

# **City of Detroit**

## **CITY COUNCIL**

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Final Report

### **St. Brigid Roman Catholic Church/High Praise Cathedral of Faith Historic District 8809 Schoolcraft Avenue, Detroit, MI**

By a resolution dated July 3, 2018, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB), a study committee, with the official study of the proposed St. Brigid Roman Catholic Church/High Praise Cathedral of Faith Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.



The proposed St. Brigid Roman Catholic Church/High Praise Cathedral of Faith Historic District is located on the south side of Schoolcraft in the two and one-half blocks between Wisconsin and Wyoming streets in northwest Detroit. The complex consists of the church and rectory (8809 Schoolcraft) and activities building (13641 Kentucky) now belonging to High Praise Cathedral of Faith; and the school (8735 Schoolcraft, 13661 Wisconsin), now Flagship Academy, erected for St.

Brigid Roman Catholic parish between 1924 and 1960. Approximately 8½ miles northwest of the Point of Origin in Campus Martius Park, it is one block north of Jeffries Freeway (I-96) and west of the Oakman Boulevard and Russell Woods locally designated historic districts. St. Brigid was among the many Roman Catholic churches that were shuttered by the Archdiocese of Detroit in 1989.

**Boundaries:**

The boundaries of the proposed St. Brigid Historic District, shown in bold lines on the attached map, are as follows:

**On the north**, the centerline of Schoolcraft;

**On the east**, the centerline of Wisconsin;

**On the south**, the centerline of the vacated alley running east-west between Kentucky and Wyoming, and

**on the west**, the centerline of the vacated alley adjacent to the west line of Lots 23, 24 and 25, John M. Welch Jrs. Wyoming Schoolcraft Sub L46 P98 Plats, WCR, extended north and south.

**Boundary Justification:** The boundaries include all of the parcels occupied by the four buildings included in the district that were built by the Archdiocese of Detroit for St. Brigid Parish.

**Statement of Significance:**

St. Brigid Roman Catholic Church/High Praise Cathedral of Faith is significant on the local level under National Register criteria A, for its ethnic and religious history and its place in the development of the city of Detroit. St. Brigid parish was founded in 1924 to serve Irish Catholics in its newly developing northwest Detroit community. It exemplifies the typical Roman Catholic parish history of its period, with development of the parish complex interrupted first by the Great Depression, and then by World War II. The church complex also represents the parish's search for relevance with the changing fortunes and demographics of the city of Detroit and Catholic church in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. This period ended with St. Brigid parish merging with the adjacent parish and its church and rectory sold to High Praise Cathedral of Faith in 1989. The parochial school continued in operation until 2005 when it was sold to Flagship Academy, a charter school, which it operates as today. The activities building was subsequently sold to High Praise Cathedral of Faith.

St. Brigid R.C. Church complex is also significant locally under criteria C. Described by Detroit architectural historian William M. Worden as "perhaps architecturally the finest Catholic church built in Detroit in the postwar period," the church building is traditionally inspired and structurally modern. Its execution was completed at one time and according to a carefully thought-out scheme by a significant church architect, George F. Diehl, and artisans Andrew Maglia, Corrado Parducci, Francis B. O'Duggen. Its appearance, although harkening back to Byzantine churches of the past, reflected a modern ecclesiastical Art Deco aesthetic, exemplifying the latter phase of the twentieth century attempt to develop modern buildings based

on tradition. The school and rectory are complimentary parts of the design of the parish complex, while the activity reflects a modern period aesthetic.

Its period of significance is from 1924, when the parish was founded and its first building was constructed, to 1989, when the church closed and its buildings were subsequently purchased by High Praise Cathedral of Faith led by Apostle Clarence R. Haddon, Sr.

## **HISTORY:**

### **St. Brigid R.C. Parish 1924-1989.**

The Irish began arriving in Detroit in the early 19th century from Canada and the northeast seaboard, particularly New York City and Boston. Whether to leave famine or oppression behind in their homeland or to seek prosperity, their numbers in Detroit increased greatly with the opening of the Erie Canal, enabling easy passage by land or sea. They likely felt welcome in the frontier city where Catholicism was already practiced by the ancestors of the French explorers who founded Detroit in 1701. In 1833 English speaking Catholics gained approval to establish their own parish, and by 1850 the Irish were the city's largest ethnic group.

Inexpensive land and jobs in industry and commerce, such as the fur trading business, mining and shopkeeping, made Detroit attractive to its growing immigrant population. Indicative of the expansion of the Irish community westward was the relocation of Most Holy Trinity Church from the center of downtown to 6th Avenue and Porter in 1849 and the erection of a new church building at that site in 1855. The need for both skilled and unskilled labor in late 19th and early 20th century Detroit kept Irish immigrants coming and staying, many finding work in the auto factories in the early 20th century.

Although the Irish were spread around the city, 47% were concentrated in what would eventually be referred to as the Corktown area west of downtown in 1853, according to the U.S. Census. Corktown's Irish population dwindled throughout the 20th century, but it remains as the symbolic cultural home of the Detroit area's Irish.

As Detroit's greatly increasing population grew outward from downtown in the twentieth century with industrial growth and greater earning power, the Catholic Archdiocese established St Brigid Parish for Irish Catholics in northwest Detroit in 1924. The parish boundaries extended to Schaefer on the west; Grand River on the south, Detroit Terminal Railroad tracks on the north, and, on the east, Oakman Boulevard to Livernois, Grand River and the rail tracks. Concurrently, the city's boundaries expanded, incorporating large tracts and opening up new subdivisions for development. Formerly part of Greenfield Township, John M. Welch Jr.'s Wyoming-Schoolcraft Subdivision, in which the church complex is located, was platted in 1923. Mr. Welch frequently used the coming of the church in his promotional ads for selling home sites.<sup>1</sup>

The Reverend Martin E. Halfpenny (1881-1940) was the founder of St. Brigid Parish. Called by Bishop Michael Gallagher to lead the new parish, his steadfastness and generosity lent courage to his parishioners during the economic challenges of the Great Depression. St. Brigid, for whom the parish was named, was born a slave but became a nun and the abbess of a community

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<sup>1</sup> Detroit Free Press, Mar 9, 1924, 36.

of 13,000 nuns in the Convent of Kildare, Ireland in the 6th century. A friend of St. Patrick, she was known for her charity.

When a location near the center of the new parish boundaries at Fullerton near Wyoming was sought but not available, Bishop Gallagher authorized the purchase of the twenty-one lot site on Schoolcraft by Father Halfpenny from John M. Welch, Jr. for \$50,000 on February 21, 1924. The first mass was held in a vacant store on the northwest corner of Schoolcraft and Wyoming on April 6, 1924 and within three weeks Sunday Mass had 280 attendees. When ground was broken for the first section of the school at the southwest corner of Schoolcraft and Indiana on October 20, 1924, the parish already had a membership of 200 families.

Detroit building permit #54050 was issued to Donaldson & Meier, a Detroit architectural firm, for the parish's first permanent structure, the two-story brick and reinforced concrete chapel and school, in 1924. Its first floor served temporarily as worship space until the present church was completed twenty-five years later. The first service was held in that building on April 5, 1925, and three Dominican nuns came from Adrian to begin teaching 145 students on the second floor of the building in the Fall of that year. In order to accommodate the rapid growth of the school, the east wing containing an auditorium was built under a permit issued on March 24, 1927 to expand to eight grades, and the first class was graduated in 1929. By 1934, 718 students were enrolled, with a graduation class of 68.

Slowed first by the Depression and then World War II, the construction of a rectory and church had stalled. Father Halfpenny, the parish founder, passed away on January 14, 1940 and Father George W. Brennan arrived in June of that year. The four priests assigned to the thriving parish had outgrown the existing house built years before. After debts were paid off, planning for the church and rectory began in earnest. On October 4, 1940 ground was broken for the rectory that was built under permit #47919 issued to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Detroit on October 9th. The estimated construction cost of the brick veneer rectory and garage was \$96,000, and George F. Diehl was the architect. George H. Diehl, Architect, and subsequently Diehl and Diehl, became a favored firm for diocesan architectural work following the retirement of architect John M. Donaldson. The rectory, completed in 1941, was connected to the first floor worship space in the school building by underground passage.

Two years later, funds were raised through the purchase of War Bonds for the construction of the new church after the end of World War II. By December of 1944, George F. Diehl, architect, and his son, Gerald Diehl, associate architect, began plans for the new St. Brigid Church. On January 3, 1948, Father Brennan signed the construction contract for the church, estimated to cost \$750,000, with the W. E. Wood Company and construction began shortly thereafter (building permit #12212, Feb. 6, 1948). Ground was broken by Father Brennan in March of that year; the cornerstone was laid on September 19, 1949. The Solemn Blessing of St. Brigid took place on Thanksgiving, November 24, 1949 and the new church received the blessing of Cardinal Mooney. Construction photos show that a four-legged square frame was built first of reinforced concrete; the octagonal exterior dome and its lantern were essentially complete atop the frame before construction of the four arms of the Greek cross church was begun.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it

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<sup>2</sup> *60th Anniversary Booklet*. Detroit: St. Brigid Parish, Detroit, 1984. 33.

appears that the exterior dome was in place when the cornerstone was laid. On November 11, 1949 the altar was consecrated and the first mass was offered.

Diehl designed a convent to house the Dominican nuns, which was erected south of Schoolcraft c. 1950 between Wisconsin and Ohio, later to be razed in the 1980s.

The final building of the complex was a modern style, brick-faced activities building located west across Kentucky Avenue from the church. Named Haddon Hall after the parish complex changed hands in 1989, its permit (#26075) was issued on June 24, 1959, with Diehl and Diehl as its architect. The 270,000 cubic foot building cost an estimated \$325,000 to construct.

Whereas St. Brigid began as an Irish parish, it adapted to a multi-ethnic parish as the population in northwest Detroit increased with immigration of many ethnic groups from Eastern Europe, including Romanians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Croats, and Armenians, as well as Lebanese, Italians, French Canadians, and Jews. Continuing its growth into the 1950s and 1960s, six masses were celebrated each Sunday in the early 1960s when the parish had 3000 members.

Physical change occurred in the 1970s when the last phase of the Jeffries Freeway, I-96, cut a swath through the parish, displacing five hundred houses. In the mid-1960s, highway revolts took place nationally in the wake of the Federal Highway Administration's plans to locate interstate highways in urban areas. Saint Brigid parish leaders fought against the route that was taken but city, state and federal transportation planners thought it necessary to link with Davison Avenue (M-8), the opposition was outweighed. Like other neighborhoods divided by interstate highways throughout the country, it exacerbated adverse effects in the area.

Ethnic and religious changes came about as Catholics were no longer moving into the area. The new highways took more and more of Detroiters out of the city and to the suburbs, where eventually manufacturing and office jobs followed. Church membership began to drop. At this time the parish reached beyond its Catholic membership to serve the broader community by donating funds and allowing use of parish hall by the non-Catholic community.

In the 1970s and 80s the neighborhood changed character again with increasing speed, reducing the number of Catholics in the area and changing the ethnic character to largely African American. On January 10, 1989, Cardinal Edmund Szoka ordered the closure of thirty-one Detroit churches, which was met by a wave of protest. Six months before St. Brigid Roman Catholic Church closed for good, it still had 700 members. or 110 families.<sup>3</sup> While parishioners at St. Brigid initially joined eight other parishes to defy Cardinal Szoka's order, all but three of the parishes including St. Brigid ultimately agreed to close. Final mass was held on June 25, 1989, with a reception following.

After the Catholic church closings in 1989, David Crumm, former religion writer for the *Detroit Free Press*, headlined an article, "Baptists Buy Church: 'It's Dream Come True'" Several growing Baptist congregations were able to purchase solidly built, architecturally rich,

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<sup>3</sup> William Kleinknecht and David Crumm, DFP, 6 parishes will close winning days despite defiance of other churches. June 24, 1989, 4A

substantial church buildings that came on the market at affordable prices.<sup>4</sup> St. Brigid Church was among them. The archdiocese listed \$350,000 as its sale price.

At the time of the closure of the church on June 30, 1989, the school remained open while the religious services of several parishes were consolidated elsewhere. When the parochial school, which became St. Brigid-St. Luke, serving grades one through eight finally closed in 2005, it had 143 students. It also housed a Montessori School for younger children. Parents and teachers were stunned with the announcement of closure of the school, which embraced the community and encouraged black pride amongst its students.<sup>5</sup> The school building was sold to Flagship Academy, a charter school, which is its current operator. The activities building was subsequently sold to High Praise Cathedral of Faith.

### **High Praise Cathedral of Faith, 1989-Present**

Apostle Clarence B. Haddon, Sr. and Prophetess Joyce R. Haddon, his wife, founded High Praise Cathedral of Faith, an Apostolic/Pentacostal denomination, in 1989 in Detroit. Prior to then, from 1947 to 1961, Apostle Haddon served under the late Bishop Ellington Forbes and the late Bishop David Ellis as the minister of music and assistant pastor at Greater Grace Temple in Eastern Market (Canfield and Russell), and under District Elder O.G. Hayes as associate elder there. In 1974, Apostle Haddon accepted commission as the pastor of the Church of God in Unity, “of which there were six members,”<sup>6</sup> located at 8751 Chrysler in Detroit, where his father had been pastor many years before. Under the Haddon’s leadership, the name of the church became Unity Apostolic Cathedral. Its rapid growth led to a move to 331 E. Bethune in 1983, before again relocating on October 29, 1989 to 8809 Schoolcraft, the former St. Brigid R.C. Church complex that included a 2000 seat sanctuary, rectory, school, and activity center with a gym and dining facility.

The relocated church was renamed High Praise Cathedral of Faith. In 2000, Apostle Haddon, who was raised in Inkster, Michigan, purchased the old Bethlehem Temple of Inkster and Douglas Elementary School and opened his church’s Inkster campus. The mortgages to both churches were burned in 2005. Presently, Apostle and Prophetess Haddon are pastoring both the Inkster and Detroit campuses.

According to his biography, Apostle Haddon has served in many ecclesiastical capacities, including Chairman, District Elder and Suffragan Bishop of the Northern District Council of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World and as its Regional Director (2003), and he is currently Vice Chairman of the Apostolic World Christian Fellowship (AWCF), which has a membership of over five million.” He leads the Pentecostal Outpour International Fellowship of Churches (P.O.P. International, a worldwide organization of believers. Prophetess Joyce R. Haddon is the CEO and Founder of J. Ruth Ministries, a ministry devoted to helping people who are hurting. She is an author motivator, psalmist, preacher and teacher.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> David Crumm, Baptists Buy Church: ‘It’s Dream Come True, DFP, July 14, 1989, 9B

<sup>5</sup> Patricia Montemurri, Closings/Parents, teachers are stunned by decision. DFP, March 16, 2005. 3A

<sup>6</sup> *Pastoral History of Presiding Bishop Clarence B. Haddon, Sr., & Co-Pastor, Dr. Joyce R. Haddon, Pastors of High Praise Cathedral of Faith and Presiding Bishop of Pentecostal Out-Pour Fellowship of Churches*, nd.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Both Apostle Haddon, Sr. and Prophetess Haddon brought their talents as singer-songwriters to their faith. Apostle Haddon began singing in the church choir at age thirteen, and directed the choir in 1973. Deitrick Haddon, appointed by his father as choir director at Church of God in Unity at the age of fourteen, earned a Grammy Award and was a Stellar nominee. Gerald, another son, Tammy Haddon, his daughter, and sister Corita (who resides in Tampa, FL) have also made a name for themselves as recording artists in Gospel music.

## **Church Architects and Designers**

### **Donaldson & Meier**

Donaldson & Meier, one of Detroit's preeminent architectural practices in existence from 1880 to 1930, was responsible for the first building of the parish — the school, whose first floor was temporarily used as a worship space. The partnership of Donaldson & Meier was founded by John M. Donaldson (1854–1941) and Henry J. Meier (1858-1917) in 1880. Donaldson came to the United States from Stirling, Scotland as an infant and completed his education in Munich and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In addition to downtown office buildings in Detroit's financial district, among them the thirteen-story original Penobscot Building (1905), its twenty-four story annex (1916), an addition to McKim, Mead & White's State Savings Bank (1916), and the David Stott Building (1929), the firm was well-known for its church architecture and its work with the Detroit Archdiocese. Among others, it designed Holy Redeemer Church in Southwest Detroit and the Chancery (1924) and St. Aloysius Roman Catholic Church (1930), the latter two on Washington Boulevard. Donaldson & Meier worked with architectural sculptor Corrado Parducci on many of its projects.

### **George Frederick Diehl, Diehl and Diehl, Architect**

George Frederick Diehl (1892-1976) was born in Detroit and received a parochial school education and training as an architect through night school and extension courses. In 1923, after working for fifteen years as a draftsman and designer in various Detroit architectural offices, including that of Albert Kahn, Smith Hinchman & Grylls, and Donaldson & Meier, he was registered as an architect in the state of Michigan. Associated with Augustus H. O'Dell as O'Dell and Diehl until 1931, Diehl had his own practice until 1948, when he took on his son, Gerald G. Diehl, as an associate, forming Diehl & Diehl, Architects. Since the early 1930s, Diehl's office devoted itself almost exclusively to Catholic church, school, and institutional work." In the St. Brigid Church dedication booklet, the following are identified as his most important projects, in addition to St. Brigid: St. John's Provincial Seminary, Plymouth, MI (1948); Gesu Church, Detroit (1922); Queen of the Miraculous Medal Church, Jackson, MI (1941, 1950), the design for the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral Towers in Detroit (1950). His later churches, including St. Clare of Montefalco in Grosse Pointe Park (1951-1953), St. Cement R.C. Church in Centerline (1961) and St. Scholastica (1965) in Detroit, were modernist in design.

The younger Diehl attended Lawrence Institute of Technology and was registered as an architect in 1947. Gerald Diehl (1916-1995) trained in the offices of Giffels and Vallet, Harley Eliington & Day, and Swanson & Saarinen before serving as Vice President of Diehl and Diehl, architect, from 1947 through 1976, and later, president, until his death in 1995. In 1992, Gerald Diehl received awards in historic preservation from the American Institute of Architects and the

American Society of Interior Decorators for his firm's work at Orchestra Hall. Mr. Diehl, a fellow and past president of the American Institute of Architects, served on Detroit's City Planning Commission for many years. The firm went out of business in November 1993.<sup>8</sup>

### **Andrew R. Maglia**

Italian born Andrew R. Maglia (1905-1974) a native of Palermo, Sicily, was the interior designer and muralist of St. Brigid. He began his craft at the age of fourteen with work based on the ancient European guild system. After immigrating to the United States in 1923, he apprenticed in New York and Massachusetts before establishing his business, Maglia Studios, in Detroit. Specializing in stained glass, mosaics and murals, he is recognized as one of the most renowned American stained glass artists of the 20th century.<sup>9</sup> In addition to St. Brigid, his work can be seen locally in the ceiling murals and mosaics at St. Hyacinth R.C. Church, Detroit (1928), St. John's Seminary, St. Theresa, Gesu, St. Clare de Montefalco, St. Gabriel, Precious Blood, and St. Matthew Catholic Church. One of the non-ecclesiastical works by Maglia was the Gabriel Richard mosaic at the Greyhound Bus Terminal (1958) at Randolph Street and Larned Street (demolished).

### **Corrado G. Parducci**

Detroit architectural sculptor Corrado G. Parducci (1900-1981) collaborated with many prominent local architects during his long career in Detroit. Born in Italy, Parducci arrived in New York in 1904. Sponsored to art school by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney), he later attended the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design and the Art Students League. Parducci worked for Donnelly & Ricci in Perth Amboy, NJ, about 1915, then for Ulysses Ricci when that firm split up, and finally with Anthony DiLorenzo, who had been associated with Ricci. By the early 1920s Albert Kahn had become familiar with their work and commissioned DiLorenzo's firm for architectural ornamentation with the understanding that Parducci would do the work. Sent by DiLorenzo to Detroit in 1924, Parducci was soon overwhelmed by the work coming his way. After about eight months, in mid-1925 he separated from DiLorenzo and opened his own studio in Detroit. The Masonic Temple (George D. Mason, 1926); Edsel and Eleanor Ford House (Albert Kahn, 1927), Guardian Building (Wirt C. Rowland of Smith Hinchman & Grylls, 1929), and the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament (Henry A. Walsh, 1930s-40s) and the Detroit Historical Museum (William E. Kapp, 1951) are only a few of his many well known commissions.

### **Francis B. O'Duggan**

The stained glass windows in St. Brigid were designed and fabricated in the studio of Francis B. O'Duggan, who operated a glass manufactory under the name of John Terrance O'Duggan (d. 1955) at 116 St. Botolph Street in Boston's Back Bay since the mid-1930s. His Boston studio became known for its stained glass windows, which it designed and fabricated for Roman Catholic churches, mainly in New England. Among them is Saints Peter and Paul Church in Lewiston, Maine, which, like St. Brigid, has an Art Deco aesthetic and is a Dominican order. It is also the second largest church in New England, serving a Franco-American congregation.

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<sup>8</sup> *Bottom Line: Architectural Blessings*, Detroit Free Press, June 14, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> [www.st.matthewdetroit.com/mosaic-dome.php](http://www.st.matthewdetroit.com/mosaic-dome.php) accessed 6/6/18



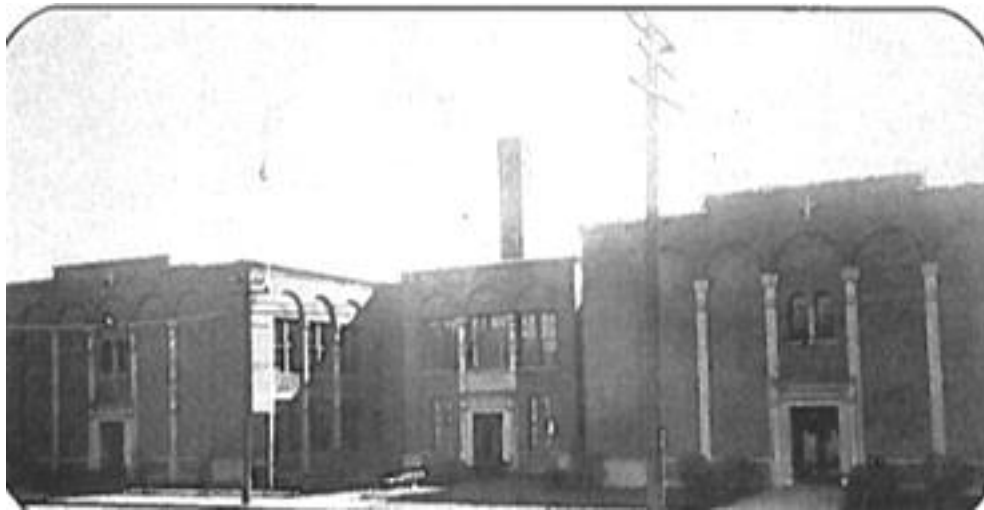
## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

The St. Brigid Roman Catholic Parish and its four extant buildings—the school, now Flagship Charter Academy addressed as 13661 Wisconsin Street; the rectory and church, now High Praise Cathedral of Faith addressed at 8909 Schoolcraft, and the Haddon Activity Center, addressed as 8911 Schoolcraft, are located on the south side of Schoolcraft Road with Indiana on its east and the east half of the block between Kentucky and Wyoming on its west. Just one block north of I-96, Jeffries Freeway, the St. Brigid complex is surrounded by a residential neighborhood

### School

The first-built structure of St. Brigid parish was a two-story, flat roofed, reddish variegated English bond brick school building from 1924 that received an identical wing in 1927, resulting in its symmetrical H-shaped footprint. Situated between Indiana and Wisconsin avenues, the school was sited close to the public rights-of-way on its front and sides; later additions have extended it southward across the vacated alley towards the residential neighborhood to the south. A straight-line concrete walkway dividing the grass-turf lawn from the public sidewalk leads to each of its entrances off Schoolcraft. A back-lit cabinet sign sits perpendicular to the building on its front lawn.

The set back, central entrance section is composed of three bays, the center of which is framed by three-sided engaged limestone columns rising up two stories with three decorative brick molded blind arches springing from foliated capitals. Three large square second story windows are spaced evenly beneath each of the blind arches. Centered on the first floor is the entrance, composed of a wooden door set into a limestone architrave, over which is a lintel carved with a Celtic knot pattern and supported by pilasters having carved capitals. The entrance bay is flanked by a single window on each side.



The north façades of the wings have shallow raised pediments over their central bays, originally with a cross centered within. They consist of five bays, with only the central entrance bay fenestrated. The entrance itself is

similarly treated to that of the central section, with an arched double window above at second story level. Side elevations exhibit similar bay arrangements and windows in three sections of three windows each. Brick detail is abundant, as seen in the dentil cornice, herringbone and basket weave patterns, and soldier course banding and arches. Wall coping sills, water courses, and foundation are stone.

## **Church and Rectory**

St. Brigid Roman Catholic Church and rectory occupy the entire Schoolcraft frontage between Indiana and Kentucky avenues, to the west of the school building. The front (north) of the church is situated close to the public right-of-way; the rectory to its east is set back substantially, creating a front yard, and connects to the east arm of the church. Long, straight line and diagonal concrete walkways cut through the grass turf front lawn of the rectory, leading to its front entrance from the public sidewalks on Schoolcraft and Indiana streets. A broad concrete area extending the width of the steps leads to the tripartite church entrance on Schoolcraft. Shrubs and trees are intentionally planted around the perimeters of the school, rectory and the church; landscaping at the southwest corner of Schoolcraft and Indiana is framed by stacked masonry pavers. A cabinet sign identifying the church sits on northeast corner of Schoolcraft at Wisconsin.

## **Rectory**

The rectory is a large, residential, two-story, asymmetrical, pressed variegated red brick building on a slightly raised basement, with a two-story attached rear matching garage extending its east elevation to the south, resulting in its L-shaped footprint. The garage is faced in common bond while the house is stretcher bond. Its hip roof is clad in red clay tile and has copper gutters; beneath its eaves runs a raised brick dentil cornice.



The front entrance of the rectory is on the east half of the front façade, which projects slightly from the west half. Four stone steps lead to the wooden paneled door with subdivided window, surrounded by a masonry, flat arch architrave with a crest containing an Irish cross centered within the entablature. To the east of the entrance is a three-part divided picture window with three figurative carved blocks set in the brick above. The rest of the windows on the front (north)

and east façades are regularly arranged rectangular multi-pane casements. Its east elevation features a chimney wall and a first floor three-sided masonry bay window with a copper roof. Near the garage section at the southeast corner of the east elevation is a single door with a ribbed metal porch roof supported on heavy wooden brackets. Belt courses and ornamental features are beige masonry; a molded belt course provides a continuous sill for the divided pane windows. In general, the rectory is substantial in its own right but, due to its positioning on the lot and its austere and subtle exterior appearance, gives full prominence to the church building its east.

## **Church**

St. Brigid Church is styled as a modern adaptation of an Early Italian church design. Its symmetrical form is that of a Greek cross with connecting corner sections that create an overall square plan at the first level, with an octagonal lantern dome centered above. Its symmetrical façade is faced with pressed brick and unglazed terra cotta and topped by arcaded cornices. Its roof is clad in the original clay tile.

Because local zoning regulations restricted the height of the church to a maximum of thirty-five feet at the mean level of the gable roofs, the central portion of the church structure is set back in the form of the octagonal dome, allowing the architect to achieve the height required for a properly proportioned mass without violating the zoning laws, which were put in place as to not interfere with the sunlight of adjoining residential properties and retain the residential neighborhood atmosphere.

St. Brigid Church façades are rich with Catholic and Irish iconography and symbols executed in terra cotta. The Schoolcraft (north) façade features three central, evenly spaced arched entrance openings separated by a large rectangular marble panel. Each opening contains a set of wooden double-doors set within compound terra cotta arches. The polychromatic lunette panels with sky blue backgrounds above the doors represent, in the center lunette panel, St. Brigid as a nun and shepherdess; in the west panel, St. Patrick as a bishop who rid Ireland of its snakes; and in the east panel, Saint Dominic as a teacher. Metal lanterns flank each opening. Four projecting plaques above the doors represent the Evangelists—Saints Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. On the pilasters and arches of the three main entrances are symbols of the seven corporal works of mercy. A rose window centered in the gable is flanked by two large partly engaged statues of saints Peter and Paul. A decorative arcaded cornice defines the slope of the gable roof and a Celtic cross crowns the apex of the gable.

The Kentucky Avenue (west) entrance features the chair and the twelve sheep representing the throne of God and the twelve apostles. The east and west walls feature Guardian Angel symbols. A variety of column and pilaster caps at windows and doorways are ornamented with monks, doves and the familiar church symbols, and five plaques depict playful caricatures of the Irish Saints. These works are all executed in unglazed terra cotta in a stylized modern which is a simplified Gothic style. Atop the side gables are archaic symbols of the Seraphim consisting of the head and six wings. At the four upper corners of the building there are eight relief plaques used as relief ornaments for the masonry walls. The three-sided corner sections of the Greek cross contain a set of two arcaded windows on first floor with secondary entrances near the transoms, and sets of four arcaded windows on their second floor.

Structurally, the interior of the church is modern in the sense that it has no exposed columns. The four wings are spanned by structural concrete arches on top of which sits the central dome over the nave, providing an unobstructed view of the alters. The dome is topped with a lantern that provides sunlight through the stained glass windows in the ceiling.

Interior walls are faced with imported marble to the height of approximately eight feet and acoustical plaster above. The floor of the sanctuary is of imported maple arranged in geometric patterns. The floors of the narthex and vestibules are of quarry tile, and the floor under the nave is of patterned asphalt tile, now covered with carpet.

An extensive program of artistic craftsmanship that included forged ironwork, carved wood and marble, mural painting and stained glass was a major component of the interior design of the church interior. The main alter is a combination of imported marble in carved designs and of ornamental forged ironworks. The two side alters are also of imported marble, as are the pedestals used to separate the side altars from the main altar. Recessed in the side walls of each transept are marble-lined shrines in the form of niches which originally contained votive lights and marble statues. The confessionals flank these shrines.

The choir loft is reinforced concrete with carved woodwork on its exterior facing. This construction technique, not requiring any columns, lends to the modern feel of this architectural element. The organ was added after the church was dedicated, when funds allowed.

The Baptismal was located in a separate room in the northeast corner of the church. Original terra cotta floors, leaded windows and the ironworks grill on the door still remain in the room. Stations of the Cross provided by the E.J. Moynes & Company were executed in hand carved wooden plaques, in a simple style with art modern influences. Church pews were stained in dark walnut with carved panels in the style of the stations of the cross decorating the ends of the pews.



Extensive murals, executed by Andrew B. Maglia, were completed by the time the church was dedicated. Imposing murals occupied both sides of the Tabernacle. The large mural painting on the face of the main arch of the sanctuary was a composition depicting Christ as King of Kings, since painted over.<sup>10</sup> In the main body of the church are representations of the four Evangelists on the huge pendentives. Around these is a decorative interpretation of the tree of Life. The words of Jesus Christ to his apostles are inscribed around the cornice circumventing the dome: “This is My Commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do the things I command you.”

The stained glass windows designed and fabricated by John T. O’Duggan are in a style compatible with overall scheme of the church, depicting traditional themes in religion with a simplified form and line. Those in the east transept are dedicated to “Our Blessed Lady;” those on the west to “Our Lord, Jesus Christ.” Deeply imbedded in the upper walls, the sanctuary windows depict six angels in adoration. The dome is filled with the symbolism of heaven. In the words of O’Duggan, “The rose window,” in deep, sharp, and clear colors, “above the choir loft is the epitome of stained glass artistry. . . [it] will grow dear to the hearts of those who contemplate its tremendous concept.”<sup>11</sup> The Baptistry windows were executed in 13th and 14th century color texture, and the windows in the Priests’ sacristy represent the rituals of ordination.

### Activities Building



Designed in 1959, the architecture of the Activities Building fully represents the modern style. It is a large, single story rectangular red brick building with dimensions of 83.6’ wide by 92’7” long by 27.5’ tall, covered with a flat roof. Spare in extraneous detail, the long side (east and west) walls feature a repetition of open slits, allowing a pattern of light into the large, multi-purpose interior space that was used for sporting activities and an auditorium. The lower level contains a full basement.

The major feature of the front (north) façade is the projecting entrance vestibule composed of four aluminum doors. Its porch features a segmentally curved roof supported midway by narrow aluminum vertical members.

<sup>10</sup> Roman Godzak, *Catholic Churches of Detroit*. Acadia Publishing, 2004, photo, 103.

<sup>11</sup> *Op cit*, 60th Anniversary Booklet, 41.



### Criteria

The proposed historic district appears to meet the first and third criteria contained in section 25-2-2:

- (1) Sites, buildings, structures, or archeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is particularly reflected or exemplified.
- (3) Buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style or method of construction.

### **Composition of the Historic Designation Advisory Board**

The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine appointed members and three ex-officio members, all residents of Detroit. The appointed members are: Melanie A. Bazil, Keith A. Dye, Louis Fisher, Zené Fogel-Gibson, Theresa Hagood, Calvin Jackson, Victoria Byrd-Olivier and Amy Swift. The ex-officio members who may be represented by members of their staff, are Director of Historical Department, the Director of the City Planning Commission, and the Director of the Planning and Development Department.

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