

**Saint Mary of the Angels Church  
1850 North Hermitage Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60622**

**Section 7:  
Narrative Description**

Saint Mary of the Angels church built 1911-1920 is located at 1850 North Hermitage Avenue in Chicago's West Town community, which is about four miles northwest of the Loop. Saint Mary of the Angels parish is comprised of several buildings that encompass one city block. The church is situated at the northeast corner of Hermitage and Courtland Avenues with the front façade facing east. The parish school is situated at the southwest corner of the property with its main entrance facing north onto the central parking lot. The parish day care building which is the former novitiate home for the sisters order is located directly across the street from the church on Hermitage Avenue facing west. The parish was founded in 1899 with construction of the first building at 1810 N. Hermitage Avenue. As with many new congregations, this first structure served as the church, school, and residence for priests and sisters of the parish.<sup>1</sup> Today this building houses the parish school, gymnasium and the Argon meeting hall. The school is a three story brick clad building built in the Renaissance style featuring highly decorative gable ends topped with finials. Across the street at 1849 N. Hermitage Ave., another building was constructed in 1905 to be the home of the novitiate for the sister's order, which today functions as the parish day care facility. The day care facility is also a three-story brick clad building built in the Renaissance style with a gable roof and arch topped window surrounds. The church is located opposite the day care facility at 1850 N. Hermitage Ave., where the main entrance faces east onto North Hermitage Avenue, a two lane residential street. The church is attached to the school with a series of two story administrative buildings that run along west side of the property, creating a large "C" shape with a large parking lot situated at the center of the "C." Landscaping is quite sparse along the parking lot and school side of the property, except for a few grassy areas and small shrubs. On the north side of the church several large bushes and trees obscure parts of the side chapels and nave, with a larger grassy area being seen closer to the public sidewalk. A tall wrought iron fence circles the entire property at the main sidewalk.

Saint Mary's has been called "the finest example of Roman Renaissance architecture in the country," as it is built in the Classical Revival style by Chicago architectural firm Worthmann & Steinbach.<sup>1</sup> The church is monumental, built on a truly grand scale. Within the West Town community area the church is a visual landmark and the main dome can be seen from well over a half mile away. The church is built in a cruciform plan with the massive dome placed at the crossing of the nave and

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<sup>1</sup> Pomoranc, Joan. *Saint Mary of the Angels Church*, Nomination for Chicago Landmarks, 1989.

transept. The main body of the church is clad with red brick set in a running bond pattern and is covered in a gabled roof. The gabled roof is visible on the transept ends where you can clearly view the pitch of the roofline. A decorative parapit wall encircles the nave roofline, which is clad in white terra cotta into which medallions are set. The transept and nave are decorated with twenty-six nine foot tall angels cast in bright white plastic. White glazed terra cotta tiles cover the roof of the massive central dome as well as several side chapels. On the north and south elevations, two square side chapels protrude from the main nave. The main dome of the church, pierced by twelve bull's-eye oculi, is 135 feet in height and is topped by a lantern and cross. Twelve roof ribs, visible on the exterior of the dome, are clad in white terra cotta terminating at the base of the lantern. The lantern is pierced by twelve round-arched openings and is capped by yet another smaller dome onto which the cross sits. On the front façade, two imposing bell towers stretch up from the ground terminating with crenellated tops. Both towers feature round-arched windows on the first and second stories, with the second story window surrounds detailed in terra cotta with keystones centrally located at the top of the arches. The towers are encircled with white terra cotta stringcourses and four arched openings, located at the top of the towers, allowing the sounds of the bells to ring out from within.

## **Exterior**

### *East (Front) Facade*

The main entrance of the church faces east out onto North Hermitage Avenue. Two large bell towers flank the central raised portico featuring four pairs of fluted Corinthian columns in limestone. The columns support a classical entablature topped by a balustrade on which sits the coat of arms of Pope Benedict XV during whose pontificate the church was built. Behind the portico rises the façade into which one of four rose windows are set with terra-cotta tracery.<sup>1</sup> The portico has a coffered ceiling set in white terra cotta tiles and three large wooden double doors recessed within the portico provide access into the church. The large double doors are topped with fanlights with decorative scroll keystones set atop the fanlights. Two smaller single doors are found on the north and south ends of the portico with large low relief sculptural panels positioned above. Smaller relief sculptural panels are also found atop the three main entry doors as well one continuous sculptural panel as acting as a cornice band running around the interior walls of the portico. Motifs of angels holding crest and notable prophets of the Roman Catholic church are pictured within the sculptural panels.

### *North/South Facade*

The north and south facades of the church are nearly identical in appearance. The bell towers that flank the central portico wrap around the side elevations to be dominating forms that punctuate the east ends of the façade. Four large stained glass windows with terra cotta tracery are set high in the clerestory level. A terra cotta belt course, located directly above the clerestory windows, runs the length of the nave and transept terminating just before reaching the large rose windows located in each of the transept ends. Each of the transept ends are decorated with

another large rose window with terra cotta tracery and angels can be seen perched atop decorating the roofline. Beneath the clerestory windows a row of bulls eye windows run the length of the nave equally spaced and a series of smaller round arched windows are found closer to ground level. At ground level, two square side chapels set out from the main nave are visible when looking back toward the apse end of the church which are capped with the same white terra cotta tiles found on the main dome. A small side enclosed portico with gabled roof is found directly in front of the transept containing a double-door with fanlight above.

### *West Façade*

The west façade of the church is almost identical to the transept ends found on both the north and south façades. The gable roofline of the transept is repeated, as is the large centrally located rose window with terra cotta tracery. A row of small round arched windows dot the exterior of the façade close to ground level, mimicking the placement and size from the north and south façades. The west façade or apse end of the church is less decorated than the other façades, clearly delineating this as the back of the church.

### **Interior**

The interior of the church is an immense space when entering through the narthex. The layout of the interior is very classical in form. A nave with clerestory windows above, flanked by two side aisles that lead to four side chapels. The nave has a barrel-vaulted ceiling and is 230 feet long. The central dome located at the crossing of the transepts extends up 135 feet from the floor of the church. The interior of the central dome is highly decorated with gold leafing and circular motif but perhaps the most impressive characteristic of the dome are the twelve round arched stained glass windows picturing the twelve apostles of Jesus. The half dome apse end of the church, located above the main altar, was modeled directly after the apse end of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.<sup>2</sup> A Baroque style mural of St. Mary in Glory, surrounded by angels decorates the inside of the half dome and below reads an inscription "Glory to God in the Highest and Peace on Earth to Men." The floor is polished tan granite with a one foot wide dark grey border outlining the main aisle and chapel areas. The visual impact of the church is awe inspiring. Almost every interior surface of the church is gilded in gold or covered with a mural. Gold gilded Corinthian columns are found throughout the church, numerous murals decorate the nave walls and the stained glass clerestory windows above are incredibly intricately detailed.

Overall the church appears remarkably intact and very few signs of alterations can be seen on examination. Except for the presence of security cameras and a handicap ramp the church looks exactly as it did when it was built in 1920. Two restorations were undertaken on the church, one in 1974 and another more extensive restoration in 1992. In 1974 the large central dome was repaired because it had

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<sup>2</sup> Granacki, Victoria, in Association with The Polish Museum of America. *Images of America Chicago's Polish Downtown*. Arcadia Publishing, 2004.

begun to leak and a lighted lantern was added to the dome, which is still in use today. In 1992, a major renovation was undertaken to both the exterior and interior of the church. The church was actually closed in 1988 due to unsafe conditions because the central dome leaked quite badly which caused plaster to fail and fall from the ceiling inside.<sup>3</sup> All stained glass windows were removed from the church and restored to their original appearance. New main entry doors were added in the narthex, brickwork was repaired and new front steps were repoured in concrete because the old concrete ones had crumbled terribly. The central dome was retiled with white glazed terra cotta tiles replacing the old green tiles that the church was originally covered in. All twenty-six nine foot angels that adorned the roofline were recast in rigid plastic because the old ones had begun to fall apart so badly that several had lost their arms and heads.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> T2VT: St. Mary of the Angels Church, Part 1 of 2

<sup>4</sup> Walsh Report. *Restoration or Renovation – How Owners Decide. A Publication of The Walsh Group*. Fall 1991; Volume III, Number 2.

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**Section 8:  
Narrative Statement of Significance**

Saint Mary of the Angels church located in Chicago's West Town neighborhood has been called "one of the finest examples of Roman Renaissance architecture in the country." The church was built for Polish-American Catholics that were settling the northwest side of Chicago in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by master church architects Worthmann and Steinbach. The church qualifies for National Register of Historic Places eligibility under Criterion C for its high artistic value and because it exemplifies the work of master architects. The period of significance for Saint Mary's is 1920, the date in which church construction was completed.

History of Saint Mary of the Angels Church

Reverend Francis Gordon of the Resurrectionist Fathers founded Saint Mary of the Angels parish in 1899 to serve the large increase of Polish immigrants settling Chicago's northwest neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> As new immigrants arrived in Chicago, many chose to settle in what was the "Polish downtown," or Polonia, roughly around Division, Ashland and Milwaukee Avenues, just northwest of the Loop. The growth of the Polonia was explosive, and by the 1930s Chicago had the largest Polish population in the nation.<sup>2</sup> The Polonia of Chicago was a self-sustaining city unto itself, providing any product or service with a couple block radiuses. As Chicago's Polonia expanded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholic Church expanded as well to meet the needs of its Roman Catholic residents.

Chicago's first Polish church established in 1867, was St. Stanislaus Kostka, located at the northeast corner of Potomac Ave and Noble Street. It is considered the "mother church" of the Polish downtown. Reverend Vincent Barzynski was the first pastor of St. Stanislaus Kostka and is considered the founding father of the Polish Roman Catholic church in Chicago.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the Polish population influx the West Town neighborhood had been traditionally Irish starting in the 1860s, but as the Polish population increased the Irish population relocated further northwest of the downtown area. By 1918, the combined parishes of St. Stanislaus, Holy Trinity, St. John Cantius, Holy Innocents, St. Hedwig's and St Mary of the Angels in West Town had over 100,000 Polish Roman-Catholic parishioners within a one-mile radius.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reverend Monsignor Harry C. Koenig, S.T.D., ed. *A History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago*. (Chicago: The Archdiocese of Chicago, 1980) 591.

<sup>2</sup> Granacki, Victoria. *Images of America Chicago's Polish Downtown*. (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2004) 7.

<sup>3</sup> Granacki 7.

<sup>4</sup> Granacki 9.

This huge increase in the number of parishioners in just over a fifty year span shows the immense importance of Catholic churches in Polish life.

St. Mary of the Angels parish was strategically located exactly half way between two already established Polish congregations in the West Town neighborhood. St. Stanislaus Kostka was located to the southeast of St. Mary's, at Evergreen Ave and Noble Street and St. Hedwig's Church, established in 1888, was located further to the northwest at Webster and Hoyne Avenues. In 1899, two city blocks were purchased by the Resurrectionist Fathers totaling ninety-six lots for the sum of \$60,000. The eastern block bound by Paulina on the east and Hermitage on the west was subdivided and sold for residences. The remaining forty eight city lots bounded by Cortland St., Bloomindale Ave., Wood St. and Hermitage Ave. became the site of St. Mary of the Angels parish. Reverend Francis Gordon, who had studied previously under Father Barzynski at St. Stanislaus Kostka, was appointed as head priest of the new congregation.<sup>5</sup> In addition to his religious duties Rev. Gordon also edited a popular Polish newspaper, acted as a principal at a diocesan high school and founded several local Polish fraternities.

The first parish building was built at 1810 North Hermitage Avenue in a fashion that was traditional with new parishes. One building was built to house all the needs of the new parish until the congregation grew in size to warrant a separate free standing church. Inside the 1810 North Hermitage building, the basement and first floor contained a gymnasium, meeting rooms, auditorium, covenant quarters and twelve classrooms. The second floor housed the church and the attic housed the priest quarters. On February 15, 1900, four Sisters of the Congregation of the Resurrection opened St. Mary of the Angels School with an enrollment of 425 students.<sup>6</sup> As the congregation size increased, so did enrollment at the school, creating a need for more nuns to act as teachers at the parish school. To help offset this need, construction began in 1905 at 1849 North Hermitage Avenue on what would become the home of the novitiate for the sister's order. The Rectory was built in 1912, just south of the site on which the present day church stands, allowing the priest to move from the third floor of the old church to a two story Renaissance revival style building.<sup>7</sup>

In 1909, plans for a freestanding church were begun by Rev. Francis Gordon on the north side of the parish property. Permission was received from Archbishop Quigley in 1911, to construct a new church for the parish. Various sources date the church construction beginning in 1911, but the building permit for the structure is dated 1913, and the cornerstone was not officially laid until August 2, 1914. A lengthy construction period was common with a church of this size and complexity. A combination of construction hurdles coupled with social issues faced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century such as delays caused by strikes, World War I, and the critical shortage

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<sup>5</sup> Koenig 593.

<sup>6</sup> Koenig 593.

<sup>7</sup> Koenig 594.

of building materials, it was no small feat that the church took eight months and eight years to complete. The church was officially dedicated in May of 1920 by which time the congregation numbered 12,000 parishioners.<sup>8</sup>

Rev. Gordon was a highly respected and popular father in the Resurrectionist order because of the many associations he oversaw and tended to. With this notoriety, he anticipated appointment as the auxiliary Polish bishop of Chicago in the future. The church whose construction he led was designed, "quite literally as a cathedral, or bishop's church."<sup>9</sup> Rev. Gordon never did get the appointment that he anticipated but the size and opulence of St. Mary's testifies to his ambitions. When completed, the church had cost \$400,000 and it is still considered one of the finest Roman Renaissance churches in the country today.<sup>10</sup>

After completion of the church, the rectory, and the novitiate home for the sisters, part of the original church structure at 1810 North Hermitage Avenue was converted to a social hall and the school was further expanded. Under the supervision of Rev. Gordon the parish thrived, growing to more than 1,600 families with 1,200 students attending the parish school in the late 1920's. Rev. Gordon died February of 1931, after which an interim priest was assigned to the parish. "In 1932, Rev. Edward Brzezinski, CR began his long pastorate at St. Mary of the Angels parish."<sup>11</sup> Rev. Brzezinski grew up in the parish and served under Rev. Gordon for three years before his passing. Rev. Brzezinski proved to be an excellent priest to carry on the legacy that Rev. Gordon had established, eliminating much of the debt the parish had incurred in building the new church. The social hall, located at 1810 North Hermitage Ave, was renamed the "Polish Aragon Ballroom" in the 1930's and it hosted very popular weekly dances where the young adults of the neighborhood turned out by the hundreds.<sup>12</sup>

In 1948, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the parish, renowned interior church painter John A. Mallin was hired to decorate the interior of the church. He painted intricate circular motifs on the barrel-vaulted ceiling of the nave as well decorating the half dome apse with a mural of St. Mary in Glory, surrounded by angels. A four manual and fifty-seven rank pipe organ, complete with theater stops, was installed making it one of a kind in the Archdiocese of Chicago.<sup>13</sup>

The extension of the John F. Kennedy expressway in the late 1950s wreaked havoc on the Polish population of the West Town neighborhood. As the expressway was extended from Lake Street to Foster Avenue, it cut directly down the center of the

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<sup>8</sup> Koenig 594.

<sup>9</sup> Kantowicz, Edmund R. "To Build a Catholic City." *Chicago History*. (Chicago Historical Society. Fall 1985; Volume XIV, Number3) 15.

<sup>10</sup> Kantowicz 15.

<sup>11</sup> Koenig 594.

<sup>12</sup> Koenig 595.

<sup>13</sup> Koenig 595.

Polonia and as a result many homes were razed to make way for construction. The new expressway, now located only two blocks east of the parish property, caused many of St. Mary's parishioners to relocate further to the northwest. By the time the expressway opened in November of 1960 the number of children enrolled in school had dropped by one third.<sup>14</sup>

In 1973, the first restoration to the church took place to the exterior of the church in order to prepare the church for its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. By the late 1970's the neighborhood, which had been predominately Polish up until this point, started to change to a Spanish-speaking congregation. St. Mary's as well as several other churches in the West Town neighborhood tailored to the change in the neighborhood by offering masses conducted solely in Spanish.

In 1988, Saint Mary of the Angels was closed due to unsafe conditions found inside the church. The massive dome had begun to leak quite badly deteriorating the plaster ceilings inside the church.<sup>4</sup> The wet plaster detached from its armature and fell in large pieces to the church floor below. The angels that adorned the roofline of the church had deteriorated to the point that several of them lost their heads and wings.<sup>15</sup>

In 1991, the Archdioceses of Chicago sold the church to the Opus Dei order and major renovations were begun the following year to restore the exterior of the church back to its former glory. All stained glass windows were removed from the church and restored to their original shape. Brickwork was repaired and new front steps were repoured in concrete because the old concrete ones had crumbled terribly. The central dome was retiled with white glazed terra cotta tiles and all twenty-six nine foot angels that adorned the roofline were recast in rigid plastic drawing all major exterior renovations to a close in 1993.<sup>16</sup>

Interior renovation started in 1997 with the church receiving a new lighting system, new exterior doors were built for the narthex and plaster was patched where it fell from the ceiling and walls.<sup>17</sup> Interior finishes were also restored or reconstructed from original photographs dating to 1948.

St. Mary of the Angels was specifically built for a Polish congregation but over time it has evolved to cater to the local community offering Sunday masses in English, Polish and Spanish. The West Town neighborhood has experienced quite a dramatic shift in demographics from its early development in the 1890s. Initially West Town was mostly Polish until the opening of the Kennedy freeway in the 1950s. Then an

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<sup>14</sup> Koenig 595.

<sup>15</sup> T2VT: St. Mary of the Angels Church, Part 1 of 2

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmiNX9A2a\\_c&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmiNX9A2a_c&feature=related)

<sup>16</sup> Walsh Report. *Restoration or Renovation – How Owners Decide. A Publication of The Walsh Group.* Fall 1991; Volume III, Number 2.

<sup>17</sup> T2VT: St. Mary of the Angels Church, Part 1 of 2

influx of Hispanic residents settled the area through the 1990s and more recently the neighborhood has experienced a gentrification that still continues today.<sup>18</sup> St. Mary of the Angels parish has acted as the cornerstone of the West Town neighborhood not only as a visually dominating landmark but also as a social tie that bound the neighborhood together and rightfully so the church just recently celebrated its 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. With renewed interest and care by the Opus Dei order, the parish is on track to prosper for another 110 years.

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<sup>18</sup> James R. Grossman. *The Encyclopedia of Chicago*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 491.

### **Polish-style Cathedrals: Design and Influence**

“Polish Cathedral” style churches are not necessarily cathedrals (seats of bishops), or seats of their respective dioceses, as the term infers, but rather highly decorative churches built on a truly grand scale.<sup>19</sup> Many “Polish Cathedral” style churches are found throughout the Great Lakes and Mid-Atlantic regions although some are also found as far northeast as New England. There are two key characteristics that distinguish these churches from other cathedral style churches. The first characteristic is that they were built to serve an entirely Polish congregation, and two, their interiors are highly ornamented in Baroque or Renaissance motifs that draw their inspirations from St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome or great churches found throughout Poland.

Traditionally, Poles have been devout Roman Catholics, following the teachings of the Vatican in Rome. The “Mother church” of Christianity is St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, which has taken on two different forms from the inception of Christianity. These two forms influenced church design throughout the world, the first of which was the basilica plan and the second of which was the cruciform plan. The basilica style plan, which was the earliest church form, was a form borrowed from the Romans. The basilica plan features a main nave (aisle) with a perpendicularly placed narthex (entryway) at the east end of the building. The altar is placed at the west end of the building, at the very end of the nave. The cruciform plan, which evolved out of the basilica plan, resembles a cross when viewed from above. The narthex and nave remain identical to the basilica plan but a transept, or intersecting section, is placed near the high altar. Old St. Peter’s, which was the first church of Christianity, was built in 318 AD and featured a basilica plan. When plans were prepared in 1546 to rebuild St. Peter’s, the basilica evolved into the cruciform plan capped with a massive dome at the crossing of the nave and transept.<sup>20</sup> These two versions of St. Peter’s Basilica are what all “Polish Cathedral” style churches in the United States draw their inspiration from. There are, of course, minor deviations from St. Peter’s form, for instance a “Polish Cathedral” church might have a cruciform plan without a dome, what is important is to remember is that all churches that followed the mother church of Christianity, drew their inspirations from her.

The history of the Polish congregations that worshipped in these grand structures is also another fundamentally important key to understanding the desire to build in the “Polish Cathedral” style. Beginning in 1795, foreign powers had occupied what had once been the Polish motherland, splitting the country between Russia, Prussia and Austria into what we refer to today as Partitions. In twenty-six short years from 1897 to 1913 roughly two million ethnic Poles left a European continent that no

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<sup>19</sup> Peter W. Williams. *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States*. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000) 179.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Fazio, Marian Moffett and Lawrence Wodehouse. *Buildings across Time: An Introduction to World Architecture*. (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2009) 313.

longer had a Polish nation.<sup>21</sup> Upon arrival in the new world, the parishioners of these “Polish Cathedral” style churches still had a strong emotional tie to the motherland and decidedly these grand churches should reflect the glory days of the Polish Commonwealth. The height of the Polish Commonwealth came in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Baroque was highly fashionable and also when Poland formed the largest state in Europe.<sup>22</sup> The Baroque style was a natural fit for the new “Polish Cathedral” style churches because they fit with a time period and fit a style that made the Polish parishioners celebrate their heritage. The highly religious subject matter of the Baroque movement also translated seamlessly to the interior of these grand structures.

While many “Polish Cathedral” style churches would be built throughout the Midwest and East Coast, Chicago fostered what would become the largest and most influential concentration of Poles in the new world. St. Stanislaus Kostka, founded in 1867 and headed by Reverend Vincent Michael Barzynski, was one of the earliest Polish congregations in the Chicago area. St. Stanislaus Kostka is an early example of a “Polish Cathedral” style church that is built in a cruciform shape with two bell towers flanking a centrally located raised front portico. This layout became the traditional form for “Polish Cathedral” style churches, with later churches adding rose windows and a large dome in the style of St. Peter’s, at the crossing of transept and nave. “Polish Cathedral” style churches did not abruptly appear on the landscape, but grew organically from a humble start. Early churches, like St. Stanislaus, were not only a place of worship for the Polish Americans but they served as the center of the communities acting as day care, school, worship hall, social venue and a place for business transactions. These churches acted as the cornerstones that helped establish the new immigrants in a “new world,” that often didn’t speak their language or understand their customs. The churches of the Polonia helped built an environment in which the immigrant would never have to leave - offering any service or good within a few block radius.<sup>4</sup> The growth of the self-sufficient Polonias both in numbers and prosperity contributed to the overall prosperity of the Catholic parishes that the parishioners belonged to. In the 1860’s, the churches of the Polonias started out as very modest structures but by the early 1900’s the Polish churches grew in scale and opulence into what we today call the “Polish Cathedral” style church.

No one architect can be credited with creating the “Polish Cathedral” style church as the design process was most often driven by the presiding priest for which the church was to be built. This thematic approach, where the form was based on St. Peter’s and the interiors were based on Renaissance or Baroque Polish church interiors created a very diverse style that thematically tied together very well based on scale and ornamentation. It is also worth noting that the architects that designed these grand buildings were almost always local to where the church was to be built

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<sup>21</sup> Granacki 7.

<sup>22</sup> Granacki 10.

making it hard to find the same architect for a number of “Polish Cathedral” style churches.

Three great examples of “Polish Cathedral” style churches that are based on the form of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome are St. Mary of the Angels in Chicago, Illinois (1920), Immaculate Heart of Mary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1905) and St. Josaphat’s Basilica in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (1901). All three of these churches are built in the cruciform shape with a large central dome at the crossing of the transepts and nave. Their large domes have clerestory arched top stained glass windows with very intricate detailing on the inside. Two large bell towers flank the centrally located front portico and their interiors are decorated in the traditional Baroque fashion with multiple murals painted with overly dramatic religious subject matter. Upon entering these churches the view is overwhelmed visually as it seems every inch of interior space is covered with gold leafing, stained glass or painted motifs. Each of these churches is capable of holding in excess of 1,000 parishioners at a time and they were all located at the center of their respective Polonias.

Holy Innocents church, built in 1911 and located at North Armour Street and West Superior Street in Chicago’s West Town neighborhood, can most closely be compared with St. Mary of the Angels church. Both churches are built in the “Polish Cathedral” style and the two churches are located only two miles from each other. Holy Innocents, like St. Mary’s features a cruciform plan with large central dome at the crossing of the nave and transept and both entryways feature a raised portico flanked by two bell towers. The exterior of Holy Innocents takes on a decidedly more Byzantine appearance with the use of dark terra cotta roof tiles on the central dome and bell towers with flared gables. Upon entering, Holy Innocent’s is not as highly decorated as St. Mary’s. The central dome interior lacks the opulence that St. Mary’s conveys as it is painted in a pale blue with small star accents and the interior walls of the church are not covered with large Baroque painted murals. The architects for both churches are Worthmann and Steinbach, although Holy Innocents resembles the interior of St. Mary’s, but at a time that was pre-John A. Mallin. The interior spaces of St. Mary’s have such richness that make the viewer feel that they are in a place that is truly special and sacred.

St. Mary of the Angels is a remarkably intact example of a “Polish Cathedral” style church. Of the remaining examples surviving in Chicago, St. Mary’s retains all of its integrity and it has been lovingly cared over its 110 year lifespan. The two restorations that have been undertaken have left it in excellent condition and the context of the parish property has not been compromised in any way. All of the parish buildings survive in remarkably good condition and still function as a church, school, fraternal organization and social hall as it did seventy years ago.

## **Worthmann and Steinbach**

Henry W. Worthmann (1857-1946) was born and educated in Germany and immigrated to America in 1882. After several years of architectural training he arrived in Chicago in 1886 and established an office out of which he grew his architecture firm.<sup>23</sup> The Chicago Historical Resources Survey cites him with designing and building a number of single and multifamily houses in the West Town neighborhood prior to his partnership with John G. Steinbach.

John G. Steinbach (1878-?) was born in Austria and brought to the United States as a child.<sup>24</sup> In 1907 he is credited with building the remarkable Renaissance church for the Flemish Catholics of St. John Berchman's parish in 1907 in his home neighborhood of Logan Square.<sup>25</sup> In 1903 John Steinbach partnered with Henry Worthmann to create Worthmann & Steinbach.

From 1903 until 1928, Worthmann and Steinbach worked in partnership, developing an enormous practice, with one office on the North Side and another one in the rapidly growing Englewood district on the South Side.<sup>26</sup> Worthmann and Steinbach were among the premier designers of churches and related structures in Chicago for Catholic and Lutheran organizations. Together they designed five massive Renaissance churches for Polish Catholic's including St. Hyacinth's Church in the Avondale neighborhood, St. Casimir's in the South Lawndale neighborhood, Our Lady of Pompeii in the Near West Side neighborhood and St. Mary of the Angels in West Town. They also designed several buildings for Loyola Academy as well as two Lutheran churches; St. James, in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, and Church of the Redeemer in the Southside Englewood neighborhood. Worthmann and Steinbach were known for their religious building but they also prepared plans for a number of Hospitals, including the Mother Cabrini and the Lutheran Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Their practice also extended outside of the Chicago area, preparing plans for a number of churches and hospital buildings in Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.<sup>27</sup>

The dissolving of Worthmann and Steinbach is not well documented except for a mention of them parting ways in 1928. Worthmann's obituary states him as being a devout Lutheran, lecturing in his latter years before classes in Lutheran schools on the subject of Church Architecture and writing a booklet entitled "The Advent of Church Architecture According to Bible History." Worthmann passed away at eighty-nine years of age on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1946 following a long illness.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Obituary of Worthman, Henry. *Illinois Society of Architects*, Bulletin, November-December, 1948, 672.

<sup>24</sup> Obit. Worthman 672.

<sup>25</sup> Kantowicz 15.

<sup>26</sup> Kantowicz 15.

<sup>27</sup> Pomoranc, Joan. *Saint Mary of the Angels Church*, Nomination for Chicago Landmarks, 1989.

<sup>28</sup> Obit. Worthman 672.

IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church

1. St Mary of the Angels Church
2. Cook County, Illinois
3. Christopher Ciesielski
4. December, 2009
5. Prelature of Opus Dei, owners

Exterior Photos

<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church001</b>	Looking west from Hermitage Ave, East (Front) Facade
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church002</b>	Looking south from Courtland Ave, North Facade
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church003</b>	Looking north from parking lot, South Facade
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church004</b>	Looking east from Wood St, West Facade
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church005</b>	Detail, dome
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church006</b>	Detail, portico, coat of arms
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church007</b>	Detail, portico, terra cotta friezes
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church008</b>	1849 N. Hermitage Ave, day care facility
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church009</b>	1811 N. Hermitage Ave, school and auditorium

Interior Photos

<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church010</b>	Nave looking toward altar
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church011</b>	Detail, dome
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church012</b>	Detail, apse mural
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church013</b>	Barrel vault ceiling over nave
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church014</b>	Detail, stained glass window
<b>IL_Cook County_St Mary of the Angels Church015</b>	Detail, decorated pilaster



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church001**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church002**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church003**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church004**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church005**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church006**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church007**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church008**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church009**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church010**



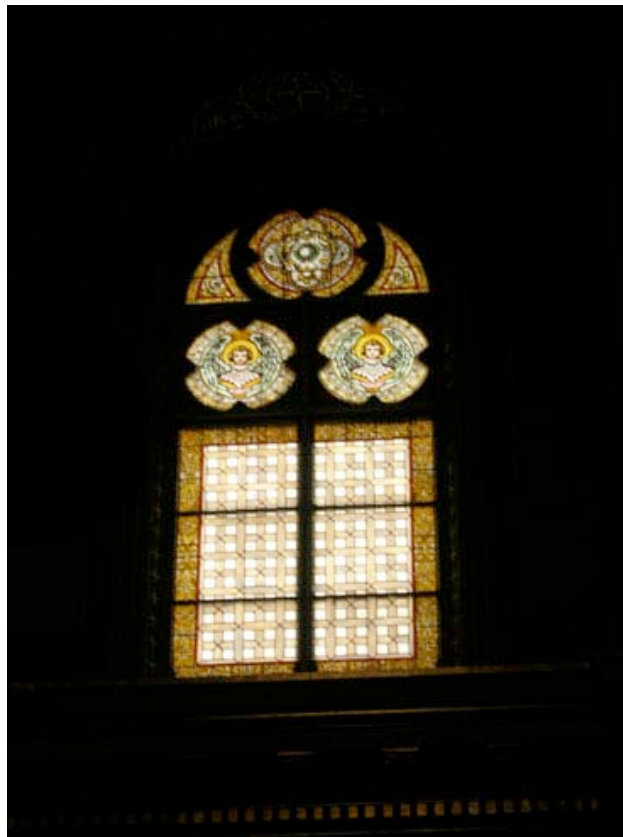
**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church011**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church012**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church013**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church014**



**IL\_Cook County\_St Mary of the Angels Church015**

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