

SG-1071

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

other names/site number N/A

related multiple property listing N/A

2. Location

street & number 820-828 Eastern Ave. & 104 Irving St.

N/A

not for publication

city or town Schenectady

N/A

vicinity

state New York code NY county Schenectady code 093 zip code 12308

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Michael Lynch Deputy S/HPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

5 APRIL 2017
Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

6/12/17
Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
6	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
6	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)
- RELIGION, church-related residence (Convent)
- RELIGION, church school (School)
- RELIGION, church-related residence (Rectory)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- WORK IN PROGRESS
- VACANT
- VACANT
- DOMESTIC, single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- LATE VICTORIAN, Gothic

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- foundation: STONE
- walls: STONE
- roof: ASPHALT
- other: METAL

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex is located at the intersection of Eastern Avenue and Irving Street in the city of Schenectady (Schenectady County) New York. It is composed of four principal buildings: a monumental stone church edifice erected in 1903; a convent, originally a school, created at the same time from a portion of the earlier church (1893); a distinctive school building with a 1913 cornerstone; and a rectory from the 1920s. In addition, there are two detached garages built later in the 20th century and a paved parking lot. Designed in a Gothic style by Hopkins & Casey, a short-lived architectural firm based in nearby Troy, New York, the exterior of the masonry church is finished with rough-faced limestone ashlar veneer and distinguished by a tripartite façade composed of three engaged towers with entrances in each. The use of three towers, and particularly of identical towers at the corners, associates the design with those of Catholic churches in Poland and with the monumental so-called "Polish Cathedrals" in Mid-western American cities with large Polish-American communities. The major, center tower and its steeple are 212 ft. tall with an entrance deeply recessed within a multi-stage Gothic arch. Entrances in the lesser, corner octagonal towers are tucked under buttressed gabled porches. The sides of the building contain side-aisle and clerestory levels and cross-gable transepts. The spacious interior, designed to accommodate 2,000 parishioners, was redecorated in 1980 and stripped of its statuary and iconography when the church closed in 2009; however, distinctive altarpieces created by Polish woodcarver Francis Szumal in 1926 remain in place. A convent (originally, a school) was created when the church was built; three of its exterior walls had been part of the original church on the site, built in 1893. When the old church was partially demolished to make room for the new church in 1903, the remaining section was divided into three stories with classrooms on the first and second floors and, subsequently, a convent on the upper story. After the 1913 school was built, it was completely refurbished for the nuns. In addition, the convent exterior was refinished in the 1920s with gray parging, scored and painted to approximate the stone ashlar of the church. The decoration includes blind Gothic arches above the first- and second-story windows, while third-story windows have true Gothic arches. The school building on Irving Street, constructed with yellow brick veneer and limestone trim in 1913, is Romanesque in design and conveys a European sensibility. Designed by New York architect Lewis H. Giele, who designed a number of churches and schools for Polish parishes in the Northeast, its front façade is decorated with a classical entablature fabricated in metal and a central entrance pavilion divided into three bays by stone pilasters capped by stylized Roman capitals and surmounted by a pediment. The entrance and upper-story windows are contained within arched openings. A two-story wood frame rectory, established in the 1920s, has a front-gable façade consistent with other one- and two-family dwellings characterizing the neighborhood; it replaced an earlier rectory that stood in the adjoining lot in front of the convent.¹ Wings on the churchyard side contained parish offices, which were expanded by an addition later in the 20th century. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex continues to dominate and anchor its neighborhood. Three of the four buildings (excluding the exterior of the rectory) – and the complex as a whole – retain excellent integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Narrative Description

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Parish was established on the site in 1892 when construction began on a modest brick church for Schenectady's growing population of Polish immigrants (Fig. 1). The church fronted on Irving Street south of Eastern Avenue (then, East Liberty Street), a major city thoroughfare. It had a flat, unarticulated façade with a wide central entrance flanked by two narrower doors. A pair of lancet windows was positioned

¹ The rectory was either built new in the 1920s or renovated and expanded an existing 1890s building.

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above the center entrance and was surmounted by a small rose window in the apex. Mounted on the roof was an octagonal belfry topped by a flared roof and cross. Side walls were divided into eight bays by brick pilasters, each containing a lancet window, except at the rear where the altar was located. All but the three rear bays were demolished to make room for the new church in 1903, which fronted on Eastern Avenue. The remaining three walls were enclosed by a fourth, and the interior was divided into three stories for use as a school and convent. A three-story rectory was constructed at the easterly side of the Eastern Avenue frontage, perhaps reusing materials from the old church. This building was demolished when the existing rectory was created on an adjoining lot around 1925.

Church: 1903

The monumental scale of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, constructed in 1903, is reflected both in the size of its plan, designed to accommodate 2,000 worshippers, and in the height and elaboration of its principal façade facing Eastern Avenue (Photo 1). The rectangular building, 156 ft. long and 75 ft. wide, incorporates a cruciform plan – a long nave with side aisles terminating at a crossing before the altar (Fig. 8). This plan is physically expressed on the exterior by cross gables and a tripartite front façade; the prominent central element representing the nave is flanked by lesser entries into the side aisles. On the side walls, the nave's clerestory rises above the roofs of the side aisles with the tall cross wings of the transept screening the multi-sided apse and chapel and sacristy wings in the rear (Photos 2 & 3). The exterior of the masonry building is finished with a rough-faced limestone veneer laid in an irregular ashlar pattern. The main floor is elevated about a half-story above the street, where it is represented by a drip course encircling the building. Window and door openings are contained within pointed-arch openings reflecting the church's overall Late Victorian Gothic Revival-style design. Most of the openings contain stained-glass tracery windows, now concealed behind clouded security glass. Late twentieth-century replacement doors (with glass inserts) have replaced the original wood doors.

A massive tower is engaged to the center of the street façade and contains the principal entrance to the sanctuary, recessed deep within a multi-stage Gothic arch at the top of wide stone steps leading up from the street (Photo 1). A statue of St. Mary with the Christ Child is enclosed behind security glass in a niche above the door. Narrow corner buttresses terminate at a pointed arch embedded in the wall a story above the entrance; from that point, the tower tapers to an octagonal crest with a copper cornice. The tower rises to 212 ft. in two more octagonal stages with copper cornices – the lower one having lancet windows on each side and the upper one having pointed openings filled with louvers – and a tapered, copper-clad steeple. (The steeple had been slate until 1980, when it and the cornices were reclad in copper.)

Smaller octagonal towers are engaged to the corners of the front façade; each has a street-level entrance within a gabled stone porch, decorated with an applied stone cross. The drip course wraps around the porches forming caps for piers from which buttresses spring (Photo 1). Copper cornices running along the rooflines of the side aisles wrap around the midsections of the towers and continue across the front to terminate at the sides of the central tower. A second copper band distinguishes the bases of the top levels of the towers, which contain lancets on each of their eight sides. Tall multi-sided copper roofs with cornices finish the stone structures.

Sections and windows on the side walls are divided by buttresses with copper cornices detailing the many roof edges. Within the cross gable, the ends of the interior transepts enclose large windows. Elaboration is diminished on the rear wall (Photo 2).

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The interior of the church is voluminous. A tall nave with side aisles opens up once entry is made through the narthex at the back of the sanctuary (Photo 5). The ceiling is distinguished by groined vaults in the Gothic style, springing from elaborate corbels mounted between clerestory windows. Four unusual lozenge forms extend along the top of the vaults; they are highlighted in blue, as is the star-patterned intersection in the center of the crossing. The clerestory lancets contain small rose windows. Beneath them hang paintings depicting the Stations of the Cross. These features wrap around the corner of the transepts; these contain large tracery windows, each with three tall lancet panels of pictorial glass surmounted by a rose element at the top of the arch. The side aisles are also groined, with vaulting springing from small corbels on the side walls and marbled columns with stylized capitals along the nave (Photo 7). Four lancets with pairs of pictorial stained glass panels are spaced between the vaults on each side, with the choir loft bisecting those in the rear. Similar arrangements of vaults, windows, and paintings are located in front of the transept in the small altars, recessed in exterior wings flanking the central apse. The seven-sided apse alternates lancets and paintings, between attenuated engaged columns on which vaulting for the domed ceiling is based (Photos 5 & 6). The ceiling between the ribs is painted blue.

When built, the side walls had been finished with a tall paneled wood wainscot and painted decoration that imitated the stone quoins and panels in the apse and stenciled borders elsewhere, including along the ribs in the ceilings (Figs. 5 & 6). These features were painted over and new stenciling applied in the 1980 restoration. Original wood flooring covers the entire sanctuary up to the elevated altar area; it and the steps leading up to it are paved with stone. The original bench pews were replaced with new ones in 1980, but they have since been removed. Two sets of confessionals remain on the wall with the narthex.

Sacred statuary and icons were removed when the church closed in 2009. However, the central altar (and two smaller ones flanking it) retain significant wood decoration created in 1926 by Francis Szumal, an itinerant Polish woodcarver whose work is represented in a number of Polish churches in the United States (Photo 6). The central altarpiece has a tall marbled architrave flanked by smaller statue niches of similar design. All are ornamented with delicate carved wood filigree along the tops of the pediments and the interior of the arched openings. The central niche contains an oil painting depicting St. Mary, Our Lady of Czestochowa, the patron saint of the church and a legendary Polish religious figure. A wood framework was constructed behind the altar so that the portrait could be hoisted out of view revealing statues of the Holy Family. The smaller altarpieces in the niches flanking the apse also held statues and are similar in design and execution.²

There are two corner rooms on either side of the apse; one contains a large built-in cabinet indicating it was the sacristy and the other contains a stair to the basement.

The choir loft, at the rear of the sanctuary, is faced by a low wall bowing out in three sections into the nave and side aisles; it is detailed with narrow panels each containing a blind Gothic arch (Photo 7). Organ pipes fill a large cabinet with a wide Gothic arch in the center of the rear wall. (The original organ was replaced with an electric one in 1987; the second organ was removed when the church closed in 2009.) The loft is accessed by stairs at each end that are contained within the exterior corner towers. The narthex below was reduced in size when partitions were added for an elevator on one side and an anteroom on the other. The church has a full basement that was renovated into a church hall in the 1970s, with kitchen and service rooms (Photo 8).

² "The House of the Lord," Schenectady Gazette (June 24, 1939), 11.

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Despite the loss of the pews and some of the decorative embellishments, such as wall stenciling, the church retains a high level of integrity of design and materials and clearly reads as a religious building.

Convent: 1893, 1903, 1913, ca. 1925

The convent is a remnant of the original 1893 church, which was repurposed as a school in 1903 and given over wholly to the nuns for living quarters after the construction of the new enlarged fire-proof school on Irving Street in 1913. Three of the exterior brick walls of the building represent the rear three bays of the original church; an 1892 date stone is embedded in the west wall, the only new wall was erected in 1903 (Photos 9 & 10). This wall appears to be constructed of brick salvaged from the demolished portion of the church, and the 1892 date stone, which had likely been located on the church's east-facing front façade, was reset in this wall to the right of the side entrance to the school. On the north and south walls, the bays are outlined by brick pilasters and corbelled frieze; the rearmost bay of the old church is wider than the other two because of extra interior space provided for the altar area. The east wall, which had been the rear gable end of the church, has no such divisions, but four bays are delineated on the added west wall in the same divided manner as the sides. The tall lancet windows centered in the bays were removed and replaced with three tiers of windows, one in each of the narrow bays and two in the wider bays. Nearly all of the windows have stone headers and sills. Those on the lower stories are flat-headed and the third floor have pointed tops. Doors and windows elsewhere are placed with less attention to symmetry. The distinctive contrast of brick and stone trim suggests that the scored stucco finish applied to the front and east walls was a later addition, designed to match the ashlar of the church – perhaps in the mid-1920s during the tenure of the parish's second pastor, the Rev. Francis S. Ren. A hipped roof, with small central dormers on each elevation, covers the square plan created in 1903.

The three-story building contains a chapel on the first floor accessed by the entrance on the north-facing façade (Fig. 10). A historic photograph (estimated to have been taken in the 1930s) shows a hipped-roof Craftsman-style porch covering the entrance and adjoining window bay; it was probably added during the ca. 1925 renovation (Fig. 2). The current gable-roof porch covering only the entrance replaced it around 1950; traces of roofing compound on the wall give evidence to the earlier structure. The floor level of the chapel and its entry hall are two steps lower than that in the rear of the building, evidently to provide greater height for the room (Photo 11). It is wider as well, necessitating three iron posts through the center to support bearing walls above. The interior of the chapel was renovated in the years following its construction, but it is now stripped of all features and furniture. At some point, its original windows were replaced with glass blocks.

A kitchen and dining room are the principal spaces in the rear section of the first floor, rooms intended for convent use. There also is a hall with a wood staircase and turned balustrade that had been accessed by the hooded doorway on the west side of the building where the 1892 date stone is located. This doorway, off the narrow alley between the convent and the church, had been the main access to the parish school when it occupied the second story of the building. A door on the south wall enters a kitchen vestibule. Windows in these rear areas have also been replaced with glass blocks for privacy, security, or both later in the 20th century. The kitchen has been updated and the dining room contains a built-in cabinet.

A remnant blackboard is the only evidence of earlier classroom spaces on the second floor (Photo 12). Windows significantly taller than those on the first story represent the design of brighter, better-ventilated rooms for school use, particularly two large rooms in the front of the building (Fig. 11). It is possible that other school rooms occupied areas in the rear and were partitioned into bed chambers when the building was

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renovated for sole convent use in 1913. A certain change is the addition of four freestanding wood stalls with wash basins for the nuns' personal use (Photo 14). The third story, with its pointed arch windows, appears to have always been used for nuns' housing. Twelve small chambers, each with built-in book shelves (since removed), are arrayed around the exterior walls, opening onto a central stair hall where four more wood stalls are located (Fig. 12, Photo 13). There is one bathroom on each floor. From the third floor, the open staircase leads to a large open attic under the hipped roof, lit by four dormers.

School: 1913

Ten years after the new church was built and the convent/school building reconstructed from the rear of the old church, a new and larger school was erected on the west side of Irving Street (Photos 15-17). Its façade reflects a mode of Classicism directly associated with Polish architecture in Europe and is not typical of parochial school design elsewhere in the Schenectady region. The use of a yellow brick veneer on the exterior of the brick and tile masonry structure also is unusual in the local context and, with liberal use of stone trim, imbues the building with higher status. The three-story, nine-bay front façade is shallow and one-room deep. It has a central, pedimented pavilion with three bays created by stone pilasters with stylized Roman capitals that carry a substantial bracketed cornice fabricated of metal (Photo 17). An arched entrance is centered on the first story and flanked by arched windows. Second and third-story windows are linked within tall arched openings by stone panels in between. A stone belt course running across the second story serves as the sill for the second-story windows; stone arches with labels at the top of the third-floor windows further unify the upper floors. A title block in the panel in the wider center bay is inscribed in Polish with words to the effect: Parish School / Mother of God of Czestochowa. The two three-bay sections of the front façade flanking the central pavilion are treated in a similar manner except that the first-story windows have flat-arch stone heads with labels. The entire building is elevated on a basement faced with bluestone, with steps leading up to the entrance made of the same material.

Behind the three-story front section is a two-story wing with a T-shaped plan and identical side facades (Photo 16). While the yellow brick veneer continues on the sides, decoration is reduced. Pairs of windows are separated by simple engaged columns on the sides of the T. Windows have flat-arch stone heads except on the second story of the shaft of the T, where the windows are arched without stone trim. The metal cornice (some of which has been lost) wraps around onto the side walls but without bracket ornamentation. The rear wall, which is up against the property line and hardly visible, is constructed with common red brick; its fenestration bears no stone trim or decoration.

The interior plan has classrooms and offices on the first floor on either side of a central hall in line with the front entrance; the hall terminates at a perpendicular hallway running in front of four more classrooms in the rear of the building (Fig. 15, Photo 19). The principal stair is located near the front entrance; two other stairs are located in the rear section where there also are secondary means of egress (Photo 18). The second floor is dominated by a large auditorium/gymnasium in the center of the building that is open to the rafters of its steel roof frame (Fig. 16, Photo 22). A small lobby area at the top of the stairs contains a ticket office and a coat room for use during public performances. A small classroom occupies one corner in the front, and what appears to be an equipment storage room is situated in the other. Two more classrooms are positioned in the rear corners of the building on either side of the stage, dressing rooms, and rear stairs. The front stairs continue to the front third story to provide access to a balcony overlooking the auditorium. A lavatory is located in a room behind the stairs with an enclosed second room at the other end. A kitchen, cafeteria, and large activity room are contained in the basement along with student wash rooms, furnace room, and storage areas.

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The building has been mothballed since the school closed in 1979. As a result, evidence of its fireproof construction is evident due to decaying conditions; clay tile construction, concrete floors, stone stairs with iron railings, and steel roof trusses are all visible. Walls were plastered and plaster and pressed metal ceilings exist in hallways and other public areas, but the underside of the concrete floors is now exposed in most of the classrooms. Doors and windows, along with their trim, are made of stained wood. Original blackboards are intact, as are wood chair rails throughout (Photos 19-21). Concrete floors are covered with asbestos tile.

Rectory, ca. 1925, ca. 1960

Church histories mention a rectory being built around the time that the new church was erected in 1903, but also that a new rectory was constructed in the mid-1920s (Photos 23-25). Map and physical evidence indicate that the first rectory was removed from its site closer to the convent after the second rectory was developed on an adjoining parcel acquired for that purpose. The current two-story wood frame rectory with a front-gable façade facing Eastern Avenue appears to have incorporated a pre-existing house on that lot, but there is no particular visual evidence on the interior to substantiate that. Externally, the rectory is consistent in form and scale with the one- and two-family houses that were being built in the neighborhood at the turn of the 20th century. It has an entrance surmounted by a second-story window on one side offset by a wide, two-story bay window. The bay window and gable-roofed entry porch rest on yellow brick foundations that materially associate them with the 1913 school and suggest they are additions to a pre-existing dwelling. A historic photograph and a 1930 Sanborn insurance map show a two-story wing on the west containing first- and second-story sun porches; on the photo, it appears to have the same yellow brick foundation as the 1913 school (Fig. 17). Elsewhere rock-faced concrete block and parged foundation walls appropriate to the 1903 period are visible.

The historic photograph also shows a one-story wing behind the sun porches and four dormers. (There are currently five dormers on the east side, nine in all.) The porches were walled in and capped by a gable roof later in the 20th century, and a one-story wing added in front of them. Wrought iron porches and bowed windows are distinguishable to this later period (Photo 24). Original wood clapboards on the exterior (and wood shingles on the dormers) were covered with metal clapboard siding in the late 20th century. Some wood sash remain intact in places, but more has been replaced with later inserts or new windows altogether.

Interior finishes are far more intact. The first story contains a living room, dining room and kitchen aligned in series front-to-rear; a butler's pantry on the east side of the dining room was opened up and made into a kitchen after the church vacated the premises. Original plaster finishes and Craftsman-style woodwork remain (Photo 26). Parish offices and a meeting room occupied spaces in the wings on the west side. These were updated with sheet wood paneling, probably around the time that the windows were replaced (Photo 27). The second story is divided into four bedrooms, two baths, and a room that appears to have been a chapel along a double-loaded hallway. Good quality woodwork is intact and reflects an ecclesiastical style (Photo 28). The second-floor hall opens into a large sitting room on the upper level of the wing. Three rooms are partitioned in the attic utilizing the dormers.

Garages: mid-1950s

A detached, concrete-block, two-car garage with a front gable roof is located behind the convent and accessed by a paved driveway that passes behind the church (Photo 29). It evidently was constructed in the mid-twentieth century for motor vehicles belonging to the parish.

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Houses on Irving Street were acquired in the 1950s and demolished to create a paved parking lot south of the school. Another two-car garage was constructed around that time in the southwest corner of the lot, perhaps more for storage and maintenance purposes than for vehicles (Photo 30).

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE, European

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1892-1966

Significant Dates

1903

1913

ca. 1926

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hopkins & Casey, Troy, NY (architects of church)

Kearny Const. Co., Troy (builder of church)

Francis Szumal, wood carver

Louis H. Giele, NYC (architect of school)

John McDermott, Schenectady (builder of school)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance encapsulates the history of the church complex as it evolved from the initial construction dates of the buildings through additions and alterations occurring up to the 50-year limit (1967). The historic significance of the church and its community is also represented in this time span.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A – The church complex is no longer owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex in the city of Schenectady, New York, meets National Register **Criteria A (Education, Ethnic Heritage – European, and Social History)** and **C (Architecture)** at a local level of significance; the complex is a distinctive example of local religious architecture comprising, in the Catholic manner, a church, parish school, convent for teachers, and rectory for priests. The parish was created in 1892 by the Catholic Diocese in Albany to provide religious services for Schenectady's growing Polish population and represents the course of that community from the late nineteenth century up to the year it was closed in 2009. (It is no longer owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.) Built in 1903, the monumental stone church evinces both the size and ambition of the Polish community that built it. With a 212-foot-tall façade facing a narrow residential street characterized by modest one- and two-family houses, the church is visible from blocks around. Its dominant presence reflects its central role in the religious, educational, and social life of the neighborhood, as well as making a clear statement of Polish identity. Designed by Hopkins & Casey, church architects from nearby Troy, New York, the Late Victorian Gothic Revival design conforms to models in other Polish centers (particularly in the Midwest) in its use of prominent steepled towers in the corners, center, or – in this case – all three locations of the façade.. The 2,000-seat, nave-and-side-aisle sanctuary has a soaring groined ceiling, tracery windows with pictorial stained glass, *trompe l'oeil* and stenciled

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wall painting, and equally grand oil-paintings of religious figures and scenes. In 1926 the itinerant Polish wood carver Francis Szumal, whose work is extant in other Polish-American churches, created three elaborate altarpieces for the church. The interior walls were repainted in 1980 in a series of modernizing improvements anticipating the parish's 75th anniversary. The 1903 church was constructed perpendicularly across the footprint of the original 1892 brick church, which was demolished except for a rear portion that was preserved and renovated for a three-story school and convent. When a new school was built in 1913, this building, continuing in its convent use, acquired a stucco finish on its two visible facades, scored and painted in imitation of the ashlar of the church. Across Irving Street, the new school, veneered in yellow brick with stone trim, was designed in a Polish manner as bold as the new church ten years earlier. The elegant Romanesque façade with a Classical cornice and central pediment evinces European sources. Its architect, Louis H. Giele, a German-American architect, educated in Europe and based in New York City, designed churches and schools for a number of Polish Catholic communities in the Northeast. St. Mary's parish school played an active role in preserving the identity and unity of the Polish-American community in Schenectady up to its closing in 1979. The rectory, thought to have been built or renovated in the 1920s, is consistent with the late nineteenth-century, two-story, front-gable, detached one- and two-family houses that composed the streetscapes around the church. Two concrete block garages erected in the mid-20th century and a parking lot adjacent to the school round out the complex.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

In 1887 Thomas A. Edison moved his Edison Machine Works, manufacturers of dynamos and other components of the electrical illumination systems that he was marketing to cities in the United States, from cramped quarters in New York City to two existing factory buildings in Schenectady. The Edison Machine Works was one of a number of Edison's electrical companies that merged to form Edison General Electric in 1889 and was headquartered in Schenectady.³ As the demand for electric lighting equipment and products accelerated, Schenectady became a magnet for immigrants seeking work. The Schenectady Locomotive Works, founded in 1848, also was a growing concern, particularly after it merged with seven smaller companies in 1901 to create the American Locomotive Company. Earlier Irish and German communities were joined by a wave of newcomers coming from Poland and Italy. Schenectady became one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation, growing 650 percent in 40 years.⁴

Poles emigrated from all three partitions of Poland: German, Austrian, and Russian. The first to come were from German Poland, and they joined St. Joseph's parish, which had been organized in 1862 by German Catholics already in the city. The small number of Austrian Poles to arrive apparently did the same. But the Russian Poles, who began immigrating in large numbers at the end of the 19th century, had a distinctive identity. By 1900 three-quarters of Schenectady's Polish population had come from Russian Poland, particularly from four of the ten provinces of Congress Poland, and 80 percent of them were employed by either General Electric or American Locomotive.⁵

In 1892, approximately 75 Polish families were living in Schenectady when the Roman Catholic Diocese in Albany sent a Polish priest, the Rev. Joseph Dereszewski, to organize a Polish parish there. Born and

³ Randall E. Stross, *The Wizard of Menlo Park: How Thomas Alva Edison Invented the Modern World* (NY: Three Rivers Press, 2008), 169.

⁴ The US Census records an increase from 13,655 in 1880 to 19,902 in 1890, 31,682 in 1900, 72,826 in 1910, and 88,723 in 1920.

⁵ Robert R. Pascucci, "Electric City Immigrants: Italians and Poles in Schenectady, New York 1880-1930," diss., State University of New York at Albany, College of Social & Behavioral Sciences, 1984, 33, 300.

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educated in Poland, Dereszewski entered the Detroit Seminary in Michigan around 1886 and was ordained by St. Joseph's Provincial Seminary in Troy in 1891. His appointment in Schenectady was his first, and it was made in response to a request by a Bratniej Pomocy Society (Brotherhood Society) for a church. On New Year's Day 1892, Father Dereszewski delivered the first mass in the Polish language at St. Joseph's Church. After that service, a meeting was held, at which time it was decided to build a Polish church to be named Matki Boskiej Czestochowskiej, for the legendary Polish icon of the Virgin Mary.⁶ The Brotherhood Society made a donation of \$1,000 to a building fund.

Later in 1892, a lot was purchased on the corner of Eastern Avenue and Irving Street and construction began on a brick church 110 feet long and 53 feet wide with its front facing Irving Street. The builders of this edifice, Brown & Clemenshire, are so far undocumented. A datestone, now preserved in the west wall of the convent, is carved with the year 1892; the church was dedicated on 4 July 1893. In addition to his religious duties, Father Dereszewski established a school in the basement of the church, teaching along with his organist, a Mr. Conrad. (The Resurrection Sisters joined the faculty as enrollment increased.) The rapid growth of the Polish parish is indicated by church documents recording the years 1892-1893: 21 marriages, 37 boys, and 30 girls born, and funerals for 9 adults, 16 boys, and 12 girls. Fifteen boys and 49 girls were enrolled in the school, the gender imbalance suggesting that boys were put to work in the factories. This discrepancy is also represented in the number of children receiving communion: 6 boys and 18 girls.⁷

In the decade in which the church was built, Polish immigration increased dramatically. Between 1890 and 1900, the number of foreign-born Polish in Schenectady grew by nearly 800 percent; based on early estimates, that pushed the population to over 3,000 persons. In the next decade the rate of increase dropped to 143.7 percent, still significant, but it diminished thereafter. There were about 400 families in St. Mary's parish in 1900. Because of this growth, the original church became overcrowded and, evidently, inadequate in its expression of the community's sense of achievement. A new church, larger and more prestigious, was planned, and the large congregation, composed mostly of working-class families, contributed the funds for its construction. Ground was broken in 1903, and the cornerstone was laid in August of that year. The old church was partially demolished, with the remaining section made into a combined school and convent. By April of 1904, services were held in the basement of the new building, and the new church was dedicated on 17 September 1905. It cost an estimated \$100,000 with an additional \$25,000 spent on interior decoration.⁸

The vision for the design of the new church likely originated with Father Dereszewski and was developed with the help of recollections of Polish churches shared by his parishioners. The firm of Hopkins & Casey of Troy, New York, was the architect of record, though they had no cultural ties to or particular experience with Polish church architecture. Charles B. Hopkins was a master builder from Topeka, Kansas, where he had developed a reputation as an architect before relocating to Cohoes, New York, to design its new city hall in 1895.⁹ His

⁶ "A Brief History of Saint Mary's Church," *Program commemorating the 100th anniversary of St. Mary's Church* (1982), St. Mary's Church Vertical File, Schenectady County Historical Society Library, Schenectady, NY. The icon is housed at the Jasna Góra Monastery in Częstochowa, Poland, a revered pilgrimage site well known in that country. "The Black Madonna of Częstochowa." <http://www.marypages.com/Czestochowa.htm>.

⁷ "Brief History."

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ From a biography published in William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883): "C.B. Hopkins, architect, came to Topeka in June, 1868, and engaged in building operations until the spring of 1881, when he became a partner of E.T. Carr, architect. Among the buildings at Topeka which he has planned may be mentioned the dwellings of Edwin Scott, W.W.

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partner, Thomas H. Casey, was barely 30 years of age, and by 1909 had left the area to be replaced in the partnership by civil engineer Thomas F. Grattan. Only three other projects of the firm have been identified: the plans for a parochial school for St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Troy (1903); St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church parish hall in Cambridge, New York (1905); and St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church and rectory in Greenwich, New York (1908).¹⁰ Hopkins & Casey, and possibly its successor, Hopkins & Grattan, was one of many firms that capitalized on the great demand for new Catholic churches, schools, convents, seminaries, and other facilities in upstate New York industrial towns in the early 20th century.

The overall design of St. Mary's follows a fairly standard nave plan in a Victorian Gothic Revival style. A steep gable roof frames the front façade and the cross-gable transepts that are flush with the side walls. Most door and window openings have pointed arches and windows are defined by tracery. The limestone ashlar veneer, covering the entire exterior on all sides, combines with the large scale of the building to convey senses of magnitude, permanence, and importance. The grand 212-ft. front façade rises substantially above the modest two-story dwellings characterizing the neighborhood, building on the rhythm of their front-gables in the streetscape. From across Eastern Avenue, observers must crane their necks to appreciate the church's front; from a distance, the church and its towers loom large as a landmark for the community. The design of the front façade, with its central tower and spire flanked by two smaller corner ones at the corners, evinces an association with other so-called Polish Cathedrals in other American cities, particularly in the Middle Atlantic and Great Lakes regions, suggesting that broader cultural and institutional identities were an influence.

In *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States*, Peter Williams describes the Polish Cathedral as a distinctive genre of church building that emerged in Polish communities in Detroit and Chicago. "Where most Catholic churches were built in grander or humbler variations of Gothic and Romanesque themes popular across the country, the ambitious prelates in the Great Lakes Polonias often chose to make monumental statements in the Renaissance style of their mother country. The scale of these structures was often enormous, both in the great size of these parishes and the episcopal ambitions of their clerical leaders."¹¹ According to Edward Kantowicz, "The preference of the Polish League for Renaissance and Baroque forms seems clear cut. The glory days of the Polish Commonwealth came in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when it formed the largest state in Europe."¹²

Manspeaker, and Judge McFarland. Also the City Building, the Union Block, J. D. Knox, Manspeaker's Block, McLaughlin's store building, Grange and Masonic building at Manhattan, etc. He has also made the plans for schoolhouses at Abilene, Manhattan, and Sabetha; a bank at Minneapolis, Kan.; a church at Rossville; and other public buildings. Mr. Hopkins was born at Lima, Livingston Co., N. Y., March 5, 1830. When an infant his parents moved to Huron County, Ohio, which place remained his home for ten years. He then lived five years in Erie County, Ohio, six years in DeKalb County, Ind., and about a year in Florida, Henry Co. Ohio. Thence he migrated to Erie County and stayed a summer, then to Huron County, thence to Cleveland and finally to Upper Sandusky, Wyandotte Co., Ohio, where he remained twelve years prior to his removal to Kansas. He was married in Norwalk, Huron Co., Ohio, July 4. 1856 to Rosannah M. Washburn, a native of the State of New York. They have four children—George W., Eugene L., Francis M., and Ella May." From census and directory data, it appears he had remarried by 1898 when he first appeared in the Troy City Directory as an architect. His partnership with Casey was short.

¹⁰ "New Schools," *American School Board Journal*, 27:5 (Nov. 1903), 27; "Days of Yore," *Washington County Post* (Nov. 3, 1955), n.p.; and "A Typical Old-Time Country Mission," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, XIX (1908), 257 fn.

¹¹ Peter Williams, *Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States* [Reprint edition] (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 179.

¹² Edward Kantowicz, *The Archdiocese of Chicago: A Journey of Faith* (Holywood, Northern Ireland: Booklink, 2006), 27–29.

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Ellen Skerrett has observed that Polish churches generally surpassed other immigrants' churches in size; their style provided a vision of Polish identity.¹³ According to another source, America's Polish Cathedrals reflected Old World architectural styles, although most were stylized and adapted to American realities. "But they all shared one thing: an aura of grandeur and extensive ornamentation. The interiors were marked by grandiose altars, copious statuary and paintings, elegant stained-glass windows, often including the names of their sponsors, and beautifully hand-carved pews and confessionals... Prime examples include Milwaukee's Neo-Renaissance Basilica of St. Josaphat, Chicago's Neo-Classicist St. Mary of the Angels and Baroque-style Holy Trinity Church, as well as Cleveland's Gothic Shrine of St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr. Pittsburgh's Polish Hill could boast the Baroque-style Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, and Buffalo's Polish cathedrals include the Neo-Romanesque St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr, the Mother Church of Western New York's Polonia."¹⁴

Both in scale and scope, these edifices were meant to elevate the status in which the Polish immigrants found themselves. A stateless people whose culture was being systematically attacked in their homeland during the years of partition, they also had to contend with a marginal position in the American industrial centers in which they settled. Their churches were the centers of Polish-American communities and the agent for preserving the Polish identity and language. St. Mary's attracted Russian Polish immigrants to settle in the neighborhood and create an enduring Polish community in Schenectady.

The choice of a Gothic style for St. Mary's seems to be counter to the Renaissance taste characteristic of other Polish Cathedrals, which may have been the result of the local architects' limited experience. However, the interior atmosphere, created by pictorial stained-glass windows, ceilings and walls painted in colors, stenciling and *trompe l'oeil* decoration, dark wood features, stations of the cross in ornate frames, and numerous oil paintings of religious figures and themes hung across the clerestory, was clearly Polish in inspiration, suggesting, again, that Father Dereszewski and other key members of the parish had a strong role in the design. If there was any doubt, a portrait of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa positioned above the altar clearly identified St. Mary's as a Polish Cathedral.

While the church was being completed, the east end of the old brick church was adapted into a three-story school with a convent on the top floor at a cost of \$16,000.¹⁵ The front and rear walls retain the pilasters that divided the church's side walls into bays, as does the new wall constructed to close off the building on the west side. The current parging was applied later and obscures the stone sills and headers of the three tiers of windows replacing the church's original lancets. Windows on the top floor have stone Gothic arches—not from the original lancets – which may have been selected to distinguish the convent level. The current plan reflects alterations made when the building was devoted solely to convent use after the new school was completed in 1913. However, the large windows on the second story hint at the former existence of classrooms on that level.

By the time the church was finished, there were 400 children enrolled in the parish school. The Sisters of the Resurrection, a Catholic order founded in Rome in 1891 by Celine and Hedwig Borzeka (an Eastern Polish mother and daughter), came to Chicago in 1900 and to St. Mary's in 1907. Schenectady was the first home of

¹³ Ellen Skerrett, "Sacred Space: Parish and Neighborhood in Polonia," in Ellen Skerrett, Edward R. Kantowicz, and Steven M. Avella, eds., *Catholicism, Chicago Style* (Chicago: Loyola University Press 1993), 153.

¹⁴ "America's 'Polish Cathedrals,'" *The Am-Pol Eagle* (March 12, n.d.). Available online at <http://ampoleagle.com/americas-polish-cathedrals-p8790-99.htm>

¹⁵ "Brief History."

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the sisters in what became the Eastern Province of the congregation.¹⁶ The 1910 census shows seven nuns – one born in Russian Poland, five in German Poland, and one in Illinois – living together at 103 Irving Street (no longer extant).¹⁷

Father Dereszewski's next project was to build a larger school building. He died in 1911 before construction began, but either he or his successor, Father Alexander Kowalski, had selected an architect with a number of Polish churches and schools to his credit.¹⁸ There are conflicting accounts of and variable name spellings for the New York City church architect Louis H. Giele. According to his obituary in the 6 October 1932 edition of the *New York Times*, Giele was born in 1861 in Germany, where he was educated in architecture before coming to the United States "in his twenties and immediately began practicing his profession." (However, his entry in the 1900 U.S. Census dates his arrival at 1875, at which time he would have been fourteen years of age.) The details of his early training are still unknown, either in Germany or the United States, and how or why he came to specialize in the design of Roman Catholic churches—for Polish parishes in particular—remains a mystery.

His best-known projects include St. Augustine's Church in The Bronx, the Church of St. Charles Borromeo in Brooklyn, St. Adelbert's Church in Philadelphia, and St. Anthony of Padua Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, where Giele and his family were living when he died in 1932. He was architect for both St. John the Baptist Church and Sacred Heart Hospital in Allentown, Pennsylvania; St. Casimir's Church in Yonkers, New York; the Assisum Institute in Manhattan; as well as Our Lady of Perpetual Help in New Bedford, Massachusetts (so far his only recorded project in that state). From at least 1900 until his death in 1932, Louis H. Giele lived at 129 Hutton Street in Jersey City with his wife, Linda (who had been born in New York to German-immigrant parents), and four children. His obituary located his office at 1123 Broadway in Manhattan.

The school that Giele designed was in keeping with the association between the Polish community and Romanesque design familiar from the old country. In addition, the choice of yellow brick, a more expensive material, helped convey the parish's success and pride in their church and school. The principal façade, fronting an unusually narrow ornamental section of the building, had a pedimented central pavilion containing the entrance. This feature was divided into three bays by four stone pilasters with Roman capitals that supported a large bracketed entablature, distinguishing the low pediment as well as the flanking sections of the façade. The entrance and third story contained arched openings. The design strongly evinced characteristics of German Neo-Classical architecture, the popularity of which peaked in the early 19th century, when many residences and public buildings had facades organized with classically ornamented central pavilions or porticos flanked by wings.¹⁹ Arched openings were common features that referenced Quattrocento Italian architecture – not to be confused with the revival of the Medieval Romanesque style (Rundbogenstil) in Germany later in the century.

¹⁶ Polish Genealogical Society of America, "Sisters of the Resurrection." Online resource: <http://pgsa.org/research-directory/archdiocese-of-chicago-polish-parishes/other-institutions/sisters-of-the-resurrection/>

¹⁷ Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line], Provo, UT, USA. Year: 1910; Census Place: Schenectady Ward 6, Schenectady, New York; Roll: T624_1078; Page: 7A; Enumeration District: 0192; FHL microfilm: 1375091. Note: 103 Irving Street is not the current convent building; it is possible that this building was used as a convent before construction of the 1913 school and reconfiguration of the old building.

¹⁸ Father Kowalski, like many Polish immigrants, was dedicated to the Polish national movement. During World War I, he along with 300 other Schenectady Poles enlisted in the American military (German and Austrian Poles were classified as enemy aliens) in large part to help gain the independence of Poland. St. Mary's and other Polish churches became actively involved in the war effort and relief work.

¹⁹ David Watkin and Thomas Mellinghoff, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987).

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Behind this culturally sourced frontispiece was a modern school building constructed with fireproof materials with a plan dominated by a large field house-like gymnasium/auditorium on the second floor. Eight tall arched windows punctuated the side walls of the room, which was open to its iron roof structure. A second-floor lobby with ticket office and coat room, accessed by stairs from the front entry, enabled the auditorium to have more than just school use. A third-story, containing a balcony and lavatories, seemed to have been conceived mostly for the effect of the arcade of windows across the top of the façade. Iron beams, encased in concrete, and concrete floors were exposed in the ceilings of most classrooms; in hallways they were covered by pressed metal ceilings. Interior woodwork was manufactured in a Craftsman school style.

When it opened, the school, with as many as 12 classrooms, needed additional teachers and administrators. The Sisters of the Resurrection had supplied six members to the parish school in the building constructed from the remnant of the 1893 church; when the new building opened in 1913, more nuns needed accommodation and the old convent/school was renovated to function solely as a convent. The 1915 NY Census counted 15 nuns in residence at 828 ½ Eastern Avenue. Interior changes were made, and it probably was at this time that the two exterior walls visible from the street were parged and fashioned to resemble the color and pattern of the ashlar on the church, including faux pointed arches. The Sisters of the Resurrection, who were engaged in teaching and ministry duties at St. Mary's and its sister Polish church in the city, St. Adelbert's, resided in the convent until St. Mary's was closed in 2009.

In 1915, the Rev. Alexander Kowalski (age 29) was in charge of the parish, but it was not until the appointment of the Rev. Francis S. (Stanislaus) Ren as pastor of St. Mary's Church in 1921, that the next set of significant improvements was made to the parish's buildings. Father Ren initiated renovations to the convent and replacement of the rectory, but his most significant action took place inside the church.²⁰ In 1926 an itinerant wood carver from Poland, Francis Szumal was commissioned to construct altar pieces for the main and flanking altars at the front of the sanctuary. Szumal was from the village of Nowy Targ in Poland, and according to a Schenectady *Daily Gazette* article, he had studied architecture and design at the Imperial Art School of Austria and had completed altar sets for 22 other American churches over the preceding 12 years.²¹ He completed the two smaller altarpieces in seven months, each measuring 8 x 20 ft. and containing more than 4,000 individual pieces. The final, larger altarpiece, measuring 23 x 37 ft. would take another three months and an untold number of components. Working in a Roman Gothic style following the general design of the church, the fine craftwork was painted white to resemble marble. Szumal set up his workshop in rooms in the "abandoned parish house," apparently referring to the first rectory.

During its first 50 years, St Mary's Church retained the ornate, atmospheric, Old World character that provided comfort and solace to an immigrant parish still strongly tied to its native culture, language, and identity at the margins of mainstream American society. However, as the congregation became a generation or two removed from the European and immigrant experiences, and inevitably more engaged in American ways of life, pressure to modernize increased. Liturgical reforms were made after the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965. After Father Ren's pastorate ended in 1969 (he died the following year), the parish came under the administration of the Rev. Michael W. Zakens. This transition marked a watershed in the development of St.

²⁰ "Brief History."

²¹ "Infinite Patience Secret of Success, Declares Wood Carver at St. Mary's," *Schenectady Daily Gazette* (Feb. n.d., 1926), St. Mary's Church Vertical File, Schenectady County Historical Society Library, Schenectady, NY. A search for other Szumal projects turned up only one: St. Stanislaus Roman Catholic Church in Chicopee, Massachusetts.

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Mary's church. In recognition of the Diamond Jubilee of the parish, significant changes were made to the interior of the church to revitalize its appearance. The walls were painted and new lights, pews, and carpeting were installed. The basement was renovated to become a church hall for group meetings and social gatherings. In addition, both the rectory and the convent chapel were remodeled in popular mid-20th-century taste and materials.

Due to declining enrollment, the parish school was closed in 1979 and has not been occupied since. The Sisters of the Resurrection continued to reside in the convent, devoting their efforts to religious education in hospitals, nursing homes, and other social service settings.

Leading up to its centennial in 1992, more attention was given to the preservation of the church. A new asphalt shingle roof was installed (where it had been slate), and the slate roofs of the three steeples were replaced with copper. The interior was stripped of its old plaster and whatever painted decoration remained after the 1969 repainting. The entire space was replastered, the current stenciled decoration applied, and a new wainscot made from sheet paneling was installed (later plastered over). The paintings hanging on the walls of the clerestory were taken down, cleaned, and restored to their original locations.

The church was closed in 2009 in a period of extensive consolidation of parishes in the Albany Diocese and around the country. It was offered for sale and purchased by the current owner who intends to reopen it as an event space. The diocese removed the religious statuary, including the Stations of the Cross, but left the paintings in place. The pews have been removed, but otherwise the building remains intact to its 1992 conditions.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested) – Approved 01/03/17 – 35,200
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.68 acres

UTM References

1	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>587619E</u> Easting	<u>4740411N</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

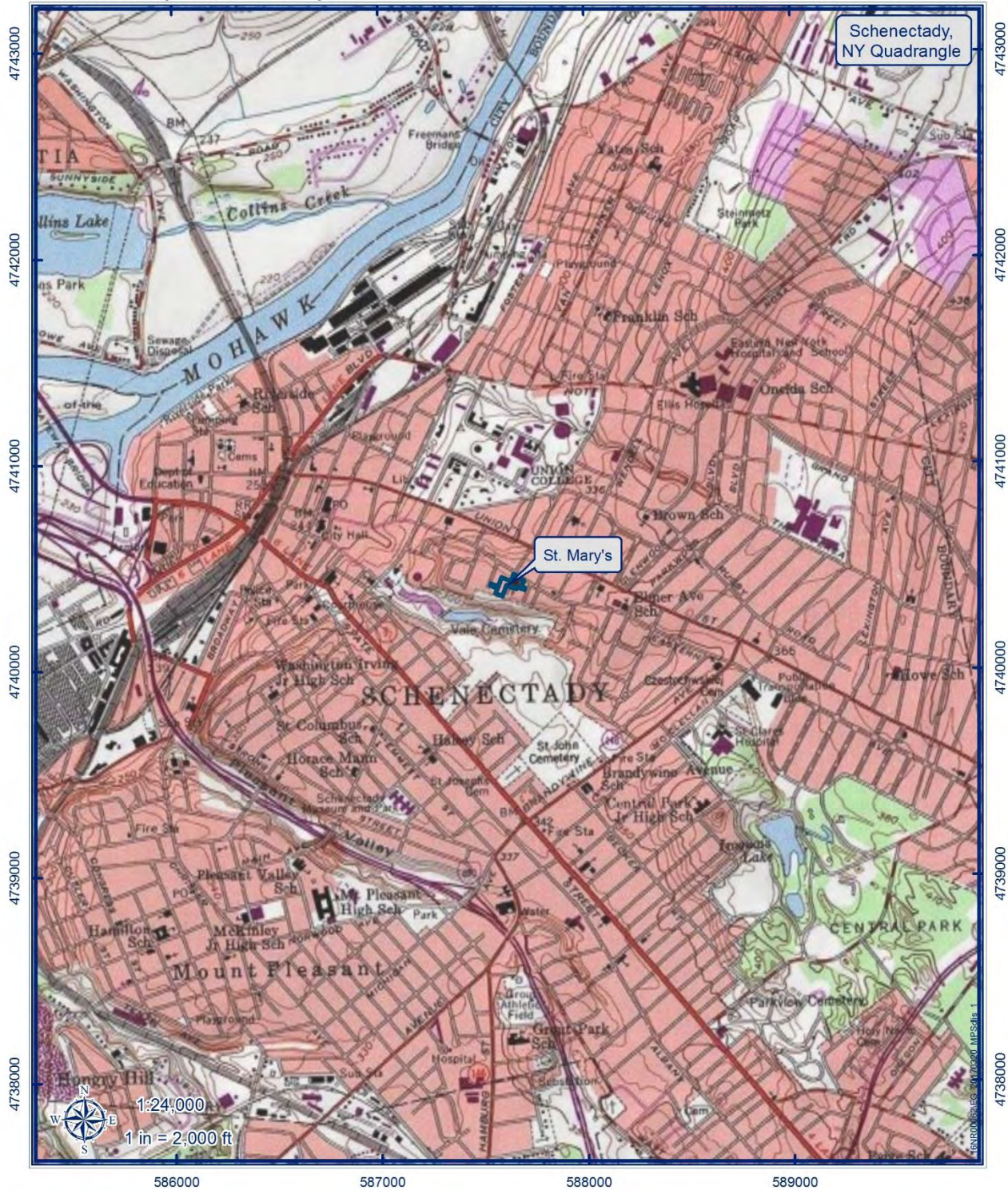
The boundary contains the historic property associated with the nominated property.

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820-828 Eastern Ave. & 104 Irving St.
Schenectady, NY 12308



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

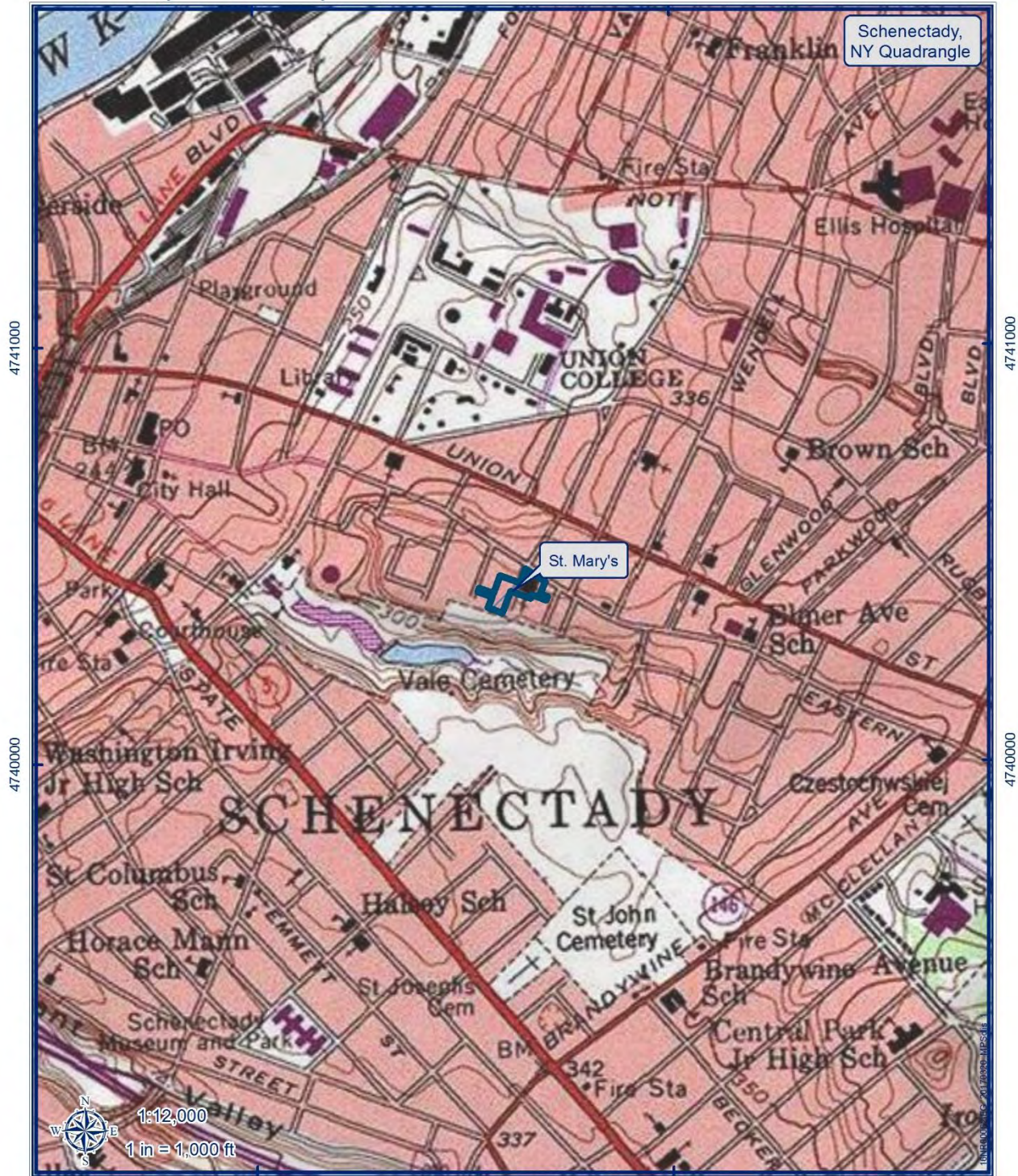


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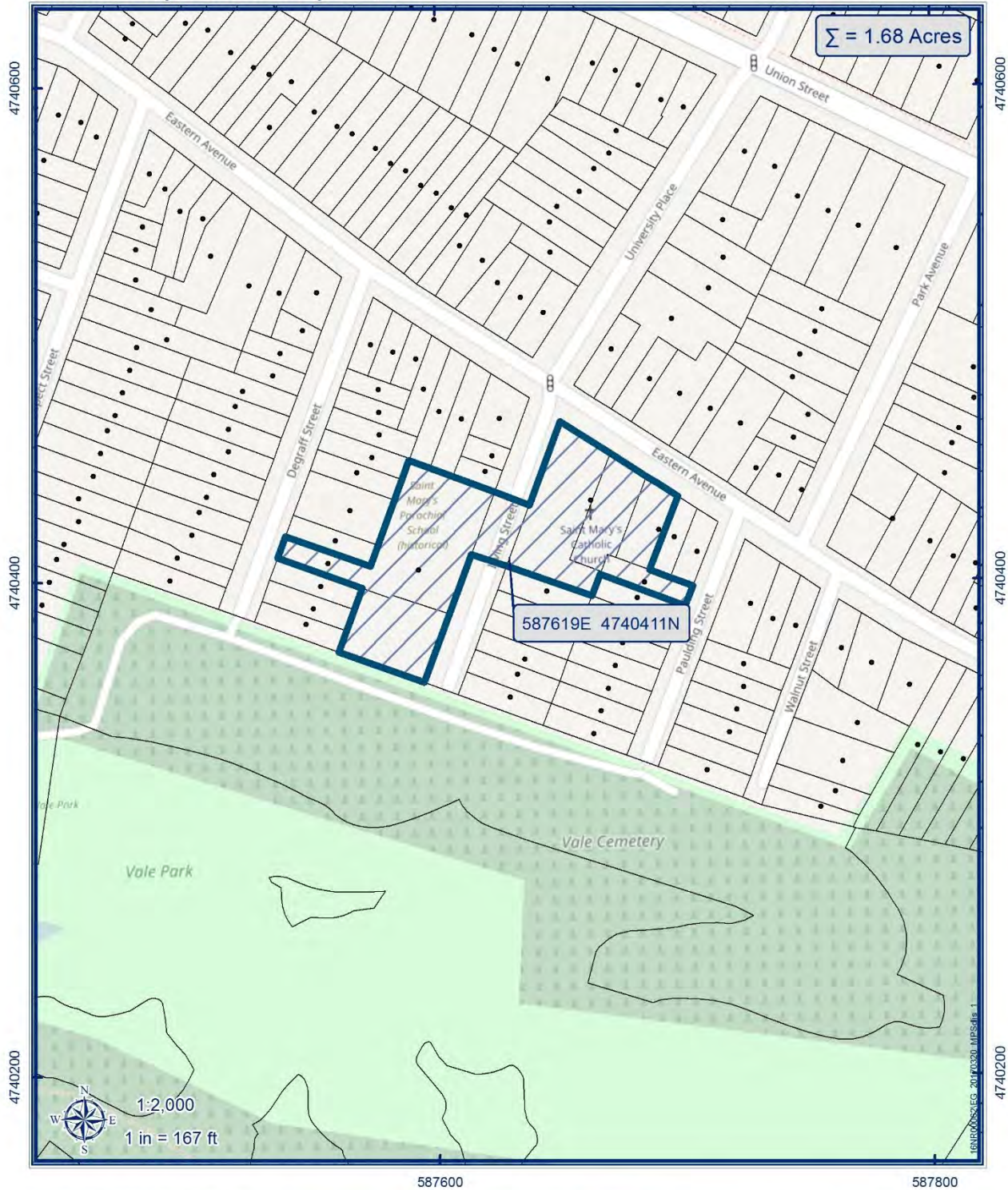


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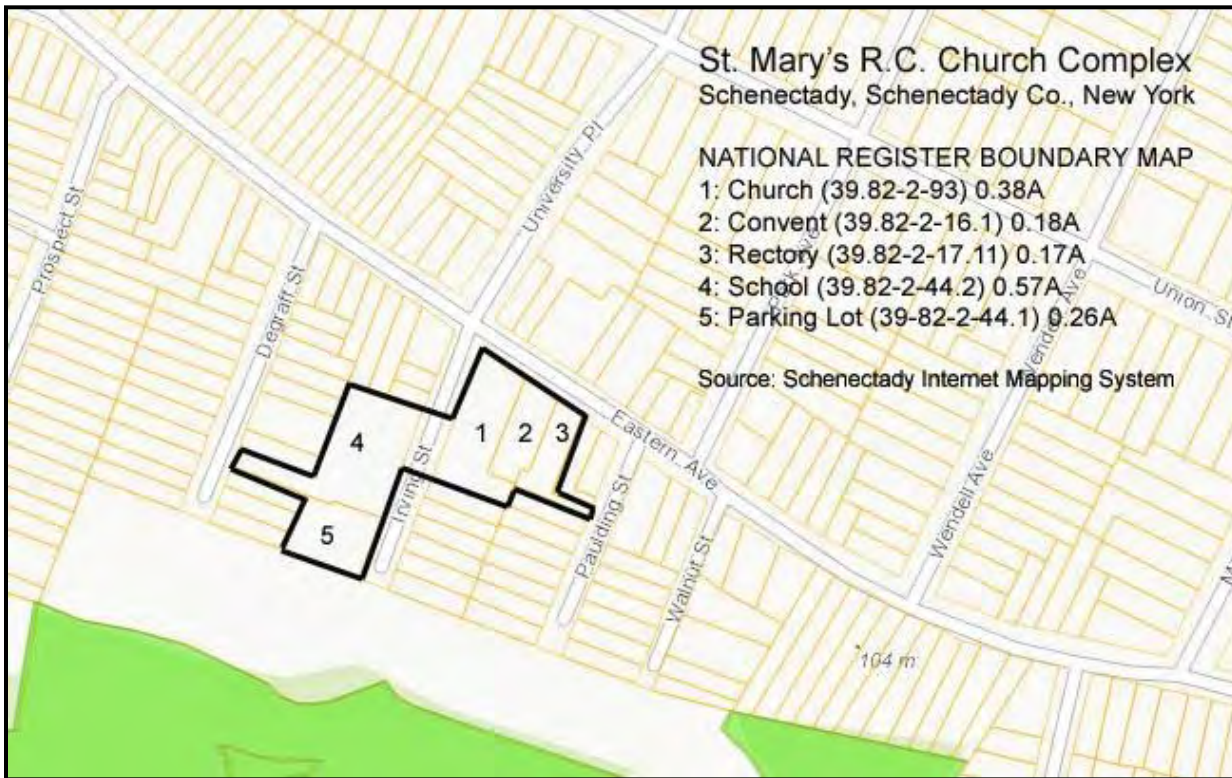


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Units: Meter



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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Neil Larson

organization Larson Fisher Associates, Inc.

date 25 October 2016

street & number P.O. Box 1394

telephone 845-679-5054

city or town Woodstock

state NY

zip code 12498

e-mail nlarson@hvc.rr.com

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Additional Documentation

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- Fig.2: Convent created from rear portion of 1893 church. Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.
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- Fig.17: View of rectory, ca. 1925. Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Schenectady, New York
County and State

Photographs:

Name of Property: St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

City or Vicinity: Schenectady

County: Schenectady

State: New York

Photographer: Neil Larson

Date Photographed: 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 30: View of church from north
- 2 of 30: View of church from SW
- 3 of 30: View of church from NE
- 4 of 30: View of church from SE
- 5 of 30: View of church interior towards altar
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- 8 of 30: View of church basement
- 9 of 30: View of convent from NE
- 10 of 30: View of convent from SW
- 11 of 30: View of convent interior, first floor, chapel
- 12 of 30: View of convent interior, second floor, old classroom
- 13 of 30: View of convent interior, third floor, bed chamber
- 14 of 30: View of convent interior, second floor, stalls
- 15 of 30: View of school from NE
- 16 of 30: View of school from south
- 17 of 30: View of school from east
- 18 of 30: View of school interior, first floor, entry and stairs
- 19 of 30: View of school interior, first floor, main hallway
- 20 of 30: View of school interior, first floor, classroom
- 21 of 30: View of school interior, first floor, classroom
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- 23 of 30: View of rectory from NE
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- 26 of 30: View of rectory interior, first floor, living room fireplace
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- 28 of 30: View of rectory interior, second floor, detail of door
- 29 of 30: View of rectory garage from NW
- 30 of 30: View of school parking lot and garage

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Schenectady, New York
County and State

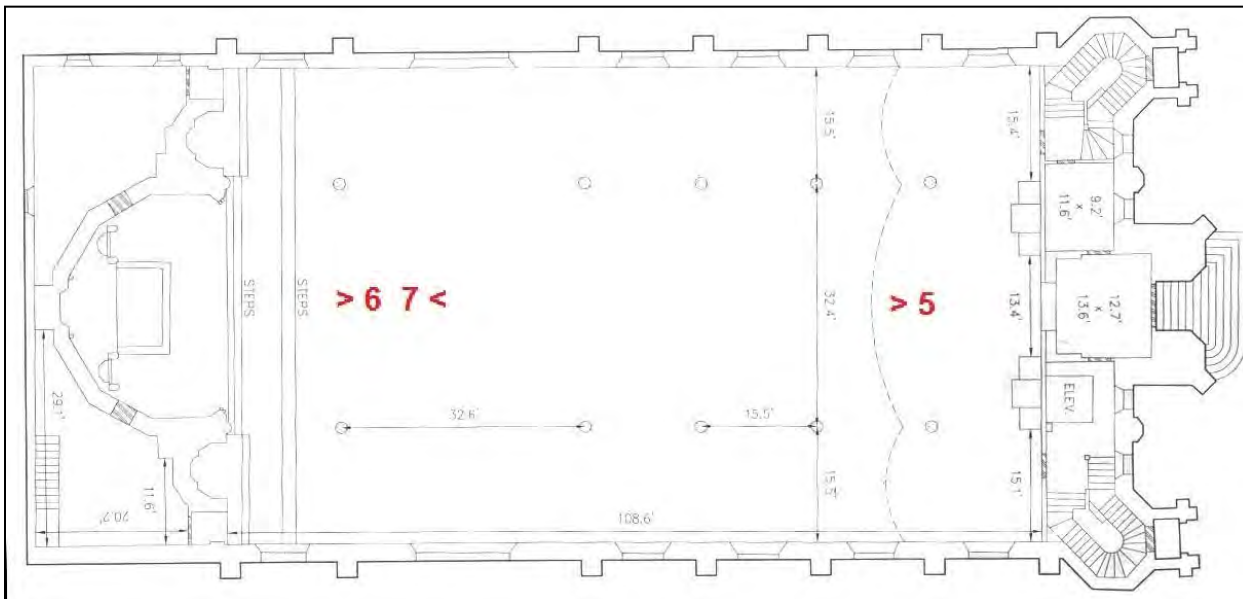
Photo Key: Exterior



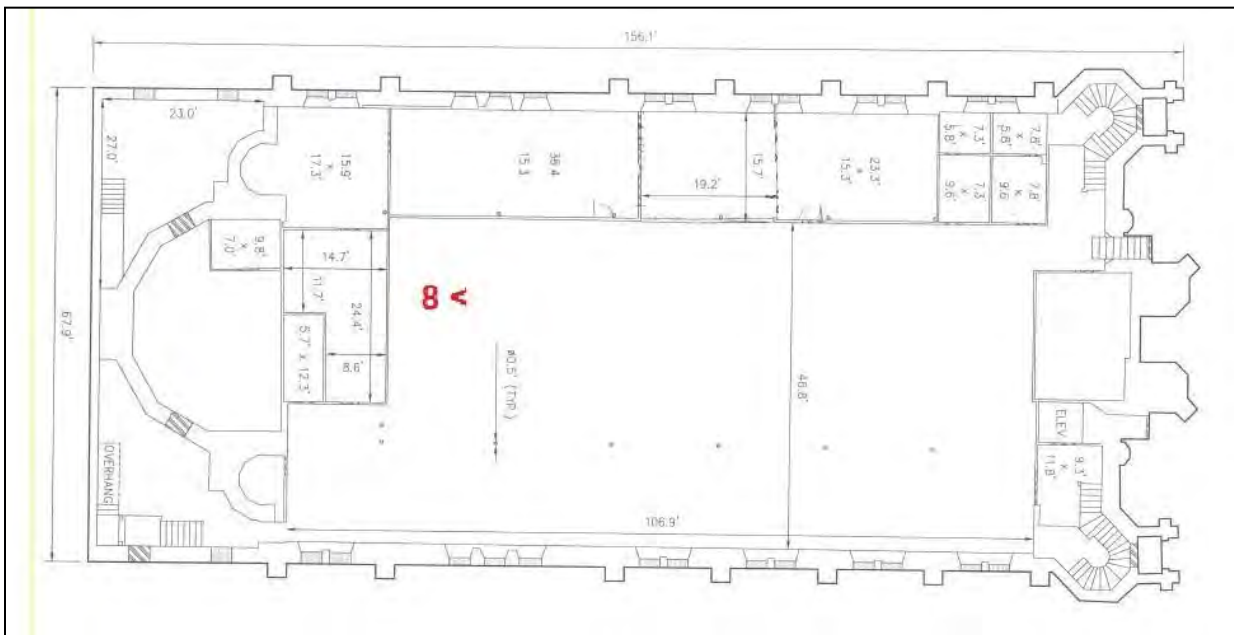
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Schenectady, New York
County and State

Photo Keys: Interior



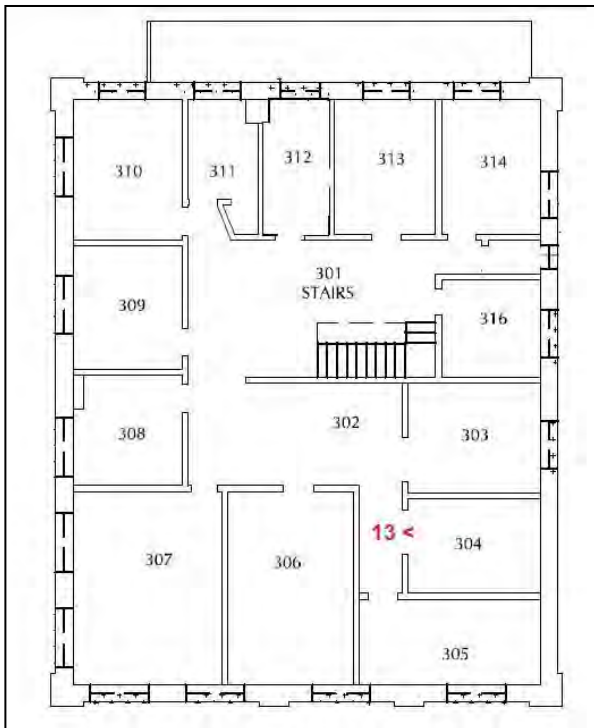
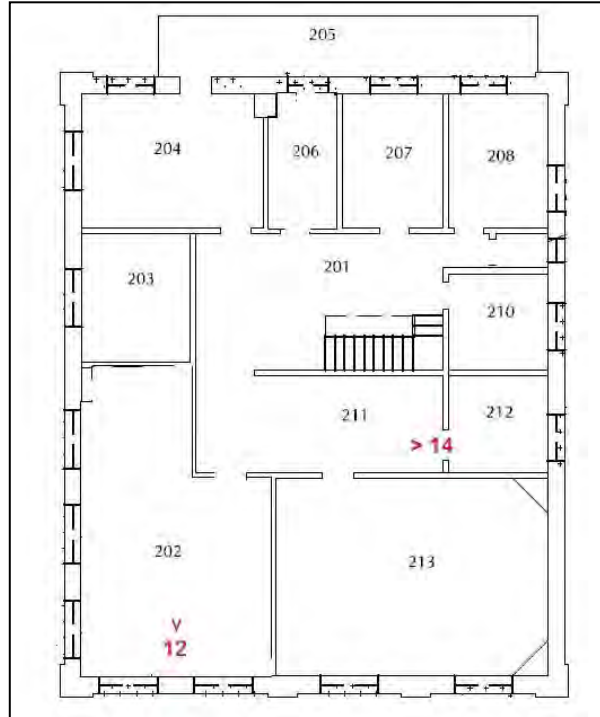
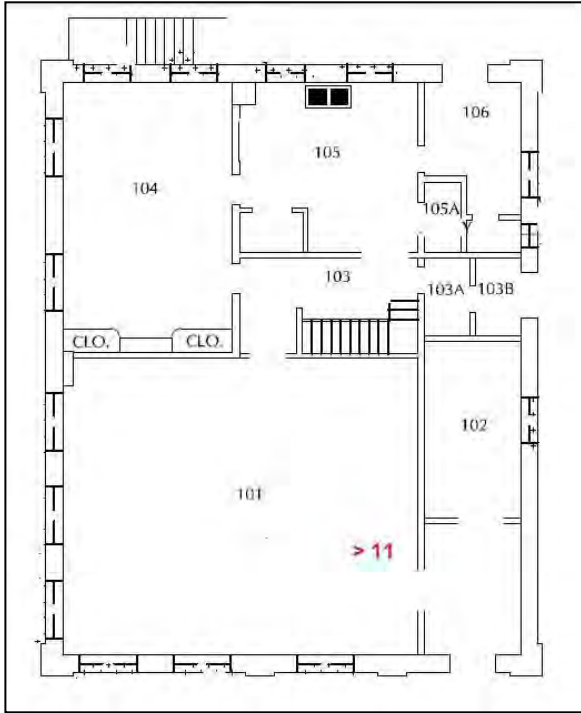
Church, first floor plan. Drawing by CHA, Albany NY, 2014.



Church, basement plan. Drawing by CHA, Albany NY, 2014.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Schenectady, New York
County and State

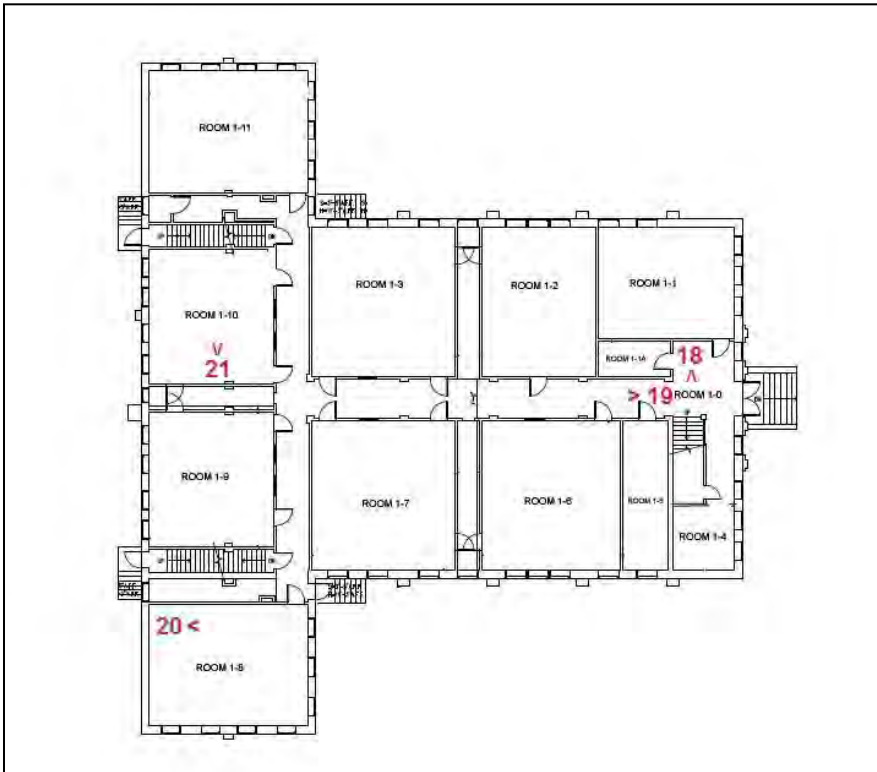


Convent floorplans. Drawings by LECS, LLC, 2015.

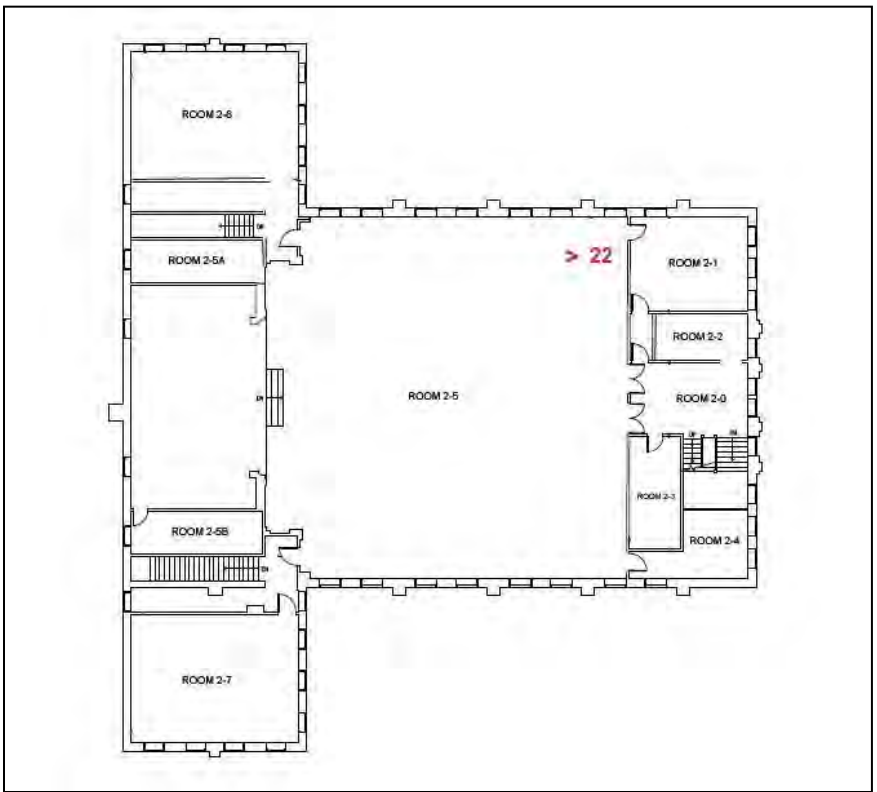
- First floor plan, upper left
- Second floor plan, upper right
- Third floor plan, lower left.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Schenectady, New York
County and State



School, First floor plan. Drawing by C2 Architecture, Schenectady NY, 2015.



School, Second floor plan. Drawing by C2 Architecture, Schenectady NY, 2015

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Schenectady, New York
County and State



Rectory, First and second floors.

Property Owner:

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

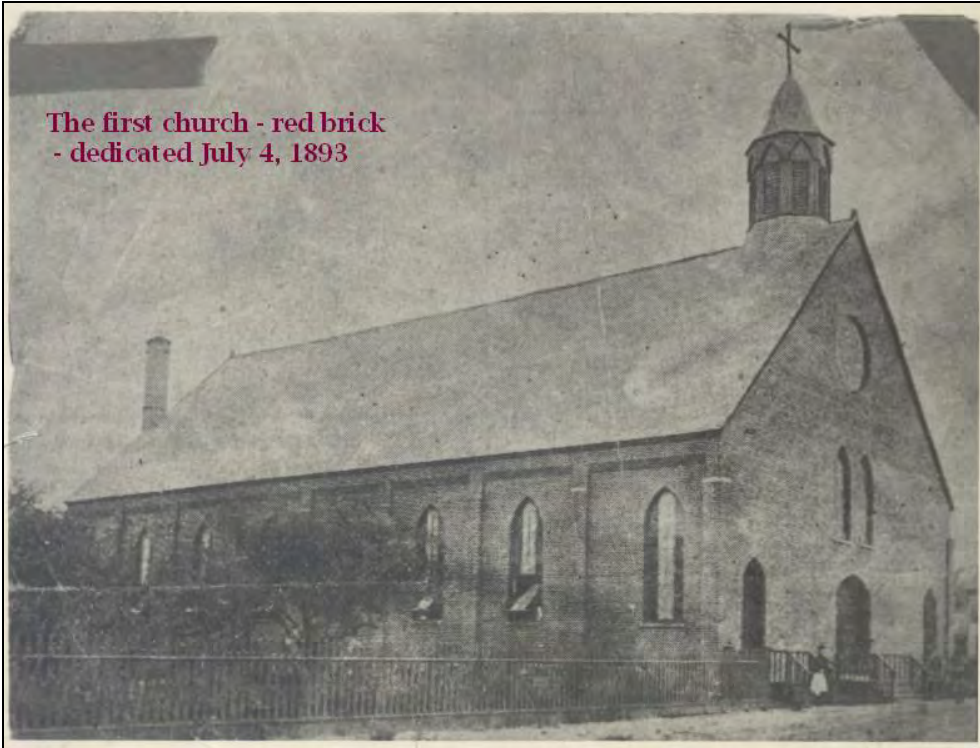
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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**The first church - red brick
- dedicated July 4, 1893**

Fig.1: Historic view of 1893 church. It was demolished with the present church built perpendicularly across it except the rear three bays which were saved and adapted into the present convent. Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.



Convent - 1930's?

Fig.2: Convent created from rear portion of 1893 church. Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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visit to it is made. The arch-
sanctuaries are almost as handsome as
those of St. John's. When completed
the church will have cost about \$125,-
000 and the school building \$16,000. This
magnificent property is a monument to
the energy and executive ability of the

wipe a joint as
plumber in Schenectady, but he was
not in the running with "Curley," who
crossed the line a winner by 10 yards.
Some one had accidentally introduced
a bar or iron between the spokes of

NEW POLISH CATHOLIC CHURCH, SCHENECTADY.
MAGNIFICENT \$125,000 EDIFICE, WHICH IS TO BE DEDICATED SUNDAY.

pastor, Rev. Father Joseph Dereszewski, and the generosity and devotion of his comparatively small congregation. Fourteen years ago the young priest came to this city to minister to the Catholic Polish population. There was no church organization and no place of worship. Until the old church, which occupied the site of the present structure, was built the services were conducted in St. Joseph's Church. Then the young priest had difficulty in form-

William's wheel, which probably accounts for his slow time.
The fat men's race was won by Donahue, with Frank Boyle a close second. John Sauter and Thomas F. Crowley also ran, but failed to finish.
The base-ball game between the married and the single men was called off on account of wet grounds.
The nail-driving contest was won by Charles Goldwalte, with Elmer Zeh second.

Fig.3: Rendering of church published in *Schenectady Daily Gazette* [1905]. Source: Schenectady County Historical Society Vertical Files.

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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Fig.4: View of side aisle showing original wainscoting (with radiators), wall stenciling, painted columns, carved altarpieces and stations of the cross and furnishings. N.D. (after carved altarpieces were added in 1926). Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.

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National Park Service

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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Fig.5: View of altar, ca. 1953. Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

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Fig.6: View of interior following 1980 restoration. Source: 100th Anniversary Program, 1992, Source: Schenectady County Historical Society Vertical Files.

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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**Infinite Patience Secret of Success, CH, 1926
Declares Wood Carver at St. Mary's**

Feb. 19 26

**Genius From Faraway Now
Tarz, Poland, Gives Lay-
man Insight into World of
the Artist.**

Infinite patience applied to any worthwhile task is the secret of success in the medium selected. This is the motto, even the gospel, of Francis Szumal, artist in wood carving, who came from his native village, Faraway Nowi Tarz, Poland, to decorate the three altars of St. Mary's Polish Catholic Church on Eastern avenue, two of which were formally dedicated Sunday.

Credentials from Cardinal O'Connell, a testimonial from President Wilson, to whom Szumal presented a hand-carved cane at the inauguration last year, and decorative effects in 25 churches in as many leading American cities, speak for the genius of the artist now gracing St. Mary's chancel with his vision and energy.

If anything impresses the layman conversing with Szumal, it is the intense sincerity of the man and his unbounded devotion to his art. An idea of the patience which he gives his work is indicated by the fact that the intricate sculptures comprise more than 4,000 individual pieces of wood, conceived, carved and fitted during the past seven months. And there is not a nail or silver altar, only wooden pegs and glue having been used.

Szumal impresses one also as taciturn, studious, his whole being given up to one thing—art. Secluded in the side room of the abandoned parish house of St. Mary's on Eastern avenue, he turns and whittles, carves and sums to himself.

An Indefatigable Worker.

For him the eight-hour whistle means nothing. Offices late at night or before daybreak he is stooped at his bench, executing his beloved patterns.

Three months more effort will be required to complete his work here, he told newspapermen today. Execution of the large center altar, 22 by 22 feet, is now under way, and until it is done, Szumal will know no peace.

The altar-set, comprising the three monumental standards, are in Roman Gothic design, following out the general design and construction of St. Mary's edifice. The two smaller pieces are eight by 20 feet.

Tribute to Originality.

It is Szumal's boast that no two of his creations are alike. Every design is patterned in harmonies with the particular architectural pattern of the edifice at hand. As a testimony of originality, he cites the experience he met in Springfield, Mass. While there he was fashioning interior work in a large church, the newspapermen took up the topic with special articles and photographs.

Subsequently, department store salesmen, after consulting Szumal, had individual pieces of his handiwork photographed, from which needle-work patterns were developed and agreed throughout the territory.

Work in this country, intermittent intervals, has occupied Szumal for the past 12 years. Szumal, because of his artistic reactions, has no horror of Ellis Island and immigration officers. As often as he likes, he comes and goes between America and his native land. Testimonials from individuals or organizations that expect to employ him, are always sufficient to admit of entry to our ports. In the instance here, the Rev. Father Francis J. Ken, pastor at St. Mary's and an individual who made contact with Szumal possible for this article, aided in procuring port entry.

Has Wealth of Treatises.

Szumal, who only seems good-naturedly when you ask him about whom Father Ken says is "about as" brings a wealth of experience and training to his creations.

For nine years he studied intensely in the best universities and schools of the continent, including the Imperial Art School of Austria and other art and engineering institutions. Architecture and design were the main fields in which his preliminary labors centered, he said. One gets variety pictures and impressions of the good-natured eccentricities of Szumal from reports of contacts he has made here, according to Father Ken.

The artist, given a free hand to select his own materials, as much as he little as he wanted, placed the employer in a quandary, because of his rigid specifications in insistent demands in selection of suitable woods.

Some of the lumber yard workers spoke to Father Ken about him here with such extraordinary demands. It takes him the longest time to decide what he wants to do it, anyway," Father Ken was told.

"Oh, never mind." He's an artist—a good-natured and thorough one. Don't worry about him," the pastor replied, amusedly.

Charishes White House Letter.

In his inside coat pocket, Szumal carried his letter from the White House, signed by E. T. Clark, secretary, on order of President Coolidge. The letter, sent following presentation of the mahogany cane decorated with a hand-carved eagle's head, reads as follows:

"The President sincerely appreciates your sending to him on the day of his inauguration the cane which you have made. He is glad to have this specimen of the handiwork of one of our citizens of foreign birth, and has asked me to thank you for it."

The letter is dated March 6, 1925. Szumal also has paid his respects to the friendship he bears for Father Ken, in the presentation of another elegantly carved cane, made since his work here is completed.

Szumal makes his home in the parish house, where he will remain until his work here is completed. Then he expects to return to his native country, where he has numerous other contracts awaiting him.

Even his parting remark to newspapermen today, had to do with his work. In his English, which he speaks haltingly but not unintelligibly, he said:

"This work, this work, it takes great time—but, ah, (with a happy shrug of his shoulders), it is worth all of it."

Joseph Anthus, organist at St. Mary's, aided the reporter greatly in understanding the work and aspirations of the artist, whose more involved utterances Anthus translated into English.



1926

Above the hand-carved altar decorations in St. Mary's Polish Catholic Church, the fine detail is indicated by the top of the setting which frames the statue of the Christ. The entire work comprises 2,000 individual pieces and is eight by 20 feet. A warm white painting of the setting gives it the appearance of marble.

At right, Francis Szumal, the artist as he appears at his work in the workshop in the abandoned parish house east of the church. He is seen choosing a section of wood scroll, which will be placed in the main altar.



Fig. 7: Daily Gazette article about wood carver and altarpieces he created, Feb. 1926. Source: Schenectady County Historical Society Vertical Files.

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National Park Service

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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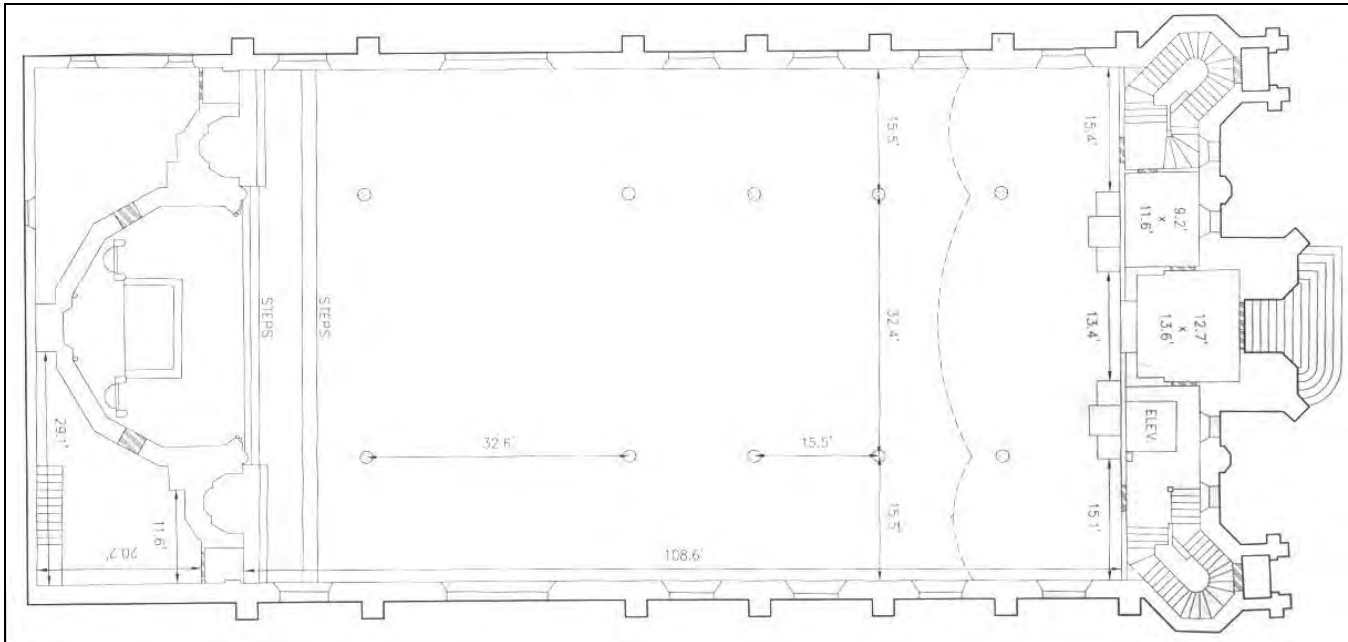


Fig.8: Church, first floor plan. Drawing by CHA, Albany NY, 2014.

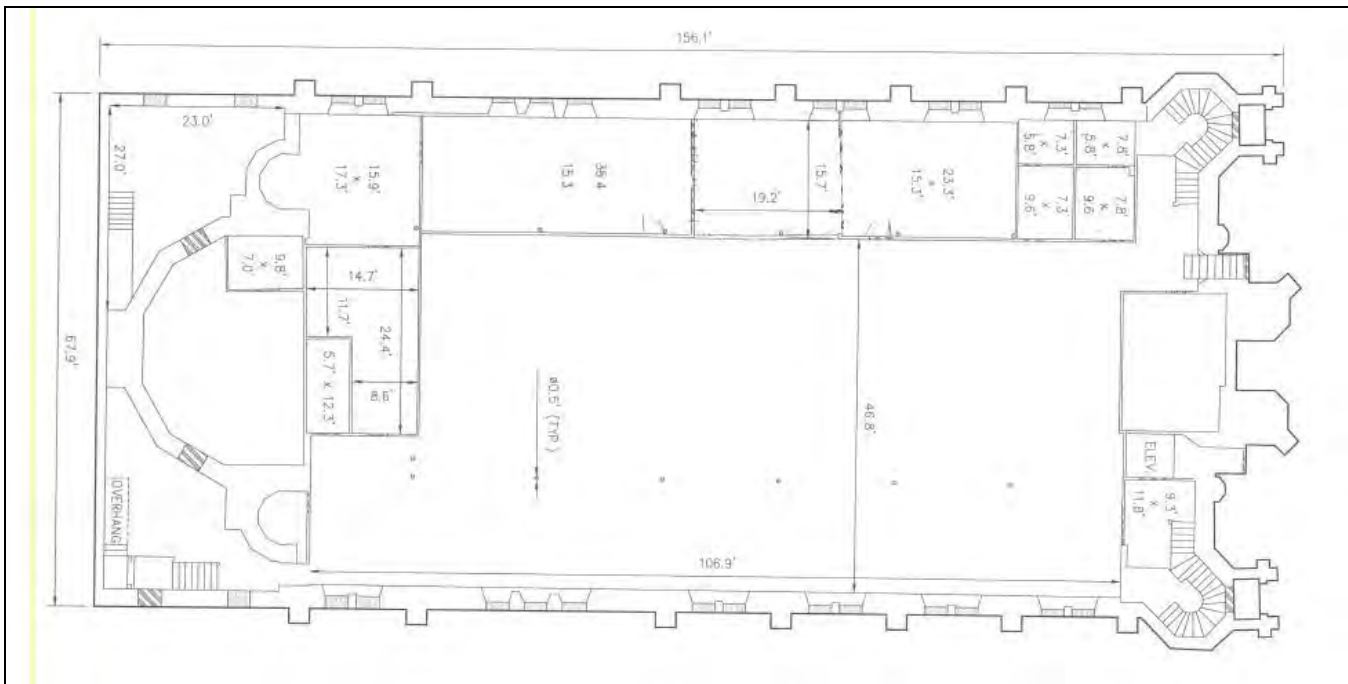


Fig.9: Church, basement plan. Drawing by CHA, Albany NY, 2014.

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National Park Service

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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Fig.10: Postcard views of church and school, N.D. (after 1913). Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.



Fig.11: View of school auditorium, 1978. Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.

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National Park Service

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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

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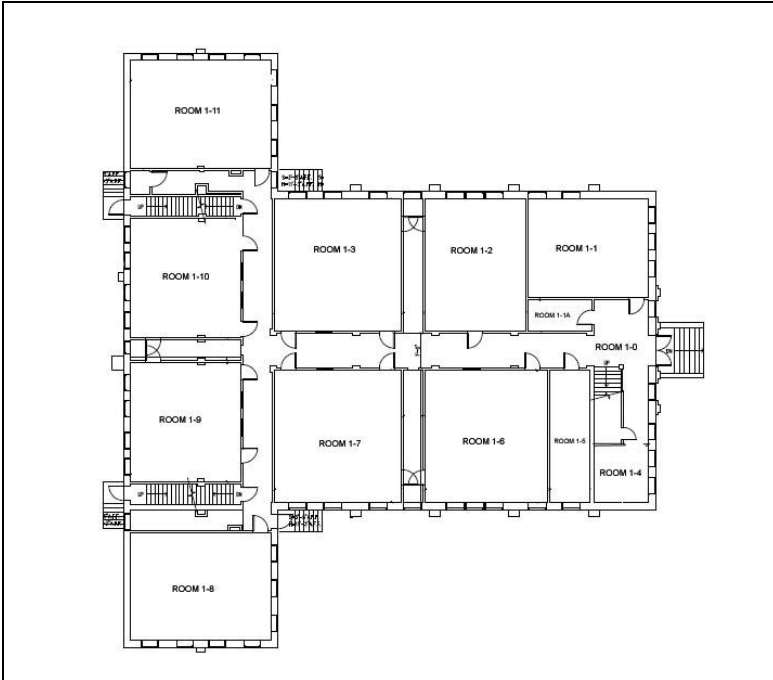


Fig.12: School, 1st floor plan. Drawing by C2 Architecture, Schenectady NY, 2015.

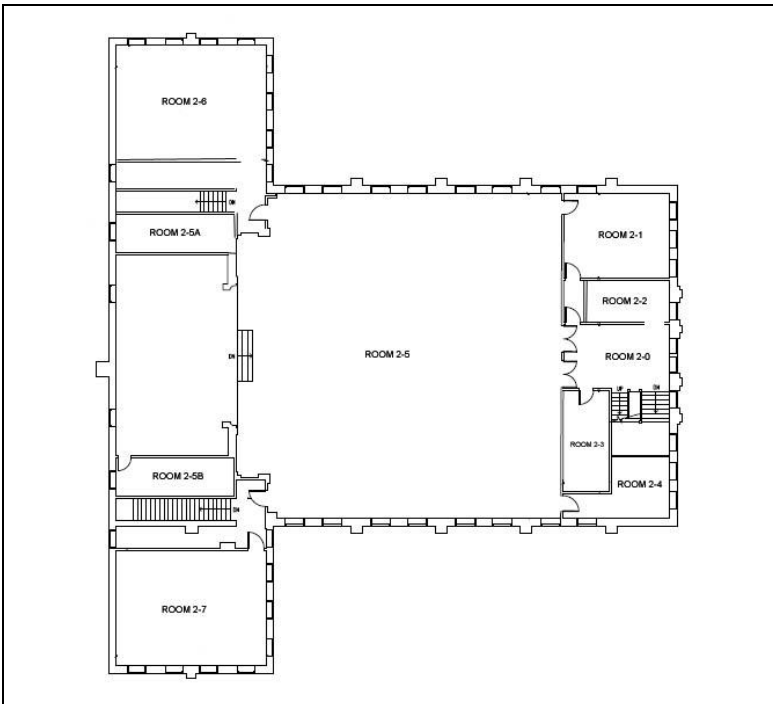


Fig.13: School, 2nd floor plan. Drawing by C2 Architecture, Schenectady NY, 2015

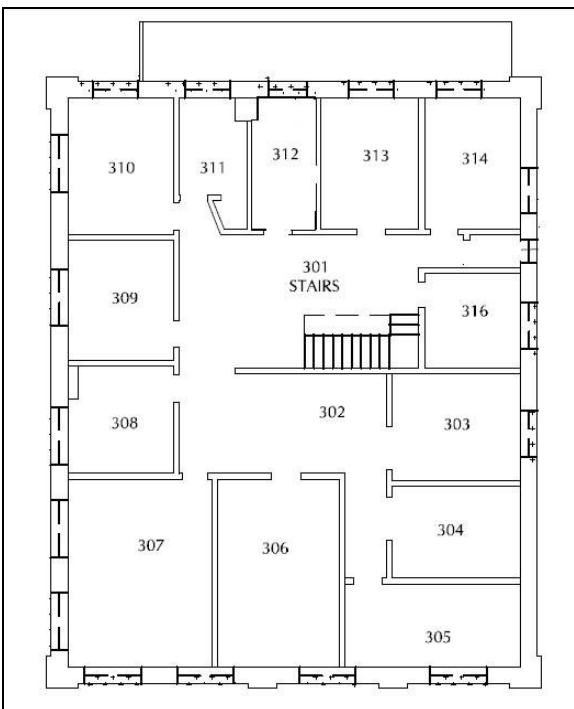
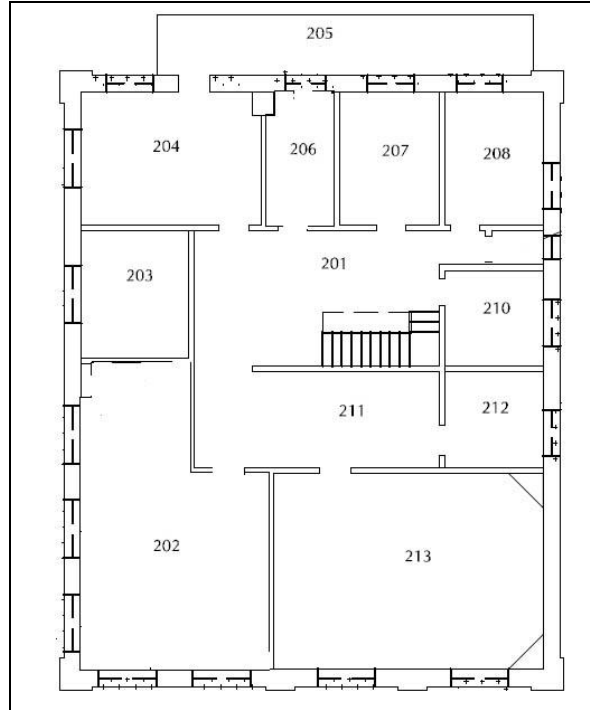
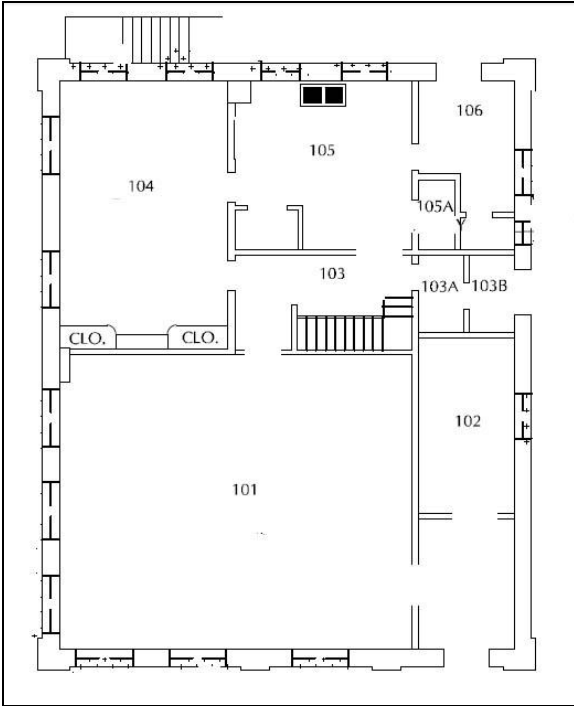
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St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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Convent floorplans. Drawings by LECS, LLC, 2015.

- Fig.14: First floor plan, upper left
- Fig.15: Second floor plan, upper right
- Fig.16: Third floor plan, lower left.

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Schenectady, Schenectady County, New York

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Fig.17: View of rectory, ca. 1925. Source: St. Mary's Historian's Archive.















































826









IN
CONFERENCE

PLEASE
DO NOT
DISTURB

KEEP
DOOR
CLOSED







DEAD
END



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: Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: Date of Weekly List:

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 6/12/2017 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.



Schenectady Historic District Commission

March 13, 2017

Michael F. Lynch, P.E., AIA, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer and Director
Division for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Waterford, New York 12188-0189

Dear Mr. Lynch,

On behalf of the Schenectady Historic District Commission, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the nomination of St Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex ("Complex") to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The Commission reviewed the nomination materials and discussed them at its February and March meetings.

It is the Commission's opinion that the Complex meets the criteria for listing on the State and National Registers. Based on the submitted nomination materials, we concur with the findings in the Statement of Significance that the Complex meets National Register Criterion A - Education, Ethnic Heritage -- European, and Religion; and Criterion C - Architecture; at a local level of significance. In addition to the architectural value of the church building itself the Complex is a complete, largely intact collection of buildings developed to serve the burgeoning Polish community in Schenectady at a time when the City's population and industries were growing rapidly.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment on this nomination. We are pleased that the property owner(s) have taken the time and effort to make this investment in the Complex and look forward to its addition to the City's collection of buildings on the State and National Registers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carrie", with a stylized, wavy flourish extending to the right.

Carrie Britt-Narcavage, Chair of the Schenectady Historic District Commission

cc: Mayor McCarthy, HDC binder



Gary R. McCarthy
Mayor

CITY OF SCHENECTADY
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

City Hall - Jay Street
Schenectady, New York 12305

Office: (518) 382-5000
Cell: (518) 424-0483
Email: GMcCarthy@SchenectadyNY.Gov

March 15, 2017

Michael F. Lynch, P.E., AIA
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer and Director
Division for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Waterford, New York 12188-0189

Dear Michael:


The City of Schenectady is the proud home of the Stockade Historic District, the first historic district registered in the State of New York. Additionally, our City contains four other beautiful historic districts, two locally designated historic landmarks and a number of sites on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. We pride ourselves in our built heritage and take seriously our responsibility of preserving our historic built environment that serves to enhance the quality of life for our residents, businesses and future generations, and spurs vital economic development.

Included in this correspondence is the recommendation of the City of Schenectady Historic District Commission to add the St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex (820-828 Eastern Avenue & 104 Irving Street; "Complex") to the State and National Registers of Historic Places ("Registers"). Specifically, based upon its review of the nomination materials provided and the Commissioners' knowledge of historic preservation and the history of Schenectady, the Commission agrees that the Complex meets the criteria for listing on the Registers and recommends its addition.

It is also my opinion that the Complex meets the criteria for listing on the State and National Registers, and recommends that the Complex should be added to the Registers.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this nomination.

Very truly yours,


Gary R. McCarthy

Enclosure

cc: Rima Shamieh



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



24 April 2017

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

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

The Virginia, Erie County
St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church Complex, Schenectady County
Marshall D. Bice House, Schoharie County
Gaines District #2 Schoolhouse, Orleans County
East Main Street Historic District, Monroe County
Camp Taiga, Hamilton County

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

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office