

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: St. Mary's Church (2019 Update)

Other names/site number: Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception; VDHR # 122-0024

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 232 Chapel Street

City or town: Norfolk State: VA County: N/A

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: NA

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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Introduction

St. Mary's Church, now the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 25, 1979. The property was listed at the State level of significance. At the time of listing, National Register Eligibility Criteria were not identified. The property is listed as significant in the areas of Religion and Architecture. The property's period of significance was identified as 1800-1899, with specific dates of 1857-1858. Contributing resources that were discussed in the nomination's narrative description consisted of the church itself and an 1894 rectory, both of which were enclosed with a wrought-iron fence. A 20th-century school building on the property was not considered contributing to the property's significance.

Since 1979, several important changes have occurred to the property. First, the original nomination was written before the church had been named a basilica in 1991. This nomination update includes a new cover sheet to reflect the property's name change in Section 1. Second, the 1894 rectory was destroyed by fire in 1980, just one year after the NRHP listing; it was razed and replaced with a parking lot. The wrought-iron fence also was replaced around the same time.

The 1979 nomination also provided little information about other resources associated with the property. A 1979 rear addition to the church, the current fellowship hall, is not mentioned. A 1953 statue of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, located at the edge of the property along Virgin Street, and a cemetery along the church's northeast side also were not discussed.

With this Additional Documentation, the property's period of significance is updated to extend from 1857, when the church was built, to 1963, and completion of the International Style school building, which was erected after the congregation of the African American congregation of nearby St. Patrick's Church merged with St. Mary's.

Additional documentation provided herein are in the following sections from the current NRHP nomination form: Section 5, Classification (with a current number of contributing and non-contributing resources); Section 6, Function or Use, Section 7, Description (including a complete inventory); Section 8, Statement of Significance; Section 9, Major Bibliographical References (based on new research); Section 11, information regarding authors; and Section 12, new Additional Documentation, including an updated Location Map with latitude/longitude coordinates, and updated Sketch Map (showing contributing and non-contributing resources) and photographs showing the property's current condition and all counted resources, with an accompanying photo key.

The Location Map provides a more precisely mapped historic boundary than the USGS map that accompanied the 1979 nomination. The boundary is based on the verbal description in the 1979 nomination and, therefore, the property's historic boundary *has not changed* as a result of this update.

At the time of listing, this property was known as St. Mary's Church. St. Mary's was declared a Minor Basilica on December 8, 1991, the 250th anniversary of the parish, at which time the name changed to its current appellation. Due to the name change, a new cover sheet is provided as part of this update.

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Private:

Category of Property

Building(s)

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1 extant (church); 2 demolished after 1979 (rectory and wrought-iron fence)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

FUNERARY: cemetery

RECREATION AND CULTURE: work of art: statue

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGIOUS: religious facility

FUNERARY: cemetery

RECREATION AND CULTURE: work of art: statue

EDUCATION: school

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19TH CENTURY: Gothic Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD; STONE; STUCCO; GLASS

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

St. Mary's Church, now the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, was constructed in 1857-1858 in Norfolk, Virginia. The property is bounded by Holt Street to the north, Reilly Street to the east, Virgin Street to the south, and Chapel Street to the west. Constructed in the Gothic Revival style, the building features a traditional gable-roof basilica plan with a semi-circular apse. The masonry building has a stucco exterior and slate roof. The exterior is adorned with finials, pinnacles, and crockets, as well as hooded lancet windows fitted with stained glass. The interior features a 62' high ceiling, which is highlighted by Gothic rib vaulting. The church has been renovated four times during the 20th century: ca 1908, 1926, 1958, and 1984-1989, resulting in alterations to the finishes, but no dramatic changes to the character-defining features. A 1980 addition on the church's northeastern corner is used as a fellowship hall. The 1.53-acre property occupies a full city block. A c. 1963 International Style school building is located in the property's southeastern quadrant. A c. 1984 hyphen connects the church and school. A small cemetery dating to the founding of the church is located along the church's northeastern wall. A statue of St. Mary, dedicated in 1954, stands in a grassy median along the property's southwestern boundary, between the post-1980 parking lot and Virgin Street. The 1894 rectory mentioned in the 1979 NRHP nomination was destroyed by fire in 1980. The remains of the building were removed and a paved asphalt parking lot was placed here. The 19th-century iron fence that surrounded the rectory and church was replaced sometime between the rectory fire and the completion of the 1984-1989 renovation of the church. The property is located at the edge of a public housing development and abuts an elevated highway exit ramp. The setting, while somewhat compromised, has been urban in nature for many decades. Overall, however, the property has a high level of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association, and a good level of integrity of feeling, notwithstanding the intrusive highway exit ramp southwest of the property.

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Narrative Description

Inventory

This nomination update expands the period of significance for the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and it now begins in 1857 with construction of the current church and ends in 1963 with construction of the International Style school building. Based on the expanded period of significance and additional historic context included in this nomination update, the 1954 statue of St. Mary and the 1963 school have been classified as contributing to the property. The 19th-century cemetery along the church's north wall was overlooked in the 1979 NRHP nomination, but herein is classified as contributing. Each of the resources listed in this inventory below are described in further detail below.

Church and Fellowship Hall, 1857-1858, 1 story, Gothic Revival, Contributing Building
Cemetery, 1858, Contributing Site
Statue, 1954, Contributing Object
School, 1963, 2 stories, International Style, Contributing Building

Church and Fellowship Hall – Exterior Description

The 1979 NRHP nomination describes the 1857-1858 church as an outstanding example of antebellum Gothic Revival architecture in Virginia. The church's west-facing façade features a central tower flanked by adjoining side entrances and topped by a spire. The central entrance has a double doorway with large paneled wooden doors, which are each topped with a pointed arch fitted with stained glass. The doors are contained within a central arched opening, which is situated under a decorative gable crown. Situated directly above the main entrance is an eight-part rose window. Above the rose window and appearing on all four sides of the tower are a pair of louvered lancets with hood moldings and a clock. Rising above the tower is an elaborate, five-tier spire, each tier exhibiting a different surface treatment, which reaches a height of 240 feet. The spire is broken in the center by a paneled band and the edge of each tier is lined with crockets. Gold-leafed crosses top the central entry surround, each side of the tower, and the spire. The adjoining side wings, which contain entrances facing north and south, also feature rose windows and Reuleaux triangle-shaped windows with hoods.

The side elevations of the church are buttressed, which separates each elevation into nine bays. Each buttress is topped with a pinnacle along the lower roofline. Each bay features a hooded lancet window. All windows within the church received stained glass in 1918. Above the lower roof, which is clad in Buckingham slate (quarried in Buckingham County, Virginia), are Reuleaux triangle-shaped clerestory windows. The main roof of the church is clad in slate laid in alternating bands of purple and unfading green. The purple bands contain a flower motif.

The semi-circular apse of the church is separated into five bays, each featuring a hooded lancet window. The part of the roof where the apse meets the gable features a gold-leafed cross.

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A small chapel (St. Joseph's Chapel) projects from the southeast corner of the church, and features the same stucco finish, Buckingham slate roof, and decorative embellishments as the primary body of the building. The chapel's gable end features pinnacles at the southeast and southwest corners, which match those seen on the main portion of the church, and the gable is topped with a gold-leaf cross finial. The exterior walls contain hooded lancet arches fit with stained glass windows, which are much less ornate than those seen within the sanctuary; the windows feature a simple diamond pane pattern. Only the two arched windows on the east elevation feature a design consisting of a shield and banner motif. The chapel is connected internally from the sanctuary, as well as from the exterior at the west elevation, where a ramp and a small run of stairs provide access from the parking lot.

On the north side of the church, a projection similar to the chapel abuts the original exterior of the church: this is a non-historic hyphen that was designed to match the style of the historic church, with stucco exterior, slate roof, and matching ornaments. It was constructed to provide direct access from the church building to the c. 1980 fellowship hall addition. The doorway accessing the hyphen is in the shape of a large pointed arch and is fitted with a large wooden door. The projection itself contains a red-carpeted ramp and a small set of stairs to provide access down from the church to the addition. A stained glass window that was previously installed within the church's north elevation was relocated to the same elevation within the hyphen.

Church and Fellowship Hall – Interior Description

Despite a number of 20th century renovations, the interior of the building retains the majority of its historic finishes and features. Documented renovations took place in 1926, 1958, and 1984-1989.

All façade entry spaces retain their historic wood doors and marble checkerboard tile. Historic stone cladding remains on the walls in the central entry foyer, while the side entries retain historic plaster and millwork, including wainscoting, chair rails, and stair banisters.

The narthex is the area within the church that features the majority of the interior modifications. Modern partition walls have been inserted within this space to house a book and gift shop and restrooms. The floor has been carpeted and the space underneath the balcony overhang has been fitted with a set of metal-framed, double-leaf doors with clear glass panes, flanked by fixed single-light metal-framed sash with clear glass, and a transom consisting of large, rectangular clear glass panes. The church's historic Carrara marble baptismal font has been relocated to this area and sits at the center of the space. Previous descriptions of the font describe a large brass cover, which is no longer present; there is currently a small statue that sits in its place.

Situated above the narthex and overlooking the nave is a balcony, which is accessed via the stairs within the side entries. The balcony features pews on the north and south sides. At the center of the balcony is the pipe organ. The organ was constructed onsite in 1858 by the New York firm Ferris and Stuart upon the completion of the church building and in time for the dedication ceremony in 1858. The organ

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underwent restoration in 1954 and during the 1970s.

The nave is entered from the narthex through the modern metal-and-glass entry doors at the north and south corners of the church's former center aisle. The nave also has been modernized, but the character of the space remains true to the Gothic Revival style. The space features soaring 62-foot ceilings, with Gothic rib vaulting rising from the columns up to the ceiling, meeting at central floral ornaments on the ceilings. The pew configuration was modified during the last quarter of the 20th century, resulting in the elimination of the center aisle. Long pews now span the center of the nave, from column to column, with narrower sets of pews along the side aisles. The altar also has been reconfigured to include a large stage area for the choir and musicians. The flooring in this space has been changed as well, likely during the 1980s renovation, resulting in the removal of the marble checkerboard flooring seen in the entryways and installation of polished slate tiles. The Munich-style stained glass windows were likely installed during the early 1920s and feature various biblical figures within varying Gothic-inspired architectural settings.

The transept contains two altars: the south altar features an altar to St. Joseph, while the north altar is to the Blessed Virgin. Adjacent to the altar to St. Joseph is a door, which accesses St. Joseph's Chapel at the church's southwestern end.

At the rear of the church is the hyphen leading to the large fellowship hall. Constructed in 1979 in the property's northeastern quadrant, the fellowship hall was constructed as an addition to both the school and the sanctuary and serves to connect the two building internally. The addition features a stuccoed veneer over concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls. The fellowship hall connects to the church via a hyphen on the addition's west wall, and it connects to the school building via a hyphen on the addition's south elevation. The fellowship hall also contains exterior doors at the north and east elevations, with windows located above the doors. The addition has a flat roof. On the interior, the addition has an open space that functions as the fellowship hall, with a few small office and storage enclosures at its east and west ends.

Secondary Resources and Site:

The church occupies the northwestern quadrant of the property. A small cemetery is situated along the building's north wall and is enclosed by a wrought iron fence. Modern mechanical equipment has also been placed in this area. Additional mechanical equipment has been placed off the church's south wall, and is hidden from view by a stuccoed CMU wall. Two small benches sit in the grass along the sidewalk at this elevation.

Church parking is provided in the property's southwestern quadrant, where the rectory once stood; the 1894 building was destroyed by fire in the fall of 1980. The 19th-century iron fence surrounding the rectory and church was replaced at some point between the rectory fire and the completion of the 1984-1989 renovation of the church. At the entrance to the parking lot from Virgin Street, there is a 1954

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statue of St. Mary surrounded by cherubim. The statue was created out of molded marble by Norfolk-based Hungarian sculptor Josef Orsolya and sits atop a crenellated stucco wall.

At the rear of the site, facing Reilly Street is St. Mary's School, which was constructed in 1963 in the International Style and designed by Norfolk architectural firm McElroy & Baldwin. The exterior walls have a tan brick veneer interspersed with aluminum-framed windows. The south elevation features large windows, which are obscured from the exterior by a concrete-block brise-soleil screen. The roof-wall junction features a boxed overhang with a mosaic tile cornice detail and red metal coping. The teal mosaic tile is also used on the north elevation above and below windows to create a colored band. A wrought iron fence encloses a portion of the site at the south of the school; this small grassy area contains concrete benches and a small statue. A small service alley runs along the west side of the school and the east side of the church building.

On the interior, the school retains its historic plan. The building contains offices, classrooms, and a cafeteria. The footprint was originally U-shaped, with two wings protruding northward: the east wing contains offices and classrooms and is two stories tall, while the west wing is only one-story and houses the cafeteria. The opening at the north of the footprint was enclosed with the fellowship hall addition, which included a connecting corridor which enclosed the center courtyard at the north elevation.

The interior walls in the building are composed of painted CMU with ceramic tile wainscoting. This feature appears in corridors, bathrooms, classrooms and the cafeteria. The stairwells and offices feature a floor-to-ceiling ceramic tile wall finish. Painted brick piers appear on the interior walls of the south elevation between window bays. The corridor floors throughout the school are terrazzo. Classrooms have either linoleum tile or carpet and bathrooms feature ceramic tile.

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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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE; African American

(Included in 1979 Nomination):

ARCHITECTURE

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RELIGION

Period of Significance
1857-1963

Significant Dates

- 1858
- 1908
- 1926
- 1958 (significant renovations)

Architect/Builder

- Keely, Patrick Charles
- McElroy & Baldwin

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

In 1979, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception (formerly St. Mary's Church) was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places with significance at the statewide level in the areas of Religion and Architecture. The period of significance was broadly defined as 1800-1899, with specific dates of 1857-1858, coinciding with construction of the church. This nomination update clarifies that the property's significance in the area of Religion falls under Criterion A and in the area of Architecture under Criterion C. This update adds another area of significance under Criterion in the area of Ethnic Heritage: African American, regarding its significant history with an African American Catholic congregation that lost its church as a result of urban renewal projects in Norfolk during the 1950s-1960s. The congregation joined the existing, predominantly white congregation at St. Mary's Church. The property meets Criteria Consideration A for religious properties and Criteria Consideration D for cemeteries as its significance is derived from the property's architectural design, its role in the proliferation of Roman Catholicism in 19th-century Tidewater Virginia, and its association with an African American congregation during the mid-20th century. Each of these topics is discussed in greater detail below, and provide justification for expanding the property's period of significance to begin in 1857, when construction began on the church, and end in 1963 with completion of the school building, which was erected after the congregation of the African American congregation of nearby St. Patrick's Church merged with St. Mary's.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A – Ethnic Heritage: African American

Formerly St. Mary's Church, today's Church of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception was dedicated on October 2, 1858. The parish itself is much older, but records predating 1842 are mostly lost. Father

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Jean Dubois is known to have travelled to Norfolk, Virginia, in 1791 with a small group of Catholic priests and families seeking refuge from persecution in France during the Revolution. They were followed two years later by refugees from Santo Domingo fleeing an uprising of enslaved persons, and in 1794 these two groups joined to form the "Roman Catholic Society of Norfolk Borough" and purchased the lot at the corner of Chapel and Holt Streets where St. Mary's now stands. They built a wood frame chapel by 1802/1803, which faced what was then renamed Chapel Street. This early building was replaced by a small brick church around 1831 by Father F. Van Horsigh, and in 1842 by the larger St. Patrick's.¹

The 1802/1803 church formally created a home for the Catholic faith in Norfolk.² The Virginia Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom had been adopted by the General Assembly on January 16, 1786, and reaffirmed by United States Constitution in 1789; these actions resulted in new Catholic communities across Virginia, as the Anglican Church had been disestablished at the same time. Reverend Michael Lacy arrived in 1803 and found the parishioners ineffective in their duties, a church starting to decay, and debt totaling six hundred dollars; Lacy worked to improve the congregation and remained the priest until his death in 1815.³ In 1820, Norfolk's Catholic population requested that a diocese be organized in Richmond and by January 19, 1821, Bishop Kelly arrived in Norfolk, appointed by Pope Pius VII. He chose Norfolk as his home because at that time the city had the largest Catholic population in the state. The congregation was poor enough that Kelly was forced to open a school to support himself. Additionally, there was a conflict between the local priest and many of the local Catholic leaders over control of church funds. The financial and religious conflict within the Norfolk community resulted in Bishop Kelly departing a year later and no new Virginia bishop was appointed until March 21, 1841.⁴

The next stage of Norfolk's Catholic history, and the history of St. Mary's, started with the arrival of Father A. L. Histelberger and his ministry from 1833 until 1852 which oversaw the construction of a large new church, St. Patrick's. The church was in the classically-inspired Greek Revival style and dedicated on July 10, 1842, by Richard B. Whelan, the second Bishop of Richmond. It measured 96 feet by 50 feet and featured six Doric columns and a mitered entrance with three flights of granite steps; it was designed and constructed entirely by Norfolk craftsmen but closely followed the 1840 design of Norfolk Academy by Thomas U. Walter.⁵ The church was heavily damaged by fire in 1856, rebuilt as a parish hall, and then demolished by 1977. In 1839, Father Histelberger also welcomed to Norfolk the Sisters of Charity, who established a school on the corner of Chapel and Mariner Streets. The school closed in 1842 but reopened in 1848 and became St. Mary's Academy, which served the community for well over a century before finally closing in 2002.⁶

Rev. Matthew O'Keefe, from Waterford, Ireland, replaced Father Histelberger and served as the first pastor of St. Mary's while also overseeing the Catholic community during the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1853-1855 and the devastation of the Civil War. The yellow fever killed one-third of the St. Patrick's congregation but Father O'Keefe endeared himself to the community with dedicated and tireless service during the epidemic, including serving the sick, helping to bury the dead, and working with non-Catholics in Norfolk such as his friend Presbyterian Reverend George D. Armstrong.⁷ Soon after the

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yellow fever subsided came the fire, potentially caused by arson, that destroyed St. Patrick's Church on December 8, 1856. The rumors of arson focused on the Know Nothings and objections to African American people being allowed to worship in the gallery of the church. The church was insured for \$10,000 with another \$1500 for the organ, but insurance underwriters estimated the loss to be \$120,000. Father O'Keefe, with community memories still fresh concerning his sacrifices during the epidemic, was able to raise funds to begin construction of a new church. The cornerstone was laid on the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 1857. Funds came from a combination of subscriptions in Norfolk among both Catholics and Protestants, as well as a preaching tour in New York by Father O'Keefe specifically to collect funds for the new church. The church was one of the earliest churches to be named St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, recognizing the December 8, 1854, Papal Edict declaring the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception as official Catholic dogma. It is claimed that local Irish gas works laborers donated their services towards construction instead of a donation of money. The final cost of St. Mary's was \$65,000, which was largely paid off over the next sixteen years; Father O'Keefe did not draw a salary during this time.⁸ In 1877, Father O'Keefe was recalled by the Maryland diocese and replaced by another Waterford native, Father John J. Doherty, who had served as assistant to O'Keefe from 1869 to 1872. Father O'Keefe was remembered as a hero of the city by Catholics and non-Catholics alike for his efforts during the Yellow Fever epidemic. Common to the period, however, he also was an "enthusiastic sympathizer" with the Confederacy and served as the chaplain of Mahone's Brigade in the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War.⁹

Under Father Doherty, the remaining debt for St. Mary's was retired and a program of building and renovation was initiated in anticipation of the church's fifty-year Golden Jubilee. The church was consecrated on December 9, 1900, by Reverend Augustine Van DeVyver, sixth Bishop of Richmond, making it one of the few consecrated churches in the diocese. The changes to St. Mary's included two original altars being replaced with new marble ones donated by parishioners, enlargement of the sacristy, heating improvements, and general renovations, including replacing gas lighting with electric fixtures. Additionally, a new rectory was constructed in 1894. Father Doherty oversaw all of this and served until his death in 1918.¹⁰

Renovations to the church continued on a regular basis up until the present. Father Doherty's predecessor, Father James T. O'Farrell, served only six years, but during his tenure the acclaimed Munich stained glass windows were installed with \$5,000 in costs paid for by parishioners. Father Edward A. Brosnan came from Richmond in 1924 and began renovations for the church's Diamond Jubilee on December 8, 1933, which totaled \$60,000 (\$20,000 of this came from the diocese and \$40,000 from parishioners). The improvements included new marble flooring under the sanctuary, new Gothic-style electrical fixtures, and re-stuccoing the exterior, all in an effort to have the church resemble its original appearance.¹¹

The next phase of St. Mary's history was the transition into the post-World War II era and the preparation for the Golden Jubilee in 1958. This period was overseen by Father Peter A. Schouten, who became pastor at St. Mary's in 1951. At that time Norfolk had become the largest city in Virginia and at least nine Catholic churches had branched out from St. Mary's, beginning with Sacred Heart in 1894.

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Downtown Norfolk was beginning a long period of urban redevelopment that included demolition of many older neighborhoods, dislocation of numerous residents, with African American neighborhoods disproportionately affected, and the construction of large public housing projects as well as new commercial buildings and public works such as the Norfolk Convention Center. During this era, the most significant change for St. Mary’s resulted from the demolition of the historically African American church of St. Joseph’s and the merging of that congregation with St. Mary’s in 1961, at the height of the civil rights movement. Many pre-merger members of St. Mary’s were assigned to other parishes outside of downtown and nearer their homes. The changes created substantial friction among those who welcomed the changes versus those who resisted. Many existing families had strong connections to St. Mary’s; being assigned to a new place of worship, and having to leave such a tradition-rich church, was upsetting for them. Meanwhile, some African American members of St. Joseph’s had been hoping to have a new church built for their congregation, rather than being moved to an older church in need of maintenance.¹²

The association of St. Mary’s with Norfolk’s African American community was not new. As early as 1842, there is documentation of African American parishioners at St. Patrick’s. Records from 1886 state that “colored” Catholics were assigned to a section of the choir of St. Mary’s for worship.¹³ In 1889, the parish of St. Joseph was founded to serve the black Catholic community in Norfolk, with eight hundred people baptized and over five hundred converts in its first twenty-five years. As with St. Mary’s, there was also an associated St. Joseph’s School. With urban renewal-related redevelopment causing profound dislocations in the local community, the diocese sold St. Joseph’s church and school to the City of Norfolk for demolition. The money funded an expanded St. Mary’s Academy, including construction of the property’s 1963 school building, and bolstered capacity for St. Mary’s Church to receive many new members. Some original parishioners who lived closer to downtown remained, but the church, now located in the heart of an African American community, became a predominantly African American congregation. The first group of pastors were from St. Josephs, led by Father Harold U. Gregory in October of 1963. Later Father John Harfmann started the first Catholic-sponsored Head Start program in Norfolk. Father Jeremiah D. Brady was the last Josephite priest, serving until 1974, when St. Mary’s returned to the Diocese of Richmond and Father Thomas J. Quinlan becoming the priest in late 1974. On May 3, 1975, Father Walter C. Barrett was assigned to St. Mary’s as its first African American associate pastor.¹⁴ With the departure of Father Quinlan in 1985, Father Barrett succeeded him and became the first African American pastor in the history of the church. In celebration of its renovations and its status in the community and the region, St. Mary’s was declared a Minor Basilica on December 8, 1991, the 250th anniversary of the parish. It was the first majority African American basilica in the United States and is one of only five predominantly African American Catholic parish communities within the 135 parishes of Richmond Diocese.¹⁵

Criterion C – Architecture

St. Mary’s Church of the Immaculate Conception was built in 1857-1858 and designed by Patrick Charles Keely (1816-1906), an Irish immigrant and architect who completed numerous commissions for the Catholic Church within the United States.¹⁶ St. Mary’s was inspired by French Gothic design, and is

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the only example of that style in southeast Virginia. Keely immigrated to the United States in 1842 and his first commission was for the new-Gothic Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York, completed in 1848. It was the first Gothic Revival style church in the Diocese of New York. That design launched Keely's career as the leading architect for the Catholic Church (focused almost entirely on Gothic Revival) of the mid-to-late 19th century. His obituary claimed more than six hundred commissions, and dozens of confirmed examples remain extant today.

In 1833, the Oxford Movement, led by A. W. Pugin, began a revival of Gothic Revival architecture that had a lasting influence on young Patrick Keely in Ireland. As a result, Keely favored English Gothic rather than French or German, making the French-inspired St. Mary's of Norfolk that much rarer a design. A similar design is seen in the St. Patrick's Pro-Cathedral in Newark, New Jersey.¹⁷ Reverend Matthew O'Keefe, who oversaw the hiring of Keely in Norfolk, also worked with him again for the design of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Towson, Maryland, where he served as pastor beginning in 1887. The design of that church, particularly its form and floorplan, was directly inspired by St. Mary's of Norfolk and was completed in 1904, shortly before the death of Reverend O'Keefe and Patrick Keely, both in 1906.¹⁸

Patrick Keely's designs followed much of the Catholic Church's thinking regarding church function and the new focus on the Gothic Revival movement. The Gothic Revival style was viewed as preferable to later styles. Elevated above contemporary industrial society, it was believed that Gothic Revival focused on faith and on humans' regard for one another. The architecture also had to be correct to match the Catholic liturgy. This focus took the form of features such as a high altar separate from the rest of the church, recessed side chapels, tall and pointed spires, and stained glass windows with imagery for teaching the liturgy. Keely repeatedly used many of the same architectural design elements, including simple floor plans, recessed side chapels, three aisles, stone interior columns, groined vaults, spandrels, and carving on the ribs, all of which are seen in St. Mary's as well as many Catholic churches of the period, regardless of the variations in exterior Gothic Revival style and design choices.¹⁹

Most character-defining interior features of St. Mary's remain from the original construction. The high altar features a central spire nineteen feet in height and thirteen feet long. It is made of polished white Italian Carrara marble with Brazilian onyx inlay. A lamb resting on a closed book is carved into the central medallion, a symbol of the Holy Sacrifice represented by Mass. At the dedication, Bishop McGill placed a sealed metal box in the altar with relics from Sts. Clement and Clara as well as from the Blessed Virgin Mary. The altar is less visible now as a result of a new platform and altar installed in the choir as directed by reforms made by the Second Vatican Council (commonly known as Vatican II).²⁰ Also intact are the clustered piers capped with acanthus leaf capitals, which support the fourteen Gothic arches that create the side aisles and support the plaster lierne vaulting running along the nave and both side aisles. The original twenty trefoil stained glass windows in the clerestory and flanking the west entrance are all intact. The 300-foot steeple is the oldest in Norfolk and the only one with a clock. The eleven-foot high wooden crucifix was saved from the fire which destroyed St. Patrick's and carved from a single piece of Bavarian pine, except for the arms.²¹

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The Munich stained glass windows, made by the Franz Mayer Company of Munich, Germany, are thought to date to 1918, but were likely installed during the early 1920s, the delay having been caused by World War I. Records show an order on October 8, 1923, for two one-light windows and fourteen two-light windows for St. Mary's, Norfolk, Virginia, for the side aisles. The apsidal windows were ordered on March 30, 1925. The windows were likely installed by Mayer glaziers. These stained glass windows were completed following the 15th- and 16th-century tradition of using intense blues and brilliant reds under the canopies. Keely used Franz Mayer stained glass windows in many of his other commissions, so they were an appropriate replacement choice for St. Mary's windows.²²

The organ at St. Mary's is the original instrument installed in July 1858. It was built by Richard M. Ferris and his half-brother Levi U. Stuart in New York City and was the last organ built by Ferris, who died that December at the age of 41. His firm built about sixty organs during his twenty-year career, with the one at St. Mary's being the only large organ still in its original location. The first public concert was on August 31, 1858, with a review stating that the organ produced "swelling tones, echoed along the high arches, like the solemn roll of thunder."²³ The mechanism is constructed entirely of wood and features a soon-to-be-obsolete mechanical system called the tracker action, which has a secondary benefit of lasting longer than many other instrument types. The overall organ has about 1,750 mostly metal pipes which vary from less than a foot to sixteen feet in length. The pipes vary in shape, a few are wood, some have reeds, and most are original with only a few replacements. Today, the organ is the oldest large-scale organ built in New York that remains largely intact and still includes rare features compared to other organs of the time; it is considered a nationally significant instrument.²⁴

In addition to periodic renovations and restorations discussed in its history, usually linked to important anniversaries, St. Mary's has undergone several periods of more recent renovations. During the 1970s, Father Quinlan focused on much-needed roof repairs and a restoration of the original organ. In 1979, a substantial addition was added to the church at a cost of \$330,000, creating the fellowship hall still in use today. Beginning in 1983, the church commenced a long fundraising and restoration effort that had three phases and eventually involved more than \$1 million dollars in costs. Phase I was completed in June of 1985 and included rehabilitation of the exterior and the grounds. At this point Father Quinlan moved on and Father Barrett became the first African American pastor in the history of St. Mary's. Phase II better integrated the fellowship hall with the church and added new restrooms and vesting space; it was finished in 1986. Phase III focused on a restoration of the interior and was completed in 1989. This final phase included substantial changes to the interior of the church, some of which restored the historic layout and others that introduced new arrangements. The High Altar was turned to create the Eucharist Chapel and the sacristy was relocated to the back of the church, while the old sacristy space was converted to a chapel named for St. Joseph. A new Reconciliation Chapel was built at the back of the church as part of its integration with the fellowship hall. The old Stations of the Cross were replaced by new ones in St. Joseph's Chapel. A new baptismal font was built to accommodate infants. Three new stained glass windows were added, one of St. Martin de Porres in the Reconciliation Chapel and two (St. Patrick and St. Joseph) were added to St. Joseph's Chapel to commemorate the lost St. Joseph's and St. Patrick's churches. The subject of the de Porres window is the African American congregation's links to the African diaspora.²⁵

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Freemason Street Baptist Church (NRHP 1971) is the only church in Hampton Roads that is truly comparable to St. Mary's in terms of architectural design. Freemason Street Baptist is the only other antebellum church in Hampton Roads, having been constructed 1848-1850, and is the earliest known surviving Gothic Revival building in Norfolk. It was designed by Thomas U. Walter in the English Perpendicular Style and does have several additions. A more typical example of Walter's work is the Greek Revival design seen in the old Norfolk Academy (NRHP 1969) and Norfolk City Hall (NRHP 1972) buildings. The English Perpendicular was chosen having been brought to the forefront of design by Richard Upjohn's design for Trinity Church in New York City, which opened in 1846. Like St. Mary's, Trinity Church has a large central steeple (which was blown off by a storm and replaced in 1897). It also has a stuccoed brick exterior and utilizes a three-aisle plan with lancet windows and pinnacled buttresses alternating, as with St. Mary's. There are also distinct differences with bays filling much of the side aisles and a large second-story balcony surrounding the nave in Trinity Church.

Back in Norfolk, Christ and St. Luke's Episcopal Church (NRHP 1979) was completed in 1910 in the English Perpendicular design by the Philadelphia firm of Watson and Huckle, along with support from local firm Ferguson and Calrow. This church is of a different style and era from St. Mary's, but its size, high style, and prominence throughout the Tidewater region place it on par with St. Mary's in regards to architectural and community stature. Rather than stuccoed brick, it features granite and limestone walls. An enormous offset square tower is atop the main entrance. The building has the expected clerestory, lancet windows, attached buttresses, but also features the massive lancet windows with English Perpendicular tracery at each end of the nave. The stained glass in the church was made by Mayer and Company of Munich, like St. Mary's. Most other documented Gothic Revival churches in Virginia fall into various Victorian or Romanesque variations, along with a significant number of typical African Methodist Episcopal churches. There are also many early-to-mid twentieth century churches with simplified Gothic Revival elements. St. Mary's Church, now the Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, remains significant at the State level in Virginia for its outstanding architectural design and high level of integrity.

ENDNOTES

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² The Story of St. Mary's, Centenary Souvenir, 1958, p.13.

³ Rev. Joseph Magri, The Catholic Church in the City and Diocese of Richmond, Richmond, Va: Whittet and Shepperson, 1906, p.43.

⁴ The Story of St. Mary's, p.14; Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Norfolk, Virginia: 200th Anniversary, 1791-1991, Norfolk, VA: Hill's Printing, 1991, p.15.

⁵ Basilica of St. Mary, 200th Anniversary, p.21; "Dedication of the New Catholic Church," *Norfolk Beacon*, July 12, 1842; The Story of St. Mary's, p.14; Judith L Smith, Spire and tower: The history,

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architecture and art of two Norfolk, Virginia church, Norfolk, Old Dominion University MA Thesis, p.10.

⁶ The Story of St. Mary's, p.15.

⁷ Hogan, The Golden Jubilee of the Church of St. Mary's.

⁸ Basilica of St. Mary, 200th Anniversary, p.27; The Story of St. Mary's, p.16; Smith, Spire and tower, p.12, 21.

⁹ The Golden Jubilee of the Church of St. Mary's, p.41.

¹⁰ The Golden Jubilee of the Church of St. Mary, p.43-45; The Story of St. Mary's, p.17.

¹¹ The Story of St. Mary's, p.17-18; Basilica of St. Mary, 200th Anniversary, p.28.

¹² Smith, Spire and tower, p.15; Basilica of St. Mary, 200th Anniversary, p.45-46.

¹³ Smith, Spire and tower, p.14-15; Basilica of St. Mary, 200th Anniversary, p.37.

¹⁴ Basilica of St. Mary, 200th Anniversary, p.37-38, 46-47; Smith, Spire and tower, p.15.

¹⁵ Carrie McCormack, "St. Mary's becomes 1st black-majority basilica in U.S.," *The Virginian-Pilot*, October 13, 1991.

¹⁶ Smith, Spire and tower, p.19.

¹⁷ The New Jersey Churchscape, <http://www.njchurchscape.com/Index-Jan2010.html>; Smith, Spire and tower, p.30-31.

¹⁸ http://www.theimmaculate.org/church/about_our_church/parish_history/index.html.

¹⁹ Smith, Spire and tower, p.29-31.

²⁰ The Story of St. Mary's, p.25; Smith, Spire and tower, p.34-

²¹ Smith, Spire and tower, p.48-52.

²² Smith, Spire and tower, p.36, 41, 43-45.

²³ William T. Van Pelt, "St. Mary's Church, The Organ," 1979. This was published soon after the complete refurbishing of the organ by Richard A. Garrett over several years beginning in 1975.

²⁴ Van Pelt, "St. Mary's Church, The Organ."

²⁵ Basilica of St. Mary, 200th Anniversary, p.47-48.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.53

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Latitude: 36.847180

Longitude: -76.282380

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Marcus R Pollard

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street & number: PO Box 11083

city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23517

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date: 8-25-2017

Photo Log

Name of Property: Basilica of Saint Mary

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City or Vicinity: Norfolk

County: N/A

State: Virginia

Photographer: Marcus Pollard

Date Photographed: May 2015; August 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0001)
Basilica of St Mary, Facade

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0002)
Basilica of St Mary, Northwest corner

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0003)
Basilica of St Mary, Southeast Chapel

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0004)
Basilica of St Mary, Sanctuary alter

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0005)
Basilica of St Mary, Sanctuary looking towards balcony

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0006)
Basilica of St Mary, Aisle

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0007)
Basilica of St Mary, South Alter

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0008)
Basilica of St Mary, North Alter

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0009)
Basilica of St Mary, South Chapel

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0010)
Basilica of St Mary, Statue

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(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0011)

Basilica of St Mary, School facade

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0012)

Basilica of St Mary, School south elevation

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0013)

Basilica of St Mary, School 1st floor corridor

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0014)

Basilica of St Mary, Connection between fellowship hall and school

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0015)

Basilica of St Mary, Connection between church and fellowship hall

(VA_City of Norfolk_Basilica of St Mary_0016)

Cemetery, north side of church



LOCATION MAP

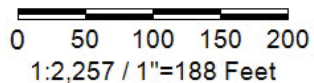
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City of Norfolk, VA
DHR No. 122-0024

LOCATION COORDINATES

Latitude: 36.847180
Longitude: -76.282380



Feet



Title:

Date: 3/5/2019

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Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.



SKETCH MAP/ PHOTO KEY

(exterior views)

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DHR No. 122-0024

List of Resources

- A. Church and Fellowship Hall (contributing building)
- B. Cemetery (contributing site)
- C. Statue (contributing object)
- D. School (contributing building)

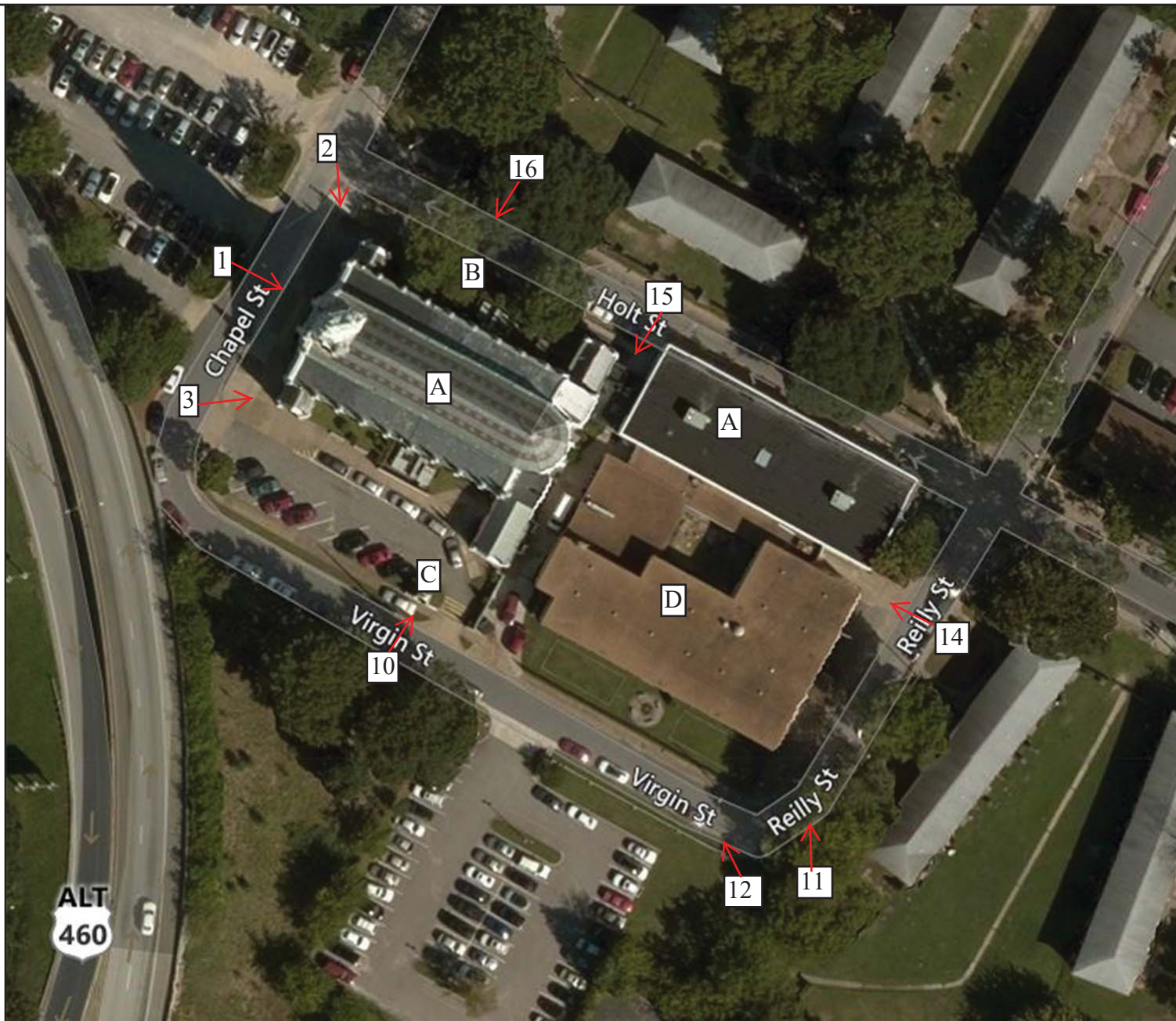
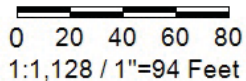


Photo Locations (photos 4-9 and 13 are interior views)



Feet



Title:

Date: 3/5/2019

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