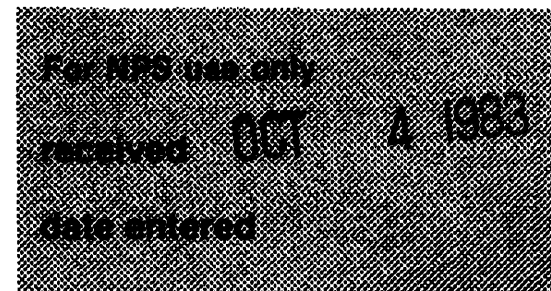


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NAME: Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
~~Parish~~ Complex

COMMON NAME: St. Mary's

LOCATION: 103 Pine Street; the site includes all of the block bounded
by Pine, Grace, George, and Delaney Streets; and the eastern
half of the block bounded by Pine, Delaney, George and Randall
Streets

OWNER: St. Mary's Church of the Immaculate Conception
103 Pine Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

CONDITION: Good; altered; original site

DESCRIPTION:

The six-acre, five-building St. Mary's Parish Complex is located near the eastern edge of the mid-nineteenth-century residential neighborhood of South Woodlawn. Interstate 95 was sliced through the northern section of this neighborhood in the early 1960s, passing just to the north of St. Mary's, and access ramps to the highway along with a widening of George Street south of the highway, have removed many of the nineteenth-century buildings which formerly fronted the St. Mary's complex on the north and east.

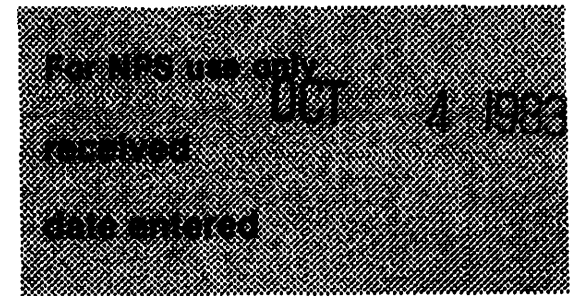
The St. Mary's Parish Complex today consists of five major buildings and a two-and-a-half-acre cemetery set on a six-and-a-half-acre site. Foremost amongst the buildings is the red brick Victorian Gothic church on the corner of Pine and Grace Streets. Erected in 1885-87, the church is basilican in plan, and lacks any projecting transepts. A tall corner tower projects from the northern end of the Pine Street facade, and a pentagonal apse is carried the full height of the nave on the building's eastern end. A clerestory lighting the nave rises above the pitched aisle roofs; all roof slopes (including those of the broached tower spire) are covered with gray slate accented by yellow and red banding. Gray granite is used extensively to accent the brickwork of the exterior walls, most particularly in the wall and tower buttresses and as the enframement of the rose window which is the principal feature of the western facade. All other windows in the building are of pointed-arch form. The only major exterior alterations have been the replacement of the original wooden western doors with three sets of modern glass double doors, and the cutting down of the intermediate buttress on the western facade, with the loss of the granite pinnacle and finial which originally topped it.

The church building is entered through three, pointed-arch doorways in the western facade, each of them approached by a flight of massive

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granite steps. Beyond the shallow narthex (the eastern wall of which was removed, in 1968, to allow more light into the sanctuary) the body of the church is divided into a nave and a pair of flanking side aisles separated by two files of clustered Gothic columns. The choir loft is located above the narthex; there are no galleries above the two side aisles. The interior walls have been refrescoed several times in the twentieth century (the last time, in 1968, the artist was John Prampolino), and all of the stained glass windows except the western rose window are also of twentieth-century date, as are the ornate wooden altar rail and the pair of bronze gates which pierce it. The auditorium in the church basement was thoroughly remodeled in the late 1950s; this space is still dominated, though, by the two files of original, cast-iron Gothic columns which support the sanctuary floor and the sanctuary columns above.

Adjoining the church buildings on Pine Street is a two-and-a-half-story rectory building erected in 1908-09 (Murphy, Hindle & Wright, architects) in the Tudor Revival style; a similarly styled story-and-a-half carriage house of slightly later date is located behind it. Both buildings have red brick exterior walls, and slate-covered hipped roofs. The rectory's facade is dominated by a slightly projecting, gabled central pavilion and the building possesses a rather grand interior--its ground floor rooms are oak-paneled and an open central staircase rises through all three stories.

At the opposite corner of the church property, near the corner of George and Randall Streets, stand the other two parish buildings--the parochial school building, erected in 1890-91, and the convent building, dating from 1895-96. Both are imposing red brick structures, the school standing four stories high under a tall, hipped roof, the convent being a story lower under a roof of similar configuration. Major exterior changes to the school include the replacement of the old wooden sash windows with new aluminum windows, and the loss of the original wooden cupola (blown down in the 1938 hurricane). The chief exterior change at the convent has involved the substitution of an enclosed brick entry for the original open front porch.

Old St. Mary's Cemetery, fronting upon George Street between Grace and Delaney Streets, is an integral part of the parish complex. The oldest section of the cemetery at the corner of George and Grace Streets, is raised above street level by sections of stone retaining wall--of slate rubble along Grace Street, of coursed granite ashlar on George Street. A 1924 wrought iron fence faces a mid-nineteenth-century extension of the cemetery along George Street; a chain link fence lines the southern and western edges of the enlarged area. Only a handful of slate or granolithic paths are found in the northern end of the cemetery; there are no drives within

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it. A scattering of mature hardwoods provide shade at the Grace Street end of the former boundaries of the several parcels engulfed during cemetery expansion.

The earliest monuments in the cemetery tend to be white marble ledger stones laid flat on the ground (many now are at least partially sodded over, others may have disappeared entirely) or standing marble slabs. Stones of these types can be found from the 1830s onward. More elaborate carved marble slabs become more frequent in the second half of the century; and one or two brownstone or zinc monuments can also be found from this period. More common, however, from the later nineteenth century onward are gray granite slabs or obelisks. The names on all of these stones, regardless of period, are almost exclusively Irish.

PERIOD: 1800-1899, 1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture; Religion; Education

SPECIFIC DATES: c. 1830, 1885-87, 1890, 1908-09

ARCHITECTS: Murphy, Hindle & Wright; unknown

SIGNIFICANCE:

The St. Mary's Parish Complex derives its primary significance from its historical importance as the home of the first Catholic parish in Pawtucket (the second oldest in Rhode Island) and its architectural importance as a unusually complete and relatively well preserved example of a typical turn-of-the-century Roman Catholic parish complex.

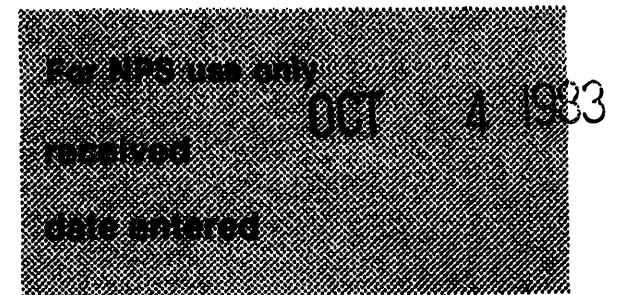
Pawtucket has historically been the center of one of the oldest and strongest Catholic communities in Rhode Island. As early as 1823, the bishop of Boston baptised five Pawtucket children. Five years later, David Wilkinson donated a tiny lot of land on Pine Street "...for the benefit of the Roman Catholics settled in the neighborhood and to have a church erected upon it." The wooden church building raised here the following year was the first structure specifically designed as a Catholic church in Rhode Island.

The original members of St. Mary's parish are thought to have numbered about fifty. Their ranks were continually swelled, however, by the waves of immigrant Irishmen who arrived in Pawtucket as laborers and mill-workers during the middle years of the nineteenth century. The original church building was enlarged twice; the modest graveyard adjoining was improved; a school building and a convent were erected on George Street; and a handsome Second Empire rectory was constructed on Pine Street--all between 1829 and 1870. New Catholic parishes were split off from St. Mary's in

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Attleboro, Valley Falls, Ashton, Central Falls, and other sections of Pawtucket. Even so, the membership of St. Mary's had reached approximately five thousand in the 1890s.

The present substantial buildings of the St. Mary's Parish Complex are all "second generation"--each replaced an earlier, wooden structure. Two of these earlier buildings survived until quite recently--the original carpenter-Gothic school building (1854) on the northwestern corner of George and Grace Streets, and the Second Empire, Father Delaney House (c. 1865) which had been moved to Randall Street, were both demolished in the late 1970s. The final surviving element of the original parish complex then, is the venerable 1830s cemetery. The fact that this historic Catholic cemetery exists within a complete, if basically turn-of-the-century parish complex, makes the St. Mary's property an especially valuable example of Rhode Island's Roman Catholic parish compounds.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property includes Pawtucket Assessor's Plat 54A, lots 498, 506, 711, 712, and includes the church, rectory, school, convent, carriage house, and cemetery, and their immediate surroundings.

ACREAGE: 6.48 acres

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

UTM: A 19 301800 4638120
B 19 301780 4637960
C 19 301630 4637980
D 19 301640 4638120

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