

Heritage Value

St. James' Anglican Church is valued as a community landmark; for its association with architect William Critchlow Harris; for its High Victorian Gothic Revival style; and for its continuous use as a place of worship and centre of community life.

In its commanding position at the head of Mahone Bay harbour on the main road from the east, St. James' Anglican Church is visible from land and sea. For many years, its thirty-metre steeple was marked on marine charts. Mariners lined up the steeples of the three churches on the shore – Anglican, Lutheran and Presbyterian/United – as a navigational aid. St. James' Anglican Church is the most southerly of these churches which are known collectively and well-recognized as Mahone Bay's "Three Churches." Together with five other heritage properties on Edgewater Street, the three churches comprise a significant representation of Mahone Bay's history during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The first St. James' Anglican Church, consecrated in 1835, was built off Clearland Road, on the hill above the old Mush-a-Mush burial ground (currently known as Bayview Cemetery). It was joined on the hill in 1863 by the Presbyterian Church which was later moved to the waterfront. The current waterfront location of St. James' Anglican Church was purchased in 1848 from John Mader who owned a section of what had been the original Maughers Mill Grant. The wedge-shaped lot, with the Rectory marked, is shown on the 1860 Plan of Division in the name of Reverend Snyder. Rev. William Henry Snyder was the first Rector of St. James' Parish, serving in that capacity from 1858 until his death in 1889.

In his letters to his family Edward Alexander Harris, then the new Curate for St. James' Parish provides an informative and entertaining account of how the church community built the church which was designed by his brother William Critchlow Harris, an eminent church architect. Construction was supervised by John E. Inglis, a member of the congregation. After the new church opened in 1887, Ned Harris became Rector in 1889, and served the parish until his death in 1931.

St. James' Anglican Church has played a continuous role in the community for almost two centuries. An active congregation continues to worship there and engage in community projects. The church is the site of many musical events including "The Three Churches" concert series each summer. The Rector and congregation of St. James' Anglican Church collaborate with Mahone Bay's other churches to hold four ecumenical services annually, and share resources and outreach projects such as the Food Bank. The tower chimes, installed in 1986, are heard throughout the town as they ring out the hours.

St. James' Anglican Church is built in High Victorian Gothic Revival style with an imposing mass. The board and batten siding was originally grey and was later painted yellow ochre with red and brown trim. In the choice of interior construction materials and style, particular attention was paid to sound quality and resonance. The bell was cast in 1879 at the McLeod Foundry in Mahone Bay.

Character-Defining Elements

Character-defining elements of St. James Anglican Church, Mahone Bay, relate to its location, function, and High Victorian Gothic Revival architecture and include:

- location at head of harbour near other heritage properties
- original imposing massing
- buttresses
- steeply pitched roof
- double and triple-light arched windows on sides and five-light east window with tracery
- gently arched windows that are wide in proportion to height
- label moldings over windows
- steeple tower with 30 metre spire set at northeast corner near the street
- hole-drilled bargeboard on gable eaves characteristic of W.C. Harris' designs
- board and batten siding
- tower and steeple at shoulder of building
- exterior colour scheme of yellow ochre with brown and red trim details including the distinctive colour bands on the shingled steeple
- original and historic interior features such as use of softwood backed by hardwood in sanctuary to intensify sound produced in chancel; use of native ash for finishing; and carefully preserved original colour scheme of moss green, rose, blue and grey.