

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

DRAFT

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name SACRED HEART ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CONVENT  
 other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_  
 name of related multiple property listing N/A

## Location

street & number 198 Emslie Street  not for publication  
 city or town Buffalo  vicinity  
 state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14206

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
 I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
 In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 \_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of commenting official Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 \_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register  
 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
 \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent**

Erie County, NY

Name of Property

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	<b>Total</b>

DRAFT

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

n/a

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

n/a

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/church and convent

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Late Gothic Revival  
LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Craftsman

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone

walls: Brick, stone

roof: Slate

other: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent are located at 198 Emslie Street in the Emslie neighborhood in the city of Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The church and convent were both designed by local architect Carl Schmill and constructed in 1913. The church is designed in the Late Gothic Revival style and the convent in the Craftsman style. Currently, both buildings are vacant and there are no other contributing or non-contributing buildings on the property.

*Location and Setting*

The church and convent are sited perpendicular to each other on a lot near the south end of the block between Howard and Clinton Streets. Clinton Street (Route 354) is an east-west highway in Erie County that runs from New York State Route 5 in Buffalo to the Erie/Wyoming County Line.<sup>1</sup> The L-shaped lot is located along Emslie Street and is roughly 200 square feet in size (see site plan below). The property formerly held the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church Complex, which included a rectory and school that are no longer extant. A mowed lawn is present throughout the property and large groves of trees frame the lot on the north and south sides. Concrete sidewalks border these buildings to the east and west. The surrounding neighborhood is a densely packed residential area composed of frame houses dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

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<sup>1</sup> "New York State Route 354, Erie County," accessed September 30, 2022, <http://www.billburmaster.com/rmsandw/newyork/state/ny354.html>.

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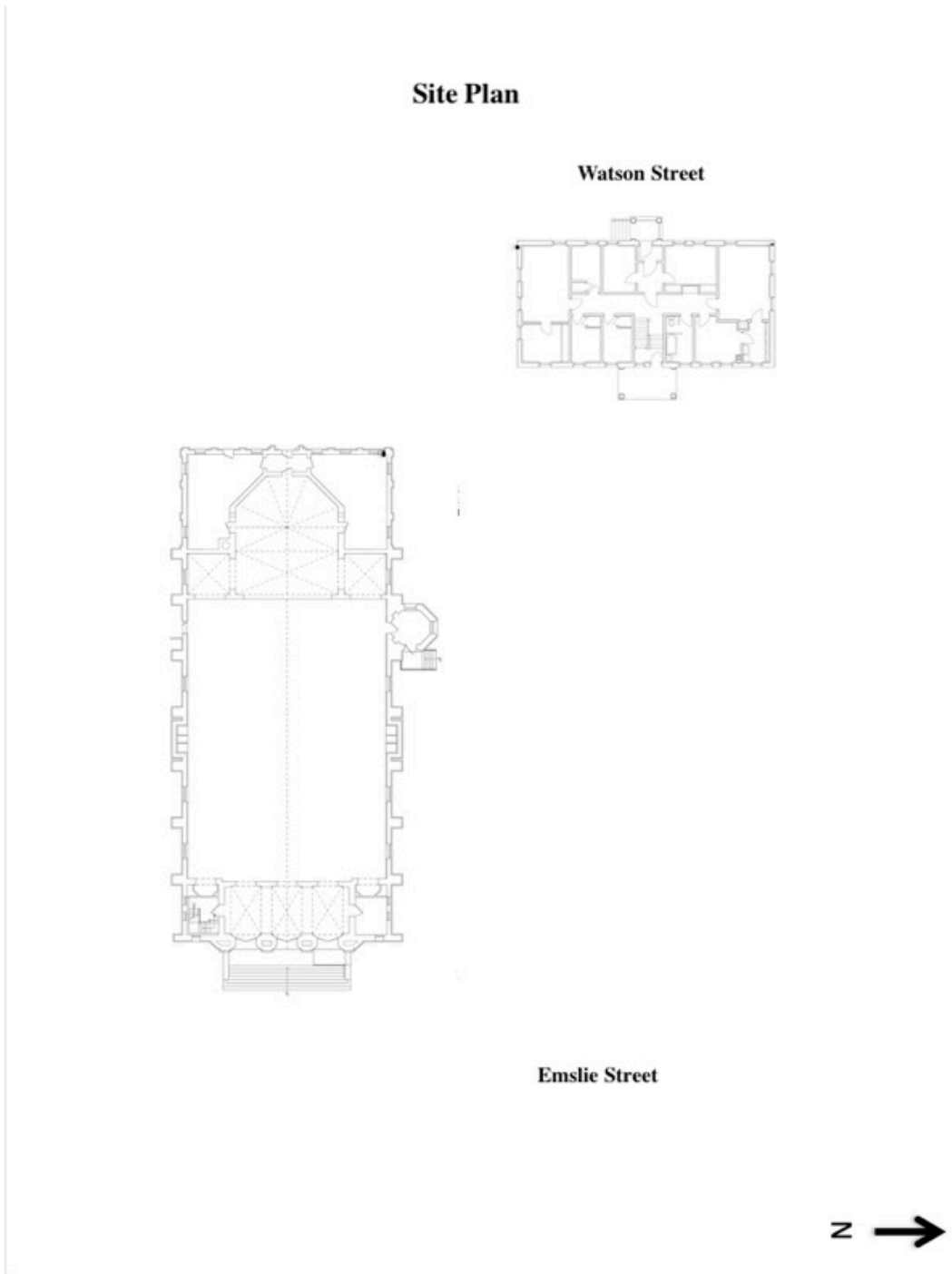


Figure 1: Current site plan showing location of church and convent

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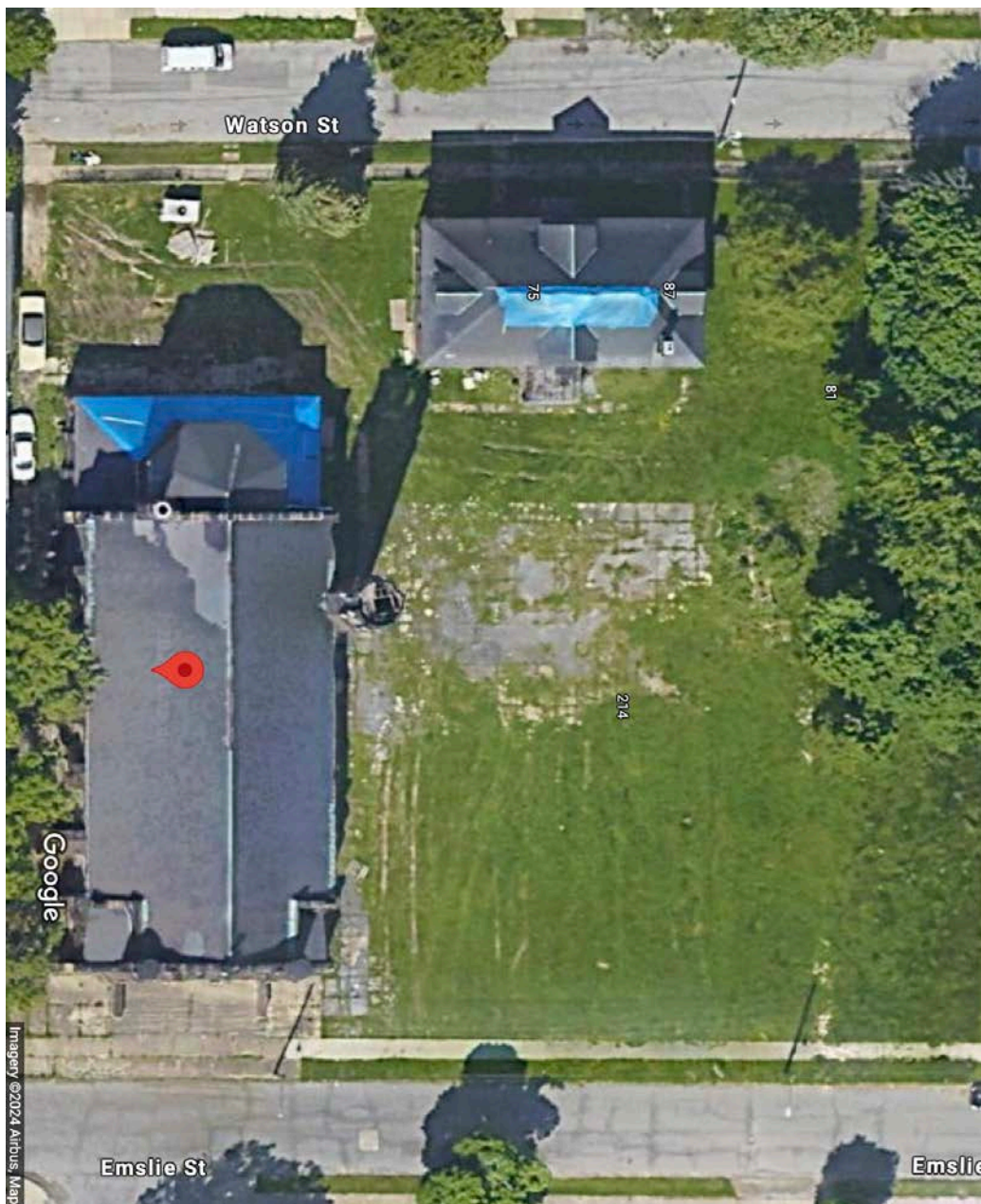


Figure 2: Overhead view of the current site and building placement in relation to the lot and street

The church is a two-story masonry building constructed in a rectangular plan with a gabled roof and deep red brick walls; it measures approximately 145 feet from east to west and 62 feet from north to south. The primary (east) elevation faces Emslie Street and displays the most ornate detailing found on the exterior of the building (photo 0001). This elevation features a tripartite entry surmounted by an expansive three-part clerestory. The clerestory is flanked by two octagonal towers that project above the roofline. Overall, the building features a variety of stone detailing, notably at doors and windows and in the form of Gothic tracery. The side elevations have double-height lancet-arched windows separated by buttresses with stone caps. On the north elevation, there is an octagonal bell tower with a stone belfry topped with battlements (photo 0002). On the interior, the pews have been removed and there is some plaster damage; however, overall, the interior exhibits a high

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degree of integrity with its intact plan, decorative woodwork, and Gothic style open framing and still conveys its ecclesiastical design and function.

The convent is a two-story masonry building with a hipped roof, gabled dormers, and red brick walls on a stone foundation. It is located at a right angle to the church and measures approximately sixty-five feet from north to south and thirty-two feet from east to west. The primary (west) elevation faces Watson Street. Features include brick walls with decorative soldier courses and stone detailing at the windows. The building has several notable Craftsman style features, including exposed rafter tails, bargeboard, and decorative framing (photo 0003).

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**Narrative Description**

**Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church (1913)**

**Carl Schmill, architect**

*One contributing building*

Church Exterior:

Constructed in 1913, Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church is located on the west side of Emslie Street between Howard and Clinton Streets. Built in a rectangular plan and oriented east-west, the brick church is four bays wide, six bays deep, and two stories high with a three-story bell tower located on the north elevation, and a one-story wing on the west (rear) elevation. The building features a variety of stone detailing, notably at doors and windows and in the form of Gothic tracery. The foundation is stone with an Ohio sandstone water table, and the front gable roof is clad in slate tile. The building consists of a double-height nave and apse, and a single-story rear wing housing the sacristy. The church is clad in dark red Devonshire brick set in a Flemish bond with Ohio sandstone trim throughout. Entrances into the church are either completely or partially boarded on the exterior and are located as follows: three entries on the east (primary) elevation; one entry through the bell tower on the north elevation; one entry in the center of the west elevation; and one entry toward the west end of the south elevation. Circulation from the basement to the second floor is provided by a stair in the southeast corner.

The primary (east) elevation (photo 0001) has a wide set of eight stone steps divided by an iron railing and flanked by two stone cheek walls. The steps lead to a tripartite entry surmounted by an expansive three-part clerestory. The clerestory is flanked by two octagonal towers which project above the roofline. The apex of the gable is topped by a stone cross with a statue of Jesus recessed in stone below; the statue interrupts a brick soldier course inlaid with stone panels just beneath the gable line. Below the statue of Jesus is the three-part clerestory beneath a segmental stone arch. Decorative stone pilasters frame the upper portion of the clerestory, and two vertical ribs divide it into three sections. Although the stained glass is partially boarded on the exterior, it is almost fully intact on the interior. On the first floor, one-story flared roof portions housing the church office to the north and choir stair to the south flank the entrance. The first floor is four bays wide and features a tripartite entry with deeply recessed partially glazed double wood doors set beneath stone arches and flanked by

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brick pilasters with stone bases and capitals featuring cherubim. Atop the central entry is a stone panel with a Latin inscription beneath a stone cross engraved in blue with the chi-rho monogram.<sup>2</sup>

Windows to the office and choir stairs are boarded and have segmental arch stone lintels and sills. A belt course of stone separates the first floor from the second floor.

The side elevations of the church, facing north and south, are each six bays wide and feature double-height lancet-arched windows separated by buttresses with stone caps; all are boarded. On the north elevation (photo 0002), four lancet arch window openings with brick lintels, keystones, and stone sills are centered on the elevation. In the easternmost bay, there are a pair of segmental-arched windows with stone lintels and sills set in short stone bands on the first floor and a pair of small windows with flat-arched brick lintels and stone sills above a stone belt course on the second floor. The westernmost bay contains the three-story octagonal bell tower with stone belfry topped with battlements. The tower formerly contained three bells removed from the original church constructed in 1875 on Seneca Street. The tower has a series of three stone belt courses; the upper two are defined by a soldier course of brick below. Each floor of the tower has four bays. The bays on the upper two floors feature long rectangular windows with brick lintels and stone sills. The first floor features a boarded entry door with a stone segmental-arched lintel and three windows with stone segmental-arched lintels above a stone belt course. Except for the tower, the south elevation is identical. The westernmost bay on the south elevation features a boarded entry with an opening in the form of a lancet arch.

The rear or west elevation features the two-story apse surrounded by the one-story sacristy (photo 0004). The two-story apse is five-sided and projects out from the church next to an exterior brick chimney on its south side. Apart from a soldier course of brick located above the center line of the apse, it is devoid of ornament. The one-story, hipped-roofed rectangular sacristy is built around the apse and is seven bays wide and two bays deep. The windows, also framed by buttresses, are smaller replicas of the lancet-arched windows on the side elevations. A stone belt course runs beneath the windows and a central entrance on the rear elevation features a boarded entry with an opening in the form of a lancet arch.

Church Interior:

The interior of the church is rectangular in plan and runs east-west. The original plan featuring the narthex, nave, chapels, chancel, apse, and sacristy remain and are clearly recognizable. No walls, alterations to space, or barriers have been added to the interior, making it clear that these interior spaces were constructed as a church (Figure 3). Although furniture and religious ornament have been removed, the building retains a high degree of interior integrity. Historic trim, hand-carved woodwork, polychrome paint features in the nave and apse, original doors and staircases, historic flooring materials, and the plan have been retained throughout the building.

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<sup>2</sup> What Does the Symbol of the P with an X through the Bottom of it Mean?" *Catholic Answers*, accessed August 9, 2022, <https://www.catholic.com/qa/what-does-the-symbol-of-the-p-with-an-x-through-the-bottom-of-it-mean>.

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Church Interior

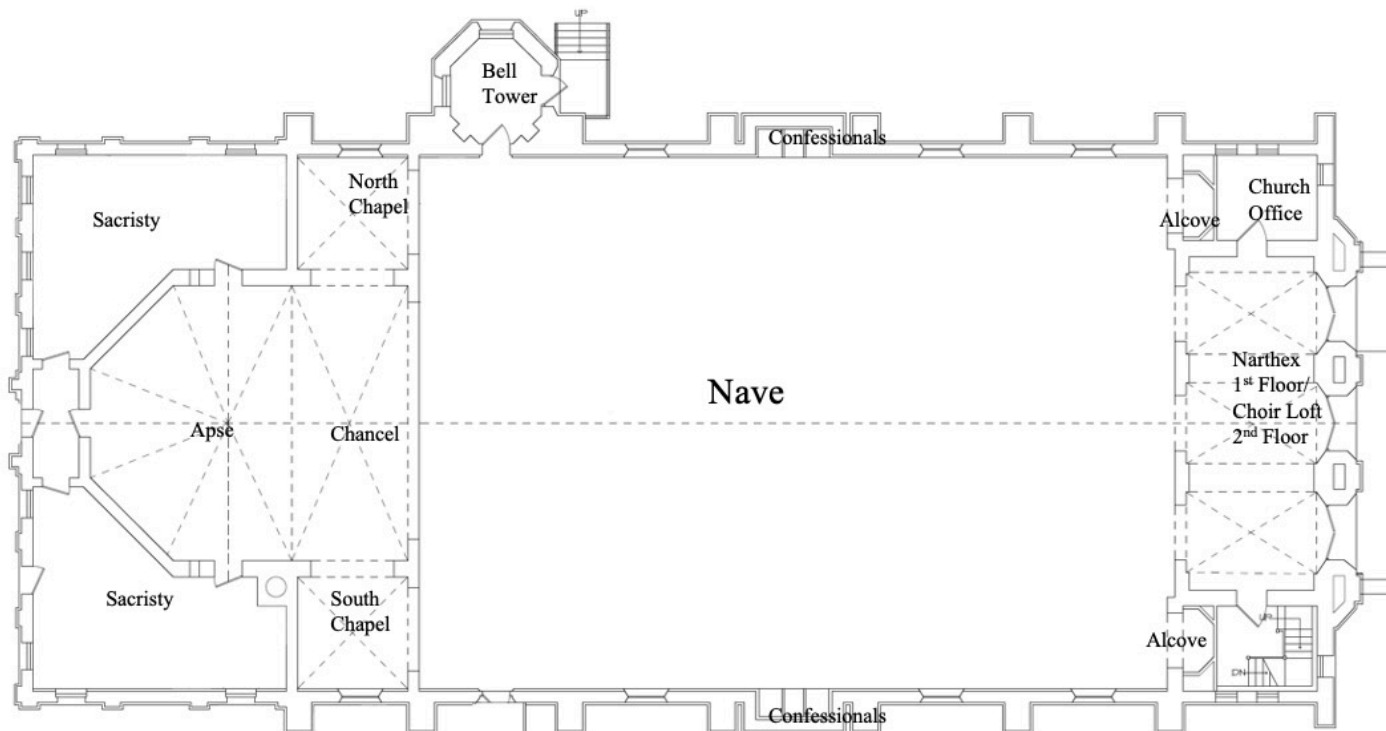


Figure 3: Church plan

A full-width narthex is entered from the three main entry doors on the primary (east) elevation (photo 0005). Each entry contains a pair of four-panel partially glazed segmental-arched wood doors. The ceiling in the narthex is coved and clad in plaster, the walls are plaster and three-quarter height red brick, and the floor is tile. There are five other doorways in the narthex that retain their segmental-arched wood doorframes. Three of these doorways enter directly into the nave and retain green terrazzo saddles. The other two doorways have red marble saddles that lead to the church office to the north and a stairwell to the south. The church office is a square room with plaster walls and ceiling, a boarded window, and linoleum flooring. The stairwell to the south provides circulation to the choir loft on the second floor and the basement below. It features peeling plaster walls and a stair leading to the second-floor choir loft that is made of wood with wood treads and square newel posts with decorative recessed panels. A second stair providing circulation to the basement is also located in this space. This stair is also made of wood and features wood stairs, simple balusters, and plain rectangular newel posts.



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Beneath the narthex and the nave, the basement is a large, open, rectangular space with brick and stone walls, concrete floors, and steel columns (photo 0006). A large boiler room with the original boiler (Bison Compact Boiler by Farrar and Trefts) is located at the center of the west end of the basement, directly below the apse. The boiler room is enclosed by brick walls with segmental-arched openings that lead to the basement of the sacristy. The sacristy basement features wood floor joists, stone walls, concrete floors, and a wood slat door in the center of the west wall that used to lead into the basement of the former rectory (not extant).

On the first floor, the narthex flows directly into the nave which consists of a large open seating area with wood floors (photo 0007). The nave is a large rectangular volume with structural trusses and purlins and a white plaster ceiling. Similar to the nave, the white plaster walls have three-quarter height red brick, which also frames the segmental and lancet-arched interior doorways, confessional booths, and alcoves in the nave, transepts, chancel, and apse. The hand-carved dark wood trusses feature cut-outs painted around the edges in royal blue and red and are painted with an image of the German cross. The underside portion of the arch of the ribs features a repetitive line of painted religious iconography featuring the symbol of Jesus (IHS) and the chi-rho monogram. Each truss also terminates in a stone corbel.

The north and south walls of the nave feature ten stained-glass windows with wood sills; the stained-glass windows were imported from Europe in 1890 and moved from the original church in the Hydraulics to 198 Emslie Street; however, only the top portions are intact. The lower portions were blown out by a nearby gas explosion in 1983. Both north and south walls feature a large central dark wood confessional with green terrazzo flooring (photo 0008). The confessionals are divided into three separate booths on each side and are built into the wall. Additionally, periodic rectangular recessions in the north and south brick walls were once utilized to house radiators to heat the building.

At the rear of the space, on the east end, are two segmental arches flanking the entry doorways from the narthex to the nave (photo 0009). Although no historic pictures of the rear alcoves in the nave could be found, they were most likely utilized as votive candle stations, dedicated spaces in Catholic churches where someone may go to light a candle and pray privately or with others. Each alcove has a tripartite wall with three-quarter-height brick and blue-painted plaster walls; the alcove to the north also features a wood bench with recessed panels. Centered on the second floor of the east wall of the nave is the choir loft beneath a large segmental plaster arch that frames the three-part clerestory stained-glass window. Aside from two missing panels in the window, it is fully intact. A solid dark wood rail with recessed panels and decorative wood elements spans the width of the choir loft. Due to excessive debris on the choir stairs, the choir loft was not accessible.

In the northwest corner of the nave is the entry from the church into the bell tower; the entryway retains a green terrazzo saddle. On the first floor, the octagonal bell tower has brick walls, two intact consoles that controlled the bells, a dark wood paneled ceiling, a small window with an opaque glass pane, and a solid wood entry door with a wood transom that provides egress out of the church. The dark wood ceiling has a removable scuttle panel. The scuttle panel provides access to a wood ladder on the second story of the tower; the ladder provides

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access to the belfry on the third floor. Due to the unstable state of the wood ladder, the second and third floors of the tower were not accessible.

At the front of the space, on the west end, are the chapels, chancel, apse, and sacristy (photo 0007). Two steps lead to the chancel, which is flanked by chapels on the north and south sides. Except for the sacristy, the flooring on this entire portion of the church is linoleum and the walls are plaster and three-quarter-height brick. Each chapel features a small lancet-arched window with a wood sill and a plaster, pointed-arched opening leading into the chancel. From the nave, the chapels and the chancel and apse are entered beneath pointed arches and sited below dome ceilings. The dome ceilings are painted blue with a white star motif and feature gold ribs accented by florets. The apse ceiling features additional ornamentation with several pointed-arched, painted panels set between the ribs. A wood cross is centered on the altar wall of the apse and a crumbling painted plaster table inscribed with the words "SANCTUS, SANCTUS, SANCTUS" is sited beneath the cross. The north chapel retains what is most likely a decorative radiator cover as there is visible piping protruding through the wall within the cover.

There are three pointed-arched wood-frame doorways on the north, south, and west walls of the apse that lead into the sacristy (photo 0010). The sacristy is a one-story wing that wraps around the apse at the rear of the church. It features peeling plaster ceilings and walls, boarded windows, and a wood floor. At the center of the rear wall of the sacristy is a boarded doorway that was previously used to access the former rectory.

Overall, the church retains interior integrity in terms of plan and decoration. The original plan featuring the narthex, nave, chapels, chancel, apse, and sacristy remain and are clearly recognizable, illustrating the church's historic use and function. Aside from decay, and some features and furniture removal, no alterations have been made to these interior spaces and it is still very readable as a church. Character-defining features include decorative terrazzo, red marble, and tile flooring, coved plaster ceilings, and historic staircases in the narthex; a three-part clerestory geometric stained-glass window, built-in confessional booths, polychrome ornament, and religious iconography painted on the hand-carved truss work in the nave; bell tower featuring historic bell consoles and a wood-paneled ceiling with removable scuttle panel and ladder to access the church bells; and the painted blue and white ceilings of the apse and chapels featuring gold ribs accented by florets.

**Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Convent (1913)**

**Carl Schmill, architect**

*One contributing building*

Convent Exterior:

The Sacred Heart Convent is located at a right angle to the church on the east side of Watson Street between Howard and Clinton Streets; it is a two-story brick building constructed with a rectangular plan and oriented north-south. It features a slate, hipped roof with a narrow brick chimney with a lead cap, exposed rafter tails, and gabled dormers with half-timbering on the east elevation (photo 0011) and wood shingles on the remaining elevations. The convent is seven bays wide on the primary (west) elevation (photo 0012), eight bays wide on the

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east elevation, and three bays wide on its north and south elevations that are identical. Fenestration on the east and west elevations is asymmetrical. The building features boarded rectangular windows and doors with decorative soldier course and stone detailing and, like the church, it has a stone foundation and is clad in dark red Devonshire brick set in a Flemish bond with Ohio sandstone trim throughout. The convent contains central hall entries on its primary and rear elevations. The primary (west) elevation entry features a gabled roof portico with decorative barge board and two brick posts with stone caps and a base that flank a short iron railing that is parallel to the street. A set of six stone steps set in a brick base at a right angle to the street lead up to the central entry which is boarded. The rear (east) elevation is at grade and features a hipped-roof portico supported by four brick posts with stone caps and bases set into a cement pad. The entry door is boarded, and a small rectangular window is sited just south of the entry beneath the portico.

Convent Interior

The convent interior consists of an attic and basement, a kitchen, pantry, dining room, communal rooms, private quarters, and office space on the first floor, and a chapel and private quarters on the second floor. The rooms are all accessed along double-loaded corridors except for the attic and the basement. Circulation is provided from the basement to the attic by a central stairway located on the west side of the building near the main entrance. The stairwell features plaster walls and ceilings and the stair is made of wood with diamond wood inlays on every other riser. The newel posts and balusters are simple and unadorned (photo 0013).

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Convent 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Interior

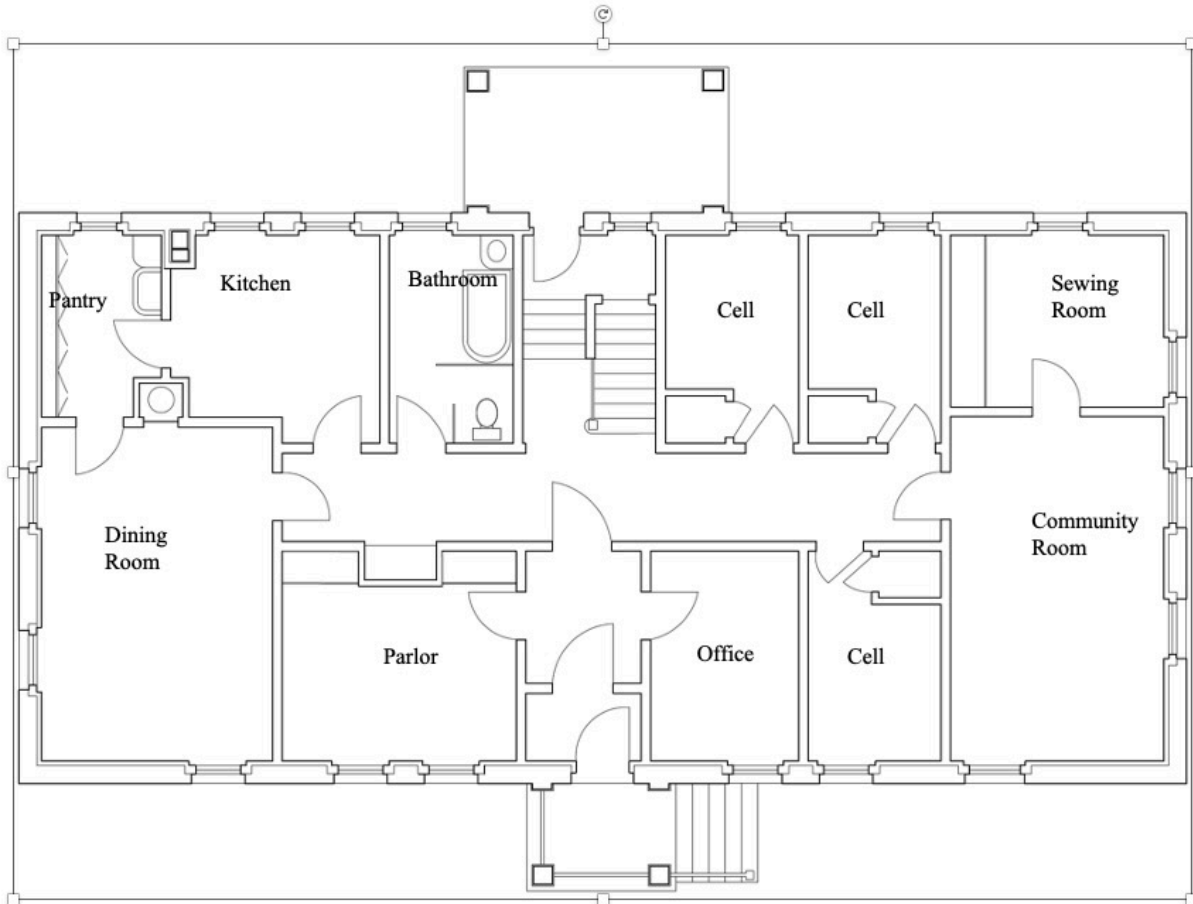


Figure 4: Convent, first floor plan

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Convent 2nd Floor Interior

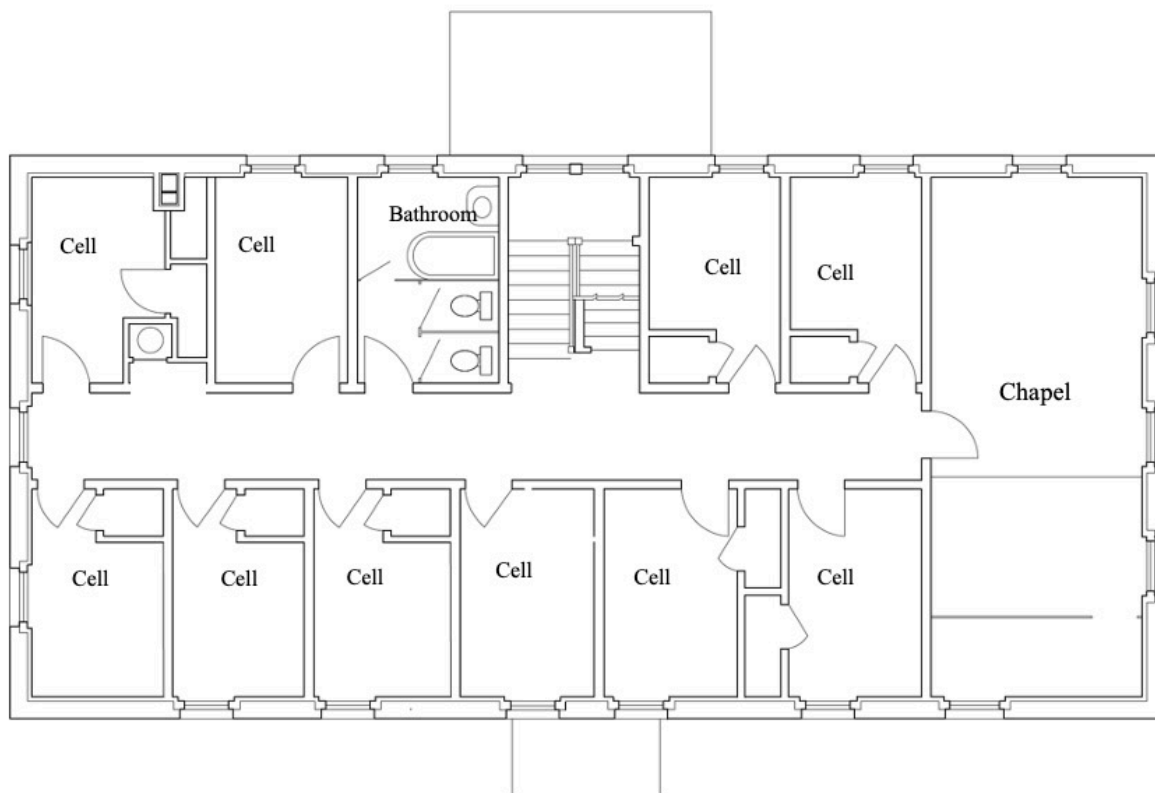


Figure 5: Convent, second floor plan

The attic is an open floor plan with exposed wood beams and truss work, wood floors, and a wooden built-in linen closet. The basement has an open floor plan with some wood-paneled partitioned spaces for the former fruit room and laundry. Basement rooms have load-bearing masonry walls, steel columns, low ceilings, and concrete floors. On the first and second floors of the convent, finishes consist of wood window surrounds, trim, and molding, four-panel wood doors, a combination of linoleum, tile, and wood flooring, and plaster ceilings and walls. A typical room, or cell, consists of a small room and closet (photo 0014) and there is a shared bath on each floor that features ceramic flooring, cement wainscot, and two wood-paneled water closets. Communal rooms such as the community/sewing room (photo 0015), parlor (photo 0016), dining room (photo 0017), and a kitchen (photo 0018) on the first floor are located in the four corners of the building and are a bit larger than the private quarters. These rooms share the same finishes as the cells with additional wood built-ins in the pantry and sewing room for storage. The largest room is the chapel, located on the second floor along the south wall. The chapel features a half-timbered ceiling, wood wainscot, tile flooring, and a large wood altar with decorative

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recessed panels; the altar is located at the east end of the room. The rear of the altar features upper wood cabinets and lower drawers for storage (photo 0019).

Overall, the convent retains interior integrity in terms of plan and decoration. The original plan featuring the public, private, and ancillary spaces remains and is clearly recognizable, illustrating the convent's historic use and function. Aside from decay and some furniture removal, no alterations have been made to these interior spaces and it is still very readable as a convent. Character defining features include wood and tile flooring, plaster walls and ceilings, wood trim, wainscot, built-ins, historic staircases, and an intact chapel with a timbered ceiling.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Period of Significance**

1913-1915

**Architect/Builder**

Carl Schmill/architect

**Significant Dates**

1913, 1915

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in 1913 with the initial construction of the church and convent and ends in 1915, once the buildings were completed and operational. This period encompasses all major architectural development and construction of the church and convent.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent are locally significant under Criterion C in Architecture as two buildings that illustrate specific typologies for church and convent design in the early twentieth century. The buildings were designed by prominent architect Carl Schmill, one of a small group of architects that were responsible for a substantial share of Buffalo Catholic ecclesiastical architecture from the late nineteenth century into the Depression. The Devonshire brick and Ohio sandstone church and convent were constructed in 1914 and were once part of a four-building complex centered around an enclosed courtyard designed by Schmill. The associated school and rectory have since been demolished; however, the church and the convent remain. Both the church and convent retain integrity in terms of maintaining their original plans and types as well as numerous character-defining features.



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Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church is designed in the Late Gothic Revival style and generally adheres to a typical early twentieth-century Catholic Church plan with some notable exceptions. Utilizing James Napora's "Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York" as a reference, Gothic Revival style churches in the city of Buffalo were reviewed to ascertain the architectural significance of Sacred Heart, and churches with similar forms were studied for comparison.<sup>3</sup> While many churches share similar exterior elements, it is the craftsmanship and floorplan on the interior of Sacred Heart church that makes it significant. The structural trusses and purlins allow for a broad nave without the use of side aisles, an uncommon element not found in any of the other churches surveyed. This method of creating or giving the illusion of additional space was not found in the Napora survey nor is it common in Catholic churches of this size in general.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the craftsmanship executed in the church is notable. The structural trusses are hand-carved and ornately painted with both Catholic and German symbolism, another design element not seen in the survey. The trusses are outlined in blue and red paint, and together with the decorative dome ceilings in the sanctuary that are painted blue with a white star motif and gold ribs, create a beautiful polychromatic effect.

As an architectural type, the Sacred Heart convent, a two-story brick building in the Craftsman style, adheres to a pattern found in convents built in urban areas throughout the United States and Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These buildings were modeled after A.W.N. Pugin's design for the modern religious house.<sup>5</sup> Inspired by medieval precedents, Pugin established the predominant form, layout, and style of the typology. Many of these buildings were designed or adapted for a new type of Roman Catholic religious community, known as an "active congregation." Unlike earlier orders, in which nuns lived a cloistered life in enclosed convents, active sisters undertook work outside of the convent. These women established schools, orphanages, and hospitals. The new convents had to meet a range of practical and modern needs and though they often looked similar in style to their medieval predecessors, were very different in layout and use. These new convents shared several features: a chapel, dormitory or cell areas, a kitchen, and community rooms.<sup>6</sup> Built

<sup>3</sup> James Napora, "Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York," Buffalo as an Architectural Museum, accessed August 2, 2022, <https://buffaloah.com/how/16/16.6/16.6/html>; Churches surveyed for this project are listed as follows: St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church, 651 Broadway; St. Louis Roman Catholic Church, 35 Edward Street; St. Teresa's Roman Catholic Church (NR, 2015); St. John's Grace Episcopal Church, 51 Colonial Circle; St. John Kanty Roman Catholic Church (NR, 2020); St. Paul's Cathedral (NR, 1990); Asbury Delaware Methodist Church, 339 Delaware Avenue; Central Presbyterian Church, 15 Jewett Parkway; Unitarian Universalist Church, 693 Elmwood Avenue; St. Joseph Cathedral, 50 Franklin Street.

<sup>4</sup> "Aisle," *Catholic Answers*, accessed October 5, 2022, <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/aisle>; Thomas Henry Poole was an English-born architect who designed numerous Catholic churches in New York City; outstanding examples are: Our Lady of Good Counsel (NRE, 2009); Church of St. Catherine of Genoa (SR, 2022); St. Thomas the Apostle (NRE, 2003); "Thomas Henry Poole," *Google Arts & Culture*, accessed October 5, 2022, <https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/thomas-henry-poole/m03h0psk?hl=en>.

<sup>5</sup> "19<sup>th</sup>-and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Convents and Monasteries;" "Nuns and Convent Building | Historic England," accessed August 11, 2022, <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/womens-history/nuns-and-convent-building/>.

<sup>5</sup> "Mendicant | Definition, History, Orders, & Facts | Britannica," accessed August 11, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mendicant-Roman-Catholicism>.

<sup>6</sup> "19<sup>th</sup>-and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Convents and Monasteries | Historic England," accessed August 11, 2022, <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-19-20-century-convents-monasteries/heag129-19and20c-convents-and-monasteries-ih/>, 14; "Nuns and Convent Building | Historic England," accessed August 11, 2022, <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/womens-history/nuns-and-convent-building/>.

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for the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, who identified in their spirit and work with the mendicant orders of the Franciscans, Sacred Heart Convent mirrors this convent type.<sup>7</sup>

The period of significance begins in 1913 with the initial construction of the church and convent and ends in 1915, once the buildings were completed and operational. This period encompasses all major architectural development and construction of the church and convent.

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## Narrative Statement of Significance

### Catholicism in Buffalo and the Creation of the Parish of Sacred Heart

The origins of the Diocese of Buffalo stretch back to the early decades of the nineteenth century when the first members of the Catholic clergy arrived in the area. Although missionaries from various orders and priests on their way to other parishes visited Western New York before the Catholic Church settled a governing structure in the area, the City of Buffalo lacked a formal diocesan structure until as late as 1829. Before the establishment of the Diocese of Buffalo, the city fell within the administrative boundaries of the Diocese of New York. The Bishop of New York directed several visits to the city to conduct worship services and report on the condition of the Catholics who lived there, and one such visitation occurred during or shortly after 1821, when Father Patrick Kelly, who previously established parishes in Auburn and Rochester, spent several days in Buffalo. At the time of his visit, five of the families living in Buffalo identified as Catholic.<sup>8</sup>

The first congregation in Buffalo did not begin formal worship until 1829. At that time, an affluent Catholic by the name of Louis LeCouteulx donated a parcel of land at Main Street and Edward Street to the Diocese of New York, and Bishop John DuBois consecrated a church built on the grounds provided. The Rev. Nicholas Mertz arrived to serve the German and Swiss immigrants who attended this original church building in the city.<sup>9</sup>

The creation of the Diocese of Buffalo accompanied the rise of European immigration to Western New York and the City of Buffalo during the middle of the nineteenth century. The rapid increase of settlement outpaced the development of Catholic churches, and the distance between Buffalo and the seat of the Diocese of New York placed a strain on the ability of the church to adequately address the needs of Catholics in the area. Before the arrival of Bishop Timon, the diocese lacked the proper infrastructure necessary to accommodate services for the growing population:

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<sup>7</sup> A MEMBER OF THE SISTERHOOD. "SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS, 1855-1928," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 40, no. 1 (1929): 38-64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44209041>.

<sup>8</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States of America: Undertaken to Celebrate the Golden Jubilee of His Holiness, Pope Pius X* (New York: Catholic Editing Company, 1914), 453-454.

<sup>9</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States of America*, 454.

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At the advent of the first bishop there were only sixteen church edifices in the diocese, and many of these were plain frame structures without any pretension of architectural ornament or elaborate furnishings. Many of them had no permanent altars, a table, or a few boards being made to serve the purpose of an altar on which Mass could be celebrated. Outside of these churches, Mass was often said in rented buildings, in dwellings, or workmen's shanties along the line of public works.<sup>10</sup>

The papacy recognized the urgency of the situation, and in 1847, they formed the Diocese of Buffalo, consecrating Father John Timon as its first bishop in the process. Upon the creation of the Diocese of Buffalo, Bishop Timon recognized the aforementioned deficiencies and initiated plans to better accommodate Catholics throughout Western New York. Throughout his tenure in Buffalo, Bishop Timon played a foundational role in the establishment of the Catholic Church as a distinguished institution in the city. Given the scarcity of Catholicism in the city upon his arrival, Bishop Timon recognized the need to construct several new churches, procure charitable institutions, and establish more parishes and missions. By inviting clergy from Europe and establishing educational institutions, Bishop Timon sowed the seeds of progress for the Diocese of Buffalo. His successors, namely Stephen Vincent Ryan (1868-1896), James E. Quigley (1897-1903), and Charles H. Colton (1903-1915), capitalized on Bishop Timon's achievements and stabilized the institution.<sup>11</sup> By the turn of the century, Catholicism in Buffalo demonstrated considerable progress:

When Bishop Colton came to Buffalo [in 1903,] he found a diocese of 108 parishes with resident pastors, 33 missions with churches, and a Catholic population of about 200,000.<sup>12</sup>

The Parish of Sacred Heart was founded by the Rev. Chrysostomus Wagner in 1875. Rev. Wagner was appointed as the first pastor of the parish, and he acquired the property for the original church located on Seneca Street in the Hydraulics section of Buffalo. Construction began immediately and the cornerstone for the church was laid on August 13, 1875. A parish school was erected circa 1877, followed by a rectory in 1890, and a convent in 1904. In 1912, the expanding Larkin Company, located across the street from the church complex, began negotiations to purchase the buildings from the congregation.<sup>13</sup> After much discussion, it was agreed that the diocese would approve the purchase. The Rev. Ludwin Winter, Assistant Pastor of Sacred Heart Church, justified the sale by saying that the property could be sold because it was never consecrated, although it was blessed.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States of America*, 455.

<sup>11</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States of America*, 455-458.

<sup>12</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States of America*, 458.

<sup>13</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States of America*, 479-481; James Napora, "Houses of Worship: A Guide to the Religious Architecture of Buffalo, New York," Buffalo as an Architectural Museum, accessed August 2, 2022, <https://buffaloah.com/how/16/16.6/16.6/html>.

<sup>14</sup> "Sacred Heart Church At the Hydraulics Is To Be Industrial Site," *Buffalo Times*, January 5, 1913, 25.

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**Construction of the new Sacred Heart Parish Buildings on Emslie Street.**

As part of the deal, the Larkin company would pay the congregation \$135,000 for the buildings and procure a 200-square-foot site on Emslie for the new church complex as part of the purchase price.<sup>15</sup> The new site would be located about five blocks north of the original church in the heart of a residential section, further away from the industrial grime and smoke. Except for the church, all of the buildings in the original church complex were to be torn down to make way for proposed additions by the Larkin Company.<sup>16</sup> Sacred Heart then used the money from Larkin to begin building a new church, school, rectory, and convent designed by Carl Schmill in June 1913. All of the new buildings were constructed of Devonshire red brick with Ohio sandstone trim at a total cost of approximately \$140,000.<sup>17</sup>

In August of 1914, as part of the construction process, the stained-glass windows installed in the original church on Seneca Street were removed and readied for placement in the new church on Emslie Street. The ten windows were brought in from Europe in the early 1890s and were valued at \$500 each. After removal from the original church, the stained-glass windows (partially extant) were sent to a mill and set in frames to fit the windows in the new church. Plans for the altars, statues, and bells to be moved to the new church were not expected to take place until later that year, closer to the time when it would be ready to hold services.<sup>18</sup>

The convent and rectory were completed in March of 1914 and the school building was completed later that year in November.<sup>19</sup> At that time, the congregation moved the majority of its activities to the new campus. Later that month, the bells (not extant) from the original church were removed and placed in the completed tower of the new church building. On March 20, 1915, the congregation celebrated its first mass in the new 576-seat house of worship. The church was dedicated on May 9, 1915.<sup>20</sup>

**Criterion C: Architecture**

**Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church**

*Typology*

Both the Sacred Heart Church and Convent are examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century religious building types constructed by the Catholic Church during this period. The church demonstrates many characteristics of the pre-Vatican II church plan (Figure 3), while also incorporating some design choices not

<sup>15</sup> "Site of Sacred Heart Catholic Church," *Buffalo Evening News*, March 8, 1913, 13.

<sup>16</sup> "Church Site is Wanted for Assembly Hall," *Buffalo Times*, January 19, 1913, 19; in May of 1936, the original church building on Seneca Street was demolished by the Larkin Company for a parking lot: James Napora, "Houses of Worship."

<sup>17</sup> "Work on New Sacred Heart Church Progressing Rapidly," *Buffalo Evening News*, January 10, 1914, 15.

<sup>18</sup> "Raze Sacred Heart Church," *Buffalo Morning Express*, August 5, 1914, 6.

<sup>19</sup> "Work on New Sacred Heart Church Progressing Rapidly," *Buffalo Evening News*, January 10, 1914, 15.

<sup>20</sup> James Napora, "Houses of Worship."

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commonly seen in Buffalo's Catholic ecclesiastic architecture. The convent conforms to the principle architectural components of A.W.N Pugin's design, which was so strong that it continued to inform the style of the modern religious house well into the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

*Church Plan and Design*

Thomas Henry Poole, an English-born architect who designed numerous Catholic churches in New York City, explains the practice and design of the nave in churches constructed in the Gothic Revival style:

An aisle in architecture is one of the lateral or longitudinal divisions of a church, separated from the nave by rows of piers, pillars, or columns. Sometimes a church has one side aisle only...as a rule in Gothic architecture the aisle roofs are much lower than the nave roof...generally one-story, but occasionally there is an upper story, sometimes used as a gallery. As a general rule, churches are divided into three aisles.<sup>22</sup>

As Poole indicates, side aisles were typically separated from the nave by piers, pillars, or columns; this type of construction was consistently seen in churches studied for this nomination. In discussing the chronology and development of the Catholic Church building type in *19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Roman Catholic Churches*, historian Andrew Derrick also points to this type of plan as characteristic of the pre-Vatican II church plan, referencing E.W. Pugin's plan for St. Austin, Stafford below as an example below:<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "19<sup>th</sup>-and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Convents and Monasteries."

<sup>22</sup> "Aisle," *Catholic Answers*.

<sup>23</sup> "19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Roman Catholic Churches | Historic England," accessed October 4, 2022,

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-19th-20th-century-roman-catholic-churches/heag159-roman-catholic-churches-iha/>.

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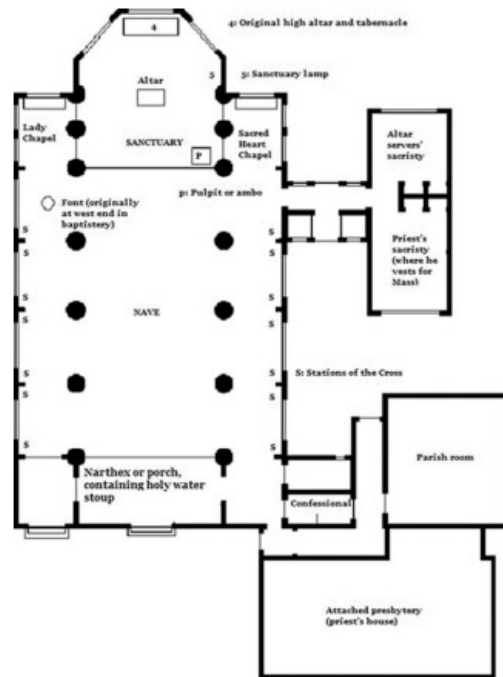


Figure 6: E.W. Pugins's Plan for St. Austin, Stafford <sup>24</sup>

Overall, Schmill's design employs the basic elements of a typical Catholic church building of its time as illustrated in Figure 6: narthex, nave, confessional, chapels, sanctuary, altar, and sacristy. As one of Schmill's last designs, Sacred Heart Church contains an interesting balance of elements from throughout his career. It is far less opulent than his high-style church designs in Buffalo such as the Church of the Transfiguration (NRE, 2014) yet much more detailed than his wood-frame church buildings like Holy Apostles SS. Peter & Paul Roman Catholic Church (ca. 1910, extant) at 660 Smith Street. His uncommon design elements for Sacred Heart Church are executed in its timber ceiling with the placement of the trusses and purlins, creating an unusual design that does not conform to the typical American Gothic Revival church design at the time. Schmill's truss work gives the appearance of side aisles (see Figure 7). The trusses extend out low from the side elevations and create the appearance of a continuous half arch, which defines the space and provides framing for the side chapels in the sanctuary and the alcoves that flank the three entry doors that lead into the nave. The trusses then curve up and meet at the ceiling, defining the central space of the church and framing the altar. This is a highly unusual method of creating or giving the illusion of additional space without constructing one- or two-story side aisles. Lengthening the nave or adding transepts were other common practices not employed in Sacred Heart's design that were typically utilized to provide additional space in Gothic Revival-style churches. <sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> "19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Roman Catholic Churches | Historic England."

<sup>25</sup> Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to American Architecture* (New York: Plume, 1980), 147.

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Figure 7: Interior photo of Sacred Heart Church

Additionally, expert craftsmanship was employed in the design of Sacred Heart Church. The trusses were all hand-carved in relief and then the relief portions were painted. The bottom of the trusses are ornately painted with both Catholic and German symbolism, another design element not seen in the survey. The trusses are outlined in blue and red paint and each one features a white-painted German cross (Figure 9). Together with the decorative dome ceilings in the sanctuary that are painted blue with a white star motif and gold ribs (Figure 8), the craftsmanship creates a beautiful polychromatic effect in the church's interior.

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Figure 8: Detail of the painting on the sanctuary



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Figure 9: Detail of carving and painting on truss work

*Comparison of other design elements in Buffalo's Catholic Churches*

Buffalo's Catholic immigrants attempted to replicate the grandiosity of European church design; however, inadequate financing and an absence of government support common in Europe frequently led to the construction of thinner, less substantial walls in America. St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church (extant) at 651 Washington Avenue is an exception to this practice; its walls are four feet thick.<sup>26</sup> Sacred Heart adhered to this

<sup>26</sup> "Buffalo's Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy," accessed August 2, 2022, <https://buffaloah.com/h/ederer/ederer.html>.

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practice, constructing walls that were a foot-and-a-half thick, an acceptable deficiency that did not impact the building structurally.<sup>27</sup>

Another design element utilized in Buffalo's Catholic churches was the use of broader, more horizontal American proportions that employed the use of side aisles in design.<sup>28</sup> As previously discussed, the absence of side aisles imparts a solid, grounding appearance in Sacred Heart's nave, clearly delineating it from some of the local Gothic Revival interiors in Roman Catholic churches such as St. Ann's and St. John Kanty that feature soaring columns and Gothic arches that physically separate the nave from the side aisles.

While American proportions may have been adhered to in terms of structure, it was the interior of Buffalo's Catholic churches that adhered to their European Catholic heritage. Few of the immigrant congregations considered their churches to be complete without bells. The three original bells were removed from the original Sacred Heart Church in the Hydraulics and installed in the bell tower at Emslie Street.<sup>29</sup> Although the bells are no longer in the tower, two intact consoles that controlled the bells inside the tower are extant.

Although Buffalo's grand era of church building produced a local stained-glass industry, much of the stained glass was imported, especially from the Royal Munich Art Works, the Bavarian Franz Mayer Works, and Tiroler Glasmalerei in Innsbruck, Austria. The stained-glass windows in Sacred Heart Church had been imported from Europe for the original church on Seneca Street. The windows were then removed from the original church and installed in the current church on Emslie Street in 1914. Although the stained-glass windows on the side elevations were partially blown out due to a gas explosion in 1983, the upper portions and gothic tracery remain and the three-part clerestory window on the front elevation of the church is almost completely intact. The colored glass in simple geometric shapes on the clerestory window lacks a depiction of saints and symbols. Having been made circa 1890, the stained-glass windows of Sacred Heart Church resemble imported stained glass from Europe. Their flatness and definitive leading were indicative of the medieval windows produced by European studios, which was very discernable from the idealized naturalism and romantic style executed by the studios in Buffalo.<sup>30</sup>

## Sacred Heart Convent

### *Typology*

From the 1850s up to the First World War, convents were built in large numbers for the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>31</sup> Beginning in the 1830s, the actual convent plan began with A.W.N Pugin's design and building

<sup>27</sup> "Browse Items-Digital Collections – University at Buffalo Libraries," accessed October 6, 2022, <https://digital.lib.buffalo.edu/files/original/f3ead8dd05534289c4a0d7d2a198878b.jpg>.

<sup>28</sup> "Buffalo's Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy."

<sup>29</sup> "Work on New Sacred Heart Church Progressing Rapidly," *Buffalo Evening News*, January 10, 1914, 15.

<sup>30</sup> "Buffalo's Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy."

<sup>31</sup> "19<sup>th</sup>-and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Convents and Monasteries;" "Nuns and Convent Building | Historic England," accessed August 11, 2022, <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/womens-history/nuns-and-convent-building/>.

<sup>31</sup> "Mendicant | Definition, History, Orders, & Facts | Britannica."

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campaign of a monastery and a series of convents in quick succession. Inspired by medieval precedents, Pugin established the predominant form, layout, and style of the modern religious house. The impact of his design was so strong that the principle architectural components of many of the convents subsequently constructed hardly varied from it, except in terms of their growing size.<sup>32</sup>

Pugin's design and plan for convents emphasized communal living and was comprised of major rooms such as a chapel, refectory, and community room. Cells were located off a central corridor located on the upper floor. Parlors were meeting spaces for visiting lay people, located by the front door, and constituting an interface between the community and the outside world. Additionally, Pugin's series of convents were built of brick for economic reasons.<sup>33</sup>

Between the late nineteenth century to the late 1960s, Catholic women in American society had far more opportunities within church structures than outside them for education and meaningful work. A large period of this time coincided with an era when American women did not have the right to vote and were thoroughly excluded from leadership roles. This was not the case for nuns who lived in active congregations, establishing schools, orphanages, and hospitals. While unthinkable in the secular world, a Catholic nun might be responsible for running an expansive institution critical to a large community. Kathleen Sprows Cummings, a professor of American Studies at Notre Dame and the director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, explains:

These women had a lot of power at a time when under secular auspices, you couldn't even dream of it. There's a way in which entering the convent was an opportunity to be a pioneer.<sup>34</sup>

The new convents developed during this time reflected the nuns' role in the community and had to meet a range of practical and modern needs for an active congregation of women religious. Additionally, women's religious communities were usually responsible for raising their funds and managing their budgets. This combined with the fact that the sisters had a clear idea of how their buildings were to be used, meant that they had a great deal of control over the design and construction. Nuns commissioned architects, provided detailed briefs, and sometimes drew up plans themselves. Once construction began, they were involved in every part of the building process, from project managing the site to designing and decorating interiors, particularly chapels.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "19<sup>th</sup>-and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Convents and Monasteries."

<sup>33</sup> "19<sup>th</sup>-and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Convents and Monasteries."

<sup>34</sup> Correspondent, Ruth Graham Glove, February 24, 2013, and 12:00 am Share on Facebook Share on Twitter View Comments, "What American Nuns Built," Boston Globe, *BostonGlobe.com*, accessed October 10, 2022, [https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2013/02/24/what-american-nuns-built-what-american-nuns-built/IvaMKcoK8a4jDb9lqiVOrI/story.html?s\\_campaign=8315](https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2013/02/24/what-american-nuns-built-what-american-nuns-built/IvaMKcoK8a4jDb9lqiVOrI/story.html?s_campaign=8315).

<sup>35</sup> "Nuns and Convent Building."

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*Plan and design*

Sacred Heart Convent was designed in the Craftsman style and built for the sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, who were responsible for running the Convent and Sacred Heart School in the new church complex. The industrious sisters identified themselves with the mendicant orders of the Franciscans by assuming a vow of poverty and supporting themselves through work and charitable contributions.<sup>36</sup> Sacred Heart Convent mirrors Pugin's plan and reflects the mendicant values in the design of both the public and private spaces. The specific typology for convent design that was developed by Pugin is evident in the type and placement of rooms on both the first and second floors.

According to Pugin's plan, the parlors or public spaces for visitors were to be located on the first floor by the front door. Schmill employed this design in Sacred Heart Convent by placing the parlor and office on either side of the front door. The parlor, the primary space to receive visiting lay people is more formal in design; it features two built-in wood bookcases, giving the appearance of a study. Pugin also emphasized communal living in his design, calling for a community room and refectory (kitchen, pantry, and dining spaces) on the first floor. In Sacred Heart Convent, these rooms are more practical spaces that are located on opposite ends of a central corridor on the first floor. The community room is divided into two portions, an open space with no ornament and a small sewing room with a built-in wood linen closet. On the opposite end of the corridor, the kitchen and pantry feature flat panel wainscot half-walls and wood built-ins for storage. Similar to the community room, the dining room is an open space with no additional ornament.

There are a total of thirteen cells with ten located on the second floor and three near the sewing and community room, away from public spaces, on the first floor. In keeping with the typology, the majority of cells are located off a central corridor on an upper floor. The cell interiors are austere and composed of a small room with a small closet. A single bathroom on the second floor was constructed to accommodate the occupants of the ten cells. The chapel, located on the east wall of the second floor is twelve-and-a-half feet in width and occupies the entire eastern portion of this floor from east to west. It is the most ornate of all the rooms in the convent and features half-paneled wainscot wood walls, an intact altar, and a half-timbered ceiling.

Utilitarian spaces are basic and located in the attic and the basement. The attic retains a large linen closet featuring wood built-ins and a store room. The basement houses a large laundry room and a fruit room that flanks the stairs; a wood scrub board remains in the laundry, and shelving is intact on the south wall of the fruit room that was most likely used to hold jars of preserves prepared by the nuns.

Schmill consistently employed Pugin's convent plan at other convents that he designed such as Corpus Christi Convent (NR, 2006) and Holy Name Convent of Jesus Christ (extant). Though slightly larger at three-and-a-half stories tall, Corpus Christi Convent has ground-floor offices and meeting rooms in front and a dining area in the rear with connecting kitchen. The upper floors contain the cells for the nuns.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Holy Name

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<sup>37</sup> National Register Nomination for Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church Complex, Section 7, 4.

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Convent of Jesus Christ has an office and reception room flanking the front door with dining, kitchen, recreation rooms, and two cells in the rear and along the sides of the first floor. The majority of cells are located on the second and third floors in keeping with the type.<sup>38</sup>

*Architect*

Carl Schmill, the architect for Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent, was born in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Germany around 1848. He graduated from the architectural college there and later entered the employ of the Krupp Armory works in Essen. After several years, Schmill opened up architectural offices in Oberhausen, Cologne, where he operated for three years. In 1880, he immigrated to Buffalo and was connected with architect Henry H. Little. Schmill opened his own offices in the Fuch building in 1889 and later moved to the Prudential Building, continuing his practice as an architect until he died in 1914 after a brief, two-day illness.<sup>39</sup> In addition to Sacred Heart Church and Convent, Schmill was responsible for the design of many churches and schools in Buffalo both individually and in partnership with Gould and his sons. Schmill's earliest designs were combination church/school buildings, all constructed in the French Second Empire Style. These included St. Mary Magdalene Church/School/Hall (1900, not extant) at Fillmore Avenue and Urban Street, St. Bernard Church/School (1907, extant) constructed at 1990 Clinton Street; and Blessed Trinity Church/School (NR, 1979) constructed at 314 Leroy Avenue in 1907.

Schmill's designs strictly for churches varied greatly. His high-style designs include one other Gothic Revival ecclesiastic building, the Church of the Transfiguration (NRE, 2014), which bears no resemblance to Sacred Heart Church. Constructed from 1893-94 and located at 929 Sycamore Street, the former church was designed in a traditional cruciform plan and featured a three-story tower with spire as the central entry and flying buttresses to create side aisles and a soaring nave.<sup>40</sup> Two other majestic designs by Schmill include Corpus Christi Church (NR, 2007) constructed in 1909 at 199 Clark Street, and the Basilica of St. Gerard Church (1911, extant) at 2515 Bailey Avenue. Corpus Christi was designed in the Romanesque Revival style and St. Gerard Church was designed to be a miniature replica of the Basilica of St. Paul-Outside-the-Walls in Rome.<sup>41</sup> Schmill's plainer buildings are Holy Apostles SS. Peter & Paul Roman Catholic Church (ca. 1910, extant) at 660 Smith Street, and St. Lawrence Roman Catholic Church (1914, not extant) at 1520 Delavan Street. Both of these wood frame churches were designed simply and similarly in the Colonial Revival style.

*Placement and Setting*

Similar to their European counterparts, Buffalo's Catholic churches formed the dominating aesthetic focal points for heavily Catholic immigrant neighborhoods in the city. The grandeur of the architecture was not solely

<sup>38</sup> "Browse Items-Digital Collections – University at Buffalo Libraries," accessed October 31, 2022, <http://digital.lib.buffalo.edu/files/original/b861f068b90700e050cc89e91e56f7fe.jpg>.

<sup>39</sup> "Schmill Funeral Will Be Held Tomorrow," *Buffalo Evening News*, January 14, 1914, 7.

<sup>40</sup> Nancy Todd, "Resource Evaluation, Church of the Transfiguration Complex," New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, May 20, 1997; John Auwaerter, "Building-Structure Inventory Form, Church of the Transfiguration Complex: Church," New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, May 1977.

<sup>41</sup> "Buffalo's Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy."

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about crafting an outward image. Churches also created a “street identity” for Buffalo’s Catholic population, who adopted the revered European practice of identifying where they lived by parish. The churches became neighborhood focal points resulting in many churches being built nearby.<sup>42</sup>

However, there was a practical reason for the proximity of Buffalo’s Catholic churches. Most parishes developed at a time when hardly anyone, especially poor, newly arrived immigrants, owned or had access to automobiles. Consequently, the parish church had to be within reasonable walking distance. The common observation that Buffalo has a density of churches in close proximity is in part based on a modern American automotive lifestyle that does not consider that parishes previously needed to be appropriately situated for pedestrians, or to serve diverse ethnic groups who lived in the same neighborhood. For example, due to language and cultural differences, Sacred Heart, a German Catholic Church was located less than a mile from St. Stanislaus’s, a Polish parish on Peckham Avenue, each serving different immigrant groups. As such, Buffalo’s Catholic churches symbolized a parish community and almost always an ethnic identity. Martin Ederer, author of “Buffalo’s Catholic Churches,” explains the phenomenon:

The parishes officially staked out a place for Catholics in a Protestant America, they informed a Protestant America that the Catholic Church and its people were here to stay: it was no accident that many of Buffalo's Catholic churches were strategically located at prominent street corners. The parishes provided a sense of place, a sense of community for immigrants settling into a strange city in a strange land. They provided a piece of home, a place with familiar language and customs.<sup>43</sup>

Although Sacred Heart is not located at a prominent street corner, it is situated toward the south end of the block nearer to Clinton Street. Clinton Street (Route 354) is an east-west highway in Erie County that runs from New York State Route 5 in Buffalo to the Erie/Wyoming County Line.<sup>44</sup> The church is visible from Clinton Street as it towers well above the row of residential houses and small commercial buildings on Emslie and along Clinton Street, providing a sense of place in the neighborhood.

The intensive growth of Buffalo’s Catholic churches paralleled Buffalo’s prosperity during its age of rapid growth from the late 1900s through the 1920s. In 1900, Buffalo had more millionaires per capita than any other city in America whose industries provided a multitude of jobs for newly arrived immigrants. As a result, Buffalo’s Catholic parishes grew and flourished; however, they did so in typically immigrant settings that remained separated from the millionaires’ neighborhoods but not from the businesses and factories that provided their employment.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, a working-class German immigrant residential neighborhood near an industrial area was chosen for the site of Sacred Heart’s new church on Emslie Street.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> “Buffalo’s Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy.”

<sup>43</sup> Buffalo’s Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy.”

<sup>44</sup> “New York State Route 354, Erie County,” accessed September 30, 2022,  
[http://www.billburmaster.com/rmsandw/new\\_york/state/ny354.html](http://www.billburmaster.com/rmsandw/new_york/state/ny354.html).

<sup>45</sup> “Buffalo’s Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy.”

<sup>46</sup> “Site of Sacred Heart Catholic Church,” *Buffalo Evening News*, March 18, 1913, 13.

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**After the Period of Significance**

After its completion in 1915, the Sacred Heart Parish complex consisted of the church, rectory, convent, and school. The parish thrived through the 1940s but membership began to plummet in the 1960s as German Catholics left the neighborhood and moved to the suburbs. It subsequently faced serious financial issues, so the Catholic Diocese closed the Sacred Heart Parish in 1973 and sold the complex to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which later struggled to maintain the buildings. In 1983, a propane explosion at a North Division Street warehouse that killed seven people blew out many of the windows in the Sacred Heart Church Complex buildings.<sup>47</sup>

In 1988, the Rev. Ronald P. Kirk's Witness Cathedral of Faith congregation purchased the extant complex and continued to utilize it until it was abandoned in 2008. Since that time, the complex has remained empty and relatively unchanged. A storm in 2008 caused the school building to collapse and it was razed in January 2009. The rectory, which was attached to the back of the church by a small one-story enclosed brick walkway, was demolished on June 20, 2017.<sup>48</sup>

*Conclusion*

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent are significant under Criterion C in architecture as examples of specific typologies of ecclesiastic architecture that remain remarkably intact and that convey their original form and function despite years of abandonment and neglect. After the closure and sale of the complex by the Catholic Diocese, the church and convent continued to serve other denominational church groups, actively operating for almost one hundred years. Although two of the original buildings of the complex have been demolished, despite deteriorating conditions, the plan of both the church and the convent remains readable and the majority of historic fabric in each building remains intact.

<sup>47</sup> "Sacred Heart Church Complex – PRS," Accessed August 3, 2022, [https://www.preservationready.org/Buildings/198EmslieStreet](https://www.preservationready.org/Buildings/198EmslieStreet;); "Buffalo's Catholic Churches: Ethnic Communities and the Architectural Legacy."

<sup>48</sup> "FixBuffalo: Sacred Heart Church: Slated for the Landfill," *FixBuffalo*, February 8, 2012, accessed August 5, 2022, <http://fixbuffalo.blogspot.com/2012/02/sacred-heart-church-slated-for-landfill.html>; "Sacred Heart Church Complex – PRS."

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** .94 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.881897 | Longitude: -78.849307 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed maps with scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

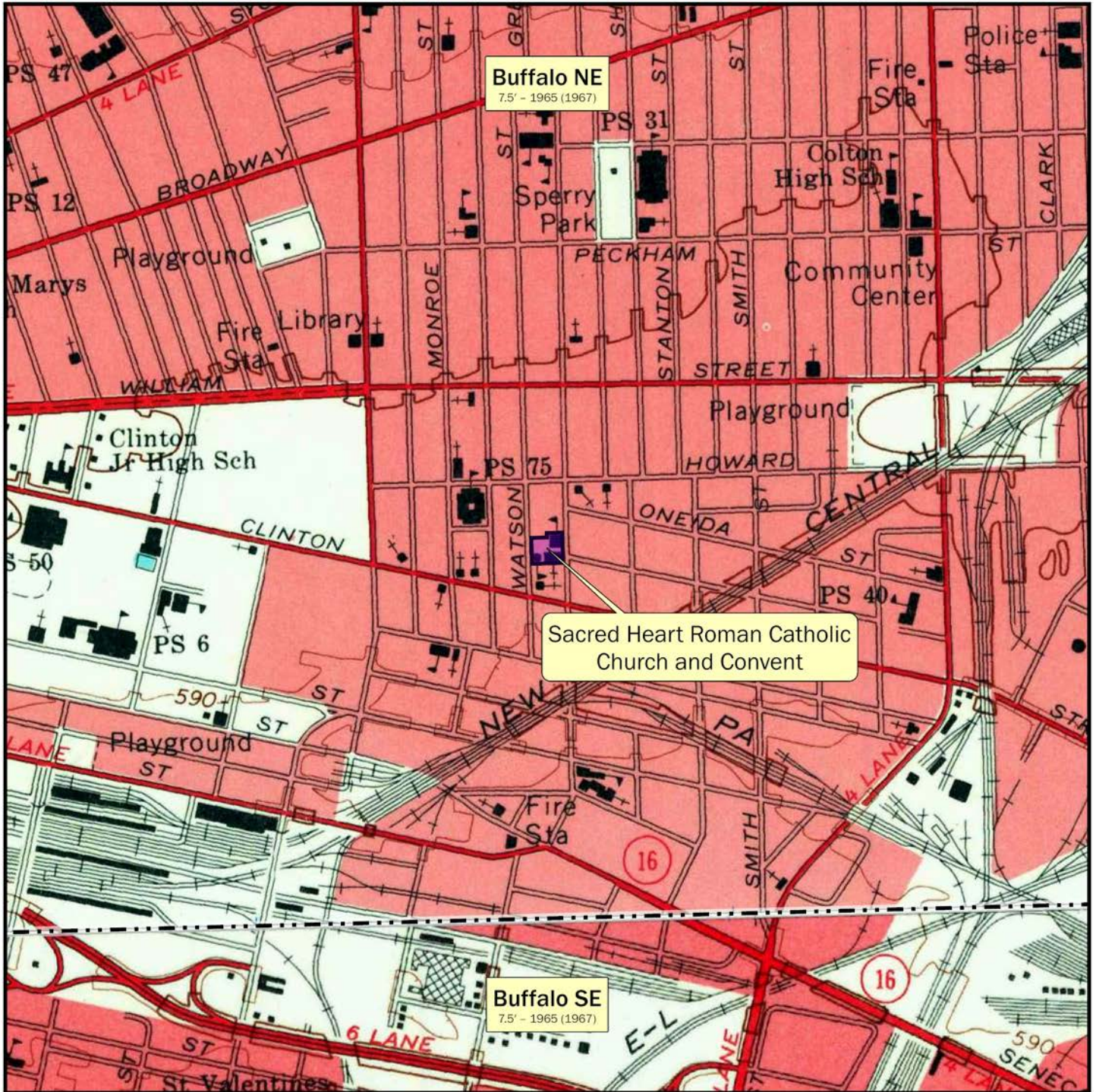
The boundary encompasses the historic property boundary associated with the former Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent.

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 Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

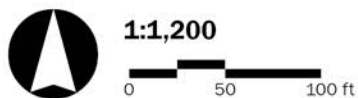
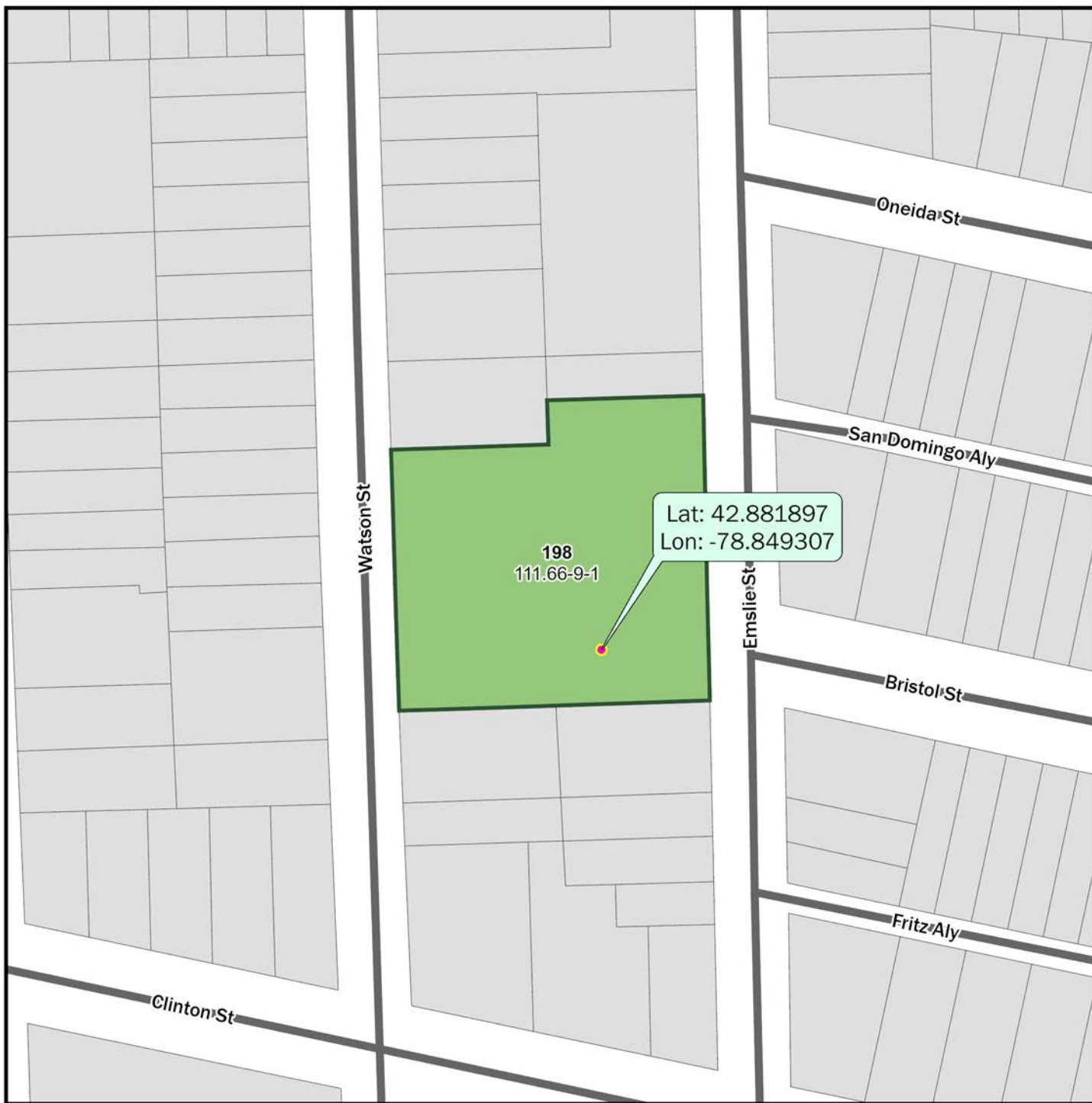
Mapped 04/19/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPD



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 Nomination Boundary (0.94 ac)  Tax Parcels



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

Erie County Parcel Year: 2021

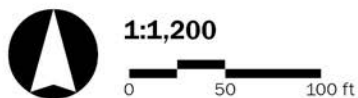
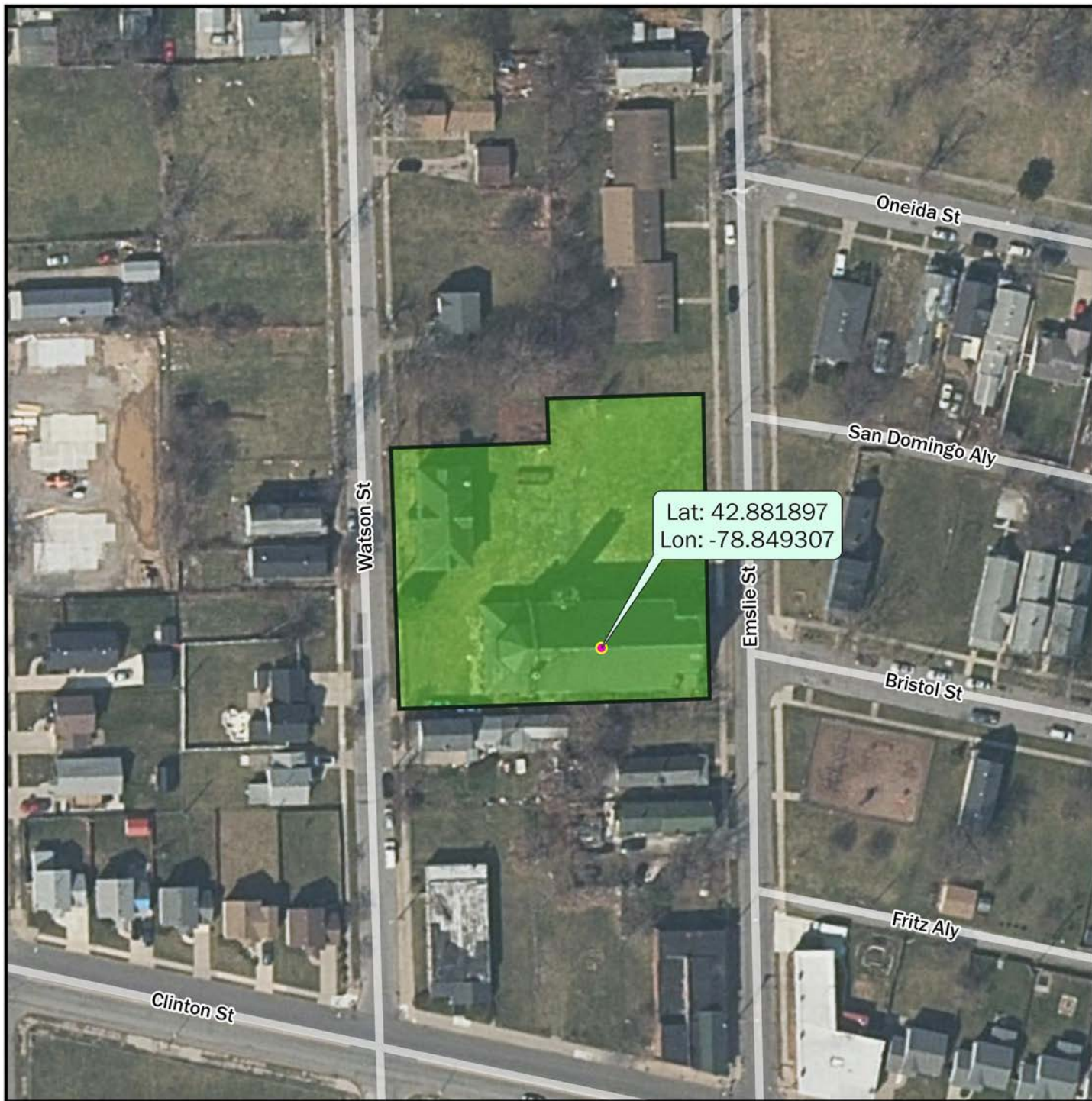
Mapped 04/19/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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 Nomination Boundary (0.94 ac)



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2021

Mapped 04/19/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Karen A. Kennedy, Director of Architectural History [Edited by Jennifer Walkowski, NYSHPO]  
organization Preservation Studios date April 18, 2024  
street & number 170 Florida Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14208  
e-mail kkennedy@preservationstudios.com

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

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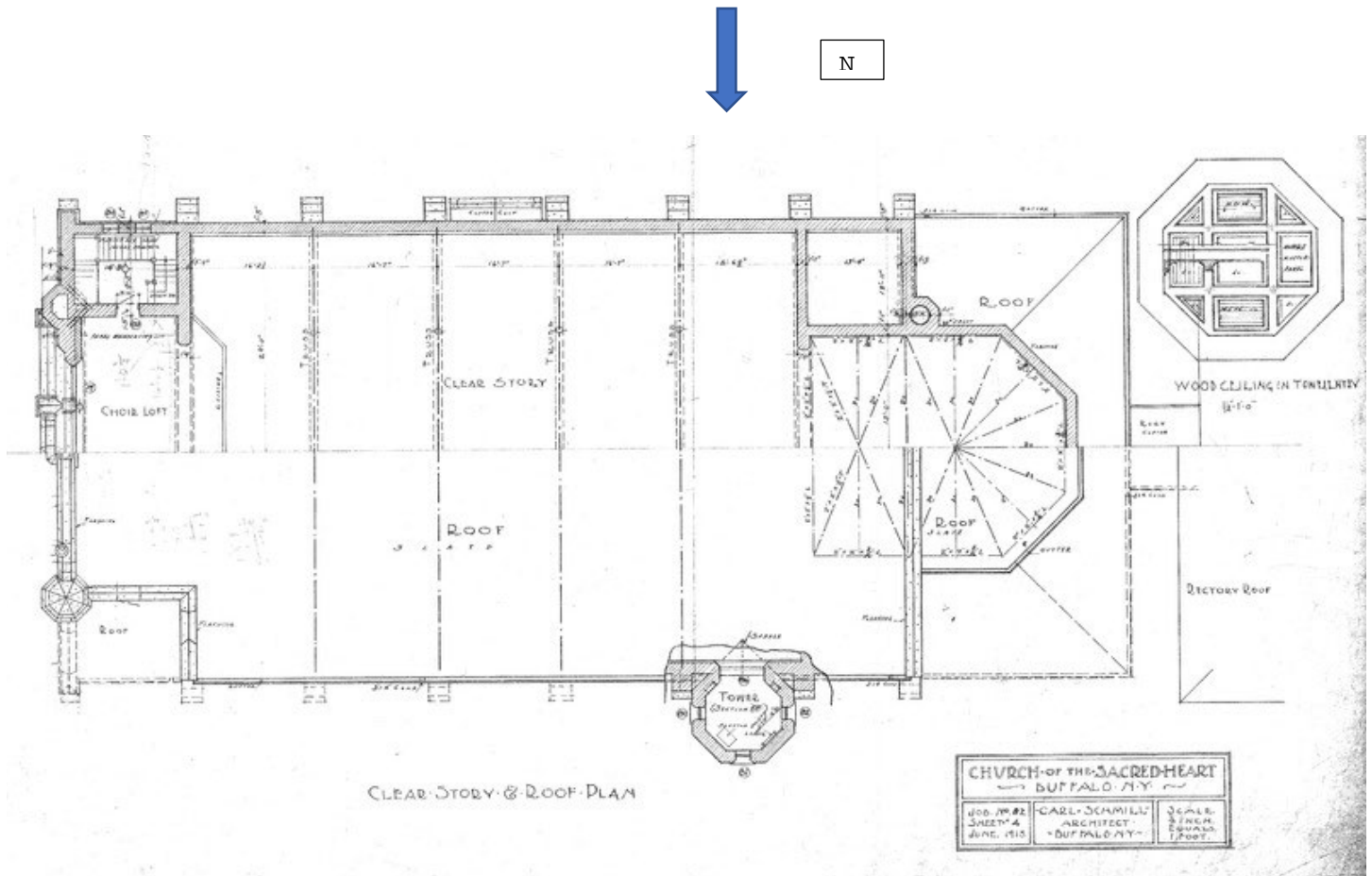


Figure 6: Clear Story and Roof Plan, Church of the Sacred Heart (1913)

Carl Schmill, Architect

*Not to scale*

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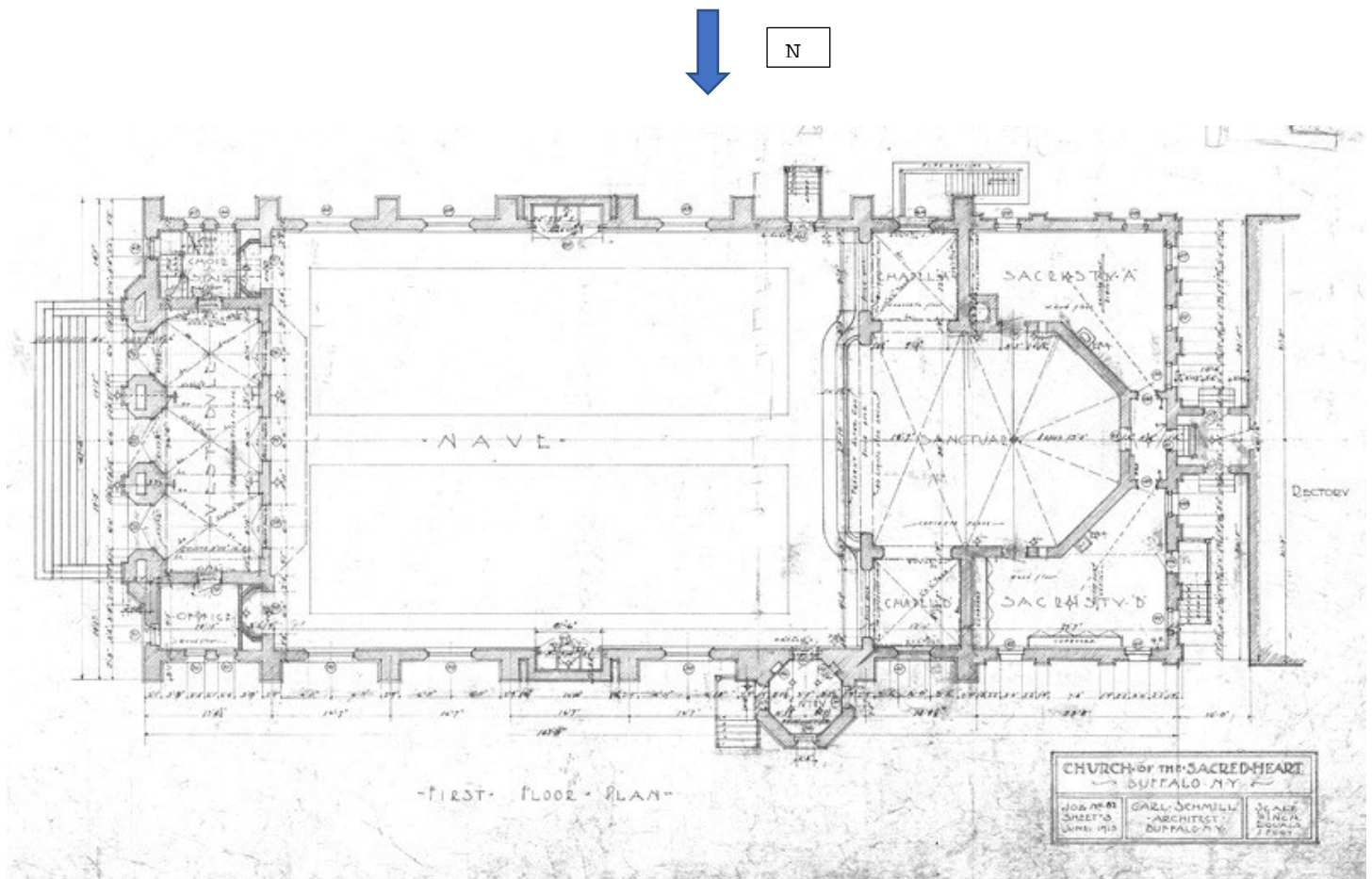


Figure 7: First Floor Plan, Church of the Sacred Heart (1913)

Carl Schmill, Architect

*Not to scale*



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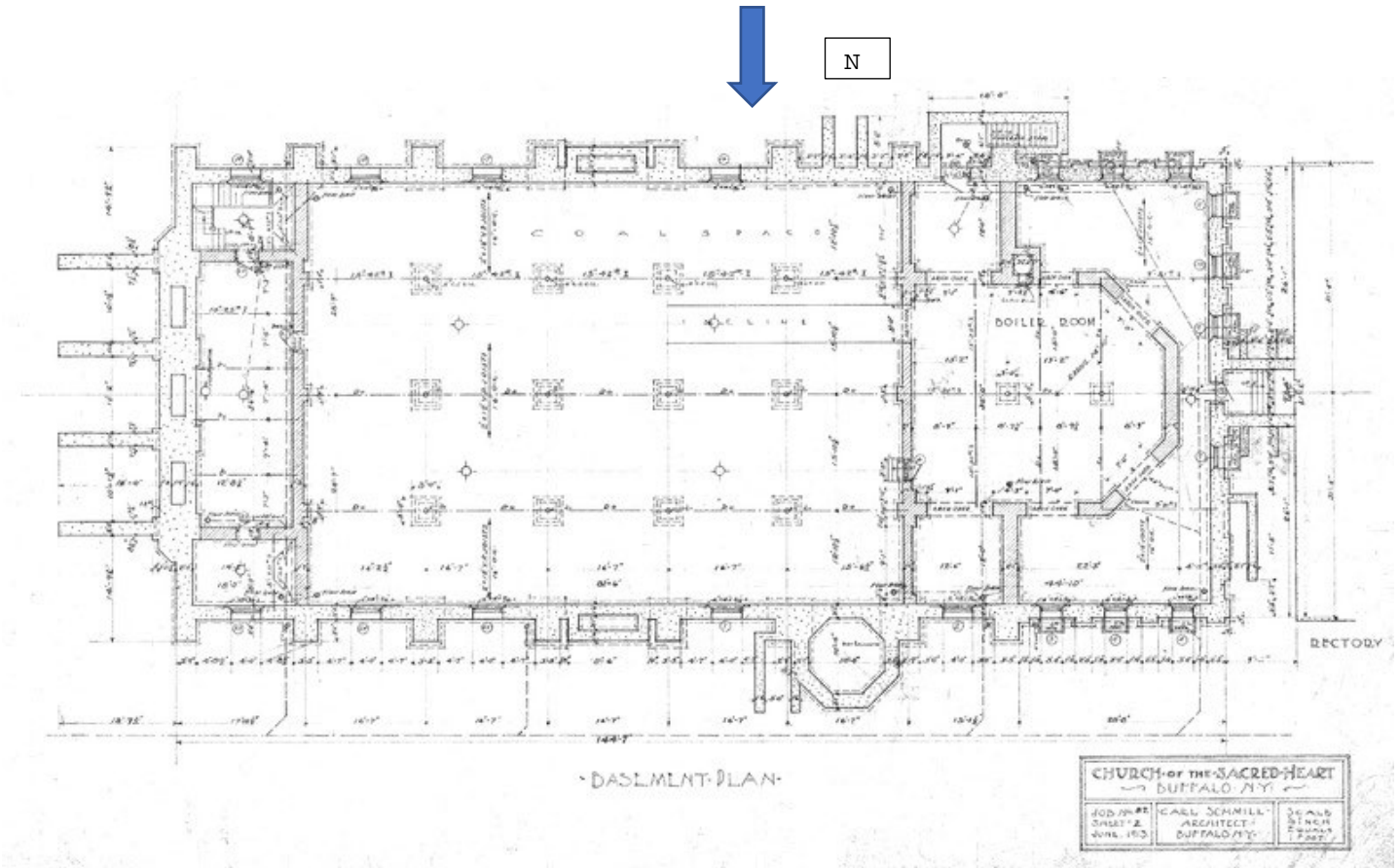


Figure 8: Basement Plan, Church of the Sacred Heart (1913)  
Carl Schmill, Architect  
*Not to scale*

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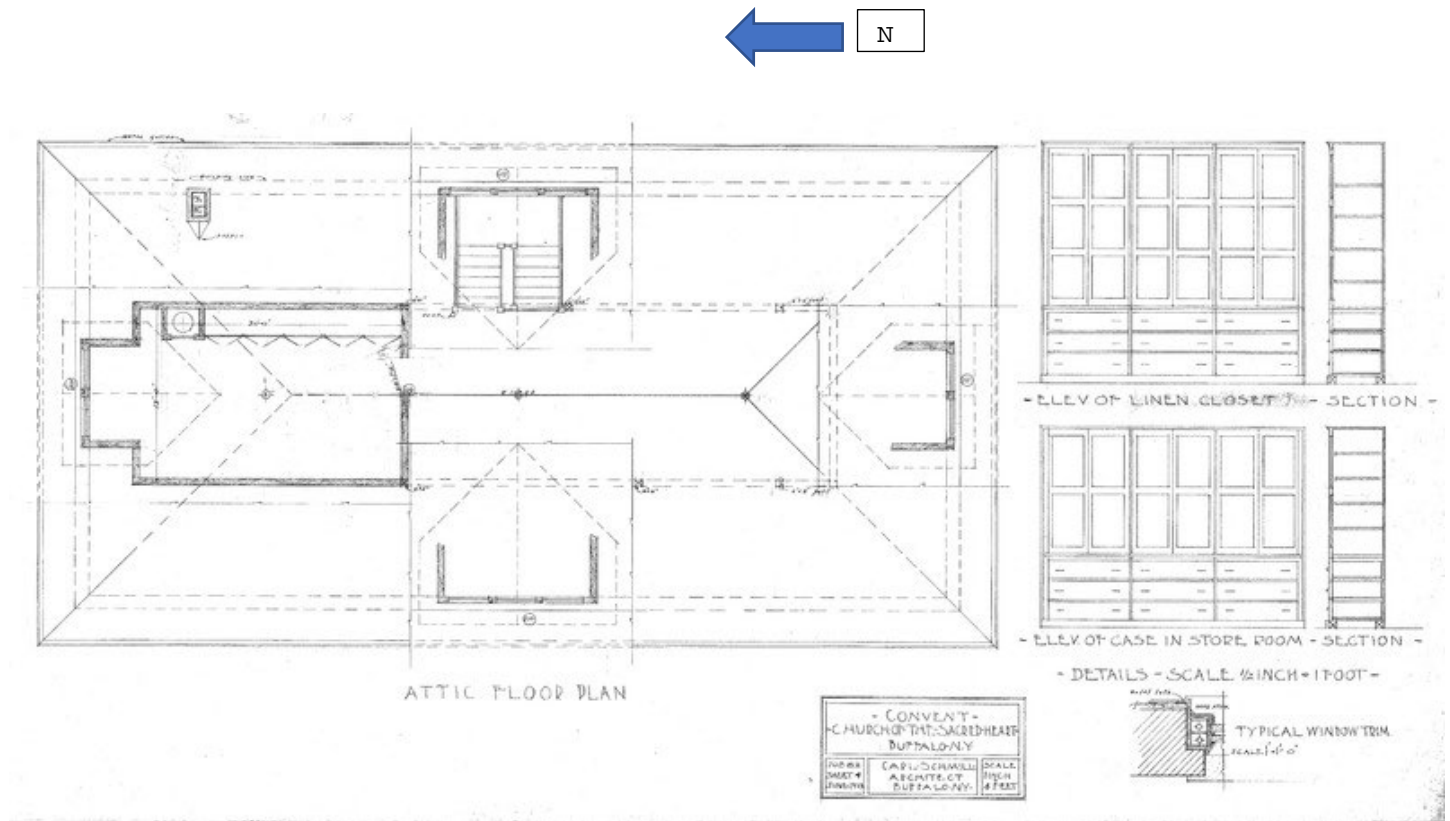


Figure 9: Attic Floor Plan, Convent, Church of the Sacred Heart (1913)

Carl Schmill, Architect

*Not to scale*

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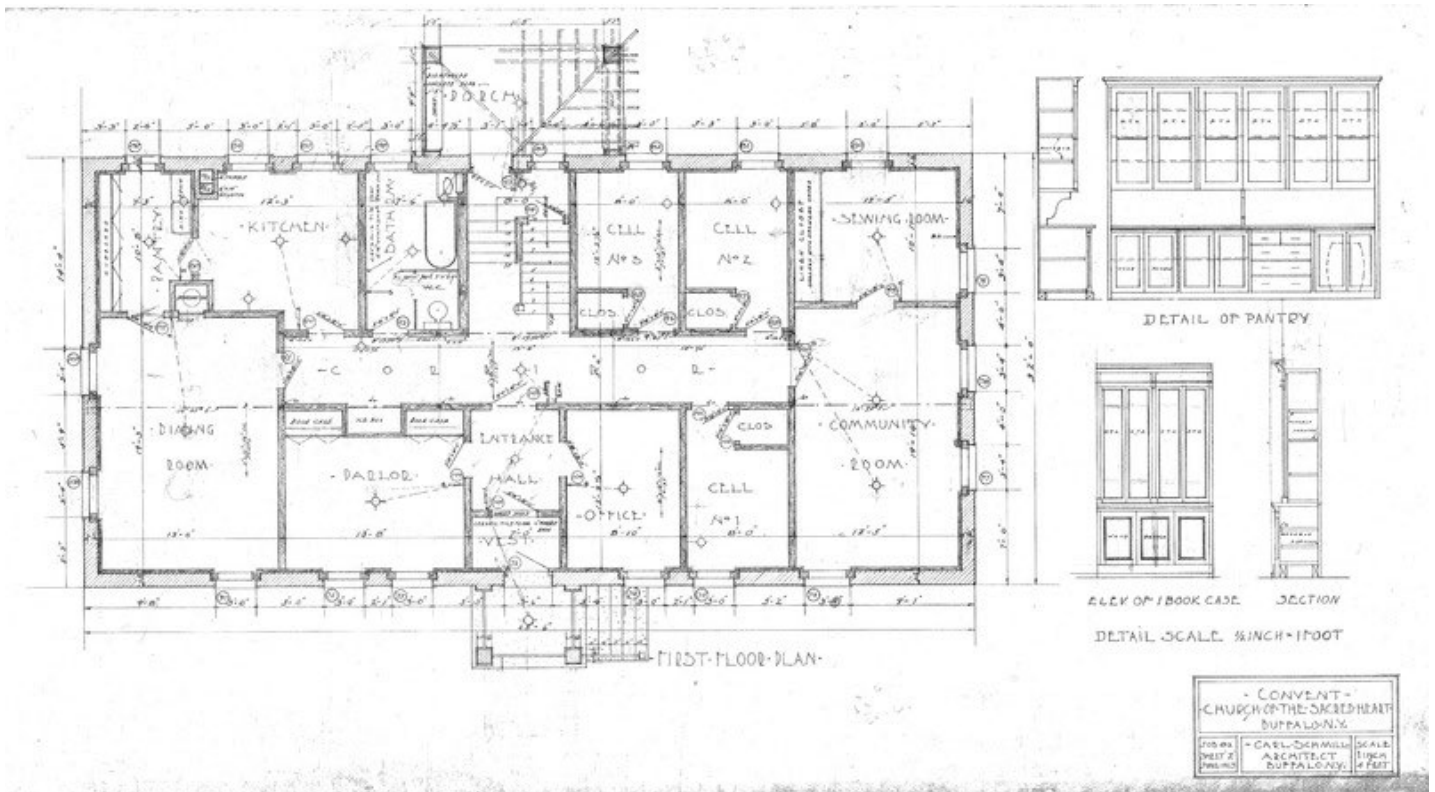


Figure 10: First Floor Plan, Convent, Church of the Sacred Heart (1913)  
Carl Schmill, Architect  
*Not to scale*

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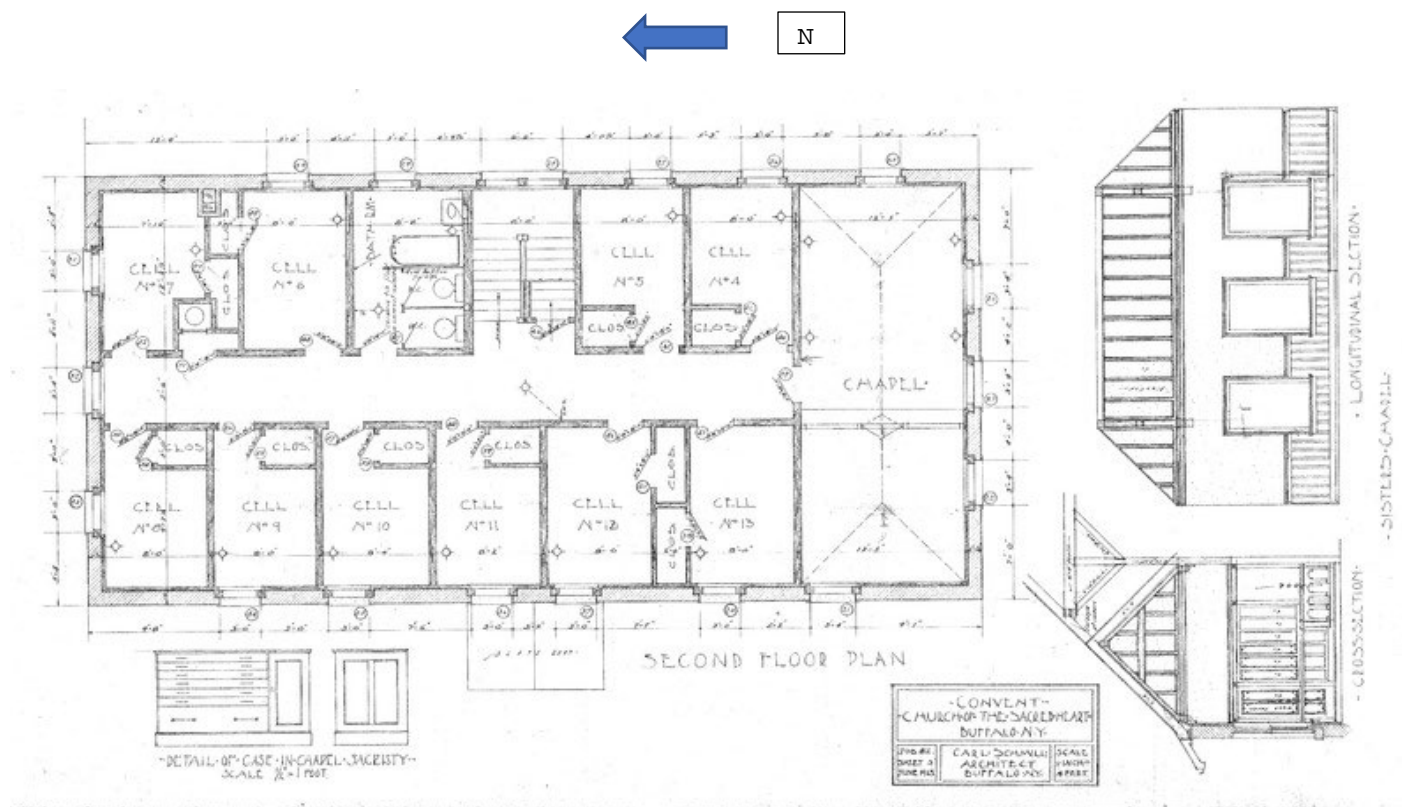


Figure 11: Second Floor Plan and Sections, Convent, Church of the Sacred Heart (1913)  
Carl Schmill, Architect  
*Not to scale*

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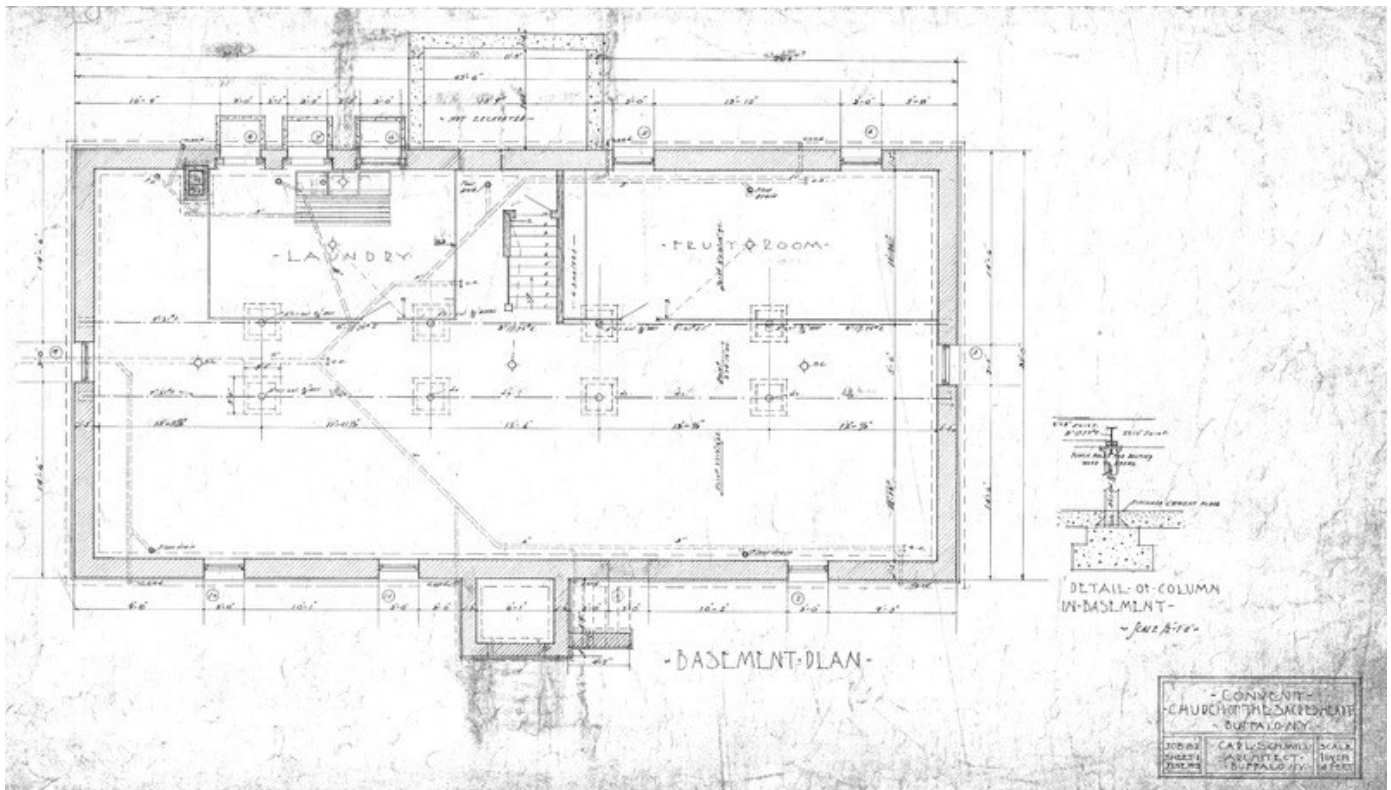


Figure 12: Basement Floor Plan, Convent, Church of the Sacred Heart (1913)  
Carl Schmill, Architect  
*Not to scale*

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Figure 13: Undated interior of Sacred Heart Church<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> "Sacred Heart Rectory/Larkin's Men's Club," accessed October 11, 2022, <https://buffaloah.com/a/seneca/696/696.html>.

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Figure 14: Undated exterior of Sacred Heart Church<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *A Pictorial History of Sacred Heart Church (Hydraulics) and looking to the Diamond Jubilee, 1875-1946*, Buffalo, New York, 1946, 48.

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Figure 15: Undated photo of Sacred Heart Convent<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *A Pictorial History of Sacred Heart Church (Hydraulics) and looking to the Diamond Jubilee, 1875-1946*, Buffalo, New York, 1946, 48.



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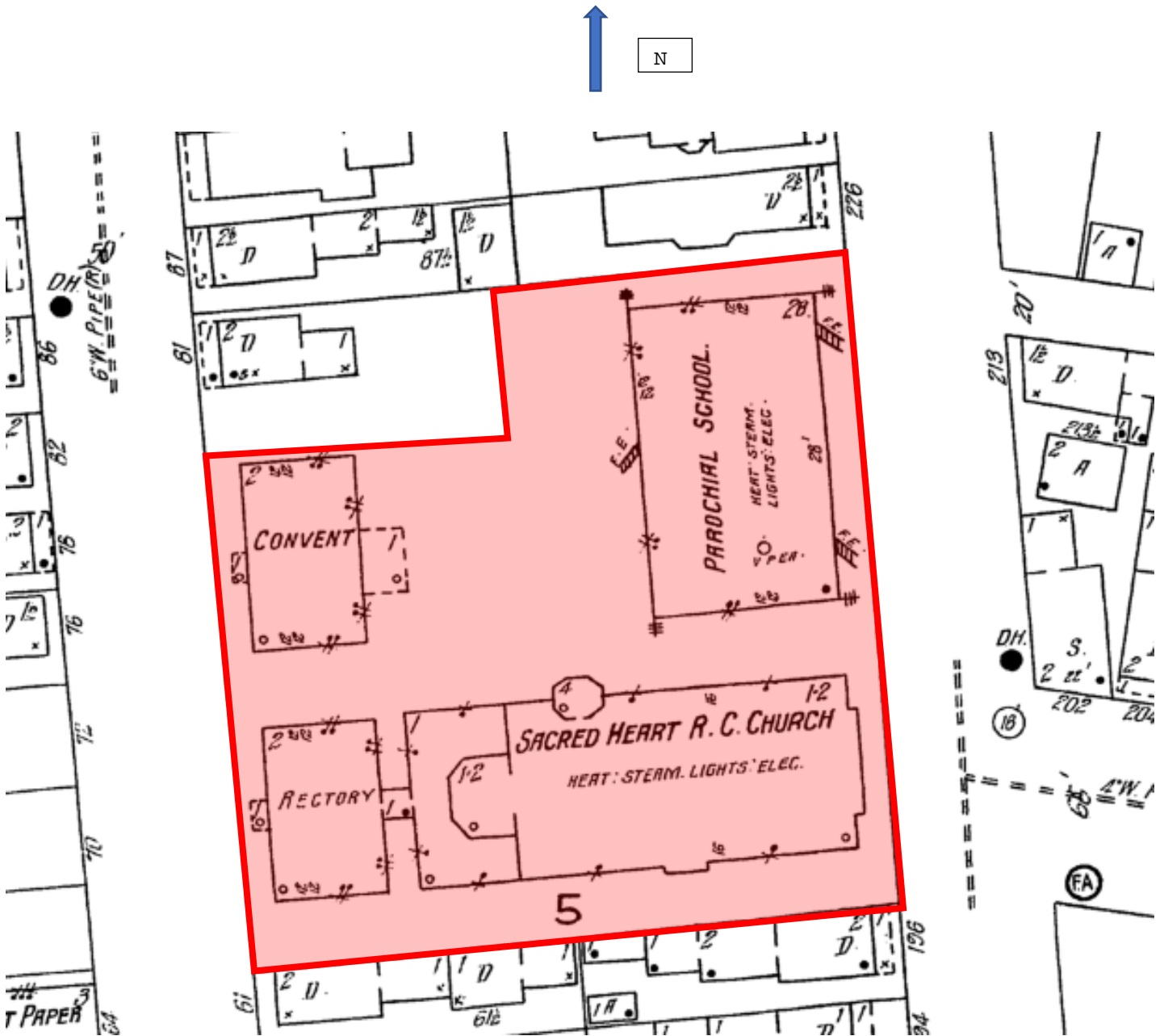


Figure 16: Detail, Digital Sanborn Map, Buffalo 1916-1940 vol. 2, 1925, Sheet 222

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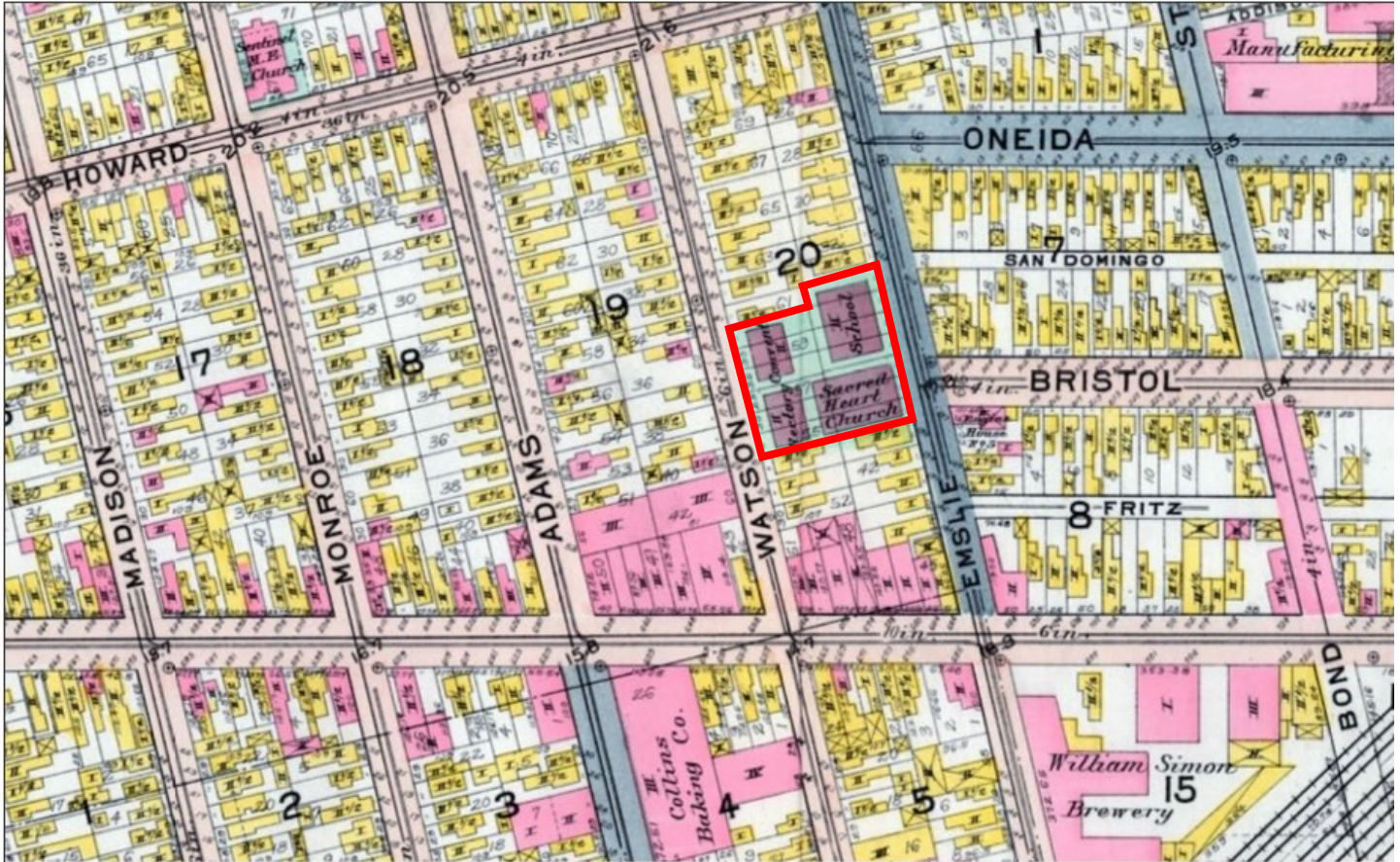
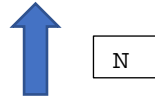


Figure 17: Map of Buffalo 1915 Volume 2, Century Atlas

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent

City or Vicinity: Buffalo

County: Erie State: NY

Photographer: Grace Celik

Date Photographed: August 16, 2022. Please note, the property has not undergone any changes since the date of photography.

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0001)  
View of east façade and south elevation of church, facing northwest.

2 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0002)  
View of north elevation of church, facing south.

3 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0003)  
View of west façade and south elevation of convent, facing northeast.

4 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0004)  
View of west elevation of church, facing southeast.

5 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0005)  
View of narthex in church, facing north.

6 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0006)  
View of church basement, facing north.

7 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0007)  
View of church nave, chapels, and apse, facing west.

8 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0008)  
View of church confessionals, facing southwest.

9 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0009)  
View of church nave, alcoves, and choir loft, facing east.

10 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0010)

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View of church sacristy, facing south.

11 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0011)

View of east elevation of convent, facing west.

12 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0012)

View of west façade and south elevation of convent, facing northeast.

13 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0013)

View of central stairway of convent, facing east.

14 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0014)

View of convent cell on east wall of first floor, facing east.

15 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0015)

View of built-in linen closet in convent sewing room in northwest corner of first floor, facing southwest.

16 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0016)

View of wood built-in in convent parlor on east wall of first floor, facing northwest.

17 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0017)

View of convent dining room in southeast corner of first floor, facing southwest.

18 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0018)

View of built-in pantry in convent kitchen in southwest corner of first floor, facing west.

19 of 19 (NY\_Buffalo\_Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church and Convent\_0019)

View of chapel along north wall on second floor, facing northeast.

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**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name N/A  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.





















