# History

Hoboken in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was predominately German, "with strong Celtic flavoring," as one historian has phased it. The German and their Irish neighbors in Hoboken formed very distinct communities reflective of their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. German immigration to the New York – New Jersey area had been underway since the Dutch founded New Amsterdam in 1624. A large surge occurred after the German Revolutions of 1848-49 and continued steadily until the years leading up to World War I. The Irish, or more specifically the Irish Catholic, did not begin arriving in significant numbers until after the mid-1850s, well after the German influence had firmly established Hoboken as "Little Bremen."

Hoboken's German population was an extension of the well-established "Little Germany" located largely in Manhattan's Lower East Side and spreading out into areas of Queens and Brooklyn. Often picnicking and holding various concerts and social celebrations in Hoboken's Elysian Fields, German immigrants began establishing their homes and businesses within Hoboken. This influx was further aided by the Hamburg-America Packet Company (1<sup>st</sup> & Newark Streets), North German Lloyd Steamship Company (3<sup>rd</sup> Street), The Scandinavia Line (Fourth Street) and Holland America (Fifth Street), all establishing their companies and shipping activities in Hoboken. By 1880, 37 percent of Hoboken's population was German and all schoolchildren were studying German in the classroom starting in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, regardless of the language spoken at home. By 1890, Germans comprised 41 percent of Hoboken's population and feature heavily in society, but not politics or most broad-based civic organizations. But because Germans "based their community on language and the German lifestyle, which revolved around alcohol, music and social organizations" and less on politics, they faced intense assimilation pressures in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. World War I demonized the culture and the language, German instruction was dropped from school curriculums and German-based social organizations disbanded. Prohibition closed

beer gardens and saloons. "With the central components of the German American identity criminalized, German's quietly assimilated." (McPherson, 154).

Others of the Catholic community in Hoboken were more recent and less acclimated to the urban and industrial experience. Where German immigrants were often educated and/or craftsmen in a skilled trade, when they arrived, the Irish were farmers or unskilled working poor. Where only a portion of the German population where Catholic; by 1900, there were 5 German language churches and one synagogue - Irish immigrants to Hoboken were almost exclusively Catholic. Although related to Saints Peter & Paul Roman Catholic Church on Hudson and Fourth Streets, letters in the dioceses archives at Seaton Hall University between a local priest and the archbishop debate the uneasiness of the German and Irish Catholic populations, citing that "they will never be easy worshiping together." At the time these letters were written the Irish were the second largest Catholic population in Hoboken, Italian Catholics did not figure on the stage yet.

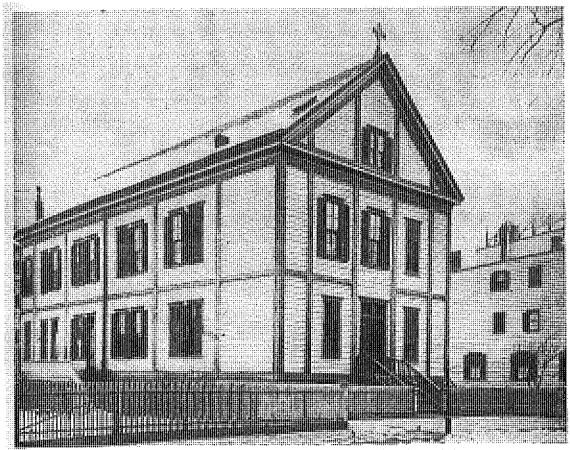
The situation was further complicated by the manner in which the German and Irish practiced their versions of Catholicism. Beginning as early as 1870, there had been attempts to establish a German Catholic parish in Hoboken with very little success. But German Catholics of late-19<sup>th</sup> century Hoboken could potentially ascribe themselves to at least three versions of Catholicism. The first was the traditional papal Catholicism, but there were two schisms in the German Catholic church in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century that lead to some emigration from Germany throughout Europe and the Americas. One in 1844 chiefly due to objections over the idolatry of religious relics. The second occurred in the aftermath of the First Vatican Council in 1869-70, which had been called in response to the perceived problems of the rising influence of rationalism, liberalism, and materialism. So while they might identify as Catholic, Hoboken's German Catholics might not actually conform to traditional catholic

ideals. Some of the letters between Hoboken priests and Archbishops Bayley and Corrigan hint at just this "while Catholic, they do not practice" laments one such letter.

Into this quagmire, the Archdiocese of Newark was attempting to establish a German Catholic parish church in Hoboken. Unfortunately, however details of the process are limited and source material to develop a detailed narrative of the history of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church are almost nonexistent. The records at the parish itself were largely lost and/or destroyed over the last several decades and the records with the Hoboken Buildings Department have met much the same fate. Records of the Archdiocese of Newark on file at Seaton Hall University are sparse and focus on the convent and former school during the 1930s. Newspapers had limited information, as did the County Clerk's Office. The bulk of the history of the parish comes from the Centennial Celebration publication put out by St Joseph's in 1971. It's important to note that even this publication cites that "because of the lack of records it is rather difficult to give a detailed history of St. Joseph's of Hoboken."

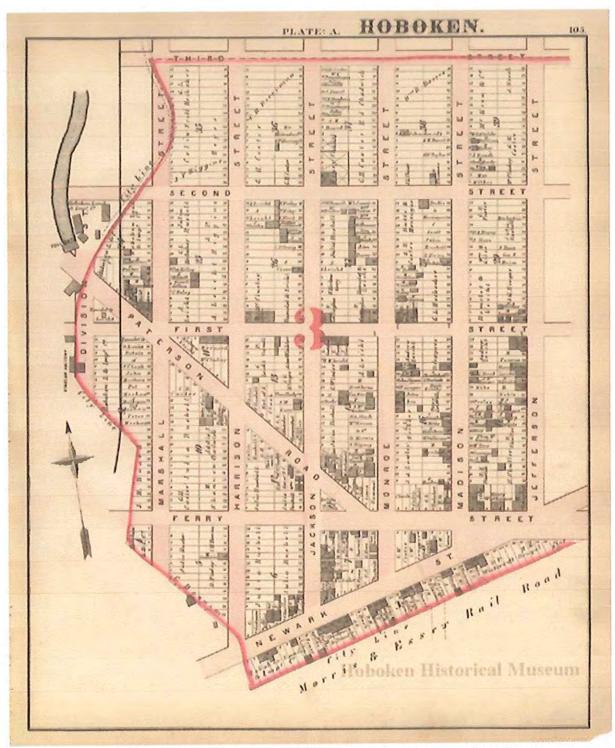
Although without permanent space to worship in, Hoboken's Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church was founded in 1871 at the request of Bishop Bailey to specifically to serve German immigrants. An organizational meeting was held at which 40 German families were present and the first mass was offered at Kerrigan Flats, a building on Grand and Newark Streets in October of that year. Almost immediately the congregation began to see an influx of Catholics from other cultures, particularly Irish but also some Italian. This expansion required larger quarters and a new chapel was established at Meadow Avenue (now Park Avenue) between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets by May 1872. In 1874 a new priest was assigned to Saint Joseph's and charged with increasing the number of Germans attached to the congregation and Saint Joseph's was finally officially incorporated into a parish. More permanent quarters were established by 1893 on Ferry Street (now Observer Highway), though the centennial

booklet seams to indicate that the church was moved from its home on Monroe Street to the Ferry location, and then back to Monroe Street where the current church was constructed.



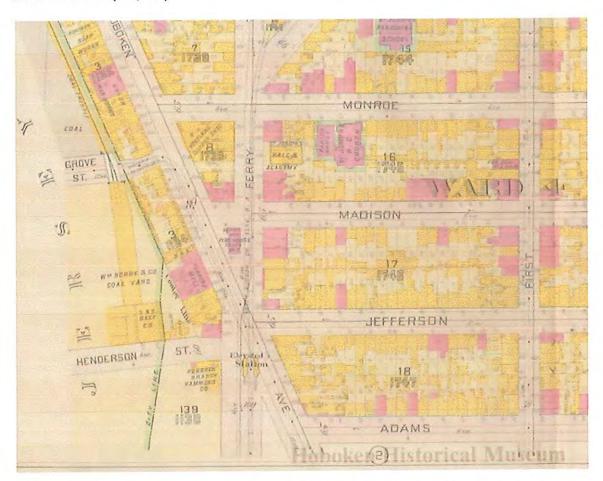
Old Saint Joseph's on Ferry Street (Observer Highway) - 1873.

With German congregants dwindling, St Joseph's lost its formal identification as a German Catholic church and was redesignated as a Territorial Parish in 1889. This designation is a formal assignment under the Code of Cannon Law given by the Archdiocese of Newark and indicating that St. Joseph's was to accommodate all Catholics, regardless of ethnic background. At this point, Saint Joseph's was offering services in German, English and Italian. A popular Italian priest - Rev Dominick Marzetti - was given permission to establish an Italian parish nearby; St. Francis was established in 1888 on Jefferson and Third Streets.



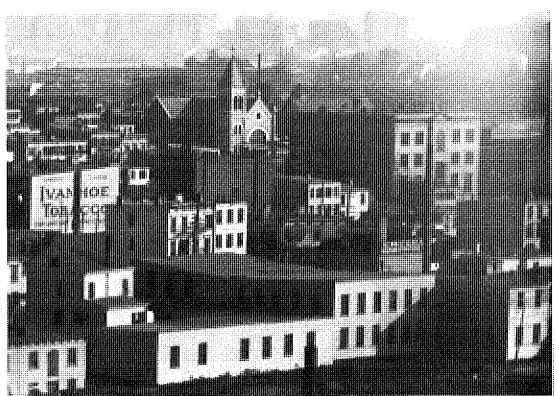
G.M. Hopkins, 1873 Plate A. Map of future site of St. Joseph's Church. From the collections of Hoboken Historical Museum

As more Italian immigrants moved into the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward around St. Joseph's in the 1890s, the church took on an Italian character. German parishioners were living throughout Hoboken, but at higher levels of concentration in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Wards nearer the Hudson River began to attend Sts. Peter & Paul, which was established as a German parish in 1889 and located at Hudson and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. As late as the 1950s a German speaking priest was still assigned to Saints Peter & Paul's maintaining its status as a German Catholic parish, while at the same time St Joseph's underwent a remodel and rededicated its high alter to Maria Santissima di Montevergine, after a 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century painting and monastery by the same name west of Naples, Italy.



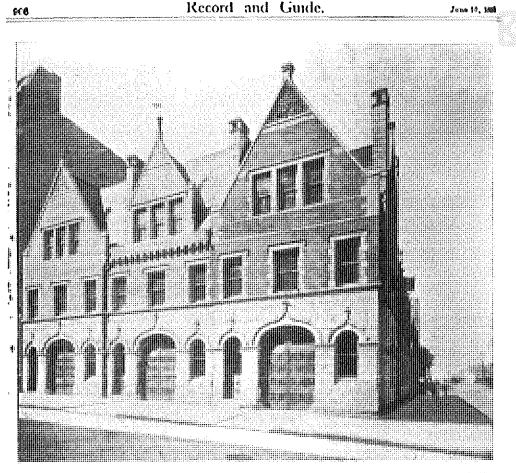
1909 Hopkins Map, Plate 3. Showing St Joseph's Church & Rectory (Monroe St), Hall (possibly the former Church on Ferry Street) and School on Jackson Street. From the collections of Hoboken Historic Museum.

Saint Joseph's remained largely a self-identified "Italian church" for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although there was a steady influx of Hispanic congregants, mainly from Puerto Rico. Like the Irish and Italians before them, Puerto Rican migrants when they began arriving in the 1950s, were largely working-class and Catholic. But while there were many Catholic churches to choose from in Hoboken, only Saint Joseph's made considerable effort to accommodate their language and traditions in the 1950s. These efforts were led by Father Eugene Zwahl who offered religious services in the 1950s in Spanish and began offering Mass in Spanish in 1966, which had be officially sanctioned under the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). He also expanded the social organizations affiliated with Saint Joseph's to model those found in Hispanic Catholic experiences including Hijas de Maria (Daughters of Mary), Madre Christiana (Christian Mothers), Curisillos de Cristianded (a retreat organization) and the Feast of the Three Kings and procession on Epiphany.



Southwestern Hoboken with St. Joseph's Church. Taken from Jersey City Heights, ca 1913. From the collections of the Hoboken Historical Museum

The cornerstone of Saint Joseph's current church building was laid on April 24, 1897. The architects for the church were Herman Kreitler & Charles E. Hebbard and the builder was Thomas Brennan. Of the three associated with the building, the least is known about Thomas Brennan. He is listed in the June 1893 issue of Real Estate & Builder's Guide as the builder of stables at 50<sup>th</sup> & 51<sup>st</sup> Streets and Park Avenue in New York City, but no additional information has been found as yet. Only slightly more is known about Charles E. Hebbard. He is listed in the 1876 City Directory of Brooklyn as living at 96 Summit Street, Brooklyn. In 1885 he is listed as the architect of the Haines Piano Company in Kings County, New York along with Herman Kreitler and in 1890 he is listed as the architect of six buildings on Marion Street in Brooklyn. His design for a "brick building on a city lot" is the subject of a small article with renderings and floorplans in the October 1887 issue of Carpentry & Building.



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Thomas Brocks, Builder

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#### A Brick House for Pily Let.

Considerably more is known about Herman Kreitler, though a clear biographical sketch or obituary has yet to be located. An extensive search of genealogical databases indicates that Herman Kreitler was born in Archern, Baden, Baden in 1841 and immigrated with his family in 1846 to the United States. He appears in the 1863 Civil War Draft Registration Records as unmarried with his occupation listed as "architect" and living in Newark, New Jersey. Although it is unclear when he married, he and his wife, Helena (or Velda in some sources), lived in Newark, New Jersey until his death in 1915, when his passing is noted in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects the following year.

During his active period as an architect Kreitler designed a number of buildings in Hudson and Essex Counties, New Jersey though his offices appear to have been in lower Manhattan. He designed several buildings affiliated with Catholic organizations most notably St Peter's Preparatory School in Jersey City, but St. Joseph's may be his only church. From the buildings that he designed that remain; it appears that Kreitler favored the Romanesque Revival style, though admittedly it was a popular style for civic architecture during his most active years. However, this was not in the style of the Richardsonian Romanesque Revival. Instead, Kreitler designed both Saint Aloysius (now the Humanities Building for St Peter's Prep) in Jersey City and St Joseph's in what architectural historian Kathleen Curran has termed "the Other Romanesque Revival." Curran finds that this second revival style originated in southern Germany and northern Italy, but quickly spread to the United States. Some of the typical features of this Romanesque style are rounded arches, triple doorway entrances, divided windows, corbel arches and a prominent vertical element — a tower, spire or belfry.

While his other identified buildings, including St Aloysius, are brick and brownstone, St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church is limestone on a marble base. It is unknown if this was a design choice or a request of the parish. A several other buildings in Hoboken feature Richardsonian Romanesque elements, most

notably the First Baptist Church built in 1890-91 on Bloomfield and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets (NR: 2/1/2006; SR: 7/22/2005), but the only other building to share many of the qualities identified by Curran is Saints Peter & Paul's Church (1929, architect unknown), the German Catholic parish on Hudson Street.

The table below is a list of buildings designed or attributed to Herman Kreitler between 1874 and 1897:

Year	Name	Address	Current use	NR/SR status
1874	Spruce Street Schoolhouse	Spruce Street, Newark	demolished	
1874	Market Street School addition	Market Street, Newark	demolished	
1880s	Saint Joseph's Orphanage (attributed)	79-81 York Street, Jersey City	St Peter's Prep campus building	Contributing Building – Paulus Hook NR Historic District
1883	Residence	10 <sup>th</sup> Avenue and 117 <sup>th</sup> Street (SE corner), Queens, NY	Residence, may be 115 10 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	
1883	Dwelling	17 Francis Street, Newark	demolished	
1885	Haines Piano Company	Kings County, NY	warehouse	
1888	Residence	81-85 Baldwin Street, Newark	demolished	
1889	Saint Aloysius	St. Peter's Prep campus building, 116 Grand, Jersey City	same	Contributing Building – Paulus Hook NR Historic District
1890	New Jersey Title Guarantee & Trust	81 Montgomery St, Jersey City	Mixed use	Contributing Building – Paulus Hook NR Historic District
1891	Thomas J Stewart furniture warehouse	88-92 Erie Street, Jersey City	Jersey City Senior housing	
1897	Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church	61 Monroe Street, Hoboken	same	
1898	St Peter's Lyceum	51 York Street, Jersey City	St Peter's Prep campus building, Demolished?	Contributing Building – Paulus Hook NR Historic District
1901	Mercantile Building	Academy & Halsey Streets,	Demolished?	



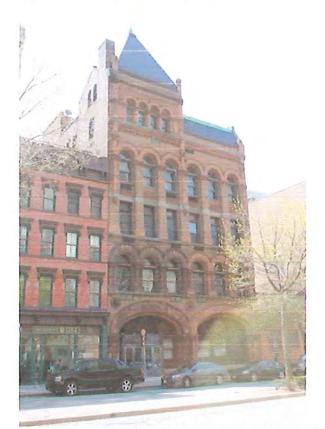
St. Joseph's Home, 81 York Street, Jersey City, Herman Kreitler attributed. Part of the Paulus Hook Historic District.



81 Erie Street, Jersey City



St. Aloysius, 151 Grand Street, Jersey City, Herman Kreitler attributed. Part of the Paulus Hook Historic District.

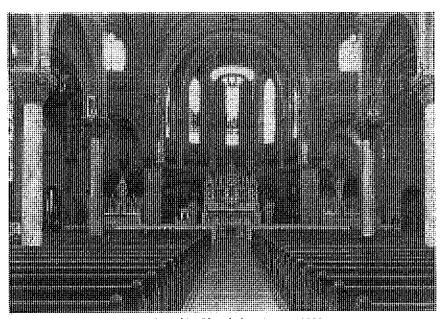


81 Montgomery Street, Jersey City. Designed by Herman Kreitler

		Newark		
1913	Essex County Hospital, TB pavilion	Cedar Grove, NJ	Abandoned, partially demolished	
1914	Jail addition	New & Halsey Streets, Newark	Demolished?	
1914	Jaenecke & Ullman Co	Wright & Miller Streets, B & C Avenues, Newark	demolished	

Perhaps the most remarkable collaboration of Kreitler's occurred very early in his career. In 1869,

Catherine E Stowe & Harriet Beecher Stowe co-authored on the domestic instructional handbook — *The American Woman's Home*. It was a best-seller of domestic advice when it was published and it covered housekeeping to such depth as to explain how convert an existing home or build new to their specific recommendations. Readers were encouraged to contact Mr Lewis Leeds of New York for "minute details," and were advised that Mr Herman Kreitler "prepared the architectural plans in this work relating to Mr Leeds's system." While no evidence has been found to indicate how many buildings were constructed or renovated to conform to the Beecher's recommendations, the popularity of their book suggests that some residences may have been built using Leeds & Kreitler's specifications.



Saint Joseph's Church Interior - 1939

Saint Joseph's Church, Hoboken, page 12

A clear attribution of the stained glass to a specific studio has not been established. A 1947 article in the *Jersey Journal* identifies Vincent DeBari as the alter architect and Dominick D'Attilio as the painter of the alter. The same article notes that the new alter was dedicated to Maria Santissima di Montevergine and but interestingly there is no mention of this in the Centennial Celebration booklet. In the same booklet, there are several references to the church interior being replastered and redecorated – the first time this is mentioned is 1918 when "new electrical fixtures were installed." It's noted that this is the first time the church was redecorated since it was built in 1897. Additional "repainting and replastering" are noted in the Centennial booklet including activities in 1939, in the mid-1950s, though oddly, the renovation and redecoration of the alter covered in the 1947 Jersey Journal article are not mentioned.



Saint Joseph's Church Interior - 1956

Research has identified a Dominic D'Attilio and his brother Anthony along with Arthur Harriton as partners in Harriton Carved Glass. World War II Army enlistment records list a Dominick D'Attilio as a resident of Hudson County, trained in the "unskilled occupations in production of glass and glass products." It is likely these are the same person, but it is unconfirmed at this moment and information

on Anthony D'Attilio and Arthur Harriton has not been found. Harriton Carved Glass was a studio located in New York City from 1933-1962. A conversation thread entitled "Harriton Carved Glass" from an online forum further attributes the ceilings in the US Capitol's Senate and House Chambers to the D'Attilio's and Harriton, but little else has been found. No additional information has been found on Vincent DeBari.

## Statement of Significance/Justification of Eligibility:

Though considerable effort had been made to establish Saint Joseph's as a German Catholic church, it very quickly was enveloped in the changing immigration patterns of Hoboken and became a parish to serve all Catholics in the area. Nevertheless, Saint Joseph's was the launching point of two additional Catholic parishes, which retain their cultural designations to this day – they are Saint Francis (Italian) and Saints Peter and Paul's (German). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Saint Joseph's further adjusted to the community it was meant to serve by being one of the first to offer services in Spanish and social groups familiar to their cultural experiences, an adjustment that lagged in other Catholic parishes until Vatican II required it.

Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church is a significant expression of Romanesque Revival architecture in Hudson County and was designed by a New Jersey architect with considerable experience in that style. The notable difference at Saint Joseph's is that it follows more of the Romanesque style originating in Germany and Italy and not the more popular American Richardsonian Romanesque, though both share many of the same elements. Herman Kreitler, himself a German Catholic, may have been influenced by the architecture of his homeland, rather than the American iteration. Additional research needs to be done to find more about Herman Kreitler, his background and training and to more positively identify the artists or stained glass studios affiliated with the interior of Saint Joseph's

### **Building Description: Exterior**

Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church is a 2 and a half story ecclesiastical building with a 3-story tower designed in the Romanesque Revival style and built in 1897. It is identified on New Jersey Churchscapes as Gothic Revival, but lacks many of the distinctive features of that style, including gothic arches, lancet windows, true hood mouldings and label stops. Instead it seems to more readily be identified with the

"other" Romanesque Revival style described by Kathleen Curran. It is clad in limestone on its front façade and stucco on the remaining elevations, though the Centennial Celebration booklet suggests that the side elevations were stuccoed in 1935. The base and stairs at the front are granite.

The front façade of Saint Joseph's Church features 3 distinct bays, the north bay is comprised of a three-story tower with a pyramidal roof, two sets of paired, arched windows, a set of paired rectangular windows and a recessed arched-topped stained glass transom with double doors — the doors are replacements. The two-story center bay is front-gabled topped by a cross and clad in asphalt shingles. The gable features corbelled arches at the ridgeline and a small quatrefoil ocular window just below. The center is dominated by a triptych stained glass window topped by 3 three quatrefoils with Catholic iconography including a cross. The ground floor transom features some of the same tracery in the arched doorway. Two arched windows flank the double door, which is a replacement. The south bay is a one-story entrance topped with a shed roof, the roofline features the same corbelled arches as the center bay and its slope is finished with a tall, narrow finial. The bay features a small quatrefoil ocular window and the entrance is a recessed arch, with a stained glass transom and double replacement doors.

The north side elevation is reflective of the interior's floorplan — a Latin Cross with side aisles. Windows on both the first and second floor are arched stained glass. The large stained glass window in the transept, is not clearly visible from the street, but is arched much like the front center bay. The north elevation, except where the tower wraps the corner, is clad in stucco. It's unclear if stucco was the original material on these side elevations as the Centennial booklet specifically cites "the walls of the buildings were covered with a water-proof cement" somewhere between 1935 and 1939. Except where the front bay wraps the corner, the south side elevation is clad in the same stucco and again is reflective

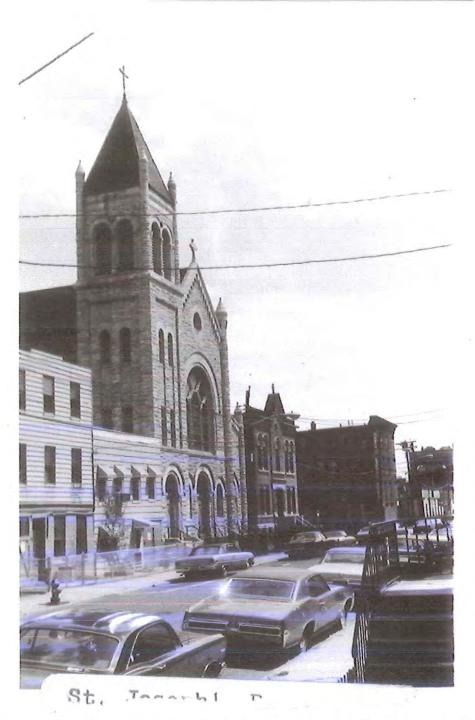
of the interior's Latin Cross with side aisle floorplan. A one-story brick addition attaches the church to the rectory next door, evidence suggest this occurred in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Windows on the first and second floors are arched stained glass and are largely blocked from view by the rectory immediately adjacent. But from a portion of the side parking lot, the bulk of the rear façade is blocked by the rear of buildings along Madison Street, one block east. What is visible is stucco clad and curved, reflective of the interior altar apse. Two of the five trefoil topped stained glass windows are visible from the church parking lot.

# **Building Description: Interior**

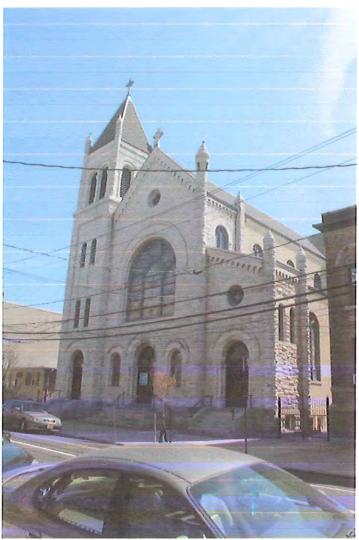
The interior of Saint Joseph's Church follows the tradition of many Catholic churches. It is laid out in the Latin Cross form with side aisles, and a rounded alter apse. The walls are plaster and show signs of long-term water infiltration. There is carved wood wainscoting that runs along the walls and the interior wood doors appear to be original. The church features a choir loft only accessible via stairs in the entryway. The wood choir loft rail arches out over the narthex and into the nave. The main floor is tiled with a decorative Greek key boarder that runs up the nave and side aisles, the floor under the pews appears to have been retiled at some point. Polished marble Corinthian columns define the nave aisle. The pews, which are interrupted in several places by the columns are wooden and original, but the alter has been pulled forward and centered in the crossing, and set on a dais – as a result several rows of pews have been removed. The alter rail and the alter are marble which is flanked by two large very fine, marble angels. They appear to date from the construction of the church, but have been wired for light. The light fixtures throughout the church clearly date from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and are a type found in many ecclesiastical buildings.

The stained glass in the south transept depicts the Holy Family with a young boy, possibly St. John the Baptist. Flanking this center motif are windows dedicated to Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Luke. The stained glass in the north transept depicts Saints Mark and Mathew in the center and their icons in the flanking windows, a Latin prayer is in the glass panel below the center. The apse contains five stained glass windows dedicated to specific saints. The center three are Jesus Christ, Saint Joseph and Saint Mary. More research is needed to fully identify all the iconography in the stained glass windows. It is also possible that closer inspection of the windows and the alter and niche murals might reveal more about the studios or artists who created them.

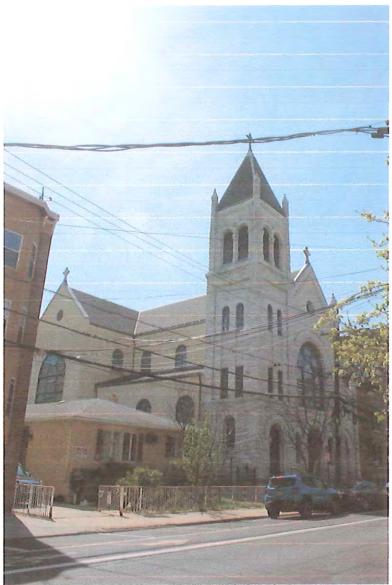
Despite some changes on the interior, the church retains much of its historic character. In fact, much of the artwork and physical relocation of the alter while maintaining the original alter, is a clear representation of the evolution of Catholic doctrine in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The exterior, with the marked change on the side elevations and the replacement doors, retains the feeling and much of the integrity of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque Revival church designed by Kreitler.



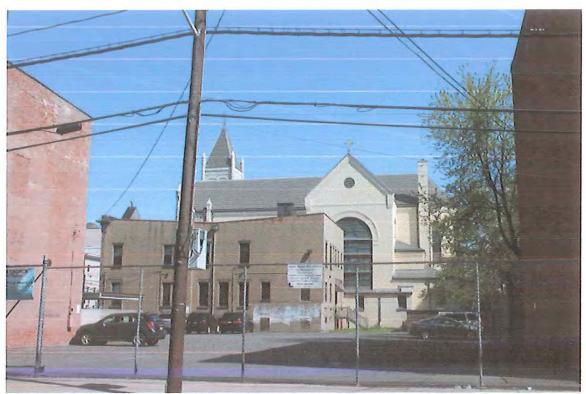
St. Joseph's Church in 1976. From the Photograph collection of the Hoboken Public Library.



Saint Joseph's Church, 2016.



St Joseph's Church, north elevation.



South elevation of St. Joseph's Church from Observer Highway (formerly Ferry Street). The parking lot is part of the parish property, and is likely the former site of the original Ferry Street St. Joseph's Church.



Rear elevation of St. Joseph's Church from 70 Madison Street.



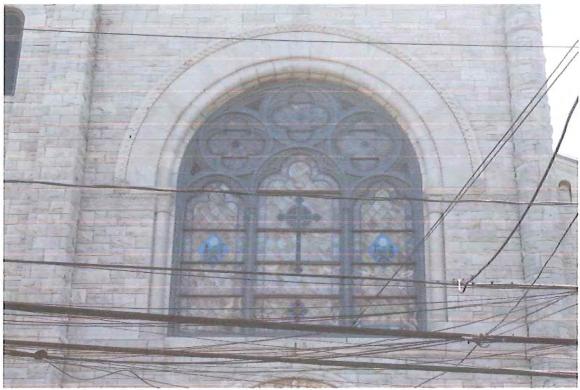
Cornerstone, St. Joseph's Church



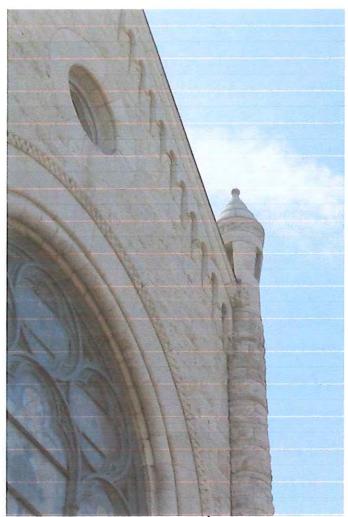
Stained glass above main (center) entrance



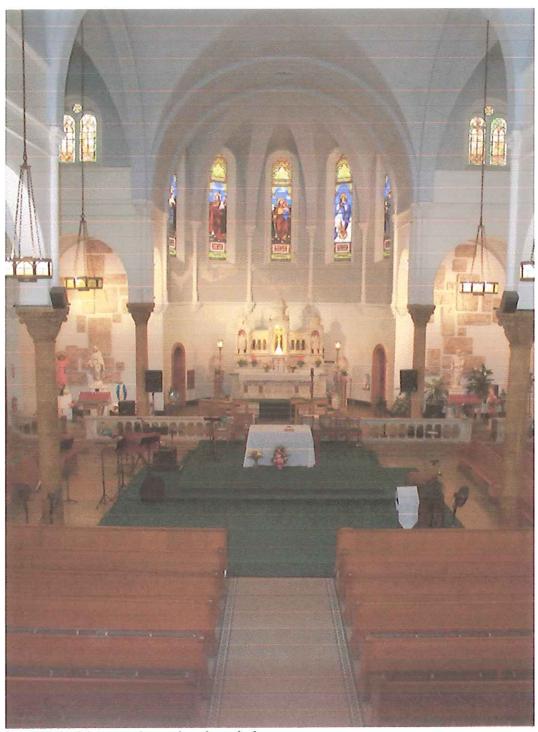
Main entrance, St Joseph's Church



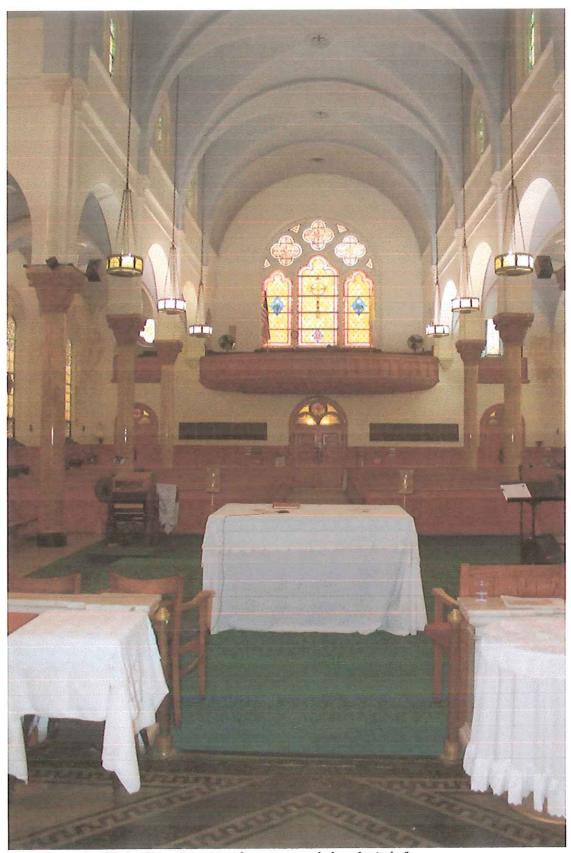
Second level window, main elevation.



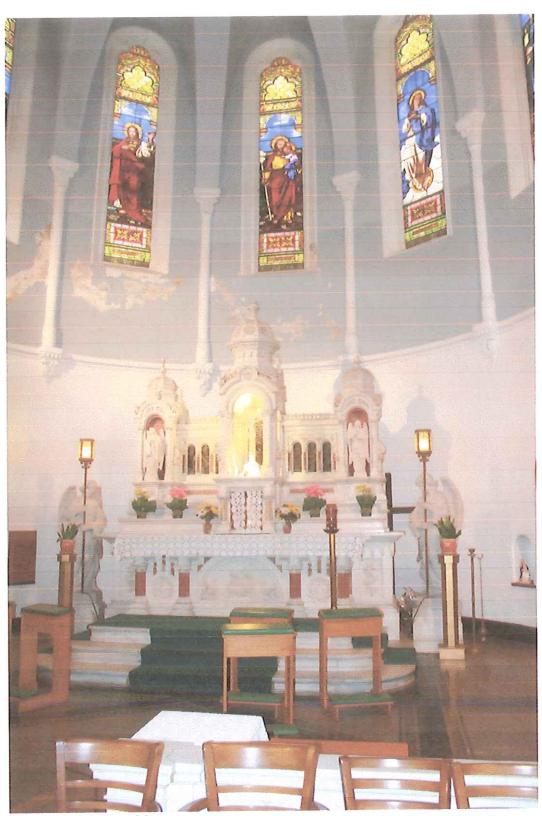
Detail of the turret, main façade.



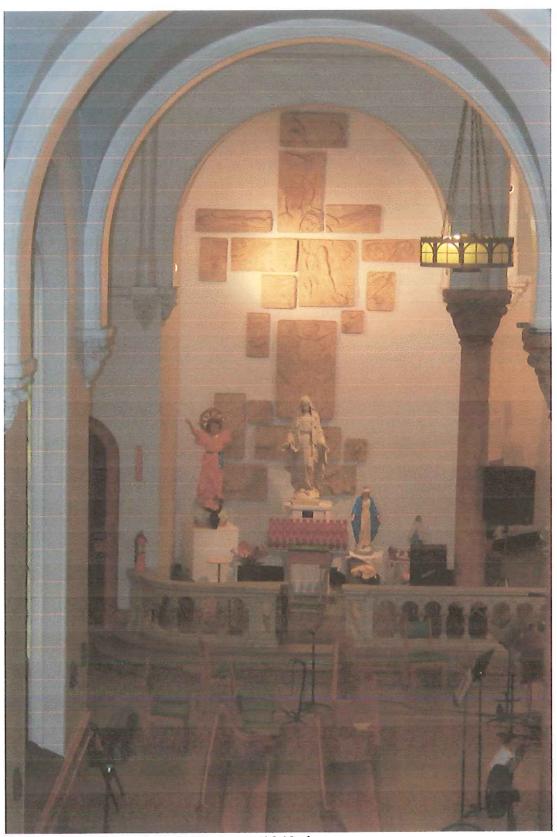
Saint Joseph's nave from the choir loft



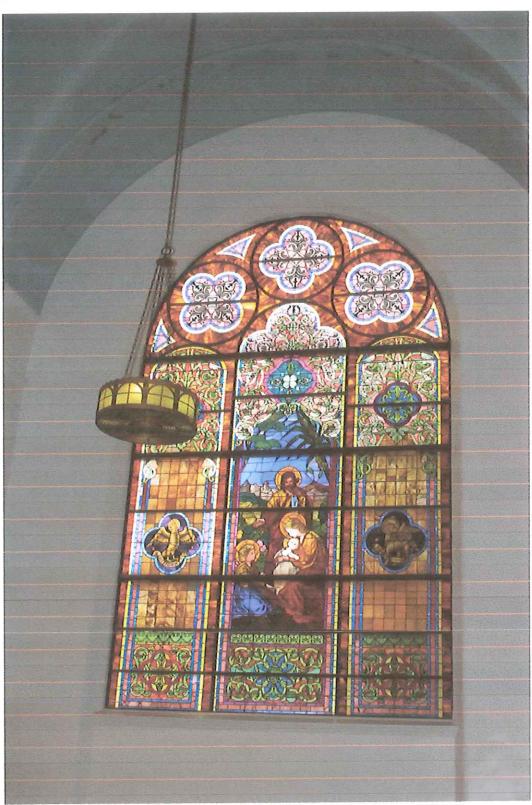
View from the high alter showing the nave and the choir loft



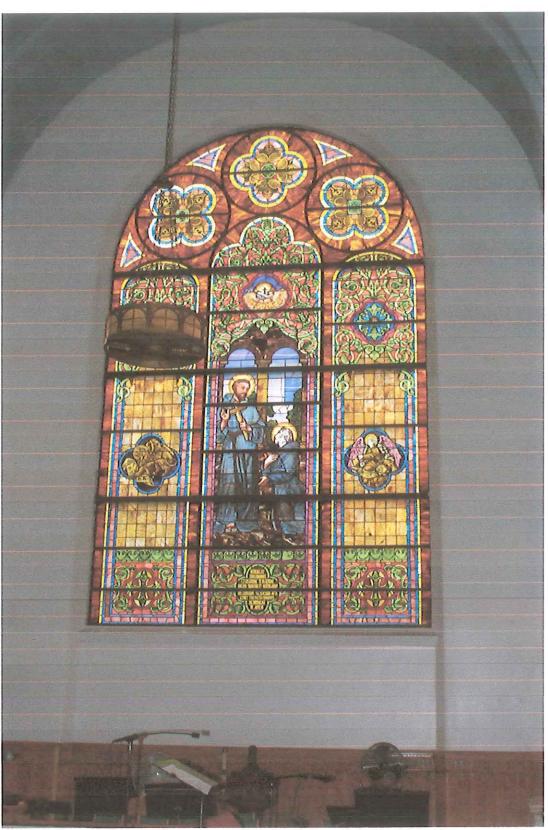
Alter of Saint Joseph's



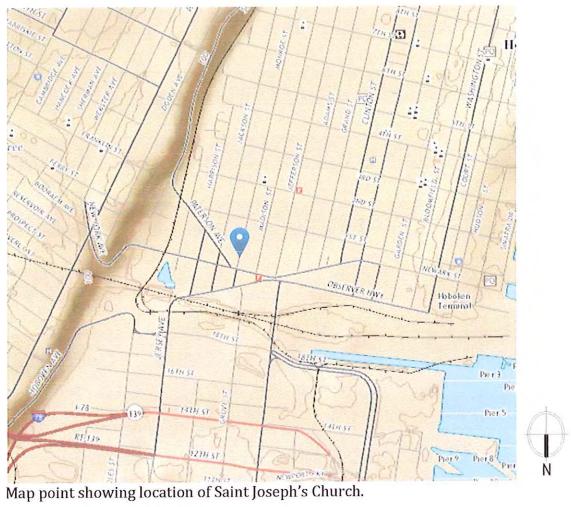
Sculpture in the north transept is a ca 1960 change.

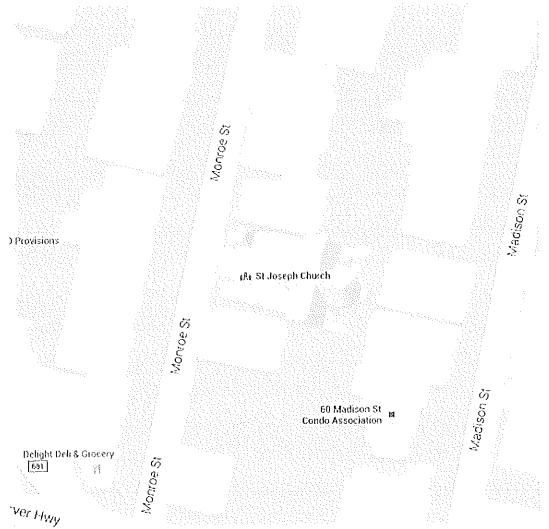


Stained glass in the south transept showing The Holy Family.



Stained glass in the north transept showing Saints Luke and Matthew.





Map showing the footprint of Saint Joseph's Church.