#### **United States Department of the Interior National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Trinity Church is a Gothic-style parish church located in the South End of Houston at Main Street and Holman Avenue. It is one of the best examples of ecclesiastical architecture produced in Texas during the early decades of the 20th century. Trinity Church is notable for its design, scale, and use of fine materials. It serves as a landmark in the transitional, residential-commercial neighborhood where it is located. Importantly, it is the one building which best exemplifies, in Texas, the abilities in ecclesiastical design of the nationally prominent architectural firm of Cram and Ferguson.

Trinity Church is located at 3404 Main Street, at the northeast corner of Main Street and Holman Avenue. The principal elevation faces southwest toward Main, and the secondary elevation faces southeast toward Holman. The church and its associated parish facilities are located inwhat was, at the time of construction, an upper-middle-income residential neighborhood. During the 1920s and 1930s there was significant commercial development along Main Street, which was eventually transformed into a suburban retail corridor. Since the late 1940s, there has been a substantial loss both of older houses and commercial buildings in the vicinity. Nevertheless, important survivors include the Neo-Classical Bering house (circa 1913) on Fannin, the South End Junior High School (1912-1914) on Holman Avenue, the Hovas-Donovan shops (1929), and Original Kelley's (1936) on South Main.

The church is constructed of smooth-cut limestone which is exposed on the interior as well as the exterior. The outside surface of the stone has acquired a tawny color from its exposure to the elements, while the interior stonework still retains its untarnished silvery-white color. Trinity is built on a basilican plan. The central bay of the nave rises to the equivalent of three stories. 'Its gabled roof is gently pitched over three very high stained-glass windows on the west facade facing Main Street. These three windows are set in simple pointed-arch openings tied together by a continuous label molding which begins at the spring line of the arches. The central nave bay encompasses the narthex, or entrance porch, of the church. Supported by simple stepped buttresses, the gable-roofed narthex is entered through a pointed-arch doorway, the arch of which is decorated by a series of receeding moldings. The aisle bays are divided from the nave bay on the east facade by stepped buttresses. Each of the aisle bays features a single stained-glass window divided into three parts by flowing tracery.

The north and south elevations are six and five bays long, respectively, while the aisle windows match the design and tracery of those on the east facade. Each of the clerestory bays of the nave contains two narrow lancet windows, and each bay is defined by rather flat buttresses. Secondary access to the interior of the church is provided by an entrance located at the base of the tower located on the southeast corner of the

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church. The tower entrance is set in an archway which is more decorated than that of the east facade. The second stage of the tower contains an elaborate niche, which has evidently never received the intended statuary. The third stage of the tower contains two small windows per side, while the topmost stage features louvered, lancet openings from which the sound of the bells can radiate. The tower is capped by crocketed pyramidal finials at each of its four corners, with a crenellated parapet running between them. Each of the tower's corners is supported by stepped angle buttresses. The five-sided apse contains five tall windows with tracery similar to, yet more complex than, that noted earlier in the aisle walls of the church.

The body of the church consists of a high, central nave flanked by lower side aisles. It measures 45 by 120 feet. In plan the nave is set off from the aisles by five pairs of columns, alternately round and octagonal in section. These columns support the six arches which separate the nave from each side aisle. The nave flows into a raised chancel area flanked by a side chapel in the base of the tower and by a baptismal chapel which is spatially continuous with the north aisle. The polygonal apse containing the altar and reredos is separated from the nave by a broad, pointed arch. Access to the apse is obtained through an elaborate gate in the altar rail, with both rail and gate executed in brass. The altar is raised three steps above the floor of the apse on a limestone The altar itself is decorated by three carved panels of stylized blossoms. The four angles of the apse walls are embellished by pilasters which support female figures which seem to grow out of the upper sections of the pilasters. The reredos is divided into three panels, the central one featuring the nativity carved in relief, and two flanking panels containing angels. To the sides of the panels are four statues set in handsomely carved niches with elaborate canopies at each end of the reredos.

The ceilings of both the nave and the side aisles are rather simple, with the beams and rafters exposed. The nave ceiling is supported by a series of large and open timber trusses. Electrified wrought-iron fixtures hang from the trusses of the ceiling and encircle the column capitals.

With the unusual spatial quality created by the very high and narrow nave and the excellent stonework, the stained-glass windows of Trinity Church are important elements which contribute to the overall architectural significance of the building. Stone tracery supports the glass in the tall, thin windows. Red and blue glass predominates in the 33 major windows, which have been gradually donated since the 1930s when the three central windows in the sanctuary and choir were installed. These early windows were designed and executed by Jacoby Art Glass, St. Louis. All of the later ones, added since World War II, are by J. Wippell Company of Exeter, England.

The thematic content of the windows varies, with the majority of the chancel windows depicting scenes from the life of Christ. The aisle windows depict scenes from the lives of the saints, along with windows detailing the history of Trinity Church and the Diocese of Texas. The clerestory windows feature the heraldic emblems of various Episcopal diocese around the world, as well as two windows based upon the Unicorn Tapestries in the collection of The Cloisters in New York City.

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Begun in 1917, Trinity Church was completed in July of 1919, dedicated November 2, 1919, and consecrated May 25, 1941. It was designed by the Boston architectural firm of Cram and Ferguson, and construction was supervised by their Houston representative, William Ward Watkin. D.A. Crawford was the contractor. Crawford's construction company built many of the finely detailed houses in nearby Shadyside, as well as other commercial and institutional buildings in Houston. Also completed in 1919 was the parish house at the rear of the church, facing Holman. This structure was connected by a passage leading from the northeast corner through the sacristy and rector's office. The tower was not completed until 1921, and on the interior the stone high altar was finished and dedicated in 1920.

Houston architect Cameron D. Fairchild, who was a communicant of Trinity, designed the Bishop's Chair and Baptismal Font and Table in 1938. In July, 1949, Fairchild completed plans for the office and classroom building to the east and south of the original parish house. These additions were set back from the corner of Holman Ave. and Fannin Street, the site of the rectory which was demolished. The rectory was an old house which had been standing when the church property was purchased. In 1951-52 Fairchild designed the Fellowship Hall and Youth Center Building, which were added to the north side of the church to make an L-shaped configuration. A patio garden with a large fountain statue of St. Francis Assisi was created in the void facing Main Street.

In 1958 the original parish house was almost totally destroyed by fire. Cameron Fairchild again prepared plans for its reconstruction on the same foundations, but with a new exterior appearance. At this time large vertical-lift oak doors were installed in the last two bays of the north wall of the church to give access to Fellowship Hall.

The Morrow Chapel, the last building on the site, was designed in 1969. It is situated at the southeast corner of the property in front of the office building, and is connected to the parish house with a covered walk. Completed in 1972, the chapel's main architectural feature is a full-length glass wall behind the free-standing altar looking onto another landscaped, private garden.

Although these facilities are physically attached to the church, they neither add to, nor detract from, the main structure's architectural integrity, and the main sanctuary still visually dominates the site. Several maintenance projects have been accomplished in recent years, including the cleaning of the exterior stonework. Most recently, the stained-glass windows were repaired and the interior faces of the tracery molding were covered, almost imperceptively, with plexiglass. Trinity Church has been well cared for, and therefore stands today in excellent condition as an important architectural landmark of Houston. The entire complex of connected church buildings is nominated herein to the National Register of Historic Places.

### 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 X 1900–	Areas of Significance—C — archeology-prehistoric — archeology-historic — agriculture — X architecture — art — commerce — communications		Iandscape architectur Iaw Iiterature Indicates Iiterature Indicates Indicate	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1917-19; additions	Builder/Architect R.A.	Cram and W.W. Watk	in/additions,

1949, '51, '69-'72 Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) C.D. Fairchild

Trinity Episcopal Church is significant as an outstanding example of Neo-Gothic church architecture designed by the prominent Boston architect Ralph Adams Cram, who was nationally known for his ecclesiastical designs. Seat of the third oldest Episcopal parish in Houston, Trinity has supplied the Episcopal Church with five Bishops during the course of its history, and a number of its parishioners have entered the priesthood. Its importance as an influential religious institution in the Houston community and the high quality of its design combine to make Trinity a local landmark.

Trinity Church was one of the few archeologically conscientious attempts to produce a Texas church fashioned after the ecclesiastical architecture of 13th-century England. In the early 19th century the principles of Gothic architecture had been put forth as particularly appropriate to the tradition and liturgy of the Anglican church. Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942), as a young architect in Boston during the 1880s, was so inspired by the Gothic Revival that he became one of its chief proponents. As the principal designer for his architectural firm, his example was so persuasive that it helped launch a second revival of Gothic architecture in the U.S., commonly called Neo-Gothic to distinguish it from the earlier revival which flourished in 1840. Neo-Gothic buildings became quite popular for churches and academic structures.

As a theorist, Cram's strong religious convictions motivated his architectural designs. As a practitioner, he insisted on the highest quality of materials and craftsmanship in his buildings. In Trinity Church, both of these qualities came together. In 1901 his firm, then called Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, was commissioned to design an overall plan, and the initial buildings, for Sweet Briar College in Sweet Briar, Virginia. The next year the firm won a major competition to redesign the campus of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In 1906, Cram was appointed by Woodrow Wilson as supervising architect of Princeton University, where he later designed the Graduate College. The Episcopal Bishop of New York named Cram to the position of consulting architect for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in 1912, upon which he worked until his death in 1942. Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson (Cram and Ferguson, after 1913) designed important ecclesiastical and educational buildings throughout the U.S. in the years between 1911 and 1930, including a series of Anglican cathedrals (at Halifax, Nova Scotia; Havana, Cuba; and Detroit) and parish churches (Emmanuel, Cleveland; Calvary, Pittsburgh; St. Thomas, New York; and others).

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In 1909, Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson became involved in two design projects in Texas: Rice Institute in Houston and the Church of St. Helena in Boerne. While only the Rice Institute was built, the unexecuted design for the church in Boerne was published in 1909 in the prominent British architectural periodical Architectural Review. Upon receiving the commission for Rice, Cram established an office in Houston and dispatched William Ward Watkin (1886-1952), a member of the firm, to superintend the construction. When Rice Institute opened in 1912, Watkin, who was a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, was appointed to the faculty to begin a department of architecture. He remained in Houston in this capacity until his death. Watkin was a parishioner of Trinity Church, and was probably responsible for obtaining the commission in 1917 to design a permanent church for the parish.

The chosen site was a corner lot at the intersection of Holman Avenue and Main Boulevard. The latter was Houston's principal thoroughfare, and had just been transformed into a paved esplanade in the South End. Watkin appears to have been involved to an unusual degree in the design of the church, as surviving correspondence between Cram and Watkin indicates. At the time of its completion in 1919, Trinity lacked the upper stages of the side tower and the full array of interior appointments. These were eventually completed according to Watkin's designes. The altar and reredos, carved by the sculptor Oswald J. Lassig, who had worked on the stone carving at Rice Institute, were dedicated in 1920 in memory of the Rev. Robert E. Lee Craig. Craig was a former rector of Trinity Church, and had been responsible for the purchase of a suitable site and for commissioning a nationally prominent architectural firm. He died in 1916 before construction was begun. The Ralston Memorial Tower was completed and dedicated in 1921. Other gifts made possible the installation of an elaborate brass altar rail and a Pilcher pipe organ, which were installed in these early years. The handsomely carved wood pulpit and lectern were saved from the Trinity Church of 1902. Watkin ceased his affiliation with Cram and Ferguson in 1919. He collaborated with them, however, on the design of Autry House in 1921, and of the Julia Ideson Building of the Houston Public Library in 1926. The last of these structures is listed in the National Register. Cram and Ferguson, without Watkin's assistance, also designed the Cleveland Sewall residence in River Oaks in 1925. The Sewall house is also listed in the National Register. On a trip to Spain in the early 1920s, Cram became fascinated with Spanish architecture, and these later Houston buildings all give evidence of that infatuation. Thus Trinity Church is the only Neo-Gothic structure built in Texas to Cram's design.

William Ward Watkin's career in Houston led him to design the Palmer Memorial Chapel, the Central Church of Christ, and the Golding Chapel of Christ Church Cathedral. He also designed St. Marks Episcopal Church in Beaumont. Watkin's interest in church design is also reflected in the two books he authored: The Church of Tommorrow (1935) and Planning and Building the Modern Church (1951).

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Trinity Church is the third-oldest parish of the Episcopal Church in Houston, having been established under the auspices of Christ Church as the Mission of the Holy Trinity in 1893 to serve parishioners who had moved to the South End. Until 1896 services and Sunday school had been held in the houses of parishioners, and then in a rented school. The first church building, located at the corner of Louisiana and Drew, was built in 1896. It was destroyed in the 1900 hurricane, rebuilt in 1902, and moved in 1910 to the site on which the present church stands. This property, which is part of the Obedience Smith Survey, was purchased in 1910 for \$13,000. The house which was included in the purchase and located on the corner of Fannin and Holman was used as a rectory and then as parish offices until it was demolished in the late 1940s for a new building. Craig, who made purchase of this property a prerequisite for his coming to Trinity, was succeeded after his death by the Rev. Clinton S. Quin. Quin arrived in Houston in January 1917, to approve Cram and Ferguson's final plans and to guide the church through the major construction. The old church was moved across Holman Avenue. In May of 1918, Quin was elected Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Texas at the Diocesan Council, which was held in the recently completed parish house of Trinity Church. Later rectors were also of some importance in the Episcopal Church.

The Rev. Charles Clingman of Dallas came to Trinity and was Rector at the time the church was completed. He remained until 1924 and went on to become Bishop of Kentucky. Three subsequent rectors also went from Trinity to the House of Bishops: Thomas N. Carruthers, South Carolina; Harry Doll, Maryland; and Richard S. Watson, Utah. The Rev. Claude W. Sprouse, Rector from 1924 to 1931, served as President of the House of Deputies of the Episcopal Church, and died during his acceptance speech at the beginning of his second term.

The community services of the church have been directed by the Women of the Church. This group purchased the adjacent William Hamman house on Main Street and operated the Guild Shoppe there. The facility was used for the housing, feeding and entertainment of servicemen during World War II. The Hamman house was demolished and was replaced by the Fellowship Hall and the adjoining Youth Center in 1950. Several very prominent Houstonians have worshipped at Trinity, among them Frank P. Sterling, cofounder of the Humble Oil and Refining Company. Texas Chief Justice Joe D. Greenhill, and famed heart surgeon Dr. Denton A. Cooley.

9. Major Bibliographi	cal References
Cram, Ralph Adams. The Gothic Ques	t. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1918.
Cram, Ralph Adams. My Life in Arch	nitecture. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1936.
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organization Christ Church Cathedral	date October 17, 1982
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city or town Houston	state Texas 77005
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title State Historic Preservation	Officer date 200rs/ 1983
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	date
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- Johnston, Marguerite. A Happy Worldy Abode: Christ Church Cathedral 1839/1964. Houston: Christ Church Cathedral, 1964.
- Knapp, Betty. Trinity Episcopal Church: A Brief History with Description of the Memorial Windows, 1893-1973. Houston: Trinity Church, 1973.
- Tucci, Douglass Shand. Ralph Adams Cram: American Medievalist. Boston: Boston Public Library, 1975.

#### Houston Daily Post

- 20 April 1917
- 22 April 1917 "Plans made for construction of new Trinity Episcopal Church"
- 31 July 1921
- 1 November 1919
- 24 August 1958
- Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library. Original architectural drawings on deposit from Trinity Church. "Trinity Church Collection."
- Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University. Correspondence between Ralph Adams Cram and William Ward Watkin. "William Ward Watkin Collection" (Box 6).
- Autry House, Episcopal Student Center, Houston. Exhibition photographs of original sketches, plans and recent photos.
- Mrs. Ray Hoagland, daughter of William Ward Watkin, to Barrie Scardino. Interview 1982.
- Stephen Fox, Fellow of the Anchorage Foundation, to Barrie Scardino. Interview 1982.

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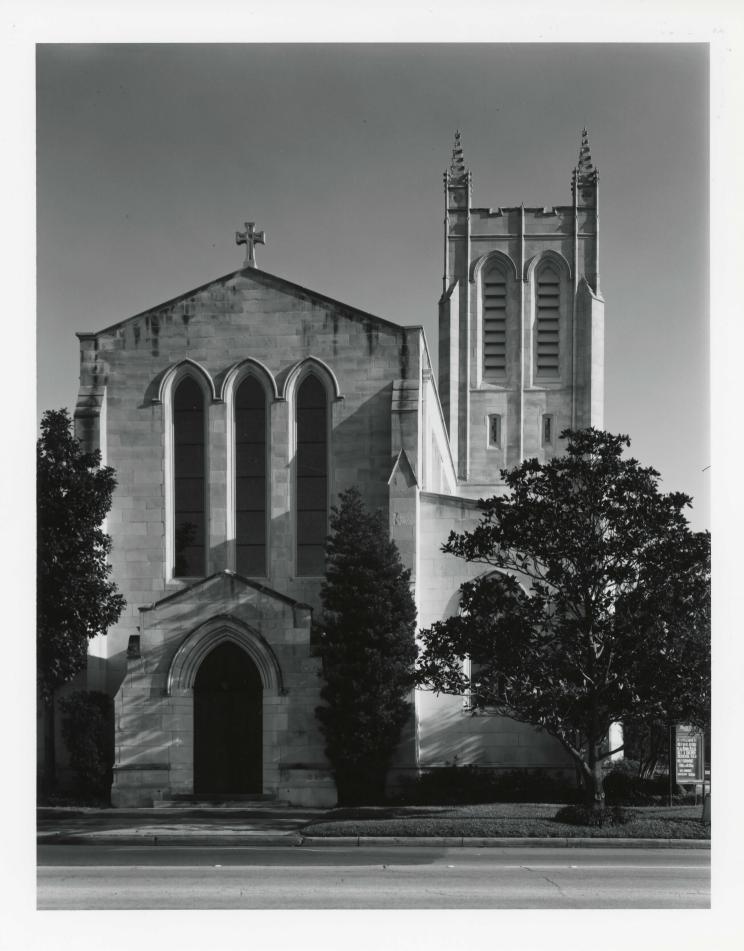


Trinity Church
304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photo: January 1983, by John Ferguson; neg. on
file, Texas Historical Commission
View of west facade, looking east
Photo 1 of 8



Trinity Church
304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photo: January 1983, by Peter Maxson; neg.
on file, Texas Historical Commission
View of rear of complex, looking west
Photo 2 of 8





Trinity Church 304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas Photo: November 1982, by Paul Hester; neg. on file, Trinity Church View of west facade, looking east Photo 3 of 8



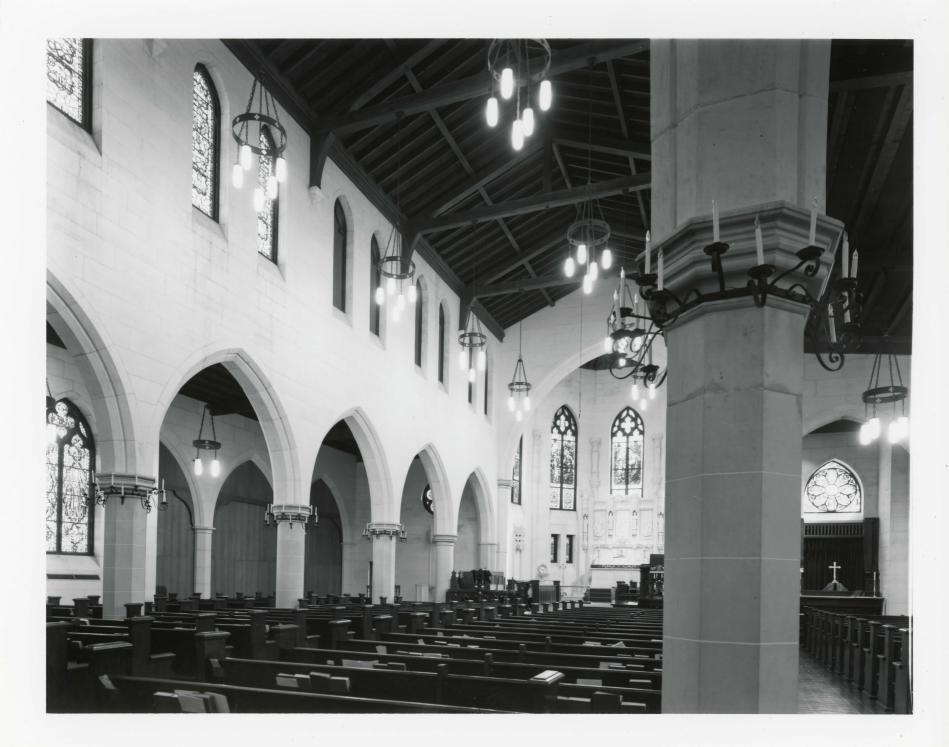


Trinity Church
304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photo: November 1982, by Paul Hester; neg. on
file, Trinity Church
Oblique view of southwest corner, looking
northeast
Photo 4 of 8





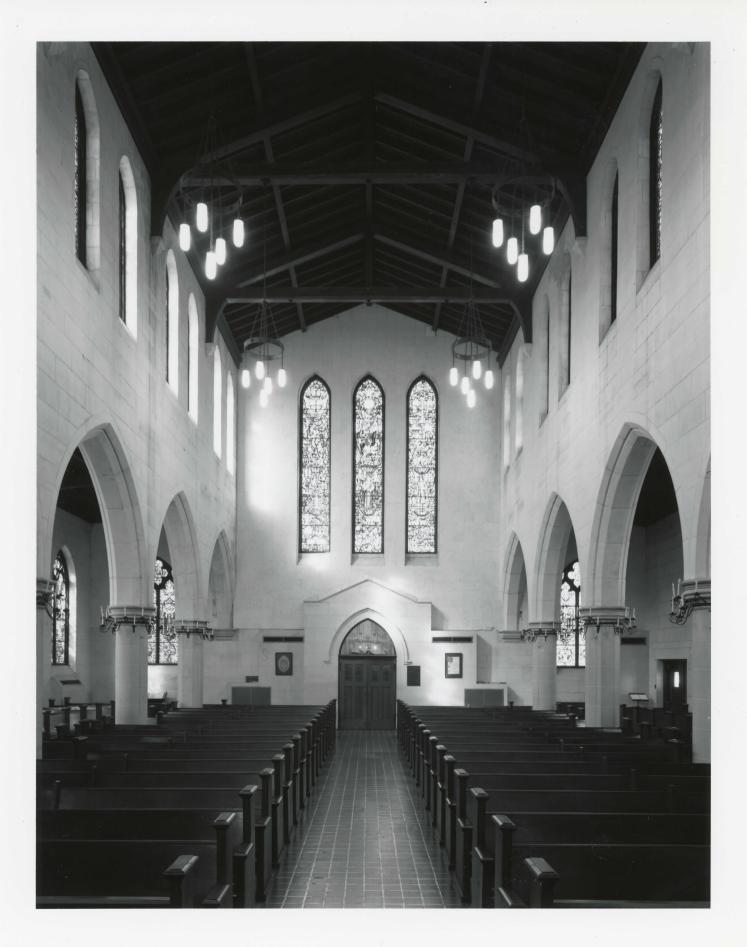
Trinity Church
304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photo: November 1982, by Paul Hester; neg. on
file, Trinity Church
View of south elevation, looking north
Photo 5 of 8



Trinity Church 304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas Photo: November 1982, by Paul Hester; neg. on file, Trinity Church View of nave, aisle, and apse; looking northeast Photo 6 of 8



Trinity Church
304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photo: November 1982, by Paul Hester; neg. on
file, Trinity Church
View of cancel, looking east
Photo 7 of 8



Trinity Church
304 South Main, Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photo: November 1982, by Paul Hester; neg. on
file, Trinity Church
View of nave, looking west
Photo 8 of 8