

PH0001856

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY DATE: JUN 26 1973

1. NAME

COMMON: St. Aloysius Catholic Church

AND/OR HISTORIC: \_\_\_\_\_

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: NW corner, I and North Capitol Streets, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C.

STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11 COUNTY: District of Columbia CODE: 001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Gonzaga College

STREET AND NUMBER: 19 Eye Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Recorder of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER: 6th and D Streets, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Proposed District of Columbia Additions to the National Register of Historic Places recommended by the Joint Committee on Landmarks

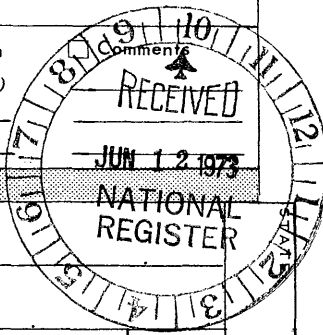
DATE OF SURVEY: March 7, 1968  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: National Capital Planning Commission

STREET AND NUMBER: 1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Aloysius Catholic Church is located at the northwest corner of I and North Capitol Streets, N.W., in a section of Washington which is undergoing substantial change as residential structures are replaced by large highrise office buildings. Attached to the church at the west is its rectory erected in 1887. At the north an alley separates the church from a parochial school.

The church which was constructed between 1857 and 1859 is a Renaissance Revival design and, as such, is unusual as most mid-century churches have Gothic derivation. The simplicity of St. Aloysius' exterior gives little indication of the elaborate decoration of the interior, yet is in harmony with it.

The rectangular main block of the church is approximately 75 feet by 154 feet. It has a very high foundation and a low gable roof. Its narrow, main facade faces east. Its walls are the height of a four story building although it actually contains only a full basement and the large nave with two balconies at the east end. At the west is a lower wing containing chancel, chapels, sacristies, and originally priests' quarters. This flat-roofed wing has the height of a three-story building. It contains a full basement and two stories. North of the wing is a one story wing with shed roof. This wing is probably a later addition but was present by 1887. Attached to this wing and the northwest corner of the main, or nave, block is a square belfry 90 feet high. It is not known whether the belfry was part of the original design of the church. The bells were dedicated seven years after the church was dedicated. Monumental stairs which divide into two straight reverse flights after the first landing lead to the main entrance of the east facade. These stairs and their balustraded open porch extend the width of the main facade. It is probable that these stairs are a late nineteenth century addition. They are smooth ashlar, channeled brownstone (now painted white). The church's walls are red brick laid in common bond and almost all of its trim is brick.

The pedimented main (east) facade is approached by the monumental stairs. This facade has three entrance bays between corner bays with paired, Ionic pilasters on almost square pedestals. These pilasters create an in antis effect as the entrance bays are slightly recessed. On pedestals on either side of the taller, central entrance are semi-freestanding Ionic columns rising to the entablature. All three doorways have semi-elliptical arches and stained glass in transoms. Over the doorways are rectangular raised brick panels and large stained glass windows with round arches. The pediment has a full entablature executed in brick. In the pediment is an oculus and above it is a gilded Latin cross.

The south facade of the main block has eight bays. The east, corner bay is irregular and has small oval windows separated by brick bands and fretwork. These windows light the stairs to the balconies. The other seven bays are divided into basement level, wainscot level, window level, and clerestory level. Each bay on the basement level has an opening under a semi-elliptical

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1857-1859

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian            | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated St. Aloysius Church at the northwest corner of I and North Capitol Streets, N.W., a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The basilican church with handsome interior decoration was erected in 1857-59. It was designed by Father Benedict Sestini (1816-1890), a Jesuit priest who was a well-known mathematician, astronomer, and physicist. The building's restrained Renaissance Revival design is unusual as most churches erected at the time were in the Gothic Revival style. Over the altar and the chapel are paintings by Constantino Brumidi (1805-1880), the artist of the frescoes on the dome of the U.S. Capitol. The church is part of a Jesuit complex including Gonzaga College and several parochial schools.

Father Burchard Villiger was the motivating force behind the founding of St. Aloysius as a parish church of the Jesuit Fathers of Georgetown College.

Ambrose Lynch gave the land for it in a then remote section of the city.

In 1857 Sestini's plans for the church were accepted. Father Sestini was already a well-known astronomer when he migrated to the United States from Italy in 1848. From 1848-1869 he taught mathematics and natural sciences at Georgetown University and did astronomical research. In 1853 the United States Government published his paper on sun spots. In 1866 he began publishing the Messenger of the Sacred Heart, a Roman Catholic periodical. Sestini is known to have designed three buildings: Holy Trinity and St. Aloysius Churches in Washington and the Jesuit Seminary in Woodstock, Maryland.

In June 1857 ground was broken for the church. By June 1859 the building was sufficiently complete to be the site of a concert. On October 3, 1959, Brumidi's altar painting was hung. Brumidi was an Italian painter and priest who became an American citizen. He decorated a number of churches but is best known for his frescoes in the dome of the Capitol. He was a personal friend of Father Sestini.

On October 16, 1859, St. Aloysius was dedicated. On September 9, 1866, the bells in the tower were dedicated.

(Continued on Form 10-300a, Page No. 2)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Atlas, Newspaper Clippings, and Photographs. Washingtoniana Collection. D.C. Public Library.

Diamond Jubilee of St. Aloysius' Church, Washington, D.C. 1859-1934. Washington: W.F. Roberts, 1934.

Dictionary of American Biography. Vol. XVI. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1935, pp. 594-595.

Durkin, Joseph T. Georgetown University. Garden City: Doubleday, 1964, pp. 34-35.

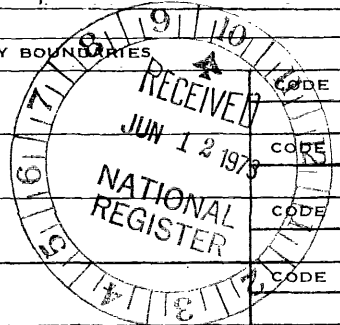
**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38° 54' 05"	77° 00' 34"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1/2 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:



**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
T. Robins Brown, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Capital Planning Commission DATE: May 1, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:  
1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

**12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: *James G. Durkin*

Title: Assistant to the Mayor for Housing Programs

Date: JUN 1973

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

*Robert M. Utley*  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

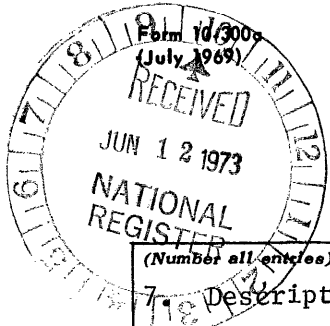
Date: 7/26/73

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JUL 26 1973

(Number all entries)

7. Description - St. Aloysius Catholic Church

arch. String courses outline the wainscot level which has seven rectangular, recessed panels. The very tall round-arched windows are separated by pilasters with recessed panels. The window at the east is filled. Above each window are rectangular, raised panels. The clerestory level has seven, small, rectangular windows. There is a brick cornice. The rear, or chancel, wing has one bay similar to those of the main block, except there is no clerestory level.

The bell tower has brick quoining and bands which divide it into five levels. The fifth level has the four faces of the functioning, custom-made clock. This level projects slightly due to corbels. In 1934 the wooden girders of the belfry were replaced by steel ones and the pitch of the belfry's pyramidal roof was lessened. The cooper-covered belfry has a single round-arched opening on each side and contains four bells dedicated in 1866.

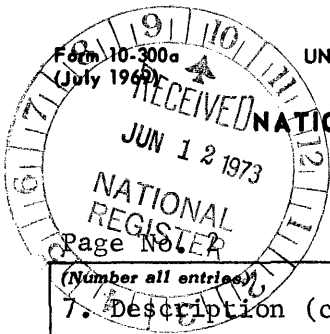
The exterior of the church was painted in 1909. A 1934 photograph shows it with white stuccoed or painted columns, pilasters, clerestory level, panels and entablature. Today these exterior features are red brick except the bases of the pilasters and columns of the east facade and the east porch and stairs.

The interior of St. Aloysius is particularly noteworthy due to the high degree of coherency of its overall design. The nave proper is a very high rectangular space with two balconies at the east supported by cast iron columns. Under the balconies are a vestibule, corner stairways, a baptistry added in 1934 along the south wall, and confessionals along the north wall. The west wall of the nave contains the large round-arched opening of the chancel flanked by smaller round-arched openings of the chapels. Above the chapels are circular paintings by Constantino Brumidi. The chancel, approximately square in plan, is covered by an oval, coffered dome with stained glass oculus. The chancel may have been enlarged between 1859 and 1887. The barrel vaulted chapels were probably created in 1925 when the side altars were recessed to make room for the new communion rail. Behind the chapels are two stories of rooms. A narrow passage behind the chancel links these rooms.

The general colors of the interior are very attractive. The predominant colors, as painted in 1959, are pale pink, rose, pale yellow, and white with silver picking out mouldings. The geometric stained glass added in 1878 in the north and south windows is predominantly blue and purple and enhances the painted colors.

The most outstanding features of the nave are the fluted, Corinthian pilasters beginning at the dado level along the north and south walls. These pilasters separate windows and carry a full entablature with frieze with plaster decoration and modillion cornice.

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7. Description (continued)

The plaster ceiling of the nave is a handsome feature. Originally the ceiling was made of plates of iron. In 1965 due to fire damage the ceiling was replaced. The ceiling has pale pink rectangular panels and rose square panels with white and silvered rosettes and mouldings.

The chancel is very elaborate. An aedicule with white marble, fluted, Corinthian columns is located behind the white marble altar and frames Brumidi's painting of St. Charles Borromeo giving the first Holy Communion to Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. This painting has been retouched several times and was restored in 1959. In the lunette is a stained glass oculus surrounded by a sunburst motif. The north and south sides of the chancel are divided into two levels. White marble, fluted, Ionic pilasters flank the entrances to the sacristies on the lower levels. The upper levels have slightly-projecting balconies under half domes. In 1934 the marble pulpit and sedilla were added and the marble floor of the sanctuary laid. An attractive white marble communion rail with square, fluted, Ionic columns and newels with mosaics of lilies dates from 1925.

The basement has a large auditorium under the nave. This rectangular room was increased 4 feet in height by excavation at the turn of the century and decorated for use as a place of worship. There are two rows of cast iron Corinthian columns supporting the ceiling and the floor of the nave. Under the entrance porch and stairs are several low-ceilinged rooms. Behind the basement sanctuary are rooms used for storage, utilities, and community services.

8. Significance

In the early years the pastor lived in a room south of the chancel behind the south chapel. The sacristan lived in a room above the pastor's. The assistant pastor's quarters were over the north sacristy. The second story rooms are still used as quarters for priests.

During the Civil War the church was going to be converted into a hospital. To prevent this parishioners built a new hospital building and St. Aloysius was not used.

Since Jesuit Fathers have always been closely associated with education it is not surprising that in 1860's the basement of the church housed a parochial school. By 1868 nearby girls' and boys' schools had been completed and the basement was vacated. In 1871 Gonzaga College, a Jesuit seminary, was located near the church.

The church has had few major exterior changes. It is possible that the chancel was enlarged prior to 1887. In 1887 the rectory was attached to the rear of the chancel wing. Decorative features of the interior have been altered and replaced through the years.

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8. Significance (Continued)

Several years ago the main sanctuary was not used and services were held in the basement sanctuary. Today most services are held in the main sanctuary.

