



Shrine Basilica of St. Lawrence

13/12/2015

Asheville

97 Haywood Street - Asheville - United States of America



In July 1905, a visitor to St. Lawrence unable to find a seat during Mass was the famous Spanish architect Rafael Guastavino, who was in town during the mid-1890s to work on the Biltmore House. He told the Pastor that a Catholic Church should be large enough to accommodate everyone and offered to draw plans for a new, fireproof church and donate an elliptical dome, the largest freestanding elliptical dome in North America.

With Bishop Leo Haid's consent, construction started shortly after parishioners helped dig the cellar. Donations of money, materials and labor helped the completion of the new church.

In 1908, Guastavino died and his son, Rafael Jr., took over with help of another famous architect, Stanford White. Bishop Haid dedicated the new church in October 1909. When Pastor, Father Peter Marion's health declined and he transferred to Hendersonville, Father Patrick Marion took his brother's place as pastor and oversaw final completion of the church, which consisted of the placing of the copper roof and paying off the debt so the church could be consecrated.

On Oct. 13, 1920, Cardinal James Gibbons consecrated St. Lawrence Church, the first church consecrated in the Vicariate of North Carolina.

The church, now on the National Register of Historic Places, houses the crypt of Guastavino.

