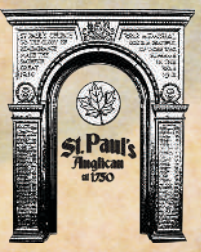
The War Memorial Arch

"Men whom we build our love round like and arch
Of triumph, as they pass us on their way
To glory, and to immortality."
-Philip James Bailey

St. Paul's and the Great War "For King and Country"



At the war's end the congregation began to consider how best to remember their fallen. Various suggestions were circulated, and the one made by the Reverend Samuel Henry Prince was chosen. St. Paul's Parish Magazine's October 1919 Editorial page announced: "The St. Paul's Memorial for our heroic dead, commemorating the sons of St. Paul's who have made the supreme sacrifice, will take the form of a Memorial Arch of cast bronze, nearly 14 feet high and some 9 feet wide, which will be erected in the main vestibule of the church and over the front door. The design is very beautiful and follows the classic model of triumphal arches in ancient times. The names of all our heroes will be cast on each side of the arch, so that all who enter the church can read this splendid roll of honour." Archdeacon Armitage tried to contact every bereaved family to ask their permission to have their son's name placed on the Honour Roll. He collected 91 names, their ranks, their regiments, and many sad memories.

How to pay for the War Memorial? It took the combined efforts of four men to raise the money. W. J. Clayton, Major J. P. Edwards, C. A. Evans, Lieut. Colonel Mowbray, who had lost their sons in battle. When the Arch at last arrived there was a shortfall of $435. Archdeacon Armitage, not a wealthy man, announced he would have to pay this amount himself. Somehow, in a Halifax mired in recession, the money was raised. Finally the bill, $3818.98, was paid to J. Whippell & Co. Exeter, England, and the unveiling of the War Memorial Arch on 1 December 1920 was an emotional service. The families gathered in the gallery and on the stairs, the Royal British Veterans formed a guard of honour, the church was filled to capacity, the Arch, covered by a huge Union Jack was unveiled by the Lieutenant Governor, and at the end after the Royal Anthem, three buglers sounded the Last Post.

After Archdeacon Armitage's death in 1929 the congregation decided that the best memorial to his long tenure as rector was to insert bronze doors into the Arch. The new doors, also by Whippell, were dedicated in 1932.

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