

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

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

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

Street address: 6670 Keystone Street

Postal code: 19135

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church

Current/Common Name: "St. Leo's" or "St. Leo's of Tacony"

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: None

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

6. DESCRIPTION

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

7. SIGNIFICANCE

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

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1890 to 1900

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: c. 1892 to 1894 (superstructure)

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Frank R. Watson (1859-1940)

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Nicholas Cavanaugh

Original owner: Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Other significant persons: _____

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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

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

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization Tacony CDC Date _____

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

Street Address 1234 S. Sheridan Street Telephone 215-334-6008

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

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: February 7, 2019

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: March 13, 2019

Date of Notice Issuance: March 15, 2019

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Rev. Joseph L. Farrell, Our Lady of Consolation

Address: 7051 Tulip Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19135

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: April 17, 2019

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: May 10, 2019

Date of Final Action: May 10, 2019 Edited by PHC staff June 12, 2023 to correct

Designated Rejected address from 6658 to 6670 Keystone St. 12/7/18

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The designated boundary of St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church includes one building on a larger parcel of 6670 Keystone Street. The overall parcel is bounded by Keystone Street at the southeast, Unruh Avenue at the northeast, Tulip Street at the northwest, and additional church property at the southwest.



The red outline shows the full property boundary.

The boundary of the church building begins at the northwest corner of Keystone Street and Unruh Avenue. The boundary includes the footprint of the church, with a perimeter buffer.



The yellow outline shows the extent of the designated boundary, which includes only the church and a small buffer.

Beginning at the northwest corner of Keystone Street and Unruh Avenue

*The above description represents the boundary adopted by the Historical Commission, 10 May 2019

DESCRIPTION:

Designed by Frank R. Watson in 1890, the modest Gothic elements applied to St. Leo's Roman Catholic Church are true to the period of construction. Situated on the northwest corner of Keystone and Unruh Streets in the Tacony neighborhood of Philadelphia, St. Leo's was built of "Stockton stone" (a brownish-gray color)₁ on a concrete base with lighter-colored "Indiana limestone" accenting the surrounds at the three-portals in the center bay, windows and capping on the stone buttresses on the north and south walls. The church has a westward orientation with the altar opposite the Keystone Street entry.

The facade is divided into three bays, with the emphasis on the center bay where three consecutive doorways on the first level are surmounted by a large Gothic arched stained glass window. Atop this is an attic space and an architectural element variously called an "open bell tower" or "bell-less" space which nonetheless heightens the structure, giving it more attention to passersby on the Interstate-95, or the Pennsylvania Railroad (since the 1850s). Two sets of steps, interrupted by a short concrete platform, lead to the central entrance on Keystone Street. A low gray stone wall connects to either side of these steps and winds around to the north or south walls, terminating to side entrances under shallow wooden entrances extending about four feet deep. Between the buttresses on the north and south walls are a series of Gothic arched stained glass windows installed in the late 1920s which were designed and manufactured by the D'Ascenzo Studios.² The west wall of this church is attached to the former convent. Some lawn space and landscaping on Keystone Street add to the rustic, "country" appearance of this church.

¹ Mahoney, D., Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches...

² Phila.: Mahoney, 1895, p. 141.

² Philadelphia Real Estate Records & Builders' Guide, 03/04/1925.

The presumed "oldest" photograph of St. Leo's. (Below)
(Catholic Historical Research Center image.)

Mon, Oct 06, 1884 | Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia, PA)

On right is contemporary news on St. Leo's laying of cornerstone at the church, October 5, 1884.

ST. LEO'S.

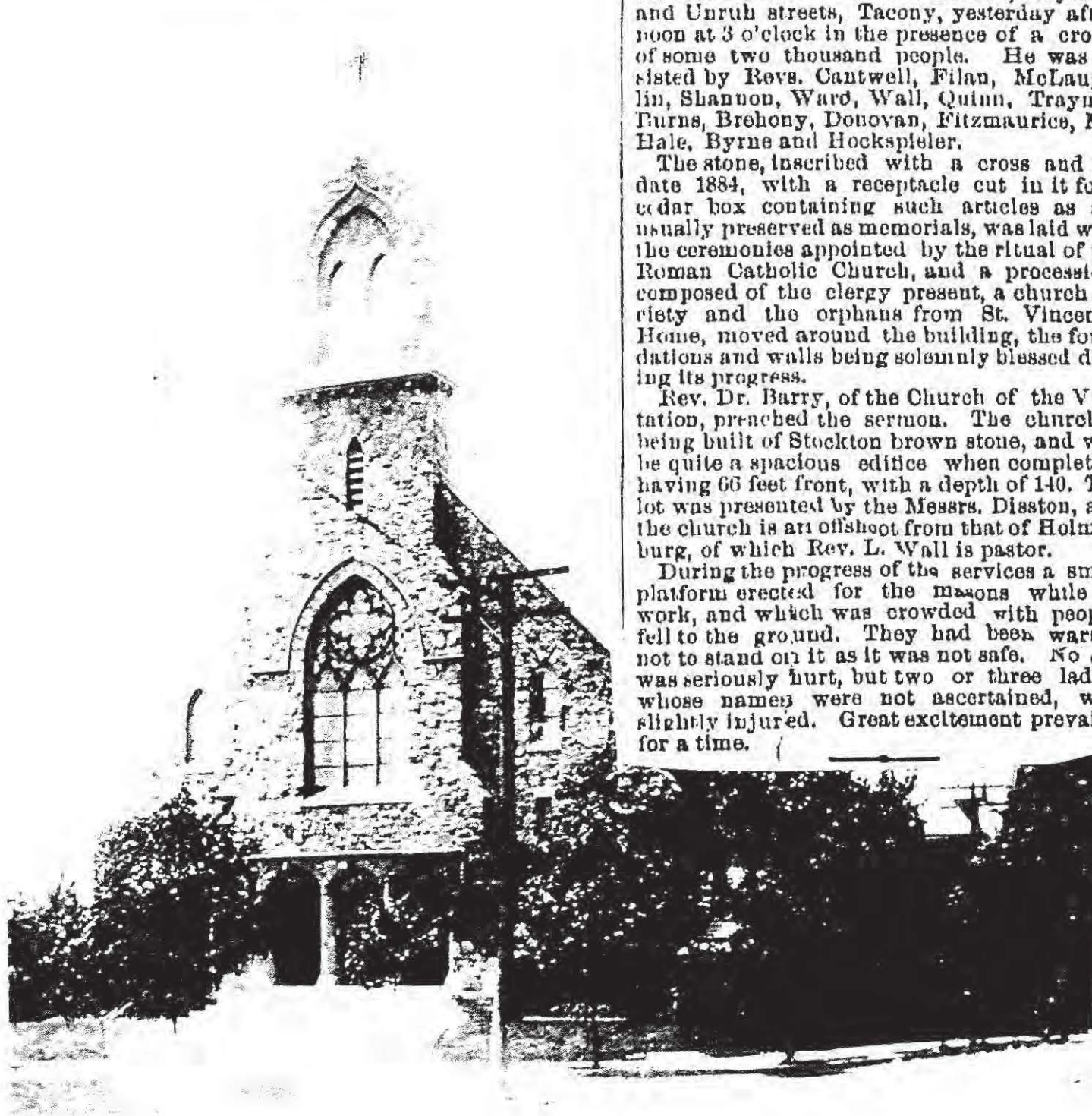
Laying of the Corner Stone of a New Roman Catholic Church.

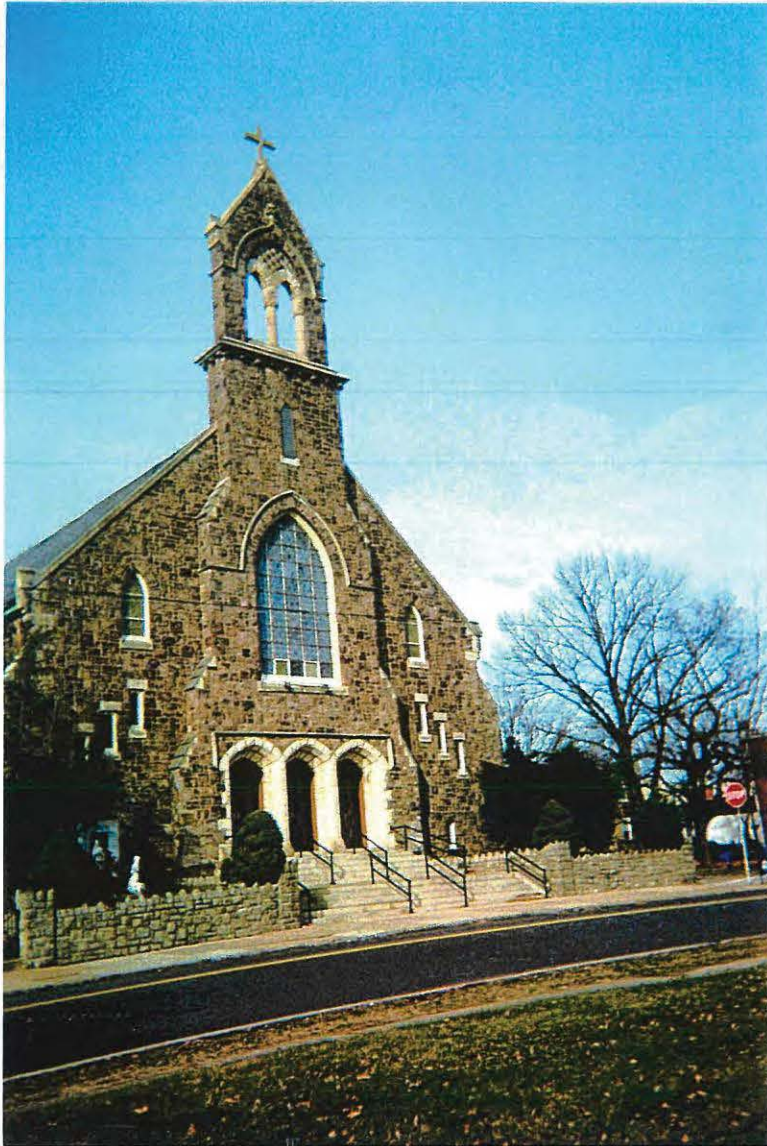
Archbishop Ryan laid the corner stone of St. Leo's Roman Catholic Church, Keystone and Unruh streets, Tacony, yesterday afternoon at 3 o'clock in the presence of a crowd of some two thousand people. He was assisted by Revs. Cantwell, Filan, McLaughlin, Shannon, Ward, Wall, Quinn, Traynor, Burns, Brehony, Donovan, Fitzmaurice, McHale, Byrne and Hockspfeiler.

The stone, inscribed with a cross and the date 1884, with a receptacle cut in it for a cedar box containing such articles as are usually preserved as memorials, was laid with the ceremonies appointed by the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church, and a procession, composed of the clergy present, a church society and the orphans from St. Vincent's Home, moved around the building, the foundations and walls being solemnly blessed during its progress.

Rev. Dr. Barry, of the Church of the Visitation, preached the sermon. The church is being built of Stockton brown stone, and will be quite a spacious edifice when completed, having 66 feet front, with a depth of 140. The lot was presented by the Messrs. Disston, and the church is an offshoot from that of Holmesburg, of which Rev. L. Wall is pastor.

During the progress of the services a small platform erected for the masons while at work, and which was crowded with people, fell to the ground. They had been warned not to stand on it as it was not safe. No one was seriously hurt, but two or three ladies, whose names were not ascertained, were slightly injured. Great excitement prevailed for a time.





Facade's center window was damaged in a storm in 1911 and replaced.

Recent images of St. Leo's church (westward vantage.) Note newer window.

Keystone Street front.

Unruh Street (right)





North wall on Unruh Street with buttresses between the D'Ascenzo Studio's stained glass windows.

(Below) Northward view from St. Leo's School's yard of Rectory that obscures church's south wall.



Statement of Significance:

St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church (hereinafter, "St. Leo's"), was the first parish planned by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in the Tacony area of the city, along the Delaware River. St. Leo's was, when established in 1884, an important center for Catholics occupying a very wide expanse of undeveloped land which includes most of the lower "Northeast" part of the city from the Delaware River westward to Route 611 and the Roosevelt Boulevard. Five (5) Catholic parishes³ emerged from the original boundaries of St. Leo's as the Catholic population surged by the late 1920s. Each parish averaged a minimum of 1,000 members.

St. Leo's parishioners formed a sizeable workforce for the industries that brought the city into the modern era. Located in Tacony, (long known for its Disston Saw Mills, one of the country's largest employers), St. Leo's was the core of the lives of a founding congregation of mainly Irish descendants from the famine years (1840s-1850s), but accepted any Catholic. Unlike the national churches and institutions nearby, such as the Germans at St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum on the river since 1857, then the Italian national church, Our Lady of Consolation (1917), St. Leo's broad acceptance of Catholics of any ethnicity raised its social profile within the lower Northeast where it lead with social societies, independently raising funds to care for locals and producing good citizens who defended our country and Catholicism. The history of St. Leo's includes some of the contemporary architects and artists known better for their work in higher social circles. The church was designed by Frank R. Watson, and stained glass windows by Nicola D'Ascenzo⁴ represent the lengths that St. Leo's parishioners went to sacrifice for their church to attain a high degree

³ The Archdiocese created from St. Leo's these parishes: Our Lady of Consolation (1917); St. Bartholomew (1919), St. Bernard (1927); St. Matthew (1927) and St. Timothy (1928).

⁴ Philadelphia Real Estate & Builders' Guide, 05/21/1890; 08/06/1890; 10/15/1890; and 03/04/1925.

of respectability for their workingclass community. It took decades for Roman Catholics in this area to be acknowledged among the Protestant groups that had dominated since the years when William Penn's associates divided the land in the 1600s. This area had been somewhat estranged, almost alienated from the city, even after the Consolidation (1854), but for the railroad line running parallel to the Delaware River. St. Leo's drew more workers to Tacony as it formed a social basis away from the monotony of labor. Given the Irish's tendency to organize, an early society to help the poor was founded, along with assistance from other Catholic philanthropic groups to place St. Leo's on a better financial foundation.

The contemporary documentation on St. Leo's is sparse, but its location, close to the Disston Saw Mills and the civic projects started by the Disstons, put St. Leo's somewhat into this sphere-- although retrospective "histories" show the independence of St. Leo's more. The industrial environment surrounding this church, the nearest one to the factory district along the river, would also suggest some impact, despite how small the percentage of Catholics workers were to the non-Catholics in the late 19th century and early 20th century. Nonetheless, the parish base was wider than Tacony and the St. Leo's church was the very heart and essence of the parish, as evidenced by the selection of the architect and artists involved in its creation in 1894. As the source of so many productive citizens, St. Leo's historically qualifies for designation because of those who were responsible for its design, its progress and its contributions to the city.

OF THE CHURCH OF THE PARISH.

The corner stone of St. Leo's R. C. Church Tacony, will be laid on Sunday afternoon next at three o'clock by Archbishop Ryan. This parish is a new one, an offshoot for the most part from that of Holmesburg. A mission conducted by the Redemptorist Fathers will be opened next Sunday in St. Teresa's R. C. Church.

MILESTONES in
St. Leo's
HISTORY
and,
CONSTRUCTION

St. Leo Roman Catholic Church at Tacony will finish their building from plans by Frank R. Watson. Several years ago the first story was completed and has since been used for church and school purposes. The superstructure about to be erected is of brown stone, seventy feet front and double that dimension in depth.

AUGUST 6, 1890

THE RECORD AND GUIDE.

brick, three stories, and basement, 66x56 feet, steam heat, iron stairs. No contracts let. Chapin is the superintendent of the school, has charge of the construction.

At New York City, it has been decided to down the upper part of the Western U Telegraph Building, recently damaged by fire and rebuild it entirely from the fifth floor. There will be no tower on the reconstruction, but arrangements may be made for topping the time ball at some conspicuous point. More elevators will be put in. Material used in the reconstruction will probably be greenstone and brick. The work will cost about \$50,000. The site that will probably be chosen for the new Municipal Buildings is a four-acre lot, taking in six irregular blocks, or parts of blocks. The boundary lines are from the north-east corner of Centre and Chamber streets east Park row, along that to Crook's Hotel, back Centre street, through three blocks, and Centre street, to corner of Chambers street. This involves shutting up or demolishing City Hall Place, Reading street, and opening a new

Competitive plans are being made by a number

A permit was issued yesterday to Nicholas Cavanaugh, for the erection of St. Leo's Church, at Tacony.

Contract let to a party of Philadelphia.

Wilson Bros., architects and consulting engineers, have completed the plans for the "Advanced Department" of the Deaf and Dumb Institute, at Mt. Airy, this structure will be 350 feet long, and practically four stories high, having three above ground and large basement.

Frank R. Watson, architect, 318 Walnut street, has completed the plans for the superstructure of St. Leo's Roman Catholic Church at Tacony, it will be two stories high, the front will be of stone, richly carved and ornamented. In design, estimates are being given by contractors.

OCT. 15, 1890

THE RECORD AND GUIDE.

The work of erecting the church of St. Leo, at Tacony, will begin at once, under Nicholas Cavanaugh the contractor, supervised by the architect, Frank R. Watson, 318 Walnut street. This structure has been fully noted in previous issues of this journal.

David Mullen contractor, of New York, has

St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church...

(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.

Frank Rushmore Watson (1859-1940) is the architect of record for St. Leo the Great (hereafter, "St. Leo's"), proposing the plans for this church in May and again in August of 1890 which were accepted that October. The 31 year old architect from the Frankford section of Philadelphia had apprenticed with Edwin Forrest Durang (1829-1911) and remained with him until about 1882. In 1880, Watson assisted Durang in the designing of St. Agnes Hospital at South Broad and McKean Streets in a sparsely developed area. This hospital was operated by the Sisters of St. Francis, an order established by then-Bishop (later Saint) John Neumann in the 1850s. (The Sisters were the first religious stationed at St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum in Tacony in the 1850s.) This seems to be the only recorded project between the two architects before Watson left Durang to open his own office.

The Tatman and Moss' Biographical Dictionary shows Watson's office began to accept commissions from "1885," leaving three unaccounted years between his departure from Durang. Watson's experience with ecclesiastical designs (namely for religious buildings like churches) was attributed to Durang. However, Watson's portfolio includes an almost equal number of non-Roman Catholic churches and a significant number of residential properties. In 1890, when Watson was hired by St. Leo's principals, he had already drawn Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Church in West Philadelphia (1888) ~~and Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in South Philadelphia (1889)~~. They were under construction

⁵Tatman, Sandra & Roger Moss, Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects. Boston: Hall & Co., 1985, pp.230,833-835. The primary source was the PRERBG, 05/21/1890; 08/06/1890; and, 10/15/1890 which noted Nicholas Cavanaugh as the contractor.

and not yet completed when St. Leo's cornerstone was blessed on October 4, 1884 by Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan,⁶ the new prelate. "Rosary" ~~and Annunciation~~ displayed the range of architectural styles handled by Watson (Romanesque ~~and a simpler "Gothic"~~) which were the trend in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Roman Catholic churches in Philadelphia (with the exception of Old St. Joseph's) are situated in locations to be seen and admired for their architecture and any artistic details. (Catholics traditionally exert more "for the glory of God" in their work, according to what they are taught.) The financial sacrifices made by congregations towards the construction and embellishment of Catholic churches are great and enforced by the pastors upon congregants. However, in the case of St. Leo's, there was no Edwin F. Durang, the Archdiocese's main architect and the busiest during that time. Instead, Durang's one-time apprentice, Watson qualified. He had succeeded in designing the Romanesque Our Lady of the Rosary for a luminary professor at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Father James J. Loughlin, DD, who founded that parish in West Philadelphia. (Thomas Eakins painted Loughlin's portrait because of the priest's status within the Archdiocese.) But, at St. Leo's, Watson seemed to have made some "short-cuts" in his ~~design, which looks (in out-line) suspiciously similar to the Annunciation, Blessed Virgin Mary design in South Philadelphia. (Refer to image.)~~ Watson planned his design for St. Leo's well after the laying of the cornerstone in 1884, perhaps trying to integrate his building atop a dug foundation lying dormant until the end of 1890. Watson submitted his plans in May of 1890, but had to wait to execute them until that October with Cavanaugh doing the construction work.⁷

⁶ Mahoney, op.cit. Also, "The Catholic Standard."

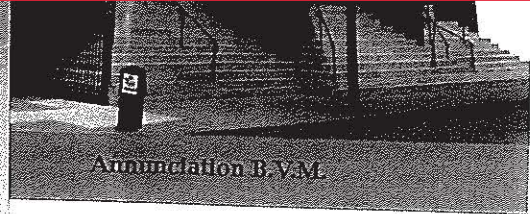
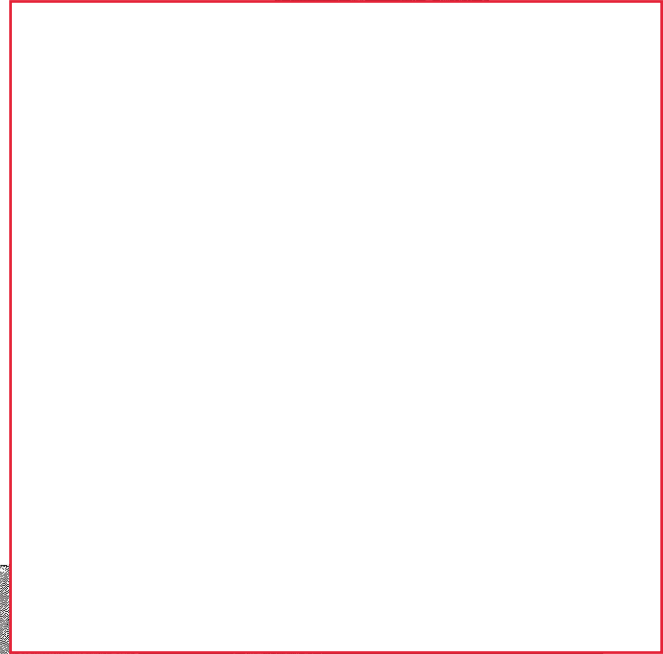
⁷ PRERBG, op.cit.

While Frank Watson awaited for his plans to be accepted by the St. Leo's principals in 1890, the Rosary church (below) proceeded to completion and dedication in West Philadelphia. This church would fully display details not applied at St. Leo's.



ORIGINAL CHURCH (DEDICATED 1890)
OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY CHURCH

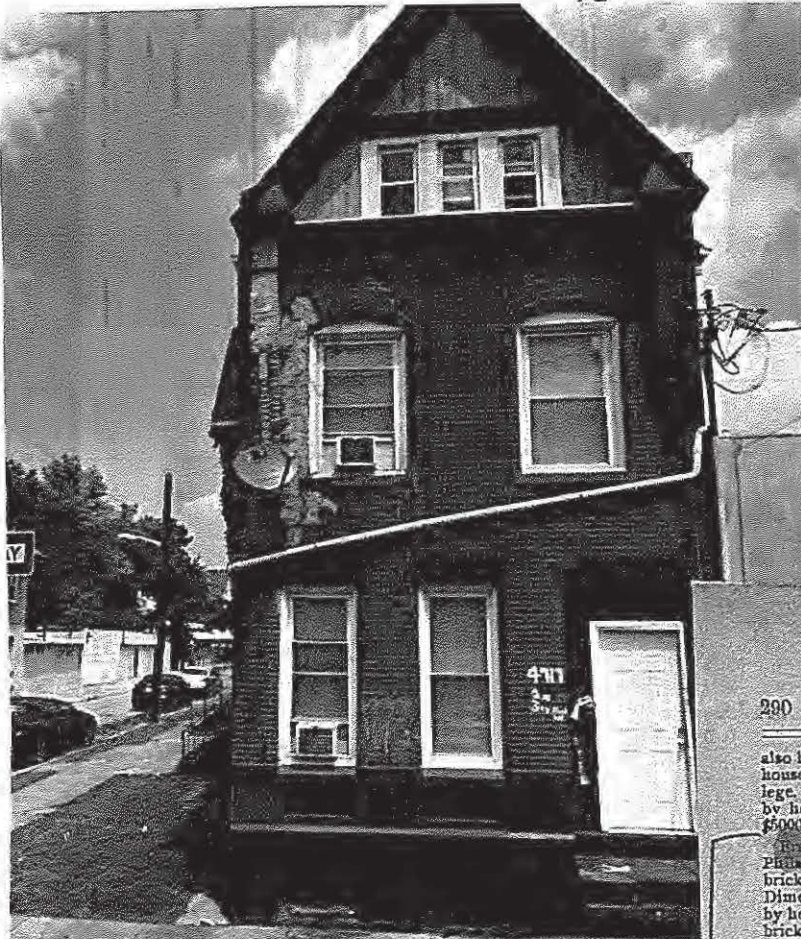
~~Annunciation, BVM Church by Watson. (1501 South 10th Street)
(Photograph originally for Archdiocese's Our Faith-Filled Heritage.)~~



St. Leo's by Watson.

While the list of Watson's career is attached, his work at St. Leo's Church must have a relevant visual image to appreciate the church's value. Below is St. Leo's interior, c. 1925 with the architectural details drawn by Watson and enhanced with Raphaellesque decorations by Lorenzo Scattaglia (now gone). Again, this work by Watson was funded by parishioners and shows the expertise of Watson. He continued a relationship with St. Leo's, even with partners later in his extensive time as an active architect, and as one whose designs added to the city's history.





One of Watson's few existing residences in Tacony from 1890.

This house was for Dr. J.A. Bolin.

The 1893 Guide (below) listed other Watson projects in the Northeast.

MAY 21 1890

290

THE RECORD

also has plans under way for a three-story frame house, for Prof. Leavenworth, at Haverford College. Dimensions 40x40 feet, slate roof, heated by hot air. Contracts not let. To cost from \$5000 to \$6000.

Frank R. Watson, architect, 518 Walnut st., Philada., has finished plans for three, two-story brick houses, for G. H. Gerhard, of Tacony. Dimensions, 16x45 feet, tin roof, to be heated by hot air; also plans prepared for a three-story brick house for Dr. J. A. Bolin, at Tacony. Dimensions 25x60 feet, slate roof, all modern conveniences, stained glass, electric bells and tiling to be used, to be heated by hot air. Contracts not let. Also plans nearly completed for finishing the Roman Catholic church of St. Leo, Tacony, Rev. Joseph A. Sullivan, rector. Basement built about four years ago. Dimensions 70x40 feet, brown stone, slate roof. Contracts not let.

the West side of Bloyd street avenue.

Senator Frank Hughes, has purchased the residence, at Mt. Airy, on the Fraley. Mr. Hughes will improve and erect a handsome stables at time of writing.

The property on the S. J. and S. W. side of Norwic more than eight and a-half to George C. Thomas, B. Townsend and others Taylor.

The East Tioga Street purchased from the Philadelphia Company, sixteen acres and the lot 216x60 feet near of Tioga and Howland case \$110,400.

THE PHILADELPHIA

REAL ESTATE RECORD

AND

BUILDERS' GUIDE.

VOL. VIII—No. 26.

PHILADELPHIA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28, 1898.

PRICE 15 CENTS

THE PHILADELPHIA

Real Estate Record

AND

BUILDERS' GUIDE,

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY, AT 17 N. TENTH STREET.

TERMS.

One Year, in Advance, - - - \$5 00

Subscription for less than One Year will not be received.

Frank R. Watson, architect, 518 Walnut Street, has made plans for a rectory for St. Mark's Church, Frankford, to be 30 x 60 feet, two-and-one-half stories high, to be of stone and brick with slate roof, hard wood on interior and all modern improvements. Also plans for two other houses at Frankford for Messrs. Siedotham and Horrocks, to be of stone and brick combination with modern improvements. Also a new school and dormitory for St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum to be two stories, and basement of brick, stone trimmings and all conveniences. Also plans for a colonial house at Tioga for Mr. Harry Merott, to be stone and frame, modern conveniences. Mr. Watson has received directions to proceed with the interior work of St. Leo's R. C. Church at Tacony. This will consist of galleries, plastering, ornamentation, seating, chancel work, furnishings, etc.

John J. Husband, contractor, 125 East Lehigh Avenue, will at once begin the rebuilding of the burned factory on Trenton Avenue, east side, south of Adams Street. The structure will be of brick and stone, furnished with steam power and fixtures.

Harry S. Warfield has fourteen houses to build. There will be eight of two stories, 15.3 x 40, on the west side of Cliford Street of Montgomery Avenue, and six three-story high, 15 x 50, on the east side of Thirty-first Street south of Montgomery Avenue.

Among the many contracts A. Raymond Baff has in hand is the remodeling of George K. McTivaine's house, at 603 North Eleventh Street. An entire new front of Wyoming blue stone and Pompeian brick, with copper cornices and Spanish tile roof, and the interior is to be entirely remodeled.



Vetri istoriati nella Chiesa S. Marco in Frankford. Lavoro dell'artista Nicola D'Ascenzo. — Il D'Ascenzo che studiò all'Accademia di Belle Arti in Philadelphia poi per altri 2 in quella di New York e poi in quella di Roma nel 1894 e 1895, nel suo studio fin da 14 anni fa in Philadelphia al n. 1608-10 Ludlow street conseguì una medaglia d'onore all'Esposizione mondiale di Chicago nel 1905 e un diploma d'oro nel Concorso annuale del "T. Square Club" di Philadelphia. Fra i suoi lavori vanno ricordati i vetri istoriati del New York College, del Palazzo Municipale di Indianapolis (lavoro governativo) e quello del Palazzo Comunale di Frankford, sotto la cui volta si ammirano quattro figure eroiche, la forza, la legge, l'equità e la saggezza che sono quattro gioielli di arte decorativa.

The image above of a stained glass window by Nicola D'Ascenzo (c.1910) was installed in St. Mark's Church in Frankford, just south of Tacony and the childhood neighborhood of architect John H. Watson. In 1888, Watson reconstructed St. Mark's interior. (Tatman & Moss: 833) Watson was alive in the 1920s to recommend D'Ascenzo to design new windows for St. Leo's where the Gothic arches and frames held stained glass consistent to the church's design.

Source of image: Strafile, A., Memorandum... Phila.: 1910.

St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church in Tacony...

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

Roman Catholics had been in the small village of Tacony near the Delaware River in meaningful numbers since the 1850s. At that time in the history of the then-diocese of Philadelphia, there were more needs for social services, especially among the children abandoned or orphaned as a result of the massive migrations of Irish and Germans in the 1840s. During the administration of then-Bishop (now Saint) John Neumann, a native of Bohemia and a Redemptorist priest, the German children were separated from the Irish and American-born of immigrant parents and became wards of the German Catholics. By "1857," St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum began on the Delaware River in Tacony, with the Sisters of St. Francis overseeing the children. A chapel was on-site primarily as part of the orphanage, but eventually, it would be the only Roman Catholic church for services in Tacony.¹⁰ The interpretation of this history is recounted somewhat differently because there had been--for decades--a cultural division between the "emigrants from Ireland and Germany with very clearly drawn national alignments."¹¹ The physical distance between these two Catholic groups put the Irish more inland than the Germans near St. Vincent's. Thus, St. Vincent's history held the orphanage's chapel as the "Cradle of Catholicity in Tacony,"¹² where St. Leo's account stated that Catholics (i.e., Irish, though not identified) worshipped at St. Dominic's, a two mile walk that was much farther than St. Vincent's.¹³ The orphanage's claim as "the only Catholic Church in Tacony"

¹⁰"Golden Jubilee of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, Tacony, Pa." Phila.: Nord-Amerika Print, 1907, p. 17.

Roth, OSA, Rev. Francis X., "History of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, Tacony, Phila." Phila.: Nord Amerika Press, 1934, p.30.

¹¹"History of St. Leo's Church." Phila.: 1917.

¹²Roth, op.cit.

¹³St. Dominic's was founded in 1849 on Frankford Avenue, a main "highway" since the 1700s. The first parishioners there were also of Irish ancestry, living in Holmesburg, next to Tacony.

may sound boastful, but true where St. Leo's did not become established until about three decades later. But, the ethnic differences between the Irish and Germans culminated in the necessity for St. Leo's.

There are no figures on the number of Roman Catholics in Tacony who complained to the Archdiocese in the early 1880s that they wanted their own church and a priest to communicate with them in English. St. Leo's was part of a widespread endeavor to expand Catholicism within the city during the 1850 to 1900 period, according to historian Dennis Clark.¹⁴ This authority on the Irish, their migrations to Philadelphia and areas of settlement had not reported on "Tacony" or those of Irish ancestry who were the founding parishioners of St. Leo's. (There also is an undeterminable number on the Irish Catholics who worked for the Disston Saw Mills, the area's largest employer.) However, the Archdiocese's decision to found St. Leo's in 1884 had to be justified by the number that the leadership determined could financially sustain a parish. Father Roth, (an Augustinian priest and not a Redemptorist) wrote that St. Vincent's Orphanage Chapel was a "parish" from 1858 to 1879,¹⁵ but the "parish" did not conform to the standard plan which had already been implimented in older parishes in the more developed areas: church, rectory, convent and school. These buildings were required in a "parish" that was structured along families, education and administering the sacraments and other rites of the Church. St. Vincent's Chapel could not fulfill these "parish" activities and operations.

¹⁴ Clark, Dennis, "A Pattern of Urban Growth: REsidential Development and Church Location in Phila." Records, American Catholic Historical Society, vol. 81, March, 1970, #1., p.164.

¹⁵ Roth, op.cit.

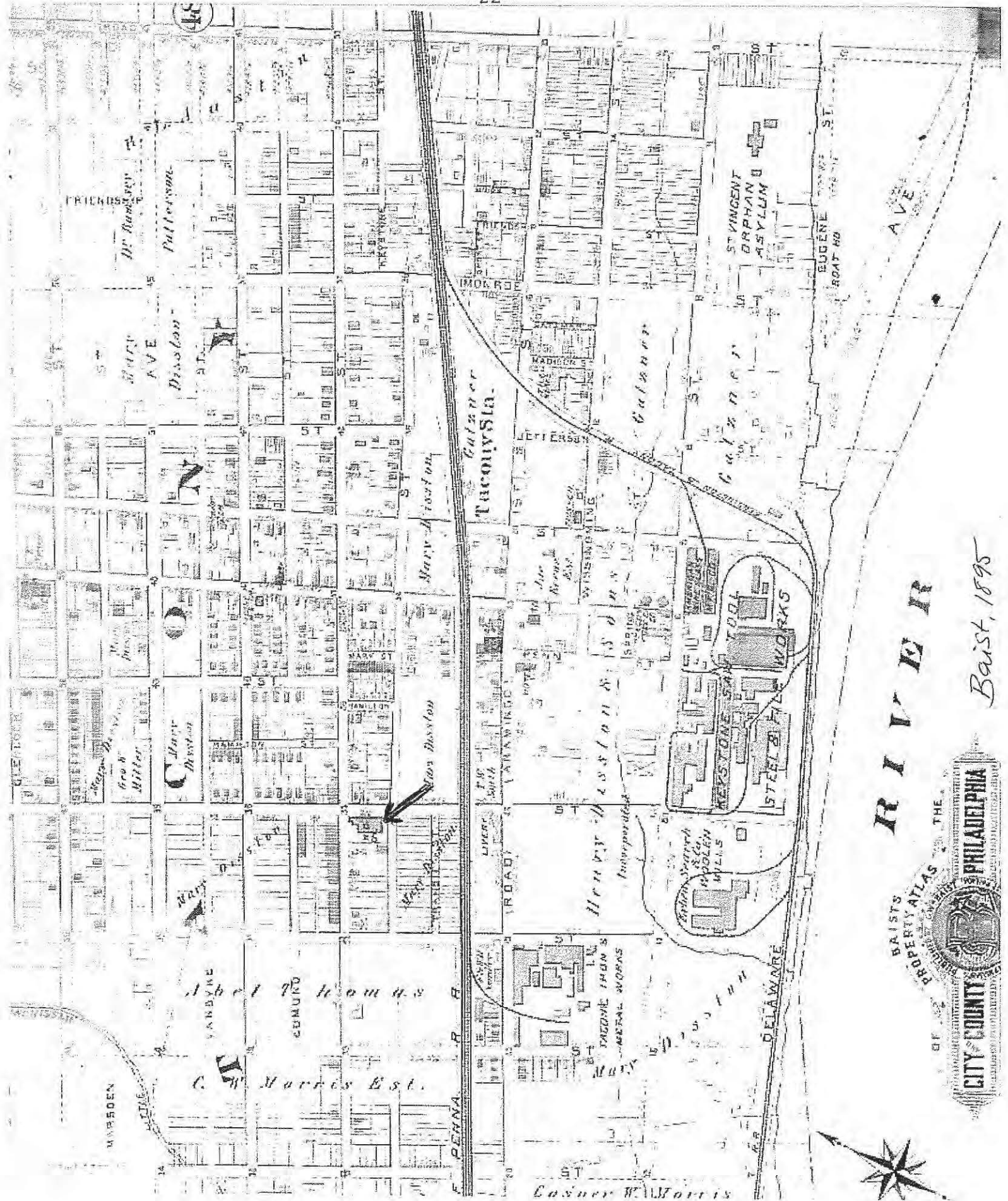
Smedley, 1862

Red mark is future site of St. Leo's.
Note limited growth of Tacony, before
factories and industries arrive by the
next decade.

(Free Library Map Collection:
S. Smedley's Atlas of 1862.)

Next page: Tacony in 1895. (Baist Atlas)





RIVER
Baist, 1895

BAISTS
PROPERTY ATLAS
OF
THE
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PUBLISHED BY
W. BAIST & CO.
122 N. 2ND ST.
PHILADELPHIA, PA.



Casner W. Morris

St. Leo's then, was designed as a Roman Catholic parish, the first one in this section of Philadelphia near the Delaware River. The first parishioners were, in Mahoney's 1895 account, few in number and "poor" but finishing the St. Leo's church building which would "seat over a thousand persons."¹⁶ The St. Leo's congregants contributed to the growth of Tacony when this church brought the local Roman Catholics together to finish the building, then celebrate its long-awaited presence.

Indeed, St. Leo's would serve as a catalyst to bring more Roman Catholics to Tacony where non-Catholic churches had been constructed prior to this nomination. A house of worship was one of a few comforts for those in the lower economic class. How accurate Mahoney's statement was could be challenged in the atlases, census records and rise in various industries which required scores of workers. Housing increased, and the types of residential properties ranged from the simple semi-detached to substantial Victorians. The difference in about thirty years of development in Tacony is evident in the long lots for individual homes and their carriages in the rear. Indoor plumbing and parlors for entertaining were in these houses for the middle class who lived near St. Leo's. Presumably, the stabilization of the Disston Saw Mills and its extensive ownership of the real estate around St. Leo's placed some responsibility on the family-owned business on the community. The Disstons' philanthropy in Tacony was generous to all religious groups, but upon the death of Henry Disston in 1878, his wife, Mary inherited his wealth and the responsibilities attached. As the leading family in Tacony, the Disstons "envisioned Tacony as a working class community of private homes and open spaces..."¹⁷ wrote St. Leo parishioner and former reporter of "The Catholic Standard & Times,"

¹⁶ Mahoney, op.cit.

¹⁷ Baldwin, Lou, A Century of Service: A pictorial history of St. Leo Church in Tacony, Philadelphia. Phila.: 1984, p.15.

Lou Baldwin. The kind of paternalism seen in other neighborhoods where factories provided housing for their workers did not occur under the Disstons.¹⁸ Indeed, the 1895 Atlas of subdivided lots on blocks owned by "Mary Disston" found no corroboration with Mahoney's 1895 history of St. Leo's, writing "A site for a church...was presented by the Disston Family." Kirlin (1909) copied the same word, "presented" and interpreted it to mean a gift, which the "Deed" dismisses as false. (See enlarged portion of October 2, 1884 between Mary Diston and Most Reverend Patrick John Ryan Archbishop of Philadelphia for the church lot, "truly paid" by Ryan for "\$1,500.00.") There was no proof that the Disstons donated any land for St. Leo's use.

St. Leo's first parishioners knew how to organize and to raise their own funds. Their self-sufficiency was bolstered by aggressive pastors and beneficial associations of the same type begun for immigrants from eastern and southern Europe at the same time. Moreover, those of Irish ancestry there would found a division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in 1889, a philanthropic group. In 1894, two pastors at St. Leo's were able to raise "\$17,000.00" to "complete the exterior of the church." Later that year, the one pastor, Father McPhilomy obtained "\$20,000.00" which seemed to have been spent on the interior's decoration. A "Crucifixion" painting over the altar was done by Lorenzo Scattaglia¹⁹ who was known to Watson (from the extensive work Scattaglia did in conjunction with Durang.) Scattaglia decorated the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul which murals still exist. These activities had not been aided by anyone but St. Leo's parishioners whose financial sacrifices were part of their faith.

¹⁸As early as the 1820s in Manayunk's textile mill district, the workers lived in employer-owned housing, such as the Schuylkill Factory whose owners founded St. John the Baptist R.C. Church.

¹⁹Baldwin, op.cit., pp. 17, 24, 32 and 39. He cited no sources. Baldwin's statements about a "Luigi Scattaglia" are untrue. Lorenzo Scattaglia died in 1931 and is buried at Holy Cross Cemetery.

Recorded Jan. 14. 1885 @ 2:30 P.M.

Mary Disston.

to

The Most Reverend
Patrick John Ryan

This Indenture, made the second
day of October in the year of our
Lord one thousand eight hun-
dred and eighty four (1884) -
Between Mary Disston of the City

of Philadelphia, widow of the one part and The
Most Reverend Patrick John Ryan Archbishop of
Philadelphia of the other part. Witnesseth, that the

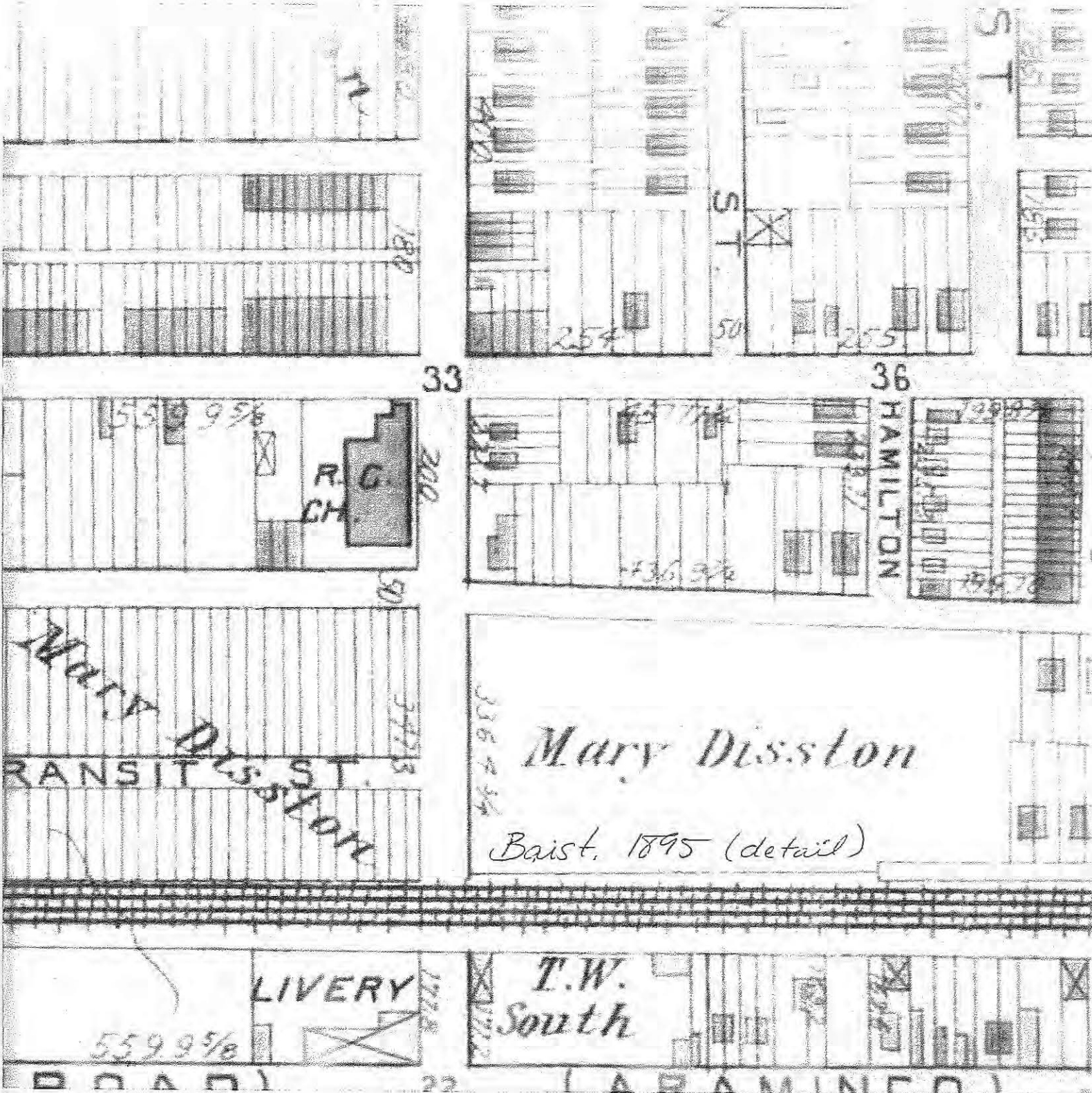
said Mary Disston for and in consideration
of the sum of Five thousand five hundred
lawful money of the United States of Amer-
ica her well and truly paid by the said Most
Reverend Patrick John Ryan in and
reading and delivery of these presents
whereof is hereby acknowledged, hath paid

The Deed that verifies a
purchase of land from
Mrs. Mary Disston in 1884.

of
into
to
the
says
and

Despite its presence since 1884, this 1895 Baist Atlas did not identify "St. Leo's," only "R.C. CH." Surrounded by large tracts owned by "Mary Disston," the small lot purchased from Mrs. Disston on October 2, 1884 for "\$1,500.00" was trite compared to the properties she owned throughout Tacony.

Note the subdivided lots opposite St. Leo's which would have had more value sold individually than as one lot.



St. Leo's parish was the last of the leading religious denominations to form in Tacony. The Episcopalians and Evangelical Lutherans had been in the area since 1867, followed by the United Methodists (1874), Baptists (1881) and the Presbyterians in 1883. The colliding rises of the Roman Catholics' St. Leo's with the Presbyterians who had the Disston family as their benefactors, would have cast the latter to have to show more loyalty to their faith and fellow Presbyterians. Moreover, there was an ethnicity problem that in Victorian Philadelphia prevailed. Irish American Catholic historian Dennis Clark wrote of "a gulf between the Irish and the 'proper Philadelphians'" at that time towards the progeny of the famine fleers. "The Irish were regarded and regarded themselves as a separate race of people," Clark added. Catholicism and the Irish culture were as one, which to Protestants signalled an "inherently disloyal" ²⁰slap to the American government, favoring the pope. The literature on Irish Catholics throughout the 19th century in the few and formal histories written by Protestants (Scharf & Westcott, Oberholtzer or Watson, then Jackson) either spared or reluctantly wrote in abbreviated versions about the group. St. Leo's, just as the other Roman Catholic parishes dominated by the Irish, would not have its founding memorialized by these authors.

The Roman Catholic press in Philadelphia, which had its beginning in 1833 was far different, though more flattering to the Irish, ignoring how by 1885, 35% of arrests in Philadelphia were of the Irish who were 10% of the population. The Irish Catholics were denied political positions and roles in city government. ²¹In Tacony, the Irish Catholics were a minority to the Protestants whose seniority could be based on William Penn's associates who first occupied the area in the 1600s.

²⁰ Clark, Dennis, *The Irish in Philadelphia*. Phila.: Temple Univ. Press, 1973, pp. 129-131; 143-144.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

As the last and smallest group in Tacony, the first parishioners of St. Leo's were susceptible to their agrarian lifestyle that influenced their class. As the underclass of Tacony, the Irish could only have fallen deeper into their Catholicism, which under the first pastor, Father Joseph Strahan strengthened with hopefulness. The Archdiocese had recently welcomed a new leader with Patrick John Ryan that spring of 1884. (The title to St. Leo's was deeded in his name that October.) How well any news or communications with the rest of Philadelphia arrived to Tacony's Roman Catholics could only have been through the newspaper, "The Catholic Standard," if one could read. But Father Strahan would have discussed news within the Catholic church in general and foremost would be what Pope Leo XIII had to say.

Leo (1810-1903) began as pope in February of 1878 in what is now believed as the turning point in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. The choice of naming the Tacony parish after Pope Leo's patron saint may have been overlooked by non-Catholics who only could see the pope, Leo, who at the time was heavily involved in politics and labor reform.²² To the Protestants in Tacony who were akin to the Nativists farther south, Pope Leo was a political leader in competition with American presidents and the emperors, kings and premiers elsewhere. In a word, the presumed power of Pope Leo threatened Protestants. But the same pope and his writings consoled Catholics such as those at St. Leo's. Who chose the name for this parish gets no blame, nor credit. But Protestants in Tacony outnumbered the Catholics and would have had reason(s) to be annoyed by the parish's naming.

22

Of the many sources on Leo XIII's years as pope, some extended discussions may be found in Hughes, Philip, A Popular History of the Catholic Church. NY: Macmillan Co., 1962.

Warner did not address any of the possible vestiges of agrarian culture that existed for decades within the Irish Catholic community before St. Leo's--he only stressed how independent the northeast became when the factories appeared and businesses developed to accommodate the locals there. Warner suggested there was no need to go "downtown" (i.e., to Center City) and to be exposed to the "proper Philadelphians" or their *haute* sophistication. If the habits and lifestyles of Taconians were similar in 1912 to the 1890s in exposure and mobility to the Center City culture, Warner calculated a small percentage of the Northeast's residents visiting "downtown."²³ Was a type of provincialism implied?

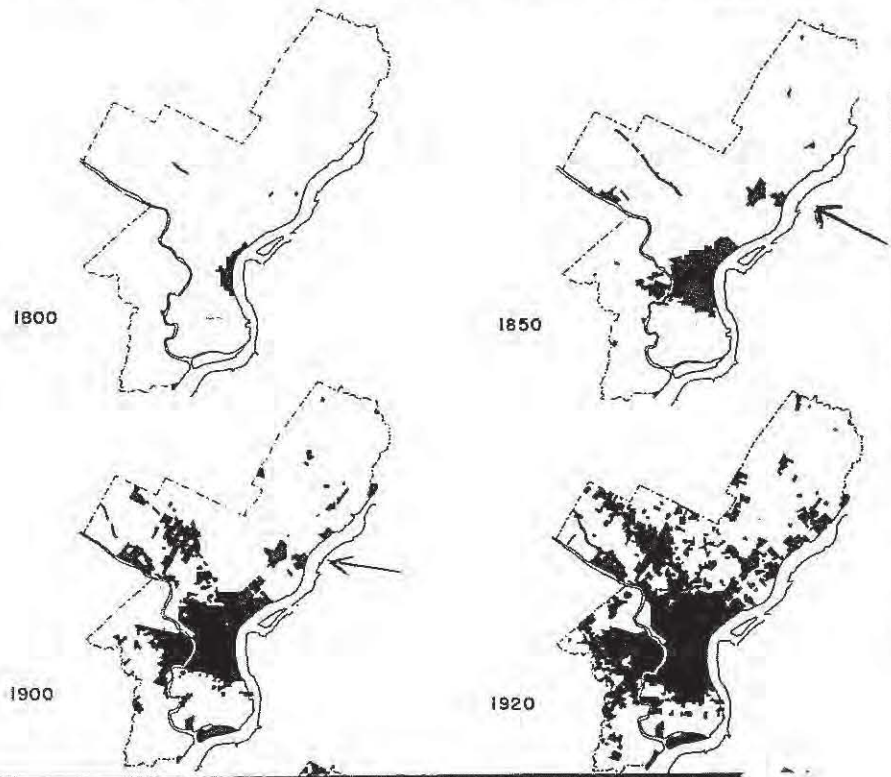
To Irish Catholics, their faith was their lives, which explains how St. Leo's grew to where by 1928, five (5) parishes were established within its old boundaries and were able to be financially sustained. What had been sown at St. Leo's proved successful, without much influence from employment or anything else. What Clark the Irish Catholic historian summarized about his group applied to St. Leo's first parishioners: "The social changes between 1870 and 1900...strongly shaped the urban deportment of the Philadelphia Irish (because) (R)eligiously they shaped a Catholic bureaucracy in a Victorian image that eventually attracted and held masses of other immigrants through its schools and influence." By "Victorian," Clark meant "communal," "traditional," "in a tight middle class image" and defensive of the Roman Catholic doctrine.²⁴ These were values not influenced by industrialism, but by religion. For this neighborhood so far from the others in Philadelphia, St. Leo's provided the primary and pervasive cohesion with other Roman Catholics who contributed to the City's progress.

²³ Warner, Sam Bass, *The Private City*. Phila.: Univ. of Penna. Press, 1987, p. 192 (chart).

²⁴ Clark, *op.cit.*, pp.143-144.

The City Planning Commission provided the maps of "Urban Growth" for Temple University's William W. Cutler, III, Ph.D.²⁵ that indicate development in 1850 in the Tacony area which did not change much in the 1900 map, but significantly increased by 1920--when the five parishes were formed or about to be formed from St. Leo's. This information corroborates with Warner and the Archdiocese's planning of parishes where warranted by the number of Catholics in a given area. (It ideally is about 1,000.)

URBAN GROWTH IN PHILADELPHIA 1800 - 1960



²⁵ Cutler, Wm., III, "The Persistent Dualism: Centralization and Decentralization in Philadelphia, 1854-1975," in Cutler & Gillette, Howard (Eds.), *The Divided Metropolis: Social & Spatial Dimensions in Philadelphia, 1800-1975*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980.

St. Leo's Church once held a significant number of rites because thousands of parishioners lived within its boundaries. By the end of the 1920s, several thousand Philadelphians who had originally claimed St. Leo's as their parish before 1917 had become members of five (5) neighboring parishes created for them. These parishes would only have been founded if the number of Catholics in a given area could financially support them--which resulted in at least 5,000 individuals leaving St. Leo's for the new parishes. City planning maps show the rise in population in the Northeast, a large expanse of land that while part of the municipal government, represented a distinctive area and identity. What Warner showed in his finding for traffic from Tacony and other Northeast communities in southbound travel in 1912 and the very low percentage connecting to the Center City milieu, was the result of what St. Leo's first parishioners experienced in previous decades. They learned to be independent and self-supportive as the minority group in those early years of the church's establishment in Tacony. But the growth of St. Leo's before 1920 (when the first division in the parish occurred) proved how influential that Roman Catholics at that Tacony parish had been in the overall growth of Northeast Philadelphia's industrial corridor. After all, St. Leo's existed far longer than the Disston Saw Mills (by over fifty years), and other major industries dependent on the city's labor force and location. However, at the present, St. Leo's church building is available for sale, despite its stable condition and loss of members who had to merge with Our Lady of Consolation Church. St. Leo's church holds a history of Tacony and its identity with large-scale factories that no longer remain as reminders of this exceptional period of Philadelphia's industrial contributions to our country.

Celeste A. Morello, MS, MA
January, 2019

Bibliographical References:

Primary and Secondary Books and Booklets:

- Baldwin, Lou, A Century of Service: A Pictorial History of St. Leo Church in Tacony. Phila.: 1984.
- Clark, Dennis, The Irish in Phila. Temple Univ. Press, 1973.
- Cutler, Wm. & Gillette, H., The Divided Metropolis. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980.
- "Golden Jubilee of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum." Phila.: 1907.
- "History of St. Leo's Church, Tacony, Pa." Phila.: 1917.
- Jacobs, James, "St. Leo the Great Catholic Church." HABS #PA-6692-B.
- Kirlin, J., Catholicity in Philadelphia. Phila.: 1909.
- Mahoney, D., Historical Sketches of Catholic Churches. Phila.: 1895.
- Roth, Francis X., OSA, "History of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, Tacony, Philadelphia." Phila.: 1933.
- Staff of the Archdiocese of Phila., Our Faith-Filled Heritage. Strasbourg, France: 2007.
- Tatman & Moss, Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects. Boston: Hall & Co., 1985.
- Warner, Sam Bass, The Private City. Phila.: Univ. of Penna. Press, 1996.

Other sources:

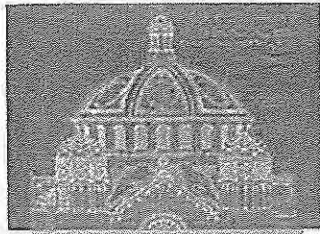
Philadelphia City Directories	Map Collection, Free Library
Phila. Real Estate & Builders' Guide	of Phila. (Main)
The Athenaeum of Philadelphia	Temple University
Catholic Historical & Research Center	Paley Library

Special thanks to:

Mr. Alex Balloon	---Tacony CDC	Messrs. Bruce Laverty &
Mr. Lou Iatarola		Michael Seneca of The Athenae-
		um of Philadelphia
Messrs. Patrick Shank &		
Shawn Weldon	---	Catholic Historical
		Research Center

APPENDIX of SOURCES CITED.

(In chronological order)



PHILADELPHIA ARCHITECTS AND BUILDINGS

- Home
- About the Project
- Participating Institutions
- Send Us Feedback
- Subscribe to PAB

SEARCH

- Projects & Buildings
- Architects
- Locations
- Collections
- Published Sources

OUR PARTNERS

- The Athenaeum of Philadelphia
- University of Pennsylvania: Engineering Archives
- Philadelphia Historical Commission
- Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

St. Leo Church

Also known as: **St. Leo School**

- Overview
- References
- Architects
- Maps

mobile-friendly version

Related Architects, Engineers, and Others

- [Hoffman-Henon Co.](#) (Architects)

Citations from Published References:

- completed plans (*PRERBG*, 3/4/1925)
- receiving estimates/bids (*PRERBG*, 3/4/1925)
- [D'Ascenzo Studios](#) (fl. ca. 1905 - 1954) (Stained Glass Studio)
- [Lovatt, George Ignatius, Sr.](#) (1872-1958) (Architect)
- [Watson & Huckel](#) (fl. 1902 - 1917) (Architects)



Citations from Published References:

- receiving estimates/bids (*PRERBG*, 11/1/1905)
- engaged to draw plans (*PRERBG*, 1/1/1908)
- [Watson, Frank Rushmore](#) (1859 - 1940) (Architect)

Citations from Published References:

- preparing plans (*PRERBG*, 5/21/1890)
- completed plans (*PRERBG*, 8/6/1890)
- awarded contracts (*PRERBG*, 10/15/1890)

D'Ascenzo, Nicola (1871 - 1954)

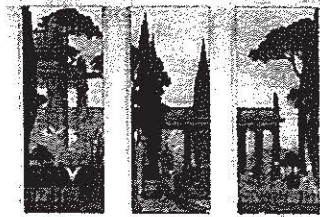
STAINED GLASS ARTIST; MURALIST, PAINTER

[Add to My Architects](#)

Born: 9/25/1871, Died: 1954

Biography from the *American Architects and Buildings* database

Born in Italy and brought to the United States at the age of 11, Nicola D'Ascenzo was originally apprenticed to a stonecutter and to a woodworker, but he acquired his formal training in painting in the evenings at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Arts (now part of Philadelphia's University of the Arts) and the New York School of Design -- although he did return to Italy briefly to study at the Scuola Libera in Rome. D'Ascenzo's family had been armor makers in Italy, and he was talented in a wide range of artistic endeavors, including easel painting (in fact he had numerous exhibitions of his paintings during his lifetime) as well as those pursuits which we associate with the studio: stained glass, mosaics, and mural painting. In an interview published in 1936 in the magazine *Pennsylvania Arts and Sciences*, D'Ascenzo boasted that he was earning a fair livelihood before the age of 21 as an interior decorator; the decorations in the chancel of the church of the Philadelphia Graphic Sketch Club (now the Fleisher Art Memorial at 7th and Catharine sts. in Philadelphia) were executed by him when he was 17 years old. In 1896 D'Ascenzo opened his studio in Ludlow Street in Philadelphia, and by the 1920s he had moved the studio to 1604 Summer Street in Philadelphia.



Mural Decoration for a Ball Room
(by Nicola D'Ascenzo, 1899)
AIA/T-Square Yearbook, p. 48 (1899)
> [View more images \[29 total\]](#)

D'Ascenzo Studios (fl. ca. 1896 - 1954)

STAINED GLASS STUDIO

[Add to My Architects](#)

Biography from the *American Architects and Buildings* database

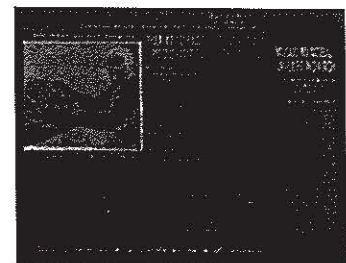
In 1896 [Nicola D'Ascenzo](#) opened his studio on Ludlow Street in Philadelphia, and by the 1920s he had moved the much enlarged studio to 1604 Summer Street in Philadelphia.

During the early days before the Studio achieved its great successes, D'Ascenzo himself made the first rough sketch for the design, but later the work was a collaborative effort likened by D'Ascenzo to "an orchestra composed of a group of artists but directed by an individual. It is in the ancient guild spirit where men worked for the love of the thing they created." It is not surprising that we find an echo here in D'Ascenzo's words of John Ruskin and the belief that the medieval worker differed from Ruskin's contemporaries in that he found joy in his labor.

The work of the studio extended across the country and abroad and clearly departed from the traditional mainstay of ecclesiastical glass. The success of the D'Ascenzo Studios can be measured, therefore, not only in the more visible projects such as the Ages of Man window installed in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, or the complete installation of windows for the Washington Memorial Chapel at Valley Forge, PA, or the windows designed for the now defunct Horn & Hardart Automats in New York and Philadelphia, but also in lesser known residential projects stretching from the East Coast to New Mexico.

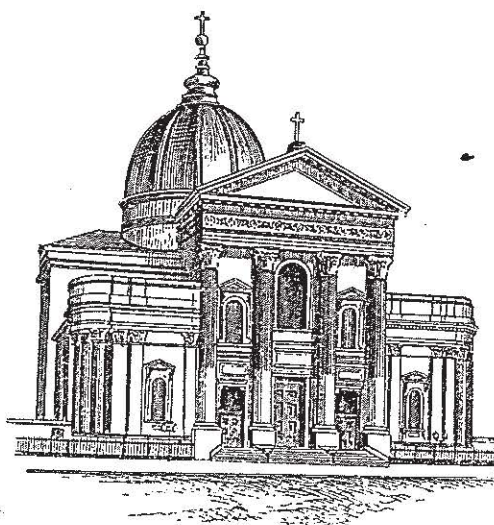
In addition to Nicola D'Ascenzo's own hand in the studio designs, the work of at least two other artists has been identified. Both [Edwin J. Sharkey](#) (1879-1951) and [David Bramnick](#) (1892-1959) contributed to the success of the D'Ascenzo Studios.

Written by Sandra L. Tatman.



[Unitarian Church]
Evening Public Ledger clipping re:
chancel mosaic
(9/30/1930)
D'Ascenzo Studio Archives,
Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
Local ID #: 29-P-246-006
> [View more images \[50 total\]](#)

HISTORICAL SKETCHES
of the
Catholic Churches
—and Institutions
OF PHILADELPHIA.



A PARISH REGISTER
AND BOOK OF REFERENCE.

PHILADELPHIA:
DANIEL H. MAHONY, PUBLISHER.

COPYRIGHT, 1895.

UNIVERSITY
OF PENNSYLVANIA
LIBRARY

ST. LEO'S, TACONY, 1884.

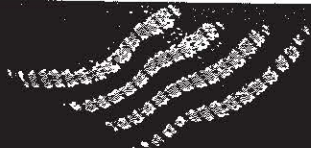
PRIOR to 1884 this parish belonged geographically to St. Dominic's parish, Holmesburg, but many of the Catholics residing in Tacony worshiped in the chapel of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, situated in the village. In May of the year named St. Leo's parish was formed, and Rev. Joseph A. Strahan, assistant at the Visitation Church, was appointed as its first pastor by the then Administrator of the Diocese, Very Rev. M. A. Walsh, LL.D.

For a time Rev. Father Strahan offered up the Holy Sacrifice in a hall on the State Road, and rented a dwelling on the same thoroughfare as his residence. A site for a church at Unruh and Keystone Streets, on the other side of the Pennsylvania Railroad, was presented by the Disston family, and the pastor soon afterwards bought lots adjoining this. By the willing and energetic aid of the parishioners the excavations were soon made preparatory to laying the foundations of the new church, the corner-stone of which was blessed and laid on October 5, 1884, by Archbishop Ryan. Rev. Thomas J. Barry, rector of the Visitation Church, preached. The basement was covered over before the winter set in. Work was then continued on the interior and the basement chapel was dedicated.

The building of the pastoral residence was begun in September, 1885, and the house was occupied the following spring. The property remained thus until early in 1892, when Father Strahan began work on the superstructure; but he did not remain to finish it, as in September of this year he was transferred to the more important parish of the Immaculate Conception, Jenkintown, left vacant by the death of Rev. Thomas W. Power. He was succeeded by Rev. Michael C. Donovan, previously of Coatesville, who resumed the work which had been suspended and pushed it energetically until the walls were up and under roof.

Yet it has been left to another to complete the work, for Father Donovan was, near the close of November, 1894, promoted to the irremovable rectorship of St. Paul's. His successor is Rev. Hubert P. McPhilomy, who had been assistant at the Visitation since his ordination. With a small and poor congregation he is working hard to furnish the parish with a temple that will be a very pretty one when completed. It is of the Gothic style, with an open bell tower, and is 60 feet wide by 140 feet long. Three adjoining doorways at the front give entrance to the church, and the basement is reached by covered entrances on either side. The walls are of Stockton stone, trimmed with Indiana limestone. The church will seat over a thousand persons.

1895



1857

1907

Golden Jubilee
of
St. Vincent's
Orphan Asylum
Tacoma, Pa.

"Nord-Amerika" Print, 1006 N. Fifth St.

1907

important object. He has been much edified by the numerous and splendid evidences of Philadelphia charity, which he has witnessed, and he has been encouraged by the Right Rev. Dr. Keurick to promote effectually the good work he has commenced. He appeals then with confidence to your liberality and feels himself emboldened when he pleads the cause of those little ones, toward whom Jesus Christ manifested such a tenderness and affection. It is not necessary for him to dwell longer on a subject which must address itself to the feelings of all, or to suggest the powerful motives supplied by religion. The Catholics of Philadelphia surely will not fail to profit by the opportunity of assisting the destitute orphan and thus become the happy instruments of God's bounty toward their fellow creatures."

F. Guth, Pastor of Holy Trinity.

Philadelphia, November 11, 1834.

P. S. — After the above had been written, so many were the applications for admission into the asylum that three distressing cases were judged to demand immediate assistance. The number of orphan boys has been increased to eighteen and another larger house has been rented in Spruce Street, opposite to Trinity Church, where we now are. Besides the ordinary subscription of twenty-five cents a month, any article of furniture or boys' clothing will be thankfully received. Contributions will be received by the subscriber and by the other Catholic Pastors of the City."

The new home received the name of "St. Vincent's Male Orphan Asylum", and in 1836 numbered thirty-one occupants. Due to his departure from Philadelphia in August of the same year, Father Guth proposed to the managers of St. Joseph's to restrict their orphanage to girls only, but to unite St. John's and St. Vincent's and to admit boys exclusively into St. John's. His proposal was accepted and thus the first St. Vincent's Home ceased to exist.

A GERMAN CATHOLIC ORPHAN ASYLUM

In the beginning, the care of the orphans was carried on by the united efforts of the Catholic parishes in Philadelphia. Regarding the care of boys, Holy Trinity, the only German Parish of the city, did pioneer work.

An unexpected influx of German immigrants in the middle of the last century brought about a change in these conditions. We read that 57,500 Germans arrived in 1846; their number increased to 215,009 in 1854. These immigrants were as a rule of the poorer classes with little more than the rudiments of an education. As was to be expected, their work for daily bread left them little opportunity of learning the English language. For this reason they desired to be able to converse with those to whom they entrusted their children. They also wished that the latter would learn or retain the mother-tongue. This explains sufficiently the acceptance of the plan for a Catholic German Orphan Asylum. One must not however, consider these as the sole factors.

During the years preceding 1845, there had been only a few Catholics among the German immigrants. One church, Holy Trinity, founded in 1789, sufficed to provide for the spiritual needs of the German Catholics. The second one, St. Peter's at Fifth Street and Girard Avenue, was founded in 1842, fifty-three years later. This church was to care for the Germans of the "Northern Liberties". The

years following 1845 saw a rapid increase in the number of German Catholics. In the extreme Northwestern part of the city, Manayunk, St. Mary's of the Assumption was founded in 1849. This was followed in 1853 by St. Alphonsus' in South Philadelphia. Due to a scarcity of priests, the North-Philadelphia German Catholics could not be provided with a priest who spoke their language.

St. Peter's was given in charge of the Redemptorists. The efforts of these pioneers in behalf of the German Catholics cannot be estimated too highly. In all the larger cities where these Fathers had parishes, they strove to make them complete. Besides church and school, they also erected their own orphanage and hospitals, together with a parish cemetery. Almost every orphan asylum for German speaking Catholics between 1840 — 1860 was the result of their zeal.

They built St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum in New York in 1851, the German Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum in Buffalo in 1852; St. Anthony's in Baltimore in 1852 and St. Joseph's in Rochester in 1861. This explains the similarity in the organization and regulation of these Homes. An additional reason is the fact that the School Sisters of Notre Dame from Munich had charge of these asylums. The first Superior General of America, the saintly and energetic Mother Caroline Friess, deserves special mention. She held the Redemptorists in the highest esteem and supported them to the full extent of her ability.

Among the Redemptorists themselves, the Rt. Rev. John Neumann, the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia, is outstanding for his efforts in promoting Orphan Asylums for German speaking Catholics. The following letter, written as early as October 1841 to the Leopoldine Mission Society in Vienna, testifies to this zeal:

"Very often poor German parents give their small children to Americans who accept them gladly in order to bring them up as Protestants. This happens most frequently with newcomers. The same situation developed in times past with the French and Irish families, but the Bishops, recognizing the danger, established orphanages, under the care of the Sisters of Charity. These Sisters already number two hundred, and have seventeen Orphanages. Since these Orphanages were established by French and Irish Bishops, children of these nationalities get the preference. There should be several orphanages for the German children in order to save them, but the help for this work must come from Germany".

Another reason not to be ignored was that St. John's could accommodate no more orphans, because the German Immigration had been exceeded by the Irish, of whom 221,253 came in the year 1851.

As a summary, we may say the great number of German Immigrants with their ignorance of the English language and their desire to cultivate the mother tongue even in the new country; the duty of the Bishop to provide for the little ones of his flock; the influence of the Redemptorists and the overcrowding of St. John's, were the main reasons that led to the erection of a Catholic Orphanage for Germans in the Diocese of Philadelphia.



“Im Zeichen der Prosperität”

Steht gegenwärtig der

deutsche R. K. St. Georg's Ritter- Orden von Pittsburg.

Eine von dem hochw. Bischof Reges Canevin und der hochw. Geistl. Gutgeheißene und warm empfohlene Versicherungs-Gesellschaft, verbunden mit Kranken-Kasse.

Der Orden hat zwei Klasse Versicherung.

Klasse A hat den Vorzug, billiger zu sein, als andere Vereine, ist jedoch Affektions unterworfen.

Polices in dieser Klasse \$500.00 — \$1000.00 — \$1500.00.

Klasse B ist etwas höher, hat jedoch keine Extra-Affektions. Polices in Klasse \$250.00 — \$500.00 — \$1000.00 — \$1500.00.

Spezial-Klasse nimmt Mitglieder auf bis 60 Jahre, jedoch nur für 00.

Jedes Mitglied kann seine Frau versichern lassen für \$100.00 — \$200.00.00.

Krankengeld \$3.00 — \$6.00 — \$9.00 pro Woche.

Der Verein bezahlt 26 Wochen im Jahr.

In Philadelphia besteht Abtheilung 61 in der N. E. Fran, Hilfe der en-Gemeinde und gibt allen katholischen Männern und Junglingen Gelegenheit, sich einem guten katholischen Verein anzuschließen.

Kunft wird gerne erteilt von den Beamten der Abtheilung 61 und in ffice der „Nord-Amerika“, oder man wende sich direkt an die Haupten: Joseph S. Reiman, Haupt-Präsident, 1104 Penn Avenue, Pittsburg. Peter J. Hess, Haupt-Sekretär, 174 E. Main Straße, Pittsburg, Pa.

hochw. Herrn Erzbischofs Ryan sehr feierlich begangen. Acht Priester und alle Mitglieder des Verwaltungsrathes des St. Vincenz-Waisenhauses hatten sich zum Empfange des hochw. Herrn Oberhirten eingefunden, der um 2 Uhr nachmittags mit dem hochw. Herrn E. D. Siltermann im Waisenhause ankam.

Im Jahre 1898 erhielt die Waisenhause-Kapelle abermals zwei schöne Heiligen-Statuen zum Geschenke: Von der lieben Mutter Gottes und des hl. Antonius, die am ersten Sonntage im Monate Mai aufgestellt wurden.

Im Jahre 1899 wurde das hl. Frohnleichnamsfest im Waisenhause auf eine ganz besonders feierliche Weise begangen und hatten sich zu dieser Feier auch aus der Stadt Philadelphia viele Wohlthäter des Waisenhauses eingefunden und zeigt sich von Jahr zu Jahr eine größere Vorliebe unter den deutschen Katholiken Philadelphia's, dieses erhabene Fest im Waisenhause zu begehen, wo es nach der schönen Sitte der alten Heimath durch eine feierliche Prozession im Freien durch die anmuthigen Anlagen des Waisenhauses begangen werden kann.

Am 19. Mai 1902 weihte hochw. Vater Geo. Michel zwei neue Statuen ein, die den hl. Vincenz de Paula und einen hl. Schutengel darstellen. Diese beiden Statuen wurden an der Front-Fassade des neuen Gebäudes des Waisenhauses angebracht.

Reihenfolge der Priester im Waisenhause.

Als das Waisenhause im März des Jahres 1857 bezogen wurde, war darin noch keine Kapelle eingerichtet und mußten deshalb die ehrw. Schwestern nach Holmesburg gehen, um dem hl. Messopfer beizuwohnen, doch dauerte das nicht lange, da der ehrw. Diener Gottes Joh. Nepomuk Neumann, der damalige Bischof von Philadelphia, den hochw. Vater Franz Gmeiner zum Kaplan des Waisenhauses ernannte, der darin auch seine Wohnung aufschlug.

Hochw. Vater Gmeiner wurde im Jahre 1860 versetzt und hochw. Vater Jakob McNaughten als sein Nachfolger ernannt. Doch blieb dieser Priester nicht lange im Waisenhause, da er noch in demselben Jahre versetzt wurde und den hochw. Vater Johann Tanzer als Nachfolger erhielt.

however, did not remain long, being transferred during the same year and succeeded by Rev. John Tanzer. In July, 1861, Rev. J. Tanzer was transferred, Rev. Matthew J. Meurer succeeding him.

Having labored seven years as chaplain, Rev. Meurer was transferred in 1868, and Rev. B. A. Baumeister made his successor.

Rev. Baumeister remained until 1869, in which year he was succeeded by Rev. H. A. Deppmann. In the year 1872 Rev. Deppmann was transferred to Pottsville and Rev. R. E. Kuenzer was made his successor. Shortly after his appointment the latter, on account of sickness, was obliged to ask for a prolonged rest. During this time the Reverend Fathers of St. Peter's, Philadelphia, took charge of the spiritual welfare of the Asylum. After the death of Rev. Father Kuenzer, Rev. H. Dieterich became chaplain. The latter was transferred November 14, 1874, and Rev. John F. Fechtel made his successor.

October 26, 1879, Rev. Father Fechtel announced that he felt in conscience bound either to give up his place as chaplain or to apply to the Rev. Archbishop Wood for an assistant, as it was impossible for him to do justice to his duties as pastor of All Saints' Church, in Bridesburg, and as chaplain of the Asylum. Therefore, through the President, Rev. M. Hohlaus, C. S. R., the Board submitted a petition to the Most Reverend Archbishop requesting him to give the Asylum a resident chaplain, who at the same time could take the pastoral charge of the German Catholics in Tacony. The Most Reverend Archbishop granted their petition, and Rev. J. Gerhard Freude was appointed first rector of St. Vincent's Parish and self-dependent chaplain of the Asylum. August 20, 1883, Rev. Father Freude made a trip to Europe. During his absence Rev. Charles Scheld took his place. April 6, 1884, Rev. Freude returned, and Rev. Scheld was transferred to St. Paul's Church, in Reading. June 3, 1884, Rev. Father Freude, on account of poor health, was compelled to make another trip to Europe, but returned

1907

Original Inventor of Artificial Stone Established 1851

William Krause

Formerly of WM. KRAUSE & SON



PATENT PAVEMENTS
CEMENT and
ASPHALT FLOORS

Office, 1640 N. Marshall Street

Philadelphia

Branch Office and Warehouse: { 1330-1332 North Fifth Street
1335-1337 North Randolph Street

Bell Phone, Kensington 27-83
Keystone Phone, Park 2-17

Yard, Fifth Street below Girard Avenue

Allgemeine Geschichte des Waisenhauses.

Die ersten Anfänge des St. Vincenz-Waisenhauses in Tacony.



So klein auch im Jahre 1854 die Zahl der deutschen katholischen Gemeinden und Katholiken in Philadelphia gewesen war, gab es bereits damals deutsche katholische Waisenkinder, für die Sorge getragen werden mußte, und eifrigste deutsche katholische Priester und opferwillige deutsche Katholiken, welchen die Noth dieser armen Waisenkinder am Herzen lag und die ihr abhelfen wollten.

Es gab damals in der Stadt Philadelphia nur zwei deutsche katholische Kirchen: die altherwürdige Kirche zur Allerh. Dreifaltigkeit an der 6. und Spruce Straße, die Mutterkirche aller deutschen katholischen Kirchen in Philadelphia, und die St. Peters-Kirche an der 5. und Franklin Straße, der heutigen Girard Avenue. Die im südlichen Stadttheile gelegene St. Alphonsus-Kirche an der 4. und Reed Straße war wohl im Bau begriffen, aber noch lange nicht vollendet und in Manayunk war mit der Gründung einer deutschen katholischen Gemeinde kaum ein Anfang gemacht worden. Auch die Zahl der Mitglieder der Gemeinde zur Allerh. Dreifaltigkeit und der St. Peters-Gemeinde war noch nicht übermäßig groß. Doch hatten diese beiden Gemeinden damals zwei von glühendem Eifer für das Seelenheil der ihnen anvertrauten Waisenkinder besetzte Priester: die Gemeinde zur Allerh. Dreifaltigkeit den hochw. Vater Peter Maria Carbon und die St. Peters-Gemeinde den hochw. Vater Lorenz Solzer, C. S. R., die als die eigentlichen Gründer des St. Vincenz-Waisenhauses in Tacony angesehen werden müssen; ja durch zähe Beharrlichkeit und festes Gottvertrauen anscheinend unüberwindliche Hindernisse bewältigten. Ehre ihrem Andenken!

Der erste Verwaltungsrath des St. Vincenz-Waisenhauses.

Diese beiden hochw. Herren beriefen eine öffentliche Versammlung der Mitglieder ihrer Gemeinden und der deutschen Katholiken Philadelphia's, die im Wohnhause des Herrn Heinrich Daudt gegen Ende des Jah-

General History of the Asyl

Founding of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, Pa.



ALTHOUGH the number of German Catholic German Catholic parishes was small in Philadelphia in 1854, still there

German orphans to be cared for. zealous German Catholic pastor their generous-hearted people, to the fate of these children strong pealed, earnestly endeavored to obtain their relief. The German Catholic parishes at the time were: Most Trinity, on Sixth and Spruce Street; Mother Church of the German Catholics in Philadelphia, and St. Peter's, and Franklin Streets, now Girard Avenue.

In the southern part of the city the erection of St. Alphonsus' Church on Fourth and Reed Streets, was in progress; and in Manayunk the organization of a German Catholic parish scarcely begun. The number of parishioners of both Holy Trinity and Peter's was, as yet, very small. The parishes, however, had very zealous priests, untiring in their labor for the salvation of souls entrusted to their care. The founders of St. Vincent's Orphanage were Rev. Fathers Peter Maria Carbon, Pastor of Holy Trinity Church, and Lawrence Holzer, C. S. R., of St. Peter's Church. By their persevering efforts and trust in God, they came apparently invincible obstacles. Honor to Their Blessed Memory.

The First Board of Managers of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum.

Toward the end of the year of 1854 these two Reverend Fathers summoned their parishioners to a public meeting at the residence of Mr. Henry Daudt. After a long discussion, they decided

Catholicity
in
Philadelphia

**FROM THE EARLIEST MISSIONARIES
DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME**

BY
JOSEPH L. J. KIRLIN
Priest of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

PHILADELPHIA
JOHN JOS. McVEY
1909

built a handsome pastoral residence on Tioga Street, and on 22 July, 1907, began the erection of the church, the corner-stone of which was blessed 3 November, 1907.

St. Leo's Church, Tacony, 1884

In May, 1884, the Rev. Joseph A. Strahan, assistant at the Church of the Visitation, was appointed by the Administrator of the Diocese, the Very Rev. M. A. Walsh, LL. D., to organize into a parish the Catholics residing in Tacony, who, while belonging to the parish of Holmesburg, worshipped in the Chapel of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, Tacony. The opening of the industrial plants had brought a sufficiently numerous Catholic population to warrant the organizing of this new parish. Father Strahan at first said Mass in a hall on State Road, and resided in a rented dwelling on the same thoroughfare. The Disston family, large employers of the neighborhood, presented a site for a church at Unruh and Keystone Streets, and Father Strahan by purchasing adjoining lots secured ground sufficient for the purposes, and began the work of building. The corner-stone was blessed on 5 October, 1884, by Archbishop Ryan. Early in the spring the work on the basement was completed. In the following September Father Strahan built the pastoral residence. In the year 1892 he renewed work on the church, but in September was transferred to the Immaculate Conception, Jenkintown, and the Rev. Michael C. Donovan, who had been pastor at Coatesville, was appointed rector, and continued the work. When the walls were up and under roof, Father Donovan was promoted to the irremovable rectorship of St. Paul's, in November, 1894, and his successor, the Rev. Hubert P. McPhilomy, who had been assistant at the Visitation, at once devoted all his energy to the completion of the church, which was dedicated, Sunday, 24 November, 1895, by Archbishop Ryan. On 22 September, 1898, Father McPhilomy was promoted to the irremovable rectorship of St. John's, and the Rev. John J. Rogers, the present rector, who had been one of the assistants at the Cathedral, was appointed rector of St. Leo's. He began the erection of a school, the corner-stone of which was blessed on 24 June, 1906, by the Right Rev. Mgr. Loughlin,

1909

D. D. The handsome building was opened on 8 September, 1908. The Sisters of St. Joseph are in charge of the school and reside in the convent remodeled from the former rectory. The inmates of the House of Correction at Holmesburg are attended by the rector and his assistant, the Rev. Hugh Trimble.

The
Nativity
B. V. M.

After having been in charge of this parish for two and a half years, the Redemptorists turned over the property to the Archbishop, as the exigencies necessitated an English-speaking parish church in that district, to accommodate the English-speaking Catholics, who were in the majority. In January, 1885, the Rev. Francis J. Quinn, who had been assistant at St. Anne's, was appointed rector, and the Rev. George Wolf was appointed as assistant rector, to attend the Germans of the district. The priests took up their residence in a part of the school-house until the year following, when they took possession of the present pastoral residence, and the entire first floor of the church building became the school, which was in charge of the Sisters of St. Joseph. This arrangement proved inadequate, however, and the old frame-structure which had been used as a chapel at the beginning of the Visitation parish, was re-erected next to the Nativity rectory to serve as a school. Father Quinn in 1890 began the building of the present church. The corner-stone was blessed 21 September, 1890, by Archbishop Ryan. The Rev. D. I. McDermott preached the sermon. On 22 February of the following year, the basement was dedicated to divine service by the Archbishop, and Father McDermott again delivered an appropriate sermon. An additional story was added to the school building, and class-room accommodations were thus secured for a thousand children, while the old frame-chapel was used as a parish hall.

The indefatigable zeal of the rector would not allow him rest until all the parish buildings were complete, and accordingly in the spring of 1893, work was begun on the superstructure of the church. On 13 October, 1893, a fierce hurricane blew down most of the eastern wall, and crushed in the roof of the basement.

1974 002

PH0078

277.48 11

L555

History of St. Leo's Church

Tacony, Pa.



Grand Souvenir
\$13,000 Campaign
1917

/

History of St. Leo's Parish

By R. J. O.

The world moves with such tremendous speed in these modern days that the beginnings of things are soon lost sight of in the incredible transformations wrought by progress. A stranger visiting Tacony today would encounter only a typical industrial town with prosperity writ large on its portals. The glamour of its early history would in no wise bewilder his fancy, for the mystery of its vanished forests and its spacious stretches of smiling meads has long since vanished before the stern conqueror—industry. The broad bosom of the lordly Delaware, that had lured the dreamer and maker of songs and until then unvexed by the touch of giant commerce would appeal to him only as the dull but convenient maritime highway to the mighty marts of the world. The voices of the romantic past would scarcely be heard amid the brazen hum of throbbing shop, foundry and factory. The gaunt shadows of silent Redmen could raise no terror in his soul, for they have been replaced by the colossal shades of world-famed magazines of mechanical art. Even the memories of the gracious Quaker, Penn, have been buried insensibly beneath the vaster and more pretentious aims of modern times, everywhere seen in the thriving aspects of the town. No, the stranger would have passed on, little suspecting the wealth of interest and charm that invested the very ground on which he stood.

Taconik, an old Indian name for woods, was, until the fairly recent past what its name implies. There were, it is true, settlements along the Delaware from Chester to the region now called Tacony in the days of Henry Hudson (1609), which settlements were utilized by the Dutch and the Swedes for the purpose of trading. It still retained its pristine wildness and beauty in the era of Penn, who, however, raised it to a distinctive position in his newly-found colony. A visit paid to its shores so impressed him with the possibilities of the site that he made it the headquarters of Thomas Fairman, his assistant surveyor of the first plan of the city. It was the latter, who, in publishing his first report, designated this tree-covered territory on the map as Taconik.

But it was many and many a year after this incident that development began to assert itself as a condition of the town. At first, Tacony grew slowly, peaceful farms occupying its splendid limits for the most. Tacony Place, later renamed Lardner's Point after its founder, Lynford Lardner, brother-in-law of Richard Penn, was the first settlement made. In time another section, called Camp Cove, was built up, below what is now Unruh Street, and State Road on the space which, until its destruction by fire a few years ago, accommodated the Tacony Iron Company's great works, and it may be interesting to note in passing that the colossal statue of William Penn which now surmounts the tower of City Hall and which some inappreciative orator has termed "a monstrosity in bronze," was cast in these Tacony Iron Works about 1890; and thus the effigy of the great Founder who from the first days of his arrival in Philadelphia looked with favor upon Tacony, is now raised aloft with gaze fixedly and benignantly directed off to the north upon the spot of his predilection.

Stretching off from these objectives in the direction of old Bristol pike, which even in the days of Penn came to be the great highway of travel to New York, was a considerable expanse of rolling land embracing the present Glenlock Avenue from Unruh on to Cottman—a veritable glory of towering

2

trees—known in those days as Tacony Hill. As the population increased, this woodland was razed to the ground and converted into fertile farm land.

Changes began gradually to creep over the face of this country, business began to insinuate itself into the heart of things, places began to take on definite limits; land began to have specific owners. By the middle of the nineteenth century the Tacony Land Association was a well-established and responsible firm. This company it was that undertook to portion out in lots the land along the line of the present Disston Street from the Delaware to State Road and stretching through the meadows as far as Torresdale Avenue. This afforded a new impetus to building, and not a few there were who availed themselves of the opportunity to settle along this line and in other sections. Among these was Wm. H. Gatzmer, who, filled with the spirit of progress, erected, in 1846, Gatzmer Place on the very spot where 200 years before Claus Clausen, a Swede, had dwelt. This historic landmark had passed, by deed, into Penn's hands, and something of its time-flavored atmosphere clung round the place when it came into the possession of one of Tacony's foremost men.

Mr. Gatzmer was, beyond doubt, an astute and sagacious observer of existing conditions. In his farsightedness he secured a charter for the Philadelphia and Trenton Railroad to run from Morrisville to Third and Willow Streets, Philadelphia. For a score of years Tacony enjoyed a peculiar prominence due to the persistent recognition of it as a southern terminus of this road by travelers from New York and New England. From this point the Philadelphia trip was usually completed by water. Even during the Civil War, soldiers, using the Pennsylvania Railroad enroute to Washington, forsook rail at Tacony and embarked for Walnut Street wharf.

Needless to say this increasing importance had much to do with the consequent enlargement of the city. Into this relatively busy section, just above Gatzmer Place, came the German Catholic Society in 1856, buying up several farms, on which they erected St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum. Here in old Tacony there were not a few buildings and a rather neat populace, made up entirely of emigrants from Ireland and Germany with very clearly drawn national alignments, the former settling along the line of State Road, the latter clinging to the river bank and all engaged in the main on farms or river or railroad. But as yet there was no sign of factories.

The transition that comes with the introduction of such and which like the spreading out of the Fairies' Pavilion in the Arabian Nights, brings, in its train, dazzling prosperity and magic growth of cities was owing to the energies of a man named Henry Disston. Imperative need for room for his sawmills it was that compelled him, in 1872, to purchase 390 acres in Tacony. With the transfer of his business from Front and Laurel Streets, he opened up a great center of industrial activity and through his agency streets were laid and parks mapped out, and within the radius of this Mecca of trade residences were constructed and stores made their welcome appearance. Other industries, encouraged and attracted by the amazing success of the famous Disston works, gravitated to Tacony. Endless possibilities for employment presented themselves with the successive appearances of the Erben Harding Worsted Mills in 1891, Lamp Black Company, 1893; Philadelphia Forge Company, 1899, and Gillinder's large glass works in 1902. Overnight the population doubled, and Tacony became a haven for hardy, horny-handed men seeking an honorable means of subsistence.

Among the many who found a livelihood in this center was a large

percentage of Catholics. Since their first conspicuous entry into the history of Tacony, 1856, they had worshipped at the Chapel of St. Vincent's Asylum, though, strictly speaking, they were considered part of St. Dominic's, Holmesburg. But the great distance of the church and other paramount drawbacks, such as lack of accommodations in St. Dominic's, led to these hard laboring men following the line of least resistance, which led, in short, to St. Vincent's. The ever-widening sunshine of good fortune in commercial and industrial Tacony continued to attract more and more Catholics till in 1884 so numerous were their numbers that St. Dominic's was obviously inadequate for their purpose of worship. The Administrator of the Diocese, Rev. M. A. Walsh, LL. D., considered it sufficiently urgent to appoint Rev. Joseph A. Strahan to organize into a parish the Catholics residing in Tacony.

Father Strahan, like most pastors, at first lived under embarrassing circumstances. He had to offer the Holy Sacrifice in a hall on State Road while he made his abode nearby in a rented dwelling. He found the Disston family, though of another religious persuasion, to be unusually kind, pressing on him many comforts and aiding in the biggest concern of his mission. Their generous bequest of land, the present site of the church, relieved much of the worry and concern that is attached to such a momentous matter. Nor did their great good will end here. It was manifested on other occasions in the presentation of a stained glass window and a valuable oil painting which now grace St. Leo's church. In the immediate past, during the campaign, the same helpful disposition was displayed in the donation of a substantial check. Father Strahan thus found heart to continue the work, and this he did by purchasing some adjoining lots, which proved sufficient ground for his object. Without more ado, he began building. On the 5th of October, 1884, the cornerstone was blessed by Archbishop Ryan, and in the following spring, as he continued his work with unflagging spirit, the basement stood completed. The parishioners were wide awake—that was evident from their co-operation. Yet hand in hand with the erection of the material edifice went the upbuilding of the spiritual. It was on October 1, 1884, that Father Strahan married the first couple, Edward O'Conner Acker, U. S. N., and Anna Greble. Even before this, the parish registers were called into use, for on a balmy afternoon in May, the 25th to be exact, the first child, Henry Kane, a son of William Kane and Catharine (Finnegan) Kane, was baptized in the humble little Ebenezer down on State Road. So smoothly did the machinery of the parish work, so rapidly did the people adjust themselves to the exigencies of the station, that the good and devoted rector was able to build a pastoral residence the following September.

Eight years sped by; and in 1892 the pastor renewed his work on the church, beginning the upper structure; but in the fall of that year the work was interrupted by his being transferred to the Immaculate Conception Church, Jenkintown. The Rev. Michael C. Donovan, present rector of St. Agatha's, came to take his place. A priest of much resolution and magnificent accomplishment, he saw the superstructure of the church proper finished during his pastorate of two brief years, when in November, 1894, he was promoted to St. Paul's as irremovable rector, leaving behind him in the community the ineffaceable memory of a sterling worker and not more by his labors in upbuilding the material temple of God than by his labors in upbuilding the spiritual temple in the souls of the people. The task of finishing and decorating the interior fell upon the able shoulders of Rev. H. P. McPhilomy, who had been assistant at the Visitation, and who like his predecessor, was a man of

deed and zeal, and fruitful in his labors. A year later, November, 1894, the church of St. Leo's was dedicated by Archbishop Ryan.

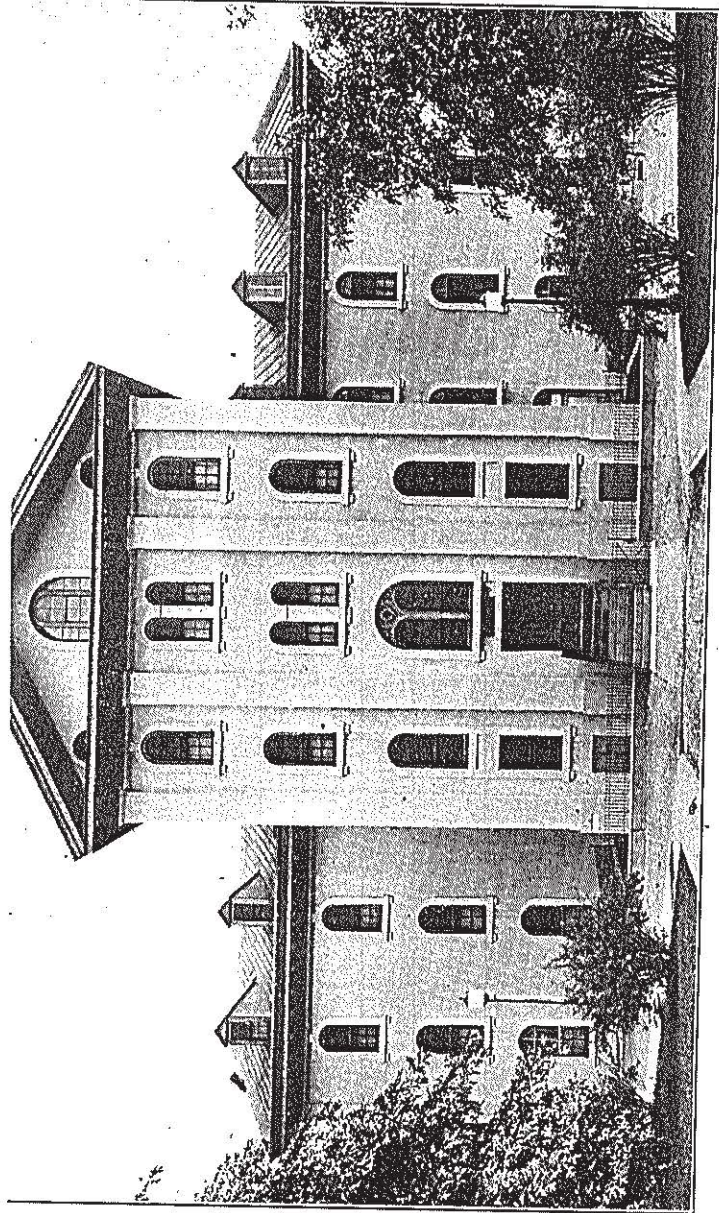
St. Leo's was fortunate in its selection of pastors, but, lamentable to relate, the parish no sooner learned to admire and reverence and love them than their worthy guides were whirled away. Thus, it was with Father McPhilomy three years later. They rejoiced at his promotion to the irremovable rectorship at St. John's but they grieved his loss. Another capable and estimable guide assumed the direction of the parish in September 1898, Rev. J. J. Rogers, who had been, previous to his appointment to St. Leo's, assistant at the Cathedral. He began the erection of the school in 1906, the corner-stone being blessed on the 24th of June by the Rt. Rev. Mgr. Loughlin, D. D. Unflagging and unstinted effort he concentrated on this project for the next two years, winning by his self-sacrifice and strenuous endeavors the profitable help of friends and benefactors. He was able on the 8th of September, 1908, to open for use a handsome building. The Sisters of St. Joseph, who are placed in charge, reside in a convent remodelled from the former rectory. His heavy duties told in the long run on Father Rogers, and in 1912 he was called to his long reward.

Rev. F. P. Brady next administered the parish, a man so charitably inclined that his name has become almost proverbial. But his Christ-like service was suddenly curtailed by his death, which caused universal sorrow through the parish.

The next pastor who came to assume responsibilities was the Rev. P. F. Fogarty. He was happily fitted for the position, having had wide experience in church building and organization. His career before 1912 was a varied and interesting one, crowded with events and rich in fulfilment. He was born near Pottsville, Pa., and after attending the district schools entered Port Carbon Normal School. From here he was graduated before the age of seventeen, though not before he had received the signal honor of being selected assistant professor, while still pursuing his course. A short period of teaching preceded his entrance into the Seminary of St. Charles, Overbrook, in 1879, in preparation for the priesthood. Once more during his philosophical course he was selected to assist as professor in the preparatory department of history and English. On March 20, 1886, he was ordained priest and immediately appointed assistant at St. Patrick's Church, Pottsville.

The following year he was transferred to the Church of the Sacred Heart, Philadelphia, and the succeeding summer beheld him appointed to a pastoral charge of St. Ambrose's Church, Schuylkill Haven, and its missions, including Port Clinton. It was at the latter place he began his significant labor of church building. Here he erected the splendid edifice of the Sacred Heart Church, the corner-stone of which had been laid by Archbishop Ryan just previous to his appointment there, and the pastor and his devoted flock rejoiced to see the last penny of obligation on the new structure cleared away in two years. For eleven years he devoted himself to the missions in the coal regions, doing much constructive work and endearing himself to his parishioners. It was sorry news for them to learn in October, 1898, that he was transferred at his own request to the beautiful little Church of St. Mary, Doylestown.

Three years of service he rendered in St. Mary's and again he was called to valiant service in another field, this time to the charge of the Church of the Presentation B. V. M., Cheltenham, with additional jurisdiction of the newly found mission at Olney, Philadelphia. Here he found the congrega-



ST. VINCENT'S ORPHAN ASYLUM OF TACONY, PHILADELPHIA

*History of
St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum
Tacony, Philadelphia*



*A Memoir of its
Diamond Jubilee*

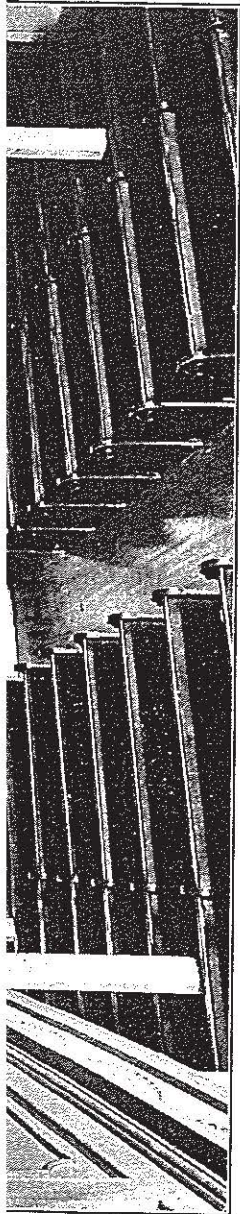
1855 — 1933



by

Rev. Francis Xavier Roth, O. S. A.

"NORD-AMERIKA". PRESS
PHILADELPHIA, PA. 1934



CHAPEL OF ST. VINCENT'S ORPHAN ASYLUM

CHAPTER IV. THE CRADLE OF CATHOLICITY IN TACONY

St. Vincent's as a Parish, 1858 — 1879

THE Tacony Cottage Association had promised its buyers the erection of a church in which they could attend services and hear sermons given in their mother-tongue. The fulfillment of that promise meant the end of a period of great hardship for the settlers. Until then they were obliged to fulfill their religious duties at St. Peter's Church about nine miles distant. As a rule, they started at three o'clock in the morning. Only when the weather was bad did they attend services at St. Dominic's in Holmesburg, which was but a half hour distant. We can imagine their joy on beholding the walls of their new church rising in 1857. The building was not yet painted, the orphans had not yet arrived, when the first Sacrifice of the Mass was offered in what is now the Board Room. Under these conditions, Father Meurer celebrated his first Mass at St. Vincent's in 1858.

Until the beginning of St. Leo's in 1884, St. Vincent's Chapel was the only Catholic Church in Tacony. Until 1908 the building contained the only Catholic school of our suburb. So, St. Vincent's may justly be called the Cradle of Catholicity in Tacony.

THE FIRST PASTORS

Rev. John George Gmeiner, 1858 — 1859

The Rev. John George Gmeiner, has the distinction of being the first pastor of St. Vincent's. We find his name for the first time in the Baptismal Record of December 1858. This date must therefore be considered as the beginning of parish-life in St. Vincent's.

Father Gmeiner was born in Oberbildstein (near Brixen, Austria), on January 11, 1799. According to the notes in his diary, he must have been one of the best students of his class. Even when advanced in years he could still write and speak Latin fluently. He was ordained on August 1, 1830, by the famous Bishop Galura, of Brixen. In 1837 he was appointed pastor of the large parish of Silberthal, where he labored for thirteen years. In opposition to "Josephinism", Father Gmeiner made special efforts to revive Catholic Liturgy. He persuaded his flock to a regular attendance of Mass on Sundays and Holydays; he bought the most beautiful vestments, and gave each of his families "Goffine's Handpostille", a well known exposition of the Sunday Epistles and Gospels.

In his fiftieth year he came to America, and on June 21, 1853 was appointed resident pastor of St. Francis Church in Trenton, N. J., replacing the Redemptorist Fathers of St. Peter's, Philadelphia, who until then had cared for the spiritual needs of the German

1933

Watson, Frank Rushmore (1859 - 1940)

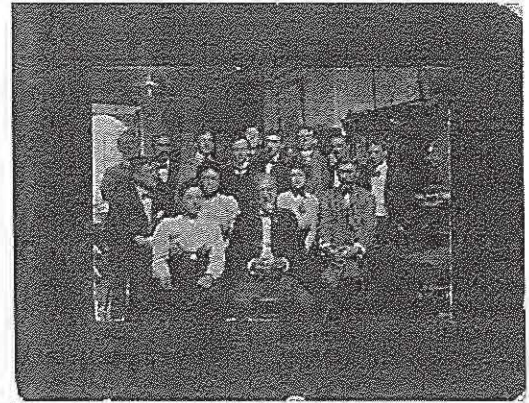
ARCHITECT

[Biography](#)
[Projects](#)
[Biographical References](#)
[Related Architects](#)
[Images](#)
[Printer-friendly version](#)

[Add to My Architects](#)

Born: 2/28/1859, Died: 10/29/1940

Frank R. Watson was one of the most important of the several architects specializing in church design in Philadelphia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was born in the Frankford section of Philadelphia, the son of Samuel and Anna B. Watson. After graduating from Central High School in 1877, Watson entered the office of [Edwin F. Durang](#), an eminent architect concentrating on Catholic church projects during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Watson spent five years with Durang before establishing his own independent firm in 1882/3. While not limiting his practice to Catholic projects, Watson still became well known for his church designs. So successful was he that he opened a branch office in Atlantic City, NJ in 1898. In 1901/02, when [Samuel Huckel](#) returned to Philadelphia, a partnership between the two was established under the name [Watson & Huckel](#). Huckel's experience with [Benjamin D. Price](#), another architect known for his church designs, as well as his experience with [Edward Hazelhurst](#) in the firm of [Hazelhurst & Huckel](#) stood the new partnership in good stead; and the office prospered until Huckel's death in 1917. Watson then continued practicing independently until 1922, when he was joined by the younger architects, [George E. Edkins](#), and [William Heyl Thompson](#). At the outset this firm was one of association, but soon the name became [Watson, Edkins & Thompson](#). When Edkins moved to Oaklyn, NJ in 1936, [Watson & Thompson](#) continued in practice until Watson's death in 1940.



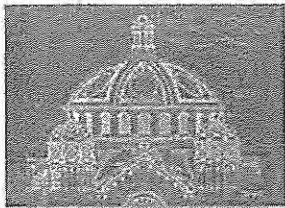
[Group Photo of James Windrim Office]
 Frank Watson
 (c. 1895)
 Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
 Local ID #: P-820
 > [View more images \[2 total\]](#)

Watson joined the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1901, served as president of the Philadelphia Chapter in 1927, and was made a Fellow in 1930. He also held memberships in the Historical Society of Frankford, the Medieval Academy of America, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Union League. He was given an honorary doctor of Fine Arts degree from Muhlenberg College. He also served as a delegate to the Pan American Congress of Architects meetings in South America in 1923 and 1927 and as technical advisor to the Philadelphia Housing Association from 1929 to 1932. In 1929 he was made an honorary member in the Mexican Society of Architects. When the Architects Building Corporation was established to oversee the design and construction of that dedicated highrise, Watson was elected president of the corporation.

Written by Sandra L. Tatman.

Clubs and Membership Organizations

- Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP)
- Pennsylvania Society of Architects
- American Institute of Architects (AIA)
- Philadelphia Chapter, AIA
- Union League of Philadelphia



PHILADELPHIA ARCHITECTS
AND BUILDINGS

[Home](#)
[About the Project](#)
[Participating Institutions](#)
[Search / Feedback](#)
[Subscribe to PAB](#)

SEARCH

[Inventories / Buildings](#)
[Locations](#)
[Collections](#)
[Published Sources](#)

OUR PARTNERS

[The Architectural Record](#)
[The Society of Architectural Historians](#)
[Philadelphia Historical Commission](#)
[Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission](#)

E. F. DURANG

- 230 Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects
- 1859 St. Patrick's Ch., parochial res., Phila.
- 1863 Phila. Bd. of Public Ed., Curtin Schl., sw 20th & Catharine sts., Phila.
- 1865 Phila. Bd. of Public Ed., Douglas Schl., sw Huntingdon & Browne sts., Phila.
- 1868 Phila. Bd. of Public Ed., Northeast Schl., nw Crown & Race sts., Phila.
- 1867 Our Mother of Sorrows Ch., ch. & schl. bldgs., 4800-4814 Lancaster Ave., Phila.
St. Johannais Lutheran Ch., ch., 15th & Ogden sts., Phila.
- 1870 Arch St. Opera Hse., 1003-1005 Arch St., Phila.
St. James the Greater Ch., rectory & schl., 38th & Chestnut sts., Phila.
St. Mary's Ch., Wilkes-Barre, PA
- 1871 Phila. Bd. of Public Ed., Paxson Schl., Buttonwood St., e. of 6th St., Phila.
- 1873 St. Andrew's Ch., 135 S. Sycamore St., Newtown, PA
- 1874 Pittson Opera Hse., Pittson, PA (attributed)
- 1875 St. Stephen's Luth. Ch., sw corner of So. Duke & Church sts., Lancaster, PA (attributed)
- 1876 Sacred Heart Ch., 1406-1418 S. 3rd St., Phila.
St. Charles Borromeo Ch., 20th & Christian sts., Phila.
- 1880 St. Agnes Hosp., 1900 S. Broad St., Phila. (with Frank Watson)
- 1881 Grace Bapt. Ch., Mervine & Berks sts., Phila. (completion only)
Our Lady of the Angels, Glen Riddle, PA
- 1882 St. Joseph Ch., St. Joseph St., Lancaster, PA
St. Patrick's Schl., 242 S. 20th St., Phila.
- 1884 St. Francis Ch., alts. & adds., Nanticoke, PA
- 1886 Cottages (2), U.S. Ave., Atlantic City, NJ
Eagle Hotel, alts. & adds., Lebanon, PA
Keystone State Normal Schl., new bldg., Kutztown, PA
Little Sisters of the Poor, bldgs., Fullerton & Sheffield aves., Chicago, IL
Phila. Bd. of Public Ed., Cahill Schl., Broad & Race sts., Phila.
Reading Academy of Music, 5th St., Reading, PA
Schuylkill Seminary, Fredericksburg Academy, Lebanon Co., PA
St. John's Orphan Asylum, alts. & adds., West Phila.
St. Joseph's Ch., Ashland, PA
St. Joseph's Protectorate, alts. & adds., Norristown, PA
St. Monica's Ch., Atlantic & California aves., Atlantic City, NJ
St. Peter's Ch. Mission, Reading, PA
Store, Locust abv. 2nd St., Columbia, PA
- 1887 Beneficial Saving Fund Soc., 1202 Chestnut St., Phila.
Carpenter, C., res., Merion, PA
Jesuit College, 17th, 18th, Thompson & Stiles sts., Phila. (demolished)
Little Sisters of the Poor, alts. & adds., Wingohocking Sta., Gtn., Phila.
- Our Lady of Visitation Ch., schl., south side of Lehigh Ave., bet. Front, 2nd St., Phila.
Res., n. of 58th St., east of Hoffman St., Phila.
Schl., Chestnut Hill Ave., bet. Perkiomen Tpke. & Norwood St., Phila.
St. Bridget's Ch., schl., Falls of the Schuylkill, Phila.,
St. James Ch., 3728 Chesnut St., Phila.
St. Vincent de Paul Ch., pastoral res., Price St., n. of Evans St., Phila.
- 1888 Cheatwood Hotel, Atlantic City, NJ
Factory (picture frame), alts., 6th & Arch St., Phila.
Hse. of the Good Shepherd, alts. & adds., 50th & Pine sts., Phila.
Merchants Insurance Co., alts. & adds., sw corner of 5th & Walnut sts., Phila.
Phila. Art Club competition (lost to F.M. Day)

establishing his own firm in 1882/3. Not limiting his practice to Catholic projects, Watson still became well known for his church designs. So successful was he that he opened a branch office in Atlantic City, NJ, in 1898. In 1901/02, when Samuel Huckel (q.v.) returned to Philadelphia, a partnership between the two was established under the name Watson & Huckel. Huckel's experience with Benjamin D. Price (q.v.), another architect known for his church designs, as well as his experience with Edward Hazelhurst (q.v.) in the firm of Hazelhurst & Huckel, stood the new partnership in good stead. The firm prospered until Huckel's death in 1917. Watson then continued practicing independently until 1922, when he was joined by the younger architects, George E. Edkins (q.v.), and William Heyl Thompson (q.v.). At the outset this firm was one of association, but soon the name became Watson, Edkins & Thompson. When Edkins moved to Oaklyn, NJ, in 1936, Watson & Thompson continued in practice until Watson's death in 1940.

Watson joined the AIA in 1901 and also held memberships in the Historical Society of Frankford, the Medieval Academy of America, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Union League. He was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree by Muhlenberg College. He also served as delegate to the Pan American Congress of Architects meeting in South America in 1923 and 1927 and as technical advisor to the Philadelphia Housing Association from 1929 to 1932.

LIST OF PROJECTS:

- 1885 Wetherill, Edward, Frankford Jct., Phila.
 1886 Brownfield & Co., warehse., Catharine & Swanson sts., Phila.
 Haffelfinger, S.L., res., Mt. Airy, Phila.
 Slonaker res., Devon, PA
 Temple Bapt. Ch., 22nd & Tioga sts., Phila.
 1887 Graver, John S., cottage, Abington, PA
 Harris, J.W., alts. & adds., Lansdowne, PA
 Hart, J.H., res., Clifton Hts., PA
 M.E. Ch., chapel & parsonage, Washington, DC
 Nat'l. Security Bank, 7th St. & Girard Ave., Phila.
 Nicetown Bapt. Ch., Phila.
 Pilling & Madelsy, dyehse. & stockrm., Trenton Ave. & Huntingdon St., Phila.
 St. James' Luth. Ch., alts. & adds. to schl., 3rd St. & Columbia Ave., Phila.
 St. Sauveur Ch., 22nd & Delancey Pl., Phila.
 Sternberger, L., store, 406 N. 5th St., Phila.
 Vansandt, John, res., Lansdowne, PA
 1888 Covenant Ch., 27th St. & Girard Ave., Phila.
 Dispatch Bldg., Main & Orthodox sts., Frankford, Phila.
 Greenwood, Dan'l., res., Frankford, Phila.
 Hermon Ch., parsonage, Frankford, Phila.
 Hubbard, A.H., res., se 22nd & Ontario sts., Phila.
 Northern Saving Fund, alts. & adds., 6th & Spring Garden sts., Phila.
 O'Reilly, Wm., alts. & adds. to store, Richmond St., Bridesburg, Phila.
 Our Lady of the Rosary Ch., 339 N. 63rd St., Phila.
 Rice, Geo., res., Woodbury, NJ
 Shepherd, Franklin L., alts. & adds. to res., Greene St., s. of Schl. Hse. La., Phila.
 St. Mark's Ch., reconstr. of int., Frankford, Phila.
 St. Steven's Ch., convent & schl., Broad & Butler sts., Phila.
 Stevens Mem. Ch., 9th St. & Lehigh Ave., Phila.
 Susquehanna Ave. Presbyt. Ch., Marshall St. & Susquehanna Ave., Phila.
 Trinity Luth. Ch., alts. & adds. to chancel, Lancaster, PA
 Walsh, Phil. J., alts. & adds., 32 & 34 S. 2nd St., Phila.
 Waterhouse, M.A., store & res., Main & Sellers sts., Phila.

Watson

- Webster, Geo. S., res., Frankford, Phila.
- Webster, John, stores (3), Frankford Ave. & Orthodox St., Phila.
- 1889 Annunciation Ch., chapel, 10th & Dickinson sts., Phila.
- Convent, alts. & adds., 48th St. & Lancaster Ave., Phila.
- Edward res., alts. & adds., Penlynne Sta., PA
- Goddard, Claude, res., Morton, PA
- Miller, Chas., 2 stores & residences, Main & Oxford sts., Phila.
- Noble, Jas., store & res., Frankford, Phila.
- Our Mother of Sorrows Ch., alts. & adds. to convent, 4800-14 Lancaster Ave., Phila.
- Patterson, residences (2), 3630-32 Chestnut St., Phila.
- Paul St. M.E. Ch., Frankford, Phila.
- Spring Garden Market Co., market & stable, 11th & Spring Garden sts., Phila.
- Thorpe, Thos., residences (2), Penn & Harrison sts., Frankford, Phila.
- Wolf, Dan'l., res., Swarthmore, PA
- 1890 Bolin, J.A., res., Tacony, Phila.
- Butterworth, Jos., res., Chester, PA
- Campbell, J.A.G., res., Chester, PA
- L'Emmanuelo Italian Mission Ch., 1020-24 Christian St., Phila. (now Christian St. Bapt. Ch.)
- Erickson res., Holmes, PA
- Freis, Fred. T., store & office, Orthodox St. & Frankford Ave., Phila.
- Gerhard, G.H., residences (3), Tacony, Phila.
- Hotel, 7th St. & Gtn. Ave., Phila.
- Luth. Ch., 5th & Cumberland sts., Phila.
- P.E. City Mission, Home for Consumptives competition, Chestnut Hill, Phila.
- Saul res., Penn St., Frankford, Phila.
- 6th German Ch. of the Evangelical, ne 5th & Indiana sts., Phila.
- St. Joseph's Ch., Girardville, PA
- St. Leo's Ch., Tacony, Phila.
- St. Luke's Ch., Frankford, Phila.
- Warehse., 21st & Market sts., Phila.
- 1891 Centenary M.E. Ch., Camden, NJ
- Deweese, John, res., Leiper & Oxford sts., Frankford, Phila.
- First Presbyt. Ch., 9-37 W. Cheltenham Ave., Phila.
- Grubb, E. Burd, alts. & adds. to res., Edgewater, NJ
- Harmon Presbyt. Ch., alts. & adds., Frankford, Phila.
- Herrick, Wm., res., Frankford, Phila.
- Kirschbaum & Co., clothing hse., 726-28 Market St., Phila.
- Nat'l. Bank, Atlantic City, NJ
- Sidebotham, John, residential operation & foundry, Frankford, Phila.
- Snellenburg, N., office, 932-34 Market St., Phila.
- Sooy, Richard, alts. & adds. to Brighton Hotel, Atlantic City, NJ
- Store, 1132 Chestnut St., Phila.
- Ursinus College, Bomberger Mem. Hall, Collegeville, PA
- Vare, Edward, res., 4th St. & Snyder Ave., Phila.
- White, John R., residences (13), 20th & Ontario sts., Phila.
- YMCA, NE branch, Phila.
- 1892 Allen, Geo. W., store, 1214 Chestnut St., Phila.
- Bowles, Thos., store, sw 8th & Sansom sts., Phila.
- o Epiphany Ch., 1101 Jackson St., Phila.
- Hensel, Colladay & Co., Franklin & Vine sts., Phila.
- Latourette, Clinton, res., Oak La., Phila.
- Our Redeemer Episc. Ch., 16th & Oxford sts., Phila.
- o St. Anthony of Padua Ch., Fitzwater St. & Grays Ferry Rd., Phila.
- Stone, Jas. A., store, 1013 Market St., Phila.
- West York St. M.E. Ch. & chapel, sw 17th & York sts., Phila.
- Wiggins, John R., store, 1013 Market St., Phila.

Tacony houses



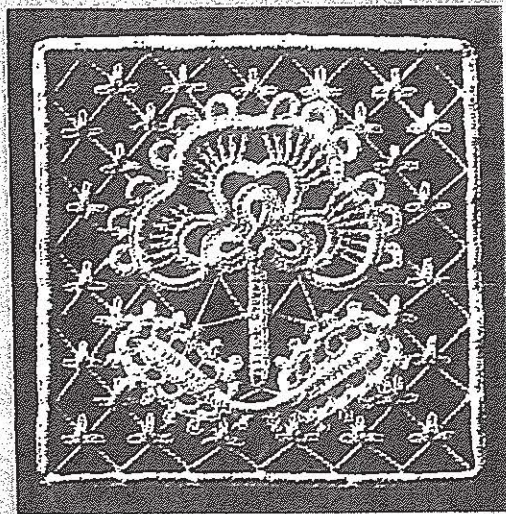
Watson

835

- t, H.C., res., Devon, PA
 Saints Luth. Ch., chapel, Cayuga St. & Gtn. Ave., Phila.
 Kley, A.F., res., Oak La., Phila.
 , alts. & adds., Jenkintown, PA
 laney, T.M., stable, Oak La., Phila.
 rst A.M.E. Ch., alts. & adds., 15th & Lombard sts., Phila.
 res & Co., alts. & adds., 7th & Arch sts., Phila.
 rot, Harry, res., Oak La., Phila.
 s., Penn & Arrott sts., Phila.
 esurrection Ch., Broad & Tioga sts., Phila.
 almon, Chas. A., res. & stable, Ashbourne, PA
 idebotham & Horrocks, residences (2), Frankford, Phila.
 t. James Orphan Asylum, 4807-61 Westminster Ave., Phila.
 rinity Luth. Ch., Chester, PA
 rinity Park M.E. Ch., Tacoma Park, Washington, D.C.
 Woll, Adolph, residences (2), ne 33rd & Diamond sts., Phila.
 Daily, Edward, res. & stable, 1408-10 S. Broad St., Phila.
 Incarnation P.E. ch., parish bldg., Jefferson & Ontario sts., Phila.
 M.E. Ch., Pemberton, NJ
 Merchantville M.E. Ch., Merchantville, NJ
 Neff, Rugan, res., Welsh Rd., e. of Bustleton Pike, Phila.
 Roskam, Isaac, factory, Susquehanna & Gtn. aves., Phila.
 Scharf, J., apt. hse., Monroe St., betw. 3rd & 4th sts., Phila.
 St. Patrick's Ch., parochial schl., Norristown, PA
 St. Stephen's Ch., Broad & Butler sts., Phila.
 Store, 50 N. 8th St., Phila.
 Walsh, Phil. J., mausoleum, Holy Cross Cemetery, Darby, PA
 White, M.B., res., Overbrook Ave., nr. City Line Ave., Phila.
 Ziegler Estate, store, 8th St., Phila.
- 5 Allen, Geo., alts. & adds. to res., 1618 Green St., Phila.
 Berean Bapt. Ch., 40th & Chestnut sts., Phila.
 Engle, Howard, res., Asylum Rd., n. of Orthodox Rd., Frankford,
 Phila.
 Fleisher, Penrose, alts. & adds., 821-23 Arch St., Phila.
 Hamilton & Diessonger, store, 1208 Chestnut St., Phila.
 Our Mother of Sorrows, parochial grammar schl. & parish hse.,
 4800-14 Lancaster Ave., Phila.
 Res., alts. & adds., 1725 Spring Garden St., Phila.
 Residences, alts. & adds., 1317-19 N. Broad St., Phila.
 St. Simeon's P.E. Ch., parochial bldg., 9th St. & Lehigh Ave., Phila.
 Store, alts. & adds., 8th & Sansom sts., Phila.
 Tabernacle Bapt. Ch., 40th & Chestnut sts., Phila.
 Walsh, Phil. J., summer home for 17th & Race sts. orphans, Sea Isle,
 NJ
- 896 Yocum, Isaac, res., 3614 Spring Garden St., Phila.
 Bowes, Thos., store, 8th & Sansom sts., Phila.
 Brady, Father, alts. & adds. to rectory, Media, PA
 Catholic Summer Schl. of America, cottage, Lake Champlain, NY
 Epiphany Ch., parochial schl., 12th & Jackson sts., Phila. ←
 Evangelical Luth. Ch., alts. & adds., Pottstown, PA
 Hoffman, H.F., alts. & adds., 1317-19 N. Broad St., Phila.
 Jenkins, Warner H., stable, St. Davids, PA
 Land Title & Trust Co., Norristown, PA
 Old Ladies Home, alts. & adds., Wissinoming, Phila.
 Rowland, Benj., stable, Frankford, Phila.
 St. Anthony of Padua, parochial schl., 22317-33 Carpenter St., Phila.
 St. John's Orphan Asylum, alts. & adds., W. Phila.
 Temple Presbyt. Ch., alts. & adds., ne Franklin & Thompson sts.,
 Phila.
 Transfiguration Luth. Ch., Pottstown, PA
- 897 Allen, Geo., stable, 18th & Brandywine sts., Phila.
 Ch., Hankow, China

THE
IRISH
IN
PHILADELPHIA

TEN GENERATIONS OF
URBAN EXPERIENCE



Dennis Clark 1973

Victorian character of the Irish brand of Catholicism would persist in the city right through the first half of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

The social changes between 1870 and 1900 thus strongly shaped the urban deportment of the Philadelphia Irish. The social problems that plagued them were moderated but still continued as steady immigration from Ireland persisted. Economically and politically, the contractor bosses drew great numbers of them into the trades and commerce of urban building activities and the sharp dealing of city machine politics. Religiously they shaped a Catholic bureaucracy in a Victorian image that eventually attracted and held masses of other immigrants through its schools and influence. And they continued to agitate for and contribute to Irish nationalist causes. In these responses the Irish experienced the social and business currents of the Victorian period, while retaining their ideals of religion and romantic nationalism.

EIGHT

THE TRADITION PERSISTS

The twentieth century would charge the city with power even greater than those which had earlier spawned its industrial might. New forms of energy and new invention added vastly to its technical capacity. Ascending downtown towers looked out over intensive development that flowed beyond the old city boundaries in a sweeping pattern of metropolitan construction and settlement. The people of this city seemed driven by a new energy as well, but their course, like the people themselves, was highly varied. Changing residences, jobs, and goals, they moved ever outward, searching the urban landscape restlessly for the warmth and stability that became increasingly difficult to find in industrial society. In their restless search they left behind in the inner city the decay and wreckage of the first American urban age. Caught in that debris were the latest immigrants and those working-class Irish still experiencing grueling exploitation in the lower levels of the industrial city.

The free-enterprise economy of the nineteenth century had left the city a legacy of bitter problems that festered during the years prior to World War I. As early as 1892 Joseph J. Murphy, editor of the *Catholic Standard and Times*, excoriated the reformers of the Progressive movement by excoriating the "sweater" in industry. He complained that any plan for housing improvement were quickly branded as "desperate Anarchistic schemes for driving the wealthy people out Philadelphia."⁴⁷ Twenty years later the same problems existed, and another social critic of the same surname, John Murphy, rose to prominence as a labor leader whose effort for the redress of working-class grievances went well beyond

troversy involving municipal contract work, "Never again under any circumstances will I go after municipal contracts."⁴² But business sense overcame political irritation. In 1908 McNichol was completing the subway excavation from City Hall to South Philadelphia, building the million-dollar Torresdale water-filtration plant, laying pipe for sewers and other public utility projects, handling asphalt and granite-block paving contracts, and conducting a half-million-dollar garbage-disposal business through the Penn Reduction Company. A total of more than \$2.5 million in contracts was thus handled by McNichol. During his career McNichol also built the subway tunnel for the Market Street transit line; the imposing Benjamin Franklin Parkway, which is still one of the most appealing features of the city; and the eight-mile Roosevelt Boulevard, which opened up the broad fields of the northeast section of the city to automobile traffic and residential development.⁴³ In terms of urban construction, few men in the last century changed Philadelphia's physical orientation more extensively than "Sunny Jim" McNichol.

The "New Immigration" of the period from 1880 onward brought to the city an array of immigrants different from that of previous arrivals. The foreign-born population of the city in 1880 was 204,335 and by 1890 would increase by 65,000, mostly because of immigration from southern and eastern Europe. The new immigrants crowded into the same slums, often into the same buildings, where the Irish had been crammed in the 1840s, and the same outrageous privation greeted them. In many ways the Irish assumed the role of "managers" of the new immigrants. As politicians, contractors, priests, and policemen, they dealt with the newcomers at firsthand, using their knowledge of the city well.⁴⁴ Often their ministrations were far from benign. "Sunny Jim" McNichol was not remembered happily by many of the Italian laborers who worked for him, nor were the Irish policemen known for their tenderness in their newly won status as keepers of the peace.

For the heavily Catholic immigrants from southern and

eastern Europe, the impressive institutional Catholicism built by the Irish and Germans in Philadelphia was to have great significance. The Irish clearly dominated that church structure. The kind of religious and cultural formulation represented by the Irish-built church was peculiarly Victorian in its characteristics. In Ireland the people had been weaned on a folk religion that was communal, rural, richly traditional, and often superstitious. Persecution had stripped it of many of the cultural attributes normally associated with Catholicism. From the simplified base of belief and worship brought to America, the Irish elaborated a Victorian religious style strongly influenced by contemporary and class factors. Victorian religion was generally both strenuous and stoic, in a tight middle-class image. The Irish developed a militant and vigorous catechistic religious style that matched anything stiff-necked Protestantism could produce. In an age that idolized competition, the Irish Catholics competed furiously with other denominations. If Protestantism viewed them as somewhat rowdy, they set up for themselves stifling standards of propriety for church behavior. They elevated the rationalist canons of the period into a creed and labored mightily to assure the perfectibility of their souls and institutions.⁴⁵

As a religious body long denied state tolerance in Ireland, the Irish Catholic church was quite familiar with the realities of the separation of church and state. In the American system this proved to be a considerable asset, since it stimulated independent development and sanctioned ghetto separatism. If the resulting ecclesiology was pompous and inward-looking, it was also broadly conservative and committed to its constituency in the lower orders of society. Such a church could be relied upon to minister to the newer Catholic immigrants with fidelity and firmness. Of the newer immigrants, the Italians suffered the most from the hard-handed Irish church figures. But, if the Irish version of Catholicism was not congenial to the new immigrants culturally, at least the base was established upon which they could mold their own versions. The

total to forty-three.¹¹ In 1889 the Reverend J. P. Loughlin stated that America desperately needed to be converted to Catholicism, for it lacked "that better food which fills the soul." Similar exhortations were common in the Catholic sermons of the time. The reaction of Protestant Philadelphians to Irish Catholic religious expansion and missionary purpose can readily be imagined. The widely known historian Henry C. Lea saw a clear threat in the Catholic presence, a threat of foreign Italianate intrigue against American institutions. As minions of the Papacy, he saw the Irish as inherently disloyal.¹² Such sentiment continued to promote strong religious dissension in the city. As late as 1897 the American Protestant Association's anti-Catholic drives found strong support in Pennsylvania.¹³

In addition to "racial" and religious factors, the half-world and the underworld of Irish misery in the slums continued to be a scandal and a testimony of failure to those who traced these conditions to something inherent in the Irish themselves. Many of the Irish workers suffered through the severe economic depression of 1873 and took part in the disorders of the violent railroad strike in 1877. For the poor there was continuous distress even in rich America. In 1875 a writer noted the "Celtic" character of those patronizing the soup kitchen of the Bedford Street Settlement House and said, "John Bull grumbles at the money he spends on his poor. . . . We give without grumbling."¹⁴

Between 1876 and 1895 the movement of the Irish onto the police force was very slow. In this period, the number of Irish on the force was less than 7 percent of the total and increased only 1 percent in a decade. By 1876 the only notable concentration of Irish officers was in the Fourteenth District in the Schuylkill area in South Philadelphia.¹⁵

Poverty and drunkenness were familiar elements in the cycle of degradation besetting the immigrant Irish. There were worse failings in the Victorian period, none more dreadful than the "life of shame" of the fallen woman. A reformer estimated that in the 1890s there were 1,500 houses of prostitu-

tion, employing over 7,000 girls, in the city. "Children of Irish or German or English parents many of them are. Girls of generous temperament or too trustful dispositions have been betrayed by employer or friend, and have found no door open to them but that of the house of shame."¹⁶ He stated that most of the girls came from the lower class and worked as domestics, among whom Irish girls were legion at the time. Thus, the "proper Philadelphians" could find much that was scandalizing about the Irish, and the religious and social ideas of the time did not afford redeeming explanations for the multiple afflictions borne by the Irish.

If the misfortunes of the Irish gave ample cause for derogatory concepts of them as a group to arise, their actual deeds as lawbreakers and criminals added to the picture of the Irish as a fallen race. In one month in 1872, the *Evening Bulletin* would report that Denis Shea, who had testified against tavern-keepers' making illegal Sunday sales, was beaten; that James McMahon and Philip Monegan had attacked police, Monegan with a knife; that Donald Cullen and John McMenamy had been arrested for burglary and drunken assaults; that Sarah Kelly had been arrested in a raid on a disorderly house; that James Scullion had tried to cut a woman's throat; that James Connolly had been seized as a wife beater, and Maggie Casey for larceny; and that, in a magistrate-court scandal, Mr. Florence McCarthy had been taken in on conspiracy charges after making false arrests. Such stories did not inspire confidence in the Irish as peaceful citizens. In 1885 the foreign-born Irish alone accounted for 35 percent of the arrests in the city, while representing only a tenth of the population. Occasionally there were sensational stories about great outrages perpetrated under Irish auspices, such as the Phoenix Park murders in Dublin in 1882, in which the viceroy for Ireland was assassinated; and the murder of Dr. Patrick Cronin in Chicago in 1889, as part of a Fenian plot.¹⁷ Such items rounded out the local tales of crime and mayhem to depict the Irish as a race of desperadoes.

ment. The image of the Irish underwent some rehabilitation as these improvements took place.

In 1875 an editorial both touted the Irish and provided some insight into the social condition of the Irish women in the city:

And everywhere we find them the same, Irishmen always, but still adapting themselves to every condition and improving it. Brave, enthusiastic and loyal, making the best citizens of the Republic and the finest soldiers of the kingdom. . . . But what shall we say of the daughters, compelled to be the drudges of our households and the victims of a social aristocracy and of outrages utterly at variance with democratic notions and often cruelly unjust? . . . they too have their compensations. . . . They are secure from competition and can afford to laugh at their detractors. . . . And they have fewer faults, too, than are charged to them. Tidiness seems their natural state, and no people are more obedient, affectionate and faithful when kindly used.⁵

The Irishman might bear the soldier-hero image, but the Irish girl was still the upstairs maid to the public.

For those who were talented or lucky enough, fortunes were being made in the city in these times.⁶ Among this ambitious group were the Irish striving upward toward rewarding careers and prominence. Their rise could be traced in the swiftly running gossip at wakes, political meetings, and saloon exchanges: "Tom Fahy's on the Board of Education." "Did you hear that Alex McClure made Frank McLaughlin editor of the *Times*?" "Tom Ryan is the only Democrat on the Council now." "Christy Gallagher's on the Fairmount Park Commission, you know." If Thomas Powers was coroner, he would let Stephen Farrelly of the Central News Company know of a death so the obituary writers could get busy; Farrelly, in turn, might call lawyer William O'Brien, who specialized in handling bequests both in Ireland and in Philadelphia.⁷ The

Irish in the city constituted a highly sensitive communications system that registered individual ascents and descents with equal relish and alacrity.

There was an echelon of the Irish community that transcended petty gossip, however, for its affairs were topics for grave consideration. This group comprised the very important men—the wealthy, the venerable, and the powerful such as James Campbell, who was born in Southwark in 1812 and was the "best known leader of the Catholic Democrats in Philadelphia";⁸ James P. Sullivan, who was born in Cork and became vice president of the huge Midvale Steel Company and president of the Market Street National Bank; Thomas Dolan, who was noted for the large library in his home on Rittenhouse Square after becoming wealthy in street-railway transactions and utilities; Thomas E. Cahill, a coal merchant who left \$1 million in 1876 to establish the first archdiocesan Catholic high school in the city; Colonel Thomas Fitzgerald, who grew rich publishing the *Philadelphia Item*; and John B. Colahan, who was married to a Quaker and was a trustee of the Drexel estate.⁹ These men were at the upper level of the flourishing economy of the city and reaped its rewards.

Still, there was a gulf between the Irish and the "proper Philadelphians."¹⁰ In 1882 Alexander McClure felt impelled to admonish the Irish to profess their devotion to America more readily, and to place less emphasis upon their devotion to Ireland; Goldwin Smith depicted them as an inferior race with a mad propensity for "assassination, dynamite, blood-thirsty bluster and delirious lying"; and a book by Edward O'Meagher Condon was entitled *The Irish Race in America*.¹¹ The Irish were regarded, and regarded themselves, as a separate race of people, "Celts," and the classification could be variously interpreted. This attribution, in a country that took race very seriously, was potentially dangerous.

The affinity of the Irish was increasingly reinforced by their huge religious establishment. Between 1869 and 1882 seven more Catholic churches were built in the city, bringing the

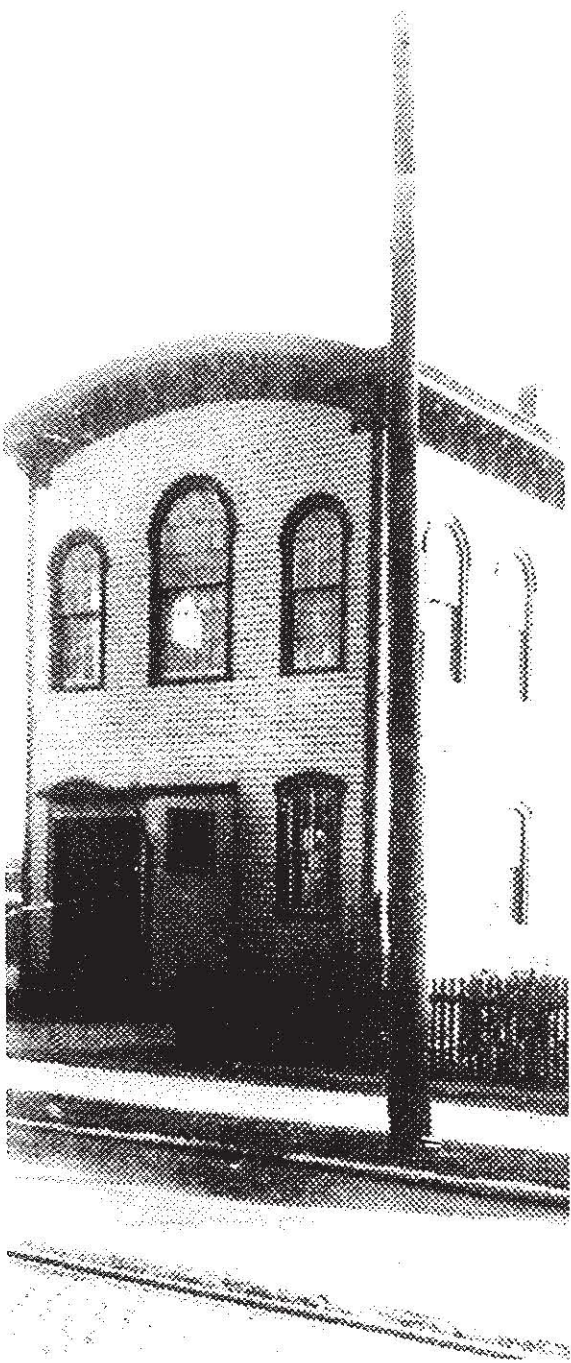


**A
CENTURY
OF
SERVICE**

A pictorial history of Saint Leo Church in Tacony, Philadelphia, PA

1984

The Church



Tacony Hall on State Road. This hall, which was St. Leo's temporary home, later became this offices of the New Era Printing Co.

then, in addition to our present Christmas, Ascension Thursday, the feasts of the Circumcision, the Immaculate Conception, All Saints, and the Assumption; the feasts of Corpus Christi, the Annunciation and the Epiphany were also Holy Days. Mass was offered at 5:00 A.M. and 8:00 A.M.; there were then no noon or evening Masses for the benefit of the working people.

Dancing, something which we take for granted today, was not looked upon favorably. Father Strahan warned the young people to avoid dancing and dancing schools, for "it resulted in mixed marriages, and worse, forced marriages."

The greatest problem of the parish, in the view of the pastor, was alcoholism. To combat this, he established a Total Abstinence Benevolent Society, which flourished briefly, then disappeared. This has to be taken in the context of the times. While Father Strahan was preaching against "Friday and Saturday debauchery", alcoholism was the social problem which most preoccupied America. Half of the overnight guests of the Philadelphia Police Department were those arrested for drunkenness. The Catholic Standard was then devoting a full page weekly to the doings of Catholic T.A.B. societies, and in Tacony, the Disstons were placing covenants in the deeds of all lands they sold, forbidding the future use of the property . . . "for the manufacture or sale of beer or liquor of any kind." This restriction remains to this day, and has never been successfully challenged.

Father Strahan had better fortune with some of the other societies he fostered. The St. Leo Beneficial Society, which provided sick and death benefits to its members, survived well into this century. Also founded were a Rosary Society, a Purgatorial Society, and the League of the Sacred Heart. Youth organizations were more difficult to form. The St. Aloysius Sodality and the Cadets of Temperance quickly came and went. Perhaps the poor children didn't have time for social clubs. These were not the best times for the young. First Communion preparation classes were held at 7:00 P.M. for the benefit of those working children who were unable to make the 4:00 P.M. class. Also, nearly half of the deaths recorded in the parish during the early years were the deaths of children.

Money was a constant and ever present problem. When the parish was founded, all of the people were canvassed, and asked to pledge an annual sum towards the building of the church. This pledge was divided into monthly payments, and collected, first by envelope, later by ushers at the door. There also was a weekly plate collection which was supposed to cover normal parish operating expenses, and a special collection each year to purchase coal. The basement was sufficiently completed by Quinquagesima Sunday in 1885 for occupation, and it was dedicated on Low Sunday of the same year. The following year nominal pew rents were established. Those who could not afford this were invited to make special arrangements with the pastor, worshippers who did neither were expected to pay five cents seat money at the door.

Collections were very poor. In 1884, the monthly collection for seven months totaled \$462.40, and the plate collection was \$245.04. The total

8-1
The Fany.
mer church
In

A CENTURY OF SERVICE



Mary Disston

C. Maher was Prefect; Annie Delaney, First Assistant Prefect; Eliza Clark, Second Assistant Prefect; Katie McShafer, Reader; Mary Gantz, Treasurer; Clara Holdoffer, Music Leader; Mary Delaney, Secretary and Consultor; and Annie Knowles, Sacristan.

Father Strahan secured the social hall on State Road for Sunday services; this same building had been used temporarily by other new congregations, and eventually became the offices of the New Era Printing Company which published a local paper in Tacony for many years. J. Harry Dorsey and Henry Piersol volunteered to clean the hall each Saturday evening, so that it would be fit for worship the next day. Weekday devotions and parish business were conducted from Father Strahan's residence.

A site for a permanent church was an immediate priority. The Disston family, which had contributed all or part towards the building sites of several Protestant churches, were approached on behalf of St. Leo's by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Parker. Every community history, and history of St. Leo's, including those published within a decade of the event, agree that the Disston family did donate the land. This is also the oral tradition of the parish, which, up to this time, has been taught to every child in St. Leo's School. Yet, the deed to the property, as recorded at Philadelphia City Hall on January 14, 1885, just as clearly states that Mary Disston sold the property to Archbishop Patrick J. Ryan for the sum of fifteen hundred dollars. It is possible that Mary Disston did give the parish a discount on the purchase price, but fifteen hundred dollars does seem to be fair market value for the six building lots involved, in the currency of the times. This parcel of land was a portion of the Green Estate, which had been purchased by Mary Disston two years earlier for \$100,000. The ground chosen was the land the church proper now occupies. At the time, it was located on the western edge of Catholic Tacony; population shifts soon made this the eastern edge. Additional land was purchased by Father Strahan from William Costigan. This land was eventually used as a site for the rectory.

Frank R. Watson, a Philadelphia architect, drew up plans for the new church. His design called for a church one hundred thirty-two feet long, by fifty-seven feet wide. The edifice was to be of stone quarried in Stockton, New Jersey, and from ground level to the top of the cross it would be ninety-five feet. There was to be a lower church with a seating capacity of nine hundred, and an upper church designed to hold over one thousand worshippers. The seating capacity is much less today, probably because the aisles then were much narrower: the center aisle was five feet, and the two side aisles only two and one half feet in width. It is interesting to note that the original plans did call for a bell in the tower; yet one has never been installed. Parish tradition has it that this was omitted because the Disston family did not approve of church bells.

On the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Father Strahan invited the men of the parish to attend the ground-breaking ceremony the following Tuesday, at eight o'clock. This was not a ceremonial invitation. It was, "Bring your pick and shovel, men." Over the next two weeks the entire basement was dug; some help was also received from "volunteers"

1894-1898

The
Church
in

Rev. Hubert McPhilomy



FATHER MICHAEL C. DONOVAN
1892-1894

The second pastor of the Church of St. Leo had one thing in common with many of his parishioners—he was a native of Ireland. Born in County Cork, he migrated to this country at age seventeen. He had received some education in Ireland, and enrolled in Professor Edward Roth's Broad Street Academy when he settled in Philadelphia. He entered St. Charles Seminary in 1875. Following his ordination by Bishop Shanahan of Pittsburgh, he was assigned as a curate to St. Joachim's Parish. He also assisted at St. Cecilia's, Coatesville, for three years prior to receiving the pastorship of St. Leo's.

Father Donovan's stay at St. Leo's was short, but during his two years as pastor he raised \$17,000.00 and completed the exterior of the church. There were then about 1,000 Catholic souls in the parish. During these years Fathers James A. Hogan, William Motley, John J. Denvir and Patrick J. Hannigan assisted in the parish. Sadlier's *National Catholic Directory* lists St. Leo's as having a school with 40 pupils, served by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. There was, in fact, no such school. The School Sisters of Notre Dame did staff St. Vincent's Orphanage, and it is possible that this and subsequent listings refer to day students at the orphanage. However, given the number, it is more likely that the listing refers to children enrolled in catechism classes at St. Leo's. The Sisters at the orphanage may have been giving them religious instruction.

In 1894, Father Donovan was appointed pastor of St. Paul's in South Philadelphia, where he served the Italian immigrant community for eighteen years. He became pastor of St. Agatha's in West Philadelphia in 1912, and was created a domestic prelate by Pope Benedict XV in April of 1921. Monsignor Donovan was called to his heavenly reward on June 11, 1927.

FATHER HUBERT McPHILOMY
1894-1898

Father Hubert McPhilomy was no stranger to St. Leo's when he was appointed rector in 1894. Early records list him as preaching from time to time during the tenure of Father Strahan. Born in Philadelphia in 1859, he attended St. Paul's, Tenth and Christian Streets, and Annunciation, Tenth and Dickinson Streets. He was also enrolled at LaSalle College prior to his admittance to St. Charles Seminary in 1876. His first assignment, after his ordination by Archbishop Ryan in 1885, was to Visitation Parish, Front Street and Lehigh Avenue. He served at that church until his appointment as pastor of St. Leo's in 1894. A capable administrator, he raised over \$20,000.00 for the completion of the church, which finally accomplished during his term. The highlights were the lovely stained glass windows, handsome murals, which,

sadly, have not survived, and the great painting of the Crucifixion over the impressive Gothic altar. There is a poignant story told about the master craftsman responsible for the painting and probably for the murals.

Luigi Scattaglia was considered one of the best liturgical artists in the country. He was also a man very devoted to his wife. When she died, shortly before the First World War, he lost his own will to live. Shortly after, he was found lying on her grave, dead by a self-inflicted gunshot wound. It is sad that such a man, capable of creating pictures which could inspire others to greater faith and hope, could not find within himself spiritual comfort in his own hour of need.

The formal dedication was held on November 24, 1895. The new church looked splendid. The walls and ceiling were covered with brilliant murals, offset by the antique oak woodwork. The sanctuary was banked with white and yellow chrysanthemums.

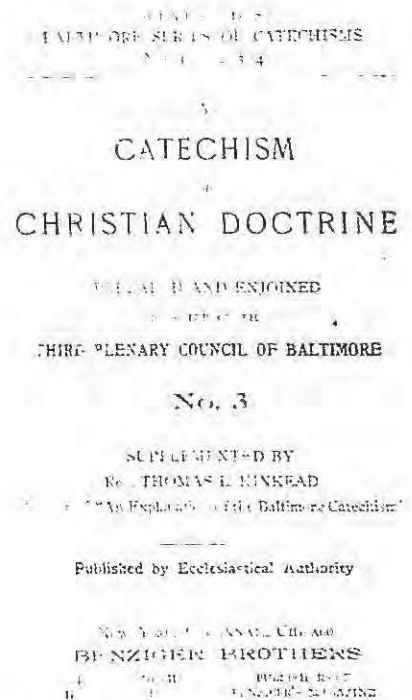
Archbishop Ryan presided over the ceremony. Reverend Thomas Barry, rector of St. Anne's, was the celebrant. Father A.A. Gallagher was the deacon, and former pastor Father Michael Donovan was the subdeacon. In the sanctuary, along with Father McPhilomy, were Father Strahan, the founding pastor, and many neighboring pastors. The sermon was preached by Father J.F. Loughlin, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, and Father Thomas Quinn served as master of ceremonies. St. Leo's choir, which was led by Benjamin F. Federal, was augmented by the choir from Father McPhilomy's former parish, the Church of the Visitation. Soloists Lizzie Gonlating and Daniel Cummings sang selections from Gounod's Mass. The "Veni Creator" and "O Cor Gesu" were sung by the best tenor of the Philadelphia clergy, Father Joseph O'Keefe of Immaculate Conception Parish. After eleven years and three pastors, St. Leo's was finally and officially complete.

The church building did have one odd flaw, which has not been rectified to this day. Directly across the street from the front of the church lay a narrow park. The main tracks of the railroad connecting New York with Philadelphia were on the other side of the park. On a warm summer day, with windows and doors open, a speaker in the pulpit often found himself in competition with a passing express. He had three unenviable choices; he could pause to give the train the right of way; he could try to outshout it; or he could simply go on with the sermon knowing full well that half of the people in the church probably couldn't hear a word he was saying.

Most of the time Father McPhilomy had no official assistant. However, Father Edward V. Rowan did serve briefly as assistant pastor.

Father McPhilomy is credited with founding societies to administer to the corporal needs of the parish, most notably, the St. Vincent dePaul Society. In addition to responsibility for the House of Correction, he also served as chaplain at Eden Hall, the exclusive Catholic girls school located on Commodore Barry's old estate near Torresdale. Eden Hall was much closer to St. Dominic's, and it is probably a tribute to Father McPhilomy's personal charisma that he held this chaplaincy.

In 1898, Father McPhilomy was appointed irremovable pastor of St. John's Church, Thirteenth and Filbert Streets. Assignment to this



"Who made you?" "God made me." So began the most famous of parochial school texts, the Baltimore Catechism. Generations of young Catholics learned the principles of their faith from this text. And even now, years later, can give an instant response to the familiar questions. This is the title page of the third volume of the series, which was used by advanced classes at St. Leo's School in 1908.

THE SUBJECT PROPERTY

The real estate which is the subject of this appraisal was observed to consist of a two (2) level granite constructed building built in 1884 formerly utilized as the church of St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Parish. Based primarily on measurements taken from a survey by Frances J. McAnaney, III, which were spot-checked in the field, the gross floor area of the subject building was estimated to be approximately 8,952 square feet above grade plus finished daylight lower level of approximately 8,583 square feet.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is an irregular shaped lot known as Parcel "4", subdivided from a larger lot which formerly included the adjacent school building of St. Leo The Great which was subdivided and sold off May 28, 2008, its rectory which was subdivided and sold off October 29, 2016 and its convent which was subdivided and sold off September 7, 2017. According to a Site Plan prepared by Frances J. McAnaney, III dated December 4, 2015, Parcel "4", known as the Church Parcel, contains 146.477' of frontage which is interrupted along two (2) courses on the northwesterly side of Keystone Street and extends in depth 159.023' along the southwesterly side of Unruh Avenue. Total area was approximately 21,790 square feet or .75002 acres as shown on the survey, exhibited as a facing page. The site essentially wraps around the former rectory property. The lot line at the rear extends in part through the party wall shared with the former convent fronting Tulip Street. The lot line at the south side extends along the retaining wall so that the concrete walkway which once shared the subject property now belongs to the former rectory property at 6670 Keystone Street.

The subject lot features the original stone retaining wall at the front and sides of the church. Two (2) curb cuts from Keystone Street serve the lot which is macadam paved with ample driveway area and striped parking area for 38± vehicles.

There is a recorded Cross Easement Agreement, which is included in the Addendum, that provides for reciprocal rights of use to the entire parking lot in perpetuity for the benefit of Parcel "A" (now known as 6658 Keystone Street, 6670 Keystone Street and 4900 Unruh Avenue) and Parcel "B" (known as 6649 Tulip Street) and rights to ingress/egress from/to Keystone Street.

The southerly portion of the interrupted Keystone Street frontage (61.418') represents the area encumbered by the Cross-Easement Agreement and must be reserved in perpetuity for shared parking purposes.

The site is served by public water and sewer and public utility gas, electric and telephone services.

IMPROVEMENTS DESCRIPTION

The subject site was improved with a gothic style granite church with partly above grade daylight basement which functions as an integral part of the religious center containing large worship room and accessory storage and mechanical areas. The upper level includes the main worship facility, accessory office and storage areas and lavatories. Gross floor area was estimated to be approximately 17,353 square feet including approximately 8,583 square feet on the finished lower level.

GENERAL CONSTRUCTION

Stone and heavy timber framing.

FOUNDATIONS/FRAMING

Masonry footings supporting load bearing masonry exterior walls.

EXTERIOR WALLS

Granite with brownstone facing at rear three level portion.

ROOF

Original slate shingles over gabled wood deck with bell tower.

LIGHTING

Lighting in the nave in the upper level church consisted of original chain suspended chandeliers converted to electric. Balance included ceiling mounted fluorescent, incandescent and spot type fixtures.

ELECTRICAL

600 amp main disconnect with separate 400 amp, 120/240 volt service controlling the heating system and separate lighting panel.

FENESTRATION

Windows included original wood framed fixed sash with custom stained glass on the upper level with steel framed casement sash with fixed and operable panels on the lower level.

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING

The lower level was served by central air conditioning with condenser fenced in chain link at the exterior south side. Heat was provided by heat exchanger unit located in the lower level mechanical room. Upper level was served by radiators fed by a Weil-McLain gas and fired low pressure storm boiler in the basement.

SANITARY FACILITIES

Located at the front of the lower level were male and female lavatories, one equipped with two (2) toilets and two (2) sinks and one equipped with one (1) toilet, one (1) sink and two (2) urinals.

INTERIOR FINISH, LAYOUT & SPECIAL FEATURES

There was a combination of vinyl tile, ceramic tile, carpeted and hardwood floor finishes with smooth concrete in the unfinished sub-basement. Wall and ceiling finishes were a combination of plaster, pressed metal and wood wainscot with wood trim stained in dark oak. There were 27 rows of fixed wooden pews in the upper level nave, each row consisting of shorter end wings and a long central pew. Four (4) rows of pews were in the choir loft and two (2) sets of 24 pews in the lower level church. The lower level church had Celotex tile ceilings. The upper level church featured marble relief wood columns, gold leaf accents and trim and a lobby with brass railings, wood steps and chair lift to choir loft.

Confessionals were situated on each level near the front. Steel fire escapes led from the upper level near the rear of the north and south sides of the building.

GENERAL COMMENTS/LAYOUT

The subject property is a well constructed building of granite construction that appeared to have been constructed in two stages. The main church portion appeared to be constructed in 1884. A rear three (3) level addition constructed circa 1895 allowed the church to intercommunicate with the convent on the third level which is not accessible from the church portion. A storage room on the lower level with Marlite wall finish had a breach in the wall formerly connecting to the convent which was sealed with gypsum board. Furthermore, the first floor of this addition at the rear has a separate room into which a pipe protrudes which is not accessible from the interior.

The building is a substantial structure, over 130 years of age and under-utilized since the merger of the parishes. As a result, the property is expensive to maintain and keep operational. The building does lend itself to continued use as a house of worship or for imaginative rehabilitation reused in an alternative configuration.

ANALYSIS OF AGREEMENT OF SALE

To the best of my knowledge, the subject property is not currently under agreement of sale nor formally offered for sale in the open market.

FLOODPLAIN

The subject property is located entirely within Zone X, area determined to be outside 500 year floodplain determined to be outside the 1% and 0.2% annual chance floodplains according to the Flood Insurance Map for the City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Community Panel No. 420757-0118H revised November 18, 2015.

ASSESSMENT AND TAXES

According to the website of the City of Philadelphia's Office of Property Assessment of Taxes, the 2018 property assessment for 6658 Keystone Street as follows:

Land	\$70,224
Improvements	<u>\$299,376</u>
Total	\$369,600

The current tax rate in Philadelphia is \$1,399.80 per \$100,000 of assessed valuation. Applying this rate to the total assessment of \$369,600 provides an annual tax levy of \$5,173.66.

HISTORY OF TITLE

According to the last Deed of Record, also known as Deed of Subdivision, the subject property is titled to Reverend Joseph L. Farrell, solely as Pastor of Our Lady of Consolation Parish and most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap, Archbishop of Philadelphia by His Agent Reverend Monsignor Daniel J. Kutys, Attorney-InFact, by instrument dated March 27, 2017. Consideration was nominal as recorded at Document No. 53204729 on April 27, 2017. This was an internal transfer of title upon subdivision of the larger site into two, creating 4900 Unruh Avenue. The site of which the subject is part was originally acquired October 2, 1884 by the Most Reverend Patrick John Ryan from Mary Disston.

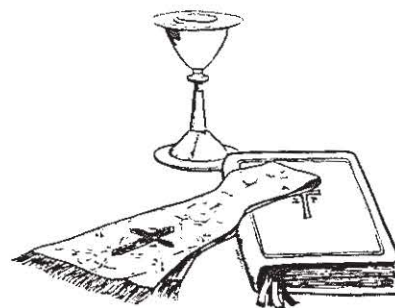
organizations which marched in the civic parade, four appear to have had Catholic origins. These were the St. Patrick Alliance, The St. Leo's Beneficial Society, The Ancient Order of Hibernians, and The Hamilton Catholic Club. There is no information on the St. Patrick Alliance. The St. Leo Beneficial Society, as has already been noted, was a parish sick and death benefit society.

Division 39, Ancient Order of Hibernians was chartered in 1889; Joseph McKeown was the first President; Patrick Conway, Vice President; John Mulholland, Recording Secretary; Patrick Lester, Financial Secretary; and Patrick Connors, Treasurer. Although the A.O.H. had no official church ties, the membership was made up of good and loyal Catholics. The early history of Division 39, A.O.H., is also a history of service to St. Leo's Parish.

The Hamilton Catholic Club was a social club for young Catholic men which flourished in the early years of this century. It had been organized in 1901, and took its name from the location of the clubhouse, on Hamilton Street. Club members participated in sports and conducted theatrics. Lawrence Carroll was the first president; the other officers included: Joseph Furphy, Aubrey Grant, Eugene McKinney, William Kalblein, Thomas Corcoran and Harry Kane, who had been the first child-baptized in the parish. The club was open to young men eighteen and over; initiation fee was one dollar and weekly dues were twenty-five cents. Members passed to honorary status upon marriage.

Father Rogers had a special interest in St. Francis Industrial School, the training school for indigent boys run by the Drexel sisters in Edgington, three miles north of City Line. Father would take some of the boys of the parish up to St. Francis where they would play ball with the boys of the school. He took a special liking to one young lad at the school, and eventually brought him back to live at the rectory. Alfred Mullin remained a life-long resident of Tacony, and never forgot Father Rogers' kindness to him. His daughter, Berenice Mullin Lamey still has in her possession a handsome crucifix which had belonged to Father Rogers.

By 1906, Father Rogers felt the parish was in a position to begin the construction of the much needed school. The building was modest by today's standards. It had only four rooms, located in that section of the present school complex which is closest to the church. The Sisters of St. Joseph agreed to staff the new school when completed; it followed then that Father Rogers also had to prepare a convent for them. The building which is now the rectory was constructed, and when it was finished, Father Rogers, his assistant, Father Hugh Trimble, and Alfred Mullin moved into the new building and left the old rectory for the nuns. If this suggests a lack of chivalry, things are not always as they seem. It is a tradition of the convent that the new residence, which faced the park, was intended to be the convent. When the Mother Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph learned of this, she objected. Some claim she felt the park would distract the sisters, others that she thought that the nuns would lack the privacy they required. In any case, object she did; and Father Rogers, always the gentleman, graciously consented to give his own quarters to the nuns. All things considered, he probably got the best of the deal.



PRIESTLY VOCATIONS FROM SAINT LEO PARISH

- 1901 Archbishop Daniel J. Gercke
- 1917 Father John H. McCloskey, O.S.A.
- 1920 Father Daniel Lannon, C.M.
- 1924 Father Thomas L. Carroll
- 1927 Father Charles McCarron, O.S.A.
- 1928 Father James Farrell
- 1930 Father Lawrence Maher
- 1933 Father Richard B. Ward
- 1933 Father Joseph Watson, C.M.
- 1934 Father Sylvan Brennan, C.P.
(James Brennan)
- 1936 Father Joseph H. Ruane
- 1940 Monsignor Thomas Riley
- 1940 Father Thomas Doyle
- 1941 Father Aloysius Gaffigan, O.S.F.S.
- 1950 Father Raymond Donahue
- 1953 Father John Riley
- 1953 Father Aloysius McGonigal, S.J.
- 1956 Father Leo Quinn, O.S.F.S.
- 1958 Father Joseph Murray, O.S.F.S.
- 1960 Father Edward Stapleton, S.S.S.
- 1962 Father Philip Cribben
- 1963 Father Brendan Keevy, C.P.
(Thomas Keevy)
- 1965 Father Joseph C. Zuschmidt, O.S.F.S.
- 1971 Father William J. Messick, O.S.F.S.
- 1972 Father William J. McKeown,
(Trenton Diocese)
- 1975 Father Gerard J. McCarron,
(Trenton Diocese)
- 1976 Father Thomas Murphy, O.S.F.S.
- 1979 Father John Gilvey, O.S.F.S.
- 1981 Father Charles Day
- 1984 Father Richard G. Greger
(Allentown Diocese)

BROTHERS

- Brother Walter Sutor, C.S.S.R.
- Brother David Tierney

streetcar line, and traffic jams and slow service plagued the long hauls from West Philadelphia and the northwest. In 1908 a private syndicate constructed the Market Street subway to link the downtown with the fast-growing commuter suburbs of West Philadelphia. This first transit line, like the later public construction of the twenties and thirties, was clearly designed to profit from and maintain the specialized character of the downtown. These were public facilities whose principal beneficiaries were downtown real estate owners and middle-class office workers and shoppers.

A 1912 traffic survey of all streetcar and subway lines showed who was using the downtown and its transit system (Table XX). The relatively light traffic from nearby south Philadelphia as compared to the heavy flows from West Philadelphia and the north side showed that the downtown was not only the world of the white-collar worker, but also the world of the white-collar worker's wife. Neither the residents of the poor ghettos of south Philadelphia nor the more distant mill workers of outer south Philadelphia, Kensington, and the northeast used the downtown frequently.

TABLE XX

STREETCAR AND RAPID TRANSIT TRAFFIC, 1912

<i>Percentage of Traffic Arriving in the Downtown Whose Origin Was:</i>	
South Philadelphia	17.0
West Philadelphia	27.4
North Philadelphia	25.1
Outer Northeast	4.7
Outer North Suburbs	7.1
Downtown	18.7

Transit construction programs, however, were not unpopular. Any call for enlargement of the system could count on at least three groups. First, the downtown office managers, storekeepers, and real estate owners, all of whom wanted to extend the transportation reach of the downtown. Second, real estate developers at the outer edges of the city and storekeepers along the proposed routes who

SAM BASS WARNER, JR.

THE PRIVATE CITY

Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth

SECOND EDITION

1996

PENN

PHILADELPHIA, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS

ST. LEO THE GREAT CATHOLIC CHURCH

Tacony

Located at the northern end of a block bounded by Tulip & Keystone Streets, & Magee & Unruh Avenues

Philadelphia

Philadelphia County

Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6692-B

HABS

PA-6692-B

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

1849 C St. NW

Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Tacony, ST. LEO THE GREAT CATHOLIC CHURCH

HABS No. PA-6692-B

NOTE: Tacony's street grid does not lie true to the compass. For the purpose of locating buildings in this report, the roads running NE to SW (ex. Keystone Street and Torresdale Avenue) will be the N-S axes and those running SE to NW (ex. Longshore Avenue and Disston Street) will be E-W axes.

Location: The parish buildings of St. Leo the Great Roman Catholic Church in the Tacony neighborhood, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania are located on the northern half of the block bounded by Tulip and Keystone streets and Magee and Unruh Avenues.

Significance: As the first "standard" Roman Catholic parish in Tacony, St. Leo the Great remains an important and viable community landmark, both physically and institutionally. The parish buildings include an ideal core necessary for the operation of a neighborhood parish: sanctuary, rectory, convent, and school. Most of these structures are sited on a high-profile location, facing Disston Park to the east across Keystone Street.

Description:

The dominant building of this religious ensemble is the sanctuary of St. Leo the Great. It stands at the southwest corner of Keystone Street and Unruh Avenue, facing east towards Disston Park. The church's designer employed a free interpretation of the Gothic Revival common to late-nineteenth-century applications, instead of a more archeological take more widespread earlier in the century. A shallow extruded "tower" element centered on the east façade, pointed-arch windows, and engaged buttresses along the lateral walls are some of the Gothic vocabulary present in the building. A robust timbered porch extends from the church's north wall, facing Unruh Avenue. The church's exterior appears to be little altered beyond a new asphalt shingle roof and storm/safety windows placed in front of the stained glass. The church building received major interior renovations and decorative simplification in 1983-1984.

Integral with the church, to its rear (west), is the present convent originally constructed as a rectory. It is a two-and-one-half story stone structure connected to the church by a crenellated two-story intermediary structure. The coursing and mortar work are identical to that of the sanctuary. The roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles and some room air conditioners hang from the windows.

To the church's south, facing east across Keystone Street towards Disston Park stands the present rectory, constructed originally as the convent. This building is connected to the sanctuary building by an enclosed second-story bridge. The rectory is three stories with the

third story contained under a mansard roof; a turret extends from the northeast corner of the second and third floors. The frame walls of the enclosed porch, turret, and bridge, and the porch piers and cornice have been covered in siding.

The main school building is two stories with a central tower element. The principal elevation facing east across the parking lot to Keystone Street and the rear elevation extending along Tulip Street are nearly identical. The brick structure has a presence similar to many early-twentieth-century educational structures and is accented with cut stone. The tower emphatically proclaims the building's religious associations and addresses the Gothic sanctuary building with its pointed arch openings and crenellated top. This school building has received aluminum replacement windows that do not fully fill the arched window frames. A three-story, brick school annex with cut stone banding stands in the southeast corner of the property, opposite the church, on Keystone Street. It has also received replacement windows.

History:

See the historical report for Tacony, HABS No. PA-6692 for more detailed information about Tacony's general development.

Until the founding of St. Leo the Great parish, Roman Catholic church services in Tacony were held in the chapel of St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum, which was founded by German-Catholic congregations in Philadelphia in 1855.¹ The archdiocese authorized the formation of Tacony's first parish in 1884 and its first mass was celebrated on May 25—the public social hall on State Road was initially used for services.² Despite oral tradition stating the land was gifted by Mary Disston, records show that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia purchased the property at the corner of Unruh Avenue and Keystone Street from Mary Disston on January 14, 1885, albeit for a discounted \$1500 cost. Groundbreaking occurred in 1885 and the basement was finished-off for services later that year. The original rectory building facing Unruh Avenue was also constructed in 1885 and ultimately made integral with the church structure.

While a "Roman Catholic church" was indicated on an 1888 city atlas, it was not until October 1890 that work on the church structure began in earnest.³ Whether Frank R. Watson provided the church's plan before groundbreaking in 1885 is not clear, however he is the architect on record for continuation of construction and Nicholas Cavanaugh was secured as the contractor.⁴ Watson was an active Philadelphia architect who specialized in

¹Louis M. Iatarola and Siobhán Gephart, *Images of America: Tacony* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 95. See also for historic photographs of the church, convent, and early school building.

²Unless otherwise noted, information related to the St. Leo the Great parish buildings is drawn from "A Century of Service: A Pictorial History of Saint Leo Church in Tacony, Philadelphia," 1984, Tacony Branch Library, Free Library of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

³*Baist's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Penna., Complete in One Volume* (Philadelphia: G. Wm. Baist, 1888) and *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* (PRERBG), 15 October 1890.

⁴PRERBG, 15 October 1890.

religious structures.⁵ After high school, he trained in the office of Edwin F. Durang—a well-known local architect particularly favored by the Roman Catholic diocese—between 1877 and 1882. Watson founded his own firm in 1882 and practiced with a variety of partners, including Samuel Huckel (1901–1917), until his death in 1940. Given his background in ecclesiastical design, it is not surprising that the diocese turned to him for a parish church project. Additionally, Watson likely was acquainted with Tacony given that he grew up in nearby Frankford. The exterior of the Watson-designed church was completed in 1892 and the interiors were finished by the church's dedication on November 24, 1895, although additions to the interior decoration were made through the 1920s.⁶

St. Leo's parish did not embark on any building projects until 1906 when ground was broken for a convent sited south of the church on Keystone Street and a school building constructed south of the rectory building along Tulip Street. The new convent building was ultimately used as the rectory and connected to the church by means of a second-story enclosed bridge that originally displayed Colonial Revival detailing. The initial four-room school building was constructed of brick and completed in 1908—it was expanded in 1917 with a four-room addition to the south whose stepped-out form anticipated a much more ambitious extension to the south in 1925. The resulting building was centered on a bell was heated by steam and lighted by electricity.⁷ A second brick school building with dressed stone banding and known as the "school annex" was constructed to the southwest of the earlier building in 1953.

Historian: James A. Jacobs

Sources:

Baist's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Penna, Complete in One Volume. Philadelphia: G. Wm. Baist, 1888.

"A Century of Service: A Pictorial History of Saint Leo Church in Tacony, Philadelphia." 1984. Tacony Branch Library, Free Library of Philadelphia. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Iatarola, Louis M., and Siobhán Gephart. Images of America: Tacony. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.

Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide.

Sanborn Map Company. Sanborn Maps for Philadelphia Pennsylvania, vol. 27. New York, 1928.

⁵All information about architect Frank Rushmore Watson is drawn from Sandra L. Tatman and Roger Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700–1930* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1985), 832–833.

⁶Iatarola, 95, for dedication date.

⁷Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Maps for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*, vol. 27 (New York: 1928), 2635.

Tatman, Sandra, and Roger Moss. Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects:
1700-1930. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1928.

1985