

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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DATE ENTERED	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

St. Stanislaus Kostka Church

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

1413 North 20th Street

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

#1--Rep. William Clay

STATE

Missouri

CODE

029

COUNTY

St. Louis City

CODE

510

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Board of Trustees, Joseph Rudawski, President  
St. Stanislaus Kostka Church

STREET & NUMBER

1413 North 20th Street

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

VICINITY OF

STATE

Missouri

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

St. Louis City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

12th and Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

STATE

Missouri

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

1. Landmark of the City of St. Louis

DATE

March, 1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Community Development Agency

CITY, TOWN

St. Louis

STATE

Missouri

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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2. Missouri State Historical Survey  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City

State

Missouri 65102

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Polish immigrants in St. Louis worshipped from 1880 to 1882 in the basement of St. Patrick's, an Irish Catholic Church at the northwest corner of Sixth and Biddle Streets near the heart of post-Civil War St. Louis. In 1882, the first Polish church and school of St. Stanislaus Kostka was constructed on 20th Street near Cass Avenue. Dedicated to a sixteenth century Polish Jesuit, the modest Romanesque Revival church (110 x 45 feet) cost \$14,470 and still stands, greatly altered, on the north side of the new church.

With the establishment of a separate parish, Poles began to dominate the immediate neighborhood. (See Section 8.) By 1890, plans for a larger, more elaborate church had already taken shape in the mind of Father Stanowski; a decision to build a new church was officially made by the Board of Trustees in 1891, and construction began in July of that year. The newly formed firm of Wessbecher and Hummel was commissioned to design the church. Louis Wessbecher, who was active in St. Louis for over fifty years (1883-1938), was born in Germany and trained at the Polyclinic of Karlsruhe and Institute of Stuttgart before coming to St. Louis in 1882. A prominent St. Louis church builder, Wessbecher's work includes two other Polish churches, St. Casimir's (1894), razed for a highway, and St. Hedwig's (1904) along with Bethlehem Lutheran (1895), St. Augustine's (1897), Holy Ghost (1909) and St. Henry's (1910).

Polish, German and English newspaper accounts of both the laying of the cornerstone (September 13, 1891) and the dedication (September 18, 1892) disclose the tremendous excitement and admiration of the entire city over the appearance of St. Stanislaus. Reports stress the uniqueness of the architecture's "Byzantine-Polish Romanesque style", the high dome and towers, and the exquisitely decorated interior. Something of the pervasive enthusiasm for the new church is recaptured in the following descriptions:

The ceremony of laying the corner-stone of the new St. Stanislaus Parish Church...took place yesterday afternoon and was witnessed by an enormous crowd. All the houses of the neighborhood surrounding the new building were gaily decorated with wreaths and garlands of flowers, while the walls of the partially completed structure were hung with festoons and flags. The procession which marched to the church was composed of sodalities and societies from all the Catholic parishes in the city. Interspersed at proper distances along the line were bands from many parishes, and along the line a dozen of more beautiful banners, flags and other insignia were to be observed.

St. Louis Republic, 14 September 1891.

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The new St. Stanislaus Polish Catholic Church...was dedicated yesterday with the most impressive ceremonies. There were three sermons--one in English, one in Polish and one is [sic] German. Besides the regular organ and choir there were present twelve of Gilmore's best musicians. Mr. Lefebvre played a beautiful solo on the saxophone during Gounod's convent Mass, which was rendered in excellent style by the choir and orchestra.... Vicar-General H. Muehlspien preached the German, Rev. Vincent Barzynski, C.R. of Chicago preached in Polish, and Rev. J. H. Harty of St. Leo's Church, this city, delivered a discourse in English.

The dedication ceremonies began at 9 am, when about thirty priests assembled in the old parish church, adjoining the new structure, and from there proceeded to the new church, where high Mass was celebrated....The new church is one of the finest structures of the kind in the city....

St. Louis Republic, 19 September 1892.

The contemporary claims were not unfounded for the new church (Photo 1) indeed did outrank all others in the city by virtue of its majestic exterior dome, brilliantly sheathed in copper, and the three interior domical spaces (Photo 2). Conceived as an ornamental and symbolic adjunct of the church, the dome proudly asserted the presence of the Polish community in the city and also linked them to the venerable European Catholic tradition in church architecture. Rising 175 feet to the dome's lantern, St. Stanislaus competed in the St. Louis skyline with the 161 feet height of the Courthouse rotunda.

Unfortunately, serious problems of water leakage developed in the dome causing damage to the church's interior. When attempts to repair it apparently failed, the firm of Wessbecher and Hillebrand was commissioned in 1912 to remove the structure, rebuild the roof and construct a new interior dome with a blind arcade. The issue of the removal of the dome, however, had aroused hostile feelings and resistance on the part of some parishioners who felt its loss would rob the church of its Byzantine style. Afterward they complained that the church appeared "as though without a head, as though some unmerciful incision had left it crippled and in distress."<sup>2</sup> Even today some members express similar regrets and hopefully dream of a day when the church could be restored to its former glory.

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Almost all of the original interior decoration (Photo 3) (including the wall painting, stained glass, principal marble altar and communion rail) was destroyed by a fire in 1929, only a year after the interior had been redecorated. Restoration work was completed in time for the Golden Jubilee anniversary in 1930--a testimony to the resilience and united effort of the parish. At this time a copy of the world's largest painting of the crucifixion was installed in the blind arcade of the apse (Photo 4). The original work, "Golgota", a panorama with two thousand figures by the Polish artist Jan Styka, had been painted for exhibition at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904; artists who worked with Styka on the original executed the one at St. Stanislaus. (A second copy of the painting has just been completed for the church as part of the restoration program and will be installed in the near future.)

The stained glass windows now present in the church are the work of a parishioner, Michael Olszewski, whose art glass studio had replaced by 1930 the ones lost in the fire. Since the architectural plans specify part of the original figural program for the windows (which included several national Polish saints and the St. Cecilia rose window), it can be established that many of the same saints are represented in the replacement windows. The new windows are noteworthy for their ornamental framing motifs and rich, vivid palette which evoke a feeling of the jewel-like clarity of Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

The large St. Cecilia window (Photo 5) is one of the finest and, like the original, a felicitous choice for the window of the choir loft. Popular since the fifteenth century as the patron saint of religious music, the image follows traditional iconography as she sits before the organ, her head crowned with roses and eyes raised toward heaven. Striking differences in style can be observed between the original 1890's St. Cecilia (Photo 6) and Olszewski's design. Many of the original windows were paid for by sodalities of the church; the sodality of St. Cecilia donated the St. Cecilia window. The original organ pipes, embellished with stylized floral patterns, survive in working condition today.

The wall paintings over the side altars and the dome painting of the apse also date to the 1929 restoration project. (See Photo 4.) Although the apse depiction of Raphael's "Disputa" has been repainted, the north and south altar images survive. Iconographically these two paintings are of interest as they refer to both the Polish Church and the Roman Church. Over the south altar St. Stanislaus Kostka is shown in devotion before the Virgin and Child while the institutional authority of Rome is declared on the north wall in an emblematic scene depicting Christ, Saints Peter and Paul, and the domed Roman church of St. Peter's.

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Fortunately undamaged by the fire is the late eighteenth century copy of "Our Lady of Czestochowa", (Photo 7) a richly bejewelled and gilded icon brought from Poland by Father Stanowski (See Section 8.). Traditionally thought to have been miraculously painted by St. Luke, the icon is set in a marble altar where flanking relief panels and inscriptions relate its legend and place in Polish history. Carved below, an emblematic shield portrays the Virgin and Child and the crests of Poland and Lithuania.

The church today still possesses a handsome exterior of bold Romanesque Revival forms, and can rightfully claim one of the most distinctive and beautiful church interiors in Missouri. Indeed, the sobriety of the exterior belies the radiant exuberance encountered inside.

Monumental towers on the front elevation (Photo 8) and an imposing cylindrical apse (Photo 9) create an aggressive profile that recalls Polish Romanesque churches dating to the period when Christianity was introduced into the first independent Polish state. The rusticated first story and pronounced white limestone tower bases reinforce the fortress-like character of the church. The clarity and simplicity of the building's large geometric masses are sustained in the articulation of the facade where white limestone trim effectively divides the red brick wall surface into three horizontal zones. In keeping with the Romanesque style, ornament is restrained, confined to the arcaded corbel tables around the gables and roof line, and the finely carved limestone capitals found on the columns of the door jambs and on the rose window arch. At the summit of the central door gable stands a statue of St. Stanislaus Kostka. The predominately flat facade is given depth and character by the concentric archivolt and splayed jambs of the three doors.

Austere and bare on the outside, surprising effects of light and space are experienced upon entering the church (Photo 10). Static volumes of enveloping space and a theme of graceful semi-circular shapes are created by a sequence of three pendentive domes which delicately spring from four slender columns. The extraordinary sense of openness and light was made possible by two structural features. Slim columns, composed of iron shafts faced with plaster, were used in place of heavy masonry piers; wooden frame construction of the domes and groin vaulting diminished the load allowing the brick bearing walls to be liberally pierced with large windows which generously illuminate the interior. Stained glass oculi in the domes (served by roof skylights) provide an additional source of light and color.

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The architects' interpretation of the centralized plan was particularly successful in St. Stanislaus. Although the longitudinal axis is greater than the transverse (145 x 88 feet), this difference is scarcely perceptible. A strong impression of unified, integrated space is achieved by the orchestration of simple, continuous curved surfaces uninterrupted by projecting members. Decoration is used to articulate the structure and maintain the purity and integrity of architectural forms. The perfect hemispheres of domes and half-circle arches joined with the triangular spaces of the pendentives and the groin vaulted aisles and arms to create a beautiful, lucid order and elegance unmatched in Wessbecher and Hummel's other St. Louis churches. Bethlehem Lutheran, completed by the firm in 1895, shares characteristics in plan and facade composition (substituting pointed arches for round-headed ones) with St. Stanislaus yet falls far short of their earlier achievement. The interior body of the Lutheran church is reduced to one vast auditorium of unarticulated space with a false ceiling of simulated Gothic ribs.

The highest tribute was paid to the architecture and achievements of the St. Stanislaus parish in a biographical sketch of Father Stanowski written in 1921:

Under his administration the church property of St. Stanislaus has been built and is the finest in St. Louis. The buildings were all erected by the Polish parishioners and could not be duplicated today for a million dollars, while upon the church there rests not a cent of indebtedness. These splendid edifices stand as a monument to the zeal and consecrated efforts of Father Stanowski, the beloved senior Catholic priest of St. Louis.<sup>3</sup>

This spirit of pride, determination and independence is still evident in the parish today. Although the interior suffers from years of neglect, a dedicated group composed of the present priest, The Reverend Jerry A. Jakle, the Board of Trustees and supporting community leaders have undertaken a fund raising drive to restore the church to its appearance in 1930. To date, approximately \$90,000 has been pledged in spite of lingering concern that the Archdiocese may gain control of the title and add St. Stanislaus to the alarming number of churches demolished or under threat of demolition.<sup>4</sup>

The formal opening of the drive on July 30, 1978, by a Polka Mass attended by two thousand people indicates the high level of Polish ethnic awareness in

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the city. Renewed interest in the church as a symbol of pride of area-wide Poles is the most encouraging change in the near northside of St. Louis, known nationally as the location of Pruitt-Igoe.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Historical and Descriptive Review of St. Louis (St. Louis: John Lethem, c. 1895), p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>Pamiętka Złotego Jubileuszu Parafji Św. Stanisława Kostki--St. Louis, MO--1880-1930 (St. Louis: St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, 1930), p. 55.  
Translation from the original Polish.

<sup>3</sup>Walter B. Stevens, Centennial History of Missouri, 5 vols. (St. Louis and Chicago: The S. J. Clark Publishing Co., 1921), 5: 558.

<sup>4</sup>For the particular protection St. Stanislaus enjoys from the demolition policy of the Archdiocese see Section 8. The St. Louis Archdiocese currently has demolition plans for over a dozen churches in the Metropolitan area, though the churches are fundamental community focus points.

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Immigration
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1892

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Louis Wessbecher & Charles Hummel

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In many respects the founding and formative stages of St. Stanislaus Kostka parish represent a unique episode in the history of the St. Louis Archdiocese and in the experience of Polish-Americans in the last decades of the nineteenth century. As the first Polish parish in St. Louis, St. Stanislaus reflected the general concerns of Polish immigrant groups across the country-- the desire for property ownership, deep feelings of religiosity and the need to define the nature of a Polish-American community (nationalism) within the existing patterns of social and religious life they found around them. Where such concerns led in other urban centers (such as Chicago) to open divisions within the ethnic community itself, and between the community and local church authorities, it was the singular achievement of the St. Stanislaus parish to avoid the worst consequences of these concerns while providing what in retrospect can be viewed as a solution well in advance of its time.

Poles began to arrive in St. Louis in increasing numbers after 1870; the census of that year listed three hundred Poles among the foreign born population.<sup>1</sup> Late in the decade this number grew to five hundred when forty Polish families from Brazil reached the city. (These families had left their homeland to work on the sugar plantations of the LaGuara region in Brazil at a time when Brazilian plantation owners were attempting to shift from slave to free labor.)<sup>2</sup> The new arrivals soon found work in the industrial plants along the riverfront and resided in the Ashley Building, an immigrant hostel built for the Irish but taken over by the Poles after 1870. Until 1900, the majority of Poles lived there at least briefly. A vivid description of what became an embarrassing eyesore aptly portrays Polish beginnings in St. Louis:

The building covers the block between Ashley and O'Fallon Streets, fronting on Third and extending back to the alley halfway to Collins Street. It is from Collins Street, however, that this vast pile of brick and mortar is seen to the best advantage. From this point of view the structure is not unlike a barrack. The boarded windows, the broken stairways, the battered cornices and the shattered window panes give the appearance of a battle scarred reminder of civil strife. From the slight eminence in the rear it looks as though its walls had been pierced by a thousand cannon shot from

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an enemy's guns; yet time and the ruthless hand of man have been its sole destroyers. Each of the four stories of the building are plainly marked by broad porches extending entirely across the rear.... Narrow wooden stairways connect with the bottom floor. Many of the supports have been displaced and thrown out of line until the whole structure seems to be momentarily threatening to topple over.... The structure...and its delapidated condition give it the ominous appearance of an abandoned fortress.<sup>3</sup>

This listing hulk was the home of six hundred people during the winter of 1897-98. Estimating conservatively, at least ten thousand Polish immigrants made the Ashley Building their first address in St. Louis.<sup>4</sup>

The Poles first held Mass in the basement of an Irish church, St. Patrick's, yet maintained a pride in their national identity as they walked "in procession from the Ashley Building to St. Patrick's dressed in their European costumes of many colors, and notwithstanding the fact that this spectacle offered the Irish denizens plenty of entertainment, on the whole it was edifying to see them practice their religion so openly."<sup>5</sup> But with the establishment of the parish of St. Stanislaus in 1880, a community defined by both Polish religious and social organizations began to grow.

Initially placed under the supervision of the Franciscan Order, by November of 1882 the first church of St. Stanislaus had been completed. The formal blessing of the church was noteworthy for the attendance of Irish, German and Czech groups which underscored the friendly relationship of ethnic groups in the area. During this period St. Stanislaus continued to rely on pastors who, because of the rules of the Franciscan Order, were not resident at the church itself.<sup>6</sup>

With the arrival of Father Urban Stanowski in 1885, the character and relationship of the parish to the Archdiocese changed dramatically. Father Stanowski, a Polish-born Franciscan of aristocratic origins, provided a dedicated, forceful leadership which shaped the course of St. Stanislaus' development for the next four decades. As a refugee of the German Kulturcamp in his native Silesia, Father Stanowski was both a patriot and a firmly committed religionist at a time when the Polish community of Chicago was sharply divided over the question of Polish nationalism and its relationship to the church.

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Most of Father Stanowski's parishioners lived in the eastern parts of Kerry Patch (east of 11th Street) and traveled as far as two miles to church. His establishment of a building and loan association and purchase of land around the church allowed parishioners to buy lots with construction loans held by the parish. As the Irish moved out of the vicinity of St. Stanislaus, more Poles were able to move in around the nucleus of Polish residents Father Stanowski had fostered.<sup>7</sup>

Through a determined effort, Father Stanowski liquidated the debt of his new parish by 1887. In the same year he received dispensation from cloister rule and took up full time residency at the church, a move that ameliorated a long standing source of dissatisfaction among his parishioners. In 1891, the Franciscans' relinquished rights to the parish and Father Stanowski became a secular priest under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese.<sup>8</sup>

It is only against the backdrop of events in Polish communities in other cities at the time that subsequent actions taken by Father Stanowski and the Archdiocese can be fully appreciated. Fierce disputes over whether being Polish meant first of all being Catholic or identifying with the ethnic element had led to the split of many congregations with open hostility to (and even outright separation from) the Roman Catholic hierarchy. At the center of the controversy was the ownership of church properties.

On May 2, 1891, "with the advice and consent of the Archbishop" the St. Louis parish was incorporated in the State of Missouri as the "Polish Roman Catholic St. Stanislaus Parish."<sup>9</sup> While the incorporation placed the ownership of the parish in the hands of its secular trustees, the use of the name "Roman Catholic" underscored the continued relationship of the parish with the Archdiocese, a connection not sought under similar conditions in other cities. The fact that Father Stanowski remained under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop while serving as the first president and treasurer of the corporation would have been considered an anathema to "nationalists" elsewhere who wished to take financial control of the parish away from the bishop and the parish priest.

Throughout the subsequent decades it was the unique personality of Father Stanowski which held the key to the delicate balance of interests achieved at the time of incorporation. The swift movement of events after May 2, 1891, clearly indicates his ability to cultivate the nationalistic and ethnic identity of his parishioners while at the same time fostering good relations with

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the church hierarchy. The Missouri compromise was thus struck.

On May 6, 1891, the first meeting of the trustees was held, perhaps only coincidentally three days after the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the Polish National Constitution. Father Stanowski had himself been responsible for organizing a celebration of that event at the church. At the same gathering a protest was heard against the imprisonment by the German government of a Polish editor who had defended the Catholic faith and rights of the Polish people.<sup>10</sup>

Construction was begun on a new church in July of 1891; by September of the following year when the church was completed, \$60,000 of its total cost of \$92,000 was already raised--a testimony to the unity of the parish noted by the press. The dedication ceremony was itself an occasion for demonstrating that it was possible to be a Polish Roman Catholic rather than either a Pole or a Roman Catholic. United States, Papal and Polish flags flew in abundance. Vicar General Muehlsienpen preached in German, Father V. Barzynski in Polish and Father J. Harty in English. Contemporary reports of the event also drew attention to the inscription on the cornerstone which names Pope Leo XIII, St. Louis Archbishop Kenrick and Father Stanowski.<sup>11</sup>

The presence of Father Barzynski of Chicago at the dedication service is of particular significance. Father Barzynski first came to public attention in 1874 when he assumed control of the Polish mother church (St. Stanislaus Kostka) in Chicago. From that time until his death a quarter of a century later, he more than any other man in America "personified Polish Roman Catholicism."<sup>12</sup> During 1891-92 Father Barzynski was an advocate of clerical leadership promoting ethnic awareness and nationalistic patriotism,<sup>13</sup> a policy already pursued by Father Stanowski of St. Louis.

In the summer of 1893, Father Stanowski returned to Poland for the avowed purpose of praying at the most hallowed shrine of Poland, The Mother of God Church of Jasna Gova in Czestochowa. Although thwarted from fulfilling his vow because he was blacklisted by the Russian occupying authorities, he was able to obtain a late eighteenth century replica of the famous icon of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa and its marble altar from the Paulist monastery of Cracow. At the time this image was claimed to be one of only two copies that had been made and, as such, it accrued the potent symbolism of Polish nationalism and religious freedom belonging to the original. Father Stanowski

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himself proudly observed, "now the third shrine of our Lady of Czestochowa is here in St. Louis. You may see it in the side altar of the church...."<sup>14</sup>

The parish's sympathy and responsiveness to the Polish national cause were evidenced again in 1895 when the church was draped in mourning and resolutions were made to abstain from entertainment in commemoration of the failure of the 1795 Polish revolution. Although the decision to recognize locally this episode in Polish history was jointly accepted by all three St. Louis Polish parishes, a newspaper caption asserting, "St. Stanislaus Says St. Casimir Is Too Gay" points to a disagreement among the parishes over the degree of mourning appropriate. The ensuing accusations and rejoinders were resolved only after Archbishop Kain threatened St. Casimir's pastor with suspension until he came forth with a full public apology to the offended parish of St. Stanislaus.<sup>15</sup>

St. Stanislaus continued to break ground in the growth of the Polish community through the early years of the twentieth century. Father Stanowski published a Polish hymnal and in 1901 became the spiritual advisor to a new Order founded by three nuns at St. Stanislaus. The Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, dedicated to teaching Polish children, was an outlet for Polish women reluctant to enter other religious communities. With the approval of Father Stanowski, the Order established its mother house at the parish. Parish life was tranquil as long as Father Stanowski was the unchallenged leader. In 1906, Father Stanowski denied the Polish sisters the right to teach in schools other than St. Stanislaus. The sisters, however, referred the matter to the Archbishop who removed Father Stanowski as spiritual advisor to the Order. In retaliation he banned the sisters from their mother house and denied them permission to teach at the parish school.<sup>16</sup> (The sisters did not return to St. Stanislaus school until 1923, after Father Stanowski's retirement.)

Challenges to his authority culminated in 1908 in a suit against the parish's Board of Trustees by some prominent members accusing Father Stanowski and other Board members of mismanagement. Although the suit was dismissed and the Stanowski faction vindicated, the dissidents left the parish taking almost half of the total membership with them and joined St. Casimir's parish. Thus, by its Silver Jubilee in 1910, St. Stanislaus had lost its dominant position in the St. Louis Polish community and was one of five Polish parishes spread over the metropolitan area.

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Although Father Stanowski's iron will had created the separate Polish neighborhood, expansion of the community and assimilation made resistance to domination by one man almost inevitable. Founded in a working class neighborhood, the church could not hold the allegiance of large numbers of wealthier people who, as their economic positions improved, moved from the parish to build new homes in outlying residential districts. The parish continued a slow decline until the neighborhood became part of the post-World War II black ghetto, suffering its greatest losses when the Pruitt-Igoe housing project was constructed in 1955. As the project became notorious for its high crime rate, fewer and fewer whites returned to the old church or elected to remain members.

The fortunes of the parish took an upward turn after the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe in 1973. Today the church is surrounded by grassy fields which provide parking for the increasing numbers of Polish-Americans who return for the Polka Masses and Fall Festival held on the Feast Day of St. Stanislaus, November 13th. The celebration in 1978 was especially enthusiastic following the election of a Polish Cardinal to the Papacy. In 1969, the present Pope (then Cardinal Wjotolka) was the first native Polish cardinal to visit this country. The only church in St. Louis that he honored with a visit was St. Stanislaus where he addressed members of the St. Louis Polish community.

Polka Masses and festivals are the most visible signs of rebirth of the parish which has once again become the focus for Polish ethnic consciousness throughout the metropolitan area. Dr. Joseph Rudawski, President of the Board of Trustees, emphasized that support comes from people who live in the city, the county, and across the river in Illinois. The renovation of the church is the Board's most pressing concern and the Board has solicited support from leaders in the public and private sectors. Although St. Stanislaus is immune from the Archdiocese's demolition policy threatening other northside churches, Trustees have experienced difficulty in convincing present and past parishioners that the building will remain. A successful request for City Landmark designation in 1976 provided a symbolic security; the Board's vote in October of 1978 to extend the charter of incorporation from ninety-nine years to perpetuity was further evidence of St. Stanislaus' commitment.

The oldest extant Polish church in St. Louis, St. Stanislaus has survived its contentious early years, devastating fire and loss of parishioners. Today it stands virtually isolated, without neighborhood context in a post-Melting Pot era which allows Poles of the late 1970's to envision the possibility of once again developing a community around the St. Louis symbol of Polish immigration and achievement in America.

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The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history as outlined in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan." St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, therefore is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "Architecture" and "Society."

FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>John S. Mysliwec, C.R.A.B., "History of the Catholic Poles in St. Louis," (MA Thesis, St. Louis University, 1936), p.4.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.6.
- <sup>3</sup>St. Louis Republic, 23 July 1898.
- <sup>4</sup>Mysliwec, p. 8.
- <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 13.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 16.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 21.
- <sup>9</sup>St. Stanislaus Parish Archives, St. Louis, Missouri. Corporation Records.
- <sup>10</sup>Original newspaper clippings, n.d. St. Stanislaus Parish Archives, St. Louis, Missouri.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup>Victor R. Greene, The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America (Madison, Wis.: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1975), p.75.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>14</sup>Original newspaper clippings, n.d. St. Stanislaus Parish Archives,  
St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>In spite of Father Stanowski, the nuns persevered. The Order rapidly  
expanded throughout Missouri and the Midwest. Today it occupies a  
large convent in suburban Ferguson, Missouri. Mysliwiec, p. 72.

# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 30 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Granite City

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 742215 4280539

B               

C               

D               

E               

F               

G               

H               

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

St. Stanislaus Koska is located on City Block 2302 and covers an area that is approximately 140 feet by 88 feet. It is set back from North 20th Street by 12.5 feet.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

1. Janice Broderick, Researcher; Duane Sneddeker, Researcher; Mary Stirtz, Research Associate  
 ORGANIZATION Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. DATE Carolyn H. Toft, Executive Director  
 STREET & NUMBER 611 Olive Street, Suite 2187 TELEPHONE (314) 421-6474  
 CITY OR TOWN St. Louis, Missouri STATE 11 April 1979

## STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL      STATE X LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Department of Natural Resources and State Historic Preservation Officer DATE     

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH

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B I B L I O G R A P H Y

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2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey  
and State Contact Person  
Department of Natural Resources  
Office of Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City

April 12, 1979  
314/751-4096

Missouri 65102

**ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH**  
St. Louis, Missouri

UTM Reference: 15/742215/4280539  
Granite City Quadrangle, Scale: 1:24,000

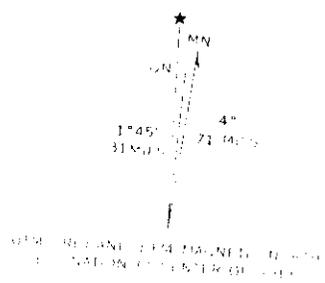


Mapped by the Geological Survey  
Revised by the Army Map Service  
Published for civil use by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from planimetric surveys by the Geological Survey 1930 and 1933. Planimetric detail revised from aerial photographs taken 1960. Field check 1954

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grids based on Illinois coordinate system, west zone and Missouri coordinate system, east zone  
1:25,000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue

Red hatched areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



1:25,000  
1000  
500  
0  
500  
1000

THIS MAP  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
AND BY THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY  
A FOLDER DESCRIBES THE MAP

#1 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: c. 1900

Photocopy: St. Stanislaus Jubilee Book,  
1930, p. 30.

Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

Church exterior, facing southwest.



NOWY KOŚCIÓŁ Z KOPUŁĄ

#2 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

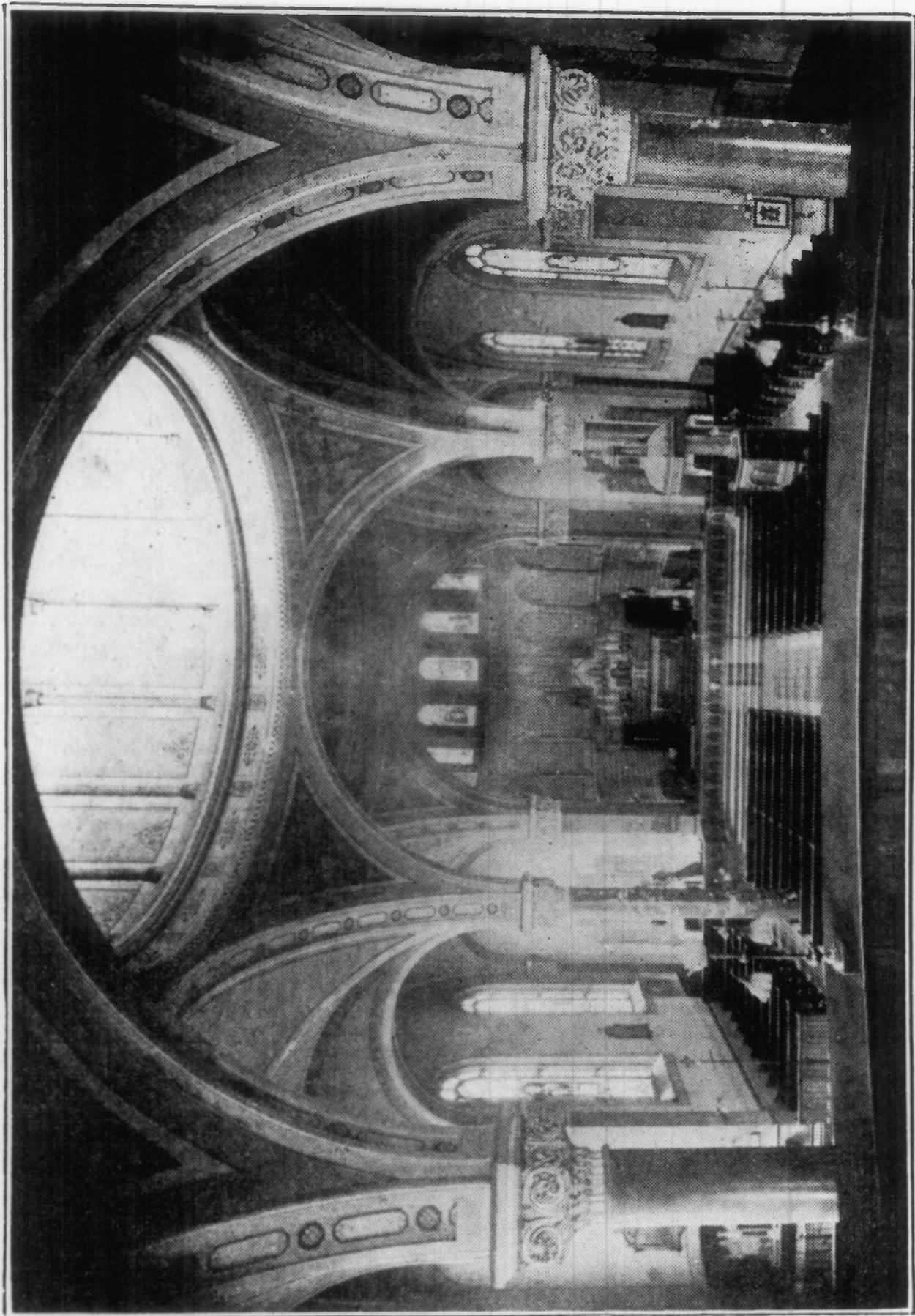
Date: c. 1900

Photocopy: St. Stanislaus Jubilee Book,  
1930, p. 32.

Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

Church interior, facing west.

G



WNĘTRZE KOŚCIOŁA

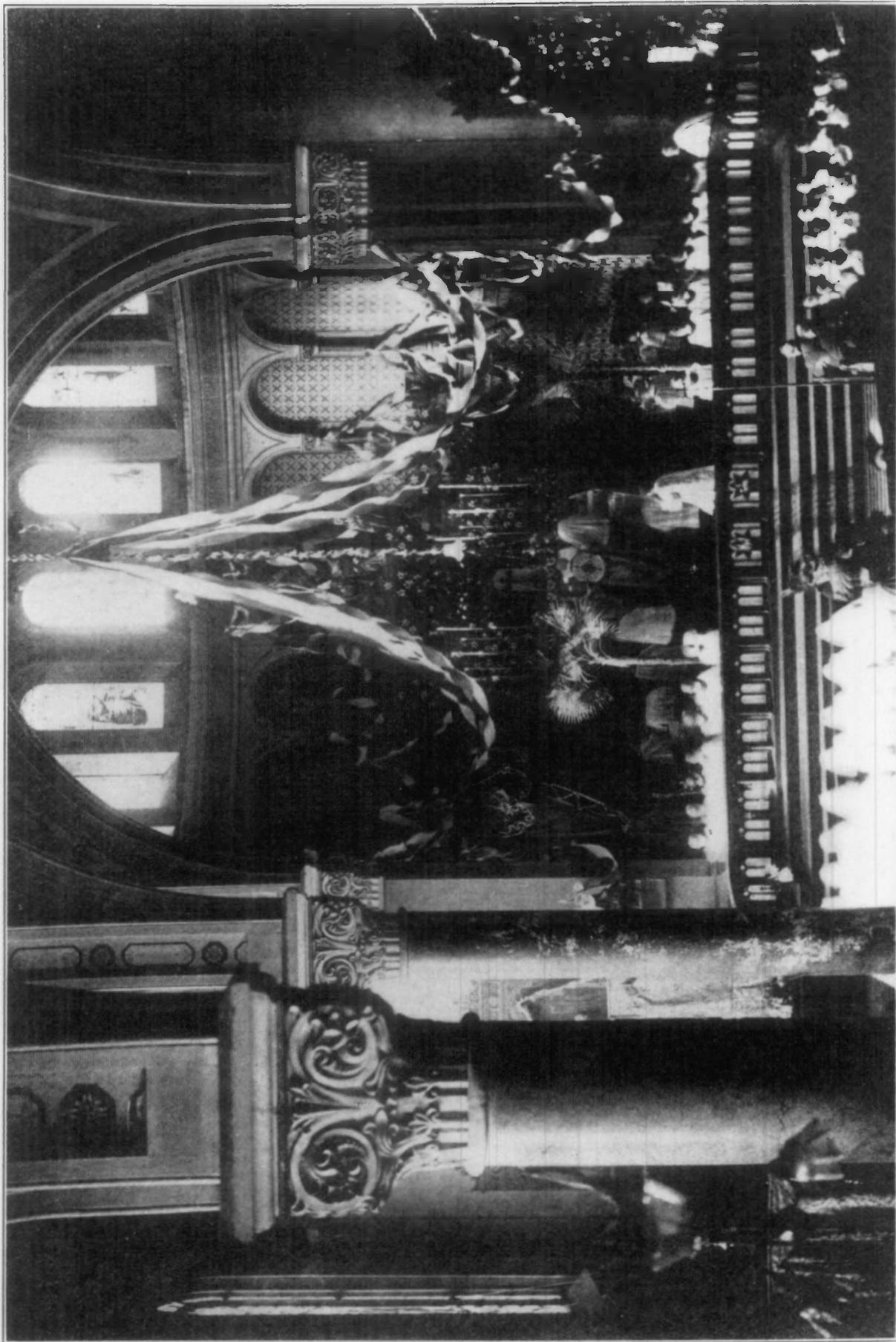
#3 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: c. 1910

Photocopy: St. Stanislaus Jubilee Book,  
1930, p. 52.

Negative:: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

Apse, facing west.



OBCHÓD SREBRNEGO JUBILEUSZU PARAFJI

#4 ST STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: 1930

Photocopy: St. Stanislaus Jubilee Book,  
1930, Frontispiece.

Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

Apse and side altars, facing west.

6



PRESBYTERJUM Z CALEM ARTYSTYCZNYM JEGO WYKONANIEM

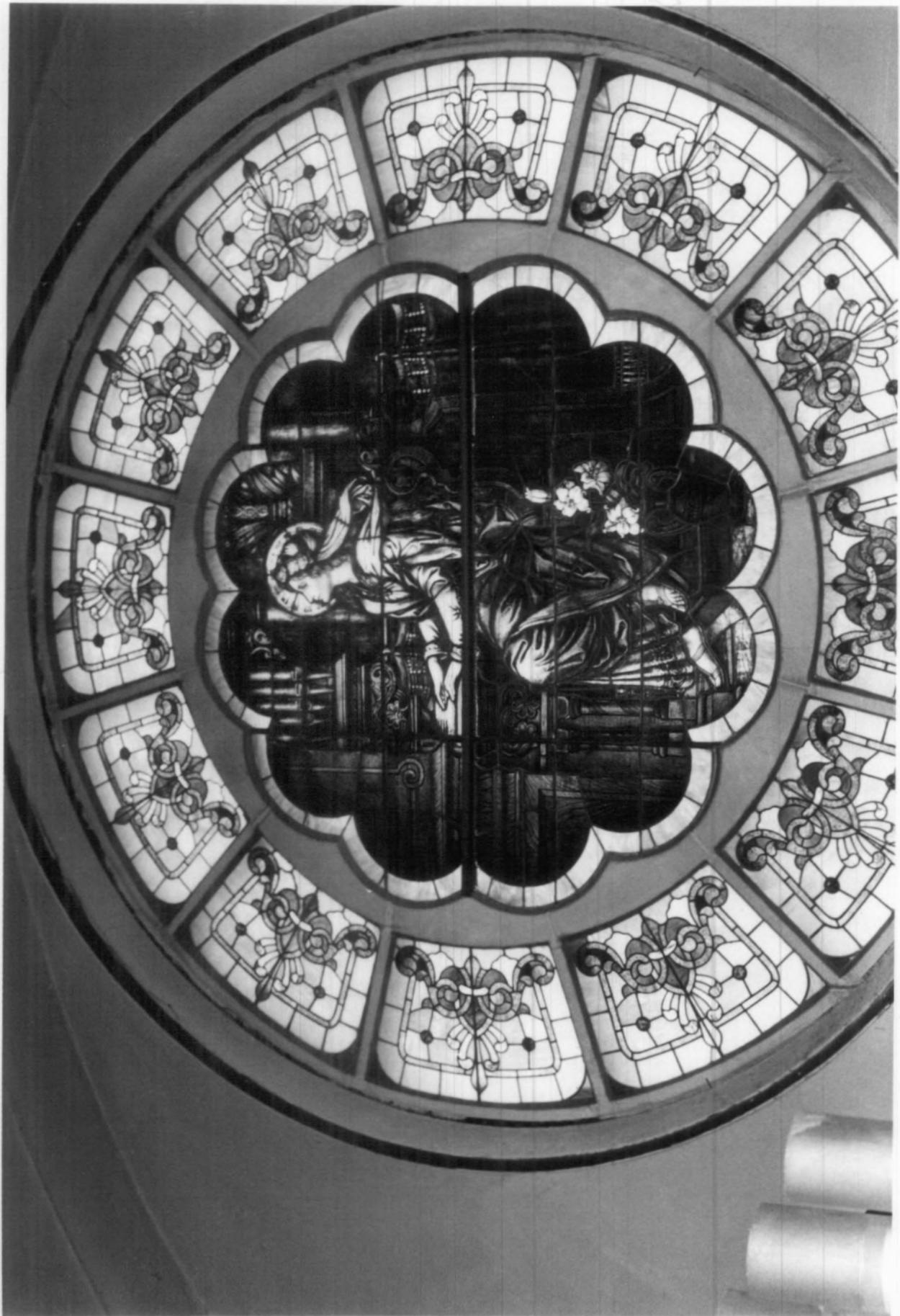
#5 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: November, 1978

Photographer: Janice Broderick

Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

St. Cecilia window, facing east.



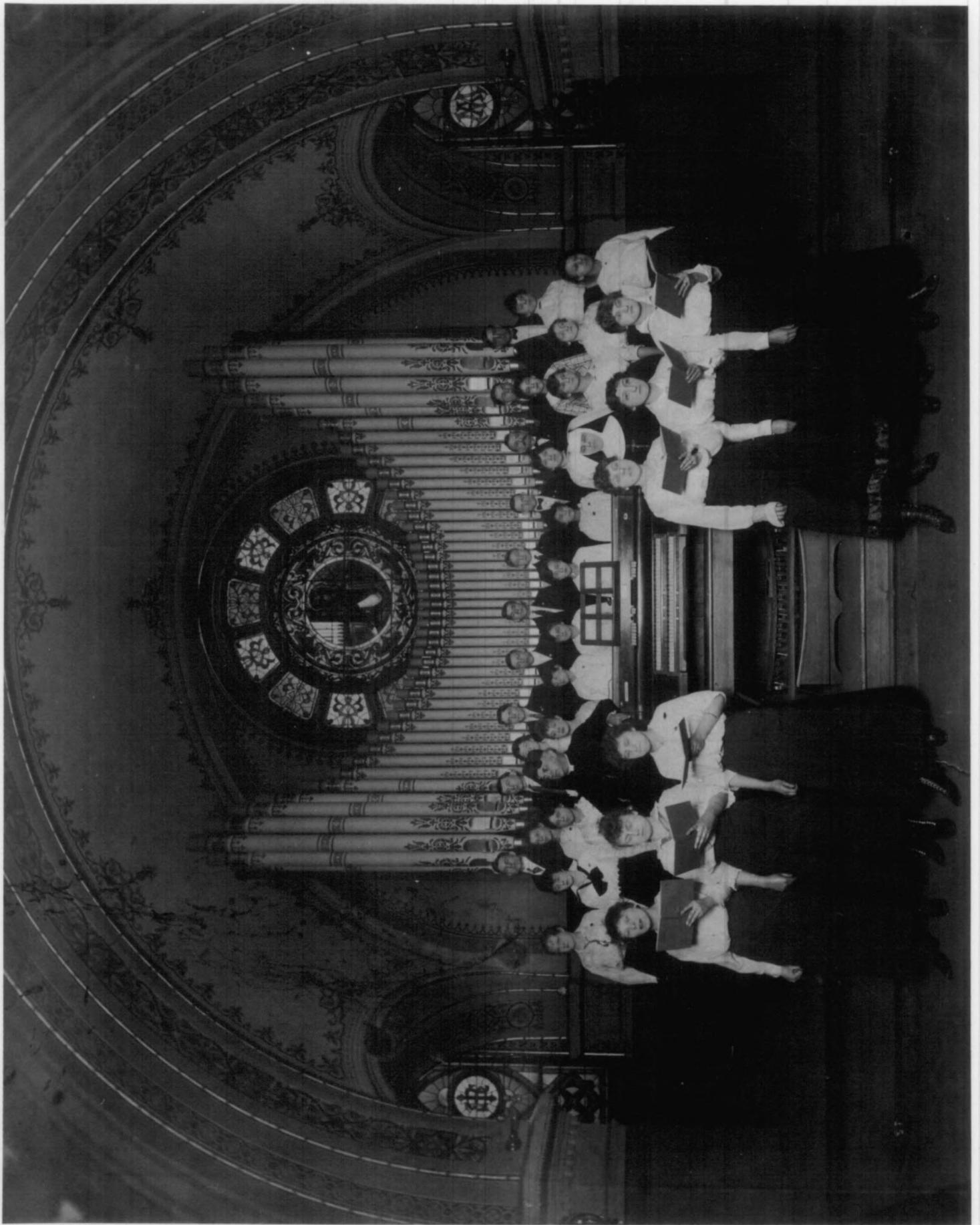
#6 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: c. 1900

Photocopy: St. Stanislaus Church Archives

Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

St. Cecilia window and organ, facing east.



#7 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: November, 1978

Photographer: Janice Broderick

Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

South altar of Our Lady of Czestochowa,  
facing west.



#8 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: November, 1978  
Photographer: Janice Broderick  
Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

Front facade, facing west.



#9 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: April, 1979  
Photographer: Mary M. Stiritz  
Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

Apse elevation, facing east.



#10 ST. STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH  
St. Louis, Missouri

Date: April, 1979  
Photographer: Mary M. Stiritz  
Negative: Landmarks Association of St.  
Louis, Inc.

Church interior taken from choir loft,  
facing west.

