

# CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL HISTORY

By the Rev. Sel Caradus

The first Anglican church in Victoria was built in 1856. At that time the Diocese of British Columbia covered the entire geographic area that now makes up the Province of British Columbia and Yukon Territory. Over time, the Province was divided up into several dioceses, and the present day Diocese of British Columbia covers Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. The parish of Christ Church is somewhat unique among church history in that the parish can be said to have existed before any church buildings. The roots of the Anglican community in Victoria go back to the outpost of the Hudson Bay Company in what is now Vancouver Washington. The fort was established in 1825, and in 1836 the first Anglican chaplain, the Rev. Herbert Beaver, was sent out from England.

In 1843 construction began on what would become Fort Victoria. The communion set, as well as the register books from Fort Vancouver were transferred to Fort Victoria. The first chaplain at Fort Victoria was the Rev. Robert John Staines. The Rev. Staines and his family arrived in Victoria in 1849, to an isolated fort that was a far cry from what they left behind in England. When Mr. Staines arrived in Fort Victoria, there was no church building, and services were often held in the fort mess hall, or on board ships. By 1853 Mr. Staines was in a state of constant feud with the governor of the colony, James Douglas. This resulted in the termination of Mr. Staines' contract as teacher and chaplain at Fort Victoria.

Staines' replacement, Edward Cridge arrived in 1855, preaching his first sermon in the fort on April 8<sup>th</sup>. The church building that has been started under Staines was finished in 1856, consecrated on August 31<sup>st</sup>. This first church was called the Colonial Church, or the Victoria District Church, but gradually the name "Christ Church" came into common use. On June 28, 1857, the first confirmations took place in the new church, with Bishop Scott traveling up from Oregon for the occasion. At this time Victoria was a tiny community of only 200 people, and a handful of buildings, concentrated around what is now the downtown area (Government, Johnson, Yates and Fort streets).

In 1858 Victoria was transformed with an enormous influx of people on their way to search for gold in the newly discovered gold fields of the Fraser River. The first ship to arrive, the "Commodore", alone had more than twice the population of the town on board. Over the next few years the town and the Anglican church along with it grew exponentially. Cridge became very active in the growing community, serving on the Legislative Council, as well as a volunteer Inspector of Schools.

Christ Church continued to grow, with additions being made to the church in 1862 (the apse and south aisle were added) and 1865 (the north aisle added). Another result of the growing town and church was the urgent need for more clergy. In 1858 The Rev. James Gamage and the Rev. Burton Crickner arrived from England.

In 1859 Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts offered to endow a diocese for British Columbia. At this time the whole area was still under the Episcopal oversight of the Bishop of London. On January 12, 1859, Letters Patents were issued to create the Diocese of British Columbia, with the Rev. George Hills as the first Bishop. Bishop Hills was consecrated as Bishop in Westminster Abbey on February 24 1859, and arrived in Victoria on January 6, 1860 to take up his Episcopal duties.

As a new Bishop of a geographically enormous diocese, Bishop Hills had many things on his mind. One of his first decisions, however, was which church in Victoria would be named as the Cathedral. There were two candidates- Christ Church, and the Church of St. John the Divine. St. John the Divine was housed in a prefabricated iron building (known as "the Iron Church") that Baroness Burdett-Coutts had arranged to be sent from England. This church was larger than Christ Church, and had the advantage of being donated by the patroness of the Diocese, to whom the Bishop and people felt much indebted. Christ Church, however, had a much superior position in town, at the crest of the hill overlooking the harbour. There were many other considerations; the colonies of Vancouver Island and the mainland were at the time separate colonies. Bishop Hills initially had Episcopal responsibility for both colonies, however, he knew that at some point they would likely divide into more than one Diocese- there were no indications, however, when that would be, or where they would be divided.

In the end, Bishop Hills decided on Christ Church, Victoria as the seat of the Diocese. On December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1865, Christ Church Cathedral came into being, and Edward Cridge was named as the first Dean.

The diocese continued to grow in population, and more clergy were often needed, and more churches built. The diocese eventually grew to the size where two archdeacons would be necessary to assist the Bishop in the administration. One would have responsibility for Vancouver Island, and the other for the rest of the diocese. Bishop Hills wished to make Dean Cridge an archdeacon, but the Dean refused, preferring to remain at the Cathedral.

This was to be the first of several clashes between the Dean and the Bishop. The issue that they clashed over was a sermon by Archdeacon Reece that defended Ritualism in the Church of England. Dean Cridge strongly disagreed with the use of Ritualism, but this issue was only the flashpoint for a disagreement that went much deeper. The true issue between the Dean and the Bishop was the understanding of the authority of the Bishop. The Dean felt that the Bishop did not have as much authority as he asserted. The Dean and Bishop argued back and forth for some time, before Bishop Hills brought Dean Cridge up before an Ecclesiastical court. The court's verdict was to strip the Dean of his license to practice in the Church of England.

Cridge had by this time heard of a breakaway denomination of Anglicans based in the United States, called the Reformed Episcopal Church. Cridge and 168 parishioners of Christ Church Cathedral left the Church of England and joined the Reformed Episcopal Church, establishing the Church of our Lord, which still exists today.

During the night of September 1, 1869 Christ Church Cathedral burned to the ground. Although the destruction of the church was complete, there was time to rescue the communion vessels, as well as the organ. The congregation of Christ Church Cathedral met in a vacant Presbyterian building on the corner of Blanshard and Pandora streets while the Cathedral was being rebuilt.

The second Cathedral was bigger than the original church, but still made of wood. It was finished in December 1872. A new Baptismal font and pulpit were installed in the church, both of which are still in use today. The organ that was donated to the new Cathedral was in regular use until 2002. There is still some of the stained glass from this second Cathedral in the present structure. The windows in the Lady Chapel and St. Christopher's Chapel are from this church.

After the departure of Cridge, Bishop Hills was reluctant to appoint another priest as Dean at the Cathedral. Bishop Hills made the decision to retain the position of Dean to himself. In the Anglican Church, the role of Dean is a Diocesan role, that of second to the Bishop. A Dean has a number of Diocesan responsibilities, not least of which is being in charge of the Diocese if the Bishop is absent or unable to perform his tasks. Aside from temporarily appointing George Mason as Dean in 1878-79, there was no Dean at the Cathedral until 1910. During this time the priests at the Cathedral were named Rector of the parish of Christ Church, but not Dean of the Cathedral.

Alexander John Doull was named as Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in 1910. A native of Nova Scotia, he was only the second Dean of the Cathedral. Although the Cathedral had been without a Dean for some thirty years, it had continued to grow and prosper.

In 1911, Bishop Perrin, who had succeeded George Hills resigned, and after much debate, Bishop Roeper was elected as his successor. The next few years were to be among the most transitory in the history of the Cathedral, but the Cathedral and Diocese eventually ended up in a long period of remarkable stability. In 1914 Dean Doull was elected as Bishop of Kootenay, and on the very day that he was consecrated, the news broke that Bishop Roeper would be becoming Bishop of Ottawa. In one of his last official acts as Bishop of British Columbia, Roeper appointed Charles de Veber Schofield as Dean of Christ Church Cathedral. In 1915, Archdeacon Scriven was elected Bishop.

On June 17, 1916, less than a year after his election, Bishop Scriven died in his sleep. According to the laws of the Diocese, Dean Schofield took over as administrator of the Diocese for the four months before the Episcopal election. When the Synod met, they elected Schofield as the fifth Bishop of British Columbia. Schofield's election meant that the Cathedral would have to find another Dean. In 1917, Bishop Schofield appointed Cecil Quinton, who was the incumbent at St. Matthew's in Brandon, as the Dean.

There had always been a dream among some parishioners of Christ Church Cathedral to have a stone cathedral, and a competition to design a new Cathedral was held in 1892. The winning design was by a local architect, John Keith. The original design was in the Gothic style of the thirteenth century.

In 1913, there was renewed discussion of a new Cathedral building. The old building was quickly becoming too small for the size of the congregation, and there was no room to hold diocese wide events. The advent of the First World War quickly put an end to any plans for construction.

In 1921 the Synod (the governing body of the Diocese) created the entity Christ Church Cathedral Buildings Ltd. which had responsibility for raising funds and organizing the construction of a new Cathedral, Hall and Deanery. After some discussion, it was decided that a new Hall should be built first. The entire building would be a memorial to those fallen in the First World War, and within the Hall would be a memorial to Bishop Hills. The Memorial Hall was begun in 1923, and some Sunday School classes were able to be held there by 1924.

Fundraising for the Cathedral and Hall continued. The project was more than a parish effort- it involved the whole diocese. At the time there were 44 parishes on the island, and they all took part in raising money.

The old Cathedral was located just to the West of the present building, on the ground where the law courts now stand. There was much discussion about where to place the new building, and eventually the present site was decided upon. Groundbreaking began on May 25, 1926, and on September 28<sup>th</sup>, the cornerstone was laid. The cornerstone was laid by The Right Reverend and Right Honourable A. F. Winnginton-Ingram, Lord Bishop of London. The cornerstone can still be seen, in the southeast corner of the Lady Chapel. It rests on twelve ancient stones from Canterbury Cathedral that may date back to the ninth century.

The original design from 1892 was modified by the architect, and a gothic design with two large square topped towers on the west end, and a larger tower over the crossing was accepted.

The next three years were busy ones for Bishop Schofield and Dean Quainton. They were filled with construction, fund raising, and the ordinary life of a very busy diocese and parish! By September 1929 the Nave, Narthex and Baptistry were ready for use, and were consecrated on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that month. At this point the bell towers had not been completed, nor had the east end. A temporary wall was put in place at the east end, and construction was halted.

It would be many years before construction would begin again on the Cathedral. The depression of the 1930's, followed closely by the Second World War meant that resources were scarce, and energies were focused in different directions.

In 1932 Bishop Schofield suffered a heart attack, and a co-adjudicator Bishop, Harold Sexton, was elected.