

SAINT PATRICK

Parish Founded: 1858 | Present church built: 1886-1887 | Consecrated: May 8, 1920

Patron Profile: Saint Patrick (5th Century)

Feast Day: March 17

Few specifics are known of Patrick's life. Only two written records of his life and ministry in Ireland have survived: his *Confession*, and the "Letter to Coroticus," which he wrote to an Irish warlord. These two documents provide the best historical information about Patrick. A native of Roman Britain, as a teenager he was abducted during a raid and taken to Ireland where he was enslaved for six years as a shepherd until he escaped and returned to his family.

Patrick's missionary work in Ireland is rooted in a dream he had after his return to Britain in which he heard the Irish calling him to walk among them again. Scholars note that a distinctive aspect of this vision is that the call does not come directly from God, but from the people of Ireland who implore Patrick to be with them and share their lives. Inspired by this dream he studied for the priesthood and prepared to evangelize the Irish.

Although it is unclear when he exactly returned to Ireland, Patrick is the first Christian missionary to venture beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire.

Tradition holds that Patrick is buried at Down Cathedral in Northern Ireland. The Archbishops of Armagh are considered Patrick's successor as he is credited with establishing the seat. Given his status as one of the primary patron saints of Ireland, Patrick is the patron of many churches and institutions across Ireland and the Irish diaspora.



PARISH HISTORY

In 1858, 50 immigrant families, mostly Irish and German, came together with Father Thomas Carroll, C.S.C., to establish the parish of Saint Patrick. Its first church was located at Western Avenue (then Division) and Scott Street. Built of brick and stone, the 30 by 60 foot structure could hold 350 people.

The parish grew significantly over the next 30 years and a new church was needed to accommodate the larger community. The pastor at the time, Father Denis Hagerty, C.S.C., acquired land between Taylor and Scott Street and the cornerstone for the new church was placed in 1886. The emblem on the stone of the Cross flanked by two anchors is the symbol of the Congregation of Holy Cross, whose members served the parish from its founding until 2001. Construction finished in 1887 and the new church had room for more than 800 people. The growth of the parish also prompted the establishment of its school in 1866. Initially an all boys school staffed by the Sisters of the Holy Cross, it became co-educational in 1950. After more than a century of service, the school closed in 1974.

The need for a larger church at Saint Patrick reflects the growth of South Bend during the second half of the 1800s. Immigrants from a variety of countries were drawn to the city by the robust industrial economy of the day that generated abundant manufacturing jobs. Many settled on the west side of the Saint Joseph River, resulting in an ethnically diverse neighborhood, as evidenced by the nearby Saint Hedwig Church, founded by Polish Catholics in the late 1870s.



Architectural Glossary

- **Gable:** The part of a wall that encloses the end of a pitched roof; often triangular.
- **Lancet:** A narrow, tall opening with a pointed arch.
- **Rose Window:** a circular window with mullions or tracery radiating in a form suggestive of a rose.
- **Tracery:** Ornamental framework in a Gothic style window.

Photography: Bartholomew J. Timm
Text & Layout: Andrew J. Remick

Sources: Anita McSorley, "The St. Patrick You Never Knew," *St. Anthony Messenger*, March 1997; Saint Patrick and Saint Hedwig Parish, "Welcome to Saint Patrick Parish," www.sspatrickhedwig.org; National Register of Historic Places, West Washington Historic District, South Bend, St. Joseph County, Indiana, National Register #75000049; Jennifer Ochstein, "St. Patrick Parish marks 150th anniversary," *South Bend Tribune*, March 6, 2008.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

George T. Hodson's design for Saint Patrick's Church exemplifies the widespread use of the Gothic Revival style in nineteenth-century religious architecture. His plan employs a three-part facade comprising a central gabled section featuring a rose window flanked by two towers, an arrangement seen in some of the great European cathedrals as well as important churches in the United States such as Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, which was completed in 1878. The asymmetrical towers are reminiscent of the monumental Chartres Cathedral in France. The polychrome brick and stone facade is characteristic of trends in civic and sacred architecture in both Great Britain and America from the 1850s through the 1870s. A niche with a statue of Saint Patrick crowns the central gable.

The church's interior, especially in the chancel, is sumptuously decorated with stained glass, painted ornamentation, and sculptures. The ornately carved altar in the apse is made of Carrara marble and onyx and features a relief of The Last Supper at the base. Five lancet windows fill most of the wall above the altar. The windows depict five Saints: Columcille (aka Columba), a sixth-century Irish abbot and missionary to Scotland, is on the left; the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patrick, and Joseph are the three depicted in the middle; Brigid (of Kildare), a fifth- and sixth-century Irish nun, abbess, and founder of multiple monasteries, is portrayed on the right. Columcille, Patrick, and Brigid are venerated as the patron saints of Ireland. On the walls of the apse around the high altar are portraits of six Doctors of the Church: to the left are Saints Alphonsus Liguori, Gregory the Great, and Augustine; to the right are Saints Jerome, Ambrose, and Thomas Aquinas. The central section of the sanctuary is flanked by two smaller altars: one dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the other honoring Saint Joseph. A statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus stands in front of the Saint Joseph altar.

Vibrant stained glass adorns the nave and intricate motifs embellish the vaults above the windows as well as the ceiling. While the designs of the windows and patterns are mainly floral and geometric, they also feature traditional Christian iconography. A large and vivid rose window dominates the rear of the church; it was a gift from Sophia Coquillard, a relative of Alexis Coquillard, one of the founders of South Bend.

ADDITIONAL PARISH MILESTONES:

- 1920: Consecration of the Church and Altar
- 1975: Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of South Bend's West Washington Historic District
- 1992: Extensive exterior renovations
- 2001: Merged with Saint Hedwig and became a diocesan parish
- 2004: Completion of comprehensive interior restoration