FHR-8-300 (11-78)

B-3608

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic: Saint James The Less Roman Catholic Church (Preferred)

and/or common: Saint James' and Saint John's Roman Catholic Church

2. Location

street & number: Aisquith Street at Eager Street (SE corner) ___ not for publication

city, town: Baltimore ___ vicinity of congressional district: Seventh

state: Maryland code 24 county: Baltimore (city) code 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	x occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
x building(s)	x private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	x religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	x yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name: Saint James Roman Catholic Church

street & number: 1225 Eager Street

city, town: Baltimore ___ vicinity of state: Maryland 21201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.: Records Office, Room 601

street & number: Baltimore City Courthouse

city, town: Baltimore state: Maryland 21202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title: City of Baltimore Neighborhood Survey has this property been determined elegible? ___ yes x no

date: 1980 ___ federal ___ state ___ county x local

depository for survey records: Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation

city, town: Baltimore state: Maryland 21202

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	X unaltered	X original site
X good	___ ruins	___ altered	___ moved date _____
___ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Saint James the Less Roman Catholic Church is an 1865-1867 High Victorian Gothic influenced brick structure with Romanesque Revival overtones, a tall central tower rising out of the facade or west elevation, and an ornate interior with marble sculpture and murals. The facade of the church has round arch recessed panels with round arch windows and pointed bichromal surrounds created by alternating stone and brick treatment, and miniature round arch corbelling under the eaves of the roof and in the facade of the tower.

DESCRIPTION

The Saint James Church stands at the southeast corner of Aisquith and Eager Streets, with the front facing Aisquith. The exterior is built of brick (all stretcher bond on front, common bond on sides), and highlighted by polychrome brick and stone trim. The body of the church is a simple rectangle, 183 feet long and 65 feet wide. The lower stories of a steeple extend slightly from the center of the western entrance wall. The side walls of the church are about 58 feet high, and the peak of the roof is close to 80 feet above the ground. The steeple, at 256 feet, is one of the tallest church towers in the city.

Since Aisquith Street slopes downhill south of Eager Street, there is a level terrace of concrete paving between the sidewalk and the portals of the chuch. This terrace is separated from the sidewalk by granite curbing, and it is entered by three groups of granite steps which are directly in front of each of the three portals of the church. Old photographs show an iron picket fence anchored in the granite curbing, but this has been removed.

The basement wall and front steps of the church are of white marble. There are three groups of front steps, each leading to one of the portal arches. The center arch tunnels through the massive base of the steeple; the other two entrances pierce the main body of the church. Each arch is accented by half-columns and archivolts. The center portal is set several feet into the base of the steeple while the other two entrances are at the skin surface of the main body of the church; thus the immense mass and strength of the steeple's base is articulated and differentiated from the more flat treatment of the building's surface. Each portal is further highlighted with a brick arch in a bichrome pattern imitative of a stone arch; inside each of the portal arches is a set of large wooden double doors topped by a half rose window in the tympanum.

The first story closes with a course of stone molding. Thereafter, the steeple and the body of the church are storied independently. The second story of this west facade of the church has two tall round-top windows flanking the steeple, each haloed with a bichrome brick arch. At the roof there is a Romanesque arched corbel table which extends around the sides of the church.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

On the steeple, well above the entrance but still below the level of the roof peak is a characteristically Romanesque pair of round-top windows inside an arch with a bulls-eye in the tympanum. Further above, beyond the roof peak, the paired window motif is repeated, but much more elaborately. Since it is above the roof of the church, it appears on all four sides of the tower. The openings are not glazed but are screened with louvers and there are clock faces (inoperative) in the tympana. The arches are of the same bichrome brick pattern as the arches below, and the whole arrangement is surrnounded by textured brick surfaces and topped by a corbel table. Over each corner is a pinnacle; the pinnacles surround an octagonal spire, puncturated by four tall brick dormers, each dormer resting on the brick tower wall below.

The north and south walls of the church are larger rectangular planes of brick broken by six large windows on each wall and one smaller window toward the western end of each wall. There are buttresses between the windows.

There is a side yard between the north wall of the church and Eager Street. This area is enclosed by an eight-foot high concrete wall. The rear of the church is not visible, as the rectory has been built adjacent to it. The rectory is a smiple three-story brick building with a low-pitch roof. The entrance is on Eager Street, and there is a basement entrance on Somerset Street. The interior of the rectory, which houses offices, a priests' residence, and other church functions, has been extensively remodelled and modernized.

The interior of the church is one large rectangular space. There is no system of nave and aisles in the spatial organization of the structure, but the pews are arranged so that there are two side aisles and a large center aisle. There is no clerestory, and except for a few pillars at the rear supporting an organ loft, the space is free of pillars, piers, or other interruptions. In the center of the eastern wall a large arch opens into a semi-circular domed apse. At the western end are the organ loft and two smaller choir lofts above. Along both the northern and southern walls are six large stained glass windows, each about 30 feet tall; at the lofts there is a smaller window in each wall. Between the windows, pilasters seem to support the quarter-round ribs that lead to the framework of the five-part ceiling coffering. The ceiling is in need of rehabilitation. The roof, ceiling, and walls need repairs to preserve the structural integrity of the church.

This nomination includes only the Saint James Roman Catholic Church property at Aisquith and Eager Streets and excludes the institutional structures to the south of the church which are neither presently nor historically connected with Saint James.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	x sculpture
___ 1600–1699	x architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700–1799	x art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
x 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
___ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The significance of Saint James the Less Roman Catholic Church is derived from several sources. As a building designed in the High Victorian Gothic style with Romanesque Revival overtones, the Saint James the Less Roman Catholic Church is an example of a type of architecture that was commonly used in Baltimore in the second half of the nineteenth century for church structures. This church is an unusual example in that it is constructed of brick rather than the more commonly used stone, particularly for buildings of similar size and lavish treatment. The structure achieves additional significance as an early work of George A. Frederick (1842-1924), a prolific and prominent architect in Baltimore who designed buildings of all types mainly in the Baltimore area but also across the state. The craftsmanship of the period is apparent in the detailing of the construction of the building itself as well as in the stained glass windows from the studios of Josef Mayer in New York and Germany; three large interior murals painted about 1886 by the German-born artist William Lamprecht; and marble sculpture work by the Baltimore sculptor Joseph Martin Didusch.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

The Saint James Church was designed by George A. Frederick, one of the leading architects of mid and late nineteenth century Baltimore. Among Frederick's other works are the Baltimore City Hall and the Cylburn Mansion (both on the National Register of Historic Places) as well as several pavilions in Druid Hill Park, also listed on the National Register. Prominently sited at a major intersection on a hill, the church is an imposing neighborhood landmark. The 256 foot tower is visible for miles around.

Incorporated into the building are several works of art that lend additional significance: The huge stained glass windows were fashioned in the studios of Josef Mayer, a major producer of stained glass in both Germany and the United States. He operated studios in both Munich and New York. (Mayer windows could be found once in the nearby St. John's Church. They were removed when that building became a community center.) The three large murals at the east end of the church were painted about 1886 by artist William Lamprecht. They depict the "Martyrdom of St. James", the "Annunciation" and the "Death of St. Joseph". According to the Thieme-Becker art encyclopedia, Lamprecht was born in 1838 near Wurzburg, Bavaria, was trained in Munich and came to America around 1870. He specialized in wall and ceiling murals, mostly of religious themes for churches. His works appear in cathedrals and churches in Boston, Brooklyn, Cincinnati, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. Lamprecht returned to Munich in 1901. He was still living in 1920.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2

The marble altar rail and the marble statuary are the work of Baltimore sculptor Josef Martin Didusch (1853-1928). Among his other works are capitals and other architectural decorations in the Library of Congress. a desk for Pope Leo XIII, a statue of George Calvert at Calvert Hall College in Baltimore, and a wealth of architectural decorations and religious and secular statuary throughout the eastern United States.

The monumental organ, perched in the main loft at the west end of the church, was constructed in BAltimore in 1868 by the master organ builder August Pomplitz at his shop at Pratt and Albermarle Streets. (The shop is no longer standing). The organ is a relic of the heyday of Baltimore organ-building, and it was made by one of the leading exponents of the craft. (For more informationon Pomplitz and Baltimore organ building see "Baltimore Organs and Organ Building" by Thomas S. Eader in Maryland Historical Magazine Volume 65 Number 3, Fall 1970).

The four bells in the tower were cast by Henry McShane and Company of Baltimore, a firm specializing in bell-founding. There has never been more than a handful of foundries making large bells in the United States. The McShane foundry, begun in 1856 and still in operation, is the only surviving one. Consequently, from its start it has manufactured large bells for churches, universities, etc., throughout the country. The bells in St. James are quite large, weighing 2100 pounds, 2600 pounds, 3400 pounds and 5000 pounds.

The Saint James parish, founded in 1833 originally served a mixed population of German and Irish immigrants. By 1841 the German population in the neighborhood had increased greatly and the Irish population center had shifted closer to the Jonestown area. Therefore the Saint Vincent parish on Front Street was created out of the English-speaking segment of Saint James; Saint James was designated to serve the German-speaking population and was placed under the ministry of the Redemptionist order, under whose ministry it remains today.

By the early 1860s the number of parishioners had grown well beyond the capacity of the old church, and plans were made for construction of the present facility. The cornerstone was laid on October 22, 1865 and the building was dedicated on December 22, 1867.

Through the years the church sponsored a large number of philanthorpic services, social groups, cultural activities, and even a savings and loan association for the neighborhood. Among the prominent business and civic leaders associated with Saint James were Louis Dohme, co-founder of the Sharp and Dohme pharmaceutical company (now Merck, Sharp, and Dohme), and brewers George Brehm and Thomas Beck. On the front wall of the church there are two plaques bearing the names of members of the church who served in both World Wars.

By the 1960s most of the Catholic German-Americans and Irish-Americans had moved out of the area and had been replaced by a mostly non-Catholic black population. In 1966, the nearby church of Saint John the Evangelist, a one-time major Irish parish founded in 1853, was forced to close because of dwindling numbers, and was merged into Saint James forming the present-day parish of St. James and Saint John's.

1. Centenary-St. James Church, Baltimore

2. Cunz, Dieter; The Maryland Germans; Princeton University Press; 1948

3. Eader, Thomas S.; "Baltimore Organs and Organ Building"; Maryland Historical Magazine; Volume 65 Number 3 (Fall, 1970)

4. Scharf, J. Thomas; History of Baltimore City and County; Louis H. Everts; Philadelphia; 1881

5. Thieme, Ulrich & Felix Becker; Allegemeines Lexikon Der Bilbenden Kunstler; E. A. Seeman; Leipzig; 1920

6. Maryland Historical Sites Inventory: Baltimore City (B-3608), Annapolis, Maryland.

9. Major Bibliographical References

B-3608

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 3

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Baltimore East Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	18	361840	4351220	B			
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification – Located on Aisquith Street at the southeast corner of Eager Street, the property measures 138' along the west or Aisquith Street side, 210' along north Eager Street side, 138' on east, and 213' on the south.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mr. Jeffrey Honick, Planning Assistant

organization Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation date November 1980

street & number 100 Holliday Street, City Hall Room 601 telephone (301) 396-4866

city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21202

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national ___ state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [signature] 2-5-82

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

St. James the Less
Roman Catholic
Church

A 18/361840/4351220
B-3608

4351

B-3608

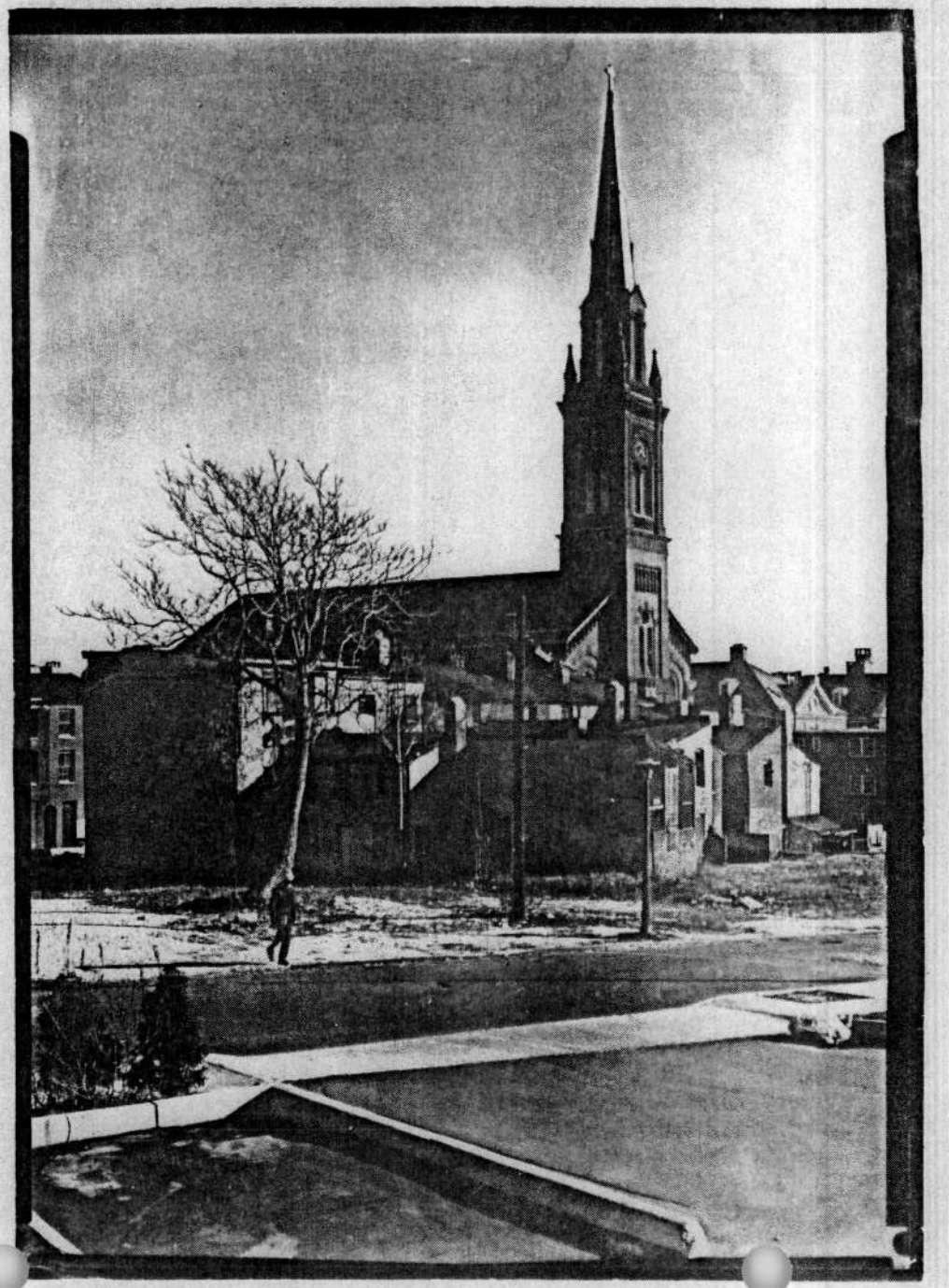


Photo - Dave Esposito

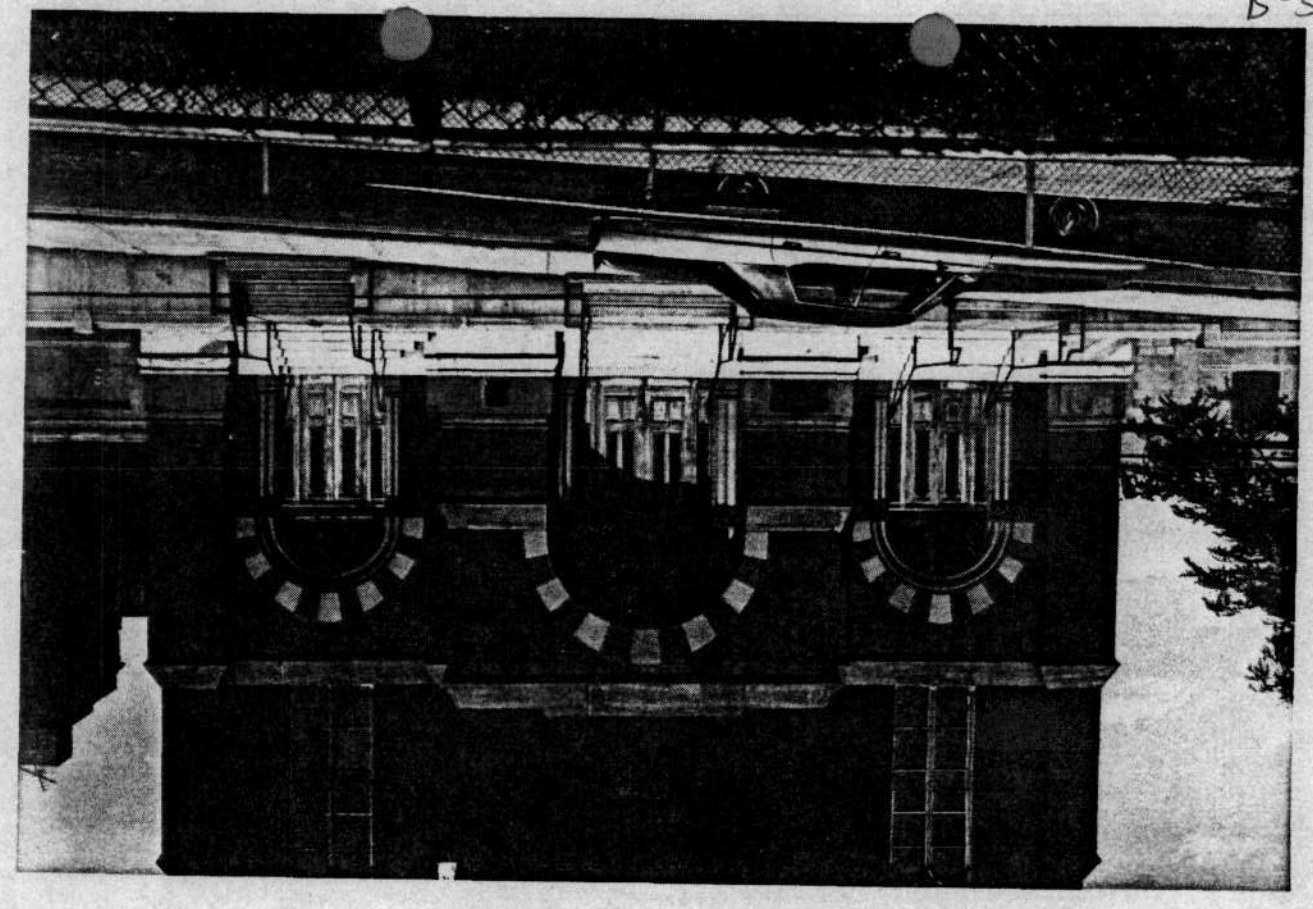
B-3608
St. James' & St. John's Church
Baltimore City
photo by David Esposito & NEG. LOC. D. ESPOSITO
February 1980
view from northwest

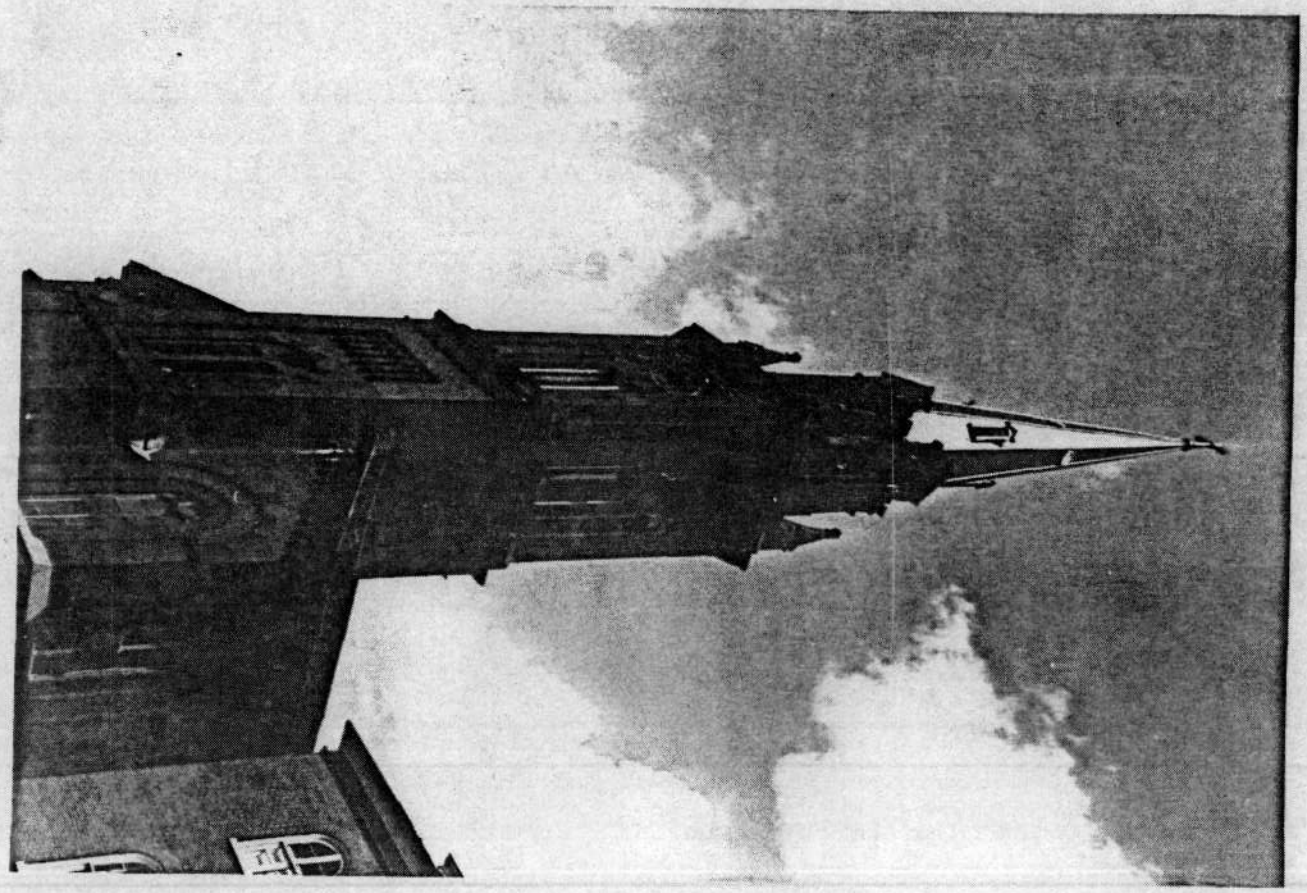
1/14

B-3608
ST. JAMES R.C. CHURCH
AISQUITH & EAGER STS. - BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY JEFFREY HONICK
JUNE 1980
NEG. LOC. - COMMISSION FOR HIST. & ARCH PRESV'N - BALTO.
VIEW NORTH ON AISQUITH ST. TOWARD CHURCH
NOTRE DAME IN FOREGROUND; ST. JAMES HALL IN BACKGROUND

2/14

B-3608





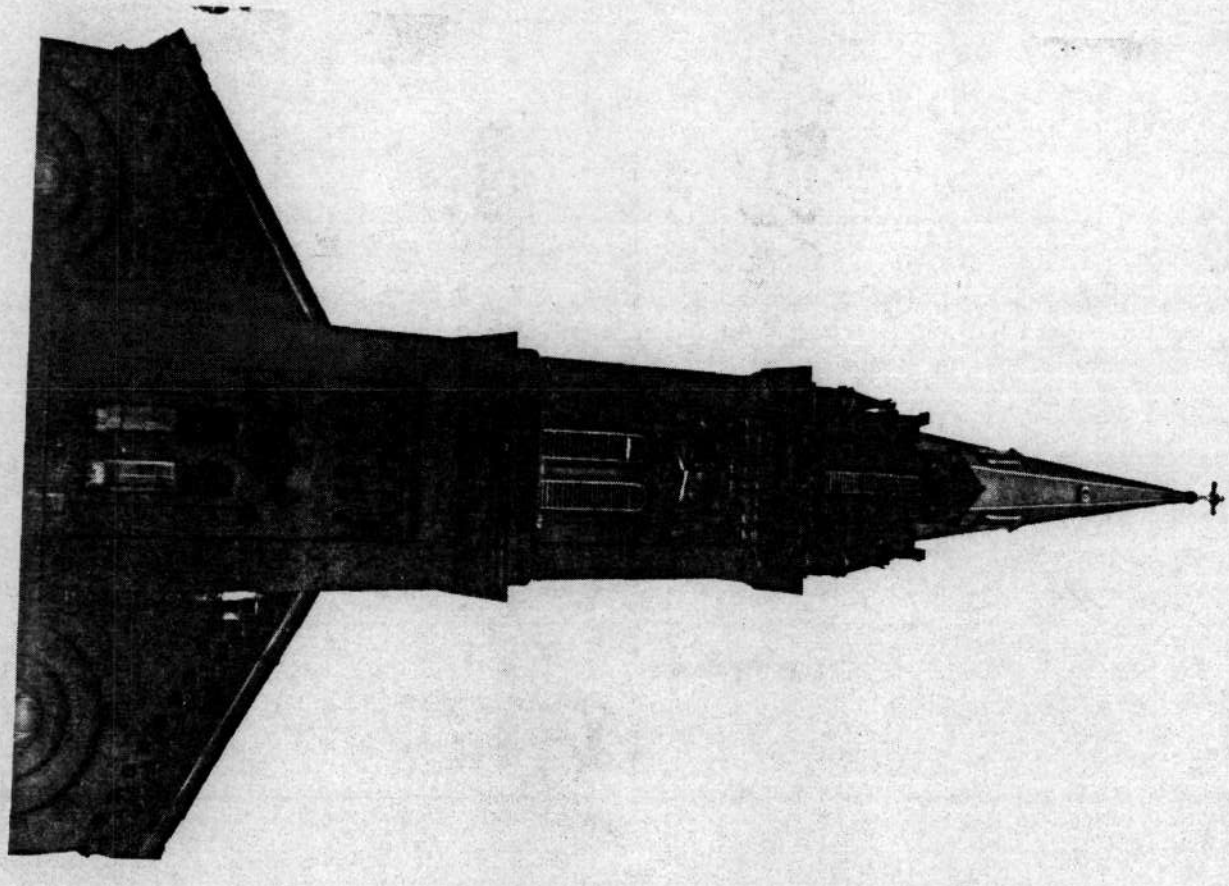
B-3608
ST. JAMES R.C. CHURCH
AISQUITH & EAGER STS. - BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY JEFFREY HONICK - JUNE 1960
NEG. AT CHAP - COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION - BALTIMORE
VIEW UP AT TOWER FROM S.W OF CHURCH

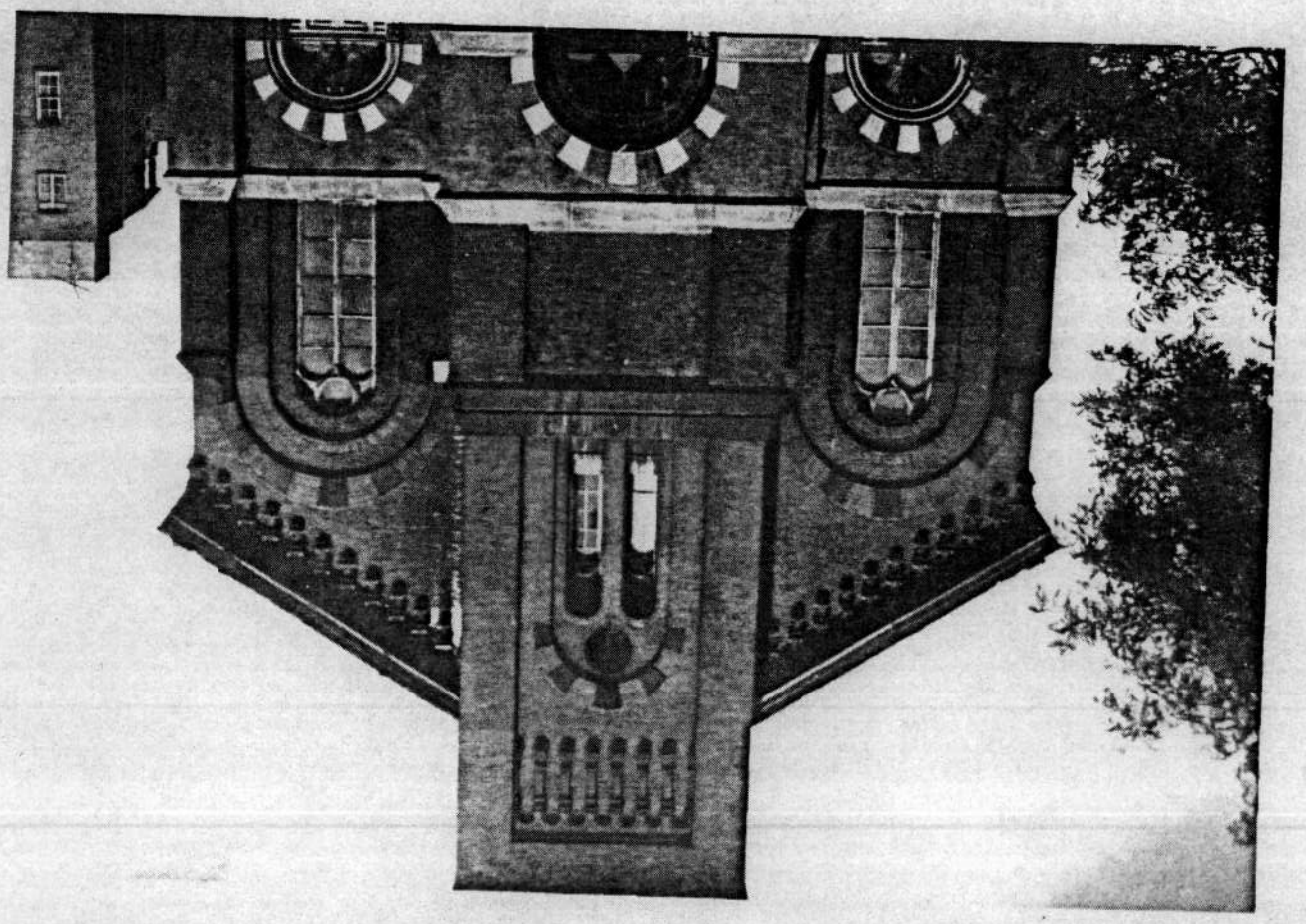
3/14

B-3608
ST. JAMES R.C. CHURCH
AISQUITH & EAGER STS. - BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY JEFFREY HONICK
JUNE 1960
NEG. AT CHAP - COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION BALTIMORE
ENTRANCE PORTALS - WEST FACADE

4/14

B-3608

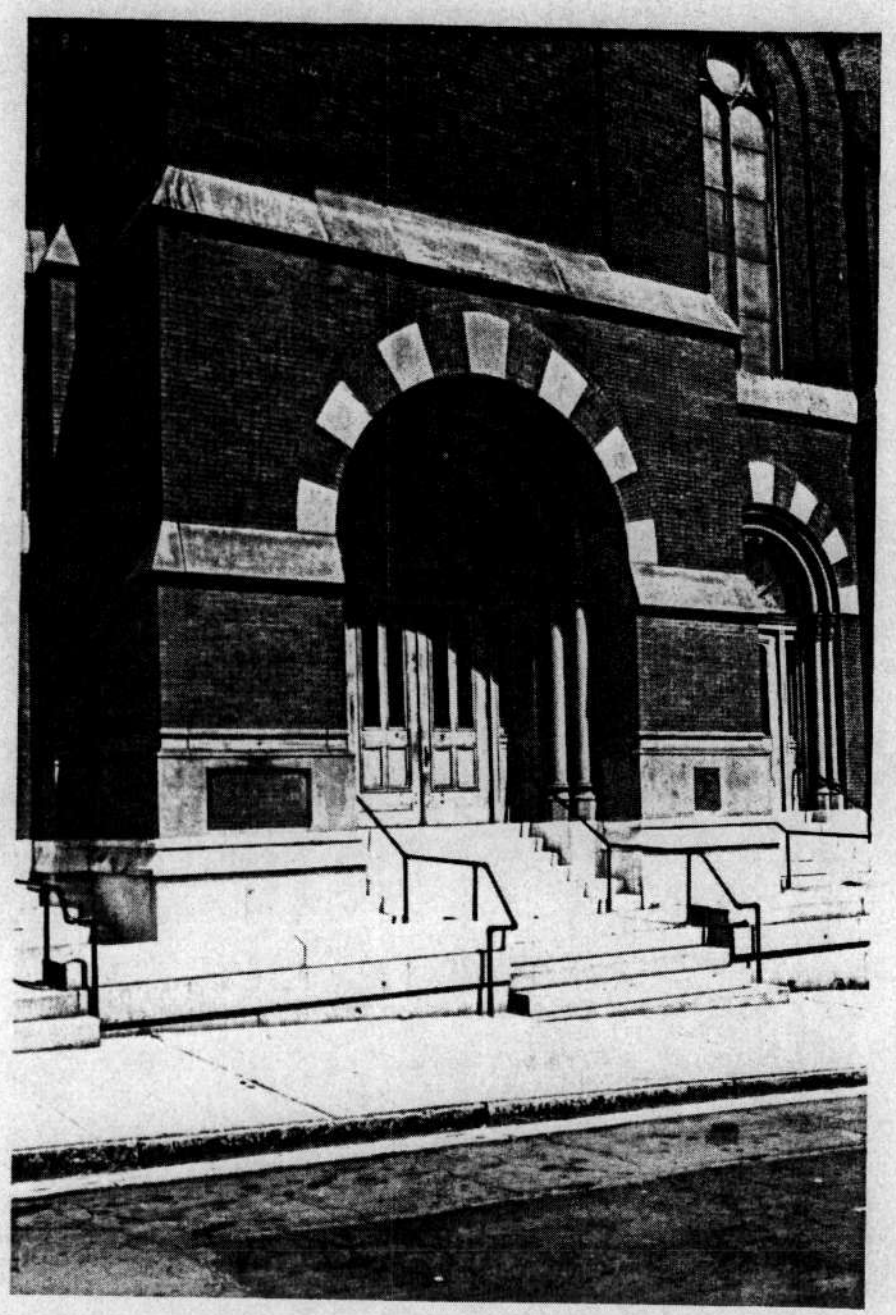




B-3608
ST. JAMES R.C. CHURCH
AISQUITH & EAGER STS. - BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY JEFFREY HONICK
JUNE 1980
NEG. AT CHAP - COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION BALTIMORE
WEST FACADE - UPPER PORTION
5/14

B-3608
ST. JAMES CHURCH
AISQUITH & EAGER STS. - BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY JEFFREY HONICK
JUNE 1980
NEG. AT CHAP - COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION BALTIMORE
WEST FACADE - UPPER PORTION OF TOWER
6/14

B-3608

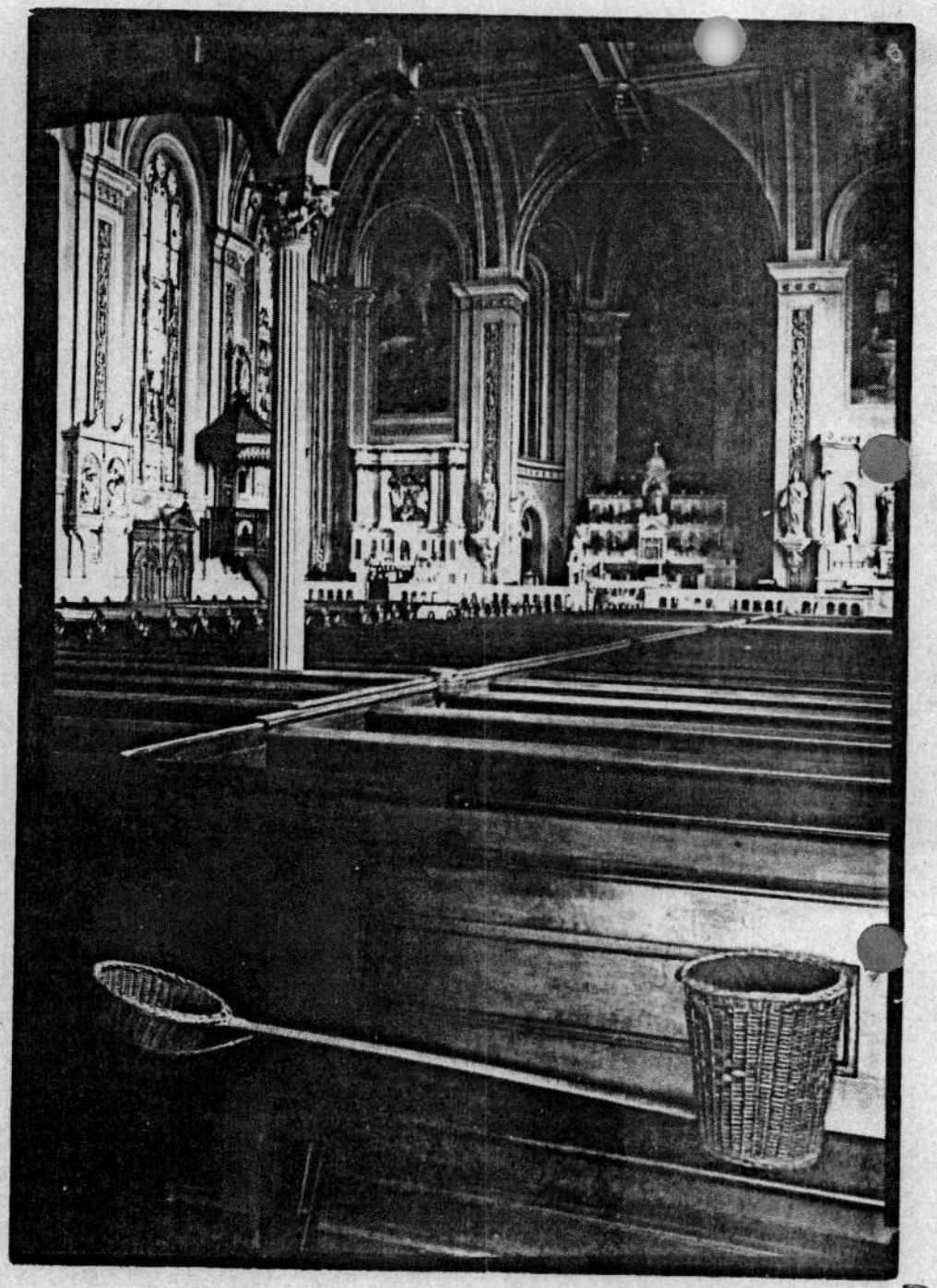


B-3608
ST. JAMES CHURCH
AISQUITH & EAGER STS. -BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY JEFFREY HONICK
JUNE 1980
NEG. AT CHAP- COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION BALTIMORE
TOWER

7/14

B-3608
ST. JAMES CHURCH
AISQUITH & EAGER STS. -BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY JEFFREY HONICK
JUNE 1980
NEG. AT CHAP-COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION BALTIMORE
CENTRAL ENTRANCE ARCH

8/14



B-3608

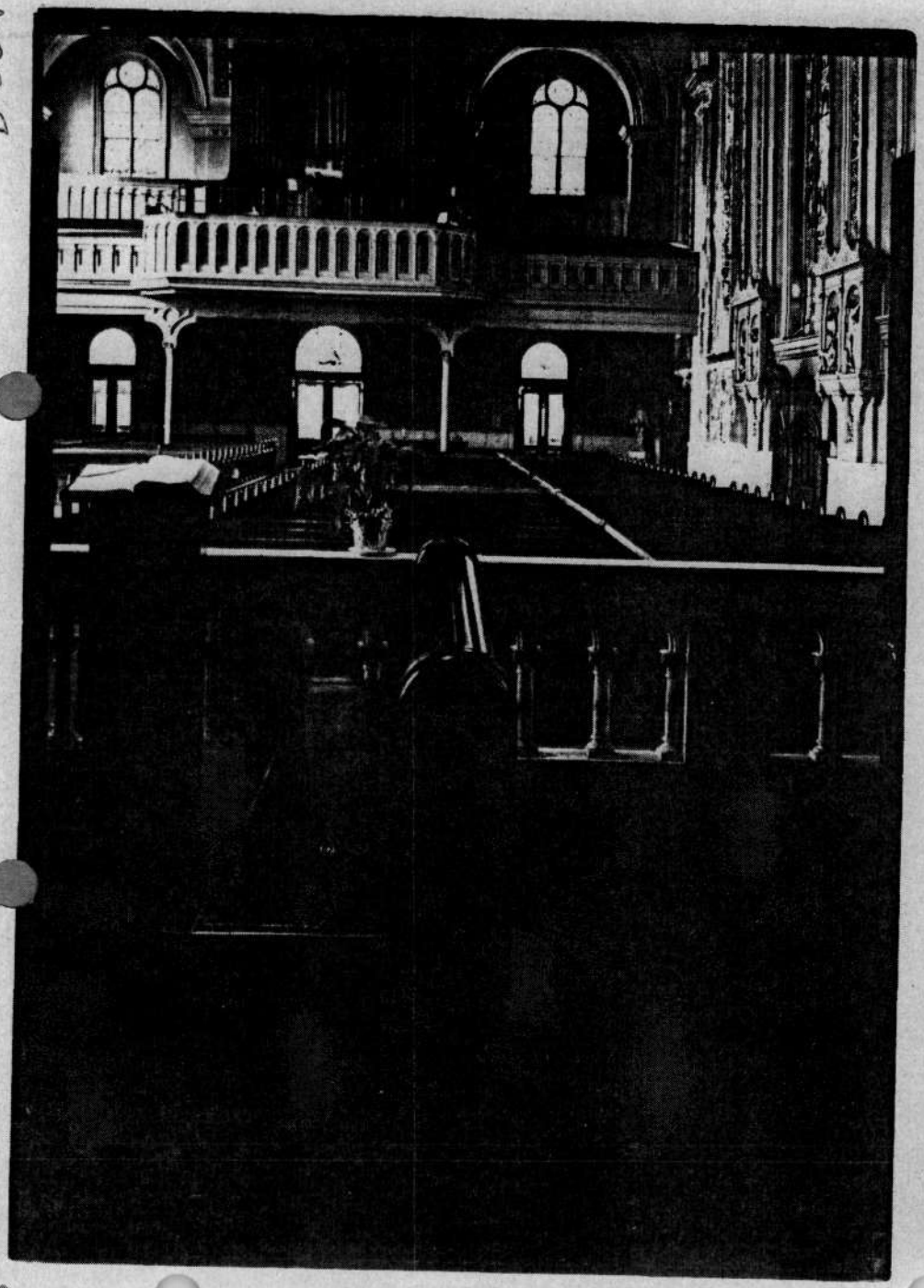
Photo:
Dave Esposito

B-3608
ST. JAMES' & ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
BALTIMORE CITY
INTERIOR VIEW
PHOTO BY DAVID ESPOSITO
FEB 1980
NEG. D. ESPOSITO
9/14

Photo:
Dave Esposito

B-3608
ST. JAMES' & ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
BALTIMORE CITY
VIEW FROM ALTAR SHOWING
POMPLITZ ORGAN IN LOFT
PHOTO BY DAVID ESPOSITO FEB 1980
NEG. D. ESPOSITO
10/14

B-3608



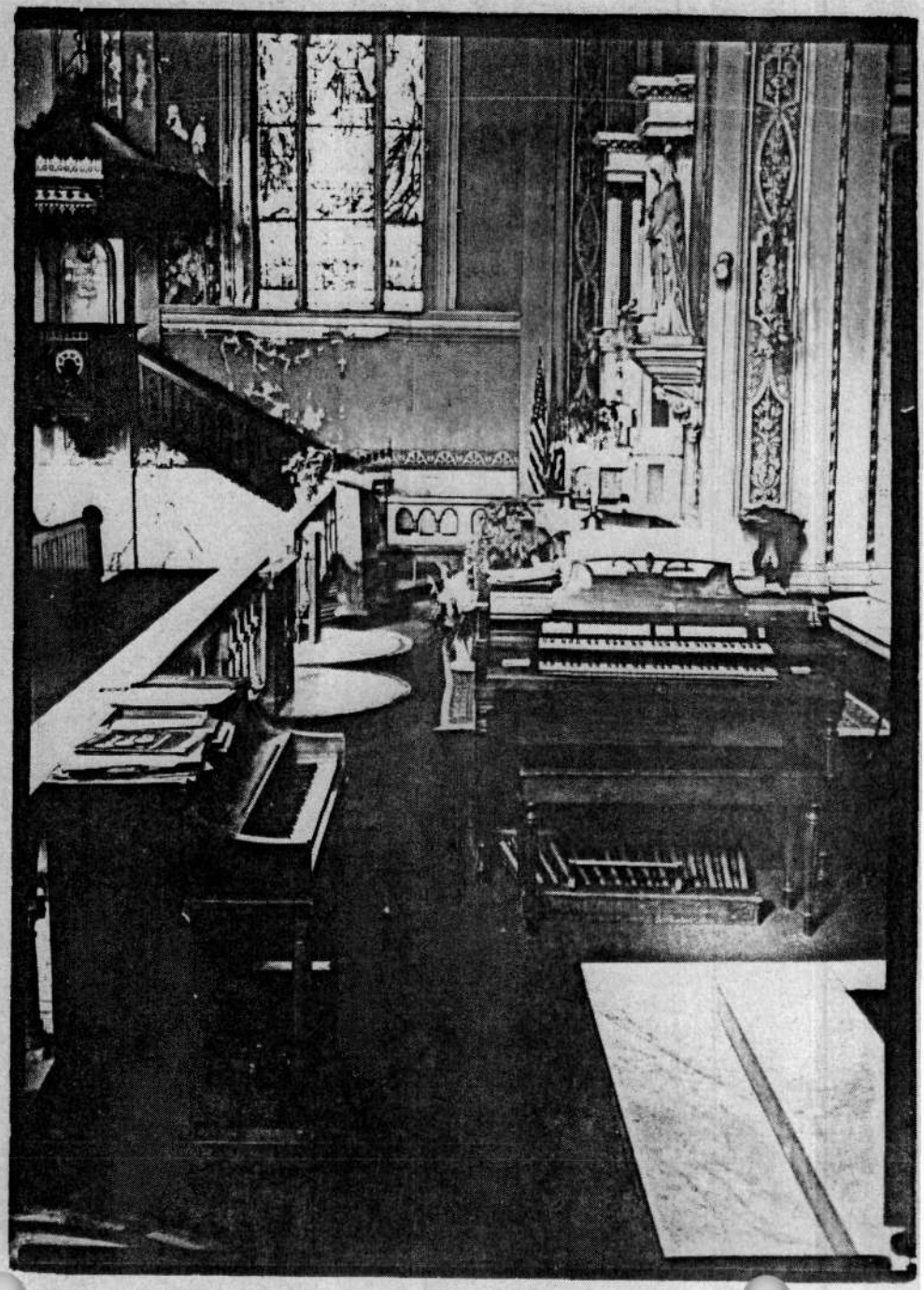


Photo:
Dave Esposito

B-3608
ST. JAMES' & ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
BALTIMORE CITY
LATERAL VIEW OF ALTAR PLATFORM
SHOWING MODERN CONSOLE ORGAN & PIANO
PHOTO BY DAVID ESPOSITO FEB 1980
NEG. D. ESPOSITO

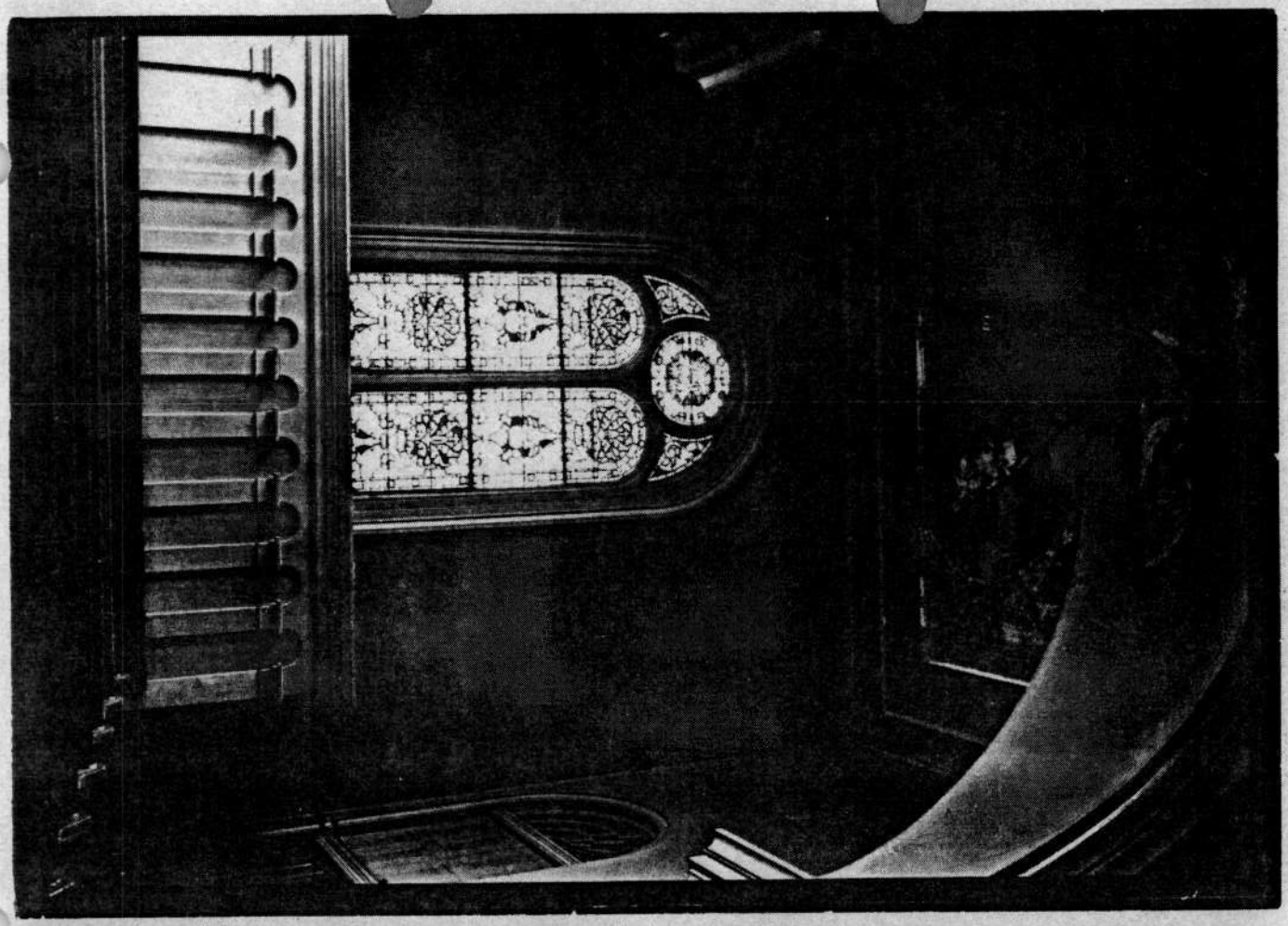
11/14

Photo:
Dave Esposito

B-3608
ST. JAMES' & ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
BALTIMORE CITY
PHOTO BY DAVID ESPOSITO
FEB 1980 NEG. D. ESPOSITO
INTERIOR VIEW, FROM ALTAR, OF LOFTS & PEWS

12/14

B-3608



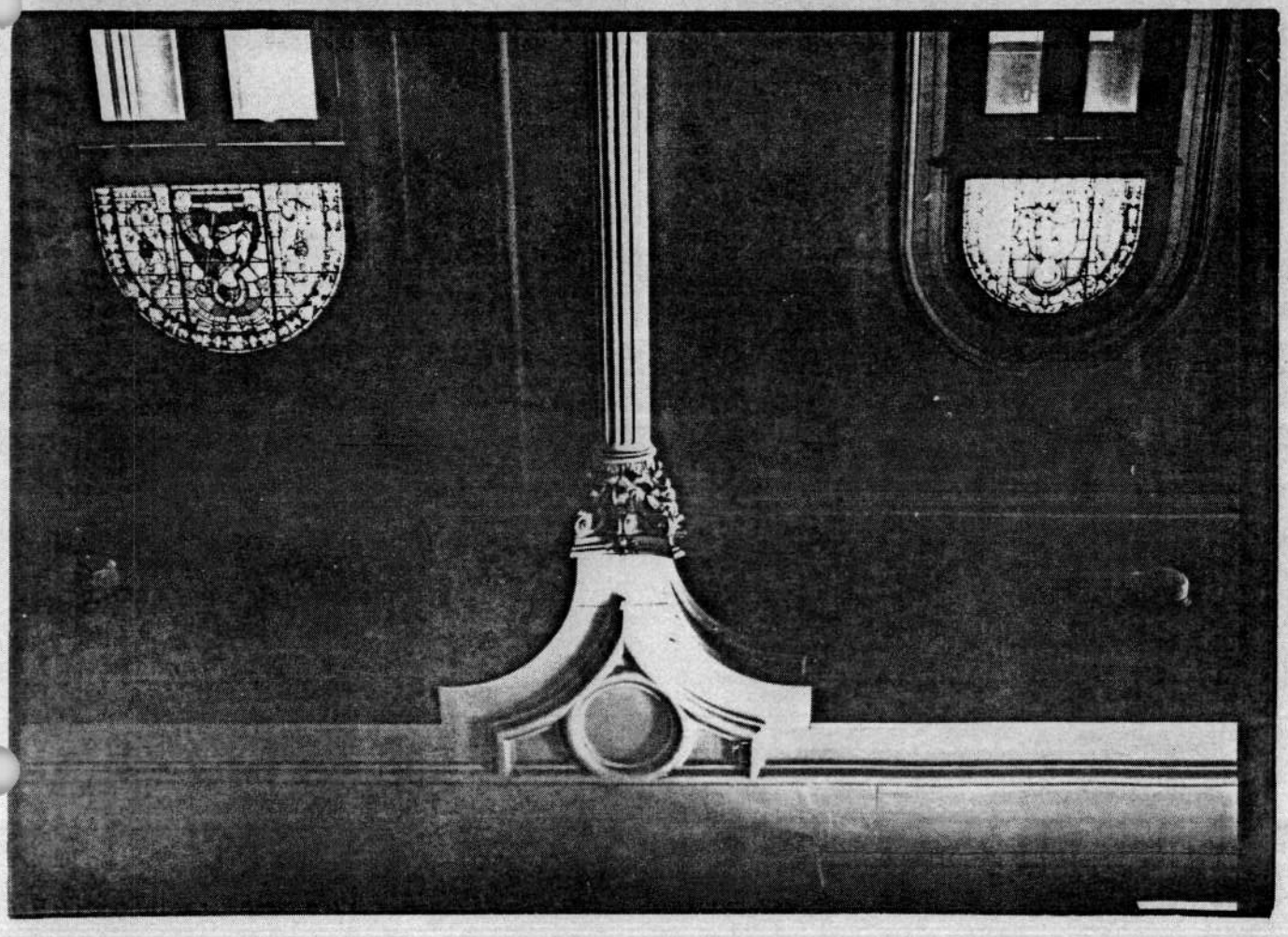
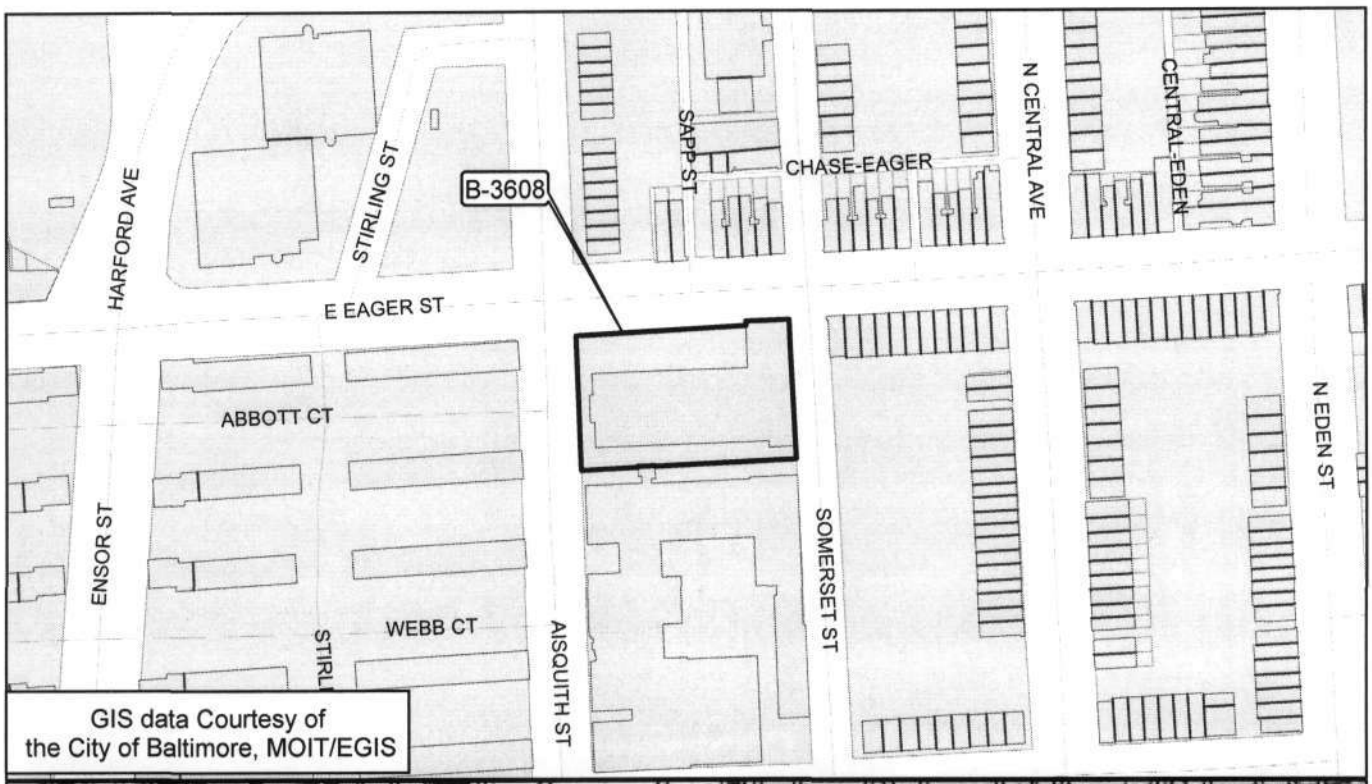
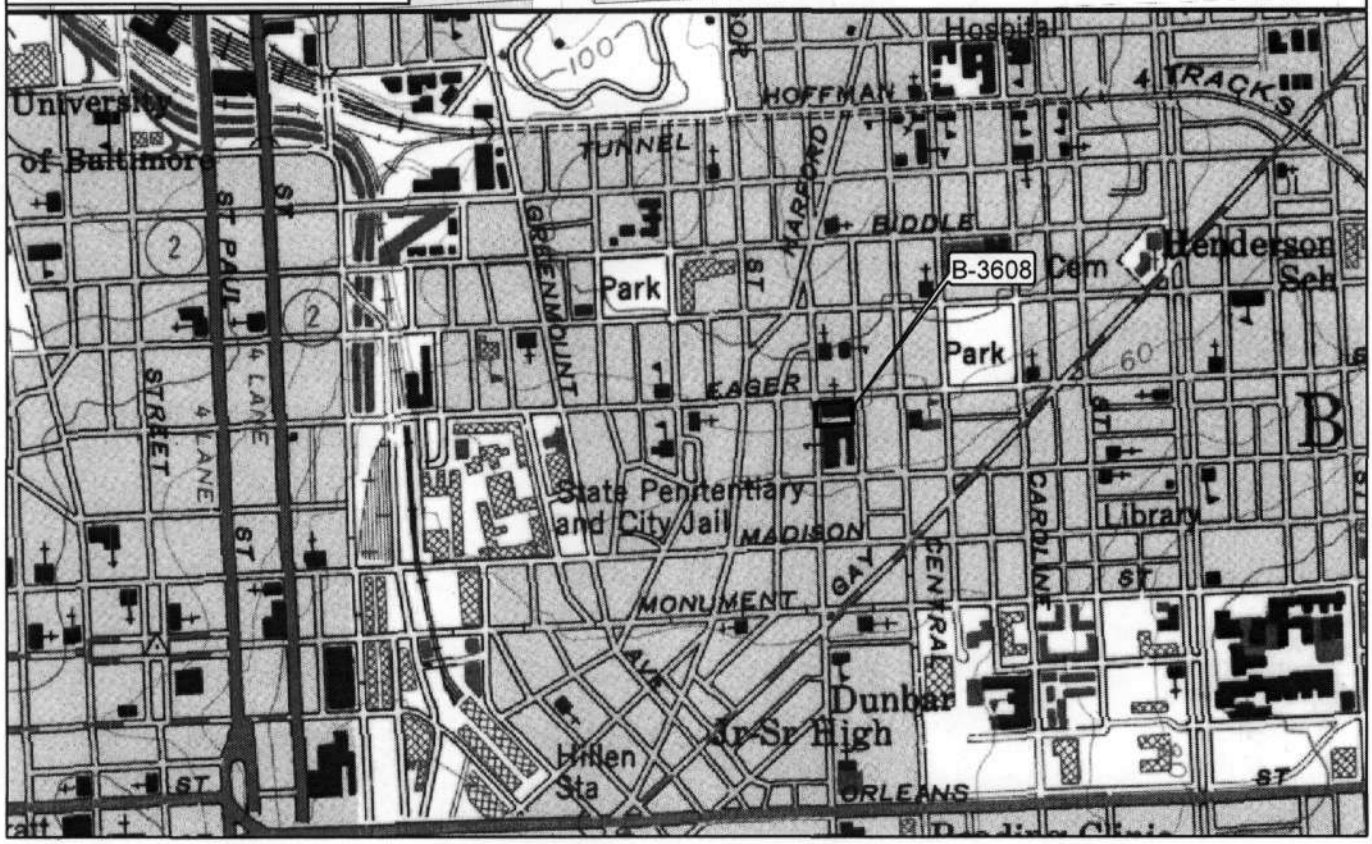


Photo:
Dave Esposito

B-3608
ST JAMES' & ST JOHN'S CHURCH
BALTIMORE CITY
DETAIL OF LOFT
PHOTO BY DAVID ESPOSITO
FEB 1980 NEG. D ESPOSITO

14/14

Photo:
Dave Esposito

B-3608
ST JAMES' & ST JOHN'S CHURCH
BALTIMORE CITY
DETAIL OF COLUMN SUPPORTING LOFT
PHOTO BY DAVID ESPOSITO
FEB. 1980 NEG. D ESPOSITO
13/14

B-3608
St. James the Less Roman Catholic Church
1225 E. Eager Street
Block 1207, Lot 066
Baltimore City
Baltimore East Quad.