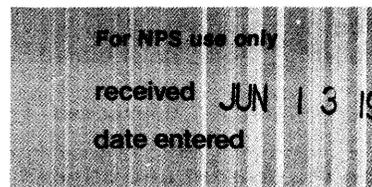


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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



1. Name

historic Saints, Peter & Paul Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 27 Bartlett Street N/A not for publication

city, town Lewiston, N/A vicinity of congressional district

state Maine code \_\_\_\_\_ county Androscoggin code 001

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Society of Dominican Friars

street & number 27 Bartlett Street

city, town Lewiston, N/A vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Maine 04240

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Androscoggin County Registry of Deeds

street & number

city, town Auburn, state Maine 04210

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? N/A yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

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

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

Saints Peter and Paul Church in Lewiston is a 20th century "Gothic Cathedral", 316 feet long, 110 feet wide, with two 167 foot towers at its east end (the facade), and seating <sup>for</sup> over 2,200. Faced completely with rough-hewn grey granite from Jay, Maine (515 wagon loads), and tawny-colored ornament and tracery of Indiana limestone, the church dominates industrial Lewiston's French-Canadian tenements in the way of its European counterparts.

The church structurally consists of a steel frame with brick reinforcement, and self-supporting granite in the outer walls. The roofs of the nave, chancel, and transepts are faced with polychromatic slate, and those of the aisles with copper. Limestone is used as a major building element in the east front, particularly in the portals, towers, and around the rose. Its use in the remainder of the building is confined to window tracery and a few decorative bands and medallions. The eight spires of the towers are of solid limestone, but partial decay caused them to be sheathed in lead in the 1940's.

There is no interior vaulting, except for false stucco vaulting in the aisles and crypt (lower church). The roof of the nave is curved, reflecting the actual structure of the steel framing.

The church was designed after an early English or Norman cathedral, a "chiseled" mode of Gothic emphasizing solid mass which conveniently echoes the "Art Deco" aesthetic of the late 1920's-1930's (compare to Duke University Chapel, 1930-35). The walls purposely appear thick while the stained glass windows are preportionately quite small, and have very heavy tracery. The rose, designed by O'Connell himself and modeled after that of Chartres, is mostly tracery with small, quatrefoil lights. The small courses and sections of detail in the east front - between the portals and rose, above the rose, and within the center of the towers - appear shallow are are framed and counterbalanced by broad, plain, stony surfaces and by flinty, massy buttresses which undulate backward and upward to terminate in spires above the rose and towers.

Small statues in niches and tiny, intricately carved medallions are variously affixed to the outer walls. The east front holds seven limestone statues of saints, executed by the Sunbroco Company of Boston. Among other statues is one of St. Dominic on the west wall facing the Dominican monestary which adjoins the apse. The bas-relief over the main portal has St. Dominic accepting a staff from Peter and Paul. Dominican motifs abound in the interior as well, including the Dominican cross in flooring tiles and St. Dominic's Shield in a frieze below the cloistery windows.

The antechurch is completely embellished, walls and ceiling, in carved oak panelling. The oak woodwork here and throughout the church is stained to resemble more expensive wood. An ornate wooden screen separates antechurch from nave and supports the balcony. The nave's rounded ceiling is fitted with decorative terra-cotta tiles running in courses reminiscent of ribbing, and similar terra-cotta decoration adorns the walls around the cloistery windows. The walls below the cloistery, as well as the surface of the piers, are faced with blocks of plaster-like material meant to imitate stone.

Along the length of the nave hang gothicized electric light fixtures manufactured by F. G. Necker of New York. Necker was also responsible for the alter decorations. The alter itself is a huge piece of snow-white Italian marble, inlaid with onyx and other native marbles.

## 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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1905–1937 **Builder/Architect** Noël Coumont of Lewiston (lower church),  
T. G. O'Connell of Boston (upper church)

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

Saints Peter and Paul is the second largest church in New England, and the only one in Maine to be faithfully modeled after a Gothic cathedral. Begun in 1905 and completed in 1938, after a twenty-eight-year lapse in construction and the adoption of new plans, St. Peter & Paul was one of the last Gothic cathedral projects designed and completed in the United States. The church is also one of the nation's major Franco-American cultural monuments, a symbol of French aspirations within the American Catholic Church at a time of growing French militancy and awareness in American life generally.

Saint Peter's parish originally envisioned a cathedral-type church as a means to alleviate massive overcrowding. The original building of 1872 proved woefully inadequate for the huge influx of French-Canadian immigrants who manned Lewiston's factories in the growth period of the 1880's-90's. The original small church was progressively fitted with multi-level balconies, but soon these were filled to capacity. In 1889, Lewiston architect Jefferson C. Coburn submitted plans for an enlargement of the existing structure which closely conformed with its High Victorian Gothic architecture. The enlargement can in no way be considered "cathedral building". The plan was accepted and a brick foundation laid in 1894. But the project got no further, perhaps due to the discovery that the balconies had seriously weakened the walls of the existing church.

In 1900 another plan was submitted by French-Canadian architect Father Paul-Victor Charland, calling for a full "Gothic Cathedral" on the site of the presumably demolished old church. A cathedral-type church was seen as the most practical and lasting solution to the parish's growth, and there's no evidence that at this point the design was influenced by nationalistic sentiment. Although a model was constructed of the proposed church, the "Charland plan" never materialized. The parish was divided at the time over whether to build a single large church or split into a number of smaller parishes. The Bishop of Portland favored the former course, and ordered Lewiston pastor Mothon in Oct., 1904 to begin construction. A new set of plans was submitted by Belgian architect Noël Coumont (1859–1950), who was then residing in Lewiston. Bishop O'Connell was reportedly "overcome" by the beauty and grandeur of the proposed edifice, modeled after a late French cathedral, and gave Coumont the unprecedented title of "architect of the parish".

Work began on the basement of the new church in the fall of 1905. Coumont supervised construction until late that winter, when he was fired from the project upon the discovery that he had dug the foundation in the wrong direction. His plans were retained however; the old church was demolished that same year, and the basement, or crypt, was completed in Dec., 1906. The elaborate vaulted basement, where mass was destined to be said for most of the remaining century, is the only evidence of how Coumont's French cathedral would have appeared had the project gone forward.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Blueprints (at Church)  
"The Church of Saints Peter and Paul", parish flysheet  
Centenaire Album Souvenir (1971)  
Interview with Father Francois Drouin  
Interview with Mr. Donat Boisvert

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Lewiston

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

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

B                                
Zone Easting Northing

C                              

D                              

E                              

F                              

G                              

H                              

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Map #23B, 114-122 Ash Street

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

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gregory K. Clancey, Architectural Historian/ Frank A. Beard, Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Comm. date April, 1983

street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone 207/289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine 04333

## 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

title

S. H. P. O.

date

5/27/83

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

7/14/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

OMN 12/31/34  
EXP. 12/31/34

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SAINT PETER AND PAUL CHURCH  
Continuation sheet

Item number 7

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Adorning the transepts are a number of statues in white Vermont marble and Swiss hardwood. Marble statues of Mary and Joseph occupy the main alters. The wooden statues, by the Swiss sculpter Thoman, stand in niches. The latter were acquired in 1946.

The stained glass windows are particularly medieval-looking, having been executed with heavy leading and predominantly in red and blue shades. The motifs were planned by Father Francois Drouin, paster 1940-52, and the windows created by Terrance O'Duggan of Boston. Installation took place in 1948.

The balcony holds a Casevant organ, whose pipes are both in the balcony and in gothicized oak cabinets in the apse. The organ was supervised in construction and first tuned by Charles Courboin of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, and installed in 1938.

The north tower contains five bells. The south tower is empty.

Below the main church is the "sous-baissement" or "lower church", as the crypt is known to parishioners. This chamber runs the length and breadth of the main church and is about as lofty as one of its aisles. Constructed in 1905-07 from designs by Noël Coumont, the crypt differs from the main church in having a vaulted roof (stucco). The interior was originally quite ornate, repleat with carved wooden and stucco filligree. Most of this has been removed. The floors of the crypt were originally of hardwood, but were laid with terazzo in 1940. The chamber is lighted by stained glass windows of a cheaper design and material than those of the main church.

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SAINT PETER AND PAUL CHURCH

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

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The parish had been divided for the first time in 1902, and in 1907 it was divided again, diminishing much-needed building revenues. Although St. Peter's continued to grow for the next twenty years, divisions continually hampered construction plans, three more parishes having broken off by 1928. The period during and immediately after the construction of the crypt was also one of severe discord within the French community and Maine's Catholic Church over the selection of a new Bishop of Portland. Maine's Catholic Church hierarchy had always been Irish, with no French participation on the diocesan level. As the majority of Maine's Catholics were French-Canadian by 1906, the death of Bishop O'Connell that year prompted Jeanne-Baptist Coutier, the editor of the influential *Le Messager* newspaper, to begin editorializing for a French-Canadian Bishop. Coutier's editorials became so enflamed as to denounce Lewiston's French Dominicans for being in league with the Irish hierarchy, for which action he was "suspended" from the parish for life, tantamount to a local excommunication.

But the agitation for a French Bishop in Portland, or a split of the existing diocese along ethnic lines, was kept alive by the French-Canadian fraternal organizations, who largely molded public opinion. The cathedral project itself became a symbol of emerging French nationalism, a trend that had political and social manifestations as well as religious. It is probable, although unprovable, that Irish Bishop Walsh, O'Connell's successor, saw a cathedral-sized church in Lewiston as a threat to his own seat in Portland. Walsh was considered by Maine's French Catholics to be a notorious assimilator, and architect Coumont, whose plans had long before been accepted, fell into an "argument" with the Bishop when he re-introduced the plans in 1908. There followed a twenty-eight year period in which no construction was undertaken, and the parish was divided three times by the diocese.

By 1928 however, the parish had saved enough money to begin construction. The Coumont design had apparently been rejected, and a number of other firms were asked to submit plans. It is not known how many firms completed designs, only one losing drawing having surfaced, by the Portland firm of Miller, Mayo, and Beal. The winning design, by Boston architect T. G. O'Connell, was much less elaborate than Coumont's, harkening to the more brutalist (and then fashionable) early English-Norman stage of Gothic. O'Connell's plans were accepted in 1928, but not publically announced to the parish until 1933.

In April, 1934, Lewiston contractor Louis Malo's bid was accepted, and the cornerstone laid shortly thereafter. The exterior walls were completed in November, 1935, and the interior structure in July, 1936. The original plans called for a vaulted nave, but for economy's sake a rounded ceiling was substituted. The interior was finished and decorated by 1938. Fully half of the construction funds, amounting to between \$3-400,000., had been raised within the parish. The remaining debt for the same amount had been paid off by the end of the Second World War.

Ironically, mass is no longer said in the upper church because of exorbitant fuel costs. The lower church is again the place of daily and Sunday worship, as it was during the thirty-two years parishioners waited for their "cathedral" to be completed.