

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FEB

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent

other names/site number Fellowship Church of God in Christ

2. Location

street & number 588 East Trigg Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Memphis vicinity N/A

State Tennessee code TN county Shelby code 157 zip code 38106

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 for 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 nationally, statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Dwyer
Signature of certifying official/Title

1/31/05
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet
 - determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet
 - determined not eligible for the National Register
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain:)

Edson W. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

3/15/05
Date of Action

St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent
Name of Property

Memphis, Shelby County, TN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Religious Resources of Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/church-related facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

RELIGION/church-related facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque Revival

Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other TERRA COTTA

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- 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.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

Ca. 1907 to 1948

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Regan & Weller (R. J. Regan and John T. Weller, Jr.)

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Tennessee Historical Commission

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St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent
Shelby County, Tennessee

VII. Architectural Description

St. Thomas Catholic Church was developed ca. 1925-1926 at 588 East Trigg Avenue at the corner of South Lauderdale Street on a 0.5-acre site in the Randolph Subdivision of South Memphis. The church was designed to reflect the organization and influences of Romanesque parish churches of the Early Christian era in the 11th and 12th centuries, as interpreted by the Memphis architectural firm of Regan & Weller. The basic organization of the load-bearing brick masonry church is composed of a tall gable-roofed nave with a clerestory, flanked by shed-roofed wings covering the aisles; a bell tower is located along the side (west) set back from the front façade by one bay in depth. The church was developed as part of a church complex that included a school building, a small convent, and a splendid grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Grace. Of these additional buildings, only the convent and grotto remain and they are included within the boundaries of the nomination as contributing features of the property. The church occupies a corner lot adjacent to a neighborhood commercial district in the midst of a predominantly working-income neighborhood.

The front (south) façade of the building is composed of a gabled parapet wall that rises the equivalent of two stories at center, flanked by lower shed parapet wing walls. The center parapet wall is topped with a plain terra cotta coping and is crowned with a terra cotta cross at its apex. The coping is supported by a deeply corbelled, blind arcade cornice; a more simple corbelled cornice is rendered on the flanking wing walls. Plain corbelled, monumental pilasters define the center and outer corners of the façade, thus increasing its sense of verticality. A large ocular stained glass "rose" window is located on the clerestory level of the façade; its arch is defined by an inner soldier course of bricks ringed with a single course of headers. The entrance is composed of three semi-circular arched doorways centered beneath the oculus that have terra cotta architraves that incorporate pilasters with Tuscan shafts and Romanesque cushion capitals. The transoms contain seven vertical lights within each arch; these transoms are currently obscured by removable canvas balloon canopies. The entrance doors are single-light, metal replacement double-doors.

The side (west) façade of the church is seven bays in depth and is dominated by its bell tower, which is set back only slightly from the line of the front façade and rises above the peak of the roof of the nave. Its scale and proximity to the front façade cause it to dominate both the front and side facades of the church. The tower is square in plan, with one semi-circular arched window on the first level and one on each exposed face of the second level. Like almost all of the windows of the first story façade, the windows of the bell tower contain pairs of interlaced Romanesque arches,

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with an ocular light above the center stile. The second level of the bell tower is capped with a terra cotta cornice to define it from the upper stage of the belfry. The belfry was originally square in plan with clipped corners, two Romanesque arches opening on each major face, and a low hip roof with a deep cornice. The belfry became unstable by ca. 1980 and was removed, leaving the bell exposed today.

The balance of the side (west) façade is divided by bays of stained glass windows with two interlaced Romanesque arches on the first story, and on the clerestory of the nave, by smaller semi-circular arched stained glass windows. Adjacent to the rear (northwest) corner of the façade is a one-story, one-bay square, gable-roofed projecting wing, which aligns on the interior and forms and extension to the transept in front of the altar. This wing also serves as an additional entrance/exit for the sanctuary.

The rear (north) façade of the church features a very deep apse that rises nearly to the peak of the roof of the nave, covered with a low part-conical roof. The apse is surrounded on the first story by a one-story projection spanning the full width of the building, covered by a half hip roof.



Views of St. Thomas Catholic Church, north rear of building.

The side (east) façade of the church is virtually the duplicate of the west façade, with the exception of a small projection near the front (south) façade. The projection is semi-circular in plan and is

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covered by a low part-conical roof, which contains an interior stair leading from the narthex to the choir loft.

The interior of the church was designed following the traditional basilica plan, as had most Catholic churches built in Western Europe and the Americas over the preceding millennium. A narthex is set within the entrances to the church, with a choir loft located on the floor above it. The narthex is finished with mahogany wood paneling installed during an interior redecoration phase finished in 1948. Access to the choir loft is gained through a doorway leading to the stair appended to the side (east) façade; on the west side of the narthex is a small room located within the bell tower, set aside primarily as a dressing room for acolytes. The choir loft is a simple space composed of a tiered riser for the seating of the choir. None of the original seating remains in place today.

Between the narthex and the nave is a paneled, partitioned area containing two confessionals, a coat closets and other small spaces. There are no records or photographs taken prior to the ca. 1948 renovation of these spaces to suggest how this area was originally treated. A terrazzo floor was installed in the narthex as a part of this same renovation.

The nave contains rows of pews divided by a center aisle, as is typical in a basilica plan, with the side aisles set behind an arcaded screen supported by columns with Tuscan shafts and Romanesque Corinthian capitals. The roof of the nave is spanned by exposed king post trusses, which are outfitted with an additional semicircular collar brace creating a wheel-like motif at center. The tie rods were added to supplement the load-bearing capability of the trusses in the late-1970s. The nave is lit by a series of extraordinarily fine allegorical stained glass windows on both the main floor level and the clerestory level. These are original to the construction of the building, each depicting various biblical events or stories. Most of the existing light fixtures in the sanctuary appear to date from the renovation of the interior in 1948; however, two light fixtures remaining in the choir loft appear to survive from the original decoration of the church when it opened in 1926. The floor of the nave and aisles is paved with terrazzo that was installed in 1948. The pews apparently date from the original construction of the church in 1925-26.

The transept of the church contains a dais added during the 1970s to conform to changes permitted under the *Constitution on the Liturgy* adopted by Vatican Council II in 1970. The original white marble high altar installed in the church in 1926 remains in place in the apse, though the altar rail separating the altar from the transept has been removed. The high altar was also originally decorated with statuary and a cross; all of these features were removed to other Catholic churches

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when the building was sold in 1986. On either side of the apse are niches containing statues of Mary (on the east) and Joseph (on the west). Correspondingly, flanking the main altar in the transept are the side altars dedicated to the Virgin Mary (on the east) and Joseph (on the west).

Also located in the apse are doorways on either side of the altar leading to the sacristies for the use of the priest (on the west), and the altar guild (on the east). The rooms are connected across the curved back wall of the apse by a narrow corridor. Original doors, 1/1 plain glass double-hung wood sashes, and door and window trim all remain in place in these rooms.

Associated with the church is a convent and a grotto that both contribute to the historic character and significance of the property. The convent is located immediately to the rear (north) of the church and faces west to South Lauderdale Street, set back from the line of the street by the same distance as the side yard setback of the church. The front lawn of the convent is minimally landscaped with a single shade tree and low row of bushes across the frontage of the yard. The yard between the convent and church is now divided by a chain link fence, but originally was unobstructed. The yard is on axis with the side of the grotto, though there is no dedicated access to the grotto from this area. The grotto is located in a side yard of the church to the north and east of the rear, northeast corner of the church. The grotto was built to fill a portion of the side yard between St. Thomas church and the parish school that stood just to the east until it was demolished ca. 1985. These two contributing elements of the property are further described as:

1. Convent, 1245 South Lauderdale Street, ca. 1907, modified ca. 1944-1948 and ca. 1975. The convent associated with St. Thomas Church is a two-story tall, four bay wide foursquare dormitory with Colonial Revival influence that was occupied by the various orders of nuns who taught classes at the St. Thomas School. The building is constructed of load-bearing masonry and is covered by a hip roof with plain eaves. The corners of each façade feature corbelled brick quoins. The windows are 1/1 metal frame replacement sashes; the windows of the first story of the front façade are surrounded with simple architraves of limestone masonry with closed pediments. The remaining windows of the building each feature a stone sill. The entrance is set within a vestibule surrounded by a simple architrave with a closed pediment, and contains a single-light replacement metal door flanked by 1/2-length sidelights and topped with a full-light transom.

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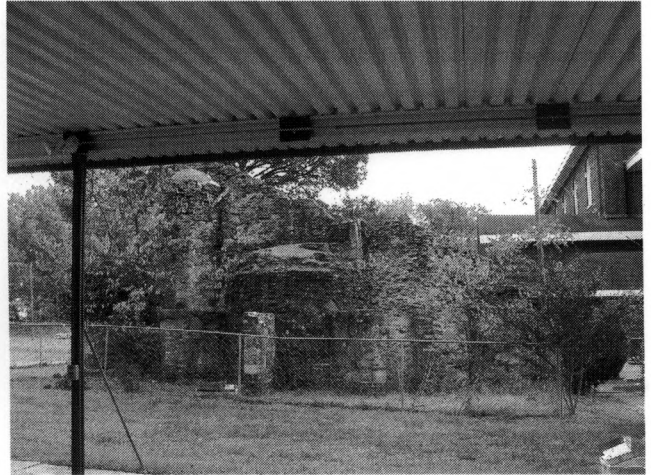
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East and north facades of convent.



View of rear of shrine.

2. Our Lady of Grace Shrine, ca. 1944. The shrine of Our Lady of Grace is a carefully planned complex of landscape features that was consciously designed to appear both vernacular in design and ancient in origin. The shrine was employed both for individual devotions as well as for the performance of Mass in the open air. The shrine complex is laid out on an axis parallel to the east side of the church, with low stone walls defining planting beds and a walkway leading to the grotto wall at the north end of the property. The various elements of the shrine complex-- walls, a fountain, and the grotto wall, among others-- are composed of a mixture of rubble stone, fragments of carved stone, and pieces of dressed faced ashlar, which are assembled to appear as though the entire setting had seen many, many periods of construction, destruction, and reconstruction, not unlike an ancient ruin. The walls of the grotto feature a small "window" like opening in the wall, as well as two semi-circular arched niches. The largest of the niches is at ground level and contains an altar; the second niche is located high on the wall and at one time contained a statue, probably of the Virgin Mary. Though the grotto has seen some vandalism and suffers from neglect, it is still a very rich and powerful landscape composition that was cleverly designed and built.

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VIII. Statement of Significance

St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent complex in Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee is nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C in the area of architecture for its significance as an important and well-preserved example of the Romanesque Revival style as interpreted in the 20th century for a parish church. The distinctive form of this church, derived from churches built during the Early Christian Era in Western Europe, and rendered in simple materials, made the church a pivotal landmark of the South Memphis community in its period of significance. The period of significance for the church begins with the construction of the earliest building on the site-- its convent, built ca. 1907-- and concludes with the completion of the last remodeling of the church building in 1948. While the remodeling work carried out in 1948 did result in some changes in surface materials and perhaps in the arrangement of smaller anterooms, it did nothing to compromise the overall Romanesque Revival design of the building. Concluding the period of significance in 1948 also permits the inclusion of the Our Lady of Grace shrine grotto as a contributing feature of this site, having been completed in 1944. The property is presented as part of the context of the Multiple Property Submission "Historic Religious Resources of Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee" and meets the registration requirements and standards for architectural integrity set forth therein.

St. Thomas Parish in South Memphis can trace its origins to 1905, when Thomas S. Byrne, Bishop of Nashville, ordered that a mission of St. Patrick's Church, located at 277 South Fourth Street, be established in South Memphis to provide for the needs of the 150 to 200 Irish Catholic families that resided in the area of the new parish. The 1.5-acre site for the original church was purchased in the same year at the corner of East Trigg Avenue and Markham Street; this site is adjacent to the existing church building on the east. A combined church and school with an adjacent convent was built for an investment of \$25,000 and was dedicated in March of 1907. The priests of St. Patrick's Church conducted the services held in the church until 1923; the administration of the parish school was overseen at this time by the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, who resided in the adjacent convent building.

The development of the new Catholic parish in South Memphis apparently did not come about without controversy. The "tale is told", to quote more than one Memphis Catholic historian, of efforts by militant Protestants to prevent the establishment of St. Thomas Parish in 1905. The population of South Memphis was largely composed of working-income Protestants employed in the furniture manufacturing, cotton warehouse and grocery distribution industries of the area. The non-Catholic residents of the area objected to the establishment of a Catholic church in the

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neighborhood when it was originally proposed. This unsubstantiated story suggests that when the original church was under construction in 1906-1907, opposing local residents would appear after the workmen had left for the day and take down the masonry and other work that had been accomplished earlier. The story continues that an unnamed local cleric of St. Patrick's was determined to prevent the further delays on the project by watching over the building site on a nightly basis, and occasionally discharging a blast from a gun to discourage the vandalism on the project site (McGraw et al 1996:73). While this old story seems plausible given the nature of the community of South Memphis at the time, there appears to be little in the way of documentary evidence to support the story.

In spite of whatever resistance the neighborhood may have shown towards the church, St. Thomas thrived. Bishop Byrne elevated St. Thomas to the position of an independent parish church in 1923, making it the seventh independent parish in the Memphis at the time. The Reverend E. F. Callahan was appointed as its first priest. After only a few months, Reverend Callahan was replaced by Father James T. Lorigan to allow Father Callahan to return to his preferred work as a missionary in rural East Tennessee. Father Lorigan then immediately set out to raise the funds necessary to build a new parish church that would stand independent of the earlier church and school building.

The Catholic Diocese of Nashville (where the affairs of Memphis' Catholic churches were administered until the 1960s) retained the services of the architectural firm of Regan & Weller to design the new parish church for St. Thomas. At the time, Regan & Weller were employed by the Diocese as their nearly exclusive design team for the construction of new Catholic churches, schools, and other buildings in West Tennessee. The firm of Regan & Weller was composed of principals Richard J. Regan (1885-1963) and John T. Weller, Jr. (1884-1954), who were raised and educated in Memphis before beginning their architectural careers. The two architects apparently met as young men when working in the office of Lundie M. Weathers (1861-ca. 1919) ca. 1906; after Regan returned to Memphis upon completion of his degree at Columbia University, he joined Weller in partnership with Hubert T. McGee (1864-1946) for a year before breaking away in 1912 to form the partnership of Regan & Weller. The two men would remain business partners and friends for the next forty years until Weller's death in 1954 (Herndon 1975:127, 153-154, 193-194).

There is no comprehensive list of commissions for Regan & Weller as a firm, nor is there a complete list of their work for the Catholic Diocese. However, the firm is known to have been responsible for a number of projects for the Diocese in the 1920s and 1930s. The earliest project known was the design of the Catholic Club of Memphis (now demolished), constructed in 1924 at

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the corner of North Third Street and Adams Avenue across from St. Peter's Catholic Church. This project was followed in 1925-1926 with the design and construction of St. Thomas Church, Holy Names School on Keel Avenue ca. 1927, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in 1927-1928 (part Central Gardens Historic District NR 9/9/1982), and Sacred Heart School in 1928-29 at 1317 Jefferson Avenue. There are, no doubt, other projects that the firm of Regan & Weller completed for the Catholic Diocese that will become known with further research.

The Romanesque Revival style enjoyed three periods of popularity in Memphis over the period of ca. 1865 to ca. 1955. There were two definitive design approaches taken by architects in the 19th century, and an entirely different approach taken by architects in the 20th century. The design of First Baptist Church [Beale Street Baptist Church] (1867-1881, 379 Beale Street, Edward Culliatt Jones and Mathias Henry Baldwin, architects, NR 2/11/1971) and First Presbyterian Church in Memphis (1884, 166 Poplar Avenue, Edward Culliatt Jones, architect, NR pending) demonstrate the "early" Victorian era strain of the style, most often associated on a national level with the work of James Renwick and others. The other strain of the Romanesque Revival is the later, more robust approach to the style, championed by Henry Hobson Richardson and represented in Memphis by the design of Second Presbyterian Church (1891-92, 280 Hernando Street, Long and Keys, architects, Minneapolis, in association with Edward Culliatt Jones). Given that these are the only 19th century representatives of the Romanesque Revival extant in the city, it is a small set from which to draw conclusions, but the same two strains adopted in the design of churches were also reflected in the design of houses, commercial buildings and public buildings built in the city.

Soon after the turn of the 20th century, though, the Romanesque Revival began to be explored in different ways by Memphis architects, starting with the construction of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in 1904 (277 South Fourth Street, Hanker and Cairns, architects). As the new century progressed, though, the development of a church design closely based on Romanesque Revival styling was relatively rare in Memphis. If a congregation or its architect were to choose a design for their new building that was a) not Gothic Revival, or, b) not Colonial/Classical Revival, the prevailing selection would have been a design in the Mediterranean Revival style. The Mediterranean Revival style was drawn from a loose conglomeration of architectural elements taken from many countries and many centuries in the rim of the Mediterranean Sea; some elements of the Romanesque Revival were included. The Mediterranean Revival became a common choice for many churches in Memphis prior to World War II. The choice of a church design based purely on the Romanesque Revival style occurred with far less frequency. Apart from Regan & Weller's design for St. Thomas Catholic Church, the only other major example of a religious building in the Romanesque Revival style built prior to World War II is the former

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synagogue of Temple Israel, designed by Jones & Furbringer in 1915-16 (1255 Poplar Avenue, now Mississippi Boulevard Christian Academy).

The timing for the elevation of St. Thomas as an independent parish church was ill chosen, in hindsight, for it came just as the Ku Klux Klan was reemerging on a national and local basis as a force to be reckoned with. In Memphis, historians have estimated that the membership of Memphis Klan No. 3 reached or surpassed 10,000 by 1923, with its members concentrated in only a few areas of the city, notably "in South Memphis between McLemore Avenue and South Parkway East" (Jackson 1967:48). The Klan tried to take over local government by entering a full slate in the city election of 1923, which caused the then editor of the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, C.P.J. Mooney, to launch his tireless anti-Klan editorial campaign that would lead to his being awarded the Pulitzer Prize later in the same year. The Klan was defeated in the election, but not without serious turmoil. One of the most disturbing incidents of the election occurred at the voting place of the city's 25th ward, located just a block east of St. Thomas Church at 608 East Trigg. A mob of over 400 Klansmen stormed the precinct after the close of the polls and demanded that the votes be counted in public; when the police finally arrived, they found the election officials had been forced outside to count the votes by the light of bonfire set in the street. The ballots were seized by the police and removed to the courthouse to be counted, and the Klan mob was dispersed. The defeat in the election of 1923 was the beginning of the end of the Klan as a significant force in the city (Jackson 1967:53-54), though a few years would pass before it was rendered powerless.

The reason for noting the activity of the Memphis Klan is not simply the proximity of St. Thomas Church to the incident on election night in 1923. The Klan was not only interested in ridding the city of African Americans, but it also carried out campaigns of violence and intimidation against Catholics and Jews during the 1920s. The location of the church in the midst of a Klan stronghold could not have come without consequences to its parishioners. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that histories of the church relate that during the construction of the new sanctuary for St. Thomas in 1925-1926, a group of Klansmen attempted to burn a cross on a lawn located immediately across the street from the construction site (McGraw et al 1996:74). The story relates that Mrs. W. J. Kelly, a parishioner of St. Thomas who occupied the house at 585 East Trigg where the cross was placed, defied the mob, toppled the cross, and extinguished its flames. Unfortunately, this story has also yet to be verified in contemporary newspaper accounts, which C.P.J. Mooney of the *Commercial-Appeal*, himself a devout Catholic, would no doubt have championed in his continuing anti-Klan campaign.

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Assuming that this story is factual, however, it appears that the construction of St. Thomas Church continued without major incident to its completion in 1926, following an investment of \$75,000 in its construction.

St. Thomas flourished in its new church home, to the point in the mid-1930s when its school population had outgrown its original school building. Once again, Regan & Weller were called in 1937 to design the new St. Thomas School, which was completed in 1938. It is also believed that the firm had a hand in a series of other improvements to the church that were made over the course of the next decade. Beginning in 1944 and ending in 1948, the church's original wood floor was replaced with the existing terrazzo floor, the church's interior was redecorated to create much of its existing appearance, and the Our Lady of Grace shrine on the church grounds was built. Other work included the construction of a high school annex to the school in 1944, and the renovation of the ca. 1907 convent to the north of the church in the same year (McGraw, et al 1996:73-74).

St. Thomas continued to be a strong neighborhood institution through World War II and through the 1950s. However, beginning early in the 1960s, the parish and the neighborhood surrounding it began to change in its racial make-up, becoming a predominately African-American neighborhood by the end of the decade. The congregation of St. Thomas changed with it. The numbers of Catholics among the entire African-American population of Memphis were few, and so the congregation of St. Thomas dwindled. The Diocese transferred James Lyke (1939-1992) to St. Thomas as Associate pastor in 1968, and elevated him to the position of the church's full Pastor in 1970. Father Lyke's tenure at St. Thomas breathed new life into the church until he was transferred to Grambling, Louisiana in 1977. Lyke introduced the "vernacular" liturgical reforms permitted by the Vatican II and added an "Afro-centric" element to the services in order to make the liturgy more relevant to his congregation. Lyke became a forceful presence in the church and outside of it, becoming a recognized leader in the Civil Rights movement that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. When the church school was closed due to dwindling attendance in the early 1970s, Lyke aggressively sought funding from the Diocese to convert it to use as the St. Thomas Community Center, which lasted until the early 1980s. After leaving Memphis in 1977, Lyke was promoted in the church, first as Bishop of Cleveland in 1979, and later, as the Archbishop of Atlanta in 1991 (Diocese of Memphis Archives), placing him among the first African Americans to be elevated to the position of Archbishop.

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The enthusiasm and leadership brought to St. Thomas by Pastor Lyke was not able to be sustained by his replacements, and the congregation continued to decline in numbers. Finally, in 1986, the property was sold by the Diocese of Memphis and the former St. Thomas School was demolished.

The role of St. Thomas as a house of worship in the South Memphis community was taken up by the Fellowship Church of God in Christ, and the church is being maintained by its stewardship as a landmark of its community today.

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IX. Major Bibliographic References

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Parnham, Pastor Bill

2000 Personal communication.

Stewart, Pastor Keith

2000 Personal communication.

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St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent
Shelby County, Tennessee

X. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property in nomination occupies an irregular parcel fronting on East Trigg Avenue, South Lauderdale and Cambridge Avenue in Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee, shown as Lots 1 and 2 on the portion of the attached Shelby County Tax Map J-7.

Boundary Justification

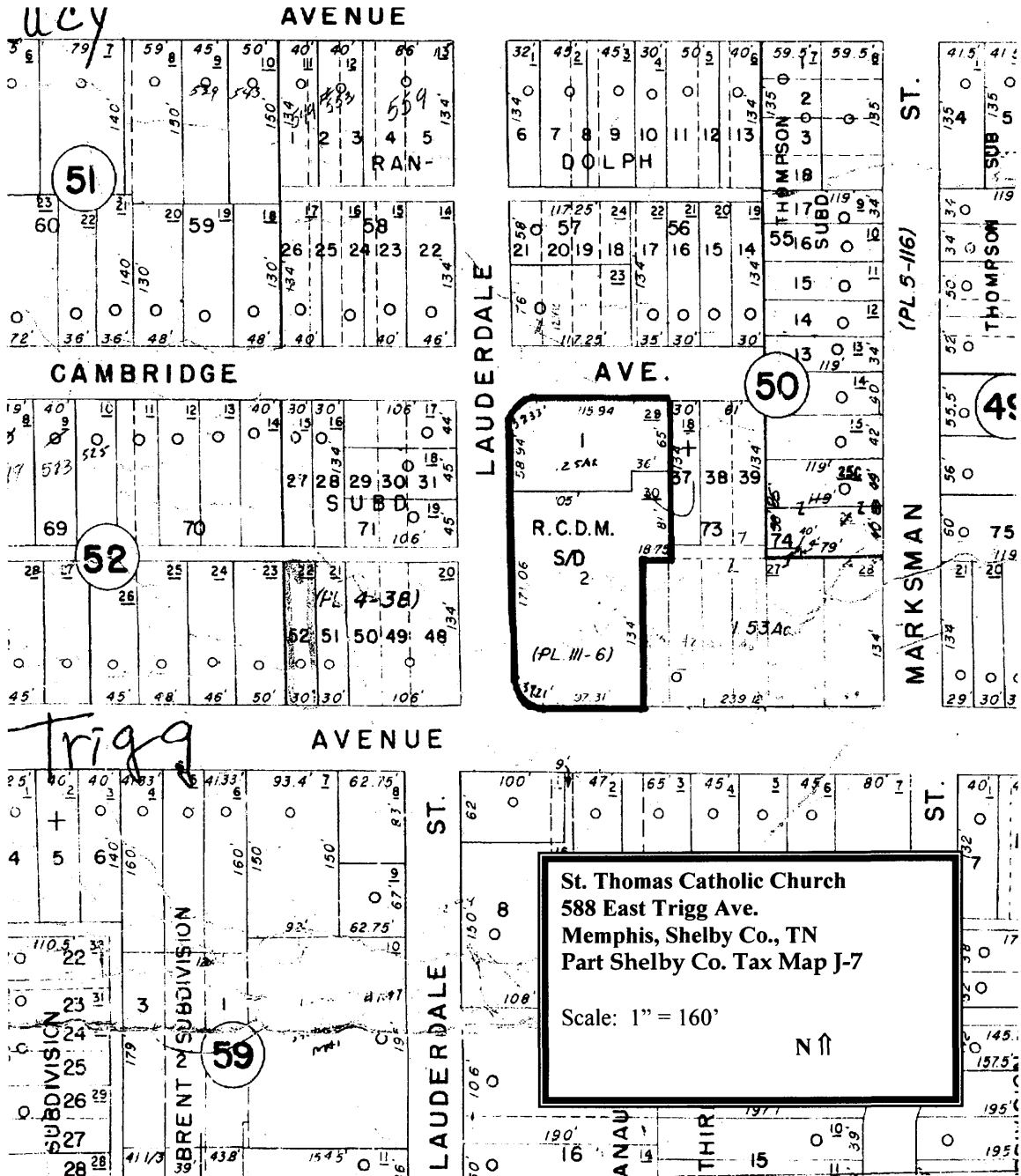
The property in nomination contains all extant buildings associated with the development of St. Thomas Catholic Church during its period of significance.

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St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent
Shelby County, Tennessee

Photographs

Photographs by: Robert Dye
Date: May 2004
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

Photo 1 of 9

View of the front south façade (East Trigg Avenue, right) and west façade (South Lauderdale Street, left) facades of the church, looking northeast.

Photo 2 of 9

View of the side (east) façade of the church, looking generally west.

Photo 3 of 9

View of the side (west) façade and rear (north) façade of the church, looking generally east.

Photo 4 of 9

View of the convent associated with the church, located to the north of the church building on an adjacent parcel.

Photo 5 of 9

View of the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace located to the east and north of the church building, looking north. The rear of the convent is visible at left.

Photo 6 of 9

View of the nave, side aisles, altar, and apse of the sanctuary of the church from the entrance.

Photo 7 of 9

View of the high altar of the church; the sacristy for the priest was located through the arched door at left, while the sacristy for the altar guild is located through the door at right.

Photo 8 of 9

View of the nave looking from the altar to the narthex and choir loft at the rear. Confessional are located on both sides of the main entrance.

Photo 9 of 9

View of one of the stained glass windows in the church, depicting the adoration of the Christ child by the Magi.

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St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent
Shelby County, Tennessee

Property Owners

Church:

Fellowship Church of God in Christ
c/o Pastor L. T. Frye
P.O. Box 2254
Memphis, TN 38101

(901) 246-3802

Former convent:

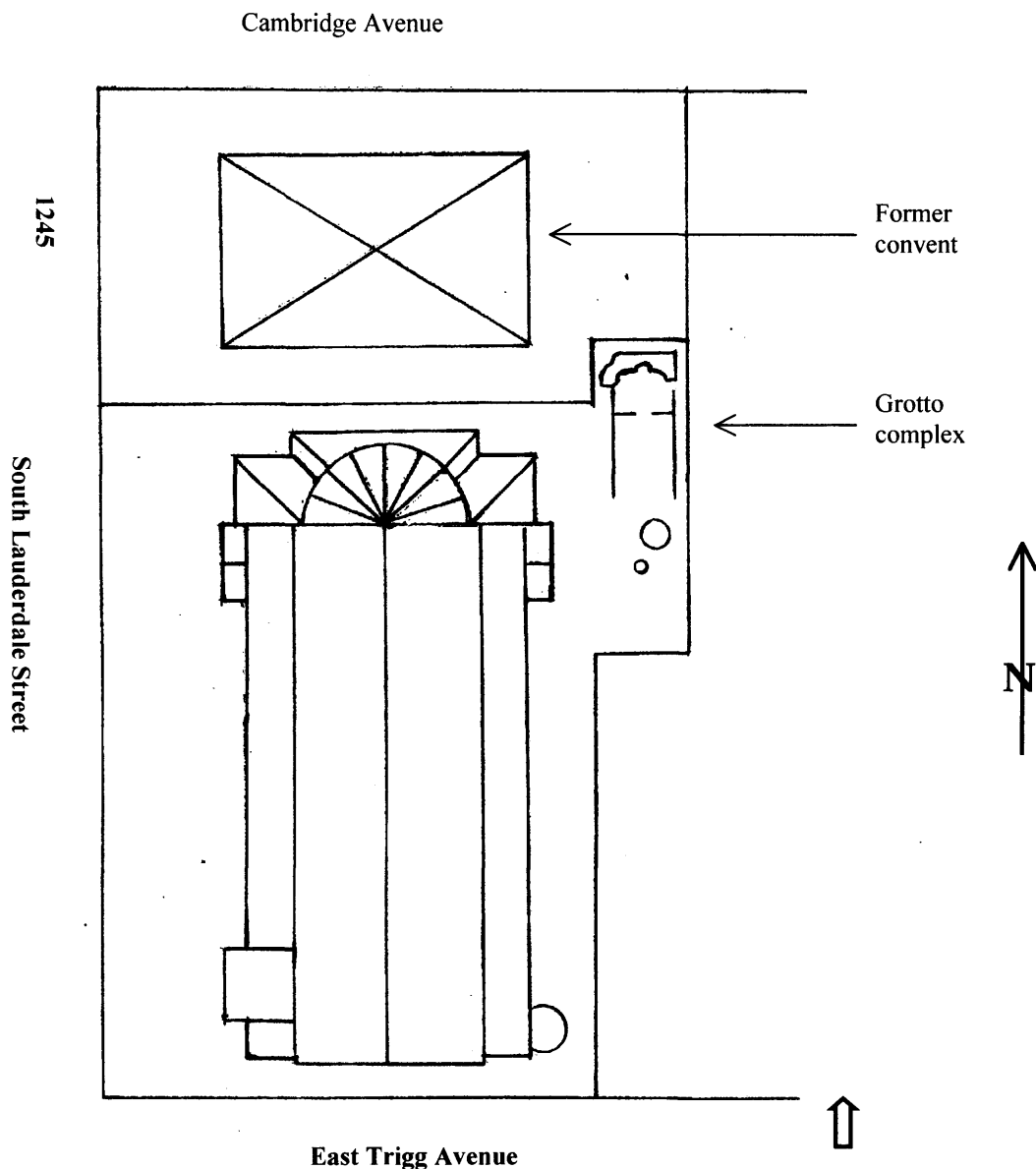
Deacon Bill Herbers
Catholic Diocese of Memphis
5825 Shelby Oaks Drive
P.O. Box 341669
Memphis, TN 38194-1669
(901) 373-1200

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St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent
Shelby County, Tennessee



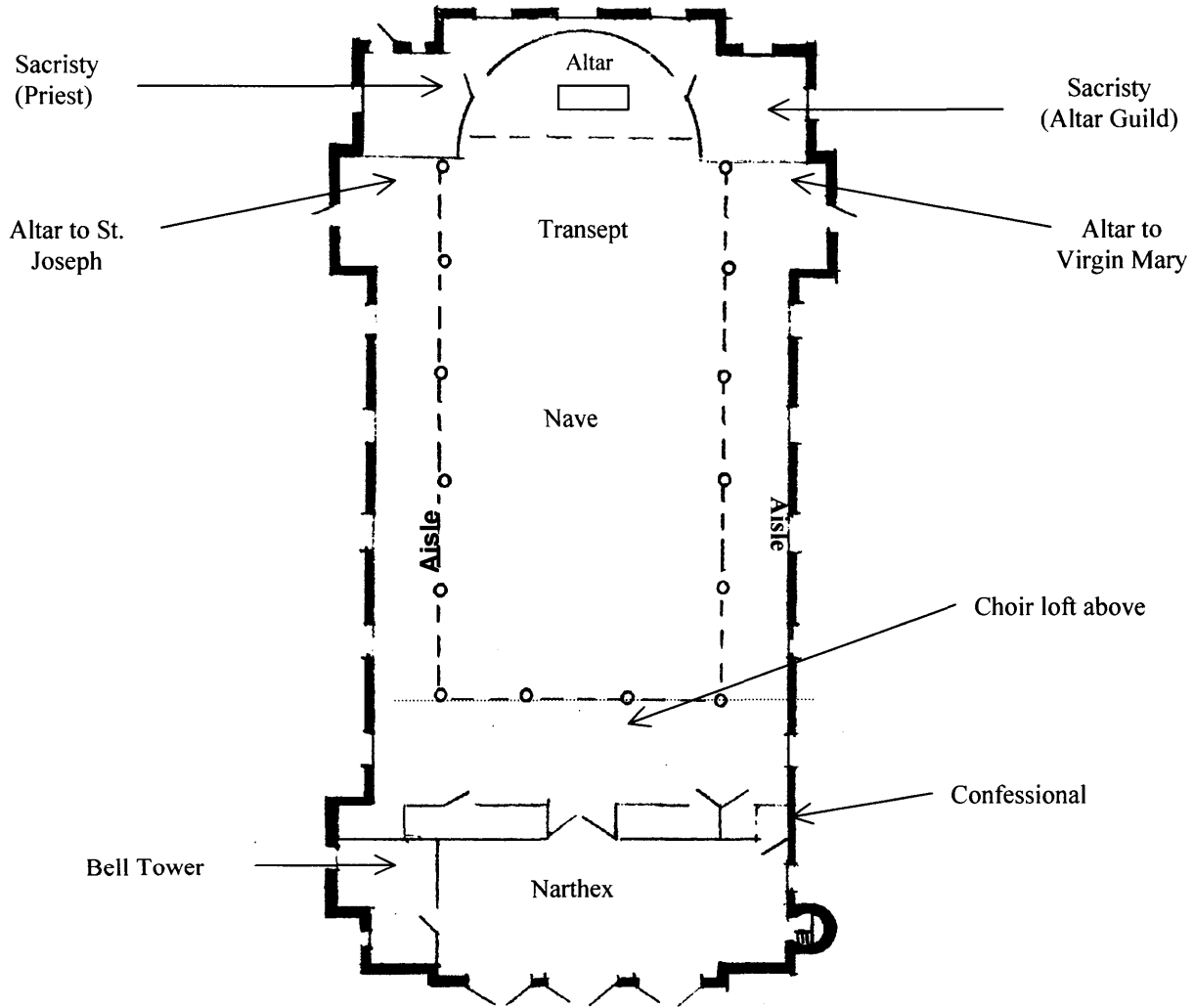
Site Plan of the St. Thomas Catholic Church complex.

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St. Thomas Catholic Church and Convent
Shelby County, Tennessee



Plan of St. Thomas Catholic Church