

## HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

Can you hear the parade coming?

It's Saturday September 28th, 1912, 11:30AM. A big day for the busy town of Victoria. Excitement is building as you read the invitation in your hand. The committee of the Victoria's Seamen's Institute (incorporated in 1912) have the pleasure in inviting you to attend the ceremony of the laying of the corner stone, at the corner of Superior and Kingston streets, by H.R.H The Duke of Connaught, K.G Governor General of Canada.

On that day, and estimated 15,000 people gathered in front of the Empress Hotel to watch the parade procession, which walked throughout the gaily decorated streets. The Royal Party, consisting of H.R.H The Duke and Duchess of Connaught and their daughter Princess Patricia were here on official business sent by The King. It was the first time The Duke and Duchess had visited Victoria on official business. At 11:00 AM, the Royal Family took part in the laying of the cornerstone at The Provincial Library adjacent to the Parliament Buildings. At 11:30 AM, the Royal Family laid the cornerstone for the Seamen's Institute at the corner of Kingston and Superior streets. This corner stone, which can still be seen reads, "Seamen's Institute, come unto me all ye that are weary and I will give you rest." The actual foundation stone of the building was laid November 1914 by J.W Bowser, attorney general of Canada and was built from funds from the London Seamen's Institute (international) and served as a haven for off duty seamen providing "a home away from home" for teenage boys and men who signed up on ships to learn to be sailors. It was run by the Over Seas Sailor Boys Club found in Staffordshire, England. The Architect was Mr. J.C.M Keith. He had designed many churches and public institutions in Victoria including :

The Royal Jubilee Hospital Nurses Residence 1908  
Sir James Douglas School 1909  
Victoria Police Station 1914  
Beacon Hill School 1914  
The Power Station 1894-1895  
Christ Church Cathedral 1926

The Seamen's Institute was leased to the British Sailors Society until after WWII where it fell into disrepair. In 1961 it was sold to the Optimists Club, which rented it to numerous organizations including the Unitarian Church. In 1963 the Unitarian Church purchased the building and in 1977 it was renovated. The current owners purchased the property in 1994 and were proud to have the building designated heritage in 2006. Much of the 1912 interior remains in the front rooms then considered to be the sitting and library room. The remainder of the brick building is intact and has withstood the test of time and history.