

# Basilica of St. Lawrence

Construction of the church began in 1905 and was completed in 1909. The church is one hundred and nine years old.

Status in the National Register is that of “National Significance” – April 2010.

Stonecutter/stone builder Frederick Miles did the statues above the church, St. Lawrence, St. Stephen, and St. Aloysius Gonzaga. Miles also worked at the Biltmore and in other places in Asheville.

The dome is 58’ wide and 82’ long. It is 48’ high. It is one of the largest self-supporting elliptical domes in North America. The upper part is only 4 inches thick.

It is of a herringbone pattern with tiles of variegated tones and glazed surfaces.

The Deprato Statuary Company of Carrara, Italy made the four statues of St. Peter, St. Patrick, St. Cecilia, and St. Rose of Lima.

The Royal Bavarian Establishment of Franz Meyer and Company in Munich, Germany, made the stained glass windows. They were probably the best makers of stained glass at the time.

Two stained glass windows in the St. Joseph chapel were taken from the earlier 1887 church.

The tableau of the Crucifixion is hand carved walnut, 17<sup>th</sup> century, from a church in northern Spain. It had been sold and acquired by Guastavino after some years of wandering from place to place, probably around 1900+.

The tabernacle of the Main Altar is composed of faience covered with a pearly, creamy glaze, and represents two angels, one on each side, drawing back the curtains from the door on which is in relief a figure of Our Savior holding a cross.

The lower part of the altar is made of glazed tile. Due to liturgical needs, the main altar table was moved forward and lowered and a 1600 pound piece of Tennessee marble was placed on top to a height appropriate for Mass. At the front of this altar table is a terra cotta panel of The Last Supper, a copy of the Leonardo da Vinci fresco in Milan.

Reredoses surrounding the apse area fill the entire wall space and are made of polychrome terra cotta. Two archangels, St. Raphael and St. Michael stand on either side of the altar. The other figures are the four Evangelists, Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of the panels measures six feet wide and eleven feet high. This work was done with great difficulty as the pieces had to be fired time and again to match the correct pieces of the various colored glazes. This use of polychrome terra cotta on such a large scale was certainly new to this country.

The Maurice DuPont family donated the communion rail.

Parts of the altar in the Marian chapel are very old. The top level is a porcelain faience crucifixion scene set into an onyx face. The eight figures set in niches in the middle colonnade are all virgin female saints. In the center is a tabernacle door with an image of the Sacred Heart. In the lower section is an inset of the Nativity, done in marble, reminiscent of the work of Della Robbia. It is unknown where they came from.

The door to the sacristy is antique art of hand-carved tiger oak depicting the Good Shepherd.

On the wall above the sacristy door is a painting of the Visitation, a 17<sup>th</sup> century masterpiece by Neapolitan artist, Massimo Stanzione (1585-1656).

The baptismal font is carved wood with plaster and paint exterior purchased in 1910.

The burial space for Guastavino was new to the design and in an area with no previous function. The design includes a door with tiles of Rafael, Jr.’s design, glazes, and relief panels with lettering, enclosed in an arched metal frame.

Throughout the vertical walls of the high altar and chapels are non-structural tiles, of different glazes and patterns, many as small as two inches square.