

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

For HCRS use only

received SEP 10 1980

date entered NOV 10 1980

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

1. Name

historic

and/or common St. Peter's and St. Joseph's Catholic Churches

2. Location

street & number 516 Brazeau Avenue and 705 Park Avenue ___ not for publication

city, town Oconto ___ vicinity of congressional district 8th

state Wisconsin code 55 county Oconto code 083

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 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	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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. Peter's Congregation, Rev. Robert Karuhn, Pastor

street & number 516 Brazeau Avenue

city, town Oconto ___ vicinity of state Wisconsin 54153

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Oconto County Courthouse

street & number Washington Street

city, town Oconto ___ vicinity of state Wisconsin 54153

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of
Historic Placeshas this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date 1975 and 1978

___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison ___ vicinity of state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearanceSt. Joseph's Church

The first St. Joseph's Catholic Church was constructed in 1870 as a small frame, clapboard-covered building, but was replaced by the present brick structure in 1895. The design consists of a gable-roofed rectangular basilica with a sanctuary in the polygonal apse at the west end. The cream brick walls, raised on a high rusticated stone foundation, are marked into bays by heavy brick buttresses and pointed-arch windows along the north and south sides. The east end is decorated with a medley of red brick pointed arches symmetrically distributed to either side of the heavy square tower. Entrance is gained through three double doors at the top of two runs of concrete stairs; contrasting cut stone courses and sills underline pointed-arch windows and arcading above. Additional polychrome in red brick corbel tables, striped bands, and trompe l'oeil "flying buttresses" on the sides of the tower enlivens the upper wall surfaces. A cross marks the peak of the asbestos-shingled pyramidal spire with its four engaged corner turrets. Alternating thin brick pilasters and arched louvred openings enclose the 1700-pound cast bell. An octagonal louvred lantern is set into the roof at the crossing of the gable roofs. A center aisle divides the nave in the interior; to either side, rows of pews provide seating, augmented by additional pews in the short arms of the crossing. Raised ornamental plaster work decorates the flat ceiling. Stencil work covers ribs framing the arched apse over the center altar. Stained glass windows in the images of saints were donated as patrons by various national groups in the parish at the time of construction.

St. Peter's Church

The original St. Peter's Catholic Church was also a small frame clapboard structure with a single spire, built in 1857. The present red brick Romanesque Revival structure was constructed in 1899. Like St. Joseph's, the plan is basilican, and the buttressed brick walls rise from a coursed stone foundation. The principle facade is composed of a two-story narthex/choir loft and tall center steeple. Two-story pilasters support arcading enclosing the round-arched lancet windows on the second story. Similar arcading on the tower is "raised" above the arched portal. Bands of interlaced brick arches underline the top of the steeple and the standing-seam metal roof to the sides of the tower; brick machicolation supports the belfrey. Four consoles rest on capitals topping the buttressed corners of the tower; a small polygonal metal spire rises from the low drum in the center. A corbel table and buttresses trim the pavilion behind the shallow gable roof over the center portal. Foliate columns support the inner-most arch in the jambs of the double doors. Only a low stone slab raises the entry above ground level. Inside, the continuous nave space is covered by a vaulted ceiling punctuated by corbel-trimmed ribs. Oculi light the polygonal apse. Rayonnant-style tracery fills the double windows along the side walls.

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 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 unity
Specific dates	1895 & 1899 ¹	Builder/Architect	Henry Foeller; Carlos C. Buck ²	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Catholic churches of Oconto are significant structures to the history and culture of the Oconto community. The proximity of two centers of the same faith was made possible by the major ethnic differences among the Catholic population. Ethnic disunity and tension, then, which paradoxically produced a counter-ethnic unity, was a contributor to the social development of Oconto. The two churches also exhibit marked contrasts in style representative of accomplished church architecture of the Victorian era.

Ethnic Unity. With its heritage going back to the era of the French fur traders, Oconto is one of the oldest settlements in Northern Wisconsin.³ It was not until 1857, however, that the Catholic Church established a parish for its communicants in Oconto. The original St. Peter's Church was the first such building in Oconto County, and early reflected the dominant French influence in social, as well as religious, matters.⁴ But as the population of Oconto grew, the number of Catholics without French ancestry grew with it, and tensions resulted: particularly onerous to the newcomers was the continued use of French in the services.⁵ In 1869, as the disagreements became critical, Father Mathias Schwebach arranged to take about 100 families and establish a new church. Most of the new congregation, which was named St. Joseph's, were of Dutch, Irish and predominantly German extraction.⁶ As nationalistic tensions had been important to the birth of the new church, the pastors of St. Joseph's were careful to avoid similar problems by holding services on successive Sundays in the English, Dutch, German, and Bohemian languages.⁷ The congregation at St. Peter's, in the meantime, was able to retain the French culture in their church until well into the twentieth century.⁸ Although the importance of ethnic associations has since diminished, the members of each congregation continue to remember their early history as a vital and living part of their religious and social heritage.

Architecture. Located in a community that has been noted for its beautiful churches,⁹ St. Peter's and St. Joseph's Catholic Churches stand out as visually significant structures. Both were built at about the same time, and were laid out on a basic basilican plan, but each differs greatly from the other in decoration and detail.

St. Peter's Church, which is the older congregation but the younger church by a slight margin, is composed of a basilican plan fronted by a two-story narthex and staged center tower. Appropriate as the worship house of its French-extracted communicants, the building is reminiscent of late French Romanesque churches of the Middle Ages. Noticeably more attenuated and vertical in form than its Gothic-style counterpart, the red brick monument is crisply constructed and detailed. The historical character of its round-arch windows, tympanum, and corbel tables is maintained in the ribbed barrel vault over the nave inside. Usually "correct" in its restrained sophistication, particularly as constructed in the small city of Oconto, the church is an impressive representative of ethnic and national influences.

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Centennial Jubilee, Oconto, 1957.
 Green Bay Press-Gazette.
 Henry H. Mening, The Catholic Church in Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1896.
 Homecoming: 80th Anniversary of St. Joseph's, Oconto, 1950.
 St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 1870-1970, Oconto, 1970

10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acres of nominated property 1/2
 Quadrangle name Oconto West, Wis.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

St. Peter's					
A	1 6	4 3 0 2 5 0	4 9 7 0 6 1 2 0	B	
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone Easting Northing
C				D	
E				F	
G				H	

Verbal boundary description and justification

St. Peter's - Block 6 of Pecors Addition to the city of Oconto, Wisconsin.
 St. Joseph's - see continuation sheet.

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

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Terry L. Shoptaugh, Historian, Historic Preservation Division
 organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date March 15, 1980
 street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 262-3390
 city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Richard Mewey

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 8/19/80

For HCERS use only

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

Forrest W. Ray date 11/10/80
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Susan Hunt McClelland* date 11.6.80
 Chief of Registration

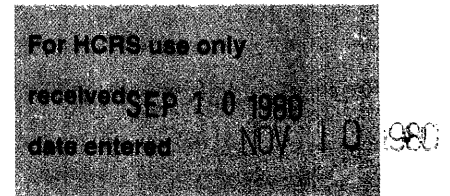
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St. Peter's and St. Joseph's Catholic Churches, Oconto, WI
Continuation sheet

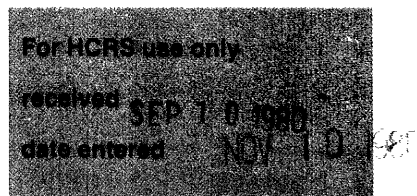
Item number 4

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St. Joseph's Congregation, Attn: Mrs. Joseph Augustine, representing congregation
705 Park Avenue
Oconto, Wisconsin 54153

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

In contrast, St. Joseph's Church, with its basilican plan and two-story narthex and center tower, is a burly interpretation of High Victorian Gothic Style. The polychromatic contrast of its cream brick walls with red brick arches, courses, corbel tables, and trompe l'oeil flying buttresses "supporting" the large square center tower, lend eccentricity to this manifestation of a national style rarely constructed in Wisconsin. With its buttressed walls, louvred lantern over the crossing, projecting apse at the east end, and heavy bartizaned tower, the building would be a monument in any city. The coloristic activity of the exterior is carried inside on ribs lining the altar apse.

Notes

- 1) St. Joseph's Catholic Church was constructed in 1870, but radically rebuilt in 1895, according to parish records. St. Peter's Catholic Church was established in a small wooden church in 1857, which was demolished and replaced by the present church in 1899, according to parish records.
 - 2) Parish records of the respective churches list Carlos Buck of Green Bay as the designer of the St. Joseph renovation, and Henry Foeller of Green Bay as the architect of the new St. Peter's Church.
 - 3) For an account of the early settlement of Oconto, see George E. Hall, A History of Oconto (1969).
 - 4) Henry H. Heming, The Catholic Church in Wisconsin (1896), p. 703-704.
 - 5) Centennial Jubilee of St. Peter's (1957), unpagged; St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 1870-1970 (1970), unpagged.
 - 6) Heming, p. 701-703; Tour of Historic Churches (1979), unpublished brochure. The new church was referred to as the "German Church;" see Oconto County Reporter, October 26, 1872.
 - 7) Homecoming: 80th Anniversary of St. Joseph's (1950), unpagged.
 - 8) Centennial Jubilee.
 - 9) See Green Bay Press-Gazette, September 23, 1979.
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: St. Joseph's Church

Acreage 1.0

Quadrangle Name Oconto East, Wis.

Scale 1:24000

UTM Reference: 16/431690/4971040

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 13-16 of Millidge's 2nd Addition to the City of Oconto, Wisconsin

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FORM PREPARED BY:

Diane H. Filipowicz, Architectural Historian, Historic Preservation Division
State Historical Society of Wisconsin March, 1980
816 State Street (608) 262-2970
Madison Wisconsin 53706