

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common
St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church

(2) Historic (if applicable)
same

II. Location

(1) Street Address
2460 Atwood Avenue

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)
Sixteenth

III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)
Building

(2) Zoning District
R4

(3) Present Use
Church

IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s)
St. Bernard's Congregation

(2) Street Address
2450 Atwood Avenue, Madison, WI 53704

(3) Telephone Number
rectory: 249-9256

V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number
0710-053-0611-5

(2) Legal Description Block 2, James P. Corry Addition, Lot 6 and the N 1/2 of vacated Jones Ct. on the south

VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)
Excellent

(2) Altered or Unaltered?
Altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?
Original Site

(4) Wall Construction

Steel frame and trusses, stone and tile-lined curtain walls

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

St. Bernard's Church is constructed of rusticated Madison sandstone with Colfax stone trimmings. Its plan is a standard Gothic cruciform. A tall two-story nave under a gable roof is flanked on each side by a low, narrow, one-story aisle under a shed roof. Gabled two-story transepts with ridgelines lower than the nave cross the nave in front of the sanctuary.

Dominating the front facade of the church is a massive tower at the southwest corner. Square in plan and supported by substantial corner buttresses, the tower is pierced at the second story by narrow lancets. An octagonal, crenellated lantern rises from the top of the tower. Buttresses at each corner face create a transition from the square tower to the octagonal shape of the lantern. The other faces of the octagon are decorated with tall lancet windows.

The front facade of the nave features a wide pointed archway under a slightly projecting pavilion that serves as the main entrance. Above is a larger pointed arch window composed of five interlaced lancets. At the southeast corner of the main facade is a small one-story wing which terminates in a parapet wall pierced by two lancet windows. A small pointed arch in the front facade shelters a side entrance and balances a similar archway in the front of the tower.

The sandstone walls of the church terminate at the roofline with parapet gables. Attached buttresses topped by gablets decorate the corners of the building and rise between the lancet windows.

Most of the windows in the building are glazed with the original stained and painted glass designed by a German artist, Kurt Drewes. The clerestory windows are large triple lancet windows decorated with scenes from the life of Christ and portraits of the saints. The small Tudor-arched lancets in the aisles depict insignia of the Four Evangelists and other religious symbols. The large transept end windows picture Old and New Testament scenes and the large window over the main entrance features angels and saints. The tympani over the front entrances and the narthex windows are decorated by faceted glass set in epoxy in an abstract design. They were installed in 1968.

On the interior, arcades of wide segmental arches on square piers separate the nave from the aisles and transepts. The ceiling is in the form of a pointed-arched vault with rectangular coffers. The piers, arches and dado are faced with white marble. The rest of the walls are plastered. A plain wooden balcony extends across the west end.

In 1968, the interior of the Church was redecorated in accordance with the changes in the liturgy. A large filigreed epoxy reredos covered with limestone and sculpted in an abstract "hands raised in prayer" design screens the large, new Tellers organ placed in the old sanctuary. The same decorative "hands in prayer" motif was painted in the vault over each clerestory window. Stainless steel lighting fixtures were hung from the ceiling, and a new ambo, altar, and president's chair in red levanto marble were installed.

The church is attached to the rectory by a narrow passageway on the west. The

Description, continued

rectory was built in 1960. Only the church building is included in the nomination.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner St. Bernard's Congregation	(2) Original Use Church
(3) Architect or Builder J. J. Flad of Flad and Small (1, 3, 4)	(4) Architectural Style Gothic Revival
(5) Date of Construction 1926 and 1927 (1, 3)	(6) Indigenous Materials Used Sandstone
(7) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the significance of the nominated property and its conformance to the designation criteria of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance (33.01), limit of 500 words.	

VIII. List of Bibliographical References Used

1. Building Permits, City of Madison Department of Planning and Development.
2. "Commemorating the Golden Jubilee of Saint Bernard Congregation, Madison, Wisconsin, Nov. 30, 1958,"
3. East Side News, July 7 and July 14, 1927.
4. "John J. Flad, Sr., 78, Dies; Headed Architectural Firm," Capital Times, August 23, 1967.
5. Madison City Directories.
6. Saint Bernard's, Madison, Wisconsin, United Church Directories, Galion, Ohio, n.d.
7. "St. Bernard's Parish in Madison Has Splendid New Church Edifice," The Catholic Herald Madison Review, December, 1927.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title

Katherine H. Rankin Secretary

(2) Organization Represented (if any)

Madison Landmark Commission

(3) Address

Neighborhood Revitalization, 215 Monona Avenue, 53709

(4) Telephone Number

266-6552

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

January 20, 1981

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

VII.(7) Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

St. Bernard's Church meets Landmarks Designation Criteria #3: It embodies the "distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen," inherently valuable for a study of the Gothic Revival style and of an indigenous material, Madison sandstone.

St. Bernard's congregation was organized in 1908 for 80 families on Madison's rapidly expanding east side. In the same year, the parish began building a combination grade school and church in a functional design of cement block and hemlock wood. By the late 'teens, the congregation had grown to 300 families.

In January, 1926, the congregation voted to construct a new church. Construction proceeded rapidly and the church was dedicated on July 9, 1927. It was the largest Catholic church in the City. At its dedication St. Bernard's was hailed as "one of the most beautiful structures of its kind in the state."¹

St. Bernard's was built during a decade of heavy construction activity by religious institutions in Madison. More than a dozen churches were built in Madison between 1920 and 1931. Of the twelve churches constructed during this time which retain their original integrity, St. Bernard's is one of six which were built to serve congregations in Madison's rapidly expanding suburbs.² Nine of the twelve churches which remain intact have the potential to be nominated as Madison landmarks because of their significant architectural design. The suburban churches are also important because of the visual impact they have as landmarks in their neighborhoods. Because of the visual importance and excellent design of these churches, it is difficult to make a comparison judgement. However, it can be said that St. Bernard's ranks among the finest.

The architect responsible for the design of St. Bernard's was John J. Flad, Sr. (1889-1967). Flad served his apprenticeship with the firm of J. O. Gordon and Son of Madison. He then worked as a draftsman for Robert L. Wright until 1916 when he is listed in the city directories as an architect for Alvin Small. After a short departure from private practice, during which Flad was a draftsman for the State Architect, and then superintendent of the Wisconsin Fish Hatchery, Flad rejoined Small's firm in 1922. By 1926, when the contract for St. Bernard's was signed, Flad had become a partner in the firm, which was then known as Flad and Small.

Before construction of St. Bernard's was completed, however, Flad left Small to work with Frank S. Moulton. The new firm of Flad and Moulton supervised construction of the church to completion.

About seven years later, Flad dissolved his partnership with Moulton and set up his own firm. By the time he died in 1967, J. J. Flad and Associates (including three of his sons) was one of the largest architectural firms in

¹East Side News, July 14, 1927.

²Four of the twelve were built for the University community and two served existing congregations downtown.

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Significance

Madison.

John Flad, himself, was responsible for the design of many important buildings in Madison, including the National Guardian Life Insurance Co. (1965), and Anchor Savings and Loan (1963). He was a prominent Catholic layman and designed several Catholic churches, including Sacred Heart Cathedral in Winona, Minn., and Christ the King Chapel in Dubuque. He also designed the renovation of St. Raphael's in Madison and the convent and school at St. Bernard's.

Since it was constructed, St. Bernard's Church has served as a visual and social focus of neighborhood life. It is located at a bend in Atwood Avenue and can be seen towering over the neighborhood for many blocks. The social and religious functions at the church have been a significant part of the lives of many east side families.