## **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only FEB 2 2 1983 received date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms* Type all entries—complete applicable sections

# 1. Name

historic	Sacred Heart Cath	olic Church Complex	K	
and/or common	Sacred Heart Cath	olic Church Complex	к <b>(</b> І	0009:7-11)
2. Loca	ation			
street & number	2218 Binney Stree	ŧ		NA not for publication
city, town	Omaha	-NA vicinity of		
state	Nebraska cod	e 031 county	Douglas	code 055
3. Clas	sification			•
Category district building(s) structure site object	Ownership public private both Public Acquisition NA in process being considered	Status X occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible yes: restricted X yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence _X religious scientific transportation other:
name The	Most Rev. Daniel H	. Sheehan, Catholic	c Archbishop of Omah	a
street & number	100 North 62nd St	reet		
city, town	Omaha	<u>_NA</u> vicinity of	state	Nebraska 68132
5. Loca	ation of Leg	al Descripti	on	
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc. $_{ m Regis}$	ter of Deeds, Omaha	a-Douglas County Civ	vic Center
street & number	1819 Farnam Stree			
city, town	Omaha	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	state	Nebraska
6. Repr	resentation	in Existing	Surveys	
title Historic	e Omaha Building Su	rvey has this pr	operty been determined el	igible? yesX no
date	January, 1979		federal sta	te county loca
depository for su	nrvey records Landmark	Historic Preservat	ion Commission, Cit	y Planning Departme
city, town	Omaha		state	Nebraska

# 7. Description

Condition excellent good	deteriorated	Check one X unaltered altered	Check one X_ original site moved date	NA	۵. ۱۹۹۹ ۱۹۹۹ - ۲۰۰۹ - ۲۰۰۹ - ۲۰۰۹ - ۲۰۰۹ - ۲۰۰۹
X_good fair		altered	•	NA	 

#### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The tall spire (124 feet) and rock-faced ashlar walls of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church are dominant features in the flat, late 19th-and-20th-century residential neighborhood of Kountze Place, where two-and-one-half-story frame houses are the norm. The Gothic Revival church was built in 1900-1902 to the designs of the Omaha architectural firm of Fisher and Lawrie. The complex also consists of the 1904 high school building, the 1927 grade school building, the 1889 rectory with barn/garage behind, the shrine on the grounds, and the school playground. All are centered on 22nd and Binney streets in north Omaha. The primary buildings of the church and schools are located on three corners of the intersection. These primary buildings were also all designed by the firm of Fisher & Lawrie (although Harry Lawrie designed the last building alone) in the early part of the 20th century. All the structures are well maintained and continue in their historic use, with the exception of the high school building which is presently vacant.

The church complex built primarily of masonry is a strong unit in contrast to the surrounding residential neighborhood of nearly all frame houses. The church, rectory, shrine, and garage are also physically unified by the raised lawn and a short wall topped by an small iron fence surrounding the property. The grade school and playground are at the southwest corner of the intersection, and high school building at the southeast. Discussions of individual buildings are as follows:

#### Church:

Designed during 1900 and completed in June, 1902, at a cost of \$25,000, Sacred Heart Church possesses major Gothic Revival exterior elements which indicate the medievalizing intentions of the architects. Rock-faced coursed ashlar walls, regularly punctuated by elongated lancet windows, rise thirty feet from a 66' by 123' plan generally in the form of a Latin cross of which the short arms form the north and south transepts. The main body of the church, delineated by a slate, steeply-pitched gable roof (the apex of which is 62 feet above ground level) stretches eastward from the "crossing" of the nave and transepts. The walls are lava stone from Colorado with Bedford limestone trim.

The principal entrance, centrally located in the corner-buttressed east facade of the gabled nave and immediately below a massive traceried window measuring 12 by 20 feet, is flanked on the south by a tower and spire which rises to a height of 124 feet. This tower, encircled by octagonal corner buttresses which terminate in pinnacles capped by limestone crockets, is the most striking feature of the structure. Secondary entrances are located in the corner-buttressed, gable ends of the north and south transepts.

The church's gabled western facade is broken by a pair of symmetrically placed chimney stacks which flank a rounded apse. A one story, gable-roofed chapel also projects from the southwest corner of this facade.

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Exterior ornamentation of contrasting Bedford limestone is limited to lancet hood moldings with corbel stops, belt courses, and window and door reveals. Additional gothic ornament is found in the large colored glass windows which are located above each of the three gabled entrances. Here wooden mullions, increasing in number in the upper part of the window, form a complex although common type of tracery. Both entrances have the original double doors with ornamental hinges which are surmounted by ecclesiastical emblems carved in stone in the tympanum.

The interior achieves the sense of height and the basic form of a Gothic church, but with a unique method. The church's interior is highlighted by a plastered vaulted roof and groining above the nave's side windows. The groins spring from the stencilled band above the arris and accentuate height. The vaulting is cantilevered from the outer walls. This emphasizes the vitality of the interior giving a soaring feeling to the space. The sense of a side aisle is created without the free standing piers and a reduction of floor space. The shallow transepts appear deeper and more pronounced by the Gothic style, white paneling and the stencilled ceiling painting. The paneling also creates a small vestibule for the side doors, confessionals on either side of the entrance door, and pews above the vestibule. The white pine high altar painted in ivory and gold is from the 1856 St. Mary Cathedral (see photo #5). The interior was described in 1902 as decorated in pale green and gold with frescoed religious emblems between the main ceiling trusses.

The paintings are one of the highlights of the interior. Various stencil-work and hand-painted scenes have survived. Fuchs & Fuchs, Omaha painters, were awarded the contract to "decorate" the interior. The view of Sacred Heart and St. Peter's in Rome (at the base of ceiling in the apse) is painted in the manner reminiscent of the Fuchs & Fuchs landscapes in the Porter-Thomsen House (Douglas County, Nebraska, NRHP pending). In the ceiling apse, the "heavenly host" are painted above the scene of churches. At the base of the vaulting, there are three Biblical scenes painted on each side, surrounded by stencil-work.

#### High School and convent:

The two-and-one-half-story brick building with raised basement was erected in 1904 to the designs of Fisher and Lawrie. The symmetrical facade has a projecting vestibule in the center with stoop. The stone lintel over the double door is carved with "1904." The rear portion of the original building was off-set from the front half and extended farther to the east. In 1952 a brick addition to the northeast corner designed by Edward J. Sessinghaus was constructed. The entire building was remodeled at the

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same time with first floor for classrooms and the second floor for the convent. The Dominican Sisters who supervised the educational needs of the parish lived in the convent.

#### Grade School and lyceum:

The most interesting building architecturally, after the church itself, is the last building constructed in the complex, the grade school and lyceum. The plan of the building is unusual in school designs in Nebraska, and the unique main facade reflects the plan. The middle third of the building is a two-story auditorium with hallways adjacent to the auditorium, running the length of the building. The classrooms are then placed along the outer walls. The emphasis on the auditorium is reflected in the name of the building. The structure is a simple brick rectangle with a flat roof. The Gothic details, while elaborate, are concentrated only on the doors and windows of the main facade and do not include wall surface forms common in most Collegiate Gothic interpretations. The grade school is a product of the Collegiate Gothic style, but represents a unique form and interpretation.

The main (north) facade has an unusual arrangement, Gothic details, and a considerable number of inscriptions. The facade is divided into three major parts each with a pointed arch recessed entrance, which reflects the interior. The prominent auditorium entrance is in the center and is flanked by the entrances to the schoolrooms. The words "School" or "Auditorium" are inscribed above the appropriate entrances. The main facade is further enlivened by a pavilion-like central portion with a prominent Gothic-detailed door surround and other decorative elements above, to the gable extending above the cornice line. Within the small gable is a mosiac of Jesus and the little children with the words "Suffer Little Children To Come Unto Me." Under the stringcourse, the name "Sacred Heart School and Lyceum" is carved in stone. The strong emphasis on patriotism, in addition to religious references, in the other inscriptions is somewhat surprising: "For God and Country" and "For Religion and Patriotism" are placed in the parapet, and "God Bless Our Country and Our Flag" is above the central entrance.

Harry Lawrie, formerly of Fisher and Lawrie, designed the grade school in March, 1927. Edward J. Sessinghaus, an architect in private practice, did additional work on the mechanical plans a few months later. The building is still in use as a grade school. The five lots directly south of the building are the school playground.

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#### Rectory and garage:

The rectory was built as a private residence in 1889 by M. F. Roys, which was purchased in 1918 by the parish and altered to fit the needs of the priest. The two-story frame residence has decorative clapboarding in the front gable typical of the period. A verandah extends along the front (south) and part of the east side. The 1918 alterations included interior and exterior changes: the one-story back porch was enclosed and the second floor extended over it, and the first floor was remodeled for two office rooms near the front door followed by an enclosed stairway and the living quarters. In recent years, the rectory has been covered with aluminum siding. The original 1889 one-and-one-half-story frame barn still stands to the rear as the garage, with access from the alley. The steep gable roof has a centered dormer on the south with a door.

#### Shrine:

The grounds between the church and the rectory were decorated in 1922 by the construction of the shrine. Care was taken to design the shrine in harmony with the church: the type of stone and method of facing is similar and the pointed arch and buttresses are typical Gothic features. The scene through the glassed-in front depicts the Vision of the Sacred Heart.

All buildings are presently used for their original parish functions with the exception of the high school and convent, which is vacant.

## 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications	community planning         conservation         economics         education         engineering         exploration/settlemen	Iandscape architecture law literature military music t philosophy	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)

Specific dates 1900-1927

XBXNXXX Architect Fisher and Lawrie, Omaha

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sacred Heart Catholic Church Complex is architecturally significant to Omaha as a fine product of the Late Gothic Revival, taking inspiration from 14th century English Gothic churches and adapting it to the needs of this parish. The tall spire and rock-faced ashlar walls of the church, two brick school buildings, rectory and shrine are visual landmarks in the surrounding residential neighborhood. The complex was created under the leadership of one parish priest, The Reverend Patrick J. Judge, who supervised the development of all the buildings. Equally unusual, one architectural firm, Fisher & Lawrie, designed the three principal buildings, although Harry Lawrie designed the last building alone, having organized his own office. The church has played a key role in neighborhood stability as the middle and upper middle class Kountze Place neighborhood experienced white flight in the 1950's and '60's when the Black community expanded into the area.

The Right Reverend James O'Connor, Bishop of Omaha, organized Sacred Heart Parish in north Omaha in 1890. Holy Family Parish at 17th and Cuming had previously served all Catholics in that section of the City, but by 1890, a new parish was needed further north. In 1896, the Reverend Patrick J. Judge met with Herman Kountze of the United Real Estate and Trust Company of Omaha. Kountze owned land west of Florence Boulevard, more centrally located to serve Sacred Heart Parish. Kountze agreed to donate land for a church, providing the structure was of brick or stone exterior, cost at least \$8,000 and be built within five years. Father Judge, who had a choice of seven locations in Kountze Place, chose to move his church to the corner of 22nd and Binney. The congregation decided to move the frame church from 26th Street until the new construction could begin, and the first mass at the location was said on June 13, 1897. The Parish limits of the church were east to the Missouri River; north to the City boundaries; west to the east side of 30th Street; and south to the north side of Grace and Parker Streets.

Father Judge immediately began work to raise funds for the new church. A fair held in 1898 raised over \$3,000, which formed the nucleus of the building fund. Numerous entertainments and subscriptions also contributed to the fund, to such an extent that the plans for the new structure were expanded. Kountze donated an additional fifty feet of land under the condition that the church cost at least \$15,000. Construction of the \$25,000 stone church began in August, 1900, with the laying of the cornerstone on September 2, 1900.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

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10. Geogra	phical Data	• • • •	
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13, 14, 15 of Bloc	k 6; and lots 11, 12	<b>,</b> 13 <b>,</b> 14 <b>,</b> 15 d	of Block 7 of Kountze Place which are the historic boundaries
List all states and coun	nties for properties overla	apping state or c	county boundaries
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state <sub>NA</sub>	code	county	code
11. Form P	repared By		
Nebraska Sta organization City Plan	rs, Preservation Adm ate Historical Socie nning Department Street	ty (	date October, 1982 telephone 402/471-3850
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Construction of the second	ictorio Brock		Officer Certification
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The evaluated significance	of this property within the s	state is:	
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665), I hereby nominate this	s property for inclusion in th d procedures set forth by th	ne National Registe	toric Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89- er and certify that it has been evaluated ervice.
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For NPS use only I hereby certify that the Autorics Keeper of the National	ATTAN	e National Register Cored In the Lional Register	date 3/24/83

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The dedication of Sacred Heart Church on June 8, 1902, attracted three bishops, the first time such high representatives of the Catholic hierarchy were present for the dedication of a religious structure in Omaha. A contemporary account referred to the new church as the "finest building erected as a parish church in the city," from an artistic standpoint. The white pine altar the first Catholic Church altar in Nebraska, was moved yet one more time and placed in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sacred Heart Church.

In 1902, the area surrounding the church had become one of the finest residential locations in the City. The 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition, which had occurred at nearby Kountze Park on Florence Boulevard, caused the city to expand northward. Many well-to-do Omahans built large homes in Sacred Heart Parish and helped it to grow in the following years.

The Dominican Sisters from Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, arrived in 1904 to handle all the educational needs of the parish. The high school and convent were built that summer, and school opened in the fall. The idea of a school was so popular that the parish agreed to build a small frame grade school the same summer (it was located on the same site as the present grade school). The larger grade school and lyceum was erected in 1927.

The success of the parish in its first half century was due to the leadership of one man, The Reverend Patrick Joseph Judge, B.C.L. (1858-1942). The spiritual and educational development of the parish, as well as the construction of all buildings was overseen by Father Judge. He was born in County Roscommon, Ireland, and ordained in Rome in 1892. The same year he came to Omaha and served as assistant pastor at St. Philomena's Cathedral and later at Greeley, Nebraska. In 1895 he was appointed to the infant Sacred Heart parish and served until his death in 1942. The growth of the parish (it was eventually divided into six parishes) and the development of the fine physical complex were significant features of his tenure. Α strong advocate of the Catholic press, Father Judge was the first editor of the Omaha Catholic newspaper, which in 1903 became The True Voice. He was also an ardent supporter of Irish independence and carried on a constant correspondence with Eamon De Valera, president of Eire.

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The Black community located south of the church since the 1920's continued to expand throughout the 1950's and 1960's. However, Sacred Heart parishioners served as a block to movement of Blacks east of 24th Street and north of Binney until the riots of the late 1960's. Whites fled the neighborhood, leaving the large turn-of-the-century homes for quick sales and subdivision into apartments. The social and economic character of the neighborhood changed, which affected support of the church and schools. With fewer Catholic families to support the high school, Sacred Heart became an archdiocesan high school, receiving support from the entire twenty-three county area rather than just the parish. Both the secondary and elementary schools became ungraded, and innovative educational technique allowing students to work at their own Pace. Sacred Heart also opened its schools to non-Catholics, in an effort to serve the entire community around it.

In 1968, the archdiocese announced closing of the Sacred Heart High School building and the school relocated into a former elementary structure at 4725 North 28th Street. The name was changed to Dominican High School, but the innovative learning techniques remained.

Statistics of Sacred Heart Church and School document the scope of their service in the late 1970's. Today Sacred Heart School has 170 students, only 19 percent of which are white, and only 30 percent who are Catholic. The Sacred Heart Church congregation is approximately 52 percent white and 48 percent minority families. From the initial move to the 22nd and Binney site in the 1890's to the innovative techniques of the elementary school today, Sacred Heart has shown its ability to change directions to better serve the community.

The architect's intentions in the use of the 14th century Gothic forms are well documented in the newspaper article of the dedication (Omaha Morning World-Herald, June 9, 1902, pp. 1-2):

It is designed in the fourteenth century English Gothic style of architecture. . In designing this church, Fisher and Lawrie had in mind to build one which would be lasting and stand for generations as a monument to the Christian religion. . . in choosing the 14th century style of architecture, they in mind its adaptability to such a building, and had, as their model, several of the European cathedrals which today are lasting monuments to the glory of God." Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

#### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Fisher and Lawrie stated that they were influenced by the 14th century English Gothic style, however they did not choose to follow the archeological correctness of the earlier ecclesiologists, but instead adapted the form for an Omaha parish. The stone material, typical of the Late Gothic Revival, provides a sharp contrast in the predominately frame residential neighborhood. The striking corner tower and spire, common in English parish churches, takes advantage of its corner-of-the-block location, unlike the more typical central location on medieval churches. The large stained glass windows in the transept ends and main (east) facade have geometric tracery, a type popular in the early 14th century. The placement of the chapel parallel to the chancel is typical of the Middle Ages, but the division of the chapel from the chancel as a separate room is more common in contemporary usage.

The interior is a unique space, highly successful in creating the feel of a Gothic church with transepts, side aisles, and aisle, but without the use of typical Gothic elements. The shallow transepts appear much deeper throughout the use of stencilling on the upper walls and ceiling, and panelling across the transept which encloses the vestibule, creates confessionals on either side of the entrance, and places pews above the vestibule. The illusion of Gothic side aisles with piers is created by the vaulting over the side aisles and pews, the set-back of the upper wall, and the stencilled arris. The illusion of a clerestory is also suggested by the placement of hand-painted Biblical scenes where the clerestory windows would have been placed at the base of the ceiling vaulting.

The amount of hand-painted scenes and stencil-work and its degree of preservation is an unusual feature in Nebraska churches. Some painting was re-done in 1942, probably the stencil-work, which is now mainly light blue, dark blue, and cream, whereas the dedication article mentions pale green and gold. The geometric wall pattern behind the main altar takes its color scheme from the altar: gold and cream. The painting also varies considerably in style and intensity, and can be divided into three main types: the curvilinear stencil-work, the "heavenly host" and two churches in the apse ceiling, and the Biblical scenes above the windows in the nave. The "heavenly host" and the view of St. Peter's and Sacred Heart are painted in an "atmospheric", dreamy landscape manner. The Biblical scenes are drawn with intensity using strong colors, a dark background, and well-defined edges which are enclosed in a stylistized stencil-work frame.

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Sacred Heart reflects the Late Gothic Revival style in the exterior use of predominantly English Gothic antecedents, the masonry construction, and stone tracery. The Gothic Revival is a popular style for Omaha churches however most examples are less distinguished and lacking the verticality of Sacred Heart. Trinity Cathedral (1880-83), the only other Gothic Revival church in Omaha currently listed in the National Register, is a gem of the style. Sacred Heart is a more modest product of the style, but has its own attributes, including the larger scale which allow more vertical emphasis in the design of the nave, tower, and spire, and a more prominent chapel. Sacred Heart is a landmark in its neighborhood and in Omaha where it has been named a Landmark through the Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance.

Architects George L. Fisher and Harry Lawrie designed the three principal buildings (the church and the two schools), an unusual occurrence in a complex of buildings. Both men were Kountze Place residents and had a long history as early Omaha architects. Both came to Omaha in the 1880's to join the office of Louis Mendelssohn and practiced in the city for nearly fifty years.

Michigan-born George L. Fisher (1856-1931) graduated from the University of Michigan in 1880 with a degree in civil engineering. Two years later he moved to Omaha to join the architectural firm of Dufrene and Mendelssohn as a draftsman. After Dufrene's death, Fisher became a full partner in 1885.

Harry Lawrie (ca. 1858-1935) had nine years of professional experience in Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland, before immigrating to Chicago in 1883 to enter the office of Burnham and Root. He moved to Omaha in 1887 to join Louis Mendelssohn and George L. Fisher as a full partner.

Mendelssohn, Fisher, and Lawrie was a prestigious firm which designed a variety of prominent buildings in Omaha's building boom of the 1880's and early 1890's. Many of these early buildings have not survived. Mendelssohn left in 1893, and the partnership of Fisher and Lawrie continued until 1913. The partners were agile designers working in a variety of building types and styles. Their buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places include Old University Library, Lincoln; Hotel Howard, Old Market Historic District, Omaha; Withnell-Barton House, Omaha; and Storz House, Omaha. Fisher and Lawrie were prominent designers in the architectural history of eastern Nebraska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

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