

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 9 1975
DATE ENTERED	JUN 18 1975

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Immaculate Conception Church

AND/OR COMMON

Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church

### 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Water Street

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Hawesville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Kentucky

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE  
021

COUNTY

Hancock

CODE

091

### 3 CLASSIFICATION

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- \_\_\_ OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- \_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ COMMERCIAL
- \_\_\_ PARK
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_ GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- OTHER: Vacant for 16 years

### 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Hawesville

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Hawesville

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

### 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hancock County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Hawesville

STATE

Kentucky

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)

DATE

1974

\_\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This simple stone structure was completed in 1871. It stands in the northwest end of Hawesville between the steep hillside and the Ohio River. Rumor has it that the building was constructed by early Italian settlers, many of them coal miners from Pennsylvania. The chief beauty of the edifice lies in the use of the superb material. Fairly large rectangular blocks of the local sandstone, of varying width and slightly varying height, are laid without mortar. The edges of the blocks are razor sharp and defined by a narrow smooth outer band, contrasting to the stippled or "pecked" texture of the surface. The blocks at the corners have just perceptibly rougher surfaces, evoking the effect of quoins. The openings are outlined with smooth flat bands several inches wide. The walls are several feet thick and filled with limestone rubble between the facings, which are said to have been hewn by a Mr. Bill Snowden.

The front of the building is dominated by the gable defined by a plain, projecting wood cornice and four pointed-arched openings. Narrower lancets set high in the wall flank the entrance, which at one time had double doors under the transom in the arch (photo 1). An inscription on a recessed stone in the middle of the gable gives the name of the church and the date of its construction. There are three bays of long, narrow windows on both sides of the building. A small wooden cupola sits astride the front gable on a square platform whose clapboard siding rises on either side of the gable to form a fanlike pattern. The cubic belfry is open, with delicate supports clustered at the corners and a pyramidal roof topped by a large cross. The roof itself is of handsome red tile, perhaps not original, but a striking feature from a considerable distance.

The interior has been stripped and vandalized so thoroughly as to convey little sense of its former character. The stained-glass windows once in this structure were moved to the present church when it was built in 1959. Without windows and trim, the single room, however, is surprisingly spacious, with its high open ceiling. The altar was set in a shallow niche, with the sanctuary platform curving out into the nave.

The location of the railroad just in front of the church in 1898 cut it off physically from the river. The floodwall, almost as high as the building, was placed both to the north and the west of it, in the aftermath of the terrible flood of 1937. This flood and others preceding it have done a good deal of damage. The church has been vacant and windowless since the congregation moved to a new structure elsewhere in 1959, abandoning it to the elements and vandals. The city purchased the building and attempted to use it as a community center for youth, but without success and it has been virtually without maintenance since: a sapling that took root at the top of the east wall, for instance, has caused much damage both inside and out. Nevertheless, in general the walls, if not the floor and roof, are structurally sound.

Recently, local citizens motivated as much by a sense of history as by piety, have sought to have the building preserved and maintained. Extensive restoration as a historical museum has been proposed, and a matching grant-in-aid from the National Park Service requested.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES *TOB 20070 014 000* ca. 1860-71 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hancock County in the western part of the Commonwealth was formed in 1829. The county seat, Hawesville, an Ohio River town southwest of Louisville, was the religious center for Catholic immigrants of this area, isolated except for the once extensive river traffic and comparable communities in Southern Indiana. Many people who settled in Hawesville and across the river in Cannelton, Indiana, were coal miners who came from Pennsylvania. It also served as the staging grounds for Confederate guerillas during the Civil War, in an area whose inner conflicts were particularly intense, with the people caught between a major Confederate thrust from the South and Union industry just across the river. Immaculate Conception Church, although abandoned for over a decade, remains the most impressive structure in Hawesville constructed of the local limestone that, along with the coal that lies in the underlying seam, formed the basis of the area's development in the mid-19th century.

In early years the Catholic population in Hawesville--many of them Italian in origin--was without any religious guidance most of the year. A priest located many miles away journeyed to this community two or three times a year. When he arrived the rituals of faith--mass, confession, and the sacraments of matrimony and baptism--were performed. Before the completion of the church in 1871, services were held in the homes of the members of the church.

In 1858 a lot was purchased with the intent of a church being built there. The official request for the construction of the church came from Bishop Spalding of Louisville in 1854. He asked Father Bede O'Connor of Cannelton to build the church.\* The Immaculate Conception Church was built--probably by members of the congregation themselves, in spite of local legend that this was one of the last buildings in the area constructed with slave labor--of native stone, perhaps quarried from Cannelton, Indiana, although the beds lie on both sides of the river. It was both durable and inexpensive; many other structures in the area, including the Cannelton Cotton Mill, were constructed of this stone, which has developed with exposure to the air a handsome golden tone.

It seems that the Civil War interfered with the construction of the Kentucky building. The partially-completed church is said to have provided protection from artillery fire in 1864. The guerillas in Hawesville were intent upon striking the Union industries in Cannelton, Indiana. "On July 25, 1864, reports of increased guerilla activity led Capt. Morgan to position his gunboat, the U.S.S. Springfield, and to open fire on Hawesville. Some used the stone walls of the new Catholic Church as protection against shell burst, others took to mine shafts in the immediate vicinity. The bombardment was short, producing little physical damage

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Church records and tradition.

Charles A. Clinton, "A History of Hancock County, Kentucky" (Hawesville, n.d.), p. 36.

Barbara Wriston, "Who Was the Architect of the Indiana Cotton Mill, 1849-50?" The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XXIV, 2(May 1965).

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM OK  
HL

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 6	5, 2, 1, 6, 7, 0	4, 1, 9, 5, 1, 8, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mrs. Thelma Robertson

(WEL & MC)

ORGANIZATION

Hancock County Historical Society

DATE

March, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 24

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Hawesville

STATE

Kentucky

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

SIGNATURE

*Eldred W. Melton* 6/3/75

TITLE

*State Historic Preservation Officer*

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*AR Wagoner*

DATE

6/18/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

*[Signature]*

DATE

JUN 17 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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Immaculate Conception Church

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

and no casualties" (p. 36). Construction of the church continued until its dedication in 1871.

Hawesville did not have a resident priest for 75 years after the church was constructed, still remaining dependent on neighboring towns to provide priests. The first resident priest in Hawesville was Father Anthony Higdon. He was appointed in 1946 by Bishop Cotton of the Owensboro Diocese. Dr. Higdon acquired land on which the grade school and rectory were to be constructed. A Catholic grade school was constructed on this land. The Sisters of Loretto staffed the school.

The Texas Railroad found its way through Hancock County in 1898. The railroad was built rather close to the church and because of this the priests were given free rail transportation for life. The L & N continued this practice when they took over the operations of the Texas Railroad.

The Hawesville Immaculate Conception Church is an example of the determination of a small but devout religious group to build and maintain a church. The early people of this church maintained it without the guidance of a permanent priest. They worked until they had constructed a building in which to worship. The building was small and simple but surprisingly monumental, without any striking decoration, except for the traditional stained-glass windows and the intrinsic beauty of the stone of which it was constructed. The church building expressed the simple dignity of a people whose religion was the focal point of their community as well as spiritual life.

\*A Catholic Church for the use of the workers in Cannelton had been planned since at least the promotion of the Indiana Cotton Mill there before 1850. According to Wriston, however, the present large and splendid Gothic Revival stone St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church that faces the river overlooking the great factory in Cannelton designed by Thomas Tefft of Providence, Rhode Island, was not built until 1876, but it must have been preceded by a frame or--considering the nature of its offshoot in Hawesville--perhaps a more modest stone house of worship. For more information on Cannelton and the mill, see the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Felix Grimes House in Owensboro, Daviess County, Kentucky, submitted simultaneously.