

The history of St. Patrick's Catholic Church

Churches - 2000



Betty
Lewis

That was
Watsonville

As people were becoming more and more conscious of historic preservation, such structures as St. Patrick's Church were recognized for their soundness of construction, outstanding architecture and of being a fine addition to the city's skyline of the old and the new. The English Gothic style of architecture was designed by William H. Weeks and the church was constructed in 1902. At its dedication of January 11, 1903, the Santa Cruz Surf had this to say: "It is one of the finest houses of worship in Central California, outside of San Francisco. It combines solidity with grace and beauty of outline, and has a seating capacity for 625 persons. The colossal structure rests upon a solid concrete foundation in which 400 barrels of cement were used. About 350,000 brick were used in the construction of the walls. The roof is covered with the finest quality of Vermont green slate."

This new edifice replaced a smaller church built in 1864 at a cost of \$7,000 and designed by



Courtesy of Betty Lewis

An early postcard of St. Patrick's Church.

James Waters. When it was decided to build a larger church the old one was moved around the corner onto Ford Street by J. W. Ostrander at a cost of \$875. His job was completed in August of 1901 and work was soon to begin on the new church under the supervision of contractor W. E.

Greene.

"The new Catholic Church is rapidly assuming shape. The heavy brick and terra cotta walls are already up to a good height and the large and handsome window frames are in place. Contractor Greene and his force of carpenters and his brick masons are rushing the work of construction." The Pajaronian, Feb. 20, 1902.

Heavy copper was used in trimming the roof and tower while sheet lead finished the gutters and valleys — altogether, a staggering four tons of copper and sheet lead, nearly four tons. 150,000 feet of lumber was required in the construction of the interior.

The tall spire rose up into the air for 132 feet and its slate covered sides could 'be seen for miles on a bright day glistening in the sunshine.' Crowning this magnificent spire was a great gilded bronze cross.

Large oak doors were placed at the entranceway and were richly varnished, as was the oak altar rail

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with its beautiful marble top. A rich addition to the sanctuary were the lovely stained glass windows, lasting monuments to the skill and artistry of the glass cutter and painter whose beautiful colors finished across the interior of the church as the sunlight streamed through the windows. As the finishing touches were being put on the new church, architect Weeks commented: "A building not built for a day, a week, a year, but a building that will look little the worse for years when we have ceased our earthly activities, and the youngest member of to-day will have reached the time allotment of three score years and ten." January 1902

Though the church had to be rebuilt after the 1989 earthquake it has beautifully retained its original look only larger in size. It makes a wonderful and graceful entrance to the city of Watsonville — a structure of grace and beauty.

Betty Lewis, a local historian, is a contributing columnist to the Register-Pajaronian.



Courtesy of Betty Lewis

An early postcard of the interior of St. Patrick's Church.