

St. Barnabas, Victoria

Prepared by Jesse Robertson (June 26, 2024)

Property Acquisition

Address	1525 Begbie Street, Victoria, BC, V8R 1K9
Legal description	LOT 5, BLOCK 7, SECTION 75, VICTORIA DISTRICT, PLAN 757 EXCEPT PARCEL A (DD 75923I) AND EXCEPT PART IN PLAN 30149
First private landholder	Benjamin William Pearse made the initial payment for Section 75 in 1857.
Diocesan acquisition	Diocese purchased Lot 5, Block 7, Section 65 around January 1947.

Narrative Overview

St. Barnabas is located in the City of Victoria (Figure 1) in the territory of the ləkʷəŋən people known today as Songhees and Esquimalt nations. The Hudson Bay Company (HBC) sold Section 75 to Assistant Surveyor Benjamin William Pearse in 1857.¹ Pearse subdivided and sold portions of the 193-acre section on several occasions beginning in 1863 (Figures 2-3). The borders of Lot 5, Block 7 were established in 1897 and purchased by one “A. Hugget” (Figure 4).²

St. Barnabas was initially located at the corner of Cook and Caledonia streets (see Associated Properties, below). Bishop George Hills purchased the property in August 1890 and laid the cornerstone for a new church that October.³ Plans to construct a new church were already circulating in 1907; parishioners raised over \$7000 to that end within a few years. It was not until 1946, however, that a special meeting of the parish selected the corner of Belmont and Begbie as an appropriate site for the new church.⁴ The Diocese purchased Lot 5, Block 7 around January 1947.⁵

Interpretive Summary

Decisions regarding future land use should bear the following considerations in mind:

⇒ The HBC sold the section containing the property in 1857. The section was variously subdivided, sold, and developed by the time the Diocese purchased the property around 1947. Diocesan ownership of this land did not contribute directly to the historical dispossession of ləkʷəŋən people from their territory.

¹ Danda Humphreys, *On the Street Where You Live: Pioneer Pathways of Early Victoria*, vol. 2 (Surrey, BC: Heritage House, 1999), 145.

² Block 7 was probably subdivided and sold later than the rest of Pearse’s estate because of its location immediately adjacent to his residence. Plan of Fernwood Estate, 1863, 24917E; Fernwood Estate, 1882, 24916E; Plan of Fernwood, 1897, 24195E, MS-3323, BCA; Humphreys, 2:145–46.

³ Register of Church Property, text 290, Archives of the Diocese of British Columbia, Victoria, BC (hereafter ADBC); John J. Ellis, *The Fernwood Files* (Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1989), 49–50; ‘Our History’, St. Barnabas Anglican Church, accessed 17 June 2024, <https://stbarnabaschurch.ca/about/our-history#>.

⁴ “Short History of St. Barnabas Church, Victoria, BC, 1910 – June 1953,” text 39, ADBC.

⁵ The present research could not locate the original Certificate of Title or correspondence dating the land purchase in the Diocesan archives. The date of purchase given here (1947) is based on a Land Registry Office Receipt for the property dated 27 Jan 1947. Register of Titles, St. Barnabas (172423-I), 87.30, ADBC; Plan of Fernwood Estate, 1863, 24917E; Fernwood Estate, 1882, 24916E; Plan of Fernwood, 1897, 24195E, MS-3323, BCA.

⇒ Private property is considered “off the table” for Aboriginal treaty negotiations, such as those currently being pursued by the Songhees Nation. Consequently, the BC Treaty Process offers few opportunities to return land to the Songhees and Esquimalt nations in their heavily urbanized traditional territories. Arrangements and/or transfers from private landowners will likely be required for these and other nations to regain stewardship and/or ownership over privatized lands.

Historical Context

In 1857, Benjamin William Pearse made the initial payment for Section 75, Victoria District from the Hudson Bay Company (HBC). The purchase came on the heels of a new HBC policy allowing land to be purchased in installments and offering “liberal deductions” on certain lands considered unsuitable for farming. (Prior to October 1856, rural land on Vancouver Island was to be sold at £1 per acre.) Pearse received Section 75 at a considerable discount, since nearly half of the area (92 acres) was marked by rocks and swamps.⁶ The section constitutes much of the present neighbourhood of Fernwood, named for Pearse’s conspicuous stone residence, Fernwood Manor (Figures 5-6). The building stood immediately west of the St. Barnabas until it was torn down in 1969.⁷

Pearse played a critical part in the colonial settlement of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, serving as assistant surveyor under Joseph Pemberton (1852-1864) and Joseph Trutch (1866-1871). Pemberton and Pearse each benefited substantially from investing in lands they themselves had surveyed and marked for discount. One contemporary later observed that “those who had the job of designating the various characters of the land were not slow to take advantage of the opportunity.” Pearse later admitted that he was made rich through such investments.⁸

Indigenous Presence and Land Use

Languages	ləkʷəŋən (North Straits Salish)
Governance	Songhees Nation; Esquimalt Nation; Te’mexw Treaty Association
Land use	No specific land use has been identified. An 1860 survey described the area as containing swamp grass, clover, wildflowers, blossoming shrubs, and rocks. Oaks and firs also grew in the area. ⁹
Archaeological data	The Archaeology Branch of British Columbia has not recorded any archaeological sites on the property. ¹⁰
Historic treaties	The property lies near the intersection of two treaties signed with ləkʷəŋən groups in 1850, the boundaries of which were imprecisely defined:

⁶ Vancouver Island House of Assembly, *Minutes of Proceedings of a Select Committee of the House of Assembly, Appointed to Inquire into the Present Condition of the Crown Lands of the Colony* (Victoria: Harries and Company, 1864), 35, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/bcbooks/items/1.0221799>; Leonard A. Wrinch, ‘Land Policy of the Colony of Vancouver Island, 1849-1866’ (MA Thesis, Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 1932), 170; Richard Mackie, ‘The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858’, *BC Studies*, no. 96 (1992): 19, 30–31.

⁷ Humphreys, *On the Street Where You Live*, 2:145–46; Ellis, *The Fernwood Files*, 39.

⁸ Richard Mackie, ‘Pearse, Benjamin William’, in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1994), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pearse_benjamin_william_13E.html; Mackie, ‘The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858’, 31.

⁹ Humphreys, *On the Street Where You Live*, 2:145–46.

¹⁰ Email, Diana Cooper (Archaeological Information Specialist, Archaeology Branch) to Jesse Robertson, 19 Dec 2023.

	<p>A treaty signed with the “Tribe of Swenghung” (1850) for land between Victoria Harbour and Spring Ridge (today’s Fernwood) and south to Ross Bay for £75 in blankets.</p> <p>A treaty signed with the “Tribe or Family of Chilcowith” (1850) for land from extending from Spring Ridge (today’s Fernwood), south to Ross Bay, and east to a line drawn from Gonzales Point for £30 in blankets.¹¹</p>
Modern treaties	<p>Songhees Nation is a member of the Te’mexw Treaty Association in Stage 5 of the BC Treaty Process (Negotiation to Finalize a Treaty).</p> <p>Esquimalt Nation is not involved in the treaty process.</p>

Associated Properties

Lots 1-5, Suburban Lot XVII, Victoria District: By the 1880s, the City of Victoria had grown sufficiently large to justify a third Anglican church, in the area then known as Spring Ridge (Fernwood). Bishop George Hills purchased lots from John Teague for \$5250 in August 1890 and laid the cornerstone for a new church that October.¹² Bishop Hills conveyed the site to Synod for \$1 in October 1891 (Figure 7).¹³

The church served the parish until the growing congregation spurred plans to construct a larger church in the present location, dedicated in April 1952. The Diocese sold the original properties to two parties. Lots 1-3 and part of Lot 4 were conveyed to the Ukrainian Catholic Church for \$6500 in July 1952. The remainder of Lot 4 was sold for \$3600 in October 1952.¹⁴

Timeline

Italicized text indicates contextual information. **Bold** text indicates information specific to the property.

Date	Details
<i>1670</i>	Hudson Bay Company (HBC) established by Royal Letters Patent and allocated a trading monopoly over all rivers flowing into Hudson Bay.
<i>13 Jan 1849</i>	HBC awarded ten-year charter for the “advancement of colonization” on the Colony of Vancouver Island.
<i>30 Apr 1850</i>	Treaties signed with the “tribe[s] or famil[ies]” of Swenghung and Chilcowitch. ¹⁵
<i>Oct 1856</i>	HBC implements new policy allowing land to be purchased in installments and affording “liberal deductions” for land containing rocks and swamps, generating a sizeable increase in land purchase and speculation. ¹⁶

¹¹ Wilson Duff, ‘The Fort Victoria Treaties’, *BC Studies*, no. 3 (Fall 1969): 12–13.

¹² Register of Church Property, text 290, ADBC; Ellis, *The Fernwood Files*, 49–50; ‘Our History’.

¹³ Register of Church Property, text 290, ADBC.

¹⁴ Agreement for Sale, Anglican Synod of the Diocese of BC (hereafter ASDBC) to Ukrainian Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Western Canada, 23 Jul 1952; Conveyance, ASDBC, 15 Oct 1952, text 277, ADBC; ‘Our History’.

¹⁵ Duff, ‘The Fort Victoria Treaties’, 9.

¹⁶ Wrinch, ‘Land Policy of the Colony of Vancouver Island, 1849-1866’, 45, 170.

8 May 1857	Assistant surveyor Benjamin William Pearse makes initial payment on purchase of Section 75, Victoria District from the HBC. The land amounts to some 190 acres, including much of the present neighbourhood of Fernwood. ¹⁷
<i>25 Apr 1858</i>	Fraser River Gold Rush begins with the arrival of some 400 miners arrive from California. Their number would reach 25,000 by the fall, and around 50,000 the following year. The sudden influx dramatically increases property values around Victoria. ¹⁸
<i>12 Jan 1859</i>	Diocese of British Columbia established amidst global expansion of British Empire and Church of England (38 new dioceses established between 1814-1859). The Letters Patent creating the Diocese give the Bishop power to hold property on behalf of the church. ¹⁹
1863	Pearse begins subdividing and selling parts of Section 75 around Cadboro Road (present-day Fort Street; Figure 2). The area where St. Barnabas now stands is subdivided as Lot 29, but does not appear to have been permanently sold. ²⁰
1882	Pearse subdivides parcels along the northern and eastern borders of Section 75 (Figure 3). ²¹
<i>6 Apr 1889</i>	Anglican Synod of the Diocese of British Columbia incorporated by Act of Provincial Legislature and empowered to acquire, hold, and sell property.
<i>25 Aug 1890</i>	Bishop George Hills purchases Lots 1-5 of Suburban Lot 17, at the corner of Cook and Caledonia streets. ²²
<i>18 Oct 1890</i>	Bishop George Hills lays cornerstone for the original St. Barnabas church building. ²³
<i>12 Oct 1891</i>	Bishop Hills conveys original St. Barnabas site to Synod for \$1 (Figure 7). ²⁴
<i>1890s</i>	Introduction of electric car service spurs residential growth and development of outlying neighbours, including present-day Fernwood. ²⁵
1897	Pearse subdivides portions of Section 75 immediately north and east of his Fernwood Manor residence, establishing the parameters of Lot 5, Block 7 (Figure 4). A plan of the area lists “A. Hugget” as having purchased the lot. ²⁶

¹⁷Humphreys, *On the Street Where You Live*, 2:145–46.

¹⁸Daniel P. Marshall, Laura Neilson Bonikowsky, and Eric Wright, ‘Fraser River Gold Rush’, in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, 2019 2006), <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/fraser-river-gold-rush>; Dorothy Blakey-Smith, ed., *Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1975), 158–59.

¹⁹“Letters Patent of the Bishop of Columbia, 1859” (copy), 85.36, ADBC; G. Hollis Slater, ‘New Light on Herbert Beaver’, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (January 1942): 14.

²⁰A plan of Fernwood Estate shows Lot 29 with a purchaser’s name crossed out. The area where St. Barnabas stands today appears to be excluded from this lot in a subsequent 1882 plan. Plan of Fernwood Estate, 1863, 24917E; Fernwood Estate, 1882, 24916E, MS-3323, BCA.

²¹Fernwood Estate, 1882, 24916E, MS-3323, BCA.

²²Register of Church Property, text 290, ADBC

²³‘St. Barnabas Church’, *Daily Colonist*, 8 January 1891, 1.

²⁴Register of Church Property, text 290, ADBC.

²⁵Ellis, *The Fernwood Files*, 49–50.

²⁶Plan of Fernwood, 1897, 24915E, MS-3323, BCA.

<i>Jun 1907</i>	Parishioners begin plans to construct a new church, raising over \$7000 for this purpose within a few years. ²⁷
<i>Nov 1946</i>	Special meeting held to discuss building a new church to accommodate the growing congregation, selecting the current site at the corner of Belmont and Begbie. ²⁸
c. 27 Jan 1947	Diocese registers title for the new church property. ²⁹
<i>25 Nov 1951</i>	Cornerstone laid for new St. Barnabas church. ³⁰
<i>20 Apr 1952</i>	Dedication service for new St. Barnabas church. ³¹
<i>23 Jul 1952</i>	Diocese conveys portion of the former site to the Ukrainian Episcopal Church for \$6500. ³²
<i>15 Oct 1952</i>	Diocese conveys remainder of the former site to individual buyer for \$3600. ³³
<i>1969</i>	Fernwood Manor torn down following the death of Pearse's second wife, Sarah Jane, in 1954. ³⁴

Figures

Figure 1. *Map showing current extent of St. Barnabas.*

PMBC Parcel Cadastre 008676810, iMapBC, Province of British Columbia.

Figures 2a, 2b. *Plan and detail showing the subdivision of Pearse's Fernwood Estate (1863), with St. Barnabas' current location (Lot "29") highlighted in red.*

Plan of Fernwood Estate, 1863, with later annotations. Item 24917E, MS-3323, B.W. Pearse family fonds, BC Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figures 3a, 3b. *Plan and detail showing the further subdivision of Pearse's Fernwood Estate (1882), with St. Barnabas' current location highlighted in red.*

Fernwood Estate, 1882, with later annotations. Item 24916E, MS-3323, B.W. Pearse family fonds, BC Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figure 4. *Plan showing the further subdivision of Pearse's Fernwood Estate (1897), including the current borders of St. Barnabas (Lot 5, Block 7), highlighted in red.*

²⁷ "Short History of St. Barnabas Church, Victoria, BC, 1910 – June 1953," text 39, ADBC.

²⁸ "Short History of St. Barnabas Church, Victoria, BC, 1910 – June 1953," text 39, ADBC; 'Our History'.

²⁹ Register of Titles, St. Barnabas (172423-l), 87.30, ADBC.

³⁰ 'Church Cornerstone Laid', *Daily Colonist*, 27 November 1951, https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist1151uvic_20/page/n13/mode/1up?

³¹ 'In the World of Religion', *Daily Colonist*, 19 April 1952, 5.

³² Agreement for Sale, 23 Jul 1952, file 24, box 16, text 277, ASBC.

³³ Conveyance, 15 Oct 1952, file 24, box 16, text 277, ASBC.

³⁴ Ellis, *The Fernwood Files*, 39.

Plan of Fernwood, 1897. Item 24915E, MS-3323, B.W. Pearse family fonds, BC Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figure 5. *Painting of the road leading through Pearse's estate (today's Fort Street) in 1861. Fernwood Manor is shown behind the trees on the left. St. Barnabas' current location would be in front of the manor, to the left of the viewer.*

Barbara Lindley Crease, "Road up to W. Pierse's [sic] Home, Fernwood." PDP01407, PR-1344, Crease family fonds, BC Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figure 6. *Photograph of Fernwood Manor in 1863. St. Barnabas' current location would be to the viewer's left.*

"Fernwood, 1863; the Benjamin William Pearse residence in Victoria." C-08746, BC Archives, Victoria, BC.

Figure 7. *Plan of the subdivision of Suburban Lot 17, Victoria District, with the area of the old St. Barnabas indicated in red.*

"Part of Suburban Lot XVII, Victoria City." Tracing appended to indenture between Bishop George Hills and the Anglican Synod of the Diocese of British Columbia, 12 Oct 1891. File 3, box 1, text 431, Archives of the Diocese of British Columbia, Victoria, BC.

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