

St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church
519 E. Third St.
Madison
Jefferson County
Indiana

HABS No. IN-129

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. MICHAEL'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

HABS No. IN-129

Location: 519 East Third Street, Madison, Jefferson County, Indiana.

USGS, Madison East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 16.641650.4288700.

Present Owner: Roman Catholic Diocese of Indiana, Indianapolis

Present Occupant: St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church

Present Use: Church

Significance: St. Michael's Church is the oldest church building in Madison, and is still in constant use. It is probably the oldest existing Gothic Revival structure in Indiana, and was among the first built, as well.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1838-1839. In July, 1837, the Parish of St. Michael was founded, with the assignment of Madison's first parish priest, Father Michael E. Shawe. In her work on Simon Brute de Remur, the Bishop of Vincennes, Sister Mary Salesia Godecker quoted a letter of Bishop de Remur which related that "we authorize by the present lines the Reverend Michael Shawe to receive contributions and offerings he may obtain for erecting a church at Madison and the other sacred purposes trusted to him by his Bishop," and was dated July 19, 1837. This letter is believed to be contained in the Archives of the Diocese of Indiana at Indianapolis, but could not be located at this time. The property for the Church was purchased June 18, 1838, and it is believed that construction began immediately afterwards, as the Church was dedicated eighteen months later, on December 22, 1839.
2. Architect: Unknown. Legend suggests that the architect was Francis J. Costigan (1810-1865), architect of the J.F.D. Lanier Home (HABS No. IN-23), the Shrewsbury House (HABS No. IN-8) and numerous other structures in Madison. Costigan arrived in Madison between June 30 and November 16, 1837, from Baltimore, where he had received his training. Further fuel for Costigan's authorship may be found in the Baptismal Records of St. Michael's Church, when on August 24, 1838, his son Francis, born August 4, 1838, was baptized.

Costigan's wife, Eliza, was also baptized into the Catholic Church on April 29, 1839. Since Costigan's son was baptized into the Church before Costigan's wife indicates that Costigan must have been a church member, although this fact is not recorded in any

ST. MICHAEL'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
HABS No. IN-129
(Page 2)

source available. Although some versions of this legend allow that Costigan may have only finished someone else's work in the building of this church, no evidence either physical or documentary can be found to support this notion.

On the other hand, there are legitimate doubts that Costigan designed this church. First, the church lacks the sophistication of Costigan's later works, as well as the contemporary designs attributed to him. The church does not contain a single detail, motif, or expression of any kind that can be evidenced in his later works, executed in Costigan's Greek Revival hand. The two archeologically correct Greek Revival Doric columns that support the choirloft would have been a standard part of any talented builder's vocabulary, and do not indicate specifically Costigan's work. Between 1837 and 1839, Costigan was believed to have been working on the design and construction of the Shuh House (HABS No. IN-92), which contains many elements used by Costigan in his later works. It is difficult to believe that he would have abandoned the rich Greek Revival designs in which he was well versed to work on a Gothic Revival structure.

Secondly, Costigan's work shows no signs that he could have managed the complex ogee-vaulted ceiling of St. Michael's. The only work in Madison that comes close to the accomplished nature of the construction is the segmental-arch vaulted ceiling of the Second Presbyterian Church in Madison, designed by Edwin J. Peck, in 1835.

The original church was very plain in composition except for its unusual ceiling, and similarity between the original St. Michael's composition and rural English and Irish chapels of the later eighteenth century indicates that a very able builder amongst the Irish Catholic congregation may have been more responsible for the design of St. Michael's than Francis Costigan.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The legal description of the property is lot 7 in John McIntyre's Addition East to the City of Madison. The following deed references may be located in the Recorder's Office at the Jefferson County Courthouse, Madison, Indiana:

1838 Warranty Deed, dated June 15, 1838; recorded in Deed Book O, page 501 on June 18, 1838. John McIntyre sold the title of the property to Simon Gabriel Brute de Remur, Bishop of Vincennes, "for the purposes of erecting on the same a Roman Catholic Church," for \$1.00 and other considerations.

4. Builders, contractors, suppliers, etc.: Unknown. It is a well established and credible tradition in Madison that the stone used in the construction of this church was removed from the excavations for the railroad incline of the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad. The incline was begun in 1837, and cut a deep path more than 60' down through the solid limestone strata of the bluffs to the north of Madison, in order to connect the river traffic with the rail lines to Indianapolis located atop these bluffs. The many Irish Catholics who came to Madison to work on this monumental project were parishoners of St. Michael's, and it would seem very logical to have used this stone from the railroad cut in the church, rather than quarry other stone for the church project. There also seems to be little doubt that some of the Irish Catholic masons working on the incline cuts would have also been employed on the building of this church.
5. Original plan and construction: St. Michael's Church has been greatly changed in its appearance from the original construction. The Church was built as a very simple gabled stone structure, without the Rectory, steeple, apse, or vestry. The church was constructed of local sandy brown limestone laid in a roughly coursed composition. The Church lies north and south, facing down St. Michael's Avenue toward Main Street at the corner of Third Street. The plan of the church runs north into the gently sloping hillside, so that the floor level of the main sanctuary lies about 5' below the ground level at the far north. The southern facade of the Church rises to its full two-story height, and gently withdraws into the hillside to the north.

The Gothic windows of the southern facade originally were not embellished with the sheet-metal surrounds evidenced today, but instead were plain, like the windows of the present side elevations. Also, the present stone roundel near the peak of the gable replaced the original small rose window in this location. It is possible, though doubted, that the window may still be in place behind this roundel. According to early photographs of the building, small stone or iron "crowns" were located atop the corbelled stone projections at the lower extremes of the gable. These "crowns" were a decorative motif that resembled a three dimensional "spray" of palm or lotus leaves, not unlike a lotus leaf capital. The equilateral arched church windows were not constructed of traditional voussoirs, but instead, the stonework of the wall is corbeled to build into a Gothic arch.

The interior of the Church has undergone a number of alterations and additions, but it retains much of its original simplicity. The volume of the church space is concentrated horizontally unlike most Gothic and Gothic Revival churches, and the plastered ogee ceiling spreads like a tent roof over the body of the Church. The

pulpit appears to have been raised up about 5' off the level of the floor and attached to the eastern wall of the church, between the northernmost pair of windows. Access to the octagonaloid pulpit was gained by a short flight of balustered stairs, also attached to the eastern wall. Overhead, a sounding board was cantilevered out from the wall to aid in projecting the voice of the speaker in the pulpit. Much of the other church "furniture," such as the pews, communion rail and altars were later replacements of the original fixtures. The dado paneling along the walls is probably original to the church, as is the choirloft. The pair of Doric columns that support the choirloft are original to the church, although the bowing central extension of the choirloft is not. The stained-glass windows present in the church probably replaced either earlier stained glass, or more likely clear glass in the original windows.

6. Alterations and additions: The major additions to the church structure and site are on the exterior of the structure. The first documented improvement to the site was composed of the construction of the Rectory in 1859-1860 (HABS No. IN-85). The five-bay stone Rectory was placed at the northwest corner of the church, and its stonework covered with stucco and scored in imitation of lightly rusticated masonry. The next improvement undertaken seems to have been the extension of the main body of the Church to the north by a full bay, or about 20'. This extension included the addition of a present apse in the structure, as well as the addition of a vestry off of the northeastern corner of the main church. A year later saw the beginning of the construction work on the church steeple on the northwestern end of the main church. Surprisingly, most of these additions can be documented in newspaper accounts and a photograph of the work in progress has also been located (see HABS photo IN-129-1). The work on the vestry, apse and steeple was noted in the Madison Daily Courier for August 19, 1865, when it was reported that "St. Michael's is being enlarged and improved; a Vestry has been built and they are going to build a steeple...." Work on the steeple must have encountered some problems, as the Daily Courier further reported on July 2, 1866, that "The work of rebuilding St. Michael's steeple has recommenced. It will be a big thing." We do not know if the construction delay was caused by a lack of funds, collapse of the partially constructed work, or because of the winter of 1865, but the steeple was probably completed by the summer of 1867. Although no architect's name is recorded as having worked on this project, the sophistication of the site plan and building compositions indicates the hand of a skilled architect in the design of this project. To complete the rustic effect, parts of the stonework on the steeple tower and

rectory were left visible through the stucco masking to add a sense of "age" to the structures. The sheet-metal window hoods on the front facade were probably added at this time as well. In 1897, the choirloft was extended to accommodate the present organ, made by August Prante and Sons of Louisville, Kentucky, for \$2250. The central section of the choirloft was rebuilt so that it bows out beyond the original balcony line. The maple strip-flooring and pews of the church were installed at this time as well.

In March, 1910, the present marble altar and granite communion rail were installed, and consecrated on April 10, 1910, along with the stained-glass window on the north wall of the apse. An ink and watercolor rendering by the interior design firm of Rambusch of New York shows the present communion rail and high altar, but shows the location of the apse stained glass window covered by a cloth canopy (see HABS photo IN-129-4). The rendering also shows proposed fresco work on the ceiling of the church, which was executed in an entirely different design according to later photographs. The Rambusch rendering may have been a proposed design for remodeling in the 1930's that was won by another design firm. It is suspected that the original pulpit was removed at the time of this work, as well as the present lighting fixtures installed. The Church had been outfitted with gas light in 1865, and the gas fixtures remained in place on the side walls until ca. 1950. The stone roundel on the front facade probably replaced the original rose window shortly after the Church Centennial in 1937. The basement of the church was partially excavated and remodeled for church meeting rooms and social events in the 1950's.

An obscure reference has recently come to light regarding the expenditure of \$900 in 1844 to plaster the church (the possible source of this is a circular letter from the "Founder of the congregation of the Holy Cross from the Mother House at Le Mans, France, September 1, 1845"). It is believed that this work was carried out on the interior, and such a large expenditure for plastering suggests a great deal of work. It is not known what work needed to be carried out, but it is possible that this money was spent to complete or repair the construction work of 1838-1839.

- B. Historical Context: The family of William Shannon is believed to be the earliest of Catholic inhabitants in Madison, having arrived here by 1814. The number of Catholics increased very slowly through the next twenty years, until the beginning of construction on the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad line. In 1836, the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad Company was formed to connect the river port of Madison with the interior of the State at Indianapolis. The engineers of the project called for the excavation of a deep rock cut in order to construct a long incline from the Ohio River to the plateau above

Madison. Calculations for the incline had to contend with a 400' vertical drop from the plateau to the river, which required massive rock cuts of 65 to 100' deep at one point. Thousands of German and Irish workmen were employed on the project, many of which were Catholic.

Madison's first official parish began on July 18, 1837, with the assignment of the Reverend Michael Edgar Shawe as the first priest of the Madison parish. The earliest and only surviving parish records of the Church are the Baptismal Records, which began July 30, 1837. Construction of the railroad incline had begun about three months earlier in the spring of 1837.

The German members of the congregation grew in number and separated from the congregation of St. Michael's in 1848 to build St. Mary's Church in 1850 as their own church, with mass and other religious services conducted in German.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Records O, page 86; dated November 16, 1837; recorded November 16, 1837. This deed reference is the earliest existing record of the presence of Francis J. Costigan in Madison. This record is kept in the Recorder's Office of the Jefferson County Courthouse, Madison, Indiana.

2. Secondary and published sources:

- a. Madison Daily Courier: September 30, 1859; August 19, 1865; July 2, 1866.
- b. Panoramic photograph of Madison, Indiana, copyright 1866 by Gorgas and Mulvey. Private collection. (Included as HABS photo IN-129-1).
- c. St. Michael's Church, Madison, Indiana, 1817-1937. Compiled and edited by Father C.F. Walsh, from the text submitted by Thomas P. Cory, S.J., as a Masters Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the School of History of Loyola University, Chicago. (Indianapolis: J.E. Ritter, 1937).
- d. Rendering of the interior of St. Michael's Church, by "Rambusch" of New York, for Father C.F. Walsh. Undated, ca.

1932-1937, ink and watercolor on press board panel. In the possession of the Church. (Included as HABS photo IN-129-4).

Prepared by: John Linn Hopkins
Project Historian
Summer, 1978

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building, one of the very early churches in Madison, was built with stone taken from the railroad cut through the hill.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 54' (three-bay front) x 124'.
2. Foundation: Stone.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Light sand-colored stone with large stones at corners forming quoins. In the front gable above the doorway is a small projecting stone shield with a carved crosslet. Above the shield is a stone roundel with stone carvings. The north rear part of the building has been plastered and scored to simulate large stone blocks. The tower has the lower portion plastered, with a stone string course being an extension of the cornice on the main building. Above the string course, the wall is stone and there is a long, narrow slot opening on each of the four faces. A string course separates the upper tower approximately in half.
4. Structural system, framing: Load-bearing stone walls with heavy timber framing.
5. Stoops: At the principal entrance on the south wall are three stone steps with an iron railing at each side. The door leading from the sanctuary on the east wall has a recessed concrete stoop with a wall and steps. There are four stone steps at the doorway leading into the second-floor room above the sacristy, near the northeast corner of the building.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The principal entrance on the south facade is through a deeply recessed, pointed-arch opening, with wood paneling on the jambs and soffit. There is a large metal surround and hood molding to simulate stone. The large wooden, double doors have vertical oak boards with raised plugs on the inside face. There is a matching transom panel above the door and stained, leaded glass above that. The doorway has wooden surrounds, stone sill and metal threshold.

There is a large doorway on the west facade of the building leading into the basement. The doorway has wooden surrounds, a one-light transom window, and a metal threshold. The wooden door has three vertical panels below a large glass pane. There is a pointed-arch doorway in the base of the tower, on the west wall, with a transom window, wooden surrounds, wooden threshold and stone sill. The wooden door is a solid panel with three wooden battens applied to it.

On the north facade of the tower at the second level is a doorway opening into the tower. The large round-arched opening has wooden surrounds and a vertical board wooden door. The doorway from the second floor to the exterior at the northeast corner of the building on the east wall, above the sacristy, has wooden surrounds, stone sill and a two-light transom window. The wooden door has four double-raised panels. A doorway leading from the sanctuary on the east side to the exterior has wooden surrounds, metal threshold and a wooden panel door. The doorway leading from the sacristy to the exterior has a wooden door with one glass pane above two wooden panels. The deeply recessed opening has a pointed-arch transom panel with intersecting tracery, wooden surrounds and a wooden framed screen door.

- b. Windows and shutters: Windows on the main floor have a pointed-arch head with intersecting tracery. The metal sashes in wooden surrounds have stained, leaded glass and the lower panel pivots open. There is a wide sloping stone sill on the interior and a flat stone sill on the exterior. The jambs on the interior are painted plaster to simulate large stone surrounds. On the exterior of the windows on the south facade are metal hood moldings painted to resemble stone.

Above the high altar on the north wall is a round-arched window with leaded stained glass in the metal sash. Wooden windows in the basement are of two kinds, some with one-light sash and others with six-light sash, each pivoting. There is a wooden casement window in the sacristy that has two,

six-light sashes and wooden surrounds. At the second floor above the sacristy are wooden windows that have six-over-six-light single-hung sashes. The small windows in the apse have leaded, stained glass in metal sashes. The exterior of the windows in the main church have Plexiglas over the leaded glass. In the four faces of the tower are pointed-arch wooden louvers in wooden surrounds.

7. Chimneys: There is a large, square brick chimney on the east side of the church, outside the stone wall.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The main church has a gable roof with patterned slate shingles. The addition to the northeast corner of the church has a hipped roof with slate shingle covering.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: The cornice, sloping out from the wall, has a metal covering and metal gutters. The gable on the front wall has a metal cap on the parapet forming a raking molding. The gable flattens out at the edges and has a skew corbel with a standing cap on it. There is a Latin cross on the south facade atop the gable peak.
 - c. Tower: There is an octagonal spire on the stone tower base that is topped with a Latin cross. The wood-framed spire is covered with sheet copper. The bell level of the tower has diagonal wood walls across the corners. There is a bell lying on the floor of the tower with the following inscription: "Cincinnati, Ohio, 1846." There are four electronic speakers and four bells in the tower. The largest bell, approximately 42" in diameter, has the following on it: "HY. STUCKSTEDE FDY CO., ST. LOUIS, MO., Donated by St. Michael's Union, A.D. 1895." The three other bells, approximately 36", 30", and 24" in diameter, having the following inscription: "HY STUCKSTEDE FDY CO., ST. LOUIS, MO. Donated by M. L. Guthneck, A.D. 1911."

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement is raised at the south side of the building and is built into the earth as it extends to the north into the side of a hill. There is an exterior entrance on the west wall near the front. It opens into a hallway that extends across the width of the building. There are toilet rooms and storage rooms, as well as the stairway up to the main floor, on the south side of the hall. To the north side

of the hall is a large meeting room, a small kitchen and the mechanical room, which extends north and becomes crawl space. There is a concrete floor and walls are plastered in the hall and toilets. The meeting room has modern wood paneling. The mechanical and storage rooms are unfinished.

- b. First floor: The main entrance, in the center of the south facade, has a double doorway leading into a vestibule. The vestibule has nine steps extending the width of the room which leads up to the nave through a double opening. The balcony extends out into the nave at the rear and is supported by two large fluted columns on either side of the center aisle. To the left of the entry is an alcove in the south corner that is a small chapel. On the opposite side is the baptismal font and the stairway to the balcony. Underneath the stairway is a stairway to the basement.

The center aisle is flanked by pews on each side and a side aisle. The chancel is behind a rail extending across the front on each side, up one step from the nave. The altar is up three steps on dais extending across the width of the church. There is an altar at each side of the center, against the wall. The high altar is in the apse. The sacristy is east of the apse and the tower west of it.

- c. Second floor: The second floor consists of one room above the sacristy and is reached by the exterior only. It is used for storage.

The balcony in the sanctuary is reached by the stairway in the nave. It extends over the nave and has a bow in the center. There is a large pipe organ in the center with choir space on each side.

2. Flooring: Wide board wood flooring in the nave has been covered over with narrow board wood flooring. The aisles are carpeted. The floor at the chancel is covered with asphalt tile. The sacristy has linoleum covering. The second-floor room has wide board wooden flooring.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered. The ceiling in the nave has an ogee curve. There is a plaster cornice molding along each side. Under the windows is a wood paneled wainscot that is wood-grained. The metal roll molding at the top of the wainscot extends along the east and west walls, being an extension of the window sill. The wainscot is painted on the south walls of the chapel, stairway and the vestibule. The plaster walls above the wainscot are painted to simulate

wallpaper. The walls and ceiling at the chancel and altar are richly decorated with stenciling and painting. The altar has a barrel vault ceiling, also richly decorated. A molding at door height extends around the altar alcove and below are plywood walls, painted, with a granite base.

4. Doorways and doors: The double-opening from the vestibule to the nave is wood framed. The large panel in the center is held onto the frame by small flower-like buttons and there is a small fleur-de-lis in the center of each door. The doors and the surround are painted to simulate bronzing. Other interior doors have wooden surrounds and wood panel doors.
5. Stairways: The stairway to the basement is enclosed by a door at the first floor. The steps extend down to a landing, turn and end at the basement floor. The stairway to the balcony has a vertical wood railing which extends from a small newel post to the landing, turns and continues up and extends around the opening. A door has been added at the landing, closing off the balcony.
6. Decorative features: The railing around the balcony has recessed panels and the same paneling forms an approximately 1' strip soffit under the balcony. The paneling and the fluted columns have been wood-grained. The communion rail is formed of gray terrazzo with the open tracery outlined in brass trim. There is a wide, flat terrazzo rail on top. The high altar is located on a dais of gray marble with two steps across the front and extending along each side. The altar is richly decorated with carvings. The altars at each side of the chancel are wood, painted white and to simulate marble. They are richly decorated. The pulpit is wood panel and the other altar appointments are wood, painted white. The wooden surrounds of the organ are wood paneling, finished natural. The communion rail in the room above sacristy is a simple gray and in poor condition.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Modern forced-air heating system.
 - b. Lighting: Modern lighting fixtures hang in two rows the length of the nave. There are wall sconces between each window. On the back side of the proscenium arch at the altar is a row of porcelain sockets with bare light bulbs.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The church sits at the base of a hill facing south, and is partly built into the hill. There is a large, concrete terrace across the front with four steps up from the curb. To the west is a large, sloping grassy yard. A concrete sidewalk extends up the hill on the west side and is terminated by fifteen concrete steps leading to the Rectory. The Rectory sits to the northwest of the site, with a barn to the east. A concrete driveway extends up the east side of the church, separating it from the convent. There is a rubblestone wall along the north side of the hill. Across the street and to the east are residential properties. There is an abandoned building to the west that formerly housed the parochial school.

2. Outbuildings:

a. Rectory: See HABS No. IN-85.

b. Carriage House: The lower floor is ashlar stone with the upper floor having vertical wood board siding. There is a large opening in the south front side and a window to the left. The second floor is inaccessible but is reached by stone steps into the side of the hill. It has a gable roof with slate shingles, and is in fair condition.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
July 1978

III. Project Information:

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with Historic Madison, Inc. and the Indiana Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief, H.A.B.S., and Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect, the project was completed during the summer of 1978 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Madison, Indiana, by John P. White, Project Supervisor (Associate Professor, Texas Tech University); John Hopkins, Project Historian (Skidmore College); and Student Assistant Architects Richard Berliner (Rhode Island School of Design); Jon Lourie (University of Maryland); Eric Swanson (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute); and Peter Whitehead (State University of New York at Buffalo). The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Historian, in December, 1984.

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