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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

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 ASCENSION ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 168 and 172 Robinson Street, 61, 69 and 91 Keil Street [] not for publication

city or town North Tonawanda [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Niagara code 063 zip code 14120

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Ruth A. Peupert *NSHPO*

7/7/16

Signature of certifying official/Title

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) _____

for *Alexis Oberlander*

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

8/29/16

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Niagara, New York

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility

COMMERCE/TRADE/office building,

fitness center

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th and EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/

Gothic Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT/New Formalism

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Medina sandstone, limestone, concrete

walls brick, stucco

roof asphalt shingle

other

Narrative Description

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

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Niagara, New York

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

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 #33,601**
- 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)

Social History

Architecture

Period of Significance:

1888 - 1969

Significant Dates:

1888, 1894, 1907, 1910, 1922, 1969

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

William H. Archer (architect, church)

Gerald Zimmerman (architect, parish hall)

Albert Asa Post (architect, school)

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Niagara, New York
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 1.91 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 7 | | 6 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 8 | | 4 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

2 | 1 | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 | 1 | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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 Tom Yots [Edited and arranged by Jennifer Walkowski, NYSHPO]

organization Tom Yots, M.S., M.Arch. Historic Preservation date May 19, 2016

street & number 656 Lafayette Avenue telephone 716.930.1831

city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14222

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

Narrative Description of Property

The Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex is located in the city of North Tonawanda, NY, on the north side of Robinson Street. The site is bordered by Robinson Street on the south, Vandervoort Street at the east and Keil Street to the north. The church complex consists of four (4) buildings related to the functioning of the parish, built over a 75 year span: 1) the Church and rectory (church built in 1894 partially on the 1888 foundation; rectory built in 1922 and interconnected at a later date), 2) the school (built in 1907, its interior rebuilt after a fire in 1945), 3) the convent (built in 1910), and 4) the parish hall (built in 1969). The cruciform plan church is oriented to face south onto Robinson Street at the corner of Vandervoort Street. The rectory, an elongated square plan, is immediately adjacent (and connected to) the church to the west with a hyphen. There is a small parking lot immediately west of the rectory. The school is north of the rectory, and is rectangular with its entry on the short side facing Keil Street to the north. The convent is also rectangular and immediately west of the school with the short side of the rectangle facing Keil Street. A parking lot is east of the school at the corner of Vandervoort Street directly behind the church, and the parish hall is opposite the parking lot on Vandervoort Street. Up until a few years ago, the entire complex was owned by the Diocese of Buffalo and used by the parish as an active place of worship, religious education and social experiences. The church was closed in 2007, and in 2011 the properties were put up for sale, resulting in separate individual ownership for the parish hall and convent while the remaining buildings have a single owner. Only the parish hall remains in use as a religious property.

The church is sited in a predominantly residential neighborhood, containing a mix of single and multiple family houses dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Immediately to the west of the block on which the complex stands is Oliver Street, one of North Tonawanda's historically commercial strips.

The Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex developed in answer to the need for a Roman Catholic place of worship in the relatively newly incorporated city of North Tonawanda. Ascension was the first Roman Catholic parish in the city and as such provided extensive services to the parishioners, many of whom were immigrants working in the local factories. The five buildings forming the complex developed to address specific needs in the parish community. Three of the buildings, the church & rectory, school and convent, were built within a less than 30-year period (1894-1922) that corresponded to the founding and growth of the original congregation. The parish hall was built much later (1969) as a result of the need for expanded educational and recreational facilities for the parish during the era of post-war growth. The first building constructed was the church built in 1893-1894. It replaced a wood frame church that was built in 1888 and burned just five years later. It is believed that the Medina Sandstone foundation of the current church is, at least in part, from the original 1888 construction. The present church, when compared to photos of the original structure, does appear to be a brick version of the design for the wood frame church. The church is Gothic Revival in style and is an

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

example of a simple American parish church built with durable materials and design elements that would have been familiar to the parishioners as Roman Catholics coming from Europe or larger American cities.

Church and attached Rectory

Church: Exterior

The church is a good example of a modest size Gothic Revival church with a tower and a prominent center entry flanked by subordinate entries in adjoining bays. It has 6,433 square feet of space and sits on a .17 acre lot of approximately 55' x 134' dimensions. The Medina sandstone foundation extends to the back of the church where, at the rear, the material changes to limestone and may not be from the original 1888 construction. The Medina sandstone portion is capped by a stone water table on which sits the brick walls laid in a running bond. A set of broad stone steps runs across the south (front) elevation leading to the entrances. The principal façade has a gable front highlighted by stone capped buttresses with a three-story tower at the southeast corner. This front has a broad central mass flanked by a narrow side mass to the west and a projecting tower to the east. Stone capped buttresses separate the masses. Above the water table are a total of seven pointed Gothic arch openings, five in the central bay and one in each of the flanking bays. The openings in the tower and west bay, along with the central opening in the center bay, house doors into the narthex, while the remainder contain high windows flanking the central entrance. All of the window and door openings contain quatrefoil windows within the arches, the largest being that above the center entrance doors. At the second level the central bay has three pointed Gothic arch windows sitting on a stone baseline that crosses the full bay. Gothic tracery in brick surrounds the windows as it does on all of the pointed arch windows and door surrounds on this façade. The cornice of the gable is wood above brick tracery and has square projections. Within the gable a small Gothic arch window sits on a stone baseline lintel that runs across the front ending in the square projections of the cornice. The tower has an entrance door at the first level, paired rectangular windows with quatrefoil windows at the top and at the second level. Pointed Gothic arch screened openings are paired at the top of the belfry, behind which is the church bell. The tower originally had a wooden spire that was removed in 1913 after being hit by lightning. It is now topped by stone crenellation.

The side elevations (east and west) have five bays of Gothic arch stained glass windows separated by buttresses before reaching the transept, which on each side has three similar stained glass windows and a small window at the top of the gable matching that on the front façade. On either side of the east transept are small one-story entrance additions with a similar small addition running north from the tower along the east wall of the church. The west transept wall is obscured by a later addition that connects the church to the adjacent rectory. This single story addition is gable-roofed and connects the two buildings at the first floor and basement levels. The north (rear) elevation is the simplest of the four, being notable principally for the large quatrefoil window flanked by two pointed arch windows in the upper portion. A single double hung window is at the first level. A

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

raised one-story brick addition abuts to the west. The addition contains two double hung windows and a flat roof and connects to the rectory to the west via a shingled enclosed walkway.

Church: Interior

The interior has a traditional Gothic Revival cruciform plan and contains simple and elegant expressions of the Gothic Revival style. These include intersecting Gothic plaster pointed arches forming the front of the sanctuary or chancel and the choir loft at each end of the church and creating repetitive bays for the stained glass windows along the plaster sidewalls. A broad narthex beneath the choir loft runs across the full width of the front and provides entry from the front with a set of double wood doors leading to what was the original center aisle of the church and single doors leading originally to each side aisle. These correspond to the entry doors on the front of the church. The eastern end of the narthex is in the base of the tower and projects slightly from the cross hall. This end contains a wooden staircase leading to the choir loft. The cruciform plan has the former seating space in the nave and transept followed by the sanctuary in the chancel. The sanctuary is the most elaborate area of the church interior with the arches culminating in hexagonal columns capped by decorative gold leaf capitals. The sanctuary space is flanked by Gothic Revival alcoves that originally housed side altars and a broad set of two steps lead to the raised area of the sanctuary and side alcoves. There were originally marble altars in the main sanctuary and the side alcoves. These were installed in 1922 and removed when the church was deaccessioned in 2007.¹ Two sacristy spaces exist behind the side alcoves, the one to the east smaller than that to west. As originally built, the rear wall of the sanctuary contained a large quatrefoil window flanked by two tall pointed arch windows. Those original windows, along with the altars, were removed when the congregation left the parish and the church was deaccessioned in 2007 before it was sold. In addition to the windows and altars, the pews and statues were removed. Currently there are three modern stained glass windows in their place. The remainder of the original stained glass windows remain throughout the church. Most of these windows contain simple geometric and floral Gothic designs with no figures represented. However the transept has a trio of windows on each side with the center window of the east transept representing the Ascension and the center window of the west transept representing the Assumption. The west transept windows are blocked from natural light by a later addition and they are backlit. The window bays are created by Gothic arches that terminate in corbels similar to the capitals on the sanctuary columns. Four bays of windows run on each side before reaching the choir loft at the front of the church. A fifth window on each side is partially obscured by the choir loft. With the removal of the pews by the previous owner, the nave is now a single open space. The choir loft is faced by a paneled wood balcony that bows out in the center. Within the panels are simple pointed Gothic arches. Three pointed Gothic arch windows are across the street façade of the choir loft, the center being obscured by the paneled organ case with decorative pipes above it. The

¹ *Ascension Roman Catholic Church 95th Anniversary 1887-1982*, Commemorative Booklet (North Tonawanda, NY: 1982).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 7 Page 4

choir loft is an open space topped by a Gothic arched ceiling and currently contains only the organ case and pipes.

Along the west wall of the west transept an open staircase leads to the basement. The basement is finished and was used as a church hall, including a space where mass could be celebrated that included a built in tabernacle. The remainder of the basement contains the boiler room and storage rooms and the entrance to a tunnel leading to the school.

Adjacent to the west transept is an addition connecting the church to the rectory. Within this addition are a large sacristy, a meeting room and a storage room that contains the west transept windows.

Rectory: Exterior

The rectory is west of the church, facing Robinson Street and connected to the church by a small hallway at the east end of the rectory. The 6600-square foot rectory sits on a .36 acre lot with dimensions 116' x 128.' It is a 2-½ story brick early twentieth century design with Gothic Revival elements in the gables and window bays. The rectory sits on a stone foundation and, like the church, the brick is laid in running bond. Stone lintels and sills are on the windows and a stone belt course runs across the front (south) façade beneath the windows. The side gable roof is covered in modern asphalt shingles. On the front façade two projecting bays flank the entry and rise into dormers at the roof level. The dormers have gable fronts supported by corbels. Within the bays are pairs of one over one double hung windows separated by mullions (brick on the first floor, wood on the second). The center entry has a covered stoop with brick columns supporting a triangular pediment surrounded by a cornice. The columns have simple caps and bases and a vertical recessed brick panel. Concrete steps between stone capped piers lead from the stoop to the sidewalk. The entry door is a paneled oak door with square top light and is surrounded by leaded glass sidelights and transoms. The east side of the front contains a two story enclosed porch, brick at the first level and wood on the floor above. Historic photos show these porches open at one time, and while enclosed, they still visually read as porches. A flat roof above the second floor covers the porch extension. The east façade of the rectory is obscured by the brick 1/1/2 story addition that connects it to the church. The west façade has a central bay rising through the first two levels with a tripartite window with transoms at the first floor level and a pair of double hung windows at the second floor. Above this, on the side gable of the house, is a tripartite window separated by brick mullions and with a taller center window. To the south of this bay a chimney leads through the roof extending into a decorative brick top and cap. North of the bay are two double hung windows on each floor with a hipped roof above. The rear (north) elevation has a narrow central projecting bay rising into a gabled dormer with a single window at the second floor and a pair of arched window in the dormer, separated by a brick mullion. A wood frame addition with a flat roof and sided in both vertical boards and shingles covers the first floor of the rear of the rectory and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 7 Page 5

connects to the addition leading to the church. A one story two car garage with overhead door is attached to the side of this addition and meets it with a shed roof.

Rectory: Interior

The rectory has an elongated square plan with a central hall double loaded corridor. The interior of the rectory is reached via a small vestibule with oak trim and side panels and decorative leaded glass windows surrounding the door to the main hall. This door is similar to the main entrance door and leads to the hall that extends to the back of the rectory. Reception rooms are on each side of the hall with the west reception room having a fireplace and the east reception room opening into the enclosed porch. This porch has brick walls and piers and the former open areas are infilled with plain painted wood panels. The former dining room is along the west wall and opposite that is an open oak staircase leading to the second floor. Beneath the staircase is a space that once housed a vault. The rear of the rectory has several rooms that at one time were service rooms and the kitchen. They are now office spaces. An enclosed back stair leads to the second floor. The second floor has a series of connected rooms and bathrooms opening off a central hall reached by the main stair. These rooms originally served as suites for the priests serving the parish. The attic, reached by an enclosed stair, is floored and finished for storage along with a bathroom and separate room that may have been used as an additional bedroom. The attic currently houses the mechanics for the air conditioning system for the building. A raised full basement with glass block windows is below the first floor.

Convent

The convent is a two and one half story building with a hipped roof and projecting bays. It faces north to Keil Street and has approximately 5000 square feet and sits on a .23 acre lot that is 72' x 138' in dimension. The exterior of the convent is brick on a Medina Sandstone foundation capped by a stone water table. Like the rectory it has running bond brick work, stone sills and windows and central projecting bays on the front and sides that rise into windowed dormers. Unlike the rectory the roof is hipped and a simple double-windowed hipped roof dormer is on the back. The convent, built, 12 years earlier, has greater detailing than the rectory, including a relatively elaborately detailed front (north) façade that includes a projecting three sided bay with a flat roof with parapet west of the center entry and a one story covered porch extending to the east. The porch cornice is supported by Ionic columns sitting on a Medina sandstone base and piers. On the second floor level of the bay is the exterior of a Gothic Revival chapel that has pointed Gothic arched windows on the sides and a quatrefoil window in the center. Like all of the windows on the front of the convent, these are flanked by stone quoins. Below the quatrefoil window is a stone inset incised with "Maria Mater Dei 1910." Beneath the roof of the porch are the center door with transom and two windows to the east. Above on the second floor are corresponding windows. The east and west facades are similar, with rows of double hung windows, except that the north end of the west façade contains two pointed Gothic arch windows that light the chapel. The rear

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 7 Page 6

(south) elevation is simpler than the others with a single door centered at the second floor level opening on the roof of what was formerly an open porch and is now enclosed and covered with painted shingle siding.

The interior of the convent is laid out around a central hall at each level and features decorative oak trim and an open oak staircase leading to the second floor. Living room, reception room and dining room spaces occupy the first floor along with the kitchen. The second floor has multiple small bedrooms that once were sleeping rooms for the nuns of the parish and is highlighted by a highly decorative chapel with pointed Gothic arches and stained glass windows. The front of the chapel is in the bay and contains a raised altar space with Gothic vaulting above. The original oak pews and light fixtures remain in the room that is remarkably original.

School

The school is the largest building in the complex. Oriented with its primary entrance facing north to Keil Street, the school is approximately 17,500 square feet and sits on a .45 acre lot. It was originally built in 1910 and suffered a devastating fire in 1945 that destroyed the interior and the roof. As built, the building had a hipped roof with a central cupola. As rebuilt the building has a flat roof surrounded by a stone capped brick parapet formed by course of brick banding. The building is faced in brick laid in common bond and at the basement level and in the parapet the sixth row of each projects forming a banding effect on the façade. The building is rectangular with the short ends facing Keil Street (north or front façade) and the back of the rectory (south or rear façade). A large parking lot, also fronting on Keil Street, fills the space between the school and Vandervoort Street. The building has a raised basement (ground floor) and two floors above. It is rectangular in shape with the lateral sides (east and west facades) containing five bays of windows, with the center bay projecting. At the southern end a stair tower occurs on each side and there is a flat roofed brick addition that rises through the raised basement and first floor levels. The window openings, sills and lintels of the school remain from the original building. They contain tripled double-hung windows separated by wood mullions that originally were topped by transoms that are now infilled. The ground floor level windows are paired with brick with wide brick mullions. The stone sills on the first floor windows are part of a stone beltcourse that surrounds the building. All of the windows have decorative stone lintels with splayed chevrons as keystones and at the ends. The entrance is in a projecting tower in the north elevation. The door is at ground level and leads to a stair that runs to the top of the building. The door and large window above it are modern replacement windows with large glass panels. At the basement or ground floor level there are four windows, two each flanking the projecting entrance pavilion, and the remainder of the façade is blank brick. A cornerstone dated 1907 rests on the beltcourse at the northeast corner of this façade. The south or east façade is characterized by the brick addition that runs through the basement and first floor with the original top floor façade above it. The addition has on the back (south wall) four small windows at the ground floor level and two double hung windows flanking a pair of double hung windows on the first level. On the east and west sides of the addition there is a single window at each level.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 7 Page 7

The 1945 fire destroyed the original interior of the school; however, given its relatively small, narrow footprint, it was believed to have been reconstructed with the same floor plan and configuration as the original building. It is typical of a pre-war elementary school layout with central, double loaded hallways on the classroom floor and stair towers at each end. The ground floor that contained recreation and service rooms has large spaces that are entered directly from the north and south stair towers. The north stair tower ends in a small corridor with doors leading to the dining hall in the northwest corner and a multipurpose room in the northeast corner. Directly ahead to the south a door opens in to a large recreation space that occupies the remainder of the east wall leading to the rear (south) stair. South of the dining hall, running along the west wall, are a kitchen, maintenance room and utility room before reaching the stair. At the southern end of the building, in the ground floor of the brick addition, are lavatory rooms and a stairway that descends to the tunnel connecting the school to the church. All of the ground floor rooms have walls tiled to the level of the top of the foundation with plastered walls above. Ceilings are plastered with modern fluorescent light fixtures attached, except in the large recreation space, where a suspended grid system with acoustic panels and inset fluorescent light fixtures has been installed.

The second level and third level each contain four classrooms, along with additional service spaces. On the first floor, in the central projecting bays of each façade, there is an office space between two classrooms. At the southern end there are two stair towers at this level. The eastern stair accesses all three floors and the western stair serves only the first floor and ground floor levels. Beyond this, in the addition, are lavatory spaces. On the second floor, in addition to the four classrooms, there is a large library space in the southwest corner that includes the area above the stairway below. The central hall angles east at this point to allow additional space in the library. On the east side of the building, across from the library, an office space exists between the southernmost classroom and the stair. The addition does not extend to this level. At both levels, natural wood doors and transoms access the rooms and the rooms are filled with natural light from the large window walls that face east and west. All of the classrooms and office spaces have plastered walls and suspended grid ceiling systems like that in the recreation space in the ground floor level. This system is also present in the hall on the first floor, while the second floor has a plastered ceiling. The halls at each of these levels are lined with free-standing lockers and there are built in bookcases in each of the classrooms.

Parish Hall

The parish hall, built in 1967-68 and dedicated and put in use in 1969, is a simple example of Modern architecture. The building has a reinforced concrete structural system and is a nearly square in plan, with dimensions of 140' x 135.' It sits on a smooth concrete base with wide, unadorned brick piers separating window walls and pebbledash stucco panels. The brick walls are topped by a corresponding concrete band forming a parapet around the flat roof. The roof above the gymnasium space is raised and sided with metal

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 8

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property
Niagara County, New York
County and State

panels separated by narrow vertical metal columns. In all the design creates a feeling of monumentality and verticality in a relative small building. The main (west) façade faces west on Vandervoort Street on the corner of Keil Street opposite the school parking lot. The center projects to form a broad entrance bay with full height door/window units with corner windows meeting the building at each end of the bay. Centered is a full height stucco panel containing building identification and at the base a projecting concrete planter matching the podium. On either side of the entrance bay are brick piers flanking window units that rise the full height with stucco spandrels separating the first and second floor windows. The north façade, facing on Keil Street, has 4 regularly spaced window units similar to those on the front and separated by wide brick piers. The rear (east) façade is a solid wall of brick with narrow projecting brick piers that separate the wall visually into five vertical units. The south façade faces a parking lot and has nine window units, narrower than the others on the building, separated by brick piers. After the fourth and eighth window units from the front, there are wider brick piers that have covered entries into the building from the parking lot. The principal interior spaces are the 600-person capacity assembly hall on the first floor and the gymnasium directly above it. The assembly hall is unobstructed with piers or columns due to the massive pre-cast concrete beams that form the floor of the gymnasium above. There are a kitchen and storage rooms on the first floor and two classrooms and locker rooms on the second floor. There is no basement.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance:

Summary

The Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex is significant as a largely intact complex of religious buildings reflective of the growth and prosperity of North Tonawanda, Niagara County, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The complex is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Social History as the first Roman Catholic church built in the City of North Tonawanda, as well as for its role as a community hub of religion, social activities, and education for over 100 years before closing in 2007. As the city's first Roman Catholic parish, Ascension also had the first Catholic school in the North Tonawanda, which played an important part in the lives of generations of immigrant children. The Ascension parish was founded to serve the growing immigrant population that came to North Tonawanda at the turn of the twentieth century. Like many churches in Western New York, it began as a German parish and changed as newer immigrant groups arrived in the city. As the congregation grew, the parish added services, starting with education and the building of the school in 1907. A convent followed shortly after in 1910 to house the nuns teaching in the parish. This made the parish more attractive to growing families and contributed to its early growth. Eventually a fine brick rectory was built adjacent to the church (1922) and considerably later, in 1969, a new parish hall opened to accommodate the growing educational and social needs of the parish. The complex retains all the character-defining elements of a typical parish, which is an important resource type in the Buffalo area.

The Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex also satisfies the requirements of Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The church was designed in the Gothic Revival style, and the style influenced the construction of the other buildings that were constructed between 1894 and 1922. Although the church is relatively modest in size, its exterior design and detailing clearly represent the Gothic Revival, with buttresses, pointed arch windows, crenelated corner tower, and a steeply pitched roofline. The interior is also characterized by notable Gothic Revival details that fill its cruciform plan, including pointed arches, hammer beam ceiling details, stained glass windows and prominent quatrefoil windows. While the other buildings reflect more subtle Gothic Revival elements, an attempt was made in subsequent development to harmonize with the church, and the influence is seen in the details on the cornices and windows, especially on the convent.

The period of significance begins in 1888 and closes in 1969. This era begins with the earliest extant portion of the building was constructed; the foundation of the original 1888 church which was later incorporated into the existing building. This period ends with the construction and opening of the last element of the original church complex, the parish hall. This era encompasses all major architectural campaigns related to the Ascension Church complex, as well as marks the period in which the church was at its most prominent.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

History of the neighborhood and community

The City of North Tonawanda was incorporated in 1897. It was originally part of the Town of Wheatfield and due to its location on the Erie Canal and, later, to the presence of the railroads, it became a significant industrial center for Niagara County. The earliest known settler, George N. Burger, built a log cabin in what is now North Tonawanda in 1809 on a site a few blocks west of the Ascension Church property.² Early development occurred along the Niagara River and much of that was destroyed during the War of 1812.³ The community began as a hamlet in the Town of Wheatfield and by 1865 it was incorporated as a village within the town, becoming an incorporated city in 1897.⁴ At the beginning, it was farming that attracted settlers but this soon gave way to industrial development because of the transit routes available via the river and the Erie Canal. The lumber industry was first to develop and by 1890 North Tonawanda was the largest lumber transport port in the country.⁵ Nicola Tesla's development of alternating current had a significant effect on North Tonawanda. The arrival of electrical power in 1895 from the Edward Dean Adams Power Plant in Niagara Falls saw industries flourish in the city due to a transformer building that supplied the community. This building, built in 1895, is extant and located just a few blocks east of the Ascension site. Subsequently the expansion of rail lines contributed to industrial growth. This brought in a significant immigrant population, many of whom were of the Roman Catholic Faith. As the original Roman Catholic parish in this early working class community, Ascension parish welcomed the immigrants of varying nationalities when they arrived to work in the local factories and lumberyards and to live in the community. This was a common occurrence in Western New York industrial communities at the turn of the century. In nearby Niagara Falls, Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church was similarly a complex of buildings that were built at approximately the same time as Ascension. Holy Trinity was founded by Polish immigrants and it retained that identity for nearly 100 years. However, the east side Niagara Falls neighborhood where it was located was home to many new immigrant groups coming in to work in the growing number of factories in early twentieth century Niagara Falls. Holy Trinity became a welcoming place for immigrants of all nationalities, providing assimilation programs and temporary worship spaces while they built churches of their own. The original congregation at Ascension was predominantly of Irish descent with some German families, and the first pastors were Irish, some born in Ireland. The number of immigrants coming into the area increased markedly by 1900 with an influx of Central European and Italian immigrants. Most of these were Roman Catholic and eventually a significant population of Italian immigrants came to worship at Ascension in North Tonawanda.⁶

² "A Brief History of North Tonawanda," 2013 Historic Treasures Tour, (North Tonawanda, NY: North Tonawanda History Museum, 2013), p 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ According to former congregation members and residents of North Tonawanda.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

History of the congregation

The Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex is typical of those developed in the Western New York area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are many examples of the form throughout the region where they were built for the parishes serving the large Roman Catholic population in the region. This was due to an influx of immigrants from Western Europe that brought many Roman Catholic families to the area. Devout Catholics dedicated to their religious community, they sought parishes where they could worship, have regular social experiences, and find education for their children, especially at the elementary level. This frequently resulted in the development of multi-building parish complexes, centered around the church building with a rectory that provided both residential and office space for the pastor and his associates, a school building for grades kindergarten through 8 and a convent to house the nuns who were the teachers in the school. Social spaces were initially provided in the basements of the church buildings, although later some parishes would build separate parish hall buildings for this purpose. An example of this was noted in an 1897 *Buffalo Evening News* article that reported the formation of a Polish Society in North Tonawanda. The article stated "It is the intention of the many Poles in the Iron-ton district to attract as many of their countrymen as possible so that a Polish church, school and banking house can be established." Fr. Cronin of Ascension Church is quoted in the article as saying that "a church would be constructed in due time."⁷ Subsequently, Our Lady of Czestochowa church, school and rectory were established in 1903. These religious complexes could be vast, as with the former St. Ann's Parish on Broadway in Buffalo. Here, the church could seat 1600, the rectory provided suites for 9 priests in residence at the parish and the school, running the full length of a city block, enrolled over 2000 students. More common were the smaller campuses that were throughout the region, still providing full services to the congregation but more modest in size. Ascension Roman Catholic Parish in North Tonawanda was one of these smaller examples, with the church capacity of a few hundred people, the original parish hall in the basement of the church, and the school convent and rectory radiating out from the church building in a tight configuration.

The City of North Tonawanda grew quickly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1880 it had 1492 residents and by 1890 that had more than tripled to a population of nearly 4800.⁸ The Ascension Roman Catholic parish was established in North Tonawanda during this period in 1887. Prior to the formation of the Ascension Parish, Roman Catholics in North Tonawanda worshiped at the nearest church of that denomination, St. Francis, in the neighboring city of Tonawanda. The original parish territory was extensive, extending north to Niagara Falls and east to the boundary of the city of Lockport. The task of forming the parish was given by the Right Rev. Stephen Vincent Ryan, Bishop of Buffalo, to the Rev. James M. Bustin, who would serve as Ascension's first pastor. The parish was incorporated on November 5, 1887, and work was done to raise funds for the building of a church. By 1888 sufficient funds were raised from both Catholics and non-Catholics in the

⁷ "Polish Colony to be Formed," *Buffalo Evening News*, March 31, 1897.

⁸ "Census of Population and Housing," *Census.gov*.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

area and the cornerstone for the new church was laid on June 18, 1888 with dedication taking place the following November. Designed by English architect William H. Archer, the new church was built at a cost of \$4500 and an adjoining rectory was built for \$2425.⁹ Within five years, on December 21, 1893, fire hit burning the wood frame church to the ground. Although the loss was covered by insurance, Fr. Bustin again raised funds so that a new, more fireproof church could be built. This new brick and stone building, also designed by Archer, was completed in less than a year and dedicated in December of 1894.¹⁰

Roman Catholic education was important to the immigrants coming into the area and the Ascension congregation from the beginning intended to build a school for the children of the families enrolled in the church. In 1888 land adjacent to the church building was purchased for \$1000 and the congregation proceeded to raise funds for the school over the next few years. The school opened in September of 1907 and initially enrolled 199 students. Teaching was provided by five Sisters of St. Joseph and later that number was expanded to nine. A convent was built adjacent to the school in 1910 to house the nuns. In the early years, there was even a high school program offered at the school. Growth was good at the school and by 1915 there were 73 secondary students and 277 elementary students for a total enrollment of 350.¹¹ By 1933 there were 350 students in grades K-9. As the city grew through the first half of twentieth century, Catholic education expanded with it, as it did in the entire Western New York Region.¹² In the 1950s new schools were regularly appearing throughout the Diocese of Buffalo. In 1959-1960 alone the Diocese opened eight new schools including two high schools, Bishop Turner in Buffalo and Madonna in Niagara Falls.¹³ Throughout the 67-year history of Ascension School, the students were taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph. In 1974 the Ascension program was closed and re-opened as a combined Ascension-Our Lady of Czetechova school. Again the school was consolidated, this time with St. Albert the Great's school and at that time the building was updated to accommodate the new program. This school was staffed by the Felician Sisters, who remained there until that program ended in 2009. The school building has remained vacant since that time.

As the parish grew the original wooden building proved to be inadequate for housing the priests in residence and the offices for the church and this building was moved east to a lot across from the church on the corner of Vandervoort and Robinson Streets where it served as a residence for the parish sexton. The new rectory, later attached to the church, was built of brick and served the parish throughout its remaining years.

⁹ *Ascension Parish Bulletin, May 15, 1977*, (North Tonawanda, 1977).

¹⁰ *History and Church Directory, 1933, Church of the Ascension, North Tonawanda, New York*. (North Tonawanda, 1933).

¹¹ "Statistics of academic examinations in the academies of the State January and June 1915."

¹² The City of North Tonawanda Population reached close to 25,000 residents by 1950 (*Census of Population and Housing, Census.gov*).

¹³ "Diocese Will Open Eight New Schools For 1959-60 Term," *Buffalo Evening News*, August 19, 1959, p. 42.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 5

The growth of Ascension Parish mirrored that of the city of North Tonawanda. In 1888 there were two marriages at the parish; there were four in 1890 and thirteen in 1892.¹⁴ The city's greatest population increase in the twentieth century occurred between 1950 and 1960 with an increase of 40.5 percent.¹⁵ Similarly the number of families in Ascension Parish more than doubled going from 600 to 1450 during that same period.¹⁶ By the late 1950s, the congregation reached a sufficient number to necessitate the building of a parish hall. Throughout that time the parish was active providing social opportunities for both the congregation and the community. Shortly after the founding of the parish, a Young People's Catholic Circle was formed for the youth in the congregation, offering events such as concerts and banquets.¹⁷ Social activities continued in the early 20th century featuring programs such as the 1904 lecture/concert attended by 500 people that was followed by a banquet hosted by the church.¹⁸ By the 1920s such activities as weekly card parties were occurring and in the 1950s there were events such as a Strawberry Festival open to the public on the church grounds and the Ascension Catholic Youth Organization was cited as being in the top 10 in the Buffalo Diocese for participation in a variety of activities.¹⁹ Originally the social functions of the church took place in the church basement with recreational programs in the ground level of the school. This was not an unusual arrangement in Western New York church complexes of this size. In 1968 the Ascension congregation began work on the parish hall and it was ready for occupancy in 1969. This building served as a community center for both the parish and the neighborhood until the parish closed in 2007. The building offered meeting and social spaces, including a 600-seat auditorium. In addition there was a gymnasium for the children in the area plus a kitchen, shower rooms and two classrooms. Following the closing of the parish, the building was purchased by The Fair Havens Church and it continues to serve its role as a community center. These facilities offered space for a variety of social activities sponsored by the church including concerts, card parties, youth programs and recreational activities.

The enrollment in Roman Catholic parishes experienced a sharp decline in the ending decades of the twentieth century and the Diocese of Buffalo embarked upon "The Journey of Faith and Grace" that resulted in the consolidation of several of the parishes. Ascension initially was spared this experience, but in 2007 it was announced that the Ascension Parish would join with St. Albert the Great parish and become St. Jude the Apostle parish operating at the St. Albert's site. The Ascension buildings were closed and sold in 2011. The convent was purchased for use as a private residence and the church, rectory and school were purchased to redevelop for residential, office and commercial use.

¹⁴ *Ascension Roman Catholic Church 95th Anniversary 1887-1982 Commemorative Booklet* (North Tonawanda, 1982).

¹⁵ *Census of Population and Housing*, Census.gov.

¹⁶ Sr. Jean Thompson, Archivist, the Diocese of Buffalo, email message to author, November 16, 2015.

¹⁷ "It is Growing," *North Tonawanda Evening News*, July 1894 accessed at Fulton History.

¹⁸ "Social Calendar; Woman's Domain," *North Tonawanda Evening News*, March 18, 1904, accessed at Fulton History.

¹⁹ "Card Party at Ascension School," *North Tonawanda Evening News*, November 13, 1925, accessed at Fulton History. Also, "Of Interest To The Family: Strawberry Festival," *Tonawanda News*, June 26, 1957, p.6, accessed at Fulton History. Also, "Of Interest To The Family: Ascension Youth Rank 7th In Diocesan CYC contest," *Tonawanda News*, March 13, 1959, p.5, accessed at Fulton History.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 6

History of the buildings

The first building to be constructed at the Ascension complex was the original wood frame church. This building, designed by English architect William H. Archer, was erected in 1888 with its cornerstone laid on June 18th of that year and the dedication taking place a few months later on November 18th. The wooden church was designed as a simple American expression of a Gothic Revival Parish Church. In 1893, a fire burned the building to its foundations.²⁰

Construction of the replacement church began in the spring of 1894 with the dedication taking place in December of 1894, just one year after the fire that destroyed the first church. The new church was built partly on the foundation of the original church and was constructed of brick instead of wood. Archer was again the architect for the brick church, which appears to be a brick iteration of Archer's original design. The current brick church greatly resembles the original wooden structure and in the 1933 commemoration booklet for the parish it is stated: "this first church was an almost exact duplicate of the present brick Church, now minus the steeple, which was struck by lightning in September 1913."²¹ The church is not an elaborate design and, in fact, is an excellent example of the medium sized Gothic Revival churches found throughout the Western New York region. The exterior of the church is characterized by the traditional forms and details found in the Gothic Revival including a steeply pitched roof, a tower (originally with a spire and now crenelated), and buttresses all in a cruciform plan. Windows and doors feature pointed Gothic arches and brick tracery typical of the style adorns the gable ends.

Once inside the church, the Gothic stylization continues with a cruciform plan and with pointed Gothic vaults done in plaster. Like the exterior, it is simply manifested with modest detailing. The entrance through a narthex leads to the nave where the cruciform plan becomes evident and the pointed Gothic arches frame the stained glass windows as well as the transept and the sanctuary space. Only the central windows of the transepts have religious figures, while the others are geometric designs in stained glass. Originally the sanctuary windows contained a central quatrefoil window depicting the Crucifixion flanked by two Gothic arched windows.²² The Gothic detailing continues with a small quatrefoil window in the choir loft behind the organ pipes.

It appears that the original 1888 Gothic Revival church set the style not only for the rebuilt church but also for the early twentieth century buildings in the complex. Each of these shows some elements of Gothic Revival detailing but only the convent has true Gothic features, including a second floor chapel that has pointed Gothic

²⁰ *Ascension Roman Catholic Church 95th Anniversary 1887-1982*, Commemorative Booklet (North Tonawanda, 1982).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² A previous owner removed those windows. The current owner and the North Tonawanda Historic Preservation Commission are negotiating their return to the church building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 7

arches and windows and a simple quatrefoil window facing the street. Additionally, the bays have either Gothic Revival crenellation or steeply pointed roof peaks ending in prominent blocks.

The original school building suffered a serious fire in 1945, which destroyed the interior and left only the brick exterior walls remaining. As originally built, the exterior had some late Victorian era detailing including a hipped roof topped by a central louvered cupola and 3-story bays topped by Romanesque style arched window groupings. As rebuilt, the school, while retaining the original stone lintels and sills and the decorative brick striping, gained a flat roof similar to other schools of the period. There are no records of the original layout of the school, but the current floor plan reflects school design of the period when it was rebuilt. Here the school is a good example of the standardized American school building of the early twentieth century. These standards were established after a disastrous fire that occurred in an elementary school in Collingwood, Ohio, in 1908. The fire resulted in the death of nearly 170 children and two teachers and from that came safety standards for schools that were adopted throughout the country.²³ These included outward opening doors, double staircases at the ends of the building and wide corridors for circulation. Additionally fireproof materials like terrazzo, ceramic tile, steel and brick were commonly used. The model further employed high, wide windows in the classrooms designed to bring natural light to the furthest standing row of student desks.²⁴ The Ascension school as currently configured contains all of these elements along with specialized spaces for dining and recreation that were also part of the model. The school is interconnected with the church and rectory via a tunnel. The current appearance of the interior is faithful to the rebuilding of the school after the 1945 fire.

The rectory was originally in a wooden house that was moved to the corner of Robinson and Vandervoort Streets across from the church complex when the current rectory was built in 1922. This building was subsequently demolished at that location in 1966. The current rectory, interconnected with the church, is of an early twentieth century vernacular style with some elements of the late Victorian, including 2 ½-story bays with beveled leaded glass windows and oak woodwork and paneled doors. The bays rise into dormers that are capped by steeply pointed parapets resembling the gabled peak of the church. The rectory is connected to the church building via a hallway addition at the first floor level on the east side of the rectory, facilitating movement within the complex.

The parish hall was designed by Western New York architect Gerald Zimmerman and constructed by Balling Brothers General Contractors in 1967-1968 and dedicated in 1969. It is a mid-century Modern building presenting a modest example of the New Formalism style. The wall surfaces are masonry and flat and unadorned and the bays are repetitive and vertical. Additionally the raised roof area above the gymnasium has articulated banding that repeats the vertical elements of the design. The building sits on a 130 foot square

²³ *Collingwood, Ohio Terrible School Fire, Mar 1908*, GenDisaster.com, <http://www3.gendisasters.com/ohio/2520/collinwood,-oh-terrible-school-fire,-mar-1908>.

²⁴ Claire Ross, *Former Niagara Falls High School, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, 2001.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 8

concrete foundation with the “largest precast concrete I beams ever made,” according to the architect, forming the floor of the building thus eliminating support posts in the basement.²⁵ The interior of the building has a simple layout providing recreation and social spaces for the congregation. It is the only building in the Ascension complex that shows no Gothic Revival influences, although the materials selected reflect the tones and colors of the earlier buildings to harmonize the complex.

Architects

William H. Archer was the architect for both the original wood frame church of 1888 and the current brick church completed in 1894. Archer was born in England in 1855, and although he originally practiced in his homeland, he came to the United States around 1880 and worked in North America and, specifically, in Western New York, where he designed buildings in the cities of Dunkirk and Buffalo. He was originally with the firm of E.A. Curtis in Fredonia, eventually becoming a partner of Curtis and Archer.²⁶ Archer did not have a formal architecture education and he and Curtis designed a number of buildings in the Fredonia area. He moved to Buffalo and established his own practice in 1890. In Buffalo his work included St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in the Black Rock neighborhood, the Howard Brothers Building on Washington Street (1891, extant), St. Mary’s Courtieux Institute for the deaf on Main Street (1895, extant), the Hutchinson Memorial Chapel on Rhode Island Avenue and Busti Street (extant), an apartment building on Porter Avenue and the Wayne and Waldorf Apartments on Main Street (1897, extant, NR listed). Archer’s work in North Tonawanda included a house for Albert B. Williams on Goundry Street in addition to the Ascension Church.²⁷ Archer was also a member of the Layman’s Missionary League of the Episcopal Diocese of Buffalo.²⁸

The architect for the 1907 school building was Albert Asa Post. Post was born in Whitby, Ontario, Canada in 1850 and came to Buffalo in 1895 where he established an office in the Mooney Building, later known as the Brisbane Building.²⁹ Locally, he was considered one of the “leading ecclesiastical architects of the country.”³⁰ In addition to the Ascension School in North Tonawanda, Post’s Buffalo buildings included St. Mark’s Roman Catholic Church on Woodward Avenue (extant), the Church of the Nativity buildings on Albany Street (extant) and Mount St. Joseph’s Academy on Main Street (demolished). Additionally his work included the school building at Stella Niagara in Lewiston and various churches and schools in Southern Ontario. He died in 1926 at the age of 76.³¹

²⁵ “Ceremonies Set Sunday for New Hall at Ascension,” *Tonawanda News*, June 27, 1969.

²⁶ Kerry Traynor, *Wayne and Waldorf Apartments, National Registration of Historic Places Registration Form*, Buffalo NY. 2014.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Fifty Sixth Annual Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Western New York*, 1893, p. 44.

²⁹ *Buffalo City Directories*, 1903, 1906, 1907.

³⁰ *Local Biographies Scrapbook, V. 27*, Grosvenor Room, Buffalo and Erie County Public Library pp. 216-217.

³¹ *Ibid.*

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara County, New York

County and State

Section 8 Page 9

Conclusion

The Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex is a good example of a locally significant Roman Catholic church complex in the City of North Tonawanda. The church and rectory, school, convent and parish hall each played an important part in the lives of a significant number of North Tonawanda residents, many of whom worshiped in the church, were educated in the school and made use of the programs offered in the other buildings of the complex. All of the buildings are in their original location and their interior configurations remain nearly identical to when they were constructed as much as 120 years ago, when they served to welcome the new incoming immigrant groups to the city. The historic architecture of the complex is recognizably ecclesiastical with familiar Gothic Revival features throughout the original structures. The Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex is in the process of being rehabilitated into a multi-use complex that will allow it to live on as a reminder of its long, rich history while serving new uses for a changing community.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Section 9 Page 1

Niagara, New York

County and State

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Section 9 Page 2

Niagara, New York

County and State

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 10 Page 1

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

The nomination boundary has been drawn to include all historically related resources owned and constructed by the Ascension Roman Catholic Church parish during the period of significance. The boundary encompasses the current legal boundaries of these historically and functionally associated buildings.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 2

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

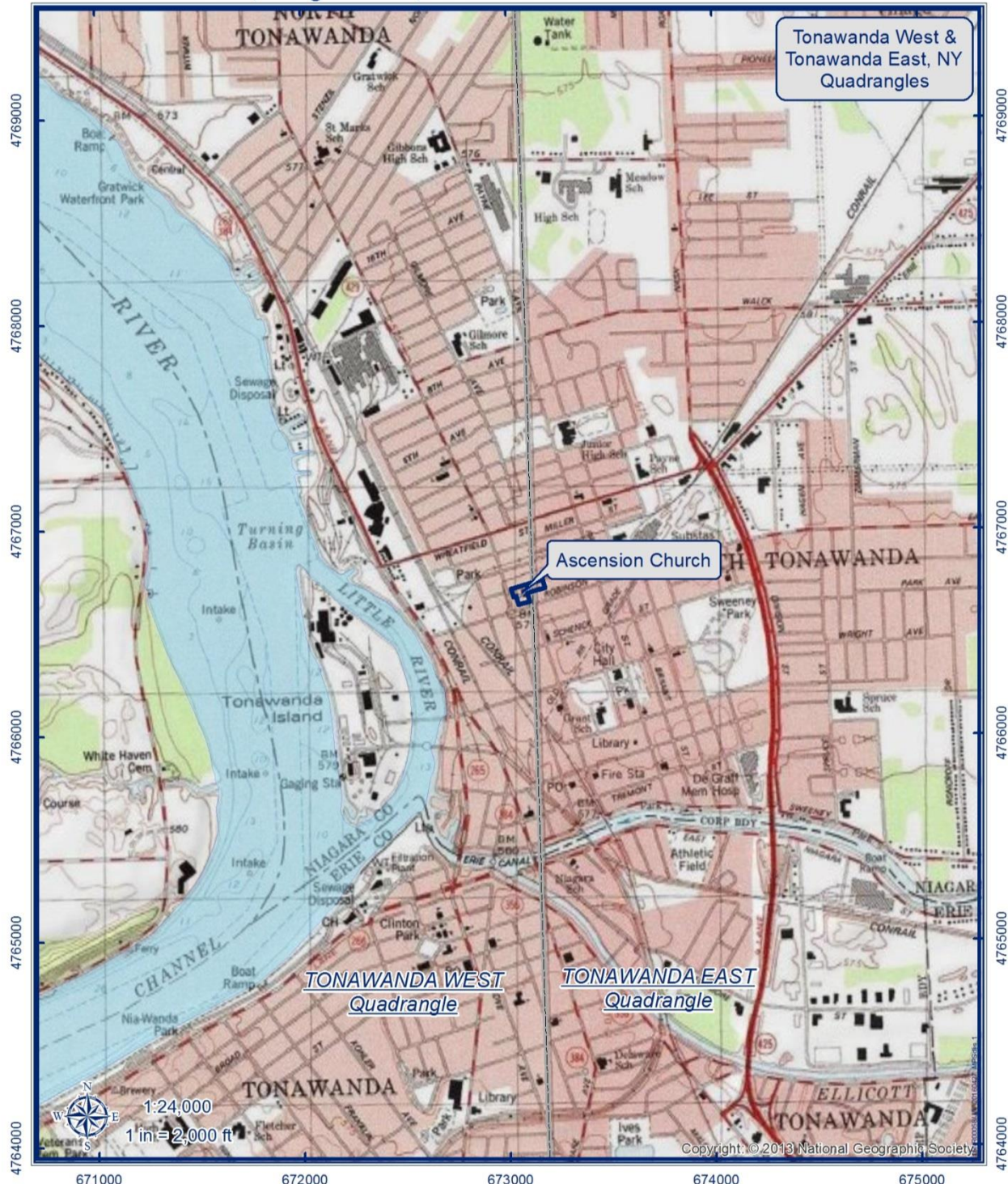
Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
North Tonawanda, Niagara Co., NY

168 & 172 Robinson Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120



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



Ascension Church



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 3

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
North Tonawanda, Niagara Co., NY

168 & 172 Robinson Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120



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



Ascension Church



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 4

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
North Tonawanda, Niagara Co., NY

168 & 172 Robinson Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120



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



Ascension Church



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 5

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
North Tonawanda, Niagara Co., NY

168 & 172 Robinson Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
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Ascension Church



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 6

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
North Tonawanda, Niagara Co., NY

168 & 172 Robinson Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
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Ascension Church



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Section 11 Page 1

Niagara, New York

County and State

Photo Log:

Name of Property: Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
City of Vicinity: North Tonawanda
County: Niagara
State: New York
Name of Photographer: Tom Yots
Date of Photograph: May, August & December 2015, April 2016.
Location of Original Digital Files: 656 Lafayette Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222

Number of Photographs: 12

Photo # 1 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0001)
Church & Rectory, south & west facades, camera facing northeast.

Photo #2 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0002)
Site, camera facing southwest.

Photo # 3 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0003)
Church, south & east façades, camera facing northwest.

Photo #4 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0004)
Rectory south facade, camera facing north.

Photo #5 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0005)
Church sanctuary, camera facing north.

Photo # 6 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0006)
Church sanctuary, camera facing south.

Photo #7 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0007)
School East façade, camera facing west.

Photo #8 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0008)
School north façade, camera facing south.

Photo #9 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0009)
School interior hall, camera facing north.

Photo #10 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex_0010)
School interior classroom, camera facing southwest.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 2

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Photo #11 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex _0011)

Convent north facade, camera facing south.

Photo #12 (NY_Niagara County_Ascension RC Church Complex _0012)

Parish Hall west facade, camera facing northeast.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 3

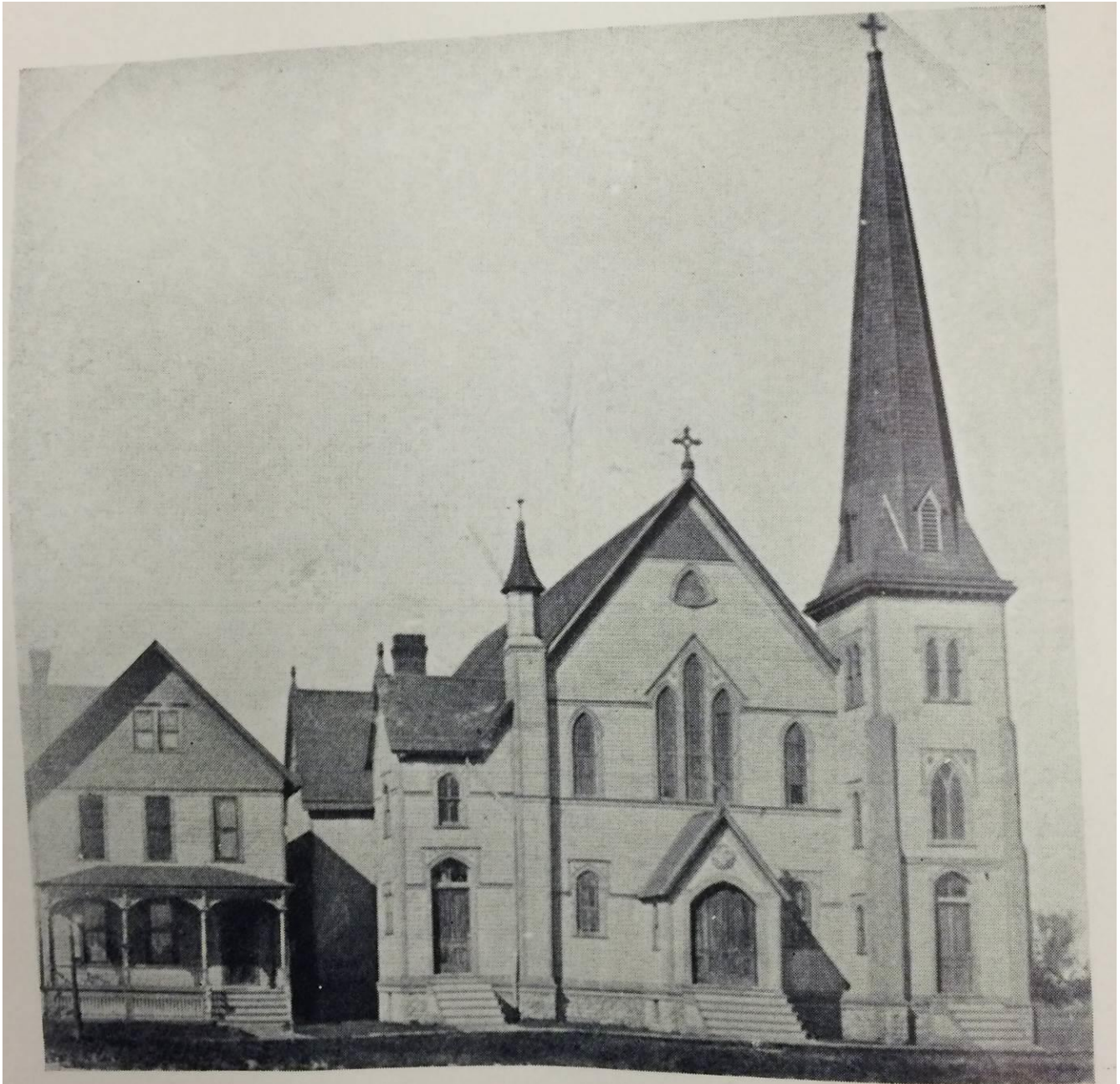
Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State

Additional Information



THE FIRST ASCENSION CHURCH

Original wood frame Church and Rectory (1888)

From History and Church Directory, 1933, Church of the Ascension, North Tonawanda, New York, pages unnumbered

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

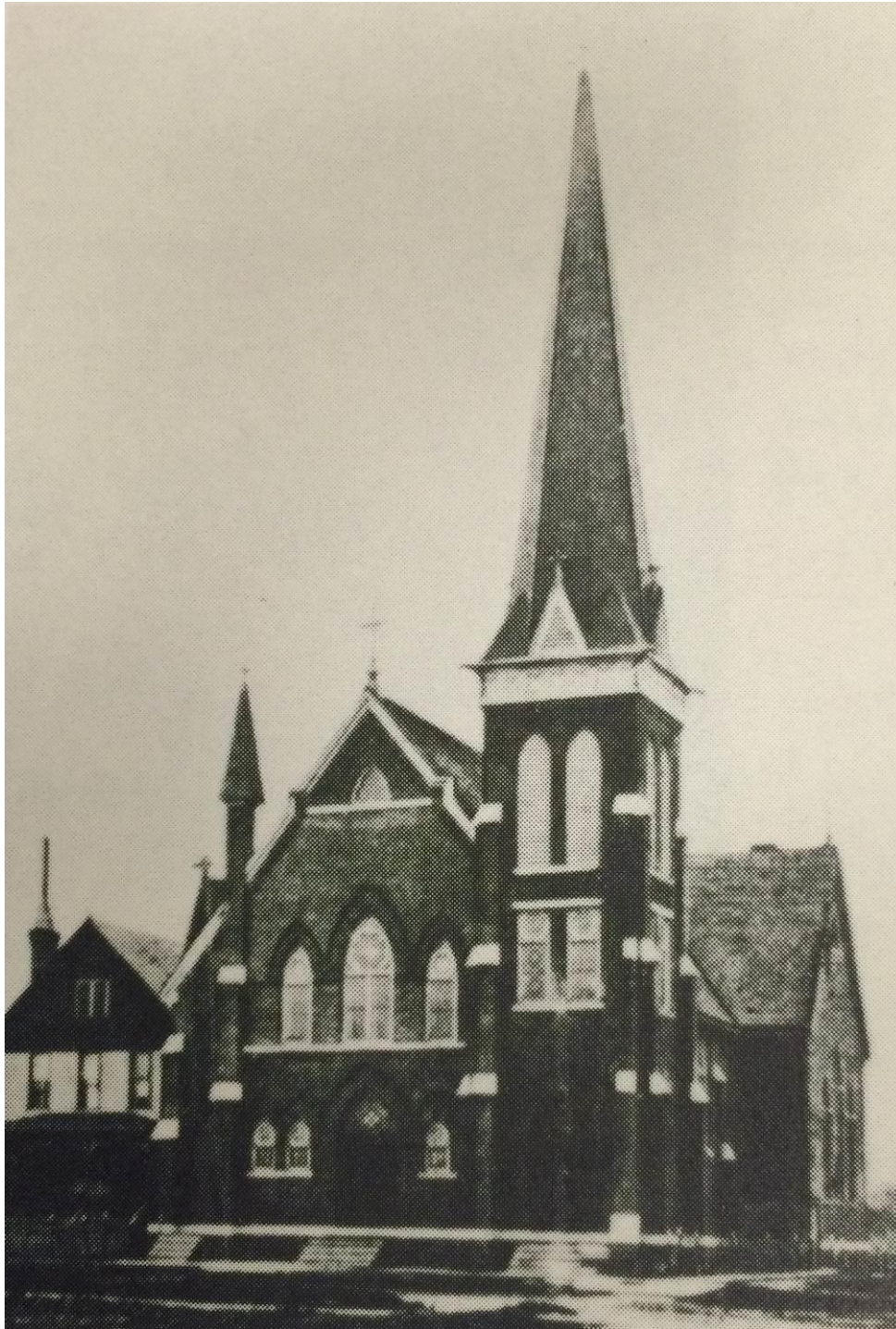
Section 11 Page 4

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



Church (circa 1910)

From History and Church Directory, 1933, Church of the Ascension, North Tonawanda, New York, pages unnumbered.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

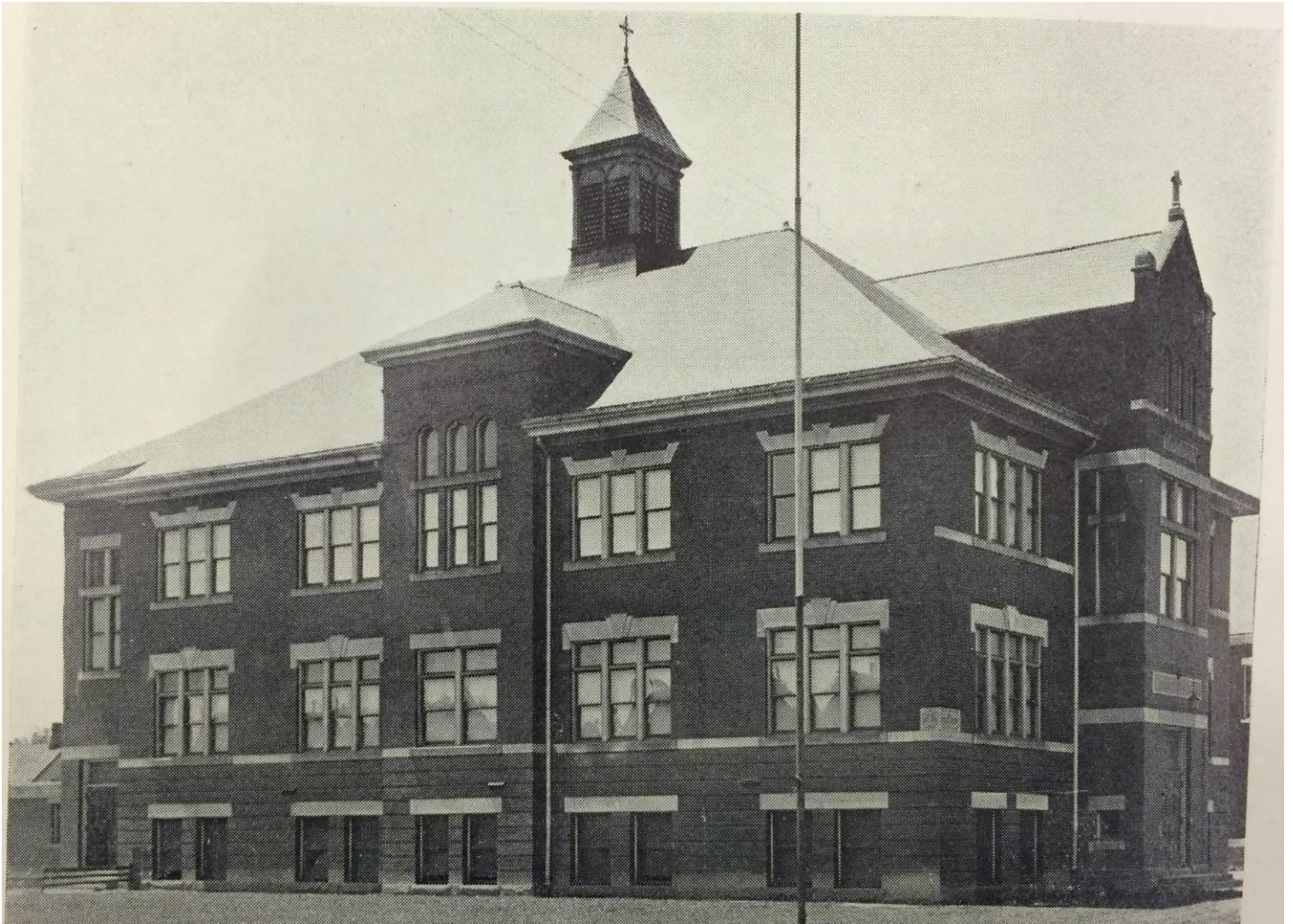
Section 11 Page 5

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



School (circa 1933)

From History and Church Directory, 1933, Church of the Ascension, North Tonawanda, New York, pages unnumbered.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 6

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



Rectory (circa 1933)

From History and Church Directory, 1933, Church of the Ascension, North Tonawanda, New York, pages unnumbered.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 7

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



Church Interior (circa 1933)

From History and Church Directory, 1933, Church of the Ascension, North Tonawanda, New York, pages unnumbered.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 8

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



Ascension Church Parish Hall Rendering (June 29, 1969)

From the Ascension Parish Hall and Recreation Center, Dedication Booklet, June 29, 1969.

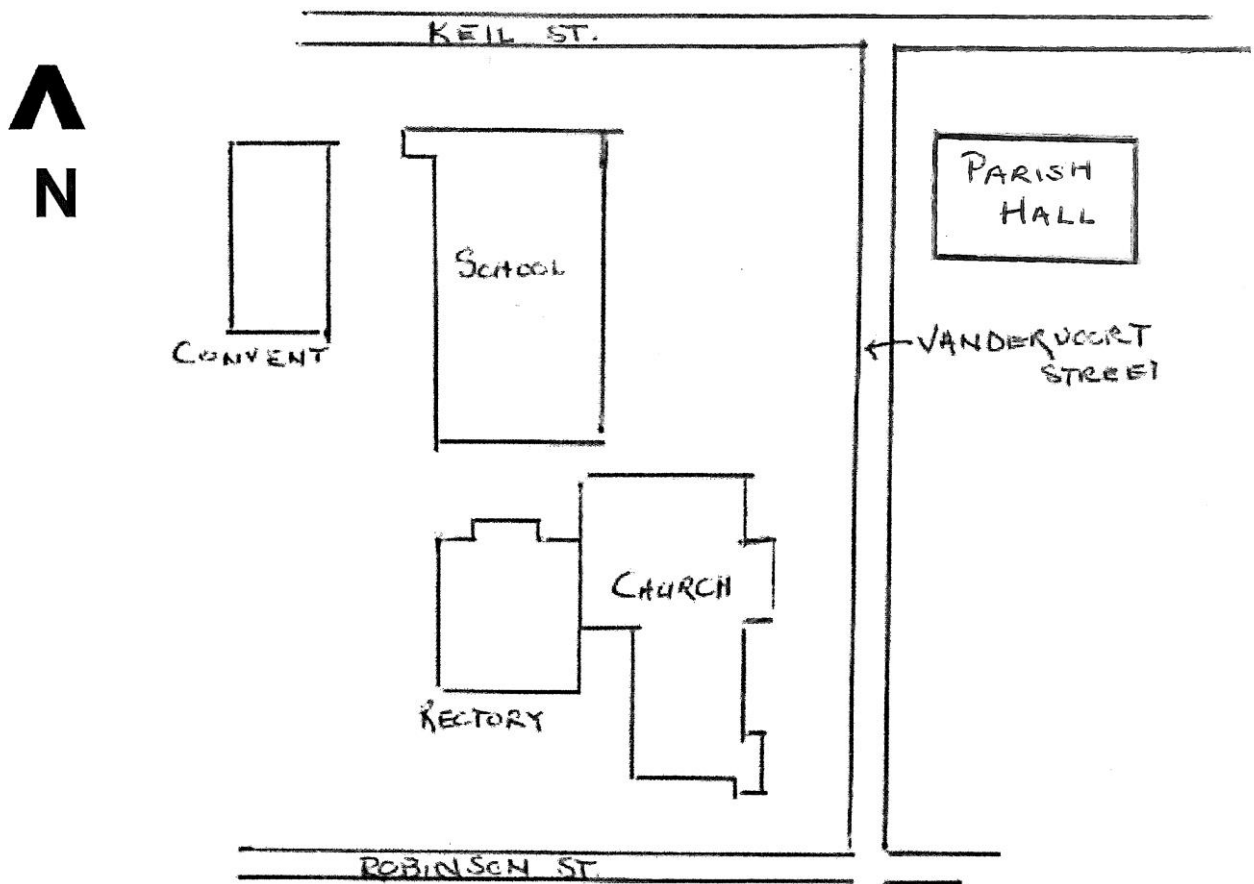
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 9

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property
Niagara, New York
County and State

168 Robinson Street, North Tonawanda, NY: Site Plan (Sketch not to scale)



Site Map

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 10

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property
Niagara, New York
County and State



Aerial Photo, City of North Tonawanda Assessor's Office

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

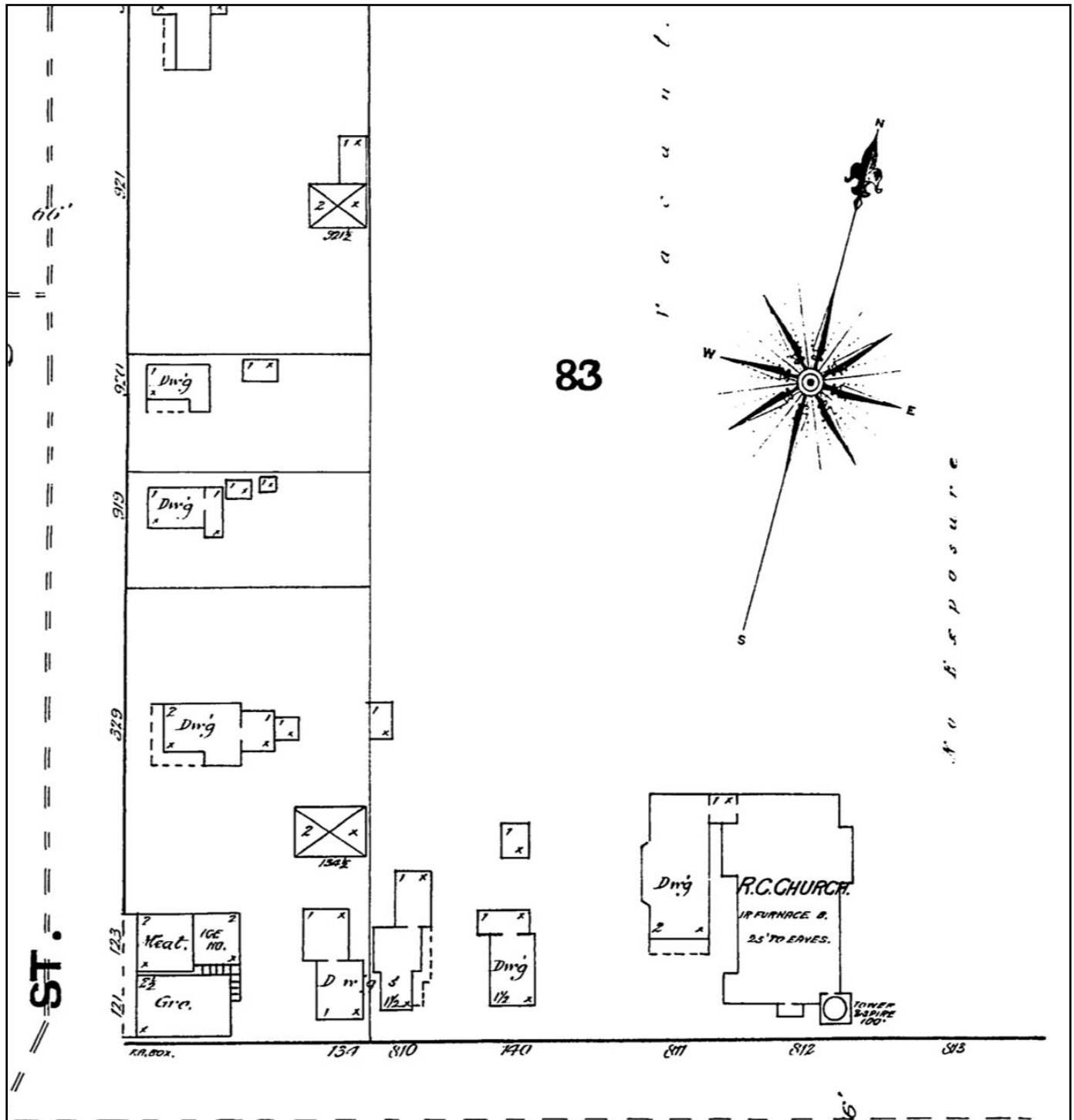
Section 11 Page 11

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



1889 Sanborn Map detail

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

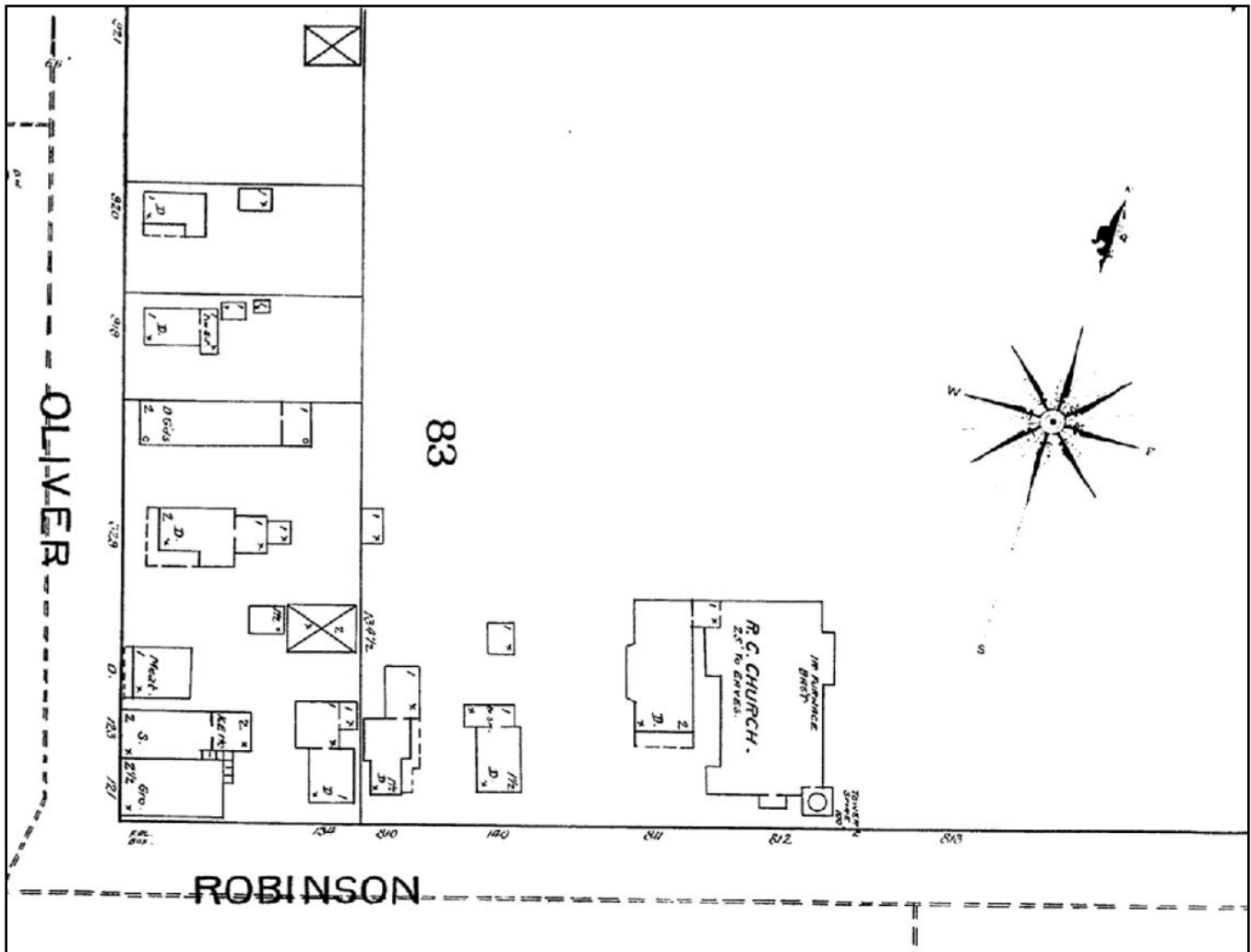
Section 11 Page 12

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



1893 Sanborn Map detail

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

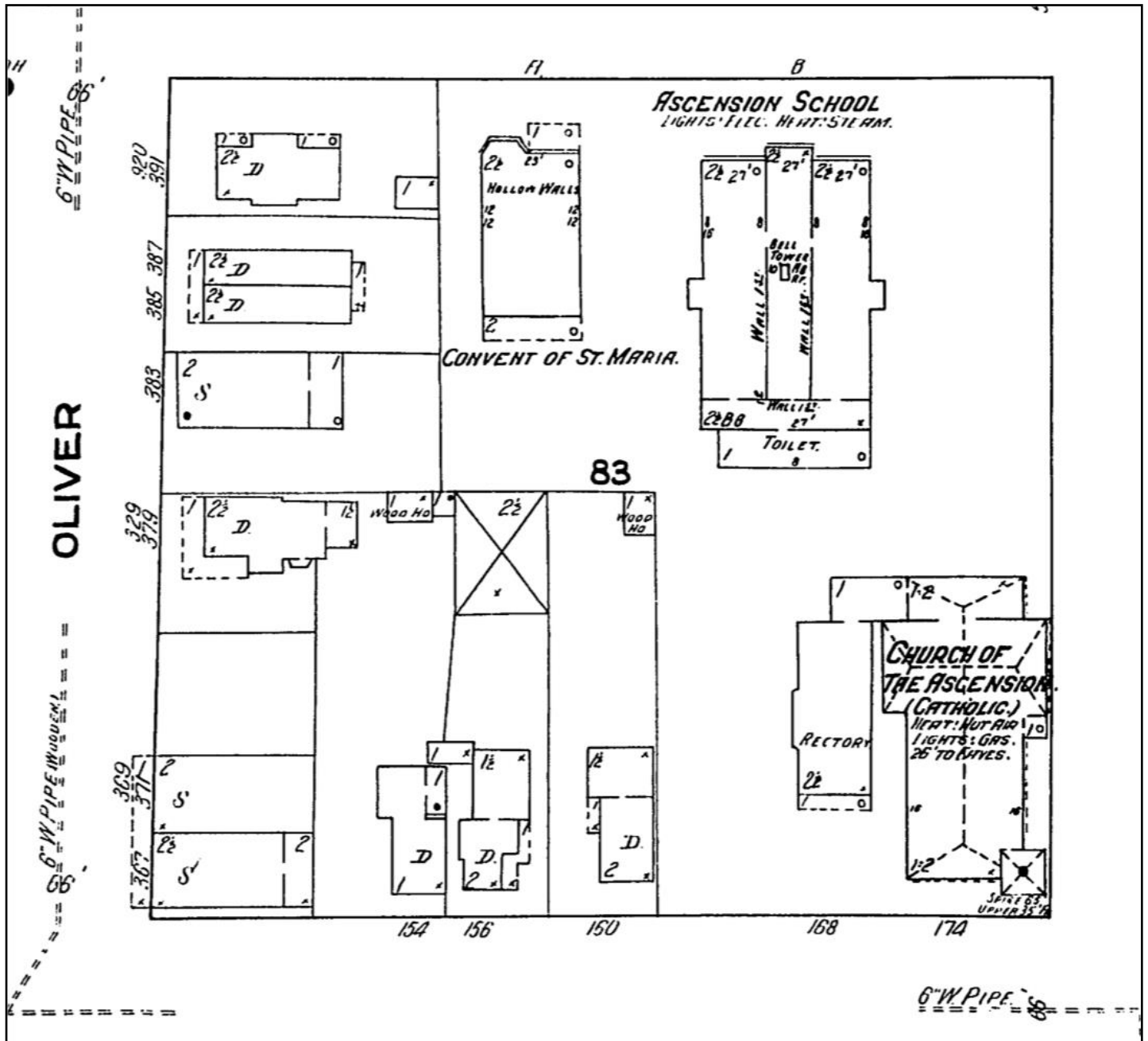
Section 11 Page 13

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



1910 Sanborn Map detail

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

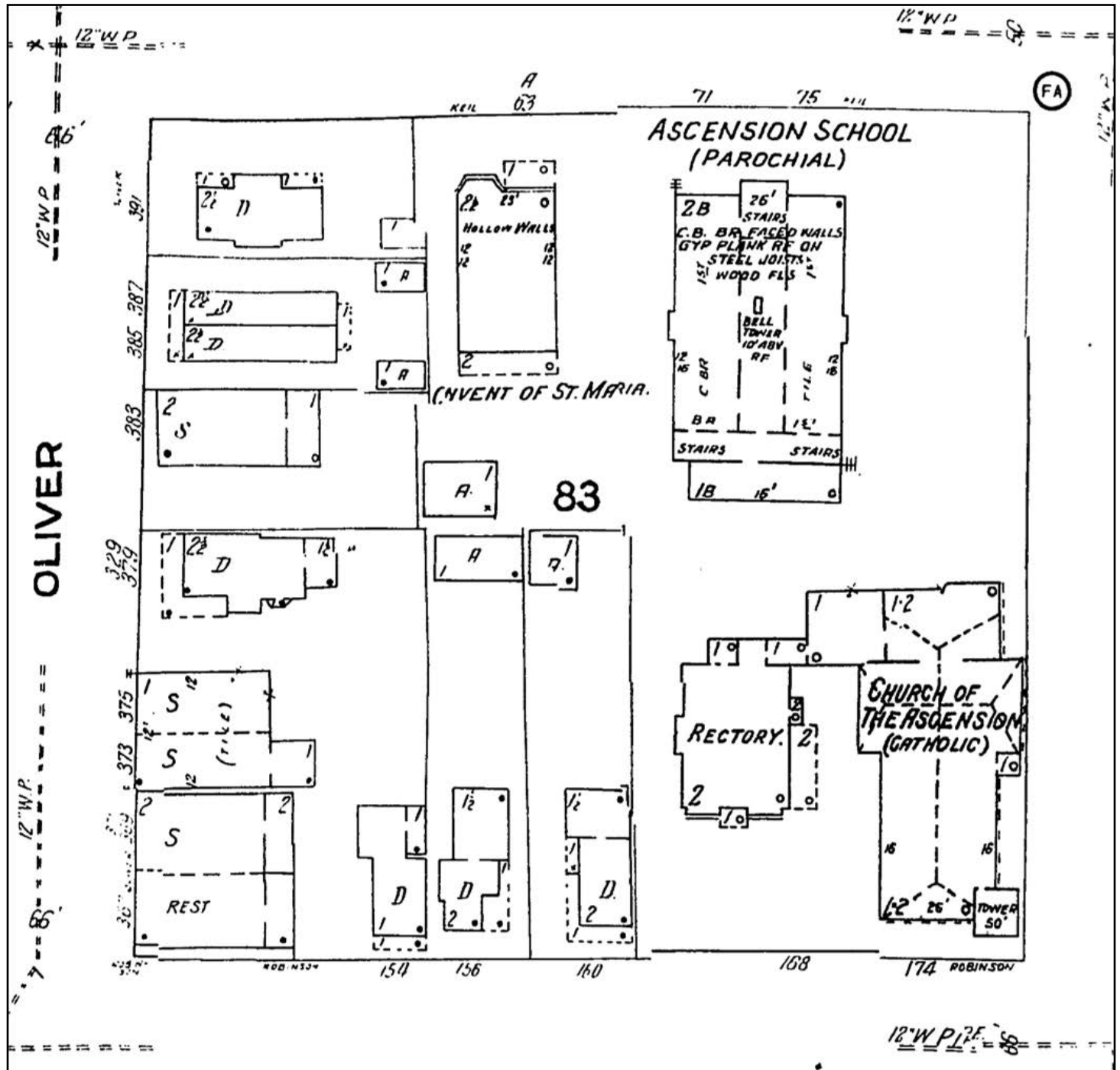
Section 11 Page 14

Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Niagara, New York

County and State



1951 Sanborn Map detail





VANDERVOORT ST
KEIL ST



F.I.T. METHOD
FIRST INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES METHODIST CHURCH

F.I.T. METHOD
FIRST INDEPENDENT TRUSTEES METHODIST CHURCH

NO PARKING
EXCEPT
AS SHOWN

NO PARKING
EXCEPT
AS SHOWN



168















Cross on the roof of the tower.

Decorative circular window with a four-lobed design.

Historical plaque on the tower wall.

61

1997

CAUTION



FAIR HAVENS
COMMUNITY CENTER

383

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Niagara

DATE RECEIVED: 7/22/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/10/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/25/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/06/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000592

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

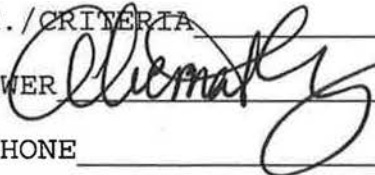
APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8/29/16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA

REVIEWER 

DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____

DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

RECEIVED 2280
JUL 22 2016
Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

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

Depew High School, Erie County
St. Theresa's Roman Catholic Church Complex, Erie County
Buffalo Public School # 63 (PS 63), Erie County
Dennis-Newton House, Tompkins County
Second Walton Armory (Thirty-third Separate Company), Delaware County
Ascension Roman Catholic Church Complex, Niagara 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

CITY OF NORTH TONAWANDA

Office of the Mayor

ARTHUR G. PAPPAS

June 21, 2016

Ms. Ruth L. Pierpont
Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
Division for Historic Preservation
PO Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Re: NYS State and National Register Nomination for the Ascension Complex

Dear Deputy Commissioner Pierpont:

At the June 20 regular meeting of the North Tonawanda Historic Preservation Commission, the vote to recommend the listing of the Ascension Complex on the NYS and National Registers was unanimous. The complex has been designated by the Commission as a local landmark for 9 years.

The Commission believes that the complex meets the criteria for listing under Criterion C as a largely intact complex of religious buildings, reflective of the growth and prosperity of North Tonawanda, New York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The complex served various immigrant populations over its 100 year history, including many notable residents of the City.

Representing the City as a whole, I too concur with the listing of this complex. These iconic structures have a long history of serving the people of the City of North Tonawanda.

Yours truly,



Arthur G. Pappas, Mayor