

Hammond's

Pieces of Heaven

Steeples, Towers, and Domes

People generally think of steeples, domes and bell towers as religious, however many have secular purposes as well. What these structures all have in common is that they are pieces of architecture, and we have many diverse examples in Hammond.

A **STEEPLE** is a tall tower on a building topped with a spire. Steeples, as we think of them, are made up of several parts; finial, spire, lantern, belfry and tower. These parts can be very simple or highly ornate, and not all steeples feature every component. Steeples can be traditional or modern. Traditional material may be heavy timber framed or made of masonry. More modern steeples may be made of lightweight fiberglass to reduce the weight on the main building. Hammond's examples range from ornate to simple and from old world to modern.

- **Tower base:** the lowest foundational section that emerges directly from the building roof, provides structural support; it often houses clocks, entrances or interior staircases
- **Belfry:** positioned directly above the tower, is the section that houses bells and features open or louvered sides so that sound can project outward to the surrounding area
- **Lantern:** situated above the belfry, is often the most ornate, with decorative sections. It usually features windows or open slats that allow natural light to filter down into the tower
- **Spire:** the tapering conical or pyramidal tip at the very top of the structure. While colloquially some use steeple and spire interchangeable, the spire is specifically the uppermost pointed section of the steeple



- **Finial:** the peak of the spire. It is frequently capped with a decorative ornament, a weathervane or religious symbol like a cross

Hammond has many unique steeples ranging from the very plain to the ornate. Here are a few examples:



1. Riverside Community Church



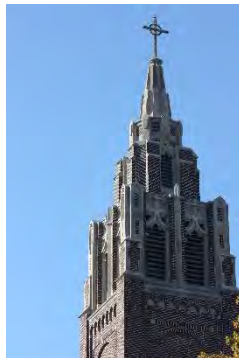
2. First United Methodist Church



3. First United Evangelical Lutheran Church



4. First Baptist Church



5. St. Casimir Church



6. First United Methodist Church

A **BELL TOWER** is a tower that contains one or more bells, or that is designed to hold bells even if there are none present. A bell tower is the heartbeat of a community. A bell tower commonly serves as part of a Christian church, but there are also many secular towers, often part of a municipal building, or educational establishments. Bells are rung from a tower to enable them to be heard from a distance. Bells may be rung, as a call to service, to mark time, used to herald special occasions or to ring out danger.

Bell towers, much like steeples, are made of different architectural elements:



- **Base:** the heavy bottom part on the ground that supports the whole tower and keeps it steady
- **Shaft:** the long, tall middle part of the tower that lifts the bells up high
- **Belfry:** the open room near the top where the bells hang
- **Roof:** the top cover of a tower which may be shaped like a point or a spire or square Norman style ramparts

There are many styles of bell towers.

Campanile, free standing bell towers, are most common in Italy. Early versions were often plain round towers with a few small windows and round arch opening near the top.

Belfry, while sometimes used as a general term for a bell chamber, it specifically refers to a heavily fortified, civic tower in places like Belgium or France. These often served as a symbol of medieval municipal power.

Westwork & Central church towers are traditionally attached bell towers that rise from the western façade or central crossing of a church. These are generally Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance architecture.

Here are a few of Hammond's examples:



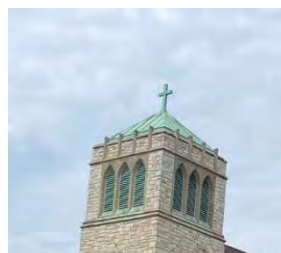
7. St. Joseph Catholic Church



8. Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church



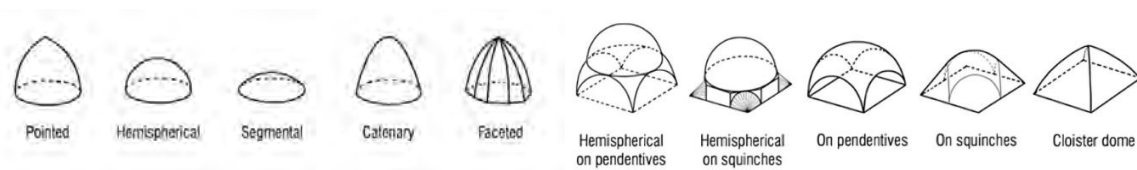
9. Hammond City Hall, Circa 1890



10. St. Margaret Mary Church

A **DOME** is an architectural element, that is the hollow upper half of a sphere. A dome can rest directly on a rotunda wall. A pendentive is a curved triangular architectural support that allows a round dome to be placed on top of a square surface or an elliptical dome to be placed on a rectangular surface. Domes have been used as far back as ancient Mesopotamia.

While we think of domes as the traditional half sphere they do come in many variations, such as bulbous domes or onion domes, beehive domes. There are also compound domes, which have a second smaller dome immediately above it and elliptical domes, which are oval rather than round.



Again, many of us think of them in a religious context but domes are also found on government buildings such as the US Capitol or on private homes such as in the original design of the Towle house prior to its 1911 remodel.

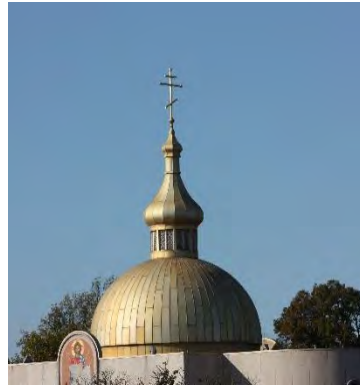
Common Functional and Ornamental Elements:

- **Oculus:** a circular opening at the top to let in light, reducing weight, famously seen in the Pantheon
- **Lantern:** a vertical structural element that tops the dome, allowing light in through a cupola
- **Coffer:** recessed panels in the dome ceiling that add structural strength while reducing weight
- **Cupola:** a small, secondary dome structure covering the lantern or top
- **Whispering Gallery:** the space/gallery inside the base of a large dome

Hammond only has a small variety of domes; they are each remarkable. Here are a few:



11. St. Demetrious
Greek Orthodox Church



12. St. Michael Ukrainian Church



13. Towle House, Prior to 1911
redesign

Bibliography

Britannica.com, Encyclopedia Britannica

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Rindgechurch.org

1. Riverside Community Church, 7449 Jefferson Avenue
2. First United Methodist Church, 6635 Hohman Avenue
3. First United Evangelical Lutheran Church, 6705 Hohman Avenue
4. First Baptist Church, 473 Sibley Street
5. St. Casimir Church, 4340 Johnson Avenue
6. First United Methodist Church, 6635 Hohman Avenue
7. St. Joseph Catholic Church, 5304 Hohman Avenue
8. Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, 7227 Hohman Avenue
9. Hammond City Hall, Hammond, circa 1890
10. St. Margaret Mary Church, 1445 Hoffman Street
11. St. Demetrious Greek Orthodox Church, 7021 Hohman Avenue
12. St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 7035 Columbia Avenue
13. Towle House, 229 Ogden Street, prior to 1911 redesign