

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

August 5, 1957

Victoria Cathedral

It has been said of Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria, British Columbia, that such a building is in itself an act of worship. Certainly, it makes one conscious that it is no secular edifice.

There are several very special items about this great building that one could not forget as long a life lasts. At least That was the impression we received as we followed the elderly gentlemen guide as he proudly told us the history of the church and pointed out all the historical furnishings in the huge building which is not yet completed and probably will not be for many years to come.

There is the swallows' nest on an eastern pillar high above the edifice, there is a stone on a front exterior wall placed there by Winston Churchill during one of his visits to Victoria while it was under construction, and many handsome and historic liturgical appointments of interest to those who take time to visit this English cathedral to the north of us, no matter what church affiliation they may claim.

Lovers of natural history will be interested in the Robin Pillar, tribute to the determined little bird who built her nest hard by the capital of the southeastern pillar of the Nave, and for whose sake building operations at that point were suspended until her family had been launched out into the world. A stone model of the bird and nest marks the spot. Flowers and trees too are commemorated, as the visitor sees the carving of the Lectern which features Dogwood, the flower of British Columbia; the Deans stall is featured by oak leaves and acorns, the Litany Desk with Trilliums and other flowers, and the Tudor rose in the choir screen.

The choir screen was originally in Westminster Abbey. It was there when the first bishop of British Columbia, the Rt. Rev George Hills, was consecrated there in 1858; it was there when the Duke of York, later King George VI, stood at its gates with Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon on the occasion of their marriage in 1923. It was the gift of the Dean and Chapter of the Abbey to the cathedral in 1929.

In the north aisle we visited with our escort the Altar and its Reredos which was sentimentally saved from the former Cathedral building, and the Foundation Stone

which rests on 12 ancient stones that were formerly part of the high altar screen in Canterbury Cathedral, these dating back seven centuries at least we were told.

"The Blitz" is commemorated by the Bishop's chair that formerly was that of the Bishop of London in St. Paul's Cathedral and which bears the scars of bombing, as does the sedilia at the south side of the high altar. Both were presented to the Christ Church Cathedral by the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's our companions, young Pat, not quite 13, and Mary Alice, not quite 11, were muchly impressed by all this history they could actually see making the destruction by war much more real to them, when they could see actual bullet holes in church furnishings.

From Westminster Abbey there also came the material from which the (?) was derived, originally part of the hangings in use at the coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (?) of the Crown enclosed in the wreath of Oak leaves and underneath the crown a bouquet composed of rose of England and the thistle of Scotland and the Leek of Wales and the Shamrock of Ireland. We stood in silence and admired the color, the handiwork, and the symbols of the English possessions and the over-all beauty of the hangings in this Church of England, and so far from the British Isles and yet so much a part of that greatly to be admired country.

The cross on the high altar was for many years in the abbey church of Tewkesbury, a token of the affectionate interest shown by the clergy and people of the homeland.

Our guide told us that the northwest tower will be the memorial to the late Rt. Rev and Rt. Hon. Arthur Foley Winnigton-Ingram, formerly Bishop of London, who took a great interest in the church in British Columbia and who on Sept. 9, 1926, laid the foundation stone of the Cathedral.

The Cathedral was consecrated on Sept 28, 1929, but its competition has been hindered first by the depression of the 1930's and then the second World War.

It is both interesting and amusing to note here that Sir Winston Churchill is a member and holds a card in the bricklayers' union in England, so he was allowed by the workmen on the cathedral in Victoria to place one stone in the tower. The stone with its bronze tablet is in the wall about nine feet above the cathedral entrance and therefore we were unable to read all the inscription.