

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

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUN 18 1986

date entered 7-17-86

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

1. Name

historic St. Joseph Parish Complex NeHBS No. D009: 0116-003

and/or common St. Joseph Church

2. Location

street & number 1730 South 16th Street N/A not for publication

city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 055

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	NA in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name St. Joseph Parish Community

street & number 1730 South 16th Street

city, town Omaha NA vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

street & number 1819 Farnam Street

city, town Omaha state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title 1984 Omaha/Douglas County Historic Building Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 - ongoing federal state county local

depository for survey records Omaha City Planning Department & Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Omaha/Lincoln state Nebraska

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Designed to accommodate the diverse needs of a large Roman Catholic parish, St. Joseph Church complex consists of buildings which serve as a church, residential quarters for the clergy and school facilities. Four contributing buildings comprise the complex: a 1915 church; a 1896 friary; a 1901 school/convent and a 1928 school. Also situated on parish property which covers most of a full block area, two additional buildings – a school and a gymnasium, both constructed in 1965 – are considered non-contributing because of their recent date. Situated in a residential neighborhood south of the city's central business district, contributing buildings are well maintained and survive in generally good condition. The church and rectory continue their historic use; the 1928 school is currently used for classrooms for a non-parish group and the 1901 school/convent now serves as a retreat center. Built to plans produced by Franciscan architects Brother Adrian Wewer and Brother Leonard Darscheid and subject to relatively few major alterations, the church, friary and school/ convent are good local examples of the Romanesque Revival architectural style. The school – designed by Omaha architect Jacob Nachtigall in the Jacobethan Revival style – exhibits somewhat less architectural integrity due to interior and exterior modifications.

GENERAL:

Composed of six buildings, two of which are non-contributing, the St. Joseph Church complex is located between 16th and 17th Streets on the east and west, and Hickory and Center streets on the north and south. Except for two houses on privately owned lots, parish buildings fill the entire block. Contributing buildings include the church (1915); friary (1896); school/convent (1901); and a second school building completed in 1928. Considered non-contributing are a gymnasium added to the 1928 school in 1965 and a grade school building also constructed in 1965. The church and friary continue their historic use as a house of worship and living quarters for parish clergy. The school/convent now serves as a retreat center, and the grade school is vacant.

Sloping upward from 16th Street, the complex property is sited along the crest of a high bluff approximately two miles from the city's central business district. Surrounding the red brick parish buildings are one-and two-story frame residences generally dating from the first 30 years of the neighborhood's beginnings in the 1880's.

Aligned parallel to Center Street, the church and attached friary occupy the complex's southern perimeter. The church faces 17th Street on the west, the friary 16th Street on the east. The school/convent is also oriented along 17th Street, approximately 70 feet to the north of the church. Occupying the center section of the church property, the school faces the north wall of the church and friary; a secondary facade is located on 16th Street on the east.

The two non-contributing buildings, the 1965 gymnasium and grade school, are situated to the north of the complex's original buildings. The gymnasium extends from the back (north) wall of the 1928 school while the grade school is located in the northeast corner of the parish property oriented toward 16th Street.

Enclosed by chain-link fencing, trees and a strip of lawn buffer the church and friary from the street on the south; asphalt parking and playground areas lie to the north, linking all of the buildings in the complex.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				ethnic

1896 - Friary; 1901 - School/Convent

Specific dates 1915-Church; 1928-School **Builder/Architect** Church: Brother Leonard Darscheid
 Friary & School/Convent: Brother Adrian Wewer
 School: Jacob Nachtigall

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecturally significant as local products of the Romanesque Revival, St. Joseph Church was designed by Franciscan architect Brother Leonard Darscheid in 1915 and the attached friary was built in 1886 to plans by Brother Adrian Wewer, who also designed the convent/school in 1901. The Romanesque group of parish buildings also derive significance for their ethnic associations, reflecting the historical origins of the architectural style, the national background of the German Franciscan architects and the cultural traditions of the Roman Catholic congregation, organized as Omaha's second German national church in 1886. Of the four Omaha churches that were at one time under the administration of the Franciscans, only St. Joseph and Immaculate Conception have retained historic structures; moreover, the buildings at St. Joseph's are the city's only remaining examples of the work of Franciscan provincial architects.

A later addition to the complex — the school building constructed in 1928 to plans prepared by Omaha architect Jacob Nachtigall — contributes to the complex on the basis of its historical associations, reflecting the important role of education in the history of the parish community.

PARISH HISTORY:

Soon after his appointment in 1859, Rt. Rev. James O'Gorman, the first Roman Catholic Vicar of Nebraska, initiated efforts to minister to Omaha's German-speaking Catholics. Bishop O'Gorman ordained the German-born priest Father Otto Groenebaum in 1867 and one year later the pastor and a small group of German parishioners at the predominantly Irish St. Philomena's Cathedral organized a new congregation. Located at 17th and Douglas Streets, St. Mary Magdalene's Church was consecrated in 1868 as the first Catholic Church in the state with a distinctly national character. (Martin, p. 100)

By 1880, Omaha's immigrant population had grown to include more than one third of the city's total population numbering about 30,000. According to census data, Germans comprised the largest group of Omaha's foreign-born residents. (Fimple, pp. 5, 39 - 40) Reflecting this demographic trend, St. Mary Magdalene's Church counted more than 200 families as members by the early 1880's. To ease crowded facilities and to expand the church's mission to include the growing German and Polish settlement south of the city's central district, in 1884 Father George Glauber purchased the lots which constitute the present St. Joseph's Church property on Center Street for \$10,000.

Although the church land had been platted as part of Hartman's Addition in 1867, the area remained relatively undeveloped and was described by parishioners as "the site out in the wilderness without street car and viaduct connection with the city proper." However by the mid 1880's, increasing commercial and industrial development at the city's center brought residential development to Omaha's southern district. German immigrants were among the area's earliest residents. In general, Germans did not tend to cluster in clearly-defined neighborhoods, but south of the railroad tracks crossing 16th Street German Catholics formed an identifiable settlement. Poles were also located near the church site and were active in the parish's early organization before establishing their own permanent church, Immaculate Conception at 24th and Bancroft Streets.

Work on the first St. Joseph's Church began in 1886. Situated on the present site of the 1901 school/convent, the two-story frame building combined a church proper on the upper floor with a school in the basement and a room serving as the priests' residence at the rear of the structure.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. 1.7

Quadrangle name Omaha - South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	2	5	3	8	4	0	4	5	6	9	5	4	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 81 & 82, Hartman Addition, and Tax Lot 48, Section 27, Township 15, Range 13, Douglas County, Nebraska, which includes all historically related property.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lynn Bjorkman, City Planner

organization Omaha City Planning Dept., Suite 1110

date April, 1986

street & number 1819 Farnam Street

telephone (402) 444-4927

city or town Omaha

state NE 68183

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

James A. Johnson

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date June 10, 1986

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for *Allores Byer*

Keeper of the National Register

date 7-17-86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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CHURCH:

Joined with the back wall of the friary at its east end, the present 1915 St. Joseph's church building was constructed on the foundation of a 1896 basement church designed by Brother Adrian Wewer. Brother Leonard Darscheid completed plans for the current church structure; O. F. Nelson was the builder. Construction costs are listed as \$40,000 on the building permit. It is not known how the original foundation was altered to accommodate the new structure, but one source has indicated that the walls up to the level of the first floor, including the paired sets of basement windows, were retained from the first building (Wichert, interview). On the exterior, the church's base is pargeted with concrete up to this level giving some evidence to support this theory.

Measuring approximately 150 x 80 feet, the rectangular red brick structure rises to an apex of about 75 feet above ground level at the ridge of the steeply pitched gabled roof. Solid masonry walls on continuous footings support the roof which is structured by a hybrid system combining a metal truss and purlins with wood rafters. Asphalt shingles cover the roof surface; six small gabled dormers are positioned on the roof's slopes.

The church's interior plan consists of a nave without transepts; arcaded side aisles; a semi-circular apse; a projecting chapel and sacristy; a choir/organ loft opposite the sanctuary and an entrance vestibule. On the exterior, the ends of both side aisles are recessed from the facade and each aisle is covered by a pitched roof. The aisle height allows for a clerestory of approximately 24 feet. Side aisle windows are tall and round-arched with trefoil tracery. Buttress-like pilaster strips mark aisle bays containing one window each. North and south clerestory walls are pierced by groupings of two and three round-headed windows arranged between pilaster strips defining bays. Pilaster strips extending the full height of the facade support an arcaded corbel table. A similar configuration enriches wall tops on each of the other three elevations — including those of the aisles and rounded apse.

Cut into the facade, three identically scaled round-arched portals open to a vestibule. The original wooden doors and window frames have been replaced by glass and metal doors surmounted by black glass panels decorated on the two end portals with gold cross designs. In the arched space above the center door is a depiction of the Christ child with St. Joseph and the church name. Above the central entrance, limestone trim defines a gable-like feature supporting a stone cross. A bank of windows lights the choir loft and centered farther up the facade is a rose window traceried in a flower motif.

Although the church was built with a central bell tower, a wood model of the building (reported to pre-date the church's construction) varies from the actual structure with the addition of two matched bell towers flanking the facade. As depicted by the model, the massive masonry towers were proposed to rise high above the building's roofline. Father Hagedorn's narrative on the history of the parish notes that construction of intended "steeple" was postponed due to high cost. (Hagedorn, p. 537) The frame bell tower that was built to Brother Darscheid's drawings straddled the roof ridge near the church's west wall. A partially open structure with pairs of round-arched pillars supporting gables and terminating in a spire, the tower was removed in 1952, replaced by a large Latin cross.

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Stylistically, the monochromatic brick, the use of semi-circular arches for window and door openings, and especially the round arch form repeated on a smaller scale in the corbel tables, associate the building with the American Romanesque Revival. Other aspects of the style evident in the design of St. Joseph's are small roof dormers; slightly projecting buttresses; broad and smooth wall surfaces; and the two-tower facade (as delineated in the model). The helm roof design of the intended towers resembles stylistic antecedents in German Romanesque churches, such as those at Limburg and Cologne.

The church's interior closely relates to the exterior in terms of its Romanesque aspects. The nave's plastered ceiling is composed of four cross-vaulted bays with semi-circular ribs. Cross vaulting is also used to span side aisles, two vaulting bays being equal to one of the nave. Side aisle arcades are also round-arched; additional cross vaulting structures the sanctuary and choir/organ loft. A blind arcade — mimicking the form of the corbel tables on the exterior — travels the length of the nave below the clerestory windows. At the church's east end an ornately-carved gilded wood altar fills the apse. Smaller side altars unified with the center altar through a semi-circular arch motif, front the wall that terminates the nave. The apse wall is embellished with stylized gold star-like figures painted over a blue field. Scenes from the life of St. Joseph are chronicled in leaded and painted glass windows on the ground level; historical Franciscan figures are depicted in the clerestory windows.

The entire church has been carefully maintained and retains a high degree of its original structural and architectural integrity. The removal of the bell tower and modern replacement doors and windows at the front entry represent the primary changes in the structure's 1915 design.

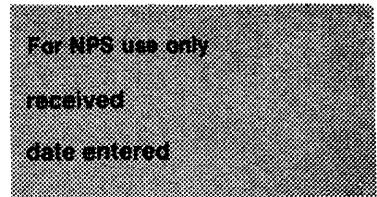
RECTORY:

Measuring approximately 85 x 60 feet, the rectory, an L-shaped structure facing 16th Street, was built as a Franciscan friary in 1896. When the present church structure was constructed in 1915, the west wall of the friary was joined to the east end of the church. Brother Adrian Wewer, Franciscan provincial architect, drew plans for the friary and for a basement structure designed as a temporary church facility. The priests' residence and basement church were constructed concurrently and were probably attached; a building permit lists their combined cost at \$18,000. Plans for the buildings no longer exist, but a photograph of the basement church shows similarities to the friary in its use of masonry and round-headed windows.

Apart from changes in the structure's west wall, the rectory's general appearance and form survive without extensive alteration. Two stories over a raised basement, the building is sheltered by a hipped roof; a central gabled pavilion projects from the principal facade. Rectangular windows at the basement level and round-headed windows on the first and second stories are ranked symmetrically across the facade and south elevation. Second floor windows appear as originally installed — double-hung with two-over-two lights. The round arches of the first floor windows have been framed-in to accommodate modern stock replacements. Technically, the building utilizes a system of interior and exterior load-bearing walls. Wood joists span between bearing walls to structure floors. The shingled roof is supported by a hybrid system of dimensioned wood rafters, timber girders and timber posts.

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Extending from the facade's central pavilion, a barrel-vaulted entry-way provides passage from street level to the rectory's central interior stairway. Leading up to the first floor, the stairway opens on a wide hall which services small rooms, each with direct access to the hall. The hallway also provides access to the church at each of the rectory's three floors. In plan, the first and second floors are similarly arranged. A second stairway furnishes interior vertical circulation while a first floor door on the south elevation permits access to the fenced yard area.

Centered on the facade in alignment with the peak of the pavilion gable, a molded brick arch springs from pilaster strips to frame a large window which lights the central stairway. The round arch is surmounted by a carved stone ornamental tablet incised with a cross, shield and the date of the friary's construction. The tablet serves as the base of a niche flanked by narrow round-arched windows. Above the niche a traceried round-arched window and two small loophole windows pierce the wall of the gable end.

A sandstone water table encircles the building; dressed stone also trims window sills and forms the lintels of the basement level windows. Buff brick patterned with diagonal markings creates the illusion of surface texture; unmarked brick header courses laid at regular intervals create a subtle banding effect.

At the corners of the building, brick pilaster strips support an arcaded corbel table which traverses across the top of the structure's walls and follows the raking eaves of the central gable. This feature, in addition to the round arches of the window and door openings, associate the structure most closely with the Romanesque Revival style, though the building's form and massing suggest a more neo-classically inspired idiom.

Apart from window and door modifications, the historical and architectural integrity of the friary has been preserved.

THE SCHOOL/CONVENT:

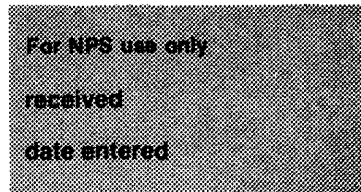
Built to provide classrooms for school students and living quarters for the parish sisters who staffed the school, the red brick two-story school/convent building features a raised basement, full attic and measures approximately 64 x 34 feet. Plans for the structure were prepared by Brother Adrian Wewer. A building permit for the project was applied for in April of 1901; the dedication of the building took place in the fall of the same year. According to the permit, the building cost \$8,000 with Fred Rauber listed as the builder. A flat-roofed brick addition measuring approximately 15 x 34 feet was appended to the rear of the structure in 1904.

A hipped roof — covered by asphalt shingles and supported by dimensioned wood rafters — shelters the school building. Two gabled dormers on the roof's front slope and one on each side slope provide light and ventilation to the attic. Technically, the building uses a system of interior and exterior load bearing walls. Wood joists span between bearing walls to structure floors.

A gabled central pavilion projects from the building's principal facade and contains a large round-arched entrance composed of dark red molded brick. A central stairway leads from the entrance down to the basement and up to the main floor, second floor and attic. Rooms on each floor open off a large central hallway; except for the addition of bathrooms on the main floor, original room partitions appear generally intact. Original interior details remaining include: bead board wainscoting; pressed metal ceilings and ornately patterned door hardware.

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In addition to the principal entrance, three doors occur in the 1904 addition providing access to the basement (at the back), and the main and second levels (on the south). Each of the south doors open to a frame porch linked by an exterior wood stairway.

Side elevation windows are segmentally arched, double-hung and contain four-over-four lights; rectangular windows are cut into the original walls at the basement level. On the facade, first floor windows are segmentally arched and on the second floor they are round-arched. The door and window placement in the facade's central pavilion breaks the symmetry of the building's overall design. Granite steps lead up to the raised central entrance positioned mid-way between the basement and first floor levels. The round-arched windows which light the interior stairwell are located between the first and second floor levels. Centered in the gable end, a small round-arched window lights the attic.

Coursed quarry-faced stone clads the raised basement while dressed stone trims window sills. On either side of the entrance arch, round stone panels display the school's date (A.D. 1901) and a stone tablet directly above the entrance arch bears the school name. As in the friary, the tablet forms the base of a recessed round-arched niche.

Brick pilasters at the corners of the building and on the facade support a corbel table which runs under the structure's molded cornice. Arcaded corbeling occurs under the eaves of the pavilion's gable end. Like the friary, the school's form and massing suggest neo-classical stylistic tendencies; however, the corbeling, round-arched windows and especially the round-arched entrance associate the building more closely to the Romanesque Revival style.

In addition to modern window replacements, a new door arrangement and fiberglass canopy at the principal entrance constitute the primary changes in the school's original exterior. Overall, historic and architectural integrity remain high.

SCHOOL:

A two-story rectangular red brick structure measuring 148 x 99 feet, the complex's largest building was completed in the fall of 1928 to plans by Jacob Nachtigall. According to the building permit, John Soderberg was the general contractor with the total cost listed at \$100,000. Technically, a system of interior and exterior load bearing walls on poured concrete footings supports the school building. Reinforced concrete beams structure floors and the flat composition roof.

In plan, the building featured a double-loaded longitudinal corridor on each floor around which classrooms and activity rooms were arranged. A central entrance on the principal (south) elevation and two doors on the secondary (east) elevation provided major access to the interior. A large section of the structure's interior space on both floors was occupied by an auditorium, but in 1965, a major remodeling reorganized the auditorium into classrooms and generally modernized the entire interior space. Also at this time, the gymnasium was appended to the north wall of the school and windows in the northern section of the east elevation were blocked in. The main entrance on the east facade was also enclosed and modified in 1965.

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Though the plan has been noted as rectangular, in elevation, wall projections from the structure's principal mass tend to create a more complex visual effect: windowless end pavilions extend about 10 feet from the principal facade; on the east, an area greater than half of the total elevation projects from the plane of the rectangular mass. The walls of the structure on three elevations extend up beyond the flat roofline to form parapets. Parapets that top the pavilion walls are shaped in a triangular motif. A band of glazed brick encircles the structure at the roofline; ornamental brickwork forms panels and plaque-like designs on the walls and parapets.

In terms of style, the school building is most closely associated with the Jacobethan Revival, a period revival style that became popular locally for educational buildings after 1910. Evidence of the style is apparent around the doors in the tabs of cut stone that project into the brickwork providing a quoin-like effect and in the Tudor arches used in door surrounds. Also characteristic of the style are the building's stone trimmed rectangular windows and shaped parapets.

Due to both interior and exterior alterations, the school's architectural and historical integrity have been diminished.

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Due to administrative problems that had arisen within the church concerning a property dispute and the removal of a popular priest, in 1894 Bishop Richard Scannell transferred authority for the parish to the Sacred Heart Province of Franciscan Fathers based in St. Louis. Beginning in Germany in the 1870's, policies against Roman Catholics resulted in the dispersion of many Westphalian Franciscans to the U.S. Especially eager to serve German and Polish-speaking congregations, the Franciscans became recognized as a leading church-building society by the American Catholic hierarchy. Franciscan priests had been active in the Nebraska vicariate, especially among the Germans and Poles in Platte and Madison counties since 1877. (Martin, pp. 158 - 161)

Finding a congregation of more than 200 families upon their arrival at St. Joseph's, the Franciscan priests under the leadership of Rev. Mauritius Baukholtz organized a building program. The province architect, Brother Adrian Wewer, prepared plans for a friary and a temporary basement church facility. Excavation for the church began in the spring of 1896 and the structure was completed in less than five months. The priests' residence was ready for occupancy in October. A building permit for the friary and church lists the Franciscans as builders and the project's cost at \$18,000.

With the completion of the basement church, the original frame parish building was fully converted for use by the school which had been in operation in the building's basement since 1887. When the Rev. Pacificus Kohlen assumed pastoral duties in 1900, the school had already outgrown its converted quarters. Kohlen relocated the frame building and on its former site directed the building of a two-story brick schoolhouse designed by Brother Wewer. This building was also used as a residence for the Sisters of the Precious Blood, the order who operated the school.

Religious services were held in St. Joseph's basement church for more than 20 years. In 1914, Father Kohlen initiated a building program to finish the church. Brother Leonard Darscheid, provincial architect, completed plans for the structure in the spring of 1915 and on January 30, 1916 the first mass was celebrated in the new building. Omaha architect and St. Joseph parishioner Jacob Nachtigall collaborated with Brother Leonard on the church's design. Nachtigall's name is listed with Darscheid's on the building permit, though the extent of his work on the project is not known.

When Rev. Timothy Magnien was installed as pastor in 1924, St. Joseph parish numbered 280 families with more than 300 students enrolled in the school. The urgent need for improved school facilities had long been recognized by the congregation, and in 1928 Jacob Nachtigall was commissioned to draw up plans for a new building. The school was opened for classes in the fall of that year.

Major building activity in the parish did not resume again until 1965 when the Omaha Archdiocese remodeled the 1928 school building. Concurrently, the gymnasium was added to the facility and the school was re-organized by the Archdiocese as Pope Paul VI. High School. Also at this time, the Archdiocese constructed the new grade school for the parish. In 1982 the parish grade school was closed and the following year the Archdiocese closed the high school.

St. Joseph parish continues under the administration of the Franciscan Fathers. Parishioners of German heritage still comprise about 60 percent of the church's current membership of 300 families.

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SIGNIFICANCE:

The designs of Brothers Wewer and Darscheid for St. Joseph Church, friary and school/convent are significant architecturally as local adaptations of the Romanesque Revival, a style which became popular for American churches in the mid-19th century. The round-arched medieval style was brought to the United States principally from Germany where a Romanesque revival had been flourishing since about 1830. (Whiffen, pp. 196 - 197) The German national background of the Franciscan architects links them directly to this tradition. The style also reflects the cultural heritage of the parish congregation.

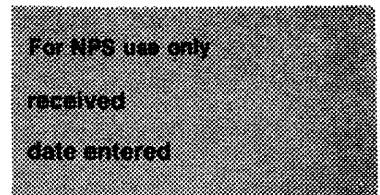
The buildings at St. Joseph's also hold significance as the city's only remaining examples of work by Franciscan provincial architects. Four Omaha churches were at one time under the authority of the Franciscan Friars of the Sacred Heart Province. It is probable that Brother Adrian Wewer prepared plans for either one or both of the early churches (1902, 1909) built for the St. Francis of Assisi congregation. St. Paul's Church burned one year after it was constructed in 1895 and its architect is unknown. In 1896 Brother Wewer designed a combination church, school and clergy residence for the newly organized Immaculate Conception parish and in the same year St. Joseph's basement church was built to his plans. Except for the St. Joseph friary and convent/school, none of Brother Wewer's Omaha designs survive. St. Joseph Church is the only known building locally to have been designed by Brother Darscheid. In addition to architects and builders, Franciscan craftsmen have also played a role in the design of St. Joseph Church. Altars, the work of the order's woodcarvers in Germany, were installed around 1920; and in 1962, Franciscan artisans decorated the church apse wall.

According to Franciscan archives, Brother Adrian Wewer (1836-1914) was born in Harsewinkel, Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1860. Described as a "carpenter by trade", Wewer's skills were put to use by the order in building and designing churches, schools and friaries throughout the Sacred Heart Province centered in the Midwest. Father Eugene Hagedorn in his definitive history of the Franciscans in Nebraska notes that Brother Wewer was responsible for the designs of a number of late 19th Century ecclesiastical buildings in Nebraska, including: St. Bonaventure's Monastery (1877) and Church (1883) in Columbus; St. Francis of Assisi School at Humphrey (1893); and two churches for St. Joseph's parish in Platte Center (1884, 1889). Wewer left the province in 1906 for San Francisco where he restored a Franciscan church and friary damaged by the earthquake. Remaining on the west coast, the architect built churches in Sacramento, Oakland, Phoenix and Los Angeles. (Franciscan Archives)

Brother Darscheid is known to have produced plans for a number of the state's Franciscan church and school buildings: St. Mary's in Grand Prairie (1925); St. Michael's Church (1899) and school (1910) in Tarnov; and the St. Francis Monastery in Humphrey (1912). Hagedorn states that Darscheid worked as an assistant — "...cut(ting) out the wooden arch frames..." — on the St. Joseph's basement church designed by Brother Wewer. (Hagedorn, p. 536) From this information, it appears that Darscheid may have trained under Wewer and then followed him as provincial architect. Although most of Darscheid's work is located in the Midwest, he did collaborate with Brother Adrian in preparing plans for St. Joseph's Church in Los Angeles in 1899. Leonard Darscheid was born in Moselweis, Germany in 1858 and died in Omaha in 1944. (Franciscan Archives)

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Though the extent of his work on the project is not known, Omaha architect Jacob Nachtigall assisted Brother Leonard in the planning of St. Joseph Church. In 1928 Nachtigall, a St. Joseph parishioner, was commissioned to prepare plans for the parish school. A local adaptation of the Jacobethan Revival style, the school contributes to the complex on the basis of its historical associations, reflecting the important role of education in the history of the parish community. The building also holds importance as an example of the work of an Omaha architect who designed a number of churches and schools for the city's Roman Catholic parishes.

Born in Germany, Joseph Nachtigall (1875-1949) immigrated to the United States at the age of eight in 1883. After working as a draftsman for the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in 1898, Nachtigall joined the office of Thomas Kimball. In 1889, he started his own practice and is credited with designs for Duchesne College, St. Joseph's Hospital, the original Father Flanagan's Boys Town building, and Our Lady of Lourdes Church, all in Omaha. In 1919, Nachtigall designed St. Bonaventure Church in Raeville, Nebraska — a particularly fine example of the German Romanesque tradition. In 1926 he produced plans for Immaculate Conception Church, an Omaha Franciscan Church which resembles St. Joseph in form and style. (Omaha Architects File)

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