

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. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 164 Nichols Street NA not for publication

city or town Newark vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Essex code 013 zip code 07105

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby 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.)

[Signature] 5/21/97
Signature of Certifying official/Title Date
Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State of 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] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Erson K. Beall 7/9/97

St. Casimir's R.C. Church

Essex County, New Jersey

Name of Property

County and State

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	
1	0	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility = Church

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility = Church

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete block

walls brick

roof slate

other terra cotta

Narrative Description

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

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions of property significance.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions of property characteristics.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage - European

Architecture

Art

Period of Significance

1917 - 1947

Significant Dates

1917

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect-- Jackson, Joseph A.

Von Gerichten, Ludwig (stained glass artisan)

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):

N/A

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Seton Hall University Library - Newark Archdiocesan Archives

St. Casimir's R.C. Church
Name of Property

Essex County, New Jersey
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .50 acres

Elizabeth, NJ Quad

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 8	5 7 1 0 4 0	4 5 0 8 1 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ulana D. Zakalak / Historic Preservation Consultant

organization Zakalak Associates date January 8, 1997

street & number 57 Cayuga Avenue telephone (908) 571-3176

city or town Oceanport state NJ zip code 07757

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 the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church

street & number 164 Nichols Street telephone (201) 344-2743

city or town Newark state New Jersey zip code 07105

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1St. Casimir's R.C. Church
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey**Description**

St. Casimir's Polish Roman Catholic church, located at 91 Pulaski Street, Newark, is a two-story, hybrid basilica plan, Romanesque Revival/eclectic church (Photo 1). One of the most unique religious edifices in the City of Newark, the church features a pressed, buff brick exterior trimmed with white, glazed terra cotta, and a richly painted interior, with sculptured altars, bejeweled icons and colorful frescoes. The more than 60 elaborate stained glass windows were designed by the master artisan, Ludwig Von Gerichten. The church represents an architectural blend of western and eastern influences such as a basilica plan with transepts, repeated rounded arches, and elaborate combinations of frescoes, icons and statuary. Located in the Ironbound section of Newark (also known as Down Neck), east of the Central Business District, the building was constructed by Polish immigrants in 1918. It is one of the largest churches in the City of Newark, seating 2,300 people, and is known as the "Basilica of the Ironbound."

The plan of the church is a modified basilica with a central nave flanked by aisles, a narthex extended by identical towers at the western end, an apse at the eastern end, and transept arms immediately west of the apse. From the eastern exterior can be seen the upper portion of the rounded apse enclosed by a low rectangular sacristy (Photo 2). Clerestory windows above the aisles and transept arms illuminate the interior.

This division of spaces within the plan is reflected in the church facade (western elevation), which is composed of a large central gable flanked by towers which extend from the nave (Photo 3). The symmetrically composed entrance facade consists of a central, two-story, gabled nave approached by a podium of six steps flanked by stone-capped sidewalls. From these sidewalls extends a projecting water table that serves to unify the lower story of the church. The lower story is arcuated with three evenly spaced, round-arched, entrances. Each of the entrances is framed by a round terra cotta arch with a pronounced keystone. Within each entrance arch is a pair of carved wooden doors surmounted by a semi-circular, stained glass tympanum with a circular tracery motif.

Capped by a belt course, the lower story supports a paired, pilaster-enframed gable with a round-arched window opening containing the main rose window. The paired pilasters at the end of the gable are paneled, and topped by Composite order capitals. The capitals, in turn, support a swag-decorated panel. An entablature, consisting of a corbelled brick architrave and terra cotta dentillated cornice, decorates the gable. The main window is set in a terra cotta, round-arched surround with a keystone, and consists of a rose window set on four, round-arched, elongated panels. Both above and below the window are bas-relief terra cotta panels, and flanking the window are niches containing statues of St. Peter and St. Paul. The peak of the gable contains the initials AMDG, which stand for "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" (to the greater glory of God), is surmounted by a plain cross.

The flanking towers contain four tiers. The first tier, which forms the base of the towers, is a quoined panel containing two rectangular leaded windows with flat, keystone arches and plain sills. Both the quoins and window trim are of terra cotta. A terra cotta belt course separates the base from the body of the tower, a tall tier containing a round-arched window at the second floor level, and an oculus below the tier entablature. The oculus is set in a flat brick surround with four terra cotta keystones at the 90 degree points. The second tier entablature consists of a plain architrave, a bracketed frieze and small cornice, all in terra cotta.

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Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

The third tier reflects the architecture of the central gable. A trabeated and pedimented arch is created from paneled pilasters supporting an entablature topped by a pediment. Within the trabeated arch, is a round-arched window surround containing paired, round-arched, louvered panels topped by a circular motif. The round terra cotta arch is supported by plain brick pilasters with terra cotta capitals. Above the pediment is a brick parapet with brick coping. This design is repeated on all four sides of the tower.

The fourth, or final, tier of the tower is an arcuated copper cupola. The octagonal cupola consists of Doric colonettes between which are pilaster-supported, round-arched openings. Each of the round-arches is keystone and has pilaster caps. In turn, the colonettes hold up an entablature. Above this entablature is a dome supporting an arcuated drum ornamented by a plain cross.

The north and south elevations of the church feature one story aisles covered with shed roofs and delineated by brick buttress strips between the round-arched stained glass windows (Photos 1 & 2). All of the windows have round-arched terra cotta hood mouldings. These mouldings produce a rhythmic pattern along the wall which establishes a horizontal continuity. There are six, single, round-arched, stained glass windows illuminating each of the aisles; each of these consists of paired round-arched panels surmounted by a circular panel. Above the shed roof, on the second story, are paired stained glass windows, also separated from each other by buttress strips. These paired windows have individual terra cotta, round-arched, window surrounds but share a common sill. At both the first and second floors of the side elevations, the roof edges are articulated by a narrow terra cotta entablature.

The side and rear elevations of the church are treated in a similar manner. The transept arms feature large, round-arched, terra cotta window surrounds containing large stained glass windows (Photo 4). The rather planar elevation of the transept arms is relieved by buttress strips flanking the window and a narrow terra cotta entablature below the gabled roofline. The east and west walls of the transepts have paired, round-arched stained glass windows set in round, terra cotta arches and connecting sills. The half-cylindrical apse is ornamented with four, individual, round-arched stained glass windows with terra cotta sills, keystones and springing stones above the high altar. Smaller, paired, round-arched windows illuminate the intersection of the apse with the transept arms.

The apse is enclosed by a single story, rectangular sacristy illuminated by round-arched, stained glass windows (Photo 2). These have brick hood mouldings with terra cotta keystones, springing blocks and sills. At the rear of the church is the priest's entrance, allowing him to enter the church behind the apse. Above the center of the transept is a small louvered cupola capped by a dome and cross.

The church building is sited at the corner of Nichols Street and Pulaski Street, Block 980, Lot 5. To the north of the church is the school and convent (Photo 1). In back of the church, to the east, is the rectory. The church is surrounded by planted gardens on the south and the west, and is enclosed by a wrought iron fence. At the southeast corner is a monument to all of the parishioners of St. Casimir's who served in armed conflicts.

The exterior of the church is in excellent condition.

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Newark, Essex County, New Jersey**Interior****Vestibule**

The vestibule (or narthex) provides a desirable space transition from the street to the nave of the church (Photo 6). At the northern end of the narthex is a small room containing a niche which projects outside the base of the tower (Photo 7). This niche contains a Pieta sculpture set on an altar with a bas-relief front. Above the Pieta is a stained glass tympanum depicting the Crucifixion. At the opposite end of the narthex is a small room which is used as a gift shop and contains the stairs to the choir loft. Both end rooms are illuminated by patterned, rather than pictorial, stained glass windows.

The vestibule leads to a second set of triple doors opening into the nave. Each set of paired wooden doors is set into a segmentally arched surround. Each door contains a crucifix-ornamented, stained glass panel. Between the doors are segmentally arched, windows looking into the nave. These are constructed of three, clear glass vertical panels, with a moveable center panel, surmounted by a stained glass tympanum. Above these windows are bas-relief panels depicting various religious scenes. The walls of the vestibule are finished in plaster with a tongue and groove wainscoting finished with a cap moulding. The floor is brown quarry tile, and the ceiling is pressed tin (Photo 6).

The Nave

The center door leads into the nave of the church. The flanking doors lead into the side aisles. Upon entering the nave, the sweep of high arches carried by the marble columns on both sides leads the eye to the sanctuary and to the elaborate high altar (Photo 8). The wide nave is flanked by the columned, clerestory walls, illuminated by stained glass windows and decorated with elaborate frescoes and murals. A center passageway, which leads to the high altar, is flanked by wide wooden pews with carved end panels. Halfway down the nave, a section of pews on the south side has been removed to accommodate the baptismal fountain (Photo 9). Directly opposite the baptismal fountain is an elaborate lectern holding the Bible. The ceiling of the nave is crossed by arches polychromed with patterned motifs. The ceiling is also ornamented with three elaborate murals depicting the last days of Jesus.

The six, smooth, marble columns on each side are topped by stylized Composite capitals featuring cherubs. From these capitals spring round, nave arches which support the clerestory walls above and form the side aisles. Another series of arches, set on a perpendicular to the nave arches and ending at a decorative wall bracket, opposite the columns, form a series of groin vaults which serve as the ceiling of the aisles (Photo 10). Above the nave arches are murals depicting the life of Jesus: on the south side of the nave are panels depicting the childhood of Jesus, and on the north side of the nave are panels showing the adult life of Jesus. Above each mural is a pair of round-arched stained glass windows. Each window depicts an individual, full-figured saint. The name of each saint is painted onto the halo.

Within the aisles, the walls are decorated by stained glass windows and bas-relief panels depicting the Stations of the Cross (Photo 10). There are six stained glass windows in each aisle. On the north side of the church, are the following windows, listed from east to west: Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette; Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi (Photo 11); Death of St. Joseph in the presence of Jesus and Mary; Our Lady, Help of Christians; St. Aloysius praying before an altar; and the martyrdom of St. Stanislaus. On the south side of the church, from east to west: St. Casimir and the Blessed

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Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

Virgin Mary; King Jon Sobieski receiving Holy Communion at Mass before going into battle with the Turks at the gates of Vienna; St. Martin; Archangel Michael with another angel; Adoration of the Magi; and the Martyrdom of St. Adalbert.

Each stained glass window is framed with stylized, polychromed, floral banding. Above each stained glass window is the painted coat of arms of a major city in Poland. The window itself consists of a pair of round arches topped by a circular motif flanked by rounded triangles set into a wooden framework. The pictorial, stained glass panel spans the upper three-quarters of the window through both round-arched panels. The lowest one-quarter of the window consists of a pivoting window panel containing the name of the window donor in a ribbon, superimposed on a castle motif. At the top of the pictorial panel is an architectural canopy of a castle motif, one of the characteristics of the Munich School of stained glass. This canopy consists of a centered round arch flanked by turrets. In the circular panel above the arches is another castle motif, also flanked by turrets. The canopy is based on Neushwanstein, the castle of King Ludwig of Bavaria, founder of the Munich School of Stained Glass.

Between each of the windows is a panel from the Stations of the Cross. These are elaborate bas-relief plaster panels set in a round-arched, gilded frame with clustered colonettes flanking the pictorial scene. Each is numbered with a Roman numeral at the top and a Polish inscription at the bottom. The Stations of the Cross begin on the south side of the church and extend from east to west. They continue in an easterly direction on the north side.

Additional aisle decoration includes gilded banding of the underside of the rib arches, and painted white and gold stars on a blue background for the vaults. The wainscoting of the outside walls is painted a deep red with a wood cap moulding. Immediately above the moulding is a polychromed band of stylized floral ornamentation.

At the crossing of the nave with the transept, the ceiling is a large groin vault ornamented with the Lamb of God set in a sunburst motif (Photo 12). At each downward point of the vault is an angel floating on a cloud. From this point, the sanctuary proceeds to the east, and the side altars within the transept arms to the north and south.

The Sanctuary

Upon crossing the transept, one enters through the triumphal arch into the sanctuary (Photo 13). The sanctuary is further divided from the transept by being elevated on a three step platform. A small, modern altar (not original), facing the congregation, is placed at the front of the sanctuary podium. At the rear of the podium, on top of another five steps, is the elaborate multi-tiered, and multi-bay, high altar of St. Casimir. The semi-circular apse which forms the sanctuary is elaborately decorated with polychromatic banding, murals, bas-relief panels and stained glass windows. A round-arched entrance on either side of the altar leads to service rooms at the back of the church: the door on the north leads to the altar boy room, and the door on the south to the sacristy. High above the altar, in the dome of the apse, is a series of full-figured depictions of saints and Polish folk heroes led by St. Casimir around the centered painting of the Holy Trinity.

The high altar is an approximately three story, five bay, masonry, plaster and wood structure. The first tier consists of a marble altar with a bas relief panel of the Last Supper on the front. The altar is finished in marble with inlaid mosaics. Immediately above the Last Supper panel is the centered, solid gold, Holy Tabernacle set into the base of an elaborate columned and domed baldachin. The baldachin is flanked by the second tier of the altar, consisting of a series of round-

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Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

arched niches filled with mosaic panels and set on a three-tier mosaic podium. The third tier of the altar consists of a large, columned and canopied portrait of St. Casimir, set into a round-arched surround with tympanum, flanked by statues of bishops set into roofed and columned niches. Above and behind the niches of the bishops are round-arched, marble panels.

The entire altar is flanked by tiered, end towers inlaid with mosaic, trimmed with clustered colonettes and surmounted by column-supported canopies similar to the baldachin. The centermost niche containing the portrait of St. Casimir is topped by an elaborate pierced canopy flanked by angels. The portrait of St. Casimir is operated by a pulley system and can be interchanged with a portrait of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Angel statues also appear at the ends of the second tier, flanking the baldachin and at the ends of the third tier (for a total of eight angels). Other notable features of the altar include the life-size angel candelabra flanking the altar and the stepped mosaic panels between the first and second tiers of the altar. The stepped mosaic panels are used as platforms for candelabras and floral arrangements as needed.

The wall treatment of the apse corresponds with the multi-tiers of the main altar. The bottom third of the wall is polychromed with a patterned and gilded ornament. The middle tier is decorated with painted murals, one on each side of the altar. The top third of the wall is illuminated by stained glass windows set into round-arched openings and separated by slender colonettes. These four windows depict, from north to south, the Nativity; the Agony in the Garden; the Resurrection; and the Ascension. All four windows were donated by the former priests of St. Casimir's. Also notable in the sanctuary is the elaborately carved wooden pulpit.

The Transept Arms

The transept arms contain the side altars and the side chapels. The side chapels are set parallel to the main altar and immediately flank the sanctuary. On the north side of the sanctuary is the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Photo 14). On the south side is the chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Photo 15). Both altars within the side chapels reflect the architecture of the main high altar. A ground level marble altar is surmounted by stepped tiers of inlaid mosaics. A centered niche holds the Holy Tabernacle. Above this altar is a three bay structure of a round-arched, larger niche flanked by smaller, similar niches. In turn, these gable-roofed enclosures are topped by domed cupolas mimicking the baldachin of the main altar Holy Tabernacle. The Blessed Virgin Mary altar contains a statue of Mary holding the Baby Jesus flanked by female saints. The Sacred Heart chapel contains a centered statue of Jesus manifesting his Sacred Heart. This statue is flanked by male saints such as St. Francis and St. Dominic.

At the ends of the transept arms are side altars, set on a perpendicular to the main altar. On the north side of the church is the altar of St. Valentine. On the south side is the altar of St. Anne. Both consist of a marble altar with a centered Holy Tabernacle. Above each altar is a series of three bas-relief panels depicting the life of the particular saint. Additional ornamentation includes mosaic panels. In the case of the St. Valentine altar, however, the center panel has been replaced by a panel depicting St. Jude. The St. Valentine panel has been rehung elsewhere in the church.

The large rose windows above the side altars include the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the south side and the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the north side. Both side windows consist of a circular window set on a series of four round-arched panels. The Sacred Heart window consists of a portrait of Jesus Christ manifesting his Sacred Heart, surrounded by roundels of the four Evangelists, and four angels. The four, round-arched panels below depict the little children coming to Jesus. The

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Immaculate Heart of Mary window on the north side is identical, in that it depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary manifesting her Immaculate Heart in the center of the window, surrounded by four bishops of the church and four angels. The four panels below depict various Roman Catholic saints paying tribute to the Blessed Mother holding the Infant Jesus in her lap.

The Choir Loft

At the rear of the nave is the choir loft (Photo 9). The loft is filled with the pipes of the magnificent and original Rodzewicz organ, built in Millburn, New Jersey. (At the time of its installation, in 1918, the organ was bought at a discounted price of \$25,000.) In the center of the choir loft is the St. Casimir rose window. St. Casimir is depicted in the middle of the window surrounded by angels. Below the circular section of the window are four, round-arched panels depicting St. Cecilia and King David flanked by angels playing various musical instruments. The choir loft is framed by a carved wooden balustrade, from which project flag holders with the flags of the United States, Poland, the Vatican and the State of New Jersey. Below the choir loft, the walls of the church are ornamented with murals and frescoes. Above the St. Casimir windows is a painted ribbon with the words, "Polonia Semper Fidelis."

The Sacristy and Altar Boy Room

On either side of the apse are service rooms set into a one story, rectangular enclosure. To the north is the altar boy room with its curved wooden locker wall (Photo 16). To the south is the sacristy (Photo 17). The two rooms are connected by a corridor which runs behind the apse. Both rooms are illuminated by round-arched, patterned stained glass windows, containing small portrait roundels.

The Stained Glass Windows

An outstanding feature of St. Casimir's Church is its stained glass windows. Over 60 windows from the Ludwig Von Gerichten studio in Munich were installed in the church in 1919. Of these, 51 are major windows: there are six windows along both sides of the aisles, 12 in each clerestory above the aisles, three rose windows: one in the facade and one in each transept arm; four major windows in the curved rear wall of the apse, and four in each of the upper levels of the transept arms. The remaining windows are in the sacristy, altar boy room, narthex, and in the upper tiers of the towers. Except for the tympanum windows in the narthex, these more minor windows are generally patterned stained glass windows with medallions rather than full-figured pictorials.

Additional Ornamentation

The pews, confessionals, wood pulpit and furniture for the sacristy and the altar boy room were purchased from the Tiffin Company of Ohio for \$15,500. The five altars and the Stations of the Cross were commissioned from the Muller Company, of Newark, New Jersey for \$18,500. The four bells, christened St. Casimir, the King, St. Stanislaus, Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, were commissioned for \$4,500. The church was originally painted in 1925, at a cost of \$15,000.

On August 6, 1936, a fire broke out in the church caused by a short-circuit damaging the entire ceiling of the church. The replacement of the ceiling and the re-decorating cost \$30,000. At this time, the painting of the church was done by a

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St. Casimir's R.C. Church
Newark, Essex County, New Jersey

well-known Polish artist, Stanislaus Mieszcan'ski. Additionally, a carved wooden Communion rail once spanned the width of the church before the Sanctuary and the side chapels. This rail was removed according to more recent Roman Catholic directives. A small section has been retained in front of the side chapel altars and another section has been attached to the front of the modern altar.

Basement

The parish youth center is located in the basement of the church (Photo 18). It contains a six lane bowling center, shuffleboard courts, and a snack bar area.

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Newark, Essex County, New Jersey**Statement of Significance**

St. Casimir's Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its long and historic association with the Polish immigrant community in the Ironbound. Since its construction in 1918, the church has been the gathering spot and focus of the large Polish community in the Ironbound, as well as surrounding neighborhoods. It is the largest Polish church in the Newark Roman Catholic archdiocese. St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church is also being nominated under Criterion C, for Architecture and Art. The church is architecturally significant as one of the most unique religious edifices in the City of Newark. It is a colorful mixture of western and eastern design influences and is the only Roman Catholic church in Newark which has retained its ethnic art and symbolism. In both design and workmanship, St. Casimir's Church is indicative of the high quality of early 20th century church architecture built in Newark. The stained glass windows of St. Casimir's are also a significant example of the work of Ludwig Von Gerichten, one of significant artisans of the stained glass school of Munich, and founding editor of *Stained Glass Magazine*.

Historical Background and Significance

For Polish immigrants, especially ones who did not speak English, life centered on the church. Here they gathered to worship, to heed lectures on church-related subjects, to enjoy church choirs, educate their children in the ways of their homeland, and socialize with members of their own ethnic group. To this day, St. Casimir's Church continues to provide the Polish community with the same services provided to its earliest members. The Church provides Polish language religious services, a parochial school, a Polish language school, and is the site of important public gatherings and social events in the Ironbound. St. Casimir's is known locally as "The Basilica of the Ironbound."

The establishment of St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church followed the general religious trend prevalent in Newark at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Churches sprang up on an average of one for each new 1,000 residents until the eve of the Civil War. Churches followed the spreading populace into the "Down Neck" (Ironbound) area, westward to the hill country, and northward to the Mount Pleasant area. Established churches first sent out missions or encouraged local congregations to meet anywhere. Nearly all the denominations present in Newark were involved and most followed the same pattern of building a frame mission house before building a church of stone or brick (Cunningham 1966: 132).

As Catholics from Eastern Europe began to immigrate to Newark in large numbers at the end of the 19th century, churches were established to meet their needs. Polish immigrants clustered near the eastern end of South Orange Avenue founded St. Stanislaus's Church on Belmont Avenue in 1889. Lithuanians who lived in the Ironbound section along Adams and Warwick streets founded the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in 1894, and Holy Trinity in 1902. Slovaks organized St. Stephen's Church in 1902, and Hungarians established the Church of the Assumption in 1911, buying the former Free Methodist Church as their sanctuary (Cunningham 1966: 208).

St. Casimir's was founded as a result of a rapid upsurge of Polish immigrants in the Down Neck area. Rev. Vitus Masnicki, then pastor of St. Stanislaus's Church on Belmont Avenue, realized the practicality of a church in the Ironbound, and purchased a plot of land for the establishment of a second Polish parish.

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Rev. Julius Manteuffel was appointed pastor of the second church for the Polish community, by the Most Rev. John O'Connor, Bishop of Newark, and celebrated the first mass in St. Benedict's School Hall on Sunday, September 6, 1908. Rev. Manteuffel proposed St. Casimir as the patron of the new parish and the newly organized congregation agreed to pledge money for the construction of the new edifice. In December of 1908, the congregation agreed to pay St. Stanislaus Church \$6,694 for a plot of land located on Tyler Street (now Pulaski), Nichols and East Kinney Streets. (St. Stanislaus parish however, accepted only \$5,000.) Not long after, a two-story combination school and church were built, and a house serving as a temporary convent for the teaching sisters was bought on the corner of Tyler Street and New York Avenue (75th Anniversary of St. Casimir's Church, 1983: n.p.).

In 1912, the Rev. Paul Knappek succeeded Father Manteuffel as pastor. The church was growing so rapidly, that Rev. Knappek immediately began to make changes. He remodeled the first and second stories of the combination school and church, and added a third floor. In addition he constructed a rectory as well as a large convent for the sisters. The addition and remodeling were only a temporary fix. Father Knappek and the congregation made plans to build a permanent church. In March of 1917, the parish accepted plans to erect a new church at a cost of \$190,000.

The start of World War I delayed construction, however, the parish continued in their efforts to realize their dream of a new home. On October 8, 1917, ground was broken for the new church, and in June of 1918, the cornerstone was blessed. The church was finally completed in June 1920, and on July 4, it was dedicated by Bishop O'Connor, with Father Masnicki celebrating the first mass (*The Advocate*, November 21, 1958).

Following construction of the church, Rev. Knappek focused his attention on the school, which was undersized and lacking in facilities. A new, three story, brick school structure was built in 1924 and contained two large halls, 18 classrooms, and additional clubrooms in the basement. It was large enough to accommodate 2,000 children. (*The Advocate*, November 21, 1958; St. Casimir's Church 1983; n.p.).

One of the remaining tasks, the painting of the church, finally took place in July of 1925 and was completed in January of 1926. The church was decorated with frescoes and murals depicting the life of Jesus Christ, St. Casimir, and other saints significant to the Polish congregation. By the end of the 1920s, Rev. Knappek had also made improvements to the sanctuary and the sacristy, as well as an expansion and renovation of the convent. In the basement of the church, Rev. Knappek constructed a club room for the youth of the parish, including a bowling alley, shuffleboards and pool tables.

On August 4, 1936, a fire broke out in the church, caused by a short-circuit, and damaged the entire ceiling of the church. The damage necessitated the repainting of the ceiling and the installation of a new lighting system.

On December 18, 1954, Msgr. Paul Knappek was given the title of protonotary Apostolic, which was conferred upon him by Pope Pius XII. The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Paul Knappek passed away on May 5, 1964. The Rev. Adalbert Kiczek became the new pastor of St. Casimir's. On September 22, 1967, Rev. Edmund A. Zajac, one of the assistants of the parish was fatally stricken. Rev. Adalbert Kiczek, quite upset with the death of his associate, while celebrating mass the following day, collapsed, and died within hours. Another assistant pastor, the Rev. Theodore Czermak, was appointed acting pastor, until the appointment of Rev. John J. Kulaga on January 20, 1968.

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Rev. Kulaga was responsible for further renovations to the school and the church. Major church repairs and renovations included new carpeting, a new altar of sacrifice, extension of the sanctuary, automation of the church bells, a new sound system, roof repairs and interior painting. A shrine to St. Jude was also established, and the basement clubrooms were updated.

Architectural and Artistic Significance

In both design and workmanship, St. Casimir's Church is indicative of the high quality of early 20th century church architecture in Newark. The building is an example of the Romanesque Revival architectural influence and is characterized by the use of symmetry, brisk articulation and strong rhythms established by regular fenestration, projecting buttresses, surface patterning, distinctive rounded mouldings, and the use of single and paired round-arch door and window openings. The twin towers are also a decisive element of the style, and provide a focal point in the neighborhood. One of the largest churches in the City of Newark, with a seating capacity of over 2,300, the imposing structure visually dominates the neighborhood.

The architectural significance of the church is further enhanced by its interior ornamentation. The church is decorated with frescoes, murals, polychromatic banding of stylized floral motifs, colorful ceilings dotted with gold and white stars, elaborate bas-reliefs and altars, and exquisite stained glass windows from the master artisan, Ludwig Von Gerichten. The church ornamentation is a blend of eastern and western influences. While the statues and sculptures are western, the icons and the painted images are Byzantine in nature. The secular and the sacred are intertwined in the use of Polish symbolism, folk heroes and coats of arms with sacred images from the life of Jesus Christ. Traditional cultural values, as well as lessons in Polish history, meld with religious associations to provide a sanctuary for a displaced immigrant. Religion and culture become one in St. Casimir's Church.

An outstanding feature of St. Casimir's Church is its stained glass windows. Over 60 windows from the Ludwig Von Gerichten studio in Munich were installed in the church in 1919. St. Casimir's is one of only four contracts the Ludwig Von Gerichten studio had in the City of Newark. The other examples are in Oheb Shalom Synagogue (stolen); St. Peter's R.C. Church (1919), now Queen of Angels; and St. James R. C. Hospital (1917) which was demolished. Although not as well known or prolific as the Franz Mayer or the Zettler Studios of Munich, Ludwig Von Gerichten, was nevertheless an expert craftsman of the Munich School. He was also the founding editor of *Stained Glass Magazine* (1906).

Originally from Bavaria, Ludwig Von Gerichten set up a stained glass studio in Columbus, Ohio in 1893, under the name Capital City Art Glass and Decorating Company. When his brother Theodore joined the company, the name was changed to the Von Gerichten Art Glass and Ecclesiastic Studios. There were said to have been more than 100 employees at the height of the studio's prosperity (*Stained Glass*, Winter 1996: 286). Initially Ludwig played an active role in The Stained Glass Association of America's (SGAA) years-long battle to get the tariff raised on foreign-made stained glass entering the United States. European windows entered under a low tariff as "works of art." The SGAA wanted it declared and taxed as a commercial product so it would be sold here at a more competitive price. However, Ludwig later reversed his position on the tariff question and in 1913, sent an employee to Munich to start a German branch of the studio. At the same time, Ludwig had a falling out with his brother Theodore, and abandoned the family studio. Ludwig's Munich studio made windows for both the European and American markets.

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Due to the outbreak of World War I, Ludwig stayed in the United States and supervised the New York sales office. Most of the American orders were held up in Germany during the war, and were shipped at the close of the war. The year 1919 saw a larger number of Von Gerichten windows installed in the United States than in any other year. The Munich studio closed in 1932, just before Hitler came into power. (*Stained Glass*, Winter 1996: 288). Ludwig Von Gerichten returned to Columbus, Ohio, and continued to maintain his own studio, separate from that of his brother.

Von Gerichten pictorial windows are famous for their facial profiles. While most pictorial stained glass windows depict a frontal face view, Von Gerichten's windows are notable for their elongated profiles and long noses. His windows are characteristically rich in color, emphasizing primary colors and incorporating mostly reds and blues rather than secondary shades, but also full of light. The painting style is characterized by a powdery stipple with a very subtle blending from light to dark. Von Gerichten windows are also known for their naturalistic skin tones (*Stained Glass*, Winter 1996: 289). Von Gerichten followed the Munich School of stained glass manufacture, including elaborate white and gold columns and canopies in the framework of his pictorial windows. Other Munich features utilized by Von Gerichten include highly painted glass, realistic figures and leadlines subordinate to the glass. Because Munich School windows were highly reminiscent of churches in the "old" country, these windows were very popular with eastern and central European immigrant congregations.

The windows of St. Casimir's are excellent examples of Von Gerichten's work. The windows were manufactured in Germany, and installed in 1919. At the time, the cost of the windows was \$12,000. The windows were recently appraised for approximately 1.3 million dollars.

Architect

The architect of St. Casimir's Church was Joseph A. Jackson. His name was found on a postcard dated June 11, 1918, showing a rendering of the church. A thorough search of the Avery Index, the New York Times Obituary Index, as well as local files on architects has not turned up any information about this architect.

While parishioners of St. Casimir's take great pride in the artistic and historic merit of their church, St. Casimir's is much more deeply significant to them. Its various signs and symbols are immediate pictorial reminders in matters of their Polish heritage and their Catholic faith. The current pastor, Fr. Frank Marciniak, has been leading a campaign of restoration. The murals and frescoes are being repaired and the stained glass windows are to be re-leaded. St. Casimir's Church continues to be a beacon in the Ironbound, attracting new Polish immigrants, as well as accommodating other ethnic congregations within its walls. Well-preserved and carefully maintained, the church continues to serve the Ironbound community and the City of Newark in the same capacity today, as when it was first founded.

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9. Major Bibliographic References

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"John F. Jackson, 81, YMCA Architect." *New York Times*, April 28, 1928, 28:2.

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St. Casimir's Church. Pamiętnik Parafiji Sw. Kazimiera Krolewicza. St. Casimir's Church: Newark, N.J. 1948.

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Weis, Helene H. "The Enigmatic Von Gerichtens." *Stained Glass Quarterly*, Winter 1996, pp. 283-289.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

St. Casimir's Church occupies Block 980, Lot 5, City of Newark Tax Map. It is located in the East Ward of Newark, at the corner of Pulaski St. And Nichols St.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel on which the church is located.

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St. Casimir's R.C. Church
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Photograph List

The following information is the same for all of the photographs listed:

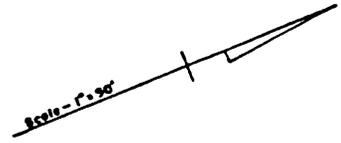
- 1) Name of property: St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church
- 2) City, county and state: Newark, Essex County, New Jersey
- 3) Photographer: Gerry Weinstein
- 4) Date of photographs: April 17, 1996
- 5) Location of negatives: Photo Recording Associates
40 W. 77th Street 17B
New York, New York 10024

6) and 7) Description of views indicating direction of camera:

- Photo 1 of 18: Pulaski Street and Nichols Street elevations, Pulaski Street is to the left of the photograph. View looking northeast.
- Photo 2 of 18: Rear elevation. View looking southwest.
- Photo 3 of 18: Pulaski Street facade. View looking southeast.
- Photo 4 of 18: Nichols Street elevation. View looking northwest.
- Photo 5 of 18: Nichols Street elevation. Rectory is to the right of the photograph. View looking northwest.
- Photo 6 of 18: Vestibule (narthex). View looking southeast.
- Photo 7 of 18: Narthex. View looking north.
- Photo 8 of 18: Nave. View looking east.
- Photo 9 of 18: Nave with choir loft above. View looking west.
- Photo 10 of 18: South aisle. View looking southwest.
- Photo 11 of 18: North aisle. St. Francis of Assisi window. View looking north.
- Photo 12 of 18: Ceiling detail at crossing. View looking east.
- Photo 13 of 18: Sanctuary with high altar. View looking east.
- Photo 14 of 18: Blessed Virgin Mary side chapel, in north transept arm. View looking east.
- Photo 15 of 18: Sacred Heart of Jesus side chapel, in south transept arm. Ceiling detail. View looking east.
- Photo 16 of 18: Altar boy room. View looking south.
- Photo 17 of 18: Sacristy. View looking southeast.
- Photo 18 of 18: Basement, bowling alley. View looking southwest.

ADAMS

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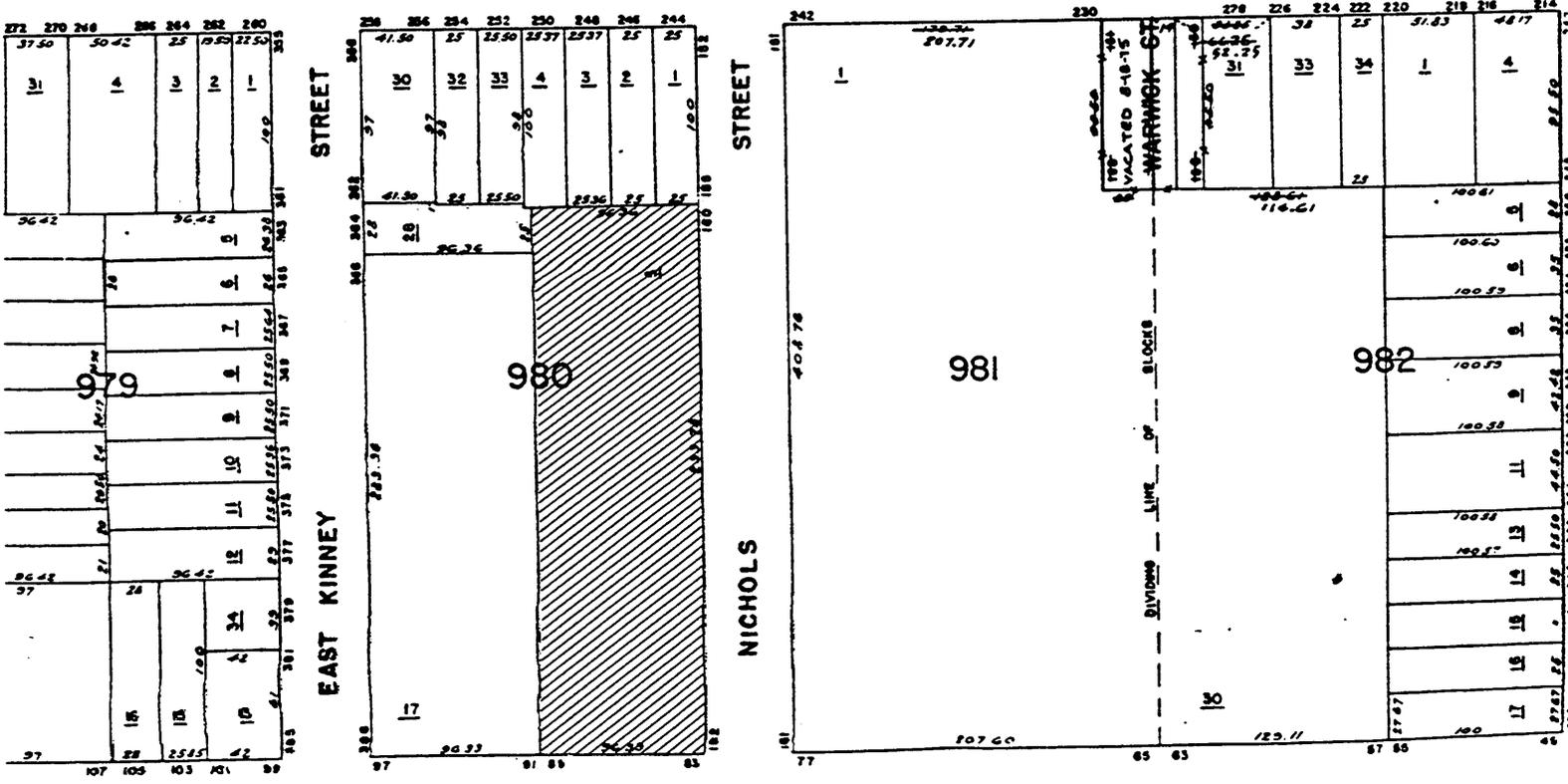
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VAN BUREN



PULASKI

Figure 1. St. Casimir's R.C. Church. Newark, Essex County, New Jersey. Existing block and lot map.

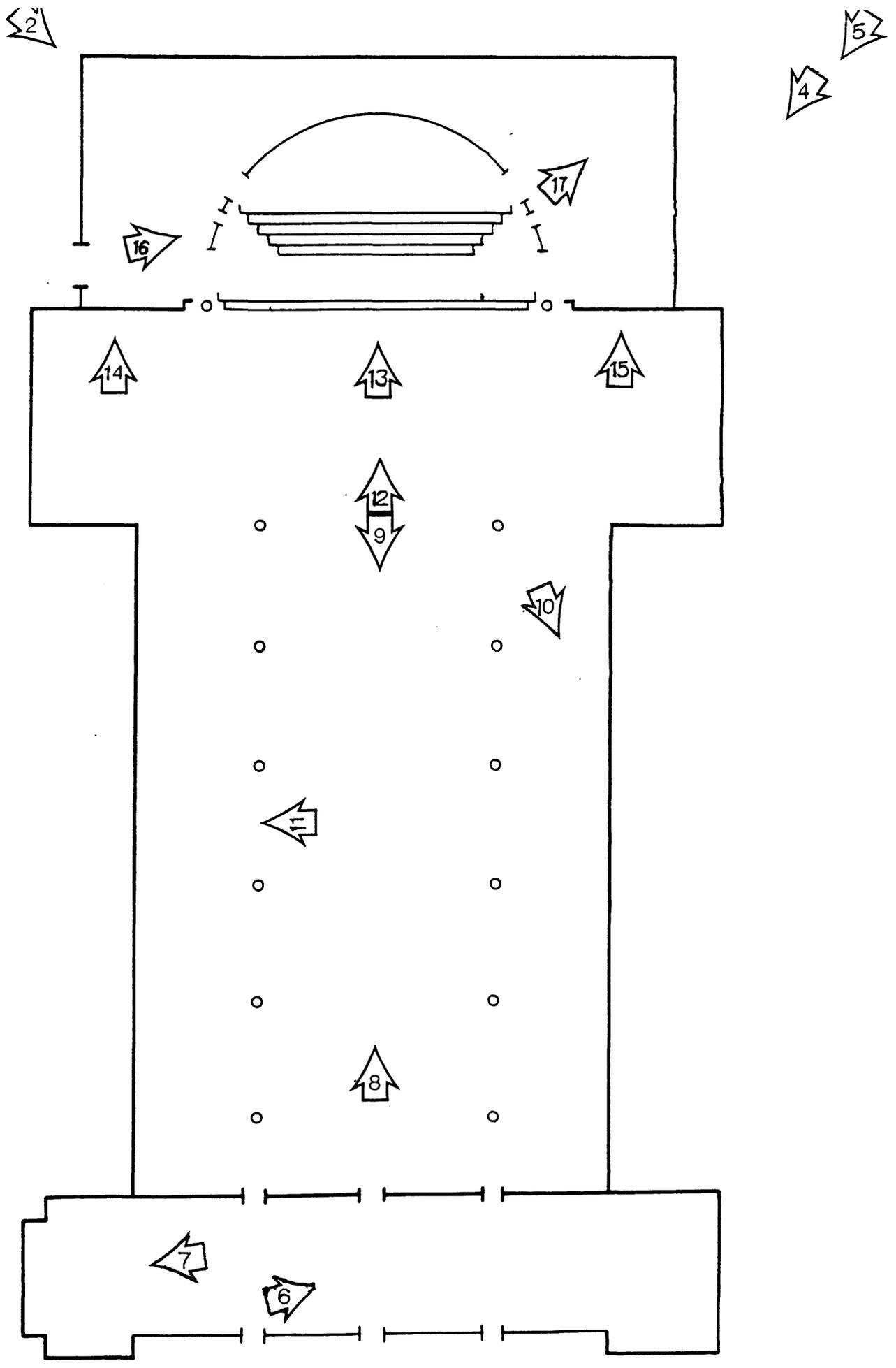
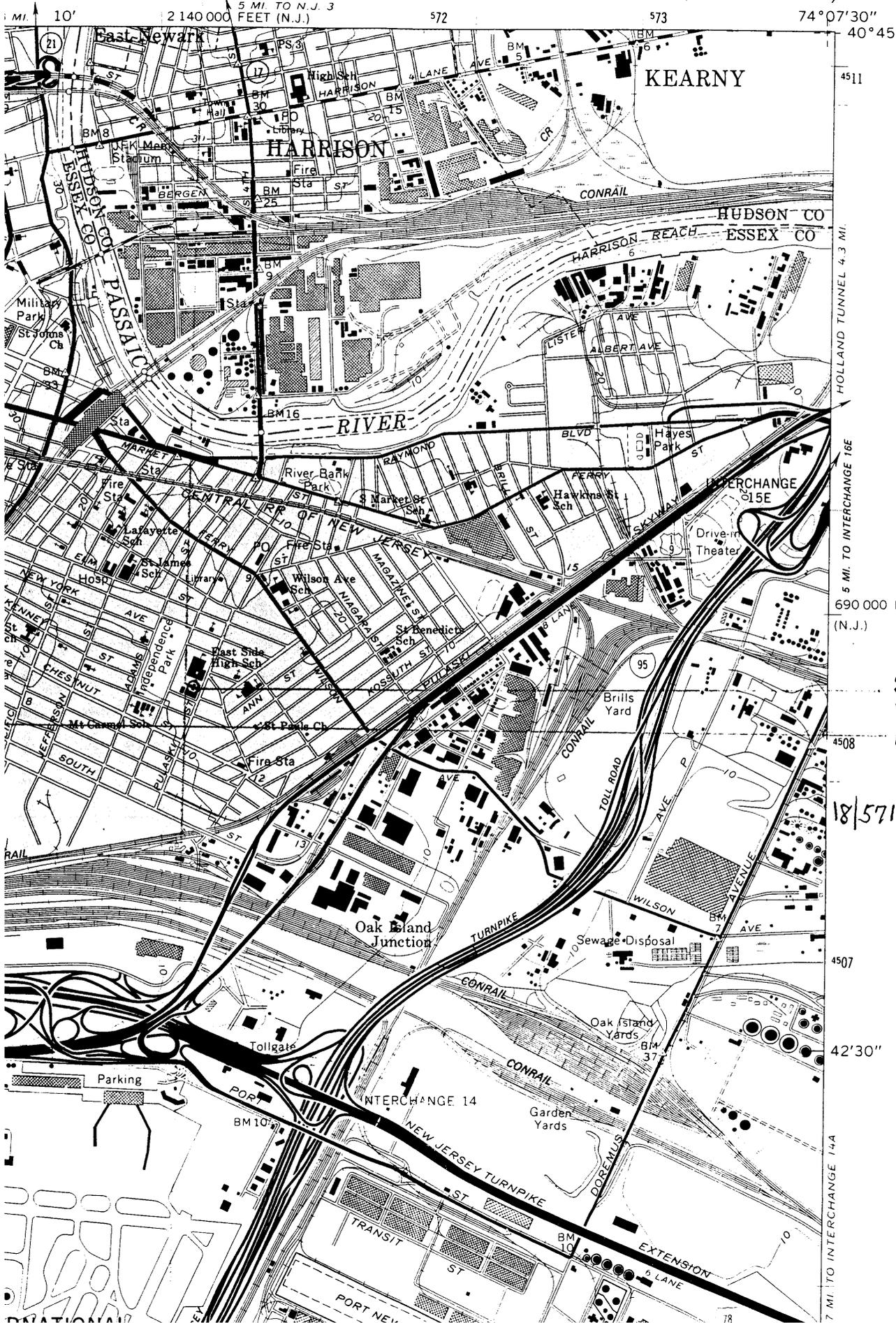


Figure 2. St. Casimir's R.C. Church. Schematic Floor Plan. Photo Locator Map. Not to Scale.



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St. Casimir's RC Church
164 Nichols St.
Newark, Essex Cty, NJ

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