

56-657

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. THOMAS AQUINAS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 432 Abbott Road [] not for publication

city or town Buffalo [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14220

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 as 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.)

Michael J. Lynch Deputy SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

22 DEC 2016
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
 - entered in the National Register
 - [] see continuation sheet
 - [] determined eligible for the National Register
 - [] see continuation sheet
 - [] determined not eligible for the National Register
 - [] removed from the National Register
 - [] other (explain) _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

2-21-17
date of action

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Erie County, 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)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	TOTAL

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS/ religious facility (church)
RELIGIOUS/ church school
RELIGIOUS/ church related residence (rectory)

RELIGIOUS/ religious facility (church)
WORK IN PROGRESS (school)
RELIGIOUS/ church related residence (rectory)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals/
Italian Romanesque Revival
Modern Movement

foundation Concrete
walls Brick

roof Asphalt, Concrete
other

Narrative Description

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

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

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. **NPS #32,399 St Thomas Aquinas RC School**
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by historic American Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance:

1922-1956

Significant Dates:

1922; 1928; 1949; 1952; 1956

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

George J. Dietel (1922); Stickle, Stickle, &

Kelly (1949)

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.77 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>678524</u>	<u>4746575</u>	3	<u>17</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>17</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u>17</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Caitlin Moriarty and Derek King/Architectural Historians [Edited and Arranged by Jennifer Walkowski/SHPO]

organization Preservation Studios, LLC date December 20, 2016

street & number 60 Hedley Place telephone (716)-725-6410

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14208

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

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

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

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Narrative Description of Property

The St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex is located at 450 Abbott Road in the South Buffalo neighborhood of the City of Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The complex consists of three buildings on one and three-quarters acres in South Buffalo, approximately four miles southeast of downtown. The church complex occupies the south portion of the block fronting Abbott Road between Tamarack and Athol Streets, along one of the three main commercial corridors through a primarily residential area. Two blocks to the east is Cazenovia Creek, and three blocks south is the Olmsted-designed Cazenovia Park, while McKinley Parkway (also part of the Olmsted Park and Parkway System) is just a block to the west.

The main buildings and additions to the complex reflect the Italian Romanesque influence, although the church is heavily influenced by the Umbrian design of Santa Maria of Cosmedin, Italy. The complex contains a church building connected to the rectory via cloister and campanile, a school with large addition, and a non-contributing garage building. The three-story former St. Thomas Aquinas School building (designed by George J. Dietel, ca. 1922, with a 1956 addition) is at the rear of the complex along the eastern property line, with a two and one-half story brick rectory (also by Dietel ca. 1928), and a thirty-four-foot, one-story limestone and Crab Orchard stone cruciform church building (designed by Stickle, Stickle & Kelly 1949-51) along the western edge of the property along Abbott Road. A cloister and campanile, designed and constructed at the same time as the church building, connect the rectory and church, with mature trees between the buildings and the road.

The lawn in front of St. Thomas Aquinas Church contains five mature deciduous trees, with two younger coniferous trees flanking the church entrance. Though there are several commercial buildings nearby, most of the buildings surrounding St. Thomas Aquinas are residences, set back from the curb with small front lawns. In contrast, St. Thomas Aquinas has a deep setback from the curb, with a wide lawn that leads up to the campanile, the cloister, and the rectory, with a flagpole and a wooden sign that reads, "St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Community: Alleluia!" Along the edges of the buildings and the lawn are flowers and shrubs, some of which are manicured and others that are untrimmed and wild, but the entirety of the complex is lined by a three-foot manicured shrub wall.

The complex's three buildings, along with the cloister, form a central courtyard around an outdoor altar with a statue of St. Thomas designed by sculptor Julia Porcelli in 1949; it was one of the first of her career. There is a concrete walkway that runs parallel to the church, ending in a "T" that runs along the wall of the 1956 school addition. At the southern edge of the complex, near the corner of the rectory and 1956 addition, is a second altar with a curved concrete base, with bronze plaques of previous ministers and members of the community embossed onto it. At the southeastern edge of the complex is an asphalt parking lot, which is bordered by the rear of the school and the east elevation of the 1956 addition, which has an additional entrance on the southern

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elevation. At the northeastern edge is a non-contributing one-story frame garage with four bays and a side-facing gable with small access driveway, which sit parallel to the main entrance to the 1922 school.

The two main buildings (church-campanile-rectory; school and addition) are contributing to the complex. There is also one contributing structure. The structure is the sculpture of St. Thomas Aquinas located in an altar on the east side of the site, along Athol Street. The one non-contributing building on the site is the one-story garage constructed c. 1990 on the north of the site behind the school.

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church (Stickle, Stickle and Kelly, 1949-1951)

The thirty-four foot, single-story church faces west on Abbott Road and occupies the northwestern corner of the complex. It is a cruciform church, based on the twelfth-century Santa Maria church in Cosmedin, Rome, with a tall central nave with side aisles and north and south transepts. It is constructed with pink, orange, and white Tennessee Quartzite stone walls, a "Crab Orchard" stone that is a mix of pink, orange, and white colors. The building has a red clay tile gable roof and simple copper gutters. There are round headed stained-glass windows along the north and south elevations, with the main entry on the west elevation, and entries at the north and south transepts, and an entry where the cloister meets the narthex at the western end of the building. There is a sacristy, with a rounded wall and curved red tile roof, at the rear of the building. The overall effect of the design is a modern, simplified version of a traditional Romanesque type cruciform plan church.

Connected to the church via a red tile-roofed cloister is a 100-foot campanile with clocks inset about eighty-feet up, a chime with arched openings, capped with a nine-foot gold-leafed Celtic Cross. The cloister itself is one-story and connects the church, campanile and rectory running north-south parallel to Abbot Road. It has the same Crab Orchard stone used in the church as a foundation, with six stone-arched openings supported by cast-stone square Doric piers. The campanile is located at the very center of the six openings of the cloister, with a mix of cast and Crab Orchard stone, with one sixty-light window on each elevation of the first floor and paired ten-light casements with two-light transoms on each elevation of the second floor. The only interior features of the campanile are a staircase to access the arched openings above and an unused baptismal space on the first floor.

Exterior

The principal west façade contains the building's main entrance. A flight of four risers leads to the central entry, which is framed by a limestone portico with red roof tiles and four columns with ornate capitals. The solid wood door consists of eight square panels below an ornamental carved wood tympanum. A rose window set in a simple, stone, deeply recessed surround has a multi-foil motif and is centered between the portico and the corbel table. On either side of the entryway, there is a shallow, recessed, blind stone niche featuring a multi-paned window. The elevation is capped with an arcaded corbel table under the gable roof line, and the corners of the

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building have bold, simplified stone quoins. There is a simple cornice and red roof tiles. A limestone Celtic cross stands at the peak of the gable.

The north and south elevations include the one-story projections of the transepts, which have simple stone cornices and flat roofs and feature two arched stained-glass windows. On the north elevation, there is an entry at the intersection of the transept and the nave with a single wooded door with an engraving of two fish holding bread in their mouths. The walls of the nave consist of small arched clerestory windows above larger arched stained-glass windows. There are two doorways on the north elevation, one at the midpoint of the elevation, leading into the projecting transept and one at the northwest corner, into the narthex. The east elevation has two projections from the rear of the sanctuary. A rounded wall from the ambulatory rises above a rectangular section that contains the sacristy and the upper portion of the large mosaic at the rear of the nave. There are five rectangular windows on the lower projection. The south elevation mirrors the northern elevation, with the exception of an entry to the sacristy at the eastern end and a doorway that connects the campanile and cloister to the narthex.

An arcaded cloister with a campanile connects from the church to the rectory. It is constructed of the same stone, limestone and red tile roofing as the church. There are three archways on either side of the campanile, with limestone columns featuring carved capitals. The campanile tower rises seventy-four feet and has the same limestone quoins as the church building. Each of the four sides is identical, with a circular limestone inset that hosts a clock on the west side. The campanile formerly held a baptismal sanctuary, which while intact, is currently used for storage. There is a metal Celtic cross on top of the campanile.

Interior

The interior of the church has a traditional cruciform plan, with the primary entrance at the west end of the building leading into a narthex, which continues into a long nave filled with pews with two side aisles, with north and south transepts off the sanctuary space and a tall baldachin and full-height mosaic mural of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure that dominates the eastern end of the church. The building has terra-cotta tile flooring throughout the sanctuary, with full-plaster walls except for wooden paneling for the first six-feet or so. Marble columns support tall plaster arches, and the altars are constructed of marble as well.

The narthex is separated from the nave by a full-glazed partition with diamond pattern muntins and paired wooden doors in the center. The doorway is in line with a center aisle that is lined by two rows of pews. Above the narthex is the choir loft, which has square patterned paneling on the wall and a short metal railing. There is a large metal organ that occupies the rear wall of the loft, with shorter pipes at the center and taller pipes to each side, enclosed with a wooden frame that curves upward like wings on either side of a center stained-glass rosette window.

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The side aisles are separated from the nave by tall arched openings with thick stone columns with modern composite capitals that have paired peacocks on all four sides. The floors have irregularly shaped red square Moravian tiles in the nave and transepts, with marble flooring in the sanctuary. The walls are smooth painted plaster, with arched stained-glass windows in the aisles depicting the life of the Virgin Mary and smaller stained-glass clerestory windows near the ceiling depicting prophets from the Old Testament, Evangelists, and depictions of the founders for the Dominican and Franciscan church orders. The ceiling itself is constructed of painted heavy timber beams, with full-width hammer beams as well.

The main altar and semi-domed chancel mark the northern end of the building, and two transepts extend north and south from the nave, forming the crossing before the main altar. The transepts feature additional pews, and both have limestone altars with small statues of Mary, St. Joseph, St. Anthony, and St. Therese.

Significant artwork in the church includes a large baldachin, a mosaic mural behind the altar in the apse, and mosaic tile stations of the cross throughout the church. The stations of the cross were created in Rome at the San Pietro Mosaic Factory. The apse mural depicts two priests flanked by St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, with two peacocks, both of which are turned north, facing St. Thomas.

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Rectory (George J. Dietel, 1928)

Exterior

The two and a half story brick rectory has clipped roof cross gables and a clay tile roof. The principal façade faces west on Abbott Road. On the western elevation, facing Abbot Road, there are three bays, with the first floor containing a center covered entry with steep stone arch and surround, flanked by single bays of tripartite one-over-one windows with large transoms. The second floor has a center bay of four narrow one-over-one windows, with a patterned brick panel above, flanked by two bays of tall, narrow one-over-one windows. The third floor dormers have single one-over-one windows. A simple stone cornice crosses the façade and is interrupted by the two dormers.

The secondary elevations share many of the characteristics of the principal façade. The east elevation faces Athol Street and has brick-arched windows and tall, one-over-one windows with soldier-course brick arches.

There is a small planted yard between the building and Athol Street containing a small shrine. The shrine, added in 1952 and dedicated to St. Joseph the Worker, has a center statue of a woman and child, with a three-foot curved stone base that has had plaques attached for each of the parish's previous pastors.

Interior:

Entering the rectory through the front door, there is a mid-century wood vestibule, which leads to a central hallway that runs east-west, with offices to the left and right. The central staircase is to the right as well. The

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rear of the rectory has a remodeled kitchen, but the dining room is in its original configuration, with exposed heavy timber with decorative scrolls at the ends along the walls and tall decorative windows. The central staircase leads to the second floor and has decoratively carved newel posts, curving handrails, and a large window. The second floor contains several dormitory rooms on a double-loaded corridor. Although most of the rooms are utilitarian, with simply a bed and window and utilize a shared bathroom in the hall, some are more ornately decorated, containing original fireplace mantels and woodwork. Carpeting has been installed.

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic School (George J. Dietel, 1922 and William R. Trautman, 1956)

The St. Thomas Aquinas school building was constructed in two phases. George Dietel designed the original Romanesque Revival three-story building on the northeast portion of the complex site in 1922. It consists of a large "T"-shaped building, with the narrow end oriented toward Tamarack Street and the perpendicular wing at the southern end. It is constructed of yellow iron spot brick, with a limestone water table and foundation, with three bays on the façade, the center of which projects out slightly, with a covered entry with paired metal doors at ground level. The building has a hipped red clay tile roof, with a cross-gable over the northern end with short red tile parapet at the east and west ends, and a center cross-gable on the northern elevation with a parapet topped with a stone cross, with all cross-gables featuring stepped brick arches in the eaves. The southern roof is hipped as well, with lower hipped roofs on the east and west ends.

In 1956, William Trautman designed a two-story addition to the school, which replaced a temporary wood church building on the south side of the site. The addition is two stories, with a flat roof and minimal detailing with the exception of the entry on the southern elevation, which consists of three arches, two of which are filled with granite, and the center containing paired doors to the main vestibule. The addition is connected to the 1922 school via a second story hallway that connects to the landing between the second and third floors. All of the windows are paired, operable five-light windows in the addition, as well as the original 1922 school, as all original windows were replaced in the 1960s to match the 1956 addition.

Exterior

The primary facade of St. Thomas is three bays wide and symmetrically composed. In the simple outer bays, a single large opening is present at each floor and contains a pair of non-original windows. The main entry occupies the center bay at the ground floor and has a prominent door surround one-and-a-half stories in height. The slightly projecting door surround is composed of deep, nested brick arches flanked by stylized Corinthian stone columns supporting a simple pediment. The entryway itself contains a pair of non-original, flush, wood doors beneath a blind tympanum. Above the entry, three tall narrow windows with round-arched heads light the intermediate landing of an interior staircase. The central bay rises above the cornice line in a prominent pedimented gable and is decorated with slender, Romanesque, brick arches. A deep frieze of patterned

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brickwork (or is it terra cotta?) follows the rake of the gable. The pediment is capped by an original clay-tile roof with a Roman cross on a short pedestal rising from the peak.

The east and west elevations are identical except for a second story walkway at the southern end of the west elevation that connects to the 1956 addition and a chimney on the east elevation. Both elevations consist of five bays separated by brick pilasters and a small projecting section. There is an arcaded corbel table in the northernmost bay, similar to but smaller than that of the principal façade. The other four bays are identical to the side bays of the principal façade.

The south elevation consists of six bays and continues many of the same features as the other elevations. The side bays depart slightly in having smaller windows on the second and third floors. The four middle bays are identical to the bays of the east and west elevations except the first floor window openings are not filled with metal, but retain glazed window panes.

The 1956 addition consists of a first floor gymnasium and second floor classrooms, and the design is more functional than the original 1922 building. The building is constructed with yellow brick and concrete. The south elevation features three archways on the first floor. The doorway is in the central arch while the sides are filled with granite. There is a circular window on the second floor and simple concrete cornice below metal flashing. The west and east elevations have smaller windows on the first floor and larger three-by-five windows on the second floor, all with plain stone sills. A second floor walkway on the east side connects the original 1922 building to the 1956 addition.

Interior:

The interior of the 1922 school contains three floors, with a combination cafeteria/auditorium on the first floor, two mid-century classrooms behind the stage, and two floors of double-loaded corridors with eight classrooms each above. The building has a "T"-plan, with a central corridor running north-south, a perpendicular east-west corridor at the southern end with two classrooms and two restrooms, with staircases at both ends. The 1956 addition is two stories, with a tall first floor gymnasium with storage and classrooms on either end, a mezzanine level with a classroom, and a second floor with a double-loaded corridor with classrooms and offices.

The main entrance on the northern elevation of the 1922 school leads to an at-grade landing that heads up to the second floor and down to a partially below grade first floor auditorium. The auditorium, which also doubles as the school's cafeteria, is completely open with a small stage with simple proscenium at the southern end, with wood flooring, round iron column supports, and window sills roughly five feet off the floor. At the northern end of the room, the center stairwell is flanked by a kitchen and two bathrooms. Behind the stage are two classrooms that were added to the building at mid-century, and at the southwest corner is a stairwell that leads up to the second and third floor.

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At the second floor of this hallway, there are two paired wooden doors, added as a fire-safety measure sometime after construction. These doors lead to the second floor hallway, which creates a "T," with a double-loaded north-south section that runs from the main stairwell on Tamarack, and an east-west section that runs parallel to Athol with classrooms and bathrooms on the southern side of the hall and wood flooring throughout. All the classrooms on the second floor are the same, with hard wood floors and baseboards, plaster walls, chalkboards on two walls, and shared light transoms at the top of hallway walls.

The main staircase is separated from the main hallway by a dividing wall with paired wooden doors with leaded glass windows, square sidelights and upper transoms. The staircase itself has metal railings with thin metal balusters and paired pressed metal newel posts and is illuminated by the nine-light windows that extend the full height of the stairwell from the second floor landing. The third floor is nearly identical to the second floor, with a double-loaded corridor with a "T" shape, wood flooring, original wood doors, lockers, and drop ceiling with florescent lighting. Similarly, the classrooms are oriented the same, with original wood flooring, baseboards, and chalkboards on two walls, transoms over the doors, and most shared light transoms over hallway-walls still intact.

The 1956 addition is connected to the 1922 school via a hallway at the second floor that extends over a narrow alley between the two buildings. Nearly the entire first floor is occupied by the gymnasium, which has tile flooring, windows roughly 12 feet off the floor, and storage on the northern end of the room, with mezzanine levels on north and south ends. A science classroom, located in the southwestern corner, is smaller than most of the rooms on the second floor, but has lower windows than in the gymnasium. The mezzanine level contains a second science classroom with a similar layout, and a storage closet that looks out into the gymnasium.

The primary staircase in the southeastern corner of the building has simple metal railings and newel posts, patterned linoleum tiles, and ceramic subway tiling on the walls. The second floor has north-south double-loaded corridors with classrooms, offices, and storage closets on each side. The classrooms are all the same size, with chalkboards on two walls (oriented so that windows are to the left of students), rotating cubbies at the rear of the classroom, with a storage closet, and shelving unit in each.

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Statement of Significance

The St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex is a locally significant example of a highly intact Roman Catholic church complex in the City of Buffalo, New York, designed in a modern interpretation of Italian Romanesque style architecture. The buildings in the complex, located at 450 Abbott Road, are highly intact examples of Italian Romanesque and Umbrian styled architecture designed by locally and regionally prominent architects George J. Dietel, and Stickle, Stickle, & Kelly. The St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, formed in 1920 and constructing its original frame church in 1921, was one of the last parishes formed in South Buffalo. The parochial school was added in 1922 and the rectory constructed in 1928, both in the Italian Romanesque Revival style. The parish community continued to grow and a new larger church was built in 1949, modeled after Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome. In 1956 the parochial school was expanded as well. The buildings in the complex reflect not only a cohesion of religious architectural styles despite their construction over nearly a thirty-year period, but the growth of the community they continue to serve, as the parish is still active.

The St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex is locally significant under Criterion C in Architecture as a highly intact example of Italian Romanesque Revival style ecclesiastical architecture. The complex consists of three buildings that express Italian Romanesque Revival influence: the church, the three-story former St. Thomas Aquinas School building (designed by George J. Dietel ca. 1922, with a 1956 addition), and a two-and one-half story brick rectory (also by Dietel ca. 1928). The thirty-four-foot, one-story limestone and Crab Orchard stone cruciform church building (designed by Stickle, Stickle & Kelly 1949-1951) is directly inspired by the Umbrian church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Italy. A cloister and campanile, designed and constructed at the same time as the church building, connect the rectory and church and also feature Italian Romanesque Revival styling. The complex has additional architectural significance related to the expansion of the parish between 1949 and 1956, in line with national trends in church construction after World War II and the local expansion of parishes across Buffalo during this period as well.

The period of significance is 1922 to 1956, starting with the construction of the school in 1922. The period of significance includes the construction of the rectory in 1928, the church in 1949, and the contributing school addition in 1956.

Growth of South Buffalo

The St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex is located in the South Buffalo neighborhood near Cazenovia Park. Before the City of Buffalo expanded into the area now known as South Buffalo, the Seneca Nation occupied the land. In 1780, they established the Buffalo Creek Village, which became the headquarters of the Iroquois Confederacy.¹ Seneca leader Red Jacket opposed the infringement of growing development into

¹ Pat Curry, "History of South Buffalo," *South Buffalo Home*, <http://www.southbuffalohome.com/history-of-south-buffalo>.

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the Seneca land, and he worked with George Washington and other leaders to ameliorate the effects of white expansion. Despite his efforts, the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 ushered in two decades of rapid growth in Buffalo, and the city sought to expand; in “1842, twelve years after Red Jacket’s death, a treaty eliminated the Buffalo Creek Reservation and the Seneca were forced to leave.”² In 1854, the City of Buffalo annexed the land as part of a major boundary increase. As the city swelled, the land in what is now South Buffalo became an attractive site for residential, commercial, and industrial expansion. Early families established farms on Seneca Street and Abbott Road, and the first church in the area, Woodside United Methodist, opened in 1872 to serve the growing community.

In 1887, the City of Buffalo hired Frederick Law Olmsted and his son, John C. Olmsted, to extend the ca. 1870 Olmsted & Vaux park and parkway system into South Buffalo. City park commissioners rejected the firm’s original plan for a large waterfront park and accepted a modified design that included Cazenovia Park (1896, 76-acres), South Park (1894, 155-acres), Woodside (now McClellan) and South Side (now McKinley) Circles, and Red Jacket and South Side (now McKinley) Parkways.³ In addition to providing recreational arenas for South Buffalo residents, the park layout shaped patterns of residential and commercial development.

The completion of the Seneca Streetcar line in 1897 mitigated the limited street access between South Buffalo and northern sections of the city and promoted further residential development. The area became a true “streetcar suburb,” as developers like William Fitzpatrick and William Connors anticipated the migration of Irish-Americans out of the First Ward, parceling out affordable single-family homes and two-family flats.⁴ South Park Avenue became the major commercial thoroughfare, with one- and two-story commercial buildings in addition to the prominent South Park Theater (1919). As the area grew, the city took strides to ameliorate the notorious poor drainage and flooding in the area. In the 1920s, it initiated projects to dredge and straighten the Buffalo River and Cazenovia Creek and extended Bailey Avenue and Tift Street to improve circulation.⁵

Various public and private institutions opened to serve the growing population as infrastructure improved. Early public institutions included the Hook & Ladder No. 10 on Southside Parkway (1907), the South Buffalo Market (1926), Public School No. 28, and South Park High School. The Sisters of Mercy opened a fifty-bed hospital on Tift Street in 1904, and the Catholic Church established a series of churches and schools. A number of Protestant congregations—including St. Jude’s Episcopal Church (1896), St. John’s Evangelical Reform Church

² Ibid.

³ Ibid; Clinton Brown Company, “Triangle Neighborhood: Intensive Level Historic Resource Survey,” 3-6, https://www.city-buffalo.com/files/1_2_1/SPlanning/PreservationBoard/Surveys/Triangle%20Report%20Sections/Sec%203-Historical_Narrative.pdf; Olmsted in Buffalo, “Buffalo’s Olmsted Parks and Parkway System,” <http://www.olmstedinbuffalo.com>.

⁴ Sam Bass Warner, Jr. coined the term streetcar suburb; for other real estate developers, see Clinton Brown Company, “Triangle Neighborhood: Intensive Level Historic Resource Survey.”

⁵ Clinton Brown Company, “Triangle Neighborhood: Intensive Level Historic Resource Survey,” 3-8.

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(1900), and South Park Baptist Church (1925)—also employed local architects to design church buildings in South Buffalo in the early twentieth century.⁶

Catholicism in Buffalo

In 1821, only five Catholic families lived in Buffalo, but within a decade, the increase of French and German Catholic immigrants precipitated the city's first Catholic church, Lamb of God (later renamed St. Louis), in 1829.⁷ Bishop John Timon became the first bishop of the region when the Diocese of Buffalo was created in 1847. The Catholic population of Buffalo grew rapidly in the 1840s as Irish and German immigrants moved into the city. Through the end of the nineteenth century, these early Catholics were joined by new Polish, Italian, Ukrainian, Lebanese, Hungarian, and Slovak populations. Rather than join the same parishes, each group “required new parishes in their ethnic enclaves to minister to their distinctive linguistic and cultural needs.”⁸

Due to the cost of erecting masonry buildings, many parishes began in temporary wood structures with ambitions to grow into more impressive churches over time. As the growing Catholic population of Buffalo heralded from a number of European countries, it is perhaps not surprising to find that these early Catholic parishes aspired to construct elegant stone churches in the European tradition.⁹

As South Buffalo grew in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the diocese established a number of Catholic parishes to serve the Catholic populations, particularly the Irish, who moved into the area. In 1897, the Right Reverend James Edward Quigley appointed the Reverend Michael J. Kean to establish St. Teresa parish in 1897 to serve the approximately 100 families of South Buffalo who had previously traveled to St. Stephen's on Elk Street, St. Patrick's on Emslie Street, or St. Patrick's in Lackawanna.¹⁰ After a successful building campaign, the parish commissioned an English Gothic church of Medina sandstone and celebrated its first mass in the permanent church in 1899. Three additional Catholic parishes opened in South Buffalo by 1910—Holy Family (1902), St. John the Evangelist (1906), and St. Agatha (1910)—evincing the growth of the Catholic population during this time. St. Thomas Aquinas opened in 1920 and St. Martin of Tours (1926) and St. Ambrose (1930) followed. Six of these seven parishes served primarily Irish congregations; St. John the Evangelist, the outlier, initially served a primarily German population.¹¹

⁶ Ibid; James Napora, “Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York: Section 29, South Buffalo-Seneca Street,” Buffalo as An Architectural Museum. <http://www.buffaloah.com/how/29/south.html>. (Accessed August 2015).

⁷ Martin F. Ederer, *Buffalo's Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy*, (Buffalo: digital@batesjackson LLC, 2003), 2.

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sister Mary Gerald Pierce, *Unto His Mercy: The First Hundred Years of the Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese of Buffalo, 1858-1958* (Buffalo: Savage Litho Company, 1976), 201.

¹¹ Ederer, *Buffalo's Catholic Churches*, 2.

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In addition to reflecting the widespread presence of the Catholic residents in South Buffalo, the dominant presence of the Catholic Church in the neighborhood through these parishes also signals the importance of the local parish to the daily routines and life patterns of parishioners. At St. Thomas Aquinas, early activities such as lawn fetes, beginning in the 1920s, and the ever-active Young Ladies Sodality club grew to include other organizations that catered to parishioners throughout the week. In addition, parochial schools provided educational opportunities in areas that were underserved by public schools.

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish History

Founding the Parish

While there were four Catholic churches operating in South Buffalo by 1920, the Buffalo diocese detected the need for an additional parish to serve residents living between the Holy Family and St. John the Evangelist parishes. While the neighborhood was not fully built out, the return of servicemen from duty in World War I prompted a new wave of growth that necessitated additional social and physical infrastructures. As one reporter recalled upon the fiftieth anniversary of St. Thomas Aquinas in 1970, “Open fields still dotted the Abbott Rd. section of South Buffalo in 1920, but the return of thousands of soldiers after World War I was rapidly changing it to a community of homes and small businesses. Churches there could not accommodate the new families...”¹²

An alternative, and more exciting, explanation for the new parish stems from a dramatic scene of structural failure at All Souls in the Mystic parish: the floor of the church collapsed during the 1920 Confirmation services. While the incident did not cause any serious injuries, it prompted Bishop William Turner—who was present at the service—to initiate the search for a new church site. He charged Father Eugene Regan, the pastor of All Souls, with finding an alternative location for the church. Regan selected the Brady homestead on Abbott Road between Tamarack and Athol Streets and the diocese purchased the land for \$21,000.¹³ However, the location was deemed too far to be convenient for All Souls parishioners, so the diocese established a new church, St. Thomas Aquinas, on that site and reopened All Souls as St. Agatha.¹⁴

St. Thomas Aquinas parish was incorporated under the laws of New York State in April 1920 with Father Regan and assistant Father James J. McGann as its leaders. Drawing from the territories of the Holy Family

¹² “St. Thomas Aquinas To Mark 50th Year,” *Buffalo Courier Express*, June 6, 1970, located in the Buffalo State College Archives, “Churches: Catholic, St. Thomas Aquinas,” clippings folder.

¹³ Sister Mary Gerald Pierce, *Unto All His Mercy*, 296.

¹⁴ See “St. Agatha,” in Ederer, *Buffalo’s Catholic Churches*, 152. Also, while specifics are left out, Sister Mary Gerald Pierce attributes the creation of St. Thomas Aquinas to the “necessity to look for a new site for the parish of All Souls in the Mystic” (*Unto All His Mercy*, 296).

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and St. Teresa parishes, St. Thomas Aquinas's parish boundaries extended from McKinley Parkway on the south to Cazenovia Creek on the north.¹⁵

While the Sisters of Mercy granted Father Regan permission to hold Sunday Masses in the school auditorium at Mount Mercy until a church was built, Father Regan began efforts to construct a temporary church as soon as possible. The wooden frame structure cost \$12,920 and was located on Athol Street [**See: Image 1**]. The first two masses were celebrated in the church on July 4, 1920.¹⁶ The church was enlarged in 1926, but it was demolished in 1956 for the addition to the school.¹⁷

In 1921, the parish commissioned local architect George Dietel to design a school building. The building featured Italian Romanesque Revival style design elements, including red tile roofs, copper cornices with parapets, Romanesque arches and detailing, and light brick construction. Prior to the construction of the 1922 school building, the Sisters of Mercy ran a parochial school in two rooms at Mount Mercy; school was subsequently held in a temporary school converted from two double-family houses at Cumberland and Athol Streets. Additionally, the growth of the parish led to the construction of the two and one-half story brick rectory in 1928, also designed by Dietel in the Italian Romanesque Revival style.¹⁸

The three-story school building was estimated to cost \$110,000 and parishioners celebrated the cornerstone laying ceremony on July 30, 1922. The school opened in 1923 with 308 pupils. The T-shaped building measured 113 feet long, 90 feet wide in the rear and 60 feet wide in the body, and featured a combination of brick, tile, concrete, and steel. It boasted "the last word in modern school construction" with "unusually large classrooms [that were] well-heated, well-lighted and scientifically ventilated."¹⁹ While the school building originally had an upper auditorium, the space was converted into sixteen classrooms early on to accommodate the growing student body, which more than doubled between 1923 and 1958.²⁰ The former proscenium can be seen on the third floor at the southern end of the hallway.

Post-World War II Growth

While the parish intended to construct a permanent masonry church for decades, the project did not come to fruition until after World War II. In 1942, the Rev. John P. Boland succeeded Father Regan as the pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas. Fr. Boland gained stature as a labor activist and this sentiment resonated through the parish.

¹⁵ Ederer, *Buffalo's Catholic Churches*, 153; Sister Mary Gerald Pierce, *Unto All His Mercy* 296.

¹⁶ Sister Mary Gerald Pierce, *Unto All His Mercy*, 296.

¹⁷ "St. Thomas Aquinas To Mark 50th Year," *Buffalo Courier Express*; Ederer, *Buffalo's Catholic Churches*, 153.

¹⁸ "Outline of Parish History 1920 to 1951," (unknown publisher, c.1952), 12, located in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church archives folder.

¹⁹ Quoted in a July 19, 1923 report, see Sister Mary Gerald Pierce, *Unto All His Mercy* 297.

²⁰ Sister Mary Gerald Pierce, *Unto All His Mercy*, 297.

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President Roosevelt appointed Boland to the chairmanship of the National Labor Board district office in 1934 and in 1937, Boland accepted the chairmanship of the New York State Labor Relations Board. He also established the Diocesan Labor School and undertook service projects in Europe.²¹ Pope Pius XII raised Boland to the rank of monsignor in 1945 and then appointed him a protonotary apostolic in 1954.²² Boland retired in 1967 due to health issues; he was known to local residents as a beloved leader of parish activities. He died in 1968 during a small fire in the parish rectory.²³

Boland's fervent belief in labor justice was tangible for his parishioners, many of whom worked in Buffalo's factories and manufacturing plants, and the pamphlet rack at the back of the church included copies of the *Catholic Labor Observer* for parishioners to take.²⁴ In 1952, Msgr. Boland started an annual Labor Day Mass dedicated to St. Joseph the Worker.²⁵ The event attracted civic and governmental leaders from across the region. Charles W. Halloran, St. Thomas Aquinas parishioner and president of the AFL-CIO Building Trades Council, led the initiative to erect an outdoor shrine to St. Joseph the Worker, along with fellow parishioner and labor leader Jack Higgins. The shrine was constructed by c. 1955, featuring an altar atop three stairs, with a statue of St. Joseph and a child. The words of Pope Pius X are inscribed on a low stone wall behind the altar:

Every man by doing his duty is following him who being God chose to become a carpenter and to be known as the son of a carpenter[.] To endure labor is the lot of those who as good soldiers of Christ choose to follow closely in his footsteps.

In 1968, a crowd of 300 honored the late Msgr. Boland at the Labor Day Mass as a plaque was unveiled. Halloran died the following year and parish leaders added a plaque honoring his contributions to the parish and the Labor Movement at the 27th annual Labor Day Mass that year in front of a crowd of 200.²⁶

During Msgr. Boland's tenure, the parish thrived. Boland is credited with spearheading the campaign to construct the impressive church and cloister that parishioners had envisioned for three decades. In 1945, the parish began a building fund; construction of the church commenced in 1949, and it was dedicated by the Most Reverend John F. O'Hara, C.S.C, on June 24, 1951. Designed by Stickle, Stickle, and Kelly of Cleveland, Ohio, the church building was estimated to cost \$348,638, while the furnishings and equipment accounted for an

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.; "Msgr. Boland, Labor Priest, Dies in Fire," *Buffalo Courier Express*, July 1, 1968, located at the Buffalo State College Archives, "Churches: Catholic, St. Thomas Aquinas," clippings folder.

²³ "Msgr. Boland, Labor Priest, Dies in Fire," *Buffalo Courier Express*.

²⁴ Christian Family Movement, *Welcome Newcomers* (Buffalo: St. Thomas Aquinas Church, c.1956), located in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church archives folder.

²⁵ Thomas Reddington, "St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Community, 1920 to the Present," (Buffalo: St. Thomas Aquinas, 1998), located in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church archives folder.

²⁶ "Labor Day Rite Honors Halloran," *Buffalo Courier Express*, September 2, 1969, located at the Buffalo State College Archives, "Churches: Catholic, St. Thomas Aquinas," clippings folder.

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additional \$500,000.²⁷ While drawing influence from the Umbrian style Santa Maria in Cosmedin church in Rome, the building also complemented the Italian Romanesque Revival style of the 1922 school building and rectory. Msgr. Boland personally selected the altar marble in Massa-Carra, Italy, and the interior furnishings include an ornate baldachin and exquisite mosaics.²⁸

A c.1956 addition to the school building designed by William Trautman is the final phase of construction on the site. The Most Reverend Leo R. Smith, D.D., blessed the cornerstone of the new addition in September 1957, and the addition increased the number of classrooms to 21 and added an auditorium to serve the student body, which grew to be as high as 900 students in 1950s.²⁹ The building has simplified detailing, but references the complex's Italian Romanesque mission style with three concrete and brick arched entries on the western elevation with pediment that mirrors the parapets on the earlier school, and bullseye windows with keystones that contain small, square stained-glass panes.

Increased enrollment in the school paralleled a general growth of the parish in the mid-twentieth century, and a wellspring of social activity rooted in the church catered to parishioners. A c.1956 welcome booklet for new parishioners estimated that the parish included about 1500 families, "certainly better than 50% of our community."³⁰ It also enumerated over a dozen active organizations catering to a range of parishioners. The Holy Name Society, for men over 18 years old, and the Rosary Altar Society, for women over 18 years old, boasted memberships of 1112 and 991, respectively, in the 1950s.³¹ The Boy Scouts and Cubs, Girl Scouts and Fatima Society catered to grammar school aged youth, and the Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality and Junior Holy Name offered leisure time activities for adolescents and young adults from ages 12 to 24. The parish also hosted monthly meetings of the Catholic War Veterans, Post 993, which formed shortly after World War II, the charitable St. Vincent de Paul Society, and a Catholic Charity Appeal. In addition to these more overtly religious groups, the parish also offered a choir and public speaking classes, among other groups. A weekly Bingo game became a tradition in 1966 and grew to be so popular that it expanded to two nights a week in 1972.³²

²⁷ "Construction of Church Will Start Immediately," *Buffalo Courier Express*, August 13, 1949, located at the Buffalo State College Archives, "Churches: Catholic, St. Thomas Aquinas," clippings folder.

²⁸ Sister Mary Gerald Pierce, *Unto All His Mercy*, 298.

²⁹ Reverend Arthur J. Smith, "Parish History Report: 04111-St. Thomas Aquinas, Buffalo," Chancery Executive Information System, edited August 1, 1998, located in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church archives folder; "St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Diamond Jubilee Year," (Buffalo: St. Thomas Aquinas, 1995), 5, located in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church archives folder.

³⁰ Christian Family Movement, *Welcome Newcomers*.

³¹ "Outline of Parish History 1920 to 1951," 22.

³² Reddington, "St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Community, 1920 to the Present," 10.

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Decline of Neighborhood

Like many Catholic parishes in Buffalo, St. Thomas Aquinas suffered as shifts in the economy and social mores spurred suburbanization and decreasing rates of religious practice from the 1970s onwards.³³ During this time, Father Eugene O’Laughlin “was a rock in an age of uncertainty.”³⁴ Despite the ongoing devotion of committed parishioners, a series of arsons represents the tension of the era. In March 1975, the *Buffalo Courier Express* reported a fire at St. Thomas Aquinas that was “the church’s third fire in six months attributed by investigators to arson.”³⁵ While the fires did not inflict much damage on the church, the incidents represented a shifting tide, and the Rev. Richard Massar said that the church would remain locked when not in use. Five years later, in 1980, the parish cancelled plans for its sixtieth anniversary celebration at the Ironworkers Hall due to low attendance.³⁶ Yet, the parish continued to serve the local community. St. Thomas Aquinas participated in the three-year parish “Renew” program that the Diocese instituted in 1985, and the parish started a Retirement Fund for the Religious in 1988.³⁷ When the Diocese began to consolidate parochial schools in 1989, St. Thomas Aquinas firmly defended its school and the importance of “quality Catholic education” in the neighborhood.

Father O’Laughlin was designated domestic prelate in 1993 and retired in 1995 at the age of 75. Father Arthur Smith was appointed the fourth pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas that year and accepted a generous parishioner donation in 1996 to repaint the church interior. While the school closed in 2006, the building was subsequently used by the Buffalo Boys and Girls Club, an aerobics group, an Irish Dance studio, and several basketball teams.³⁸ The parish continues to operate and serve the local Catholic community in 2016.

Italian Romanesque Ecclesiastic Design and Post-War Church Construction

The St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex is significant for the intact examples of Italian Romanesque Revival ecclesiastic architecture, with the 1949 church’s design heavily influenced by the Umbrian design of Santa Maria in Cosmedin church, located in Rome. The church has added significance tied to national trends in church construction, as congregations across the country fueled a post-World War II building boom for religious buildings. In Buffalo, the trend is seen not just in St. Thomas Aquinas, but in parishes in Buffalo’s northern streetcar suburbs as well.

³³ Ederer, *Buffalo’s Catholic Churches*, 8.

³⁴ Reddington, “St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Community, 1920 to the Present,” 11.

³⁵ “South Side Church Fire Held Work of Arsonist,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, March 10, 1975, located at the Buffalo State College Archives, “Churches: Catholic, St. Thomas Aquinas,” clippings folder.

³⁶ “St. Thomas Church Cancels Festivities,” *Buffalo Courier Express*, August 12, 1980, located at the Buffalo State College Archives, “Churches: Catholic, St. Thomas Aquinas,” clippings folder.

³⁷ Reddington, “St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Community, 1920 to the Present,” 12.

³⁸ “St. Thomas Aquinas Parish History,” (Buffalo: St. Thomas Aquinas, c.2007), 2, located in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church archives folder.

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The school and rectory designed by George Dietel exhibit the clearest examples of the Italian Romanesque Revival style in the complex. The Italian Romanesque Revival was part of the “Eclectic” movement on American residential architecture which emerged out of the rising trend of American architects receiving formal architectural training in Europe. Often trained at the French Ecole Des Beaux Arts, these late-nineteenth century designs combined classical “period” forms and materials with modern styling. The movement gained momentum after the 1893 Chicago Columbian exposition and led to the rise of several Medieval Revivals, including the Italian Romanesque Revival.³⁹ Italian Romanesque Revival in particular was based on architectural styles popular in Western Europe, Italy, in particular, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Typical Romanesque Revival architecture features solid, heavy feeling walls punctured by relatively few voids for windows, the use of round arches and corbelled tables, red clay tile roofs, and bell towers are also common features; all of these are utilized in the design of the St. Thomas Aquinas church complex.

The construction and style of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in 1949 fits in with the national pattern of church construction during the mid-twentieth century. Many parishes and congregations across the country put off large-scale renovations and construction during the Depression, but after World War II, there was a boom in construction for religious buildings.⁴⁰ Driven by repairs, as well as the growth of post-war “baby boom” families settling down and looking for religious centers, church construction totaled \$126 million in 1947, increasing to \$474 million in 1953, before ballooning to \$1 billion in 1960.⁴¹

Prior to World War II, many church styles were grounded in various Classical Revival designs, including Italian Romanesque, although Gothic Revival was a more common example during this period. While the changes implemented by Vatican II led to more experimental designs in the mid-1960s, prior to that most Post-War church construction mirrored the revivalist designs found prior to World War II. This division of pre-and-post Vatican II design influence can be seen in the traditional design of St. Thomas Aquinas, which, like St. Margaret’s on Hertel Avenue in Buffalo and St. Paul’s in Kenmore (both built in 1954), and St. Benedicts on Main Street in Eggertsville (built 1952), chose more traditional, revivalist, cruciform designs, while just ten years later, the St. Rose of Lima Parish constructed a New Formalist styled, thin-shell concrete, modernist church.

While the St. Thomas Aquinas church maintains the Italian Romanesque precedent set by Dietel’s design, the building has a much more formal grounding in an actual Italian design. Msgr. Boland championed the design of the new St. Thomas Aquinas church in the Sunday *Bulletins* beginning in 1949. He promoted modeling the church after Santa Maria in Cosmedin church, a mini-basilica with roots in the sixth century located in Rome,

³⁹ Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Setters and Rituals*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 669.

⁴⁰ Lisa Mausolf, *Mid-20th Century Architecture in NH: 1945-1975*, (Concord: NH Employment Security, 2012), 14. via NH.gov.

⁴¹ Jay M. Price, “When Traditional Could be Modern: Religious Buildings in Kansas after World War II,” *Kansas Preservation* 26, no. 2, (2004): 5.

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Italy. Boland was born in Buffalo's Black Rock neighborhood and studied in Rome for six years before being ordained there in 1911.⁴² During this considerable time in Rome, it is likely that he became familiar with Santa Maria of Cosmedin church and, in addition to this personal connection, the style was lauded for "bringing to Buffalo a whisper of the peace-loving countryside that St. Francis of Assisi knew so well."⁴³

The church interior is laid out nearly identical to the Umbrian Santa Maria in Cosmedin church, with unadorned plaster walls, round arch windows, arched openings lining the nave, round top windows in the clerestory, a prominent baldachin in the chancel, and prominent heavy exposed timber beams along the ceiling. Though the interior mimics the design of its Umbrian precedent, the exterior recalls details from the other buildings on the campus. The façade of the church repeats the arcaded corbel table found on the main entrance of the school, and the red tile roof of the church, its entrances, and the campanile and cloister match the tile used on the rectory and school.

Architects & Artists Associated with St. Thomas Aquinas Parish Buildings

George Dietel

The original 1922 school and 1928 rectory buildings were designed by George J. Dietel, a local architect that gained national prominence for his work on Buffalo's city hall, one of the largest Art Deco city halls in the country. Dietel was a Buffalo native who attended Canisius High School and College and worked on numerous commissions around the city before partnering with John J. Wade in 1926 to prepare the design for City Hall. Wade, who studied at the Beaux Arts Institute in New York City moved to Buffalo in 1919 after working with several architecture firms across the country; he designed large municipal buildings, including the Oakland City Hall, Pittsburgh City and County Buildings, and Wilmington City Hall. Dietel partnered with Wade in 1926 to give the latter local experience and to handle some of the workload designing the 560,000 sq. ft. building. The two additionally hired Sullivan Jones, one of Wade's mentors and former New York State Architect, to help with the design as well.⁴⁴ The firm also designed several other buildings around the city, including the Liberty Bank at 892 Genesee Street in 1930.

A great example of George J. Dietel's work is the St. Francis de Sales Church on Humboldt Parkway in 1926, designed with Murphy and Olmsted. The St. Francis de Sales Church has a lot of similarities to the St. Thomas Aquinas complex, as it is also designed in the Italian Romanesque Revival style, with red clay tile roof, and large Indiana limestone.

⁴² "Msgr. Boland, Labor Priest, Dies in Fire," *Buffalo Courier-Express*.

⁴³ "The Completed St. Thomas Aquinas," source unknown, 8, located in the St. Thomas Aquinas Church archives folder.

⁴⁴ Chuck LaChiusa, "Dietel & Wade," *Buffalo as an Architectural Museum*, <http://www.buffaloah.com/a/archs/dw/dw.html>.

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Stickle, Kelly & Stickle

The 1949-1951 church building was designed by Stickle, Kelly & Stickle, an architecture firm based in Cleveland that specialized in designing Roman Catholic churches. Formed in 1945, the firm consisted of father George Wesley Stickle and his son, Robert Wesley Stickle, as well as John Sherwood Kelly, and was located at 2422 Prospect Avenue. The firm dissolved in 1952, but during that span designed several churches and schools in Cleveland, in addition to the church in Buffalo, before forming “Stickle & Associates” focusing on architecture and engineering.⁴⁵

The design for the St. Thomas Aquinas church was based on the Santa Maria church in Cosmedin, Rome, dating from the twelfth century. Several details from the design harken back to the medieval design, including the layout of the interior (See: Image 2), the tall campanile, and the exterior’s light Crab Orchard stone and limestone, which is reminiscent of the pink and white limestone used in Romanesque Designs around Tuscany and Umbria during the twelfth century.

Stickle, Kelly & Stickle utilized Indiana limestone in St. Thomas Aquinas, a material they also used in their 1948 design for the Our Lady of Mercy Church at 2425 West Eleventh Street in Cleveland, Ohio. That design also incorporated a large bell-tower and featured “Crab Orchard stone from Tennessee, which does not discolor” and was utilized on St. Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁶

Trautman Associates

Trautman Associates was formed in 1956 by William R. Trautman, M. Russell Turley, and Norman Schlenker, PE, shortly before the constructed of the St. Thomas Aquinas School's addition. The lead partner, William Trautman, grew up in Buffalo and attended Buffalo State Teachers College from 1939 to 1943, studying in the Civilian Pilot Training Program. In 1943 he worked in the Curtiss-Wright research laboratory on Genesee Street as a draftsman and administrative assistant. He received a bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Buffalo in 1950, earning his professional engineering license in 1951. From 1951 until 1956, he served as first plant engineer at the Genesee Street Laboratory, now operated by the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory. In 1956, Trautman and two of his coworkers, Turley and Schlenker, resigned and formed what would become Trautman Associates, which, according to the firm, was “one of the earliest integrated architectural and

⁴⁵ Cleveland Landmarks Commission, “Stickle, Kelly and Stickle,” in Cleveland City Planning Commission: Cleveland Architects, planning.city.cleveland.oh.us.

⁴⁶ Barry K. Herman, *Cleveland’s Vanishing Sacred Architecture* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 119.

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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engineering firms in the City of Buffalo.”⁴⁷ Trautman was involved in another religious project when, in 1976, the firm lead the renovation of the 1851 St. Joseph’s Cathedral in downtown Buffalo.⁴⁸

Church Furnishings

The tile mosaic Stations of the Cross were made in the San Pietro Mosaic Factory at the Vatican.

Julia Porcelli

Julia Porcelli sculpted the statue of St. Thomas Aquinas located in the courtyard behind the campanile. She was born in 1917 and worked at the *Catholic Worker* (a religious paper) in New York City before moving to Newport, Rhode Island, to apprentice under Ade Bethune, a renowned liturgical artist and social activist, in the mid-1940s.⁴⁹ Porcelli developed a unique sculptural method, in which she did not use clay or wax models but, rather, carved directly into her wood or stone medium. She won second prize in the 1952 New York City Village Art Center awards and exhibited work at the Whitney Museum and the National Academy Galleries in New York City, as well as at numerous university galleries across the country.⁵⁰ Her life-sized limestone sculpture of St. Thomas Aquinas was one of her largest works at the time of her death in 1974.

Conclusion:

The St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church complex in Buffalo, New York has served the local community for almost a century. It is locally significant in architecture as a rare and impressive example of Italian Romanesque design. The complex retains strong integrity pertaining to both of the criteria from the time spanning from the construction of the school in 1922, through the construction of the new church in 1949 and the addition to the school in 1956.

⁴⁷ Trautman Associates, “Origins,” trautmanassociates.com/who-we-are/origins/.

⁴⁸ Reyner Banham, Charles Beveridge, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Buffalo Architecture: A Guide* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 72.

⁴⁹ Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage – January 1975,” *The Catholic Worker*, January 1975, <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/daytext.cfm?TextID=546&SearchTerm=work>.

⁵⁰ “Object of Religious Sculpture to Create Thought, Says Artist,” *Herald Statesman*, January 2, 1960, 4; “Porcelli Sculpture,” *The Hastings News*, February 21, 1968, 10.

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

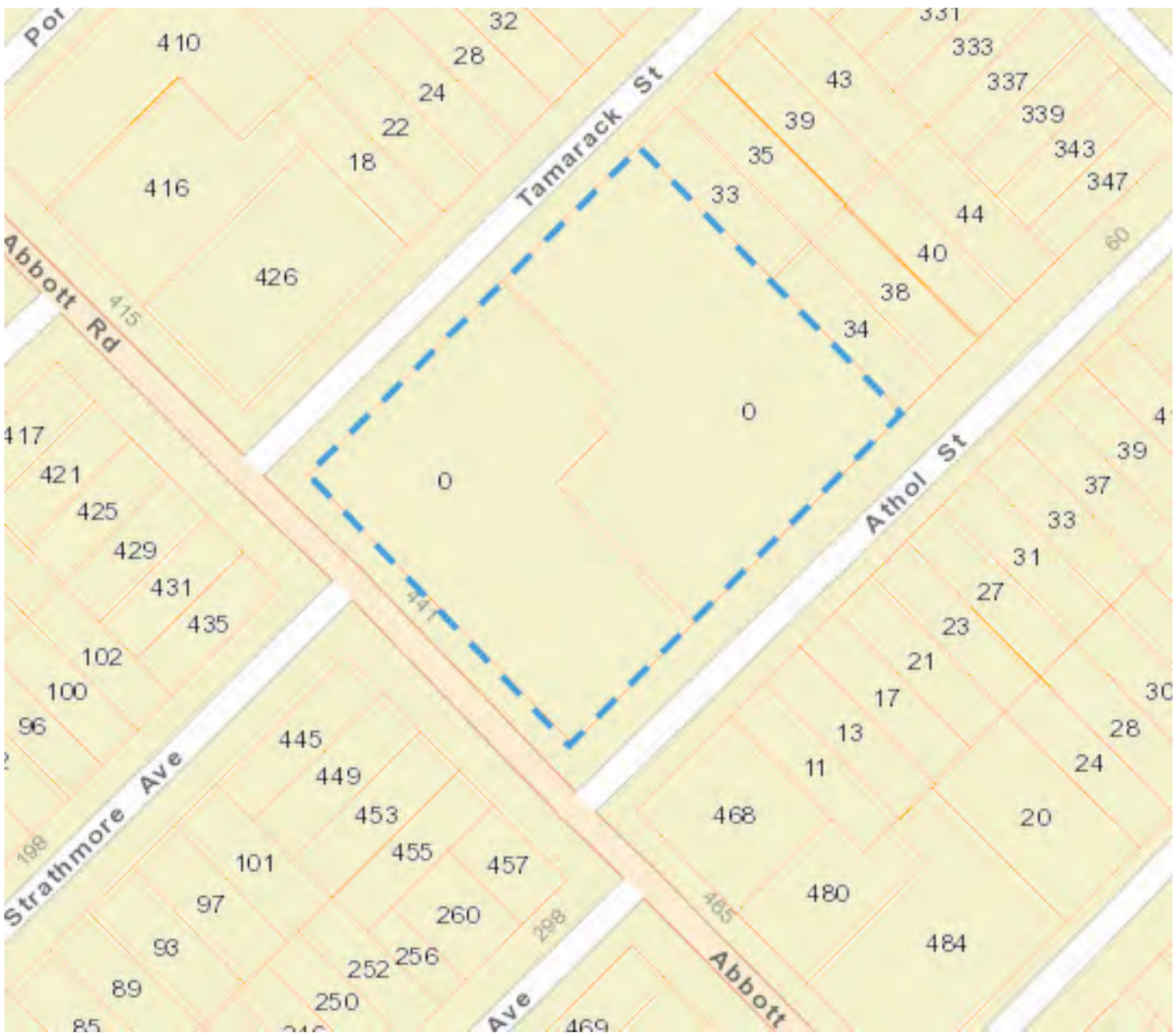
Section 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is indicated with a heavy line on the attached maps with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the current legal parcels associated with the church complex, which corresponds to the property historically associated with the St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church complex.

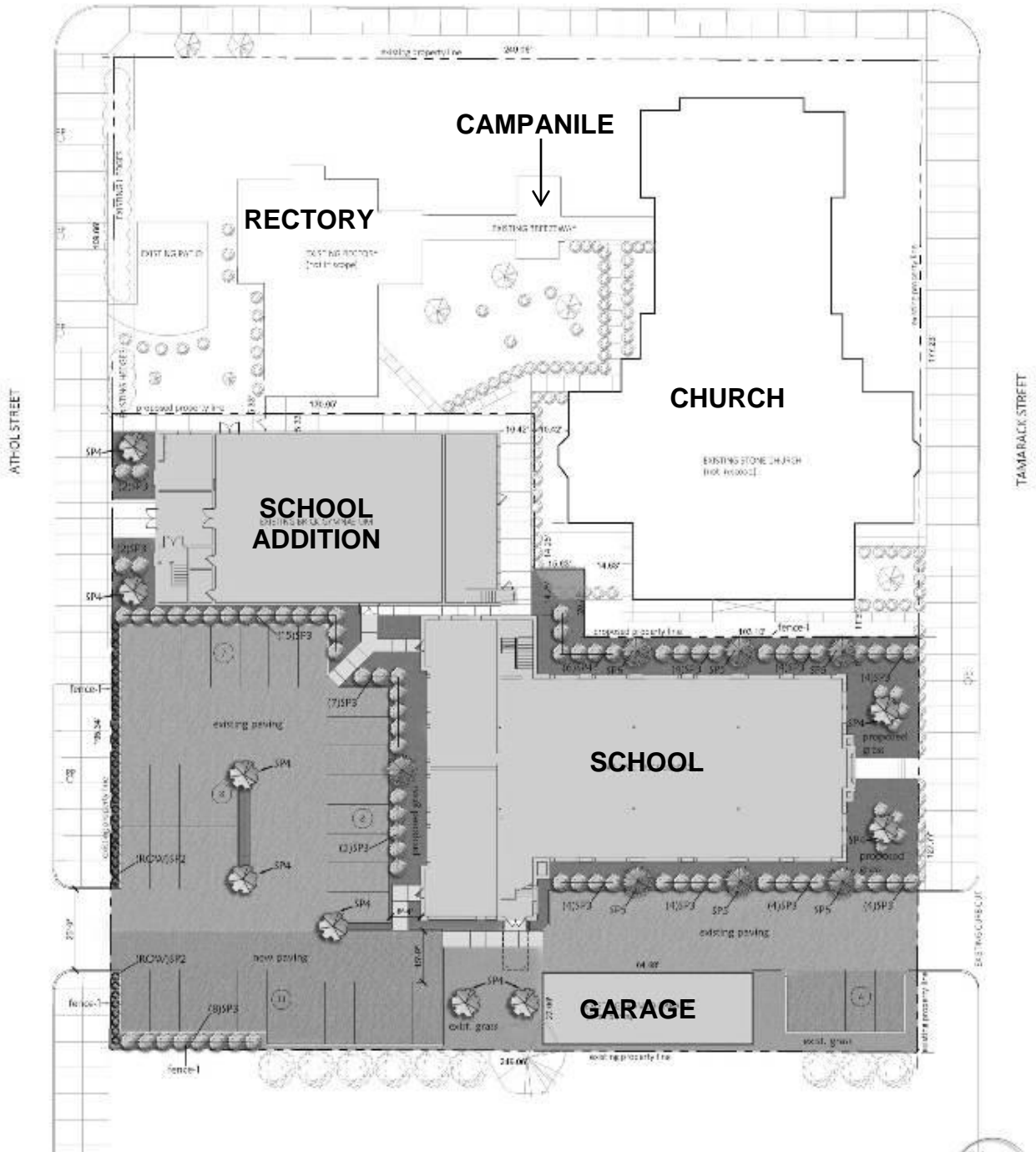


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Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 2

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
County and State



Site Plan

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

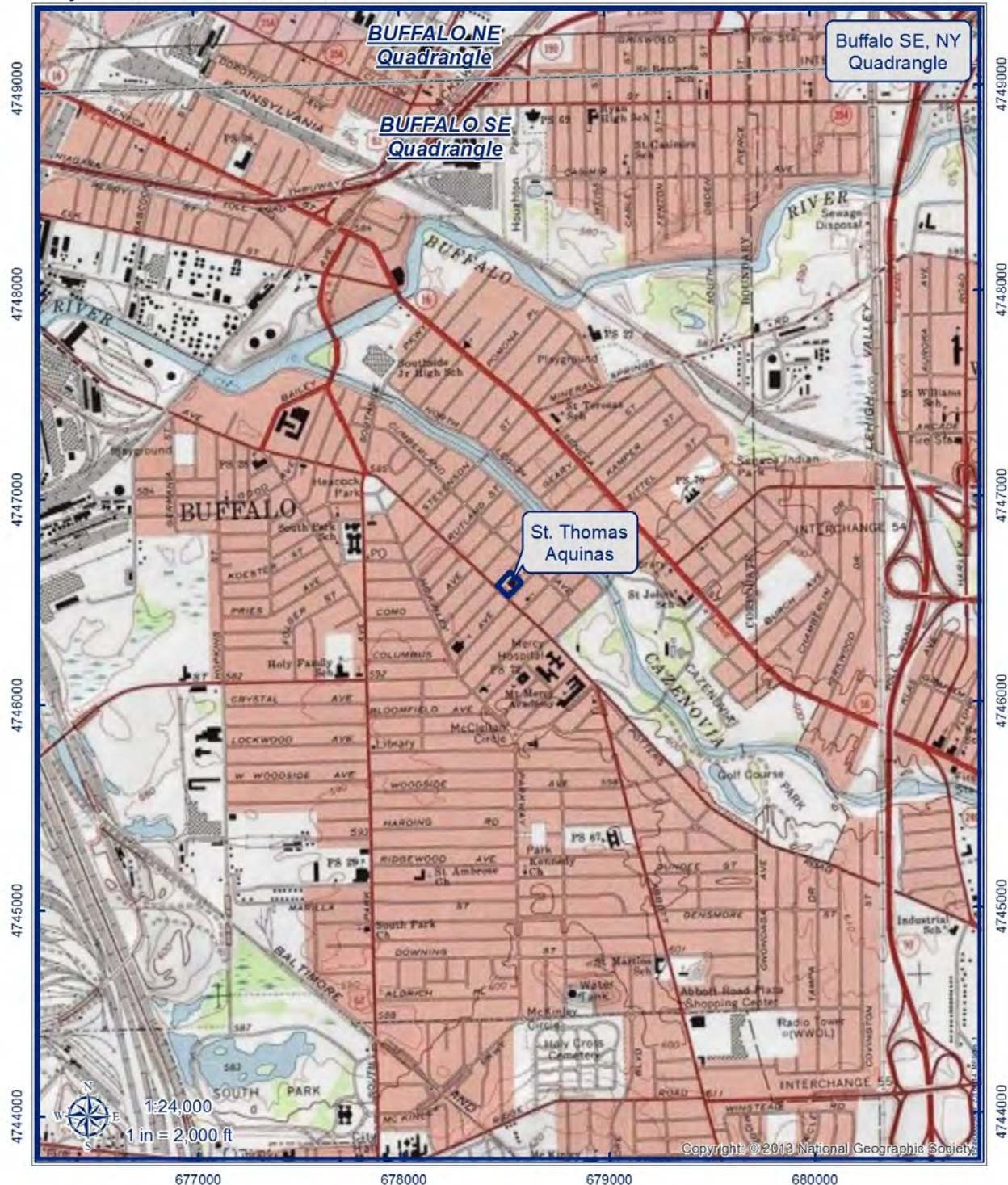
Erie County, New York

County and State

Section 10 Page 3

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

432 Abbott Road
Buffalo, NY 14220



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



St. Thomas Aquinas



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

432 Abbott Road
Buffalo, NY 14220



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



St. Thomas Aquinas



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

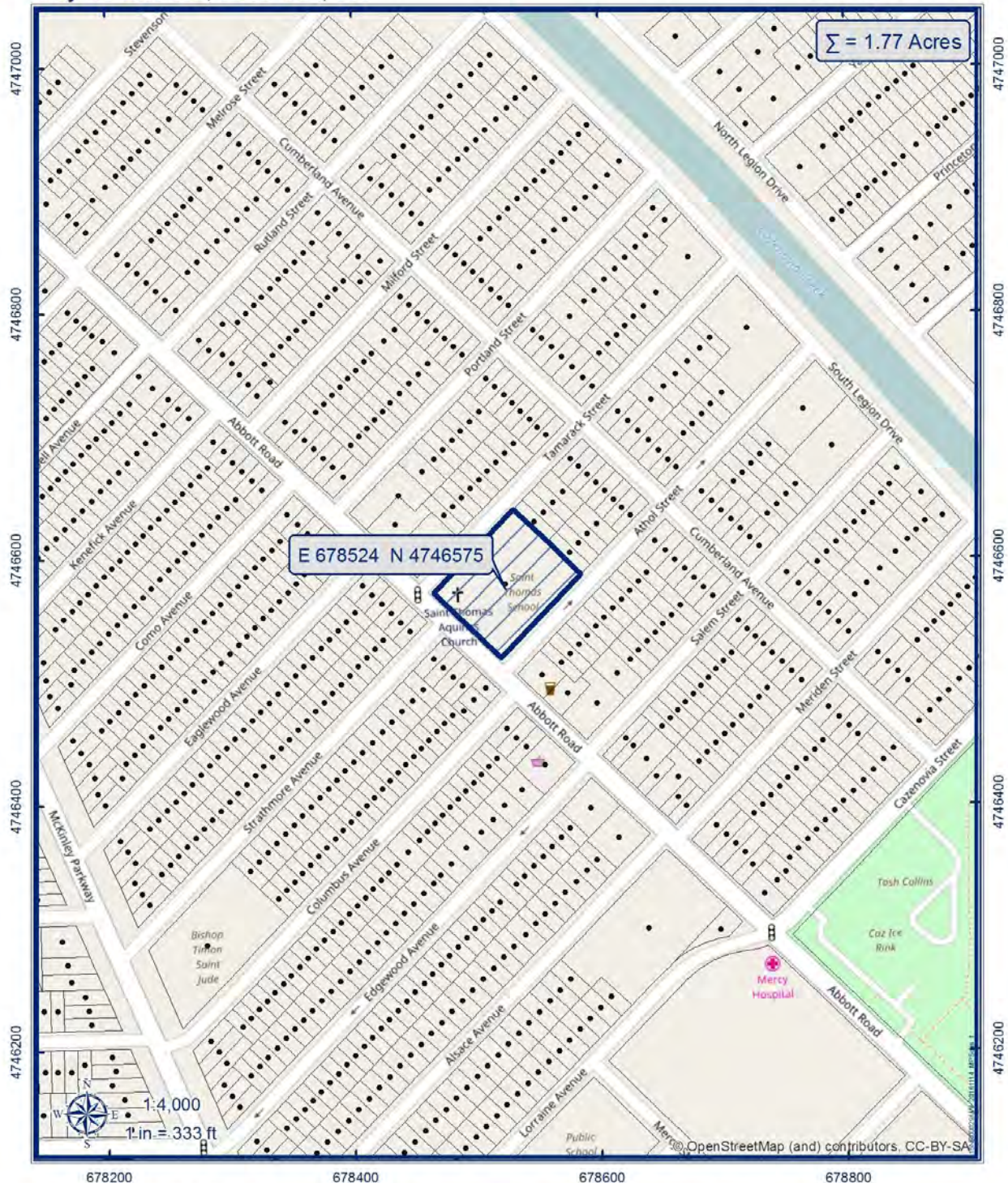
Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

432 Abbott Road
Buffalo, NY 14220



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



St. Thomas Aquinas



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex
City of Buffalo, Erie Co., NY

432 Abbott Road
Buffalo, NY 14220



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar (United States), USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, SDA, Airphoto, Swisstopo, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

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



St. Thomas Aquinas



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

Section 11 Page 1

Additional Information

Photo Log:

Name of Property: St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex
City or Vicinity: Buffalo
County: Erie
State: NY
Name of Photographer: Derek King
Date of Photographs: August-December 2016
Number of Photographs: 12

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0001
Northwest corner of complex, showing church, façade of school, and façade of rectory, camera facing SE

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0002
Southwest corner of complex, showing rectory, 1956 school addition, and campanile, camera facing NE

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0003
Campanile and rectory, camera facing NE

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0004
Northeast corner of complex showing school, camera facing SW

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0005
Southeast corner of complex, showing 1956 addition, camera facing NW.

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0006
Interior of church, showing baldachin, interior details and furnishings, camera facing E

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0007
Interior of church showing narthex, choir loft, organ, and furnishings, camera facing W

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0008
Interior of church showing altar, stained glass windows, furnishings and materials, camera facing S

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0009
Interior of rectory showing dining room, camera facing E

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0010
Interior of school, second floor hallway camera facing S

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

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NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0011
Interior of school showing standard classroom, camera facing NE

NY_Erie County_ St. Thomas Aquinas RC Church Complex_0012
Interior of 1956 school addition showing typical classroom, camera facing S

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National Park Service

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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THE ORIGINAL COMPLEX. (DIOCESE OF BUFFALO, CHANCERY ARCHIVES)

Image 1: St. Thomas Aquinas complex prior to the construction of the 1949-1951 church building. From left: the 1922 school, the c.1920 temporary church, the ca. 1928 rectory. From Ederer, *Buffalo's Catholic Churches* 153.

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St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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Image 2: Interior of the Santa Maria Church of Cosmedin, Rome.

Isabelle Lombolt, "Santa Maria in Cosmedin," March 6, 2014, *E-Architect*, Accessed October 28, 2016, http://www.e-architect.co.uk/images/jpgs/rome/rome_building_aw080217_709.jpg

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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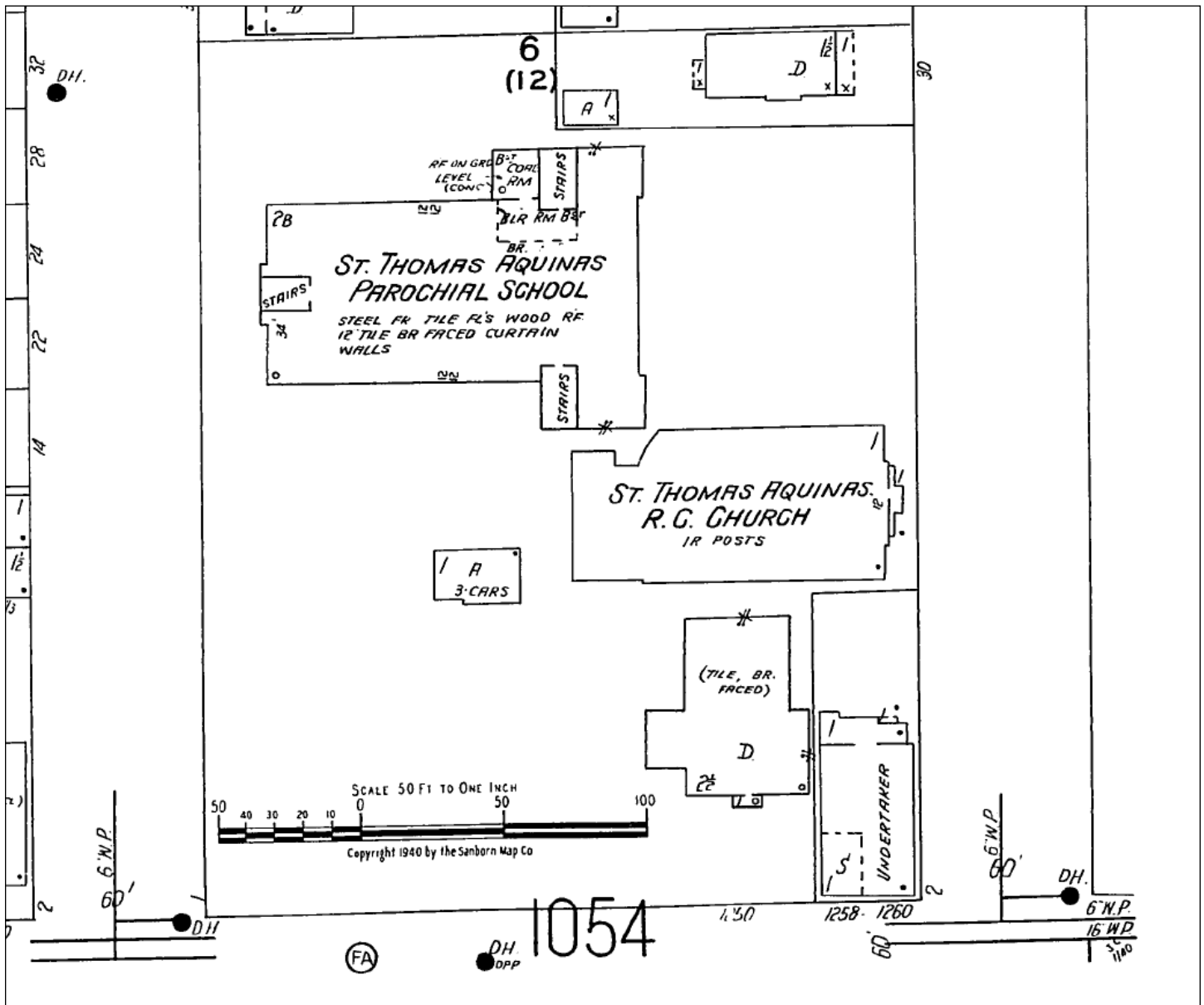
St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, vol. 10, sheet 1022 (1940)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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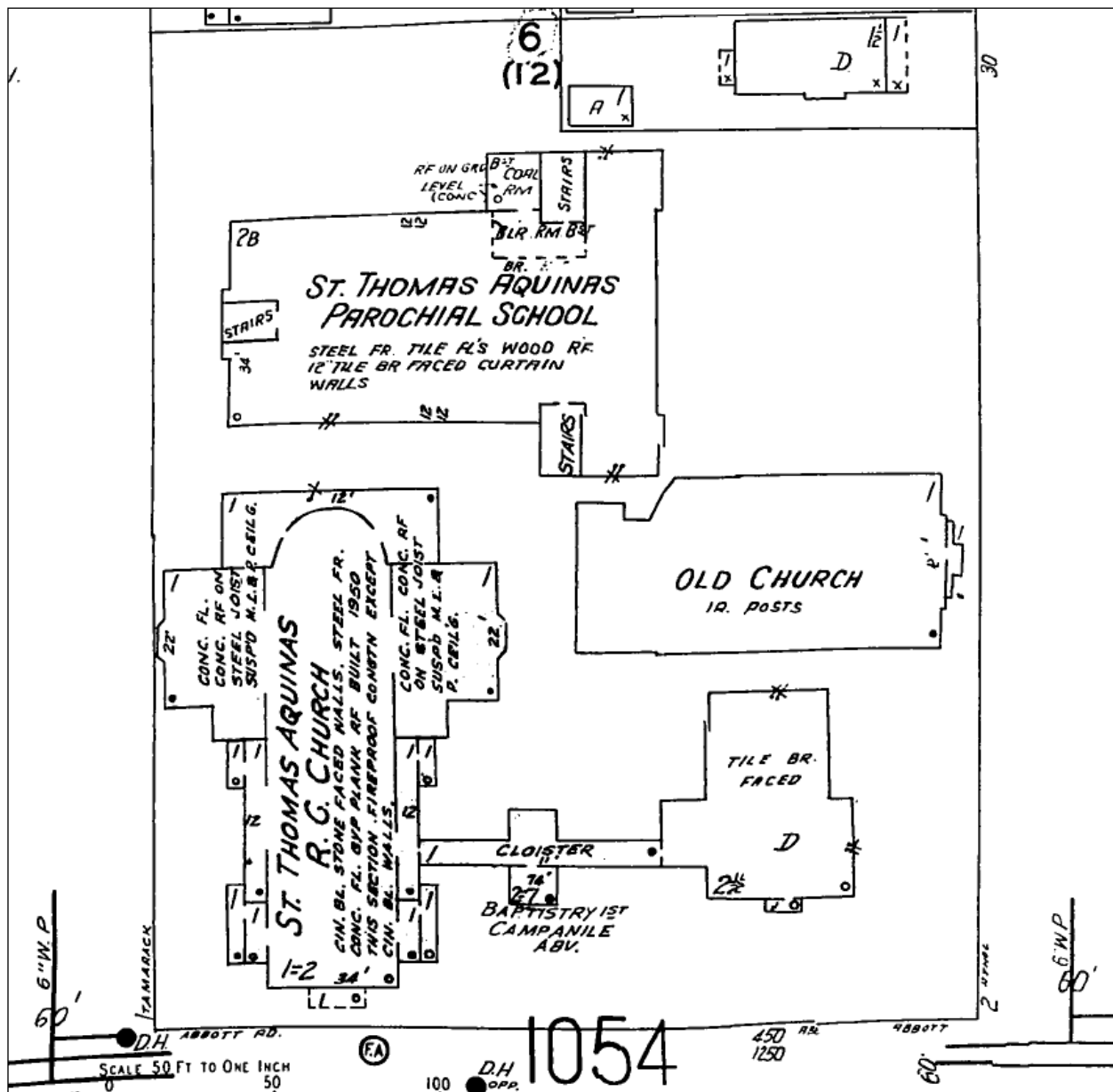
St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State

Section 11 Page 6



Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, vol. 10, sheet 1022 (1940 updated to 1950)



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 1/6/2017 Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: 2/21/2017 Date of Weekly List: 3/2/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

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

Accept Return Reject 2/21/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

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

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



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



23 December 2016

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

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

Offerman Building, Kings County
St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church Complex, Erie County
St. Thomas Aquinas Roman Catholic Church Complex, Erie County
Mentholatum Company Building, Erie County
Silver Lake Cemetery, Richmond 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