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# 7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Richmond's Sacred Heart Cathedral, together with the Bishop's Residence and Priest's House, occupies an entire city block fronting on Monroe Park. The irregular plot was purchased in 1867 and added to in 1884; it consists of 65 feet facing Monroe Park, 320 feet on Floyd Avenue, 400 feet on Park Avenue, and 223 feet at the rear on Cherry Street. The Italian Renaissance-style cathedral was designed by the New York architect Joseph H. McGuire and built between 1903 and 1906. Together with the Mosque and Grace and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, the Cathedral acts as a strong and visually forceful boundary for the late 19th and early 20th century residential district, "The Fan". The domed and porticoed Latin-cross-plan structure was built with a basement of Virginia granite and a superstructure of Indiana limestone with a copper and unglazed green tile roof. The massiveness of the structure is suggested by its exterior dimensions: 206 feet long and 114 feet wide with a height of 144 feet from the ground to the top of a cross on its dome. It is the second cathedral built for the Catholic Diocese of Richmond.

The front (east) elevation is distinguished by a hexastyle pedimented portico with fluted Corinthian columns (the outer columns are paired) and a tablet with the inscription "IF YE LOVE ME KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS". The pediment is topped by a cross. The portico is fronted by stone steps that elevate the main entrance from the street; the main entrance consists of three double doorways each having multiple paneled doors, leaded-glass transoms and classical cornices. The cornice of the center door is higher than the other two entries and is supported by brackets. Flanking the portico are two bell towers topped by tent roofs with cross finials. The towers are visually connected above the portico by a blind arcade. Over the crossing is the dome topped by a lantern with a cross finial. The dome sits on an octagonal drum that has stone cresting with broadfoot crosses.

The cathedral has a variety of fenestration types. The most typical are roundarched openings with leaded stained-glass windows. The gables of the transepts have large, circular stained-glass, or rose, windows. Secondary entrances have paneled doors topped by transoms that are similar in appearance to the main entrance. A brick arcade serves to connect the Cathedral to the priest's house.

In plan the Cathedral is in the form of a Latin cross. The main entrance opens onto the narthex and is flanked by baptistery and the stair tower. The baptistery retains the original marble baptismal font with a brass domed cover. The church auditorium consists of nave, aisles, transepts, and apse. The aisles are separated from the nave by Corinthian columns supporting round arches. They continue around the sanctuary to form an ambulatory which is separated from the sanctuary by an elaborate wrought-iron grillwork screen. At the ends of the transepts are semi-octagonal chapels with additional chapels opening off the aisles and the ambulatory. The walls are wainscoted in marble, and the floors are mosaic and terrazzo. The richly coffered ceiling is supported by vaults built according to the "Guastavino System", that is, with vaults of interlocking tiles rather than stone. This system was popular in revivalist buildings in the Northeast during the first three decades of the 20th century, but was rarely used in the South.At the crossing the ceiling rises into the dome, a clear height of ninety-six feet. Under the apse is the crypt with fifty catacombs for burial. The boiler rooms are beneath the morning chapel which is entered from the ambulatory as well as from the street. The sacristy adjoins the morning chapel. The organ loft is directly over the entrance vestibule. The organ was constructed at the factory of John Brown of Wilmington, Delaware, and is a duplicate of the organ in the Cathedral at Savannah, Georgia. The case was designed by the architect, Joseph H. McGuire, who also designed all the furniture for the build-

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

# 8. Significance

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Specific dates	1903-06	Builder/Architect Jo	oseph H. McGuire	

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

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Framed by Richmond's Monroe Park and forming the visual pivot between the city's commercial area and the residential Fan District, the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart is Virginia's most distinguished ecclesiastical representation of the Italian Renaisance Revival style. The domed and porticoed limestone structure, with its cloisters, diocesan gardans, and episcopal residence, is the work of Joseph H. McGuire, a New York architect whose practice centered on Roman Catholic churches and institutional buildings. Begun in 1903, completed in 1906, and regarded at once by contemporaries as the most ornate and beautiful church edifice in the South, the Cathedral was the gift of financier, promoter, and philanthropist Thomas Fortune Ryan, of Virginia and New York, and his wife, Ida Barry Ryan. The Ryans' largest single gift to the Catholic Church, it is representative of the monumental benefactions given to churches and universities by the barons of American industry and finance at the turn of the century. Also significant as a landmark in the growth of the Catholic Church in Virginia, Sacred Heart supplanted St. Peter's Church, Richmond's first cathedral, as the seat of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. The consecration ceremonies held on November 29, 1906, brought together the most eminent Catholic churchmen in the country for one of the wost colorful and impressive ceremonies in Richmond's history.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first movement towards the erection of a larger cathedral in Richmond dates to the period just following the Civil War. In 1867 Bishop John McGill purchased the eastern portion of the block on which the present cathedral stands. In view of the beginning of Richmond's expansion westward, McGill dreamed of a magnificent new structure which would replace St. Peter's on Grace Street as the principal church of the diocese, while serving as the parish church of the city's west end. <sup>1</sup> The paucity, as well as the poverty, of Catholics in the City prevented further action on McGill's plans, however, until 1882. On November 17th of that year at a meeting of prominent Catholic laymen held in the basement of St. Peter's, means were proposed for raising funds for a more "fitting Cathedral."<sup>2</sup> This movement met with some success in 1884 when Bishop Keane purchased the remainder of the present block. <sup>3</sup>

In 1901 Thomas Fortune Ryan, after conversations with his friend, the Rt. Rev. August Van DeVyver, Bishop of Richmond, announced his intention to donate \$250,000 for the erection of a new Richmond cathedral.  $^{24}$  Very soon after this announcement, he approached Joseph H. McGuire with a proposal to draw up plans.

According to contemporary accounts, Ryan so admired McGuire's design that he agreed to build the edifice even though the lowest estimate of its cost far exceeded the quarter-of-a-million-dollar mark. <sup>5</sup> Mrs. Ryan was responsible for donating the Cathedral's handsome interior furnishings, also expressly designed by the architect. <sup>6</sup> The Cathedral cornerstone, which had been cut and wrought years before in the Garden of Gethsemane, was officially laid on June 5, 1903. Construction of the Cathedral was completed three years later.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet #5)

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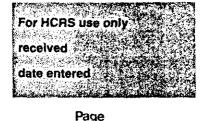
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# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART, Richmond, Va. Continuation sheet #1 Item number <sup>7,8</sup>



ing including the confessionals, altars, Bishop's throne, pulpit, gas and electric fixtures, bronze work and baptismal font.

The interior of the Cathedral has undergone some change since its consecration in 1906. Prior to the celebration of the silver jubilee in 1931, the interior painting was completed under the direction of Robert Rambusch. With the approach of the golden jubilee in 1956, the interior was repainted, new lighting and loudspeaker systems were installed, and statues of St. Peter and St. Pius X were placed in niches behind the old high altar. Original imitation-stained-glass windows were removed at this time and replaced with the present Limoges stained-glass windows. In 1968-69 the sanctuary was modified significantly to conform to the directions of Vatican II. The crucifix was lifted above the sanctuary and suspended from an arch, and the Bishop's chair and the screen behind it were moved forward to the middle of the sanctuary and placed behind a new freestanding altar set on a raised platform beneath the crossing.

To encourage participation in the liturgy, the seating arrangement was made cruciform, and movable pews were installed. In 1976 the old high altar was dismantled, reduced in size, and moved ot its present position. In 1980 a ramp was installed on the north side of the building providing free access to the Cathedral for the handicapped.

Connected to the Cathedral by an arcade is the priest's house, a three story, hippedroofed dwelling. Constructed of buff-colored brick, the side-hall-plan house is entered through its original double doors. The hall contains a curved open-well stair that runs to the third floor. The stair has a paneled newel post, molded handrail, and turned balusters. A stained-glass window in a segmental-arched opening lights the stair hall. The main reception rooms on the first floor retain their original Neoclassical Revivalstyle mantels with marble facing around the fireplace opening. Major openings throughout the house have molded architrave trim that frames the original paneled doors and 1/1 hung sash. The principal fenestration on the first floor is contained within segmental-arched openings; the second-floor openings are rectangular, while the third-floor openings consist of segmental arches that are smaller than the openings on the first floor. The Bishop's residence is connected to the priest's house by a cloister and mirrors the latter in plan and style. Both structures are covered by unglazed green tiles that are also used on the cloister. The roof lines of both structures are broken by brick chimneys. The chimney on the priest's house near the arcade has elaborate corbeled brickwork.

Situated between the Cathedral and its adjoining residences is a small courtyard. The courtyard has roses and shrubs planted around its concrete walks.

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#### Significance Historical Background

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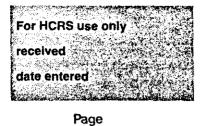
The Cathedral is one of a small number of Virginia buildings erected in a fully developed Italian Renaissance Revival Style. Like contemporary Beaux-Arts Classicism, the Italian Renaissance Revival developed as a reaction to High Victorian eclecticism, the pervasive and most fashionable style of the post Civil War period. The Renaissance Revival began with the Villard Houses in New York City, designed by McKim, Mead, and White in 1883. The firm subsequently popularized the style through their designs for the Boston Public Library (1888-92) which demonstrated its adaptability for public edifices. When Joseph H. McGuire planned the Cathedral in 1901, the style had already come to Richmond through Carrère and Hastings's Jefferson Hotel which had been completed in 1895. FHR-8-300 (11-78)

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National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART, Richmond, Va. Continuation sheet #2 Item number



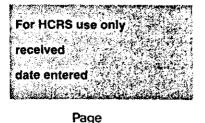
Joseph H. McGuire (1865-1947) was a graduate of City College of New York who studied architecture at St. Xavier College and the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. During a long and distinguished career that spanned nearly half a century, McGuire designed many large and important Catholic churches, including the Church of the Holy Family, New Rochelle, New York Holy Trinity Church, on 82nd Street near Broadway, and St. Elizabeth's Church and Hospital in New York City, and the Catholic Church of St. Rose at Lima, New York."<sup>7</sup> The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was the first major commission he received upon entering practive in New York in 1901, and it remains one of the most outstanding examples of his work.

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McGuire's patron, Thomas Fortune Ryan (1851-1928), whom William C. Whitney called "the most adroit, suave, and noiseless man" that American finance had ever known, controlled corporations valued at one and a half billion dollars. A native of Nelson County, Virginia, who began his career in Baltimore before establishing himself on Wall Street in 1874, Ryan launched his first great business venture in 1883, organizing a syndicate for the consolidation and extension of street railway projects in New York, Chicago, and many other cities. The syndicate's Metropolitan Traction Company of New York was one of America's first holding companies. Among his most famous financial transactions were his formation of the American Tobacco Company, his struggle for control of Seaboard Railway, his acquisition of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, and his promotion of a syndicate to develop the Belgian Congo. Also a major benefactor of the National Democratic party and credited with securing Alton B. Parker's presidential nomination in 1904, Ryan devoted a substantial portion of his wealth to the Roman Catholic Church. An early convert to Catholicism, Ryan and his wife donated more than twenty million dollars to Catholic causes. 9 In addition to Sacred Heart Cathedral, which cost no less than half a million dollars and can be compared in magnitude to J. P. Morgan's gift of \$500,000 for the erection of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and J. J. Hill's million dollar donation for the Catholic theological seminary at St. Paul, the Ryans contributed very largely to the building funds of other Catholic churches in many parts of New York. <sup>10</sup> Mrs. Ryan was a particularly generous patron of the Catholic Church in Virginia. Among her gifts were Sacred Heart Church in Manchester and the Church of the Blessed Sacrament in Harrisonburg. 11

Eyewitness accounts of the picturesque and solemn consecration services of November 29, 1906,were unanimous in agreeing that the dedication marked the most important event in the history of the Cathedral Catholic Church in Virginia as well as a major event in the history of the city. The city editor of the <u>Richmond</u> <u>Times-Dispatch</u>, Joseph Geisinger, reported that in 1850 the Diocese of Richmond,which then included West Virginia, contained only six priests, seven churches, and three schools, while only three cities in the diocese held regular masses on Sundays. By 1906, notwithstanding the fact that West Virginia and Western Virginia were no longer in the diocese, there were ten times as many priests and more than fifty churches. There were, in addition to the parochial schools now found in every parish, a college, several high schools and academies, industrial schools, infant and orphan asylums, and other charitable institutions. From only a handful of Catholics in 1850, Geisinger observed that there were now more than thirty thousand, a number that had even greater significance in view of the almost entire absence of eastern and southern European United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART, Richmond, Va. Continuation sheet #3 Item number 8

immigration into the South after the Civil War. There was also a general sentiment that the presence at so important a celebration of James Cardinal Gibbons, a former Bishop of Richmond then regarded as America's greatest Catholic churchman, along with the Papal Delegate to the United States and other church notables, had given the Virginia Church an impetus that would be felt in the far distant future. The fact that the long-wishedfor Cathedral had been made possible by the generosity of a native Virginian and Catholic layman also augured well for the diocese's continued growth. <sup>12</sup>

The significance of the Cathedral to the city was brilliantly reflected in the publication of special Cathedral sections in the November 29 and 30, 1906, editions of the <u>Richmond Times-Dispatch</u>. Noting that the growth of cities and railways had called forth larger buildings for commerce than even the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the editor of the <u>Times-Diapatch</u> rejoiced that the "spirit that inspired men to build cathedrals then is still alive and that such a spirit had been manifested in this city." Richmond now proudly stood "among the cathedral cities of the world." <sup>13</sup> Perhaps the clearest statement of the architectural and civic importance of the monumental structure came from an unidentified Protestant layman:

Not alone as a church will the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart be a power, for its beauty and artistic conception will stimulate and encourage the love of beauty of all buildings, whether secular or or churchly. The Cathedral will give Richmond an unchallenged precedence as a chosen place for all great Catholic gatherings, and will further serve to make Richmond the capital and metropolis of this and adjoining States. Already Richmond has gained great good from the cathedral, for its consecration united a whole city in praise and benediction and gratitude, and the civic life of this community is vastly richer by that spontaneous and unanimous outpouring of public sentiment, which has unmistakably declared, with every mark of approval and satisfaction, that Richmond rejoices in the possession of our new cathedral. <sup>14</sup>

The event then gained national attention through two New York publications. The <u>New York</u> Times devoted a full column to the consecration on November 30, while <u>Harper's Weekly</u> on December 22 published a full-page photograph of the cathedral's spacious interior as part of a special article by Charles Marshall Graves on the Ryans' "remarkable ecclesiastical gift." <sup>15</sup> The name of the Richmond Cathedral is derived from a special form of Catholic devotion that focuses attention on the physical heart of Jesus Christ as the most powerful symbol of God's redemptive love for humanity. The liturgical devotion dates to the seventeenth century, although it did not receive high ecclesiastical sanction until the middle of the 19th century. Just two years before the Ryans offered to build the Cathedral in Richmond, Pope Leo XIII decreed the consecration of the whole world to the Sacred Heart. Thus, the name of the new Cathedral reflected the elevated rank which the devotion to the Sacred Heart achieved in Catholic liturgy and theology in the decades just prior to the building's construction. 16

While the Cathedral continues to be used for such important diocesan events as the ordination of priests and bishops, it more recently has been opened to the public for

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concerts, lectures, and even plays. In 1979 the sanctuary served as the stage for a Virginia Commonwealth University production of <u>Beckett</u>.

McGuire's original plans for the Cathedral complex remain in the possession of the Diocese of Richmond.

RAC

<sup>1</sup><u>The Cathedral of the Diocese of Richmond Dedicated to the Sacred Heart 1906-1956</u> (Richmond: 1956), p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Magri, <u>The Catholic Church in the City and Diocese of Richmond</u> (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1906), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>The Cathedral of the Diocese ..., p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>"Ryan's New Cathedral Opened in Richmond, "<u>New York Times</u>, November 30, 1906.

<sup>5</sup>Charles M. Graves, "A Remarkable Ecclesiastical Gift," <u>Harper's Weekly</u>, Volume 50, December 22, 1906, pp. 1858-59, illus.

<sup>6</sup>Magri, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup>Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, <u>Biographical Dictionary of American Architects</u> (Deceased) (Los Angeles: 1970), p. 407.

<sup>8</sup>Max Lerner, "Thomas Fortune Ryan," in Dumas Malone, ed., <u>Dictionary of American</u> Biography, Vol. XVI (New York: 1943), p. 266.

<sup>9</sup>For an account of Ryan's conversion, see <u>Richmond Times-Dispatch</u>, November 25, 1906; his material contribution to the Catholic Church is discussed briefly in Lerner, p. 268 and in the <u>Richmond Times-Dispatch</u>, November 30, 1906.

<sup>10</sup>For a fuller discussion of the barons and their religious benefactions, see Matthew Josephson, <u>The Robber Barons</u>, <u>The Great American Capitalists 1861-1901</u> (New York: 1934), pp. 318-323.

<sup>11</sup>Richmond Times-Dispatch, November 30, 1906.

12Ibid; Geisinger's account of the earlier cornerstone laying ceremonies at St. Peter's and at the Cathedral site is quoted in Magri, pp. 17-33.

13<sub>Richmond Times-Dispatch</sub>, November 29, 1906.

<sup>14</sup>Richmond Times-<u>Dispatch</u>, November 30, 1906.

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Page

 $^{15}$ See notes 4 and 5.

<sup>16</sup>"Devotion to the Sacred Heart," <u>The New Catholic Encyclopedia</u>, Vol. XII (New York: 1967), pp. 818-820.

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### 10. <u>Geographical Data</u>

### Boundary Justification

The nominated property for the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart consists of 1 2/3 acres located at Floyd Avenue and Laurel Street in the city of Richmond. The irregular lot was purchased in 1867 and added to in 1884; it consists of 65 feet on Laurel Street, 320 feet on Floyd Avenue, 400 feet on Park Avenue, and 223 feet at the rear on Cherry Street. The property contains the Cathedral, the Bishop's Residence and the Rectory or Priest's House. The residences were planned at the time of the Cathedral and with the Cathedral enclose a small courtyard.

