

**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 33

NAME: Church of the Immaculate Conception of Blessed
Virgin Mary

LOCATION: FM Road 2672 ✓
St. Mary's, Lavaca County, Texas ✓

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

ARCHITECT: Unknown BUILDER: Unknown

INTERIOR CRAFTSMAN: Arthur Fatjo

SPECIFIC DATES: 1896 (construction); ca. 1945 (interior painting)

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: Acreage of nominated property: less than one acre
UTM reference: 14/694280/3259090

Verbal boundary description: Beginning at a point southeast of the church, the corner of FM Road 2672 and the driveway, along the northern boundary of the drive, continuing around its curve north, then its northernmost intersection with the road, then east and south along the fence line in a curve, returning to the point of origin.

DESCRIPTION:

The Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a wood-frame building in Gothic Revival style typical of religious structures, the church steeple provides a prominent visual landmark for the community of St. Mary's. Basically rectangular in plan, the building terminates in a polygonal apse, while a small, projecting, polygonal corner room houses the sacristy. Rising above the gable roof, a central bell tower is crowned by a steep octagonal spire with a Latin cross. The Gothic theme is further

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carried out by the tower's paired lancet windows and single wheel window. Throughout the church, acute arches form window and door openings with hood molds. Upon its completion in 1896, the church had double-hung windows with wood sashes, while the arched upper sashes contain branching mullions. The church roof was originally of wood shingles. In addition to the central double door with Gothic transom, entrances for two side aisle open on the front facade. At some undetermined date the front wall was moved outward to enlarge the structure, thus creating a vestibule and enclosing the base of the tower. Composition shingles are the present roofing material, except for the tower roof which is pressed metal. Historic photographs reveal the spire to have once been polychromatic and presumably of slate or wooden shingle, with small corner pinnacles. These were removed in the 1970s.

The interior space consists of a nave separated from side aisles by wooden columns resembling clustered masonry piers. Both the ceiling and wall surfaces are of beaded board, while a barrel vault spans the nave and smaller vaults cover the aisles. A choir loft is located at the rear.

A particularly interesting element of the church interior is the ceiling of the apse area, which is painted by freehand technique to resemble a cloud bank in shades of light blue, white, and beige. The heads of winged cherub are suspended among the clouds, their gaze directed toward a dove, the dove of the Immaculate Conception, in the center panel. This painted decoration was executed around 1945 by painter Arthur Fatjo, an American who received training in Hamburg, Germany, with the Bijoa Studios. Mr. Fatjo was employed for some time by the Drapato Statuary Company of Chicago, for whom he painted religious sculptures and church interiors.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Church of the Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary in St. Mary's community is important as a 19th-century survival of the Gothic Revival style which substantially retains its original appearance (1896). Decorative painting, carried out in the mid-1940s, embellishes the interior of the structure, and provides a late example of this craft.

The history of the parish itself extends well beyond that of the present religious edifice, for St. Mary's is considered the oldest rural Catholic parish in the state. Originally known as "Brown's settlement, the community was composed primarily of settlers from Kentucky and Missouri. Reverend John Mary Odin, who later became Bishop, visited it in 1840 and reported a wooden church under construction at that time. Father Edward

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Clark was then missionary, and the church was to be named St. Mary's after the parish church in Barren's, Missouri. Deed records reveal the sale of 44.5 acres at the site from Bernard Brown to Bishop Odin in November of 1841. Early in its life, the church was the principal parish serving numerous nearby communities. When Texas' first Catholic Diocese was established in Galveston in 1847, St. Mary's parish was one of ten parishes with completed churches.

Costing \$4,000, the present church was constructed in 1896, while Reverend Louis P. Netardus (who was from St. Mary) served mainly at Hallettsville, the nearby seat of Lavaca County. Surprisingly, when the edifice was built the community had no resident priest, whereas a historic photograph taken on the day of dedication shows quite a large gathering of people.

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Page 1 of 2

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Churches with Decorative Interior Painting Thematic Resources
State Texas

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

2. Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
the Queen of Peace

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

3. Church of the Guardian Angel

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

4. Church of the Immaculate Conception
of Blessed Virgin Mary

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

5. First Baptist Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

6. First United Methodist Church

Substantive Review

Keeper
Attest

Beth Grosvenor 6/21/83

7. Nativity of Mary, Blessed Virgin
Catholic Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

8. Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

9. St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

10. St. Joseph's Catholic Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper
Attest

Delores Byers 6/21/83

7/14/83
filed in
District 12/12/76

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Church of the Immaculate Conception of
Blessed (Churches with Decorative Interior
Painting TR) VIRGIN MARY
Lavaca 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
 RETURN
Entered in the 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"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary 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 _____

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



Church of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
St. Mary's, Lavaca County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Exterior, Southwest oblique camera
facing Northeast)
Photo #68 of 98



Church of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
St. Mary's, Lavaca County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Interior, oblique view facing altar
(camera facing Southeast)

Photo #69 of 98



Church of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting
St. Mary's, Lavaca County, Texas
Carol Kennedy
September, 1980
Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas
Interior, apse ceiling detail
(camera facing East)

Photo #70 of 98



Church of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Churches in Texas with Decorative
Interior Painting

St. Mary's, Lavaca County, Texas

Carol Kennedy

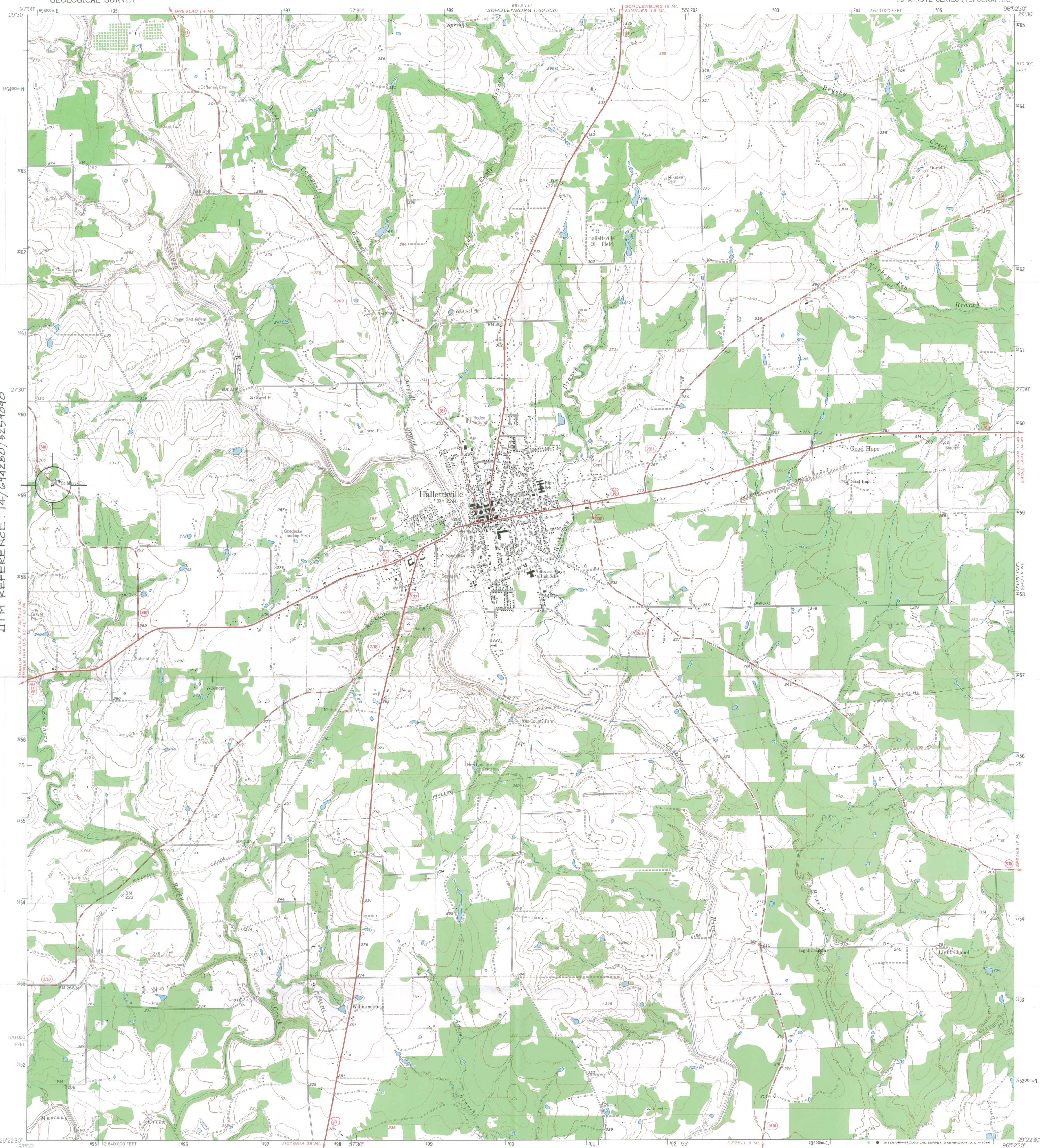
September, 1980

Texas Historical Commission,
Austin, Texas

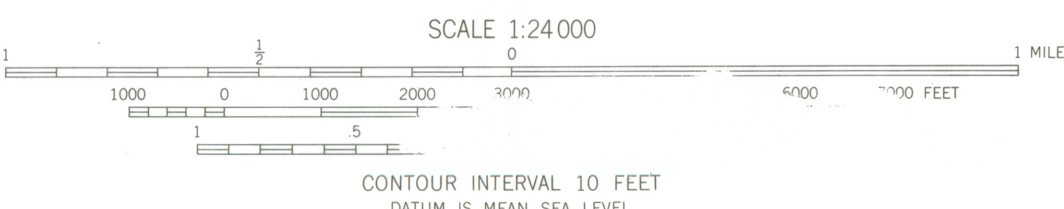
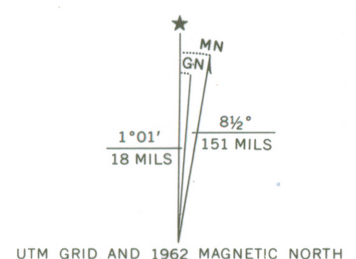
Interior, oblique detail of apse ceiling

Photo #71 of 98

ST. MARY'S CHURCH
F.M. ROAD 340-2672
ST. MARY'S, LAVACA COUNTY, TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14/694280/3259090



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1962. Field checked 1962
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, south central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 14, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

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

QUADRANGLE LOCATION
2996-233
2996-233

HALLETTVILLE, TEX.
N2922 5-W9652 5/7.5
1962
AMS 6642 IV NW-SERIES V882

HALLETTVILLE SE