

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

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

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

Street address: 804-16 North Orianna Street (part of or formerly part of 801-15 N. 4th Street)

Postal code: 19123

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Saint Agnes Roman Catholic School

Current/Common Name: Saint Agnes School

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Building

Structure

Site

Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition:  excellent  good  fair  poor  ruins

Occupancy:  occupied  vacant  under construction  unknown

Current use: Vacant

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

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

**6. DESCRIPTION**

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

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

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

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1926 to 1984

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1926

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Peter F. Getz

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: \_\_\_\_\_

Original owner: Cardinal Dennis J. Dougherty (Archdiocese of Philadelphia)

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

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

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

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

**8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

*Please attach a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization Brown Street OCF LLC, c/o OCF Realty Date 9/14/23

Name with Title Dennis Carlisle, VP of Acquisitions, OCF Realty Email dennis@ocfrealty.com

Street Address 1936 Washington Avenue Telephone 215 735 7368 x118

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19146

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: 9/14/2023

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 9/15/2023

Date of Notice Issuance: 9/15/2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Brown Street OCF LLC, c/o OCF Realty

Address: 1936 Washington Avenue

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19146

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 10/18/2023, rec. Criteria E and J

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 11/10/2023

Date of Final Action: 11/10/2023

Designated  Rejected

**NOMINATION**  
For the  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**



**SAINT AGNES ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL**

**BUILT 1926**

**804-16 North Orianna Street**

**(part of or formerly part of 801-15 N. 4th Street)**

**Northern Liberties**

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The proposed boundary, which does not correspond to an OPA-compliant parcel description, is as follows:

BEGINNING on the southerly side of Reno Street (16 feet side, legally open, on city plan), at its intersection with the westerly side of Orianna Street (40 feet wide, legally open, on city plan), and from said point of beginning running, THENCE;

THENCE, extending SOUTH 11 DEGREES 00 MINUTES 17 SECONDS WEST, along the said westerly side of Orianna Street, a distance of 101 feet to a point;

THENCE, extending NORTH 72 DEGREES 17 MINUTES 50 SECONDS WEST, along a line through a wall, a distance of 26 feet to a point;

THENCE, extending SOUTH 11 DEGREES 00 MINUTES 17 SECONDS WEST, along a line through a wall, a distance of 7 feet to a point;

THENCE, extending NORTH 72 DEGREES 17 MINUTES 50 SECONDS WEST, along a line through a wall, a distance of 45 feet to a point;

THENCE, extending NORTH 18 DEGREES 33 MINUTES 02 SECONDS EAST, a distance of 108 feet to a point on the southerly side of Reno Street;

THENCE, extending SOUTH 78 DEGREES 33 MINUTES 33 SECONDS EAST, along the said southerly side of Reno Street, a distance of 60 feet to point of intersection with the said westerly side of Orianna Street, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.



Figure 1: Aerial Photo: Philadelphia Atlas

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



*Figure 2: East Elevation facing Orianna Street. Photo: Dennis Carlisle*

The Saint Agnes Roman Catholic School is a three-story institutional building at the southwest corner of Orianna and Reno Streets. On all four sides, it has a façade of rusticated granite in a random ashlar pattern. The entire building's roof line has stone coping.

The East Elevation consists of four sections. Starting from the south, the first and third sections have six sets of three-part mullion windows, two per floor. The second section has four sets of three-part mullion windows, two on the second and third floors, and two arched entryways. This section has a Mission-style parapet at the top, with a simple stone cross of two intersecting bars of equal length on the facade and topped with a gold-colored cross. This section also has a granite tablet inscribed with the words "SAINT AGNES". The fourth section has one window per floor and has the east side of the cornerstone of the building, inscribed with "1926". The windows have simple granite rectangular lintels and sills, the entry doors have granite molding. The stone façade has a course ashlar pattern along its base.



*Figure 3: North Elevation facing Reno Street. Photo: Dennis Carlisle*

The North Elevation, facing Reno Street, consists of three sections: starting from the east, the first and third sections have three sets of two-part mullion windows, but the first floor window in the third section has been filled in with concrete masonry units. The first section has the north side of the cornerstone, which is inscribed with a cross. The second section in the middle has two sets of three-part mullion windows above two entryways. This section has another Mission-style parapet, simple stone cross on the façade, and is also topped by a gold-colored cross. As with the east elevation, the windows have simple granite rectangular lintels and sills, the entry doors have granite molding, and the façade stone has a course ashlar pattern along the base.



*Figure 4: West Elevation facing interior courtyard. Photos: Dennis Carlisle*

The West Elevation, facing a concrete courtyard, is similar to the East elevation, but with some notable differences. The façade is not delineated into sections, does not have a course ashlar pattern at its base, nor does it have a parapet. The windows have splayed rusticated granite lintels with keystones. The arched entryways have rusticated granite molding. The second and third floors have five sets of three-part mullion windows and two single windows on either side. The first floor has two sets of three-part mullion windows, two arched entryways, and four single windows, one on the north end of the building (filled in with concrete masonry units) and three on the south end of the building. The fire stair on the south side of this elevation has three single windows, offset in alignment with others. This area is not accessible from the Right of Way.



*Figure 5: North Elevation facing courtyard. Photo: Dennis Carlisle*

The North Elevation, also facing a concrete courtyard, consists of the fire tower of the building. It has one window and one opening (enclosed with wire mesh) on the second and third floors. The first floor has an entryway and a two-part mullion window. All the windows and the door have splayed granite lintels with keystones. This area is also not accessible from the Right of Way.



## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Saint Agnes Roman Catholic School is a significant historical resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation:

Criterion E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation

Criterion J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

Under Criterion E, the former Saint Agnes Roman Catholic School is an exemplar of the work of architect Peter F. Getz, whose designs for Catholic Institutional buildings in Philadelphia and Southeastern Pennsylvania created a unity of design for Archdiocese of Philadelphia institutional buildings in both areas - establishing its visual culture, particularly for Catholic school buildings.

Under Criterion J, the former Saint Agnes Roman Catholic School is the first and only school in Philadelphia established by a Slovak congregation and the Saint Agnes Hall within the building served as an important meeting place for the Slovak community in Philadelphia. It exemplifies the cultural, social, and historical heritage of the Slovak community in Philadelphia.

### CRITERION J

The former Saint Agnes Roman Catholic School is the only school built by and for the Slovak community in Philadelphia. St. Agnes Hall, the 1<sup>st</sup> floor auditorium, gym, and meeting hall in the building, was an important meeting place for the Slovak community in Philadelphia.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, roughly 2,000 Slovaks emigrated to Philadelphia<sup>1</sup> and settled in several areas of the city, but were concentrated in five areas: Northern Liberties, Southwark, Nicetown, "Point Breeze" (Not the modern day Point Breeze, but in two neighborhoods near the Point Breeze Gas Works: "Polacktown", the area bounded by modern-day Vare Avenue, Winton, 28<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup> Streets, and Wrightsville, the area bounded by modern-day Passyunk Avenue, 28<sup>th</sup>, Dover, and Porter Streets) and the "Meadows" (a rural area of South Philadelphia roughly located in the modern-day Girard Estates area)<sup>2</sup>. The concentrated areas of Slovak newcomers had points of origin in common; those from the eastern Slovak counties settled in Nicetown and the areas of South Philadelphia mentioned above. Those from central and western Slovak counties settled in Northern Liberties.<sup>3</sup>

The Slovakian immigrants soon formed fraternal organizations and benefit societies, both secularly and religiously-based, to support each other. One goal shared by Philadelphia's Slovak immigrants and these organizations was the establishment of a Catholic parish for Slovak immigrants in Philadelphia. Early on, there was dispute over whether the imagined parish should be located in South Philadelphia or North Philadelphia. Though a North Philadelphia parish was voted upon, the "south side" Slovaks interceded with the Archbishop and established a parish in South Philadelphia, St. John Nepomucene, at 9<sup>th</sup> and Wharton Streets in 1907. There were distinct cultural differences and disputes between the Slovaks from

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<sup>1</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, page 9. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Zecker, "All Our Own Kind Here": The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945." Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998) Pages 134,165.

<sup>3</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, page 10. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

the eastern Slovak counties and the central and western Slovak counties, and the Northern Liberties Slovaks were eventually able to persuade Archbishop Ryan to allow them to establish a parish for “north side” Slovaks, Saint Agnes, in the same year.<sup>4</sup>

The Slovak population in Northern Liberties was scattered around the neighborhood, living mostly in “trinity” homes in enclosed courts and alleys. The location for a Saint Agnes parish church was chosen to be at the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Brown Streets, where across the street, some of the earliest-arriving Slovak immigrants had lived on two trinity courtyards, Heiland Avenue and Heiland Place (now 322 Brown Street).<sup>5</sup>

The church was completed in 1910, and in 1912, it was decided that a goal for the church would be to establish a parish school for Slovak Catholic children.<sup>6</sup> This need arose due to discrimination faced by the children of Slovakian immigrants at the St. Peter’s school that stood at 5<sup>th</sup> and Girard. This Catholic school was mostly attended by the children of German immigrants, who attended for free, but Slovakian-American children were charged a tuition of one dollar per month. Similar issues were reported at the predominately Irish Catholic Schools, Saint Augustine and Immaculate Conception.<sup>7</sup>

In 1919, the St. Agnes Building and Loan Association was founded to raise funds for the proposed parish school<sup>8</sup>. Under Father Jozef Novorolsky, the remaining abutting lots on the block bounded by 4<sup>th</sup>, Reno, Orianna, and Brown streets were purchased with the intention of developing a school and rectory for the parish: 319-321 Brown Street, 325 Brown Street, and 814-16 North Orianna Street in two transactions on June 4<sup>th</sup> 1917, 802-06 North Orianna Street and 810-12 North Orianna Street in two transactions on June 15<sup>th</sup> 1917, and 323 Brown Street on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1917.<sup>9</sup>

While the rectory plan took shape via the redevelopment of an existing home at 319 Brown Street, the plans for the school languished until Father John York came to lead the parish in December 1922. Father York established a special school collection in 1923 and revived the St. Agnes Building and Loan Association.<sup>10</sup>

On October 5, 1925, a building permit was approved for the new school under the designs of prolific Catholic school architect Peter F. Getz.<sup>11</sup> Father York officiated a Groundbreaking Ceremony on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1925. The proposed design was a three-story school building that held an auditorium/hall/gym on the

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<sup>4</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, pages 10-12. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Zecker, “All Our Own Kind Here’: The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945.” Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998) Page 123.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Zecker, “All Our Own Kind Here’: The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945.” Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998) Pages 123,263.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Zecker, “All Our Own Kind Here’: The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945.” Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998) Pages 264-65.

<sup>8</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, pages 13. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

<sup>9</sup> Deed: Recorded on 4 June 1917 in Philadelphia Deed Book J. M. H. No. 212, p. 118. (319-321 Brown St.); Deed: Recorded on 30 June 1917 in Philadelphia Deed Book J. M. H. No. 217, p. 167. (323 Brown St.); Deed: Recorded on 4 June 1917 in Philadelphia Deed Book J. M. H. No. 182, p. 531. (325 Brown St. and 814-816 Orianna St.); Deed: Recorded on 15 June 1917 in Philadelphia Deed Book J. M. H. No. 191, p. 424. (802-806 Orianna St.); and Deed: Recorded on 15 June 1917 in Philadelphia Deed Book J. M. H. No. 263, p. 82. (810-812 Orianna St.)

<sup>10</sup> Robert Zecker, “All Our Own Kind Here’: The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945.” Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998) Pages 263-64.

<sup>11</sup> Application for Permit for the Erection of New Buildings, Permit No. 11699, Plan No. 2393, dated 5 October 1925. Collection of the Philadelphia Department of Records City Archives

first floor, classrooms on the second and third floors, a convent on a portion of the third floor, and a partial basement that held a utility area and private club space. The school was lauded for its modern design; the entrances to the hall on the first floor are at-grade, with no steps or incline, and the hall is a clear span with no columns.<sup>12</sup>

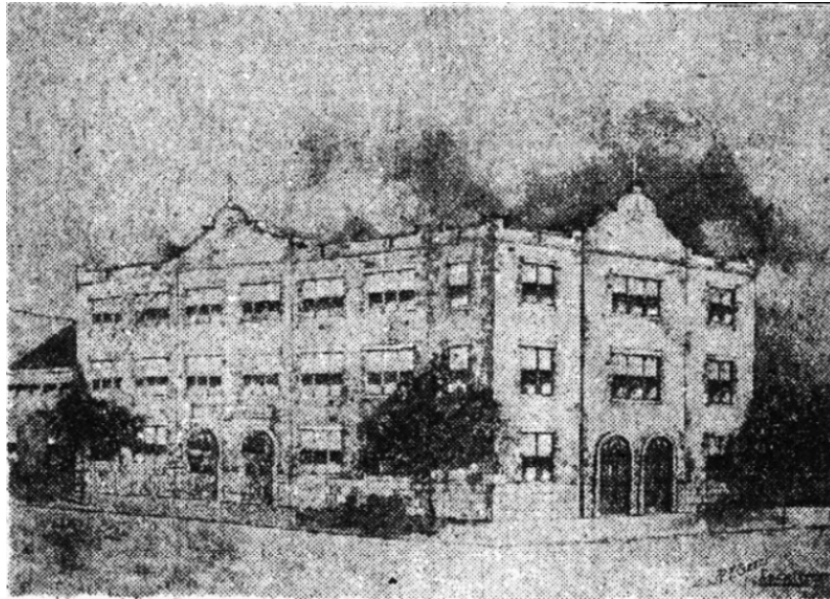


Figure 6: Rendering of the new Saint Agnes School, published in *Catholic Standard and Times*, 24 October 1925

After site work and foundation were complete, there was an elaborate corner-stone laying ceremony on January 17, 1926, where Bishop Michael Crane blessed the cornerstone followed by a sermon and solemn Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The event was attended by many parishioners and visiting clergy from around the region.<sup>13</sup>

The dedication ceremony for the completed building was held on August 1, 1926. It was officiated by Bishop Crane, with assistance by Bishop Paul Jantusch, the Bishop of Trnava, Czecho-Slovakia. There was a procession led by the two bishops around the Saint Agnes church block, and Bishop Jantusch delivered a sermon in Slovakian and then a solemn Benediction. The ceremony concluded with a play presented in the new school's hall by the children of the parish.<sup>14</sup>

Father York persuaded the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius from Danville, PA to join the staff of the school, and they did so for the entire time the Catholic school operated.<sup>15</sup> Upon opening, the school was instantly successful, and Slovak parents moved their children from other Catholic and public schools nearby to Saint Agnes.<sup>16</sup> Enrollment at Saint Agnes peaked in 1926 at 260 children.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "Ground to be Broken for Saint Agnes' School" *Catholic Standard and Times*. 17 October 1925, Page 1

<sup>13</sup> "Cornerstone is Laid for Saint Agnes' School" *Catholic Standard and Times*. 23 January 1926, Page 1

<sup>14</sup> "St. Agnes' Parish School is Dedicated by Bishop" *Catholic Standard and Times*. 7 August 1926, Page 3

<sup>15</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, page 16. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Zecker, "All Our Own Kind Here": The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945." Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998) Pages 265.

<sup>17</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, page 16. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

While the Saint Agnes School was singularly influential to the culture of the Slovak community of Philadelphia for educating that community's children, it was also a socially and culturally significant building due to its first floor space, which came to be known as Saint Agnes Hall. The fraternal organizations and benefit societies founded decades earlier came to use to utilize the Saint Agnes Hall as their meeting and event space. Assembly 48 of the Slovak Catholic Sokol, founded in 1909, moved its meetings to Saint Agnes Hall. Saint John of Nepomucene, the "south-sider's" parish, held its benefit ball at Saint Agnes Hall in 1927. The Slovak Catholic Sokol basketball teams played their games at Saint Agnes Hall. It became a social and cultural hub of the Philadelphia Slovak Community and the sports events held against Slovak Catholic Sokols in the Philadelphia suburbs created connections to Slovakian immigrants in areas outside the city.<sup>18</sup>

The private meeting hall in the basement of the school became a social-cultural hub of its own. The Slovak Citizen Association of Philadelphia, founded in June 1927, headquartered itself in the basement space, its charter still present in the space in 2022.

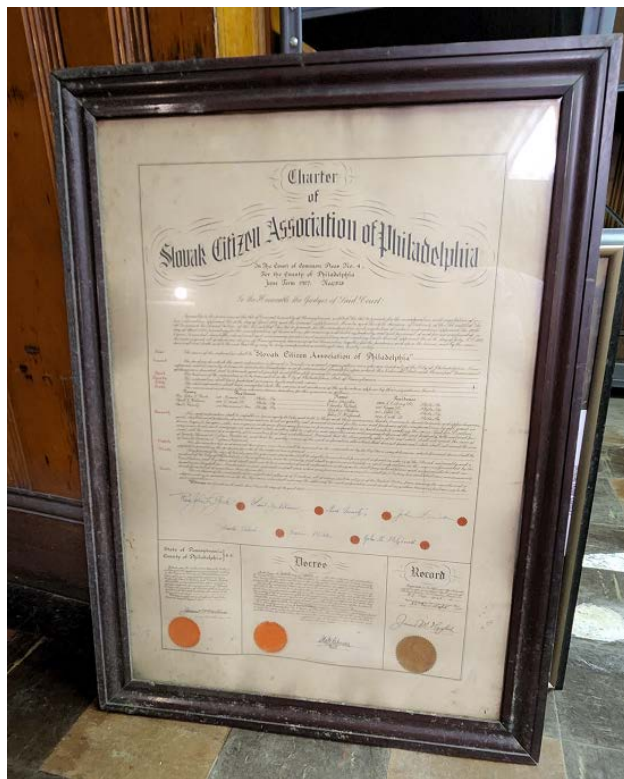


Figure 7: Charter of the Slovak Citizen Association of Philadelphia in the former private basement club space, May 24, 2022.  
Photo: Dennis Carlisle

St. Agnes Hall was rented for dances, card playing, and billiards. The church would stage educational films and sell tobacco, candy, and refreshments. In 1933, this sale of concessions drew the attention of city officials, which sought to tax the school building based on those sales. After several court battles that eventually reached the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in *Dougherty, Trustee, Appellant v. Philadelphia*

<sup>18</sup> Robert Zecker, "All Our Own Kind Here': The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890-1945." Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998) Pages 315,348,379.

et al 314 Pa. 298 (Pa. 1934) it was determined that only the auditorium of the school should be eligible for taxation based on that income, not the whole building.<sup>19</sup>

A Catholic War Veterans Post, called St. Agnes Post #1132, was founded in 1946 upon suggestion of Father York<sup>20</sup> and utilized the private club room into the 1980s.<sup>21</sup>

Over the decades after opening, enrollment at the Saint Agnes School dwindled. In the 1940's, average enrollment was 207, in the 1950s, 162, in the 1960s, 70. The school closed in 1969.<sup>22</sup> In 1975, the new rector, Father Falatek, leased the school building to the School District of Philadelphia, who opened the second location of A School for All Ages, a Board of Education project funded by a federal grant where adults and children ages 5 to 70 would volunteer to attend school together.<sup>23</sup> The School District also ran a daycare in the school<sup>24</sup>. Though this was a positive development for the school building and the parish, the St. Agnes Hall would no longer be accessible to the parish or the public.<sup>25</sup>

## CRITERION E

Peter F. Getz (May 1, 1888-October 30, 1965) was a prolific architect who primarily designed Catholic churches, schools, and convents in Philadelphia and all throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania. Getz is the successor of previous local Catholic building architects, Edwin Forrest Durang and Rowland W. Boyle. Of particular interest are Getz's school building designs. In the first half of his career, his school buildings had granite facades arranged in a random ashlar pattern; presumably influenced by the designs of Durang and Boyle. In the second half of his career, his school building designs show an International Style influence, with flat roofs and long series of ribbon windows.

Peter Getz attended the Pennsylvania Museum School of the Industrial Arts' School of Applied Art, receiving awards in Architectural Drawing in 1907<sup>26</sup> and Architectural Design in 1909.<sup>27</sup> After completing his education, he worked under Rowland W. Boyle, whose practice focused primarily on Catholic institutional buildings, until his death in 1911. Boyle had apprenticed under Edwin Forrest Durang, another architect who designed many buildings for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia<sup>28</sup>. Getz later worked at the firm of Cope & Stewardson. He started working on independent projects around 1916.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. *Dougherty, Trustee, Appellant v. Philadelphia et al*, 314 Pa. 298, 1934.

<sup>20</sup> Furdek: Jednota Annual. United States, First Catholic Slovak Union., 1983, Page 46

<sup>21</sup> Application for Zoning Permit and/or Use Registration Permit #86614, City of Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections, 28 December 1984

<sup>22</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, pages 16, 29. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

<sup>23</sup> "School for Ages 5 to 70 Open," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 1 February 1975.

<sup>24</sup> Application for Zoning Permit and/or Use Registration Permit #39924, City of Philadelphia Department of Licenses and Inspections, 6 March 1975.

<sup>25</sup> Church of St. Agnes – St. John Nepomucene, Diamond Jubilee, 1902-1982. Northvale: Custombook, Inc., 1982, page 29. Collection of the Catholic Historical Research Center of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

<sup>26</sup> Annual Report of the Trustees for the Fiscal Year Ending 1907 United States: Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 1907

<sup>27</sup> Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, with the List of Members. United States: Pennsylvania Museum of Art, 1909

<sup>28</sup> Tatman, S. "Boyle, Rowland W. (d. 1911)" Philadelphia Architects and Buildings.

[https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/24035](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/24035)

<sup>29</sup> Tatman, S. "Getz, Peter F. (c. 1858 - d.1965)" Philadelphia Architects and Buildings.

[https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/25841](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/25841)

Among his earliest independent works were the designs for the School, Chapel, and Rectory of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church at 1401 N Mascher Street in 1916<sup>30</sup> (demolished circa 1977). His home and office were at 1634 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street until moving to 1001 Chestnut Street (the Victory Building), Suite 714, in 1924.<sup>31</sup>

Through the 1920's, Getz designed dozens of Catholic institutional buildings across Philadelphia and the region. Getz was so active at this time, that in the last week of 1924, three of his school-church combination buildings were dedicated at around the same time—Saint Martin of Tours at 5701 Loretto Avenue, Saint Hubert at 7320 Torresdale Avenue, and Saint Alice at 150 Hampden Road in Upper Darby.<sup>32</sup> Getz designed at least 18 Catholic school buildings in the 1920's, nearly all with common façade elements: a granite façade in random ashlar pattern, arched doorways, and Mission-style parapets on the roofs.



Figure 8: **Left to Right, 1<sup>st</sup> Row:** Most Blessed Sacrament School Annex, 5600 Chester Avenue, Philadelphia, PA, 1925. Holy Name School, 700 Gaul Street, Philadelphia, PA, 1927. Saint Benedict School, 1919 Medary Avenue, Philadelphia, PA, 1925. **2<sup>nd</sup> Row:** Our Lady of Peace School Millmont Avenue, Ridley, PA, 1928. Saint Francis of Assisi School, 112 Saxer Avenue, Springfield, PA, 1929. Saint Thomas of Villanova School, 1225 E Lancaster Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA, 1925. **3<sup>rd</sup> Row:** Saint Alice School, 150 Hampden Road, Upper Darby, PA, 1924. Demolished. Saint Charles Borromeo School, 1731 Hulmeville Road, Bensalem, PA, 1926. Saint Anne School, 2301 E Tucker Street, Philadelphia, PA, 1926. Photos: Google Streetview.

<sup>30</sup> The American Contractor. Volume XXXVII, Number 15 United States: F. W. Dodge Corporation, 1916

<sup>31</sup> The American Contractor, Volume 5, Number 40. United States: F.W. Dodge Corporation, 1924

<sup>32</sup> “Three Parochial Buildings Completed for Opening”. *Catholic Standard and Times*, December 27, 1924, Page 1

Starting in the late 1940's, Getz's school designs began to have a more modern look and appear to be influenced by International Style. His 1948 design for the Saint Bernadette School at 1001 Turner Avenue in Drexel Hill illustrates this transition, having a brick façade but retaining the granite random ashlar façade design along its base. His 1951 design of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary School at 811 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street has a massing similar to his older designs but the buff brick façade of his later designs. The Saint Martin School Annex, 1956, has the massing and window fenestration of his later school designs, but the granite façade and limestone lintels of his 1920s school designs. The 1958 addition to the Annunciation B.V.M School in Havertown has his typical random ashlar design on two elevations, and the buff brick façade seen on his later buildings on another.



*Figure 9: Left to Right, 1<sup>st</sup> Row: Saint Bernadette School, 1001 Turner Road, Drexel Hill, PA, 1948. Immaculate Conception School, 811 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA, 1951. 2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Saint Martin School Annex, 5400 E Roosevelt Boulevard, Philadelphia, PA, 1956. Annunciation B.V.M. School Addition, 421 Brookline Boulevard, Havertown, PA, 1958. Photos: Google Streetview.*

Getz's school designs in Philadelphia and Southeastern Pennsylvania all became very similar after that—long rectangular massing with flat roofs, large ribbon windows, and primarily brick facades. This type of school design continued until his death in October 1965.



Figure 10: **Left to Right, 1<sup>st</sup> Row:** Sacred Heart School, 109 N Manoa Road, Havertown, PA, 1960. Saint Monica School, 1601 Shunk Street, Philadelphia, PA, 1960. Holy Rosary School, 3040 Walton Road, Plymouth Meeting, PA, 1957. **2<sup>nd</sup> Row:** Saint Paul School, 351 E Johnson Highway, East Norriton, PA, 1965. Saint Thomas Aquinas School, 1631 South 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, PA, 1957. Saint Joseph School, 40 Valley Road, Warrington, PA, 1962. **3<sup>rd</sup> Row:** Our Lady of Cavalry School, 11023 Kipling Lane, Philadelphia, PA, 1959. Saint Joseph School, 404 Charles Street, Coatesville, PA, 1958. Immaculate Conception B.V.M. School, 606 West Avenue, Jenkintown, PA, 1966 (completed after Getz’s death). Photos: Google Streetview

The last school building completed in his lifetime appears to be the Saint Paul’s School at 351 East Johnson Highway in East Norriton, dedicated 6 months before his death<sup>33</sup>. Getz died in October 1965. His funeral was held in a church he designed, the Saint Martin of Tours Roman Catholic Church at 5450 E Roosevelt Boulevard.<sup>34</sup>

When the Saint Anastasia School in Newtown Square was demolished and a new school was built in 2004, the random ashlar stone façade pattern was included on the façade of the new school.

Paul W. Getz, Peter F. Getz’s son, would also become an architect and worked with his father on several commissions, co-listing his father as credit for designs even after his death. One



Figure 11: Portion of the 2004-built Saint Anastasia School. Photo: Google Streetview

<sup>33</sup> “Saint Paul’s Parish, East Norriton” Catholic Standard and Times, April 30, 1965, Page 8

<sup>34</sup> “Peter F. Getz Dies at 77; Local Church Architect” Catholic Standard and Times. 5 November 1965, Page 9



major Philadelphia design credited to both architects is the Saint Mary Interparochial School at 440 Locust Street.<sup>35</sup>

Outside of architecture, Getz was a Catholic layman who served as President of the Knights of Columbus Luncheon Club and Secretary of the Archdiocesan Holy Name Union. He was also a member of the Holy Name Society and the Men of Malvern.<sup>36</sup> Getz's son, Joseph, became a priest and served for 71 years until his death in 2022.<sup>37</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the Saint Agnes Roman Catholic School building, due to its exemplification of the cultural and historical heritage of the Slavic Community in Philadelphia (Criterion J) and as a design of prolific Catholic building architect Peter F. Getz (Criterion E), is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

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<sup>35</sup> "St Mary School—Elevations" Philadelphia architects and buildings

[https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/im\\_display.cfm/1264088?ProjectId=PHC-6360](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/im_display.cfm/1264088?ProjectId=PHC-6360)

<sup>36</sup> Peter F. Getz Dies at 77; Local Church Architect (1965, November 5) *Catholic Standard and Times*, Page 9

<sup>37</sup> "Joseph John Getz, O.S.A." Augustinian Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova. (n.d.).

<http://augustinian.org/necrology-page/getz>

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The following sites were used to create this nomination:

Catholic News Archive

Google Books

Google Maps

Philadelphia Architects and Buildings

Philadelphia Atlas Zoning Archive

ProQuest Dissertations & Theses

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Zecker, “All Our Own Kind Here’: The Creation of a Slovak-American Community in Philadelphia, 1890- 1945.” Dissertation: (University of Pennsylvania, 1998).

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