



# Office of the City Clerk

City Hall  
121 N. LaSalle St.  
Room 107  
Chicago, IL 60602  
www.chicityclerk.com

## Legislation Text

---

File #: O2021-3830, Version: 1

---

Department of Planning and Development city of chicago

Chicago City Clerk-Council Dii».  
2021SEP9ftMIO:2i

September 9, 2021

The Honorable Anna M. Valencia City Clerk City  
of Chicago Room 107, City Hall 121 North LaSalle  
Street Chicago, Illinois 60602

**RE: Ordinance designating the Monastery of the Holy Cross Building (3101-11 S. Aberdeen Street)  
as a Chicago Landmark**

Dear Clerk Valencia:

We are filing with your office for introduction at the September 14, 2021, City Council meeting as a transmittal to the Mayor and City Council of Chicago the recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks that the Monastery of the Holy Cross Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

The material being submitted to you for this proposal includes the:

1. Recommendation of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks; and
2. Proposed Ordinance.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. Sincerely,

Kathleen E. Dickhut Deputy  
Commissioner  
Bureau of Citywide Systems and Historic Preservation Department of  
Planning and Development

encls.

cc: *Alderman Patrick Thompson, 11<sup>th</sup> Ward (via email w/ enclosure)*

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 1000, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

**ORDINANCE**

**Monastery of the Holy Cross 3101-3111 S.**

**Aberdeen Street**

WHEREAS, pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Municipal Code of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), Sections 2-120-620 through -690, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Monastery of the Holy Cross Building, consisting of the former church and attached rectory, (the "Building"), located at 3101-3111 S. Aberdeen Street, Chicago, Illinois, as more precisely described in Exhibit A, attached hereto and incorporated herein, satisfies three (3) criteria for landmark designation as set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4), and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Building was designed for a national parish to serve the German-speaking residents of Bridgeport and was originally the home of Immaculate Conception Church. It is currently the last remaining example of a German national parish in this neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Immaculate Conception Church was a social and religious hub for Chicago's thriving German-American communities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ethnic churches allowed for integration and assimilation into American society while harkening back to the architecture and culture of their homeland; and,

WHEREAS, Bridgeport was and is a popular neighborhood for immigrants new to the United States. Immaculate Conception Church served many of Bridgeport's immigrant communities, both well-established and burgeoning, throughout its over century-long existence; and,

WHEREAS, the Building exemplifies many high-Gothic Revival design elements, demonstrating faithfulness to a popular construction style of the time; and,

WHEREAS, the Building, is a significant early work of Hermann J. Gaul, a renowned Chicago-based ecclesial architect of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; and,

WHEREAS, the Building is noted for its impressive acoustics, a quality common among churches designed by architect Herman Gaul; and,

WHEREAS, Gaul's use of Gothic Revival characteristics, like those seen at the Building, greatly contributed to the overall appearance of the built environment in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Chicago; and,

WHEREAS, Gaul catered to Chicago's large German-American population, designing an array of buildings throughout the city and beyond that exuded the finest characteristics of German and Gothic Revival architecture; and,

WHEREAS, Some of Gaul's designs outside of Illinois have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places including Holy Hill National Shrine of Mary in Erin, Wisconsin, and St. Mary Church and Academy in Indianapolis, Indiana; and,

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has a significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community,

architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; and

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2021, the Commission adopted ..a resolution recommending to the City Council of the City of Chicago (the "City Council") that the Building be designated a Chicago Landmark; now, therefore,

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:**

SECTION 1. The above recitals are hereby adopted as the findings of the City Council.

SECTION 2. The Building is hereby designated a Chicago Landmark in accordance with Section 2-120-700 of the Municipal Code.

SECTION 3. For purposes of Sections 2-120-740 and 2-120-770 of the Municipal Code governing permit review, the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and
- the two-story flat building south of the church's apse and masonry wall parallel to the east-west alley directly south of West 31st Street are both excluded from the significant features.

SECTION 4. The Commission is hereby directed to create a suitable plaque appropriately identifying the Building as a Chicago Landmark.

SECTION 5. If any provision of this ordinance shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such provision shall not affect any of the other provisions of this ordinance.

SECTION 6. All ordinances, resolutions, motions or orders in conflict with this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

SECTION 7. This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage and approval.

**EXHIBIT A**

**Building Address**

3101-3111 S. Aberdeen Street, Chicago, Illinois

**Permanent Index Numbers**

17-32-202-042-0000  
040-0000

(partial)

17-32-202-

**Legal Description**

LOTS 19 to 25 (except therefrom that part lying East of a line 79.0 feet West of and parallel with the East line of Lot 16) all in Wilders Subdivision of Blocks 1 and 4 of the Assessors Division of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section 32, Township 39 North, Range 14, East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Cook County, Illinois.

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF CHICAGO THAT CHICAGO  
LANDMARK DESIGNATION BE ADOPTED FOR THE**

**MONASTERY OF THE HOLY CROSS**

**3101-3111 S. Aberdeen Street**

**Docket No. 2021-06**

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago:**

Pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago (the "Municipal Code"), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks (the "Commission") has determined that the Monastery of the Holy Cross (consisting of the former Immaculate Conception church and attached rectory, hereinafter, the "Building") is worthy of designation as a Chicago Landmark. On the basis of careful consideration of the history and architecture of the Building, the Commission has found that it satisfies the following three (3) criteria set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code:

- J. Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*
- 4. Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*
- 5: Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

**I. BACKGROUND**

*The formal landmark designation process for the Building began on June 3, 2021, when the Commission approved a preliminary landmark recommendation (the "Preliminary Recommendation") for the Building as a Chicago Landmark. The Commission found that the Building meets three (3) of the seven (7) criteria for designation, as well as the integrity criterion, identified in the Chicago Landmarks Ordinance (Municipal Code, Section 2-120-580 et seq.).*

As part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission preliminarily identified the "significant historical and architectural features" of the Building as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and,
- the two-story flat building south of the church's apse and masonry wall parallel to the east-west alley directly south of West 31st Street are both excluded from the significant features.

Also, as part of the Preliminary Recommendation, the Commission adopted a Designation Report, dated

June 3, 2021, the most current iteration of which is dated August 5, 2021, incorporated herein and attached hereto as Exhibit A (the "Designation Report").

At its regular meeting of July 1, 2021, the Commission received a report incorporated herein and attached hereto as Exhibit B (the "Department of Planning and Development Report") from Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, stating that the proposed landmark designation of the Building supports the City's overall planning goals and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

On July 27, 2021, the Commission received written consent to landmark designation of the Building in a form dated July 27, 2021, and signed by Prior Peter Funk, OSB, representing the monastic community that owns of the Building.

## **II- FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 2-120-690 of the Municipal Code, the Commission has reviewed the entire record of proceedings on the proposed Chicago Landmark designation, including the Designation Report and all of the information on the proposed landmark designation of the Building; and

WHEREAS, the Immaculate Conception Church (now Monastery of the Holy Cross) was designed for a national parish to serve the German-speaking residents of Bridgeport. It is currently the last remaining example of a German national parish in this neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, this church was a social and religious hub for Chicago's thriving German-American communities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ethnic churches allowed for integration and assimilation into American society while harkening back to the architecture and culture of their homeland; and,

WHEREAS, Bridgeport was and is a popular neighborhood for immigrants new to the United States. Immaculate Conception Church served many of Bridgeport's immigrant communities, both well-established and burgeoning, throughout its over century-long existence; and,

WHEREAS, the Building exemplifies many high-Gothic Revival design elements, demonstrating faithfulness to a popular construction style of the time; and,

WHEREAS, the Building, is a significant early work of Hermann J. Gaul, a renowned Chicago-based ecclesial architect of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; and,

WHEREAS, the Building is noted for its impressive acoustics, a quality common among churches designed by architect Herman Gaul; and,

WHEREAS, Gaul's use of Gothic Revival characteristics, like those seen at the Building, greatly contributed to the overall appearance of the built environment in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Chicago; and, .

WHEREAS, Gaul catered to Chicago's large German-American population, designing an array of buildings throughout the city and beyond that exuded the finest characteristics of German and Gothic Revival architecture; and,

WHEREAS, Some of Gaul's designs outside of Illinois have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places including Holy Hill National Shrine of Mary in Erin, Wisconsin, and St. Mary Church and Academy in Indianapolis, Indiana; and,

WHEREAS, the Building meets three (3) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, consistent with Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code, the Building has significant historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value; now, therefore,

**THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS HEREBY:**

1. Adopts the recitals, findings and statements of fact set forth in the preamble and Sections I and II hereof as the findings of the Commission; and
2. Adopts the Designation Report, as revised, and dated this August 5, 2021; and
3. Finds, based on the Designation Report and the entire record before the Commission, that the Building meets the three (3) criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 2-120-620 (1), (4) and (5) of the Municipal Code; and
4. Finds that the Building satisfies the "integrity" requirement set forth in Section 2-120-630 of the Municipal Code; and
5. Finds that the significant historical and architectural features of the Building are identified as follows:
  - AU exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and

3

**the two-story flat building south of the church's apse and masonry wall parallel to the east-west alley directly south of West 31st Street are both excluded from the significant features.**

**6. Recommends the designation of the Building a Chicago Landmark.**

This recommendation was adopted

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

# Monastery of the Holy Cross (Formerly Immaculate Conception Parish Church)

3101-3111 S. Aberdeen Street

Final Landmark Recommendation Adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, on August 5, 2021

CITY OF CHICAGO Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

### Contents



<b>The Bridgeport Community Area</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Location Map</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Parish History of Immaculate Conception and the Church</b>	
Early Parish History	4
Construction of the Church	5
Later History	6
Monastery of the Holy Cross	7
Building Architecture	8
<b>The Gothic Revival Story</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Architect of Immaculate Conception</b>	
Hermann J. Gaul	15
<b>Criteria for Designation</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Significant Historical and Architectural Features</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	

## **Monastery of the Holy Cross (Formerly Immaculate Conception Parish Church)**

**3101-3111 s.aberdeen street**

**Date of Construction: Rectory 1901; Church 1908-1909**

**Architect: Hermann J. Gaul**

**Architectural Style: German Gothic Revival**

The Monastery of the Holy Cross, formerly Immaculate Conception Parish Church, is a fine quality example of the high German Gothic Revival style and possesses a strong and historic connection to Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood and its development during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Immaculate Conception was originally a German "national parish" which later served a diverse community of immigrants from 1908 to 1990. The church is largely intact and has undergone few interior changes to the original sanctuary with the exception of the addition of a monastic choir in the nave. Since 1991, it has operated as the Monastery of the Holy Cross, a ; Roman Catholic Benedictine Monastery of the Subiaco Cassinese Congregation. The complex includes a church building and adjoining rectory. Both were designed by architect Hermann J. Gaul. An adjacent school building once located to the east of the church is no longer extant. An additional two-story brick flat building is also part of the complex but is not part of the landmark designation. The rectory predates the main church building, and both structures are fine examples of Chicago's ecclesiastical architecture.

The Monastery of the Holy Cross is located at 3101 -3111 South Aberdeen Street in Chicago's Bridgeport Community Area. The church building and rectory are color-coded Orange in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey (CHRS), which preliminarily identifies it as significant to its surrounding neighborhood.

## The Bridgeport Community Area

Bridgeport, Chicago's Community Area 60, is situated three miles southwest of Chicago's Loop business district, although it did not officially become part of the City of Chicago until 1863.

Inheriting the area near the South Branch of the Chicago River occupied by a settlement known as Hardscrabble, Bridgeport was platted in 1836 by the Illinois and Michigan Canal Commissioners, twelve years before the completion of the adjacent Illinois and Michigan

1

The Monastery of the Holy Cross is located at 3101-3111 S. Aberdeen Street in Chicago's Bridgeport Community Area. The Complex includes the church and adjoining rectory building as outlined on the above map.

Reopening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal at Bridgeport, 1871, after the channel had been deepened. (Artist: Unknown. Source: Chicago Historical Society (ICHi-05836))

Canal which let travelers of the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes reach the Mississippi River. The commissioners named the area Bridgeport because of the bridge constructed over the canal lock.

By 1863, the Bridgeport area was annexed by the City of Chicago. Irish immigrants moved into Bridgeport as early as the 1830s, in addition to Italian- and Lithuanian-Americans. In the many years after, waves of German and Polish immigration followed, eventually succeeded by Mexican and Chinese immigrants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2008, the Chicago Sun-Times stated that Bridgeport had become one of the four most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Chicago.

Early German immigration to Bridgeport was spurred on by the need for workers to man the nearby canal. A German neighborhood called Dashiell formed north of 31st Street and east of Halsted Street during this time, as well as a "Little Dalmatia" along Wentworth. These German immigrants began the congregations which eventuated in the First Lutheran Church of the Trinity (1863), Holy Cross Lutheran Church (1886), St. Anthony Catholic Church (1873), and Immaculate

Conception Catholic Church (1883). These immigrants lived in housing stock made up of frame and brick cottages and two-flats with small backyards. The neighborhood also

3

(

consisted of small stores, fraternal halls, schools, and saloons. Bridgeport's immigrant population fluctuated considerably throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and by 1960, when the Immaculate Conception parish was still in full operation, Bridgeport's foreign-born citizens constituted 12.9% of its population.

In 1990, when the parish's use of the church ceased prior to its reuse by the Monastery of the Holy Cross, 23.8% of Bridgeport's population was foreign-born—a sizable increase.

In 2000, the number of foreign-born residents in Bridgeport had increased to 32.2% of the neighborhood's population. Asian-born immigrants were living in Bridgeport in significant numbers by 2000, as were Hispanic residents.

**Hardscrabble. Retrospective Map of the Southern Fork Portage area, circa 1830. (Source: A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago, vol. I (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1884), pp. 112ff.)**

## Parish History of Immaculate Conception

### *Early Parish History*

**This building served as Immaculate Conception Church from 1883 to 1891. It was located on Bonfield Avenue between Archer and Lyman. It is still extant but has been relocated to Morgan Street.**

On June 1, 1869, Peter Fischer, pastor of Chicago's Saint Peter Church, purchased land for a new German Roman Catholic parish on Bonfield Avenue between Archer Avenue and Lyman Street. A frame building was erected on this land which soon came to serve as Immaculate Conception Church, founded on May 7, 1883.

In 1891, Immaculate Conception's third resident pastor, Father Peter L. Biermann, obtained the finances for the construction of a combination church, school, and convent at 1045 West 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The original frame building on Bonfield Avenue was moved to 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Auburn (now Litanica) Avenue where it became the first church of Saint George Lithuanian parish. Father Biermann's successor, Reverend Peter Faber, oversaw the church's design and construction from 1897 to its completion in 1909.

*This Page: Immaculate Conception in process of construction*

*Opposite Top: Archbishop James Edward Quigley, blessing the cornerstone on August 2, 1908*

*Opposite Middle: Cornerstone of Immaculate Conception*

*(Source: Immaculate Conception Parish Seventy-fifth Anniversary book)*

### *Construction of the Church*

The church's rectory at 3111 South Mospratt (now Aberdeen) Street was constructed first in 1901, while the former parish residence at 1047 West 31" Street was remodeled as a convent. Additional funding provided by parishioners and Father Faber further financed the construction of the church itself.

The Chicago Daily Tribune reported on July 10, 1907, that plans had "been completed for a church edifice, 60 [by] 155 feet, to be built for the Church of the Immaculate Conception, at Thirty-first and Mospratt streets." The newspaper reported that the church building was to "have a tower 170 feet high" with the exterior to be "constructed of brick and stone." The building was to cost \$60,000, a fair amount for the time. The building's design was undertaken by German-born architect Hermann J. Gaul, who soon built a career out of commissions from Catholic German clients.

5

The cornerstone was laid on August 2, 1908 and blessed by James Edward Quigley, Archbishop of Chicago. The church was completed in time for Mass on Christmas Day in 1909 and was formally dedicated on June 19, 1910.

#### *Later History*

In the years after the construction of Gaul's church, the parish continued to grow, soon encompassing as many as 700 families with a membership consisting of clans of German, Polish, Irish, Italian, and Lithuanian descent. In the 1930s, the church established scouting programs and other activities for parish youth while the school's student body attendance stayed robust.

The church's generous and dedicated congregation also ensured completion of Gaul's original . design. On December 7, 1958, Archbishop Albert G. Meyer presided at a special Mass which marked the Bridgeport parish's diamond jubilee. In connection with this event, The New World noted the following: "The original plans for the church were finally carried out in their entirety this year [...] The remaining six stained-glass windows were installed, as were the three marble altars, altar-railing, hand-carved statues, and many other ecclesiastical furnishings."

The Immaculate Conception parish served as a way station for Bridgeport's earliest immigrants. As noted Chicago-based cleric Martin Ei'Marty has observed:

The parishes [were] way stations between ethnic and immigrant phases to Americanized status. This did not mean that there was one-way traffic at

6

whose exit they became ex-Catholic. The archdiocese would not have stood for Americanization on such terms. Instead, they were given tools for bringing together their past and present, their old ways and new, Old World and New, old faith and new circumstance." The story of parishes such as Immaculate Conception is the story of "one important...way by which immigrants of old 'made it'."

By 1978, the church's school attendance had slipped, and only 113 children were in attendance. The pastor, principal, and School Board of Immaculate Conception parish joined with the staff of nearby St. Bridget parish and engaged in a year of evaluation by a joint committee. The committee decided to combine the two grammar school programs. The newer Immaculate Conception school facilities at 1045 West 31 st Street were to be used by the combined parish schools and, in September of 1979, operation of the parish schools as a single institution began under the name Immaculate Conception-St. Bridget School.

At the same time, Bridgeport began to experience an influx of Mexican-Americans residents while the church worked with priests from neighboring Catholic parishes in promoting programs for the Bridgeport community. Among active parish organizations were the School Board, Men's Club, and Women's Club.

*Monastery of the Holy Cross*

**Early historic interior photograph of Former Immaculate Conception Church**

The Archdiocese of Chicago would eventually shutter Immaculate Conception in 1990, leading to a new chapter for the church. For two years, the site was used as a storage warehouse until it was purchased by the Monastery of the Holy Cross, a Roman Catholic Benedictine monastic community that adheres to the centuries-old tradition of living by the Rule of St. Benedict.

Benedictine monks, known for centuries as the hoteliers of Europe, are revered for their hospitality, a fact demonstrated by their reuse of a portion of the church as B&B rental space.

After their acquisition of the church, they "restor[ed] it to vibrancy [...] including the commissioning of icons and statuary, as well as the installation of a new high altar" and a loft space for guests. The community today numbers between 8 and 10 monks who engage in the study and scholarship of Gregorian chant, a practice bolstered by the church's "magnificent acoustics."

*Building Architecture*

The Immaculate Conception Church was built in the Gothic Revival style and was inspired by Germany's Cologne Cathedral, the most significant religious structure in the hometown of the church's architect, Hermann J. Gaul.

As is common for Gothic

Revival churches, the

Immaculate Conception Church Recessionary after the Dedication Mass (Immaculate

is a masonry building with Conception Parish Seventy-fifth Anniversary book)

structural elements, such as tall, narrow windows and

a slender

tower, that accentuate its vertical proportions. Carved stone statuary and brick ornamentation with fine decorative detail used throughout provided an opportunity for Gaul to offer the neighborhood a high-style church while also matching the material of surrounding brick cottages and two-flats.

The main entrance on the church's eastern elevation consists of three pointed archways crowned with finial-topped gables and sculptural trefoils; above, a pointed-arch stained-glass window inset in ornate tracery. This same elevation's uppermost gable is adorned with pointed Lombard bands and a statue of Mary, the church's patron. The church's bell tower is capped by a tall steeple and is surrounded by four additional smaller steeples at the bases of which are four winged gargoyles. Lancet windows and similarly-shaped recesses appear on all sides of the tower.

9

10

Above Left: Northern side of transept

Above: Apse and Innsbruck stained glass windows

Left: Narthex

Opposite Page:  
View of nave and apse  
from choir loft

(Photo Credit: Max Chavez)

12

The exteriors of the church's nave and apse feature stained-glass windows inside of ogee arches; the transept's northern elevation features a statue of St. Joseph at its apex as well as large stained-glass windows, here framed by detailed tracery.

The church's narthex consists of a large set of stairs leading up to three sets of double, leather-covered doors topped by wooden trefoils.

Beyond, the nave with its two side aisles sit underneath impressive rib vaulting while the nave's clerestory is adorned with stained-glass windows depicting Biblical scenes. This grand nave is separated from its side aisles by vibrant green marble columns.

The church's cruciform floorplan is completed by the transept which features multiple focal points such

as four handsome frescoes and eight painted depictions of green-winged angels. The apse, transept, and choir loft contain stained glass windows believed to be by the

Rendering of Immaculate Conception. (Immaculate Conception Parish Seventy-fifth Anniversary book)

Tyrolese Art Glass Company from Innsbruck, Austria; the stained glass windows in the nave have a different quality and luminance

suggesting these are of a different manufacturer.

The Magnificat window in the choir loft (at the rear of the nave) is of particular importance as it is the only stained-glass window in the church with an "Innsbruck" marking. The monastic community who now worship in the church have written that in connection with Vespers beginning at 5:15 p.m., "a particularly beautiful time of day in our church," they (and other observers) especially note "the setting sun streaming through the golden Magnificat window in the choir loft."

The adjacent rectory is a more modest building, but no less significant. The structure, which predates the main church building, features an arched entrance with thick voussoirs supported by small columns. All of the front elevation's windows are sharply arched in the traditional Gothic Revival style and capped with stone lintels. A two-story tower with a conical roof constitutes the rectory's southern corner. The facade's center bay gable has a handsome green cornice, a feature echoed similarly in the two dormers on either side of the gable.

Interior view of Monastery of the Holy Cross (former Immaculate Conception Church) Photo Credit: Carl Klein

### *The Gothic Revival Style*

Gothicism as an architectural language began in 12<sup>th</sup> century France and further developed the then-prevailing characteristics of Romanesque design. The style's original form is best exemplified by the High Gothic beauty of Europe's 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century churches which used structural grandeur as an expression of religious faith. Paris's Notre-Dame and Germany's Cologne Cathedral are some of the most internationally-renowned examples of this early version of Gothic architecture. Gothicism proliferated in Europe for four centuries until it was replaced by Renaissance-era classicism.

Eighteenth-century Europe saw a revival of Gothicism which eventually spread to the United States in the following century. The 1840s and 1850s saw an explosion of Gothic Revival churches, beginning along the East Coast and soon spreading nationwide, that lasted well into the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although the style had begun to wane decades prior. Gothicism's original use in Christian buildings resulted in it becoming an in-demand style for the country's grandest churches and cathedrals during the height of its popularity.

Gothic Revival in the United States is easily identifiable by the presence of several architectural characteristics including: an emphasis on verticality, flying buttresses, ribbed vaults, pointed-arch windows with tracery, and the use of decorative elements such as trefoils, quatrefoils, and

**Historic photograph (dating from 1917) of the construction of St. Benedict Church on Irving Park Road. The gentleman in the rear seat closest to the photographer is Hermann J. Gaul, architect. Source unknown.**

finials. Gothic Revival architecture can be seen across Chicago, appearing in numerous city landmarks, such as Tribune Tower and the University of Chicago's earliest campus buildings (a version of Gothicism known as Collegiate Gothic). Other variations of Gothic Revival can be found in Chicago, such as Venetian Gothic, which informs the design of Henry Ives Cobb's Chicago Athletic Association and Walter W. Ahlschlager's Uptown Broadway Building.

## Architect of Immaculate Conception

*Herrmann J. Gaul*

Herrmann J. Gaul was born in 1869 in Cologne (Koln), Germany. In his youth, Gaul was an admirer of the Cologne Cathedral which would soon come to inspire many of his works, including Immaculate Conception. After coming to the United States as the nineteenth century drew to a close, he settled in Chicago in 1897 and apprenticed for a time with famed Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. By 1898, Gaul was a member of the Illinois Society of Architects. After working under Sullivan, Gaul opened his own architectural practice in Chicago in 1902.

15

Historic photograph (1990) of Immaculate Conception school facilities (left) and Northern elevation of church (Preservation Chicago Archives)

His work was mostly focused on the design and construction of distinguished buildings for German Roman Catholic clients, although Gaul did occasionally execute secular designs for clients of German descent.

Much of Gaul's work emulated Gothic and Romanesque Revivalism. Historian Edward R. Kantowicz observed that "German Catholics chose Gothic almost two-thirds of the time as their native style, hearkening back to the days before [Martin] Luther when German Christianity was still united." Gothicism was still in the large vocabulary of architectural forms which was available to local architects who had begun to work in the 1890s.

Gaul was a member of what Kantowicz called the German "ethnic league" and designed four Gothic and two Romanesque churches in Chicago, in the vein of a tradition carried on by many of Gaul's contemporaries including Henry Schlacks, Egan & Prindeville, and Worthmann & Steinbach who all designed numerous Gothic and Romanesque churches throughout the city. Gaul also designed schools, hospital wings, and orphanage buildings for German ethnic institutions.

One of Gaul's most spectacular Chicago area designs is the Athenaeum at 2936 North Southport Avenue. The theater was commissioned by the adjacent German-speaking St. Alphonsus congregation as a venue for parish youth to put on theatrical productions; the building also contained multiple libraries and reading rooms, a gymnasium, a bowling alley.

17

Exterior views of Monastery of Holy Cross (formerly Immaculate Conception Church). Top: North elevation fronting 31st Street. Bottom Left: Rear elevation. Bottom Right: Principal elevation. Photo Credit - Joanne Yasus, Preservation Chicago Archives.

18

billiard rooms, and large event halls. Chicago's oldest continuously operating off-Loop theatre, the auditorium of the German-inspired Athenaeum opened on November 18, 1911, and contains an impressively cantilevered upper balcony and excellent acoustics, much like his design at Immaculate Conception. The structure suffered fire damage in 1939, but remains still as a popular venue and high-quality example of Gaul's talent for catering to German-American clients. **Rectory tower and church steeple as viewed from the south. Photo Credit: Max Chavez**



Gaul's other works in Chicago include such noted churches as St. Benedict Church and St. Philomena Church. He also contributed to the extensive exterior remodeling in 1913 of the original 1873 St. Michael Church in Old Town. Outside of Chicago, Gaul's works in Illinois include St. Peter and Paul Church in Naperville, St. Nicholas Church in Evanston, Divine Word Monastery and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in Techny, and St. Joseph School and the former Mallinckrodt College in Wilmette. The German Gothic-style St.

Nicholas Church in Evanston was Gaul's first major commission.

Gaul's work obtained distinction in Wisconsin and Indiana, as well. Some of these buildings have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, including Holy Hill National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians, in Erin, Wisconsin, and the Gothic Revival St. Mary Church and Academy in Indianapolis, Indiana. Other notable Gaul designs outside of Illinois include St. John the Baptist Church and St. Mary Church in Hammond and Decatur, Indiana, respectively.

Gaul's son, Michael F. Gaul, joined his father's firm whereupon they assumed the title of Hermann J. Gaul and Son. Hermann J. Gaul retired in 1948 and passed soon after in 1949. Michael F. Gaul carried on the firm's architectural practice until his passing in 1996. In that time, the firm designed buildings including Quigley South High School, now St. Rita, and Maria High School, both located in Chicago.

## Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of Landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation" as well as possess sufficient historic design integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Monastery of Holy Cross (formerly Immaculate Conception Church and consisting of the church building and attached rectory, hereinafter, the "Building") be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Example of City, State, or National Heritage***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The church was designed for a national parish to serve the German-speaking residents of Bridgeport. It is currently the last remaining example of a German national parish in this neighborhood.
- This church was a social and religious hub for Chicago's thriving German-American communities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ethnic churches allowed for integration and assimilation into American society while harkening back to the architecture and culture of their homeland.
- Bridgeport was and is a popular neighborhood for immigrants new to the United States. Immaculate Conception Church served many of Bridgeport's immigrant communities, both well-established and burgeoning, throughout its over century-long existence.

### ***Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The Building exemplifies many high-Gothic Revival design elements, demonstrating faithfulness to a popular construction style of the time.

- The Building is a significant early work of Hermann J. Gaul, a renowned Chicago-based ecclesial architect of the early 20th century.
- The Building is noted for its impressive acoustics, a quality common among churches designed by architect Hermann J. Gaul.
- Gaul's use of Gothic Revival characteristics, like those seen at the Building, greatly contributed to the overall appearance of the built environment in early 20th century Chicago.

### ***Criterion 5: Important Architect***

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- Gaul catered to Chicago's large German-American population, designing an array of ■ buildings throughout the city and beyond that exuded the finest characteristics of German and Gothic Revival architecture.

20

- Some of Gaul's designs outside of Illinois have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places including Holy Hill National Shrine of Mary in Erin, Wisconsin, and St. Mary Church and Academy in Indianapolis, Indiana.

### ***Integrity Criteria***

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.*

The Building possesses good physical integrity, displayed through its siting, scale, overall design, and historic relationship to the surrounding area. It retains its historic overall exterior form and a majority of all exterior materials, features and detailing.

The Building exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity. Since the Building was completed in 1908-1909, no major additions or alterations have been made to the Building. Most historic features, finishes, overall form, footprint, and location of entrances and arrangement of fenestration are intact.

### **Significant Historical and Architectural Features**

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object is under consideration for Landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon evaluation of the Building (consisting of the former Immaculate Conception church and attached rectory) the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines of the Building; and,
- The two-story flat building south of the church's apse and masonry wall parallel to the east-west alley directly south of West 31st Street are both excluded from the significant features.

### **Bibliography**

#### **Parish History; Bridgeport; Architect.**

*Alford, Clarence Walworth. The Illinois Country, 1673-1818 (Chicago: The Loyola University Press, 1965; first published by A. G. McClurg & Co. in 1922 as part of the centennial histories planned by the Illinois Centennial*

Commission; reissued by Loyola University Press, Chicago, in *The American West reprint series*, March 1965).  
*Archdiocese of Chicago. A History of the Parishes* (1980).  
Archdiocese of Chicago Archives.  
*Arnheim, Rudolf. The Dynamics of Architectural Form: Based on the 1975 Mary Duke Biddle Lectures at the Cooper Union* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977). '  
*Biles, Roger. Illinois: A History of the Land and Its People* (DeKalb: Northern University Press, 2005).  
Carrier, Lois. *Illinois: Crossroads of a Continent*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 1993, 1998). .  
*Chicago Tribune, May 13, 1900, "Chicago at a Glance. "*  
*Davis, James F. Frontier Illinois* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998).  
*Gray, James. The Illinois* (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1989; a reprint of Gray's 1940 text, together with an 1989 introduction).  
*Hansen, Harry. The Chicago* (New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942).  
*Hill, Libby. The Chicago River: A Natural and Unnatural History* (Chicago: Lake Claremont Press, 2000).  
*Horsley, A. Doyne. Illinois: A Geography* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, Inc.; Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, 1986).  
Immaculate Conception Church. "Immaculate Conception Centennial: 100 Years of God's Blessings, 1883-1983."  
*Howard, Robert P. Illinois, A History of the Prairie State* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972; Foreword by Paul M. Angle).  
*Jensen, Richard J. Illinois, A History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001; a reprint of Jensen's 1978 text).  
*Kantowicz, Edward. "To Build the Catholic City," Chicago History* (Chicago Historical Society, 1985).  
*Keating, Ann Durkin, ed. Chicago Neighborhoods and Suburbs, A Historical Guide* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).  
*Keating, Ann Durkin. "Fort Dearborn," pages 312-313 in James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, Janice L. Reiff, eds., The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).  
*Lane, George, and Algimantas Kezys. Chicago Churches and Synagogues* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1981).  
*Lewis, Michael J. The Gothic Revival* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2002)  
*Martone, Michael, ed. Townships* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1992).  
*Mayer, Hold M., and Richard C. Wade. Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).

*Pacyga, Dominic A. Chicago, A Biography* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).  
*Pacyga, Dominic A. "Bridgeport," pages 92-93 in James R. Grossman, Ann Durkin Keating, Janice L. Reiff, eds., The Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004).  
*Pease, Theodore Calvin. The Frontier State 1818-1848* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987; published for the Illinois Sesquicentennial Commission and the Illinois State Historical Society; published as part of *The Sesquicentennial History of Illinois*; originally published as *Volume 2 of the Centennial History of Illinois by the Illinois Centennial Commission, 1918*).  
*Pierce, Bessie Louise. A History of Chicago, Volume I, The Beginning of a City, 1673-1848* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1937; Second Impression 1975). *Pierce, Bessie Louise. A History of Chicago, Volume II, From Town to City, 1848-1871* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1940; Second Impression, 1975).  
*Quaife, Milton M. Checagou: From Indian Wigwam to Modern City, 1673-1835* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933).  
*Shaw, Stephen Joseph. The Catholic Parish as a Way-Station of Ethnicity and Americanization* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1991; part of the *Chicago Studies in the History of American Religion* edited by Jerald C.

*Brauer and Martin E. Marty).*

*Skerett, Ellen. "Immaculate Conception Church," A History of the Parishes (1980).*

*Tallmadge, Thomas Eddy. Architecture in Old Chicago (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1941; Second Impression 1975).*

*Vexler, Robert I., and William F. Swindler, eds. Chronology and Documentary Handbook of the State of Illinois (Dobbs Ferry, New York: Ocean Publications, Inc., 1978).*

*Wilkes, Paul. Excellent Catholic Parishes: The Guide to Best Places and Practices (New York: Paulist Press, 2001).*

*Wilson-Dickson, Andrew. The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel, An Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music in Worship (Oxford: Lion, 1992).*

*Zangs, Mary. The Chicago 77: A Community Area Handbook (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2014).*

### **Hermann J. Gaul's Design For National Register Listed St. Mary's Church in Indianapolis**

*Indiana Architectural Foundation, Indianapolis Architecture (Indianapolis " Hilltop Press, Inc, 1975).*

*Indianapolis News, September 9, 1912. Indianapolis Star, September 9, 1912.*

*"New Edifice of Pioneer German Catholic Congregation," Indiana Catholic, September 6, 1912, page 1.*

*Political and Biographical Memories of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana (Chicago: Goodspeed Brothers, 1893).*

*"The History of Nine Urban Churches," (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Riley-Lockerbie Ministerial Association of Downtown Indianapolis).*

### **23**

*Bodenhamer, David J., and Robert G. Barrows, eds. Encyclopedia of Indianapolis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).*

*Dunn, Jacob Piatt. Greater Indianapolis (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1910).*

*Taylor, Jr., Robert M. Indiana: A New Historical Guide (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989).*

Interview with Cecilia Kings, Daughter of Hermann Gaul, July 2, 1975.

Interview with Ida Striby, Sister-in-Law of Hermann Gaul, July 29, 1915.

Sister Clarita Uehlein, Secretary, St. Mary's Catholic Church, Indianapolis. National Register Form Preparation, October 13, 1975

## Acknowledgments

### CITY OF CHICAGO

Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

### Department of Planning and Development

Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

Kathleen Dickhut, Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Citywide Systems, Sustainability and Historic Preservation

### Project Staff

Daniel R. Klaiber (Project Manager), editing

Historian Ellen Skerrett contributed a great deal to this piece on behalf of the former Immaculate Conception Church (now Monastery of the Holy Cross Church) which was designed by noted church architect Hermann J. Gaul and built for the Archdiocese of Chicago by 1908 in Chicago's Bridgeport community. Ellen Skerrett is the author of *Born in Chicago: A History of Chicago's Jesuit University* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008); *At the Crossroads: Old Saint Patrick's and the Chicago Irish* (Wild Onion Books, 1997); and *Nineteenth Century Chicago Irish* (Loyola University of Chicago Center for Urban Policy, 1980). With Francis O' Neill and Mary Lesch, she edited *Chief O'Neill's Sketchy Recollections of an Eventful Life in Chicago* (Northwestern University Press, 2008). Along with O'Neill and Lesch, Skerrett edited a memoir of immigration and assimilation by Francis O'Neill who left Ireland in 1865, traveled the world as a sailor for five years, and then settled in Chicago shortly before the Great Fire of 1871. O'Neill's memoir affords a view of urban life in Chicago in the late 1800s. With Dominic A. Pacyga, Skerrett also wrote *Chicago, City of Neighborhoods: Histories and Tours* (Wild Onion Books, 1986). The next year she wrote *The Irish in Chicago* with Lawrence J. McCaffrey, Michael F. Funchion, and Charles Fanning. With Jeffrey M. Burns and Joseph White she produced *Keeping Faith: European and Asian Catholic Immigrants* (Orbis Books, 2000).

Meg Hall, Director of Archives and Records at the Archdiocese of Chicago, and her associate Charles Heinrich also

helped facilitate research on the former Immaculate Conception Church and its architect Hermann J. Gaul.

Special thanks to Joanne Yasus for her assistance to the monastery and for her guidance of this project.

This report was prepared by, documented by, and written by Carl Klein. In addition, this report and designation effort would not have been possible without the contributions of Preservation Chicago and specifically Max Chavez, Mary Lu Seidel and Ward Miller.

Finally, special thanks to Father Peter Funk, O.S.B., Prior, and the Monastic Community of the Monastery of the Holy Cross, Chicago, Illinois"

25

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual building, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development; Bureau of Citywide Systems, Sustainability and Historic Preservation, City Hall, 121 North LaSalle Street, Room 905, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; web site: <<https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/>provdrs/hist.html>*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

Photo Credit: Daniel Klaiber

## COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

Ernest C. Wong, Chair

Gabriel Ignacio Dziekiewicz, Vice-Chair

Maurice D. Cox, Secretary

Suellen Burns

Tiara Hughes

Lynn Osmond

Alicia Ponce

Paola Aguirre Serrano

Richard Tolliver

The Commission is staffed by the:

Department of Planning and Development

Department of Planning and Development  
Bureau of Citywide Systems, Sustainability and Historic Preservation  
City Hall, 121 N. LaSalle St., Room 905  
Chicago, Illinois 60602  
312.744.3200 (TEL)  
<<http://www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks>>

*June 2021, revised and reprinted August 2021*

28

of Planning and Development city of chicago

July 1, 2021

Report to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks On the  
**Monastery of the Holy Cross 3101 S.  
Aberdeen Street**

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) finds that the proposed landmark designation of the Monastery of the Holy Cross supports the City's overall planning goals for the surrounding Bridgeport Community Area and is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans.

Since its opening in 1909, the building has served as an important center of worship for the community and pedestrian anchor at the corner of West 31<sup>st</sup> Street and South Aberdeen Street. Originally a Roman Catholic parish, known as Immaculate Conception, the prominent Gothic Revival style building was the achievement of a predominantly German-speaking parish, which was founded in 1883. In 2018, Father Peter Funk, on behalf of the current owner of the building, the Monastery of the Holy Cross, suggested to the CCL Program Committee that the building be designated a Chicago Landmark.

DPD's recent planning and various public investment projects in the broader area are consistent with the proposed landmark designation. Adding to the vibrancy in the area is recent retail investment in the 3100 block of South Halsted on formerly City-owned land as well as a streetscape project along South Morgan Street, between 31<sup>st</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Streets, supporting local business and pedestrian activity. Moreover, a new Amazon Warehouse at 2420 S. Halsted will leverage private investment for Chicago River pedestrian improvements adding to the area's recreational strengths along with the continued success of Palmisano Park, constructed on the site of a former quarry.

The designation would join three other designated Chicago landmarks located in Bridgeport, including: the site of the origin of the Illinois and Michigan Canal (designated 1996); the Chicago

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 1000. CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

and Alton Railway Bridge (designated 2007), and; the Spiegel Administration Building (designated 2011).

Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

Therefore, in conclusion, landmark designation of the Monastery of the Holy Cross supports the City's overall planning goals for Chicago's Bridgeport Community Area, is consistent with the City's governing policies and plans and reinforces the reality that historic neighborhood assets can continue to serve as anchors of community life.

Department of Planning and Development