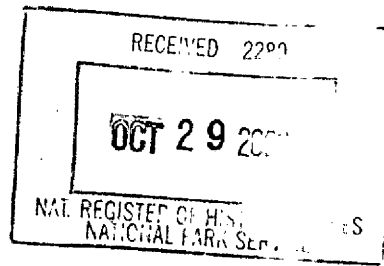


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or 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 listed in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Mary's Church

other names/site number St. Mary of Ostrabrama

2. Location

street & number Corner of Jackson Street & Whitehead Avenue not for publication

city or town South River Borough vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Middlesex code 023 zip code 08882

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] Date 10/24/03
Signature of certifying official/Title
Marc A. Matsil, Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
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 this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Edson H. Beall 12/10/03

St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J.

Middlesex County, N. J.

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	-	buildings
-	-	sites
-	-	structures
-	-	objects
1	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

RELIGION: religious facility/church

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

20TH CENTURY REVIVAL/romanesque

foundation stone/granite

walls stone/granite

roof asphalt shingle

other steeple-aluminum

stained glass windows

Narrative Description

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

St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J.

Middlesex County, N. J.

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1904 - 1908

Significant Dates

1904, 1908

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Henry Dandurand Dagit

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
- 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

Name of repository:

St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J.

Middlesex County, N. J.

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.307

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 552755 4477654
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

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 Thomas F. Dominiecki, Deacon and a preservation student Burlington County College

organization St. Mary of Ostrabrama Church date 4/30/03

street & number 30 Jackson Street telephone 732-254-2220

city or town South River state NJ zip code 08882

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 the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name St. Mary of Ostrabrama Church

street & number 30 Jackson Street telephone 732-254-2220

city or town South River state NJ zip code 08882

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, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
Middlesex County

Section Number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description

St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J. is located on the southwest corner of Whitehead Avenue and Jackson Street on three parcels of land that now form part of tax lot 1, block 320¹ in the Borough of South River, Middlesex County, New Jersey. The Romanesque Revival style church that was constructed between 1903 and 1908 soars approximately 157 feet² at the front façade which includes the central front entrance, vestibule, bell tower and steeple. The structure has a two-story nave fronted by a cross-gabled two-story vestibule and partially engaged tower. An angled apse is located at the rear and a sacristy is attached to the west side of the nave. The church is 66 feet wide at the façade, 51 feet wide at the central nave and 63 feet in width at the rear of the church including the sacristy. The building measures 149 feet in length.

The church edifice was designed by the noted Philadelphia architect, Henry Dandurand Dagit, who while continuing in private practice, was designated as the architect for the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey. The church is done in the Romanesque Revival style of architecture having exterior walls done in massive rough granite stone of various shades of gray and light beige with stone buttresses along the sides of the two-story nave. The Romanesque Revival style continues in twenty-three round-arched stained glass windows, the louvered openings of the bell tower, the articulated stone arch that surrounds the original main entrance to the church and the round arched ceiling in the nave.

The location for the construction of the church was chosen by the Polish immigrants of South River and Sayreville because of its proximity to the South River, which forms the boundary line between the Boroughs of South River and Sayreville. The original vacant lot on which the church was to be constructed had a depth of 150 feet along Whitehead Avenue and contained 0.307 acres and was purchased from Charles and Jemima Whitehead in September 1903.³ The parish trustees in October 1903⁴ hired the Trenton diocesan architect, Henry Dandurand Dagit whose design for the new church necessitated the purchase of two more parcels of land to the rear of the first parcel of land purchased. These two parcels added another 17 feet to the depth of the original property. A local builder, Marcus

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St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
Middlesex County

Section Number 7 Page 2

Narrative Description

Wright,⁵ was selected as the contractor, who, using local paid laborers and many volunteer Polish immigrant parishioners, constructed the first level of the church. This street level building originally contained three classrooms for educating the immigrant Poles and a chapel room for conducting religious services.⁶ Because of financial limitations, the main upper church was not constructed until 1908 when Henry Dandurand Dagit was again hired to complete the church.⁷

The church today is essentially the same Romanesque Revival style church planned by Mr. Dagit of massive granite stones, multiple rounded arches and a round arched interior ceiling. Its exterior walls are constructed of huge granite stones from the street grade level to the top of the bell tower. The façade of the church (the north elevation) faces Jackson Street. The east elevation runs along Whitehead Avenue. The south elevation, comprising the apse and the sacristy, runs along the rear line of the deeded property. The west elevation runs along a former interior lot line facing the church's present rectory.

The main entrance located in the façade is set in the central, partially-engaged bell tower, on limestone steps ascending to the nave in the upper church. Originally, two huge multi-paneled wooden doors gave access to the vestibule of the church.⁸ These doors and the original entranceway were modified several times in the 1950s and 1960s.⁹ A semi-circular stained-glass transom is located over the main entrance doors. The stained glass in the transom has been replaced several times. A series of three recessed rounded finished stone arches step in from the exterior to create the articulated stone entrance found in true Romanesque-style churches.

The façade of the tower above the entrance arch has a stone statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a niche that is capped by a stone cross.¹⁰ Just above the stone cross is a stained glass rose window that was replaced after a 1973 fire. Above this window is the bell tower with two arched louvered openings with stone tracery.¹¹ These arched openings are repeated on each of the four sides of the bell tower. Above the bell tower was a copper-covered wood steeple that was destroyed in a 1973 fire. This fire-damaged steeple was replaced in 1973 with a three-stage aluminum oxide steeple manufactured to custom fit over the masonry bell tower.

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St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
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Narrative Description

The corners of the steeple are each finished with two perpendicular buttresses. The stone beneath the belfry windows is corbeled out three steps above the dentils.

The tower separates two halves of a cross-gabled narthex that rises from street level to the floor of the bell tower. Each half contains two large round arched stained glass windows at the nave level and two segmentally arched windows at the basement level. The east half contains a baptistery and the west contains the stairs to the choir loft. These sections have two stone buttresses at each corner which become recessed as they gain height. An aerial view¹² from 1978 shows that the narthex forms the horizontal bar of a cross while the nave forms the perpendicular bar of a cross.

The vestibule or narthex contains 11 limestone steps (now covered by carpeting) rising from inside the main entrance door to the nave level.¹³ Between the 6th and 7th steps is a four-foot-wide aisle that runs parallel to Jackson Street and connects the side entrance/choir steps (on the west) to the baptistery (on the east). The walls of the vestibule are stucco and have anchored to them fourteen statues of saints encircled by bronze-coated wire rope.¹⁴ The wood ceiling (replaced after the 1973 fire) has four recessed floodlights and a chandelier containing twelve lamps.

To the left of the vestibule (on the east side) is the baptistery¹⁵ which contains a white marble baptismal font. The floor is carpeted; the walls are sheet-rocked and are painted with various gospel scenes. The ceiling is wood from which is suspended a chandelier containing four lamps.

The east elevation¹⁶ is constructed of granite from street level to the eaves of the gable roof. The east granite section containing the baptistery has four buttresses, two at each corner, two round-arched stained glass windows and a gable roof. A street level storage room exists beneath the baptistery and has two segmental arched windows now filled with block glass. The east wall running along the nave of the church has eight round-arched windows holding the original stained glass windows from 1908. This east side wall also has eight granite buttresses, which recede as they approach the edge of the roof. The third buttress from the

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St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
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Narrative Description

rear contains the original chimney for the furnace. The ground level rooms under the nave on the east elevation have eight segmental arched windows which contain glass block and aluminum awning replacement windows.

The south elevation¹⁷ which contains the apse section of the church and the rear wall of the sacristy is granite stone from grade level to the edge of the gabled roof. The apse of the church has three round arched original stained glass windows. One granite buttress is located on the southwest corner of the church and another marks the separation of the church nave from the sacristy. The street level south elevation has five segmental arched windows containing glass block with small aluminum awning window inserts.

The west elevation¹⁸ is granite from grade level to the eaves of the gable roof. The sacristy was constructed along the west elevation of the nave of the church. At the nave level it has two round arched windows with stained glass which contain representations of the four gospel writers. Two grade level segmental arched windows exist. One has been filled in with a faux stone and has a crucifix attached to it at present. The other grade level window is partially covered in a faux stone and contains two aluminum awning windows. The sacristy exterior wall has no stone buttresses.

The interior of the sacristy has two counter-high cabinets for storage of sacred vessels and liturgical coverings. Above one of the cabinets on the rear wall is an all-white relief of the crucifixion with two women and a man standing or kneeling beneath the cross.¹⁹ To the left of this cabinet is a sacrarium. Two large clothes closets with four sliding doors are located on an interior wall and are used to hang clerical vestments. The floor is entirely carpeted. The walls are covered with an oak veneer paneling. Two round arched stained-glass windows on the west wall contain depictions of the four gospel writers, two in each window.²⁰ The ceiling is covered with twelve-inch-square white ceiling tiles from which are appended two fluorescent light fixtures.

To the north of the original sacristy area and along the west side of the church, a new entrance area was added in the 1980s²¹ to give better access to the

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St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
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Narrative Description

side entrance of the church for parishioners using the newly acquired rear property for parking purposes. This addition has a flat roof, a faux stone exterior, one round arched window, a rectangular window and an aluminum entrance door. The windows contain stained glass.

The west elevation²² contains six round arched original stained glass windows and six granite buttresses which recede as they rise. On the west side of the nave where a seventh stained glass window would be, is a colored relief of a priest standing in front of an altar raising the host above his head.²³ A single altar server to the rear of the priest holds the back of the priest's chasuble. In front of the altar are flames of fire engulfing five figures. Rising above the fire and off to the left side are two winged angels protecting two humans from the flames. Above the flames and the altar is a cross with the nailed corpus of Jesus Christ. Under each of the nailed hands, the nailed feet and the bleeding chest wound are three winged angels holding chalices to collect the blood dropping from the corpus.

Adjoining the west elevation near the front of the church is a new brick-enclosed area²⁴ housing an elevator to assist aged and disabled parishioners in gaining entrance to the nave of the church from grade level. This addition has a shed roof with two skylights, two rectangular stained glass windows and three aluminum entrance doors at the street and parking lot levels.

On the inside of the church the ground floor is at grade level. It contains a utility room, two rest rooms, two meeting rooms, a flower room, a boiler room, three storage rooms and a chapel room under the chancel of the church. An altar server's room is on the lower level beneath the sacristy. Throughout the ground level, the floor is covered in ceramic tile, while the walls are paneled and painted white or various pastel colors. The ceilings are now covered by a dropped grid containing 2' X 4' white ceiling tiles and fluorescent lights. The doors throughout are solid wood with a square window at eye level and are painted white.²⁵

The upper level of the church contains the chancel, nave and the choir area. The chancel contains the high altar under the rounded apse. A relief of Our Lady of Ostrabrama is located above the tabernacle on the high altar.²⁶ Recessed in the

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St. Mary's Church
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Narrative Description

base of the high altar is a relief of the Last Supper.²⁷ The ceiling of the apse has a canvas painting of Christ the King surrounded by four angels, two on each side. (This area is presently covered by scaffolding.)

To each side of the high altar are two smaller altars. Above each of the side altars is a wall mosaic. One, of the resurrected Christ, and the other of a glorified Blessed Virgin Mary.²⁸ Above each of the altars are plaster arches with the arch over the high altar having a greater span.

Marble pilasters rise on the walls in the sanctuary and end with gold colored capitals. In front of the high altar is a marble sacrificial altar elevated three steps above the floor of the nave. The entire floor area of the chancel is carpeted. The round arched ceiling over the chancel is covered with twenty-eight faux coffered squares painted on canvas in two rows of fourteen each. Each faux coffer measures two feet by two feet. Halogen lights are recessed in four of the faux coffers.

The floor of the nave is 34 feet beneath the round arched ceiling. It contains 50 wooden pews, has a carpeted floor, marble wainscoting of seven feet on the side walls beneath the stained glass windows. Above the marble side walls to the lower edge of the ceiling are plaster walls painted to give the appearance of limestone blocks. Each round arched stained glass window is surrounded by faux marble scagliola. Between the stained glass windows near the ceiling are fourteen circular mosaic portraits of various saints. The nave is under a round-arched ceiling from which are suspended three sixteen-lamp chandeliers. The round arched ceiling is covered with oil painted canvas of seventy-two faux coffers measuring two feet by two feet and six depictions of gospel scenes. Recessed halogen lights are hidden in twenty-four of the faux coffers.²⁹

The choir loft³⁰ is located below the bell tower and above the vestibule in the narthex and extends into the nave of the church. The choir area is largely occupied by a pipe organ having 1,653 pipes, woodwinds, and windchests. The area of the choir loft below the bell tower has two rows of wooden pews. A dropped ceiling conceals the air conditioning ducts and three recessed halogen lights. The organ console is centered in the choir loft above the nave and there are two sets of wooden

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St. Mary's Church
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pews on each side of the organ console. Two rows of twenty-eight faux coffers painted on canvas cover the round arched choir ceiling over the organ console and side pews. Halogen lights are hidden in four of the ceiling faux coffers. The entire floor is carpeted.

The Romanesque Revival structure designed by Henry Dandurand Dagit is impressive with its height, its massive stone exterior and rounded arches found throughout the exterior and interior of the church. It has served the faith community of St. Mary's continuously since it was a dream of Polish immigrants in the 1890s.

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South River, N. J.
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Endnotes

¹ The current tax map for the Borough of South River, particularly sheet 36, reflects tax lot 1 in block 320 as containing all the land fronting on Jackson Street between Whitehead Avenue and Holmes Avenue even though conveyed to the church at different times in various deeds. This singular tax lot contains the school at the corner of Jackson & Holmes, the church at the corner of Jackson & Whitehead and the rectory in between. The portion of tax lot 1 which contains the church has been shaded in. See exhibit 3.

² The height of the façade was indicated in a 1907 Philadelphia publication: The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide Vol. XXII No. 44 Philadelphia Wednesday, October 30, 1907. See exhibit 10.

³ Middlesex County Clerk's Office, Deed Book 351-151. See exhibit 2.

⁴ Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Church of St. Mary's of Ostrabrama dated October 14, 1903. See exhibit 4.

⁵ Ibid. See exhibits 4 and 5.

⁶ See exhibit 6.

⁷ Resolution of the Board of Trustees of St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J. dated February 18, 1908. See exhibit 7.

⁸ See exhibit 11.

⁹ See exhibits 11 and 12 and photos 5 and 16.

¹⁰ See photo 7.

¹¹ See photo 7.

¹² See exhibit 12.

¹³ See photo 17.

¹⁴ See photo 18.

¹⁵ See photos 18 and 19.

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St. Mary's Church
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- ¹⁶ See photos 9 and 10.
- ¹⁷ See photo 11.
- ¹⁸ See photos 12, 13 and 14.
- ¹⁹ See photo 21.
- ²⁰ See photo 22.
- ²¹ See photos 13 and 14.
- ²² See photos 13, 14 and 15.
- ²³ See photo 23.
- ²⁴ See photos 8 and 15.
- ²⁵ See photo 35.
- ²⁶ See photo 27.
- ²⁷ See photo 28.
- ²⁸ See photos 29 and 30.
- ²⁹ See photos 31, 32, 33 and 34.
- ³⁰ See photo 33.

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St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
Middlesex County

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Statement of Significance

St. Mary's Church, South River, NJ¹ is a local landmark in the river town incorporated as the Borough of South River located in Middlesex County, New Jersey. This imposing and majestic church structure is the tallest structure in the Borough and its dominance can be seen from any avenue of approach to the Borough of South River. It is a well-preserved granite stone Romanesque revival structure, significant for its architecture under Criterion C. The architect of the church was Henry Dandurand Dagit, a renowned Philadelphia architect of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

The influx of Polish Catholics into the Borough of South River and the adjoining Borough of Sayreville in the 1890s had caused these people of faith to petition the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Trenton for permission to organize into an ethnic Polish parish and allow them to build a church structure.² This petition was denied for several reasons and a subsequent appeal to the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, D. C. was likewise denied. Undaunted and persistent, the Polish community consolidated the formerly non-unified Polish speaking populace of the South River-Sayreville area and with increased financial resources again petitioned the Bishop of Trenton, James A. McFaul in November 1902 for permission to establish an ethnic Polish parish and to build a church structure.³

In December 1902, Bishop McFaul gave permission to the Polish community to organize a parish, appointed the first pastor, Rev. Joseph Regorowicz, and allowed the parish to commence planning for a church structure.⁴ Not losing any time, a certificate of incorporation was prepared and signed on January 5, 1903 for St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J. The certificate of incorporation was recorded in the Middlesex County Clerk's Office on January 6, 1903 in the Certificate of Incorporation Book F at page 293.⁵

Eager to build a church structure, the corporation purchased a vacant lot at the corner of Jackson Street and Whitehead Avenue in the Borough of South River from Charles and Jemima Whitehead on May 8, 1903 which deed was

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Continuation SheetSection Number 8 Page 11St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
Middlesex County

Statement of Significance

recorded in the Middlesex County Clerk's Office on September 14, 1903 in Deed Book 351 at page 125. Said deed specifically recited that: "This property has been purchased with the view of erecting a Catholic Church thereon to be used in accordance with the Statutes of the Diocese of Trenton N. J. and the canon law covering such cases by the Polish Catholics in communion with the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Trenton and of South River and Sayreville N. J."⁶

The trustees of St. Mary's passed a corporate resolution dated October 14, 1903⁷ authorizing the awarding of a building contract to Henry D. Dagit to erect only the basement of a new church because of limited funds. When more funds became available, the trustees, by a resolution dated February 18, 1908,⁸ authorized Henry D. Dagit to complete the church building in accordance with his plans and specifications. A trustees' resolution of May 11, 1908 authorized William Reith of Philadelphia, PA to manufacture the stained glass windows for Henry Dagit's plans.⁹

Henry Dandurand Dagit was born in Philadelphia in 1865 and was educated in the Philadelphia public school system. Mr. Dagit was originally employed in 1886 by the office of Walter Geissinger, a Philadelphia builder, and later around 1888, he was a partner with a builder, George M. Rowe under the name of Rowe & Dagit performing general building and architectural plans in the Philadelphia area. In 1922 and 1925, Henry D. Dagit was joined by his sons, Henry D. Dagit, Jr. and Charles E. Dagit respectively and practiced in Philadelphia under the name of Henry D. Dagit & Sons.¹⁰ A successor architectural firm of Dagit and Saylor exists today at 100 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19110.

Henry D. Dagit's early career in architecture was general in nature. His career exploded when he was selected as the architect for the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey in 1898. The Trenton Diocese then included the New Jersey counties of Middlesex, Somerset, Hunterdon, Warren, Monmouth, Ocean and Mercer.¹¹ Mr. Dagit served as the architect for the Diocese of Trenton from 1898 to 1908 during which he planned and oversaw the con-

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Statement of Significance

struction of more than one hundred and seventy-eight religious oriented structures to include rectories, convents, orphanages, schools and churches.¹² Mr. Dagit's work with the Trenton Diocese enhanced his architectural reputation and assured him success in his native Philadelphia, eastern Pennsylvania, and central and southern New Jersey. One of his most notable examples of a late Victorian Byzantine church in the Philadelphia area is the church of St. Francis de Sales at 47th Street and Springfield Avenue in the Harmony Hill section of Philadelphia. (This church is already on the National Register of Historic Places.)

St. Mary's in South River is executed in the Romanesque Revival architectural style and is the tallest structure in South River, rising to a height of one hundred fifty-seven feet.¹³ The original church's exterior with the exception of the steeple is built of a light gray granite.

The main entrance to the church is framed by an arched stone doorway (since modified several times in the 1960s and 1970s) above which are eight arched louvered openings, two each for the four-sided bell tower. The nave and the apse are complemented by seventeen original stained glass windows measuring fourteen feet in height.

The interior of the church has an arched ceiling crowning the nave. The sanctuary has three arches over the three altars and the narthax has three arches over the interior main entrance doors. The characteristic Romanesque arch tops the choir loft and is also present over the confessionals on each side of the interior entrance doors.

The church sustained an electrical fire in June 1973 which caused the original wood frame, copper-covered steeple to be destroyed, but the granite façade was undamaged. A new steeple matching the original design was constructed of aluminum and hoisted into place in three sections.

This is the only Romanesque Revival style church in Middlesex County that was designed by the architect, Henry D. Dagit. Its Romanesque architecture is

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St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
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unique in design and strong as a rock, and it is still standing tall after nearly one hundred years. Due to this architectural significance under Criterion C, St. Mary of Ostrabrama Church should be recognized through a listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Continuation Sheet

St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
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Endnotes

¹ The original certificate of incorporation named the religious organization as St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J. The corporate name was officially changed to St. Mary of Ostrabrama by a corporate resolution dated August 18, 1992 and was filed with the New Jersey Secretary of State.

² Upon This Rock, A New History of the Trenton Diocese, Edited by Msgr. John C. Shenrock, Cardinal Publishing Company: Pennington, New Jersey, 1993, p. 212

³ St. Mary's Church South River, New Jersey 75th Anniversary Book, Limited Edition, Custombook Inc.: Hackensack, N. J. 1978, p. 11

⁴ In Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of St. Mary's Parish South River, New Jersey 1903-1953, B&M Printing Company: South River, New Jersey, 1953

⁵ The original certificate of incorporation was recorded with the Middlesex County Clerk because that was the legal procedure at the time which was later changed to require the filing with the Secretary of State's Office in Trenton, New Jersey.

⁶ Middlesex County Clerk's Office, Deed Book 351-125, at page 126

⁷ Resolution of the Board of Trustees of the Church of St. Mary's of Ostrabrama dated October 14, 1903

⁸ Resolution of the Board of Trustees of St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J. dated February 18, 1908

⁹ Resolution of the Board of Trustees of St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J. dated May 11, 1908

¹⁰ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, biography of Henry Dandurand Dagit, architect, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 219 South Street, Philadelphia, PA 13106

¹¹ In 1981, the New Jersey counties of Middlesex, Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren were split off from the Trenton Diocese and the four counties then became the Diocese of Metuchen.

¹² Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, project list of Henry Dandurand Dagit, architect, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 219 South Street, Philadelphia, PA 13106

¹³ The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide Vol. XXII No. 44 Philadelphia, Wednesday, October 30, 1907

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South River, N. J.
Middlesex County, NJ

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Major Bibliographic References

Middlesex County Clerk's Office

Certificate of incorporation records
Building contract records
Deed book records

Philadelphia Architects and Buildings

Biography of Henry Dandurand Dagit
Project list of Henry Dandurand Dagit

St. Mary of Ostrabrama

Corporate records of resolutions of Board of Trustees
Golden Jubilee Book marking 50th anniversary
75th Anniversary Book

South River Tax Assessor

Tax maps
Listing of assessed owners

The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, Vol. XXII No. 44
October 30, 1907

Upon This Rock, A New History of the Trenton Diocese, edited by Msgr. John C. Shenrock, Cardinal Publishing Co.: Pennington, New Jersey, 1993

Facilities Used for Research

Dagit & Saylor Architects, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Diocese of Metuchen-Diocesan Center, Piscataway, New Jersey
Diocese of Trenton-Pastoral Center, Lawrenceville, New Jersey
Middlesex County Clerk's Office, New Brunswick, New Jersey
Rutgers University-Special Collections/University Archives
Alexander Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey
Rutgers University-Art Library, New Brunswick, New Jersey
St. Mary of Ostrabrama Church, South River, New Jersey

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Major Bibliographic References

South River Public Library, South River, New Jersey
South River Tax Office, South River, New Jersey
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J. is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Jackson Street and Whitehead Avenue. The legal description from Deed Book 351 at Page 125 as recorded in the Middlesex County Clerk's Office is as follows:

"All that certain lot, tract or parcel of land and premises hereinafter particularly described situate, lying and being in the Borough of South River, in the County of Middlesex and State of New Jersey.

BEGINNING on the southeasterly sideline of Jackson Street at the northeasterly corner of a lot of land conveyed to Asher W. Bissett by Charles Whitehead and wife, by deed dated on or about June 1, 1898 and from thence running (1) southeasterly along the line of said lot and binding thereon and continuing the same course one hundred and twenty seven feet to a stake; thence (2) northeasterly at right angles with Whitehead Avenue or nearly so ninety six feet to a stake to the southwesterly side of Whitehead Avenue; thence (3) along said side of Whitehead Avenue northwesterly one hundred and fifty feet to the southeasterly sideline of Jackson Street; thence (4) along Jackson Street southwesterly one hundred feet more or less to the place of Beginning."

Boundary Justification

The original boundaries were as described above from a deed dated May 8, 1903 between Charles Whitehead and Jamima Whitehead, his wife, by her attorney in fact, Edward Whitehead (grantors) to St. Mary's Church South River, N. J., a New Jersey corporation (grantee) and recorded in the Middlesex County Clerk's Office on September 14, 1903 in Deed Book 351 at Page 125.

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National Park Service

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St. Mary's Church
South River, N. J.
Middlesex County, NJ

PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information applies to all photographs:

1. St. Mary's Church, South River, N. J.
2. Middlesex County, New Jersey
3. Thomas F. Dominiecki, Deacon
5. St. Mary of Ostrabrama Church
30 Jackson Street
South River, New Jersey 08882

List of Photographs

4. March 27, 2003
 6. Telephoto view of St. Mary's (east elevation) from the Sayreville side of the South River
 7. Photograph 1 of 34
-
4. March 27, 2003
 6. Telephoto view of St. Mary's bell tower and steeple from the southwest taken from the Monumental Cemetery. St. Mary's school obstructs most of the church.
 7. Photograph 2 of 34
-
4. April 9, 2003
 6. Close up view of St. Mary's cornerstone located on the northeast side of the façade.
 7. Photograph 3 of 34
-
4. April 9, 2003
 6. Close up view of St. Mary's sign in front of the northeast corner of the church at the intersection of Jackson Street and Whitehead Avenue, South River, New Jersey.
 7. Photograph 4 of 34

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PHOTOGRAPHS

4. April 9, 2003

6. Photograph of the façade of St. Mary's facing Jackson Street. View is from across Jackson Street.

7. Photograph 5 of 34

4. April 9, 2003

6. Close up view of the front entrance to St. Mary's on Jackson Street. View is from across Jackson Street.

7. Photograph 6 of 34

4. April 9, 2003

6. Telephoto view of St. Mary's bell tower from Jackson Street. View is from across Jackson Street.

7. Photograph 7 of 34

4. April 9, 2003

6. View of the northwest façade of St. Mary's. View is from across Jackson Street.

7. Photograph 8 of 34

4. April 9, 2003

6. View of northeast side of the façade and east elevation of St. Mary's. View taken from across the intersection of Jackson Street and Ferry Street (Whitehead Avenue stops at the intersection and then continues as Ferry Street).

7. Photograph 9 of 34

4. March 27, 2003

6. View of east elevation of St. Mary's along Whitehead Avenue and part of the south elevation facing the parking lot. View taken from across the street of Whitehead Avenue.

7. Photograph 10 of 34

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7. Photograph 11 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of the southwest elevation of St. Mary's taken from the church parking lot.
7. Photograph 12 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of west elevation of St. Mary's reflecting the sacristy taken from the parking area in front of the rectory garage.
7. Photograph 13 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of west elevation of St. Mary's reflecting new side entrance to the parking lot. View is taken from the steps of the rectory.
7. Photograph 14 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. Telephoto view of steeple, bell tower and west elevation of St. Mary's taken from the parking area by the rectory garage.
7. Photograph 15 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View from inside of front entrance of St. Mary's looking out towards Jackson Street.
7. Photograph 16 of 34

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PHOTOGRAPHS

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of interior vestibule steps looking from the Jackson Street entrance up at the ceiling over the nave.
7. Photograph 17 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of the vestibule wall by the baptistery showing wall-mounted statues and a view of the baptistery.
7. Photograph 18 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of the baptismal font and wall painting in the baptistery taken from the vestibule steps.
7. Photograph 19 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of main aisle in the nave taken from the top of the vestibule steps looking south towards the sanctuary.
7. Photograph 20 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. Telephoto view of relief on the south wall of the sacristy taken from the entrance to the sacristy.
7. Photograph 21 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of one of the stained glass windows in the sacristy looking west. Photo shows two of the gospel writers.
7. Photograph 22 of 34

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South River, N. J.
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PHOTOGRAPHS

4. March 27, 2003
6. View of the relief on the west wall of St. Mary's taken from the center aisle looking towards the sacristy.
7. Photograph 23 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of stained glass window picturing Our Lady of Ostrabrama in the west wall near the elevator. Photo taken from the nave of the church.
7. Photograph 24 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of basement hallway under the center aisle of the nave looking from Jackson Street towards the south. Door at end of the hallway is to the chapel under the sanctuary.
7. Photograph 25 of 34

4. April 9, 2003
6. View of chapel under the sanctuary looking from the east wall along Whitehead Avenue towards the west.
7. Photograph 26 of 34

4. April 1, 2003
6. Telephoto view of portion of the high altar reflecting the tabernacle and the relief of St. Mary of Ostrabrama. Note portions of scaffolding in the front and back of the altar.
7. Photograph 27 of 34

4. March 27, 2003
6. View of high altar reflecting tabernacle and relief of the Last Supper in the base of the altar.
7. Photograph 28 of 34

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4. April 1, 2003
 6. Telephoto view of mosaic of the resurrected Christ against the south wall of the sanctuary.
 7. Photograph 29 of 34
-
4. April 1, 2003
 6. View of mosaic of the glorified Blessed Virgin Mary against the south wall of the sanctuary. Note the icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa on the right.
 7. Photograph 30 of 34
-
4. March 27, 2003
 6. View of stained glass window in the east wall along Whitehead Avenue. Depiction is of the Holy Family. Note the 13th and 14th Stations of the Cross, the circular mosaic portraits of saints, the marble wall below the window and the faux scagliola.
 7. Photograph 31 of 34
-
4. April 9, 2003
 6. View of the ceiling over the nave reflecting two gospel scenes and the faux coffered ceiling.
 7. Photograph 32 of 34
-
4. March 27, 2003
 6. View of St. Mary's church nave looking from the sanctuary towards the choir loft.
 7. Photograph 33 of 34
-
4. March 27, 2003
 6. View of St. Mary's Church nave looking from the vestibule towards the sanctuary at the south wall.
 7. Photograph 34 of 34

(NORTH)
INDEX MAP OF
SOUTH RIVER BOROUGH
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY



LEGEND
① ... INDICATES MAP PAGE NUMBER



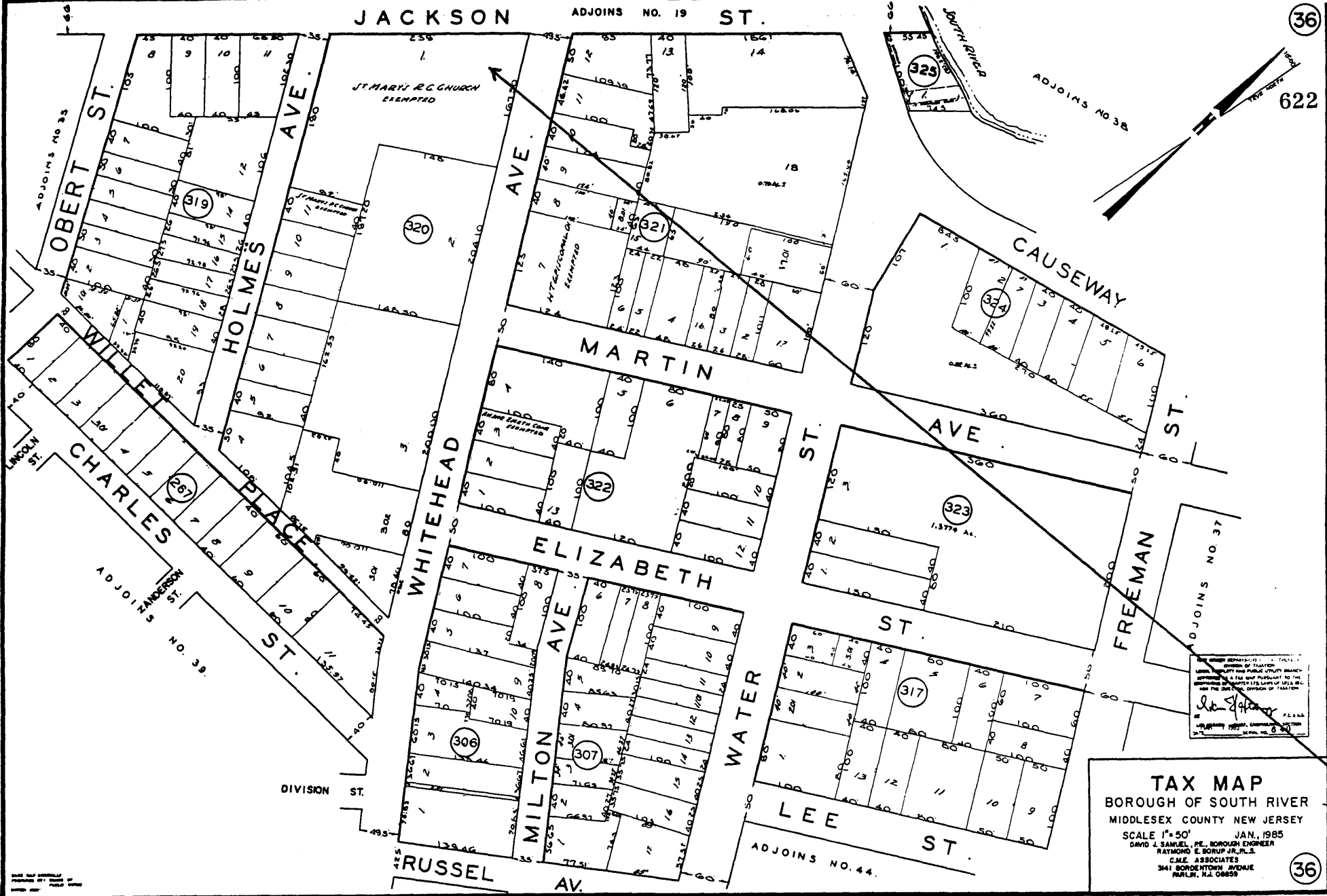
TOWNSHIP OF EAST BRUNSWICK
MIDDLESEX CO.

TOWNSHIP OF EAST BRUNSWICK
MIDDLESEX CO.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, SOUTH RIVER, N.J.
MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

BOROUGH OF SOUTH RIVER
TAY MAP INDEX

ADJOINING KEY MAP SOUTH

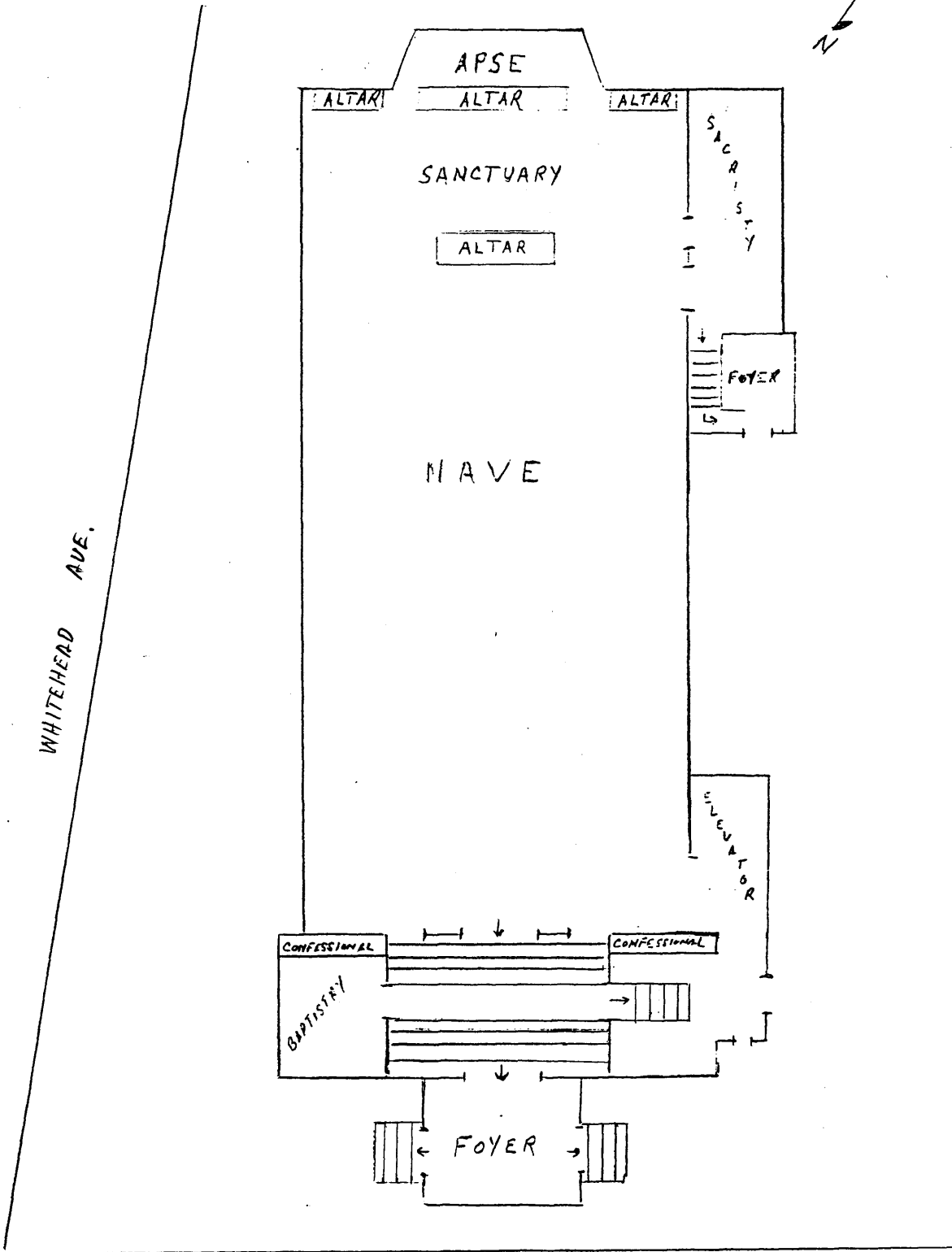
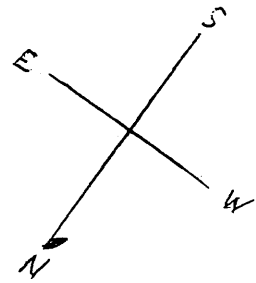


I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE
 INFORMATION CONTAINED ON THIS
 MAP IS TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE
 BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF
 AND THAT I AM A LICENSED SURVEYOR
 IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY.
 DAVID J. SAMUEL, P.E., BOROUGH ENGINEER
 RAYMOND E. BORUP JR., P.L.S.
 C.M.E. ASSOCIATES
 3441 BORDENTOWN AVENUE
 HURLER, N.J. 08059

TAX MAP
 BOROUGH OF SOUTH RIVER
 MIDDLESEX COUNTY NEW JERSEY
 SCALE 1" = 50' JAN. 1985
 DAVID J. SAMUEL, P.E., BOROUGH ENGINEER
 RAYMOND E. BORUP JR., P.L.S.
 C.M.E. ASSOCIATES
 3441 BORDENTOWN AVENUE
 HURLER, N.J. 08059

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, SOUTH RIVER, N.J.
 MIDDLESEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

ST. MARY'S CHURCH FLOOR PLAN

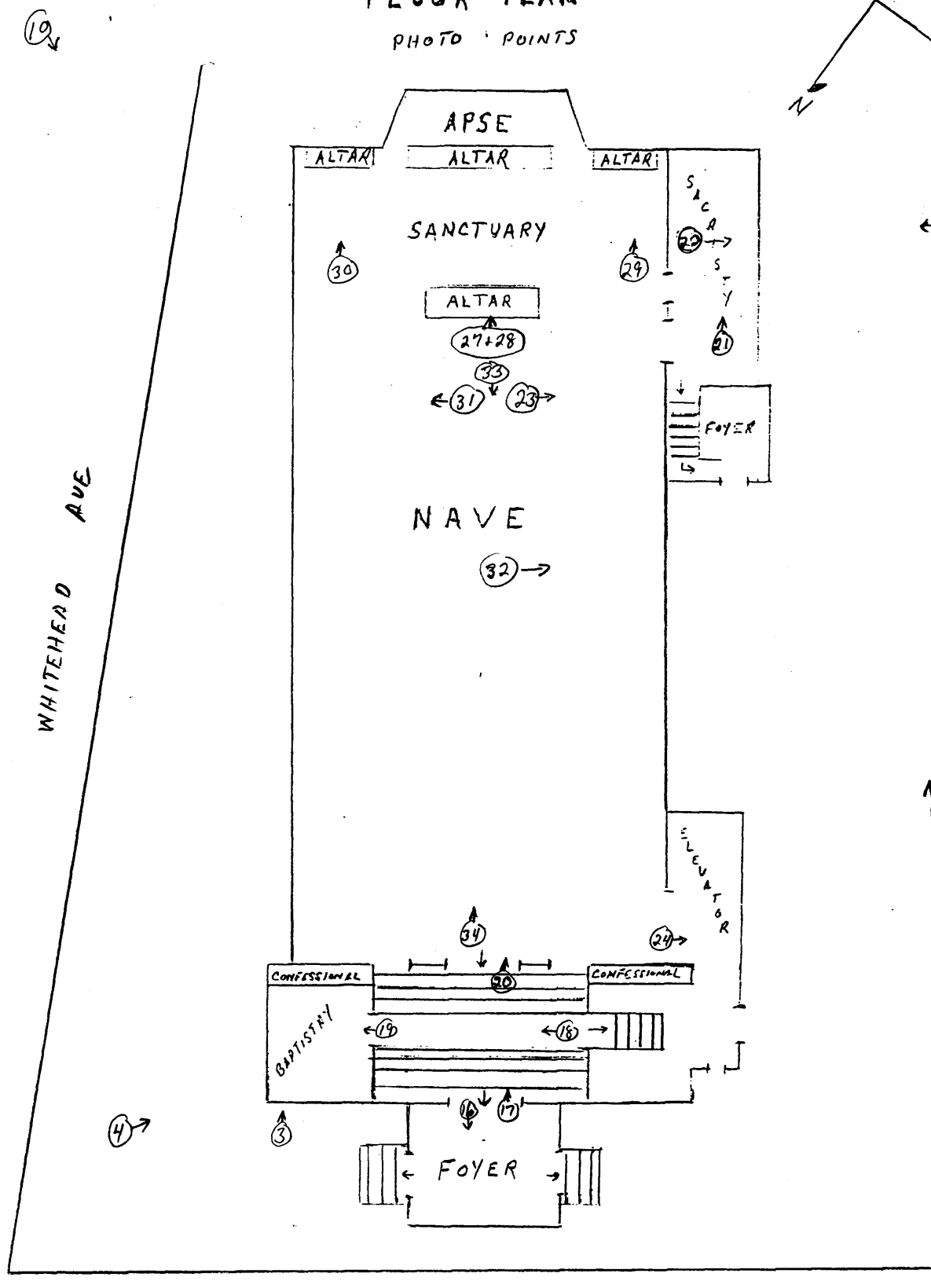
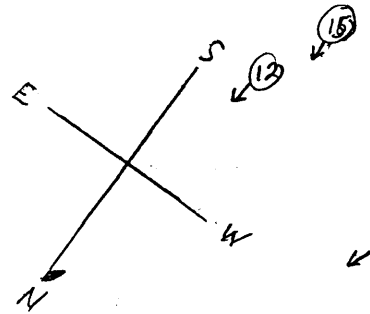


WHITEHEAD AVE.

JACKSON ST.

PLAN IS NOT
TO SCALE

ST. MARY'S CHURCH FLOOR PLAN PHOTO POINTS



WHITEHEAD AVE

JACKSON ST.

PHOTOS 25+26
TAKEN IN
LOWER LEVEL
FLOOR PLAN
NOT SHOWN

PLAN IS NOT
TO SCALE

OFF
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MA.

CROSS
THE
SOUTH
RIVER

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2

Parishioners personally excavated the basement for their church in 1902. The beautiful stone edifice was dedicated to the service of God in 1909. Also shown are Right Reverend James A. McFaul, Bishop of Trenton, who blessed the church; and, left, Reverend John Supinski, Second Pastor, 1907-1910



