

Integrated Timeline for the History of Bethesda Episcopal Church

(Integrated with other historical events)

By Jane Agee, The Reverend Paul Evans, and Mary Shartle

- 1787 Episcopal Diocese of New York established
- 1805 First Episcopal church at Ballston Center was organized (“Ballston” often refers to Christ Church [1817] of Ballston Center which united with St. Paul’s, Ballston Spa, as Christ Church according to DeMille, p. 33)
- 1811 John Henry Hobart became diocesan bishop of New York (his son would later become rector of Bethesda, 1845-46)
- 1814 First incorporation of a religious Society for the Propagation of the Gospel named Bethesda. This incorporation was not sustained and is not recorded in New York Diocese history.
- 1826 Saratoga Springs was incorporated as a village.
- 1830 Official incorporation of Bethesda Protestant Episcopal Church, October 4th; documented in New York Diocese history and in General Convention Proceedings. Death of Bishop Hobart; first building that housed Bethesda was given by Dr. John Clarke; it was originally an old spring house that was located on the northeast corner of Putnam and Congress Streets. The Reverend Edward Davis was recorded as rector in the incorporation. Davis and The Reverend Deodatus Babcock from Ballston Spa served as mission priests to the fledgling congregation.
- 1832 Saratoga and Schenectady Railroad opened.
- 1834 The Reverend Babcock reported 10 communicants for Bethesda in the Journal of the Proceedings of the General Convention of the Diocese of New York.
- 1835 Rensselaer and Saratoga Railroad opened.
- 1841 The vestry, in a controversial move, purchased from Rockwell Putnam a lot on Washington Street on which to build the present church at a cost of \$3,590, an exorbitant sum at that time.
- 1842 The Reverend William Walker who had previously served at Christ Church, Troy, New York, became the first full-time rector* of Bethesda.

- 1842 Using plans supposedly adapted from those drawn up by Richard Upjohn, a renowned architect from New York City, Bethesda began erecting the present church on the Washington Street property.
- 1843 The Reverend Samuel Hanson Cox became rector of Bethesda.
- 1844 Church was completed, and first services were held in a largely unfurnished building.
- 1845 The Reverend John Henry Hobart, Jr. (son of Bishop Hobart) became rector of Bethesda and preached the first sermon in the new church.
- 1846 The Reverend Philip E. Milledoler, M.D., became rector of Bethesda.
- 1848 Trinity Church made a grant of \$1,000 to Bethesda.
- 1850 The Reverend S. S. Wiley became rector of Bethesda.
- 1853 The Reverend John Steinfort Kidney became rector of Bethesda. First bell was given.
- 1858 The Reverend Robert C. Rogers became rector of Bethesda.
- 1860 The church was enlarged by moving out the side walls, and the stained glass windows were given.
- 1861 The Reverend Edmund Rowland became rector of Bethesda. Civil War begins. Rockwell Putnam and Saratoga Bank filed foreclosure suits against Bethesda for non-payment of the mortgage. The vestry negotiated a loan, including the legal costs of the foreclosure suits to satisfy the creditors.
- 1863 The Reverend Francis C. Wainwright became rector of Bethesda.
- 1864 First running of the Travers at Saratoga Race Course.
- 1865 The Reverend John Breckenridge Gibson became rector of Bethesda.
- 1866 Bethesda finally paid off its debt for the lot purchased from Rockwell Putnam, and the consecration of Bethesda was conducted by Right Reverend Horatio Potter, Bishop of the Diocese of New York. The ceremony was held on October 17th. Rectory at this time was on the corner of Broadway and Greenfield.
- 1868 Diocese of Albany was formed, and the Right Reverend William Crosswell Doane became bishop.
- 1869 The Reverend Norman W. Camp became rector of Bethesda. Rectory at this time was located on Clinton Street and was valued at \$10,000. Home of the Good Shepherd was

begun at the behest of Mrs. Frances Placidia Gibson (nee Wood), wife of the Reverend John Gibson.

- 1873 The Reverend Joseph Carey, S.T.D., became rector of Bethesda.
- 1887 Tower was added to west front of the church. Elizabeth Haight Putnam, widow of Rockwell Putnam, donated funds for the tower, in memory of her husband and children, and her grandchildren gave four bells in memory of Rockwell Putnam, Elizabeth Peck Putnam, George Rockwell, and Edith Mary Georgiana. A service blessing the bells was conducted by The Right Reverend William Crosswell Doane, D.D., Bishop of Albany, on July 3. During this year, many gifts of note were made: chancel stained glass window and brass eagle lectern (Spencer Trask); marble altar (Katherine Y. Ehninger); brass altar rail (Mrs. Charles D. Slocum); central reredos (Mrs. William A. Sackett and her sister, Mrs. J. L. Perry); marble baptismal font (Hugh Willoughby); brass altar cross on the side altar (Madame Jumel).
- 1890 St. Faith's School was founded by Eleanor Shakelford, great-granddaughter of Rockwell Putnam and Beatrice Sands.
- 1898 Marble columns were added in church (dedicated to Gabriel Duval Clark, Sr., and Mrs. Harriet Perry).
- 1913 The Reverend Hubert P. LeFl. Grabau became rector of Bethesda.
- 1917 United States enters WWI.
- 1918 The Reverend Grabau stepped down to serve in WWI in 1918. The Reverend Irving G. Rouillard became rector of Bethesda. Spanish Influenza epidemic spreads, and Fr. Rouillard offers Parish House as a relief station for flu victims.
- 1920 The rectory on Washington Street, formerly the home of the Wiggins family, was purchased, largely due to funds provided by Joseph H. Clark, as a wedding gift for The Reverend Irving Rouillard and his new bride.
- 1926 Organ was donated by Joseph H. Clark.
- 1927 Division of Albany Diocese is advocated at General Convention of New York.
- 1928 The Reverend Rouillard was named Archdeacon of Troy. The Right Reverend Nelson resigned as Bishop of Albany; The Right Reverend Oldham succeeded him.
- 1929 Planning for first Centennial of Bethesda begins; Black Friday on Wall Street.
- 1930 First Centennial Celebration takes place over four days in October (commemorated in a book by Fr. Rouillard).

- 1933 The Reverend Rouillard wrote a stirring letter in the *Saratogian* prescribing action to combat unemployment during the Great Depression.
- 1941 Pearl Harbor and the US entry into WWII; Fr. Rouillard's three sons would serve.
- 1945 WWII ends in Europe and Pacific.
- 1950 The Reverend Malcolm W. Eckel became rector of Bethesda.
- 1953 The Reverend Benjamin W. Holmes became rector of Bethesda.
- 1967 Cassavant organ was installed. Fr. Holmes celebrated 137th anniversary of Bethesda.
- 1968 The Reverend Thomas T. Parke became rector of Bethesda.
- 1976 Fr. Parke led the 146th anniversary celebration of Bethesda.
- 1980 Fr. Parke led the 150th anniversary celebration of Bethesda.
- 1995 Side entrance was added to the church with handicap access.
- 2009 Dedication service for the organ in the balcony of the church was held. The children of George and Laura Pierce donated funds for the building of this organ in memory of their parents.
- 2012 The Reverend Canon Thomas T. Parke died on March 5, 2012.
- 2012 The Very Reverend Marshall J. Vang, Dean of the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany, became interim rector of Bethesda.
- 2020 The Reverend Charles Wallace became Priest-in-Charge of Bethesda.

*The term rector is used in a general sense for all the clergy listed in this timeline although some—especially those who served for a short period of time—may have been deacons rather than priests.