

## St. Stanislaus Kostka Catholic Church, Winona



WITH ONE EXCEPTION, Winona's historic churches are located near the center of town. On the east side, a massive church with a unique style looms majestically over a working-class neighborhood. It was constructed in only 13 months by a fractious immigrant community at the bottom of the city's economic and social ladder. How did this happen?

Starting in 1855, Poles from Kaszubia, a northern region under German rule, migrated to Winona to form what was then Minnesota's largest Polish community. A stateless people whose culture was under at-

tack, Kaszubs were passionate about sustaining their Polish-Catholic identity in America. At first, Winona's Poles had no choice but to worship in a church dominated by Germans. By 1873 they had established their own eastside parish, St. Stanislaus Kostka, with a Polish priest.

Winona's Poles generously supported the church and felt entitled to choose their pastor. Local bishops, who happened to be Irish, disagreed. For years the Polish community fought with Bishop Joseph Cotter over clerical appointments and once organized a large protest march to his residence. In 1893 Cotter ended one confrontation by appointing Fr. Anthony Klawitter, a Pole from New Jersey. Because their community was growing rapidly, the new pastor and his parishioners planned a larger, grander church and selected Charles

Maybury, Winona's premier architect, as its designer.

Maybury designed "St. Stan's" in the "Polish Cathedral" style, which mixes elements from the Renaissance and Baroque eras when Poland was a great European kingdom. A towering central dome, capped by a statue of St. Stanislaus, stands 172-feet high. The building's red-and-white exterior echoes the Polish flag, and its stained-glass windows feature Polish religious symbols. Seating 1,800, the church cost \$86,000, equivalent to more than \$10 million today; the majority was raised from parishioners earning a few dollars a day in Winona's lumber mills.

The 1895 dedication signaled a new era of peace in the parish. Those Winonans who looked down on the Poles realized, in the words of a local memoirist, that "an ironic justice wrote itself on Winona's skyline." St. Stanislaus towered over every other church in the city.

*Greg Gaut and Marsha Neff can see the dome of St. Stan's from the front door of their eastside Winona home.*

Sources: William Crozier, *Gathering a People: A History of the Diocese of Winona* (1989); Alan Lathrop, *Churches of Minnesota: An Illustrated Guide* (2003); Daniel Hoisington, "Polak, Catholic, American: The Polish Community in Winona in the 1890s" (unpublished paper).

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*St. Stanislaus Church and (behind it) school, about 1905* (MNHS COLLECTIONS)





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