

**ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**, 200 Main St. in Palatka. This image was taken by famous Civil War photographer, Matthew Brady, in 1870. The church is celebrating its 169th anniversary. *See related story below.*



Photo and information submitted by Dianne Taylor, St. Mark's Episcopal Church historian

Memory Lane

1870

Area residents are invited to submit their pre-1960 photos that were taken of Putnam County people or places to the *Palatka Daily News* for publication in our Memory Lane section. Email [tmurphy@palatkadailynews.com](mailto:tmurphy@palatkadailynews.com).



# CURRENTS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2022

PAGE 1B

# 169

**HISTORIC CHURCH REACHES ANOTHER MILESTONE YEAR**

Father Bob Marsh has been a significant leader at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palatka and the Putnam County community since his ordination Dec. 18, 1982.

**By TRISHA MURPHY**  
Palatka Daily News  
[tmurphy@palatkadailynews.com](mailto:tmurphy@palatkadailynews.com)

**A**s history has it, St. Mark's Episcopal Church has a rich story to share as it celebrates 169 years of ministry in Palatka.

The Carpenter Gothic church designed by architect Richard Upjohn was founded Dec. 12, 1853, and started as a white wooden board-and-batten building with lancet windows and a rose window with a picket fence surrounding it.

The picket fence was to dissuade cattle at the time from wandering onto the church campus at 200 Main St., according to the church's history.

Upjohn also was the designer of Trinity Episcopal Church in New York City and was considered to be one of America's most esteemed church architects and co-founder and president of the American Institute of Architects. He is largely responsible for the Carpenter Gothic-style in Florida.

"The mission of St. Mark's Episcopal flourished to an enthusiastic and inspired level during our years under the leadership of Father Bob Marsh," said Dianne Taylor, church historian.

Marsh has been a significant leader in the church and the Putnam community since his ordination Dec. 18, 1982. He has been at the church from 1992 to 2002 and from 2014 to the present. He has been involved in the founding of the Lee Conlee House, domestic abuse shelter. He has also been a member of the Palatka Rotary Club and supports Boy Scout Troop 236, Girl BSA Troop 9236 and Cub Pack 236.

See **HISTORIC**, Page 4B



# Historic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

## CELEBRATION

Following the morning worship service at 9:30 a.m. Dec. 18, St. Mark's Episcopal Church will be honored with a birthday party and Marsh's ordination anniversary celebration all with a homemade luncheon prepared by the St. Mark's Church Women. The event is open to the public.

"What a joy to have a scholar of Biblical and local North Florida history as our spiritual leader at St. Mark's," Taylor said.

Marsh is a native of North Florida and a former banker called to the ministry in the midst of his career. He is a gifted lecturer and spiritual leader who is known to weave into Biblical lessons the parallels of life in ancient communities of faith with their achievements and challenges which directly relate to the tensions of life that we experience today, Taylor said.

## THE CHURCH TODAY

Today, St. Mark's Episcopal is a hub of engagement within the Putnam County community with seasonal spaghetti dinners and old-fashioned home-cooked meals by the Episcopal Church Women.

In September, the church hosted the annual Tea with the Queen and music festival organ concerts are offered during the year. Educational tours of St. Mark's for elementary school children in the county are conducted during the annual Occupation of Palatka reenactment festivities.

The church also invites civic organizations and nonprofit groups to utilize their facility for events, including Scouting troops for boys and girls led by Scoutmaster Allison Waters-Merritt, as well as civic organizations such as Food Bank, Pilot Club and overnight bicycling clubs.

## FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS

"St. Mark's is exploring new ministry opportunities in the Palatka area with special focus on the many unmet needs in our community," Marsh said. "We are particularly happy with our involvement in ecumenical worship and hope for more growth in that area."

That growth is something Taylor has seen. "The historic James House located on the St. Mark's campus adjacent to the sanctuary is slated for renewal," she said. "Named for Robert James, the proprietor of the James Cafe located in the Hotel James on St. Johns Avenue, the James House is under review for a state grant."

## NOTABLE HISTORIC FACTS ABOUT ST. MARK'S

Some of the notable historic facts about the Palatka church include:

■ St. Mark's Episcopal church was the only Florida Carpenter Gothic church designed by Upjohn and the only church in Florida for which the architect personally drew the plans. The original Upjohn architectural drawing of St. Mark's is located in the George Fairbanks Collection at Florida State University Libraries and St. Mark's Episcopal at Palatka has a copy of the hand-drawn plans.

■ The organizers of St. Mark's in 1853 were legacy leaders in Florida, and in that same timeframe several of those St. Mark's organizers met in St. Augustine as the original members of the Florida Historical Society.

■ Those names included Gov. William D. Moseley, the first elected governor of the state, and Elizabeth Moseley Haughton, his daughter, who proposed the organizing of an Episcopal church in Palatka.

■ Her husband, Judge T.S. Haughton, was a direct descendant of two Florida pioneers: Francis Philip Fatio, one of only two land grant holders in continued residence in North Florida with a 10,000-acre land grant from the British occupation, the Second Spanish Period, and the Florida territorial transition; and Fatio's grandson, Francis P. Fleming, who served as governor of Florida from 1889 to 1893.

■ Judge Isaac Bronson, an attorney in Watertown, New York, was appointed to Congress in 1837 and introduced the act by which Florida became a state in 1845. President James K. Polk appointed Bronson to the Southern District superior and federal court and Bronson made his headquarters in St. Augustine. In 1854, Bronson built his palatial home in Palatka, Sunny Point, now known as the Bronson-Mulholland House.

■ Judge Bronson and Bishop Benjamin Whipple were instrumental in persuading Upjohn to design St. Mark's for a fee within the building committee's budget.

■ Benjamin Putnam, for whom Putnam County was named, was speaker of the state House of Representatives, major in the Seminole War, surveyor-general of Florida, and circuit judge in Palatka. His only child, Kate, was the daughter-in-law of U.S. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. His widow, Helen Kirby Putnam, donated the land on which the St. Mark's rectory is located.

■ James Burt was the driving force in the development of Palatka and the construction of the Upjohn-designed the church and rectory at St. Mark's. He was a banker, successful mercantile businessman with his brother George Burt in St. Augustine, Palatka Tract trustee and served St.

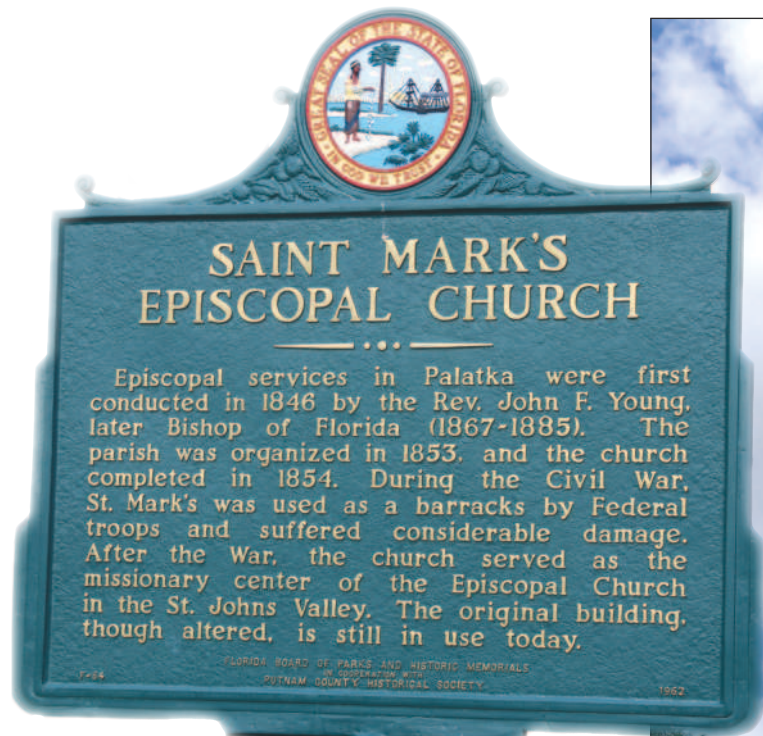


Photo courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Florida State University Libraries, Tallahassee, FL

**ABOVE:** Pictured is the architectural drawing of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palatka.

**AT LEFT:** Architect Richard Upjohn.

Mark's as its treasurer, vestryman and junior warden for 40 years.

■ George R. Fairbanks moved to Florida as a law clerk with Judge Bronson from Watertown, New York. In 1855, Fairbanks delivered the application of St. Mark's to the Diocese Convention in Tallahassee, which was unanimously approved. He became the clerk of the circuit court, state senator, president of Florida Fruit Growers Association, the author of books on Florida history and was a founder of the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

■ Robert Boyd, one of the first settlers in Palatka, built a house that was one of the first three in town with glass windows. He served as sheriff, tax assessor and tax collector of Putnam County, all at one time.

■ Dr. George Hawes opened his medical practice in Palatka in 1852, served in the Florida Senate from 1848 to 1861 and served St. Mark's as senior warden for 42 years.

■ Hubbard Hart was an entrepreneur and owner of the Hart Line steamboat empire and hotel venue, which became the catalyst for Florida's nascent tourist industry on the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers.

■ Marcellus A. Williams, one of the organizers of St. Mark's, went on to make a difference in Florida post-Civil War as an important federal government surveyor. He studied surveying with George Washington's nephew Lawrence Washington. In 1870, Williams surveyed all of the real property at southern tip of the state between the Everglades and the Atlantic Ocean, the Intracoastal Waterway between Lake Worth to Fort Myers and from Amelia Island to Cedar Key.

■ St. Mark's may be considered the forerunner for Upjohn's Carpenter Gothic style in Florida, where as many as 60 white wooden Gothic churches with red front doors were built in the state following the Civil War. Area examples of his Carpenter Gothic-style can be seen in Federal Point, Welaka, Crescent City, Green Cove Springs, Fleming Island and St. Mark's in Starke.

■ Judge Isaac Bronson and his wife, Sophronia, donated the land upon which the St. Mark's sanctuary was constructed in 1855 under the supervision of church secretary James Burt. Bronson as a U.S. congressman sponsored the bill that included Florida as a state and Palatka as an incorporated city.

■ During the Civil War's Occupation of Palatka from March 10 to April 17, 1864, Union soldiers of Barton's Brigade set up their camp and tents on the grounds and occupied the buildings at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and the Bronson-Mulholland House.

## ANOTHER 169 YEARS?

Marsh isn't sure about the church making it to another 169 years, which would be 338 years of wooden buildings in Florida, he smiled.

"We need to pray the old hymn: 'The Lord will come and not be slow' by the poet John Milton," he said.

Dianne Taylor, St. Mark's Episcopal Church historian, contributed to this article.



Photos by TRISHA MURPHY / Palatka Daily News

St. Marks Episcopal Church will mark its 169th year in the community Monday. Following the morning worship service at 9:30 a.m. Dec. 18, the Carpenter Gothic church will be honored with a birthday party and Father Bob Marsh's ordination anniversary celebration all with a homemade luncheon prepared by the St. Mark's Church Women. The event is open to the public. **TOP OF THE PAGE LEFT:** A historic marker that sits on the grounds of St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

# Snow Day

## 2022

Tuesday, Dec. 27th 3 p.m. - 7 p.m.  
Palatka Riverfront

2 Snow Play Areas ❄️ Dual Snow Slides

Fabulous Faces - Face Painting ❄️ Food (for purchase)

Bring your camera! Winter Scene Selfie Photo Booth

Brought to you by: