

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

other names/site number St. Clare's Roman Catholic Parish

name of related multiple property listing N/A

2. Location

street & number 169-193 Elk Street [] not for publication

city or town Buffalo [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14210

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ron Daniel Muehly
Signature of certifying official/Title

6-12-2018
Date

DSEP
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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) _____

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

[Signature]

7/27/2018

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Erie County, New York

Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
2	0	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility, church school,

church-related residence

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/ Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone, Brick

roof Asphalt shingles, slate

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See continuation sheets.

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location
- C** a birthplace or grave
- D** a cemetery
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance:

1882-1951

Significant Dates: must fall within POS

1882, 1889, 1896, circa 1930, 1951

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Architect: Frederick Hampel (church only)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. **NPS #35,904**
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by historic American Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other repository: _____

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.66 Acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>676784</u>	<u>4751197</u>	3	<u>17</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>17</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u>17</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Matches tax records. See continuation sheets.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Courtney Creenan-Chorley, AIA and LaLuce Mitchell, RA [Edited by Jennifer Walkowski, NYSHPO]

organization Flynn Battaglia Architects, PC date 5/10/2018

street & number 617 Main Street, Suite 401 telephone 716-854-2424

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14213

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

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Name of Property
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Narrative Description of Property

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex is located at 169-193 Elk Street on a 1.7-acre parcel of land approximately three miles southeast of downtown Buffalo, NY, bounded to the north by Elk Street, the west partially by Euclid Place, the south by Prenatt Street and by individual single- and multiple-family residential homes to the west and east. The complex is located in Buffalo's Fifth Ward, historically a predominantly Irish working-class neighborhood located adjacent to the Buffalo River and its grain elevators, steel mills, and other industries.

Surrounded by low 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 story wood framed houses, the complex is a visual landmark in its neighborhood. The complex consists of two buildings: a **church** with an interconnected rectory and attached garage; and a free-standing **school** building. The school is located on the northwest corner of the site at the intersection of Elk and Euclid. The church is located east of the school along the northern border of the site, fronting Elk Street. To the church's immediate east, the rectory and attached garage are connected to the church's southeast corner, and are set back significantly from Elk Street with a large lawn toward the street. Parking for the site is located between the church and school buildings. A secondary parking lot is located south of the church, on a peninsula of land also owned by the complex. Chain link fencing surrounds the west and south borders of the complex. A small section of iron fence remains at the north edge of the current parking lots, between the church and school.

The current church was completed in 1889, replacing the original 1875 small brick church at the same location. Its primary façade faces north toward Elk Street. The church is a Gothic Revival style building, with a two prominent square corner towers and rock-faced limestone foundation and walls. The current rectory was constructed in two phases: the southern brick building with limestone connector to church was completed in 1882, followed by a c. 1930 stone addition to the north, mimicking the other stone buildings on the site. The three-and-a-half-story parish school was constructed in 1896. Its east and north elevations are clad in limestone, over brick, framing a courtyard between it and the church.

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church (1889)¹

The church and rectory of the complex are connected internally. Due to differing styles, detailing and functions, they are described separately below for clarity. The connection between church and rectory will be described primarily within the church section as it was constructed at the same time as the church. A small garage abuts the rear of the connector between the church and rectory.

¹ *Buffalo Express*, "A Fine First-Ward Church: The New St. Stephen's Catholic as it will Appear when Finished," April 14, 1889.

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Exterior

Following a typical Roman Catholic cruciform church plan, the church is a rock-faced limestone building with ashlar coursing and a steeply-pitched asphalt shingled gable roof with six wood dormers on each side above the nave. The exterior is made up of two types of limestone: the primary elevation and the buttresses on the side elevations are local gray limestone "from the Lockport quarries," whereas the remainder of the side elevation and the entirety of the rear elevation are another variety of limestone, possibly Onondaga limestone, characterized by widespread dark chert inclusions. The exterior stone coursing runs to grade with a stone water table at the base of the first floor level around the entire church. The main axis of the church is oriented north-south, with the transept oriented east-west. Tall Gothic-arched stained glass windows dominate each exterior elevation and are generally original wood assemblies. Stone steeples rise from the roofline at each side of the primary street facade.

North (primary) Elevation

The north elevation is the primary façade and faces Elk Street. This facade is three bays wide, articulated by limestone buttresses at each end of the façade and demarcating each bay. The central bay contains an entry pavilion in which double-leaf wood doors with inset glass panels and a paneled wood transom are set within a carved limestone Gothic compound arch flanked by engaged pilasters and accessed by a short concrete stair up from the sidewalk. The pavilion is topped by a carved limestone Celtic cross, symbolic of the church's location in a neighborhood steeped with Irish-American heritage. Above the pavilion, a very large Gothic-arched window is set into the front-facing gable with a large stained glass rose window set into its peak. A small window with trefoil-arched head is set just below the peak of the gable.

The end bays of this façade contain secondary entrances, which are elaborate paired paneled wood doors with glass insets and stained glass transoms, set into Gothic-arched surrounds and accessed by short concrete stairs up from grade. Above the entries, these two end bays extend upward to become steeples of asymmetric design to each other and each contain one or more levels of Gothic-arched openings that have been infilled with glass block or brick. The east steeple contains louvers, likely original, in its highest level of openings. Both steeples are topped by bracketed cornices and were historically topped by tall spires, though these were removed in approximately 1932, reportedly due to concerns over their structural stability. In lieu of the spires, each of the steeples is presently terminated by a metal box topped by a small metal cross.

East and West Elevations

The east and west elevations are symmetrical to each other, each ten bays long, bookended by the steeples at the front Elk Street facade and the transept at the rear. The six bays that form the side of the nave are denoted by buttresses, between each of which is centered a tall Gothic-arched wood-framed stained glass window upon a

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rock-faced limestone sill. The tracery within each window forms a pair a smaller Gothic arches and a roundel within its peak. Stone corbels at the top of the side walls support the roof eave.

Along these elevations, wood roof dormers align with each window bay below, are glazed with windows terminating in a trefoil arch, and are shingled on their cheek walls. Each dormer has a double-sloped hipped roof, with a tall steeple culminating in a copper cross finial.

Similar to the sides of the nave, the end of each transept is divided into bays divided by buttresses. The central bay is dominated by a large Gothic-arched window that within its wood tracery contains three smaller Gothic-arched windows and a rosette within its peak. The gable peak terminates in a round opening that has been infilled with brick and an attic louver.

At the northwest corner of the west transept, a small wood-framed shed-roofed vestibule of recent construction provides an entry from the parking area into the transept, accessed by stairs and a handicapped ramp. A small plaza with stone balustrade lines the west side of the west transept adjacent to this entry.

South Elevation

The rear wall of the ambulatory is polygonal in plan with each corner defined by buttresses. The polygonal form extends upward into the roof line, where each facet contains a wood dormer glazed with Gothic-arched windows at each face and terminates at a flat polygonal stained glass skylight centered over the apse. Historic photos show that this roof area originally terminated in a short spire and thus the skylight is believed to have been added when the spire was removed along with the two other spires soon after 1932.

A one-story stone entry vestibule extends from the southwest corner of this rear elevation, accessed by a short concrete stair from grade. Made up of the same dark-flecked limestone as the remainder of the rear facade, this vestibule is topped by a standing-seam copper shed roof.

Connector to Rectory

A two-story connecting corridor from the church to the rectory extends from the southeast corner of the church to the west elevation of the rectory. Sanborn maps show that the connector was built at the same time as the church itself or within the following ten years. The two visible elevations of the connector, north and south, are constructed of the same ashlar dark-flecked limestone as the adjacent rear elevation of the church. A tall red brick chimney is present at the south wall of the connector near its east end. While several of the window openings at both elevations have been infilled with brick, those that remain are original wood Gothic-arched windows with trefoil arched-heads. The garage (see below) abuts the rear (south) elevation of the connector at the first floor level. The connector currently has a flat roof with metal copings.

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The connector contains various utilitarian storage and janitor closets and accommodates an elevation change of several feet terminating into the sacristy of the church.

Interior

The interior of the church follows a cruciform floor plan with a center aisle and two side aisles the length of the nave, a narthex in the rear (north) of the church with choir loft above, and altar at the front (south) of the church, with pews to either side of the apse within the transept. A sacristy is located behind the apse to the southeast. Most interior finishes appear to be original and are intact aside from minor maintenance. Diocese records indicate that in 1913 an industrial explosion in the neighborhood blew out many of the original windows of the church. These windows were replaced or replicated shortly after.

The narthex, accessed from Elk Street, has wood floors concealed with contemporary vinyl, and plaster walls with wood trim. Simple woodwork conceals closets and frames a small chapel. A pair of wood doors with a simple stained glass transom within a Gothic arch separates the narthex from the sanctuary. The ceilings over the small chapel and coat closets are low, flat ceilings. The ceiling over the narthex proper is a Gothic vault, to match the profile of the transom above the sanctuary door.

The sanctuary contains a wood floor with contemporary vinyl at the aisles only. Stained glass windows and dormers light the space from the sides and above. Atypical to the time period of construction, this sanctuary does not contain a colonnade, possibly due to the construction of the church around the original building. Plaster Gothic arches exist throughout at vaults, door and window openings. The gabled roof and dormers allow for a column-free, open plan with plaster painted to give the illusion of groin vaults over the side aisles. Over the center aisle is a vaulted ceiling with ridge ribs, hung from the main roof structure. These vaults are aligned with the exterior dormers and clerestory windows. All vaults are decorative rather than structural and terminate atop pilasters at the walls. Large pendant lights hanging over the two innermost lines of pews light the sanctuary. The choir loft at the rear of the sanctuary is a wood balcony with Gothic detailing and contains a Germanic-style pipe organ by Garrett House Organ Company of Buffalo. It was moved and added to the church in 1891 after being built for another location.³

The altar is elevated slightly above the floor of the sanctuary and features a stone floor and flat plaster walls with a band of ornamental plaster at the perimeter. Engaged pilasters at each interior corner of the polygonal rear wall splay upward into vaults similar to those in the nave. A clerestory extends upward from an enclosure formed by the top of the vaults, containing two stained glass windows stacked above each other within each facet. A second level of vaults extends upward within the clerestory to a flat octagonal stained glass skylight centered over the apse. Minor alterations were made to the altar area in the 1970s in accordance with guidelines

³ Ibid.

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established by Vatican Council II and some changes were made to the statuary collection, but otherwise the sanctuary and altar are largely intact as originally constructed.

An ambulatory corridor is located behind the rear wall of the apse, providing passage between the rear southwest entrance and the sacristy located at the southeast corner of the church. The sacristy is a small space, carpeted with wood paneled wainscot and flat plaster upper walls and ceiling. The sacristy is in turn connected to the connector that leads to the rectory via a door in the southeast corner.

Rectory (1882, circa 1930, 1949)

Exterior

The church rectory contains the oldest building in the complex. The rectory is two stories tall and was constructed in two sections. The rear portion is the oldest, constructed in 1882 out of red brick eight bays deep. A one-bay addition was constructed at its north side around 1930. Constructed of limestone to match the adjacent buildings in the complex, the addition faced Elk Street and thus became the primary elevation of the rectory upon its completion.

The 1882 portion of the rectory is characterized by a regular rhythm of evenly spaced openings with one-over-one double-hung windows, precast concrete sills, and arched brick heads. Windows are a mix of original wood sash and vinyl replacements. The walls are topped by a flat metal coping band at the eave and a flat roof. A small one-story shed-roofed addition with metal siding is attached at the rear (easternmost) bay to provide a covered entry vestibule from the adjacent parking area.

The c. 1930 northernmost bay of the rectory is three bays wide when viewed from its primary (north) elevation. Each elevation of this addition has a low concrete water table with the balance of the façade made up of rock-faced limestone. The central entry on the north elevation is a visual focus of the building, made up of a wood entry door with a honed limestone surround that exhibits Art Deco stylistic influences such as incised lines in the stonework. The first floor windows are paired nine-over-nine double-hung wood sash with six-light transoms above and the second floor windows are one-over-one double-hung wood sash with honed limestone surrounds which extend upward to form a horizontal flat stone band below the eave. The roof of the addition is side gabled and clad with asphalt shingles.

Interior

A 1949 renovation, due to a fire, replaced or refurbished the majority of the interior finishes within the rectory.⁴ Given the relatively small amount of funds spent on this renovation, it is likely that the work was largely a repair rather than a substantial re-configuration. As such, it is believed that the interior configuration of the

⁴ Ibid.

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rectory is largely original.

Upon entering the main door in the north elevation of the rectory, the first floor of the stone addition contains two waiting rooms, currently used as offices, on either side of the entry vestibule and corridor. Aligned opposite the entry door within this addition to the south, a second door opening enters the footprint of the original rectory. The first floor of the original rectory contains a double-loaded corridor lined with spaces for living. One living suite for a priest is located on the west side of the corridor, containing a bathroom, living area, and bedroom. A communal dining room and kitchen are located along the east side of the corridor, along with storage space and a half-bath for general use. A back door leads out of the building at the south end of the corridor.

A stair to the second floor terminates at a landing providing access to a double-loaded north-south corridor. Within the addition, just to the north of the landing, a former priest's suite is presently used as a large meeting room. Four living suites are located along the corridor within the older portion of the rectory, two on either side, each containing a bathroom, living area, and bedroom. In addition, there are several general storage rooms located throughout both floors.

All walls within the rectory are either plaster or gypsum board and floors are a mix of wood, tile and, predominantly, carpet. On both the first and second floors, there are numerous millwork built-ins used for linen storage. These appear to be from this 1949 renovation, as they are characterized by simplified mid-century profiles and lines. The communal dining room contains a crystal chandelier, which is the extent of any elaborate furnishings. The first floor kitchen has an original pantry as well as a 1980s-era kitchenette.

Garage (1895, circa 1940)

A concrete block two-car garage was added circa 1940 on to the south elevation of the connector between the rectory and church, which replaced an older structure with a smaller footprint that appears on older Sanborn maps. Two garage doors open to the south and two contemporary metal doors also provide access. The concrete block walls are covered in metal siding in some areas and the roof is flat with metal flashing. An open shed-roofed area with post framing, located between the garage and rectory, was added after the construction of the garage for covered storage but is open to the elements.

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St. Stephen's Roman Catholic School (1896)⁵

Exterior

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic School is a three-story masonry building with full basement, constructed in 1896 in the Late Victorian Gothic style. The school is rectangular in plan, oriented north-south and seven bays deep with a full-height turret at its front (northwest) corner and an rectangular enclosed stair tower protruding from the rear. The school received a significant interior renovation that was completed in 1951, but the exterior received only minor alterations in that work and remains largely as originally constructed.

The school is constructed of red brick and two types of limestone. The entirety of the north façade is rock-faced ashlar limestone matching the church building (likely the same Lockport gray limestone), which extends to grade with no water table. At the east and west facades, this type of limestone is used for the belt courses only and a second type of limestone containing widespread dark chert inclusions, possibly Onondaga limestone, is used for the water table. At the east façade, this secondary limestone is used for the upper floors as well, whereas red brick is used for the upper floors at the west façade. At the rear façade, the secondary limestone is used for the water table and red brick is used for the remainder of the elevation, which is undivided by belt courses. A profiled wood eave lines the perimeter of the east and west elevations and the eastern bay of the north elevation. The roof of the main block is hipped at the front side and gabled at the rear and has asphalt shingles with copper gutters and downspouts. The rear face of the main gable is clad in fish-scale slate shingles. The roof of the rear stair tower is also gabled and a brick chimney extends from peak of this rear gable.

The north (primary) elevation faces Elk Street and is three bays wide, with each of the three bays distinctly expressed. The easternmost bay is a shallow protruding three-sided bay. The center bay contains the main entrance to the building at grade and rises to a front-facing gable that ties back into the hipped roof. The grade level entrance is set within a rusticated stone arch with a pair of metal double doors and a sunburst transom above. At the first floor, a pair of Gothic-arched openings flank a stone nameplate for "St. Stephens School", though the easternmost window has been infilled with brick. The second and third floors each feature a set of three openings, which have Gothic-arched heads at the third floor. The westernmost bay, at the northwest corner of the building, contains a round turret, into which is set a series of Gothic-arched windows that step upward as they progress around the curve of the wall, originally having aligned with stair landings within. The third floor of the turret is capped by stone crenellations and, above the crenellations the turret extends for an additional story clad in flat copper, into which is set a series of louvers, perhaps historically the location of the school bell. The copper is in turn topped with a conciliar roof of asphalt shingles.

⁵ *The Catholic Church in the United States*, (New York: The Catholic Editing Company, 1914)

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The remaining three elevations are visually broken into bays, discernible at the east and south elevations by openings grouped vertically and at the west elevation by narrow vertical piers that extend the full height of the elevation. As described above, these side and rear elevations are articulated using a varied palette of materials; however, the elevations are otherwise quite ordered, characterized by their regular and consistent rhythm of openings, rectangular at the basement through second floors, Gothic-arched at the third floor, and round-arched at the south elevation and east side of the rear stair tower. Secondary entries break the rhythm at two points: at the southernmost bay of the west elevation, a rock-faced arched surround articulates a pair of paneled entry doors with sunburst transom above, and at the southernmost bay of the rear stair hall at the east elevation, a metal door set into a sunken concrete areaway provides access from the lowest level of the rear stair out to the adjacent parking area.

Windows at many elevations have been infilled with either brick or wood, including most at the basement level, several at the first floor of the east and west elevations, and at all floors of the rear stair hall.⁶ At the third floor, the windows are no longer extant, though the wood frames remain. Windows remain at the remainder of the openings and are generally double-hung wood assemblies, with a few vinyl replacements. First and second floor windows retain wood six-light transoms above, though these have generally been covered from the exterior.

Interior

A double-row of steel columns runs north-south through the interior of the St. Stephen's School building, which largely define its interior configuration, especially at the second and third floors, which formerly housed classrooms along each side of the double-loaded corridor. While the columns themselves date from 1951, replacements for a single row of cast iron columns as part of result of a fireproofing campaign, drawings from that renovation project suggest that the same double-loaded interior configuration existed prior to 1951.

Vertical circulation through the building is located at both the north and south ends of the structure. The north stair is contained within the turret. A wood stair existed within this turret historically, as evidenced by plaster repairs on the walls; however, the current stair is a replacement from the 1951 renovation, constructed of terrazzo over metal pans and a concrete rather than wood structure. The reconstructed stair has somewhat different intermediate landing heights and so does not align with the turret windows, and as a result landings cut through windows in some locations. A secondary switch-back egress stair at the south end of the building has the same materials, finishes, and detailing as the north stair and was similarly reconstructed in 1951 in place of an older wood stair in order to better fireproof the building.

Floors through the building are typically carpet or vinyl tile over the original 1890s wood within classrooms and vinyl tile within corridors over concrete, which was in turn applied over the original 1890s wood. Interior faces

⁶ Where openings have been covered or infilled, in most cases the infill was at the exterior face of the wall only and the windows themselves (including glass) remain within the wall, accessible from the interior.

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of exterior walls are typically plaster and interior walls are gypsum board over a variety of lightweight fireproof concrete block products, some of which were innovative inventions of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Interior classroom doors and frames are wood, whereas doors to the stairwells are metal.

The basement, accessed via a short stair down from grade, contains a large open hall divided by a double row of structural columns, which are clad in ceramic tile, as are the perimeter walls of the hall, below an acoustical tile ceiling. This open area appears to have previously been the school cafeteria and has most recently served as a bingo hall. Located on either side of the central corridor, the south end of the basement contains a small kitchen on the east side and mechanical spaces for the building on the west.

The first floor contains two classrooms along the double-loaded corridor at its north end, toilet rooms for each gender at the south end of the building, and a large open space between. The classrooms have carpeted floors, plaster or gypsum board walls, and solid core wood doors. The large open hall dates from a 1978 alteration, beyond the period of significance, in which the corridor and classroom walls were removed to create a bingo hall. The structural columns and beam soffits remain and are clad, along with the perimeter walls of the room, in faux-wood paneling. The toilet rooms have terrazzo floors with a speckled field and a solid outer border, gypsum board walls, and an acoustical tile ceiling with integral fluorescent lighting. A row of tall wood storage lockers is located across the hall from the toilet rooms. Ceilings at the first and second floor are flat plaster approximately twelve feet tall.

The second floor consists of two classrooms located along each side of the double-loaded corridor. The classrooms have similar finishes to those that remain on the second floor, but also typically retain their chalkboards and surrounding "ranch-style" stained wood trim. At this floor, classrooms doors typically have operable transoms above made of a solid material in lieu of glass. Operable transom hardware is commonly extant, mounted to the wood "ranch-style" door trim. Toilet rooms for each gender are located above those on the first floor, with matching finishes.

The third floor is predominantly a large open gymnasium/activity space with vaulted ceiling, an attached storage room to the north, and former administrative offices along the hallway to the south. The gymnasium has original 1890s wood floors, wood wainscoting, plaster walls, radiators, and ventilation grilles. The arched ceiling is gypsum board, likely from the mid-twentieth century, and features recessed light fixtures from the same era. The south rooms at this floor were renovated as a sauna and toilet room after the period of significance and contain contemporary finishes.

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Statement of Significance:

Overview

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex is significant as a representative example of a Roman Catholic Church complex in Buffalo. The complex is located in the city's Fifth Ward, in a neighborhood known as "The Valley," historically a predominantly Irish working-class neighborhood located adjacent to the Buffalo River and its grain elevators, steel mills, and other industries. The complex consists of two buildings: a church with an interconnected rectory and attached garage; and a free-standing school building. St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social Historic as a largely intact local example of a neighborhood church complex that served as a social, religious, and educational center for the immigrant neighborhood throughout its history. The complex is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a good representative example of the Late Victorian Gothic style of architecture, both in the church and the unusual school. St. Stephen's parish was founded in 1875 to help relieve the pressure on the neighborhood's earlier church, St. Bridget's, located about one mile west. The first St. Stephen's church was a simple brick building, which opened on Christmas Day in 1875. The growth of the parish, however, quickly necessitated the need for expanded facilities at St. Stephen's, and plans for a new church were drawn up in the 1880s. The current church was completed in 1889, supposedly subsuming the original 1875 small brick church at the same location. The current rectory wing was constructed in two phases: the southern brick building with limestone connector to church was completed in 1882, followed by a c. 1930 stone addition to the north, mimicking the other stone buildings on the site. The church also had a convent wing, which was demolished by the church in 1981. In late summer of 1882, Father McDermott established a partnership between St. Stephen's and the Sisters of Mercy to form a new school, a continuation of the partnership the Sisters had with St. Stephen's mother church, St. Bridget's. By 1894, the growing student body exceeded the capacity of the initial school building and in 1896, the current four-story brick and limestone school building was constructed for over \$25,000. Beginning in 1949, plans were made for a significant update to the school building. The intent of the project appears to have been to better fireproof what was at that time, a 75-year old school building constructed almost completely with a wood structure. The building reflects these fire safety updates today, most especially on the interior where wood columns have been replaced with steel columns, and the wood stair cases were replaced with concrete and metal. The period of significance is 1882 to 1951, which spans from the construction of the complex as it currently stands until the completion of the 1951 alterations to the school, which was the last major construction project undertaken in the complex.

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Catholicism in Buffalo

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Catholics in Western New York came under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Baltimore until the establishment of the Diocese of New York in 1808.⁸ The first resident priest was assigned to the western portion of the state in 1821. However, he left the position after two years due to the amount of travel required over a vast, sparsely populated, and still largely wild region.⁹ However, the young city continued to grow and, within a decade, the increase of French and German Catholic immigrants precipitated the establishment of the city's first Catholic church, Lamb of God (later renamed St. Louis) in 1829. The Catholic population of Buffalo grew rapidly in the 1840s as Irish and German immigrants moved into the city.¹⁰

In 1847, Buffalo and Albany were broken off from the Diocese of New York and formed into new dioceses. Bishop John Timon became the first Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Buffalo, in the rapidly growing city. Through the end of the nineteenth century, the early Catholic immigrants were joined by new Polish, Italian, Ukrainian, Lebanese, Hungarian, and Slovak populations. With the multitude of immigrants moving to and living within the city, "almost every parish church represented an ethnic group, whether formal constituted as such, or whether it effectively gained an ethnic identity simple because of the neighborhood it served."¹¹ As each parish was formed, either around a specific ethnicity or a particular neighborhood, a simple structure was typically built quickly. This would establish the Parish while fundraising occurred for a more opulent and larger structure, usually constructed of stone.

The second Bishop the Diocese of Buffalo, Stephen V. Ryan, oversaw the diocese during its greatest period of expansion and the height of the city's prosperity. One of his greatest achievements was unifying the Catholic school system in the diocese and establishing a commission to ensure uniform levels of education quality. Appointed in 1868, he continued to lead the diocese until his death in 1896. St. Stephen's was established during this period of prosperity and growth.

Bishop Quigley took over the diocese in 1897 followed by several more short-term successors over the next twenty years.¹² This was a period of rapid growth for the diocese and for Buffalo. By 1915, the diocese was made up of seventy-two churches, eighteen combination schools/churches, thirty schools, twelve academies, thirteen hospitals and charitable institutions, six convents, and twenty-eight rectories. Bishop William Turner

⁸ Martin F. Ederer, *Buffalo's Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy*, (Buffalo: digital@bates Jackson, 2003)

⁹ Thomas Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church in Western New York: Diocese of Buffalo*, (Buffalo: Catholic Historical Publishing Co., 1904), 136

¹⁰ Ederer, *Buffalo's Catholic Churches*

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Fran Gangloff, *A History of the Diocese of Buffalo*, (1995), 8

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led the diocese from 1919 to 1936. During his tenure, more than thirty new parishes were established.¹³ Bishop John A. Duffy ascended to leadership in the diocese and led it in the interwar years. During these years, the inability of parishioners to contribute as much as previously decimated the resources of the Church, especially those of the Catholic school system.¹⁴

Bishop O'Hara led the diocese from 1945 and then Burke from 1952. This was a period of growth, especially for the Catholic school system, as a result of the baby boom. A contemporary observer commented with wry humor that "the Bishop could not pass an empty property without envisioning the construction of a Catholic School." During his tenure, he added approximately 500 classrooms in dozens of elementary schools and eleven new high schools.¹⁵ It was during this period of rapid investment that St. Stephen's saw its most extensive renovation projects since its original construction.

Bishop James A. McNulty, who took over the diocese in 1963, was the first to confront the region's industrial and consequent population decline following the closing of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1957. At the time, the diocese had amassed a large debt and, to address this, he imposed an annual assessment on each parish, big or small, above and beyond its own expenses, which was quite unpopular. During his tenure, parishes in the city of Buffalo began to close as residents increasingly migrated to the suburbs.¹⁶

Bishop Edward D. Head led the Buffalo diocese beginning in 1973. Similar to his predecessor, he led a diocese in decline. As the school-age population decreased, he oversaw the consolidation of some and the closing of other Catholic schools. In some cases, an attempt was made to "regionalize" the schools by consolidating several former schools into one or two, but this was met with varied success. The next forty years coincided with the nadir of industry in Buffalo and, as such, the diocese continued to decline with the city. Many schools and parishes closed and resources were not always plentiful. Nonetheless, Western New York continues to have a large and devout Roman Catholic population concentrated in a large number of parishes that are steeped in history and architectural grandeur befitting of that history.

Catholic Education in Buffalo

Buffalo's Irish families lived in the First Ward and the Valley, an area which lacked a public school well into the late nineteenth century, forcing many to rely on private Catholic schools. While many families relied on this education system out of need, Bishop Timon's arrival in 1847 helped coalesce parishes throughout the city as full-service community centers in their neighborhoods, promoting the full "cycle of events": baptism, First

¹³ Ibid., 44

¹⁴ Ibid., 60-61

¹⁵ Ibid., 62

¹⁶ Ibid., 69

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Communion, parochial school, confirmation, marriage, devotions, parish sports teams, summer festivals, and finally funerals.¹⁷

When Bishop Ryan took over in 1868, one of his first priorities was improving and standardizing the quality of the diocese's educational programs, for ecclesiastical students but also in its parochial schools. There were many different teaching orders in the diocese and they had many different systems of imparting instructions, of varying quality. Bishop Ryan, thus, set up a diocesan board of school examiners, whose duty it was to visit all the schools of the diocese at least once per year and examine the different classes of the school and make suggestions for improvement where they were needed.

Bishop Ryan was very passionate about the need for moral and religious education and in a pastoral letter from 1873, implored parents to send their children to Catholic schools:

Catholic parents cannot in conscience send their children to schools in which the faith and morals are imperiled. Such are schools where religious instruction is excluded. Such in general are our public schools... Continue, therefore, good Christian parent, though it is a hardship; nay, an injustice, to force you to support schools and pay for schools of your neighbor's children, continue to send your children where faith and morals will be guarded from the risks and perils to which they must inevitably be exposed in schools where the first essential element of true education, that is, religion, is excluded or ignored.

On the other hand, to ensure that parishioners did send their children to Catholic schools, he declared that "pastors may not henceforth admit to First Communion children who have not attended the Catholic school for at least one scholastic year."¹⁸

In order that children had the opportunity to attend Catholic schools, Bishop Ryan declared that every parish have its own parochial school," an intent that was generally achieved.¹⁹ In a pastoral letter, he wrote:

And you, Venerable Clergy, I exhort to the clergy to redouble your zealous effort in behalf of Christian Education. Let the schoolhouse and Christian Church rise side by side, they both claim your protection, your intelligent and watchful care. Let there be good parochial schools in every parish where all the children and especially the children of the poor may receive a Christian education.

He even contended that if money was not available for both church and school, then the school should receive the preference. He further exhorted pastors to "do everything in their power to develop efficiency in the schools in order that 'our children may receive an education equal even on the score of secular learning, to that given to

¹⁷ Timothy Bohen, *Against the Grain: The History of Buffalo's First Ward*, (Buffalo: Petit Printing, 2012), 162

¹⁸ Sister Marie Patrice Gallagher, OSF, *The History of Catholic Elementary Education in the Diocese of Buffalo, 1847-1944*, (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 117

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 52

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others.”²⁰ Among the new parish schools established in this expansionary climate in the late nineteenth century was St. Stephen’s School. St. Stephen’s was operated by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, which were one of at least twelve teaching orders within the Buffalo Diocese and one of more than forty total religious orders within the diocese.

The Sisters of Mercy, originally founded in Dublin, Ireland, first arrived in the United States in the mid-1850’s and came to the Buffalo Diocese soon after from Providence, Rhode Island, at the “urgent request” of Bishop Timon. He selected as their first mission St. Mary’s School in Rochester (at the time, Rochester was part of the Buffalo Diocese). In this parish, they conducted both a free school and a tuition-charging academy, the latter for the purpose of giving them a means of financial support. From this colony of Sisters, the bishop chose four for St. Bridget’s School in Buffalo.²¹

While they began to teach at several schools in rural areas of the diocese in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, beginning with St. Joseph in Batavia in 1859, St. Stephen’s was only their second school in the City of Buffalo when it was founded in 1882, staffed by nuns commuting from St. Bridget’s²². Next, two Sisters were chosen to teach at Holy Name parish school when it was established in 1884 in an old former public school building. However, the Order’s urban ministry really began to expand after 1900, beginning with their appointment to St. Teresa’s in 1907.²³ By 1910, in addition to St. Stephen’s, they operated nine other schools in the city alone, serving 8,000 students.²⁴ During the height of Buffalo’s Catholic school system in the early-to-mid nineteenth century, the Sisters of Mercy became one of the largest teaching orders in the city, focused especially on the schools in South Buffalo.

The religious teaching orders that provided teachers for the parish schools in the Diocese were often chosen according to the dominant ethnicity of the neighborhood the parish served so that teachers would be available that spoke the same language as the students. For example, the Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Charity were chosen to teach the children of German immigrants whereas the Felician Sisters took charge of the Polish schools.²⁵ The Sisters of Mercy do not seem to have had a defined group of schools based on language, but given the Order’s Irish roots and their beginnings in Buffalo at St. Bridget’s teaching the children of Irish immigrants, new schools that the Sisters took over within Buffalo tended to be in Irish neighborhoods.

²⁰ Ibid., 117

²¹ Ibid., 21-22

²² Ibid., 49

²³ Ibid., 113

²⁴ New York State Legislature Assembly 95th Session, *Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York, Vol 1* (Albany: The Argus Company, 1872), 66; Bohlen, *Against the Grain*, 6

²⁵ Gallagher, *The History of Catholic Elementary Education in the Diocese of Buffalo*, 81

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In addition to parish schools, the Sisters of Mercy also founded and continue to operate Mount Mercy Academy, a Catholic girls' school, and Trocaire College in South Buffalo. The Sisters of Mercy also founded and operate several care facilities including Mercy Hospital, Kenmore Mercy Hospital, St. Jerome's Hospital in Batavia, as well as McAuley House for teens and Ignatia House for recovering female alcoholics. The order's motherhouse is the Mount Mercy Convent, which was constructed in 1912 on the school and hospital complex in South Buffalo.²⁶

Throughout the early history of the diocese, younger Sisters in religious orders often received teacher training from the more senior Sisters and then took an examination given by the Diocese in order to gain a teaching certificate.²⁷ However, in keeping with New York State educational training laws, more formal teaching education began to be available to Catholic school educators. The Sisters of Mercy opened its own three-year normal school in 1937, but prior to this Sisters had supplemented their education through enrolling at D'Youville College and especially Canisius College. The enrollment of Sisters of Mercy at Canisius College was so large that the university sent their professors to the motherhouse to teach classes directly.

The Catholic school system in Western New York reached its height in the mid-1960s with approximately 100,000 students, but quickly fell to only 61,000 by the fall of 1973.²⁸ In 1960, there were more than 2,000 religious teaching in Catholic elementary and high schools in the region. Thirty years later, there were only 440, with the remainder of the school staff made up of lay teachers, sometimes with only a few sisters, priests, or brothers remaining.²⁹ The decline in enrollment after the Baby Boom placed such stress on the state's Catholic school system that the New York State Council of Catholic School Superintendents issued a warning in 1969 of the dire consequences that a collapse of the system would cause.³⁰

The Valley Neighborhood

In the first half of the twentieth century, Buffalo was one of the nation's largest cities, with multiple major industries often related to Great Lakes shipping and utilizing massive grain elevators, steel mills, and, later, chemical plants. The second half of the twentieth century saw the decline in manufacturing in the United States and particularly in older industrial cities such as Buffalo. With the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1957,

²⁶ J. David Valakik, PhD., et al., *150 Years Celebrating God's Life in Us: The Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, 1847-1997* (Buffalo: The Heritage Press, 1997), 90

²⁷ Gallagher, *The History of Catholic Elementary Education in the Diocese of Buffalo*, 134

²⁸ Gary Stranges, "Sisters of Mercy Ponder Future of Parochial Schools as Enrollment Drops," *Buffalo Evening News*, Oct. 16, 1973, 37.

²⁹ Gallagher, *The History of Catholic Elementary Education in the Diocese of Buffalo*, 96

³⁰ Dick Burke, "\$750 Million Burden To Taxpayer Seen If Catholic Schools Shut," *Buffalo Evening News*, Sept. 5, 1969, 16.

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the final nail was driven to render Buffalo as unnecessary in the transportation of goods from the Midwest to the East Coast, and what grain elevators were left in operation continued their decline to closure.

Within but representative of this larger and oft-told narrative of Buffalo's rise and fall lies the small former immigrant neighborhood known as "the Valley," in which the St. Stephen's Church Complex is located. The community gained its moniker as "the Valley" in the 1960s because it was surrounded by the river to the south and railroad tracks on all other sides such that the only way in or out was over a bridge, contributing to a sense of isolation.³³ The Valley has always been culturally similar to the neighboring First Ward neighborhood, the historic home of Buffalo's Irish immigrant community. Prior to receiving its own moniker, the Valley had always been culturally considered to be the easternmost part of the First Ward, though it technically fell across the boundary line into the fifth ward of the City of Buffalo. Given that within the period of significance, the Valley was considered part of the First Ward, the remainder of this section describes the environmental and culture context of the First Ward and ends with a specific emphasis on the industrial and lifestyle influences in the area closely surrounding St. Stephen's.

Irish immigrants in Buffalo first settled along the shores of Lake Erie and the ship canals, but in time moved inward and began to settle and create a community in the First Ward. The First Ward, historically, was known for having its own mob bosses and version of Tammany Hall. Those living in the Ward struggled through an incredibly hard life. The area was defined by the riverfront, grain elevators, and industrial plants (especially iron and steel plants) that surrounded and dotted the neighborhood and the residents were the employees of those industries.

More than any other, the grain industry defined the First Ward and its environs from the invention of the grain elevator in 1842 through the 1950s. Laborers were needed to dry, sort, and weigh the grain in the elevators as well as to run the machinery. Grain scooping was often the first job Irish immigrants took when they arrived in Buffalo. Scoopers used shovels to scoop up the loose grain in the hull of ships into buckets on a steam-powered pulley system, which then transported the grain up into a storage bin or warehouse. By 1887, there were a total of thirty-nine grain elevators in Buffalo, primarily located in the First Ward, which could transfer 3.5 million bushels a day.³⁴

Shipbuilding was also a major industry in the First Ward due to its inexpensive land and its proximity to the Buffalo River. The largest shipbuilding firm was Bidwell & Banta, which specialized in palace steamers, "some of the largest and most luxurious wooden side-wheel steamboats in the world."³⁵ Iron manufacturing blossomed as an industry in the nineteenth century in the First Ward to respond to a growing demand for machines and

³³ Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 173

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 25

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30

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machine parts for the growing waterfront industries. Several iron works in the neighborhood made steam engines, boilers, car wheels, propeller wheels, and other items. Other industries in the Ward during the late nineteenth century included coal storage and distribution yards, railroading, and several flour mills.³⁶

By 1888, the chemical industry had also established itself on the banks of the Buffalo River nearby. Large plants operated by Schoellkopf's Aniline & Chemical Works, Buffalo Chemical Works, and Sterling Manufacturing Co. (a manufacturer of alkali and muriatic acids) appear on Sanborn maps from that era and maps from the early twentieth century show significant expansion.³⁸ Finally, during this era, Buffalo was one of the largest processors of lumber in the world, much of which occurred in the First Ward.³⁹ This industry was especially strong in the neighborhood where St. Stephen's is located, with five major lumber yards located within the surrounding blocks. One of them in particular, G. Elias & Son Lumber Co., occupied three city blocks on its own.⁴⁰

After the First Ward became overcrowded due to ongoing expansion of both industrial and residential uses, development extended eastward along Elk Street and the Valley community developed from the overflow. As a result, the residents of the Valley were culturally similar to those in the First Ward and had a very similar life experience. In time, settlement continued to move east beyond the Valley into South Buffalo and south towards Lackawanna after 1900.

Within the Valley neighborhood, Elk Street is the major commercial thoroughfare. Elk Street formerly extended all the way downtown but presently begins at a junction with South Park Avenue in the First Ward and continues east forming the central spine of the Valley before ending at a junction with Seneca Street on the northern bank of the Buffalo River. Elk Street continues to physically link the two neighborhoods, but historically also served as a bustling commercial avenue lined with all the businesses necessary to sustain one's everyday life.

St. Stephen's Parish History

To serve the quickly growing Irish immigrant population employed in the docks and industry of the First Ward, too far from the older parishes in the core of the city for many parishioners to walk to, Bishop Timon had a church established in this area. The new church, named St. Bridget's (often referred to as St. Brigid), began in 1850 in a rented room. A small frame church was erected around 1852 on Fulton Street near Louisiana Street in the northwestern area of the First Ward. St. Bridget's parish opened a school in 1854 or soon after which was

³⁶ Ibid., 31, 26

³⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1881 corrected to 1888, Buffalo Vol. 2, plate 55

³⁹ Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 32

⁴⁰ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1900 corrected to 1914, Buffalo Vol. 7, plates 513-522

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operated by the Sisters of Mercy order of nuns from its conception in a small brick building adjacent to the church. The frame church building had been poorly constructed and was condemned, so plans for a grand new edifice were made. The cornerstone was laid in 1859 and completed at the end of 1860.⁴¹

The population of the First Ward continued to grow and the boundaries of current development extended further east down Elk Street in tandem with ever-expanding industrial concerns to employ the new arrivals. In response to increasing pressure on the facilities at St. Bridget's and other nearby parishes, St. Stephen's Parish was formed in 1875 approximately one mile east of St. Bridget's to serve this fledgling new neighborhood. Bishop Ryan appointed Rev. Eugene McDermott to select a location for the new church and to lead the new congregation.⁴³ Previously, McDermott was assistant pastor at St. Bridget's and thus knew the neighborhood and the people well.⁴⁴

The Buffalo City Atlas from 1872 shows that the location chosen for St. Stephen's was at the edge of the city's development at that time. The land that the church complex was constructed on was three smaller lots and the land westward toward downtown was similarly divided with buildings shown on many of the lots. Immediately east of the church site, large tracts of land predominate, suggesting that land subdivision for urban development had not yet occurred here.

The diocese purchased the lot on Elk Street on June 28, 1875, which measured 132 feet wide by 437 feet deep. Ground was broken for the building on July 5, 1875 and the cornerstone was laid on either September 4 or October 7, 1875, depending on the historical source.⁴⁵ A "plain" brick church building measuring 40 feet wide by 75 feet deep opened for its first service on Christmas Day 1875. Bishop Ryan dedicated the small new church as St. Stephen's after his patron saint. Saint Stephen was canonized in the early years of the church. He is typically known for martyrdom in the early Christian Church and is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. St. Stephen is also the Patron Saint of Bricklayers and Stone Masons, a fitting patron for what would ultimately become an impressive complex.⁴⁶ The parish then numbered 130 families. McDermott also had constructed a small frame structure and in this "shanty" he made his residence. He purchased more land south of the church building in April 1878 and, on this part of the lot in 1882 constructed a brick parish residence, which remains in expanded form today. In the summer of 1882, Father McDermott also established the parish school in two rooms within the rectory. A detailed discussion of the school as an institution and as a building, as well as the convent that provided nuns to staff it, is included in the next section of this document below.

⁴¹ Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church*, 245-246

⁴³ St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church and the Bicentennial History of Catholic America*, (S. Hackensack, NJ: Custombook, 1976), 8.

⁴⁴ Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church*, 463, 481

⁴⁵ Donohue states September 4, whereas a *Buffalo Express* article from 1889 states October 7

⁴⁶ "St. Stephen – Feast," Our Catholic Faith, Accessed May 1, 2016, <http://www.ourcatholicfaith.org/saints/s.html>

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Plans for a new church were drawn up in the 1880s and the small temporary church was left in place and in use while the larger stone structure was built around it. During construction, the pastor, Rev. McDermott, liked to say that he preached in two churches every Sunday. In addition to his customary preaching duties, he superintended the construction work himself. The new church under construction he said “would be a credit to the congregation and an ornament to that part of the city.”⁴⁷

A newspaper article describing the new church near to its completion in 1889 described it thus: “The new church is of gray limestone from the Lockport quarries, and is 153 feet long by 60 feet wide. The transept is 80 feet wide. Other dimensions are equally imposing, the height of the walls being 32 feet while the main tower stands 150 feet high. ... The church is plain, almost severe, in style, but presents many excellent architectural features.” The church contains two large stained glass windows entitled “St. Stephen’s Discourse Before the Council” and “St. Stephen’s Martyrdom,” which were flanked by six smaller but colorful windows depicting other saints.⁴⁸

The article continues: “The interior, where the work is now going on, will be semi-gothic in style. No pillars will obstruct the view, the roof being constructed with iron trusses. The windows will be of stained glass and the walls will be decorated in gold, cream and blue. The seating capacity is 1,200.”⁴⁹

By 1889 and the opening of the new church, the parish is noted to have grown to 250 families.⁵⁰ Despite this growth, the construction of such a massive edifice proved to be an expensive endeavor for the young congregation. The new church cost a substantial sum and as a result the congregation went into debt.⁵¹

In 1891, in an effort to outfit their new church while limiting costs, the congregation purchased a refurbished organ and had it installed in the rear gallery. The organ had originally been built for another church by Garrett House Organ Company of Buffalo and this same company refurbished the organ before installation at St. Stephen’s.

By 1898, the church campus as it remains today (including the school and convent, discussed in the next section) was largely complete as a result of the extensive building program undertaken by an energetic pastor. St. Stephen’s has always been located in a working-class community and Father McDermott was known for

⁴⁷ Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church*, 263

⁴⁸ St. Stephen’s Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen’s Church*, 8

⁴⁹ *Buffalo Express*, “A Fine First-Ward Church”

⁵⁰ Accounts of the opening year for the church vary widely depending on the historical source, ranging from 1886 to 1889. The 1889 date was chosen for this nomination because it comes from a source that was written in 1889 (the *Buffalo Express* article listed in the previous footnote) and thus is a first-person account from that year stating that the church was nearly completed at that time.

⁵¹ Some discrepancy as to the cost of the church’s construction exists in historical sources. The *Buffalo Express* article states that new church cost \$40,000 and as a result the congregation went into debt \$27,000. In contrast *The Catholic Church in the United States of America* states the new church cost over \$200,000.

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doing his best to assist the less fortunate of the neighborhood. During strikes or at other times when the poor had difficulty “keeping the wolf from the door,” he would buy fifteen or sixteen carloads of coal at wholesale rates and distribute it among the needy.⁵² Father McDermott passed away in 1898.

Father McDermott was succeeded by Rev. Henry M. Leddy. As a result of all the construction, Rev. Leddy found the congregation to be under a heavy debt burden and during his tenure, he focused on paying down this debt.⁵³ Owing to his ill health during his entire rectorship, the church property became rundown. Rev. Thomas H. Barrett succeeded in leading the parish after Leddy passed away on July 6, 1912. Leddy Street, which still exists in the Valley neighborhood, was named after Rev. Leddy.⁵⁴ Soon after his appointment, Barrett oversaw \$30,000 in repairs to the church property.

Similar to how St. Stephen's had been formed to release pressure from St. Bridget's, the First Ward continued to densify as immigrants continued to arrive and the development of Buffalo continued eastward and southward across the Buffalo River. The congregation at St. Stephen's grew throughout the 1880s and 1890s and, as a result, several new churches were established to relieve pressure on its facilities and bring the church's services closer to the increasing number of parishioners. In 1897, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church was established to serve the southern portion of the First Ward, and in 1900 a new Medina sandstone church was completed to house it at 115 O'Connell Street. The same year, St. Teresa's Church at 1870 Seneca Street in South Buffalo was established to serve parishioners south of the river for which a new stone church was completed in 1900. In 1902, Holy Family Church was established on South Park Avenue in South Buffalo.⁵⁵ Finally, in 1912 St. Monica's parish was established in close proximity to St. Stephen's on Seneca Street in the northern portion of the Valley. A combined church/school building for St. Monica's located at 214 Orlando St. was completed in late 1913.⁵⁶ In 1914, as a result being split multiple times, St. Stephen's parish was noted to have “only” 600 families.

In addition to the ever-increasing Irish population, Polish settlement was also increasing in the city at the beginning of the twentieth century to a total of 60,000 citywide by the year 1900 and a number of these families were choosing to live on the streets in the northern portion of the First Ward. The First Ward Irish, always suspicious of outsiders, did not spare this new immigrant group their distrust. There is even one account of a potential riot when a few newly-arrived Polish families tried to go to Mass at St. Bridget's.⁵⁷ However, the nearest Polish Catholic churches were the older established parishes further north in the Broadway-Fillmore

⁵² St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of St. Stephen's Church*, 11

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *The Catholic Church in the United States*

⁵⁶ James Napora, “Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York” (MArch Thesis, SUNY University at Buffalo, 1995), 27.1, <http://www.buffaloah.com/how/tc.html>

⁵⁷ Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 196

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area, some distance from the First Ward. To serve this new pocket of Polish families, the Diocese established St. Valentine's Church on South Park Avenue near Alabama Street in 1920 and a yellow brick combined church/school building was completed in 1922.⁵⁸ Throughout the twentieth century, St. Valentine's continued to serve the needs of Polish families in the First Ward but as Poles continued to expand down Elk Street into the Valley, they increasingly joined St. Stephen's and eventually became the dominant ethnic group of St. Stephen's parish. Poles primarily lived north of Elk Street in the First Ward and in the Valley, though there was a scattering of them on every street in the First Ward by the early 1940s.⁵⁹

In the early 1910s, a pair of industrial explosions took place near the church. In June 1913, an explosion occurred in the Husted Grain Mill. The explosion killed 33 people and injured 80. After the incident, Friar Barrett ministered to the injured and gave last rites to the dying. The explosion blew out windows for a quarter of a mile, including one stained glass window at St. Stephen's titled "St. Stephen Addressing the Council." Barrett's sister Elizabeth had married a wealthy Jewish New Yorker, Martin Rothschild. Both Elizabeth and her husband were first-class passengers aboard the *Titanic* when it sank in 1912. Martin went down with the ship but Elizabeth escaped in a life raft and survived. She was a devout Catholic and so donated the replacement window to the church.⁶⁰

A second industrial explosion occurred in January 1916 at Kelker Blower Company on Harrison Street just north of the church. Incidents like this demonstrate the type of neighborhood that the Valley was. It was never wealthy and was always heavily industrial, but provided steady employment and the dense population allowed businesses to thrive that provided all of the residents' daily needs within walking distance. Many of the parishioners were employed in the surrounding neighborhood as steel workers and grain scoopers, all labor-intensive employment but reliable blue-collar jobs. St. Stephen's offered refuge from the grit of day-to-day life in a light-filled and open space. The Catholic Church became a dominant force in the Irish American culture by the late nineteenth century, so much so "the church and its teaching pervaded their whole life; it formed their moral outlook."⁶¹ Enrollment in Catholic elementary school and weekly mass attendance were expected. The multiple parishes in the Ward and Valley came to be the center of life for many of its residents.⁶² In 1928, near the end of the First Ward's prominence as an Irish immigrant neighborhood, the parish registered approximately 425 households and is noted to have held 44 baptisms.

In 1929, Friar Barrett retired and moved to live with his sister in New Jersey. The pastor that took his place was Rev. John Peel, assistant pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish. During his time at St. Stephen's, Peel was also the diocesan superintendent of Catholic schools. Soon after taking over the parish, Rev. Peel made

⁵⁸ Naporá, "Houses of Worship", 26.1

⁵⁹ Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 197

⁶⁰ Diocese of Buffalo Archives, "St. Stephen Parish: Historical Notes"

⁶¹ Margaret Ann Kilgallon, "Irish Immigration to Buffalo's First Ward", (Masters Thesis), 3

⁶² Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 171

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repairs to the parish facilities and in c. 1930 directed construction of a stone addition to the front of the rectory containing two large offices on the first floor and a pastor's office and living quarters on the second floor enclosed by a "handsome stone exterior." With the addition, Peel's assistants, Fathers Sullivan and Donovan, received individual studies, bedrooms, and bathrooms.⁶³ In the early and mid-1930s, he left the parish to serve in state and national education positions and then returned to St. Stephen's in 1937. Peel is also responsible for introducing the Novena to St. Jude and the Sacred Heart and for constructing a special shrine to St. Jude. Bishop Duffy proclaimed this the official diocesan shrine to St. Jude in 1934.⁶⁴ The spires at the front of the church are noted to have been removed about this time. They appear in photographs from 1932 but are stated to have been removed soon after due to structural instability.⁶⁵ The spire over the apse was likely removed at the same time.

The next defining event noted in the church's history is a fire that significantly damaged the rectory on December 27, 1948. Both Pastor Peel and his assistant, Rev. Martin Fell, were killed in the blaze. The rectory was quickly rebuilt by the new pastor, Rev. Francis Crowley. A building permit dated March 8, 1949 lists the cost of the repairs to be \$6,000.⁶⁶ During the eleven months of construction, Father Crowley and his assistant lived at the St. Monica's rectory.⁶⁷ Given the relatively small amount of money spent on this renovation, it is likely that the work comprised a repair of the existing rather than a substantial alteration.

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic School

In late summer of 1882, Father McDermott established a partnership between St. Stephen's and the Sisters of Mercy to form a new school, a continuation of the partnership the Sisters had with St. Stephen's mother church, St. Bridget's.⁶⁹ Mother M. Joseph Brown, Mother Superior of St. Bridget's, promised to provide two Sisters and Father McDermott made accommodations for about eighty children in two rooms of the rectory. However, when the two Sisters arrived and the doors opened for the new school on September 2, 1882, one hundred students registered. Within a few days, there were "almost twice as many pupils." A temporary hall, dubbed "the wigwam," was pressed into service.⁷⁰ During these early years of the school, the Sisters commuted from St. Bridget's every day. In 1890, the pupils were given an examination by three Fathers in the Diocese and received high marks, suggesting the young school had already achieved high academic standards.⁷¹ Throughout its history, like other parish schools in the city, St. Stephen's served up through eighth or ninth grade. After graduating, students could move on to one of the diocese's several high schools.

⁶³ Ibid., 13

⁶⁴ Diocese of Buffalo Archives, "St. Stephen Parish: Historical Notes"

⁶⁵ Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 174

⁶⁶ City of Buffalo, Building permit #RO 46594, dated 3/8/49

⁶⁷ St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church*, 18

⁶⁹ Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 174

⁷⁰ St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church*, 8

⁷¹ Gallagher, *The History of Catholic Elementary Education in the Diocese of Buffalo*, 63

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On August 27, 1891, the diocesan newspaper announced that the “Sisters of Mercy now teaching in St. Stephen’s School will soon have a home of their own.”⁷² The new convent was constructed at a cost of \$12,000 and opened in 1893, adjoining the church on its west side.⁷³ The funds that McDermott used to build the convent were initially intended to be used to construct a new rectory for the priests, but McDermott realized a convent was a higher priority at the time. In 1894, the growing student body exceeded the capacity of the initial school building.⁷⁴

In 1896, the current four-story brick and limestone school building was constructed for over \$25,000 at the northwest corner of the church site at the intersection of Elk Street and Euclid Place. In addition to classrooms, the school contained “a large hall in the upper story for the uses of the societies of the parish and school entertainments.” This large hall remains on the third floor.⁷⁵ On June 17, 1895, a large crowd gathered for the first raising of a large flag that had been given to the school by the *Buffalo Courier-Express*. Around this time, the Christian Brothers came to the school to teach the eighth and ninth grades, though after many years they were replaced by Sisters.⁷⁶

In 1914, soon after St. Stephen’s parish was split multiple times as the city continued to grow and new parishes developed in South Buffalo, St. Stephen’s school is noted to have had an enrollment of 450 pupils in the charge of ten Sisters.⁷⁷ The school had an extensive program of extracurricular activities, including a school band. The band is said to have received many requests to play at Catholic and non-Catholic functions.⁷⁸

In a history of their Order, the Sisters of Mercy make this note of the high academic standards the Order upheld in the schools they managed:

...In 1942, one hundred fifty-six Sisters of Mercy engaged in the work in instructing 6,429 grammar school pupils, over half of whom are in the City of Buffalo ... the annual competitive scholarship examinations conducted by the Catholic high schools and academies within the City of Buffalo, afford a criterion by which to measure results. Nearly fifty percent of the scholarships awarded to pupils completing the eighth grade in June 1941 were won by pupils of the Sisters of Mercy.⁷⁹

⁷² St. Stephen’s Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen’s Church*, 9

⁷³ *Catholic Church in the United States*, 482

⁷⁴ Bohen, *Against the Grain*, 174

⁷⁵ Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church*, 263

⁷⁶ St. Stephen’s Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen’s Church*, 10

⁷⁷ *Catholic Church in the United States*, 482

⁷⁸ Gallagher, *The History of Catholic Elementary Education in the Diocese of Buffalo*, 63

⁷⁹ Sister Mary Innocentia Fitzgerald, *A Historical Sketch of the Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese of Buffalo, 1857-1942*, (Buffalo: Mount Mercy Academy, 1942), 117.

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In its decades of service, the school became an institution in the local neighborhood. During these years, St. Stephen's School likewise made a strong impact on its neighborhood and the city. A report in the diocesan newspaper written October 11, 1917, states it thus:

Few parochial schools of the city have furnished so many talented men and women to public life as St. Stephen's, taught by the Sisters of Mercy. Scores and scores of public school teachers have acquired their elementary education in the old stone building on Elk Street. The same is true of many leading Catholic business and professional men of the city.⁸⁰

Beginning in 1949, plans were made for a significant update to the school building. The building permit dated July 31, 1950 states simply "general repairs & alter brick school" for the sum of \$55,000.⁸¹ The scope of the construction work is described in the construction specifications for the project in a narrative that also details the construction of the original building:

The existing building is a three story and basement structure located on the southeast corner of Elk Street and Euclid Place. Exterior walls are of stone facing with brick backing. The interior of the building consists of wooden floors supported on wood joists, partitions of wood, and stairways are of wooden construction. Interior support of floors is accomplished by one row of cast iron columns which support wooden and steel girders on the first, second and third floors. It is proposed generally to remove interior partitions, wooden stairs, present plumbing fixtures, lighting fixtures, and heating equipment. All of the forgoing to be replaced as indicated on the drawings and described in these specifications. Present brick walls enclosing stairs to remain with alterations as indicated on drawings.⁸²

Drawings prepared for the project by James G. Davison, Consulting Engineer, of Youngstown, New York, shed more light on the scope of the work. The intent of the project appears to have been to better fireproof what was still, at that time, a 75-year old school building constructed almost completely of wood. Both existing stairs were replaced with new terrazzo stairs on concrete slabs. The existing single row of cast iron columns was removed and replaced with two rows of steel columns filled solid with concrete. A new two-inch concrete slab was poured over the existing wood floors in the corridors and the new corridor walls were constructed of fire-resistant gypsum block. Other new partitions were constructed of different varieties of fireproof concrete block including lightweight expanded clay aggregate and slag. Taken together, this work provided safe fire exit routes from throughout the building for the first time in its history. The only portion of the school not impacted by the project was the gymnasium on the third floor, which remained largely untouched.⁸³

⁸⁰ St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church*, 12

⁸¹ City of Buffalo, Building permit #RO 49153, dated 7/31/50

⁸² James G. Davison, Consulting Engineer, "Specifications: Alterations to St. Stephen's School", 2, Accessed at City of Buffalo permit archives.

⁸³ While the gypsum board ceiling of the third floor gymnasium appears to have been added in the mid-twentieth century, it does not appear on the drawings from the 1951 renovation work. It is possible that it was added later in the 1950s or 60s.

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Fireproof design of schools had become a heightened topic of concern in the early-to-mid twentieth century. Major fires in Collingswood, Ohio in 1908 and Camden, South Carolina in 1923 led to changes in fire regulations and more focus on ensuring the regulations were met. In total, from 1900 to 1958, 821 lives were lost in 37 fatal school fires in the US and Canada.⁸⁴

While Diocesan officials were likely aware of the potential danger of operating wooden school buildings, this was a widespread practice and the need to meet continuous growth in the early twentieth century and a shortage of funds during the interwar years meant that it wasn't until the massive post-war construction campaign by Bishop O'Hara that the funds were available and allocated to address the Catholic school system's facility needs. The decision to allocate a portion of these funds to St. Stephen's, despite its stagnant enrollment, was likely a result of the deadly rectory fire that had occurred two years before. When school ended for the summer in 1950, construction began and the renovated school opened in February of 1951. Soon following the completion of this project, the convent received a complete renovation.⁸⁵ This would be the last major construction project on the campus prior to its long decline.

After the Period of Significance

In the wake of the baby boom and with growing suburbanization occurring in the 1960s, Catholic school enrollment declined in general throughout the city. The school enrollment at St. Stephen's was especially hard-hit by this trend. While the Irish population of the neighborhood had been slowly departing for South Buffalo since the 1920s, leading to a steady to slowly declining enrollment for decades, during the 1960s the trend accelerated. In 1928, the school is listed as having 364 students, in 1954 it had 274 students and eight teachers, and by the 1961-62 school year, it had fallen below 200.⁸⁶ By 1968-69, its last school year in independent operation, St. Stephen's School had only 130 students and four teachers. The next year, fall 1969, St. Stephen's merged with St. Monica's such that fourth through eighth grades went to St. Monica's for their lessons and the younger grades of both parishes attended St. Stephen's.⁸⁷ Together, the two buildings had 288 students. A scarcity of teaching Sisters also contributed to the decision to consolidate the schools. The use of both school buildings continued for only a year before St. Stephen's School was closed in the spring of 1970 and students of all grades from both parishes moved to St. Monica's.

In the fall of 1973, responding to continuing declining enrollment in the 28 Catholic elementary schools and two high schools they operated at the time, the Sisters of Mercy commissioned a study to determine which of

⁸⁴ National Research Council Committee on Safety to Life from Life in Elementary and Secondary Schools, *School Fires: An Approach to Life Safety* (Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1960), <https://books.google.com/books?id=XGQrAAAAAYAAJ>

⁸⁵ St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of St. Stephen's Church*, 18

⁸⁶ Diocese of Buffalo Department of Education, "Directory of Schools" from various years: 1953 through 1971

⁸⁷ *Buffalo Courier-Express*, "Six Catholic Schools To Consolidate," June 12, 1969, 1

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their schools should remain open.⁸⁸ In its last years, St. Monica made most of its operating money from bingo games held in the building.⁸⁹ In September 1973, the school also raised tuition to \$50 from the \$35 it had been previously, but this wasn't enough to staunch the financial shortfall and, in June of 1974, the consolidation venture ended as St. Monica's was also closed. In the last year of the combined school, it educated only 125 students, compared with the 641 the two schools had educated separately twenty years earlier.⁹⁰

In contrast to the school's enrollment, the number of parish families appears to have been fairly stable throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century. In 1960, 450 households were registered at St. Stephen's, whereas diocese records show 307 families registered to the parish in 2000. While the neighborhood surrounding the parish and parish itself were in a slow decline by the early 1970s, some small updates continued to be made to the facilities during this era. The interior of the church was repainted and the sanctuary was renovated in accordance with the guidelines established by Vatican Council II. The old wooden altar and old-style pulpit with canopy and winding wood stairs were removed and replaced with a small altar large enough to hold the tabernacle and a modern lectern. The altar rail was removed and a Table of Sacrifice was installed, facing the people. Some of the large number of statues in the sanctuary were removed and the others were repainted. The stained glass windows were repaired and the rear parking lot and school playground were paved. Finally, the old oil boilers were replaced with new gas-fired boilers.⁹¹

After closing, the St. Stephen's school building received a partial renovation in 1978 in which the second floor classroom walls were removed and mid-twentieth century finishes were applied for a sum of \$5,000 in order to create a large open area that was used as a bingo hall.⁹⁶ The first floor has also been used as a bingo hall.

On December 10, 1980, a building permit was issued for the demolition of the 2-1/2 story convent building for a sum of \$9,500. Since the school had been closed for six years, the parish likely felt no need to maintain a large unused structure on its campus. The permit listed the future land use as "vacant."⁹⁷

St. Stephen's parish name was changed to the Shrine of St. Jude in 1991, but was changed back in 1995. In 2007, after suffering declining populations for decades, the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo merged five parishes in the First Ward and South Buffalo together (St. Stephens, Sts. Rita & Patrick, Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Precious Blood, and St. Valentine's). St. Clare became the new operating name of the consolidated parish, which was located at the former St. Stephen's campus. The consolidation of the five parishes appears to have accelerated their decline. After consolidation in 2008, St. Clare's was spiritual home to 696 households. In

⁸⁸ Stranges, "Sisters of Mercy Ponder Future of Parochial Schools an Enrollment Drops"

⁸⁹ Tony Violanti, "Lament for St. Monica's...A Chunk of South Buffalo that Has Died," *Buffalo Courier Express Sunday Magazine*, 8

⁹⁰ Camille Curro, "Budget Ax to Shut St. Monica School," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, Jan. 25, 1974, 5

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹⁶ City of Buffalo, Building permit #152231, dated 2/22/78

⁹⁷ City of Buffalo, Building permit #165032, dated 12/10/80

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2010, only two years later, that number dropped to 388 and by 2015, to only 241. The four unused parish properties were sold following the merger, which helped shore up the finances of the combined church, but the ensuing swift decline in congregants following the merger continued to cause financial stress for the parish. As a result, St. Clare parish closed in the spring of 2016 and merged its congregation with St. Teresa's in South Buffalo.

Following its closing, the Diocese of Buffalo sold the St. Clare Church Complex to new owners. The former school building is under conversion to apartments, whereas the church/rectory building has also been purchased but has not yet acquired a new use.

Architecture of the St Stephen's R.C. Church Complex

The complex remains a cohesive campus, sans the former convent. Even with this removal, the complex reads as a uniform whole, a demonstration of services offered within this working-class neighborhood. The courtyard between church and school is legible, with both elevations made of stone and a small section of iron fence remaining. The front lawn of the rectory remains as a reflective space on the campus framed by the rectory, the church's east elevation and the connector between the two, all in similar materials. All of these remain, surrounded by and emerging above low wood-framed residences. The only other church complex within the Valley, St. Monica's, which absorbed St. Stephen's school, has since been completely demolished. This leaves St. Stephen's as the only example of a largely intact Catholic church complex in the neighborhood.

The church and school are good representative examples of the Late Victorian Gothic Revival Style. Similar to the European counterparts, the Gothic Revival in the United States was meant to inspire and create awe in parishioners. Flying buttresses, stained glass, and large vaults all contribute to the creation of the light and airy space that is often a refuge from the daily toils of both work and home. Several church gables are topped by Celtic crosses, showing the cultural influences of the neighborhood on the design. All twelve original dormers remain, having survived at least one roofing project, and appear to be in good condition. Although the spires have been removed, the steeples remain and allow for interpretation of these symbolic elements as part of the overall ecclesiastical design. Overall, the architecture is highly symbolic, representative of The Divine, as it rises as a landmark above the surrounding neighborhood. Gothic-arched windows remain with their stained glass, as do (applied) flying buttresses, distinctive elements representative of the Gothic Revival style.

The church has a column-free interior, an uncommon example of such construction from this time period in the region. This creates a large unobstructed, light-filled volume, leaving all seating with views of the altar. All interior finishes remain intact, with some late twentieth century updates.

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The school is a rare remaining example of a late nineteenth century parochial school building in the City of Buffalo. Also constructed in the Late Victorian Gothic style in the same materials as the church, the school contributes to the architectural cohesiveness of the complex. The multi-purpose gymnasium is unique as to its location on the top level and its large volume with vaulted ceiling. Its provision as part of the school's original construction establishes the gymnasium as an example of the early recognition of physical fitness, activity and time for mental breaks and play.

The rectory and school interiors are both examples of design responding to concerns common to institutions during the mid-twentieth century. Both were impacted by fire and the fear of fire. The rectory received a minor interior renovation in 1949 due to an interior fire, which resulted in the updating of many of its finishes. The school was brought up to modern standards of fire-proofing in 1951 by removing its original wood stairs and replacing them with steel and concrete stairs, adding a second line of steel columns for redundancy, and adding lightweight concrete block partitions to divide the corridors from the classrooms.

Architects/Builders

The identity of the architect of St. Stephen's church is somewhat unclear. Builders or architects for the rectory, school, and convent are not known. Frederick Hampel is the stated architect for St. Stephen's Church by the Diocese in several texts.⁹⁸ Apparently a single practitioner, little is known about Hampel, though in 1895 a building permit appears in the newspaper for a five-story brick factory he designed for Mathias Strauss at 783 and 785 William Street, which is no longer standing.⁹⁹ Otherwise, the only other information known is that he partnered with nationally-recognized architect Calvin Otis for three years before going their separate ways in 1869. Otis was referenced by Andrew Jackson Downing's *Rural Residences* due to his designs in the neo-gothic style.¹⁰⁰ Otis practiced until his death in 1883 and likely left a stylistic influence on Hampel. The only known structure still standing by Otis is a portion of the current "Broadway Barn," the City of Buffalo's Department of Public Works garage, though it has been substantially altered.¹⁰¹

Oddly, a newspaper article from 1889 describing the new church then under construction lists the architect as Fred W. Humble.¹⁰² Despite the similarities to the name "Frederick Hampel," The Buffalo City directory from

⁹⁸ Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church*, 263

⁹⁹ "Building Permits," *The Buffalo Express*, June 7, 1895, 6

¹⁰⁰ "Otis, Calvin Nicholas." Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, Accessed Nov. 4, 2016, <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/129/>

¹⁰¹ "City wants to demo old Broadway arsenal", Greater Buffalo Blog, Accessed Aug. 1, 2016,

<http://greaterbuffalo.blogs.com/gbb/2012/02/city-wants-to-demo-old-broadway-arsenalarmoryauditorium-campaign-has-an-alternative.html>.

¹⁰² *Buffalo Express*, "A Fine First-Ward Church"

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1893 confirms that these were, in fact, two different people. Hampel's address is listed as 627 Michigan Street whereas Humble's is listed as 27 German Insurance Building.

The work of Fred W. Humble is only slightly better recorded in history than that of Hampel. He is known to have been practicing in 1887 and in 1907, as in that year he was removed from a position as supervising architect for the construction of the Niagara Falls Federal Building.^{103,104} Further works attributed to him are Engine #26 Fire Station at Tonawanda and Progressive Streets in Buffalo, completed 1894, and his service as supervising architect for the post office in Jamestown, NY, in 1904.^{105,106}

Integrity

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex retains its setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling that define historic integrity. Despite the loss of one wing of the complex, the extant buildings retain a sufficient level of exterior and interior features and cohesiveness to understand them as a nineteenth-century church complex. The church remains largely intact as built, with only minor cosmetic changes. While both the rectory and school received interior renovations in the mid-twentieth century, those renovations did not substantially alter their exterior skins or their spatial configurations. The renovations were in reaction to fire safety concerns, a common type of alteration made to address the needs of active school and church buildings, and do not interfere with the reading of the buildings' original forms or purpose.

Summary

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex in Buffalo, New York served as an anchor for its surrounding neighborhood for over 140 years prior to its closing in 2016. It is locally significant in the area of architecture as a cohesive example of late-nineteenth century religious architecture in the Late Victorian Gothic style and for its place in the social history of an isolated Irish immigrant neighborhood, for which it served as a major social center throughout its history. The complex retains strong integrity beginning in 1882 with the construction of the oldest part of the rectory through the completion of the 1951 alterations to the school, which were last major construction project undertaken on an extant building in the complex.

¹⁰³ *Buffalo Courier-Express*, "Main Street Becoming Like Midway, Architect Asserts," Feb. 6, 1937, 30

¹⁰⁴ *Buffalo Courier*, "Local Architect Loses Position," August 14, 1907, 6

¹⁰⁵ Francis R. Kowsky, et al., *Buffalo Architecture: A Guide*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 185

¹⁰⁶ US Government Printing Office, *Congressional Serial Set 1905-1906*, 497,
<https://books.google.com/books?id=D58qAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA465>

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 9 Page 2

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 2

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

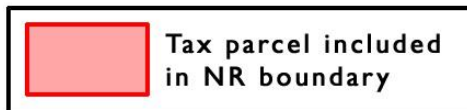
The nominated property is indicated with a bold line on the attached maps with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all property historically associated with the St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex during the period of significance, based on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.



Legend:



ST. STEPHEN'S
ROMAN CATHOLIC
CHURCH COMPLEX

Site Plan



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 10 Page 2

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

169 Elk Street
Buffalo, NY 14210



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

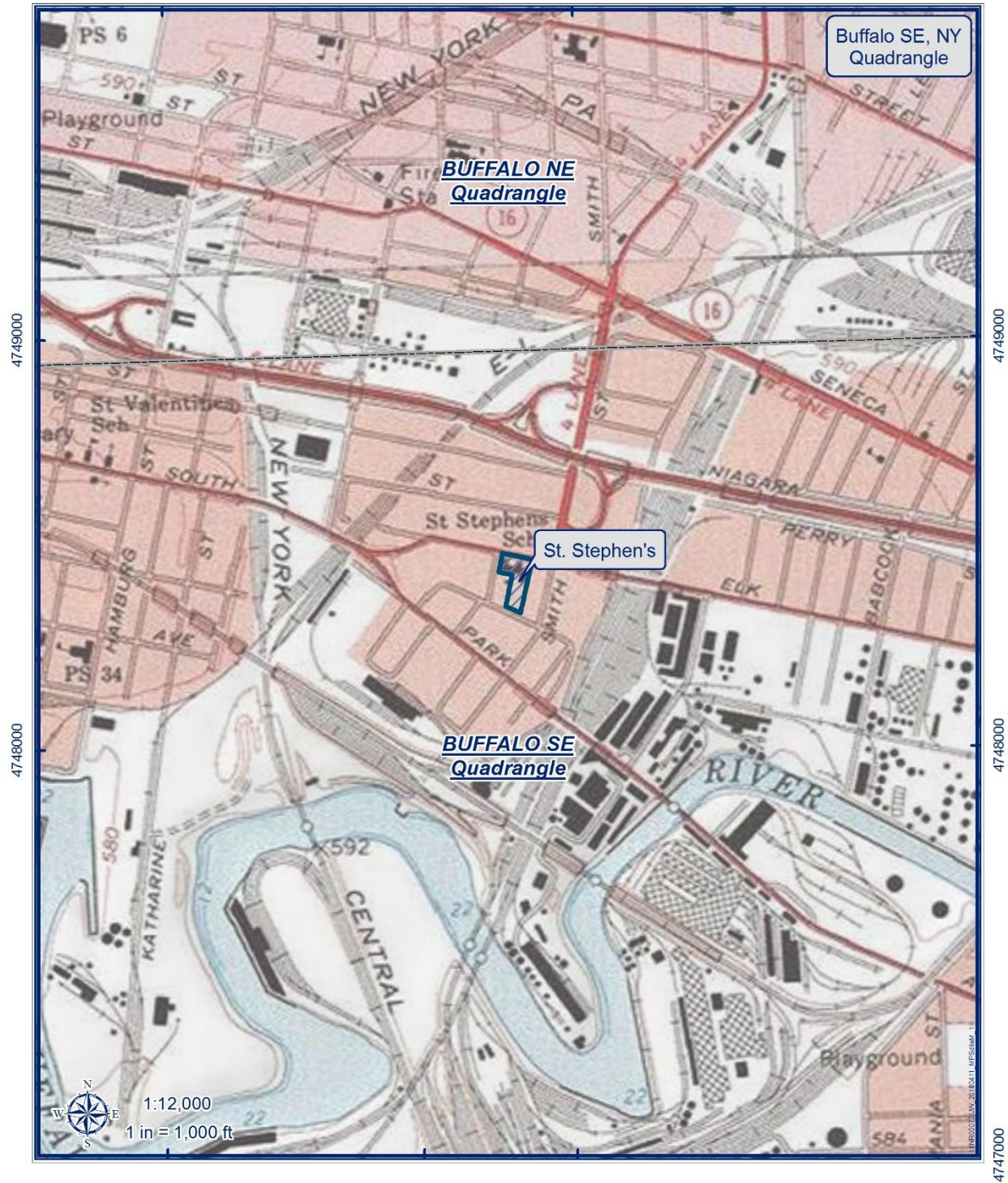
Section 10 Page 3

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

169 Elk Street
Buffalo, NY 14210



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



St. Stephen's



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation
Division for Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

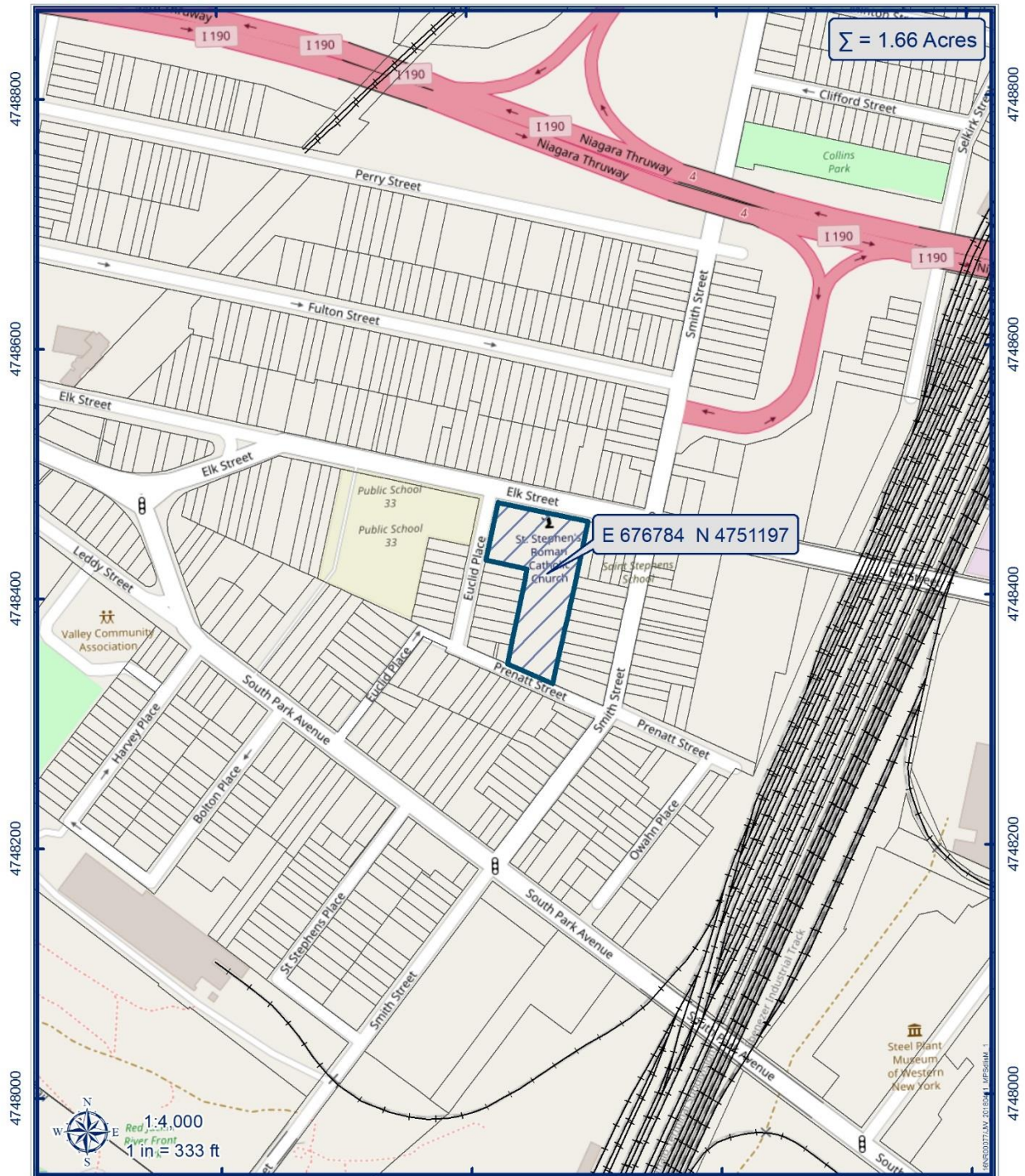
Section 10 Page 4

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

169 Elk Street
Buffalo, NY 14210



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



St. Stephen's



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation
Division for Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 5

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

169 Elk Street
Buffalo, NY 14210



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



St. Stephen's



Parks, Recreation
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Division for Historic Preservation

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 11 Page 1

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

Additional Information

Photo Log:

Name of Property:	St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex
City or Vicinity:	Buffalo
County:	Erie
State:	NY
Photographer:	LaLuce D. Mitchell, RA and Courtney Creenan-Chorley, AIA
Date Photographed:	March and May 2017
Location of Original Digital Files:	Flynn Battaglia Architects, 617 Main St., Suite 401, Buffalo, NY 14203
Number of Photos:	31

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0001

Neighborhood context, looking north on Euclid Place toward rear of St. Stephen's Roman Catholic School

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0002

Looking northeast toward St. Stephen's Roman Catholic School (at left) and St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church (at right)

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0003

Overview of complex looking southeast from the corner of Elk Street and Euclid Place, showing the school in the foreground and the church beyond

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0004

Overview of complex looking southwest from Elk Street, with the rectory visible at left, church at center, and school at right

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0005

North (front) elevation of church

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0006

Looking southeast toward the north and west elevations of the church

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0007

Looking northeast toward the west and south elevations of the church

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0008

Looking north toward the rear (south elevation) of the church, at left, and rectory, at right, with the stone church/rectory connector and a small attached garage visible at center.

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National Park Service**

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Continuation Sheet**

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 11 Page 2

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0009
Looking northwest toward the east elevation of the rectory

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0010
Overview of rectory, looking southwest

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0011
Looking southwest toward the north and east elevations of the school

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0012
Looking northwest toward the east and south (rear) elevations of the school. A rear stairwell, visible at left, extends from the main block of the school building.

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0013
Detail view of the north elevation of the school, showing original double-hung Gothic-arched windows within its front-facing gable

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0014
Interior view of the church sanctuary, looking south from the narthex

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0015
Interior of church sanctuary, looking north from the altar

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0016
Interior of church sanctuary, looking upward toward skylight over apse

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0017
Interior of church sacristy, looking southeast toward door to church/rectory connector

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0018
Interior of church/rectory connector, looking east

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0019
Interior of rectory, first floor corridor looking north

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0020
Interior of rectory, view of first floor office

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0021
Interior of rectory, view of typical bathroom

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Continuation Sheet

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 11 Page 3

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0022
Interior of rectory, view of typical former bedroom

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0023
Interior of rectory, view of typical living room

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0024
Interior of school, basement space looking northeast

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0025
Interior of school, first floor corridor looking south

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0026
Interior of school, open first floor space looking southeast

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0027
Interior of school, second floor corridor looking south

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0028
Interior of school, typical second floor former classroom

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0029
Interior of school, third floor gymnasium looking northeast

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0030
Interior of school, detail view of original materials at gymnasium wall

NY_Erie County_St. Stephen's RC Church Complex_0031
Interior of school, north (front) stairway looking northwest into turret

United States Department of the Interior
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Section 11 Page 4

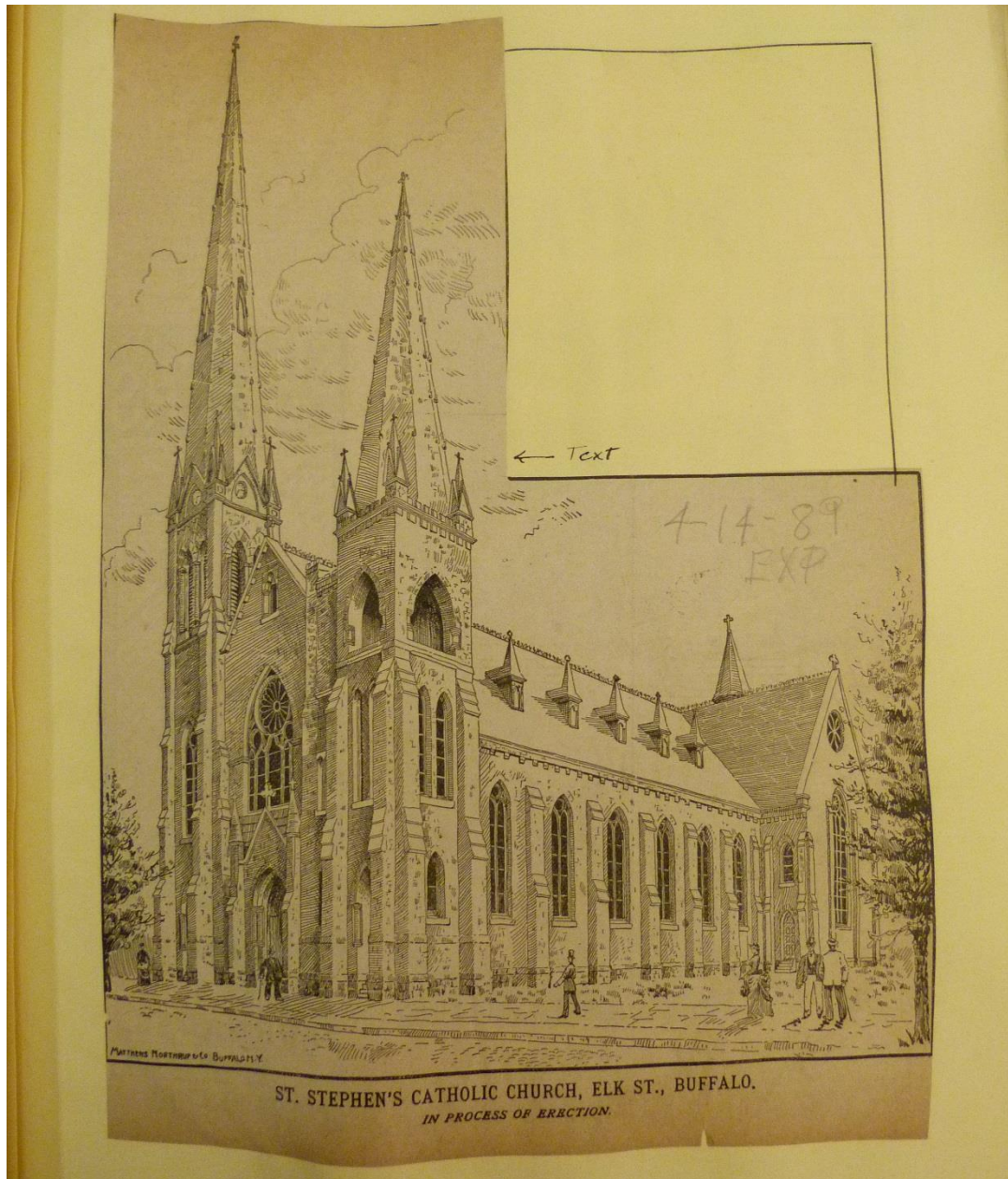
ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

Historic Images:



St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church (1889)

Rendering published in local newspaper during ongoing construction.

Source: *The Buffalo Express*, "Building Permits"

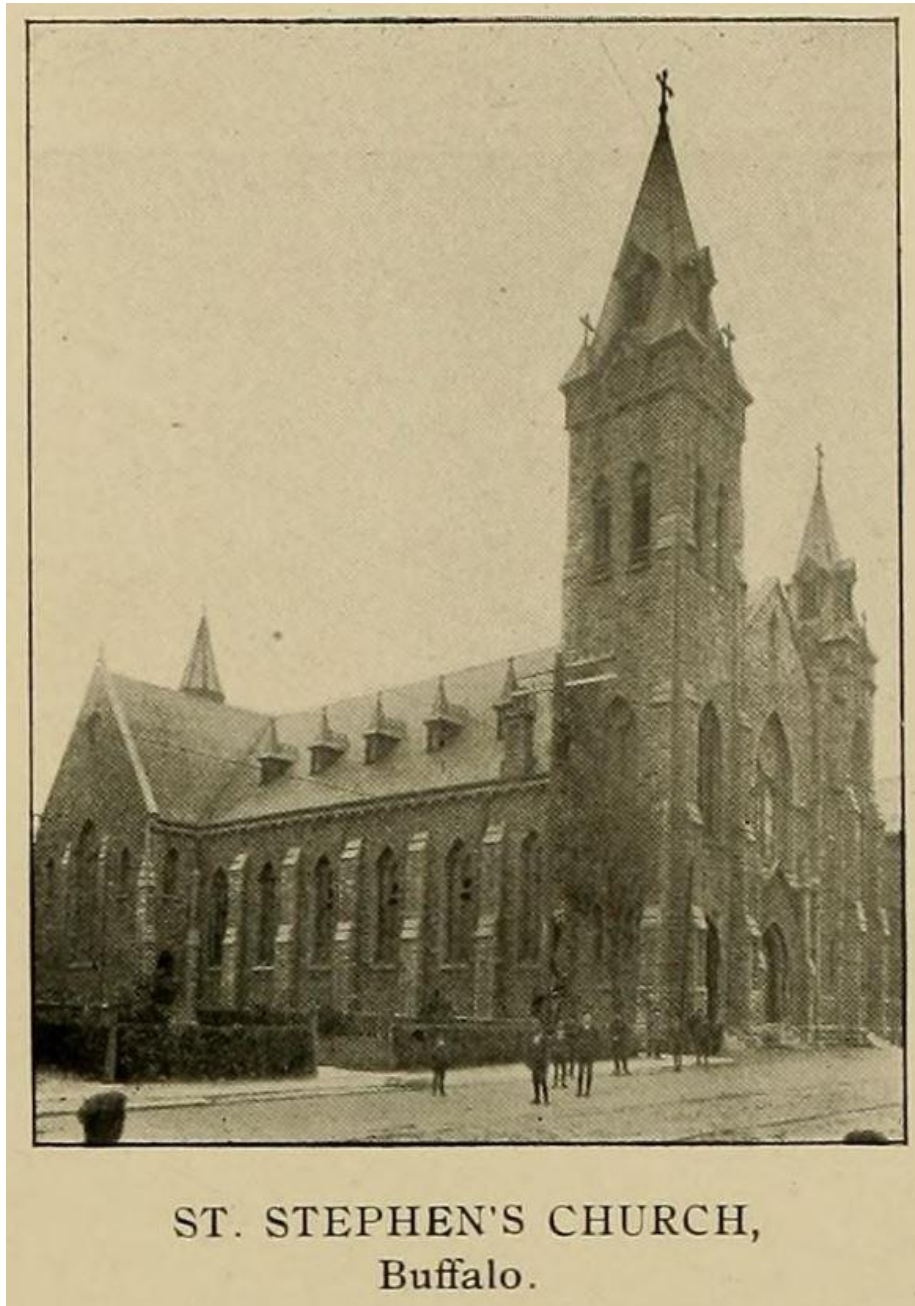
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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH,
Buffalo.

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church (1904)

Note the original steeples and spires at the front of the church and over the altar. Otherwise, the building is largely intact to what is shown here.

Source: Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church*, 75

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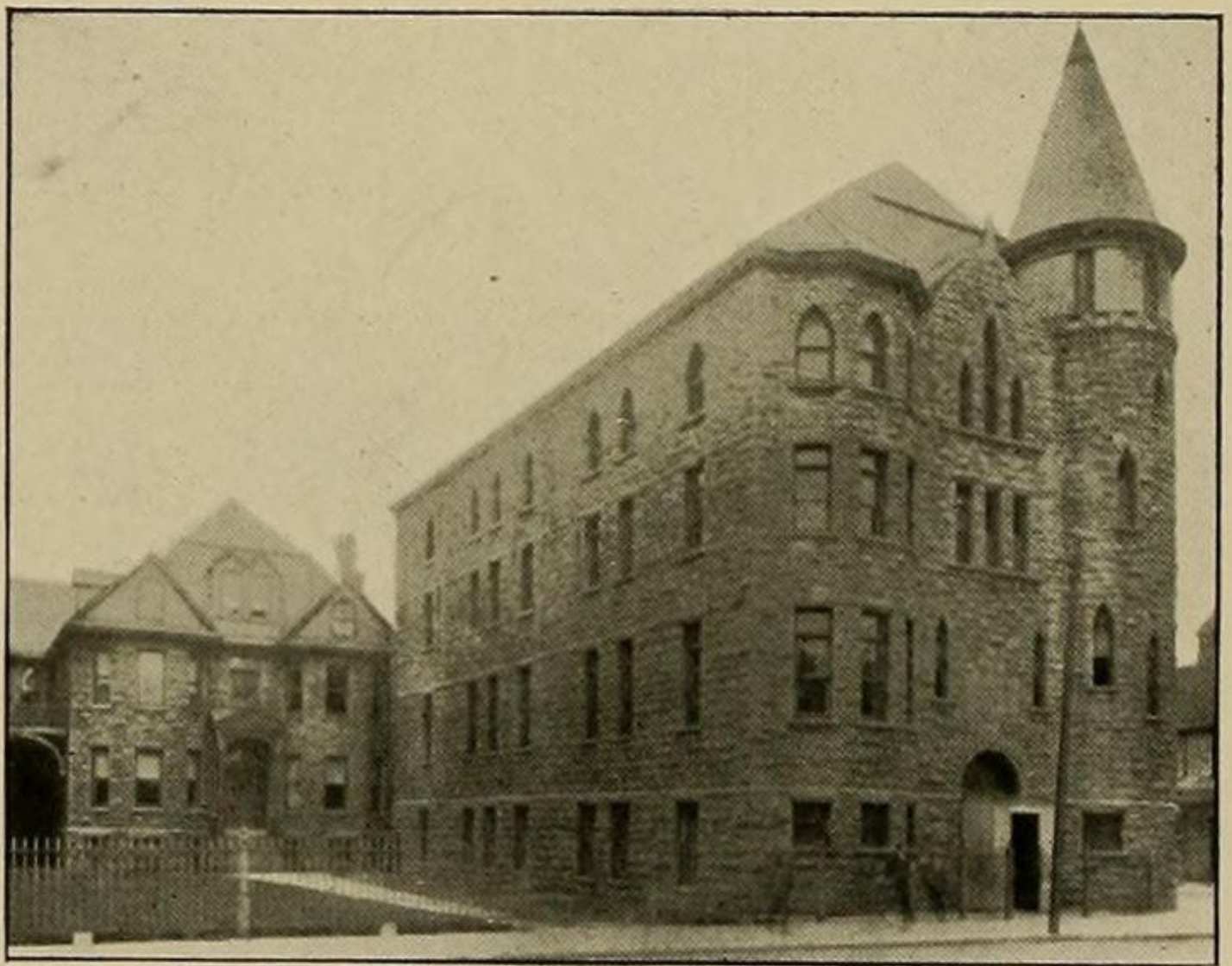
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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State



ST. STEPHEN'S CONVENT AND SCHOOL, Buffalo.

St. Stephen's Convent and School (1904)

After the school closed in 1970, the convent (left) was subsequently demolished in 1981. Despite some infilled windows, the school building (right) is highly intact.

Source: Donohue, *History of the Catholic Church*, 75

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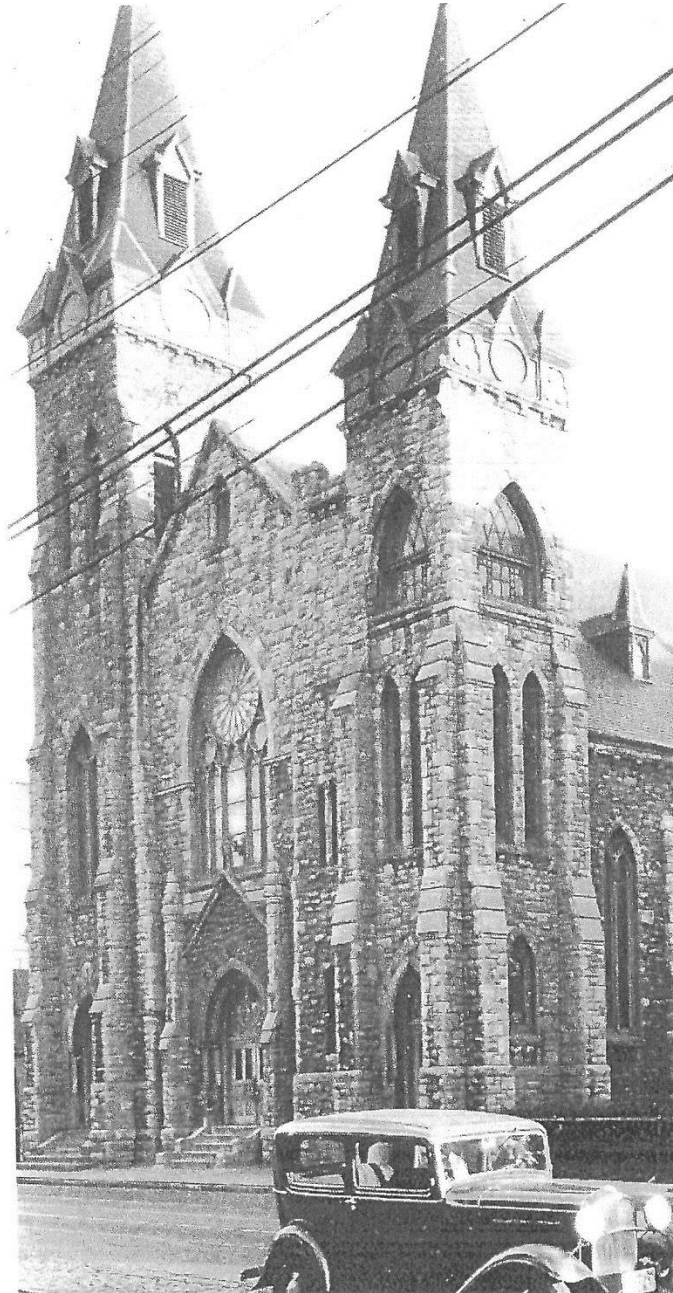
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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State



St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church (1932)

This image is the most recent in which the spires are visible and it is stated in historical narratives that they were removed soon after this date.

Source: St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church*

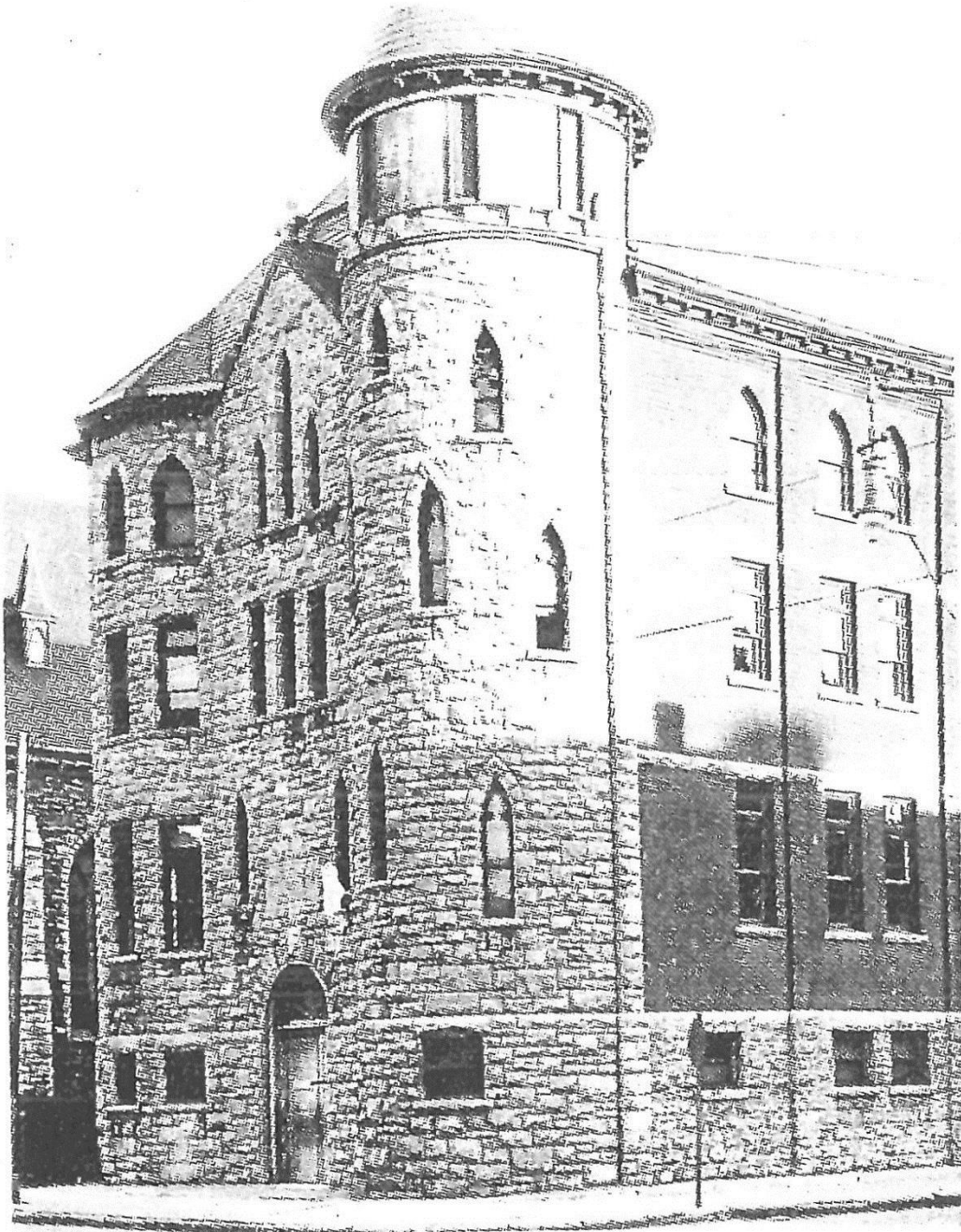
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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



St. Stephen's Roman Catholic School (1932)

Source: St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church*

United States Department of the Interior
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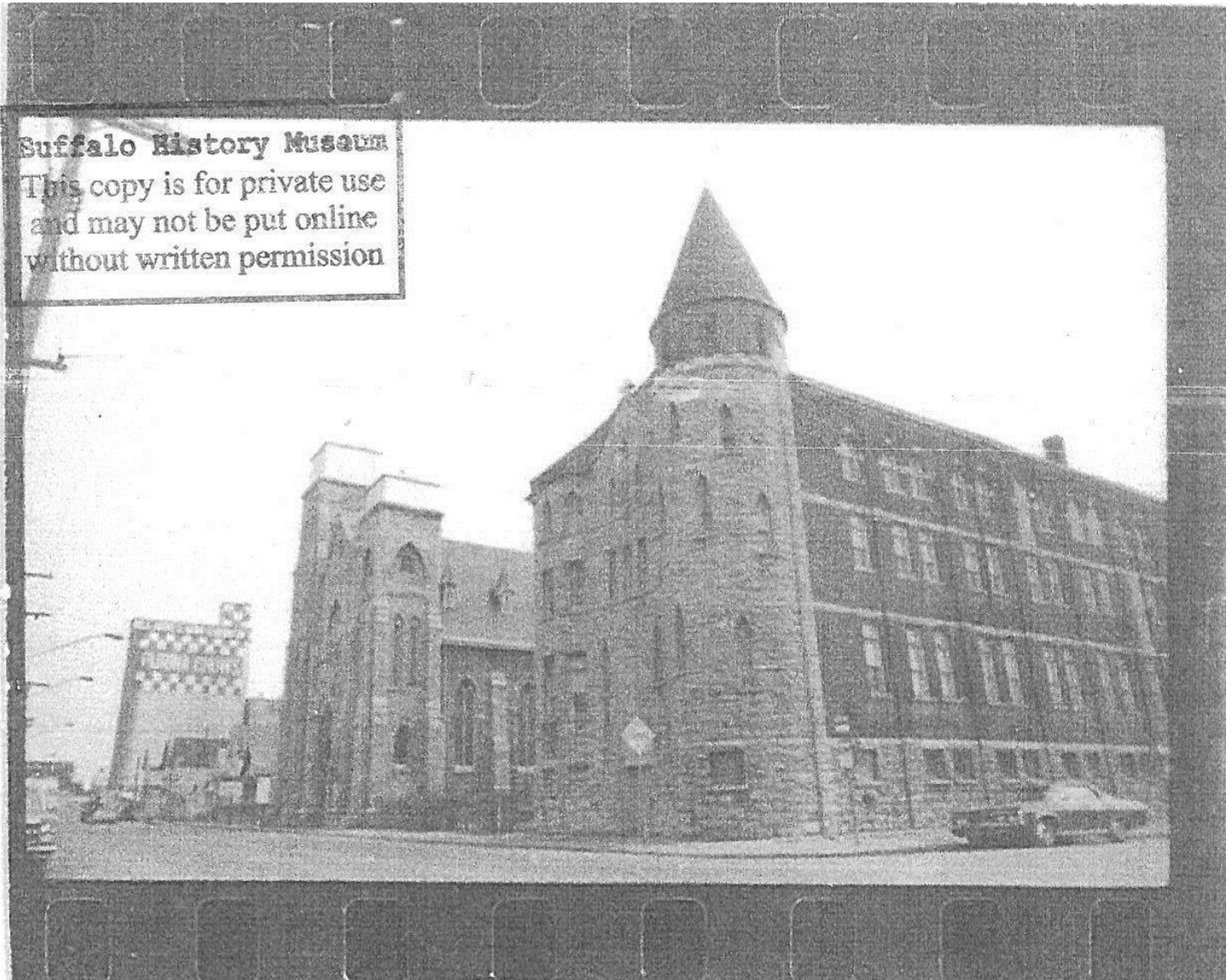
Section 11 Page 9

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State



St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church (1972)

St. Stephen's Complex in context with industrial uses beyond on Elk Street.

Source: Buffalo History Museum Photo Archives

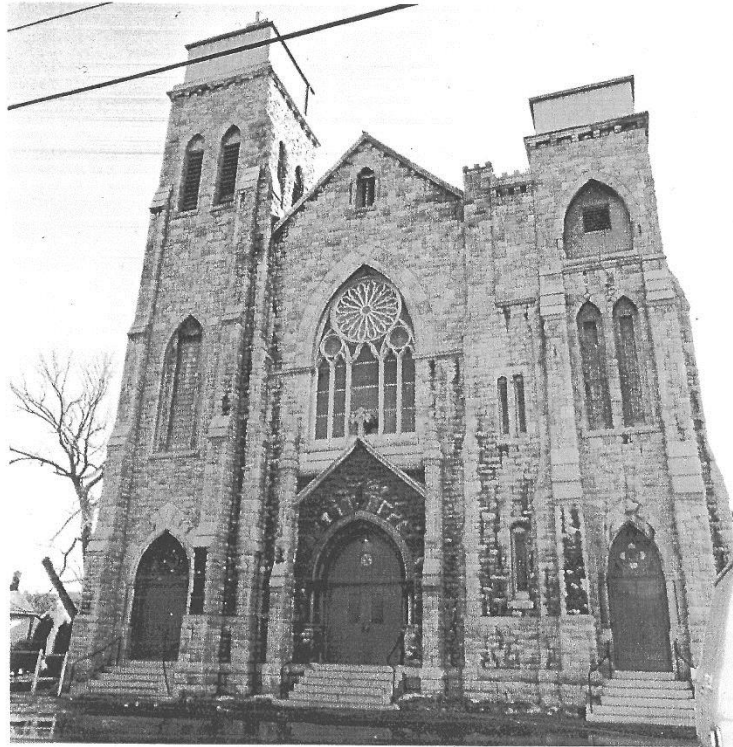
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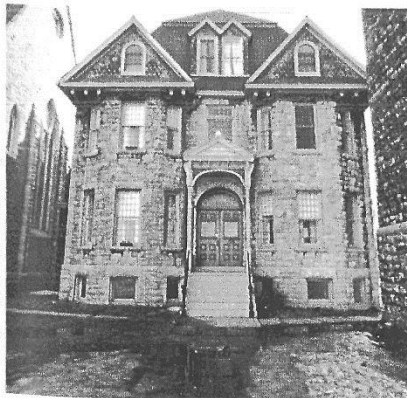
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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



Stone facade of St. Stephen's Church houses Diocesan Shrine of St. Jude. Venerable church is a beloved Buffalo landmark where thousands are drawn to annual St. Jude Novena and Triduum



Adjacent to the church are St. Stephen's Convent, home of the Sisters of Mercy, and parish rectory, right, which not only provides accommodations for our priests, but also serves as the parish's administrative offices

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church, Rectory, Convent (1976)

Source: St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church*

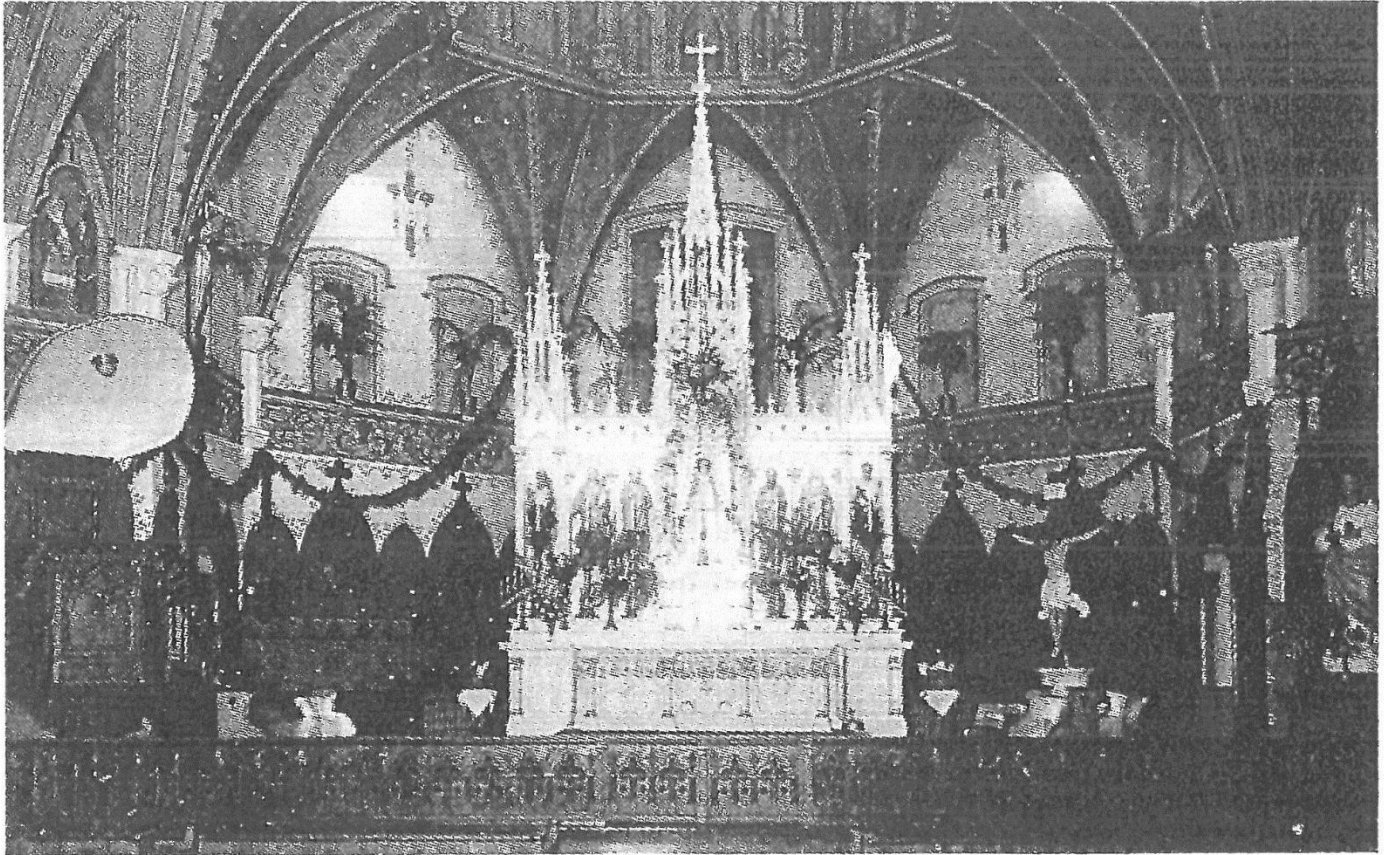
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Continuation Sheet

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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



St. Stephen's Church as it appeared when the century was young (circa 1900)

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Interior (circa 1901)
Source: St. Stephen's Church, *The Story of Saint Stephen's Church*

United States Department of the Interior
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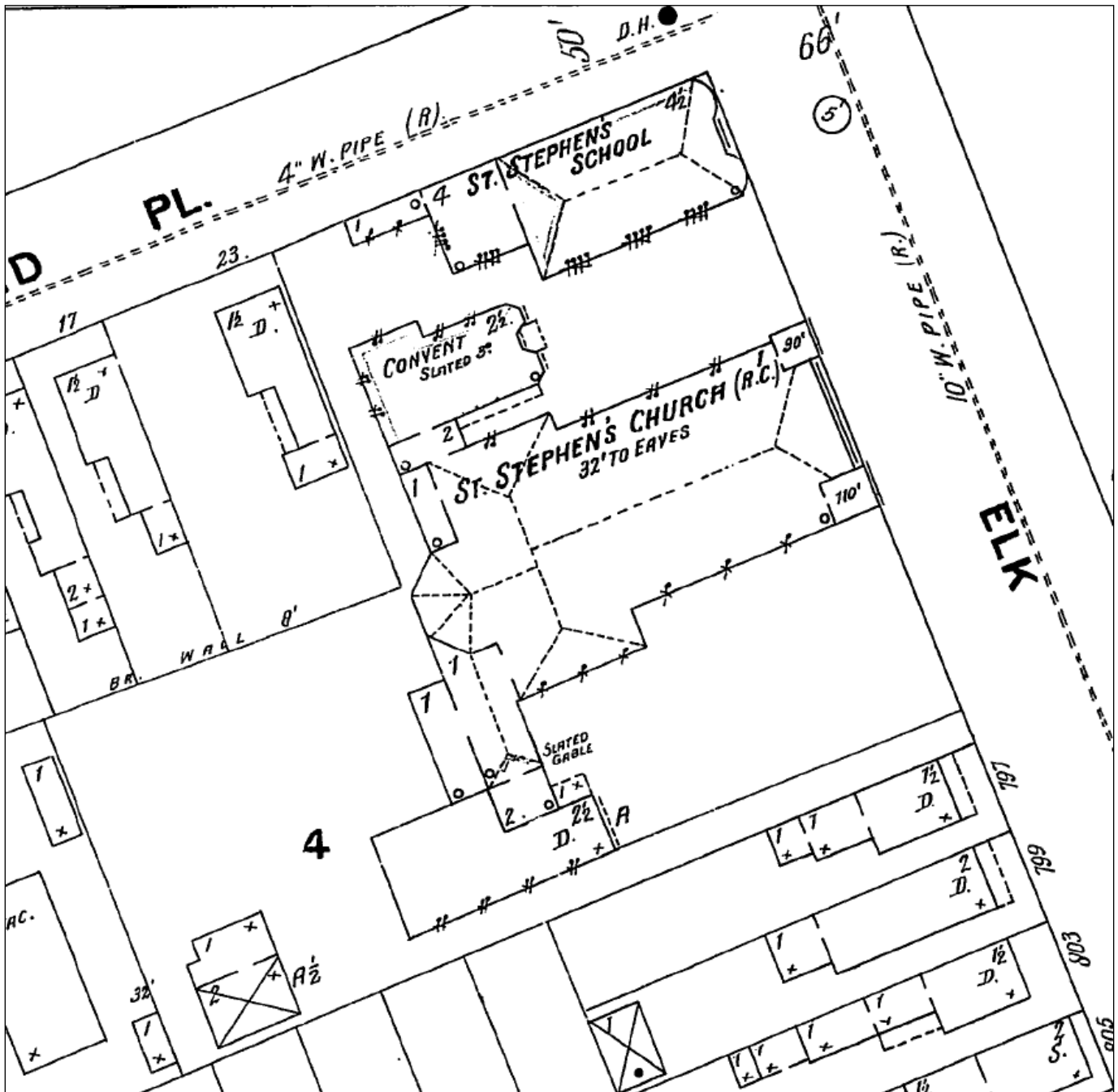
Section 11 Page 12

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State



Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Vol 2, Sheet 204 (1899)

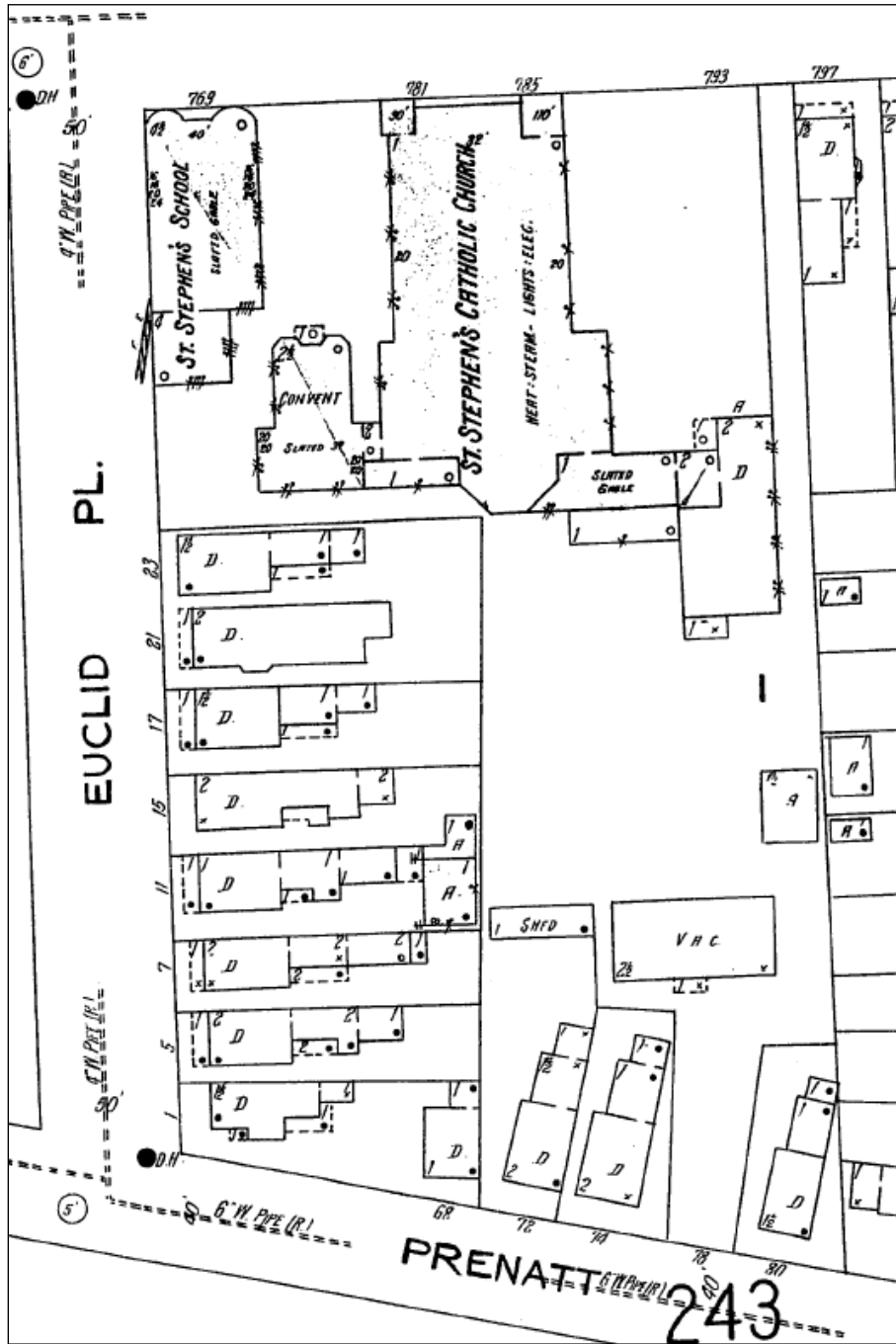
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ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 11 Page 13

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Vol 2, Sheet 242 (1925)
Note here that the church had acquired additional property to its south.

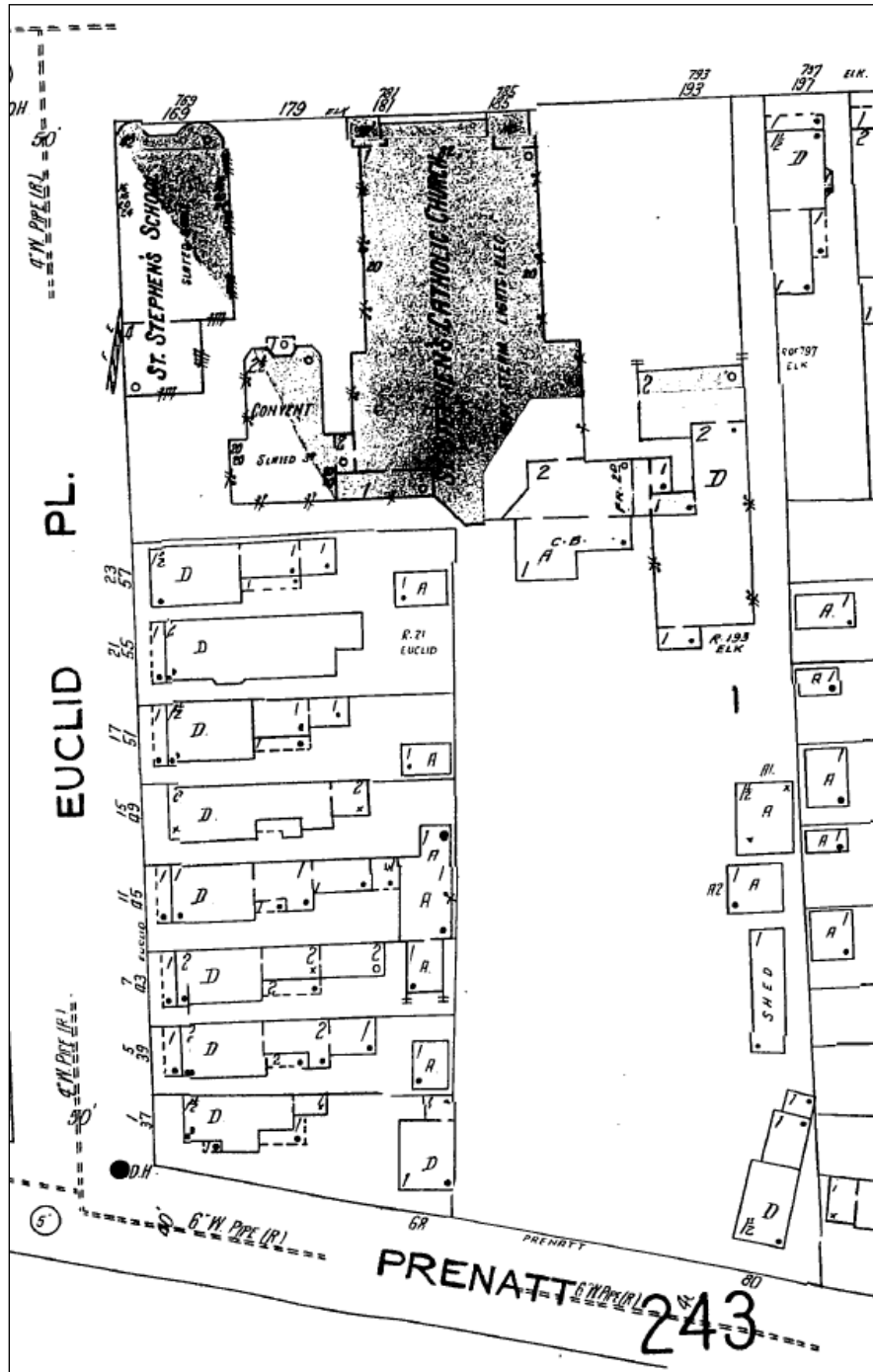
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 11 Page 14

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Vol 2, Sheet 242 (1925 updated to Apr. 1950)

This map shows the construction of the front addition to the rectory c. 1930, appears to show the rear garage as it exists today, and also that many of the buildings at the south end of the site had been demolished. None of the structures shown at the south end of the site remain today.

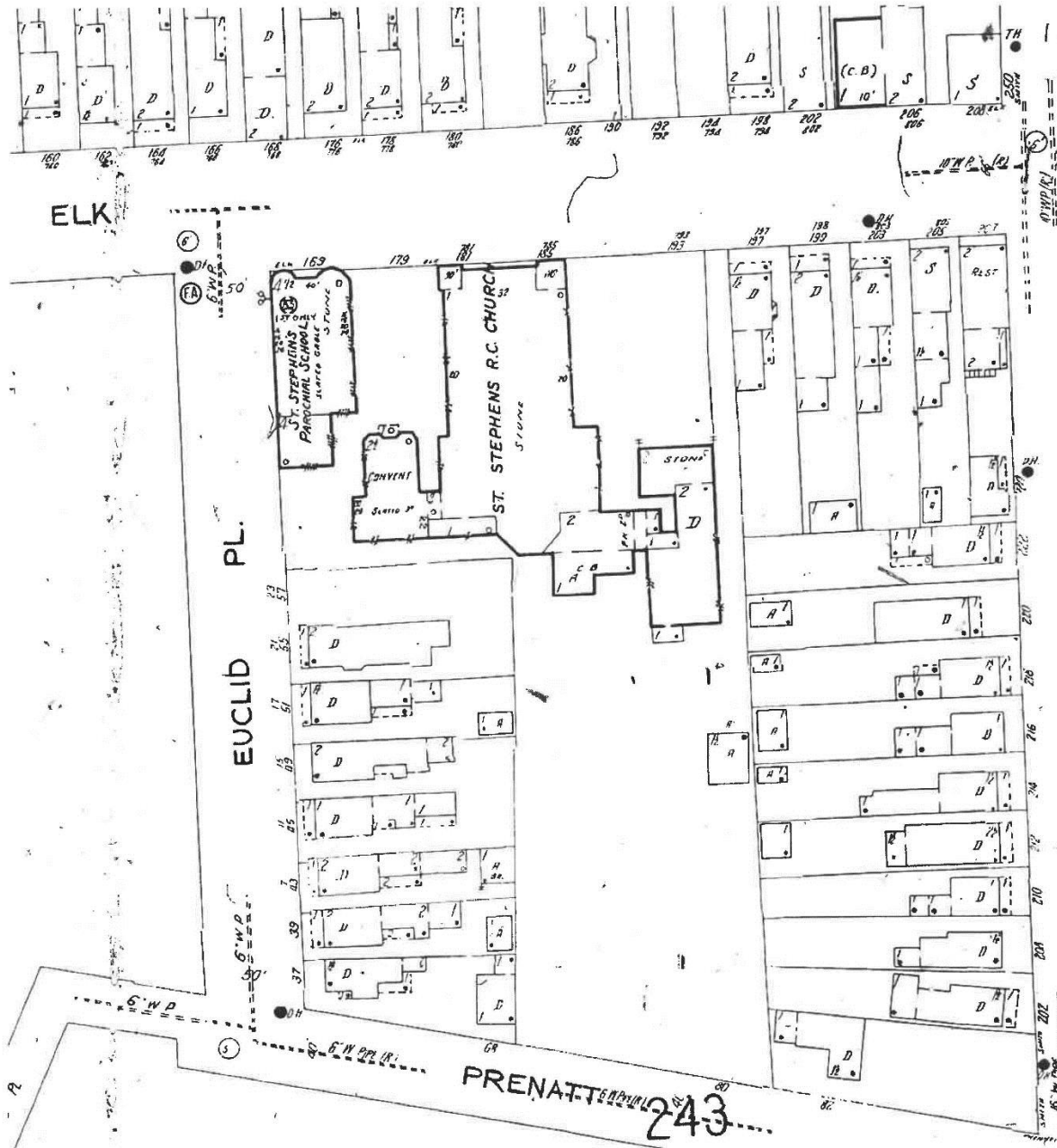
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Continuation Sheet

ST. STEPHEN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

Section 11 Page 15

Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Vol 2, Sheet 243 (1981)

All major buildings on the site remained at this time, though several outbuildings on the south portion of the site had been removed. A demolition permit for the convent was issued 12/10/1980, so it was likely demolished soon after this map was published. The dwelling just southwest of the property at 57 Euclid Pl. had also been demolished by this year.



NO PARKING
9 AM - 5 PM
THU & FRI
← →

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING





DO NOT
ENTER





St. Clare's
Parish Community
1000 N. 1st St.



ST. ELBERT
CHURCH
WAS BUILT
BY THE REV. JOHN
D. WELLS, D. D.
IN 1854



NO PARKING
PLAC
SPACES

PARKING RESTRICTED
Except for Church Services
and Church Activities
ALL OTHERS KEEP OUT

NORTHEAST
MECHANICAL
30











NO
ENTERING

PARKING RESTRICTED
Except For Church Services
And Church Functions

NO
LEFT
TURN







































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/19/2018 Date of Pending List: 7/9/2018 Date of 16th Day: 7/24/2018 Date of 45th Day: 8/3/2018 Date of Weekly List: 7/27/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 7/27/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



15 June 2018

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following ten nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Amagansett U.S. Life-Saving and Coast Guard Station, Suffolk County (U.S. Government Lifeboat Stations, Houses of Refuge, and pre-1950 U.S. Coast Guard Lifeboat Stations)

St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Church Complex, Erie County [note: no longer owned or used as a religious institution]

Fuller Shirt Company Factory, Ulster County
Immanuel Union Church, Richmond County
Buffalo Public School #57 (PS57), Erie County
Buffalo Public School #44 (PS 44), Erie County
Pine Hollow Cemetery, Nassau County
Wollensack Optical Company, Monroe Company
Faith Missionary Baptist Church, Erie County

Wardencllyffe Laboratory, Suffolk [note, while Wardencllyffe is technically a district, there is only one owner, who supports the nomination; please see the file of supporting documentation, which contains more than 9,500 expressions of support for this nomination]

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office