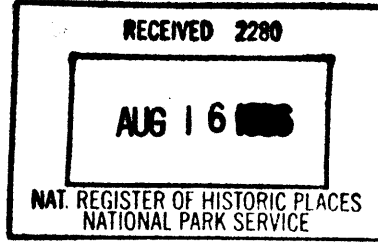


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District

Other names/site number 098-295-1954-55-56

Location

Street & number 530 & 550 N. Rural St. and 545 N. Eastern Ave.  N/A  not for publication

City or town Indianapolis  N/A  vicinity

State Indiana code IN county Marion code 097 zip code 46201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 36CFR 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.)

*Patel R. Kibbi*

8-6-96

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper  
*Patricia Andrews*

Date of Action  
9/25/96

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register  
 other, (explain:)

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

RELIGION: Church School

RELIGION: Church-Related Residence

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

RELIGION: Church School

DOMESTIC: Institutional Housing

RELIGION: Church-Related Residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Classical Revival

19th & 20th c. AMER.: Bungalow/Craftsman

OTHER: American Foursquare

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

roof STONE: Slate; ASPHALT

other

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.)

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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_

RELIGION \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1909-1946 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1909 \_\_\_\_\_

1915 \_\_\_\_\_

1926; 1946 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Bohlen & Son \_\_\_\_\_

Bedell, George V. \_\_\_\_\_

Henkel, Karl P. & Hanson, Erb \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Major Bibliographic 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:

Rectory & Archdiocesan Archives \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 1.86

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 575600 4403000  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 16

3 16  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 16

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 William L. Selm, Consultant  
organization Guerin Place LP date 5-31-96  
street & number 401 East 41st St. telephone  
city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 317/283-7820

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 see continuation sheet  
street & number telephone  
city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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DESCRIPTION

The St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District is located on a 1.86 acre site. The site is bounded by Eastern Avenue (500 block) on the west, North Street (2700 block) on the north, Rural Street (500 block) on the east and an alley to the south. The surrounding neighborhood is residential with a commercial node one block to the south at the intersection of East Michigan and North Rural Streets. The immediate residential housing stock is largely composed of bungalows and modest Arts and Crafts styled houses and doubles dating from circa 1905 to 1915. The historic district site is composed of five historic buildings and an open area functioning as a school playground and parking lot. The five historic buildings are the Church, the Rectory, the former Convent and School, the School, and the Garage and Boiler Plant building. (Photographs #1 & 2)

Church

Photographs #1,2,3,4 & 5

The Oratory of St. Philip Neri (Church) is situated at the southwest corner of Rural and North Streets. The main (east) facade faces Rural Street. It is constructed of solid brick masonry walls with limestone trim and foundation walls. The floor is of wood construction. The asphalt-shingled gable roof is composed of wood decking over heavy timbers and steel trusses. The main facade is composed of two square corner towers framing the gabled nave end. The south tower is two stories in height; the north tower is three stories tall and functions as the bell tower. The towers are defined by corner piers and are pierced by round-arched entrances with paneled wooden, double-leaf doors and fan lights with art glass. The second-story windows have stone hoods. The third level of the north tower has louvered round arched opening at the bell chamber and gabled parapets between the stone capped piers. At the base of the north tower is the cornerstone inscribed with "A.D. 1909". The south tower parapet is crenelated. The center entrance is centered on the nave-end wall between the two towers. Rock-face and smooth limestone frame the round-arched doorway and adorn the walls flanking the entrance. Limestone Roman Doric columns frame the doorway and support the springstones of the archway, inscribed with serif letters the legend: "THE ORATORY OF ST. PHILIP NERI". At the second story level is a centered, six-leafed rose window flanked by two round arched windows, all with art glass. A blind arch with stone-colored, brick voussoirs and a belt course, integrated with the windows, relieves the otherwise blank upper gable wall. The gable is framed by a simple, shallow corbel table, coped with limestone and topped by a limestone cross finial.

The north and south facades are near identical with flat-ended apses east of the towers. The nave

## ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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walls are divided into three bays, separated by buttressed piers and a corbel table. A round-arch window pierces each bay. Limestone caps the buttresses and serves as the window keystones. The gabled transept walls project slightly from the nave facade and each is pierced by a large round arch window with art glass and a limestone keystone on sills. A canopied entrance is below each transept window. The transept gables are limestone coped and finialed by a cross. The west facade is symmetrical with the projecting rounded apse projecting from the gabled east wall of the nave. The apse is enveloped by a one-story, flat-roofed structure pierced by paired windows with art glass accommodating the priest's and servers' sacristies. On the south facade an added enclosed passage connects the sacristy to the rectory.

The interior of the Church is a simple cruciform plan with side aisles and a center aisle with wooden pews between. The choir loft is situated above the front entrance. An unusual feature is the floor that slopes down to the sanctuary. The floor is covered with vinyl flooring. The sanctuary floor is slightly raised with four altars. The old high altar with a large wooden crucifix is set against the back wall of the apse. The two side altars are set in round arch niches flanking the apse opening. A free-standing altar is centered on the raised sanctuary before the high altar. The walls of the nave and apse are clad with St. Meinrad sandstone to the height of about twenty feet. The upper walls and ceiling are the original plaster-clad barrel vault. The ceiling of the apse is ornamented with a fresco depicting the parish's patron, St. Philip Neri.

Art glass fills all of the windows of the Church. They have been reset in aluminum sash and protected with plexiglass covering. The nave windows repeat the pattern of an angel surrounded by a floral frame. The remaining windows employ floral and geometric patterns. The north rose transept window has an unfurled American flag in its center.

The exterior of the Church has remained largely unaltered since its construction in 1909. The two exceptions being the addition of the two side entrances cut into the transept end wall in 1938 to provide a safer exit in case of fire,<sup>1</sup> and the addition of storm windows over the windows and resetting of the art glass in aluminum sash in 1959.<sup>2</sup> The present altars, sandstone walls, Stations of the Cross plaques and sanctuary fresco date from 1959.<sup>3</sup> The ceiling light fixtures date from 1938.<sup>4</sup> The Church originally had a slate roof,<sup>5</sup> replaced by shingles in 1976.<sup>6</sup> The enclosed passageway between the Church and Rectory was added some time between 1916 and 1927.<sup>7</sup>

### Rectory

### Photographs # 6 & 2

The Rectory is located immediately south of the Church. The Rectory is a two-story, wood-framed house with brick veneer and Neo-Classical styling. It has a full basement and is topped by a hipped roof. A hipped-roof dormer pierces each of the planes of the roof. Each dormer has

ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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twin casement windows. The roof originally was slate clad, but is now asphalt shingled. The red-brown brick matches that of the church. Limestone is employed as the waterable window sills and flat arch keystone and spring stones on the main facade. Brickwork quoins ornament the front two corners. Other decorative features include the brick-piered centered front portico which is flanked by two roofless terraces. The portico roof is flat with a Neo-Classical wooden architrave. The portico roof originally had a balustrade.<sup>8</sup> The centered front entrance is flanked by two single lighted sidelights. The lighted panel door is a replacement. The main facade is divided into three bays; all the windows are paired. The windows on the secondary facades are singular, paired, or grouped in threes and fours. All windows, except on the north facade have permanent metal awnings. The north facade has a wood-frame, Neo-Classical, side portico.

The Rectory interior has a center hall plan with offices, parlors and meeting rooms, dining room and kitchen on the first floor; bathrooms, bedrooms and offices are located on the second floor. Original woodwork and plaster has survived. Art glass in the Arts and Crafts style is found in some windows.

Convent and School

Photographs # 7,2 & 8

The former Convent and School Building (now known as Guerin Place) is located approximately 100 feet south of the Rectory, facing Rural Street. The main facade is divided into two distinctive parts. The north half, originally the School, is divided into four bays with a pedimented entrance at the third bay from the north. Above the entrance is a hipped dormer piercing the slope of the slate-clad hipped roof. The south half, originally the Convent, is symmetrical with three bays in width, a centered entrance and a centered hipped-roof wall dormer. On the entire main facade all of the windows are paired. The dormers each have three windows. The south wall is three bays wide with segmented arched windows and a one-story bay. A centered hipped roof dormer pierces the south slope of the hipped roof.

The Convent and School Building is of solid masonry brick construction with segmented arched and flat headed windows found on the rear (west) and side (south) facades. The northern facade is not pierced by openings. The south facade had a one story, five-sided, projecting bay with art glass windows. The west facade has a projecting entry pavilion with a round arched entrance and a flat-roofed brick addition. with exposed metal fire escape dating from 1957.<sup>9</sup> An elevator shaft and new rear entrance were added in 1994 when the former convent was converted to use as apartments.

The Convent and School was remodeled in 1994, changing its use from a religious residence to elderly housing accommodating thirteen, single bedroom apartment units and a day care center in

ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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the basement. Original plaster walls remain as do the simple doors and woodwork in the rehabilitated former office, parlors and bedrooms. The entry halls and stairwells have retained their character with wooden floors, treads, railings and newel posts. The former chapel room on the first floor retains its art-glass windows, two with religious symbols.

School

Photographs # 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14

The St. Philip Neri School is two stories in height resting on a raised basement. The roof is flat. The walls are of solid brick masonry and faced with a light-brown brick with limestone trim. The main (west) facade on Eastern Avenue is divided into five portions with the center and the two flanking end portions projecting. The center serves as the front entry pavilion with a round arched opening framed by a limestone Neo-Classical open pediment supported by two free-standing limestone columns. The frieze is inscribed in raised letters with the legend, "ST. PHILIP NERI". The archway is framed with molded limestone with a spandrel separating the four glazed wood slash doors from the art-glass window depicting an unfurled American flag. The flag is clear and visible both inside and out. The limestone spandrel is decorated with sculpted swags and a roundel framing an open book. The classical limestone entablature with cornice and dentil continues around the building. Limestone is employed in the foundation, watertable, window springstones and sills, coping, pier capitals and parapet panels. The single and grouped windows have aluminum sashes, replacing the wooden sashes sometime in the 1950s.

The rear of the school has two wings. The south wing contains the gymnasium-auditorium on the at the raised basement and first floor level with classrooms on the top floor. The north wing is of painted brick and houses classrooms. The north wing was the original school building, constructed in 1915 and integrated into the completed school of 1926.<sup>10</sup>

The interior of the school has changed little from its completion in 1926. The classrooms typically have a fenestrated wall with the remaining walls covered with slate chalkboards. The ceilings and walls have the original plaster. The wood floors were covered with linoleum tile in 1953.<sup>11</sup> The corridors and stairwells have glazed brick wainscoting and terrazzo floors and treads; the upper walls and ceilings have their original plaster finishes. The gymnasium-auditorium has a vinyl tile floor replacing the original wood floor in the early 1990s. The stage with its flat proscenium arch, and visitors' gallery at the second-floor level, are intact. The basement has a kitchen and parish social hall, and once housed bowling alleys.



ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Garage-Boiler Plant

The Garage-Boiler Plant is brick-faced; one story in height with a boiler basement. It is located between the Rectory and the School. The garage portion has six garage bays with paneled overhead doors facing east and a large brick chimney. The west facade has steel sash industrial windows, a garage door and wooden panelled doors. It is covered by a flat roof. This building houses garage and storage areas, two classrooms and the boiler plant, providing heat for the buildings in the parish complex. It was constructed in 1946.<sup>12</sup>

Description Endnotes

1. Diamond Jubilee, St. Philip Neri 1909-1984 (Indianapolis: St. Philip Neri Church, 1984), p.32.
2. Golden Jubilee, 1909-1959 (Indianapolis: St. Philip Neri Church, 1959), n.p.
3. Diamond, pp. 35 & 36.
4. Ibid., pp. 32 & 36.
5. Bass Photo No. 73773, Feb. 26, 1921, Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis.
6. Diamond, p. 39.
7. William G. Baist, Real Estate Atlas Surveys of Indianapolis and Vicinity, Indiana (Philadelphia: G. William Baist, 1916 & 1927), Plan 13.
8. Bass.
9. Golden, n.p.
10. Ibid., n.p.
11. Ibid., n.p.
12. Diamond, p. 35.

ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District is significant under Criterion A as it is associated with events that have made significant contribution to the broad patterns of American and local history, specifically in the area of religion. The district derives its primary significance from its architectural distinction and from its historical importance. The district illustrates the population growth and development of Indianapolis' eastside and the growth and expansion of Catholic institutions and population in the first decades of the twentieth century. The district is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as it represents the typical historical composition of Catholic parish buildings. The district is an excellent example of religious and educational architecture designed by three different Indiana architectural firms, and constructed over the period of 1909 to 1946 to fulfill the spiritual, educational and social needs of this Catholic community on the eastside of Indianapolis. Because the district is significant for its architectural merit its nomination addresses Criterion Consideration A. Four of the five buildings continue their historical function, while one building now serves a secular function with a secular owner.

St. Philip Neri Parish was founded in 1909 to serve the needs of a growing Catholic population on the city's eastside. The city's first Catholic parish was St. John, founded in 1837, when the city's population was nearing 2,692.<sup>1</sup> As the city grew in population and size, the number of parishes increased. St. Mary Church was founded in 1858 as the city's second Catholic parish and served as a national parish for the city's German Catholic population. Between the end of the Civil War and 1900 when the city's population grew to 169,164,<sup>2</sup> nine new parishes were established in all areas of the city, including St. Francis de Sales (1881) and Holy Cross (1895) on the eastside. Steady growth continued in the first decade of the twentieth century with the founding of five parishes, three of which were founded in 1909 (St. Philip Neri and Our Lady of Lourdes on the eastside and St. Catherine of Siena on the southeast side).<sup>3</sup> The following year the city's population grew to 263,661 with an estimated 26,000 Catholics.<sup>4</sup> St. Philip Neri Parish was situated immediately east of Holy Cross Parish and west of Our Lady of Lourdes in Irvington, already annexed by Indianapolis in 1902.

Francis Silas Chatard, Bishop of the Diocese of Indianapolis, was responsible for the founding of these parishes from his consecration as bishop in 1878 to his death in 1918. With St. John and St. Mary centered in the original Mile Square of Indianapolis, St. Philip Neri was one of the third generation of Catholic parishes serving as milestones to the city's growth at that time, spreading out from the original city limits. By the year of his death in 1918, Chatard oversaw the founding of fourteen parishes.<sup>5</sup>

The founding of St. Philip Neri Parish began in the autumn of 1908 with the desire of some

## ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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members of the crowded St. Joseph Parish, near downtown at College Avenue and North Street (Chatham Arch National Register Historic District), to form a new parish to serve the far eastside<sup>6</sup> of Indianapolis. The area that became the parish territory of St. Philip Neri had been annexed and incorporated in to the City of Indianapolis between 1886 and 1906.<sup>7</sup> After meeting with the self-appointed committee of far eastside Catholics, Bishop Chatard appointed Rev. George J. Smith to organize the new parish.<sup>8</sup> The territory of the new parish was composed of areas taken from the established eastside parishes of St. Joseph (founded 1873), St. Francis de Sales (1891), Holy Cross (1895) and Our Lady of Lourdes (newly established in 1909). The lots on which the Church and Rectory are sited was purchased September 25, 1908.<sup>9</sup> These and the parish buildings that followed were the first buildings erected on the undeveloped vacant lots. The building of the parish complex was simultaneous with the development of the neighborhood.<sup>10</sup> The plans were completed by local architect George V. Bedell and ground was broken for the Church on February 1, 1909, followed by the laying of the cornerstone on March 7, 1909.<sup>11</sup> The church and rectory were completed three months later; the church was dedicated on June 27, 1909.<sup>12</sup>

The Rev. George J. Smith (1876-1927) was appointed by Bishop Chatard to organize the parish. He was appointed the parish's first pastor, serving in that position for eighteen years until his death at the age of 51. St Philip Neri was his first parish assignment after his seminary education in Cincinnati and Rome, where he was ordained in 1901. Rev. Smith returned to Indiana and served as secretary to Bishop Chatard from 1901 to 1908.<sup>13</sup> Rev. Smith named the new parish in honor of St. Philip Neri (1515-1595), an outstanding figure of the Counter Reformation and founder of a religious order and institution of musical gatherings, known as oratorios. Parish histories speculate that Rev. Smith named the parish after the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in Rome, visited during his seminary days in Rome.<sup>14</sup>

At the time of the dedication of the church on June 27, 1909, the parish campus consisted of the Church and Rectory, but plans were underway for a parish school. Rev. Joseph Chartrand, pastor of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral Parish (and later Bishop of Indianapolis) preached the dedication sermon and told the new congregation "that no parish could be successful without a parochial school" and that the parishioners were to help their "pastor to build the school that is to adjoin the beautiful church".<sup>15</sup> A newspaper article reported that the plans for the school had already been drawn.<sup>16</sup> Contractor John A. Schumacher applied for a building permit on August 13, 1909, for the school valued at \$19,740.<sup>17</sup> The building combined the school and convent under one roof. It provided four classrooms in the north half and a residence for the Sisters of Providence who operated and staffed the school. The plans were drawn by the well-known local architectural firm of D.A. Bohlen & Son.<sup>18</sup>

## ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

St. Philip Neri Parish grew rapidly after its founding. When Bishop Chatard was petitioned in the autumn of 1908 to form the parish to serve the rapidly growing eastside, the petitioners estimated that about seventy-five Catholic families would be ministered by the new parish.<sup>19</sup> Within one year the parish Annual Report counted 175 families, 700 souls and 113 children enrolled in the school. Ten years later the number of families nearly quadrupled to 617 families, 1881 souls and 362 children in school. Eleven years later in 1930, the number of souls increase to 4800 with 745 enrolled in school.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of the parish with the rapid construction of the parish complex allowed the parish to be fully functional immediately. The church was functional for Mass in the sixth month of the parish's first year with a residence for the pastor and three assistant pastors. Plans for the combined School and Convent were drawn in July of that year.<sup>21</sup> It was completed before the end of 1909 and opened its doors on January 4, 1910, with four classrooms for eighty-three pupils. In one month's time enrollment increased to 115 pupils.<sup>22</sup> The immediate success of the St. Philip Neri Parish attracted more Catholics to the parish area resulting in a real estate boom along Rural Street and other streets surrounding the parish buildings.<sup>23</sup> The rapid growth impressed Bishop Chatard who called it the "Miracle Parish".<sup>24</sup> The rapid growth necessitated the construction of a new school building of four classrooms and an auditorium immediately west of the School and Convent in 1915. The following year two portable, temporary frame buildings adding four classrooms were added to accommodate the growing enrollment.<sup>25</sup> The steady growth continued and necessitated another school expansion in 1926. Rev. Smith contracted with the architectural firm of Henkel and Hanson to design a new school building facing Eastern Avenue and integrating the 1915 school structure. The new School opened in October, 1926, with seventeen classrooms, a principal's office, nurse's office, library, storage, auditorium, parish social hall and bowling alleys. The school's main entrance featured a large, unfurled American flag in art glass.<sup>26</sup> The window was designed so that the flag is clear and recognizable from both inside and out.

The expanded school contributed to the continued growth in parish membership in the 1920s with the peak membership of 5075 in 1926 and near-peak school enrollment of 750.<sup>27</sup> The burden of rapid growth was relieved by the founding of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish to the northeast in 1925, taking some of St. Philip Neri's parish territory.<sup>28</sup> The planning and construction of all of the major parish buildings was initiated and overseen by Rev. Smith who remained pastor until his death in 1927, after eighteen years of service.<sup>29</sup> The Garage-Boiler Plant was constructed in 1946, initiated by Monsignor Busald<sup>30</sup>, pastor from 1934 to 1971. St. Philip Neri Parish's peak years were the late 1920s, but remained very stable until the mid 1960s. St. Philip Neri Parish gave up additional territory from its southeast corner in 1952 when St. Bernadette Parish was founded. Between 1960 and 1965 the Parish lost a thousand members and the school lost a hundred pupils. Decline was steady throughout the 1960s and 1970s to the

ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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present with 1279 parishioners and 219 pupils recorded in 1994.<sup>31</sup> The parish territory grew slightly in 1983 with the dissolution of St. Francis de Sales Parish to the north.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the decline of the past three decades, the parish complex remains intact and continues its historic function; the only exception being the Convent and School. It ceased to function as a school when the new school was completed after 1926. The growth of the school necessitated more Sisters of Providence as teachers and the conversion of the classrooms to convent living quarters, with the decline of school enrollment and the decline of vocations and dilution of the teaching mission of the order, the Convent occupancy dwindled.

The St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District represents the work of three known architectural firms. The buildings in the district possess a high degree of integrity, retaining their character, materials and historical functions. The three architectural firms specialized in designing certain building types exhibited here in the district.

The Church and Rectory were designed by local architect George V. Bedell (1861-1948). The son of German immigrant parents, Bedell does not appear to have had any formal architectural training, but rather came to architecture by way of the building trades. His obituary described him as a "prominent Indianapolis architect and builder."<sup>33</sup> The local Catholic newspaper described Bedell as "one of the best-known church architects in the middle west."<sup>34</sup> Bedell first advertised himself as an architect in 1900, and the design of Holy Trinity Slovenian Catholic Church in Haughville, westside industrial suburb of Indianapolis, was his first major design commission. After the design of St. Philip Neri Church and Rectory in 1909, he designed a synagogue (demolished), St. Mary's Academy (Lockerbie Square Historic District), Holy Rosary Catholic Church (proposed, not built), and St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church.<sup>35</sup> Bedell also designed a series of neighborhood cinemas (1920s), schools, office buildings, houses and at least one industrial building (Lockerbie Glove Co., Lockerbie Square Historic District). Bedell adapted the Romanesque Style for the modest Oratory of St. Philip Neri, but introduced a new element not found in any other historic Catholic church. This element, the sloped floor, noted in a newspaper article on the church dedication, allowed that those in the "back pews can see the chancel and altars as well as if they had front pews."<sup>36</sup> Bedell, of course, later used the sloped floor in his design of the cinemas in the 1920s. Despite its acceptance in Protestant church design (auditorium sanctuary) in the late nineteenth century, sloped floors were not employed in Catholic church design until after the Second World War period, particularly after the changes made by the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. In his design of the Rectory, Bedell combined the details of Neo Classicism with the typical blocky form of Arts and Crafts houses, extremely popular in Indianapolis in this period.

## ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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The Convent and School building was the work of the local architectural firm of D.A. Bohlen & Son. This firm was prolific, accomplished and dynastic. The firm was founded in 1853 by German immigrant architect Diedrich A. Bohlen, who was followed by his son, grandson and great-grandson in the practice. This firm was responsible for many of the landmarks of Indianapolis and Indiana, especially religious and institutional buildings. A number are listed in the National Register, including St. John Catholic Church, City Market, General German Protestant Orphans Home, Roberts Park Methodist Church, the Majestic Building and others in Indianapolis. The Bohlen firm was probably commissioned to design the Convent of St. Philip Neri because of the firm's long-standing relationship with the Sisters of Providence, a Catholic teaching order headquartered in Vigo County, Indiana. The Bohlen firm designed all of the buildings on the Sisters' convent and college campus.<sup>37</sup> The building functioned as a convent until its sale to Eastside Community Investments, a community development corporation. The convent was rehabilitated in 1994 into elderly housing and a daycare center following the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The former Convent was renamed Guerin Place in honor of Mother Theodore Guerin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence. The Sisters staffed St. Philip Neri School and many other Catholic schools throughout Indiana and Indianapolis.

The School is the work of the Connersville, Indiana, architectural firm of Henkel & Hanson.<sup>38</sup> This firm was founded in 1918 by Karl P. Henkel and Erb Hanson. The firm specialized in the design of school buildings and at Henkel's death in 1944, was credited with the design of over 150 schools throughout Indiana. Henkel's obituary noted the schools of St. Philip Neri and St. Therese (Little Flower), built in 1926 and St. Gabriel School in Connersville also in 1926.<sup>39</sup> Henkel was noted as the designer of the school by a St. Philip Neri pastor in a report.<sup>40</sup>

The St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District is a product of its time. The parish was founded to serve the needs of a growing Catholic population in a growing Indianapolis. The list of pioneer parish families is a mixture of Irish and German names, with Irish names predominating.<sup>41</sup> The parish territory included Ward 9, a census tract noted in 1920 as being the highest concentration of the city's Irish-born residents (15.3% of the total 2,414 Irish born) and the second highest concentration of German-born residents (13.4% of the 5,097 total German-born).<sup>42</sup> Both St. Philip Neri and Holy Cross Parish (founded in 1895) were Catholic parishes in Ward 9 that flourished as the older Irish Catholic parishes of St. John and St. Bridget were in decline.<sup>43</sup>

The large American flag art-glass window over the school front entrance was the original idea of Rev. Smith.<sup>44</sup> The school was constructed in 1926 during the period of power and influence of the Ku Klux Klan. This populist, white, nativist, Protestant, political and social organization was anti-Catholic and white supremacist. The Klan was the dominant political force in

ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Indianapolis politics between 1921 and 1928, controlling the mayor's office, city council and the Indianapolis Public School Board.<sup>45</sup> Bishop Chartrand encouraged pastors, including Rev. Smith, to turn parishes into devotional, educational and social centers in response to the public intimidation and private anti-Catholic prejudice during the Klan period.<sup>46</sup> The expanded school allowed more Catholic families access to a Catholic education steeped in the faith and free of Klan-influenced attitudes in the public schools. In addition to classrooms, the School also contained bowling alleys and social rooms for the use of the St. Philip Neri Athletic Club, which provided a variety of past-times.<sup>47</sup> The American flag is visible and clear both inside and out, proclaiming to the pupils inside and the public outside the American values and patriotism of the Parish and of American Catholics. Perhaps the flag window made the parish school less of a target to those who accused Catholics of being un-American and Catholic education suspect.

St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District is an intact Catholic parish complex of Church, School, Convent, Rectory and Garage-Boiler Plant. The parish was founded as this eastside neighborhood was developing and acted as a catalyst for more rapid neighborhood development. The district is a religious and architectural landmark, the work of three Indiana architectural firms, and it represents the historical expansion of the residential area of Indianapolis in tandem with the growth and development of the Catholic Church in this city.

ENDNOTES

1. Sixth Census or Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States, as Corrected at the Department of State in 1840 (Washington: Blair & Rives, 1841), pp. 358-359.
2. James J. Divita, "Ethnic Settlement Patterns in Indianapolis," unpublished study, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 1988, p. 27
3. Jacob Piatt Dunn, Greater Indianapolis (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1910), I: 619-620.
4. Divita, p. 33; and Dunn, I: 615.
5. James V. Divita, "Catholics", The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 389.
6. Golden Jubilee, 1909-1959 (Indianapolis: St. Philip Neri Church, 1959), n.p.
7. "Annexation History Map," Planning Division, City of Indianapolis, unpublished, n.p.

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8. Golden, n.p.
9. Diamond Jubilee, St. Philip Neri 1909-1984 (Indianapolis: St. Philip Neri Church, 1984), p. 26.
10. G. William Baist, Real Estate Atlas Surveys of Indianapolis and Vicinity, Indiana (Philadelphia: G. William Baist, 1908 and 1916), Plan 13.
11. "St. Philip Neri Church Ground Broken for New Indianapolis Ediface," The Catholic Columbian Record, Feb 26, 1909, p.1; "Proposed New Church of St. Philip Neri at Indianapolis", The Catholic Columbian Record, Feb. 26, 1909, p.1.
12. "Dedication Last Sunday," The Catholic Columbian Record, July 2, 1909, p.1.
13. St. Philip Neri Silver Jubilee Souvenir (Indianapolis: St. Philip Neri Church, 1934), p.5.
14. Golden, n.p.
15. Catholic Columbian Record, July 2, 1909, p.1.
16. Catholic Columbian Record, June 25, 1909, p.1.
17. Record of Building Permits, Application #2601, Permit #26987, Microfilm Records Division, City of Indianapolis.
18. Silver, p. 10; and "School Building for the Sisters of Providence," 9 sheets, D.A. Bohlen & Son, July 15, 1909.
19. Diamond, p. 25.
20. St. Philip Neri Church Annual Report, 1909, 1919 & 1930, Archdiocesan Archives, Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis.
21. "School Building."
22. Golden, n.p.
23. Ibid., n.p.
24. Diamond, p. 27.



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25. Diamond, p. 28.
26. Silver, p. 15.
27. "Annual Report," 1926.
28. Diamond, p. 29.
29. "Diocesan Archives Questionnaire," 1942, Archdiocesan Archives, Catholic Archdiocese of Indianapolis.
30. Diamond, p. 35.
31. "Annual Report," 1918-1994.
32. "Annual Report," 1918-1994.
33. "New Boundaries for Four City Parishes," The Criterion, April 22, 1983, p.1.
34. "George Vincent Bedell," Indianapolis News, Oct. 11, 1948, p. 14.
35. Catholic Columbian Record, Feb. 5, 1909, p.1.
36. News, Oct. 11, 1948; and James J. Divita, "Forum," Indianapolis Star Magazine, Aug. 30, 1981, p.22.
37. Catholic Columbian Record, July 2, 1909.
38. William L. Selm, "Bohlen, Diedrich August" and Richard W. Smith, "Bohlen, Meyer, Gibson & Associates", The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, pp. 333-334.
39. Silver, p. 15.
40. "Karl P. Henkel, 54, Dies of Pneumonia," Connersville News-Examiner, Jan. 4, 1944, p.1.
41. "Diocesan Archive Questionnaire."
42. Diamond, p. 22.
43. Divita, pp. 40, 42-43.

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44. David G. Vanderstel, "Irish," The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, pp. 827-829.
45. Diamond, p. 29.
46. Leonard J. Moore, "Ku Klux Klan," Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, pp. 879-882.
47. Silver, p. 13.

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**ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT**

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District occupies all of the following lots of the Holtman & Topp Subdivision of the city of Indianapolis: 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, and 42; and the vacated north-south alley parallel to and between Rural Street and Eastern Avenue.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The real estate described in the Verbal Boundary Description (above) is the property on which sits all five of the buildings noted and included in the nomination.

**ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT**

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

The following information is identical for all photographs.

St. Philip Neri Parish Historic District  
Rural and North Streets, Indianapolis  
Marion County, Indiana  
Marsh Davis  
May 1, 1996  
Eastside Community Investments, Inc.  
26 North Arsenal Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46201

- #1 Church, Rectory, & Convent on Rural Street; Camera Pointing Southwest.
- #2 Church, Rectory, Garage-Boiler Plant, Convent, & School; Camera Pointing Southeast.
- #3 Church; Camera Pointing Southwest.
- #4 Church Interior; Camera Pointing Southwest.
- #5 Sanctuary, Church Interior; Camera Pointing West.
- #6 Rectory; Camera Pointing Southwest.
- #7 Convent (Guerin Place); Camera Pointing Northwest.
- #8 Former Chapel Room; Convent (Guerin Place) Interior, Camera Pointing South.
- #9 School; Camera Pointing Northeast.
- #10 School Main Entrance; Camera Pointing East.
- #11 School, East (Rear) and North Facades; Camera Pointing Southwest.
- #12 Flag Window & Main Stairwell, School Interior; Camera Pointing Southwest.
- #13 Gymnasium, School Interior; Camera Pointing Southeast.
- #14 Main Corridor, First Floor, School Interior; Camera Pointing North.
- #15 Garage-Boiler Plant; Camera Pointing Southeast.

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**ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT**

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**PROPERTY OWNERS**

Tel: (317) 236-1403

The Most Rev. Daniel Buechlein  
Archbishop of Indianapolis  
1400 North Meridian Street  
P.O. Box 1410  
Indianapolis, IN 46

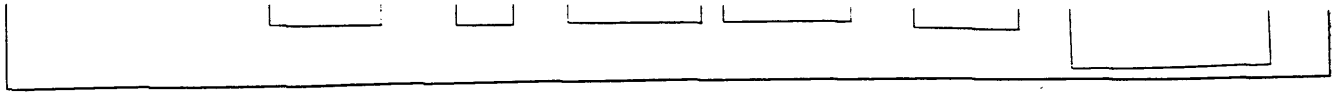
Tel: (317) 624-8438

Rural Street, Inc. and  
Guerin Place LP  
26 North Arsenal Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46201

# ST. PHILIP NERI PARISH HISTORIC DISTRICT

SKETCH MAP WITH PHOTOGRAPH VIEWS

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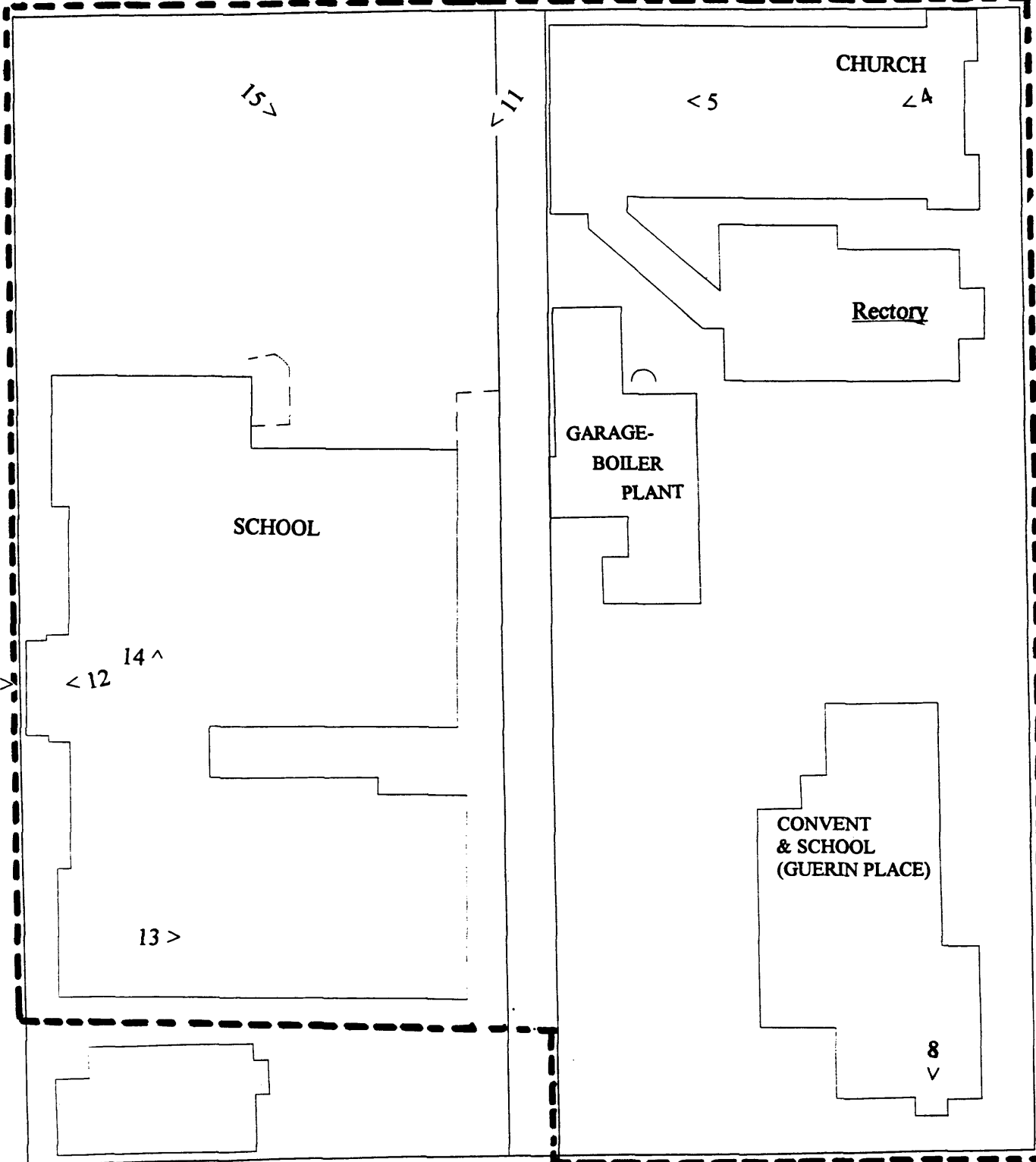
E. NORTH STREET

2 >

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N. EASTERN AVENUE

N. RURAL STREET



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