

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

For NPS use only

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

received JUN 25 1986
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Church Of The Ascension

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1601 Pacific Avenue NA not for publication

city, town Atlantic City _____ vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Atlantic code 001

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Rector, Wardens & Vestrymen of the Church of the Ascension

street & number 1601 Pacific Avenue

city, town Atlantic City _____ vicinity of state New Jersey

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Atlantic County Clerk's Office

street & number Main Street

city, town Mays Landing _____ state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Atlantic City:Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date March 1979 _____ federal _____ state _____ county local

depository for survey records Office of New Jersey Heritage, CN 404

city, town Trenton _____ state New Jersey 08625

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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION

The Church of the Ascension is a historical center of the City of Atlantic City. The church is an 1893 building of Basilica plan with central nave, clerestory, and side aisles. The edifice was executed in a decorated, eclectic fashion combining Romanesque features and Spanish Renaissance influences. There is an adjoining three story parish house of complementing design which was added to the church properties in 1900 with brick and terra cotta adornment juxtaposed to broad expanses of stucco, unifying the individual structures into one well balanced ecclesiastical complex. The facade gable is articulated by the ascending series of brick "steps" at the cornice line. A tripartite central doorway is flanked by brick and terra cotta pilasters, inspired by the Greek Corinthian order by receiving their expression from a "vocabulary" of seashore motifs. Echoing this portal is a five part row of arched windows, entered at gallery heights.

The steep pitch of the gabel roofs are covered with earth-red spanish tiles, although the side aisles are presently re-roofed with asphalt shingles. Fourteen ounce standing seam cooper covers the semi-circular apse (added at the extreme end of the church in 1922, Frank A. Watson, R.A., Philadelphia, Pa.) and the parish house has a builtup hot roof.

Architecturally, the tower rising from the corner of the property pleasingly dominates not only the connecting structures, but also the adjoining streets. Brick quoins visually strengthen the corners. Winged cherub heads spout from angular intersections. Terra cotta moldings display egg and dart detailing. Festooned floral ornamentation adorns the top and a massive, classically derived cornice terminates the masonry construction. Above this point, a copper, louvered cupola is surrounded by a terra cotta balustrade stretching between heavy piers. Surmounted by the cross, this domed roofed structure holds a fine twelve note carillon, original with the building.

Floors of the narthex covered with tiles reported to have been made in Holland are laid smooth and level with the wooden floors of the nave. Three steps elevate the chancel floor above the nave. One step elevates the sanctuary above the chancel and the altar is raised three steps above the sanctuary floor. These chancel and sanctuary areas are covered principally with Vermont "cream" marble tiles with stair treads and risers being constructed of Tennessee pink marble. Adjacent walls are finished in "Litholite" draughted stone. Pulpit, railings, sedila, font, and cathedra are a very fine type of cast stone.

The heating system is unique as there are hot water pipes under each pew. This was to keep the parishioners feet warm. This is further illustrated by the floor plan, a copy attached hereto. The floor plan is an exact plan.

There was an auditorium which was sold to the N.J. Bell Telephone Co. for their expansion. The building was torn down.

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Church of the Acension, Atlantic City,
Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ Item number 7 Page 1

Twenty stained glass figural windows executed by Lavers & Westlake, London, England in 1902 line the nave. Following a major fire in an adjacent hotel, this same firm re-executed (from original sketches) the ten windows from the Gospel side of the church. All of these original windows were damaged beyond repair with the single exception of the St. Michael window which was slightly altered and moved to the Rector's office. There are three beautifully executed windows in the Chapel.

Sanctuary windows depict the life of Christ and are executed in a 13th century manner by the D'Ascenzo Studios of Philadelphia. The Assumption of Elijah, also executed by D'Ascenzo in medieval style is seen in the roundel of the chancel.

An integral feature of the musical life of the church is the four manual Moller pipe organ, donated to the church in 1916 by Walter E. Edge. Walter E. Edge was elected Governor of the State of New Jersey in 1917 and again in 1943. The organ was given to the Church of the Ascension in memory of his first wife, Lady Lee Phillips who died July 14, 1915. At the time of its installation, it was reported to be the largest instrument on the South Jersey coast, consisting of a two division chancel organ and a three division gallery organ, all under the command of one console.

The oak case of the chancel organ reflects an expression of architectural elements. Filagree panels fill the space between small turned columns. Rising above this, a pair of spirally incised "Byzantine inspired" columns support the projecting center of the case with the intervening spaces filled with functional large scale open diapasons.

The fabric of this fine survivor of the 19th century is a "tapestry" of distinct elements, owing as much to the traditions of many centuries past as to the influences in the age of "steel and steam". But this eclectic edifice is orchestrated into a working expression of faith.

The carillon which is hand pulled was given in memory of Francis West Hemsley who died September 11, 1882 and Susan O. Hemsley who died June 5, 1878.

The tower & chimes were erected by Fredrick Hemsley and Elizabeth Hemsley Avery.

Parish House - The Parish House was erected in 1900 and is decidedly Romanesque. The entrance is from 30 South Kentucky Avenue side of the building

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Church of the Acension, Atlantic City,
Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ Item number

7

Page 2

and can also be entered through the north side double door of the inside of the church. It consists of three floors. The first floor contains the Sacristy - beyond is a meeting or reading room and beyond that the choir room and music room. There is a hand-rail which can be mounted by stairs or a chair glide. The second floor consists of a lavatory, large dining room and a large well equipped kitchen. The third floor consists of a bathroom and three large meeting rooms which are used for Church School. There are two lavatories on the first floor, one for male and one for female.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1893-94 **Builder/Architect** Lindley Johnson

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE

The Church of Ascension at the corner of Pacific and Kentucky Avenues, is Atlantic City's best preserved, "high" style church, by a noted Philadelphia architect, Lindley Johnson (1854-1937). Its central position on Pacific Avenue, on the boundary between the hotels of the resort and the shops and residences of the permanent community makes clear its social role as a representation of local cultural aspirations. Finally, it is of note as an impressive example of eclectic architecture, that merged Romanesque Revival and Spanish motifs exemplifying "trendy" design characteristics of a resort, but also denoting its elite social characteristics by its superbly detailed interior and innovative structure.

When Johnson was asked to prepare plans for the Church of the Ascension, he had already become an important architect of resort architecture, having designed hotels and cottages in Winter Harbor and Grindstone Neck, Maine, a casino, club and cottages at Pike's Peak, Colorado, and numerous buildings along the New Jersey shore, including a hotel at Brigantine, the Atlantic City Country Club, and the shingle, Brighton Hotel in Atlantic City. With these buildings, Johnson showed the up-to-date styling, typically either Queen Anne or shingle style that resorts demand. He was thus a logical choice for this new Episcopal church that succeeded Thomas Richard's brownstone Victorian St. James as the fashionable place to worship. Its location, further to the west at Kentucky, is also of note, marking the gradual shift of the big hotels toward the Park Place and Illinois Avenue locations of the turn of the century.

Johnson was of note in his own right as one of the early designers who made the shift from Victorian to turn of the century styles. This allegiance was marked by his position as a founder of Philadelphia's T-Square Club, an assembly of young architects who reshaped both the style and the nature of practice from a business toward its "artistic" image. His career was of further note as one of the first Philadelphia architects to attend the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and included a brief stint in Frank Furness's office before setting out on his own. The 1880's and 1890's were the most active years of a visible career, and the Church of the Ascension marks one of the high points.

The church itself is of special note for its innovative adaptations of high style Queen Anne to a more Spanish motif. The Queen Anne had been associated with English taste (and Episcopalian-Anglophilic taste) for a decade. Its chevroned arches, and brick coursed base reflect that more medievalizing sources, but the broad stucco surface, and the small dome of the tower are more exotic

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ATTACHED

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property ±1 Acre

Quadrangle name Atlantic City

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	5	4	9	0	6	0	4	5	3	6	6	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at the Northwestwardly corner of Pacific & Kentucky Aves. then extending Westwardly along side of said Pacific Ave. 75" to a point thence northwardly on a line drawn parallel with said Kentucky Ave. 150' to other point on the Westwardly side of said Kentucky Ave. and thence Southwardly along the same 150' to the Northwardly side of said Pacific Avenue and place of beginning. Block 29, Lot 59.
List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county NA code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Louise Spall, Chairperson, Warren Bradway, Father R. Collins, S.S.C., William Duchesne, Doris Fenton, Nicholas Hillyer & David Van Sant.

organization The Church of the Ascension date 2/29/84

street & number 1601 Pacific Avenue telephone Church: 344-0615
Rectory: 266-8807

city or town Atlantic City state New Jersey

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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Sharon C. Zemanke*

title Asst. Commissioner For Natural Resources date June 13, 1986

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

for *Sharon C. Zemanke* **Keoper of the National Register** Entered in the National Register date 7-24-86

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration _____

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,

Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 1

-- perhaps recalling the fashionable work of Carrere and Hastings at St. Augustine, Florida. The delicacy of the interior forms a marvelous contrast with the massive masonry of the exterior. Slender iron columns, exposed and obviously modern, recall the Furness office use of iron in such buildings as the B & O Station, and the University of Pennsylvania Library. This building survives in a remarkably complete state.

The social position of the church is of note as well. Founded in 1879, the church marks the maturing of the resort from its purely summer population to a year-round city. With the Library, St. Nicholas-Roman Catholic Church the new high school, and hospital, all on Pacific Avenue, that street became the focus of the year-round community. The Church of the Ascension is the earliest building of that row. It is thus the first important civic building of the mature city.

As the work of the regionally important architect for the church of a significant group of developers and builders of Atlantic City, and an important landmark that describes the new largely vanished sophistication of the resort, the Church of the Ascension deserves to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The original deed from Frederick Hemsley, Et Ux to the Rector, Wardens & Vestrymen of the Church of the Ascension was filed May 34, 1883 and recorded in the Clerk's Office of the County of Atlantic, in Deed Book, 117, page 407, & also known as Block 29 and Lot 59.

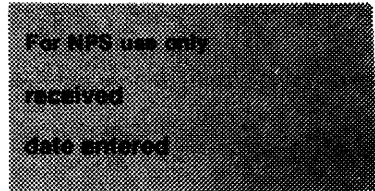
The Church of the Ascension is the mother church of Absecon Island. Its offsprings were: The Church of the Good Shepherd, Rhode Island Avenue in the Inlet Section; St. Augustine's at 1709 Arctic Avenue, All Saints Episcopal Church at 10 South Chelsea Avenue; and the Church of the Epiphany in Ventnor.

ARCHITECT -- LINDLEY JOHNSON 1/18/54 - 2/27/37

The architect Lindley Johnson was born in 1854 in Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania., the son of Joseph Warner Johnson and Mary W. Johnson. He resided in Rosemount, Pa., and his office address was the Harrison Building, Philadelphia.

Johnson was educated at the Lauderbach's Academy and Germantown Academy. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, his major was Scientific Course and the date of his graduation was 1875. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree. He received his initial architectural training at the University of Pennsylvania and

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



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

Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,

Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 2

he was a world traveler, visiting China, India and Australia. He attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris, France for three years and received his training in the office of Frank Furness.

Mr. Johnson's principal works include general domestic work with country clubs, hotels, churches, etc. He designed a large number of hotels and cottages in the Atlantic City area.

A member of the Beaux Arts Society of New York, architectural society, Johnson received a medal at the International Exposition at Washington for hospital and tubercular subjects.

Mr. Johnson was considered as one of the able architects of the City of Philadelphia, noted for originality in his designs and for the faithful compliance with his undertaking and obligations. He received the appointment of architect for Fairmount Park. The music pavilion, one of the noted features of the park, was designed by him as well as many other artistic adornments of the gardens. He superintended the alteration of the Rittenhouse Club, designed the residence of Aldred C. Ray, Chestnut Hill; H.M. Sill, T. Harry Dougherty, Mrs. Reigel, Germantown, the Brighton Hotel and many others including the 2nd National Bank, Atlantic City, The Ivanhoe Hotel and Gresham Hotel.

The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide has on record the information concerning the Church of the Ascension. It is contained in Volume 8, Number 3, page 30. The date is 1/18/1893.

PROJECT REFERENCES

- 1886: Hall residence, Germantown, Philadelphia
Brighton Hotel, alts & adds, Atlantic City, NJ
Hawkins cottage, Media, PA
Rex, Alfred, res., Chestnut Hill, Phila.

- 1887: Hotel, Bramwell, VA
Second National Bank, Atlantic City, NJ
Schl., Pennsylvania Ave., Atlantic City, NJ
Ogden, Edward, alts & adds to res., Riverton, NJ
Alts & adds, 1527 Locust St., Phila.
Dixon, Geo., res., Rosemont, PA
Heyl, Geo., res., Rosemont, PA
Levi, Sam'l., 2 res., Locust St., Phila.

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Church of the Acension, Atlantic City,
Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ Item number 8 Page 3

- 1888: Johnson, Lindley, res., Rosemount & Montgomery Aves., Rosemount, PA
Hemsley, Frederick, pair of res., Tulpehocken & Green Sts., Germantown,
Phila.
Music pavilion, Lemon Hill, Fairmount Park, Phila.
Art Club competition, Phila.
Wilson, Dr. E., res., 2038 Locust St., Phila.
Mayer, Gen., alts & adds to res., Highland Station, Chestnut Hill,
Phila.
Res., alts & adds, 1013 Arch St., Phila.
- 1889: Tiers, W.T., res., Devon, PA
Congill, E.L., 2 residences, Washington Terrace, n.P.
Office bldg., 512 & 514 Walnut St., Phila.
Gardette res., Manheim St., Germantown, Phila.
- 1890: Wanamaker, John, stable, Broad & Carpenter Sts., Phila.
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Chapel & Sunday schl. Chestnut Hill,
Phila.
- 1890: Graham land Improvement Co., hotel, Graham, VA
Hotel, Brigantine Beach, NJ
Wright, R.K., Jr., res.
Coffin, J.C., res., Brigantine Beach, NJ
Philler, Wm. R., res., Haverford, PA
- Real Estate Investment Co., hotel, club, boat house, Winter Harbor, Me
Hotel, Ivanhoe Furnace, VA
Hotel, Grindstone Neck, Gouldsboro, ME
Tiers, W.T., cottage, Winter Harbor, ME
Trotter, Nathan, cottage, Winter Harbor, ME
Levis, Chas. M., res., Cheltenham, PA
Levis, Sam'l. W., cottage, Winter Harbor, ME
Lennig, J.B., cottage, Winter Harbor, ME
Dixon, Geo., cottage, Winter Harbor, ME
Broadmoor Land & Investment Co., 2 cottages, Colorado Springs, CO
Princeton Club, 1223 Locust St., Phila.
Smith, E.D., res., St. Davids, PA
Esling, W., res., 2107-2109 Locust St., Phila.
Hall, Winifred, VA

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Church of the Acension, Atlantic City,

Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 4

- 1891: Freedley, A., res., Winter Harbor, ME
Ivanhoe Hotel, Ivanhoe, VA
Colorado Springs Casino, casino, 4 cottages, club bldg., & casino annex, Pike's Peak, CO
Struthers, Wm., res., PA
Philips, A.M., res., Main Line, PA
Bispham, Geo., res., Merion, PA
Wilcox, W.J., cottage,
Barnes, W.H., cottage, Colorado Springs, CO
Bispham, James L., res., Overbrook, Phila.
Wright, Sidney L., res., Carpenter St., Mt. Airy, Phila.
Esling, W., alts & adds, 2109 Locust St., Phila.
Irwin, M. Spence, res., Grindstone Neck, ME
Brighton Hotel, alts & adds, Atlantic City, NJ
Sharon Estate, residential development, Chevy Chase, MD
Ridgeway, J.J., office bldg., 12th & Locust sts., Phila.
- 1892: Wright, Sidney, res., Germantown, Phila.
Clafin, Wald M., res., Wayne, PA
Episcopal chapel, Grindstone Neck, ME
Lindsley, A.V.S., office bldg., Nashville, TN
Ackler, J.H., res., Nashville, TN
Wills, Col., 2 cottages, Nashville, TN
Chevy Chase Land Co., 6 cottages, Washington, D.C.
Newlands, alts & adds to mansion, office bldg., store, 12 mechanics cottages, n.p. (Frank G.)
Stedwagon, E.J., res., n.p.
Townsend, J.B., Jr., res., Overbrook, Phila.
Schoeff, W.K., res., n.p.
Quaker City Motor Co., stable, 23rd & Filbert sts., Phila.
Smith, Byron L., res., Chicago, IL
Stewart, Sen. Wm. M., res., stable & barn, Washington, D.C.
Newlands, Francis G., Burlingame, CA
Wright, Sidney L., stable Carpenter St., Mt. Airy, Phila.
Brighton Hotel, casino, Atlantic City, NJ
Lanier, J. Buchanan, res., n.p.
Wilcox, James M., res. Nashville, TN
Hunting Club Bldg., nr. Washington, D.C.
Alts & adds, 1904 South Rittenhouse Square Phila.
Jarrach, Dr. W., res., Lehman St., Phila.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,

Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 5

- 1893: Ascension Episcopal Church, 1601 Pacific Ave., Atlantic City, NJ
Park guard hse., Fairmount Park, Phila.
Lake House, Altoona, PA
Struthers, Wm., alts & adds to res., Bryn Mawr, PA
Wilcox, James, alts & adds to res., n.p.
Merrick, J. Vaughn, Jr., res., Roxborough, Phila
Ryan, Archbishop, lodge, administration, bldg., & ornamental entrance
to Catholic cemetery, Mt. Airy, Chestnut Hill, Phila.
Claflin, Wald M., stable, Wayne, PA
Hays, Fred P., stable & storehse., City Line Ave., Overbrook, Phila.
McCarthy, E.W., 3 cottages, Lehman St., Germantown, Phila.
White, Wm. B., alts & adds to res., n.p.
- 1894: Magargee, S.J., 2 residences, Atlantic City, NJ
Globe Gas Engine Co., factory, e. side 49th St., & P.R.R., Phila.
- 1895: Philadelphia Gun Club, clubhse., Eddington, PA
Wanamaker, John, warehse., Carpenter to Washington, at Broad St.,
Phila.
- 1896: Wilcox, James M., res. & stable, Rosemont, PA
Struthers, Wm., cottage, Jekyl Island, GA
Hemsley, Frederic, 6 cottages, Chelsea, NJ
- 1897: Dessez, Leon, res., Chevy Chase, MD
Drinking fountains, Fairmount Park, Phila.
St. Joseph's Hosp., alts & adds, 17th St. & Girard Ave., Phila.
- 1898: Atlantic City Country Club, Atlantic City, NJ
Offices, alts & adds to fronts, 512-514 Walnut St., Phila.
Lisle, R.M., alts & adds to res., Paoli, PA
Hicks, Wm., res., Jekly Island, GA
- 1899: Stephenson, Walter B., res., Lower Merion Twnp., PA
Lesley, Robt., alts & adds, 312 S. 15th St., Phila.
Deveney, Chas. F., stable & alts & adds to res., Haverford, PA
Stephenson, Walter B., res., n.p.
- 1901: Townsend, J.B., Jr., res., Overbrook, Phila.
Sargent, Winthrop, res., Haverford, PA

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,

Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 6

For NPS use only

received

date entered

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History of Architecture on the Comparative Method

A. M. Heston Annals (Atlantic City Public Library) Pages 281-361.

The Church News of the Diocese of New Jersey, Volume XXXI, November, 1942, Number 6

Heston's Hand Book of Atlantic City, Page 66 (copyright 1892-A.M. Heston) Sketch of Early Church, in writer's possession

Deed Book 117, page 407, May 23, 1887 Atlantic County Clerk's Office, Mays Landing, NJ

Architectural Record - From the files of The Athenaeum, 219 South Sixth Street, Philadelphia, PA.

The Centennial Yearbook, 1879-1979 - The Church of the Ascension

Who's Who in New Jersey, Atlantic County, Author: Souder, H., New York City: National Biographic News Service, 1925, pp 80 (Walter E. Edge.)

The New Jersey Governor: A Study in Political Power, Author, Lockard Duana, pp 111-112 (Walter E. Edge).

Information on the Church's Pipe Organ, prepared by the Reverend William Fullerton Parker, Hopkinson House #1901, Washington Square South, Philadelphia, Pa.

Original Blueprints, by Stewart A. Jellett Co., Philadelphia, Pa. Engineers #1195 (for heating system) in the possession of the Church

George E. Thomas, Ph.D. Atlantic City Historic Buildings Survey, New Jersey Office of Historic Preservation, 1980. Inventory No. 36, pp. 12-14.

Moss and Tatmen, Biographic Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930, (Boston, 1983).

Locations of Drawings & Papers: PHMC; AIA Archives, UPA Archives

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,
Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ Item number 8

Page 7

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION -- FIRST 100 YEARS

During the early 1870's a group of devout Episcopalians was concerned that there were no year round services of the Episcopal Church in Atlantic City. Therefore, in 1879 when summer services were resumed for that year, they were destined never to be suspended.

On August 10, 1879 the opening service of the Church of the Ascension was held in a newly constructed building located at the corner of Michigan and Pacific Avenues. The Reverend J. Rice Taylor was then the priest-in-charge. The Church was incorporated on January 3, 1881, and the following year the Reverend William H. Avery became the first rector of the parish.

The Church grew and prospered to such an extent that the vestry felt the need for a more central location. The present lot at the corner of Pacific and Kentucky Avenues, was purchased in January, 1886 and the wooden church was moved in the spring of that year. At that time the entrance was on Kentucky Avenue.

The second rector was the Rev. John H. Townsend who assumed the pastorate in 1891. This dynamic priest immediately planned a new church building. The tower and chimes were given by the Hemsley family, and Miss Josephine Fletcher organized and directed the boys' choir which took part in the first service held in the new building on Whitsunday, May 13, 1894. In the fall of 1896 a pipe organ was installed and Mr. Albert Dietz came from New York City as the first full-time organist and choir master. Under his guidance the music of Ascension was brought to perfection. In the year 1900 this office was filled by Mr. Alger E. Weeden. For the next forty years this devoted and gifted musician left his imprint not only on the parish but upon the whole community.

The same year saw also construction of the parish hall buildings as well as beginnings of St. Augustine's and All Saints' Chapels. Father Townsend's dream of Ascension as the "mother church" was in the process of realization. Soon after the Church of the Good Shepherd was built in the inlet section and a large addition was built on the rear of Ascension's parish hall.

In the year 1910 Father Townsend resigned and the Reverend Charles M. Niles became the third rector of the parish. Under his leadership a substantial reduction of the large church debt was made. Father Niles died in 1919 as the church was at the point of being dedicated.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,

Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 8

He was in turn succeeded by the Rev. H.E.A. Durell who remained as rector for more than thirty years. Father Durell was a man of indomitable courage to whom much credit must be given for keeping alive the Church of the Ascension during the black days of the depression. No place was as hard hit by the depression as was Atlantic City.

In the year 1950, the Reverend Canon A.G. Waklin became the fifth rector. He came from Toronto, Canada, and faithfully served this parish for three years and then returned to Canada to assume an important post in the church there.

The vestry elected as rector of the parish the Reverend Gilbert D. Martin in October 1954. It was during this rectorship that many changes were made in the church building which greatly enhanced its beauty. The sanctuary was completed, the old parish house removed, the debt was paid and the building finally consecrated. Father Martin was rector for five years and was succeeded by the Rev. John Margos, who was rector for the next eight years. He gained for the parish much publicity in the community as a parish that was interested not only in its own parochial life but in the life of the common man who passed by the doors of the church. Father Margos resigned in August 1967 to become the rector of St. Michael's Church in Yeadon, Pa.,

In October of 1967 the Reverend Robert M. Collins was elected as the eighth rector of Ascension Church. During the past thirteen years many improvements have been made. The church building has been entirely redecorated. A new baptistry has been built as well as the All Soul's Chapel. An outdoor shrine facing onto Pacific Avenue has been added. It is a life size crucifix of bronze in honor of those who died in the Vietnam war and was given not only by the people of the parish but also by the business community of the neighborhood. In addition there has been an abundance of memorial gifts to beautify the interior of the church including a hand-carved set of Stations of the Cross, imported from Italy. Above all the spirit of renewal and spiritual growth has been evident among the people.

In this, our Centennial Year, we look forward to a second century of service as a missionary parish for Christ and His Church. The parish must stand as a witness to the Catholic faith of the Episcopal Church in downtown Atlantic City.

In this time of city-wide transition, the Church of the Ascension offers an enduring message. With God's help we shall be of even greater service to the community: to His great glory".

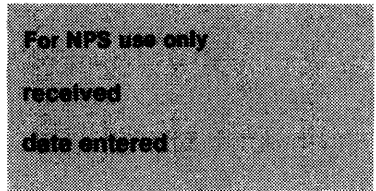
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,
Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 8

Page 9

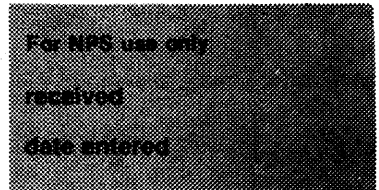


The Centennial Yearbook 1879-1979 -pp.1

As of this writing (November 1983) there remains two Episcopal Churches in the City of Atlantic City - The Church of the Ascension and St. Augustine's. Where there were once five Episcopal Churches in Atlantic City there are just now two. The Church of the Ascension being the "mother church" must survive and become a landmark in the ever changing facade of Atlantic City.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Church of the Ascension, Atlantic City,

Continuation sheet Atlantic County, NJ

Item number 9

Page 1

Green, Capt. John M., stable, Rosemont, PA
Ellison, H.H., res., Rosemont, PA
Brighton Hotel, new wing, Atlantic City, NJ
Townsend, J.W., res., Bryn Mawr, PA
Struthers, Wm., interior alts & adds to res., Bryn Mawr, PA

1902: Ellison, H.H., stable, Rosemont, PA
White Haven State Hosp., White Haven, PA (actually 1901-03)
Lillie, Louis, stable, Haverford, PA
Barringer, D.M., res., Radnor, PA

1904: Dalley, Florence R., res., Haverford, PA

1905: Register, res., stable & gardener's cottage, Haverford, PA
Keating, J.P., res., 322 S. 16th St., Phila.

1906: Alts & adds, 1823 Delancey St., Phila.
Green, John P., alts & adds to res., Rosemont, PA
Free Library of Phila., Tacony branch, Phila.

1910: Welsh, Sam'l., alts & adds to res., Bryn Mawr, PA (Cited as Johnson &
Page in the PRERBG, this may refer to an association with Geo. B. Page
(q.v.)

1912: James, Robt. C., res. Haverford, PA

1914: Harrison, Phillip, apt. hse. & post office, Bryn Mawr, PA

1915: SS. Peter & Paul Cemetery, lodge & entrance, Marple Twnp., PA

1920: Gane & Snyder, store & apt. bldg., Bryn Mawr, PA

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals; Withey, p. 325;
UPA Gen. Alumni Cat. (1917), p. 75; Koch, Bk. of Carnegie Libraries (1917);
T-Square Club: 1894/95; 1899/1900; 1902/03; 1903:
Phila. & Popular Philadelphians.

LOCATIONS OF DRAWINGS & PAPERS: PHMC: AIA Archives; UPA Archives.

Church of the
Ascension
Atlantic City
Atlantic County, NJ

Atlantic City Tax
Map

29 SHEET No 2

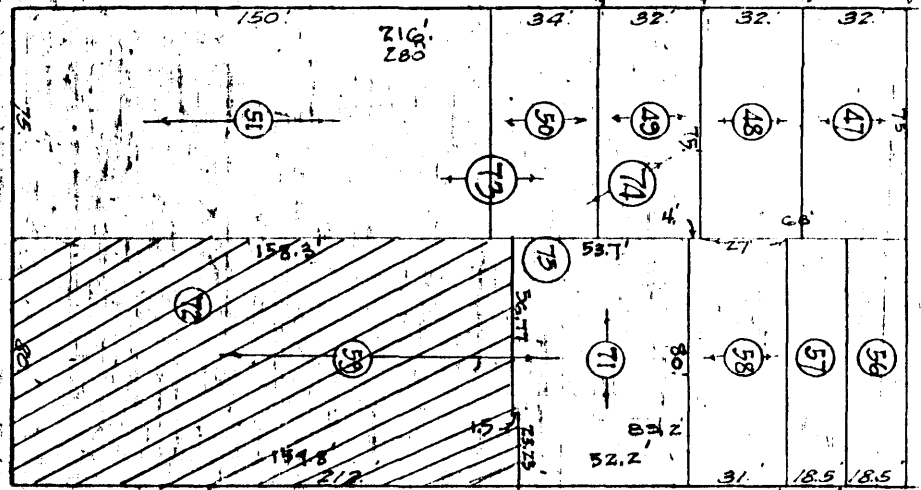
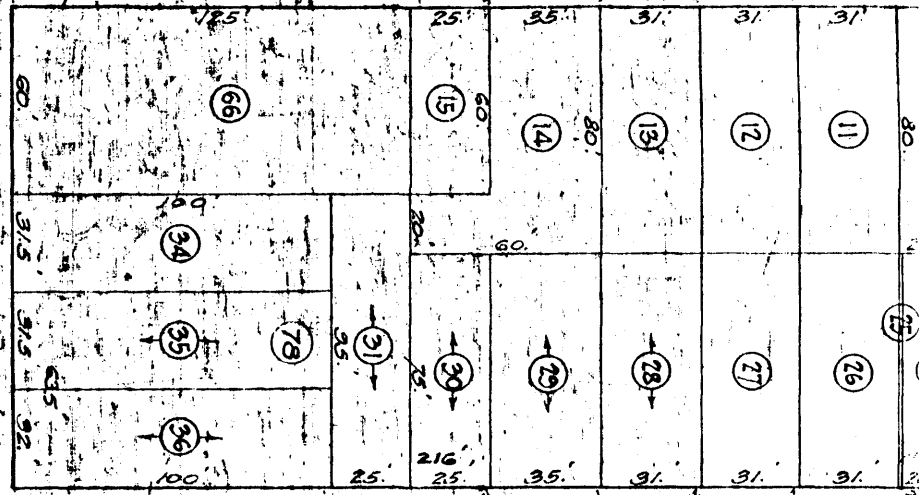
PACIFIC

AVE.

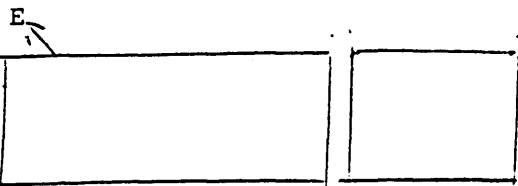
MT. VERNON

(FORMERLY SURF)

KENTUCKY

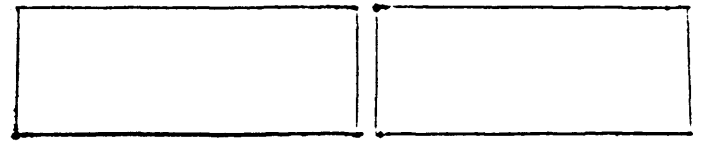


SCALE 1"=40'

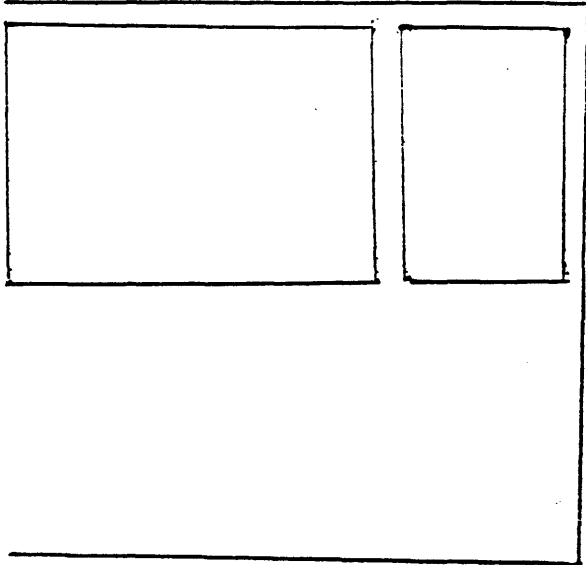


PACIFIC AVENUE

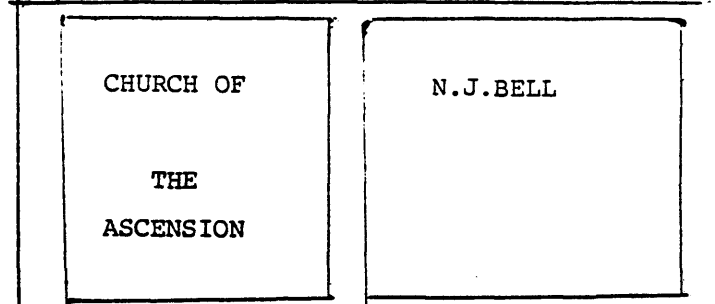
SITE PLAN



PACIFIC AVENUE



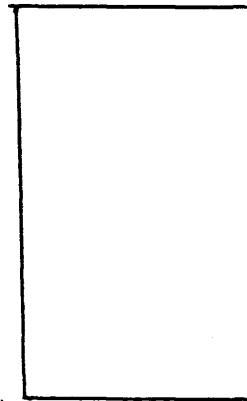
BELLFIELD AVENUE



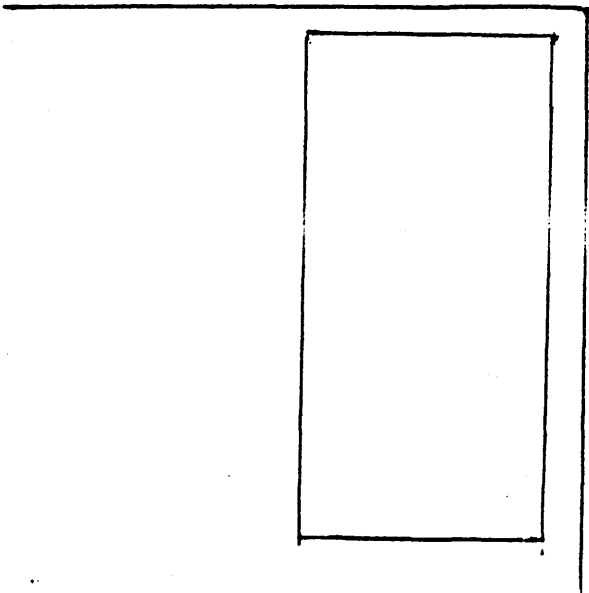
CHURCH OF
THE
ASCENSION

N.J. BELL

KENTUCKY AVENUE



Church of the Ascension
Atlantic City
Atlantic County, New Jersey



ATLANTIC AVENUE

ATLANTIC AVENUE

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