

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received APR 4 1984  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number ~~Southeast corner of West Ninth Street~~  
and ~~North duPont Streets~~ not for publication

city, town Wilmington vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state Delaware code 10 county New Castle code 003

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church

street & number 927 North duPont Street

city, town Wilmington vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number 4th Floor, City/County Building, 800 North French Street

city, town Wilmington state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Delaware Cultural Resource Survey N. 7486  
has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Hall of Records

city, town Dover state Delaware

## 7. Description

|   |                                       |   |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                              |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input 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 _____  |

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

The Church of St. Anthony of Padua is an Italian Romanesque church built on the northwest corner of West Ninth and North duPont Streets. It was built in 1926 to serve the Italian-American community located in the Westside section of Wilmington. It has served as a catalyst for Italian cultural pride and remains today as a uniquely Italian church in the city.

The church is approximately 187 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall. It is set diagonally on the lot. The outside walls are built of an uncoursed rusticated ashlar stone, light brown in color. The walls are generally unornamented except for the north wall, which is the entrance. Square pilasters with doric capitals form the corners of the church. Single story bays that run the full length of the east and west walls contain the shrines and the chapels of the various saints. Circular windows with 360 degree stone arches provide windows for the shrines. Just over the shrines, five stained glass windows with arched lentils form a clerestory.

There are rose windows on both the north and south walls of the church. The window on the south wall has twelve petals, each depicting one of the twelve disciples of Jesus.

The south wall (entrance) of the church is the most ornate facade. A portico over the entrance, which is based on the portico of the church of St. Zeno in Verona, Italy, is supported by two columns with Romanesque capitals which have rams' heads in the corners. Behind the columns, two pilasters with Romanesque capitals under two winged dragons facing away from each other frame the central two doors. The lintel over the doors has a terra cotta relief of the last supper. An arched shaped terra cotta relief of St. Anthony holding the baby Jesus is over the lintel. The portico hood has a barrel vault with an arch decorated with terra cotta reliefs of a pair of keys alternated with a papal hat. The keystone of the arch has a terra cotta relief of a lamb with a cross (symbol of the papacy). The portico hood has a medium pitch gable with a crucifix on the peak.

On either side of the portico doors are doors with relatively plain surrounds. All the doors are made of bronze and feature reliefs made by Egididio Giaroli, designer of the doors of the Chapel of the Swiss Guards in Vatican City. The reliefs on the main doors depict important saints of the Old and New Testaments, while the theme of the side doors is of the life of St. Anthony. In one of the reliefs, Giaroli and Father Balducelli, pastor of the church when the doors were made, are represented as a cat and dog chasing each other, in reference to their frequent bickering over the designs of the doors.

## 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 checked="" 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**      1925                      **Builder/Architect**      John Mulrooney

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Ever since its inception, the Church of St. Anthony of Padua, located on the corner of West Ninth and North duPont Streets, was intended to be a focal point for the neighborhood it serves. This church is being nominated under criteria A for having fostered the cultural pride of the Italian community in Wilmington through the programs and festivals it has sponsored. It is being nominated under Criteria C because it is an excellent example of an American interpretation of the Italian Romanesque style and because its interior is decorated with murals, mosaics, shrine sculptures and other works of art by both Italian and Italian-American craftsmen and artists. Its architecture reflects the traditions and culture of the Italians of the community it serves.

The church's Italian identity, however, is not just reflected in the architecture, but also in the activities that take place under its guidance. The first pastor of the church, the Rev. John F. Tucker, was appointed to the parish because he was one of the few pastors in the diocese who spoke Italian fluently. He believed in encouraging Italian cultural pride and continued Italian customs through the church, even at a time when the Italian-American's cultural identity was discouraged in an effort to Americanize the immigrants. Religious processions and feasts, similar to those held in Italy, were held by the churches and children were taught the Italian language.

St. Anthony of Padua, for whom the church was named, was the saint popular with all the common people of Italy. Although a Portuguese national, he lived most of his life in Italy, and was appointed preacher to all of Italy in 1222. For ten years he traveled throughout Italy and France, denouncing the weakness of the secular clergy and the sins of his society: greed, the luxurious living of the wealthy and the oppression by the politicians. He died at Padua in 1231 and was canonized a year later.

To most Wilmington residents, the church is best known for its annual Italian Festival, which was begun on a small scale in the 1920's. It features Italian food and Italian folk dancing, as well as music and carnival rides. The festival is usually held around the Feast of St. Anthony, which is on June 13. The carnival attracted international attention in 1979 when an Italian television network produced a special program on the festival.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Errigo, Joseph, History of St. Anthony's Church, Wilmington: Hambleton Co., 1949.

Roland, Carolyn Z., Guidebook: The First Annual Cityside Church and Synagogue Tour of Wilmington, Delaware, April 26, 1981.

Special thanks to Rev. Roberto Balducelli.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Wilmington North Del. -PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

a - SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

### 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 Alan Hawk

organization

date December 1983

street & number Office of Planning  
800 N. French Street

telephone (302) 571-4130

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

*Daniel R. Griffith*

title

date March 30, 1984

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date

5/3/84

*Alma R. Bynum*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The church has a medium pitch gable roof made of brick-red tile. The eave ends have a bracketed cornice and a stone cross on the peak.

The bell tower, which is 110 feet tall, is located on the west side of the church and is built over the baptistry. The corners of the tower have pilasters with no capitals. The openings to the belfry have double arched lintels, the center skewback being supported by a Corinthian column with capitals similar to those supporting the portico. Gargoyle drainspouts provide drainage for the belfry. Three windows with stone arch lintels are arranged vertically up the center of the north, south and west facades. The tower is capped with a brick-red tile tent roof with a metal cross on the peak.

Interior (refer to floor plan)

Although the exterior of the building is relatively austere, the interior is richly decorated with art, in the form of mosaics, murals and shrine sculptures, done by Italian and Italian-American artists. This artwork, being an integral part of the church, is one of the characteristics of the Italian Romanesque style and it reflects the Italian heritage of the church.

1. Nave and Vestibule

The doors from the vestibule to the nave have stained glass windows depicting scenes in the life of St. Anthony. Just inside the nave is a floor mosaic of the coat of arms of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, the order to which Father Tucker belongs. The nave is divided into three aisles, one down the center and the other two between the colonnade and the shrines.

The side walls of the nave are divided into two sections: the colonnade and the clerestory. The columns of the colonnade are steel posts covered with Scagliola, artificial marble. The columns, which have highly fanciful Romanesque capitals featuring a ram's head on each corner and a peacock in the center, support round arches. The capitals are similar to those on the portico and belfry. Above the arches is the clerestory. Between the stained glass windows are four black pilasters supporting three arches. The ceiling of the nave is a barrel vault with octagonal plaster coffers and rosettes.

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2. Shrine to St. Rocco, St. Anselmo and St. Patrick

The statue of St. Rocco is in the center, with St. Anselmo and St. Patrick on either side. The bases of the statues are mounted on the rear wall of the shrine. The altar, which is supported by four angels representing the four evangelists, is made of yellow sienna marble.

3. Holy Rosary Chapel

The Virgin Mary (Our Lady of the Rosary), holding the infant Jesus, is handing a set of rosary beads to St. Dominic on her right. On her left kneels St. Catherine of Sienna. The alter is made of marble.

4. Chapel of St. Francis de Paul

In the center of the rear wall of the chapel is a statue of St. Francis. Murals painted by Father Balducelli in 1946 depict the life and the miracles performed by the saint. On the left side wall of the chapel, the young St. Francis is shown with his mother visiting Assisi. The scene on the left of the statue shows him restoring life to three dead children. To the right of the statue, he is pictured restoring sight to a blind woman. On the right side wall, he is shown sailing over the Strait of Messina on a cloak he borrowed from a sailor who refused to give him passage on his boat. Because of this miracle, St. Francis is the patron saint of seafaring people.

5. Chapel of the Sacred Heart

Jesus Christ is shown appearing before St. Frances de Sales and St. Margaret Mary. The bronze-gilt crucifix was made by Edigio Giaroli and the altar is made of Carrara marble.

6. Sodality Chapel

This chapel is dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes and the interior is decorated to resemble the grotto of Lourdes. A fountain on the right corner is a reminder of the water of Lourdes. In this scene the Virgin Mary appears before Bernadette of soulr'ious who is kneeling.

7. Baptistry

The baptistry, located at the base of the bell tower, is closed off from the rest of the nave by an iron grille. The baptismal font is located in the center of the room, which contains three statues. On the left in an alcove is a statue of St. Anne holding her infant daughter, Mary, the mother of Jesus. Behind the baptismal font is a statue of the infant Jesus with his arms held open wide to receive small children. To the right of the font is a statue of St. John the Baptist.

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8. Altar of the Virgin Mary

The altar mosaic is a reproduction of the Sistine Madonna of Raphael. The altar, which was made in Italy by Guido Tomagnini, who also made all the other altars in the sanctuary, is supported by a relief of an angel on either side of the tabernacle. The mosaic of a dove on the front of the altar signifies Mary as the queen of peace.

9. Eucharist Tabernacle

The tabernacle contains a modern pulpit with a brass relief. An octagonal-cupola shaped hood of oak is mounted on the wall over the pulpit. The hood is supported by wood pilasters.

10. Boys' Sacristy and Choir Organ Loft

In the stained glass windows of the sacristy are scenes of the Via Crucis, the annual lenten pageant. Parish children who actually appeared in the pageant were used as models. Above the sacristy is the choir organ loft, which has a mural by Father Balducelli of a choir procession on the rear wall. Also in the loft is an antique Tucker theater organ that was originally used in the Queen Theater on the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Wilmington.

The choir loft opens toward the sanctuary. The opening has a triple arch supported by black Corinthian columns, repeating the design of the clerestory. The whole unit is surrounded by a richly-decorated Gothic arch, which also encloses an elaborate cast metal grille over the arches. The stone balcony has paneled walls and is supported by four decorated scroll brackets.

11. Altar

In the center of the altar is a pear wood crucifix from Ortisei, Italy. The backdrop of the altar is a velvet curtain which is changed to a different color for each of the four liturgical seasons of the Christian calendar. The altar surround consists of an ornate pediment supported by two black Corinthian columns with gold capitals.

12. Altar Table

The top slab is made of white and yellow streaked sienna marble supported by a central block of Rosso Posifisico. The altar top is supported by reliefs of the four writers of the Gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

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13. Sanctuary Arch Mosaic

The vault over the sanctuary has a three million piece mosaic designed by Duilio Cambellotti, a Roman artist and assembled by the director of the Mosaic Studio in Vatican City, Lorenzo Cassio. It depicts the Virgin Mary presenting the Infant Jesus to St. Anthony. Overhead, the heavenly host rejoices and the Holy Spirit (a dove) descends on Mary, Jesus and St. Anthony. On one side of that scene are saints related to the United States - St. Francis de Sales, the patron saint of the diocese of Wilmington, and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini of Chicago, who had been canonized in the 1940's. On the other side are two saints of Italy - St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena.

14. Priests' Sacristy

Stained glass windows depict the parts of the Mass. The loft overhead is similar to the choir organ loft across from it. (number 8)

15. Shrine to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal

A statue of the Virgin Mary with her arms outstretched is mounted on the wall. She has a halo of electric lights around her head. The surround is the same as the Eucharist Tabernacle (number 9).

16. Altar of St. Joseph

The altar mosaic reflects Joseph embracing the infant Jesus. Again, the marble altar is supported by angels and there is a mosaic of carpenter tools on the front of the altar to signify Joseph as the patron saint of labor.

17. Chapel of the Resurrection and Souls in Purgatory

A statue of the resurrected Jesus holding a Christian banner in his left hand stands over a marble altar. On the base of the altar is a painted relief showing the souls of sinners being consumed by the fires of Hell. The statue replaced the crucifix on the main altar (number 11) during the Easter season.

18. Shrine of St. Gabriel and St. Francis Xavier Gabrini

Statues of the two saints are mounted on the wall. The altar is made of Rosso Alpino and sienna yellow marble and was imported from Italy. The angels are carved from Batticino marble.

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19. Shrine of the Little Flower

Statue portrays St. Therese in heaven receiving roses from the Virgin Mary and sending them down to earth, fulfilling a promise she made before her death. Mary is holding the infant Jesus. Behind her is a cross, a symbol of the resurrection, with a cloth, which has the face of the crucified Jesus on it, draped over the arm. Three angels are on the left side of the cross.

20. Shrine of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

A statue of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus is over an altar made of bollocini marble.

21. Chapel of St. Anthony

The Chapel of St. Anthony was the first shrine to be installed in the newly completed church. The statue was moved into the chapel just after the church opened. Just above the altar is a statue of St. Anthony holding the infant Jesus. On the base of the altar is a statue of the corpse of St. Anthony lying in repose.

22. Shrine to St. Michael, Our Lady of Misericordia and St. Lucy

A statue of Our Lady of Misericordia is on the left; the statue of St. Lucy, the oldest statue in the shrine, is in the center and St. Michael is on the right.

Not only does St. Anthony's Church contribute to the broad patterns of local history, it has great artistic merit as well. Architecturally, it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Italian Romanesque style as well as being a distinctive addition to the Wilmington skyline.

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The church has enjoyed strong community support ever since it was first suggested. Father Tucker's first instructions as pastor to the Italian community were to raise funds and build a church as soon as possible. Most of the Italians in the neighborhood welcomed the proposed church and contributed generously to it. Fifty thousand dollars was raised in the first week for the church. A temporary chapel was built where the rectory is now located. This chapel was demolished in 1945.

Construction of the new church began with the laying of the cornerstone on June 14, 1925. The design was developed by John Mulrooney of Wilmington, a partner in the Philadelphia architectural firm of Gleeson, Mulrooney and Burke.

The church was built by laborers and craftsmen from the community it served, as were the great Gothic cathedrals built during the Middle Ages. This similarity was intentional and is seen in other aspects of the construction of the church. Father Tucker wanted each generation to make an improvement or addition to the church and thus share in its construction.

The general contractor, Ernest DiSabatino, was very active in the church and was awarded the Papal Cross 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontice' by Pope Pius XI in 1930 in recognition of his work for the welfare of the community and for the church. Other local businesses contributed to the building of the church: Alexander Petrillo & Co. did the excavation and stone work; F. Giovannizzi & Sons did the exterior limestone trim and interior marble work; Pasquale Mongillo built the first main altar; Artificial Stone Co. (owned by Arthur Pavoni) provided the tile and cast stone trim; and Agostino Fortunato Co. did the carpentry work.

The first mass in the new church was held on Palm Sunday, but was not formally dedicated until June 13, 1925, the Feast Day of St. Anthony. However, the church was far from complete. By 1930, the steel columns on either side of the nave were transformed into scagliola (artificial marble) columns. The bell tower was completed in 1938. The stained glass windows were installed between 1940 and 1943. In 1944, a new pulpit, sanctuary furniture, and altar steps were installed.

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In 1946, Father Roberto Balducelli, St. Anthony's first Italian priest, painted murals in the choir organ loft to the left of the altar depicting a choir procession, and in the chapel of St. Francis de Paul depicting the saint's arrival in Assisi and three miracles he performed. Father Balducelli used parish children as models for the murals.

The ceiling of the nave became a barrel vault with plaster coffers and rosettes in 1948. A three million piece mosaic depicting the Virgin Mary presenting the Infant Jesus to St. Anthony was commissioned by the church in the late 1940's to cover the sanctuary arch. It was designed by Duilio Cambellotti, who worked on the doors of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, and made by the director of the Mosaic Studio in Vatican City, Lorenzo Cassio. It was imported in sections from Italy and installed by Father Balducelli and two assistants.

The sanctuary was changed in 1962 to bring it in line with the liturgical changes made by Vatican II. The pulpit was replaced by a new lower one and the altar was moved forward so that the priest could say mass facing the congregation.

In 1973, Egidio Giaroli, the Italian sculptor who designed the doors of the Chapel of the Swiss Guards in Vatican City, designed the doors depicting the beatitudes and the glorification of Christians in heaven.

St. Anthony's Church remains the hub of the Italian community of Wilmington and has kept its Italian character along with the community it serves. In the 1920's, it was a monument to the growing influence of the Italian community and is today a unifying force for the community.

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Boundary Description

BEGINNING at the intersection of the westerly side of duPont Street with the northerly side of Ninth Street; thence westerly along said side of Ninth Street to its intersection with a line being 135 feet east of and parallel to the easterly side of Scott Street; thence northwardly along said line to its intersection with a line being 110 feet north of and parallel to the northerly side of Ninth Street; thence westwardly along said line to its intersection with a line being 70 feet south of and parallel to the southerly side of Tenth Street; thence eastwardly along said line to its intersection with a line being 100 feet west of and parallel to the westerly side of duPont Street; thence southwardly along said line to its intersection with a line being 170 feet north of and parallel to the northerly side of Ninth Street; thence eastwardly along said side of duPont Street to its intersection with the northerly side of Ninth Street; said point of BEGINNING.

This boundary provides for a small area around the church. However it is designed to exclude the post-1950 buildings that have been built on the same block as the church.

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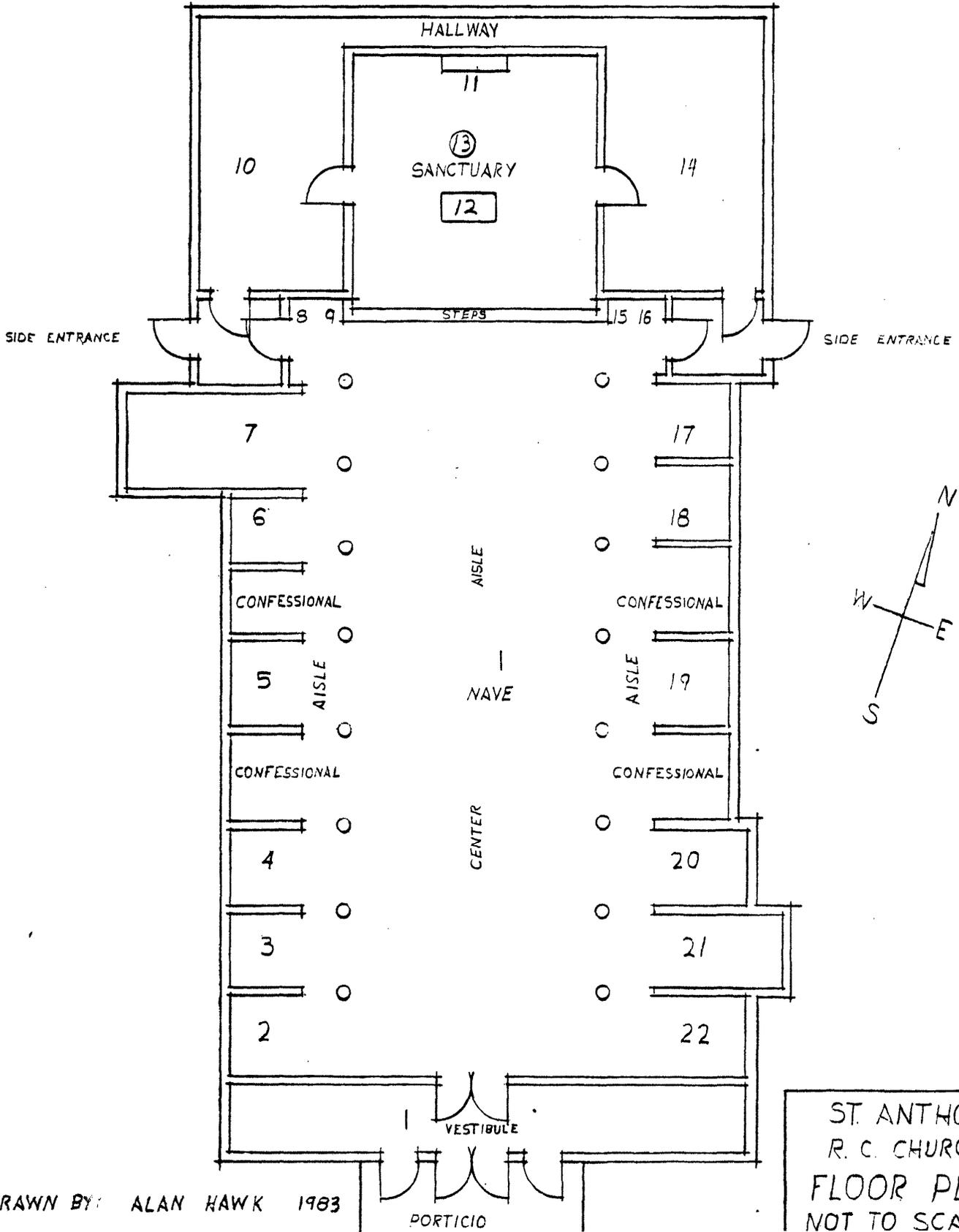
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received \_\_\_\_\_  
date entered \_\_\_\_\_

Continuation sheet

Item number \_\_\_\_\_

Page \_\_\_\_\_

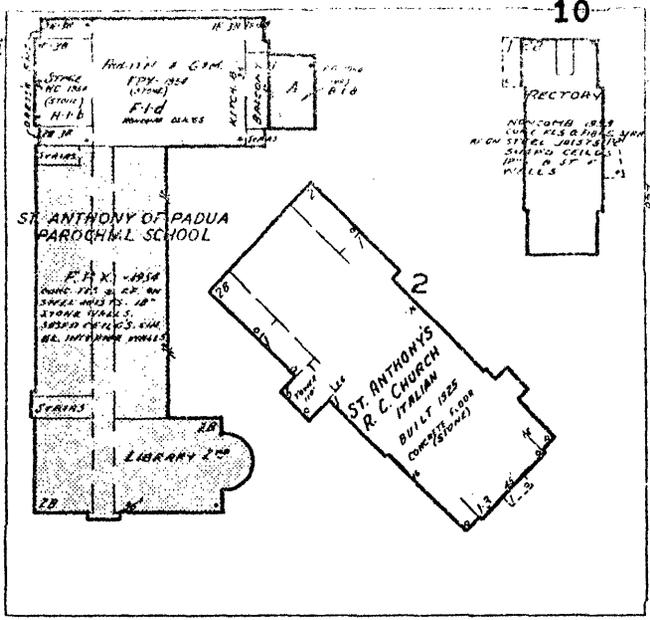
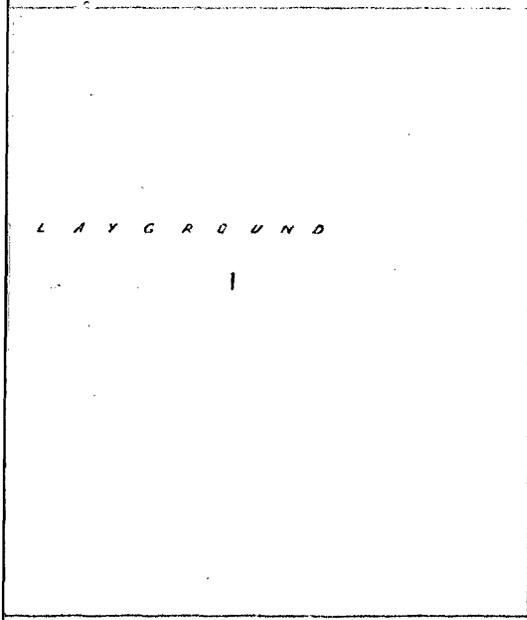


DRAWN BY: ALAN HAWK 1983

ST. ANTHONY'S  
R. C. CHURCH  
FLOOR PLAN  
NOT TO SCALE

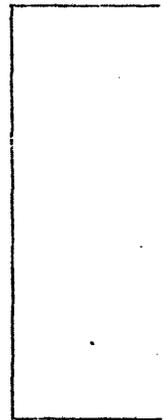
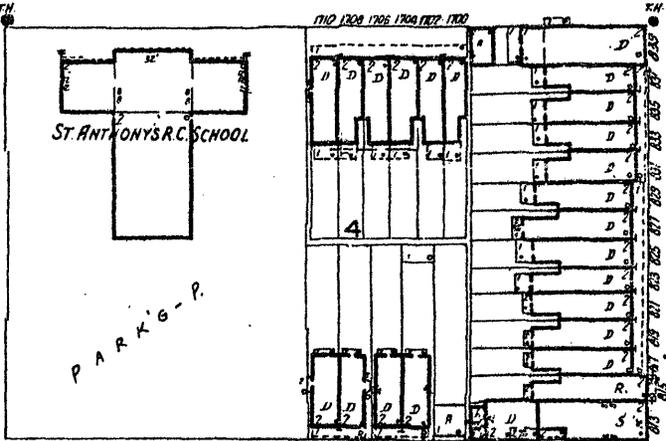
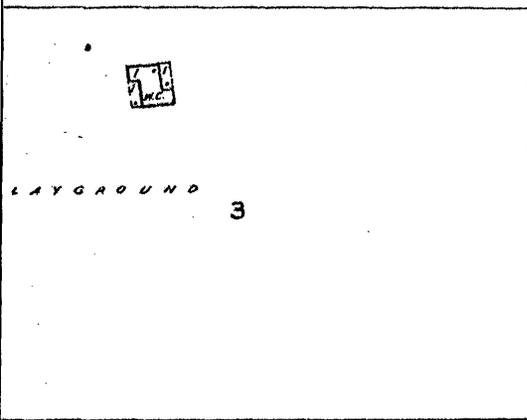
W. 10TH ST. 43

W. 10TH ST. 10



W. 9TH ST. 43

W. 9TH ST. 10

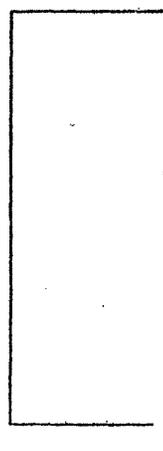
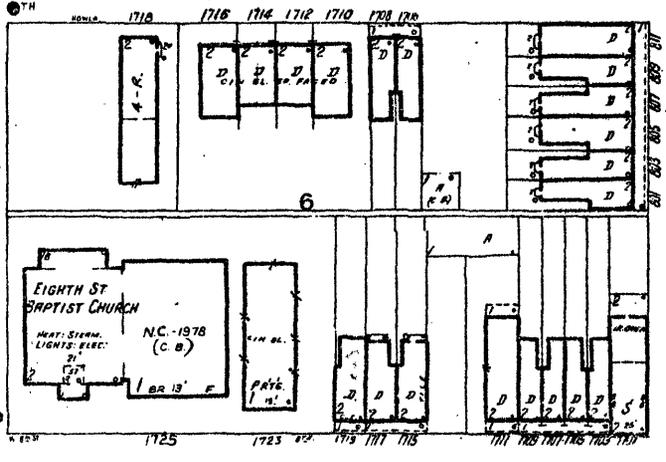
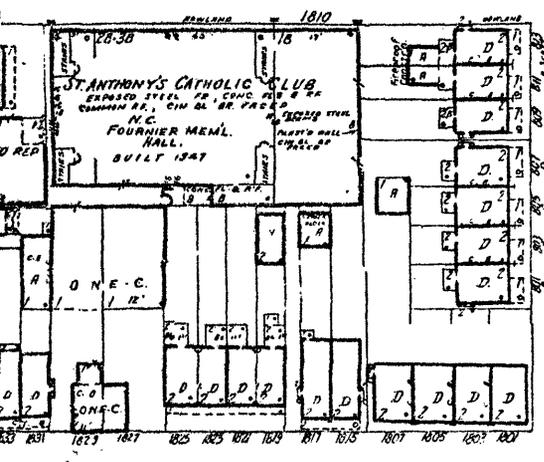


N. SCOTT

N. DUPONT

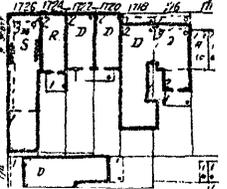
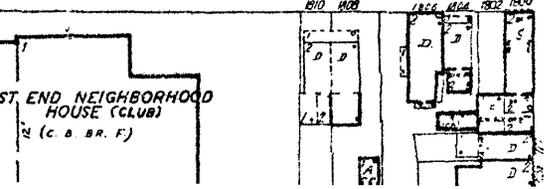
HOWLAND

50



W. 8TH ST. 43

W. 8TH ST. 10

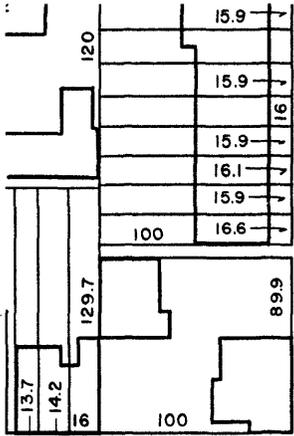


ST ANTHONY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH  
SANBORN MAP 1979, map 49

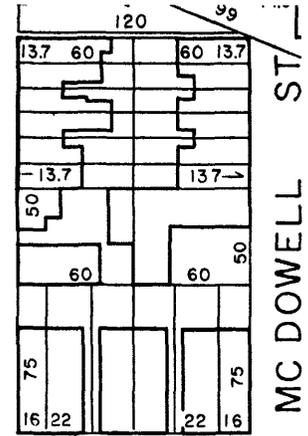
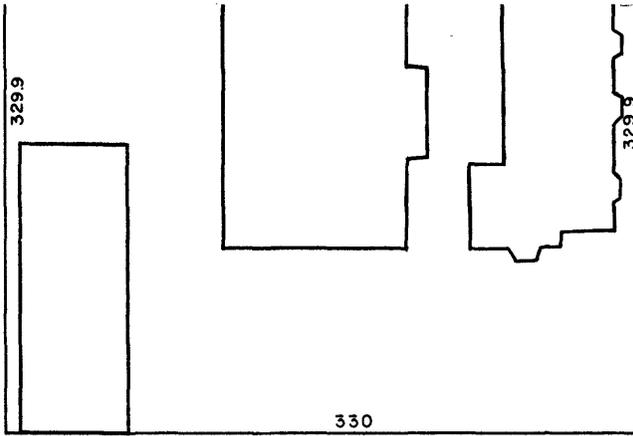
SCALE OF FEET  
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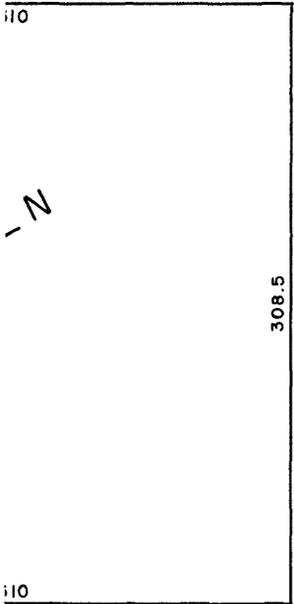
## 9TH AND DUPONT STREETS



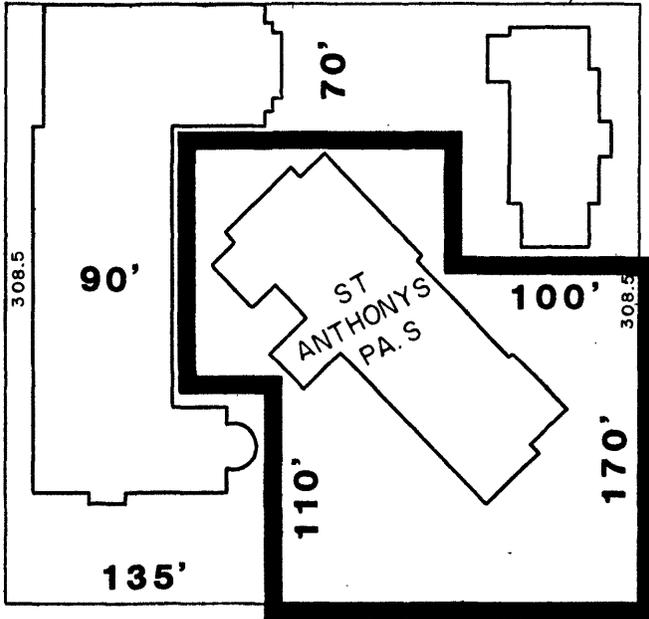
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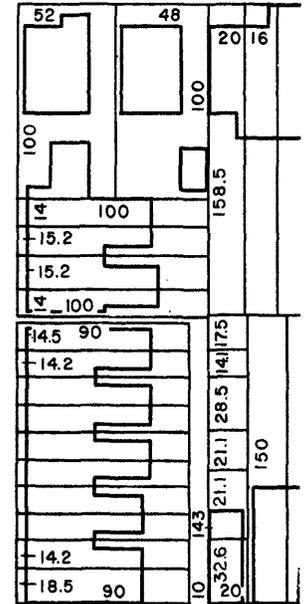
### 10TH ST



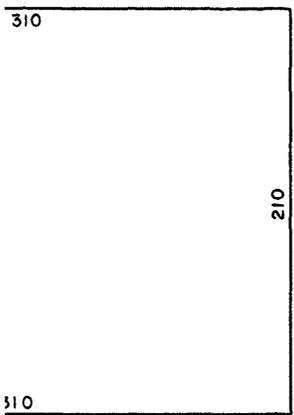
SCOTT ST



DUPONT ST



### 9TH ST



C

