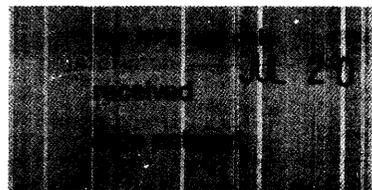


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



1982

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

1. Name

historic Roberts Park Methodist Episcopal Church

and/or common Roberts Park United Methodist Church

2. Location

street & number 401 North Delaware Street N/A not for publication

city, town Indianapolis N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Indiana code 018 county Marion code 097

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 type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <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: |

4. Owner of Property

name South Indiana Conference of the United Methodist Church

street & number 2429 E. Second Street

city, town Bloomington N/A vicinity of state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marion County Recorder

street & number City-County Building

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Roberts Park Methodist Church is a large, Romanesque Revival structure situated on the near east side of downtown Indianapolis. This imposing building was constructed in 1870, using limestone from Emmitsville, Indiana. The building is basically rectangular in plan, with a bell tower on the southwest corner. The church has a gable roof that was originally slate but is now covered with fiberglass shingles.

The main (west) facade of the building faces Delaware Street, a major traffic artery, and consists of a rectangular central block and the bell tower. Buttresses located on this central block divide it, visually, into three units, with the center unit being the largest and most monumental. This center unit is three bays wide and is marked by the recurring use of round-arched openings arranged in arcades. The intricate moldings, chamfered embrasures, and ornate columns make this arcade the most decorative exterior element of the building. The ground floor features an arcade comprising three compound arches springing from engaged columns with floriated capitals. These arches contain the main entry doors, which are surmounted by stained glass rose windows. A stone belt course over this arcade separates the ground floor level from subsequent floors. A two-story arcade, three bays wide, begins at the second floor level and echoes some of the first floor design. This series of three arches again springs from engaged columns, this time two stories high, with decorative embellishments at the base, midpoint, and capital of each column. Quatrefoils appear in the voussoirs of the arches. Each of the arched openings in this arcade features a pair of smaller, round-arched windows on each story level, surmounted by a roundel. A belt course separates this arcaded area from the gable area, which contains a simple arrangement of four smaller, round-arched windows linked by an impost course. The gable, itself, is decorated with a frieze embellished with medallions, and features finials at the gable stops. A 10' statue of the Virgin Mary stands at the gable's vertex. The entire center unit of this central block is flanked by smaller units one bay wide; each of these two units contains a round-arched window on each of three floor levels.

The three-story bell tower is located on the south end of the west facade. The tower contains rounded-arch windows at the first and third floor levels, while the second floor level carries a tablet giving the name and construction date of the building. Buttresses are used on each corner of the tower. Originally, it was planned that a steeple would rise from the tower and provide a suitable location for the church bell, but the steeple was never constructed. A small, pyramid-roofed structure atop the tower currently houses the bell.

The interior of the church is notable for its abundant use of finely-crafted woodwork and its large and impressive sanctuary. The ground floor of the building contains the lecture hall, a large room featuring oak woodwork and ornate, cast iron columns with floriated capitals. A pair of elaborate staircases lead from this area to the main sanctuary on the second floor. These staircases are crafted of black walnut and feature massive hand railings and large turned balusters. The main sanctuary, itself, was built without any interior support columns, despite its 62' width, and features a ceiling height of 34'. The walnut staircases continue up from the sanctuary to the galleries, which wrap around three sides of the sanctuary, sweeping down to form a choir area along the east wall of the building. These galleries are also made of walnut but are supported by cast iron posts with floriated capitals, painted to resemble the surrounding wood. The pews in the sanctuary and galleries are original, and provide seating for approximately 1200 people.

In 1927, an addition was constructed at the east end of the building, housing a gymnasium, a stage, and several classrooms. This addition was designed to harmonize with the original structure, and includes buttresses and rounded-arch windows among the design elements. In the late 1950's the interior of this addition was remodeled, and the stage and gym were replaced with an apartment for the maintenance personnel and additional classroom and office space.

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/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input 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 1869-76

Builder/Architect Dietrich A. Bohlen, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Roberts Park United Methodist Church is architecturally significant as one of the major works of Dietrich A. Bohlen, one of Indiana's premier architects. The building also has religious significance as the current home of the city's first Methodist congregation, which was organized in 1821. This structure was begun in 1869, but financial problems caused construction to be halted after the first floor was completed in 1873. The building was finally completed and dedicated in 1876.

Dietrich A. Bohlen was born in Germany in 1828 and came to Indianapolis in 1850. After working with various other local architects he went into private practice in 1853. By the time he was commissioned to design the Roberts Park Church, he had already completed work on the Morris-Butler House (National Register, 1973), St. John's Catholic Church (National Register, 1980), and the convent and chapel at St. Mary-of-the-Woods at Terre Haute. Tradition maintains that he patterned his design for Roberts Park Church after City Temple in London. Considered one of the finest Romanesque church structures in the area, the building was hailed as a local landmark soon after its completion. Early guidebooks of Indianapolis typically pictured it when presenting photos of the city's most prominent structures. Bohlen's architectural firm, one of the nation's oldest, went on to design many of Indianapolis' finest structures, including the Majestic Building (National Register, 1980), the City Market (National Register, 1974), and the Crown Hill Cemetery Chapel (National Register, 1973).

The building is the fourth home for the city's original Methodist congregation, which was organized in 1821. The Methodist Church saw rapid growth in this area throughout the 19th century, and included as members many of Indianapolis' most prominent citizens. Despite the gradual commercialization of their downtown neighborhood, this congregation remains one of the strongest religious organizations in the city, and currently draws members from the entire Indianapolis area.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approximately one acre

Quadrangle name Indianapolis West

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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B

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| Zone | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | |

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|------|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Square 18 of the southwest quarter of Hasson's Subdivision of the City of Indianapolis

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. Noel E. Cord (Ruby J.), member

organization Roberts Park
United Methodist Church

date 8-13-79

street & number 5317 E. St. Joseph Street

telephone 317/357-9697

city or town Indianapolis

state Indiana 46219

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

James M. Ridenour for

title James M. Ridenour
Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 12, 1982

For NPS use only

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

Allous Byers

Entered in the
National Register

date

8/19/82

Keeper of the National Register

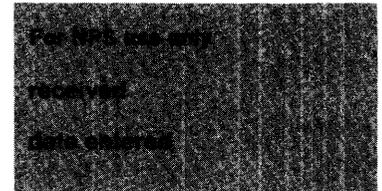
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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



Continuation sheet Roberts Park Meth. Church

Item number 9

Page 1

Pamphlet: Methodist Episcopal Church, Historical Outline (Illustrated)
Program Sixtieth Anniversary, Pub. The Hollenbeck Press, 1902

Pamphlet: Roberts Park Methodist Church, One Hundred Twenty-fifth
Anniversary, Program and History

Article: Indianapolis Sunday Star Magazine, June 11, 1978, Pages 42-47

Indianapolis, Indianapolis: S. H. Knox & Co., 1907