

Holy Family Church (Roman Catholic)
1104-1114 West Roosevelt Road;
near the northeast corner of West
Roosevelt Road and South May Street
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1048

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
50-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

HOLY FAMILY CHURCH (ROMAN CATHOLIC)

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Location: 1104-1114 West Roosevelt Road; near the northeast corner of West Roosevelt Road and South May Street, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: The Archbishop of Chicago and the Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus.

Present Use: Church; The Rev. Samuel F. Listermann, S. J., Pastor.

Statement of Significance: Completed in 1860, Holy Family Church is one of the earliest Roman Catholic churches in Chicago, and was then one of the largest churches in the country. Presently, it is the second oldest church in the city, preceded only by St. Patrick's Church, which also escaped the fire of 1871. The building is a typical example of pre-fire, Gothic revival church architecture in Chicago.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Block 28 of Crane and Wesson's subdivision of blocks 27 and 28, Canal Trustees subdivision of the south-east quarter of section 17-39-14.

The following is an abstract of the chain of title contained in book 474E, p. 5, in the Cook County Recorder's Office: The first entry in the record states that John B. Drayts received all of lots 27 and 28 from Mary Ann Shays on April 20, 1857 (Document 44.147, filed July 19, 1872). The land was handled by N. P. Iglehart & Co., real estate, and amounted to 25 lots at \$600 each [See: Thomas M. Mulkerins, Holy Family Parish, Chicago; Priests and People, ed. and arr. by Joseph J. Thompson, Holy Family Parish History Commission (Chicago: Universal Press, 1923), p. 7, for details of this transaction]. On February 27, 1874, the Trustees of J. B. Drayts turned the title over to Arnold Damen, the parish's pastor (Document 156158). Arnold Damen, et al. deeded the property to John F. Pahls, S. J. on June 28, 1882 (Document 404964), who in turn transferred it to the Trustees of the Parish of Holy Family on June 2, 1896. The last entry records the transfer of land from The Very Rev. Joseph M. Egan and the Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus to the Chicago Province

of the Society of Jesus on May 1, 1950 (Documents 14801997-8). A check with Rev. Samuel F. Listermann, S. J., the present pastor has revealed that the church is owned by both the Jesuits and the Archbishop of Chicago.

2. Date of erection: 1857-1860.
3. Architects: Dellenberg & Zucker and John Van Osdel / Industrial Chicago, Vol. 1 (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891), p. 103/.

"The architects were Dillenberg and Zucker [sic], while the interior was designed by John Van Osdel." / Mulkerins, op. cit., p. 32./

There is no known information on Dellenberg & Zucker / Dillenberg & Zucker. John Van Osdel was probably the foremost architect in Chicago during the pre-fire years. For a biographical sketch of him see: A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago, Vol. 2 (Chicago: The A. T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1885), p. 564.

See below: Original plans, construction, etc., for more information on the architects.

4. Original plan and construction of building, builders, suppliers, etc.: There is no record of the original building permit for the church.
 - a. The church building: The cornerstone was laid on August 26, 1857. The structure was roofed by the end of 1858 and floored and plastered by 1859. On July 26, 1860, the church was dedicated and all activities were transferred to the new building. Originally, it measured 146' by 85', with a nave 61' high; transepts were added, increasing the width to 125'. In 1886 a 40' extension brought the total length to 186'. The building is constructed of brick with trimmings of Illinois cut stone / Mulkerins, op. cit., pp. 15, 25, 26, 32/. The total cost was \$130,000 / Industrial Chicago, loc. cit./
 - b. The tower: In 1860, a large bell was hung in a temporary wooden tower / Mulkerins, op. cit., p. 38/. Contracts were originally let to Patrick O'Conner for the front wall and towers [sic] of the church / Joseph P. Conroy, Arnold Damen, S. J.; A Chapter in the Making of Chicago (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1930), p. 120/.

The present tower at the southeast corner was probably designed by John Van Osdel. According to the records

in Van Osdel's Account Books, 3 v. in the Chicago Historical Society Library, V. 1, pp. 44-45, 49, the tower of the church of the Holy Family was contracted in 1860. The account book lists the following names and costs (subject to spelling errors due to irregularities in handwriting):

Carpentry: W. & A. B. Cook, Stone steps,
August 29, 1860, \$450.
Wrought Iron: Cliffin L. Olivier, stairs
in tower, \$150.
Cast Iron: Glap Thompson & Alstar, \$2,000.
Masonry: P. O'Conner, first section --\$3239.
Brickwork: Outer -- \$300, setting front \$630.
Cut Stone: Michael Sullivan, cut stone for front
and second story of tower, \$953;
W. L. & A. B. Cook & Co., front,
\$2290.

Hearsay evidence has suggested that certain financial and structural difficulties were encountered in the building of the tower which account for the extended length of time required for the completion of it and the entire facade. It is uncertain whether or not Van Osdel actually began and/or completed the work.

In 1874, the tower is said to have been left truncated, and contracts were let again Ibid., p. 286.

See description of facade design below in Old Views.

- c. Interior fittings, decorations, etc.: The interior was probably designed, at least in part, by Van Osdel. His Account Book, Vol. 1, p. 49, lists a contract with Wm. Donahue for pews in 1860; cost--\$1200.

The contract for the original stained-glass windows was let to Robert Carse Ibid., p. 120.

Altar: dedicated October 26, 1865; foundation is masonry up to the table; altar is stone set on 2 brick columns built from ground; 9'-2" long by 29" wide, 2" thick; height from floor of sanctuary is 52'; top turret within inches of ceiling; extends width of sanctuary, 30'-3"; extends 6' out from rear wall Mulkerins, op. cit., pp. 32, 284, 287. Altar picture is a copy by a Flemish Jesuit of a Murillo; carvings by Anthony and Sebastian Buscher; originally lighted by gas Ibid., pp. 287-88; biography of Buscher's p. 296; see same for a complete description of altar subject matter.

Side altars: 1873 also by the Buschers [Ibid.], p. 289.

Communion railing: by Louis E. Wisner; extends full width of main and side aisles; inlaid carved panels [Ibid.], pp. 290-293; biography of Wisner p. 294.

Statues: imported from Europe (Munich) by Albert Franz Springer [Ibid.], p. 296.

Confessionals: carved by Anthony Buscher [Ibid.].

Original six black candlesticks: carved by a Mr. Kennis [Ibid.], p. 300.

Pews: installed 1860; formerly had doors and locks for renting purposes [Ibid.].

Pulpit: originally located in front of the main west column inside the communion rail; moved in 1895 in front of second large pillar; later this was replaced by a moveable pulpit so that the entire congregation could see the preacher [Ibid.].

Windows: the present windows were installed in 1907, replacing earlier stained-glass [Ibid.], p. 301; see pp. 301-305 for description of subject matter.

Stations of the Cross: new paintings were installed in 1873; each measuring 8' x 6'; in oil; imported from Europe; originally mounted in massive Gothic frames almost reaching buttresses of roof; during decoration of church 1889-1890, Rector Rev. E. A. Higgins, S. J. ordered them removed and the paintings glued to wall with narrow, square wooden frames; 1902 redecoration under Fr. Meyer replaced them with artistic, stucco frame (present frame) [Ibid.], pp. 305-306.

Organ: built by Mitchell & Son, Montreal; all foreign material; rebuilt 1892, 1922; largest in U. S. at time of dedication in 1870 [Ibid.], p. 307.

Costs, etc.: organ--\$25,000; 3,983 pipes, 63 stops; main altar--\$25,000; side altars--\$6,000; Stations of Cross--\$7,000 [J. Thompson Gill, History of the Organization and Growth of the Holy Family Jesuit Parish, Chicago (Chicago: S. I. Bradburty & Son, Printers, 1878), p. 7.]

See Supplementary Material for additional descriptions.

5. Alterations and additions: See Architectural Description below.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The church was one of the early Catholic churches in Chicago, and is associated with the religious history of the city. The parish was founded by Rev. Arnold Damen, S. J. in 1857. Father Damen had come to Chicago in the summer of 1856 from the St. Francis Xavier Church in St. Louis to conduct a series of spiritual revivals. Damen was offered an established church on the North Side of Chicago, however, the dynamic priest chose to set up a new parish on the city's West Side. This area was at that time largely undeveloped; however, it was populated by many Irish immigrants. The original Holy Family Parish was bounded on the north by Polk Street, on the east and south by the south branch of the Chicago River, and was unlimited to the west. (Today the boundary would be approximately Western Avenue.)

By July 12, 1857, a temporary wooden frame church was completed. It measured 20' by 48', was two stories high, and was located on the south side of 11th Street, 75' east of May Street. The building soon proved to be inadequate, and necessary classroom space was added. The building burned May 10, 1864, well after the present church was completed.

The church was located far enough west to escape the destruction of the Chicago Fire of 1871. According to local legend, at the time of the fire, Father Damen prayed that his church might be spared, vowing that in return seven candles would always burn in the church at the statue of the Blessed Virgin. This vow is fulfilled to this day: seven lights burn at the altar in the east transept to commemorate the escape of the building from the 1871 fire.

Father Damen left the church in 1877, however, he has remained the most esteemed figure in the history of Holy Family Church. Today, one of the major streets in Chicago bears his name.

C. Old Views:

1. Thomas M. Mulkerins, Holy Family Parish, Chicago; Priests and People, ed. and arr. by Joseph J. Thompson, Holy Family Parish History Commission (Chicago: Universal Press, 1923).

- p. 19 temporary wood church; drawing; c. 1857.
- p. 29 drawing of facade as planned; without tower, changes in fenestration, as if twin towers were to be added; c. 1860.
- p. 87 photograph of tower and St. Ignatius College from Blue Island Ave. looking west on 12th St. (Roosevelt Rd.); c. 1890.

- p. 99 photograph of organ; c. 1890.
p. 110 photograph of church and college looking west
on 12th St.; c. 1890.
p. 229 Holy Family Church, St. Ignatius College, Sodality
Hall, and other structures; air view of entire
area; c. 1920.
pp. 282-315 lengthy description of interior with photographs
of notable details.

2. Loyola University Catalogue (1870/71-1877/78):

Frontispiece drawing of college and church; church tower
is depicted with a single pointed steeple, without a
clock, in a much simpler design than finally built.

3. See Bibliography for additional sources of old views.

D. Bibliography:

Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago. Vol. 2. Chicago: The
A. T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1885. pp. 401-404.
History, description, and old view (drawing) of church
and college, p. 401.

A Sketch of Old St. Mary's Church, the First Catholic Church
Erected in Chicago. Chicago: S. I. Bradbury & Son, 1878.
Includes a history of the organization and growth of
the Parish of the Holy Family by J. Thompson Gill, pp.
5-15. Chicago Historical Society Library.

Bürgler, J. Geschichte der Kathol. Kirche Chicago's mit
Besonderer Berücksichtigung des Katholischen Deutschtums.
Chicago: Wilhelm Kuhlmann, 1889. p. 84.
Drawing of church and college building.

Chicago (Ill.) Holy Family Jesuit Church.
Clippings in the Burnham Library of the Art Institute of
Chicago.

Conroy, Joseph P. Arnold Damen, S.J.; A Chapter in the Making
of Chicago. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1930. pp.
78-97, "Building of the Church."

Gill, J. Thompson. History of the Organization and Growth
of the Holy Family Jesuit Parish, Chicago. Chicago:
S. I. Bradburty & Son, Printers, 1878.
Old view on cover; history and description of Holy
Family Church and St. Ignatius College.

Industrial Chicago, Vol. 1 (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing
Company, 1891). pp. 63, 103.

Mulkerins, Thomas M. Holy Family Parish, Chicago; Priests and People, ed. and arr. by Joseph J. Thompson, Holy Family Parish History Commission. Chicago: Universal Press, 1923.

Contains the most complete collection of information and pictures relating to the church.

Onahan, William J. Address to Rev. Arnold Damen, S.J. on the occasion of his "Golden Jubilee," in behalf of the Congregation and parish of the Holy Family, Chicago, November 20th, 1887. Chicago: Cameron, Amberg Print Co., 1887.

Primarily of historical interest.

Tallmadge, Thomas E. Architecture in Old Chicago. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941. p. 81.

Van Osdel, John M. (1811-1900) Architect's Account Books. 3 vols. Chicago: 1856-1900. Vol. 1, pp. 44-45, 49.

Original manuscript in the Gunther Collection of the Library of the Chicago Historical Society.

E. Supplementary Material:

1. The church, which is cruciform in shape, is of plain gothic style, with peaked roof and pointed spire. It is built of light colored pressed brick, with stone dressings, being 226 feet in depth by 125 feet in the transept [sic] and 80 feet in the main. The spire which is also 226 feet in height, is furnished with a belfry containing three bells, and a clock with four dial plates . . . It is the intention to place in the tower, at an early day, a full chime, consisting of twenty bells, an estimate for which has already been furnished. At the top of the peaked roof is placed the figure of our Savior bearing his cross, and below on either side are Joseph and the Blessed Virgin.

J. Thompson Gill, History of the Organization and Growth of the Holy Family Jesuit Parish, Chicago (Chicago: S. I. Bradburty & Son, Printers, 1878).

2. The heavy Gothic building on Twelfth and May streets is remarkable in many respects. In the spring of 1857 a temporary house for worship was erected on Eleventh street, and on its completion, in July, the foundations of the present great building were begun, under the Superintendence of Dellenberg & Zucker and J. M. Van Osdel. Within three years it was completed, and there stood out upon the prairie as a mirage, an architectural pile, large and stately, 125 x 236 feet, with nave 61 feet high. The principal tower or belfry is today without a peer in the West, and for the \$130,000 expended on the building, a

house was given to Chicago, which, for all time, will stand as the sole monument to the truer ante-bellum architecture here. The stained-glass windows, frescoes, paintings and altars of this church must be seen to be appreciated. Each transept shows a great English Gothic window of stained glass; the clearstory is supported by massive columns, and the roof is vaulted or ribbed and decorated with rich frescoes. Parpeyned buttresses, two heavy towers, one crowned with a Byzantine dome, and a medieval entrance point out the fact that where there existed a will for architectural adornment in 1857, there was a way. The traveler of continental Europe will find here one church, at least, which may remind him, in a small measure, of the great cathedrals he has seen during his journeyings, and, further, may learn that all this work was accomplished during the dark days of the panic of 1857. The seating capacity of the church is about 4,000; the membership is about 14,000. In the neighborhood of the church are a number of buildings, each one important. The St. Ignatius college building, just east, is a well-designed brick-and-stone structure, erected at a cost of over \$200,000. Within it is a hall, with a seating capacity of 1,500, a gallery of 400 seats; thirty class-rooms, museum, library, dormitories, chapel and living rooms for the faculty and boarders. Reid & Sherwin were the mason contractors, and M. Donohue the carpenter contractor for the church building.

Industrial Chicago, Vol. 1 (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891), pp. 63, 103.

See also HABS report on St. Ignatius College Building, now St. Ignatius High School (HABS No. ILL-1056), 1076 West Roosevelt Road, Chicago, which adjoins the church and shares much of its history; also, HABS report on St. Patrick's Church, (ILL-1033), northwest corner of Adams and Desplains Streets, Chicago, the oldest church in the city, for information on the early history of the Catholic Church in Chicago.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka
Historian
National Park Service
J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
August 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Holy Family Church is the second oldest Catholic Church building in the Chicago Diocese, pre-dating the fire of 1871.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair. The interior of the church is in good condition. The exterior has had the original dark brick painted an off-white on the Roosevelt Road facade. The remainder of the exterior is untreated.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Latin-Cross in shape; approximately 80'-0" x 260'-0".
2. Foundations: Limestone.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are dark-brown brick; the south (front) facade has been painted an off-white. The arches spanning the openings are white limestone.
4. Porches, stoops and bulkheads: The entrance on the south (front) is four steps and a very shallow stoop.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance on the south (front) consists of three bays with two large panel doors per bay. The entrance to the tower on the south is through doors with somewhat less relief in paneling than the main doors. The entrance to basement is between these two openings. A covered entrance to the school is located near the rear of the Sanctuary on the east side. All of the other entrances are later additions.
 - b. Windows: All windows are stained glass lancet windows (mostly in pairs) except for four clover-leaf quatra-foil windows on the south front, varying in size.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Copper corners with corbeled brick battlements below.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: A small tower with a circular stair is located at southwest corner. A large bell tower with extensive Gothic Revival detail is located in the southeast corner. A small flat-topped octagonal cupola is located at the peak of each of the three gables on the south facade. (The two side gables are parapet walls.) A small pier capped by a masonry finial rises between each of the three bays.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Basement: Parish hall, kitchen, storage and mechanical equipment.

b. First Floor: There is a small narthex at the south (front) and sacristies on the north. The remainder of the floor has altars in the north, east and west end walls of the cross with the nave in the long south leg of the Latin Cross. The first balcony (for the parishioners) is the full width of the nave and side aisles, and is two bays deep from the rear wall. The upper balcony (for the choir) is the width of the narthex only, and is also two bays deep from the rear wall.

2. Stairways: One stairway in the small southwest tower is circular within a square shape. There is a large stairway in the southeast tower, a stair on east of side of nave to basement, and additional stairs in later additions to the north of the sacristies.

3. Flooring: Terrazzo flooring on the first floor; wooden floors in balconies. There is some asphalt tile in the sacristies, and also in the basement.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, painted.

5. Doorways and doors: Dark, stained wood with heavy wooden trim and transoms.

6. Decorative features and trim: There is extensive sculpture and Gothic Revival detail throughout church as well as on confessionals in the rear of the church. There are numerous paintings on the walls of side aisles and around the altars. Pews are dark, stained wood, and are divided down the middle for entrance on one side only.

7. Lighting: Electric lighting.

8. Heating: Central heating.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The church faces south on the north side of Roosevelt Road between Blue Island Avenue and May Street. The area is undergoing extensive Urban Renewal; the new University of Illinois campus is under construction in the second block, east of the church.
2. Outbuildings: A small garage is located at the northwest corner of the church; it is a later addition.
3. Landscaping, walks, enclosures: There is a small fenced enclosure to the west of the south (front) portals. The remainder of the area on the west and north of the church is asphalt pavement for parking and school playgrounds.

Prepared by J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
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