

St. Ann's Academy

& the architecture of faith

[Home](#)[Architects](#)[Religious Architecture & Pioneer Life](#)[Decoration](#)[Contact & Acknowledgements](#)[Bibliography](#)

Welcome

St. Ann's Academy in Victoria, BC, was a Catholic convent and girls school. It was constructed in stages between 1858 and 1910, and the building became a special space for women, Catholicism, and French Canada in the capital of British Columbia



Architects

Fr. Joseph Michaud

Charles Verheyden

John Teague

Thomas Hooper

Sister Mary Osithe

Religious Architecture

French-Canadian Architecture

Success & Permanence

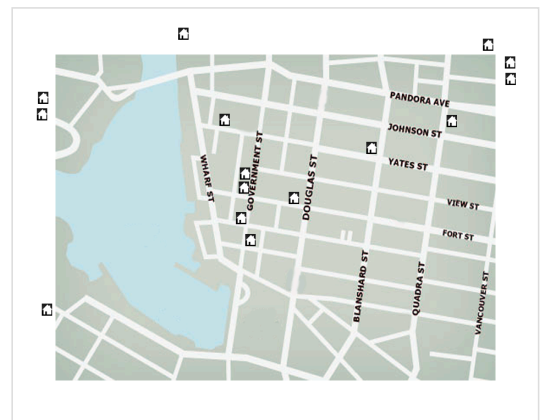
Secular use of Sacred Space

Thomas Hooper

1857-1935

Thomas Hooper designed and constructed the 1910 Western addition to St. Ann's Academy. Hooper's large addition radically altered the form and tone of the building, but he preserved fundamental concerns about the building's role in Victorian society.

- [Biography](#)
- [Architecture](#)
- [Take a Tour](#)
- [Footnotes](#)



Biography

Thomas Hooper was born in Hatherleigh, Devon on 2 March 1857. Hooper had two uncles, who were architects in England, and he moved to London, Ontario with his family in 1871 as a teenager. Hooper was apprenticing as a joiner and carpenter in London, but he moved to Emerson, Manitoba with his family in 1878. Hooper married Rebecca Johnson the following year. ¹

Decoration

Stained Glass

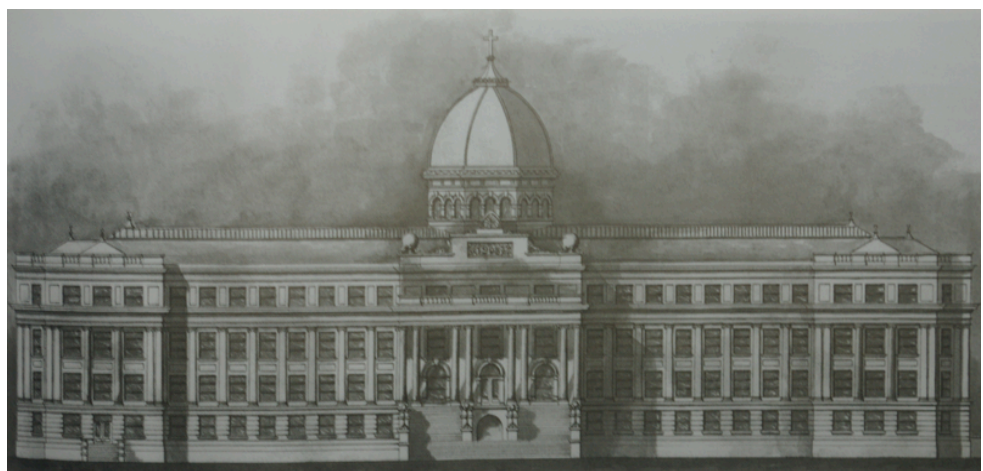
Gardens

Emerson was a Western boomtown, and Hooper continued to chase the opportunities of growth communities in the West, which the *Times* would later describe as "tramping the CPR."² Hooper moved to Winnipeg to work as a contractor and architect, when that city got the boost of the incoming railroad, but he moved West again in 1886 to Vancouver, the rapidly growing terminus of the CPR. Hooper had quick success on the West Coast, and he served as Provincial Supervisory Architect and established an architectural practice in 1887.³ Hooper's business grew in Vancouver, but he switched his focus in the 1890s to Victoria, where he recognized a more lucrative market.⁴



Hooper was one of several English-born architects, who arrived in Victoria just after the railroad, like Francis Rattenbury.⁵ Hooper initially came to Victoria to work of the Metropolitan Methodist church (1889–91), but thereafter he operated firms in both Victoria and Vancouver.⁶ Thomas Hooper was a fortune seeker, like John Teague, but he was also a thoroughly professional architect in a newly professional industry, and he never advertised in Victoria as anything other than an architect.⁷ Like Teague, Hooper amassed a fortune designing and constructing Victoria's commercial sector; however, he also asserted strong stylistic beliefs in his public buildings. Hooper stayed up to date on the latest innovations and trends in the East, and he was ultimately responsible for introducing several of them to British Columbia.⁸

The Sisters of St. Ann commissioned Hooper to design an expansion to the Academy in 1908, which would result in the final major addition to the building. Unlike John Teague before him, Hooper showed no reverence to the original design of Fr. Michaud. Hooper designed a huge domed structure, which would cover the existing building, but the Sisters rejected it.⁹ Instead Hooper adapted his design and constructed a sizable and inconsistent appendage to the West of the Michaud wing in 1910. Hooper was an architect with a mind of his own, and he ran into significant opposition again when he totally ignored the directions of the building committee in his submission for the University of British Columbia.¹⁰ However, Hooper's addition to St. Ann's did maintain the spirit of the building as French-Canadian, since it exhibited an obvious Second Empire influence.



The years before the First World War saw another economic boom, and these were the most prolific years of Hooper's career.¹¹ He worked all over BC in Victoria, Vancouver, Revelstoke, Vernon, and Chilliwack focusing on large, public commissions. However, the local economy and Hooper's business took a sharp decline in 1913.¹² Hooper moved his practice to New York in 1915, but he lost his market again when the United States entered the war.

Hooper returned to Vancouver in 1927 to eloquent editorials in the local press, but he failed to reestablish his career. ¹³ Thomas Hooper died on 1 January 1935:

Former Victoria Architect Dies
Thomas Hooper, Designer of Metropolitan Church Here, Passes in Vancouver.

Thomas Hooper, aged seventy-seven years, pioneer resident of Victoria and Vancouver, and widely known in British Columbia as an architect, died in Vancouver on New Years Day.

As designer of the Metropolitan United Church and the old Ice Arena here, Mr. Hooper was particularly well known in this city.

C. Elwood Watkins, local architect, was articled to Mr. Hooper in 1890 and some twenty years later Mr. Watkins entered into partnership with Mr. Hooper. They were associates when Mr. Hooper was given the contract to design the Metropolitan United Church. The two enjoyed a term as partners, Mr. Hooper leaving during the war for the United States.

RETURNS TO CANADA

He subsequently returned to Canada. Structures erected here by Mr. Hooper include the Centennial United Church, George Jay School, the Humbolt Street extension to St. Joseph's Hospital and the addition to St. Ann's Academy.

While in practice here, Mr. Hooper maintained an office in Vancouver and designed in the Terminal City the Spencer Building on Cordova Street, the Winch building adjoining the Vancouver Postoffice and the addition to the Vancouver Court-house.

Funeral Services were conducted in Vancouver. (8 Jan 1935) ¹⁴

Just years earlier, the newspapers had commented on Hooper as "architect of many of Victoria's chief business buildings," but here they referred exclusively to his large, public works. ¹⁵ This was indicative of the identity adopted by professional architects, who associated themselves and their talent with the magnitudes of their work. When Thomas Hooper died he was not a builder like Charles Verheyden had been.

Architecture

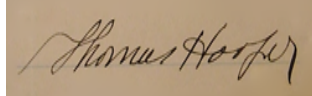
Thomas Hooper did not take formal architectural training, but he still exhibited all the characteristics of a capable and professional architect in the late nineteenth century. Hooper kept up to date on innovations in Eastern North America, and his own ideas about architecture remained the principle force behind his buildings.

In the 1890's Hooper came under influence of the **Romanesque Revival** of H.H. Richardson in the United States. The Metropolitan and Centennial Methodist churches in Victoria both had Richardsonian elements, and the Protestant Orphanage at Cook and Hillside St. (1893) replicated Richardson's Sever Spencer Hall at Harvard, according to historian Donald Luxton. ¹⁶ Hooper even featured Richardsonian architecture on his professional letter-head (see top of the page). Hooper worked in a number of different styles over his career, but after his failed UBC plan in 1912, Hooper favoured **Beaux-Arts**.

 St. Ann's 1910

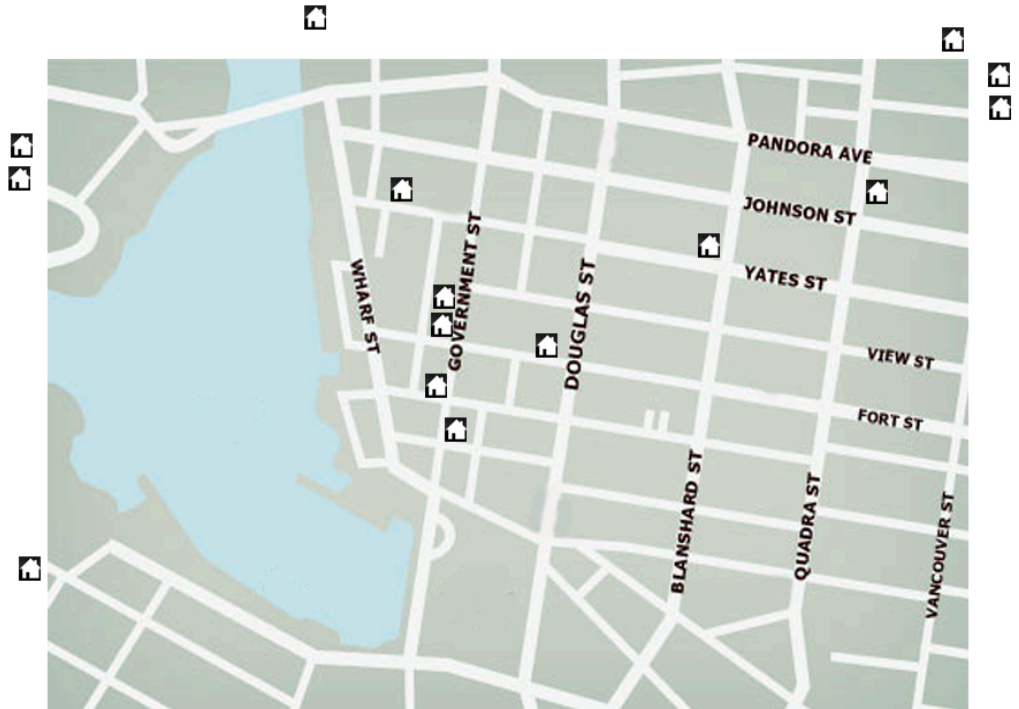
Hooper's work on St. Ann's Academy was inconsistent with the trends he exhibited in his other buildings. Hooper built the 1910 wing in **Second Empire** style, which Hooper never favoured, but more importantly, Hooper would have known that **Second Empire** was out of fashion in Eastern Canada by the twentieth century. ¹⁷

The striking divergence of this structure from Hooper's public work illustrates that Hooper undertook a specific goal in its conception. Hooper used **Second Empire** style to emphasize the **French-Canadian nature of the building**.



Take a Tour of Thomas Hooper's Victoria

The following is a map of downtown Victoria, BC, which marks the locations of extant buildings designed by Thomas Hooper. Click on the black house icons to learn more about Hooper's buildings and plan a walking tour of Victoria's architecture.



Footnotes

- ¹ Dorothy Mindenhall and Carey Pallister, "John Teague: 1835–1902," *Building the West: the Early Architects of British Columbia*, Donald Luxton, ed. (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2003), 75.
- ² Martin Segger, "Teague, John," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, 2000, , (5 December 2009).
- ³ Mindenhall and Pallister, 75. And Segger.
- ⁴ BCA, Verticle Files, John Teague, J.D. Kerr, "John Teague," *Biographical Dictionary of Well-known British Columbians* (Vancouver, 1890), 301–4.
- ⁵ Colonists in British Columbia sent for the brideships because they believed there existed a shortage of white women in the colony. See Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
- ⁶ Mindenhall and Pallister, 75.
- ⁷ BCA, Victoria City Directories.
- ⁸ G.E. Mills, *Architectural Trends in Victoria, British Columbia, 1850–1914*, Manuscript Report Number 354, (Parks Canada, 1976), 12.
- ⁹ Mills, 13.
- ¹⁰ Mindenhall and Pallister, 75.
- ¹¹ Mills, 13. And Christina Cameron and Janet Wright, *Second Empire Style in Canadian Architecture, Canadian Historic Sites, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No 24* (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1980), 58–9, 76–7, 84–5.
- ¹² Mills, 22.
- ¹³ Martin Segger and Douglas Franklin, *Victoria: A Primer for Regional History in Architecture* (Watkins Glen, NY:

Pilgrim Guide to Historic Architecture, 1979), 347. And Mindenhall and Pallister, 75–77.

¹⁴ Paul Merrick Architects Limited, *St. Ann's Academy Study Project Report* (Victoria, BC: BC Buildings Corporation, 1992), pg?

¹⁵ Hallmark, "St. Ann's Chronology 3rd Edition," 1986.

¹⁶ Mindenhall and Pallister, 78.

¹⁷ BCA, Victoria City Directory, 1895.

¹⁸ Mindenhall and Pallister, 75.

¹⁹ Segger.

Photos:

BCA, Thomas Hooper Correspondence. 1895, H/D/R57/H76.

Luxton, 141.

BCA, "St. Ann's Academy," 1910, A-07664.

Thomas Hooper, Architect: Victoria & Vancouver BC, AD MCMX, Vancouver: Evans & Hastings, 1910, NW720.9711 H788t.

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