# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms

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### 7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Immaculate Conception School, at 2912 Lafayette, was completed in 1926. Facing north from a raised site, it occupies all of City Block 1309 on the north side of the city's Compton Hill district. It is a three- story steel frame masonry construction, T-shaped in plan, with concrete rafters which were poured in place. Its concrete foundation is faced with coursed rubble lime-stone and trimmed with a granite watertable. Atop a high hill and surrounded by smaller, residential structures, the building presents a dignified, massive appearance, with red brick common bond walls detailed with limestone quoining, capstones, and beltcourses.

The school reflects the influence of the Jacobethan revival style, the architectural style most favored for city schools of the period, and which was popularized by prominent St. Louis architect William B. Ittner. The carefully formulated product of an economical use of materials, site and decoration, the school's exterior reflects precisely the arrangement of space within. The horizontality of the building's seven-bay primary facade is emphasized by grouped windows and a heavy stone beltcourse which connects the lugsills of the second story and visually separates the ground floor. A second stone course at lintel level on the third story effects a cornice and emphasizes the curvilinear roofline, where sillouettes of shaped gables rise above the flat, composition roof. Countering this strong horizontality are the vertical groupings of the windows of each bay, and two projecting towers, which break through the roofline on the primary facade and are crowned with battlements. Windows of the school are large and grouped in solid masses, forming a rhythmic unified pattern across all facades. Fenestration of the main block is restricted to a four-over-one doublehung sash, usually capped by a fourlight transom. Throughout the structure, windows of the first story are paired; those of the second and third stories are grouped four or five under a single lintel. All windows have stone lintels and sills, and are marked by heavy quoining.

#### PRIMARY ELEVATION

The focus of the seven-bay primary facade is upon the entrance, which is set within a central bay rising to a shaped gable, and is flanked by projecting towers. Surmounting the entranceway, on the second and third stories are groupings of four windows set together under a single stone lintel; the flanking bays present paired windows at each of their three stories. Windows of the three central bays were originally of etched glass; all but two have been lost or replaced. Classical details in the Jacobethan Revival, which if they appear at all, are usually limited to details of the primary entrances, here have been transformed into a prepossessing Neoclassic portico, displaying paired smooth shaft columns and pilasters of the Tuscan order, and carrying a full cornice with balustrade above. The facade's end bays are surmounted by shaped gables filled with diaper patterned brickwork.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number

Page

#### SECONDARY FACADES

The east and west secondary facades are identical, each a three-bay configuration, the center bay of which contains secondary entrances to the school which open into lateral stairtowers. The doubleleaf doors are surmounted by paired doublehung windows. At the level of the landing is set a large triple-bung sash window which rises to ceiling height on the third story. In marked contrast to fenestration and stone detailing, the remaining two bays of the secondary facades are elaborated with decorative brickwork in a diaper pattern.

#### SOUTH FACADE.

Projecting from the center of the main block on this facade is a one-story el which contains the school's auditorium/gymnasium area. Its broad expanse of wall surface is broken into rhythmic divisions by simple buttresses capped with limestone. Fenestration on all facades of the gymnasium is restricted to the second story, and is a triplehung two-over-two-over-two sash with a flat arch of vertical stretchers and stone lugsill. The stylistically simple gymnasium el is consistent with the unadorned rear facade of the main block, which presents windows of the primary fenestration pattern set under flat stretcher arches. At the third story level, the stretchers extend across the facade to form a beltcourse, echoing the limestone coursing of the other elevations.

#### INTERIOR

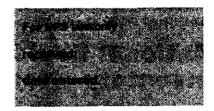
The Immaculate Conception's T-shaped floorplan reflects the traditional "closed plan" format, which presented a single long hall on each floor, surrounded by classrooms on all sides. The opinion of many school authorities of the time was that the centralized hallway of this floorplan not only was more economical, but allowed more "control" over students than the new "open plan" popularized by Ittner, generally considered to provide superior lighting and ventilation. I However, at the Immaculate Conception, Hess reached a compromise between the air and light of the Ittner's open plan, and the economy of the central hall. Transoms surmount each window for improved air movement; large staircase windows bring shed natural light into each hallway, and to bring classroom light into the hallways, the door to each room is glass-panelled and set under a transom.

The school's primary entrance opens into the main lobby through doubleleaf plateglass doors, flanked by 20-light sidelights; both doors and sidelights are surmounted by multi-light transoms. Echoing the configuration of the primary entrance are secondary doorways to either side of the reception hall, which open onto the principal's office and a small waiting room. These are singleleaf doors, each with 15 lights, flanked by sidelights of 15 lights and topped by transoms, which were opened for ventilation. The auditorium and

NPS Form 10-900-a (3-82)

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

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number 7

Page 2

gymnasium area also opens off the main lobby; originally, it was fronted by a small ticket booth. Walls of the auditorium are surfaced in glazed tile. A small stage is located at the southern end of the room and is flanked by dressing and locker rooms.

Since the building served the parish not only as a school, but as a social and recreational center, the ground floor of the building was intended mainly for community use. Originally, it was comprised of committee and meeting rooms, and a small kitchen. Multi-paned, doubleleaf doors situated at either end of the central hallway could be closed to partition off the stairways to the upper floors. Wooden folding doors in rooms to either side of the lobby could be opened to form large rooms for meetings or mass. On the second floor of the school was located the teacher's dining room kitchen and lounge; the music rooms and general classrooms. The kindergarten was situated on the top floor of the structure.

Halls throughout the school have high, molded plaster ceilings. Floors in each hall are covered with Terrazzo in patterns of red, white and grey; all woodwork, including picture rails, is of oak. Classrooms retain original oak closets and chalkboards. Their original wood flooring has been covered with lineleum tile.

#### **ALTERATIONS**

Beyond the replacement of some window glass, there have been no alterations to the exterior of the structure. All room configurations, window sashes and woodwork are original to the structure. Alterations to the interior have been few; consisting mostly in overlaying tile in classrooms; some doors are missing or damaged. One door has been opened on the southwest corner of the gymnasium el.

#### PRESENT CONDITION

The Immaculate Conception School has been vacant for several years, and has suffered minor damage from exposure and vandals. Most of the window glass has been broken, but window sashes and most interior doorways are in fair condition, as are most of the flooring and wall surfaces.

#### **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>William C. Bruce, ed., <u>Grade School Buildings</u>, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1925, p. 13.

### 8. Significance

•	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculturex_ architecture art commerce communications	 landscape architectur law literature military music philosophy politics/government	rex_ religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1925 - 1926	 ignie & Daly/Henry 1	

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Immaculate Conception School is significant in its association with parochial education of the early twentieth century in St. Louis; as a center of religious life for its parish and the surrounding area; and as an important early work of its architect, Henry Hess, who, during the first half of this century, was responsible for a numerous Catholic educational institutions in the city and surrounding county. As such, the school is illustrative of the themes of architecture, education and religion, and complies with Criteria A and C of the standards for the evaluation of historic properties by the National Register of Historic Places.

#### **ARCHITECTURE**

The Immaculate Conception School is significant as a fine example of the Jacobethan Revival architectural style, and one which has survived in nearly unaltered condition. Construction of the school was begun in 1925 and completed a year later. A three-story masonry structure, the school's formal, restrained facade decoration, and "closed" floorplan typify traditional educational architectural theory at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Henry P. Hess was born in St. Louis in 1884. His family had always been involved in building and construction: his father was an executive of a planing mill; and several of his brothers later became contractors. 2 Hess began his training in the office of Henry Weise in 1900, when he was 14. draftsman, he worked for nearly all the prominant St. Louis firms, including Isaac S. Taylor and Eames and Young. $^3$  The association most influential to his -later career, however, was about 1912, when he joined the staff of William B. Ittner, while Ittner was serving as Commissioner of School Buildings for the City of St. Louis. Here Hess gained valuable experience in the design of educational institutions, studying Ittner's theories of the requisites of proper light, ventilation, and a large, inviting kindergarten area, as well as assimulating Ittner's stylistic preferences: that a school should have a "domestic" simplicity, 4 with dignified, restrained decoration. When Ittner resigned in 1915 and went into private practice, specializing in school buildings,<sup>5</sup> Hess also resigned; a year later he was was able to form his own firm. Vince Schulte, whom he had met while working in Ittner's office, became his draftsman, and remained with Hess for the next twenty-five years. 6 Hess' first independent commission was St. Rose's School on Goodfellow Street, and upon its completion, he was established as a favorite architect of John Joseph Cardinal Glennon, an enthusiastic supporter of school construction. 7 Until his death in 1957, Hess was to receive many commissions for school buildings within the archdiocese of St. Louis, and throughout the Midwest, completing

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number

Page

approximately 700 structures. <sup>8</sup> Chief among his works are Cardinal Glennon College, Rosati-Kain High School, De Andries High School, the William Cullen McBride High School, the College of Commerce and Finance for St. Louis University (now the Business School), Christian Brothers College, All Saints Church in University City, the Mary Queen of Peace complex in Webster Groves, Missouri, and St. Joseph's Hospital in Hot Springs Arkansas. 7 Hess' buildings throughout the twenties and thirties generally reflect traditional, historical revival styles; those of his later career show the influence of Art Moderne and other contemporary architectural movements.

#### EDUCATION AND RELIGION - Historical Associations

Catholic education in St. Louis reaches as far back as St. Louis Catholicism itself. Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, the Church's emphasis, however, was upon higher education, and the construction of colleges and seminaries. With the advent of common public elementary schools and a general move toward compulsive education, the Roman Catholic bishops realized the need for parochial elementary and secondary schooling to combat the public schools' free, but undeniably Protestant influence. In 1875, the Vatican issued the so-called Instruction of 1875, which ordered that every effort was to be made to start new parish schools, or to improve and enlarge the existing ones.10 By the time the Immaculate Conception School was erected, there was a total of 5,788 parochial schools throughout the country, with an enrollment of 1,633,599.11

The Immaculate Conception church had its beginning in 1854, as St. Kevin's parish. The first church building, at Eighth and Chestnut streets, was finished in 1862. A small school adjoined the church. When, in 1874, a second church was constructed, the parish school moved with it to its new location on the corner of Jefferson and Locust Street.12 During the last part of the nineteenth century, when the influx of new immigrants to St. Louis expanded the church's congregation, new accommodations were necessary, and a third church and school were constructed at Park and Cardinal.13 Sometime around the turn of the century, the parish name was changed to Immaculate Conception, and in 1904, it moved to its present church building on Lafayette, a Late Gothic Revival structure, while classes continued at the Park and Cardinal site.

In April of 1924, land for the construction of the present school was donated to Archbishop John J. Glennon and the archdiocese by John O'Fallon Delaney, and his wife Elizabeth.14 Delaney was a physician who never practiced medicine; he devoted himself to the management of his father's large estate.15 Delaney's family had always been intimately involved with Catholic education in St. Louis. He was the grandson of John Mullanphy, an early St. Louis pioneer and philanthropist, who in 1827, was responsible for the

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number

Page 2

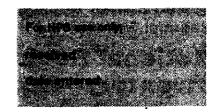
formation of one of the first Catholic schools in St. Louis, run by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart.16 The land donated to the parish was originally the Delaney family home. The Delaneys gave the land "in consideration of their regard and appreciation of the value of religious education...for the purpose of maintaining and operating a school in which the doctrines of the Roman Catholic religion shall be taught." 17

The cornerstone of the present school was laid in 1925 and dedication of the structure took place on Easter in 1926.. Contractors were Gillispie and Daly, a local firm. The school served students from Kindergarten to eighth grade, and was staffed by the Sisters of Loretto, who had served as the faculty of the Immaculate Conception schools from their creation. <sup>18</sup> Each sister was responsible for several classes, which, in addition to regular and religious instruction, included sewing, drawing, and music. Between 300 and 400 students regularly attended the school, almost entirely from Irish and German backgrounds. <sup>19</sup> The school served not only as the education center for the parish, but as gymnasium, meeting room, library and auditorium. During later years, mass was often held in one of the large first floor meeting rooms. <sup>20</sup>

In the fifties and sixties, the population of the parish began to change. New immigration introduced Italian, Black and Puerto Rico students to the school. The middleclass began an exodus from the inner city, the Immaculate Conception congregation dwindled, and the parish became unable to support its own school. Accordingly, in 1969, when the Archdiocese took over the Immaculate Conception School, and consolidated the schools of St. Henry, Holy Guardian Angels, St. John Nepomuk, Sts. Peter and Paul and St. Vincent de Paul parishes the school had less than 100 students. The school was renamed Compton Heights Catholic School, and the Sisters of Loretto were replaced by the Precious Blood Sisters. Enably, the Compton Heights school was closed in 1979, and its students transferred to Notre Dame elementary school.

The school has been vacant for the last six years. Presently, it is in the process of acquisition by a private development firm, which intends to restore the building and convert it into apartments. The exterior and hallways will be returned to their original condition and all significant interior features will be retained.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number 8

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### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Deed to property.

<sup>2</sup>Henry LePique, St. Charles, Missouri, personal interview, February 1, 1985.

3Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>William B. Ittner, F.A.I.A., <u>The Planning and Construction of Modern School Plants</u>, St. Louis: 1922, p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Marie Anderson Ittner, "Footprints", privately published pamphlet in archive collection of the St. Louis Public Library, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Le Pique.

William B. Faherty, S.J., <u>The Catholic Ancestry of St. Louis</u>, St. Louis: St. Louis University Press, 1965, p. 35.

8Ibid.

9<u>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</u>, Henry P. Hess Obituary, October 23, 1957.

1061en Gabert, <u>In Hoc Signo? A Brief History of Catholic Parochial</u>
<u>Education in America</u>, Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press,
1973, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 93.

12 Immaculate Conception Church, Anniversary Program, Immaculate Conception Parish, 1979.

13Father John Freiberger, St. Clement's Parish, personal interview, January 27, 1985.

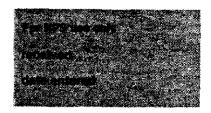
14Deed in Title Papers, Archdiocese of St. Louis.

15 The Book of St. Louisans, St. Louis: St. Louis Republic, 1912, p. 154.

16William Hyde and Howard L. Conrad, eds., Encyclopedia\_of\_the\_History\_of St.\_Louis, New York: Southern Historical Company, 1899, Vol. III, p. 1591.

17Deed.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number

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18Sister Frances Ann, Sisters of Loretto, personal interview, January 31, 1985.

19Freiberger.

20 Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Freiberger.

22 Immaculate Conception: Our Story, Pamphlet of Dedication for new Parish Center, 1983.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached continuation sheet.

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## **National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number 9

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- 1. Book of St. Louisans. St. Louis: St. Louis Republic, 1912.
- Faherty, William B., S.J. <u>The Catholic Ancestry of St. Louis</u>. St. Louis: St. Louis University Press, 1965.
- Frances Ann, Sr. Sisters of Loretto, St. Louis, Missouri. Personal interview, January 31, 1985.
- Freiberger, John, Fr. St. Clement's Parish. Personal interview, January 27, 1985.
- 5. Gabert, Glen. <u>In Hoc Signo? A Brief History of Catholic Parochial Education in America</u>. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1973.
- 6. Hyde, William and Conrad, Henry L., eds. <u>Encyclopedia of the History</u> of St. Louis. New York: Southern Historical Company, 1899.
- 7. Immaculate Conception: Our Story. Pamphlet of Dedication for New Parish Center, 1983.
- 8. <u>Immaculate Conception Church</u>. Anniversary Program, Immaculate Conception Parish, 1979.
- Ittner, Marie Anderson. "Footprints", privately published pamphlet in archive collection of the St. Louis Public Library.
- 10. Ittner, William B., F.A.I.A. <u>The Planning and Construction of Modern School Plants</u>. St. Louis: 1922.
- LePique, Henry. St. Charles, Missouri. Personal interview, February 1, 1985.
- 12. St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Henry P. Hess Obituary. October 23, 1957.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Immaculate Conception School Item number

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of three hundred (300) feet. Bounded on the north by Lafayette Avenue, south by property now or formerly of Boyce and Lindsey, east by Nebraska Avenue, and west by Pennsylvania Avenue, containing 2 acres, more or less.

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



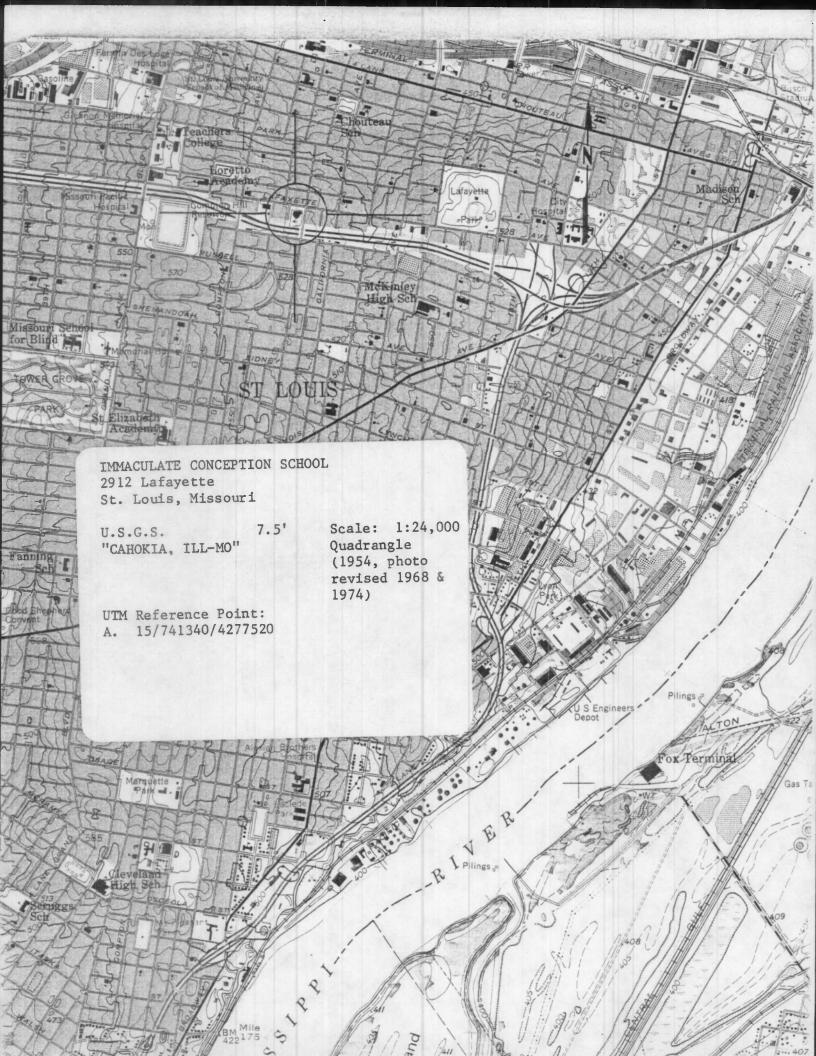
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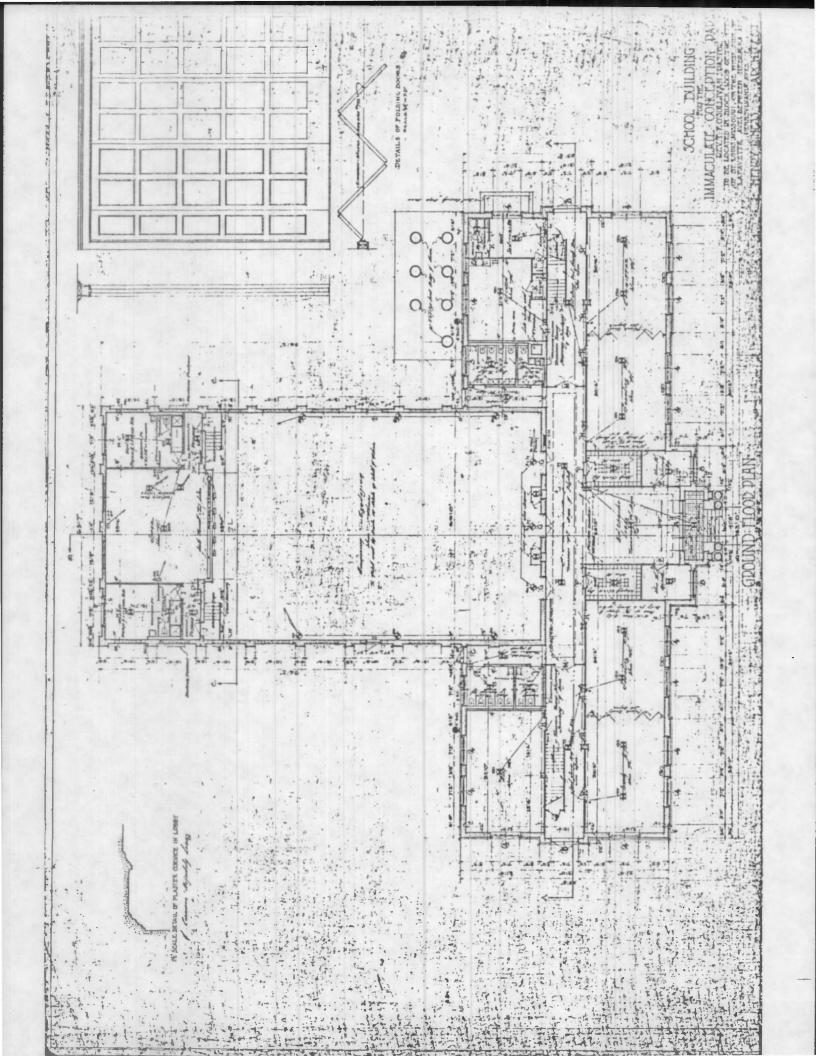
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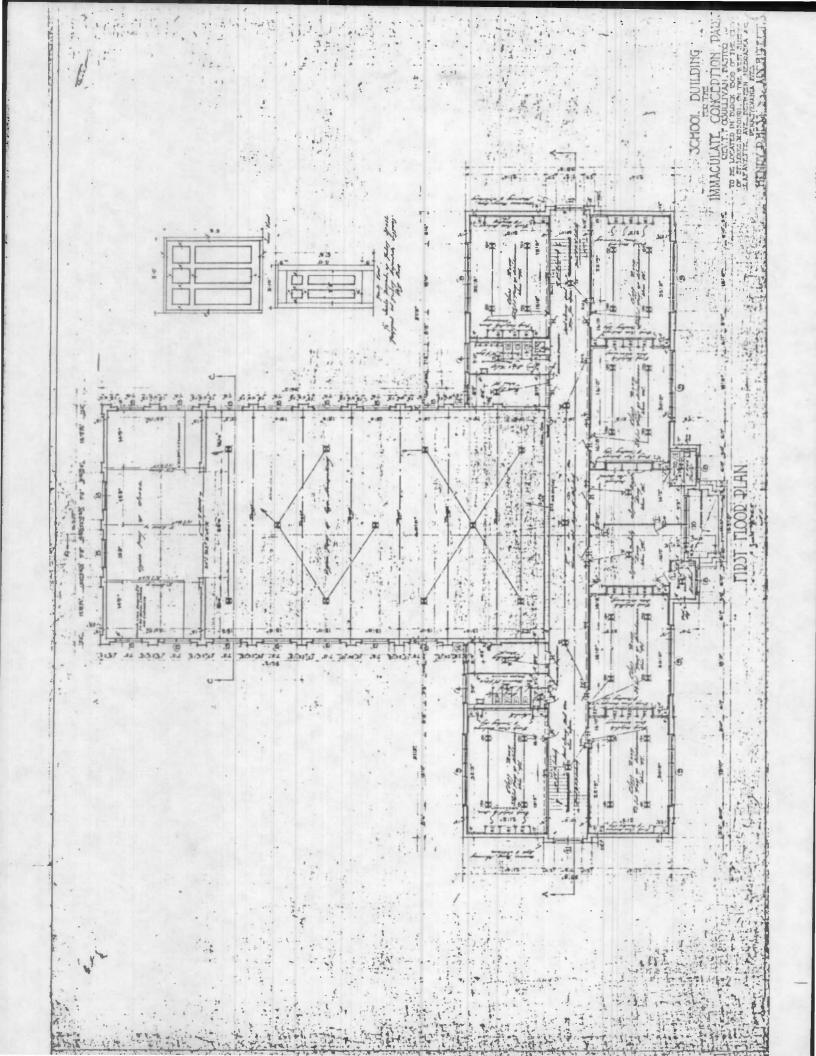
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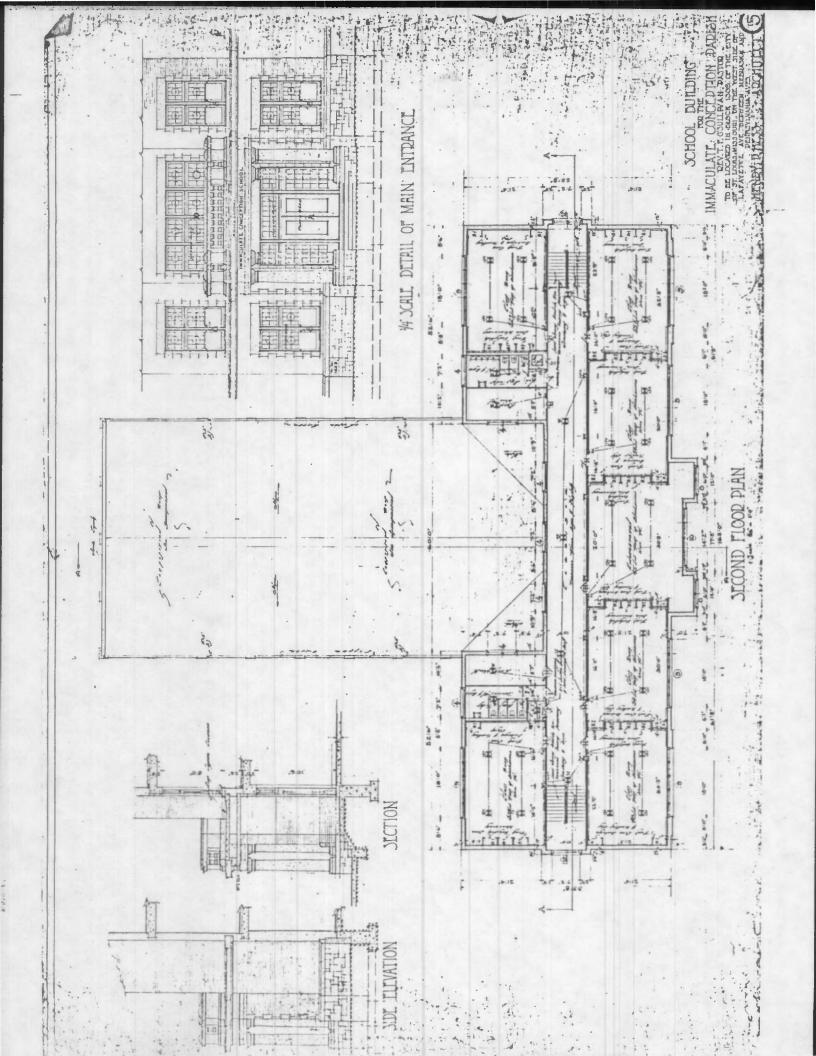
2) James M. Denny Chief, Survey & Registration and State Contact Person Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program P. O. Box 176 Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Phone: 314/751/4096 Date: 3/19/85









#1 of 15

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL 2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHER: Randy Spurr January 1985

NEG. LOCATION:

Pride, Inc. 3606 Botanical

63104 St. Louis, Missouri

General view from the northwest.



#2 of 15

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL 2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHER: Randy Spurr January 1985

NEG. LOCATION: Pride, Inc. 3606 Botanical St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Primary facade.



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL 2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

#3 of 15

Randy Spurr January 1985

PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION: Pride Inc. 3606 Botanical St. Louis, Missouri 63104

West facade, view from southwest.



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL

#4 of 15

2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri.

Randy Spurr January 1985 PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION: Pride Inc. 3606 Botanical

St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Secondary (west) facade, view of main block

from the southwest.



#5 of 15

2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL

Randy Spurr January 1985 PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION: Pride Inc. 3606 Botanical

St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Rear facade, main block, seen from the southeast.



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL 2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

#6 of 15

Randy Spurr January 1985 PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION:

Pride Inc. 3606 Botanical St. Louis, Missouri 63104

East facade of gymnasium el, seen from the east.



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL

#7 of 15

2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHER: Randy Spurr

January 1985

NEG. LOCATION: Pride, Inc.

3606 Botanical

St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Detail of primary facade, central entrance.



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL 2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

#8 of 15

Randy Spurr January 1985 PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION: Pride, Inc. 3606 Botanical St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Detail of portico.



#9 öf 15

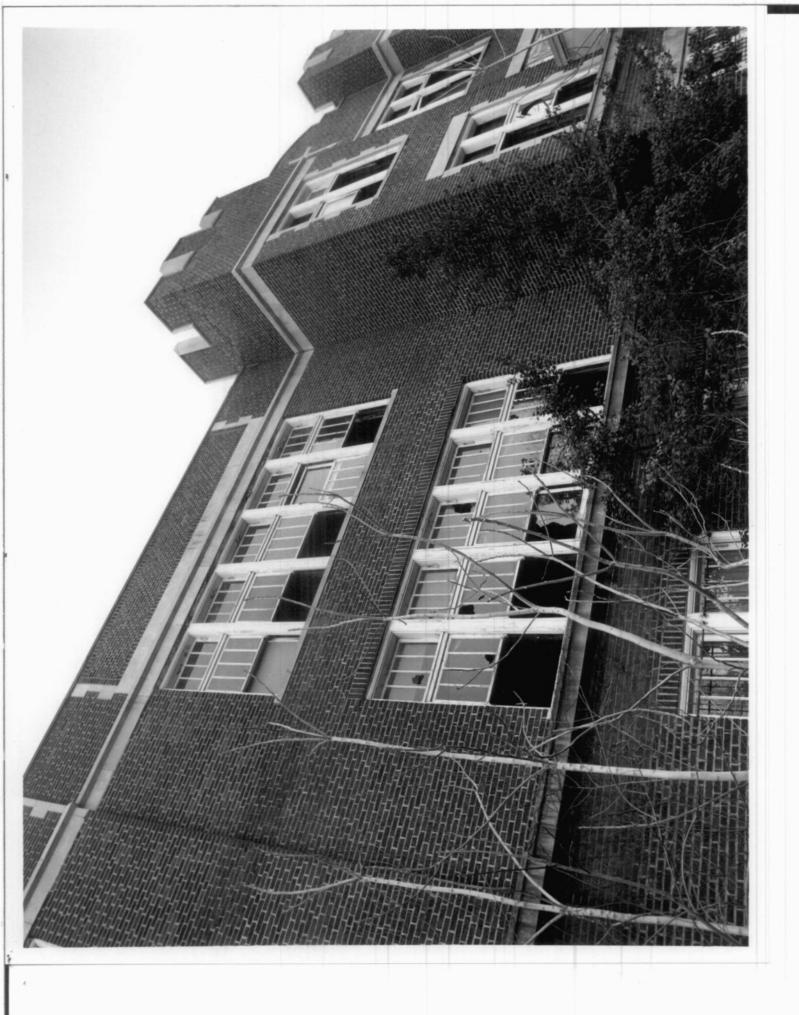
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL 2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

Randy Spurr January 1985 PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION:

63104 Pride, Inc. 3606 Botanical St. Louis, Missouri

Detail of windows, primary facade.



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#10 of 15

PHOTOGRAPHER: Randy Spurr January 1985

NEG. LOCATION: Pride, Inc.

3606 Botanical

St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Detail of secondary entrance, west facade.



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#11 of 15

2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

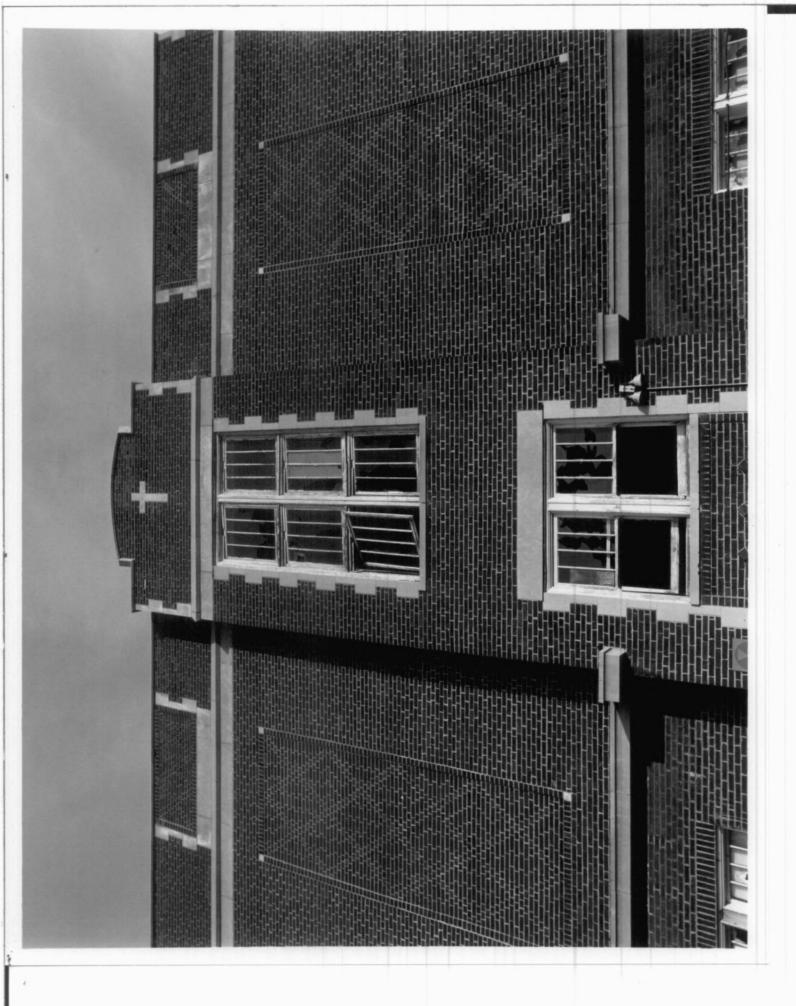
Randy Spurr January 1985 PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION:

Pride, Inc. 3606 Botanical St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Detail of secondary (west) facade, view from

the west.



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#12 of 15

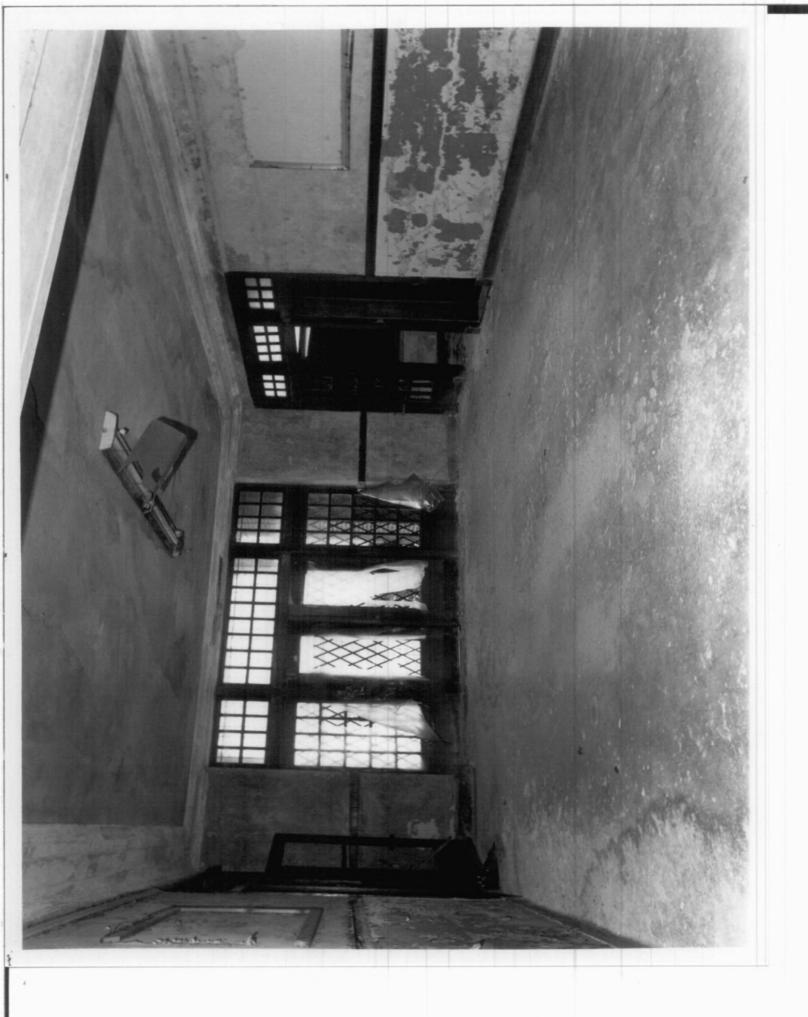
Randy Spurr January 1985 PHOTOGRAPHER:

NEG. LOCATION:

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St. Louis, Missouri 63104

Interior view of lobby, looking north to main entrance.



#13 of 15

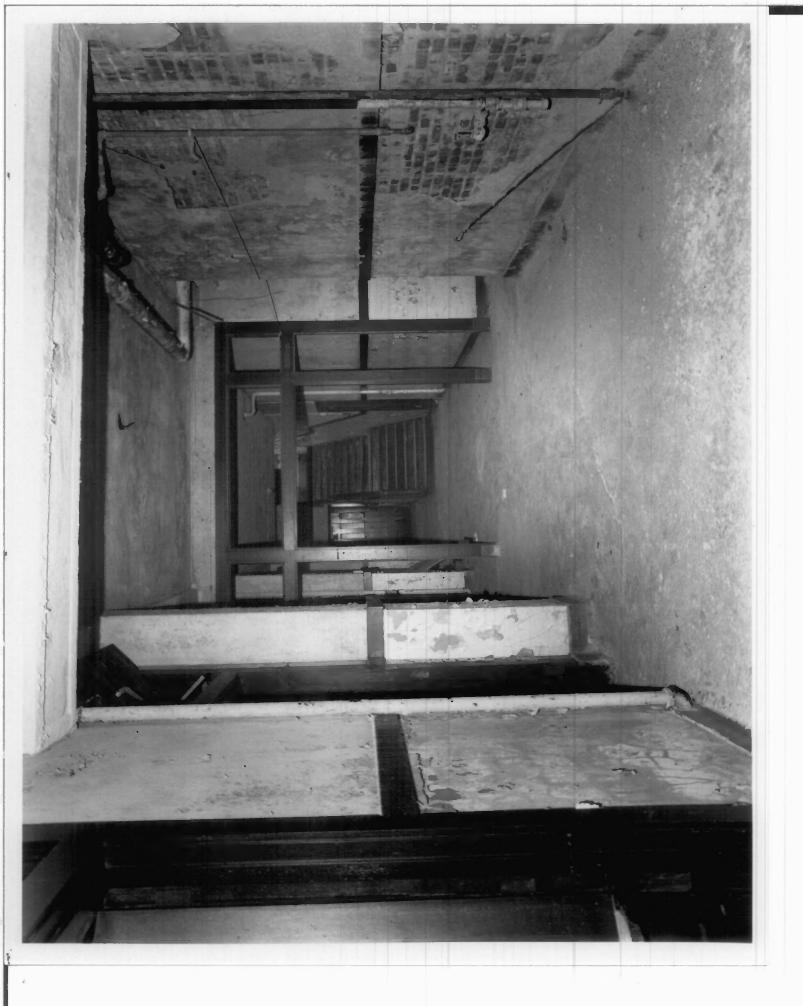
2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri IMMACULATE CONCEPTION SCHOOL

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Interior view, central hall, first floor.

View to the east.



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#14 of 15

2912 Lafayette, St. Louis, Missouri

PHOTOGRAPHER:

Randy Spurr January 1985

NEG. LOCATION: Pride, Inc. 3606 Lafayette

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Third floor hallway, looking east.



#15 of 15

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Interior view, third floor classroom.

