

A Look Back in Time

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii Church, 2224 45th Street, was designated a local landmark by the Common Council on July 15, 1996 based on Standards 1 and 3 of Section 15.04 of the City's Zoning Ordinance. Holy Rosary Church, as the church is commonly referred, reflects the City's cultural history as required by Standard number 1 and also embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen as required by Standard number 3.

Italian immigrants, who came to Kenosha at the turn of the twentieth century, formed an Italian Catholic Church in 1904 and immediately began construction of a church building at 22nd Avenue and 55th Street. The first Holy Rosary Church was completed in 1905. The membership grew so quickly, that by the late 1920's, the congregation began planning for a new building at 22nd Avenue and 45th Street. In 1931, the cornerstone of the new building was laid and the current church was completed in 1932.

Holy Rosary Church is a two-story, rectangular church building constructed in the Beaux Arts classical architectural style. Designed by architect Charles A. Augustine, the walls of the church are primarily constructed of smooth limestone veneer that has been painted. The rear wall and tower are constructed of brick and trimmed with stone veneer. The main block of the church features a gable roof decorated with a wide metal frieze under the shallow, returned eaves of the building. The front gable peak projects to form the roof of the elaborate entry pavilion that features most of the Beaux Arts details. Openings on the north and south elevations are large, multi-light, round-arched windows filled with stained glass. Shallow pilasters flank these openings. At the west ends of the building are one-story projecting entry pavilions decorated with round-arched openings. At the rear of the building is a tall, square bell tower that features a domed roof, round-arched louvered openings, pilasters, cornices, and dentils.

The entry pavilion on the main elevation is topped with a full pediment decorated with dentils and low-relief figures. Under the pediment is a wide frieze; a large, rose window; large scroll brackets; and two round-arched openings filled with free-standing statuary. Two free-standing angel statues project from the roof above the pediment. The lower level of the main elevation has three entrances decorated with full pediments and entablatures. Fluted Ionic pilasters decorated with swags support a wide frieze, and flanking the entrances are arched reveals with low-relief crosses.

Holy Rosary Church is architecturally significant as a fine and unusual example of the Beaux Arts classical architectural style. The Beaux Arts style is similar to the Classical Revival style of architecture in that it features symmetrical form and massing and heavy, classical details. Both styles evolved

from a movement at the turn of the twentieth century based at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Because of the heaviness of the style, it was primarily used for public and institutional buildings. The Beaux Arts variation emphasizes more elaborate details and free-standing statuary. Holy Rosary Church is unusual because it is designed in a classical style. Most churches in Wisconsin favor the Gothic, Romanesque Revival or Queen Anne styles. Some churches are designed in the Classical Revival style, few have the Beaux Arts details seen on this church. Holy Rosary Church has a symmetrical form and massing and classical details like the round-arched windows, pediments, dentils, and friezes that are seen on both Classical revival and Beaux Arts buildings. But, the elaborate details, such as the unusual scroll brackets, the enriched pilasters, the low-relief figures, and the free-standing statuary, make this design Beaux Arts. This church is the most unusual and decorative in Kenosha and probably one of the most unusual and elaborate in the state.

This church is historically significant because of its association with Italian immigrants in Kenosha. Ethnic congregations of main-line denominations were frequently organized in communities with ethnic enclaves, like Kenosha during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ethnic churches not only provided religion, but also social services to the people who were members, and, in some cases, the only historic resources associated with some ethnic groups were their churches. Many ethnic churches have retained their ethnic ties, although some have expanded memberships that include other ethnic groups. Kenosha's ethnic churches are historically significant because they represent the variety of immigrant settlement in the city and because they reflect the important ethnic heritage of Kenosha.

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii Church is a beautiful historic landmark within the City of Kenosha that everyone should experience, both inside and out. Experience for yourself the beauty of this Paris-inspired design. It is an experience you will not soon forget.

