

HISTORIC AREA PRESERVATION PLAN – 44

THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS (AKA HOLY CROSS CHURCH), GYMNASIUM (KELLEY CENTER), RECTORY AND SCHOOL BUILDING HA-44 (HC)

125 N. Oriental Street
Marion County, Indianapolis

A PART OF THE
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
FOR MARION COUNTY, INDIANA

Adopted by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation
Commission March 27, 2024

Adopted by the Metropolitan Development Commission
April 17, 2024

Prepared By:

Staff of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission
1842 City-County Building
200 East Washington Street
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indianapolis

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Holy Cross Church, Gymnasium, Rectory and School Building Historic Area Plan

Section 1: Owner

ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF INDPLS
PROPERTIES INC
1400 N MERIDIAN ST INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46206-1410

Section 2: Historic Area Delineation & Legal Description

The subject property is comprised of one parcel of land known as “the historic area,” which includes four buildings commonly known as: Holy Cross Church, Rectory, Gymnasium and School building. These buildings were historically known as: The Church of the Holy Cross, the Holy Cross Convent, Holy Cross School and Kelley Center. The property is described as follows:

Holy Cross Addition L1 as recorded in Plat Book 27 page 196 in the office of the Marion County Recorder on 9/16/1947.

Section 3: Physical Description and Construction Information

Known dates of construction and architects:

1. Holy Cross Church (ca. 1922 Cornelius A. Curtin, Architect- Renaissance Revival)
2. Church Rectory (ca. 1910, ren. 1948)
3. Holy Cross School Building (ca. 1902 D.A. Bohlen & Sons- Federal Style)
4. Gymnasium (ca. 1948)

Physical Description

Building 1: Holy Cross Church

Holy Cross Church, also known as the Church of the Holy Cross, features an open brick gable bordered by stepped corbeling. Originally, the church had pointed, arched, stained glass windows in the clerestory and segmentally arched windows along the aisles and flanking the pointed arch, rock-faced limestone ashlar center entrance. The Gothicism is seen most

1.



2.



3.



4.



prominently today in the original entrance. The prominent interior features of the church include the barrel-vaulted ceilings, the classical style cornices and pilasters.

Building 2: Church Rectory

The rectory building, also known as the Holy Cross Convent, is more stylistic of a residence than an institution. It was built circa 1910 as a three bay, irregular foursquare residence. It was later renovated in 1948. The 2-story, yellow brick building features a covered front porch that runs most of the length of the front façade. In addition, the building also has a side porch.

Building 3: Holy Cross School Building

The school building was built in 1902. The building features two separate entrances, as it was used as both a school and rectory/convent at the same time during different periods of the building's history. The architectural detailing can be seen in the fine course rock-faced limestone ashlar base that is topped by a solid red brick walls with limestone window framing, eared lintel and portico columns on the rectory section. The school portion retains limestone for the sill and an incised name block above the east door.

Building 4: Gymnasium

The gymnasium, also known as the Kelley Hall, was construction circa 1948. The exterior of the building is a buff brick with limestone trim. The building features an engraved stone over the entry that faces Oriental Street that reads "Holy Cross Hall". The fenestration of the building includes glass block, double hung and nine pane windows.

Section 4: Statement of Significance

Since 1896, Church of the Holy Cross has continued to serve as an architectural and social fixture in the near eastside neighborhood of Indianapolis. As of 2024, the church complex has four buildings built between 1902-1948; each one reflects the needs of its time and the history of the neighborhood as a whole. Church of the Holy Cross is historically significant for:

- (1) **Architectural value:** The 1922 church building serves as one of three early twentieth century Renaissance Revival Catholic churches in Marion County. Moreover, the former school and convent building was designed by D.A. Bohlen and Sons, a noted Indianapolis architectural firm.
- (2) **Historic/Neighborhood Value:** Holy Cross played a central role in defining neighborhood character and development Indianapolis' east side, particularly the Holy Cross-Westminster neighborhood.
- (3) **Cultural Value:** Holy Cross holds particular importance to late nineteenth and early twentieth century German and Irish Catholics' community heritage in Indianapolis.

The Center Township, Marion County Interim Report (1991) identified three structures within the Holy Cross complex as historically significant: the Church of the Holy Cross main building (ca. 1922) rated "Outstanding," the Holy Cross School building (ca. 1902) rated "Notable," and the Holy Cross rectory (ca. 1922) rated "Contributing." Church of the Holy Cross is also a contributing resource to the Holy Cross-

Westminster neighborhood, a designated historic district on the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures, the nomination of which dedicates a section to describing the Holy Cross church buildings.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed historic resource is comprised of four existing buildings:

5. Holy Cross School Building (ca. 1902)
6. Church of the Holy Cross Main Building (ca. 1922, add. 1945)
7. Church Rectory (ca. 1922)
8. Fatima Hall / Kelley Hall (ca. 1948)

Together, they form the Church of the Holy Cross complex, which grew in lot size and buildings over time to accommodate its operations, serving both the congregation and the community at large with its spaces.

The first Holy Cross building erected in 1896 served as the church, school, and convent; however, the congregation quickly set sights on a second, more monumental building – saving up funds for the project that would result in the present church building (ca. 1922) as early as 1909.¹ The 1896 Gothic Revival church building was severely damaged by a storm in 1927, losing much of its architectural character.² After the 1922 church building was completed, the original 1896 structure continued to operate as part of the Holy Cross School, until its demolition in 2001.³

Church of the Holy Cross Building (ca. 1922)

In 1922, Holy Cross built its second church building on the corner of Ohio and Oriental Streets. This structure was designed by Cornelius A. Curtin, a Louisville-based architect who had designed churches across Indiana and Kentucky. He brought a classical vocabulary to the Renaissance Revival design that set it apart from the mostly Gothic Revival Catholic churches of the time, a design choice evident in other Curtin churches such as St. Joseph Church (ca. 1903) in Shelbyville and St. Mary Church (ca. 1908) in Richmond. Other contemporary exceptions to the Gothic Revival church standard within Indianapolis included SS Peter and Paul (ca. 1907, classical façade addition in 1936) and St. Joan of Arc Church (ca. 1929).⁴

The church entrance (north) is comprised of Bedford limestone and framed by an arched pediment supported by Corinthian columns. A rose window sits on the north elevation above the pedimented entrance. Pilasters segment each bay, and an arched window populates each bay on the west and east elevations. The arched windows had ornate stained-glass windows commissioned from Zurich, Germany; in 2019, the church removed them.⁵ The east and west elevations are articulated in glazed brick. The building has two continuous limestone cornices: the lower, more ornate cornice has a dentil course that runs across each elevation, while the roofline cornice is more reserved. A 136-foot tall bell tower, with a pediment supported by Doric columns over its entrance, flanks the building on its southwest end. Overall, the building features over “twenty carloads” of Bedford limestone and over a million glazed bricks from Brazil, Indiana.⁶

The interior includes a barrel-vaulted ceiling with classical cornice moldings and pilasters. The pews seated 1,000 parishioners, oriented towards a nineteen-foot-tall Carrara white marble altar.⁷ In 1945, the space between the church and rectory was used to expand the priest sacristy space.⁸ This monumental church building, sitting on the corner of Ohio and Oriental Streets, stood as a symbol of and testament to Holy Cross' role as a center of the neighborhood.

Church Rectory

The church rectory served as the living quarters for the priest from its inception in 1922 until 1972, when it was converted into a convent and used for that purpose until 1996.⁹ The residential brick building is a three bay, two-story irregular foursquare house with a front and side porch, hipped roof, and hipped central dormer. In 1954, another bathroom was added. The building façade reflects a similar scale and vocabulary to other American foursquares in in the Holy Cross-Westminster neighborhood.

Holy Cross School & Sisters of Providence Convent (ca. 1902)

The school & convent building was the second structure to be built on church grounds, supplementing the original church building from 1896. The two-story brick building has a rock-faced limestone ashlar masonry base, stone lintels, and dormer windows. The west wing housed the Sisters of Providence Convent, who ran the school; this portion has more articulated architectural features, including a stone portico, an eared lintel on its central second-story window, and a central dormer that breaks the cornice. D.A. Bohlen & Sons – a multigenerational family-owned firm that designed other Indianapolis landmarks such as the Morris-Butler House (ca. 1864), Indianapolis City Market (ca. 1886), and the Murat Temple (ca. 1909) – designed the loosely Romanesque Revival style building, stylized with classical elements.¹⁰ The west wing operated as the sisters' convent until 1972, when it was used as the church rectory until 1987.¹¹ In 1988, Eastside Community Investments, a neighborhood nonprofit development corporation first chaired by Holy Cross' Father Byrne, renovated the wing to become affordable housing units under the name "Providence Place."¹² In 2000, Holy Cross started construction of a new addition to the school building and reincorporated the west wing for educational purposes.¹³ After 127 years of continuous operation – 121 of those in this building – the Holy Cross School closed having been the oldest parochial school in Indianapolis still operating in its original building.¹⁴

Gymnasium (Kelley Hall)

This parish house was erected in 1948 at the site where the church's groundskeeper's house once sat.¹⁵ The building is made of buff brick and Bedford limestone trim. The building is minimally stylized, though regular limestone capped pilasters maintain a classical rhythm on the exterior. The parish house provided a space for athletic and social activities, which ranged from bingo fundraisers in the 1950 and 1960s, to food pantry operations and at-risk youth counseling in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.¹⁶ While most often used for parishioner events, it also served as a space for public activities as early as 1949, including an amateur

boxing match, a square dance, and a polling location.¹⁷ The building was originally named Fatima Hall, and later changed to Kelley Hall in 1989 to honor Wilfrid Kelley.¹⁸

HISTORIC/CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Beginnings and the Early Twentieth Century

Holy Cross, since its inception in 1896, has served as a social and cultural center for its namesake neighborhood for over a century. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis established Holy Cross in response to a growing population of Irish and German Catholics in east Indianapolis, who had settled in the area during the mid-to-late nineteenth century.¹⁹ The original church building in 1896 seated 1,000 parishioners, the largest of all the Catholic churches in the city at the time.²⁰ Starting from 300 families, the congregation grew to 2,392 in 1909 and reached 3,600 by 1925.²¹ The number continued to hover around 3,000 parishioners up until 1952.²²

In the early twentieth century, a concentration of parishioners resided in a four to five block radius around the church, clustered along Market, Ohio, New York, and Oriental Streets as well as Marlowe and Arsenal Avenues.²³ The 136-foot-tall bell tower's rings could be heard from a mile away, signaling Sunday Mass.²⁴ Holy Cross served as the centerpiece to a predominantly German and Irish Catholic neighborhood, a social and economic haven from anti-Catholic hostility during the 1920s and 1930s elsewhere in the city.²⁵ Writer Joseph M. White described the church community as a tight knit neighborhood:

"The parish was thus very much an urban village. Many parishioners, then, were also neighbors, who, residing in houses built on small lots close to the street, might see each other on a daily basis in their neighborhood as well as in church or at its social events. This physical proximity of parish families to each other helped to develop the strong bonds of community for which Holy Cross became noted."²⁶

The church added to its neighborhood services by operating a school since 1896, teaching 200 students in its first year.²⁷ The school grew with the congregation, reaching 520 students in 1927 and teaching at least 400 students each subsequent year until 1939.²⁸ The school was included in nearby real estate listings as an amenity – a neighborhood character defining feature along with the church itself.²⁹ As the neighborhood became less Catholic and the church's congregation diminished in the latter half of the twentieth century, Holy Cross School opened its doors to everyone, with non-Catholic students making roughly half of the student body in 1978.³⁰

Post-WWII

The Holy Cross neighborhood suffered from post-World War II white flight away from the city center, with a loss in its longtime residents and fewer Catholics in the area. The congregation dwindled in this period, going from roughly 3,000 in 1952 to 1,185 in 1965 to roughly 600 in 1978.³¹ Despite no longer having a strong religious base, Holy Cross remained an important fixture in the community through its social programs, which reached beyond its parishioners and welcomed the general public. This included starting one of the largest food pantries in the city and an at-risk youth programming in Fatima Hall in

conjunction with Highland-Tech Youth Council and the city's Community Action Against Poverty program in the 1960s and 1970s.³²

This commitment to serving their surrounding community even as Catholicism diminished in the neighborhood earned the church headlines in the *Indianapolis Star* such as "Vibrant Young Parishioners Help Reverse Decline at Holy Cross," with other articles attributing Holy Cross' investment in the neighborhood as a major factor in its revitalization in the 1980s.³³

Throughout its existence, Holy Cross has had a unique identity tied to its neighborhood; when the Archdiocese of Indianapolis first planned to merge Holy Cross' congregation with St. Philip Neri in 1992, the community mounted a campaign against the act, successfully staving off a merger until its eventual closure in 2014.³⁴ Whether serving a primarily Irish and German Catholic neighborhood in the early twentieth century, or leading the efforts in revitalizing and supporting the area in the late twentieth century, Holy Cross has existed as an important neighborhood institution that exemplifies the near eastside's history and evolution.

Section 5: Preservation Objectives

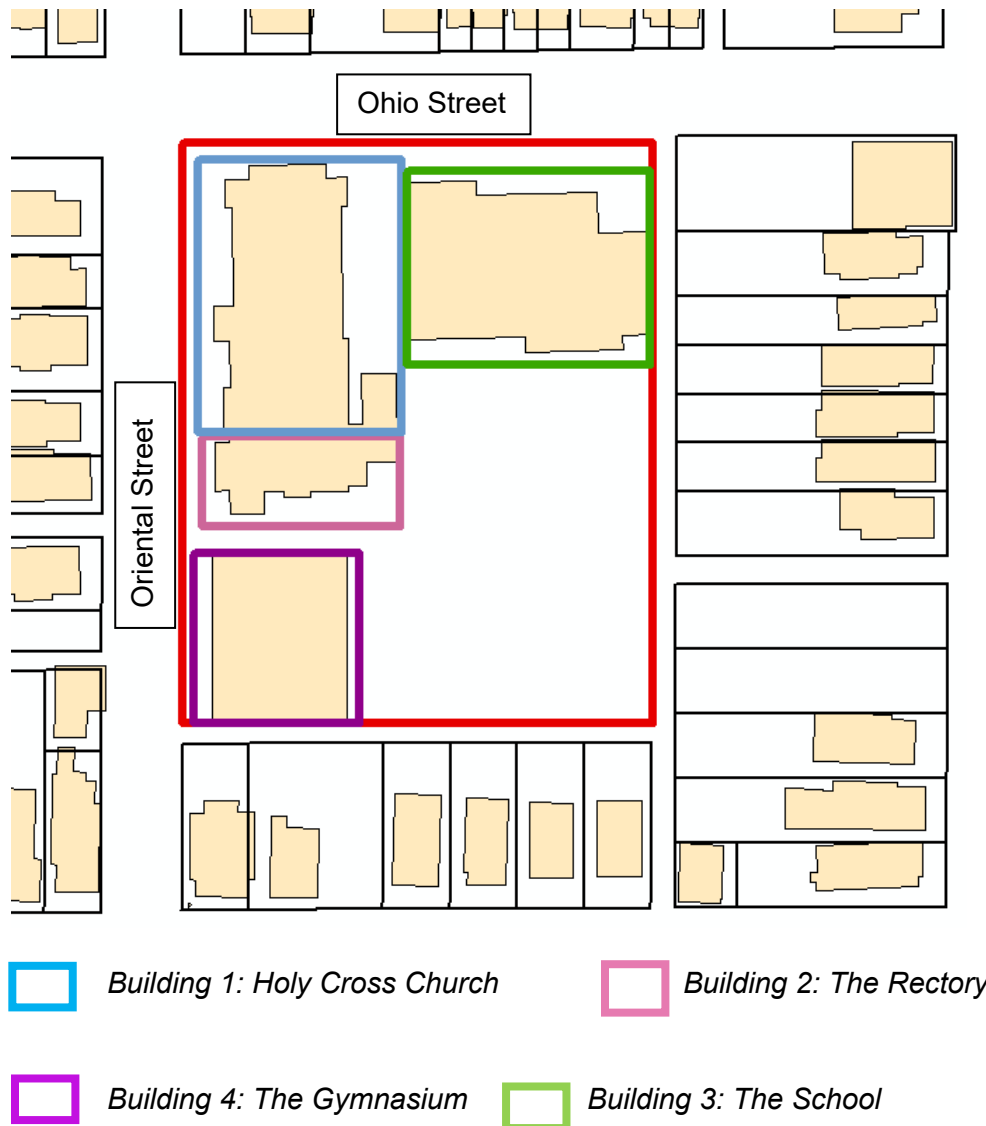
The subject structures on this campus, exterior features of the site and architectural and historic character thereof shall be preserved as a significant resource of Indianapolis and Marion County.

Section 6: Preservation Criteria

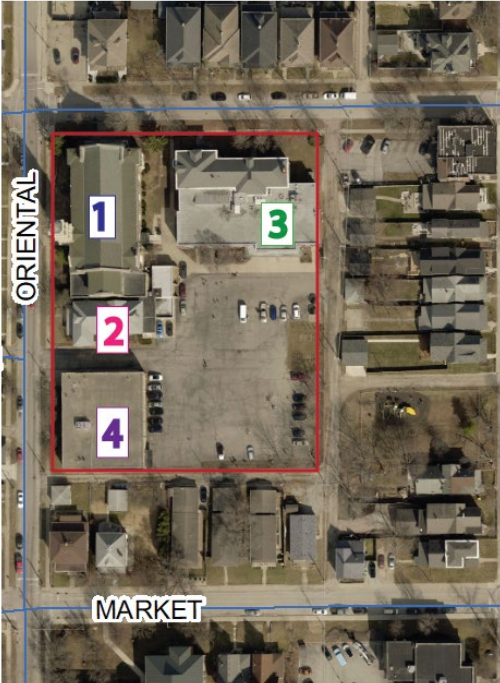
- A. Any development, construction, reconstruction, restoration, or alteration of the subject structure's interior, exterior, or site shall be appropriate to the property's historic and architectural values and significance.
- B. Any development, construction, reconstruction, restoration, or alteration to the exterior shall be visually compatible and appropriate in function, general design, arrangement, color, texture, and materials to the design and character of the historic area.
- C. The IHPC shall use the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: With Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitation, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*³⁵ to determine appropriateness when it reviews and makes decisions regarding development, construction, reconstruction, preservation, restoration, alteration, and demolition in the historic area.

Section 7: Identification and Designation of Historic Area

The parcel at 125 N. Oriental Street, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana is hereby identified and designated as an Indianapolis Historic Landmark. This plan has been prepared in accordance with the State Statute IC 36-7-11.1, which establishes and empowers the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission. After the approval of this plan by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission and its adoption by the Metropolitan Development Commission as part of the Marion County Comprehensive Plan, the provisions and requirements of IC 36-7-11.1 and this plan apply to all property and structures within the delineated area.



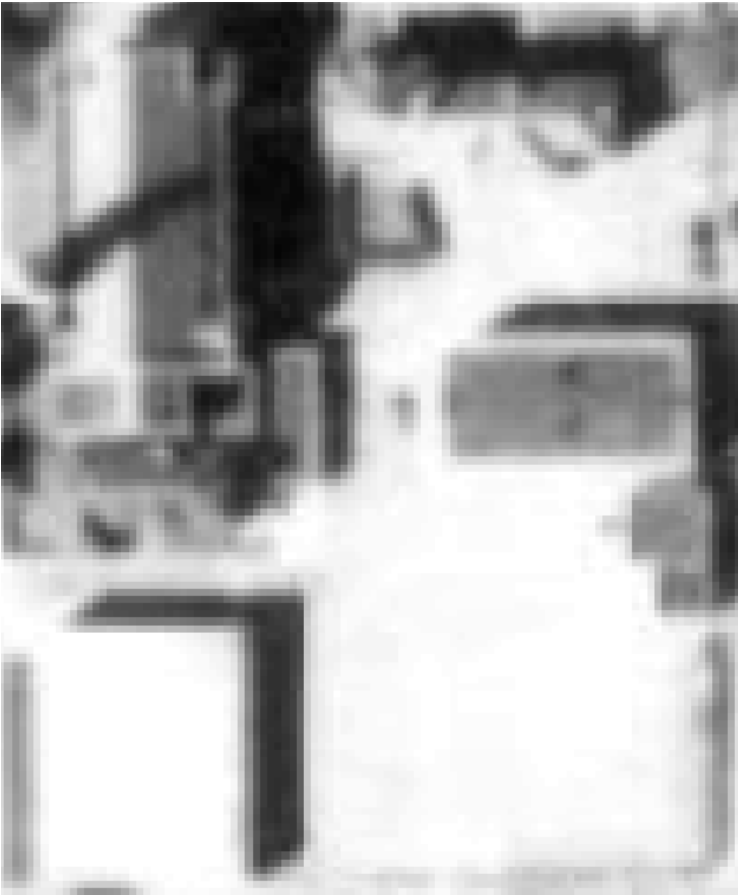
Section 8: Maps and Photographs



Aerial Photographs



1937 Photograph of Area



1950 Aerial Photograph



Historic Photograph: Encyclopedia of Indianapolis

Current Conditions Photos (taken March 23, 2024)
Holy Cross Church





Holy Cross Rectory (attached to church)



Gymnasium


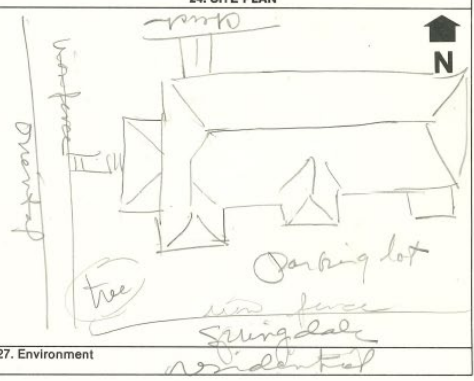


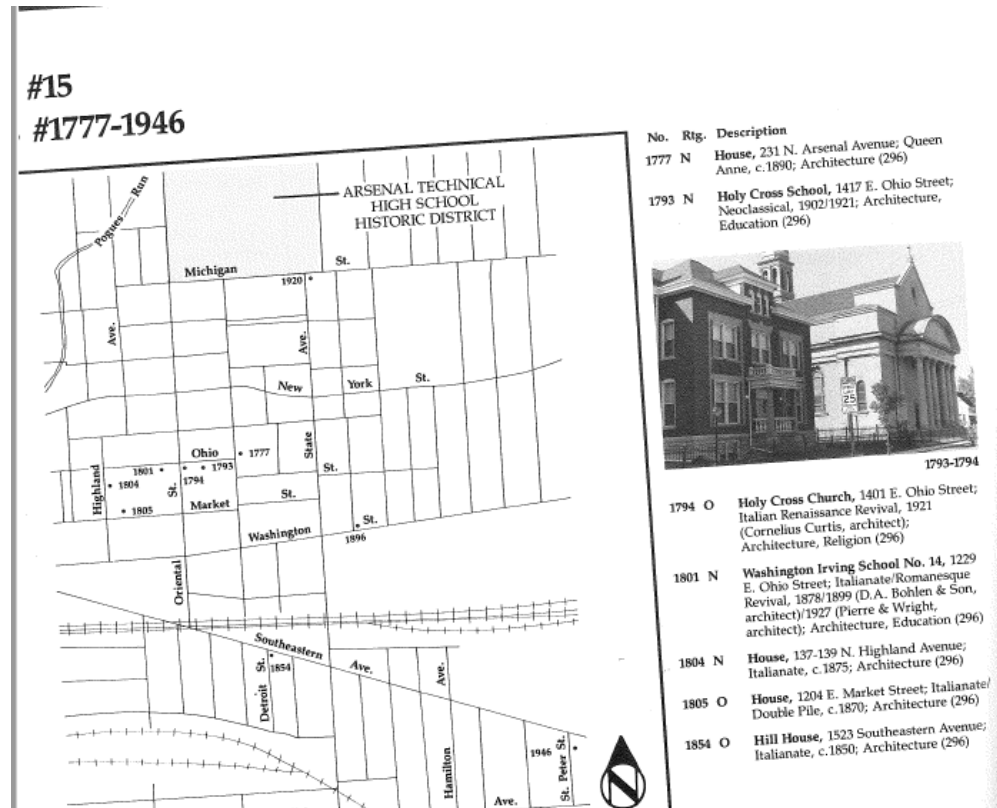
Holy Cross School Building



Section 8: Additional Documentation

IHSSI Survey Card-Rectory Building

1. Rating <input type="checkbox"/> Outstanding <input type="checkbox"/> Significant / Notable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contributing		2. County <i>Marion</i>	3. Survey No. <i>098-296-01795</i>
4. Historic Name <i>Holy Cross Church</i>		5. Township <i>Center</i>	Preliminary No. <i>098 296 01147</i>
6. Address <i>125 W Oriental</i>		7. City <i>Indy</i>	8. Quad Name <i>W Indy 194</i>
INDIANA HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES INVENTORY State of Indiana Department of Natural Resources State Form 16822 / Revised 1967			
			
9. Common Name <i>house</i>		10. Visible <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	11. Endangered <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Explain
12. Ownership <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private		Owner's Address (if different)	
13. Use Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	14. Category <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s) <input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	15. Surveys / Legal Protections	16. Location Notes / Legal Description <i>east side Oriental 2nd Hwy south of Ohio north of Springdale</i>
17. Condition <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	18. Integrity <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered <input type="checkbox"/> Moved Date moved		
19. Time Period(s) <i>c. 1910</i>	20. Style(s) <i>P</i>	21. Architect / Builder	
22. SPECIFY ALTERATIONS			
Removals	Replacement	Additions <i>al stoms</i>	Other
23. DESCRIPTION		24. SITE PLAN	
Stories <i>2</i>			
Plan <i>irregular</i>			
Foundation <i>brick</i>			
Walls <i>yellow brick</i>			
Roof <i>hipped black composition shingles</i>			
Porches <i>flat (west) yellow brick yellow kneewall concrete deck big composition roof</i>			
Openings <i>2h4, single + pair door original side hinged multi pane door</i>			
Interior			
Grounds / Outbuildings <i>tree grass W fence</i>			
25. No. of Contributing Resources <i>1</i>	26. No. of Non-contributing Resources <i>0</i>	27. Environment <i>residential</i>	



¹ Joseph Michael White, *An Urban Pilgrimage: A Centennial History of the Catholic Community of Holy Cross, Indianapolis, 1896-1996* (Indianapolis 1997): 30.

² White, 40.

³ "Ground Broken for New Holy Cross School," *Indianapolis Star*, June 2, 2000, C3.

⁴ White, 31.

⁵ "Stained Glass Windows Removed from Holy Cross Church," *WISH-TV*, July 15, 2019, <https://www.wishtv.com/news/stained-glass-windows-removed-from-holy-cross-church/>.

⁶ Ralph S. Pfau, *Church of the Holy Cross, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1896-1946*, Indianapolis 1946, pamphlet.

⁷ Pfau, *Church of the Holy Cross*.

⁸ White, 62-63.

⁹ White, 82.

¹⁰ Joseph Michael White, *An Urban Pilgrimage: A Centennial History of the Catholic Community of Holy Cross, Indianapolis, 1896-1996* (Indianapolis 1997): 118; "City News Notes," *The Indianapolis Journal*, December 8, 1901, 11.

¹¹ White 118.

¹² White, 108; Paul Bird, "Low-Income Housing at Holy Cross," *The Indianapolis News*, March 16, 1988, D-2.

¹³ "Ground Broken for New Holy Cross School," *Indianapolis Star*, June 2, 2000, C3.

¹⁴ "Ground Broken," 2000.

¹⁵ White, 65.

¹⁶ White, 97 & 101.

¹⁷ "Amateur Mitt Show Carded Wednesday," *Indianapolis Star*, May 15, 1949, 6; "Church Notes," *Indianapolis Star*, September 15, 1951, 10; "Public Notices," *Indianapolis Star*, November 2, 1996, B8.

¹⁸ White, 66.

¹⁹ Holy Cross/Westminster Historic District National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, *National Park Service*, April 26, 1985, 32.

²⁰ White, 3.

²¹ White, 39.

²² White, 40.

²³ White, 12.

²⁴ White, 75.

²⁵ White, 41.

²⁶ White, 12.

²⁷ White, 5.

²⁸ White, 47.

²⁹ “Real Estate,” *Indianapolis Star*, September 20, 1914, 29.

³⁰ Isabela Boyer, “Vibrant Young Parishioners Help Reverse Decline at Holy Cross,” *Indianapolis Star*, September 9, 1978, 13.

³¹ White, 84; Boyer, “Vibrant Young Parishioners.”

³² White, 101.

³³ Boyer, “Vibrant Young Parishioners;” Rob Schneider, “Holy Cross-Westminster: This Investment Returns Dividends to Neighborhood,” *Indianapolis Star*, June 20, 1982, 3F.

³⁴ Susan Reed, “Holy Cross Planning to Fight Merger,” *The Indianapolis News*, February 26, 1992, 1.

³⁵ Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: With Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitation, Restoring, & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, Diane Publishing Co., 1995.