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## Chapter 1 -- "Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed and Protestant" 1888-1893

The city at the western terminus of the newly completed Canadian Pacific Railway was going to need more Anglican churches for certain. When the first C.P.R. passenger trains began to arrive in late May of 1887 there was a single Anglican church in the city, St. James. Only six years old, it had just been rebuilt to replace the original structure, destroyed in the Great Fire of 1886. The new St. James at Cordova Street and Gore Avenue seated 250, far more than the tiny wooden church on the waterfront it replaced. All through that summer and into the fall one hundred people or more were arriving each and every week at the C.P.R.'s Howe Street station. Vancouver's population was literally exploding -- from 1,000 right after the fire, to 5,000 at the end of 1887, and it would grow to 8,500 by the end of 1888. The need for not one, but several new churches was clear.

If new Anglican churches were to be built, the founders of what was to become Christ Church were quite certain as to the type of Anglicanism they wanted preached and practiced: low church. The rector of St. James, Father Henry Glynne Fiennes-Clinton, was of the opposite persuasion. A graduate of Keble College, Oxford, he was part of the "second generation" of the Oxford Movement. That movement 50 years earlier had established Anglo-Catholicism in England. As much as it could in a frontier community, St. James' reflected that tradition. Father Clinton put stress on ceremony; there were fine linens and colourful frontals imported from England on the altar. Most important, the Holy Eucharist was seen as belonging at the centre of worship. For many Anglicans in 1888, both in England and across the Empire, this was too "Catholic" an emphasis. A small group decided to build their own church. There is no evidence St. James was split into factions; but a visiting priest once noted that while the demeanor of those in and near the chancel was reverent, those in the back of the congregation were restless.

Rather than being upset by the departure of low church proponents, Father Clinton seemed somewhat relieved that they determined to branch out on their own. He also knew that with an alternative parish available, he could continue to instruct his own people in sacramental churchmanship. The good father agreed that the new church might be "less ornate" in its worship. The breakaway proceeded amicably. Father Clinton himself chaired the first meeting in Miss Wales' schoolroom on Seymour Street on the evening of May 2, 1888. The group wanted the new church distinctively to "uphold the principles of the Reformation and of the Evangelical Ministry," feeling with deep conviction it should be, according to a later historian, "Catholic, Apostolic, Reformed and Protestant." (The conviction, undoubtedly, centred on the last three adjectives.) They agreed it would be built in the west end of the city, an area in which the C.P.R. was engaged in the rapid development of its real estate.

When Bishop Acton Sillitoe came to Vancouver from his base at Holy Trinity Church (later Cathedral) in New Westminster, still having to travel muddy, courduroyed roads, he was accommodating -- but also cautious. On May 22 in the vestry of St. James', Bishop Sillitoe gave his consent to the delegation that had been chosen to see him at the meeting three weeks earlier. The bishop agreed they could look for a "low churchman" to be their rector. However, the group's nominee would have to receive his appointment from the bishop, make "the usual declarations and oaths" of loyalty, and be paid at least \$100 per month for no less than two years. And "no liability, legal or ecclesiastical, either as regards stipend or providing other work, shall rest upon the Bishop in case of failure of the arrangement or resignation of the incumbent." Acton Sillitoe was, like Father Clinton, a high churchman. If the new parish failed, the low churchman they had employed would have to find work outside the diocese of New Westminster.

The "New Church Committee" set to work raising money and finding land. The new president of the Canadian Pacific Railway was coming to town in July. William Van Horne had land -- lots of it. As the railway's vice president in 1886 he had persuaded the province to give the C.P.R. essentially what was to become downtown Vancouver as "payment" for extending the railroad from Port Moody to the new city (an extension the C.P.R. had fully

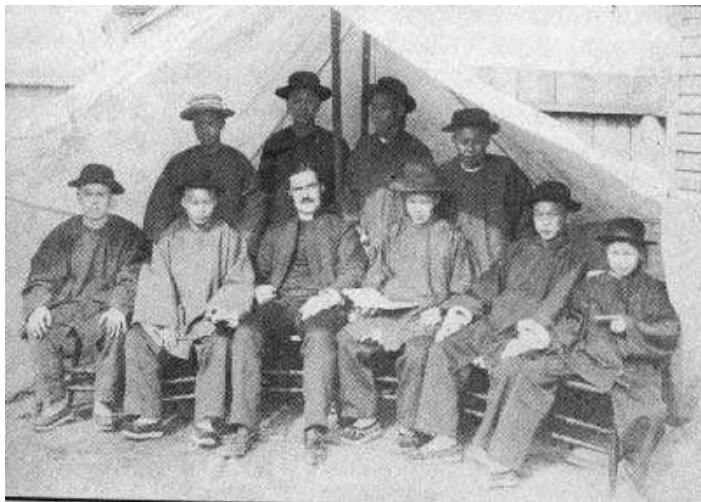
intended to carry out in any case). Van Horne offered the committee land in two locations, both on Burrard Street: five lots costing \$500 each at the northeast corner of Burrard and Georgia Streets, or five costing only \$200 each at the southwest corner of Burrard and Nelson Streets. The committee took the more expensive lots, and agreed to pay for them in five semi-annual installments of \$500, beginning in August 1889 -- plus six per cent interest. Until all the money was paid, the C.P.R. would keep title. (The present St. Andrews Wesley United Church stands on the other site.)

The committee had the bishop's permission and a land contract. Now it needed funds. A group of businessmen placed an advertisement in the local papers asking all interested to meet August 6 in the Wilson Hall on Abbott Street. Those attending pledged to guarantee a clergyman's stipend, and three days later in the office of John Devine, Cordova Street, met with the original new church committee. It was resolved: "That it is the opinion of this meeting that a stone church be erected on the lots mentioned to seat from four to five hundred and to cost from \$20,000 to \$25,000." Such a church, if it could be filled, would contain by far the largest (non-Native Indian) congregation in the diocese: in 1888 Holy Trinity in New Westminster numbered 180 members; St. James now enrolled 222. A committee of five (W.F. Salisbury, Henry J. Cambie, John Devine, Thomas H. Condell, and Lacey R. Johnson) was appointed to find a rector. By mid-November they had found their man, and the bishop agreed to appoint the Rev. Hugh Pooley Hobson rector of the still unnamed parish.

The reaction of that 34-year-old clergyman arriving from Toronto six days before Christmas, 1888, was the same that travellers by rail still express upon arrival in Vancouver. "The trip along the C.P.R., especially through the mountains, charmed him so much that he could hardly find words to express the pleasure he had experienced," reported the Vancouver World, whose reporter found Hobson at the Leland Hotel. Ellen Prentice Hobson, and the rest of the family would come a few weeks later with the furniture. A native of Bourne, Lincolnshire, Hobson had studied art in London and Paris. He entertained ideas of making art his profession. At age 21 he married Ellen, eldest daughter of Manning Prentice of Stowmarket, Suffolk. Three years later the couple migrated to Canada. Hobson obtained a teacher's certificate, and taught in Bond Head, about 20 miles north of Toronto. A few years later he felt called to the ministry, and in 1885 graduated from theological college.

The school from which Hobson graduated, Wycliffe College, had been founded in Toronto in 1879 to provide low church theological training for those unhappy with Toronto's first theological college, Trinity College. Hobson was definitely a product of his evangelical education. In a farewell sermon at St. James' Cathedral, Toronto, where he had been curate since 1885, Hobson had told the congregation, according to a newspaper report, that "when ordained he resolved, as he hoped every young man did, as far as his feeble powers would permit, to preach the old fashioned Gospel of free salvation. That Gospel was one of which he was not ashamed, and as long as he lived he would preach it in its purity and simplicity." In short, he declared, his theology was that of the "good old Book." The association of Christ Church and similarly-oriented Wycliffe graduates would last over 60 years.

The second evening after arrival, Hobson was properly introduced to the town at a large reception, Bishop Sillitoe presiding. Arrangements had been made for space to be rented in a vacant store in the Lord Durham Block on Granville Street as a temporary place of worship. On Sunday, December 23, the Fourth Sunday in Advent, services were held at 11 a.m., 3



*The Rev. Hugh P. Hobson, first rector, and baptismal class.*

p.m., and 7 p.m. The open collection for the day totalled \$46.95. Hobson's sermon, according to the World, delighted the congregation. His text was Revelations 3:8, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." The following Tuesday, Christmas Eve, the parishioners met and resolved, upon a motion of Allan McCartney, seconded by Thomas Condell, that the church would be called "Christ Church." William Skene

took on the position of people's warden; John Devine was appointed rector's warden; W.P. Creighton and A.P. Black became chief sidesmen, and W.F. Salsbury, the treasurer. On Christmas Day at 11 a.m. communion was celebrated. There were 33 communicants. Bishop Sillitoe celebrated the following Epiphany Sunday.

Ellen Hobson, a French and German teacher by profession, arrived in January, in time to be elected president of the Ladies' Aid Society. Mrs. Salsbury was elected first vice-president; Mrs. Ceperley, second vice-president; and Mrs. Skene, secretary-treasurer. Within five weeks they had organized a promenade concert in the large room on the first floor of the just completed Van Horne block. The programme included several piano solos by Mr. Gough, who lent the piano; Mrs. McCartney sang "Among the Daisies" with such expression that an encore was demanded; Mrs. Creighton sang "The Song that Reached My Heart"; Mrs. Bolton sang "In the Gloaming." Refreshments were plentiful; an excess was auctioned off. The social was so successful that another was planned for Easter week, after Lent.

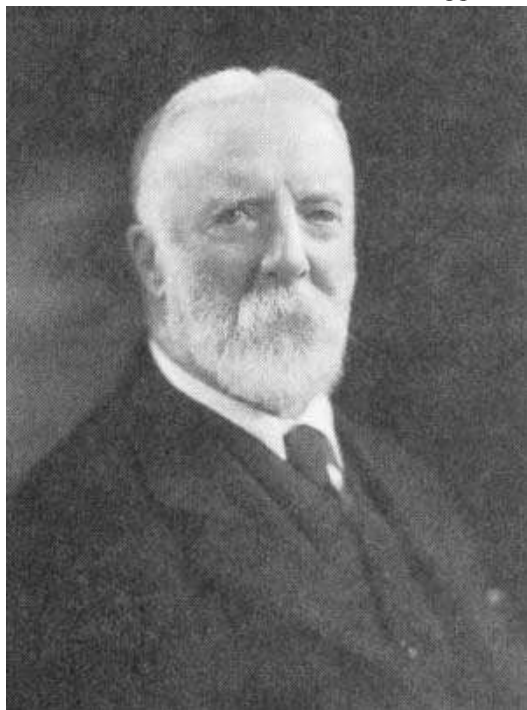
Meanwhile, while services moved to the Elphinstone Block, then back to the Durham Block, the men of the parish formed a building committee. On January 25, 1889, it was decided first to construct a building to house the Sunday school. The committee bought a sixth lot from the C.P.R. (the price had gone up to \$600) and inquired of the railway's land commissioner, J.M. Browning, how close to the lot line the school house might be built. Browning replied that restrictions would apply to a school house (making it near impossible to build), but if the committee were to put up a church, they could build "as you may think best." The C.P.R.'s desire was to see a church built that would add value to its adjacent property.

The building committee on February 14 devised a new plan. They would build a stone basement, use it for worship, and later use the space for the Sunday school when funds could be raised to build the church itself. Henry J. Cambie and D.B. Charleson advanced money. Proposals from architects were requested by the first of March, and eleven days later C.O. Wickenden was chosen. Wickenden, from Winnipeg, was then completing an office block on Hastings Street for the C.P.R.'s company physician. He would later complete several more commercial buildings of red brick and stone. He drew up plans for a building in stone, which, when fully completed, would seat 900 and have a tower 140 feet high. On April 3 tenders were let to M.E. Cook for masonry and Charles Hillyer for other trades.

As work progressed, Hobson's growing flock kept busy. On Mondays, the Young Men's Society met, at which the rector presided; on Tuesdays, the Ladies' Aid gathered; on Wednesdays, Evening Prayer "flower services" were held, with a special address for the children; on Thursdays, the Girls' Society met; and on Fridays came choir practice. The bishop visited twice in 1889 for confirmations, on Palm Sunday and again in early June. Stanley Park had opened the previous summer, and became the site of many church picnics. Over the summer the Sunday school grew to 142 children, with an average

attendance of about one hundred, taught by thirteen teachers. Soon the basement was finished, complete with a temporary roof. It was divided into four large rooms by sliding doors; when opened into one room it was capable of seating 500 people. According to the diocesan *Monthly Record*, the opening services were held October 6, 1889. "It was unfortunately a wet day; nevertheless there were 52 communicants and all the services were well attended. Special pains had been made by the choir to have the services well rendered and their efforts were most successful." The Bishop preached from a pulpit decorated with flowers by the women. He urged the congregation to contribute to the church with a cheerful, willing spirit, and reminded them that 67 families had yet to subscribe towards the building fund. The squat structure soon gained a nickname: the "root house"

"The whole work of the Parish is established upon the foundation of active co-operation of the laity, both men and women, and the list of workers published at Christmas shows that a large proportion of the congregation is enrolled in one form of church work or another," the *Churchman's Gazette* and *New Westminster Diocesan Chronicle* reported early in 1890. The congregation had raised seven thousand dollars, "by far the largest sum ever contributed in this diocese by a single Parish." Unfortunately, building in stone was expensive, and even this large amount was insufficient to begin work on the church proper. At the beginning of May the church committee asked the people's warden, H. J. Cambie, who had succeeded William Skene, to approach the C.P.R. for assistance.



*Henry John Cambie, 1836-1928*

**H**enry John Cambie, a native of Tipperary, Ireland, was perhaps the man most instrumental in the founding of Christ Church--and indeed in choosing Vancouver as the railway's pacific terminus. Educated in England, he had come as a youth to Canada, and learned the surveyor's trade. He had been charged with the task of finding the best route for the transcontinental railway. As chief of survey in British Columbia, Cambie had fought within the C.P.R. for the Fraser Canyon route to Burrard Inlet. Publically grave, but privately witty, Cambie now was the chief engineer of the C.P.R.'s Pacific Division.

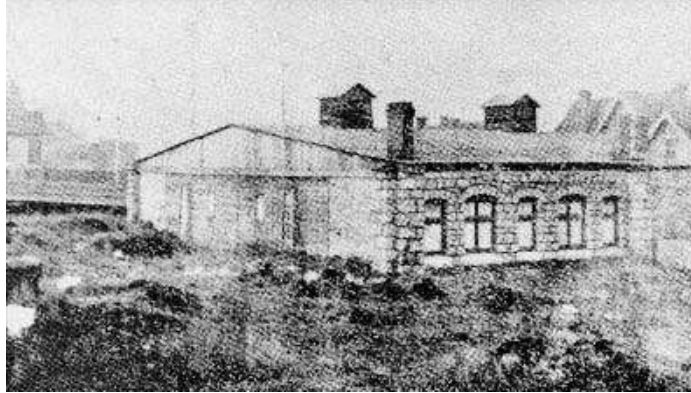
Cambie made a proposal to his company president, Van Horne. Christ Church still owed \$3100 for six lots. Might the C.P.R. give a 20 per cent rebate on four of the lots, and donate the other two lots free "as has been done for other Churches in Vancouver," he asked Van Horne. This would reduce the purchase price to \$1600.

A "few members" could raise this sum immediately; with title to the land, the congregation could get a mortgage and borrow the \$12,000 that Cambie estimated was needed to finish the building. "The completion of such a handsome building would have the affect of inducing people to improve their property in the vicinity and it is needless to say the Company would reap a share of the benefits arising therefrom," Cambie wrote Van Horne (through Land Commissioner Browning). Otherwise Christ Church could remain "an eyesore to the neighbourhood for a long time." The president replied on July 14. Although the trustees of the C.P.R. would like to oblige the wardens of the church, "I must say that the Trustees in view of all the circumstances do not feel justified in making any further concessions in the matter."

Christ Church remained the "root house," and Hobson continued an evangelical ministry. He set up a Chinese mission school on Pender Street. The school would later move to Water Street, and later again to Homer Street. It evolved as the Church of the Good

Shepherd. Hobson taught a baptismal class to men and boys. In this he was assisted by catechist Ten Yong, who had come to B.C. from Honolulu. At Christ Church missionary meetings were held on Saturdays. Lady A-Hok of China was one of several speakers. A parish newspaper was begun in 1891. But in that same year, according to the Church's Twentieth Anniversary souvenir pamphlet written 18 years later, in 1909, "differences arose between the incumbent and the congregation which dampened the interest and prevented progress with the church building, many temporarily leaving the church and declining to contribute to its funds."

We do not know what the differences were, but they were serious enough to cause offerings to fall off to the point that Hobson was forced to take a \$500 cut in stipend -- half of his original salary. Much of the problem must have been connected to the slowdown in Vancouver's economic growth that had just begun in 1891. There was growing friction between Christ



*The "Root House" short after construction*

Church and the C.P.R., by now the dominant economic power in the city. The railway directly employed a tenth of Vancouver's population during this period, and paid about an eighth of all wages earned. The C.P.R., under financial strain itself, continued to press for a church building to further its real estate interests. In November, the railway's land commissioner wrote to the wardens: "There is a most unsightly construction built upon the lots... This I consider a decided injury not only to the locality in which it stands, but to the city generally, as any such building remaining so long unfinished must make a more unfavourable impression upon visitors to our city... I have to request that you will let me know at as early a date as possible when it is your intention to proceed." Not only was there no completed building, the C.P.R. was still owed the \$3100 for the lots, plus \$524 in accumulated interest.

In April, 1892, two members of the church committee resigned. Hobson met with the land commissioner, to no avail. The bishop was consulted but did not seem to be able to help. The organist quit. The C.P.R. was asked if it might agree to hand over the deed of the church's land to a loan company once a new church was built; the railway refused. Instead, in mid-October the railway sued. The trustees appealed for delay to Sir Donald A. Smith, governor of the railway, but to no avail. Other creditors brought actions against the building committee.

By this stage, Bishop Sillitoe was fully involved. Land Commissioner Browning furnished him with copies of correspondence between the railway and Christ Church. "It is difficult to understand how Mr. Hobson expects to go on with the building," said Browning. The church committee opened a "Christ Church Defense Fund" to fight the railway in court. On January 17, 1893, the church committee resolved to call the congregation together to elect new trustees under the Religious Institutions Act -- a legal strategem. Opposition soon crumpled, however, and on January 29 Hobson's conducted his last Sunday service in Vancouver. The next week Christ Church's first rector departed for a post in the American church in the Eastern United States. He was to head for Bridgeport, Connecticut -- far, indeed, from Vancouver -- leaving the parish he had founded with such promise, in imminent danger of collapse.

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