

## DELAWARE CHURCH ARCHIVES

Linden St. opposite the present site. They remained in charge until 1896 when a peculiar priest, Rev. John S. Gulez, the present pastor, was secured for the parish. Incorporated under the present name January 8, 1898 and in the same year the deed to the property was transferred to them. Present building opened and dedicated 1904. A two story brick structure. English Gothic style. The three steepled towers contain four bells. This is the only church in Wilmington with a groined ceiling. The church organ was presented to the church by Andrew Carnegie, this being the only Catholic church in the city to receive such a gift. Congregation is largely Polish. First settled clergyman, Rev. Leo Szozeponski, 19=890-94; educated at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore and Irving University, Rome, Italy. See: Anthony Liebert, an historical sketch (1904); Rev. John S. Gulez, History of St. Bedwig's Church (New York, E. Brickman and Sons, 1904).

Minutes, 1904-- , 1 vol.; Register, 1889-- , (baptisms) 5 vols.; (confirmations), 1 vol.; (marriages), 2 vols.; (members), 2 vols.; (deaths), 1 vol.; Communion Record, 1905-- , 1 vol.; Financial, 1887-- , 2 vols.; at rectory, 408 S. Harrison St. Sunday School, 1897-- , 2 vols.; in possession of Sisters of the Felician Order, Linden and Harrison Sts. Records of incorporation and deeds: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Deeds Record; vol.D15, p.293; vol.D15, p.561; vol.N17, p.397; vol.P17, pp.108 and 111; vol.X20, p.138; vol.K21, p.48; vol.G23, p.231; vol.B27, p.126; vol.H27, p.492; v ol.I37, p.386; vol.X39, p.233.

99. ST. HEDWIG'S PAROCHIAL SCHOOL, 1897-- , Linden and Harrison Sts., Wilmington.

Organized 1897, in charge of Sisters of the Felician Order. Classes were conducted on the first floor of the original church until 1904 when the present church was erected. The entire building at the old church was then used for classrooms. Part of this old building at the old original church until 1904 when the present church was erected. The entire building at the old church was then used for classrooms. Part of this old building is still in use for school purpose. Present building dedicated 1924. A two story brick structure.

General registration, 1911-- , 3 vols.; Attendance record, 1926-- , 189 small vols. (separate vol. yearly for each class); in school office in charge of Sister Superior.

100-102 ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH, Wilmington, 1889--.

100. ST. JOSEPH (Colored), 1889-- , 1012 French St., Wilmington.

Organized 1889. Until the opening and dedication of the church in 1890, services were held in the basement of St. Mary's Church (entry 82). The church is a one story brick structure of Gothic style. Additions were made in 1895 and 1934. St. Joseph's Orphanage was part of whis organization from 1890-1928, when it was discontinued and a parochial school for colored children, was

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established. St. Joseph's League and Archconfraternity was established in March 1895. Its membership, comprising both white and colored, contributed to the support of this institution and now assist in the Mission work for the colored. First settled clergyman, Rev. John A. DeRuyter, S.S.J., 1889-96; educated at St. Joseph's Seminary at Millhill, England.

Minutes, 1890--, 2 vols.; Register (including baptisms, confirmations, deaths at orphanage), 1890--, (baptisms, including record of converts), 1 vol.; (deaths), 1 vol.; Parish Census, 1890--, 1 card file; Book of Announcements (incomplete), 1890--, 1 vol.; Burial Permits, 1890--, yearly form; Financial, 1890--, 2 vols.; Sunday School, 1933--, 1 vol.; Immaculate Conception Sedality, 1905--, 2 vols.; at rectory, 1012 French St. Record of incorporation: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Certificate of Incorporation, vol.F3, p.133.

101. ST. JOSEPH'S PAROCHIAL SCHOOL (Colored), 1890--, 11th and French Sts., Wilmington.

Organized 1890 in charge of Sisters of St. Francis. Until 1928, classes were conducted under the Sacristy of the Church. In that year St. Joseph's Home for colored boys was closed and the building remodeled for a school house. Some of the boys from the home were transferred to St. Joseph's Industrial School (entry 104), Clayton. Present building dedicated 1928. A three story brick structure.

Attendance record, 1910-18, 1925-28 (1919-24 no entries), 1 vol.; 1928--, 1 card file. Vol. in rectory. File in school office in charge of Sister Superior.

102. BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH (Colored), 1936--, 712 Scott St. Wilmington.

Organized as a mission of St. Joseph's Church. Building opened and dedicated in 1936. It is a one story stuccoed building. The church is served by priests from St. Joseph's Church.

Minutes, 1936--, 1 vol.; Register, 1936--, 1 vol.; Financial, 1936--, 1 vol.; at rectory of St. Joseph's Church, 1012 French St.

103. URSULINE ACADEMY, 1893--, 1106 Pennsylvania Ave., Wilmington.

Founded 1893 by Sisters of the Ursuline Order as a boarding and day school for girls. Incorporated 1895. The curriculum comprises kindergarten, elementary, and secondary courses. The school first occupied the building at Delaware Ave. and Harrison St. previously occupied by the Visitation Academy (entry 88). In 1924 the present building for nuns and resident students was dedicated and in 1926 the present school and auditorium were dedicated. The buildings in Kent architecture are brick structures. The convent and residence hall are in a building of three stories and the school and auditorium in a two story structure. A private chapel is maintained for the sisters and students. The Chaplain is

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DELAWARE CHURCH ARCHIVES

Rev. John J. Sheehy.

Minutes, 1893--; Register (confirmations, members, deaths),

1893--, Financial, 1893--, in charge of Mother Superior. Information as to number of vols. or records refused. Records of incorporation and deeds: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Private Acts Record; vol.E1, p.571; Certificate of Incorporation; vol.R19, p.118; Deeds Record; vol.R22, p.415; vol.U32, p.561.

104-105. ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH, Clayton, 1895--.

104. ST. JOSEPH'S INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL (Colored), 1895--, on Highway 6, Clayton.

Organized 1895 through the efforts of the Rev. John A. DeRuyter, S.S.J., a member of the Josephite Fathers and pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Wilmington (entry 100). It is an Industrial School for colored boys and is incorporated under the title of St. Joseph's Society for Colored Missions of Delaware. A band is conducted by the school and many of the boys are taught to play musical instruments. In addition to the grade school maintained for the boys, they have an opportunity to learn various trades such as painters, printers, carpenters, bakers, cooks, and cobblers. The priests are assisted in conducting the school by the Sisters of St. Francis. The school is situated on a large plot of ground, part of which is used for farming. Abandoned colored boys in New Castle County are committed to the care of the society (Del. Laws, vol.19, Cap.638). See: St. Anthony's Monthly (Clayton, privately printed, 1898--), complete file with few exceptions at rectory; "Silver Jubilee", historical sketch of school and chapel in St. Anthony's Monthly (May, 1920).

Register (baptisms), 1895--, 2 vols.; (confirmations), 1895--, 2 vols.; (marriages), 1895--, 2 vols.; (members), 1895--, yearly reports; (deaths), 1895--, 2 vols.; Financial, 1895--, 12 vols.; Sunday School, informal records kept by individual teachers; in rectory safe (including records of chapel). Records of incorporation and deeds: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Deeds Record; vol.G19, pp.525, 530, and 537; vol.U21, p.277; Kent Co. Recorder's office, Deeds Record; vol.M12, p.495.

105. ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL, 1895--, on Highway 6, Clayton.

Organized 1895 in conjunction with St. Joseph's Industrial School. First services were held in one of the schoolrooms until 1896 when the present chapel was dedicated. In addition to the services conducted for the boys of the school, the church also serves as a place of worship for the white Catholics living in this vicinity. A Sunday school is also conducted for white children. The founder and first pastor, Rev. John A. DeRuyter, S.S.J., 1895-95, died before the chapel was erected; educated at St. Joseph's Seminary at Millhill, England.

Records of chapel are included with those of the school.

# Profiles of Black Leaders in Delaware

## 1993 HONOREES



*"WITH CHANGE COMES OPPORTUNITY & SUCCESS"*



**PAAC**

**Preservation of Afro-American Culture, Inc.**  
Volume I • February 1993

**\$5.00**

He is the Host and Producer of the Community Live Weekly TV show, which appears on TCI Cable on Sundays at 3:00pm throughout New Castle County. He has been honored by the Wilmington Branch N.A.A.C.P., the Southbridge Tenant Council, the Walnut Street YMCA, and other community organizations.

He is the Dinner Chairman of the Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Dinner, held in Wilmington at the Longshoreman's Hall.

He remains a member of the Wilmington Branch of the N.A.A.C.P., Advisor to the Wilmington Housing Authority's Tenant Council, Member of the Addiction Coalition of Delaware, and is chairman of the Church and Society Committee of the Mt. Joy United Church where he is a member. He is also a former community representative to the Heald Street Program.

He is divorced with four children and resides in Wilmington, Delaware.

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#### HERMAN M. HOLLOWAY, SR.



Herman M. Holloway, Sr., of Wilmington, Delaware, began a new phase in the political history of the First State when on November 3, 1964, he became the first Afro-American ever to be elected to the Delaware State Senate. Representing the Second Senatorial District in the City of Wilmington, Holloway is the present holder of the highest elective office attained by a member of his race in Delaware. He was born in Wilmington, Delaware, February 4, 1922, and active at the district level for twenty years. His prior legislative experience consisted of one year in the Delaware State House of Representatives. He was elected on November 23, 1963, to serve out the unexpired term of the late State Representative Paul F. Livingston.

In 1988, Senator Holloway became the most tenured legislator in the present Delaware General Assembly. He has 25 years continuous service, more than any minority legislator elected at the state or congressional levels of government through-out the nation. Senator Holloway, for twenty consecutive years, has served as a member of the Joint Finance Committee and 16 years as chairperson on the Senate Committee on Health and Social Services and Aging. He presently serves as a member of the Senate Committees on Labor, Revenue and Taxation and the Committee on Corrections. He is a member of Delaware's Interstate Cooperative

Commission and a member of the Human Resource Task Force, Eastern Region of the National Legislator Conference. Senator Holloway has been the recipient of numerous commendations and awards from various professional, civic and social groups including fraternities, business and industry, labor, religious and educational organizations.

Identified by the local press in 1974 as having sponsored and passed more socially progressive legislation than any legislator in Delaware history, such as Delaware's Public Accommodations law, Open Housing Legislation, mandating education and training for all handicapped children within the state's public education system, Adult Protective Services and various programs and benefits for the States' Aging population, effective Child Support Collection legislation, Child Protective laws, Consumer Protection Legislation and numerous enactments to provide opportunity and benefits for women, and disadvantaged and the poor.

His legislative interest and participation remove him from and above the narrow confines of special interest or group problems. He says, "...this is as it should be. As a State Senator, regardless of my elective district, I am a representative of all the people, special considerations and interest notwithstanding".

Educated in both the parochial and public schools of Wilmington, Senator Holloway graduated from Howard High School and later attended Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia. In June of 1969, he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Law degree by Delaware State College. In 1972 he was awarded an Honorary Associate's degree of Applied Science by the Georgetown Branch of Delaware Technical and Community College.

Churchman and fraternalist, he is a member of My Joy United Methodist Church; a Past Worshipful Master of Union Lodge #21, Prince Hall Masonic Order. He has served as a member of the Board of Managers of the Walnut Street Y.M.C.A., and the Monday Club, Inc. He is the founder and President of the Citizens Political Issues League.

Married to the former Miss Ethel Johnson of Wilmington, Senator Holloway is the father of three daughters and two sons.

During his tenure to date in the Delaware General Assembly, this Delawarean has created an impressive new image of the Afro-American in relation to his aspirations for citizenship, opportunity and participation in the mainstream of community life. Senator Holloway has influenced many young aspirants of his race to pursue the field of public service.

V-19, 12, 1889

SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

Zebbley's

St. Joseph's Colored Mission was started on Oct. 10, 1889, by the Reverend John A. de Ruyter, S.S.J. This mission was held in the basement of St. Mary's Church. St. Joseph's Society for Colored Missions was incorporated on Tuesday, March 4, 1890. On May 12, 1890, five candidates were confirmed in St. Mary's Church. A plot of land was purchased on French St. near 11th St., on June 10 and on July 3, 1890. The corner-stone of the school building was laid on July 6, 1890. The ceremony was preceded by a large parade starting at 4:00 p.m. In the line were delegations from New Castle, Chester, Baltimore and Washington. The sermon was preached by the Very Rev. Father Leeson, Provincial of the Josephites. The stone was blessed by Bishop Alfred A. Curtis. The stone was a gift of J.L. Malone, a local stone-cutter.

On Sunday morning, Oct. 5, 1890, the building was blessed by the Most Rev. Alfred A. Curtis, Bishop of Wilmington. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Walter Elliott, a Paulist Father from New York. At the 4 o'clock service the sermon was preached by the Rev. John Slattery. One section of the building was adapted to be used as a temporary church. In 1891, two more buildings were built and these served as a school and a home for the sisters.

In August, 1892, Father de Ruyter opened an orphanage for colored boys, the first Catholic home of this type on the Atlantic seaboard. Additional land was purchased on Oct. 4, 1892.

The corner-stone of the orphanage was laid on May 28, 1893, by Bishop Alfred A. Curtis. He was assisted by Vicar-General J.B. Slattery of Boston and Father de Ruyter. Addresses were delivered by Judge J. Frank Ball and former Mayor Austin Harrington.

St. Joseph's Industrial School for Colored Boys at Clayton was established by Father de Ruyter, in 1895, and at the age of 14 years the boys were transferred there. In 1893, a free dispensary was established on the corner of 11th and Walnut Streets. It was closed in 1896. Father de Ruyter died on Wednesday, Aug. 23, 1896, before the school at Clayton was completed. At his request, he was buried in Clayton, first beneath St. Joseph's Chapel and later in a private graveyard on the school grounds.

The home in Wilmington was closed on April 1, 1928, and all of the work was transferred to Clayton. The parochial school was established in September, 1928, with an enrollment of 60 boys and girls. On July 6, 1933, an assistant priest was added to the parish.

The church was enlarged, altered and renovated in 1934. The corner-stone was blessed and laid by the Rev. James F. Didas, S.S.J., assistant to Father Conrad F. Rebeshier, S.S.J., on April 10, 1934.

The church was dedicated on Sunday, Sept. 30, 1934, by the

Most Rev. Edmond J. FitzMaurice, Bishop of Wilmington. The Very Rev. John J. Sheehy acted as master of ceremonies. Solemn High Mass was celebrated by the Very Rev. Louis B. Pastorelli, S.S.J., and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. John Gillard, S.S.J. Bishop FitzMaurice, who had recently visited Rome, conferred the Papal Blessing upon those in attendance.

St. Joseph's Church was seriously damaged by fire on Sunday, Dec. 30, 1945. The cause of the fire was not determined. The pastor, the Rev. Michael J. O'Neal immediately had preliminary plans drawn for an entire new layout including a church, a school and a rectory. In the meantime a temporary chapel was constructed in the parochial school and was first used on Sunday, Jan. 13, 1946. Later in the year the damaged building was torn down.



DELAWARE CHURCH ARCHIVES

of incorporation and deeds: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Deeds Record; vol.C17, p.18; vol.N39, p.400.

81. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH , 1852-- , Henry and Washington Sts. , Delaware City.

Organized 1852. Worshipped in one story brick structure on Williams St. , 1852-1904. Present building dedicated 1904. It is a one story brick structure with belfry and bell. English Gothic style. First settled clergyman, Rev. John E. Dolan, 1927--.

Minutes, 1927-- , 1 vol.; Register (baptisms, including record of converts), 1855-- , 3 vols.; (confirmations, including record of first communions), 1889-- , 1 vol.; (marriages), 1855-- , 3 vols.; Financial, 1904-- , 1 vol.; at rectory, Washington St. Records of incorporation and deeds: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Deeds Record; vol.X6, p.174; vol.X12, p.347; vol.Z17, p.528; vol.G19, p.337; vol.C29, p.393; vol.N38, p.506.

82-82. ST. MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH, Wilmington, 1887--.

82. ST. MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH, 1857-- , 6th and Pine Sts. , Wilmington.

Organized and building dedicated in 1857, Incorporated in 1877 as St. Mary's Church. It is a two story brick building of German Gothic style. The tower contains the largest bell in Wilmington. Incorporated under present name in 1894. First settled clergyman, Rev, Patrick Reilly, 1858-85; educated at Mount St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Md.

Minutes, 1858-- , 4 vols.; Register (baptisms including record of converts), 1857-- , 6 vols.; (confirmations), 1857-- , 3 vols.; (marriages), 1857-- , 4 vols.; (deaths), 1857-- , 4 vols.; (first communions), 1857-- , 4 vols.; Parish Census, 1933-- , card index; Burial Permits, 1857-- , 3 vols.; Financial, 1857-- , 3 vols.;

After the flood of 1838, 130 acres on both sides of Brandywine was sold to Mr. James Riddle. He conducted cotton mills here from 1845 and called them the "Kentmere" mills. He was a firm believer in religion for every man according to his preference. A great many of his mill hands were of the Catholic faith and there was no church near at hand for them. Mr. Riddle suggested to Mr. James Bradford, the wife of the founder of the James Bradford Paint Co. , that a small chapel he built in the neighborhood. Enlisting the help of Mr. William Brown, carriage builder & Mr. Edward Mahoney, of the Harlan and Hollingsworth Co. a small frame church known as St. James was built in 1869 at Lovering Ave. and duPont St. a site now on the right of way of the B&O Railroad. It was abandoned as a church in 1887 when St. Ann's Church at Gilpin Ave. and Union St. was built. Holy Name Society, 1890-- , 2 vols.; at rectory 602 E. 6th St. Records prior to 1885 in German. Records of incorporation and deeds: New Castle Co. Recorder's office Deeds Records; vol.

IMAGES  
*of America*

THE DIOCESE OF  
WILMINGTON

Jim Parks



## Two GROWING YEARS



A friendly but firm Bishop FitzMaurice makes sure the children know the answers to catechism questions before conferring Confirmation on the class. The quiz used to be an integral part of the sacramental preparation and this scene—in St. Joseph Church in downtown Wilmington in the mid-1950s—was repeated many times during Bishop FitzMaurice's long episcopate. (Fred Weicht photo courtesy of the Josephite Fathers archives.)



Boxing was a popular sport in the early days of the Catholic Youth Organization. The diocesan organization was modeled on one established in the Archdiocese of Chicago during the Great Depression. The idea was that young people's spiritual welfare would be served by providing them with recreational activity—primarily athletic in the beginning—in a wholesome environment. (Sanborn Studio photo courtesy of the Office for Catholic Youth Ministry.)



This team represented St. Joseph Parish, Wilmington, during the 1937–1938 basketball season. Father John J. Sheehy, its founder, insisted from the beginning that all C.Y.O. sports leagues be open to participation by the predominantly African-American parish at a time when most activities in the area were racially segregated. The coach is Josephite Father James Didas, whose order founded St. Joseph's as a "mission to colored people" in 1889 and served there for nearly a century. (Courtesy of the Josephite Fathers archives.)




Wilmington firefighters battle a blaze in the steeple of historic St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception on the city's east side in the late 1960s. Although extensively damaged, the structure was saved. St. Mary's was consecrated in 1858 by St. John Neumann, then bishop of Philadelphia. In addition to having that distinction, the parish is believed to be the only one that boasts two parishioners who earned the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest decoration for valor. They were James P. Connor in World War II and Bernard McCarren in the Civil War. (Photo by Action.)



The Diocesan Gospel Choir sings at a liturgy at St. Joseph Church in downtown Wilmington in 1991. (Photo from *The Dialog*.)



The building committee at Corpus Christi Parish assemble at the site on New Road in Elsmere where the present church is located. Father Thomas F. Gardocki, pastor, is standing at the left of the sign. The parish was founded in 1948 to serve a rapidly growing population at the start of the "Baby Boom." For a time, it conducted a high school as well as a parochial elementary school. (Photo from *The Dialog*.)



Forging Faith, Building Freedom:  
African American Faith Experiences  
in Delaware, 1800-1980

A book to accompany  
an exhibition at the Delaware History Museum,  
September 26, 2013 - June 14, 2014

Constance J. Cooper    Lewis V. Baldwin

Published by the Delaware Heritage Press  
for the Delaware Historical Society  
2015



DELAWARE PUBLIC ARCHIVES

The strong black Methodist presence and influence in Delaware were sustained through a range of denominations, among which were the AMEs, the AMEZs, the UAMEs, the Colored Methodist Protestants, and even a few congregations that were not affiliated with a denomination. In 1866, a union between the African Union Church and the First Colored Methodist Protestant Church was consummated in Wilmington, and the resulting body assumed the title African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church of the United States of America and Elsewhere (AUF CMP), ordinarily called the African Union Methodist Protestant Church (AUMP).<sup>54</sup> This body remained essentially in the Methodist tradition, with articles of religion, general rules, and discipline, but its spiritual heads were called presidents instead of bishops. In a general sense, the AUMP and UAME churches were living proof that the Peter Spencer tradition was still very much alive throughout Delaware, and these institutions, in conjunction with the growing numerical strength and the rising popularity, influence, and visibility of other African Methodist groups in the state, virtually assured the continuing vitality of black religious life.



Clarence Street Church of God, Seaford  
Ca. late 1930s-early 1940s  
Zebley Collection, Delaware Historical Society

Although Methodism would continue to be the face of black church culture in Delaware for the next generation or so, the stage was set for the rise of other black denominations. Shiloh Baptist Church, the first of this denomination among blacks in Delaware, was organized in Wilmington in 1876. St. Joseph Church in Wilmington became the first black Catholic congregation in 1890. These churches were representative of the new trends toward denominational diversity that would extend into the next century and beyond.<sup>55</sup>

Delaware's black churches continued to function as comprehensive communities. A mere glance at the periodicals, conference minutes, and books of doctrine and discipline of African Methodist churches reveal that their concerns extended far beyond establishing missions and converting the unsaved at home and in Africa. These churches set the standard for healthy social life by promoting temperance, denouncing sexual promiscuity, and encouraging monogamous and stable families. On the economic front, as had been the case in antebellum times, they encouraged their constituents to be industrious, to avoid lotteries, to be prompt in paying debts, to deal fairly with one another, to be thrifty, to support one another in business ventures, and to pool their meager resources to buy land, homes, churches, and businesses.<sup>56</sup> These churches also trained their people, who were excluded from most areas of American political life, in the wise use of the ballot and became proving grounds for political leadership. Although they were not known for strong vocal responses to white violence against blacks, as in the case of the lynching in the Smyrna area in 1867, they were nonetheless a refuge for blacks who needed to release pent-up emotions and frustrations, and who, in the midst of their labors and sufferings, needed to be refreshed psychologically and physically.

Much of the time, energies, and resources of the churches were devoted to education, especially since the law establishing public education for blacks, passed by Delaware's legislators in 1875, resulted in segregated schools. Although Reconstruction occurred in Delaware largely through Freedmen's Bureau schools, Quaker philanthropy, and organizations such as the racially mixed Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People in Wilmington, which opened schools throughout the state where black children learned the basics of reading and writing, black churches also made significant contributions.<sup>57</sup> Churches of all denominations operated Sunday schools, where the emphasis, as always, was placed on basic education, religious teachings, and moral training. AME churches, locally and through their annual and general conferences, supported elementary, secondary, and collegiate education in Delaware and other states. In the AUMP denomination, the emphasis was placed largely on education for ministers, who were responsible for providing leadership for the race. In 1894,



an educational bureau consisting of five elders and laymen was created in each of its annual conferences to aid young men who desired seminary education in planning their course of study. The UAME Church urged congregations in its connection “to use their influence in encouraging education,” and day schools were supported, ministerial training required, and committees on education formed to monitor the educational progress of youth and adults.<sup>58</sup> Black Catholics were instrumental in the establishment of schools in Clayton and Wilmington in the 1890s, where students were trained in fields such as printing, painting, farming, and carpentry.<sup>59</sup> The feeling among black church leaders was that increased education would translate into more and better job possibilities for black Delawareans. Although the Delaware General Assembly had established state-funded schools for blacks in 1875, the conviction that black churches had the primary responsibility to educate their own race never really subsided.<sup>60</sup>

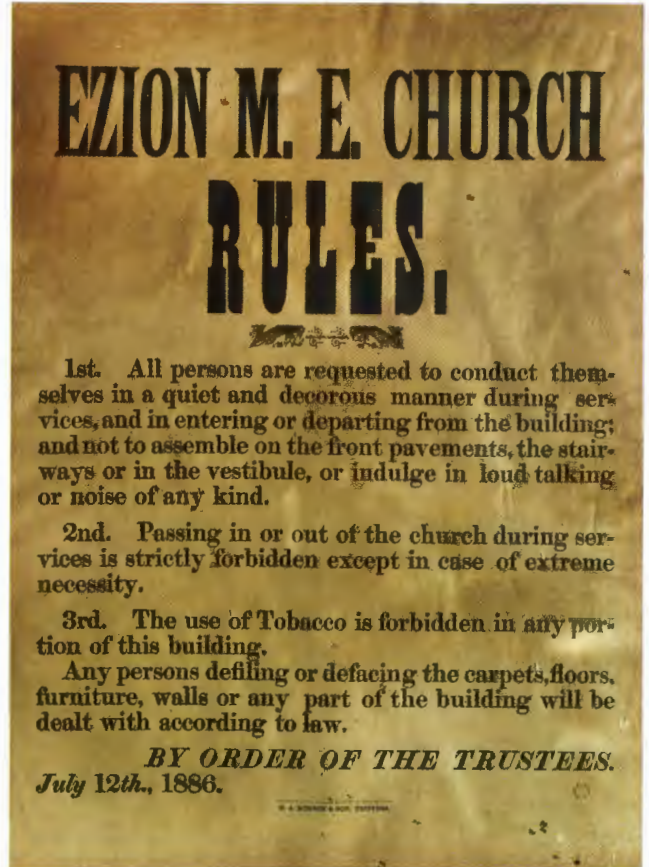


Whatcoat Methodist Church, Dover  
 Ca. late 1930s-early 1940s  
 Zebley Collection, Delaware Historical Society

The one most significant and enduring feature of black church and religious life in Delaware in the period from 1865 to 1900 was the August Quarterly festival, which was still the rallying point for thousands of inhabitants and visitors from the Delmarva Peninsula. Thousands either walked or arrived by steamboat, carriage, and on mule-back to participate in the 1865 meeting, the first after the Civil War, and the worship services in black Methodist churches in Wilmington were colorful and animated. Although some among the better-educated blacks complained that “these special meetings” were the stereotypical and outdated remains of slave customs, large crowds continued to show up each year on the last weekend in August, and some twenty thousand appeared in 1879.<sup>61</sup> Sermons were delivered simultaneously in the Mother AUMP Church, in other black churches, in tents set up alongside churches, and on the sidewalk along French Street, and the celebrants expressed the whole range of their experience, spirituality, and emotion through songs, fervent prayers, dancing, shouting, foot-stomping, and hand-clapping. August Quarterly ostensibly commemorated the founding of Peter Spencer’s Union Church of Africans but the festival, as always, had a larger purpose that embraced the fullness of African American religious life in Delaware. Thus, “offshoots were held in places that ranged from Glasgow to Delaware City,” as the sheer power of black faith was combined with love feasts, family reunions, weddings, and the enjoyment of music, good food, and storytelling.<sup>62</sup> It was difficult for the celebrants to imagine better ways to give expression to black religion and culture in those final years of the nineteenth century.

### Toward Progressive Accommodationism: Delaware’s Black Churches and the Increasing Diversification of African American Religion, 1900-1955

The great W.E.B. DuBois declared in 1903 that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men.”<sup>63</sup> When considered in the context of black life in Delaware in the first half of that century, DuBois’s comment could not have been more prophetic. Discrimination at all levels of institutional life restricted the advancement of black Delawareans, politically, socially, educationally, economically, and otherwise. Although “a political breakthrough came in 1901,” when businessman Thomas E. Postles was elected to the Wilmington City Council, and was succeeded later by druggist John O. Hopkins, blacks continued to experience bitter frustration and disappointment even as white churches and their leadership continued to openly espouse and practice racism.<sup>64</sup> It is not surprising that this climate was accompanied by sustained efforts on the part of black churches to maintain their own separate and independent existence in Delaware.



Top left, Communion service used at Star Hill AME Church, Star Hill  
 Courtesy of Star Hill AME Church  
 Photo by Steve Boyden

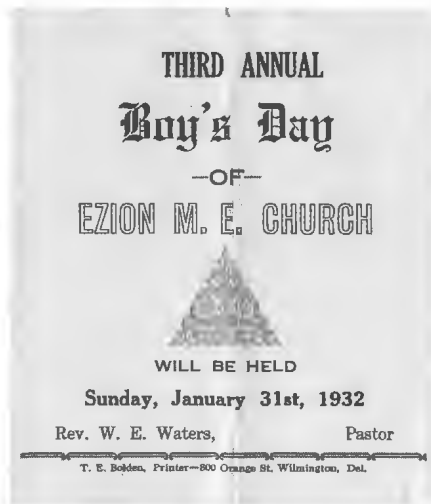
Bottom left, Monstrance, early 1900s  
 Chalice and Paten, 1953  
 Courtesy of St. Joseph Catholic Church, Wilmington  
 Photo by Steve Boyden

In the Catholic church, the sacrament of Holy Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” This chalice (cup) and paten (plate) were presented to Father Meldon Elwood, SSJ, by his parents when he was ordained a priest. The monstrance is used in processions or at other times of adoration when the communion host is presented to the faithful.

Ezion M.E. Church Rules  
 1886  
 Courtesy of Ezion-Mount Carmel United Methodist Church, Wilmington  
 Photo by Steve Boyden

Ezion ME Church burned in January 1886 and was rebuilt by July of that year. These rules, especially number 3, reflect the church’s concern for its new building.

Left, Congregation at Shiloh Baptist Church, Wilmington  
 Ca. late 1940s  
 Courtesy of Shiloh Baptist Church



Top left, St. Joseph's Industrial School, Clayton, Delaware, courtesy of anonymous lender. In addition to St. Joseph Catholic Church and other facilities in Wilmington, the Josephite order established St. Joseph's Industrial School in Clayton in 1895. The boarding school provided education and vocational training for boys from underprivileged homes. Following Booker T. Washington's philosophy that African Americans should learn practical skills, students learned occupations like farming, printing, carpentry, painting, and plumbing. The average yearly enrollment was 71 students. St. Joseph's closed in 1972.

Top right, Third Annual Boy's Day, Ezion ME Church, Wilmington, January 31, 1932, courtesy of Ezion-Mount Carmel United Methodist Church

Bottom, "DeRuyter Men" in front of St. Joseph Catholic Church, Wilmington, 1950, courtesy of St. Joseph Catholic Church

The "DeRuyter Men," also known as "Home Boys," were former residents of Saint Joseph Orphanage. The alumni group, founded in 1945, honors Father John de Ruyter, SSSJ, who founded the church and orphanage. Established in 1892, the orphanage was the first such facility in the United States specifically for African American boys. Located next to the church, it remained open until 1928, when the boys moved to St. Joseph's Industrial School in Clayton.

# Wilmington...

## On the Move



A sleek Amtrak Acela arrives at the historic Wilmington Train Station.

Photography by Mike Biggs/Text by Lise Monty

Designed by Simpson Studio, Inc.

Published by Miller Publishing, Inc.  
Wilmington, Delaware



While the corporate buildings of MBNA have risen all around it, St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church continues to thrive. The Franciscan Friars who minister to the 400 families that make up the dynamic community of faith give credit to MBNA for being a good and helpful neighbor. Originally established in 1889 to minister to the African-American residents of the city, it now has a diverse membership. The red brick church was built in 1948 to replace the original frame church edifice that was destroyed by fire in 1947. In its history, but no longer in existence, are the country's first orphanage for black males and a school run by Franciscan sisters.

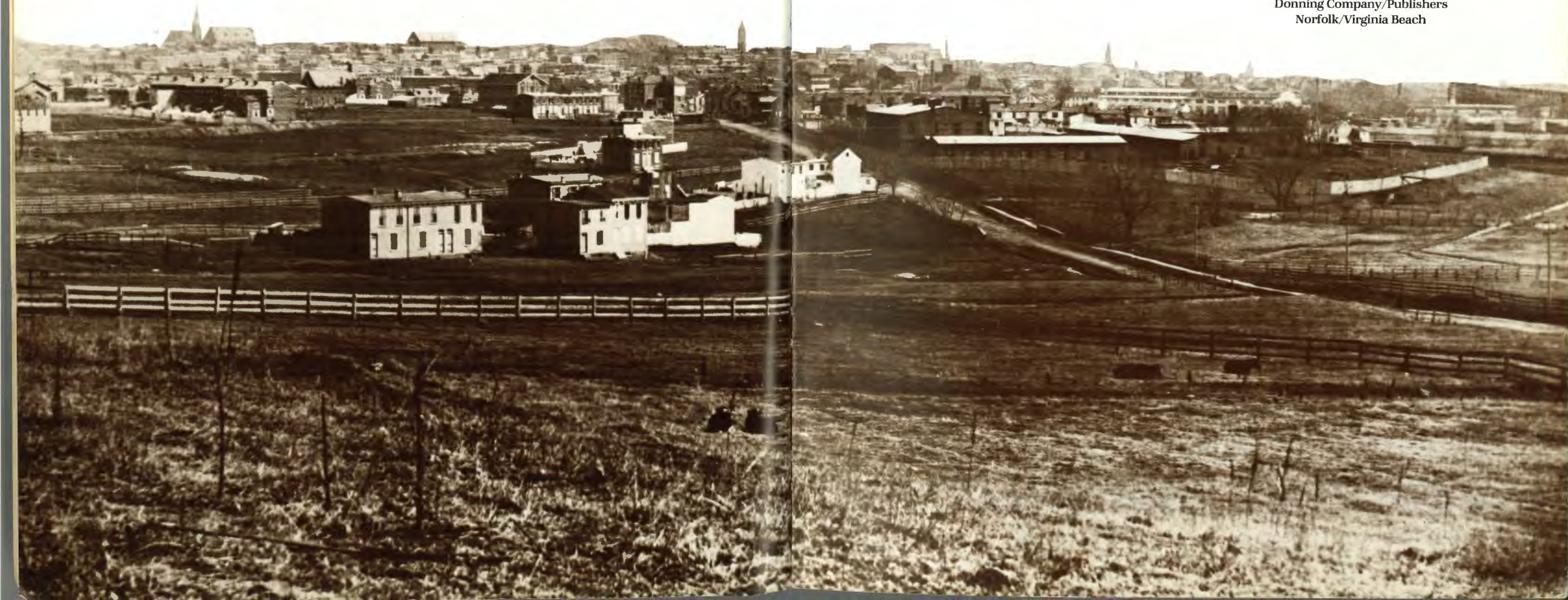
F17  
1870  
Wilmington in the 1870s or '80s as seen from  
a pasture near Maryland Avenue. Courtesy of  
the Historical Society of Delaware.

# Wilmington

## A Pictorial History

by Carol E. Hoffecker

Design by Jamie Backus Raynor  
Donning Company/Publishers  
Norfolk/Virginia Beach



For the Delaware Gazette.

## Celebration of St. Patrick's Day in Wilmington.

The third celebration of the anniversary of Ireland's patron saint by the "Friendly Sons of St. Patrick", took place in this city on Thursday evening, the 17th inst. The large lecture room of Institute Hall was neatly and tastefully decorated with American flags, prominent among which was the green flag of Ireland, representing an Irish harp encircled with a wreath of shamrocks and emblazoned with a representation of the rising sun, having on the top the inscription "The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick." A banner with a life size portrait of the immortal Washington standing between the shield of his country and the harp ever hallowed by Irishmen, occupied a conspicuous place on the front of the platform with the beautiful motto—"The starry shield of Washington."—"The hope of the harp of Erin," neatly inscribed underneath.

On three large tables extending the whole

*The growing Irish presence in Wilmington is clear from this article from the Delaware Gazette in 1856. Courtesy of the Historical Society of Delaware.*

*The cornerstone of St. Mary's, the city's second Roman Catholic church, Sixth and Pine streets, was laid in 1858. The east side church was consecrated by Bishop, now Saint, John Newman of Philadelphia. In 1866 the congregation built a parochial school next door. Two years later when there were already 3,000 Roman Catholics in Wilmington, mostly Irish, the city was made the seat of a diocese. Photograph by Clayton Adams.*



INVENTORY OF THE CHURCH  
ARCHIVES OF DELAWARE

*by the*

HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY

PRELIMINARY DRAFT NOW BEING  
CHECKED FOR FINAL ACCURACY

MARCH 1940

Binder #1

WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

DIVISION OF PROFESSIONAL AND SERVICE PROJECTS

OLD POST OFFICE BLDG.

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE



100-102. ST. JOSEPH'S PARISH, Wilmington, 1889--,

100. ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH (Colored), 1889--, 1012 French St., Wilmington.

Organized 1889. Until opening and dedication of the church in 1890, services were held in the basement of St. Mary's Church (entry 82). The church is a one story brick structure of Gothic style. Additions were made in 1895 and 1934. St. Joseph's Orphanage was part of this organization from 1890-1928, when it was discontinued and a parochial school for colored children was established. St. Joseph's League and Archconfraternity was established in March 1895. Its membership, comprising both white and colored, contributed to the support of this institution and now assist in the Mission work for colored. First settled clergyman, Rev. John A. DeRuyter, S. S. J., 1889-96; educated at St. Joseph's Seminary at Millhill, England.

Minutes, 1890--, 2 vols.; Register (including baptisms, confirmations deaths at orphanage ), 1890--, (baptisms including record of converts), 1 vol.; (confirmations, including record of first communions), 1 vol.; (marriages), 1 vol.; (deaths), 1 vol.; Parish Census, 1890--, 1 card file; Book of Announcements (incomplete), 1890--, 1 vol.; Burial Permits, 1890--, yearly form; Financial, 1890--, 2 vols.; Sunday School, 1933--, 1 vol.; Immaculate Conception, Sodality, 1905--, 2 vols.; at rectory, 1012 French St. Record of incorporation: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Certificate of Incorporation, vol. F3, p. 133.

101. ST. JOSEPH'S PAROCHIAL SCHOOL (Colored), 11<sup>th</sup> and French Sts., Wilmington.

Organized 1890 in charge of Sisters of St. Francis. Until 1928, classes were conducted under the Sacristy of the Church. In that year St. Joseph's Home for colored boys was closed and the building remodeled for a school house. Some boys from the home were transferred to St. Joseph's Industrial School (entry 104), Clayton. Present building dedicated 1928. A three story brick structure.

Attendance record, 1910-18, 1925-28 (2929-24 no entries), 1 vol.; 1928--, 1 card file. Vol. in rectory. File in school office in charge of Sister Superior.

102. BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH (Colored), 1936--, 712 Scott St., Wilmington.

Organized as a mission of St. Joseph's Church. Building opened and dedicated in 1936. It is a one story stuccoed building. The church is served by priests from St. Joseph's Church.

Minutes, 1936--, 1 vol.; Register, 1936--, 1 vol.; Financial, 1936--, 1 vol.; at rectory of St. Joseph's Church, 1012 French St.

103. URSULINE ACADEMY, 1893--, 1106 Pennsylvania Ave., Wilmington.

Founded 1893 by Sisters of the Ursuline Order as a boarding and day school for girls. Incorporated 1895. The curriculum comprises kindergarten, elementary, and secondary courses. The School first occupied the building at Delaware Ave. and Harrison St. previously occupied by the Visitation Academy (entry 88). In 1924 the present building for nuns and resident students was dedicated and in 1926 the present school and auditorium were dedicated. The

# THE CHURCHES OF DELAWARE

by

FRANK R. ZEBLEY

Author of "Along the Brandywine"



*A history, in brief, of the nearly 900 churches  
and former churches in Delaware as  
located by the Author.*

1947

added to the church. It was the intention to surmount this tower with a spire. During the construction of the tower, it collapsed. Fortunately, this happened on a Sat. afternoon, when no one was closeby, and no one was injured. This accident caused the plans to be changed and the height of the tower was lowered and it was just squared off. Being completed, it was planned to hold the dedication services on Sun., Oct. 16, 1892, but as Father Dollard died on the 14th, the service was postponed. The dedication was held on Nov. 20, at the morning service. After the dedication exercises, Bishop Curtis celebrated Pontifical High Mass. He occupied the throne and also preached the sermon. Pontifical Vespers, at 4 o'clock, were celebrated by Vicar-General Lyons, at which time the sermon was preached by the Rev. J. F. Nolan, D.D. The church was incorporated on Jan. 7, 1894.

The rectory was built in 1898. In 1899, St. Ann's Parochial School was built by the Rev. Peter Donaghy. The corner-stone was laid on May 28, 1899, at 3 o'clock by Bishop John J. Monaghan in the presence of large delegations from the Catholic Societies. The convent for the Sisters was built in 1910, by the Rev. Francis J. Connelly. The convent was dedicated on Feb. 19, 1911, at 3 P. M., by Bishop John J. Monaghan. He was assisted by the Revs. John J. Dougherty, Francis Mahoney, D.F.S., and F. J. Connelly, the pastor. The services were held in the chapel of the convent. With the coming of the Rev. John J. Bolen, as pastor, in 1933, it was decided to rebuild, entirely, the interior of the church, to remove the high outside steps and to place the entrance on the pavement level. The tower was crowned with pinnacles and crosses and many new stained-glass windows were installed.

The old altar tables were used for reasons of sentiment but they were reconstructed and rearranged to harmonize with the stately new interior. A beautiful rose window, of jewel glass, crowns the main altar. The organ was rebuilt and placed in a new setting. Originally pumped by hand, an electric blower had been added to the organ in 1910.

The church was dedicated, under the patronage of St. Ann, Mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on Sun. morning, Mar. 17, 1935, by the Most Rev. Edmond J. FitzMaurice, Bishop of Wilmington. He was assisted by the Rev. John J. Bolen. The sermon was preached by the Bishop.

Ground was broken for the present rectory on Mon., Oct. 27, 1941. On Dec. 28, 1943, a service for the deaf was inaugurated at St. Ann's Church by Father John J. Bolen. It was announced that these services would be conducted on the 4th Sunday of each month at 7:30 P. M.

In the early days of St. Ann's parish a social club was organized and it was named the "Manning Library Ass'n" for Bishop Manning. A one-story clubhouse, of frame construction, was built on the present site of the school. Athletic events as well as social and educational affairs were held. On Apr. 21, 1894, the lot at the s. e. cor. of Union St. and Lovering Ave. was purchased. A handsome brick clubhouse was built and the numerous club activities were continued. Interest gradually died out and the property was transferred to Spottswood Garland on June 6, 1899. He sold it to the Home of Merciful Rest Society on July 31, 1901.

**St. Joseph's R. C. Church.** St. Joseph's Colored Mission was started on Oct. 10, 1889, by the Rev. John A. de Ruyter, S.S.J. This mission was held in the basement of St. Mary's Church. St. Joseph's Society for Colored Missions was incorporated on Tues., Mar. 4, 1890. On May 12, 1890, five candidates were confirmed in St. Mary's Church. A plot of land was purchased on French St., near 11th St., on June 10 and on July 3, 1890. The corner-stone of the

school building was laid on July 6, 1890. The ceremony was preceded by a large parade starting at 4 P. M. In the line were delegations from New Castle, Chester, Baltimore and Washington. The sermon was preached by the Very Rev. Father Leeson, Provincial of the Josephites. The stone was blessed by Bishop Alfred A. Curtis. The stone was a gift of J. L. Malone, a local stone-cutter.

On Sun. morning, Oct. 5, 1890, the building was blessed by the Most Rev. Alfred A. Curtis, Bishop of Wilmington. The sermon was delivered by the Rev. Walter Elliott, a Paulist Father from New York. At the 4 o'clock service the sermon was preached by the Rev. John Slattery. One section of the building was adapted to be used as a temporary church. In 1891, two more buildings were built and these served as a school and a home for the sisters.

In August, 1892, Father de Ruyter opened an orphanage for colored boys, the first Catholic home of this type on the Atlantic seaboard. Additional land was purchased on Oct. 4, 1892.

The corner-stone of the orphanage was laid on May 28, 1893, by Bishop Alfred A. Curtis. He was assisted by Vicar-General J. B. Slatterly of Boston and Father de Ruyter. Addresses were delivered by Judge J. Frank Ball and former Mayor Austin Harrington.

St. Joseph's Industrial School for Colored Boys at Clayton was established by Father de Ruyter, in 1895, and at the age of 14 years the boys were transferred there. In 1893, a free dispensary was established on the corner of 11th and Walnut Sts. It was closed in 1896. Father de Ruyter died on Wed., Aug. 23, 1896, before the school at Clayton was completed. At his request, he was buried in Clayton, first beneath St. Joseph's Chapel and later in a private graveyard on the school grounds.

The home in Wilmington was closed on Apr. 1, 1928, and all of the work was transferred to Clayton. The parochial school was established in September, 1928, with an enrollment of 60 boys and girls. On July 6, 1933, an assistant priest was added to the parish.

The church was enlarged, altered and renovated in 1934. The corner-stone was blessed and laid by the Rev. James F. Didas, S.S.J., assistant to Father Conrad F. Rebesher, S.S.J., on Apr. 10, 1934.

The church was dedicated on Sun., Sept. 30, 1934, by the Most Rev. Edmond J. FitzMaurice, Bishop of Wilmington. The Very Rev. John J. Sheehy acted as master of ceremonies. Solemn High Mass was celebrated by the Very Rev. Louis B. Pastorelli, S.S.J., and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. John Gillard, S.S.J. Bishop FitzMaurice, who had recently visited Rome, conferred the Papal Blessing upon those in attendance.

St. Joseph's Church was seriously damaged by fire on Sun., Dec. 30, 1945. The cause of the fire was not determined. The pastor, the Rev. Michael J. O'Neal immediately had preliminary plans drawn for an entire new layout including a church, a school and a rectory. In the meantime a temporary chapel was constructed in the parochial school and was first used on Sun., Jan. 13, 1946. Later in the year the damaged building was torn down.

**St. Hedwig's R. C. Church.** In 1883, a group of Polish families arrived in Wilmington from Posen Province, Poland. They spoke German and attended Sacred Heart Church. Sometime later the Order of St. Benedict sent Father Richard Aust, a Polish priest, to Wilmington to look after their spiritual welfare.

On Aug. 13 and Sept. 27, 1890, the Benedictine Order of the Sacred Heart purchased the lots on the s. e. and n. e. corners of Linden and Harrison



ST. PETER'S R. C. CHURCH  
(Page 71)



ST. PAUL'S R. C. CHURCH  
(Page 75)

**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 sub-categories 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 St. Joseph's Catholic Church

other names/site number CRS # N-13687

**2. Location**

street & number 1012 French Street

not for publication

city or town Wilmington

vicinity

state Delaware code DE county New Castle code 003 zip code 19801

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] DESABO December 2, 2003  
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 commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ 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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature] 1/14/04  
Edson H. Beall

## 5. Classification

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

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

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

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

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

Contributing	Non-contributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	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

RELIGION/ religious facility

## 7. Description

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

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/  
Neo-Gothic

foundation STONE/granite  
roof CERAMIC TILE  
walls BRICK  
other CONCRETE

**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 patterns of our history.
- B** Property is 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.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION  
ETHNIC HERITAGE / Black  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1947-1954  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1947, 1954  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (See continuation sheets.)



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Previous documentation on file (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  
X \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Name of repository: Wilmington Public Library

Every Evening  
1894

History of Wilmington: The Commercial, Social and Religious Growth of the City During the Past Century. Compiled by the Every Evening.

Pearce, B. Ben  
1998

Historical Vignettes of African American Churches in Wilmington, Delaware. Chaconia Press, Wilmington, De.

Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church  
1990

One Hundred Years of Service to God and His People. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Wilmington, Delaware. Commemorative booklet.

St. Joseph's Industrial School  
1951

St. Joseph's Industrial School 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Clayton, De.

Scharf, Thomas  
1888

History of Delaware. I.J. Richards & Co., Philadelphia.

The Delawarean  
1905

"Great Opportunities, Home-seeker's Paradise." Newspaper supplement, 11/4/1905

### Maps Consulted

1901 Baist Atlas of Wilmington  
1936 Franklin Survey of Wilmington  
1998 Sanborn Insurance Company Map  
1999 New Castle County Tax Parcel Maps

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>449095</u>	<u>4370305</u>

### Verbal Boundary Description

#### Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debra Campagnari Martin, Preservation Planner

organization City of Wilmington, Delaware date 2001; Revision: 08/18/2003

street & number 800 N. French Street telephone 302-571-4402

city or town Wilmington state DE zip code 19801-3537

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Diocese of Wilmington

street & number 500 West Street telephone 302-654-5920 (rectory)

city or town Wilmington state DE zip code 19801

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 3 Page 1

St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
name of property  
New Castle County, Delaware  
county and State

=====

Agency Certification

In my opinion, St. Joseph's Catholic Church does meets /    does not meet the  
National Register Criteria.

James M. Baker

James M. Baker  
Mayor  
City of Wilmington, Delaware

Nov 9, 2001

Date

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section number** 7 **Page** 1

St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
Property Name

Wilmington, New Castle County  
County, State

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**Physical Description**

Built in 1947 to replace the church lost to fire on December 31, 1945, the St. Joseph's Catholic Church building is a three-bay, one and one-half-story brick and cast stone edifice executed in the neo-Gothic style. The church is connected to the 1954 rectory (also rebuilt) to the south by a hyphen whose façade was fashioned as a sculpture niche. The facades face north/northeast and front on North French Street in the northern part of Wilmington's central business district. The lot slopes dramatically offering space for an additional full level below the two levels visible from French Street.

The church facade exhibits an elbowed parapet at the front of the front-gabled roof. Cast stone coping has been applied to the skyward edges only. The roofing material is flat clay tile. A pseudo-bell tower and cross at the gable apex surmount the projecting center section of the building. Tripartite lancet windows with cast stone surrounds and wide mullions dominate the facade above the main entrance; the windows contain stained glass currently protected by exterior clear panels. A similarly detailed surround encloses the double-leafed, oak doors. Above the doors, the surround includes an embossed frontispiece reading "ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH" surmounted by a relief symbol of a cross over a shield. The doors are flanked by narrow single lancet windows with cast surrounds. Each flank of this symmetrical facade contains a set of tripartite windows with false foil details. A small quatrefoil opening (filled in where a light would be) is centered above the lancets. The brick bond pattern is composed of six rows common bond and one row Flemish bond. Low brick walls flank the main entrance stairs. The southern side is a planter filled with shrubs. The northern side hides the handicap access ramp. The sides of the building are buttressed, with six on the north side and four on the south side (the stairwell and basement entry interrupt the southern elevation). There are no openings along the back (east) wall other than for the rose window. The foundation is dressed granite, parged on the inside basement level.

The sanctuary interior is distinguished by a double barrel-vaulted ceiling; plastered-covered "exposed" beams with a design of a cross and olive branches painted on the collars; a balcony over the narthex; pendant lantern light fixtures; oak pews and chestnut/oak trim, doors and confessionals; marble, Gothic-inspired altar rails; a rose window over the chancel area in the rear (east) wall; many stained glass windows as well as Arts and Crafts-influenced interior doors with plain stained glass.

The main altar area contains a pre-Vatican II high altar with Gothic design elements. The

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Section number** 7 **Page** 2

St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
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County, State

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predominant material is a cream colored marble with contrasting insets and pilasters. The present altar also uses the cream marble and contrasting insets, as does the altar rail. Two recessed side altars, located to each side of the main altar, hold statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary (north side) and St. Joseph (south side). The marble is similar to that in the main altar. The marble baptismal font currently rests near the St. Joseph side altar. A third side altar on the south side of the church contains multiple statues. A figure of St. Anthony is in repose in a glass-fronted, cream-colored faux-marble crypt in this niche.

Stained glass windows are featured in all elevations of the church. The center facade contains a large depiction of St. Joseph and two angels, while the small lancets contain simple organic designs and memorials. The north side windows are dedicated to (from west to east): St. Patrick, Our Lady of Fatima, St. Veronica, St. James, The Blessed Virgin Mary, The Resurrection, The Infant of Prague, St. Susanna, St. Peter and St. Michael. The south side windows are dedicated to (from east to west): St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, the Holy Family, St. Benedict the Moor, St. John, and the Sacred Heart. The southern niche contains a double lancet window with stained glass, facing to the west. Stained glass with stylized crosses is also found in pointed arch windows to either side of the main altar, high in the walls and facing north and south. The rose window above the chancel area is one of the most striking features of the sanctuary.

Other statues include a painted plaster figure of Blessed Martin de Porres, salvaged from the 1945 fire, currently placed to the north of the main altar. The statue is significant to this parish as a venerated figure of African American ancestry (the statue was created prior to the elevation of Martin De Porres to sainthood, which occurred in 1962). A dedicated space in the rear of the church identifies a former area of display for this statue. Statues probably dating to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century are found outside: to the north is a statue of St. Joseph holding the infant Jesus, surrounded by two other children; to the south in the hyphen niche is another statue of St. Joseph. Both statues appear to be cast stone.

The basement level of the church includes a large open function hall and stage. Numerous small rooms behind the stage include storage, restrooms and kitchen facilities.

The Rectory is a 2-story, 3-bay building with a brick veneer laid in running bond. Cast stone details like a second story belt course at the lintel level above the second story windows and coping at the roof line, complement the style of the church. An enclosed front porch of cast stone and large windows dominates the street-level façade, but offer a view of the original

**United States Department of the Interior**  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
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St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
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---

entry arrangement of a simple Colonial Revival surround and door with three horizontal glass panes above a large panel. Paired replacement windows flank the main entrance. At the second story, the center bay contains a double window, while the side bays contain one window each. The facade is topped by a low parapet topped off with a cast stone cross. The roof is flat. The north and south elevations are five bays wide by three stories tall. These elevations retain their original 2/2 horizontal paned windows that are regularly arranged with concrete sills as their only decoration. The rear is similarly simply detailed.

A one story hyphen connects the buildings at the street and was detailed as a large cast stone statuary niche. It now houses a statue of St. Joseph on a concrete pedestal flanked by two concrete planters. The interior was not accessible.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

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St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
Property Name  
Wilmington, New Castle County  
County, State

---

**Statement of Significance**

St. Joseph's Catholic Church is being listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its architectural significance to the City of Wilmington as an example of mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic Revival/Eclectic style on a small scale. The church is also significant under Criterion A for its association with the Josephite Fathers and the work they did to establish community services for the Wilmington African American community dating from the late-1880s. Although none of the buildings from that period remain, the existing church building replaced the earlier structure that was destroyed by fire in 1945, the church was rebuilt during the Josephite period and therefore represents the importance of their contribution to improving the secular aspects of the lives of Wilmington's African American population.

The Josephite Order of the Sacred Heart was founded with the mission of evangelizing to the African American population through education and social service. In Delaware, the Josephite Fathers, through the leadership of Father John DeRuyter, established a mission presence with a complex in Wilmington with the St. Joseph's Church, rectory, convent and orphanage (last three non-extant), located on French Street. Beyond evangelization, these priests were concerned with the welfare of the African American community in America, and they employed strategies used by others to successfully bring their disadvantaged student population into society as self sufficient and productive members.

St. Joseph's Mission Society was established and trained in Mill Hill, England, with the mission to evangelize outside of Europe. In the United States, St. Joseph's Seminary opened in Baltimore, Maryland in 1888 with the mission to evangelize America's black population. Mill Hill graduate Father John DeRuyter arrived in Wilmington to begin St. Joseph's Mission in 1889, having labored for similar purposes in Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia. He was responding to an invitation from Bishop Curtis to minister to the black Catholics of Wilmington who had ceased to congregate because a lack of leadership and discrimination in predominately white churches.

Upon his arrival, Father DeRuyter was assisted by local resident John Crawford in gathering approximately 50 black Catholics who wished to worship together, and secured the use of the basement of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church (E. Sixth and Pine Streets) in which to celebrate Mass. St. Mary's parishioners were predominately of Irish and German heritage. Father De Ruyter immediately began to solicit other parishes for funds to build a church, which soon became a campaign for a school, as well. While Father DeRuyter probably noted quickly the poor state of black schools, his educational goal was in keeping with a Josephite philosophy maintaining that there is no more effective missionary agent than the free school (St. Joseph's 1990).

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St. Joseph's Wilmington mission erected their first buildings, a school and teacher's residence, in 1890 in the 1000 block of North French Street on a parcel measuring 125 by 200 feet. A contemporary newspaper account indicated that the laying of the school cornerstone was the cause for one of the largest gatherings of Catholics in the City, drawing county participation as well (Every Evening 1894). While the building campaign for the construction of the church continued for a number of years, mass was celebrated on the first floor of the school and classes were taught in the basement. With the help of Mother Katherine Drexel (now St. Katherine Drexel) of Pennsylvania, herself dedicated to serving the spiritual and educational needs of African Americans and Native Americans, Father DeRuyter staffed the school with Franciscan Sisters from Glen Riddle, Pa. A rectory was added to the property in 1891-1892.

In 1892 St Joseph's constructed the first black orphanage for boys in America on their site. In 1893 the school and orphanage had 16 staff members. Shown on the 1901 Baist Atlas as a great, sprawling structure to the north of the church and school, the orphanage included a free dispensary and operating room. The effort was supported by charitable contributions from across the country. The orphanage averaged about 80 boys, but was said to have space for 200 (Every Evening 1894). While the orphanage was transferred ca. 1930 to a site in Clayton, Delaware (also the location of St. Joseph's Industrial School from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) the school expanded and continued to operate. The school provided elementary education up through 8<sup>th</sup> grade; Howard High School, Philadelphia's Southeast Catholic High School and the St. Joseph's Industrial School provided secondary education. Graduates of St. Joseph's School were among the first to integrate Salesianum High School, a Catholic institution, on November 14, 1950. Salesianum was the first secondary school in Delaware to establish integrated classes. Due to changing needs of the community, St. Joseph's School and former orphanage complex was demolished in 1956.

A church sanctuary separate from the school was not established until after 1901, and possibly as late as 1930, as evidenced by reference to a \$10,000 expansion project that added 12 feet to the front and the rose window to the rear of an existing building-- probably the original school (St. Joseph's, 1990). This coincides with the expansion of the school made possible by the relocation of the orphanage to Clayton, in Kent County. The church and rectory were destroyed by an electrical fire on New Year's Eve, 1945. The church was rebuilt and opened in 1948. The rectory followed in 1954. Both structures remain largely unchanged to the present.

From its humble beginnings, the complex in the 1100 block of French Street grew to occupy the majority of the block, with facilities dedicated to spiritual, educational, residential and medical needs of the black community. St. Joseph's philosophy was spread in the greater community as well,



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establishing two mission churches: Our Lady of Mercy in Belvedere (southwest of Wilmington) in 1929; Blessed Sacrament at 712 Scott Street, Wilmington, in 1936. St. Joseph's continues in its founding mission to the present day, while expanding its program to serve the underserved wherever needed, such as in the areas of prison ministry and AIDS and homeless outreach. St. Joseph's also serves the central business district, offering daily and holy day masses for downtown workers. The tenure of the Josephites ended in 1993, and the parish has been lead by the Franciscan Order since 1995.

**Integrity**

The St. Joseph's Church and Rectory are located in the same space occupied by the original mission buildings. Developed as the first permanent Catholic mission to African Americans in Delaware, the parish remains committed to this purpose, though African American Catholics presently worship in parishes throughout the City. Though the acreage formerly associated with the Josephite complex has been severely reduced by the construction of corporate buildings in recent years, the Church remains the spiritual center of the mission. The church and rectory still reflect the peaceful feeling of an urban sanctuary despite the change in land use and scale of the buildings surrounding them.

The buildings themselves are simple and well designed, reflecting the original "mission" purpose in the use of dominant Mission and neo-Gothic architectural details. The original materials of the complex were brick and stone, as are the current buildings. The charming and well-executed architectural details of the exterior and interior of the church have been changed very little since 1948.

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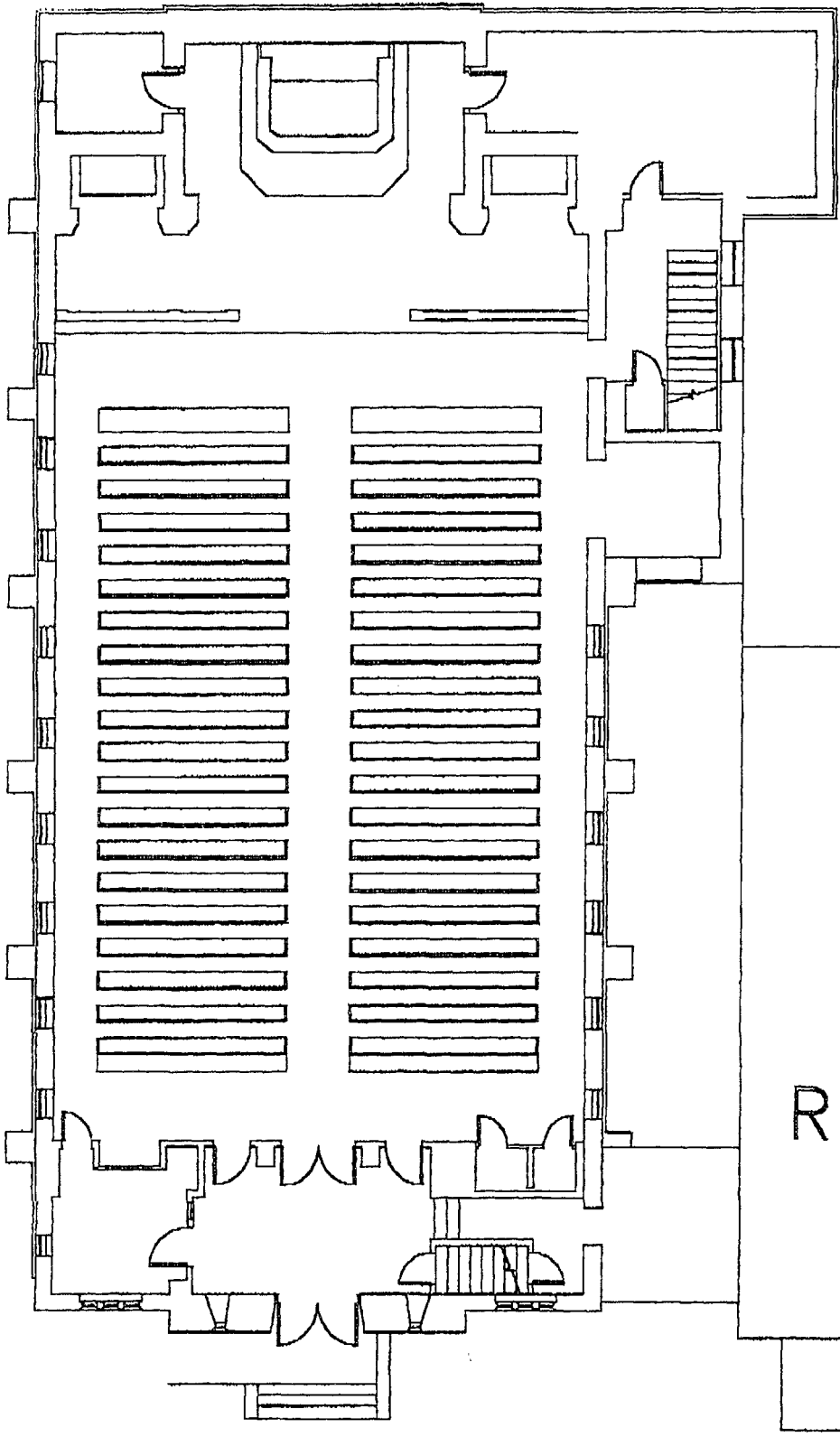
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**Boundary Justification**

The nominated boundary includes the remaining property associated with the St. Joseph's Catholic Church and Rectory. The boundary described takes into account the reduction of the property size that began with the demolition of the school in 1956 and continued until 1999 with the purchase of much of the remaining open space associated with the church by commercial interests. Mid-rise office buildings now occupy adjacent space to the north, east and south of the church and rectory.

**Boundary Description**

Beginning at a point 95 feet north of the northeast corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and French Streets, thence 104 feet north along French Street to a point; thence east 140 feet, in a line perpendicular to French Street to a point; thence south 104 feet, in a line parallel to French Street to a point; thence west 140 feet to the point of beginning, containing approximately one-third of one acre.



St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
1012 French Street  
Wilmington, New Castle County, DE

Floor Plan

RECTORY

St. Joseph's Church



720

St. Joseph's Catholic Church  
 1012 French Street  
 Wilmington, New Castle County, DE  
 Tax Map 1"=100' N ↑



ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

1012 FRENCH STREET

WILMINGTON, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DE

Photo by: DAVID AMES, MAY 1999

NEG: PRESERVATION PLANNING OFFICE

CITY OF WILMINGTON

VIEW: FACADE AND SCULPTURE NICHE, FACING NORTHEAST.

Photo 1/6



ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

1012 French Street

Wilmington, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DE

PHOTO BY: DAVID AMES DATE: MAY 1999

NEG: PRESERVATION PLANNING OFFICE

CITY OF WILMINGTON

VIEW: Interior, SANCTUARY VIEW TOWARD THE ALTAR

PHOTO 22/4





ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

1012 FRENCH STREET

WILMINGTON, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DE

Photo by; DAVID AMES, MAY, 1999

NEG: PRESERVATION PLANNING OFFICE  
CITY OF WILMINGTON

VIEW: Interior, rear altar and rose window

Photo: 3/6



ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

1012 FRENCH STREET

WILMINGTON, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DE

Photo by: DAVID AMES, MAY 1999

NEG: PRESERVATION PLANNING OFFICE  
CITY OF WILMINGTON

VIEW: SANCTUARY FROM THE ALTAR

PHOTO 4/6



ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

1012 FRENCH STREET

WILMINGTON, NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DE

Photo by: DAVID AMES DATE: MAY 1999

NEG: PRESERVATION PLANNING OFFICE  
CITY OF WILMINGTON

VIEW: DETAIL OF TWO STAINED GLASS WINDOWS, INTERIOR

Photo 5/6



ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

1012 FRENCH STREET

WILMINGTON, NEWCASTLE COUNTY, DE

Photo by: DAVID AMES DATE: MAY 1999

NEG: PRESERVATION PLANNING OFFICE  
CITY OF WILMINGTON

VIEW: DETAIL OF LEADED GLASS SANCTUARY DOORS

photo 6/6