

Old St. Marys Catholic Church  
Fredericksburg, Texas.

Gillespie Co

HABS No. 33-0-2

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 33

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Marvin Eickenroht, District Officer  
San Antonio, Texas.

THE OLD ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH  
FREDERICKSBURG, GILLESPIE CO., TEXAS

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The present owner is the St. Mary's Catholic Church. The plot for the church was purchased in 1848 and used up until 1905 when the present church was built. The old church is now used as living quarters for the grounds caretaker. The church has always belonged to the St. Mary's Catholic Church.

In 1905 the church was made into a church school by putting in a second floor and cut up into class rooms. Leo M. J. Dielman of San Antonio, Texas was the architect. Under this alteration the entire interior detail and other framing was removed.

The church is on the original site. It was started in 1861 and finished in 1863. Father Peter Baunach, a Benedictine priest, directed all construction. Practically all workmen were members of the congregation. Christian Kraus, "The Schoolmaster", kept the books. John and Jacob Metzger, Peter Schmidt, Moritz Hartmann were stone masons. Peter Schandua and Christoff Brinkrolff were carpenters. Martius Sener cut stone and a man named Petsch mixed mortar. Peter Meurer, an eleven-year-old boy drove the ox teams. Other workmen serving in various capacities were - Anton Kraus, John Klein, Valentine Heinemann, Johann Plank, Geo. Weber, Christian Leyendecker, Jacob Weinheimer, John Roeder, H. Fuchs, J. Keller, Peter Pehl, G. Besier, John Fritz, Peter Bag, X. Vogl, Hernandez and Frank Stehling.

Father Peter Baunach was the first priest of the congregation and Otto A. Petsch the caretaker of the grounds is the present occupant of the Old Church.

In 1848 a small plot of ground was purchased for \$18.00 and the seed of the Fredericksburg St. Mary's Catholic Church building was planted. The first building was a strong, sturdy log building 18' x 46' x 15' high with an earth floor covered with sand. For thirteen years this building served for devotional purposes. A granite monument marks the place where the altar of the log church stood.

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The building of this old church brought up many interesting problems. Practically no money changed hands, all materials, pay, etc., being handled by means of trade and barter. The walls are of limestone, quarried in the limestone hills near Comfort and hauled to building site by ox team. Roof trusses are of wood ceiled on underside with beaded ceiling. Walls are finished on the inside with plaster.

Material for one day's work only was brought to the job to avoid theft by Indians at night. Lime for mortar was made from limestone burned near the site in crude ovens built by the church workmen. These ovens were mere niches dug into a limestone creek bank. Scaffolding was constructed of oak saplings bound together by rawhide thongs. No block and tackle was available, so a windlass with a handle on each side was built to aid in the raising of materials. Shingles and some of the heavy timbers used in the tower were cut by hand. Roof plates, joists, beaded ceiling, balusters, trim, sash and doors came from a small planing mill operated by some Mormons a few miles from Fredericksburg.

What is practically two sets of trusses are used in the church. One set carries the roof and one holds up the beaded ceiling. The cross at the top of the stone tower was carried up to the top on the shoulder of Moritz Hartmann, a distance of 57'-0". Hartmann had seen a previous cross which he had made broken when an attempt was made to raise it by the windlass, so he carried the second one himself.

The original bells were given to the Notre Dame Church at Kerrville, Texas, and its pews to Harper, Texas.

Author Emil Niggli

Approved Marvin Eickeroht

Revised 1936, H.C.H.