

# NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

### PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 3501-25 N. 6th Street

Postal code: 19140

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: St. Veronica Chapel-School (Roman Catholic)

Current/Common Name: St. Veronica Roman Catholic School

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Elementary school

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1894 1892 to Present- 1894

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1892-94

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Edwin F. Durang

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: John McShain

Original owner: Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☐ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☒ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☐ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name with Title Celeste Morello, MS, MA Email \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address 1234 S. Sheridan Street Telephone 215.334.6008

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19147-4820

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: May 30, 2019

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: September 26, 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: October 10, 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Address: 222 N. 17th Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19103

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: November 13, 2019

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: December 13, 2019

Date of Final Action: December 13, 2019

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

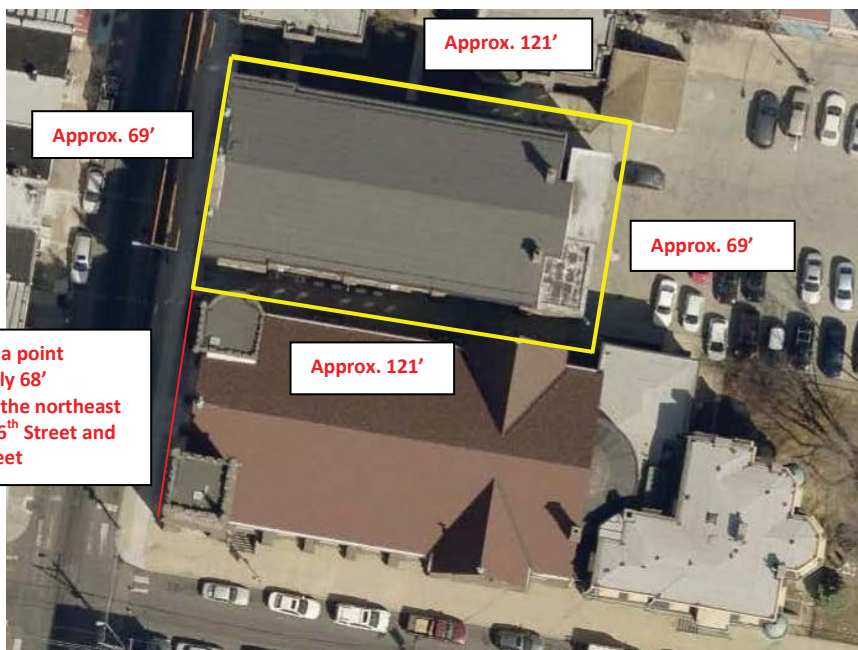
## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated boundary of St. Veronica Roman Catholic School includes one building on a larger parcel of 3501-25 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The overall parcel is bounded by W. Tioga Street at the south, N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street at the west, N. Randolph Street at the east, and private residences at the north.



*The red outline shows the full property boundary.*

The boundary of the school building begins at a point approximately 68-feet northeast of the northeast corner of N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street and W. Tioga Street. The boundary includes the footprint of the school and a perimeter buffer.



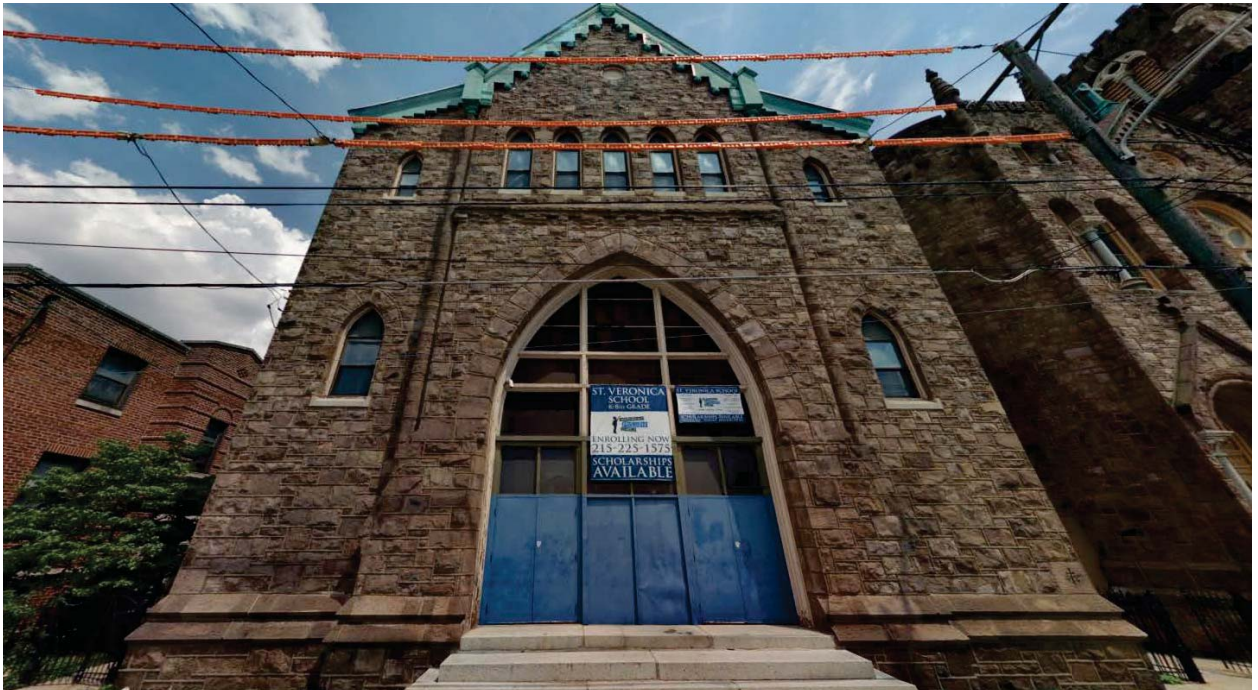
*The yellow outline shows the extent of the nominated boundary, which includes only the school building, with a small buffer.*



Staff supplemented photographs



The school's west elevation, which fronts N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, with St. Veronica Roman Catholic Church adjacent at south, 2019. Source: Cyclomedia



The school's west elevation, which fronts N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, 2019. Source: Cyclomedia



Staff supplemented photographs



The school's west elevation, which fronts N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, showing St. Veronica Roman Catholic Church adjacent at the south, 2019. Source: Pictometry



The school's north elevation, 2019. Source: Pictometry

Staff supplemented photographs

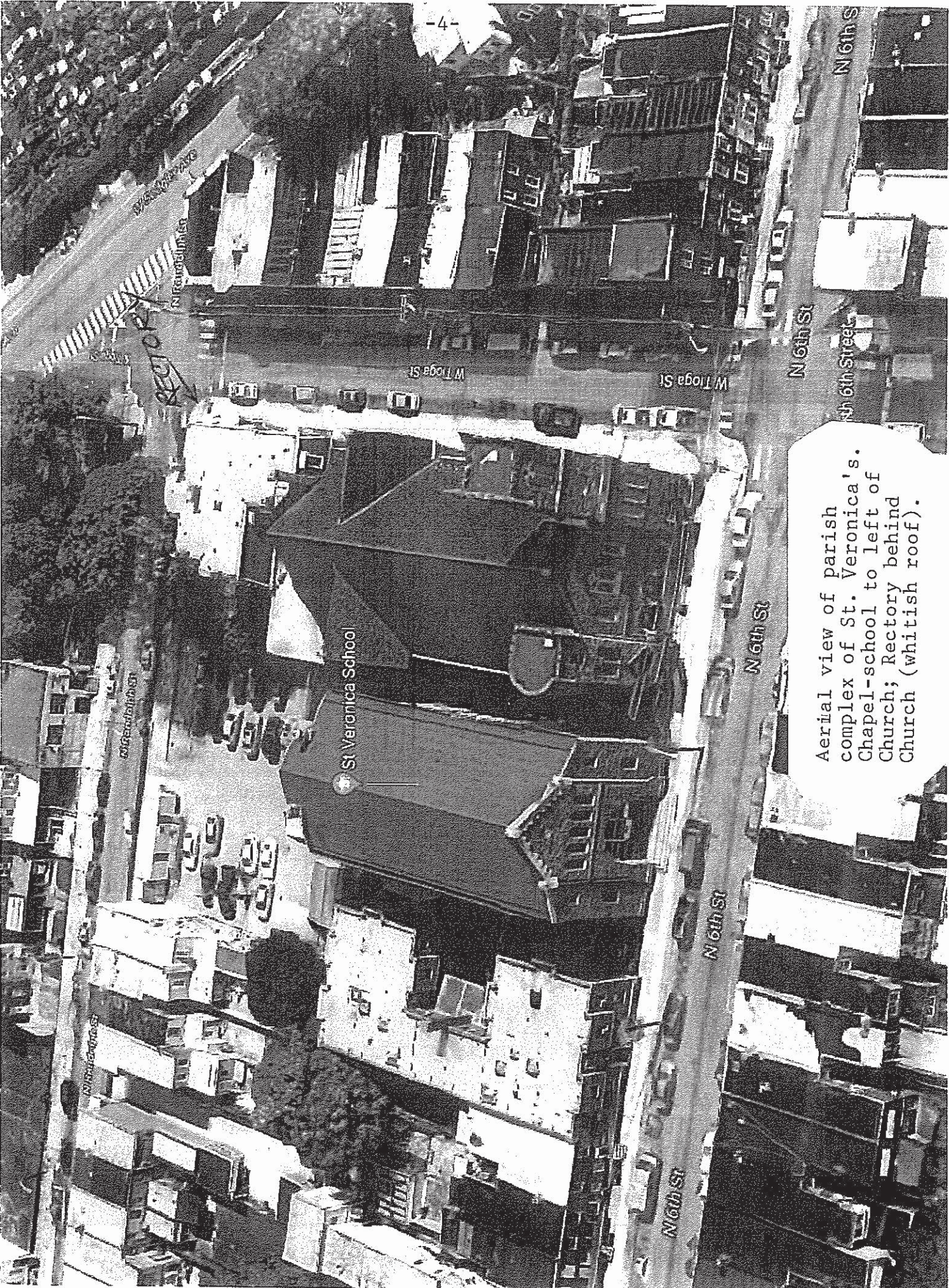


The school's east elevation, 2019. Source: Cyclomedia



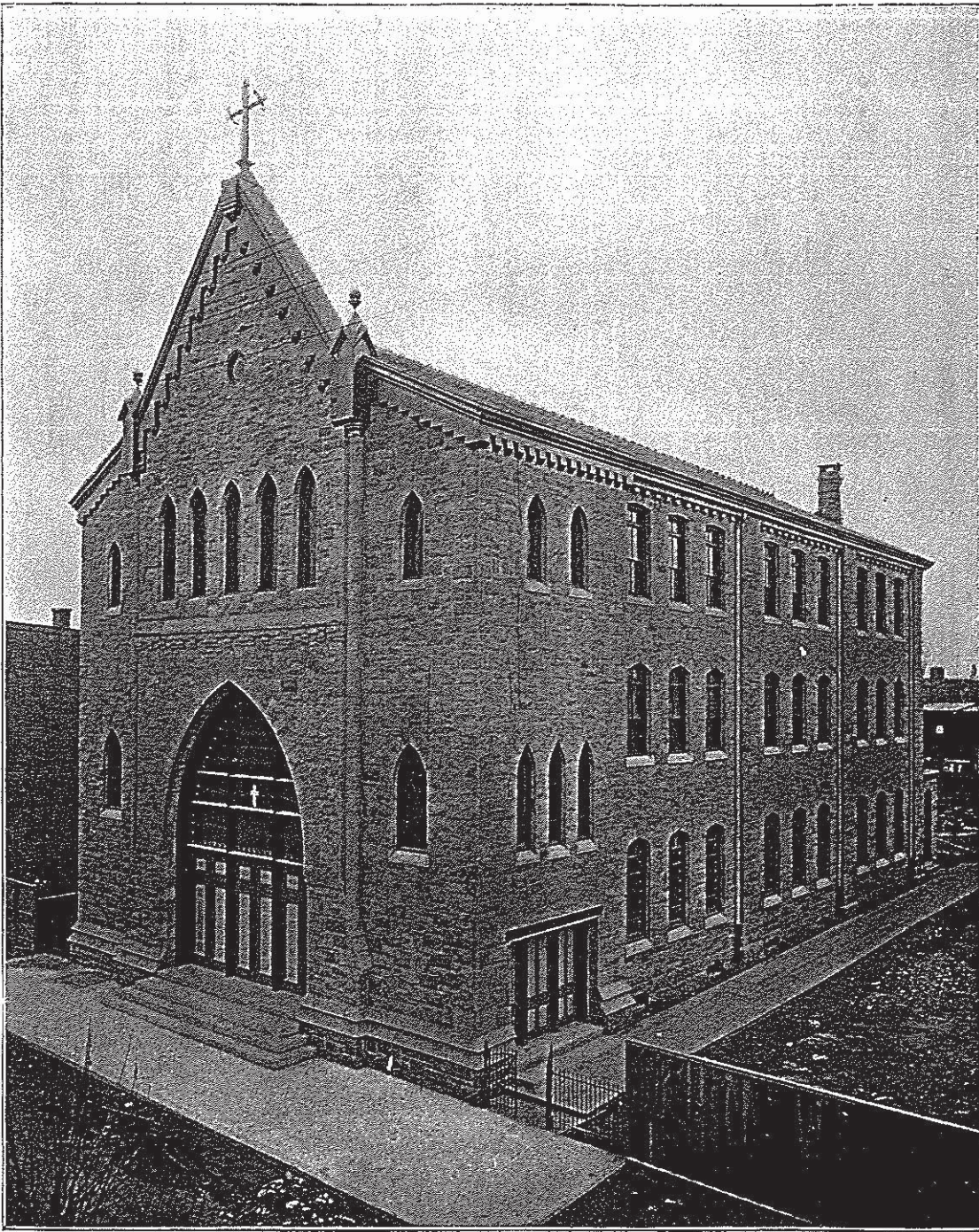
The school's east elevation, 2019. Source: Pictometry





Aerial view of parish complex of St. Veronica's. Chapel-school to left of Church; Rectory behind Church (whitish roof).





ST. VERONICA'S CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

This image was selected by Durang for his "Album" of his most important projects. This photograph dates c. 1900 with partial excavation of the future church's foundation seen on right, at the northeast corner of Sixth and Tioga Streets.



DESCRIPTION:

St. Veronica's "Chapel-School" had originally served as a building where the first level, with 18' high ceilings, would conduct religious services until funds for a separate church could meet costs. The second and third levels were fitted for classrooms,<sup>1</sup> which account for the four bays on each side of this rectangular building. The style is a late Norman with a wide Gothic arch holding three sets of double doors at the ground or first level. The shallow buttresses or piers that rise alongside of this arched portal ascends at the first floor, above a base about 32" high (or about four steps) to the roof. These piers separate the facade into three bays, with the center bay as the focus, and two stories high. A cornice runs horizontally below five Gothic arched windows parallel to the third level. The pattern of stone along the pediment above this center bay feigns crenellations. A cross is prominent at the top of the pediment.

This building, designed by Edwin F. Durang and built by John McShain's contractors from 1892 to 1894 is of Trenton brownstone with copper gutters and some trim as accents.<sup>2</sup> The aerial shows how this building is part of a parish complex of church and rectory constructed rather close to each other. This chapel-school was the first building for the St. Veronica parish, with the rectory next constructed (1896-1897),<sup>3</sup> then finally a church by 1909. All are of the same Trenton brownstone material unifying the buildings. However, this chapel-school's Norman-Romanesque style is more correlated with the church's design with the pre-Gothic rounded arches which may have been intended to elude how late it took to construct the church, the last building in the complex.

<sup>1</sup> Mahoney, D., *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches...*, p. 137.

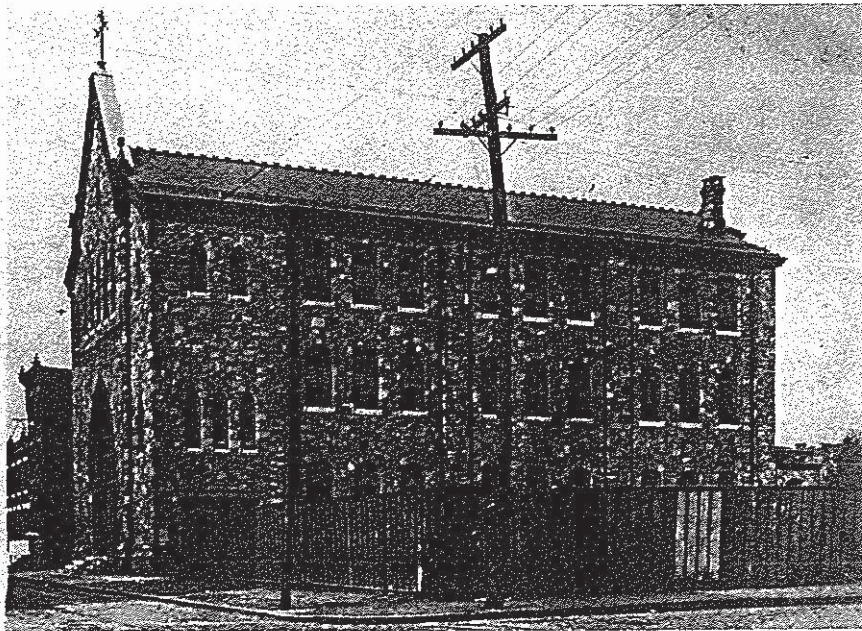
<sup>2</sup> E.F. Durang's "Album," n.p., n.d., with McShain ad; Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, March 16, 1892.

<sup>3</sup> St. Veronica's Parish History. Catholic Historical Research Center.



Mahoney's account of St. Veronica's chapel-school stated that this building measured "60' wide by 106' long" while the parish history claimed dimensions of "55' by 105'." The present condition of this occupied building is good. The roof is asphalt and also in good condition, per the aerial image.

The copy of the photograph below was taken prior to the excavation of the church's foundation in the early 1900s.



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Above photograph from St. Veronica's parish history, Catholic Historical Research Center, (CHRC), Philadelphia.



St. Veronica's chapel-school...

(e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation.

Architect Edwin F. Durang (1829-1911) was the de facto architect for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at the time of St. Veronica's construction in 1892. His designs for the leading Roman Catholic parishes in the city were recognizable and had represented the prominence finally attained by Catholics in the staunchly Quaker-Protestant elite. Hundreds of thousands of local Roman Catholics saved to hire Durang to create breathlessly beautiful houses of worship crafted by workmen whose skills would otherwise not have been showcased, especially in masonry. But, Durang was also sensitive to the groups of Roman Catholics in the city who set financial limitations in what they were able to do to build parishes which would be the centers of social and religious life in communities.

The Tatman and Moss Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects has many omissions of projects which Durang himself listed in his "Album."<sup>10</sup> (Both sources are copied and attached for comparisons.) Durang, however, did not make a chronology of his work and how many other designs and active projects he was already engaged in when he was retained by St. Veronica's group. The relevance is that with such a unique design, the Norman, it would be helpful to remark on other projects that Durang was involved in at the time he began the chapel-school at St. Veronica's.

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<sup>10</sup> There are two Durang "Albums," (with some of the photographs copied herein) and neither has the place or dates of publication. What is certain is that the information was directly from the architect himself.



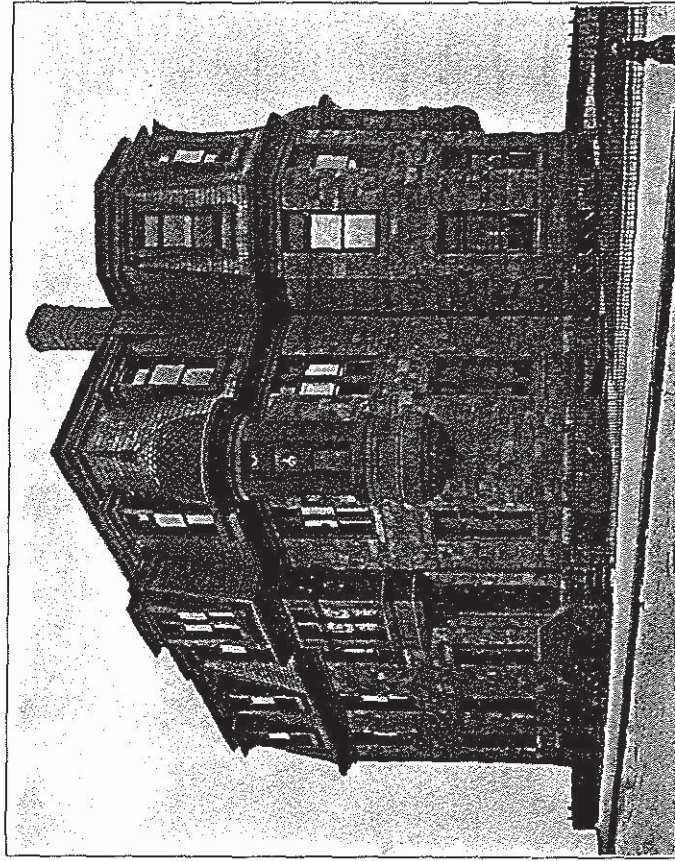
In the year 1890, Durang's designs for the churches of Our Lady of Mercy, Nativity, BVM and St. Laurentius began to materialize. The constructions of these buildings would carry into Durang's employment for St. Veronica's chapel-school in 1892. The genius of Durang is where none of these churches that were designed at the same time, had resembled each other. There were churches of stone OR brick OR stone of different tones; pointed or rounded arches; Gothic or Romanesque or Baroque; architectural complexity that varied in shape and form for each spire. For the aforementioned churches from 1890, Durang subcontracted the services of William J. McShane, an Irish emigre who was a carpenter-builder of superior quality and had a large crew from whom he demanded equally superior skills. (See copy of photograph on page 14 of the nomination of St. Veronica's Rectory of McShane's men at work at Our Lady of Mercy Church.) The style of masonry that William McShane used at Our Lady of Mercy, a Romanesque, was very similar to that by William's nephew, John McShain at St. Veronica's chapel-school.

Some parish histories, such as the one from St. Veronica's note without reference to Durang (or other architects) the technological innovations affecting lifestyles through new construction. Durang had begun his career in architecture when gas lighting was the "modern" way to illuminate. By the time St. Veronica's was in construction however, electricity was coming into use and architects such as Durang had to learn how to design to accommodate the conversion of gas to electricity, or design for an electric-operated building. Thus, Durang's career evolved.

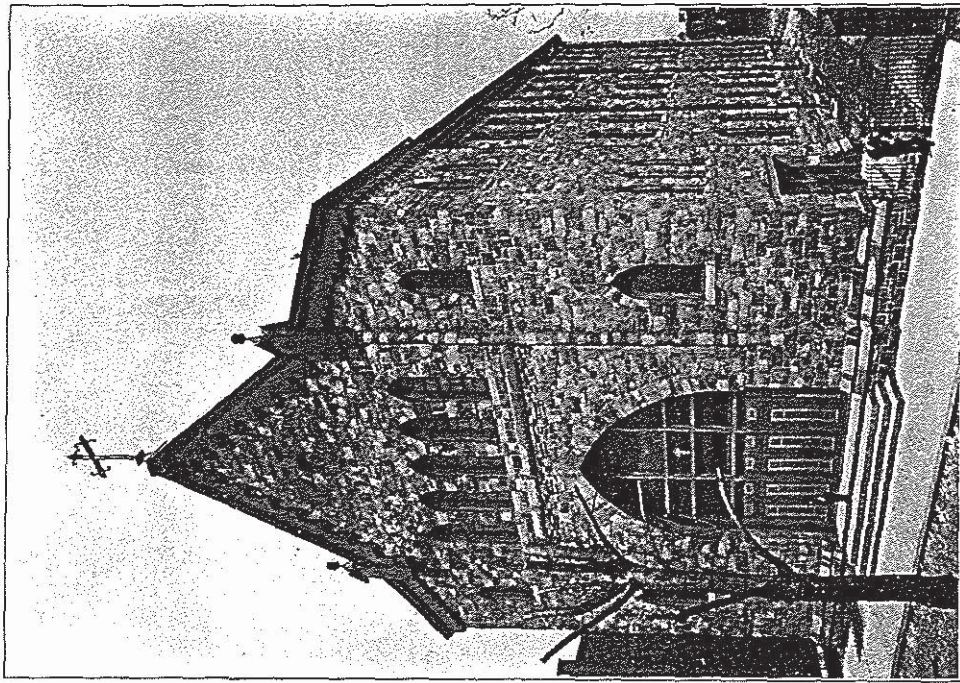
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<sup>11</sup>The spelling of William McShane is correct; his nephew John's name originally was "McShane," but was inadvertently changed through the recording of a legal document with the "McShain" spelling. John then adapted the "McShain" name in his early advertisements replicated in Durang's "Album," and copied for this nomination to verify that he built the chapel-school and rectory at St. Veronica's.





RECTORY OF ST. VERONICA, SIXTH AND TIOGA STS., PHILA.



ST. VERONICA'S SCHOOL, SIXTH AND TIOGA STS., PHILA.



For "1892," Tatman and Moss' book noted "St. Veronica's Ch., schl. & parochial bldg., 2nd & Butler sts., Phila." Newspaper accounts, archdiocesan records and city records, such as The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide dispute the location of Durang's work for St. Veronica's from the Tatman and Moss account and have "Sixth and Tioga Streets" where "plans ...for the church school and parochial house to be erected." Durang presented "very complete" designs that "contemplate handsome structures of stone." He would also "supervise the entire work of construction" with John McShain's masonry and building crew.



*2119 Apple Tree St.  
Philadelphia.*  
(Formerly Tower St.)

•BUILDINGS ERECTED:

PARSONAGE, ST. VERONICA'S R.C. CHURCH  
STABLE & BOILER HOUSE ST. AGNES HOSPITAL  
CARPENTER WORK, ST. PAUL'S R.C. SCHOOLS

•BUILDINGS SUPERINTENDED:

PARSONAGE & SCHOOLHOUSE OF  
ST. MICHAEL'S R.C. CHURCH.  
SISTERS OF MERCY CONVENT, MERION.



Irish-born John McShain (1860-1919) migrated to Philadelphia in 1885 and "joined the firm of his uncle, William J. McShane" <sup>12</sup> who had worked on many projects for the Archdiocese from Durang's designs. (See his advertizement from Durang's "Album.") John would start his own business as a "carpenter and builder" and compete with his uncle in Durang-designed buildings. St. Veronica's was one of his first construction jobs. (See his advertizements also from Durang's "Album.") Although John did not build the number of churches as his uncle, what John was able to do was leave a name, reputation and his knowledge of the business to his son, John McShain, Jr. who would go on "to develop what would become one of the five largest construction firms in the United States." <sup>13</sup> John, Sr.'s work for Durang involved the Romanesque and Baroque in complex churches such as St. Charles Borromeo and the rebuilt St. Michael's. He was also responsible for the nominated chapel-school and rectory of St. Veronica's parish.

**JOHN McSHAIN**  
*Contractor, Carpenter and Builder*  
631 North Seventeenth Street  
TELEPHONE CONNECTIONS

*I have erected the following buildings under the direction of  
EDWIN F. DURANG & SON, Architects*

<i>St. Paul's School, Christian St., Phila.</i>	<i>St. Marie de Pazzi Church, Christian St., Phila.</i>
<i>St. Pauls School, Montrose St., Phila.</i>	<i>St. Mary Hospital, Phila.</i>
<i>St. Charles Church, 20th and Christian Sts., Phila.</i>	<i>Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, Merion</i>
<i>Rectory of St. Charles Church, 20th and Christian Sts., Phila.</i>	<i>St. Nicholas Church, Atlantic City</i>
<i>St. Francis Assisi School, Germantown</i>	<i>Rectory of Our Lady of Consolation, Chestnut Hill</i>
<i>St. Veronicas School, Tioga</i>	<i>Rectory of St. Denis, Ardmore</i>
<i>St. Veronicas Rectory, Tioga</i>	<i>Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis, Glen Riddle</i>
<i>St. Michael's Church, Phila.</i>	

ESTIMATES FURNISHED

<sup>12</sup> On-line, anonymous author; "The Hiberno files: An Irish American Heritage Documentation and Narration Project." (Refer to Appendix.)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



# WILLIAM J. McSHANE CONTRACTOR AND BUILDER

Among the  
Buildings Superintended  
and erected are the  
following.

2204 Arch St. Phila.

St. Francis R.C. Church, Philadelphia.  
Our Lady of Mercy, R.C. Church, Phila.  
Nativity R.C. Church, Phila.  
St. Laurentius R.C. Church,  
St. Anthony's R.C. Church,  
St. Thomas R.C. Church, Villa Nova.  
R.C. Church of the Epiphany Phila.

Academy of Notre Dame, Philadelphia.  
Buildings at Glen Riddle for Sisters,  
of St. Francis.  
Chapel & Rectory St. Gabriel's R.C. Church, Phila.  
Rectory, St. Peter Clavers  
Store Buildings 4203-05 Lancaster Ave



As the architect for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Edwin F. Durang capably used styles which began with Roman Catholicism: Romanesque, Gothic and later, the Baroque. He competed with local architects who were neither Roman Catholic, nor designed buildings for Roman Catholic use, but were Romanesque or Gothic, according to the Victorian Era of revivals of medieval architecture. It was Durang's job to distinguish the "Roman Catholic" buildings from "Protestant" ones of the same styles. He worked first under Archbishop James Frederick Wood, the successor of (Saint) Bishop John N. Neumann, then Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan whose tenure in the archdiocese was one of the rise of Roman Catholics in all levels of social, political and cultural discourse. Needless to say, Durang's designs, once materialized, demonstrated the breadth of Roman Catholic citizenry in financing tasteful, beautiful buildings that are among the city's best examples of 19th century architecture.

Edwin F. Durang ranks well above other ecclesiastical architects for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia not only for the volume of buildings he designed but for how his interpretation of traditional Roman Catholic architecture had been fully executed. Durang significantly influenced the City and Commonwealth by his architectural work.

Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA  
May, 2019



NOMINATOR'S NOTE:

For the previous nomination of Nativity, Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church (2016-2017), the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, through its legal counsel, compiled a (partial) list of buildings designed by Edwin F. Durang.

This information by the Archdiocese is attached to support why St. Veronica's chapel-school and rectory (separate nomination submitted together) should be historically-designated under the criterion (e) as Durang designs.

(Pages 16, 17 and 18 herein.)



# Edwin Forrest Durang

- Majority of works commissioned for Archdiocese and its parishes
- Approximately two-thirds of Durang buildings in Philadelphia are owned by Archdiocesan parishes
  - 40 buildings total (23 parishes)
  - 18 already on Historic Register

-16-

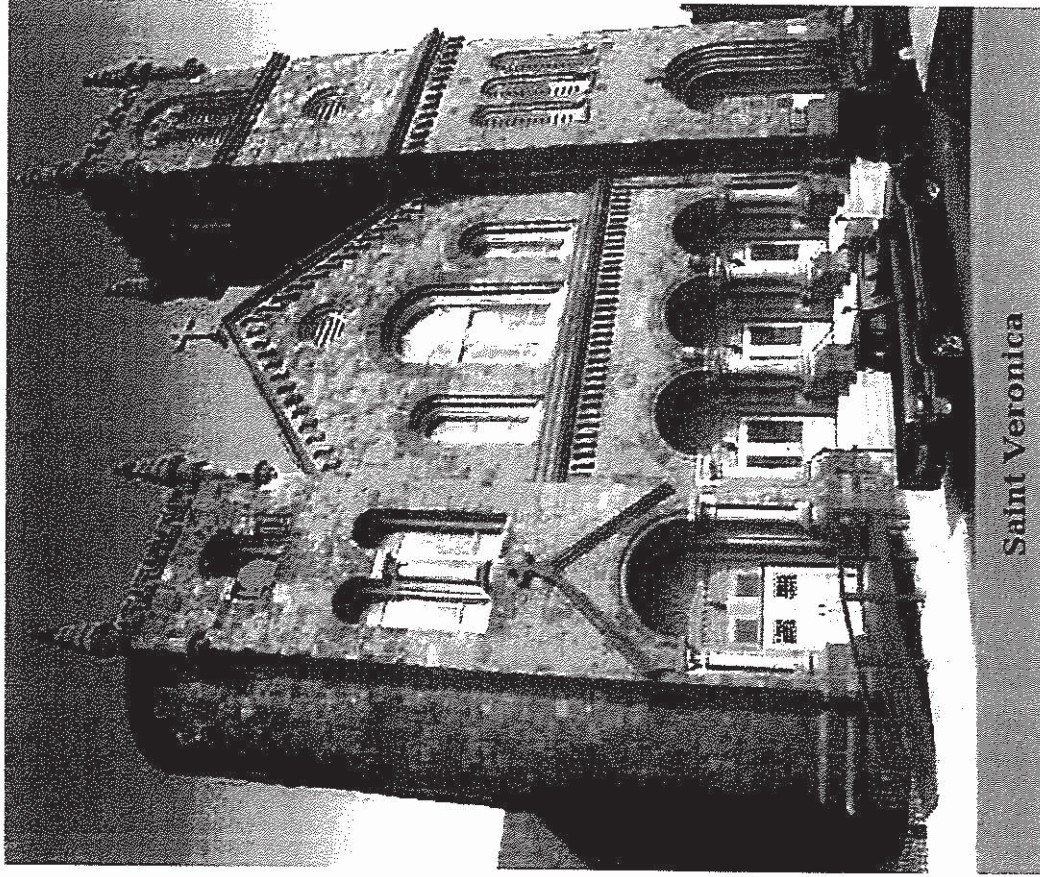
This information was provided by the Archdiocesan counsel from the Obermayer Law Office.



# Durang Buildings on Philadelphia Historic Register

- St. Francis Xavier
- St. Charles Borromeo
- St. Michael (Church, school and pastoral residence)
- St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi (towers and cupola)
- St. Laurentius
- St. Paul (school)
- St. Veronica (rectory)
- St. Vincent de Paul (pastoral residence)
- St. Peter Claver Evangelization Center (rectory)
- Our Mother of Consolation Catholic Church (rectory)
- St. Patrick (school)

# St. Veronica



Saint Veronica

- Constructed in 1872
- Durang designed rectory in 1896
- On Historic Register
- \$265,875 in maintenance expenses over past 10 years
  - Façade work
  - Partial roof replacement
- \$241,000 forecast for façade repairs over next 5 years



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES: (Primary and Secondary)

NOTE: SOURCES FOR BOTH ST. VERONICA'S PROPERTIES

Durang, Edwin F., "Albums." n.d., n.p.

Mahoney, D., Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and  
Institutions in Philadelphia. Phila.: 1895.

Kirlin, Rev. Jos., Catholicity in Phila. Phila.: McVey, 1909.

Tatman, S. and Moss, R., Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia  
Architects. Boston: Hall, 1985.

Webster, R., Philadelphia Preserved. Temple Univ. Press, 1981.

Zarnecki, G., Art of the Medieval World. NY: Abrams, 1975.

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OTHER SOURCES:

Records, Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.  
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia (on McShain information)

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THANKS TO:

Messrs. Patrick Shank and Shawn Weldon, CHRC.

Messrs. Michael Seneca and Bruce Laverty

Staff, Philadelphia Historical Commission.