

**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 25

NAME: St. Mary's Catholic Church

LOCATION: 306 W. San Antonio  
Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas

OWNER: Most Rev. Patrick F. Flores, D.D.  
Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas  
P. O. Box 32648  
San Antonio, Texas 78284

ARCHITECT: Leo M. J. Dielmann BUILDER: Jacob Wagner

INTERIOR CRAFTSMAN: Dr. Oidtman Studios (1936)

SPECIFIC DATES: 1905-1906 (construction);  
1906, 1908 and 1936 (interior painting);

GEOGRAPHIC DATA: Acreage of nominated property: less than one acre  
UTM reference: 14/511890/3349290  
Verbal boundary description: (previously listed on  
National Register in Fredericksburg Historic District); City lot #305, Survey No. 126,  
Ascencio Vaca. Shown on Map of Fredericksburg, Texas, completed August 3, 1954, by  
Victor L. Nixon; scale 1" = 300'.

DESCRIPTION:

Saint Mary's Catholic Church stands beside its 1861 predecessor, and is a dominant structure amid a complex of related parish buildings. This handsome Gothic Revival church was executed in rusticated limestone ashlar offset with dressed limestone, quarried nearby. Its bold rectangular plan features a projecting polygonal apse and a corner tower rising well above the roofline of the entrance facade. Buttresses, lancet doors, and windows with trefoil and quatrefoil motifs reinforce the Gothic theme, as do the steeply pitched roof, pinnacles, and parapet details of the tower.



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Refined and sophisticated interior painting combining symbolic religious motifs with geometric detailing enhances the spacious interior. The painting is applied to the plastered walls and ceiling. Columns with foliate capitals divide the nave into three sections, with the vaulting of the larger center section rising higher than that of the flanking side sections. Geometric banding in rich hues of red, blue-green, and yellow-gold against a white background accentuates the vaulting as well as the reveals of the stained-glass windows. A stenciled chair rail encircles the nave and entrance foyer. It is done in brown, red, and blue-green, and is accented with metallic gold. Characteristically, the apse decoration is treated more elaborately than that of the rest of the interior. Depicted above the apse spandrel is an enthroned "Christ in Majesty" holding a scepter and orb. This is superimposed on a geometric framework and flanked with the Latin words Ego Sum Panis Vitae, meaning "I am the bread of life." Two large murals which appear much like tapestries adorn the side walls of the apse. In contrast to the white walls and ceiling of the rest of the interior, the apse ceiling is painted blue-green. A geometric border design in blue-green, red, and metallic gold highlights the vault ribs.

Historic photographs show two different schemes of decoration which were used in earlier times. The earliest photograph, made about 1906, shows simpler geometric banding than now, and a very dark color on the walls of the apse. A later photo, about 1954, shows the present geometric banding, but a more elaborate diaper pattern applied to the walls of the apse and at least a portion of the nave. Church records reveal that in 1936-70 the interior was redecorated by the Dr. Oidtmann Studios, Inc., of New York, and then again in 1972 as part of the recent work of restoration. Unable to afford a complete restoration, some of the more elaborate painting was deleted, especially in the apse. The church organ, in the choir loft, features pipes that have been painted and stenciled. At the time of its purchase from a company in St. Louis the organ was one of only three such instruments known to exist in the state. Although today the interior of the church is more simply decorated than it once was, St. Mary's is noteworthy among the Texas painted churches.

## SIGNIFICANCE:

Saint Mary's Church is a fine monument of the Gothic Revival style, and is Fredericksburg's most outstanding example. Furthermore, its interior is enriched with decorative painting which distinguishes it from other Gothic Revival churches in the state. Since its founding by German immigrants in the late 1840s, the church has played a major role in the religious, educational, and social lives of the community. The present structure reflects the prominence of the German culture in Fredericksburg.

German settlers came to Fredericksburg in the spring of 1846, seeking favorable economic and agrarian opportunities. Soon after their arrival a Catholic group began gathering informally, and made plans for building a permanent church. A resident priest arrived in 1849 and was followed by a Catholic school teacher in 1856. Simple lumber and stone structures served these early activities. In 1861 a permanent stone building



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was begun. This building, standing today, housed the growing congregation for the next 43 years, until it was no longer large enough. San Antonio architect Leo M. J. Dielmann designed the present building, which is among the most prominent buildings architecturally in Fredericksburg. Its soaring spire can be seen from a great distance from the surrounding hills.

Entries for "frescoeing" appear in the church records of 1906 and 1908, although no information about that early painting is available, except for one photograph. In 1936 this painting was modified significantly by a New York firm recorded in church documents as Dr. Oidtman Studios, Inc. Young German artists are believed to have executed this work. Limitations of funds prevented a full restoration of the painting during the rehabilitative work done in the 1970s. Some portions of the painting were deleted altogether, although enough significant stencil and mural work remains to convey a sense of decorative enrichment.



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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

Helena Byers 6/21/83

Attest

12. St. Mary's Catholic Church  
(Umbarger, Randall County)

Entered in the  
National Register

for  
Keeper

Helena Byers 6/21/83

Attest

13. St. Mary's Church of the  
Assumption

Entered in the  
National Register

for  
Keeper

Helena Byers 6/21/83

Attest

14. Wesley Brethren Church  
7/18/83 Previous  
listing 1/18/79

Entered in the  
National Register

for  
Keeper

Helena 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 Catholic Church (Churches with  
Decorative Interior Painting TR)  
Gillespie County  
TEXAS

Working No. MAY 9 1983

Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84

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

Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6/21/83

Entered in the ☐ RETURN

National Register ☐ 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                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> original site    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity  
☐ dates  
☐ boundary selection



## **8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas 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 \_\_\_\_\_

UMT 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 Catholic Church  
Churches in Texas with Decorative  
Interior Painting  
Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas  
Linda C. Flory  
October, 1980  
Texas Historical Commission,  
Austin, Texas  
Exterior, Southwest oblique, camera  
facing Northeast

Photo #47 of 98







St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Churches in Texas with Decorative  
Interior Painting  
Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas  
Linda C. Flory  
October, 1980  
Texas Historical Commission,  
Austin, Texas  
Interior, view facing apse

Photo #48 of 98







St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Churches in Texas with Decorative  
Interior Painting  
Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas  
Linda C. Flory  
October, 1980  
Texas Historical Commission,  
Austin, Texas  
Interior, view facing choir loft

Photo #49 of 98



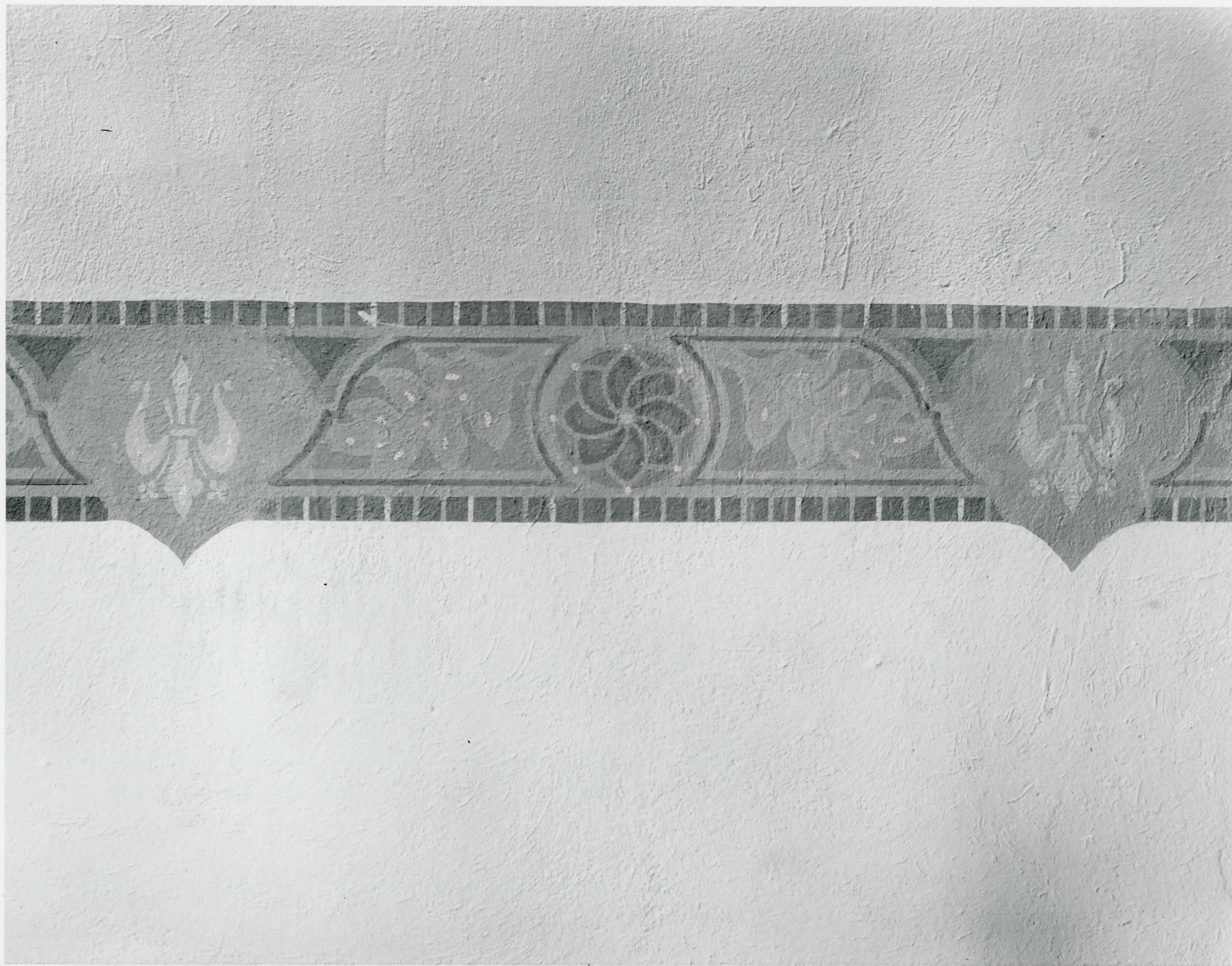




St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Churches in Texas with Decorative  
Interior Painting  
Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas  
Linda C. Flory  
October, 1980  
Texas Historical Commission,  
Austin, Texas  
Interior, detail of apse spandrel

Photo #50 of 98







St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Churches in Texas with Decorative  
Interior Painting  
Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas  
Linda C. Flory  
October, 1980  
Texas Historical Commission,  
Austin, Texas  
Interior, detail of chair rail

Photo #51 of 98







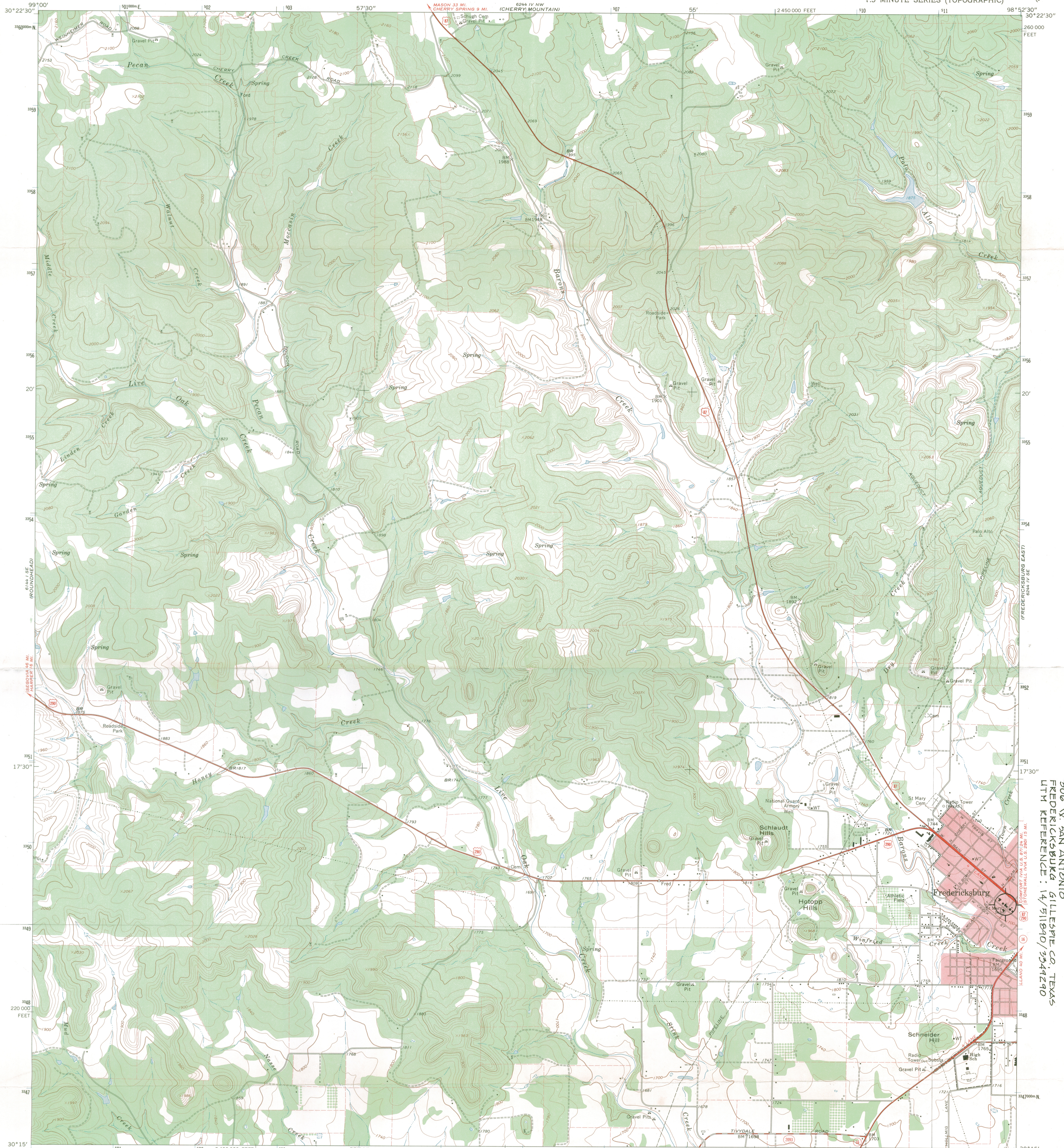
St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Churches in Texas with Decorative  
Interior Painting  
Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, Texas  
Linda C. Flory  
October, 1980  
Texas Historical Commission,  
Austin, Texas  
Interior, detail of apse wall

Photo #52 of 98



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

FREDERICKSBURG WEST QUADRANGLE  
TEXAS—GILLESPIE CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1967

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

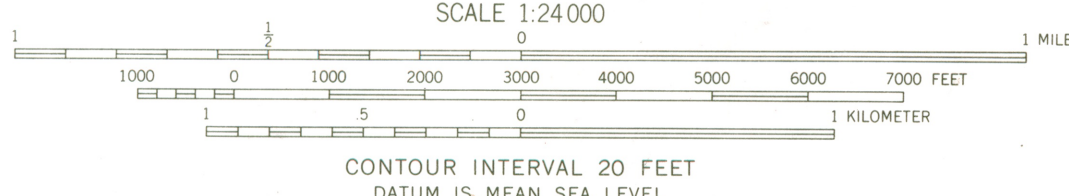
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, central zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines

UTM GRID AND 1967 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



| ROAD CLASSIFICATION |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Heavy-duty          | Light-duty      |
| Medium-duty         | Unimproved dirt |
| U.S. Route          | State Route     |

FREDERICKSBURG WEST, TEX.  
N3015—W9852.5/7.5

3198-232

AMS 624 IV SW—SERIES Ver2

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH  
306 W. SAN ANTONIO  
FREDERICKSBURG, GILLESPIE CO., TEXAS  
UTM REFERENCE: 14/511890/3349290