ST. CASIMIR'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (NOW THE PAUL ROBESON THEATRE), 40 Greene Avenue (aka 40-44 Greene Avenue), Borough of Brooklyn. Built c. 1864, attributed to Rembrandt Lockwood, architect; altered 1890, [Frederick?] Weber, architect

Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 1957, Lot 28

On June 28, 2011, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (later The Paul Robeson Theatre) and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 5). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Three people spoke in favor of the designation including representatives of the Historic Districts Council, New York Landmarks Conservancy, and the Victorian Society New York. A motion was approved to leave the record open for 30 days; no further comments were received. The Commission received a letter of support from Councilmember Letitia James.

<u>Summary</u>

The Rundbogenstil building at 40 Greene Avenue, originally named the Church of the Redeemer, was erected c. 1864 for the Fourth Universalist Society possibly to the design of the architect Rembrandt Lockwood. The building remained its home until 1870 when Temple Israel, one of Brooklyn's first Reform congregations purchased the structure and converted it into a synagogue. Having outgrown the building after 20 years, Temple Israel sold it to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn in 1890. The brownstone-fronted building, described in 1870 as being "modest as to size, ornaments and decorations"[1] was enlarged with the addition of an apse and steeple before its dedication as the new home of St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church, a parish founded in 1875 to tend to the spiritual needs of Brooklyn's Polish population. St. Casimir's occupied the church on Greene Avenue until 1980 when it was merged with Our Lady of Czestochowa another Polish parish. That year Dr. Josephine English, an African-American physician and community activist purchased the building, converting it into The Paul Robeson Theatre to provide the community with greater access to the arts. This early Brooklyn church building is a significant example of the Rundbogenstil and an important reflection of the borough's rich religious and cultural history.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

<u>The Development of Fort Greene</u>[2]

Before Europeans first made contact with Native Americans on what is now called Long Island, large portions of the island, including present-day Brooklyn, were occupied by the Lenape, or Delaware Indians. The Lenape lived in communities of bark- or grass-covered wigwams. In the larger settlements, which were typically located on high ground adjacent to fresh water, they fished, harvested shellfish, and hunted and trapped animals. The main habitation Marechkawick was located around modern-day Fulton Street near Lawrence and Jay Streets. Both Fulton Street and Atlantic Avenue, which pass near the site of St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church, follow the routes of Native American trails and the area around the church could have been adjacent to or part of a smaller inland campsite, where the Lenape not only hunted and fished but cultivated corn, tobacco, beans, and other crops.[3]

Brooklyn was first settled in the late 1630s and early 1640s by Walloon and Dutch farmers who settled along the shoreline just north of the Fort Greene area. In 1645 the Dutch village of Breuckelen, centered where the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges now stand, was incorporated. The village developed very slowly, reaching a population of only 1,603 residents by 1790 two years after it had been officially incorporated as a town by the State Legislature.[4]

The growth of Brooklyn began in the 19th century as improved transportation across the East River made it possible and convenient for businessmen in Manhattan to live in Brooklyn. By the mid-1830s and 1840s fast, safe, and reliable steamboats traversed the river first opened to steam ferry traffic by Robert Fulton's ship *Nassau* in 1814.[5]

Extensive residential development of Brooklyn began in the 1830s in the area of Brooklyn Heights, near the ferry slips, and in1834 Brooklyn was officially incorporated as a city. By the mid-19th century much of the area west of Flatbush Avenue (including the modern-day neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, and Boerum Hill) had been substantially built up and residential development was pushing eastward toward Fort Greene.

In the 17th century Fort Greene was the property of Pieter Ceser, also known as Peter Caesar Alberti, reputedly the first resident of Italian descent in Brooklyn.[6] By the 19th century much of the land within Fort Greene had been divided into four farm tracts owned by the Ryerson, Post, Spader, and Jackson families. Martin and Annetje Reyerszen settled in Wallabout in the late 17th century. The family holdings spread south from Wallabout and encompassed most of the modern-day neighborhoods of Clinton Hill and Fort Greene including the site of St. Casimir's.[7] Slavery was common in Brooklyn and at the time of the 1790 census, Jan Ryerson's household included five slaves and ten years later John Ryerson owned six slaves.[8] The widow of Jacob Ryerson began to sell off the family land in the late 1840s.

Before Fort Greene[9] developed as a middle-class residential district, however, it was the site of a notorious shantytown located primarily along Myrtle Avenue. In addition to the shantytown, Fort Greene was the site of a hospital and poor house established in 1824 as well as the Brooklyn Burial Ground. Fort Greene Park, originally opened in the 1840s as Washington Park, provided open space for the working-class population that inhabited the area at the time. The park was redesigned in 1867 by Olmsted and Vaux to meet the needs of the growing middle-class population. Most of the houses erected in Fort Greene before the Civil War were modest frame dwellings and row houses for the middle classes, many of them businessmen and professionals who commuted to Manhattan. Soon they were joined by wealthy residents who began building larger homes in the area.

The Church of the Redeemer and Temple Israel

The church that became St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church was originally constructed for the Fourth Universalist Society of Brooklyn. Founded in the late 18th century, the Universalist Church of America, a Christian sect whose primary tenet was universal reconciliation to God, became the sixth largest denomination in the United States by its peak in the 19th century. Universalist services in Brooklyn were first held in 1841 and in 1848 the First Universalist Society moved into a Gothic Revival-style church at Monroe Place and Clark Street in Brooklyn Heights. As residential Brooklyn moved south and eastward from Brooklyn Heights, members of that congregation who lived in the Fort Greene area broke away and formed the Fourth Universalist Society in April 1860. In 1863 the Society purchased two lots from Roswell Graves, a surveyor and civil engineer, on the south side of Greene Avenue between Carlton and Adelphi Streets. By the following spring, the congregation, which had been worshipping in a chapel at Cumberland Street near Lafayette Avenue, moved into this building, the Church of the Redeemer, whose design is attributed to Rembrandt Lockwood.[10] In November 1868, the church, which was described as a "handsome and substantial brick, stone front" edifice, was put up for sale.[11] The First Universalist Society, which had sold its church that same year, merged with the Fourth Society and the now recombined congregation worshiped at Church of the Redeemer until 1870 when it was purchased by the newly formed Temple Israel.[12]

The first Jewish residents in Brooklyn were recorded in the 1830s and by 1870 the Jewish population of Brooklyn had grown considerably. Congregation Kahal Kodesh Beth Elohim was founded in 1848 followed in 1854 by Congregation Baith Israel Anshei Emes both of which followed Orthodox ritual. Temple Israel was founded in November 1869 by members of the older congregations who were drawn to Reform Judaism.[13] The new congregation held their services in rented rooms in the Young Men's Christian Association at Fulton Street and Gallatin Place beginning in January 1870. Within a few months the congregation had grown to 40 families and sought a permanent home. On April 6, 1870, they purchased the church with its furnishings. Apparently little or no alteration was needed to adapt it to the needs of a Reform congregation, since the church was consecrated as Temple Israel on April 8th. At the time, the *Brooklyn Eagle* described the building as having a facade of hewn stone with stained glass windows on the Greene Avenue elevation but no side windows due to the proximity of the neighboring houses. Temple Israel continued to worship in the building for the next 20 years by which time the congregation had grown to 465.[14]

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church

Roman Catholics in Brooklyn did not have their own church until 1823, when St. James' Church was dedicated on the site of the current St. James' Cathedral. Occasional masses were said in Brooklyn homes but the closest church was St. Peter's Church on Barclay Street in Manhattan. The Roman Catholic population in Brooklyn increased over the next 30 years. In 1853, the Diocese of Brooklyn was created and the Very Reverend John Loughlin (1817-1891), Vicar General of New York, consecrated as its bishop. Between 1853 and 1883, Bishop Loughlin oversaw the tremendous growth of the church in Brooklyn from four major churches to 90 churches, 37 chapels, 100 schools and colleges, and 16 health facilities serving 200,000 congregants.[15]

The first Polish immigrants had arrived in New York in the early 17th century. Failed revolts against foreign domination of Poland in 1830, 1840, 1846, and 1863 brought additional

groups of Poles to the city. The large scale Polish immigration that began in the 1850s brought more than 500,000 Poles into the United States by 1890. The Polish presence in Brooklyn and Greenpoint was established by the 1870s, as the new immigrants were attracted by the area's industrial jobs. Father Joseph Niedzielski of Cincinnati was called to establish the first Polish parish in Brooklyn for some 100 Polish and Lithuanian families in 1875. The former Second Baptist Church at Lawrence and Tillary Streets was purchased for the new parish and dedicated as St. Casimir's by Bishop Loughlin that same year. By 1883 a school had been established (it closed in 1901) and by 1888 the parish had grown to 500 families.[16] In July 1890, to accommodate the growing congregation, Bishop Loughlin purchased Temple Israel. After exterior and interior alterations, including the addition of the steeple and apse, the church was dedicated by Bishop Loughlin on November 27, 1890.[17] Among the church's pastors, the longest tenure was that of Father Gervase W. Kubec who was assigned to St. Casimir's in 1913 and remained until 1953. During his tenure, two devastating fires gutted the church's interior including the altar and gallery, the first in 1918. Under Father William F. Flaskowski the church was thoroughly renovated in 1953.[18] The church, which served as a national church for Poles throughout much of Brooklyn, celebrated its 90th Anniversary as an individual parish in 1965. By 1980, with falling attendance, it was merged with another parish, Our Lady of Czestochowa, in South Brooklyn and the building put up for sale.

Subsequent History/Paul Robeson Theatre

Fort Greene had been home to African-Americans since the 1840s, when free blacks moved to the area attracted by skilled jobs available at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and, by the 1860s, more than half of Brooklyn's African Americans lived in the Fort Greene and Borough Hall areas. Within three decades, a small African-American population resided in the area south of Lafayette Avenue, and by 1930 the African-American population of the area south of Greene Avenue between South Portland and Clermont Avenues, which included St. Casimir's Church, had grown to 55 percent. By the 1970s as racially mixed, middle-income residents were purchasing and renovating the neighborhood's brownstones, the minority population of Fort Greene had risen above 70 percent where it remains.[19]

Dr. Josephine English, the first African-American woman licensed as an obstetrician/gynecologist in New York State, moved to Brooklyn in 1956. Within two years, she opened a women's health clinic on Bushwick Avenue. Twenty-three years later she established the Adelphi Medical Center at the corner of Greene Avenue and Adelphi Street, in the former Adelphi Hospital,[20] to which she later added a senior center. In the next decade, Dr. English founded a daycare center, an after-school program, and a summer camp for the youth of the neighborhood. In 1986 she opened a free-standing ambulatory surgical center, the first woman licensed to do so by the state. Dr. English also recognized the role that the arts played in the community and purchased St. Casimir's Church in 1980, converting it into The Paul Robeson Theatre (also spelled Theater) "to enrich and strengthen the community through art, culture and education."[21] Named for the legendary African-American actor, the theater has been offering works by and for the African-American community for three decades.[22]

Rembrandt Lockwood and Frederick Weber

The original design of 40 Greene Avenue has been attributed to Rembrandt Lockwood (1815-?), an artist turned architect, based on a letter he wrote to Marcus L. Ward, an early patron, listing eleven churches that he had built including the "Universalist Church, Green [sic] Av.

Brooklyn."[23] Little is known about his early life, he was born in New York and by 1841 he apparently had been a resident of Richmond, Virginia for several years. Lockwood travelled to Munich around 1845 to study and returned to the United States sometime prior to 1848 when he settled in Newark, New Jersey. While in Munich he began a project that would take him nearly a decade to complete, a 27- by 17-foot mural of the Last Judgment that he completed in 1854 to mixed reviews. He left Newark in 1858 and moved to Newburgh, New York where he began practicing as an architect specializing in ecclesiastical and institutional buildings. He moved to New York City in 1863 and continued practicing until 1876.[24]

The 1890 alteration plan for the church listed in the *Real Estate Record and Guide* notes only that the architect is a Mr. Weber.[25] At the time the only architect by that name was Frederick Weber who had opened a practice in Greenpoint in 1874. He practiced until at least 1893 during which time he was responsible for numerous residential and commercial properties in both Brooklyn and Manhattan where his work can be found in the Greenpoint Historic District and the Greenwich Village Historic District Extension.[26]

Description[27]

The former St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church was designed in the Rundbogenstil or Round Arch style, a variant of the Romanesque Revival that was popular in the years around the time of the Civil War. The primary motif of the Rundbogenstil and the Romanesque Revival is the round arch and simple decoration. The centerpiece of St. Casimir's brownstone facade is a large arched enframement that encompasses a rose window supported by a trio of arched windows, to either side are smaller stained-glass windows set in Venetian arch enframements. The metal-clad parapet, most likely added as part of the 1890 alterations,[28] features pinnacles, shallow pediments, and corbelled cornices flanking a steeply pitched stone pediment. The spires and finials that once topped the pinnacles were removed prior to 1965. The metal-clad steeple, also 1890, consists of a square tower, pinnacles, and octagonal spire. The steeple features round-arched openings with louvers, corbelling, rosettes, and crosses. In 1959 the original windows on the primary facade and nave which had been filled with patterns of opalescent glass, were replaced with figurative stained-glass panels representing religious subjects. They were designed by Jacob Renner, a Munich-trained stained-glass artist with Hiemer & Company of New Jersey. The critical aspects of the windows were overseen by Henry Irwin who was responsible for selecting the glass and Simon Berasaluce, a Madrid- and Paris-trained artist who was responsible for the painted details.[29]

North facade: Brownstone; wide stoops with possibly historic (c. 1939) metal railings and cheek walls with heavy scrolls at the landing; round-arched, under-stoop entrances; historic gate under the eastern stoop; round-arched main entrances with double-leaf, paneled wood doors and tripartite stained-glass transoms; partially-blind arcade with two stained-glass windows; three round-arched stained-glass windows; metal-clad parapet; metal-clad steeple with an octagonal spire. Alterations: facade, stoops, and doors painted; basement windows infilled with wood panels; non-historic doors under both stoops; one panel of west entrance transom replaced; spires and finials removed from pinnacles of parapet (prior to 1965); non-historic mail slot, house numbers, lights, and signage; tracery of rose window partially missing; remote utility meter attached to stoop.

West facade: brick; round-arched stained-glass windows; peaked roof. <u>Alterations:</u> facade parged; metal vents and hatch on roof; asbestos shingles; crosses on southeast and southwest pinnacles of tower missing or damaged. Recently, localized structural damage has been noticed.
South facade: brick; tripartite; square apse with round-arched, historic stained-glass windows; one-story extensions on the east and west; vent in gable of apse. <u>Alterations:</u> facade parged.
Site features: painted concrete areaway with steps; possibly historic metal fence; non-historic railings at steps; gate missing; small gooseneck pipe by east stoop.

Researched and written by
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Landmarks Preservationist

NOTES

[1] "The Jews and Their Worship," *Brooklyn Eagle,* July 5, 1870, 3.

[2] The following section is based on Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), *Fort Greene Historic District Designation Report (LP-0973)* (New York: City of New York, 1978), prepared by the Research Department, 3-12.

[3] Reginald Pelham Bolton *Indian Paths in the Great Metropolis* (New York: Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, 1922), 135-6.

[4] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, v.18: Social Statistics of Cities* (Washington, D. C. 1880)

[5] William R. Everdell and Malcom McKay, *Rowboats to Rapid Transit: A History of Brooklyn Heights* (Brooklyn Heights Association, 1973), 14-16.

[6] Fort Greene Landmarks Preservation Committee, *Historic Fort Greene: A Proposal for the Designation of Fort Greene as an Historic District* (Brooklyn: Fort Greene Landmarks Preservation Committee, 1973), III-3. From Michael Anthony Zuffo, "Peter Caesar Alberti: The First Italian Settler in Brooklyn," unpublished senior essay, St. Francis College. Deed records spell the name as Pieter Ceser and do not indicate when he obtained the land.

[7] William Perris, *Plan of the City of Brooklyn, L.I.* (New York: William Perris & J. H. Higginson, 1855), part 6. NYPL Digital ID 1516242.

[8] United States Census records, 1790, 1800. Historian Graham Russell Hodges notes that "Dutch farmers remained the most steadfast slaveholders" and that Kings County had the largest slaveholdings. Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York & East Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 164.

[9] Fort Greene in the 19th century referred to the fort located on the site of the park. The larger neighborhood, now known as Fort Greene, was the lower reaches of Clinton Hill. Fort Greene became a separate neighborhood in the 20th century. *Fort Greene Historic District Designation Report*, 5A.

[10] "Christian Universalism," *Wikipedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Christian_Universalism&printable=yes, (accessed April 18, 2011); Henry R. Stiles, *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, N. Y. from 1683 to 1884* (New York: Munsell, 1884), v. 2, 1087; "Religious Notices," *Brooklyn Eagle,* October 20, 1860, 3; Kings County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 616, p. 321 (December 31, 1863); United States Census records 1850, 1870; "'The True Irrepressible Conflict,'" *Brooklyn Eagle*, December 17, 1860, 3; *Brooklyn City Directory for the Year Ending May 1st, 1865* (Brooklyn: Lain, 1864), appendix, 10; Letter from Rembrandt Lockwood to Hon. Marcus L. Ward, December 16, 1867, "Selma Rattner Research Papers on James Renwick," Columbia University, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Drawings and Archives, Box 22: 27, 2005-006.

[11] "Real Estate for Sale," *Brooklyn Eagle,* November 21, 1868, 1.

[12] Stiles (1884), v. 2, 1087-8.

[13] Temple Israel was among the first Reform synagogues in Brooklyn. The first congregation appears to be Ahavis Achim founded in Williamsburg in August 1869, three months before Temple Israel. Temple Israel moved to rented quarters in 1890 until the completion of its new synagogue at Bedford and Lafayette Avenues in 1891. In 1921 it merged with Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, which had become a Reform synagogue by the 1870s, forming Union Temple located at 17 Eastern Parkway since 1929. Stiles (1884), v. 2, 1089; "Union Temple of Brooklyn" www.uniontemple.org/aboutus/history (accessed June 6, 2011).

[14] Samuel B. Abelow, *History of Brooklyn Jewry* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Scheba Publishing Co., 1937), 5, 10, 14, 15, 18-21; Kings County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 941, p. 486 (April 6,1870), Liber 1986, p. 419 (July 2, 1890); Henry R. Stiles, *A History of Brooklyn Including the Old Town and Village of Brooklyn, the Town of Bushwick, and the Village and City of Williamsburg* (Brooklyn: by Subscription, 1870), v. 3, 815-7; Stiles (1884), v. 2, 1089; "Consecration of the Temple Israel, Brooklyn," *New York Times (NYT),* April 9,1870, 2; "A Temple Consecrated," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 11,1870, 2; "Temple Israel," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 28,1891, 1; *Brooklyn Daily Eagle Almanac, 1890* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1890), 98-99.

[15] Stiles (1884), v. 2, 1045, 1059; Norval White, Elliot Willensky with Fran Leadon, *AIA Guide to New York City*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 584.

[16] James S. Pula, "Poles," *The Encyclopedia of New York City,* 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 1006; John Kean Sharp, *History of the Diocese of Brooklyn, 1853-1953* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1954), v. 1, 175-6; *Souvenir Journal of the 90th Anniversary of St. Casimir Church: 1875-1965*, (Brooklyn: The Church, 1965), n. p.

[17] Bishop Loughlin also purchased the house at 392 Adelphi Street for use as a rectory. The 116 foot, 8¾ inch-deep lot extended behind the church providing room for the construction of an apse. When 392 Adelphi Street was sold by Dr. English in 1999, the lot was reduced to 75 feet by 25 feet and Lot 28 now incorporates part of the former rectory property. Kings County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 1986, p. 414 and p. 419 (July 2, 1890), Liber 4802, p. 850 (Dec. 20, 1999, recorded Mar. 9, 2000); "Alteration plan 721," *Real Estate Record and Guide* 46 (July 19, 1890), 162.

[18] *Souvenir Journal,* n.p.

[19] Judith Berck, "Fort Greene," *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, 2nd ed., 471; Fort Greene Landmarks Preservation Committee, III-8-10; Barbara Habenstreit, *Fort Greene, U. S. A.* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974) 2, 4, 160, 162; U.S. Census Bureau, *American FactFinder, Census of Population, 2000,* Zip Codes 11205, 11238 [data base] (accessed June 29, 2011).

[20] Adelphi Hospital operated from 1929-1974. It was sold to 50 Greene Avenue, Inc. in 1975 a corporation of which Dr. English was later president. The Paul Robeson Theatre website says her clinic was opened in 1978, the newspaper says 1981. The corporation transferred title to Dr. English in 1987. New York City took possession in 1988 and allowed Dr. English to continue operation until 1995 when it was at auction for back taxes. The building has been converted to apartments. "Closing of Hospital Is Bitter," *NYT*, May 5, 1974, L135; Kings County, Office of the Register, Deeds and Conveyances, Liber 790, p. 1350 (July 14, 1975), Liber 2106, p. 444 (October 14, 1987);

"After 14 Years' Service, Health Clinic Faces Auction Gavel," *NYT*, October 15, 1995, CY10; www.paulrobesontheater.org/about (accessed May 9, 2011).

[21] "Mission Statement," www.paulrobesontheater.org/about (accessed May 9, 2011)

[22] www.paulrobesontheater.org/about (accessed May 9, 2011)

[23] This letter is the only record of his involvement in the design of the church. "Selma Rattner Research Papers on James Renwick," Columbia University, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Drawings and Archives. Box 22:27, 2005:006.

[24] William H. Gerdts, Jr. *Painting and Sculpture in New Jersey,* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1964), 93-103; Dennis S. Francis, *Architects in Practice New York City,1840-1900* (New York: Committee for the Preservation of Architectural Records, 1979), 50, 92.

[25] *Real Estate Record and Guide* 46 (July 19, 1890), 162. An article in the *Brooklyn Eagle* attributes the alterations to architect Joseph Werbler, this name does not appear in any resources including the Brooklyn city directories. "Polish Catholic Church," *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 27, 1890.

[26] LPC, "Architects' Appendix," *Greenwich Village Historic District Extension Designation Report (LP-2184)* (New York: City of New York, 2006) prepared by Jay Shockley.

[27] No graphic representation of St. Casimir's prior to the 1939-40 tax photograph has been found. Based on anecdotal evidence from newspaper reports, the church appears much as it did following the alterations made under Bishop Loughlin in 1890 prior to its consecration. "Lightning Strikes the Western Spire of St. Casimir's Church," *Brooklyn Eagle,* June 26, 1898, 34; "Two New Polish Parishes," *Brooklyn Eagle*, July 29, 1896, 2.

[28] A 1973 engineering report by Conti and Saunders, P. C. noted that the parapet wall "appears to have been built after the roof trusses and framing were in place." Building Property Office, Parish Files, Box 3 of 19, File Unit #11 St. Casimir, Brooklyn 3/8/65, attachment to letter from Hugo V. Conti to Robert Coyle, Diocesan Building Office, October 9 1973. Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, Diocesan Archives.

[29] Bishop's Office, Parish Visitation Files, Box 2, St. Casimir's, Letter to Edward W. Hiemer & Company from John J. Rudden, Director, Diocesan Building Office, July 15, 1959. Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, Diocesan Archives; e-mail correspondence from Judith Hiemer Van Wie to Marianne Percival, dated September 9, 2011 and September 20, 2011.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture, and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre) has a special character and a special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre) was possibly designed by Rembrandt Lockwood and constructed c. 1864; that it is an example of the Rundbogenstil or Round Arch style; that it was built as the Church of the Redeemer for the Fourth Universalist Society; that it was home to Temple Israel one of Brooklyn's first Reform synagogues from 1870 to1890; that it was purchased by the Roman Catholic Diocese in 1890 for St. Casimir's, a Polish parish founded in 1875; that the church was enlarged with the addition of a steeple and an apse at that time; that the stained-glass windows on the Greene Avenue facade and along the nave were designed and installed by Hiemer & Company of New Jersey in 1959; that it served as St. Casimir's until 1980; that it was purchased by Dr. Josephine English, the first African-American woman licensed as an obstetrician/gynecologist by New York State and a community activist; that since 1980, as The Paul Robeson Theatre, it has served the African-American community as a center for the arts; that it reflects the rich religious and cultural history of the borough of Brooklyn.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 74, Section 3020 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 3 of Title 25 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre), 40 Greene Avenue (aka 40-44 Greene Avenue), Borough of Brooklyn and designates Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 1957, Lot 28, as its Landmark Site.

Robert B. Tierney, Chair
Pablo E. Vengoechea, Vice-Chair
Frederick Bland, Diana Chapin, Michael Devonshire,
Joan Gerner, Michael Goldblum, Elizabeth Ryan,
Roberta Washington, Commissioners

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre)
40 Greene Avenue (aka 40-44 Greene Avenue)
Brooklyn, Block 1957, Lot 28
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre)
Windows
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre)
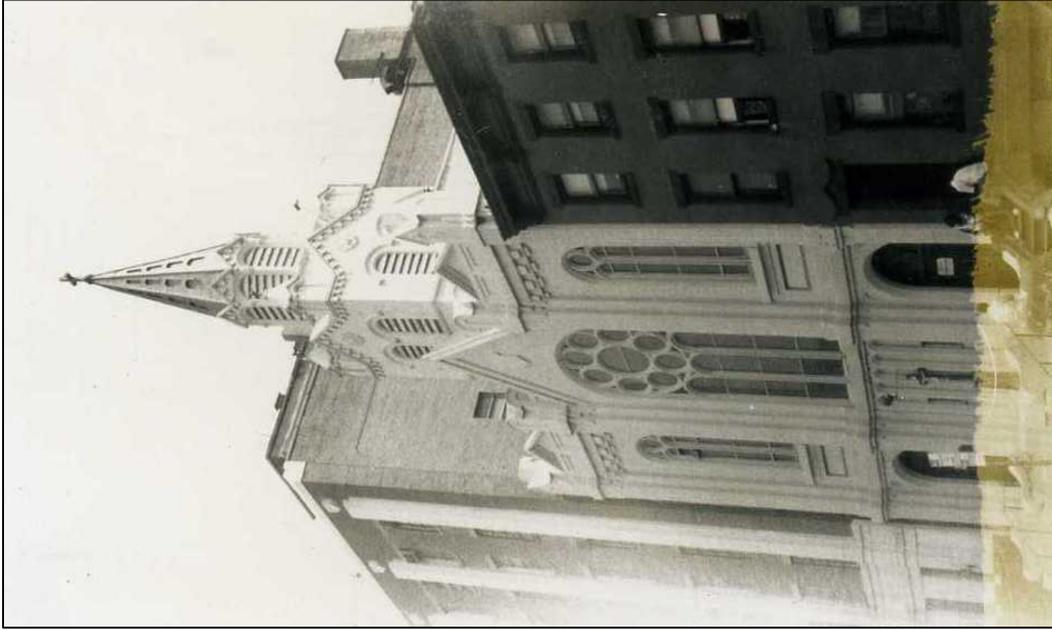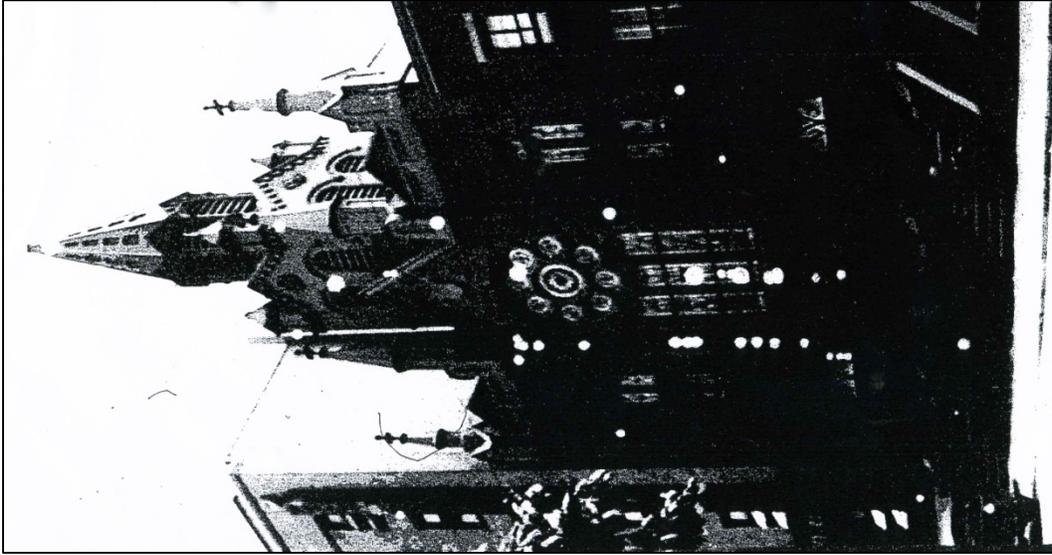Door and window details
Photos: Christopher D. Brazee and Marianne S. Percival, 2011

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre)
Nave and sanctuary windows
Photos: Marianne S. Percival, 2011

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre)
Parapet and steeple
Photo: Christopher D. Brazee, 2011

St. Casimir's Roman Catholic Church (now The Paul Robeson Theatre), c. 1940 (left) and c. 1976 (right)
Photos: New York City Dept. of Taxes (c. 1940), Municipal Archives; Andrew S. Dolkart, 1976

ST. CASIMIR'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (NOW THE PAUL ROBESON THEATRE) (LP-2476), 40 Greene Avenue (aka 40-44 Greene Avenue) Landmark Site: Borough of Brooklyn, Tax Map Block 1957, Lot 28

Designated: October 25, 2011