

The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206) 625-4501

REPORT OF DESIGNATION

LPB-151/80

NAME OF PROPERTY
AND ADDRESS:

✓ ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
732-18th AVENUE EAST

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

CAPITOL HILL ADDITION BLOCK 23,
LOTS 1, 2, 21, 22, AND A PORTION OF VACATED
ALLEY AND A PORTION OF LOT 20.

OWNER:

CORPORATION OF THE CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF SEATTLE

On March 19, 1980 the Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve the designation of the above property as a Seattle landmark. The Board voted to approve the designation of the church structure and only the immediate portion of the city block on which it is located as denoted in the above legal description.

Specific features to be preserved are: the entire exterior of the building, including the stained glass, surface painting, and decoration.

The designation is based upon satisfaction of the following criteria of Ordinance 106348:

Section 3.01 (3) It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, city, state or nation.

As a major facility, serving a widespread area, St. Joseph's parishioners and the church itself have made major contributions to the community (the neighborhood) and the city.

Section 3.01 (4) It embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural style, a period, or of a method of construction.

...more...

The church presents a major complete and almost unchanged example of the ART DECO style. More importantly, perhaps, it is important link in the exploration of new (old) structural materials, i.e., unadorned, reinforced concrete, as exemplified in Europe in works by such men as Moser of Switzerland and Perret of France.

Section 3.01 (5) It is an outstanding work of a designer or builder.

St. Joseph's and the Seattle Tower (Northern Life Tower) are stellar among the many significant contributions by A.H. Albertson to the urban scene, not only in Seattle, but throughout the Puget Sound area.

Section 3.01 (6) Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identify of such neighborhood or the city.

Because of its size, quality, color and form, and location near the top of the eastern slope of Capitol Hill, St. Joseph's since its completion has been a significant element in the urban scene and in the skyline of the city.

Issued March 31, 1980.

Earl D. Layman
City Historic Preservation Officer

by:

Roberta Deering
Board Coordinator



City of Seattle

Department of Community Development/Office of Urban Conservation

Landmark Nomination Form

LPB-340/79

Name St. Joseph's Church Year Built 1929
(Common, present or historic)

Street and Number 732 - 18th Avenue East

Assessor's File No. 133680 - 0825 (759 X-11)

Legal Description Plat Name Capitol Hill Add. Block 23 Lot 1-22

Div. #2
And vacant alley adjacent

Present Owner Corp. of Catholic Archbishop of Seattle Present Use Religious

Address 732 - 18th Avenue East

Original Owner Same Original Use Religious

Architect A.H. Albertson Builder A.D. Belanger

St. Joseph's Church: Architectural Description

LPB-340/79

Description: Present and original (if known) physical appearance and characteristics

St. Joseph's Church, built entirely of reinforced concrete in 1929, is one of the more technologically progressive religious edifices built in the United States in its time. Designed by A.H. Albertson, the church is an expression of modernistic architecture, sparingly detailed, with art deco elements and forms. Although reflecting many of the spatial elements found in romanesque and gothic architecture, the design of St. Joseph's is a direct result of the liturgical and symbolic requirements of the traditional Catholic Church rather than an imitation of historical architectural forms.

Built into a steep embankment, rising 33 feet between 19th Avenue East at the rear, and 18th Avenue East at the facade, the structure consists of two major floors, the lower level housing the parish hall and a chapel, and the upper one housing the main body of the church. 150 feet in length, the church follows a cruciform plan including a nave, flanking side aisles, shortened transepts and a rectangular sanctuary. Polygonal stair towers and a baptistry have been handled so as to add interest to the external form while simultaneously serving functional requirements. At the crossing, the interior is illuminated by an octagonal lantern which surmounts the complex massing of exterior forms arranged at the lower, east end of the church. The overall composition is dominated at the right of the facade by a 100 foot high square-based tower, articulated by vertical shafts and terminating in three tiers of octagonal forms.

Fenestration is direct and simple, and includes pairs of elongated clerestory windows and two geometrically designed rose windows at the east and west ends. Walls are also punctuated by a variety of lancets and smaller rectangular windows. The exterior walls are modulated by flat buttresses and occasional terra cotta panels detailed in art deco-styled reliefs. Set within the concrete walls, these panels occur above portals, under pediments and copings and within spandrel areas at the east end of the church and tower. All interior and exterior wall surfaces are of exposed concrete, no attempt having been made to conceal wooden form markings and joints. This direct and straightforward approach to construction has resulted in subtle textures which relieve the otherwise austere appearance of the church.

The interior of St. Joseph's is similarly plain, consisting of a long nave, a slightly pitched roof supported by concrete beams and geometrically-arcaded side aisles. Rectangular transept chapels create a wide, unobstructed space, immediately under the crossing lantern and in front of the sanctuary. Detailing was originally restricted to a wrought iron baptistry grille and altar rail, an ornamental plaster organ grille, and painted ornamentation of the crossing piers, roof beams, pulpit and side aisle arches. Since its initial completion, in 1929, stained glass and mosaics have also been introduced, contributing color and warmth to the interior.

St. Joseph's Church: Statement of Significance

LPB-340/79

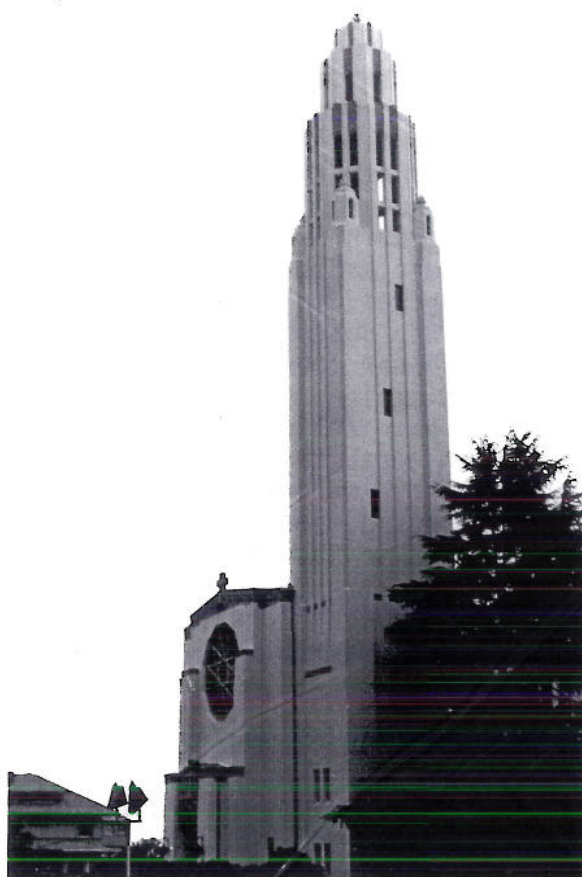
Statement of significance

Designed in 1929 by noted Seattle architect A.H. Albertson, St. Joseph's Church is widely recognized for its early and expressive use of reinforced concrete technology. Though reinforced concrete as a basic building material was discovered and used extensively by the Romans, this technology was lost with the coming of the dark ages and indeed was not really rediscovered in this country and explored as an expressive building medium until Frank Lloyd Wright started experimenting with it in the second decade of this century. Concurrently the material was being re-discovered and re-explored by such early modern architects in Europe as Auguste Perret in France and Werner Moser and others in Switzerland. By the late twenties and early thirties those men and others had built aerodromes, schools, factories, commercial buildings and churches; in the latter range were buildings of equivalent spirit and quality to St. Joseph's Church here in Seattle. Certainly this church ranks with its European cousins as an outstanding expression of this period and material. Its style was at one time called derisively "modernistic", but more recently it has been classified as "art deco". One of the virtues of this style was the departure from historic precedent and an attempt to express a new and very plastic material. Some critics might say that this church is gothic in nature and traditional in form, but such aspects of it, as is true with its counterparts in Europe, were dictated by church ritual and dogma rather than by slavish adherence to previous space-forms. The church has changed somewhat internally through the years with the advent of a generous amount of stained glass in the windows of the nave, and elsewhere, and with the addition of elaborate and extremely attractive mosaics in the apsidal end of the church.

St. Joseph's church is located in a predominantly Catholic neighborhood in what has traditionally been a close-knit community. The old Parish of St. Joseph was formerly a part of the Immaculate Conception Parish. Founded in 1907, the parish lies east of 14th Avenue and north of Denny Way, and extends to the lake on the north and east. Originally embracing approximately 180 Catholic families, the first church was built of wood frame construction and was consecrated on April 21, 1907. A school for children was established in the basement and conducted by the Sisters of the Holy Names. Growth of the parish paralleled that of the city and necessitated the construction of the present structure two decades later.

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Photographs:

Submitted by: Office of Urban ConservationAddress 400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 Phone 625-4501

Date _____

Reviewed [Signature]
Historic Preservation OfficerDate 1/16/79