



**Holy Cross Catholic School
Simcoe Street South**

City of Oshawa

Prepared For: Heritage Oshawa
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HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
357 SIMCOE STREET SOUTH, OSHAWA, ON

I. LOCATION

The subject property is located on the west part of Lot 10, Concession 1, originally part of East Whitby Township, now within the City of Oshawa. The structure at 357 Simcoe Street South is on the east side of Simcoe Street South, south of Olive Avenue in Oshawa..

II. SCHOOL HISTORY

During the 1920's Oshawa experienced an economic boom and growth in population due to the success of the McLaughlin automobile manufacturing business. Instead of attempting to add onto St. Gregory's school, which was the first separate school to open in the city of Oshawa, it was decided to establish another separate school in the south end of the city. At that time, the home of Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Cowan, on Simcoe Street South was available, as the Cowans had moved to Toronto. This home and its spacious grounds were purchased and the residence was remodeled to provide classrooms for what became known as Holy Cross Separate School. This new school relieved the pressure on St. Gregory's school and served the needs of the community for many years.

During the post-war era, Oshawa's population grew and the schools became overcrowded therefore an addition was required. The addition, providing more classrooms, was built onto the front of the first school the old Cowan Mansion facing Simcoe Street. Father P. Coffey was the priest in charge of the Holy Cross parish at this time and it has been said that "he worked very hard to provide the best educational facilities for his students". Father P. Coffey was a valuable member of the Oshawa board of education on all matters pertaining to the secondary schools.

III. GROWTH AND CHANGE

Holy Cross Catholic School opened on the current site in 1938. Its first teacher's included Sisters from the order of St. Joseph, as well as lay staff. By the end of the Second World War there was an enrolment of approximately 900 students. As other schools were founded, such as St. Gertrude's and St. Christopher's (both are no longer used as an elementary catholic school), the total enrolment decreased to under 200 in 1994. A French Immersion section was added to the school in 1990, which increased its total enrolment to 300. To accommodate the original high enrolment, annexes were added in 1955 and 1963. The records indicate that in 1956 822 students were managed by 19 female teachers and 1 principal, who was also her own secretary. In 1972 the Sisters of St. Joseph withdrew their involvement in the school. In 1973, due to the persistence of the Principal at the time and concerned parents, a library and gymnasium were built to link one of the annexes to the main building.

Since the 1970's until the spring of 2008, Holy Cross Catholic School has since been home to Board Meetings, Superintendents of Education and Consultants offices, a Heritage Language base, two beginning high schools and finally the Board Maintenance Department.

IV. DECLINE

Due to a decline in enrolment, the Durham Catholic School Board was faced with the decision to close numerous Catholic Schools in the Oshawa area. Holy Cross was one of the schools and its doors were closed in the spring of 2008.

V. ARCHITECTURE

Date of Construction and Style

By the twentieth century, the learning environment needs of students and teachers had been researched and presented in standardized formulas for design and construction. Published plan books, such as *Modern Schoolhouses*, offered sample floor plans, architectural designs and technical notes for new construction. These plans could be adapted to the size requirement, budget and site available. Holy Cross may have been constructed with the use of these plans.

The architecture of Holy Cross School contains elements of Modern Classicism. Modern Classicism is characterized by simplified forms of Classical elements that still achieve a formal composition.

Holy Cross Catholic School was built in approximately 1938 on its present site. The original school was located in the home of Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Cowan that had been purchased from them to be used as school. The property underwent various changes due to the increasing enrolment. In the late 1930's eight rooms were built on the back of the Cowan residence. The residence itself was eventually torn down and eight more rooms were constructed on the same site. Overtime several more classrooms were added to the main structure of the building (the west 2-storey portion).

After the Second World War, the population of South Oshawa was increasing, which was due to the settling of immigrants from Poland and Ukraine in the south end of the city.¹ To accommodate the growing population annexes were added in 1955 and 1963. In 1973 a library and gymnasium were built which linked one of the annexes to the main school building.

Form

The subject building is a 2 storey rectangular structure with a slightly projecting frontispiece entrance and a flat roof. It faces west onto Simcoe Street South. The west (main) façade achieves symmetry through the central placement of the main entrance and the balanced window groupings. The east, north and south facades lack the window openings and decoration of the west wall.

Masonry

This is a red brick structure with smooth concrete detailing. The window openings are placed in groupings of three over three windows and each window has a smooth concrete simple detailed frame. Smooth vertical concrete bands run parallel to the window openings and this banding adds to the symmetry of the west façade.

Foundation

The foundation is concrete with red brick veneer.

Window Openings

The building features large flat multipaned windows throughout. Triple groupings of window openings are arranged in a symmetrical pattern along the west façade (front of the building). The hung sashes are nine panes over three. All openings have lugsills made of concrete.

Each set of three windows is separated from the next set by a cement vertical course which creates a frame around each triple grouping of windows on the upper and lower level.

Entrance

The main entrance has a simply decorated frontispiece that is accessed by a dual staircase to the main level doorway. Over the doorway is a multipaned, oversized flat transom window. The entrance doors and transom are recessed within a simple smooth concrete door surround. On the door surround located above the

entranceway is a symbol called a Chi Roo.ⁱⁱ Above the door surround is a simple concrete band with a dentil course running along the bottom of the band.

On the upper level is a multipaned flat window. Between the window opening and the door surround is a metal fence like decoration with a symbol in the centre. This is the same symbol that is located on the front entrance porch railing. The raised parapet of the entrance frontispiece features a simply carved cross which rises above the roof level. The school name “Holy Cross” is engraved into the concrete below this cross.

A second entrance is located on the south side of the building which leads into the main school building. It features an arched entranceway with double doors and an arched transom window and concrete head with a small cross etched into the centre of the concrete head.

VI. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

During the 1920's Oshawa experienced an economic boom and growth in population due to the success of the McLaughlin automobile manufacturing business. Instead of attempting to add onto St. Gregory's school, it was decided to establish another separate school in the south end of the city. At that time, the home of Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Cowan, on Simcoe Street South was available, as the Cowans had moved to Toronto. This home and its spacious grounds were purchased and the residence was remodeled to provide classrooms for what became known as Holy Cross separate school.

Holy Cross School opened its doors in 1938. During the 1950's and 60's additions were added onto the school to accommodate the growing population in the South end of Oshawa. The growth in population was due to the settling of immigrants from Poland and Ukraine. Holy Cross Catholic School served as an educational institution for the population of South Oshawa for approximately 70 years.

APPENDICES



1. West Façade, August 2008



2. South Façade, August 2008



3. South Entranceway, August 2008



3. East Façade, August 2008



4. North Façade, August 2008

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Oshawa experienced an influx of Ukrainian immigrants following World War II the majority of who were classified as Displaced Persons unwilling to return to their homeland. In 1951 Oshawa had 2470 persons listing their racial origin as Ukrainian. They settled in Oshawa due to the wealth of manufacturing, friends and relatives.

ⁱⁱ The Chi Rho is the earliest cruciform symbol used by Christians. It is formed by the first two letters of the word Christ in Greek, chi = ch and rho = r. It symbolizes a cross which invokes the crucifixion of Jesus and symbolizes his status as the Christ. First used in the early 4th century CE. The alpha and omega are located on either side of the Chi Rho. They are the last two letters of the Greek alphabet and have been used since the 4th century expressing, in the Christian faith, of the lord's divinity..... "the beginning and the end".

SOURCES

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