

= Saint Leonard Catholic Church (Madison , Nebraska) =

Saint Leonard Catholic Church is a Roman Catholic church in the city of Madison , in the state of Nebraska in the Midwestern United States . Built in 1913 , it has been described as " an outstanding example of the Romanesque Revival style of architecture . "

St. Leonard 's parish , named after Saint Leonard of Port Maurice , was organized in 1879 . A wood frame church was built in 1881 on the outskirts of Madison , and moved into the city in 1898 . In 1902 , the basement of the current church was built , and the congregation moved into it , converting the old church to a school . When funds allowed , the basement was extended , and the current brick church completed in 1913 .

In 1989 , the church , its 1912 rectory , and the rectory 's garage were listed in the National Register of Historic Places , as the work of noted Nebraska architect Jacob M. Nachtigall . A pupil of Thomas Rogers Kimball , Nachtigall designed a number of Catholic churches and other buildings in the state , several of which are also listed in the National Register .

= = History = =

The first white settlers to occupy the site of Madison were a party led by Henry Mitchell Barnes , who settled near the junction of Union and Taylor Creeks in 1867 . Growth of the new settlement was rapid ; in particular , there was an influx of German families from Wisconsin . The town of Madison was officially platted by Barnes in 1870 or 1871 . In 1875 , it became the county seat of Madison County , and in 1876 it was incorporated . The Union Pacific Railroad reached Madison in 1879 ; by 1880 , the town had a population of about 300 .

The first Christian services held in Madison were Presbyterian , taking place in Barnes 's and other homes . A Presbyterian congregation was organized in 1870 , and a church built in 1872 . A Methodist circuit encompassing Madison and Antelope counties was organized in 1871 ; a parsonage was built in Madison ca . 1875 , and a church begun in 1877 . A Lutheran congregation may have formed in Madison in about 1875 , although early records are incomplete ; the congregation was initially served by the pastor of a Lutheran church in Green Garden Precinct , located about seven miles (11 km) southwest of Madison . It was formally organized in 1885 , and a church built in Madison in 1887 .

The first Catholic settlers in Madison County homesteaded near present @-@ day Battle Creek , northwest of Madison , in the late 1860s . In 1874 , they organized a parish ; in 1874 ? 75 , they built St. Patrick 's Church , the county 's first Catholic church . In 1877 , they wrote to Bishop James O 'Connor of the Diocese of Omaha , asking that a priest be assigned to visit the church at intervals until a permanent priest could be assigned to the parish ; in apparent response to this , Franciscan missionaries based in Columbus were given the responsibility of providing for Madison County .

= = = 1879 ? 1900 = = =

In 1879 , a group of Catholic residents of the Madison area met to plan the building of a church . At the meeting , a total of \$ 426 @.@ 75 was subscribed ; additional contributions of \$ 322 @.@ 86 were obtained from citizens of Madison . In January 1880 , the church 's trustees spent \$ 100 for five acres (2 @.@ 0 ha) on a hill at the southeastern edge of town . In the spring , a party of parishioners drove their ox teams to Wisner , about 30 miles (50 km) northeast of Madison , for the first load of lumber for the new church . The 30 @-@ by @-@ 40 @-@ foot (9 m × 12 m) frame structure , with a capacity of 100 , was completed in November 1881 ; the total cost was \$ 957 @.@ 61 , leaving \$ 208 @.@ 00 owed to the carpenter . The new church was dedicated to St. Leonard of Port Maurice , an 18th @-@ century Franciscan priest , preacher , ascetic , and writer venerated as the patron saint of parish missions .

In 1882 , a parcel of land southeast of the church was purchased for a cemetery ; a one @-@ year @-@ old child buried in September of that year became its first occupant . The cemetery was fenced in 1883 . In 1884 , the church was enlarged : a sacristy and a room for the priest were added

to the east end , and a steeple to the west end .

As Madison 's population grew , the church became too small for the expanding congregation . In addition , its location outside of the city was inconvenient for many parishioners . In 1898 , a tract of land inside Madison was bought . Rather than building a new church at the time , the parish elected to move the old one to the new site . The church was moved in two parts ; when it was reconstructed , another section was added between them , increasing the building 's seating capacity to 180 . The church on the new site was dedicated in November 1898 .

== 1900 ? 1913 ==

In the early 20th century , the parish decided that the old church should be remodelled into a school and a convent for the teachers , and that a new church should be built . Brother Leonard Darscheid , a Franciscan architect , drew up plans for a church ; but financial constraints precluded its construction . Instead , a temporary basement church was built just west of the old church building . It is not known whether the design of the basement used Darscheid 's plans . Construction of the basement church began in July 1902 , services were held there beginning in September 1902 , and it was dedicated in February 1903 .

The school opened in September 1903 , with two classrooms staffed by two members of the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque , Iowa . 66 students were enrolled , including a number of non -Catholics , owing to overcrowding in the public schools . To make more space available , a basement was dug in 1904 . In 1910 , a third classroom was added .

In 1910 , the Franciscans turned the management of the parish over to the Diocese of Omaha . In October of that year , Edward S. Muenich became the first diocesan pastor of St. Leonard 's .

Muenich embarked upon an extensive building campaign , for which he retained Omaha architect Jacob M. Nachtigall . Born in Germany in 1874 , Nachtigall had immigrated to the United States with his family in 1883 . Initially working as a laborer in Omaha , he had served as a draftsman for that city 's 1898 Trans -Mississippi and International Exposition . He had then worked as a draftsman for Omaha architect Thomas Rogers Kimball from 1900 to 1908 ; during this time , Kimball had designed the city 's St. Cecilia 's Cathedral . In 1909 , Nachtigall had opened his own architectural office .

In 1911 , a two -story eight -room brick rectory designed by Nachtigall was begun ; it was completed and furnished in 1912 , at a cost of \$ 10 ,374 . In the fall of 1912 , the church basement was extended by over 50 percent .

== 1913 ? 1946 ==

In 1913 , a Romanesque Revival church designed by Nachtigall was built on the existing basement . The cornerstone was laid and construction begun in May ; the church was completed by the end of November , and formally dedicated on December 4 . The cost of construction was about \$ 75 ,000 . While the church was under construction , Catholic services were held in Madison 's armory .

The new church had a seating capacity of 700 . In its 110 -foot (34 m) tower was a clock with four six -foot (1 .8 m) dials , and a peal of three bells , contributed by the citizens of Madison ; beside summoning the parishioners to Mass , these rang the quarter -hours , marking time for the residents of the city and the surrounding rural areas .

While the urban United States experienced an economic boom during the 1920s , the agricultural sector of the country experienced a depression . Disruption of European agriculture by World War I had produced high prices for farm commodities , and it had been thought that Europe 's recovery would be slow and that the high prices would persist . This gave rise to a bubble in farmland prices , which burst when the rapid postwar recovery of European agriculture drove commodity prices down again . At the same time , increasing mechanization reduced the need for farm labor , pushing agricultural wages downward and rural unemployment upward . Madison and St. Leonard 's parish suffered from this agricultural depression and from the Great Depression of the 1930s . During this time , the parish 's population remained more or less stable : in 1918 , it consisted of 440 individuals

; in 1929 , 452 .

In 1926 , the parish was forced to close its school , since the Presentation Sisters were no longer able to staff it . The school re @-@ opened in 1931 , with 60 pupils taught by Missionary Benedictine Sisters based in Norfolk .

The onset of World War II once again brought prosperity to rural Nebraska , and it persisted into the 1950s . St. Leonard 's paid off its remaining debt , held a mortgage @-@ burning ceremony in 1946 , and began raising funds for a new school .

= = = 1946 ? present = = =

The cornerstone for a new school was laid in November 1953 . A property adjoining the new school site was bought , and the house standing upon it converted to a convent for the nuns staffing the school . The new building was completed and opened for classes in August 1954 ; the old school , which had begun life as the first St. Leonard 's Church , was demolished that fall , and its site became a parking lot .

The Benedictine Sisters withdrew from the school in 1978 , prompting the closing of the seventh and eighth grades . The school continued to offer grades 1 ? 6 , taught by three lay instructors .

Beginning in the early 1990s , Madison experienced a large influx of Hispanics . In 1990 , Madison County 's population was 2 % Hispanic ; by 2010 , the number had increased to 13 % . In the city of Madison , whose single largest employer was a meatpacking plant with over 1000 employees , operated by IBP and then by Tyson Foods , the increase was far greater : the Hispanic fraction of the population rose from less than 1 % in 1980 to 48 @.@ 8 % in 2010 , as the Spanish @-@ speaking population increased and the white non @-@ Hispanic population fell . By 2011 , an estimated two @-@ thirds of St. Leonard 's parishioners were Hispanic . Beginning in 1991 , the archdiocese assigned Spanish @-@ speaking priests to the parish , and both English- and Spanish @-@ language services were offered .

The centennial of the church building was celebrated in December 2013 , at a bilingual Mass conducted by Elden Curtiss , archbishop emeritus of the Archdiocese of Omaha .

= = Architecture = =

In 1989 , three of the parish 's buildings ? the church , the rectory , and the rectory 's garage ? were added to the National Register of Historic Places , as the work of distinguished Nebraska architect Jacob M. Nachtigall . Beside St. Leonard 's , Nachtigall designed a number of other notable buildings in Nebraska , many of them Catholic ; these include St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Dwight (1914) , St. Anthony 's Church in Cedar Rapids (1919) , St. Bonaventure 's Church in Raeville (1919) , Immaculate Conception Church in Omaha (1926) , and Father Flanagan 's House at Boys Town (1927) .

= = = Church = = =

The church is oriented east @-@ west , with the main entrance facing westward . It is just over 153 feet (47 m) long from east to west ; 52 feet (16 m) wide from north to south . The walls are made of mosaic gray pressed brick trimmed with Bedford stone , rising from a rock @-@ faced limestone foundation , and are about 40 feet (12 m) high . The peak of the roof is about 70 feet (21 m) above ground level .

At the west end of the church , a 110 @-@ foot (34 m) belltower rises above the main entrance . The tower is topped with a copper dome , capped with a cross . It contains three bells , weighing 900 , 1 @,@ 600 , and 2 @,@ 500 pounds (410 , 730 , and 1 @,@ 130 kg) . The tower 's clock has four six @-@ foot (1 @.@ 8 m) dials . Below the tower , a flight of seventeen steps ascends to the church 's main entrance , via a set of double doors through a semicircular archway .

The church 's north and south walls are supported by a series of buttresses . Seven windows run along each wall . A line of brick corbels runs along the walls below the eaves . Near the east end of

the church , a short transept extends a short distance outward . At the church 's east end , beyond the transept , is a semicircular apse with a conical roof , topped with a six @-@ paned conical skylight .

= = = Interior = = =

The interior plan of the church consists of a nave , a short transept , and a semicircular apse . At the west end of the nave is a narthex . At the center of this is a vestibule leading to the church 's main entrance ; at the church 's northwest corner is a reconciliation room , formerly a baptistry ; at the southwest corner is a short passage from which a staircase descends to the basement and another rises to the choir loft . In the loft is the church 's organ , a tracker model manufactured by the Hinners Organ Company in 1879 ; the organ was not originally built for St. Leonard 's .

The nave measures 98 feet (30 m) between the entrance and the communion rail . An aisle passes down its center ; narrower aisles follow the north and south walls . Two rows of seven circular columns run along the nave . The columns are made of wood , plastered to conceal the material , and decorated with Corinthian capitals . The rib @-@ vaulted ceiling rises 30 feet (9 @. @ 1 m) above the floor . Fourteen stained @-@ glass windows , depicting scenes from the life of Christ , occupy the nave 's walls . The 13 @. @ 5 @-@ by @-@ 5 @-@ foot (4 @. @ 1 m x 1 @. @ 5 m) windows were produced by the Muenich Art Studio of Chicago . Between the windows are sculpted stations of the cross . In three spandrels above columns on each side are fresco paintings .

Two marble steps rise from the nave to the chancel . At the top of the steps is a hand @-@ carved white wood communion rail , decorated with miniature onyx columns and topped with marble .

At the northwest and southwest corners of the chancel are two side altars : to the north , a Marian altar ; to the south , an altar of St. Joseph . The original image on the Marian altar depicts Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception ; more recently , an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe has been added . The St. Joseph altar includes a bone relic of St. Leonard of Port Maurice .

On the Gospel side of the chancel is a large hand @-@ carved wood pulpit , decorated with carved figures of the four Evangelists .

The chancel is dominated by the high altar , which stands over 20 feet (6 @. @ 1 m) tall , and which cost its donors \$ 2 @, @ 080 in 1913 . Like the communion rail , the side altars , and the pulpit , it is made of hand @-@ carved wood decorated with small onyx columns . At the base is a relief sculpture of the Last Supper ; above that is a marble altar table . The tabernacle is just above that ; to either side is a sculpted angel , kneeling to the tabernacle and holding the sanctuary lamps . Above the tabernacle is a sculpted Crucifixion of Jesus , with the Virgin Mary and the apostle John on either side of the cross . In separate niches on either side of the crucifixion scene are statues of St. Boniface and St. Patrick , representing the German and Irish ethnicity of the parish in the early 20th century . Above their niches are figures of angels blowing trumpets ; at the top of the altar is a statue of St. Leonard .

On the half @-@ domed ceiling of the apse is a large oil @-@ painted mural depicting a scene in Heaven . In the center , God the Father and Jesus are enthroned on a cloud ; a stained @-@ glass skylight at the top of the dome depicting the Holy Spirit completes the Trinity . Flanking the Father and Son are the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist . Below the cloud is Satan in torment . At the left and right of the scene is an assemblage of 18 Catholic saints and 10 angels .

Beside the fourteen large windows in the nave , there are 25 stained @-@ glass windows in the church , depicting saints and symbols of the Catholic Church . These include St. Cecilia , patron saint of the Archdiocese of Omaha , and a pair of windows depicting St. Boniface and St. Patrick .

In the 1989 form nominating it for the National Register of Historic Places , it was noted that the church had undergone only minor alterations , including an interior redecoration in 1964 , the replacement of roof slates with asphalt shingles in 1977 , and the addition of a concrete ramp for access by the handicapped in 1986 .

= = = Rectory = = =

The rectory , located just south of the church , was designed in Neoclassical style , with Romanesque Revival elements . It is a rectangular house measuring 40 feet (12 m) wide by 57 feet (17 m) long , with eight rooms in two stories . Like the church , it is made of mosaic gray brick .

An open porch occupies the whole of the west frontage , facing the street , and wraps around to cover half of the south side . The portico is supported by circular columns with Doric capitals . At the base of the porch is brick latticework . There is a small enclosed porch with a doorway on the east side .

There are three rowlock arches above all of the windows on the first floor . One of the west @-@ facing windows on the second floor has two rowlock arches above it ; the other second @-@ floor windows are rectangular . There are two circular window openings in the attic , one facing west and the other south .

The rectory has a sloping roof with overhanging eaves and wood cornices . On the south wall is a tympanum , filled in with siding .

= = = = Garage = = = =

The original rectory garage is located southeast of the rectory . It is a rectangular structure facing westward , measuring 16 feet 2 inches (4 @. @ 9 m) north to south , and 26 feet 4 inches (8 @. @ 0 m) east to west . The interior is a single room .

The front (west side) of the garage is made of the same mosaic gray brick that was used for the construction of the church and the rectory . The north and south walls are both made of two different materials : the western two @-@ thirds of them is red brick , possibly from the brickyard that once operated in Madison ; the easternmost third is plastered with a layer of cement , painted red to match the bricks . The rear (east) wall is also plastered with red cement . It is speculated that the garage was either lengthened to fit a longer car , or that the eastern third had to be rebuilt ; the building 's hip roof shows no signs of having been lengthened .

The garage has two doors and two windows . Both the doors and windows have two rowlock brick arches over them . The car entrance is on the west side ; a passage door is on the north side . A clear @-@ glass window with 16 panes is on the east side . On the west side , north of the car entrance , is a window with beveled lead @-@ glass panes , which appear clear from the outside but red from inside the building . It has been speculated that this window was part of the parish 's first church .