

COMMENT ON NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION

**ADDRESS: 1432-48 S 29TH ST, 2922-28 AND 2930-36 DICKINSON ST,
ST GABRIEL'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMPLEX**

OVERVIEW: The Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) has requested comments from the Philadelphia Historical Commission on the National Register nomination of the buildings located at 1432-48 S 29th St, 2922-28 Dickinson St, and 2930-36 Dickinson St. Historically known as St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church, the complex is located in the Grays Ferry neighborhood of South Philadelphia. PHMC is charged with implementing federal historic preservation regulations in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, including overseeing the National Register of Historic Places in the state. PHMC reviews all such nominations before forwarding them to the National Park Service for action. As part of the process, PHMC must solicit comments on every National Register nomination from the appropriate local government. The Philadelphia Historical Commission speaks on behalf of the City of Philadelphia in historic preservation matters including the review of National Register nominations. Under federal regulation, the local government not only must provide comments, but must also provide a forum for public comment on nominations. Such a forum is provided during the Philadelphia Historical Commission's meetings.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History as the religious and social anchor of the Irish American community of Grays Ferry in South Philadelphia. Built by and for predominantly Irish immigrants and their families beginning in the late 1890s. St. Gabriel's is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a remarkably intact complex of parish church buildings primarily in the Romanesque Revival style by the most well-known Catholic church architects in Philadelphia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, particularly Edwin F. Durang and his son, F. Ferdinand Durang. The Period of Significance begins in 1897 when the Rectory, the oldest existing building in the complex, was completed, and ends c.1970 when the population of the Grays Ferry neighborhood began to decline precipitously and the role of the church as a community anchor was changing.



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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: NA**2. Location**Street & number: 1432-48 S 29th St, 2922-28 Dickinson St, 2930-36 Dickinson StCity or town: PhiladelphiaState: PACounty: PhiladelphiaNot for Publication: NAVicinity: NA**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 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local Applicable National Register Criteria: ___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:_____
Date_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official/Title:_____
Date_____
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper_____
Date of Action

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Private: ☒

Public – Local ☐

Public – State ☐

Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

Building(s) ☐

District ☒

Site ☐

Structure ☐

Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

RELIGION – Religious Facility (Church, Rectory, Convent, School)

Current Functions:

RELIGION – Religious Facility (Church, Rectory, School)

Work in Progress

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Romanesque Revival; Art Deco

Principal exterior materials of the property: Granite; Limestone

Physical Description Summary Paragraph

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex is located along the 2900 block of Dickinson Street in the Grays Ferry neighborhood of South Philadelphia. The approximately 2.6 acre site, which contains six contributing resources on three parcels, was built in stages between 1897 and 1948. The Church, Rectory, Garage, and School are located at 1432-48 S. 29th Street (on the north side of Dickinson Street); the Convent is located at 2922-28 Dickinson Street; and the Parish House is located at 2930-36 Dickinson Street. With the exception of the Parish House, which is Art Deco in style and faced in limestone, the buildings feature a consistent Romanesque Revival treatment in quarry faced Port Deposit granite. The surrounding neighborhood is urban and consists largely of small brick rowhouses from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. There is a parking lot to the west (at the northwest corner of 30th and Dickinson Streets), which until 2017 was occupied by a one-story brick warehouse.¹ The buildings are in good condition, and other than the Convent serve their original purposes. The complex retains integrity, with limited exterior changes and relatively minor interior changes.

Physical Description

Overall Setting and Building Relationships

The complex is set among the dense, rectilinear grid of Philadelphia streets with Dickinson Street as the organizing east-west spine. The Rectory, Church, School and Garage are located on the north side of Dickinson Street on a full block bounded by 29th Street on the east side, 30th Street on the west side and Wilder Street on the north side. This block is surrounded by concrete sidewalks. The Church occupies much of the eastern half of the block and is built nearly to the property line on the north and east sides. A short iron fence encloses the narrow space between the sidewalks and the north elevation of the Church, turning south and terminating at the tower to the north of the main east elevation entrance. A granite post anchors the fence at the northeast corner, at the point where it turns south. Along the south side of the Church there is a grass lawn, which is enclosed by an iron fence² matching the one along the north elevation. The landscaped lawn contains a number of trees and shrubs as well as a stone cross memorializing Reverend Patrick J. Mellon, St. Gabriel's first pastor. The Rectory is located in the middle of the block, at the west end of the lawn, with its south side along the sidewalk. The interior of the block, between the Church, Rectory and the School (which fills the western side of the block), is paved in concrete and is used as a parking and loading area. The parking area is accessed through a gate along

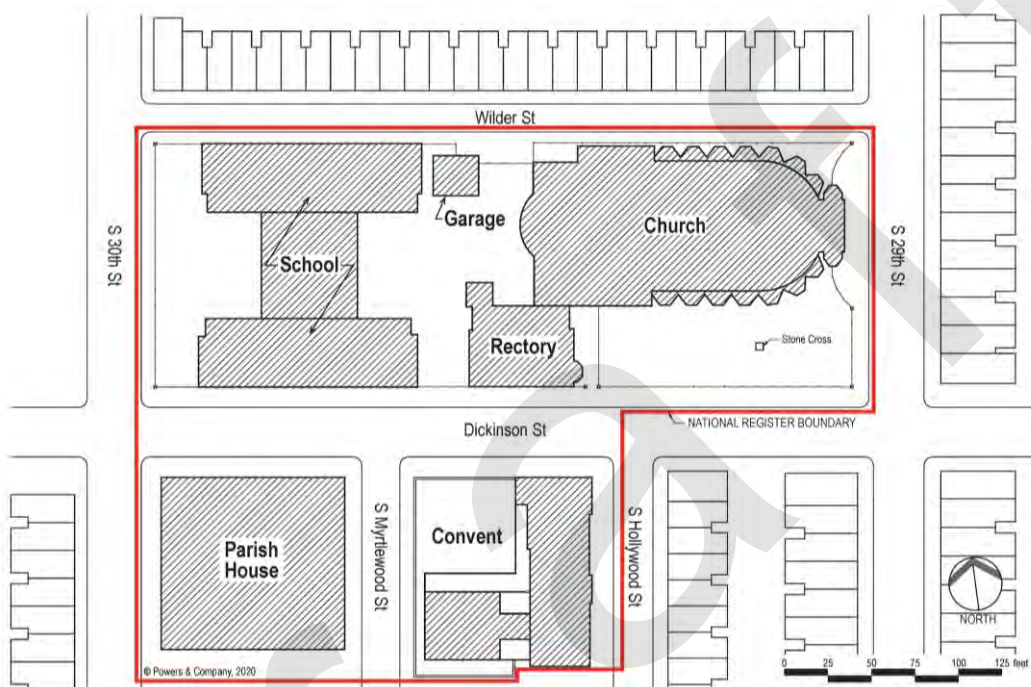
¹ The warehouse was built around 1960 as an addition to a larger, late nineteenth-century mill complex – originally the George Campbell Worsted Mill as indicated in the historic maps in **Figures 10 and 11**, and later known as the Joseph D. Murphy Woolen & Silk Mill – that once occupied the whole block bounded by 30th and 31st Streets between Dickinson and Reed Streets. Except for the one-story warehouse, the complex was demolished in the 1970s.

² The fencing and stone piers are evident in historic photos of the property as early as 1920, and may have been in place by at least 1910. Also in **Figure 7**, a historic photo dated 1920, is the stone cross memorializing St. Gabriel's first pastor, who died in 1913. The fencing and related piers and gates, and the cross, are uncounted landscape features but enhance the setting and are part of the early design of the property.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Dickinson Street. At the north end of the parking area, there is a one-story garage that is built to the property line along Wilder Street. The adjacent H-shaped three-story School is built to the property line on the north and south sides but contains a large open area on the west side, along 30th Street. This open space, which is paved in concrete and serves as a play area for students, is enclosed by a short iron fence with stone posts.



Site Plan



Current Aerial View (Google)

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

South of the Church and Rectory, the Convent is located on a property bounded by Hollywood Street to the east, Dickinson Street to the north, South Myrtlewood Street to the west, and two-story rowhouses to the south. The three-story Convent is L-shaped in plan. The side of the "L", which comprises the original 1914 building, abuts the property line on the east and north sides. A three-story addition, built in 1949, extends from the south end of the west elevation to South Myrtlewood Street to complete the L. The resulting open space at the northwest corner of the property consists of a courtyard that is paved in concrete and enclosed by a concrete block wall. South of the Convent, a narrow alley, paved in concrete, separates the building from the adjacent rowhouses.

The three-story Parish House is located west of the Rectory and south of the School on a property bounded by 30th Street on the west side, Dickinson Street on the north side, South Myrtlewood Street on the east side, and two-story rowhouses to the south. The Parish House is built to the property line on the west, north and east sides, therefore there are no site features on these sides except for concrete sidewalks. On the south side, a narrow alley, which is paved in concrete and currently enclosed by a chain-link fence, separates the building from the adjacent rowhouses.

All outward facing elevations of the complex face two-story rowhouses except the west elevation of the school, which faces an asphalt parking lot on the west side of 30th Street.

Rectory (1897)

Built when St. Gabriel's still occupied a temporary church building (constructed 1896) at the northwest corner of the property, the three-story Rectory is the oldest existing building in the complex. Edwin Forrest Durang (1829-1911), the most notable and prolific Catholic church architect in Philadelphia, designed the building, which is built of quarry-faced Port Deposit granite. The building, which is roughly rectangular in plan, contains a copper cornice on all four sides and a hipped roof with modern asphalt shingles. Stylistically, the building can most closely be associated with the Romanesque Revival style.



Photo 1 (left): Rectory, south and east elevations, view northwest

Photo 2 (right): Rectory, west and south elevations, view northeast, and driveway into paved center of the block.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA

County and State

The building is primarily accessed through an iron gate with stone corner piers on Dickinson Street, at the west end of the lawn described above. The gate opens to a private, concrete walkway that leads to the main entrance on the east elevation. Based on historic photographs, the gate and stone piers may pre-date 1910, but were in place at least by 1920. As described above, the south elevation is built to the property line while the north and west elevations face a parking area.

The east or primary elevation, which faces the Church, is five bays wide, containing a three-sided, projecting stone bay on the first and second floors on the side closest to Dickinson Street. The northernmost bay is recessed slightly from the rest of the elevation. The center bay on the first floor contains the main entrance, which is reached by granite steps with a c.1950s metal railing on both sides. All other bays contain one-over-one, double hung metal windows, which appear to have been installed sometime in the last 30 to 40 years. There are flat metal panels above each of the windows that fill in the upper part of the original openings, which are arched. As seen in a historic photo from 1920, the infilled upper portion of each opening originally contained a transom. There are also single-light windows with iron grates in the raised basement. This window treatment is the same on all four elevations.

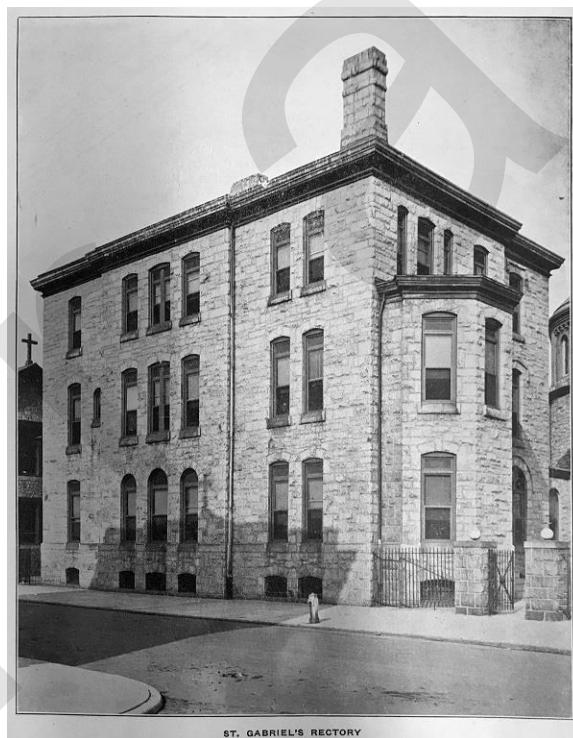


Figure 4: Rectory (1897) in 1920.

The south elevation (facing Dickinson Street) is seven bays wide with the three center bays projecting slightly forward of the two on either side. The west elevation (facing the School) is six bays wide on the first floor and four bays wide on the second and third floors (a one-story wing on the north elevation accounts for the additional two bays on the first floor). On the second floor, the bay closest to Dickinson Street contains a projecting, rectangular metal bay window, which is painted. The bay contains three one-over-one windows similar to the modern metal windows found elsewhere.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA

County and State

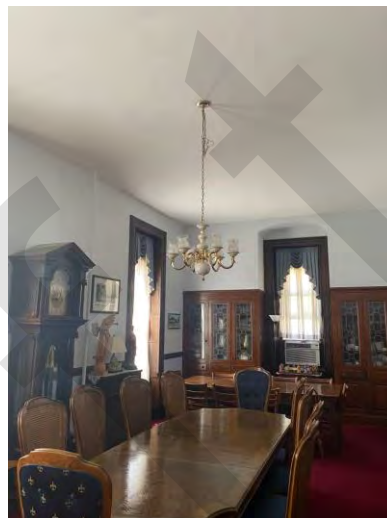


Photo 3 (left): Rectory, interior, first floor, entrance hall, view west

Photo 4 (middle): Rectory, interior, first floor, main stair, view west

Photo 5 (right): Rectory, interior, first floor, dining room, view west

Interior: The interior of the Rectory consists of a series of public spaces (parlor, dining room, etc.), offices and a kitchen while the second and third floors contain private quarters, including bedrooms, sitting rooms, and bathrooms. The main entrance on the east elevation opens into a center hall with carpeted floors, plaster walls with wallpaper, and plaster ceilings. The finishes in the remainder of the first floor spaces and on the upper floors are similar, including the intact, historic millwork, such as baseboards, chair rails, and door casings, is largely intact. A portion of the north side of the hall opens to the main stair, which is carpeted and has a varnished wood railing. A doorway adjacent to the stair leads to an enclosed, one-story interior passageway that connects the first floor of the Rectory to the Church

St. Gabriel's Church (1902, 1912)

Designed by Edwin Forrest Durang as the permanent home of St. Gabriel's – replacing the earlier temporary chapel at the northwest corner of the property – this Romanesque Revival church was begun in 1902 and put into service in 1903. Like the Rectory, the Church is built of quarry faced Port Deposit granite. It consists of a standard Latin cross plan, but with a nave that is round on the east end – curving into the narthex – echoing the shape of the apse at the west end of the building. As described above, the Church is built nearly to the property line on the east and north sides, with a landscaped lawn along the south side. An iron fence with stone piers (pre-1920) encloses the narrow space between the north elevation and sidewalk as well as the lawn on the south side. The south lawn includes a stone cross memorial to Reverend Patrick J. Mellon, St. Gabriel's first pastor, placed here between 1913 and 1920. The west elevation faces a paved parking area.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State



Photo 6 (left): Church, south elevation, view northeast, showing the iron fence that surrounds the lawn.



FACADE AND SIDE VIEW OF ST. GABRIEL'S CHURCH

Figure 7 – View of the completed church in 1920. While the church was put into service in 1903, the east end was not completed at that time.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State



Photo 7 (right): Church, east elevation, view west, showing the gable end that was completed in 1912.

The east or primary elevation with the main entrance (facing 29th Street) consists of the gable ended nave, which is three bays wide. This end of the building was not begun until 1912, therefore all features described below date to that year. On the first floor, there are three pairs of painted, six-panel wood doors with stained glass transoms. The doors are reached by granite steps with metal hand rails. The doors are set deeply into heavy, Romanesque arched openings, which are framed by squat colonettes with Romanesque capitals that support the arches with alternating rough and smooth granite voussoirs. Lanterns hang from each arch. Above the center door, there is a large rose window with stained glass within a pronounced opening with rough and smooth voussoirs matching those around the doors below. Flanking the entrance and rose window, there are half-octagonal "towers" with hipped slate roofs. A date stone is located at the lower portion of the south tower.



Photo 8 (left): Church, east and north elevations, view southwest



Photo 9 (right): Church, north and west elevations, view southeast; garage visible at right photo edge

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

As is typical in a Latin cross plan church, the north and south elevations mirror each other. The nave of St. Gabriel's is flanked by an aisle and seven small stone chapels on each side (east of the crossing), creating a three-tiered exterior massing. The first tier consists of the chapels, all fourteen of which are half-octagonal in plan and have small arched windows with leaded glass as well as hipped, standing seam copper roofs. The chapels follow the form of the nave, curving into the narthex. The middle tier of the north and south elevations consists of the aisle walls, which again follow the rounded shape of the nave. Each bay of the aisle walls east of the crossings – there are seven on each side, corresponding to the chapels below – contains three stained glass windows with arched heads. Above the windows, there is a granite modillion and copper cornice. The roofs over the aisles are slightly pitched. The uppermost tier – the clerestory – is fully clad in copper sheet metal. There are three stained glass windows with arched heads in each of the clerestory bays except the two bays at the rounded eastern corners, which each contain a single window. Between the windows, there are plain copper-clad "pilasters" and above there is a modillioned cornice.

Moving west, the north and south elevations of the transept are each one bay wide and are gabled. The center portion of the wall projects slightly forward of the primary vertical plane. On the lower level, there are three small stained glass windows with arched heads. Higher up on the wall, there is a biforate stained glass window with a slender, stone colonette as a mullion. The gabled roofline contains stone bracketing. Each end of the gabled roof is surmounted by copper crosses on bases resembling small temples.

The westernmost portion of the church consists of the apse, which is U-shaped in plan and contains side wings with pitched roofs. The upper third of the apse clad in copper sheet metal and virtually identical in treatment to the clerestory level of the nave, with which it is level. The north and south elevations of the side wings contain stained glass windows with arched heads. At the inside corner of the rounded part of the apse and the north side wing, there is a tall, square stone chimney that rises above the top of the roof. A small, one-story stone extension is found on the west side of the north side wing. A corresponding structure connects the church to the rectory on the south side.

The roofs over the nave, transept and sanctuary are gabled and clad in dark gray slates with copper flashings. All other sections of roof are pitched.

Interior: The church consists of a barrel vaulted Latin cross plan. The nave is flanked by side aisles and contains semi-circular apses both at the east end (narthex) and west end (sanctuary). A series of tall, semi-circular arches supported by compound piers separate the nave from the side aisles and curve into the apse at the end (**Photos 10, 11**). The piers contain Romanesque-style capitals at the spring line of the arches. Above the piers, there are additional, shorter compound piers with a capital at the point where the main barrel vault above the nave begins. The barrel vault contains prominent molded ribs aligned with the piers below. Above each bay of the arcaded nave, there are semi-circular arched stained glass clerestory windows made possible by groin vaults: three in each of the primary bays, and one in each of the narrower, curving bays at the east end). The outer walls of the side aisles are more solid, containing large semi-circular arched openings into each of the fourteen chapels (seven on each side) that surround the nave at ground level. Above each of the chapels, there are three semi-circular arched stained glass windows in the gallery.

The transept is treated much like the nave, but has flat north and south walls unlike the apses at the east and west ends of the nave. There is a quadripartite vault at the crossing of the nave and transept.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA

County and State

The floors throughout the nave, chapels, and transept are marble and date to 1920. The nave contains approximately two dozen pews arranged on either side of the center aisle, also dating to 1920. These spaces also contain partial height marble paneling dating to 1902-1912. Above the marble, the walls consist of painted plaster, as do the piers (including gilded capitals) and vaults. The current paint scheme dates to 1995, with exceptions noted below.



Photo 10 (left): Church, interior, nave, view west to altar



1905 image showing the relatively plain interior scheme of the recently-completed church.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

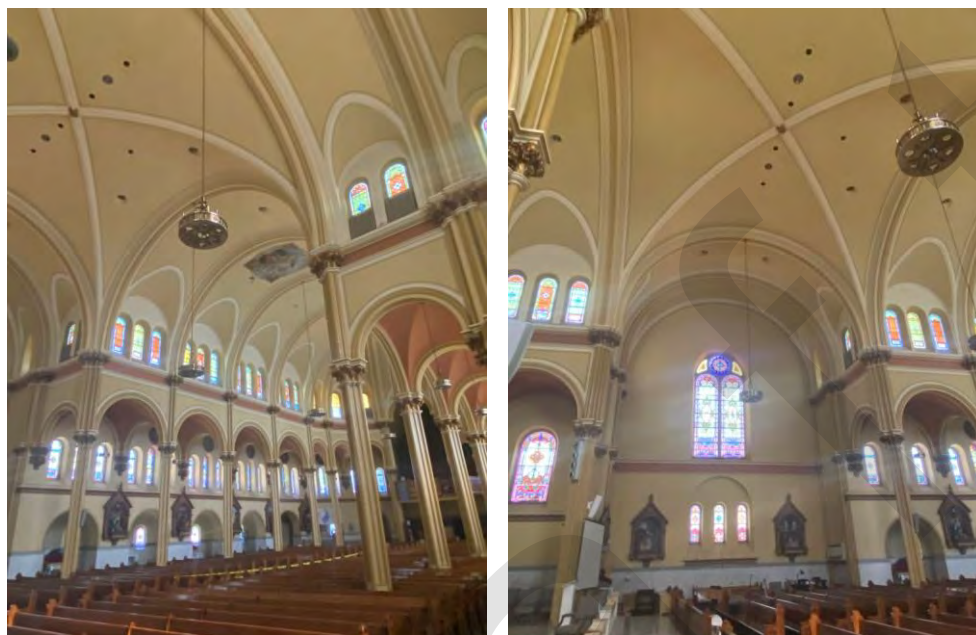


Photo 11 (left): Church, interior, nave, view northeast from transept

Photo 12 (right): Church, interior, transept, view north

The sanctuary at the west end of the space contains an apse with solid walls up to the clerestory (**Photo 10**). The walls contain seven narrow bays equally distributed around the radius of the apse, and are separated by flat pilasters. Above the pilasters, Romanesque-style colonettes sit on gilded plaster corbels and contain capitals similar to those atop the compound piers in the nave. A series of frescoes, which date to 1920, decorate the walls between the colonettes. Within the half dome above the apse, there are seven semi-circular stained glass windows with groin vaults aligned with the seven bays below). The dome also contains prominent plaster ribs that correspond to the colonettes. Like the nave and transept, the floor of the sanctuary is marble, but is several steps above the main floor and is separated from the public space by a low marble balustrade. The centerpiece of the sanctuary is an ornate, marble altar, behind which there is a wood screen.

School (1906, additions in 1915 and 1921)

St. Gabriel's School is a two- to three-story school building of quarry faced, Port Deposit granite that was built in three stages in 1906, 1915 and 1921. The School is built to the property line on the south and north sides. On the east side, there is an open space that is used for parking and loading/deliveries. A play area enclosed by a low iron fence with stone posts, which are original, is located on the west side of the building.

Stylistically, the building is difficult to classify. Its cornices, gables and pediments suggest a Classical influence, but its materiality and solidity are more in line with the previous Romanesque Revival buildings in the complex (the Rectory and School), only without any arched openings. The two-story section, which consists of the south wing (along Dickinson Street) and the narrow connecting wing in the center, was designed by Edwin F. Durang and built in 1906. The middle wing (initially two stories, with a third added in 1961) was designed by F. Ferdinand Durang in 1915 and the three-story wing along Wilder Street was designed by Emile G. Perrot (1872-1954) in 1921.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State



Photo 14 (right): School, west and south elevations, view northeast, showing the fenced play area along the western border of the property, and multiple stages of expansion.



1920 view of the school from the same perspective as the above current photo.

The exterior is relatively plain in treatment. A slightly pronounced water table can be found on each section of the building. Above the water table, the walls are relatively planar, however there are imposing, painted metal pediments at each end of the gabled roof, as well as on the south elevation where they punctuate the middle of the otherwise rectilinear façade. A metal cornice similar to the pediment treatment is found on all four elevations of the north and south wings. Although the original window openings have not been altered, the original windows themselves were replaced with the existing aluminum, multi-light awning units within the last ten to twenty years. The window openings contain granite sills and painted steel lintels with rosettes. As the existing windows are shorter than the original windows, the upper portion of each opening is infilled with a painted metal panel. Between the windows in the middle wing, there are wide concrete spandrel panels that were installed when the third floor of this

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

section was built in 1961. There is no discernible “main entrance,” only modest, hollow-metal doors located on the east and west elevations of both the north and south wings. These doors, which were installed in the last ten to twenty years, are located within original door openings and are reached by granite steps with modern metal railings.



Photo 13 (left): School, south elevation, view northwest



Photo 15: School, west elevation, view east

Interior: Each section of the School's H-shaped plan contains a long corridor lined by classrooms. The corridors contain carpet tile floors, plaster walls (with the lower half covered by glazed tiles, and plaster ceilings. The floor levels in all three sections are uniform, therefore there are no communicating stairs or other changes in elevation on any of the three floors. The classroom entrances are mostly historic, consisting of glazed wood doors and large transoms. Clerestory windows are also found in many locations in the upper part of the corridor walls to provide natural light from the classroom windows. The classrooms are fairly utilitarian in finish, containing modern vinyl tile floors and plaster walls and ceilings. There are some offices interspersed among the classrooms. There are metal stairs at the east and west ends of the wings parallel to Dickinson and Wilder Streets. There is no elevator.



Photo 16 (left): School, interior, first floor, corridor, view east



Photo 17 (right): School, interior, first floor, typical classroom, view southeast

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA

County and State



Photo 18 (left): School, interior, first floor, typical classroom, view northeast

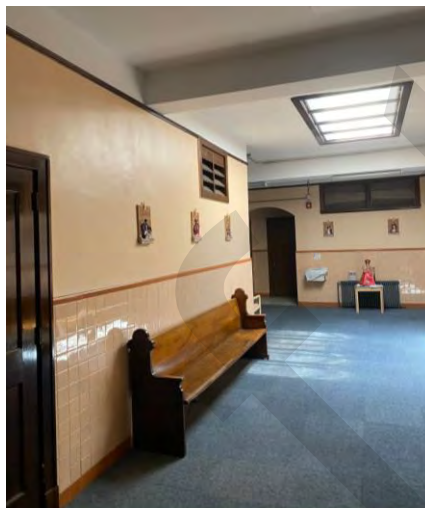


Photo 19 (right): School, interior, first floor, corridor, view north

Garage (c.1915, addition c.1960)

Located along Wilder Street between the Church and the School, behind the Rectory, the Garage is a small, one-story brick and concrete block structure, the eastern half of which was built around 1915 and the western half of which was added around 1960. It is strictly utilitarian in treatment. Both the north and south sides of the c.1915 section have metal garage doors, but only the south side of the c.1960 section has a garage door. Original or very early fencing connects to the east and north sides of the 1915 portion of the building.



Photo 20: Garage, north elevation, view south

Convent (1914, addition in 1949)

The Convent is a three-story, Romanesque Revival-style building of quarry faced Port Deposit granite with limestone trim. The building, which is L-shaped in plan and has a flat roof, is located on a separate parcel (2922-28 Dickinson Street) from the Church, Rectory, and School that spans the full length of the south side of Dickinson Street between South Hollywood Street (to the east) and South Myrtlewood Street (to the west). The northwest portion of the site consists of an open courtyard that is enclosed by a

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

concrete block wall on the north and west sides. The convent was designed by F. Ferdinand Durang, Sr. (1884-1966) following the death of his father, Edwin F. Durang, in 1911.



Photo 21 (left): Convent, east and north elevations, view southwest



The north, primary elevation faces Dickinson Street and is five bays wide. Within the water table, which contains limestone coping, there are two infilled basement windows with iron grates on either side of a granite double stair. The stair, which contains a painted iron picket railing, leads to the main entrance in

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

the center bay on the first floor. The entrance contains a modern, paneled aluminum door with side lights and a delicate leaded glass transom within a limestone architrave surround with a cornice. A panel above the cornice is inscribed with "ST. GABRIEL'S CONVENT." On either side of the entrance, there are two one-over-one, double-hung aluminum windows with single-light transoms that appear to have been installed within the last 30 to 40 years. On the second floor, there are stained glass windows with arched heads with limestone keystones in the three center bays and smaller rectangular stained glass windows in the outer bays. On the third floor, there are three one-over-one double-hung aluminum windows similar to those on the first floor (but without transoms). All windows have limestone sills. Between the third floor windows, there are square limestone panels: one is inscribed with an IHS shield (IHS for iota-eta-sigma, the first three letters of the name of Jesus in the Greek alphabet) and the other contains a Latin cross. The north elevation is capped by a prominent copper cornice, above which there is a granite parapet. At the center of the parapet, there is a granite cross.

The east elevation, which faces Hollywood Street, is twelve bays wide with the first two bays (at the north end) and eighth and ninth bays projecting out slightly. The masonry treatments, fenestration, and cornice on this side are similar to those on the north elevation with some minor differences. In the fifth bay from the north, there is a ground level entrance containing a three-panel, painted wood door with a single-light arched transom. The three southernmost bays contain modern metal egress doors. There is a mix of single windows and tripartite windows, with the larger opening of both type containing segmental arched heads with limestone keystones, except for the northernmost bay on the second floor, which contains a semi-circular arched head. The east elevation is set back slightly from the adjacent rowhouse, which abuts the south elevation of the Convent.



Photo 23: Convent, north and west elevations, view southeast

The west elevation is also twelve bays wide, but the southernmost four bays are largely blocked from view by a three-story addition that was built in 1949, creating the L-shaped plan that exists today. As on the east elevation, the masonry treatments, fenestration, and cornice on this side are similar to those on the north and east elevations, but the first and second floors are partially concealed by a two-story wood porch that was built along with the 1949 addition. The porch wraps around to the north elevation of the addition, which is faced in granite similar to the original building, although there are fewer decorative

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

embellishments (there is no cornice on the addition, for example). There are also bands of concrete wrapping around the addition at each floor level. On the first floor, the full width of the addition connects with the original building, however on the second and third floor only a narrow link structure exists. The fenestration in the addition is similar to that in the original building, consisting of one-over-one, double hung aluminum windows set directly into the granite walls with thin bluestone sills.

The south elevation abuts a two-story rowhouse on the east side, but the remainder faces an alley that separates the building from another rowhouse on the South Myrtlewood Street side. The eastern half of the south elevation consists of the original building while the western half consists of the 1949 addition, both of which are similar in treatment to their other elevations.

Interior: The interior of the convent consists of a double-loaded corridor with offices, public spaces and a kitchen on the first floor and bedrooms on the second and third floors. Entering from the main entrance on the north elevation (facing Dickinson Street), there is a small vestibule with marble floors and paneling. The corridors on all three floors of the original building contain vinyl tile floors, plaster walls and ceilings, painted wood baseboard, and painted wood doors and transoms with casing (**Photo 25**). The center portion of the west corridor wall is open to the main stair on each floor (**Photo 25**). The stair is wood and contains painted, square wood balusters and a hand rail. The corridors in the 1949 addition contain vinyl tile floors, painted concrete block walls, and painted concrete ceilings.

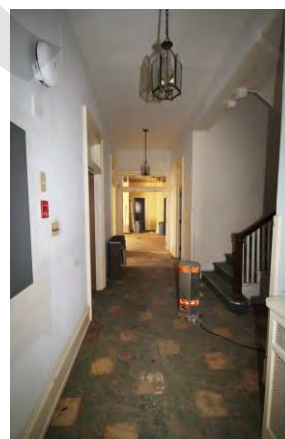
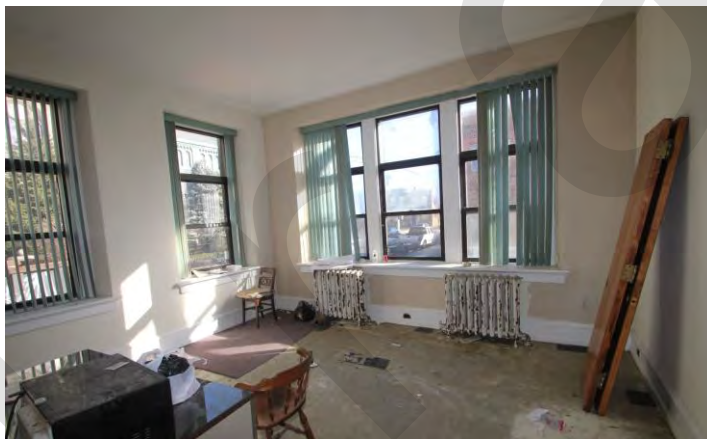


Photo 24 (left): Convent, interior, first floor, view northeast;
Photo 25 (right): Convent, interior, first floor, corridor, view south;

On the first floor, the former offices and public spaces contain finishes similar to those in the corridors except in the 1949 wing, where there are no corridors. Rather, the addition contains several large rooms like a kitchen with utilitarian finishes and a large multi-purpose room with vinyl tile floors, faux wood paneling on the walls, and a dropped ceiling grid, which is currently missing most of the ceiling panels.

The second and third floors consist nearly entirely of small bedrooms and bathrooms with finishes matching those in the corridors of their respective sections (**Photos 29, 30**). The major exception is at the north end of the second floor, where there is a chapel, which contains vinyl tile floors, painted wood wainscoting, plaster walls with pilasters, molded plaster window frames, plaster crown molding, and an ornamental plaster ceiling (**Photo 27**).

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA

County and State



Photo 27 Convent, interior, second floor, chapel, view east

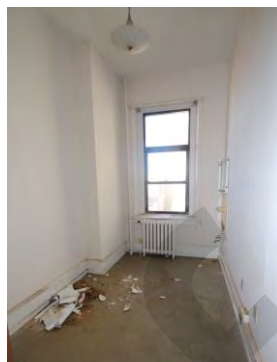


Photo 29 (center): Convent, interior, second floor of 1914 section, typical bedroom view east



Photo 30 (right): Convent, interior, second floor of 1949 addition, typical bedroom view north

Parish Hall (1948)

The Parish Hall is a four-story, Art Deco style building faced in smooth limestone panels. Rectangular in plan with a flat roof, the building is located on its own parcel at 2930-36 Dickinson Street, which is immediately west of the Convent and south of the School. The building, designed by the architectural firm of Gleeson & Mulrooney, occupies nearly the entire parcel, leaving only a narrow, paved alley along the south elevation. The building was designed to serve both educational and recreational purposes for the school as well as function as a community space for the larger parish. It continues to serve the current St. Gabriel's School and the local community.



Photo 31: Parish House, north and west elevations, view southeast

The west or primary elevation, which faces 30th Street, is seven bays wide. On the first floor, the main entrance, which is reached by a granite step/landing, contains two pairs of painted hollow metal doors. A limestone band between the doors and the second floor windows is carved with the inscription "St.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Gabriel's Auditorium." At the same height, the date "1948" is carved into the stone to the north of the entrance. There are additional hollow metal doors in each of the end bays, but apart from two metal louvers the first floor otherwise consists of a blank wall. The second through fourth floors contain pairs of one-over-one, double hung metal windows except in the three center bays on the third floor, which contain only a single one-over-one unit, and in the two end bays on the fourth floor, which do not contain windows. Between the second and fourth floor windows in the three center bays, there are contrasting black granite spandrels. Above the three center windows on the fourth floor, there are limestone panels carved with Greek crosses. The roofline is flat except above the three center bays, where the parapet is stepped on both ends.

The north elevation, which faces Dickinson Street is six bays wide. On the first floor there are four rectangular metal louvers at ground level. On the second floor, there are four pairs of one-over-one, double-hung aluminum windows with single-light transoms within arched openings. When the existing windows were installed (sometime in the past 30-40 years), replacing the original windows, solid metal panels were installed within the arched portion of the opening.

The east and south elevations are less formal in treatment, containing an inconsistent and asymmetrical arrangement of windows (similar to those on the other elevations) on what are otherwise planar limestone walls. An alley, paved in concrete, separates the south elevation from the adjacent rowhouses.



Photo 32 (left): Parish House, interior, second floor, view northwest



Photo 33 (right): Parish House, interior, second floor, view northeast

Interior: The interior of the Parish Hall contains a multi-purpose room on the first floor, a combination gymnasium and auditorium on the second floor, and classrooms on the third floor. The gymnasium/auditorium contains wood floors, glazed tile and exposed brick walls, and plaster beamed ceilings, which feature applied acoustical panels between the beams. On the west side, there is a one bay wide mezzanine level and on the east side is a stage. The first and third floors were not made accessible for survey at this time.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Integrity

The St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex retains all seven aspects of integrity. The aspects of Design, Materials and Setting are particularly important for this property. The consistent treatment of quarry faced Port Deposit granite with limestone remains intact throughout the campus (except for the Parish Hall, which is all limestone) and helps to create the impression of the Church and related parish buildings as a cohesive ensemble of architecturally and functionally related buildings that grew organically over time. Additionally, the setting of the school complex within the urban setting of the Grays Ferry neighborhood, which has changed relatively little over time, is integral to appreciating the parish's history and development. Comparison with available historic images confirms that the buildings individually retain overall integrity, as do their relationships to each other and the surrounding neighborhood.

Design – Although there have been some minor modifications and additions, including the replacement of most original windows (except in the church, which retains its stained glass), all resources largely retain their original Romanesque Revival, Romanesque-influenced, and Art Deco designs, respectively. In the Church, Rectory, School and Convent the character-defining quarry faced granite and other stone detailing, similar heavy massing with gabled rooflines (except the Convent, which has a flat roof) all remain largely intact and continue to convey a consistent architectural language throughout the complex. The Art Deco style of the Parish Hall was a dramatic departure from the form, materiality and massing of the original eight buildings. On its own, the Parish Hall retains integrity of design in its planar and sharp rectangular massing, its original exterior material, limestone, as well as its consistent fenestration pattern.

Materials and Workmanship – With very minor exceptions, all buildings retain their original exterior materials. Many original interior finishes, including marble floors and paneling in the Church, extensive plasterwork in the Church and Convent chapel, and millwork in the Convent are intact and make notable contributions to the property's integrity. Many of the original finishes and features were clearly finely crafted by hand and continue to convey the skill with which they were made.

Setting – The Church complex (and its parish) grew substantially after the turn of the twentieth century, expanding with several new buildings to the south and west that filled most of the land available for it, as the surrounding neighborhood developed quickly. Most of its historic setting remains intact. The presence of the surrounding residential neighborhood, which primarily consists of two- to three-story brick rowhouses of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, has remained consistent throughout much of the parish's history. The only loss to the immediate setting was the demolition of the textile mill to the west, directly across 30th Street, during the 1970s (the mill is shown in the historic maps in **Figures 10 and 11**). As the loss of the mill affected only one side of the site (the parish buildings are virtually enveloped by brick rowhouses on every other side), the impact on the setting has not compromised overall integrity.

Feeling and Association – The complex continues to readily convey the feeling of a religious institution, especially one that has maintained an important position in the surrounding Grays Ferry community for over 120 years. St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church established a strong association with this specific property as a result of its long occupancy of the site, which continues to this day (except in the Convent, which was no longer needed and has been sold).

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ 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

- ☒ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance: SOCIAL HISTORY; ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance: 1897-c.1970

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Edwin F. Durang, architect; F. Ferdinand Durang, architect; William J. McShane, builder; Emile G. Perrot, architect; Gleeson & Mulrooney, architect

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History as the religious and social anchor of the Irish-American community of Grays Ferry in South Philadelphia. Built by and for predominantly Irish immigrants and their families beginning in the late 1890s, St. Gabriel's is highly characteristic of the largely self-sufficient "national" or ethnic Roman Catholic parishes that were built throughout Philadelphia for new arrivals from Ireland, Italy and Eastern Europe from the 1840s onward. Like many such parishes, St. Gabriel's fulfilled a need not only for spiritual fulfillment and guidance, but was also an instrument of social support, education, healthcare and economic assistance to a geographically dislocated population thrust from the rural confines of Ireland into the often bewildering American urban environment. St. Gabriel's is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a remarkably intact complex of parish church buildings primarily in the Romanesque Revival style by the most well-known Catholic church architects in Philadelphia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, particularly Edwin F. Durang and his son, F. Ferdinand Durang. The Period of Significance begins in 1897 when the Rectory, the oldest existing building in the complex, was completed, and ends c.1970 when the population of the Grays Ferry neighborhood began to decline precipitously and the role of the church as a community anchor was changing. The St. Gabriel's complex meets Criterion Consideration A as a religious institution that is nominated for architectural merit and its important local role in the Irish-American community.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Irish in Grays Ferry

The neighborhood today known as Grays Ferry – the area loosely bounded by Grays Ferry Avenue to the north, 25th Street to the east, Moore Street to the south, and the Schuylkill River to the west – was until the mid-nineteenth century a largely undeveloped suburban area that formed the northwestern portion of Passyunk Township. Although a ferry across the Schuylkill River had been operating in the vicinity of the present Grays Ferry Avenue Bridge since about 1673, it became known as Grays Ferry after George Gray purchased the ferry and surrounding property in 1747. The southernmost of three ferries across the Schuylkill, Grays Ferry was the point through which nearly all traffic from west and south of Philadelphia had to pass in order to enter the city. In 1854, when the Act of Consolidation combined the City of Philadelphia with all outlying districts, townships, and boroughs into the new County of Philadelphia, Grays Ferry administratively became part of the city.

Although the Irish had maintained a presence in Philadelphia since before the Revolution, the most pronounced wave of immigration began in the late 1840s as the Great Famine forced many out of Ireland and into American ports, including Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and Boston. During this period, most Irish arriving in Philadelphia crowded into rigidly segregated slums in the districts of Southwark, Moyamensing, Kensington, and Port Richmond in the southeastern and northeastern sections of what later became the County of Philadelphia. Concentrations of Irish could also be found farther west, particularly near the southwest corner of Rittenhouse Square and in isolated locations throughout Grays Ferry, where unskilled labor was needed in riverfront industries and the area's many brickyards. Reflecting the early growth of the Irish in this area, St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1839 on 20th Street at Rittenhouse Square, but remained an outlier for about 30 years.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

The Catholic church played a pivotal role in the lives of the newly arrived Irish in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century onward. As explained by historian Dennis Clark, the church “was the foremost instrument at hand for promoting educational growth and social adjustment” to a population of former rural dwellers faced with the bewildering complexity of urban life in America. It also, in Clark’s words, “provided a means of maintaining a coherent pattern of social separation from the indigenous Philadelphians, whose reception of the immigrants had proved less than enthusiastic.” In response to hostile and often violent treatment by “native,” Protestant Philadelphians, the newly arrived Irish were forced to create their own neighborhoods and institutions, forming “a responsive institutional fabric in which the immigrant could find the self-assurance, familiarity, and practical aid he needed.”³



Figure 1: Map of Philadelphia parishes, 1949. (excerpt, in the collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia)

As Philadelphia expanded over the mid- to late-nineteenth century, so did its foreign-born Irish population, which by 1860 numbered 95,458 or about 17% of the city overall.⁴ Outgrowing the traditional areas of settlement farther to the east and north, the Irish began to move in increasing numbers to developing neighborhoods west of Broad Street and south of South Street. This geographic shift can be tracked chronologically by the opening of new parish churches after 1850. In 1853, for example, St. Teresa’s opened at Broad and Catharine Streets, followed by the parish of St. Charles Borromeo at 20th

³ Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 95-99.

⁴ Clark, 29.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

and Christian Streets, about six blocks to the west, in 1863.⁵ Continued population growth and increased attendance forced the creation of several additional parishes in South Philadelphia through the end of the century, including St. Anthony of Padua at the corner of Fitzwater Street and Grays Ferry Avenue in 1886, St. Thomas Aquinas at 17th and Morris Streets in 1889, and St. Monica's at 17th and Ritner Streets in 1895 (**Figure 1**).⁶

The founding in 1895 of St. Gabriel's Parish, like its predecessors, came as the result of population growth southward and westward from the traditional centers of Irish settlement. In 1885, virtually no housing existed in the immediate vicinity of the property St. Gabriel's would later occupy. In fact, the neighborhood was described as a "wilderness" in the words of Murray Dubin, "more brick clay ponds than houses." As illustrated by period maps, the area was occupied only by scattered farms and light industrial operations like brickyards and small textile mills. In the 1890s, however, development intensified, bringing thousands of small, two- to three-story brick rowhouses that would come to define the neighborhood (and most of South Philadelphia) by the turn of the century. As later atlases illustrate, after 1901 the area was densely filled in with low- to moderate-cost housing. Although by the mid-1890s the Irish population in Philadelphia was increasingly American-born, the independence and cohesiveness of their communities was preserved as a continued bulwark against still suspicious (if less hostile and violent) attitudes about their concentrated presence in the city.

A History of St. Gabriel's Parish

Prior to the founding of St. Gabriel's in 1895, the fledgling Irish community in Grays Ferry most likely attended services at St. Anthony of Padua or St. Charles Borromeo, but neither parish had the capacity to absorb the quickly growing population. Noticing the strain, the leader of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan (1831-1911), called on Reverend Patrick J. Mellon, who was then rector of Saint Joseph's Church in Reading, Pennsylvania, but was born in and grew up in Philadelphia's Saint Patrick's Parish, to found a new parish for the Grays Ferry neighborhood.

Arriving in Philadelphia in late October 1895, Father Mellon immediately set to work to secure a building site and begin construction as quickly as possible. By November 7, Mellon and a committee of church leaders had settled on a 400' by 400' site between 29th and 30th Streets and Reed and Dickinson Streets (**Figure 2**). The purchase price was \$37,200. Construction of a temporary chapel – a "neat, strong, and severely plain" wood-framed building at the northwest corner of the present site (**Figure 3**) – was begun in quick succession (the location of the chapel, demolished in 1904, is indicated in **Figure 2**, the 1901 Bromley Map). The name of the new church – chosen by Father Mellon – would be St. Gabriel's. Mellon later observed that this choice was "unwittingly appropriate" since the original deed for the tract of land that encompassed the church property was granted by James, Duke of York and Albany – later James II of England, a Catholic king – on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1676 (this church holiday commemorates the visit of the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary).

⁵ Murray Dubin, *South Philadelphia: Mummies, Memories, and the Melrose Diner* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 19.

⁶ All but St. Teresa's at Broad at Catharine Street remain standing today.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

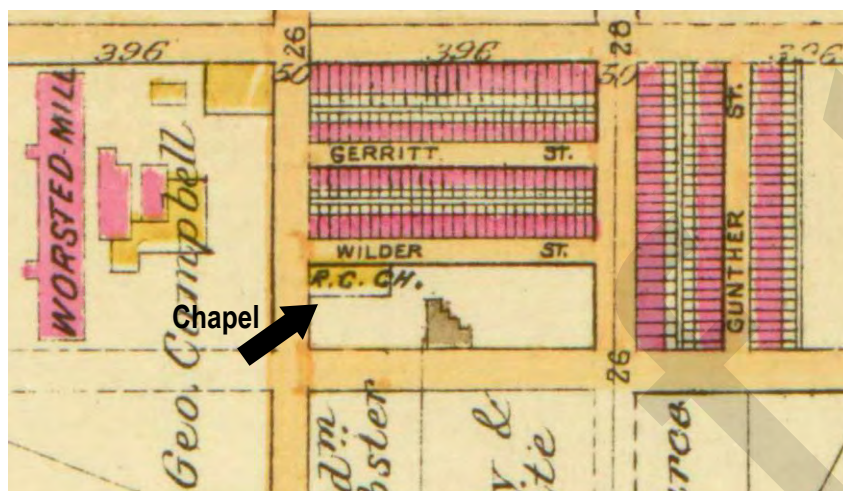


Figure 2: Bromley Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1901. In this map, only the temporary chapel (1895) at the northwest corner of the site and the Rectory (1897) are in existence. The property originally purchased in 1895 extended north to Reed Street between 29th and 30th Streets, although the northern two-thirds were later sold and developed into housing, as reflected in this map.

When the chapel opened on Christmas Day, 1895, it became the spiritual and community center for Irish Catholics in the Grays Ferry neighborhood. The parish boundaries – essentially the entire area west of 23rd Street with Wharton Street as the northern boundary to 28th Street and Grays Ferry Avenue as the northern boundary from 28th Street to the Schuylkill River – encompassed nearly 400 families, a number that continued to grow in subsequent years (see **Figure 1**, a 1949 map showing St. Gabriel's parish in relation to neighboring parishes). The chapel was formally dedicated in a ceremony led by Archbishop Ryan on January 26, 1896.⁷

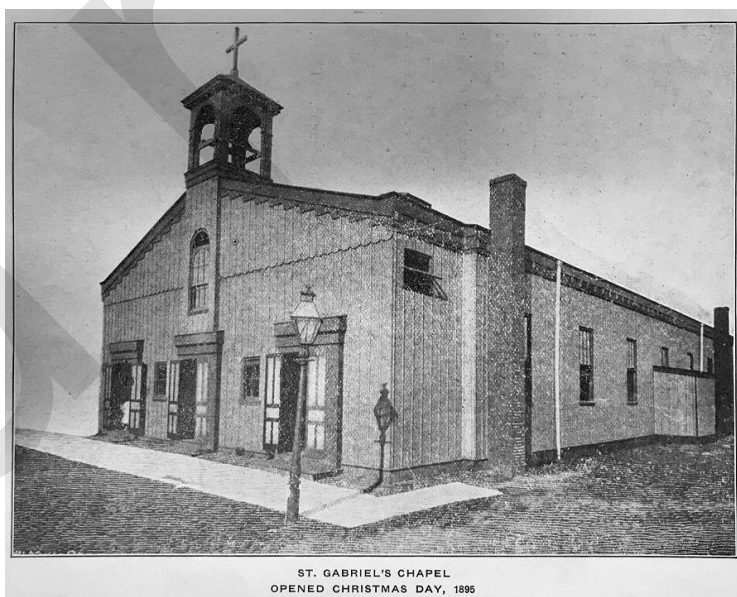


Figure 3: St. Gabriel's temporary chapel in 1895.

⁷ "St. Gabriel's Dedicated," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 27 Jan 1896.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

During the church's first two years, Father Mellon lived in one of the neighborhood houses, but the need for a permanent rectory quickly became apparent. In order to serve the continually growing parish, additional priests would be required. To house them, the construction of a new rectory was begun in April 1897. Designed by architect Edwin F. Durang, perhaps the most prolific Catholic church architect in Philadelphia, the structure was ready for occupancy in January 1898.

With the completion of the rectory, Father Mellon and his new assistant, Father Michael J. Brady, turned to the much more difficult task of erecting a permanent church. Consulting with Diocesan authorities, the parish again hired Durang to design the new building, the contract for which was awarded to contractor William J. McShane, who also built the Rectory, on April 9, 1902. Newspaper accounts and parish histories indicate that the parish men volunteered to dig the foundations of the new church as they had during construction of the rectory and would do later for the parish school and convent. Parish histories do not indicate that the volunteers were involved in construction beyond the foundations – professional builders like McShane were always hired – but the effort was nonetheless an important ceremonial demonstration of their commitment to the St. Gabriel's community. With the foundations largely complete, the cornerstone was laid on May 1.



ST. GABRIEL'S CHURCH AND RECTORY, TWENTY-NINTH AND DICKINSON STREETS, PHILA.

Figure 5 – View of the Rectory and Church in about 1910, prior to the completion of the east elevation of the church in 1913.

The cost of the new church was covered by numerous fundraising events – fairs, excursions, and entertainments such as dances and theatrical performances – held regularly beginning in 1896. Such events, which had a dual role, serving also as a means of fostering and strengthening social bonds, became a major source of revenue to the church. Parish members were also expected to make frequent contributions to the St. Gabriel's Church Debt Association, which was formed in February 1896 and remained in operation for decades. The Association, which was typical of the city's larger Catholic

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

parishes, collected 25 cents a week from working men and 10 cents a week from working women. Although the parish raised a significant amount from what was primarily a working-class population, it was not enough to complete the new church in a single building campaign. At its dedication in October 1904, the eastern front, which would consist only of a blank wall for a number of years, stopped about fifty feet short of 29th Street (the incomplete east side is visible in **Figure 5**).⁸

The way in which the members of St. Gabriel's parish contributed to the growth of their community – through financial contributions and those of their time and physical labor – represents the continued tradition of voluntarism brought from Ireland. The active participation by ordinary members of the church in parish affairs had long been common in Irish parishes. This type of grassroots involvement became a convenient and familiar means of structuring Irish-American immigrant communities in cities like Philadelphia. It also reflects the extent to which the community identified with and looked to the parish for support in nearly every aspect of their lives. As explained by Margaret F. Brinig and Nicole Stelle Garnett, identity with an ethnic, territorial parish like St. Gabriel's "was so complete that, in many cities, most Catholics (and some non-Catholics) would respond to the question 'Where are you from?' with their parish name rather than their street address or the name of their neighborhood."⁹

Like most large Catholic parishes in Philadelphia, one of the primary ways that St. Gabriel's became involved in the lives of its community was through education. The need for a school system for Catholic children separate from that of the city's public schools was first recognized during the 1840s. Initially, the Philadelphia public school system, founded in the 1830s, was "designed to fit students into special social and economic positions in society," particularly as the United States became more urban and industrial.¹⁰ In this way, the public schools also became an important means of "Americanizing" Irish immigrants during this period.¹¹ Although poor Irish immigrants could benefit economically from such an education, exposure to predominantly Protestant teachers and students and a "distinctly Protestant" curriculum led to fears among Catholic leaders of a loss of faith and culture. Catholic primary, grammar, and secondary schools arose in response, seeking to provide an education more in line with both the religious (Catholic) and social traditions of the children within their own community.¹²

The opening of a parish school for St. Gabriel's became a central goal of Father Mellon's following the completion of the first phase of the church. Toward the end of 1905, Mellon directed that work on a new school building for the children of the parish be commenced, and by May 1906, construction on the Durang-designed building was well underway. This first section of what is now a much larger building was built parallel to Dickinson Street just west of the Rectory. The two-story building, built of Port Deposit granite to complement the existing Church and Rectory, contained twelve classrooms and served 456 students on opening day in September 1908. The school was staffed by an order of nuns known as the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which were invited to the parish by Father Mellon.

⁸ *Silver Jubilee, St. Gabriel's Church* (Philadelphia, 1920), 18.

⁹ Margaret F. Brinig and Nicole Stelle Garnett, *Lost Classroom, Lost Community: Catholic Schools' Importance in Urban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 10.

¹⁰ Clark, 93-95.

¹¹ Dominic Vitiello, *Historic Educational Resources of Pennsylvania* Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2007.

¹² Timothy Walch, *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education From Colonial Times to the Present* (Washington, D.C.: The National Catholic Educational Association, 2003), 2, 26-27.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

St. Gabriel's School, which was opened in 1906, is highly characteristic of how parish schools in Philadelphia continued to thrive and grow even with an improved public school system. Although the public schools were gradually reformed through the standardization of curricula and the offering of vocational opportunities more appropriate to a largely working class population, the Catholic church maintained and expanded its parish schools in Philadelphia through the early twentieth century. Not only did the schools remain relevant for their inculcation of Catholic ideology, requiring religious study that consisted of "Bible history and catechism, with a pervasive citation of and allusion to Catholic models, customs, and principles of moral formation," but also as important conduits to the priesthood for boys and to the various orders of sisters for girls.¹³

Although Father Mellon was transferred to St. Thomas Aquinas Church at 17th and Morris Streets in 1911, his successor, Father James A. Holahan, enthusiastically continued to develop the parish complex. The most pressing need following the completion of the first section of the School was to finally build the front of the church, facing 29th Street. As part of the \$25,000 project, which was funded "through the medium of large and small donations, benefits and fairs," numerous other improvements, including the installation of new pews, a copper roof, brass electrical fittings and chandeliers, and the side chapels were also completed. Architect E.F. Durang died in 1911, but his son, Francis Ferdinand Durang (1884-1966), was hired to complete the building. Although the elder Durang had designed a front for the church in his original plans, which included two 120-foot towers (as seen in [Figure X](#)), his son designed a shorter, more restrained east elevation). The change in design, discussed in more detail below, likely resulted from both limited funds and a desire to simplify what was clearly a more eclectic, Victorian composition. Regardless, on its formal rededication in May 1913, St. Gabriel's Parish had for the first time since it was founded in 1895 a permanent, fully functional church.

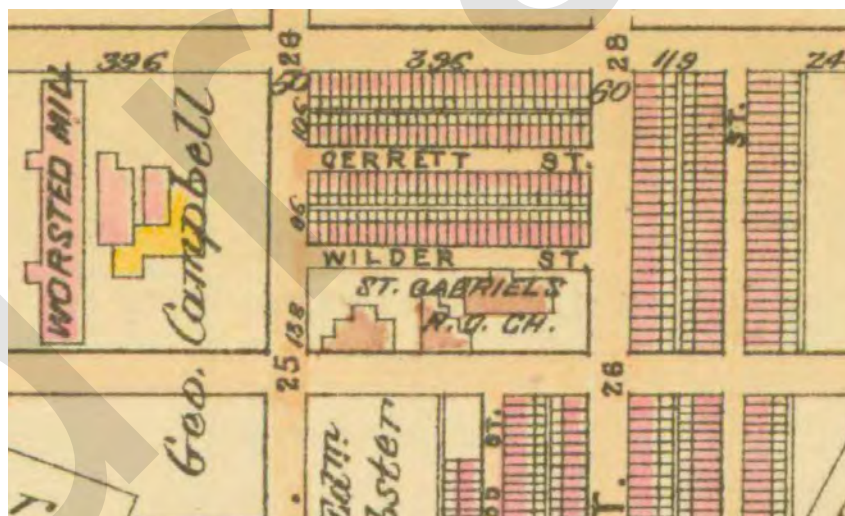


Figure 8 – Bromley Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1910. As shown in this map, several major changes occurred on the site after 1901. The permanent church building was begun (in 1903), the temporary chapel was demolished (in 1905), and the southern portion of the school was built (in 1906).

¹³ Clark, 98-99. Additional context for the role of the parishes in Philadelphia related to education and other themes can be gained through the archives of the Archdiocese, which were unfortunately closed to researchers during most of this nomination's preparation. Future researchers should consult the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

As the St. Gabriel's parish complex grew, so did the residential neighborhood around it. By 1910, rows of small brick rowhouses had filled in many of the blocks around the church (**Figure 8**). Although certainly not restricted to St. Gabriel's parishioners, an examination of the 1910 census records reveal that many of the houses were, in fact, occupied by first or second generation Irish-American families.¹⁴ Despite their working class position, many of the families owned their homes, a fact made possible at least in part by the St. Gabriel's Building and Loan Association, which the parish founded after the turn of the century. Building and loan associations, essentially "people's banks," in the words of Dennis Clark, became popular in American cities during the early nineteenth century. As explained by Clark, "each person deposited a small sum, usually weekly, until enough equity was established to warrant an extension of credit. If a man could pay the nominal ground rent on a lot, he could after a time borrow perhaps \$1,400 from his local building and loan association, have a house built, and repay the loan over a period of years."¹⁵ It is unclear if the St. Gabriel's Building and Loan Association was operated directly by the church or served in an adjunct role, but at the very least it operated with the endorsement and support of church leadership. As was the case in many urban Catholic parishes in the United States, the church encouraged parishioners to purchase homes within the parish boundaries. Brinig and Garnett explain that priests encouraged and even commanded homeownership in order to "promote stability and intensify commitment to, and rootedness in, the parish community."¹⁶ By 1918, there were over twenty building and loan associations associated with Catholic parishes in Philadelphia, and well over thirty by 1930.¹⁷

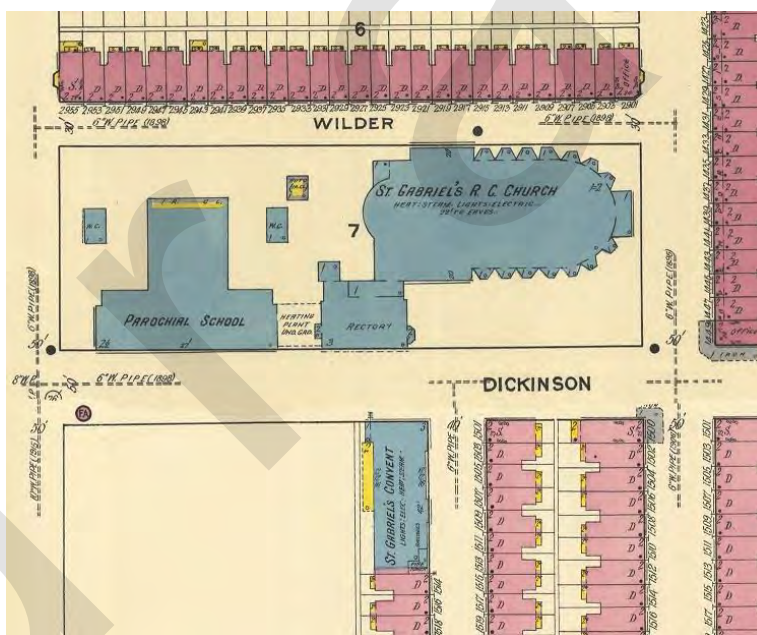


Figure 9 – Sanborn Map, 1918. This map shows the completion of the eastern front of the church (in 1913) and the construction of the first portion of the convent (in 1914). The two small bathrooms seen on either side of the school were likely built along with the 1906 building but left off the earlier 1911 Bromley atlas. The bathrooms were demolished once the northern portion of the school, which contained indoor facilities, was built in 1921.

¹⁴ United States Census, 1910: Philadelphia, Ward 36, Enumeration District 903.

¹⁵ Clark, 56-57.

¹⁶ Brinig and Garnett, 10.

¹⁷ John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 21.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

With the continued growth of St. Gabriel's over the early twentieth century, the parish increasingly relied the Sisters to carry out its educational work. Initially housed in three separate rented houses along Wilder Street (just north of the church) beginning in 1908, the Sisters required permanent housing and by 1914 Father Holahan embarked on the construction of a new convent. Purchasing land on the south side of Dickinson Street (directly across from the Rectory) early in 1914, Holahan hired F. Ferdinand Durang to design the new, three-story building (**Figures 9 and 10**). With space for over two dozen sisters, the convent was completed and opened in February 1915. The new convent was likely quickly filled as the number of parish children continued to increase, requiring more teachers and an addition to the School by 1915. Durang was hired yet again to design an expansion to the north side of the existing School, adding an additional eight classrooms. By the time the addition was completed in August 1916. That fall, the School enrolled over 1,100 students.

Although the Sisters were primarily occupied with teaching in the School, they were also tasked with performing charitable work in the parish, especially during times of great need. In 1918, when the influenza epidemic ravaged the Grays Ferry neighborhood, the Sisters effectively served as nurses to aid parishioners through the illness. The Sisters "went from house to house, seeking out those who were in direct need," and "offered assistance in the form of nourishment, cleaning, and arranging of the sick room, bathing the sufferers, and administering medicine as prescribed."¹⁸ During this time, the parishioners also benefitted from the services of a Catholic doctor, Dr. Arthur P. Keegan, whom Holahan invited to open a practice and take up residence in the parish around 1915. Even before the pandemic, the services of a Catholic doctor were "badly needed," according to the 1945 parish history, although it is unclear if a parish doctor was maintained after Keegan's departure around 1920.¹⁹ It is unknown how many of St. Gabriel's parishioners succumbed to the flu in 1918. Those who did not survive were buried in the Old Cathedral Cemetery at 48th Street and Lancaster Avenue in West Philadelphia or the Holy Cross Cemetery in Yeadon, Pennsylvania, adjacent to Southwest Philadelphia (St. Gabriel's did not have its own cemetery). These two cemeteries appear to have been the most common places of burial for St. Gabriel's parishioners both before and after the pandemic, as a cursory review of obituaries from 1900 to 1930 reveals.

Despite being hit hard by the influenza, St. Gabriel's Parish appears to have recovered quickly. Shortly before his death in July 1920, Father Holahan undertook yet another major building project. In early 1919, in preparation for the parish's Silver Jubilee celebrations, Holahan formulated plans for the renovation of the church interior, including the installation of a new marble altar, altar rail, tile floors, and electric lights. Parish histories do not indicate whether the decoration and furnishing of the church in this were part of the original plans for the building – it could have been that the parish simply did not have enough funds to complete the interior until 1920 – but Holahan's project nonetheless symbolized the great progress made by St. Gabriel's since 1895. Beyond the altar, which remains today, the most noticeable change to the church was the application of the first decorative paint scheme over the interior plasterwork (compare **Figure 15**, which shows the undecorated plaster services in 1905 to **Figure 16**, a c.1920 photo that illustrates the ornate decorative effects completed in 1913). The frescoes, gilding and scagliola

¹⁸ Historical Sketch (1945), 59.

¹⁹ Dr. Keegan was elected to the Philadelphia City Council in 1935 and served three terms. He had previously, in 1920, run for Congress, opposing the incumbent William S. Vare of the notorious Vare Republican machine, losing by only slightly more than 1,000 votes.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

finishes installed throughout the nave, transept, sacristy and chapels substantially upgraded the interior effect, and became a testament to the progress made by the parish since 1895.

The first project to confront Holahan's successor, the Right Reverend Monsignor Joseph A. McCullough, was yet another expansion to the School, the student population of which had already outgrown the 1915 construction. Designed by Emile G. Perrot, an architect who had trained under E.F. Durang and, like his employer, became a prominent church architect, the addition was once again made possible through parish fundraisers and donations from the congregation. The three-story expansion opened in the fall of 1921. With an additional eight classrooms on the first and second floors, St. Gabriel's School now had an enrollment of over 1,600 students. Although an auditorium was created on the third floor, the ever-growing number of students required that this space be converted into four more classrooms less than five years after it was built. Following the parish's "period of most rapid development" in the years 1922-1927, the student population had grown to 1,900.

During the 1920s and beyond, St. Gabriel's continued to hold or sponsor fairs, carnivals, dances and other activities for parishioners. As they had since the 1890s, these events frequently had a fundraising component, but no less important was their function of fostering social connections, particularly between men and women for the purpose of marriage. It was the hope of church leadership, of course, that if a couple met and married in the parish, they would remain there to raise a family, cementing the role of the church in the lives of a new generation of parishioners.²⁰

Apart from social events, participation in athletic leagues also became one of the primary ways in which men participated in parish life. The parish's Kaywood Athletic Club, founded during the 1910s, became particularly well known for its soccer team, playing parish teams not only in and around Philadelphia but from across the state and Northeast region. In 1923, the Kaywood team progressed as far as the National Challenge Cup of the United States Football Association, losing to the Bethlehem Steel Football Club in the first round (the game received national attention, with coverage appearing in the *New York Times*).²¹ The Kaywood club remained active through the early 1930s. The Arcadia Athletic Association, an American football team founded by parish men in the 1920s, lasted even longer, into the late 1960s.²² Both clubs, although not officially aligned with the church, maintained clubhouses in the Grays Ferry neighborhood and functioned as important fraternal organizations for the young men of the parish.

Although the population of the parish continued to grow through the 1930s, the onset of the Great Depression and then World War II brought a long pause to the expansion of St. Gabriel's campus. Following the war, however, the parish gained permission from the Archdiocese to construct both a new school building at the southeast corner of 30th and Dickinson Streets as well as a three-story addition to the convent to house the additional sisters who would be required to teach the still growing student population. With recreation facilities and a library in the basement, an auditorium and gymnasium on the first floor, and six classrooms on the second floor, the new Parish Hall, completed in the fall of 1949, was the most comprehensive addition to the St. Gabriel's campus in decades. The building's relatively modern, Art Deco-influenced form and limestone façade were a striking departure from the heavier, roughhewn granite aesthetic present in all prior buildings. Reporting on the start of construction in May of 1949, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* indicated that the student population was then around 1,800, contrasting

²⁰ Clark, 99.

²¹ "Bethlehem Eleven Wins, *New York Times*, 21 Oct 1923.

²² *St. Gabriel Parish, 1895-1995* (Philadelphia: Published privately by the parish, 1995), 32.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

with the 1,900 figure of the late 1920s. The final changes to the St. Gabriel's campus came in the 1960s when the interior of the original school building was completely renovated and a third floor was added to the middle wing. At this point, the student population came in at around 1,400.

On the surface, St. Gabriel's continued to thrive during the 1950s as veterans returned from World War II. But Grays Ferry was on the cusp of tremendous socioeconomic change due to the coming loss of industrial jobs and increasing suburbanization. Racial conflict, too, would be an unfortunate aspect of neighborhood life for the remainder of the twentieth century as the population of Tasker Homes, a large public housing project built in 1937 at 30th and Tasker Streets, became increasingly African American. Whites frequently clashed with black residents, particularly over the use of Lanier Park, which separated Tasker Homes from the still largely white neighborhood. Over the course of the 1960s and 70s, these tensions led to "nine near riots, several assaults, and three murders," according to one source. Although white residents pledged to maintain and defend their Grays Ferry enclave, crime and drugs, which whites largely blamed on black residents of Tasker Homes, came to define the neighborhood. By the 1970s, Grays Ferry was one of the most heavily patrolled areas by the Philadelphia Police Department. Although the black population continued to rise during this time, the overall population of the neighborhood declined precipitously from about 11,400 in 1970 to 6,592 in 1990.²³

While still largely poor today, the Grays Ferry neighborhood has shown signs of a rebound since the late 1990s with crime decreasing and residential construction expanding in recent years. In 2004, Tasker Homes was demolished and replaced with a new affordable housing development known as Greater Grays Ferry Estates. Surviving the tumultuous last decades of the twentieth century, St. Gabriel's Parish continues to serve the community, which is now far more racially diverse. While the parishioners who attend church services are still predominantly white, St. Gabriel's School is more representative of neighborhood demographics – with an over 60% African American student body.²⁴

The Architecture of St. Gabriel's Parish

St. Gabriel's rectory, church, and the 1906 section of the School are major works in the Romanesque Revival style designed by Edwin Forrest Durang (1829-1911), the most prolific Catholic church architect in Philadelphia during the nineteenth and very early twentieth century. Over the course of his nearly 60-year career, which spanned the period between about 1855 and 1911, Durang designed at least 25 major churches in Philadelphia and over 30 more in the Philadelphia suburbs and more distant locations like Allentown, Harrisburg, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as well as in Camden and Atlantic City, New Jersey. A vast majority of Durang's ecclesiastical commissions came from Roman Catholic parishes, making him the favored architect of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Durang displayed equal skill in the application of the Gothic Revival and Romanesque Revival styles, which dominated church design during the late-nineteenth century.

Durang was born in New York City in 1829 to a renowned family of performing artists; his grandfather, John Durang (1768-1822), has been credited with being the first American-born actor, while his father,

²³ Timothy J. Lombardo, *Blue Collar Conservatism: Frank Rizzo's Philadelphia and Populist Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 165-166; "They'll Fight Anybody, Anytime," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 4, 1974; "How a Grays Ferry Street Fight Became a Racial Crisis," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1997.

²⁴ Demographic information retrieved from Great Philly Schools, a project of the Philadelphia School Partnership, on June 24, 2020: <https://www.greatphillyschools.org/s/schools/0011N00001GzoXoQAJ/st-gabriel-catholic-school-an-independence-mission-school>

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Charles Durang (1791-1870), a well-known dancer, gave the first-ever public performance of Francis Scott Key's "The Star Spangled Banner" with his brother, Richard Ferdinand Durang (c. 1785-1831), in Baltimore in 1814. In New York for only a short time after his birth, Durang grew up in Philadelphia, where his family had deep roots.

The origins of Durang's architectural career remain unclear. He is listed as an artist in an 1847 Philadelphia directory, and is known to have subsequently worked as a painter of theater scenery in Cincinnati in 1848-49. Durang's panoramic paintings of the Old and New Testaments and of American history were exhibited in Louisville in 1849 and in Philadelphia in 1851, when he appears to have returned permanently to his home city. By 1855, a directory lists Durang as an architect.²⁵

Durang appears to have trained under John E. Carver (1803-1859), an architect whose work included a number of Gothic-style churches and houses in and around Philadelphia.²⁶ Carver for a time also superintended the construction of the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul on Logan Square, the head church of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Carver was hired in 1857 to complete the building after its designer, Napoleon LeBrun (1821-1901), was dismissed and the man appointed to succeed him, architect John Notman (1810-1865), left the project.²⁷ Durang would have worked alongside Carver on this project, and it is during this time that Gregory Oliveri suggests that the younger architect established the connections with Diocesan officials that would serve him for the rest of his career. Although LeBrun briefly returned to the project following Carver's death, he later departed Philadelphia for New York, creating a void that Durang would ultimately fill.²⁸

Durang's first major ecclesiastical commission came in 1863, when he was hired to design a new church for St. Anne's parish on East Lehigh Avenue in the Port Richmond neighborhood of Philadelphia. Commissions for Our Mother of Sorrows Church on North 48th Street in West Philadelphia and for the parish of St. Charles Borromeo at 20th and Christian Streets in South Philadelphia followed in 1867 and 1868, respectively (Our Mother of Sorrows is illustrated in **Figure 11**). All three churches remain standing. Although the highly articulated St. Anne's (now heavily altered) and St. Charles' churches were clearly influenced by the Italian Renaissance and Baroque leanings of the earlier Cathedral Basilica, Our Mother of Sorrows was designed in a sparer Romanesque form – most likely due to the limited financial resources of that parish – that would come to define Durang's portfolio later in his career.

²⁵ *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1855* (Philadelphia: Edward C. & John Biddle: 1855), 94; George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 198; *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory for 1855* (Philadelphia: Edward C. & John Biddle: 1855), 149.

²⁶ Sandra L. Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), accessed at https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/23154 on February 3, 2020.

²⁷ The Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul was individually listed in the National Register in 1971 (NRHP# 71000720).

²⁸ Gregory Oliveri, "Building a Baroque Catholicism: The Philadelphia Churches of Edwin Forrest Durang" (Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1999), 23-24.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

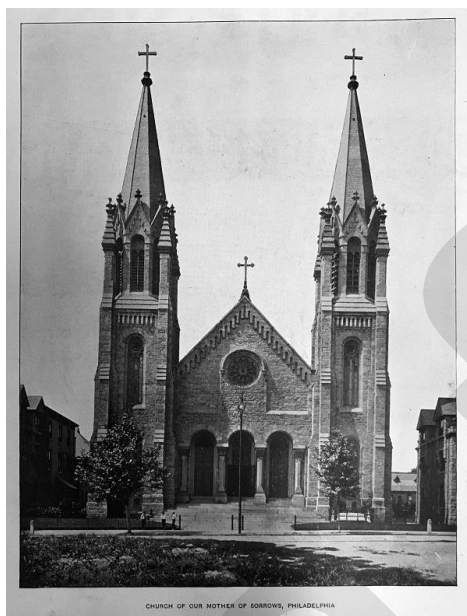


Figure 11 – View of Durang's Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Philadelphia, around 1900.

The Romanesque Revival style, which sought a return to the round arch as the defining structural and decorative feature as found in pre-Gothic medieval churches, surfaced in the United States in the mid-1840s. Richard Upjohn's Church of the Pilgrims (1844-46) in Brooklyn, New York and James Renwick's Smithsonian Institution Building (1847-51) in Washington, D.C., were the first works designed in this style in the United States. Based primarily on German models and architecture books of the period, the Romanesque Revival became popular with the influx of German immigrants during the 1840s, as well as the publication of several works on the style by the likes of Robert Dale Owen (1801-1877), a social reformer and United States congressman from Indiana. Owen, chair of the Smithsonian's Building Committee, argued in *Hints on Public Architecture* in 1849 that the Romanesque style was more suitable as a national American style than the Greek Revival because, unlike the symmetrical white Classicism so prevalent in American cities, it was economical, flexible, and more honest in its expression of interior program. Dale and others also believed that the Romanesque style, like the Gothic Revival that achieved popularity around the same time, was well-suited as a means of achieving the irregularity and asymmetry of form recommended by theorists of the Picturesque movement.

Durang may have been first exposed to the Romanesque Revival style by John Notman's design for the Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity (1857-59), which survives today on the west side of Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia.²⁹ Although built of brownstone rather than the granite favored by Durang and more ornate in its surface treatment than Durang's Our Mother of Sorrows Church, built a decade later, Holy Trinity offered an introduction to the Romanesque language that would serve Durang through much of his later career.

Despite his early foray into the Romanesque Revival with his commission for Our Mother of Sorrows in 1867, more than two decades would pass before Durang returned to the style in Philadelphia. Of a series

²⁹ The Church of the Holy Trinity was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 (NRHP# 73001660).

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

of at least nine major commissions that came to Durang from Philadelphia parishes between 1871 and 1885, six were in the Gothic Revival style while the other three were influenced by the Renaissance and Baroque designs of his earlier years.

Durang's first full work in the Romanesque Revival style after Our Mother of Sorrows came in 1890, when he was commissioned to design the new Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church at Allegheny Avenue and Belgrade Street in Port Richmond. The symmetrical façade, built of quarry faced brownstone, was designed with three imposing, round arched portals at ground level and a soaring central tower. Apart from the use of brownstone, the Church of the Nativity set the tone for nearly all of Durang's subsequent church commissions in Philadelphia. Although the particular form and composition varied – depending on the site, either a single side or central tower would be substituted for flanking towers – the extensive use of the round arch and quarry-faced granite were virtually a constant through Durang's churches after 1890.

The motivation behind Durang's shift to the Romanesque is unclear. It did coincide with a resurgence in the popularity of the Romanesque led by architect Henry Hobson Richardson and his followers, who primarily designed large public buildings, such as city halls, and occasionally churches and private dwellings. Attempting to moderate the architectural eclecticism of previous decades, these architects sought a return to order through the use of simple geometries and broad surfaces, extensive application of masonry, and attentiveness to proportion. Durang, as explained above, is known to have been influenced by prevailing architectural trends, and it is highly likely that he was aware of Richardson's and his followers' work, which became known as Richardsonian Romanesque. It is a convenient explanation, but it is more likely, however, that the limited financial resources of the parishes Durang worked for during this period led to the choice of the typically less embellished and, therefore, more economical Romanesque Revival style. Durang did still occasionally revert to the Gothic Revival if desired by a particular parish, but he appears to have been increasingly occupied with the Romanesque Revival after 1889 (St. Bonaventure, built in 1894 at 9th and Cambria Streets in North Philadelphia, was the best example of Durang's post-1890 Gothic Revival work, but was demolished in 2013).

Durang's Romanesque Revival Philadelphia Church Commissions

Our Mother of Sorrows	48 th and Lancaster Ave	1867 (extant)
Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Belgrade St and Allegheny Ave	1890 (extant)
Our Lady of Mercy	Broad and Susquehanna Ave	1890 (demo'd)
St. Francis Xavier	23 rd and Green Street	1894 (extant)
St. Peter the Apostle	5 th and Girard Ave	1895 (extant)
St. Monica's	17 th and Ritner St	1901 (extant)
St. Thomas Aquinas	17 th and Morris St	1901 (extant)
St. Gabriel's	29 th and Dickinson St	1902 (extant)
St. Veronica's	6 th and Tioga St	1907 (extant)

The choice of the Romanesque Revival style for St. Gabriel's was a logical one for the predominantly working class parish. The style's comparatively simple forms compared to Gothic, for example, were a cost-effective means to creating a church edifice that was both dignified and evoked a sense of permanence for this fledgling religious community. In much the same way, the nearby parishes of St. Thomas Aquinas at 17th and Morris and St. Monica's at 17th and Ritner had also begun to build Durang-designed, Romanesque Revival-style churches in 1901 (**Figures 12 and 13**). Durang's design for the St.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

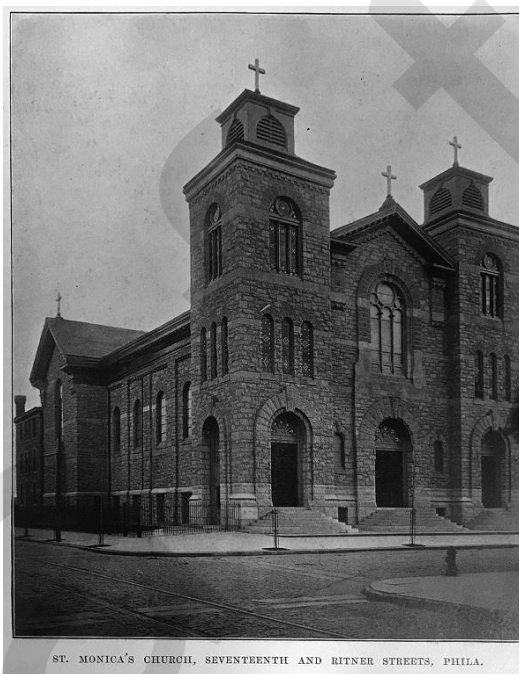
Philadelphia, PA

County and State

Gabriel's Rectory in 1897 signaled he would take the same approach for the permanent church five years later.



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CHURCH, SEVENTEENTH AND MORRIS STREETS, PHILA.



ST. MONICA'S CHURCH, SEVENTEENTH AND RITNER STREETS, PHILA.

Figure 12 (left) – View of Durang's St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Philadelphia, around 1900.

Figure 13 (right) – View of Durang's St. Monica's Church in Philadelphia, around 1900.

The design for the new St. Gabriel's church was illustrated in an engraving and described in the *Catholic Standard and Times*, Philadelphia's Catholic newspaper, in late September 1902 (**Figure 14**). The description is as follows:

The church building will be in the Romanesque style of architecture. The front upon 29th Street is designed with two flanking towers 20 feet in diameter by 120 feet high up to the top of the finials. A large main door with arched and deeply recessed mouldings will have an imposing effect; above this will be a fine rose window 16 feet in diameter, filled with geometrical tracery, the center object being the Cross of St. Patrick. The main front gable will face the clear story [sic.] and will be 88 feet above the pavement.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

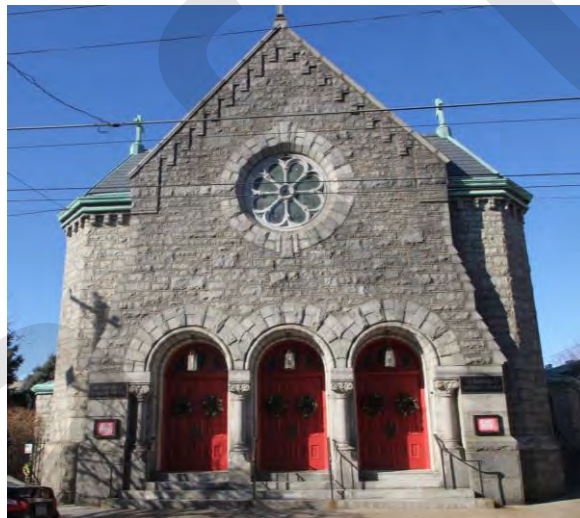


Figure 14 – Etching of E.F. Durang's original design for the front of the church (figures are out of scale) and the east elevation today. The etching was published in *The Catholic Standard and Times*, September 30 1902.



Figure 14a – Comparison of church as initially constructed in 1903, and following completion of the east elevation in 1912.

The illustration and description differ from what was built in three key ways. First, the towers were never completed, the front gable is lower than 88 feet (it measures approximately 40 feet high), and there are three small doors rather than one large door. While these features may have been part of the original design, the front of the church was not begun until 1912, one year after the death of E.F. Durang (between the church's completion and the commencement of construction in 1912, the east elevation consisted of a blank wall). It is likely, therefore, that Durang's son, F. Ferdinand Durang, who joined his father's firm as a partner in 1909, redesigned the front of the building. The more modest, low-slung composition completed by the younger architect may have come as a result of limited parish funds. It is also possible that the more eclectic, Victorian design of E.F. Durang was viewed as unfashionable by 1912, and that his

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

son purposely sought a more restrained interpretation of the Romanesque style that better suited its time period.

Regardless of the motivation behind the change in design, it follows a trend toward simplicity in Catholic church architecture around the turn of the century. As expounded by Boston architect W.H. McGinty in *The Catholic World* in 1899, "We are at the beginning of an age which will exemplify the beauties of simplicity. Gaudiness and arrogant superfluity will have no home in the time into which the wheels of progress have carried us."³⁰ McGinty's contemporary, architect Charles Donagh Maginnis, also wrote that "it is clear that we need more simplicity, more sincerity in our building" and that Catholic churches "must wear an aspect of reticence, of dignity, even of severity."³¹

Like nearly all of Durang's church commissions during the 1890s and early 1900s, St. Gabriel's Church – in addition to the Rectory, School and Convent – was built by the firm of William J. McShane, the favored contractor of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia during this period. Beyond an advertisement that appeared in Durang's self-published monograph, *E.F. Durang's Architectural Album* (ca. 1910), little documentation on McShane's life or career exists today. Nonetheless, it is clear from numerous surviving examples, including nearly all of the above-listed Romanesque churches, that McShane's body of work is characterized by high quality craftsmanship, particularly in regard to exterior masonry treatments.³²

Although McShane's involvement in the construction of St. Gabriel's extended to the structural components of the interior, the firm did not take part in decorative treatments, which were nearly always executed by specialist church decorators. Still, little interior decoration appeared inside St. Gabriel's for several years after its completion in 1904. As illustrated in a photo of the nave from 1905 (**Figure 15**), virtually no surface decoration existed within the building. Rather, the nave, transept, and sanctuary are reduced to their architectural forms, including tall arcades supported by compound piers with Romanesque-style capitals and vaulting with prominent ribbing. This type of straightforward treatment, which may have been a result of limited funding, conformed (if unintentionally) to McGinty's prescription for "Soft and chaste colors, with the church emblems delicately interwoven," to "appeal to the religious feelings much stronger than bright hues and glaring contrasts."³³

No ornamentation would be added to the church interior until 1920, in time for the parish's 25th anniversary Silver Jubilee celebrations. That scheme consisted of extensive frescoes on the flat plaster surfaces and vaults and a scagliola treatment, a type of imitation stone finish on plaster, on the piers and colonettes (**Figure 16**). A third decorative scheme was installed only 25 years later, in 1945, when new frescoes were installed but the scagliola finishes were retained (**Figure 17**). The colors applied in the 1945 redecoration – soft beige and terra cotta tones with highlights of ivory and gold – appear to remain intact, although most of the frescoes and all of the scagliola finishes were removed or painted over in subsequent decades. While the artists who executed the first two decorative campaigns are unknown, the 1945 parish history indicates that the scheme installed that year was Adolph Frei & Sons, a Philadelphia-based firm that is known to have decorated more than 500 churches in the United States and Europe. Frei, born in 1854 in Germany, was educated at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and, beyond his work in ecclesiastical settings, was known for decorating the Pennsylvania State Building at

³⁰ W.H. McGinty, "Catholic Church Architecture" in *The Catholic World*, vol. LXIX, no. 410 (May 1899), 191.

³¹ Charles D. Maginnis, FAIA, *Catholic Church Architecture* (Printed for the author, 1906), 14.

³² E.F. Durang, *E.F. Durang's Architectural Album* (Philadelphia: Published by the author, ca. 1901).

³³ McGinty, 198.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. Frei died in 1935, therefore the work at St. Gabriel's was completed by his sons.³⁴



Figure 15 (left) – View of the nave in 1905, showing the original decorative scheme.



Figure 16 (right) – View of the nave in about 1920, showing the new decorative scheme installed that year.



Figure 17 – View of the nave in about 1945, showing the new decorative scheme installed that year, and the current interior.

³⁴ Obituary for Adolph Frei, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 30, 1935.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Although it cannot be as precisely classified as Romanesque Revival, E.F. Durang's design for the first wing of the School in 1906, which is more vernacular in form and has no arched openings, still emulates the impressive massing and material treatment in Port Deposit granite of the earlier buildings.

F. Ferdinand Durang's design for the new Convent in 1914 combines some elements of the Romanesque Revival – imposing massing, quarry-faced granite and large, round-arched windows – with several defining features of the Classical Revival style – symmetrical form, a Classical portico at the main entrance, and a denticulated copper cornice – that had grown in popularity since the turn of the century. This stylistic hybrid signaled Durang's attention to architectural trends of the day but still a desire to make the building as compatible as possible with the rest of the complex, maintaining an aesthetic cohesiveness that would characterize the St. Gabriel's campus for decades to come. Durang's design for an addition to the School in 1915 followed this, as did the third addition along Wilder Street, designed by Emile G. Perrot in 1921.

The final buildings constructed by St. Gabriel's Parish were the three-story addition to the Convent and the new Parish Hall at the southeast corner of 30th and Dickinson Streets, both in 1949. The two buildings were designed by the firm Gleeson & Mulrooney, established in 1923 and one of the favored firms of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia between about 1925 and 1960. A partnership between Raymond T. Gleeson (1898-1958) and Thomas F. Mulrooney (1895-1955), both of whom were 1921 graduates from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture, the firm did work almost exclusively for Catholic parishes in and around Philadelphia, and also in Pittsburgh and Delaware. Over the course of their decades-long practice, Gleeson & Mulrooney were most regularly hired to design additions to or new buildings for existing parishes, including schools, rectories, and convents.

Throughout the 1930s and 40s, Gleeson & Mulrooney consistently demonstrated an adeptness at fitting new buildings into existing parish church complexes with a pre-established architectural style, most often the Romanesque or Gothic Revival, but without slavish imitation of their historical forms. The firm also took a similar approach to new church complexes, where they alluded to the architectural traditions of the Church's past while creating works that were appropriate to the present. This approach is evident at the parish church complex of St. Helena's at 5th and Godfrey Streets in the Olney section of Philadelphia, which became one of the firm's largest commissions. Between the 1935 and the early 1940s, Gleeson & Mulrooney designed a church, convent, school and rectory for the relatively recently established parish, all in granite but in a simplified, more clean cut version of the Romanesque Revival style than any of the earlier work by E.F. Durang or his son. Likewise, the firm's design for St. Matthew's Church at Cottman Avenue and Battersby Street in Northeast Philadelphia, built in 1941, is traditional in plan and materiality, featuring granite and limestone throughout, but is a highly modern interpretation of the Gothic style.

Although little is known of the firm's later work, their 1949 design for St. Gabriel's Parish Hall suggests that Gleeson & Mulrooney had progressed, even if slightly, toward a more Modernist approach that abandoned ornamentation altogether. While the Convent addition aimed to complement the original building through the use of quarry-faced granite, albeit in a more severe, rectilinear form, the Parish Hall eschewed the Romanesque influences of the earlier complex in favor of a comparatively modern composition. The building's more geometric form, which is all but absent of ornamentation, suggests the influence of the Art Deco style, and an early nod to Modernism. Still, although the Parish Hall is clearly differentiated from the earlier buildings, it nonetheless is compatible with the remainder of the complex through its solidity, extensive use of masonry, and regular fenestration.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

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Oliveri, Gregory. "Building a Baroque Catholicism: The Philadelphia Churches of Edwin Forrest Durang." Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 1999.

Tatman, Sandra L and Roger W. Moss. *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985. Accessed at <https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/> on February 3, 2020.

Parish Histories (in the collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia, PA)

Lavin, Timothy J., Rev. *Historical Sketch of Saint Gabriel's Parish*, 1895-1945. Philadelphia: Published privately, 1945.

The First Eight Years of St. Gabriel's Church, Philadelphia, PA. Philadelphia: Published privately, 1904.

St. Gabriel Parish, 1895-1995. Philadelphia: Published privately, 1995.

Silver Jubilee, St. Gabriel's Church, 1895-1920. Philadelphia: Published privately, 1920.

Vitiello, Dominic. Historic Educational Resources of Pennsylvania Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2007.

Walch, Timotyh. *Parish School: American Catholic Parochial Education From Colonial Times to the Present*. Washington, D.C.: The National Catholic Educational Association, 2003.

Newspapers (see footnotes for specific citations):

New York Times

Philadelphia Inquirer

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia
6740 Roosevelt Blvd, Philadelphia, PA 19149

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

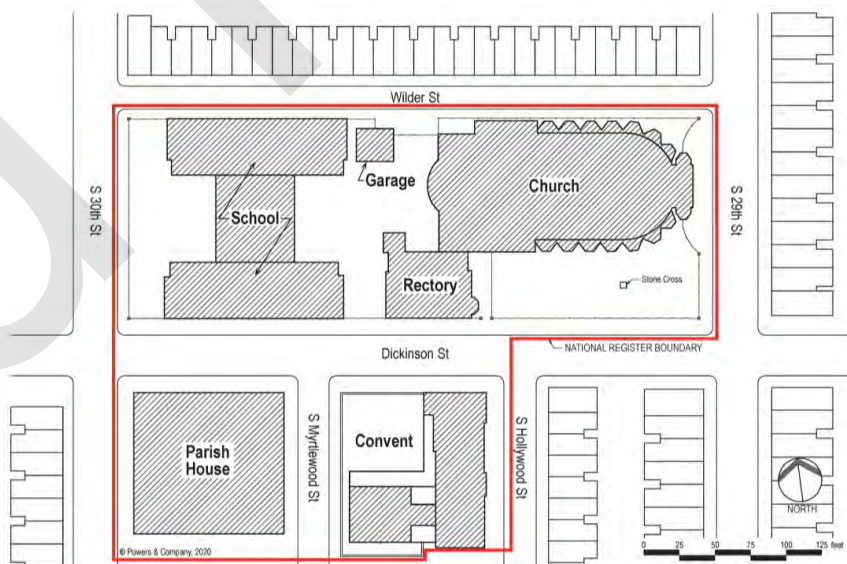
Acreage of Property ~2.4 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (Datum if other than WGS84: _____)

Latitude: 39.935214 Longitude: -75.193335

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the property is shown as a solid red line on the map below.



St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Boundary Justification

The proposed National Register Boundary is limited to the parcels on which the existing buildings stand (1432-48 S. 29th Street, 2922-28 Dickinson Street, and 2930-36 Dickinson Street). The boundary includes uncounted but contributing resources including fencing, walls, and similar landscape features built within the period of significance, including a stone cross memorializing Father Mellon. All extant resources that were historically associated with St. Gabriel's Parish are included, except the three houses on Wilder Street (2923, 2925 and 2927) where the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, lived from September 1908 to February 1915. Although these modest, two story brick rowhouses remain standing (part of a block-long row of almost-identical houses), an examination of the deeds reveals that the parish never owned them. Rather, the parish appears to have rented the properties in the expectation that a permanent convent would soon be built, as one existed at virtually every other large Catholic parish in the city. Therefore, because they were used by the parish on only a temporary basis for a relatively short period of time, the houses are excluded from the boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kevin McMahon, Associate
organization: Powers & Company, Inc.
street & number: 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1717 city or town: Philadelphia state: PA zip code: 19107
e-mail: kevin@powersco.net telephone: (215) 636-0192 date: June 25, 2020 revised: August 25, 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
City or Vicinity: Philadelphia County: Philadelphia State: PA
Photographer: Robert Powers and Fitim Ajvazi
Date Photographed: February 14, 2020 and May 14, 2020

<i>Photo #</i>	<i>Description of Photograph</i>
1.	Rectory, south and east elevations, view northwest
2.	Rectory, west and south elevations, view northeast
3.	Rectory, interior, first floor, entrance hall, view west
4.	Rectory, interior, first floor, main stair, view west
5.	Rectory, interior, first floor, dining room, view west
6.	Church, south elevation, view northeast
7.	Church, east elevation, view west

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex

Philadelphia, PA

Name of Property

County and State

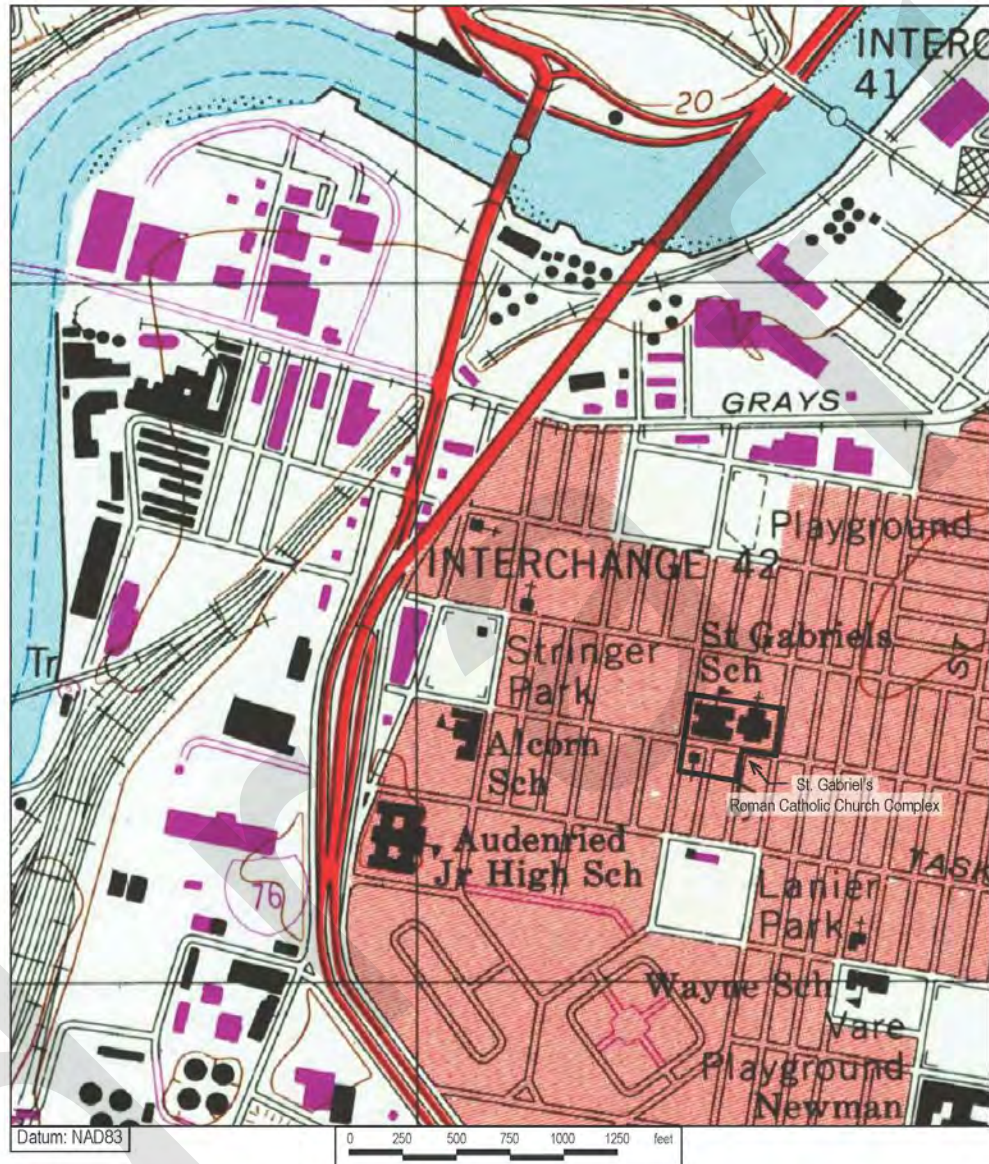
8.	Church, east and north elevations, view southwest
9.	Church, north and west elevations, view southeast
10.	Church, interior, nave, view west to altar
11.	Church, interior, nave, view northeast from transept
12.	Church, interior, transept, view north
13.	School, south elevation, view northwest
14.	School, west and south elevations, view northeast
15.	School, west elevation, view east
16.	School, interior, first floor, corridor, view east
17.	School, interior, first floor, typical classroom, view southeast
18.	School, interior, first floor, typical classroom, view northeast
19.	School, interior, first floor, corridor, view north
20.	Garage, north elevation, view south
21.	Convent, east and north elevations, view southwest
22.	Convent, north elevation, view south
23.	Convent, north and west elevations, view southeast
24.	Convent, interior, first floor, view northeast
25.	Convent, interior, first floor, corridor, view south
26.	Convent, interior, first floor, view west
27.	Convent, interior, second floor, chapel, view east
28.	Convent, interior, second floor, corridor, view south
29.	Convent, interior, second floor of 1914 section, typical bedroom view east
30.	Convent, interior, second floor of 1949 addition, typical bedroom view north
31.	Parish House, north and west elevations, view southeast
32.	Parish House, interior, second floor, view northwest
33.	Parish House, interior, second floor, view northeast

Index of Figures

Figure #	Description of Figure
18.	USGS Map
19.	Site Plan with National Register Boundary and Photo Key
20.	Rectory – Existing first floor plan with photo key.
21.	Church – Existing plan with photo key.
22.	School – Existing first floor plan with photo key.
23.	Convent – Existing first floor plan with photo key.
24.	Convent – Existing second floor plan with photo key.
25.	Convent – Existing third floor plan with photo key.
26.	Parish House – Existing second floor plan with photo key.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State



USGS Map Excerpt - Philadelphia Quadrangle - Pennsylvania (1995)
St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
1432-48 S. 29th Street, 2922-28 Dickinson Street, and 2930-36 Dickinson Street
Philadelphia County, PA

Lat. Long.
39.935214 -75.193335

Figure 18 – USGS Map

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

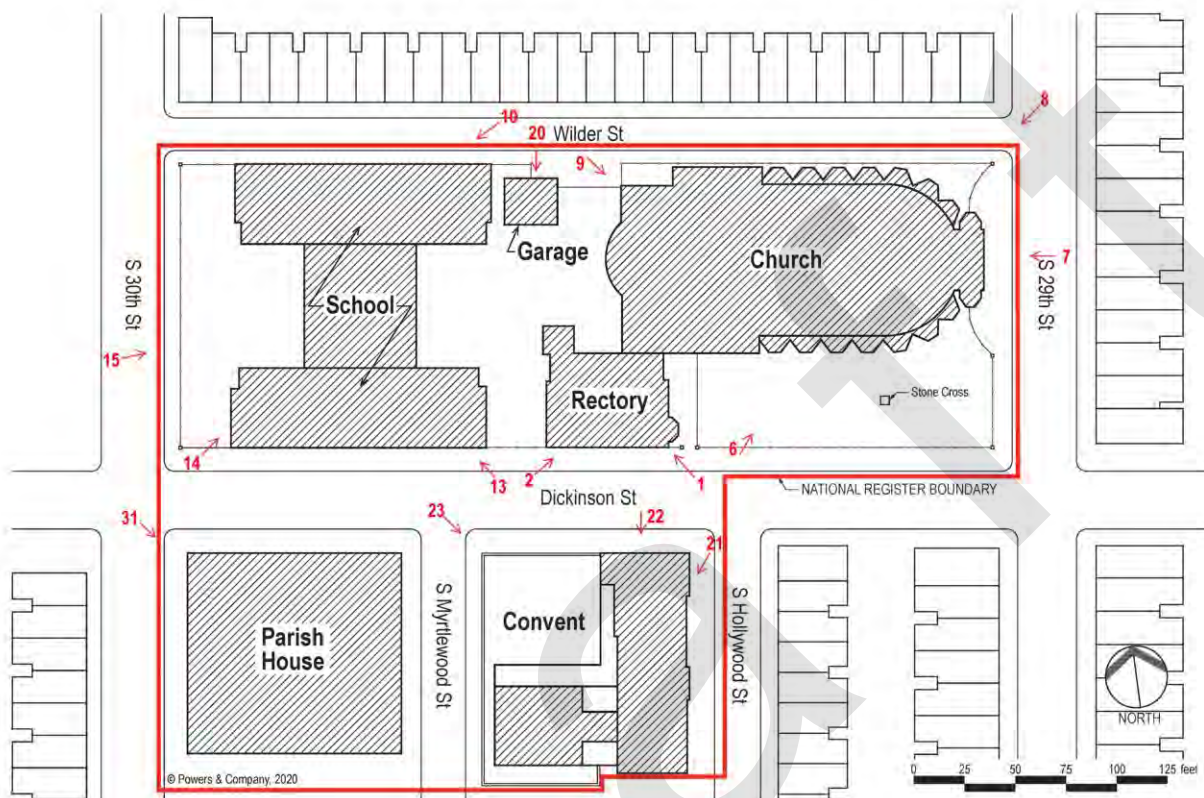


Figure 19 – Site Plan with proposed NRN Boundary and Exterior Photo Key

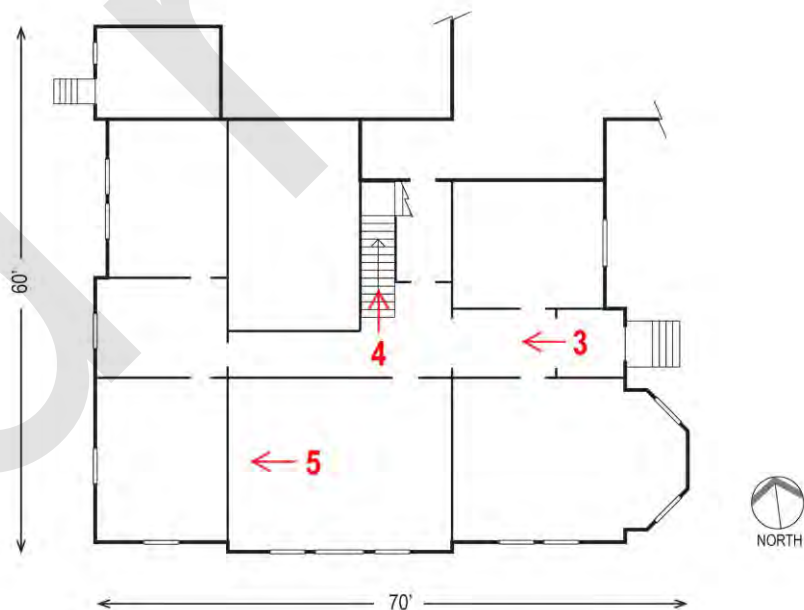


Figure 20 – Rectory – Existing first floor plan with photo key.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

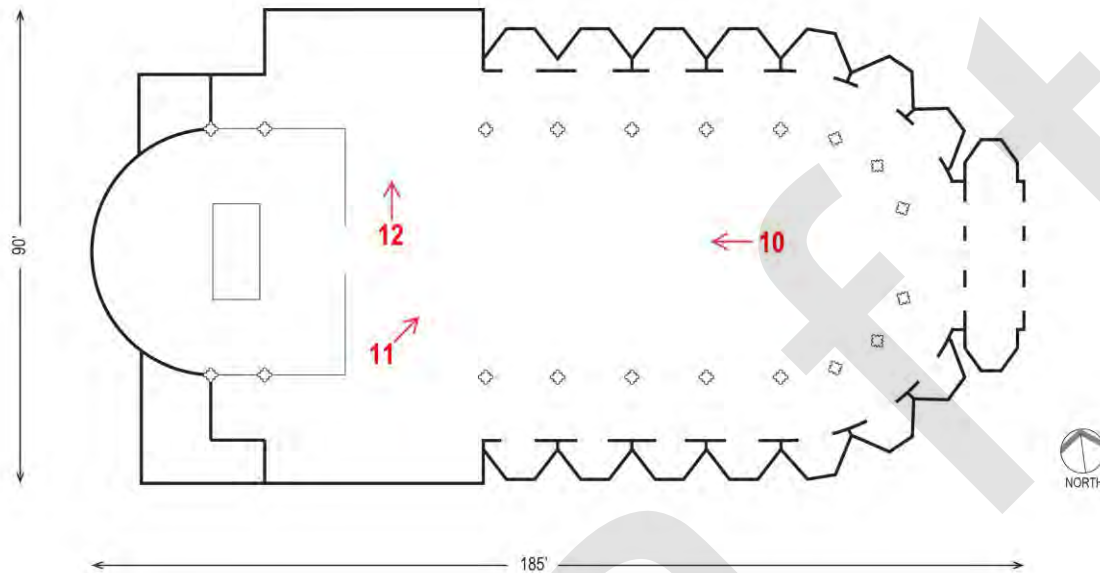


Figure 21 – Church – Existing plan with photo key.

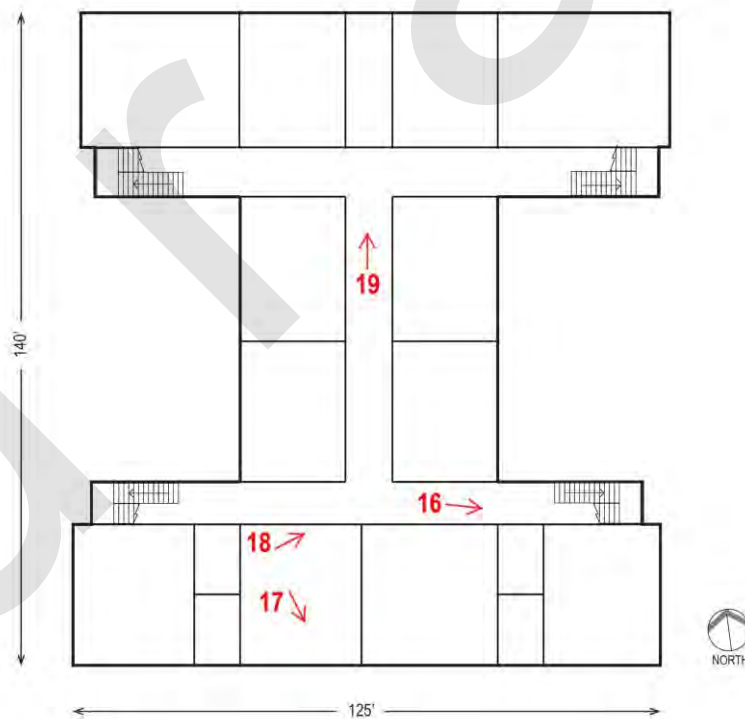


Figure 22 – School – Existing first floor plan with photo key.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

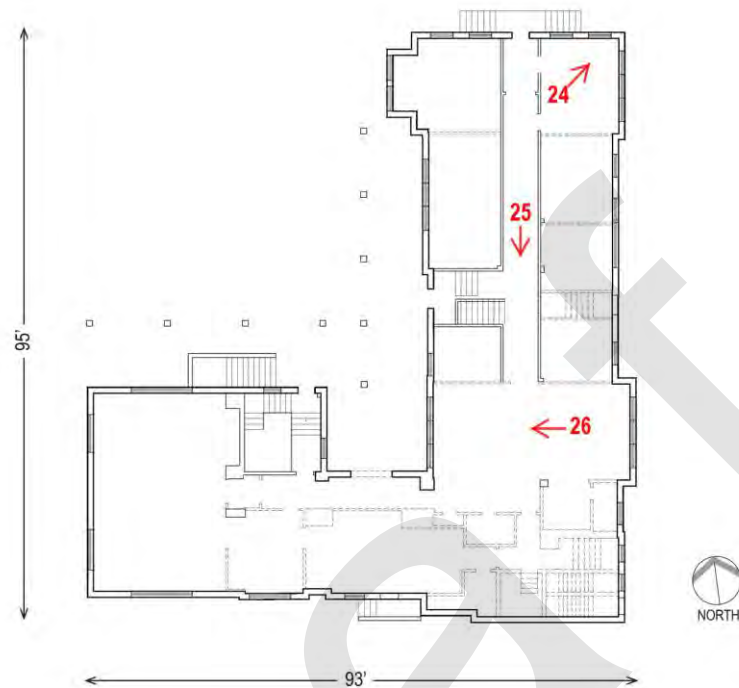


Figure 23 – Convent – Existing first floor plan with photo key.



Figure 24 – Convent – Existing second floor plan with photo key.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

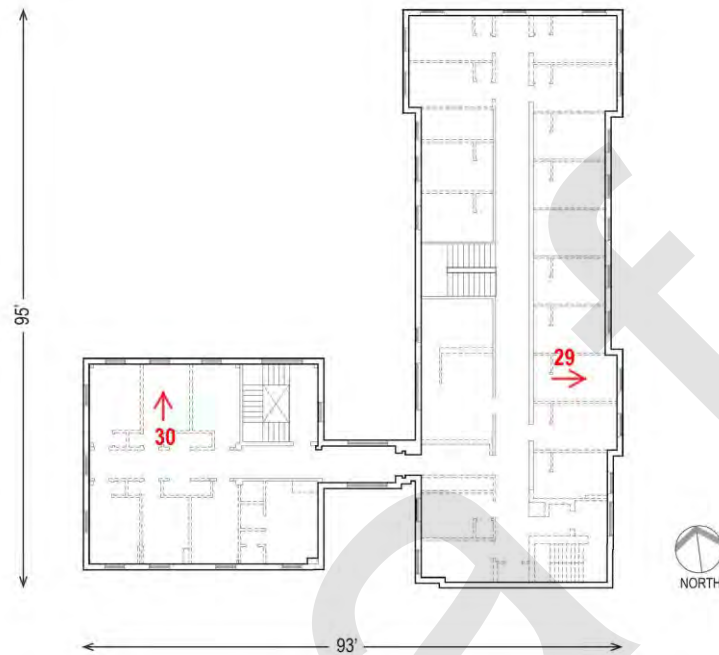


Figure 25 – Convent – Existing third floor plan with photo key.

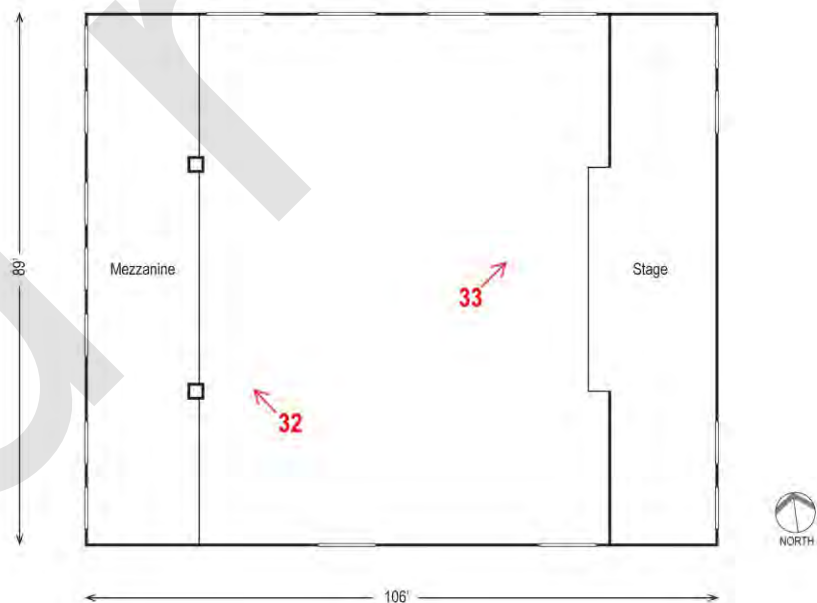


Figure 26 – Parish House – Existing second floor plan with photo key.

St. Gabriel's Roman Catholic Church Complex
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA
County and State

Additional edits include:

- Adjusting photo #s and figure #s as needed following edits that may have changed the order the images appear, and deleted a few
- Updating the photo and figure logs to reflect those changes
- Updating the photo keys as needed
- Confirming dates of current photos

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.