

# HISTORY OF THE SITE

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## ***The Establishment of New Westminster***

- In 1859, New Westminster was chosen as the new capital of the Mainland Colony of British Columbia. It was incorporated as Western Canada's first city the following year.
- In the spring of 1859, the Royal Engineers began clearing the land for the establishment of New Westminster.
- In February 1859, the British War Office decided to provide spiritual care for the troops under the command of Colonel Moody, and in September, sanctioned 100 pounds sterling for the purpose. John Sheepshanks was nominated.
- Reverend Sheepshanks conducted the first Anglican service in New Westminster on Sunday September 2nd, 1859 in the Customs House.
- Holy Trinity Church was the second Anglican Church built on the mainland; the first had been built near Fort Langley.
- The first Holy Trinity Anglican Church, built in 1860, was designed by Captain Arthur Reid Lemprière, who arrived with the third group of Royal Engineers in April, 1859.

## ***Construction of the Second Holy Trinity Anglican Church 1867***

- The first Holy Trinity was destroyed by fire in 1865.
- The second building was built of sandstone imported from Salt Spring Island, and was consecrated on December 18th, 1867.
- The architect was Hermann Otto Tiedemann, a successful architect, noted as the designer of the Colonial Administration Buildings in Victoria (the "Birdcages").
- The first Bishop of the new diocese, The Right Reverend Acton Wyndeyer Sillitoe, was consecrated Lord Bishop of New Westminster on All Saints' Day 1879.
- Holy Trinity Church became the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of New Westminster in 1892.

## ***Great Fire and Rebuilding 1898-99***

- Holy Trinity was burned during the great New Westminster fire of September 10, 1898.

- The wooden elements of the building were destroyed, but some of the walls, although damaged, remained standing.
- The current Cathedral is a reconstruction of the previous church, the walls and foundations of which were found to be sufficiently strong to be reused.
- The reconstruction was undertaken by local architect George W. Grant, who was extremely busy following the Great Fire, designing many of the structures in Downtown New Westminster that still stand.
- Of the peal, seven of the eight bells were cracked beyond repair, and were sent to San Francisco to be melted down to provide funds for rebuilding. The one original bell that remained, named "Wisdom", still hangs in the tower.
- Work was completed on the rebuilding of the Cathedral in 1899 in time for services on All Saints Day. The Cathedral was consecrated on April 3rd, 1902, following the settlement of the debt incurred by the restoration work.

## ***Twentieth Century to Present***

- This remained as the Cathedral Church of the Diocese until 1929 when Archbishop de Pencier designated Christ Church in Vancouver as his Cathedral.
- The Parish of Holy Trinity was bitterly disappointed, and following a fight which lasted over a year and which threatened to be dragged before the Supreme Court, a settlement was reached which included the right of Holy Trinity to retain the title of Cathedral in perpetuity.
- Notable surviving features of Holy Trinity Cathedral include the three stained glass windows in the apse, the work of local craftsmen, Henry Bloomfield and Sons.
- A number of historically significant artifacts grace the Cathedral. Ties to Westminster Abbey are represented by the pillared Credence Table in the sanctuary and the altar cross as well as the banner on the front of the pulpit. The brass lectern was a gift of the first Governor of the Colony, Sir James Douglas in 1875. This and other items were saved from the burning former building by the Rector of the day, the Reverend Shildrick.