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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 any 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 instructions. 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 Immaculate Conception Church  
other names \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  not for publication  
city or town Washington, D.C.  vicinity  
state District of Columbia code DC county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ zip code 20001

### 3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).  
[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_ Date 7/23/03  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
DC Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

### 4. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action 9/19/03  
Signature of the Keeper

Immaculate Conception Church  
Name of Property

District of Columbia  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
4		Total

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

**number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility/Church school/  
Church-related residence

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RELIGION/Religious facility/Church school/  
Church-related residence

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century/Gothic Revival

Late Victorian/Italianate/Queen Anne

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foundation    Brick

walls        Brick

                  Sandstone trim

roof         Not visible

other

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**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 pattern of our history.
- B** Property 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 a 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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**Area of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Religion

**Period of Significance**

1870-1963

**Significant Dates**

1870-1874; 1874-88; 1908; 1930

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Edward Clements

**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 files (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
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Immaculate Conception Church  
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 20,638 square feet

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1 8 Zone	3 2 4 6 0 0 Easting	4 3 0 8 2 2 2 Northing	3																
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 Richard Vidutis, Historian/edited by Kim Williams, DC HPO (7/03)  
Organization Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc date 4/17/99; 7/03 (edited)  
street & number 9001 Edmonston Rd. telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Greenbelt state Maryland zip code 20770

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- X A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- X A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

- X 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 SHPO or FPO)

Name Parish of the Immaculate Conception  
street & number 1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, NW telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction 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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Immaculate Conception Church

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

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## Description Summary:

The Immaculate Conception Church property, at 8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets, N.W. in Washington, D.C. consists of four associated buildings: a church, school, rectory and convent. The Gothic Revival Immaculate Conception Church building at the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets, N.W., begun in 1870, is a soaring brick building characterized by its tall central tower and pointed arch lancet windows. It was the second church structure to be erected by the Immaculate Conception parish. The first church building, constructed in 1864-65 to serve as a church and school, was located on the adjacent lot at 707 N Street and the present site of the church school building. In 1908, the present church school structure replaced the 1864-65 church/school. Designed by B. Stanley Simmons in a Tudor Revival style, the brick church/school contributes to the ecclesiastic character of the property. The rectory and convent, two attached dwellings facing 8<sup>th</sup> Street, are designed in an Italianate style typical of the residential building forms and styles of the period in Washington and the neighborhood. The cohesive group of associated buildings fit neatly into the surrounding urban fabric.+

## General Description:

### Immaculate Conception Church:

Exterior Description: Originally constructed in 1870-74, but not wholly completed until the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Immaculate Conception Church is a soaring, but restrained, red brick, Gothic Revival church building. The basilican-plan structure, measuring 126' x 60,' is three-bays wide and extends seven bays deep. The church is characterized by its three-story central tower, added in 1904, and by its tall, pointed-arch lancet windows and Gothic-style buttresses.

The principal façade, facing N Street, is divided into three distinct bays. The central entry, leading into a narthex, and then to the central nave, is set within a tall, double-height Gothic arch with a series of deep brick reveals springing from a cluster of brick piers. A Gothic-arched transom light surmounts the double wood doors, while a tri-partite lancet window with tracery fills in the arched space above. To either side of the central entry and separated by brick buttresses are paired wooden entry doors, recessed into a broken-arched opening with brick label molding. Above these entries are two-part lancet windows, set within a steeply pitched Gothic arched opening. All three of these arches are decorated with brick label moldings. The three-story brick tower, with pointed-arch openings on all elevations, rises above the center bay of the façade, while a tall, brick parapet wall with pointed-arch blind arcading culminates above the side bays.

The side elevations are cleanly divided into seven equal bays by tall brick buttresses that extend well above the parapet wall and main roofline. The bays themselves consist of tall, two-part lancet windows set within pointed-arch openings. Brick label moldings surround the arches.

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Immaculate Conception Church

Name of Property

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The rear elevation is an unarticulated and an adorned brick wall surface that abuts the side wall of the neighboring two-story row houses.

**Interior Features:** The interior of the Immaculate Conception Church is the result of several remodelings, but contains original delicate columns, wood paneling, ceiling vaults and a marble Gothic altar. The interior consists of an entry narthex, the main sanctuary with a balcony level, and a central apsidal chancel with smaller chancels to either side. Wooden pews line the sanctuary to either side of the central aisle, while the main altar occupies the center chancel. The altar is set upon a raised marble platform, is constructed of white Italian marble and is designed in a high Gothic style. The right chancel, originally a smaller altar area, now holds the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Grotto, built in 1930, was the work of Yicken Yon Port Totten, a Washington sculptress, and was donated by Anna Marie Hagan. The Grotto and was constructed of Italian and African marble with mosaic insets. The altar was installed in November 1940 when the church was redecorated for its 75th anniversary celebration of its founding. The balcony level contains a large pipe organ.

### Immaculate Conception Boys' School:

Located immediately adjacent to the 1870 church building, the Immaculate Conception Boys' School is a three-story, three-bay Tudor Revival-style building constructed in 1908 to the designs of architect B. Stanley Simmons. The Boys' School was erected on the site of and replaced the original church and school structure, built by the Immaculate Conception Parish in 1864. Although the building's overall massing and smaller size defers to the adjacent church structure, its simple brickwork, extensive glazing, brick buttresses and vertical emphasis of elements complement the religious edifice.

The principal façade of the Boys' School faces N Street and is divided into three bays. The central bay, formed by two polygonal towers lit by narrow embrasures, consists of a pair of entry doors, set within a broken arched opening and surmounted by a two-story, projecting oriel window of copper. A tri-partite, Venetian-like parapet wall adorned with a simple cross, rises above the central bay.

The flanking side bays consist of large banks of windows with brownstone sills and surrounds. A crenelated parapet rises above these window bays, enhancing the Medieval and battlement quality of the building.

### Immaculate Conception Convent (1317 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.):

The Immaculate Conception Convent at 1317 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. is a three-story, two-bay brick building designed in a transitional Italianate/Queen Anne style and built between 1874 and 1878. The building sits upon a slightly raised foundation, has pressed brick walls and a three-story, character-defining projecting bay.

The principal façade, facing 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. consists of a side entry door and a three-bay, polygonal projecting bay. The entry door, raised above ground level and reached by a set of concrete steps with an iron railing, features an Italianate-style wood surround with a bracketed cornice. Above the entry door,

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single 1/1 windows articulate the second and third floor levels. The projecting polygonal bay features single 1/1 windows in its three wall planes, at all levels. All of the windows have stone sills and stone lintels. The roofline of the dwelling is capped by a bracketed wood cornice.

### Immaculate Conception Rectory (1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.):

The Immaculate Conception Rectory is a three-story, three-bay brick dwelling designed in an Italianate style and built prior to 1873. Set upon a low brick foundation, the building has all-stretcher, pressed brick walls, is covered with a sloped roof and is characterized by its flat front and its bold, Italianate cornice and door surround.

The principal façade, facing 8<sup>th</sup> Street, consists of a side entry door and two windows on the first story, and three symmetrically arranged windows on the second and third stories above. The entry, slightly raised above ground level and reached by an original iron stair, features a heavy Italianate-style wooden surround with two brackets supporting a projecting cornice head. The windows are all 2/2 sash with stone sills and lintels. A projecting wood cornice with wooden brackets culminates at the roofline.

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Immaculate Conception Church

Name of Property

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## Summary Statement of Significance:

The Immaculate Conception Church and its associated buildings, including a school, rectory and convent is a significant complex of religious structures located in Washington, D.C. The complex typifies the urban Catholic Church, with the house of worship as its centerpiece surrounded by its associated structures, including, in this case, a school (707 N Street, N.W.), a rectory (1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.) and convent (1317 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.). The church exemplifies the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic Revival, and its associated buildings are good examples of the Italianate and Tudor Revival styles as applied in an ecclesiastical setting. As such, the Immaculate Conception Church and its three adjacent and associated buildings meet National Register Criterion C.

In addition to its architectural significance, the Immaculate Conception Church is associated with persons who are notable in the history of the Catholic Church in the Washington area: The Reverend J. Walter, pastor at St. Patrick's and founder of and interim pastor at Immaculate Conception, was the confessor and defender of Mrs. Surratt, who was put to death as a co-conspirator in the assassination of President Lincoln; and the Reverend Francis J. Hurney, pastor at Immaculate Conception, instituted the *Washington Catholic Hour*, a weekly radio program broadcast over WOL that lasted from 1931 until 1962.

The period of significance for the property extends 1870, when the cornerstone for the second Immaculate Conception Church was laid, to 1963, when the interior of the church was renovated and the school was refurbished.

## Resource History and Historic Context:

### Catholicism in Washington:

Lord Baltimore and the Society of Jesus established the Catholic presence in Maryland in 1643. The Jesuits founded Georgetown University in 1789 and Holy Trinity Church in 1791. St. Patrick's Church, established by 1794 is the oldest Catholic parish in Washington. The early parishioners were a mixture of Catholics who were already settled in the region, and newly immigrating Irish Catholics flocking to the city for construction work on the public buildings. The first St. Patrick's church was a modest frame structure that was replaced in 1884 by the stone structure that remains on the site. After large numbers of Irish came to Washington, many to dig the C&O Canal in the 1830s, they built the Church of St. Mary Mother of God in 1845 and St. Dominic's in 1852. The descendants of these Irish and other immigrants also constructed churches along North Capitol Street, for example, St. Aloysius in 1858, St. Martin's in 1901, and the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1920. The original Immaculate Conception Church at 8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets, N.W. was constructed in 1864-65.

The seat of Catholic administration for the Washington area was centered in Baltimore where the Archdiocese was situated. The Washington area did not become a full-fledged archdiocese itself until 1948. The Archdiocese of Washington includes the District of Columbia and five Maryland counties of Montgomery, Prince George's, Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary's.



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### Vicinity of the Immaculate Conception Parish Prior to the 1860s:

Historically, the site upon which the Immaculate Conception Church stands was part of a mixed-use residential and commercial neighborhood that although slow to develop, thrived during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Seventh Street, N.W. was an important transportation and commercial corridor and was lined with rows of stores from Pennsylvania Avenue on the south, to the city's boundary at present-day Florida Avenue on the north. These commercial concerns grew up around and were supported by the markets that were clustered in the area. The oldest market to be built in the vicinity was the Northern Liberties Market, established at Mount Vernon Square in 1846. Catering to a city-wide clientele and encouraging the development of local retail, the Northern Liberties Market served an important commercial role in the life of mid-19th century Washington until its demolition in 1872. The O Street Market, built in 1881 at the corner of 7th and O Streets, N.W., came about as a direct result of the demolition of the Northern Liberties Market in 1872.

In addition to its market presence, 7th Street was an important early transportation corridor that traces its origins to an 1810 Congressional charter. Congress granted a charter for the construction of a system of turnpikes from Washington City to the District line, including the 7th Street Turnpike. The toll road was paved between 1818 and 1822. In the 1830s, omnibus service operated over Seventh Street between L Street and the Potomac River, and by 1862, 7th Street had become the route of the city's first streetcar operation.

However, when the Immaculate Conception Church was originally constructed in 1864-65, the surrounding area was still undeveloped. The streets were still dirt roads, and there were only a few scattered frame buildings in the vicinity. Across the road from the proposed Immaculate Conception site were deserted clay-pits and brick works. During the 1870s and early 1880s, the area was known as "Cow Town" presumably for the number of cows roaming the streets. However, the commercial activity around the Northern Liberties Market, the 7<sup>th</sup> Street streetcar line and the Immaculate Conception Church and School buildings at 8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets, encouraged the eventual commercial and residential growth of the area. By the 1880s, the area surrounding the Immaculate Conception Church was well developed.

According to the 1888 Sanborn Map, Square 423 contained an uninterrupted series of one-, two-, and three-story brick store buildings along 7th Street from N to O Streets and a long row of three-story brick dwellings along 8th Street, N.W. The Immaculate Conception Church and School stood on the site facing N Street, while less substantial light industrial/commercial properties (coal yard, stable, blacksmith shop) occupied the northern end of the square facing O Street.

### The Role of St. Patrick's in Building the Immaculate Conception Church:

With the increase in population of the City of Washington following the Civil War, people began to migrate beyond "old" downtown into the area north of Massachusetts Avenue. Many Catholics, who were members of St. Patrick's, but who were moving to newly developing neighborhoods beyond downtown, found traveling to St. Patrick's too difficult. At the same time, St. Patrick's felt the pressure

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of an increasing congregational membership on its limited facilities. The overburdened St. Patrick's, and the limited number of options spurred the building of other churches within the St. Patrick's parish boundaries. (Prior to 1865, there were four Catholic churches in the northern section of Washington, including St. Patrick's at 10<sup>th</sup> and G Streets, N.W.; St. Matthew's at 15th and H Street, N.W.; St. Aloysius at North Capitol and I Streets, N.E.; St. Mary's on 5th Street, between G and H Street, N.W.)

As the first Catholic Church in Washington, St. Patrick's became the parent church to all other churches in the Capitol region. The construction of other churches was not an easy matter for the parent church or for individual parishes since sufficient funds were rarely available to complete construction on the building(s) in their entirety. As a result, land and funds were sometimes donated to parishes by the pastors themselves. For example, the early St. Patrick property was, itself, acquired in part by Father Caffrey from personal funds and later by Father Matthews with funds inherited from his parents

### The First Building at Immaculate Conception Parish

The rapid growth of St. Patrick's induced Father J. Walter, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, to undertake the building of the new parish of Immaculate Conception within the northern limits of his own parish, but in a newly developing area of the city. Of the mission churches, Immaculate Conception is considered to be the "oldest daughter" of St. Patrick's church. Parish boundaries were centered at 8th and N Streets and were drawn as follows: beginning at the northwest corner of 3rd and L Streets, NW, running west on the north side of L Street to 13th Street, then north on the east side of 13th Street to Boundary Avenue (now Florida Avenue) to 3rd Street, then south on the west side of 3rd Street to the starting point. In actuality, though, the northern boundary was almost without limit "embracing all the territory in the direction of Brightwood to the District line, most of it even within the city limits being unimproved—commons and truck gardens."<sup>1</sup>

The land for the Immaculate Conception Church and School cost \$16,000 with \$8,000 being paid up front. Written histories of the church report that Father Walter had started building the first structure at Immaculate Conception with just six dollars in hand.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 1864, ground for the church/school building was broken, and construction of the 50' x 75' structure to the designs of William R. Hutton<sup>3</sup>, architect in Montgomery County, began. The cornerstone was laid on Sunday October 30, 1864. By the middle of the summer of 1865 work was completed on the 50' x 75' structure.<sup>4</sup> On Sunday, July 2, at the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, the Most Reverend Martin J. Spalding, Archbishop of Baltimore, dedicated the new building. Father Walter was assisted by Reverend P. F. McCarthy of St. Patrick's. The Rev. F. E. Boyle, pastor of St. Peter's Church, preached the sermon, and John F. Callan acted as Master of Ceremonies.

<sup>1</sup> *Washington Post*, September 19, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> Walter, Rev. M., *At Peace with all Their Neighbors: Catholics and Catholicism in the National Capitol, 1787-1860*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Bowers, Kathryn. *Church of the Immaculate Conception, 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1864-1964*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Proctor, John Claggett. "Immaculate Conception Church Built in 1865 Begins Jubilee," *The Sunday Star*, November 10, 1940.

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The new congregation of Immaculate Conception continued under the pastoral care of St. Patrick's with Father Walter saying mass on Sundays and holy days. Father Walter, as well as his successors, had to take many long walks over the muddy roads as far as Brightwood to attend to the sick and perform other pastoral duties.<sup>5</sup> On September 1, 1866, Father McCarthy left St. Patrick's to take permanent charge of Immaculate Conception and to become its first pastor. He served at Immaculate Conception until his death in 1882.

The Immaculate Conception Church/School building was the first structure to be built at the Immaculate Conception Parish and was originally designed to be both a church and a school. The church/school was located on N Street next to a vacant corner lot at 8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets, N.W. and the site of the present Immaculate Conception School building at 707 N Street, built 1908. The school function of the building was divided with the boys' school located in the northern section and the girls' school in the southern section of the first floor. The school for the boys opened on September 4, 1865, and was initially operated by lay teachers. For the girls, Father Walter had already engaged the Sisters of Charity from St. Joseph's in Emmitsburg, Maryland to teach at Immaculate Conception. The school was under the supervision of Sister Josephine Kelliher.

As the number of parishioners at Immaculate Conception rapidly increased to about 2,000, the 1865-66 church/school building quickly proved to be too small. Within a matter of a few years, construction of a new and larger church became a priority.

### The Building of the New Church (corner of 8th & N Street, NW)

Under the guidance of Immaculate Conception's first pastor Father McCarthy, construction of the new Church commenced when the corner stone was laid on November 13, 1870. However, actual work on the church did not effectively begin until the next spring. The new church was designed to measure 67 feet wide and 127 feet long and feature a 175' tower. Three altars were designed to face 182 pews, accommodating 1,000 worshipers. The estimated cost was \$75,000.<sup>6</sup> By the time construction of the church was completed, it measured 60' wide and 126' long, and accommodated only 176 pews. The proposed tower was left unfinished. The final cost of the edifice was placed at \$51,000 by one report<sup>7</sup> and at \$60,000 by another.<sup>8</sup>

According to church documents, Messrs. Dant and Barry were responsible for laying the brick walls, while James Lewis prepared the finished, pressed brick front façade. Joseph Beckert provided the plastering by Mullan & Son of Baltimore for a cost of \$1,800.00. The pews were made in Richmond, Indiana for \$15 each.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Inchoirer*, November 1940.

<sup>6</sup> *Catholic Mirror*, October 22, 1870.

<sup>7</sup> *Catholic Mirror*, February 20, 1875.

<sup>8</sup> Bowers, 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Catholic Mirror*, February 20, 1875.

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A procession of 1,000 people walked to Immaculate Conception to meet another 8,000 waiting there to mark the laying of the cornerstone. A time capsule in the cavity of the cornerstone contains Catholic and secular newspapers of the day, specimens of United States currency, and a parchment stating that the corner stone was laid November 13, 1870.<sup>10</sup> Upon the church's dedication in 1874, the 1864-65 church/school building became the school/parish hall.

The construction of churches was a pay-as-you-go affair with each parish being responsible for raising funds for its own construction projects. As funds became available building projects would be completed. In the case of Immaculate Conception, the major portion of the church was completed by 1874. However, the tower was not completed for 30 years, and the exterior surface features, another 36 years.

Built by Edward Clements, Immaculate Conception is designed in a restrained Gothic Revival style. The brick church shares some similarities to some of the larger and better known mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century houses of worship created by James Renwick and Richard Upjohn and may have been associated with a notable, but as yet undiscovered designing architect. Clements has ties to the prolific 1860s-70s Washington architect Adolph Cluss, but this building is rather more restrained than much of Cluss's work.

### Immaculate Conception Academy:

The numbers of girl students at Immaculate Conception increased so rapidly that Father McCarthy, the first pastor of Immaculate Conception, erected a new school for them at 8th and Q Street where a lot was purchased. The new girls' school was completed in September 1872 at a cost of \$11,000. It was known as the Immaculate Conception Academy and eventually became a highly regarded school within the Washington community and beyond. The Academy was in charge of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, which was founded by Ann Seton.<sup>11</sup> In 1911, the Immaculate Conception Academy was reported to have preparatory courses lasting eight years, academic courses lasting four years, and a commercial department which offered "all the improved and up-to-date business systems of typewriting, shorthand and bookkeeping for which diplomas are given at the end of the course."<sup>12</sup> Eventually, the girls' academy developed a four-year high school degree, affiliated with Catholic University. Courses at the academy prepared students for college, nursing school or business. However, because of diminished enrollment, the school was moved to St. Stephen's Parks at 24th and K Streets, by order of Archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle.<sup>13</sup> By the time the Girls' Academy was moved to St. Stephen's, it was one of Washington's oldest Catholic girls' schools.

<sup>10</sup> *Catholic Mirror*, November 19, 1870.

<sup>11</sup> *Washington Star*, August 19, 1911.

<sup>12</sup> *Washington Star*, August 11, 1911.

<sup>13</sup> Bowers, 16.

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## Land Acquisition and the Development of the Immaculate Conception Parish:

The early development and expansion of Immaculate Conception was largely based on the good will and generosity of its parishioners and pastors. A list of land documents at the Archdiocese of Washington Archives begins with the deed by William Jones from October 6, 1864, which designated land for a church and a boys' school. The cornerstone for the church and boys' school was laid on October 30, 1864, at the location where the present Gothic styled school stands now.

On October 10, 1865, William H. Thumbert donated the lot at 714 N Street. This land was across the street from the Church/School building and had a building erected in the 1880s that served as a residence for the Brothers of Mary, a school annex, and later as the George Washington University Newman Center. On May 12, 1866, and then on September 23, 1868, two pieces of land were donated to Immaculate Conception. Charles Columbus gave the parish one lot, while the parish's first pastor, Rev. Patrick F. McCarthy, donated the other lot. These transactions added land to the rear of the church. It is likely that the rectory at 1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, built prior to 1873 according to tax assessments, was built on the land acquired by Pastor McCarthy soon after it was donated. The church residence at 1317 8<sup>th</sup> Street was built between 1874 and 1888. Both of these well-preserved Italianate-style buildings are roughly contemporaneous with the completion of the initial phase of the church and have served since then as the residence of the parish priests and the nuns and clergy engaged in teaching at the church schools.

On October 31, 1870, Mr. and Mrs. Barry donated land at 1554 8th Street, NW, where the girls' academy was built in 1872. On June 12, 1886, the Barrys added more land to their original donation, also designated for the girls' school. On January 3, 1906, James W. O'Brien donated land at 1251 8th Street, NW. Finally, land adjoining the Brothers of Mary residence at 710-712 N Street, NW, was put in trust on May 7, 1929, and then deeded to Immaculate Conception on July 2, 1936.

## Post Construction History of Immaculate Conception Church:

Father McCarthy died on November 5, 1882, after being pastor for 16 years. He left a church practically out of debt, including two schools—one for girls, the other for boys—and provided for a free school for the boys of the parish with a personal legacy of \$15,000.<sup>14</sup> Following Father McCarthy's death, Father Stanislaus A. Ryan succeeded him as pastor of Immaculate Conception. During his tenure at Immaculate Conception, Father Ryan laid lasting foundations that continue in operation to this day. He liquidated a small debt left from the building of the church, procured the teaching services of the Brothers of Mary, built a residence for the Brothers at 714 N Street, and frescoed the interior of the church.<sup>15</sup>

Father Ryan wanted to set high educational standards at Immaculate Conception. The Girls' Academy was being operated by the Sisters of Charity and Father Ryan wanted the same standards of excellence at the Boys' School, still located in the 1865-66 school building at 711 N Street. To this end, he secured the Brothers of Mary—"the Marianists"—to take charge of the boys' education in 1890. The first Brothers to

<sup>14</sup> *Catholic Red Book*, 197.

<sup>15</sup> *Catholic Red Book*, 197.

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teach at Immaculate Conception were named Michael, Edward, and Joseph.<sup>16</sup> To begin with, the Brothers lived with the sisters in a frame structure at the southeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets, N.W. In 1892, Father Ryan built a house for the Marianists directly opposite the church. Later, this structure would be used as an annex to the school when the old school became overcrowded.<sup>17</sup> The Marianists continued their service at Immaculate Conception until 1964.

During Father Ryan's pastorate, Immaculate Conception was one of the first parishes in the nation to begin devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A statue of Our Lady was placed above the main altar in the 1880s. School children contributed a large heart made of pearls and semi-precious stones. It hung around the statue's neck on a silver chain.<sup>18</sup>

Father Ryan died on May 22, 1903, and was succeeded as pastor in July 1903 by Father James D. Marr. Fr. Marr had grown up in the parish and left from there to begin his studies in the priesthood. Under his direction, work on the exterior of the Immaculate Conception church, which had remained unfinished for about 36 years, was completed, including the completion of the church tower.

### Immaculate Conception Boys' School (1909):

Father Marr was also responsible for building the present Tudor Revival-style school building, on the site of the original 1864-65 church/school building. In Father Marr's annual parish report to the Archbishop of Baltimore and Washington (written as an undated letter between June 21, 1908, and January 11, 1909), he describes the physical improvements he had made to the Immaculate Conception Parish since he was appointed pastor in 1903. He emphasized that money for repairs to the parish buildings was collected from Sunday envelope donations and without resort to diocesan funding, fairs, or social entertainment. The yearly donation receipts came to between \$1,600 and \$2,500 during the five years of his tenure. Three buildings required particular attention. The rectory and the church had consumed \$25,000 in repairs: the rectory was "scarcely habitable" and the exterior of the church "was unfinished and had been so for twenty years." As for the boys' school, it "was so bad that it was unsanitary and the floors so unsteady that it was necessary to prop them up." He had hoped to use the same method of Sunday receipts to finance the building of a new boys' school and to begin work on the structure in the spring of 1909. But before he could begin, someone wrote an anonymous letter to the Fire Marshal of Washington, DC, complaining of the poor condition of the school. The Fire Marshal condemned the school building until certain changes would be made and repairs carried out to the exits. These repairs would have cost several hundreds of dollars. Father Marr reasoned that it would make better financial sense to raze the old building and construct a new one. For this he had to borrow an initial sum of \$34,300 and later \$12,000 more in order to complete payments for the work on the school. In the letter, Father Marr further tells the Archbishop that he expected to be able to pay the loan back without recourse to diocesan funds in about 8 years at 4% interest.

<sup>16</sup> McNees, Valerie. "Famous Old School to Close Doors," *The Catholic Standard*, April 10, 1964.

<sup>17</sup> *The Washington Post*, September 19, 1903.

<sup>18</sup> McNees, April 10, 1964.

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The new school was built in 1908 at 711 N Street, erected in the same spot as the original church/school building. The cornerstone on the school commemorates both buildings—the 1864-65 church/school and the current school building. Designed to harmonize with the Gothic architectural style of the church, the new school building was conceived by Washington architect B. Stanley Simmons. It contains six rooms that were designed to accommodate 300 boys. When built, it was 58 feet wide, 100 feet long, 60 feet tall, and was considered to be practically fireproof. An auditorium was incorporated with a 35-foot high ceiling with two galleries that could hold up to 800 people. Above the auditorium a second hall was built with 3,300 square feet of floor space.

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Church History:

In 1914, Father Riordan, who gave the dedicatory address at the opening of the new school, was appointed pastor of Immaculate Conception. Father Riordan, and his assistant, Reverend (later Monsignor) Charles E. Roach, carried out the first refurbishing of the interior by incorporating a new lighting system. Father Riordan was known as a good money manager and raiser of funds. By 1921 when he left Immaculate Conception to become pastor of St. Martin's Church, he had eliminated a debt of \$58,000 on the church.

From 1921 to 1930, Rev. James E. Connell served as pastor at Immaculate Conception having come from a country parish in northwestern Maryland. In February 1930, the Rev. Francis J. Hurney, an assistant pastor at St. Patrick's, was made pastor. During his priesthood, Father Hurney, along with Father Ignnatius Smith, O.P., instituted the Washington Catholic Hour, a radio program broadcast over WOL, beginning on October 6, 1930, with music under the direction of Professor Harry Wheaton Howard. The Washington Catholic Hour was on the air from about 1930 to 1962. The broadcasts took place every Sunday evening from October through April and presented various speakers who were authorities in the fields of Theology, Philosophy, Canon Law and History. Funds for the radio program were raised during an annual card party and dance held at the Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington.<sup>19</sup> On the same day that the Catholic Hour made its debut, the dedication of the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes took place with weekly services at the shrine becoming very popular.<sup>20</sup>

During the special dedication for the Grotto of Lourdes, a procession took place that included 24 friars in brown cassocks and sandals, 36 altar boys in blue and white cassocks, and 60 young girls dressed in white. The Reverend Stanislaus Ozyz, an assistant pastor at Immaculate Conception, acted as celebrant.<sup>21</sup> On May 15, 1932, an unveiling, dedication and blessing of a painting of the Blessed Bernadette Soubirous took place. Copied by a Czechoslovak artist, it was executed on copper and donated to Immaculate Conception by the White family.

Father Hurney was pastor for only three years when he died in September of 1933. Father Hurney was succeeded by his close friend, the Rev. (later Monsignor) John Keating Cartwright, who at the time was

<sup>19</sup> Bowers, 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Inchoirer*, November 1940.

<sup>21</sup> *The Washington Post*, October 6, 1930.

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an assistant at St. Patrick's. Father Cartwright continued the programs started by Father Hurney and in 1936 created the Boys' and Men's Choir. Father Cartwright served for 13 years at Immaculate Conception and then was transferred to St. Matthew's Cathedral. Father Cartwright was known as a scholar and historian having published in various Catholic publications. He also taught church history and pastoral theology at Catholic University in Washington, DC.

Father Cartwright would regularly invite noted scholars to the church pulpit to enhance Sunday services. The notables who delivered sermons at Immaculate Conception were usually Fr. Cartwright's close friends and included the Very Rev. Ignatius Smith, O.P.; the Rev. Artheme Dutilly, O.M.I., an internationally known scientist at Catholic University; Rev. Dr. John Tracy Ellis, author of a biography of James Cardinal Gibbons; and Rev. Paul Bussard, a priest who was in residence at Immaculate Conception in the 1930s and who later became the editor-in-chief of *The Catholic Digest*.<sup>22</sup>

Father Cartwright also introduced the Printer's Mass—originally begun at the turn-of-the-century at St. Andrew's Church in New York City. The Printer's Mass was intended for those who worked at night, such as workers from the Government Printing Office, newspapermen, hotel and restaurant managers, railroad personnel, bartenders, and the homeless. Immaculate Conception was the only church in Washington, DC to hold mass between midnight and dawn—2 to 3 a.m. on Sundays.

Of all the pastors at Immaculate Conception, Rev. John Keating Cartwright probably was the most learned and well known. He was born in Baltimore, and there attended St. Ann's Parochial School, Loyola College, and St. Charles College. He completed his theological studies at the North American College in Rome where he received his Ph.D. from the University of Propaganda in 1913 and his S.T.D. in 1917. He was ordained on December 3, 1916, by Cardinal Pompili, Vicar of Rome, in the vicar's private chapel. He returned to the United States in 1917 and was assigned as an assistant at St. Ann's (Baltimore) for three years. In 1920 he went to St. Patrick's (Washington). He also taught at the Sulpician and Paulist Seminaries, and was an Assistant Professor at Catholic University, Washington.<sup>23</sup>

For the 75th anniversary of Immaculate Conception, Father Cartwright had the church refurbished. The ceiling was painted with a blue and gold design, and new wrought iron Gothic-style lights were added. An altar of Italian and African marble with mosaic insets was also installed for anniversary celebration, which due to the July heat, was postponed until November.<sup>24</sup>

In 1935 Rev. Joseph E. Gedra was assigned as one of Father Cartwright's assistants, and in 1945 became pastor of Immaculate Conception. In 1952, Father Gedra was made pastor of St. Paul's Church, in Damascus, Maryland. The first evening Mass took place in 1954 with the permission of the Archbishop of Washington, the Most Reverend Patrick A. O'Boyle. The evening Mass became so popular that nearby parking facilities were overwhelmed. When the local Kaufman's Department Store burned down, Immaculate Conception acquired the land for parking.

<sup>22</sup> Bowers, 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Inchoirer*, November 1940.

<sup>24</sup> *Times-Herald*, November 16, 1941 and Proctor, November 10, 1940.



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In 1952 Rev. (later Monsignor) John B. Roedker became the pastor of Immaculate Conception. He served for five years during which time he duties also included being the vice-chancellor of the Archdiocese. Father Roedker gained national fame for Immaculate Conception in 1953 when he was named national director of the fund-raising appeal to build a national shrine to Immaculate Conception Parish's patron—the Blessed Mother, under her title, the Immaculate Conception. Fr. Roedker's efforts are credited with the great success of the nationwide appeal with contributions exceeding all expectations.

In 1962-63, the interior of the church was renovated. Carried out by the Rambusch Decorating Company of New York, the work was supervised by Donald S. Johnson and Harold L. Boutin of Johnson and Boutin, Architects.<sup>25</sup> During the same period, 1962-63, the Tudor Revival-style school building was also refurbished.<sup>26</sup> Despite this effort, the Immaculate Conception Boys' School closed in 1964 after 74 years in existence. The Marianist order that ran the boys' school, requested permission to withdraw the Brothers, due to a shortage of vocations and a lack of personnel to staff the school in the future. By 1964 the Brothers of Mal had been training their religious as teachers in secondary schools and colleges only. After the Marianists left, the school building reopened to both boys and girls under the direction of the Sisters of Mercy. Four Sisters of Mercy were assigned for the 1965 school year. Their convent was located at 1317 8th Street, NW, adjacent to the Rectory.<sup>27</sup>

### Notable People Associated with Immaculate Conception

Harry Wheaton Howard, born in 1870 of Protestant parents, came to Immaculate Conception in 1904 when he was 29 years old. He stayed for 45 years until his death in 1949. Harry Howard began his musical studies at the age of 8. He studied piano with local musician and teacher William Waldecker. In 1888 he went to Berlin to study at the Stern's Conservatory with Xavier Scharwenka. He returned to the States in 1892 and became organist at the Calvary Baptist Church. At Immaculate Conception he became the organist, teacher, and musical arranger. In 1907 he conducted a season of grand opera under the direction of Katie Wilson-Greene, a well-known concert manager.<sup>28</sup> Mr. Howard was also known in the Washington area for playing the organ at movie theaters during the days of silent films.<sup>29</sup>

At Immaculate Conception Mr. Howard was known as "the Professor" who, besides being the organist, was also its choirmaster. He also arranged operettas and plays for the Immaculate Conception Academy where he taught. A native of Washington, he was the son of Horatio N. Howard, surgeon in the Civil War. His father's cousin, General Howard, was founder and third president of Howard University.

<sup>25</sup> Bowers, 25.

<sup>26</sup> MacNees, May 29, 1964.

<sup>27</sup> MacNees, April 10, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> *The Washington Post*, November 9, 1940.

<sup>29</sup> *The Washington Post*, November 13, 1940.

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Helen Hayes, one of the best-known actresses in the United States was baptized in Immaculate Conception on October 28, 1900, by Rev. Ambrose Beavan. Her parents, Francis B. Brown and Catherine E. Hayes, were married in Immaculate Conception on October 24, 1898.<sup>30</sup>

Graduates of the Immaculate Conception School which opened in September 1865 include Father John J. Conway, famed orator and assistant pastor at Immaculate Conception; Joseph A. Roth, a 1902 graduate who became a professor of English at Fordham University; Francis J. Dailey, a reporter and then city editor of the *Washington Herald*; Joseph J. Murphy, editor of the Washington paper, *The New Century*; and Frances de Sales Ryan, an authority on the history of Washington, D.C.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Proctor, November 10, 1940.

<sup>31</sup> MacNees, April 10, 1964.

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"Our Washington Letter," December 24, 1870.

"Our Washington Letter," February 13, 1875

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## Verbal Boundary Description:

The Immaculate Conception Church complex, including the church, school, rectory and convent occupies Lots 2, 801, 802, and 803 on Square 423 in Washington, D.C. The lots are located at the northeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets and front both 8<sup>th</sup> Street and N Street. +

## Boundary Justification:

The boundaries include those lots that have been associated with the church since the construction of the buildings in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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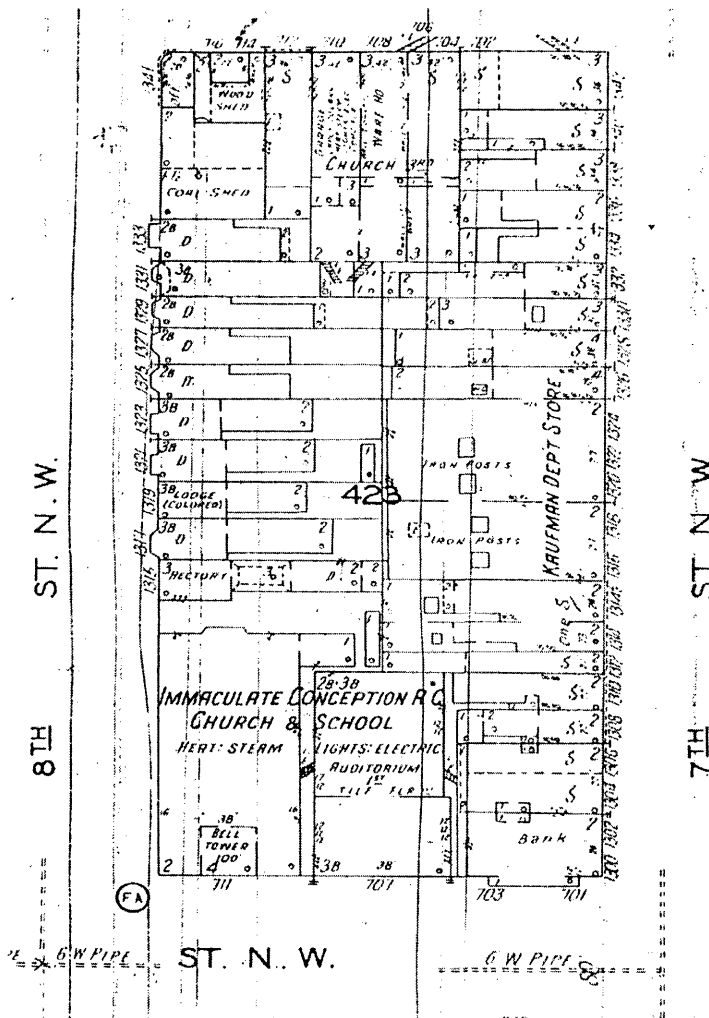
## SITE MAP

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Immaculate Conception Church  
8<sup>th</sup> and N Streets, N.W.  
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1991

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

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- 1) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of west elevation of church looking southeast  
1/12
  
- 2) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
Detail of front bays of west elevation of church looking east at tower  
2/12
  
- 3) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of south elevation (principal façade) of church
  
- 4) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of church tower from east  
4/12

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

- 5) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of south (front) elevation of church school building looking north  
5/12
  
- 6) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of east facades of rectory and convent buildings at 1315 and 1317 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
6/12
  
- 7) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
Interior of church looking at central altar at north end wall  
7/12
  
- 8) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of central altar  
8/12



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### PHOTOGRAPHS

- 9) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of altar to left of central altar  
9/12
- 10) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of Lourdes Grotto in altar to right of central altar  
10/12
- 11) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
Interior view of west wall, showing lancet windows  
11/12
- 12) Immaculate Conception Church  
1315 8<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC  
Richard Vidatus  
November 1998  
Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc.  
View of southwest corner (entrance wall) showing baptismal font, confessional, and organ in balcony  
12/12