

Footnotes in History

The building now known as the Bakersfield Historical Society building was built in 1840 by subscription and owned jointly by the Chapel Society and the Bakersfield Association for the Promotion of Education. It was a three story post and beam framed structure with the first floor being utilized by the Methodist Chapel Society and the two upper floors used as the South Academy. The South Academy was chartered in 1845 as the Bakersfield Academical Institution. The bricks in the structure were made with clay from the Tupper Lawyer Farm west of the village. There are two wythes of brick with the outer layer of brick veneer covering the timber frame.

In 1867, the South Academy sold their equity in the first floor to the Catholic Diocese. In March of 1876, the Methodist Chapel Society sold its share of the property to the Catholics. In 1885 the Catholic Diocese obtained full ownership of the building from the Educational Institution. Soon after 1900 the Catholics began remodeling the building by removing the second floor, changing out the windows, adding single story addition at south end of the building and dressing the walls with embossed metal to transform the building into a sanctuary. The church was known as St. George's Catholic Church.

As the size of the membership declined and the cost of maintenance and repairs increased, the Catholic Diocese closed St. George's Catholic Church in Bakersfield in 1996. In 1997 they transferred ownership to the newly organized Bakersfield Historical Society, Corp.

Much has been done to structurally stabilize the building since 1997: replacement of rotted sills and floor joists, new wiring, added plumbing for an ADA compliant restroom and kitchen, new standing seam steel roof, new foundation on back addition as well as new brick on the addition and back gable, peripheral drainage, emergency exit on back addition of the building, new furnace, ADA compliant ramp access to the building, and more.

Our building is used for storage and display of artifacts and information relating to Bakersfield's historic past as well as providing a venue for local events.