

An Old St. Francis School Primer

Céad Míle Fáilte! A hundred thousand welcomes!

Opened in 1936, St. Francis School was the first parochial school in Central Oregon, and in 2004 it was reborn as the first McMenamins east of the Cascades. The past radiates throughout the property as the experiences of former students, teachers, priests and parishioners mingle with those of modern-day patrons.

The St. Francis School was the realization of a long-held dream of parish priest Father Luke Sheehan who came to the “wilds” of Oregon from County Cork, Ireland in 1910. He established and cultivated the St. Francis parish, in large part, by trekking hundreds of miles on horseback or on foot, to meet with widely dispersed parishioners. Among this pious group were many of his countrymen, Irish immigrants who had converged on the high desert mostly to work as sheepherders.

The original school building, constructed during the Great Depression, contained four classrooms, with grades 1-8 paired two to a room. The first year, there were 145 students enrolled, a number that grew to more than 300 at its peak. To accommodate enrollment increases, additions were made – the first two in 1953. Seven years later, four more rooms were constructed. Then, in 1968, a spacious new parish center was built on the school’s north side to house a gym, stage, meeting rooms and cafeteria.

By all accounts, the nuns who taught at St. Francis (who came from Sisters of the Holy Names at Marylhurst University south of Portland until the university closed in 2017) were effective teachers; many were taskmasters, and most had big hearts, though some chose not to wear it on their sleeve. Former students seem united in the opinion that upon entering the public high school in Bend, they stood about a year ahead of their public school peers academically. Socially, however, St. Francis kids felt a little delayed – a deficit that some erased in record time.

In the late 1960s, change was afoot. Student uniforms were no longer required, lay teachers began to fill the roster, and the remaining nuns no longer wore habits. While the look of the faculty and student body relaxed, the focus on quality education remained constant.

In 2000, the St. Francis School relocated to a newly constructed campus across town. The old downtown property, which now included four bungalows, was purchased by McMenamins. Following a detailed renovation that infused unconventional elements into the place, the Old St. Francis School was reborn.

Within its walls you’ll find original art and historical photos, both paying tribute to the property’s beginnings and stories that have been passed down. You’ll also find an eclectic gallery of African, Indonesian, Japanese, Celtic and Episcopalian art, as well as numerous one-of-a-kind items. A talented group of artisans – a core of McMenamins veterans and some new folks from Bend – contributed to the remarkable craftsmanship.

This walking tour highlights interesting items, but by no means describes everything. From hand-painted Celtic borders and metal spheres to one-of-a-kind headboards, this place is overflowing with creativity. Grab a drink and take a walk, and keep an eye out for all the fun details!



Pub Entry: Lyle Hehn's portrait of the ubiquitous Ruby welcomes all from above the door. Ruby is a McMenamins icon and namesake of our Ruby Ale. She gazes over two cast iron flame sconces to watch over a patio separated from the sidewalk by original ironwork.

In the Pub: At the base of the stairs is an intricate carved wood panel with inlaid brass depicting a hunt, food preparation and a celebration. The copper-topped bar anchors the pub and channels its magic through the large skylight, through which has descended a wood carving of a chariot. The unique piece took 25 years to carve and tells the story of the Mahabharata; check the description on the bar for more information.

The “Oak Cannon Favorite” wood burning stove warms the pub; this no. 36198 cast iron behemoth originally burned coal. Two stunning stained glass and painted windows were crafted by David Schlicker: One depicts St. Francis of Assisi with an owl and wolf, and the other shows founder Father Luke Sheehan.

Smoke Room: Pass by the decorative “smoke room” etched glass and feast your eyes on Francisco Cristich's *Feast of St. Francis*. The Oregon artist honors the school's annual celebration of letting loose monarch butterflies in tribute to St. Francis. The next painting shows Klondike Kate, “Flame of the Yukon,” on a backdrop of scenes from the Old West. Between the two is an old English meat market hanger. Butcher's tools are arranged in the likeness of a bull.

Warm heart-pine found throughout this building and the guestrooms was salvaged from an old warehouse at the Jim Beam distillery in Kentucky.

Lodging Wing Hallway: This hallway contains a number of panels from Northwest artists, including Lyle Hehn's imaginative Easter scene in front of the school and his surreal *Christmas Dream*, which features twin Santas buzzing the annual sack-pinata-quiz race. Olivia Behm's piece shows Ruby in the classroom on Valentine's Day. Finally, astronauts visit the old Museum of Wonders in Jenny Joyce's playful scene of a strange encounter outside of Bend, referencing the Apollo lunar training that took place near Bend in the late 1960s.

Historic photos line the hall. Father Dominic O'Connor, a former Bend priest and national hero of Ireland, is the prominent figure mid-hall, with photos showing him in a WWI chaplain uniform strolling the streets of Ireland, and even the ceremonial return of his remains to County Cork, almost 30 years after his death in Bend. Check out the 1947 Washington Redskins (respectfully renamed the Commanders in 2022) photo along with one of the Green Bay Packers. Don Deeks, pictured in both, is Mike and Brian McMenamin's uncle.

Look up! Two skylights decorated by Francisco Cristich pay tribute to the Irish roots of the parish. One depicts the Yeats family, as well as folklore, poets, and Celtic art. The other is a collage of elements: earth, fire, water, air. Just outside the hallway on the east wall are two tile collages – a project overseen by Donna Lutzsky, art teacher at the new St. Francis School. The tiles, done by students there, include images of Father Luke and St. Francis. The ironwork silhouettes over the collages were made by Joe Elliott.

The Courtyard: Circle to the left (west) and follow the path between the Old School and Parish Center. Gems tucked into the landscaping include wrought iron arches created by Architectural Ironworks and a handcrafted cedar fence. Near the hotel lobby entrance is an old coat of arms urging you to move ever *forward*, and two pinecone-capped iron posts stand at the end of the path.

Parish Center, Outside Entry: Notice the king's head above the door... He's smiling because through these doors lies a kingdom of fun.

Parish Center Entry: Sharing space with the stylish light fixtures and painted borders is Jenny Joyce's campfire gathering. Here, a monk tells a story around the campfire and even the wolf listens.

The Fireside Bar: This former Knights of Columbus meeting space is a great spot to pass the time. Framing the fireplace is a large iron mantle with a modern geometric pattern. On the walls are four panels of traditional Indonesian folk art. Although largely a Muslim country, the reverse painting on glass exhibits the rich Hindu traditions that date back centuries. Typical of the style, virtually all of the space is filled and probably represents a Hindu celebration such as a wedding.

The Soaking Pool: The crown jewel of McMenamins soaking pools is semi-enclosed, allowing bathers to experience sun, rain and snow through the open roof. Craftsman David Schlicker created the stained glass windows high above the pool depicting the sun and moon. Hundreds of hand-glazed tiles line the pool, and four tile murals show the life of St. Francis and his compassion for animals. The tilework was done in a Byzantine style with Celtic touches by Bend artist Justyn Livingston.

The Parish Center Hallway: Pause to take in the hall gallery of historic photos, Indonesian panels and McMenamins posters advertising past events. Have some fun here, we did!

The Rambler Room: Named for the first car the nuns owned, a 1968 Rambler Ambassador, this event space is filled with amusing items. The paintings here are Jenny Joyce's flying nuns swooping in for a picnic and Olivia Behm's fanciful depiction of Father O'Riordan and one of the Sisters from the school driving the Rambler past the Museum of Wonders. The museum building still stands – now as a beauty salon – on old Highway 97, just north of downtown.

Father Luke's Room: This room is a microcosm of the property. Here you'll find historic photos, original paintings and one-of-a-kind light fixtures mixed with European signs and African, Indonesian and Japanese pieces.

Indonesian woodwork frames two works by Jenny Joyce. The first is her panel showing a Hippodrome, which stood for years on Wall Street across from the school, attracting all ages dressed up for Saturday night dancing. The second is a tribute to Father Luke featuring four vignettes: the school, church, Sisters and Father Luke himself. Olivia Behm's piece portrays the nuns playing baseball with Father Luke, a huge baseball fan, smiling down from the heavens. The paintings share the space with four handmade iron light fixtures. The room also includes a wood, leather and iron Taiko drum, hammered bronze gong, and deep-relief elephant tusks.

The Theater: Each light fixture is a unique creation by Wolfgang Forge in Vernonia, Oregon and the creative minds at Hippo Hardware in Portland. Their elemental and organic designs appear almost alive against the "Olympic Club Red" paint that coats the ceiling. This was the first time McMenamins commissioned unique fixtures.

O'Kane's: It's easy to spend the day in this cozy building that is capped by a one-ton cartouche salvaged from the Capitol Theater in Salem. The former one-car garage was transformed into a work of art. Hugh O'Kane's colorful story is retold in Jenny Joyce's panel. You'll also find an 1896 Round Oak stove, numerous stained-glass windows and three sets of church doors, one of which dates back to the 19th century.

Imagine the storied past of the backbar with its horseshoes and stained glass, and the bar itself is from an Indonesian side table. The rare Povey stained-glass windows are from an Elks Lodge in Portland. A hundred years ago, the Povey Glass workshop was considered the finest in the Northwest, and we are lucky to have a set. The clock depicted in one of the windows shows 11, the time when Elks members pay homage to their absent brothers. There are three English leaded glass windows and the torch stained glass on the north side originated in Centralia, home of McMenamins Olympic Club. On the back side of O'Kane's, plaster Celtic crosses break up the edifice.

The Ed House and Art House: St. Francis School bought four bungalows east of the original school building in the 1960s for a variety of purposes, one of which was an art classroom. In 2015, three of the bungalows were sold and moved to Sunriver to make way for 41 new hotel rooms; the fourth still exists as the Parish House. Opened in 2016, the Ed House and the Art House (namesake of a former bungalow) guestrooms pay homage to the nuns who taught at the school from 1936-2000 and the McMenamins artists who have imbued McMenamins' properties with beauty and imagination.