

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Washington
COUNTY: Pierce
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE JUL 30 1974

1. NAME

COMMON: Steilacoom Catholic Church
AND/OR HISTORIC: Church of the Immaculate Conception

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 1810 Nisqually	
CITY OR TOWN: Steilacoom	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: #6 - Honorable Floyd V. Hicks
STATE: Washington	CODE: 53
COUNTY: Pierce	CODE: 053

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Corporation of the Catholic Archbishop of Seattle		
STREET AND NUMBER: 907 Terry Avenue		
CITY OR TOWN: Seattle	STATE: Washington	CODE: 53

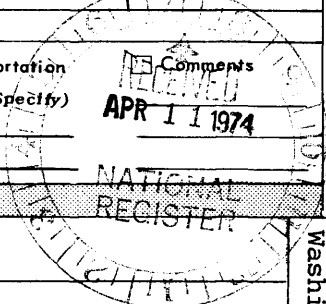
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Pierce County Court House - County City Building		
STREET AND NUMBER: 930 Tacoma Avenue South		
CITY OR TOWN: Tacoma	STATE: Washington	CODE: 53

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey		
DATE OF SURVEY: 1937 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE: District of Columbia	CODE: 11

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Immaculate Conception Catholic Church stands at the corner of Main and Nisqually streets in Steilacoom, the first incorporated town in the State of Washington. It has occupied this site since 1864 when it was removed from Fort Steilacoom, one and a half miles away, where it was constructed in 1855.

The main structure of the church and its adjacent bell tower presents the same appearance as when the church was built 119 years ago. The major changes to the structure were additions of a presbytery at the rear of the church during the period 1867-1870 and a small front porch in more recent years. Neither detract from the original appearance since both additions were built in the same style as the original structure.

The building is of frame construction and painted white. The clap-board siding consists of some of the first boards to have been cut in the earliest sawmills in the state.

With the exception of the bell tower, the church is in an excellent state of preservation today, and is still in daily use. New foundations were placed in recent years and minor interior modifications have been made, such as placing asphalt tile on the aisle of the nave and installing a central heating system. Recently a successful campaign to raise funds to restore the bell tower was conducted. It is anticipated that within a few months the church's original bell will again summon the citizenry to services.

The interior, with minor exceptions, has remained the same for over 100 years. A few years ago, turned wood finials and small metal candle holders which lined the top of a simple wooden reredos which half-circles the altar, separating the sanctuary from the sancristy, were removed. However, these have been retained and could be replaced in the event it was desired to restore the interior more closely to its original appearance. Similarly, doors which have been removed from the pews were also stored and could be returned to their original use. The doors are equipped with their original hinges and white porcelain knobs.

Of the 14 pews (seven rows of two each), only the first four rows are original. The others are later additions but closely resemble the originals. The pews are of fir, painted yellow and glazed with brown.

The interior, including the ceiling, is of board and batten construction and painted white.

The stations of the cross are depicted by tinted engravings which were printed in Frankfurt, Germany. They are titled in three

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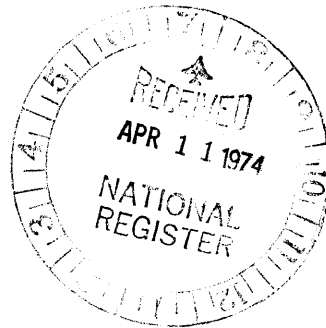
(Number all entries)

#7 - Description
Steilacoom Catholic Church

languages--English, French, and German. Although undated, they are obviously of 19th century origin and are of a type which is seldom, if ever, found in active churches today.

One particularly unusual feature of Immaculate Conception is that it is one of the very few Catholic churches in the United States in which the altar continues to face the wall and at which the priest serves mass with his back to the congregation. In almost all other churches, the altars have been moved forward, or new altars erected, to permit priests to face forward in conformity with the practice recommended by Vatican II.

In summary, Immaculate Conception Church is a vital, living memento of the Pacific Northwest frontier. Unlike so many preserved buildings of the past, it is not a museum or a curiosity but rather a useful structure still fulfilling the purpose for which it was built over a century ago.



B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1855, Moved 1864

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | losophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The unassuming appearance of the white clapboard Immaculate Conception Catholic Church standing on a hillside overlooking a view of the blue waters of Puget Sound and the white-clad Olympic Mountains belies its importance in the early history of Oregon and Washington Territories. Although it would look at home in an old New England town, the little church once knew the footsteps of trappers, soldiers, Indians, and settlers who inhabited the Washington frontier. For Immaculate Conception is the oldest Catholic church in the State of Washington and in its early days was a center of missionary activity in the Puget Sound area. Fittingly, it stands in Steilacoom, the oldest incorporated town in the state.

Immaculate Conception's beginning, however, was not in the town in which it now stands, but a mile and a half away at Fort Steilacoom. According to Wilfred P. Schoenberg's A Chronicle of the Catholic History of the Pacific Northwest 1743-1960, the church was built at the fort in 1855, although this reference states that the exact date of construction is not conclusively know. However, this date is further supported by the Centennial Edition of The Catholic Northwest Progress (September 8, 1950) which also states that the church was erected in 1855.

Fort Steilacoom had been founded in 1849 when soldiers of M Company, 1st Artillery, under command of Captain Bennett Hill disembarked at the mouth of Steilacoom River (now Chambers Creek). They moved into several log structures on property formerly farmed by Joseph Heath on the bluff above Puget Sound. This land on which the fort was established was leased by the U.S. Government from the Hudson's Bay Company which had first occupied the area in 1833.

Fort Steilacoom was the first United States Army post to be established in the Puget Sound area after settlement of the Oregon boundary question in the treaty of 1846. This pact determined that the United States, and not Great Britain, would hold sovereignty over land below the 49th parallel in the Pacific Northwest. And so the flag of the United States came to the shores of Puget Sound, not only to protect the settlers from increasingly restive Indians but also to give visible evidence that the Americans now controlled the recently disputed land.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

American College Bulletin, Vol. 2, No. 2, April, 1904.

Bellingham Herald (Bellingham, Washington), July 14, 1929.

Bonney, W. P. Pierce County, Vol. I. Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Co., 1927.

Catholic Northwest Progress, August 6, 1915; July 23, and November 12, 1926; and Centennial Edition, September 8, 1950.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

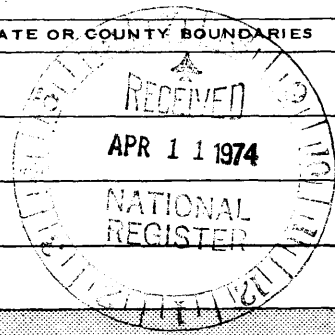
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		47° 10' 17"	122° 35' 27"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "			37	
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

10/530800
5224050
CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/2 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Lynn D. Scholes & Gary Fuller Reese

ORGANIZATION: Steilacoom Historical Museum Association DATE: 3/27/74

STREET AND NUMBER:
P.O. Box 16

CITY OR TOWN: Steilacoom STATE: Washington CODE: 98388 53

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: Charles H. Odegaard
Charles H. Odegaard

Title: Director - Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

Date: April 3, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

A. Rueantense
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 7/30/74

ATTEST:
[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 7.26.74

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#8 - Significance
Steilacoom Catholic Church (1)

A number of Catholics were among the military personnel who made up the new garrison. Accordingly, in 1854, Bishop Francis Norbert Blanchet of the diocese of Oregon City directed the Rev. Louis Rossi to go to the fort. There, with the assistance of soldiers, he erected a chapel--the church which now stands in Steilacoom. Initially, it was under the patronage of St. Michael the Archangel, but in 1856 the edifice was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. It not only served the personnel of the fort, but also was the headquarters for Catholic church activity for the surrounding area. Baptisms and weddings of settlers were conducted there and funeral masses for some of the earliest pioneers were said in the chapel.

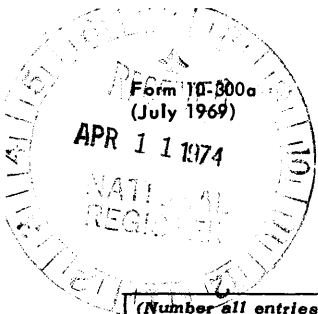
With subjugation of the hostile tribes in the Indian Wars of 1855-56, in which the troops at Fort Steilacoom played a key role, and the end of the Civil War, the fort was beginning to lose its importance (It was abandoned in 1868). As the tide of emigrants swelled on the Oregon Trail, new settlements were growing, among them nearby Steilacoom which had been founded in 1851.

To meet the demands of Catholics in that town, the church was removed to Steilacoom in 1864. There it was reassembled and was dedicated by Bishop Blanchet on July 26, 1864.

Father Rossi remained six years, using Steilacoom as a center for his work in Port Townsend and Olympia. During his stay at Steilacoom, he baptized four or five hundred Indian children, performed twenty marriages, and erected six churches. Father Rossi also erected the church at Port Townsend and was instrumental in founding the Church of St. Michael in Olympia.

During this period, Steilacoom was the Catholic missionary center for the northern part of the Oregon diocese. Belgian priests spearheaded this activity and such names as Loulard, Leclair, Ricard, and Brouillet appear on the roster of the first priests in the area.

The Sisters of Charity of Providence came to Steilacoom in 1862 and erected a new school, St. Joseph's Academy, and built a convent. Classes were begun January 4, 1864, and the school was formally dedicated on July 2, 1864, only a few days before Immaculate Conception Church was dedicated on its new site next to the convent. The school and convent were closed on June 24, 1875, after Steilacoom's hopes to become the metropolis of the Pacific Northwest were dashed when the Northern Pacific Railway determined its western terminus would be in Tacoma.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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#8 - Significance
Steilacoom Catholic Church (2)

Father Brondel came to Steilacoom August 28, 1867. In a letter written in 1868, he gave his first impressions of the area:

"Ten miles to the north of Steilacoom, at the mouth of the Puyallup (River) and ten miles to the south, on the banks of the Nisqually (River), are the Indian reserves bearing these names. There are scattered about throughout the country sixty families of white farmers. Twenty of these--the nearest living five miles from my residence--are Catholics. By dint of hard labor they eke out a poor but honest living. At Steilacoom itself but three families, of the forty making up the population, are of the Faith. A mile and a half from the town I have a few church members among the soldiers of the United States Fort established there."

"My church looms up in the middle of the woods. Connected with it there is no presbytery, but I rejoice in having a convent near by. Its community of three Sisters take care of a few orphans and teaches the children of the town and of the surrounding country. On the first Sunday of my arrival, after three ringings of the church bell, I celebrated Mass for a congregation--filling one half of the seats--of fifty people."

At the end of three years, Father Brondel could report forty-five baptisms, one-hundred and sixty Easter communions, three marriages, twenty-eight first communions, and six Christian burials. He had also, during these three years, the means to build a \$200 presbytery and to pay \$16 monthly for the meals that were brought to him three times a day from the convent next door. After eleven years (one year in Eastern Washington), he was appointed Bishop of Vancouver Island.

In these years, many missions were founded in the Puget Sound area. Missionaries from Steilacoom traversed the shores of the Sound, ministering to both whites and Indians. Gradually, many of the newer missions became more important than Steilacoom, and in a few years the center of activity shifted to Port Townsend.

The last resident pastor at Steilacoom was the Rev. Peter F. Hylebos, who eventually left in 1881 to found the Catholic church in Tacoma. Father Hylebos, who spoke seven languages, was a distinguished scholar and graduate of the University of Louvain in Belgium. Prior to coming to Steilacoom, he had founded the first church at Cowlitz Prairie. His name is preserved in the naming of Hylebos Waterway, one of the main dock areas in the Port of Tacoma.

From 1881 until the present, Immaculate Conception has been administered as a mission, first from Olympia, then from Puyallup, and after 1894

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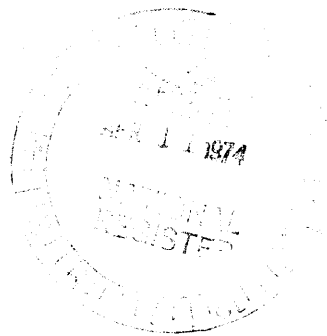
#8 - Significance
Steilacoom Catholic Church (3)

from Tacoma. In 1968, St. John Bosco Church was established only a few miles from Steilacoom and it has since been responsible for Immaculate Conception. Presently, a retired priest, Father Martin Duggan, lives in Steilacoom and says daily mass in the church, the first to do so since Father Hylebos left ninety-three years ago. However, the church has never ceased to be in use although during some periods services were conducted only on a monthly basis.

The historical significance of Immaculate Conception was recognized by the Catholic Church on September 21, 1918, when a tablet in front of the church was unveiled under the direction of W. P. Bonney, curator of the Washington State Historical Society. Bishop Edward J. O'Dea of Seattle made the principal address at the ceremony and blessed the tablet. Among those who spoke was the Rev. Father Hylebos who had been the last full-time pastor when he departed 37 years before.

The inscription on the bronze tablet, mounted on a granite boulder, reads: "This Catholic Church was erected near Fort Steilacoom by soldiers in the early 'fifties'. Afterwards moved to the City of Steilacoom and dedicated Church of the Immaculate Conception. In commemoration this tablet placed 1918 by Washington State Historical Society." The tablet also bears the seal of the society.

Immaculate Conception has also gained federal recognition in that details of its construction were registered in the Historic American Buildings Survey conducted in 1937 by the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations of the U.S. Department of the Interior.



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#9 - Major Bibliographical References
Steilacoom Catholic Church

Chronique de la Provine des Sts, Anges. Vol. 1804-1894.

Historic American Buildings Survey, No. 39-W2, U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, Branch of Plans and Design. 8 sheets.

Hunt, Herbert. Tacoma: Its History and Its Builders, Vol. I. Seattle: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917.

Schoenberg, W. P. A Chronicle of the Catholic History of the Pacific Northwest, 1743-1960.

