

# SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH



National Historic Site  
Mount Vernon, New York

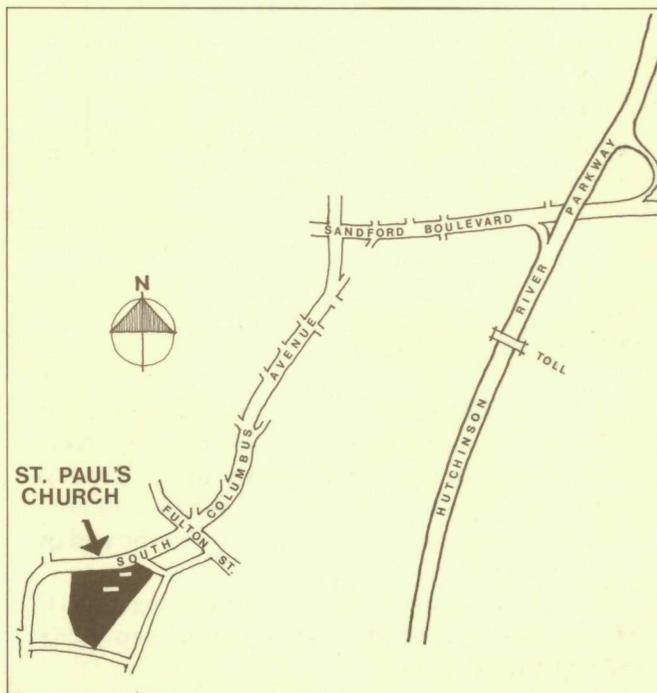
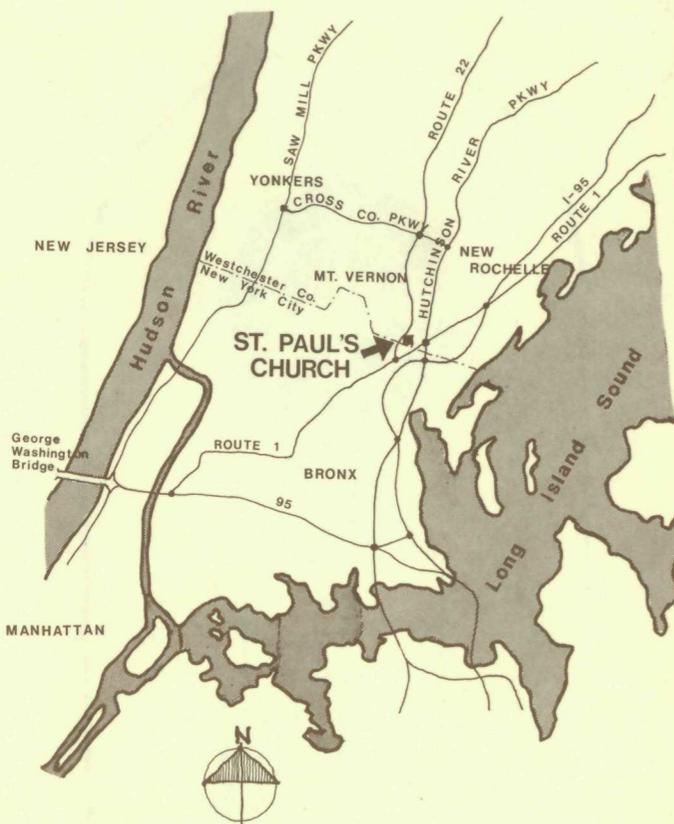
## A TIME LINE FOR ...

- 1642 Westchester County's first white settlers Anne Hutchinson and her followers flee Boston to near the present site of St. Paul's.
- 1665 The original St. Paul's Church is founded on the spot where the present edifice now stands.
- 1692 A new church is constructed north of the present structure at the location of the memorial flag pole.
- 1702 Lord Cornbury, Governor of the royal province of New York, declares all church edifices belonging to the Church of England. St. Paul's parishioners resist the decree.
- 1706 Reverend Bartow, having successfully converted enough parishioners, holds regular Episcopal services at St. Paul's.
- October 29, 1733 An election is held on the village green in front of St. Paul's. Reporting this and subsequent events eventually led to the trial of John Peter Zenger and the establishment of freedom of the press in the BILL OF RIGHTS.
- 1758 St. Paul's Church is presented a bell cast by Lester and Pack at the White-chapel Foundry in London. It is the "twin sister" of the famous Liberty Bell in Philadelphia.
- 1758 A militia company is organized to defend Eastchester and to keep open the Boston Post Road as a line of communication to the New England Colonies. Of the four officers, three lie buried in St. Paul's Churchyard: Thomas Pinckney, Daniel Searing, and William Pinckney. All were members of the parish.
- 1763 Construction of the present edifice is begun.
- 1767 Church edifice is completed, made from field stone taken from farms and timber from nearby forests. Oyster and clam shells from Eastchester Creek, lime from Long Island Sound, and sand from the sand pit in the Churchyard were mixed to

provide mortar. Brick was used for the window and door jams and arches. The bell tower is later made from local brownstone.

- October 18, 1776 The Battle of Pell's Point. Following this engagement, the church is siezed by Hessian troops under Baron Knyphausen and converted into a barracks and hospital. Ninety men died the first night in the church and were buried in a sandpit in the churchyard.
- 1780s Church is used during the week as a Court of Oyer and Terminer by such legal practitioners as Aaron Burr.
- 1787 Among the pewholders and vestrymen are listed the Pells, Van Cortlands, Rhinelanders, Pinckneys, Bartows, Wards, Valentines, Morgans, Drakes, Townsends, Fowlers, Guions, Huestices, Webbs, Crawford, Underhills, Rapeljays, Honeywills and Roosevelts.
- 1829 George Washington Adams, son of President John Quincy Adams and grandson of John Adams, is drowned in Long Island Sound. His body is found by a warden of St. Paul's and temporarily interred in the churchyard.
- 1833 Rem Rapelje, a parishioner, presents the church with an organ built by Henry Erben about 1830 and remains among the oldest working organs in the country.
- 1910 One of the oldest "Bishop's Chairs" in the country, carved and dated 1639, was brought from Europe and donated by a parishioner to St. Paul's. Today it is located in the church next to the pulpit.
- 1943 The Secretary of the Interior declares St. Paul's Church a National Historic Site.
- 1980 The National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, assumes ownership of St. Paul's from the Episcopal Church.

# SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH



# “A SHRINE

Initially constructed in 1665, Eastchester's Saint Paul's Church and adjacent village green have been the setting for historical events which established an early foundation for basic freedoms outlined in the Bill of Rights. The story of Anne Hutchinson who fled Massachusetts Bay Colony in search of religious freedom in 1642; the story of a Protestant community which successfully resisted an English Governor's decree to take their church and meeting house; the story of an Episcopal minister who eventually converted the community and affected locally a separation of church and state, all center around St. Paul's. The event that made this site famous, "The Great Election of 1733," led directly to the establishment of a free press in colonial America.

According to history, in October 1733, the High Sheriff of Westchester County tacked a notice on the door of St. Paul's Church. This announced an election for county assemblyman to be held the 23rd on the village green, at that time the hub of Westchester County. The sheriff, an appointee of the British Governor, Cosby, had omitted stating the time of the proposed election. As in the past, his intention was to appear on the village green at an unpublished time with the Governor's candidate, William Foster, and call the election without opposition from the local residents. Apparently, he was unaware of the recent political organization of Westchester citizens called "The People's Party" who were prepared on the date of the election to stand with their candidate, the ex-chief justice William Morris, all day on the village green, if necessary.

In keeping with tradition, when the election began, voters lined up behind their chosen candidate on the village green. This was to be the first recorded election held between candidates sponsored by opposing political parties in colonial America. The People's Party's candidate, Morris, quickly captured the largest number of votes. Not to be beaten, the sheriff called for a balloting in an attempt to disqualify as many of the People's Party

# FOR THE BILL

as possible. While allowing all supporters of the governor's candidate to vote, he excluded some 38 Quakers from the People's Party by insisting they swear to their land-holding status on a Bible. As the Quaker religion prohibited swearing of oaths, they were prevented from voting. Despite the sheriff's scheming, Morris won the election.

Infuriated by the sheriff's and the governor's mishandling of authority, the citizens of Westchester appealed for a newspaper to keep them informed of any further attempts to limit individual freedom. Within a week of the election, John Peter Zenger, a former apprentice with the local newspaper, published the first edition of the "New York Weekly Journal" which ran a full account of the sheriff's corruption of the ballot box on the Eastchester village green. While extolling the freedom of the press, subsequent editions delighted readers with satirical attacks on officials who placed themselves above the law, especially Governor Cosby.

Although he risked losing public support, the Governor began his counter attack. First, he publicly ordered the burning of four issues of the "Weekly Journal". When that received little attention, he jailed Zenger for nine months and had him tried on a charge of libel. A famous colonial lawyer from Philadelphia, Andrew Hamilton, agreed to plead Zenger's case. He tried to prove not whether Zenger had actually written the offending material, but whether he had the right to print what was "notoriously" true. The jury found Zenger not guilty, a decision which helped to set a precedent in the New York courts for the establishment of a press free from governmental interference or oppression. Years later, in discussion of the Bill of Rights, Zenger's trial was given as the reason for insuring freedom of the press in The First Amendment.

Replacement of the wooden church which historically bore the notice of the election made infamous by Zenger's Journal was begun in 1763.

# OF RIGHTS”

By the American Revolution, the current core edifice was completed and served in 1776 as a hospital for Hessian troops. These troops were recovering after being defeated in their attempts to block Washington's retreat from Long Island.

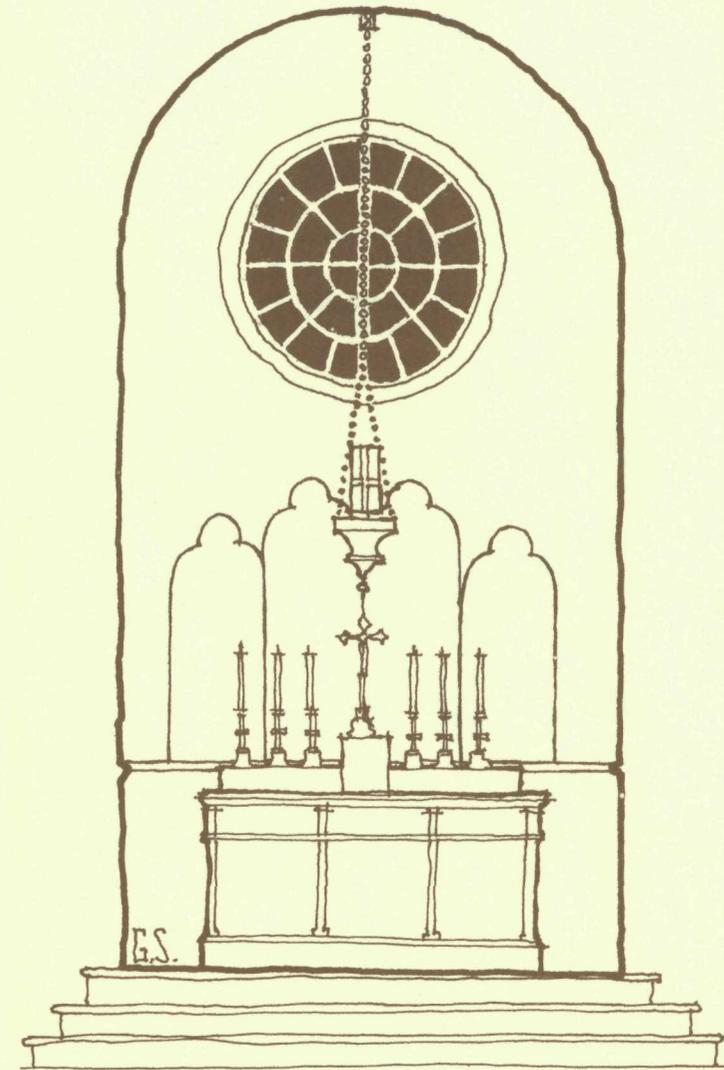
Soon after the Revolution the church was completed. Along with the regular Episcopal services, the church also served during the week as a courthouse to such legal practitioners as Aaron Burr.

As early as 1931, a committee of nationally eminent citizens, headed by Sara Delano Roosevelt, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's mother, sought restoration and federal protection for St. Paul's Church and the village green. In 1943, after restoration was completed, the Secretary of the Interior declared the area a national historic site and conferred upon it federal recognition as an area significant in the history and establishment of this nation. Local residents continued to strive for further protection. With the passage of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 and the subsequent donation of the site by the Episcopal Diocese of New York and the City of Mount Vernon, New York, St. Paul's Church National Historic Site is now a unit of the National Park System. The Site will be operated under a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service by a non-profit corporation made up of local organizations and citizens.

## ADMINISTRATION

St. Paul's Church National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The Superintendent's address is Manhattan Sites Office, National Park Service, 26 Wall Street, New York, N.Y. 10005.

**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**



## YOUR VISIT

St. Paul's Church and Parish Hall are located at 897 South Columbus Avenue, Mt. Vernon, New York. The grounds are currently open dawn to dusk seven days a week. The parish hall with new visitor facilities is slated to be opened by the end of 1982.

Grounds maintenance is a continuing effort. Visitors are cautioned to watch their step while visiting the cemetery.