

2414 Columbia Avenue - Sacred Heart Catholic Church



Sacred Heart Catholic Church 2009

Heritage Register - Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Sacred Heart Catholic Church
- 2) **Common Name:**
- 3) **Address:** 2414 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1915
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:**

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Description:

Sacred Heart Catholic Church is located on the northwest corner lots of the intersection of Butte Street and Columbia Avenue in upper Rossland, British Columbia. It is a substantial building, (88' X 38') with peaked roof and wood clad walls, easily identifiable as a church with a tall bell tower/steeple and many, very large stained glass windows. The main entrance with double wooden doors is on the east side and the address of this heritage place is 2414 Columbia Avenue.

Heritage Value:

Sacred Heart Catholic Church is valued as a place of spiritual, religious and social significance to many generations of Rosslanders.

The Catholic Church has played a role in Rossland's identity and development since the beginning of the gold mining era with the first Catholic Church built in 1895. Sacred Heart Church is the second Catholic Church to be built and continues to be the anchor and focal point of the Catholic Community since its construction in 1915, providing a place for worship, religious services and celebrations and family events such as christenings, weddings and funerals.

Designed in the style of Spanish Mission churches of California, the integrity of the original building has been kept - the only exception being the location of the main church entrance - moved to create safer and easier access. There are five buttresses visible on the exterior walls, allowing the interior of the Church to be open with no need of pillars or posts. A bell acquired by the Sacred Heart Parish in 1900, resides in the bell tower. Four beautiful and large stained glass windows are located on both the east and west sides of the Church, and one on the south side, facing Columbia Avenue - all in their original positions. Sacred Heart Church is recognized as a visible testament to the efforts and indeed, sacrifices of the many parishioners over the years who have provided the care, time, effort and money needed to create and maintain their spiritual home. Its presence evokes many memories and stories with connections to past events and people.

Alterations to the Interior of the Church in 2013 - 2015, are a visible response of the parishioners to changing times. The social and educational activities previously held in the Parish Hall (built in the 1930s) and the Catechism Center (1960s), both located across Columbia Avenue, are now happening within a portion of the Church space itself in a newly defined "Gathering Place" complete with kitchen facilities.

Character Defining Elements:

- Architectural style

- Stained glass windows
- Bell tower
- Access and use for over 100 years
- Signage on the exterior - name, use and service times
- A plaque on the exterior, and beside the entrance, identifies Sacred Heart Catholic Church as a significant Rossland heritage building



Sacred Heart Catholic Church - c.1915

HISTORY

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN ROSSLAND'S EARLIEST YEARS:

- The Rossland Mining Camp grew with the discovery of gold deposits and subsequent claims in the Rossland Range of mountains in the early 1890s - primarily on Red Mountain. Word of the 1890 first claims spread rapidly and prospectors and miners came to the area to stake and work their claims and provide evidence that the mineral wealth was worthy of commercial development - costly financing for the necessary rail transportation, smelting facilities and power supply needed. In the winter of 1895 there were less than 100 people residing in Rossland - by the end of 1895, there were 3500 - The beginning of the Rossland Boom Years!

- As early as 1892, a traveling priest, Rev. Father Bedard, visited the Rossland Mining Camp and conducted Mass - the camp was part of the district missionary circuit. Father Peytavin became the first resident priest in early 1894 (before the “boom”) and he was followed by Father Lemay in 1895.
- At first services were held wherever possible, e.g., boarding houses, but with the population growth, a church became an obvious goal.
- In October of 1895, construction of the first Catholic Church - on Davis Street, north and above Columbia Avenue began. The structure was 30’ X 50’, with pitched roof and a flat roofed tower on the southeast corner. Apparently, the seating capacity was 230. Cost was estimated to be \$1200. The first Mass was said in this new church on New Year’s Day, 1896.
- A 15’ X 30’ residence was planned for the priest, and to be built on a neighboring lot.
- An extremely successful 3 day fair was held in December of 1895 in the Opera House netting \$1050 - a most profitable “extravaganza”! Completion of construction was guaranteed. (See January 3 edition of the Rossland Miner for details.)
- Because of Father Lemay’s lobbying efforts, in July of 1896, two Sisters of St. Joseph arrived in Rossland to create and manage a temporary hospital on Columbia Avenue with approximately 12 beds for patients. This was replaced, 6 months later, by a 3 storey building on the present site of what used to be Mater Misericordia Hospital which contained facilities for many more patients, as well as a chapel and living quarters for the Sisters. Much of the hospital’s operating expenses were met by the miners themselves who took a one dollar per month payroll deduction towards operating the hospital - all miners - regardless of faith. (Wages averaged \$3.00 a day at this time.)
- Father Lemay died in 1897 due to a failed operation and he is buried in the Sacred Heart Parish Cemetery called Calvary Cemetery where a monument marks his gravesite. He is remembered as being a fine person, always giving to and caring for others and his death at the age of 51 was felt to be a loss by all Rosslanders.
- Arrangements for a church bell were made by Father Welsh who followed Father Lemay. The bell, which came from England, was purchased by the congregation at a cost of \$471.00 and installed in late 1900 in the belfry. It weighs 1029 pounds. It is interesting to note that in the 1908 archival picture of the Church, the belfry is flat-roofed but the 1909 photo shows a pitched roof atop the tower.
- The organ from the first Catholic Church is at the Rossland Museum.

NEW CHURCH UNDERWAY:

- The congregation was growing and a Catholic education valued so plans were made to convert the existing Church into a school and build a larger Church on land purchased in 1902 on the corner of Butte and Columbia - present location.

- Plans were on hold however, until 1915 when construction of the present Church was started under the supervision and leadership of Father McIntyre who became parish priest in 1912
- From the Rossland Miner - Oct. 30, 1915:- “Imposing appearance on the high elevation - seating capacity of 360 - modeled on the old Spanish Mission churches of California - no interior pillars or posts, all the weight rests on the 5 buttresses on the exterior - 88’ X 38’ - handsome tower on the corner includes a double entrance and surmounted by a cross on top which is 85’ from the ground - lighted by electricity - heated by steam”.
- Father McIntyre lived in the Church for 7 years until the parish rectory was purchased in 1922.
- The Parish Hall was built in 1930 - across Columbia Avenue from Sacred Heart Church. (There had been two Knights of Columbus Halls lost to fire before the Parish Hall was built, both located in the Downtown area.)
- In the 1960’s the catechism center was built beside the Parish Hall and named, “The MacIntyre Center” to honor Father Mac, the priest who served the Catholic Community so well. His 60th anniversary as parish priest for Rossland was celebrated in 1972.

MORE RECENT CHANGES IN THE PARISH:

The McIntyre Center was leased to the Golden Bear Daycare Society from 1997 to 2006 to raise additional income for the Church to meet increasing operational expenses.

- In 1997 the full time priest position, since 1895, was changed to half time
- In 2012 the Bishop approved renovations to Sacred Heart Church to provide both Worship and Gathering spaces that would see the Church through the next 40 years.
- Both the Hall and Center were sold in 2013 to pay for these renovations which were primarily completed in 2013.
- The renovation project is a credit to all those involved - the interior integrity and beauty of the Worship space has been kept and the Church space now allows for a place for the social needs of the Parish to be met as well.

RESEARCH SOURCES:

- 1985 “The History of Rossland’s Heritage Commercial Buildings” - Sheila Corrado - project funded by Heritage Trust of BC
- 1995 Sacred Heart Parish - 100th Anniversary publication
- The Rossland Miner, January 1896
- Rossland Miner newspaper edition - Thursday, Sept. 5, 1946
- Parishioners’ contributions

Many stories and more information are available directly from the Sacred Heart Parish about people, service, sacrifice, efforts, accomplishments and events