

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

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

Street address: 928-930 Christian Street  
 Postal code: 19147 Councilmanic District: First (1st)

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: "Madonna House"  
 Common Name: unk.

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building       Structure       Site       Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:     excellent     good       fair       poor       ruins  
 Occupancy:     occupied     vacant       under construction       unknown  
 Current use: Condominia

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary.  
**Staff is kindly requested to provide.**

**6. DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1923 to 1924

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1923-1924.

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Charles J. Cummiskey

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: W.R. Dougherty

Original owner: Catholic Missionary Society/ Archdiocese of Phila.

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

## CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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

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

## 8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

## 9. NOMINATOR

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

Name with Title Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA Email -----

Street Address 1234 South Sheridan Street Telephone 215.334.6008

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

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

## PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 10/8/2021

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 10/28/2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 10/28/2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: James Campenella

Address: 1111 Locust St, Unit C

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19107

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 12/1/2021

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 1/14/2022

Date of Final Action: 1/14/2022; designated under Criteria for Designation A, D, J (no to Criterion H)

Designated  Rejected



926-928-930 Christian Street aerial.

**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (supplemented by Historical Commission Staff)**

**Premises "A"**

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected. Situate on the Southeast corner of Christian St and Delhi (late Stewart) Street, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward of the City of Philadelphia. Containing in front or breadth on said Christian Street 16 feet and extending of that breadth in length or depth Southward along said Delhi Street 70 feet. Bounded Northwardly by Christian Street, Southwardly by a 3 feet wide alley extending West into Delhi Street, Eastwardly by ground now or late of Coleman Fisher and Westwardly by Delhi Street, aforesaid.

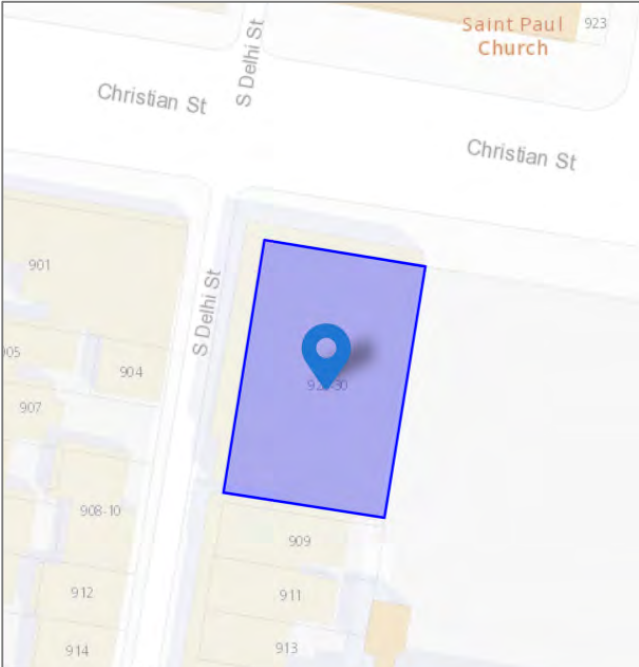
**Premises "B"**

All that certain lot or piece of ground with buildings and improvements thereon erected. Situate on the South side of Christian Street at the distance of 16 feet Eastward from the East side of Delhi Street in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward of the city of Philadelphia. Containing in front or breadth on the said Christian Street 30 feet extending of that width in length or depth Southward on the East line thereof 73 feet and on the West line thereof 70 feet to a 3 feet wide alley.

Being No. 928-930 Christian Street.

Together as respects both of the premises above described with the free and common use right liberty and privilege of the said Delhi Street and of said 3 feet wide alley as and for a passageway and watercourse at all times hereafter forever.

Source: Philadox , Document ID #51253995, Recorded 8/27/2005





-3b-

**Photographs: 928-30 Christian Street (supplemented by staff)**



*928-30 Christian Street: Front elevation along Christian Street.*





*View of with main entrance and masonry details.*



-3d-



*View of front (north) and east elevations.*



*View of front (north) and west elevations. The west elevation faces S Delhi Street.*



-3e-



Cornerstone showing 1923 construction date.



Front entryway with masonry detailing.



Small alleyway runs along south elevation.



View of west elevation from S Delhi Street.



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## DESCRIPTION:

This handsome three story building facing Christian Street is of Yale-Tex brick, an unusual type with black flecks in the brick and in the mortar.<sup>1</sup> A hip roof extends well over the walls. Rectangular in plan, the building's design echoes the Florentine palazzo with the flush facade, subtle rounded arches at the facade and five bays along the east and west sides. These arches are blind, holding flat-lintel windows. The brick masonry produces textures along the belt courses, around the windows and portal on the north (Christian Street). The main feature is the portal, with its two-toned surround on the double doors and the carved limestone archivolt which put emphasis on the replica of the colorful Della Robbia terra cotta of the "Madonna and Child."



The building is elevated above Christian Street and accessed by double stairs from the east or west. The third level's windows are rounded and in singles while groups of windows are on mainly the second level. Each story was intended to be individual in character. The overall condition is good for the residents who occupy the building. The building measures 43 by 70 feet.

Recent photographs<sup>2</sup> (attached and above) show aspects of this special building's overlooked features<sup>3</sup> which add to the legacy of Philadelphia's former Little Italy's past.

<sup>1</sup> "The Catholic Standard and Times," August 4, 1923; Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, January 2, 1923 both name Charles Cumiskey as the architect and W.R. Dougherty as builder.

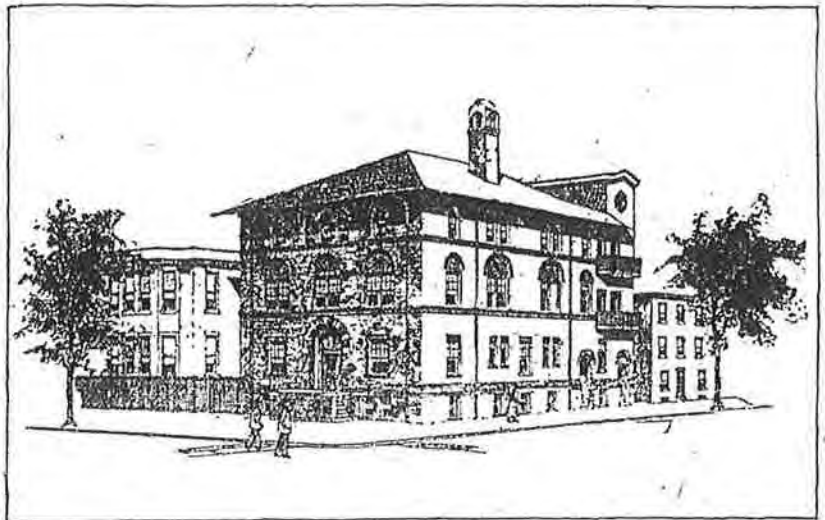
<sup>2</sup> Photographs taken in October, 2021, credited to Anthony DiFlorio, III.

<sup>3</sup> Criterion (d) will discuss this issue later.

# Standard *The Catholic* and Times

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 1923

GoogleMaps image (below) is consistent to the architect's drawing of 1923, on right.



*Proposed New Madonna House*

Summarized building description was published in The Philadelphia Real Estate Record on January 2, 1923:

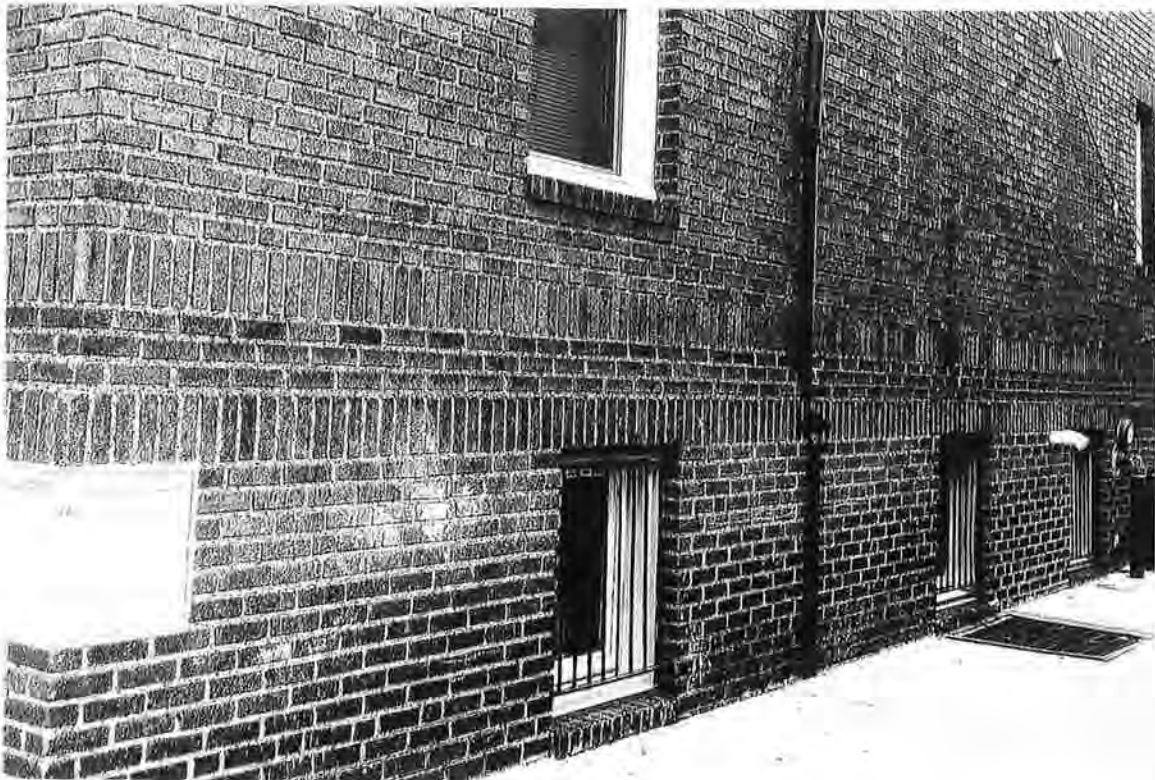
Madonna House, Christian street^ near Tenth street, Philadelphia. Architect, Charles J. Cumiskey, 118 West Sharpnack street, Philadelphia. Owners, Catholic Missionary Society, Rev. Edward T. Lyng, Director, St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, Tenth and Christian streets, Philadelphia. Brick, steel, limestone, cut stone, 3 stories and basement, 43x70 feet, slag roof, granolithic, maple and pine floors, safety treads, metal window guards, metal lath, marble work, hollow metal doors, bond, iron work (heating, electric fixtures and fly screens reserved), electric work. Contract awarded to W. R. Dougherty, 1610 Sansom street, Philadelphia.





Madonna House's east wall shows roof overhang, blind rounded arches and the decorative brick under the belt courses. Uncoordinated brick fills a rounded space with masonry in a textured pattern.

Below, the west wall shows color variation to distinguish the base. Note the corner-stone in partial view.





The Madonna House's north side (facade) juts out to Christian Street.(right) The Dougherty contractors' brick work is best seen on the facade: belt course, surround at the portal and especially at the window frames. (See p. 22)

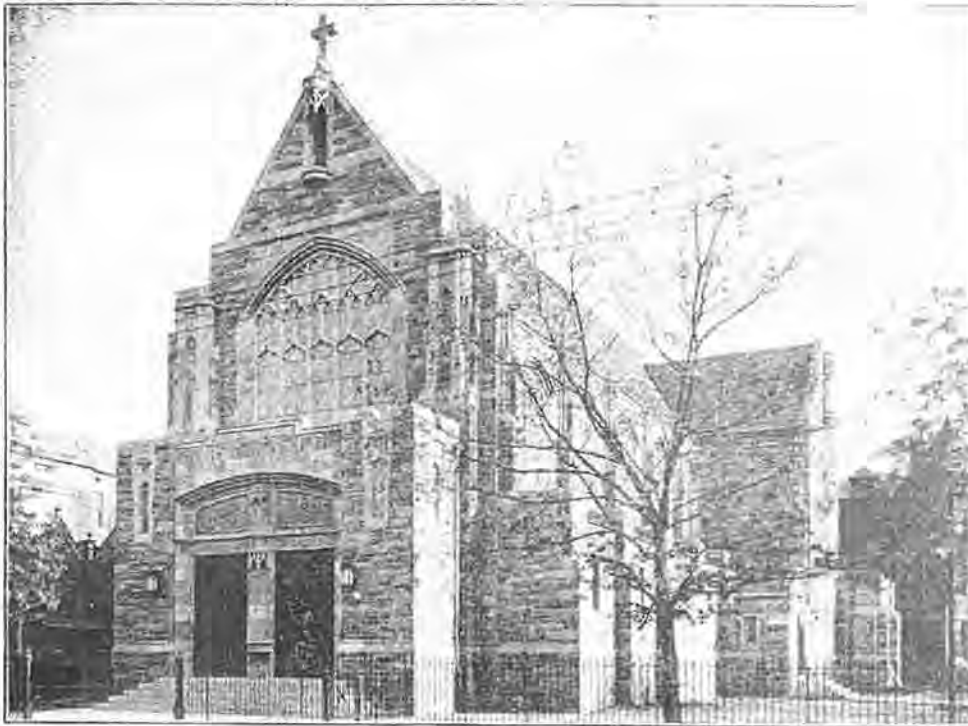
The Della Robbia terra cotta replica identifies the building, (left and below), but it is also consistent to the "Florentine palazzo" design by reference of 15th century sculpture.

(DiFlorio photos.)

Detail (right) of terra cotta plaque seen in 15th century Florence--or during the Italian Renaissance.







OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL CHURCH

Madonna House was constructed by the W.R. Dougherty Company, which built Holmesburg Prison and many Archdiocesan buildings at least from the 1890s. At left, the Dougherty Company was at work from 1922 to 1924 on Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in South Philadelphia.

At this project, the builders used "Economy Concrete" an inexpensive "concrete stone" which was to lower the budget costs for the church.

For the Madonna House, the Dougherty Company used "Yale-Tex brick" another rather new building material, which was made in Pittsburg by Gloninger & Company in 1922. The dark gold brick at the Madonna house is not smooth--in keeping with the design's characteristic rough finish. The brick and mortar look as if ground pepper or small black flecks were combined into the brick or mortar mixture.



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## STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE:

Organized in 1903 by Right Reverend Monsignor Henry T. Drumgoole, DD, LLD, as the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's first "Missionary Society," the Madonna House had outgrown the 814 South 10th Street location and the nominated building was constructed from 1923 to 1924. "The Catholic Missionary Society" of the Archdiocese soon made this building its headquarters, with activities here for Italian immigrants, especially their children, to provide skills, learning, dental, medical and legal services, but mainly Catholic supervision to maintain the faith. When the Madonna House initially was Father Drumgoole's concept, the area from Bainbridge Street southward to just below Washington Avenue, Sixth Street, westward was heavily settled with Italians from the c.1880 to 1920 influx-- a great majority were impoverished and with too many children to maintain. While parents or the parent-less strived to live on the streets, or cramped rooms, children were grossly neglected--to be left orphaned. The Church was concerned with the social issues arising from these conditions and how so many Protestant groups sought out the Italians<sup>4</sup> and pointed to the lack of interest shown by the Archdiocese. This was not true, and more than fifty years before the Madonna House's founding, in the 1860s, many social welfare programs were started by Italians and Italian Americans at St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Church, just two and one-half blocks southeast of the nominated building. Protestant groups tried as early as the 1880s to benefit from Italian converts; by the 1900s through the 1920s,<sup>5</sup> the quantity of southern Italians overwhelmed the area and brought not only Episcopalians, but Presbyterians and Methodists to challenge the Archdiocese's handling of immigrants in the "Italian quarter."<sup>6</sup>

The Madonna House may have been the last settlement house in an area long known for the Jewish Settlement House, which arose

<sup>4</sup> "Golden Jubilee Celebration: 1903-1953 of the Madonna House," pp. 13-21; copies attached as Appendix I.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See the "Directory of the Charitable, Social Improvement..." by The Civic Club of Philadelphia, 1906.



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after the likely prototype, "House of Industry" on the 700 block of Catharine Street. Protestant groups had long scoured this part of South Philadelphia, just south of South Street, and the reputedly crime-ridden communities attracted "soul-savers." There is no area in Philadelphia with such a strong history of immigrant settlement houses as here, and Madonna House's history somewhat concludes how social services among immigrants began, what had been tried and what was successful. The same kinds of services have been part of present-day offices for newcomers from Spanish-speaking countries and for Far East Asians.

Madonna House's design was considerate of the ethnic group served by the missionary staff: southern Italians were supposed to feel comfortable, but the design prolongs the "Little Italy" colony formed, according to Richard N. Juliani, Ph.D. with the founding of St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi parish nearby in 1852.<sup>7</sup> A closer review of Madonna House's history reveals class disparities among the Italian groups, as well as their cultural prejudices among themselves. Many Italian-born or first-generation of Italian nationality had succeeded when Madonna House was founded in 1903,<sup>8</sup> so the purposes of Madonna House seem more oriented to preserving the Catholic faith. Admittedly, by 1953, Madonna House's basis "no longer exists" and St. Paul's parish sold the property by the mid-1990s to a developer.

Madonna House's social goals and the time of its activity deserve scholarly attention---more than summarized herein--and its historical significance extends beyond Philadelphia. The building's design on busy Christian Street protects the "Little Italy" character as well as maintaining an architectural diversity on Christian Street. For these reasons, Madonna House should merit designation.

Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA  
October, 2021  
(Still during COVID limitations)

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Juliani, R.N., Priest, Parish and People, Notre Dame Press, 2007, See full index on this subject, pp. 388-389.

<sup>8</sup> Juliani, R.N., Building Little Italy. PSU Press, 1998;  
Golden Jubilee Celebration (1903-1953) Madonna House, p. 21.

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South Philadelphia's Southwark and Moyamensing Townships had hosted the most immigrants prior to Consolidation because the docks on the Delaware River at Washington Avenue brought in ships with refugees from Ireland, Germany, then eastern and southern Europe. The photograph (above) is nominator's effort from the mid-1990s on Pennsylvania's first House of Industry, "founded 1846" on the 700 block of Catharine Street.<sup>9</sup> It was the prototype for subsequent settlement houses in this neighborhood. The building on the right was St. Martin's College, an Episcopalian-run organization planned to attract Italian Catholics, hence the Italianate building design by Louis C. Baker in 1906.<sup>10</sup> (Note the similarity to Madonna House's facade from 1923-1924.)

The St. Martin's College building is now part of the Fleisher Art Memorial.

<sup>9</sup> The marker was sponsored by the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), and Irish Catholic beneficial society.

<sup>10</sup> Information from The Fleisher's Jeff Hindle.



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Madonna House....

(a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation...

and,

(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

Villanova University's Richard N. Juliani, Ph.D. began his research on Italian-speaking peoples in Philadelphia in the 1960s, publishing a socio-historical review which is the basis for any subsequent study on the city's "Little Italy" settlement in South Philadelphia. Dr. Juliani's Building Little Italy: Philadelphia's Italians Before Mass Migration (1998) focussed on the why, how and results of a group forming a colony in then-Moyamensing Township, next and within a mostly Irish Catholic neighborhood by the 1840s-- coinciding with the arrivals of those fleeing famine-ravished Ireland. Those who spoke Italian were from central to mainly northern Italy, were skilled, arrived with families intent on forming a new home, and they were Roman Catholic. By the early 1850s, Bishop John N. Neumann, CSsR recognized the number of Italian-speakers in the area, purchased land and an existing Methodist church and refitted it for Catholic worship. A professor from the seminary who spoke Italian would become the pastor of the first Italian national church in the United States. The name of the church/parish was that of a Carmelite nun from the 17th century, Mary Magdalen, from the wealthy Florentine Pazzi family. The cultural heritage of the majority was linked to their fellow Ligurian, Christopher Columbus whose name would appear in social activities, a building, in speeches and celebrations.<sup>11</sup>

This group, as Juliani wrote, was sophisticated to create an "elaborate internal institutional structure" in the Little Italy<sup>12</sup> community. (The Italian Republic did not form until 1860-1870, when disparate states and monarchical regions were finally added.)

<sup>11</sup>This book was published by Penn State University Press in 1998.

Dr. Juliani, from Villanova's Department of Sociology is an emeritus.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 314.

FOR VARIOUS NATIONALITIES.

Class V.

vides railroad fare, clothing, rent, procures employment, gives relief in money. Organization: A Board of Directors. Support from investments, \$75,000, and membership fees. Pres., Judge Wm. B. Hanna; Sec., Thos. D. Ferguson; Treas., Simon J. Martin.

ITALIAN AND FRENCH METHODIST EPISCOPAL MISSION (p. 579), 721 S. 9th St. BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION OF THE CIRCOLO DIODATI. Provides benefits to members in cases of sickness and helps the poor and strangers; furnishes interpreters, protection in courts, cares for abandoned children and sick and helpless persons. Composed of Italian young people.

SOCIETA ITALIANA DI MUTUO SOCCORSO E BENEFICENZA (ITALIAN MUTUAL AID AND BENEFICIAL SOCIETY) (p. 406) (est. and inc. 1880), Hall, 918-920 S. 8th St. Object: To assist and relieve its members when sick or in extreme necessity; to give burial to those who die; and to accumulate a separate fund for the help of the poor. For the latter purpose a committee appointed every year by the Society for the purpose. Treas., Frank Raab, 737 Carpenter St.; Sec., Joseph Fratantuono, 1006 S. 9th St.; Angelo Rossi, 1112 S. 7th St.

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SOCIETY OF BROAD ST. Aids Hebrews at the

ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH STUDENTS. Object: To protect Jewish immigrants and forward them to destinations of their own choice. Works in unison with the Jewish immigrants' aid. Organization: A Board of Directors and a small fund. President, Abraham Kaufman; Vice-Pres., Leon Dalsin; Treas., Leon Dalsin; Sec., 802 N. 7th St.

AUSTRIAN HUNGARIAN ASSOCIATION. To aid those who are sick and 3d Sundays at Coverdale. To aid those who are sick and custom. funds raised by subscriptions and Hungarian Bazaar. Pres., Waldman, 1627 N. 8th St.

AUXILIARY BRANCH OF HEBREW CHARITIES. has charge of the

These organizations seeking Italian immigrants were already active when the Archdiocese formed the Catholic Missionary Society in 1904.

All of these Protestant offices were near Madonna House.

EDUCATION.

Class XII.

ITALIAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSION (p. 606), 729 S. 10th St. NIGHT SCHOOL for the youth of both sexes from 10 years of age and upwards. Instruction in common English branches and Italian.

ZION GERMAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (p. 620), N. 28th and Cabot Sts. SATURDAY DAY SCHOOL. Instruction in the German language and religion.

THE MISSION OF THE COVENANT TO ISRAEL (Reformed Presbyterian) (p. 622), 800 S. 5th St. There is a NIGHT SCHOOL.

FAIRHILL UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (p. 623), N. W. Cor. Front and Tioga Sts. There is an EVENING CLASS. Apply to the minister in charge.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION (p. 626), Parish House, Broad bet. South St. INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL, Saturday morning 10 A. M., November to Easter, for boys and girls. The boys are taught wood-carving, drawing and painting; the girls sewing and knitting, and the smaller ones cut out and paste pictures in scrap books. No. pupils, 100; teachers, 14.

CHRIST PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH (p. 629), Cor. 2d and Church Sts. There are NIGHT CLASSES, once a week, under paid instruction in cooking, dressmaking and millinery; and a SEWING SCHOOL.

CHRIST PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH (p. 628), S. E. Cor. 6th and Venango Sts., Franklinville. There are classes in free-hand drawing and modern languages, meeting in the Guild Room adjoining and in the basement of the Church, on Wednesdays and Thursdays, 7.30 to 9 P. M. The classes are for all; an entrance fee of 75c. is charged.

EMMANUEL PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, Holmesburg (p. 631). PARISH SCHOOL. Pupils, 36; teacher, 1.

MEMORIAL PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMFORTER (p. 634), 19th and Titan Sts. There is a KITCHENGARDEN for little girls held in the Parish Building.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY (p. 635), 19th St. and Rittenhouse Sq. COLORED INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL. A Sewing School (p. 350). COOKING SCHOOL (p. 354). SATURDAY MORNING SCHOOL (p. 350).

THE HOLY TRINITY MEMORIAL CHAPEL. See Addenda.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF L'EMMANUELLO (p. 631), 1024 Christian St. There is a day and night school in which Italian children are taught the English language.

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL MISSION TO THE JEWS, IN THE DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA (p. 637), 737 S. 9th St. Instruction is given young Jewish men and women in English language, history of the United State and civil government.



Piccolo gruppo dei Socii della FEDERAZIONE DELLE SOCIETA' ITALIANE di Philadelphia.

The photo above is c. 1910, captioned as a "Small group from the Federation of Italian Societies of Philadelphia."

The members were from the business class in the Little Italy neighborhood, with their own dues-paying organizations which often included death benefits to the families. These groups also went beyond their inner circles to aid the lower classes in the neighborhood--without affiliation with any church. But their existence showed that internally, Italians did strive to assist non-members.

(Right: 1906 listing of some organizations.)

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SOME BENEFICIAL SOCIETIES.

Class XIX

**CONSORELLA ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA REGINA MARGHERITA** (inc. 1893), 918-20 S. 8th St. Object: To encourage social and sisterly feeling, to accumulate a fund to provide members with relief when sick, and to provide for their burial after death. Membership: Italian women or those of Italian descent, from the ages of 15 to 50 years. No., 200. Sick benefits, \$5 weekly for 6 months. Death benefits, \$50, and at the death of husband, \$25. Fee, 30c. per month, and \$1 and more, according to age, at entrance. Assessments at death of member, 50c.

**HOLY MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION MUTUAL RELIEF SOCIETY** (inc. 1901). Object: Social and beneficial. Sick and death benefits. Organization: A Board of Directors. Pres., Antonio Ricciardi, 716 Fitzwater St.; Sec., Gabriele Gambone, 706 S. 7th St.

**SOCIETA ITALIANA DI MUTUO SOCCORSO E BENEFICENZA** (est. and inc. 1880), Hall, 918-20 S. 8th St. Object: To assist and relieve its members when sick or in extreme necessity; to give burial and to accumulate a separate fund (p. 98) for the help of the poor. Membership: White men of good moral character not over 50 years of age. No., 375. Sick benefits, \$6 per week for 6 months and \$1 for the other 6 months. Death benefits, \$150; on death of wife, \$10. Entrance fee, \$5 to \$10 for those between 18 and 40 years of age; thereafter to 50 years, \$20. Dues, 50c. per month and \$1 per year for benevolent fund. Assessment on death of member, 50c.

**SOCIETA DI MUTUO SOCCORSO SAN MICHELE ARCANGELO UNIONE FRATERNA MOUTERODUNESA IN PHILADELPHIA** (est. 1890, inc. 1892), 721 Carpenter St. Object: To promote the moral and material condition of its members, and to accumulate a fund for sick, death and accident benefits. Membership: Catholic Italians from 18 to 50 years of age. Sick benefits, \$6 per week for 6 months. Death benefits, \$75; on death of wife, \$40. Entrance fee, according to age. Assessment on death of member, 50c. on death of member's wife, 25c.

**SOCIETA DI UNIONE E FRATELLANZO ITALIANA** (est. 1868, inc. 1868), 744 and 746 S. 8th St., Columbus Hall. Object: Care and relief of the sick and needy members. Membership: White men bet. 18 and 50 years of age. No., 325. Sick benefits, \$6 per week for 26 weeks in each year. Death benefits, \$100; on death of wife, \$50. Other benefits, services of physician. Entrance fee, \$3 <sup>1877</sup>



REPARTI DELLA SOCIETA' PER GL'IMMIGRANTI

Ricovero

EMANUEL V. H. NARDI, Direttore	
REV. DANIEL SCALABRELLA	Avv. HARRY B. GANDOLFO
FRANK A. TRAVASCIO	Dr. G. M. DE VECCHIS

Ufficio d'Informazioni

Avv. JOSEPH BARTILUCCI, Direttore	
REV. AGOSTINO BONANNI	JOHN DI SILVESTRO
ALFONSO CUBICCIOTTI	DR. G. M. DE VECCHIS



Some of the Madonna House Board, were already involved in immigrant children services, as this book in 1920 recorded

ASILO INFANTILE

(vedi Pag. 53)

COMITATO ASILO

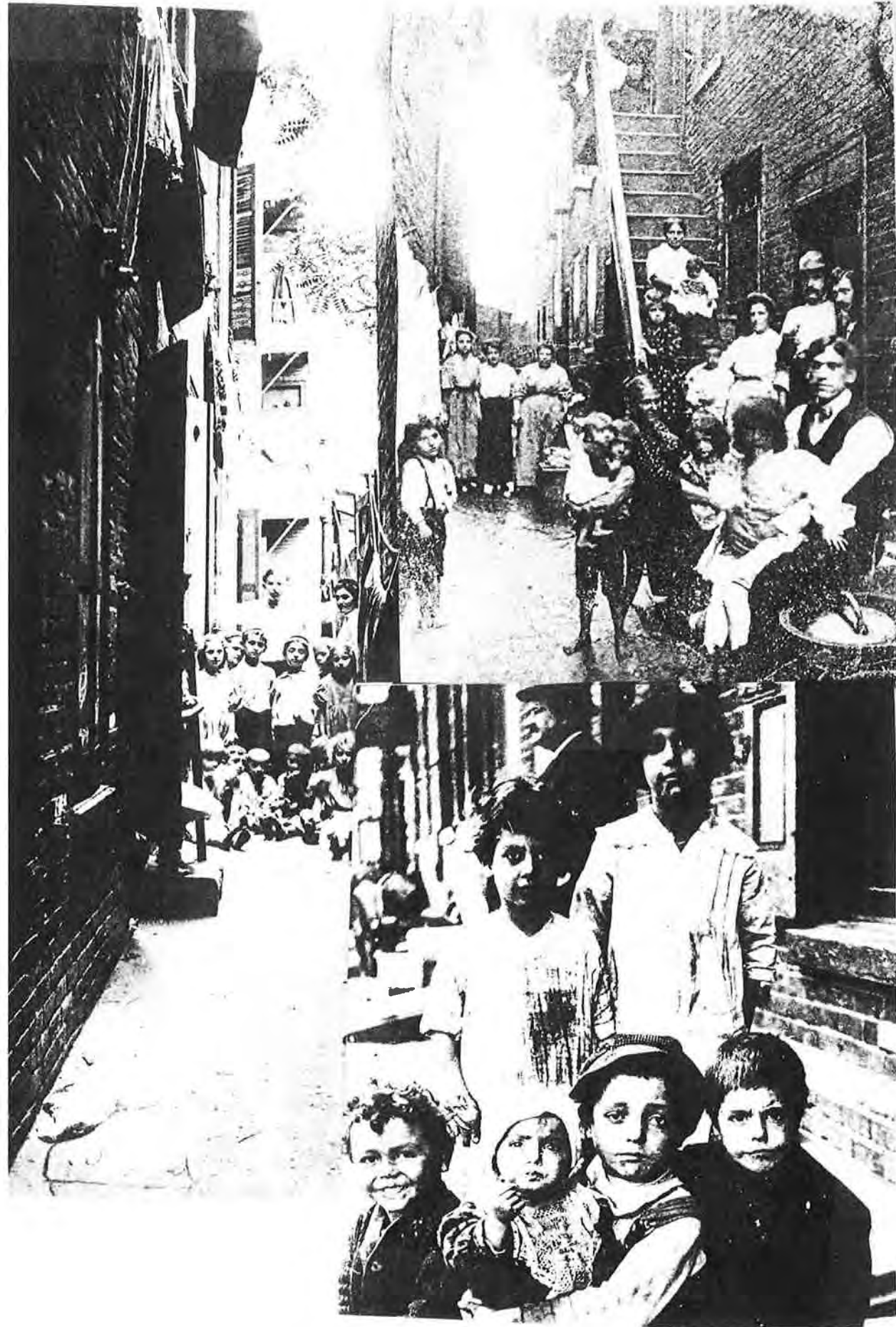
REV. AGOSTINO BONANNI, Direttore.	
JOHN QUEROLI	ANTONIO RAGGIO
FRANK ROSATTO	HENRY DI BERARDINO



—(0)—

COMITATO SCUOLA DI CITTADINANZA

Avv. HARRY B. GANDOLFO, Direttore
EMANUEL V. H. NARDI



(All photos:  
Temple U., SCRC)

Published ma-  
terials by the  
Italians in  
Little Italy  
differed from  
these photographs  
by The Octavia  
Hill Association  
in the early 1900

The Italian press  
hid the reality  
of the immigrant  
poor in the nei-  
ghborhood which  
The Catholic Mis-  
sionary Society  
would address.

Social welfare groups were organized by the first in Little Italy and they were for dues-paying members who would do occasional charitable work.<sup>13</sup> Juliani portrayed a contained, manageable group which was self-supportive--even without the Church.

A different scenario arose with Italian nationals after the Italian Republic formed and thousands of southern Italians and Sicilians--generally single men seeking temporary employment--were recruited abroad to fill the void in jobs which were abjured by those in Philadelphia. The single male worker brought social problems leading to crime, mental illness (depression, loss of emotional support, etc....) and a sharp rate of return to Italy, according to Wyman who found that "50%" of Italian immigrants to the U.S. from "the 1880s to the early 1920s" left for Italy.<sup>14</sup> A characterization of this southern Italian immigrant versus the earlier ones from the north is significant for lack of family, instability in housing and employment (as a dependent of others) and no real social status. The Church had little interest in these temporary residents who sent some of their earnings abroad, and kept little--not enough to contribute to a Church, or to be a parishioner. It was this personality which lent non-Catholic groups to Little Italy by the 1880s, and those who brought families en masse. Wyman noted that Italian Catholics who converted to any Protestant faith would return to Italy where Protestant clergy awaited.<sup>15</sup>

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Social welfare services for the newcomer in Little Italy appeared as early as the 1860s among the northern Italians and the programs were not religious affiliated. Juliani noted "1883" as the year that Emmanuello Church began its proselytizing among the Italians,<sup>16</sup> hiring an architect to design a quaint church that looked

<sup>13</sup> La Societa di Unione e Fratellanzo Italiana met in "Columbus Hall" at 8th and Fitzwater Streets from "1867."

<sup>14</sup> Wyman, M., Round-Trip to America. Cornell U. Press, 1993, p.10.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp.174-176.

<sup>16</sup> Juliani, R. N., Priest, Parish, and People. Notre Dame Press, p.122.



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as if from a Tuscan hillside. Other Episcopalians set out on the 700 block of Catharine Street where the House of Industry was located; the Episcopalian church was across the street for any immigrant to see what was availed.<sup>17</sup>

The Methodists also tried to sway errant Italian Catholics, but the Presbyterians showed greater impact with a huge church constructed around from the humble Emmanuello. (See p.20 )<sup>18</sup> To the Catholic hierarchy at the Archdiocese, this Italian Presbyterian church and its native Italian ministers proved the greatest threat.

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By 1900, Little Italy had three Roman Catholic churches within three blocks: St. Paul's, the territorial Catholic church; and two Italian national churches, Our Lady of Good Counsel, run by the Italian Augustinians, then St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi. All grew because of the southern Italian migrations, but few offered acculturation services, maintaining bi-lingual activities in the isolated community. St. Paul's, with its clergy of non-Italian ancestry, would experience the greatest challenges in growth,<sup>19</sup> with the new school constructed in the 1890s quickly abandoned for a larger one by 1905, mainly for Italian-born or Italian American students. St. Paul's was closest to where Protestant proselytizing occurred at the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches where there were "cases of malicious proselytizing of the poor little ones by wealthy Protestant sects."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, John Wanamaker was said to have invested his funds into the construction of the Presbyterians' church for the Italians. Lower class Italians were in the thousands, crowded into rooms at a time when child labor was permitted, or children were left to live on the street. The Octavia Hill Association's photographer took pictures of this area's Italians living in conditions of filth while other Italians attained education and began businesses. Economic classes were distinctive in Little Italy and a few publi-

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<sup>17</sup> See Hawks, Msgr. Edward, William McGarvey & The Open Pulpit... Phila.: Dolphin Press, 1935 on the Episcopalian Italian efforts.

<sup>18</sup> This is based upon the church's size (for 3,000) and investors.

<sup>19</sup> "Catholic Standard and Times," May 6, 1905.

<sup>20</sup> Report of the Catholic Missionary Society of Phila. for 1909,"p. 8.

cations published in 1910 lauded Italian-born business-owners.<sup>21</sup>

The threat was significant for the Archdiocese to act, if not but to heed what St. Paul's pastor, Father Donovan, was reporting. The Catholic Missionary Society's history put its origins to "1902" with Donovan, then to "1903" when Monsignor Henry Drumgoole organized a group of volunteers, benefactors and an agenda. In 1904, this group purchased a rowhouse at 814 South 10th Street for services to aid the Italians which included dental, medical and legal work, daycare, religious instruction, literacy classes, a library and educational classes, then later, sports, kindergarten "within the limits of the small Italian quarter east of Broad and between Bainbridge and Federal."<sup>22</sup>

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The nominated building, the Madonna House thus arose in 1923 because of the success of the organization since the first House in 1904. At the 926-930 Christian Street location, the Madonna House became the Catholic Missionary Society's headquarters "Devoted to Catechetical and Religious Instruction and to Settlement and Social Service Work." (Report of 1929). Yet, in 1935, the CMS was still propoing that "The ultimate purpose of this Society is to bring religious instruction to the thousands of Catholic children who are attending public school. But because of the proselytizing work of various non-Catholic denominations carried on in their Settlement Houses, it was deemed expedient for the Society to adopt a similar program to offset the Protestant influence by establishing Catholic settlement houses, now under the supervision of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity." By 1953, the CMS at Madonna House reported that "after fifty years of work, the problem of Italian immigrants no longer exists." Thus, it may have been the last settlement house for Italians in Philadelphia.

<sup>21</sup> Strafile, Prof. A., Memorandum, Coloniale...della Colonia di Philadelphia, Phila.: Mastro Paolo Printing House, 1910. And, La Colonia di Filadelfia, Phila.:L'Opinione, 1910.

<sup>22</sup> Golden Jubilee Celebration: 1903-1953 of the Madonna House. CHRC, p.21;



MOST REV. PATRICK J. RYAN, D.D.

The Catholic Missionary Society was formed under Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan (left) in 1903, as a long-awaited response to what had been somewhat successful at the Italian Episcopal Emmanuello Church (bottom, left) and the Italian Presbyterian Church (below) both were one block from Madonna House.



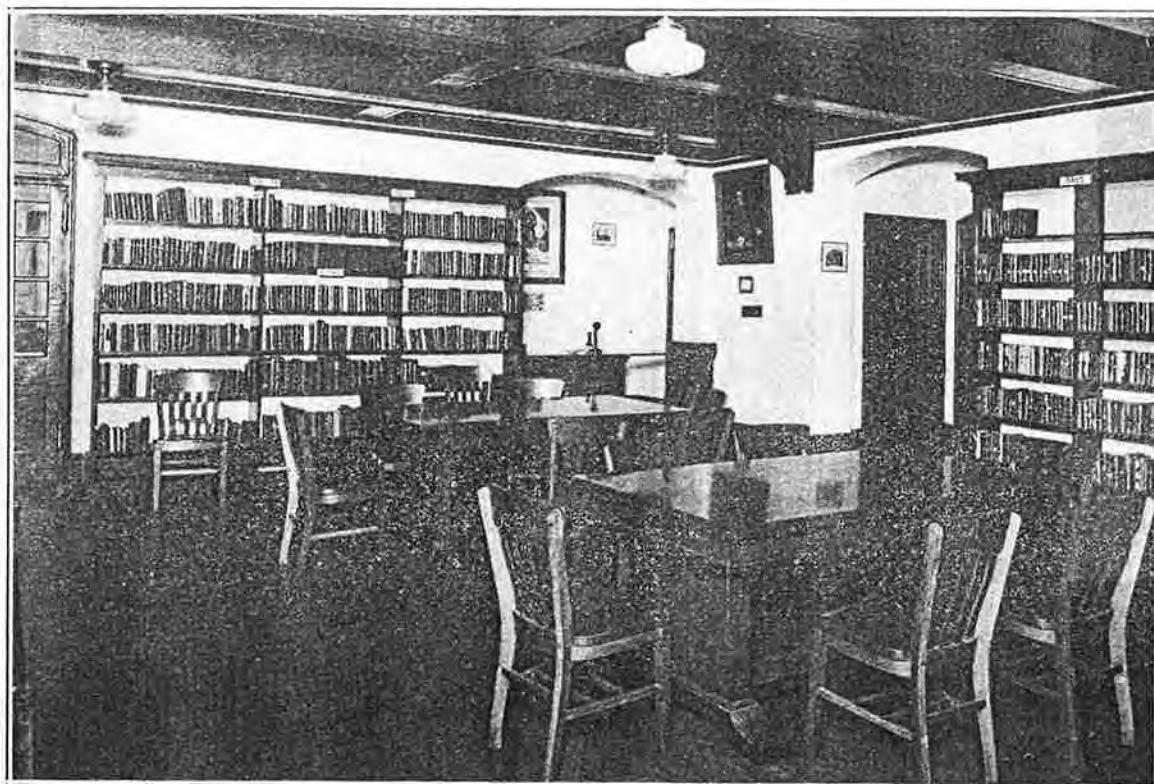
The Protestants intentionally constructed their churches in Little Italy to draw converts away from Roman Catholicism. Many Italians justified leaving the Church because of cultural differences with the clergy; Protestants were said to give food, clothing and other material things to struggling Italians.



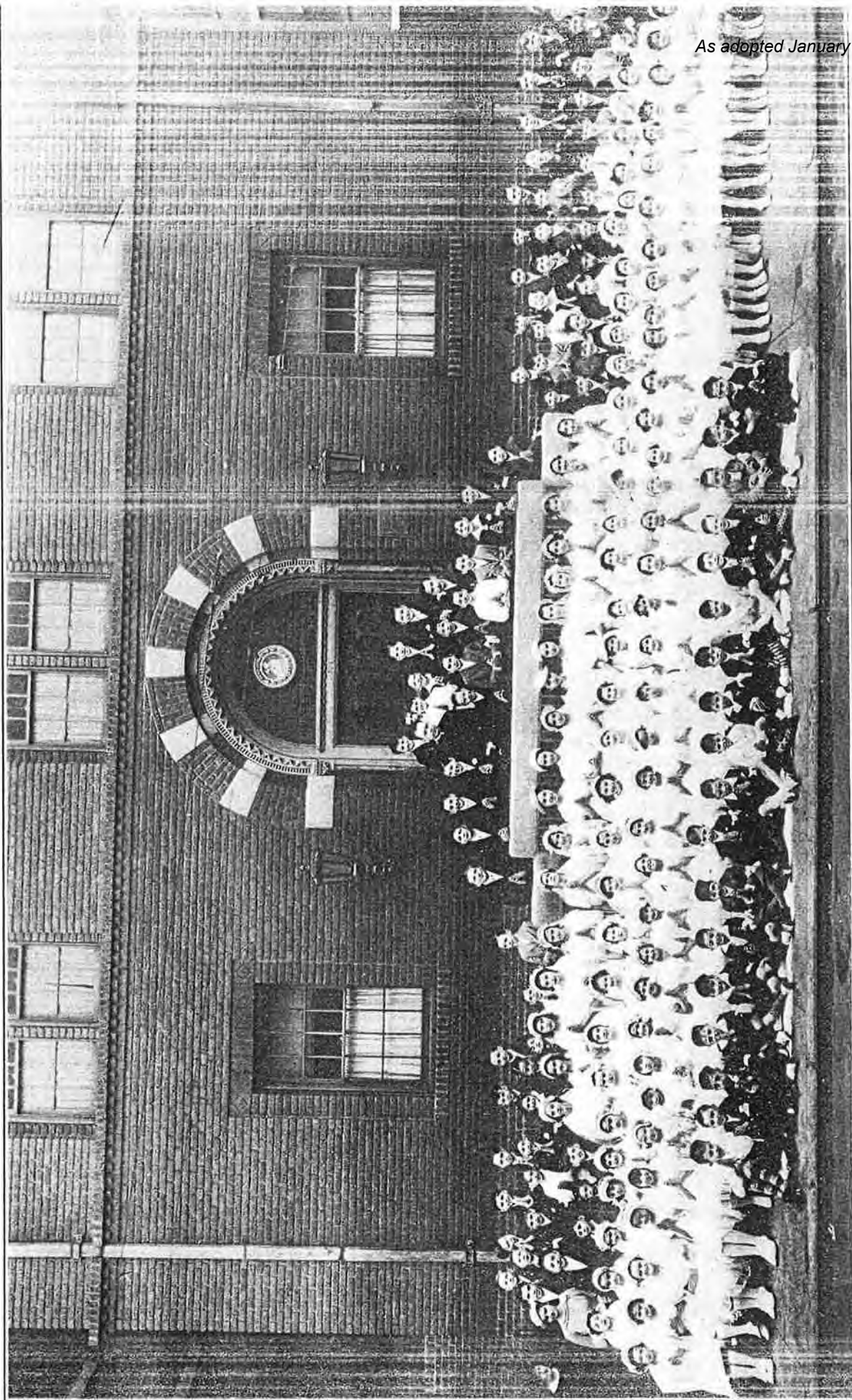


Sister Maria de Lourdes, Supervisor, and Group of Teachers

1935-1936 photos at Madonna House.

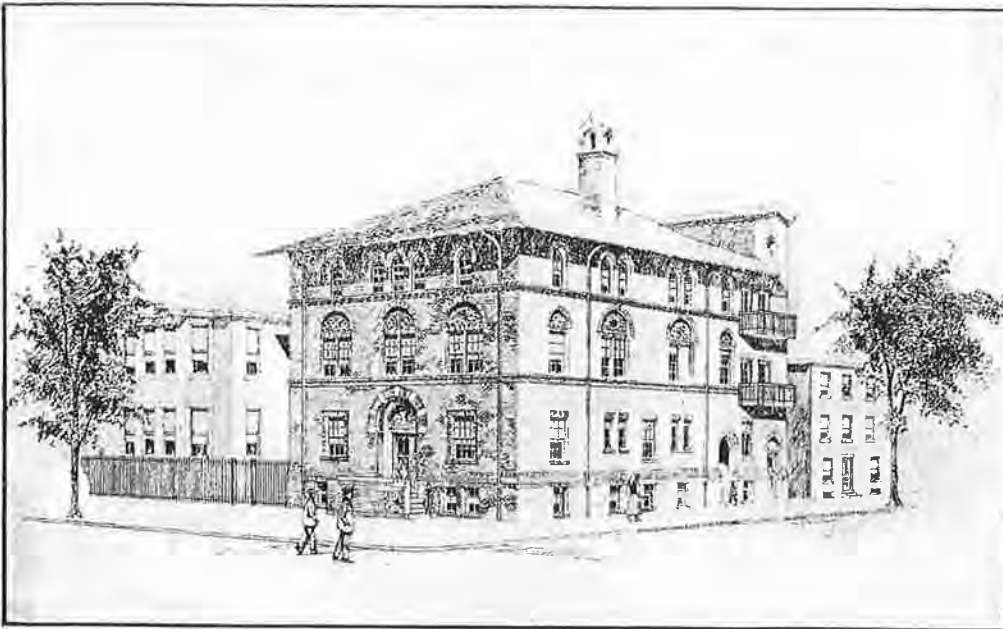


A well equipped Library of wholesome literature is available to the children at all times



Madonna House Yearbook of 1936: First Communion Group at the Madonna House

(Details of brickwork and portal ornamentation.)



**NEW MADONNA HOUSE  
FOR ITALIAN COLONY**

Work on Building at 926-28-30  
Christian Street Shortly to  
Be Commenced

**MODERN OFFICES INCLUDED**

Clinics and Service Headquarters,  
Legal Advice and Classrooms  
Among Improvements

Plans and specifications for the erection of a new Madonna House at 926-28-30 Christian street, have been recently approved and the bid awarded by His Eminence, the Cardinal. The work is to begin within the next two months and will fulfill the dream and ambition of hundreds who have assisted in the work of the Catholic Missionary Society for the last twenty years. The undertaking will require an outlay of \$30,000 and will mark one of the most progressive steps taken in religious affairs of the Italian colony in many years. The building is to be erected under the supervision of the Rev. Edward J. Lyng, Diocesan Director of the Catholic Missionary Society. The new structure is to be a three-story building of Yale Tex brick. It is to resemble the architecture of the Renaissance period. On either side of the main entrance will be the directors' offices beyond which will be a moderate sized library, which will also include the attendants' office. In the rear on the first floor will be three rooms and a waiting room devoted to social service work, the entrance to which will be on Dahl street. The second floor will be given over to instruction rooms—six in number—which will be made possible by folding doors. These will permit of larger assemblages. A large clubroom for girls will be provided in the front portion of the building facing on Christian street. The same order and scheme will be followed for the boys on the third floor. A kindergarten for the smaller children and a playroom for the older children will be found in the basement. The building will be 70x43 and was designed by Charles Cumiskey.

**MADONNA HOUSE**  
926-28-30 Christian Street

**Will Fill Long Felt Want**

The new Madonna House will fill a long-felt want in the heart of the Italian colony by reason of the diversity of activities and social advantages to be centered there. In the original days of the movement a clinic was established in the old Madonna House, 514 South Tenth street, but by reason of the overcrowded and unsuitable character of the building it was later abandoned. Provisions are being made in the new Madonna House where treatment may be given for minor physical defects, where eyes, nose and throat may receive treatment and where practical and sound medical advice will be dispensed to the worthy poor. It is also proposed to incorporate in the work a bureau similar to the legal aid where advice by competent experts regarding the provisions of law will be given to those unable to retain legal counsel. This feature of settlement work is of vast importance particularly where the poor are the defenseless prey of unscrupulous and unprincipled money-mongers and others. The consent and co-operation of those qualified to assist in the above-named capacities have already been pledged and the success of these projects awaits only the erection of the new Madonna House.

Those who have followed the progress of the Catholic Missionary Society in its work of imparting catechetical and spiritual knowledge to the children of the Italian immigrants have manifested the greatest eagerness in the erection of the Madonna House. Chief among the organizations upon whose help those in charge will depend are the Madonna auxiliaries, who have enthusiastically sponsored the project of a new Madonna House. The board of managers of the Catholic Missionary Society at its last meeting gave unqualified approval to this undertaking and many prominent Italian gentlemen throughout the city have already pledged their assistance in this important step. It has been agreed to erect a tablet in the new Madonna House upon which the names of all benefactors subscribing a thousand dollars will be inscribed. It is confidently expected that all the old workers and supporters of the Madonna House will hasten to the call of assistance now that the dream and ambition of years is about to be realized.

Much was expected at Madonna House, said to be the first settlement house established by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Architect Cumiskey's drawing is from the Yearbook in 1929 of The Catholic Charities and Social Welfare Activities, which had been reported in news articles.

**NEW MADONNA HOUSE  
CORNER-STONE IS LAID**

**Building Blessed by His Eminence,  
Who Delivers Informative  
Discourse**

**SHOWS IMMIGRATION CAUSES**

**Cardinal Analyses Reasons for  
Exodus—Other Addresses  
Made**

Another evidence of the Catholic social programme was brought to the fore last Sunday, and warning was served that the Church will not permit her children, no matter of what race, to be ensnared into the meshes of irreligion or robbed of their Faith by those working under the guise of charity, at the corner-stone laying and blessing of the magnificent new Madonna House at 926-30 Christian street.

The principal speaker of the day was His Eminence, who, despite the inclement weather obtaining on last Sunday, officiated at the ceremonies. His Eminence presented a thoughtful analysis of the causes which have brought, within the last few decades, so large a number of Italian immigrants to these shores. Economic distress was advanced as the principal cause of the tide of immigration.

The agitation to restrict immigration from Catholic countries was laid to religious bigotry, and especially that un-American spirit which would keep out a man because of his religion. Recalling Columbus and Verazano, discoverers of the new world, His Eminence asked his hearers if it were right or fair to exclude Italians from the continent discovered by Italians. His address will be found appended.

An imposing programme had been arranged for the occasion, but the out-of-door festivities were cancelled because of the bad weather. A representative number of laity, were, however present in St. Paul's Church, where the addresses were delivered.

The speakers, in addition to the Cardinal were the Right Rev. Monsignor Henry T. Drumgoole, D. D., LL. D., Luigi Silliti, Royal Italian Consul, and Henri Di Bernardino. Chevalier Silliti spoke in Italian. Monsignor Drumgoole's address and that delivered by Mr. Di Bernardino are reproduced in this issue.

"The Catholic Standard and Times" (above) August 4, 1923; (right) April 12, 1924 edition.



Madonna House....

(d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style:

"FLORENTINE PALAZZO STYLE" (15th Century)

Architect Charles Cummiskey won the commission from The Catholic Missionary Society to plan an institutional building on the lot at Christian Street, adjacent to St. Paul's old parochial school. Cummiskey's design apparently adapted several factors: limitations of space (on a 48X70 lot); focus on a very busy street; the then-20 year mission for Italians in the area; any influence(s) from St. Paul's R.C. Church across the street and its schools next to the lot's northeast and southeast; and how the interior space would be used.

The new Madonna House's design combined Louis C. Baker's facade from his (Episcopal) St. Martin's School across from the House of Industry on Catharine Street,<sup>23</sup> and the "Florentine Palace Block" a new type of urban residential building popularized in the 1400s by Michelozzo (1396-1472) in Florence, Italy. The design was to appear as "Italian" for clientele who were from southern Italian peasant villages, hundreds of miles from Florence.

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Art historians cited a "Renaissance Revival" architectural style as early as the John Notman design for The Athenaeum (1845-1847) in Philadelphia. Rectangular, with "Stuccoed brick and coursed brown-stone ashlar" the three stories under the "flat roof"<sup>24</sup> held most of the architectural characteristics that Chastel noted in directing the "Florentine Palace-Block" style to Michelozzo.<sup>25</sup> This is a precise dating and style, instead of a general "Renaissance" descriptive.

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<sup>23</sup>Baker's two-tone portal surround with the same Della Robbia-type of terra cotta Madonna and Child plaque atop the brick is unique and not found in Florentine palazzo facades.

<sup>24</sup>Webster, R., Philadelphia Preserved. Temple U.Press, pp.60-61.

<sup>25</sup>Chastel, A., Italian Art. Harper & Row, 1963, pp. 155-157.

Michelozzo initially was hired to design a residential building for the Medici family in the city of Florence. These types of urban structures attained the term "palazzo," but Hartt advised that the word "palazzo" was used freely to refer to any large building at that time (15th century). The Medici Palace established the characteristics to describe the "Florentine Palace" of that century:

- 1) rectangular "block" plan
- 2) rough or rusticated masonry varying on each level
- 3) about 3 to 4 stories in height
- 4) overhanging cornice
- 5) "balanced system of windows"
- 6) facade close to street level, not set back.

About thirty such palazzi were constructed in Florence after the Medici palazzo.<sup>26</sup> (Palazzi is Italian plural for palazzo.)

Michelozzo's design derived from First Century Roman tenement houses in developed areas. (See p.26 ). Wealthy Florentine families occupied these 15th century interpretations where they had great spaces to entertain. The success of this design in architectural history is where in the 1500s, the "block-palaces" arose in Rome.<sup>27</sup>

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Madonna House's design recalls elements from the 1st Century Roman and 15th century Florentine mainly in plan. The "fortress-like" characterization given to the Florentine palazzi held that each level was a different degree of rustication; the Roman prototype did not.<sup>28</sup> The design called for an unrefined appearance in the masonry.

The exterior's three levels are distinguished by a belt course, which is consistent to the Roman and Florentine models.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Chastel, op.cit., Hartt, F., History of Italian Renaissance Art. Prentice-Hall, 1975, pp. 124-25;258; Janson, HW, History of Art, NY: Abrams, 1977, p. 393.

<sup>27</sup>Hartt, op.cit., p. 124.

<sup>28</sup>Wheeler, Sir Mortimer, Roman Art and Architecture. Oxford U.Press, 1964, pp. 128-129.

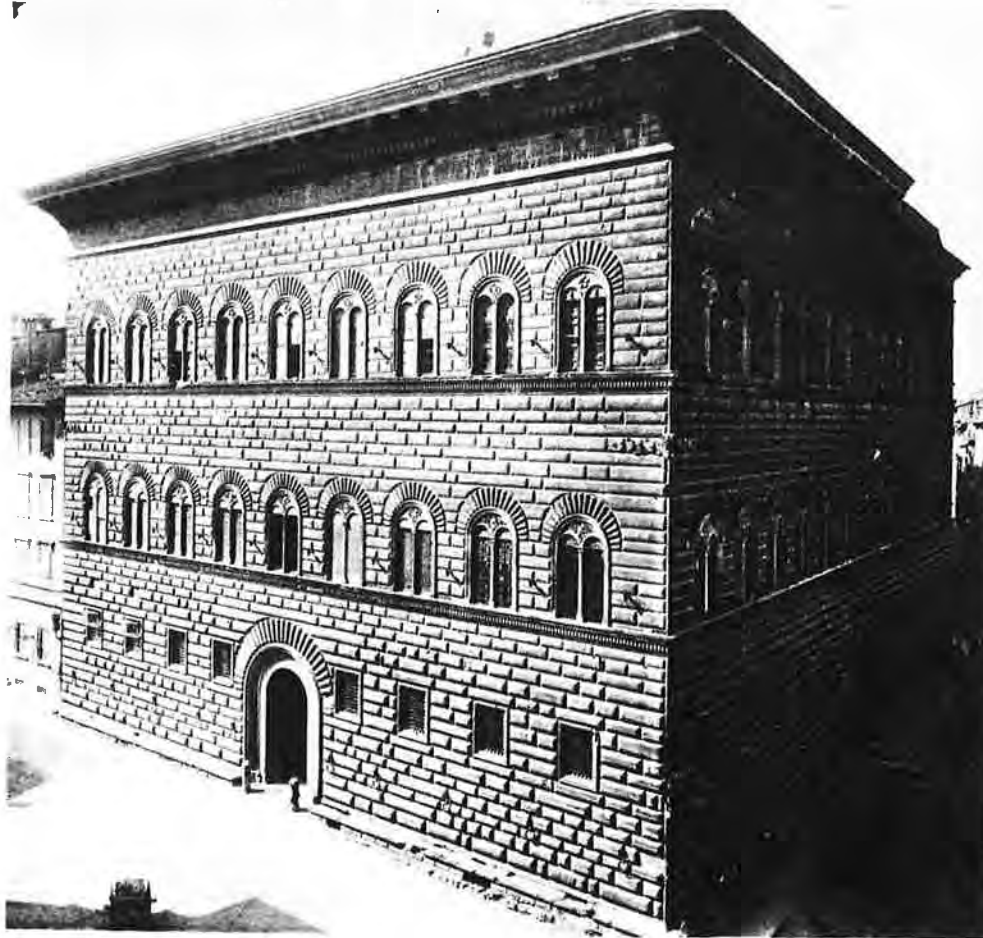
<sup>29</sup>Hartt, p. 258.



142. MICHELOZZO DI BARTOLOMMEO.  
Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence. Begun 1444



Above is Wheeler's model of a Roman tenement (1st C.AD) of brick and concrete to compare in form and textures to the 15th century Florentine palazzi (Left and below in Hartt.)



307. BENEDETTO DA MAIANO  
and IL CRONACA.  
Palazzo Strozzi, Florence.  
1489-1507

Madonna House....

(h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City.

With the understanding that one is in the former Little Italy, the Madonna House's architectural design would not be unexpected on Christian Street. Since the demolition of the c. 1898 St. Paul School/ Norbertine residence in the 1950s, Madonna House has been given wider breadth in view, allowing for all of its sides to be seen unobstructed. Visitors to the area see a quasi-Florentine palazzo and upon closer look, see unusual brick construction, not only in the manner of the bricks' courses, but in the textural designs. The Yale-Tex brick brings a quirkiness as well.

Locals have known of the Madonna House as a property of St. Paul's parish until the mid-1990s. The building was where the Trinitarian Sisters worked in a variety of social services within the once-heavily populated parish and neighborhood. Many in the neighborhood had relatives who benefitted from the Sisters' work and that of The Catholic Missionary Society when Madonna House was its headquarters until 1953. But, Madonna House's origins were part of the City's and especially this particular neighborhood's long history of services to immigrants, beginning with the Irish Catholics in the 1840s--among them were the first parishioners of St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, founded in 1843. Farther east, but on or near Christian Street, eastern European Jews had related organizations, notably what is recalled in the history of the Settlement Music School on the 400 block of Christian. However, Madonna House carries not only this history, but an architectural visual for the Little Italy community--there are very few "Italian-like" buildings now in the neighborhood to attest to the 100 years plus of a majority of Italian nationals who resided here.

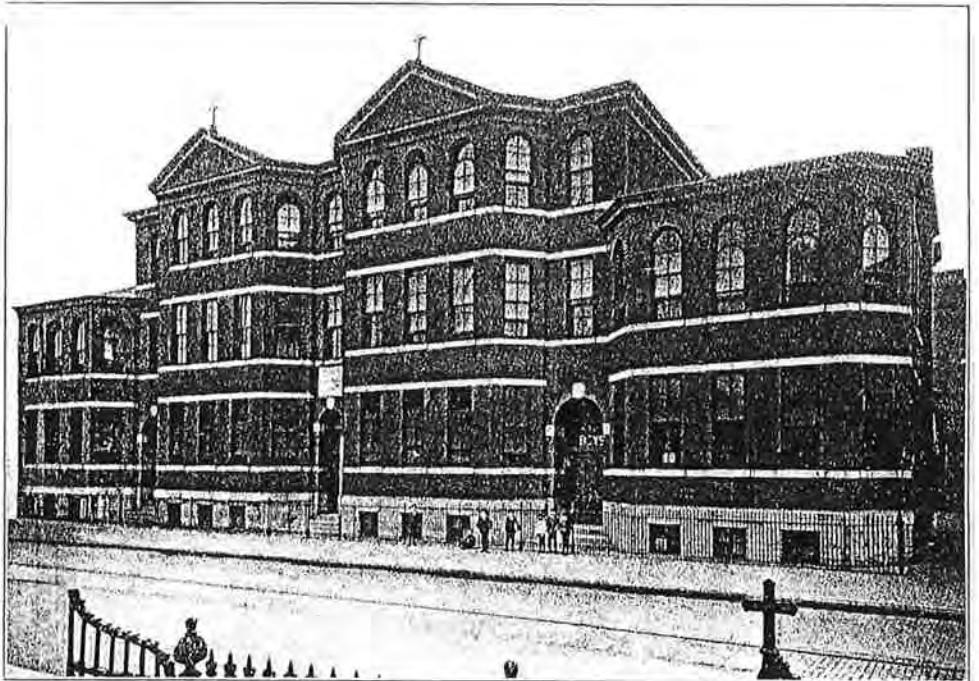




This view is from South 10th Street, on Christian Street, looking eastward with Madonna House on right, next to the St. Paul's School (towards center above; below) in 1956. St. Paul's R.C. Church is hidden beyond the trees on left.

Right: Edwin F. Durang's c. 1896 St. Paul's School which was next to Madonna House before it was demolished by the late 1950s.

(Photo: EF Durang's "Album.")





Above: Madonna House's architectural features are on display everyday, or for public events, like this Irish Catholic parade to honor those who came to this neighborhood.

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Madonna House's contribution to the City's and Commonwealth's immigrant settlement history remains within the presence of this stately building on Christian Street in Bella Vista. Although it was the headquarters of The Catholic Missionary Society, the location was intended to counter Episcopalian and Presbyterian workers who lured Italian Catholics to their denominations. And architecturally, the Madonna House competed with the Episcopalians to try to attract Italians with the Florentine palazzo design. However, presently, condominiums and often a small business are here in a building still with a cross and Della Robbia terra cotta of the Madonna & Child (a replica) to align with its Catholic past. It is a building appropriate for visitors trying to find what of Little Italy remains.

For these and the aforementioned reasons, Madonna House merits historical designation.

Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA  
October, 2021  
(Still during COVID limitations)

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A P P E N D I X I:

Pages from Madonna House's 50th anniversary booklet.



*Golden Jubilee Celebration*

1903



1953



OF THE  
**Madonna House**

Thursday Evening, May 28, 1953

8:00 O'CLOCK

**SAINT PAUL'S SCHOOL HALL**

MONTROSE STREET BETWEEN 9th AND 10th



Reverend William J. Smith  
Director of the Madonna House

## Fifty Years with the Madonna House

The greatest problem of America comes from the same source whence comes her greatest strength. That problem is the integral assimilation of her immigrants into the cultural life of the community. Too frequently these immigrants with all the color of their own cultures are shunted off into ghettos and consequently doomed to lives of mean poverty. Not only then are they the sufferers but the community as well is deprived of their contributions to the richer and fuller life toward which it should be tending.



**Right Reverend Monsignor  
Henry T. Drumgoole, D.D., L.L.D.  
Founder and First Director 1903-1912**

This situation, common now, was even more common during the last years of the last century and the first years of this. America then was going through the growing pains of its adolescence and many minorities found themselves in the precise position of which we have been talking. The assimilation of all immigrants into civic life could not come of itself. The process needed the warm solvent of generosity, understanding, and patience on the part of those who had already made the transition from being a minority to the status of being full fledged citizens.

Here in Philadelphia we saw the process repeated many times. No clearer example can be found than the case of the Italian immigrants of the last century. These people, coming from the land which has contributed most to the civilization of the Western world, found themselves huddled together in the small, overpopulous section of South Philadelphia. For a long time ignored by the established citizenry, hampered by the language difficulty, weighed down by mean employment, the Italians suffered cruelly both spiritually and materially. They were eighty-five thousand in number and were served by only two churches and seven priests. It was a field fertile for defection from the Faith. And the Protestant churches were not slow to plant that field. By the turn of the century there was feverish proselytizing among the Italian community by many of the sects. They offered the poor people material help and opportunity in return for their presence at Protestant worship. It is to the eternal credit of these descendants of martyrs that so few of them did fall away. The Catholic Church in Philadelphia was painfully aware of the sad situation and strove mightily to alleviate it. In August of 1902 Fr. McDonovan, rector of St. Paul's, faced with the great need, organized a night school wherein he offered training in several manual arts along with the essential catechetical instruction. But he knew and others knew that it was merely a stop-gap, an expedient, that something

more extensive would have to be done. What could one priest do when the problem facing him consisted of eighty-five thousand non-English speaking people, twelve thousand of whom were children in public schools or worse, in the workshops of that day?

The Italians, however, had a friend, a zealous and apostolic friend. He was Monsignor Henry Drumgoole, a professor at St. Charles Seminary. In 1903 with the blessing of His Excellency Archbishop P. J. Ryan, D.D. he set about interesting Catholic men and women in the work of saving souls. His efforts met with instant success. The missionary instinct which is said to be in all of us took fire in the hearts of these laymen and thus was born the organization that is today known as the Madonna House. They adopted the name of The Missionary Society and by October 8, 1904 had procured a house located at 814 South Tenth Street. It was a building of fifteen rooms equipped for all immediate needs. On the night of October 8, 1904 the Society held its first meeting at which Archbishop Ryan presided. In attendance as well were Right Reverend Monsignor Henry Drumgoole, the Reverend James Turner who was the Vicar General of the diocese, the Reverend Phillip R. McDevitt, at that time the Superintendent of Schools and later the Bishop of Harrisburg. Prominent laymen also lent their support and encouragement. At that first meeting policies were outlined and the order of the house was agreed upon. Miss M. J. Hunt, whose name and deed loom large in the history of the Madonna House (as the building was even then called), was appointed resident manager. Miss Nellie Casey volunteered her services as visiting nurse. Knowing that some attractions must be offered to encourage a child who has already spent a day in school to give another hour to catechism, the committee obtained the services of several manual training instructors.

In November of 1904 another important meeting was held in Roman Catholic High School at which the Archbishop again presided. The deplorable situation existing in South Philadelphia was fully outlined to the large crowd gathered there. At that time the Knights of Columbus, who for the fifty years of Madonna House History have remained among its staunchest supporters, pledged the Society three thousand dollars. Father Drumgoole was put in charge of the collection which was deemed necessary for the furtherance of the Settlement project. The house soon became a maelstrom of activity. Classes were organized in sewing, embroidery, and dressmaking for the working girls; manual training and a sports program were provided for the boys. A kindergarten was organized with an enrollment of twenty-five children. In 1904 there were six hundred children who were enjoying the services of the Settlement House.

An athletic club was formed in 1908 under the management of Herman Bonner. Mr. Bonner spent many years heading the Madonna House Catholic Club which soon attracted much attention in the sports world. This club, begun as just another activity, in after years became a very important adjunct to the Madonna House. It helped greatly by its financial contributions to the work of the project. The names of Mr. Bonner and Miss Hunt, the resident manager, who so heroically labored for so many years in the cause of the Italian immigrants, are truly held in benediction.

Adopted January 14, 1922

The influence of the House was becoming very extensive. The need for a new house was evident to the board of managers which met frequently. New members were added. Names like Samuel J. Castner, Martin Maloney, Walter George Smith, John J. Sullivan, James M. Wilcox, Ignatius J. Horstman, and Emmanuel V. Nardi figured largely in the work of the House. To their keen interest, their untiring labors much of its success is attributable. Wanting to extend the spiritual benefits to as many as possible, they obtained the use of the large chapel of St. Paul's School and provisions for Sunday Masses and catechetical instruction were made. In addition to this, there were nineteen organized clubs with various activities to round out the social, religious, and athletic activities of the boys and girls. During these first four years, although he was still teaching, Monsignor Drumgoole worked assiduously at the Madonna House. He had been appointed Director of the Missionary Society in 1903 but the work was becoming such that the need of an assistant was imperative. The Archbishop appointed Father Joseph M. Corrigan, D.D. to assist Monsignor Drumgoole. Father Corrigan was later to take complete charge of the Madonna House. In 1909 the Missionary Society branched out. It began activities in the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, in St. Francis of Assisi, Germantown, and in Ambler. Already the House had prepared well over a thousand children for the Sacraments. These can be shown by statistics, but much of the work done by the Madonna House is intangible and known only to God. It is remarkable to note that an organization such as this which depends so much on the contributions of others was by 1909 itself contributing to others in distress. There is a record that in that year money was sent by the Missionary Society to the Earthquake victims in Sicily.

Under the paternal care of Archbishop Prendergast the Madonna House expanded to reach other quarters. Quick to realize the excellent prospects of such a work, he opened a branch at 1208 Reed Street in January of 1912, called the Assunta House. This in the years it existed was to do much missionary work in that section.

In September, 1915 Father Edward J. Lyng was appointed Diocesan Director of the Catholic Mission Society to succeed Father Corrigan after a lapse of two years. At a meeting of the board in October of the same year the appointment was ratified and a course of action proposed for the coming years. The board proposed to obtain the services of the Sisters of the Immaculate



**Most Reverend  
Joseph M. Corrigan, D. D.  
Second Director 1912-1915**

(Continued on page 19)



**Reverend Edward Lyng  
Third Director 1915-1932**

In the Spring of 1922 the Cardinal authorized the Diocesan Director to begin a pioneer movement in Norristown. With the help of the Knights of Columbus and the Alliance of Catholic Women this movement proved successful. A house was started at 230 East Main Street. In 1922, also, there was organized a Woman's Auxiliary to aid the work of the Madonna and the L'Assunta Houses.

At a meeting of the board at the Cardinal's residence on March 1, 1923, permission was granted to the Diocesan Director to have plans drawn and estimates obtained for a new building. This was subsequently built at 928 Christian Street. The laying of the cornerstone and the blessing of the new House by the Cardinal took place with great ceremony on April 4, 1924. Within its walls were found not only catechetical instructions but many features of social work. The Madonna House supplied free dental service, legal advice and free medical examinations. In the meantime Father Lyng had been transferred to St. Paul's Church as permanent rector in recognition of his great work as Director of the Mission Society.

The Madonna House came of age. On January 24, 1928 a banquet to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary was held in the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel under the patronage of His Eminence the Cardinal. Personages of great distinction honored the banquet and the Madonna House with their presence. The main speaker of the evening was His Eminence. Others who spoke were Monsignor Corrigan, Monsignor Drumgoole, the Honorable John J. Freschi, Judge Eugene Allesandrini, John J. Silvestro, and the Italian Ambassador. The huge success of the banquet was largely owed to the efforts of the Madonna House Auxiliaries under the presidency of Mrs. Catherine Carroll. So much could and should be written of the splendid work of this brave and talented woman among the Italian people. She has ever been their champion, their great friend. Still after these many years her care and her work among us do not cease. The Madonna House has much for which to be grateful to Mrs. Carroll.

(Continued on page 21)

Heart of Mary to manage the social and religious activities of the House. These good Sisters worked indefatigably for many years and accomplished an incalculable amount of good. At the same meeting the Madonna House Guild was formed. This was a society of young women who were to meet monthly and actively engage in teaching and in other departments. A resolution was passed to issue a monthly bulletin and plans were made for the procurement of money. Among these was the well remembered Lend-a-Hand Society.

The work went on. With the advent of the Sisters the religious and social services of the House spurted ahead. In those first years thousands were prepared for the Sacraments, some ninety thousand homes were visited and many who had been negligent returned to the fold.

As adopted January 14, 2022

With the assurance that comes with maturity the Madonna House for the last twenty-five years has settled into the regular routine of religious and social services to the community. Father Lyng was succeeded by Father James W. Gibbons, D.D. in 1932 who was Director modeled after the pattern to which the House had become accustomed. With his zeal and industry the advances accomplished by his predecessors were insured. During Father Gibbons' tenure the Missionary Sisters of the Most Blessed Trinity came to take charge of the activities. There are no words to tell of their love and devotion. Who can tell this side of Heaven the gigantic good they have done and are doing under the wise and kind leadership of the Sisters.



**Rev. Edward W. Gibbons, D.D.**

**Fourth Director 1932-1936**  
gone before. His unflagging interest carried the Madonna House to greater achievements. He in turn was followed by Father Edward Flatley in 1942.

So recent has his term been that all of us remember the great energy he expended on behalf of the Madonna House and the many new projects he initiated. At the coming of Father Flatley, the Madonna House was taken over by the parish of St. Paul which agreed to accept all responsibility for it and its activities, even to the extent of supplying a direct of. At that time it was moved to 918-920 Carpenter Street, its present site.

**Rev. Joseph F. Toye  
Fifth Director 1936-1942**

In 1949, Father Smith, the present director, came. So briefly, inadequately, is told the story of the Madonna House. It has been a beacon, a safe harbor, a friendly refuge, an anchor of faith for countless children of South Philadelphia who might otherwise have lost their way.

**The Madonna House Today**  
Today, after fifty years of work in South Philadelphia, the problem of Italian immigrants no longer exists. Our people, by dint of hard work, have taken their place as leaders among the American citizenry. As a result, the program is aimed at solving the problems of any American community. We aim to give the children a healthy religious atmosphere in which to grow, and

## The Angel Cenacle

The Angel Cenacle meets once a week and is made up of those girls of Grammar School Age who want to give an afternoon in helping the missions. The girls mount holy cards, make shrines, polish medals, etc. and send these things to the Missions in the South. They are encouraged to receive the Sacraments and to try to get their parents to receive as often as possible.

## Private Tutoring Service

Through the services of the Harvester Club of St. Joseph's College, special tutoring in Latin is given to the ninth grade pupils of St. Paul's school. This is done in an effort to keep the children up to the high standards of Catholic schools. A word of thanks is due to the college students who have been so faithful to this endeavor.

## Referral Service for Crime Prevention Division, Philadelphia Police

Because it is often difficult to correct delinquency among our youth, unless the causes are uncovered and corrected, the Philadelphia Police department has instituted a system of referring the cases of children who have gotten in trouble to a committee of interested persons. The Madonna House has been happy to take part in this program which is headed by Mr. J. Francis Finnegan. During the past year or so more than seventy-five cases have been investigated and reported upon.

## St. Paul's Holy Name Society

Because of this activity an opportunity is provided to contact the men of St. Paul's Parish. These men have been active as good Catholics in the reception of the Sacraments, taking part in discussion clubs and supporting the parish by continual sacrifice of time. Their Mothers' Day Communion Breakfast was a grand success this year, when basketball trophies were awarded to Anthony Provenzano of the Junior Team, and Carmen Argentina of the Intermediates. A special award of outstanding merit was given to Mr. Dominic Fante because of his unstinted efforts on behalf of the Madonna House.

## Our Lady of Fatima Club

In 1917 Our Blessed Lady appeared at Fatima in Portugal, beseeching the world to return to God. She proposed the daily recitation of the Rosary and the devotion of the First Saturdays. In return She promised peace to the world, that peace that only God can give. The good mothers of our kindergarten children accepted Our Lady's request and faithfully do their best to please Her Immaculate Heart. These good women have been inspired to help the Madonna House in many ways. Their service in the