



# WELCOME TO *Visit Beloit*

## 656 PLEASANT STREET HISTORY



ST. PAUL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH  
OCT. 25, 1914-SEP. 7, 1988

THE ANGEL MUSEUM  
MAY 1, 1998-SEP. 29, 2018



BUILT  
1914



VACANT  
1988-1998



VISIT BELOIT  
JAN. 29, 2020 -  
PRESENT

Our building, located at 656 Pleasant Street in Beloit, Wisconsin, has a long history in the city dating back to the early 1900s. Beloit's first Italian-speaking Catholic families were parishioners at nearby St. Thomas Catholic Church. As the population of Italians grew in Beloit, primarily due to the industrial and manufacturing boom of the city, the needs to have a Catholic church where their Italian language was spoken was in high demand.

Therefore, residents decided to lay the foundation for their own church in 1914 which was the original use of the structure we own today. It was formed as St. Paul's Catholic Church and dedicated on October 25, 1914. Miss Alice Broder, a prominent Beloit woman, donated a large sum of money for the construction of the church. The church was named after the name saint of her brother, Paul.

The builder was William Fitzgerald. Its gabled roof is flanked by a truncated square "tower" with a flat roof trimmed with battlements. The front red brick gable wall includes wall buttresses, inset crosses, and a rose window with four keystones. The side walls each contain a series of four round stained-glass windows. The first priest of St. Paul's was Father Alfredo F. Giovannoni. The parish served not only those of Italian descent, but all Catholic residents of Beloit for 74 years. After the death of Father Joseph L. DeStefano, the Diocese of Madison made the decision to close the parish on September 7, 1988.

The building, owned by the city of Beloit after the parish's closure, sat relatively dormant for ten years as neighboring riverfront development projects built great momentum. In 1994, the building was locally landmarked as a historic structure, but does not exist on the state or federal historic registries.

Local interest in the building was renewed when it became the home of The Angel Museum as of May 1, 1998. The world's largest angel collection began in 1976 when Beloit residents Joyce and Lowell Berg were on vacation in Florida. When visiting an antique store, they fell in love with an Italian bisque figurine of two angels on a seesaw. It captured their hearts and angel collecting soon become a passion for the couple. In the late 2000s, the Berg Angel Collection numbered more than 13,000. The museum was home to angels and angel artifacts of more than 100 different materials and from more than 60 different countries. Additionally, the museum was also home to more than 600 Black angels that were donated by Oprah Winfrey. The angels were gifts from her fans. The museum was open for twenty years until it closed on September 29, 2018, when the Berg Angel Collection was sold at auction.

The city of Beloit had continued ownership of the property from the time of the parish dissolution through its days as a museum. In 2019, the city of Beloit sought a developer to purchase the property to preserve the historic structure. Visit Beloit, the official tourism entity for the region, was successful in acquiring the property. The organization officially purchased the building on January 29, 2020. It significantly rehabbed the building to move its offices to the property on March 1, 2021. Future construction plans include completing a new events venue and a building expansion for additional offices, meeting spaces, and an experience center for visitors and residents.

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