

PH0352659

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED **AUG 12 1976**

DATE ENTERED **DEC 12 1976**

**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 Church of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception (Roman Catholic)

AND/OR COMMON

St. Mary's Church, Wilmington

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Intersection of Sixth & Pine Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Wilmington

VICINITY OF

One

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Delaware

10

New Castle

004

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Church of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception

STREET & NUMBER

Sixth & Pine Streets

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Wilmington

VICINITY OF

Delaware

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Public Building

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Wilmington

Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Delaware Historic Sites and Buildings, N-651

DATE

1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Preservation Section, Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Dover

Delaware

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Mary's Church is a brick building fronting on Pine Street. Its front and Sixth Street side are of pressed brick, sparingly trimmed with limestone. Window openings have semi-circular arches; between are plain brick pilasters. Surmounting each bay between pilasters are brick dentils. There are three brick towers on the Pine Street facade. The two corner ones are set diagonally, with onion-shaped domes topped with crosses. The center square tower, now used as a belfry, has arched louvred openings, and a flat roof. Until a fire in 1966, the openings were glazed and the tower was surmounted by a wooden belfry and a third onion-shaped dome and cross.

The church was built in 1858 by Charles McCloskey, a local contractor. The central tower was added in 1881. Extensive interior improvements were made in 1907, at which time the original galleries along the sides of the church were removed, leaving only the portion in the rear, which still has the original pews. A new sacristy was added to the south side of the building, and the old sacristies incorporated into the enlarged sanctuary, and three new marble memorial altars were placed therein. Renovations now in progress (1976) will move the two smaller altars and incorporate them into a new communion table, in front of the high altar, to accommodate the revised Catholic liturgy.

An unusual feature of the church is the clerestory of the nave, which is constructed of plaster and lath entirely under the tabled roof. Illumination for the clerestory windows is provided through skylights set flush in the gabled roof. This arrangement was part of the original construction.

Attached to the rear of the church, fronting on Sixth Street, is a rectory built in 1881, now unoccupied. In 1866, the parochial school was built on Pine Street, on a lot south of the church. A sisters' residence, built on Fifth Street adjoining the school in 1899, was razed in 1970. The school, a three-story brick structure, originally had four classrooms on the first and second floors opening from a center hall; the third floor was completed in 1973. Extensive interior alterations were made in 1964, when new offices and lavatories were installed, and in 1974 for the present occupant, The Elementary Workshop.

The church is in the Mulberry Run urban renewal project, and adjoins the Poplar Street project to the north and west. Across Sixth Street is a public school recreation area; facing it on Pine Street are modern townhouses built in 1966. The remainder of the St. Mary's block is occupied by moderate income brick townhouses of innovative arrangement; alternate units front on interior walkways, instead of the street front.

The church retains its original dimensions, described in 1858 as about 100 feet long and 60 feet wide with an arched ceiling 36 feet high. The original ceiling fresco by Joseph Uberti and Peter Diffenbach was later removed, probably in the 1907 remodeling.

A large painting of the Assumption by the same artists was in an arch over the main altar. It was removed about 1960 due to deterioration of the plaster arch and later discarded. Paintings of the 11 apostles were also removed and lost, and the entire interior painted green. One painting remains, above the sacristy door in the south wall; it is being carefully preserved in the current redecoration.

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 checked="" 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 1858 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Charles McCloskey (Builder)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Mary's is the only church in Delaware associated with Blessed John Nepomucene Neumann, Bishop of Philadelphia 1852-1860, and now a candidate for canonization by the Roman Catholic Church. The church was built under his direction while Wilmington was part of the Philadelphia Diocese, and he conducted the elaborate ceremony of consecration on its completion in 1859.

Its founding pastor, Father (later Monsignor) Patrick Reilly, was a pioneer in Delaware education, having founded a boarding school in 1839 which evolved into St. Mary's College in 1847 under his direction, and a parochial school at St. Peter's while pastor there from 1842 to 1853. St. Mary's is identified especially with his later efforts in the fields of adult education and religious education for public school students, for both of which the school built in 1866 was used in addition to its primary parochial school use. The church and school under his long pastorate (1858-1885) was Wilmington's principal institution for the education and integration of thousands of Irish immigrants, most of whom lived in the parish upon first arriving.

The school building has been used for a variety of innovative educational uses. In 1867, after establishment of the Diocese of Wilmington and withdrawal of the Philadelphia sisters who had operated it as Public School No. 13, religious education of parish children was entrusted to the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, a tightly-structured organization of parish volunteers.

Early adult education programs associated with the church included the Reilly Lyceum founded in 1888, and the Benevolent Pioneer Literary Association, an off-shoot of the Catholic Total Abstinence movement which had arisen in Ireland to combat alcoholism. These institutions were an important contribution to the upward mobility of young Irish laborers for whom formal education had been limited.

Reopened as a parochial school in 1887, the building in 1932 was the home of the first parish group of what was to become the Catholic Youth Organization. In 1970, the school became the first inter-parish school serving two parishes - St. Mary's and St. Patrick's. Since the parochial school was discontinued in 1974, the building has been leased to the Elementary Workshop, Inc., a private non-denominational school emphasizing the "open classroom" approach. The Workshop had been started several years earlier in the former rectory, after the pastor's residence was moved to a nearby apartment to save expenses. The church now shares its pastor with St. Patrick's Church, 15th and King Streets, where he now resides.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1858-1958, Church of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Wilmington: published by the parish, 1958.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	8
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4	5	3	3	6	0
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4	3	9	8	7	2	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Donn Devine

ORGANIZATION

St. Mary's Parish

DATE

May 1976

STREET & NUMBER

2004 Kentmere Parkway

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

Delaware

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Lauren C. Seay

TITLE Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

8/3/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 12/12/90
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

W. J. [Signature]

DATE

12/6/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER