

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: St. Mark's Methodist Church
Other name/site number: St. Mark's United Methodist Church
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 600 Pecore Street
City or town: Houston State: Texas County: Harris
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

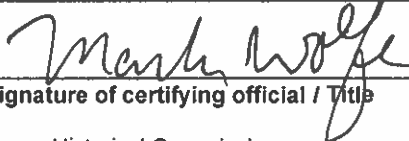
3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D


Signature of certifying official / Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

6/2/22
Date

Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
1	0	objects
3	1	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: RELIGION: Religious Facility, Church School; OTHER: Sign

Current Functions: RELIGION: Religious Facility, Church School; OTHER, Sign; RECREATION AND CULTURE: Sports Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification: LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Late Gothic Revival

Principal Exterior Materials: STONE, GLASS, METAL

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-15)

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: A (Religious Properties)

Areas of Significance: Religion (*local*), Architecture (*local*)

Period of Significance: 1938-1960

Significant Dates: 1938, 1940, 1960

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Bailey, James Ruskin (architect, church); Hayes, LeRoy "L.R." (building contractor, children's development center); P.G. Bell Company, Inc (builder, children's development center)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-16 through 8-27)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 9-28 through 9-31)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 1.06 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (use decimal degree format)

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 29.790036°N | Longitude: -95.378117°W |
| 2. Latitude: 29.790538°N | Longitude: -95.378124°W |
| 3. Latitude: 29.790538°N | Longitude: -95.377288°W |
| 4. Latitude: 29.790051°N | Longitude: -95.377283°W |

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated boundary includes approximately 1.06 acres owned by St. Mark's United Methodist Church, specifically the northern and eastern portion of TRS 1 8 & 10 ABST 1 J AUSTIN (Account # 0400700000010), all of TR 9 ABST 1 J AUSTIN (Account # 0400700000009), the northern portion of LT 9 & TR 8 BLK 2 CLAYS SEC 1 (Account # 0092640000020), and the northern portion of LTS 10 & 11 BLK 2 CLAYS SEC 1 (Account # 0092640000010) Houston, Harris County, Texas as recorded in the Harris County Appraisal District. Data accessed July 29, 2021 (Map 3).

Boundary Justification: The nominated boundary includes the resources historically associated with St. Mark's Methodist Church. It excludes ancillary resources now owned by the church that were not historically associated with it during the period of significance including Boy Scout storage, a landscaping storage shed, garden club storage, and a historic-age residential building. The parking lot and driveway were historically associated with the church during the period of significance, but do not contain any historic resources, and thus are excluded.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Hannah Curry and Jacob Foreman, Architectural Historians/Historic Preservation Specialists
Organization: SWCA Environmental Consultants
Address: 10245 W. Little York, Suite 600
City or Town: Houston State: Texas Zip Code: 77040
Email: Hannah.curry@swca.com
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Date: June 2021

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheet Map-32 through Map-35)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-36 through Figure-47)

Photographs (see continuation sheet Photo-5-6, 48 through Photo-66)

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photographs

Name of Property: St. Mark's Methodist Church

City or Vicinity: Houston

County, State: Harris, Texas

Photographer: Hannah Curry

Date: September 2020, March 2021, October 2021, or April 2022 as noted

All photographs accurately depict property conditions. No changes nor significant deterioration has occurred since the photos were taken between September 2020 and April 2022.

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): North elevation of the sanctuary wing, view south

Photograph Number: 0001

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): North and west elevations of the classroom wing, view southeast. Newly constructed portion of classroom wing visible at right.

Photograph Number: 0002

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): West elevation sanctuary and north elevations classroom wing, view east.

Photograph Number: 0003

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Bell tower base and arcade, view southeast

Photograph Number: 0004

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): West and south elevations of the classroom wing, view northeast

Photograph Number: 0005

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): South and east elevations of the classroom wing and south elevation of the connecting hyphen, view northwest

Photograph Number: 0006

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): West and south elevations of the children's development center, view northeast

Photograph Number: 0007

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): South and east elevations of the children's development center with the east elevation of the sanctuary wing and the non-contributing multi-purpose court, view northwest

Photograph Number: 0008

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): East elevation of the connecting hyphen with the children's development center on the south and the sanctuary wing on the north, view west

Photograph Number: 0009

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: March 2021

Description of Photograph(s): North elevation of the children's development center, view southwest

Photograph Number: 0010

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Interior of the sanctuary wing, view east

Photograph Number: 0011

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Interior of the sanctuary wing, view west

Photograph Number: 0012

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, narthex (right) and connecting hyphen (left), view northwest

Photograph Number: 0013

Date Photographed: March 2021

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, connecting hyphen towards narthex with balcony stairs in background, view east

Photograph Number: 0014

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor hall with original articulated plaster and trim, view south

Photograph Number: 0015

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, second floor with original framing in the ceiling and attic, view north.

Photograph Number: 0016

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, original basement column with non-original framing, view southeast

Photograph Number: 0017

Date Photographed: March 2021

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, children's development center second floor hallway, view west

Photograph Number: 0018

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): St. Mark's sign, view southeast

Photograph Number: 0019

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Narrative Description

St. Mark's Methodist Church, located at 600 Pecore Street in Houston, Texas includes two contributing buildings, one contributing object, and one non-contributing structure: a 1940 church building and attached classroom wing, a 1960 children's development center, a 1940 sign, and a 2015 multi-purpose court constructed outside the period of significance. The two and a half-story church building was designed in the Late Gothic Revival style and is the last known project in Houston by architect James Ruskin Bailey. The church building is divided into two sections, the sanctuary with a cruciform plan and the classroom wing, internally connected by a hyphen. It has limestone load bearing masonry cladding, wood and steel framing, buttresses, a prominent bell tower with steeple, cast stone dropped arch window openings with diamond-shaped tinted glazing, a stained-glass circular rose window on the eastern wall of the sanctuary, replacement vinyl multi-light casement windows, and replacement standing-seam copper roofing on the gabled and mansard roof portions. The interior features various finishes to demonstrate the hierarchy of the spaces, with carved wood paneling, and smooth-finish plaster walls.

The two-story children's development center was designed by LeRoy "L.R." Hayes and constructed by P.G. Bell Company, Inc. The I-plan children's development center repeats much of the church design including the limestone cladding, window trim, and composite shingle mansard roof providing continuity on the site. The center has replacement vinyl sash windows, and c. 2000 attached covered walkways. The interior features vinyl tile flooring, and smooth-finished walls in the classrooms. The historic sign utilizes the same limestone in its structural support and surrounding planter. In September 2019, a fire began in the southeast corner on the second floor of the church building's classroom wing causing significant damage. Ongoing rehabilitation work including the reconstruction of the south end of the classroom wing has been approved by the Texas Historical Commission and is being carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Despite alterations over time, the property retains a high level of historic integrity.

Site and Setting

St. Mark's Methodist Church is positioned between Pecore Street and Redan Street between the Norhill and Woodland Heights residential neighborhoods in the greater Houston Heights area. The setting is composed of early to mid-20th century residential development. Nearby residences are primarily one- and two-story single-family Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, Craftsman, Neoclassical, and Minimal Traditional homes constructed primarily for working-class families between 1910 and 1930 with some new infill construction designed to complement the historic buildings.

The nominated boundary includes approximately 1.06 acres and all resources historically associated with St. Mark's Methodist Church including two contributing buildings, one contributing object, and one non-contributing structure. Excluded from the boundary are ancillary resources now owned by the church that were not historically associated with it during the period of significance. The church purchased several adjacent tracts since it originally acquired the property, including most recently in January 2020. Excluded resources include Boy Scout equipment storage (c. 1985), a landscaping storage shed (c. 1995), the garden club storage (c. 1995), and a historic-age residential building (c. 1920) purchased by the church in January 2020 to use as temporary office space. The congregation also owns a parsonage (c. 1965) at 702 Pecore, one block west of the church, however, its purchase was outside the period of significance.

The historic church building faces north onto Pecore Street with a driveway located along the western edge of the original property boundary. A paved surface parking lot is located on the south side of the property facing Redan Street. The parking lot and driveway were historically associated with the church during the period of significance, but do not contain any historic resources, and thus are excluded from the boundary. Due to the location of the parking lot, the congregation primarily uses a non-original south entrance to access the building. A system of covered walkways was added c. 2000 to

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

protect pedestrians walking between the sanctuary and children's development center. The walkways feature aluminum columns, wood fascia, and a flat membrane roof (Maps 1-5).

Church Building (1940)

The church building is an irregular L-shape plan 2.5-story building with limestone cladding facing north onto Pecore Street. It has a combination of load-bearing masonry with wood-and-steel framing. The original plans call for slate, but the gabled and mansard roof currently uses non-historic standing-seam copper and matching coping installed in 1988 and 2021-2022. The building's original wood casement windows were replaced in the late 1990s or early 2000s, with new vinyl windows to resemble the historic multi-light windows, but all other windows are original. The building is divided into two primary sections with a hyphen to provide an internal connection. Each section, the sanctuary and the classroom wing, has differing functions and interior finishes. The limestone exterior has been cleaned since some of the photos were taken in September 2020 (Maps 2-5, Figures 1-9, 12, Photos 1-6, 8, 11).

Sanctuary

Exterior

The sanctuary wing runs east-west on its axis and is located along the northern edge of the historic property boundary. This wing is constructed from load-bearing masonry and has a steeply pitched cross-gabled roof. It has a cruciform plan and steepled bell tower on the northwest corner. There is a one-story hipped roof addition on the east elevation that was constructed in 1960. Typical windows described for this wing are original wood frame windows with leaded diamond panes of glass inside the original cast stone drop arch openings. Each of these original windows contains an original metal awning window sash roughly 24 inches tall at the bottom, and the rest of the window is fixed.

The primary (north) façade is arranged in an ABCDDDE pattern. Bay A is a one-story space that is used for choir rehearsal and a robe room, and it was added onto the building in 1960 at the same time as the children's development center. This addition has the same limestone cladding and steps back from the original façade making it a compatible historic alteration. Bay A contains a single steel casement window with paired sashes containing diamond lights to match the other original windows on this wing. The lintel on this window also matches the cast stone lintels located on the classroom wing.

Bay B contains a single pedestrian door under an original portico and leads into the vestry. Located at the top of six concrete steps, the original door is solid wood with a single diamond-shaped light in the upper third. A wood transom is located above this door. The portico is supported with groupings of square columns at each corner, and a single pendant light hangs from the original bead-board ceiling. Bay C contains the north transept and protrudes from the building's façade to create its cruciform plan. Bay C contains a group of three original tall drop arch wood frame windows. Bays D contain original drop arch wood frame windows with buttresses separating each bay.

Bay E contains the north façade's primary entrance and the steepled bell tower, and it protrudes from the building's façade to denote its importance. Bay E contains buttresses at each corner to provide additional visual emphasis. The entrance is located under a drop arch opening and contains a set of original paired wooden doors, each with a grid of nine lights roughly centered on the door. Iron rails decorated with trefoil shapes and a metal kick plate provide additional ornamentation to the door. A limestone and concrete staircase leads to the entrance. The front entrance is flanked by matching sconces as well as the church's cornerstone on the west and the wall-mounted official Texas Historical Commission Historical Marker the church received in 1990 on the east (Figure 11). At the attic level, Bay E contains two original wooden louvers on the bell tower, where the 1892 bell is located from one of the congregation's preceding

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

buildings. The hexagonal pyramidal tower roof contains a single cross as its finial; the cross faces east and west to match the sanctuary's axis.

The west elevation is arranged in an AB pattern. Bay A matches Bay E of the north façade. Bay B is divided into two stories to accommodate the balcony located on the sanctuary interior. Bay B's second floor matches the north façade's Bay C containing a group of three original tall drop arch wood frame windows. The first floor of Bay B contains a set of three original fixed windows with leaded diamond glass set within rectangular openings. Bay B windows align with one another with vertical cast stone separations and a limestone spandrel. The pitch of the gable has a cast stone cross.

The south elevation mirrors the north façade. As such, this elevation will be described from east to west, and the elevation is arranged in an ABCDDD pattern. Bay A has the 1960 addition which contains a single pedestrian door under a portico, and the covered walkway leading to this door has been modified to provide an accessible entrance to the choir room. The door in Bay A is a wooden multi-light door, and Bay B contains a replacement window into the vestry. Bay C is the southern transept, and Bay C and Bays D contain original wood frame windows with leaded diamond panes of glass inside the original cast stone drop arch openings. Both Bay C and Bays D mirror the north façade exactly.

The east elevation contains the church's only stained-glass circular rose window with leaded partitions positioned within the building's gable. The artist is not known. Other original windows on the east elevation were removed and the openings filled with new limestone as part of the construction for the 1960 addition. The addition contains two regularly spaced steel casement windows with paired sashes containing diamond lights to match the typical windows on this wing. The lintel on these windows also match the cast stone lintels located on the classroom wing.

Interior

On the interior, the western end contains the narthex with access from the entrances on the north façade and west elevation. There is also interior access to the narthex from the classroom wing via the hyphen. The narthex has been altered slightly to combine the vestibule and ambulatory identified on the original drawings provided to the congregation in 1938. The narthex has plaster walls articulated to resemble concrete block, green and purple slate flooring, and a square tile baseboard. Crown molding at the ceiling is painted white to match the walls and ceiling. Along the eastern wall, there are three sets of original wooden doors providing access to the sanctuary, each aligning with an aisle. The central doors are paired, while the side aisles each have a single door. The wooden doors all contain a single diamond light in the upper half. An staircase is located at the southern end of the narthex to provide access to the balcony.

The nave contains several rows of wooden pews separated by a center aisle facing the chancel on the east side of the room. In the balcony, on the western end of the nave, there are three rows of pews with two aisles and a door to the second floor of the classroom wing. The nave's flooring is red carpet, and the walls are white plaster with sconces located between windows. The ceiling has exposed wood-veneered steel scissor trusses, rafters, and plank sheathing to add decorative elements to an otherwise simple space. There are geometric pendant posts on each end of the trusses and carved hanging finials from their centers. Pendant lights hang from the trusses over each row of pews, and the fixtures repeat the drop arch motif used on the windows. The north transept currently contains a piano after the church's organ was damaged in a September 2019 fire, and the south transept remains empty. The chancel and both transepts are framed with a drop arch similar to the windows which is typical of Late Gothic Revival architecture.

The chancel is arranged symmetrically on the east end of the nave with the altar located at the center. It is clad in simple wood paneling with some carved religious symbols on the altar itself. Two wooden seats for the ministers are important components, and they have red upholstered cushions to match the flooring in the nave. The pulpit, for sermons and Gospel readings, is located on the south, while the lectern for other Biblical readings and prayer, is located on the north.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Paired original wooden doors are located at the ends of the side aisles at the east end of the nave, flanking the chancel. The doors match the central doors from the narthex to the nave. These doors provide access from the nave to the combined vestry and sacristy space as well as to the choir loft stairs. Wood organ screens are also located above both doors.

The choir loft is located above and behind the chancel, and overall the space is very simply ornamented. The wood paneling from the chancel continues into the choir loft space and runs approximately 10 feet up the wall. The rose window overlooks the rear of the choir loft, and additional carved wood organ screens are located on the east wall as well as in the ceiling.

Due to the structure of the choir loft, the vestry and sacristy space is a U-shaped space with a narrow hallway (the sacristy) along the east connecting the two mirrored north and south rooms (the vestry). Each vestry contains a wood paneled staircase leading both up to the choir loft and down to the basement. The basement originally functioned as the choir rehearsal room and now houses some mechanical equipment and two single-occupancy restrooms. There is also a mechanical and storage room located under the choir loft that is accessible from the sacristy.

There is a hallway from the south vestry to the current choir room, which was constructed as an addition in 1960. The 1960 choir room has the original east exterior wall exposed, while the remaining walls utilize painted drywall and contrasting baseboard and window dressing. Utilitarian rectangular light fixtures with exposed tube bulbs are regularly spaced along the ceiling.

Classroom Wing (Updated April 2022)

Exterior

The classroom wing, constructed with wood and steel framing, runs along its north-south axis with primary access from the historical entrance on the north elevation and another entrance on the east elevation. The east elevation entrance is not original to the design, though it is unknown when the entrance was added. The classroom wing has a raised basement, first floor, and second floor. Windows in this wing are replacements, mostly rectangular vinyl multi-light casement that mimic the appearance of the original multi-light casement windows with original cast stone lintels. Like the sanctuary wing, this portion is clad in limestone, however it has a mansard and gabled roof with the same replacement standing-seam copper roofing with matching coping. The limestone exterior has been cleaned since some of the photos were taken in September 2020 (Map 5, Figures 3-8, 12, Photos 1-6).

The primary (north) façade is arranged in an ABCBDEFFF pattern. Bays A through D are recessed under an original arcade within the hyphen at the first floor connecting the sanctuary and classroom wings. The second-floor contains two equidistant gabled dormers with replacement multi-light vinyl casement windows. The arcade has five regularly spaced arches with a flight of concrete stairs providing access to the entrance. Each arch is separated by a square limestone column, and the arches are outlined with plain cast stone trim following the openings. Bay A contains a set of paired replacement multi-light casement windows, and Bays B each contain a single replacement multi-light casement window. Bay C is the historical entrance and contains a single non-original pedestrian door with corresponding transom. The door's design has a rectangle of wooden rails and a single, full-length panel of glass, and Bay D contains a paired set of the same doors. Bay E has triple-grouped replacement multi-light windows on all floors, and Bays F are occupied by regularly spaced replacement multi-light windows. Basement windows are partially visible along this elevation.

In September 2019 a fire began in the southeast corner on the second floor of the classroom wing causing significant damage primarily to the building envelope, original roof structure, and second floor spaces, though the smoke damage

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

affected the entire building. As part of remediation for the fire, smoke, and subsequent water damage, all remaining finishes were removed on the second floor and mostly removed in the basement and first floors of this wing.

Ongoing rehabilitation work including the reconstruction of the south end of the classroom wing has been approved by the Texas Historical Commission and is being carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Work on the classroom wing began in August 2020 and will be completed in approximately June 2022. The south end of the wing has new steel and wood structural elements, limestone cladding, multi-light casement windows to match the existing ones, and contractors are installing new standing-seam copper roofing. Construction fencing partially conceals the lower portion of the west, south, and east elevations. Dormers on the roof now have vents (Figure 12, Photos 2, 5-6).

The west elevation is arranged in an AABCDEEE pattern. Bays A have paired replacement multi-light casement windows on the first and second floors only, and two of the fenestrations have temporary vents showing; basement windows in this bay were sealed with limestone cladding at an unknown date. Bay B contains a square multi-light window on the first floor only; there is no historical openings on the second floor or basement. Bay C contains triple-grouped replacement multi-light casement windows on the first and second floors only. The reconstructed portion includes Bay D and Bays E. Bay D contains non-original casement emergency doors on both the first and second floors (currently concealed), and a new exterior fire stair was installed during the rehabilitation project. Bays E are all single multi-light casement windows on the first and second floors only. Architect James Ruskin Bailey included a port cochere in the original conceptual sketches for this elevation. However, the port cochere was never constructed, likely due to budget constraints.

The south elevation is arranged in an AAAABCC pattern. Bays A are all single rectangular multi-light casement windows on the same southernmost face of the wing. Bays B and C are located along the hyphen that connects the classroom wing to the sanctuary. Bay B contains a single rectangular multi-light casement window on the first and second floors only. Bays C contain three rectangular multi-light casement windows on the first floor and paired rectangular multi-light casement windows on the basement and second floors. Stairs down to the basement kitchen are located under Bays C.

The east elevation is arranged in an AAABBCDE pattern on three faces. Bays A are on the first face, furthest recessed on this elevation, and each bay contains rectangular multi-light casement windows on the first and second floors only. Bays B and C are on the second face of this elevation. Bays B contain rectangular multi-light casement windows on the second floor and a single pedestrian door with a wooden frame and full-length gridded glass panel on the first floor. There is a small portico covering the entrance. Bay C contains a single rectangular multi-light casement window on the second floor and set of paired multi-light windows on the first floor. Bays D and E are on the third face of this elevation under a gable closer to the sanctuary (Photo 9). Bay D contains a set of paired rectangular multi-light casement windows on the second floor and the non-original entrance on the first floor. The entrance contains a wooden door with full-length gridded lights and a coordinating sidelight, and it sits under a cantilevered portico. Bay E contains a single multi-light casement window between the first and second floors, and most of the building's mechanical equipment is now located beneath this Bay E window.

Interior

On the interior, the only remaining finishes are located on the first floor. The reception area, located in the hyphen connecting the sanctuary with the classrooms, remains entirely intact, however, the classroom spaces were reconfigured. The reception area, remodeled at an unknown date to address accessibility between the sanctuary and the classroom wings, is located 30 inches higher than the narthex floor. A stair with cast iron railing is located at the north end of the reception area to connect the space to the narthex, and a new ramp at the south end of the reception area meets current accessibility standards for visitors with impaired mobility. The reception area utilizes white painted walls, contrasting baseboards, and door frames. The door into the reception office is wood with a full-length glass panel and corresponding

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

transom, and there is a sliding glass reception window. Flooring is vinyl tile at the 30-inch height and continues the slate tile from the narthex at that floor level. Office space includes built-in millwork for storage and mail (Figures 5-9, Photos 13-15).

Classroom and office finishes were removed as part of the fire remediation, and some surviving finishes include plaster stamped to resemble running bond masonry blocks, chair rails, baseboards, and wooden door frames with corresponding transoms. Current photographic documentation indicates that prior to the fire and remediation, the transoms had been hidden behind a furr down when HVAC was installed in the building in the 1950s. Photographs from 1955 and 1975 provided by the congregation also demonstrate that at least some classrooms had floor-to-ceiling paneling installed. In accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the interior retains its corridor pattern and stamped plaster walls with partial reconstruction. Other features reused or replicated (on an as-needed basis) include the baseboards, chair rails, interior windows, crown molding, doors, and transoms. As of April 2022, these many of the original features have been placed into storage for safe-keeping until the completion of construction. The second floor plan is partially intact at the northern end. The basement, used as Fellowship Hall, retains its kitchen space, open plan, and small stage for large gatherings and events. (Photo 17).

Sign (1940)

There is an original at-grade sign on the north side of the property arranged perpendicular to Pecore Street that is counted as a contributing object. The trapezoidal sign is constructed of the same limestone as the church and framed by a planter on three sides. The street number for the church is carved into a smooth-faced piece of stone roughly centered on both sides of the planter bed. The illuminated metal portion is not original to the property, and it was last replaced in 2014 when the current pastor was appointed to the congregation. The sign is adorned with the United Methodist Church's logo, St. Mark's name, service times, pastor's name, and website. Although the signage itself is new, the sign's support system and the surrounding planter are original to the site and retain integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship (Map 5, Photo 19).

Children's Development Center (1960)

Exterior

The Children's Development Center was constructed in 1960 to provide additional classroom space for the overflowing congregation. Designed by L.R. Hayes and constructed by P.G. Bell Company, Inc., the new building cost approximately \$120,000 and was constructed between September 1959 and March 1960. The building was sited to the south and east of the sanctuary and classroom wings on the property. The new facility opened on March 13, 1960.

The center is an I-plan two-story wood-frame building with the same limestone cladding as the church building and a very similar design, with a mansard roof with composite shingles. The building's design has same the cast stone lintels as the church on the south elevation and the other elevations use limestone to create much simpler versions of the same lintel shape. All windows are replacement vinyl sash windows to mimic the multi-light windows on the classroom wing. Most first floor classrooms open to the exterior, so the building has multiple exterior doors, and a covered walkway was added c. 2000 along the west and north elevations. The walkways use aluminum columns, wood fascia, and a flat membrane roof.

Elevations feature irregular patterns of narrow vinyl sash windows and wider square fixed windows. Doors on the south elevation facing the parking lot are wooden doors with two panels in the lower half and a 3x3 grid of lights in the upper half. Doors on all other elevations are wooden with full-length gridded glass panels. The primary entrance is located on

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

the west façade, and there is a staircase immediately inside the door to provide access to the upper level (Maps 2-5, Photos 7-10).

Interior

The building has different floor plans on the first and second floors. On the first floor, the five classrooms have doors to the building exterior, providing direct access. There are interior connections between the classrooms, however, there is no central corridor typical to school or office buildings. The first floor has two stair halls, one on the west at the building's primary entrance, and one centrally located with access from the north elevation. Each classroom on the first floor also has its own restroom. On the second floor, there are six classrooms positioned around a central corridor. The corridor is accessible by both staircases, and there are centrally located restrooms along the south elevation.

Interior finishes include vinyl tile flooring, lay-in ceiling tiles, baseboards, chair rails, picture rails, crown molding, and smooth-finished walls in the classrooms. Door trim remains its original brown color, however, all other trim has been painted white to match the walls (Figure 10, Photo 18).

Multi-purpose Court (2015)

There is a children's play area located to the east of the church and children's development center. The play area includes playground equipment for children, and a multi-purpose court. Although the playground equipment is not large enough in size and scale to count as individual resources, the court is treated a non-contributing structure. The multi-purpose court was completed between 2014 and 2015 based on a comparison of historical aerial imagery available on Google Earth. The multi-purpose court is enclosed by an 8-foot chain link fence, and the court surface is made from flexible interlocking plastic squares. The court's surface is predominantly blue and red, and it is striped for half-court basketball and foursquare. A children's size basketball hoop is located at the north end of the court (Map 5, Photo 8).

Alterations

St. Mark's Methodist Church experienced numerous minor alterations over the decades. Some renovations are meticulously dated in St. Mark's archives, however, many others are not documented. Alterations began in the late 1940s as the congregation began converting classrooms into other functional spaces, first a Chapel in 1948 and later a Heritage Room in 1975, changing finishes to suit the needs of the space at the time. Most alterations were necessary maintenance and upgrade items, such as installing air conditioning and the accompanying furr downs in the mid-1950s; steeple repairs in 1957; a 1960 addition on the east elevation for the choir room, structural repairs and waterproofing in 1963; a new roof in 1988 replacing the previous shingles with copper sheet metal, and ongoing rehabilitation work including the reconstruction of the south end of the classroom wing approved by the Texas Historical Commission and which is being carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation following the 2019 fire.

Other alterations were related to performance and/or function improvements, including the addition of the classroom wing's east elevation entrance; remodeling the kitchen; installing a sound system in the nave; and replacing the original wood casement windows on the classroom wing with new vinyl casement windows in the late 1990s. Hyphen alterations include upgrades for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, converting classrooms to office space, remodeling the parlor on numerous occasions, and most recently, installing a temporary wall between the nave and the classroom wing to prevent access to the fire-damaged wing. A complete list of alterations to the church building are listed in the table below.

Changes to the children's development center included all replacement vinyl sash windows to mimic the historic multi-light windows, replacement exterior doors, and a covered walkway was added c. 2000 along the west and north

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

elevations. The multi-purpose court was added to the property in 2015. The illuminated metal portion of the sign is not original to the property, and dates to 2014.

Table 1. Alterations at St. Mark's Methodist Church & Classroom Wing

Date	Alteration
Unknown; multiple	Alterations to the first-floor plan within the hyphen
Unknown	Southern entrance to the church building added within the hyphen
Unknown	East elevation entrance added to the church building's classroom wing
Unknown	Kitchen remodeled in the church's classroom wing basement
Unknown	Elevator installed
Unknown	Classrooms added east, west, and south of the stage in Fellowship Hall
Unknown	Sound system installed in Sanctuary
1948	Classroom converted for use as a Chapel
c. 1955	Air conditioning installed, creating furr downs in corridors
1957	Steeple repairs following a lightning strike
1960	Sanctuary addition on east elevation for choir rehearsal space
1963	Structural repairs to Sanctuary walls
1975	Classroom wing room converted for use as a Heritage Room
1988	Copper roofing installed on Church Building
c. 1995	Classroom wing's original windows replaced with new with same sash type and light patterns
c. 2000	Covered walkways added to the site
2019	Fire occurs in the classroom wing
2020	Fire and smoke damage remediation completed in the Sanctuary
2021-2022	Post-fire repairs are being completed in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation including the reconstruction of the southern portion of the classroom wing

Source: Raymond Moers, *Twelve Adventurous Decades* (1990).

Integrity

St. Mark's Methodist Church retains its integrity of location and setting. St. Mark's remains in its original location and the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood is largely intact. The only non-historic intrusion on the property is the 2015 multi-purpose court and other playground equipment. Despite changes made over the years, and most recently rehabilitation work resulting from the 2019 fire, the church, classroom wing, and children's development center retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are evident in the sanctuary in the intact limestone masonry cladding, buttresses, vertical emphasis of the bell tower, gabled roof,

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

fenestration pattern, cast stone dropped arch window openings with diamond-shaped tinted glazing, stained-glass circular rose window, cruciform plan and intact floor plan, and original interior features such as the wooden pews, doors, chancel, alter, choir loft, vestry, wood-veneered steel scissor trusses, and plaster wall finishes, all typical of early 1940s Late Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture. While the integrity has been somewhat compromised due to changes over the years and the reconstruction of the south end and other fire damage to the classroom wing, integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is readily visible in the intact limestone exterior, fenestration pattern, original arcade within the hyphen, gabled and mansard roof, and some original finishes. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is evident in the children's development center's intact limestone cladding, mansard roof, cast stone lintels, largely intact fenestration pattern and floor plan. The original historic sign is also extant on the property. The property retains integrity of association since it is still in use by its founding congregation. St. Mark's Methodist Church retains all aspects of integrity to convey the feeling of an early 20th century Late Gothic Revival church in a residential neighborhood.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Statement of Significance

St. Mark's Methodist Church is located at 600 Pecore Street in Houston, Texas. At the national level, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) split in 1844 into the MEC and Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) over the morality of slavery. Efforts to formally reunify the Methodist church began in 1914. By 1939 the Plan of Union was introduced as a series of documents that created a single Methodist Church, its official bureaucratic systems, and codified shared religious texts and missions. That same year, the formal Unification Conference was held. National and local reunification activities occurred somewhat simultaneously, and St. Mark's was formed in May 1938 from the congregations of the Norhill Methodist Episcopal and Woodland Heights Methodist Episcopal, South churches, prior to the vote for reunification of the MEC and the MECS. This meant that it was the first merged congregation in Houston and likely in the U.S. Local religious leaders of all faiths celebrated the merger, and the newly combined congregation held its first service in the new church building in February 1940. St. Mark's Methodist Church is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Religion at the local level of significance as the first white Methodist congregation in Houston to merge as part of the newly formed Methodist Church and served as a physical representation of the denomination's reunification.

The new Late Gothic Revival combination sanctuary and classroom building reflected the influence of the Methodist Church's Bureau of Architecture and its edicts about ecclesiastical design for new construction. The design by architect James Ruskin Bailey is his last known project in the Houston area. Bailey provided a simplified version of the Late Gothic Revival style to meet design goals as well as budgetary constraints for the primarily working-class congregation. St. Mark's is also nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance as an example of an early 1940s adaptation of Late Gothic Revival ecclesiastical design in Houston, and for reflecting Methodist architectural guidelines. The children's development center was designed by LeRoy "L.R." Hayes and constructed by P.G. Bell Company, Inc, and it opened for use in 1960. The period of significance begins with design and construction of the church in 1938 and ends with the construction of the children's development center in 1960. The property meets Criteria Consideration A (Religious Properties) because St. Mark's Methodist Church derives its primary significance as a symbol of the reunification of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) and its manifestation in Houston, and from architectural distinction.¹

Methodism in the U.S. and Houston

Methodist practice first arrived in America in 1771, and the Methodist Church in the United States formally organized in 1784 and 1785 at the Christmas Conference (Dec. 24, 1784 – Jan. 2, 1785). with Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as lay ministers and Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke as superintendents. The denomination experienced rapid growth, and by 1808, Asbury took the title of Bishop, and the denomination's national organization established a formal constitution, publishing house, and system for camp meetings and revivals.²

The first documented Methodist Episcopal minister in Houston arrived on May 8, 1837, and efforts to evangelize early Houstonians began November later that year. The earliest Methodist missionaries in Houston were Littleton Fowler and Martin Ruter. The Houston-based legislature for the Republic of Texas elected Fowler as the Senate Chaplain, and Fowler used that position to host worship services out of the senate chambers when the senate was in session. Fowler owned property in Houston on Texas Avenue between Milam and Travis Streets, and in May 1838, he became the superintendent

¹ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1995) 26-27.

² "A (brief) history of the people of The United Methodist Church." Resource UMC. Accessed October 28, 2020 <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/a-brief-history-of-the-people-of-the-united-methodist-church>

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

of the Texas Mission.³ The first official Methodist congregation in Houston formed on April 14, 1839, and their first church building opened in 1844, located on Fowler's lot.⁴

The national Methodist church experienced several schisms since its official organization. Early offshoots included the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787, which left over racial discrimination, and the Methodist Protestant Church (MPC) split in 1830 over the lack of layperson involvement in church bureaucracy.⁵ However, none of these schisms were as contentious as the schism at the 1844 General Conference. Like the rest of the country, the Methodist church wrestled with the morality of slavery, and ultimately the church agreed to split at the 1844 General Conference.

In 1845, the national denominations formally began operating as the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS), the two largest denominations from the original Methodist organization. Northern whites advocated for the abolishment of slavery, while Southern whites supported it. The 1844 schism did not have a significant impact in Houston, which at the time had approximately 70 people attending Methodist services each week, half of whom were black.⁶ Due to the low population of Methodist residents in Houston, it's difficult to determine whether the split generated considerable debate within the community. Since Texas was a slave-holding state, with the concentration of slaveholders in East Texas, it can be assumed arguments introduced by the MECS were reverberated through the Houston Methodist community. Throughout this multi-denominational period, most Methodist churches in Houston fell under the umbrella of the MECS, but the anti-slavery branch of Methodism did not pull out of Houston entirely. Despite the separate denominations, by the 1890s, the two churches began working together under the Federal Council of Methodism to coordinate international missionary work and to prepare a common hymnal, catechism, and Order of Service.⁷

In January 1875, Rev. Rudolph Brueck founded a German-speaking Methodist congregation in Houston, and the Emanuel German MEC formed at the corner of Preston Avenue and Hamilton Avenue.⁸ By 1890, it was clear that commercial and light industrial development was encroaching on the area, and the congregation sold their property and moved to the southwest corner of White and Lubbock Streets in Sixth Ward and renamed the congregation Zion German Methodist Church. In 1924, the congregation once again sold their property and relocated, this time to the corner of Norhill Boulevard and Eleventh Street in the Norhill neighborhood, where it became the Norhill Methodist Episcopal Church, North.⁹

In 1912, the MECS leadership organized a new congregation in the Woodland Heights neighborhood at the corner of Houston Avenue and Grota Street.¹⁰ As a result of rapid growth, the Woodland Heights MECS purchased new property on Pecore Street in 1927 with the intention of constructing a new, larger facility.¹¹ Unfortunately, due to the Great

³ The lot where Fowler owned property was most recently the home to the *Houston Chronicle* building, and it is currently under construction as a 48-story high rise building per a July 17, 2018 article from *Swamplot*.

⁴ John H. Herbert, "First United Methodist Church, Houston," Texas Historical Commission Subject Marker Application Form, 2008-2009. On file with the Texas Historical Commission.

⁵ Dennis C. Dickerson, "Our History," The Official Website African Methodist Episcopal Church. Accessed February 26, 2021 <https://www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/>; Alan K. Waltz, *A Dictionary for United Methodists*, Copyright 1991, Abingdon Press. Used by permission by UMC.org.

⁶ Allan Turner, "Houston's wild days in the 1800s birthed churches that survive today." *Houston Chronicle*. May 19, 2016. Accessed September 17, 2021 <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/history/article/Houston-s-wild-days-in-the-1800s-birthed-churches-7723088.php>

⁷ Blake Barton Renfro. "The Reunification of American Methodism, 1916-1939: a Thesis" (2010). 400, pages iv, 13. https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/400. Accessed November 5, 2020.

⁸ This property is located where Minute Maid Park now sits.

⁹ Raymond Moers, "St. Mark's United Methodist Church," Texas Historical Commission State Marker Application, 1989. On file at the Texas Historical Commission, page 3.

¹⁰ This property was acquired by the Texas Highway Department and Interstate 45 now travels over this site.

¹¹ "Our History: Twelve Adventurous Decades." St. Mark's United Methodist Church. Accessed September 11, 2020. <https://www.smumc.org/history.php>.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Depression, the congregation was unable to raise the funds for construction and the property remained undeveloped until the late 1930s.

1939 Plan of Union

Nationally, discussions to reunite the MEC and MECS began as early as 1914 when the MECS proposed a reunion that would be a clean merger rather than one denomination being subsumed by the other.¹² In 1916, the MEC also passed "strong resolutions in favor of reunion with the Southern Methodist Church" at its General Council.¹³ Although articles described the contemporary effects as "basically sectional and entirely a question of administration" and implied that the merger was about eliminating competition for members within the broader Methodist doctrine, the college of bishops of the MECS expressed concerns about merging all American Methodist denominations, particularly black Methodist congregations.¹⁴

Over the next two decades, church leadership from the MEC, MECS, and MPC denominations worked together to create a plan that would satisfy the majority of their members. The MPC had split over issues over layperson representation at the conference and district levels, because both the MEC and MECS had much larger followings. The issue of layperson representation was later resolved.

In 1936, the MEC and MECS agreed on a plan for merging the denominations again at their general conferences, and in 1937, a majority of their congregations also approved the plan.¹⁵ The final approval to merge all three churches into a single Methodist Church was ratified at the Southern Methodist General Conference in Birmingham, Alabama on May 2, 1938.¹⁶ Despite the formal decision to merge, the Plan of Union was not finalized until May 11, 1939.¹⁷ The final Plan of Union was made up of multiple documents, including a formal Declaration of Union, a new Constitution. It identified standing and special committees, established the organizational structure, and provided rules of practice and order.¹⁸

Much of the work in developing the Plan of Union's components is attributed to Bishop John M. Moore of the MECS.¹⁹ Although Bishop Moore has been acknowledged as drafting some three-quarters of the plan's language, several commissions and members from all three Methodist branches were involved in the drafting and adoption of the Plan of Union by each denomination's General Conference. These included committees created by each denomination to consider and discuss the potential national merger. General Conferences of the MECS and MEC created Commissions on Interdenominational Relations in 1926 and 1928, respectively. The MPC also maintained an Interdenominational

¹² "Methodist See Bright Chances for Worldwide Union; New Plan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 18, 1916, page 28.

¹³ "Many Important Gatherings for May Among Most Church Bodies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 14, 1916, page 28.

¹⁴ "Methodist See Bright Chances for Worldwide Union; New Plan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 18, 1916, page 28.; "Episcopal Letter to Methodists," *Houston Post*, November 27, 1916, page 9.

¹⁵ J.N.R. Score, "Union is Vital Issue at Methodist Church Conference in Birmingham," *The Houston Chronicle*, April 10, 1938, page A6.

¹⁶ J.N.R. Score "Methodist Conference is Due to Ballot Today on Seven New Bishops," *The Houston Chronicle*, May 2, 1938, page A5.

¹⁷ Dr. J.N.R. Score, "Eight Million Methodists Hail Merger," *The Houston Chronicle*, May 11, 1939, page A13.

¹⁸ Lud H. Estes, ed. *Journal of the Uniting Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Methodist Protestant Church*. Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1939. In 2021, the Church's bureaucratic structure is lead by the General Conference rather than by superintendents or individuals. The Council of Bishops, responsible for the Church's ministry, mission, and spiritual leadership, and the Judicial Council, responsible for ruling about specific Church actions and their adherence to the Methodist Constitution and Book of Discipline, sit immediately under the General Conference.¹⁸ Bishops are appointed as administrative leaders of an Annual Conference, or geographic region, and Bishops are primarily responsible for ordaining Clergy. Clergy members are appointed by the Bishop to congregation(s), and they are primarily responsible for presiding over sacraments, such as baptism, confirmation, communion, weddings, and funerals. Laity are the individual church members whose volunteerism supports the church's finances, decisions, and mission work, and the Laity ensure that Church adheres to its own structure and doctrine. See "First United Methodist Church Hierarchy," *Hierarchy Structure*. Accessed September 17, 2021 <https://www.hierarchystructure.com/first-united-methodist-church-hierarchy/>.

¹⁹ Methodist Church Uniting Conference "The Daily Christian advocate : a record of the Uniting Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church." Kansas City, Missouri. 1939. Page 378.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Relations and Church Union Commission. These commissions and their members were responsible for jointly producing as well as presenting the Plan of Union to their respective General Conferences. These actions led to the authorization of and planning for the Unification Conference of 1939, when the three branches of Methodism officially united.²⁰ Although the conference authorized the merging of the three branches of Methodism into one national group, it did not mandate or even entirely support the merging of local congregations that were previously of separate denominations, especially if these decisions were made for monetary reasons.²¹

Bishop Charles L. Mead was another instrumental figure. He was a member of the MEC's Committee on Interdenominational Relations by 1928, where he worked to facilitate and discuss potential unions.²² In 1930, Bishop Mead along with other members of the MEC committees met with members of the MPC in Pittsburg and began discussions concerning the potential federal union of the two churches.²³ This meeting was unofficial as the two churches desired the participation of the MECS in their discussions. In 1931, a meeting of the three branches occurred. Mead eventually served as the host of the 1939 Unification Conference in Kansas City, supporting the unification of the Methodist branches from the early days of the Plan of Union's development and assisted in the unification of St. Mark's precursor congregations, Norhill and Woodland, in 1937 and 1938.

The Plan of Union formally addressed the ways in which finances, property, pensions, and the voting bodies would be organized under the new Methodist Church. More of an operational framework than "plan," the Plan of Union created five jurisdictional regions (Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central, and West) and a separate Central Jurisdiction for all predominantly black Methodist Churches in the U.S., regardless of their location, allowing for the continuation of racial segregation as part of the Plan. These regional jurisdictions would be overseen by five bodies: The General Conference, Judicial Council, College of Bishops, jurisdictional conference, and the smaller annual conferences within each jurisdictional conference. This framework provided a balanced commonwealth wherein each body would assist in checking the others and regulating the whole.²⁴ At the national scale, the General Conference, consisting of clerical as well as lay representatives from each regional jurisdiction, would maintain the legislative powers of the unified Methodists. The jurisdictional conference would check legislative decisions made by the General Conference. The College of Bishops would continue to hold the ecclesiastical power for the unified national church, however, unlike in the preceding organizational structure, the bishops would no longer hold the power to veto legislative decisions made by the clerical and lay representatives of the General Conference.²⁵ This setup was intended to resolve MPC concerns about layperson involvement by affirming that "laypeople are given equal rights with clergy in legislative matters."²⁶ In all other respects, the Plan of Union was dominated by MEC and MECS clergy due to overwhelming majority within the greater Methodist belief system.

Whereas the General Conference would oversee legislative matters, the regional jurisdictions would hold the electoral powers within the system and appoint their own representative bishops, lay representatives, board and committee members, as well as officers. Each jurisdiction could make their own legislative acts pertaining to regional matters if they did not interfere with those set forth by the General Conference.²⁷ Although five of the six regional jurisdictions were geographic in their extent, the exclusively black "Central" jurisdiction was racially delineated and thus included black congregations nationwide. As a result, local ecclesiastical and bureaucratic decisions in each jurisdictional region regarding moral direction, local ministry activities, or the treatment of local clergy would be decided by local white

²⁰ Ibid. page 379.

²¹ Ibid. page 30.

²² John M. Moore. *The Long Road to Methodist Union*. Page 182.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Blake Barton Renfro. "The reunification of American Methodism, 1916-1939: a thesis" (2010). 400, page 76.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Paul Neff Garber, "Union of Methodism Ends Historic Controversy," *Raleigh News and Observer*, April 16, 1939, page 29.

²⁷ John M. Moore. *The Long Road to Methodist Union*. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press. New York. Page 124.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

congregations, and black congregations would have to create a single system that functioned nationally.²⁸ Although combined into one national group, the Central jurisdiction did maintain elective officials and representatives within the General Conference.

St. Mark's Merger

In 1935, the all-white Norhill and Woodland Heights congregations were located a mere 15 blocks apart in a densely populated area of the city, and Woodland Heights' new property on Pecore was only five blocks from the Norhill congregation. Woodland Heights was developed starting in 1907, Norhill in 1920, and both deed-restricted subdivisions were fully developed by the start of World War II.²⁹ Though both were master-planned speculative developments, Woodland Heights marketed itself to a higher-end clientele, providing larger homes, modern sewers, electricity, gas, and telephone lines, as well as easy access to Houston's streetcar lines at the time, while Norhill attracted Houston's working-class laborers who worked at the Houston Ship Channel or one of the railroad companies.³⁰ Housing in both subdivisions was composed of bungalows with either Queen Anne-style or Craftsman-style detailing, though homes in Woodland Heights tend to be larger than homes in Norhill. Residents from both Norhill and Woodland Heights demonstrated that the congregations had more in common than proximity. They worked as machinists, retailers, contractors, salesmen, bank tellers, with some members working as assistant managers, bookkeepers, educators, lawyers, and some small business owners, including a printer and a laundry.³¹

The first recorded mention of a possible merger between the two congregations occurred at the April 6, 1936, quarterly conference meeting within the Woodland Heights congregation, prior to the General Conference that would approve a merger between the two churches. Woodland Heights' minister at the time, Rev. Landrum, worked with Rev. H.M. Whaling of the Houston District of the MECS to coordinate the merger and seek the approval from higher levels of Methodist leadership.³² Six members from each church and both ministers held the first joint committee meeting on January 5, 1937 to draft their Declaration of Purpose, and on January 15 and January 22, 1938, the Woodland Heights and Norhill congregations, respectively, overwhelmingly voted in favor of combining the two congregations under the MECS until the national branches formally unified a year later. Landrum and Rev. A.A. Leifeste of the Norhill congregation received approval from the regional Bishops for each of their churches. These included Bishop Charles L. Mead of the MEC and Bishop A. Frank Smith of the MECS. Bishop A. Frank Smith was head of the Texas conference of the MECS at the time of the Woodland Heights and Norhill merger. In a letter written to the newly merged congregation in 1938, Bishop Smith stated it "will be chronicled in years to come as the first union in the march of Methodism towards consolidation of its ranks."³³

In 1937, Bishop Mead, who would be a proponent of merged congregations during discussions about the Plan of Union, authorized the merger of the Woodland Heights and Norhill congregations and assisted in appointing a unification committee at the Norhill church. The following year, Bishop Mead was an honorary chairman for the fundraising campaign which would lead to the financing and construction of the current St Mark's sanctuary and other campus buildings.³⁴

²⁸ Joey Butler, "50 years on, Central Jurisdiction's shadow looms." *UMNews*. April 18, 2018. Accessed November 10, 2020 <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/50-years-on-central-jurisdictions-shadow-looms>.

²⁹ "About Woodland Heights." City of Houston Planning and Development Department Historic Preservation Manual. Accessed September 2021 https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/HistoricPreservationManual/historic_districts/woodland_heights.html

³⁰ "About Norhill." City of Houston Planning and Development Department Historic Preservation Manual. Accessed September 2021 https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/HistoricPreservationManual/historic_districts/norhill.html

³¹ Ancestry.com. U.S., *City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.; Ancestry.com. *1940 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

³² Moers, "St. Mark's United Methodist Church," page 4.

³³ Moers, *Twelve Adventurous Decades*, page. 86.

³⁴ Historic journals. Minutes, and documents on file at St. Marks.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

The merger of the Woodland Heights and Norhill churches was lauded throughout the city with congratulations from the Houston Ministerial Alliance and the Methodist Pastor's Association, and it was celebrated in a luncheon at the Texas State Hotel sponsored by the local Episcopalian bishop. The luncheon saw attendance from more than 100 people including religious leaders from four Protestant denominations, a Catholic priest, a rabbi, laypersons, and wired regrets from Reconstruction Finance Chairman Jesse H. Jones that he could not attend the event.³⁵ The first united service occurred at the Norhill campus on May 8, 1938, more than a year before the newly unified churches adopted the Plan of Union.³⁶ The new joint Steering Committee voted to approve the name St. Mark's for the new church on June 27, 1938, and the congregation adopted the name shortly thereafter.³⁷

St. Mark's was likely the first merged congregation in the U.S., with enthusiastic local newspaper articles stating that "the new church is the first in the country to consummate an actual union of two branches of Methodism since the merger of all branches of Methodism became official."³⁸ However, additional research did not identify any statewide or national recognition of the merger or impact resulting from the merger. Archives at the Texas Annual Conference for the United Methodist Church, the United Methodist General Commission on Archives and History at Drew University, Tulane University, Southern Methodist University, Boston University, Emory University, Wesley Seminary, St. Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University, and Duke University did not identify any materials referencing St. Mark's merger as an influence on other congregations across Texas or the United States. These archives were targeted as locations of prominent Methodist seminaries and/or known repositories of Methodist documents. While local religious bodies celebrated the merger that created St. Mark's, the impact of the merger remained a local phenomenon.

St. Mark's Campus

Now one congregation, St. Mark's wasted no time fundraising to construct a new church building. The first fundraising banquet occurred on May 9, 1938, at Hogg Middle School. The Finance Subcommittee estimated that the congregation would earn \$30,000 from the sale of the Norhill campus, and the remaining project funds would need to come from donations. The fundraising goal was set at \$100,000, an ambitious goal for congregants at the end of the Great Depression. Though the fundraisers hoped to reach their goal within just two weeks, by June 7, they had only raised over \$76,000.³⁹

The first joint Building Committee occurred on February 11, 1938, where the members saw presentations from seven architects. After winnowing their finalists to Aynesworth & Irvine, James Ruskin Bailey, and Harvin C. Moore, the committee selected Bailey to design the new church building on February 16, 1938. Meeting minutes state that "the consensus of opinion held that Mr. Bailey was best qualified to undertake the architectural work and on motion of Rev. Leifeste, seconded by Mr. Walton, and duly carried, the committee selected Mr. Bailey to be recommended to the steering committee for employment."⁴⁰ Although not stated as a reason for selection, Bailey's father-in-law was President of the Board at Methodist Hospital, which was still closely intertwined with the Methodist Church at the time, and Bailey had worked on projects for other Methodist congregations and the hospital.⁴¹ His connections to the Methodist church likely helped the committee with their decision.

³⁵ "Pastors of Merging Churches Are Praised for Pioneering in Christian Unity at Luncheon." *The Houston Chronicle*, May 7, 1938, page 7.

³⁶ "Norhill and Woodland Methodists Will Unite in Sunday Celebration," *The Houston Chronicle*, May 8, 1938, page E5.

³⁷ Moers, *Twelve Adventurous Decades*, page 95.

³⁸ "United Church in Norhill is Dedicated." *The Houston Chronicle*, September 21, 1939, page B15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, page 100.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, page 103.

⁴¹ "Landmark Designation Report: Sarah Francelia Bell Home," City of Houston Planning and Development Department. June 2004. On file at the City of Houston Historic Preservation Office.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Bailey presented his first design for St. Mark's to the steering committee on March 15, 1938, and the committee was apparently thrilled with the proposed design.⁴² Bailey designed a combined sanctuary and classroom building in the Late Gothic Revival style in keeping with Methodist recommendations and policies at the time. These recommendations and policies are discussed in greater detail below. The new church building would have limestone cladding, slate roofing tiles, and the original church bell that was designed for the Zion German Methodist Church in 1892.⁴³ Contractor bids were discussed at the July 21, 1938 meeting, however finances became a roadblock between the congregation and their ideal church. The committee ultimately agreed to take a loan from the Rice Institute (now Rice University) to help finance the construction of the entire project, and groundbreaking occurred on September 5, 1938.⁴⁴

The cornerstone was installed on September 10, 1939, and several members were able to include mementos inside a copper receptacle within the cornerstone, though records do not specify the type of mementos.⁴⁵ The first church service in the new building occurred on February 4, 1940, with Bishop Smith providing the sermon that Sunday.⁴⁶ This also marked the first time the original 1892 bell from Zion Methodist Church rang in its new location.⁴⁷

St. Mark's, at the time of construction, believed that the congregation had more than enough space to conduct worship, religious education, and social activities. However, the congregation sought to expand the property by 1946. The congregation purchased adjacent residential lots in 1948, 1949, 1954, and 1971; these sales are not reflected in digitized appraisal district records.⁴⁸ Harris County Appraisal District also notes adjacent property purchases in 1991, 1997, 2004, and 2020. Lots purchased during the period of significance were used to construct parking and later the children's development center, while parcels purchased after the period of significance are not included in the nominated boundary.

Some alterations on the property included new musical chimes in 1942, central air conditioning installation c. 1955, steeple repairs in 1957, structural repairs and waterproofing in the 1963, a memorial garden in the early 1970s, and copper roofing was installed on the 1940 church building in 1988.⁴⁹ With more than 500 people attending Sunday School each week, the congregation also constructed a children's development center for Sunday School classrooms within the historic property boundary. The new building was designed by LeRoy "L.R." Hayes and constructed by P.G. Bell Company, Inc, and it opened for use on March 13, 1960.⁵⁰

The church changed its name to St. Mark's United Methodist Church in 1968 as part of the merger between the national Methodist and the Evangelical United Brethren Churches to form the United Methodist Church. At that time, the Methodist Church's Central Jurisdiction was eliminated, and black congregations were racially integrated into the bureaucratic and ecclesiastical structure of the church.⁵¹ On September 20, 2019, the church building suffered from a two-alarm fire, which destroyed part of the classroom wing.⁵² Fire remediation work forced the church to gut most of the entire classroom wing and undertake substantial smoke remediation in the sanctuary. Although the sanctuary was repaired and is now available for use, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the congregation to virtual services. Exterior structural repairs for

⁴² Moers, *Twelve Adventurous Decades*, page 104.

⁴³ Moers, "St. Mark's United Methodist Church," page 5.

⁴⁴ Moers, *Twelve Adventurous Decades*, pages 110-112.

⁴⁵ "United Church in Norhill is Dedicated." *The Houston Chronicle*, September 21, 1939, page B15.

⁴⁶ "Bishop Smith Will Speak at Opening Of St. Mark's Church." *The Houston Chronicle*, February 3, 1940, page A7.

⁴⁷ Moers, *Twelve Adventurous Decades*, page 127.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, page 142.

⁴⁹ ⁴⁹ Moers, *Twelve Adventurous Decades*, page 148.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, page 143-144.

⁵¹ Butler, "50 years on, Central Jurisdiction's shadow looms."

⁵² Michelle Homer, "Firefighters battle big fire at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in the Heights," KHOU 11 News. September 20, 2019. Accessed November 11, 2020 <https://www.khou.com/article/news/local/firefighters-battling-fire-at-st-marks-united-methodist-church-in-the-heights/285-c0d824e1-4749-43cf-a947-45888faf9a5e>.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

the classroom wing are underway, and Houston-based Merriman Holt Powell Architects are working with the congregation to design the interior remodel, which is slated to be completed in June 2022.

James Ruskin Bailey

James Ruskin Bailey was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on April 3, 1889, to James P. and Ida G. Bailey. His World War I draft card shows that he served in the Pennsylvania National Guard as a 1st Lieutenant in the Air Service before moving to Houston. Bailey moved to Houston by 1917, where he worked as an architect in partnership with prominent architect Joseph Finger. On January 21, 1920, Bailey married Margaret Scott at First Methodist Church in Houston, and their only daughter, Martha Shaw Bailey, was born on November 21, 1925. The 1930 census shows the Bailey family living in Houston's prestigious Shadow Lawn neighborhood with a live-in cook.⁵³ Bailey worked on a number of high profile projects around Houston including the Sara Francelia Bell Home (City of Houston Landmark 2004), the first Methodist Hospital building in the now-Midtown neighborhood (demolished), the Cheek-Neal Coffee Company Building (NRHP 2017), a 1926 remodel on the Kirby House (2006 Smith Street; extant), the 1927 Ben Milam Hotel, a 1929 office and educational building for First Methodist Church, and the 1930 J.C. Parks Building. Research did not identify any other Bailey projects completed in Houston between 1930 and his move to Birmingham, Alabama in 1954.

Disaster struck on December 19, 1938, when Bailey was involved in a car accident on Galveston Island, and a passenger in the other vehicle died.⁵⁴ Bailey spent at least three days recovering from injuries he sustained during the accident, and he was charged with "murder without malice," as noted in historical newspaper articles from *Newspapers.com*. *Houston Chronicle*, and the *Galveston Daily News* do not indicate the outcome of that case.⁵⁵ By the 1940 federal census, Bailey was divorced and living as one of nine lodgers with a family of five on Binz Street in what is now Houston's Museum District. His World War II draft card places him in the Montrose neighborhood and lists his sister Mrs. William H. Moore as his emergency contact. By 1954, Bailey moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where the 1957 Birmingham City Directory lists him as a draftsman for noted Alabama architect Charles H. McCauley and married to Nancy B. Bailey.⁵⁶ Bailey and Nancy had a son, David, at an unknown date.⁵⁷ Bailey died on October 27, 1959, in Birmingham, and he was buried near his parents in Homewood Cemetery in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.⁵⁸

L.R. Hayes

LeRoy "L.R." Hayes was born in DeSoto Parish, Louisiana on February 17, 1896, to William P. and Margaret Harris Hayes as the youngest of five children. By the 1900 census, William P. Hayes and four of the children, including L.R. lived in Houston with no mention of Mrs. Hayes. William P. Hayes died in 1906, and L.R. lived with his eldest sister Fannie Hayes Seyle and her husband Oscar H. Seyle during the 1910 census. By the 1920 census, the Seyles adopted L.R. and claimed him as their adopted son in the federal record, where it also showed L.R. did office work related to building and construction as his occupation. Hayes married Henrietta Barr on May 5, 1920 at Grace United Methodist Church in the Houston Heights, and the couple had three children together: Margaret Emma Hayes Porter, Alice Frances Hayes Wenzel, and Dr. David Leroy Hayes.⁵⁹ Hayes is noted in the 1930 and 1940 censuses as living at 833 Yale Street in the Heights neighborhood and working as a building contractor, and their son's wedding announcement in 1954 lists them at 1121 Heights Boulevard.⁶⁰ Articles published in the *Houston Chronicle* demonstrate that Hayes worked as a residential

⁵³ Ancestry.com records, various.

⁵⁴ "Three Killed in Accidents," *The Kilgore Daily News*. December 19, 1938, page 1.

⁵⁵ "Houston Architect's Hearing Postponed," *The Houston Chronicle*. December 22, 1938, page C3

⁵⁶ "James R. Bailey, local architect," *The Birmingham News*, October 27, 1959, page 13.

⁵⁷ "Deaths: Bailey, James Ruskin," *The Birmingham News*. October 27, 1959, page 30.

⁵⁸ "James Ruskin Bailey," FindAGrave.com. Accessed November 11, 2020. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/90788689/james-ruskin-bailey>.

⁵⁹ Ancestry.com

⁶⁰ "Hayes-Givens," *The Houston Chronicle*, June 28, 1954, page C2.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

developer, building homes and selling them throughout the Heights, Garden Lawn, and Oak Forest neighborhoods in Houston.⁶¹ Census records note that Hayes did not complete his high school education, and no records were located claiming Hayes was a licensed or trained architect. Hayes died on March 26, 1981, and he is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery next to his wife.⁶² Hayes' other projects in Houston are primarily residential, however, the Reagan Masonic Lodge (OTHM 2010) also attributes Hayes as its designer.⁶³

*Architectural Context*⁶⁴

In the late nineteenth century, the Protestant evangelical denominations, including Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists, advanced and innovated church design and religious architecture. These denominations' doctrines focused on worship as an important component of religious practice, and the emphasis required a new type of church building.⁶⁵ New churches in this period emphasized size and capacity, in line with the denominations' evangelical focus on membership growth. The resulting architecture yielded two-story churches or churches with balconies in order to increase capacity without purchasing more land.⁶⁶ Auditorium-style sanctuaries, similar to opera houses or symphony halls, became popular among new church construction. Balconies, curvilinear rows of seating, multiple aisles, bowled floors, and flanks of folding doors for enlarging the space were the predominant features of an auditorium-style sanctuary.⁶⁷ Auditorium-style sanctuaries used terminal arrangements, requiring members to face forward towards the altar.⁶⁸

As part of evangelical philosophies at the end of the nineteenth century, churches became multipurpose facilities to promote the social and community aspects of worship attendance, in order to supply the congregation's social and spiritual needs.⁶⁹ As part of the volunteerism inherent to their ministry, churches offered multiple social and activity-based organizations to their congregations and the community, as well as all of the spaces necessary to meet the organizations' needs.⁷⁰ In addition to the sanctuaries, the evangelical denominations constructed kitchens, dining rooms, parlors, fellowship spaces, gymnasiums, and classrooms within their church walls to meet the functional needs of their congregation.⁷¹ Auditorium churches for evangelical congregations fell out of style in the early twentieth century. Part of this was changing religious missions and philosophies for the church building. The other component of the change hinges on architects establishing their field as both technical and aesthetic.⁷²

As denominations explored new ideas for their churches, Gothic Revival design was emerging as a favored choice for ecclesiastical and academic architecture. Architect Ralph Adams Cram, best known for his religious and collegiate Gothic Revival architecture, helped to popularize the style in the U.S. in this period. Cram was an astute scholar of the history,

⁶¹ "Purchased by Mr. and Mrs. George L. Bacarisse," *Houston Chronicle*, December 21, 1941, page 8.

⁶² Ancestry.com

⁶³ Courtney Spillane, "Westwood-Milliken-Frucht House," City of Houston Landmark Designation Application, July 2011. On file at the City of Houston; James E. Fisher and Trevia Wooster Beverly "Reagan Masonic Lodge No. 1037, A.F. & A.M." Official Texas Historical Marker Application. November 2009. On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

⁶⁴ Section partially taken from Hannah Curry, Lauren Maas, and Victoria Myers. "St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church." National Register of Historic Places, July 2019. On file at the Texas Historical Commission. Accessed September 17, 2021. <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/100004373/100004373.pdf>

⁶⁵ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre: the Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 197.

⁶⁶ Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: a Material and Cultural History*, Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003, 47.

⁶⁷ Loveland, 33.

⁶⁸ Jason John Paul Haskins, "Liturgical Arrangement Typology," *Locus Iste*, October 19, 2011. Accessed November 29, 2018 < <https://www.locusiste.org/blog/2011/10/liturgical-arrangement-typology>.

⁶⁹ Loveland, 70.

⁷⁰ Kilde, 197-198.

⁷¹ Loveland, 72.

⁷² Kilde, 203.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

culture, and architecture of Medieval Europe. While his designs were influenced by historical precedent, he developed an American adaptation of the style that was more flexible and functional. Boston-based architecture firm Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson with lead partner Cram promoted the style in their Late Gothic Revival ecclesiastical designs for First Baptist Church (1902); St. Thomas Episcopal Church (1907); Cathedral of the Incarnation (1908) and St. John the Divine Episcopal Church (1925-1931) among others. The style was widely disseminated, as seen in the proliferation of Late Gothic Revival churches in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

At the same time, many colleges and universities embraced what became known as Collegiate Gothic. Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson's designs for West Point Military Academy (1904-1923) and Princeton University (1906-1929) served as important examples, along with the work of other prominent architects.⁷³ Collegiate Gothic served American academia by adding "a millennium in an eyeblink to the history of the university." The style also evoked the tradition and lineage of academia by recalling the monasteries, cathedrals, and both Oxford and Cambridge universities in England. It afforded newer institutions to provide a standard style while still allowing room for each building on campus to have unique details to identify the building's use and function. The perceived stability and longevity of the style also influenced new colleges and fledgling universities to incorporate Gothic architecture into their campus plans.⁷⁴

Late Gothic Revival and the Methodist Church

Many Evangelical denominations embraced Late Gothic Revival architecture for their churches. The Bureau of Architecture for the Methodist Episcopal Church (established 1921) even declared Gothic style architecture to be the official style of the denomination.⁷⁵ The most vocal proponent for Late Gothic Revival ecclesiastical design was Elbert Conover.

Conover was born in New Jersey in May 1885, and he graduated from Drew University Theological Seminary in 1913. Conover served a few years as a Methodist Episcopal minister before turning to administrative work for the denomination. By 1924, Conover was the Director of the Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and he kept his position through the bureau's name change to the Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture in the late 1930s. Conover also travelled to Europe to study architecture during 1926 and again in 1932. Although records do not indicate when or if he retired, Conover died in November 1952.⁷⁶ The American Institute of Architects (AIA) also offers a biannual Elbert M. Conover Memorial Award to non-architects for their contributions to religious architecture.

Conover wrote extensively about ecclesiastical architecture, and his enthusiasm and preference for Late Gothic Revival design is obvious. Conover believed that buildings should be beautiful, that churches should occupy space that is both material and spiritual, and that religious architecture should "cultivate reverence, symbolize truth, stir the imagination, and stimulate resolution."⁷⁷ The physical appearance of the building ought to complement and showcase the architect's technical and aesthetic expertise. He argued that churches should express religious truth, aspiration, spiritual faith, worship, and endurance, and that they should provide for fellowship and the nurture of Christian character:⁷⁸

⁷³ Ethan Anthony, *The Architecture of Ralph Adams Cram and His Office* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007) 9, 16, 41-139, 148, 152-60; David J. Vater, "Calvary Episcopal Church, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania," National Register of Historic Places nomination, April 2011, 8-7. On file at the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

⁷⁴ Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity, Volume 3: the American Middle Ages*. Open Book Publishers, 2018, pg 230. Accessed via Jstor June 19, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv5zfz24.9>.

⁷⁵ John Taylor Boyd, Jr., "The Bureau of Architecture of the Methodist Episcopal Church," *Architectural Record*, vol. 49, no. 1, serial 268, January 1921, 95.

⁷⁶ Sandra L. Tatman, "Conover, Elbert Moore (1885-1952)," *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*. Accessed December 27, 2018 <https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/2205>

⁷⁷ Elbert M. Conover, *Building the House of God*, New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1928, 18.

⁷⁸ Conover, 69-73.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

The room must create environment for the soul just as a sublime scene in nature, on land or sea, has its peculiar effect on the thoughtful. One of the reasons why architecture is of such vital importance in worship is that we cannot always worship God in some majestic setting in nature. In worship the great spiritual experiences of the race are to be recapitulated. Again we are to see the burning bush and the glory of God in the temple. In holy worship we must be brought face to face with the tremendous facts in human history, the venture of Abraham into the unknown, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and the achievements of the saints. When we realize the primary importance of worship, we will understand that not just any kind of hall or meetinghouse will be best suited to this holy experience.⁷⁹

Conover hated many of the design features of auditorium-style churches, declaring auditorium-style sanctuaries as “not churchly.”⁸⁰ He sought a return to cruciform sanctuaries in conjunction with the classrooms, kitchens, gyms, playgrounds, and other community spaces that also characterize an evangelical church. Conover also expressly stated that new churches should utilize the Gothic style “for no other seems adequate.”⁸¹ For Conover, Late Gothic Revival architecture expressed the spirit of devotion and eternal truths, and the style served as a useful foundational tool for applying religious symbols to provide a greater ambiance of reverence.⁸²

Despite enthusiasm from Conover and the Bureau of Architecture, Late Gothic Revival started to fall by the wayside after the 1920s along with many other revival styles. The Great Depression resulted in funding shortages for the design and construction of new buildings, and World War II yielded a shortage of both building materials and skilled laborers. In the 1930s and 1940s, architectural design moved towards more austere, less elaborate styles such as Art Deco, Art Moderne, or Modernism, making St. Mark's a late example of the Late Gothic Revival style. Research did not identify other churches of any style constructed in Houston between 1930 and 1945. The congregation's commitment towards building their new church building in those economic conditions is unique, and their perseverance is evident through the economical choices the congregation made in materials and finishes throughout the building.

No specific archival records were located to show exactly how the design of St. Mark's conformed to Bureau of Architecture's national standards. However, given Conover's extensive writings and impact, and that Gothic Revival was still the official style for the denomination, it's not surprising that it was chosen for St. Mark's in the late 1930s.⁸³ Both likely influenced the project committee and Bailey in the planning, design, and construction of a new facility. In this way, St. Mark's design exemplified the influence of style preferences and guidelines of the Methodist Church at the time of its construction.

The Late Gothic Revival church building reflects a modest adaptation of the style through the limestone masonry cladding, buttresses, verticality of the bell tower with the steeple, tall, narrow, cast stone dropped arch window openings with diamond-shaped tinted glazing, stained-glass circular rose window, gabled roof, simplified cast stone ornament in place of elaborate tracery, and the cruciform plan. Original interior elements such as intact floor plan, wooden pews, doors, chancel, alter, choir loft, vestry, wood-veneered steel scissor trusses, and plaster wall finishes are also characteristic

⁷⁹ Conover, 100.

⁸⁰ Conover, 104.

⁸¹ Conover, 210-211.

⁸² Elbert M. Conover, “Good Architectural Design – the Ally of Religious Education,” *Religious Education*, Jan 1, 1930, 25, ProQuest 842.

⁸³ Inquiries to the archivist at Drew University in New Jersey, which is the national archive for the United Methodist Church, revealed no specific records exist to demonstrate the exact ways in which the design of St. Mark's followed national standards. The archive does not have a special collection for the Bureau of Architecture, or any specific documents published by the Bureau. By the 1939, the Bureau of Architecture transitioned to an Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture based in New York. Although the Interdenominational organization was not exclusively Methodist, the Methodist Church relied upon it for design guidance.

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

of early 1940s Late Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture.⁸⁴ The children's development center also has a compatible design allowing for a cohesive campus.

Conclusion

St. Mark's Methodist Church is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A in the area of Religion at the local level of significance and under Criteria C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance, with a period of significance spanning 1938–1960, the years in which the congregation merged, designed, and constructed the buildings on the campus. The property meets Criteria Consideration A (Religious Properties) because St. Mark's Methodist Church derives its primary significance as a symbol of the reunification of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS) and its manifestation in Houston, and from architectural distinction.

⁸⁴ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992) 173.

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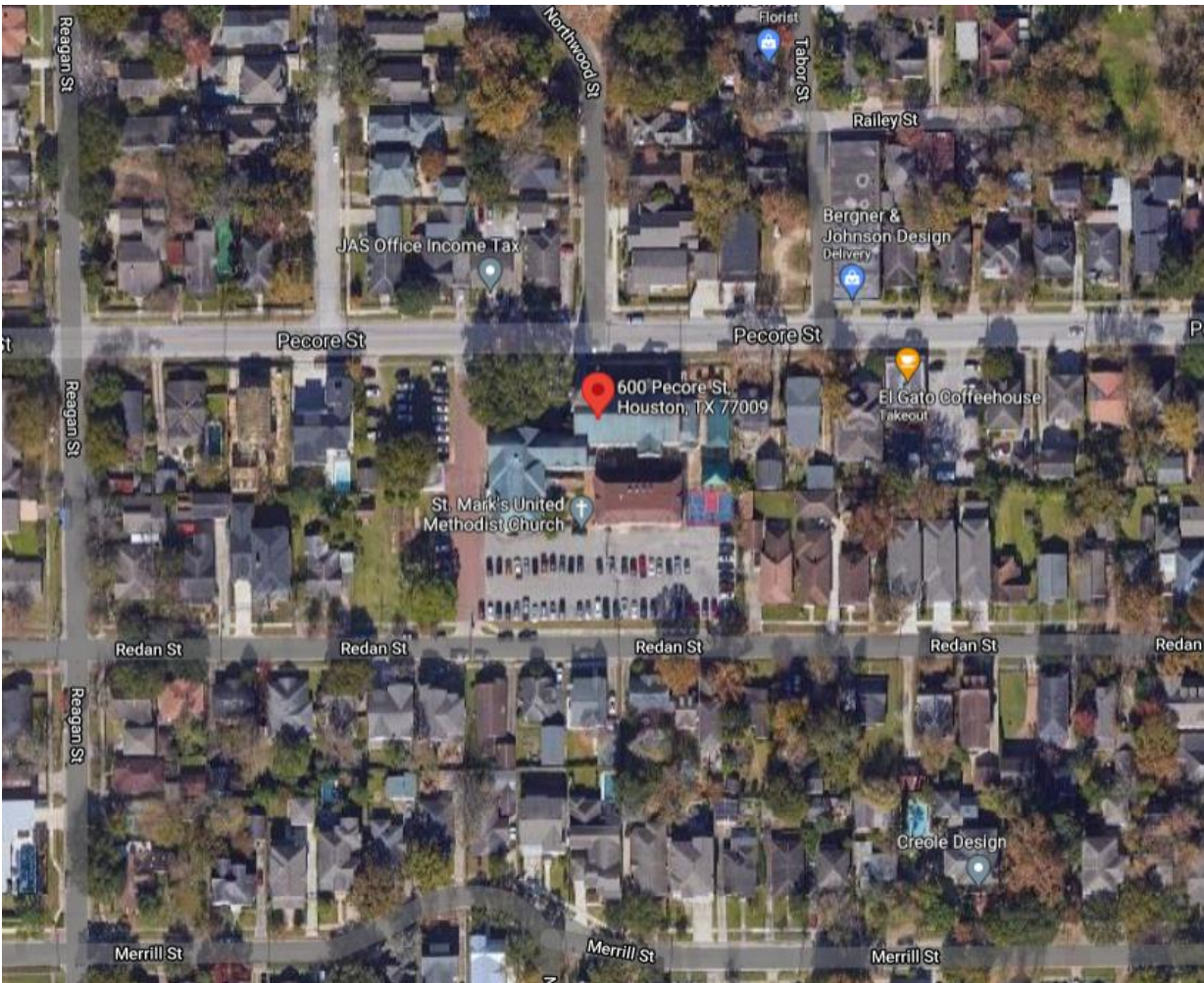
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

MAPS

Map 1. Harris County in Texas.



Map 2. Google Aerial, accessed July 21, 2021.



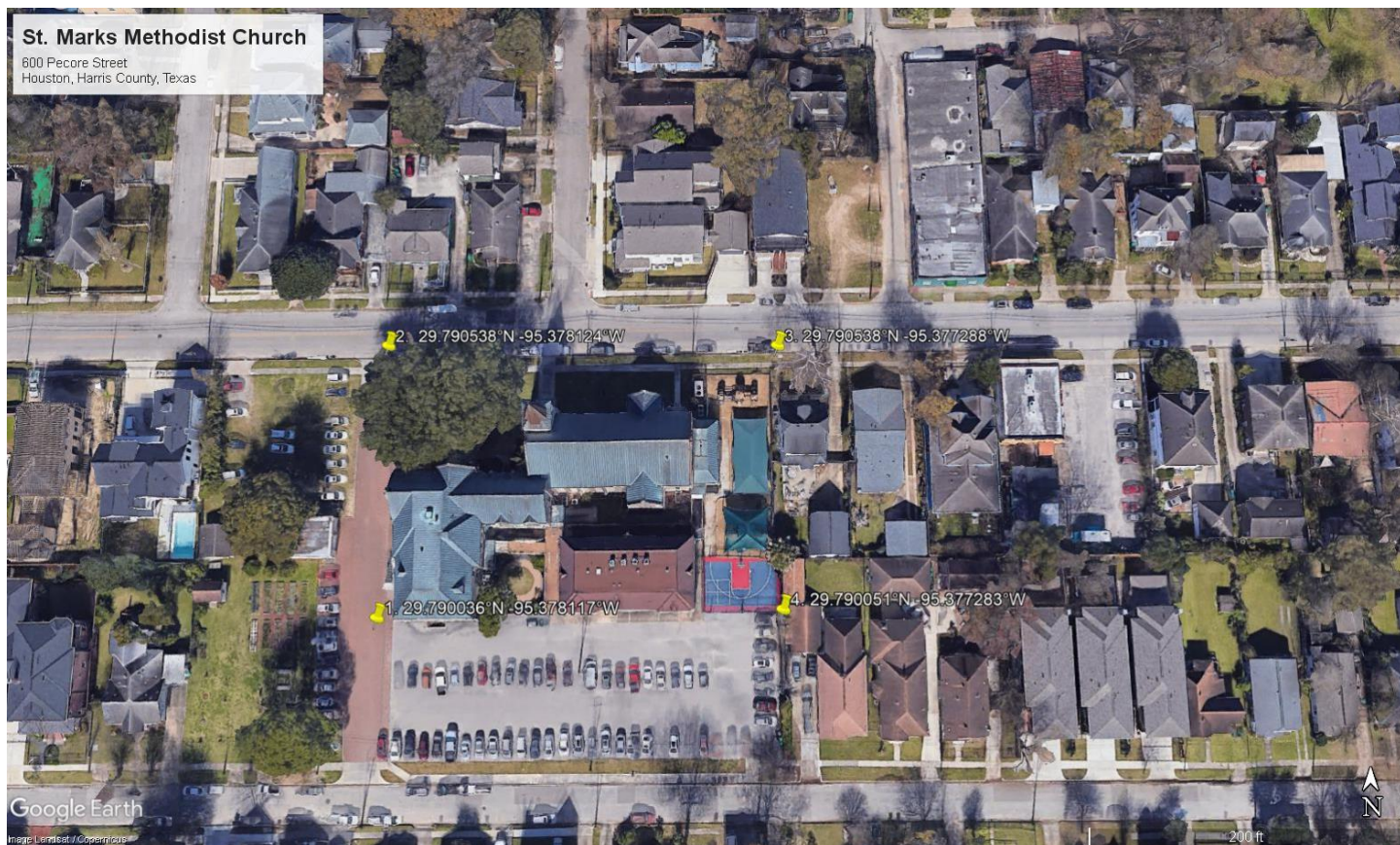
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 3. Google Map showing nominated boundary in red, accessed July 29, 2021. The nominated boundary includes approximately 1.06 acres owned by St. Mark's United Methodist Church, specifically the northern and eastern portion of TRS 1 8 & 10 ABST 1 J AUSTIN (Account # 0400700000010), all of TR 9 ABST 1 J AUSTIN (Account # 0400700000009), the northern portion of LT 9 & TR 8 BLK 2 CLAYS SEC 1 (Account # 0092640000020), and the northern portion of LTS 10 & 11 BLK 2 CLAYS SEC 1 (Account # 0092640000010) Houston, Harris County, Texas as recorded in the Harris County Appraisal District. Data accessed July 29, 2021. The nominated boundary includes the resources historically associated with St. Mark's Methodist Church. It excludes ancillary resources now owned by the church that were not historically associated with it during the period of significance including, Boy Scout storage, a landscaping storage shed, garden club storage, and a historic-age residential building. The parking lot and driveway were historically associated with the church during the period of significance, but do not contain any historic resources, and thus are excluded.



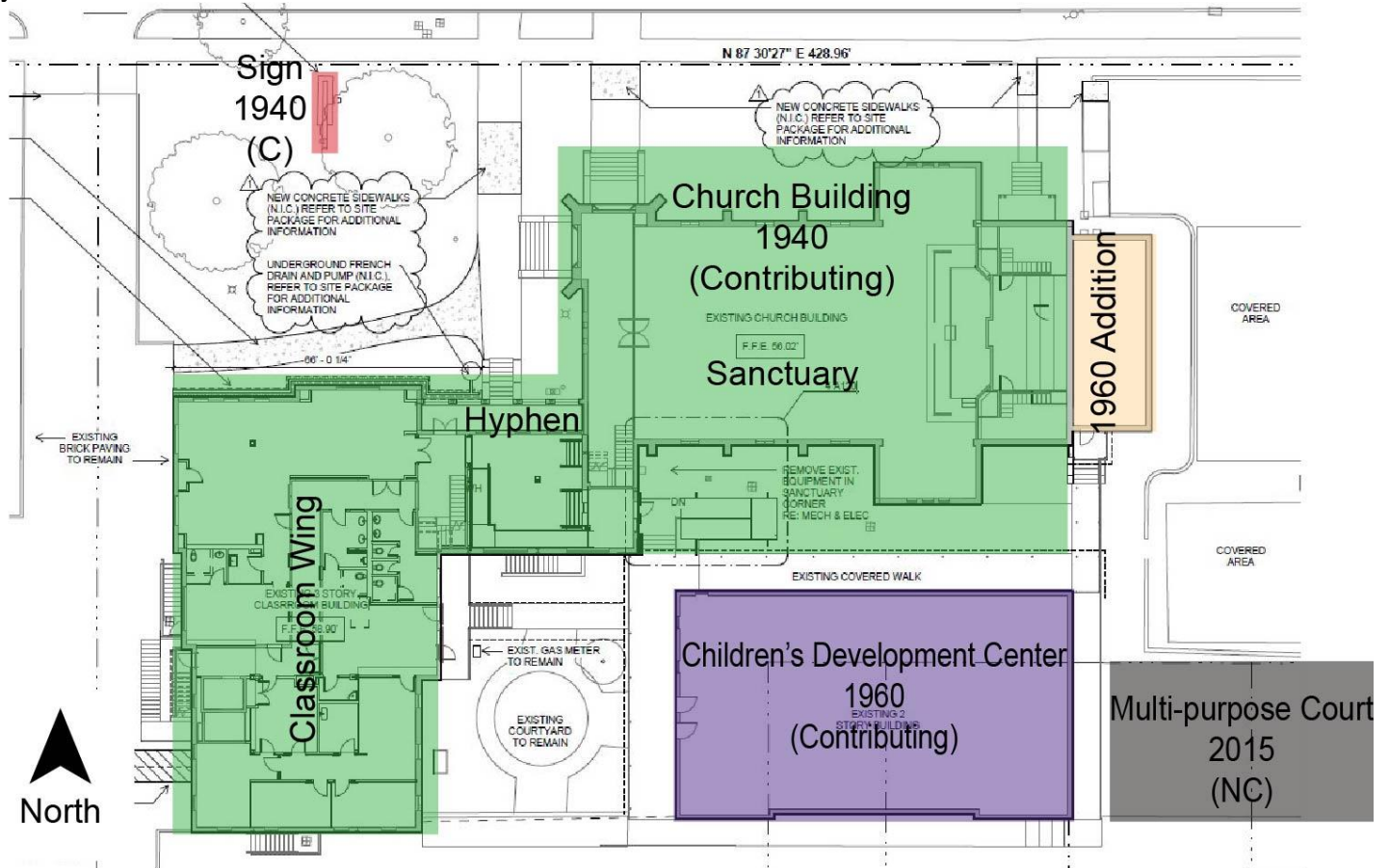
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 4. Google Earth Map, accessed July 29th, 2021.



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

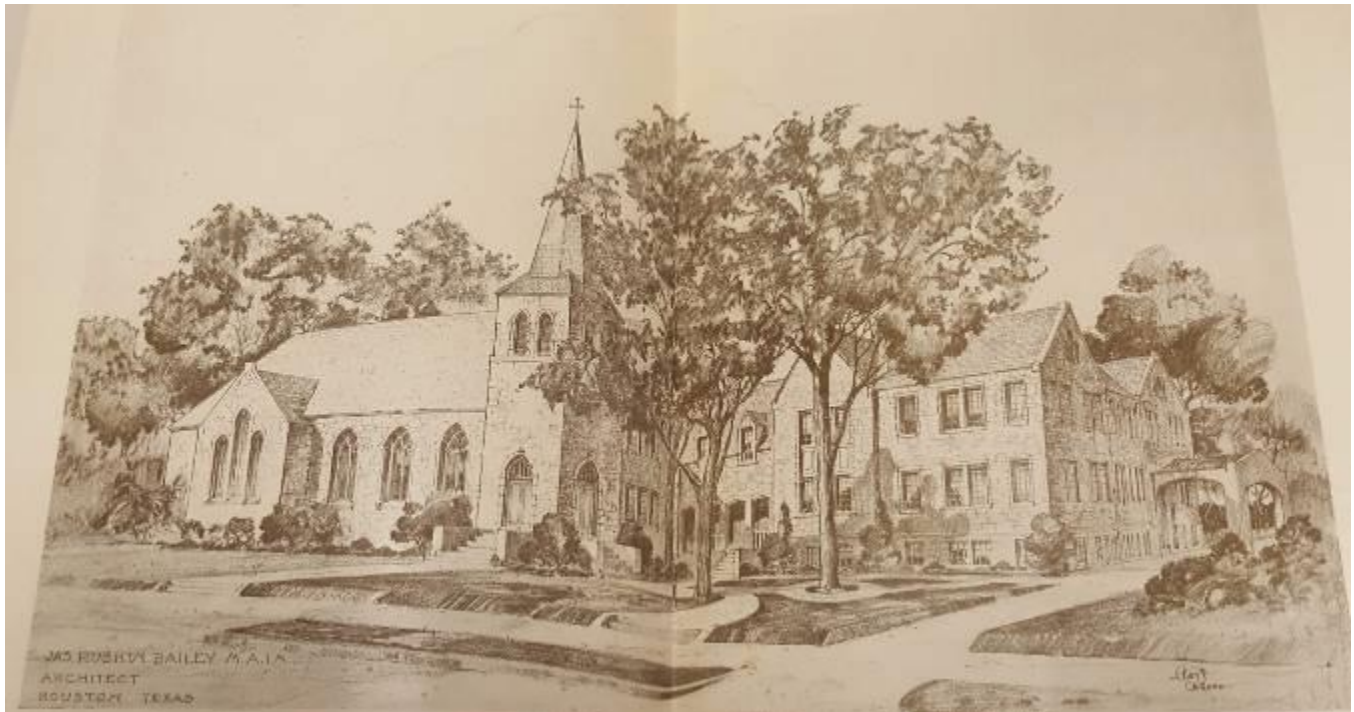
Map 5. St. Mark's site plan with the subject buildings included, courtesy Merriman Holt Powell Architects. Annotations by SWCA.



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

FIGURES

Figure 1. 1938 rendering of St. Mark's view southeast, courtesy St. Mark's United Methodist Church archives.



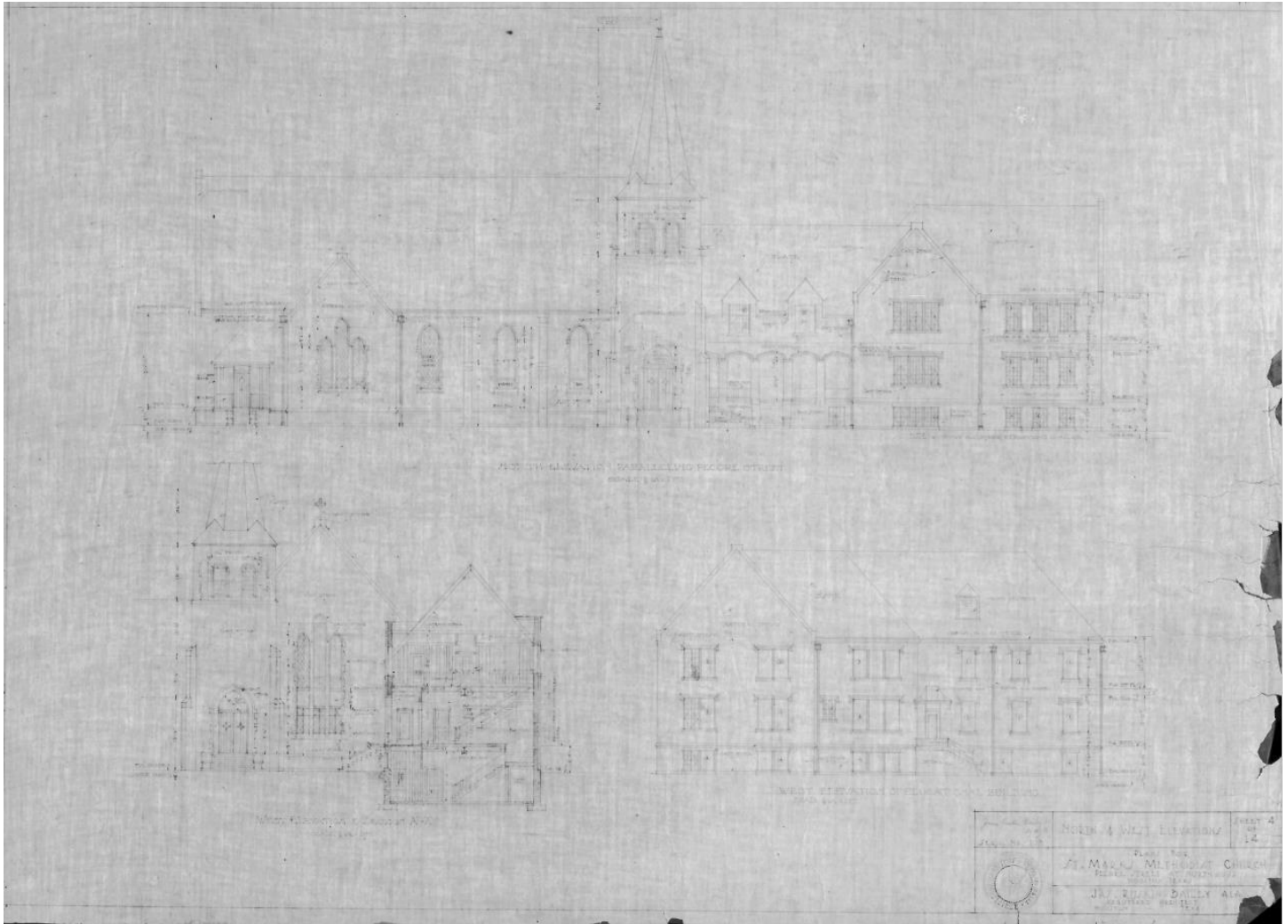
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 2. 1938 rendering of St. Mark's interior view east, courtesy St. Mark's United Methodist Church archives.



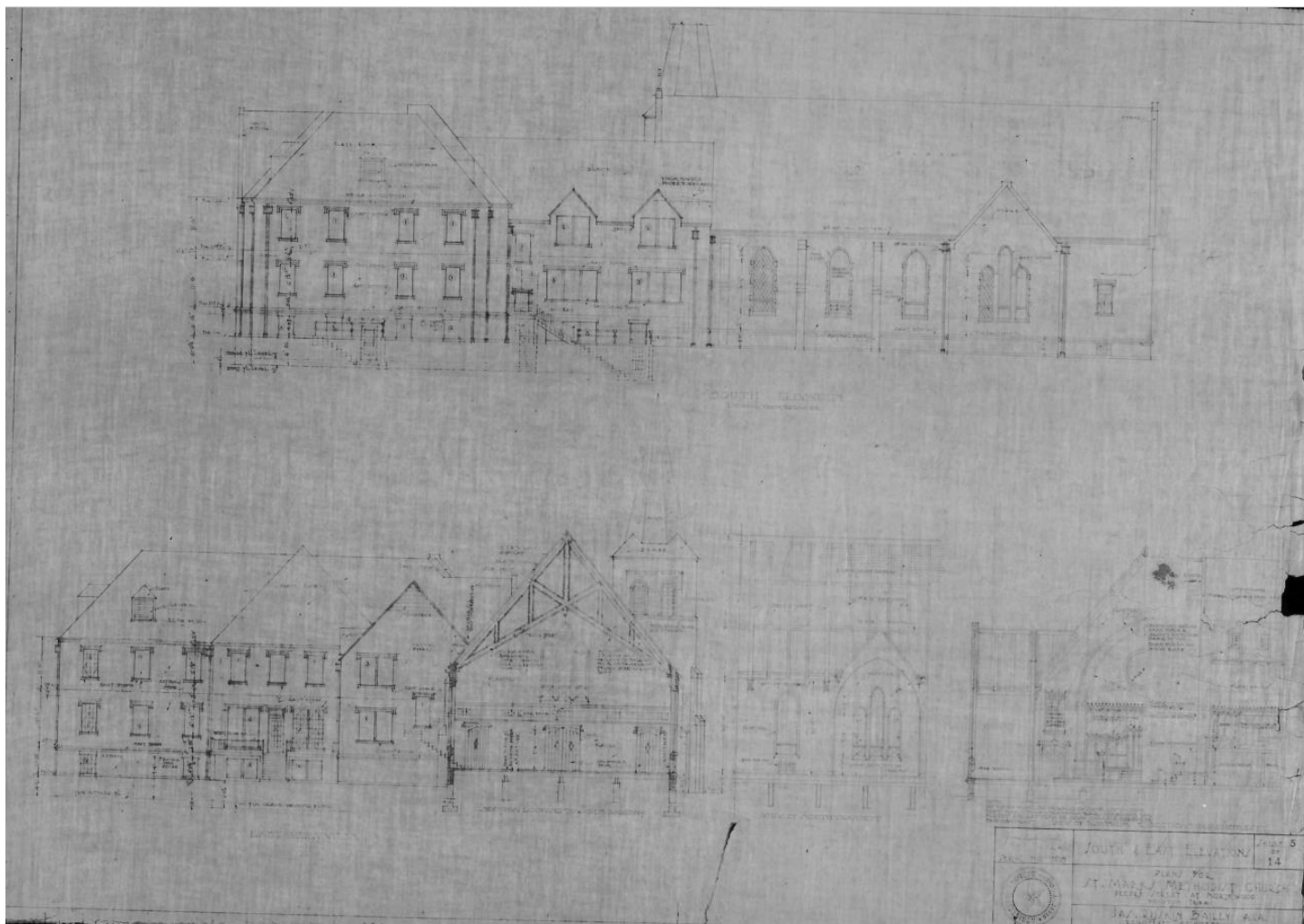
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 3: Original architectural drawings showing north and west elevations of church building, 1938.



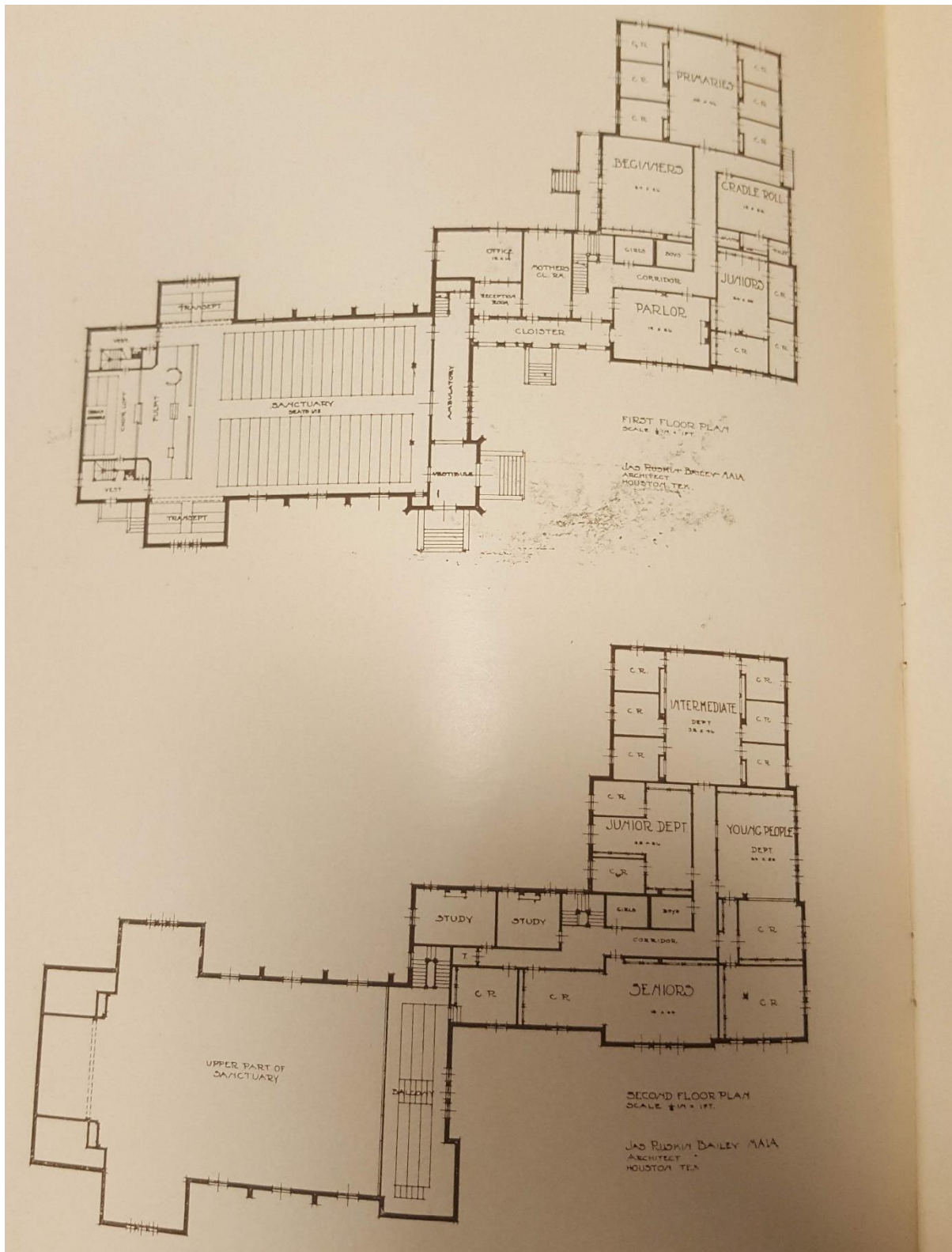
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 4. Original architectural drawings showing south and east elevations of church building, 1938.



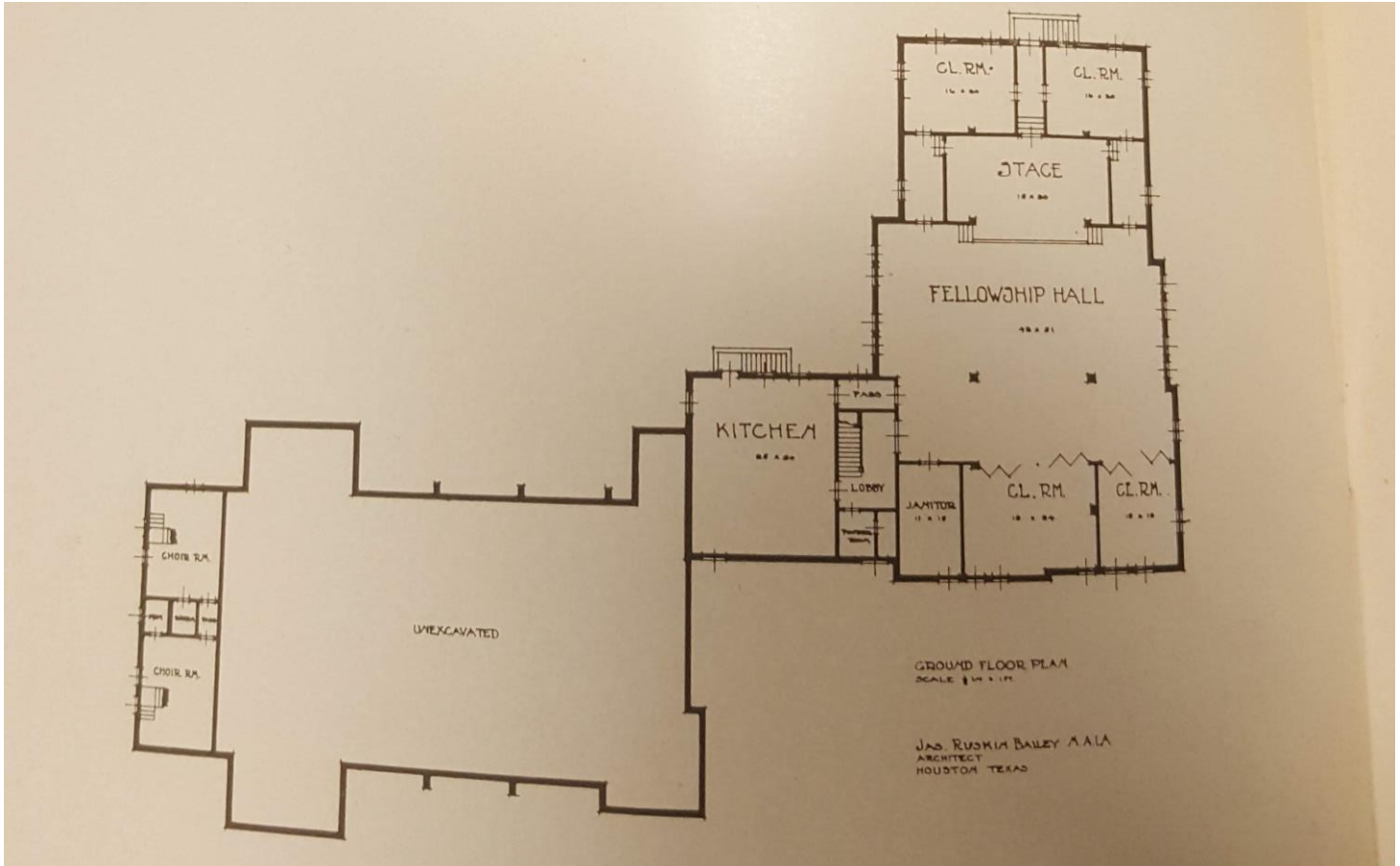
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 5. 1938 first and second floor plans for St. Mark's, courtesy St. Mark's United Methodist Church archives.



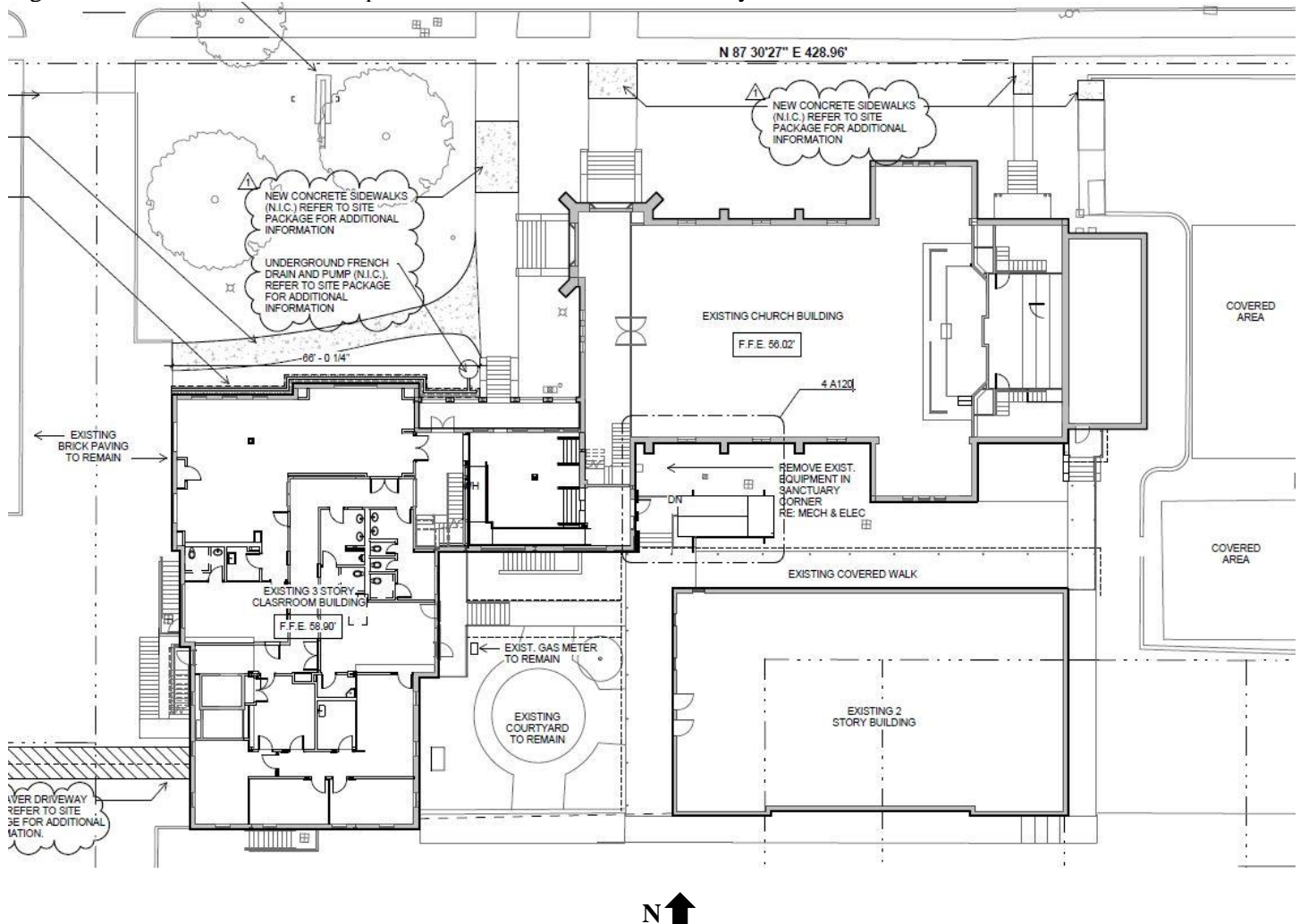
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 6. 1938 basement floor plans for St. Mark's, courtesy St. Mark's United Methodist Church archives.



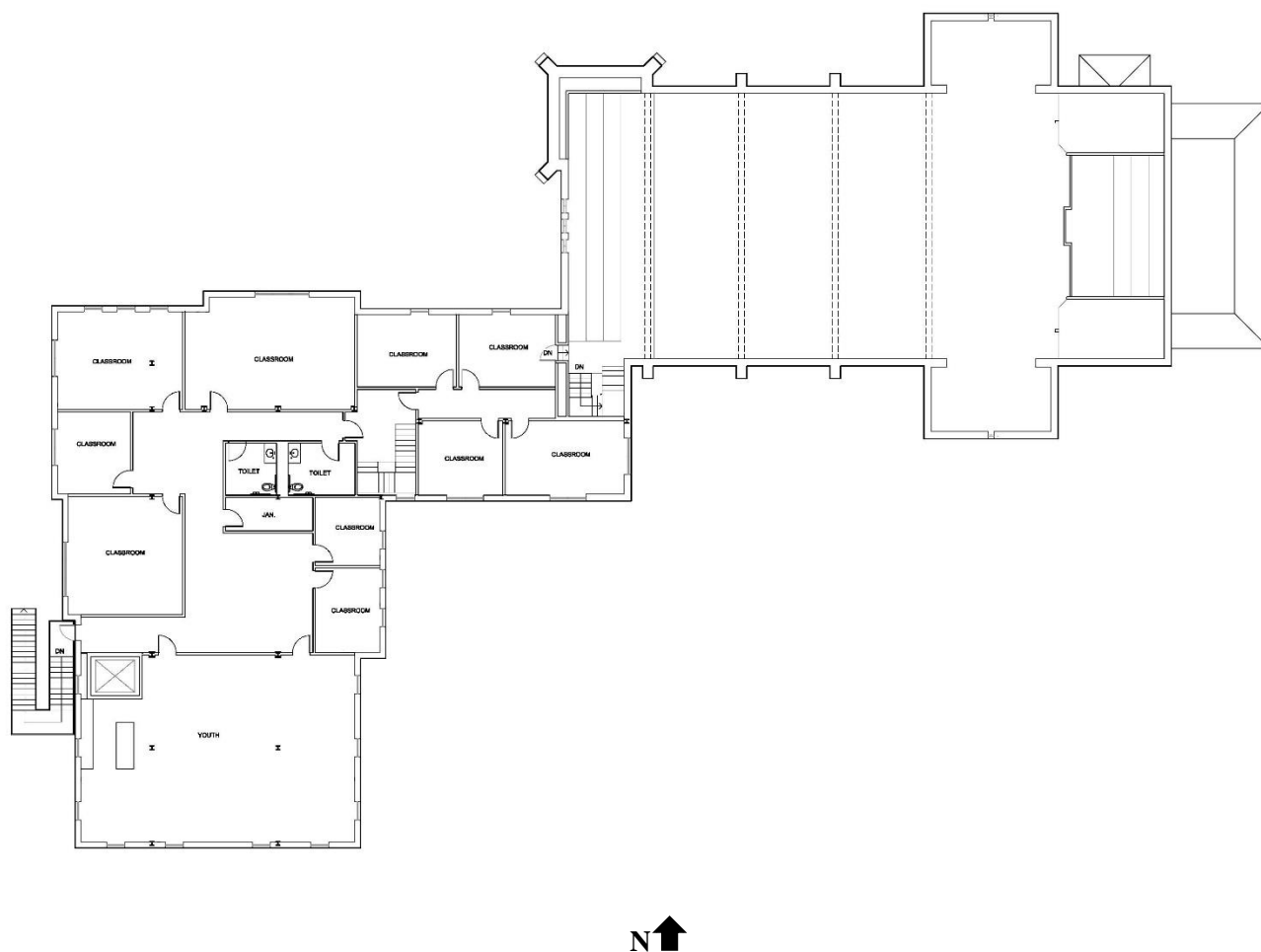
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 7. Planned 2022 first floor plan for St. Mark's Church, courtesy Merriman Holt Powell Architects.



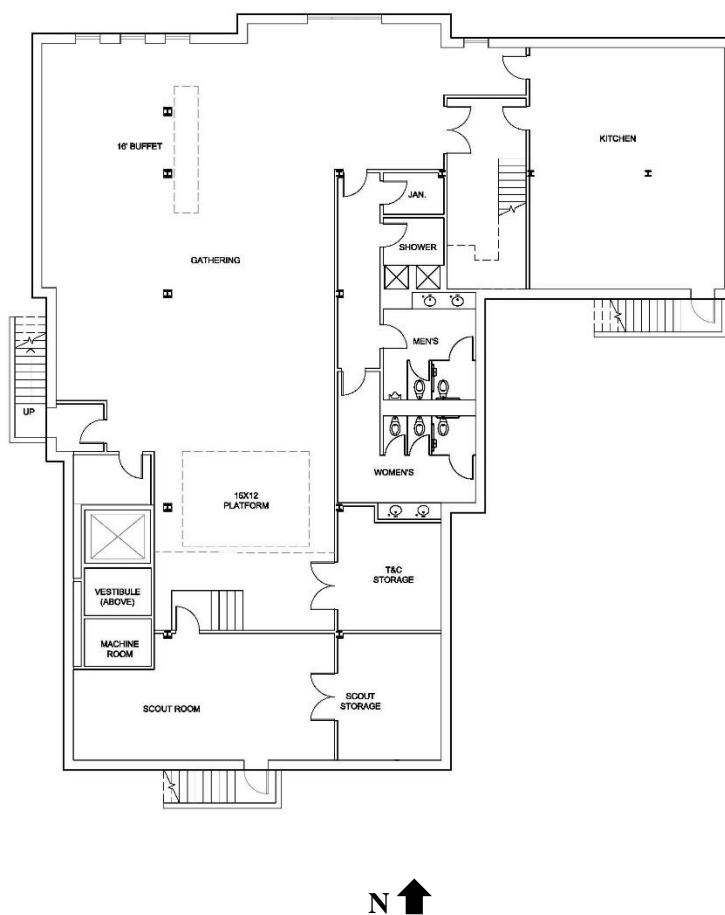
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 8. Planned 2022 second floor plan for St. Mark's Church, courtesy Merriman Holt Powell Architects.



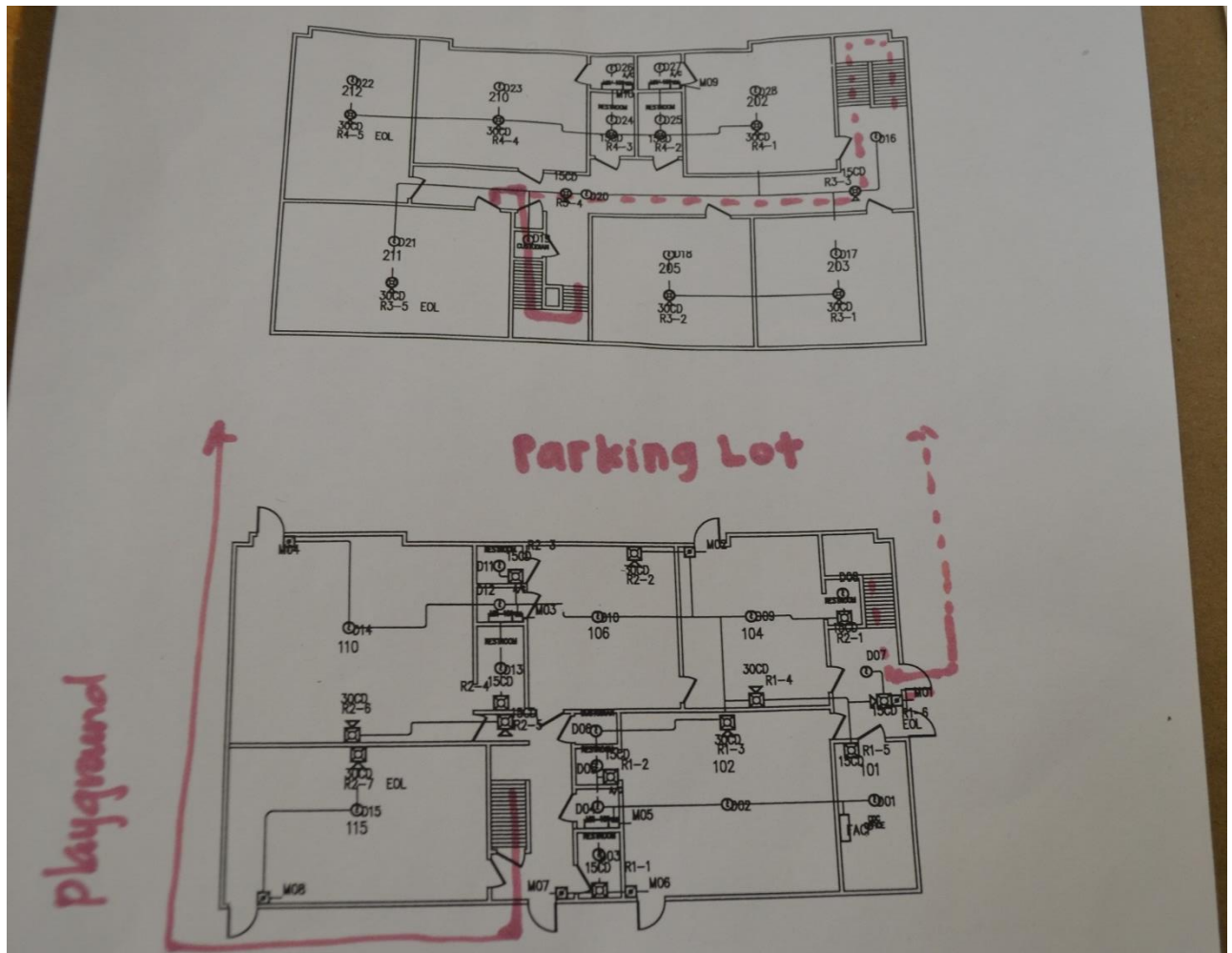
St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 9. Planned 2022 basement floor plan for St. Mark's Church, courtesy Merriman Holt Powell Architects.



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 10. 2020 floor plans for St. Mark's children's development center, courtesy St. Mark's United Methodist Church.



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St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 11: Inscription for 1990 Texas Historical Commission Historical Marker (mounted on north façade)

This congregation traces its history to 1875, when the Rev. Rudolph Brueck organized Emanuel German Methodist Episcopal Church. It was renamed Zion German Methodist Church in 1891 and Norhill Methodist Episcopal Church, North, in 1924. Woodland Heights Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1912. It merged with the Norhill congregation in 1938 and relocated to this site. The new congregation, named St. Mark's, represented the historic first merger among churches of the North and South Conferences of the Methodist Church.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ "St. Mark's United Methodist Church," Texas Historical Commission Historical Marker, Atlas Number 5201010759, Marker Number 10759.
Section FIGURE, Page 46

St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 12: West elevation of classroom wing showing new construction at south end, October 2021.



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

PHOTOS

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): North elevation of the sanctuary wing, view south

Photograph Number: 0001



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): North and west elevations of the classroom wing, view southeast. Newly constructed portion of classroom wing visible at right.

Photograph Number: 0002



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): West elevation sanctuary and north elevation classroom wing, view east.

Photograph Number: 0003



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Bell tower base and arcade, view southeast

Photograph Number: 0004



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): West and south elevations of the classroom wing, view northeast

Photograph Number: 0005



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): South and east elevations of the classroom wing, view northwest. New construction on classroom wing visible.

Photograph Number: 0006



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): West and south elevations of the children's development center, view northeast

Photograph Number: 0007



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): South and east elevations of the children's development center with the east elevation of the sanctuary wing and the non-contributing multi-purpose court, view northwest

Photograph Number: 0008



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): East elevation of the connecting hyphen with the children's development center on the south and the sanctuary wing on the north, view west

Photograph Number: 0009



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: March 2021

Description of Photograph(s): North elevation of the children's development center, view southwest

Photograph Number: 0010



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Interior of the sanctuary wing, view east

Photograph Number: 0011



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Interior of the sanctuary wing, view west

Photograph Number: 0012



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, narthex (right) and connecting hyphen (left), view northwest

Photograph Number: 0013



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: March 2021

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, connecting hyphen towards narthex with balcony stairs in background, view east
Photograph Number: 0014



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, first floor hall with original and replicated articulated plaster and trim, view south. Original trim, including baseboards, chair rails, window casing, and crown molding, is in protective storage until the appropriate point in the construction schedule.

Photograph Number: 0015



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, second floor with original framing in the ceiling and attic, view north.

Photograph Number: 0016



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: April 2022

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, original basement column with non-original framing, view southeast

Photograph Number: 0017



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: March 2021

Description of Photograph(s): Interior, children's development center second floor hallway, view west

Photograph Number: 0018



St. Mark's Methodist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Date Photographed: September 2020

Description of Photograph(s): St. Mark's sign, view southeast

Photograph Number: 0019

