

moderate the addition of the vestry at the front of the church. The old wooden vestry was removed and replaced with one of stone similar to that in the main structure. Three of the panels of the large chancel window were relocated by the side altars and a new panel was added to balance the set. The original high wooden altar was replaced with one of North Grant stone topped by a dome or baladichino. Repainting and sanctuary alterations were carried out in 1974.

St. Ninian

*Preclarus doctor in orbe
nomine qui Ninia Patrio de sermone dictus*

*a teacher famous in the world
called Ninian in his native language
— Miraculi Nynie Episcopi*

The Cathedral is under the patronage of St. Ninian, an obscure figure whose name is identified with the earliest foundation of the Church in what is today Scotland. In the eighth century, Bede made a brief reference to him which has been the starting point of all subsequent research pertaining to Ninian:

"In the five hundred and sixty-fifth year of our Lord's Incarnation . . . there came into Britain from Ireland a priest and abbot . . . by name Columba to preach the word of God to the provinces of the northern Picts, that is to say, to those who are separated from their southern regions by steep and rugged mountain ridges. For these southern Picts, who dwell on this side of these same mountains, had long before, as the story goes, forsaken the error of idolatry and received the faith of truth when the word was preached to them by Nynia, a most reverend Bishop and holy man of the nation of the Britons, who had been regularly instructed at Rome in the faith and mystery of the truth; whose episcopal see, distinguished by the name and church of St. Martin bishop, where he himself with many other saints rests in the body, the English nation has just now begun to govern. The place, which belongs to the province of the Bernicians, is called in the vernacular "At the White House" (Ad Candidam

St. Ninian's Cathedral in Antigonish is the Episcopal seat for the Catholic Diocese of Antigonish which includes Antigonish, Pictou, and Guysborough counties on the eastern Nova Scotia mainland, and the entire Cape Breton Island. This see was first created in 1844 as the Diocese of Arichat with the seat at Arichat in southeastern Cape Breton. From the beginning, however, the bishops usually lived in Antigonish and in 1886 the see was officially renamed the Diocese of Antigonish, making the parish church of St. Ninian the official Cathedral.

The present stone Cathedral is the third church to serve the needs of the people of Antigonish. The town started its ecclesiastical history as a mission of St. Margaret's Parish, Arisaig. St. Margaret's, the first Catholic parish in this county, had been founded in 1792 by immigrants from the Scottish Highlands. In 1810, the first Catholic chapel in town was built southwest of the present Bank of Nova Scotia building. This was under the patronage of St. John but, in 1812, it was renamed St. Ninian, and the parish got a resident priest in 1815. To serve the growing population, under the stewardship of Rev. William Fraser in 1824, a new St. Ninian's church, 72 feet long, 45 feet wide, with a spire of 110 feet high and a capacity of 800 people, was built. Its location was on Main Street near the site of the present John Paul Center and Farrell's Texaco service station. This building served the community for fifty years.

Father Colin F. MacKinnon was appointed Bishop in 1852. In October 1865, when the parish had 400 families, Bishop MacKinnon presented the idea of a new stone church to a meeting of parishioners who approved the plan. Finances were discussed and two possible sites were considered, one being that of the present St. Martha's Hospital, and the other the present location of the Cathedral. On October 22, 1866, Bishop MacKinnon turned the first sod for the excavation trenches and the hauling of stone from the quarries at North Grant and Brierly Brook began early in January of the following year (1867). On May 16, 1867, Ronald MacGillivray, stonecutter of Hallowell Grant, signed an agreement with Bishop MacKinnon and Father Hugh Gillis, the pastor, to build the foundation and the walls up to the window ledges.



Casam), because he there built a church of stone in a manner to which the Britons were not accustomed."

Two eighth-century poems about Ninian and a twelfth-century life of Ninian have been found which shed light on his life, and we depend on these plus limited archaeological and linguistic evidence for our knowledge of him.

Behind the historical texts lies the figure of a real man who made a lasting impression on those around him. It is now quite generally agreed that he was a fifth-century Briton and from linguistic and literary evidence it seems fairly clear that he founded the original Candida Casa (near the location later known as Withorn) at some date between 400 and 420 A.D. The name of this early Christian missionary to Scotland lives on here in New Scotland where the Cathedral under his patronage stands as a monument to the faith and courage of our forefathers.

In the absence of the Bishop in Rome on official business, the major work of managing the construction was in the hands of the hard-working and zealous Father Gillis. On June 29, 1867, two days before Confederation Day, the cornerstone was laid and the foundation blessed by Very Rev. Dr. John Cameron, then rector of the cathedral at Arichat and vicar general of the diocese.

The building of the Cathedral was the work of Sylvester O'Donoghue, a native of Coolruss, Co. Wicklow, Ireland. Trenches were dug for the perimeter of the church, the foundation walls being 43 inches wide. The main body of the church is maintained on square piers 38 to 40 inches wide and about 80 inches high. Along the top of the piers, hand-hewn wooden beams, 10 inches in width and 12 inches in depth, are laid, supporting the main floor. There is no basement; holes were dug to accommodate the piers with earth fill around them. The roof, which was originally slate from Scotland, is carried on heavy timber trusses which bear on columns and the outside wall. Mr. O'Donoghue carried out Bishop MacKinnon's instructions, especially those on the placing of a cluster of shamrocks between two sprigs of thistle in the carved stone about the central door, which is flanked high up by two stone tablets displaying the amorial bearings of Pope Pius IX and those of Bishop MacKinnon. The name of the architect, A. Leveque of Montreal, and the builder, Mr O'Donoghue, are recorded here. Near the top in raised letters are two Gaelic words: "Tigh Dhe" (House of God). The edifice, 170 feet long by 70 feet broad, is of local limestone and sandstone in Roman Basilica style. It has two square towers each 125 feet high. It was constructed in seven years at a cost of 40,000 pounds, which would vary in value from \$160,000 to \$200,000. The seating capacity was for 1,500. The organ, composed of 700 pipes, is an imposing instrument, bought from Messrs. Hook of Boston. The bells, cast in Dublin, were dedicated to St. Ninian, St. Joseph, St. Columba, and St. Margaret of Scotland and suspended in the western tower in August 1874. The next month saw the plastering completed, staging removed and the chancel window installed.

St. Ninian's was dedicated on Sunday, September 13, 1874, with much elaborate liturgical celebration.

ST. NINIAN'S CATHEDRAL

Antigonish, Nova Scotia

A Short History and Guide



Although the people had referred to the new church as a Cathedral from the time it was begun, it did not officially become a cathedral until the seat of the diocese was moved to Antigonish from Arichat in 1886. The remains of two of the founding bishops, MacKinnon and Fraser, rest in tombs in a vault beneath the sanctuary.

The Interior

The interior decoration was not carried out until 1899. The work was done by Ozias LeDuc, a Quebec artist who had studied in Paris. Some of the paintings are believed to be free adaptations of works by Bonnat and Hofman, two 19th-century European artists.

Over the center isle are frescoes depicting the three mysteries of the Catholic faith — the Nativity, the Crucifixion, and the Ascension — plus a fourth depicting Christ as the Good Shepherd.

Between the arches at the sides of the main aisle ceiling are frescoes of the apostles and some early saints also by LeDuc. The stations of the cross, painted on canvas affixed to the walls, are by LeDuc or one of his students.

The large painting of St. Ninian, at the rear of the church on the "Epistle" side, is the oldest in the church. It was executed by an Italian artist, Apollonio, as a commission from Bishop Colin MacKinnon, and placed in the church of St. Ninian on Main Street in 1857. The painting was moved to the Cathedral on its completion in 1874. Notice how the slave is depicted as being emancipated by Christian faith and placed on an equal level with his master, the highland chief. This painting was carefully restored by experts in 1957.

The painting of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph over the side altars came to the Cathedral in 1876 as presents from the Very Rev. Canon Walsh of New Hampshire.

Little now remains of the original sanctuary decoration; major changes were made in 1937. Originally there was a large stained-glass window in the sanctuary above the altar. This was removed and blocked in to accom-