



Interior of St. Gabriel's as completed this week.

126-Year-Old Church Reopens

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As the church looked May 1, 1966.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, Wis.—Midnight Mass this morning marked the end of a year-long renovation of St. Gabriel's Church here, started with the discovery of a crack in the ceiling.

The 126-year-old church was designed by the Rev. Samuel C. Mazzuchelli, a candidate for sainthood, who helped lay its cornerstone in 1839.

The complete renovation of the church includes new pews, installed last week and refurbishing the old baptismal font, made of pewter and long out of use.

Unlike the old church with its drop ceiling, the trusses and decking are exposed and new light fixtures

were hung from the roof supports.

Wood-paneled front doors have been replaced with English-Fleming glass in an antiquated style. A new entrance from the parking lot area was also added.

When the crack in the ceiling was discovered last December, church officials ordered the roof replaced. Masses were moved out of the building for "safety reasons" and into the school across the street.

As work progressed on removing the roof, it was discovered that repairing the structure would be more extensive than first planned. No estimates on the cost of renovation have been released by the church.

Appearance of the church

was changed little in the remodeling process. The two-foot-thick walls still surround the building. One new item in the church is an altar, situated so the priest can face the congregation during Mass.

The building is still the Gothic structure that was built in Mazzuchelli's time. Some work on the outside is planned for next year. Plans call for cleaning the outside and painting the towers.

The Rev. Eugene E. Zimmerman, S.J., the present pastor, came to St. Gabriel's last summer.

Architect for the project was Hackner, Schroeder and Associates of LaCrosse, Wis., and general contractor was Steiner Brothers Construction Co. of Prairie du Chien.