



St. Boniface Church *and Related Buildings*

Address: 1358 West Chestnut (Church)
1346 West Chestnut (School)
1342 West Chestnut (Convent)
921 North Noble (Rectory)

Date: School: 1896, Church: 1904

Architect: Henry J. Schlacks

**CHRS
Rating:** Orange

Threat:

Closed by the archdiocese in 1990, the 4 buildings sit vacant and deteriorating. Plans by the archdiocese to demolish the structures were thwarted in 1999 by community activists and support from City Hall. 3 1/2 years later, no reuse plan has emerged and the buildings are again threatened with demolition. The community has urged the city to purchase the property from the archdiocese for reuse as a branch library and cultural center, or to trade the property for vacant property elsewhere in the city. Negotiations are pending but city support is diminishing.

Fulfillment of Landmark Criteria:

Saint Boniface Church meets a required number of the criteria established by the Chicago Landmarks Commission for preliminary landmark status.

Integrity: The buildings are remarkably intact. Save for the stained glass, the buildings have undergone very little alteration over the past 100 years.

- 1. Significant Architect:** Henry J. Schlacks, born in Chicago in 1868, was at the forefront of Chicago Catholic church architecture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His many church buildings, including others in the neighborhood, gained him the sobriquet "the master of Catholic church architecture in Chicago."
- 2. Significant Architecture:** The church, defined by its four soaring bell towers with their steeply pitched clay tile roofs, provides an instantly recognizable symbol for the surrounding neighborhood and is visible for miles around. The base is made of rusticated ashlar block intersected by canted buttresses that extend down to the sidewalk. Details include intricately carved stone columns and other carved details throughout, a series of blind arcades, as well as intact rosette window frames, minus their stained glass, which have long since been removed by the archdiocese. The school building echoes the style of Louis Sullivan, Schlacks' one-time employer, with its five prominent arched arcades.
- 3. Critical Part of City's Heritage:** St. Boniface, named for the patron saint of Germany, was established for German immigrants in 1865. After The Great Chicago Fire of 1871, St. Boniface provided meals and sometimes housing for the great masses that were displaced by the terrible tragedy. Later, one of its parish priests, Father Evers, led the effort to condemn the 10 acres adjacent to the church, which is now Eckhart Park.