

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 24 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:
The Former Immaculate Conception Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

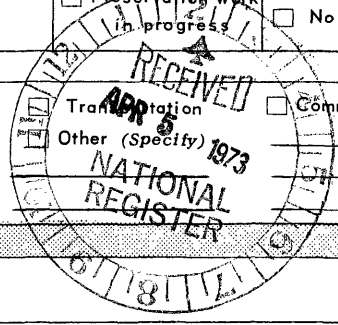
STREET AND NUMBER:
119 High Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Westerly

STATE Rhode Island 02891	CODE 44	COUNTY: Washington	CODE 009
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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	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments



4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Westerly Automatic Oil Heat, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:
125 High Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Westerly

STATE: Rhode Island 02891	CODE 44
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Westerly Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
49 Broad Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Westerly

STATE Rhode Island 02891	CODE 44
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:	CODE:
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

APR 24 1973

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

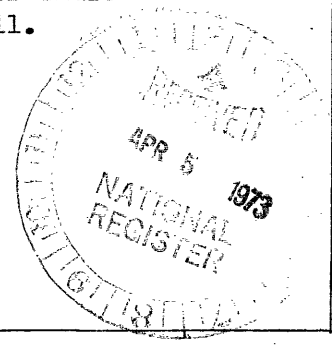
In March, 1886 the newly formed parish of the Immaculate Conception in Westerly, Rhode Island, purchased a lot 150' x 150' on which to build a church. Work on the foundations began soon after under the direction of Patrick Holliday, a local stone mason. The cornerstone was set on the twenty-sixth of September, 1886, and the masonry walled basement, rising a half storey above grade, was roofed over in time to hold the first mass in the new building on Christmas Day of that year.

The clapboard "carpenter gothic" upper structure was not completed until 1889. Basically rectangular in configuration, the church has a moderately pitched roof. In the west facade we see an interplay between a centralized pattern of windows, door openings and ornamentation, and dynamically composed massing. The facade progresses in space from the recessed north bay, through the broad central section, to the projected and vertically emphasized south stair tower and belfry. Playing against this progression are the statically composed openings and decorative elements: the symmetrically spaced entrances, the primacy given the middle portion of the facade through size and elaboration, the rather naive pyramidal groupings of pointed windows arranged to emphasize the central axis, further defined by a small pointed vent high in the gable, and by the cross surmounting the gable's ridge.

Though the west facade of the former Immaculate Conception Church is rather busy, it relates directly to the interior's simple basilican plan. The broad nave flanked by side aisles is divided into six longitudinal bays. The pointed arches of the nave bear similar crossing arches supporting the nave and side aisle ceilings. In the ceilings are circular pierced-work vents. The mouldings of the arches, the foliated capitals and corbel bosses, and the facings of the clustered columns are executed in plaster. The side walls are articulated with paired lancet windows. The entrances to the church are enclosed in a narthex above which is a balcony. The chancel, set off from the body of the nave by a heavy moulded arch, is lit by a triad of windows high in the east wall. Windows throughout the church are filled with stained glass. In the northeast corner of the building beside the chancel is a small sacristy.

All the specifically religious fittings--the altars, statuary, railings, pulpit, etc.--have been removed from the chancel and the chapels which flanked it. The paneled wood pews remain in the nave. Originally the walls and ceiling were frescoed with decorative borders and bands--now largely painted over. With the exception of this alteration and the removal of religious articles from the building, the former Immaculate Conception Church is well preserved and in good condition. The parish built a new church in the years 1966-68, and the former church was sold in 1969. Since then it has been used as a concert hall.

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6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

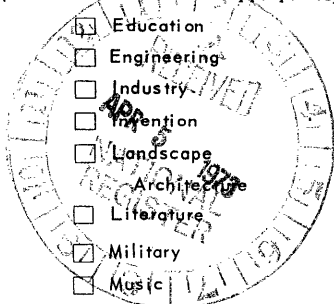
- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1886

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input checked="" 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/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Ethnic history</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Immaculate Conception Church was the first Roman Catholic church in Westerly. Prior to 1885, when the parish was established, area Catholics attended St. Michael's Church across the river in Pawcatuck, Connecticut. In the post-Civil War era local industrial enterprises, particularly granite quarrying and textile manufacture, attracted a large number of new workers to Westerly. Many of these were European immigrants, mostly Irish at first, later Italians. As the Catholic population increased, St. Michael's became too small and the Parish of the Immaculate Conception was founded to meet their needs. This parish was unusual in that, rather than serving a single Catholic ethnic group, its congregation was made up of both Irish and Italians. Moreover, for many years the parish was run by the Marists, a French order.

The new parish grew rapidly. The Irish and Italian immigrants who worked in Westerly's quarries and mills attended the "mother church" or one of four year-round mission chapels located in outlying villages. During the summer season hundreds of visitors worshipped at services conducted by priests sent from the mother church to the resort communities which dotted Westerly's coastline. By 1935, the semi-centennial of the parish, Immaculate Conception counted 5200 members--more than half the total number of Catholics in Rhode Island and Connecticut when those states became the Diocese of Providence in 1843.

Buildings serving the Parish of the Immaculate Conception were concentrated on High Street, forming an extensive complex. With the church proper were a large parish house, parochial school and convent. The parish became so large, that eventually it was subdivided into smaller units. In 1946 the mission chapels were made independent churches. In 1955 in-town Westerly was divided between Immaculate Conception and the new St. Pius X parish.

The course of the development of the Parish of the Immaculate Conception parallels the influx of non-Yankee ethnic groups into Westerly; it signalizes historic changes in the social structure of the town. Once the only institution of a small and little-noticed band of outsiders, the parish became but one of many organizations serving the newly ascendent immigrant population. The former Immaculate Conception Church is a potent symbol of these changes.

The building is a characteristic and well preserved example of late XIX century "carpenter gothic" architecture. Perhaps its most important feature from an architectural standpoint, however--what makes this building not simply typical of a style, but outstanding in one aspect of

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Newspaper articles in The Westerly Sun, Westerly, R.I.: May 31, 1930; September 14, 1969; May 28, 1971; July 14, 1972.

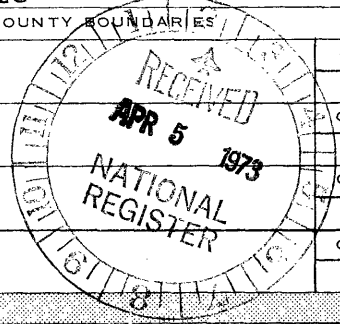
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	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	° ' "	° ' "		41 ° 22 ' 55.71" N	71 ° 49 ' 31.57" W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one 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



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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
D.W. Chase, Survey Director

ORGANIZATION: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission** DATE: **December 1, 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER:
52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Providence** STATE: **Rhode Island 02906** CODE: **44**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>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:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: <u><i>Frederick C. Williamson</i></u> State Historic Preservation Officer Title: _____ Date: <u>3/28/73</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u><i>Robert M. Utley</i></u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date: <u>4/24/73</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u><i>Robert M. Utley</i></u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date: <u>4/16/73</u></p>
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Washington	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 24 1973

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (continued)

design--is the high quality of the acoustics. From the first, the former Immaculate Conception Church has been a center for ambitious musical performances. The dedication of the building in 1891 was celebrated with an elaborate musical program. Rev. William J. Galvin, who came to the parish in 1894, was an accomplished musician. A prolific composer of liturgical music, he brought well known musical groups to Westerly for special church services. In the 1920's Immaculate Conception had a choir renowned throughout Rhode Island. Musical performances became so much a part of the life of this church that even weddings became major musical productions.

Since the church building was secularized in 1969 it has been used for performances by the Community Chorus of Westerly. Mr. George Kent, director of the Chorus and a professor of music at the University of Rhode Island, suggests that the building's outstanding acoustical qualities are attributable to the shape of the interior space--high, narrow and unobstructed, to the hard surfaces of the walls and ceilings, and to the effect of the circular pierced-work vents in the ceilings which open the space between roof and ceiling, "permitting the sound to gather momentum and presence." In this church auditorium music can "bloom to its full potential." With Mr. Kent, other acoustical experts who have visited the building rank the former Immaculate Conception Church in Westerly the finest hall for musical performances in the area. As such, the building is a significant cultural resource.

