

History of St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The Parish was founded when Queen Ann's Chapel was erected on "The Plains" in 1711. The Plains is the area presently occupied by commercial properties around Storey Avenue. It is also the location of the Belleville Cemetery. In present day, a towering memorial cross placed in the cemetery in 1911 marks the spot where the chapel stood, directly opposite the entrance to Port Plaza. The parishioners are proud to be part of the oldest continuous Episcopal Church in Massachusetts. Queen Anne's Chapel was deserted by 1776 and began decaying until a storm took it down completely soon after.

For the convenience of many parishioners who had removed to "The Waterside", St. Paul's was constructed on the present site on High Street between Market and Summer Streets in 1738. It now sits at its present location at 160 High Street (King's Highway) and was officially opened in 1741.

As tensions with the Mother country began to sour, those who worked in the shipbuilding and international merchant trade defected from the British and did not necessarily want to associate with the farmers in the Anglican Church who many were still loyal to the King," Tom Smith of Newburyport and a member said. "Some of those people split off from the First Parish of Newbury and got their own minister, which became the Belleville Congregational Church. We share a similar history with them."

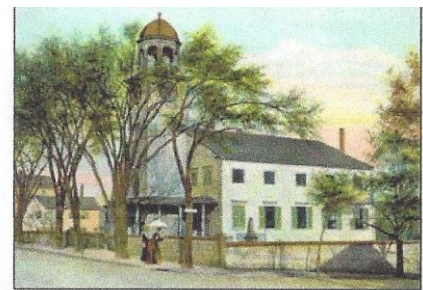


In 1797, The Reverend Edward Bass, D.D. Rector of this church was consecrated Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and held the offices of Bishop and Rector until his death. St. Paul's church was the first Bishop Church in Massachusetts.

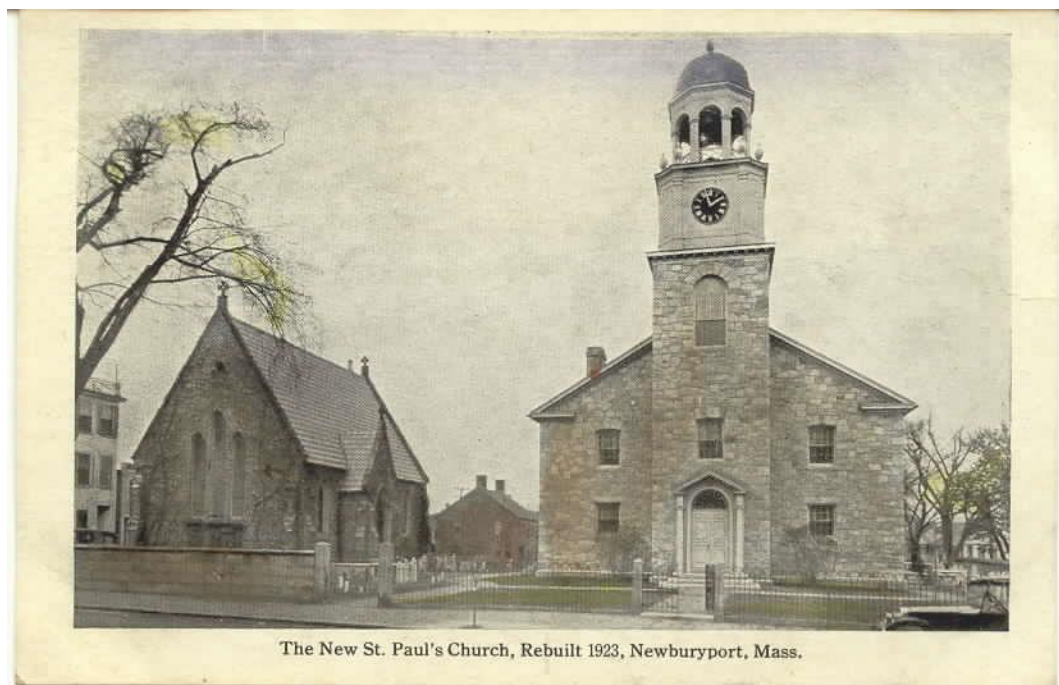
In 1800, that first building was replaced by a larger structure. On April 27, 1920, the building was consumed by fire. The cornerstone of the present church was laid August 17, 1922.

The church as it now stands was dedicated in 1923, built of Rockport granite to match that of St. Anne's Chapel.

Historical artifacts are on display in the church's vestibule. St. Paul's is surrounded by a cemetery as "it was the Anglican tradition — to bury people on consecrated ground," according to church historian Bronson de Stadler.



St. Paul's Church (1801, burned in 1920), 166 High Street.
The stone church now on the site was completed in 1923.



The New St. Paul's Church, Rebuilt 1923, Newburyport, Mass.

Saint Anna's Chapel is a stone Gothic Chapel on High Street located west of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. It is made of rough Rockport granite and was erected in 1862-1863. It was the gift of the Reverend William Horton, D.D., Rector of St. Paul's Church from 1853-1863, in memory of his only daughter, Anna, who died August 31, 1857.

The chapel was designed by Dr. Chase. The architect was Mr. Rufus Sergent (Who designed the First Religious Society's church on Pleasant Street), the builder was John Bayley & Sons. Mr. Albert Currier who was a prominent architect and builder (City Hall, Large Mill Buildings) was the Superintendent. It cost in 1862, \$8,300 to build.

On May 23rd, 1863, the chapel was dedicated by the Right Reverend Manton Eastburn, Bishop of Massachusetts.

Mr. Henry Sharp of New York designed and executed the beautiful stained glass windows.

For a time, St. Anna's Chapel was a temporary home for the members of the Greek Orthodox Church while they rebuilt after a heart-wrenching fire destroyed their house of worship on Harris Street in 1987.

Currently, the chapel is used during the summer months for St. Paul's Sunday Services and is often used for Children's Services, special lectures and special fundraising events.

Recently, thanks to the Community Preservation Act, the roof was redone, the external stone crosses have been re-erected and the chapel itself has been restored.