

**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 ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

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

Street address: 1600-06, 1608-10 E. Berks Street, Philadelphia

Postal code: 19125-3403

Councilmanic District: 1

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: St. Laurentius Roman Catholic Church

Common Name: St. Laurentius Church or St. Laurentius Parish

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: Note: while immaculately maintained over the years, the building has structural issues that are being addressed and is otherwise in excellent condition.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1882 to 1965

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: Basement: 1885. Church 1885-90.

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Edwin Forrest Durang

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Builder: William J. McShane/Plasterer: Thomas Kane

Original owner: The Congregation of St. Laurentius Church/Archbishop Ryan

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 Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian
Name with Title John Christian Bullitt LaRue, Preservationist Email Oscar.Beisert@gmail.com
Organization Off Boundary Preservation Brigade & Date April 10, 2015
Street Address Friends of St. Laurentius Telephone 717.602.5002
City, State, and Postal Code 205 Rochelle Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19128
Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: _____
 Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: _____
Date of Notice Issuance: _____
Property Owner at Time of Notice
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____
Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____
Date of Final Action: _____
 Designated Rejected

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

St. Laurentius Roman Catholic Church (St. Laurentius Church) is located at the southwest corner of E. Berks Street and Memphis Street in the Fishtown section of the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia. St. Laurentius Church stands on a campus of four buildings that is comprised of four tax parcels on the south side of E. Berks Street between Memphis and Tulip Streets, known as 1600-06, 1608-10, 1612, and 1616-18 E. Berks Street. This nomination proposes the designation of the church building only, but is submitted without prejudice to subsequent nominations of the other buildings.

The church building stands primarily on the tax parcel known as 1600-06 E. Berks Street, but a small extension of the church building projecting from the southwest corner of the main section of the church building extends across the tax parcel boundary onto the tax parcel known as 1608-10 E. Berks Street. The overall boundary of the proposed designation is as follows: Beginning at a point at the southwest corner of E. Berks Street and Memphis Street, containing in front or breadth on said E. Berks Street 70 feet more or less, and of that width extending southwardly between lines parallel at right angles with said E. Berks Street in length or depth 87.5 feet more or less, and extending westwardly between lines parallel with said E. Berks Street 17.5 feet more or less, and extending southwardly between lines parallel at right angles with said E. Berks Street 26.5 feet more or less to E. Wilt Street, and extending eastwardly along said E. Wilts Street 87.5 feet more or less to the northwest corner of E. Wilts Street and Memphis Street, and extending northwardly along said Memphis Street in length or depth 114 feet more or less to the point of origin; being know as 1600-06 E. Berks Street (OPA Account 777076000, Parcel Nos. 018N07-0099, 0078, and 0018) and part of 1608-10 E. Berks Street (OPA Account 181198100, Parcel Nos. 018N07-0076 and 0100).

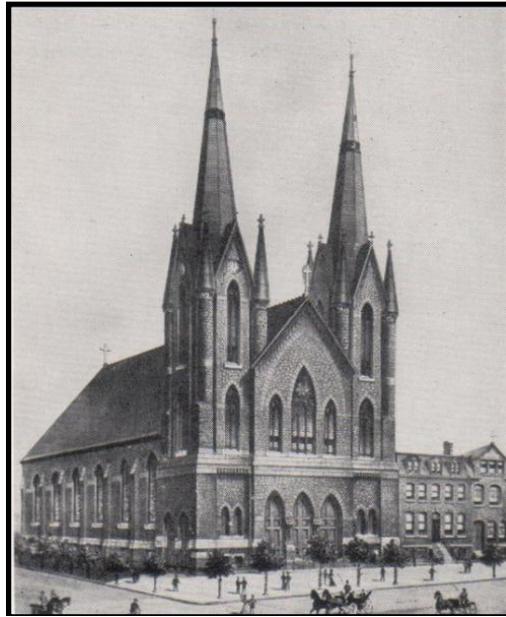
See the plot plan on the next page.

St. Laurentius Church, 1600-06 and 1608-10 E. Berks Street



Beginning at a point at the southwest corner of E. Berks Street and Memphis Street, containing in front or breadth on said E. Berks Street 70 feet more or less, and of that width extending southwardly between lines parallel at right angles with said E. Berks Street in length or depth 87.5 feet more or less, and extending westwardly between lines parallel with said E. Berks Street 17.5 feet more or less, and extending southwardly between lines parallel at right angles with said E. Berks Street 26.5 feet more or less to E. Wilt Street, and extending eastwardly along said E. Wilt Street 87.5 feet more or less to the northwest corner of E. Wilt Street and Memphis Street, and extending eastwardly along said Memphis Street in length or depth 114 feet more or less to the point of origin; being know as 1600-06 E. Berks Street (OPA Account 777076000, Parcel Nos. 018N07-0099, 0078, and 0018) and part of 1608-10 E. Berks Street (OPA Account 181198100, Parcel Nos. 018N07-0076 and 0100).

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



St. Laurentius Church in 2015 (left) and in 1899 (right).

St. Laurentius Church is a densely constructed urban campus that includes four major buildings: the church, the rectory, convent, and school, developed between 1885 and 1890. The church, rectory, and convent are architecturally uniform, and all of the buildings possess an air of architectural importance. In fact, it should be stated that the group of buildings represents an impressive architectural expression befitting a major religious institution.

The Church

Likely due to the strictures of its urban lot, the church building is rectangular in form, following the traditional layout: narthex, nave flanked by aisles, bema and alter. Even in its “attached” urban format and environment, the church is a fully articulated work of architecture. The entire building is constructed of rusticated brownstone with polished brownstone, granite, and marble details. The narthex of the church building faces northeast and within and/or flanking the narthex are impressive identical towers. Extending northeast-southwest, the nave provides a large and impressive ornamental space for congregants and is braced by lower, parallel aisles.

Facing onto Berks Street, the primary elevation of the church building relates to the Polish Cathedral Style of Architecture as articulated in the Gothic Revival taste with Romanesque stylistic antecedents as applied in the broader architectural movements and patterns in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century. Its architectural style is characterized by a central gable that is flanked by two large towers.

Beneath the gable and within the central compartment, the lowest stage of the façade is articulated in a recession of elevations. A base course of rusticated brownstone is defined by a polished granite coursing that is stylized to usher the recession to the next elevation of the first stage of the building. Recessed above the base course is another elevation of the façade’s first stage, which is also of rusticated brownstone. A further recession of the façade occurs at the height and termination of the first stage, which is defined by two narrow tiers of smooth-faced

brownstone coursing. The brownstone coursing is supported in the tower sections of the façade by castellated details.

Within the first stage of the building, the central component is approached by smooth-faced granite steps that lead to three doorways that form the entrance, emblematic of the Holy Trinity. Each doorway is recessed within pointed Gothic archways that are defined within lintels of like rusticated brownstone. The piers between the archways consist of half-height marble columns that feature carved Baroque capitols. The said columns are supported by two-part plinths, the upper component of which is of smooth-faced granite in line with the previously mentioned base course; the lower component of which is of rusticated brownstone also at the same elevation of the base course. Recessed within vaults of continuous rusticated brownstone, the doorways feature original double wooden doors with matching panels at the top and bottom lighted by small, like-sized panels of stained glass at the center of each door. Atop each double door are archways with blind recessions of rusticated brownstone defined by rusticated stone lintels. Flanking the entrance and within the tower compartments are sets of two small and single arched windows, which are situated immediately above the base course.

Within the second stage of the primary elevation are three apertures set within surface archways of three points within the rusticated brownstone façade. Unlike the doorways below, the equilateral arched apertures feature full size stained glass windows within geometric tracery, the arches of which are distinguished by rusticated brownstone lintels. Being about one-third greater in height, the central aperture springs above the two flanking apertures that are of equal size. In the central compartment, the blind gable is entirely of rusticated brownstone, forming a third and final stage of the gable compartment. Before the termination of the gable to the roofline, there is a cornice of dentilated gothic stonework. At the top of the gable is a copper-clad cross, sitting on a similarly-clad plinth.

Ceremoniously flanking the second and third stages of the gable compartment are the primary elevations of the towers. The square shaft of each tower is deeply scalloped at each corner, creating a gabled projection at each of the eight tower elevations. Protruding from the recesses of the scalloped corners are fully articulated blind turrets that taper up both the second and third stages of the towers. Six-part cone-shaped patinated copper-clad roofs are atop each turret, which are ceremoniously crowned with Gothic finials. At the primary and southeast elevations of the second and third stages of the tower compartments are single equilateral arched apertures per stage. Each aperture within the second stage features full size stained glass windows within geometrical tracery, the arches of which are defined by lintels of rusticated brownstone. However, the second stage of the northwest and southwest elevations of the tower compartments are without apertures due to the presence of the roof mid to lower stage.

The towers are not merely ornamental but also serve as belfrys, of which are located within the third stage. Again crowned with three point arches, the apertures are mirrored at each elevation of the third stage in form and size, but, unlike the second stage, feature full size wooden louvered vents at a narrower width. These vents serve the belfry component of the towers. The spring of the gable is a short expanse above the stone lintels of the third stage and this is repeated at each elevation of the towers. Within the short expanse of the gable of the east tower is a clock face at each of its four elevations. Dramatic gothic stonework is used to form a cornice at the top of each gable. Equal or slightly greater in height than the third stage, a fourth stage of the towers consists of eight-part patinated copper-clad spires crowned with copper-clad crosses.

The brownstone and granite coursing at the first stage of the primary façade continues onto the northwest and southeast elevations of the towers. The previously mentioned base coarse is also

continuous at each elevation of the church building. The only deviation from the primary elevation of the towers is at the first stage of the northwest and southeast elevations, within which are two arched apertures of entryways, featuring original wooden double doors. The arches of the doorways are defined by rusticated stone lintels. Beyond the tower compartment within the northwest and southeast elevations, the buttress elevations are single and simple stages. Set within a system of eight Gothic buttresses is a fenestration of seven arched apertures of stained glass windows that are set several feet above the base course. At the termination of each buttress, the structural member is capped with a tier of three smooth-faced brownstone shingle-like caps.

The rear, southwest elevation serves as the gable end and consists of a solid wall of rusticated brownstone. The coping at the roofline is extant in the form of copper flashing. A patinated copper-clad cross sitting on a similarly-clad plinth is located at the top of the gable. Extending from the single stage of the northwest elevation just before its termination at the west corner, a one-and-one-half-story ell is located a rear of the lot. This one-story component appears to be one room in depth and width and features a cross-gabled roof. At the rear elevation the first floor apertures, with three point arches and defined by rusticated brownstone lintels, are filled with modern materials. Off-center at the rear elevation of the ell is a gable-end featuring three arched apertures of stained glass windows. The central aperture is roughly one-third higher than its flanking counterparts. The gable of the northeast elevation of the ell is a blind wall of rusticated brownstone. The ell also features copper flashing at various eaves and joints.

The Church, Interior

The Church Interior is an incredible period feature of the building and the larger church complex, but will not be included in the nomination at this time. The hope is to amend the nomination at a later date to include the entire facility, including the wondrous interior.

The Rectory and the Convent

The Rectory and the Convent are period and impressive components of the larger church complex, but will not be included in the nomination at this time. The hope is to amend the nomination at a later date to include the entire facility.

St. Laurentius School

The St. Laurentius School is a later, yet important component of the larger church complex, but will not be included in the nomination at this time. While constructed later, which is reflected stylistically, the St. Laurentius School is also an important architectural work in its own right. The hope is to amend the nomination at a later date to include the entire facility.



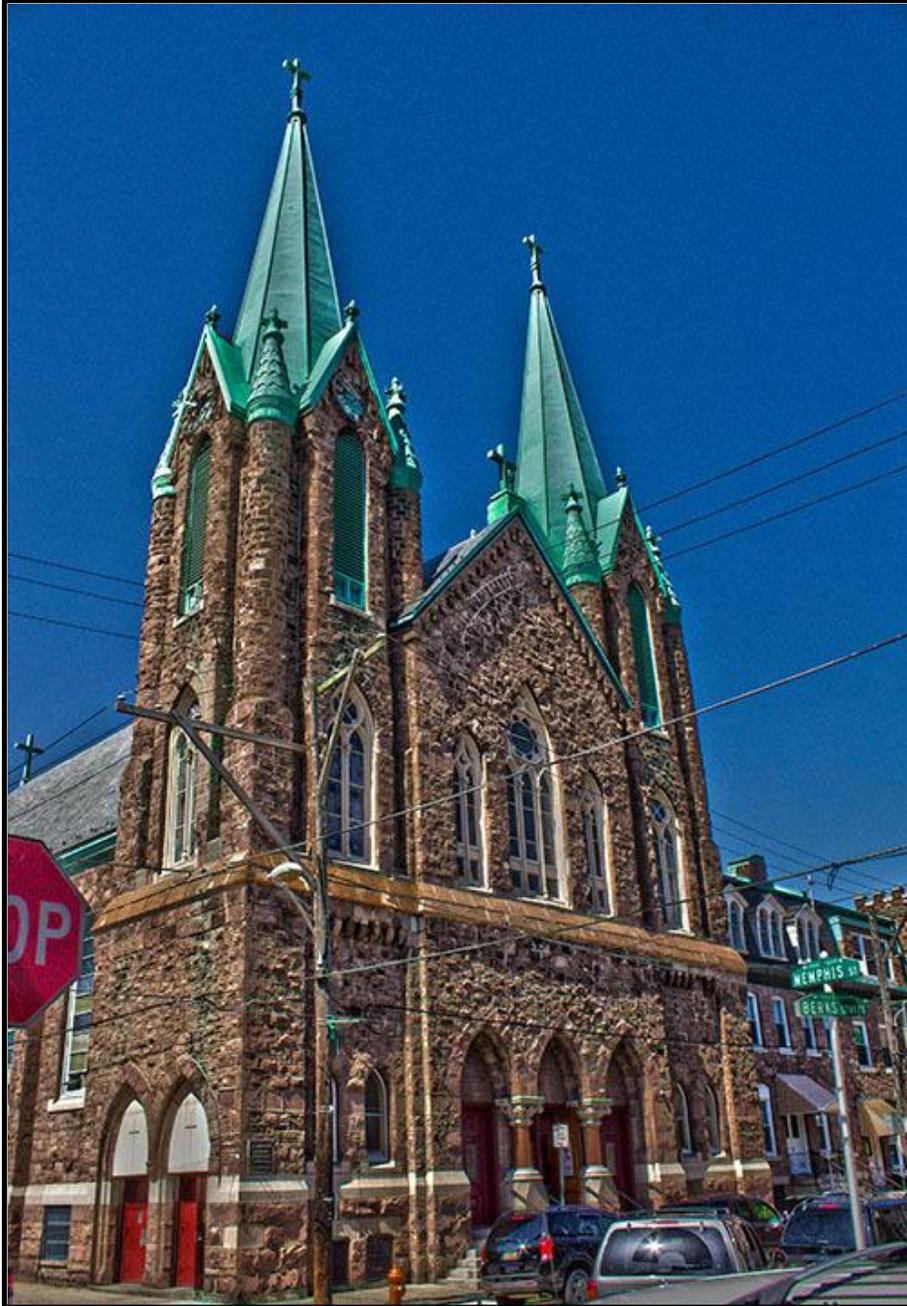
Looking southwest, the church, the rectory, the convent, and the school.



Looking south, the church, the rectory and the convent.



Looking southeast, the primary and northwest elevation of the church.



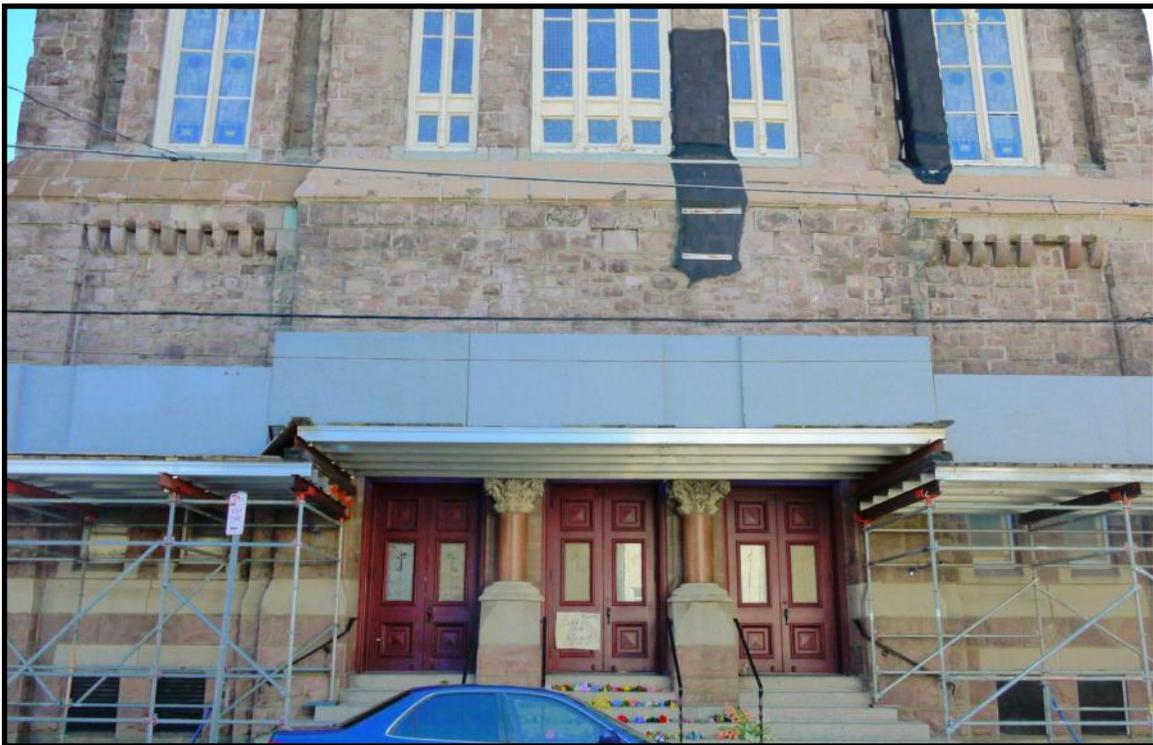
Looking southwest, the primary elevation of the church.
Courtesy of the Philadelphia Church Project



Looking southwest, the primary elevation of the church.



Looking southwest, the upper stages of the primary elevation.



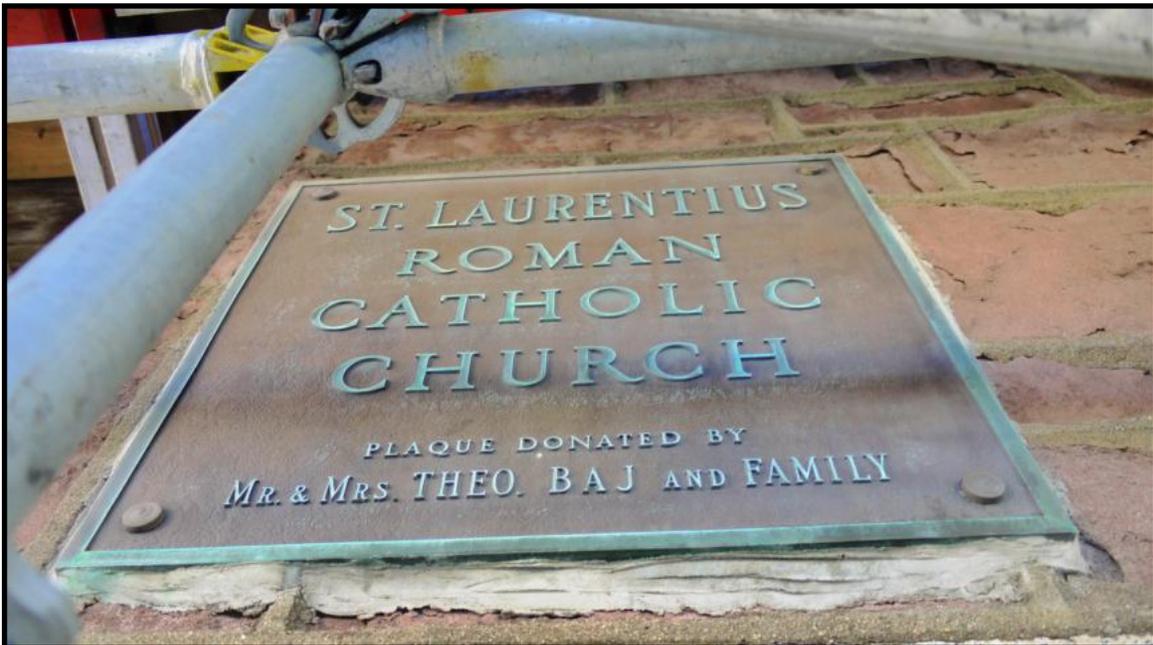
Looking southwest, the first stage of the primary elevation.



Looking northeast, the rear elevation of the ell and the church.



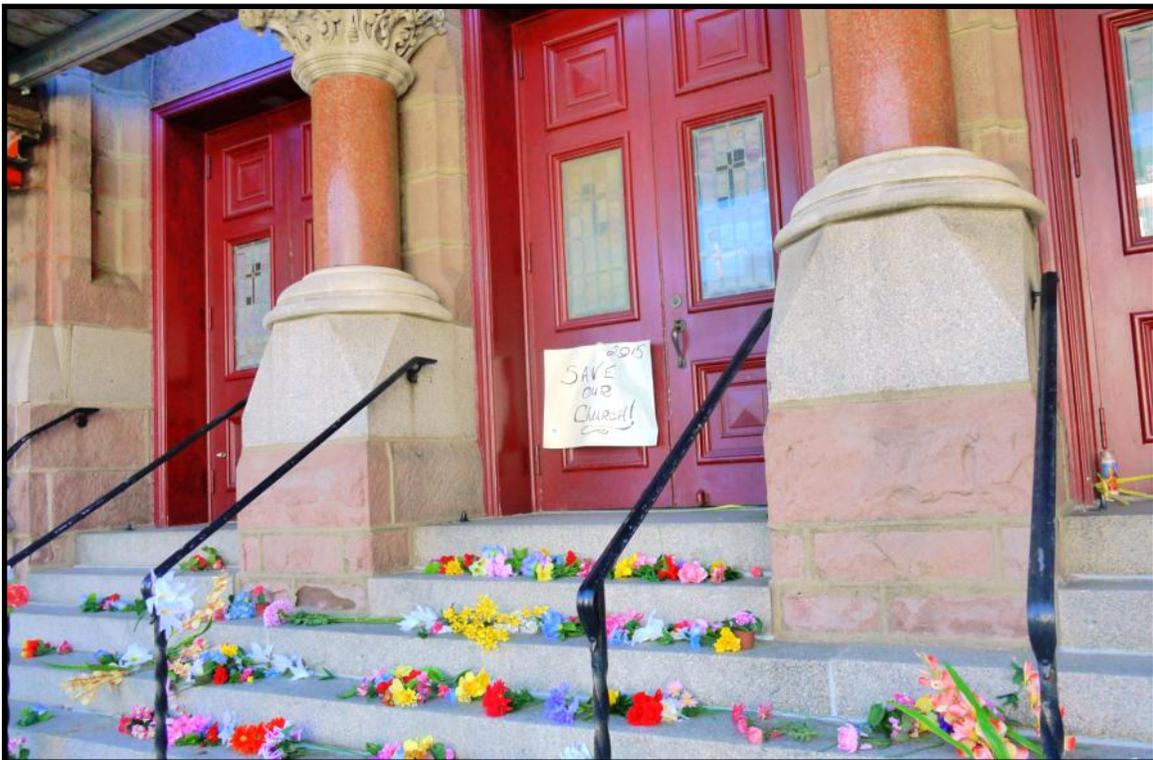
Looking southwest, the cornerstone dating to construction of the basement in 1885.



Looking southwest, a bronze plaque commemorating the building.



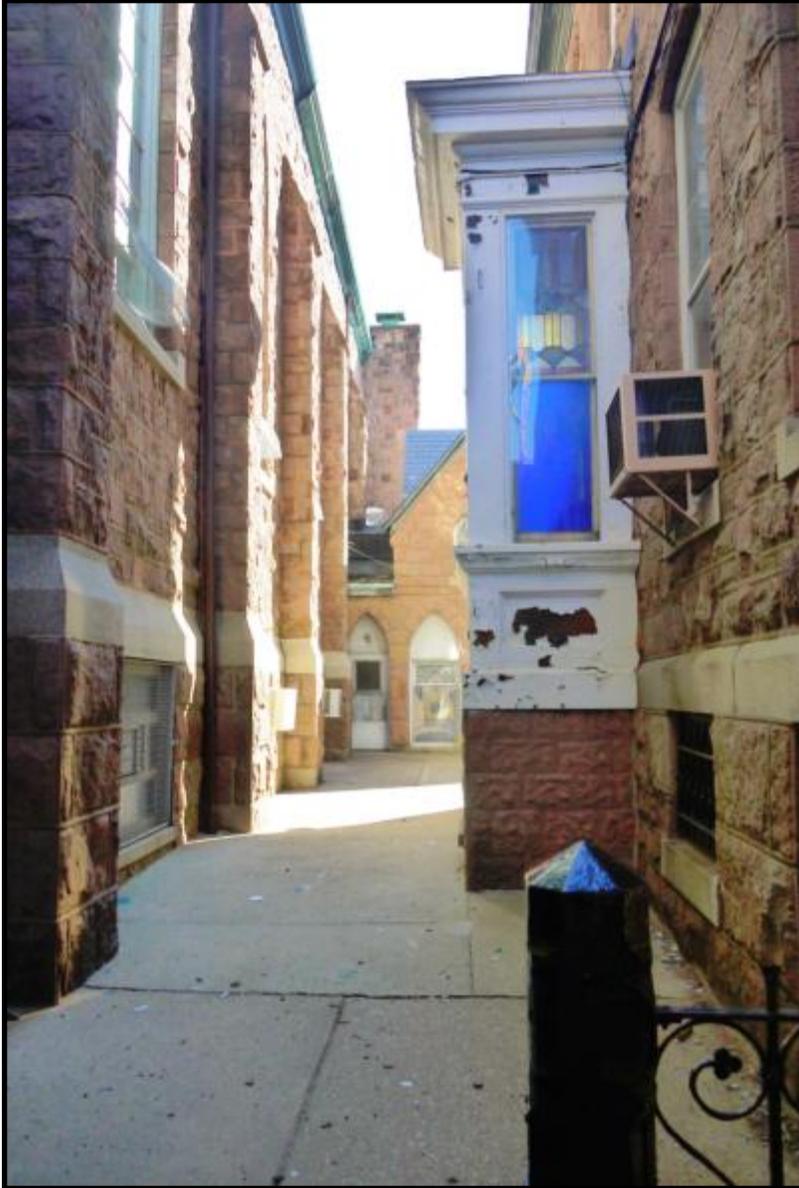
Looking west, the first stage and column details of the primary façade.



Looking southeast, the first stage and central compartment of the primary elevation.



Looking southwest, the original central doorway and its original and/or period-appearing doors.



Looking southwest, the alley between the church and the rectory.
Ell is at the rear.



Looking southeast, the upper stages of the northwest tower and belfry.



Looking northwest, the southwest and south east elevations, as well as the rear of the northeast tower, clock and belfry.



Looking west, the southwest elevation and the other rear elevations of church buildings on E. Wilt Street.



Looking northeast, the southwest, rear elevation of the church and rectory.



Looking north, the rear, south elevation of the rectory and church.

All interior photographs are courtesy the Philadelphia Church Project. Please note: The interior photographs are for reference purposes and to help foster an understanding as to why this building should be landmarked. This nomination is for the physical, exterior of the building, not the interior. It is the hope of the applicant that the nomination will be amended to include interior at a later time.



The Alter of St. Laurentius Church



The interior of St. Laurentius Church.



The ceiling and aisle of St. Laurentius Church.



Looking northeast, the interior of the nave, aisle, and narthex of St. Laurentius Church.



Interior details of St. Laurentius Church

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Laurentius Church a significant historic site that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

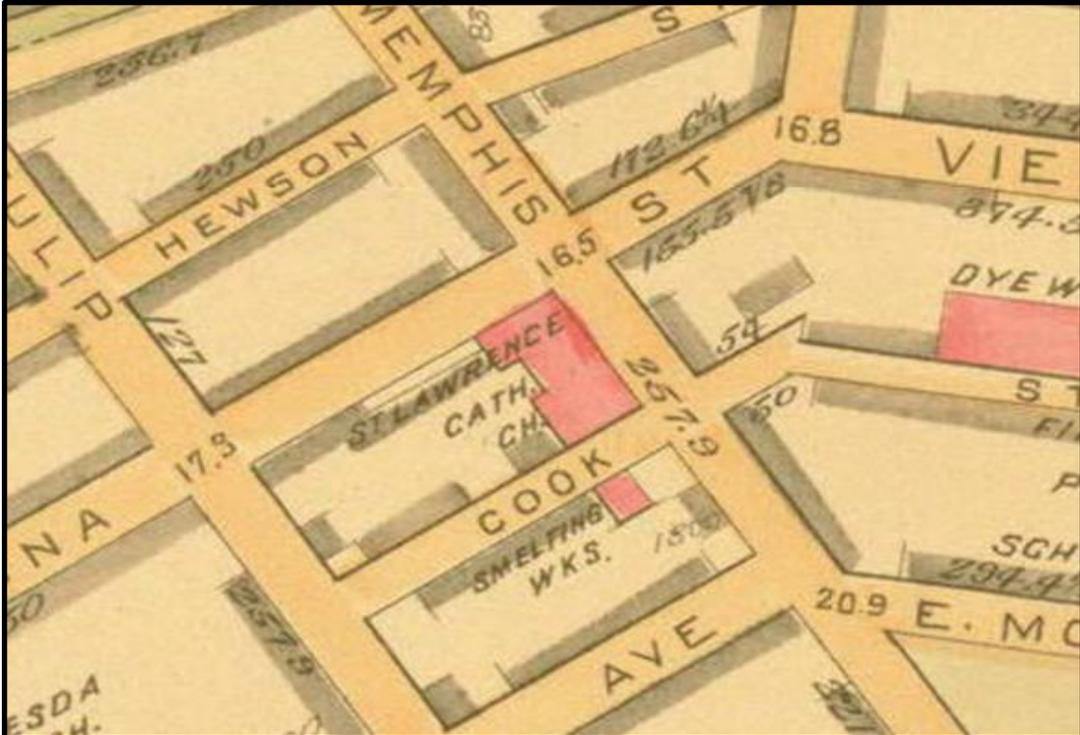
Located on E. Berks Street in the Fishtown neighborhood of the larger Kensington District of Philadelphia, St. Laurentius Church satisfies Criteria for Designation A, C, H, and J, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code. St. Laurentius Church:

- (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;
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- (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 develop of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City; and
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

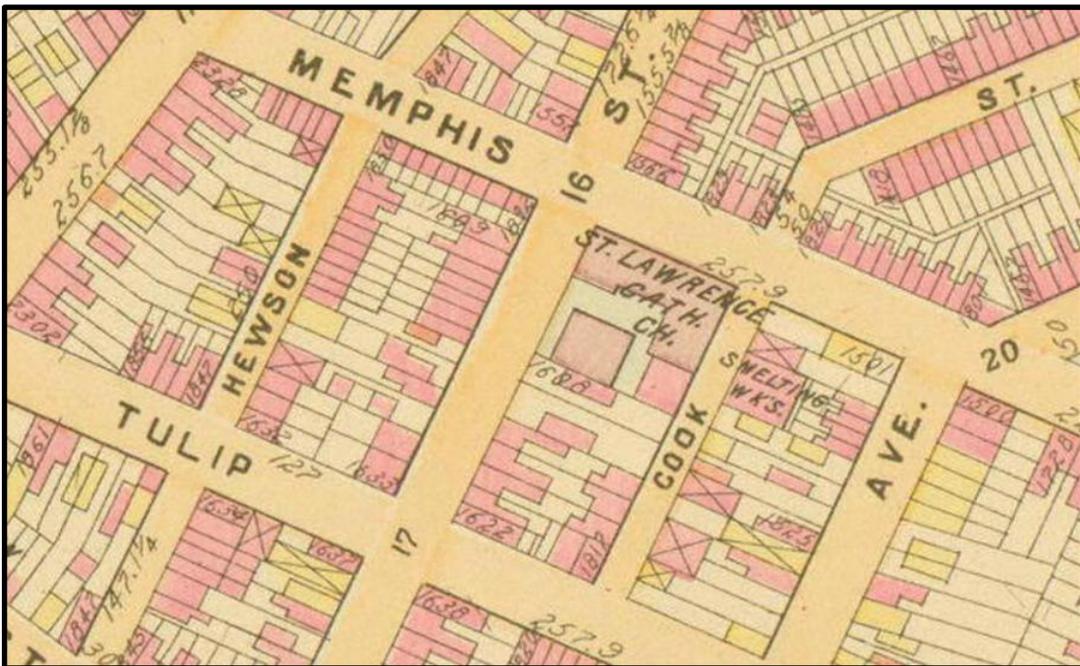


St. Laurentius Church Complex, Circa 1920s¹

¹ Pamietnik Jublieuszowy: 1882-1932, Booklet. St. Laurentius Church. Philadelphia: 1932



G. William Baist's Atlas shows St. Laurentius as it was built in 1888, prior to the construction of the rectory and likely under construction. Courtesy of Philly Geohistory.²



George W. & Walter S. Bromley's Atlas shows the complex of St. Laurentius as it was built in 1895. Courtesy of Philly Geohistory.³

² Baist, G. William. Baist's Property Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Penna. Philadelphia: Baist, 1888.

³ Bromley, George W. & Walter S. Civil Engineers. Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1895. Philadelphia: GW & WS Bromley, 1895

Criteria 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;

Criteria H: Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City; and

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

St. Laurentius Church on E. Berks Street has significant character, interest, or value as part of the cultural characteristics of the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Owing to its location in the Fishtown neighborhood of the larger Kensington district, St. Laurentius Church is an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood and its larger community. Furthermore, St. Laurentius Church is a symbol of the cultural, economic, social and historical heritage of the Polish-immigrant and Polish-American population of the City of Philadelphia, as well as being part of the development of the neighborhood itself.

Polish Migration to America

Poland, as we know it today, was subdivided and annexed by three superpowers in 1795—Prussia, Russia, and Austria. The sovereign nation would not be fully unified again until 1919. Because of Poland was divided by its reorganization under the jurisdiction of three foreign countries, each section of Poland developed in its own way, influencing which Poles emigrated, including their period of departure and what became of them after their arrival in the United States.⁴ In general, Polish emigration progressed from West to East, from German Poland to Galacia and the Russian provinces. Attempts to overthrow the foreign government in 1831, 1846, and 1863 had been unsuccessful, increasing the persecution of the population.⁵ The Prussian May Law was passed in 1870, which prohibited the use of the Polish language in schools and churches, which was nearly a final blow to the population. All of these factors, as well as economic disparity, coupled with the “hope” of achieving the American dream led to a large migration of Polish immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶

The German sections of Poland—Pozan (Posen), Silesia, West Prussia, and East Prussia—represent the first groups of Polish immigrants to migrate to America. Upon arriving in America, the Polish population most often settled in major cities, forming communities that established churches and civic organizations to support their culture and practice customs brought with them from the old country. Immigration to America began as early as 1854, when the parishes of “Panna Marya” and “Czestochowa” were established as a result of Polish migration to Texas. In Wisconsin, the Polish immigrants founded their “Polonia” parish in 1855. Increasing in number, Polish immigrants arrived in Michigan by 1857, Milwaukee in 1862, Mississippi in 1864, Chicago in 1864, and Buffalo and New York City in 1872. In all of these places, the Polish population founded close-knit communities.⁷

⁴ Golab, Carol Ann. *The Polish Communities of Philadelphia, 1870-1920: Immigrant Distribution and Adaptation in Urban America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1971.

⁵ 100th Anniversary Booklet. St. Laurentius Church. Philadelphia: 1982.

⁶ Golab, Carol Ann. *The Polish Communities of Philadelphia, 1870-1920: Immigrant Distribution and Adaptation in Urban America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1971

⁷ 100th Anniversary Booklet. St. Laurentius Church. Philadelphia: 1982.

According to Carol Ann Golab, the years of 1870 to 1920 were important in the formation of modern urban America. These decades witnessed two important events—the rise of preeminence of large cities as the industrial centers of the nation and the massive influx to the cities of especially foreign-born populations. Cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Minneapolis Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and New York were creating and growing new industries and ideas. Cities attracted new people, which from 1870 to 1920 included a ratio of one-half immigrants and their children. These immigrants left a permanent imprint on the American urban environment. While not all of the immigrants of this period settled in major cities, most of them did.⁸

Polish Migration to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Eventually, Polish immigrants settled in Pennsylvania, establishing parishes: Shamokin in 1870, Shenandoah in 1872, Nanticoke and Pittsburgh in 1875, Mt. Carmel in 1877, and Philadelphia in 1882. The first Polish organization founded in Philadelphia was Związek Narodowy Polski, (Polish National Alliance), which was organized under the leadership of Julius Andrzejko on February 14, 1880. A society like the Polish National Alliance gave members the opportunity to discuss their mutual religious and social problems. Polish Catholics attended churches and joined pre-established congregations, which was difficult for the newly established group in a dense city like Philadelphia. After the first two years in Philadelphia, they discovered that they would prefer their own congregation within the Catholic church. On January 29, 1882, a local chapter of the Polish National Alliance recognized the need for the establishment of a Polish Catholic parish led by a Polish-speaking priest.

Foundation of a Polish-Catholic Community in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

An infrastructure of interpersonal relationships represented by organizations and associations such as the Roman Catholic parish was a further manifestation of the stability of the community. Finally, the continued performance of this territorial community worked to preserve the group's ethnicity.⁹

After the meeting in January 1882, a resolution to petition the Archbishop of Philadelphia to send the congregation a priest, which included the following: Xavier Karczewski, Charles Drehmann, John Piotrowski, John Nepomucene Szweda, Adalbert Nowak, Anthony Symbol, Stanislaus Robaszkievicz, and Michael Ostrowski, which included people from Philadelphia, Phoenixville and Camden. A committee was then formed to visit and petition the Most Rev. Archbishop James F. Wood, which resulted in the founding of the St. Laurentius Church later that year. However, in the earliest days, the parish was known as “Holy Cross,” which was soon changed to St. Laurentius.¹⁰

⁸ Golab, Carol Ann. *The Polish Communities of Philadelphia, 1870-1920: Immigrant Distribution and Adaptation in Urban America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1971.

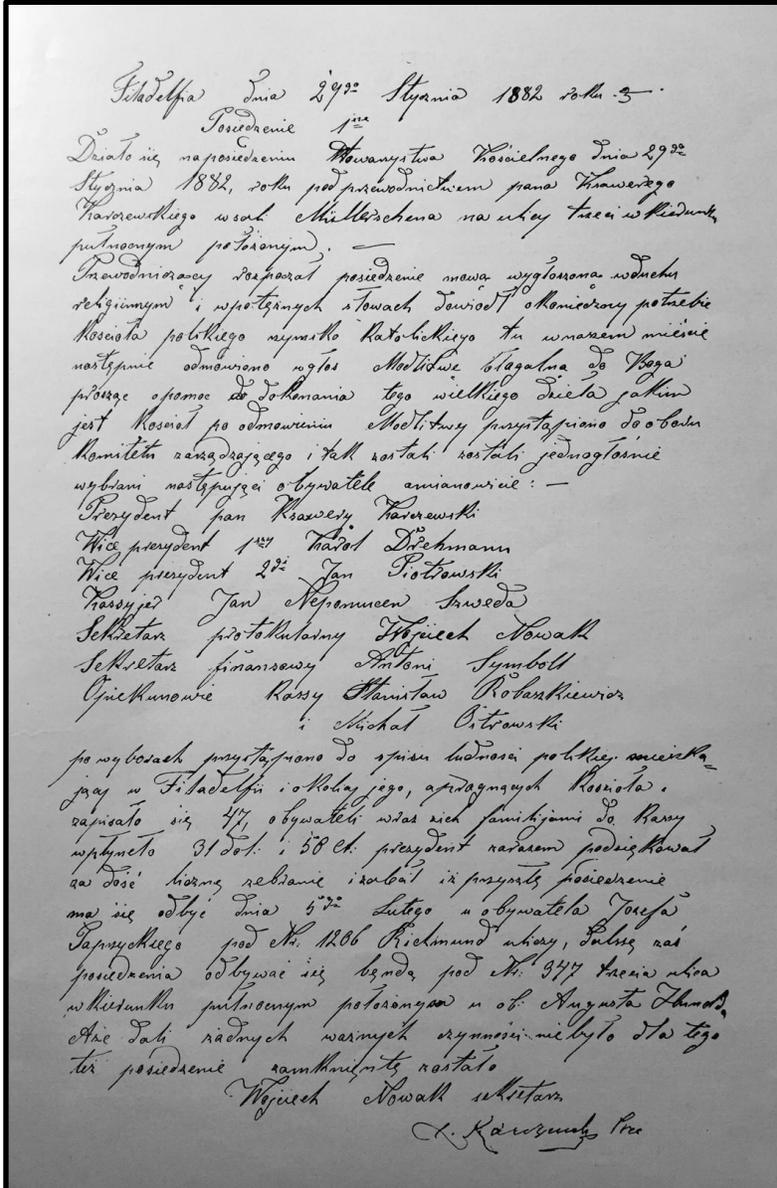
⁹ Golab, Carol Ann., *ibid.*

¹⁰ 75th

St. Laurentius Roman Catholic Church—the First Polish Catholic Colony in Philadelphia

St. Laurentius (the Latin form of St. Lawrence) of Rome was a martyr of the early church. As chief of the deacons of the Roman congregation of the Christian Church, Laurentius administered the church’s budget, notably that portion of the budget dedicated to helping the poor. The Roman Emperor Valerian began his Christian persecutions and, as a leader in the clergy and member of the upper class, Laurentius was a prime target. The Roman government demanded that Laurentius turn over the riches of the Church in exchange for saving his life. The popular narrative in the Church is that Laurentius asked for three days to gather the money. He then spent those three days distributing as much Church money to the poor as he could. When the government demanded he turn over the money he presented himself, along with the poor, crippled, and blind

as the “true treasures of the Church.” He was executed by being roasted alive on a gridiron and apparently told his executioners quite calmly, “You may turn me over; I am done on this side.”¹¹ He was martyred in the year 258. In addition to veneration in the Roman Catholic Church, Laurentius is venerated in Eastern Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, and the Anglican Communion.



Original letter regarding the founding of the congregation, Circa 1885.

¹¹ “Laurence Deacon and Martyr (10 August 258)” Lectionary of the Episcopal Church, Revised 2009

Hall, formerly at the corner of Norris and Sepviva Streets.¹² The Archbishop invited Rev. Julian Dutkiewicz to come from Brooklyn, New York; however, this was a short stay. Apparently, he and this particular Polish congregation did not get on well and, in all official records, his memory is generally removed. He was succeeded by Rev. Emil Kattein, who was a Polish-speaker of Germanic origin. Kattein changed the name of the church from Holy Cross to St. Laurentius.

After the acceptance of Kattein as their priest, the congregation worked to procure a piece of land for their new house of worship. While “orange men,” a Protestant fraternal order known for starting riots, stood in their way for quite some time, the parishioners were able to secure a lot at the corner of Vienna and Memphis Streets in the Fishtown neighborhood of the larger Kensington district.

Charles Schmitt, of the City of Philadelphia, dealer in feathers, and Melina, his wife, and John Gartner (signed "John Gärtner"), of the city, tavern keeper, and Lizzie, his wife, to the Most Rev. Patrick John Ryan, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, for three properties:

One, lot with building on the South side of Vienna Street [now Berks] at the distance of 179 feet East of Tulip Street, Containing in front on Tulip Street 18ft and in depth back to Cook Street [now Wilt] 114 feet

Two, lot with buildings on the South side of Vienna Street at the distance of 215 feet East of Tulip Street and at the West side of Memphis Street, Containing in front on Tulip Street 25ft and in depth back to Cook Street 113 feet 8&3/4 inches

Three, lot with buildings on the South side of Vienna Street at the distance of 197 feet East of Tulip Street, Containing in front on Tulip Street 18ft and in depth back to Cook Street 114 feet more or less

In Trust "for the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Laurentius." Subject to a mortgage debt of \$5,000. Acknowledged on 24 December 1885.¹³

When the lot was finally procured, a basement was erected on the site, pending construction of the larger, complete superstructure of their house of worship.¹⁴

The basement of St. Laurentius Church was blessed by Archbishop Ryan in the presence of a large congregation on Sunday, December 20, 1885. After the blessing, a Solemn High Mass was celebrated by Rev. Hubert Schick, the rector of St. Alphonsus', assisted by Rev. Father Litz, C.S.S.R., rector of St. Boniface's, as deacon. Rev. A. Schulte, professor of the seminary, acted as master of ceremonies. The sermon of this service was given in Polish was preached by Rev. Kattein. In his closing remarks, Archbishop Ryan recognized that Poland was a “martyr nation,” persecuted in faith with its people suffering exile and death for their beliefs.¹⁵ Father Kattein served the congregation until May 1887. That June, Rev. Adalbert Malusecki succeeded Father Kattein.

¹² “St. Laurentius, 1882,” Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and Institutions of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: 1895, p. 138.

¹³ Recorded on 13 January 1886 in Philadelphia Deed Book GGP, No. 102, p. 121

¹⁴ 75th Anniversary Booklet. St. Laurentius Church. Philadelphia: 1957.

¹⁵ “The New Polish Church.,” *The Times*. Philadelphia: 21 December 1885.

Within the first six months of Father Malusecki's leadership, the congregation raised roughly \$24,000, which led to the construction of the congregation's permanent superstructure—the Gothic Revival building that stands to-date in 2015.¹⁶ Archbishop Ryan again presided over the dedication, and the Knights of St. Casimir (a Polish Roman Catholic Fraternal Organization) led a parade for the occasion. High Mass was celebrated by Rev. Stanislaus Roddowicz of Baltimore. Rev. Francis A. Brady and Rev. James B. Hogan of St. Charles' Seminary served as Deacon and sub-deacon respectively.¹⁷ In March 1895, Father Malusecki removed to Reading, Pennsylvania.¹⁸

Father Malusecki was succeeded by Rev. Father Tarnowski in 1895, and it was under his leadership that the buildings housing the rectory and the convent were constructed in the last years of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ The Parish, like many churches, experienced some drama. In 1899, the priest-in-charge of St. Laurentius', Rev. Gabriel Kraus, sued a member of the congregation—John Winiarz. The disagreement resulted in the formation of St. Josaphat's Polish Catholic Church in Manayunk, an interesting factoid that modernity can allow us to note. Winiarz apparently made the mistake of accusing the Rev. Kraus, along with two other parish council members, of being thieves.²⁰

In 1896, the Chamberlain of the Pope, Rev. Peter Wawrzniak, celebrated a High Mass at St. Laurentius' for the occasion of the Twenty-third annual Polish Catholic Union Convention. Rev. Frank Lange of Chicago served as Deacon and Rev. J. Kasprzycki, also of Chicago, served as sub-deacon. Rev. Tarououski delivered the sermon.²¹



In the early 1900's, Polish Catholics in America actually petitioned the Pope to appoint a Bishop of their own nationality to oversee them. As a result, the Pope sent The Most Rev. Albin S. Simon, an Archbishop of high rank at the Vatican. Simon conducted a mission trip throughout the United States that included five nights in Philadelphia. During his stay, he was a guest of Rev. Kraus at

Society of St. Laurentius Church, 1920s. Courtesy St. Laurentius Collection.

¹⁶ "St. Laurentius, 1882," *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and Institutions of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: 1895, p. 138.

¹⁷ "St. Laurentius' Church," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*: 22 September 1890.

¹⁸ Kirlin, Joseph L. *Catholicity in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: 1926.

¹⁹ Kirlin, Joseph L. *Catholicity in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: 1926.

²⁰ "Sued by a Priest: Father Kraus Brings Action Against John Winiarz, Who Furnishes Bail," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 17 March 1899.

²¹ "Polish Catholic Union: Twenty-third Annual Convention Now in Session," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 18 of September 1896.

St. Laurentius'.²²

Additional property was purchased to the northwest of the current parcel for additional construction in 1911.

The Most Rev. Edmond Francis Prendergast, the Right Rev. William Keiran and the Right Rev. Nevin F. Fisher, executors and trustees of the will of Most Rev. Patrick John Ryan, late Archbishop of Philadelphia, to the Most Rev. Edmond Francis Prendergast, the present Archbishop of Philadelphia, for "All the property and effects real and personal whatsoever and wheresoever situate of which said the Most Reverend Patrick John Ryan died seized of possessed of." Recites the will of P.J. Ryan, dated 21 August 1884, in which he gave all property he had to his executors in trust to turn over the same to his duly appointed successor as Archbishop of Philadelphia. Acknowledged on 26 July 1911.²³

In 1912, the church's lighting system was converted from gas to electric. Furthermore, the church was "embellished," receiving fourteen paintings of scenes in the history of the Church in Poland. The artist of the pieces was a then well-known artist named Scataglia.²⁴

The property further northwest was procured for \$1 on July 10, 1918 and the school was constructed after that time.

The Right Rev. William Kieran, the Right Rev. Nevin F. Fisher and the Right Rev. John J. McCort, executors and trustees of the will of the Most Rev. Edmond Francis Prendergast, late Archbishop of Philadelphia, to the Most Rev. Dennis Joseph Dougherty, present Archbishop of Philadelphia, for "All the property and effects real and personal whatsoever and wheresoever situate of which said the Most Reverend Edmond Francis Prendergast died seized of possessed of." Recites the will of E.F. Prendergast, dated 26 July 1911, in which he gave all property he had to his executors in trust to turn over the same to his duly appointed successor as Archbishop of Philadelphia. Acknowledged on 10 July 1918.²⁵

In 1919, a new Hall Pipe Organ was installed at a cost of \$20,000.²⁶

Rev. Kraus played an important role in Polish-American relations in 1920. It was then that, in Philadelphia, the Emergency Committee for Polish Defense was chosen in response to the ongoing war between Poland and Russia. American Poles wanted to support their country and show unity as a people. The Emergency Committee, which included Rev. Krause, along with officials from the Polish Government Loan, visited the White House on August 18, 1920 to appeal to President Woodrow Wilson to support Poland in the war.²⁷

In 1932, the Golden Jubilee year for the Parish, Rev. Bronislaus E. Rutt was appointed as rector. May 30, 1932 was the day of celebration for the parish. It included a grand parade with flags and banners and several bands. The parade marched to Cedar Street, to Cumberland Street, to Aramingo Avenue, and to Girard Avenue and Berks Street, where it picked up Denis Cardinal Dougherty and marched him to the church. At 10:30AM, the Solemn Pontifical Mass of

²² "Polish Archbishop Here," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. 26 May 1905.

²³ Recorded on 5 January 1913 in Philadelphia Deed Book ELT, No. 1545, p. 386

²⁴ "Week's Religious News," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 14 September 1912.

²⁵ Recorded on 6 April 1919 in Philadelphia Deed Book JMH, No. 525, p. 17

²⁶ 100th Anniversary Booklet. St. Laurentius Church. Philadelphia: 1982.

²⁷ "Phila. Poles Deny Reports on Morale," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 18 August 1920.

Thanksgiving was celebrated by the Most Rev. Gerald P. O'Hara, the Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia. Likewise, at the Diamond Jubilee celebration on November 17, 1957, a Solemn Pontifical Mass was celebrated at the church by the Most Rev. J. Carroll McCormick, Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia.

On April 18, 1982 the Church held a Centenary Mass of the Parish. Rev. Leonard Lewandowski, now Pastor of St. Titus' Church in Norristown, invited John Cardinal Krol of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to preside at the Mass.²⁸



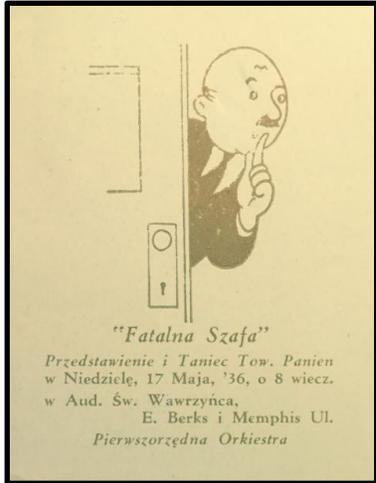
Women's Organization of St. Laurentius. Courtesy of the St. Laurentius Collection.

The Culture of St. Laurentius

Celebrations that involved special groups and/or the entire St. Laurentius Parish were an integral part of community life for the Polish Catholics of the Kensington and Northern Liberties. Throughout this nomination, period photographs have been presented, some even out of order to present the flavor of the community that historically radiated the parish. Congregation and pastoral anniversaries were always cause for large and often elaborate community celebrations. Other annual rituals were also celebrated—for example, on Sunday March 4, 1951, the Twelfth Annual Communion Breakfast was held by the “Holy Name Society of St. Laurentius Parish” in the Parish Auditorium. A booklet of a program was printed up for the event and also as a physical memento of the ritual.²⁹

²⁸ 100th Anniversary Booklet. St. Laurentius Church. Philadelphia: 1982.

²⁹ Twelve Annual Communion Breakfast. Holy Name Society, Saint Laurentius Parish. Philadelphia: 1951.



Secret Invitation to a St. Laurentius Event, which is typically written in Polish

Aside from the Holy Name Society, the parish also featured the following organizations over the years: the Catholic Ladies Guild of St. Laurentius Parish; the League of the Sacred Heart of St. Laurentius; the St. Laurentius Alter Boys; the St. Laurentius Choir; the St. Laurentius Club; the St. Laurentius Catholic Young Men’s Club; the St. Laurentius Midgets Basketball Team; the Young Ladies of the Immaculate Conception Society of the St. Laurentius Parish; and Sigma Tau Lambda, among numerous others that existed over the years.³⁰ Events were hosted to raise money for the various organizations and these events usually evolved into annual rituals and/or traditions. The Third Annual Dance, with its Art Deco-inspired program, was held on Saturday, May 14, 1938 by the St. Laurentius Alter Boys.³¹ The same year, the Laurentian Dance was held by the St. Laurentius Club, featuring Walter Dombkowski and his Radio & Recording Orchestra.³² The primary objective in this section is to illustrate the complex culture of the church and its congregation that existed as the center of the Polish Catholics.

Other outside organizations hosted events and supported St. Laurentius, as well as other Polish Catholic congregations: Catholic Ladies Guild; Eighteenth Ward Polish Republican Club; Gr. 301 Polish Women’s Alliance; the Greater Northeast Polish American Citizens’ Association; the Knights of Columbus, Madonna Council No. 3932; the Kosciuszko Literary Association; the North East Polish American Citizens Association; the Northwest Polish Citizens’ Association; the Polish American Citizens, Harmonia & Ostwiata Club; the Polish American Citizens’ League of Philadelphia and State of Pennsylvania; the Polish American Progressive Club of 15th Ward; the Polish Beneficial Association; the Polish American Congress, Inc., East Pennsylvania District; the Society of the Polish Crown; etc. All of these organizations participated in events held by St. Laurentius and respected their successes as part of a greater community.



Mother Mary Angela, Founder of the Felician Sisters

The Early Polish Catholic Colonies, Compatriots, and Communities of Philadelphia

Founded in 1882, St. Laurentius is the first and oldest Polish Catholic Church in the Philadelphia area. However, in 1889, the Felician Sisters of the Order of St. Francis were introduced to the Diocese at the invitation of Archbishop Ryan. Earlier that year, the parochial schools of the “Polish Catholic Church of St. Laurentius, at Vienna and Tulip Streets, in the Kensington district...” had been officially opened, and a small community of the Felician Sisters came to Philadelphia where they “...took charge of their little exiled compatriots...”

The Felician Sisters of the Order of St. Francis were founded about the year 1850, at Cracow, Poland, by Mother Mary Angela, the first Superioress of the Order. The first colony to reach America

³⁰ Manuscript Collection of St. Laurentius Parish. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia. Visited 9 April 2015.

³¹ Third Annual Dance Program. St. Laurentius Alter Boys. Philadelphia: 1938

³² The Laurentian Dance Program. St. Laurentius Club. Philadelphia: 1938.

settled at Polonia, Wisconsin, in 1875, at the invitation of Rev. Father Dombroski, who was pastor of a scattered Polish settlement in the Western wilds. Though their chief work is the charge of orphans and the distressed, they are successful teachers of their own people.³³

Administering the parochial school was the only work of the Felician Sisters in Philadelphia, living in their own convent at 1640 Vienna Street. While called to serve the parochial school at St. Laurentius, they still existed as their own order.

After the founding of St. Laurentius, a strong Eastern European migration of Polish immigrants came from the old Austro-Hungarian Empire and Czarist Russian to the mining and industrial centers of Pennsylvania. To meet this need, eighteen Polish parishes were established by Archbishop Ryan, six of which included: St. Stanislaw in 1891; St. John Cantius' in 1892; St. Josaphat in 1898; St. Adalbert in 1904; St. Ladislaus in 1906; and St. Hedwigs in 1907.³⁴



Graduates of the Parochial School, 1910s. Courtesy of the St. Laurentius Collection.

St. Laurentius was the only Catholic Church devoted to Polish Catholics until late in the year 1893, when the Polish Catholic Colony at Bridesburg had become strong enough to support its own church. This was necessary within their growing community and St. Laurentius was too far away to make a Sunday morning commute.³⁵

Securing a lot at Orthodox and Thompson Streets, the Bridesburg Polish Catholic Colony first worshiped in a frame chapel that was dedicated by Archbishop

Ryan on December 17, 1894. The colony became St. John Cantius' in time.³⁶ Also in 1894, a Lithuanian congregation was founded—St. Anthony's, and while politically related to Poland, the Lithuanians requested their own church and their own priest.³⁷

From this time forward through the 1910s, the Catholic Church developed as a significant force in Philadelphia and the nation. In 1883, Philadelphia was the second largest diocese in the United State with 45 churches in Philadelphia and 56 churches with resident-priests in the surrounding counties. There were roughly half a million Catholics in the Philadelphia area with the greatest

³³ "Felician Sisters of the Order of St. Francis. Introduced into the Diocese in 1889.," Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and Institutions of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: 1895, p. 210.

³⁴ Connelly, James F. The History of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

³⁵ "St. John Cantius', 1893," Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and Institutions of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: 1895, p. 139.

³⁶ "St. John Cantius', 1893," *ibid*.

³⁷ "St. Anthony's', 1894," Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and Institutions of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: 1895, p. 139.

number in the city, most of which were an immigrant people.

In November 1904, a German Catholic Church at Alleghany and Gual was opened to the Russian Polish residents of Kensington. Attendance grew over time, and, eventually, St. Adalberts was founded.³⁸ Numerous other congregations were to follow as the Polish Catholic population of Philadelphia grew in the first half of the twentieth century.

Polish Population of Kensington and Northern Liberties

The Kensington District or neighborhood was the embodiment of the Workshop of the World that once defined Philadelphia. Of the Polish immigrants that arrived at Philadelphia, several groups were scattered about the Kensington neighborhood and also in Northern Liberties, the dividing lines of which appear to have been somewhat blurred. Most of these immigrants owed their existence to the textile industry. However, in time, the Polish population's exclusively textile-based employment diversified to include machinists and metal workers, which reflected Kensington's second major industry—hardware and machine shop manufacture. This entire population made up the congregants of St. Laurentius Church. Located in North Kensington by 1910, there was a tight cluster of Poles near the southwest corner of The Protestant Episcopal Hospital—around Front Street and Lehigh Avenue. Waterloo Street was the central thoroughfare of this community. Consisting largely of German Poles, most of them were weavers who had been attracted to the area by large textile firms, comprising roughly twenty-six percent of the larger local Polish population. The majority of the textile workers were employed by the Hardwick and Magee Company, carpet manufacturers that employed nearly 600 people in the 1910s. John Bromley and Sons, the Smyrna rug manufacturer, employed 1,375 people, some of whom were Poles. The John B. Stetson Company and the Rockford Knitting Company, as well as the Jonathan Ring and Son, Inc. also employed many of the Polish textile workers of Northern Liberties and Kensington.



First communion class of St. Laurentius, 1888. Courtesy of the St. Laurentius Collection.

Another North Kensington cluster could be found between Front and Second Streets, Westmoreland to Tioga. Unlike the rest of Kensington in the first decades of the twentieth century, this area was not fully developed. In 1915, empty lots and open fields were still available, housing was relatively new. Almost one-half of the dwellings in the area were constructed after 1900, the vast majority of which were row houses—rental being slightly higher than South Philadelphia and Northern Liberties. Home ownership of Poles was more common in North Kensington.

Generally, the Poles of Kensington

were permanent and committed residents of their neighborhood, being descendants of German Poles and early Polish settlers. This group made up the oldest Polish Philadelphians, making up groups of skilled versus unskilled workers. Because this sect of the Polish population were skilled workers, they stayed in the city longer than other groups of Philadelphia's Polish population.³⁹

³⁸ "A New Polish Church," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*. Philadelphia: 29 August 1908.

³⁹ Report of Philadelphia Real Estate Survey, p. 329-330.

In the early years of Polish settlement in Philadelphia through 1914, machinists and metals workers found work at the Bernstine Manufacturing Company, makers of metal bedsteads and bedsprings. Other major employers were the Schaum and Uhlinger Textile Machinery Company, S.L. Allen Company, manufacturers of agricultural implements, North Brothers Manufacturing Company, hardware specialties, and, after 1914, the Smith, Dum and Company, manufacturers of textile machinery. Ninety percent of the hose made in the United States was dyed with Smith, Drum machinery.⁴⁰

Polish machinists, metal workers, and laborers were employed at the Abram Cox Stove Company, the Enterprise Manufacturing Company of America, and the Thomas Devlin Manufacturing Company, most of which were manufacturers of malleable and grey iron, steel, brass, bronze castings to order, iron fittings for gas, and steam and water thumb screws. Companies like Devlin provided employment for the unskilled Polish immigrants due to the type of work required. The same was true of the city's tanneries and leather factories. However, most Polish people in Northern Kensington were skill workers. Very few were self-employed or in service occupations. Unskilled workers consisted of roughly ten percent of the population. Almost forty percent were weavers, stichers, knitters, etc., largely consisting of German Poles. However, this meant that the population depended on the good and bad portion of the textile industry.

The Poles had divided themselves into several clusters, each of which was definable in terms of its occupational industrial structures. Nevertheless, the Poles of Kensington and Northern Liberties formed one community, that of St. Laurentius Parish. It was the Parish which united them; it was the Parish which gave structure and meaning to their existence.⁴¹ within the city.

By 1915, there were roughly 4,464 Polish people in Philadelphia.⁴² Kensington and Northern Liberties only accounted for a small part of the larger Polish population; however, these communities also accounted for the earliest of these immigrants.⁴³

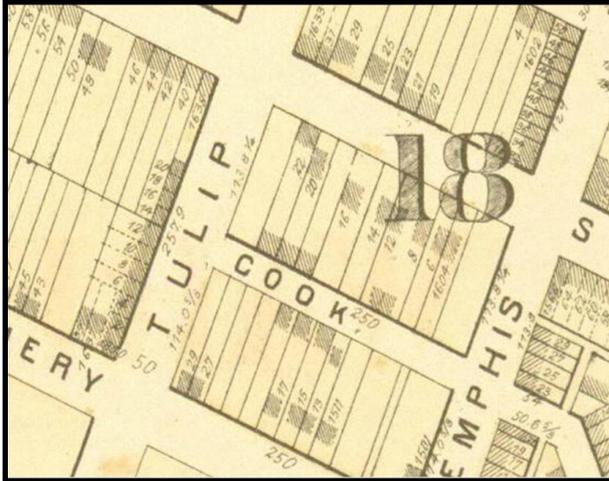
⁴⁰ Stevens, Pennsylvania: Titan of Industry, III, p. 734-756.

⁴¹ Golab, Carol Ann. The Polish Communities of Philadelphia, 1870-1920: Immigrant Distribution and Adaptation in Urban America. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1971.

⁴² Boyd's City Directory, 1915.

⁴³ Golab, Carol Ann. The Polish Communities of Philadelphia, 1870-1920: Immigrant Distribution and Adaptation in Urban America. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1971.

Criteria (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and
Criteria (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.



St. Laurentius Church reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style, representing the first of the large houses of worship designed in what became commonly known as the Polish Cathedral Style of Architecture. This specific microcosm of ecclesiastical architecture is one that developed in the period that Polish immigrants settled and prospered throughout America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Real Estate Survey, 1875, showing lots on Vienna Street pre-construction. Courtesy of Philly Geohistory.

St. Laurentius Roman Catholic Church—the Building on E. Berks Street

First worshipping in temporary quarters, as referenced above, the congregation of St. Laurentius Church eventually acquired a lot at the corner of Memphis and Vienna Streets (now E. Berks Street), which was deeded from Charles Schmitt to the Most Archbishop Ryan “for the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Laurentius” for \$13,500 on December 24, 1885. Soon after this purchase, in 1886, the Father Kattein led the movement for the construction of a basement structure that would serve the church as their house of worship for roughly three years. After Father Kattein was called to another parish, the congregation welcomed Father Malusecki and under his leadership the superstructure of the present church edifice was completed.

Likely prior to the time that the basement was constructed, the eminent ecclesiastical architect, Edward Forrest Durang, was hired to draw-up the plans for a house of worship that would become St. Laurentius Church. While the basement was completed and in use by the close of 1886, the superstructure was constructed between 1886 and 1890, when in September of that year local newspapers reported that construction was complete.

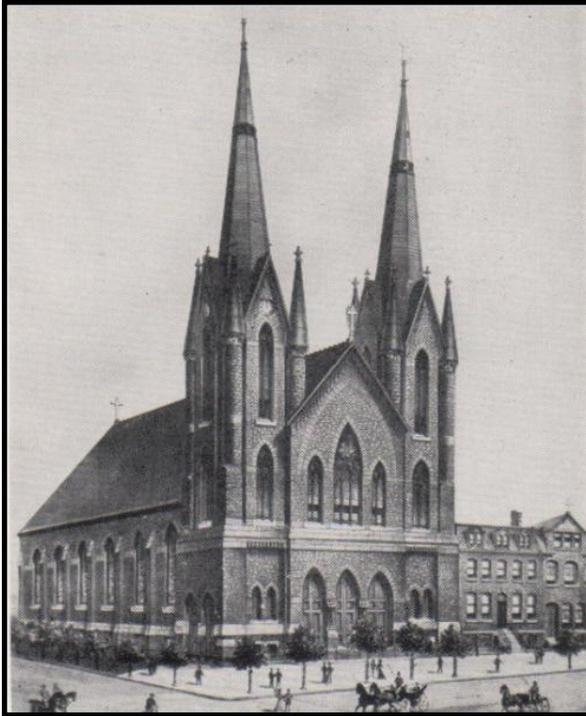
The new building thus completed and set aside for the service of God is 60 feet wide by 122 feet long, with a height from the floor of the church to the vaulted ceiling of 60 feet. The walls are of stone, and over the front rise two spires, each which ascends to a height of 150 feet from the sidewalk. The adornments of the temple are handsome, rich and tasteful.⁴⁴

Designed by Durang, St. Laurentius was constructed by William J. McShane, Contractor and Builder, of 2204 Arch Street, and the plasterwork was completed by Thomas Kane, Plaster, of

⁴⁴ “St. Laurentius, 1882,” *Historical Sketches of the Catholic Churches and Institutions of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: 1895, p. 138.

3825 Fairmont Avenue. The contractor and the plaster regularly worked on projects that involved a Durang design.

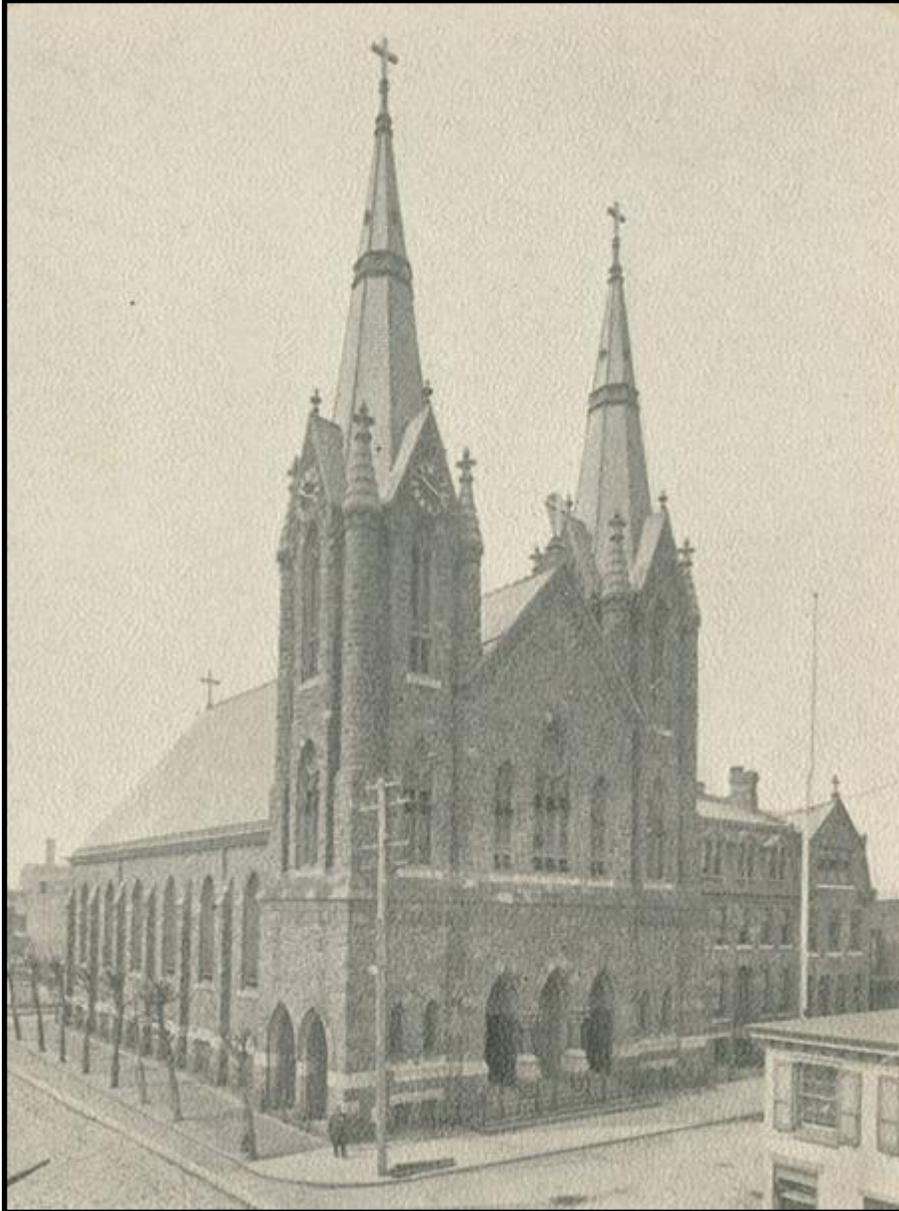
The brownstone church and rectories were all completed by 1895. The original basement worship space was converted to a parochial school. The cost of the entire project was estimated at roughly \$75,000 by the Diocese of Philadelphia.



Left: Drawing of St. Laurentius, 1899. Below: St. Laurentius Church, Interior Photos. Courtesy the Friends of St. Laurentius.

The church interior was incredibly elaborate and maintains much of its original details to-date.





Photograph on post card depicting “St. Laurentius R. C. Church, Memphis and Berks Streets” Circa 1905. Courtesy the Library Company of Philadelphia.⁴⁵

Edwin Forrest Durang (1829-1911), Architect

Among those who have made a successful study of architecture is Mr. Edward F. Durang, whose offices and drawing rooms are located at No. 1200 Chestnut Street. Mr. Durang has zealously devoted himself to the practice of his profession in Philadelphia for the last twenty-two years, and brings a wide range of experience to bear, coupled with an intimate knowledge of the wants of the public. He has executed some of the most important architectural commissions in the city and vicinity, designing and superintending the construction of many prominent buildings.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Library Company of Philadelphia Print Dept. Brightbill postcards [Churches - Miscellaneous - 50]

⁴⁶ Philadelphia and Popular Philadelphians. Philadelphia: 1891.

Of the distinguished theatrical family, Edwin Forrest Durang was the grandson of John Durang (1768-1822), renowned as the first native-born American actor. Born in New York City on April 17, 1829, he was the son of Charles Durang and Mary White Durang, both of whom were accomplished stage actors. His father, Charles Durang, and his uncle, Richard Ferdinand Durang, were the first to perform "The Star-Spangled Banner", and his brother Charles Durang (1791-1870) also worked as the director and prompter at both the Chestnut Street Theatre and the American Theatre in Philadelphia.

In Durang's early years and prior to becoming an architect, he worked briefly as a lithographer and an engraver. In 1848, he partnered with Peter E. Abel in the creation and publication of political cartoons. His brothers John T. and Oscar Durang were also employed in the printing trade by 1850.⁴⁷ In 1855 he appears in Philadelphia city directories as an architect practicing at 304 Vine Street. By 1857 he has moved to 417 Market Street and has begun working with Architect John E. Carver. Carver was both a residential and ecclesiastical architect. Upon Carver's death in 1859, Durang succeeded him, retaining the office at 21 N. 6th Street until 1880.

In 1891, he was described as having "...made a specialty of ecclesiastical architecture and has built some of the finest churches in the country..." Within this same description some of his important works were listed: German Hospital, Girard Avenue and Corinthian Street; St. Agnes Hospital, Broad and Mifflin Streets; Maternity Hospital, Woodland Avenue and Seventieth Street; St. Joseph's Hospital, additions, Girard Avenue; St. Mary's Hospital, additions, Palmer Street; Little Sisters of the Poor, Eighteenth and Jefferson Streets; Girls' Orphan Home, Race and Eighteenth Streets; the grand church of St. James, Thirty-eighth and Chestnut Streets; St. Charles Borromeo, Twentieth and Christian Streets.⁴⁸



Church of the Visitation, Philadelphia. Designed by Durang and similar in style and form to St. Laurentius. Courtesy of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

⁴⁷ Philadelphia on Stone Biographical Dictionary of Lithographers. The Library Company of Philadelphia.

⁴⁸ Philadelphia and Popular Philadelphians. Philadelphia: 1891.

In 1900, Durang showcased the best of his work in a published and bound portfolio, which had been subsidized by advertisements:

Building/Resource	Location	Status
St. James Church,	West Philadelphia	Extant
Parochial School of St. Thomas Aquinas	Philadelphia	Demolished
St. Charles Church	Philadelphia	Extant
St. Charles Convent	Philadelphia	Unknown
St. Francis Church	Philadelphia	Extant
Church of Our Lady of Mercy	Philadelphia	Demolished
St. Veronica's Church	Philadelphia	Extant
Catholic High School	Philadelphia	Extant
Church of the Nativity	Philadelphia	Extant
St. Peter's Church	Philadelphia	Extant
Sisters of Mercy Convent	Merion	Extant
Church of Our Lady of Good Council	Bryn Mawr	Extant
St. Vincent's Maternity Home	Philadelphia	Demolished
St. Michael's Church	Chester	Extant
Sacred Heart Church	Philadelphia	Extant
St. Joachim's Church	Frankford	Destroyed
Beneficial Savings Fund Building	Philadelphia	Demolished
St. Laurentius Church	Philadelphia	Extant
St. Mary Magdalen Da Pazzi Church	Philadelphia	Demolished
St. Agnes Hospital	Philadelphia	Demolished
Church of the Visitation	Philadelphia	Extant
St. Anne's Church and School	Philadelphia	Extant ⁴⁹



Left: Church of Our Mother of Sorrows, Philadelphia. Right: St. Thomas Church, Villanova. Designed Durang, the above churches have characteristics in form to St. Laurentius, but are more commodious buildings in semi-urban and suburban locations. Courtesy of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

⁴⁹ E.F. Durang's Architectural Album. Philadelphia Athenaeum. 1900.

In the last decade before his death, the above-referenced works were listed by him with photographs as the best work of this career. Among these works St. Laurentius Church was called out, being of what is now interpreted as the Polish Cathedral Style of Architecture. While many of his buildings survive, the list dwindles little by little eroding the fabric of legacy of this great architect.

While Durang was largely known for his work on churches, he also designed a large number of residential and organizational buildings in Philadelphia and other regional locations.

E. F. Durang, the architect, of 1200 Chestnut Street, who does a great deal of the drawings and plans for Catholic edifices, has just finished the sketches for the grand new hall of the Philopatrian Literary Institute, which is to be built on Twelfth Street, below Locust. It is said that the structure will cost \$70,000.⁵⁰

Durang's work spanned the region, including various locations in Pennsylvania including Harrisburg, Leabnon, and Reading. Durang even designed buildings for the Catholic Church in Washington, D.C., including the "immense monastery buildings" for the Sisters of Notre Dome.⁵¹

Following Carver's example, Durang also specialized in ecclesiastical design, much of his work being completed for the Catholic Church. In November 1909, Durang was joined by his son F. Ferdinand Durang, who, having also become an architect, succeeded him after his sudden death in 1911. According to the obituary published in June 1911 in *Catholic Standard and Times*

...died suddenly Monday morning near the rectory of St. Monica's Church, Seventeenth and Ritner streets, while making measurements for the new convent.⁵²

The Durang dynasty represents one of the most successful architectural enterprises specializing in Catholic Church projects in Philadelphia. Other similar dynasties included Henry D. Dagit and his sons. The Durangs provided architectural mentorship to a number of young architects in ecclesiastical design, including: Rowland Boyle, father to an architectural dynasty himself; Emile G. Perrot; and Frank R. Watson, all of whom originally trained under the Durangs.



A drawing of the title page in Durang's portfolio. Courtesy the Philadelphia Athenaeum.

⁵⁰ *The Times*. Philadelphia: 15 March 1891.

⁵¹ *The Times*. Philadelphia: 8 June 1899.

⁵² *Catholic Standards and Times*. Philadelphia: June 1911.

The Polish Cathedral Style of Architecture in Philadelphia

After the Civil War, a trend emerged in architecture to construct monumentally grand churches for all manner of congregation types within the Roman Catholic Church of North America. Historically, and even today, monumental buildings were usually designed to serve as cathedrals, symbolizing the seats of bishops and/or a diocese. However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries, the construction of monumental churches became a prominent practice of congregations.⁵³ In the Midwest, the Middle Atlantic and in New England, Polish Catholic populations called for elaborate church buildings that emulated the grandeur and historicism of the old country. Chicago and Milwaukee have the highest concentration of churches that reflect this trend and therefore a small genre of American architecture has been identified.

In terms of sheer size and monumentality, Polish Catholic churches on the Near Northwest Side surpassed the parish churches constructed by most German, Bohemian and Irish congregations. The architectural style promoted by the Resurrectionists used Renaissance and Baroque forms molded to distinctively promote their vision of Polish history and identity.⁵⁴

As stated, the genre also emerged in the Middle Atlantic and in New England. In Pennsylvania, there are five popular exemplars: the Church of St. Adalbert, Port Richmond, Philadelphia; the Church of St. John Cantius, Bridesburg, Philadelphia; St. Laurentius Church, Fishtown, Philadelphia; the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Polish Hill, Pittsburgh; and St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, Pittsburgh. The three Philadelphia examples all possess similar characteristics of form with facades of three compartments, containing a central gable flanked by spired towers with belfrys. While St. Adalbert is perhaps the most impressive of the three Philadelphia examples, and historically important in its own right, St. Laurentius represents the earliest of three buildings. And while St. Laurentius is architecturally important in its own right, without being related to a particular movement, it should be stated that the building is an early example of this genre within the architectural context of the larger region.



St. Adalbert's Church, Port Richmond, Philadelphia, of the Polish Cathedral Style genre. Courtesy of Susan Perkins, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵³ Williams, Peter W., *"Houses of God: Region, Religion, and Architecture in the United States."* Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

⁵⁴ Skerrett, Ellen. "Parish and Neighborhood in Polonia". *Sacred Space*. Catholicism, Chicago Style.

Conclusion

St. Laurentius Church on E. Berks Street is a significant building in the Fishtown neighborhood of the larger Kensington district of Philadelphia and should be listed in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Constructed between 1885 and 1890, the building stands as the oldest and most prominent symbol of the immigration and settlement of Polish Catholics in Philadelphia, which justifies Criterion H, owing to its unique location and singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, and/or City. While Polish settlement at-large began in Pennsylvania nearly a decade earlier, the first colony of Polish Catholics in Philadelphia congregated to form what became St. Laurentius Church in 1882, linking the congregation and its first building to Criterion J, exemplifying the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the [Polish] community. Furthermore, St. Laurentius Church is linked to German Polish immigration, the first major wave of Poles to the United States, designating the parish as the center of their cultural and religious life in the early years for the entire local population and later when it served the Kensington and Northern Liberties community after other Polish Catholic congregations had been founded. For this reason, St. Laurentius Church fulfills Criterion H, having significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City. Furthermore, St. Laurentius is a master architectural work in its own right, as well as being the work of a master architect--Edwin Forrest Durang, the eminent ecclesiastical designer within the realm of Philadelphia Catholicity, which fulfills Criteria C and E, reflecting the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and 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 Philadelphia.

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