

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION

The Church of the Immaculate Conception and Rectory
132 Barome Street

Suggested Architectural Rating: Blue

Construction Dates: 1851-57 for original church
1929-30 for reconstructed church
1900 for rectory

Architects: Father John M. Cambiaso, S.J., and T.E. Giraud for original church
Wogan and Bernard for reconstruction.
Diboll and Owen, architects for rectory.

Nomination Information

Date: May 25, 1978

Nominated by: Laurance Eustis, III

Seconded by: Andre' Rubenstein

Diane Manget

Imre Hegedus

Recommended by: Staff

Site Description

Square 226, Lots 5, 6, and two undesignated lots.

1st M.D. 5th A.D.

Zoning: CBD-1

Lot Sizes: Rectory on undesignated lot

30'3" x 145'0"3" x 31'2" x 152'5"5"

Church on three lots

Lot 5: 21'3"6" x 152'4"6" x

21'6"5" x 156'0"2" x

Lot 6: 21'3"6" x 156'0"2" x

22'2" x 163'3"2" x

Undesignated lot" 21'3"6" x 163'3"2" x
22'2" x 170'6"2"

Current Use: Largest undesignated lot: Rectory

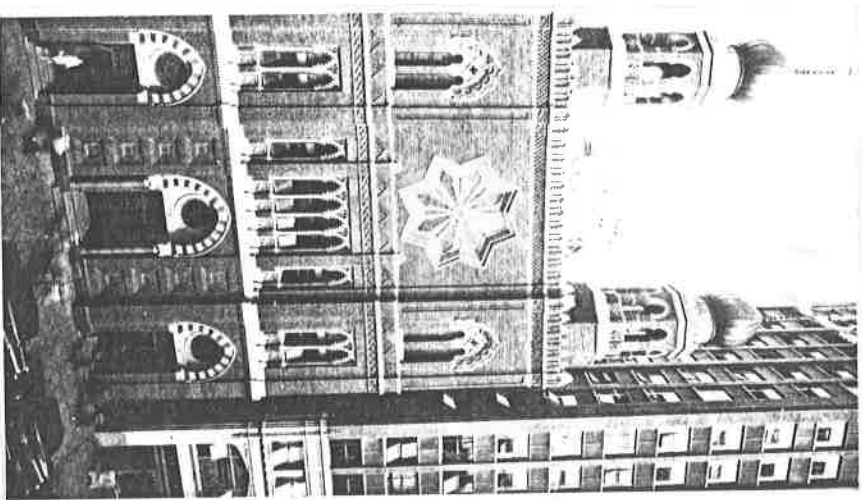
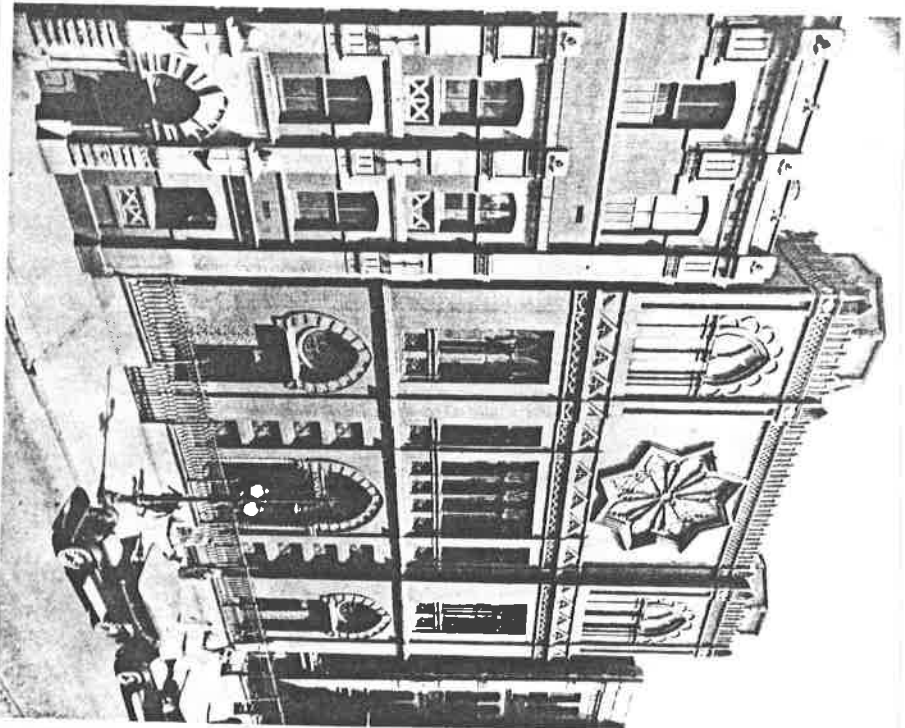
Smallest undesignated lot and lots 5 and 6: Church

History of Property

Current Owner: Jesuit High School of New Orleans

Date of Acquisition: December 29, 1949 transfer from The Catholic Association

Purchase Price: Transfer



The nomination of these buildings is based upon their architectural significance. Each of the four areas of criteria used in determining landmark qualification, and outlined in City Ordinance #5599 MCS will be examined on an individual basis in order to provide information upon which a final decision will be made whether or not to designate the property.

Architectural Significance

According to records in the Office of Conveyance, the land upon which these buildings stand was acquired by the Society of Jesus in 1848. Construction of the Church of the Immaculate Conception began in 1851, and the church was dedicated in 1857. The design of the first church was the work of Father John Cambiaso, the Superior of the Jesuit Order in New Orleans, with assistance from the architect, T. E. Giraud. Father Cambiaso had resided in Spain and North Africa before he came to New Orleans. The great monuments of Islamic architecture in Spain and North Africa served as a source of inspiration in the design of the detailing of the church. The construction of the Pere Marquette Building in 1925 seriously damaged the old church and it was determined that it would have to be rebuilt. The architectural firm of Wogan and Bernard was hired to reconstruct the church, closely following the original design. Work on the present church was begun in late 1928 and it was dedicated in early 1930. The most striking aspect of the church has always been the Islamic or Moorish character of the architectural details. The ground floor entrances are framed by three great horseshoe arches whose design is derived from similar arches in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, the greatest monument of Islamic architecture in Spain and a building of great interest to nineteenth century architects. The great bronze entrance doors reflect the Islamic fascination with repetitive geometric patterns. The slender glass columns and the elaborate pointed arches that frame the second story stained glass windows appear to have been salvaged from the old church, as were the decorative panels beneath the second story openings. The great eight-pointed window at the center of the third floor also appears to have been salvaged from the old church, while the elaborately enframed windows to either side of it were designed by Wogan and Bernard. The two open towers topped by onion domes were also designed by Wogan and Bernard, but were based upon the design of the towers intended to rise above the first church, but never erected.

The four story building adjacent to the church, which now serves as the rectory, was built in 1900. Designed by the architectural firm of Diboll and Owen, the building originally served as the elementary school of the College of the Immaculate Conception, and was the gift of Bernard, Hugh and Partrick McCloskey. Newspaper accounts of the opening of the building state that Diboll and Owen designed the structure to harmonize with both the church and the other college buildings, designed by James Freret in 1881. The marble entrance follows the design of the church entrances. The rest of the facade is executed in pressed brick, with the pilasters and other details carried out in a sand color so as to contrast with the dull red of the plain wall surfaces. This was the treatment used on the 1881 College buildings which occupied the corner of Baronne and Common. Stylistically the Rectory is related to theBeaux Arts style as interpreted by the French architect Viollet-Le-Duc during the 1870's. The style is characterized by the relative simplicity of decorative detailing and the heavy character of the pilasters which divide the facade. James Freret, whose designs for the older College buildings is copied in the design of the Rectory, studied architecture in Paris in the late 1860's and early 1870's and was familiar with the work of prominent French architects of the period. The influence of French architectural training and design is an important factor in the development of American architecture in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Architects

Father John M. Cambiaso S.J. and T. E. Giraud, the architects for the original church, were also individually responsible for two other 1850's churches. Father Cambiaso, while not trained as an architect, must have been a man of considerable talents, for he is also credited with the design of St. Maurice Church at 605 St. Maurice Avenue, which has since undergone several renovations since it opened in 1857. T. E. Giraud designed Holy Trinity Church at 721 St. Ferdinand Street in Faubourg Marigny in 1853.

The firm of Wogan and Bernard, architects for the reconstruction of the church in 1929-30, were responsible, along with Albert Toldeano, for the design of the present LePavillon Hotel in 1906 and the Fairmont Hotel in 1908. The firm of Diboll and Owen, architects for the Rectory, were also responsible for the design of the Canal-Louisiana Bank in 1906 which is now International House.

Historic Personages

Father John M. Cambiaso, S. J., the designer of the first Church of the Immaculate Conception, was born in Lyons, France and served as an instructor in Jesuit colleges in France, Sardinia, Africa, and Spain. He arrived in New Orleans in 1846 and held the position of superior of the Jesuit Order from 1848 to 1852. From 1852 to 1858 he was President of the College of the Immaculate Conception, which he was instrumental in founding. Father Cambiaso continued to serve the College as Treasurer through the 1860's.

Cultural, Economic and Social History

Through both the Church and College of the Immaculate Conception, the Jesuits made a major contribution to life in nineteenth century New Orleans. The fact that the church was rebuilt following its original design indicates the popularity of the unique structure, which could have been replaced by a church featuring a more conventional architectural treatment. The Rectory is the only surviving building from the old College of the Immaculate Conception which was one of the most respected educational institutions in this city. The college moved and changed its name to Jesuit High School in the 1920's.