



Brother Charles Borromeo Harding

1838-1922

Amateur Architect

By

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Patrick Harding was born in Waterford Diocese, Ireland in 1838.[13] His parents were James Harding and Mary Delhout. There is no record of when they came to the United States nor do we know if all the family came. Patrick's father, who was a carpenter by trade, was already deceased when Patrick came to Notre Dame in 1862 at age 24. Further information about Patrick comes from a document found in his "drop file" at the Midwest Archives. This was the *Interrogatory of Postulants* [13] which consisted of questions about the personal life of the candidate. Patrick's interview was conducted by S.J. Letoureau, Novice Master. I learned the identity of Fr. Letoureau as a young priest who had come to Notre Dame in company with Fr. Moreau when Moreau made his visit in 1857. To complete the interrogation the Novice Master asked the questions and recorded the candidate's answers.[P1] From this document it is learned: that Patrick had other siblings but they are not named nor enumerated; he had completed "common studies" which probably means an elementary education; he had worked as a joiner, that is, a carpenter who makes doors and molding. To the question of why he wanted to leave the world Patrick answered, "To save my soul and enter heaven." Patrick had learned of the Society, "partly through acquaintance with the Brothers." Where this occurred is not given. Patrick is further recorded as: not married, not subject to epilepsy, has not been expelled from any other religious community, nor has he been convicted of a crime. To the question, "What is your temper?" he answers simply, "So, so". Patrick entered on 31 December 1862 and was professed on 26 August 1866 at the age of 26. He is no longer Patrick Harding but will be called by the religious name of Brother Charles Borromeo Harding.

I would like to indulge in a bit of speculation for which I have no evidence. Brother Francis Xavier, one of the original five Brothers who had come with Fr. Sorin, was also a

carpenter and a builder. Brother Francis is credited with having built Old College and several buildings which still stand behind the present Main Building.[10] I believe it reasonable to think that Brother Charles would have been assigned to work with Brother Francis and thus to have come to the attention of Fr. Sorin when the matter of the construction of the church arose .

In 1868 the Local Council met and determined that the campus needed a new church. The older structure, built in 1848, was determined too small to continue serving the growing college and the local parish. When Fr. Sorin returned from the 1868 General Chapter in Rome, it was as the newly elected Superior General of the Congregation. Fr. Sorin immediately indorsed the idea of a new church and announced that," the church could be built and paid for in two years". Further, Sorin had looked about at the churches in Rome and decided that the Jesuit Gesu church was the favored style for the new Sacred Heart of Mary Church. Conveniently there was an architect, Patrick Charles Keeley, who was traveling about the country at this time designing many churches. Keeley was invited to submit plans and was given the suggestions and ideas of Fr. Sorin. When Keeley returned with his plans they were for a cruciform church, two hundred feet long with an estimated cost of \$100,000 dollars. These plans were rejected as too costly and too lavish. After discussing the options, Fr. Sorin determined that they would go ahead on their own. Fr. Sorin, Fr. Granger, pastor of the Church, and Brother Charles Harding would build the Church.[3-pgs. 622-624] Thomas Schlereth in his book *A Spire of Faith* makes commentary on the construction of the new church. Schlereth says, "Sacred Heart Church was largely the collective effort of three Holy Cross religious, Brother Charles, Fr. Granger, and Fr. Sorin who designed (and redesigned) the church in almost an ad hoc fashion." [5 pg.17]

There was a second professional architect, besides Patrick Keeley. His name was Thomas Brady and he practiced in St. Louis. I came upon his name in an article in the SCHOLASTIC, the student publication of the time, which reported: "Mr. T. Brady, a well known Architect from St. Louis has come to campus with plans for the new church".[14-A pg 78] A second mention of another architect is found in what are called, "*Father Steiner's Comments*". Fr. Steiner writes, "this good Brother (referring to Brother Charles) was known as a builder. It was said that when the church was erected he told the architect that the roof would never stand up as designed. Tradition has it that he was told to add what timbers he thought necessary. This he did. The church is still there after 80 years." [11] (It has now been 135 years.)

The decision was made to build this new church south of the old church. That way the old church could continue to serve the college and the parish. It had been my hope to find the plans, which surely must have been drawn for such a major project. However, a search of all available archives failed to uncover anything which could be identified with Brother Charles. There does exist a drawing of a church which is identified as that of Thomas Brady[P4a], the architect from St. Louis, but an examination of this drawing and the present church[P4b] shows that Brady's plan was not followed. There also exists an etching[P5] which is not unidentified as to the artist. This is accompanied by a description of what the church will look like on the inside, and appears to be a circular sent out to solicit donations for the church's construction. It is difficult for me to believe that such an ambitious project could have been built without some plans being drawn, however if there were any they have not survived.

The construction now began on this first portion of the church. The corner stone was laid in place in 1870. Only the nave and sanctuary were to be built at this time. The back of the

sanctuary was of plain brick. A large cross was outlined in brick and the altar was set against this wall.[P3] Construction on this portion took until 1875 to complete. An inspection of this portion as it stands today gives insight into what a monumental task the construction had been.[15 – pgs.15&16] An article in the December 4, 1878 issue of *Scholastic* shares insight into the reputation Brother Charles Borromeo had gained and to his character. The article states: “The almost faultless architecture was designed by one of the good Brothers of Holy Cross, whose modesty will not permit us to mention his name.”[D,pg229]

Further construction of the church had to wait while the old church was demolished. However, rather than demolishing the old church at this time the college authorities chose to use it for various purposes, i.e. classrooms, storage, and science laboratories.[3- Ultimately the old frame Sacred Heart Church was taken down in 1885.

On Sunday April 27, 1879 fire broke out in the main building. With heroic efforts it was prevented from spreading to the adjacent Church. However the main building was a total loss. Fr. Sorin was out of the state at the time and came back to campus to view the damage. With his characteristic faith and bravado he proclaimed that: “If it were all gone, I should not give up.” [3 –pgs. 652-658]. The new building was to be larger. For this task an independent architect, Willoughby Edbrook was hired to draw the plans, but it was Brother Charles Harding who, along with Brother Alfred Larkin, who oversaw the reconstruction.[15] The new main building was completed in time for the school opening in September of that same year, 1879.

It was, according to the *Scholastic*, [14D pg.] Brother Charles who designed and built the Golden Dome from which Our Lady still presides[14D]. I am sure Brother Charles also

assisted in the raising of the statue of Mary to the top of the dome, however, Mr. Alexander Staples of South Bend is credited with placing the statue.[14C]

In 1882 Brother Charles was requested by Fr. Sorin to build a residence for the minimis. He, Fr. Sorin, would design it.[3-pg 671] (Minims were young boys six to thirteen years of age who had at that time a dormitory in the main building.) This new dorm was named St. Edward's Hall [P6] after Fr. Sorin's patron and built just east of and behind the main building.

In 1884 the university was ready for further growth and two wings were added to the main building. Brother Charles again was not the architect, but supervised the construction.

In 1886 the apsidal chapels were added to Sacred Heart Church, three on each side. Brother Charles was responsible for their design with no doubt help from Fr. Sorin and Fr. Granger. A third addition was made to the church in 1887, called the Lady's Chapel dedicated to Mary. The Lady Chapel was not, however, the design of Brother Charles but Patrick Keeley whose original design for the church had been rejected. The Lady's Chapel was a gift to Fr. Sorin for his 50th Jubilee of ordination.[5 pgs.17 to 19]

It was not until 1893 that Sacred Heart Church was completed. The church had only a partial steeple housing the bells from the carillon of the old church. Sorin had been offered and accepted a huge bell six feet tall and weighing 44,400 lbs. To include the bell's large size and weight some re-designing of the steeple would be required. According to the *Scholastic*, Brother Charles completed the steeple and topped it off with its majestic spire and gold cross.[14D-pg.399]

In this same year, 1893, Brother Charles was instructed to begin two new buildings. The Professed House,[P7] was intended as a residence for the priests and Brothers engaged in

teaching at the university, but served them only a few years. In 1899 the community was asked to vacate the building in order that the increasing student enrollment might live in the private rooms which had become popular for upper classmen. In 1936[17] the now named Corby Hall again became the residence of all the religious associated with the University.

The second building which is listed as being started in the same year was the Institute of Technology.[P8] This three story structure was constructed on the east side of the main quad. Over the years an assortment of university departments were housed in the building. In 1916, while serving as a chemistry building, the top floor caught fire resulting in the loss of the third floor. Finally, in 1945 it became the Crowley School of Music.

The year 1893 was marked by another historic event but not for Brother Charles. It was in that year Brother Charles' close ally in many campus building projects died. Fr. Sorin passed away at 9:45 in the morning ,Tuesday, October 1893.[3-pg.715] Together they had formed a team whose projects, perhaps the greatest being the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, still stand in tribute.

Sorin Hall had opened in 1889 as the first residence to have private rooms. It was reserved for seniors and the best students. The initial structure was the design of Willoughby Edbrooke, who had been the architect for Main Building III. The popularity of the private rooms was recognized and in 1897 Brother Charles was given the task of adding two wings to Sorin Hall. These can be seen in the back of the building forming the building into a letter C.

In 1902 Brother Charles was assigned to the group going to Portland, OR to assume management of the newly acquired Columbia College. At Columbia his talents were put to use

immediately in designing and constructing St. Mary's Hall[P9] to house the Sisters who were coming to look after the domestic duties on campus. This three story wooden structure was divided by a brick fire wall. Half of the building housed the Sisters and the other half was to house a program for minims which was never started. This half then became an infirmary. The building was raised in 1959.

I was unable to find a record of Brother Charles' return to Notre Dame, however, he must have done so for his name occurs again in the Local Council Minutes in 1905: "Brother Charles is assigned to estimate the damages of a fire in the seminary", and in 1906 he designed and directed the construction of Dujarie Hall[P10] as a residence and house of studies for the Brother members of the Congregation.[7 pg.84] Lest there be a second Brother Charles in the community at this time I consulted the listing of all the Brothers who had entered the congregation. There was no other Brother Charles during this period.

Now we have a puzzle? According to Fr. Steiner's Comments, "in later years Brother Charles was at Portland looking after its buildings there." We cannot tell how long Brother Charles stayed this time but sixteen years later Fr. Steiner's Comments inform us of the death of Brother Charles, "He (Br. Charles) died on the train coming back to Notre Dame. Fathers Eugene and Thomas Burke were with him on the train." [11] Brother Charles died June 18, 1922 and is buried in the Indiana Province Community Cemetery at Notre Dame.

Brother Charles Borromeo Harding is credited with being the architect of: Sacred Heart Basilica, St. Edward's Hall, The Crawley School of Music, Corby Hall, Dujarie Hall, and additions to Sorin Hall at Notre Dame and St. Mary's Hall at Columbia College. Any one of these structures would stand out as the work of an accomplished architect. He was a man of not only

architectural engineering skill but artistic design and there is no information to suggest that he had ever formerly studied either.

His death was eulogized and remembered in poetry and prose published in the November 1922 addition of *THE COLUMBIAD*:

Brother Charles, C.S.C.

Fold over him the shroud of deeds well done,
Not at his lowly casket bend to weep;
The day is done and like a weary child,
He lays him down to sleep.

So, silently along life's way he went
We scarcely noticed the steep road he trod.
Until our eyes beheld his fragile form
Enter the house of God.

Fold over him the shroud of peace and rest,
No more for him the burden and the heat;
Sweetly he did the task God bade him do-
His labors are complete.

Fold over him the shroud of love and hope,
And in the gathering twilight breath a prayer
That his white winding sheet be at the last
The one that we shall wear.

(Anonymous)

BROTHER CHARLES

One morn I missed him on the accustomed hill,
Along the heath and near his favorite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.

Students returning to Columbia this year missed the kind, familiar face of Brother Charles. Always quiet and retired in manner, he went home after a long life of labor in the same unobtrusive way that he had lived. Columbia was blessed by the presence of this genuine man and gentle, courteous religious. Brother Charles was a model to everyone at Columbia. Early in the morning he went to his work, and while his strength lasted he found something to do on every day. And when the darkness came on he put aside his tools and found his greatest refreshment before the tabernacle. He loved his rule and practiced it with a fidelity that was saintly. Students and faculty will miss this kindly, religious man, but none who knew him will ever forget him with their prayers; for while he is not present in body, Columbia is sure to have in him an advocate before the throne of God to bring blessing and success to its work. The Editor

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- [2] Circular Letters of The Very Reverend Basil Moreau, Founder of the Religious of Holy Cross
- [3] O'Connell, Marvin R., Edward Sorin, University of Notre Dame Press, 2001
- [4] Schlereth, Thomas J. The University of Notre Dame: A Portrait of Its History and Campus, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN, 1976.
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- [9] The Columbiad, Monthly publication of Columbia College, available from University of Portland archives, Portland, OR
 - A] September, 1903 – pg 14
 - B] November, 1916 - pg 56
 - C] November , 1922 – pgs – 24 & 25
- [10] <http://architect.nd.ed/buildinginVENTORY.shtml>
- [11] *Father Steiner's Comments*. Available in Indiana Province Archives : re. Brother Charles Borromeo.
- [12] Covert, James T. A Point of Pride, The University of Portland Story. University of Portland Press, 1976

- [13] Interrogatory of Postulants – Midwest Province Archives: re, Brother Charles Borromeo (Patrick) Harding.
- [14] *Scholastic* – Student publication of the University of Notre Dame –Available in University of Notre Dame Archives.
- [A] Vol. III (1869-70) pg. 78
- [B] Vol. XII (1878-79 pgs. 229-230
- [C] Vol. XVII (1883-84) pg. 88
- [D] Vol. XXV (1891-92) Pg. 399
- [15] Brother Aidan's Extracts, <http://archives.nd.edu/aidan/aidan124.htm>; re. Charles Borromeo, Brother (Harding, Patrick)
- [16] Fr. Barry J. Hagan, C.S.C., Director of University Archives, University of Portland; re. St. Mary's Hall.
- [17] Donahue Circular Letter #21 Sept. 15, 1936, pg. 2

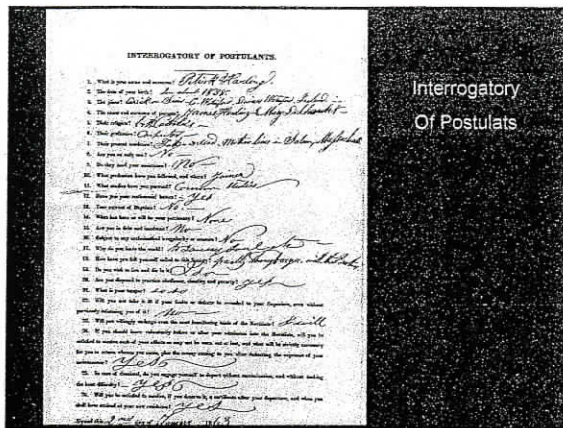
Photographs: University of Notre Dame Archives – GNEG

- P4a - 10A/05 Drawing by Thomas Brady of proposed Sacred Heart Church-1869
- P6 - 10A/06 Etching and description of exterior and interior of Sacred Heart Church
- P7 - 10/A Interior of Sacred Heart Church - 1875

I appreciate the help of the following in the preparation of this paper:

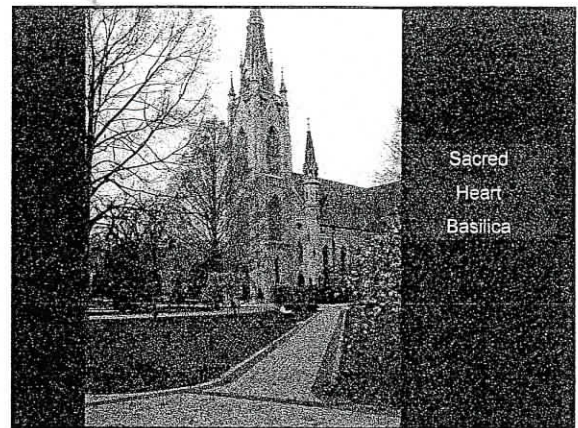
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The Midwest Province Archives	Brother Larry Stewart, CSC
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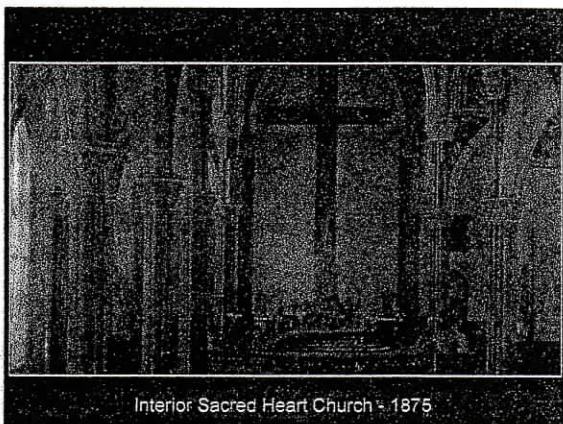
Interrogatory
Of Postulants

P1



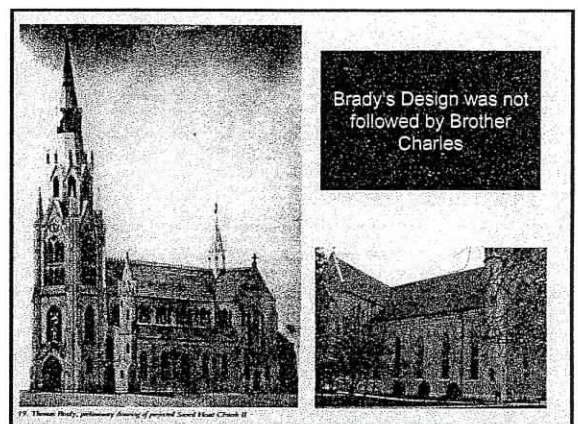
Sacred
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P2



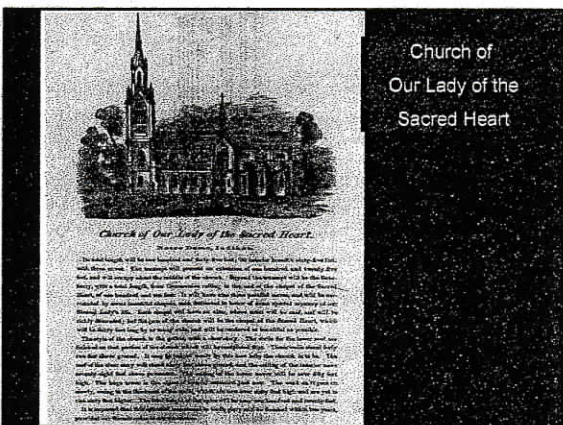
Interior Sacred Heart Church - 1875

P3



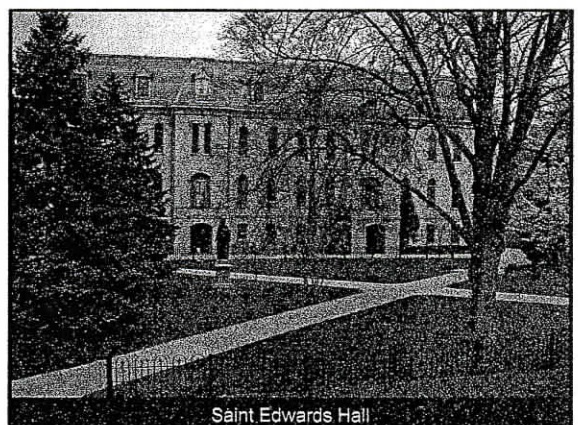
P4a

P4b



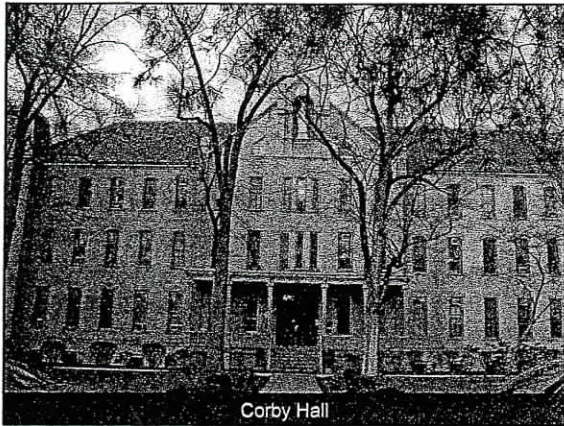
Church of
Our Lady of the
Sacred Heart

P5



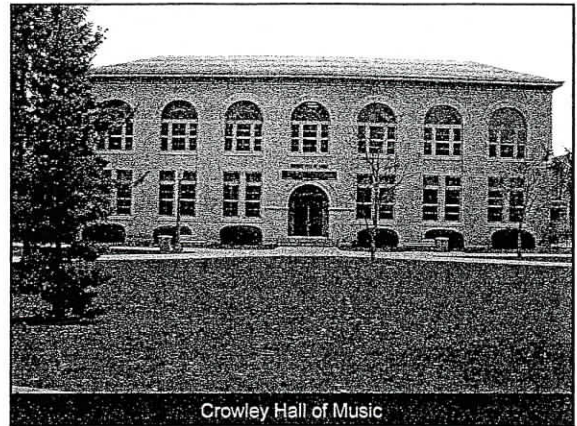
Saint Edwards Hall

P6



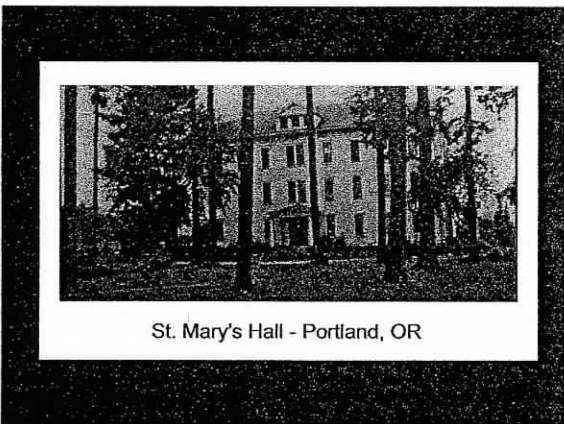
Corby Hall

P7



Crowley Hall of Music

P8



St. Mary's Hall - Portland, OR

P9



Carrol Hall (Dujarie)

P10