

by Fr. M. B.

McNamara

D. O. R.

Historian

CHURCH OF SS. PETER AND PAUL (720 W. Main Street, Rochester, NY, 14611)

1. Background. When the Redemptorist Fathers who had charge of Rochester's only German-language church, St. Joseph's, decided to abandon their original church on Ely Street and rebuild on Franklin Street, also on the east side of the Genesee River, its west side parishioners reacted by forming a new congregation on the west side of town. Here they put up a small frame church called St. Peter's, on the corner of Maple and King Streets. The move engendered much bad feeling on the part of the German Catholic community. However, in December 1842, Bishop John Hughes came up from New York to listen to the arguments. He approved the new church on condition that, according to church law, the property title be put in his name. St. Peter's dates, therefore, from 1843. As a result of friction in the parish a decade later, the church was reincorporated in 1859 as SS. Peter and Paul's. A larger church of brick, erected on the same site as the original, was dedicated on August 15, 1859 by the bishop of Erie, Pa., Josue M. Young. This continued in use until around 1910, when it was sold to the Buffalo, Rochester and Pittsburgh Railroad which needed to enlarge its facilities in the vicinity of Maple Street.

2. Third and Present Church. The building of the third church, needed to accommodate a growing congregation, was supervised by Father J. Emil Gefell, pastor since 1907. Property was bought on "West Avenue" (now West Main Street), running through to Brown Street. Here he erected a church, rectory, convent and school. The architects were Gordon and Madden of Rochester, but the Italianate models on which they drew were traceable to the pastor, who had been educated in Italy. Construction material for all four buildings was tapestry brick with stone trim. The exterior design of the church is in the tradition

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of the Romanesque of central Italy, the campanile obviously inspired regarding design and position by the campanile of Siena Cathedral. The arcuated porch blends well with this, although early Renaissance in derivation. Its attractive arches at once recall the arcaded porch of the Ospedale degli Infanti in Florence. A contemporary description declares that the interior resembles that of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome. The Early Renaissance ~~arcuation is well to left and right of the seating area, and there is~~ ^{ceiling of embossed metal.} coffered barrel vaulting. The altar ⁽¹⁹⁰⁹⁾ was transferred from the second church to this church. It was an ornate, high-set altar with gradines, wooden, but marblized. It was never adequate, artistically.

If I rightly remember, the cornerstones of both the first (1843) and the second St. Peter's church buildings were transferred to the N.E. outer wall of the new building. Bishop Thomas F. Hickey laid the cornerstone of the new church on October 1, 1911. and dedicated the finished building on June 30, 1912. The Hiram E. Edgerton Co. was the building contractor. Eventually, the interior was richly decorated with mural paintings. I have a firm recollection that the artist was Gonippo Raggi, an Italian church artist living in New York. The total cost of the church building was \$100,000.

When the tower was completed, the bell which had hung in the first and second churches was moved into it. From 1843 on this was used also as a fire-alarm bell by the neighborhood company of volunteer firemen. The church's bell-ringer also rang for the fires, at \$1.25 per fire. The first such ringer was Peter Renaud, who rang for fires nine years, assisted by his sons. After that, the janitor, Peter Voss, took over the task.

4. Artistic Comments. The main feature of this building is the harmony of its facade and bell tower. The interior, though richer, is likewise impressive.

Fifth Pastor: Father Francis Kneuthauer
1865-1907

6th Rev. Francis H. Sinclair D.D.
Pastor of St Peter + Paul Church
(Maple St)

Born - Germany - Jan 14, 1838

Ordained - Rome May 21, 1864

Died Sunday Sept 22nd 1907

Father J. Emil Giffell became
pastor - Oct 4, 1907 to 1950 retired

Died May 10th 1959 - 88 yrs old

Rev Robert J. Fox became pastor
1950 - 1967

Died July 14, 1967 - 64 yrs old.

Father Wm Davis SSCC became pastor
Oct 2, 1967 - June 11, 1972

Father Daniel McCarthy SSCC pastor
June 1972 - Nov 1980

Father Wm. Nepron SSCC pastor ^{Nov} 1980 - 1982

Father ^{assistant pastor} Friedrich ~~to~~ Bueque SSCC 1982 - ^{July} 1983

Father Richard Mc Kelly SSCC pastor July 31, 1983

Father Richard Czwerdz SSCC ^{July 1983} to 1986 July