

Hidden Gem - St. Anne's Anglican Church

If you are a Group of Seven fan, have we got a treat for you!

On a quiet section of Gladstone Avenue, just across from the Cadbury factory, you will find this month's hidden gem - St. Anne's Anglican Church, one of Canada's Historic Sites. The church was built under the watchful eye of Reverend Lawrence Skey who served as rector for over 30 years. After taking a year off to study church architecture abroad, he returned to Toronto and held an architectural competition to select his designer. The winner was a young Toronto architect, Ford Howland, who came up with the unique idea to design the church in Byzantine style and constructed the church from 1907 - 1908. The structural principal is the magnificent central dome (which creates incredible acoustics in the room) and the outstanding display of stained glass windows. But what make this church incredibly unique are the paintings found in the dome and surrounding the altar.

Reverend Skey was a patron of the arts and befriended artist J.E.H. MacDonald at the Toronto Arts and Letters Club in the early 1920s. Unbeknownst to him, his friendship with this established artist would forever cement his church in Canadian history. In 1923, Mr. MacDonald assembled ten Canadian artists including his son, Thoreau, and two other members of the Group of Seven, F.H. Varley and Frank Carmichael, to create the murals for St Anne Church's. It was their only religious commission. Interestingly, the artists all worked on canvasses independently in their studios, working harmoniously with the general design by focusing on a particular palate of colours and drawing from a common stock of materials for their supplies. The magnificent results were officially recognized in 1997 when the federal government declared the church a national historic site.

The church is only open for service on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. I suggest sneaking in early and having the pleasure of hearing the choir rehearse as you quietly take in these fascinating walls. There are handouts at the back of the church which easily guide you through the murals, pointing out details such as the recognizable Group of Seven Georgian Bay touches and the self-portrait of F.H. Varley as one of the shepherds at the Nativity.

[St. Anne's Anglican Church](#) truly is a gem not to be missed.

This month's hidden gem from Les Clef's d'Or is by:

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