

# 2396 COLUMBIA AVENUE – SACRED HEART CHURCH



## Heritage Register – Building

- 1) **Historical Name:** Sacred Heart Church
- 2) **Common Name:** Catholic Church
- 3) **Address:** 2396 Columbia Avenue
- 4) **Date of Construction:** 1915
- 5) **Design, Style, Architecture, Architect:**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Description:

The Sacred Heart Church is located on the northwest corner lot at the intersection of Butte Street and Columbia Avenue in upper Rossland. It is a substantial building, (88 feet by 38 feet) 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.

## **Heritage Value:**

The Sacred Heart 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. The first Catholic Church was built in 1895 on Davis Street and called The Church of the Sacred Heart. Sacred Heart Church is the second Catholic Church and continues to be the anchor and focal point of the Catholic Community. Since its construction in 1915 it has provided 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 is the location of the main church entrance which was 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.

Sacred Heart Church is recognized as a visible testament to the efforts and sacrifices of the many parishioners who have provided the ongoing 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 to changing times. The parish hall, built in the 1930s, and the catechism centre, built in the 1960s, were located across the street on Columbia Avenue. The social and educational activities previously held in those centers 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 Church as a significant Rossland heritage building.

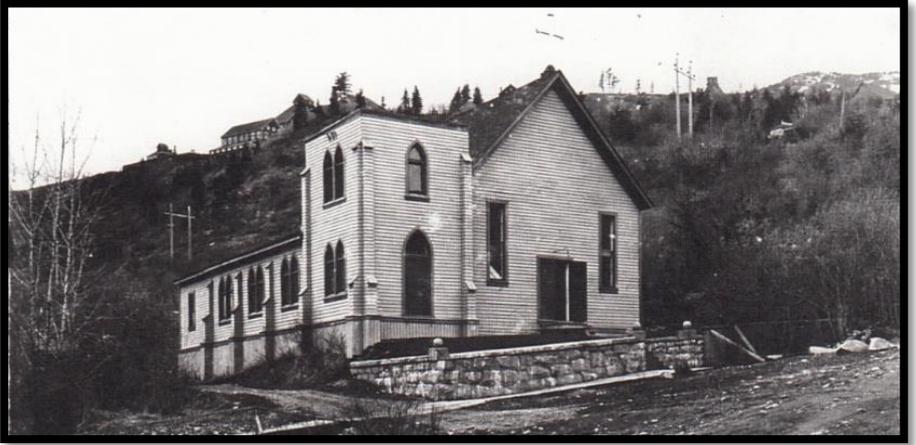
## **HISTORY**

### **1892 - 1911**

The history of the Catholic Church in Rossland began years before there was a town. 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. Services were held wherever possible, such as in boarding houses and even in the Red Mountain mines. As the population grew, a church became an obvious goal. Father Peytavin became the first resident priest in early 1894 and was followed by Father Lemay in 1895.

In August 1895, services were conducted in a building next to the War Eagle Hotel, a few lots east of the Miners' Union Hall. In October of that year, construction of the first Catholic Church on Davis Street, on the north side of Columbia Avenue, began. Contractor McCarthy erected a 30 foot by 50 foot structure with a pitched roof plus, a flat roofed tower on the southeast corner. The seating capacity was 230. A 15 foot by 30 foot residence for the priest was also built on a neighbouring lot.

A three day fair was held in December 1895 in the Opera House to raise the \$1,200 needed to pay for the construction of the church. The women of the parish organized "fancy tables and fruit and candy tables." The fair was a roaring success, netting \$1,050 above expenses and was considered the most profitable extravaganza put on by any church in the district. The funds enabled Father Lemay to complete his residence.



The Church of the Sacred Heart on Davis Street c. 1897

The first mass was said in this new church, The Church of the Sacred Heart, on New Year's Day 1896. Father Lemay's simple and unselfish way of life earned him much admiration. He befriended miners, merchants and many in need and, in return, was respected and loved.

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 in rented quarters on Columbia Avenue. It had approximately 12 beds for patients. Funds for a three-storey building were raised and on July 4, 1897, the new Mater Misericordia Hospital opened on the corner of Columbia Avenue and Georgia Street. It contained facilities for many more patients, as well as a chapel and living quarters for the sisters. Much of the hospital's expenses were augmented by the miners who took a generous, one dollar per month, payroll deduction towards its operations. All miners, regardless of faith, agreed to this deduction. The significance of this is understood when you consider that wages averaged \$3.00 a day at this time.

Father Lemay died shortly after he made "an errand of mercy." On a stormy evening in 1897, he was asked to journey to a cabin of an old prospector who was on his deathbed and administer the last sacrament. Shortly after blessing the dying man, already physically exhausted from his ride, he left for home. The following morning, he was too sick to say mass. The doctor diagnosed his illness as "inflammation of the windpipe" and ordered an operation.

Unfortunately, the operation was not successful and he passed away. His body rests in the Calvary Cemetery; a monument marks his gravesite. His death at the age of 52 was a loss felt by all Rosslanders.

Father N. A. Rivers replaced Father Lemay until July 1899 when Father J. Welsh took over. In 1900, Father Welsh travelled to England to purchase a bell for the Church. The bell weighed 1029 pounds and cost \$471. The bell bears the following inscription:

*AD 1900*  
*Memorial in honour of Jesus Christ*  
*Church of the Sacred Heart*  
*Leo XIII, Pope*  
*A. Dontenwill, Bishop*  
*J. Welsh, Parish Priest*

The original belfry had a flat roof but with the acquisition of the bell a pitched roof was added to the tower.

## **1912 - 1996**

In 1915, with a growing congregation, plans were made to convert the existing Church of the Sacred Heart into a school and build a larger church on land, purchased in 1902, at the corner of Butte Street and Columbia Avenue. Construction was started under the supervision of the newly ordained priest, Rev. A.K. MacIntyre, known as "Father Mac," who had arrived in 1912. The *Rossland Miner* described the new Church in an editorial on Oct. 30, 1915:

*"Imposing appearance on the high elevation – seating capacity of 360 – modelled 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, by the indirect system. This was accomplished by means of gold crosses hanging from the beams with inverted shades throwing the lights to the roof. The sanctuary arch has a row of hidden*

*lights behind it, which throw the light on the altar – heated by steam”.*

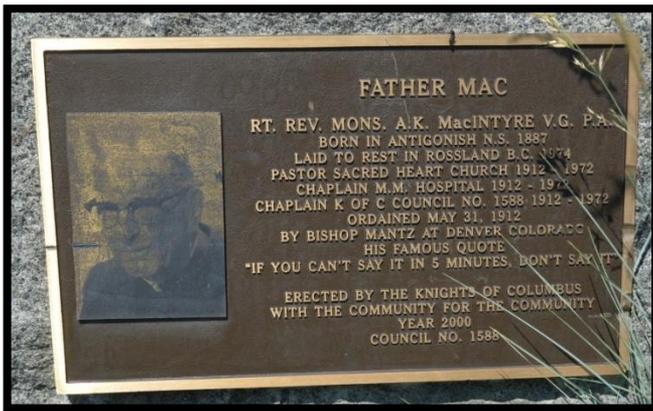


Sacred Heart Church - c.1915

The bell from the Church of the Sacred Heart was moved to the second Catholic Church. For seven years, Father McIntyre's quarters were in the church, upstairs above the office, until the parish rectory was purchased in 1922. The Catholic Church service club, Knights of Columbus, lost two halls to fires in the downtown core, in 1927 and 1929. In 1930, they began using the newly constructed parish hall erected across the street.

In the 1960s the catechism center was built beside the parish hall and named "The MacIntyre Center" to honor Father Mac, who had served the catholic community with such dedication. In May 1972, Father MacIntyre celebrated his diamond jubilee, his 60th year in the priesthood. Since he had served his entire time as parish priest in Rossland, he also celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> year as Rossland's parish priest. His length of service to this single parish was, at that time, the longest in the history of the church in Canada. Father Mac passed away on November 4, 1974.

In 2000, the Knights of Columbus erected a dedication to Father Mac in Esling Park on Spokane Street.



### **1997 - PRESENT:**

A declining catholic congregation put financial strain on the church coffers. Therefore, the MacIntyre Center was leased to the Golden Bear Daycare Society from 1997 to 2006 to raise additional income to meet increasing expenses. The financial restraints in 1997 also lead to the reduction of the priest position from a full-time to a half-time position.

In 2012, with the congregation continuing to decline, the bishop approved renovations to provide both worship and gathering spaces within the Church. Both the aging hall and the rarely used MacIntyre Center required extensive, costly upgrades, so they were sold in 2013 to pay for restructuring the church. The renovation retained the interior integrity and beauty of the worship space but also provided a gathering space to meet the social needs of the parish. The former large church space was divided into two sections; the original church space and a new open "Gathering

Space.” The original choir loft and confessionals remained the same within the Gathering Space. A carefully designed, open wall was installed to separate the church and Gathering Space. The mostly open aspect enabled the Gathering Space to be utilized as overflow for regular church services or when the church was full for weddings and funerals.

During 2014, changes were made to the open-topped, bell tower which had leaked despite efforts to seal it. The solution was to install gable vents on the eight large arched openings around the bell. Additionally electrical upgrades were carried out and an education space for catechism classes created upstairs.

In 2015, it was decided that the open wall between the church and the Gathering Space should have the flexibility of being closed. After careful deliberation, high quality bi-fold doors, which could tuck into the ends of the pews, were selected and bolstered with robust hardware. A great deal of attention went into the patterns and dimension of the timber frames and the blinds in the glass windows.