

Chalked Names

When the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was closed in 1949 a number of children remained at the school into 1952. The last 11 boys chalked their names on a wall in the basement of the chapel at 4:30 p.m. on December 7, 1951 (one had left that day). When the ownership of the chapel was acquired by the local government in 1978 all names remained as originally chalked—without even a smudge. A Plexiglas sheet now protects the names.

School House

The historic site also has the one-room school house—Cowichan Public School—located just to the west of the chapel. This was built in 1886 and is the oldest frame constructed building north of the Malahat on Vancouver Island. It operated as a school for about ten years and then became the farm manager's home and the farm herdsman's home when the farm school operated. It was originally located on the west side of Koksilah Road across from the present farm entrance and historic cairn but moved to this site in 1978.

Kiosk

Additional information on the history of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farms School including maps and photos is at the kiosk. There is also one display with the names of all the children who came to the farm school by date and Party.

Photos by Touy Smith

Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society

4791 Fairbridge Dr.
Duncan B.C. Canada
V9L 6N9

fairbridgechapel.com

A Short Guide to The Fairbridge Chapel

Cowichan Station, British Columbia



Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society
2012

Early History

During the reign of King George VI the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School received a gift of \$20,000 from Major J.H. Feilden of Blackburn, Lancashire, thus allowing for the construction of the Fairbridge Chapel. His name was to remain anonymous until after his death which unfortunately occurred during WWII.

The renowned B.C. architect, Ross A. Lort, M.R.A.I.C. was assigned the task of designing the beautiful chapel soon after funds were received in August, 1938. Upon completion they were sent to England for review by the Fairbridge Farm School Society and Sir Herbert Baker, R.A., F.R.I.B.A. chief architect for the British Empire, suggested changes that included the upper clerestory windows and the aspe thus allowing the natural light to enhance the interior timber beams of the nave.

In the spring of 1939 a level area was cleared within the farm school home site on the bench overlooking the lower fields with Mt. Tzouhalem in the distance. Construction started shortly thereafter with the foundation stone laying ceremony taking place on Friday, September 22, 1939. The chapel was officially dedicated on Saturday, April 20, 1940 and on May 27, 1981 it was declared a district historic site and listed in the British Columbia provincial registry.

Special Features

The chapel is 26x14 metres and includes a half basement where the renovated original wood burning furnace is located and still heats the building during the winter months. Because the chapel was within a school its size surprises many who see it for the first time. Approximately 400 can be accommodated if one includes the six rows in the choir stalls.

Foundation Stone

This is located on the left side of the porch at the main entrance. The ceremony was held on Friday, September 22, 1939 with the stone laid by the Honourable Eric W. Hamber, Lieutenant-Governor of B.C.

Turret Clock & Bell

The historic Gillett & Bland clock and bell chimes out the hours. It was originally bought by Charles Redfern, a Victoria jeweler in 1875 and donated by the next owner, Joseph Rose and installed in the tower in 1940. It is one of the oldest turret clocks in Canada still manually wound and keeps excellent time.

Stained Glass Windows

There are five stained glass windows of Norman design in the aspe above the altar. The centre one is in memory of John Taylor who arrived to the farm school on November 6, 1936 but died in October 1937. John was just 12 years old.

In the narthex there is a three panel window built around the theme of Christ as the Sower. Six medallions, three in each outer panel, tell the story in turn of the Flood, the Birth, the Good Shepherd, the Nativity, with the two remaining medallions being pictures of land-clearing and ploughing.

Agriculture and the Saviour are effectively combined in the central idea of the window and between the central panel and the medallions are symbols of 16 agricultural implements dating back to Biblical times. This memorial window is to Co. John Stoughton Dennis, C.M.G. who assisted in establishing the farm school and spent a lifetime of service in the development of western Canada as surveyor, engineer and head of the Canadian Pacific Railway Department of Colonization and Immigration. He died in 1938, ten years prior to the windows being installed.

Wood Construction

The chapel makes full use of the native British Columbia wood. The exterior siding is clad in western red cedar shingles while the interior walls are lined with clear Douglas fir plywood, clear beams, and flooring. The pulpit rood screen and communion rail are made of clear fir plywood while the alter is made from clear Douglas fir. Finally, the pews and choir stalls are also made from clear Douglas fir planking. All wood came from sawmills within the Cowichan Valley.

Memorial Plaques & Scrolls

There are a number of memorial plaques and scrolls on both the walls of the narthex as well as the nave. These include a list of all farm school students and staff who serviced during the Second World War. A total of 82 students and 11 staff are listed. This represents the largest percentage of volunteers from any community in Canada. A scroll in memory of John Logan is to the right of the "For King and Country" list while a plaque in memory of Norman Alsop and Thomas Kemp is at the east end of the narthex. These three young men were killed during the war.

Angels

Two carved angels adorn the rood screen are made of local maple wood. They were a gift of Arthur J. Hendry a member of the Fairbridge Farm School British Columbia Committee.

Pulpit

The donor was H.R. MacMillan, who, at the time, was the Chairman of the FFS British Columbia Committee and very prominent in the B.C. forest industry for over sixty years.

Pipe Organ

The original organ was built in 1927 by Harrison & Harrison Co. for Mr. & Mrs W.N. Mitchell of Halsway Manor, in Somerset, England. Mrs. Mitchell donated it to the chapel upon hearing of its construction. It remained at the Fairbridge Chapel until 1976 at which time it was donated to Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria by the Fairbridge Society where it remains and now in use. A larger Harrison & Harrison organ but of similar design is located in Westminster Abbey, London. The present chapel organ is a Wurlitzer donated to the society in 1988.

Outside Pulpit

As you view the chapel from the south lawn to your right is the outside pulpit. This is a unique feature of the chapel. Often during the warm summer mornings the children of the farm school would assemble on the grass for the Sunday service before heading down the hill to spend the rest of the day at their Koksilah River swimming hole.

Sanctuary Handles

The entrances doors have two handles, and are known as the sanctuary rings. Fugitives could claim sanctuary by holding the rings; and they then had the protection of the church for 40 days during which time they could choose to be either punished or banished from the realm.

