

P40014168

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Kentucky	
COUNTY: Kenton	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
JUL 24 1973	

1. NAME

COMMON:
Mother Of God Roman Catholic Church

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
119 West Sixth Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Covington

STATE Kentucky	CODE 21	COUNTY: Kenton	CODE 117
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
**Archdiocese of Covington
Bishop and his successors forever**

STREET AND NUMBER:
**c/o Rev. Wm. H. Mertes, Admin.
119 West Sixth Street**

CITY OR TOWN: Covington	STATE: Kentucky	CODE 21
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Kenton County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Covington	STATE: Kentucky	CODE 21
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

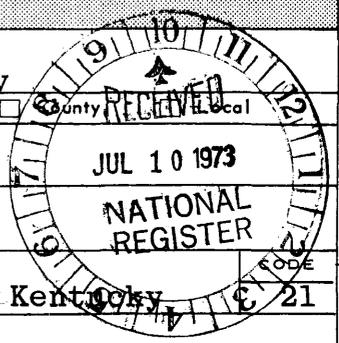
TITLE OF SURVEY:
Survey Of Historic Sites In Kentucky

DATE OF SURVEY: **1972, March** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
401 Wapping Street

CITY OR TOWN: Frankfort	STATE: Kentucky	CODE 21
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This beautiful Renaissance basilica was begun in 1869 and completed in 1871; designed by Walter & Stuart from the original drawings of Father Kuhr in 1841. It was built of brick and stone by Anton Bley and Bros. The building is 87 feet wide, 90 feet deep; the transept is 98 feet and the interior is 200 feet high. There are two cast iron columns giving support to the roof which are considered the largest in this part of country. At the front entrance is a granite parapet and four tall Corinthian columns. The entrance is enhanced with religious statuary and beautiful flowers in season. The two tall clock towers can be seen from nearly all parts of the city as well as from across the River in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The interior was designed and executed by Wencelas Thien who also made the marble frescoes which were installed a few years later - these are considered unequal in design and harmony. The cupola stands 150 feet high and contains a most unusual Italianesque mural, possibly done by Johann Schmitt who did the five beautiful murals in 1890. The cupola provides proper lighting for these murals which depict the "mysteries of the rosary" and are considered masterpieces of religious art. Johann Schmitt was called the "first Christian painter in America" and is recognized as the first teacher of Frank Duveneck, well known artist who worshipped here and taught at the Cincinnati Academy of Art as well as in Paris and Italy.

A large crucifix over the center altar was done in 1871 by Covington (Ky.) sculptor Ferdinand Muer; the Stations of the Cross were executed by Paul Deschwanden in 1872. Other notable objects include magnificent art glass windows depicting various religious themes, all imported from Munich, Germany and installed over a period of years from the original early installations in 1871 to 1921, which enhance the beauty of this building. Beautifully carved wood communion table and pulpit done by Donnenfelser were added in 1891. The relics which had been put into the altar of the first church were enclosed in a magnificent marble altar in 1903. The Mettlach mosaic tile floor was also laid at this time.

A very large and magnificent organ built by Koehnken & Grimm of Cincinnati (Ohio) was installed in 1876 at a cost of \$7,800. (Present plans include the reworking of this organ, one of the few remaining such organs in this area.)

Carrara marble bowls for holy water were given at an early date and modernization of heating and lighting has been done as time and finances permitted.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1869-1871**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mother of God Roman Catholic Church, built between 1870 and 1871, is one of the oldest churches in the City of Covington, Kentucky. It is the oldest Catholic Church in continuous use in Covington, and probably in the entire Northern Kentucky area.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, there was a very large immigration of Germans, mostly Roman Catholic, to Northern Kentucky, especially Covington. These people became and are to this day among the leaders of the community.

St. Mary's parish, the first parish in the city of Covington, was established by Bishop Flaget in 1833. In 1834 the parish built a frame church, which was one of the predecessors of St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. During the first eight years of its existence, St. Mary's parish was a mixed congregation of English-speaking and German-speaking parishioners. By 1841 the number of German-speaking families was large enough to warrant a separate parish. The Germans were granted permission to establish their own parish, under the name of Mother of God's Congregation, and their first services were held in a rented hall. Their first pastor was Reverend Ferdinand Kuhr who was born in Eslohe, Prussia and came to America in 1839 to establish German missions for the church. Since he was orphaned at an early age and had no money for education, Father Kuhr realized the importance of education. Even while the church services were still being held in a rented hall, he rented an additional building and opened a school. Father Kuhr played a large role in raising the money for the first German Church and one-story brick school which were opened in 1843.

- Continued -



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of the Diocese of Covington, Ky., 1853-1953, by Rev. Paul E. Ryan, 1954 (privately printed, Compiled from the Archives of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky.)

Booklet "100th Anniversary of the Dedication of Mother of God Church" compiled from church records and files of the diocesan weekly, "The Messenger"; and "A Centennial Chronicle", 1941 by Sister Mary C. Brungs, S.N.D.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

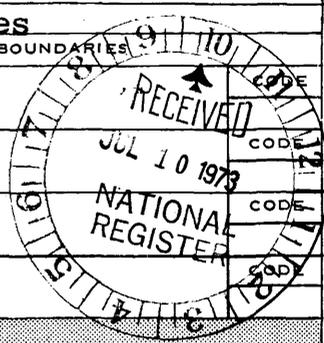
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0	0		39° 05' 02"	84° 33' 45"	
NE	0	0				
SE	0	0				
SW	0	0				

UTM
16/715160/
4328830

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 10 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Mrs. Robert M. Rouse, Kenton County Representative

ORGANIZATION: Kentucky Heritage Commission DATE: July 10, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER: 13 West Lakeside Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Ft. Mitchell STATE: Kentucky CODE: 21

12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: Mrs. Simeon Willis

Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: July 6, 1973

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert M. Rouse
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 7/24/73

ATTEST:

[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 7/20/73

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) # 1

STATE	Kentucky	
COUNTY	Kenton	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	JUL 24 1973	DATE

(Number all entries)

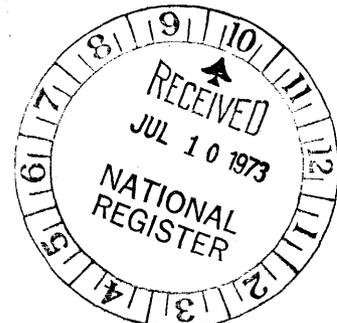
#8 SIGNIFICANCE

In 1867 the Mother Of God congregation began a movement for a larger church, and by 1870 a lot was purchased and a temporary church erected. The present Mother Of God Roman Catholic Church, designed by Walter and Stuart from drawings made by Father Kuhr, and completed in 1871, is a majestic edifice that makes a lasting impression upon visitors. Its dimensions are: 87 feet front, 190 feet deep, 98 feet in transept and 200 feet high. Resembling a Renaissance basilica, it has a handsome portico and Corinthian columns, tall stained glass windows, a cupola 150 feet in height that illuminates the interior paintings, and slender towers with gold crosses that are landmarks which can be seen from most of the bridges crossing the Ohio River.

The theme of the interior decoration is the mysteries of the rosary, with the joyful mysteries depicted in the Johann Schmitt murals; the sorrowful mysteries in the plastic work, and the glorious mysteries in the windows. The Wenceslas Thien frescoes, unequalled in design and color harmony, retain their original charm. The artistry of Kriehagen is represented by the pictures above the windows - a symbolism from the Litany of Loretto. The five Johann Schmitt murals, completed in 1890, are considered masterpieces of religious art. Johann Schmitt was called "The First Christian Painter in America". He also aided poor boys and tutored Frank Duvencok and saw him off to Munich, Speyer and Florence. Duvencok, was later called "America's greatest talent of the brush," and for many years he was the head of the Cincinnati Art Academy.

In 1879 Reverend William Tappert became the pastor of Mother Of God Church while his brother, Henry Tappert, served as his assistant. The Tapperts were born in Dueren, and educated in Rhineland. The church prospered under the Fathers Tappert; they were universally popular with the members of the congregation and were men of the widest culture. Father William was a thorough German administrator. When he arrived the church had a \$90,000 debt, but in 1903, every cent had been repaid, as well as that incurred since his arrival. As a result the church was consecrated and blessed.

- Continued -



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) # 2

STATE	Kentucky	
COUNTY	Kenton	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		JUL 24 1973

(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Father Henry Tappert, who had received a classical & musical education in his native land, directed the church choir. The musical programs at Mother of God Church became famous on both sides of the Ohio and Licking Rivers. In a published criticism, Professor Elsenheimer of the Cincinnati College of Music, wrote a glowing account of the 1890 Christmas program at Mother of God Church. In the summer of 1896 the St. Caecilia Society conducted its Gregorian Institute in Covington, at the invitation of Father William & Henry Tappert. After hearing concerts presented by the St. Gregorius Singing Society of the parish, Professor John Singenberger, the most famous instructor at the institute, declared the St. Gregorius Singing Society the finest Catholic Church choir in the country. After Father Henry Tappert died in 1929, his able successor in directing the men's choir was Professor Edward Strubel who had begun his career as organist & choir director in 1895 under Father Henry Tappert. One of his best known compositions is "When Evening Shadows Fall" which was awarded first prize in a national contest for original American choral music in Chicago.

Education remained important in the Mother of God parish. In 1905 they built a modern school, containing an auditorium, gym, cafeteria, a specially designed music room. In Bishop Maes's opinion, Mother of God was "a model parish."

The Mother of God Roman Catholic Church or "Mutter Gottes Kirche" was built by German immigrants over a hundred years ago. Many aspects of the church served to remind the immigrants of their previous homes - the pastors were German and many of the church's beautiful pieces of art work, including stained glass art windows, a valuable Mettlach tile floor and stone statues from the Mayer Royal Art Institute, were ordered from Germany, others were executed by artists of German descent. The Mother of God Roman Catholic Church is a magnificent edifice, rivaling many fine churches of Europe. It is a symbol representing the German heritage of the immigrants who settled in Covington, Kentucky.

