NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

853

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED 2280

OCT 16 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Columba School

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 400 Craig Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Schenectady [N/A] vicinity

state New York code NY county Schenectady code 093 zip code 12307

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ruth A Pierpont DSHPO 10/7/15
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

[✓] entered in the National Register
[ ] see continuation sheet
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register
[ ] see continuation sheet
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register

[ ] removed from the National Register

[ ] other (explain)

Signature of the Keeper date of action

for Edson H. Beall 12·1·15

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

[X] private
[ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

[X] building(s)
[ ] district
[ ] site
[ ] structure
[ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	**0**	**TOTAL**

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: SCHOOL

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

20th CENTURY REVIVAL: COLLEGIATE GOTHIC

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK/CONCRETE
roof SYNTHETIC
other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

8. Statement of Significance

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

[x] **A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[ ] **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[x] **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[ ] **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

[ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] **B** removed from its original location

[ ] **C** a birthplace or grave

[ ] **D** a cemetery

[ ] **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure

[ ] **F** a commemorative property

[ ] **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance:
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance:

1923 - 1960

Significant Dates:

1923

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Walter H. van Guysling, M.L. & H. G. Emery

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

[ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
[ ] previously listed in the National Register
[ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register
[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark
[ ] recorded by historic American Building Survey
_____
[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
_____

Primary location of additional data:

[ ] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State agency
[ ] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[X] Other repository: Schenectady Co. Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .67 acres

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	5 8 6 9 3 1	4 7 3 9 7 1 6	3	18		
2	18			4	18		

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Lopez (edited by Emilie Gould, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation)

organization TAP, Inc date 01/26/15

street & number 210 River Street telephone (518) 274-3050

city or town Troy state NY zip code 12180

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

name Boys and Girls Club of Schenectady

street & number 400 Craig Street telephone (518) 374-4714

city or town Schenectady state NY zip code 12307

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 2050

Descriptive Summary

St. Columba School is located at 400 Craig Street in the midtown Hamilton Hill neighborhood of the city of Schenectady, Schenectady County, in eastern New York. Built in 1923, this parochial school is a 27,000 SF, three-story building with a raised first floor. It is constructed of reddish-brown brick masonry laid up in common bond. The rectangular footprint of its classroom core is flanked by stair towers for the separate Boys and Girls entrances. The towers include an intermediate floor between the second and third classroom floors for restrooms and offices. The building is designed in the Collegiate Gothic style, emphasized by white Indiana limestone buttress amortizements, pinnacles, and a crenellated parapet on the façade, where most of the ornamentation appears. The limestone water table, sills, and prominent cornice below the brick parapet are carried onto the side (north and south) elevations. Behind the brick parapet is a flat roof.

Setting

St. Columba School is located on the west side of Craig Street, south of its intersection with Emmett Street; two 10-foot wide flagstone patios separate the primary (east) façade from the sidewalk. To the north on Emmett Street, between the school and sidewalk, are a small, triangular flagstone patio, concrete walkway to a side entrance, and vacant land where a convent stood until it burned in 2012. Vacant land continues to the rear (west) of the building, which is further landlocked by a public playground and the backyards of Stanley Street homes to the south. A fenced eighteen-space parking lot borders the school's south elevation. The immediate neighborhood is primarily residential, with simple, wood-frame one and two-family homes with double-decker porches, the latter characteristic of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century worker housing in Schenectady.

The parochial school building is the surviving resource of a former parish complex that included three other buildings. The church, which the city demolished in 1989, was located on what is now a paved lot across from the school on the east side of Craig Street; the convent at the rear of the school burned in 2012; and the former rectory is part of a tract of two-family houses a block east of the school.

Exterior

Buttresses divide the façade (east) of the classroom core into three bays and also demarcate the stair towers at the north and south ends of the building as additional, single bays. The central bay contains the main entrance (more in the next paragraph) below second and third-story groupings of five modern, rectangular casement windows topped with metal infill panels; a 1960 photograph shows the original nine-over-one, double-hung windows. On the flanking bays, the modern first floor windows are in larger elongated openings, now filled with single inoperable panes of glass below metal in-fill panels. The same 1960 photograph shows that the original windows had three levels of sash: a bottom operable single-pane window, surmounted by monumental, nine-over-nine double-hung windows. Above the first floor, the flanking bays contain the same banks of five casement windows with metal in-fill panels as in the central bay. All windows are inserted into the original openings which retain their stone lintels and sills.

The main entrance in the central bay protrudes toward Craig Street with a crenellated white Indiana limestone pediment surmounted by a stone cross and "St. Columba School" spelled in bas relief on the frieze. Buttresses on each side of the entrance have elaborate pinnacles, also in stone, and the side wall contains a narrow window to light the vestibule. The entrance has been blocked, but 1960 photographs show triple wood doors with divided lights on the doors' upper halves. At the roofline the central bay is surmounted by more crenellation below the brick parapet. Stone pinnacles crown each buttress and a metal domed cupola covers an alcove featuring a statue of sixth-century Irish abbot St. Columba. The cupola is ornamented with tracery and its metal dome is surmounted by a cross.

The original Boys and Girls side entrances, with metal and glass, double commercial doors, also protrude from the base of the flanking stair towers. These entrances feature heavy stone arch hood moldings with buttresses, pinnacles, and side windows akin to the main entrance. Above the first floor, pairs of casement windows with metal in-fill panels fill the original window openings at all stories of the stair towers, which once had paired nine-over-one double-hung windows.

The side (north and south) elevations are identical. The stair towers here are two bays wide, with each bay featuring two narrow, vertical replacement windows with awning panels fit into the original window openings. Historic photographs from 1923 and 1960 show the original nine-over-one, double-hung windows.[1] As previously mentioned, the ornamentation on each side elevation is limited to the stone cornice, corner buttresses, and water table.

The rear (west) elevation is utilitarian and devoid of ornamentation. Like the façade, the three bays carry banks of five casement windows with in-fill metal panels in the original openings at the second and third stories. The original first-floor fenestration has been obscured by the protruding rear of the stage, which occupies the middle of this elevation at grade. A square brick chimney rises well above the roof-line.

Interior

St. Columba School retains its original 12-room plan, with wide corridors on the second and third floors, flanked on each side by three classrooms of equal size. These corridors are bookended by the stair towers; the stairs are metal and concrete with metal gratings instead of balusters. The half level in the stair towers between the classroom floors has restrooms at the NE and NW corners. The half level above has similarly sized and placed rooms that may have served as offices. One of the rooms at the landing between the second and third floors originally served as the principal's office, while one of the landings at the third floor held the library.

An auditorium (originally its sole purpose, now also a basketball court) makes up the entire first floor. It features a painted coffered ceiling with modern fluorescent lighting, four stylized columns, and newer hardwood floors. The sole ornamentation is the white-painted pilasters and curved moldings of the proscenium. The blocked entrance is visible. Above it is a small booth and opening for projecting films.

[1] *The Columbian* [Yearbook], (Schenectady, NY: St. Columba School, 1960), frontispiece.

All twelve classrooms retain all of their historic characteristics. Each classroom has a bank of five closely spaced windows on the outside wall and a narrow cloakroom on the inner wall. Above each cloakroom, a row of five, nine-light clerestory windows (some blocked) separates corridor and classroom. Each room has three blackboards, along with hardwood floors and substantial stained and varnished wood trim for the doors, windows, and blackboards. One room retains most of its fittings as a laboratory. All classroom ceilings are plaster with the exception of two rooms, which have acoustical tile ceilings.

Modern finishes are limited to fluorescent lighting throughout the building, drop ceilings of acoustical panels in the second-floor corridor, and vinyl commercial floor tile in the second-floor hallway. (The original quarry floor tile remains on the third-floor.) Nearly all classroom doors are modern commercial replacements, but there are exceptions. The few remaining four-panel wood doors have nine-light glazing, replicated in a transom above.

Summary Statement of Significance

St. Columba School in Schenectady, NY, is an intact example of an early twentieth-century school that is locally significant under criterion A in the area of education because of its association with the twentieth-century growth of local parochial schools in the Diocese of Albany. The diocese's Catholic schools were seen as a means of protecting the Catholic faith and preserving the cultural heritage upon which the area's immigrant parishes were founded. The school served as a unifying force for Schenectady's Irish population, the city's oldest immigrant group, which by the 1920s was dispersed throughout the city. The school also drew students from the mix of Italians and Poles in the immediate Hamilton Hill neighborhood.

In addition, St. Columba School is significant under criterion C in the area of architecture because it exemplifies the standardized school design of its era. Specifically, the 1923 building's reinforced concrete construction, spacious lofty classrooms, and expansive banks of windows illustrate concerns and standards related to fireproofing and safety, as well as optimal ventilation, heating, and lighting to promote a healthy learning environment. Noted Albany architects Walter H. van Guysling and M.L. and H.G. Emery designed St. Columba School following these standards.

The building's construction date of 1923 to the beginning of the area's population decline in 1960 serves as its period of significance.

Schenectady History

Schenectady is a mid-size, formerly industrial city located on the south shore of the Mohawk River in eastern New York. Because of its strategically located rail lines and its presence on the Erie Canal (which Schenectady's early Irish population helped build), the city enjoyed modest growth in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Population began to grow more quickly after the founding of the Schenectady Locomotive Works in 1848 and the General Electric Company in 1886.Through a merger with seven other builders, Schenectady Locomotive Works became the American Locomotive Company (ALCO), the world's largest locomotive manufacturer by 1901. GE developed large-scale electrical distribution systems on the basis of a patent granted to famed inventor Thomas Alva Edison around 1887. By the early twentieth century, GE had become a global concern that employed thousands of Schenectadians for generations.

In particular, ALCO and GE fueled massive growth in the first decades of the twentieth century, as thousands of immigrants came to work in their plants. The population of Schenectady in 1900 was about 32,000 people. By 1910, the city was home to 72,826 people, and population peaked at 95,692 people in 1930. The local economy hit its pinnacle during and immediately after WWII when ALCO had 15,000 employees and GE employed nearly 40,000 workers.[2]

---

[2] Bill Buell, *Historic Schenectady County: A Bicentennial History* (San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2009), 50.

Immigrants – first the Irish and Germans, and then Poles and Italians – supplied much of this manpower. The Irish and Germans arrived in the mid to late nineteenth century, followed by large waves of Italians and Poles at the turn of the twentieth century. These later immigrants formed the strongest ethnic enclaves, with the larger group, Italians, forming a downtown neighborhood, and Poles moving first east along Eastern Avenue, then west into the Mont Pleasant neighborhood.[3]

The Hamilton Hill neighborhood developed around this time as the county sold off its vast land holdings, including the "poor farm" and fairgrounds. It soon became the largest tract of nearly identical double-decker two-family homes in the city. [4]

St. Columba Parish

With the encouragement of the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese, all of Schenectady's ethnic groups began establishing parishes in quick succession in the first decade of the twentieth century. Soon after, many of these ethnic parishes added schools. This building program was founded on American church policy dating to the nineteenth century, when overlapping parishes were developed to serve immigrant Catholics in their own languages; thereafter, the bishops mandated the building of schools near every church and obligated parents to send their children to parish schools. This strict approach was intended both to preserve the cultural heritage of the many national churches and to ward off the perceived threat to the Catholic faith by public education, which leaned toward Protestantism and was becoming increasingly secular. National enrollment grew from 400,000 students in 1880 to over 1.8 million students in 1920.[5]

The last county land sale occurred in Hamilton Hill in 1901, and St. Columba Church was founded in 1907 on the poor farm site on the east side of Craig Street, south of its intersection with Emmett. A white, wood-frame vernacular Gothic church was erected directly behind Sacred Heart, the French Catholic Church established just four years earlier.

Unlike the Italian church (St. Anthony's, founded in 1902) and the Polish churches (St. Mary's and St. Adalbert's, both founded in 1903), St. Columba was a "mission" church, established to handle the overflow from St. John the Baptist Church, which the Irish built in 1865 on downtown Franklin Street.[6] Despite its subordinate status, St. Columba, named after the sixth-century Irish abbot, was intended to serve the same purpose for the Irish as the national churches did for other ethnicities.

---

[3] Robert R. Pascucci, *Electric City Immigrants: Italians and Poles of Schenectady, NY, 1880-1930*" [Study], Chapter 1 *passim*.

[4] Neil Larson, *City of Schenectady Historic Resource Survey: A Reconnaissance-level Survey Conducted for the Schenectady Urban Cultural Park and Department of Development*, vol.2, (Troy, NY: Historic Architecture Field Services, 1993), 66-71.

[5] Nancy A. Goblet, edited and expanded by Kathleen LaFrank, *Saints Cyril and Methodius Slovak Roman Catholic School*, [National Register Nomination], (Albany, NY: New York State Historic Preservation Office, 2007), section 8: 6.

[6] "St. Columba, Schenectady, NY," *Marriages, April 1908-October 1974* [Book NY052-02]. Manchester, NH: American-Canadian Genealogical Society, 1999. (Available at Grems-Doolittle Library, Schenectady County Historical Society, Schenectady, NY.)

However, not all ethnic parishes equally supported parochial education. Polish Americans, anxious to preserve their customs and language, readily established schools. Italians were more tepid about this goal, favoring public schools to help their children assimilate.[7] As Irish nationalism became more of a cultural force in Europe, the Irish became more concerned about preserving their identity in America.

Cast in this light, the Horace Mann School, built in 1908 just one block from the new St. Columba parish, likely embodied a threat. As early as 1914, St. Columba's popular second pastor, the Rev. John J. Lynch, vowed to build a parochial school on the parish campus before stepping down. In addition to appealing to Irish Catholics, Lynch went door to door securing pledges from the mixed population of Italians, Germans, and Poles who lived in Hamilton Hill. When complete, St. Columba's inspirational Collegiate Gothic design and religious iconography contrasted strongly with the plainer Horace Mann School.

Lynch's building program had support from diocesan leadership. In 1919, Edmund F. Gibbons became the new Bishop of Albany. He came to the diocese from Buffalo where he had been superintendent of Catholic schools as well as a parish priest, and served the Albany diocese for 35 years until 1954, shepherding the growth of religious vocations and supporting additional programs of parish building.[8] However, education was perhaps his key theme. Gibbons oversaw the founding of the College of Saint Rose in Albany, Siena College in the nearby town of Colonie, Mater Christi (a "minor" seminary preparing high school graduates for study at a "major" seminary), 22 high schools, 82 grade schools, and the diocesan newspaper, *The Evangelist*.[9]

In September 1923 the bishop presided over the dedication of St. Columba School, which was attended by 2,000 people. Gibbons began the dedication by leading prayers in the church. A procession then walked across the street to the school, where Gibbons blessed the exterior and interior. Gibbons's sermon confirmed the church's policy of building parochial schools to provide a Christian education. He was diplomatic in answering a question about why parochial schools were being built in addition to public schools. While he pronounced public schools as "excellent," he also said the church must provide doctrinal elementary education, or children would grow up "Godless."[10] Gibbons continued that the chief goal of St. Columba School would be "character training."[11]

Gibbons enlisted as teachers and administrators the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Carondelet, the order which emigrated from France in 1836 to teach deaf children in the village of Carondelet in Missouri. The order came to New York State in 1858. By the time St. Columba opened, they had already established 40 schools in the state, as well as several hospitals and colleges.[12] The Sisters of Saint Joseph opened St. Columba with grades first through fourth; by 1934 they had expanded to twelve grades, first through high school. A convent (since destroyed by fire) was built north of the school on Emmett Street to house 20 sisters.

---

[7] Pascucci, Chapter 6 *passim*.
[8] Georgina Pell Curtis, *The American Catholic Who's Who XIV*, (Grosse Pointe, MI: Walter Romig, 1961).
[9] Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, "A Brief History." www.rcda.org/history.html
[10] "Gibbons Blesses New St. Columba's Parochial School," *Schenectady Gazette*, September 10, 1923.
[11] "New School at St. Columba's Dedicated," *The Schenectady Union-Star*, September 10, 1923.
[12] Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, "Our History." csjalbany.org/index.cfm/History

Period School Design

The style and construction of St. Columba School closely reflect the increasing standardization of school design at the beginning of the twentieth century. Main concerns – fire safety, proper ventilation, heating, and lighting – continued to be discussed and regulated at the national and state level up until the structure was built in 1923, but only to fine-tune standards dating to at least 1900. Little in the literature and regulations between 1910 and 1923 required major changes to established plans, spaces, functions, or external appearance.[13]

Fireproofing in the use of brick, terra cotta, and reinforced concrete had become the standard a decade before St. Columba was built, so emphasis turned to safe egress through the arrangement of stairs and corridors.

Ventilation, so much the subject of study since the late nineteenth century because of its association with quelling illness, did receive renewed attention between 1910 and 1923. Some advocates debunked the practice of flushing classrooms with large quantities of blown air to enhance the oxygen level and dispel carbon dioxide. Instead, heating practice moved from gravity, forced-air systems to direct heat supplied by cast-iron radiators. The St. Columba School in fact had such radiators to directly supply heat.[14]

The practice of providing classrooms with ample natural light from the left direction, through generous banks of windows, remained the standard, with the added recommendation that it also come from the east or west. With electric lighting well established, schools of the 1920s added artificial light to accommodate programmatic needs.[15]

Finally, part of the standardization of school design included a restrained approach to exterior design; one estimate states that 75 percent of schools built in the early twentieth century were based on Tudor and Collegiate Gothic styles because of their scholastic connotations.[16]

St. Columba as a Period School

St. Columba School exemplifies the trademark construction methods and design of schools of its era. The building's flat roof, brick cladding, reinforced concrete structure, wide corridors, and stair orientation (with stair cases on opposite ends of the building) are all ingredients of the progressive fire safety practices of the time. Classrooms were heated with steam radiators instead of forced hot-air from a gravity system. The architects recognized the advance of artificial illumination and installed electric lights. In addition, to create an optimal learning environment, they made a long bank of windows inherent to the layout of each room in an east-west orientation. These rows of five windows also lent the façade its symmetry and supported the Collegiate Gothic style.

---

[13] Susanne R. Warren, *The Schools of New York State: Development of the School as a Building Type* [Context Study], (Albany, NY: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1990), 153-154; 199-200.
[14] Ibid., 215-216,
[15] Ibid., 211-214.
[16] Ibid., 249.

The small classrooms of St. Columba School did veer from the standard 22' by 28' classrooms of public schools. These square classrooms measured 16' by 16.' At its opening, the *Schenectady Gazette* noted that the seating capacity of the class rooms was about 50 pupils and the auditorium was expected to seat about a thousand.[17]

The Architects

The Albany Diocese seemed to spare no expense in building St. Columba and commissioned the prestigious Albany architects Walter H. van Guysling and brothers M.L. and H.G. Emery to design the school. Van Guysling is known for his whimsical interpretations of Dutch architecture, as in the Hudson River Day Line and R.B. Wing buildings in Albany. In addition, he designed other landmark buildings sprinkled throughout that city, among them the Gothic Revival Philip Schuyler School, which shares details with St. Columba.[18] The Emery brothers are best known for the Beaux Arts Elks Lodge on State Street in Albany, as well as their design for the Gothic steeple of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, whose spire still dominates the Albany skyline.[19] All these buildings are on the National Register, including the Elks Lodge, of which, only the façade remains.

For the St. Columba commission, the architects settled on what is best described as Collegiate Gothic, a subgenre of the Gothic Revival style. They made generous use of crenellation above the main entrance and Boys and Girls side entrances. Buttresses mark all three entrances and define the bays of the main (east) façade. The main entrance is also marked by relief sculpture, another Collegiate Gothic trait, and a cupola with elaborate tracery and a cross at the center of the roofline. Nonetheless, this ornamentation is relatively restrained and nearly devoid on the remaining elevations, in keeping with the goal of efficiency.

Closure and Recent History

Just as the founding of St. Columba parish and school mirrored the growth of ethnic communities in Schenectady in the early twentieth century, so the decline of both reflected population loss as families moved to the suburbs after World War II, resulting in increasing costs for aging members left to support urban parishes. Schenectady's population peaked in 1950 at 91,785; ten years later, it was 81,682.[20]

This triggered a change in diocesan school policy. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Gibbons' successor, Bishop William Scully, endeavored to centralize high school education instead of relying on parish support. As a result, Bishop Gibbons High School for boys and Notre Dame High School for girls were opened in 1958 and 1959.[21] St. Columba School merged its elementary school with St. Joseph High School in 1960, but enrollment continued to decrease. Meanwhile, a shortage of teaching nuns resulted from wider career choices for women. The high school closed in 1969 and, citing small enrollment, the diocese closed the grade school in 1974.

---

[17] "Gibbons Blesses."
[18] Diana S. Waite, ed., *Architects in Albany* (Albany, NY: Mount Ida Press, 2009), 35.
[19] Ibid.
[20] New York State Office of the State Comptroller (Division of Local Government Services and Economic Development), "Population Trends in New York State's Cities," *Local Government Issues in Focus* 1.1 (2004), 7.
[21] Notre Dame-Bishop Gibbons School, "ND-BG: History." nd-bg.org/about/history/

Simultaneously, the congregation of St. Columba was merged with that of Sacred Heart (originally a French parish), whose smaller, brick-masonry Gothic church was just around the corner on Stanley Street. Though increasingly deteriorated, St. Columba Church continued to be used for parish programs and as a police outreach center until the city demolished it in 1989, citing the structure as a public hazard and leaving the empty lot that remains today across from St. Columba School. The combined Sacred Heart-St. Columba parish closed in 2008 as part of a diocesan plan to close or merge dozens of parishes throughout its borders and, in 2012, the abandoned convent building to the north of the church burned down.

The Boys and Girls Club bought and has occupied the St. Columba School building since 1976.[22]

Integrity

St. Columba School fully supports National Register criteria A and C in the areas of education (parochial school development) and architecture for its period of significance, 1923-1960. The school is locally significant and retains a remarkable degree of architectural integrity. It continues to read as an early twentieth century parochial school because of its highly intact exterior, as well as an interior largely unaltered since the building was constructed in 1923.

St. Columba's purpose, to keep intact Irish Catholicism, mirrored diocesan and national goals to protect the faith and preserve the heritage of parishioners in the new neighborhoods of early twentieth century Schenectady. The school's setting has been altered by the loss of the parish church but, overall, the community retains the worker housing associated with the construction of the building. Exterior alteration is confined to the blocked main entrance and replacement windows which do not disrupt the original opening sizes or fenestration. The interior plan retains the original layout of classrooms flanking double-wide corridors, with many surviving features such as blackboards, cloakrooms, and sturdy wood trim. The school's concrete construction, layout, and fenestration – all employed to maximize safety and provide an optimal learning environment – reflect standardized school design of the period. Ornamentation was executed with a high degree of workmanship and expressed a Collegiate Gothic mode as interpreted by locally-important architects Walter H. van Guysling and M.L. and H. G. Emery from Albany, NY. Overall, St. Columba School remains a dominant historic resource in Schenectady's Hamilton Hill neighborhood.

.

[22] "Sacred Heart-Columba To Note 75th Birthday," *Schenectady Gazette*, October 14, 1978.

Bibliography:

Buell, Bill. *Historic Schenectady County: A Bicentennial History*. San Antonio, TX: Historical Publishing Network, 2009.

The Columbian [Yearbook]. Schenectady, NY: St. Columba School, 1960.

Curtis, Georgina Pell. *The American Catholic Who's Who XIV*. Grosse Pointe, MI: Walter Romig, 1961.

Goblet, Nancy A., edited and expanded by Kathleen LaFrank. *Saints Cyril and Methodius Slovak Roman Catholic School* [National Register Nomination.] Albany, NY: New York State Historic Preservation Office, 2007.

"Gibbons Blesses New St. Columba's Parochial School." *Schenectady Gazette*, September 10, 1923.

Larson, Neil. *City of Schenectady Historic Resource Survey: A Reconnaissance-level Survey Conducted for the Schenectady Urban Cultural Park and Department of Development*. Vol.2. Troy, NY: Historic Architecture Field Services, 1993.

"New School at St. Columba's Dedicated." *The Schenectady Union Star*, September 10, 1923.

New York State Office of the State Comptroller (Division of Local Government Services and Economic Development). "Population Trends in New York State's Cities." *Local Government Issues in Focus* 1.1 (2004).

Notre Dame-Bishop Gibbons School. "ND-BG: History." nd-bg.org/about/history/

Pascucci, Robert R., *Electric City Immigrants: Italians and Poles of Schenectady, NY, 1880-1930* [Study]. Albany, NY: State University of New York at Albany, 1984. schenectadyhistory.org/resources/pascucci/

Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany. "A Brief History." rcda.org/history.html

"Sacred Heart-Columba to Note 75th Birthday." *Schenectady Gazette*, October 14, 1978.

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, "Our History." csjalbany.org/index.cfm/History

"St. Columba, Schenectady, NY," *Marriages, April 1908-October 1974* [Book NY052-02]. Manchester, NH: American-Canadian Genealogical Society, 1999. (Available at the Grems-Doolittle Library, Schenectady County Historical Society, Schenectady, NY.)

Waite, Diana S., ed. *Architects in Albany.* Albany, NY: Mount Ida Press, 2009.

Warren, Susanne R. *The Schools of New York State: Development of the School as a Building Type* [Context Study]. Albany, NY: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1990.

Additional Information

City of Schenectady, Assessor's Office (105 Jay Street, Schenectady, NY)

Sanborn Insurance Company Maps.

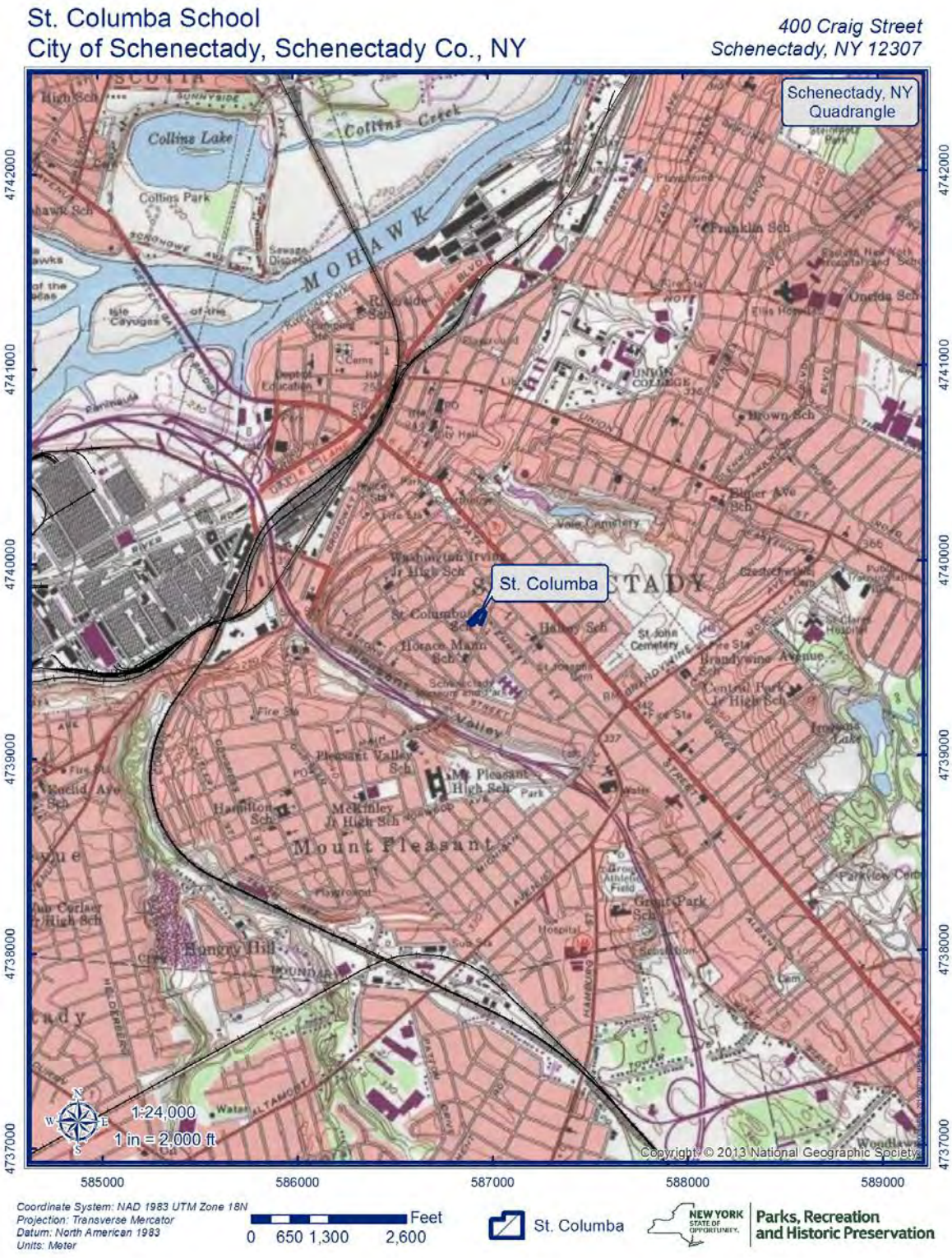
Schenectady County Historical Society (32 Washington Street, Schenectady, NY)

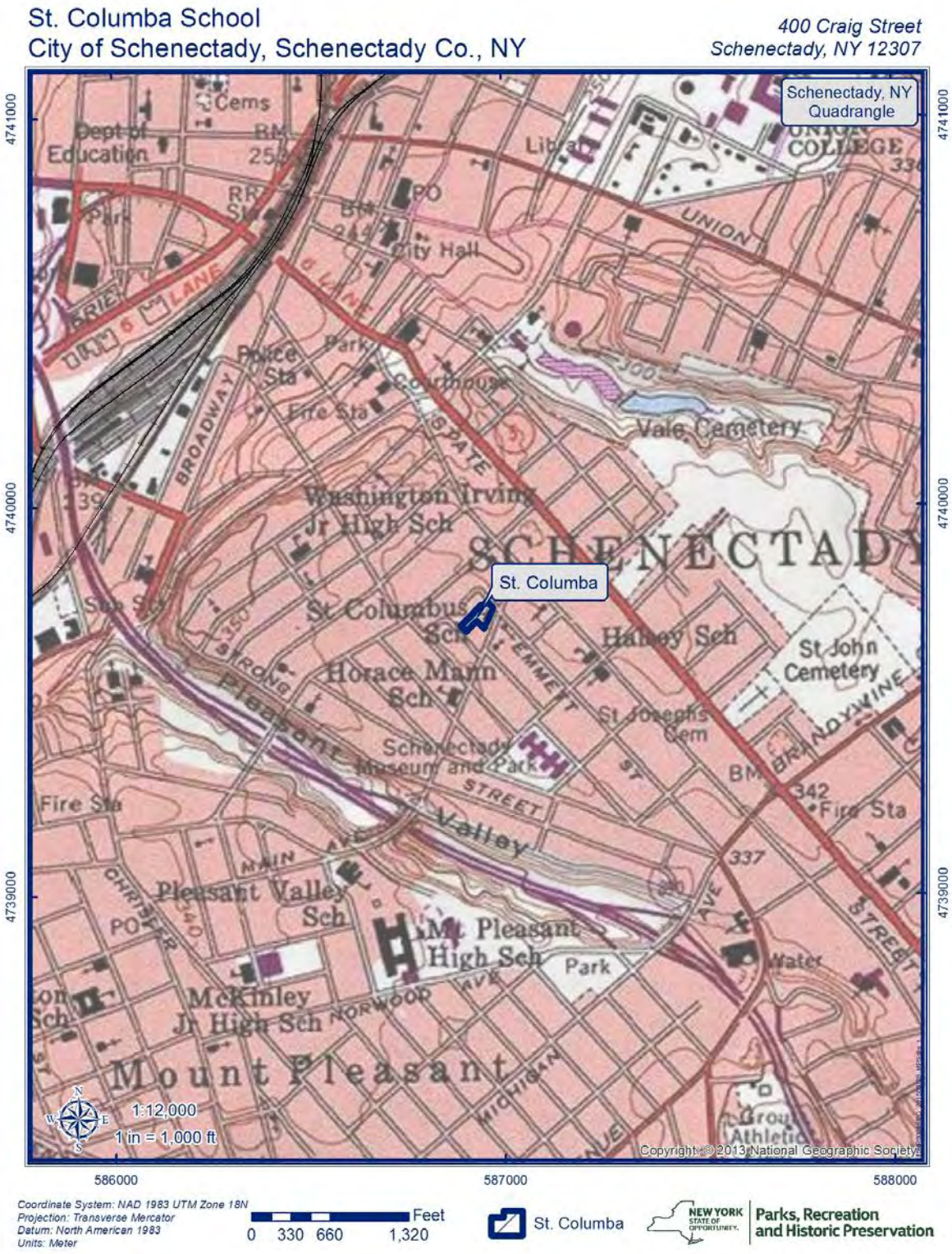
Verbal Boundary Description

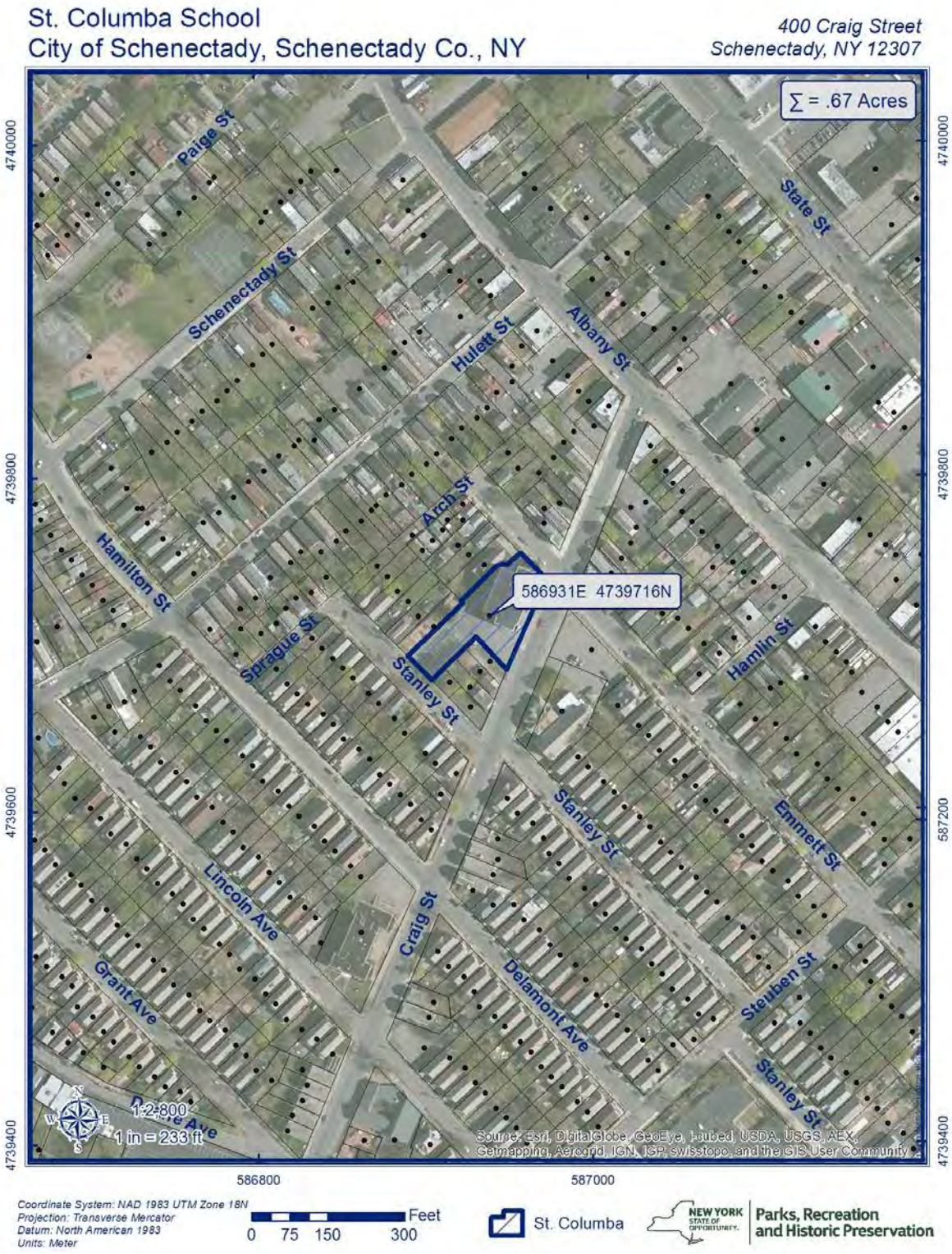
The nominated property is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is based on the current tax parcel (49.33-2-53.2) on which the school is located. The former sites of the convent and church have been subdivided and are excluded.


St. Columba School
City of Schenectady, Schenectady Co., NY
400 Craig Street
Schenectady, NY 12307
Schenectady, NY Quadrangle
St. Columba
Collins Lake
Collins Park
Collins Creek
MOHAWK
Mount Pleasant
Hungry Hill
1:24,000
1 in = 2,000 ft
Copyright © 2013 National Geographic Society
4742000
4741000
4740000
4739000
4738000
4737000
585000
586000
587000
588000
589000
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter
Feet
0 650 1,300 2,600
St. Columba
NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY.
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

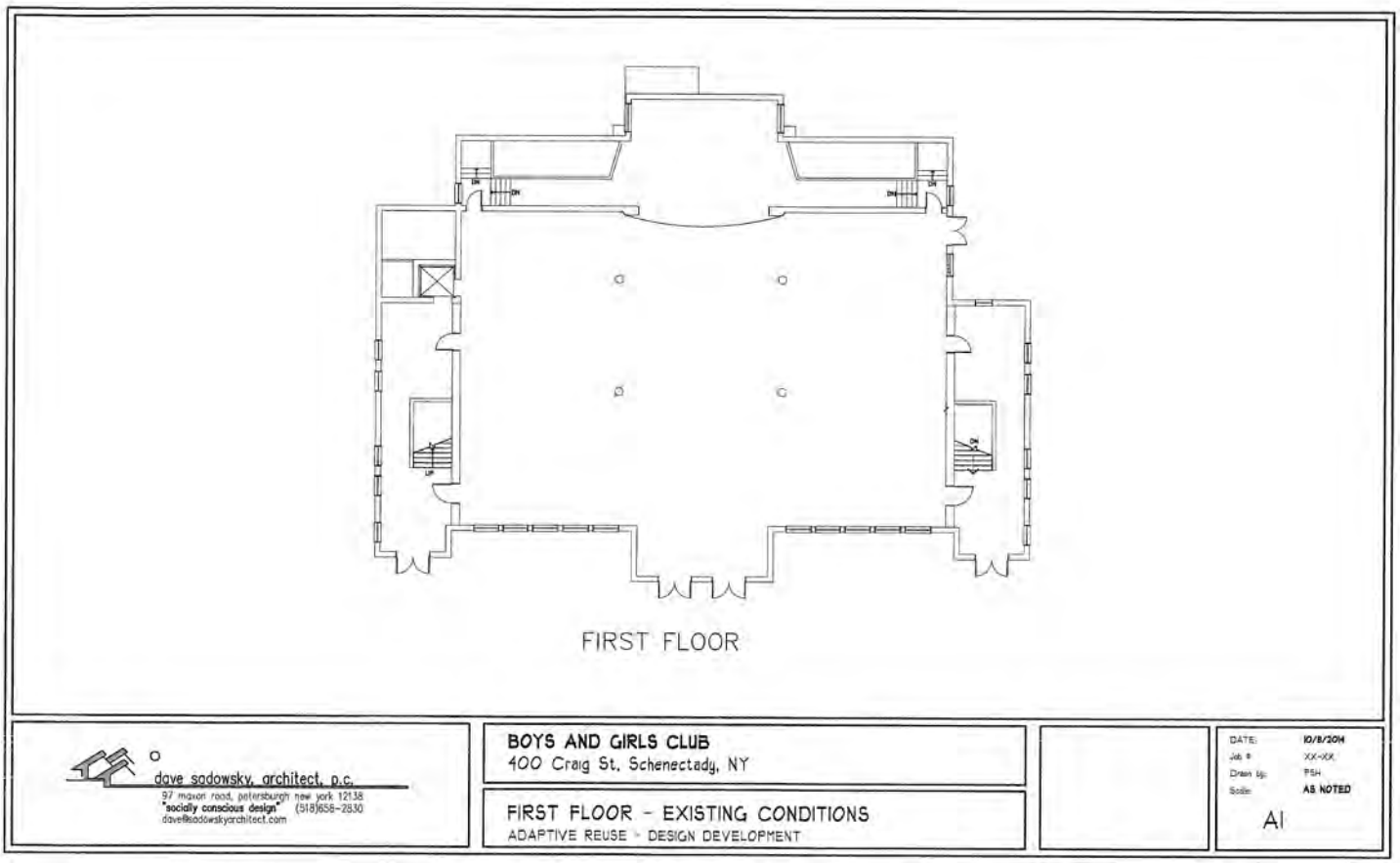

St. Columba School
City of Schenectady, Schenectady Co., NY
400 Craig Street
Schenectady, NY 12307
Schenectady, NY Quadrangle
St. Columba
Dept of Education
City Hall
Police Sta
Fire Sta
Vale Cemetery
Washington Irving Jr High Sch
SCHENECTADY
St Columbus Sch
Halley Sch
St John Cemetery
Horace Mann Sch
St Josephs Cem
Schenectady Museum and Park
Pleasant Valley Sch
Mt Pleasant High Sch
Park
McKinley Jr High Sch
Mount Pleasant
Water
Athletic
1:12,000
1 in = 1,000 ft
Copyright: © 2013 National Geographic Society
4741000
4740000
4739000
586000
587000
588000
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter
Feet
0 330 660 1,320
St. Columba
NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY.
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

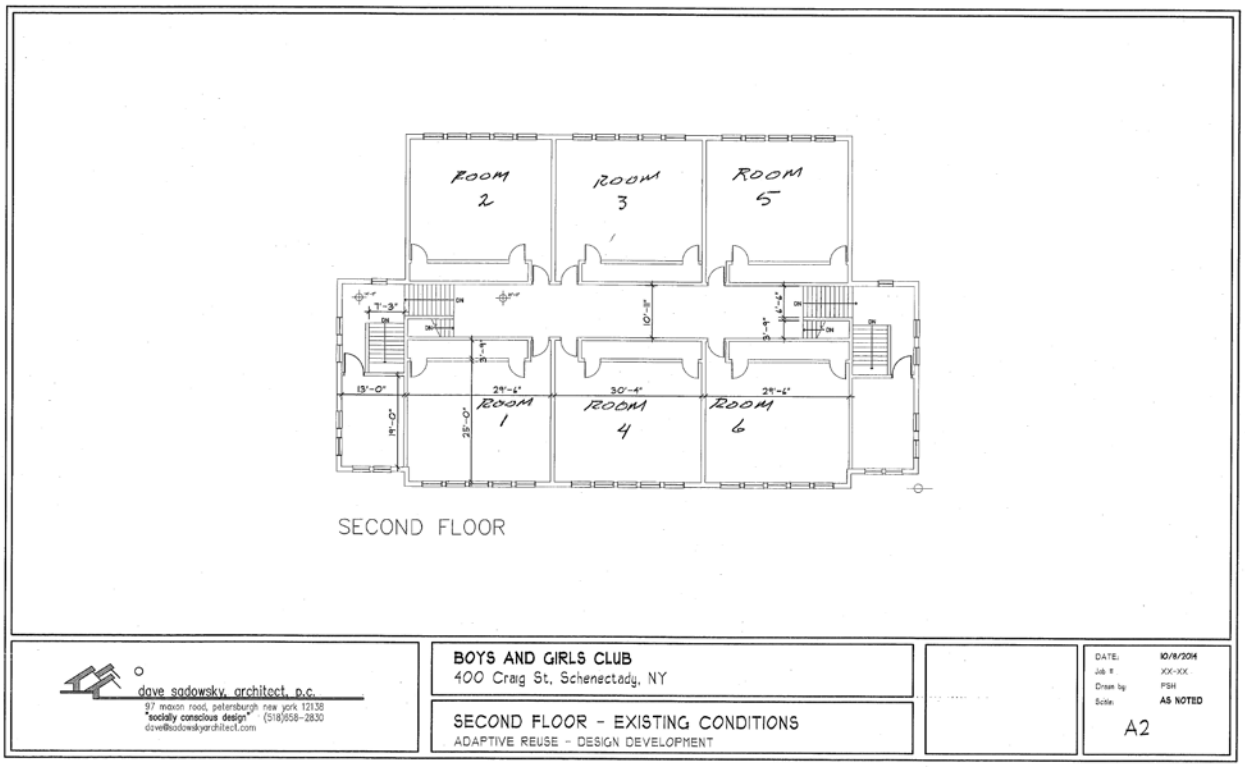

St. Columba School
City of Schenectady, Schenectady Co., NY
400 Craig Street
Schenectady, NY 12307
∑ = .67 Acres
586931E 4739716N
Paige St
Schenectady St
Hulett St
Albany St
State St
Arch St
Hamilton St
Sprague St
Stanley St
Hamlin St
Emmett St
Lincoln Ave
Craig St
Grant Ave
Delamont Ave
Steuben St
1:2,800
1 in = 233 ft
Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community
4740000
4739800
4739600
4739400
586800
587000
587200
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter
Feet
0 75 150 300
St. Columba
NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY.
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

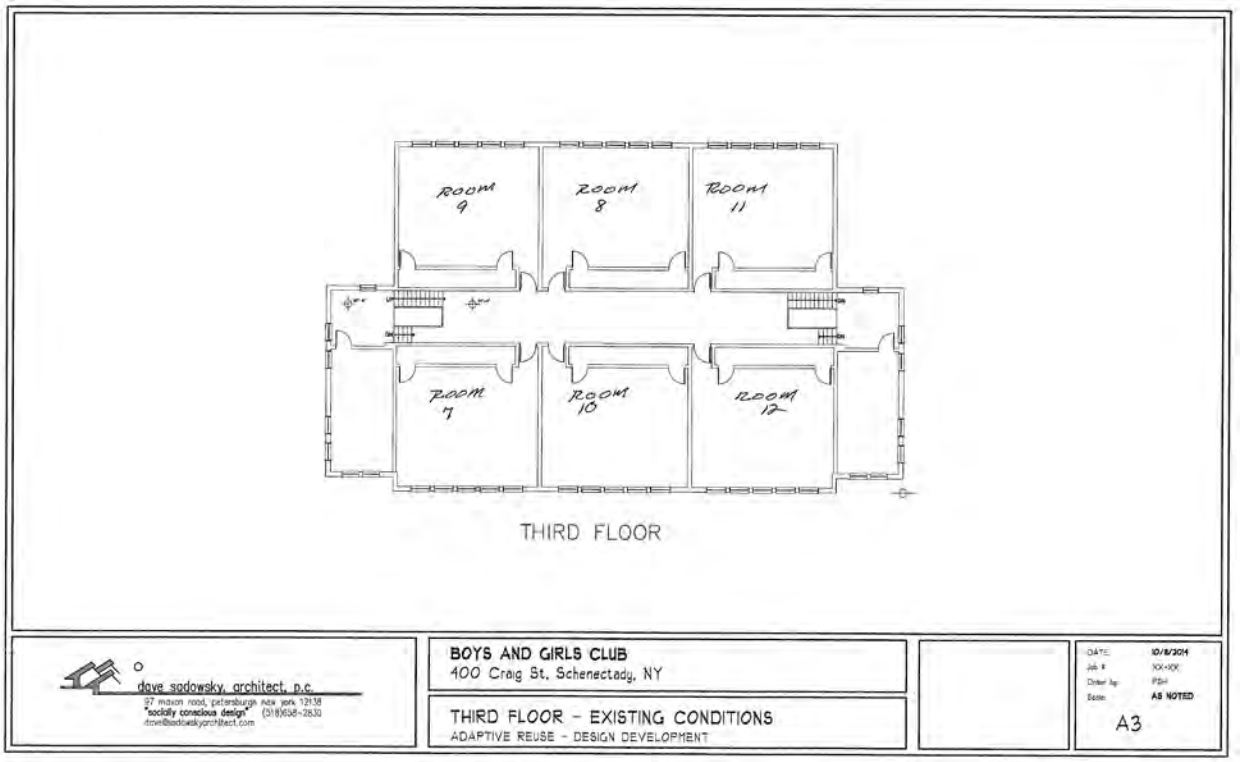
Tax Map: St. Columba School (400 Craig Street, Schenectady, NY)

Additional Information

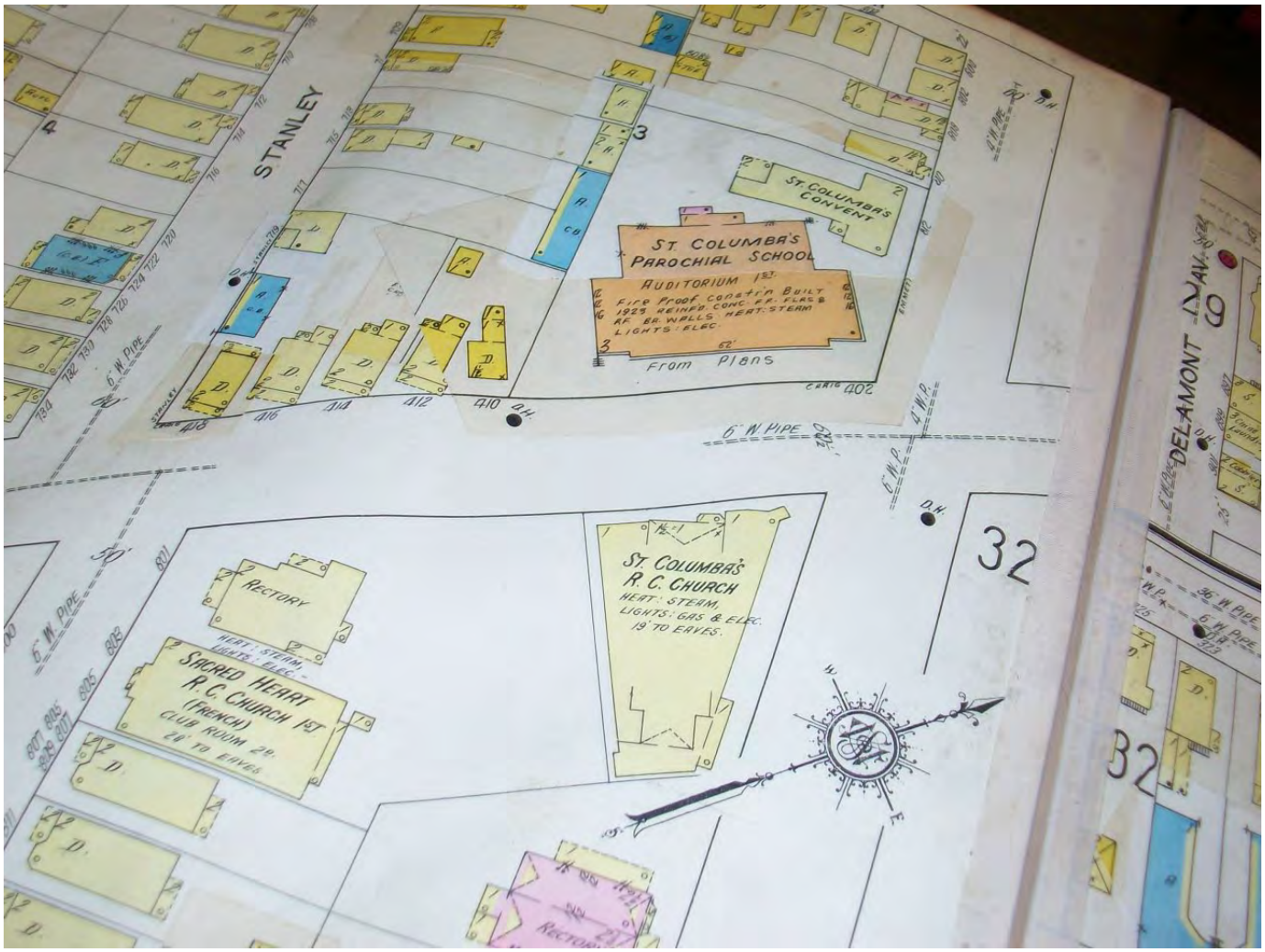
Floor Plans (Existing Conditions)




ROOM 2
ROOM 3
ROOM 5
ROOM 1
ROOM 4
ROOM 6
SECOND FLOOR
dave sadowsky, architect, p.c.
97 maxon road, petersburgh new york 12138
"socially conscious design" (518)658-2830
dave@sadowskyarchitect.com
BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB
400 Craig St, Schenectady, NY
SECOND FLOOR - EXISTING CONDITIONS
ADAPTIVE REUSE - DESIGN DEVELOPMENT
DATE: 10/8/2014
Job #: XX-XX
Drawn by: PSH
Scale: AS NOTED
A2


ROOM 9
ROOM 8
ROOM 11
ROOM 7
ROOM 10
ROOM 12
THIRD FLOOR
dave sadowsky, architect, p.c.
97 maxon road, petersburgh new york 12138
"socially conscious design" (518)658-2830
dave@sadowskyarchitect.com
BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB
400 Craig St, Schenectady, NY
THIRD FLOOR - EXISTING CONDITIONS
ADAPTIVE REUSE - DESIGN DEVELOPMENT
DATE: 10/8/2014
Job #: XX-XX
Drawn by: PSH
Scale: AS NOTED
A3

St. Columba School, *Sanborn Map*, 1924



The Columbian **[Yearbook]. Schenectady, NY: St. Columba High School, 1960.**

ST. COLUMBA'S HIGH SCHOOL

1960 YEARBOOK

The Columbian **[Yearbook]. Schenectady, NY: St. Columba High School, 1960.**

Note: Front entrance and windows

Comparable Building by architect Walter H. van Guysling: Philip Schulyer High School (69 Trinity Place, Albany, NY) – National Register (Mansion Historic District, Albany, NY)

List of Photographs

Name of Property:	St. Columba School (400 Craig Street)
City or Vicinity:	Schenectady
County:	Schenectady
State:	New York
Name of Photographer:	Michael Lopez
Date of Photographs:	October 1 and 9, 2014; August 1, 2015; October 2, 2015
Location of Original Digital Files:	Troy Architectural Program (TAP), 210 River Street, Troy, NY 12180
Number of Photographs:	15

KEY

NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0001	East facade	Oct 2, 2015
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0002	South elevation	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0003	Southwest corner	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0004	West (rear) elevation	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0005	Northwest corner	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0006	Ornamentation over entrance, east façade	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0007	Gym/Auditorium, first floor, looking northwest	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0008	Stage/Proscenium, first floor, looking west	Aug 6, 2015
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0009	Corridor, second floor, looking north	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0010	Corridor, second floor, east wall	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0011	Cloak room (typical), Room 7, third floor, looking south	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0012	Blackboard and cloakroom (typical), Room 10, third floor, looking west	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0013	Blackboard and cloakroom (typical), Room 12, third floor, looking west	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0014	Corridor, third floor, looking south	Oct 9, 2014
NY_Schenectady_St. Columba School_0015	Metal-grate balustrade, south stair tower, third floor	Oct 9, 2014

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT
City of Schenectady

JACLYN L. MANCINI
Director
(518) 382-5147 & 382-5149
E-Mail: jmancini@schenectadyny.gov

STEVEN STRICHMAN
Zoning & Empire Zone Officer
(518) 382-5049
E-Mail: sstrichman@schenectadyny.gov

CHRISTINE S. PRIMIANO
Principal Planner
(518) 382-5147
E-Mail: cprimiano@schenectadyny.gov

May 26, 2015

Ms. Ruth L. Pierpont
Deputy Commissioner, Division for Historic Preservation
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

Thank you for giving the City of Schenectady the opportunity to comment on the proposed historic designation of the Horace Mann School at 602 Craig Street and the St. Columba School at 400 Craig Street. The Development Office referred the proposal to the Historic District Commission for their input.

The Schenectady Historic District Commission met on April 29, 2015 and reviewed the application provided by your office. It was unanimously agreed that both properties are worthy of historic designation. The Commission also recommended that prior to the State's approval of the designation, the applicant should provide a completed application form, as the draft reviewed by the Commission did not include owner information and some minor details.

We hope that our input has been helpful. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (518) 382-5149 or jmancini@schenectadyny.gov.

Sincerely,

Jaclyn L. Mancini
Director of Development

cc: Historic District Commission file

RECEIVED
JUN - 3 2015
CITY COMMISSIONER
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

CRAIG ST
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

NISSAN

CRAIG

OFFICE

MY FUTURE
Reimagine Technology

CHP