

## **100th Anniversary of Old St. Andrew's Church, Gateway to Labrador Visitor Centre, L'Anse au Clair, Labrador**

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### **Significance of the Anniversary**

2019 marks the 100th Anniversary of the completion of the Old St. Andrew's Church, Gateway to Labrador Visitor Centre in L'Anse au Clair, in the Labrador Straits. The original St. Andrew's church was the first church in the community of L'Anse au Clair. Construction took a decade, but when the windows were installed in 1919, the church was able to be used by the community. It has been a centre for community life ever since.

The church was built between 1909 and 1919 with local donations, by local members of the church. It was consecrated in 1931 and deconsecrated in the 1970s, after which the building was used by a local business and, for a time, was a center for music and entertainment for the town. A heritage restoration was undertaken in 1991-92 as part of a Heritage Regions project. Descendants of the original builders restored the church to close to its original state and repurposed the building as a community museum and regional interpretation centre. It now houses exhibits, artefacts and artwork that keep community memories and introduce visitors to the people, natural environment and lifestyle of the region. The Heritage Regions renovation project restored community pride in the building and restored the church as a living part of the community.

When the building was being assessed for renovation, the original windows were found underneath it. The only window that was missing was the stained glass window with a red cross that had hung behind the altar. Local women from the entire Labrador Straits region worked together on a community quilt, to be exhibited in the new visitor centre – a quilt the same size and shape of the original window. Each woman embroidered and appliquéd a heritage image in a square that represented a pane of glass from the window. The quilt was unveiled at the opening of the re-purposed, restored building in 1992. That event celebrated the involvement of the broader Labrador Straits community in the restoration project in the community of L'Anse au Clair. It began a process of community involvement in the celebration of heritage that we hope to continue and expand on with this anniversary project.

## **Heritage Significance of Old St. Andrew's Church**

The St. Andrew's Church building is a painted wooden structure in Gothic Revival style, with a central tower. It is located on Joncas Hill, along the Trans Labrador Highway (Route 510) in L'Anse-au-Clair, near the entrance of the community, at its main intersection. The building is currently used as the Gateway to Labrador Visitor Centre, with heritage interpretation and tourism information functions.

St. Andrew's Church has historic, spiritual, cultural and aesthetic values. The historic significance of the St. Andrew's Church Building lies in part in its status as the oldest church buildings in the Labrador Straits region, and as one of the oldest buildings in L'Anse-au-Clair. Volunteers of the local Anglican parish built it during 1909 to 1919. The St. Andrew's Church building has spiritual significance as the first St. Andrew's church in L'Anse-au-Clair. It was built under the guidance of Canon J.T. Richardson, who was named Ordinary Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1949, in recognition of his efforts for the people of the Strait of Belle Isle. The St. Andrew's Church building has cultural significance through its adaptive reuse and local landmark status. The church was deconsecrated in 1971 and sold to a local businessman who used it for an eatery, movie theatre, and concert and dance hall. In 1991, the building was donated to the Labrador Straits Historical Development Corporation, who restored it and currently use it as the Gateway to Labrador, an interpretation centre with exhibits about the cultural and natural heritage of the region. This function is concomitant to the building's use as a visitor information centre, a key point in regional economic development via the local tourism industry.

St. Andrew's Church has aesthetic value as an example of a relatively small, rural, wooden church building in Gothic Revival style, with a tower. Gothic Revival style was popular for Anglican churches constructed in Newfoundland from the mid-nineteenth century through to the post WWI period. The pointed arch windows with tracery are characteristic of that style, as is the building's signature cinquefoil wheel design window in the front, central bell tower. The tower contains the double door front entrance, and is capped with a hexagonal roof with sloping sides meeting at the apex, and a topped with a cross.

## **L'Anse au Clair's Musical Legacy**

A visiting ministers once commented of a church service in L'Anse Au Clair, " their singing raised the rafters". When MacEdward Leach came to research "Folk Songs and Ballads of the Southern Labrador Coast" in 1960, many of his informants were from L'Anse au Clair. Albert Dumaresque and the Letto family - Peter, Stuart, Alex and Ben were singing ballads at that time that had arrived with the first settlers and were continuing to be sung in the community. The tradition was that men were the singers and they sang alone without accompaniment. Peter Letto was recognized as

the official singer in the community, singing songs that he had learned from his father and grandfather.

The town still has more singers and musicians than average for the region - from traditional musicians to the winner of a national teen TV talent contest.

### **Proof of Anniversary**

Church records for the Old St. Andrew's church were destroyed in a fire in Flower's Cove NL in the early 20th C. A local individual, Wilson Dumaresq has an invoice from 1919 and copies of meeting minutes regarding the building of the church. (Copies of these records are included in our email to you.) These records, along with the records of Canon Richards informed the work of local historian, Irving Letto in his book "Sealskin Boots and a Printing Press".

Mr. Letto tells us the story of how the church in L'Anse au Clair was built:

"Among the personal papers of Arnott Dumaresq [1886-1957], is found the minutes for a meeting held on October 3, 1907:

A meeting was called in Lanse au Clair to consider the advisability of building a church in the place. Nearly all the men were present. Mr. Richards in the chair. The chairman gave an address in which the reasons for building a church were clearly set forth; and the interest shown by Mr. Edwin Grant in the project was duly emphasized. A motion as to whether a church was needed was carried unanimously and the meeting proceeded to elect a committee."

The following year, according to Richards news from the Flower's Cove Mission in the Diocesan Times, the people of L'Anse au Clair took Grant's challenge seriously. He wrote:

The little settlement of about 100 inhabitants has decided that the time has come when a building consecrated absolutely to the service of God shall be erected in their midst. A small school-chapel has been used hitherto. The idea of building a church originated in a conversation with Mr. Grant of Blanc Sablon, in October of 1907, who promised that he would find the foundation, give the windows and make a contribution from the Blanc Sablon Room of \$25, on condition that the people of Lanse au Clair have a building fund of not less than \$50 when he would return in the summer of 1908. Through the zeal of the people stimulated by the energetic and capable leadership of the teacher Miss Amy Baily, the condition was more than fulfilled when Mr. Grant returned, and he was as good as his word.

At another meeting on November 9, 1910, the people asked Richards to write Grant for a “plan of the building and an estimate of what it would cost to put it up and in shape.” The minutes recorded a list of the persons who offered to donate some fish or its value, but because not everyone agreed the plan was dropped. Richards himself, at that meeting, pledged \$2 per year “so long as he remains in the Mission.”

By 1919, the church was nearing completion. An invoice, from the Horwood Lumber Company, St. John’s, to Richards dated May 31, 1919, found among Dumaresq’s personal papers, describes the window that was placed in the end of the church over the altar. It had a gable top and was glazed with coloured glass. The installation of this window was considered to be one of the finishing projects for the church and research in the restoration of the building has noted 1919 as the completion year. Church services were held by lay persons at that time as ministers only visited occasionally and Bishops even less often. We know that when Bishop White visited L’Anse au Clair in 1926, the service was held in the new church. The church was eventually consecrated in 1931 on the visit of the bishop at the time.

## **Project Events**

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the old church, we are proposing a series of concerts and heritage talks. Twice weekly we will host an event with local musicians and historic presenters at either the old church or the new church. (Depending on anticipated audience size we may also use the town hall if construction is finished by 2019.)

We have begun compiling a list of musicians and heritage presenters from the community and the region and will be contacting them to determine their availability for the anniversary event. L’Anse au Clair is a tiny community. Some of the individuals may be living or working in nearby communities or in other parts of Southern Labrador or Northern Newfoundland.

## **Capital Projects**

In order to celebrate the connection between the broader community and the anniversary event we will host volunteer community history sessions to collect information for a Commemorative Booklet. Our volunteers will host oral history events to collect photos and information for the booklet during the planning phase of the project. The booklet will record significant events that connect the community to the building and will be printed in time for the anniversary events.

We also plan to have a plaque and unveiling event to commemorate the anniversary and the community's contributions to the building and restoration of Old St. Andrew's Church.

## **Geographic Location**

L'Anse au Clair is a community of 215 people (2016 census data) on the Labrador-Quebec border in the Labrador Straits. The Labrador Straits is made up of seven small communities along the Strait of Belle Isle and has a population of 1,645 (2011 data) It is part of the larger Southern Labrador region which is connected by road and ferry to the Quebec Lower North Shore and by ferry to the Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. Our local family and economic networks are within these geographically linked regions.

## **Project Timeline**

Planning: Planning for the anniversary event will take place from January 2018 to June 2019.

Training: Training for volunteers will take place from May to June 2019. Volunteer collection of oral histories for commemorative booklet will take place at this time as well.

Implementation: Project events will take place from June to September 2019

Project Management will cover the entire period and extend to December 2019 for reporting purposes.

## **Project Legacy**

The LSHDC has always looked for a legacy to the region from its projects. This project will not only recognize a heritage anniversary in the community of L'Anse au Clair, it will recognize the musical heritage of the community. The planned anniversary events will encourage local artists to perform.

We will try to revive the concept of informal community concerts, the type of event that used to be held in kitchens, but in a venue more open to the general public. We hope that this example might encourage other informal musical events in the future, by the community, or by local businesses or organizations.

We also plan to create a commemorative booklet for the anniversary. Community volunteers will host oral history events to collect photos and information for the

booklet during the planning phase of the project. The booklet will record significant events that connect the community to the building and will be printed in time for the anniversary celebration.

### **Community Involvement - Project Partners**

Our project volunteers will include the Town of L'Anse au Clair, our cultural committee, CHART, and volunteers from St. Andrew's Church. Donations of cash, goods and services will be requested from community partners including local businesses and the municipality.