



ST. PETER'S CATHEDRAL'S NOTABLE FEATURES

- ❖ St. Peter's is architecturally notable for two reasons:

One of Montana's **best expressions of the Arts & Crafts movement** which began originally in Great Britain in the 1880s & was "...a reaction against industrialization and the quality of manufactured goods, the movement is marked by a desire to revive the craftsmanship associated with traditional arts, a 'form follows function' philosophy and an idealized view of the medieval craft guilds."

And, of the **gesamtkunstwerk concept** [*gesamt*/in total + *kunst*/form of creative expression + *werk*/work] which, in this context, means: "...circumstances where an architect is responsible for the design and/or overseeing of the building's totality: shell, accessories, furnishings, and landscape... An increasing trend among architects in the 18th and 19th centuries was to control every facet of an architectural commission. As well as being responsible for the structure itself, they tried to extend their role to also include designing (or at least vetting) every aspect of the interior work. This included not only the interior architectural features but also the design of furniture, carpets, wallpaper, fabrics, light fixtures, and door-handles."

- ❖ Designed in 1930-31 by Spokane architect Harold C. Whitehouse of Whitehouse & Price whose many other ecclesiastical works include Church of the Holy Spirit (Missoula, 1915), St. James Episcopal Church (Dillon), St. James Episcopal Church (Deer Lodge), St. John's (Butte) as well as the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist (Spokane, 1925-1929 and 1948-1954) and Temple Emanuel (Spokane, 1928).
- ❖ Whitehouse's design for St. Peter's embodies Arts & Crafts style values: honesty in design & materials, hand-made elements & furnishings, and use of local building materials. In discussing the Cathedral's design & furnishings, he frequently invokes the word "medieval."

- ❖ **Reredos** from the Anglo-French words "rere [rear]" + "dos" [dosser] the back, like a basket on back" was designed by Whitehouse who exclaimed to Henry H. Daniels, in April 1932, nearly 92 years ago: "Here I am in Boston & busy as a bee on the reredos, the [carved] woodwork is all done & I have received it at the [Irving & Casson] factory. The work is so far beyond my expectations that I was simply overjoyed. It is by far the best piece of Gothic work I have ever done..." The painted panels were executed by Herrick & Calvert of NYC; Calvert of the firm had been a Tiffany employee before partnering with other decorative & stained glass companies.

- ❖ **Pulpit** designed by Whitehouse & manufactured by American Seating Co., Grand Rapids, MI; note linenfold Gothic ornamentation carved to resemble vertically-folded linen, originated in Flanders & spread to France, Germany & England by late 15th century, the only ornamentation **not** derived from architecture but textiles.

- ❖ **Baptistry** designed by Whitehouse, "...the man [at Walker Cut Stone, Co., Tacoma] who will do the carving is one of the best stone carvers in this section of the country ...I am making special designs for the tile floor [Pewabic Pottery, Detroit] of the same which will be in blue & tans..." Oak fount cover's iron elements fabricated in Spokane & wood paneling with carved lettering by Spokane Woodworking Co.

Honesty in design & materials: there is no steel frame, St. Peter's is a freestanding masonry building, i.e., the stone, known as Helena brownstone & quarried transmits the load to the ground. The function & appearance of the nave's open-timbered roof, with gusset plates forged by blacksmith Philip Huber according to family lore. Fortunately, there was no documented damage to St. Peter's during the earthquakes of October 1935 although long-time parishioner Margaret Sieben Hibbard recalls dancing in the undercroft when the first quake hit & feeling the floor go up & down!

Hand-made elements & furnishings: Whitehouse designed the credence, floor & altar candlesticks, pulpit, baptismal font, bishop's and priests' sedile, & cross atop the rood beam & all were custom-made for St. Peter's following the architect's designs. He wrote: "With reference to memorials in general, I would certainly keep away from catalogs on these things, because if we design all the parts that go into the church, they will be in good harmony & it has been my experience that this stock stuff is more or less in the way of misfit, & anything that is designed for its particularly place is always satisfactory...I regret very much that we have to use the brass railing [from the old St Peter's] for the altar but of course if it can't be helped, we will put it in but it will certainly detract from the richness of the chancel. [gold or silver was Whitehouse's preferred materials]"

Use of local building materials: exterior walls of church portion of building are composed of "Helena brownstone" quarried near Montana City at T.C. Power's quarry; brick for the parish house wing most likely purchased from Western Clay Mfg Co. operated by Archie Bray, Sr. (The limestone trim, however, is from Indiana.)

Components/furnishings of note:

- ❖ Whitehouse to Daniels, July 1931: "...There is one thing we should keep in mind at this time & that is to keep the furniture along the line of pulpit, choir stall, etc. as fine as possible, because of the fact that the interior of the church is extremely plain, & **we are depending upon the chancel furnishings to enrich the church.**"
- ❖ In 1937, Whitehouse designs & fabricates, in his basement, the **rood beam cross:** cross to be of myrtle wood which grows only in Marshfield, OR & Jerusalem, noting its color should contrast well with chancel ceiling; precious Czech jewels of green symbolizing growth, love, hope, fidelity & immortality; red symbolic of love, holy zeal, martyrdom & the Holy Ghost & Pentecost. Sunburst at center is the "old medieval delineation of the sun...symbolic of the Sun of Righteousness. portraits of the four Evangelists at points & base of cross (executed by Spokane artist Bertha Ballou), circle is fine twisted wire symbolizing the Circle of Eternity rendered by Delos Ransom.
- ❖ **Altar** designed by Whitehouse who writes: "I am tremendously enthusiastic about the altar, & the people who are going to do the work are Irving & Casson, the foremost wood carvers in the country. I am going to be pretty bold in stating that I think it will be the finest altar in Montana..." [Irving & Casson founded in Boston in 1875 specializing in interior woodwork & mantels. In 1914-15 merged with A.H. Davenport to form "...one of the most significant American furniture makers of the 19th & 20th centuries. Long recognized for its fine craftsmanship of furniture & interior woodwork, the company also provided complete interior design services. From cathedral altars to bedrooms, from the White House to a suburban home, Irving & Casson—A.H. Davenport Co. occupied a unique place in the history of American decorative arts until it closed in 1974.]