

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

REFNUM 84003806

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Grace Reformed Church

and or common Grace United Church of Christ - Akron, Ohio

2. Location

street & number 172 West Bowery Street

not for publication

city, town Akron

vicinity of 14th cong. dist.

John Seiberling

state Ohio

code 039

county Summit

code 153

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Congregation of Grace United Church of Christ

street & number 172 West Bowery Street

city, town Akron

vicinity of

state Ohio

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Summit County Courthouse

street & number 175 South Main Street

city, town Akron

state Ohio

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Ohio Historic Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records City of Akron, Planning Department

city, town Akron

state Ohio

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Grace Reformed Church, located in an urban setting in central Akron, is a brick Romanesque Revival style basilican plan with a rectangular nave, aisles, a transept, a narthex and clerestory. There is a functional campanile at the northern juncture of the transept and the nave. The building does not display any significant alterations or changes.

The exterior of this church is tan brick, and the roof is gray slate which is mounted with special copper nails. There is a brick corbel table at the roof level of the walls, which is sometimes referred to as an arched exterior cornice. There is some projecting brick work at the roof level of the exterior, which represents Medieval style mountings for scaffolding. The front of the church presents a deep revealed ornamental doorway, with a compound round arched portal in the Italian Romanesque style. Engrossed archivolts and classical tympanums are above the four oak doors to the main entrance, and the two side doors at the base of the campanille.

The campanile is functional, with a carillon inside of it. The campanile is surrounded by a stone colonnade supporting the cornice and the slate roof. The carillon is not original to the church (it was added in 1957).

There is a large inset rose shaped stained glass window above the front tympanum. There are eight large stained glass windows with geometric designs in them at the lower level of the nave, and 16 similar stained glass windows at the clerestory level. All of the windows in the transept and narthex are also stained glass.

The nave has a barrel vault type plastered ceiling above the clerestory, and all of the interior rooms of the church are plastered, except the basement which is largely smooth brick. There are spired wrought iron lighting fixtures in the interior of the nave that are of a Romanesque design, and are suspended by heavy chains. There is an interior ornamental Romanesque frieze around the whole interior of the nave at the base of the clerestory level. All of the floors in the church above the basement are hardwood; and the church pews are quarter-sawn stained oak. There is a small balcony at the rear of the nave.

The front of the interior of the nave presents one with a view of a heavy oak altar, and an oak pulpit and lectern. There is also a large oak choir loft at the extreme front of the nave. Behind the choir loft is an area with ornamental brass organ pipes set in three large plaster arches. The organ of this church is a pipe organ which was constructed by A. J. Schanz & Sons in 1927. This organ has been constantly maintained by Schanz & Sons since 1927. The organ has a three manual and pedal console for Choir, Swell, and Great Organ. The Organ has 2315 pipes, a harp of 49 bars, and chimes for 20 bells.

The transept area of this church is four stories high, and consists of segmented offices and religious education rooms of various dimensions. The basement of this church runs the length of both the nave and transept, and it is largely used as a gymnasium and auditorium. The basement of this building had a significant renovation in 1964.

A very basic drawing of the dimensions of this building, and its' design is provided on a separate page.

8. Significance

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

Erected: 10/3/26

Specific dates

11/20/27

Builder Architect

Associated Architects, Akron, O.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architects: Henry & Murphy and Melville Peck.

The Grace Reformed Church is significant under Criteria A through its association with the religious history of the Reformed Church in the United States. The building is significant under Criteria C as a fine example of early twentieth century church architecture in the City of Akron. The basilican plan with side campanile displays characteristics of the Romanesque Revival style through its use of round arches particularly along the corbelling along the cornice and entrances. The building's architecture reflects the early twentieth century eclectic trends.

The major historical event which has taken place in this building was the hosting of the 24th and last, triennial General Synod of the Reformed Church In The United States from June 21st to June 29th, 1932. This was the last general meeting of a church denomination which had formed from two Reformed groups in 1860 (The German Reformed Synod, and the Ohio Reformed Synod). These two groups both directly traced their heritage to the German Reformed Synod, which broke with the Church of Holland in 1793 in a similar manner to the way in which the Episcopal Church in the United States broke away from the Church of England during the same year. The Reformed Church In The United States was the largest Reformed group in the United States, and the 24th General Synod at Grace Church in Akron from June 21st to June 29th, 1932 had 214 delegates from all regions of the United States and several hundred observers in attendance. Discussion of a merger with the Evangelical Synod of North America took place in Grace Church's sanctuary on June 24, 1932; and a merger between 95% of the Reformed Churches In The United States and The Evangelical Synod of North America took place two years later to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Architectural: William Fleming, *Arts and Ideas*, (New York, 1963), pp. 140-141.
 Pier Luigi Nervi (Gen Ed.), *World Architecture* (New York, 1977), p. 354 & 269
 "Akron Times-Press," November 19, 1927, p.2.

Historical: "The Centennial-Grace Evangelical and Reformed Church (Akron, 1953)
 p. 19 "Akron Beacon Journal" June 21, 1932, p. 27 June 22, 1932, p. 14

10. Geographical Data

June 23, 1932, p.19 June 24, 1932, p.21
 June 25, 1932, p.2, June 26, 1932, p.1

Acree of nominated property less than one

June 29, 1932, p.23.

Quadrangle name Akron West

Humanitarian: "Centennial" already cited, 1:24000
 "Akron Beacon Journal," Aug. 9, 1952, p.4

UTM References

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification (Description taken from Summit County Real Estate Property Card; Acct. No. 01A005100; Book #3, Page 1124, Block 01, Route 005 Legal S. Akron Lot 78 N. 1/2 & Vac. St. Lot 79 N. 1 HLF & St. Lot 80 E.23 Ft. & 1 HLF Vac. St. Frontage 113.5, Depth 155, Depth Factor 115.

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 Warren E. Colligan Chairman, Grace Church Historical Committee

organization Grace United Church of Christ date April 29, 1983

street & number (Home) 1924 Eighteenth St. telephone (216) 928-6670

city or town Cuyahoga Falls state Ohio 44223

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature W. Ray Luce

title SHPO date 5/18/84

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

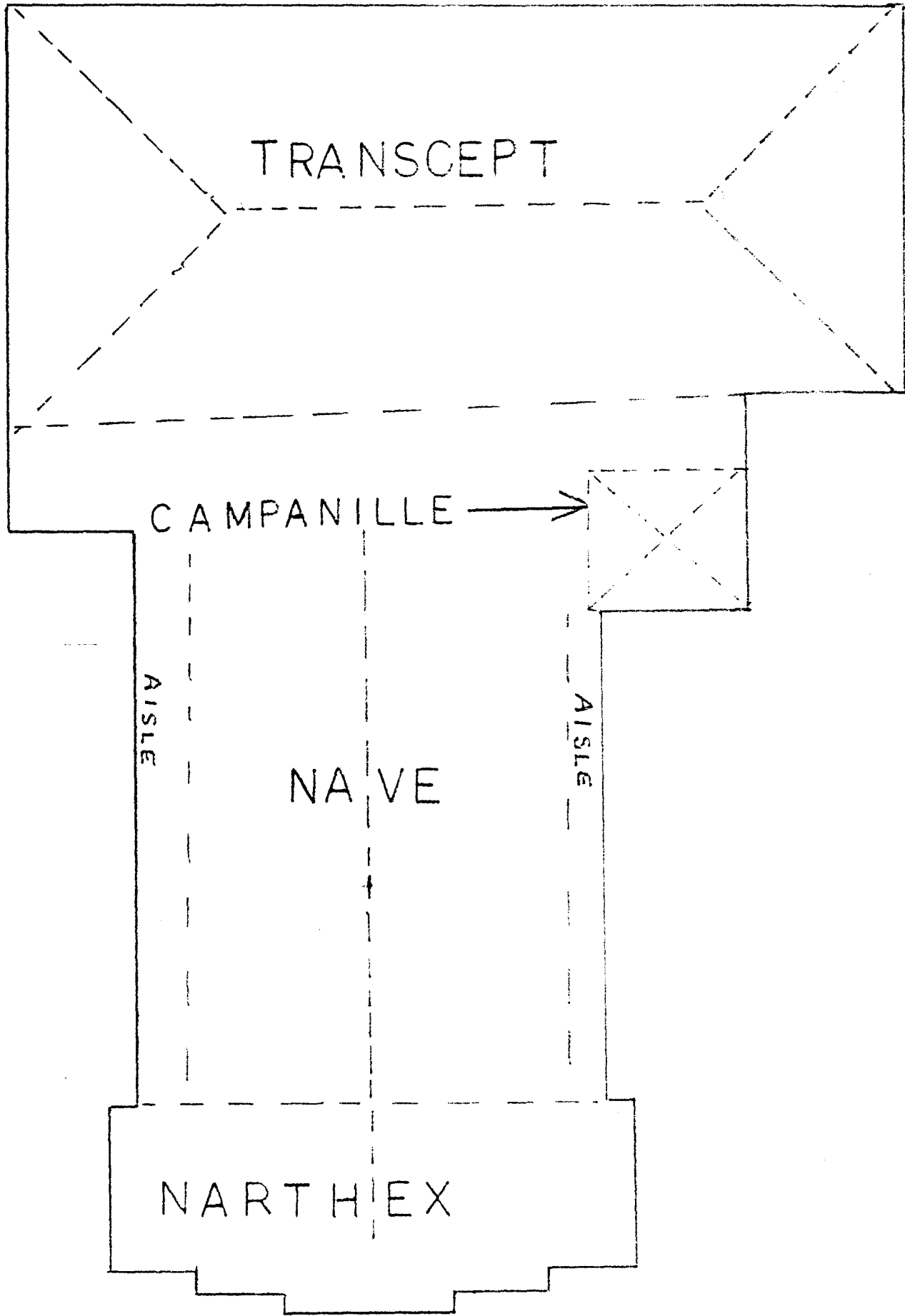
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

GRACE U.C.C.-AKRON

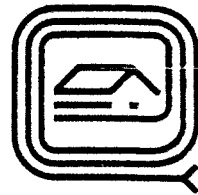
Grace Reformed Church, Akron, Summit County, Ohio



SCALE 1/16" = 1 FOOT

Ohio Historic Preservation Office

1985 Velma Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43211
614/466-1500



OHIO
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
SINCE 1885

August 9, 1984

Congregation of Grace United
Church of Christ
172 West Bowery Street
Akron, OH 44313

Dear Members:

This is to inform you that the Grace Reformed Church has been entered in the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior.

The nomination was made in connection with a state plan to identify and document prehistoric and historic places in Ohio which qualify for National Register status under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. All nominations are approved by the Ohio Historic Site Preservation Advisory Board.

Enclosed is information explaining the purposes and goals of the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

W. Ray Luce
State Historic Preservation Officer

WRL:rs
Enclosure

X.c: Mayor
Senator Oliver Ocasek
Representative Cliff Skeen
NEFCO
Jeff Brown, RCO



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Local News

Published Friday, August 17, 2001, in the Akron Beacon Journal.

AKRON'S GRACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO BE A PARKING LOT

One final gift for hospital

BY PAULA SCHLEIS
Beacon Journal staff writer

The carillon bells that once called people to worship have been silent for years. The domed sanctuary of rich, dark wood witnessed its last sermon almost a decade ago. The stained-glass windows have been replaced with plywood.

There is little left of Grace United Church of Christ but a brick and mortar shell -- and that will disappear this fall.

Grace, one of the grand downtown churches that once served as the spiritual and social center for thousands of area families, will be razed as part of a multimillion-dollar expansion of Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron.

The date of its demolition has not been set, but the space will be used as the construction staging area before being turned into a parking lot.

Grace was built in 1927 at the corner of Bowery and State streets, its massive form overshadowed by the hospital that now owns it.

To some, it's as if the church is making the ultimate sacrifice for a cause it served throughout its existence.

"The church congregation was part of the hospital family," said Bill Considine, hospital chief since 1979. "The partnership between that church and this hospital was special."

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So special, as a matter of fact, that it earned the church a spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

Helping hospital

Grace's spacious basement was offered to the hospital when a polio epidemic hit the Akron area in 1947. Church members moved their services and activities to other facilities while the hospital brought in beds and bedside tables, irrigating stands and linen hampers, medical supplies and an iron lung.

Some 400 children were hospitalized during that community emergency.

When another polio epidemic struck in 1952, the church was turned into an emergency ward again.

There were numerous other connections between the church and hospital -- like the times the hospital would rent the social hall for conferences, and church members would cook the lunch or dinner.

"We did things in tandem on a routine basis," Considine said.

But Considine had more than a professional relationship with Grace. He had personal ties.

He was married there.

Bill Considine and Becky Krenrick exchanged vows on Oct. 14, 1972, before a packed assembly.

"It was a grand old church," said Considine, who -- like his wife Becky -- grew up in Akron. The Krenrick family was particularly active in the church.

So it wasn't a particularly easy decision on Considine's part to raze Grace.

"Did we have some reluctance? You bet," he said. "But it's the right decision."

"It helps that the people who were part of that church had a special affinity for helping children," he added. "In a strange way, I guess you could say by the church being demolished, it's supporting children once again."

Beginning of end

The church's impending demise comes as no surprise to former churchgoers who saw the handwriting on the wall years ago.

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As the hospital and various commercial enterprises grew up around Grace, the congregation began to dwindle. Families moved to the suburbs and opted for newer churches that were more conveniently located.

William Ault, 36, said four generations of his family attended Grace -- from his grandfather to his own children. Ault was baptized there almost 30 years ago, as were his five siblings. His uncle and two sisters were married there. And even as he grew to adulthood and moved to Tallmadge, he managed to drive back to attend services once a month.

As a boy, he marveled at the size of the church: "It was humongous."

He used to climb the bell tower (when nobody was looking) and liked to play hide and seek behind the 20-foot-high organ pipes (but not when anyone was playing it.) He played basketball in the basement with his childhood friends.

When the congregation moved out of the church, Ault helped haul out the old pews and stained-glass windows, all of which were sold or dispersed among church members.

The Grace of Ault's youth is the one he cherishes.

"You couldn't buy a seat in the place," he said. People drove from Canfield and Canton and Clinton.

But that trip got to be harder for older members, and there were fewer young people to replace them.

Ault said churchgoers hoped getting the building on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 would somehow save it.

"It worked for a little while, but we finally had to let it go," Ault said.

Selling the church

In 1992, church leaders asked to meet with hospital officials.

"Sunday attendance was down to a handful of people," Considine said. "They didn't want to squander their endowment funds. They asked if we'd be interested in buying it."

About the same time, another church opened its arms to what was left of the Grace family. It was the same congregation that Grace split from in 1856 over a dispute on whether sermons should be read in German or English.

In 1993, the congregation said a final ``amen" as members celebrated the last regular service and left to join the First Grace United Church of Christ on South Portage Path.

The hospital originally had hopes of using the building for other functions. Some training was done there, some offices were relocated, and there was room for storage.

But the building turned into a money pit. There were plenty of code violations that needed to be answered, it received poor marks from the fire inspector, and there were plumbing and boiler issues.

Considine began to mention an insect problem, then stopped in midsentence.

``You know, this church is near and dear to a lot of people and they don't need to hear this," he said. ``I want them to remember it in its heyday."

Paula Schleis can be reached at 330-996-3741 or pschleis@thebeaconjournal.com

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Ohio Historic Preservation Office

National Register of Historic Places File Checklist

The following materials are contained in this file of the National Register form for:

Name: Grace Reformed Church (Demolished)

County: Summit

Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form

Multiple Property Nomination form

Photograph(s)

Photograph(s) (copies)

USGS map(s)

USGS map(s) (copies)

Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)

Correspondence

Other _____

