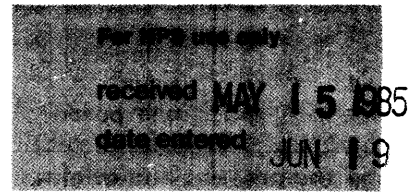


100-2031-0018  
100-2031-0018



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Christ Church of LaCrosse

and/or common Christ Episcopal Church of LaCrosse, Wisconsin

**2. Location**

street & number 831 Main street (commonly called: (Corner of Ninth and Main street) \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town LaCrosse \_\_\_ vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Wisconsin code 55 county LaCrosse code 063

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: community service, concert meetings

**4. Owner of Property**

name Rector, Wardens and Vestrymen for Parish Members of Christ Episcopal Church, LaCrosse

street & number 831 Main street

city, town LaCrosse \_\_\_ vicinity of state Wisconsin 54601

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds, LaCrosse County Courthouse

street & number 400 North 4th

city, town LaCrosse state Wisconsin 54601

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Historic LaCrosse /  
title Architectural and Historic Record has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no  
Rausch, Joan and Richard Zeitlin  
date August 1984 \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county  local

depository for survey records City Planning Department, City of LaCrosse, Wisconsin

city, town LaCrosse state Wisconsin

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved    date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"Christ Episcopal Church, on the northwest corner of Ninth and Main street, is an outstanding example of the Romanesque Revival style of architecture."<sup>1</sup> The church still retains its earlier dominance of the corner location. Its raised basement contributes to its grandeur by raising the main structure above the pedestrian and vehicular traffic levels. The more modern addition to the north used for educational purposes does not seriously affect the view of the original structure.<sup>2</sup>

It is a multi-storied design, approximately 150 feet long by 107 feet wide, cruciform in shape and built of native limestone. It has a tall tower, approximately 120 feet above street level on the south side of the east front, a shorter tower on the southwest corner of the apse/transept juncture, and a flèche-type crossing tower above the nave/transept intersection. The buff-colored limestone is rough cut to create a highly textured surface that contrasts strongly with the red Michigan sandstone used for framing elements on major openings, as string courses, drip moldings, decorative banding and the checkerboard decoration on the towers and around the apse.<sup>3</sup>

The most significant architectural feature of the church is the massive tower of the southeast corner. The single tower set to one side of the building dominates the intersection of major streets and counteracts the horizontal emphasis of the main building. It seems to be derived from H. H. Richardson's design for the towers on Trinity Church in Boston, although the architect for Christ Church, M. S. Detweiler did not simply copy Richardson's work. One of the main entrances to the church is on the south face of this tower and is decorated in red sandstone using Corinthian columns, a tympanum window, sculpted heads, and bands of carved molding representative of the Romanesque period. The corners of this tower become more rounded as it extends upward, softening its mass and creating a sense of weathering. The top level of the tower has a pair of round-headed arches between the three arched towerets on the corners.<sup>4</sup>

The south end of the transept contains a large round arched window framed with smooth red sandstone that carries raised bands of carving that repeat motifs found on the arch above the tower entrance. In the gable above the south window of the transept there is a round escutcheon with insignia of the historic episcopacy as it springs from the apostle Peter. It is banded with oversize voussoirs in sandstone and several courses of sandstone. Although the southeast corner with its dramatic tower was intended as the focal point of the church, the entire south side was decorated because of its location on Main street. Although Detweiler's design is typical of Romanesque Revival designs, he made a great effort to relate the building to the community. The white limestone of the exterior walls was quarried from a nearby local bluff and is an unusually late example of the use of local stone in this quantity. This stone either has a high sand content and erodes quickly or is a pocked limestone that does not hold a smooth finish. Both types of stone were used in the early history of LaCrosse, especially the limestone and it can still be seen as the foundation in most structures built in the city before 1910. The design date of 1898 indicates that the church is

<sup>1</sup>Leslie F. Crocker. "Christ Church; Romanesque Sermon in Stone". The LaCrosse Tribune 7 October 1979.

<sup>2</sup>Leslie F. Crocker. "Christ Episcopal Church: Architectural Description". unpublished ms. 1979.

<sup>3</sup>Crocker. ms.

<sup>4</sup>Crocker. ms.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

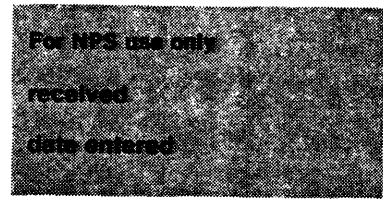
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**Continuation sheet**

**Item number** 6

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Intensive Architectural/Historical Survey Report 1983-1984 No  
August 1984, Joan Rausch and Richard Zeitlin.  
UW-L Area Research Library, LaCrosse, Wisconsin x local

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places No  
August 1984 State survey  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisconsin.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

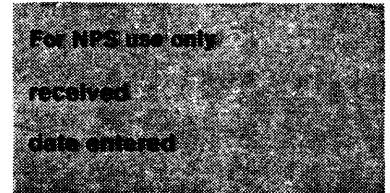
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Christ Church of LaCrosse, LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

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Christ Church of LaCrosse, LaCrosse County, Wisconsin  
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a product of the late phase of the Romanesque Revival when structural support problems and decorative details were already solved and the style was firmly established in the architectural community and the public as well.<sup>5</sup>

"At the time of its construction, the electrical work in the church came in for great comment. In 1898, such a large use of electricity was uncommon in this area, although times were quickly changing. There were 450 incandescent lamps throughout the church, each with a power of 16 candles. Early electrical fixtures used very low light output partially because the filaments of the bulbs couldn't stand the higher heat necessary for greater light and partially because society was used to the low light given off by kerosene or gas lamps. The bellows of the pipe organ were operated by electricity as was the ventilating system which could change the air in the church every ten minutes. Because of the dangers of fire from the new electrical system, the wires were run through iron pipes, a practice still used today. Thirty-one lights were hidden from the congregation, but poured light down on the altar to create a flood of light on the decorations. The dome contained twenty-five lights to illuminate it.<sup>6</sup>

"One of the outstanding features of the church is a stained and leaded glass window in the south transept, designed by the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company of New York, in 1898. Tiffany was best known for his elegant colored glass lamps, but his windows for homes and churches are equally impressive. The blue-green glass of this window and the contoured drapery of the figure of Christ are outstanding examples of Tiffany's use of color and texture in windows. The window was donated by Mrs. Angus Cameron, a famous local advocate of women's rights, to the memory of her late husband, Senator Angus Cameron."<sup>7</sup> Designed and incorporated into this window is the Cameron coat of arms. Of equal size and overall framing design is the leaded and stained glass window in the end of the north transept. This window was designed by Charles J. Connick and donated by Mrs. Frank P. Hixon in memory of her late husband who was one of the leaders of LaCrosse as well as a vestryman of the church. This window is a pictorial depiction of the Beautitudes designed in cooperation with donor, Connick and rector.

Beneath the entire building are rooms for Sunday school, guild meetings and other church and community activities.

The main floor of the church has chancel, nave, two transepts and cloister aisles. The chancel is a 34 X 40 apsidal form divided from the nave by the sanctuary rail. The nave is 82 feet in length by 36 feet in width and 36 feet from floor to the highest part of the ceiling. On either side of the nave the cloister aisles are reached between a row of massive pilaster piers, with richly decorated capitals, from which spring the arches supporting the clerestory walls. The clerestory is lighted by semi-circular shaped windows placed above the roofs of the cloister aisles. These aisles, 12 feet wide, run the full length of the nave, to the point where the transept intersects. The transepts are 22 feet wide by 33 feet deep. The intersection of transepts and nave are treated in massive piers with engaged columns from which springs the large vaulted dome, covering the axis or central portion of the building. The pilaster piers on both sides of the nave are connected above by a series of decorated arches. Mr. C. W.

<sup>5</sup>Crocker. Sermon in Stone.

<sup>6</sup>Crocker. Sermon in Stone.

<sup>7</sup>Crocker. Sermon in Stone.

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Mellinsh, sculptor and modeler of Columbus, Ohio, added the stucco and plaster decoration to the interior. The chancel was panelled with scagliola and pillars supporting the arches under the rotunda and along the cloister aisles were of the same decorative material. The pews and chancel furniture was designed by the architect and made by the Manitowoc Seating Company, of Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The altar and reredos were of special design and made by the E. Hackner Company of LaCrosse. The heating and ventilating system was installed by the Vogelgesang Furnace Company, of Columbus, Ohio and the V. Tausche Hardware Company of LaCrosse, who also did the slate, copper and tin work.<sup>8</sup> The massive, original cast iron boiler was only recently removed and new heating system installed.

Minor alterations and restoration has been necessary through the years although the structure remains essentially as it was built. Extensive problems with roof leakage necessitated the replacement of the original red tile tower roof and slate covering the nave to the present composition shingles over the nave with copper sheeting on the tower roof. One small chimney reaching to a basement reception/meeting room was removed from the chancel roof.

In 1962, an educational building of simple rectangular shape was built to the north of the stone church and joined at the north end of the narthex on the Ninth street side by a small connecting doorway. One small window was removed to accomodate the doorway -- no other changes were necessary or needed. At the west end of the building, on the Ninth street side, is a small chapel which was originally used as an office area for the church. No major changes were made in the conversion except in appropriate furnishings and entrance to the basement area through the interior. The narthex ceiling has been covered with accoustical tiles and the walls covered with a commercial panelling; the original stairway remains which connects this entrance to the basement rooms. The original 10 foot high double-panelled doors remain to the great tower entrance on the south side as well as similar doors to the center entrance on the west Ninth street side. Similarly designed doors are at the inside narthex entrance to the nave and at the outside entrance to the chapel. The original ceiling lighting fixtures in the nave have been rebuilt for larger lamps and reflectors in the early 1920's by the Benton Electric Company. Original wall lighting fixtures have been removed during the redecorating and painting of interior walls and to improve the lighting for the congregation. The interior has been repainted and the original scagliola of the columns has been removed. Painted decoration of Celtic-like design has been added to the ceiling over the chancel.

The basement or "undercroft" has been remodeled several times through the years to accommodate the changing activities of the church. It is now a large "hall" with panelled walls and storage rooms although the area originally was designed for creative productions with stage and auditorium. An area formerly used as a reception room, with fireplace to the exterior chimney now removed, has been incorporated into the hall. Original hardwood floors remain with carpet runners now in the aisles and carpeting on the chancel floor. Door hardware is the original brass. Additional stained glass windows have been added as memorials were given to the building. Exterior stone has

<sup>8</sup>"Artistic Architecture. The LaCrosse Daily Republican and Leader.  
31 December 1898. p.10.

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National Park Service**

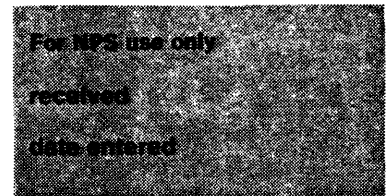
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worn and weathered due to its soft limestone content but remains in excellent condition despite the softening of corners. Tuck-pointing has been done to some exterior stone as needed. The placement of furniture and altars have been changed through the years but the church remains as built on the original site and in excellent condition and continual use. The corner of Ninth and Main remains at the edge of the present downtown area of LaCrosse although still centrally located in the city.

Although churches are often excluded from placement on the historic register, this example of architecture and the scarcity of this type in the area is good reason to request its inclusion.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1898–1899<sup>1</sup> **Builder/Architect** M.S. Detweiler<sup>2</sup>

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Christ Episcopal Church, on the northwest corner of Ninth and Main streets, is an outstanding example of the Romanesque Revival style of architecture."<sup>3</sup> "This church is one of two remaining examples of the Romanesque Revival style in LaCrosse that were constructed of stone."<sup>4</sup> The city once had several examples of this type of architecture but few used cut stone more appropriate to the style. "The overall design, the excellent use of colored stone, the decorative elements on the main tower and around the entrance, as well as the Tiffany window in the south transept make this church unique to the region."<sup>5</sup> The elaborate interpretation of this style as evidenced in this building was in anticipation of its proposed role as an Episcopal cathedral.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Christ Church building cornerstone. Dated 1898. Vestry minutes record construction began in 1898 and finished in 1899. Dedication ceremony, September 10, 1899. Dedication described in "Benediction of Christ Church," The LaCrosse Morning Chronicle, 12 September 1899.

<sup>2</sup> M. S. Detweiler, "Letter to Christ Church Vestry," 1898. Letterhead indicates Detweiler's firm as Detweiler, Restieaux & Co., Architects, Columbus, Ohio.

<sup>3</sup> Leslie F. Crocker, "Christ Church: Romanesque Sermon in Stone," The LaCrosse Tribune, 7 October 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Leslie F. Crocker, Christ Episcopal Church, MS, 1979. "The other example is the German Methodist Episcopal Church on the northeast corner of Seventh and Ferry."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Vinter, Parish History by Rector, Christ Church 1920–1957, Cassette, 1971.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached references on continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property .53

Quadrangle name LA Crosse

Quadrangle scale 1.62500

**UMT References**

A 

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4	8	5	2	2	6	5
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**Verbal boundary description and justification**

"situated in the city and county of LaCrosse and State of Wisconsin and known and described as follows, viz: lots number seven (7) and eight (8) in block number four (4) of Burns, Franam & Burns Addition to LaCrosse "

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state does not apply code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clarice W. Estes Parishoner and volunteer archivist for Christ Church

organization   date February 14, 1985

street & number 1522 Main telephone (608) 784-6741

city or town LaCrosse state Wisconsin 54601

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *J. H. Hearn*

title DIRECTOR OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION date APRIL 29, 1985

For NPS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u><i>Delores Byrum</i></u>	Entered in the National Register
Keeper of the National Register	date <u>6/19/85</u>
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

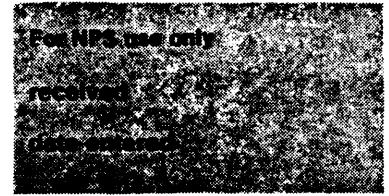
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Architecture

"This church is one of two remaining examples of the Romanesque Revival style in LaCrosse that were constructed of stone."<sup>7</sup> "The Romanesque Revival style was very popular in LaCrosse during the period 1880-1900 when the lumber boom created great wealth in the community. The design date of 1897-1898 indicated that the church is a product of the late phase of the Romanesque Revival when structural support problems and decorative details were already solved and the style was firmly established in the architectural community and the public as well."<sup>8</sup>

This late version of the Romanesque Revival was probably based on designs by H. H. Richardson published in the late 1800's. It was constructed of cream colored limestone with contrasting red sandstone banding, arches and decorative details. The massive corner tower is its most outstanding feature and is derived from Richardson's design for Trinity Church in Boston. This tower contains a highly sculpted entrance on the ground level with a top story of paired arched windows between triple arched towerets on the corners. The subtle rounding of the tower's corners as it rises softens its mass while creating an effect of weathering over the ages. The exterior of the south transept uses a large window as the dominant form with sandstone bands and a round escutcheon defined by massive sandstone voussoirs.<sup>9</sup> "This church is the best remaining example of the Richardson Romanesque in a city that once abounded with various forms of the Romanesque Revival."<sup>10</sup>

M. S. Detweiler, architect of Christ Church, was chosen by the building committee of Christ Church after consideration of plans submitted by twenty prominent architects of the country. His experience included work in Denver, Iowa, Georgia and Ohio. His study of architecture included a course in design at the Chicago Art Institute and private instruction at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris.<sup>11</sup>

The Mead Construction Company of McDonald, Pennsylvania and owned by Mrs. Clara Mead began the construction of the church although it was finished by the Ohio Guarantee Construction Company due to financial difficulties of the first company.<sup>12</sup>

Historical Background:

Closely associated with the building of this church are those prominent and active early settlers who contributed to the building and establishment of the city

<sup>7</sup>Leslie F. Crocker, Christ Episcopal Church, MS, 1979.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Republican and Leader (LaCrosse), 31 December 1898, p.10.

<sup>12</sup>Minutes, Vestry of Christ Episcopal Church, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, Vol.1, 1857-1900.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

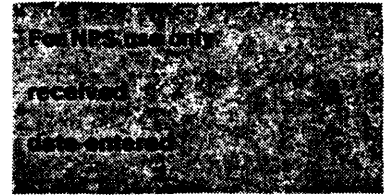
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of LaCrosse. It was a time of great wealth, expansion and a time of lumber boom. This church was seen to be a necessity for an active church population that had outgrown their first frame building on this site. This same group sponsored the first boy choir in the city and installed the first pipe organ in the city and desired to see a church of prominence built here. Diocese reorganization was needed and under discussion at this period due to growth of population within the diocese and the rapid population and business expansion in the western side of the State around LaCrosse. Communication within this large area was difficult for the existing diocese of Milwaukee hence the expected possibility that a new diocese would be created with Christ Church, LaCrosse designated as the cathedral of this new diocese. Unforseen by all was the rapid change and decline of the lumber trade and population and the designation of Eau Claire, Wisconsin as the episcopate. Before this occurred, however, the design, decoration (escutcheon on south face) and massive size was chosen as appropriate for a cathedral and was financed by wealthy families of the city.<sup>13</sup>

Church members of this building committee and first vestrymen of this stone church were, among others Henry Gund, Judge B. F. Bryant, J. M. Hixon, F. P. Hixon, Joseph W. Losey, General Orlando Holway, H. C. Stevens, W. R. Sill, Angus Cameron, and Gysbert Van Steenwyck.<sup>14</sup> Each of these men made major contributions to this growing community as businessmen, bankers, arbitors of labor and transportation rates, creators of streets, parks and cemeteries, government officials, commissioners of immigration and organizers of cultural activities for the community.<sup>15</sup> The first religious service held in LaCrosse was the beginning of the Episcopal church and held at the home of John M. Levy, one of the earliest settlers of LaCrosse.<sup>16</sup>

Art

Prominent on the south face of the building at the end of the south transept is the leaded and stained glass window 15 foot 6 inches by 15 foot 2 inches. Designed

<sup>13</sup>Robert D. Vinter, Parish History by Rector, Christ Church 1920-1957, Cassette, Personal Interview 1971.

<sup>14</sup>Minutes, Vestry Minutes of Christ Episcopal Church, LaCrosse, Wisconsin, Vol. I, 1857-1900.

<sup>15</sup>A. H. Sanford and H. J. Hirshhehimer, A History of LaCrosse, Wisconsin 1884-1900. LaCrosse Historical Society, 1951.

<sup>16</sup>Mrs. John M. Levy, Life in Early LaCrosse, MS, LaCrosse Public Library.

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and made by the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company in New York in 1898, this window was donated by Mrs. Angus Cameron, a newspaper woman and famous local advocate of women's rights, to the memory of her late husband, Senator Angus Cameron. "The blue-green glass and contoured drapery of the figure of Christ are outstanding examples of Tiffany's use of color and texture in windows."<sup>17</sup>

Equal in size and prominent at the end of the north transept is the leaded and stained glass window designed and made by Charles J. Connick of Boston. It is a pictorial series of nine scenes based on the Beautitudes. Wood and lead framing and Venetian tracery similar in design to the Tiffany window hold this window in place. Given in memory of the late Frank P. Hixon and donated by his wife, this window was added to the church after the completion of the building.<sup>18</sup>

Two leaded and stained glass windows are located in the upper wall of the apse signed by the Fanagan Biedenweg Company of Chicago. A rose window is in the upper east face of the narthex above the central entrance. Numerous other leaded windows exist along the cloister aisles.

Still in use is a lectern topped with bookstand fronted by a hand-carved mahogany eagle with out-stretched wing spread of approximately 30 inches. It remains a symbol of continuity to parish members and has been in constant use in this building and the former church on this same site.

<sup>17</sup>Crocker, Sermon in Stone.

<sup>18</sup>Minutes, Christ Church.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

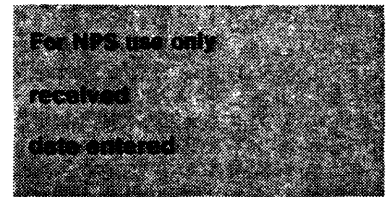
**National Register of Historic Places  
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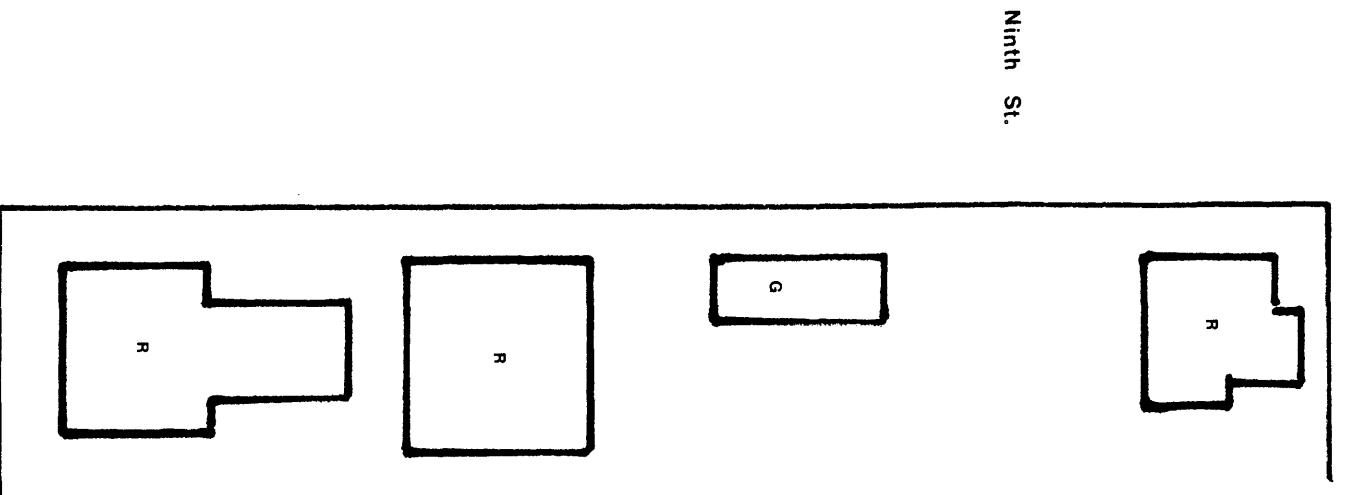
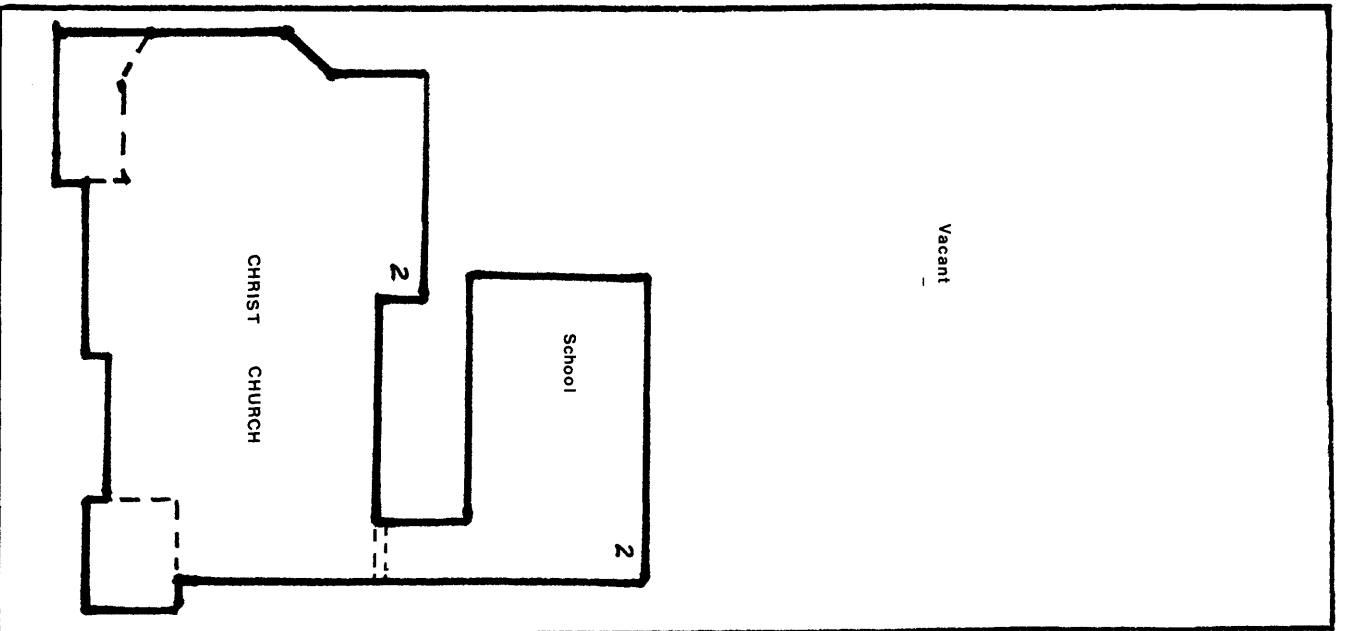
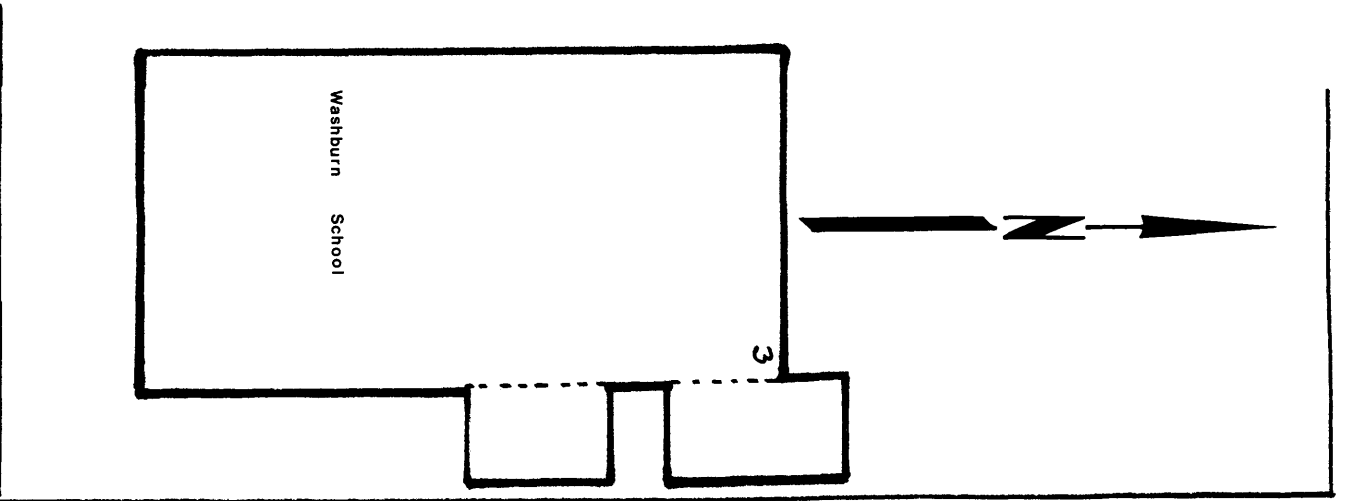


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