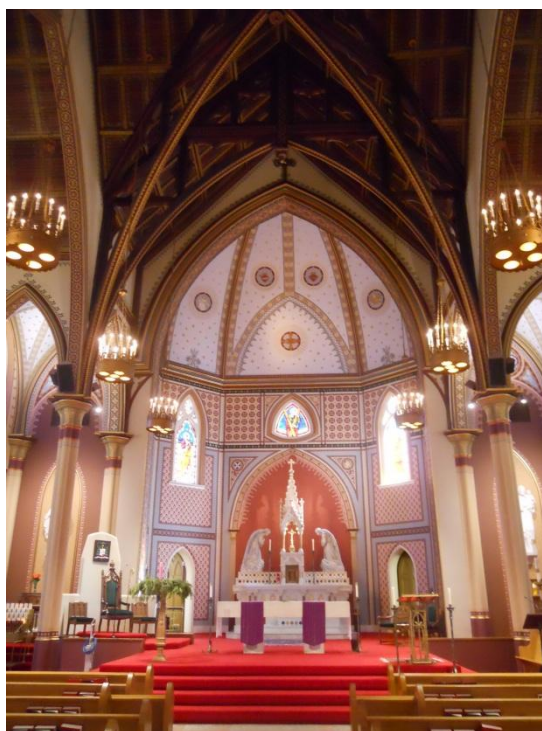


**Sandwiching in History**  
**Cathedral of Saint Andrew**  
**617 Louisiana, Little Rock**  
**January 10, 2014**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



**Intro**

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of the Cathedral of Saint Andrew! I’d like to thank a few people for their help with today’s tour—

Margie Pullam, docent chairman at the cathedral;

Shawn Hallman, church secretary;

Father Matthew Garrison, rector;

And Becky Witsell, whose company, Studio Werk, analyzed and recreated the church’s 19<sup>th</sup> century stenciling decoration and restored the Stations of the Cross (2004-2007).

This tour is worth one hour of continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects.

The cornerstone for the cathedral was laid on July 7, 1878, and the church was dedicated on November 27, 1881. St. Andrew's is the oldest place of continuing worship in Little Rock and is the mother church of the Diocese of Little Rock, which includes all Catholics in Arkansas. The cathedral was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

### **History of the Cathedral Parish**

Father Peter Donnelly, an Irish priest from the Diocese of St. Louis, said the first Catholic Mass in Little Rock in 1830 in a room above Dugan's Store at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Main streets. Father Donnelly later became the first resident Catholic priest in Little Rock; prior to that time, the city was served by priests traveling from St. Louis or New Orleans. In 1843 Pope Gregory XVI (16<sup>th</sup>) separated Arkansas from the Diocese of St. Louis and established the Diocese of Little Rock, which included all of Arkansas and at that time Indian Territory (until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). And on March 10, 1844, Andrew Byrne was consecrated as the first bishop of the Diocese of Little Rock.

Bishop Byrne purchased property at the northeast corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Center streets and in 1845 erected the first St. Andrew's Cathedral on that site. He consecrated the cathedral under the patronage of St. Andrew the Apostle, the brother of Peter and the first apostle called by Jesus. In order to promote Catholic education, in 1850 Bishop Byrne traveled to his native Ireland and secured a group of the Sisters of Mercy to serve in Arkansas. They arrived in Little Rock in 1851 and opened St. Mary's school for boys and girls. The convent and school soon relocated to the west side of the 600 block of Louisiana Street, where it remained until 1908, when a new building was completed in Pulaski Heights. At that time, the school was renamed Mount St. Mary Academy and became an all-female school.

Bishop Andrew Byrne died in 1862 in Helena, Arkansas, and was buried there in the garden at St. Catherine's Convent. Due to the Civil War, the Diocese of Little Rock had no bishop from 1862 until 1867, when Edward Fitzgerald became the second bishop of Little Rock. Interestingly, Fitzgerald refused the pope's initial offer of appointment to the Diocese of Little Rock and only accepted the offer after receiving a mandate from Pope Pius IX (9<sup>th</sup>). At the age of 32, Fitzgerald was the youngest bishop in the United States.

### **Cathedral of St. Andrew at 7<sup>th</sup> & Louisiana**

The congregation of St. Andrew's eventually outgrew the 1845 cathedral at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Center streets. Bishop Fitzgerald, along with Archbishop Patrick John Ryan, laid the cornerstone for a new cathedral at the northeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Louisiana streets on July 7, 1878. The Gothic Revival-style cathedral was designed by Little Rock architect and parishioner Thomas Harding, Sr. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the English Gothic Revival style was very popular, especially for churches, because it embraced medieval forms and details which drew the line of sight upward toward God and heaven.

Modeled after the cathedrals of Europe, St. Andrew's was laid out in the shape of a Latin cross with a nave (pews), transept (North-South cross-section), and apse (curved section behind the main altar). The congregation faces east toward the rising sun, which serves as a reminder that Jesus is the son of God and the light of the world. The church measures 140' x 86', and the walls are 36' high.

The second Cathedral of St. Andrew (this building) was constructed with native cypress and yellow pine and granite from nearby Fourche Mountain and cost more than \$70,000, most of which was raised by Bishop Fitzgerald outside of Arkansas. The church was dedicated on November 27, 1881. The *Arkansas Gazette* published a notice about the dedication ceremony, which read, "St. Andrew's Cathedral is the finest and stateliest ecclesiastical structure in the southwest and the imposing ceremonies of Sunday next will be in keeping with the solemn purpose for which it has been erected, and the great era which its

dedication marks is the history of the Catholic church in this region. Admission to the morning ceremonies will be by ticket only, price \$1.”

Although the church was put into use by 1881, the steeple on its south tower was not completed until 1887. It has been said that Bishop Fitzgerald waited to finish the steeple until the 7-story Masonic Building at the northeast corner of Capitol and Main was completed in order to ensure that the cross on the steeple would be the highest point in Little Rock. However, the Masonic Building wasn't built until 1891-1892, so the steeple's construction delay may have been unrelated. Regardless, when the St. Andrew's steeple was completed in 1887, reaching a height of 220 feet, it was the tallest structure in Little Rock.

The tallest tower contains a 3,300-pound cast-iron bell, which was made in 1886 by the McShane Foundry in Baltimore, Maryland. When Little Rock acquired its first telegraph fire alarm system in 1890, the St. Andrew's bell played an integral part in the city's fire protection, ringing a sequence of bell codes to identify the fire's location. This alarm system was used until 1944.

The church's interior was finished out gradually with the goal of completing it in time for Bishop Fitzgerald's Silver Jubilee in 1892 (his 25<sup>th</sup> year as bishop of the diocese). In November 1891 the *Arkansas Gazette* reported on the new Stations of the Cross at St. Andrew's, saying, "The figures are in high relief, as it is called, and many of the heads stand out statuary fashion. The work is considered by critics, fine, and so far as the reporter is able to judge the critics are right."

The 14 Stations of the Cross depict the suffering and passion of Jesus and were intended to tell the story to those who could not read. St. Andrew's commissioned German immigrant and sculptor Joseph ("Hosef") Sibel ("Sible") to create the Stations of the Cross. When Sibel came to the United States, he first lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Bishop Fitzgerald likely became aware of his talents (Fitzgerald previously lived in Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio). Sibel later opened a studio in New York City. He deplored the mechanical manufacture of religious art, calling it "pseudo-art" that was stereotyped and monotonous. Each

of Sibbel's designs was unique—he used live models for his statuary, which he created by sculpting a clay figure that was used to make a mold. He then used the molds to cast the figures in plaster. True to his belief that a work of art should be unique, after finishing the job for St. Andrew's, Sibbel broke the molds so that no exact duplicates could be made.

According to church records, Sibbel was paid just \$1,400 for his work, and the church paid \$85 in freight and \$12.50 to have the Stations delivered. The arches around the stations were applied by a local plasterer named William Murphy, and the crosses above each Station were built by a local carpenter for \$1 apiece. The Stations are built into the walls and fit perfectly between windows and around corners. Each Station is 9 feet tall from the base to the top of the cross and 6 feet wide. Like many sculptors, Sibbel cleverly signed his work by including a self-portrait. If you look closely at the first Station where Jesus is condemned to death, Sibbel's face appears at the end of the arm-rest on Pilate's chair.

The cathedral's interior was "frescoed," or stenciled, in the late 1880s or early 1890s at the cost of \$3,000. Prior to that time, the interior walls were white-washed with a sand finish. The original stenciling decoration featured pointed arches, rectangles, and horizontal and vertical lines, which were used to visually weave together the altar, windows, doors, and other architectural elements of the church interior. In accordance with the Gothic Revival style, and in particular, the writings of English architect Augustus Welby Pugin, himself a convert to Catholicism, a building's architecture and decoration could improve humanity. In this case, the architecture and stenciling were designed to draw the eye toward the altar and then up toward heaven.

The church interior was redecorated several times throughout the twentieth century, but none of the other designs achieved the same result as the original painted decoration. It is important to note that the church has an incredibly complicated roof and has always had problems with water leaks. Historically, these leaks damaged the plaster walls of the cathedral and prompted frequent repainting. Based on historic photographs, most of the original wall decoration

had been painted over by the 1930s (with the exception of the ceiling; it is original to the late 1880s or early 1890s).

In 1975 the interior of St. Andrew's was modernized to reflect the liturgical changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The stained glass windows in the apse were removed, and a large wooden screen was placed behind the altar. In addition, some of the main altar's ornate towers were removed, the side altars were taken out of the sanctuary, and a table was placed in front of the main altar so the congregation could see the priest doing communion. The interior walls were an off-white color.

### **Restoration of Stenciling and Stations of the Cross**

The cathedral retained its 1970s decoration until recently. In 2001 Msgr. Scott Marczuk ("Marzuck") asked artist and preservationist Becky Witsell to review historic photographs of the cathedral's interior and to give a report on what might be involved in the restoration of the original painted decoration.

Several people have told me, "It all started with the roof." The patterned slate roof was retiled in 2003 by Midland Engineering of South Bend, Indiana, at the cost of \$825,000. In 1881 the slate roof cost \$2,000.

In 2004 water damage to the sanctuary's walls was repaired, and during that time, Witsell collected about 160 paint samples from all over the cathedral's interior so they could be analyzed in a lab to determine the exact colors used in the original stenciling. She also discovered some original stencil designs under layers and layers of paint. These designs were traced so they could be reapplied after the walls were repaired. In some cases, there was no evidence left because of water damage and repainting. In those cases, Witsell and her staff used historic photographs and Gothic Revival stencil patterns from a book called *Modern Church Decoration*, published in 1900. This book provided the formula for decorating churches around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Specific designs were identified as border patterns, frieze patterns, panel patterns, and so on. Using all

of this information as a guide, Witsell and her staff recreated the cathedral's original stenciling (2004-2007).

Remember that the ceiling is in the original painter's hand. There are two slightly different patterns alternated on the ceiling—it is difficult to see unless you stare at it for a while. During the restoration, they found one painter's signature, John Cherry, who was probably one of several painters hired for the project.

Witsell and Studio Werk also restored the 14 Stations of the Cross at that time. The Stations were originally coated with oil paint, but over the years, they had been repainted with latex paint, which is not compatible with oil, causing damage to the plaster. The Stations also sustained water damage because they are built into the cathedral walls. And delicate pieces of the sculptures like fingers and legs were broken. Many layers of paint were removed to reveal the detail of the Stations, the plaster was repaired, and they were repainted.

### **Stained Glass**

Almost all of the stained glass is original. McCully and Miles of Chicago, a firm customizing in ecclesiastical and domestic stained glass windows from 1872 to 1914, created the rose window in the choir loft, as well as the windows in the apse and the transepts. Those windows could not be finished by the 1881 dedication of the cathedral, so clear glass windows were put in at that time. The nave windows and the Last Supper window were the work of the Franz Mayer Company of Munich, Germany, and were installed in 1892. The window of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Albert the Great (south side of nave) was destroyed by a tornado in the 1950s and was replaced in 1975 by the Harmon firm of St. Louis.

The rose window measures 12 feet in diameter and contains the traditional Star of David in the pattern. It represents the heritage and role of Judaism in the early church. In the Christian tradition, the star indicates that the Messiah will come from the house of David. The six points of the star symbolize God's rule over the

universe—north, south, east, west, up, and down. The center of the star depicts St. Cecilia, Patroness of Music, Musicians, and Singers.

During the cathedral restoration, Norton Arts conserved the rose window, Last Supper window, and the five windows in the apse (they had been removed during the 1970s modernization and stored at the cathedral), which were then re-installed.

### **Details/Interesting Facts**

Cathedral has 12 quadralobe columns supporting the roof, which symbolizes the twelve apostles. The columns have four lobes, thus quadralobe, symbolizing the four gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The columns are made out of native cypress with sheet metal caps at the top. The architect and decorators intended for the columns to look like stone. This was achieved through a process called “sanding” whereby the wood was painted, and then bellows were used to blow sand onto the wet paint to give it a rough texture like stone.

The cathedral floor was originally wood with patterned encaustic tile (made from compacted clay dust fired in a kiln at 2,500 degrees for 30 to 40 hours) in the apse. The encaustic tile is still under the red carpet, and the terrazzo floor replaced the wood floor in 1962.

The altar, baptismal font, ambo (podium), and bishop’s chair are original to the cathedral. The altar is made of Italian marble and was purchased for St. Andrew’s by Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Hager, a Lutheran couple who befriended Bishop Fitzgerald. The 1882 will of Alexander Hager promised to provide funding for hospital service in Little Rock if God spared the city from the yellow fever outbreak that was tearing through the South. When the outbreak passed over Little Rock, Hager’s will provided Bishop Edward Fitzgerald with \$75,000 to found what would become St. Vincent Infirmary (he got the Sisters of Charity from Nazareth, Kentucky, to start the Charity Hospital in 1888).



In 1994 the baptismal font was moved to the front of the cathedral, and an immersion pool was installed at that time.

The word “cathedral” comes from the Latin word “cathedra” meaning chair. Each cathedral has a bishop’s chair, where he teaches, governs, and sanctifies. The bishop’s chair originally belonged to Bishop Edward Fitzgerald.

The original organ was replaced by the current Moeller organ in 1932. It has 3,775 pipes with leather interiors and 25 bells. The organ was restored in 1993, and the pipes have been rearranged to make the rose window visible from the inside of the cathedral.

I already told you that Bishop Byrne died in Helena, Arkansas, and was buried there in 1862. On November 30, 1881, the Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle, Bishop Edward Fitzgerald had the remains of Arkansas’s first bishop, Andrew Byrne, removed from Helena and brought to St. Andrew’s Cathedral, where his body was placed in a crypt below the vestibule floor.

Due to water damage and leaks in that area, the crypt was relocated in 1962 to an area below the floor in the north transept.

Today, the crypt holds the remains of Arkansas’s first five bishops—Andrew Byrne, Edward Fitzgerald, John Morris, Albert Fletcher, and Andrew McDonald. Bishop Byrne’s original grave marker is now on the wall at the bottom of the stairs in the crypt. The gate used to access the crypt was originally part of the alter rail and features images of grain, symbolizing the host, and grapes, symbolizing the blood of Christ.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Catholic Bishop of Little Rock, Peter Sartain (Sartan), was bishop from 2000 to 2006, when he was sent to Illinois and later became the Archbishop of Seattle, Washington. The current and 7<sup>th</sup> bishop of Arkansas is Bishop Anthony Taylor (since June 2008).

The front altar table contains a first-degree relic. It is a piece of bone from St. Andrew, who was martyred. Crucified on an “X” shaped cross because he didn’t want to be crucified like Jesus.

Holy Oils—for the sick; for healing

    Sacred chrism—for baptism, confirmation, and ordination of a priest

    Catacumins—new converts to Catholicism

Next tour is February 7 at noon—Stone’s Throw Brewing at 902 E. 9<sup>th</sup> St. in LR.