

S T E E P L E S



The ecclesiastical style of architecture most easily recognized is Gothic and Sacred Heart Cathedral is proof of the beauty and grace in the design. Its towers soar to the sky and the stone window tracery and ornamentation is repeated in a modified style in the eight glassless window openings on each tower. Designed by Charles H. Prindeville of Chicago, it was built in 1926-27 as the parish's second church.

Text by Sharon Damieder

O let me rise
As larks harmoniously
And sing this
day thy victories:

From "Easter Wings"
George Herbert [1593-1633]

All over the city, church spires, steeples and towers do indeed rise as larks to the heavens and the One they were built to give glory to.

Big and small, round or pointed, Romanesque or Gothic, their reverent shapes topped with crosses or hung with bells symbolize the religious aspirations of generations of men.

Brick, stone, wood. Those who used earthly materials to build spires and steeples and the churches they crowned poured their whole beings into forming their idea of perfect ecclesiastical architecture.

Their victory came with completion and the realization that they had done their best to honor God.

As mighty and majestic cathedrals of old gave way to modern and compact churches, the spire or cross adorning the roof took on a more contemporary design. But the spirit remained the same.

Men continue to use the spire or steeple in ecclesiastical architecture as a distinction that sets the House of God apart from others, and as a symbol of their upward thoughts and prayers.

[Information obtained through Father Robert McNamara, diocesan historian at St. Bernard's Seminary, Courier-Journal files, the Rochester Historical Society and the Public Library.]



St. Joseph's clocktower, although dwarfed by present day buildings, still dominates the downtown area. The Franklin Street church, an adaptation of late Renaissance Baroque design, dedicated in 1846, gained its first tower in 1857 (left). Bells were installed the same year and a clock in 1864. In 1909 the facade and present tower were erected (right). The church was constructed of Lockport stone by Nevins & Jones, architects and builders.



St. Patrick's, Aurora, a church of Romanesque architecture, has a cupola-like steeple. The small rose window in the center is characteristic of Gothic styled churches, although they're usually much larger and more ornate. Stained glass for all the windows was donated by parishioners. The brick church was dedicated in 1874.



On Joseph Avenue in Rochester, the Lady of Perpetual Help's cop domed bell tower rises 110 feet the facade and contains four bells. The church, dedicated in 1915 is of Italian Renaissance architect with cream shade pressed brick trimmed with terra cotta and stone. It was designed by Joseph Oberlies and George F. Lorenz.