

St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church, Church II
Cambria City Neighborhood
918 Broad Street
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5741-B

HABS
PA,
11-JOTO,
44-B-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: 918 Broad Street, Cambria City, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pa.

Description: The church measures 56' x 120'. Built of brick, there is a great variety of attractive brick and stone surface decoration. The front gable facade, which faces south, is dominated by an impressive stone rose window. The facade has horizontal bands of brickwork and blind arcading beneath the roof cornice. The principal entrance is flanked by columns surmounted by statues of St. Peter and St. Paul. The roof has pantiles. The church has six-bay side facades. The design of the windows in the aisles is the same as in the old St. Columba's church on Chestnut Street, narrow round-arched windows with stone voussoirs. The upper story has paired round-arched windows. St. Columba's Church was described by the architect as "an example of the Lombard Romanesque showing great restraint in design." The four-story tower on the west side "develops gradually from the square to an octagon top, giving a fresh note to this Italian style of tower."

The interior is divided into nave and side aisles with a gallery at the west end and semi-circular apse. There is a huge mural above the high altar painted by F.B. Lieftvcher in 1919. The nave has a barrel-vaulted ceiling. The windows have stained glass depicting a number of Irish saints, including St. Bridget and St. Patrick.

History: St. Columba's was predominantly an Irish parish when it was founded and is named after an Irish saint who established many monasteries in Ireland and abroad. The first church, built in 1888 on Chestnut Street, was badly damaged in the 1889 flood. A new church was needed but it was not until 1910 with the appointment of Fr. Condori as pastor that steps were taken to raise the necessary funds. Early in 1913 a design by the renowned church architect John T. Comes (1876-1922) of Pittsburgh was selected. On 26th October of that year the cornerstone was laid in an impressive ceremony, which attracted several thousand people. Inside the stone was placed a history of the parish, names of the rectors, assistants and committees, the names of the present church committee, copies of newspapers, pieces of money, and other articles. The estimated cost of construction was \$75,000 but the end figure was approximately \$93,000. The contractor was Linton Overderff, and the structure was completely paid for in four years. The church was ready for occupancy and dedication in 1914.

Sources:

The Catholic Register (17 April 1938 and 23 November 1987).

Comes, John T., Catholic Art and Architecture (1920).

Kervick, Francis W. Architects in America of Catholic Tradition (1962).

Kory, William. "The Churches of Johnstown Pennsylvania Population Survey", (University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, 1972).

Johnstown Tribune-Democrat, 21 November 1987.

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Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). An overview of history of the city (HABS No. PA-5669) and an overview of the neighborhoods of Cambria City and Minersville (HABS No. PA-5672) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the downtown and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Bernadette Goslin in August 1988 under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, the supervisory historian of the project. Goslin's and other project historians' work was published as The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1989), edited by Kim E. Wallace. Illustrations in the publication include large format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe and 35 mm photographs taken by the project historians.