



Rev. Wilhelm Grutza.

1888 ORIGINAL CHURCH BUILT

St. Josaphat Parish is founded to serve a growing Polish immigrant community on the South Side of Milwaukee under the leadership of Rev. Wilhelm Grutza. The first church is destroyed by fire in less than a year.

1895 MONUMENTAL CHURCH DESIGNED

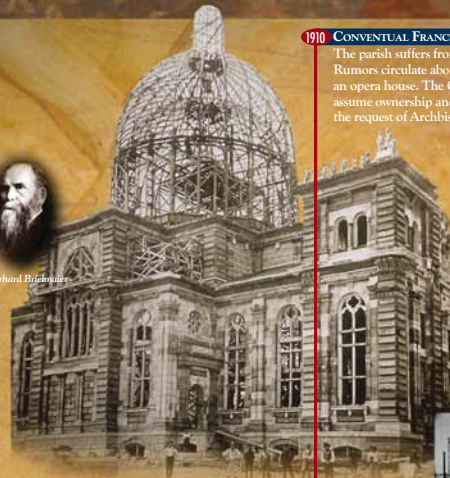
Father Grutza determines that the second church is too small for the rapidly growing community and hires architect, Erhard Brielmaier to design a large, monumental church. The original design called for a brick structure trimmed with terra cotta, modeled after St. Peter's in Rome.



Erhard Brielmaier

1897 CORNERSTONE IS LAID

Building of the great church begins, with parishioners assisting with excavation and mixing of concrete. To save money, Father Grutza acts as mason contractor for the project.



1910 CONVENTUAL FRANCISCANS ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY

The parish suffers from a staggering construction debt. Rumors circulate about the church being turned into an opera house. The Conventual Franciscan Friars assume ownership and pastoral care of the parish at the request of Archbishop Messmer.



Interior of dome before murals



Interior of dome after murals

1896 CHICAGO BUILDING SALVAGED

Upon learning that the U.S. Post Office and Custom House in Chicago, built 16 years before for \$4 million, was being demolished due to unstable construction, Father Grutza pays \$20,000 for the salvaged materials, which are transported to Milwaukee on 500 railroad flat cars. Brielmaier redesigns the plans to accommodate the dismantled Scioto sandstone building.



U.S. Post Office and Custom House, Chicago, Illinois



Original Plan

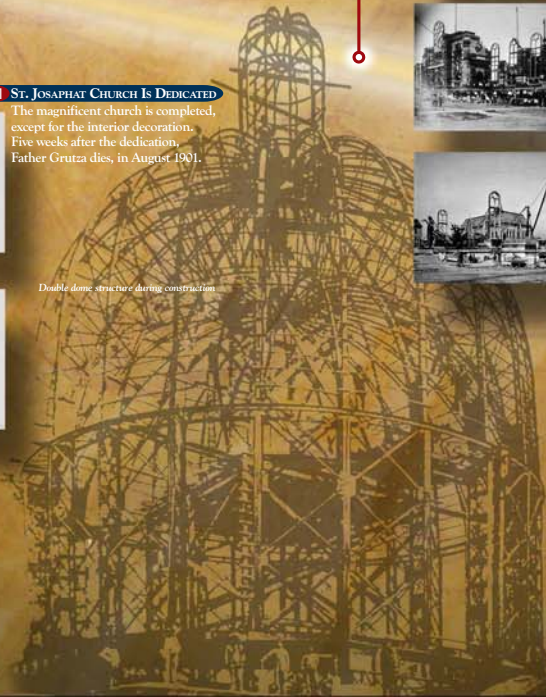


Redesigned Plan

1901 ST. JOSAPHAT CHURCH IS DEDICATED

The magnificent church is completed, except for the interior decoration. Five weeks after the dedication, Father Grutza dies, in August 1901.

Double dome structure during construction



Framing



Completed Church



Rev. Felix Baran, OFM Conv.

1926 CHURCH INTERIOR IS DECORATED

Rev. Felix Baran, OFM Conv., the pastor of St. Josaphat Parish, commissions Gonippo Raggi, a celebrated Italian artist to create dozens of murals. He also enlists Conrad Schmitt Studios of Milwaukee to paint the ornamental plasterwork.



Gonippo Raggi

1928 CHURCH IS CONSECRATED

Debt-free and finished at last, the church was consecrated in an elaborate ceremony on November 18, 1928 by Bishop Paul Rhode of Green Bay.

1929 CHURCH DECLARED A BASILICA

On March 10, 1929, Pope Pius XI declares St. Josaphat Church the third basilica in the United States. The ceremony of elevation took place on January 25, 1931, in the presence of His Eminence Samuel Cardinal Stritch, the Cardinal Archbishop of Chicago.

1991 The St. Josaphat Basilica Foundation is formed and undertakes a capital campaign for the restoration and renovation of this historic landmark.

2000 The Basilica of St. Josaphat celebrates the Holy Year of the Great Jubilee with the opening of the Pope John Paul II Pavilion.



Interior of sanctuary before murals



Interior of sanctuary after murals