

A BIT OF ST. STEPHEN'S PARISH CHURCH HISTORY

St Basil the Great - Doctor of the Church in both Eastern & Western rites, in the 4th century described religious icons as the gospel in paint. Often, artists feel that each brush stroke is divinely inspired and can express what words cannot. Extending this to religious stained glass, frescoes, statues, architecture, etc., St. Stephen's Church has some very high standard artistry to enjoy, appreciate, contemplate, and share including a relic (bone?) of the first Christian martyr - Saint Stephen.

The original St. Stephen's Church was built in 1838 under the Parish's first pastor, Rev. John Cummings and was a smaller replica of the present church. Within 25 years it became dilapidated and out of date and was in need of replacement.

In 1863, under the direction of Rev E.J. Dunphy, the present Gothic style church was built at a cost of \$12,658.47. The statues and central 'Stoning of St. Stephen' stained glass windows in the sanctuary were donated by individual parishioners and in 1864 the Stations of the Cross were added.

In 1915, the pipe organ (current value is \$350,000), a gift from Fr. Doyle, was installed. He was pastor from 1886 until his death in 1916.

Rev. A.W. Meahan (pastor of St. Stephen's Parish 1917 to 1919) had the numerous wood stoves replaced by a furnace which supplied central heating.

In 1922 and 1925 under Rev. M.T. Murphy, the interior chimney was relocated to the exterior and Interior frescos were done by T.X. Renaud of Montreal. They have been recently restored by the same company and now await funds for installation.

In 1926, Rev. Charles P.J. Carleton became pastor and replaced the kerosene and arc lamps with electric lights. It also was probably during his tenure that the side (10) stained glass windows were updated to the present ones by internationally renowned artist Guido Nincheri and his studio - 4 of which bear his name. Examples of the original stained glass windows are in the church side vestries.

Fr. Carleton's replacement in 1949 was Rev. Michael O'Brien. Fr. O'Brien had a new floor laid and the pews were rearranged. He retired in 1964 and was succeeded by Rev. J. Arthur Burns. Fr. Burns was responsible for Vatican 2 changes and the altar and external features are more beautiful than ever.

During Fr. Paul Riley's tenure 2002 -2008 (St. Stephen and Holy Rosary parishes having previously combined due to priest shortages), pilgrimage tours from Connecticut added St. Stephen's Church and veneration of the relic to their tour after a miracle occurred to one of their pilgrims in 2005.

As a whole, there is so much church and biblical history contained in the stained glass, relic, frescoes, statues and architecture that it would take a substantial book to explain the church building and its contents, let alone stories behind the support and sacrifices of its pastors and parishioners that have brought it to its current level.

The flip side of this page gives just a small amount of information. Explanation of the colours, flowers, gestures of the face, position of the limbs, inclusion of objects, etc. of each work of art would take many pages. The teaching of each window contains sufficient material for a book.