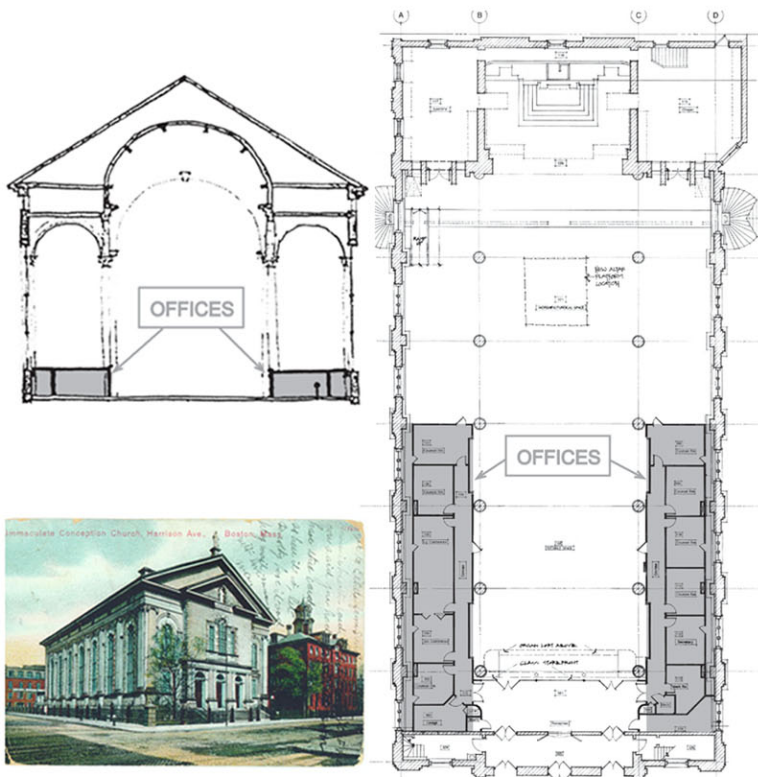




Immaculate Conception Church was dedicated in 1861, and from 1864 to 1913 served as Chapel for Boston College. The Church houses the largest surviving organ built by Elias and George Greenleaf Hook, inaugurated in 1864. In the mid 1980's, the Jesuit community chose to renovate the interior by introducing a group of small offices and meeting rooms in the side aisles of the main floor. These spaces would be regularly heated and air conditioned, occupying 4 percent of the entire interior volume, rather than conditioning the entire space.



Principal acoustical concerns were to maintain the wonderful acoustical environment for organ performance, and provide a highly-flexible sound system responding to a variety of activities within the Sanctuary. The offices/meeting rooms also required a high level of privacy and relative quiet. Shortly after initial demolition had begun, the Boston Landmarks Commission claimed that the interior of this church qualified for landmark status, and demanded suspension of work.

The argument finally prevailed that a governmental agency cannot landmark the interior of a church. Meanwhile, the group concerned with organ acoustics became more satisfied when they realized that the acoustical environment changes dramatically with the number of persons attending a concert, and the change in reverberation due to audience size was less radical with the renovation. Maintaining the acoustic environment involved replicating the absorption and reflection characteristics of the floor and walls that would be obscured by the new construction, so that the primary change would be a small reduction of volume. Removal of the aisle seating outside the columns was deemed acceptable as these were considered sub-optimal listening locations. The sound system required variability for a wide range of activities including concerts, meetings, and of course worship services, all in a highly reverberant space. The church, owned by the Order of the Jesuits of Boston hosts regular organ recitals, other concerts, and liturgical celebrations.

Architect: The Architectural Team, Chelsea, MA

CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION BOSTON, MA