

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Endangered Churches Shortlist**

**April 18, 2008**

#### **Church of the Holy Cross** **Lillooet Lake Road, Skatin (formerly Skookumchuk) B.C.**

Located in the isolated Village of Skatin on the Skatin Nation (75 km southeast of Whistler), the Church of the Holy Cross is one of Canada's least known National Historic Sites and perhaps one of its most endangered. Since 2003, the community group Ama Liisaos (Good Angels) Heritage Trust Society has been struggling to raise funds to repair the damaged church after a century of exposure to wind, weather and the flooding Lillooet River undermined its foundation and destabilized its steeples.

In recent months a new foundation has been put in place and the steeples temporarily braced, completing the emergency stabilization phase of the restoration. Almost half of the \$200,000 for this emergency work came from small donations from across Canada. The final three phases of work will address the wooden exterior of the building, safety and sprinkler systems, and roofing, but fundraising for the approximately \$450,000 required is going slowly—the remote location of the church has limited its public profile.



Meanwhile, with every wind or ice storm, pieces of siding and decorative woodwork are torn off the church; in April an entire stained glass window and frame fell out of the church tower, but, miraculously, sustained no damage.

Between the mid-1890s and 1905, the people of the Stl'al'imx Nation built this Gothic Revival "cathedral in the wilderness" out of local cedar. None of them had formal carpentry training. Instead, they relied on photographs of the French Gothic cathedrals of Chartres and St. Denis for inspiration. They crafted three delicate steeples, hand-carved the altar, pews and interior detailing, and imported stained glass windows from Europe. The church was declared a National Historic Site in 1981.

**All Saints' Church Community Centre  
223 Sherbourne Street, Toronto, Ont.**

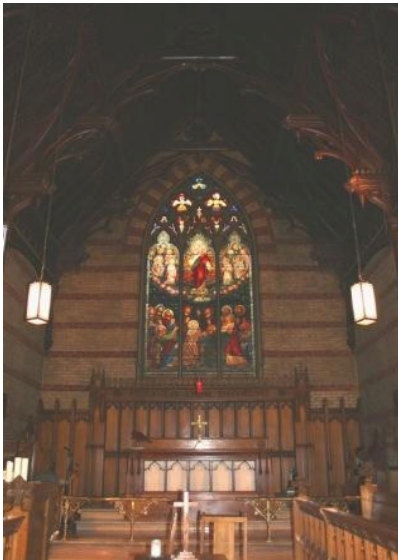
Designed in 1874 by Toronto architects Richard C. Windeyer and John Falloon, the former Anglican Church is identified as Canada's perfect Gothic Revival fusion of architecture and applied arts advocated by William Morris and Augustus Pugin.



Originally part of Toronto's most fashionable district, the downtown congregation declined in numbers after World War II. Near empty by the 1970s, the Church was decommissioned as a parish and reconstituted as a community centre.

Still owned and operated by the Anglican Diocese, the community centre offers daily services in keeping with the Church's "free and open" spirit. They include a drop-in, food bank, seniors' program, harm reduction addiction education, community choir, arts program, and much more.

Although designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* in 1983 the building is suffering from serious deterioration leaving floor joists rotting, support columns weakened, foundation walls cracking and roofing systems worn out. Even basic repairs have been neglected as the Diocese faces funding challenges.



Interior elements on the other hand have been well preserved but are beginning to show the wear and tear associated with the building's community service related use. Included are a hand crafted wood ceiling of hammer beams, rafters, purlins and bead board; Toronto's best repository of an unbroken sequence of stained and stencil glass windows; an inlaid Minton encaustic tile floor from Stoke-On-Trent; carved oak chancel furnishings, pulpit, pews, lecturn, and a 1918 Casavant organ.

A recently enacted bylaw requiring minimum maintenance standards for designated heritage buildings would allow the City to impose specific repairs that if not made could result in fines or with repair costs being added to the municipal tax bill.

Although engineering reports were commissioned over five years ago, no rehabilitation plan for the site has been developed. With downtown land values skyrocketing, the

revenue potential of selling the site could be very attractive to the Diocese, leaving the future of this landmark in Toronto's historic Cabbagetown neighbourhood in jeopardy.

**St. Patrick's Church  
2267 Brunswick Street, Halifax, N.S.**

Located in downtown Halifax, St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church will be closed this June and the parish merged with a neighbouring one, leaving the building's future at risk.

In response, parishioners have formed the "Saint Patrick's Church Restoration Society" with the goal of raising funds to protect the church and possibly retain its function as a place of worship. A recent professional assessment concluded that the overall condition of the building is good, but the front and the rear elevations are in need of restoration work very soon.

In 2007, the Archdiocese gave the group until June 30 of this year to raise \$300,000 in cash and \$300,000 in pledges—one fifth of the \$3 million it has determined will be required for the repair, future maintenance, and operation of the building. If this fundraising goal is met, negotiations will take place to have the church placed in trust to the Society.



Despite a variety of resourceful fundraising activities, the Society is still only half-way to its goal. If unsuccessful, the Archdiocese is free to sell the St. Patrick's property to developers who, it is feared, will apply to have the church's provincial and municipal heritage designations removed to enable the demolition of the building for new development.

St. Patrick's remains a vibrant place of worship with the congregation performing social justice and charity work in the community, renting its basement as a homeless shelter in the winter months and utilizing its sanctuary as a performance space.

Built between 1883 and 1885 with the volunteer labour of Irish immigrants, this richly decorated Victorian Gothic church was designed by architects Henry Peters and George Henry Jost. It houses an 1898 Casavant organ (one

of only two remaining from the firm's first 100 instruments) stained glass (four panels of which withstood the Halifax explosion of 1917) and other important art works.

The church's predicament underscores the pressures exerted on places of worship by declining numbers of congregants and rising land values in urban areas.

**Heyfield Memorial United Church  
Main Road, Route 80, Heart's Content, Nfld.**

Built in 1877 as a Methodist church, Heyfield Memorial United Church officially closed its doors in November 2007 due to declining attendance. The United Church administration recently decided to demolish the building, but the local heritage society is asking the municipal council to decline a demolition order on the basis that the church is a designated Municipal Heritage Building, allowing other options to be more fully explored.

The church is surrounded by a consecrated churchyard cemetery making the reuse of the church for non-religious purposes a concern for many stakeholders.



Located in eastern Trinity Bay, Heart's Content grew into an important telegraph centre after the first transatlantic telegraph cable between Ireland and Newfoundland was established there in 1866. Methodist members of the Anglo-American Telegraph Company founded the church. Designed in the Gothic Revival style, this simple wooden clad structure with a steeply-pitched roof, tower and steeple, houses a remarkable vaulted interior completely sheathed in decorative pressed tin, all painted white. In 1975, the Heart's Content congregation named their church Heyfield Memorial in memory of their founding clergyman, Reverend Jesse Heyfield.



The threat of demolition of the Heyfield Memorial United Church is a situation facing many rural churches throughout Newfoundland as challenges posed by a shrinking population due to out-migration are being met.