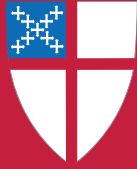


THE HISTORY AND
ARCHITECTURE OF



ST. PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH



10 EAST THIRD STREET • ALTON, ILLINOIS



OUR HISTORY

St. Paul's Church, along with the smaller Trinity Chapel on State Street in North Alton, make up the Episcopal Parish of Alton, a historic parish established in 1836.

St. Paul's boasts a history nearly as old as that of the State of Illinois. Bishop Kemper of Missouri noted that a gathering of Episcopalians convened in Alton in early 1836 to elect a vestry and organize as St. Paul's Church.

Captain Benjamin Godfrey, a retired steamboat captain and businessman who had established his residence in nearby Godfrey, noticed the thriving town of Alton had no church buildings. Using his own funds, he constructed a building in 1834 and offered its use to all organized religious groups until selling it to the Episcopalians in 1845 for \$1,800 when it became St. Paul's property.

1856 The original church was torn down to build today's existing church. Some of the original walls and much of the limestone from the 1834 structure were reused.

1860 A tornado struck the church in June, causing extensive damage to the roof and west tower. The church bell crashed to the ground and was never replaced. Architect L. D. Cleveland advised on the rebuilding. Armstrong and Pfeiffenberger, Builders in Alton restored it. Lucas Pfeiffenberger was 26 at the time. He went on to become a renowned and prolific architect in Alton and beyond.

1913 Responding to the parish's needs, an addition was built to the back of the sanctuary for offices and meeting rooms. James M. Maupin was the architect.

1943 The parish **began a major renovation** led by architect Guy Study, who had attended Washington University and the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France, famous for its Gothic architecture, such as Notre Dame Cathedral.

Study redesigned the front and interior of St. Paul's to reflect the noble rugged simplicity of the Gothic style.

The length of the front window was reduced by 10 feet. The Emil Frei firm of St. Louis made new stained glass in a remarkable reproduction of the original glass set in 1856.

The battlement was added to the west tower. The Baptistry and Peace Chapel were created. Inside the balcony was restored and the organ returned to its original location. The sanctuary floor was laid with Moravian tiles. The wrought iron pulls on the church's front door were retained.

1960 The **parish hall** (now called Heneghan Hall) and the **education building** were completed.

1976 The parish undertook **another major renovation** with the church getting a new slate roof, concrete floors, heating and lighting systems, carpeting and new basement storage areas. The tile floor was relaid.

2020 **A major fire** in June caused extensive damage to the church's interior. Everything had to be cleaned and repainted. The interior of the office wing, where the fire started, was completely destroyed and had to be rebuilt.

2023 **St. Paul's celebrates 187 years!** Twenty-seven rectors have served during both prosperous and challenging times. Regardless, the parish has remained steadfast, united and today continues to flourish.





OUR ARCHITECTURE AND ART

St. Paul's Episcopal Church closely resembles a small parish church in England.

It is in the Gothic Revival style, popular in the nineteenth century, based on northern European architecture from the Gothic Age in the 12th – 16th centuries. Pointed arch windows, stained glass and soaring interiors are some characteristics of the style.

EXTERIOR

The church is built of rubble limestone likely quarried from the hillside where it sits. The foundations probably rest on bedrock.

The roof is steeply pitched to shed rain and snow. Towers flank the entrance to the church. An octagonal steeple crowns the west tower. The top of the tower has a battlement with squared openings. This design is based on structures that protected archers defending forts or castles during the Middle Ages. Buttresses on the corners of the tower help to hold up the great weight of the walls.

The pointed arch windows are typical of the Gothic Revival style. Compared to a round arch, the pointed arch allows the walls to be built much higher with larger openings for stained glass windows that create a feeling of awe inside the church.

A unique feature of this building is the use of limestone to form crosses on the front windows. Cheerful red doors are typical of Episcopalian churches.



INTERIOR

Narthex

The narthex of a church is the entrance or lobby area. The vestibule floor was tiled in 1898.

Peace Chapel

To the left is the Peace Chapel with a statue of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She stands upon a serpent, representing Mary's obedience to the command of God. Beneath the statue is a pricket stand with candles where one may light candles during prayer.

Baptistry

To the right, the Baptistry holds the baptismal font used to receive new members through the sacrament of baptism. St. Paul's Baptistry also contains the Columbarium with 24 niches for the remains of parishioners. The large Paschal Candle is part of the Easter traditions. The Greek letters, Alpha and Omega, represent Christ as the beginning and end of all things, and are seen together with the five brass incense grains representing Christ's five wounds.



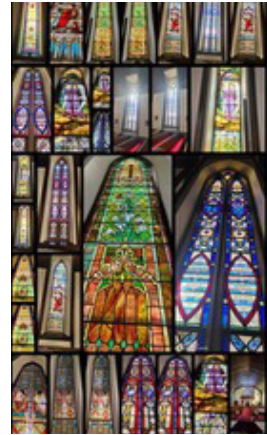
Nave

The nave is the central part of the church accommodating the congregation. A wooden ceiling and dark woodwork frame mellow white walls. The pews were installed in 1936.



Stained Glass Windows

Eight jewel-toned windows cast heavenly light into the soaring space. The windows create an otherworldly atmosphere. They veil the view of the busy outside world. They also help teach parishioners Bible stories. Subjects include Christ, angels, lilies, musicians playing a harp and organ and many more. Note the names of patrons and the people they have memorialized inscribed on the windows.



Other liturgical art includes the Stations of the Cross encircling the nave, and at the back, a painting by Johanna Gnerich and a wooden sculpture of St. Paul by Hillis Arnold. For 34 years, Arnold was a professor of ceramics and sculpture at Monticello College, now Lewis and Clark Community College. His artwork mostly features religious themes and can be seen throughout the United States.

Sanctuary

The sanctuary is the area around the altar demarcated by an altar rail. The large “Christ the King” crucifix above the altar dates from 1942 when the Mary C. Hayner window was removed from above the altar and placed in the east side of the nave. The eagle lectern and bishop’s chair were donated in 1898.

Altar Needlepoint Kneelers

The women of the parish stitched the needlepoint kneelers as part of a church renovation in 1976. The Royal Academy of Needlework in London, England designed them. Motifs include the Episcopal Church seal and symbol, as well as community landscapes of St. Paul’s, the bluffs, the Piasa bird, the mill, a river barge and business logos such as Shell Oil and Owens-Illinois.



Organ and Choir Loft

The church's original organ was built in 1858 by Joseph Gratian, who is memorialized in the window in the front right of the nave. A second organ was built by the Estey Organ Company. In 1991, Robert G. Dial Organ Builders of Springfield, Illinois was commissioned to build a new organ for the church. After extensive study, certain ranks of the old organ with historic and musical merit were retained and revoiced for inclusion in the new organ. Today it is a remarkable 38 rank (3 manual) organ.

St. Elizabeth's Chapel

This restful chapel is used for daytime services.

Parish Office Addition

Connected to the sanctuary, the rubble limestone walls of the parish office addition match those of the 1856 church. The interior of the addition was rebuilt after the 2020 fire and still houses offices today.

Heneghan Hall and Education Building

The parish hall (now called Heneghan Hall after the death of Fr. Heneghan) and the Education Building were completed in 1960. The renowned St. Louis firm, Emil Frei, designed and installed the stained glass window in the stairwell on the west wall. The hall, which has been updated, has a kitchen and is perfect for wedding receptions and events of all kinds.



Garden

The garden sits on the site where the old rectory used to be. Watching over the garden is a bronze sculpture of St. Francis of Assisi by renowned sculptor Hillis Arnold.





The history, architectural significance and awe-inspiring stained glass windows that grace the simple loveliness of St. Paul's Church make it a frequent stop on local tours showcasing area historical landmarks.

For more church history, see Guy Study, *History of St. Paul's Church*, Alton, Illinois, St. Louis, Mo., Mound City Press, 1943. Available at Hayner Downtown Library, 283.977386 STU

The people of the Episcopal Parish of Alton have been blessed to worship God in all His glory surrounded not only by the "beauty of holiness" but also the "holiness of beauty."

All people are welcomed to join us!



St. Paul's Episcopal Church

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