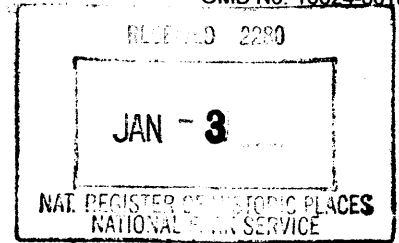


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instruction. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church

other names/site number:

2. Location

street and number: 1409 Pacific Avenue

N/A not for publication

city or town: Atlantic City

N/A vicinity

state: New Jersey

county: Atlantic County

zip code: 08401

3. State/Federal/Tribal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: Assistant Commissioner, Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
Date: 12/12/01

State or Federal agency and bureau: American Indian Tribe

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: _____ Date: _____

State or Federal agency and bureau: American Indian Tribe

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain: _____)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

2/2/01

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion

Historic Subfunctions

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

Religious Structure

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion

Current Subfunctions

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

Religious Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	Granite
Walls	Granite
Roof	Terra Cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes..
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1905-1935

Significant Dates

1905

1935

Significant Person

(Complete if criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Durang, Edwin F. (architect)

McShain, John (builder)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS:)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

See continuation sheet for additional HABS/HAER documentation.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.95

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	549280	4356745	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Joan Berkey, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization:

date: 10/2/2000

street & number: 1003 Bartlett Avenue

telephone: (609) 927-7950

city or town: Linwood

state: New Jersey

zip code: 08221-

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name: Diocese of Camden

street & number: P.O. Box 708, 631 Market Street

telephone: (856) 756-7900

city or town: Camden

state: New Jersey

zip code: 08101-

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget. Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1993 O - 350-416 QL 3

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Continuation Sheet
Section number 7 Page 1

St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church
Atlantic County, NJ

Narrative Description

St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church, built in 1905 with an addition in 1935, is a Romanesque Revival style church erected in rough-cut, light-colored North Carolina granite on a granite foundation. [photo 1 and 2] With a 76' wide x 150' deep footprint, the church is cruciform in plan and features twin 120' tall towers flanking an 85' high, gable-fronted façade marked with three, semi-circular arched door openings. The church retains most of its original interior and exterior details, including red terra cotta tile roof and crestings, copper gutters, stained glass windows, doors, and interior plaster moldings. All door and window openings are topped with semi-circular arches that have keystones. The arch is also used decoratively to enrich the corbel tables along the eaves, and in belt courses marking the horizontal divisions. The gabled transepts are 12' wide, and the apse is contained within a semi-dome that is flanked by two smaller apses containing two side altars. A one-story sacristy fills the northwest corner between the west transept and the apse. A one-story baptistery, built in 1935, was added to the northeast corner between the east transept and the apse; it is also built of matching granite. [photo #3]

Set back about 12' from the curb, the church sits at the northwest corner of S. Tennessee and Pacific Avenues in the city of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, New Jersey. The church, which faces south onto Pacific Avenue, is located one block south of Atlantic City's central business district on Atlantic Avenue, and is one block north of several oceanfront casinos on the boardwalk. It occupies four of the eleven 25' wide x 150' deep lots which comprise the 275' wide x 150' deep site. Also on the site are two contributing buildings: (1) a 3-story stone rectory built in 1909 and located directly west of the church [photo #5], and (2) a 3-story, stone and brick former convent built in 1925 and located west of the rectory. [photo #4] A Romanesque Revival style parochial school, built in 1909 and located between the rectory and the convent, is no longer extant [historic image #11]; its site is now used for church parking. Neighboring buildings are an eclectic mix of modern hotels, early 20th century store/dwellings and hotels, a modern bank, and a convenience store.

Landscaping on the site is minimal and consists of several sycamore (*Platanus*) trees along Pacific Avenue; there is also a small statuary garden in front of the rectory which contains a statue of St. Nicholas of Tolentine that is flanked on the east by a modern sign announcing mass times, and on the west by a flagpole and a stone sign taken from the parochial school. The statuary garden is enclosed by a modern metal picket fence and has hedges of Japanese boxwood (*Buxus japonica*) and yews (*Taxus*) surrounding grass and plantings of rhododendrons (*Rhododendron*), hydrangeas (*Hydrangea*), a rose bush (*Rosa*), and a variety of annual flowers.

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church
Atlantic County, NJ
(Section 7 continued)

In front of the parking lot is a 5' wide landscaped strip of grass with a short cedar (*Cedrus*) hedge. [photo #4]

Current appearance

The church has a symmetrical façade (south elevation) with two, 3-stage towers of equal height, square in plan, flanking a gable front. [photo #2] The entire building has a 4 ½' high stone watertable, and, unless otherwise noted, all building materials and details are original. Where the manufacturer of the stained glass window is known, the name appears in parentheses.

Quadrangular pyramidal spires rise from the tower's cross gables; all are clad with red terracotta tiles and topped with crosses. The lower stage of each tower on the south elevation consists of a stained glass window with a stone lintel (Mayer to the west, and a grisaille-style made by an unknown manufacturer to the east); these windows are enframed by Corinthian colonettes of polished brown Vermont granite. Door openings on the east and west elevations contain oak double doors comprised of a single light over a raised panel, topped with a semi-circular, molded overdoor infilled with circular stained glass (Mayer) windows. The towers' middle stages have paired stained glass windows (Callanan) on the three elevations facing away from the nave. These windows are separated by polished brown granite Corinthian colonettes which support the junction of the two arched window heads. The third stage of the towers contains arch-headed openings on all elevations. The openings are filled with paired, louvered panels surmounted by circular wood panels with applied wood tracery. A stepped stone corbel table marks the cross gable on all tower elevations. All four corners of both towers are chamfered and are terminated at the third stage by a cylindrical stone turret that rises nearly the height of the cross gables. The stone turret bases are richly carved with acanthus leaf ornamentation. [photo #2]

The gable front of the façade, or south elevation, consists of three arched door openings having two pairs of polished brown granite colonettes with marble Corinthian capitals supporting the central voisseur. Each doorway has a pair of oak double doors with one light over a raised panel, surmounted by a semi-circular, molded overdoor infilled with stained glass windows (Mayer). The doors have modern hardware. A corbelled and molded stone belt course above the doorways marks the upper level. This level is also three-bays wide, and features two tall, paired stained glass windows (Mayer) flanking a triple stained glass window (Mayer); the grouping is topped with a rose window of stained glass (Mayer). The gable peak terminates in a semi-circle topped with a stone acroterion in an acanthus leaf design. Between the rose window and the gable peak is a "false" window opening, infilled with stone, whose purpose was likely to add symmetry to this part of the façade.

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church
Atlantic County, NJ
(Section 7 continued)

The east and west elevations of that part of the building which contains the nave and nave aisles are identical. [photos #2 and #4] The nave aisles are one-story tall and four bays wide, each bay having a stone corbel placed under the eaves of a gently sloping, terracotta tile roof. The upper story, which defines the nave, consists of a clerestory of 15 stained glass windows (Callanan) on each elevation, with a stone corbel under the eaves. These stained glass windows are executed in stylized patterns of flowers and religious symbols.

The east transept has an oak double door (1 light over a raised panel) on the first level of the south elevation. The upper story has three stained glass windows to the west (Callanan), with stone corbelling at the eaves, and a larger stained glass window (Mayer) to the east. [photo #2] A small, stepped stone corbel topped with a gable roof marks the junction of the corner of the south wall and the gable roof. The transept's east elevation has a paired stained glass windows (Mayer) at the first story and a rose window, identical in size and configuration to that on the façade, at the upper story. Triple, infilled window openings add balance to the gable end near the peak. The roof peak has the same semi-circular acroterion found on the façade's gabled peak, and is topped with a stone cross. The face of this elevation is stepped out toward the street in two stages, and stone belt courses mark varying levels at horizontal intervals. The upper story of the east transept's rear, or north, elevation has three stained glass (Callanan) clerestory windows with stone corbelling at the eave to the west, a larger stained glass window (Mayer) to the east, and a decorative stone corbel (identical to that on the south elevation) at the eave line to the east. [photo #3]

A copper-clad clerestory, rectangular in plan and ending in a semi-circle at the north end, defines the east side altar, which occupies the corner between the transept and the semi-dome. [photo #3] The clerestory sits above a terracotta-tiled roof elevated above a granite base with stone corbelling at the eaves. This corner also contains the one-story baptistery which has three stained glass windows (Mayer) on the east elevation. Stone belt courses mark the watertable and the top of the windows on both elevations. A portion of the north wall, to the east, projects about 1' to accommodate the altar inside.

The west transept is identical in plan, massing, fenestration and detailing to the east transept. [supplemental photo #1] Also identical is the clerestory and base (for the west side altar) in the northwest corner between the transept and the semi-dome. A stone chimney rises above the base at the west wall of the apse. At the first level, the remainder of this corner is filled with a one-story sacristy which has six stained glass (Callanan) windows on the north elevation and one stained glass window (Callanan), to the north, on the west elevation.

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Section number 7 Page 4**St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church**
Atlantic County, NJ
(Section 7 continued)

The upper level of the apse, at the north end of the church, has two stained glass windows (Callanan) on the west elevation, seven stained glass windows (Mayer) around the semi-dome, and two stained glass windows (Callanan) on the east elevation. All of these windows are topped with stone corbelling at the eaves. On the roof, the semi-dome is topped with a stone cross. A louvered, copper-clad cupola marks the roofline junction of the apse with the transepts; it is square in plan, with a pyramidal, tiled roof that is also topped with a cross. [photo #3]

The interior of the church retains its original plan, massing, plaster ornamentation, and stained glass windows, while most of its historic, painted finishes date from 1935.

The vestibule has a white and black 2" hexagonal tiled floor that is lined around the perimeter walls with rectangular ceramic tiles in black, light red, and dark red. [photo #6] The vestibule also has plaster walls, a 4' 11" tall white marble wainscot, and a 12" high brown marble baseboard. Windows and doors are surrounded with 8" wide oak complex molding trim. Romanesque-style plaster corbels support two arched openings that run north to south at the nave's doors. The vestibule is illuminated by five original brass electric lanterns suspended by chains from the ceiling in front of the façade and tower doors. The stained glass windows above the exterior doors consist of a large, semi-circular design stained glass window (Mayer) surrounded by five, smaller circular stained glass windows (Mayer). The central facade door features "I H S" in its design, while the flanking doors have the Greek symbols for alpha and omega. The five smaller circular windows have designs of stylized leaves. The northeast corner of the vestibule features a plaster statuary niche set diagonally.

The north wall of the vestibule has paired doors off of each tower which provide access to the nave aisles, while a pair of double folding doors opens from the center of the vestibule into the nave. Paired, arch-headed windows flank the nave entry doors, and are located to the east and west of the nave aisle doors. These windows are 1/1 double-hung wood sash with clear, leaded glass in a tracery pattern (Callanan). Each door is of oak and has one light over four molded panels. The door light is arch-headed and consists of clear, leaded glass (Callanan). The doorway is surmounted by a semi-circular transom of three molded wood panels, and its arch is infilled with coffered oak panels. [supplemental photo #3] An oak, circular staircase in the southeast corner of the vestibule leads to the choir loft.

Behind the vestibule are the nave and nave aisles. [photos #7 and #8] The nave aisles have plaster walls (beige) and vaulted and domed ceilings (sky blue); a 7' 4" marble wainscot rises from the floor to the bottom of the window sills, and is comprised of a 10" wide white marble top above a 5' wide gray marble wall and a 1' 7" wide brown marble baseboard. The east and west exterior walls of the nave aisles have 4 bays of stained glass windows executed by the

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church
Atlantic County, NJ
(Section 7 continued)

Mayer Studios of Germany. These windows are framed with plaster Corinthian colonettes and have gray marble sills. [supplemental photo #5] Radiators are placed under each window, behind the marble wainscot. Between the windows on both walls are bas-relief, stone carvings depicting the Stations of the Cross. [supplemental photo #4] The nave aisles have transverse arches marking each bay; the sky-blue ceiling of each bay is ribbed and groined, and terminates at the top with a circular molding containing a modern light fixture. The ribs are outlined with gold leaf and stenciling, and are supported by Romanesque-style corbels. Some of the ribs are painted a gold/bronze color and show a faded stencil decoration. [photo #7]

The nave aisle is separated from the nave by a complexly executed 4-bay arcade supported by polished yellow/beige marble columns. [photo #7] The marble columns are five-part, consisting of a large column in the center, surrounded by four thinner marble columns. The arcade's upper wall is executed in plaster, and has yellow/beige faux-painted marble colonettes above each column. Between the colonettes is a smaller arch-headed arcade with Corinthian capitals that runs the length of the wall. The spaces between the upper, smaller columns on both nave aisles are decorated with a total of 52 gold-leaf covered shields painted with symbols depicting the life of Christ, the sacraments, and several saints; these decorations were added in 1935. [photos #7 and #8] Topping the smaller arcade is a dentil course and acanthus leaf molding banded on top with rosette molding. All details are of plaster.

The clerestory is comprised of stained glass (Callanan) windows delineated by plaster Corinthian colonettes supporting the voisseurs. [photo #9] Larger plaster colonettes mark the bays of the arcade below, and support the gold leaf-covered and stenciled ribs which transverse the nave's barrel vaulted ceiling. Arched bays above the clerestory windows are molded and decorated with a stylized gold leaf design.

The nave, transepts, and side aisles have a modern beige-colored terrazzo floor and modern oak pews. The ceilings of the nave, the transepts, the choir loft, and the semi-dome are decorated with the Apostle's Creed in Latin accompanied by paintings of St. Peter and the apostles, added in 1935. [photos #8, #9 and #10]

The rear, or south, wall of the nave has a marble wainscot and plaster walls identical to those along the nave aisle walls. Ornatly carved confessional booths decorated with carved dogwood blossoms and shamrocks flank the central entry doors, as do metal radiators with modern metal enclosures. Next to the two confessionals are statues of St. Joseph and the Blessed Mother, which formerly sat in the school lobby. [photo #8]

The choir loft, located at the south end of the church, is supported by two Corinthian columns of

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church

Atlantic County, NJ
(Section 7 continued)

metal with a faux-marble finish. The projecting balcony half-wall is of plaster banded with an arcade of Corinthian columns. A modern round clock is placed at the center of this half-wall. [photo #8]

The choir loft has plaster walls, an oak tongue and groove floor and original oak pews. A 53-rank theatrical organ, purchased in 1916 from the M.P. Möller Company of Hagerstown, MD has a casing of oak; the organ's main pipes are located against the south wall, behind the pews, while the console is located in front of the pews. [photo #8] The organ's bellows and more pipes are contained in two small rooms on each side of the main pipes. To the far west is another small room, located in the west tower, used to store sheet music.

The north and south walls of the transepts, including the corners at the sanctuary, have the same colonnade treatment, marble wainscot, and clerestory windows as those found on the interior nave aisle walls. [photos #9 and #10] The east and west walls of both transepts are also treated identically: a large rose window of stained glass (Mayer) sits above a triple stained glass (Mayer) window at the upper level, while a double stained glass window (Mayer) sits below at the lower level. The rose window in the west transept depicts the *Birth of Christ*, while that in the east transept depicts the *Resurrection of Christ*. To each side of the double stained glass window is a *bas relief* stone carving of one of the Stations of the Cross, while above the double window is a depiction of the Ten Commandments in Roman numerals. Identical carved wood confessionals are placed below the double windows in both transepts. [supplemental photo #6] On the ceiling above the clerestory windows is a continuation of the apostle's creed and paintings of the apostles. The easternmost and westernmost clerestory windows have stained glass windows by Mayer.

The west transept has a painted mural above the exterior door on the south wall of *Jesus on the Road to Emmaus* [seen in photo #9]. Directly opposite, on the north wall, is a mural of *Jesus Teaching the Elders* above an arch-headed, oak double door that leads to the sacristy.

The east transept has a small altar, dedicated to St. Rita, on its north wall. [supplemental photo #2] It is richly executed around a tiled niche featuring a mosaic of St. Rita. The white marble altar consists of paired marble columns supporting an ornately carved, gabled entablature. The altar's base is supported by two marble columns. The east transept also has two murals: one depicting *The Raising of the Widow's Only Son* on the north wall above the altar to St. Rita [seen in photo #10], and another of *The Conversion of St. Augustan* on the south wall above the exterior door.

The sanctuary, which sits between two side altars, is contained within an apse with a semi-dome.

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church

Atlantic County, NJ
(Section 7 continued)

[photo #7] Its floor is comprised of off-white 12" square marble tiles, laid diagonally, with brown 3" square marble tiles laid in the corners of each white tile. [supplemental photo #8] The sanctuary and nave are separated by a white marble chancel rail comprised of an arch-headed arcade. The rear sanctuary apse wall is of plaster (beige) and is semi-circular in shape; the upper half consists of faux-painted marble colonettes, identical to those on the side aisle interior walls, spaced approximately 6' apart. Between the colonettes, in niches, are seven painted murals of the archangels. Below the niches is a 5'8" high white marble wainscot that is also carried around the walls of both side altars. A plaster cornice molding of acanthus leaves and dentils defines the division between the sanctuary wall and the semi-dome. [supplemental photo #8] At the rear of the sanctuary are two, arch-headed oak doors leading to the east and west rear passageways behind the sanctuary.

The immense main altar is made of hand-carved white marble in the gothic style. [photo #7 and supplemental photo #8] Its central spire is flanked by two smaller spires which contain carved figures of St. Nicholas of Tolentine and St. Thomas of Villanova. The back of the altar is inscribed with both the names of the people who donated money for its construction, and a list of the Augustinian fathers who served the church. A smaller, un-carved white marble altar sits in front of the main altar.

The ribbed semi-dome features seven (7) stained glass (Mayer) windows depicting the seven archangels--Gabriel, Raphael, Chameul, St. Michael, Uriel, Jophiel, and Zadkiel. [photo #7] These windows are separated by faux-marble, plaster colonettes that terminate in ribs which carry up to the top of the semi-dome. The ribs are richly decorated with gold leaf and stenciling, while the spaces between the ribs are intricately decorated with gold leaf designs and painted symbols depicting the Blessed Trinity and the Cardinal Virtues, executed in 1935. An echo, or celestial organ, is concealed in a small mahogany room above the semi-dome. It is accessed by a catwalk from the back of the choir loft.

The side altars have ribbed, domed ceilings to the front (south) and a semi-domed ceiling to the rear (north). [photo #7 and supplemental photo #7] Both ceilings are pierced by circular stained glass (Callanan) skylights. Two Corinthian capitals, with faux marble painting, support the junction of one ceiling with the other. The west side altar is executed in an ornate Gothic style and consists of a statue of Mary flanked by two angels, all done in carved, white marble. The semi-dome is painted with a mural of *The Annunciation*. [supplemental photo #7] The east side altar is identical to the west one, but consists of a shrine dedicated to the Heart of Jesus. Its semi-dome is painted with a mural of *The Flight to Egypt*. The lower wall of both side altars, above the marble wainscot, is richly executed with a gold-leaf design on a maroon background. The murals and painted walls were added in 1935.

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church
Atlantic County, NJ
(Section 7 continued)

The baptistery, located east of the east side altar, is accessed through a square-headed doorway with a brass grille door, surmounted by a circular stained glass window fabricated by Philadelphia's Willet Studios in 1935. [photo #10] Rectangular in plan, the baptistery has a dark green marble purgatorial altar set within an arch-headed niche on the north wall [photo #11], and a brass baptismal font on a green marble base set in the south wall. [supplemental photo #9] The walls are of smooth, polished white marble. The floor consists of dark green, white, and black marble set in a geometric pattern. There is a dark green marble baseboard along all walls, and radiators are concealed in the wainscot under the windows.

The east wall has three stained glass (Willetts) windows; they depict, among other things, the Holy Eucharist, matrimony, baptism, confirmation, the seven sources of sin, and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. [supplemental photo #10] The cove ceiling is broken by a barrel-vaulted ceiling, rectangular in plan, that runs the length of the room and has recessed, indirect lighting. Both ceilings are covered with 3/8" mosaic tiles in varying shades of gold with accenting lines of lapis blue, white, and black 3/8" mosaic tiles. Various mosaic tile motifs are used in the lower vaulted ceiling, and include designs of the seven sacraments, the seven deadly sins, fig trees (one cursed, one in bloom), a peacock, a pelican, wheat, and grapes. The barrel-vaulted ceiling features a dove mosaic and is inscribed: "1st Matt. All power that is in heaven and earth has been given to me—Go ye therefore—Teach all nations—Baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The entire north wall is also executed in a mosaic mural of angels (to the east) and St. Nicholas saying mass (to the west). Behind the altar is the verse, also done in mosaic: "This only I ask of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord—St. Monica."

A plain oak door on the west wall to the rear (north) of the baptistery opens into to a 6' wide passageway behind the east side altar; it contains built-in oak storage closets on the south wall. This area is illuminated by two stained glass windows on the north wall which were also fabricated by Willetts in 1935. Both of these depict St. Nicholas, and one is inscribed: "Fear not, Nicholas—all is well with you—my Son carries you in His heart—and I in your protection." The passageway has a marble floor identical to that in the sanctuary. At the west end of the passageway is an oak door of 2 arched panels over 2 square panels, which leads to the sanctuary.

The sacristy, located in the northwest corner of the church, has plaster walls, hexagonal ceramic tile (identical to that in the vestibule), a modern acoustical tile dropped ceiling with florescent lights, and a 42" high sunk panel oak wainscot around all walls. [photo #12] The original oak wardrobe/dresser for vestments occupies the west wall. There are 4 stained glass windows (Callanan) on the north wall, and one on the west wall (Callanan). Cast-iron radiators are placed

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below each window. The east wall has a closet to the north, and paired oak doors, topped with an arch-headed stained glass window (Mayer), leading to the sanctuary to the south. The south wall has paired oak doors leading to the west transept and to the clergy-house passageway. The rear passageway between the sanctuary and the sacristy also has two stained glass windows (Callanan) on the north wall, the same tile floor as the sacristy, and built-in oak storage closets on the south wall.

A passageway with stairs leading to the clergy-house is accessed through a doorway on the sacristy's south wall. [supplemental photo #1] It has plaster walls, oak double doors leading to the street on the south wall, and two modern, 1/1 aluminum replacement sash on the north and south walls. The lower landing has a tiled floor like that in the sacristy and vestibule, while the upper landing has a terrazzo floor.

The basement, accessed by exterior stairs on the west foundation wall, has granite foundation walls and a concrete floor. At a later date, probably during the 1935 decorating campaign, the floor was lowered. Massive steel I beams and 2" x 12" oak floor joists support the floor overhead, which shows a tongue and groove underlayment. The original coal-fired steam boiler has been replaced with a modern oil burner. A massive granite foundation, running from the floor to the basement ceiling, supports the main altar above in the north end of the basement. A wine cellar nearby once contained sacramental wines; its shelves are now empty, but the racks remain. Ductwork for a ventilating system, no longer used, is extant under the nave, side aisles, and transepts. The basement under the baptistery retains the original exterior walls of the 1905 church and the base for the statuary niche that was removed in 1935.

Contributing Buildings: Rectory--Current Appearance

The three-story rectory has a 50' wide x 75' deep rectangular footprint and was built in 1908 of matching North Carolina granite. [photo #4] It is five bays wide, nine bays deep, with a raised basement. Window and door openings are arch-headed and have stone lintels. The building has copper soffits and fascia, and a hipped roof covered with slate. Three interior, end-wall brick chimneys pierce the roofline—two in the front on the east and west elevations, and one in the rear on the west elevation. The exterior appearance is nearly original except for the replacement of original, arch-headed wood 1/1 double-hung windows with modern 1/1 metal double-hung sash. The replacement windows are smaller, so the upper portion of the window has been infilled with an aluminum panel. In plan, the building has a center hall on all levels with a main staircase located mid-way off the hall, and a service stair to the rear (north).

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The main entrance is accessed from a one-story, open porch having its original wrought iron railing. The plane of the façade (south elevation) is broken by a central projecting bay, one-bay wide, on all levels; it terminates at the roofline with a copper clad pediment topped with a cross. Windows in this projecting bay are paired. The shed-roofed porch has granite porch supports and is accessed by a flight of concrete steps to the east. Below the porch is a raised basement that is entered through a centrally-placed, modern door flanked by two windows on each side. [photo #4]

The east and west (side) elevations also have a projecting bay, three bays wide, that marks the center of the building. The west elevation has a one-story, shed-roofed porch to the rear; the porch has square wood columns, a wood balustrade, and a door leading into the kitchen. This elevation also has a modern metal basement entry door towards the rear. [photo #4] The east elevation has a one-story passageway of matching granite to the rear (north) which connects the rectory to the church. [supplemental photo #1]

The rear (north) elevation has five single windows on the first floor. The upper two floors consist of two projecting, copper-clad bays to the east and west. These bays have paired windows, as do the middle bays on the second and third stories.

With the exception of the basement, the interiors of the rectory are original and intact. The basement rooms, including the original kitchen, have been rehabilitated for use as church offices, meeting space, and a food distribution center. Some original wood trim, doors, and kitchen fixtures remain.

The first floor comprises several parlors [supplemental photo #12], a dining room, clergy offices, a tiled vestibule, and a modern kitchen. The vestibule has its original tiled wainscot, semi-circular and square transoms with stained glass, and stained glass double doors leading into the hallway. [supplemental photo #11] Rooms on the first floor now have a modern, suspended ceiling. The second floor contains bedrooms, bathrooms, and sitting rooms, while the third floor has bedrooms, bathrooms, sitting rooms, and a library with original built-in bookcases. Of particular note are two reading "nooks," with built-in oak seats, located in the projecting bay of the façade on both the second and third floors. The first, second, and third floors retain their original oak moldings, hardwood floors, plaster walls and ceilings, paneled oak doors, and picture rail moldings. Fireplaces on these three levels also have their original glazed tile surrounds and wood mantels. [supplemental photo #12] Between several bedrooms are original oak pocket doors. Bathrooms have their original tile floor, tile wainscot, tub, toilet, and sink.

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Contributing Buildings: Convent--Current Appearance

The convent, built in 1927, is a three-story, vaguely Gothic style building that is three-bays wide and twelve-bays deep. [photo #5] The front third, and a small portion of the rear, of the building are of granite. Most of the remainder (which would have originally been obscured by neighboring buildings) is of cream-colored brick, except for a two-story tall portion on the east elevation toward the rear which is now covered with aluminum siding. The building's flat roof is covered with red, terracotta pavers, and is surmounted by a copper-clad solarium (original) to the front (south), and a copper-clad laundry (also original) to the rear. Most of the building's original 1/1 wood double-hung windows have been removed and replaced with modern 1/1 metal replacement sash.

The façade has a modest gable peak parapet topped with a stone cross. [photo #5] Above the third story windows and below the cross is a *bas relief* stone carving of the Virgin Mary. The façade's first floor windows are paired; their original stained glass has been removed and replaced with un-colored, opaque glass in metal frames. The lower sash is fixed while the upper sash is louvered to open inward. A one-story projecting stone wall is located at the southwest corner of the façade, and a one-story entrance hall (which originally connected the convent to the school) is attached to the east elevation. The entrance hall has a modern aluminum/glass door, and is fronted by stone steps with modern metal hand railings. Above the square-headed stone door opening is a carved name plaque now covered over. The east wall of the entry has been stuccoed over.

Original interior details abound, primarily on the first floor and to a lesser extent on the upper floors in the community spaces. Bedrooms and bathrooms on the upper floors have been recently (spring 2000) rehabilitated for current use as a women's shelter.

Rooms on the first floor—chapel, vestibule, and sisters' offices--are executed in the Spanish Revival style and feature plaster walls, hardwood floors, Spanish-style oak doors with hammer-head nail trim, and oak moldings, all original. The entrance hall has an original flagstone floor, a domed and vaulted ceiling with Ionic corbels supporting the arches, and two original wrought iron chandeliers. [supplemental photo #13] The vestibule also has an original flagstone floor, an oak-beamed ceiling that has gold stenciled decoration on the beams [supplemental photo #14], a bull's-eye glass window with shutters on the north wall, and a fireplace on the east wall above which is a statuary niche—all original. The former chapel has the same beamed/stenciled ceiling, and a stepped floor to the west where an altar used to stand. A small sacristy, with original built-in vestment cabinets, is tucked under the stairs which run along the west wall of the vestibule. The two sisters' offices, to the north of the vestibule, have original oak paneled walls,

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wrought iron chandeliers, oak floors, and oak paneled doors. [supplemental photo #15] The dining room has original oak paneled wainscot and built-in china closets. The kitchen is modern.

In addition to bedrooms and bathrooms, the second floor has a library/community room with original oak wainscot and original oak built-in bookcases. The former infirmary on the third floor is now a community space, and the solarium on the attic roof is now a computer training center.

Original Appearance of the Church and Subsequent Alterations

Historic photographs, combined with written accounts, document the exterior and interior changes to the church. While the exterior remains mostly unaltered, the interior has undergone several redecorating campaigns.

When completed in the fall of 1905, the church's exterior appearance, with the exception of the addition of a baptistery in 1935, was almost identical to that seen today. A 1906 photograph of the south and east elevations shows the same plan, massing, fenestration and roofing materials. [historic image #4] At that time, stone crosses appeared on all of the gable peaks located on both the gable roofs and towers. Although the newspaper article describing the building said they were to be gilded, they do not appear so in the 1906 photograph. Today, a few of the crosses are missing, most notably the one of the façade's gable peak over the main entrance. A 1906 postcard of the east and north (rear) elevations documents the rear elevation before the 1935 baptistery addition. [historic image #7] This view shows a projecting stone bay on the north wall of the east transept which contained a statuary niche, visible in an early interior view. [historic image #5] Also seen in the postcard is the apse, now hidden by the baptistery, containing the east side altar. The apse has a window, presumably of stained glass on its east wall; both the projecting bay and the window were removed when the baptistery was added in the corner in 1935.

In the fall of 1905, the interior of the church was described in a history of the church written by a Catholic priest, Father Thomas Middleton:

From the clerestory down the building though of neat and not unpleasant lines throughout seems to revel as it were in somewhat lavish display of ornament of many varied characters in mouldings, arches, and so on.

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By June of 1906, barely nine months later, Middleton stated in a footnote that the interior details with the exception of two altars and the chancel railing, had been completed. These were likely the two side altars.

Middleton's observations are born out by an interior photographic view of the sanctuary that was included in a booklet distributed at the 1905 dedication of the church. [historic image #3] Although of poor quality, the photo shows a paucity of furnishings with only a small main altar, no side altars, a modest chancel railing, and two ornate, gas-lit chandeliers which illuminated the nave and transepts. Interior painted finishes, beyond plain walls, are not visible.

Two somewhat later interior views—a lantern slide taken ca. 1910 (historic image #5) and a postcard dated 1910 (historic image #6)—provide the most information about the church's early interior finishes and furnishings. In the lantern slide, the vaulted ceiling appears to be painted with a dark (blue?) ground. In both views, the semi-circular walls of the main apse featured richly decorated gothic arches painted in the niches between the colonettes (no longer extant), but there were no murals or figures painted in the niches. The wall below the niches and colonettes appears with painted lines in a diamond pattern over a dark background (no longer extant). Painted decoration (extant) appears in the semi-circular bays over the transepts' clerestory windows. Ceiling ribs in the apse and transepts were an all-over light (white?) color. Also, the present main and side altars (which do not appear in the 1905 photo) are seen in the 1910 postcard. All altars are extant, however, the original statue of the Virgin Mary in the west side altar (seen as a double figure holding a wreath in historic image #5) was replaced sometime after 1960 with a different statue of the Virgin Mary that originally sat to the east of the main altar (visible in historic image #13).

In 1916, the church's original organ was removed and installed in the chapel at Villanova College. It was replaced with a theatrical, manual pipe organ made by the H. P. Moller Co. of Hagerstown, MD at the cost of \$9,350.

Another early postcard, not postmarked but printed before 1935 [historic image #28], shows the transept murals were originally arch-headed, and also depicts stenciling above the marble wainscot in the transepts. Also visible are painted religious figures above the stained glass windows in the semi-dome, but their "vagueness" suggests the postcard company may have added them.

In 1935 the baptistery was added to the northeast corner of the church. The statuary niche [visible in historic images #3, #5, and #28] on the north wall of the east transept was removed

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and replaced with the present marble and mosaic altar to St. Rita. The window opening on the east wall of the east side altar was removed and replaced with a doorway to the baptistery. Above the door, a round stained glass window (extant) designed by Willets Studios was placed. The baptistery retains its 1935 finishes, including a mosaic ceiling, marble tiled floors and walls, stained glass windows by Willets, marble altar on the north wall, and marble and brass baptismal font on the south wall. [historic image #17] The mosaic scene on the north wall was installed after ca. 1960.

Also added in 1935 was a passageway behind the east side altar, which connected the baptistery with the rear of the main altar apse. This passageway included built-in, oak storage closets (extant), and two stained glass windows by Willets (extant), the Philadelphia firm which also executed the windows in the baptistery.

Concurrent with the baptistery addition was a major redecorating campaign that introduced many new painted finishes and decoration to the interior. [historic images #13 and #14]. Fifty-two gilt shields, painted with religious symbols, were added between the colonettes on the walls of the transepts and nave (extant). An ornate, tri-part gold leaf and paint/stencil design was added to the ceiling of the semi-dome (extant), while the ceiling ribs of the semi-dome, transepts, nave and nave aisles received a gold leaf and stencil finish outline (extant). Some of the ribs in the nave aisles were also gold leafed and stenciled (extant). Murals of the seven archangels were painted in the niches behind the main altar. The wall below the murals in the apse received an all-over gilt and paint decoration (no longer extant), and the paired columns flanking the main and side altars were completely gold-leafed and given a stenciled pattern of alternating crosses and stylized flowers (no longer extant). The back wall of the side altars received the same gilt and paint decoration as the wall below the murals in the apse (extant). The two transept chandeliers were removed and indirect lighting was added. Ceiling murals of the Apostles and the Apostle's Creed in the nave and transepts were also added at this time (extant). These ceilings were painted a cream color, and dotted all-over with a random pattern of stars (no longer extant). Murals in the semi-domes over the side altars were added at this time as well.

Other interior changes included the laying of rubber flooring that imitated vari-colored marble (no longer extant), the cleaning of transept murals (extant), the replacement of storm glass over the stained glass windows, the re-setting of the Stations of the Cross into smaller frames (extant), the re-finishing of pews and woodwork with a dark gray stain (no longer extant), the replacement of copper work on the roof (extant), and the concealing of radiation in the wainscot (extant).

Also added in 1935 was a fan-driven ventilating system in the basement that pumped chilled air, cooled by huge blocks of ice, through floor registers under the pews.

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In 1970, when the liturgy of the church was changed and the freestanding altar was adopted, a portion of the original white marble altar was brought forward, and the gate in the center of the chancel railing was removed. The lantern over the tabernacle was also removed at this time and was supposedly placed in a local funeral home.

The last major beautification project was undertaken in the spring of 1977. The ceiling was repainted a solid cream color (extant), covering the all-over star design but leaving the murals of the Apostles and the Apostle's Creed intact. The gold-leafed and stenciled columns flanking the main and side altars were given a faux marble finish (extant). The ornate gold and stenciled decoration of the main apse wall, below the niches, was painted over with a cream color (extant), as was the painted decoration above the niches below the semi-dome. New indirect lighting was also installed. It is likely that the colonettes in the nave and the apse were finished in faux-marble at that time.

In 1980, an electronic carillon was added, donated in memory of Senator Frank "Hap" Farley. In the mid-1980s, the present terrazzo floor was installed and the original oak pews were replaced with the current, modern oak ones.

Original Appearance and Subsequent Alterations of the Rectory and Convent

In November 1996, the parochial school was torn down to create a church parking lot. The school and convent were connected by two passageways, one in front and one to the rear. When the school was demolished these openings were closed over. Stained glass windows in the chapel, designed by Willets Studios and installed in 1950, were removed at a later, unknown date. The convent's original 1/1 wood double-hung windows have been replaced with modern metal replacement sash. The interiors of the convent have changed little; the chapel's altar has been removed and the kitchen has been modernized, but most original interior finishes and trim remain, particularly on the first floor.

The clergy house is largely unchanged from the date of its construction in 1908. The original 1/1 arch-headed, double-hung wood windows have been replaced with modern aluminum double-hung sash of a smaller height. Because the replacement windows are smaller, the remainder of the window opening has been infilled with an aluminum panel. Rooms in the basement have been altered the most-- several have been renovated for use as church offices and a food bank, and a basement entry under the porch is being converted into the church gift shop, now housed in the sacristy. Rooms on the upper three stories are remarkably intact and most retain their

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original oak trim, oak tongue and groove floors, plaster walls, paneled doors, pocket doors, tiled fireplaces, and wood mantels. The bathrooms also retain their original tiled walls and floors, tubs, toilets, and sinks. An elevator was added just south of the central staircase in 1960 for an infirm priest, and a modern kitchen was installed in the northwest corner of the first floor.

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church
Atlantic County, New Jersey

Statement of Significance

St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church is significant under criterion C as a well-preserved, intact example of ecclesiastical architecture executed in the Romanesque Revival style in 1905. It is the most majestic, almost cathedral-like, church in the city of Atlantic City and is the only extant Romanesque Revival church there. St. Nicholas is a late example of this revival style, which began in the 1840s, was amplified by Henry Richardson in the 1870s and 1880s, and faded from usage after the first decade of the 20th century.

Built of light-colored North Carolina granite, the church is cruciform in plan and retains most of its original elements including stone exterior, red terracotta tile roof, twin towers, stained glass windows, and numerous interior features such as murals, altars, *bas-reliefs*, and plaster ornamentation. The majority of its decorative finishes was added in 1935. Most of its finer stained glass windows were designed in the style of the Munich School of Stained Glass and were fabricated by the most well known of the Munich firms, the Mayer Studios. A baptistery, added in 1935 to the northeast corner of the church, features a richly tiled Venetian enamel and glass mosaic ceiling executed by the DePaoli Mosaic and Terrazzo Company of New York City. Stained glass windows in the baptistery were fabricated in 1935 by the well known Willet Studios of Philadelphia and feature rare Norman slab glasses.

St. Nicholas Church is also significant under criterion C as the work of Edwin Forrest Durang (1829-1911), a prominent Philadelphia architect who specialized in ecclesiastical design, most notably churches and institutions associated with the Catholic church. Durang's firm was one of the most successful enterprises specializing in Catholic church architecture in Philadelphia around the turn of the last century, and his list of commissions as published in the Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects is impressive. Durang's firm was only rivaled in the later 19th and early 20th centuries by the dynasty of architects begun by Henry D. Dagit (1865-1929) and carried on by his sons after 1922. Henry D. Dagit, Jr. (1893-1981) was responsible for designing the 1935 baptistery addition.

St. Nicholas was the first Roman Catholic church to be established on Absecon Island, and this building (its third), is one of only three consecrated churches in the Diocese of Camden. To be consecrated, a church must be of majestic quality, its altar must be sunk into the earth to signify its permanence, and it must be paid for in full. From its founding in 1855 until 1997, St. Nicholas was under the auspices of the Augustians.

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church

Atlantic County, New Jersey
(criterion C, continued)

Historical Background

Atlantic City was in its infancy as a health and pleasure resort when the Augustinian fathers first said mass there in 1855. As John Hall, editor of the city's paper *The Daily Union* and author of one of the city's first histories, observed: "the Augustinian Fathers came to look after lost or strayed sheep and found a few such scattered among the sand hills of which there were plenty." [Hall, p. 295] Just one year earlier, the city had been incorporated and the first train had crossed the south Jersey pinelands to Absecon Island where Atlantic City is located.

The first mass on the island was celebrated in the spring of 1855 in the dining room of a guest cottage (one of only four in the resort at the time) owned by Thomas Bedloe, an Irishman who came to Atlantic City from Philadelphia in 1852. Celebrant of the mass was the Rev. Michael Gallagher, Order of St. Augustine (OSA), who was attached to the community of St. Augustine in Philadelphia. [McMahon, pp. 8-9]

This was not the first mass to be said in south Jersey, or even in Atlantic County, however. According to the records of Old St. Joseph's in Philadelphia, the first Catholic mass and baptism in south Jersey was said on October 5, 1743 in Salem County for Belgian and German glassblowers who had settled there. [*Catholic Star Herald*, 6-16-1989, p. 57] It continued as south Jersey's only parish for almost ninety years.

The first Catholic church to be erected in south Jersey was St. Mary's Church of the Assumption built in 1830 near Sweetwater in Gloucester (now Atlantic) County. Believed to be the third Catholic church erected in the state, the small clapboard chapel drew a congregation from miles around. [Ibid.] As Patrick Kendrick, third Bishop of Philadelphia, noted in 1830:

August the fifteenth day I blessed the cemetery and church of St. Mary of the Assumption in a place commonly called Pleasant Mills, in Gloucester county in the state of New Jersey. About two hundred Catholics were present from various places, some distant six miles, some twelve or more miles from the church. The people generally are employed about the furnaces and works of this kind. The Rev. William O'Donnell, O.S.A. exercises the office of pastor among them. He visits them from the city once in the space of two months. At present there is no other church in that part of this state which belongs to the diocese, but one in the town of Trenton, which is also visited by the same priest once every month. [McMahon, p. 39]

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church

Atlantic County, New Jersey
(criterion C, continued)

With the collapse of the iron industry, the chapel was eventually abandoned in 1860, and burned to the ground in 1900 during a forest fire. [*Atlantic City Press* clipping, undated, p. 36]

Before the 1840s were over, Catholic congregations in southern New Jersey had organized and built churches in Gloucester, Salem, and Cape May counties. The introduction of railroad service in 1854 into Atlantic City, then in 1863 into Cape May, opened south Jersey to development and brought both Catholics and non-Catholics alike to newly established pinelands and coastal resort communities. [Dorwart, p. 111]

At the time of Atlantic City's first mass, the local Catholic community was comprised of a number of influential city residents, among them: Col. Daniel Morris, a surveyor who laid out the City's streets as they now appear and who later founded the Morris Guards, a popular military/social club begun in 1887; Patrick O'Reilly, a Reading, Pa. subcontractor who helped to build the first railroad line into the resort; and Alois Schaufler, a hotel owner who helped build the first turnpike in Atlantic City across the meadows at Missouri Avenue and who was later elected to City Council. With the encouragement of the local community, and through a gift of property by Morris and O'Reilly, Father Gallagher erected a plain, two-story frame structure in 1855 (no longer extant), just months after having said the first mass on the island.

Sited on the south side of Tennessee and Atlantic Avenues, the simple building served as both presbytery and dwelling until the completion three years later of a gothic-style chapel on a neighboring lot. The abandoned presbytery/dwelling house was subsequently sold, then given an addition of 10' to its front and thereafter served a variety of uses, at one time being known as the Mt. Vernon Cottage, and then the Bristol.

The new, Gothic chapel, built at a cost of \$16,000, was put under the patronage of St. Nicholas of Tolentine, an Augustinian friar who is patron of the souls in purgatory. [historic image #1] At the time, only two other churches in the country were under the guardianship of St. Nicholas of Tolentine—one in Erie County, PA (founded in 1833) and the other in Wilkes-Barre, PA (founded ca. 1840). [Middleton, p. 24] The framework for the chapel had actually been designed as a replacement for the St. Denis Church, a ca. 1835 stone building in West Haverford, Pennsylvania. However, the materials were shipped to Atlantic City for the new St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church instead, and St. Denis was re-built some years later. [Middleton, p. 22]

Capable of holding 300 people, the chapel was usually jammed during the summer months, but nevertheless served Absecon Island for twenty-five years. Father Gallagher attended the church from 1855 to 1860, residing in Atlantic City during the summer and returning to Philadelphia

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church

Atlantic County, New Jersey
(criterion C, continued)

after the season, then making frequent trips back to the resort in the winter months to hold services. [McMahon, p. 18]

In Atlantic City's early years, Catholic group excursions to the resort were immensely popular. The *Catholic Herald of Philadelphia* (August 9, 1855) advertised the following outing which was sponsored by the Catholic Philopatrian Institute of Philadelphia:

The excursion will leave Vine Street wharf at half past six in the morning, the charge for the round trip being one dollar and a quarter. [as cited in Middleton, p. 19]

After Fr. Gallagher's departure from Atlantic City for other assignments in 1860, the St. Nicholas chapel was attended as an out-mission by priests from St. Augustine's in Philadelphia, a practice that continued until 1880. In the summer months, a priest remained at the shore mission throughout the week, saying mass daily; in the winter, priests were sent from Philadelphia once a month on Sunday. [McMahon, p. 20; Middleton, p. 17]

On July 6, 1880, the Mid-Chapter of the Augustinians at Villanova voted that "Atlantic City should have a resident rector to enter into his duties with residence the first Sunday in August." [McMahon, p. 20] The Reverend J.J. Fedigan, OSA, then president of Villanova College in Pennsylvania, was given the appointment.

By now, the 26-year old resort was booming. The Camden & Atlantic Railroad, which started resort service in 1854, had been joined by the Philadelphia & Atlantic Railroad (narrow gauge) in 1877. Although the number of year-round residents was only 1,043 in 1880 (compared with 687 in 1860), the railroads brought throngs of visitors, particularly during the summer months. [Heston, *Absegami*, ii, p. 305] Whereas the first boarding houses and cottages were located on Atlantic Avenue, the beachfront was fast becoming even more popular and was, by 1880, home to eight frame hotels. One of them, the Brighton, made history in 1876 by remaining open year-round. [McMahon, p. 21]

When Father Fedigan arrived, he quickly determined the size of the gothic chapel was inadequate for the ever-growing number of worshippers. He thought to build a new chapel, but compromised, as he later wrote in his diary, by enlarging the existing structure in 1881 to seat 900. [McMahon p. 22] Within a year, even this larger chapel was too small, so Father Fedigan exchanged the church's 75' x 150' Atlantic Avenue property for a larger 125' x 150' lot on Pacific Avenue in 1887. [Atlantic County Deed Book 116, p. 363] The chapel was moved to the new location, given a basement to handle over-flow services, and received a new front. [historic image # 2] The moving and re-building occurred in the winter of 1887, and the renovations

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brought a total of 1,000 seats. Supposedly, the iron support columns in the basement had been part of the Second Street Market house in Philadelphia. [Hall, p. 299]

In the meantime, Father Fedigan established a mission church in 1885 at the corner of California and Atlantic Avenues to serve the increasing Catholic population in the lower districts of Atlantic City. The church was designed by Edwin Durang, the Philadelphia architect who would later design the present St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church in 1902. Attended by priests from St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church during the summer months only, the mission was dedicated under the patronage of St. Monica. The frame church burned in 1896 and a new one, renamed Our Lady Star of the Sea, was built in 1897 under the direction of Philadelphia architect John Deery. [McMahon, p. 23; Our Lady Star of the Sea "Souvenir;" Historic Sites Survey, p.10]

In 1891, a new presbytery or parish house, was erected at the northwest corner of Tennessee and Pacific Avenues, the site of the present church. [historic image #2] It was a three-story, frame Victorian building, possibly designed by Durang, as he received a commission from St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church in late 1890. [Tatman and Moss, p. 232] Thirty years after its construction, the building was described as a "large and somewhat showy, yet not unhandsome structure." [Middleton, p. 36]

Father Fedigan was rector of St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church until 1898, when he was transferred to Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. He was replaced by Rev. Francis McShane (1846-1932), an Irish-born priest who was then serving as President of Villanova College. ["The Diocese of Trenton" as cited in McMahon, p. 24] Like his predecessor, Father McShane found the church's facilities inadequate to meet the demands of the times, not surprising since Atlantic City's population had grown steadily from 687 in 1860 to 27,838 in 1900. [Heston, ii, p. 305] Similarly, the number of hotels, cottages and boarding houses had gone from 311 in 1882 to 649 in 1900. [Copsill's Directories, as cited in Funnell, p. 34] The railroads were also conveying impressive numbers of visitors to the city: on July 1st and 2nd in 1893, the Reading and the Pennsylvania Railroads brought 20,000 passengers to the city, and on July 3rd, 4th, and 5th of that year they brought 46,680. [Ibid., p. 94] By 1900, the city boasted 4,234 houses, 541 stores with dwellings, 32 churches, 3 railroad depots, and 3 ocean piers. [Hall, p. 319]

Atlantic City was not another Newport, however. As intended by the City's founders, the resort appealed to the urban masses, particularly the lower and middle classes of Philadelphia who were lured as much by the gaudy boardwalk and amusement piers as they were by the reputed health benefits of bathing in the ocean.

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In 1900, the *Sunday Gazette* (Atlantic City) remarked that Father McShane had collected \$13,000 toward a building fund begun one year earlier. The sum was remarkable given, as Middleton noted in 1906, "the bulk of worshipers at St. Nicholas', the same pretty much as at other pleasure resorts, was largely of the floating class of mere visitors, strangers from afar, from all parts of the Union, with no special interest in local needs or improvements." [Middleton, pp. 43-44]

The paper reported that the new church building would have "what is known as a basement but its ceiling will be of more than ordinary height. The object is to have room for the holding of two services at one time, upstairs and downstairs." The paper, like Middleton, noted the growth of the congregation did not warrant a new structure, but the increasing number of Catholic visitors coming to Atlantic City did. [*Sunday Gazette*, 5-27-1900]

Formal plans for the church were announced one year later, in April 1901, through an illustrated hand-out distributed at church services and in a local newspaper article. The newspaper accurately described the new building as it would, and does, appear today:

The entire front is 76' wide, the depth of the Church being 150'. The plan gives a nave, side aisles, deep transepts, the Sanctuary, ending in a central Apse with Main altar; smaller apses, on either side, with Altars. The front shows two towers of like form and finish—90' high with low spires 30 feet additional, including gilded Crosses, in all 120'.

The face portion between the towers presents a striking appearance, rising up a high gable, 85 feet, with gilded cross. Below are grouped three large entrances with jambs of polished granite in columns. Higher up will be three windows, the central one being a special feature of the façade. All the details will be rich, but substantial. Besides the three front entrances, there will be four others, one from each tower on the sides, and one from each transept toward the front—seven in all.

There will be four windows on each side of the building between the towers and the transepts. Over these will rise the clerestory with five groups of windows. The Transepts, extending out 12 feet, will rise up to the height of the main part, 85 feet in the gables. Each gable end will show a large ornamental window with two smaller ones below. The ventilation will be faultless. The roof and the spires will be covered with red tile and terra cotta cresting, which will add to the appearance and durability of the whole.

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The stone must be white or very light in color, and must come from a quarry that has stood rigid tests. The costs, when finished, will not be less than \$100,000. [*Atlantic City Daily Press*, 4-1-1901]

Apparently, plans for a basement large enough for church services had been abandoned. To make way for the 76' wide x 150' deep cruciform church, the 3-story parish house, located on the northwest corner of Tennessee and Pacific Avenues and built in 1891, was moved to the west side of the old chapel. The new church was designed by the "celebrated church architect" Edwin F. Durang (1829-1911) of Philadelphia. [ibid.] Durang specialized in ecclesiastical design, most notably those churches and related institutions associated with the Catholic Church, and his significance is discussed later in this section.

Durang was no stranger to Atlantic City, or to Father McShane. As previously mentioned, Durang had designed the Catholic mission church of St. Monica in Atlantic City in 1886, and his other Atlantic City commissions included cottages and a hotel. [Tatman and Moss, pp. 230-232] Durang had also worked with Father McShane when the latter was president of Villanova College, designing a college building there in 1898. [Ibid. p. 232]

Not surprisingly, most of the major public and commercial architectural commissions in Atlantic City were given to Philadelphia architects, like Durang, because of the resort's strong social and economic ties with Philadelphia in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Such prominent Philadelphia designers as Stephen D. Button, John Deery, Addison Hutton, and Frank Watson were hired to design banks, hotels, summer houses, churches and stores in the resort, few of which remain today. Only after the first decade of the 20th century would Atlantic City have its own residents architects, like Sauer & Hahn and Vivian B. Smith.

Under Durang's direction, construction began and the cornerstone was laid July 6, 1902 with some 2,000 people in attendance. [*Sunday Gazette*, 7-7-1902] Three years later, on September 17, 1905 the church was dedicated. [*Atlantic City Sunday Press*, 9-18-1905] Although the exterior was completed, the interiors were not, and at the time they were described as "unadorned" by the local newspaper. [*Sunday Press*, 9-18-1905] Altars and pews from the 1885 chapel were used until replacements could be purchased. [Middleton, p. 44] [historic image #3]

At the time of its dedication in 1905, the church had cost nearly \$128,000. Of the \$113,000 raised by the church to that date, \$84,000 had come from collections, \$12,000 from entertainments, \$9,600 from donations and door-to-door collections, and \$7,400 from a surplus of seat money over operating expenses. The church also needed an additional \$35,000 for altars,

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statues, and windows, of which \$16,300 had already been donated to these memorials.
[Brochure, *Dedication of the New St. Nicholas Church*, 1905]

Fr. Thomas Middleton, an Augustinian who wrote a history of St. Nicholas Church in the fall of 1905, observed the following of the interiors in a footnote:

At this writing, St. Nicholas', while being wholly completed outside, within needs nearly everything yet to be finished in the way of equipment—altars, seats, etc. [Middleton, p. 46]

Of the interior, he also noted that “from the clerestory down the building though of neat and not unpleasant lines throughout seems to revel as it were in somewhat lavish display of ornament of many varied characters in mouldings, arches, and so on.” [Ibid.]

By June of 1906, barely nine months later, Middleton stated in an additional footnote that the interior details with the exception of two altars and the chancel railing, had been completed. The two altars referred to were probably the two in the side apses. The statuary niche on the north wall of the east transept was possibly a shrine to St. Rita, added as late as 1910; the Athenaeum in Philadelphia holds a drawing, dated 1910, of “St. Rita’s Shrine” for St. Nicholas drawn by architect George Lovatt, Sr. (1872-1958). Lovatt’s shrine was probably never installed; it does not appear in a ca. 1910 image of the interior [historic image #5], nor does it show in a ca. 1905-1934 postcard. [historic image #28]

The church’s stained glass windows were fabricated by two different firms. The finer stained glass windows found in the nave, transepts, semi-dome, balcony, and vestibule were designed in the style of the Munich School of Stained Glass, and were fabricated by the most well known of the Munich firms, the Mayer Studios. Most of these are memorials, inscribed with names; only one is signed by Mayer Studios, but they all have the same enframing design at the top. They were fabricated using handmade, mouth-blown antique glass and painted in the traditional trace and matte technique of glass painting. [Conditions Report and Recommendations, p. 1] Mayer’s advertisement in Durang’s ca. 1910 architectural album proudly boasted of supplying stained glass windows for at least fifteen American cathedrals in such major cities as Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco.

The simpler stained glass windows in the clerestory, sacristy, and towers were fabricated by Martin Callanan, an Irish immigrant who established a studio in Philadelphia in the 1880s. [Callanan ad in Durang’s *Architectural Album* (ca. 1910) and interview with Tim Callanan] These windows are fabricated using American cathedral glass, which is a transparent colored

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glass with a mechanical finish imparted by a roller. Callanan's ad in Durang's ca. 1910 portfolio cites more than ten church commissions, including St. Nicholas of Tolentine, Our Lady of Mercy (Philadelphia), St. Joseph's (Sea Isle City, NJ), and St. Francis Xavier (Philadelphia), all which had been designed by Durang.

According to a booklet distributed at the dedication, the parishioners had great difficulty raising the necessary monies from within the community to build the new church. Attempts to solicit local merchants, hotel owners, and resident Catholics were largely unsuccessful. However, urgent and repeated appeals in the church, on Sunday when resort visitors were present, yielded the greatest results. [Brochure, *Dedication of the New St. Nicholas Church*, 1905] The church also held penny auctions, card parties, and fashion shows to raise money. [interview, Fr. Wm. Hodge]

With the church essentially complete, Father McShane turned his attention to building a new parochial school and rectory. The old chapel, which sat just west of the new one, was torn down in September 1907 to make way for the new buildings. The local paper noted that the former church was "not considered worth more than old lumber" and that pieces of the old structure were being carried off as souvenirs by relic hunters. Large sections of raised-panel oak paneling, possibly from the old chapel, are currently stored in the Church's basement. The rectory, which sat just west of the old chapel, was moved across the street to sit at the northeast corner of Pacific and St. James. [*Sunday Gazette* 9-27-1907 and 10-27-1907] It then became the home of the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal organization, and was used as such until they erected a new building on the site in 1927.

Edwin Durang also designed the new rectory and parochial school. [Tatman and Moss, p. 233] [historic images #8, 9, and 11] Like the church, the three-story school was built of granite in the Romanesque Revival style, and featured eight classrooms on the upper two stories with an "entertainment" hall on the first floor. It could hold several hundred students and its costs were estimated at \$40,000. [*Sunday Gazette* 9-27-1907] Classes were first held on September 16, 1909 and all eight grades of elementary school were offered. Classes were taught by the Sisters of Mercy who first resided in a frame cottage on Ocean Avenue, about a half block from the church.

The rectory, also 3-stories tall and built of granite, was placed between the new church and school, and was connected to the church by a passageway between the sacristy and the rear of the rectory's east (side) elevation.

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Solemn consecration, the final dedication of the church when it had been paid for in full, was held on June 6, 1914, with the apostolic delegate to the U.S., Archbishop John Binzano of Washington, D.C., officiating.

In 1925, plans to build a convent for the Sisters of Mercy, who taught at the school, were announced in the local paper. Two cottages on a 25' x 125' lot just west of the school were razed to make way for a 3-story building of Mt. Airy granite and brick. The convent was described as having a chapel, parlor, dining room, and kitchen on the first floor, with bedrooms and a community room on the second floor, and bedrooms and an infirmary on the third floor. The roof had a solarium and a laundry. [*Sunday Gazette*, 1-1-1925] All of these rooms are intact. The convent cost \$125,000 and was built by John McShain of Philadelphia, whose firm also built the new church. [*Atlantic City Sunday Press*, 9-13-1925] [historic images #11 and #15]

The convent was designed by Frank A. Berry (no dates, flourished 1921-1927) who resided both in Philadelphia and Atlantic City. He later built the 5-story, Moorish-revival style Knights of Columbus building (extant) across the street, on the site of the former rectory. Berry's modest list of commissions in Tatman & Moss' Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects shows most of his projects were in New Jersey, and included Our Lady of Victory Church in Sayreville (1920), St. Matthew's Church in National Park (1920), several residences and stores in Atlantic City, and an office building in Elizabeth (1927). He appears in the Philadelphia directories for the years 1921 through 1927, in the Atlantic City directories for the years 1925 through 1928, and was the brother of an Augustinian. Local tradition says he was never paid for his work on the Knights of Columbus building. [notes on file at the St. Nicholas of Tolentine church]

In the height of the Depression, a major interior renovation was undertaken in 1935, and a one-story chapel/baptistery addition was placed in the northeast corner of the church at the same time. Decorators estimated that more than \$700 worth of gold leaf was used on the ceiling, and the great amount of interior scaffolding caused a visiting priest to remark, "it's like saying mass in a subway under construction." [McMahon, p. 27] Murals in the transepts were cleaned and restored, and the domes of the side altars were painted with scenes of the Annunciation and the Flight into Egypt. Radiation was concealed in the wainscoting, chandeliers were removed and replaced with indirect lighting, and the ceiling was painted a cream color and decorated with paintings of the Apostle's and the Apostle's Creed. Ceiling ribs were gold-leafed and stenciled, while paintings of the archangels in the main apse's niches were added. Fifty-two, gilt wooden shields, painted with symbols associated with the passion and death of Christ, were added between the colonettes along the nave aisle and the transepts. The top of the apse semi-dome was

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painted with symbols of the Blessed Trinity, flanked by the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. [*Atlantic City Press*, 8-25-1935] [historic images #13 and #14]

Also added at this time was a novel system of "air conditioning" to provide relief in the nave, transept, and side aisles during the sweltering summer months. Massive ductwork was placed in the basement, and it was connected to a large, 5' diameter ventilating fan located in a small room under the west transept. Huge blocks of ice were placed on a raised concrete platform next to the fan. The fan would draw the chilled air and force it through the ducts and out through registers placed under the pews. Although the registers were removed when new flooring was installed in the 1980s, the fan and ductwork remain *in situ*.

The baptistery addition, financed by an anonymous benefactor, was designed by Henry D. Dagit and Sons, a Philadelphia architectural firm noted, like Durang, for its ecclesiastical work with Catholic churches. Specifications for the work, found in the St. Nicholas of Tolentine files, note that the baptistery's ceiling was to be tiled with 3/8" square gold tesserae in a design similar to the vestibule ceiling of St. Bartholomew's Church on 50th Street and Park Avenue in New York City. (St. Bartholomew was designed by Bertram Goodhue and built in 1917-1919.) Subjects for the ceiling's symbols were to be selected by the owners (presumably the church), and the font and altar were to be made of solid Alps green marble. [Specifications] All of these features are extant. [historic image #17]

Stained glass windows for the baptistery were fabricated by the well-known Willets Studios of Philadelphia, founded by William Willet in 1898 and still in operation today. Willet, an artist and leader in the American Gothic movement, worked with noted American church architect Ralph Adams Cram to create traditional designs that rivaled the works found in the finest European cathedrals. [Conditions Report, Willet Studios, 1997] Among Willet's early commissions were the National Cathedral (1907) and the National Presbyterian Church, both in Washington, D.C.

The cost of the remodeling and the addition was \$25,000. At the time, Fr. Fedigan claimed the church had 200,000 yearly visitors and on Sunday, August 18th 1935, 11,000 had attended services that day. [*Atlantic City Press*, 8-25-1935]

When the liturgy of the church was changed, and the free-standing altar was adopted in 1970, part of the main altar was separated and brought forward. [interview, Fr. Wm. Hodge] The lantern over the main altar was removed, and was supposedly placed in a local funeral home. The original pulpit and the chancel rail gates were also removed to an unknown location.

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With the decline of Atlantic City's popularity as a travel destination in the 1950s and 1960s, the church also experienced a decline in attendance. However, the introduction of casino gaming in the late 1970s reversed the trend and brought worshippers back into the church. In 1977, spurred by the rebuilding of the resort and in anticipation of the growth of tourists because of casino gaming, the church underwent another beautification project. Among the improvements were new lighting to accentuate the murals and other artistic decorations, a repainting of the ceiling, and repainting of the columns flanking the altars. The addition of mosaics to the north wall of the baptistery probably occurred at this time as well. The work was executed by D'Ambrosio Art Studios of Pelham Manor, New York, a firm begun in the early 1900s, which specialized in church renovation work. One historian, without citing a source, claimed that Antonio D'Ambrosio, Sr., who had founded the studio, had been taught by Lario Panzirani, Sr., who designed the St. Nicholas of Tolentine church's paintings and murals in the early 1900s. [McMahon, p. 29.] The beautification was completed by Easter Sunday; in celebration of the Church's 75th anniversary, the church was re-dedicated on July 6, 1977 by the Most Rev. George Guilfoyle, bishop of Camden, NJ. [Ibid.]

Despite the rise in tourism, the number of year-round parishioners continued to dwindle as they left the city to reside elsewhere. By the 1989 there were only 120 of them, and the Augustinians increasingly concentrated on the needs of the casino visitors and the growing number of homeless and destitute in the resort. [*Atlantic City Press* 11-5-1989] In 1996, the Augustinians of the Province of St. Thomas of Villanova, who had founded the parish in 1855, decided to withdraw their service from St. Nicholas of Tolentine and on February 2, 1997, the pastoral care of the parish was returned to the bishop of Camden, the Most Reverend James T. McHugh. [The Augustinians in Atlantic City, pp. 23-24.]

Although the Church has less than 100 active parishioners today, it continues to play a vital role in the community. It still attracts large numbers of visitors every year, with approximately 3,000 per week attending services in the winter, and up to 5,000 per week in the summer. [Interview, Fr. Wm. Hodge] The Church also sponsors a food bank with weekly distributions to the needy, concert series, a Mariner's Blessing in the spring, and other specialized religious ceremonies in addition to daily and Sunday masses.

The Significance of Architect Edwin F. Durang

Edwin Forrest Durang (1829-1911) was born into a prestigious family of professional actors and performers. His grandfather, John Durang (1768-1822), was credited with being the first native-born American actor, and his father and uncle, Charles and Richard Ferdinand Durang, were the

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first to perform the "Star Spangled Banner." In later years Charles Durang (1791-1870) worked as director and prompter at both the Chestnut Street and the American Theatres in Philadelphia. After his retirement in 1853, he taught dancing and wrote several books regarding dancing as well as a history of the Philadelphia stage. [Tatman and Moss, p. 232]

By 1865, Edwin F. Durang was listed in the Philadelphia city directories as an architect with an office at 304 Vine Street. In 1857 he was noted at 417 Market Street, and it is in this year that he began working for John E. Carver, a veteran residential and ecclesiastical architect. Upon Carver's death in 1859, Durang succeeded him in the firm, retaining the office at 21 N. 6th Street until 1880. Following Carver's example, Durang also specialized in ecclesiastical design, most notably those churches and institutions associated with the Catholic Church. In November, 1909, Durang was joined in the firm by his son, F. Ferdinand Durang (1884-1966), who succeeded him in 1911. The Durang firms represent one of the most successful enterprises specializing in Catholic church architecture in Philadelphia, only rivaled in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the dynasty of architects sired by Henry D. Dagit (1865-1929). Edwin F. Durang was a member of the Franklin Institute. [Ibid.]

Durang's list of commissions as published in Tatman and Moss' Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects is impressive and includes more than fifty churches of which the overwhelming majority is Catholic. His other commissions included public schools (5), parochial schools (27), rectories (22), convents (10), college buildings (11), hospitals (5), private residences (7), an art gallery, an orphan asylum, two opera houses, an academy of music, two hotels, one bank, and numerous alterations and additions primarily for Catholic institutions. The majority of his works were located in the city of Philadelphia and environs, while others were found in Chicago, Reading (PA), Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, and Mobile, AL.

Three of his Philadelphia Catholic churches have been recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). St. Charles Boromeo Church (900 S. Twentieth St., HABS PA, 51-PHILA, 682) [historic images #18 and #19] was built in 1876 and is a Romanesque Revival church, rectangular in plan with no clerestory, side galleries, a coved and ribbed (but not vaulted) ceiling, and twin towers of unequal height. St. James Church (3278 Chestnut Street, HABS PA, 51-PHILA, 380) [historic images #20 and #21] is a Gothic Revival style church, cruciform in plan, with a nave rising above the side aisles, a clerestory, and twin towers of unequal height. Built in 1887, it also has a main altar contained within a semi-dome, and two side altars. St. Francis Xavier Church (2321 Green Street, HABS PA, 51-PHILA, 479) [historic image #22] was erected in 1895, is cruciform in plan and is stylistically a mix of Greek Revival with Romanesque elements. It has no towers, but has a full dome over the sanctuary.

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His New Jersey commissions included: St. John's Church (Lambertville, 1892), St. Francis Hospital (Trenton, 1894), St. Agnes Hospital (Trenton, 1895), St. Joseph's parochial school (Camden, 1895), a church in Beach Haven (1898), St. Nicholas Church convent (Passaic, 1901), Sisters of Notre Dame School (Ft. Lee, 1905), Holy Angels Collegiate Institute (Ft. Lee, 1908) and St. Mary Magdalene Church (Millville, 1908).

In addition to St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church, rectory, and parochial school in Atlantic City, Durang was responsible for two cottages on United States Ave. (1886, demolished), St. Monica's Church (1886, burned and rebuilt by a different architect), the Chetwoode Hotel (1711 Pacific Ave., 1888, demolished), alterations to the Charles O'Neill cottage (Pacific and Illinois Ave., 1898, demolished), and St. James Protestant Episcopal Church (Pacific and N. Carolina Ave., 1905, demolished) [historic image #23].

According to Tatman and Moss' list, St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church in Atlantic City was the 49th church designed by Durang, and he would design only five more before his death in 1911.

Around 1900, and again around 1910, Durang published photographic portfolios of his commissions, which are found at the Athenaeum in Philadelphia. These not only document the best examples of his work, but also identify other buildings not listed by Tatman and Moss. The portfolios show an equal versatility with both Gothic and Romanesque Revival ecclesiastical styles. His first church, Our Mother of Sorrows at 48th St. and Lancaster Avenues in Philadelphia, was designed in 1867 and altered (by Durang) in 1892. [historic image #24] It shows a well-executed Romanesque Revival façade with twin, 3-stage towers having buttressed walls and pyramidal spires. Of equal height, the towers flank a gable-fronted nave having three arched door openings framed by columns. In fact, the majority of his churches, whether Gothic or Romanesque Revival, show symmetrical facades comprised of twin 3-stage towers, usually but not always of equal height, flanking a gable-fronted nave. Also, most are built of stone and have shallow transepts (like St. Nicholas) and gable peaks topped with crosses.

Two church interiors illustrated in the portfolios are strikingly similar to those in St. Nicholas of Tolentine, and obviously served as a model. Our Lady of Mercy Church (Broad and Susquehanna Ave., Philadelphia, 1890) [historic image #25] shows identical, Corinthian marble columns (one large column surrounded by four thinner columns) along the nave aisle colonnade. Also identical is the detailing of the arcade across the nave aisle wall, the arched and groined ceilings, the placement of side altars, and the detailing of the apse with a semi-dome containing the main altar. [historic image #26] St. Gabriel's church (29th and Dickinson St., Philadelphia, 1902) has the same 5-part marble columns, side altars with domes and vaulted ceilings, and a main altar in an apse with a semi-dome. [historic image #27] Visible in the photo are colonettes,

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nearly identical to those in St. Nicholas, around the apse's wall below the semi-dome. Neither interior photograph shows painted decoration, murals, or stenciling on the walls.

When compared with the other churches in the portfolios and with those documented by HABS, St. Nicholas of Tolentine emerges as a well-executed example of one of Durang's finer Romanesque Revival churches. St. Nicholas was, in fact, included in the ca. 1910 portfolio, indicating Durang's pride in its design. Variations of its symmetrical façade, shallow transepts, apse with semi-dome, clerestory, and towers appear in Durang's earlier works, and show the same skilful use of exterior massing and detailing to create an almost monumental air. St. Nicholas' interiors, also based on earlier commissions, show a mastery of composition and a use of plaster architectural details to provide a rich ornamentation in the absence of painted decoration.

Context within the Romanesque Revival Style in America

Within the context of Romanesque Revival as an American ecclesiastical building style, St. Nicholas emerges as a later example. Although architect Henry H. Richardson (1837-1886) is most popularly associated with the style through his interpretation of it in the 1870s and 1880s, Romanesque Revival as an accepted architectural expression began decades earlier in this country.

Most of the 19th century was an age of eclecticism and churches, like other buildings, were designed after the manner of past architectural styles. In England, Romanesque Revival was a minor influence where, under the guidance of eminent British architect, Augustus Pugin, Gothic Revival dominated. In France, also, Gothic designs far out-numbered Romanesque during the same time period. In America, both styles were equally acceptable as viable architectural models for ecclesiastical design. This duality is explained partially by a decreasing dependence on English design for American buildings, and by the great, mid-19th century influx to this country of Germans whose mother country readily embraced Romanesque Revival. [Whiffen, p. 61]

The first two architects to use the Romanesque Revival style in the United States were Richard Upjohn (1802-1878) and James Renwick (1818-1895). Although both would become most famous for their Gothic Revival churches in New York City (Upjohn's 1839 Trinity Church and Renwick's 1850-1879 St. Patrick's Cathedral), each contributed to the rise of the Romanesque Revival through Upjohn's Church of the Pilgrims in Brooklyn in 1844-46 and Renwick's Smithsonian Institution in 1846. Soon, the style was so popular that by the 1850s and 1860s new churches and public buildings, but not houses, were more frequently Romanesque than Gothic.

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Section number 8 Page 16

St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church
Atlantic County, New Jersey
(criterion C, continued)

[Ibid., p. 61] One of Philadelphia's most well-known Romanesque Revival churches from this time period is Church of the Holy Trinity (Protestant Episcopal), designed in 1857-1859 by Philadelphia architect John Notman. [HABS PA 51-PHILA, 677]

Henry Richardson amplified the Romanesque Revival style by contrasting the rock-faced masonry walls with arches, lintels, and other structural features in a different stone. His landmark 1872 design of Trinity Church in Boston brought him immediate fame and created a Romanesque variant that would be copied in banks, jails, public buildings, homes, and churches for at least fifteen years beyond his death in 1886.

Eclecticism continued to dominate American church architecture through the first three decades of the 20th century, with Classical and Colonial Revival being added to the mix. The noted firm of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson was especially associated with the Gothic style, regardless of the sect to be served. Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942) authored several books on church architecture around the turn of the last century and was particularly disdainful of the Romanesque Revival style. In 1899, he commented that "Richardson's death removed the fictitious vitality of the alien style he had tried to make living, and it began to collapse in the follies of 'schoolhouse Romanesque.'" [Cram, p. 10]

Despite Cram's low view of the style, Romanesque Revival continued to be used, often by architectural firms like Durang's, which designed in the Gothic Revival as well. However, Romanesque Revival was not confined for use by one religious sect as Durang's portfolios might suggest. Of the fourteen resort churches illustrated in Hall's 1899 History of Atlantic City and County, two were Romanesque Revival (Presbyterian and Methodist, neither extant), eight were Gothic Revival (all sects represented, including the Catholic parishes of St. Nicholas and Our Lady Star of the Sea), one was Spanish Revival (Episcopal), one was Greek Revival (Methodist), and two were shingle style (Jewish and Methodist). In Philadelphia, it was much the same. Moses King's 1901 Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians is richly illustrated with photos of twenty of the city's finer churches which show Romanesque Revival style churches for Baptist, Episcopalian, Unitarian, and Roman Catholic congregations.

When completed in 1905, St. Nicholas' interior architectural ornamentation was typical for the time period. The great amount of plaster and marble ornament—columns, colonettes, arcades, ceiling ribs, and moldings—creates a cacophony of details that almost overwhelm the observer with their complexity and grandeur. When compared with the interiors of Durang's other Catholic commissions, St. Nicholas has the same richness and diversity of architectural ornament seen in the best of his other works. St. Nicholas' main altar, too, is an excellent example of stone-carving craftsmanship on a par with others seen in Durang's churches, and its overdone

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church
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(criterion C, continued)

tracery is typical for the period. Such ornateness was eschewed by Cram, however, who observed in 1899 that "frivolous 'gingerbready' follies...at present seem to affect the altar designs of the Roman church." [Cram, pp. 163-164]

The elaborate painted interiors seen in Durang's earlier works, for example in Philadelphia's St. Charles of Borromeo (1876) [historic images #18 and #19], are largely absent in St. Nicholas, reflecting a trend toward simplicity that began in the 1890s. W. H. McGinty, writing about Catholic architecture in an 1899 issue of *Catholic World*, noted:

We are at the beginning of an age which will exemplify the beauties of simplicity. Gaudiness and arrogant superfluity will have no home in the time into which the wheels of progress have carried us....[c]atholic church decoration in this country is apt to be overdone, and with vitiated taste we indulge in meaningless lines and glaring contrasts which distract the attention of the worshipper, instead of by the harmony of our colors endeavoring to carry him beyond worldly influences... Soft and chaste colors, with the church emblems delicately interwoven, appeal to the religious feelings much stronger than bright hues and glaring contrasts. [McGinty, p. 191 and 198]

McGinty did, however, advocate the use of stained glass windows where "the whole history of the bible is written in the hues of the rainbow by the earnest hand of faith." [Ibid.]

Thus, Durang used architectural details, rather than paint, to ornament and decorate St. Nicholas. Although the semi-dome received richly-painted details, and the arches over the clerestory windows were decorated to a lesser extent, the remainder of the church interiors were left plain, or, as an early postcard suggests [historic image #28] given bands of stenciling above the wainscot on the perimeter walls. Only later, in 1935, would St. Nicholas receive the great amount of gilding, faux-graining, and stenciled decoration seen today on its interior.

By the close of the first decade of the 20th century, the Romanesque Revival style had become passé, although the Gothic Revival as an ecclesiastical style continued to flourish, largely under the hand of Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1943).

Summary

St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church, completed in 1905, is an excellent, late example of Romanesque Revival ecclesiastical architecture. It is the most majestic, almost cathedral-like, church in the city of Atlantic City, and is the only extant Romanesque Revival church there. St. Nicholas Church is also an excellent example of the work of Philadelphia

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church
Atlantic County, New Jersey
(criterion C, continued)

architect Edwin Durang, and was designed in the manner of Durang's finest Philadelphia churches.

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Section number 9 Page 1

St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church
Atlantic County, New Jersey

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Section number 9 Page 3

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Atlantic County, New Jersey
(bibliography, continued)

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St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church

Atlantic County, New Jersey
(bibliography, continued)

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Continuation Sheet
Section number 10 Page 1

St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church
Atlantic County, New Jersey

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Block 27, lot 42 as noted on the tax map of the City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property is the one which has been associated with the property since 1919, is the one currently associated with the property, and includes the two contributing buildings in addition to the church.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

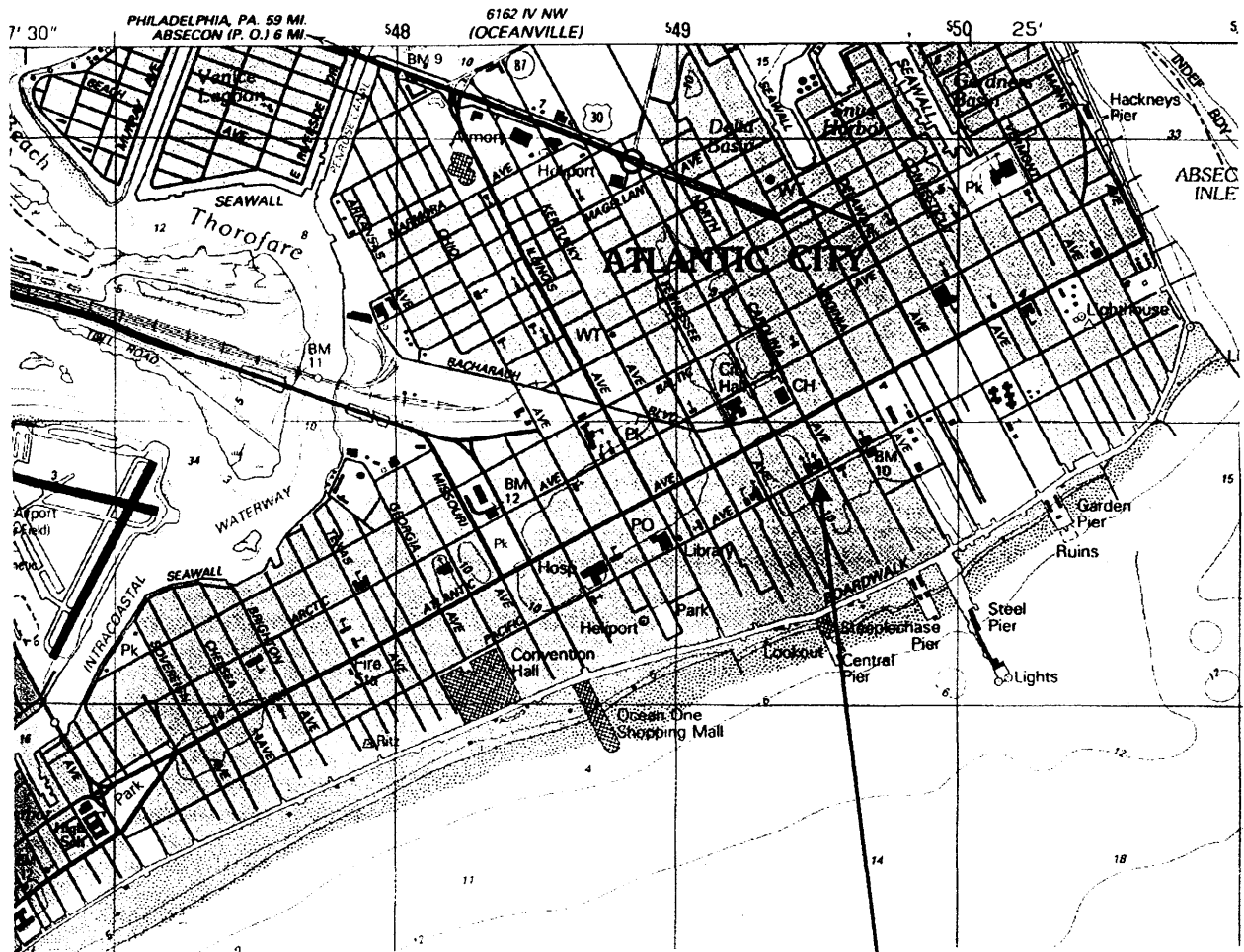
**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**
photographs

St. Nicholas of Tolentine R.C. Church
Atlantic County, New Jersey

Typical information for all photographs

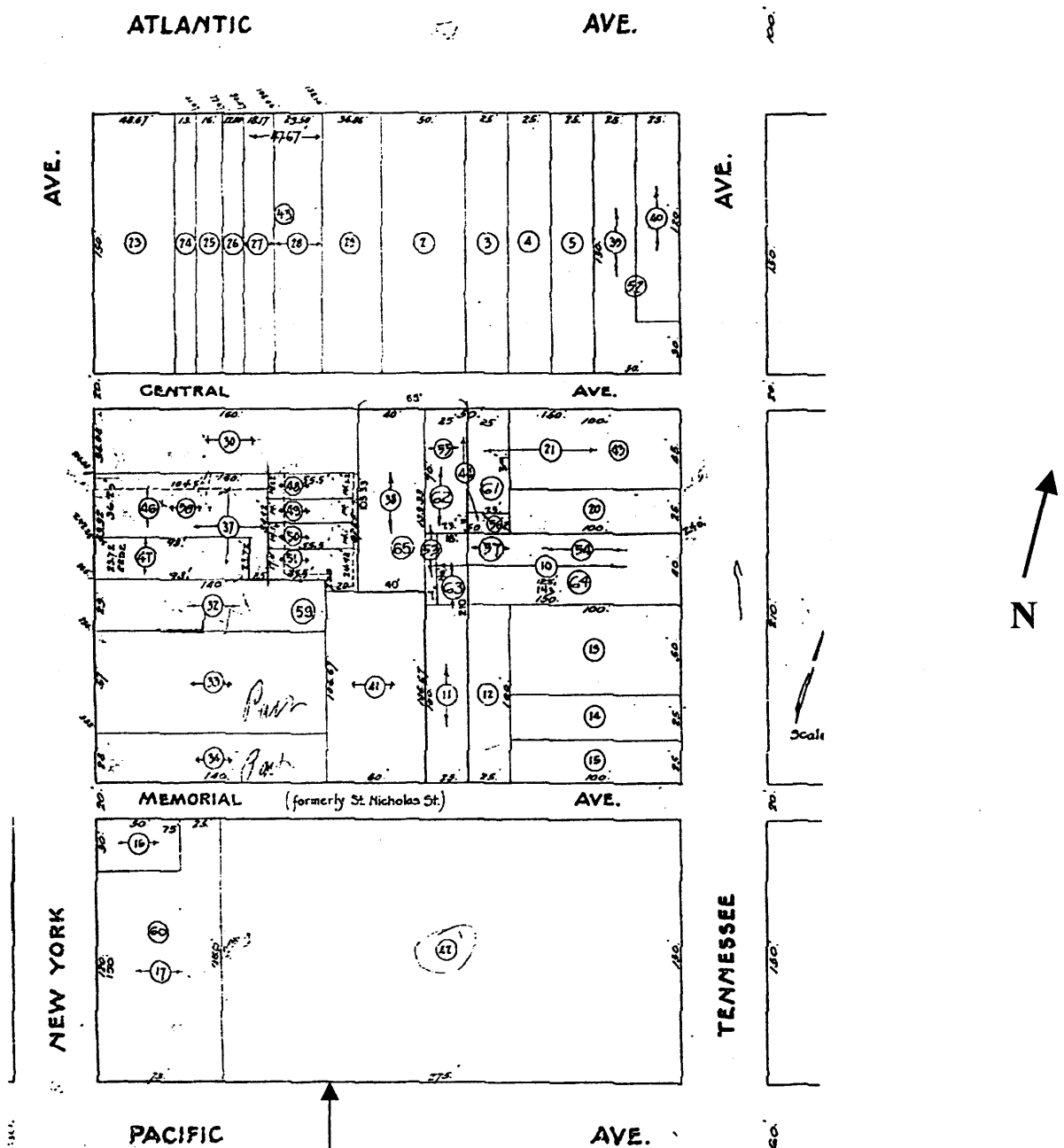
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2. County and State	Atlantic County, New Jersey
3. Photographer	Joan Berkey
4. Date of Photograph	August 2000
5. Location of Negatives	St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church 1409 Pacific Avenue Atlantic City, NJ 08401

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Description of View</u>
1.	exterior view showing setting and streetscape, looking northeast
2.	church exterior: main (south) and east elevations, looking northwest
3.	church exterior: north and east elevations, looking southwest
4.	church exterior (south and west elevations) and rectory (south and west elevations), looking northeast
5.	convent exterior, looking northwest
6.	church interior: vestibule, looking west
7.	church interior: nave, looking north toward altar
8.	church interior: nave, looking south toward choir loft
9.	church interior: west transept and west side aisle, looking southwest
10.	church interior: east transept, looking northeast
11.	church interior: baptistery, looking north toward altar
12.	church interior: sacristy, looking southwest



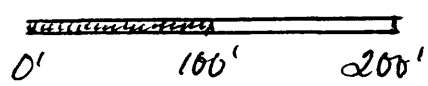
St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church
 1401 Pacific Avenue
 City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ

partial photocopy of USGS map, Atlantic City quadrangle

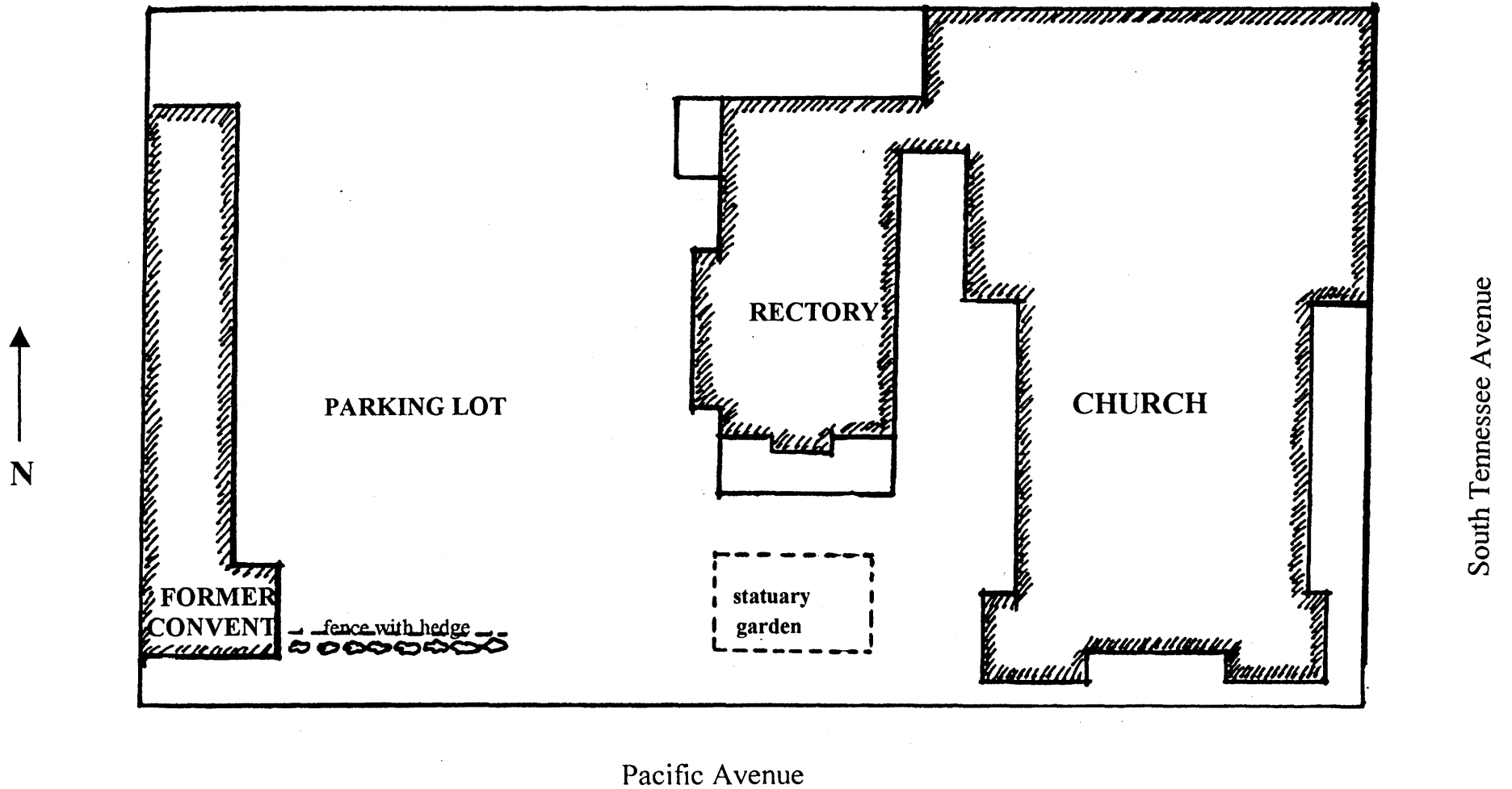


St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church
 City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ

Tax map, City of Atlantic City
 Block 27, lot 42
 Scale 1" = 100'



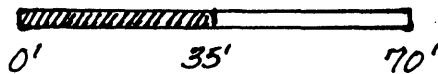
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City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ

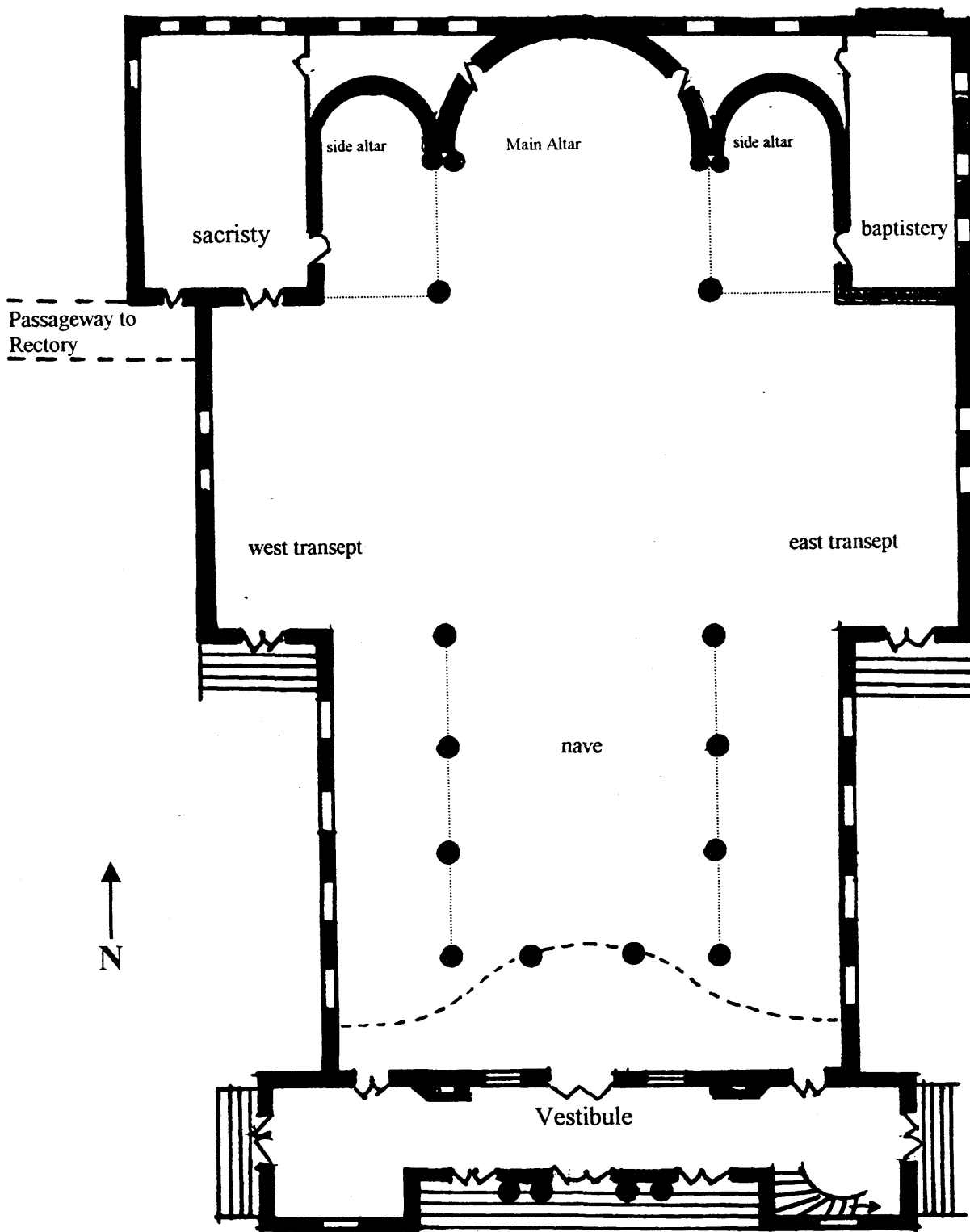


Pacific Avenue

South Tennessee Avenue

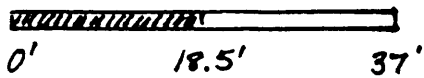
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Scale 1" = 35'

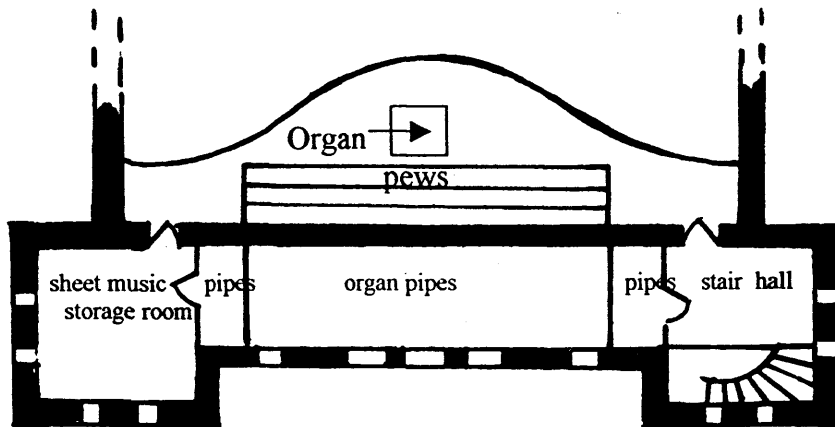




St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church
 City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ

First Floor Plan
 Scale 1" = 18.5'

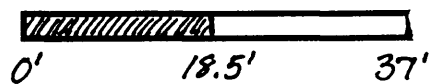




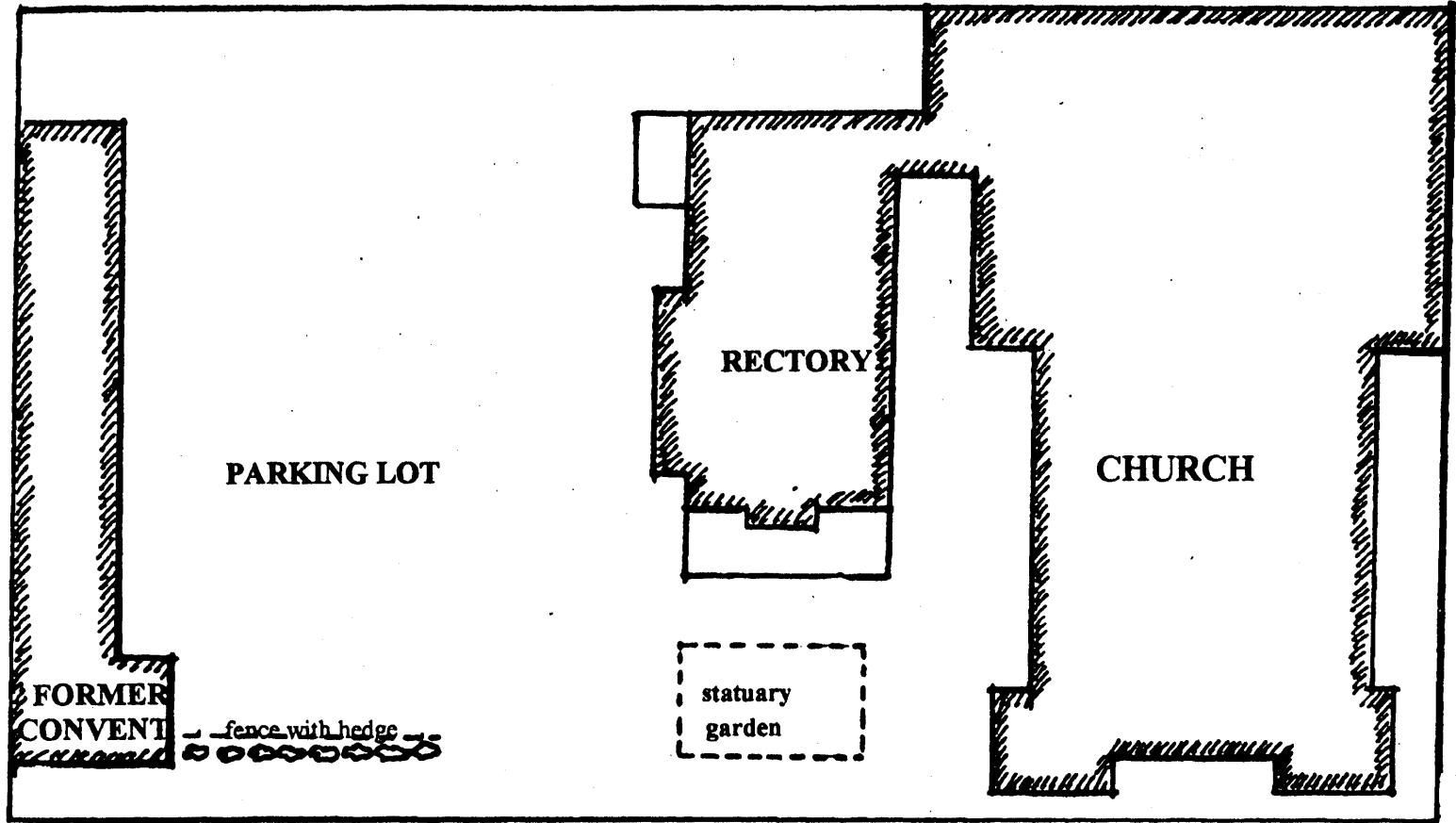
St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church
City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ

Floor Plan—Second Floor Choir Loft

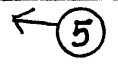
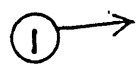
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St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church
Atlantic County, NJ



South Tennessee Avenue

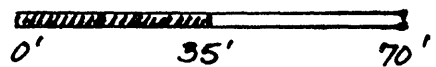


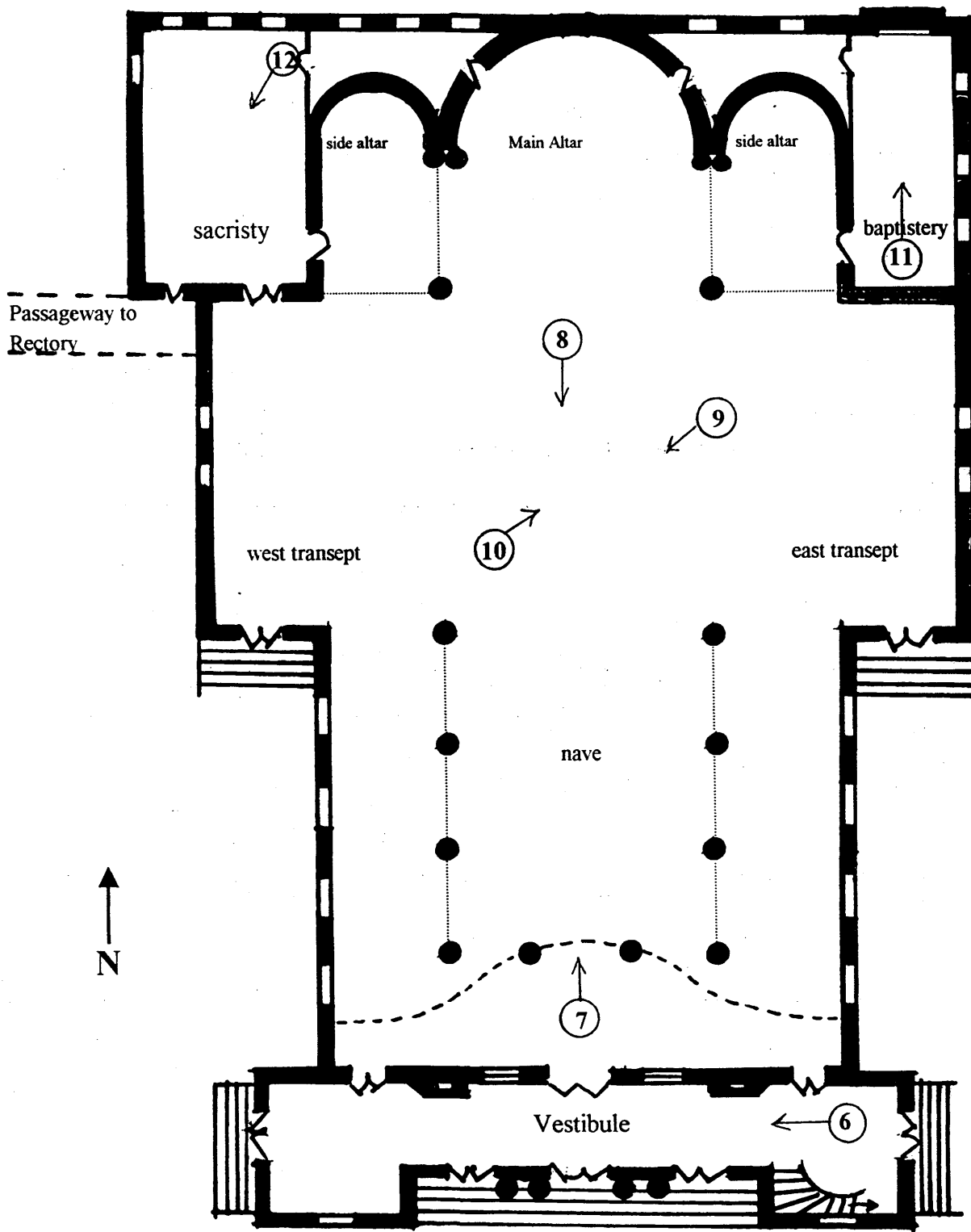
Pacific Avenue



Site Plan Annotated for Photographs

Scale 1" = 35'

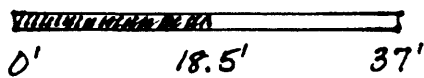




St. Nicholas of Tolentine Church
 City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ

First Floor Plan Annotated for Photographs

Scale 1" = 18.5'





Supplemental Photo #1

Rectory and Church

Looking north

Note the one-story connection
between the two buildings



Supplemental Photo #2

Altar to St. Rita

Looking northeast

Located on the north wall of the east transept;
added in 1935 when the baptistery was added



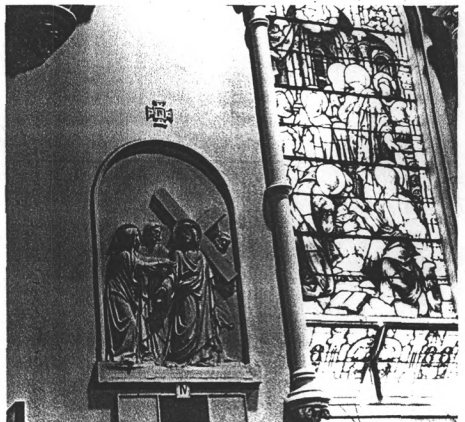
Supplemental Photo #3

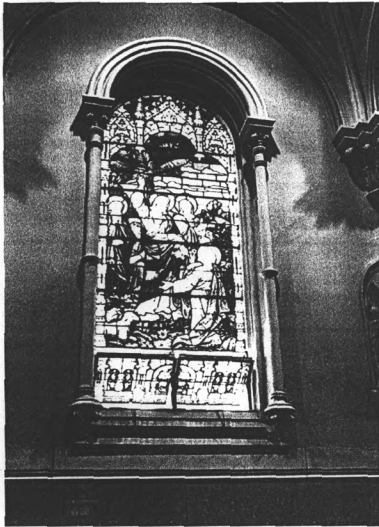
*Vestibule;
Door leading into nave*

Looking north

Supplemental Photo #4
Bas Relief Station of the Cross

Looking east

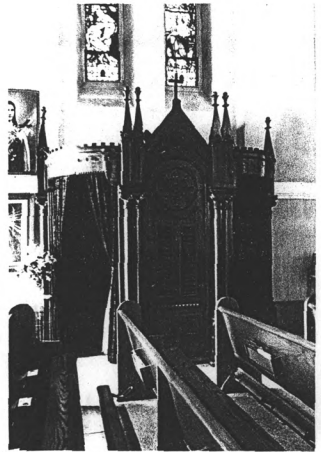




Supplemental Photo #5

*Typical Stained Glass Window
By Mayer Studios of Munich, Germany*

This one is located on the east side aisle wall and is the only one signed by Mayer; the “gothic” entablature in the arched head of the glass appears in all of the Mayer windows used in the church. (looking east)



Supplemental Photo # 6

Confessional Booth

This is one of four original carved oak confessionals; it is on the west wall of the west transept.



Supplemental Photo #7

Side Altar—Blessed Mary

Note the faux marble on the columns to the left and the right, the mural in the semi-dome, and the stenciled decoration behind the altar—all added in 1935. (looking north)



Supplemental Photo #8

Looking East across the Apse

Note the clerestory windows of cathedral glass to the right, with Mayer Studios windows to the left in the semi-dome.

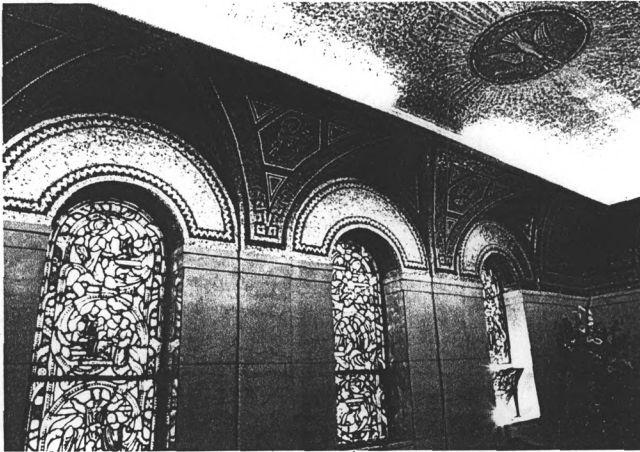
The square headed doorway and round stained glass above (done by Willets) mark the entrance to the baptistery and were added in 1935.

Supplemental Photo #9

Baptismal Font in Baptistery

Original to this 1935 addition, the font is made of brass and green marble. The water empties into a cistern, rather than into the sewer. (looking south)

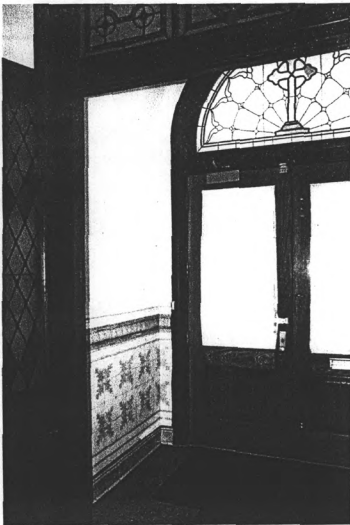




**Supplemental
Photo #10**

Baptistery

East wall, showing intricate mosaics on ceiling and stained glass windows by the Willets Studio in Philadelphia (1935)



Supplemental Photo #11

Rectory Vestibule

This view, looking southeast, shows the original entry doors, original tiled wainscot, and original stained glass transoms.



Supplemental Photo #12

Rectory, West Parlor

Showing original (1908)
mantel with tiled
surround



Supplemental Photo #13

*Former Convent
Vestibule*

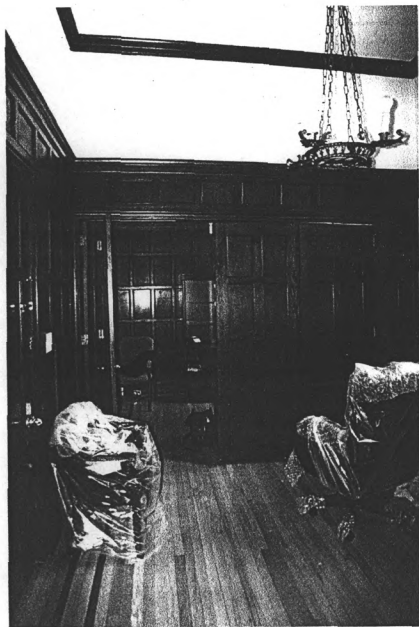
Note original groined ceiling, consoles, and
original chandelier



**Supplemental
Photo #14**

*Former Convent,
Entrance Hall*

Note the original
beamed ceiling,
original window
with paneled
shutters, original
wrought iron stair
railing, and original
chandelier



Supplemental Photo #15

*Former Convent,
Sisters' Offices*

Note original paneled walls, original folding
doors, original hardwood floors, and original
chandelier

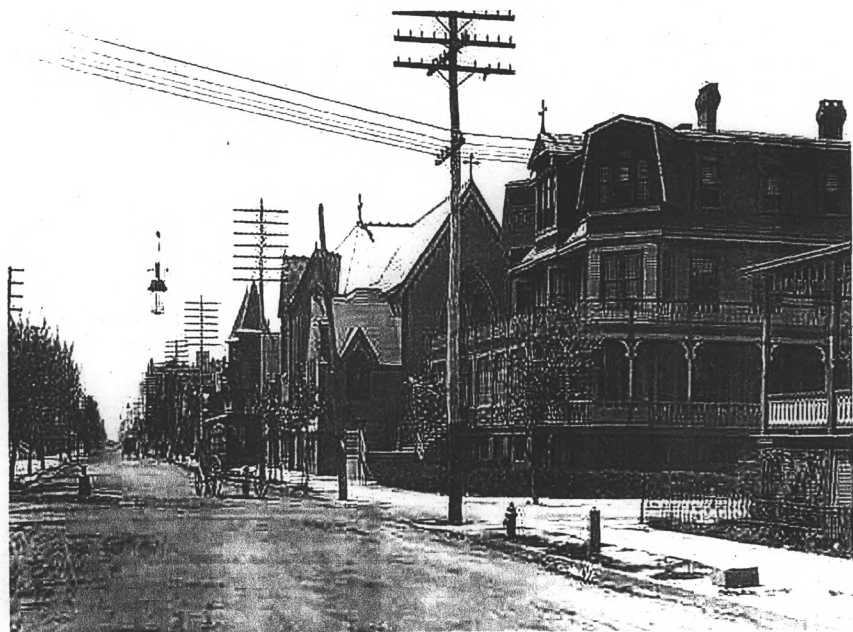


ST NICHOLAS' CHURCH.

Historic Image # 1

St. Nicholas Church, ca. 1885

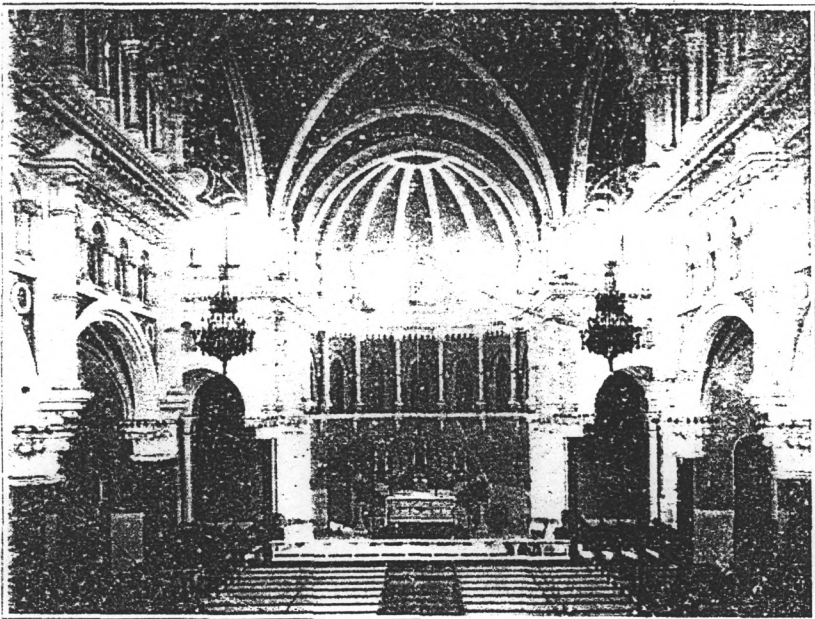
This building, the second for the church, faced north onto Atlantic Avenue. [from Hall's Daily Union History of Atlantic City and Atlantic County, 1900, p. 295]



Historic Image #2

View east down Pacific Avenue

This view shows the St. Nicholas Gothic style church (1858) moved to this site, and altered, in 1887. The rectory on the corner occupied the present site of St. Nicholas Church. [glass plate negative #25, Atlantic County Historical Society]



INTERIOR OF NEW ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH. FROM GALLERY

Historic Image #3

St. Nicholas Interior ca. 1905

Note the absence of side altars, and the small, temporary main altar taken from the old chapel.
[St. Nicholas Dedication booklet, from the Church files]



Historic Image #4

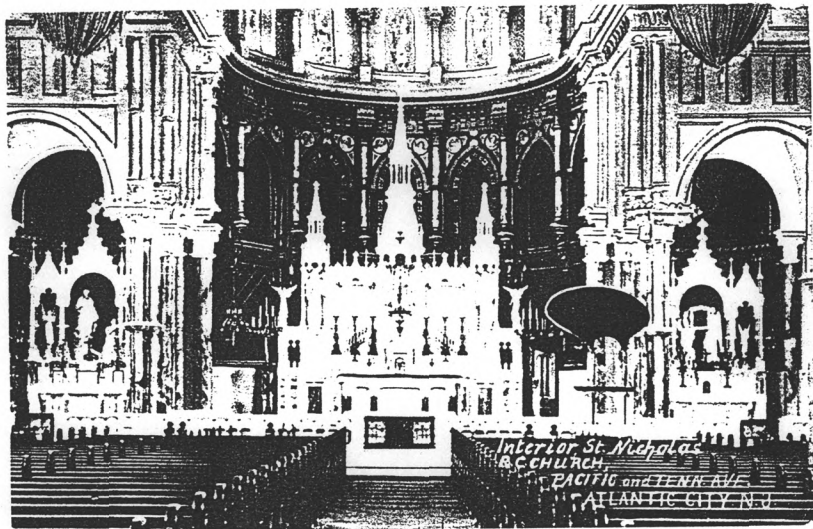
1906 Photo of South and East Elevations

[lantern slide #478, Atlantic County Historical Society]



Historic Image #5

St. Nicholas Interior, ca.1910. This view shows the two chandeliers over the transepts, the lantern over the main altar, a statue in the statuary niche (in the east transept, shown right), the dark colored ceiling, and the original pews. Note the painted decoration on the main apse wall below the semi-dome, and the lack of painted decoration on the semi-dome. These finishes would be changed in the 1935 re-decorating campaign. [lantern slide #479, Atlantic Co. Historical Society]



Historic Image #6

Postcard, postmarked 1910, of interior

Note that this postcard image is reversed; the side altar to the Virgin Mary is to the west (left), not east (right), of the main altar.

[Church archives]

Historic Image #7

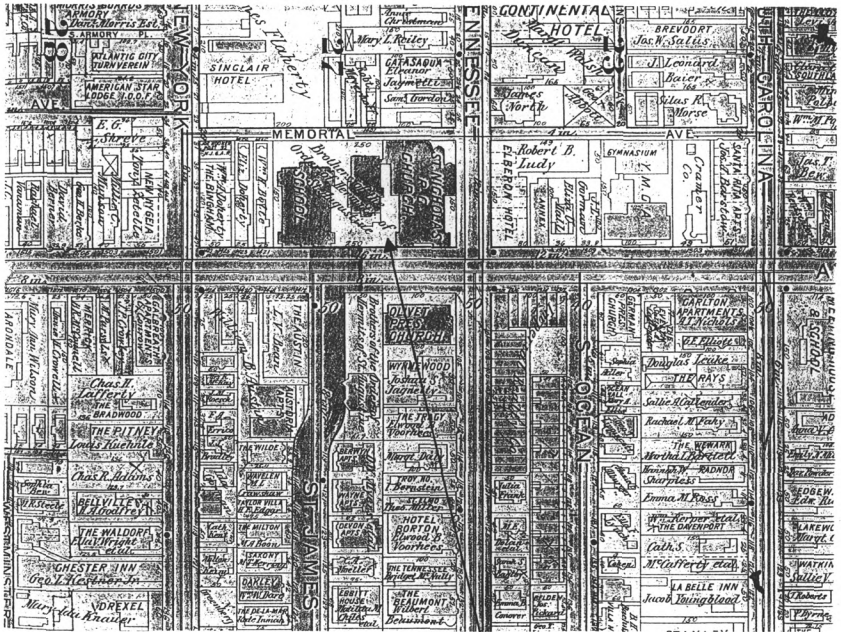
*Postcard, dated
1906*

Showing rear and
east elevations
before the
baptistry addition
[Church archives]



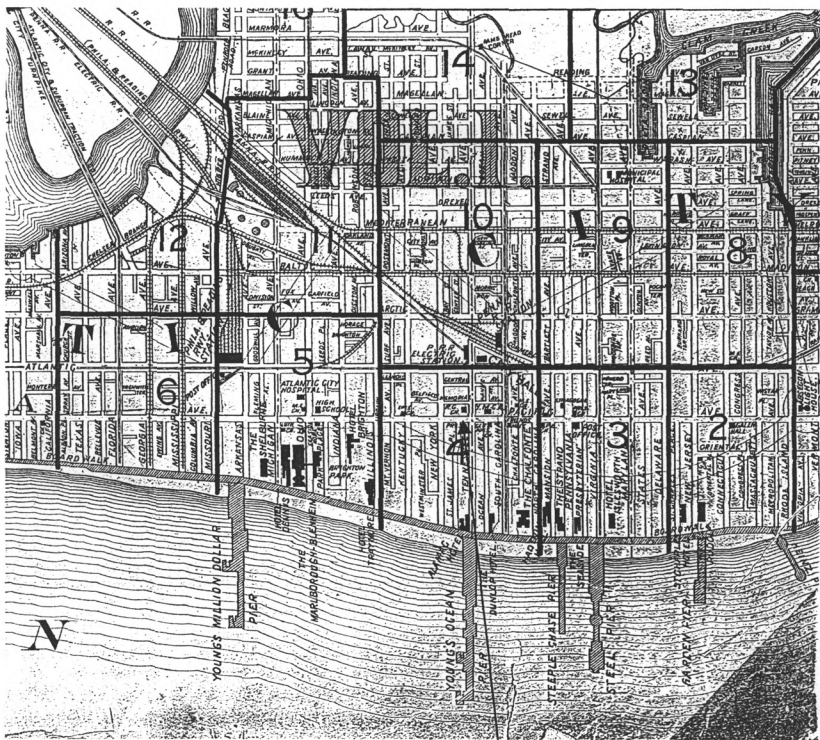
Historic Image #8

1910 Aeroview map of Atlantic City, portion showing the church, rectory and school [Library of Congress website]



Historic Image #9

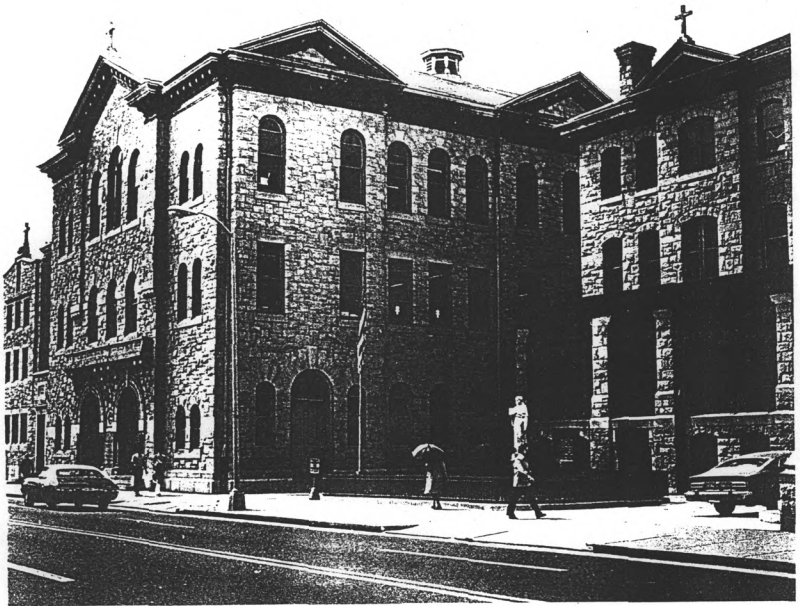
1914 Mueller Map of Atlantic City
portion showing St. Nicholas Church, Rector's Rectory and School



Historic Image #10

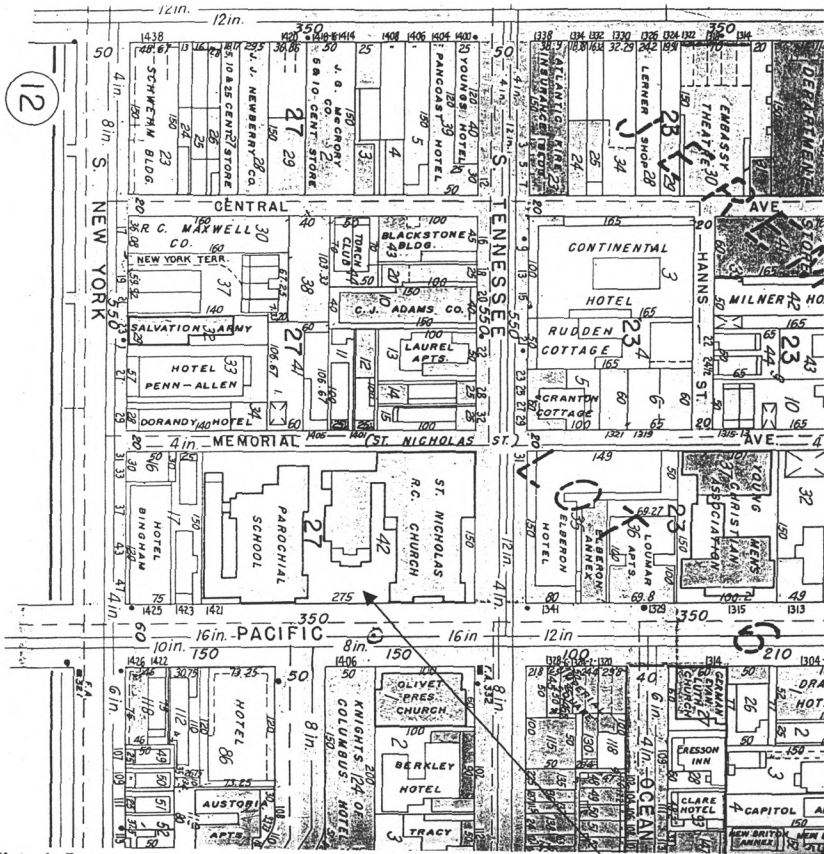
1914 Mueller Map of Atlantic City

This overview shows the proximity of St. Nicholas Church to the Pennsylvania Railroad Station (to the north) and the major piers and hotels along the boardwalk to the south.



Historic Image #11

Ca. 1970 photo of School and Rectory
[Church archives]



Historic Image #12

1938 Franklin Map of Atlantic City

This portion shows the complex consisting of church, rectory, school and convent. Note that the Knights of Columbus Hotel sits across the street, on the site of the former rectory.



Historic Image #13

1959 Photo, Close-up of Main Altar

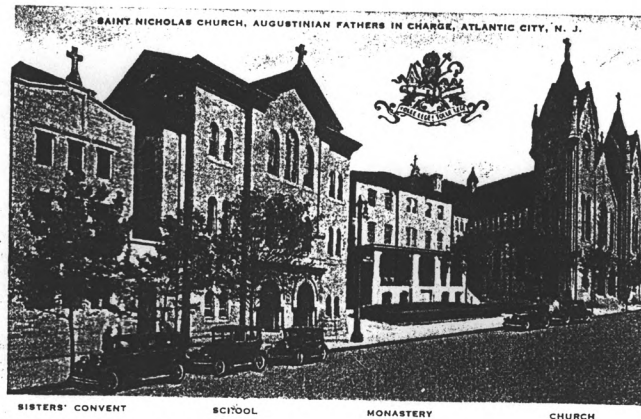
Note the elaborate gold leaf/stenciled columns to the left and right of the main altar, the original pews, and the gold leaf/stencil design behind the main altar. The statue of Mary, to the right of the altar, was placed in the west side altar at a later date. [Church archives]



Historic Image #14

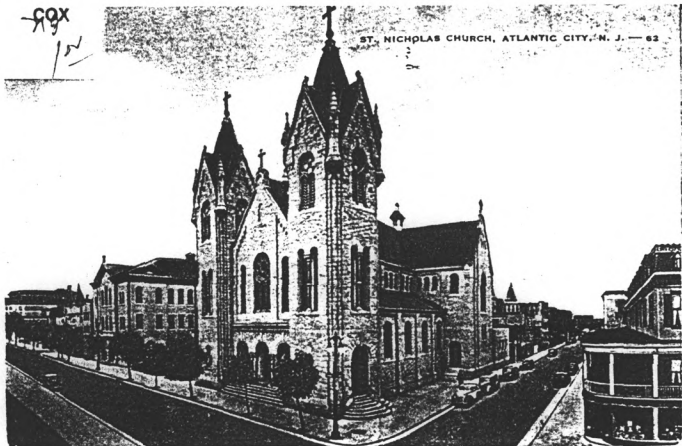
Interior after 1935 re-decorating campaign

Note the painted shields under the clerestory, the painted murals in the semi-domes over the side altars, the symbols painted in the main semi-dome, the figures painted in the niches behind the main altar and the original pews still in place. [McMahon, Upon These Sands]



Historic Image #15

Postcard, ca. 1930 showing the church, rectory, school and convent
[Church archives]



Historic
Image #16

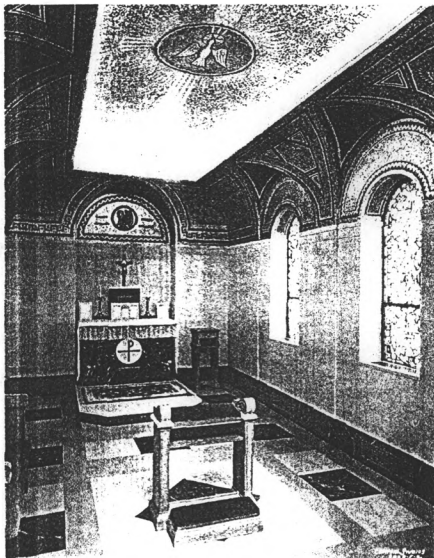
Postcard dated
1953
[Church
archives]

Historic Image #17

Baptistry, looking north toward altar

Undated, but taken before 1977

Note that the north wall below the cove ceiling is still plain; the tiled mosaic would be added later. [Church archives]



Historic Image #18

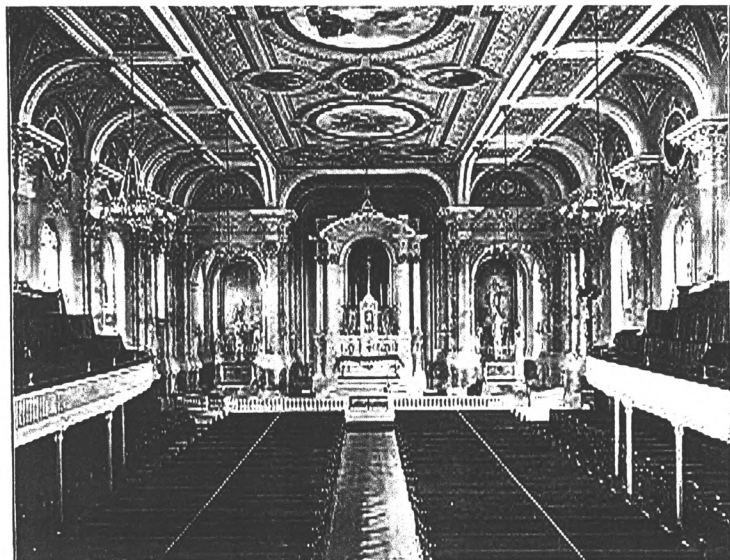
*St. Charles Boromeo Church
900 S. 20th Street
Philadelphia, PA*

Designed by Edwin Durang in
1876. [HABS website]

Historic Image #19 (below)

*Interior, St. Charles Boromeo
Church*

[HABS website]



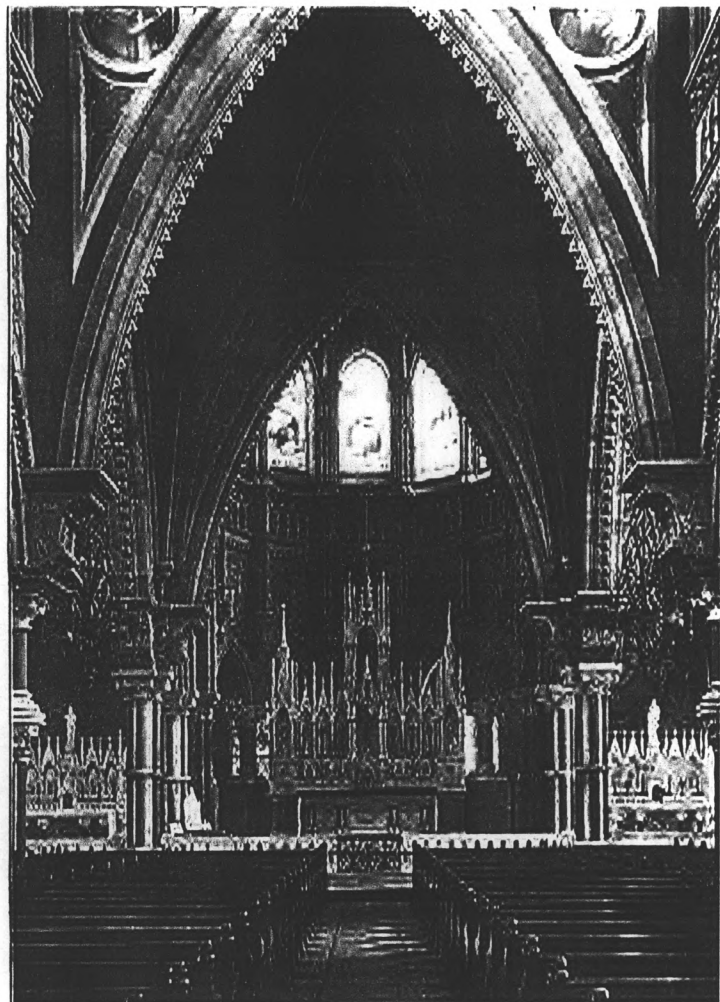
**Historic Image
20**

*St. James Church
3278 Chestnut St.
Philadelphia, PA*

Designed by Edwin
Durang in 1887.
[HABS website]



ST. JAMES CHURCH, THIRTY-EIGHTH AND CHESTNUT STREETS, PHILA.



Historic Image #21

Interior, St. James Church, 3278 Chestnut St., Philadelphia, PA

Designed by Edwin Durang in 1887. [HABS website]

Historic Image #22

*St. Francis Xavier
Church
2321 Green Street
Philadelphia, PA*

Designed by Edwin
Durang in 1895
[HABS website]



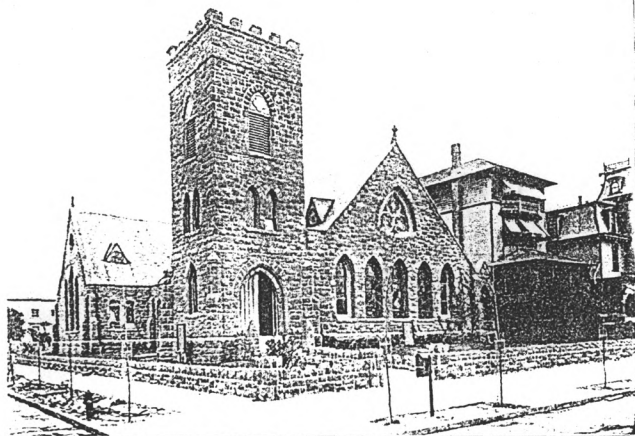
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH
PHILADELPHIA PENNA.
By James H. Rogers, Rebd.

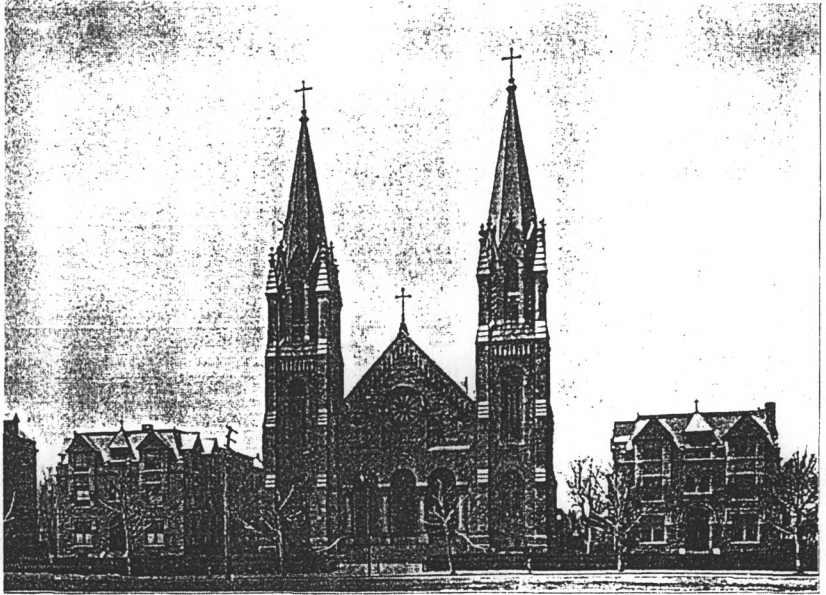
Historic Image #23

*St. James Protestant
Episcopal Church
Pacific & N. Carolina
Avenues, Atlantic City,
NJ*

Originally a frame
church, it was altered and
given a stone face by
Edwin Durang in 1905.

Demolished. [Edwin
Durang Portfolio, ca.
1910]





OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS CHURCH, FORTY-EIGHTH AND LANCASTER AVENUE, PHILA.

Historic Image #24

*Our Mother of Sorrows Church
48th and Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, PA*

Durang's first church, designed in 1867 and altered (by him) in 1892.



OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH AND RECTORY, BROAD AND
SUSQUEHANNA AVENUE, PHILA.

Historic Image #25

Our Lady of Mercy Church, Broad & Susquehanna Philadelphia, PA

Designed by Edwin Durang in 1890. [Edwin Durang ca. 1910 portfolio]

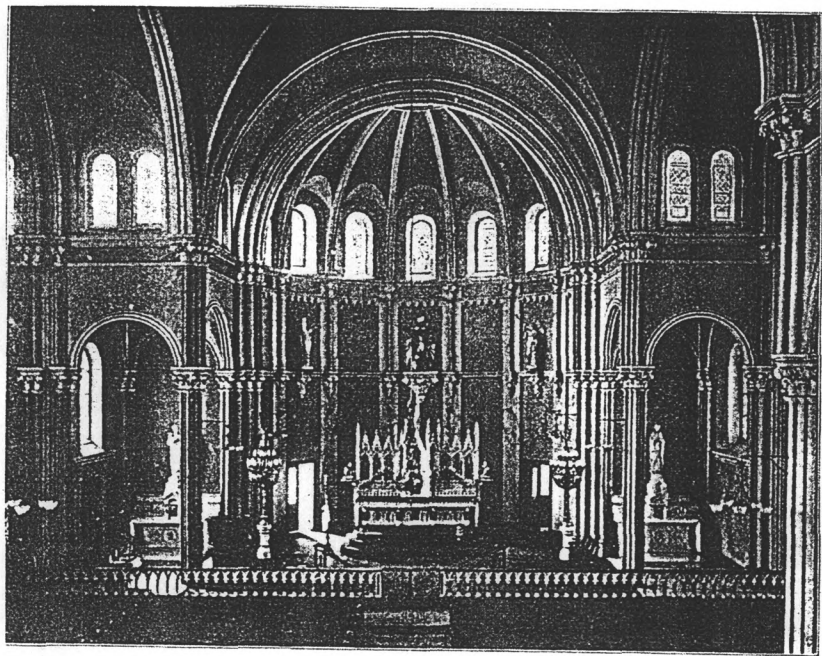


INTERIOR OF OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH, BROAD AND SUSQUEHANNA AVENUE, PHILA.

Historic Image #26

Interior, Our Lady of Mercy Church
Built in 1890

[Edwin Durang ca. 1910 portfolio]



INTERIOR OF ST. GABRIEL'S CHURCH, TWENTY-NINTH AND DICKINSON STREETS, PHILA.

Historic Image #27

St. Gabriel's Church, Interior
29th & Dickinson Streets, Philadelphia

Designed by Edwin Durang in 1902. Note the similarities with St. Nicholas Church—five-part grouped columns, ribbed semi-dome, and domed/arcaded side altars.

Interior of St. Nicholas' R. C. Church, Atlantle City, N. J.



Historic Image #28

Postcard view of interior, not dated or postmarked, but printed before 1935

Because the statuary niche appears in this view (to the right), the postcard was printed before 1935. Note the arch-headed murals on the transepts walls, and the stenciled border above the wainscot. The religious figures above the stained glass windows in the semi-dome were possibly added by the postcard company. [Church archives]