

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH DATA SHEET  
0665886

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED MAR 29 1978  
DATE ENTERED SEP 18 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

ST. JOSEPH'S BASILICA

AND/OR COMMON

ST. JOSEPH'S BASILICA

DEC 27 1977

OH

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

1109 Chestnut Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Alameda

VICINITY OF

9

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

California

CODE

(06)

COUNTY

Alameda

CODE

(001)

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Roman Catholic Bishop of Oakland Corporation Sole,  
in favor of St. Joseph's Parish of Alameda, California.

STREET & NUMBER

1109 Chestnut Street

CITY, TOWN

Alameda

VICINITY OF

STATE

California

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Alameda County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1225 Fallon Street

CITY, TOWN

Oakland

STATE

California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Introduction: St. Joseph's Basilica was built in 1921 to replace an old gothic-style church which had burned to the ground in 1919. The building is located on land which was originally purchased by the Sisters of Notre Dame for a convent and school. Designed by Harvard-educated architect H. A. Minton, the Basilica is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style of architecture.

Exterior: The massiveness of the building is achieved by the use of reinforced concrete, with a concrete plaster surface. The roof, also of reinforced concrete, is covered with red tile. The front elevation on Chestnut Street is dominated by a fortresslike parapet with a curvilinear cornice (or espadana), with a crucifix covered in gold leaf placed at the top of the parapet. To the left is a bell tower capped by a blue and green tile dome with exposed ribbing along the upper surface, and another gold crucifix placed at the top. The dome is supported by four piers which incorporate Renaissance detailing, such as a couplet of engaged Corinthian columns and floral brackets in the design. A short red tile stairway leads up to the three set of doors entering into the narthex. At this entrance is an elaborate design of cast concrete, made to resemble the carved stonework of an earlier time. The doors are framed by four engaged Corinthian columns decorated with festoons, acanthus leaves, and geometric Spanish patterns. Some of the detailing has a Renaissance flavor to it, including the cherubs in the keystone above the arches, the arched cornices over two of the doors and the urns placed above each column. The primary design in the spandrels at the corner of each arch includes a coat of arms, and long flowing banners reminiscent of Medieval heraldry. The cornice molding is an acanthus design, as is some of the decoration at the base of the fluted lamposts at either side of the stairway. A semicircular window completes the arch over each set of double oak doors. The large window at the center of the façade over the middle set of doors is framed by two pilasters and a curved cornice at the top. There is a similar parapet and entrance on the elevation to the south.

Interior: The floor plan of the church<sup>is</sup> in the form of a basilica, which in early Christian times, meant a church with several aisles covered by a high roof over the center seating area (or nave), and lower lean-to roofs over the side aisles. One enters into the narthex (vestibule) from the front entrance. To the right of the narthex is an office and stairway to the choir loft above. To the left is the Baptistry and Grotto located in a small room under the bell tower. The Baptistry and Grotto areas are separated by a decorative wrought-iron fence. The Grotto, designed in the tradition of Lourdes, has a cave-like appearance with a rough rocklike surface on the walls and ceiling. It is illuminated by two stained glass windows imported from Germany, and a bank of red votive candles. Continuing from the narthex through another set of doors into the nave, one notices that the ceiling has a barrel vault construction. The ceiling was constructed of cast plaster hung from a steel framework. Cast plaster vaulting ribs separating each bay run along the vaulted surface from one side to the other. Most of the architectural ornamentation inside the church is either cast plaster or concrete. The arcades at both sides of the nave is a series of piers and

(Cont'd)

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(7) DESCRIPTION (Sheet 2)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

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arches. A stained glass clerestory window is located in each bay over an arch above the arcade. The transept has a vaulted ceiling which intersects with the nave to create a dramatic groin vault. Diagonal ribs run along the seam of the intersection and meet at a medallion at the center. A splendid crystal chandelier imported from Czechoslovakia hangs from the center point. The church seats 752 people on oak pews located in the nave and the transept. The floor is covered with red carpeting imported from Italy

The Altar with its marble floor is at the head of the nave, separated by distance and elevated above the nave connected by steps. Within the sanctuary, behind the altar, is a delicate mahogany baldaccino (a wooden canopy on columns). In the center of the baldaccino is a carved crucifix. The baldaccino is said to resemble the piece designed by Bernini at St. Peter's in Rome. This, as well as the crucifix, were hand carved by an old San Francisco craftsman in the early 1960's, and are irreplaceable. At both sides of the sanctuary are the sacristys where the vestments are kept.

One of the most notable artistic features of the church are the mosaics designed by Isabel and Edith Piczek, considered to be among the greatest of contemporary church artists. These brightly colored mosaics depicting the sacraments and figures of Christ, were executed by Italian craftsman abroad, and sent in sections to Alameda where they were assembled and carefully installed onto the walls of the church.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1920 - 1921

BUILDER/ARCHITECT H. A. Minton

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The architecture and artistic decoration of St. Joseph's Basilica are of the highest quality. It is a fine example of the Spanish Colonial Revival incorporating most of the idioms of this architectural movement, and ranking high among the other buildings of this style in one Bay Area. The building's designer, H. A. Minton, was a notable architect of the San Francisco Bay Region.

In addition, the Basilica has achieved a stature which is recognized nationwide. In the spring of 1972, St. Joseph's Church was elevated to the rank of Basilica by Pope Paul VI. This made it one of the four others in the western United States, including Missions in San Francisco, Monterey, and San Diego. Basilicas are those churches of the world so designated by the Sovereign Pontiff as outstanding in their devotional and religious spirit, and noted for their artistic and architectural beauty and historical significance. The honor was given to St. Joseph's because of the devotion of the people to the Eucharist, and the intense spirit of the people, the excellence of Catholic education in the community, and the outstanding architecture of the building itself.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

1. Identifying American Architecture: Blumenson, American Association for State & Local History, 1977.
2. The Story of Architecture in Mexico, Sanford, W.W.Norton & Co., New York, 1947.
3. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles, Whiffen, MIT, 1969.
4. St. Joseph's of Alameda (booklet published by St. Joseph's parish in 1960).
5. Alameda Times-Star (newspaper).

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.40

SEE 7.5 MINUTE TOPOGRAPHIC QUADRANGLE MAP: Oakland West Quadrangle, Calif.

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 | 565740 | 4179960  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C    |    |   

B    |    |     
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D    |    |   

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Basilica is bounded by Chestnut Street on the east and the vacated right-of-way of San Antonio Avenue on the south. The Boys' High School is coterminous with the west wall of the Basilica. The rectory building and a landscaped area lie to the north. (See map of building group.)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

David Cannon and Woody Minor

December 16, 1977

ORGANIZATION

Staff members, Historical Advisory Commission (H.A.C.)

DATE

1-6830

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall, Room 315, Oak and Santa Clara Avenue

TELEPHONE

522-4100 (AC415)

#226

CITY OR TOWN

Alameda, California 94501

STATE

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Knowmell*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 3/9/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*R.B. Reltig*

DATE

9/18/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

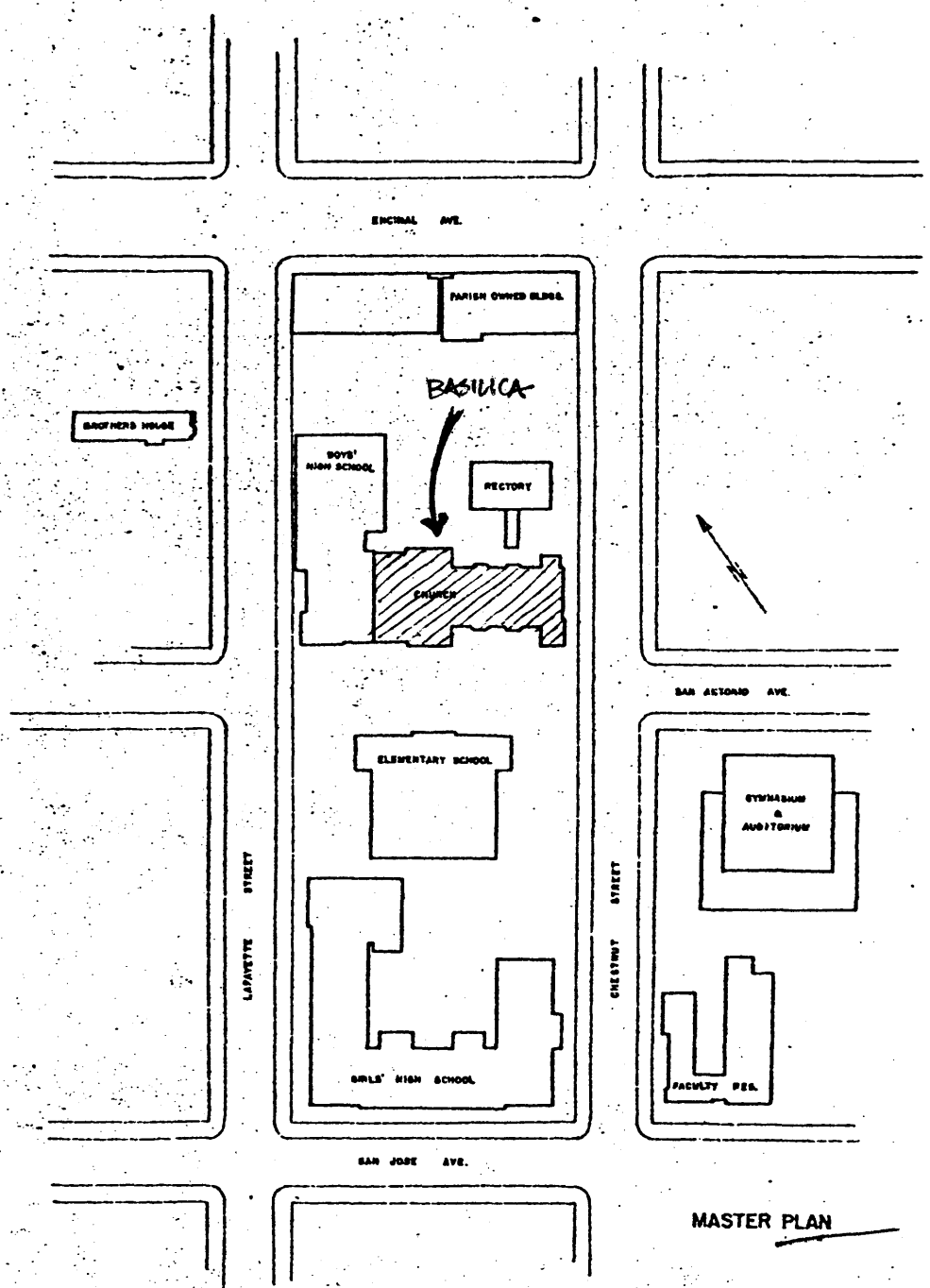
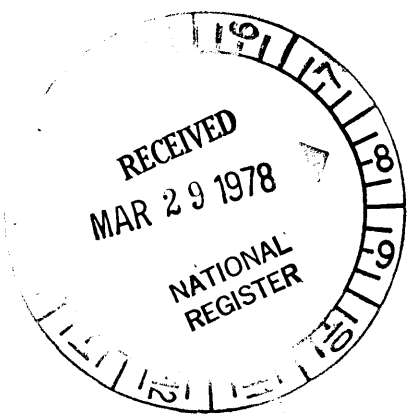
ATTEST:

*William Labovich*

DATE

Sept 13, 1978

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



**MASTER PLAN**

ST. JOSEPHS PARISH  
ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA