

History of St. James Episcopal Church (from Parish Profiles 1998 & 2006)

As early as May 1764, when the first Anglican missionaries were sent out from England to the newly British Florida, occasional services of the Church of England were held in the area of what is now Lake City. Lake City was originally known to the British as Lancaster in the late 18th century, later called Alligator by the newly independent Americans, and renamed Lake City in 1859. Episcopal services were held sporadically in the Lake City area until Bishop Francis Peter Rutledge appointed The Reverend O.P. Thakara of Fernandina Beach as the itinerant missionary to the newly named town.

In 1859, Bishop Francis Peter Rutledge, the first Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Florida (1851-1866), observed in his journal that there was reason to believe that a church would soon be established. During the Civil War, the local congregation expanded as refugees settled in Lake City. Immediately following the hostilities, the Bishop of Florida established a Freedman's Academy in Lake City. Freeman Young, Second Bishop of Florida, referred to "the hostility with which our undertaking was greeted," in his Episcopal Address of 1868. Members of the local congregation sought to organize a parish, as noted by the 25th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Florida (1867-1868), but their attempt failed.

St. James' Parish was formally organized in January 1870 with The Reverend J.H. Quinby of Monticello "giving" two Sundays a month to the new church. His first report listed 18 families with a "total of 80 souls" as comprising the congregation. In December 1870 the vestry called The Reverend William Camp as the first full time rector of St. James' Parish.

The Reverend Charles S. Snowden became rector in December 1871, remaining for fifteen years. Under his leadership, the Little Church was built in 1880 at a cost of \$1,250.00, of which \$500 was a gift from Christ Church, Savannah Georgia in gratitude for the work done by Rev. Snowden nursing yellow fever victims in that city. Much of the construction work was done by The Reverend Snowden and his nephew, Snowden Miller.



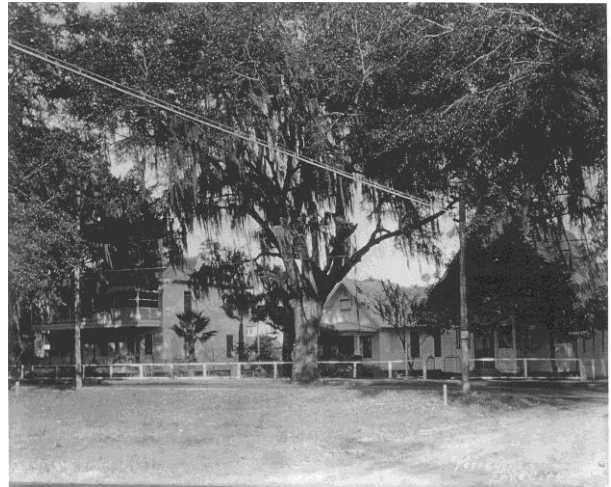
ST. JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Charming View of St. James' Church at Lake City, of Which Rev. Walter T. Cavell is the Rector. 1916

The church was consecrated by Bishop Young on the second Sunday after Christmas in 1884. In 1898, St. James' parish made its first move, departing its site on Alachua Street and moving south to the new site on the northeast corner of the intersection of South Marion and Brown Streets.

The same year the Rectory was built on an adjacent lot. A few years later, around 1900, a parish day school was erected between the two buildings. The present Parish Hall, built in 1926, incorporates some of the day school's structure.



Later most of the Little Church's dark stained wood was painted, including the original pews which were constructed of the wide native pine planks. The Bishop's chair, altar, baptismal font and pulpit, carved by Snowden Miller, were refinished and are now used in the Big Church. St James operated as a mission until 1960 and was recognized as a parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Florida in that year.

In 1966, the Rev. William McLaurine Hall became the twenty-second rector of St. James'. Rev. Hall would hold this post for twenty-eight years, serving longer than any other rector at St. James'.

In 1966, The Reverend William McLaurine Hall became the twenty-second rector, serving for twenty-eight years. In December 1968, Mr. Bill Crawford delivered the report of his committee to the Vestry, recommending a ten acre property at the intersection of McFarlane Avenue and Brown Lane as the best available for the new building. The Vestry purchased that land and an adjacent lot in 1969, \$30,000.00 for a total of eleven acres. The move to this site, the second move, took place in August 1987. The Rectory and Parish Hall were moved at the same time.



During the clearing of debris from the South Marion Street lot, one of the employees of the mover discovered an old apothecary jar hidden in a brick pier. The jar contained the original 1880 cornerstone papers which had been moved in 1898 with the Church, and placed in the unmarked foundation pier. These papers include lists of the 1880 members of St. James' and the contributors to the original buildings fund.

By November of 1987 reconstruction had progressed to a point that services could be held in the Little Church.

On the first Sunday of Lent in 1988, the parishioners waded from their cars and balances on planks laid over the flood to get to services. That morning's First Lesson was Genesis 9:8-17, "I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be but off by the waters of a flood, never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." On Easter Sunday, 1989, final completion of the move was marked with the dedication of a new bell tower dedicated to Lillie Brown, who had done so much to make the move possible.

St. James' longest serving rector, The Reverend Mac Hall, retired on January 16, 1994.

The Reverend Dr. H. Jeff Robinson began his ministry here in August 1999. Father Jeff had majored in music at Stetson and that, combined with the choir leadership of Dr. Alfonso Levy, elevated music to more central feature of our worship.

Father Robinson was joined by St. James' first serving deacon, The Reverend Jimmie Hunsinger in August 2000. She has been most valuable in ministering to our congregation's spiritual needs.

Father Robinson, the vestry and the congregation mobilized to make the creation of a new sanctuary possible. With the motto "God's Call, Our Commitment," the building campaign began on Celebration Sunday, April 22, 2001. Construction followed in July 2002 and the new sanctuary was consecrated on Sunday March 9, 2003. The congregation continued to answer God's Call, retiring the building mortgage on May 1, 2006. The total cost was nearly \$1,000,000.00. St. James, with Bishop Samuel Johnson Howard, burned the mortgage on July 2, 2006.



In March 2007, The Reverend Susan Q. Claytor was called as rector of St. James' Parish.

In August, 2008, Mother Susan and her family left St. James and returned to Jacksonville.

From August to the end of November, 2008, The Rev. Michael N. Armstrong served as supply priest. December 1, 2008, she was called as priest in charge. In June of that year she was called to serve as rector and her Celebration of New Ministry was held on August 12, 2009.