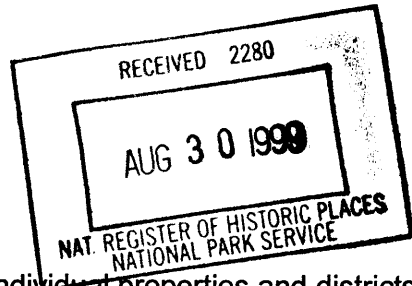


1205



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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional 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 Basilica of St. Francis Xavier, Church and Rectory

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 114 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SW N/A not for publication       
city or town Dyersville N/A vicinity       
state Iowa code IA county Dubuque code 061 zip code 52040

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 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 X statewide X locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patricia Ahlstrom 8-25-99  
Signature of certifying official Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA  
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 commenting or other official 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):

*Edson H. Beall* 9/29/97

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

=====

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

Contributing

2

Noncontributing

buildings

     sites

     structures

     objects

2

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Gothic

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

roof STONE/Slate

walls BRICK

other WOOD

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

=====

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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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 1889-1935

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1889

1935

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder HEER, FRIDOLIN & SON

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(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: \_\_\_\_\_

=====

10: Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property LESS THAN ONE

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	653040	4705980	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	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 Clarabelle Baum

organization Dyersville Area Historical Society

date October 7, 1998

street & number 120 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SW

telephone 319/875-2504

city or town Dyersville state IA zip code 52040

=====  
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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Archdiocese of Dubuque

street & number 1229 Mt. Loretta

telephone 319/556-2580

city or town Dubuque state IA zip code 52001

=====  
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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier Church and Rectory  
Dubuque County, Iowa

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Basilica of St. Francis Xavier stands on the corner of First Avenue West and Second Street SW in Dyersville, Iowa, Dubuque County. Dyersville is a predominately German Catholic community of 3,800. This twin-spired church is Gothic-revival with a distinct French, English and German influence. The Basilica is located at the edge of a downtown commercial district and is surrounded by a school, convent and former high school which is now an apartment dwelling, as well as several businesses and residences.

The church foundation is constructed of rubble stonework cut in native limestone. The overall dimension of the St. Francis Xavier Basilica is 70 feet by 174 1/2 feet. The church is 76 feet high and is graced by twin spires 20 x 20 feet square and 100 feet high. A cross surmounts each spire. The belfries are ornamented by pinnacles separated from the remainder of the tower by heavy stone cornices. The helms of the towers are octagonal with gables on four sides, ornamented with miniature towers and windows richly decorated with bands. Each helm carries a cross.

The crosses on the Basilica's twin spires have molded metal bases. The steeples are 212 feet from ground to top. The crosses are 10 feet high with a width of 6 feet and 8 inches. The spire portion below the base is made of 40-pound zinc coated tin. The crosses on the spires are made of ten inch square wood. Presumably, when the church was built in 1889, they were covered with heavy copper painted white. In 1953, when the Basilica underwent its first major external repair program by George Jackson of Dubuque, Iowa, the crosses were completely covered with a 32/100-inch thick 23-Carat gold leaf. The spire drainage is through eight molded zinc gargoyles.

The nave of the church is 66 feet wide and 140 feet long, providing approximately 1000 seats. The interior of the church is divided by two rows of columns located between the middle and two side arcs on either side; one large cross arch appears in the center thus forming a natural place for fresco paintings. The spacious sanctuary is semi-diagonal in shape raised for steps above the floor of the main church. A large gallery extends the full width of the church and the center portion, which protrudes over and deeper into the middle nave, is carried by iron-columns. Besides space for the pipe organ, the gallery provides additional seating for 200 persons.

In addition to a separate outside entrance to the north and south sacristies, the church has one entrance on each side and three in front. There is also one north and two south entrances on each side and three in front. There is also one north and two south entrances to the basement. All of the portals of the church are cased with stone. The three in front are decorated with arch columns enriched with crockets and finials.

Rubble stonework cut in native limestone carries the basement up to the church's floor level. The building proper is of brick with curbstone trimmings. Various shapes and colors of slate cover the roof and tower helmets. The cornices consist of galvanized iron. The skillfully designed exterior of the church compares favorably with any structure of its kind in this part of the country.

The church contains 64 cathedral glass windows and transoms in burnt colors. Sixteen of the larger of these adorn the main building. Ten of those windows represent historic events in the life of Christ and the Saints, while the remaining windows are made up of various ornamentals or geometric designs.

In March 1897, two new side altars were added to the furnishings. They were purchased from and erected by the Dubuque Altar Company and designed by J. E. Brielmaier. The two altars made of butternut are alike in their general outline and differ only in statuary and paintings. Each measures 36 feet in height and 15 feet in width and are of original Gothic design. The numerous pinnacles and columns, artistic carving and gilding form a rich framework for the many paintings, statues, and relief's which adorn the altars. At this same time the Dubuque Altar Company built two large ornate butternut confessionals.

In December 1897, a new main altar was erected. The same J. E. Brielmaier from Milwaukee who had recently joined the Dubuque Altar Company designed the lofty baldachin (i.e., canopied altar). The Milwaukee Monument Company built the marble. The altar is in baldachin style; the altar proper stands independently under a canopy supported by four columns. The canopy is square, 14 feet each way, resting on four wooden pillars and is 52 feet in height. The baldachin is richly decorated with woodcarvings, numerous pinnacles, and gables and with paintings of life-sized angels on a tooled gold and silver leaf background.

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

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier Church and Rectory  
Dubuque County, Iowa

Section number 7 Page 2

The frescoing of the church began in 1904. The design was copied from renowned churches in Germany, particularly in Munich and Italy. A. Brielmaier and his sister Lottie of Milwaukee did the painting. He painted the frescos while she completed the pictorials, putting the faces of herself, her mother and local residents on saints and angels.

The first religious service was held December 3, 1889 on the Feast of St. Francis Xavier. The church added electric capabilities in 1904.

### **Changes In The Basilica**

The pulpit was originally in the nave section with an elaborately carved butternut canopy. When the pulpit was moved into the sanctuary during the 1940's the canopy was not reused - it was stored for some years in the church basement and eventually and regrettably destroyed.

### **Way Of The Cross**

The 1870 Way of the Cross pictures, which had deteriorated, were replaced with 14 large Gothic plaster reliefs in 1953.

### **Rose Window**

The rose window above the organ was installed in 1959. It replaced a conventional church window on which the framework had become deteriorated. An Indian motif was selected in recognition of Indian habitation in this area 150 years earlier.

### **Communion Railing**

The communion railing was removed in 1970 and has been partly returned to Basilica in 1997.

### **Organ**

The second organ in the Basilica, which replaced the original one, was installed in July of 1971. The 37 rank organ is a custom made instrument designed for the Basilica by the Wicks Organ Company of Highland, Illinois. The organ was designed keeping in mind the size of the church and the acoustical qualities of the building.

### **Moveable Altar**

In 1973 following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, a smaller altar was made to face the congregation and installed in the center of the sanctuary. It is portable and matches the marble high altar. The John C. Kaiser Company of Dubuque, Iowa made it, by Mr. Fritz Ganshirt.

### **South Entrance**

In 1989 a new addition was added to the south side of the Basilica. It includes a handicapped elevator as well as restrooms and more convenient entrances to the basement of the Basilica.

This is a contributing building.

## **AREA AND BUILDINGS AROUND BASILICA**

### **Rectory (contributing building)**

The brick and stone rectory was erected in 1935. It is west of the St. Francis Xavier Basilica. It contains 14 rooms and is being used as a home for resident priests. Several rooms are used as offices. The contractor was A. J. Osterhaus Construction of Dyersville, Iowa. The building is 68' x 66'. It has a slate roof. A garage with a passageway connects it to the church.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier Church and Rectory  
Dubuque County, Iowa

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Basilica of St. Francis Xavier possesses twofold significance at both the local and state levels under National Register Criterion C. First of all, this edifice is an outstanding example of a building influenced by the second phase of the Gothic Revival movement, and it exhibits influences drawn from a variety of European influences including English, French and German. This building is the primary architectural landmark in Dyersville, and according to David Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim in their Buildings of Iowa, it "is one of the best-known nineteenth century Gothic Revival churches in Iowa." (p.93). Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the commission for St. Francis was one of the most outstanding and perhaps best known church designs that resulted from the joint partnership of Fridolin Heer Jr. after the latter completed his architectural education at the Royal Architectural School in Stuttgart, Germany in 1884. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Heers became one of the leading firms in the Midwest in the design of churches and institutional buildings, plying their craft in Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, and Minnesota, as well as Iowa. St Francis Xavier is one of the two Iowa churches to be elevated to the rank of Minor Basilica by the Pope, the other is St. John's in Des Moines, which is already listed on the National Register. St. Francis was the first to receive honor of Basilica on May 11, 1956. St. Francis Xavier Basilica is one of the finest examples of Gothic architecture in the Midwestern United States. The detailing tends toward the French High Gothic style but the combination of stone and brick favors a multicolored Ruskinian Gothic Revival building.

In 1846 a colony of German Catholics settled on farms they bought directly from the government, north and northeast of present-day Dyersville. These settlers attended church services at New Vienna for the first ten years.

Wealthy English who began to relinquish their leadership to the Germans around 1857 founded Dyersville. The migration of the English continued as they sold farms, homes and stores to the Germans whom by 1910 had taken an almost exclusive possession of Dyersville. Although Dyersville started out as an English Protestant community with about five different churches, today it is predominately Roman Catholic. The St. Francis Xavier Parish started with 20 families in 1859 and has grown to become a parish of 1800 families.

The history of the Catholic Church at Dyersville begins with the arrival of its first pastor, the Rev. A. Longfils. On October 13, 1858 Father Longfils began building a brick church. It was completed in 1862. Because of the influx of families to this community the church had to double the proportions of the church in 1870. Fifteen years later Father Kortenkamp again found this church much too small. He began plans to build the magnificent church, which bears the name of St. Francis Xavier. The cornerstone was laid on June 3, 1888.

A distinct honor was bestowed on the St. Francis Xavier Parish when, on May 11, 1956, Pope Pius XII proclaimed and elevated the Dyersville church to the rank of minor Basilica. The events leading up to this proclamation began when Conrad Cardinal Von Preysing of Berlin, Germany, visited the United States in 1947. The Nazis during World War II had kept the Cardinal under house arrest, due to his anti-Nazi sentiments. It was at this time, at the request of Archbishop Henry P. Rohlman, that the Cardinal blessed the site for the proposed new Xavier Grade School on March 4. He was so impressed with the staunchly practiced Catholic faith and the almost entirely Catholic population in Dyersville, as well as the beautiful and impressive Gothic twin-spired church, that he promised to make every effort possible to see that this wonderful church became a Basilica.

Pope Pius XII thereafter received detailed reports and pictures of the size and architectural beauty of St. Francis Xavier Church and school, the devotion and spiritual guidance as fostered by the Clergy and the Sisters, large number of laity participating faithfully in church functions. All of these led to a surprise announcement by Archbishop Leo Binz of Dubuque on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Holy Mass in Dyersville, that the Pope had on May 11, 1956 proclaimed the elevation of the Dyersville Church to the rank of Minor Basilica. Besides the honor of being named a Basilica, the Papal edict granted special spiritual blessings to all who worshiped in the Basilica. The Dyersville Basilica was the twelfth church in the United States to be honored in this manner.

The Papal Proclamation also states that the Holy See does not bestow this title lightly nor without long investigation. The Dyersville church also has a rich treasury of relics of the Saints and is also a consecrated church; a distinction that must be met before it can become a Basilica.

United States Department of the Interior  
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8,9 Page 4

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier Church and Rectory  
Dubuque County, Iowa

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The population of Dyersville is approximately 3800 while St. Francis Xavier Parish, which includes the surrounding countryside, has approximately 5000 members.

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Basilica of St. Francis Xavier. Booklet compiled by the Dyersville Area Historical Society, Dyersville, IA 1964.

"Crosses on the Spires" The Golden Hour. St. Francis School Newsletter, 1919-1920.

Gebhard, David and Mansheim, Gerald Buildings of Iowa Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993

Hoffman, Reverend M. M. Centennial History of the Archdiocese of Dubuque. Dubuque, IA. Columbian College Press, 1937

Sommer Lawrence, The Heritage of Dubuque. First National Bank, 1975, Page 159-160.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   10   Page   5  

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier Church and Rectory  
Dubuque County, Iowa

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Legal description for contributing structures

Church and Rectory Lots 384-389 and the alley

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

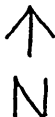
These boundaries include those properties historically associated with the church, which retain their historical integrity. Excluded are modern buildings, which date to a different era.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

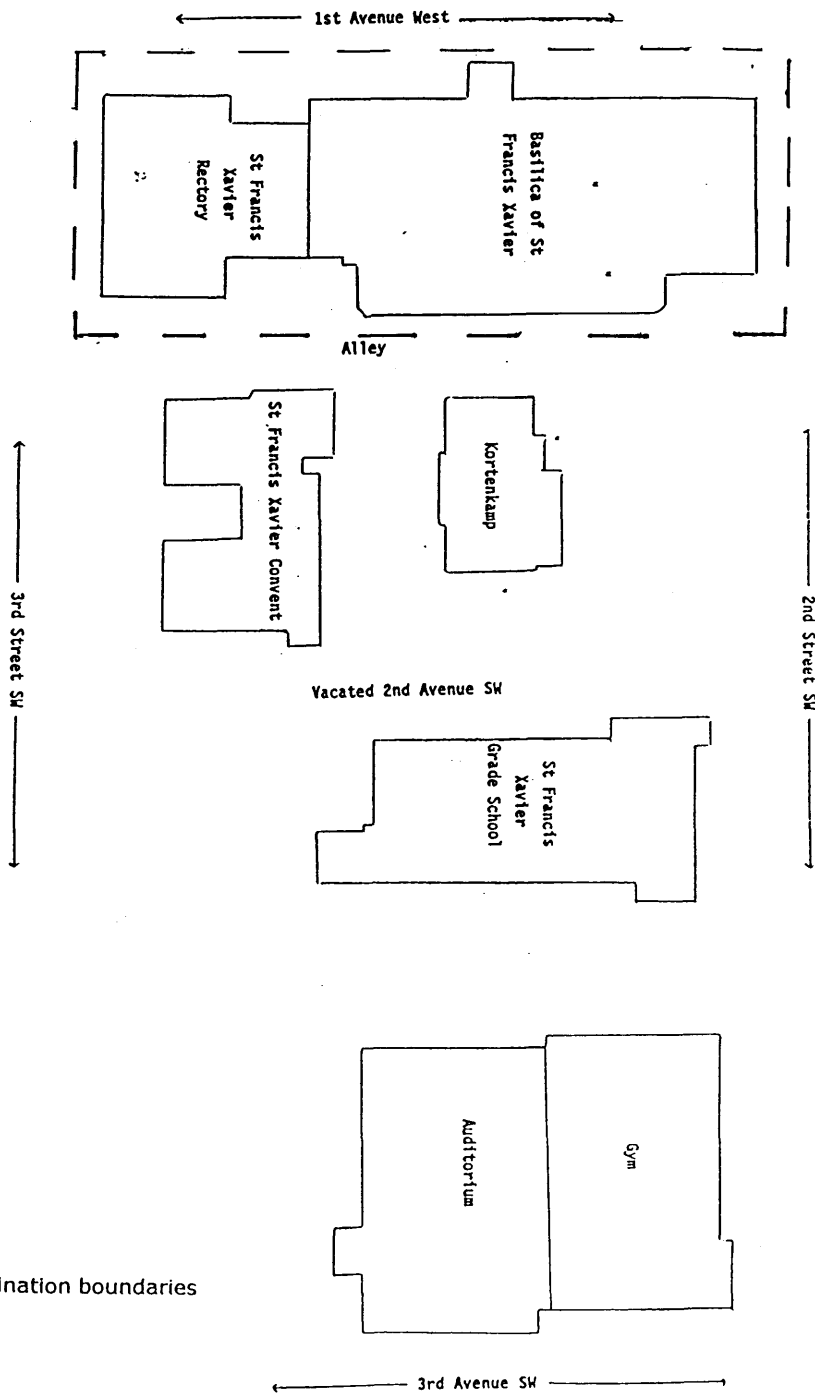
Basilica of St. Francis Xavier, Church,  
Rectory and Convent  
Dubuque County, Iowa

Section number MAPS Page 6



1999

Source: Unknown



--- Represents nomination boundaries



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 8

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier Church and Rectory  
Dubuque County, Iowa

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Relative to all photographs: (except # 6)

Photographer:

Photographer is Robert Wilhelm  
30113 Prier Road  
Dyersville, Iowa 52040

Date of Photographs:

Photographs # 1-5 - June 1998  
Photograph # 6 - 1945  
Photographs # 8-11 - November 11, 1998

Location of negatives: (except for # 6)

Robert Wilhelm

Photograph # 1  
Basilica of St. Francis Xavier  
Camera facing Southwest

Photograph # 2  
Basilica -  
Camera facing Northwest

Photograph # 3  
Basilica  
Camera facing West - inside picture

Photograph # 4

Basilica  
Camera facing West - inside close up of front of church

Photograph # 5

Basilica  
Camera facing Northwest

Photograph #6

Rectory  
Camera facing East