



Wood and Stone

The wood carvings in Stone Church represent some of the most unique and beautiful nineteenth and early-twentieth century woodwork in Canada. The font cover, the pew-ends and the wall carvings are all examples of this creative Canadian tradition. Of the many different carvings in the church, the Holy Communion Table and the Rector's Stall are the best known. The Holy Communion Table is decorated with detailed carvings of grapevines, complete with clusters of grapes. The canopy of the Rector's Stall is considered one of the finest

examples of ecclesiastical craftsmanship in the province. Both were made by Canadian craftsmen.

Some of the carvings in the church were made by local craftsmen. One example is the rosettes above the large central door at the front of the church, which were made by John Rogerson. He was known for carving the President's Chair of the St. Andrew's Society, the front doors of 1 and 5 Chipman Hill as well as the ship figureheads in the NB Museum. He started attending Stone Church in his declining years, and carved the rosettes during the last months of his life.

National Historic Stone

There are more than 800 national historic sites in Canada. 58 are in New Brunswick, and 13 of those 58 can be found in Saint John. The majority of these historic sites date from the nineteenth century and show the origins of the culture that makes Saint John unique. Part of this culture is loyalty to a British heritage and evidence of this loyalty can be found in Stone Church. It was named a Garrison Church in 1824, when the Lieutenant-Governor donated £600 to help defray the cost of building. The church is still used by the military to this day for special church services. Since then, the church has maintained its connections to England and the Church of England. The Linking Stone, set in the Chancel arch, is a piece

of Caen stone which once formed part of the chancel of St. Andrew's Church, Steyning, Sussex, England. The stone thus forms a link between St. John's Church and the Church of our forefathers in ancient Britain. There is still a pew in the church that is reserved as the Garrison Officers' Pew, and the royal coat of arms still hangs from the balcony.

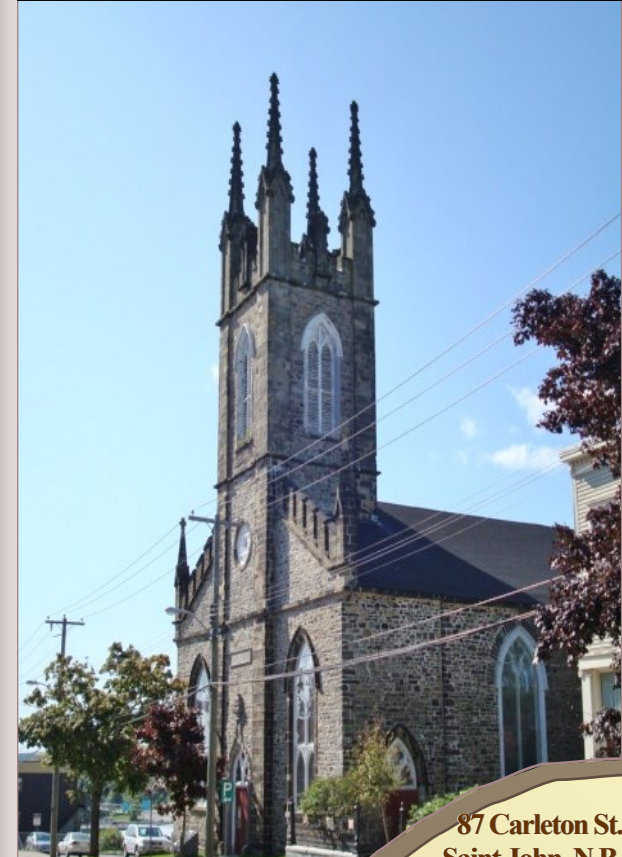


In order for a location to become a national historic site of Canada it has to meet certain criteria. Two of these are creative achievement in design and the display of 'a cultural tradition, a way of life or ideas important to the development of Canada'. Stone Church fulfils these criteria admirably through its stone, wood and glass, the people who have been part of its cultural tradition and the people who are still active members of the Saint John community. The story of Stone Church is not over. It is one of those national historic sites which are described in the quotation above as 'an integral part of what we are, not simply what we were'. Stone is still an active church in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city and is also known for the social outreach to many of Saint John's disadvantaged. Stone Church is not only considered the finest example of a Gothic Revival Church east of Montreal, it also has a place in the future of this city, province and country.



Each of us is carving a stone, erecting a column, or cutting a piece of stained glass in the construction of something much bigger than ourselves.
- Adrienne Clarkson

St. John's Stone Church - a national historic site



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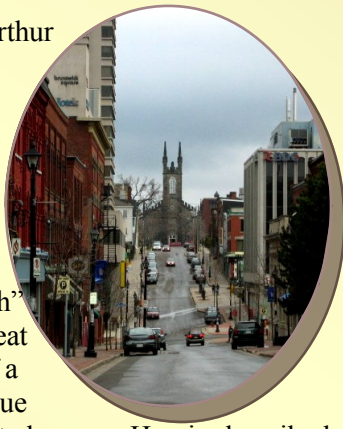
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'There is no one "model" or "typical" National Historic Site of Canada. They may be sacred places, battlefields, archaeological sites, structures or districts. Many are still used for work and worship, commerce and industry, education, habitation and leisure. These sites are an integral part of what we are, not simply what we were.'

— National Historic Sites System Plan, Parks Canada website.

As Canadian architect Arthur Erickson once said, 'great buildings that move the spirit have always been rare. In every case they are unique, poetic, products of the heart'. For over 180 years, "Stone Church" has been one of those great buildings, the product of a hundred hearts, and unique in very odd and unexpected ways. Herein described are some of the quirky and interesting aspects of Stone Church that have developed during its long tenure as a landmark of the Saint John city skyline.



Fire and Stone

First of all, it must be mentioned that there is no such thing as Stone Church. In 1823, when the land was granted by the Honourable Ward Chipman, Chief Justice of New Brunswick, to build a church on the site where the current building stands, the church that was planned was named St John's Church. It was meant to be a chapel-of-ease, to take the overflow of Anglicans from Trinity Church. Only after it was built did it become known as Stone Church. It took very little time for the nickname to become ... set in stone, so to speak, for the church was visible to most of the city centre. It sat alone on the top of the hill, at the edge of the city until the city grew around it. Other churches at the time were made of wood. Stone Church, one of the first stone buildings in Saint John, was built using a type of stone that was different from that found all over the city. The stone had been imported from England as ballast and left on the docks once the departing ships had enough cargo to fill their holds.

The builders decided that the church should be made of stone in order to protect it from fire. Their concern turned out to be prophetic. Since then, Stone Church has escaped destruction by fire four times. The first time was during the 1877 Great Fire of Saint John, when the majority of the buildings

below Union Street were destroyed. The second time was in 1914, when the building next door burned to the ground, and the fire came within eight feet of the church.

The last two fires are of more mysterious origins. Once, a Bible Study group arrived to find that someone had kindled a fire under the gallery stairs. More recently, church leaders who were locking up the building after an evening meeting found a lit candle tucked away in the vestibule, next to a vase of dried flowers. The people responsible for these near-disasters have never been identified.

Stone and Glass

The majority of the stained glass windows were installed between 1906 and 1925. Each of them depict a particular Bible story and are dedicated to members of the church. Two of the windows were made by Hayes and Company, which was located in Munich, Germany. These two windows are known to be fine specimens of German stained glass window craft and legend has it that their distinctive earthy colouring is due to a particular binding agent used to moisten the paint powder: urine. This is a traditional method of making stained glass artists used various sources to gain their supply of urine. One authority on stained glass, the monk



Theophilus, insisted that the best urine to use was that from a three-year-old goat fed on ferns or that of a small red-headed boy.

Clayton and Bell, a famous stained-glass company based in London, England, built two of the other windows in the church. Their stained glass can be found around the world and two of their most famous projects are some of the windows of King's College in the University of Cambridge, and the Albert Memorial in London that was commissioned by Queen Victoria. Both were

tricky commissions; the first because of its complexity and the second because of its intricacy. Clayton and Bell managed to handle these without any difficulties but when they installed the great East window of Stone Church they soon found themselves in trouble. The main panels of the window depict the four gospel writers - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - which were each identified by the symbols they held in their hands. Once the window was complete it was immediately evident that the bodies of Mark and Luke had been attached to the wrong heads. This

may have been caused by mixing up the pieces of glass as they were unpacked. Some say that the pieces of glass were protected from breakage during the ocean crossing by placing them in barrels of molasses

which made it necessary to clean them before they could be assembled. If this story is true, it isn't surprising that the builders of the East Window found themselves in a sticky situation.

The remaining church windows were made by the Canadian company Robert McCausland Ltd., which was founded in 1865 and now has the distinction of being the oldest continuously owned family company in Canada. These windows are beautifully designed, showing great artistry and the intense colouring for which McCausland is famous. However, one has an extra feature; an angel with three feet! Two of the panels at the base of one of the upper windows were reversed during the installation process so that one angel appears to have three feet and another only one.

