3821 Cedar Hill Cross Rd

Victoria landmarks

St Luke's Anglican church, completed in 1887, was typical of churches built around that time in response to the needs of settlers. Edward Mallandaine, who has the distinction of compiling Victoria's first directory in 1860, was the architect. The contractors were W. F. Fullerton and John Saville and the cost was $2,360.61.

The church was laid in the form of a cross with a steeple at the east end. It was not until 1942 that the north aisle was added and the nave was extended in 1951, raising the seating capacity to 450.

The parish was formed in 1860 and Bishop George Hills, the first bishop of British Columbia, conducted the initial service on Aug. 10 of that year. With only 12 persons in the congregation, the services were held in the home of John Irvine whose son was reputed to be the first white child born in Fort Victoria.

In 1862, thanks to a seven-acre donation of land for the church and glebe, and the generosity of Miss Burdett Coutts, St. Luke's chapel was built. The first incumbent was Rev. Alexander Charles Garret (later, Bishop of Dallas, Texas). The chapel also served as a school where Mrs. Henry King, the first teacher, had six pupils. Miss Susan Crease taught the Sunday school.

For several years, St. Luke's was the only church in the whole Saanich. When the present church was constructed, the altar from the chapel was incorporated into the new altar, and the old church was used for the parish hall until 1911 when it was demolished.

The first rectory burned down in 1893 and a smaller one was built at a cost of $600. When a new rectory was built, the old one was left standing inside. Water color paintings in the north aisle depict the church in its former days in its rural surroundings.

Designated as a heritage site, the church and its graveyard represent much of Victoria's early history.

Contributed by Geoffrey Castle tor the Victoria Branch of the B.C. Historical Association.