

PH 36 3871

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	SEP 8 1976
DATE ENTERED	DEC 12 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

NAME

HISTORIC AND/OR COMMON
The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 48 Hunter Street, S. W.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

___ VICINITY OF

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5th - Andrew Young

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Fulton

CODE

121

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Archdiocese of Atlanta

STREET & NUMBER

756 West Peachtree, N. W.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fulton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Pryor Street

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Survey of Historic Structures, Sites and Districts:
Atlanta Urban Design Commission

DATE

November, 1972

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Atlanta Urban Design Commission

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (1869-73), in its finished state in 1873, did not appear exactly as it does today because of slight alterations which were done in the interior in 1923, 1954, and again in 1969. The exterior has remained the same over the years except that in 1923 it lost a parapet balustrade with large trefoil crosses that connected the four pinnacles of its northern tower. Rising from a base of heavy granite blocks, the mass of the Immaculate Conception is positioned about six feet above street level. This granite base encloses the basement area which was and continues to be used for offices and Sunday school rooms. The church super-structure, built of red brick, has a modified cruciform plan defined on the exterior by a pitched roof over the long nave, intersected by shorter transept roofs adjacent to the apse and its side chapels. However, the transepts are not apparent when viewing the nave interior because the main arcades continue uninterrupted from the vestibule to the apse, thereby concealing the enlarged final bays of the flanking side aisles. The whole of the interior is composed of a vestibule opening onto a wide nave and side aisles which terminate at the apse and side chapels.

The most striking feature of the Immaculate Conception's exterior is the pair of square towers flanking the central gable over a tripartite entrance. The southern tower is seventeen feet square and eighty feet high, whereas the larger, northern tower is twenty-two feet square and one hundred twenty-five feet high. This northern tower consequently projects farther beyond the plane of the side aisle and facade. Though different in size, these towers are complementary in proportion and style. Both towers are framed at each corner by large buttresses that project at right angles to the wall planes and are comprised of three equal stories surmounted by a taller fourth story. Heavy and massive on the first floor, the buttresses graduate inward, becoming smaller and lighter as one's eye moves upward to the second, third, and fourth floors. This effect, countered by pilasters attached to the buttresses near the top of the taller north tower, is carried above the cornice by turrets or pinnacles surmounted by conical spires.

Recessed behind the planes of the flanking towers is a central bay comprised of a tripartite portal below and an upper story crowned by a triangular gable with a raking cornice. This triple portal is located at the top of a staircase that rises two flights from the street to the level of the granite base. The center door is larger than its two flanking doors and contains stained glass in its modified tympanum. Above the entrance is a large Gothic window, subdivided by tracery into narrow lancets framing a central panel and surmounted by three oculi. The gable carries a large cross.

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The composition of the nave and transept walls of the northern and southern elevations are identical except that the larger, northern tower projects outward farther. The four bays of the side aisle are separated by three buttresses slightly smaller than the tower buttresses. Above the buttresses are small pinnacles which seem to thrust through the pitched roof. A Gothic tracery window opens in each side aisle bay above windows with segmented arches in the basement level. Rising above the roof of the side aisles, a clerestory is also divided into four bays by strip buttresses. Each contains two small lancet windows. Much taller pinnacles, surmounted by granite spires and framed by gables like those atop the lower pinnacles, ascend above the eaves and are actually continuations of the buttresses.

The transepts are divided into two zones by a stringcourse slightly higher than the side aisle eaves. The lower zone contains a large, four part, intersecting tracery window. Above it and under the transept gable is a rose window composed of a large central circle surrounded by eight smaller ones. Both transepts have two large buttresses above which project octagonal pinnacles with conical spires like the facade towers.

A view of the apsidal end of the Immaculate Conception shows that the pitched roof of the apse is lower than that of the nave. Correspondingly, the roofs of the side chapels are lower and steeper than those of the side aisles. Buttresses frame the apse contained in the apsidal bay. The lateral chapel walls contain a small lancet window with stained glass.

The plan of the interior has not been altered since it was designed by Mr. Parkins. Its interior dimensions are as follows: nave width, thirty-two feet; side aisles, nineteen feet; nave length, one hundred forty feet. The entrance vestibule communicates with the nave by three arched doorways which correspond to the entrance doors. The first story of the towers, which open from the vestibule, communicate, in turn, with the two side aisles through large depressed arched doorways. Over the doors leading from the vestibule to the nave is a rounded balcony projection denoting the organ loft. Separating the nave from the side aisles is a nave arcade composed of six pointed arches ornamented with toric moulding and held on five cast iron cluster columns. Above the arcade clerestory, windows are arranged in pairs over each arch

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and are separated by engaged cluster columns on consoles set in the spandrels. The consoles carry the wooden brackets of the wooden ceiling beams. The clerestory windows that correspond to the transept bay are blind windows and serve only to extend the pattern of the lancet shape the full length of the nave.

The transept bays which can be clearly seen on the exterior are almost completely disguised on the interior because of the continuous nave arcade. These transept bays are covered by pitched ceilings perpendicular to the pitched ceilings of the central nave and side aisles. Set in the bays, the large tracery windows and the rose windows above them are accommodated by the increased ceiling height.

A large, pointed arch separates the apse from the nave, and two similar arches separate the side chapels from the side aisles. Around these arches are mouldings that spring from tall, clustered columns which have Gothic, cabbage leaf capitals. Two arched openings, connecting each side chapel with the apse, are also framed by these mouldings. Today the back walls of both side chapels and apse are flat, and their ceilings are tunnel vaulted. It is documented that originally the apse was composed of a solid wall with a blind arcade which stretched behind the altar. The arcade was removed at some point between 1900 and 1954. According to Atlanta newspaper accounts, in 1880 there was above the altar a painting of the Immaculate Conception copied from one by Murrillo. By 1900 the painting had been replaced by the installment of a stained glass window. The present window depicting the Immaculate Conception was placed in the wall in 1921.

Originally, under the direction of the architect, W. H. Parkins, the length of the nave ceiling was frescoed with twelve large pictures of the apostles by McGriff and Sheridan of Atlanta. Directly over the pointed arch of the apsidal opening was another fresco representing the Crucifixion. The present pitched ceiling of painted pressed tin, supported by wooden brackets and beams, apparently was superimposed over the original plaster ceiling, but it is not recorded when or how this was done.

In 1880 the wainscoting along the aisle and nave walls was added and remains today. In 1923 the present stained glass windows were installed. By 1954 the plaster walls were cracking. They were covered over with a cloth which concealed damages and prevented further cracking. The wall behind the high altar was stuccoed

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and scored, as were the walls in the side chapels. In 1969 the church was repainted as it appears today. The walls are a light grey and the arches are lined with gold paint.

In 1880, a rectory was built on to the east end of the church. Constructed of brick and designed to blend easily with the church structure, the rectory forms a homogeneous composition with the church of mid to late nineteenth century architecture.

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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) History	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1869-1873

BUILDER/ARCHITECT William H. Parkins

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception (1869-1873), the first Catholic church and Mother Parish of Atlanta, is one of the oldest standing structures in the city. Designed by William H. Parkins, one of the first practicing Atlanta architects, this church is a highly imaginative Early Victorian Gothic Revival building. Drawing upon English and European church architecture, Parkins built what was in 1869 the most magnificent structure in the city. It was the harbinger of the new, post-Civil War Atlanta and has remained standing in the central city. Now surrounded by the skyscrapers of 20th century Atlanta, Immaculate Conception is one of the few vestiges of the old city and of the work of William Parkins.

The first Catholic church in the city was a square-framed, weatherboarded structure built in 1848. It was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and named the Immaculate Conception in her honor.

In 1861, Father Thomas O'Reilly was appointed Pastor of the church, and it was because of his influence with General Slocumb of Sherman's army that many of the original buildings of Atlanta were saved from burning in 1864. During the seige, however, the Immaculate Conception was severely damaged by the shells which had exploded about it and at the end of the war stood worn and unstable above the ruins of Atlanta. The parishioners, though few in number, decided in 1869 to build a new church to the Virgin. The architect, W. H. Parkins began designing the structure which was to be built on the site of the former church, situated on what was the corner of Hunter and Loyd Streets (Loyd Street is now Central Avenue). The estimated cost was between \$75,000 and \$80,000. The cornerstone was laid on September 1, 1869 by the Right Reverend Bishop Verot of Savannah, but it was not until 1873 that the huge structure was finally completed and dedication ceremonies held.

Not all of the parishes in the metro-Atlanta area grew out of the Immaculate Conception, but the church is considered by Atlantans to be the Mother Parish of them all. In 1954, the Church of the Immaculate Conception was rededicated as a shrine. After renovation of the church, Bishop Hyland, Auxiliary Bishop of

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Colley, Van Buren, History of the Diocesan Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Atlanta, Ga.: The Diocesan Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, 1955.

King, Maria, "Two Atlanta Churches: An Analysis of Nineteenth Century Revival Architecture," Thesis, Emory University, 1975.

Consultation with Elizabeth A. Lyon, Chairman Advisory Committee on Historic Structures, Atlanta Urban Design Commission

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	7,4,1,8,2,0	3,7,3,7,3,2,0 ³³⁰	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Maria King, Research Assistant for Atlanta Urban Design Commission

ORGANIZATION Dept. of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Section and Atlanta Urban Design Commission DATE March 8, 1976

STREET & NUMBER 270 Washington Street, S.W., Room 703-C TELEPHONE (404) 656-2840

CITY OR TOWN Atlanta STATE Georgia

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

David M. Sherman
DAVID M. SHERMAN

DATE 8-26-76

TITLE

Chief, Historic Preservation Section

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ACTING

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 12/12/96

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12/6/76

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Savannah-Atlanta, on June 2, 1954, offered Solemn Pontifical Mass of thanksgiving. During the sermon he referred to the Mother Church as a "Shrine to the Blessed Mother." From that point on this Catholic church has been known as the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and was in 1954 officially designated a shrine by decree of Archbishop Gerald P. O'Hara.

Equally as significant as its role, in the religious history of Atlanta, is the quality of the church's architecture. The architect, William H. Parkins, came to the city from New York in 1868 when he was thirty-two years old and from the years 1869 until 1882, he was responsible for the designing of many outstanding structures there. More recent research has begun to locate his buildings over a large radius outside of Atlanta.

As a beautiful example of Gothic Revival church architecture, the Immaculate Conception reflects a concept of style that nineteenth century theoreticians of architecture emulated. It is necessarily eclectic, manifesting an American version of religious architecture in which such eclecticism is a product of both foreign and local influences. The overall structure of the church comprised of flat brick walls, square towers with corner pinnacles, and rigid, mechanical proportions, suggests a "Commissioners' Gothic" style which grew up in England in the very early 1800's. But then Parkins combines with these characteristics, picturesque qualities, the most obvious of which is the towered facade. One might think of the uneven towers of Chartres Cathedral. The tripartite portal and the three rose windows, again, reflect Chartres and France rather than medieval England. In the interior, the cabbage leaf capitals on the engaged columns around the apse and the side aisles are also characteristic of French Gothic. The nave, because it lacks vertical articulation, is characteristic not of the French or English Gothic, but is found in provincial adaptations of Gothic architecture in Italy. The rounded organ loft balcony is also very Italianate in feeling. The architect seems to have taken qualities he felt were appropriate to the religion and attached one quality to another, resulting in a church of revival architecture different from any other.

Because, in 1869, Atlanta's people had little money, he made use of the most readily available materials such as the sturdy cast iron columns. With Parkins' sensitive use of brick, his technical skill, and his knowledge of northern United States and

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English architecture, along with his obvious love for the romantic picturesque, he designed the Immaculate Conception. It is, in its Gothic simplicity, austere, and at the same time representative of a most devoutly Catholic ideology.