

Thank you for visiting St. Ann's Academy. Please feel free to keep this guide as a souvenir of your visit. If, however, you have no further use for it, please return it to the Interpretive Centre so that it can be reused to save paper and reduce our costs.



PROVINCIAL
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COMMISSION

St. Ann's Academy is under the ownership of the Provincial Capital Commission. The chapel was deconsecrated by the Roman Catholic Church as part of the school closure. While regular services are not held in the interfaith chapel, it and other areas of St. Ann's Academy are available for public and private functions.

For more information on the Interpretive Centre and history of the building or rental information, please contact:

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ENGLISH



SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF THE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE AND GROUNDS



Welcome to the St. Ann's Academy Interpretive Centre. The information contained in this booklet will help inform you about the history of St. Ann's Academy (and the many people associated with it) and guide you through a tour of the Interpretive Centre and grounds. Each page of the guide takes you to a different point of interest, and provides a short narrative passage describing the location or an aspect of the history of St. Ann's Academy. Accompanying each narrative is a selection of quotations that provide some more personal impressions of St. Ann's Academy and its history, and several detail points that briefly elaborate on the renovation and restoration of the Academy. For your assistance, the tour routes through the Interpretive Centre and the grounds are shown on the next two pages of this guide. Please refer to these route plans as you proceed through the tour.

If you are feeling adventurous, take the time to explore the grounds or to relax in the orchard. The walking tour of the grounds is fairly extensive, and the route between points 9 and 10 is not wheel chair accessible, so please feel free to abbreviate or customize the tour to suit your needs and interests. The Interpretive Centre and grounds are yours to experience. Should you wish to learn more about St. Ann's Academy than is presented in this guide, please take advantage of the text panels posted throughout the Interpretive Centre or ask one of our volunteer docents or a staff member for assistance. Additional information, is also contained in the various materials available for purchase from our gift shop.

Enjoy your visit to St. Ann's Academy!

19. Stairs

As you conclude your tour, you have returned to the beginning, the main staircase of St. Ann's Academy. For many, the experience of St. Ann's Academy began and ended on these stairs. New students would ascend these stairs at the time of their enrollment and later would return to them with their class for the traditional graduation photograph. Young women entering the order also came here to commit themselves to a life of community, faith and service. When St. Ann's Academy closed, the Sisters lost a place they called home, but their interest in contributing to the improvement of society continues. Today, the St. Ann's Academy Interpretive Centre exists as a community resource helping to preserve and increase community awareness of St. Ann's Academy and its place in the history of Victoria and British Columbia.

- A primary principle for the restoration of St. Ann's was historical accuracy and faithfulness to the selected restoration dates. In some cases, however, compromises were required. The trees in the formal garden, for example, were mere saplings when the garden was established in 1911. Today they have grown to maturity and provide a thick canopy that blocks out the sun.
- These stairs are yet another example of compromise. During the 1910 - 1918 restoration period, the stairs leading to the parlours and chapel dated to 1886 and were built of wood in a gracefully curved baroque style. By 1924, time and the elements had taken their toll on these wooden stairs and they were replaced with this much more durable concrete structure. To replace these more modern stairs with a wooden replica of the stairs built in 1886 would have involved considerable cost and would have reintroduced the problems of maintaining an exposed wooden structure. Nonetheless, these stairs are an authentic feature of the Academy and are inaccurate only in the sense that they post-date the selected restoration period by approximately six years.

"We walked up those stairs and she cried and the Mother Superior said please don't cry, your daughter's going to be very happy and she said 'I know she is but I'm not.'"
(Anonymous, Student 1925-33, S.S.A. 1940-present)

"She said, 'We're looking at the hard cold bricks of the Academy and forgetting the living stones who are the students of the Academy and the nurses of the hospital that are going forth with the message we taught them and are going forth into the world.'" (A Sister of St. Ann quoting an anonymous S.S.A)

18. Plaque

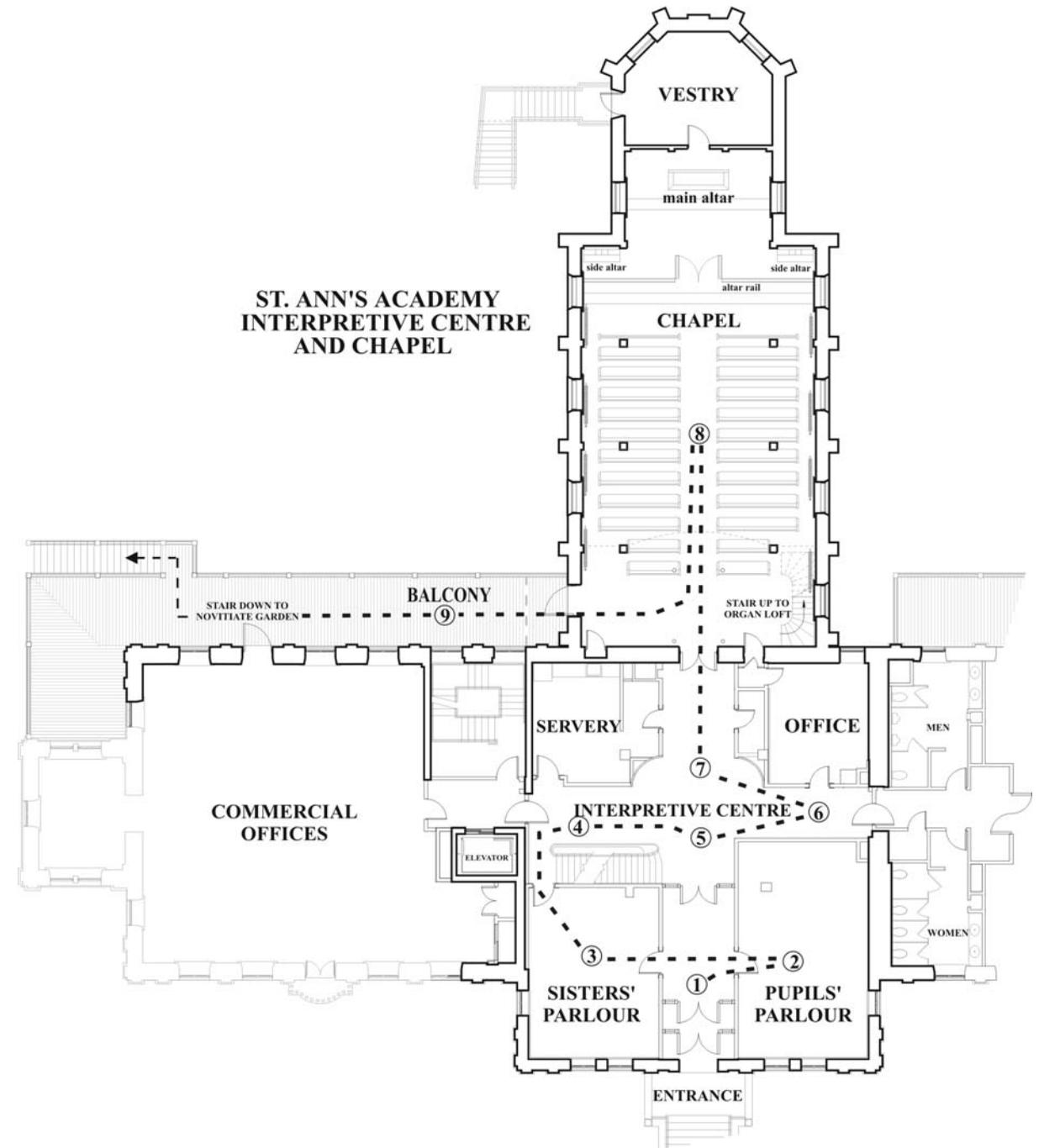
Though they were an independent congregation of women, the Sisters of St. Ann were also members of the local Catholic community and the Victoria community at large. Through their work the Sisters made important contributions to these communities, and in return received their support. Bishop Demers, who is commemorated in this plaque, was one of the more prominent of the Sisters' supporters. It was Bishop Demers who recruited the Sisters of St. Ann and brought them to Victoria in 1858. Once here he provided them first with their log cabin convent and later, in 1860, with a larger brick convent and school on View Street. In addition to the bishop, there is a long and varied list of donors to the Sisters of St. Ann ranging from the likes of Sir James Douglas, the first governor of British Columbia, to Kwong Lee, a member of Victoria's Chinese community. In many respects, St. Ann's Academy can be seen as a symbol of this long and productive relationship between the Sisters and the citizens of Victoria.

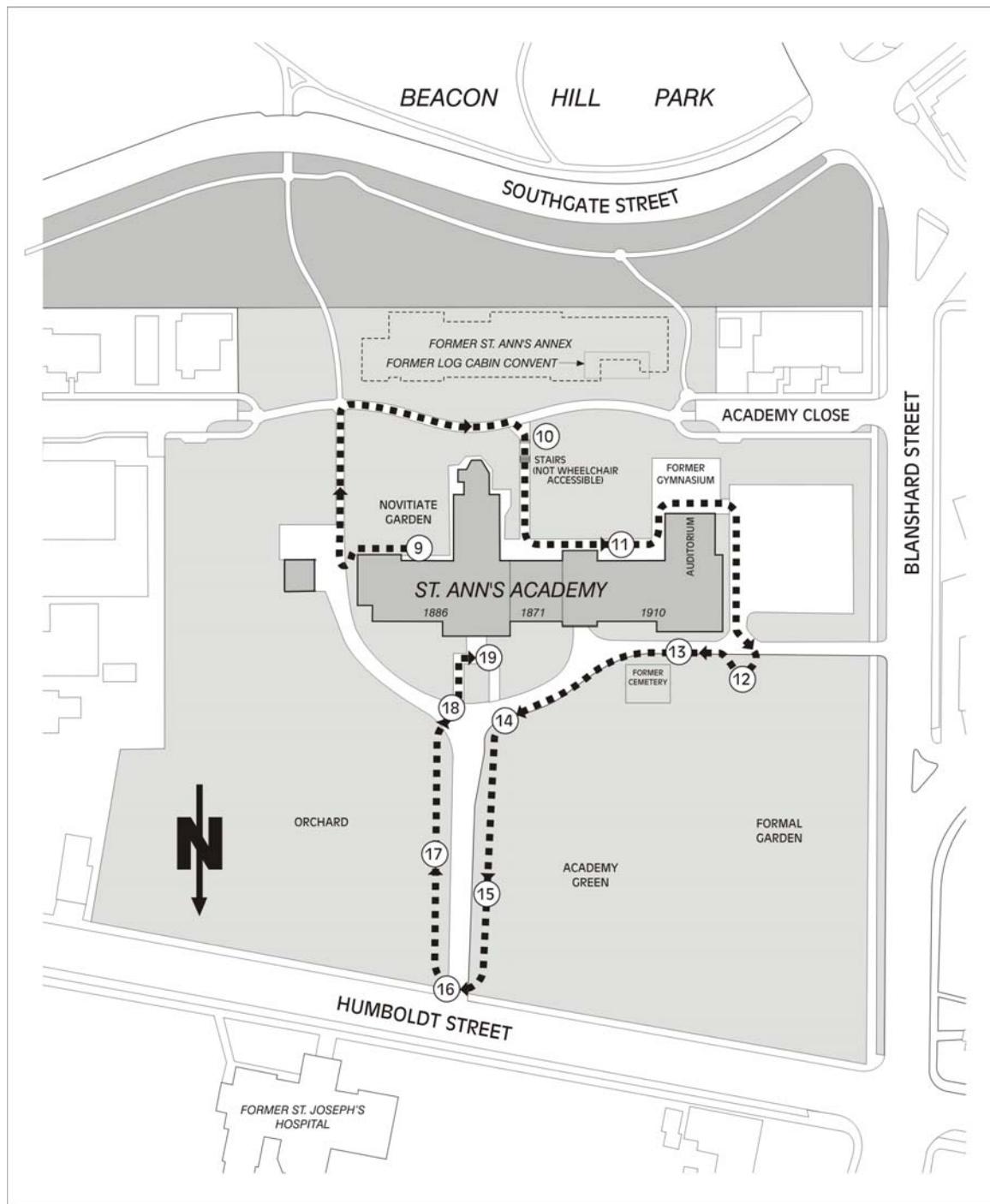
- The first phase of the construction of St. Ann's Academy in 1871 cost \$12,000. A loan from the Sisters' Mother House in Quebec, repaid with funds raised locally, financed the construction. During 1872, a call for donations generated \$1191.90 and a "Fête and Bazaar" raised \$1500. These fund-raising bazaars became an annual event.
- The renovation and restoration of St. Ann's Academy in 1997 cost \$16.5 million. Upgrading the building with a reinforced concrete liner to meet modern earthquake standards was a major expense. The building debt will be paid off over a fifty-one year term using revenues from the rental of office space in the building.

"Sisters of Charity - Bishop Demers is erecting a substantial two story brick building, 50 by 30, Between View and Yates streets, for a residence for the ladies belonging to the Sisters of Charity resident here." (Victoria Daily Colonist, June 21, 1860)

"For Aid - The Sisters of St. Ann, whose handsome new Convent School and Orphan Assylum are now underweigh on North Park street, appeal to the public of Victoria for aid in completing the edifice. A more noble or worthy institute than the Sisters of St. Ann does not exist." (Victoria Daily Colonist, November 15, 1871)

"A careful examination of the work done all round in St. Ann's Academy convinces one that our city is to be congratulated on possessing such an excellent educational institution." (Victoria Daily Colonist, June 30, 1898)





17. Orchard

Apple and plum trees can still be found in the orchard, which is being revived. Near the street, vegetables were also grown in the far northeast corner for a while, but by the 1960s students were using the corner as their own baseball diamond. The fruits and vegetables helped sustain the convent and boarding school particularly when food was being rationed during the Second World War. Sisters, hired men and sometimes students helped keep the orchard productive and beautiful until the schools' last few years when the orchard, like the rest of the grounds, became too much for the Sisters to manage.

- This orchard and the trees in it may be more than one hundred years old. Members of the British Columbia Fruit Testers have volunteered their expertise and are attempting to identify the different varieties of apples. Some appear to be familiar heritage varieties, including Transparent, Gloria Monday, Canada Red, and King of Tompkins County. Some are proving to be more difficult to identify and may be unique unnamed varieties.
- The largest tree, near the Humboldt Street wall, is a Crab Apple. A single Crab Apple was often included in an orchard to serve as a pollinator for the other trees.

“We would get in trouble because apple season would come upon us or pear season and you’ve got about 300 girls and they wanted apples, but they’re too smart to steal them off the playground. They would come back after school was over when there [were] fewer people.” (Theresa Basset-Price, Student 1961-73)

“That was the end of the grounds that had the baseball diamond and everybody played baseball whether or not you could.” (Catherine Graves, Student 1967-73)

“They were beautiful orchards and gardens and pathways that you could walk up and down there when we were meditating.” (Anonymous, Student 1940-48, Former S.S.A. 1953-80)

“When you’ve just entered and you see these gorgeous plums all ready and one of the rules was you can not eat out of the dining room. It was a real source of temptation.” (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1949-present)

16. Gate

Across the street lies the 1908 addition to what was once St. Joseph's Hospital, which the Sisters established in 1876. From this gate the three different phases of the construction of St. Ann's Academy are easily recognised. The taller section to the right (west) is the 1910 Hooper addition which housed the student dormitories and class rooms. Between this addition and the Interpretive Centre is the original 1871 convent and school. The remaining structure, including the Interpretive Centre and east wing was built in 1886. Though their construction was separated by a period of fifteen years, the 1871 and 1886 were designed as a complete structure by Brother Michaud. The local architects who interpreted Michaud's design and oversaw its construction were Charles Vereyden (1871) and John Teague (1886). They made a number of modifications, most notably the incorporation of the 1858 St. Andrew's Pro-Cathedral as the Sisters' chapel, and as a result the final design of St. Ann's in 1886 cannot be attributed to any one individual. In general, though, when completed in 1886 the building must have appeared very much as Michaud had originally envisioned it.

- Early on, the division between the Sisters' cloister and the more public areas of St. Ann's extended into the grounds, with the main drive marking the transition between the cloistered area to the east and the student spaces to the west. After the division of the grounds eased in the 1960s, students played games along the main drive and among the orchard trees.
- This entrance gate is a replica and marks the formal entryway to St. Ann's Academy. On certain occasions, such as when a wedding party arrives by horse-drawn carriage, it is tempting to imagine an earlier time when similar carriages would have passed through the gate carrying distinguished visitors to the convent.

"...the Tally Ho used to go by and they'd come out and say on the right you have the Sisters of St. Ann, who teach at the Academy, and on the left you have the Sisters of St. Joseph who do nursing ... couldn't even get their information straight. We used to come out and laugh at that ... It was still the Sisters of St. Ann on both sides." (Anonymous S.S.A. 1939 - present)

"Suddenly the walls of the new buildings faded away and there stood out the old brick convent that seemed to the child's mind the hugest building in Victoria if not the world." (Emma Chismore, Student 1874-85)

1. Parlour Entrance

For a moment, allow yourself to imagine that you are a prospective student of St. Ann's Academy, here with your parents for your first meeting with the Sisters of St. Ann (S.S.A). This Foyer, with its imposing doors and stained glass windows would be the beginning of your experiences at St. Ann's, just as it is the beginning of your tour today. Formerly a convent and girls' school operated by the Sisters of St. Ann, the building and grounds are now owned by the Provincial Capital Commission in trust for the people of British Columbia. Most of the building has been rebuilt for use as modern office space with only the historic façade remaining. However, the rooms of this Interpretive Centre retain most of their original structure and are being restored to appear as they did in the 1920s.

- Local craftspeople played an important role in the restoration of St. Ann's Academy Interpretive Centre by applying their skill and knowledge to recreating the historic appearance of these rooms.
- As much original material as possible has been reused in the restoration. Century-old cast-iron door hinges were salvaged and refurbished; original plaster work was repaired and reused; the surviving 'wavy' hand made glass was saved and used on the front of the building whenever possible; original light fixtures or matching period pieces were found and used; and even the original skeleton key locks on the parlour and chapel doors have been restored to working condition. It is hoped that these preserved historic features will serve as a link to the past for at least the next one hundred years.

"It was an old house so you kind of revered it on account of its age..." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1938-present)

"There was a sort of dignity to that place because you came up those front steps with stained glass windows and two parlours that were always immaculate...and then you had that beautiful chapel and this to me did things to people." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1929-present)

St. Ann's is very special, not just because of its obviously community and spiritual nature but also because it is our link to the East...it's a link with the rest of Canada, it's a link with Quebec." (Mary Doody Jones, St. Ann's Rescue Coalition)

"There is also a real human factor, especially with something like St. Ann's where you've got so much history of such groups of people; whether they be student or nuns you get a feeling for those people in the building." (Jim Stiven, Vintage Woodworks)

2. Pupils' Parlour

This wing of the building dates to 1886, but the story of St. Ann's Academy begins much earlier. The first four Sisters of St. Ann and a lay helper arrived in Victoria on June 5, 1858, and within two days the Sisters began offering classes at their log cabin convent. The log cabin, with an addition, and a rented house in town, were the centres of the Sisters' work until they moved into their View Street convent in 1860. In 1871 construction began on this site and from here the Sisters continued to provide educational services in Victoria until the closure of St. Ann's Academy in 1973.

- The pipe radiators are a unique feature of St. Ann's Academy. Their fittings, which are no longer made, were reused for the restoration. This created a number of problems as the threads on the pipes and fittings were stretched and pitted from their earlier use. Numerous leaks developed during the reassembly, and the sight of a frustrated plumber chasing down yet another leak was a common and sometimes amusing sight.
- All the windows in the Academy were removed and rebuilt for use in the restoration. These windows in the Interpretive Centre are an inward opening style referred to at the time of construction as "French casement windows." This style of window was more commonly used in Quebec than in Victoria, but their hardware is typical for a Victoria building.
- Window restorers were surprised to find that despite the poor quality of wood used to build them, the 1871 window frames were in far better condition than those built for 1910 addition to the Academy. The quality of wood used in these early window frames reflects the fact that St. Ann's was never meant to be a grand estate and that thoughts of economy, rather than luxury, were foremost in the minds of the Sisters of St. Ann.

"When my brother returned from the war...he came in and picked me up in full habit and swung me around the parlour, so I remember the parlour very well." (Anonymous, Student 1925-33, S.S.A. 1940-present)

"I remember it being very hush-hush...it always seemed very quiet..." (Dorothy Tubman, Student 1945-55)

"Even at that time I got the impression they were little used. They seemed like very typical Victorian front parlour - only for the best..." (Catherine Graves, Student 1967-73)

15. Academy Green

A school journal from 1924 tells us that the Sisters sacrificed Christmas gifts from their families to pay for the paved tennis courts that used to lie between the formal gardens and the avenue. The Sisters were concerned about the physical recreation of their students, but Novices and Sisters would play, too, even with the holy habits they used to wear. After the school's closing, the popular courts were converted to a parking lot for employees of St. Joseph's Hospital, but eventually returned to the grassy area we now call Academy Green.

- The renovations at St. Ann's Academy even extend to some of the plants used on site. Though the presence of holly hedges lining the main drive is historically accurate, the holly that is here now is all new. Much of the original holly still survived when the restoration began, but it was over-grown and diseased. The decision was therefore made to replace the holly with a more manageable and disease-resistant variety.
- The oak trees lining the main drive are also part of the restoration. In the past, poplars, rhododendrons, and cypress trees were used, but they all fell victim to disease. These oaks, which were purchased with donations from former students and other members of the community, were chosen for their hardiness and suitability for the conditions found on the site.

"The Sisters met the expense by selling their Christmas presents and souvenir gold nuggets which had been given them by friends and relatives, - for those were Klondike times" (Moninna McKenna, Student 1922)

"I would like to ask you a very personal question.' And I said, 'You can ask me. I might not answer, but anyway you can ask.' 'How do you get around the tennis court in those skirts?' I said, 'I don't have any trouble at all! They're not in my way and I get along fine.'" You get used to them, like you get used to anything else." (Anonymous S.S.A. 1928 - present)

"After the school closed the tennis courts were turned into a parking lot and then the whole thing was torn out all together. I don't know how old the courts must have been, they certainly weren't anywhere near original but they had gotten a good lot of use through the sixties and seventies." (Catherine Graves, Student 1967-73)

14. Plaque

When the Sisters of St. Ann decided to build this school and convent, they were not consciously creating a heritage site. They built as their needs required and finances allowed, slowly acquired land, changing it to suit their purposes, and eventually created the St. Ann's Academy that stands before you. In recognition of the historical significance of the building and grounds, and of the contribution of the Sisters of St. Ann to the history of Victoria and British Columbia, St. Ann's Academy has been designated by both the Federal and Provincial governments as a heritage site.

- The exterior of St. Ann's Academy has been restored to appear much as it did between the years 1910 and 1918. This particular time period was chosen as it was the earliest date that allowed the entire Academy building to be preserved.
- The selection of any restoration date is an issue of compromise and can never hope to truly represent the entire history of a building. Similarly, no one date can be considered more important or representative of the building than any other. This is particularly true of St. Ann's Academy which changed so frequently through its long and productive life.
- A number of smaller buildings, including a laundry, were part of the St. Ann's Academy complex. They were removed some years ago and will not be replaced.

"I'm sure that the four women who came to Victoria in 1858 never dreamt what was going to happen in the next 140 years." Anonymous S.S.A., 1949 - present

"It's not that people count less than heritage; heritage is for people..."(Mary Doody Jones, St. Ann's Rescue Coalition)

"To be able to see something the way it [was] fifty years ago is a treat for anybody I think. I think it's costing a lot of money ... but I'm just glad there's a program like that so that we can do stuff like that rather than tearing it down." (Don Bauer, Painter)

"Now that it's done I think it beautiful ... I would have wished if we were going to restore the building we could have restored it for housing for seniors, you know people don't have places to live." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1949-present)

3. Sisters' Parlour

With the closure of St. Ann's Academy the building and grounds were sold to the Provincial Government and served as offices for the Ministry of Education, as a temporary courthouse, and as a home to a variety of non-profit social service agencies. In 1990 the building was vacated to allow for private redevelopment. This development was vocally opposed by community activist groups and the project came to an abrupt end following the collapse of its financing. Numerous visions for the future of the Academy were then put forward and it was not until 1995, following much debate, community input, and compromise, that work began on the St. Ann's Academy you see today.

- Almost all of the woodwork in the Interpretive Centre is grained (painted) to look like oak. In the past, with the lower cost of labour, it was more economical to purchase inexpensive local wood and paint it to look like more valuable or exotic species. For the restoration of the Interpretive Centre and chapel, modern rates of pay made the painting and replication of the wood-graining one of the larger expenses.
- The painters working on the restoration received special training on faux finishing. The actual process of wood-graining, though time consuming, is not difficult. The greater challenge facing the painters was the need to accurately replicate the style of wood-graining that the original painters had used. To assist them, the painters would work with an original door or piece of trim side by side with the piece they were working on.
- Work to recreate the historic appearance of these parlours is ongoing. One project currently being pursued is the location and acquisition of Edwardian period furnishings that match those used by the Sisters of St. Ann. A photo-catalogue of suitable pieces has been developed as a guide for future purchases. Donations of furniture suitable for our needs would also be most gratefully received.

"They did entail...privatizing it, which I felt that was a misuse of the public trust. I registered my protest to that and then found there were other people with the same concern, so we decided we should function as a group." (Tom Loring, St. Ann's Rescue Coalition)

"I think the greatest issue - above heritage, above process, above social justice, above environment which is what the grounds were about...was the word I use and other people used - was sacrilege to this special place." (Mary Doody Jones, St. Ann's Rescue Coalition)

4. The Congregation

Founded in 1850 by Mother Marie Anne Blondin in Vaudreuil Quebec, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann was only eight years old when the first four missionary sisters departed for Victoria. Victoria too was in its infancy, and in the midst of transition from a fur trade outpost to a booming centre of the Fraser River gold rush. As settlement followed and expanded in the wake of later quests for gold and riches, the Sisters of St. Ann joined the ranks of pioneers on the growing settlement frontier. From Victoria the Sisters established schools and hospitals to serve the needs of settlers and First Nations alike in British Columbia, the Yukon, and Alaska. This was St. Joseph's Province, and at its centre was the Provincial House, St. Ann's Academy. Prior to the closure of the Academy the Provincial House was transferred to the Sisters' Begbie Street facility from which they continue their ministry and remain an active force in the community.

- The Sisters' community or residence was beyond the door to your left as you exited the parlour and was home to a regular staff of 35 Sisters. It was a cloistered space, open only to the Sisters. It now contains office spaces and, much like it was in the past, is off limits to visitors to the Interpretive Centre.
- The prominent place in the history of the Sisters of St. Ann held by Mother Marie Anne Blondin, the Foundress of the Sisters of St. Ann, and Bishop Ignatius Bourget, the Bishop of Montreal when the Congregation was established in 1850, is commemorated in the busts flanking the entrance to the Chapel.

"I'm very interested in St. Ann's Academy because it was the nucleus of the Sisters of St. Ann in the West." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1938-present)

"Mother Foundress, oh indeed, she was an inspiration to every Sister of St. Ann..." (Anonymous, Student 1925-33, S.S.A. 1940-present)

"As a nun, we were told that one of the significant things about the Sisters of St. Ann from other orders is that we were not in a mold...the Sisters of St. Ann were very unique and we were allowed to be individualistic and individualized." (Anonymous, Student 1940-48, Former S.S.A. 1953-80)

"It was a place that always opened up more opportunity...it kept giving me the chance to develop and grow, be who I was." (Anonymous, Student 1948-52, S.S.A. 1952-present)

13. Cemetery

Every May, two Sisters led a procession of students through the grounds in honour of Mary, the mother of Jesus. The procession concluded next to the formal gardens with the crowning of the statue of Mary in the Academy's cemetery, where Sisters of St. Ann were once buried. The Sisters first cemetery was established in 1864 near the log cabin convent and was relocated here in 1889. Though no new burials occurred here after 1908, the existing graves served as a compelling reminder of the Sisters long presence in Victoria and the sacrifices they made. After the school's closing in 1973, the Sisters' remains were moved to Ross Bay Cemetery.

- The two large trees flanking the entrance to the Interpretive Centre are California Redwoods (Sequoias) planted by the family of Cecilia and Anna McQuade. Cecilia and Anna were early students of the Sisters' and they both chose to enter the Order. At that time there was no Novitiate in Victoria and the two young women were required to travel east to the Sisters' Mother House in Quebec for their training.
- Prior to the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad in 1885, travel between Quebec and Victoria was very difficult. This in part accounts for the fact that before the 1889 establishment of the Novitiate in Victoria only five local women chose to travel east and enter the Order of the Sisters of St. Ann.

"The other vivid religious memory is that of the May procession and crowning of the statue of our Lady in the gardens. We wound our way through the grounds as we sang and then put our own wreaths by the statue. Even today (or in past years) when the grounds were strewn with garbage and weeds it was not them that I saw but young women from 6-18 singing amidst beautiful grounds on sunny days." (Anonymous Student)

"The precious remains of our Saintly deceased will not be removed to Ross Bay cemetery, but will be kept on our grounds, if among other reasons only to remind us of their heroic lives." (ASSAV - Council Minutes, May 28, 1912)

"There was always a lot of gossip saying ... are there bodies under there, are there not bodies under there ... We knew it was a cemetery and it was always revered actually. I never remember walking through." (Anonymous, Student 1940-48, Former S.S.A. 1953-80)

12. Formal Garden

Much has changed since the Sisters first arrived in Victoria, including the ground you stand on. At one time this garden was a small ravine through which a stream emptied into James Bay. In its original state it was useful to the local *Songhees* as a resource site and transportation route. By 1911 the land had been filled and leveled and only then became productive for the Sisters. Here an elaborate garden of flowers, walking paths, and rare trees and shrubs was established for the enjoyment and recreation of the Sisters and senior students. In later years the gardens became overgrown and eventually, following the closure of St. Ann's, became a refuge for the homeless and party seekers. As a focus of the efforts to save St. Ann's Academy, the grounds are being reclaimed and are maintained as a public open space for all to enjoy.

- The Academy gardens were designed and built by Father Vullings who became acquainted with the grounds while convalescing across the street at St. Joseph's Hospital.

"I wonder if any of these dear Sisters have ever realized the effect in our lives the beautiful Convent gardens have had." (Emma Chismore, student 1874-85)

"They were wonderful for teaching science ... you had every kind of tree possible in that garden ... so that you could teach botany. You had your science class prepared for you right on the grounds." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1938-present)

"Quite often, too, with the grounds, we liked walking on the outside because we could sneak over the fence and stuff like that and sometimes there were boys who would come talk to us and naturally that's where you would want to go." (Carol Ball, student 1947-59)

"That garden was too much for one person, I couldn't do it all ... it was a full-time job." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1925 - present)

"When I think of the kids, just let loose in that front garden. Nobody stopped them from running all over it you know and those little gazebos out there, those were the best hiding places you know, those darn kids who want to skip a class ..." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1929-present)

5. Novitiate Staircase

As both a convent and school, there were clearly defined boundaries within the Academy that separated the Sisters' community from the more public areas of the school. This area that makes up the Interpretive Centre was a transitional space open to invited guests and students and, while still part of the convent, was outside of the cloister. One exception, however, is this staircase which led to the third floor Novitiate where new Sisters, known as Novices, received their training. Though not marked by a doorway or other barrier it was an extension of the cloister into this more public space and the restrictions that applied to it were known to all.

- The handrail for this staircase was removed from the building during an earlier restoration effort. None of the parts were labeled, making the process of reassembly much like putting together a puzzle. A single worker pursued this project and took more than one month to complete his task.
- The handrail represents one of only a few naturally finished wood surfaces in the Interpretive Centre. The stair treads, however, have a painted wood-grain finish.
- The bell-rope connects to a working bell in the bell tower. The original bell disappeared and a replacement has been donated. Give the rope a pull if you like, but you can only hear the bell if you are outside the Interpretive Centre.

"The centre of the stair was hollowed out and it would only be the Sisters' steps that hollowed it out because that staircase was considered out of bounds for everybody else; it was considered part of the cloister...I think that very building had a sense of history that didn't exist in other places and I would think of the generations of nuns who had climbed those stairs before me; it was a nice feeling." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1949-present)

"The mystery of having seen those novices in their white veils climbing those stairs and wondering if they were on their way to heaven or if they just had a special place up there." (Anonymous, Student 1925-33, S.S.A. 1940-present)

"We were dying of curiosity to get beyond those doors, on to what was called the cloistered side..." (Anonymous, Student 1950-53, S.S.A. 1953-present)

6. St. Ann's Academy

Beyond the door at the end of this hall, educational activities took place in the Hooper wing and on the third floor of the 1871 wing, with administrative activities on the second floor. Now Ministry of Advanced Education employees work in the spaces that were once dormitories, art and music studios, classrooms, the library and the museum. Over the years more than 35,000 students received their education from the Sisters of St. Ann in Victoria. Some of these were boys, who attended in the early primary grades, but it is for its education of girls and young women that the Academy is best remembered. Here boarders and day scholars were guided by women who were accomplished in education, art, music, commerce, and administration and who acknowledged no limits to their students' capacity to learn.

- Much of the wainscoting in this building bears its original painted wood-grain finish and has been brought together here from various parts of the building. A close inspection suggests that the painter worked very quickly.
- Even the flooring of the Interpretive Centre hallways has been temporarily painted with a faux wood finish. During the 1920s, these hallways were covered with linoleum. At that time, linoleum was a very common material, but today it is rarely used and available in only limited patterns and colours. It is, therefore, both time consuming and expensive to find linoleum that comes close to matching the original.

"Discipline was formative and not rigid... the rules were strict because they were training us...to become people of integrity..." (Anonymous, Student 1925-33, S.S.A. 1940-present)

"I was very close to my students and I really had a good relationship with them, even to the point that one of the Prefect of Studies, an older Sister, accused me of having too friendly a relationship with my students." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1946-present)

"We knew what girls were capable of...and I think that long before people realized that girls are quite capable of doing mathematics and science we were saying 'Yes, you'll do it...'" (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1949-present)

"Our role models were principals of schools, administrators of hospitals - as women - so we had very good role models in that way." (Darlene Southwell, Student 1956-59)

11. Playground

When the Sisters of St. Ann first arrived in Victoria, they were commonly known as the Sisters of Charity. Although this name may not have been entirely accurate, it was an appropriate description of the Sisters and their work. Throughout its operational life, St. Ann's Academy was an independent school and received no government financing. Students attending the Academy were therefore required to pay an annual tuition. However, to ensure that their school was open to both rich and poor, the education of many students was subsidized at the Sisters' expense. Similarly, the Sisters' charity extended to less fortunate members of the community. Along side this primary students' playground, the Sisters operated a soup kitchen from a window beneath the chapel.

- If you look beneath the trees lining Academy Close you will see a small brick platform. From this position a statue of the Virgin Mary watched over the Academy students as they played.
- The bare concrete structure at the far end of the lawn marks the location of the school's gymnasium. Sister Osithe, the Academy's much admired art teacher, designed the building.
- As you proceed to the next stop on your tour, you will pass the auditorium with its rows of large stained glass windows. Once the site of student performances and graduation ceremonies, it is now used by the Ministry of Advanced Education and is available for public rentals.

"Destitute Orphans will be received GRATIS as Day Schollars; and parents actually not able to pay are requested to call at the Establishment." (First Prospectus, 1858)

"I don't think that there was ever any question that they would keep us out because we couldn't pay up front..." (Catherine Graves, Student 1967-73)

"I remember when we used to play...in the back of the school...sometimes we would see - I guess they must have been poor people - that the Sisters were giving them food..." (Lois McGee, Student 1952-59)

"With them [the Sisters of St. Ann] the question has never been, Is he a Catholic? but simply, Is he poor, friendless and an orphan?" (Victoria Daily Colonist, November 15, 1871)

10. Log Cabin Convent

Behind the Academy is the original site of the log cabin convent. The building was purchased by Bishop Demers in 1855 from Leon Morell, a *Canadien* employee of the Hudson's Bay Company. Morell's wife, Adelaide, a *Stikine* woman, had died shortly before the sale, leaving their Métis daughter, Emilie, to become the first orphan placed under the Sisters' care in 1858. The St. Ann's Annex, an often forgotten feature of St. Ann's Academy, was also located in this area. Built as a primary school in 1929, the Annex received additions in 1958 and 1967, and also in 1967 became St. Ann's Secondary School. The removal of the Annex and the closure of the street it faced onto, creates a new green space linking the Academy grounds and Beacon Hill Park. There was always a close relationship between the Academy and the park, with Beacon Hill Park serving as a welcome venue for the students' and Sisters' activities.

- The log cabin described above by Sister Marie Angèle still exists and can be found on the grounds of the Royal British Columbia Museum next to Helmcken House. Though commonly described as a log cabin, the actual building style is known as *post-on-sill*. This style of construction was well known in Quebec and was spread throughout the territories of the Hudson's Bay Company by its French Canadian employees.

"Our house - a log cabin - is thirty feet by eighteen and clapboarded...Exteriorly it is all right enough, but inside it is quite different. The log joints have not been filled in, and there is no ceiling, but the floor is like those in Canada. The cabin is separated in two by rough lumber; in the middle of this partition is a double chimney." (Sister Mary Angèle, S.S.A., 1858)

"High school began in Grade 8 [and continued] through Grade 12, and the little people were on this side of the street and the big people were on that side, and there was not much mixing..." (Catherine Graves, Student 1967-73)

"That's where we went to school. Even though we were physically in the annex the picture of St. Ann's is the big building." (Aileen Lingwood, Student 1965-67)

"When it was St. Thomas Aquinas day... the nuns and we would...walk to the park and they gave us Revels [ice cream]..." (Carol Ball, Student 1947-59)

"We used to do English classes in Beacon Hill Park which was a great way to do an English class." (Catherine Graves, Student 1967-73)

7. Chapel Entrance

On your left, as you approach the entrance to the chapel, was the Sisters' infirmary. Originally, a door connected the infirmary to the chapel, allowing the elderly or ailing Sisters the opportunity to follow the Mass without leaving their beds. The chapel began its life in 1858 as St. Andrew's church, and was built by Brother Joseph Michaud, for Bishop Modeste Demers, to serve as Victoria's first Roman Catholic Cathedral. The interior of the church was not completed until 1860 and as construction progressed, Brother Michaud became the first priest to be ordained in the church, thus becoming Father Michaud. Eventually outgrown by its congregation, the small wooden church was moved from its home across Humboldt Street, where the former St. Joseph's Hospital now stands, and incorporated into the 1886 expansion of St. Ann's to become the Sisters' chapel. It is interesting to note that Father Michaud also provided the original plans for St. Ann's Academy. The old cathedral played no part in his plans for the Academy, however, and the chapel he designed for the building would have occupied the area now filled with the parlours, infirmary, priest's breakfast room, and the rooms above.

- While the Academy stood empty, vandals gained entry into the chapel by breaking through one of the stained glass windows of the chapel doors. Using the surviving window as a guide, skilled craftspeople successfully rebuilt the damaged window. The challenge now is remembering which of the windows is the original.

"The Sisters began their training to be Sisters of St. Ann and until recently they died at St. Ann's because it was the infirmary of the Sisters of St. Ann. So it was the beginning and the end of the Sister's life; it was all encompassing." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1938-present)

"Those old nuns...liked that proximity to the rest of the community. They were in an infirmary but it was next to the community room, they had a door to the chapel if they wanted to pray..." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1929-present)

"When the lower portion of the building is completed, the whole interior of the church will be one of the finest places of worship in the city, and will reflect the taste and skill of Father Michaud." (Victoria Daily Colonist, November 23, 1860)

8. Chapel

Despite many changes throughout the history of St. Ann's Academy, its role as a centre of Catholic education remained consistent. This chapel symbolizes that role. Brother Michaud patterned this church on the ornately decorated baroque rural churches he knew in Quebec. During the 1960s, the Catholic Church was swept by a wave of change associated with Vatican II and many of the chapel's features were modernized. The decorations were simplified, the main altar and altar rail removed, and the whole space was painted a somber grey. Later, following the closure of St. Ann's Academy in 1973, the chapel fell victim to a period of neglect. Now restored to its 1920s appearance, the chapel serves as an interfaith rental facility and is available for weddings and other appropriate activities.

- Heritage restoration consultants carefully considered historical photographs and documents and made detailed analyses of surviving paint and structural details to assist them in developing a vision of the chapel's appearance during the chosen restoration period.
- In some instances, as with the altar, original features of the chapel were lost and a replica has been created. In other cases, a replacement piece that is similar to the original in age and appearance might be used.
- If you move forward to the altar rail and look up towards the back of the chapel you can see the Casavant organ that the Sisters purchased in 1913. It is in full working order and is often played during weddings here at St. Ann's Academy.

"In the afternoon...we'd all go in and the sun would be setting...through the stained glass windows, it was beautiful, very restful." (Mary Flanagan, Student 1926-37)

"On St. Ann's day we'd all come in there and we'd have to go right up to the altar and we'd pronounce our vows..." (Anonymous, Boarder 1936, S.S.A. 1939-present)

"Many Sisters did not want to see the altar changed and some of the structures removed, many did..." (Anonymous, Student 1925-33, S.S.A. 1940-present)

"It was heartbreaking...you had green algae all over the chapel walls." (Mary Doody Jones, St. Ann's Rescue Coalition)

9. Balcony / Novitiate Garden

This Balcony is an extension of the Sisters' community and overlooks the Novitiate Garden. With the establishment of the Novitiate at St. Ann's in 1889, local women, freed from the burden of traveling to Quebec, entered the order in increased numbers and helped to satisfy the need for English-speaking Sisters to work in the institutions of St. Joseph's Province. This garden offered the novices a secluded space of their own for recreation, though still under the watchful eyes of the professed Sisters. By 1968 the Novitiate at St. Ann's was closed and relocated to the Sisters' new facility at Queenswood House. At a time of considerable change within the church and society in general, fewer women chose to enter religious orders while many professed Sisters returned to secular life.

- If you look through the two balcony windows closest to the Chapel you can see a stairwell that is part of the new concrete structure that supports the heritage brick façade and original roof structure of St. Ann's Academy.

"At that time that seemed to me to be the ultimate you could do with your life. There was no CUSO or any organization like that... so I became a Sister." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1949-present)

"I entered in Lachine Quebec...in 1946, I was eighteen...I thought, and I still do think, that God called me..." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1946-present)

"We had a big summer house there...we used to sit in there and...relax together or do a little sewing or fancy work..." (Anonymous, S.S.A. 1928-present)

"We always had to be a little careful because you know young novices could be quite rowdy and people were in the chapel trying to pray." (Anonymous, Student 1948-52, S.S.A. 1952-present)

"Just as it became natural for me to enter, it became natural for me to leave. I felt that that wasn't what I was called to anymore." (Anonymous, Student 1957-63, Former S.S.A. 1964-69)

"I still have a copy of the letter I wrote when I left..." (Anonymous, Former S.S.A. 1964-69)