

St. Thomas Anglican Church

Location: 5 John Street, Seaforth, Ontario

Year built: 1863

BUILT IN 1863, this frame and clapboard-sided building with tower and spire is a fine example of Carpenter's Gothic architecture. Carpenter's Gothic is a Canadian adaptation in wood of European stone architecture. In St. Thomas Anglican Church only the windows are Gothic, capped on the exterior with wooden mouldings that accentuate the Gothic design. Traces of Greek Revival detailing can be seen in the tower and beside the main door. The main entrance door mixes Greek Revival and Gothic details. The arched window above the door shows a simple version of the complex leading pattern known as switch line tracery, a pattern of intersecting curved lines seen in the windows of older Gothic churches.

The window mouldings rest on simple pilasters, which are Greek Revival in style. The narrower lancet window above the main door adds to the Gothic effect. The 50' (15 metre) tower is capped by an eight-sided belfry and spire. The tower also has brackets; the dentils under the brackets are repeated under the eaves of the main roof.

The nave or central section of the church, with tower and spire, was built in 1863.

The chancel, the space reserved for clergy and choir, was built in 1872. Two wings were added to the north and south sides in 1878 to provide more seating for a congregation that had grown to 121

people. The ceiling was also raised to its present height at this time. The church then had three front entrances, until 1923 when the two side ones were replaced by windows.

In the early days before a church building was erected, about 1859, Rev. Cresswell of Seaforth, Rev. James Carmichael of Clinton, and Rev. J.C. Des Barries used their



The Old Church with side wings and three entrances c. 1878

influence to have services held every Sunday at Downey's Hall (now the Queen's Hotel) or Carmichael's Hotel (now Royal Apartments) in Seaforth. They did so for three years. Services were held at Carmichael's Hotel in winter and in Thomas Adams' barn on Goderich Street West in the summer.

St. Thomas Anglican Church was the first permanent place of worship built in Seaforth. A newspaper article of March 17, 1877 notes: "The Church is actually a strange mixture of Gothic and Greek Architecture.... The inside of the Church was roughly finished and seating consisted of plain boards on blocks brought from Mr. Adams' bush. Much of the work was done by the men of the congregation, and the people were proud of their new Church, for at long last, their dream became a reality." Reverend C.C. Johnston was appointed the permanent Rector of St. Thomas Anglican Church in 1864, staying until 1870.

In 1885, the congregation purchased, and moved, the old Methodist Episcopal Church building for use as a parish hall. A passageway was built between the two buildings in 1913.

The first memorial window was installed in 1890. Over the years, the plain windows have been replaced by stained glass memorial windows. One such window, "The Resurrection Garden," commemorates the work of the women of the Ladies Guild.



Building the Church in 1863
Photo: Public Archives of Canada



Children of the Church School, c. 1900

Over the years a number of men, women and children of the congregation have been faithful members of the choir. George Clarke gave many years service as choirmaster and organist.

The Church School has long been an important part of the church for training the children in the Scriptures and in Anglican worship.