

56-1964

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 of eligibility for individual properties or 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 listed in 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. Casimir's Church Complex

MPDF N/A

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 309-315, 317, 320 & 324 Sheridan Avenue not for publication

city or town Albany vicinity

state New York code NY county Albany code 001 zip code 12210

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Roger Daniel Madley

11/22/17

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 this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature]

1/16/2018

St. Casimir's Church Complex
Name of Property

Albany, New York
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	_____	_____	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	4	0	
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	1	structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	0	0	objects
		4	1	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
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>RELIGION: Religious Facility</u>	<u>RELIGION: Religious Facility</u>
<u>RELIGION: Church School</u>	<u>SOCIAL: Civic</u>
<u>RELIGION: Church-related residence</u>	<u>DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS</u>	foundation <u>STONE, CONCRETE</u>
_____	walls <u>BRICK, WOOD, STONE, METAL</u>
_____	roof <u>ASPHALT, RUBBER/EPDM</u>
_____	other _____
_____	_____

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

St. Casimir's Church Complex

Name of Property

Albany, New York

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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 is 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 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 the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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.

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.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
SOCIAL HISTORY
ETHNIC HERITAGE: EUROPEAN

Period of Significance

1896-1967

Significant Dates

1896 (church & rectory), 1906 (school), 1923-24 (convent),
1960-1967 (school renovations)

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

William C. Schade (church)
Marshall L. & Henry G. Emery (school)
Gander, Gander & Gander Architects (convent)

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Albany County Hall of Records

St. Casimir's Church Complex

Name of Property

Albany, New York

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property .73 acres total (.30 and .43 acres)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	601315	4723875	2	18	601307	4723798
Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing	

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is shown on the enclosed mapping, which was drawn at a scale of 1: 24,000, 1: 12,000 and 1: 3,000; all maps are entitled "St. Casimir's Church Complex, Albany, Albany Co., NY."

Boundary Justification

The boundary for this NRHP nomination was drawn to include the four tax parcels on which the St. Casimir's Church Complex was developed and does not include any extraneous or "buffer" land. The complex developed in such a way that the boundary consists of two separate but historically related units separated by Sheridan Avenue: a .3-acre unit located on the north side of Sheridan Avenue (601315E/4723875N) that includes the convent and school, and a .43-acre unit on the south side (601307E/4723798N) that includes the church and rectory. The boundary includes a total of .73 acres of property and represents the historic extent of the complex as it developed during the cited period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kimberly Konrad Alvarez, Preservation Consultant (kkalvarez@landmarkconsulting.net)

organization Landmark Consulting LLC date 7/1/2017

street & number 83 Grove Avenue telephone (518) 458-8942

city or town Albany, state New York zip code 12208

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

Property Owner

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

name MULTIPLE (2 total)

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, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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St. Casimir's Church Complex
Albany County, New York

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Summary

The Saint Casimir's Church complex is located at the center of the block of Sheridan Avenue, between Lexington Avenue and Henry Johnson Boulevard, in the Arbor Hill/Sheridan Hollow neighborhood in the City of Albany, Albany County, New York. The school and the convent are located on the north side of the street at 315 and 317 Sheridan Avenue, respectively, while the rectory and church are positioned on the south side, at 320 and 324 Sheridan Avenue. This portion of the historic Arbor Hill/Sheridan Hollow neighborhood was an early enclave of Polish American immigrants from the Prussian sector of Poland who came to Albany as early as 1870. To the east of the neighborhood are the downtown commercial center and the Hudson River. To the south, running parallel with Sheridan Avenue, is Central Avenue, a main east-west commercial corridor, and Washington Avenue, the civic corridor where the state capitol, city hall, and various courthouse and state and municipal offices are located. To the west and north are more residential blocks. This NRHP nomination includes four contributing buildings which were constructed by the Roman Catholic Polish parish between 1896 and 1923. The church is a red brick Gothic Revival-style church with carved brownstone trim built 1896-97. The adjacent two-story rectory was designed in an urban Queen Anne style with an asymmetrical façade arrangement, including a broad curved oriel with conical roof and mansard roof supported by an articulated cornice; it was built concurrently with the church in the 1890s. The three-story brick school building was built around 1905 in a modest Classical Revival style per designs by local architects M.L and H.G. Emery. Lastly, the two-story church convent, next door to the school, was designed by the prominent Gander Brothers Architecture firm in 1923 in the Gothic Revival style.

St. Casimir's Church

The former St. Casimir's Church is a red brick Gothic Revival-style church with carved brownstone trim at the buttress coping stones, window sills, lancet hoods, and rusticated foundation walls. As the carved cornerstone at the northeast corner indicates, it was constructed in 1896. The rectangular footprint of the building is approximately 85 feet long and 48 feet wide along the street frontage. The façade of the church is constructed with orange, smooth, water-struck bricks with thin red mortar joints in a running bond coursing. This brick treatment continues around to the first bay of the side walls before switching to darker common brick with grey mortar joints laid in common bond. The front and side walls all include

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stepped buttresses at each bay and six brick courses of stepped corbeling at the top of the walls where the parapet begins. The parapet at the side walls as well as at the gable end rakes are covered with a sheet metal cap and formed cornice with snow fencing rails on the side walls with vertical braces in the shape of a cross. The primary façade is symmetrically arranged in three bays with central entry at the base of an integrated bell tower that rises 44 feet high. Centered within each of the flanking bays on the front wall are paired lancet windows at the ground floor and single larger lancet windows on the second floor. The main double entry doors in the center bay are accessed by a broad stoop of pink granite treads. It is believed these front steps were originally of brown sandstone, matching the foundation and trim. However, building records indicate that the current pink granite steps, a more durable stone, were installed in 1966.

Positioned above the entry doors are a single lancet window at the second floor, and a triangular window at the attic level, all with wood tracery and leaded glass. The bell level of the tower includes a pair of lancet topped louvered openings on each of the four sides of the tower. The tower roof is an ogee-shaped hip roof with metal cornice, asphalt shingle cladding and crowned by a ball finial and cross. The sidewalls include single two-story high lancet leaded-glass windows in each bay, as well as smaller double-hung windows providing natural light into the basement level. The rear wall of the rectangular plan church is flat apart from the projecting semi-circular apse.

On the interior of the church the main nave space rises to a full two stories to a height of 21 feet above the floor with plaster ribbed vaulted ceiling with decorative bosses and painted figural panels centered within a number of the vaults. The nave spans the full width of the building, without lower side aisles. There is a broad center aisle flanked by carved wood pews leading from the entry doors in the narthex to the chancel. There are narrower aisles along the side walls. The south (altar) wall is arranged symmetrically with a full height centered arch opening to the ribbed vaulted apse housing an elaborative carved marble Gothic altar with spires, niches, as well as a colorful scene of the last supper with a combination of high-relief and full figure carvings of Jesus and the twelve apostles. One of the niches at the center of the altar contained a

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statue of Saint Casimir, the patron of the parish, but was removed when the church was deconsecrated when the Diocese closed the church.¹

The lower walls of the apse are decoratively painted with gold leaf or foil above a marble wainscot. Lancelot door openings on either side wall provide access into the sacristy spaces. There are two side altars on the flat walls on either side of the chancel arch. These ornate carved white marble altars are executed in the Gothic style with numerous spires and a large central niche in which full figure statuary were placed until the church closed. Historically, the altar area included a low, carved marble altar rail with swinging gate openings at the center. This was likely removed as liturgical changes were made in the diocese, but the rail was kept on site and positioned against the back wall of the nave. The rear of the sanctuary includes a choir and organ loft that occupies the first two bays of the north end of the church. An organ is situated in the center of this choir loft within the tower with choir pews on either side. Winding staircases from the northeast and northwest corners provide access to this loft. Stained glass windows of biblical imagery fill all the window openings on the north, east and west walls. Since the closing of the church by the Catholic diocese, the statuary that filled the many plaster wall and altar niches has been removed along with the carved Gothic "stations of the cross." Aside from these minor changes the church remains in remarkably good and intact condition and still illustrates its religious function.

Rectory

The rectory was designed in an urban Queen Anne style with an asymmetrical façade arrangement including a broad curved second floor oriel with conical roof and a mansard roof supported by a deep articulated cornice with wreath and swag ornamentation. The mansard roof includes an "eyebrow" attic window at the front and originally had iron cresting spanning the top of the mansard roof (now removed). The front façade is arranged in three irregular bays with the front entry door in the center-most bay with a

¹ This altar was designed and fabricated by Dapato Statuary Company of Chicago and was installed in 1930 at a cost of \$3,000. Angela Pochman, *St. Casimir's Church, Centennial Celebration, 1893-1993* (The Church: 1993).

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projecting gabled roof canopy over the door and supported by curved brackets. Above the front door and this canopy is an oval window with leaded stained glass panel. The wood door and window casings include slender pilasters with plinth blocks set on the sills and topped by small capitals that support the window hood entablature. While the façade arrangement remains intact, modern cladding alterations have occurred. The walls were originally clad with wood clapboards and corner boards but were covered with aluminum siding in 1966. The decorative cornice and trim on the oriel and eyebrow windows were at that time covered with aluminum panning with the carved wood ornament either covered or replaced with a series of raised diamond-shaped molding elements. The iron cresting no longer remains. Effort was made not to cover over the wood casework on the front façade, yet on the sides which are minimally visible from the street frontage and much less decorative, the aluminum siding is panned over the trim. All the original windows, excepting a large picture window on the rear wall, are intact. The two-story structure is generally rectangular in plan with rear kitchen ell aligned with the west side wall. This kitchen appears to date from the 1970s and was built over an original basement level laundry room. Because the grade of the property slopes down towards the rear of the parcel, the basement level is partially exposed on the rear (south) side with full sized windows. The two-over-two windows in the basement laundry room space suggest it was original. Also on the rear (south), there is an open first floor porch, a covered areaway to a basement door and second floor porch supported by arched brackets and covered by a shed roof the full width of the rear elevation. The roof is nearly flat pitched towards the rear with a stepped parapet. There is a non-descript concrete block and brick two-car garage along the rear property line. Sanborn Insurance maps from 1908 and 1934 show this outbuilding, though on-site inspection suggests it has been greatly altered. This garage in its altered and deteriorated state is considered non-contributing.

On the interior, the original layout and finishes are generally intact, despite the many changes in occupants over the past 100 years. The house retains its single-family layout with numerous second floor bedrooms and a late twentieth century kitchen in the rear ell. On the first floor is a large dining room and parlors

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along the east side of a central corridor while bedrooms, bathrooms or clergy offices are located along the west side. There is a broad central stair hall with a switch back stair and midrise landing along the west wall. At the second floor the broad open corridor provides access to five large bedrooms and one bathroom, as well as an exterior door on the south wall to the rear porch. The plaster walls, high ceilings, carved baseboards and door and window casings with turned corner blocks and vertical six panel wood doors with porcelain knobs all reference the architectural aesthetic and craftsmanship of the 1890s. Despite the modern cladding which obscures some of its original architectural character, this building still retains a great percentage of its character-defining features on both the interior and exterior in terms of location, setting and relationship to the adjacent church; its form, massing and even its interior plan and layout are intact, indicating clearly how this building would have served as both an office, meeting space and residence for the clergy and parishioners of St. Casimir's Church.

School

The brick school building was constructed in 1905-1906 to the designs of M.T. and H. G. Emery Architects of Albany. The building, which has a broad rectangular footprint, was constructed with a raised basement level such that the upper four feet of this basement space could include regular windows for natural daylight (original basement windows were three-over-three double-hung sash). The front portion of the building, being two bays deep and three broad bays wide along the street frontage rises a full three stories plus basement, whereas the rear extension includes the basement plus two upper stories. The rear extension includes six regularly spaced window bays along its length with single windows at the basement and first floor levels and ganged double windows under a shared arched brick lintel on the second floor. The façade is arranged with three prominent window bays with paired aligned windows at the basement, first and second floors and five single windows at the upper third floor level. While original window sash were wood, aluminum replacement windows were installed during the 1960s renovations. At least one original wood double-hung six-over-six window remains intact on the east elevation, along with the original elevation drawings indicating the original design intent for these many window openings.

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Entrances include a pair of modern replacement aluminum doors on the west elevation into a stair hall at grade level at the mid-point landing between basement and first floor and the main double doors centered on the front façade which also enters the building at a half flight below the first-floor level. Because the grade of the site slopes to the east, the front doors are reached via a small stone stoop. The red brick walls are ornamented with cast stone at the projecting watertable, which coincides with the front basement window lintels, and with light colored glazed brick stringcourses under the first and third floor window sills and directly under the metal cornice on the front portion. A formed sheet metal cornice and brick parapet span the full front façade and return along the side walls. The rear elevation is plain and unornamented with a projecting chimney stack and rear door to the boiler room.

On the interior, the general plan of the building as originally designed included a broad central double-loaded corridor at the basement and second floors, while at the first floor level the central entrance led to a broad full-width assembly room with stage and dressing rooms along the rear (north) wall. Today, the first floor continues to be accessed by a broad set of stairs from the front doors to a wide central (double loaded) corridor matching the original second level floor plan. There are three classroom spaces on the east side of the corridor and one classroom, two public restrooms, a storage room, an office and side staircase on the west side of the corridor. This space at the rear of the first floor is the most dramatically altered area of the building. As noted, when first constructed this area included a large assembly room and stage instead of the classrooms and restrooms that were added in the 1960s. A second staircase at the end of the central corridor was also added, located essentially where the stage once was. The second and third floors remain essentially as initially constructed. The second floor consists of a broad central corridor with three classrooms on the east side and two classrooms and the side stair on the west side. The front rooms originally were subdivided to include space for a chapel, kitchen and dining room, but the minor interior partitions were removed in the 1960s renovations to convert them into more teaching spaces. The third story when initially built contained four bedrooms, a bathroom and linen room for the sisters that ran the school. During the 1960s-era renovations the inner partitions on the third floor were removed

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creating two large rooms from six smaller dormitory-like spaces form more classroom space, as the convent next door (c.1924) eliminated the need for housing for the sisters. The basement, when first constructed, included bathrooms for boys and girls, men's and women's retiring rooms, a kitchen and a bowling alley on either side of a central corridor. The bowling alley and men's & women's rooms reflected the fact that this building also served as a community and parish social center. The boiler room and coal storage room took up a significant amount of room in the northwest corner of the basement. The 1960s renovations removed the bowling alley, and reoriented the kitchen while reducing the size of the restrooms since new facilities were added on the first floor. The coal storage room was eliminated and the boiler room consolidated in order to accommodate the new rear emergency egress stair. The result was a large open assembly space or parish hall in the center of the basement. This large open area was later divided up with new walls added to create additional classrooms along the east wall.

Interior finishes include drywall, vinyl tile flooring and acoustical tile ceiling in the basement although in most cases where modern finishes exist, the original wall, ceiling and floor materials survive behind them. Visible historic elements in the basement include a molded wood trim shelf at the window sills, and some extant pressed tin ceiling panels under the front staircase. Otherwise, this space remains simple and unornamented. On the first floor, most of the finishes date to the 1960s renovations. The modern partition walls are drywall, the floors covered with vinyl tile and ceilings are acoustical tile with fluorescent light panels. Again, in most locations along the perimeter walls and at the floors and ceilings, original materials survived behind the modern finishes. The front rooms which were not changed in the 1960s retain the molded wood trim, the chalk boards, and plaster walls. The 1960s-era rear staircase is finished with terrazzo treads and risers with iron stringer and balusters. The second floor retains most of the original features including glazed interior windows high on the corridor walls for borrowed light, as well as a skylight to the roof. The classroom doorways include large glazed and operable transoms above. Inside the rooms, chalkboards line two interior walls, while closets line another. The window openings are large filling most of the exterior wall and the existing aluminum windows date to the 1960s. Large heavy timber

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beams span across the classrooms and corridor running from the east to the west walls. The original timber framing system consisted of suspended trusses hung from the principal roof rafters and concealed within the center partition walls on the second floor. This suspended truss system allowed for the original auditorium space on the first floor to be unencumbered by support columns. This structural system was supplemented in the 1960s renovations when steel columns were added along with the new partition walls at the first floor. These new steel columns helped to support the second-floor framing, alleviating the load on the suspended trusses. The floors and ceilings at the second floor are covered with 1960s finishes, although hardwood strip flooring and plaster ceilings remain concealed beneath. There is a wrought iron fire escape attached to the east wall and doorways in the front classrooms (SE corners) exist at each level. Originally the building included iron fire escapes for second means of egress from each floor, and they were located on the rear (north) elevation. In the 1960s renovations, the rear fire escape was eliminated due to the addition of the interior egress stair and portions of the original iron stair reconfigured and relocated to the current east elevation position. Wood trim around windows, doors, chalkboards and baseboards remain intact on the second and third levels. The original wooden side staircase remains in its original location and arrangement, although the 1960s renovations enclosed the open baluster/handrail in order to bring it up to fire code requirements. Fortunately, the original 1906 architectural drawings and the 1960s renovation drawings exist and provide significant information both on the original design intent and execution, as well as the major alterations. The school remains essentially intact to the 1960 era renovations, including repairs after a small fire at the rear northeast corner classroom on the second floor in 1982 and extensive roof repairs in 2004.

Convent

The brick two-story convent was the last of the parish buildings to be constructed. Designed by the prominent local firm Gander Brothers and built in 1923-24, the convent provided a residence for the sisters, who that had previously occupied the third floor of the school. The primary façade of the building is arranged symmetrically with seven bays and a central entrance. The first-story windows are paired

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slender double-hung sash with rectangular transoms above. On the second floor the windows are single one-over-one double-hung windows without any transoms. While the windows all have limestone sills with canted top face, the window lintels are thin steel plates that carry the coursings of brick above without any ornamentation. There is a limestone surround at the entryway with carved banding with inset bosses and an engraved tablet over the door inscribed with "ST. CASIMIR'S CONVENT." A modern aluminum canopy projects out from the door surround and is supported by two aluminum posts. The entry stoops is also limestone with stone kneewalls and iron railings. There is a broad paneled wood front door with narrow glazed sidelights. The brickwork used around the building is textured, raked dark brick with recessed orange colored mortar. There is a carved limestone watertable course that wraps around three walls of the building at the first-story level as well as a carved limestone stringcourse at the roof level, below the parapet. Although there is no ornamentation at the window lintels, there is a course of soldier bricks that align with the stone sills at the second floor and span between the windows and around the side walls. There is a similar course of soldier bricks positioned above the stone watertable course. The brick parapet is crenulated in a Gothic/medieval motif with stepped limestone capstones and inset tablet centered over the entryway with two trefoiled lancet arches under a bas-relief shield and having a carved limestone cross incorporated into the capstone. At the southeast corner, positioned just below the watertable course, there is a carved cornerstone with the inscription "ST. CASIMIR'S CONVENT" on the south side and "A † D 1924" on the east side. The side walls are three bays deep with the lower first floor windows consisting of two groups of three windows and a single center window which corresponds with the central corridor on the interior. The rear elevation is constructed of common, untextured brick and the fenestration is less ordered and uniformly spaced. All the windows throughout are the original wood double-hung or transom sash. There is a slightly projecting chimney between the first two bays from the northeast corner, as well as a slightly projecting wall area that corresponds with the location of the center staircase within. Next to the northwest corner there is a projecting, five-sided angular bay that corresponds with a raised dais or altar space within the interior chapel. This angular bay has windows on the two diagonal walls and a limestone cornice with inset stone cross. There is a back porch with wood

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columns and open balustrade that provides access to two first floor doorways while a ramp from the adjacent parking lot provides access to the basement door located under the porch. This porch retains its original flat-seamed hipped metal roof.

The interior of the convent retains most of its original floor plan with a central corridor running the length of the building bisected by the front entry vestibule and the aligned main staircase along the rear wall. Off of the corridor on the first floor there are larger community or public gathering rooms along the front (south) and service spaces such as kitchen, pantry, storage and bathrooms along the rear (north) side. The room at the north end of the corridor on the first floor is the daily chapel space. On the second floor, the corridor again runs down the center, the length of the building, with seven narrow bedrooms aligned with the window bays on the front side, and four bedrooms and two bathrooms along the rear wall. The staircase is an open switchback stair with original dark stained oak details and mid-point landing along the north wall. All the trim, cabinetry, doors and windows on the interior are oak with dark stain and varnish finish. The basement repeats the plan of the first floor with centered corridor and large rooms on either side.

Overall, the four buildings retain their historic and architectural integrity in terms of location, design, setting, association, feeling, and relationship to each other. Most of the exterior materials and much of the interior materials and layouts remain intact, demonstrating the workmanship of the late 19th and early 20th century eras in which they were built. More recent alterations, such as the addition of aluminum siding on the rectory, aluminum windows and doors at the school or expansion of service facilities like kitchens or bathrooms, reflect the changes in building codes for their use categories in the second half of the twentieth-century. Fortunately, these buildings retain excellent documentation in terms of original drawings and most of the original exterior fabric is concealed intact beneath the contemporary layers. Despite now being owned by different owners, the iconography that remains on the buildings and the shared context of

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the four parish buildings helps to retain the association and history of the polish community that once considered these buildings the center of their neighborhood.

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Summary

St. Casimir's Polish Roman Catholic campus, which includes a church, rectory, school and convent, is significant from an architectural and urban planning perspective for its largely intact collection of the four components that were typical of a Roman Catholic parish campus. It is also significant for its social history and ethnic heritage associations during the period spanning 1870-1966. From its inception in the late nineteenth century, St. Casimir's, located on Sheridan Avenue in the City of Albany, Albany County, was planned as a religious center that would meet the spiritual, academic and social needs of the community, particularly the immigrant Polish-Americans of Albany. The period of significance begins with the construction year of the church and rectory, 1896, when the Roman Catholic Polish parish which had been established by the diocese in 1893 first purchased land on Sheridan Avenue and started construction on their parish church. The period of significance spans to 1967 covering the dates of the parish's expansion through the construction of a parish school and convent, as well as the enlargement of the school's enrollment capacity through the 1960s renovation. The parish is significant under criterion A in Social History and Ethnic Heritage: European for its important role as the community center of Albany's Polish immigrant community, which was concentrated in this section of the Arbor Hill/Sheridan Hollow neighborhood. It is additionally significant under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, for the representative building types it includes, these collectively forming the parish campus.

Historic Background

Many Polish and American-Polish families lived within New York's Capital Region, having immigrated from the Prussian sector of Poland to Albany as early as 1870. Being exceptionally religious and patriotic, they set out to establish a Polish church where they could worship in their native language. The parish of St. Casimir's officially began in 1893, when Bishop McNeirny of the Catholic Diocese of Albany assigned Polish priest the Rev. Bartholomew Molejkajtys to serve the 64 Polish families in Albany. While the parish remained without its own church, mass was regularly held in the hall of the Christian Brothers Academy

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until 1896, when land on Sheridan Avenue was purchased and the construction of the church and rectory began. The church was completed the following year and dedicated on October 24, 1897. After the completion of the church and rectory, the parishioners organized a school in the church basement with the initial curriculum consisting of religion and the Polish language. As St. Casimir's parish grew, so did the school enrollment. The brick, four-story school at 309-315 Sheridan was built in 1904-05, opening with an enrollment of 45 boys and 47 girls instructed by two lay teachers and the pastor. In response to a request by parishioners who felt a stronger religious influence was needed at the school, nuns from the Sisters of the Resurrection in Chicago, Illinois, were sent in the summer of 1917 to provide the educational instruction and assumed full charge of the school and its enrollment of over 400 pupils. The sisters' living quarters were on the top floors of the school building until 1923, when plans were made to build a convent for the sisters on an adjacent lot. The convent was consecrated in June 1923 by Bishop Gibbons. St. Casimir's was one of the largest Polish churches in the region and, as the community grew, the parish maintained its role as the center of the Polish community. The parish had Polish-speaking priests, taught Polish history and culture, and was the location for numerous ethnic celebrations. An especially memorable one was the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the death of Polish nobleman Brig. General Casimir Pulaski, who came to this country to aid George Washington in the Revolution and gave his life in the cause of the Continental army. This event was attended by representatives of Polish veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, G.A.R. Spanish War veterans, Sons of Union veterans and numerous societies of St. Casimir's Church. "Pulaski Day" as designated by proclamation by Governor Roosevelt, was celebrated annually on Oct. 11th at St. Casimir's Hall.¹ Another important celebration was that of the Polish Millennium in 1966, which marked the anniversary of Poland's unification as a nation and entry into Christianity. Nearly 40 Polish-American organizations from the region participated in programs to mark this important event over a seven-month period culminating in a millennial banquet reception at the Polish Community Center. These celebrations often involved the students of St. Casimir's either in

¹ "Albany area Poles Honor Pulaski," *Times Union*, 12 October 1931.

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recitation of blessings, readings, or performance of native music dressed in Polish attire.² As a national church, St. Casimir's was not restricted to a geographic area and its congregants remained loyal even as they moved from the center city to the suburbs in the second half of the twentieth century.

St. Casimir's Parish is also significant under NRHP Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, because all four of the buildings are representative examples of their periods and types and because they reflect the work of some of the most prominent architects in the city; in addition, the all represent architecture styles prevalent in the last decade of the 19th century and first quarter of the 20th century. The church embodies the Gothic Revival style traditional for religious buildings, while the adjacent rectory was executed in the Queen Anne style which, at the time, was a departure from the Greek Revival and Italianate row houses that had populated Sheridan Avenue and much of this portion of the Arbor Hill neighborhood. The Albany Diocese commissioned locally prominent architect William C. Schade to design the church and possibly the rectory. William Schade was a well-known designer of religious and residential properties throughout the Capital District region. The school and convent buildings were constructed in the first two decades of the 20th century and directly reflected the incremental but steady growth of the parish. The use of brick and stone construction signified their long-term intent to be part of the community and the diocese involved prominent local architects who had vast experience in designing religious schools, monasteries, churches and convents. Brothers M.L and H. G Emery, architects of the school, were responsible for the designs of numerous school buildings within the far-reaching boundaries of the Albany diocese. Gander, Gander and Gander architects, another team of brothers, was known not only within New York State but throughout the United States for their institutional designs.

² "Tri-City Groups to Observe Poland's 1000th Anniversary," *Times Union*, April 1966; "Albany Polish Fete Millennium at Citizenship Ceremonies," *Times Union*, 5 May 1966; "Mass celebrates Polish Millennium," *Times Union*, 12 September 1966; "300 Note Millennium of Polish Christianity," *Times Union*, 26 September 1966.

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Early Neighborhood Development

The St. Casimir's Church Complex is located on the block of Sheridan Avenue above what is known as "the hollow." One of the oldest settled portions of Albany, Sheridan Hollow is called such because of the deep ravine formed by the Fox Creek, or the Vossenkill, which flowed east into the Hudson River. In the 1750s the northern line of the city stockade ran along the southern edge of the ravine, what is now Columbia Street.³ This area just outside the city's central core was traditionally occupied by working class homes. During the pre-industrial era, Sheridan Hollow was home to many water-based industries, in particular many tanneries and their tanning pits.⁴ In the 1790s a new street plan was laid out and implemented with streets laid in grid pattern. Many of the east-west streets were given the names of animals, while the north-south streets were given the names of birds. Present day Sheridan Avenue was initially named Fox Street, thus given reference to the Fox Creek, while adjacent Orange Street was Hare Street.⁵ While other creeks, such as the Beaver Kill and Rутtenkill, were filled in over time to facilitate growth and development within the city after the American Revolution, Sheridan Hollow was much too steep. This topographical characteristic essentially separated and isolated Arbor Hill from the more populated and prosperous portions of the city to south and along the river's edge. More residential structures were built at the base of the ravine as Fox Creek was diverted into a conduit north of the ravine on Arbor Hill. Arbor Hill was developed between 1825 and the turn of the century by the wealthy Van Rensselaer family and served as a home to industrialists, business owners, and lumber barons conducting commerce stemming from the Erie Canal. In contrast to the wealthier Arbor Hill community, Sheridan Hollow maintained its mixed-use and industrial status, with an emphasis on "messier" industries, such as tanning, tile kilns, brickyards and metal working. Residents of this area have historically been lower-income and members of the working class.

³ Diana S. Waite, *Albany Architecture: A Guide to the City* (Albany, NY: Mount Ida Press, 1993), 104.

⁴ Stefan Bielinski, "Foxes Creek," Colonial Albany Social History Project, last modified Oct. 10, 2007, <http://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov//albany/loc/foxescreek.html>.

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Heading into the 19th century, Sheridan Hollow became home to newly arrived European immigrants, first the Irish then the Polish.

Today the Sheridan Hollow neighborhood is defined as located along the southern edge of Arbor Hill and encompassing the area south of Clinton Avenue and east of Lexington Avenue. It is just north of the city's central business district. This area includes the length of Sheridan Avenue and Orange Street and consists of many row structures and closely space detached buildings providing apartments and single unit dwellings. The area retains much of its nineteenth-century historic character, although demolition and redevelopment have taken its toll in some parts.

Polish Immigration to Albany

The first Poles to arrive in the Americas were among the early settlers of the Jamestown colony.⁶ These Poles were hired by the London Company to bring their industrial skills creating glass and manufacturing pitch, tar and resin to Jamestown. Polish settlers continued to be a part of British colonial settlements and in 1643 the first Polish settlement in Dutch New Amsterdam was documented.⁷ Polish immigrants and settlers participated in the American Revolution venturing to America to fight for the Continental Army, as they supported the idea of self-government. The first large wave of Polish immigrants to the United States in the early years of its statehood was largely made up of intellectuals and poorer nobles, and this coincided with the period of three territorial divisions of Poland perpetrated by Russia, Prussia and Austria. This series of partitions progressively reduced Poland's size until 1797, when the sovereign state of Poland ceased to exist. What had once been a strong force in Europe had been essentially eliminated as a

⁵ Simeon DeWitt, *Plan of the City of Albany*, 1794. Simeon DeWitt (1756-1834) was Geographer and Surveyor General for the Continental Army during the American Revolution and Surveyor General of the State of New York from 1784 to 1834. <http://exhibitions.nysm.nysed.gov//albany/map/mapdewitt.html>.

⁶ James S. Pula, *Polish Americans: An Ethnic Community* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995).

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result of the division of the country between Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Most of these Polish immigrants were refugees from the Prussian occupied sections where the government sought to control native Poles by suppressing their language.⁸ Many Poles lost their land and fled the country looking for better economic opportunity. They came to America for the sole purpose of making money and most believed that once this was accomplished they would return to Poland and prosper.⁹ However many remained in the U.S. because much of what they remembered and valued of their homeland had been lost through the occupation. Additionally, they were inspired by the contributions of Polish-American heroes such as Tadeusz Kosciuszko, Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, or Casimir Pulaski in the Revolutionary war and the creation of the United States.¹⁰

Polish settlers arrived in the Albany area starting in the late 1790s, followed by the great wave of immigration and the establishment of ethnic communities in the late 19th and early 20th century. The first Polish immigrants in Albany, August Bertram, Gustav Bertram, Alexander Czerski, Alexander Olszewski and Francis Urban, were from the Prussian sector of Poland, establishing their homes in Albany as early as 1870. Following the Franco-German (Prussian) war between 1870 and 1883, many more Poles immigrated to America establishing their residences in Albany. The majority of Polish Immigrants were Roman Catholics and they tended to stick together in large groups clustered in cities. Albany's Arbor Hill, Schenectady's Mount Pleasant, and South Troy came alive with families, shops, and the central focus of the neighborhood, the ethnic church. Religion was a key feature in Polish life in the Old World, and the church became the nucleus of any new Polish community with its very existence attracting new immigrants into

⁷ Frank Renkiewicz, *The Poles In America, 1608-1972; a Chronology & Fact Book*. (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1973).

⁸ Pula, *Polish Americans*.

⁹ Lenny Reisner et al, "Polish Immigration into America" last modified Feb. 13, 1998. http://www2.needham.k12.ma.us/nhs/cur/kane98/kane_p3_immig/Poland/Polish.html

¹⁰Blessed Virgin Mary of Czestochowa, National Catholic Church. "Historic of our Parish and the Polish People in Albany" assessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.bvmc.org/about-us-cg16>

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the area. A Polish priest brought the mother tongue with which to preach the word of God, while the school taught the rich history of their heroic Polish nation to the younger generation. Through the efforts of the Franciscan Fathers at Our Lady of Angels Church on Central Avenue in Albany, where the Polish families first attended mass on Sundays and Holy Days, several Polish speaking priests from neighboring cities came periodically to hear confessions and administer the sacraments to this growing community. However, they were determined to establish their own Polish church. The Reverend Stanislaus Nowak, a priest residing in the St. Joseph's provincial seminary in Troy, NY, initiated a building fund, to which the 64 immigrant families in Albany were happy to contribute whatever they could, accumulating a total of \$835 over a five-year period.

Parish & Campus Development

The Polish parish of St. Casimir's officially began in June 1893, when Bishop McNeirny assigned a newly ordained priest, the Rev. Bartholomew Molejkajtys, as the pastor for the 64 Polish families in Albany.¹¹ While the parish remained without its own church, permission was received to celebrate Sunday mass and other religious services in the hall of the Christian Brothers Academy, located on Howard and Lodge Streets. Despite the slow raising of funds, in January of 1896, a Certificate of Incorporation of the proposed St. Casimir's Church was signed by Bishop Burke, Fr. Molejkajtys, and the first two parish trustees, Stanley Ogrodowski and Michael Zamiarski. Shortly thereafter, the parishioners were in a position to purchase

¹¹Saint Casimir is the patron saint of Poland and Lithuania. He was born the third of thirteen children of King Casimir IV and Elizabeth of Austria, daughter of Albert II of Habsburg. He was born on October 3, 1460, in the royal palace at Krakow, Poland. The young prince was trained in spirituality and displayed holiness at an early age. When King Casimir IV ordered Casimir to lead an army against King Matthias I Corvinus of Hungary in 1471, he refused. Casimir believed an attempt to seize the Hungarian throne was unjust and refused to take part in it. He was confined to the castle of Dzoki as punishment. When his father was away from Poland from 1479-1483, Casimir served as regent of the nation. Casimir died of consumption on March 4 while visiting Grodno, Lithuania. Buried at Vilnius, Lithuania, his tomb became famed for miracles, and he was canonized in 1522 by Pope Adrian VI. Casimir is also patron of the Knights of St. John and is invoked against enemies of Poland and the faith.

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four lots on the south side of Sheridan Avenue for \$2,200 from Martin Wagoner. The architect William C. Schade and contractor John J. Kelly, who lived at 183 Sheridan Avenue, were engaged in the construction of a masonry church and a wood framed rectory at the estimated cost of \$21,000. The parishioners agreed that each would donate \$5 towards the building fund or help dig the foundations. The church is Gothic Revival in style with graduated brick buttresses and lancet windows having brownstone trim and a centered bell tower on the front façade. The bricks, rusticated foundation stones and pointing mortar of the front of the building are of a finer quality, whereas the rear six bays of the church are constructed with common brick and minimal ornamental detailing. The church cornerstone was blessed on July 26, 1896 with a ceremony and a procession including various church societies from the German parishes of Our Lady of Angels and Our Lady Help of Christians. The first liturgy was celebrated in the basement of the church on December 26, 1896. The church was completed the following year and dedicated on October 24, 1897.

The rectory was designed in an urban Queen Anne style with an asymmetrical arrangement, including a broad curved second floor oriel with conical roof, a mansard roof with "eyebrow" attic window at the front topped by iron cresting and supported by a deep articulated cornice with wreath and swag ornamentation.

In the early years, the Ladies Rosary Society, which had been established in 1893, was responsible for providing the funds for a monstrance, a chalice, the Blessed Virgin Mary's altar, a stained-glass window above the main altar, priests' vestments and altar linens, and funds towards the school. After the completion of the church and rectory, the parishioners organized a school in the basement with the initial curriculum consisting of religion and the Polish language. Two secular teachers were hired to teach about 18 pupils. As other Polish immigrants settled in Albany, St. Casimir's parish grew and so did the school

Abraham Ladislav, "St. Casimir." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03402a.htm>.

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enrollment. Plans were begun for providing better equipped teaching facilities, and in 1903 the parish purchased six lots across the street from the church for \$3,600 from Maria Madeleine Isabelle de Courval.¹² The school at 309-315 Sheridan was built of brick in a modest Classical Revival style, four stories high and included a hall/auditorium, an office, a nurse's room, a lunch room, a cloak room and seven classrooms. It was designed by the architectural firm of brothers Marshal L. and Henry G. Emery and was constructed for \$40,000. Opening in 1905 with an enrollment of 45 boys and 47 girls and instructed by two lay teachers and the pastor, by 1911 St. Casimir's School became an all-day school and received accreditation from the New York State Education Department.

With a strong enrollment, the parishioners felt a need for more religious influence in the school. In the summer of 1917, the Sisters of the Resurrection sent five sisters to the parish from their mother-home in Chicago, Illinois; they were Sister Superior Marcianna, and sisters Philomena, Louise, Hyacinth and Marcella. Thereafter the sisters provided the educational instruction at the school, and Polish subjects such as reading, history, and literature were added to the curriculum. The following year, as five more sisters were added to the faculty, the Sisters of the Resurrection assumed full charge of the school and its enrollment of over 400 pupils. At this time, the sisters' living quarters were on the top floors of the school building.

During the early years of St. Casimir's parish it continued to grow in membership, with 500 families consisting of about 3,000 individuals on record in 1922. It was one of the largest Polish parishes in the Albany Diocese, having its own church and rectory, both without debt, and a school with only a \$3,000 debt. In 1918 the three buildings were valued at \$100,000. However, the year 1921 was a difficult one for the parish. World events such as the annexation of the city of Wilno to Poland saddened many Lithuanians

¹²The school property was deeded/transferred from Ms. DeCourval to St. Casimir's Church on August 14, 1906. Albany County Clerk, Book 561, page 435.

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in the parish and caused much dissention as the Polish-Lithuanian war broke out in Europe. This dissention hit home as well, as St. Casimir's pastor, the Rev. Molejkajtys, was a Lithuanian and many of the parishioners were not accepting or obedient to him. Eventually, many of them left the parish. Father Molejkajtys regrettably resigned in December of 1922 and Bishop Gibbons appointed the Rev. Joseph Ostrowski as pastor.

In 1923, the NYS Regents exams were introduced at St. Casimir's School, which up to that point had not been included in any parish school program. Also that year, upon Bishop Gibbons' recommendation and by agreement from all parishioners, plans were made to build a convent for the sisters. A lot was purchased next to the school and a two-story brick building was erected at a cost of \$55,204. The building was designed in the Gothic Revival style by Gander Brothers, sons of Anton A. Gander, a prominent Albany carpenter.¹³ The convent was consecrated in June 1923 by Bishop Gibbons and after the sisters moved into their new home, the top floors of the school were renovated into much-needed classroom space.

Community Life

While the Polish community grew and expanded throughout the neighborhood, the original St. Casimir's parish maintained its role as the center of the community, including serving as the location for annual celebrations. In October 1929, the Polish people and military organizations of the Albany area paid tribute to the Polish nobleman, Brig. General Casimir Pulaski, who came to this country to aid George Washington in the Revolution and gave his life in the cause of the Continental army. The parish commemorated the 150th anniversary of his death with a parade, memorial, and military exercises and St. Casimir's Hall at the

¹³"Albany carpenter, Anton A. Gander had six sons; one became an electrician, two became contractors and three – Joseph J., Conrad J. and John P. chose to be architects. Together the Gander family made a significant contribution to the building fabric of the twentieth-century." John A. Gander, "Gander, Gander & Gander" *Architects in Albany*, (Albany, NY: Mount Ida Press/Historic Albany Foundation, 2009), 57.

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school was the center of the programmed events for the celebration. This event was attended by representatives of Polish veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, G.A.R. Spanish War veterans, Sons of Union veterans and numerous societies of St. Casimir's Church. "Pulaski Day," as designated by proclamation by Governor Roosevelt, was celebrated annually on October 11th at St. Casimir's Hall.¹⁴

In April of 1931, the Albany Polish American Citizens Club was established as a not-for-profit club to foster Polish tradition, language, and culture through education, fellowship and social interaction. Membership was limited to males age 21 or older of Polish or Lithuanian descent. The first president of the club was Anthony Ostrowski (1931-1934). The Polish Community Center was initially organized as the Polish Democratic Club of Albany, NY, on October 2, 1932. Its first meeting of 54 members was held at St. Casimir's Church. Early meetings were also held at 147 Northern Boulevard and 335 Clinton Avenue, but in November 1942 the club purchased 288 Sheridan Avenue, one block away from the church, as its permanent headquarters. In May 1956, the structure was renovated and expanded to include a bar, eight bowling alley lanes as well as a shuffleboard counter. The Polish Community Center was also the site of nearly all major meetings and rallies of the Albany County Democratic Party since the 1950s.¹⁵ The club later moved to another location and the building is no longer extant.

In 1966, the Tri-City Polish Americans held a series of programs to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of Poland's unification as a nation and entry into Christianity. This Polish Millennium celebration was based on Poland's conversion to the Roman Catholic faith in 966 and its concurrent acceptance of Western Civilization. As part of the celebration, nearly 40 Polish-American organizations in Albany, Troy, Schenectady and Amsterdam planned programs from May through November, including a naturalization

¹⁴"Albany area Poles Honor Pulaski" *Times Union*, 12 October 12, 1931.

¹⁵Edward Swietnicki, "Polish Center -'Irish HQ'- for Sale," *Knickerbocker News*, 17 March 1972.

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ceremony at the Albany County Courthouse (on May 4, 1966), a millennial banquet reception at the Polish Community Center at 288 Sheridan Avenue, and a local artist exhibition on Polish culture at the school hall of St. Casimir's Church. Additionally, Constitution Day, honoring the ratification of the Polish constitution of 1791 was celebrated annually on May 3rd. These celebrations often involved the students of St. Casimir's either in recitation of blessings, readings or performance of native music and in Polish attire.¹⁶

Repair and Improvements to the Parish Buildings

Over the years the pastor, Fr. Ostrowski, and the parish worked hard to maintain and upgrade the parish buildings by holding various fundraising functions. The school was used for numerous social functions and school activities throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, including many concerts and dances, as well as the annual celebrations for Pulaski or Constitution Day. In the school in the 1930s and 1940s minor renovations were conducted, including new flooring installed in the grand hall/auditorium, a new kitchen added in the basement, and additional bathroom facilities. The church was renovated with new lighting, painting of the interior, marble tile flooring, repairs to the tower, the roof and the stained glass windows. The Ladies Rosary Society purchased a new altar railing, while Fr. Ostrowski raised funds amounting to \$3,000 for a new altar. This new Gothic-style altar was fabricated and installed by a Chicago firm, the Dapato Statuary Co. This was an outstanding feature with spires, niches and a colorful scene of the Last Supper in a combination of high relief and full figure statuary of Jesus and the twelve apostles depicting the scene of the Last Supper.

¹⁶"Tri-City Groups to Observe Poland's 1000th Anniversary," *Times Union*, April 1966; "Albany Polish Fete Millennium at Citizenship Ceremonies," *Times Union*, 5 May 1966; "Mass celebrates Polish Millennium," *Times Union*, 12 September 1966; "300 Note Millennium of Polish Christianity," *Times Union*, 26 September 1966.

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During the 1960s, under the direction of the new pastor, the Rev. Francis Drzewiecki, a building fund drive was set up immediately to address the inherited debt of \$90,000. During Drzewiecki's first year, this debt was reduced by \$25,000 while still making necessary repairs to the four buildings. Over this decade, the doors of the school were replaced with aluminum doors and a canopy was added at the side entrance. The bells of the church were electrified by a clock controlled mechanism which enabled the clock to ring three times a day (6am, 12pm and 6pm). Boilers in the rectory, the convent and church were replaced using funds donated by the Holy Name Society. Father Drzewiecki continued to make improvements to the parish buildings while still systematically reducing the parish debt. He received much support from his parishioners since he always showed his appreciation for their loyalty and generosity.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the city fire chief inspected St. Casimir's school along with all the diocese schools to identify any life safety and fire hazards. Specific concerns that were noted for St. Casimir's were the open-frame stairways, the lack of panic hardware on the exit doors, lack of self-closing fire-proof doors at the boiler room, lack of fire protection and emergency lighting. These inspections were likely a reaction to the national attention given to schools and other public spaces after a fire destroyed Our Lady of the Angels parochial school in Chicago in December of 1958, killing 92 students and three nuns. This tragic event prompted a series of major changes and enhancements to the life safety codes and regulations governing U.S. Schools and other public buildings.¹⁷ Many buildings in the mid-twentieth century that had been constructed prior to the 1920s, thus predating a number of advancements in fire protection engineering and materials, were generally not required to retroactively comply with new building regulations. However, in the aftermath of the Chicago school fire, fire commissions around the country were ordering the immediate inspection of school buildings as a civic priority.¹⁸ After the fire chief's

¹⁷Peter Steinfels, "A Most Awful Inferno, 50 years ago this week," *New York Times*, 5 December 2008, A14.

¹⁸To address the lessons learned from the Our Lady of the Angels School fire, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) revised the *Building Exit Code* (c.1927 NFPA 101), later renamed the *Life Safety Code* to speak to inadequacies in school fire safety. The Life Safety Code is unusual among safety codes in that it applies to

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inspection of St. Casimir's school, a series of recommendations for fire safety compliance were made, including the enclosure of the stairways with fireproof materials and the provision of fire doors. It was also recommended that fire escapes serving all classrooms be equipped with doors with panic hardware opening outward. As a result, the early 1960s witnessed extensive improvements to the school. In 1963, the school roof was repaired and the open frame stairway from the main floor to the attic was enclosed to address concerns of egress and fire safety raised by the fire chief. The most drastic alteration at the school during this time reflected not only the need to make life safety upgrades, but also its recent growth in enrollment. The first floor auditorium space, which encompassed most of the rear wing, was infilled with a central corridor and classrooms and bathrooms on either side. This added three additional classroom spaces but required the installation of new steel framing from the basement to the attic. The new first floor layout followed the plan of the second floor with broad central corridor and large rectangular classroom spaces on either side. At the same time, a new rear fire-proof staircase was installed at the end of the central corridor to serve the basement, first, and second levels with exits to the exterior. This work was designed by Evans & Davis, Architects & Engineers, of Troy. Other work on the parish buildings included the installation of aluminum siding to the rectory in 1966, and the paving of the parking lot in the rear of the church with blacktop. In 1967, storm windows were added to the convent, new bathroom facilities added in the church, and a new kitchen and acoustical ceilings in the school.

Decline of Parish

During the late 1960s and 70s as the area surrounding the church began to change, many of the parishioners moved away to the suburbs or to the outskirts of the city, thus accelerating the transformation. It was noted in an article about the Polish Community Center that "The Sheridan Ave-Orange Street neighborhood was where most of Albany's Polish families settled in the 1910s, 1920s and

existing structures as well as new structures, such that once adopted into law, all structures must comply. *NFPA 101 Life Safety Code*, 2009 edition, National Fire Protection Association, July 2008.

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1930s. In recent years [1960s-70s], these families' sons and daughters have spread far and wide to the suburbs."¹⁹

As a national parish, St. Casimir's had no territorial limitations and had always drawn attendance from beyond the neighborhood. Because those who moved away retained an ingrained sense of loyalty to the parish and continued to attend its functions, St. Casimir's began to notice an increased parking problem for Sunday mass. The congested streets and scarce parking prompted the parish to pave the area behind the church.²⁰ The change in neighborhood demographics also had an impact on the Polish Community Center, which, in the early 1970s, purchased six acres on Washington Avenue Extension in the Pine Bush area where a new building was constructed boasting the addition of a dance hall and a parking lot for 40 cars. The grand opening of the new Polish Community Center took place on June 2, 1973.²¹ The building that formerly housed the community center at 288 Sheridan Avenue has since been demolished.

As the parishioners scattered geographically, most of those remaining in the neighborhood were reluctant to send their children to a school in the depressed area. However, to maintain the school, Father Francis Drzewiecki and later Father Tom Krupa began to accept children from the surrounding community whether or not they were Catholics or members of the parish. Supporting the school was a great drain on the parish, as many non-parish, neighborhood families could not pay the required tuition. In the late 1980s, Albany's inner-city churches formed what was referred to as the *Center City Cluster* and initiated a planning process for how best to serve their communities into the 21st century. These six inner city parishes had been built from the mid-1800s through the early 1900s and had served pockets of immigrant residents in Arbor Hill and North Albany. By 1991, as each parish was facing dwindling congregations due to the migration of their membership from the cities to the suburbs. The diocese, as part of a

¹⁹Swietnicki, "Polish Center - 'Irish HQ' - for Sale."

²⁰"Changes of the Times Affects St. Casimir's," *Times Union*, 14 March 1965, D9.

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reorganization effort to deal with the shrinking number of diocesan priests, notified the parishes of the Center City Cluster that they would be sharing three priests between them. While the Center City Cluster churches tried to adapt their missions to serve their new local population of Hispanics, Vietnamese and blacks, they continued to face rising insurance and utility bills on their many various buildings. The Center City Cluster presented a proposal to the bishop with recommendations that included renting out former schools, convents and rectories, merging parishes and selling the extra churches. In June 1992, the diocese designated the school at St. Casimir's as a Regional Diocesan School with minimal subsidy but by that time the parish had reached a debt of \$118,432 owed to the diocese. Despite the many difficulties encountered in the parish, Father Tom Krupa continued the Polish traditions and celebrations at St. Casimir's for another decade, while the number of parishioners continued to decline.

In August of 2004, the Albany Diocese decided at the recommendation of a pastoral council of the Center City Cluster to close and deconsecrate St. Casimir's Church, a fixture in the Polish community for 111 years.²² The church and rectory were sold in June 2005 to the Restoration Apostolic Truth Ministries, Inc. In 2009, its school was shut down after operating in the city for 112 years. Today the school and the convent are owned by Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless.

Architects

The designer of the church and possibility the rectory was William C. Schade. Schade was also the architect of the Schlitz Hotel on Broadway, opposite the Railroad Depot, which was demolished in 1964. The Albany Business Directory for 1907 lists Schade as architect with address of 23 deGraaf Building and in 1922 at 50 Beaver St, room 6. While it is unclear how many residential buildings he designed, Schade apparently

²¹Albany Polish Community Center, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.albanypcc.com/pcc-members>.

²²The Church of Blessed Virgin Mary of Czestochowa in Latham opened in 1999. Blessed Virgin Mary of Czestochowa, National Catholic Church, "Historic of our Parish and the Polish People in Albany" assessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.bvmc.org/about-us-cg16>.

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worked on many churches through the twentieth century in an around Albany, including the Slingerlands United Methodist Church built in 1871. Both churches give a sense of Schade's typical church style; simple, restrained Gothic Revival styles with symmetrical arrangement around a central tower, with stepped buttresses and lancet masonry openings. His son, Charles A. Schade, also went on to become an architect working in Albany.

The Albany Diocese seemed to spare no expense in building the school and commissioned the Albany architecture firm of brother architects Marshall L. Emery (1863-1921) and Henry G. Emery (1871-1956) to design the school.²³ The Emery brothers were sons of William Emery, an engraver who had been employed in the office of Albany architect Walter Dickson, who, while in partnership with Frederick Clarke Withers, worked on the alterations to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in 1891. The brothers both graduated from Columbia University's School of Architecture and Marshall Emery also worked in Withers & Dickson's New York City office as a draftsman before opening his own architectural practice in New York City in 1894. In 1899, his brother, Henry, joined him, after having worked for the prestigious firms of R.M. Hunt and Warren & Wetmore, and they formed the partnership of M.L. & H.G. Emery.²⁴ During their partnership the brothers designed many churches, schools, hospitals and other institutional buildings in New York City, in Nyack, where Henry eventually moved, and throughout the Hudson and Mohawk valleys.²⁵ In Albany, they are best known for the Beaux-Arts Elks Lodge on State Street in Albany, as well as their design for the Gothic steeple of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, whose spire still dominates the Albany skyline. These buildings are on the National Register, including the Elks Lodge, of which only the façade

²³Complete architectural drawings and Specifications for St. Casimir's School at 305-311 Sheridan Ave, Albany are on file at the Albany County Hall of Records. M. L. & H.G. Emery Architects are listed with offices at 68 Bible House in New York and 12 Drisland Bldg, in Albany.

²⁴Virginia Kurshan, "Landmarks Preservation Commission Cobble Hill Historic District Extension Designation Report" (LP-1554), (New York: City of New York, 1988).

²⁵Gini Stoldorf, ed. "The Emery Brothers: Marshall and Henry" *Historical Society of the Nyacks Newsletter*, vol. 7:1 Winter 2012.

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remains. The Emerys were practicing during a time when American architectural styles experimented with a series of revival styles based on European origins. As a result they did not have a typical style, but rather their portfolio of work included Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, Romanesque Revival and even examples of Arts & Crafts style.

The convent, built in 1923-24, was designed by the well-known Albany architecture firm Gander, Gander & Gander, composed of three brothers, Joseph J. (1884-1967), Conrad J. (1890-1967), and John P. Gander (1892-1973). Two of the brothers, Joseph and Conrad, attended Columbia University and went on to work for the prominent New York City firm of Delano & Aldrich. The younger brother, John, attended Carnegie Institute of Technology before returning to Albany, where he worked with well-known local architect Charles Ogden. From 1916 through the 1960s, the firm was known not only within New York State, but throughout the United States as well for its institutional buildings. They specialized in designing monasteries, convents, schools and churches and were responsible for a large number of Albany diocese convents, including Our Lady of Angels Convent on Sheridan Avenue (1916), House of Good Shepherd Sisters' Convent at 25 W. Lawrence St (1924), the tower at Our Lady Help of Christians Church at 66 Second Avenue (1925), Sisters of Mercy Mother House at 634 New Scotland Avenue (1927), Monastery of the Immaculate Conception, now part of Maria College, on New Scotland Avenue (1928), St. Mary's Church Sisters' Convent at Pine Street (1936), Sisters of St. Francis Convent at 74 Second Avenue (1936), Mater Christi Seminary on New Scotland Avenue (1952) and the Sisters' Convent for Cardinal McCloskey High School on Elm Street (1956, demolished).²⁶

Today the four buildings remain standing and in remarkably intact condition. Although the campus has been subdivided in terms of ownership, each retains its religious/social services functions at this point in time.

²⁶Diana S. Waite, *Architects in Albany* (Albany, NY: Mount Ida Press, 2009) 57-58.

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St. Casimir's Church Complex
Albany County, New York

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St. Casimir's Building List

Property No.	Property Name	Date of Const.	Dates of Major Alt.	Architectural Style	Architect/Builder
320 Sheridan Ave	Church	1896		Gothic Revival	William Schade
324 Sheridan Ave	Rectory	1896	1966	Queen Anne	Pres. William Schade
309-315 Sheridan Ave	Grammar School	1906	1962-1967	Classical Revival	Unknown
317 Sheridan Ave	Convent	1923-24		Gothic Revival	Gander, Gander & Gander

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- "Emery, Marshall Lansing Obituary," *New York Times*, December 31, 1920.
- "Albany Poles plan tribute for Saturday–Parade and Exercise will mark Celebration of Gen. Pulaski's Anniversary" *Times Union*, October 20, 1929.
- "Albany area Poles Honor Pulaski" *Times Union*, October 12, 1931.

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"Tri-City Groups to Observe Poland's 1000th Anniversary" *Times Union*, April 1, 1966.

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- Albany county Clerk's Office Deeds: Grantor Albany Roman Catholic Diocese transfer of St. Casimir's Church property (320 & 324 Sheridan Avenue) to Restoration Apostolic Truth Ministries, Inc. for the price of \$200,000. Date of transfer was June 24, 2005. "Being the same premises conveyed to the party of the first part (St. Casimir's Church) by Martin V.B. Wagoner and

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his wife by deed dated June 1, 1896 and recorded in Book 475, Page 523. (Albany County Hall of Records - 95 Tivoli St, Albany, NY 12207)

Complete architectural drawings and specifications for St. Casimir's School at 305-311 Sheridan Ave, Albany for Rev. B. Molejkajtys are on file at the Albany County Hall of Records. (05-07787000; 05-02096000)

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps:

- Albany 1892, Sheet 56
- Albany 1908-1909, vol. 1, Sheet 46
- Albany 1908-1909, vol. 1, Sheet 48
- Albany 1934-1935, vol. 1, Sheet 63
- Albany 1934-1951, vol. 1, Sheet 63

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St. Casimir's Church Complex
Albany County, New York

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs by Kimberly Conrad-Alvarez, August 2017

Original digital files, TIFF format, maintained at NYS Division for Historic Preservation

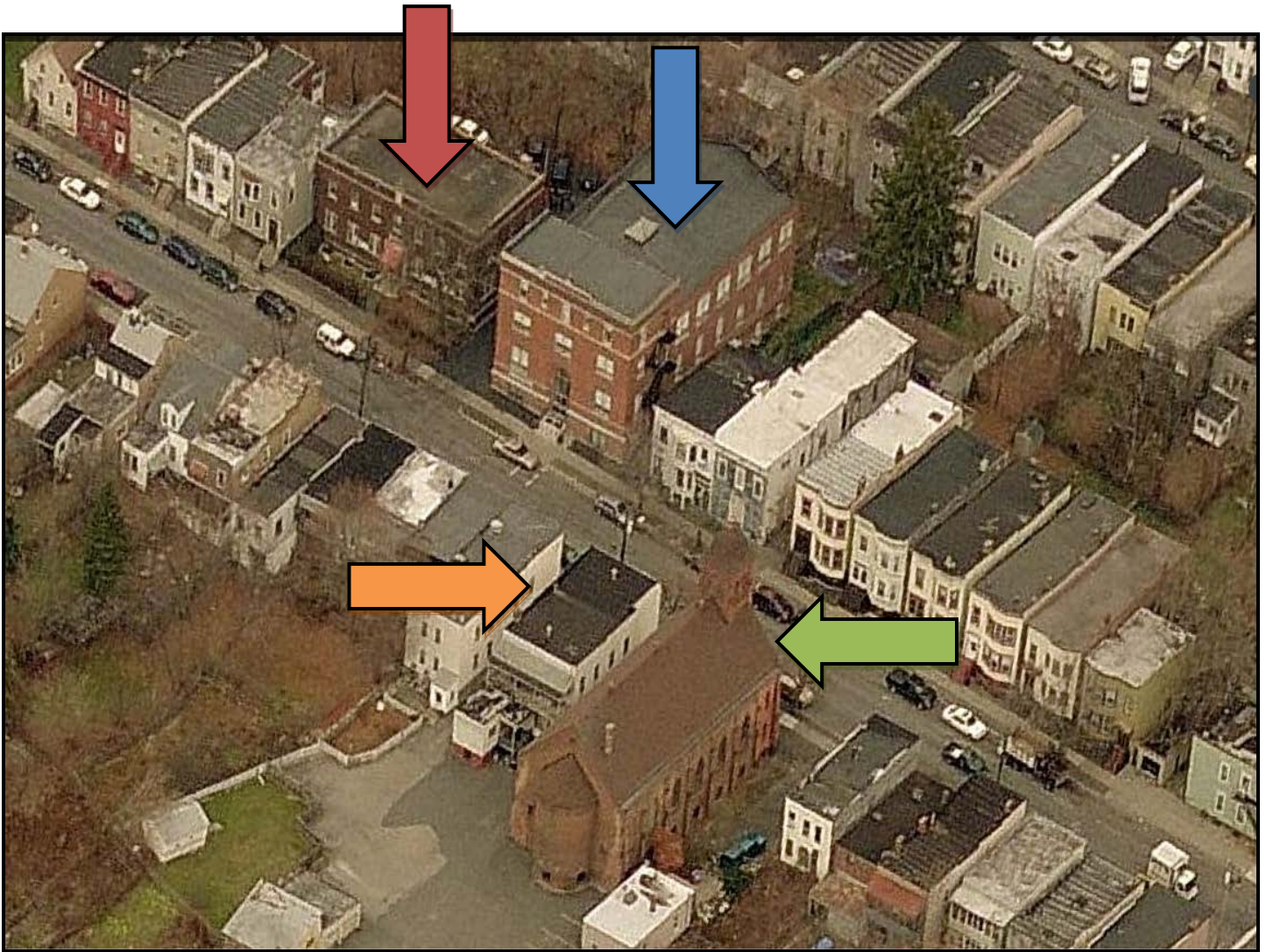
- 0001 EXTERIOR, St. Casimir's Church, view looking southwest showing facade
- 0002 EXTERIOR, St. Casimir's Church, view showing southeast flank elevation
- 0003 EXTERIOR, St. Casimir's Church, detail view of church tower
- 0004 EXTERIOR, St. Casimir's Church, view showing northwest flank elevation
- 0005 INTERIOR, St. Casimir's Church, view looking toward liturgical center
- 0006 INTERIOR, St. Casimir's Church, view looking towards gallery
- 0007 EXTERIOR, rectory, view looking roughly south
- 0008 EXTERIOR, rectory, view looking to south from elevated position
- 0009 EXTERIOR, school, view looking to northeast
- 0010 EXTERIOR, school, view south showing northwest flank elevation
- 0011 EXTERIOR, school, view roughly west showing southeast flank elevation
- 0012 INTERIOR, school, classroom
- 0013 INTERIOR, school, corridor
- 0014 INTERIOR, school, classroom
- 0015 INTERIOR, school, classroom
- 0016 INTERIOR, school, classroom
- 0017 EXTERIOR, rectory, view looking to northeast showing façade
- 0018 EXTERIOR, rectory, detail view showing entrance
- 0019 EXTERIOR, rectory, view showing rear elevation
- 0020 EXTERIOR, rectory, rear elevation

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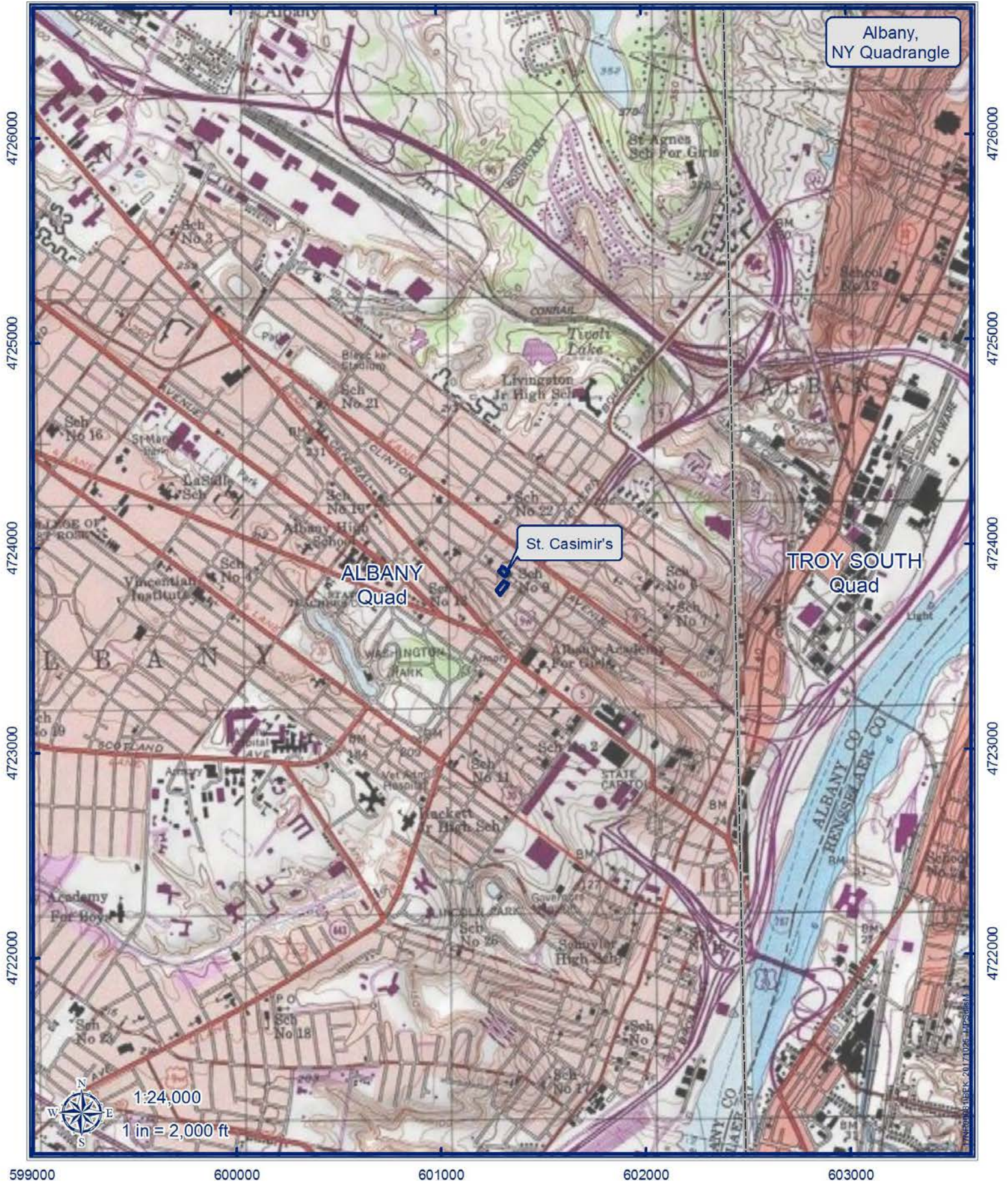
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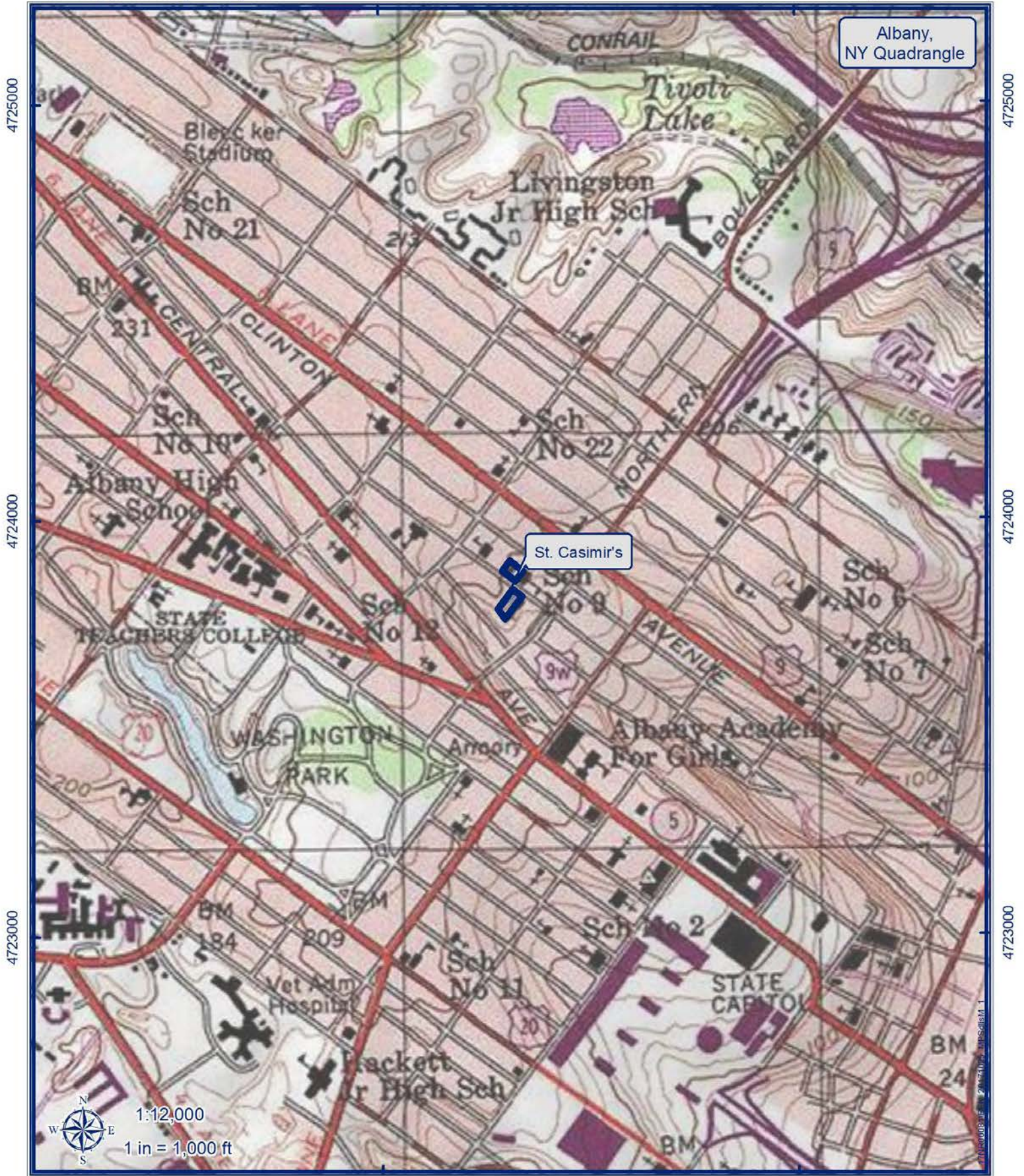
St. Casimir's Church Complex
Albany County, New York

MAPS



ABOVE, aerial view showing interrelationship of the four components which formed the St. Casimir's Church Complex, two of which are disposed on either side of Sheridan Avenue. Clockwise from top: convent (red arrow); school (blue arrow); church (green arrow); rectory (orange arrow).









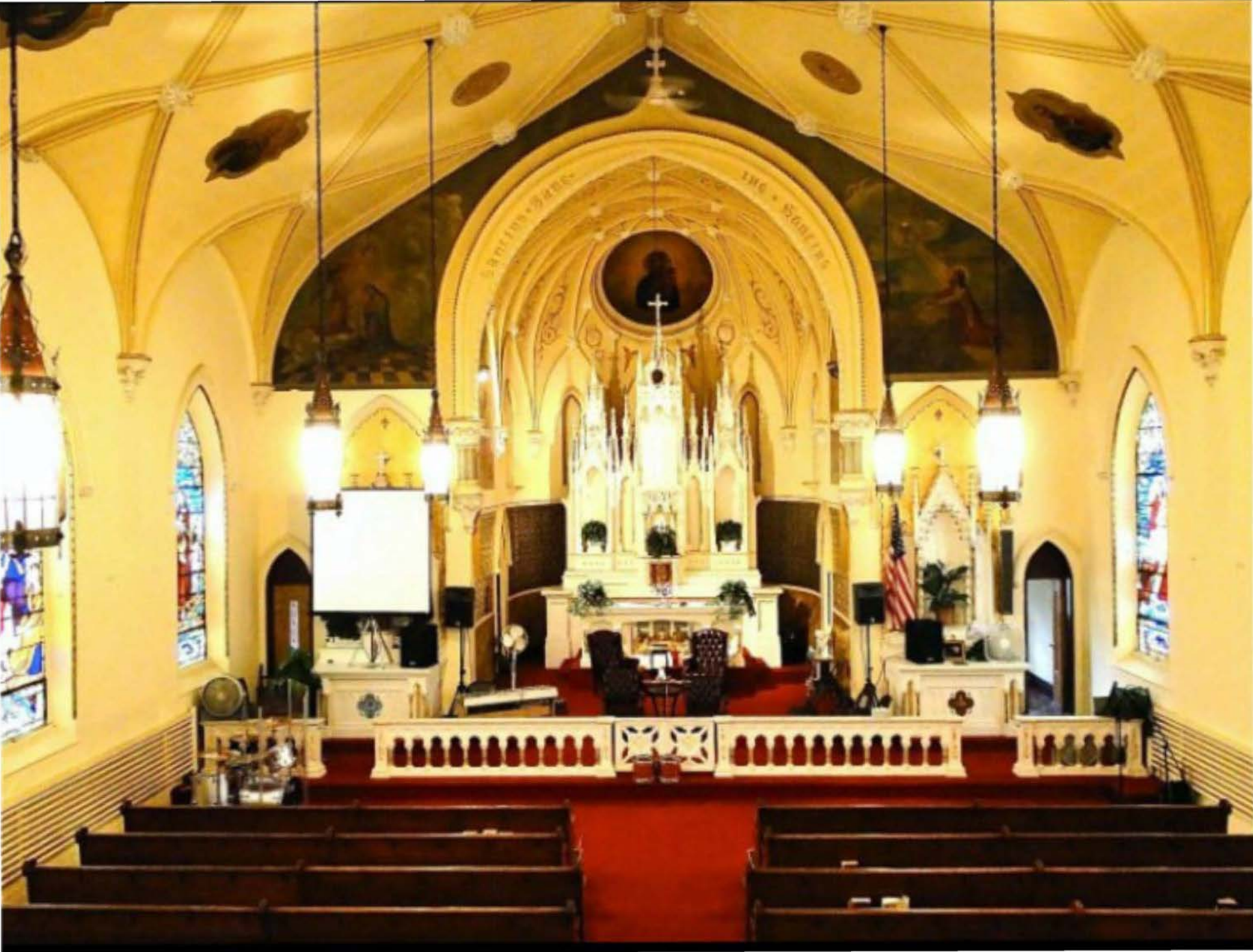
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→

324

TLT



374

CHURCH





ST. CASIMIR'S SCHOOL

ST. CASIMIR'S
REGIONAL SCHOOL





St. Casimir's



STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES
The student is responsible for
the care and use of the
blackboard and the bulletin board.
The student is responsible for
the care and use of the
blackboard and the bulletin board.

By the student
at the blackboard
10/10/10











Sister Maureen Joyce Center
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Working together
to improve health and
quality of life
for all
2024-2025
2024-2025

FOOD PANTRY
2024-2025

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CENTER



315 Sheridan Avenue

ST. CASTLE'S
CONVENT

Mc
Rescue on Earth







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: St Casimir's Church Complex

Multiple Name: _____

State & County: NEW YORK, Albany

Date Received:
12/1/2017

Date of Pending List:
1/2/2018

Date of 16th Day:
1/17/2018

Date of 45th Day:
1/16/2018

Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100001964

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

Appeal

SHPO Request

Waiver

Resubmission

Other

PDIL

Landscape

National

Mobile Resource

TCP

CLG

Text/Data Issue

Photo

Map/Boundary

Period

Less than 50 years

Accept

Return

Reject

1/16/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria A and C. Ethnic Heritage, Polish, and Architecture

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236

Date 1/16/2018

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



28 November 2017

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 three nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church Complex, Albany, Albany County
Temple Beth Zion, Buffalo Erie County
Ziegele-Phoenix Refrigeration House and Office, Buffalo, Erie County

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