

St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church
700 McIntosh Street



Year Built: 1908-1911,
Architect: H. R. Halton
Added to Heritage Register: January 25, 2010

Description:

The first wave of Slovak immigrants to Canada started to arrive in the 1880s from the Orava region of northern Hungary. Families that had settled in Fort William organized a congregation in 1902. They attended St Patrick's Roman Catholic (Mission Island) Church, served by Jesuit priests. Father Arpin was an ally to their desire to build their own church and helped purchase the original four lots. The congregation was established on March 5, 1906, in a meeting at Jan Matulak's home; and, on July 28, 1907 the cornerstone for St. Peter's Church was laid by Bishop Schollard, who appointed Father Maynard as the first pastor.

Near completion, tragedy struck, when on midnight, November 1, 1907 a fire destroyed the entire structure. Renewed fundraising and construction culminated in the completion of both St. Peter's Catholic School in September of 1911, and completion of the adjacent St. Peter's Church on Oct. 8, 1911.

The church was designed by local architect H.R. Halton and constructed by LeBrun Contracting. The structure, built in the Romanesque style, is a handsome brick building with stone fitting, a tall white belfry and stained glass windows. The interior contains a choir loft for 100 singers, carved wooden pews, an ornate set of Stations of the Cross in Slovak and a magnificent main altar that was originally intended for a North Bay cathedral, and installed here in 1936. The ceiling murals were painted by artist L. Scott Young, and restored by his daughter Joyce prior to being re-hung in 1993. They represent the only complete extant work of this artist left in North America. A side-altar, by parishioner Joseph Levciik was completed in 1991.

Recent renovations included the installation of a new pipe organ in 1996, lexan protection for stained glass windows, an elevator and extensive refurbishing of the church hall.

St. Peter's Church and the adjacent Manse occupy a prominent well-landscaped site in the east-end area. The church is more visible since the demolition of St. Peter's School a number of years ago and the Church is also now more accessible thanks to the ample parking.