

St. Paul's Church was formed by an official act of the City Council of Key West. In a petition to the Bishop of New York, the City Council requested a priest be sent and the Parish of St. Paul's be established. In 1831 the Council gave notice of a public meeting to establish an Episcopal Church and a committee was appointed.

The first rector was the Reverend Sanson K. Brunot, who arrived December 23, 1832. He held the first service on Christmas Day 1832 in the County Courthouse on Jackson Square. Since there was no church building or rectory Brunot became a permanent houseguest of Vestryman William Whitehead.

The first Vestry was elected April 8, 1833.

Land for a church site was given by the widow of John William Charles Fleming in 1832. The only stipulation was that her husband's remains stay where they were. He is still buried on the grounds, but the actual site is unknown.

The original church, made of coral rock, was built in 1838/1839. The building when completed was 38 by 58 feet and the total cost of construction was \$6,500.00. This building was totally destroyed by a hurricane on October 11, 1846.

The second church, a wooden structure, measured 28 by 66 feet. The first service was held in this building June 30, 1848. The church was consecrated on January 4, 1851 by The Right Reverend C.E. Gadsden, Bishop of South Carolina.

In 1857 a rectory was erected on the corner of Duval and Eaton Street, facing Eaton. The Rev. Osgood E. Herrick was the first in a long line of rectors to call it home.

The church was growing steadily and the seating capacity of 350 was becoming inadequate. This was when St. Peter's was established (1875) and the Spanish Mission of St. John's followed.

The second church was destroyed in the Great Fire of Key West on March 31, 1886. By some good fortune the Rectory survived undamaged. Church rebuilding began immediately and the third church was completed in 1887. This structure, constructed of wood, stood in the center of the block facing Eaton Street. It was approximately 58 by 98 feet.

In 1890, the Vestry voted to purchase a chime of bells. Once installed, the first chime of bells within Florida was inaugurated Palm Sunday morning, March 22, 1891 at 10:00 am.

On October 11, 1909 another disaster struck and the church was destroyed by a hurricane. The parish hall, (completed in 1904), survived and was used for services. The Rectory also survived this storm. The plans for the new church were approved in 1911. The new structure would be constructed of concrete. The church would also be located at the corner of Duval and Eaton Streets. This required the moving of the Rectory to its current location in 1914. The first service in the current building was on June 8, 1919. During this period many of the stained glass windows were ordered and installation began in 1920. The organ arrived in 1931, in time for the Christmas services.

A major restoration of the church was begun in 1991 to save the building from collapse. The concrete used in the construction had been mixed with sea water and beach sand, which caused the steel reinforcing within the walls to rust and expand. This in turn caused many of the walls and columns to split. Work was completed in 1993 at a cost of nearly one million dollars.

Today the church continues to stand as a beacon within the diverse cultural community of Key West. The church is open daily for prayer, meditation and visiting. Many concerts and other community events take place here and St. Paul's plays a positive role in the community, artistically and spiritually.