

**PUBLIC COMMENT  
RECEIVED FOR THE  
REMAND OF THE  
DESIGNATION OF  
401-09 N. 65<sup>TH</sup> ST**

**The following letter was submitted by several members of the public (see below):**

Subject: St Donato Church

Dear Members of the Historical Commission:

On July 14, 2023, you will once again be given the task to review St Donato Roman Catholic Church 401 – 409 North 65<sup>th</sup> Street, for historic designation. I ask that while you are once again reviewing the historic value of St Donato Church that you please keep in mind that St Donato Roman Catholic Church was granted historic and placed on the Philadelphia Registry has a Philadelphia Historical Landmark on April 9, 2021. This designation was granted unanimously on March 3, 2021, and again on April 9, 2021, and again in remand on November 30, 2022. St Donato church was granted historic because of the expertise, knowledge, and wisdom of all of you who reviewed the nomination for its historic merits.

I would like to take a moment and reiterate the historical facts of St Donato Church:

- 1) St Donato Parish was established in 1910 in the then Haddington/Overbrook section of the city of Philadelphia. The parish and church was established so that the large immigrant Italian catholic community would have somewhere to worship and feel welcomed.
- 2) The completion of the lower church was in the summer of 1910. The first mass was celebrated on July 16, 1910 the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.
- 3) By 1911, the Pastor Father Pietro Michetti of St Donato Church/Parish realized two things (1) that just establishing a church and parish dedicated to Italian immigrants was not enough to call all those that left the catholic faith for protestant churches back to the faith, and (2) that with so many families the parish needed to establish a school. Father Michetti prayed for help and guidance. Father's prayers led him to contact Mother Cabrini to ask for the help of her and her missionary sisters.
- 4) Mother Cabrini answered this plea and arrived in Overbrook/Philadelphia in 1912. During the two years that Mother Cabrini helped serve the Italians of Overbrook she and her missionary sisters helped establish St Donato School, an orphanage, and the convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. St Donato Church **was the only** church in Philadelphia that St Frances Cabrini worshiped at from 1912 -1914. It was for the church, school, and community that St Frances Cabrini came to Overbrook.
- 5) Mother Cabrini passed away in 1917 and never got to see the completion of the St Donato's upper church.
- 6) On July 7, 1946, Mother Cabrini became St Frances Xavier Cabrini by Pope Pius XII. Philadelphia is a very blessed city for it is probably the only city that can say it has had multiple saints walk its streets, saints like St Frances Cabrini, St John Neumann, and St Katherine Drexel.
- 7) On July 7, 1946, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, Cardinal Dougherty held a celebration mass in honor of Mother Cabrini being made a saint at St Donato Church.
- 8) In October of 1946, the lower church of St Donato's was declared as Mother Cabrini Chapel.

- 9) St Donato Church was built and redesigned by architect F. Ferdinand Durang. The cornerstone is dated August 7, 1921. It is has stood solidly for 100 years, it stands has solidly today has when it was first built and will still stand for another 100 years or more.

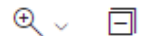
St Donato church was unanimously designated as Historic on April 9, 2021, because of these facts, because of St Donato Church's history with St Frances Cabrini, because of its history with the Architect F. Ferdinand Durang, and because of the history of how the church and Mother Frances Cabrini aided the Italian immigrant community of Overbrook. Since April 9, 2021 none of those facts and reasons for which you all considered valid reasons to designate St Donato Church has historic has changed.

Should St Donato Church lose its justly deserved title has a Historic Philadelphia Landmark a travesty will occur in Philadelphia. For should you change your vote and opinion St Donato Church will always be a part of history it will just become part of Philadelphia's lost history. Only you the Philadelphia Historical Commission can preserve history. Only you the Philadelphia Historical Commission can protect and save St Donato Church from just becoming another pile of rubble.

Thank you,

## St. Donato's church

📎 1 attachment ▾




Bonita Beltrante <bonitab0123@gmail.com>

To: preservation



Mon 7/3/2023 5:35 PM

 template letter to the historic... ▾  
15 KB

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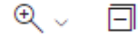
Forwarding letter for St. Donato's church remain Historical.

Sincerely,

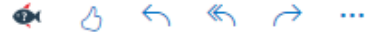
Bonita L. Beltrante

# St Donato Church to remain historical

1 attachment

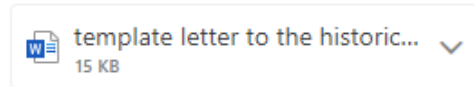


Angelica Beltrante <angel31257@hotmail.com>



To: preservation

Mon 7/3/2023 5:40 PM



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**From:** Bonita Beltrante <bonitab0123@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Monday, July 3, 2023 9:37 PM

**To:** angel31257@hotmail.com <angel31257@hotmail.com>

**Subject:**

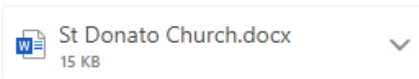


mciaccia12@comcast.net



To: preservation

Tue 7/4/2023 6:49 PM



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Thank you for your consideration,  
Marian Ciaccia

[Reply](#) [Forward](#)

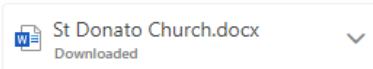


mciaccia12@comcast.net



To: preservation

Tue 7/4/2023 6:49 PM



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Thank you,  
Lucille A Ciaccia

## Save St. Donato's Church

1 1

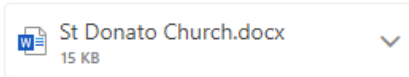


sherry <sherry68@comcast.net>

To: preservation



Thu 7/6/2023 9:00 PM



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Joyce



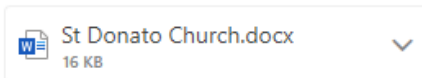
Lou Fanelli <amarisland@gmail.com>

To: preservation



Fri 7/7/2023 5:50 AM

Cc: Marian Ciaccia <mciaccia12@comcast.net>



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Signed document attached this time!

Thank you,

Lou

## St Donato letter attached

1 1

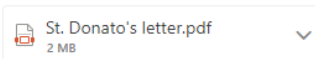


Lois Antell <loisantell@gmail.com>

To: preservation



Fri 7/7/2023 12:06 PM



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Please keep the beloved St. Donato Church as an historical site.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lois Antell  
Realtor/Office Manager  
Mac Real Estate Services LLC  
McCool Properties LLC  
227 S. High St.  
West Chester, Pa. 19382  
610-692-7010  
cell-610- 291-0203

## St. Donato Church historical designation

Timothy Crowley <tjcehc@sbcglobal.net>

Thu 7/6/2023 7:50 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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To the Members of the Historical Commission of Philadelphia,

I am writing to formally request the historic designation of St. Donato be maintained. It is troubling to me that a building that was rightly given that designation would so suddenly and strangely be considered as no longer historically significant. At a minimum, the sudden shift warrants further investigation, examination and explanation.

I am also significantly troubled by what seems to me a bias by your commission against buildings in the West Philadelphia area. Why are so few historically important buildings in that area represented with a historic designation? There seems to be a snobbish favoritism for certain areas like Manayunk and Rittenhouse and a particular lack of respect for areas that are historically important to immigrants of the 19th century.

As a former resident of West Philadelphia, student of St. Donato School and parishioner of St. Donato Church, I want you to be aware that your decisions are not without impact on the community that remains very much centered around St. Donato Church.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth H. Crowley

## St Donato Church - Historic Landmark Designation

Joanne Devine <jcdevine@verizon.net>

Thu 7/6/2023 7:40 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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To the Members of the Historical Commission of Philadelphia,

I am sending this message to support the effort to retain the historic landmark designation of **St. Donato Church located at 401 N. 65th Street.**

I understand a decision by the Commission is to be made shortly regarding the status & that it is important to hear from the community as a voice in the decision-making process.

Thank you for your consideration in retaining the historical significance of the church building.

Sincerely, Joanne Devine

## landmark designation of 401 N 65Street

Gabrielle Hamilton <hamiltongm2@yahoo.com>

Thu 7/6/2023 8:19 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>;Gabrielle Hamilton <ghamilton@flushingtownhall.org>

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To the Members of the Historical Commission of Philadelphia,

I am Gabrielle M. Hamilton, reaching out to the Commission in support of the historic landmark designation of St. Donato Church located on 401 N. 65th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19151.

I am writing as a former neighbor to St. Donato's Church and a former parishioner. But I am also writing as a director of education who works at a historic building in NYC: Flushing Town Hall (FTH). My work allows me to serve over 20,000 school students and families each year--- only because a group of community leaders had the foresight to save Flushing Town Hall from the wrecking ball. As a result, FTH has become an anchor for a diverse community of immigrants, many living at-or-below the poverty-level, who come to FTH to lift their spirits and enjoy arts and cultural programs. But for that group of local leaders, FTH would have been plowed-under and the land sold to the highest bidding developer.

I am urging the Commission to recognize the value of community anchors, such as St. Donato's Church. With historic status, St. Donato church can remain a beacon of stability for a community that feels largely ignored and under supported. The church could invite neighbors, and local other communities for festivals and cultural programs. It may even be an effective tool in reducing crime--- rather than a empty plot of land, or worse-- a pile of rubble that the children in the neighboring school could get hurt in.

I applaud you on the Commission who strive to preserve both landmarks and communities, who see a bolder and brighter tomorrow for West Philadelphia with the landmark designation of 401 N. 65th Street.

Thank you for the important work you do for our communities and neighbors.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle M. Hamilton



## St. Donato Church, N. 65th St.

Li Th <lithamilton@gmail.com>

Thu 7/6/2023 1:02 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

Cc:Sesto Figlio <reformphilacouncil@hotmail.com>

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To the Members of the Historical Commission of Philadelphia,

I am writing to support vigorously the effort to retain the historic landmark designation of St. Donato Church located at 401 N. 65th Street.

Since the Historical Commission voted unanimously on April 9, 2021 (a mere two years ago) to designate St. Donato Church as an Historical Landmark, nothing has changed about its architectural significance, its historical significance in relation to St. Frances Cabrini and the city of Philadelphia, or its value as a community asset to warrant removing its historical designation. It continues to meet criteria A and E for designation, and it should retain its status.

If anything, the original petition for its designation underestimated its importance, and the rapid increase in demolition of historical ecclesiastical architecture in Philadelphia has only increased the importance of preserving St. Donato. As a professor of medieval history with a specialization in the ecclesiastical architecture of eleventh- and twelfth-century Italy, it is clear to me that William Durang's exterior intentionally echoes the Italo-Norman romanesque architecture of southern Italy (a point overlooked in the original petition). Thus, the physical structure itself is a reminder of the places from which the founding community of immigrants originated. This was, at times, a painful history both as economically disenfranchised farm laborers in Italy, and as unwelcomed immigrants to the United States in the late 19th, early 20th century. The very marginalization of these immigrants, even by their fellow Roman Catholics, is why St. Frances Cabrini was sent on mission to serve this community. Philadelphia and the United States need more reminders of the contributions of immigrants to our society, not fewer.

Historical monuments exist within a landscape, and the memory of the contributions of St. Cabrini and her sisters has recently been diminished by the closing of Cabrini University outside of Philadelphia. Elsewhere in the city of Philadelphia, as well as in the United States, monuments to Christopher Columbus have, understandably, become controversial signifiers of Italian-American heritage. There can be no better way to record the contributions of this immigrant community than preserving the worship site of St. Frances Cabrini and Durang's beautiful example of Italo-Norman romanesque.

As a former member of the parish, I was with my family in the pews when the late pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Fr. Rock, stood in the pulpit of St. Donato Church and promised the community that the church would not be closed despite its merger with our Lady of Lourdes. Whether he made that promise in ignorance or not, I do not know. It is fair, however, to assess any promises from the current pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Fr. Rock's successor and confrere, accordingly. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has shown little to no capacity to grow parish communities through evangelization in the past 75 years. Removing its historic designation will only pave the way for St. Donato Church to meet the fate of St. Laurentius and so many other beautiful sacred spaces in Philadelphia. Therefore, it is imperative to retain the historical designation so that, were the church to be deconsecrated, other more capable organizations or individuals could maintain this important site.

My wife and I continue to own a home in Philadelphia and plan to return to live here in the future. We continue to support a range of Philadelphia causes with our donations. We have made substantial financial contributions to the Independence Mission Schools and St. Frances Cabrini school over the past several years. We have supported the recently formed Society of St. Frances Cabrini of Philadelphia since its formation. We also support the Free Library of Philadelphia, Haddington Branch also located on 65th St. My extended family has likewise continued to make donations within the community. The estate of my late aunt, Elizabeth Lemmer, also made a gift to Our Lady of Lourdes with the intention that it be used to support St. Donato just prior to Fr. Rock's passing. These three community assets: Haddington Branch Library, St. Frances Cabrini school, and St. Donato Church are all located on the same block of N. 65th Street (between W. Girard Ave. and Callowhill St.) and serve as anchors to stabilize the surrounding community. Removing the historical designation from St. Donato will enable the ultimate demolition of the church, negatively impact the school and library, and likely destabilize the community. The Society of St. Frances and the community deserve and need more time to develop a program of support for this valuable site.

As a native Philadelphian, former parishoner, and as an historian, I urge you to consider the broader importance of this community asset, to defend your original well-reasoned decision, and to sustain the historical designation of St. Donato Church.

Sincerely,  
Louis I. Hamilton

(No subject)

Marsha W <1964godsproperty@gmail.com>

Thu 7/6/2023 10:36 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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I am sending you this text to let you know that I live across the street from St. Donato Church, and that I would love for it to remain a historical figure in the future. I've enjoyed over the years watching the parishioners and also supporting the things that the church has offered.

## St. Donato Church

John F. Millon, CPA, MST <jmillon@verizon.net>

Tue 7/4/2023 11:41 AM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

Cc:JOHN MILLON <jmillon@verizon.net>

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Dear Members of the Historical Commission:

On July 14, 2023, you will once again be given the task to review St Donato Roman Catholic Church 401 – 409 North 65<sup>th</sup> Street, for historic designation. I ask that while you are once again reviewing the historic value of St Donato Church that you please keep in mind that St Donato Roman Catholic Church was granted historic and placed on the Philadelphia Registry has a Philadelphia Historical Landmark on April 9, 2021. This designation was granted unanimously on March 3, 2021, and again on April 9, 2021, and again in remand on November 30, 2022. St Donato church was granted historic because of the expertise, knowledge, and wisdom of all of you who reviewed the nomination for its historic merits.

I would like to take a moment and reiterate the historical facts of St Donato Church:

- 1) St Donato Parish was established in 1910 in the then Haddington/Overbrook section of the city of Philadelphia. The parish and church was established so that the large immigrant Italian catholic community would have somewhere to worship and feel welcomed.
- 2) The completion of the lower church was in the summer of 1910. The first mass was celebrated on July 16, 1910 the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.
- 3) By 1911, the Pastor Father Pietro Michetti of St Donato Church/Parish realized two things (1) that just establishing a church and parish dedicated to Italian immigrants was not enough to call all those that left the catholic faith for protestant churches back to the faith, and (2) that with so many families the parish needed to establish a school. Father Michetti prayed for help and guidance. Father's prayers led him to contact Mother Cabrini to ask for the help of her and her missionary sisters.
- 4) Mother Cabrini answered this plea and arrived in Overbrook/Philadelphia in 1912. During the two years that Mother Cabrini helped serve the Italians of Overbrook she and her missionary sisters helped establish St Donato School, an orphanage, and the convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. St Donato Church **was the only** church in Philadelphia that St Frances Cabrini worshiped at from 1912 -1914. It was for the church, school, and community that St Frances Cabrini came to Overbrook.
- 5) Mother Cabrini passed away in 1917 and never got to see the completion of the St Donato's upper church.
- 6) On July 7, 1946, Mother Cabrini became St Frances Xavier Cabrini by Pope Pius XII. Philadelphia is a very blessed city for it is probably the only city that can say it has had multiple saints walk its streets, saints like St Frances Cabrini, St John Neumann, and St Katherine Drexel.
- 7) On July 7, 1946, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, Cardinal Dougherty held a celebration mass in honor of Mother Cabrini being made a saint at St Donato Church.
- 8) In October of 1946, the lower church of St Donato's was declared has Mother Cabrini Chapel.
- 9) St Donato Church was built and redesigned by architect F. Ferdinand Durang. The cornerstone is dated August 7, 1921. It has stood solidly for 100 years, it stands as solidly today as when it was first built and will still stand for another 100 years or more.

St Donato church was unanimously designated as Historic on April 9, 2021, because of these facts, because of St Donato Church's history with St Frances Cabrini, because of its history with the Architect F. Ferdinand Durang, and because of the history of how the church and Mother Frances Cabrini aided the Italian immigrant

community of Overbrook. Since April 9, 2021 none of those facts and reasons for which you all considered valid reasons to designate St Donato Church as historic has changed.

Should St Donato Church lose its justly deserved title as a Historic Philadelphia Landmark a travesty will occur in Philadelphia. For should you change your vote and opinion St Donato Church will always be a part of history it will just become part of Philadelphia's lost history. Only you the Philadelphia Historical Commission can preserve history. Only you the Philadelphia Historical Commission can protect and save St Donato Church from just becoming another pile of rubble.

Thank you,  
John F Millon

John F. Millon, CPA, MST

Office address:

200 Lawrence Road

Suite 500

Broomall, PA 19008

Office 484-420-4267

Fax 610-924-2933

*Referrals are important to us and welcomed. If you are satisfied with our services, please do not hesitate to refer us to your friends, family and colleagues.*

## (401-409) Saint Donato Church

dfw19@aol.com <dfw19@aol.com>

Sat 7/8/2023 11:47 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Dear Commissioner's of the Philadelphia Historical Commission,

Your Historical Designation of Saint Donato Church in 2021, was a right and accurate decision. Saint Donato Church met the criteria to be made historical in 2021 and today in 2023 Saint Donato Church still meets the criteria to be historical.

If the historical designation is removed it will marginalize the integral part that Women, Immigrants, Italian Americans and Catholics, played in Philadelphia's history.

Saint Mother Cabrini, broke through the prejudices of her days to become an incredible role model to all women and all immigrants here in Philadelphia, as well as, around the world. St Donato Church is just not a building beautiful has it is. It's the hollowed ground where the first American Saint actually walked, worshiped and got her strength from God to carry out her missions. Saint Mother Cabrini touched so many lives in Philadelphia its hard to grasp the far reaching impact that her work and presence had.

Saint Mother Cabrini's, presence at the Saint Donato Church is an important, integral part of the History of Philadelphia. Saint Mother Cabrini, stands as a huge role model to ALL Women and ALL Immigrants. To have the place where the Pastor asked Saint Mother Cabrini to come to Saint Donato's to help fight against the prejudice that was taking place in Overbrook/Philadelphia acknowledged and preserved the Philadelphia Historical Commission will keep it has an important part of the fabric of Philadelphia, this community, and beyond.

Thank you for your time

Colleen Hammel

# Carroll, Pagano & Associates, PC

Certified Public Accountants

1300 Lawrence Road

Havertown, PA 19083

610-853-2030 • 610-853-4911 (fax)

cpacpas@aol.com

July 6, 2023

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: St Donato Roman Catholic Church

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

On July 14, 2023 you will be given again the task to review St Donato Roman Catholic Church Building located at 401-109 N 65th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19151 for historic designation by all the historical members. I am requesting upon reviewing the historic value of this Catholic Church that you keep in mind that St Donato Roman Catholic Church was granted HISTORIC and placed on the Philadelphia Registry as a Philadelphia Historical Landmark on April 9, 2021. This designation was granted unanimously on March 3, 2021 and voted again on April 9, 2021 and then sent back to the Historical Committee on November 30, 2022. St Donato Roman Catholic Church was granted historic because of the expertise, knowledge and good wisdom of all those who are on the committee who reviewed the nomination for its historic merits.

I would like to address these historic facts and elaborate more extensively about St Donato Roman Catholic Church:

1 - St Donato Roman Catholic Church was established in 1910 in the Haddington/Overbrook section of the City of Philadelphia. The church was established so that the large Italian catholic community could worship and feel welcome for they were denied to worship in the surrounding parishes at that time. Basically not accepted for they did not know the English language that well and were basically laborers from their native country of Italy.

2 - These same laborers participated with the contractor in the building of the lower church and it was completed in July of 1910. On the Saturday, July 16, 1910, which is the feast day of Our lady of Mount Carmel, the first Mass was celebrated by Father Pietro Michetti. For those of you who are not catholic, these Italian immigrants had a special devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel for she is one of the original statues that still is in this beautiful church. It was the bond for all those wanted to belong to this church. IT WAS THEIR CHURCH.



3 - In 1911, the Pastor, Father Pietro Michetti realized two things that was vitally needed for his new parish assignment. He needed unification to bring back the faithful who felt, back then, that the Catholic Church of Philadelphia did not want Italians in their parish so some left the catholic faith and join Christian Churches that would accept them. To bring them back to the Catholic faith which was what they had in Italy. and a school for all the children of these immigrants. Father Michetti had no other alternative but to turn to God for help and guidance. Father Michetti prayers led him to contact a nun in New York who was helping that archdiocese with those Italian immigrants there if she could assist him. That nun was Mother Cabrini and the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

4 - Mother Cabrini responded to his plea and arrived in the Overbrook section of Philadelphia in 1912 with her came 2 additional sisters. During the next two years Mother Cabrini helped and served the Italians of Overbrook with the help of her missionary sisters. This order under her guidance assisted Father Michetti to establish a school for these children. She also established an orphanage for those children who had no parents and she purchased a residence to be the convent for her and the sisters. I want to bring to your attention that St Donato Church, the lower section, was the only church in all of Philadelphia did she worshipped from 1912 to 1914. She was directed by Pope Leo XIII to go West rather than East to assist these immigrant Italians with a church, school and well bonded community in the Overbrook section of this great city. Mother Cabrini never had the ability to return back to St Donato for she was called to other cities and passed away in 1917 never to see the plans to build the upper church that Father Michetti told her that some day it will be done.

5 - St Donato Church was redesigned by the architect F Ferdinand Durang, and built by the construction company that he felt would build it to his specifications for he traveled to Italy and saw how churches were built there especially in the region where most of these Italian immigrants came from. In fact the construction crew were the immigrants who lived there and they wanted to be part of building THEIR CHURCH.. The cornerstone is dated August 7, 1921 and it has stood solidly for over 100 years and will stand solidly for another 100 years for he copied the structure of those century old churches in their region. This is what makes St Donato church different from other churches in the Philadelphia area. I know you have seen pictures of the outer structure.

6 - On July 7, 1946, Pope Pius XII seeing all that this little nun has done and the miracle intercessions that she has done and still is being done today, Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini became St Frances Xavier Cabrini. The first American saint of the United States. To her was added St John Neumann and St Katherine Drexel. Philadelphia has been blessed for it is the only city in this country that has 3 canonized saints who looked and the poor and disheartened and helped them and served them. On that same day Archbishop of Philadelphia, Dennis Cardinal Dougherty held a celebration mass, not at the cathedral but at St Donato Church for that is where her presence was felt.



## Carroll, Pagano & Associates, PC

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He then dedicated the lower church to be called St Frances Cabrini Chapel. Presently we are in the midst to change the chapel to a Shrine for that is the purpose as to why we need this church to be an historic building.

St Donato Church was unanimously designated as historic on April 9, 2021, 100 years later from its construction and because of the facts I have presented above I once again implored your unanimous consent again so that as the church tower stands as a beacon to all those who are less fortunate and disheartened, to come to pray and worship and feel the inner strength to overcome life's burdens and succeed

Should St Donato Church lose its justly deserved title as a Historic Philadelphia Landmark, a travesty will occur in Philadelphia as well as the faithful of the community who reside there, meaning the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Catholics. Should you change your vote and opinion, St Donato Church will be part of a past history and become lost to a pile of rubble displaced with all the rest of torn down structures. Only you, the Philadelphia Historical Commission can protect and save St Donato Church. I am part of the committee of the Society of St Frances Cabrini of Philadelphia Inc, which has been approved as 501 (c) (3) to accomplish what I had stated here for you to know. I have attached photos to understand our cause.

Sincerely,



Joseph A Pagano  
Certified Public Accountant











## St. Donatos Church

Katie Alston <jimkat1@msn.com>

Mon 7/10/2023 9:31 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Dear Members of the Historical Commission:

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I would like to take a moment and reiterate the historical facts of St Donato Church:

- 1) St Donato Parish was established in 1910 in the then Haddington/Overbrook section of the city of Philadelphia. The parish and church was established so that the large immigrant Italian catholic community would have somewhere to worship and feel welcomed.
- 2) The completion of the lower church was in the summer of 1910. The first mass was celebrated on July 16, 1910 the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.
- 3) By 1911, the Pastor Father Pietro Michetti of St Donato Church/Parish realized two things (1) that just establishing a church and parish dedicated to Italian immigrants was not enough to call all those that left the catholic faith for protestant churches back to the faith, and (2) that with so many families the parish needed to establish a school. Father Michetti prayed for help and guidance. Father's prayers led him to contact Mother Cabrini to ask for the help of her and her missionary sisters.
- 4) Mother Cabrini answered this plea and arrived in Overbrook/Philadelphia in 1912. During the two years that Mother Cabrini helped serve the Italians of Overbrook she and her missionary sisters helped establish St Donato School, an orphanage, and the convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. St Donato Church **was the only** church in Philadelphia that St Frances Cabrini worshiped at from 1912 -1914. It was for the church, school, and community that St Frances Cabrini came to Overbrook.
- 5) Mother Cabrini passed away in 1917 and never got to see the completion of the St Donato's upper church.
- 6) On July 7, 1946, Mother Cabrini became St Frances Xavier Cabrini by Pope Pius XII. Philadelphia is a very blessed city for it is probably the only city that can say it has had multiple saints walk its streets, saints like St Frances Cabrini, St John Neumann, and St Katherine Drexel.
- 7) On July 7, 1946, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, Cardinal Dougherty held a celebration mass in honor of Mother Cabrini being made a saint at St Donato Church.

8) In October of 1946, the lower church of St Donato's was declared has Mother Cabrini Chapel.

9) St Donato Church was built and redesigned by architect F. Ferdinand Durang. The cornerstone is dated August 7, 1921. It is has stood solidly for 100 years, it stands has solidly today has when it was first built and will still stand for another 100 years or more.

St Donato church was unanimously designated as Historic on April 9, 2021, because of these facts, because of St Donato Church's history with St Frances Cabrini, because of its history with the Architect F. Ferdinand Durang, and because of the history of how the church and Mother Frances Cabrini aided the Italian immigrant community of Overbrook. Since April 9, 2021 none of those facts and reasons for which you all considered valid reasons to designate St Donato Church has historic has changed.

Should St Donato Church lose its justly deserved title has a Historic Philadelphia Landmark a travesty will occur in Philadelphia. For should you change your vote and opinion St Donato Church will always be a part of history it will just become part of Philadelphia's lost history. Only you the Philadelphia Historical Commission can preserve history. Only you the Philadelphia Historical Commission can protect and save St Donato Church from just becoming another pile of rubble.

Thank you,

Kathleen Alston

Sent from my iPhone

## St. Donatos Church

CATHY MCANDREW <cathymcandrew@aol.com>

Mon 7/10/2023 9:25 PM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

**External Email Notice. This email comes from outside of City government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender.**

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Thank you,

Cathy McAndrew

Sent from my iPhone



## St Donato Church

karen hammel <kkhammel@hotmail.com>

Thu 7/13/2023 11:31 AM

To:preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Dear Members of the Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Karen Hammel and I am from the Society of St Frances Cabrini of Philadelphia. I am aware that the July 14, 2023, Philadelphia Historical Commission Meeting was supposed to discuss the Remand of St Donato Church 401 – 409 North 65<sup>th</sup> St, and instead now will be discussing a continuance. The most important element is that St Donato Church remains under the PHC's protection.

The Society of St Frances Cabrini of Philadelphia is trying to utilize St Donato church to establish a shrine to St Frances Cabrini. We would love for St Donato Church to continue to have the honor and title of being a Philadelphia historical landmark. It is without question that the discussion of St Donato Church being historical would not exist if not for the tireless work of St Frances Cabrini. From 1912 -1914 St Frances Cabrini did much to help the Italian immigrants in this Overbrook neighbor, for not only did she worship in St Donato Church, but she brought home and back to the Catholic faith numerous immigrants who fled to protestant faiths because they were not feeling welcome in the Catholic church here in America. St Frances Cabrini and her Order of nuns' helped establish many institutions in Philadelphia including St Donato School and an orphanage. St Donato Church is the only church in Philadelphia for which the "first American saint," the "first American female saint," the "saint of immigrants," St Frances Cabrini worshiped.

I would like to take a moment to and compare St Donato Church to Betsy Ross's House. Betsy Ross's House is the most visited historical landmark in Philadelphia, why do so many visit this humble house? My guess it is they go and visit it because Besty Ross's House is part of Philadelphia's living history; it is an actual part of history that people can go to and see not just through pictures or visualization but by going into Betsy Ross's House and getting the whole experience of living history. St Donato Church like Betsy Ross's house is more than a mere building it is also a part of Philadelphia's living history and justly deserves to remain on Philadelphia's Registry of Historical Landmarks.

Should St Donato Church lose its justly deserved title has a Historic Philadelphia Landmark a travesty will occur in Philadelphia. For St Donato Church will always be a part of Philadelphia's history, however, if it loses its historic protection and designation, it will just become part of Philadelphia's lost history. I am asking all of you, the Commissioners of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, to preserve a very important part of Philadelphia's history. Back in 2020 the beautiful Catholic church Our Lady of the Rosary/ Most Blessed Sacrament was unable to be protected by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and today the corner of 63<sup>rd</sup> and Callowhill is not a gym but rather a large hole in the ground, please protect and save St Donato Church from becoming just another pile of rubble.

Thank You,  
Karen Hammel

## Fw: St Donato Church 401-09 North 65th Street

preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

Mon 10/23/2023 1:09 PM

To: Laura Dipasquale <Laura.Dipasquale@Phila.gov>; Jon Farnham <Jon.Farnham@phila.gov>

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**From:** Robert Frederico <robertfrederico2@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Monday, October 23, 2023 12:44 PM

**To:** preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

**Subject:** St Donato Church 401-09 North 65th Street

**External Email Notice. This email comes from outside of City government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender.**

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Dear Historic Commission,

I please request that Saint Donoto's Church keep it's historical status.

This landmark is very important to many Catholic residents of Philadelphia, PA

Thank you,  
Robert Frederico

To whom it may concern,

I would like to thank and acknowledge the Philadelphia Historical Commission for their work in maintaining historic architecture for future generations to enjoy. My name is Christopher Daniels. I am a lifelong resident of West Philadelphia, a devout Catholic, and a teacher at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter in support of Saint Donato's being recognized and maintained as a Historical site and listed on the Philadelphia Register for Historic Places. Saint Donato's, like many churches in the city of Philadelphia, has a rich erhistory, one that deserves to be preserved. Built to serve the underserved Italian immigrants, Saint Donato's grew and evolved over the years. While the parish itself has been suppressed, its suppression should be used as a springboard for ways forward that can benefit the Overbrook area. Churches provide a rich and unique history that many institutions simply cannot rival. Churches are the places where people are baptized, married and ultimately buried. To deconsecrate, demolish and destroy completely erases the sacredness that the ground possesses. It is my firm belief that if the nomination is rescinded today, that a grave sin will have been committed.

As a reminder, I would like to point to the former Our Lady of the Rosary Church, located just a short distance away, at 63rd and Callowhill. Despite public outcry, protest and preservation efforts, the church was ultimately demolished and an empty field now rests in its place. The West Philadelphia/Overbrook Community simply cannot afford to lose another religious/historical landmark. It would behoove the Historical Commision to maintain the current designation as stands and ensure that Saint Donato's Church remains a staple in the community for decades/centuries to come.

Sincerely,  
Christopher Daniels

**Dear Philadelphia Historical Commision,**

**My name is Amirah Horner- Waples. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Francis Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donato's Church because the church is very historical and has significant history to the Italian community who first started here and shared their faith. Unlike many Churches, this Church is one of the only churches that have had a saint walk in it. To me this Church is very important since it's one of the few churches in this area that share, teach, and spread their catholic faith. It means a lot to me since it's a part of the community and the people who come here. Overall, I hope this Church will be Preserved so it will have a long lasting effect on its current community and the community that is to come.**

**Sincerely,**

**Amirah Horner- Waples**

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Cameron Hackshaw. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Dinato's Church because it should be a historical landmark, the inside and outside is a truly beautiful place. It has been around since 1910, a place where many people who have been a part of our school have graduated. When you close it and are so openly trying to change it, it's almost like trying to change things that have been around since people were children. It's a place of love and worship. It's amazing. It would be no big reason why our church should ever be destroyed. It's a place where hundreds upon hundreds of people got married and worshiped. It could be a place where people found hope and solace in our lord, when we were lost and here you are letting it ever be destroyed. It could be so far as to say terrible that you would allow something like that, a place of the Lord, God's house. It's already close down and nobody knows what might happen in the future. This isn't any old church respectfully, this church is for the public and not only that a school full of many children, who will never get a chance to go in and see the beauty in there. It's like if people like ally were to allow your high school to be demolished and closed for years. A place where you see so many people graduate and you were hoping that one day you would walk down, finally graduating elementary school . Starting your new life as a high schooler. It would truly be terrible if before I was even able to graduate to a place where I saw my brother graduate, a place where I worship my lord, and a place I've been to since I was baby would be destroyed all in one day. I honestly feel as though no church should ever be destroyed, especially in times like this you're destroying somebody's place of worship when our economy has failed us, people doing idiotic things for no reason. People forget what sin truly is. It's terrible that anyone would allow a church to get destroyed. We would hate another church like Boys Latin which just stands there in rubble. Before you decide to answer if you want it to be a historical place or not possibly even get destroyed remember it's a place of the lord,

Sincerely Cameron Hackshaw

My name is Damarques Davis. I am an eighth grade student at St. Frances Cabrini school. I am writing this letter of support in favor of St. Donato's church, because historical buildings shouldn't be taken down, they should not be altered in any way, the reason for this is its history. For example it's like burning all history books, it's taking away history, the church is a staple in the community along with the school. Many people have seen their family get married, go to Christ, and more. So it would take away from them and this community doesn't really have a parish. They contribute to the community so it would be lowering the community.

*Sincerely, Damarques Davis. Thank you for taking your time to read this message.*

*Dear ,*

*Philadelphia Historical Commission ,my name is Dylanrae. I am an eighth grade student at Saint frances cabrini school. I am writing this letter in support of Saint Dantos church because I think it will be really good for my school. We could have mass there again , we can maybe even have our graduation there instead of saint cyprian. My school is literally having mass in our cafeteria which is kinda bad because the cafeteria has to change and we gotta eat lunch upstairs on days we have mass , so i think we should be able to have it at saint dantos church.*

*Sincerely , Dylanrae.*

Isir Thomas  
8th

Religion

My name is Isir Thomas. I Am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter in support of Saint Donato's church because, when I was younger I used to go there and I have many, many memories there. My grandma used to take me there a lot when I was younger. It was also a way for a lot of people from the community to learn about our Lord. Another reason I think the church she stayed at is because of how long it's been there for so long. Thank you for taking the time out of your day to read this letter, Sincerely Isir Thomas.



Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission ,

My name is Jaeda Johnson. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Danato's Church because the church really holds lots of memories to thousands, maybe even millions of people. It would be nice to keep it open so that maybe us eighth graders like me and even the ones after us could graduate at the church. Keeping this church would mean because back when it was built it has built so many memories and everyone including me is trying their best in our power to save it because it means so much to us. We would not want our lovely church to be closed down or even possibly demolished because that church means something to us. You would not want anyone to take something away that you loved so why would they ever take away our dear loving church. Churches in general are not just a building its something more than that but overall we would be very thankful if you leave our church be.

Sincerely ,

Jaeda Johnson

Dear Philadelphia Historical commission , my name jayla simms . I am a student at st frances cabrini school . I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint donatos church because this place is historical . it had been around for decades. I believe tearing it down will tear down its history . this would also be an amazing place to graduate .

Yours truly , Jayla simms

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My Name is Joshua Obeng-Dapaah. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donatos Church because this church is a part of our community and history. The church has been host to many events. As a child my class and I would go to the church for mass. People were married and buried in that church. Our Model and Patron; Saint Frances Cabrini, even walked along the ground of our church. I hope you read this and consider leaving our church alone as a historical place.

Sincerely,  
Joshua Obeng-Dapaah

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission, My name is Kaden Adolphus. I Am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Dinatois Church because it's a place where you can connect with your friends and community. Also churches might help people in need, like providing food or support, and if it closes, those people might not get help anymore. Finally, it's a place to learn about your faith and grow as a person. So, keeping the church open can be important for our social life, helping others, and growing in our beliefs.

*Yours Truly, Kaden Adolphus*

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Kamirah Smith. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Danato's Church because I have many memories. A couple examples of this, when my 3rd grade class put on the stations of the cross for the school and parish. Along with the many masses I've attended in the church. I would like to have the luxury of graduating in the Church next to my school. Opening the church would mean we could have proper mass in the Church instead of the cafeteria. Our cafeteria is used for lunch and talking, This gives the wrong impression during mass.

Thank you for your time, Kamirah Smith

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Kelen White and I am in the eighth grade at Saint Frances Cabrini school. Churches are good for the community and we need them to stay up and remain so that we can practice religion and know more about it so we can know the name of our God.

Have a good day,  
Kelen White.

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Kylie Holman. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donato's Church because I grew up with this church. I felt so comfortable and I really really loved it dearly. We made so many memories in that church and I'd really like to have it back.

Sincerely,

Kylie Holman

*Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,  
My name is Kyndal Wright. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donato's Church because the Saint Donato's Church is a historical site and it brings really good memories when we used to do Mass in the church. To me it's very important and special because even though nobody goes in, it still brings various memories and good times. This church means a lot to the students of Saint Frances Cabrini. It was a place where we would pray and learn more about Our Lord. The church has many historical features and details to really look at and examine. It is a beautiful place and we never want to lose it. St Donato's Church is a part of our community and will really help people see that it is a sacred and holy place to be. Thank you for reading this letter to support our Church.*

*Sincerely,  
Kyndal Wright*



Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Meia Smith-Ricketts. I am an 8th grade student at St. Frances Cabrini School and I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Dinato's Church because I'm requesting that you do not tear down or demolish the Church. I am asking this because this Church is directly next to our school and we used to worship in it a couple of years prior to the pandemic and we haven't been in it since. I want to ask you to save the Church because since we cannot access the Church we've had to have mass in our cafeteria, and I would like to worship God in our temple like we used to and I would also like to graduate there. Please understand me and my request

Sincerely, Meia Smith-Ricketts

Dear Philadelphia Historical community, My name is Nevaeh Pearce I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donatos Church because we must keep the memories and keep up things that stayed long for history and can be passed on for many more generations and remind or to tell people what happened years ago and how it only was two races around here, so we have to keep it up show everyone how it is and used to be.

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Rashi Summers Jr. I am an eighth grader student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donato's Church because I remember when I was a little kid going into that church. That church to me was amazing and was a very beautiful church. It is a very historic church and our school saint walked in that very building. I am very worried about that church because I want to graduate there. Please open up the church again and make it historical because many kids like me want it and love it.

Sincerely, Rashi Summers Jr.

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commissions my name is Shaniyah Lucas I a 8th grade student at st frances cabrini school.I am writing this letter of support in favor of saint donatos church because I grew up in the church, we had a lot of our plays for mass in there.I would also love to graduate in there because of how much it means to me.We also had all of our masses in there before it closed.I would love for the church to open back up just so that me ( and my class) could see it for one last time.

Sincerely,  
Shaniyah Lucas

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission, My name is Aiden Hamilton. I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donatos Church because when I went to the church I used to enjoy my time in the church and seeing other people that weren't associated with the school going to the church. I want this church to not be demolished because even though I didn't build the church or go to church other than when we had mass or the praise dancing I still liked the paintings and everything about the church. I liked the statues. I liked everything about the church. It doesn't have a significant place in my heart but I still loved the church.

Sincerely,  
Aiden Hamilton

*Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission, my name is Sumayah Patterson I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School. I am writing this letter of support in favor of Saint Donatos Church because I personally think that it should reopen, if this was to happen we would be able to have proper mass instead of having it in the cafeteria. Another benefit of the church reopening is we would be able to graduate there instead of going a further distance to a completely different church, when we were younger we would have mass every often in there. A Lot of good memories have been held in that church, not just for me but many others in the school.*

*From- sumayah patterson, God bless.*

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission, My name is Zamirah Scott I am an eighth grade student at Saint Frances Cabrini School I am writing this letter of support in favor of saint donatos. Church because.. I want to graduate from this church. I feel like it would be a great opportunity and an amazing memory to see my old church for the last time. Sincerely, Zamirah Scott.

Philadelphia Historical Commission,

My name is Chelsea. I am an eighth grade student at st frances cabrini school. I am writing this letter of support in favor of St. Donatos Church because it has been moved around for so long and i have lots of memories. I've been going to the church ever since starting at St Frances Cabrini which was about 8-9 years ago. It holds a special place in my heart and I feel like it should stay. Not only does it mean alot to me but a lot of the other students here at St Frances. Please take this letter into consideration.

Sincerely,

Chelsea