

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received OCT 12 1982

date entered

**1. Name** St. Hedwig's Roman Catholic Church

historic

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number Linden and South Harrison Streets, NA not for publication

city, town Wilmington vicinity of congressional district One

state Delaware code 10 county New Castle code 003

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	NA being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name St. Hedwig's Roman Catholic Parish

street & number 408 South Harrison Street

city, town Wilmington vicinity of state Delaware 19805

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New Castle County Recorder fo Deeds

street & number 800 French Street City/County Building

city, town Wilmington state Delaware 19801

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wilmington Cultural Resource has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date June 1979  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Hall of Records

city, town Dover state Delaware 19901

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### ST. HEDWIG'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

#### DESCRIPTION

St. Hedwig's Roman Catholic Church at the corner of Linden and Harrison Streets in Wilmington, Delaware, is an example of late Gothic Revival architecture rendered in soft gray brick (concrete block with brick veneer) with details in limestone and decorative tan and gray brick corbelling. Despite changes from the mid to late 1950s, the church has substantially retained its architectural integrity.

The building is cruciform, with the apse at the eastern end and short transepts projecting north and south. The front entryway at the foot of the nave, consists of a set of three double doors flanked by 80' spires terminating in cross gable spires. The close buttresses, a substantial amount of brick corbelling, and the rustication of the basement story break up the otherwise smooth surface. Stone detailing on the body of the building consists of coping on the buttresses, the small columns flanking the center set of double doors of the main entrance, and the hood molding and drip stone over the two window arrangements near the apse. The large pointed window in each transept and the rose window over the entrance feature a simplified form of decorated tracery made of wood and are protected by hood moldings of stone. All the stained glass dates from 1904, except for two windows in the towers.

The interior plan consists of a nave with colonnaded aisles, a screened choir, a slightly projecting transept, and an apsed presbytery. Examples of wood wainscoting from two periods are visible upon entering the vestibule. The original material, installed in 1904, is a simple, vertical panelling. The replacement panelling, installed in 1960, is a light oak with decorative quatrefoils, and replaced the marble veneer wainscoting which had cracked. This lighter panelling continues into the sanctuary and matches the pew ends; the original dark wood pews have also been replaced.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1904 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

ST. HEDWIG'S CHURCH

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Hedwig's Roman Catholic Church is architecturally significant as a strong example of late Gothic Revival style in an ecclesiastic rendering. Socially and historically, St. Hedwig's significance lies in its continuous, exclusive use by Wilmington's Polish community. The church serves as the only architecturally visible anchor or centerpiece for the Wilmington Polish community; historically, as a focal point of Polish pride and community. The church is therefore nominated as significant under National Register criteria C and A: it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the type and method of construction, and it is associated with individuals and events that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history.

In 1883, Polish immigrants began arriving in Wilmington from the Polish province of Posen. It was decided, as their numbers increased, that they should have their own parish church (about 92% of Polish Americans are Catholic, and religion has always been a major factor in their lives). In 1891, they formed their own parish, St. Hedwig's, and purchased a lot at the northeast corner of Linden and Harrison Streets. The cornerstone of a modest, red-brick church was laid the same year.

Due to the growing Polish population, and its increasing financial stability, the Poles decided to build a larger and more elaborate church across the street from the original one. The space occupied by the first church is now the site of St. Hedwig's school, built in the 20th century.

Church records indicate that a church committee, consisting of two lay members, Mr. John Zacubowski and Mr. Joseph Emery, and the parish priest, Father John Gulcz, was established prior to the purchase of additional land for a new church. After several rejections, the men finally obtained a \$60,000 loan from the Equitable Trust Company. A second loan for \$30,000 was secured during construction of the church.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Scharf, History of Delaware  
 Szczerba, Barbara. Unpublished University Thesis from church records  
 Cityside, Inc. Churches of Wilmington

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .3

Quadrangle name Wilmington South

Quadrangle scale 7.5 minute

**UMT References**

A 

1	8	4	5	1	4	9	0	4	3	9	8	8	1	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

See Item 7, P. 2

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia A. Maley, Planner II

organization Wilm. Dept. of Planning date March 1982

street & number 800 French St. telephone (302) 571-4402

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Daniel R. Griffith*

title Deputy SHPO date Sept. 30, 1982

**For HCRS use only**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*Delores Byers* Entered in the National Register date 11/12/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

St. Hedwig's presents open space from floor to ceiling, doing away with classic triforium and clerestory levels. The plastered ceiling is supported by clustered, artificial marble columns with foliate capitals from which springs fan vaults (scagliola). The vaults were painted with murals in the late 1950s by an artist named Panzeroni, who added to the original foliate design depictions of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John around the apex of the central vault. The apse above the altar is covered with murals of the heavenly hosts praising God. The marble altar reredos (screens) for the main inside altars were added in 1938 and contain 12 kinds of marble, replacing the old reredos which ended in three pointed arches. The stations of the cross, done in relief panels, were originally multicolored, but have been since redone in a more restrained white with gold detail.

Many of the changes in the interior of the church - new pews, the pulpit moved closer to the congregation, the altar placed so the Liturgy of the Eucharist could be celebrated facing the congregation - were the results of the changes in worship mandated by the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s.

Justification of Boundaries

The boundaries for this nomination include only the Church and not the adjacent rectory which was built at a later date.

The Church boundaries: bounded on the northwest by (the southeasterly right-of-way edge of) South Harrison Street, on the northeast by (the southwesterly right-of-way edge of) Linden Street, on the southeast by a line 154' southeast of and parallel to the southeasterly right-of-way edge of South Harrison Street, and on the Southwest by a line 95' southwest of and parallel to the southwesterly right-of-way edge of Linden Street

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The land on which the church presently stands on the southeasterly corner of Linden and Harrison Streets was purchased by St. Hedwig's church on February 5, 1898, from the Order of St. Benedict of Delaware. The remaining portion of the land was sold to St. Hedwig's by Bishop John J. Monaghan on March 8, 1898.

Having obtained land and money, the committee chose as an architect an acquaintance of Father Gulcz, Mr. A. Brilmaier, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Wishing to establish both a reputation for himself and a model for the churches in the Wilmington area, Mr. Brilmaier submitted plans for a church in the Gothic revival style. The plans were received and accepted by the St. Hedwig's committee, which then selected John Healy and Sons as contractors (a local firm still present and active in Wilmington, Delaware). The blessing of the cornerstone was held on July 4, 1904, and the building was completed later that year. A number of members of the Polish community who could not contribute financially to the project contributed with labor. This group included a number of shipworkers from the local shipbuilding firm of Harlan and Hollingsworth, who assisted in shaping and placing the curbed ceiling beams that were similar to the hull of a ship.

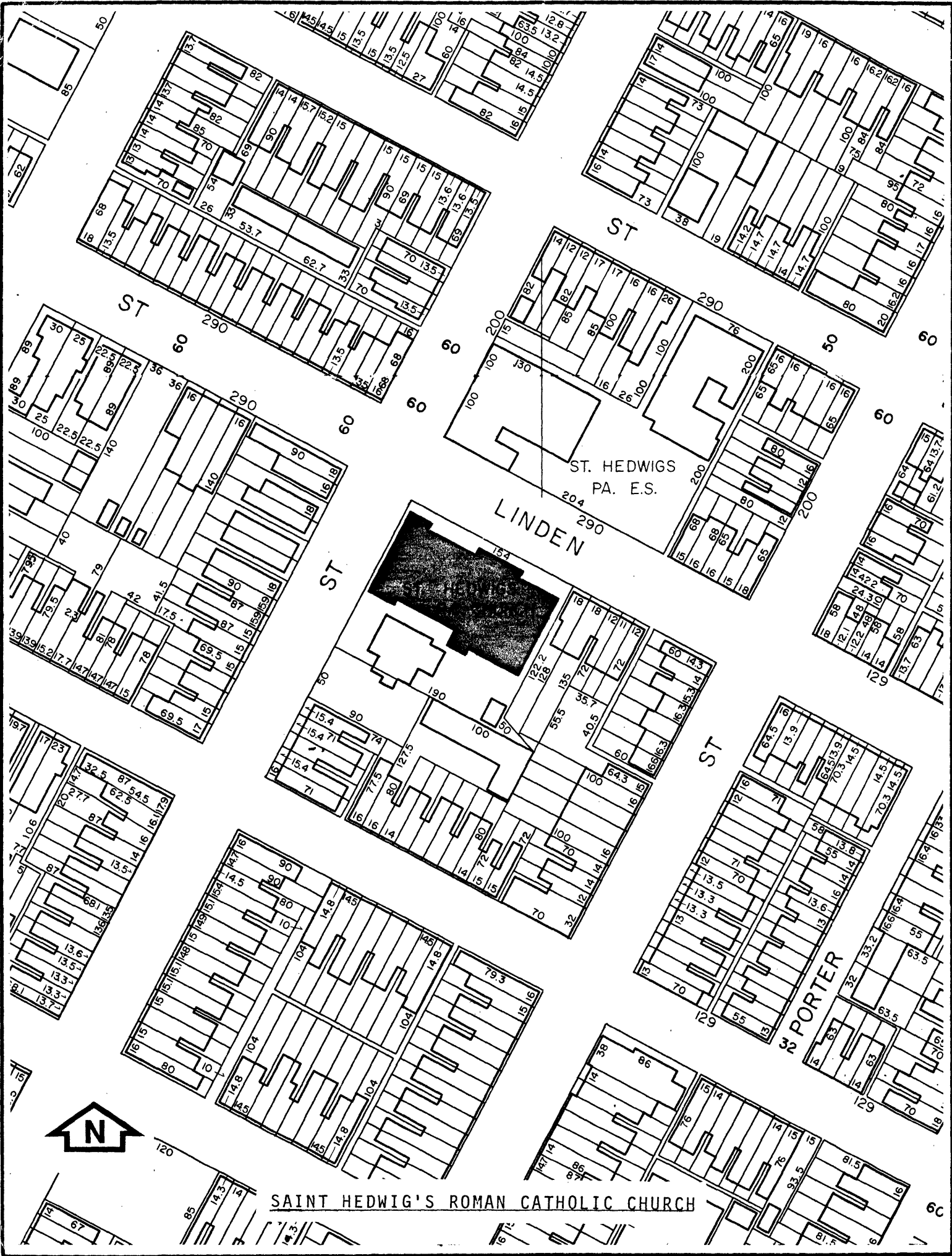
The original church organ was purchased in 1912 from the Estey Organ Company (owned by a family of Polish heritage) with a fund matched by Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnate. A new console was installed in 1973 by Hudler-Hunter of Philadelphia; some pipes were replaced, other renovated.

Since 1904, St. Hedwig's has been in constant use, remaining the focal point for religious and social functions of the Wilmington Polish American community, including housing St. Hedwig's Senior Center.

Level of Significance

St. Hedwig's is being submitted at a local level of significance, since its significance is architectural and intertwined with the history of the Polish community in Wilmington.

Because of the above, St. Hedwig's Roman Catholic Church is an exception to the religious structure exclusion criteria.



SAINT HEDWIG'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH