



The following is the finding aid for the St. Lawrence Parish, Milwaukee collection located at the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives. A finding aid is a catalog tool used in archives that briefly describes the material found in a collection. These records are not available digitally unless otherwise noted.
[Genealogists should consult our genealogical resources guide.](#)
[Researchers must make an appointment with an archivist to view the material.](#)

**St. Lawrence Congregation (Milwaukee, Wis.)
Records, 1888-1999
MC 117**

Volume
10.90 cubic feet.

Access
Open except for financial, payroll, personnel, teacher contracts and prenuptial marriage files.

Historical Note

On February 12, 1888 the vicar-general, Msgr. Augustine Zeininger, called a meeting at St. Joseph Convent for all German Catholics in the area to discuss forming a new parish. Several blocks of land across the street from the convent were purchased for the new parish and Rev. Louis Barth was chosen to be the first pastor. At this time St. Lawrence was on the far western edge of Milwaukee and the only thing to the west of the parish was celery fields. A small building was purchased for the first combination church/school building until a larger church could be constructed. The parish formed quickly, and by October 21, 1888 the parish was ready to be dedicated.

The parish continued to grow and several additional lots were purchased for additions to the buildings. By 1901 the parish was overcrowded and Rev. Barth requested that a new parish be built on the South Side. St. Lawrence helped to found the new Holy Ghost parish. In October of 1904 a large fire broke out and completely destroyed the church building. The cause of the fire was never determined. To replace the building a much larger gothic church was built and dedicated in August of 1906; a ceremony that lasted 6 hours. The new church sat of 1,000 people and had three galleries for the school children and choir. Throughout the early to mid-20th century the social life at St. Lawrence remained vibrant. Parishioners were involved with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, boy scouts, boy's altar society (in which they had as many as 90 servers), Young Ladies Sodality, May Crownings, Perpetual Help Devotions, Catholic Youth Organization, Bingo, Forth Hour Devotions, Ushers Society, Christian Mother's Society, and the Holy Name Society. Bingo consistently remained one of the top fund-raising activities of the parish.

After Vatican II, St. Lawrence's pastor, Rev. Hugh Wish, continued to say Mass in the traditional way. This put him at odds with some of his parishioners and some of the sisters of the parish, who eventually left. In 1977 he resigned to help organize the St. Pius V Roman Catholics, Inc.

In 1895 the School Sisters of St. Francis came to teach in the school and remained for several decades. The relationship between the Sisters and St. Lawrence was very close. When the sisters' chapel was damaged by a fire they used the St. Lawrence church, and likewise after St. Lawrence's fire the parishioners used the sisters' chapel. During the 1920s and 1930s the sisters taught kindergarten through commercial school. The commercial courses consisted of a 1 or 2 year business school following the

completion of 8th grade. Students were taught shorthand, typing, and business language. In 1972 the Superintendent of Catholic schools called together 10 south side schools and questioned whether they could all continue to exist, and the St. Lawrence parishioners formed the St. Lawrence Parent and Booster club to boost parent involvement and school fund raising. In the fall of 1998 St. Lawrence and St. Matthew merged their schools

During the late 20th century the demographics of the neighborhood continued to shift away from being predominantly German and Polish American to predominantly Hispanic. By the end of the 1990s St. Lawrence was located in one of the poorest zip codes in the city of Milwaukee. St. Matthew and St. Lawrence merged in 1999 to form St. Rafael the Archangel parish.

Scope and Content *a brief description of the types of materials in the collection.*

This collection contains the records from St. Lawrence parish in Milwaukee, WI. Much of the historical material was compiled for the parish's 100th anniversary celebration in 1988. Of particular interest are photographs documenting the 100th anniversary celebration, the burning of the parish's mortgage, first communions, graduations and photographs of priests who served or were priest sons of the parish. Also included are records from various parish societies, such as the Christian Mother's Society, the Usher's Society, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. In addition there is information documenting the merger process between St. Lawrence and St. Matthew parishes.

Box and Folder List *This is a list of folders names within the collection. The folders are listed alphabetically. "B" is an abbreviation for box and "F" is an abbreviation for folder. This list will help the researcher narrow down exactly what folder they want to look at.*

Box	Folder	Folder Title
B 1	F 1	Altar Consecration, 1907-1963
B 1	F 2	American Federation of Catholic Societies, Souvenir Book, 1913
B 1	F 3	Anniversary Booklets, 50 th Anniversary, 1938
B 1	F 4	Anniversary Booklets, 70 th Anniversary, 1958
B 1	F 5-6	Anniversary Booklets, 75 th Anniversary, 1963
B 1	F 7	Anniversary, 100 th , 1988
B 1	F 8	Anniversary, 100 th , Booklets and Programs, 1988
B 1	F 9	Anniversary, 100 th , Donations, 1988
B 8		Articles of Incorporation & Warranty Deeds, 1888-1892
B 2	F 1	Athletic Association, 1986-1990
B 2	F 2	Building, Architectural Drawings, 1961
B 2	F 3	Building, Asbestos Removal, 1989
B 2	F 4	Building, Renovations and Remodeling, 1961-1964, 1981
B 18		Bulletins, 1986-1998
B 2	F 5	By-Laws & Proxies, 1985, n.d.
B 2	F 6	Catholic Family Life Program, 1975
B 2	F 7	Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1944-1951
B 2	F 8	Correspondence, Alderman, 1986-1997
B 2	F 9-10	Estates, 1986-1999
B 2	F 11	Finance Committee, Meeting Minutes, 1979-1985
B 10-11		Financial Information, 1956, 1974-1998 (restricted)
B 8		Historical Documents, Miscellaneous, 1897-1988
B 3	F 1	Historical Information (including family lists), 1912-1988
B 3	F 2	Historical Materials, Marcella Stemper Croke, 1922-1929
B 3	F 3	Insurance Policies, 1991-1999

Box	Folder	Folder Title
B 3	F 4	Insurance, Individual, 1989-1996 (restricted)
B 3	F 5-6	Merger, St. Lawrence/St. Matthew Steering Committee, 1998-1999
B 3	F 7	Mother of Perpetual Help Devotions, 1952-1953
B 3	F 8	Organ Repairs, 1986-1990
B 3	F 9-10	Parish Council Meeting Minutes, 1978-1987
B 4	F 1-3	Parish Council Meeting Minutes, 1988-1998
B 4	F 4	Parish Mission, 1983-1993
B 9		Payroll, 1985-1994 (restricted)
B 10		Payroll, 1995-1998 (restricted)
B 10		Personnel Records, 1980s-1990s (restricted)
B 4	F 5	Photographs, Activities, n.d.
B 4	F 6	Photographs, Buildings, n.d.
B 4	F 7	Photographs, Burning of the Mortgage Papers, 1974
B 4	F 8	Photographs, First Communion, 1955-1982, n.d. (undated photographs pre-date 1955)
B 4	F 9	Photographs, Graduation, 1968-1990, n.d. (undated photographs pre-date 1968)
B 8		Photographs, Oversized, n.d.
B 5	F 1	Photographs, Parish Events, n.d.
B 5	F 2	Photographs, Parish Centennial, 1987
B 5	F 3	Photographs, Priests and Priest Sons and Brothers of St. Lawrence, n.d.
B 5	F 4	School, Alumni & Reunions, 1985-1996
B 5	F 5	School, Elementary School Association, 1982-1989
B 5	F 6	School, Finance Committee and Financial Statements, 1982-1994
B 5	F 7	School, Joint School Committee (St. Matthew/St. Lawrence), 1997-1998
B 5	F 8	School, Joint Committee, St. Matthew Financial Statements, 1995-1998
B 5	F 9-10	School, Near South Side Catholic School Association, 1995-1996
B 6	F 1	School, Tuition Information, 1982-1987
B 6	F 2	Societies, General, 1941-1989
B 6	F 3-5	Societies, Christian Mothers, 1945-1971
B 6	F 6	Societies, Christian Mothers, Finances, 1955-1959
B 6	F 7	Societies, Financial Books (unknown society), 1946-1949
B 7	F 1	Societies, Financial Books, 1962-1971
B 7	F 2	Societies, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 1911-1998
B 7	F 3	Societies, Usher's Society, Dues Book, 1937-1939
B 7	F 4	Stations of the Cross, 1963
B 8		Status Animarum (parish annual report), 1942-1971 (incomplete run)
B 7	F 5	Status Animarum (parish annual report), 1972-1998
B 10		Teacher Contracts, 1954-1990 (restricted)
B 7	F 6	Tri-Parish Council Meetings (St. Matthew/St. Lawrence/St. Vincent de Paul), 1997-1998
B 11		Weekly Contributions, 1991-1992 (Includes census) (restricted)