

443

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

APR 24 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts
other names/site number Central Manor: Exchange Building

2. Location

street & number 26 East Exchange Street N/A not for publication
city, town St. Paul N/A vicinity
state Minnesota code MN county Ramsey code 123 zip code 55101

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Nina M. Archabal 4/17/89
Signature of certifying official Nina M. Archabal Date
State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:)

Sharon Byrum Entered in the National Register 5/25/89

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/school

Domestic/institutional housing

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Beaux Arts

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

stone

roof slate

other copper

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 7 Page 1

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Art, built between 1908 and 1910, is located at the southwest corner of Exchange and Cedar Streets on the north side of downtown Saint Paul. The present building, known as the Main Building, was the last and largest building erected as part of the complex which comprised the conservatory and convent. Other buildings on the site included a woodframe house, a 2 1/2 story woodframe Music building built in 1901, and a woodframe barn and attached annex, all of which have been demolished. A city parking ramp (built 1987) stands south of St. Agatha's and an 11 story high-rise apartment complex (built 1964), Central Towers, is attached to the west facade of the conservatory. The building is across the street from Central Presbyterian Church (listed on the National Register in 1983) and with the church forms a historically significant visual and physical gateway to the St. Paul central business district from the State Capitol area.

St. Agatha's was designed in the Beaux Arts style with identifying features such as: facade symmetry with a centered entrance, pilasters, decorative banding with shields, a low pitched hipped roof, and an accentuated cornice. The conservatory is a six story building constructed on a stone foundation and faced with stretcher bonded brown pressed brick. It was designed to be fireproof and was built at a cost of \$150,000. At the rear of the building is a two story wing housing the chapel. The upper story of St. Agatha's features a rooftop garden, a rare feature in Saint Paul architecture, which has rectangular openings with iron grillwork railings, situated beneath a slate covered truncated hipped roof. The seven bay main facade of the building has regularly spaced rectangular and segmental arched window openings with 1/1 sash. The first story of the building is textured with horizontal layered brick patterning, and the first story segmental arched window openings have wide radiating brickwork. The 2nd through 4th story windows display prominent key stones and stone sills. The outer two bays of the main facade are outlined with brick-work simulating quoins. The main entrance has a one story brick porch with brick piers and stone Tuscan columns supporting an entablature and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 7 Page 2

projecting parapet topped by a cross. The porch is entered laterally via two curving brick stairways with iron railings. The building is further ornamented with a pressed copper cornice between the fourth and fifth stories and smaller cornices above the sixth story.

The convent chapel, attached to the rear of St. Agatha's, is similar in style and ornamentation to the main building and is original to the design. It has a hipped roof with copper elliptical dormers along the southerly roof line and a projecting parapet wall topped by a cross on its easterly street facade. The chapel has ornate stained glass windows, brickwork simulating quoins, and light colored stone ornamentation.

St. Agatha's originally included offices, two parlors with brick fireplaces and glass chandeliers, study rooms, a community room, library, and infirmary on the first floor; art classrooms and the adjoining rear chapel on the second story; and dormitory rooms for nuns on the upper floors. Though elevators and fire-doors have been installed, and various partitions added, the interior retains much of its original character, as well as some original furnishings. The two parlors on the first floor are intact and the entire first floor retains original oak and maple woodwork—mantels with China tiles painted by the sisters, window and door frames, picture rails and baseboards—as well as classically inspired plaster moldings and brackets, marble baseboards and large glass transom windows. The interior details are similar to those at Derham Hall at the College of St. Catherine (1903-04), also designed by architect John H. Wheeler. Beginning in 1962 the building was used as a live-in facility for working women and then for emotionally disabled adults until early 1988. St. Agatha's is presently being converted for office reuse.

The building is still intact and in good condition.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education

Art

Significant Person

N/A

Period of Significance

1908-1930

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wheeler, John H., architect

Hoffman, John H., builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
See continuation sheet.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 8 Page 1

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts is significant as the oldest of the four arts education institutions established in the Twin Cities before the turn-of-the-century that survived well into the 20th century.

CONTEXT: *Art Education in the Twin Cities, 1884- ca. 1930*

The establishment of St. Agatha's Conservatory in 1884 is representative of the early patterns of development of arts education and art appreciation in the Twin Cities. It was an early regional example of the turn-of-the-century, nationalistic trend to establish cultural institutions that would propagate and nourish a distinct American "culture" while enhancing the aesthetic posture of the developing cities. This trend was locally represented by four arts institutions: St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts, begun in 1884; the Northwestern Conservatory of Minneapolis, founded in 1885; the Minneapolis School of Art, established in 1886; and the St. Paul School of Fine Arts, begun in 1894.

St. Paulites, like other urban citizens of this era, were eager to establish a cosmopolitan community and sent some three generations of young people to St. Agatha's to learn art and music technique and appreciation as well as elocution and social grace. St. Agatha's was instrumental in establishing and nurturing a demand for art education in the metro area and filled that need until arts instruction became more fully integrated into both parochial and public schools in the 1930s.

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts was established in 1884 by the St. Paul Province of the Sister of St. Joseph. The religious order, founded in LePuy France in the 17th century, brought to the Upper Midwest a cultural heritage of scholarship in music and the arts. St. Agatha's Conservatory and Convent was originally established as a residence for twenty sisters who taught in parochial schools

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 8 Page 2

throughout the city. The original St. Agatha facility was a rented house at 10th and Main Streets and the convent was intended to be financially self-supporting with the sisters teaching classes in music and needlework to support the religious order. Within twenty years St. Agatha's Conservatory became one of the most important art and music schools in the state, and had become not only self-supporting, but a financial asset to the province.

In 1886 the conservatory moved into the woodframe Judge Palmer House at Cedar and Exchange streets (near the site of the present building). Enrollment in music, art, and kindergarten classes increased, with many students drawn from the wealthy St. Paul families who lived nearby. To accommodate growth, the sisters in 1892 constructed a two story woodframe building behind the Palmer House and in 1898 linked this building with the newly renovated Palmer barn. In 1901, after the Vocal Music and Music Expression departments were added, the sisters constructed a 2 1/2 story woodframe Music Building on the site of the present Central Towers highrise apartment building (immediately west of the present building). Further growth of the school and convent in the twentieth century led the sisters to embark on their largest building project, the construction of the present six story building and connecting chapel wing. By 1912, two years after St. Agatha's new building was completed, the conservatory had an enrollment of 817 students and offered a range of classes including piano, violin, organ, mandolin, music history and theory, voice culture, counterpoint, elocution, languages, painting, drawing and dance.

The philosophy of the Carondelet Sisters, with its emphasis on excellence and the importance of art in education, put St. Agatha's squarely within the ideology that society is enhanced by art appreciation. Turn-of-the-century cities and their philanthropic captains of industry competed with one another to endow the public with cultural and educational institutions. This trend was witnessed in the Twin Cities by contributions made to the arts by James J. Hill (Minneapolis Institute of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 8 Page 3

Arts), Wm. H. Dunwoody (Minneapolis Institute of Arts), and Thomas B. Walker (Walker Collection to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Walker Foundation), to name but a few. St. Agatha's role was to educate generations of Twin Cities residents who would patronize those institutions.

A comparison of school catalogues (see bibliography) indicates that St. Agatha's (1884) offered a curricula and degree program comparable to other early arts institutions in the Twin Cities: The Minneapolis School of Art (1886); the St. Paul School of Fine Arts (1894); and the Northwestern Conservatory in Minneapolis (1885). (The Minneapolis School of Art evolved into the Minneapolis School of Art and Design, the St. Paul School of Fine Arts became the Minnesota Museum of Art, while the Northwestern Conservatory closed its doors in 1923).

In the tradition of the conservatory, the sisters at St. Agatha's strove to become better instructors. Annette Wheeler, sister to the St. Agatha's architect, John H. Wheeler, was the first nun from the Sisters of St. Joseph to be sent to Chicago to earn a bachelor's degree in music for the American Conservatory of Music, an institution they were closely allied with into the 1930s. Silvio Scionti, an instructor and pianist from that institution was retained bi-annually, from 1914-1934, to evaluate St. Agatha's and instruct St. Agatha students. Other sisters at St. Agatha's went on to earn music degrees from Columbia University, the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Eastman School of Music, DePaul University, Julliard, Northwestern University and the University of Minnesota. Music students were sometimes given recitals at the Schubert Club of St. Paul (established 1882), a nationally known performing stage for up-and coming performers from Europe and the United States. At its peak in 1920, St. Agatha's had an enrollment of 1100 students in its art, music, dance and drama classes.

St. Agatha's art instruction was as correct and exacting as its music instruction. Its preference for religious Renaissance Art as a model of instruction was reflected

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 8 Page 4

in a collection of some 300 paintings copied in European museums (Pitti Palace, the Uffizi, the Louvre) by three Sisters of St. Joseph between the years 1908 and 1910. Sent by the Archbishop of St. Paul, John Ireland, with letters of introduction, these sisters studied with Hans Hoffman and Professor Knirr at the Damen Akademic in Munich and with Arthur Colosie, Maitre Dans de Royale Institute of Beaux Arts in Florence.

By 1914, Twin City residents were able to view the private collections of two prominent residents: James J. Hill's collection of French 19th Century paintings and Thomas Walker's collection that encompassed 15 galleries attached to Walkers' home and covered half a city block. The fledgling Minneapolis Institute of Arts owned only 14 original works. Although both the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Walker collections quickly expanded in the ensuing years, St. Agatha's copies of Italian Renaissance paintings served as an important and very early contribution to art education in the Twin Cities. (Professors from the University of Minnesota would bring their art classes to St. Paul to study the collection at St. Agatha's). The paintings were also a source of revenue, as copies of the reproductions were painted and sold to wealthy Twin Cities residents for their collections. The Sisters of St. Joseph at St. Agatha's Conservatory, while leaving the formation of a new American artistic tradition to American artists and their critics, can be credited with decades of quality art education that provided a base of art appreciation in a metropolitan area now nationally known for its thriving art life.

Not coincidentally, the success of the St. Agatha's Conservatory assisted the Sisters of St. Joseph to continue a long history of development of education and health care facilities in Minnesota. At the inception of the Conservatory in 1884, the Sisters of St. Joseph had already established

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 8 Page 5

St. Joseph's Academy (1851), Minnesota's first educational institution (listed on the National Register in 1975) , and St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul (1853), Minnesota's first hospital. These institutions, partially funded by the revenues raised by St. Agatha's, were followed by St. Mary's Hospital in Minneapolis (1887), the four-year liberal arts College of St. Catherine (1904), and thirty-seven parochial schools in Catholic immigrant settlements across southern Minnesota (1851-1926).

After about 1930, enrollment at St. Agatha's and at downtown parochial school began to decline slowly as parochial schools elsewhere in the city began to offer their own art and music courses. In 1962, after seventy-eight years of operation, the sisters closed the conservatory and sold the building.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	5
---	---

4	9	2	4	1	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	7	7	1	1	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

 Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 Zone Easting Northing

D

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

N/A See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies all of Lots 1, 2, and 3, Block 7, Bazille and Guerin's Addition, City of St. Paul.

N/A See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all the city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

N/A See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas R. Zahn
 organization Thomas R. Zahn & Associates, Inc. date November 22, 1988
 street & number 807 Holly Avenue telephone (612) 227-9989
 city or town St. Paul state Minnesota zip code 55104

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 9 Page 1

- Building permits for St. Agatha's Conservatory buildings, City of St. Paul Building Permits Division, St. Paul City Hall.
- Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County, Ramsey County Historical Society.
- Dunn, James Taylor. St. Paul's Schubert Club. A Century of Music 1882-1982. St. Paul: North Central Publishing Co., 1983.
- Granger, Susan. "St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Art (sic), National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form draft, March 1984.
- Johnston, Patricia Condon. "Reflected Glory: The Story of Ellen Ireland." Minnesota History, v. 48, n. 1 (Spring 1982), pp.13-23.
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts, "Minneapolis Institute of Arts Handbook." 1917 & 1922, MHS Collections, 690 Cedar Street, St. Paul.
- Minneapolis Institute of Arts, "Catalogue of the First Public Loan Exhibition." 1883, MHS Collections, 690 Cedar Street, St. Paul.
- Minneapolis School of Fine Arts Catalogues, 1886/87, 1893/94, MHS Pamphlet Collection, 690 Cedar Street, St. Paul.
- Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, "An Account of It's Works." 1915, published by its trustees, Minneapolis, MHS Pamphlet Collection, 690 Cedar Street, St. Paul.
- Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, "Report of the Annual Meeting of the Governing Members of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts." October 11, 1916, MHS Pamphlet Collection, 690 Cedar Street, St. Paul.
- Morgan, H. Wayne. New Muses. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978.
- Northwestern Conservatory of Music, Catalogue 1906/07, Quarterly Bulletin #11, Minneapolis Collection, Minneapolis Public Library.
- O'Connor, Wm. Van, ed. The Arts in Minnesota. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958.
- St. Agatha's Conservatory, Catalogue, ca. 1915, property of Sister Ann Thomasine Sampson, C.S.J., St. Joseph Provinciate, 1880 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul.
- St. Paul School of Fine Arts, Catalogue 1906/07, MHS Pamphlet Collection, 690 Cedar Street, St. Paul.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts

Section number 9 Page 2

Sampson, Sister Ann Thomasine, C.S.J. "A Guide to Places of C.S.J. Historic Interest in Minnesota and North Dakota." Unpublished manuscript, 1983.

Sampson, Sister Ann Thomasine, C.S.J. The History of St. Agatha's Conservatory of Music and Arts, 1884-1962. unpublished, 1984.

Sampson, Sister Ann Thomasine, C.S.J. "The Ireland Connection." unpublished manuscript, 1983.

Sampson, Sister Ann Thomasine, C.S.J. Tape-recorded presentation made at St. Agatha's. 1981.

Savage, Sister Mary Lucinda. A Century's Harvest. St. Louis: Buxton and Skinner Printers. 1936.

Wheeler, John H. St. Paul Survey Files 1981-1983. Ramsey County Historical Society. John Wheeler, a native of St. Paul, spent 14 years in the offices of Twin City architects, including 7 years with Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. In 1902 he established his own office. Due, perhaps to the fact that Sister Celestine Howard, Superior of St. Agatha's Conservatory, was his aunt Wheeler designed 18 to 20 buildings for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. He was also responsible for the design of other buildings for the Catholic Church.

