

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7 (and 8)

Page 21

NAME: St. Mary's Church of the Assumption

LOCATION: FM Road 1295
Praha, Fayette County, Texas

OWNER: Most Rev. Charles V. Grahmann, D.D.
Catholic Diocese of Victoria, Texas
P. O. Box 4708
Victoria, Texas 77903

ARCHITECT: O. Kramer

INTERIOR CRAFTSMAN: Gottfried Flury

SPECIFIC DATES: 1895 (construction)

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: Acreage of nominated property: less than one acre
UTM reference: 14/687110/3283570

Verbal boundary description: Beginning at a point the northwest edge of the parking area, proceed east along the curb line approximately 270', thence 90° west to the edge of FM Road 1295, thence south returning to starting point.

DESCRIPTION:

St. Mary's Church of the Assumption represents the Gothic Revival style of architecture as it was interpreted in rural 19th-century Texas. Among the older churches in the group chosen for nomination, its rectangular exterior is uncommon as it is built of rusticated sandstone ashlar. The outside church walls was stuccoed in 1930, leaving sharply contrasting buttresses, hood molds, and window sills of exposed stone. The entire front facade is also left unstuccoed. At the front entrance, a square tower with an octagonal spire rises above the steep, gabled roof. At the rear of the church where the nave and polygonal apse connect, occurs a much smaller octagonal spire or fleche. All window and door openings, with the exception of a wheel window above the main entrance, are narrow lancets of stained glass. The wooden doors have carved panels which resemble tracery.

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The church interior is adorned with an unusual and sophisticated combination of decorative paintings. They exhibit freehand work, stencil applications, and infilling. Dividing the space into nave and side aisles are octagonal columns exhibiting white marbling with metallic gold speckles. The ceiling, constructed of a network of wood-frame vaults with pointed arches, is sheathed in beaded boards painted to simulate the sky as a backdrop for the elaborate painting. A trompe l'oeil effect is produced by painted bands extending from the tops of the columns and pilasters up to the vaults. The appearance is of ribbed vaulting. Within each of the "ribbed" ceiling panels over the nave is a religious motif (star, heart, etc.) centered on a radiating yellow sunburst. Curvilinear motifs extend along the painted bands. Of particular interest are the vaults of the side aisles, above column height, where a profusion of painted plant life (possibly representing Paradise) appears to spill over the cornice. Freehand flora and fauna are depicted in hues of greens and blues among rose, white, and yellow blossoms. Although the kinds of plants are repeated, no two plant forms are identical. On the back wall of the apse, also above column height, is a mural of three winged angels, each wearing a robe of a different color (pink, pale blue, and ochre). The figures are portrayed with a large Latin cross in a traditional "Lamentation" pose. At the base of the mural are two faint churches, both of which exist in Prague, Czechoslovakia, painted a slightly darker blue than the background. The partition walls separating the sacristy from the altar are stenciled in rinceau and festoon pattern, and are colored maroon and gray. This is a darker color scheme than that used in the remainder of the structure, and may represent the work of a different painter.

SIGNIFICANCE:

St. Mary's Church of the Assumption in Praha is important because of its exterior construction in Gothic Revival style, and because of its unusual and skillful interior painting. Established in 1855 by Czech settlers, St. Mary's was the first Roman Catholic church between San Antonio and Houston. Since then it has played a major role in the social and cultural life of the community. Every August 15, a celebration is held of the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, called Prazka Pout ("homecoming"). St. Mary's is the only Roman Catholic church in the country said to have such a custom. The present structure, with its rusticated stone and stuccoed walls, is the fourth structure built at this site, and was designed by architect O. Kramer and completed in 1895. The first three churches were frame, were built in 1865, 1866, and 1876, and are no longer extant. The beautiful interior of the present structure was painted soon after the building was completed, and retains its original appearance and integrity. The skillful use of freehand trompe l'oeil techniques with plant and architectural forms is rare, and a pleasing sense of lightness is achieved. The artist who did the ceiling work was Gottfried Flury, a native of Solothurn, Switzerland. He immigrated to the United States in 1881, at the age of 17, and painted scenery in New York theaters before moving to San Antonio in 1891. In Texas he became known as a painter of church murals and frescoes. St. Mary's is one of the very few structures still standing that displays his work.

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Page 2 of 2

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Churches with Decorative Interior Painting Thematic Resources
State Texas

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

11. St. Mary's Catholic Church
(306 W. San Antonio,
Gillespie County) **Entered in the
National Register**

for
Keeper *Delores Byers* 6/21/83

Attest

12. St. Mary's Catholic Church
(Umbarger, Randall County) **Entered in the
National Register**

for
Keeper *Delores Byers* 6/21/83

Attest

13. St. Mary's Church of the
Assumption **Entered in the
National Register**

for
Keeper *Delores Byers* 6/21/83

Attest

14. Wesley Brethren Church
*7/18/83 Previous
listing 1/18/79* **Entered in the
National Register**

for
Keeper *Delores Byers* 6/21/83

Attest

15. St. Peter's Catholic Church
(Previously listed 5/25/79)

Keeper

Attest

16.

Keeper

Attest

17.

Keeper

Attest

18.

Keeper

Attest

19.

Keeper

Attest

20.

Keeper

Attest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

St. Mary's Church of the Assumption (Churches
with Decorative Interior Painting TR)
Fayette County
TEXAS

Working No. MAY 9 1983

Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84

Date Due: 6/9/83 - 6/23/83

Action: ACCEPT 6/26/83

Entered in the National Register
RETURN
REJECT

Federal Agency: _____

resubmission
nomination by person or local government
owner objection
appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments: _____

Recom./Criteria _____

Reviewer _____

Discipline _____

Date _____

see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition:		Check one	Check one
<u>excellent</u>	<u>deteriorated</u>	<u>unaltered</u>	<u>original site</u>
<u>good</u>	<u>ruins</u>	<u>altered</u>	<u>moved</u> date _____
<u>fair</u>	<u>unexposed</u>		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

summary paragraph
completeness
clarity
alterations/integrity
dates
boundar selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource -
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UNIT References

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Title _____

Date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
Praha, Fayette County, Texas
Mike Yancey
May, 1977 (still current)
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Exterior, South elevation (camera
facing North)

Photo #34 of 98



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting

Praha, Fayette County, Texas

Mike Yancey

May, 1977 (still current)

Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas

Exterior, West elevation (camera
facing East)

Photo #35 of 98



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
Praha, Fayette County, Texas
Mike Yancey
May, 1977 (still current)
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Exterior, wall and door detail on
East elevation (camera facing West)

Photo #36 of 98



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting

Praha, Fayette County, Texas

Carol Kennedy

September, 1980

Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas

Interior, detail of side aisle ceiling

Photo #37 of 98



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
Praha, Fayette County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Interior, detail of central vault

Photo #38 of 98



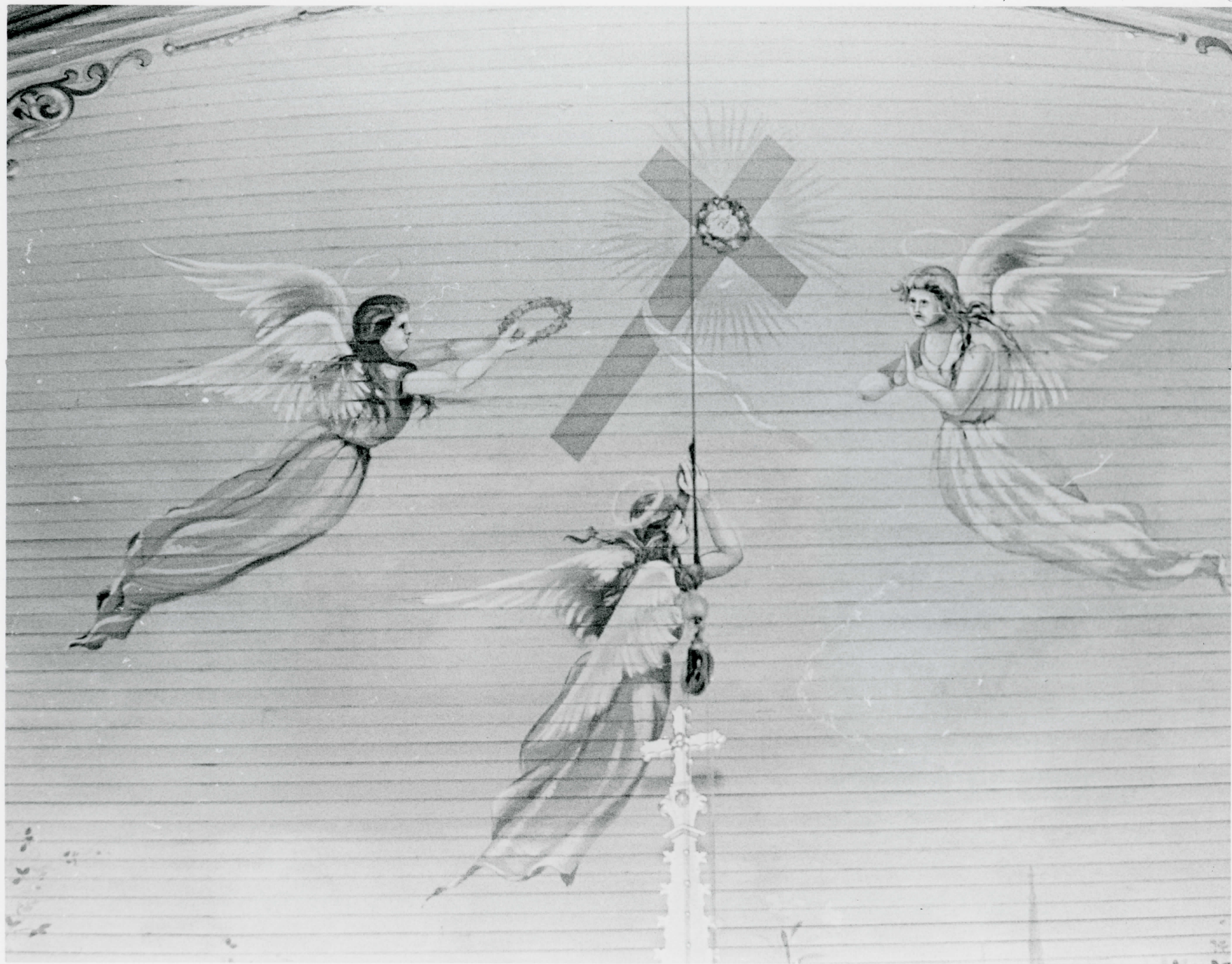
St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
Praha, Fayette County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Interior, view toward side altar

Photo #39 of 98



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative Interior
Painting
Praha, Fayette County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas
Interior, detail of apse ceiling mural

Photo #40 of 98



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
Praha, Fayette County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Interior, ceiling detail in apse

Photo #41 of 98



St. Mary's Church of the Assumption
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
Praha, Fayette County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Interior, sacristy wall

Phot #42 of 98

This is a detailed topographic map of the Flatonia, Texas area. The map features contour lines indicating elevation, with major peaks reaching over 500 feet. Key geographical features include Flatonia, a small town with a grid street pattern, and Mulberry, a larger area to the south. Several creeks are shown, including Rocky Creek, Mulberry Creek, and Little Mulberry Creek. The map also depicts various roads, including a major highway (Route 10) and several local roads. A scale bar at the bottom indicates distances in feet (0 to 2,600) and miles (0 to 4.2). The map is labeled with "FAYETTE CO" and "LAVACA CO" at the bottom. A legend at the bottom right identifies symbols for "INTERIOR- GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D.C. - 1967".

UTM GRID AND 1965 MAGNETIC NORTH

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



TEXAS

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

FLATONIA, TEX.
N2937.5—W9700/7.5

1965
AMS 6543 II NE-SERIES V882

2997-414