

CHRIST CHURCH – MILLARVILLE Brand MJ96

Christ Church was constructed in 1896 at the instigation of the Reverend Webb-Peploe, the first Anglican minister in the Millarville area. Because of poor health, Webb-Peploe had relinquished his pastoral duties in England and came to Western Canada. He acquired a quarter section of land in the Millarville area in 1894 and had a house built of vertical logs. Church services were being held in private homes, and Webb-Peploe was determined that a church should be built. He donated a five-acre parcel of land for the church and in 1895 contracted Charles Schack to oversee the construction of the building, to be done of vertical logs like his home. It stands on a foundation of local sandstone and concrete. Charlie Shack agreed that he should receive no payment until the structure had stood for three months. Originally the logs were left unpeeled but in 1926 it was discovered that the logs were being destroyed by wood-boring insects so the parishioners peeled the logs and preserved them with applications of solignum. The work of the insects is still visible today in the form of exquisite tracings on the log's surfaces. This unique structure survives today as a very special architecture in the foothills.

Christ Church was dedicated on May 6, 1896. The church bell, rescued during demolition of the old Alexandra Block in Calgary, was donated by the Hudson's Bay Company. It was installed in Christ Church on June 2, 1930.

The Christ Church interior is distinctive. The furnishings are a combination of local materials and donations, many from overseas. The Gothic stained-glass windows in the attractive five-sided east chancel wall were placed by Miss DeVere Hunt in memory of her brother who lost his life in the Boer War (1899-1902). The Communion Table, pulpit, and lectern, in keeping with the rest of the building, were made of small, rough logs. The altar cloths and kneeling rugs were gifts sent to Webb-Peploe from friends in England. Rehabilitation work has been performed on the church. Special services are still a regular event at the church. It is open for regular Sunday worship, seating 100 people.

The cemetery ground was consecrated in 1920, and an impressive memorial, depicting a broken column, was erected in honour of those who died in the First World War. In 1998, the column was replaced with a very large natural stone and the original plaque from the column was attached. Many of the old-time residents of the area are buried here.



Figure 1. Christ Church, Millarville, c. 1910-1912



Figure 2. Interior of Christ Church, Millarville, n.d.

Christ Church has its own cattle brand MJ96. For many years, several parishioners would buy cattle to feed and sell them the following year. These donated funds were used to maintain and operate the church.

Beautiful grounds surround this special rural church. In 1982, a sculpture of “The Crucifixion” was crafted by Ross Weaver from hammered and welded steel. A garden of native trees, shrubs, and flowers surrounds this sculpture. A Centennial peony bed was established in 1996, creating a picturesque setting for the annual Flower Festival.

The Flower Festival, organized by the Millarville Christ Church Ladies Guild since the 1960's, is a popular local event held in the summer. The church, the cemetery and the grounds are decorated with beautiful arrangements of flowers and greenery and attendees are treated to scones with homemade strawberry jam and "real" whipped cream.