

## HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

### ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CATHEDRAL COMPLEX

(Written Winter, 1991)

#### I. NAME

Historic: St. John the Evangelist Cathedral Complex

Common: St. John Cathedral Complex Historic District

#### II. LOCATION

802, 812, 830 and 840 North Jackson Street  
831 and 845 North Van Buren Street  
630 East Wells Street

#### III. CLASSIFICATION

Historic district

#### IV. OWNER

Rev. James J. Brady, Rector  
St. John's Cathedral  
802 North Jackson Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

#### V. YEAR BUILT

1847 - 1966

#### VI. DESCRIPTION

##### Boundaries

The St. John's Cathedral Complex Historic District is bounded by North Jackson Street on the west, East Wells Street on the south, North Van Buren Street on the east, and East Kilbourn Boulevard on the north.

Tax Key Numbers: 392-1476-000 and 392-1477-000

PLAT OF MILWAUKEE IN SEC (28-29-33)-7-22 BLOCK 78 LOTS 3 THRU 12 & LOTS 1-2-3-11-12- & 13 IN BLK 78 IN PLAT OF NW ¼ OF NW ¼ SEC 28 ADJ.

##### Architectural Character

The St. John Evangelist Cathedral Complex occupies an entire city block in the central business district bounded by North Jackson, East Wells, and North Van Buren Street and East Kilbourn Boulevard. The buildings are oriented primarily to face North Jackson and North Van Buren Streets. The surrounding blocks are occupied mostly by office, institutional and

apartment buildings dating from the late nineteenth century into the 1980s. The cathedral complex covers the entire block, and there is little open landscaped space.

#### The Cathedral, 812 North Jackson Street

The focal point of the complex is the Cathedral Church of St. John the Evangelist at 812 North Jackson Street. This is a monumental, cream brick, Neo-classical style, gable-roofed structure that extends the full depth of the block from North Jackson Street to North Van Buren Street. Construction of the church was begun in 1847 with extensive alterations in 1892 and between 1936 and 1942. The architect for the 1847 work was Victore Schulte, while the new tower was done in 1892-93 by George B. Ferry, and the 1936 rebuilding was designed by W. R. Perry of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Its façade faces west to North Jackson Street and features a Neo-Classical style lower elevation enriched with pilaster strips surmounted by a projecting, three-stage, domed tower of Baroque inspiration. The lower façade and first stage of the tower date from 1847 and rely on the bold use of plain classical elements rendered in cream brick such as the numerous pilaster strips and the classical cornices for its monumental effect. The Neo-Baroque stone enframed main entrance, side entrances and upper story statue niches are its principal ornamental features.

The first stage of the tower, which is buttressed by scrolled copper volutes at the parapet level of the façade, contains an elongated, stone enframed, broken pedimented window and a clock face in each of its sides. Since the round clock faces interrupt the entablature, the cornice is curved to outline their tops. The upper stages of the tower were added in 1892-93. The smaller second tier is rectangular with a pedimented stone enframed window on each face and free standing brick Corinthian columns at each corner. Above a classical cornice with stone urn finials at each corner, is the third tier. This is an octagonal brick belfry with engaged columns at each corner and arched openings on each side. Its copper domed roof is encircled by a ring of urn finials and surmounted by a cross-topped open copper lantern.

The north and south side elevations are nearly identical. Each is composed of numerous equal width bays containing a single, two-story tall, stone pedimented, stained-glass window flanked by plain brick pilaster strips with stone caps. The classical brick entablature with triglyph frieze continues around from the façade, although the brick parapet wall does not. The design and construction of the western bays dates from 1847. The eastern bays were added when the church was lengthened by 65 feet in 1936 and mimic the design of the original portions of the elevations.

The rear or east elevation of the cathedral dates from the 1936 enlargement. It is simply composed with brick pilaster strips with stone caps and bases at the corners. A monumental stone, segmentally-pedimented, classical door surmounted by a compound molded stone-enframed ocular window is the chief ornamental feature. A cartouche emblazoned with the insignia of a bishopric is incorporated into the door pediment. The classical entablature with triglyph frieze that girds the building is surmounted by a plain brick parapet wall.

#### The Rectory, 802 North Jackson Street

To the south of the Cathedral is the rectory. The building is sited near the edge of the sidewalk on the northeast corner of Jackson and Wells Streets. It is a large, flat-roofed, rectangular, two-story, cream-brick structure built in 1950 to the designs of Milwaukee architect Mark F. Pfaller. Its principal elevation faces west to Jackson Street and is symmetrically composed of five bays of regularly spaced plain rectangular windows with the stone enframed entrance in the middle. Plain limestone enframes the recessed, central

double leaf entrance doors. The words "St. John's Cathedral Rectory" are carved above the transom within the arch enframing the door. The keystone of the arch is carved with a plain cross in bas-relief. Iron lanterns flank the doorway. Above a shallow stone cornice moulding, a plain brick parapet wall encircles the flat roof. Brick quoining accents the corners.

The south elevation facing Wells Street is the only other architecturally treated elevation. It is composed of a bilaterally symmetrical pattern of plain windows although the fenestral arrangement of the second story does not mirror that of the first story. The decorative features from the front are repeated on the side elevation including the brick quoining, the stone belt course at the second story level, the stone cornice, and the parapet wall. The north elevation is similar in design.

The east elevation is composed of the attached, six-car, one-story, flat-roofed garage wing. Three, two-car-width, paneled wood, overhead garage door openings fenestrate this elevation. The plain brick parapet wall is intermittently interrupted by short sections of classical balustrading. The garage roof is used as an open terrace accessible from the second story of the rectory.

#### Old Convent/Caretaker's Residence, 630 East Wells Street

This structure is a 2-1/2 story, gabled-hipped roof, cream brick, Queen Anne style residence. It is sited a few feet off the sidewalk at the northwest corner of Van Buren and Wells Streets facing Wells Street. The Wells Street, or south, elevation is asymmetrically composed of the now enclosed wooden entrance porch surmounted by an open balcony flanked by a two-story, bay window. Both of these elements are sheltered by the projecting gabled roof.

The principal feature of the east elevation is a two-story bay window centered under another gable that intersects the hip roof. The other two elevations are utilitarian in character with the fenestration placed to satisfy floor plan requirements.

The building is generally devoid of decorative features. The wood eaves and gables are now covered in steel siding. Rock faced limestone trim is used sparingly to accent the corners of the basement level, for the stringcourse that unifies the first story window sills and for the second story window sills. The front porch is now completely enclosed with modern glazing units set in plywood partitions.

#### St. John's Cathedral High School, 831 N. Van Buren Street

The St. John's Cathedral High School is located just north of the cathedral. It is sited at the edge of the sidewalk facing North Van Buren Street and extends through the block to North Jackson Street.

The school is a three-story, flat-roofed, cream brick structure designed to harmonize with the Neo-Classical design of the adjacent cathedral. It was built in 1907 to the designs of Milwaukee architects Buemming and Dick. The present facade faces North Van Buren Street. Originally there was also an elaborate west elevation facing Jackson Street, but it was destroyed when an addition was put in front of it in 1966.

The Van Buren Street elevation is a symmetrical Neo-Classical composition that borrows its principal design elements from the adjacent cathedral. The three-bay, slightly projecting, pedimented center pavilion is flanked by four bays of large, plainly enframed, multi-paned windows. Brick pilaster strips with stone caps accent the corners while a course of brick

dentils and a copper cornice define the eaves line. The central entrance is enframed with a crosstetted brick architrave surmounted by a stone cross. Directly above it at the second story level is a pair of roundhead windows with a massive stone sill enclosed within a crosstetted brick architrave surmounted by a stone pediment. The balance of the fenestration on the façade is composed of regularly spaced, 9-over-9 wooden windows.

The first bay of each of the side elevations is elaborately articulated with brick paneled blind fenestration and ornately enframed and pedimented Roman grill windows. Brick pilasters with stone caps and a deep Doric triglyph frieze continue the rich architectural detailing carried around from the façade. The central section of the side elevations is recessed. It lacks architectural detailing and the 9-over-9 windows are arranged to respond to floor plan requirements. The westernmost bay of each side elevation projects and picks up the architectural treatment of pilaster, Doric frieze, and stone-enframed pedimental Roman grill windows used on the eastern bays.

The westernmost section of the school is a four-story, flat-roofed addition built in 1966 to the designs of architects Sherer and Sherer. It fills the space formerly occupied by an ornamental entrance plaza fronting the school auditorium and abuts the 1907 portion of the old school obscuring its original Jackson Street elevation. This addition is rendered in brown brick on a concrete foundation. A one-story, flat-roofed entrance vestibule with slit windows abuts the south side. The Jackson Street façade of the 1966 addition is modern in design and features a three-story bank of eleven, cast-stone-enframed windows as its principal design feature. Eleven more slit windows punched in the wall fenestrate the fourth story.

#### The Convent, 845 N. Van Buren Street

The convent is located at the southwest corner of Van Buren Street and East Kilbourn Boulevard. It is a three-story, cream brick, flat-roofed structure of simple Neo-Classical design incorporating architectural features derived from those on the cathedral. It was built in 1926 to the designs of Milwaukee architects Peacock and Frank. Its principal elevation faces Van Buren Street with a secondary elevation on Kilbourn Boulevard. The first story brick is banded, and a stone belt-course defines the second story level. The Van Buren Street façade is five-bay composition with small 4-over-4 windows arranged to either side of the ornate, Neo-Baroque entrance. The multi-paneled double-leaf, main entrance doors with leaded fan light are enframed by paneled stone pilasters supporting a carved stone garland frieze. Resting on the frieze above the door, an arched window at the second story level is enframed within an ornate pedimented surround abutted by scrolled volutes. The entrance treatment reflects the design of the main entrance to the cathedral church. A simple copper cornice at the eaves is surmounted by a parapet wall ornamented with a freestanding cross centered on the façade.

The north elevation is composed of slightly projecting end pavilions with seven bays of 6-over-6 windows in between. The first-story banded brickwork, stone belt course, copper cornice and parapet wall continue around from the façade. The principal ornamental features of the relatively simple architectural treatment are the two-second story, stone enframed, Neo-Baroque windows centered within each of the projecting end pavilions. These windows are simple larger versions of the window over the main entrance to the convent on the Van Buren Street elevation.

The south elevation is utilitarian in design except for the first bay, which mimics the design of the end pavilions on the north elevation. An open arcaded breezeway fitted with iron grillwork connects the convent with the adjacent school.

### The School Gymnasium, 840 N. Jackson Street

The gymnasium is located at the southeast corner of North Jackson Street and East Kilbourn Boulevard. It is a three-story, gable-roofed, cream brick structure of vaguely Neo-Classical design built in 1955 to the designs of Milwaukee architect Urban F. Peacock. It has two elevations, the façade facing west to North Jackson Street and a secondary elevation, facing north to Kilbourn Boulevard.

The gabled Jackson Street elevation is symmetrically composed of banks of metal awning windows on each of the three levels flanking a monumental stone Neo-Baroque style central entrance treatment. The three pairs of glass and aluminum entrance doors at street level are surmounted by a broad stone transom plaque inscribed with the word "Gymnasium." The whole composition is enframed by broad, banded stonework surmounted by a two-story tall, pedimented and volute enframed arched window. The entrance treatment is a simplified and somewhat abstracted version of the main entrance to the cathedral. A stone belt course at the second story level separates the banded first-story brickwork from the plain brick upper façade. Shallow brick quoining accents the corners. A molded stone raking cornice trims the gable. A large copper cross crowns the peak of the gable.

The north elevation facing Kilbourn Boulevard is simply treated. The banded brickwork, second story stone belt course, and stone entablature at the eaves continue around from the façade. The large glass block filled windows that light the gymnasium and some smaller metal windows comprise the fenestration.

The east elevation is simply treated since it is obscured from view by the adjacent convent while the south elevation directly abuts the 1966 addition to the school and is not visible.

## **VII. SIGNIFICANCE**

The St. John's Cathedral Historic District is architecturally significant as a complex of building constructed over a period of more than a century utilizing a common design vocabulary and materials to create a unified grouping. It includes one of the city's most architecturally distinguished church structures surrounded by functionally related buildings that pay homage to it by mimicking its principal design elements. The complex is historically significant for its associations with the rise of Catholicism in Milwaukee and its central role in the administration of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and the development of important social, humanitarian, and educational institutions.

## **VIII. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### General Background

Catholicism has had a long presence in Wisconsin in going back to the mid-seventeenth century when the first series of Indian missions were established by Fr. Allouez. As a French possession under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Quebec, Wisconsin retained its mission status until the nineteenth century. Wisconsin subsequently fell under the province of Louisville, Kentucky (1810), then Cincinnati (1882) and finally Detroit (1832) as various Sees were established to minister to the rapidly growing population in the Midwest. Papal approval ultimately created a See headquartered in Milwaukee on November 28, 1843 with Rev. John Martin Henni as its bishop. Within four years of his arrival, Henni had increased the number of priests in Milwaukee from three to thirty-four, increased the number of parishes from four to thirty, and embarked on the construction of a cathedral church as well as the churches of St.

Gall and Holy Trinity. The industrious Henni became archbishop in 1875, and by the time of his death in 1881, Wisconsin had three dioceses (Milwaukee, La Crosse, Green Bay), 258 churches, 125 schools, 25 religious, and charitable institutions, and 200,000 Catholic parishioners statewide.

### History of St. John's Cathedral

The history of St. John's Cathedral is intimately related to the history of its predecessor, St. Peter's, which housed the congregation while the present church was built. The history of St. Peter's begins in 1837 when Solomon Juneau conveyed property (block 73, lots 10 and 11) to the Rt. Rev. F. Reese, Bishop of Detroit, for the purpose of building a church. Milwaukee's first Mass had just been celebrated that year by the Rev. Fleurimont J. Bonduel at Solomon Juneau's residence, which was then located at the southeast corner of Water and Michigan Streets. Subsequent services took place at the courthouse. The city's first resident priest, Rev. Patrick O'Kelley, later raised funds for the construction of a permanent church on the property that Juneau had donated. The new church, dedicated to St. Luke, was blessed on March 15, 1841, but not actually completed until 1842. Under the new pastor, Fr. Martin Kundig, the church's name was changed to St. Peter's in honor of the baptismal name of Coadjutor Bishop Peter Lefevre of Detroit. By Christmas of 1844 the single-story, clapboard church at the northwest corner of today's Jackson and State Streets had been doubled in size to accommodate the increasing number of worshippers. Upon Bishop Henni's arrival in 1844, St. Peter's became the first Cathedral and served as such until the present St. John's was dedicated in 1853. In the interim, the Roman Catholic population of Milwaukee had exploded from about 20 in 1835 to over 6,000 in 1847.

St. Peter's had a colorful later history being used as a children's chapel where Mass and Sunday School were held, then as a location for special French services and as a chapel for seminarians. From 1863 to 1868 St. Peter's was used as a Bohemian parish church, and in the 1870s it was used again for services for children. St. John's Cathedral's expenses necessitated the sale of the old St. Peter's church and property, but to prevent its use for secular purposes, Msgr. Leonard Batz, pastor of St. Mary's, purchased the church for \$10,000 in 1874 and the grounds for \$2,000 the following year. Batz sold the grounds in 1879 and used the money to finance the acquisition of property for a new parish, the present S.S. Peter and Paul, on the east side. Old St. Peter's Church was then moved to N. Cramer Avenue and became part of the new parish complex. St. Peter's was subsequently moved to the grounds of St. Francis Seminary in 1939 and since 1975 has been located at Old World Wisconsin near Eagle in Waukesha County.

### St. John's Cathedral

It had become clear to Bishop Henni by 1847 that St. Peter's Cathedral was just too small a structure to serve the rapidly growing diocese of Milwaukee. The present cathedral site was purchased on Jackson Street, and construction began that summer. On December 5, 1847 Henni laid the cornerstone of the new structure. Work progressed slowly on a pay-as-you-go basis as Henni solicited funds from numerous sources including churches in Cuba and Mexico. The cathedral, name St. John's, was ultimately consecrated on July 31, 1853 as the first church in Wisconsin specifically built as a Catholic cathedral.

The cathedral is one of the three Zopfstil churches in Milwaukee designed in the 1840s by the German born carpenter-architect Victor Schulte. Similar to, but larger than the other two, St. Mary's and Holy Trinity, it is a simple, rectangular building, classical in form and detail with walls of local cream brick. Various alterations have been made to the church over the years.

The upper stages of the tower were removed about 1880 because of structural problems and replaced in 1892-93 with the present Neo-Baroque tower designed by George Bowman Ferry of the firm Ferry and Clas. A devastating fire in 1935 left only the exterior walls and tower of St. John's standing. Rebuilding was carried out beginning in 1936 according to plans by Pittsburgh architect William R. Perry. In the rebuilding, an entirely new interior was installed, and the church was lengthened by 65 feet to extend back to North Van Burn Street. The original character of the exterior was scrupulously maintained, however.

### The Cathedral Complex

Over the years, the cathedral complex came to occupy an entire city block. Various generations of convents, rectories, schools, and orphanages were built and replaced. Among these were a pair of matching, two-story cream brick, Greek Revival structures flanking the Cathedral on North Jackson Street built in 1853. The southern structure was the rectory while the northern one was used originally as St. Rose's orphanage. Both the rectory and the old St. Rose's orphanage were substantially altered on the exterior and enlarged in the later 1880s. The old rectory was eventually replaced by the present rectory in 1950. The old St. Rose's Orphanage structure was used for school purposes from 1888 until about 1908 when it was razed to make way for the present school auditorium.

The North Van Buren Street part of the block has contained a number of private houses, convents, and school buildings over the years. The old school, Bishop's Hall, built in 1872, was moved in 1907 to a site directly behind the cathedral to make way for the present cathedral. The first convent, a wooden house probably built in the early 1850s, was located directly behind the cathedral on Van Buren Street. It was apparently razed when Bishop's Hall was moved to its site in 1907. The old convent of the Dominican Sisters at 630 E. Wells Street, built in the late 1880s or early 1890s, was used as the residence for the caretakers of the Cathedral for many years after the Dominican Sisters moved to the new convent in 1927. The former convent of the Sisters of Charity, an Italianate residence built in the 1860s that was enlarged and later used as the Girl's High School, was razed to make way for construction of the present Dominican Sisters convent about 1926.

### St. Rose's Orphanage

In addition to housing members of the clergy, the St. John's complex was the original home to several important institutions including St. Rose's Orphan Asylum and the various St. John's Cathedral schools.

St. Rose's Orphanage was one of the major social institutions in the city. It began operation on May 4, 1848, when the first child, a 4-year-old girl named Katie Colfer, was left in the care of the Sisters of Charity. At the request of Bishop John Martin Henni, these Sisters had come to Milwaukee in August of 1846 to serve as teachers and nurses for the fast growing Catholic population of Milwaukee. Henni also planned to establish an orphanage, much like the one he had fostered in Cincinnati a decade before, and place the institution under the charge of these same Sisters. The orphanage began functioning when Katie Colfer was placed in the care of the Sisters of Charity. When Bishop Henni returned from his year-and-a-half fundraising trip abroad, he formalized the institution some time between May 26 and October 15 of 1849. Because the Sisters had a rule allowing them to care only for girls, orphaned boys were assigned to St. Emilian's. Church officials determined that St. Emilian's would be supported by German-speaking Catholics while St. Rose's would be supported by English-speaking Catholics. Early assistance to St. Rose's was provided by St. Mary's Charitable Society, which had been formed at St. Peter's Congregation in 1842. In September of 1848, St. Rose's

Orphans Society was established to specifically aid the orphanage. The organization was formally organized on February 1, 1850, and incorporated on February 13, 1851. The Society's board was responsible for the external management of the orphanage and organized fundraising fairs, festivals, picnics and entertainments. Milwaukee County contributed some support during St. Rose's early years. Farmers throughout the county also habitually contributed foodstuffs to the institution. In mid-1882 St. Rose's became an archdiocesan institution and began receiving assistance through archdiocesan-wide contributions. Such institutionalized support made sense since St. Rose's admitted children from across the state and even received out of state girls. St. Rose's eventually received support from the Milwaukee Community Chest Fund beginning in 1924.

St. Rose's Orphanage was first located at the combination convent and school building on Van Buren Street directly behind the cathedral where the Sisters of Charity lived and conducted classes. The north wing of the c. 1852 frame building housed the orphans as well as the chapel. This building remained their home for only a short time until the Fall of 1853 by which time there were over 39 girls at the institution. St. Rose's then moved to the new two-story, brick, Greek Revival style building just north of St. John's Cathedral on Jackson Street that had been built for the orphanage. The building occupied two lots purchased by St. Rose's Society. The building housed the orphans until the Spring of 1888.

The growing number of girls and the concern for health and space probably prompted St. Rose's to consider a new location near the city limits where the Sisters' other institution, St. Mary's Hospital, was located. A resolution was introduced into Milwaukee's Common Council on August 23, 1860, for the donation of land to the Sisters for orphanage purposes. The resolution was approved on September 19, 1860, and the deed to the new property was signed on September 21, 1860. The gift of the approximately 3 ½-acre site at North Point, part of the city's 40-acre poor farm tract, was conditioned upon their constructing a building on the site within two years and the continued operation of an orphanage on the premises. To fulfill the conditions of the donation, the nuns erected a two-story building on the site in 1861 at a cost of \$4,000. They decided to use it as a junior branch of St. Rose's, called St. Joseph's, for younger girls. St. Joseph's handled children under the age of five until St. Vincent's Infants Asylum was opened in 1877 on the city's South Side. Run by the same order of nuns, St. Vincent's became responsible for infants and children up to the age of 5. Those girls who were past that age were transferred to St. Joseph's at North Point. St. Joseph's was later enlarged by the addition of another story to the original building next to the cathedral.

In September of 1883, by which time St. Rose's was receiving archdiocesan aid, Archbishop Heiss recommended that all the orphan girls be cared for in one building through the consolidation of St. Joseph's and St. Rose's. The matter of location was studied since it was not unanimously agreed that the North Point site would be best. The committee charged with site selection ultimately recommended the North Point site on April 28, 1886, and presented building plans that had been drafted by noted local architect E. Townsend Mix. Four experts also presented opinions on the healthfulness of the North Point site. Since Archbishop Heiss himself favored North Point, it was perhaps inevitable that St. Rose's would end up there. The final building plans were accepted on September 8, 1886. After working out some cost reductions, the building committee received the authority to go ahead with construction on May 20, 1887. The original St. Joseph's building was retained, and a large addition was constructed to the south toward the North Avenue end of the property. The building's cornerstone was set and blessed on the feast of St. Rose on August 20, 1887. The orphans were transferred from Jackson Street to North Point during the week of April 16-21, 1888, and Archbishop Heiss blessed the building on May 6, 1888. The old orphanage was subsequently extensively remodeled for school use.



In the early years at St. Rose's, girls attended academic classes until lunch and then spent their afternoons learning cooking and sewing, fancy needlework, arts and crafts, and music. All possible was done to prepare them for self-sufficiency after they left the institution. Domestic skills were emphasized well into the early twentieth century, and the tasks performed by the girls enabled the institution to operate with only the assistance of a handyman. The model cooking school was particularly significant in the early years at North Point. The model kitchen was completed in the spring of 1889, and by that Fall the school was operating under the supervision of Mrs. E. F. Walsh, who was a graduate of the Boston School of Cooking.

The changing population at St. Rose's reflected the city's changing ethnicity. From 1849 to 1871, girls of Irish descent accounted for 72 percent of the residents, while those of German parentage constituted 13 percent of the orphanage. From 1871 to 1896, those of Irish descent accounted for 55 percent of the admissions, while Germans accounted for 25 percent. After 1896, children of German parentage outnumbered other ethnic groups. Other nationalities including Slovenes, French, English, Bohemians, Poles, and Italians were also represented.

Girls generally stayed on at St. Rose's until they finished eighth grade, but they were not expected to stay after 14 years of age. Those who did remain at the home were given further education and training. Those who left went to homes or situations approved by the Sisters, and they were always welcomed back if they became ill or were left without means. Many went on to work as clerks, bookkeepers, stenographers or seamstresses, and some opened their own shops or businesses. Some entered the convent, but most of St. Rose's girls married.

By the early 1970's, foster homes had replaced many of the function of St. Rose's, and the facility's residency dropped to around 40 to 45 girls. No longer an orphanage, St. Rose's changed its name to St. Rose's Home for Girls. In order to make room for St. Mary's Hospital expansion, St. Rose's was closed in March of 1973 and the buildings were demolished. St. Rose's moved to its present facility at 3801 North 88<sup>th</sup> Street in 1973 where it became a residential treatment center for emotionally disturbed girls. The facility is licensed for 40 girls but usually has about 36 residents. The Sisters of Charity relinquished operation of St. Rose's in the late 1970's, and the facility is now nonsectarian. The Lake Drive site where the orphanage once stood is now occupied by St. Mary's Seton Tower, which is a medical professional building.

### St. John's Cathedral Schools

The history of St. John's various schools reflects the Catholic Church's historic commitment to education. Separate schools for girls and boys had been established at St. Peter's Church, the predecessor to St. John's, as early as 1842. The work begun at St. Peter's was continued by St. John's Cathedral, which quickly became the model for the diocese's other parishes. Progress in education at St. John's did not follow a smooth linear progression, but experienced ups and downs until the 1870s. As there were initially no other facilities, Bishop Henni continued the boys' and girls' classes in the basement of old St. Peter's Church. Following a succession of lay teachers, the brothers of the Holy Cross from Notre Dame, Indiana were given charge of the boys' school from 1855 to 1858. Pupils ranged in age from seven to seventeen, and the curriculum included mathematics, reading, spelling, penmanship, grammar, and catechism. Financial difficulties and the poor accommodations in St. Peter's basement led Bishop Henni to close the school in 1858. The girls' school followed much the same pattern as the boys'. Early lay teachers were replaced by the Sisters of Charity, who

took over the girls' classes upon their arrival in Milwaukee in 1846. The school remained in St. Peter's basement until 1854. Since there was a demand for a more exclusive, upscale educational institution, the nuns formed a second girl's school for tuition-paying students. Originally called the St. Joseph's Select School for Girls, classes were conducted in the nuns' frame dwelling on Van Buren Street behind the cathedral. This school relocated to the newly completed orphanage-convent building on Jackson Street just north of the cathedral in 1854 and was renamed St. Rose's Select School. In 1854 the parish girls' school moved out of St. Peter's basement into the north wing of the newly vacated Van Buren Street dwelling. The remainder of the house was rented by the unmarried sisters of local priest Fr. Kundig, who lived in the house and operated a boys' school out of the south wing. The Kundig sisters' school remained in operation as a quasi-parochial school for some years and provided a much-needed educational facility for boys after the departure of the Holy Cross Brothers. The curriculum including reading, U.S. history, geography, German, writing, spelling, language, mathematics, and catechism.

The declining health of teacher Frances Kundig led Bishop Henni to purchase the Smith residence on Van Buren Street just up the block from Kundig's school and outfit it for classroom use for the 1873-8174 school year. Two lay teachers were hired to instruct the boys' classes there. In the Fall of 1874 all the boys' and girls' classes were transferred to the newly completed \$25,000 three-story Bishop's Hall, which provided four classrooms for each school. The Brothers of the Holy Cross returned to take charge of the boys' classes, while the Sisters of Charity continued in charge of the girls.

In 1884 St. John's Cathedral School became a totally free school for the children of its parishioners and was said to be the first Catholic free school in the region. The girls' school extensively remodeled and moved into the recently vacated old St. Rose Orphan Asylum building on Jackson Street in 1888 after the orphanage moved to the North Point area.

In 1895 the management of both the boys' and girls' schools was placed under the charge of the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa. A major integration of the two schools occurred in 1905, which up to then had had been treated as separate entities to the point that each school even had its own library. Public opinion had come to favor mixed classes and coeducation was introduced to the diocese at the Cathedral School in that year. Consistent increases in enrollment led to the construction of a new facility in 1907-08, which housed both the grade school and the new high school. The St. John's Cathedral Grade School, as it came to be called, was finally displaced by the ever-expanding high school enrollment in 1947, when its six classes were relocated to the vacant school building belonging to St. Mary's parish a few blocks away. Like the high school, St. John's Grade School had a citywide enrollment by the early 1960s, but attendance fell from the 300 to 500 student average experience earlier this century. Classes continued at St. Mary's until 1974 when they were discontinued due to falling enrollment. The high school reached a peak enrollment of about 700 students in 1967, but then precipitously declined until the school finally closed in 1976. At that time, it was reportedly Wisconsin's oldest Catholic high school. Afterwards the school houses various other educational tenants, most recently the Downtown Montessori School, a day care center, and the Bruce-Guadalupe School. The building is currently vacant.

## **IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the St. John's Cathedral complex be designated as a City of Milwaukee Historic District as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-3, e-5, e-6, e-8, and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

## **X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES**

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

### **A. Guidelines for Rehabilitation**

#### **1. Roofs**

Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces of the rectory or caretaker's residence, school, gymnasium, and convent if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline, or pitch. Retain the existing tile roof on the cathedral.

#### **2. Materials**

##### **a. Masonry**

- (i) Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- (ii) Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed.
- (iii) Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration and the accumulation of dirt on the exterior of the building. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone.
- (iv) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that are inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed.

##### **b. Wood**

- (i) Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.

- (ii) Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed.

### 3. Windows and Doors

- a. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash.
- b. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building. The leaded glass windows in the church should not be altered or removed except for restoration.

### 4. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design and appearance.

### 5. Additions

All of the elevations of the church are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Additions are not recommended and require the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevation. Additions may be made to the rectory, convent, school and caretaker's residence subject to Commission approval.

### 6. Non-Historic Additions/Non-Historic Structures

Alterations to non-historic buildings or portions of buildings shall be made in such a way as to be as sympathetic as possible to the historic building or neighboring buildings. If possible, alterations should seek to lessen the adverse impact of the non-historic addition or building on the historic components of the structure or district.

### 7. Signs

The installation of any permanent exterior sign shall require the approval of the commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the historic and architectural character of the complex.

8. Site Features

New plant materials, fencing, paving and lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the complex.

B. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed so as to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the district.

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the buildings in the complex.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to historic buildings must be compatible to and sympathetic with the designs of that structure and contribute to the design unity of the complex.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity and design unity of the complex. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic structures.

4. Materials

The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the historic buildings should be consistent with the colors, texture, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on those structures. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

C. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The visual character of the streetscapes in the district is maintained by the general consistency of the block faces in terms of height, scale, siting and density. This has resulted in a compact, cohesive building stock with few intrusions that distract from the district's historic character.

1. Maintain the height, scale, mass and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.
2. Use traditional landscaping, fencing, signage, paving and street lighting that are compatible with the character and period of the district. Avoid introducing landscape features, fencing, street lighting or signage that are inappropriate to the character of the district.

#### D. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

##### 1. Condition

Demolition request may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to public health and safety.

##### 2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the district.

##### 3. Location

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the complex and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the district.

##### 4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

##### 5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.

##### 6. Replacement

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible new building that would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the district as did the old structure (see New Construction Guidelines).

