

**The History of
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Gardner MA
December 1882 through June 2018**

- December 10, 1882 The first Protestant Episcopal church service in Gardner is held by Rev. John S. Beers, General Missionary of the Diocese of Massachusetts, in the Lower Town Hall, which was used during week days as a kind of police court.
- January 7, 1883 Rev. Beers baptized Eva A. and Georgianna Murray in the Lower Town Hall. The first baptisms in Gardner in accordance with the rites of the Episcopal Church.
- February 9, 1883** A society (mission) is organized under the Missionary Society of the Diocese of Massachusetts in a business meeting presided over by Rev. Dr. William Reed Huntington distinguished Rector of All Saints, Worcester. This date is celebrated by St. Paul's as their founding.
- April 16, 1883 Rt. Rev. Benjamin H. Paddock of Boston, Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts confirmed (2) candidates, Dr. David Parker and Mary Van Benthuysen, at a service with Rev. John S. Beers in the Lower Town Hall. The mission now has eight communicants.
- July 1883 The first Priest-in-Charge, Rev. John C. Hewlett, joins the mission.
- July 22, 1883 A Sabbath (Sunday) school is organized with Rev. Hewlett as Superintendent.
- August 4, 1883 The new Episcopal church and society are christened St. Paul's at the suggestion of Mr.

William Briggs, who so named it after St. Paul's, New Castle-on-the-Tyne, England where his father is buried.

August 11, 1883 Services are moved to a larger space in the Upper Town Hall.

July 13 and 20, 1884 Sunday evening services are held at the West Village skating rink and over 300 people attend each service.

October 4, 1884 Land is purchased in the West Village on North Main Street from George B. Hager for \$1,200. It also has frontage on Pleasant Street and was just south of Frank Conant's store. The church was built by contractor William N. Moore from plans prepared under the direction of the pastor, Rev. Thomas A. Hyde.

June 14, 1885 The new church is dedicated. It is 34' wide x 65' deep and seats 300 people. The ceiling is painted blue, the roof trusses dark red, and the pews are hard wood. The basement is finished off for a Sunday school and ladies parlor. At the southeast corner there is a small tower which contains the No. Main Street entrance.

June 21, 1885 The first service is held at the new church on North Main Street.

February 7, 1887 The Central Convocation of the Massachusetts Diocese is held at St. Paul's.

September 5, 1894 A deed is recorded that reflects the transfer of the North Main Street property from John S. Blatchford Trustee to the Trustees of Donations to the Protestant Episcopal Church (St. Paul's).

November 10, 1901 The Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts is formed from the division of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts.

April 7, 1902 A deed is recorded for a lot adjacent to the North Main Street church that was sold to the Trustees of Donations to the Protestant Episcopal

Church (St. Paul's) by Abraham Rosenberg for One Dollar.

- April 6, 1903 The Vestry votes to transfer all of the North Main Street property to the Trustees for the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. This is noted in the deed that is recorded on April 23, 1903.
- Early 1904 The Mission voted to stop accepting aid from the Diocesan Board of Missions upon which St. Paul's had been largely dependent since the time of its founding.
- January 4, 1905 St. Paul's is organized as a Parish.
- July 10, 1905 Land is purchased at the corner of School and Cross Streets from the Munroe Estate. The firm of Wiley & Foss of Fitchburg is commissioned to build the church.
- May 9, 1906 St. Paul's is admitted into union with the newly formed Diocese of Western Massachusetts. It is the first new parish to be admitted since the formation of the Diocese.
- Fall 1907 The North Main Street church is sold to Attorney J. P. Carney.
- December 29, 1907 The last service is held at the North Main Street church.
- January 1908 Services are held at the Syndicate Block on the corner of Chestnut and Central Streets.
- February 3, 1908 Henry Vaughan, noted church architect, visits the Cross Street site.
- April 1908 Attorney J. P. Carney sold the North Main Street property to the Finnish Lutheran Evangelical Society.
- July 7, 1908 The Vaughan design shows three buildings in a Victorian Gothic style; a rectory, a parish house and a granite church with a tower. Along with the connecting cloisters these buildings extend 168 feet on School Street.
- January 31, 1909 The new parish house (church) is dedicated. It is 24' x 60'. The woodwork is

cypress and the flooring maple. The windows are of diamond paned, leaded cathedral glass. The ceiling is 18 feet in height. The gallery is capable of seating 75 people. The approximate cost to build the parish house was \$14,000.

February 1, 1909 The first service is held at the new church, 96 Cross St.

August 20, 1912 The church acquires 123 Chestnut Street from Mrs. Susan E. Boyles. The property includes a house and a quarter acre of land and provides frontage on Chestnut Street.

April 19, 1913 Levi H. Greenwood, who served the church in many capacities, including Vestry Member, Junior Warden, and Senior Warden, gifted the church a house and a lot valued at \$7,000.

March 29, 1920 A deed is recorded for the Greenwood property at the intersection of School and Cross Streets diagonally across from the church.

September 28, 1928 The Greenwood property is sold and the proceeds are designated for a new rectory to be built at 92 School Street.

May 14, 1929 The Vestry votes in favor of a new rectory. Albert J. Smith, architect of Worcester, was present and submitted plans similar to the original design of Henry Vaughan.

September 16, 1929 Work begins on the rectory. It is projected to cost \$15,000.

March 11, 1930 The new Rector, Rush W.D. Smith, and his family move in to the rectory.

July 9, 1930 A strip of 12 to 15 feet of land is donated to the City of Gardner to eliminate the dangerous intersection at the intersection of School and Cross Streets.

November 17, 1946 The Building and Grounds offered by the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of St. Paul's to the Diocese of Western MA are accepted.

June 18, 1956 The church acquires land behind the rectory

with no street frontage from the Estate of Isadore H. Mason.

October 27, 1963 The Parish offices, school wing, and kitchen built on the former Mason land, are dedicated.

December 1964 The first steeple is raised.

2004 - 2005 The narthex is renovated to make it handicap accessible, the roof covering is converted from slate to a rubberized material and the church walls which were bowing are secured.

May 9, 2005 The center island in the parking lot is removed.

October 1, 2009 The Rectory is rented.

December 2009 A new freestanding sign is installed and the existing sign is relocated as a wall sign.

May 18, 2014 The altar rail is relocated to the first step and the choir pews reoriented and moved beyond where the altar rail had been.

Additional notes:

In the original parish register Dr. David Parker was the first in the list of families, first in the record of confirmations, and first in the list of communicants. In 1907 it was said of him “The people of this parish ought to hold in loving memory the name of Dr. David Parker”.

The first marriage ceremony in the parish register was that of Edward J. Rose and Libbie E. Jacobs and was performed by Rev. John C. Hewlett on Nov. 21, 1883.

On March 22, 1898 a meeting was held and over \$1,000 was raised for a new pipe organ. It was a first class instrument with about 400 pipes and was produced by Hook & Hastings. Col. L. G. McKnight presided at the meeting.

On April 21, 1894 Prince Momolu Massaquoi, of the Vei tribe on the west coast of Africa near Liberia, gave a talk at St. Paul’s on his home and his people. The Prince was studying at Williams College and was about 21 years old. A Google search of N’Jabacca returns an article from The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine Volume 69 Nov. 1904 to April 1905. On

pages 927 – 928 there is an article about the Prince.

On October 30, 1907 it is announced that the annual fair will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, Nov. 19 and 20.

The North Main Street church was located at what is now City Hall Avenue where it connects with Main Street. In 1923 the address of the previous North Main Street church was noted as 49 Main Street.

In relating the church history on January 8, 1908, Rev. Robert F. Cheney stated “For a long time the belief has been growing...that the rapid expansion of business interests in West Gardner has made the present location (North Main Street) undesirable for church purposes”.

On July 7, 1908 The Gardner News ran an article titled “Start on Handsome New Edifice” regarding the Vaughan design. In the article it mentions that “the great oak which has long been a landmark on the lot will not be disturbed”.

Henry Vaughan (1845 – 1917) was considered one of the greatest Gothic Revival architects in America. He also designed Christ Church, Sheffield and the Washington Cathedral, Washington D.C.

St. Hilda’s Guild was an active women’s club at St. Paul’s for many years. It is mentioned in an article from the Fitchburg Sentinel on April 28, 1932 which reads “The annual May breakfast of St. Hilda's guild of St Paul's Episcopal Church will be held in the church Monday”.

A Vestry discussion in April 2000 related to removal of a stump. It is presumed that this is when one of the three large oak trees was taken down and crosses were made from it.

Team Ministries, a touring Christian drama ministry, visited St. Paul’s on November 13, 1977 and put on the show “The Team”.

Founded in 1976, the group put on over 1,000 shows between then and 2007. For more information visit

<http://www.teamministries.us/>.

Table 1: Priests of St. Paul’s Gardner

Priest	Term	Years Notes
John C. Hewlett	July 1883 to Feb. 15, 1884	0.5 Priest-in-charge

Thomas A. Hyde	June 1884 to Jan. 31, 1886	1.5 Priest-in-charge, author
James S. Lemon	May 1886 to Jan. 1892	5.7 Priest-in-charge, Ph.D., author
Francis L. Palmer	July 1892 to Aug. 1895	3.1 Priest-in-charge
Jonathan E. Johnson	Dec. 1895 to July 1900	4.6 Priest-in-charge
Medville McLaughlin	Nov. 1900 to Apr. 17, 1904	3.5 Priest-in-charge
Robert F. Cheney	Oct. 1904 to Apr. 1910	5.5 First Rector
Albert R. Parker	Sep. 1910 to Sep. 1912	2.0
Henry Quimby	Dec. 1913 to Dec. 1921	8.0
Walter G. Harter	May 1921 to Sep. 1924	3.3
John P. Beauchamp	Jan. 1925 to Oct. 1927	2.7
Rush W.D. Smith	Aug. 1928 to Jan. 1941	12.4 First to live at 92 School St.
George E. Keith	Oct. 1941 to Oct. 1945	4.0
John S. Kromer	Feb. 1946 to Dec. 1949	3.8
John H. Payne Jr.	Apr. 1950 to Jan. 1956	5.8
Frederick Chapman	Aug. 1, 1956 to Mar. 1, 1960	3.6 Also diocesan music consultant
Theodore E. Gaetz Jr.	Mar. 1, 1960 to July 1967	7.3
John S. Greenman	Oct. 1967 to Mar. 1970	2.4
Gordon Hutchins	Sep. 1, 1970 to June 30, 1985	14.8 Chaplain, Colonel, U.S. Army
John T. Tarrant	Oct. 1985 to Aug. 31, 1989	3.9 Bishop of S. Dakota Feb. 2, 2010
Alston R. Chace	Aug. 1, 1990 to Jan. 31, 1997	6.5 Chaplain, Colonel, U.S. Air Force
Mary F. Schreiber	Aug. 1, 1998 to Dec. 19, 1999	1.4
John Leahy	Feb. 21, 2000 to Dec. 3, 2006	6.8
William Hobbs	Apr. 15, 2007 to	Priest-in-Charge, half-time

Table 2: Property Transactions for St. Paul's in the area of Cross, School, and Chestnut St, Gardner MA

Event	Date	Deed Book	Page	Activity
1	Nov. 23, 1905	1747	6	The Lorenzo V. Monroe Estate is acquired by the Wardens for \$4,580.00.
2	Jan. 4, 1906	1822	95	The Wardens sell the Monroe Estate to the Rectors, Wardens, & Vestry of St. Paul's for \$1.00.
3	Aug. 19, 1912	2004	91	Susan E. Boyles property is acquired for \$1.00. It is a quarter acre with frontage on Chestnut and Cross Streets.
4	Mar. 29, 1920	2208	211	Levi H. Greenwood property acquired at the intersection of School and Cross Streets diagonally across from the church for less than \$100.00. It is one-eighth of an acre.
5	Sep. 28, 1928	2479	216	The former Greenwood property is sold to Carolyn C. Pearson.
6	July 9, 1930	2526	281	The strip of land at intersection of School and Cross Streets is donated to the City of Gardner.
7	Sep. 25, 1953	3536	540	The former Boyles property is divided in half and a lot entirely on Chestnut Street is sold to Gertrude M. Peterson.
8	June 18, 1956	3801	504	The Estate of Isadore H. Mason is acquired

(land where Parish offices and Kitchen reside)

Table 3: Stained Glass Windows and other Artifacts at St. Paul's

A Stained glass window	In Loving Memory of Philip A. Bjurling
B Stained glass window	In Thanksgiving for the Love and Life of William Day Williams June 19, 1923 – May 11, 1989
C Stained glass window	None. This is the central window on the end wall above the altar
D Stained glass window	To Those Who Have Given Of Their Time
E Stained glass window	To the Glory of God In Loving Memory of Richard Baxter Whitney July 22, 1896 – August 5, 1917
F Stained glass window	Go Ye Therefore and Teach All Nations In Loving Memory of C. Gordon Bell January 25, 1932 to February 7, 1992
G Icon	In Loving Memory of Thomas Hilton Williams, Jr. 1917 – 1929
H Baptismal font	To the Glory of God this Font was given by the Sunday School and the St. Paul's Chapter Christmas A.D. 1897
I Proclamation	The Diocese of Western MA accepts the Building and Grounds offered by the Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of St. Paul's on November 17, 1946
J Sign on wall	In Loving Memory of Brian R. Monette

Attachments:

- A) Plot plan from 1886 showing the location of St. Paul's on North Main Street.
- B) Picture of the exterior of the North Main Street church.
- C) Picture of the interior of the North Main Street church.
- D) Line drawing of the Vaughan design from July 1908 of a rectory, parish house, and granite church.
- E) Plot plan from January 2004 showing property transactions for St. Paul's in the area of Cross, School, and Chestnut Streets.
- F) Picture of the interior of the church in June 2018.

Acknowledgement:

The church owes a debt of gratitude to Ms. Jody Munson and Mr. John Kiosses. The two spent hours compiling records and most of the information in this document came from their files.

Mr. Kiosses has often cited the phrase on one of the stained glass windows which reads "To Those That Have Given Of Their Time" to remind us not to forget those who have

supported St. Paul's and so we thank them both.

References:

- a) The Gardner News – 1882 to 1930. Articles published in the newspaper during these years formed the primary source of information for this history.
- b) The Gardner News. Heritage State Parks Gardner St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Discusses the Victorian Gothic architecture.
- c) The Gardner News. Supplement. Monday, September 16, 1985. Pages 6A and 7A. Settlers Build Churches as Community Grows contains a photo of the North Main Street church.
- d) The Pastoral Staff, Trinitytide, 1930, page 11, In Memoriam section contains a picture of St. Paul's and leads with the death of Mr. Levi H. Greenwood on April 7, 1930 and his contributions to St. Paul's.
- e) Amiable dwellings: The Episcopal churches of Western Massachusetts by Arthur Pierce Middleton, 1976, provides a brief history of St. Paul's.
- f) Deed research by the firm Whitman & Bingham in January 2004 as part of the building permit application for the Narthex renovations.
- g) Vestry Meeting Minutes from 1990 to 2017.