

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

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES 32 pp.

### 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: 1001 W Luzerne Street

Postal code: 19140 Councilmanic District: Fifth (5th)

#### 2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Little Flower High School for Girls

Common Name: same as above

#### 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: Catholic secondary school (Grades 9 to 12)

#### 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary.

#### 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 1938 to         

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1938 to dedication, 1939

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Henry D. Dagit & Sons

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: McCloskey & Company

Original owner: Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: St. Thérèse Martin, OCD, and Cardinal  
Dennis Dougherty, DD of Philadelphia

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION: *\*Committee on Historic Designation did not recommend Criterion A but agreed the nomination satisfied Criterion J.*

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, St. Thérèse Martin with Cardinal Dougherty
- ☐ (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: 6/2/2021

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 7/30/2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 7/30/2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Address: 222 N 17th St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19130

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 9/21/2022

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 10/14/2022

Date of Final Action: 10/14/2022; designated under Criteria D, E, H, and J

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected *\*Committee on Historic Designation and Historical Commission concluded building is designed in the Moderne style not International Style.* 3/12/18

-3-

## BOUNDARIES:

The PHC Staff is requested to provide dimensions to the parcel below, identified as the Little Flower High School lot.

Other available information on the parcel is below.

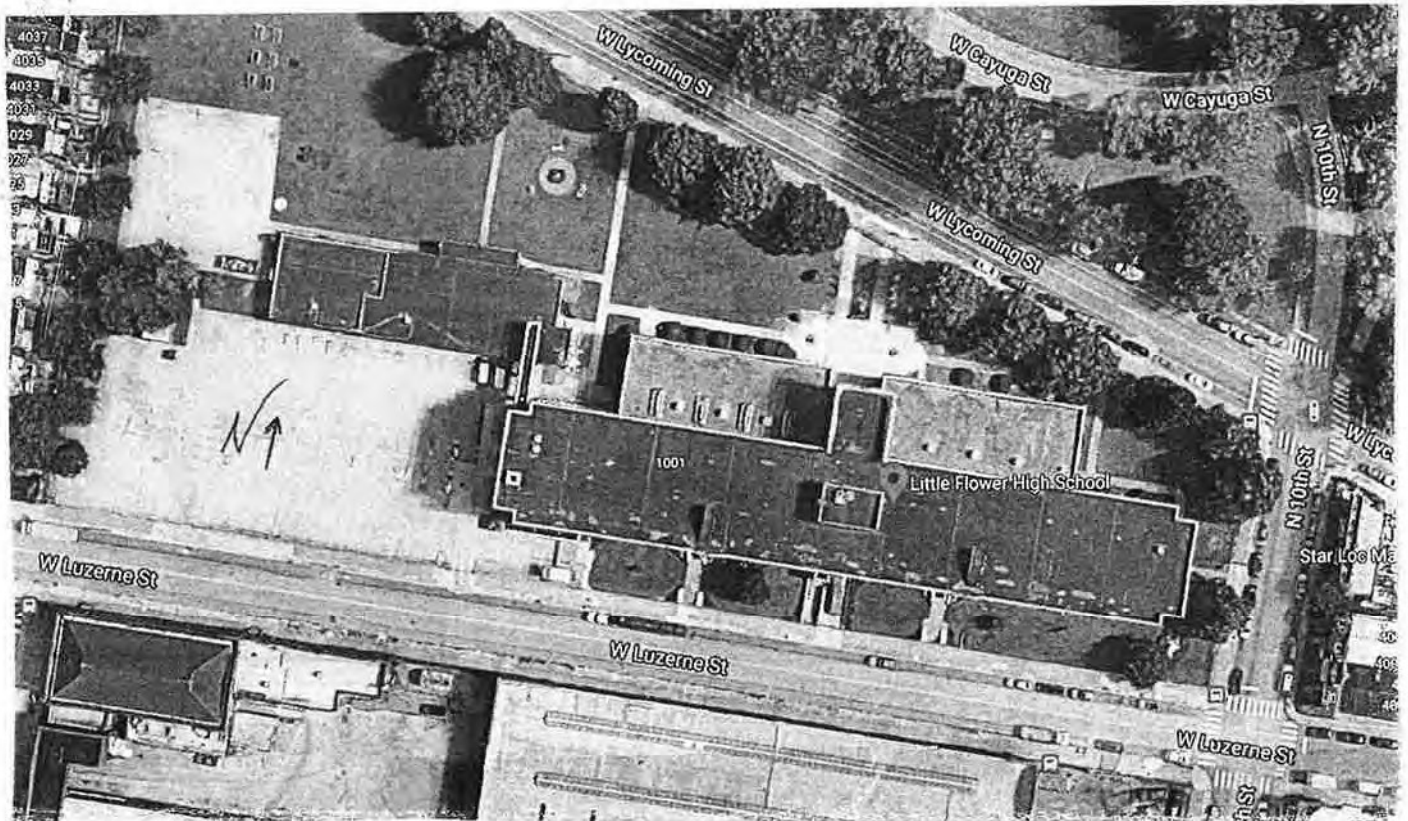
**City of Philadelphia | Atlas**

**1001 W LUZERNE ST**  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19140-3115

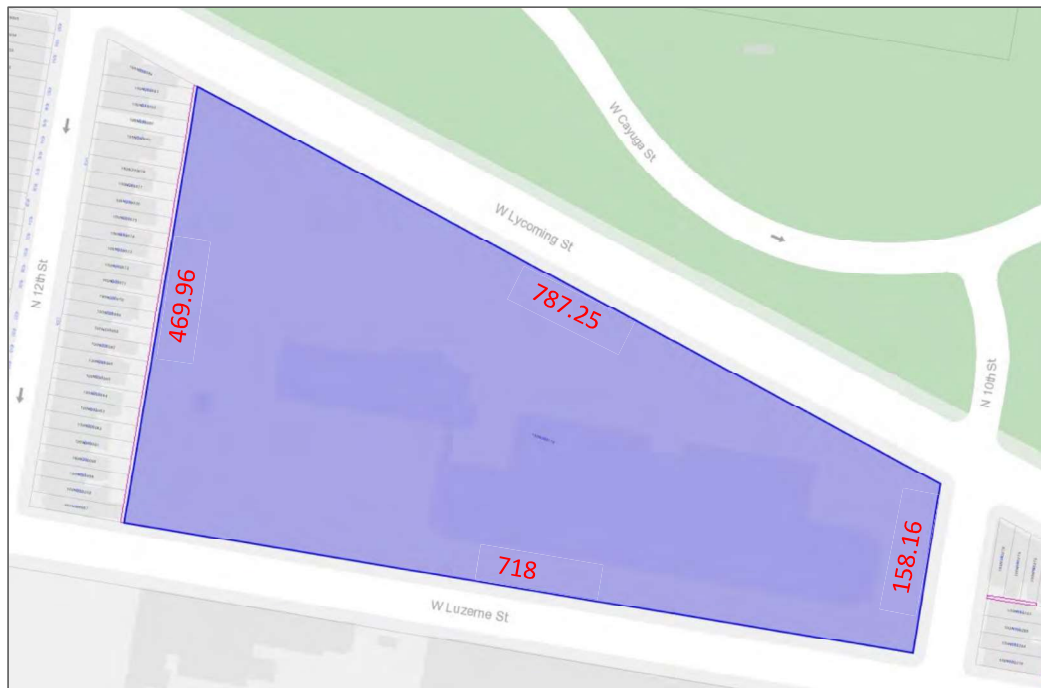
1001 W. Luzerne

Parcel Details

Map Registry #	100N200114
Parcel Address	1001 W LUZERNE ST
Status	Active
Origination Date	06/10/2003
Inactive Date	12/30/1999
Has Air Rights	No
Is Condo	No
Perimeter	2,108 ft
Area	214,782 sq ft



## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (Provided by PHC Staff)



The boundary description for 1001 W Luzerne Street is as follows:

Beginning at a point at the northwest corner of W Luzerne and N 10th Streets thence West along W Luzerne Street approximately 718 feet; thence North approximately 470 feet; thence East along W Lycoming Street approximately 787 feet; thence South along N 10<sup>th</sup> Street approximately 158 feet to the point of beginning.

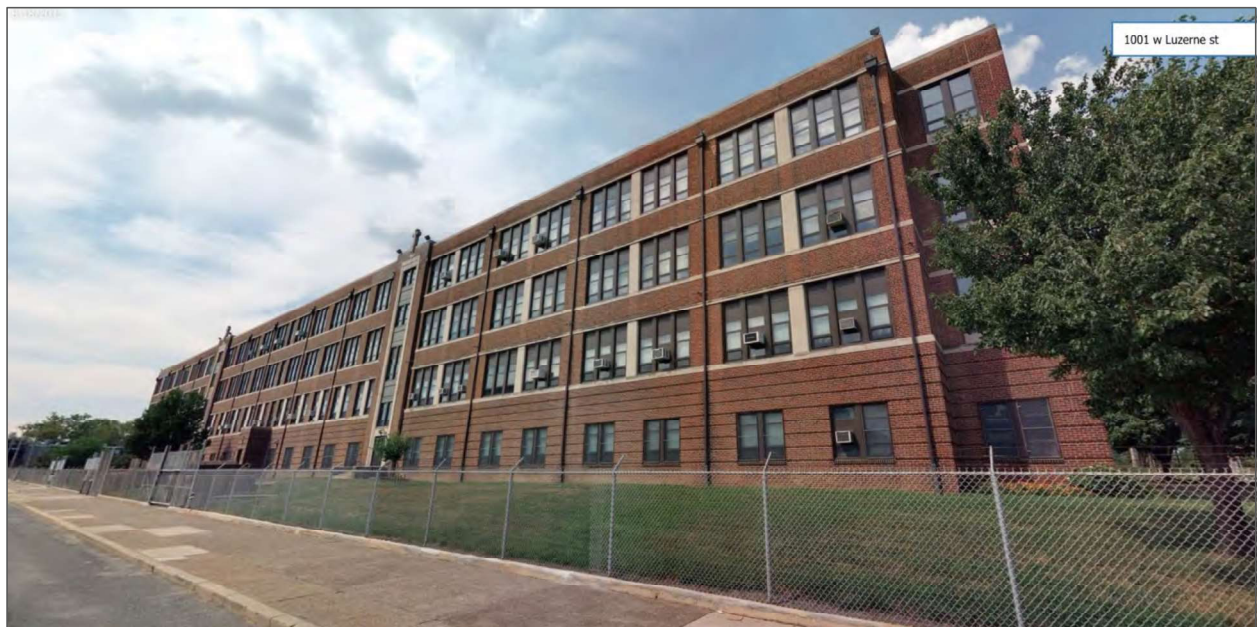




## PHOTOGRAPHS (Provided by PHC Staff)



Front façade of 1001 W Luzerne St. (Source: Cyclomedia, August 2021)

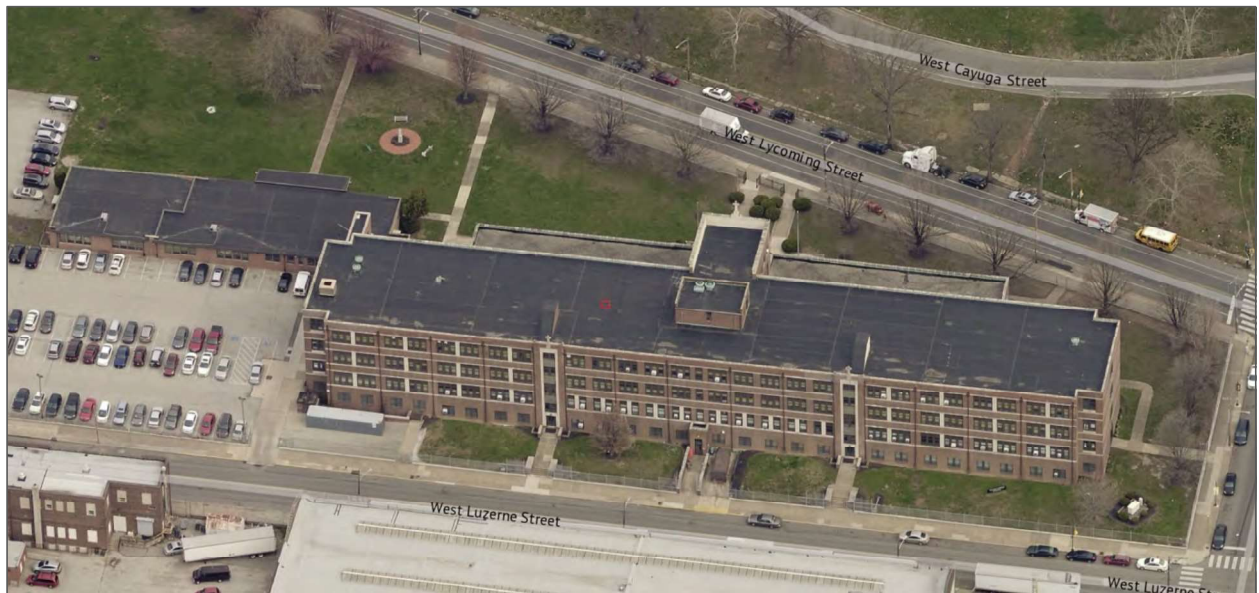


Rear façade of 1001 W Luzerne St. (Source: Cyclomedia, August 2021)

PHOTOGRAPHS (Provided by PHC Staff)



Aerial view showing front of building at 1001 W Luzerne St. (Source: CONNECT Explorer, August 2021)



Aerial view showing rear of building at 1001 W Luzerne St. (Source: CONNECT Explorer, August 2021)



-4-

DESCRIPTION:

Little Flower High School for Girls is located behind an expanse of landscaped lawns, and on the south side of Hunting Park on Lycoming Street. The building faces northward. The grounds are an integral part of the building's design, a late 1930s geometric assemblage of rectangular forms in the "International Style."

Red or "salmon" colored brick is the main construction material with horizontal or vertical white Indiana limestone strips defining the windows and main portal. There are three rectangular forms in the composition: two single-story wide rectangles flanking and projecting from the center rectangular, which is a vertical three-story. This unit has groupings of three windows at each level within a limestone surround, and same in vertical strips at the roofline. A limestone cross is at the top of the flat roof. Limestone trim also outlines the entry's bronze doors which are hemmed in by the projected sides of the buildings in the foreground. The center unit's south wall is attached to a wider three-story rectangular unit spanning the length of the building, and within the greenspaces around it. The building's south wall on Luzerne Street is remarkable for the vertical elements which indicate the two access points. At the east and west walls are projected areas where stairwells are located. (See page 7.) Around all sides of the building, horizontals of limestone effectively coordinate with the verticals.

The building appeared in very good condition, as were the manicured grounds.

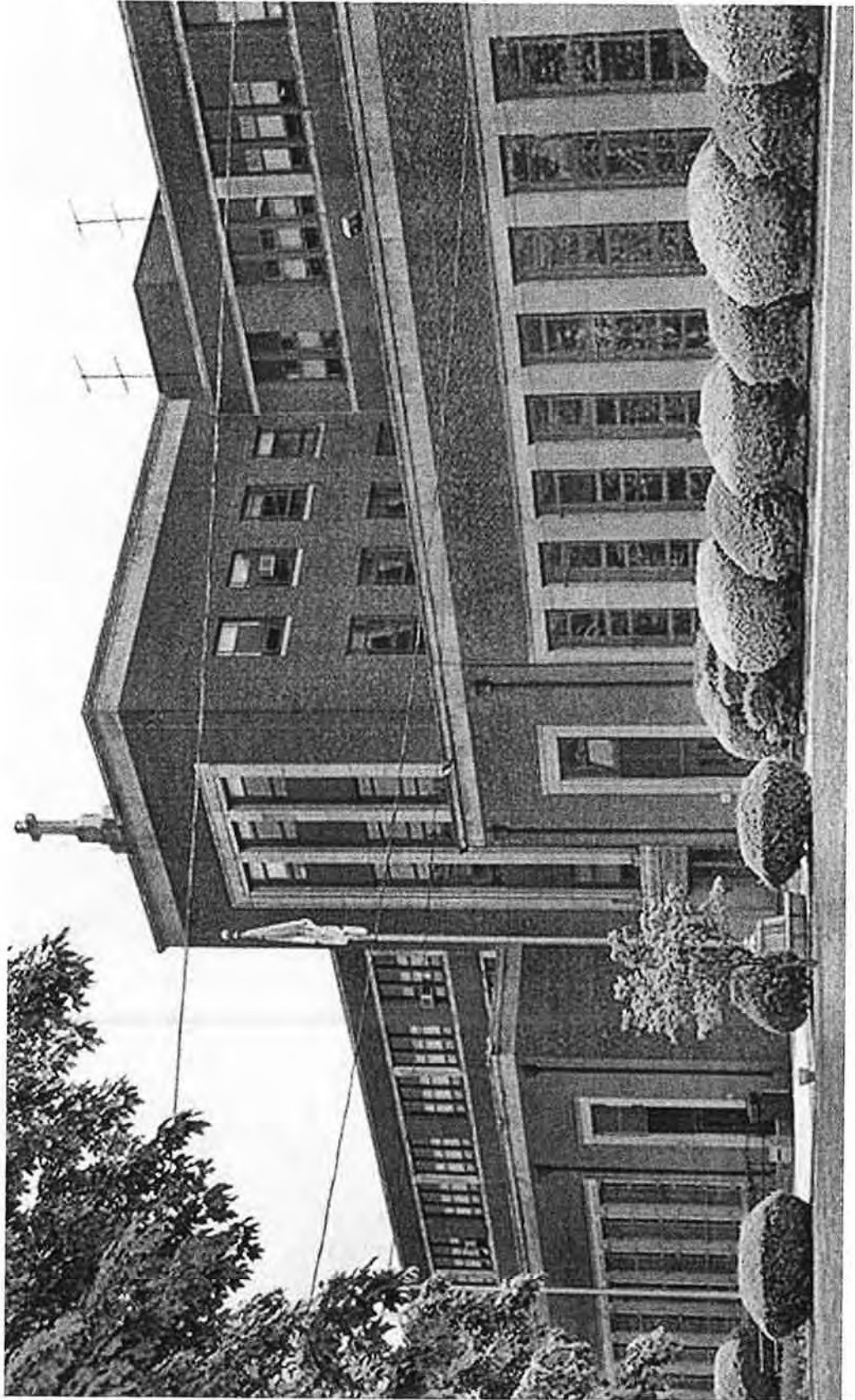
Recent photographs as well as those from the Henry D. Dagit and Sons Album follow, along with the "Pencil Points" (April, 1942) article.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Album dates from 1952 and was presented to Cardinal O'Hara. All records are in the Archdiocesan Archives, Catholic Historical Research Center, (CHRC), Philadelphia.

-5-

LITTLE FLOWER HIGH SCHOOL for GIRLS

(Photograph taken for the building's architects, Henry D. Dagit & Sons.)





-6-



Recent photographs of  
Little Flower High School.

Top: Closer view of entry  
and "canopy" (architect's  
description) slightly over  
the triple-sets of doors.

Note the planed lines in  
the limestone trim.

Left: View farther to  
north shows how building  
and greenspace coordinate  
and the type of landscaping.

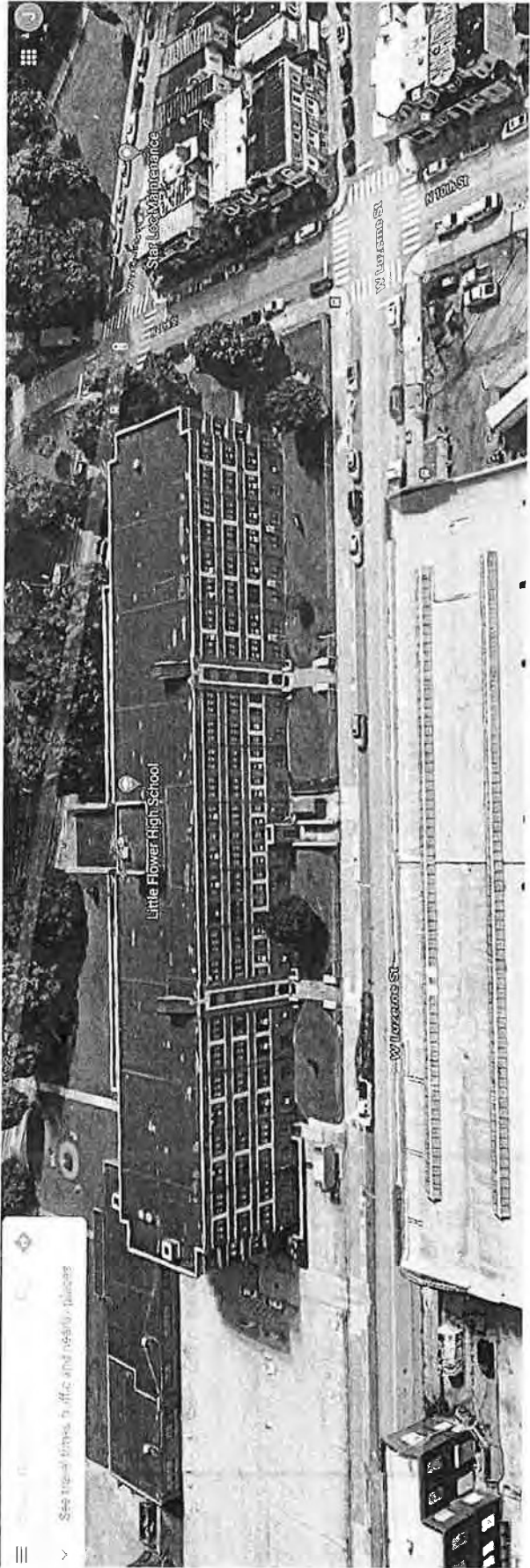
The statue is of St. Therese  
of Lisieux, who is known as  
"The Little Flower."





Recent photographs of west and south walls.  
Luzerne Street is at south.

Remarkable are how the white lime-stone strips add to the geometric characteristics of the building.  
The shapes of the windows, placement of the windows and the contrast in colors present more linear forms for this design.



-8-

## STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE:

When planned in 1938 as a Catholic high school for girls in Northeast Philadelphia, Little Flower's construction was overseen by Cardinal Dennis J. Dougherty, DD. As the first Cardinal for the Philadelphia see, who was enthroned by the nation's first Cardinal, James Gibbons, Dougherty was able to participate in the proceedings in Thérèse "The Little Flower" Martin's canonization in the early 1920s. A Carmelite nun, dying at age 24 and authoring a book which was published millions of times, Thérèse's cause to sainthood came earlier than the 50 year requirement (along with miracles) and she became a world-wide, popular saint. Philadelphia's Cardinal Dougherty would memorialize St. Thérèse all over his archdiocese;<sup>2</sup> naming the new high school "Little Flower" was expected. And the building would likewise, be exceptional.

The Henry D. Dagit & Sons firm designed the new school, with Matthew McCloskey & Company<sup>3</sup> contractors erecting a fire-proofed modern building for its time. By the late 1930s, buildings in the "~~International Style~~,"<sup>\*</sup> especially residential plans, were considerate of their sites, appearing as if attached to the ground organically, but in linear or geometric forms. Little Flower High School's design was featured in "Pencil Points," the "foremost publication" for architects; the design was rarely seen in school design. When Cardinal Dougherty appointed some of the best professionals for Little Flower's construction, the intent was to create another tribute to St. Thérèse with her statue at the entrance to greet everyone and to remember her in context with the new way of designing schools in a "modern" style in the 20th century. Criteria (a), (d), (e) and (h) direct how Little Flower High School merits historical designation.

- <sup>2</sup> Dougherty ordered statues of Thérèse in the 400+ churches in the Archdiocese, not counting those in parochial schools, chapels, and St. Charles Borromeo Seminary's cloister. Novenas to her also were begun in parishes and continue today.
- <sup>3</sup> Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, January 5, 1938; "The Philadelphia Inquirer," May 21, 1939.

*\* Committee on Historic Designation and Historical Commission concluded building is designed in the **Moderne** style not International Style.*

-9-

HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS  
ARCHITECTS

HENRY D. DAGIT, JR., R. A.  
ALBERT F. DAGIT, R. A.  
CHARLES E. DAGIT, MANAGER

1329 RACE STREET  
PHILADELPHIA

April 20, 1942

86.4351

His Eminence, D. Cardinal Dougherty  
Archbishop of Philadelphia  
225 North 18th Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Your Eminence:

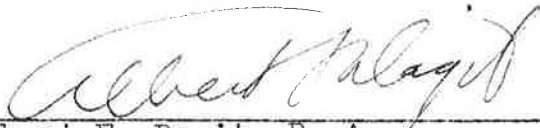
Under separate cover, we are sending you a copy of the April issue of PENCIL POINTS magazine, on Pages 207, 208 and 209 of which you will find illustrations of the Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls.

PENCIL POINTS is the foremost publication devoted to the architectural profession. The editors selected your new Little Flower High School for presentation to its readers as an example of fine architectural treatment, planning and design and we are delighted that this latest addition to Philadelphia's Catholic Educational System has received such outstanding recognition.

With every good wish, we remain, Your Eminence,

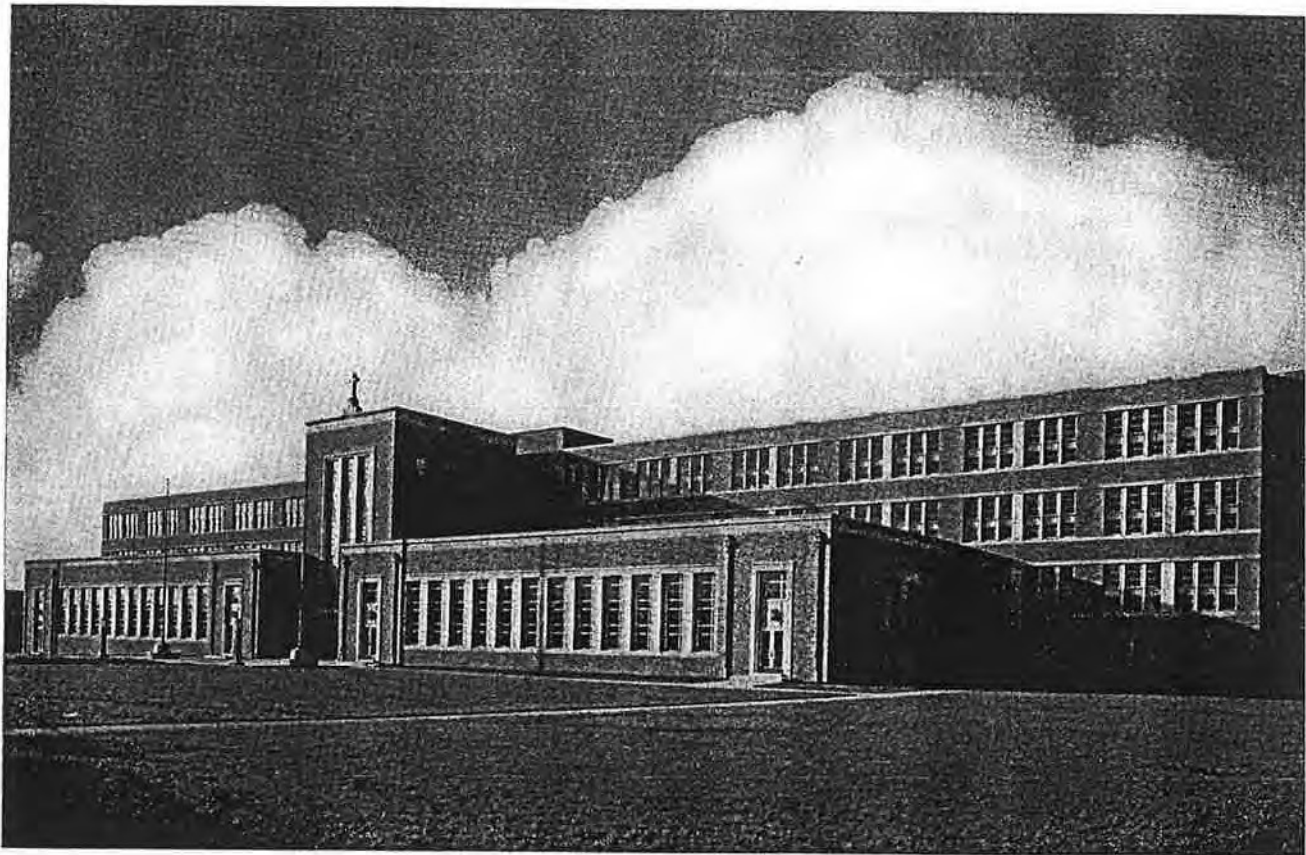
Sincerely yours,  
HENRY D. DAGIT AND SONS,

By:

  
Albert F. Dagit, R. A.

AED:GD



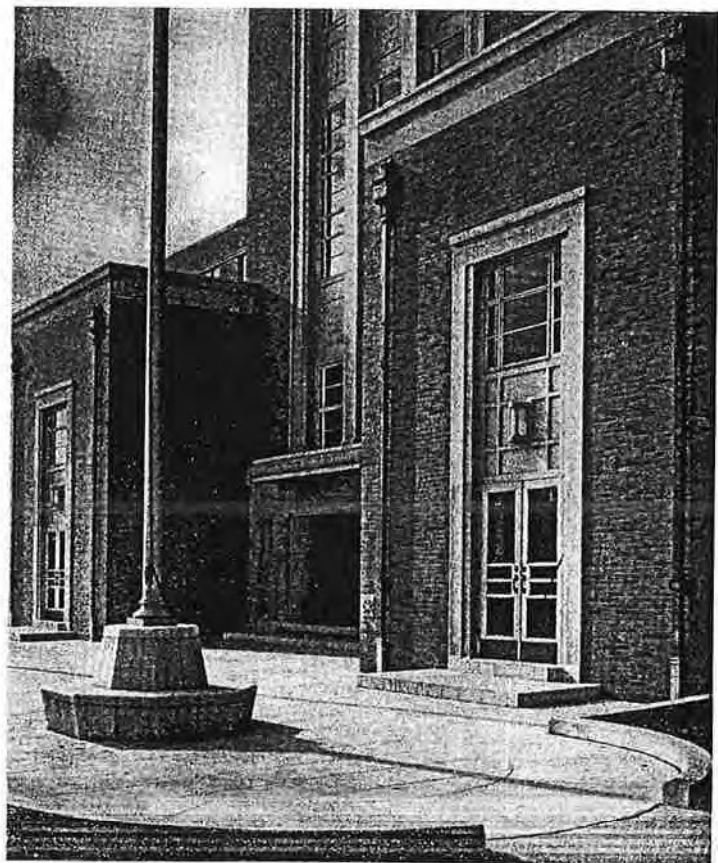


## HIGH SCHOOL

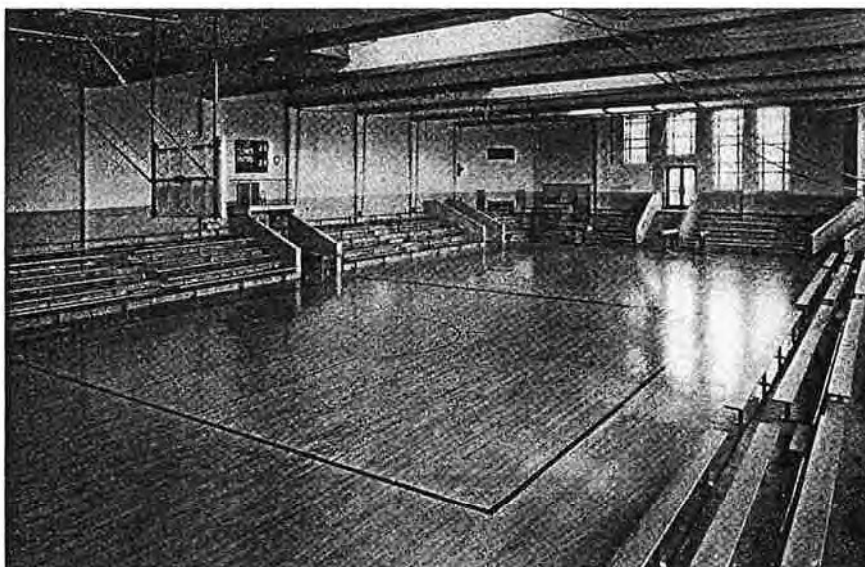
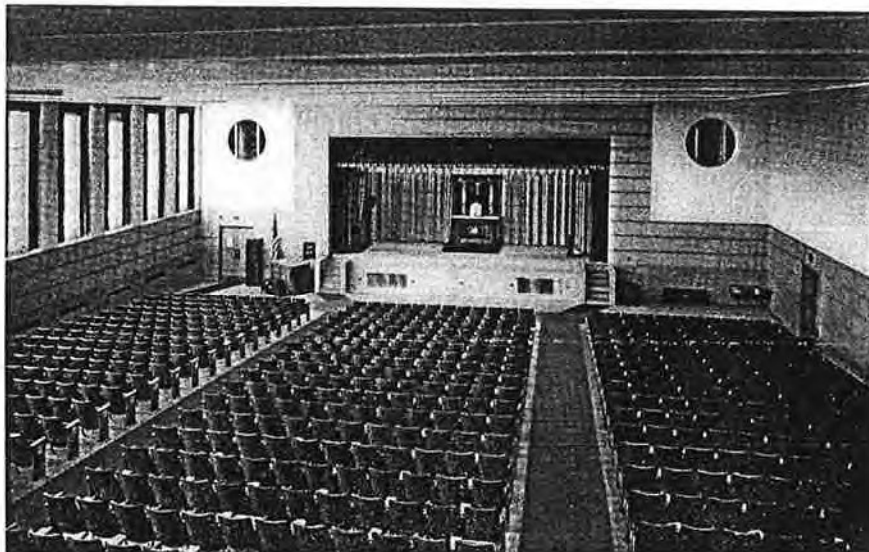
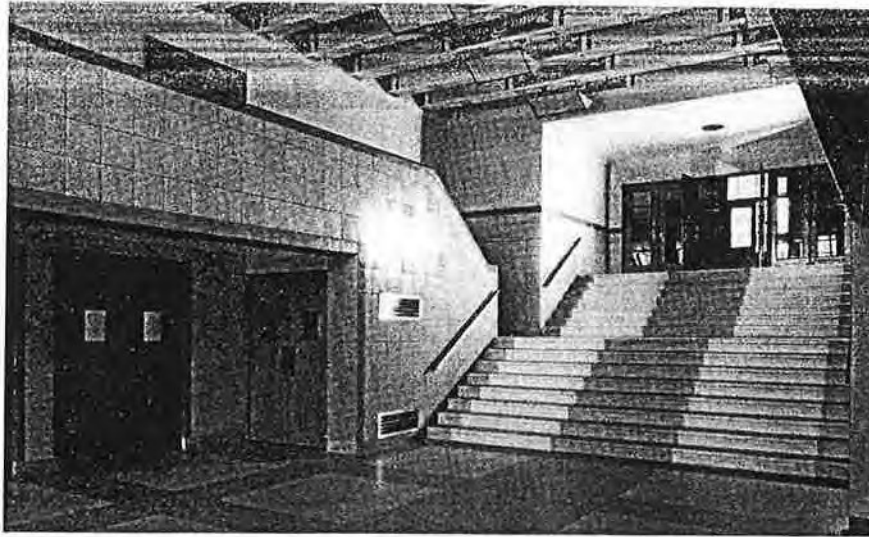
HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS

ARCHITECTS

*This Catholic high school for girls, in Philadelphia, owned by The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, has academic facilities for 3,000 students. Built of reinforced concrete on a structural steel frame, the building is faced with salmon-colored brick in a full range of shades, and trimmed with Indiana limestone. The main entrance doors and door frames (see detail at right) are of bronze. Each Class Room, as well as the Auditorium, Gymnasium, and Cafeteria has a loud speaker connected with the office so that announcements and special lectures may be broadcast to the entire student body. Class Rooms for academic subjects are on the first two floors. On the third floor are the Science Laboratories and the necessary rooms for Vocational Training*

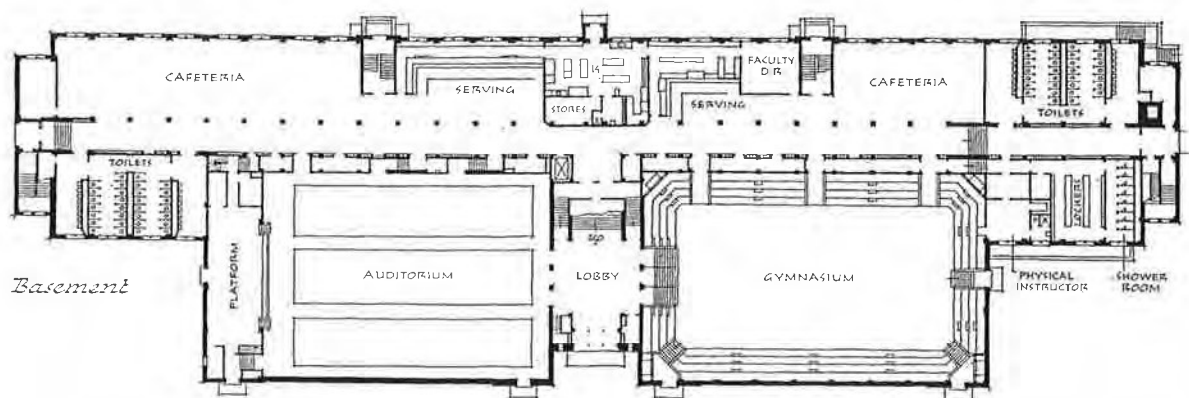
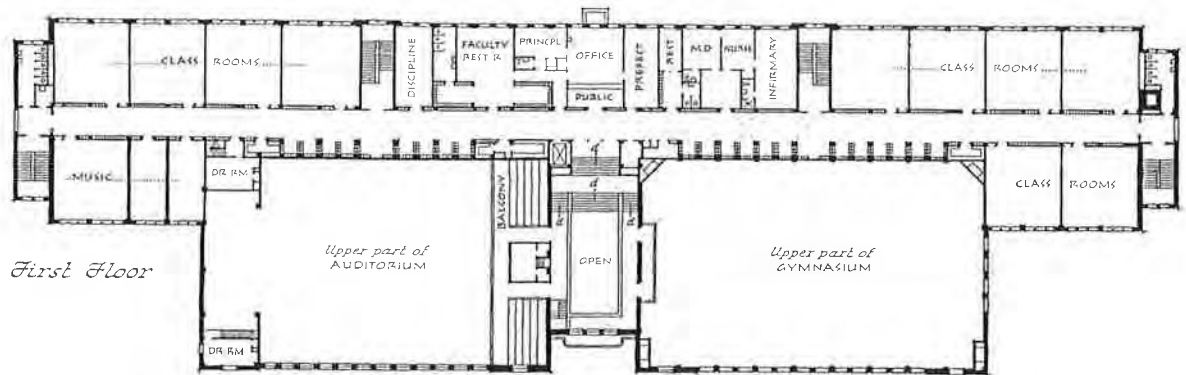
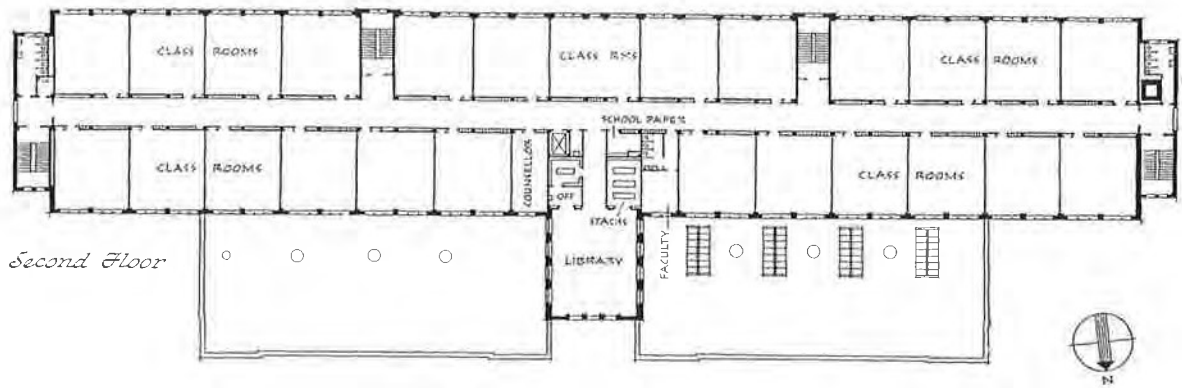
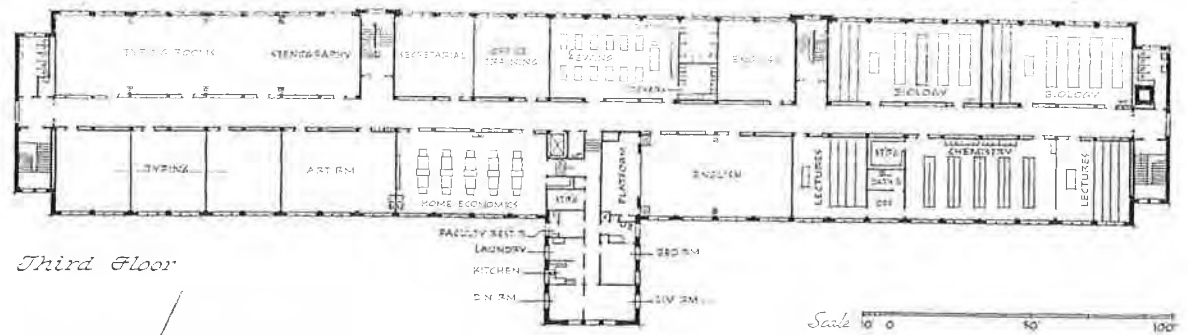


The plan of the building was so disposed that the Entrance Lobby is in the middle of the building, with the Auditorium and Gymnasium on either side. For special events, such as Commencement exercises, the Lobby doors to the Auditorium and the Gymnasium can be thrown open, making both rooms available to accommodate the guests. When either the Auditorium or Gymnasium is used at night the doors from the Lobby to the school proper can be locked, making it unnecessary for visitors to go through the school. A Cafeteria and Kitchen facilities are provided on this floor. The top photograph shows the Lobby which has a terrazzo floor and glazed terra cotta wainscoting in buff, with crimson trim. The special glass lighting fixtures are trimmed with chromium. The Auditorium (center photograph) is also used as a Chapel for the students. The wainscoting of glazed terra cotta is also of buff, with green trim, topped with buff plaster walls, sand-finished. The Gymnasium (right) has a buff color, glazed structural tile wainscot, and concrete bleachers for the fixed wood benches. Corridors, stair halls, and toilets have terrazzo floors, and buff-color, glazed structural tile wainscots. All interior woodwork is of plain, sawed red oak. A centrally-located Library is on the second floor in the main entrance wing. (All photographs are by William M. Rittase)



DESIGNED BY HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS, ARCHITECTS

-12-



LITTLE FLOWER CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS -



# GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL NEARS COMPLETION

PI-MAY 21, 1939

The Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls, an imposing edifice of red brick trimmed with limestone, is rapidly nearing completion on a spacious plot at 10th st. and Lycoming ave.

This latest addition to the cultural assets of the city will be ready in August, several weeks before the opening of the 1939-40 school year. Henry D. Dagit & Sons, architects, said yesterday.

The building will contain in addition to classrooms, lecture rooms, laboratories and cafeteria, a large auditorium, gymnasium and library. McCloskey & Co. are the builders.

Fronting a park across the street, a monumental main entrance of three stories is the central motif. Its bronze entrance doors are shielded from the elements by a massive limestone canopy. A large limestone cross tops the entrance.

On the left is the auditorium; on the right, the gymnasium, while behind these wings is the main building containing 63 classrooms, lecture rooms, laboratories, etc.

## LOBBY IS TWO STORIES

Built for long-range durability, the framework of the fireproof building is of reinforced concrete and steel throughout.

The lobby is two stories open on to the auditorium and gymnasium and serves the three-fold purpose of a foyer for both the auditorium and gymnasium and the main entrance.

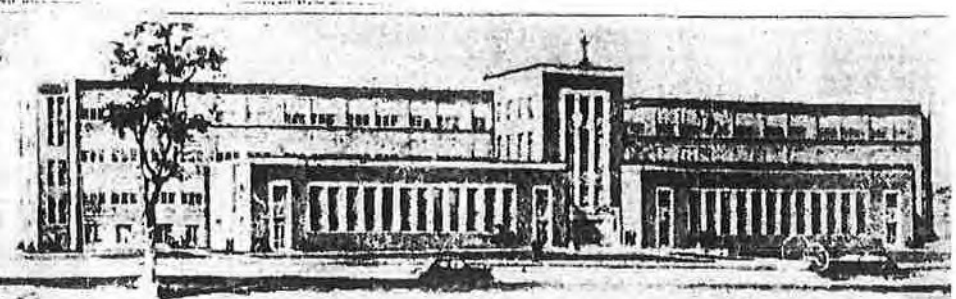
Walls of the lobby are of buff terra cotta with crimson trim; those of the auditorium are faced with terra cotta tile painted in cream, coral and green colors. A unique system of direct lighting is used.

The library is on the second floor above the entrance lobby; above the library, on the third floor, is the domestic science instruction, with kitchen, dining room, living room, bedroom, tile bath and laundry.

Each classroom, the gymnasium, auditorium and cafeteria will be equipped with a sound system, controlled from the principal's office.

Award for Convent

"The Philadelphia Inquirer," "Bulletin" and "Record" publicize Little Flower H.S.



Exterior plan of new Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls being constructed by McCloskey & Co., at 10th st. and Lycoming ave. The structure will be ready

for occupancy late in the summer. It was designed by Henry D. Dagit & Sons. The exterior is brick, trimmed with limestone.

# CORNERSTONE LAID FOR GIRLS' SCHOOL

MAY 22 1939

Record  
**Cardinal Dougherty Takes Part in Ceremonies as 5000 Attend.**

Dennis Cardinal Dougherty yesterday set in place the cornerstone of the partially completed Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls, 10th and Luzerne sts.

More than 5000 persons attended the ceremony, including Bishop Hugh L. Lamb and many priests.

Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Bonner, superintendent of parochial schools, spoke. He said:

"Never in the history of our country was there so great a need of religious education as there is today. Never so much as now were Catholic high schools of such vital necessity."

Music was supplied by the combined bands of the John W. Hallahan and West Catholic Girls' High Schools.

The building, which will accommodate 2500 pupils, will contain 63 classrooms, a library, auditorium and gymnasium. It will be opened in September.

## CORNERSTONE TO BE LAID Cardinal Dougherty Will Preside at School Exercises

The cornerstone of the partially completed Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls, 10th and Luzerne sts., will be placed tomorrow at exercises at which Cardinal Dougherty will preside.

The bands and glee clubs of the Hallahan and West Catholic Girls' High Schools will participate. Monsignor John J. Bonner, diocesan superintendent of schools, will preach. The new building will contain 63 classrooms, library, auditorium, gymnasium and other facilities, accommodating 30,000 pupils.

Why store in the attic furniture or other

Non-Catholic, secular newspapers on Little Flower High School's progress included the architect's drawing.



The Catholic Standard &amp; Times Friday, May 19, 1939

Continued to  
Sunday May

# Standard



VOL. 44—NO. 31

Published weekly. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office at Philadelphia, Pa., under the Act of March, 1879.

PHILADELPHIA,

## Girls' New High School Corner-Stone to Be Laid

His Eminence to Officiate Sunday at 10th and Luzerne Sts., at 3.30 P. M. (d. s. t.)—Clergy and Laity Cordially Invited to Be Present—Right Rev. Monsignor John J. Bonner, D. D., LL. D., Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, to Preach—Music by Bands and Glee Clubs of Hallahan and West Catholic Schools

Described as one of the finest and most up-to-date schools in the country, thoroughly in pace with modern strides in educational progress, the corner-stone of the Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls will be blessed and laid in place on Sunday afternoon at 3.30 o'clock (d. s. t.).

His Eminence, the Most Rev. Archbishop, will officiate. The Rev. Clergy have been invited to assist in cassock, surplice and biretta. Members of their congregations, particularly parish societies, have likewise been invited to be present. Religious orders of men and of women will attend, especially superiors and heads of congregations, colleges, academies and high schools.

One of the local Catholic news outlets recorded a "Description" apparently from the (unnamed) architect.

Box, J. C. D., assistant of schools, as Joseph A. Gor- assistant super- as sub-deacon. Corr and the min, D. D., will anies. be delivered by assignor John J. D., diocesan schools. ndered by the the Hallahan elphia Catholic s. Vocal selec- y the Glee Clubs

Schools.

3.30 P. M.—Laying of corner-stone.

Flag raising and rendition of "Star-Spangled Banner."

Sermon by the Right Rev. Monsignor John J. Bonner, D. D., LL. D.

Selection: "May Hymn," Glee Clubs.

Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament by His Eminence: Motet, "Adoramus Te Christe," Palestrina, Glee Clubs; "Tantum Ergo," Glee Clubs; "Holy God We Praise Thy Name," entire assembly.

Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament will be given immediately after the corner stone laying.

### Description of School

Rapidly nearing completion is the new Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls situated on a spacious plot of ground at the corner of 10th and Luzerne sts. This beautiful structure, facing the charming park on the opposite side of the street, is modern in design, construction and appointments. The architects are Henry D. Dagit & Sons, of this city.

The exterior presents a pleasing harmony of lines, detail and proportion by the frank arrangement of its studied masses. The monumental main entrance rising three stories in height is the central motif. Its bronze entrance doors are shielded from the weather by a massive limestone canopy. Above this canopy is a tier of windows for the lobby, the library and the third floor, which are framed with limestone trim, giving a vertical movement to the design and unity of composition to the main entrance wing. This treatment forms a strong and logical point of interest at the

center of the facade with all other parts being complimentary and adding to the dignity and beauty of the front elevation. On top of the entrance wing is a limestone cross.

### Auditorium and Gymnasium

The auditorium is on the left of the main entrance and the gymnasium is on the right; while behind these wings is the main building containing classrooms, lecture rooms, laboratories, cafeteria and all other necessary facilities that make up the modern high school of today.

The exterior walls are built of red brick trimmed with Indiana limestone. The steel windows, too add to the atmosphere of permanence and good quality that pervades the entire building. Its construction is fireproof, of reinforced concrete and steel.

The imposing lobby, which is two stories in height, is colorful and beautiful in its design and selection of materials. The walls are built of buff terra cotta with crimson trim around the doors and windows. The floors are laid in blocks of cream and coral terrazzo.

(Continued on Page 3, Col. 5)

Little Flower High School for Girls...

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City...and is associated with the life of a person significant in the past:

ST. THÉRÈSE MARTIN, OCD  
(1873-1897)

The face, and the writings of Thérèse Martin, a 24 year old Carmelite nun when she died, have fixated those who have seen them.



Just before she passed, Thérèse wrote "Spring-time Story of a Little White Flower Written by Herself and Dedicated to the Reverend Mother Mary Agnes of Jesus." Thérèse was dying of tuberculosis while she wrote what would become published millions of times over the decades as Story of a Soul (1898). Mother Agnes was, in fact, one of Therese's older sisters (her other sisters also were Carmelites). They would be communicating with Philadelphia's first Cardinal, Dennis

Dougherty for years--before and after Thérèse was canonized a saint in 1925. And Thérèse's sisters would live on afterward, to know that in Philadelphia, Dougherty would name a Catholic high school for girls after Thérèse, a model of goodness and honesty and deep conviction. She referred to herself as the "Little Flower" and made allusions to flowers and gardens in her writings, which were burrowed in Dougherty, all consumingly. In the Archdiocese of

-16-

Philadelphia during Dougherty's leadership, (1918-1951), Thérèse Martin's holiness had been promoted by her Order at the Carmelite Monastery in Oak Lane, with some translations of her work distributed from Philadelphia. In 1921 to 1922, the design of the new church at Our Lady of Mount Carmel<sup>4</sup> in South Philadelphia held at the portal a bas relief of "Little Thérèse" not yet, but anxiously awaiting canonization. (She would attain sainthood officially after Mount Carmel church's dedication.) In 1925, Cardinal Dougherty<sup>5</sup> and hundreds here boarded a ship for Thérèse's canonization: the manufacturing of statuettes, printed images on cards and other commemorative articles (medals, dolls, etc....) began then, and continues because interest in Thérèse continues.

Thérèse's popularity in Philadelphia could be put into better context when she is compared to other Catholic saints who were in secular news and/or in popular culture in the 20th century. For example, Joan of Arc reached sainthood in 1920 with nearly 100,000 people (and a substantial number who claimed to be related to her)<sup>6</sup>. Philadelphia has the first parish church dedicated to her in Harrowgate, yet hundreds of statues of her are not in archdiocesan churches, as Thérèse's. Hollywood made films on Joan with A-list actors, as with the story of Bernadette Soubirous. The latter was canonized in 1933 (Dougherty may have participated(?).) And then there was the first American saint, Frances Cabrini, who in 1946 led what is now, a formidable line of 20th century extraordinary American Catholics to this official status.

None captivated Cardinal Dougherty more than Thérèse.

Her book, edited by Agnes, was the beginning of many, many books hailing Thérèse's "Little Way," or capitalizing on her popularity. In 1999, a curated travelling display of Thérèse's personal effects and numerous photographs of her came to Philadelphia and other U.S. cities, maintaining a "cult" to her. There was Thérèse, a

<sup>4</sup> This nominator submitted the Monastery's Chapel and Mount Carmel Church and Rectory applications to the PHC in 2021 with these facts.  
<sup>5</sup> Archdiocesan Staff, *Our Faith-Filled Heritage*. 2007, p. 84.  
<sup>6</sup> This nominator's application for this St. Joan of Arc Church and the subsequent one were submitted in 2019 and await review.

-17-

child playing; or of dressing in a play on Joan of Arc (a heroine then, in French history); or of Thérèse with her new habit, as a Carmelite in Lisieux (Normandy), France. Her parents, Louis and Zélie Martin have since been canonized, and her sister, Céline (Sister Genevieve, OCD) has an open cause for sainthood, bringing continued popularity and publicity to Thérèse Martin and her family.

Cardinal Dougherty's fluency in several languages, including French, allowed him to freely communicate with Thérèse's sisters and the other nuns at the Lisieux Carmel. He kept them informed of his work, and when a new archdiocesan high school was planned for girls in Northeast Philadelphia, it was Dougherty who named the school in the words that Thérèse called herself: Little Flower. (Refer to Dagit letter, dated October 8, 1938, p.18.)

Below, is a congratulatory letter from St. Thérèse's sister, Mother Agnes on "Little Flower Catholic High School" saying "I ask my little sister Saint to offer the many perfumes of roses for graces (well wishes) to Little Flower Catholic High School in Philadelphia and to all of its staff. Sister Agnes of Jesus, OCD") A copy of the original letter is below.

J. † M.

*Pax Christi*

CARMEL DE LISIEUX.

1<sup>er</sup> 23 Oct 1939

*Je demande à ma Sainte  
Petite Sœur d'offrir ses  
roses les plus parfumées de  
grâces à Little Flower Catholic  
High School de Philadelphie  
à tout son Personnel*

*Sœur Agnès de Jésus  
fcd*



-18-

HENRY D. DAGIT, JR., R. A., A. I. A.  
ALBERT F. DAGIT, R. A.  
CHARLES E. DAGIT, MANAGER

HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS  
ARCHITECTS

1329 RACE STREET  
PHILADELPHIA

October 8, 1938

His Eminence, D. Cardinal Dougherty,  
Archbishop of Philadelphia,  
225 N. 18th Street,  
Philadelphia, Penna.

80 4336

Your Eminence:

Over the main entrance doors of your new Girls' Catholic High School there is an inscription to be placed in the limestone.

We believe it would be appropriate to have the name of the school carved in the limestone at the present time. We have provided for the words Northeast Girls Catholic High School.

The stone for this part of the work will be fabricated at the quarry in Indiana and it is necessary for us to furnish the Contractor with the necessary information so that there will be no delay in the erection of this part of the building.

We would appreciate your consideration of this matter of the inscription and your advising us what you would like to have carved in the limestone over the main entrance doors.

The work on the building is proceeding properly and with promptness and dispatch which we trust meets with your approval.

Thanking you for your kindness and with every good wish, we remain Your Eminence

Sincerely yours,  
HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS

By:

*Henry D. Dagit, Jr.*  
Henry D. Dagit, Jr., R. A.

HDL:AK

Oct. 10, 1938  
Mr. Benjamin telephoned to  
Mr. Dagit telling him, by direction of the Eminence,  
that the new Girls' High School is to be known  
as the Little Flower High School for Girls

Photo from Stephane-Joseph Piat, OFM, Celine: Sister and Witness to St. Thérèse... Ignatius Press, 1997.

Entry in The New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967)

Standing second from left is Mother Agnes who wrote the letter in 1939 to Little Flower High School.



November 1896: from left to right, Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart; Mother Agnes of Jesus; Sister Geneviève (Céline); Sister Marie of the Eucharist (Marie Guérin); Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus

Less than one year before she died at age 24, Thérèse was photographed with three of her four sisters and cousin, Marie--all Carmelites.

## THÉRÈSE DE LISIEUX, ST.

French Carmelite nun celebrated for her autobiography; b. Alençon, France, Jan. 2, 1873; d. Lisieux, Sept. 30, 1897 (feast Oct. 3).

**Early Life.** Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin was the youngest of nine children born to Louis and Zélie (Guérin) Martin, two boys and two girls having died before her birth. Louis was a successful watchmaker and jeweler, while Zélie was a craftswoman. Their last child, Thérèse, was a sickly infant and had to be boarded with a wet nurse for the first year of her life. As she was a warm and affectionate child, deeply devoted to her family, her mother's death constituted a traumatic experience in her young life and plunged her into a state of sadness and sensitivity that she endured for 8 years.

Thérèse, in her autobiography, divided her own early life into three distinct periods: the first was the happy and untrammelled period of her infancy before her mother died; the second, the 8 years from 1877 to 1886, her "winter of trial," as she called it, a time of sensitivity and weariness and occasional religious scruples; the third was the period between 1886 and 1888, beginning with what she called her "conversion" and terminating with her entrance into the convent.

The family moved to Lisieux in 1881, and Thérèse was enrolled in the Benedictine Abbey school as a day student. She was a bright, retentive student, but shy and somewhat withdrawn, and consequently found school life unpleasant. In 1883 at the age of 10 she contracted a strange illness during which she suffered a mixture of convulsions, hallucinations, and comas for 3 months. Finally, while earnestly imploring the help of the Blessed Virgin, she was instantaneously cured. Thérèse always believed her cure was miraculous and that the statue of Our Lady of Victories, before which she had been praying, actually smiled at her.

On Christmas 1886, Thérèse experienced her "conversion," an instant change which marked the inception of a new maturity and a more intense religious program. The actual occasion of this experience was simple. She had just returned from midnight Mass, and her father made a depreciatory remark about the festivities arranged for his youngest daughter. Ordinarily she would have been deeply hurt by the careless remark but, as she wrote: "Thérèse was different now, Jesus had changed her heart." Her sister Céline stated: "I was a witness to that sudden change, and I thought I was in a dream. That transformation was not limited only to a new self-possession but, at the same time, her soul could be seen to develop and grow in the practice of zeal and charity." From her earliest years Thérèse had been extraordinarily religious; in fact, she remarked near the end of her life that from the age of 3 she had never refused anything to the good God. She had been diligent at prayer and extremely conscientious in the practice of virtue. But the experience of Christmas 1886 marked a new stage in her religious development, as she acquired an intense interest in the apostolate, conceived a desire to suffer for God, and began to make immediate plans for entering the Carmelite convent in Lisieux.

A Carmelite. Her two older sisters, Pauline and Marie, had already entered the cloistered convent of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Lisieux, and it was there that Thérèse wished to serve God. At one time she had wanted to become a foreign missionary but she finally concluded she could help in the conversion of even more souls by joining a contemplative order. She was only 14 when she made application to the Carmel, and while the nuns were willing to receive her, the Abbé Delatroette, ecclesiastical superior of the convent, felt she should wait until she was 21. Thérèse, accompanied by her father, visited Bishop Hugonin to petition her early admission to the Carmel. The bishop took the matter under advisement; and while waiting for his ultimately favorable reply, she and her father and her sister Céline embarked on a pilgrimage to Rome. During a general audience Thérèse was presented to Leo XIII, and despite the prohibition to speak she asked him to allow her entrance into Carmel at the age of 15. He gently assured her she would enter if it were God's will.

On April 9, 1888, at 15 she entered the Carmelite convent, spending the remaining 9½ years of her life in the red-brick building on the Rue de Liverot. All was



St. Thérèse  
de Lisieux.

far from serene in the Carmelite convent of Lisieux during the years that Thérèse lived there, and the major part of the difficulties can be ascribed to her superior for most of her time in the convent, Mother Marie de Gonzague, a woman of mercurial temperament, jealously guarding her position of authority and allowing the convent to be split into two factions. Thérèse abstained from the inner politics of the convent and concentrated on her own life of prayer. She was intensely faithful to the rule of the order, quietly performing the duties assigned her; the full heroism of her life of fidelity and closeness to God was not even comprehended by most of the nuns in the convent until her memoirs were published posthumously.

In 1893 Thérèse was appointed acting mistress of novices, an office she held for the last 4 years of her life. During that time she articulated her "Little Way," that attitude of approaching God that Benedict XV said "contained the secret of sanctity for the entire world." There was nothing essentially new about her "Little Way," but it was a fresh and vigorous restatement of basic Christian truths. Pius XI defined it by saying "it consists in feeling and acting under the discipline of virtue as a child feels and acts by nature." Her "Way," therefore, is not a single virtue or a slogan, but a whole

attitude of soul, the basis of an entire relationship with God.

The first manifestations of a tubercular condition came some 18 months before her death, but she continued the monastic observances as well as she could for more than a year until she was finally placed in the convent infirmary. During her final illness she was often fatigued, racked with pain, and plunged into a bitter temptation against faith. Shortly before her death she said: "I did not think it was possible to suffer so much." Her final words were: "My God, I love You."

**Autobiography.** One year after her death a form of her autobiography was published privately and mailed to a number of other Carmelite convents in lieu of the traditional obituary notice. There was an immediate demand for additional copies and a general printing was ordered. In the next 15 years it was translated in countries all over the world and more than a million copies were printed. Thérèse did not originally intend to compose an autobiography, and it was only in the last months of her life, when she realized she had a mission to teach others her "Little Way," that she asked her sister to collect and edit her writings. The first section of the memoirs was written as a feast day present for her sister Pauline, the second as a short spiritual essay for her sister Marie, and the third for the prioress, Mother Gonzague. The document is epistolary in form and baroque in style, thus the language often appears coy and saccharine. Thérèse, writing in the full stream of the late Romantic movement, used the only language she knew, but she wrote with a complete honesty and candor that is the ultimate appeal of these amazingly successful memoirs.

**Cult.** Worldwide reaction to the young French nun was impressive. Pius XI called it a "hurricane of glory." As Thérèse's autobiography gained popularity, letters began to inundate the Carmel of Lisieux and there were countless reports of favors, spiritual and material, granted through her intercession. The Holy See waived the usual 50-year waiting period, and allowed the investigations for beatification to be inaugurated. She was beatified in 1923 and canonized May 17, 1925, less than 28 years after her death.

In the bull of canonization, Pius XI said that she fulfilled her vocation and achieved sanctity "without going beyond the common order of things." This phrase is the key to understanding her message and popularity. Her life was simple, devoid of the drama and major conflict that characterize the lives of so many saints, but in the framework of that simple life she achieved sanctity.

See also SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD.

**Bibliography:** *Autobiography*, tr. R. KNOX (New York 1958); *Collected Letters*, ed. A. COMBES, tr. F. J. SHEED (New York 1949). *The Photo Album of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, comment. François de Sainte-Marie, tr. P. T. ROHRBACH (New York 1962). J. BEEVERS, *Storm of Glory* (New York 1950). P. T. ROHRBACH, *The Search for St. Thérèse* (Garden City, N.Y. 1961). **Illustration credit:** Copyright 1962, P. J. Kenedy & Sons.

[P. T. ROHRBACH]

The New Catholic Encyclopedia.  
NY: McGraw, 1967, Vol. XIV.



Thérèse's writings appeal to no particular denomination or whether a believer or not: she literally articulated love in flowery references and in simple words that are weighty and very meaningful. Books on her life and example are still published, as if she had never been previously recorded. Her family had maintained her archives in Lisieux, where they (writings) still attract scholarly study. As for her face! John Nava's tapestry, "Communion of the Saints" for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles, California, featured Therese in white habit, staring ahead and intent. She was with other late 19th to early 20th century saints, most of whom were martyrs. St. Thérèse Martin is still vital in our heritage and culture, and her presence in Philadelphia especially is profound.



-22-

Little Flower High School for Girls...

- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style

~~"THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE"~~ \*  
of the late 1930s

The publicity on the construction of Little Flower High School for Girls was justified. The Henry D. Dagit & Sons architectural firm had taken advantage of the building site on Lycoming Street, a vast unused lot on the south side of Hunting Park, another open area. Any building erected on this site would have given Webster cause when he wrote of the ~~International Style~~ \* as one where the "...conscious arrangement of the buildings in reference to their grounds are clearly European features."<sup>7</sup> The style also allows, as Brown opined, for buildings to move horizontally, and not vertically as had been the trend in the late 1920s and early 1930s<sup>8</sup> with the new, taller highrises in the cores of urban areas. These types of buildings had limited space on the ground: building higher was one solution, but also one that could utilize steel construction. Thus, Little Flower's horizontal plan could be timely constructed, and for a school building to be in the ~~International Style~~ \* had been uncommon. The design isolated Little Flower. (Refer to next page on the dramatic architectural development in school design.)

The ~~International Style~~ \* is under the general title in architecture, "Modern" and is dated from the 1910s through 1930s with European architects who influenced Americans by the late 1920s. A fresh and rebellious review of traditional architecture prompted European architects, notably in Spain and in Germany, to "advocate a reductive, cubic geometry" and a "streamline movement" in the conventional or structural forms. Fletcher observed that walls become as "a skin of glass, sheet metal or similar material protecting"<sup>9</sup> the building. Further, "generally openings are rectangular and rely for their ef-

<sup>7</sup> Webster, R., Philadelphia Preserved. Temple Univ. Press, 1981, p.320.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, M., American Art. NY: Abrams, 1979, pp. 406;414.

<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, Sir Bannister, A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method. NY: Schribner's, 1961, p.1166.

\* Committee on Historic Designation and Historical Commission concluded building is designed in the **Moderne** style not International Style.

**N**INE new diocesan high schools were established during the past thirty years. The tuition in these schools is paid by the parishes and not directly by the students, so that even poor children are able to receive a Catholic high school education. The Northeast Catholic High School for Boys pictured here, with its annexes, had an enrollment in 1950 of 4045 boys.

②

**T**HE West Philadelphia High School for Girls (seen in the picture) has a faculty of 3 priests, 96 sisters from seven different communities, and five lay teachers, with a student enrollment of 2887 girls.

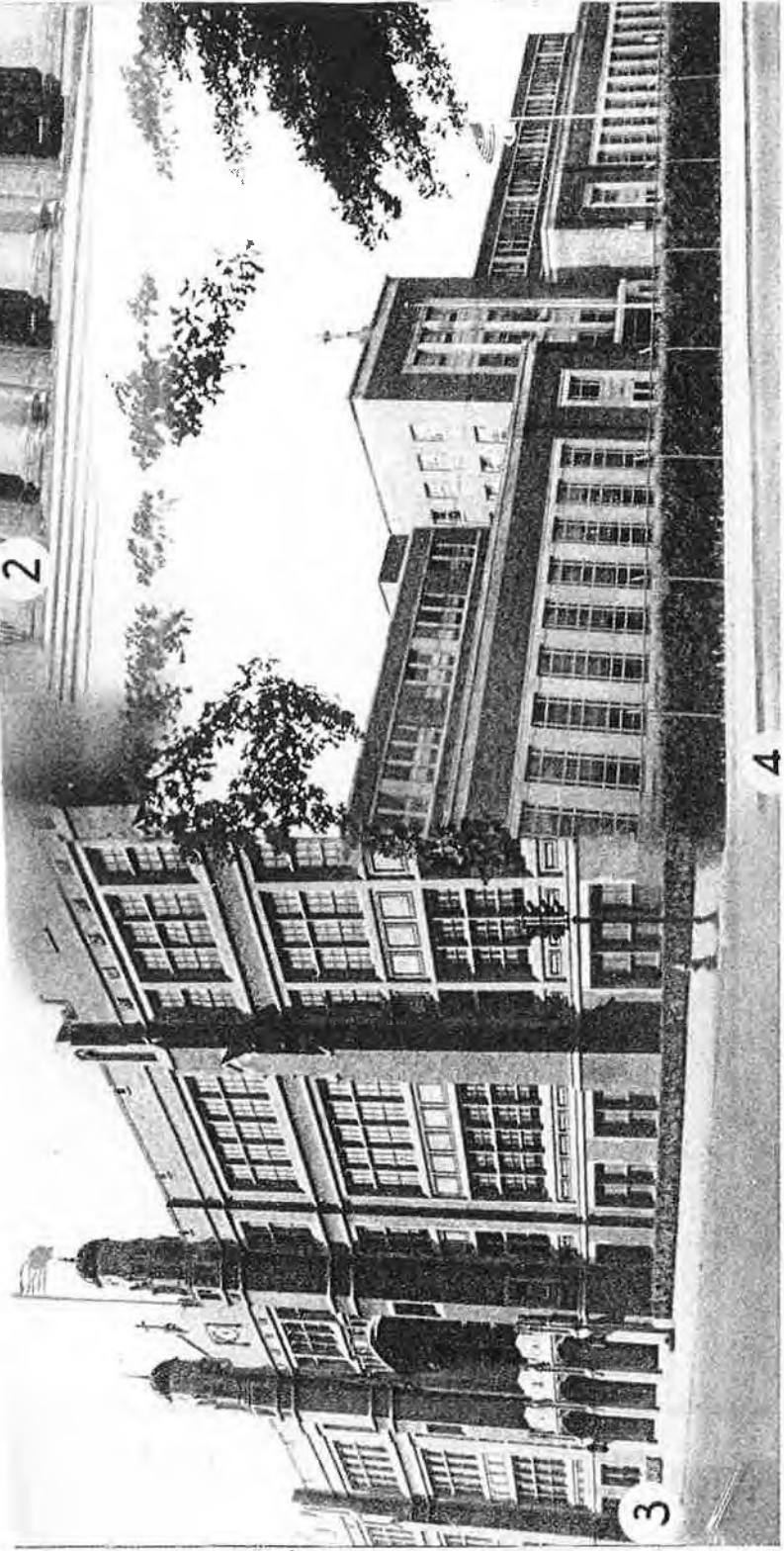
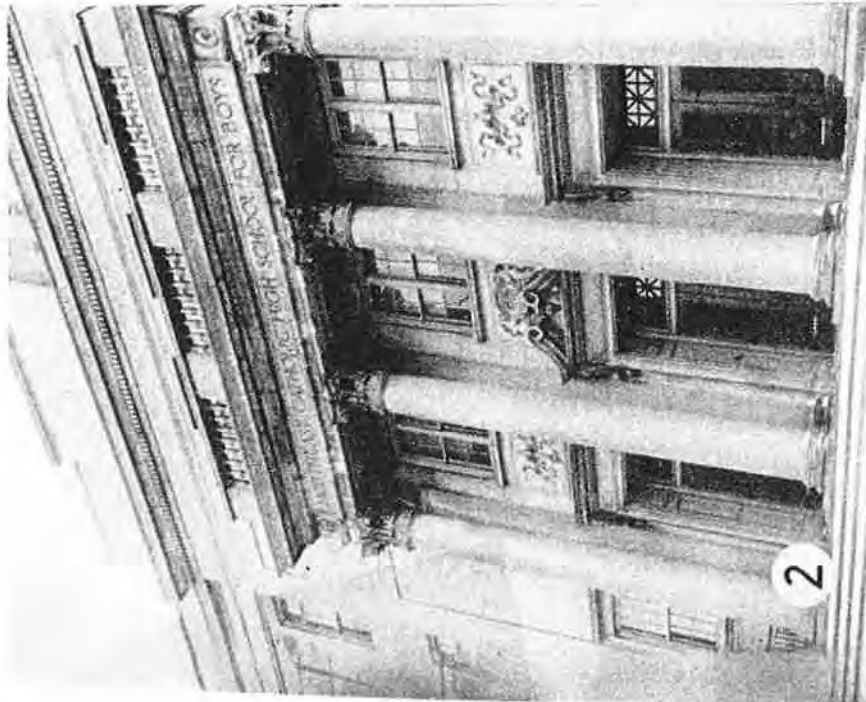
③

**O**NE of the newest diocesan high schools, Little Flower, is dedicated to Saint Therese of The Child Jesus, (seen in the picture). It is regarded by many architects as one of the best planned modern high schools in the country. Its splendid auditorium and gymnasium offer outstanding facilities for the use of 3329 girls who are enrolled in its classes.

④

EVOLUTION in  
CATHOLIC SECON-  
DARY SCHOOL  
DESIGN: c.1925  
to 1938 in Phila-  
delphia.

("Funeral Eulogy"  
and Legacy of  
Cardinal Dough-  
erty. 1951.CHRC)



4

-24-

fect almost entirely upon their proportions." A flat roof, sharp architectural lines and "total absence of applied ornament" defer to "the inherent qualities of materials."<sup>10</sup>

The quoted architectural characteristics are found in Little Flower's building, with more narrative in the "Description" herein on how the Dagit architect(s) took three rectangles of different dimensions and found a way to attach them coherently so that the forms accommodated the interior functions. The floor plans on page 12 noted the activities for most spaces, but what is clear, is that the non-academic activities for the auditorium and the gymnasium in the one-story rectangular units in the front are apart from the academic and vocational activity areas in the three-story wider rectangular unit. What differentiates the Little Flower building from the Hallahan High School building (1912) is more than the exterior design: Hallahan is one rectangular building encompassing all activities within. Hallahan's size also, implied its times when few girls went beyond 7th grade, and there was no law requiring lengthier education.<sup>11</sup> Twenty-five years later, Little Flower was to accept more than 3,000 girls: space was necessary and planned for distribution. Moreover, Cardinal Dougherty pushed for fire-proofed buildings, and Little Flower's structural construction of steel and reinforced concrete limited widespread internal blazes. These materials were part of what was meant in 1938-1939 as "modern" with less use of old-time wood and flammable interior materials. (Little Flower's tile floors and walls inside were also "modern" improvements.)

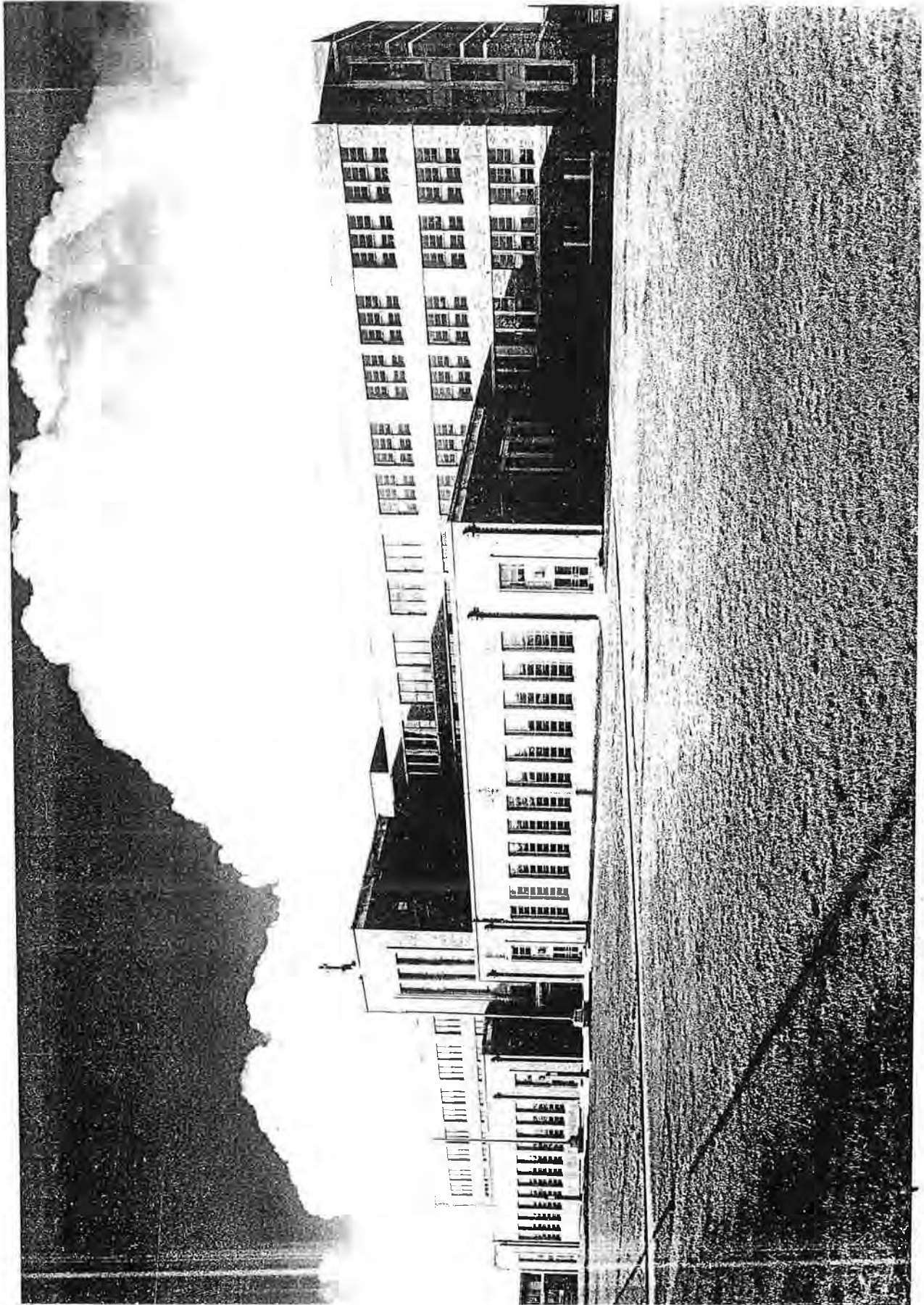
Dougherty's choice of the Dagit firm and McCloskey was in understanding their experiences in constructing "modern" buildings.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 1167. Webster, op.cit., p. 320. Fletcher, op.cit., p.1169. (In order of quotes.)

<sup>11</sup> Donaghy, FSC, Rev. Thos., Philadelphia's Finest: A History of Education in the Catholic Archdiocese, 1692-1970. ACHS: 1971, p.219 where by 1939, school law "required students to remain in school through their eighteenth year."



-25-



Photograph from the Architectural Album of Henry D. Dagitt & Sons  
(Source: Catholic Historical Research Center, Philadelphia.)

-26-

Little Flower High School for Girls...

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

HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS (Architects), with  
McCLOSKEY & COMPANY (Builders)

The Dagit firm worked well with McCloskey & Company on several projects from the 1920s through 1950s.<sup>12</sup> Both worked at a time when Catholic education expanded to larger institutional buildings for the growing population, and where state law "required" extended education. Both firms were also selected by Cardinal Dougherty separately, or together: one of their more nationally-known building collaborations was Holy Redeemer Chinese Catholic Church-School,<sup>13</sup> the first in the United States.

Henry D. Dagit, Sr. began on his own in 1888 and before he died in 1929, had already had his three sons working in his office.<sup>14</sup> Henry ("Hank") Jr., Albert and Charles, Sr. were artists and architects. Albert was said to have been the most talented of the brothers, said his nephew, Charles, Jr. Who designed Little Flower is not known: letters from the firm use the formal "we" and no particular brother by name. The Dagit name was rehabilitated by the late 1920s, noted Charles, Jr., after years when his grandfather's reputation was said to have been damaged after the parishioners at St. Francis de Sales church criticized his design as non-Catholic. For most of the 1920s, commissions were fewer than before; after Henry, Sr.'s death, the sons slowly asserted themselves, but eventually attained more favorable comments on their work<sup>15</sup>--which was not traditional (as their father's), and modern, in the architectural trends of the 1930s.

<sup>12</sup>Telephone interviews with Charles Dagit, Jr. and his cousin, Tim Dagit in February and in March, 2021.

<sup>13</sup>This nomination was submitted in 2021 by the undersigned.

<sup>14</sup>Tatman, S. and Moss, R., Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects. Boston: Hall, 1985 and on-line "pab.org" site.

<sup>15</sup>Charles Dagit, Jr., interview.

HENRY D. DAGIT, JR., R. A.  
ALBERT F. DAGIT, R. A.  
CHARLES E. DAGIT, R. A.

HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS  
ARCHITECTS

1329 RACE STREET  
PHILADELPHIA 7, PA.

February 27th, 1952

The Most Reverend John F. O'Hara, C.S.C., D. D.,  
Archbishop of Philadelphia,  
City Line Avenue and Cardinal Road,  
Philadelphia, Penna.

Most Reverend and dear Archbishop O'Hara:

Accompanying this letter are two volumes of photographs illustrating some of the buildings we have designed in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Each building is described briefly, and we prepared these volumes for you to provide information about them in the hope that they might be of value and assistance to you.

It was our intention to present these to you when we had the pleasure of meeting you. However, we realize that there have been many matters of great importance requiring your time, so we thought it would be well to send you the books now.

Our firm has been established since 1888 and we have had wide experience in designing schools, churches, college buildings and institutions not only in Philadelphia but along the Eastern Seaboard. We would like to have the honor of volunteering our services to help you with any building problems you may have before you. We will be glad to give you professional advice regarding costs in Philadelphia or other matters of a building nature.

It is our hope that the photographs will be useful to you and that we may have the opportunity to serve you and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Sincerely yours,

HENRY D. DAGIT & SONS

BY:



Albert F. Dagit, R. A.

AFD:cid

-28-

Little Flower High School's design was particularly one of which the Dagits were proud: multiple references and photographs were in the Dagit "Album" which also featured their work in Florida, Georgia, New York, New Jersey, Maryland and Washington, D.C. At the time of Little Flower's construction, the Dagits had just reached completion of St. Vincent's Hospital in West Philadelphia and Assumption ("Raven Hill") Academy. They designed the Cardinal's Residence on City Line Avenue with McCloskey and would do extra work there in 1943. With McCloskey, Monsignor Bonner High School for Boys arose in 1939.<sup>16</sup> Architectural designing for both firms developed into larger buildings with more utilities (optional heating choices and multiple units throughout the buildings), materials that were good, but more economical towards the overall costs in construction, like the reinforced concrete and different blends of concrete and cement; and metals used in lieu of wood for durability.

The Dagit sons had made great efforts to raise the Dagit name after Henry, Sr.'s death in 1929. Just prior to that year, and by personal letter to the Cardinal, the Dagit firm wrote to ask the prelate to "consider" the Dagits "for any architectural plans" in designing proposed schools in the Archdiocese.<sup>17</sup> McCloskey had been busy with construction projects on city schools, erecting "more schools in the city than any other single contractor."<sup>18</sup> Little Flower was among them, but not the Dagits as the designers. Dougherty meted out commissions for Archdiocesan projects, mindful of the costs during the Depression years (c.1929 to c. 1940) and the Dagits competed with Paul Henon, Gleeson & Mulrooney (which had a substantial portfolio of properties in Northeast Philadelphia), and less often, George I. Lovatt, Sr. (who had won two major archi-

<sup>16</sup>Dougherty "Correspondence" file: letters, #80.4330-80.4340. CHRC.

<sup>17</sup>Frederick Dagit letter to Dougherty, February 14, 1928. CHRC.

<sup>18</sup>Clark, Dennis, The Irish in Philadelphia. Temple Univ., 1973, pp.157-8.



-29-

tectural awards while the senior Dagit was still alive.) Nonetheless, the Dagit sons struggled with more architectural competition rising as the Archdiocese grew: by Dougherty's death in 1951, there were 1,114,122 Catholics in the Philadelphia see.<sup>19</sup> Below is a tabulation of American Catholic high schools, modelled from the Roman Catholic High School plan, as approved by the National Catholic Educational Association in 1904:<sup>20</sup>

TABLE 2. GROWTH OF CATHOLIC  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS 1920-63

Year	No.	Enrollment
1920	1,552	129,848
1947	2,111	467,039
1953	2,416	577,860
1963	2,432	1,004,927

SOURCE: Adapted from *The Official Catholic Directory*, 1920, 1947, 1953, 1963.

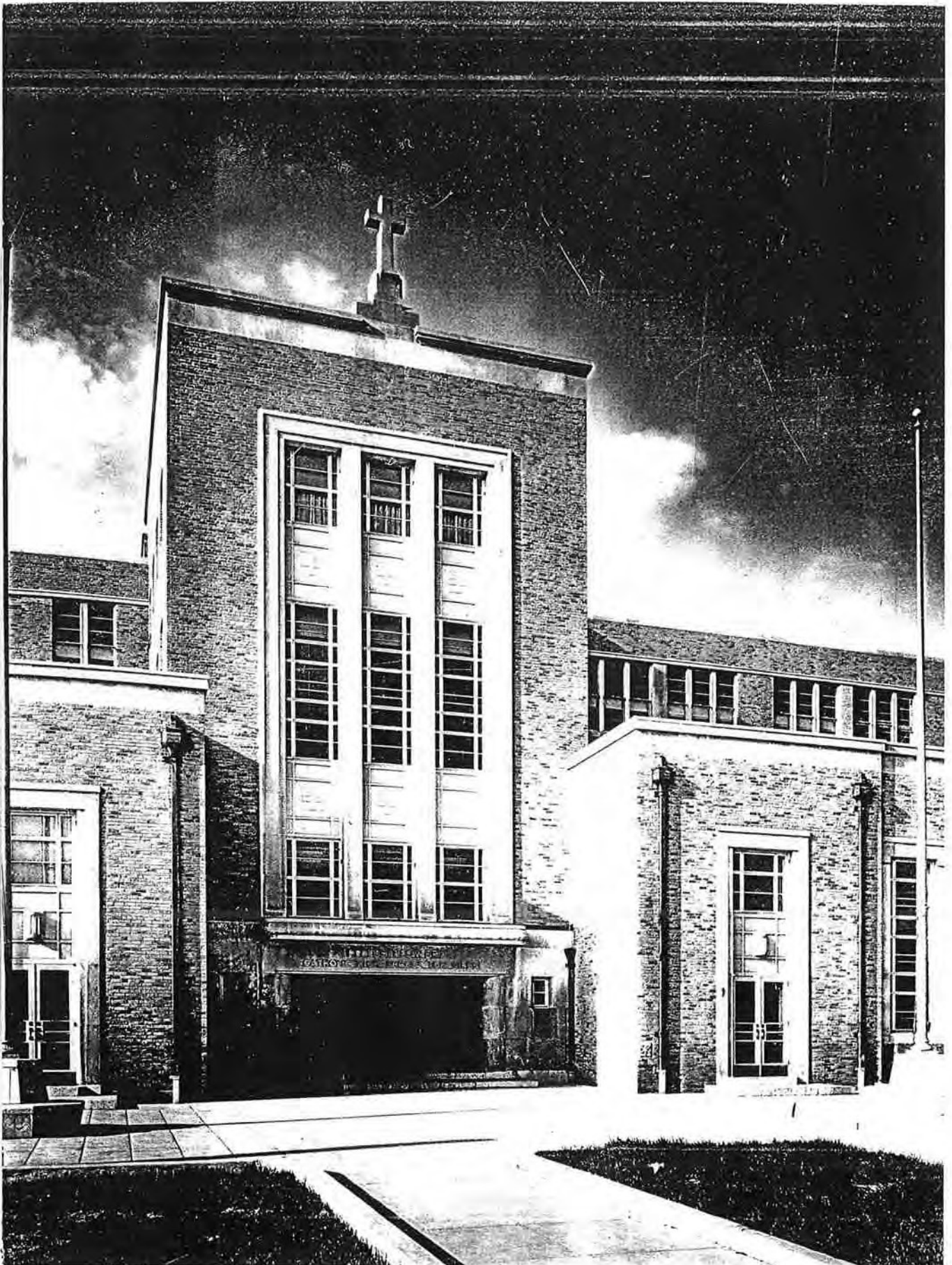
As the Dagit brothers continued to promote the firm in publicity-type photographic spreads and advertizements, McCloskey had ventured more into politics, benefitting his company with more government-sponsored projects that led him to Washington, D.C. Although not cumulatively gaining the number of commissions for federal buildings in the capital city, (John McShain did), McCloskey became known nationally for his work as a Democratic Party fundraiser from the 1930s through 1960s. His reward: Ambassador to Ireland (1962-1964).<sup>21</sup>

The Dagits and McCloskey were always identified as "Philadelphia" businesses and although their work was known outside of the Commonwealth, they had reached significance at the time of Little Flower High School's construction, adding more to the building's significance in history.

<sup>19</sup>The New Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol.XI, p. 265.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 21; 22.

<sup>21</sup>"The New York Times" obituary of Matthew McCloskey, April 26, 1973.



Dagit promotional photo of Little Flower.

-31-

Lastly, Little Flower High School for Girls...

(h) has a "unique location" and "represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood..."

Relative to the architectural design and the building's dimensions, Little Flower is the largest structure in the area and adjacent to historic Hunting Park. Gone is the lore that the British Army had encamped there in 1778,<sup>22</sup> or that locals used Hunting Park as a race-course before "some citizens...formally presented the (various lots) to the city as a public park" by the mid-1800s, just after Consolidation.<sup>23</sup> Barren ground until broken with the construction of Little Flower, Cardinal Dougherty had purchased the lot for "1.00" according to City records. This was a time when the Cardinal's relationship with real estate broker Albert M. Greenfield brought more acquisitions for the Archdiocese in North and Northeast Philadelphia. Little Flower High is part of this fascinating past in how the city expanded in this direction and the effects of Roosevelt Boulevard, residential urban planning and in buildings which characterize the era.

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Little Flower High School's origins with Cardinal Dougherty are associated not only with him but others also with national or international names attached to their accomplishments. The building's architectural design, as it is sited on the grounds, had been lauded and had launched the "~~International Style~~"<sup>\*</sup> in school buildings. Thus, these are some of the many reasons why this wonderful building with its wonderful persons merits historical designation and listing on the Register of Historical Buildings.

Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA  
May, 2021 (during COVID)

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<sup>22</sup>Donaghy, op.cit., p. 219.

<sup>23</sup>Scharf and Westcott, History of Philadelphia. 1884, p. 723i.

*\*Committee on Historic Designation and Historical Commission concluded building is designed in the **Moderne** style not International Style.*

-32-

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- Cardinal Dougherty Correspondence
- "Funeral Eulogy" booklet of Dougherty, 1951.

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On-line sites: pab.org; GoogleMaps; "New York Times"; Catholic-Philly.com;