

The Church of the Sacred Heart is a historic Roman Catholic church in Freeport, Minnesota, which has a population of 563. The church was constructed from 1905 to 1906 as the third and largest building to house a congregation formed by the community's German American settlers in 1881. The Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places on July 12,1991 for its local significance in the theme of social history. It was nominated for demonstrating the central role played by the Catholic church in Freeport and many other communities settled by German immigrants. The Sacred Heart parish was originally part of a parish in New Munich, Minnesota. The heavily German-American community of Freeport asked the Diocese of St. Cloud for a priest to form their own parish, and Father Simplicius Wimmer arrived in response. Freeport's first church building was a wood-frame structure built in 1882, measuring 70 by 36 feet, with a rectory added in 1890. The parish outgrew this building and constructed a new one in 1896, which was a brick-veneered building measuring 154 by 66 feet and seating 1,000 people. The second building was completed at a cost of \$30,000 (equivalent to \$933,240 in 2020). The original wood building was donated to the parish of St. Rose and moved five miles north. The 1896 building was struck by lightning in 1904 and destroyed by fire. The parish immediately organized a rebuilding effort, and even the priest pitched in. The third building was even larger and more ornate than the second building, with a total construction cost of \$115,000 (equivalent to \$3,312,426 in 2020) by the time it was finished in 1906. It required 38 boxcar loads of brick for its construction.

The building is executed in a cruciform plan and exhibits features of both the Gothic Revival and Romanesque Revival Styles. Built on a raised, coursed, rough faced foundation of Mankato Sandstone, the church has walls made of St. Cloud brick decorated with buff-colored polished Mankato stone. The symmetrical building is dominated by a square steeple centered in the facade which enhances the verticality of the building. At the base is a portal with a pair of wooden doors and a stained glass transom flanked by Corinthian columns set in a stone pointed arch. Centered in the facade is a large stained glass rose window with tracery, below which are five pointed arch stained glass windows; above this Gothic opening is a statue of Christ in a pediment. Atop the first stage of the tower on three sides are black faced clocks. The tower is of a form common to both Gothic and Romanesque Styles, and features Gothic louvered windows which fill the octagonal second stage of the tower, which is brick and features a miniature tower at each corner and steeply pitched dormers below the octagonal spire and pinnacle. Flanking the tower on the west-facing facade are six tall, pointed arch stained glass windows with tracery set in recessed panels with a continuous polished stone sill. Two-tiered buttress support each corner of the building. Raised brick panels feature bands of Romanesque corbelling which accentuate the gable up to the raking parapet, which is capped with molded metal. The identical north and south elevations have two primary entrances (both covered by brick porches added in 1978). Above each entry into the narthex are two tall, narrow pointed arch windows. The remaining five bays of the nave are divided by brick buttresses with each bay containing a large stained glass window in a pointed arch. There is a corbelled table below each eave. Each transept gable is buttressed at the corners and contains a window of similar shape and design as the one in the tower. A fleche centered above the transept rises from the gable roof. The seven sided apse has a conical roof and four stained glass windows. Surrounding the lower half of the apse is a seven sided ambulatory featuring 2/2 double hung sash with segmental brick arches, and a service entrance with a modern overhead garage-style door in the raised foundation.

Although it was painted in 1979, the interior of the Church of the Sacred Heart retains its characteristic Gothic-inspired design. Walls are decorated with a variety of original stencil patterns that encircle most of the interior. The vaulted ceiling is painted sky blue and adorned with gilt detailing; rounded plaster ribs in an ivory tint terminate at capitals carried by round plaster columns. The stained glass windows on the north wall depict the Old Testament, while those to the south represent the New Testament. Other original decorative elements include wooden pews (constructed by Herman Hollerman of Melrose), the main altar, side altars, Stations of the Cross, and statues (installed in 1909). The building's finished basement features a decorative pressed metal ceiling. Sacred Heart Church retains good design integrity and is unaltered except for a few interior changes which include carpeted aisles and sanctuary, new lighting, a contemporary granite altar, and the installation of protective Lexan glass over the stained glass windows in 1979.

