

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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MAR 30 1991  
NATIONAL  
REGISTER

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Grace Reformed Church, Sunday School and Parish House

Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

Street & Number 1405 15th Street, N.W [ ] Not for Publication N/A

City, town Washington, D.C. [ ] Vicinity N/A

State District of Columbia Code DC County DC Code 001 Zip Code 20005

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
[X] Private	[X] Building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
[ ] Public-Local	[ ] District	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Buildings
[ ] Public-State	[ ] Site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Sites
[ ] Public-Federal	[ ] Structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Structure
	[ ] Object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
N/A

Number of contributing  
Resources previously  
listed in the National  
Register 0

#### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

*John P. Bacus*  
Signature of certifying official

4/3/91  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

#### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.

☐ ( ) see continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register. ☐ ( ) see continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Patrick Anders*

4/18/91

*for* Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION-Religious Structure

RELIGION-Church Related Residence

RELIGION-Church School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION-Religious Structure

RELIGION-Church Related Residence

RELIGION-Church School

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Late Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation: STONE-Granite

walls: STONE-Cleveland Greystone

roof: STONE-Slate

other: Stained Glass

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located on 15th Street, N.W. in Washington, D.C., Grace Reformed Church comprises three buildings: the Church or Sanctuary; the Sunday School; and the Parish House. The Church, designed by Paul J. Pelz and A. A. Ritcher, was constructed in 1902-1903; the Sunday School, designed by Paul J. Pelz, was constructed 1911-1912; and the Parish House, preceding both religious structures, was erected in 1892 by W. H. H. Knight, a member of the congregation. The three structures are situated so that the Parish House and Church front 15th Street, N.W. while the Sunday School, abutting the Church to the east, faces onto an alley which was originally intended as O Street, N.W.

### The Church

Designed in the Late Gothic Revival style, Grace Reformed Church is rectangular in plan with vertical emphasis given by its soaring towers and spires. The church sits upon a granite base and measures 52 feet wide and 71 feet high. It is constructed of Cleveland greystone with much sculptural ornamentation decorating the facade. The facade of the church is three bays wide and fronts 15th Street, while the side (south elevation), comprised of two end gables connected by five bays, extends along the alley.

The 15th Street facade consists of a tall, projecting bay with a gable roof flanked by two, shorter side bays covered with cross gable roofs. Octagonal towers topped with delicate spires located at the corners of the central bay articulate this central element and provide a vertical emphasis to the church. A door with a pointed arch pediment is located on center of the central bay with small, pointed arch side lights flanking it. The tympanum above the door is in relief and depicts the Ascension of Christ. Two sculpted Shields representing Geneva and

[X ] See continuation sheet

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
[ X ] nationally [ ] statewide [ ] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria [ ] A [ ] B [ X ] C [ ] D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) [ X ] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D [ ] E [ ] F [ ] G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1892-1912

1892; 1902-03; 1911-12;

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Knight, W. H. H.

Pelz, Paul J.

Ritcher, A. A.

Earley, James Farrington

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and period of significance noted above.

Grace Reformed Church, located at 1405 15th Street, N.W. in Washington, D.C. is comprised of three attached buildings; the Sancturay building, the Sunday School building, and the Parish House. Erected as a national memorial to the Reformed Church in the United States, Grace Reformed Church was constructed in 1902-03 to the plans of nationally noted architect Paul Pelz, and architect A. A. Ritcher. The church is designed in an elegant Gothic Revival style and is rich with sculptural ornamentation credited to the noted Washington, D.C. sculptor James Farrington Earley. The Sunday School building erected in 1911-12 according to the plans of architect Paul J. Pelz, continues the Gothic Revival style of the church. The Parish House, designed by W. H. H. Knight in a Victorian rowhouse form, is an integral part of the complex. The Parish House, constructed in 1892, preceded the erection of the church and Sunday school buildings.

Although properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes are not ordinarily considered eligible for the National Register, this property qualifies for listing under Exception A because it is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style and is the work of a master architect, and master sculptor.

[x] see continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

<input type="checkbox"/> preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet
<input type="checkbox"/> previously listed in the NR	Primary location of add. data: N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State SHPO office
<input type="checkbox"/> designated a National Historic Landmark	<input type="checkbox"/> Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Local government
	<input type="checkbox"/> University
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
	Specify repository: _____

## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of property .165 acres

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### UTM References

A 18 / 323610 / 4308440 /  
Zone Easting Northing  
B    /    /    /  
Zone Easting Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

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The nominated property occupies lot 827 in square 210 in Washington, D.C. The site measures 72' x 100' and contains approximately 7,200 square feet, or .165 acres of ground.

☐ See continuation sheet

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### Boundary Justification

Lot 827 in Square 210 has historically been associated with Grace Reformed church, its Sunday School and the Parish House.

☐ See continuation sheet

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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Name/title <u>Kim Prothro Williams/Architectural Historian</u>	
Organization <u>Traceries</u>	Date <u>January 30, 1991</u>
Street & Number <u>702 H Street, N.W.</u>	Telephone <u>(202) 393-7112</u>
City or Town <u>Washington</u>	State <u>DC</u> Zip code <u>20001</u>

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Zurich appear above the side lights. Above the central door and occupying the entire width of the central bay is a large, five-panelled, stained glass tracery window. The window is enclosed within a pointed arch label-molding with label-stops sculpted in the form of two heads representing a burgher and a knight. Above the central window and within the gable is a pointed arch niche within which rests a figure supporting the shield of Frederick, the Elector of the Palatinate, and symbol of the Reformed Church. A sculpted electorate cross terminates the top of the gable, while the spires of the corner towers project slightly higher. The two side bays are identical. Both consist of a central door with carved tympanums, and stained glass, rose windows above, all set within a pointed arch surround. Blind galleries surmount the pointed arch and form a frieze below the cornice line. Square buttresses in plan terminate the ends of the church and extend from the ground to slightly above the roof line of the end bays. Niches are located at the midpoint and at the top of the buttresses. A copper gutter and a copper ridge line are visible at the roof level of the end bays.

The South elevation facing the wide alley is comprised of two gables, one at the west end, the other at the east end, connected by five identical bays, two stories in height. The west bay is part of the church building itself, while the east bay represents the facade of the Sunday School Building, constructed after the completion of the sanctuary. The west gable is pierced by a tracery window, comprised of two, two panelled lancet windows with a rose window above. Sculpted panels of blind arcading interrupt the lancets at a level  $\frac{1}{3}$  the height of the window. Pointed label moulds with carved label-stops surround the tracery to protect the windows from the weather.

The five bays connecting the east and west gabled ends are identical except for the fifth bay from the west which holds a door at its ground level. Each bay, separated by pilasters, contains a tracery window. Projecting modillions support an unornamented frieze and cornice. These bays are covered with a gable roof supporting three copper dormers with ornamental hoods.

The entrance to the church occurs on center at the 15th Street elevation. A small, wood panelled entry vestibule opens onto the central aisle of the church with the raised altar at the east end adjacent to a raised choir stand slightly to its north. The doors on either side of the central entrance similarly open onto an extension of the wooden entry vestibule, leading church-goers up the stairs to the balcony level, or onto the main floor. A wide, contoured balcony, supported by cast iron columns, extends the entire width of the church across the west end. Two groups of pews are located to either side of a central aisle at the balcony level.

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The interior of the church is a large, open area with a central aisle and very narrow side aisles located between the pews and end walls. The central nave of the church soars a full three stories high, terminating at the raised altar at the east end. The east wall of the altar holds a Sacramental mosaic, beyond a high arch supported by clustered columns with foliated capitals. The sides, vaulted at a lower level than the central aisle, are separated from it by a wooden entablature extending from the altar to the balcony. Wooden ribs, at each bay, extend from the entablature and follow the vaulted ceiling of the aisles to rest on sculpted brackets of stone on the exterior end walls. The brackets are visually supported by pilasters which also serve to delineate the separate bays of the side elevations. The south and west walls display the lancet windows of stained glass. The north wall has two lancets with no glazing (where the north wall of the church is abutting the south wall of the Parish house), and two lancets with stained glass windows. There are a total of eight stained glass windows in the church presenting a series of scenes from the life of Christ, beginning, along the south wall of the church, with the visit of the Magi at His birth, and culminating, at the large, five-panelled lancet window on center of the west wall, with the Ascension of Christ. The window artistry was done by Conroy and Prugh of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Sunday School

The Sunday School Building, abutting the church at its east end, is rectangular in plan, measuring 72 feet long and 35 feet 5-1/2 inches wide.

The east gable of the south elevation of the church, and facade of the Sunday School Building, is covered with Cleveland greystone and repeats the style and elements of the west gable of the church, but in a manner more appropriate to the school's function. The east gable, 3 1/2 stories tall, is divided into three parts, consisting of a slightly projecting central portion rising to the apex of the gable and flanked by wings. The entire gabled bay is highly fenestrated, not with tracery windows, but with casement windows at each level. Six sculpted tympanums with the names of important Reformed Church leaders appear above the window openings of the Sunday School Building. The names of "Zwingli" and "Calvin", the founders of the Reformed Church, are carved in the tympanums of the windows located on the third floor of the center bay with two fish sculpted next to them. The fish was a popular symbol of Christianity because the five letters of the Greek word for fish are the initials for the expression "Jesus Christ, son of God Savior". The names of "Bullinger" and "Beza", the successors of Zwingli and Calvin in Zurich and Geneva, appear at the second floor level in the side bays of the Sunday School facade. At

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the basement level of the central bay are the names of the authors of the Reformed Church Catechism, "Ursinus", the theologian, and "Olevianus", the court preacher at Heidelberg. Small rectangular openings are located at the gable above the Chi-Rho sculpture, a symbol associated with the Roman Emperor Constantine and his becoming a Christian in the fourth century. A highly ornate finial tops the apex of the gable. Piers decorated with pointed arch niches, as found on the front facade of the church, buttress the edges of the central portion and ends of the wings of this east gable.

The east side elevation of the Sunday School Building faces a narrow, 10 foot alley. This elevation, not visible to the public, is brick, with no sculptural decoration. The elevation is not completely unornamented, however, as the casement windows of the first and second floors are recessed within pointed arches extending the full two stories. The third floor similarly has casement windows but which are flush with the facade.

The north rear elevation of the Sunday School Building faces the rear parking area directly behind the Parish House next door. This elevation, also of brick, has a central gable and two end chimneys. The third level is fenestrated with four casement windows flush with the facade, while recessed windows at the first and second levels (infilled with brick on the first floor) are set within five separate, pointed arches. Small, rectangular, fixed windows appear at the attic level of the gable. Two brick chimneys, on either side of the gable, terminate the ends of this east elevation.

The interior of the Sunday School Building can be accessed from either the door on the exterior facade, or from an interior door located at the back wall of the sanctuary. Both of these doors open onto an entry vestibule which in turn opens onto a foyer. From the foyer, a set of double doors lead into the "Roosevelt Room" and stairs ascend to the conference room and Sunday School classrooms.

The Roosevelt Room, which is used for meetings and social events, is square in plan and incorporates into its east side wall the cornerstone of the original Grace Reformed Church Chapel on this same site. A vitrine contains Theodore Roosevelt memorabilia.

The conference room, rectangular in plan, extends a full two stories in height with a balcony level consisting of the Sunday School class rooms. A central, wooden speaker's platform is located at the west end of the room with movable seating in front. A semicircular balcony level, located above the platform, is accessed by wooden stairs at either side of the speaker's



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podium. A narrow walkway is located between the balcony railing and the irregular shaped classrooms divided off behind. The classrooms, placed in the poche, formed by the intersection of the semicircle and the rectangle, are partitioned by rolling slat doors. The design of this classroom and conference area is referred to as "Akron-style", since the first Sunday School of this type, designed in the late 1860s by Lewis Miller, was built in Akron, Ohio.

Parish House

The Parish House is a three-story brick structure with a two story projecting bay. The central entrance door and vestibule is located next to the bay, towards the north end. The projecting bay has paired rectangular windows with a segmental transom light above on the first floor, and paired, segmental arched windows on the second floor. A segmental arched window is located at the second floor of the main block, while three rectangular windows are located at the third floor. The central window is covered with a triangular brick pediment and the side windows have jack arches. Decorative string courses are located at each of the levels and inset brick panels can be found between the basement and first floor and between the first floor and the second floors. The cornice of both the projecting bay and main block is corbelled and supports a flat roof.

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Grace Reformed Church qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places for the following reason:

Criterion C: The church building and its attached Sunday school are notable examples of the work of master architect Paul J. Pelz and master sculptor James Farrington Early. The church and Sunday School building are also excellent examples of Gothic Revival style architecture, a movement popular in America in the late-19th century.

The Reformed Church Movement in the United States

The Reformed Church grew out of the general climate of the religious Reformation in Europe in the 16th century. About the same time that Martin Luther began to preach the principles of the Protestant Reformation in Germany, the founder of the Reformed Church, Huldreich Zwingli began to preach the same principles in German-speaking Switzerland. After Zwingli's death, reform theology continued to prosper through the efforts of many preachers and teachers, among them John Calvin of Geneva.

The Reformed theology was brought to the United States in the 1630s when the Dutch settled in New York. The movement later spread through immigrants from Germany and Switzerland. By 1746, 46 Reformed congregations are known to have existed. These churches were supported by Holland until 1792. Throughout the 19th century, the number of Reformed churches continued to grow, and, by 1863, the General Synod was organized.

In Washington, D.C., the First Reformed Church, a German-speaking congregation, was established in 1868. In 1877, the congregation that would become Grace Reformed Church was established for English-speaking Reformed Church believers. Grace Reformed Church was initially supported as a mission church by the Maryland Classis, the governing body of the Reformed Church in the region. In 1880, the Maryland Classis purchased the current site of Grace Reformed Church at 1405 15th Street and in 1881, a chapel was constructed. Designed in the Queen Anne style, the chapel was built at a cost of \$4,100 at the rear of the lot on 15th Street, reserving the front portion of the lot for a church. In 1892, the Parish House was built. The name listed on the permit to build as architect was W.H.H. Knight, known to have been a member of the congregation.

In 1899, it was felt that the Reformed Church denomination needed a new church located in Washington, D.C., to be a national symbol of the denomination and to strengthen its outreach

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in the nation's capital. The Board of Home Missions in the Maryland Classis challenged the entire Reformed Church in the United States to raise money to build "a suitable church on that fine lot." (Brochure, Grace Reformed Church Archives) Money and support began to be collected from members of Reformed congregations throughout the United States. The decision of President Theodore Roosevelt to worship at the church added to the importance of the building's role in representing the denomination in the nation's capital. These sentiments were summed up by the Reformed Church Messenger, the denomination's newspaper, on the occasion of the dedication of the church in 1903:

In erecting this building the Reformed Church has done an appropriate thing in a beautiful way. The denomination would have aided the Washington Church, in any event, in erecting a house of worship. But the coming of President Roosevelt to worship with our Reformed people gave new life as well as new significance to the movement to erect a new church in Washington... In the first place, the church building is one of which the Reformed Church may be proud. No picture yet printed has given an adequate idea of the beauty of the structure. Within and without it is as beautiful and artistic as it is substantial and complete. The finished structure reflects credit on all who have had anything to do with its erection. Any member of the church visiting Washington will find a church of which he may be proud. Neither in Washington nor elsewhere will be found a building which so appropriately and so adequately meets the purpose of its erection. It stands as a monument first of all to the power and grace of the kingdom of Jesus Christ but it represents at the same time the history and genius of the Reformed Church. (June 11, 1903)

The article further emphasized the significance of the choice of the Gothic Revival style to represent the Reformed movement:

The style of architecture; the shields of Geneva, Zurich and the Palatinate; the emblems cut into stone arches over the entrances to the church and the memorials in the windows and the chancel, combine to make one harmonious story easily understood by any one who knows the Reformed Church. (June 11, 1903)

Construction History of Grace Reformed Church

Designs for Grace Reformed Church in Washington, D.C., were begun in 1901, after an agreement was reached and signed between architects Paul Pelz and A. A. Ritcher and the Building Committee of Maryland Classis. By February 1902, it was reported that "Mr. Pelz is working away on new plans. That is he is at the facade, with which we must go to the building

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permit offices and prepare for the commencement of work. While that is going on the arrangement for final plans will have to be made..." (Letter from Dr. Schick to Mr. Slagle, February 9, 1902).

Specifications detailing the contractor's responsibilities and the building materials to be used were drawn up and signed by Paul Pelz in April 1902, while a contract between the church and the builders, Richardson and Burgess of Washington, D.C., was signed in May 1902. The D.C. Building Permit (D.C. Permit #2052, 06/07/1902) was filed in June 1902, and President Theodore Roosevelt laid the cornerstone on July 1 of the same year. Just three weeks after the laying of the cornerstone, the contractors had "in a satisfactory manner placed all of the water table of the Grace Reformed Church in position" (Letter from Paul Pelz to Mr. Slagle, July 24, 1902). By October 25, 1902 work had progressed substantially as most of the rafters of the roof were in place (Letter from Paul Pelz to Mr. Slagle, October 25, 1902).

According to the building specifications, the church was of fireproof construction. Several types of materials were used on the building, including stone, brick, iron, copper, tin and slate. The stone facing of the church was specified as Amherst Grey Canyon, supplied by the Cleveland Stone Company. All roofs were covered with Matthews Vermont slate and all cornice gutters were lined with McClure's IX Genuine Charcoal Iron redipped Tin. The hardware was specified from the Catalogue of the Reading Hardware Company, and the doors and their frames were to be red birch, inside and out.

In early 1903, the exterior walls were erected and the sculptural ornamentation was being completed. By early April, the interior of the church was being finalized. At this time, the wainscoting was almost complete, one-third of the floor was laid, a three manual organ had been purchased, and final preparations were beginning for the dedication ceremony scheduled for June 1903. (Letter from Rev. Schick to Mr. Slagle, April 9, 1903)

The architect and contractors had not fully completed their contract by the dedication ceremony, however. On July 25, 1903 a piece of copper work in the alley side cornice "had come loose and which I [Pelz] discovered on what I thought would be my final visit" (Letter from Paul Pelz to Mr. Slagle, July 25, 1903). On July 28 the copper cornice was repaired (Letter from Paul Pelz to Mr. Slagle, July 28, 1903) and the building finally completed.

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The Architect: Paul J. Pelz

Paul J. Pelz, architect of Grace Reformed Church in association with A. A. Ritcher, and architect alone for the Sunday School Building, is best known in Washington, D. C. for his design of the Library of Congress. Born in Silesia, Germany in 1841, Pelz was the son of an historian and writer, who was also a member of the Frankfurt Parliament during the revolution of 1848. In 1851, his family left Germany for the United States. Pelz remained in behind to complete his education in Breslau and then joined his family in 1858.

In 1859, Pelz began working as an apprentice in the New York architectural firm of Detlef Lienau. By 1864, Pelz had become the chief draftsman for the firm, and two years later, left Lienau's office to come to Washington, D.C. Pelz eventually came to work for the United States Lighthouse Board as the office's principal draftsman. Pelz worked in this capacity from 1872-1877, designing numerous lighthouses, including Spectacle Reef, Lake Huron, considered to be one of the best examples of monolithic stone masonry in the United States. While still engaged by the U. S. Lighthouse Board in 1873, Pelz, in association with John L. Smithmeyer, another Washington, D.C. architect, submitted drawings and won the competition for the design of the Library of Congress. Thirteen years later, in 1886, Congress authorized construction of the library according to the designs of Smithmeyer and Pelz. Smithmeyer was appointed architect alone, but after two years, when he refused to accept inferior cement for his foundation specifications, his commission was abolished by Congress. The Commission was awarded to the Army Chief of Engineers, Brigadier-General Thomas L. Casey, who then retained Pelz for the preparation of a new design. In the end, much of the original design was built, although Pelz was not involved with the construction supervision.

Paul Pelz, generally in association with Smithmeyer, was also responsible for Georgetown University's Healy Hall, Riggs Memorial Library, and Medical Department; the Carnegie Library and Music Hall at Allegheny, Pennsylvania; the Chamberlain Hotel at Fort Monroe, Virginia; the Government Hospital Buildings at Hot Springs, Arkansas; and the Hospital and Administration Buildings at the University of Virginia. In Washington, Pelz designed the McGill Building at 9th and G Streets, N.W. (destroyed in 1973); and a great many private residences.

Judging from the correspondence between Pelz and the Building Committee during the construction of Grace Reformed Church, Pelz became inspired by the Reformed Church and its philosophies. He studied the history of the church (Letter from Dr. Schick to Dr. Slagle, January 05, 1903) and made a special effort to incorporate sculptural elements on the church

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which were symbolic of the Reformation movement and the Reformed Church. He took great pride in the symbolic aspect of the church which had been artistically carved by sculptor, James F. Earley and considered Grace Reformed Church, upon completion, "more artistic than any church in this city" (Letter from P. Pelz to Dr. Slagle, August 11, 1903).

In May of 1903 a letter from Paul Pelz to Reverend Slagle indicates that, as the church was nearing completion, Pelz was happy with the results. Pelz wrote, "I am truly proud of my work having striven hard to make ends meet. I was [,] through your confidence and liberality with what you could command...enabled to make the very best use of your money and have given you a thoroughly well digested, well built edifice. To the builders belongs great credit for having entered into the spirit which moved me with enthusiasm, and I am prone to say that I have sent my own inspiration down to the very hearts of all the workmen from the foreman down the chain to the very hod carriers and laborers, who are to day proud of having worked on your church..."

In his last official letter to Reverend Slagle, dated August 11, 1903, architect Paul Pelz recognized the church's artistic value. He wrote, "The church itself is a creation to which I look with much pride. Your liberality permitted me to make it more artistic than any church in this city, and I think of few churches in the United States which have a more artistic development. The quality of the sculptural work you permitted me to apply is of a high grade and should lead to emulation by other denominations for their memorial churches, if their building committees are intelligent enough to rise to the understanding required."

Paul J. Pelz's relationship with Grace Reformed Church did not end with the completion of the church. Eight years later, he was retained as the architect of the Sunday School Building which replaced the original Queen Anne chapel. Pelz's design for the Sunday School was executed again in the Gothic Revival style. This choice of style unified the new Sunday School Building with the design of the original church.

A. A. Ritcher

A. A. Ritcher of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, was also responsible for the design of Grace Reformed Church. It is not known why the two architects collaborated on the design of the building. Although not as active in overseeing construction at the church as Pelz, Ritcher did receive half of the architects' fees, indicating that his role was more than minimal. Very little is known about Ritcher. He was born in Philadelphia in 1873 and died in 1925. He was apparently a member of the firm Ritcher and Eiler, specialists in school design. He was a member of the

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Historical Society in Lebanon, Pennsylvania in 1911 and is listed as the architect with Beard Construction Company, responsible for the construction of High School (now Harding Elementary School) in 1918, in Lebanon, Pennsylvania.

The Sculptor: James F. Earley

James F. Earley was responsible for the sculptural work on Grace Reformed Church. A fourth or fifth generation stone carver, James F. Earley, was born in Birmingham, England in 1856 and studied sculpture at the Royal Academy in London. He migrated to the United States as a young man, becoming a United States citizen in 1882. He died of typhoid fever in 1906 in Washington, D.C., leaving his business to his son John J. Earley, who became well known in the city for developing architectural concrete.

James F. Earley first worked in the United States in Boston, where he was engaged by a contractor for several years. In 1890, he was sent by his employer to Washington to supervise some work. Earley ended up staying in Washington and starting his own architectural sculpture business, called Earley Studios. Earley's name appears in the Washington City Directory for the first time in 1892.

Between 1892 and his death in 1906, James F. Earley was responsible for much sculpture found on private residences, commercial and religious structures in Washington, D.C. Some of his particular pieces include the marble pulpit at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, the altar and statues at the Franciscan Monastery in Brookland (which won him a medal by Pope Leo XIII), and the marble relief on the Evening Star Building.

Outside of Washington, James F. Earley was especially known for his work on the U.S. Government Building at the St. Louis Exposition of 1904. Earley reportedly sculpted the frieze, caryatids and medallions on this building, as well as the ornamental frieze on the Fishery Building at the same Exposition. Other works of James F. Earley include ornamental detail on the U. S. Custom House in Baltimore; a fountain at the U.S. Custom House at the Lewis and Clark Centennial in Portland, Oregon; a garland on the U. S. Post Office in Cumberland, Maryland, and Eagles for lamps at the U. S. Post Office in Salem, Oregon (The Washington Architectural Club Catalog 1901, 1903 and 1906).

James Farrington Earley's last known work was a memorial at the United States Military Academy at West Point. It was while working on this memorial that Earley fell ill. He died in Washington on February 16, 1906. Funeral services were held the morning of February 19 at

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St. Patrick's Catholic Church with many professional friends and a large number of architects in attendance.

Earley's sculpture for Grace Reformed Church included much of the stone ornamentation on the exterior of the building, including the carved tympanums above the central door and two side doors; the figure supporting the banner of Frederick, the Elector of the Palatinate; the shields located at either side of the central door, and the heads of the Knight and Burgher serving as label-stops. Paul Pelz praised Earley's work and was pleased at learning "that you [the Chairman of the Building Committee] are pleased with my endeavor to make your church the most artistic in the city" (Letter from Paul Pelz to Mr. Slagle, February 9, 1903). Pelz continued to describe the figure located in the niche in the gable of the facade, "The figure pleases me so much having all the sweetness of expression of a young girl just budding into womanhood". The sculptural work on the church was entirely completed, at a discount rate of \$1,000.00, by early April, 1903. (Bill to Grace Reformed Church from James F. Earley, sculptor, April 13, 1903).

Theodore Roosevelt and Grace Reformed Church

President Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President of the United States, was a skilled politician who set out to define the great national problems of his time and to find practicable solutions with a reforming zeal. Domestically, he was concerned with fighting for federal regulation of railroads, federal food and drug regulations, and conservation of America's natural resources and against industrial consolidation in trusts and the horrors of slum tenements and alley living. Internationally, Roosevelt increased the recognition of the United States as a major world power.

As a private person, Roosevelt had a deep commitment to religious precepts and it was his habit to attend religious services wherever he was. He preferred the Reformed Church if one were available to attend and is reported to have said, "I take a sentimental satisfaction in worshipping in the Church of my fathers." Roosevelt began attending Grace Reformed Church soon after his arrival in Washington, D.C. in 1901 as Vice-President of the United States. Even before Roosevelt left New York to take up his new duties, Reverend Dr. J.M. Schick, Pastor of Grace Reformed Church between 1900 and 1913, invited him to make the church his home. Roosevelt did so and attended church regularly, rarely missing a Sunday morning service during his eight years in Washington. As President, he would ordinarily walk to the church from the White House, always accompanied by two secret service men, and often with family members or



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friends. He regularly had flowers sent to adorn the altar from the greenhouse at the White House and was a faithful communicant between 1901 and 1909. Roosevelt is reported to have taken part earnestly in all the service, singing heartily every hymn, and listening intently to the sermon, even jotting down notes on the sermons when appropriate. His regular pew is still in the church. Roosevelt's appreciation for the spiritual support that he received from his church attendance was evident by the letters he sent to the pastor as well as the tangible gifts of two bishop chairs and his portrait.

President Roosevelt laid the cornerstone of Grace Reformed Church on July 1, 1902 and spoke at its dedication on June 7, 1903. As his speech at the dedication ceremony of Grace Reformed Church concluded:

"This church is consecrated here to-day to duty and service, to the worship of the Creator, and to an earnest effort on our part so to shape our lives among ourselves and in relation to the outside world that we may feel that we have done our part in bringing a little nearer the day when there shall be on this earth a genuine brotherhood of man."

Conclusion

In conclusion, Grace Reformed Church meets the criteria for designation as a landmark in the District of Columbia and for listing on the National Register of Historic Places because it is a fine example of the Gothic Revival style and is the notable work of architect Paul J. Pelz and sculptor James F. Earley. It has strong historic association as a symbolic representation of the Reformed Church denomination in the United States and with President Theodore Roosevelt. All of the buildings of the church are in good physical condition and retain a high degree of architectural integrity to their original construction.

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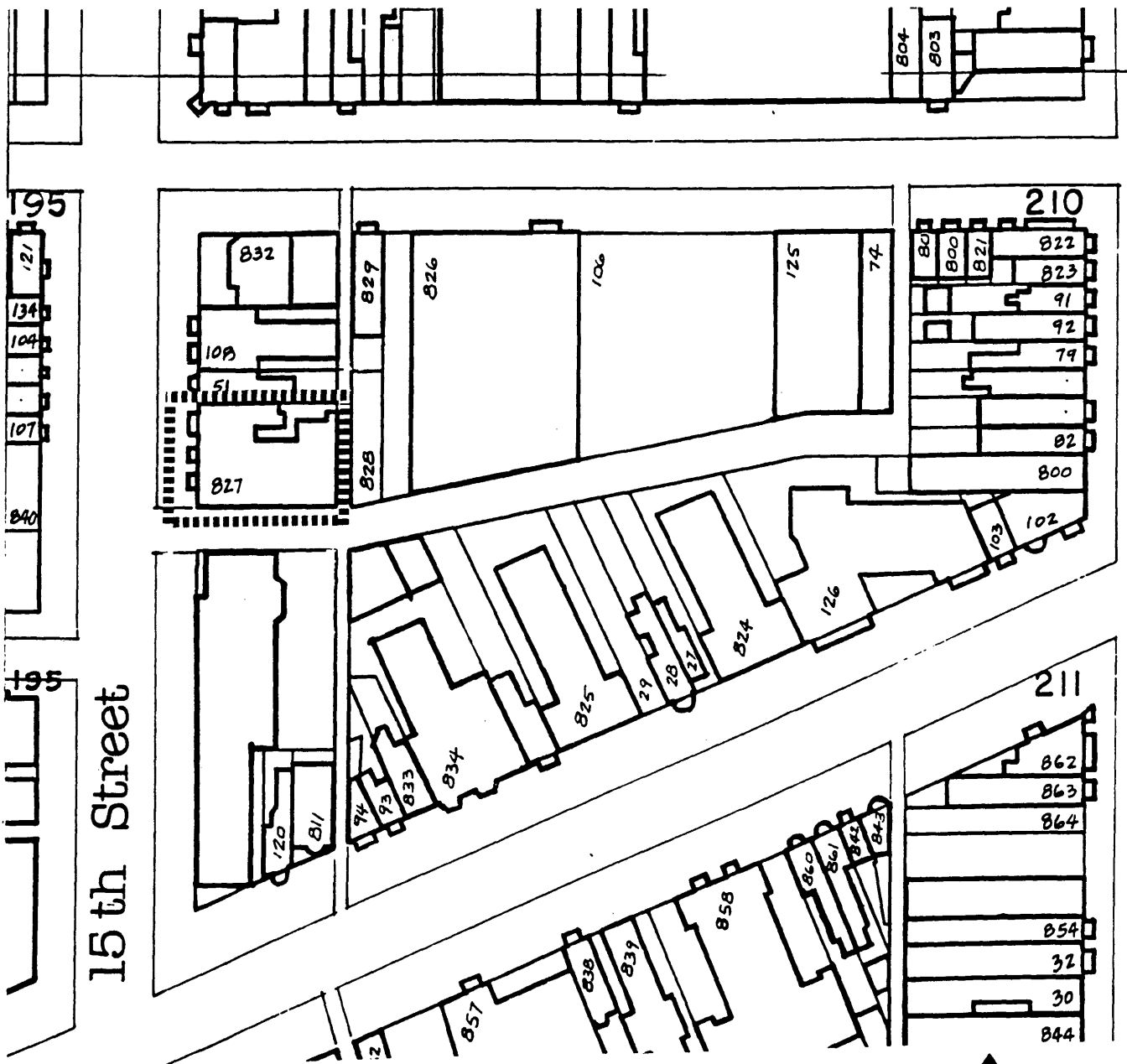
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Square Footage: 7,200  
Acreage: .165 acres

