

Fairbridge Farm Chapel

Location: 4791 Fairbridge Drive, Cowichan Station, BC

Formally Recognized: 2015/07/08

Other Names: Fairbridge Chapel

Construction Dates: 1939-1940



Front View of the Chapel



Back View of the Chapel

Statement of Significance for Fairbridge Farm Chapel

Historic Place

The Fairbridge Farm Chapel is a two-storey and half basement wood frame Arts and Crafts style chapel with red cedar shingles, white stucco façade, and a two-storey clock turret. It is located in the historic Fairbridge Farm park-style subdivision, in Cowichan Station, British Columbia. It is one of two historic buildings located on this large lot. This historic place is specific to the building footprint.

Heritage Value

The Fairbridge Farm Chapel has significant heritage value in the building's historic integrity, specifically the original character and materials. Another significant aspect of the chapel is its association with important individuals, all of whom helped shape the character and growth of the community. The representation of past and present community members has immense value and is evident in the unique historic features found within the chapel.

The Fairbridge Farm Chapel was built in 1939 and opened in 1940 on the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School in the Cowichan Valley. The Fairbridge Society, a philanthropic society famous for its emigration scheme, built only this one farm school in Canada. As such, the chapel's association with the Fairbridge Society is of great pride to the area.

The most defining heritage value comes from the historic integrity of the building. The exterior and interior materials are all original dating to the time of construction. These historic materials include the shingles, floors, timber frame, and windows. The original elements of the chapel still remain in good condition, including the pews and interior and exterior pulpits.

There are several unique and historic features that continue to contribute to the spiritual ambiance of the chapel. Throughout the Fairbridge Farm Chapel, there are several beautiful stained glass windows. Above the altar, there are five Norman-style stained glass windows, each dedicated in memory of an individual from the Cowichan Valley. In the narthex there is an exquisitely detailed three panel window, depicting the theme of Christ the Sower. This window was also dedicated in memory of an individual associated with Fairbridge Farm. Adorning the rood screen are two carved angels, believed to have been carved for the chapel by George Selkirk Gibson, the renowned local architectural sculptor.

The historic turret clock and bell are a very unique aspect of this chapel. Made in 1875 by English manufactures Gillet & Bland, it was donated by Joseph Rose and installed in the tower in 1940. There is significant heritage value in this historic clock, as the first public clock in British Columbia and now as the only clock within a chapel in the province. This intricate piece of machinery is one of the oldest turret clocks in Canada still manually wound. This clock has played an important role in the function of the community for over 70 years.

The Fairbridge Farm Chapel provides a rare local example of the British Arts and Crafts style of architecture. Founded in the 1880s, the Arts and Crafts movement was influenced by traditional artistic craftsmanship and was designed to emphasize nature and art. The Fairbridge Farm Chapel's use of natural materials, interior exposed beams, and decorated exterior stucco façade all speak to the Arts and Crafts movement. As a rural community, the beauty of this building helped define the character of the surrounding area, both in the past and present.

The Fairbridge Farm Chapel has been associated with many notable individuals. The two architects that are credited with the design of the chapel are Sir Herbert Baker; known for his influence on South African architecture and New Delhi's government structures; and Ross Anthony Lort; known for Vancouver architecture, notably the Vancouver Art Gallery 1951 renovation. The chapel was visited by many influential figures including the Lieutenant Governor of the time: the Honorable E.W. Hamber. These significant individuals all helped shape the community of Fairbridge and the Cowichan Valley.

A highly impressive feature of this heritage building is the quality of the interior wooden floors, exposed beams, and pews. Upon examination, it will be noticed that each plank of British Columbian Douglas Fir is in pristine condition and that there are no visible knots in the wood. The quality and quantity of local wood has significant value to the community.

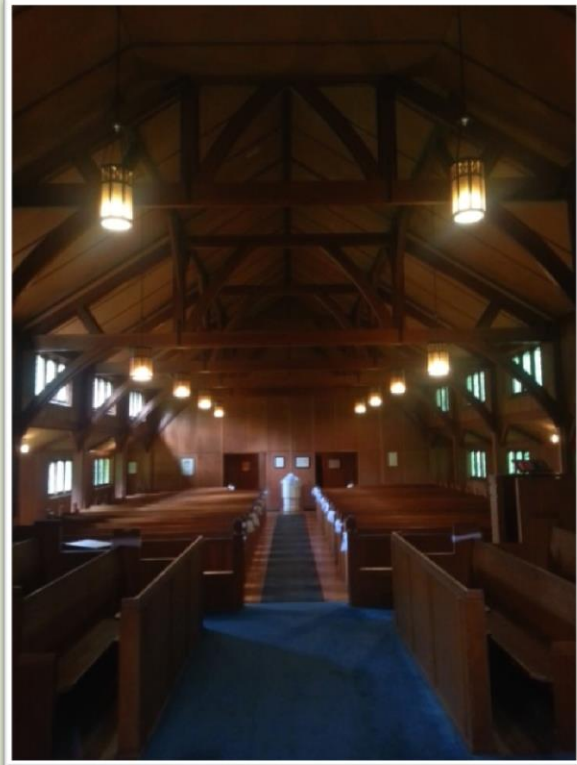
Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Fairbridge Farm Chapel include:

- All historic materials dating to the time of construction including the Douglas Fir floors, Western Red Cedar shingles and timber frame, as well as the quality of the interior wood
- The unique historic features including custom stained glass windows, the original turret clock and accompanying bell, and original angel carvings
- All of the original elements of a chapel building including the pews, interior and exterior pulpits and sanctuary handles
- All of the original elements of the Arts and Crafts style including steep roofs, interior exposed beams and exterior stucco façade with applied wood decoration
- Continued use for events
- The open surrounding area and visibility of the chapel building



View towards the Altar



View towards the Nave

Historical Information

Timeline

- 1939. The Fairbridge Chapel was built on Fairbridge Farm School, Canada.
- 1940. March 3rd, the first service was held in Fairbridge Chapel.
- 1940. April 20th, the Fairbridge Chapel was officially dedicated.
- 1952. The Fairbridge Farm School was closed.
- 1977. The CVRD acquired the Fairbridge Chapel, the schoolhouse, and land to use as park land.
- 1988. The CVRD transferred ownership of Fairbridge Chapel to the Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society.

Important Facts

- The Fairbridge Chapel was designed by Ross A. Lort and Sir Herbert Baker.
- The Fairbridge Farm School in Canada was established in 1935.
- The Child Emigration Society (the society responsible for the Fairbridge Farm Schools) was created by Kingsley Fairbridge (1885-1924).
- The first Fairbridge Farm School was established in Pinjarra, Australia.
- Fintry Fairbridge Training School, near Vernon BC, was used by the Canadian Fairbridge Farm School.



Front View of Clock Turret

Current Information

Function

- Used for community and chapel events; including weddings and Christmas concerts.
- Owned and managed by the Fairbridge Chapel Heritage Society.
- For information on the Fairbridge Farm Chapel visit: www.fairbridgechapel.com.

Construction

- New roof in 1989 and 2007.
- Stabilized foundation, updated electrical wiring, new chimney, refurbishing to floors and ceiling.
- Glass panes repaired in 1979.

Heritage Status

- Declared a Heritage Conservation Area when the property was a CVRD Regional Park, 1981.
- Pending Provincial Recognition.