

Limestone Rocks!

The Fencepost limestone, source of Post Rock, is abundant in fossils from the Cretaceous Era. 145-65 mya.



Top: The ammonite, *Collignoceras woolgari*, is a relative of the modern squid and octopus. Lower: *Inoceramus labiatus*, aka fossil clams, resemble modern sea shells.

Different Perspectives:



These before and after images of a limestone quarry in Russell County illustrate how AI photo enhancement can be used to bring new perspective to old photos.

Next Meeting:

Meetings of the Kansas Post Rock Limestone Coalition are held every two months in locations across the Post Rock region and everyone is welcome. Our next meeting will be Thursday, December 4th starting at 10:00 am at Sternberg Museum of Natural History in Hays, Kansas. Check our [Facebook page](#) and [website](#) for details.



Liebenthal St. Joseph Church recipient of 2025 Post Rock Limestone Preservation Award

By: Bradley Penka



At left is the church, new rectory, and school in the 1920s after reconstruction from the 1917 fire. At right, is the church and rectory today. The school is behind the trees in the background.

The Kansas Post Rock Limestone Coalition (KPRLC) announces its 2025 Preservation Award to recognize successful efforts to preserve and restore structures built with native greenhorn limestone post rock. The award is presented to St. Joseph Church of Liebenthal.

Liebenthal was the first Volga-German settlement in Rush and Ellis Counties founded February 22, 1876. By the beginning of the 20th century, the first church, constructed in 1877, had become too small to accomodate the growing congregation.

In 1902, German-born architect, Viktor Klutho, of St. Louis, Missouri drew the design for a new Gothic style church. From 1902 until 1905, the members of the parish worked to complete the building. Stonework was completed by the parishioners with Father Rudolf Stollenwerk overseeing the construction. Over two thousand loads of native "Fencepost limestone" were quarried from nearby hills northeast of the town, moved by wagon, cut, shaped, stacked and set to form the walls of this beautiful building. In 1917, parishioners constructed a three-story limestone school with four classrooms, a gymnasium, lunch room (parish hall), and living quarters for the nuns who taught in the school.

Continued on page 2



The camera captures a reflection as workers replace copper on the steeple of St. Joseph Church in Liebenenthal in 2019.



A long flight of steps lead to the front door of St. Joseph School.



An ornate staircase leads to the third floor of the Convent located in the native limestone St. Joseph School.

The Kansas Post Rock Limestone Coalition Newsletter is distributed about four times per year for members and friends of the Coalition. Bradley Penka, editor.

Liebenthal church survives two fires

From page 1

On August 13, 1917, a fire that originated in the rectory spread to the church roof and gutted the buildings. Father Stollenwerk again oversaw construction of the church using its original walls. The interior of the church was reconstructed nearly identical to its original appearance. A new rectory was constructed on the original site. The re-dedication took place on December 8, 1921.

In December 1959, fire again gutted the church, this time from faulty Christmas decorations. The interior was reconstructed and a dedication held on October 18, 1961. This time, the interior of the gothic cathedral had a more modern style, making it unique from other native limestone churches in the region. Still, its original walls remained strong.

In 2014, the interior was repaired and painted. The church and other buildings have also had new roofs installed withing the past 10 years. In 2019, the copper steeple was restored with new copper and new copper crosses were installed at the top of the tower.

In 2024, a member of the church purchased the three-story rectory with intent to preserve the ornately decorated structure. Many of the original furnishings remain in the residence and it retains much of its original character, with only updates to the plumbing and electrical systems.

In November, 2024, as part of the celebration of Rush County's 150th anniversary, the rectory, and school were reopened for public viewing for the first time in over two decades.

Today, St. Joseph Church, the tallest structure in Rush County, stands as one of the most beautiful churches on the Kansas plains and is a testament to the dedication and fortitude of our early settlers. The Kansas Post Rock Limestone Coalition congratulates St. Joseph Church as the recipient of its 2025 Preservation Award.

KPRLC Membership

Don't forget to renew your membership in the Kansas Post Rock Limestone Coalition. Your support helps us continue our mission of "promoting, preserving, and protecting the history, art, and architecture of the Kansas Post Rock Limestone region through education and tourism."

By being a member, you will help us to fulfill our mission, plus you and/or your business will have the opportunity to be featured in promotional materials and special events.

To join or renew, visit our website www.kansaspostrocklimestone.org/ and select membership. To pay by check, download and print an application, then mail to: Kansas Post Rock Limestone Coalition, PO Box 44, Lucas, KS 67648.

The Kansas Post Rock Limestone Coalition is a 501(c)(3) Kansas corporation and donations are tax deductible to the extent of the law.