

ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH: GOTHIC REVIVAL STAPLE IN CURTIS PARK

Why do you think Gothic Revival was such a popular style for religious buildings in the early 20th century?

The current Gothic Revival cathedral is the third location that has served as a home for one of the oldest Episcopal congregations in Denver. It sits at 26th and Curtis Streets, where St. John's in the Wilderness (Colorado's first Episcopal parish) was already operating a Sunday school in the rapidly growing Curtis Park neighborhood.

Structure

The church is a small (approximately 40x70 feet) L-shaped structure built out of Harvard Brick with limestone lintels and tan belt courses with a slate roof. The exterior is ornamented with wooden Gothic tracery on the windows and porches. Connected to the church by an arch is an addition designed by Jacques Benedict and built in 1928. The Clergy House is compatible in design and detail with the original Ralph Adams Cram building. St. Andrew's bell is one of the largest and most beautifully toned in all of downtown Denver and for years has marked the passing of the hours. The bell is housed in a timber-framed tower adjacent to the church.

The interior is dominated by tall pointed Gothic arches made of brick. A beamed ceiling and diamond patterned amber leaded glass windows are important decorative features of the building. St. Andrews is ornamented with paintings and sculpture including a Sieneese Madonna which stands watch at the door, and opposite, an 18th century Portuguese Sorrowful Mother and Spanish Monastic stalls carved by Franciscans a hundred years ago for the Queen of Missions, Santa Barbara. A santo hangs on the wall, and an Edwardian Rerardos, by the Denver Artist Albert Byran Olsen, adorns the high altar. There is a Romanesque baptismal fount by the front entrance (St. Andrew's Episcopal Church National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form).

Congregation and History

Ground was broken on March 18, 1874, and the building was ready for occupancy on Trinity Sunday of that year. The new church building was formally opened by the bishop under the name Trinity Memorial Chapel. Between 1880 and 1895, the church was enlarged to a total seating capacity of 350 people. Soon after this expansion, however, the parish membership began to decline. The demographics of Denver were changing and Curtis Park was no longer a fashionable neighborhood. In 1880, the cornerstone was laid for the new Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist at 19th and Welton Streets.

On the night of May 15, 1903, an arson fire destroyed the Cathedral. The Cathedral vestry decided that they would not rebuild at the Welton St. location. In 1904, the Trinity Memorial building was so badly deteriorated that the congregation decided to rebuild on a site owned by the Diocese, adjacent to the site previously occupied by St. John's Cathedral.

Sometime around 1919, the membership opted for the name St. Andrew's, presumably to avoid confusion with the larger Trinity Methodist Episcopal, just a few blocks away. In the 1920's, Father Neil Stanley, a renowned preacher and spiritual director, became rector of St. Andrew's. Father Stanley

brought both Anglo-Catholic liturgy and a heartfelt concern for the poor of the neighborhood, a tradition that continues to this day. During his tenure, a rectory, which now serves as St. Andrew's parish house, was built on the lot south of the church.

In 1986, major repairs on St. Andrew's structure included a new composite roof, new plaster and paint, and an oak floor that was laid over the asbestos tiles. Tim Hinz, a local woodworking artist, made a freestanding altar. The men of St. John's removed asphalt and planted trees. The church was rededicated on the Feast of St. Andrew's, 1988. On All Soul's Day 1999, a fire broke out in the undercroft of the church, causing significant smoke damage to the entire nave and sanctuary. The congregation worshipped for nine months at the nearby Temple Events Center while the church was undergoing restoration. The church organ was ruined in the fire, and an organ committee was formed to select an appropriate instrument for the church. A Buzard pipe organ was placed in the church following a successful Capital Campaign (St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Fact Sheet).

Neighborhood

Curtis Park is one of Denver's oldest neighborhoods, springing up between 1870 and 1893. The population of the city's first "Streetcar Suburb" was encouraged by international immigration and migration within the U.S., but was fairly homogeneous; mostly northern European. In the second half of the 20th century, the neighborhood became more diverse as its population came to include substantial numbers of Mexican-Americans and Japanese-Americans (Curtis Park: Denver's Oldest Neighborhood).

References

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form.

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Fact Sheet.

Denver Public Library. Curtis Park: Denver's Oldest Neighborhood. Retrieved from <https://history.denverlibrary.org/curtis-park-denvers-oldest-neighborhood-upgrade>.