

# "The Big Church in a Little Town"

*"Because the Church is a visible building, it stands as a special sign of the pilgrim Church on earth and reflects the Church dwelling in heaven."*

*— Rite of the Dedication of a Church*

❖ Powerful spotlights illuminate the twin-spired beauty for it to radiate its nighttime splendor 15 miles and more on the South Dakota prairie...thanks to an anonymous donor who pays the bill.

❖ The huge, 118-page Photo Gallery in the back of the church was not created with publishing in mind...but St. Anthony's friends begged for it in book form and it is now available for \$10.

❖ The "Last Supper" bas-relief on the lower front of the high altar was in brown tones until 2003...when an artistic parish volunteer added the da Vinci colors.



❖ Church workers twice did headstands on top of a steeple...once when the church was first built and recently when it was re-shingled.



❖ Father Helmbrecht, who served Hoven for nearly 50 years, conducted a two-year, door-to-door campaign to raise money for the upper parts of the church...and the entire debt was paid off in four years.

❖ The gargoyles on either side of the main entrance used to spout water...until the resulting deluge during heavy rains was channeled elsewhere.

❖ The pictures in the sanctuary were painted on canvas...and good glue has held them there for over 80 years.



*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*  
*— Proverbs 29:18*



Kelli J. Borth caught this special moment when the silhouette of Christ appeared on a front door of the church.



## Contact Information

St. Anthony of Padua Church  
P.O. Box 98  
Hoven, South Dakota 57450  
Phone 605-948-2451  
[www.stanthonys-hoven.com](http://www.stanthonys-hoven.com)

*On the National Register of Historic Places  
Over 1,000 sign the register annually*

# "Cathedral of the Prairie"



**St. Anthony of Padua  
Catholic Church  
Hoven, South Dakota**

# The big church that forgets it's in a little town...and consequently bites off big projects

*"And as the people blessed themselves at the holy water font, I felt assured that their sturdy simplicity was only temporary and that better facilities would eventually come to those who worshiped there. I was later to realize that assurance in near-magnificence!"*  
 — from early-day Hoven teacher Wm. Boerger autobiography

## In the beginning

The "Cathedral of the Prairie" was completed in 1921 at a cost of a quarter of a million dollars. Its replacement value is \$20 million. The congregation furnished 496 days of work and a thousand loads of sand, gravel, and fieldstone for basement construction. The massive structure is enhanced with extensive oak woodwork, including 300-pound doors. Architect Anton Dohmen designed churches in Kansas, North Dakota, and South Dakota, with St. Anthony's being his last and most ornate. Contractor Anton Zwak's signature has been found on a roof tile and in other places in the church.

More intricately and ornately stenciled than any other church for miles around, St. Anthony's seats 1,000 people. Its twin spires rise 140 feet to the heavens. It is 161 feet long and 64 feet wide, and its 17-rank, 1,127-pipe organ is also unequaled for miles around. The north steeple houses three bells weighing 1800, 1300, and 850 pounds. An electronic carillon plays music on the hour.



## 1980s major restoration

When contacted about the need for a major 1980s restoration, two contractors suggested the walls be simply plastered and painted over with white. A third contractor agreed to do an actual restoration saying it would take seven years and he couldn't guarantee a price under half a million dollars. St. Anthony's volunteers put in 20,000 hours working at the church, including repairing some severely damaged areas. Volunteers working in their homes added to that number, and the job was completed in less than five years.

A vast web of wooden scaffolds covered the nave of the church, one quarter at a time. The sanctuary required a scaffold of its own. Brides walked down the aisle under this scaffolding during the restoration process.



*"I never weary of great churches. ... Mankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a cathedral."*  
 — Robert Louis Stevenson

## ...and continuing

Bavarian artisans designed 31 stained glass windows for \$8,900, including 23 large windows in the church nave depicting the life of Christ from birth to Ascension.



- ❖ \$800,000 roofing and window project
- ❖ \$60,000 basement renovation
- ❖ South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Christmas concerts
- ❖ Ecumenical musical events

*"Let not your hand be open to receive and clenched when it is time to give."*  
 — Sirach 4:31

**Yes, I want to help preserve this national historical monument!**

\_\_\_ Please find enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Please find enclosed my donation of \$135, which includes a shipping cost, for an unframed copy of the John Green "Cathedral of the Prairie" print pictured below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you, Benevolent Friend, for helping us maintain the "Cathedral of the Prairie." Please make checks payable to St. Anthony's Church and leave at the rectory or mail to P.O. Box 98, Hoven, SD 57450. The parishioners of St. Anthony's will remember you monthly in prayer.*



*"Cathedral of the Prairie"*  
 by John Green