

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE ~~IN IDAHO~~)

SITE NAME: St. John's Cathedral Block

SITE NUMBER: 37

LOCATION: ^{8th} ~~Eighth~~ and Hays, ^{9th} ~~Ninth~~ and Fort streets, Boise, Ada County (~~001~~), Idaho

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Idaho
420 West Idaho Street
Boise, ID 83702

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Boise South, 7.5 minute ACREAGE: Approximately three acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the St. John's Cathedral Block and the property on which it stands, block 90 Boise City Original Townsite. Legal description on file at the Ada County Courthouse, Boise, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/5,64,740/48,29,960

DATE OR PERIOD: 1904-1948

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture and Religion

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: State

CONDITION: excellent unaltered/altered original site

DESCRIPTION:

The St. John's Cathedral Block in Boise lies a few blocks north of the state capitol and of Boise's downtown. It contains the Romanesque revival stone cathedral on the southeast corner; the two-and-a-half-story brick, stone, and stucco Bishop Glorieux house on the southwest corner; the two-story brick St. Joseph's School on the northwest corner; and, completing the group on the northeast corner, a two-story reinforced concrete gymnasium for St. Joseph's School. All four buildings were designed by Tourtellotte and Company and its successor firms. The respective dates are 1904-1921, 1905, 1925, and 1948. The block is densely planned. The only spaces are a parking lot between the Bishop's residence and the school, a playground between school and gymnasium, and a small lawn around the residence. Grassy curb strips and mature trees on the east, west, and south sides of the block have also been maintained.

Building A:

St. John's Cathedral is a massive rusticated sandstone Romanesque revival church which was entered in the National Register May 24, 1978.

Building B: Bishop Glorieux house:

This two-and-a-half story residence was designed in 1905. It survives, as does the cathedral, in excellent condition. It is designed in the Tudoresque style. The body of the house is a squarish forty-three-by-fifty-four-foot two-story block with a slightly flared, hipped roof. This form is elaborated by the outsetting of shallow, square bays on the sides and a small gabled porch in front. At roofline it is elaborated by large gabled dormers emerging front, right side, and rear. These dormers are cantilevered over the second-story bays beneath them; this contributes to the medieval quality of the mock half-timbered upper story. The dormer gables are supported on elaborated figure-four brackets, a device which looks bungaloid. Also suggestive of the bungalow style are the exposed rafters under all lateral eaves and the half-timbering itself, which in the work of these architects tended to be associated with bungaloid designs. The first story is brick on a rusticated, random-coursed, stone foundation with corner stone quoins and a stone sill and belt course between stories. The porch, which has stepped parapet walls of the random-coursed stone, is supported on double Doric columns. A tall, carefully detailed, corbelled brick exterior chimney rises on the right or south wall near the front corner. Upper sashes have multiple diamond-shaped panes; bargeboards are coffered and have pendant finials at their apexes.

The house was planned with an entry hall and stairway between a front parlor and library on the right and the bishop's office and dining room on the left. More office space and the kitchen are to the rear, and seven chambers and a bath around a central hall are on the second story. There is a small one-story brick addition on the left side; the brick is closely matched to that on the first story of the original house. The front porch has been screened. Otherwise the building appears unaltered on the exterior.

The Bishop Glorieux residence was completed in the spring of 1906 at a reported cost of \$12,000. The original drawings show the third story unfinished, but the newspaper report of the first reception in the bishop's "new palace"¹ described a private chapel there.

Building C: St. Joseph's School:

This two-story flat-roofed school building is red brick on a low concrete basement. It dates from 1925. The dimensions are eight-four feet eight inches by sixty-one feet eight inches, with the entrance centered on the long dimension, facing north on Fort Street. There are five closely ranked six-over-one-light double-hung sash windows on their side of the entrance bay, which is embellished with a barely outset classical doorway with half-engaged Doric columns, a pediment containing the name of the school, and a geometrically-stylized cornice with a central cartouche. The entrance itself is inset, double-doored, with a deep multi-light transom. A pair of sashes are immediately above the door; a wide wooden molding and cornice run all around the building just above the second-story windows; the parapet above is finished with concrete coping, notched at intervals. Centered on it and aligned with the doorway below is a double-curved mission style gable in brick; inset in the gable is a keystone, round-arched niche containing a piece of statuary.

The building was designed with a fully symmetrical cross-plan, with a central stair and four classrooms upstairs and four down. The end elevations were elaborated with very shallowly outset two-story bays, with the cornice neatly outset across their upper faces. On the first floor was a secondary entrance; on the second, a large keystone round-arched window, with two contiguous sashes under an upper fan-light. The west elevation on Ninth Street is intact. The east has been obscured in a one- and two-story brick addition designed by the successor firm, Hummel, Hummel and Jones, in 1959. The brick for this addition is fairly closely matched to the original, and the concrete sill is continued around the base.

St. Joseph's was completed as a comprehensive boys' school during the tenure of Bishop Daniel Mary Gorman. J. O. Jordan and Son was the contractor. The projected cost was \$35,000.

Building D: St. Joseph's Gymnasium:

Designed in 1948, the St. Joseph's gymnasium is a two-story concrete structure with its exterior surface scored to suggest stone blocks. On the eight-bay street facade the building has six-pane first-story windows and hinged ten-pane second-story windows. At either end are inset entrances with double doors.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The St. John's Cathedral Block is one of the most important architectural sites in Idaho. In addition, as the seat of the Idaho Diocese the block represents a Catholic institutional cluster unparalleled in the state for survival and excellence of the individual buildings. It is also the earliest evidence in the Thematic Group, and one of the earliest in the commissions list, of an on-going relationship with the Catholic Diocese which would be of great importance to this architectural firm.

It was a custom of the Roman Catholic Church, here as elsewhere, to build institutional clusters which met a number of their parishoners' needs. St. Alphonsus Nurses' Home and Power Plant (site 107) are remnants of a group which included the lost St. Teresa's Academy and St. Alphonsus Hospital, the former designed by the firm in 1903 and the latter the object of a major addition in 1909. In Nampa, only a rectory (site 110) remains individually eligible among a cluster which is unusually homogenous stylistically: a church, rectory, and school, with a nearby hospital, all designed by Tourtellotte and Hummel over a twenty-year period. Two such clusters were commenced in the late 1930's: one in west Boise, the older elements of which are included in the Group (St. Mary's Church and Parish House, site 133), and another in Pocatello. The St. Mary's cluster, particularly, shows a fine cohesiveness and state of preservation. But among earlier buildings, which are both more rare and more readily evaluated, the St. John's group is unrivaled.

The buildings of the St. John's block are not stylistically homogenous--not even the two earliest, which were designed more or less contemporaneously. Their individual distinctiveness and clear functional relationship is one form of significance, as homogeneity (as at Nampa) would be another. Evidently the effect desired here was one of richness and variety.

The cornerstone of the ensemble is St. John's, the most ambitious ecclesiastical building in Idaho. It is perhaps surpassed in finesse, but not in scale or institutional importance, by architect E. M. Kreig's St. Thomas Catholic Church in Coeur d'Alene. The Romanesque Revival cathedral was built in 1904 and added to the National Register in 1975.

Building B, more than two stories in height, with gabled eaves and very elaborate surface treatment, is a premier example of the Tudoresque style. The Tudor treatment of the second story and attic looks back to the nineteenth century in its picturesqueness and in the contrast of material and texture it provides; but it looks forward, in the emphasis on framing and in the specific devices of gable brackets, exposed rafters, and half-timber strips, to the bungalow and bungalowoid houses which would become very popular within the next few years (see sites 5, 57, and 71).

St. Joseph's School (building C) dates from 1925 and thus represents a much later period of developmental style. The tenacious classicism is an important factor in the work of the firm over time, but two other influences are also evident and significant. One is the geometricization of decorative forms (here the "pediment") which has been appearing in commercial and to some extent in residential designs since the 1910s. The other is the Spanish taste (here confined to a cartouche and pediment) that had appeared in missions designs around 1910 (for example, the ineligible Nampa Catholic Church, or the Will Regan House in the Warm Springs Historic District) and which was enjoying a resurgence in the middle 1920s (see the Fletcher Oil Building, site 119 and the F. C. Hummel House remodeling, site 121).

The final building on the block, the 1948 school gymnasium, is so much younger, and so much more utilitarian in character, that its architectural significance as an individual structure is not argued here. It is integral to the ensemble, however, because it was designed by the successor firm; because unlike the school added to the St. Mary's, Boise, group (site 133) it is fitted into the discrete spatial unit of a city block; and because in material and aesthetics it completes the sequence from academic and picturesque revivalism through modern functionalism which is represented by the four buildings on this block.

The earliest of the St. John's block buildings are among the earliest of the presently known commissions of this firm for the Roman Catholic Church. St. Bernard's in Blackfoot, reported in 1902, and the large, lost St. Teresa's Academy in Boise, which is dated 1903, are the only earlier references. These choice commissions for the Catholic academy, cathedral, and bishop's residence in the seat of the diocese were of great importance in making the reputation of the still-young firm of Tourtellotte and Company, especially coming as they did at about the same time as the commission for the capitol. They also led to many more commissions. Sites 37, 86, 89, 90, 101, 105, 110, 113, 116, and 133 in the Thematic Group are previously unregistered, individually eligible sites which represent dozens of other churches, rectories, hospitals, and schools designed for the Roman Catholic Church over a period of forty years. This period corresponded to one of the substantial expansion for the church, as for the state as a whole. A history of the diocese summarizes building activity under the leadership of Alphonse Glorieux, bishop from 1884 until his death in 1917, increasing the number of schools from one to fourteen, hospitals from none to three, and churches from ten to seventy.

1. (Boise) Idaho Daily Statesman, April 20, 1906, p. 5, c. 2.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Bradley, Right Reverend Cyprian, and Most Reverend Edward J. Kelley. A History of the Diocese of Boise, 1863-1952. Boise: Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise, 1953.

(Boise) Idaho Daily Statesman, December 31, 1905, p. 18, c. 4; March 30, 1906, p. 5, c. 2; April 20, 1906, p. 5, c. 2.

Boise, Idaho. Idaho Historical Society. Boise City building permits, May 8, 1925.

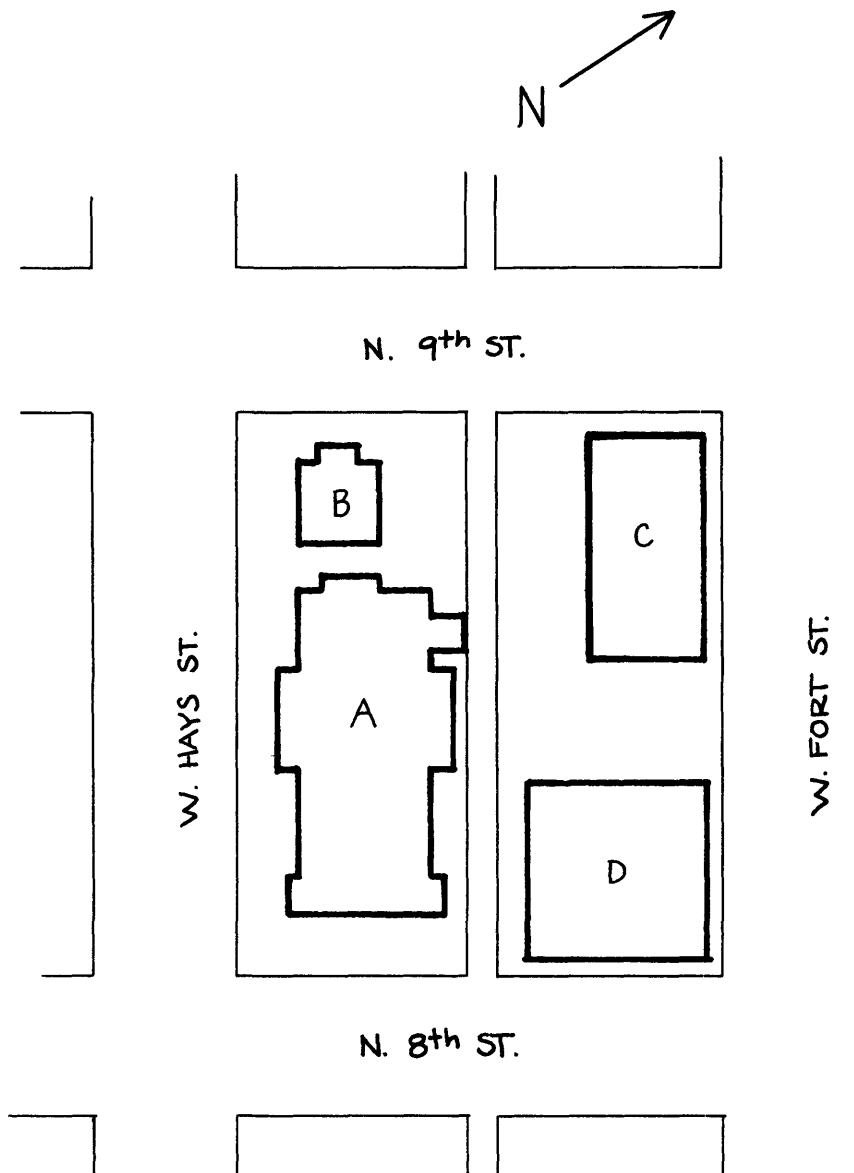
Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. Files 114P and 135L. Drawings and tracings signed John E. Troutellotte and Company and Troutellotte and Hummel.

TOURTELLOTTE & HUMMEL THEMATIC GROUP

ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL BLOCK

BOISE, IDAHO 1981

NOT TO SCALE



A - CATHEDRAL

B - BISHOP GLORIEUX HOUSE

C - ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL

D - ST. JOSEPH'S GYMNASIUM