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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Church of St. Stephen (Catholic) other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 2201 Clinton Avenue South not for publication N/A city, town Minneapolis vicinity N/A state Minnesota code MN county Hennepin code 053 zip code 55404

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: [X] private, [ ] public-local, [ ] public-State, [ ] public-Federal. Category of Property: [X] building(s), [ ] district, [ ] site, [ ] structure, [ ] object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0, Total 1.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [ ] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Ian R. Stewart, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Minnesota Historical Society. Date: 7/3/91

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: [X] 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:). Entered in the National Register: Signature of the Keeper: Date of Action: 8/15/91

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious structure

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque

Richardsonian Romanesque

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Sandstone

walls Sandstone

roof Asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

St. Stephen's Catholic Church, a stone edifice which combines elements of Romanesque Revival and Richardsonian Romanesque styles, is located on the southeast corner of Clinton Avenue South and 22nd Street, about one mile south of the central Minneapolis business district. It is situated within the Washburn Fair Oaks neighborhood, which primarily consists of late nineteenth and early twentieth century single family residences, although some small apartment buildings have also been erected in the area. One block to the west is Washburn Fair Oaks Park, and to the immediate east is the eight-lane interstate highway 35W.

Arranged on a cruciform plan, the asymmetrical 125' x 88' church has a buff-colored Kettle River (MN) sandstone foundation supporting random-ranged, quarry-faced red Bayfield (WI) sandstone walls. The west-facing facade is composed of three bays dominated by a 150'-high square corner tower that has a north entry set in a compound arch. The tower is pierced on all four sides by several narrow, round-arched windows. Above these windows is a belfry with two louvers on each elevation set in a recessed panel with dentils. The corners of the belfry terminate in pyramidal towers. Surmounting the belfry is an octagonal copper-clad spire with four louver windows and modillions at its base. The spire windows were reduced in size when the original wood shingle spire was replaced at an unknown date.

The middle bay of the facade consists of a tall gabled section containing the church's main entrance, which has a gabled compound arch flanked by stone buttresses. Directly above the entry are four narrow rounded windows and a rose window. A stone cross caps the parapet, and a tall stone chimney rises from one corner. The third bay has a matching entrance into the pentagonal vestibule, with two stained glass windows lighting the interior staircase.

The north and south elevations of St. Stephen's Church are nearly identical. Each broad gabled transept has three round-arched Tiffany stained glass windows flanked by buttresses above which is a large semicircular-arched stained glass window. Designed by Tiffany Studios of New York City, the six windows were installed in 1892 at a total cost of \$1,200. They are tall and narrow with a rounded arch and medallion above. The windows represent the Good Shepherd, the Immaculate Conception, the Sacred Heart, St. Patrick, St. Stephen, and St. Agnes, and each one carries the name of the person it was given in memory of. Among Tiffany Studios' stained glass work, the company designed figure, religious, landscape, and floral windows, however, the vast majority of business was

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generated by commissions for ecclesiastical figure windows. The demand for religious designs increased with the rapid growth of organized religion in the last third of the nineteenth century. For \$700 a customer could purchase a 3' x 5' pictorial memorial representing a major Old or New Testament story, although some commissions could cost as much as \$5,000. A variety of techniques were employed by the company to assemble stained glass windows, but it was their incomparable glass that distinguished their designs from others. Since they have been installed some elements of the St. Stephen's windows have been slightly altered, although these changes are minimal and do not significantly detract from the overall aesthetic effect. Other Tiffany windows were designed for churches in Duluth, Faribault, Minneapolis, Rochester, St. Paul, Stillwater, and Wabasha, but St. Stephen's contains the largest single group in the state.

The outermost walls of the nave, slightly lower than the central gabled section, are covered by a shed roof and feature three pairs of stained glass windows similar in size and shape to the Tiffany windows. Above the shed roof are three sets of rectangular stained glass windows set between wood shingles. There is a small, octagonal, copper-sheathed spire at the junction of the nave and transept.

A small brick enclosure giving access to the basement was added to the south wall in about 1960.

The interior of St. Stephen's Church has undergone several changes, however, the original hammer-beam roof truss remains unaltered. In 1927 the original marble altar was replaced, walls were painted a buff color, and a new organ, light fixtures, and ventilation system were installed. The interior was redecorated again in 1954, and the altar was removed following the Vatican reforms in the early 1970s. In 1988 the church received a new altar, baptismal font, and proclamation furniture based on designs from original interior woodwork. Along with the pews, they were arranged to create an active central communal worship space, and to provide for more private devotional areas. At the same time a hardwood floor was installed and two large stained glass windows replaced those in the upper part of each transept.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
Architecture

Period of Significance  
1889-1891

Significant Dates  
1891

\_\_\_\_\_  
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Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

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Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
Corser, Frederick G., architect  
Tainor Brothers, builders

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

In the local context of late nineteenth century religious architecture, St. Stephen's Church, built between 1889-1891, is architecturally significant under National Register Criterion C as a well preserved and relatively early example in Minneapolis of ecclesiastical design based on Richardsonian Romanesque and Romanesque Revival styles.

St. Stephen's parish was organized by Father Patrick Kenny, who met in 1884 with several families living on the southern edge of Minneapolis to discuss building a new church. Catholic residents were interested in establishing a parish closer to their homes so they would not have to attend services at either Immaculate Conception Church or Holy Rosary Church, both located about one mile from their neighborhood. Property for St. Stephen's was purchased for \$21,000 and was located at 22nd Street and 3-1/2 Avenue South, which later became Clinton Avenue. The first church (demolished) was a wood frame building constructed in 1885 that originally served about 35 families. In 1886 Father Kenny organized the St. Vincent DePaul Conference to raise money for a new building to serve the rapidly growing parish that contained over 200 families by 1889. Construction of St. Stephen's began in July 1889, and the cornerstone was laid about one month later by Archbishop Ireland in a ceremony attended by nearly 1,000 people that the Minneapolis Tribune called "one of the most impressive services of its kind ever witnessed in the city." The 1,400-seat capacity church was completed at a cost of about \$60,000 and dedicated in May 1891.

St. Stephen's was erected at the end of an especially active phase of church construction in Minneapolis which reached its zenith in the mid-to-late 1880s. According to one account, by 1893 the city had over 150 religious buildings of which at least seventeen were built between 1889-91. However, many of the churches erected during this construction boom were simple wood frame edifices later replaced with more imposing and architecturally distinctive buildings. In addition to St. Stephen's, only six of the early churches remain today in Minneapolis: Our Lady of Lourdes (Greek Revival, 1857, NRHP); St. Anthony of Padua (Gothic Revival, 1866, altered); Gethsemane Episcopal (Gothic Revival, 1886, NRHP); First Congregational (Romanesque Revival, 1886, NRHP); Holy Rosary

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(Gothic Revival, ca.1886); and Wesley United Methodist (Richardsonian Romanesque, 1891, NRHP).

In keeping with contemporary architectural trends, the design for St. Stephen's blended elements of Romanesque Revival and Richardsonian Romanesque styles. The former style was popular in Minnesota between ca.1860-80 and the latter enjoyed widespread use from about 1880-95. Frederick Corser, the architect for St. Stephen's, was like many of his professional colleagues who often combined Richardsonian and Romanesque features in his designs. Corser (1849-1924) studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in 1877 came to Minneapolis where he established an architectural firm. Like other architects from the region, Corser borrowed Richardson's ideas and modified them according to his and his clients' needs and tastes. St. Stephen's exhibits his ability to unite stylistic trends into an attractive and functional ecclesiastical building.

In a rather simplified but distinctive way, Corser remained largely faithful to Richardsonian precedent by utilizing a variety of design features that contribute to the building's architectural significance. An overall effect of mass, volume, and scale prevails through the lithic quality of rock-faced masonry, continuous gables, and horizontal massing. Additional Richardsonian influences can be seen in the straight-forward treatment of the stone and the large arched entries. Unadorned exterior walls are punctuated by windows arranged in groups of two, with doors and windows set off in characteristic round-arched, compound openings. The corner tower, borrowed from the Romanesque Revival vocabulary, contrasts sharply with these features, but the complete design gives a sense of structural solidity.

Through its design quality and a high degree of integrity, St. Stephen's Church stands out in Minneapolis as one of the best examples of Richardsonian-inspired religious architecture. The most important prototypes are the First Congregational Church of Minnesota and Wesley United Methodist Church, both designed by Warren Hayes.

#### ENDNOTE

1. Corser is credited with the design of two wood frame, Queen Anne style houses on Nicollet Island (1886, 1890) which are part of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District. His other known designs include three Romanesque buildings in Minneapolis: the Minneapolis Public Library, North Branch (1893, NRHP), the Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged (1895, NRHP), and the Medical Science Building (1896-98), which is included in the University of Minnesota Old Campus Historic District.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Atwater, Isaac. History of the City of Minneapolis. Part I. New York: Munsell & Co., 1893.
- Duncan, Alastair. Tiffany Windows. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980.
- Hudson, Horace B. Hudson's Dictionary of Minneapolis, 1891. Minneapolis: Beard-Hudson Printing Co., 1891.
- Larson, Paul C., ed. The Spirit of H.H. Richardson on the Midland Prairies. Ames, IA.: Iowa State University Press, 1988.
- Marx, Patrick K. The Soul of a People: An Urban Church on the Edge. Minneapolis: St. Stephen's Church, 1985.
- Northwestern Chronicle. 9 December 1886; 15 May 1891; 8 April 1892.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References

A 15 | 478640 | 4978410  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Lots 24 and 27 of Auditor's Subdivision No. 7, Hennepin County.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

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