

St. Luke's Protestant Episcopal Mission, Church
8th Avenue and 13th Street
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5856-A

HABS
PA
7-ALTO,
79-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. LUKE'S PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL MISSION, CHURCH

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79-A-
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Location: 8th Avenue and 13th Street

Date of Erection: 1881-82

Architect: Frederick Clarke Withers

Description: This modest, Gothic-influenced stone church is built on a rectangular plan, and features a nave with side aisles. The building measures approximately 60' x 100' and is constructed of an Ohio sandstone, laid in random courses of rough-faced ashlar, trimmed with smooth-faced. The gable roof has a larger wood belfry (80' high) with a pinched steeple over the 13th Street entrance, and a smaller one of the same shape on the opposite end. The gable end, facing 13th Street, has two pointed-arch windows. The nave windows have trefoil tops. The aisle walls are buttressed.

A newspaper article written at the time of the cornerstone laying, described the building:

The surface stone which will be used is from the Berea, Ohio, quarries. This is a soft grayish-blue, most agreeable to the eye, harmonizing nicely with the dressed stone to be used, which is from the Amherst quarries of Ohio, known as the Clough stone. The style of the building is Old English, and the dimensions virtually one hundred by sixty feet. It will have a nave with aisle walls, arcade columns supporting arches, with a clere-story over. The chancel and nave will be under the same roof, separated, however, by a lofty brick arch. There will be an organ chamber on the south side of the chancel, a robing-room for the clergy on the north side. There will be two porches easy of access, one on Eighth Avenue near the corner, the other on Thirteenth Street. Between the two porches, abutting on the west gable, and, as it were, at the entrance to the church, rises a foundation for the baptistery, supporting a stone font of large dimensions. The church will seat five hundred people, and will have three aisles, the centre one being five feet wide and convenient for processions. The aisle walls from the floor to the proper height will carry the necessary wainscoting of ash, the same material of which the seats will be constructed. The aisle and clere-story windows, made of rolled cathedral glass, of various tints with geometrical designs, will be used until replaced by memorials with stained glass. . . .

History: St. Luke's was founded in 1856. PRR officials were early and active members. The first church was erected on the site of the parish house on 8th Avenue in 1856, and the second one, of stone, on this site in 1858.

In 1881, ground was broken for this third church. Masons laid the cornerstone on September 3, 1881, and the building, which seated 500, was completed on January 15, 1882. The cost of the structure and furnishings was \$40,000, of which \$17,000 was contributed by Thomas A. Scott, PRR president, and \$12,000 by George Whitney of Philadelphia. In 1911, the church was described as "the most beautiful in Altoona up to that time."

Its designer was Frederick Clarke Withers (1828-1901), a prominent English-born architect distinguished for his churches. Withers was part of the Anglican ecclesiological movement that advocated a new approach to church building. This church, likened to English parish churches, is a good example of the genre, and was published in national publication Building.

Sources: Africa, 174-5, quoting Altoona Tribune (September 5, 1881). Kowsky, "Withers, Frederick Clarke"; "The Architecture of Frederick C. Withers"; The Architecture of Frederick Clarke Withers. "St. Luke's Episcopal Church." Sell, 369. "St. Luke's Church, Altoona, Pa."

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER),

ST. LUKE'S PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
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HABS No. PA-5856-A (Page 2)

Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Alston K. Hoagland, project supervisor and editor, in the summer of 1989. Hoagland's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.