

United States Department of the Interior  
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. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 58-15 Catalpa Avenue [ ] not for publication

city or town Queens [ ] vicinity

state New York code NY county Queens code 081 zip code 11385

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide ☒ locally. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Rudolf A. Puopolo DBHPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/13/12  
Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation  
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

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex****Queens County, New York**

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**5. Classification****Ownership of Property**

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

4

Noncontributing

0

buildings  
sites  
structures  
objects  
**TOTAL**

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**Ridgewood Multiple Resource AreaN/A**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious FacilityChurch-Related ResidenceChurch School**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious FacilityChurch-Related ResidenceChurch School**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Italian Renaissance Revival**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Granitewalls Brickroof Metal

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

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## DESCRIPTION<sup>1</sup>

### Overview:

The St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church complex, which includes a church, rectory, school and convent, occupies most of the northwest side of Catalpa Avenue between Onderdonk Avenue and Woodward Avenue in the Ridgewood neighborhood in the borough and county of Queens, New York City. The buildings across the street and on surrounding blocks are almost entirely residential, with some commercial storefronts. Ridgewood is a sprawling residential neighborhood, developed in the early 20th century that became home to a large German-American community. The ethnic make-up of the neighborhood has changed over time, but its character remains largely intact. Much of it is included in the Central Ridgewood Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places (90NR01596), and the Ridgewood Multiple Resource Area (90MRA00035). St. Matthias is included within the boundaries of the Ridgewood South Historic District designated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. The architectural character of the district is largely defined by the early 20th century Mathews Flats (see significance section), with neo-Romanesque and neo-Italian Renaissance designs and faced in distinctive Kreisler brick.

The St. Matthias Church Complex, just across the street from the northwest border of the Central Ridgewood Historic District, consists of four buildings: church, rectory, school and convent, all four designed by architect Francis J. Berlenbach, Jr.. Constructed of pale yellow or amber brick, these four buildings are architecturally congruous with the rest of the district and are significant in the telling of Ridgewood's history and development. The first building, designed by the prominent architect F.J. Berlenbach as a combined church and school, was erected on the property in 1909 and is currently used as the school. As the congregation grew with the population of the surrounding area, the grand church—which was designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style—was completed in 1926. Several additions have been made since that time, but they are largely invisible from Catalpa Avenue.

### The Church, 58-15 Catalpa Avenue (Borough of Queens, Tax Map Block 3473, Lot 50)

### Constructed 1926

### Exterior:

Principal Façade- The church's main elevation has a three-bay, buff ironspot brick narthex with a projecting center bay and stone, terra-cotta, or cast-stone trim, and a three-stage tower above. There are three door openings on the first floor and three window openings on the second floor; and a molded fascia and foliated frieze below a denticulated and modillioned cornice. There are molded enframements with modillioned cornices surmounted by an oculus and foliated ornament at the first and third-bay door openings of the first floor, and a molded entablature with a balustrade supported on paired Corinthian columns at the center of the first floor.

<sup>1</sup>The description of the exteriors is adapted almost in its entirety from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Ridgewood South Historic District Designation Report (LP-2348)*, prepared by Tara Harrison.

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There is a sign inscribed "ST. MATTHIAS R.C. CHURCH" affixed to the frieze of the entablature, and Guastavino tile-vaulting on the ceiling of the entablature. Corinthian pilasters flank the center door opening, which has a recessed entryway with a molded enframement containing a possibly historic double-leaf, paneled wood door. In the first and third-bay are non-historic double-leaf, paneled wood doors. There are stained glass transoms with decorative wood muntins above the doors. A molded frieze band above the first floor has a centered inscription ["OVR TESTIMONY THAT THE LORD IS GOD"] and small rectangular windows flanked by foliated volutes in the first and third bays. Window openings in the first and third bays of the second floor have a paneled enframement with a balustraded spandrel and a pedimented lintel supported on scroll brackets. There are brick pilasters with Corinthian capitals at the east and west corners of the second-floor facade and three grouped brick pilasters with Corinthian capitals flanking the projecting center bay. There is a scrolled mascarón keystone, as well as foliated spandrel panels, above the double-height arched window opening in the center bay; that opening contains a historic multi-pane window with stained glass panels visible behind it. There is a granite water table and a rusticated granite foundation. The cornerstone is inscribed with a cross symbol and the date, "A.D. 1924." There are granite steps with metal railings; copper leaders flanking the main-entry entablature; an areaway paved in concrete and enclosed with historic iron fencing featuring a swan motif. There is a commemorative bronze statue of Pope John Paul II in the areaway.

The tower has four identical faces. In the first stage there are brick plinths with molded bases and capitals and three decorative panels featuring foliated volutes; and a carillon comprised of pairs of fluted Corinthian pilasters flanking two fluted Corinthian columns in antis carrying an entablature and modillioned cornice. Wood louvers enclose the carillon. The second stage is an aedicule with a balustrade and brick piers and fluted Corinthian columns carrying a denticulated copper pediment. The balustrade features corner impost blocks surmounted by urns and a centered clock face with molded frame. There is an arched window opening with a paneled surround and a keystone set between the columns of the aedicule, and a possibly historic multi-pane window. The third stage of the tower is a copper cupola with engaged Corinthian columns surmounted by a cross.

The transept has buff-brick facades flanking the nave to the east and west, each with one arched window opening with a projecting sill and a continuous lintel on the first floor and two oculus windows with molded surrounds on the second floor. There is a string course and also an iron catwalk below the oculus windows. The first- and second-floor window bays are articulated by recessed panels framed in brick corbelling. There are entry porches on the south wall of the east and west transept; the porches are buff-brick with a rusticated granite foundation and a copper gutter. Double wood entry doors are accessed by flights of granite (west transept) and metal (east transept) stairs. A basement door is visible in the foundation to the left of the porch on the west transept. There is a copper leader at the southwest corner of the west transept.

Alterations to this façade: A 1965 concrete and brick-curtain wall addition to church connects to a 1950 school addition. A 1965 addition has segmental-arch windows and a double-leaf main entry door surmounted by a glass transom with a "St. Matthias School" sign. The tower was restored between 2005 and 2006. There are security lights above the first- and third-bay entries on the south elevation and above the porch entries on the east and west transept. Metal security mesh covers a portion of the first-floor window on the west transept.

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West (side) elevation The west elevation includes a transept, a side aisle, nave, and narthex. There is a sill course below four arched window openings with projecting sills and continuous lintels on the side aisle. There is a one-story brick projection with two small windows with projecting sills, a rusticated foundation, and a copper cornice below the third arched window opening of the side aisle, and a copper cornice and pitched metal roof above it. There are four oculus windows with molded surrounds on the nave; a pitched metal roof with an aediculated dormer; and a rose window on the transept (not visible from Catalpa Avenue). The side elevation of the narthex has one window opening on the first floor and a paneled frieze band and cornice above with one small rectangular window framed by foliated volutes. There is one window opening on the second floor, and brick pilasters with molded plinths and Corinthian capitals at the corners of the second floor, as well as a pedimented copper cornice. The cornice has a frieze band with foliated ornament, dentils and modillions. There is a paneled surround on the first-floor window opening and a paneled surround with a balustraded spandrel and pediment supported on scroll brackets on the second-floor window opening. The first-floor window is multi-pane with decorative wood muntins, with stained-glass visible behind the window. The second-floor window is multi-pane with decorative wood muntins, with stained-glass visible behind. There is a rusticated granite foundation, and there is a metal gate and goose-neck sewer pipe at the southwest corner of the building.

Alterations to this facade: There is a fire alarm and a Fire Department sign below the narthex window on the first floor. Metal security mesh covers portions of the side-aisle windows; and there is an exposed electrical conduit on the facade.

East (side) elevation- The east elevation includes a narthex, side aisle, nave, and transept. The side elevation of the narthex has one window opening on the first floor, with a paneled frieze band and cornice above with one small rectangular window framed by foliated volutes. There is one window opening on the second floor, which has brick pilasters with molded plinths and Corinthian capitals at the corners, and a pedimented copper cornice. The cornice has a frieze band with foliated ornament, dentils and modillions. The first- and second-floor window surrounds are the same as on the west elevation. The first-floor window is multi-pane with decorative wood muntins, and has stained-glass visible behind. The second-floor window is multi-pane with decorative wood muntins, also with stained-glass visible behind. There is a sill course below four arched window openings with projecting sills and continuous lintels on the side aisle; a one-story brick projection with two small windows with projecting sills, rusticated foundation, and a copper cornice below the second arched window opening of the side aisle; a copper cornice and pitched metal roof above the side aisle; four oculus windows with molded surrounds on the nave (not visible from Catalpa Avenue); a pitched metal roof with an aediculated dormer; a rose window on the transept (not visible from Catalpa Avenue); a rusticated granite foundation with basement windows; two copper leaders on the wall of the side aisle; and a metal gate and goose-neck sewer pipe at the southeastern corner of the building.

Alterations to this facade: Metal security mesh covers portions of the side-aisle windows. The basement windows are covered by metal security bars. There is an exposed electrical conduit on the facade.

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North elevation (partially visible from Onderdonk Avenue and Forest Avenue elevation station of the subway)-

The upper level of the apse has rose windows with foliated surrounds and arched stained-glass windows with a terra-cotta string course-lintel and is flanked by corbelled-brick piers. It has brick buttresses; a pitched copper roof with a cross finial; copper leaders; aediculated dormers at the front and rear of the nave roof; two aediculated dormers on the north and south sides of the east and west transept roofs and two on the apse roof; an ocular window in the pediment of the east and west transepts, with a rose window below; and rose windows at the clerestory on the east wall of the nave.

**Interior:**

Each of the three entrances leads into its own small vestibule beneath the organ loft. Within each vestibule, the entrance from the exterior is through a set of wooden double doors with a transom, set within a wooden enframingent. The transoms above the doors to either side entrance has colored leaded glass; the transom over the entrance to the central vestibule has plain leaded glass. In the side vestibules, a staircase ascends to the upper church and organ loft, and descends to the lower church; in the center vestibule, stairs lead only into the upper church. A cylindrical light fixture hangs from the ceiling of either side vestibule on a long chain. Each side wall of the central vestibule has a pair of leaded glass windows; only the outside walls of the side vestibules have such windows. Between the side vestibule on the west side of the church and the central vestibule is simple space formerly used as a baptistry; the same space on the opposite side is a rest room.

Sanctuary- The upper church is Latin cross in plan, with a long nave with a single aisle, a shorter transept, and a semi-circular apse with a ribbed half-dome. There is a raised organ loft that extends across the rear of the nave (the original pipe organ has been replaced). There are four bays in the nave (the organ loft occupies most of the fourth bay), and two bays in the apse and one arched bay in each side of the transept. In the aisles, each bay has a large round-arched window. Where the nave's barrel-vaulted ceiling meets the rear wall, there is an arched area behind the organ. The end of each side of the transept has a large rose window in its upper area. The floor of the nave and the aisles is occupied by original wooden pews along a central aisle that extends from the entrance to the altar.

The church is adorned with a variety of polychromatic ornament. The aisles are separated from the nave and apse by a round-arched colonnade - stone-colored arches with blue details, carried on steel Corinthian columns wrapped in green and white "marble-ized" scagliola with gilded capitals - which continues in the transept. The underside of the arches are adorned with blue squares with an egg-and-dart molding. The ceiling of the nave is a tall barrel vault, which continues in the long apse and the transept. Walls and ceiling are coated in plaster painted in a creme color (the ceiling is wire lath suspended from a steel frame). An orange- and dark-yellow-paneled scagliola wainscoting encircles the sanctuary.

The ceiling over the crossing is a shallow saucer dome, set on four pendentives. Each bay in the aisles rises to a shallow saucer dome, also set on four pendentives. The creme-colored saucer dome has a light blue oval form at its center, and dark blue pendentives with plaster ornament.

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Ornamental glass fills both the round-arched window below and the oculus above. In the clerestory of the nave, above the aisle, each bay has one oculus; but in the curving apse the windows are tall and round-arched. The curving wall of the semi-circular apse, below the half dome, has a blind arcade - pairs of blind arches separated by pilasters. On either side of the apse is a round-arched opening that leads to a shrine.

In the center of the apse sits a tall marble altar approached by a small flight of steps. It focuses on a central niche with a statue of St. Matthias, holding a scroll and a hatchet (St. Matthias was a carpenter), standing on a pedestal directly above a small pediment carried by small piers. The niche is flanked on either side by a column paired with a pier, supporting an architrave. The arch above, with a volute keystone, is filled with a shell motif. The niche is flanked by tall paired Corinthian columns on high bases. These support an architrave with high relief ornament and a central inscription, above which is a triangular pediment. Within the pediment is a scene of the Last Supper. Similar but smaller marble altars stand to the left and right facing the aisles. To the left is a statue of Mary, to the right is a small Crucifix, beneath which is a tabernacle.

Lighting fixtures include a series of metal chandeliers hanging throughout the sanctuary (and in the lower church as well). The original light fixture is cylindrical in form, and survives intact in the vestibule. Throughout the church, a wider circular piece has been added at the bottom of each fixture. There are also two larger, elaborate iron chandeliers hanging in the transept that are believed to come from Germany.

There is an extensive ornamental scheme throughout the church, both in paintings and in stained glass.

The stained glass windows were manufactured by the Franz Mayer Studios in Munich. Many include the names of donors. Adam and Henry Schlachter, the contractors who built St. Matthias, are named as donors of a window showing St. Henry and St. Cunigunda holding a model of the church. Windows above the main altar depict "The Last Supper," "First Communion," "Manna in the Desert," "Viaticum," and "Multiplication of the Loaves." On the west side of the nave windows depict "The Spiritual Works of Mercy" and on the east side "The Corporal Works of Mercy." One of these, at the rear, illustrating "Burial of the Dead," was donated, according to its inscription, "by a few undertakers of Ridgewood." The window in the organ loft depicts "St. Cecilia." The windows in the clerestory include depictions of the evangelists. The transept rose window on the west depicts "The Election of St. Matthias," and on the east "Jesus Teaches the Apostles the Beatitudes."

Painted areas include the barrel-vaulted ceilings, which are divided into large paneled square areas with a circular panel in the center. Each circular panel has a painted scene - four in the nave, two in the apse, and two in either side of the transept - representing one of the Ten Commandments. The painting in the center of the shallow saucer dome over the crossing depicts Msr. Wagner presenting the new church building to St. Peter, who in turn points to Christ. One of the figures is said to represent Msr. Wagner's sister. In the saucer dome's four pendentives are roundels with paintings of Sts. Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Alphonsus, and Bernard (identified by painted plaques in the central scene). Each of the transept rose windows is surrounded by seven roundels painted with the heads of saints. Among the saints represented are Sts. Cyril, Anselm, Leo the Great, and Bede; there are also paintings of the western church fathers Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great, and the eastern church fathers Basil, Gregory Nazianus, Athanasius and John Chrysostom. Other images

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included "The Fourteen Holy Helpers" including three bishops, three virgins, three knightly patrons, the physician Pantaleon, the monk Giles, the Deacon Cynac, the Martyr Vitus and Saint Christopher. Various symbols of Christ and the Eucharist appear on the walls of the apse, including fish, bread and a ship, and, above them, angels holding the instruments of the Passion.<sup>2</sup>

According to the church's *Diamond Jubilee* journal:

"Just this year a fascinating discovery was made. A tattered newspaper clipping proved that the beautiful iron chandeliers that grace our church once hung in the Imperial Palace of Kaiser Wilhelm in Strassburg. Apparently these priceless chandeliers fell into the hands of tourists after the Kaiser was overthrown in 1918, and one of these tourists happened to be a friend of Father Wagner's!"

*Sacristies-* Behind the altar are two sacristies, one to either side, that contain carved oak cabinetry originally used to house vestments and vessels used during the church services.

Alterations: According to the *Diamond Jubilee* journal: During the 1960s, "Another project successfully completed...was to conform the Church to the wishes of the Vatican Council by renovating the main altar so that Mass could be said facing the people. Through the cooperation of various societies, the main altar was transformed and new marble shrines were installed."

*Basement - Lower church sanctuary-* The lower church is reached by stairs from the main entrance. It is a large rectangular room with a semi-circular apse approached by a short flight of steps. There is an elaborate freestanding altar.

The Rectory, 58-13 Catalpa Avenue (Borough of Queens, Tax Map Block 3473, Lot 61)

Constructed 1910

**Exterior:**

*South elevation (on Catalpa Avenue)-* The four-story tall rectory is clad in amber-colored ironspot brick, with limestone trim. It has a six-bay projecting first floor, a four-bay second floor with a projecting porch in the fourth bay, a five-bay third floor, and a fourth-floor centered gable with a quatrefoil finial. It has one-over-one, double-hung windows in all openings except the third bay at the first floor and the fourth bay at the second floor. There are a blind arch with block sill and flush architrave at the fourth-floor gable; flush sills at the first floor; projecting sills and flush lintels at the second and third floors; and a band course at the sills and below the lintels on the third floor. Other details include a limestone water table at base; rustication on the lower portion of the first floor; a rusticated arched opening with a recessed entry; brick pilasters with molded limestone and pressed-metal capitals flanking the third and fourth bays of the first floor; a pressed-metal cornice at first floor;

<sup>2</sup> Descriptions of the subjects of both paintings and windows were kindly provided by the Church.



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an enclosed brick porch with a three-sided bay window at the second floor, a shed roof supported on paired brackets above; a limestone or terra-cotta architrave with a keystone above the arched window opening at the center bay on third floor; a deep pressed-metal cornice with modillions supported on paired brackets; and a brick-and-flagstone stoop with concrete cheek walls and metal railings. The areaway is paved in concrete, and is enclosed with a possibly historic decorative metal fence.

Alterations to this facade: What had been an open porch on the front and one side of the first story was enclosed and extended with rusticated buff brick between 1936 and 1950. The second-floor bay window was reclad in metal (date undetermined). There is a non-historic paneled wood entry door; security light and camera above the main entry; a sign plaque to left of the door on return; and an address tile and security alarm box to the right of the door.

West (side) elevation- The buff-brick facade wraps around from the south elevation. There is one window with a flush block sill of limestone or terra cotta on the first floor; no window on the second floor; and a blind arch in the sixth bay of the third floor. The remainder of the elevation is red brick with windows on the first through third floors; the windows have projecting sills and flush block lintels of limestone; there is a third-floor band course at the sills and lintels which continues from the south elevation. There is a molded, pressed-metal cornice above the first five bays of the third floor; a deep pressed-metal cornice with modillions supported on paired brackets above the sixth bay of the third floor; and brick corbelling below the cornices. The west elevation of the enclosed brick porch on the second floor of the south elevation has a window opening with a projecting sill and flush lintel and a shed roof supported on paired brackets above; two metal leaders towards the front and rear of the building; a parged chimney and rear parapet wall with terra-cotta tile coping visible on the roof; and a metal porch with a copper roof and metal stairs towards the rear of the building.

Alterations to this facade: the second-bay window on the third floor has brick infill and no lintel.

East (side) elevation- The buff-brick facade wraps around from the south elevation. The enclosed brick porch continues from the first floor of the south elevation and extends almost to the rear of the building. There are three first-floor windows with projecting sills and flush block lintels of limestone; windows with similar detailing on the second and third stories; a three-sided brick oriel towards the rear of the building on the second floor; brick corbelling below the molded, pressed-metal cornice; metal leaders towards the front and rear of the building. Two short brick parapet walls are visible on the roof; there is a shed roof supported on paired brackets at the first bay on the second floor (which continues from the second-floor porch with three-sided bay window on the south elevation); goose-neck sewer pipe at the southwest corner of the foundation; and a non-historic metal gate at the southeast corner of the building.

Alterations to this facade: The enclosed porch was extended from the south elevation between 1936 and 1950; there is a security light at the first floor.

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**Interior:**

The entrance to the rectory leads to a small vestibule; opposite the entrance, a paneled wooden doorway with an ornamental leaded glass upper half is set within a floor-to-ceiling wooden frame with a long, narrow leaded glass sidelight at either side and leaded panes at the top. The doorway opens into a narrow hallway; a small reception room to the right has a ceiling with a small central area of Adamesque plaster ornament, but little other decorative detail. There is a kitchen, a main office that was formerly a dining room, and in the rear a newer dining room. The upper floors have servants quarters and residences for the priests. Ornamental detail is minimal.

**The School, 58-25 Catalpa Avenue (Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 3473, Lot 50)**

**Constructed 1909**

**Exterior**

*South elevation on Catalpa Avenue-* On Catalpa Avenue the school has a six-bay, amber-colored ironspot brick facade with limestone or terra-cotta trim, with the second through fifth bays projecting. There is brick quoining at the second and fifth bays; two blind openings in the first and sixth bays and two window openings in the second and fifth bays of first floor. There is one window in the first bay between the basement and the first floor; two blind windows in the first and sixth bays and two window openings in the second and fifth bays of the second floor; two blind arches in the outer bays and four arched window openings in the second through fifth bays of the third floor. Window openings in the second through fifth bays have historic wood-and-glass transoms. There are historic arched, multipane wood windows with decorative muntins in the third and fourth bays of the third floor. There are projecting sills and splayed keystone-lintels on the blind windows and window openings at the first and second floors. There is a continuous sill, and a continuous molded impost, and brick soldier-course surrounds with limestone or terra-cotta molding at the second through fifth windows on the third floor. There are blind arches in the first and sixth bays on the third floor with projecting sills and soldiercourse surrounds with paneled keystones. There is a molded string course; a modillioned, denticulated cornice; a pediment with a modillioned, denticulated cornice and a blind oculus with four keystones. There is a pediment surmounted by a cross, and two historic double-leaf, paneled wood main entry doors with pairs of arched lights in the third and fourth bays on the first floor. The entry doors are framed by a molded, denticulated entablature of terra cotta comprising three pilasters supporting an architrave surmounted by three paired pilasters below a molded cornice with a key pattern. There are two groups of three historic arched wood windows with glass transoms between paired pilasters. The keystone-lintels above the entry doors are surmounted by tympana with crosses and foliate motifs, and spandrels with foliate motifs. There is a statue of St. Matthias between the entry doors. There is a limestone water table; a cornerstone inscribed with a cross symbol and the date "A.D. 1909"; a window/door opening in the first bay of the basement floor; a concrete stoop at the main entry with historic metal railings and under-stoop utility panels; an areaway paved in concrete, and with non-historic metal fencing and gate. There is a flag pole in the areaway to the right of the stoop.

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Alterations to this facade: There is a 1913 brick addition to the rear of the building (architect F.J. Berlenbach, Jr.). There is a 1950 addition to the rear of the school building (architects [George Edward] Beatty & [Francis J., Jr.] Berlenbach) with cinderblock and brick curtain-wall construction. The addition is accessed via an alley to the west of the school building. The first-floor windows of the south elevation are covered by metal security mesh, and the pediment is covered by pigeon-wire. There are two "Drug-free School Zone" signs flanking the main entry doors. There is an exposed electrical conduit to the left of the main entry.

West (side) elevation- The west elevation has 16 visible bays. The last bay projects and continues the buff-brick cladding and terra-cotta detailing of the south elevation. There is a limestone water table in the last bay of the foundation. Seven basement windows with block lintels are visible. There is a service door in the last bay of the basement and an enclosed brick porch/service entry towards the rear of the building at the basement level, with metal railings, steps and a fence at the basement areaways. There are 12 visible window openings on the first and second floors; the window openings in the last bay on the first through third stories are surmounted by splayed keystone-lintels. The windows and window detailing at the first and second-floor windows are the same as the east elevation (see below). There is a molded cornice.

Alterations to this facade: There is a 1913 brick addition to the rear of the building with grouped windows with projecting sills. There is a 1950 brick addition to the rear of the building. The basement windows are covered by metal security mesh. There are flanking brick walls and a plastic awning at the basement service entry in the last bay. The transoms of the second-floor windows are sealed. There are HVAC units and support framing to the rear of the building. There is a fallout shelter sign above the basement service entry. There are three metal leaders, a security light, and an exposed electrical conduit on the facade. There is an alarm bell and a plastic utility box on the facade towards the front of the building.

East (side) elevation- This elevation has 12 visible bays. The first bay projects and continues the buff-brick cladding and terra-cotta detailing of the south elevation. There is a limestone water table in the first bay of the foundation. Seven basement windows with block lintels are visible. There is a service door in the first bay of the basement; metal railings and steps at the basement areaways; and two service doors with metal steps towards the rear of building. There are twelve visible window openings on the first and second floors, and an attic window in the first bay above the second floor. The window openings in the first bay are surmounted by splayed keystone-lintels; arched first-floor window openings in the second through twelfth bays contain historic multi-pane windows with textured-glass and arched transoms, some of the transoms containing stained glass. The window openings sit above a buff-brick sill course and have projecting sills and continuous buff-brick lintels. Rectangular second-floor window openings have projecting sills and molded lintels. There is a molded cornice; a chimney towards rear of building; and a non-historic metal gate at the southeast corner of the building.

Alterations to this facade: There is a 1913 brick addition to the rear of the building with grouped windows with projecting sills. There is a 1950 brick addition to the rear of the building. The window in the second bay of the first floor has been partially filled in with brick. The transoms of the second-floor windows are sealed. The top portion of the chimney has been rebuilt. There are three metal leaders, a security light and an exposed electrical conduit on the facade.

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**Interior:**

The hallways in the school have been updated; classrooms have standard equipment. Neither has notable ornamental detail. There is a small dining room in what was formerly a library, which retains floor-to-ceiling wooden shelving with simple ornamental patterns at the top. The basement gym served as the original church sanctuary; its only notable feature is a beamed ceiling, and wooden wainscoting. There is a stage at one end.

Alterations: According to the Diamond Jubilee journal,

In 1950...twelve new, modern classrooms were constructed. Soon after, in March, 1951, a brand new auditorium was opened.<sup>3</sup>

The Convent, 58-25 Catalpa Avenue (Borough of Queens Tax Map Block 3473, Lot 50)

Constructed 1914

**Exterior:**

South elevation on Catalpa Avenue- This elevation has a three-bay, buff ironspot brick facade with limestone or terra-cotta trim, and a projecting center bay. There is one window opening on the first floor, three window openings on the second and third floors; paired double-hung windows in all openings except the center bay on the second and third floors. The entry is through the center bay of the first floor; it has a historic wood door with paneled enframing and side lights visible behind a storm door. There is a projecting third bay on the first floor; projecting sills and splayed double-keystone lintels at all windows except the center-bay windows on the second and third floor; a molded surround at the center-bay window opening on the second floor with a bracketed sill and pedimented lintel, and a window with decorative wood muntins. There is an arched window opening in the center bay of the third floor with a projecting sill and flush architrave with keystone; a molded string course above the third floor; a modillioned and denticulated pressed-metal cornice, interrupted by a centered, Baroque style curved parapet with molded terra-cotta coping and a blind oculus with four keystones. There is a molded terra-cotta or limestone panel with a cross on the projecting third bay of the first floor; a bluestone sill at the foundation on the eastern and western corners of the building; a limestone water table; a porch in the first and second bays of the first floor, a concrete stoop and cheek walls in the second bay; non-historic metal railings and columns on the porch; metal leaders at the western corner of the porch and the southeastern corner of the building on the first floor. The areaway is paved in concrete, and enclosed by a non-historic metal fence. There is a non-historic metal gate at the southeastern corner of the building.

Alterations to this facade: There is wood-panel infill between the brick piers supporting the porch. Metal flashing covers the first-floor cornice at the porch and projecting bay. "No Loitering" and "St. Matthias School Entrance" signs are affixed to the facade, and there are two handicap-access signs on the areaway fence.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matthias R.C. Church Diamond Jubilee journal of 1983 (n.p.)

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West (side) elevation- The projecting two-bay facade of buff-brick wraps around from the south elevation. There are two windows on the basement and first through third stories; windows have projecting sills and flush block lintels of limestone. The remainder of the facade is red-brick with windows on the basement and first through third stories; the windows have projecting sills and flush block lintels of limestone. There is terra-cotta tile coping; a brick porch with a service entry and metal stairs towards the front of the building.

East (side) elevation- There is a brick wall with windows on the basement and first through third stories. Buff-brick quoining from the south elevation wraps around the corner of the building. Windows have projecting sills and block lintels. There is terra-cotta tile coping; metal stairs towards the rear of the building; and a fire escape at the second and third floor.

**Interior:**

The convent entrance leads to a narrow hallway. On the left is a small sitting room. On the right is a small chapel with wooden wainscoting and large, multi-pane leaded glass windows.<sup>4</sup> At the rear is a dining room with ornamental wall panels framed in wood, and a ceiling divided into panels by similar wooden elements. A narrow staircase on the left leads to the upper stories, which have small bedrooms.

<sup>4</sup> According to the *St. Matthias R.C. Church Diamond Jubilee* journal of 1983: "In 1958, the Sisters' chapel was modernized...."

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**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.)

- ☒ **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.
- ☒ **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

**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  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance:**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ArchitectureSocial History**Period of Significance:**1909 - 1926**Significant Dates:**1909/1910, 1926**Significant Person:**N/A**Cultural Affiliation:**N/A**Architect/Builder:**Francis J. Berlenback Jr.Franz Mayer Co. of Munich (windows)

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SECTION 8: SIGNIFICANCE

The St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex in New York State's Queens County includes a large church, rectory, school, and convent, all maintaining an excellent degree of architectural integrity. The complex is significant under criterion C in the area of architecture for its collection of harmoniously designed ecclesiastic buildings in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, as group of buildings all representing the work of prominent local architect F. J. Berlenbach, and for the church's highly decorated interior, which contains a remarkable program of painted ornament and stained-glass windows by the renowned Franz Mayer Company of Munich. The complex is additionally significant under criterion A in the area of social history for its association with both the history of Queens County's Ridgewood neighborhood and its largely German-American Roman Catholic population. A period of significance has been set from 1909, when the parish built its first church (now school), until 1926, when its highly decorated new church was constructed. The complex was identified as a contributing resource in the Ridgewood Multiple Resource Area in 1984.

The Ridgewood neighborhood<sup>5</sup>

Located in western Queens County, the town of Ridgewood originally spanned the Brooklyn-Queens border, an area that was inhabited by the Mespachtes Indians prior to being settled by Europeans.<sup>6</sup> The high, thickly wooded terrain is part of the terminal moraine that runs through Ridgewood and continues east through the center of Long Island. Part of the town was located in Bushwick, Brooklyn, one of the original six towns that joined together to become the City of Brooklyn in 1854, while another section was part of the adjacent town of Newtown, one of the original three towns of Queens County.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, farms in Bushwick and Ridgewood were tilled by Dutch and British families, who grew lettuce, corn, potatoes, cauliflower, and a variety of fruits for urban markets in Brooklyn and Manhattan. The only-known Dutch farmhouse surviving in Ridgewood is the Adrian and Ann Wyckoff Onderdonk House (third quarter of the 18th century, a designated local New York City landmark). At the start of the American Revolution, Ridgewood was mostly farmland, along with a small burial ground. During this period and for some time thereafter, many of the farms held slaves.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>With the exception of several added quotations from early publications, this section is adapted almost in its entirety from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Ridgewood South Historic District Designation Report (LP-2348)*, prepared by Tara Harrison. Sources for this section include: Walter J. Hutter et al, *Our Community, Its History and People - Ridgewood, Glendale, Maspeth, Middle Village, Liberty Park* (New York: Greater Ridgewood Historical Society, Inc., 1976); George Schubel, *A History of Greater Ridgewood* (New York: Ridgewood Times Publishing Co., 1912); and Vincent Seyfried and Stephen Weinstein, "Ridgewood," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, ed., Kenneth T. Jackson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1005.

<sup>6</sup>Ridgewood was named for the reservoir, built in 1856-59 by the City of Brooklyn, located on the glacial ridge formed by the Long Island terminal moraine. The reservoir was located in the present-day Highland Park on the south side of Ridgewood.

<sup>7</sup>Early records show that the Woodard and Van Ende families, 18th-century owners of the land contained in the Ridgewood South Historic District, as well as many of their neighbors, were slave owners. [Henry Onderdonk, Jr., *Queens County in Olden Times* (Jamaica, NY: Charles Welling, 1865), 48; LPC, *Adrian and Ann Wyckoff Onderdonk House Designation Report (LP-1923)* report prepared by Jay Shockley (New York: City of New York, 1995); United States Federal Census: 1790, 1800, 1810].

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In the mid-19th century, Bushwick began to lose its rural, agricultural landscape. Large numbers of Germans immigrated to New York following the political upheavals in central Europe in 1848. Many settled in Williamsburg and Bushwick (collectively with Greenpoint known as Brooklyn's Eastern District) and began the development of the area's most famous local industry, brewing. Owned by German immigrants, the breweries employed a largely German workforce, whose families also provided a sufficient local demand for lager beer.

Development in Bushwick was further propelled by improvements in transportation. The Myrtle Avenue horsecar line was extended east to Broadway in 1855, while the elevated rapid transit line, operated by the Brooklyn Elevated Railroad, reached Broadway and Gates Avenue in 1885. By 1880, 35 breweries had been established in Brooklyn, including at least 11 located in a 14-block area in the Eastern District known as "brewer's row," and other German immigrants opened factories and knitting mills in the area. Tenements and small row houses were built to house the workers and their families.<sup>8</sup> A second wave of development began after the construction of the elevated railroad along Myrtle Avenue in 1888, making the area an attractive alternative to congested downtown Brooklyn and lower Manhattan. Development, consisting primarily of three- and four-story multiple dwellings, spread eastward toward the Brooklyn-Queens border during the following decade. A number of picnic grounds, beer gardens, amusement parks, and racetracks opened amidst Ridgewood's fields and farming villages towards the end of the 19th century, catering especially to the large German population of Bushwick.

Located to the east of Bushwick, Ridgewood (also known as East Williamsburgh) remained largely rural until after the consolidation of the City of New York in 1898, just as the last vacant land in Bushwick was being developed. Transportation improvements to the area helped propel development. Myrtle and Metropolitan avenues and Fresh Pond Road are among the oldest streets in Ridgewood, having originally been Native American trails and then used by Long Island farmers to take their products to market. Stagecoaches and horsecars ran along Myrtle Avenue, which extended from Fulton Ferry – with ferries that provided access to Manhattan – to Jamaica Avenue. The first railroad to reach the area, in 1878, was the New York Connecting Railroad Extension (once the Manhattan Beach Railroad), running from Brooklyn through Ridgewood to the Brooklyn seashore. In 1881, the Bushwick Railroad Company secured a right of way through several Ridgewood farms and began operating steam service from Wyckoff and Myrtle Avenue to the Lutheran Cemetery. The elevated rapid transit line ran to Wyckoff Avenue along the Brooklyn/Queens border beginning in 1888 and an extension of the electrified trolley ran from Bushwick to Fresh Pond Road in Ridgewood in 1894. The Myrtle Avenue line was extended at grade over the private right-of-way of the former Lutheran line from Wyckoff Avenue to Lutheran Cemetery in 1904.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Bushwick was not a company town. Housing was constructed by speculative builders, most of whom were also of German descent, including some brewers who invested some of their profits into real estate.

<sup>9</sup> The Bushwick Railroad Company's line to Lutheran Cemetery, known as the Lutheran Line, operated for seven years through the Wyckoff, Meyerrose, Ring, Doscher and Wagner former farms, before being taken over by the Brooklyn City Railroad. The steam engines were replaced by electrified trolleys in 1895, and the line was later elevated to Lutheran Cemetery in 1915, as an extension of the BRT's Myrtle Avenue (now M) line. The tracts of the former at-grade line are still evident in the street bed of Woodbine Street under the existing elevated M track at the northeastern edge of the Ridgewood South Historic District. (No title, *The Newtown Register*, May 19, 1881; "Ridgewood's Great Growth," *The Newtown Register*, December 31, 1914, 2:2; John Roberts, "The Lutheran Line," available on-line (January 14, 2010) at: [www.junipercivic.com/juniperberryarticle.asp?nid=162](http://www.junipercivic.com/juniperberryarticle.asp?nid=162).)



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By the turn of the century, Bushwick's builders began purchasing Ridgewood's farms, parks, and racetracks. Over the next two decades they constructed tenements and small row houses similar to those they had built for the German-immigrant workers and their families in Bushwick.<sup>10</sup> An article in the *Real Estate Record and Guide* published in late 1909 mentions that an area of over 150 blocks of former farmland and picnic parks in Ridgewood was then experiencing intense growth.<sup>11</sup> The construction of the Queensboro Bridge further contributed to the development of the area. The bridge opened in 1909, linking the roadways of Queens to Manhattan, just as the United States was beginning to embrace automobile travel.

From the turn of the century to World War I, more than 5,000 structures were built in Ridgewood; industrial areas developed to the north, while residential construction occurred in the southern section.<sup>12</sup> The developers built wood-frame houses until 1905, when building codes took effect requiring masonry construction. All subsequent construction in Bushwick and Ridgewood was of masonry. Many of the builders, including the G.X. Mathews Company, hired the architectural firm of Louis Berger & Co. to design their rows, which were faced largely with bricks produced by the Kreischer Brick Manufacturing Company. Many of Ridgewood's buildings share similar designs, brickwork, and ornamentation.

Building stopped during World War I, resuming at a slower pace following the war and continuing until the last Ridgewood farms were developed in the late 1930s. During this period, more of the same types of buildings were constructed, including new-law tenements and attached and semi-detached single- and multi-family houses.

In 1939, the WPA Guide called the area "old-fashioned and respectable."<sup>13</sup> Ridgewood remained a working- and middle-class neighborhood throughout the rest of the 20th century.

German Immigration in New York City, Brooklyn's Eastern District and Ridgewood<sup>14</sup>

From its founding in 1626 by Peter Minuit, a native of the German town of Wesel am Rhein, New York City has had a significant German population. During the 1820s, the first German neighborhood and commercial center developed in the area southeast of City Hall Park and by 1840 more than 24,000 Germans lived in the

<sup>10</sup> Three basic types of homes were constructed: two- and three-family row houses with one apartment per floor, two- and three-story tenements with two apartments per floor, and small multiple-dwellings with ground-floor stores.

<sup>11</sup> "Growth of Queens," *Real Estate Record and Guide* (December 25, 1909), 1200, as cited in LPC, *Stockholm Street Historic District Designation Report* (LP-2081), report prepared by Donald G. Presa (New York: City of New York, 2000).

<sup>12</sup> In the early and middle 20th century, factories and warehouses were erected in Ridgewood along Flushing and Metropolitan Avenues, north of Ridgewood's residential neighborhoods. This industrial area is located near the Newtown Creek and English Kills shipping channels, and adjoins similar commercial areas in Williamsburg, Bushwick, and Maspeth. In its heyday, the area had hundreds of knitting mills, oil refineries, and manufacturers of such products as glassware and pharmaceuticals.

<sup>13</sup> Works Progress Administration, Lou Gody ed., *New York City Guide* (New York: Random House, 1939), 460.

<sup>14</sup> This section on German Immigration is based on LPC, *(Former) Scheffel Hall Designation Report* (LP-1959), report prepared by Gale Harris (New York: City of New York, 1997). Sources for this section include: Stanley Nadel, "Germans" and "Kleindeutschland" in the *Encyclopedia of New York* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

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city. During the next twenty years, their numbers increased dramatically as "mass transatlantic migration brought another hundred thousand Germans fleeing land shortages, unemployment, famine, and political and religious oppression," with over 1,350,000 Germans immigrating to the United States.<sup>15</sup> To accommodate this growth, new German neighborhoods or "Little Germanys," also known individually as "Dutchtown," developed, including *Kleindeutschland*, east of the Bowery and north of Division Street in Manhattan and outside the city in the Eastern District of Brooklyn (Williamsburg, Bushwick and Greenpoint). By 1860, Germans in New York City numbered more than 200,000, accounting for one quarter of the city's total population. They represented the first large immigrant community in American history that spoke a foreign language. In the 1870s and 1880s, dislocations caused by the growth of the German Empire brought more new immigrants to the United States while thousands of American-born children of German immigrants established their own homes in these neighborhoods.<sup>16</sup> Germans established new neighborhoods in Yorkville in Manhattan and Steinway in Queens, and existing German neighborhoods, such as Williamsburg and Bushwick, expanded. New York City's German population increased in the 1890s, reaching a peak of over 700,000 in 1900. After that, many Germans and German-Americans migrated to suburban areas outside of New York City, resulting in the reduction of the city's German population to under 590,000 by 1920. During the same period, many of the Germans that remained in New York moved from older neighborhoods in Manhattan and Brooklyn to newly developed areas like Ridgewood. New York City's German population grew again during the 1920s as many Germans fled economic and political turmoil in Europe.

Immigrants from Germany and their descendants have contributed greatly to New York City's culture in areas such as religion, politics, business, labor, publishing, the arts, philanthropy, and local cuisine. By settling in areas with such a high concentration of fellow countrymen, it was easy for the Germans to maintain their culture and customs, which included German-speaking churches and synagogues, German newspapers, singing societies, Turnverein, and beer gardens.<sup>17</sup> Many of the city's breweries were established by Germans, who also operated hundreds of beer halls and wine gardens in German neighborhoods, especially in Brooklyn's Eastern District. Germans were also well-represented in the building trades, including in the practice of architecture, and created their own banking, savings, and loan institutions.<sup>18</sup> Several publishing houses and newspapers were owned by German New Yorkers, including the popular *Staats-Zeitung*. While German singing societies and choral groups were generally identified with the middle and working classes, German musicians predominated

<sup>15</sup> *Encyclopedia of New York*, 463, as cited in *Scheffel Hall Designation Report*.

<sup>16</sup> By 1880, the city's German population constituted about one third of the city's total.

<sup>17</sup> A Turnverein is a gymnastics society founded in Germany based on the teachings of Prussian nationalist, Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. In America, especially in cities where large German populations settled, "the principal German organizations, other than the churches, for maintaining cultural and social traditions were the singing and gymnastics societies known respectively as the "Gensang Vereins" and the "Turn Vereins" (Gesang = singing; turn = gymnastics; verein = club or society) established not long after the arrival of the first significant numbers of Germans in the late 1840s and early 1850s." (Robert L. Dyer, "The Boonville Turner" from *Boonville an Illustrated History*, available on-line (3/5/08) at: <http://www.undata.com/turnerhall/thhist.htm>.) No title, *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 31, 1856, 3; Landmarks Preservation Commission, (Former) *Colored School No. 3, later Public School 69 Designation Report* (LP-1977), report prepared by Donald Presa (New York: City of New York, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> German-born architects working in New York included William Schickel (1850-1907), Detlef Lienau (1818-87), Leopold Eidlitz (1823-1908), Alexander Saeltzer (date undetermined), Alfred Zucker (b.1852), and Louis Berger (b.1875), who was a prolific Ridgewood architect and the designer of the earliest buildings in the Ridgewood North Historic District.

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in the New York Philharmonic and provided it with many of its directors, including Leopold Damrosch. In Ridgewood, German-American social organizations represented in the early- and mid-20th century included the First German Sports Club, the Schwaebischer Saengerbund, the Steuben Society of America, the Rheinpfaelzer Volkfest Vereins, the German-American School Association, and the Gottscheer Gedenkstsette.<sup>19</sup>

Development and building in Ridgewood<sup>20</sup>

According to the 18th and early 19th century records, the land in the central area of Ridgewood was part of the Woodard and Van Ende/Onderdonk farms, two long narrow farms that extended along both sides of Woodward and Onderdonk Avenues, respectively, from approximately Newtown Creek to Myrtle Avenue.<sup>21</sup> Following his death in the 1830s, Joseph Woodard's heirs began selling off portions of the property, which had been mapped and divided into over 100 lots. Van Ende descendants occupied their farm for almost 100 years from 1709 to 1805, the property passing from purchaser Paulus Van Ende to his son, then to his granddaughter and later to his great-grandson. In 1786, the western portion of the farm was sold to Johannes Covert. (The small sections that extend from the otherwise straight western boundary of the district were part of the Covert property.) The next long term owners of the property were Adrian and Ann Wyckoff Onderdonk, whose descendents sold the southernmost portion of the farm, including the bulk of the property in the historic district, to Joachim Meyerrose in 1864.<sup>22</sup>

Born in Bremen, Joachim Meyerrose (whose name is sometimes spelled Meirose or Meyerose) immigrated to Newtown in 1844, finding employment on the farm of John C. Debevoise for a short time before renting

<sup>19</sup> The Gottscheers were Austrians who emigrated to the Balkans in the fourteenth century. In the 1880s, many Gottscheers, fleeing upheaval in the Balkans, moved to the United States and were among those who later settled in the developing neighborhood of Ridgewood in the early 20th century. During the World War II era, Gottscheers were again forced to flee Yugoslavia; the largest number of these refugees - about 3,000 - settled in Ridgewood, Queens.

<sup>20</sup> This section is based on the following sources: *Atlas of the Borough of Queens, City of New York* (Brooklyn: E. Belcher Hyde, 1903), v.2, pl. 23; Schubel, 38-41, 45-48; and "Striking Advantages of Rapidly Growing Ridgewood Section," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 17, 1909, 2-4.

<sup>21</sup> It is unclear if the farms extended all the way to today's Myrtle Avenue or to Catalpa Avenue, which was historically known as Myrtle Street, and later Elm Avenue. Extensive property south of Catalpa Avenue, from the triangular intersection of Catalpa and Myrtle avenues extending east towards Glendale was owned by members of the Debevoise family by the early 19th century. Lambert Woodard is listed as a resident of Queens County by the late 1660s and his two sons, Nathaniel and Lambert were among the grantees, present freeholders and inhabitants of the town when Governor Dongan reissued a patent for the Newtown in 1686. Joseph Woodard, son of Nathaniel, purchased 135 acres on the southeast side of Flushing Avenue, as well as additional property on the northeast side of the road in 1747. His son Joseph, who died in 1832, inherited that portion of the land that contains the Ridgewood South Historic District. Although the name is spelled "Woodard" in the records, the street named for the family is "Woodward." (Riker, 171, 383, 422, 423; Onderdonk, Jr., 48; "For Sale or to Let," *New York Tribune* (August 1841 - February 1843); "Extracts from the Records of Newtown," *The Newtown Register*, March 4, 1886, 3; "Extracts from the Records of Newtown," *The Newtown Register*, June 24, 1886, 9; "Old Newtown and its Confines," *The Newtown Register*, May 26, 1887, 4; "Map of the Woodard Farm in Newtown," Surveyed April 1842 by H. Martin, Filed August 5, 1842, Map No. 332; Map of the Woodard Farm in Newtown," Filed March 25, 1837, Map No. 341.)

<sup>22</sup> *Adrian and Ann Wyckoff Onderdonk House Designation Report*; Queens County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 222, 131 (June 2, 1865). For more information on the Van Ende or Onderdonk ownership, see the designation report.

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farmland on 56th Street in Manhattan.<sup>23</sup> Meyerrose returned to Newtown in 1854, purchasing almost nine acres of property from Debevoise. Ten years later, he enlarged the farm by purchasing additional land from Gertrude (Onderdonk) Schoonmaker.<sup>24</sup> Meyerrose farmed the land, with the help of his sons, into the last quarter of the 19th century. His older son Richard left farming to open a hay and grain market, while Joseph Meyerrose continued to work the farm after his father's retirement, expanding the operation by renting adjacent property. From 1907 until 1911, a portion of the farm was used as a baseball field, known as "Meyerrose Park." The field was the home of the Brooklyn Club of the Atlantic League (later Union League) and the semi-professional Ridgewood team. For a time, the park was also used by the Brooklyn Royal Giants, a professional Negro League Team, and for high school baseball games, as well as for soccer and cricket matches. The year 1911 marked the final season for Meyerrose Park; in February of that year Gustave Xavier Mathews agreed to purchase the Meyerrose farm for \$20,000 per acre, a record price for land in Ridgewood.<sup>25</sup>

German-born Gustave Meyers began purchasing former farmland in Brooklyn and Queens County just after the turn of the 20th century and was one of the first builders to start developing the Queens section of Ridgewood. In 1904, the Mathews Realty and Construction Company of Queens was incorporated, with G.X. Mathews and two of his brothers, William F. and Ernest, as its directors. In 1907-08, Mathews purchased portions of the former Schwamb and Fleckenstein farms along Forest Avenue, and began the company's first full-block development, constructing the model tenement buildings that would make the company and Ridgewood famous. (Figure 1) By developing a large-scale and efficient building system, the company was able to produce well-designed housing at an affordable price. Meeting with continued success, the company agreed to purchase the old Meyerrose farm, the site of the Ridgewood South Historic District, in 1911, and constructed almost 170 model tenements on the site. That same year, the G. X. Mathews Company received 25 percent of the tenement house certificates issued in the borough of Queens. In 1915, the Tenement House Department of New York City selected the "Mathews Model Flats" as the "most up-to-date method of housing for the masses at a minimum of cost;" and other builders began to copy the buildings.<sup>26</sup> By the mid-1910s, few large tracts of land were left to develop in Ridgewood.

The "Mathews Model Flats" which give Ridgewood its distinctive architectural flavor. These were built on larger-than-usual lots, 27.5 feet wide, allowing two apartments on each floor, each with its own full bathroom, with shared light shafts providing windows in each room. The layout was "first planned and constructed" by the

<sup>23</sup> Information on the Meyerrose family and Meyerrose Park is from the following sources: Schubel, 45-48; Hutter, 241, 252; United States Census Record, 1880, 1910; "The Assessors' Work," *The Newtown Register*, August 17, 1882; "Local Happenings," *The Newtown Register*, April 7, 1892; "Sheriff Meyerrose Proved Popular Host," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 2, 1904, 2; "J. Meyerrose, Ex-Sheriff, Dies," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 3, 1940; "The Parks of Ridgewood," available on-line (June 11, 2010) at: <http://www.covehurst.net/ddyte/brooklyn/ridgewood.html>; "No Outlaw Baseball," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 27, 1909, 8; "Atlantic League Busy on its New Grounds," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 3, 1907, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Only the small portion of the district south of Catalpa Avenue was formerly owned by Debevoise, however, the Meyerrose farm extended south to Myrtle Avenue. Descended from an early colonist and a prominent Newtown family, John C. Debevoise owned extensive property on the south side of Elm Avenue (now Catalpa) extending to the east past Forest Avenue. For more on the Debevoise family, see the *Ridgewood North Historic District Designation Report*. [Queens County, Office of the Register, Conveyance Liber 136, 434 (December 1, 1854); Liber 222, 131 (June 2, 1865).]

<sup>25</sup> "The Real Estate Field," *New York Times*, February 28, 1911, 16.

<sup>26</sup> "Ridgewood's Great Growth," *Ridgewood Times*, December 31, 1914, 2:2.

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Mathews Company, and the buildings quickly became widely known in Queens, with other developers' copies later described as the "Mathews Model Flats" type.<sup>27</sup> The buildings were so successful that they became the model for future development; the "Mathews Model Flats" were endorsed by the Tenement House Department. In a letter dated January 23, 1918, a commissioner of the Tenement House Department recommended "Mathews Model Flats" as a solution to the shortage of housing for U.S. Government shipyard employees. The letter explained that the model had been adopted as a standard in Queens for both the Mathews Company and other builders.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to being innovative in plan, the tenements are striking in appearance. Built after 1905, when fire codes in Ridgewood began requiring masonry construction for attached rows, the buildings have load-bearing masonry walls constructed of light colored Kreischer brick. Using mainly pale-yellow- and amber-colored brick, the buildings have fine detailing, including corbelled, projecting, recessed, contrasting and geometric patterned brickwork, brick pilasters, and contrasting brick or carved-stone string coursing. With mainly flat facades, the mid-block buildings are recessed from the street wall of the corner buildings, adding further interest to the row. After experimenting with several different facades designs in the Ridgewood North Historic District, by 1910 Mathews established the Romanesque- and Renaissance-Revival-inspired design that would be used on every building he constructed in the central Ridgewood area.

Kreischer Brick<sup>29</sup>

The brick manufacturing firm that would later become B. Kreischer & Sons was founded by Balthazar Kreischer (1813-1886) in 1845. Kreischer was born in Bavaria and came to New York City in 1836, where he worked for a period as a mason. In the early 1850s, Kreischer was one of the first in the United States to produce fire brick, a fire resistant brick used in many industrial buildings. In 1853, Kreischer became aware of refractory clay deposits in Westfield, Staten Island. He acquired several tracts with clay deposits and purchased the rights to mine clay on nearby land. Two years later he established a brickworks on the Arthur Kill. As the factory expanded, the area became known as Kreischerville. By the time of Kreischer's retirement in 1878, the company had become a major producer of building materials in the metropolitan area. Kreischer's sons continued the firm, but financial problems forced them to sell the company in 1899.

<sup>27</sup> "Building of the Home as a Matter of Economy," *Ridgewood Times*, April 19, 1913. The article credits the G.X. Mathews Company with having designed the layout of the tenements, despite the fact that Berger is the architect of record in the building permits.

<sup>28</sup> The letter describes the Mathews flats as the "best example" of the "character of house which would give the maximum of living accommodations in space, light, air and ventilation, as well as convenience for creature comforts, and the maintenance of the best sanitary conditions for the minimum expense in rent, and yet, giving a fair and satisfactory return to the builder and subsequent owner." Unpublished letter from Tenement House Department to Hon. J. Rodgers Flannery, dated January 23, 1918 (Gustave Mathews, Passport Applications, January 2, 1906- March 31, 1925 (M1490), 1918-1919, Roll 0651, Certificates: 51000-51249, 10 Dec 1918-10 Dec 1918 available on-line: [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)).

<sup>29</sup> This section is based on the following sources: Kreischer Brick Manufacturing Company, *Plain and Ornamental Front Brick, Firebrick, Clay Retorts of the Finest Quality* (New York: Kreischer Brick Manufacturing Co., 1902); Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Kreischerville Workers' Housing* (LP-1870), report prepared by Betsy Bradley (New York, 1994); National Register of Historic Places, *Ridgewood Multiple Resource Area* (Washington, D.C., 1983), report prepared by Donald G. Presa; and Heinrich Reis, "Clays of New York: Their Properties and Uses," *Bulletin of the New York State Museum*, June 1930.

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Peter Androvette, who owned a number of shipping concerns in the metropolitan area, including the operation that handled raw and finished materials for Kreischer, acquired B. Kreischer & Sons at foreclosure, reincorporating the company as the Kreischer Brick Manufacturing Company in 1902. This ushered in the company's heyday during the early twentieth century, when it produced brick of all colors and types, along with ornamental terra cotta. The company's products were used by architects and builders throughout the East and Midwest. The company's prominence declined after the First World War, and the factory was closed in 1927.

Most of the Kreischer brick used in Ridgewood, including the Ridgewood South Historic District, is buff or amber-colored brick with smooth surfaces, laid with tight, flush joints. Rock-faced brick, also manufactured by Kreischer, was used in Ridgewood for details such as band courses and decorative panels.

Builders in Ridgewood used Kreischer brick consistently until the First World War; after that, they used wire-cut bricks produced at factories in Pennsylvania. These bricks had rough surfaces and were laid with raked joints, producing a very different appearance.

St. Matthias Church

Before selling the bulk of the family farm to G.X. Mathews, the Meyerrose heirs sold a large lot fronting on Catalpa Avenue to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brooklyn for the construction of a new church, to become the St. Matthias church complex.

Between 1909 and 1926, a combined church-school, rectory, convent, and larger church were constructed for the newly formed parish of St. Matthias, all designed in a classically inspired style by local architect Francis J. Berlenbach, Jr. The St. Matthias church complex is significant as an ensemble of buildings designed over a period of time by the same architect, and also as a highly intact example of early-20th century ecclesiastical architecture in New York.

The founding and growth of the St. Matthias parish was integral to the development of Ridgewood as a largely German and German-American working-class community and reflected the importance of the church as a community institution. In 1908, Father Nicholas M. Wagner (1873-1930) was appointed pastor-founder of St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church by the Right Reverend Charles E. McDonnell, Second Bishop of Brooklyn from 1892-1921, whose goal it was to have a church dedicated to each of the twelve apostles in Brooklyn. St. Matthias was the first Catholic church in Brooklyn dedicated to that saint.<sup>30</sup>

As noted in a 1914 study of *The Catholic Church in the United States of America*:

In 1908 Rev. Nicholas M. Wagner was sent to the Ridgewood section of Brooklyn [sic] to build another church for the Germans. Territory was taken from St. Brigid's and St. Aloysius' parishes and formed into that of St. Matthias. Father Wagner said Mass in a hotel not very far from the one in which Father McCloskey said his first Mass for the people of St. Brigid's Church. The church was built on Catalpa Avenue. It is a combination

<sup>30</sup> John K. Sharp, *History of the Diocese of Brooklyn, 1853-1953* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1954), 40.

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building (church and school); the church seats 900, and the school has ten class rooms. The building cost \$80,000, and has a debt of \$75,000. The rectory of stone, built in 1910 at a cost of \$25,000, is free from debt. The schools are in charge of 10 Sisters of Notre Dame, and have an attendance of 575 children. The congregation, German and English, has about 150 English-speaking families, and numbers 4000.<sup>31</sup>

Father Wagner was born in Brooklyn to German-immigrant parents. He was educated at Holy Trinity parochial school there and St. Francis Xavier College, New York. He studied theology at Mayence [Mainz, Germany] Seminary, where he was ordained in 1896. He was assigned to the Church of the Holy Trinity, where he remained until 1908.<sup>32</sup>

Father Wagner's first undertaking as pastor of St. Matthias was to conduct a census of the Ridgewood area; the approximately 1,500 Catholic residents counted in his census formed the new church's parish. The first mass was held in an open-air pavilion at the Ridgewood Park and Colosseum, and by early 1909 an organized effort was underway to raise funds for the construction of a combined church-and-school building.

By 1921, the school was quite successful As listed in the *Directory of Catholic Colleges and Schools*:

ST. MATTHIAS' SCHOOL (Elem.), Catalpa near Woodward ave. Conducted by School Sisters of Notre Dame. Rev. N.M. Wagner, Rect. Sr. M. Alcantara, Supr. Teachers - Rel., 18. Students - Total, 903; Boys, 452; Girls, 451. Grades, 8.<sup>33</sup>

Architect Francis J. Berlenbach, Jr.<sup>34</sup>

Francis J. Berlenbach, Jr. (1857-1944) is known to have been employed in the design office of James Renwick during the year 1880, but other details regarding his architectural training remain unestablished. Berlenbach opened his own design firm at 260 Graham Avenue in Brooklyn around 1885. His father Franz Joseph Berlenbach (1825- c.1895) was a carpenter and builder by trade and had settled in Williamsburgh in 1863 after having lived for a time in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Both Berlenbachs were active in the construction trades in the greater Williamsburgh area during the late nineteenth century.

The younger Berlenbach developed a specialty in the design of buildings for local Roman Catholic churches, and served as an architectural consultant to the Archdiocese of Brooklyn and Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic. He designed the churches for the Brooklyn parishes of St. Finbar, the Assumption, St. Joseph, and the Blessed Sacrament. Among his Brooklyn commissions for the Dominicans were the Convent of the Order of St. Dominic (1889) at 56-64 Havemeyer Street and the Annunciation School at 70 Havemeyer Street (1892), both Romanesque in style. He also designed the St. Aloysius R.C. Church (1907-1926) at 382 Onderdonk Avenue,

<sup>31</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States of America* (New York: Catholic editing company, 1914), Volume 3, p. 571.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Reverend James H. Ryan, *Directory of Catholic Colleges and Schools* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Council Bureau of Education, 1921) p. 595.

<sup>34</sup> This section adapted from LPC, *F.J. Berlenbach House* (LP-2152) (City of New York: Landmarks Preservation Commission, 2004), report prepared by Donald G. Preşa.

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and the St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church complex (1909-1926). Berlenbach favored the Italian Renaissance style for these later buildings; all of which are listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places as part of the Ridgewood Multiple Resource Area.

Design of the St. Matthias Complex

Constructed in 1909—in record time, by all accounts—the parish's first building was a combined church-and-school designed by Berlenbach in a handsome Romanesque/Renaissance Revival style and clad in the same Kreischer brick as the surrounding tenements, with stone and terra-cotta trim. A chapel seating 600 occupied the main floor, with six classrooms for a parochial school on the floor above. In 1913 an addition to the rear of the building increased the capacity to 900.

Construction of a brick-and-stone rectory was completed in 1910, with Berlenbach again providing the designs. A convent was erected in 1914 to house the Sisters of Notre Dame, who had joined the parish in 1910 to take charge of the parochial school. Berlenbach designed the convent building in a Neo-classical style, using a slightly lighter shade of yellow Kreischer brick than was used for the church-school and rectory. The rectory and convent are distinguished by their Dutch Renaissance-inspired central parapets. German-born mason Herman Veit was the contractor for the church-school and convent, and developer Henry Schlachter was the contractor for the rectory and the later church building.

As the St. Matthias parish continued to grow during the 1910s, the need for a larger church became pressing. In 1917 a major building campaign was launched, only to be suspended due to the scarcity and high cost of materials and labor during wartime. Despite these challenges, Father Wagner took the farsighted step of planning for a temporary church structure that would ultimately serve as the foundation for a new church when funds allowed. The "basement" church, a simple one-story brick structure located between the convent and rectory, was completed in 1919. By 1924, the parish had raised enough of the projected \$250,000 cost to begin construction on the new church; remarkably, this was accomplished largely through donations of \$200 or less given by the parish's working-class families.<sup>35</sup> Dedicated in 1926, the new church, cruciform in plan and featuring a bell tower with a clock face atop the narthex, made a grand architectural statement for the thriving parish, yet complemented the existing buildings with its modest scale, pale-yellow brick, and elegant Classical forms and ornament. Berlenbach's design for the new church was rooted in the ecclesiastical architecture of the Italian Renaissance, particularly expressed in the two-stage central bell tower with cupola, and thus was an appropriate choice for a Roman Catholic parish.

In contrast to the relatively modest exterior, the church interior is a remarkably exuberant design - a Latin cross, its aisles defined by round-arched Corinthian colonnades, with polychromatic scagliola columns and an elaborate program of saints and religious scenes (see Description section) painted on plaster walls and ceiling,

<sup>35</sup> Henry Schlachter again served as contractor for the parish on this project. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "St. Matthias Roman Catholic Parish Complex: Church, School, Rectory and Convent." N.d.



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culminating in a shallow saucer dome over the crossing of nave and transept depicting the church's founder, Msr. Wagner, presenting the new church of St. Matthias to St. Peter.

Stained glass windows by the studio of Franz Mayer, Munich

One of the most significant aspects of the church's design is its collection of stained glass, especially in the tall, narrow, round-arched windows of the sanctuary. These are the product of the Franz Mayer Studio in Munich – an appropriate German connection for this congregation.

The Franz Mayer studio began in 1847 manufacturing sculpture and marble altars, but in 1860 turned to the production of stained glass - part of a 19<sup>th</sup> century revival of the art of stained glass in Germany and Austria.<sup>36</sup> In Munich, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, King Ludwig I had created a small glass studio, believed to be the first of its kind in Europe. Mayer's studio became the most prominent Munich producer of stained glass – eventually restoring medieval stained glass windows and exporting new windows around the world.

By 1900, the company had a staff of between 500 and 600. Mayer made windows for more than 45 United States cathedrals – including several windows in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan, as well as the windows for the former St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco (destroyed by fire in 1962).<sup>37</sup> The company maintained branch offices in London and New York until the First World War and is still in business in Germany.

Later history

On April 18, 1926:

The Right Rev. Bishop Charles Edward Molloy of the Brooklyn Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, formally blessed the new Church of St. Matthias, at Catalpa and Woodward Avenues, Ridgewood, Queens.... The church was packed and there was a large crowd outside. Police reserves from the Glendale station kept the crowd in order.<sup>38</sup>

The church included a notable organ, as reported in *The New Music Review and Church Music Review* in 1924:

The Odell Company and Its Activities: We have received a program of the inaugural organ recital given by Peter Boergermann and Leopold Blatz at St. Matthias's Church, Ridgewood, Long Island, New York. The fine new

<sup>36</sup> "History of Stained Glass," from the web site of the Stained Glass Association of America (<http://www.stainedglass.org/html/SGAAhistorySG.htm>).

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel Mayer, "Architectural Glass: International Artists Working with an International Studio," *Journal of the Glass Art Society*, special issue for the 2001 conference of the Glass Art Society held in Corning, N.Y. pp 112 ff. Dr. Gabriel Mayer is a fourth-generation member of the Mayer family and managing partner of Franz Mayer of Munich, Inc.

<sup>38</sup> "Blesses New Church," *New York Times*, April 19, 1926, p.4.

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organ on which the recital was given has been built by the well-known New York builders, J.H. and C.S. Odell and Company. This firm has a remarkable list of recent installations and contracts to its credit....<sup>39</sup>

Father Wagner opened the St. Matthias School in 1909, with four teachers serving 150 children. From the beginning, however, he hoped to bring in teachers from the School Sisters of Notre Dame, an order with roots in Germany. Though by some accounts the order had its origin as early as 1597, the Sisters trace their history to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and Sister Theresa Gerhardinger of Bavaria (Sister Theresa has been beatified and is now referred to as "Blessed Theresa"). According to the Sisters' web site, Blessed Theresa founded

...a religious community in order to respond to the needs of the times through education... She sent her sisters in communities of twos and threes to small towns and villages.<sup>40</sup>

The Sisters sent emissaries to America in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century specifically to attend to the educational needs of German immigrants:

Missionaries from America soon came to visit [the order in Munich] and to ask if School Sisters of Notre Dame would come to America to teach the children of the German immigrants who were arriving there in rapidly increasing numbers.<sup>41</sup>

As described in a 1908 account, just a few years before the opening of the St. Matthias school:

The School Sisters of Notre Dame began their work in America in 1848, in Baltimore, where an academy and boarding and day school was established by six Sisters, from the mother house in Munich, Bavaria.... Mother-General Theresa, before returning to Europe, established several houses in different cities. In 1850, Sister Caroline, a young religious of great ability, was appointed vicar-general of the Congregation in America,....From these small beginnings the Congregation has grown to be one of the foremost teaching Orders in the United States - in fact the largest Order exclusively devoted to teaching.... There are more than three thousand Sisters and novices, in charge of two hundred and forty-seven houses, and ninety-six thousand, four hundred pupils.... The curriculum of the Sisters is so arranged as to give a solid, and, at the same time, a thoroughly accomplished education.<sup>42</sup>

In 1897, 50 years after their arrival here, the *Boston Daily Globe* described the order as "perhaps the largest body of teaching sisters in this country":

<sup>39</sup> *New Music Review and Church Music Review*, Vols. 24-25, 1924, p. 283.

<sup>40</sup> School Sisters of Notre Dame web site: <http://www.ssnd.org/about-us/our-history> (accessed June 19, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> "Our church, her children and institutions. Compiled and edited by Henry Coyle - Theodore Mayhew - Frank S. Hickey. (Boston: Angel Guardian Press, 1908), pp. 183-4.

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They maintain 230 missions, where 74,996 parish pupils, 1847 day pupils and 474 boarding pupils are taught. They have also 2336 orphans under their care. ... The first school sisters of Notre Dame who came to this country landed in New York from the steamer Washington, July 31, 1847. They came to America at the invitation of the Rt Rev Michael O'Connor, D D, the first bishop of Pittsburg.<sup>43</sup>

Father Wagner apparently made multiple requests to the order before receiving the first four Sisters in 1910:

Rev. N.M. Wagner, pastor of St. Matthias' Parish, Brooklyn, New York, had repeatedly applied for sisters. Finally, August 29, 1910, teachers departed for this mission. They found a comfortable convent home, neatly furnished, awaiting them.<sup>44</sup>

The school population – like the congregation – grew quickly. According to the St. Matthias centennial publication of 2008:

By the end of 1922, the parish contained 1,050 families, and there were over 900 children attending school.

Together with lay teachers, the Sisters of Notre Dame have led the school of St. Matthias for the past century. In the words of the St. Matthias centennial publication:

One thing has never changed since 1909 - the fine tradition of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and many dedicated lay teachers.<sup>45</sup>

St. Matthias parish remained largely German-American until well into the 20th century, when immigrants from Poland and Latin America began settling in the area and joining the parish. There have been several additions to the complex, notably a school building addition constructed in 1950, and an additional extension to the school constructed in 1966. These are located to the rear of the complex; however, and are barely visible from Catalpa Street; consequently, they do not disturb the visual unity of the complex. (See description section for details.)

In 1953, the Church undertook renovation work. As described in its *Diamond Jubilee* yearbook:

In late 1953, the Church received its first facelift. The entire church was redecorated from the polychromed work in the lower church to the marble pulpit and marble cross installed in the upper church.<sup>46</sup>

Additional changes to the interior took place in the 1960s:

<sup>43</sup> "Grew from Four to Thousands," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 4, 1897 p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> Sister Dymrna, *Mother Caroline and the School sisters of Notre Dame in North America*, Volume 2 (Woodward & Tiernan Co., 1928), p. 91.

<sup>45</sup> *St. Matthias Church 1908-2008* (New York: St. Matthias Church, 2008), n.p.

<sup>46</sup> *St. Matthias R.C. Church Diamond Jubilee*, 1983 (n.p.).

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Another project successfully completed...was to conform the Church to the wishes of the Vatican Council by renovating the main altar so that Mass could be said facing the people. Through the cooperation of various societies, the main altar was transformed and new marble shrines were installed.<sup>47</sup>

In 1983, the church undertook a major restoration. As described in its *Diamond Jubilee* yearbook:

...we are in the midst of real history in the making: The Restoration. The work began on July 5th, and it continued until late September. What went on behind those closed doors? The pews were removed, refinished and repositioned. The Stations of the Cross were restored. The Odell organ was dismantled in order to make way for the brand new Casavent organ! The Church was painted, murals and paintings were cleaned and restored to view, the stained glass windows were cleaned and fixed, where needed. At 75 years old, St. Matthias looks better than ever. The work was done principally by Mr. D'Ambrosio and his contracting firm, with Monsignor Konrad closely supervising.... On October 30, 1983, the Solemn Jubilee Mass and Rededication of the Church was celebrated by His Excellency, Bishop Francis J. Mugavero.<sup>48</sup>

Today masses are still offered in German, as well as in Polish, English, Spanish and Italian. The St. Matthias Church Complex survives as a remarkably intact grouping of buildings, designed by a single architect in complementary styles relating to the styles of the surrounding Mathews flats and making use of the same Kreischer brick. The church and related buildings represent a significant part of the cultural and architectural history of Ridgewood and this section of the borough of Queens.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

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cc.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Queens County, New York

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

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Section 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

Located in the Ridgewood neighborhood in the borough and county of Queens, New York City, the St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church complex, includes a church, rectory, school and convent. Facing east, the complex occupies the majority of the northwest side of Catalpa Avenue between Onderdonk Avenue and Woodward Avenue, flanked by rows of residents on the south, north, and west.

Boundary Justification

The Complex is located on those lands associated with its 1909 – 1926 historic period of significance

St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex  
Name of Property

Queens County, New York  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.42 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 592717 4506272  
Zone Easting Northing

3 18    
Zone Easting Northing

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 Anthony Robbins

organization  date 4/10/2012

street & number 50 West 67<sup>th</sup> Street telephone

city or town New York state NY zip code 10023

## 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 St. Matthias RC Church (Contact – Monsignor Edward B. Scharfenberger, Secretary – Treasurer)

street & number 58-15 Catalpa Avenue telephone 718.821.6447

city or town Queens state NY zip code 11385

**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. 20503

United States Department of the Interior  
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Queens County, New York

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Section 11 Page 1

Additional Information

ST MATTHIAS CHURCH COMPLEX - PHOTO LIST

Photos by Anthony W. Robins

April 2012

1. St. Matthias Church, front façade on Catalpa Avenue, looking north
2. St. Matthias Church, south façade on Catalpa Avenue, looking north
3. St. Matthias Rectory, front façade on Catalpa Avenue, looking north
4. St. Matthias School, front façade on Catalpa Avenue, looking north
5. St. Matthias Convent, front façade, on Catalpa Avenue, looking north
6. St. Matthias Convent, first floor, dining room
7. St. Matthias School, main floor, typical classroom
8. St. Matthias Rectory, entryway
9. St. Matthias Church, front façade, entrance porch
10. St. Matthias Church, basement sanctuary looking towards altar
11. St. Matthias Church, main sanctuary, chandelier
12. St. Matthias Church, main sanctuary, looking towards altar
13. St. Matthias Church, main sanctuary, looking towards organ loft
14. St. Matthias Church, main sanctuary, crossing detail
15. St. Matthias Church, main sanctuary, side-aisle detail
16. St. Matthias Church, main sanctuary, main altar

HISTORIC PHOTOS

17. St. Matthias Church, as photographed shortly after dedication on Easter Sunday, 1926 (1)
18. St. Matthias Church, various historic photos
19. St. Matthias School, early view
20. St. Matthias Church, as photographed shortly after dedication on Easter Sunday, 1926 (2)
21. St. Matthias Church, basement church where liturgy was celebrated 1919 to 1926
22. St. Mathias Church, dedication of church by Bishop Thomas E. Molloy - April 18, 1926

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St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

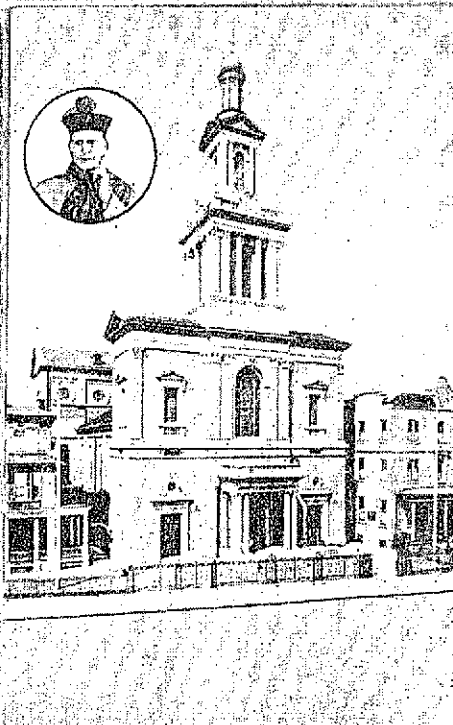
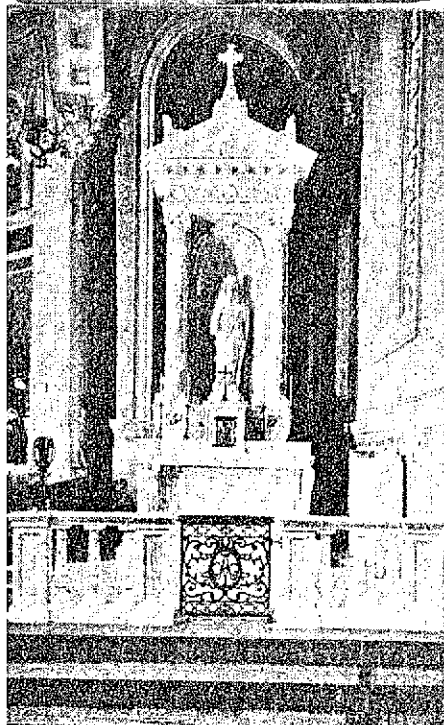
Name of Property

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#17



Church as photographed shortly after the dedication — Easter Sunday, 1926.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 11 Page 3

St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

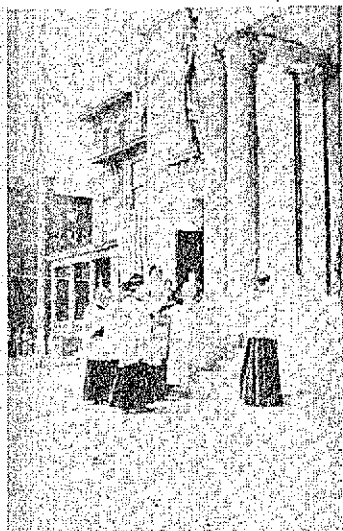
Queens County, New York

County and State

#18



Parish scene from the mid-20's.



Dedication of our present Church by the  
Bishop Thomas E. Molloy - 4/18/26.



In 1928, two new priests came to St. Matthias, replacing Father Kleinlaus. One was Reverend Sylvester Marsh, a sincere zealous priest who worked untiringly for the welfare of his people.

In October, 1926, the worthy achievements of Father Wagner were recognized by the Pope, and he was made a Monsignor. He did not have many years left in St. Matthias, however. On January 20, 1930, after a long sickness, Father Wagner was called out of this life.

For more than seven months following Monsignor Wagner's death, the parish was entrusted into the capable hands of Father Ranker. Then, on September 1, 1930, Father Siegelack succeeded Monsignor Wagner as pastor of St. Matthias.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
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Section 11 Page 4

St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

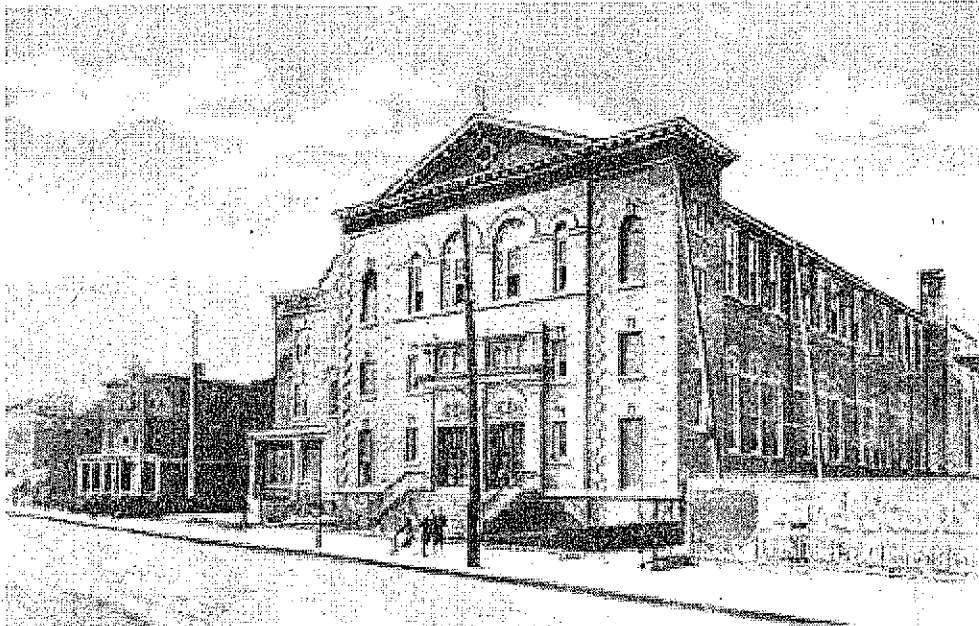
Name of Property

Queens County, New York

County and State

#19

ST. MATTHIAS R. C. CHURCH CATALPA AVE., RIDGEWOOD



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

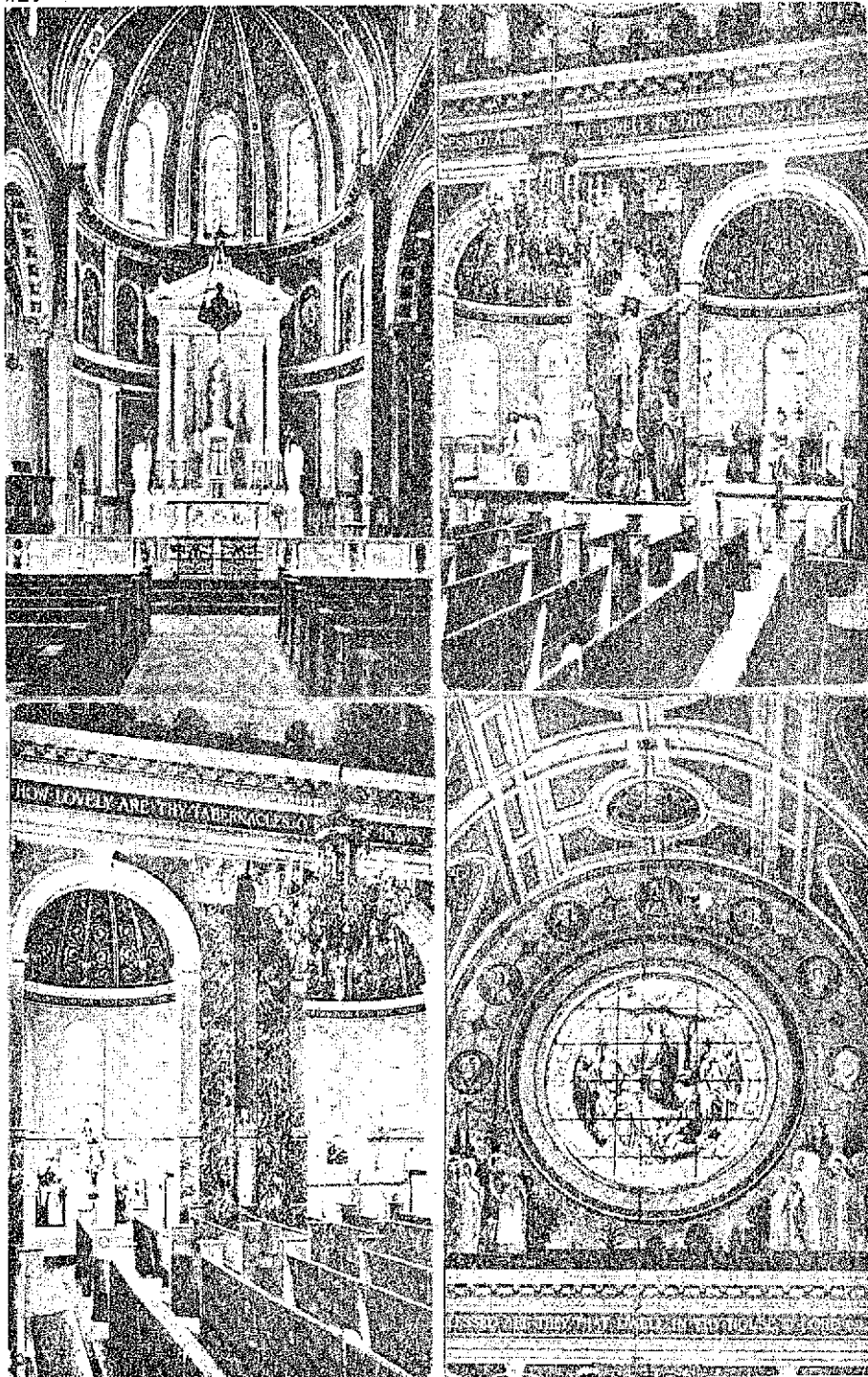
Name of Property

Queens County, New York

County and State

Section 11 Page 5

#20



Church as photographed shortly after the dedication — Easter Sunday, 1926.

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National Park Service

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Section 11 Page 6

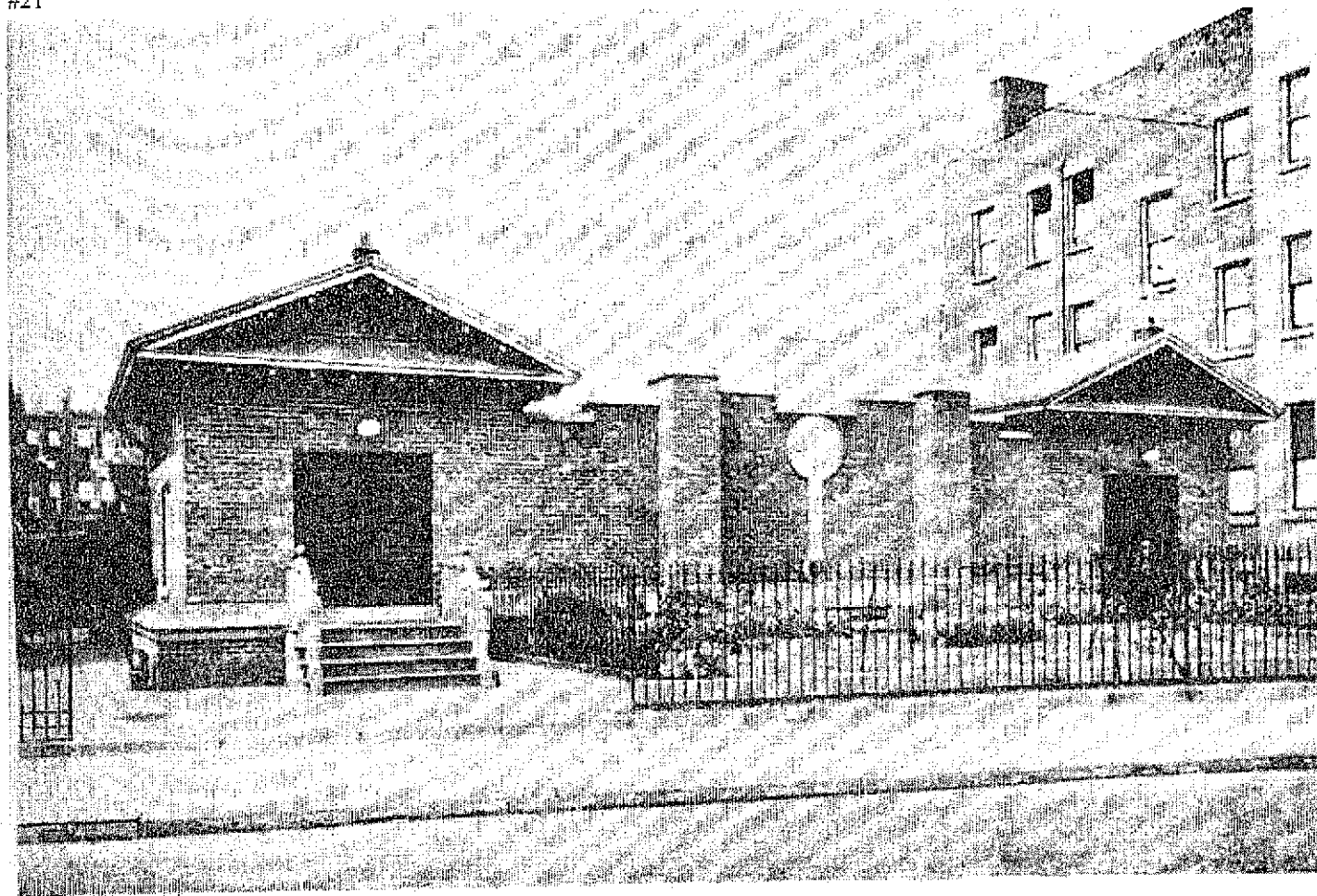
St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Queens County, New York

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#21



Basement Church — where the liturgy was celebrated from 1919 to 1926.



United States Department of the Interior  
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Section 11 Page 7

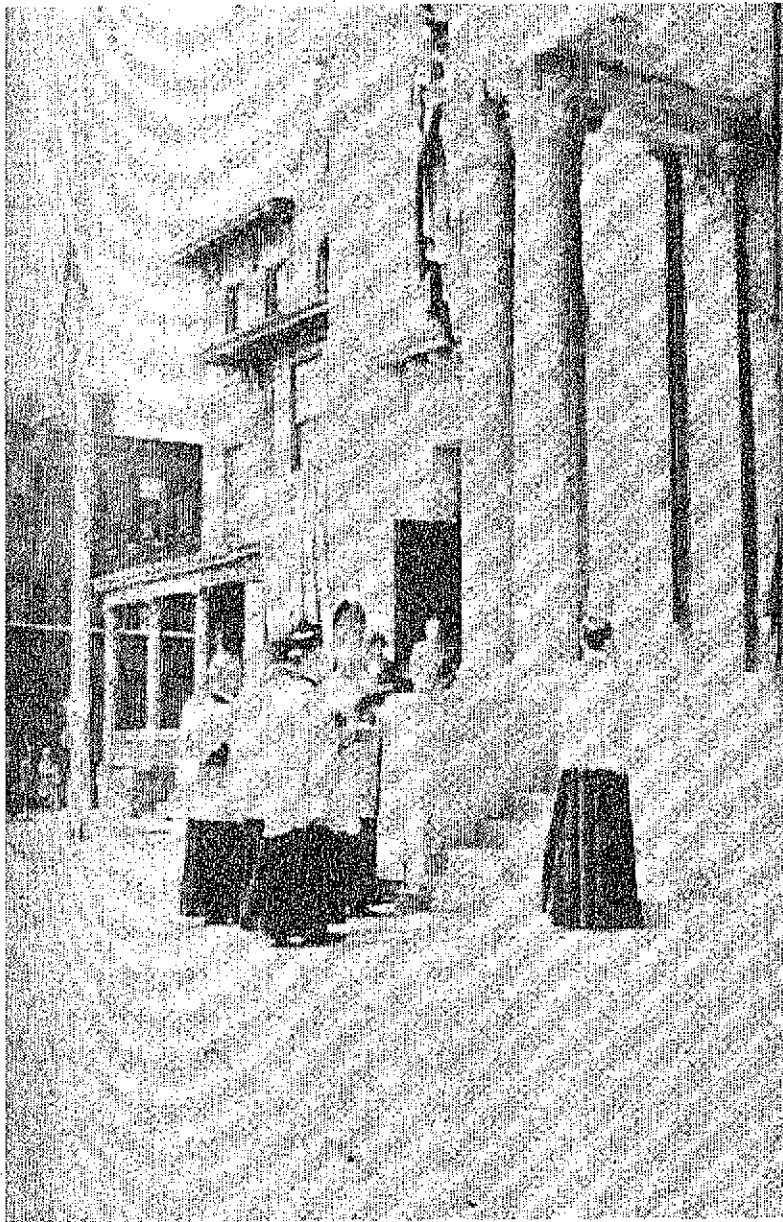
St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex

Name of Property

Queens County, New York

County and State

#22



Dedication of our present Church by the  
Bishop Thomas E. Molloy - 4/18/26.

St. Mathias Roman Catholic Church Complex  
Queens, Queens County, NY

58-15 Catalpa Ave.  
Queens, NY 11385-5001

4509000

4508000

4507000

4506000

4505000

4504000

4509000

4508000

4507000

4506000

4505000

4504000



591000

592000

593000

594000

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter

0 750 1,500 3,000 Feet



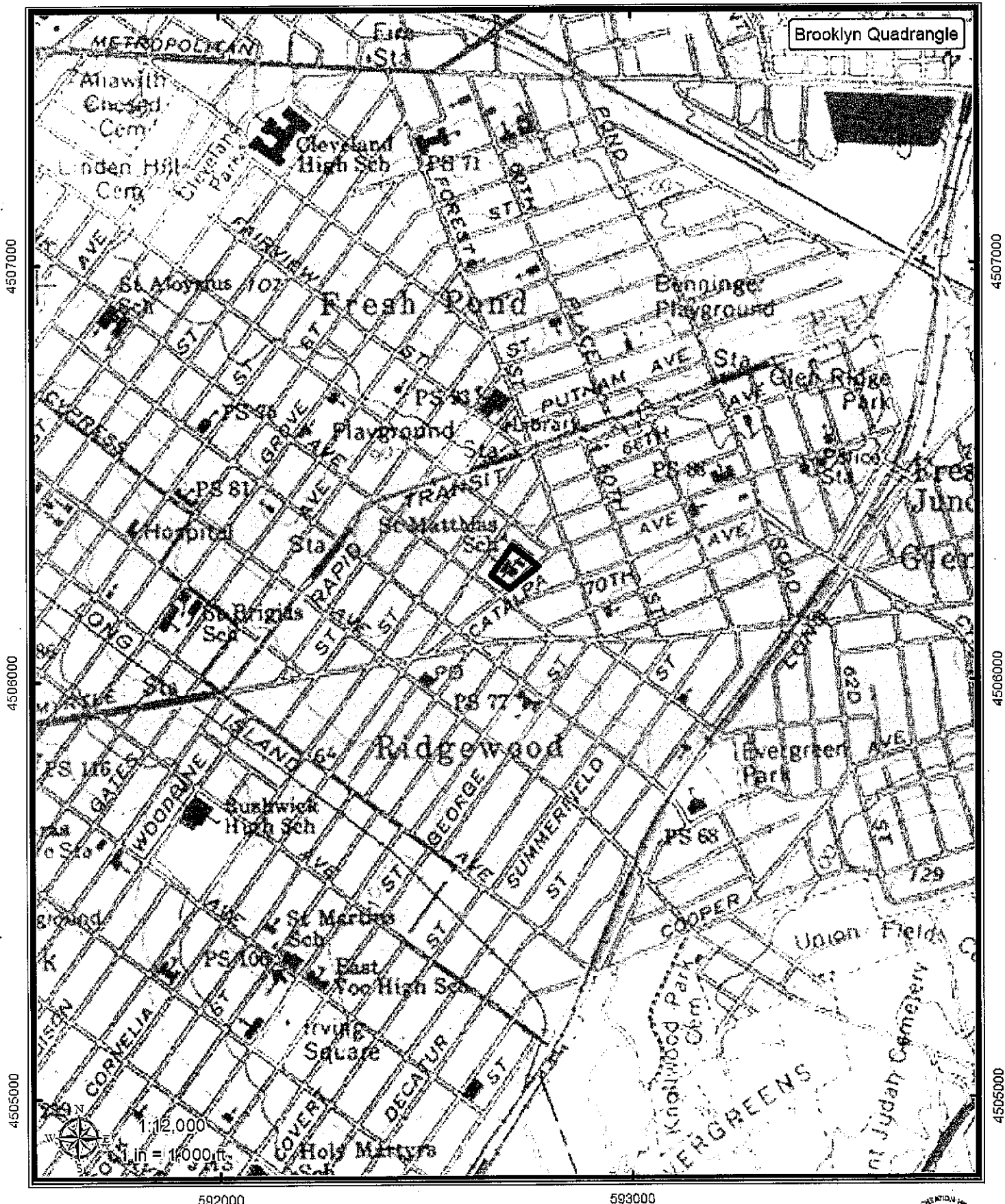
St. Mathias

USGS Topo Quadrangle from  
Services@arcgisonline.com



St. Mathias Roman Catholic Church Complex  
Queens, Queens County, NY

58-15 Catalpa Ave.  
Queens, NY 11385-5001



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter

0 380 760 1,520 Feet



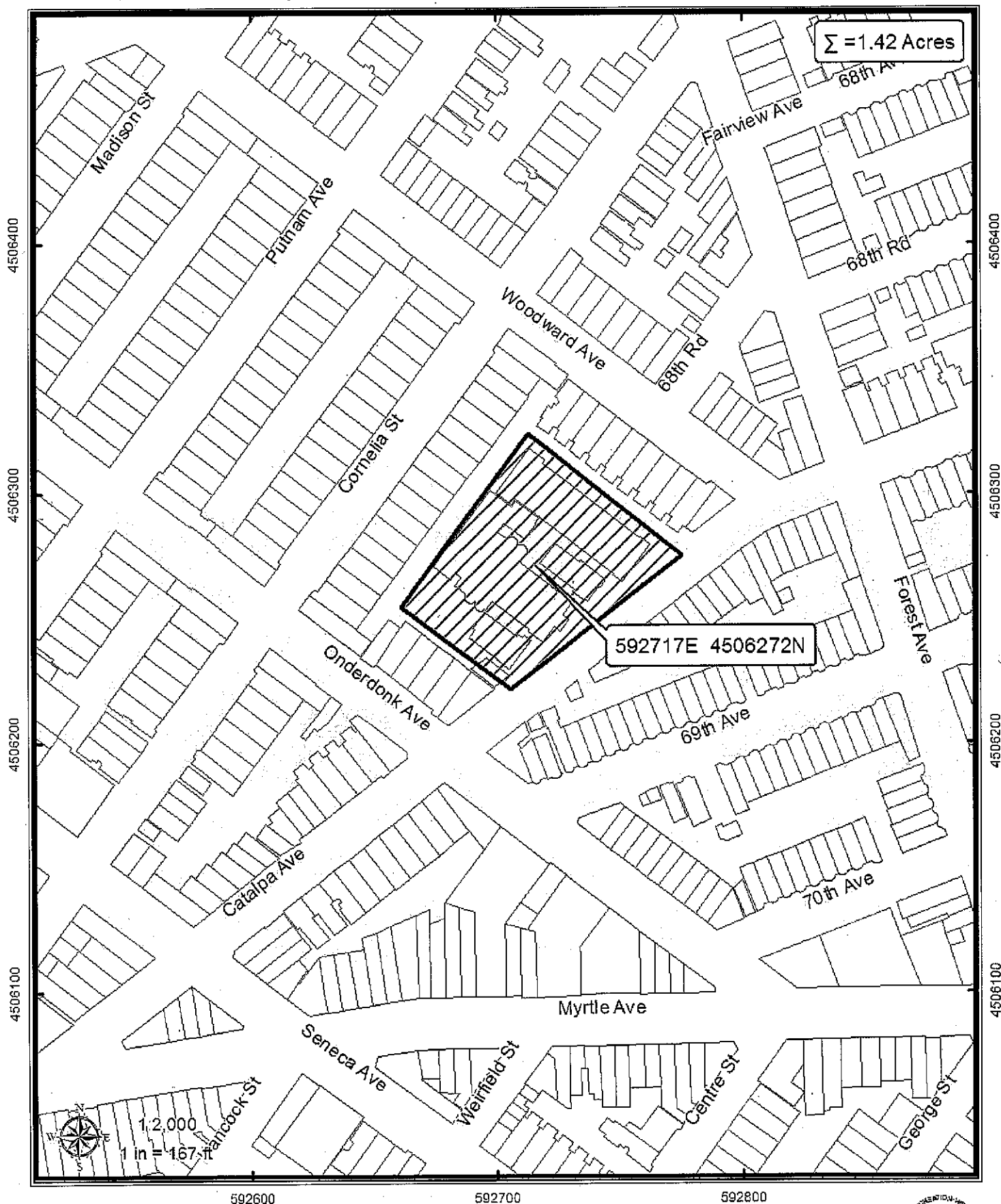
St. Mathias

USGS Topo Quadrangle from:  
Services@arcgisonline.com



St. Mathias Roman Catholic Church Complex  
Queens, Queens County, NY

58-15 Catalpa Ave.  
Queens, NY 11385-5001



Coordinate System : NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection : Transverse Mercator  
Datum : North American 1983  
Units : Meter

0 62.5 125 250 Feet



St. Mathias

Tax Parcel Data:  
NYC ORPM  
<http://gis.nyc.gov/dot/nycitymap>





**Landmarks Preservation  
Commission**

Robert B. Tierney  
Chair

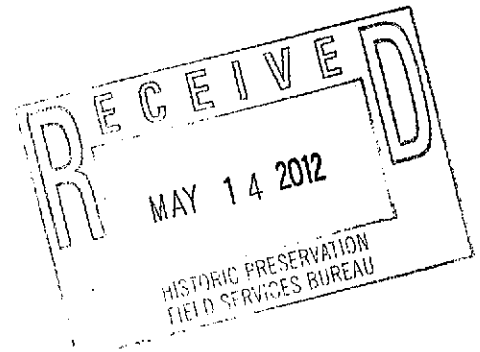
Kate Daly  
Executive Director  
kdaly@lpc.nyc.gov

1 Centre Street  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
New York, NY 10007

212 669 7926 tel  
212 669 7797 fax

May 9, 2012

Ms. Ruth Pierpont, Deputy Commissioner  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 189  
Peebles Island  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189



Re: St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex, 5824 Catalpa Avenue  
Ridgewood, Queens County

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

I write on behalf of Chair Robert B. Tierney in response to your request for comment on the eligibility of the St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex, located at 5824 Catalpa Avenue in Queens, for the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Commission strongly supports the nomination of the St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex. Please note that the Commission is currently considering the eligibility of the portion of the block of Catalpa Avenue where St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex is located, for local historic district status. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
Kate Daly

cc: Robert B. Tierney, Chair  
Mary Beth Betts

HELEN M. MARSHALL  
PRESIDENT

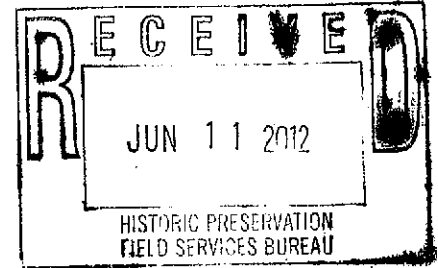


CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF QUEENS  
120-55 QUEENS BOULEVARD  
KEW GARDENS, NEW YORK 11424-1015

(718) 286-3000  
web site: [www.queensbp.org](http://www.queensbp.org)  
e-mail: [info@queensbp.org](mailto:info@queensbp.org)

June 6, 2012

Ruth L. Pierpont, Director  
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
PO Box 189, Peebles Island  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189



Re: St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex  
51-15 Catalpa Avenue, Queens, NY 11385  
Queens County

Dear Ms. Pierpont,

I strongly urge the State Review Board to consider the nomination of Saint Matthias Roman Catholic Church Complex to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The harmoniously designed ecclesiastic buildings in the Italian Renaissance Revival style represent the work of local architect F.J. Berlenback. The Church's highly decorated interior contains painted ornament and stained-glass windows by the renowned Franz Mayer Company of Munich. This Complex blends harmoniously with the Ridgewood South Historic District and serves as a reminder and tribute to the German immigrants who made Ridgewood their new home long ago.

Today, almost a century later, the complex continues to serve an ever changing population while representing a significant part of the cultural and architectural history of Ridgewood, Queens. It is only fitting we assist them by granting State and National Registers of Historic Places to the site so it can be enjoyed by future generations.

Sincerely yours,

Helen M. Marshall  
Queens Borough President

**Rocklyn Asset Corp.**  
310 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn NY 11215  
718-965-7300 Fax: 718-965-7316

May 1, 2012

Mr. Daniel McEneny  
Preservation Program Specialist  
New York State Division for Historic Preservation  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation  
Peebles Island State Park  
P.O. Box 189  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

**VIA FACSIMILE - 518-233-9049**

Re: St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church

Dear Mr. McEneny:

I am the real estate attorney handling property management matters for St. Matthias Roman Catholic Church, in the Borough of Queens, in the City of New York ("St. Matthias").

Please accept this letter as a clarification to your inquiry regarding the corporate structure of St. Matthias and its authorized signatories. Every Parish within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn is incorporated as a religious corporation pursuant to the Religious Corporations Law of the State of New York ("RCL"). Therefore, pursuant to the RCL, St. Matthias is a separately incorporated New York religious corporation (see enclosed St. Matthias certificate of incorporation). All of the property, assets and liabilities of St. Matthias are owned and solely controlled by St. Matthias. I have attached for your easy reference a copy of the deed to St. Matthias Church, which clearly depicts St. Matthias as the owner of the property.

As defined in the RCL, the Pastor/Rector of St. Matthias, Reverend Monsignor Edward B. Scharfenberger, serves as a member of the board of trustees and is also the Secretary of St. Matthias Parish corporation. It is in this capacity that provides Monsignor Scharfenberger with the authority to execute any and all documents in connection with the application to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation.

Mr. Daniel McEneny  
Preservation Program Specialist

Page 2 of 2

If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please feel free to contact me.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Colleen J. Lefferts". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Colleen J. Lefferts, Esq.







