

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS IN AUGUST 2023



ST. ADALBERT PARISH COMPLEX
1622-1658 W. 17TH STREET; 1633-59 W. 16TH STREET



CITY OF CHICAGO
Brandon Johnson, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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ST. ADALBERT PARISH COMPLEX

1622-1658 W. 17TH STREET AND 1633-1659 W. 16TH STREET

BUILT: 1908-1928

ARCHITECT: HENRY J. SCHLACKS (Church and Rectory, 1914)

PAUL N. DUCA (Convent, 1928)

UNKNOWN (School, 1908)

The St. Adalbert Parish Complex includes four adjacent buildings that were constructed for use by the St. Adalbert Catholic parish:

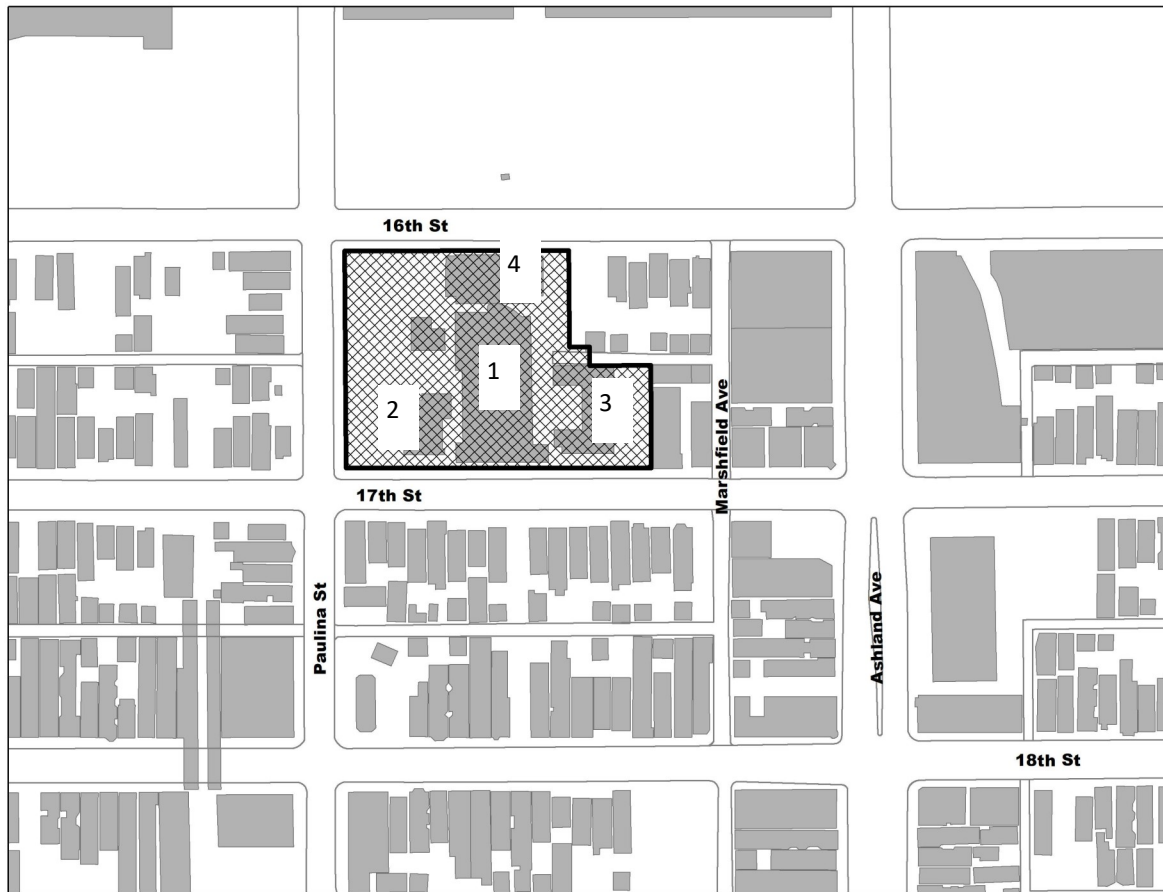
St. Adalbert Church, 1636-1640 W. 17th Street
St. Adalbert Rectory, 1646-1650 W. 17th Street
St. Adalbert Convent, 1626-1630 W. 17th Street
St. Adalbert School, 1641 W. 16th Street

The St. Adalbert's Parish Complex is located in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago, with all four buildings situated on a block bordered by W. 16th Street, S. Marshfield Avenue, W. 17th Street, and S. Paulina Street.

This Roman Catholic parish was first established by the Polish immigrant community in Pilsen in 1872, well before the present parish complex was built. The congregation would grow to become the center of Polish life on Chicago's Lower West Side for multiple generations, with a peak membership of about 4,000 families in the parish and over 2,000 students enrolled in its school. From the mid-twentieth century onwards, Pilsen transitioned from a community of European immigrants to a neighborhood of predominantly Mexican immigrants, and St. Adalbert's served as a spiritual home and community anchor for that group as well.

The massive St. Adalbert Church has been a distinctive feature of the Pilsen neighborhood for over a century, with its grand twin bell towers visible far beyond its surrounding residential blocks. The church and its adjacent rectory were built in 1914 and designed by renowned ecclesiastic architect Henry J. Schlacks, who designed many other parochial buildings for Catholic parishes throughout the Chicago area. The convent building was constructed in 1928, designed by architect Paul N. Duca in a style meant to complement the existing church and rectory buildings. The school building was constructed in 1908 as an unattached expansion of a previous St. Adalbert school building which is no longer extant.

While its components were built separately, the resulting St. Adalbert Complex is a cohesive representation of early-twentieth century ecclesiastical architecture. Though the St. Adalbert's parish was consolidated with the nearby St. Paul's parish in 2019 and no longer occupies the complex, these four buildings served the surrounding community religiously, socially, and educationally for more than a century, and still stand testament to the growth and changes of the Pilsen neighborhood.



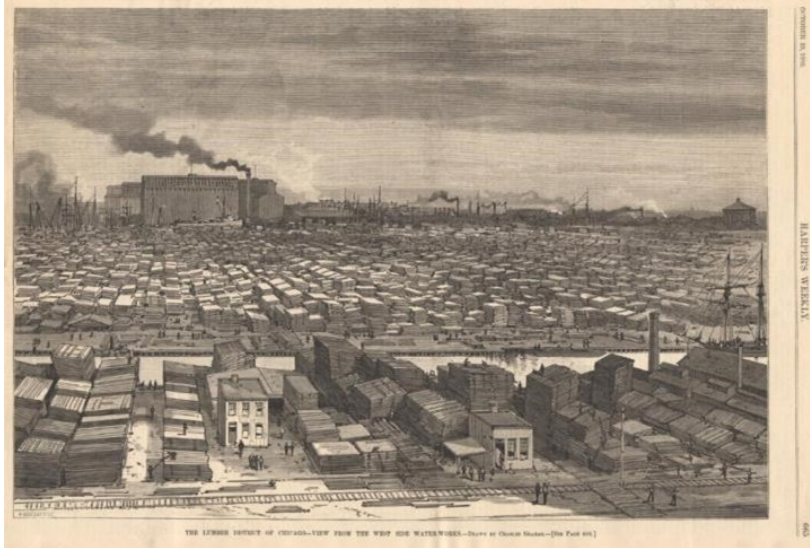
The St. Adalbert Parish Complex includes the parcel outlined above and the following: 1. Former Church Building (1636-40 W. 17th Street); 2. Former Rectory (1646-1650 W. 17th Street); 3. Former Convent (1626-30 W. 17th Street); and 4. School (1641 W. 16th Street)

Pilsen and the Lower West Side Community

The St. Adalbert Complex is located in Pilsen, a neighborhood within Chicago’s Lower West Side Community Area. This area near the South Branch of the Chicago River began to develop when nearby infrastructure projects proved transformative for the Lower West Side. Construction of the Illinois & Michigan Canal, the Southwestern Plank Road, and the Burlington Railway drew in workers, primarily Irish and German immigrants at first, who settled in the area and began building homes and businesses. By the 1850s, new infrastructure provided direct routes between downtown Chicago and the rest of the country by water, road, and rail. This connectivity, along with abundant affordable land, made the area particularly well-suited as an industrial manufacturing and distribution hub. Lumberyards, factories, grain elevators, stockyards, and breweries soon sprouted up near the Chicago River, bringing with them a great number of jobs. Chicago’s population was growing exponentially in the 1800s, and as waves of European immigrants flooded the city looking for work, many of them found it on the Lower West Side. In particular, Bohemian immigrants (from the modern-day Czechia and the Slovak Republic) formed a community in the area and established homes and businesses, including a restaurant called “At the City of Plzň” which gave the new neighborhood its now-Anglicized name of Pilsen.

When the Great Chicago Fire destroyed much of downtown in 1871, Pilsen was largely spared and in fact benefited greatly from citywide rebuilding efforts. The construction industry boomed as Chicago sought to replace the nearly 17,500 buildings lost in the fire, and many new manufacturing facilities were built in Pilsen due to its attractive river access and abundance of workers. Through the turn of the century, the neighborhood continued to grow as a center of industry and immigrant life as people from Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, Croatia, and Sweden

flocked to the area for work.



These tight-knit immigrant communities constructed homes, businesses, and schools, many in a vernacular architecture style that combined local building methods with European stylistic influences. They also built churches and synagogues, which served an important function not only as places of worship but also as community centers that were crucial for many recent immigrants. By the early 1900s, Catholic churches were the most prevalent in the area.

Lower West Side, Lumber District, 1883. Credit: *Harpers Weekly*

The population continued to grow in Pilsen and the Lower West Side through the first decades of the twentieth century, as industrial jobs remained plentiful. Though immigration from Europe had slowed, many descendants of the first wave of immigrants in Pilsen stayed in the area to raise their own families, and in 1920 the neighborhood received an influx of Mexican immigrants in search of employment. Unfortunately, resources became scarce amidst the Great Depression and World War II as many of the industrial businesses in the area closed or relocated to the suburbs, and many residents left to follow these jobs or seek opportunities elsewhere.

However, Pilsen was spared the levels of disinvestment that many other West and South side neighborhoods suffered around this time, in large part due to its location near some crucial urban revitalization efforts. When the construction of a new campus for the University of Illinois at Chicago displaced thousands of people living on the Near West Side in the early 1960s, many relocated to nearby neighborhoods including Pilsen. Many of these new residents were of Mexican descent, and as they re-established their homes, businesses, and institutions in Pilsen, the neighborhood once again grew to become a common point of entry for a new wave of transplants and immigrants, this time from Latin America. As the Mexican population proliferated in Pilsen, their culture and traditions shaped the neighborhood through modern day. One of the most visible manifestations of this Mexican influence in Pilsen is the prevalence of vibrant murals, brightly-painted houses, and statues and sculptures honoring Latin American heroes and religious figures. Today, Pilsen maintains its reputation as a vibrant enclave of Mexican culture.

St. Adalbert's Parish

In the 1850s, Chicago began experiencing what would become a decades-long wave of immigration of ethnic Poles. Although initially Chicago's *Polonia* (a term used to describe the community of Poles in America) was concentrated on the Northwest side, the population soon spread to other areas of the city, largely in pursuit of the industrial employment. Due to its abundance of such jobs, Pilsen had by the 1870s its own well-established Polish enclave. Though Chicago's *Polonia* had successfully formed two of their own Roman Catholic parishes by 1872, both were located several miles away from the rapidly growing Polish community in Pilsen who desired their own local church. As such, with the help of Bishop Thomas Foley, a new parish dedicated to Saint Adalbert of Prague was founded in Pilsen in 1874.

Typical of many congregations, the parish did not have many resources in the beginning, and it spent its first years worshipping in an unfinished substructure with a temporary roof and altar until they were able to erect a proper church and school building in 1884, along the east side of Paulina Street between 16th and 17th Streets (both buildings are no longer extant). In 1904, Reverend Casimir Gronkowski was appointed pastor of the growing congregation. Born in Poland in 1873, Gronkowski immigrated to the United States at age 20 to study theology. He was ordained as a priest in 1897 and moved to Chicago, initially serving as pastor of St. Salomea Church before coming to St. Adalbert. He grew to be very well-regarded and respected by the parish and greater Chicago Catholic community, and remained at St. Adalbert for over fifty years until his death in 1957. During that time, he led much of the parish's early growth and years of prosperity.

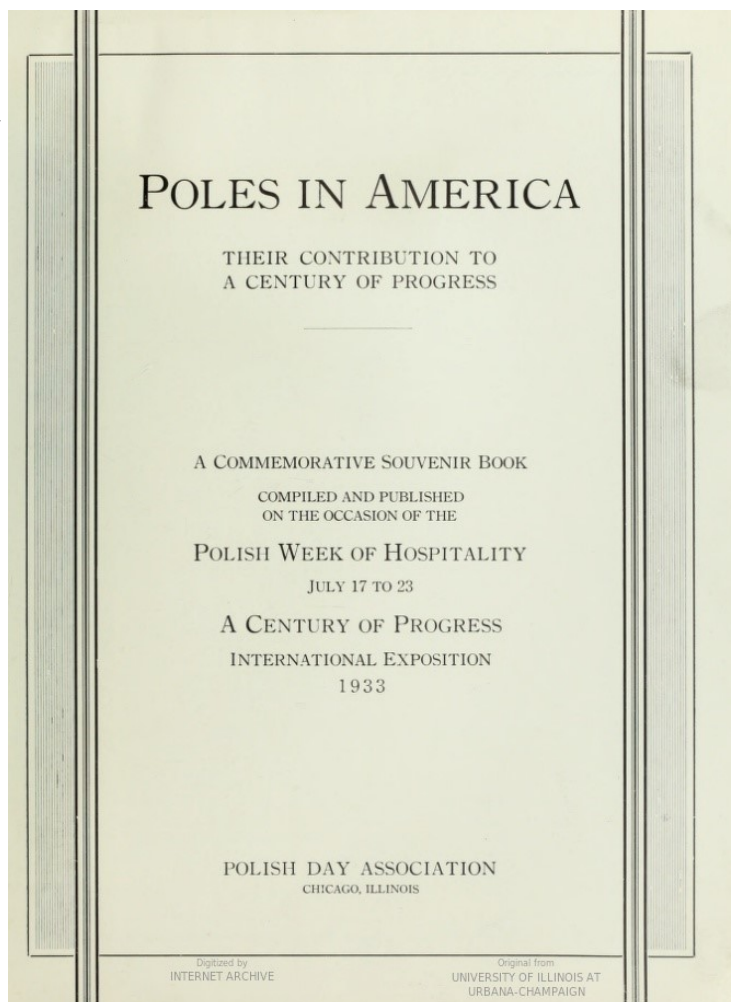


St. Adalbert, 1936. Credit: *Chicago Tribune*

Dedicated to improving the church facilities, Gronkowski oversaw the construction of a still-extant addition to the original school building in 1908, a simple three-story brick building that still stands and now serves as a public school. Gronkowski then hired renowned ecclesiastical architect Henry J. Schlacks to design a grand church. The cornerstone for the new church was laid in 1912 with much fanfare, including a celebratory parade around the neighborhood and a ceremony presided over by Archbishop Quigley. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that “the church is to be one of the finest in Chicago . . . the architecture is to be of the type of St. Paul’s church in Rome,” and Schlacks and Gronkowski traveled to Italy during the construction of St. Adalbert to choose marble for the church’s altars.

The new church and its adjoining rectory were completed in 1914 and dedicated on September 20th. Once again, a parade and an elaborate ceremony were held, with a reported 50,000 people in attendance at the event. St. Adalbert’s majestic new home seemed suitable for such a thriving parish, which established itself as the center of Polish-American life and culture in Pilsen for many decades. In addition to its regular religious services, the church provided social, educational, and recreational opportunities for its congregants, who formed a multitude of clubs and organizations through the years. Many of these were religious in nature, such as chapters of the Polish Roman Catholic Union, the St. Vincent De Paul society, the St. Theresa society, the Third Order of St. Francis, the Apostleship of Prayer, and the Holy Family Society as well as many others. Secular groups included the Julius Slowacki Literary and Dramatic Circle and the Falcons Athletic Club, as well as chapters of the Polish National Alliance, Polish Women’s Alliance, and the American Legion. The church also frequently hosted visiting Polish dignitaries, and invited the public to many cultural events such as the “Polish Week of Hospitality” that was part of the 1933 World’s Exposition in Chicago.

The parish was an anchor for multiple waves of Polish immigrants and eventually their American-born children and grandchildren. At its peak, the parish had a membership of around 4,000 families, with over 2,000 students enrolled at St. Adalbert’s School. In 1928, a three-story convent was constructed to the east of the church that could house up to 52 women religious. The convent would be the final building of the parish.



“Poles in America-Their Contribution to a Century of Progress” 1933. Credit: HathiTrust—University of Illinois

By the mid-twentieth century, the *Polonia* in Pilsen had shifted from an immigrant community to mostly second and third generation Polish-Americans who were more financially and culturally well-established than their predecessors. Though this new *Polonia* still had ties to their heritage, and the community gradually began dispersing. This outmigration increased in the years following World War II, as suburban homeownership became the preferred living arrangement for those with the means to attain it. At the same time, Mexican immigrants began moving to Pilsen, drawn to its affordable housing and job opportunities. As these new residents were Roman Catholic, many were also drawn to join the St. Adalbert parish.

However, the addition of these new Mexican parishioners was vastly outpaced by the mass out migration of the local Polish community, and by the 1970s, the congregation at St. Adalbert's had shrunk to 600 families with only 200 students enrolled at its school, and extensive repairs needed to keep the complex functional. In 1974, the Archdiocese of Chicago announced plans to close St Adalbert and merge the parish with nearby St. Vitus. Though the St. Adalbert congregation had not been exempt from stress related to the cultural and racial changes in the community, the planned closure of the parish unified European and Latino ethnics. Through protests and letter-writing campaigns, the parish community pleaded with religious and city officials to spare their parish, and rallied to raise funds for renovations. After successfully fending off closure of their church, St. Adalbert began taking steps to formally recognize the Mexican heritage of its parishioners. The church initiated a weekly Spanish-language mass and dedicated a new shrine to Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos. St. Adalbert was also one of eight neighborhood parishes that brought the Mexican tradition of *Via Cruces* to Pilsen. This elaborate reenactment the Way of the Cross, culminating with a procession down city streets, has drawn crowds to Pilsen every Good Friday since 1977.

The number of parishioners at St. Adalbert continued to wane into the twenty-first century. In 2016, the Archdiocese of Chicago once again announced that the St. Adalbert church would be closed. The final mass at St. Adalbert Church was celebrated on July 14, 2019, and was conducted in English, Polish, and Spanish.



Mario Castillo's *Metafisica or Peace* (1968), formerly near 19th and Halsted.

St. Adalbert's Parish Description

Siting

The St. Adalbert's Parish is situated on the western half of the block bordered by W. 16th Street, S. Marshfield Avenue, W. 17th Street, and S. Paulina Street. The church building is the largest building in the complex and faces W. 17th Street, flanked on either side by the rectory building (to its west) and convent building (to its east). The school building is located directly behind the church building, with its front façade on W. 16th Street. The westernmost portion of the complex (running directly along S. Paulina Street) is currently in use by the school as a parking lot and student recreation area.

1. St. Adalbert Church

1636-1640 W. 17th Street

Constructed: 1914

Architect: Henry J. Schlacks

The crown jewel of the St. Adalbert Complex is its Henry J. Schlacks-designed church. Newspapers at the time reported that the church was a replication of the famous Roman basilica *San Paolo fuori le Mura*, though Schlacks's Renaissance Revival design for St. Adalbert appears to have drawn inspiration from the ancient basilica rather than duplicate it. St. Adalbert Church's distinctive, south-facing front façade is dominated by 185-foot high symmetrical bell towers. Each features frosted glass clocks, two bracketed cornices supporting decorative arcaded openings, and four pediments below a copper cupola crowned by a cross. These towers flank either side of the central portion of the building, which has a grand portico entryway with seven doorways evenly spaced between eight smooth columns with Corinthian capitals. The columns support a stone architrave which is topped by a row of arcaded clerestory windows. Above this, the façade is set back slightly so it is flush with the lower entryway's exterior wall, with a prominent rose window with stone detailing that is centered between four Corinthian pilasters and capped with a bracketed cornice and ornate pediment with a carved medallion depicting the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. This main façade is primarily constructed of cream-colored pressed brick, with cream and rose-colored granite, limestone, and terra cotta details throughout. The remaining elevations of the church are clearly intended as secondary façades, they have relatively few details apart from some stone arcade windows. The cream-colored brick continues throughout the exterior on all elevations.

According to Rolf Achilles, the stained-glass windows in the church are the work of Franz Xavier Zettler of the Royal Bavarian Art Institute, Munich, Germany. They show St. Adalbert in the transepts and the patron saints of Poland around the nave. Zettler windows are known to exist throughout the U.S. and in Chicago at St. Boniface Church, St. Hedwig Church, St. Agatha's Church and many others.



St. Adalbert Church, 2022



St. Adalbert Church, 2022, showing details of primary (South) facade



St. Adalbert Church, 2022, showing symmetrical 185 foot bell towers and Corinthian capital details.



2. St. Adalbert Rectory
1646-1650 W. 17th Street
Constructed: 1914
Architect: Henry J. Schlacks



The St. Adalbert rectory was constructed in conjunction with the adjacent church building, and as such was designed by Schlacks in a complementary, simplified Renaissance Revival style. It is a three-story building with a raised basement, all clad in the same cream and rose-colored pressed brick, granite, limestone, and terra cotta as the church building. The most notable feature of the south-facing primary façade is its pedimented entry, which is supported by bracketed columns with matching stone pilasters on the exterior wall. A stone balustrade staircase connects this raised first floor entrance to the sidewalk. The roof is flat, with simple terra cotta coping, with a decorative terra cotta belt course below. Similar terra cotta blocks surround all the front façade windows, with some split by engaged columns with Composite capitals. The remaining elevations of the rectory are clearly intended as secondary façades, the only notable details being terra cotta lintels and two small open porches connected to the first floor; one on the east façade and one on the north, both with copper roofs. The cream-colored brick continues throughout the exterior on all elevations.

3. St. Adalbert Convent
1626-1630 W. 17th Street
Constructed: 1928
Architect: Paul N. Duca



The St. Adalbert convent building was constructed in 1928 to house the nuns of the parish who operated the parish school. It was designed by architect Paul N. Duca in a simple interpretation of the Renaissance Revival style which blends harmoniously with the existing church and rectory to its west. It is a three-story building with a raised basement. Like its adjacent parish buildings, it is clad in cream-colored pressed brick with cream terra cotta details. The massing of the building is articulated by slightly recessed sections on either end, and an additional, more deeply recessed section at the far west of the building. The south-facing primary façade has a raised first floor entrance with decorative terra cotta moulding surrounding the doorway. Just above the first floor there is an ornamental terra cotta cornice that runs across the central section of the building, while above the third floor there is a larger, dentilled terra cotta cornice that spans all the way across the first recessed sections on both sides. The roof is flat, with a very simple terra cotta cornice and diamond-patterned ornamental masonry below. The rectangular windows on all floors are symmetrical and have simple terra cotta sills and flat masonry arches. The five windows on the second floor of the central section of the building are unique in that they are comprised of rectangular panes of colorful art glass and round panes depicting religious symbology. These second floor windows are surrounded by round masonry arches with masonry spandrels and keystones, with the center window featuring a cross medallion in place of the standard keystone. The deeply-recessed section at the far west end of the building has an additional entrance that is situated mid-level between the basement and first floor. This entryway has a simple curved pediment and brackets, both made of wood. A seemingly identical entryway is also present on the east side of the building. The remaining elevations of the school are clearly intended as secondary façades, they have little detailing apart from some minor continuation of the ornamental cornice and masonry from the third floor of the front façade

4. St. Adalbert School
1641 W. 16th Street
Constructed: 1908
Architect: Unknown



The St. Adalbert school building was constructed in 1908 as an unattached expansion of a then-adjacent school building that is no longer extant. The architect/designer of this existing school building is unknown. It is a three-story building with a north-facing primary façade clad in red pressed brick with yellow pressed brick ornamentation. The far east and west ends of the first floor each have a slightly raised limestone entryway topped with scrolled corbels and a stone cross finial. All three floors have simple, symmetrical rows of windows with limestone sills. The massing of the building is articulated by two slightly recessed sections on either end. The remaining elevations of the school are clearly intended as secondary façades, they have little to no detailing and are clad in common brick.

Renaissance Revival-Style Churches in Chicago

St. Adalbert's church, and to a lesser degree its convent and rectory buildings, reflect the influence of the Renaissance Revival style of architecture. Historically-derived architectural styles were an important defining visual characteristic of Chicago architecture during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and buildings designed in historic revivalist styles remain significant contributors to Chicago's architectural heritage. Classicism—the general architectural style first developed in ancient Greece and Rome and refined by European Renaissance and Baroque architects—plays an especially important role in Chicago's streetscapes, used to embellish many of the city's most prominent cultural, institutional, and religious buildings.

Religious buildings, including churches, synagogues, mosques, and associated buildings such as rectories, convents, and parochial schools, are frequently noteworthy visual “landmarks” in Chicago neighborhoods. Their size and scale—often rising above blocks of lower-rise residential and commercial buildings—and the sophistication of their ornamental beauty are important components of the city's architectural heritage. Many residents closely associate neighborhoods with the religious buildings located there, and these buildings form important visual anchors within these neighborhoods.

Beginning with the city's earliest churches and synagogues, Chicagoans have sought to create beautiful religious buildings in a variety of architectural styles. The earliest church buildings in Chicago, built in the 1830s and 40s in the wake of the frontier settlement's founding, were mostly wooden buildings built in the Greek Revival style with austere Classical porticos and pointed steeples. Beginning in the 1850s, the Gothic Revival style became popular due to its historic associations with the great medieval cathedrals built in Europe from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries. Through the rest of the late nineteenth century and extending into the early twentieth century, brick and stone churches built in the Gothic Revival and other medieval-inspired styles such as Romanesque Revival remained popular. In addition, different religious faiths, and even ethnic groups within these faiths, often preferred certain architectural styles for their buildings.

The Renaissance Revival style was particularly important in the design of early-twentieth-century church buildings. Both church hierarchies and architects increasingly saw Classical architecture as a significant style for churches and related religious buildings. Christianity's early history, rooted in the Classical culture of ancient Rome, and the great Christian churches of the fifth and sixth centuries that were the earliest grand architectural expressions of this religious faith made Classicism seem both rationally and emotionally appropriate for modern church buildings. Classicism's rebirth as the architectural style of choice for fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance church buildings and its subsequent importance for church architecture during the next four centuries solidified these important associations with Christianity.

In Chicago, a number of significant churches and synagogues were built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries using Classical architectural styles. One of the oldest surviving of note is the First Church of Christ, Scientist (now Grant Memorial A.M.E. Church), located at 4017 S. Drexel Boulevard and built in 1897 to a design by Solon S. Beman. Other prominent examples include Holy Cross Church at 1736 W. 46th Street (1913-15; Joseph Molitor); Corpus Christi Church at 4900 S. King Drive (1914-16; Joseph W. McCarthy); St. Mary of the Angels Church at 1850 N. Hermitage Avenue (1914-20; Worthmann & Steinbach); and the former K.A.M. Synagogue (now occupied by Rainbow PUSH Coalition), located at 4945 S. Drexel Boulevard (1923-24; Newhouse and Bernham). The St. Adalbert Church and Rectory buildings designed by Henry J. Schlacks are fine examples of this significant architectural movement, with their overall form and details reflecting this historic American interest and appreciation of Classical architecture.

Architect Henry J. Schlacks

Architect Henry John Schlacks was born in Chicago in 1868. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and trained as a drafting apprentice at the renowned Chicago architectural firm of Adler & Sullivan before traveling Europe, studying different styles of religious architecture across the continent. Upon his return to Chicago in 1891, Schlacks started an architectural firm with Henry Ottenheimer, a former coworker from Adler & Sullivan. Though in their early years Schlacks & Ottenheimer designed all manner of buildings, from small-scale residences to sprawling industrial complexes, Schlacks soon found his niche designing Catholic churches and their associated parish buildings as well as schools, hospitals, and residences. Schlacks also taught at Notre Dame University, where he is credited as one of the founders of the school's architecture program. By 1897, Schlacks had established himself as a specialist of Catholic architecture and left his firm to practice independently.

As an ecclesiastical architect, Schlacks had an impeccable fluency in multiple styles of religious architecture, likely honed during his grand tour of Europe. His stylistic range made him particularly well-suited for frequent commission work from the Archdiocese of Chicago, as their wide range of European ethnic parishes each had their own style preferences. Schlacks most frequently worked within the Gothic Revival, Romanesque Revival, and Renaissance Revival styles that were most common for Catholic churches, and he often drew heavily from Roman basilicas and even sometimes closely replicated specific European examples.



Henry J. Schlacks, Architect. *Credit: City of Chicago St. Gelasius Landmark Designation Report*

Schlacks was prolific, serving as the architect of upwards of thirty churches and parochial buildings to the Chicago area alone. One of his earliest commissions was St. Peter Church, built in 1895 in then-rural Niles Center (now Skokie) and modeled after small-scale Gothic churches in German towns. In 1897-98 Schlacks designed St. Paul Church, also built of brick and based on German Gothic precedents but gigantic in scale, its twin spires towering over the Lower West Side. Schlacks's designs for St. Boniface Church (1902-04) and St. Anthony Church (1913-15) are handsome examples of the fine brickwork that is typical of the Romanesque Revival style, while the former St. Henry Church (1905-06; now called Blessed Aloysius Stepinac Croatian Catholic Mission) is a spectacular Gothic Revival landmark in the West Ridge neighborhood.

From the 1910s onward, Schlacks largely turned from medieval styles (Gothic and Romanesque Revivals) to the Classical and Renaissance Revival styles that he personally had favored since his post-MIT days exploring the Classical and Renaissance buildings of Rome. St. Mary of the Lake Church, a wealthy Uptown parish, received a buff-colored terracotta and brick church (1913-17) modeled in part after the Church of St. Prudentiana and the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Wall, both in Rome. St. John of God Church (1918-20, no longer extant), served a Polish parish in the Back-of-the-Yards community and bore a striking resemblance to St. Adalbert, as both were large-scale Classical church buildings with entrance colonnades and twin Baroque-style bell towers. St. Ignatius Church (1916-17) in Rogers Park and the former St. Clara Church (1923-1928, later called St. Gelasius Church and then Shrine of Christ the King) in Woodlawn both display austere Classicism, with gray limestone cladding and single tall bell towers. One of the last of Schlacks's major works, St. Ita Church (1924-27) in Edgewater, shows a notable shift back to the Victorian-era styles of his past. This church was designed in a French Gothic style at the specific request of the Cardinal who commissioned Schlacks for the project.

Although Schlacks is most well-known in Chicago for his ecclesiastical buildings for the Archdiocese of Chicago, his body of work also includes secular buildings and other churches throughout the country. Three of Schlacks's buildings are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Curtiss-Wright Aeronautical University Building in Chicago, Illinois, Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Depot in Grand Junction, Colorado, and Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Station in Salt Lake City, Utah), with countless others listed as contributing to National Register Historic Districts. One Schlacks-designed church is a designated Chicago Landmark (St. Gelasius), and at least 15 are categorized as orange-rated (possessing features that make them potentially architecturally and/or historically significant) in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. Many others that may not have any officially recognized status are nonetheless considered notable by architectural historians and locals alike due to their grand design and striking features. Long after his death in 1938, Henry J. Schlacks continues to be regarded as one of Chicago's most influential masters of religious architecture.



St. Gelasius, 6401 S. Woodlawn *Credit: City of Chicago St. Gelasius Landmark Designation Report*

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-620 and –630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation” and that it possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the St. Adalbert Complex be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State, or National Heritage

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The St. Adalbert Complex exemplifies Chicago’s contribution to the late-nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century architectural revival of grandly-scaled Classicism, commonly referred to as the “American Renaissance” and popularized by the World’s Columbian Exposition that was held in Chicago in 1893.
- The St. Adalbert Complex exemplifies the history of Polish and Mexican immigration and the cultural heritage and influence of these communities in Chicago.
- The St. Adalbert Complex exemplifies the critical role that religious institutions played in the history and development of Chicago’s neighborhoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The St. Adalbert Complex is a unique example of ecclesiastic architecture, a building type that is significant to the visual character of Chicago’s neighborhoods.
- The St. Adalbert Complex includes buildings that are distinctive examples of the Renaissance Revival style, which is significant to the history and visual character of Chicago’s built environment and its ecclesiastic architecture in particular.
- The St. Adalbert Complex is distinguished by the buildings’ quality of design, detail, materials, and craftsmanship, as displayed by features including the ornate façade and twin bell towers of the church and the use of granite, limestone, and terra cotta detailing throughout the complex.

Criterion 5: Work of Significant Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The St. Adalbert Complex includes a church and rectory building that were designed by Henry J. Schlacks, a prolific local architect who specialized in ecclesiastic architecture. He was frequently commissioned by the Archdiocese of Chicago and designed over two dozen local churches, including such noteworthy examples as: St. Paul Church, St. Boniface Church, St. Mary of the Lake Church, St. Ita Church, and the former St. Clara Church (later, St. Gelasius, a designated Chicago Landmark).
- Schlacks is also known for his work on significant secular designs throughout the country, including three buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places: Curtiss-Wright Aeronautical University Building (Chicago, Illinois), Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Depot (Grand Junction, Colorado, and Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Station (Salt Lake City, Utah).

Criterion 7: Unique Visual Feature

Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or City of Chicago.

- The St. Adalbert Complex encompasses half of a city block and includes a large-scale Renaissance Revival church with two 185-foot towers, surrounded by low-scale residential and commercial buildings. It has been a prominent and familiar visual feature of the Pilsen neighborhood for over a century.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic interest or value.

The St. Adalbert Complex possesses sufficient integrity to convey its historic architectural and cultural significance.

The existing buildings of the St. Adalbert Complex remain in their original location, and their setting within a low-rise, residential neighborhood has stayed remarkably similar given their age. Despite having undergone some minor alterations and deterioration typical for buildings of this age, the buildings of the St. Adalbert Complex have largely retained their original character-defining exterior features, materials, and overall design and therefore sufficiently convey their historic significance.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of the St. Adalbert Complex, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the four buildings that make up the St. Adalbert Complex: the church, rectory, convent, and school buildings. Building interiors are excluded from the significant features. In addition, the single-story accessory building located north of the rectory is also excluded from the significant features.

For the purposes of Section 2-120-740 of the Municipal Code governing the review of permit applications, the following additional guidelines shall also apply:

- The Commission’s review of proposed work should ensure that the significant historic and architectural features of the exteriors and rooflines of the four buildings are preserved while allowing reasonable change and flexibility to meet new needs in accommodating future uses including potential new construction on undeveloped portions of the parcel.

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