

1800's

New Church



Francis P. Kenrick

Bishop Francis P. Kenrick Feast of St. John the Evangelist. Francis P. Kenrick, Third Bishop of Philadelphia, authorizes Rev. John Hughes to build a new church, which will become the proto-cathedral for Philadelphia.

December 27, 1830

A lot in the "western" part of Philadelphia is chosen as the site. It is on the east side of 13th St. between Market and Chestnut Streets.

1831

Passion Sunday St. John the Evangelist Church is consecrated.

April 8, 1832

First Fresco



Nicholas Monachesi completes what is probably the first true fresco in the United States in the interior of the church. He later becomes a famous Philadelphia portraitist.

1832



St. John the Evangelist Upper Church, pre-1907 renovation.

Fr. Hughes befriends Marc Frenaye, who lived for three years in Mexico. Fr. Hughes develops a great affection for Mexico and establishes a long-term and informal connection between Mexico and St. John the Evangelist Church. Many wealthy Mexican merchants living in Philadelphia help retire the debt from building the initial church.

1832 - 1834

Mozart's Requiem Mass

The American premier of Mozart's Requiem Mass takes place at St. John's.

April 29, 1834

A large fire breaks out on 13th Street above Chestnut. The church catches fire several times but is not destroyed. St. John's School established by Fr. Hughes in the basement of the church. Classes continue in the basement until 1899.

August 1834

St. John's was designated as the Proto-Cathedral for Philadelphia for the next quarter-century. Bishop Kenrick takes up residence.

January, 1838

Anti-Catholic violence erupts in Philadelphia



St. Michael's and St. Augustine's Churches were burnt. Public masses are suspended by the bishop. A detachment of militia (now National Guard) under General John Cadwalder defends St. John's from destruction in a battle at the corner of 13th and Market Streets. Forty people are killed in these riots.

1844

St. Katharine Drexel



St. John's is a flourishing residential parish. Parishioners at that time include Anthony Drexel and his family. One of his daughters, Katharine, is confirmed and receives First Holy Communion at St. John's. She later becomes a nun, founds the Congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and later becomes known as St. Katharine Drexel.

1850's

St. John Neumann



Bishop Neumann is welcomed to Philadelphia at St. John's and becomes the fourth bishop of Philadelphia on April 4th, Palm Sunday. He takes up residence at St. John the Evangelist Church and is later named a saint.

Catholic Philopatrian Literary Institute



Fr. Sourin establishes the Catholic Philopatrian Literary Institute, which is still active today.

[Visit thephilo.org](http://thephilo.org)

1855

St John's joins the Jesuits when the pastor, Fr. Sourin, becomes a Jesuit. The Jesuits assume responsibility for the rest of the debt as well as running the parish.

December 8, 1855

The blessing of the Statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception.

May 16, 1857

Jesuits relinquish administration of the parish.

April 27, 1860

First Empress of Mexico



Madame Anna Maria Huarte de Iturbide, the First Empress of Mexico, dies and is buried in Vault IX of the Churchyard at the age of 79. Her husband, Mexican Emperor Augustin de Iturbide, overthrew the Spanish rule, but General Santa Ana forced his abdication on March 19, 1823. The Iturbide family was initially exiled to Italy. The former Emperor returned to Mexico to rally his forces, was captured instead, and executed on July 19, 1824. His family moved to Philadelphia, where they lived on Spruce St. near 13th, and later at 226 Broad St. A son Augustin J. Iturbide, a daughter, Sabina are also buried here. Two additional (unnamed) children are reburied in the vault in 1849.

March 21, 1861

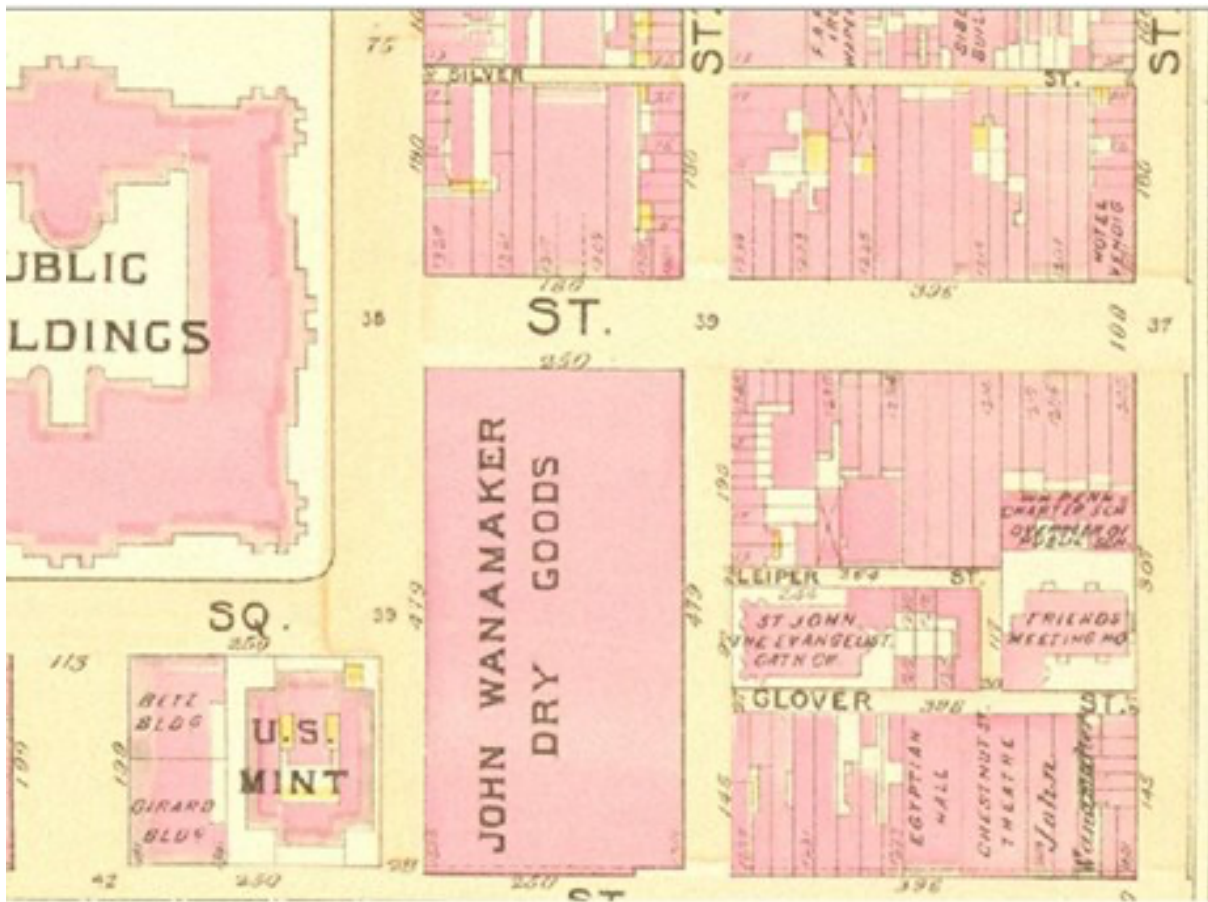


Cathedral Basilica
OF SAINTS PETER & PAUL

Cathedral opens near Logan Circle and St. John's reverts back to a parish. The parish is becoming less residential and more of a business district.

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1864



The original rectory is torn down and the current friary is built on the same site. By this time, John Wanamaker has built a large retail store near the church and City Hall is being built nearby. Much of the neighborhood around St. John's at this time is residences and small businesses.

1895



A great fire burns part of the block around Market Street and 13th Street. The church and part of the rectory are lost in the fire. Three firemen are killed fighting the fire when a building collapses on them. A fourth fireman later dies of pneumonia, contracted while fighting the fire. After the blaze is extinguished, the Blessed Mother statue remains standing amid the rubble.

February 16 - 17, 1899

Mass for the firemen killed in the fire is held at the Academy of Music.

February 26, 1899

The Sisters of St. Joseph assume responsibility for the school. The school is moved out of the basement of the Church and from this time the basement is used as the Lower Church.

September 10, 1899

The First Bulletin

First parish bulletin, The Monitor is issued. The first bulletin notes the issue of paying "pew rent." The school children received instruction for First Holy Communion at 3:30 in the afternoon, while working children received their instruction at 8:00 PM. Fr. Fisher becomes the new pastor. Among his innovations is 2:45 AM Sunday Morning Mass for night workers. Most of these were newspaper workers, so the mass was known as the "Printer's Mass." The history notes that 300 workers were present for mass on November 5th, 1904.

September 1899