

CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

1535 Logan Street, Denver, Colorado 80203

Architect: Leon Coquard, Aaron M. Gove, Thomas F. Walsh

Year Built: 1912

Designed by Detroit architect Leon Coquard and realized by Denver firm Gove & Walsh, this cathedral was called the “Pinnacled Glory of the West” when it was built. Indeed, it exemplifies the most classic elements of the French Gothic style in ways not often seen in this part of the world, especially one century ago.

The Cathedral is sited at Colfax Avenue and Logan Street, just one block from the iconic gold dome of the Capitol Building. Facing south towards Colfax it assumes a traditional cruciform of a cathedral. The front façade has a triple entrance, each with deep, pointed compound arches around bronze double doors. Carved panels and blind arcades decorate above the doors, higher up a rose window is centered on the middle entrance and double gothic windows in recessed arches sit centered over the outer entrances. Twin towers are at either side of the façade, decorated with arcaded belfries, corner pinnacles and crocketed spires that reach 210 feet tall.

Inside, arched vaulted ceilings float 68 feet overhead and ornate spiral staircases ascend to balconies. The interior is furnished with a sanctuary, altar, cathedra and side altars of Carrara marble.

The cathedral is said to be modeled after the 13th century Amiens Cathedral in France, famously built to house the reputed head of John the Baptist recovered in the Fourth Crusade. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the cathedral was not easy to build and suffered from setbacks due to both natural and financial reasons. The cost of the church was quite high, \$500,000 at the time, and delays in securing funding caused slowdowns in construction. There were also problems from groundwater on the site that required mitigation during building. Once complete, the spires were damaged twice by lightning strikes, once shortly after their completion and again in 1997, requiring one spire to be rebuilt by architect David Owen Tryba of Denver.

The cathedral was dedicated on October 27, 1912 by Cardinal John Murphy Farley of New York. In 1979, Pope John Paul II named the Cathedral a Minor Basilica.

References

National Register of Historic Places, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Denver, Denver County, Colorado, National Register #75000506

Peasron, M. (2004). *Historic Sacred Places of Denver*. Denver, Colorado: Historic Denver, Inc.