St. Andrew Church

In the early twentieth century, the Western Knitting Mills, as well as other industries in the area, had trouble keeping Catholic workers in their employment for longer than a few months. The Rochester community had no Catholic Church, leaving many devout Catholic workers no choice but to leave the community in search of other employment. In 1912, non-Catholic mill owners gathered at the Detroit Hotel to discuss the issue of keeping Catholic workers in Rochester. The assembly invited Father John Needham of Royal Oak to help establish a Rochester Catholic Church. Even before a Catholic Church was established, Father Needham held the first Catholic mass in the home of Camille DeBaene on October 30, 1912. He continued to come every Friday to teach catechism and one day a month to hold mass.

In 1914, Father Plouried succeeded Father Needham. During the spring of that year, the Catholic Church committee bought an old one-story frame house that was once used as a doctor’s office on the southwest corner of Walnut and Third Street. The property was bought for $3,000; $980.00 of which was earned through bazaars, concerts, and bake sales. The old office was remodeled into a chapel. The church was placed under the patronage of St. Andrew the Apostle and on May 31, 1914, Father Needham blessed the structure as Saint Andrew Catholic Church. The church had a seating capacity of 150. By 1923, the church was unable to accommodate the growing congregation. The pastor, Father Thomas Crowley, promised that a new church would be built. In the spring, the old church was moved to the back of the lot. The parishioners earned some of the money for the new church by hosting
banquets. A new red brick church was completed in 1928 and seated 600 people.

Throughout the years, the church was repaired and expanded. In 1967, however, it was determined that a new church with a larger seating capacity was needed. In 1969, a new church, with a seating capacity of 1,350, was completed on Inglewood Road. The dedication of the new church was one of sadness mixed with happiness. In July 1971, the church sold its old building on Walnut to the city of Rochester. The church was demolished and became a parking lot.