

## **Shrine of the Blessed Mother (Our Lady of the Parkway)**

### **City of Pittsburgh Historic Landmark Nomination**

**Prepared by Preservation Pittsburgh**



412.256.8755  
1501 Reedsdale St., Suite 5003  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233  
[www.preservationpgh.org](http://www.preservationpgh.org)

March, 2019.



# INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY HISTORIC NOMINATION FORM

**HRC Staff Use Only**

Date Received: .....

Parcel No.: .....

Ward: .....

Zoning Classification: .....

Bldg. Inspector: .....

Council District: .....

**Fee Schedule**

Please make check payable to *Treasurer, City of Pittsburgh*

Individual Landmark Nomination:	\$100.00
District Nomination:	\$250.00

**1. HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY:**

Shrine of the Blessed Mother (a.k.a. Our Lady of the Parkway, Queen of Peace Shrine)

**2. CURRENT NAME OF PROPERTY:**

Shrine of the Blessed Mother (a.k.a. Our Lady of the Parkway)

**3. LOCATION**

a. Street: Wakefield Street

b. City, State, Zip Code: Pittsburgh Pa. 15213

c. Neighborhood: Oakland

**4. OWNERSHIP**

d. Owner(s): City of Pittsburgh

e. Street: 414 Grant St.

f. City, State, Zip Code: Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219 Phone: (412) 255-2626

**5. CLASSIFICATION AND USE – Check all that apply**

<u>Type</u>	<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Current Use:</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Private – home	<u>Shrine</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> District	<input type="checkbox"/> Private – other	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public – government	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public - other	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Place of religious worship	_____

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**6. NOMINATED BY:**

**a. Name:** Council President Bruce Kraus & Matthew W.C. Falcone

**b. Street:** 414 Grant St., Suite 510

**c. City, State, Zip:** Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219

**d. Phone:** (412) 255-2130 **Email:** bruce.kraus@pittsburghpa.gov

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Provide a narrative description of the structure, district, site, or object. If it has been altered over time, indicate the date(s) and nature of the alteration(s). (Attach additional pages as needed)

*If Known:*

**a. Year Built:** 1956 (dedicated November 22)

**b. Architectural Style:** Vernacular

**c. Architect/Builder:** Sophie Toma, Anna Cybak, Mary Sunyoga, Phillip Marraway

Narrative: See attached.

**8. HISTORY**

Provide a history of the structure, district, site, or object. Include a bibliography of sources consulted. (Attach additional pages as needed.) Include copies of relevant source materials with the nomination form (see Number 11).

Narrative: See attached.

**9. SIGNIFICANCE**

The *Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances, Title 11, Historic Preservation, Chapter 1: Historic Structures, Districts, Sites and Objects* lists ten criteria, at least one of which must be met for Historic Designation. Describe how the structure, district, site, or object meets one or more of these criteria and complete a narrative discussing in detail each area of significance. (Attach additional pages as needed)

The structure, building, site, district, object is significant because of (check all that apply):

1.  Its location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity;
2.  Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
3.  Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;
4.  Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
5.  Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail;

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6.  Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource;
  7.  Its association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
  8.  Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;
  9.  Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures, or objects that may or may not be contiguous; or
  10.  Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.

Narrative: See attached.

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#### 10. INTEGRITY

In addition, the ordinance specifies that “Any area, property, site, structure or object that meets any one or more of the criteria listed above shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration”. (Attach additional pages as needed)

Narrative: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 11. NOTIFICATION/CONSENT OF PROPERTY OWNER(S)

##### *1.3(a)(2) Community information process.*

*Preceding submission of a nomination form for a District, the Historic Review Commission shall conduct at least one (1) public information meeting within or near the boundaries of the proposed district, which shall include at least one (1) member of the Department of City Planning and one (1) Commission member, to discuss the possible effects of designation. Notice shall be given to the owners of property in the proposed district in accordance with Section 1.3(b) below. The final public information meeting shall be held no more than six months before the nomination form is submitted.*

##### *1.3(a)(1)(a) Subsection F.*

*In the case of a nomination as a Historic District, by community-based organizations or by any individual, but in either event the nomination shall be accompanied by a petition signed by the owners of record of twenty-five (25) percent of the properties within the boundaries of the proposed District.*

- Please attach documentation of your efforts to gain property owner’s consent.-

\*\* The nomination of any religious property shall be accompanied by a signed letter of consent from the property’s owner.

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12. PHOTO LOGS: *Please Attach*

13. BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Please Attach*


14. NOMINATION FORM PREPARED BY:

a. Name: Matthew W.C. Falcone for Preservation Pittsburgh

b. Street: 1501 Reedsdale St. Suite 5003

c. City, State, Zip: Pittsburgh, Pa. 15233

d. Phone: (412) 256-8755 Email: mfalcone@preservationpgh.org

e. Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_



## **HISTORIC NOMINATION – INSTRUCTIONS**

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT THE NOMINATION FORM**

1. Indicate the original name of the property if it is currently known by a different name; e.g. Union Station.
2. Indicate the current name of the property
3. Indicate the street address for the property. For districts, attach a separate sheet listing the street address of each property included in the nomination and a clear street map of the area showing the boundaries of the proposed district.
4. Indicate the owner of the property and his or her mailing address. For districts, attach a separate sheet listing the owner of each property and his or her mailing address.
5. Check the classification as indicated.
  - a. **“Historic Structure”** means anything constructed or erected, the use of which requires directly or indirectly, a permanent location on the land, including walks, fences, signs, steps and sidewalks at which events that made a significant contribution to national, state or local history occurred or which involved a close association with the lives of people of nations, state or local significance; or an outstanding example of a period, style, architectural movement, or method of construction; or one of the last surviving works of a pioneer architect, builder or designer; or one of the last survivors of a particular style or period of construction.
  - b. **“Historic District”** means a defined territorial division of land which shall include more than one (1) contiguous or related parcels of property, specifically identified by separate resolution, at which events occurred that made a significant contribution to national, state, or local history, or which contains more than one historic structure or historic landmarks, or which contains groups, rows or sets of structures or landmarks, or which contains an aggregate example of a period, style, architectural movements or method of construction, providing distinguishing characteristics of the architectural type or architectural period it represents.
  - c. **“Historic Site”** means the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure whether standing, ruined or vanished, where the location itself maintains historical or archaeological value regardless of the value of any existing structures.
  - d. **“Historic Object”** means a material thing of historic significance for functional, aesthetic cultural or scientific reasons that may be, by nature or design, moveable yet related to a specific setting or environment.
6. Indicate the person(s) responsible for the nomination. Please note: According to the Historic Preservation Ordinance:

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*“Nomination of an area, property, site, or object for consideration and designation as a Historic Structure, Historic District, Historic Site, or Historic Object may be submitted to the Historic Review Commission by any of the following:*

- a. The Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh
  - b. A Member of the Historic Review Commission
  - c. A Member of the City Planning Commission
  - d. A Member of the Pittsburgh City Council
  - e. The Owner of Record or any person residing in the City of Pittsburgh for at least one year (for the nomination of a Historic Structure, Site or Object)
  - f. A signed petition of 25% of the owners of record (for the nomination of a Historic District)
7. Write a physical description of the nominated property or district. Include the following information as applicable:
- architectural style(s)
  - arrangement of architectural elements
  - building materials
  - method(s) of construction
  - visual character
  - street pattern
  - density
  - type and arrangement of buildings
  - topography
  - history of the development of the area
8. Provide a narrative history of the structure, district, site, or object. Include the following information when available:
- History of the development of the area;
  - Circumstances which brought the structure, district, site, or object into being;
  - Biographical information on architects, builders, developers, artisans, planners, or others who created or contributed to the structure, district, site, or object;
  - Contextual background on building type(s) and/or style(s);
  - Importance of the structure, district, site, or object in the larger community over the course of its existence.
  - Include a bibliography of all sources consulted at the end. Where historical information is uncertain or disputed, reference sources in the text.
9. Listed below are the categories and criteria for historic designation as set forth in the Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance. Describe in detail how the structure, district, site, or object meets one or more of the criteria. According to that legislation in Section 1.4 of the Pittsburgh Historic Preservation Ordinance, *Criteria for Designation*, a building must meet at least one of the following criteria in order to be designated:
1. Its location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity;
  2. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
  3. Its exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;
  4. Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;

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5. Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail;
  6. Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource;
  7. Its association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States;
  8. Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction;
  9. Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures, or objects that may or may not be contiguous; or
  10. Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh.
10. In addition, the ordinance specifies that “Any area, property, site, structure or object that meets any one or more of the criteria listed above shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration.”
  11. The nomination must be accompanied by evidence that the nominator has made a good-faith effort to communicate his or her interest in the historic designation of this landmark or district to the owner(s) of these properties. Describe how this was done, and attach evidence that the owner(s) of the nominated landmark or of the properties within the nominated district have been informed of the nomination. This may include a copy of a notification letter with a mailing list, a letter confirming phone calls, or a petition signed by affected property owners.
  12. Clear photographs of the nominated buildings or districts should accompany the nomination form. The applicant shall include photographs of all elevations of an individual building and its setting, or the front elevation of each building in a district. In the case of closely spaced buildings or rowhouses, several buildings may be included in one photograph. Each photograph must be labeled with the street address of the building(s) and the month and year the photograph was taken.
  13. Copies of major supporting documents should accompany the nomination form. Such documents may include, but are not limited to:
    - historic photographs;
    - historic and contemporary maps;
    - historic or contemporary texts describing the subject property or district;
    - historic or contemporary texts describing people, places, or events that comprise the historic context of the subject property or district.
    - Oversized materials (such as architectural drawings) and materials too fragile to copy may be accepted.

**PLEASE NOTE:** It is the responsibility of the nominator to provide the Historic Review Commission and its Staff with information sufficient to fairly evaluate the nomination. **Incomplete nomination forms will not be accepted. Fee must be included. Nominations must be submitted in both electronic and hard-copy format.**



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**CHECKLIST: Shrine of the Blessed Mother**

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- #1-6 Nomination Form:** Address, Ownership, Classification, Nominator Info.
  - #7: Description
  - #8: History
  - #9: Significance
- #10 Integrity**
- #11 Consent of Property Owners**
- #12 Photographs of Property:** numbered and labeled
- #13 List of Supporting Documents**
  
- Fee**
- Hard-Copy nomination**
- Electronic nomination (Word Format for text).**

**Shrine of the Blessed Mother**  
**Historic Nomination Form**  
**Addendum**

## Individual Property Historic Nomination Form

Historic Name(s): Shrine of the Blessed Mother/Queen of Peace/Our Lady of the Parkway

Current Name: Shrine of the Blessed Mother

Location: Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Neighborhood: South Oakland

Ownership: City of Pittsburgh

Type: Site

Historic Use: Shrine

Current Use: Shrine

## Descriptive Narrative

Year Built: 1956

Architectural Style: Vernacular

Creators: Sophie Toma, Anna Cybak, Phillip Marraway, Mary Sunyoga

## 7. Description

*Preparer's Note:* Hereafter, the site located in South Oakland, Pittsburgh, PA 15213 will be referred to interchangeably as the "the Shrine of the Blessed Mother" and "the shrine."

### *Boundary*

The Shrine of the Blessed Mother lies in the southernmost section of the neighborhood of South Oakland in Pittsburgh, Pa. and is comprised of architectural, sculpted, and landscape elements. The shrine is roughly bounded by the cliff side extending to the 376/Bates St. Offramp to the south, the houses on Wakefield Street to the East, the southern residential property lines of the houses on Frazier Street to the North, and by the southerly continuation of Whitney Way to the West. Visually, the site is distinguished by the presence of manicured and well-maintained plantings, which contrasts with the verdant brush that surrounds the shrine.

### *Physical Description*

The Shrine of the Blessed Mother occupies a small, roughly rectangular piece of land on a northwest-by-southeast axis. The sole access to the site lies at the bottom of Wakefield Street (Photo. 1), a Belgian cobblestoned road (Photo. 2) extending from Ward Street. The cobblestones terminate at several concrete barriers and a small, concrete walkway (Photo. 3) extends from the right of the barriers past two 19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular homes (the last remaining on a street that was once full of very similar structures). In front of the second house from the barriers, the poured concrete gives way to a modern concrete walkway with a black iron hand railing on left. Approximately fifteen feet to the left of the railing there is a mesh, metal chain link fence that narrows in towards the path as it turns from concrete to a herringbone patterned red brick bound by wooden ties on the left (Photo. 4). The pathway

continues a gradual descent down the hill a sign that reads "Shrine of the Blessed Mother -Entrance" (Photo. 5) establishes a formal entrance to the site.

After this point, a beige vinyl shed sits at left and a cream-colored fence begins and serves as a divider between the houses northeast of the site (Photo. 6). Along this fence line are a series of wooden crosses, approximately fifteen feet tall that have counterparts along the left side of the path. In total, there are fourteen crosses that are representative of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. At this point the landscape consists of a gently sloping grassy hills interspersed with fir trees. On the parkway side of the path there is a wooden signpost with a triangular top that contains postings about the shrine's history, articles about the shrine, and a biography of one of its founders, Philip Marraway (Photos. 7 & 8). A small opening in the foliage provides a view of the Parkway below framed by two wooden crosses (Photo. 9).

Continuing down the path, a single row of wooden benches sits at left and obstructs a portion of the path. Immediately opposite the row sits an altar, a shrine to Jesus, and the Queen of Peace shrine (Photo. 10). The altar (Photo. 11) sits on a rectangular concrete pad accessed by a small concrete walkway surrounded by various types of planted flowers off of the main brick path. The altar is comprised of a marble top supported by two rectangular support pillars on which the Greek letters "Α" (alpha) and "Ω" (omega) hang. Behind the altar is a stone reredos with a rounded-arched opening housing a blue and white statue of Jesus on the cross flanked by vases with cut flowers. The altar is flanked by two of the aforementioned wooden crosses, which when taken in context of the crucifix within the reredos is meant to allude to the predominant iconography associated with Cavalry. There is a peaked, wooden yard shrine between the altar and the Queen of Peace Shrine that houses a picture of Jesus flanked by angels that sits over several prayer cards (Photo. 12).

The Queen of Peace shrine (Photo. 13-15) sits approximately ten feet west of the altar and faces towards to the parkway. The structure consists of concrete and is framed by rounded-arched opening with two courses of multi-colored brick and masonry work (the outer course is coarse stone while the inner course is smooth brick). The interior is painted light blue, which establishes a backdrop to the statue of the Queen of Peace, which stands atop a rectangular granite pedestal in which the words "QUEEN OF PEACE PRAY FOR US" is engraved (Photo. 13). Two small marble shelves flank the statue and provide space for candle votives and two removable plant stands that often support lavish bouquets flank the statue. There is a padded kneeler before the enclosure, which is flanked by two identical concrete statues of angels, which stand on a granite base on which a plaque reads "In honor of Maria and Domenico Campitelli".

To the left of the shrine stands a bronze plaque (Photos. 16 & 17) which features of an image of the shrine above the words "Parkway Shrine Plaque 2015" and lists the following:

Anonymous donors  
Sophia Toma  
Sophia McMurtry  
Phillip Marraway and Children

Josephine Dinardo  
Iolanda and Comillo Smmartino  
David Klickovich  
Martin Marek  
Sophie Koss  
Antonio and Pina DiBattista  
D'Aquilante Family: In Memory of Eugene and Concetta  
John Takach  
Giovanna Defetice  
Audia and John Otto  
Cheryl and John Harchuck  
Vincent Dunigan  
Donna Schulli  
Keith Glabb  
Sabbia Sciulli  
Kason Finke  
Chuck Beck

Gradisek Family: In Memory of Angela and Carmine Dinardo  
Gino Ginardo  
Sam and Angela Verbane  
Nancy D'Andrea  
Melissa Ruggiero  
Diane Faust  
Frances Colton  
Claudi Bazan Arias and Anoni Prevosti Vives  
Campitelli Family  
Saint Anthony Community  
Paul Surgent  
Grance MErtta  
Fr. Dan Vallecorsa  
Fr. Richard Ulam  
Mario and Alfonso Provenzano  
Gloria Parkinson  
Romilda Ianmitto  
Joe Alba  
James T. Dunigan

The brick path continues past the Parkway Shrine Plaque 2015 and curves to the left, responding to the geographical curvature of the hillside. This curvature creates a small, open segment of green space, manicured with flowers and contains several plaques honoring figures affiliated with the founding of the site and its continued maintenance (Photos. 18 & 19). The path continues to ultimately terminate at a natural spring that emanates from the cliff side (Photo. 20). Two statues of the Virgin Mary (one kneeling, one standing) and a statue of Joseph kneeling that are grouped around several plantings serve

as a marker, helping to establish the natural spring as a separate area within the larger shrine site (Photos. 20-22).

The rock face of the hillside is comprised of slate, from which a natural spring ebbs and flows depending on the season and the amount of rainfall. The pathway to the spring gently slopes down the hillside and terminates in a crevice, which captures the spring water and creates a small pool when the spring's flow is in abundance. To the right of the pathway, a small ledge of stone and polished granite has been constructed to ease access to the pool and the water emanating from the hillside (Photos 23 & 24). The erosion of the slate surrounding the spring create natural shelving, in which several small votive statues are placed, emphasizing the spring's devotional connection to the overall shrine site (Photos. 25 & 26). The flow of the natural spring down the hillside creates another opening in the otherwise dense foliage, providing another direct view of the Parkway below (Photo. 27).

## 8. History

The Shrine of the Blessed Mother was first created in 1956 and it should be noted that there are multiple accounts, some of which are tangentially intertwined, that recount the shrine's origin. The earliest recorded report of the shrine's creation can be traced to a Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph article from September, 1956 that identifies Anna Cybak (from Ambridge) as having founded the shrine to honor her Army infantry sergeant son, Paul Cybak, who died while fighting in Saipan in 1944.<sup>1</sup> According to the same article, Anna Cybak was visited by the Virgin Mary in a dream, which inspired her to help create a shrine to the Virgin Mary.

Another early account of the shrine's creation from a 1957 Pittsburgh Press article also attributes Cybak as one of the creators of the site along with long-time Oakland resident Sophie Toma. Toma lived on Wakefield Street and, after her house was razed for the creation of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway, she maintained ownership over an undevelopable plot of land that would become home to the shrine. According to the Sun-Telegraph article, it was Anna Cybak, Sophie Toma, and their friend Mary Sunyoga (and her son, Steve) who cleared the lot and erected the statue. Different accounts of Toma's motivations for creating the shrine exist, and like Anna Cybak's divine vision, many of these accounts identify that Toma created a shrine in a nearby schoolyard after receiving a vision by the Virgin Mary. Mary would again appear to Toma and instruct her to move the shrine to its current location.<sup>2</sup>

In another account of the shrine's founding, Philip Marraway is also credited with the sites' inception. Like Toma, Marraway was a resident of Oakland (Forbes Ave.) and worked as a steelworker in the nearby Johns & Laughlin plant along the Monongahela. According to several accounts, on his walk home from work one evening Marraway saw a light beckoning him from the hillside above the parkway. Marraway followed the source of the light and discovered that it emanated from an image of the Virgin Mary. The next day (purportedly during his lunchbreak), Marraway traveled to the site where he saw the image of the Virgin Mary the previous night and arrived at the same site at the same time as Sophie Toma. They agreed their meeting was divinely inspired and agreed to work together to erect the statue of the Virgin.<sup>3</sup>

Some accounts of the shrine's founding also include the miraculous appearance of a natural spring. In these, the spring was responsible for the placement of the statue (Marraway and Toma carried it through the site until they became stuck in the mud at which point they constructed the pedestal).<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> "Ambridge woman, long forgotten, created enduring Pittsburgh shrine," *The Times*. January 19, 2013. Article accessed: <https://www.timesonline.com/article/20130119/News/301199942>. It should be noted that a microfilm survey of Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph newspapers from July-December 1956 failed to reveal this article. Additionally, attempts to contact the Butler Times reporter (Bill Utterback) and the Cybak family mentioned in the article were unsuccessful.

<sup>2</sup> Koss, Sophia. Telephonic Interview. Conducted October 23, 2017. Notes reside with Matthew W.C. Falcone.

<sup>3</sup> An unattributed, although it appears to be written by Marraway's decedents, document posted at the site of the shrine provides information about Phillip Marraway's life and details his account of the shrine's founding.

<sup>4</sup> "South Oakland cliff shelters shrine for the Virgin Mary," *The Pittnews*. August 24, 2008. Article accessed: <https://pittnews.com/article/23717/archives/south-oakland-cliff-shelters-shrine-for-virgin-mary/>

other accounts, the spring miraculously appeared to answer the prayers of those (Josephine DeNardo, in particular) tending to the shrine and its flowers.<sup>5</sup>

In September of 1956, the shrine was blessed by a Rev. Thomas Hornyak, pastor of St. Joachim Church and has continuously grown and evolved to encompass the boundaries of the site described above. Current stewards of the site cannot recount when specific features were added but photographic documentation over the past seven decades shows part of the shrine's built evolution from a free-standing statute, to one flanked by candles and votives, to the enclosed statue of the Blessed Mother that is present today (Figs. 9 & 10, Photo. 13).<sup>6</sup>

In the early 2000s the shrine's continued existence came under threat as the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission's plans for the Mon-Fayette Expressway proposed removing much of the cliff side, including site of the shrine.<sup>7</sup> Plans to extend the expressway into downtown Pittsburgh were ultimately abandoned.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Believers: Don't mess with the Blessed Mother," *The Morning Call*. April 19, 2004. Article accessed: <https://www.mcall.com/all-5shrineapr19-story.html>

<sup>6</sup> "Madonna of the Hill," *The Pittsburgh Press*. April 21, 1957. "Traffic noise doesn't interrupt serenity of neighborhood shrine," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. August 31, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> "Believers: Don't mess with the Blessed Mother," *The Morning Call*. April 19, 2004. Article accessed: <https://www.mcall.com/all-5shrineapr19-story.html>

<sup>8</sup> Article about the Mon-Fayette Expressway



## 9. Significance

- 1) *Its location as a site of significant historic or prehistoric event or activity*

This object & site does not meet this Criterion.

- 2) *Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archeological, or related aspects of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States*

This site does not meet this Criterion.

- 3) *Its exemplification of an architectural type, style, or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship;*

This site does not meet this Criterion.

- 4) *Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history of development of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States*

This site does not meet this Criterion.

- 5) *Its exemplification of important planning and urban design techniques distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design or detail.*

This site does not meet this Criterion.

- 6) *Its location as a site of an important archaeological resource*

This site does not meet this Criterion.

- 7) *Its association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States*

### **Traditional Cultural Site**

The Shrine of the Blessed Mother is a unique representation of lay Catholic religious devotion in Pittsburgh founded and maintained by a community from differing cultural backgrounds who have established routine practices centered on the shrine. The shrine should be considered a Traditional Cultural Site because of its cultural importance to a community of worshipers who, over the past seven decades, regularly make pilgrimage, worship at, and care for its upkeep.

Integral to understanding the significance of the shrine to the community it serves, the status of the shrine must be contextualized within established doctrine of the Catholic Church. While the term “shrine” has differing meanings across cultural and religious practice, the Catholic Church establishes the meaning of the term in its own belief structure in Canon 1230: “A shrine is a church or other sacred places which has the approval of the bishop and which is visited by the faithful as pilgrims.”<sup>9</sup> Today, and at no point in its history, has the Shrine of the Blessed Mother been considered an official “shrine” by the Catholic Church. It remains, as it was at its founding, an expression of faith, belief, and devotion to a lay Catholics throughout the region.

The community of worshipers deserves equal consideration and definition to help understand the shrine’s significance. In aggregate, the stories that recount the shrine’s creation provide insight into who initially comprised the founding members of the community. Philip Marraway, a Maronite, Lebanese Catholic, Anna Cybak, a Catholic who surname connects back to Eastern Europe, and Sophie Toma, an Italian Catholic all had different cultural origins but were brought together by a common devotion (and intervention) by the Virgin Mary. Although no formal records exist, the cultural diversity of the founders would continue to be a hallmark of the community of worshipers brought together by the shrine. Oral histories and keys artifacts provide an indication of the cultural composition of this community over time. This is perhaps most evident in the Shrine of the Parkway 2015 Plaque that lists individuals and families connected to the site. Surnames on the plaque like McMurtry, Dinardo, Klickovich, Otto, Surgent, and Faust suggest that the community of worshipers today maintains the cultural diversity of its founders.

The physical characteristics and manifestations of the shrine can also be viewed as a reflection of the cross-cultural nature of the community of worshipers it services. Architecturally, the shrine is comprised entirely of vernacular expressions that reflect independent contributions visually reflective of the ethnography of its worshipers. The wooden posts containing information about the site and prayer cards devoted to Jesus have stylistics and cultural connections to wayside shrines prevalent in Germany, Austria, and Poland.<sup>10</sup> The placement of votives and small statuary in the slate hillside surrounding the natural spring draw direct visual connections to grotto shrines popular in France, Italy, Turkey, and throughout the Mediterranean.<sup>11</sup> The Queen of Peace shrine, in all of its

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<sup>9</sup> The Holy See. *Canon 1230*. Accessed: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/\\_P4J.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P4J.HTM)

<sup>10</sup> Timmermann, Achim. “Highways to Heaven (and Hell): Wayside Crosses and the Making of Late Medieval Landscape,” *The Authority of the Word; Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400-1700*; Intersections, Vol. 20 (2011). Accessed: [https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004226432/B9789004226432\\_013.xml](https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004226432/B9789004226432_013.xml)

<sup>11</sup> Mayes, Frances. *Shrines, Images of Italian Worship*. New York: Randomhouse, 2005.

documented iterations, has clear connections to publically-accessible yard shrines often found in abundance in Italian-American communities throughout the Northeast.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the practices of this community of worshipers that directly center on, and involve, the shrine should be noted as a representation of their traditional cultural practices. Since the shrine's founding the Shrine of the Blessed Mother's community of worshipers has been united in devotion to the Virgin Mary, not necessarily by ethnic or cultural identity. The community gathers at 7pm on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of each month to pray the rosary together, a commemoration the date of the visions of the Virgin that resulted in the shrine's founding.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, masses are occasionally held at the shrine to mark special occasions related to the Virgin Mary, the history of the shrine, and its continued evolution.

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### **Proliferation of Freeways**

The Shrine of the Blessed Mother is also directly associated with period of rapid expansion of freeways, highways, and interstate road systems throughout the country as particularly manifested in Pittsburgh. Through this association, the shrine conveys a transitional moment in Pittsburgh's history when neighborhoods and a way-of-life rooted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century transformed to the rapid, post-WWII modernization of American society.

Specifically, the construction, and effects, of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway plays a central role to the creation narrative of the shrine as well as one of its intended functions. In 2006 the Penn-Lincoln Parkway East, from the Bates Street Interchange to the Churchill Interchange, was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places when the Federal Highway Administration, in consultation with various State Departments of Transportation and State Historic Preservation Offices, listed the roadway as one of the nationally and exceptionally significant features of the Federal Highway System. The determination states that the Penn-Lincoln Parkway East was eligible under Criterion A in the area of transportation, as Pittsburgh's first modern expressway as well as for its incorporation of significant planning and integration with existing transportation systems, while attempting to limit dislocation of existing development (Diehl & Frederick, Historic Resource Survey Form, Penn-Lincoln Parkway East, 2012).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Sciorra, Joseph. "Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars of New York's Italian-Americans." *Perspective in Vernacular Architecture*. Vol. 3 (1989), pp. 185-198. Vernacular Architecture Forum.

<sup>13</sup> "My office looks out over I-376 to the hill..." *Pittsburgh City Paper*. June 10, 2004. Article accessed: <https://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/my-office-looks-out-over-i-376-to-the-hill-next-to-bates-street-during-the-winter-i-noticed-wooden-crosses-and-a-white-sculpture-that-looked/Content?oid=1336367>

<sup>14</sup> Diehl, Emma and Frederick, Barbara. *Historic Resource Survey Form, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Penn-Lincoln Parkway East*. Key 157111. June 2012. Accessed: [https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/CRGIS\\_Attachments/SiteResource/H157111\\_136521\\_D.pdf](https://www.dot7.state.pa.us/CRGIS_Attachments/SiteResource/H157111_136521_D.pdf)

It is in the dislocation and impact on existing development that the historical significance of the parkway intersects with that of the shrine. According to early accounts the land on which the shrine was founded belonged to Toma's former home, which was razed to accommodate the creation of the parkway. Other accounts of the shrine's founding reference that Toma was motivated because of a particularly horrific traffic accident on the nearby parkway.<sup>15</sup> This singular traffic accident, however, should be contextualized within this era of history and the mass-accessibility of automobiles, newly created highways, and the social response they elicited.

Throughout the 1950s American society struggled to adapt to the rapid, prolific access to cars and freeways and resulting deaths and injuries from automobile accidents were legion. A review of headlines from editions of the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph in the year the shrine was created, 1956, illustrates how prevalent deaths from car crashes were at this time in and around Pittsburgh. Between August and September of 1956 alone, headlines such as "427 Die in Traffic; 12 in District", "270 Die in Traffic, Seven from Area", "4 Killed, 15 Hurt in Traffic", "Autos Kill 113 in '56", "4 Die in Parkway Crash" were prominent features of the front page and the newspaper devoted a weekly section to listing the details of fatal and/or particularly gruesome accidents.<sup>16</sup> Public service announcements and safety propaganda in these same newspapers highlighting the loss of life from automobile accidents were a frequent occurrence (Fig. 11).<sup>17</sup> Driving the number of fatalities was a combination of factors such as the nascent development of car safety technology (seatbelts were not mandatory features in cars until the 1960s), the advent of highways and parkways (and the accompanying availability of faster driving speeds), and the increasing availability of the automobile to different segments of American society.<sup>18</sup> Toma's account of the shrine's founding speaks directly to the proliferation of concerns about automobile traffic (and accidents resulting in death) and ties directly into this narrative.

Connections between the Shrine of the Blessed Mother and the nearby Penn-Lincoln Parkway are also evident in the nomenclature of the site as well as its design and geographic orientation. Early accounts of the shrine refer to it as 'Queen of Peace' and 'Madonna on the Hill'. Although the formal name of the shrine today is the Shrine of the Blessed Mother, it is more commonly known as "Our Lady of the Parkway" or "Shrine of the Parkway" (as it appears on the aforementioned plaque at the site). The shrine (both the overall site and the

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<sup>15</sup> Koss, Sophia. Telephonic Interview. Conducted October 23, 2017. Notes reside with Matthew W.C. Falcone.

<sup>16</sup> "427 Die in Traffic; 12 in District," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. September 4, 1956; "270 Die in Traffic, Seven from Area," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. September 8, 1956; "4 Killed, 15 Hurt in Traffic," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. September 17, 1956; "Autos Kill 113 in '56," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. September 14, 1956; "4 Die in Parkway Crash," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. September 22, 1956.

<sup>17</sup> "Growing Highway Hazards," *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph*. October 3, 1956.

<sup>18</sup> "Automobile Safety." Smithsonian Museum of American History. Accessed: <https://americanhistory.si.edu/america-on-the-move/essays/automobile-safety>

statue of the Virgin Mary) is oriented in a manner that integrates the hillside's steep topography as to be highly visible to all traveling on the Parkway East.

- 8) *Its exemplification of a pattern of neighborhood development or settlement significant to the cultural history or traditions of the City, whose components may lack individual distinction*

This site does not meet this Criterion.

- 9) *Its representation of a cultural, historic, architectural, archeological, or related theme expressed through distinctive areas, properties, sites, structures, or objects that may or may not be contiguous*

### **Pittsburgh's Natural Springs**

The Shrine of the Blessed Mother also has an association with the history of natural springs and the recreational, sanitary, and devotional role they played throughout the history of the City of Pittsburgh as recognized by designation of Howe Springs, Voegtly Spring, and Catahacassa (Snyder) Spring by the City in 2015.

Natural springs have played an important part in human development and their history in Western Pennsylvania and in Pittsburgh. Western Pennsylvania is marked with a number of springs that stretch throughout Appalachia, many of which are now marked by small towns bearing their names: Berkley Springs, Seven Springs, etc. What sets the springs within the City of Pittsburgh apart from their rural counterparts is the confluence of topography, population density, and cultural interaction.

During Pittsburgh's early development, these springs provided European-American settlers a generally clean source of drinking water and some of the earliest roads in the area, Nemaquin Trail and Forbes Road, cut through the forest and purposefully remained near to some of the larger springs, like Snyder Spring, to provide fresh drinking water to travelers.<sup>19</sup> And Western Pennsylvania was littered with many different geological types of natural spring from which early settler could choose.

Unfortunately, records of springs and the role they played in Pittsburgh's early development are obscure and the first we see them enter into the official records is at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a petition to Pittsburgh City Council dated April 3, 1912 the petitioners mention that "On the old Voegtly Place is a spring that has supplied the people of that section with the purest of water for the past fifty years or more."<sup>20</sup> This would place the spring as serving

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<sup>19</sup> Charles McCollester, *The Point of Pittsburgh, Production and Struggle at the Forks of the Ohio*, (Pittsburgh: Allegheny Commercial Printing, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> B.A. Overbeck & Harry C. Koehler, Petition for the Preservation of Spring on the Old Voegtly Farm, Robinson Road, 24<sup>th</sup> Ward, City, Petition, April 3, 1912.

a function in the community around 1860, which is the oldest document reference to a spring within Pittsburgh (then Allegheny City). Similarly in an advertisement printed in the Pittsburgh Daily Post on July 26, 1893 from E.M. Hukill, president of the Apollo Spring Water Company challenges the public of Pittsburgh's East End to prove claims that the company obtains its bottled water from Howe Spring.<sup>21</sup>

Howe Springs and Voegtly Spring served geographic regions within the city and were situated in the midst of residential neighborhoods. The Holy Waters spring, in contrast, relates more to the historical narrative surrounding Catahecassa (Snyder) Spring's public and site-specific function. While the site of the shrine was once a neighborhood, the construction of the Penn-Lincoln Highway below removed a significant number of residential structures and fundamentally altered the boundary of residential South Oakland. It also significantly altered the terrain and topography of the area, likely exposing underground aquifers that are a typical geographical feature throughout Pittsburgh. The result was the creation of an accessible natural spring whose volume of water fluctuates seasonally like many of the other springs throughout the city.

The existence of the Spring of the Holy Waters is an integral part of the historical and devotional narrative of the Shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In accounts of the natural spring, it is identified as being indirectly responsible for the location of the statue (Marraway and Toma carried it through the site until they became stuck in the mud at which point they constructed the pedestal).<sup>22</sup> The spring is also directly connected to devotional nature of the site and its routine maintenance. According to several accounts, the spring flowed forth answering the prayers of Josephine DeNardo enabling her, and later caretakers of the site, to water the flowers placed at the shrine.<sup>23</sup> Like Howe Springs, Voegtly Spring, and Catahecassa Spring, the Spring of the Holy Waters has evolved to incorporate structural components (the addition of a granite platform) to make the naturally flowing water more physically accessible and aesthetic elements (the presence of votive statues and devotional figurines) to reflect and reinforce the spiritual nature of the site.<sup>24</sup>

*10) Its unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh*

The Shrine of the Blessed Mother occupies a unique geographic location and is a well-established visual feature in South Oakland and within the City of Pittsburgh. Situated on the precipice above Route 376 (the Parkway East), the shrine is highly visible to all east-bound

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<sup>21</sup> "A Chance for an East Ender." *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, July 26, 1893.

<sup>22</sup> "South Oakland cliff shelters shrine for the Virgin Mary," *The Pittnews*. August 24, 2008. Article accessed: <https://pittnews.com/article/23717/archives/south-oakland-cliff-shelters-shrine-for-virgin-mary/>

<sup>23</sup> "Believers: Don't mess with the Blessed Mother," *The Morning Call*. April 19, 2004. Article accessed: <https://www.mcall.com/all-5shrineapr19-story.html>

<sup>24</sup> *Something About Oakland*, produced and narrated by Rick Seback. Pittsburgh, PA: WQED. 2007. DVD.

traffic, which numbers among tens of thousands of people every day. To vehicular traffic on the Parkway East, the shrine is most visible at night and in the fall and winter when the crosses and other feature are illuminated and the trees lack their full foliage.

While the Shrine is not visible from any vantage point in the neighborhood streets of South Oakland, it is a well-established if not beloved, featured of the community. Street signs guide neighborhood and travelers through the maze of one-way streets down the hillside to the shrine.

#### **10. Integrity**

As a traditional cultural site, the Shrine of the Blessed Mother retains a high degree of integrity in location, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association. The shrine remains in its original location on the cliff side of South Oakland. While the physical setting has become more verdant over time, the manicured landscape sparsely populated with trees remains a consistent reflection of the physical condition present at its founding, helps to distinguish the site from the foliage of the surrounding hillside, and maintains its visual relationship with the Parkway East. The Shrine of the Blessed Mother also maintains its integrity of workmanship, feeling, and association through the presence of vernacular architectural, structural, and sculptural manifestations present at the site.

**Shrine of the Blessed Mother**  
**Historic Nomination Form**  
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**Shrine of the Blessed Mother**  
**Historic Nomination Form**  
**Photo Log**

# Map Overview



# Site Plan



# Photo Log Key



## Photo Log Key - Continued





Photo. 1. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Wakefield Street (looking north), August 17, 2017.*  
Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.





Photo. 2. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Wakefield Street (looking South)*. August 17, 2017.  
Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 3. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Concrete Walkway*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.

Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Historic Nomination Form - Photo Logs



Photo. 4. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother*, Brick Pathway, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 5. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Entrance Sign, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 6. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Service Shed, Entrance Gate, Cross, and History Board, August 17, 2017.*  
Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 7. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Shrine Pathway*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 8. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Posted Articles about the Shrine's History and Founding, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 9. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, View of the Parkway at Entranceway including two Stations of the Cross, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.*





Photo. 10. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Panoramic of the Shrine including the majority of its structural components, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.*



Photo. 11. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Altar*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 12. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Wooden Shrine dedicated to Jesus, August 17, 2017.* Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 13. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace Shrine, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo 14. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace Shrine, Statue and Floral Arrangement, August 17, 2017.*  
Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 15. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Queen of Peace Shrine, Recto*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 16. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Cliffside and Parkway Shrine Plaque*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 17. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Parkway Shrine Plaque 2015, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.





Photo. 18. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Phillip And Margot Marraway Plaque, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 19. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Don Doyle Plaque*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 20. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Pathway to Natural Spring – “Holy Waters”, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 21. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, View Facing Southeast from the Natural Spring featuring Statuary of the Virgin Mary, Joseph, and Mary in the foreground, Queen of Peace Shrine in the Central Plane, and Stations of the Cross in the Background, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 22. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Statuary Marking the Entrance to the Natural Spring, August 17, 2017.*  
Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 23. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Natural Spring – “Holy Waters”*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 24. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Natural Spring Access Ledge*, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 25. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Natural Spring Cliffside Rock Formation Featuring a Placed Votive Angel, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.*





Photo. 26. *Shrine of the Blessed Mother, Natural Spring Cliffside Featuring Votive Offerings, August 17, 2017.*  
Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.



Photo. 27. Shrine of the Blessed Mother, View of the Parkway from the Vantage Point of the Natural Spring, August 17, 2017. Source: Matthew W.C. Falcone.

**Shrine of the Blessed Mother  
Historic Nomination Form  
Supporting Documents**

Shrine of the Blessed Mother - Historic Nomination Form – Supporting Documents

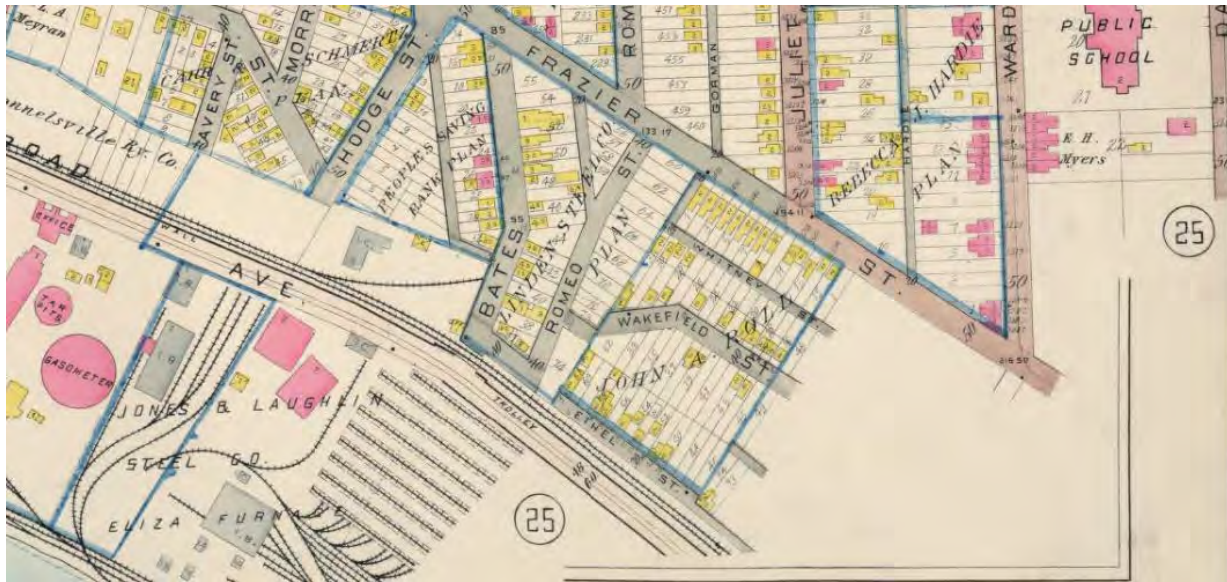


Fig. 1. South Oakland, West Oakland. 1910. G.M. Hopkins & Co. Accessed: <https://historicpittsburgh.org/islandora/object/pitt:20090323-hopkins-0008>

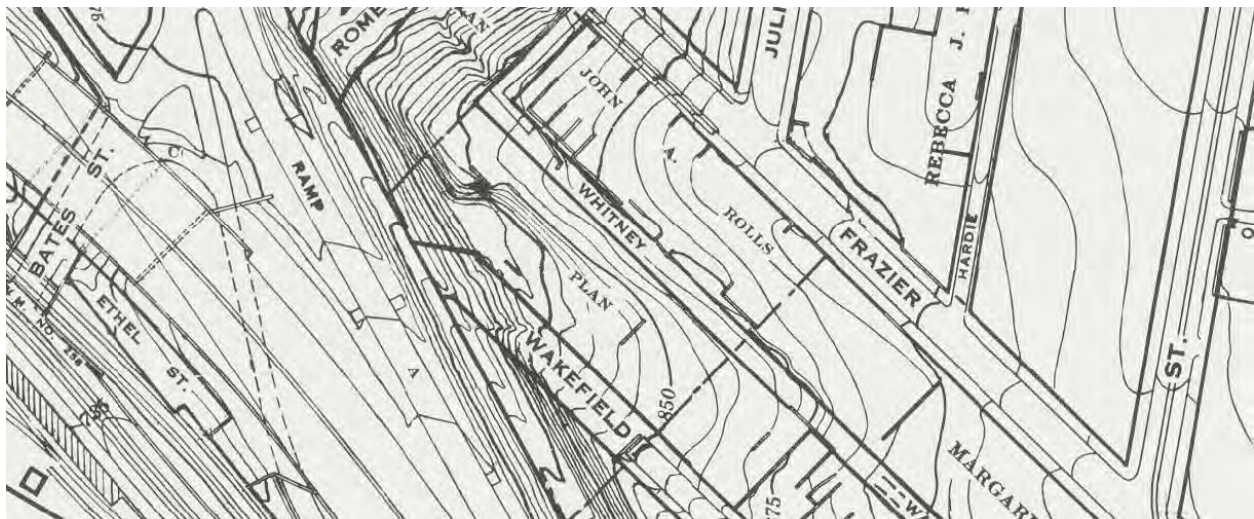


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Fig. 5. Hare, Clyde. *Penn-Lincoln Parkway Construction*. 1951. Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs. Accessed: <https://historicpittsburgh.org/islandora/object/pitt%3A86.16.93>



Fig. 6. Corsini, Harold. *View of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway East and J&L Steel Mill from above Second Ave*. 1951. Carnegie Museum of Art Collection of Photographs. Accessed: <https://historicpittsburgh.org/islandora/object/pitt%3A85.4.64>



Fig. 7. Bindyke, Don. *Aerial view of the Penn-Lincoln Parkway East*. 1954. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs. Accessed: <https://historicpittsburgh.org/islandora/object/pitt%3AMSP285.B010.F30.I05>



Fig. 8. Shrader, John. *Penn-Lincoln Parkway East Bates Street Construction*. 1956. Allegheny Conference on Community Development Photographs. Accessed: <https://historicpittsburgh.org/islandora/object/pitt%3AMSP285.B010.F30.I04>

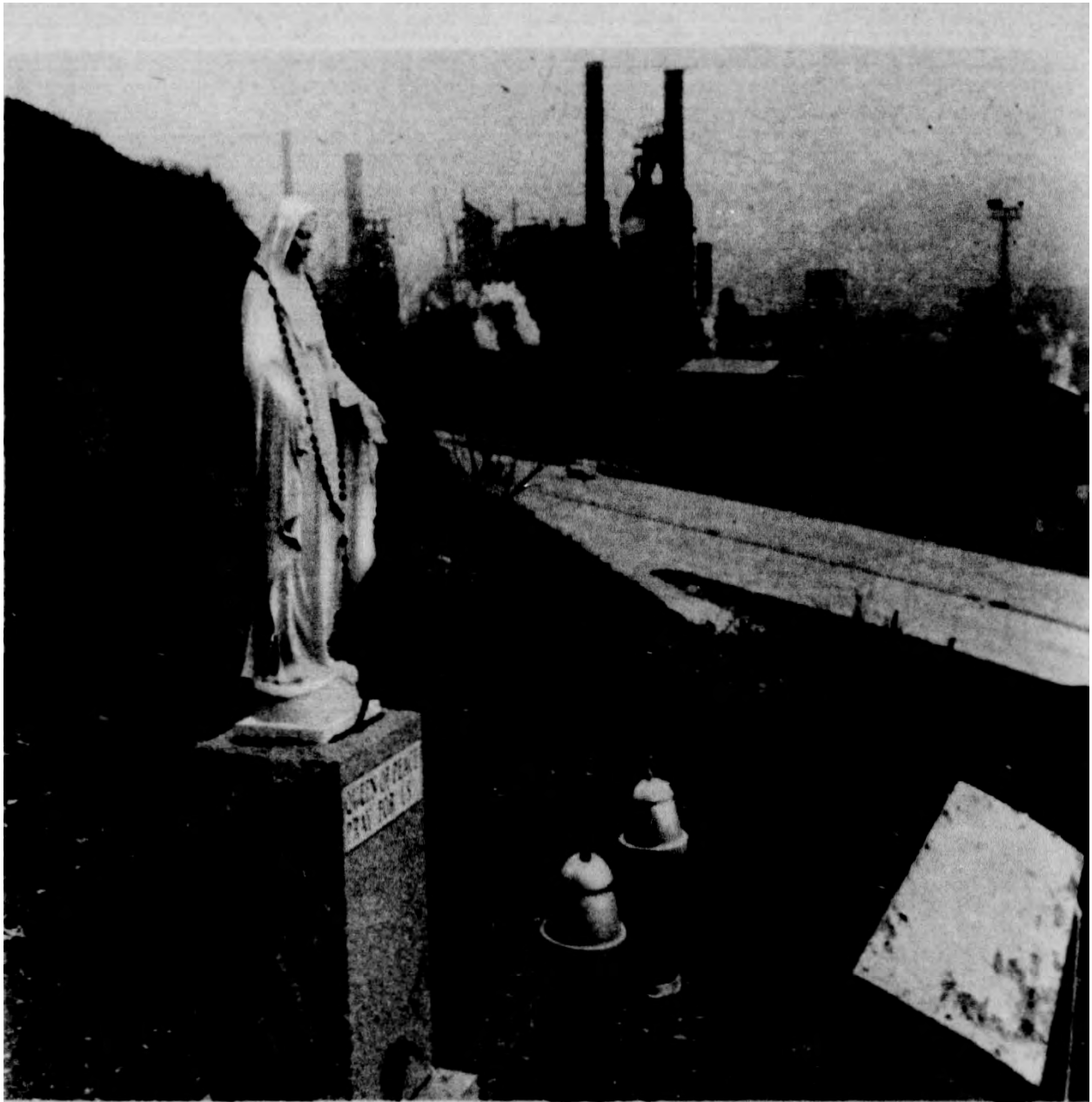


Fig. 9. "Pittsburgh Album. Madonna of the Hill." *The Pittsburgh Press*, April 21, 1957.





Fig. 10. Walcoff, Matt. "Traffic Noise Doesn't Interrupt Serenity of Neighborhood Shrine." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 31, 1998.



Fig. 11. "Open for Business." *Pittsburgh Sun-Times*. September, 1956.

