

The Cathedral of the Madeleine

Although Franciscan missionaries visited the area of what is now Utah in 1776, the first permanent Catholic establishment came in 1866 with purchase of property on Second East Street just north of First South Street. There was built a small church which served Catholics until construction of the present edifice at East South Temple and “B” Streets on property Bishop Lawrence Scanlan (1843 – 1915) purchased in 1890 for the sum of \$39,000.

The cornerstone of the new Cathedral was laid on July 2, 1900. On August 15, 1909, the church was dedicated to God by James Cardinal Gibbons under the patronage of Saint Mary Magdalene. The architects were Carl Neuhausen and Bernard Mecklenburg. The Cathedral combines a predominately Romanesque exterior with a Gothic interior.

In 1917, under the direction of Bishop Joseph S. Glass (1874 – 1926), it was remodeled and decorated according to the designs of the renowned architect John Comes, to make it one of the most beautiful churches in the United States. Bishop Glass also changed its name to The Cathedral of the Madeleine. Its fine mural paintings by Felix Lieftuchter and wood carvings by the William Ross Company compare favorably with the best in Europe. The stained glass windows in the body of the Cathedral were made in Munich; those in the Sanctuary by George Sotter of Pittsburg. The Stations of the Cross were painted by Robert S. Chase under the direction of Ralph Adams Cram.

A major renovation of the interior took place during 1991 – 1992 at a cost of \$9.7 million, including restoration of the art, stained glass and woodwork. A new tracker-action organ was also installed. Additional elements in the renovation included a seismic retrofit to strengthen the building against earthquakes; the rebuilding of the lower level of the cathedral, including Scanlan Hall; and the construction of a new cathedral plaza.

A renovation of the liturgical elements to bring them into conformity with the liturgical reforms that followed the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) was also undertaken, chiefly building a new altar in a more prominent location; the construction of a new chancel screen; providing a separate Blessed Sacrament chapel; and adding a more ample baptismal font.

The Cathedral is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Utah State Register of Historic Sites.