

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 16 1977
DATE ENTERED DEC 2 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME



HISTORIC

St. Mary's Catholic Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Fourth Street at Third Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Medora

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

North Dakota

VICINITY OF

CODE 38

COUNTY

Billings

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<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:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Diocese of Bismarck

STREET & NUMBER

Box 1575

CITY, TOWN

Bismarck

VICINITY OF

North Dakota 58501

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Billings County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Post Office Box 168

CITY, TOWN

Medora

STATE

North Dakota 58645

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

North Dakota Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1977

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS State Historical Society of North Dakota
Liberty Memorial Building

CITY, TOWN

Bismarck

STATE

North Dakota 58505

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

___EXCELLENT
GOOD
___FAIR

___DETERIORATED
___RUINS
___UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

___UNALTERED
ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
___MOVED DATE_____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Measuring 24 by 50 feet, St. Mary's Catholic Church in Medora is a 1-story yellow brick structure laid in common bond, with a brick foundation and a 3-course brick water table. Straddling the facade end of the gabled roof is an open wooden belfry with corner posts sheathed in angled boarding and supporting a pyramidal roof surmounted by a cross. Wooden shingles cover both the belfry roof and the main roof, and beneath the facade eaves of the latter are broad fascia which give emphasis to the rake of the gable. On each side elevation are four 6 over 6 windows with wooden double-hung sash and lancet-arch headings. The arched form of the headings is reinforced by a double row of soldier coursework, a feature repeated in the blind arch above the paneled wooden doors at the entrance. A metal plate over the doorway reads as follows:

Saint Mary's
This Church Was Built in 1884
by Medora
Marquise de Mores
And Dedicated to the Diocese
by Her Sons
in 1920

To the right of the door is a cornerstone inscribed "Athenais," which was the name of the daughter of the Marquise de Mores. On the south elevation is a cellar door, and centered on the rear wall is a chimney built in 1941. There are no plantings or outbuildings, but the church lot was leveled and a front sidewalk laid in 1961-62.

The interior of St. Mary's was originally one room, with walls and ceilings finished with plaster left its natural white. The walls are now painted green, and the false-arch ceiling is covered with insulating fiberboard tiles installed in 1941 during an extensive restoration and renovation project. At the same time, a small sacristy and an equally small confessional were constructed from wood framing and fiberboard on either side of the altar. A chancel arch was erected to coordinate visually the new rooms with each other, while at the same time making the sanctuary distinct from the nave. A reredos of drapery was added behind the altar, which is the original white and gilt wooden one, carved with columns, panels, and floral designs. At the rear of the building, a vestibule was built from a part of the nave in order to buffer drafts. The floor area on either side was then raised to provide a platform for the choir (south side) and a pump organ (north side). New flooring was laid in the nave (the original was wide pine planks), and frosted glass from a nearby abandoned church was substituted for some of the original transparent panes in the lancet-arch windows, although the project was never completed.

A bell was hung in the belfry of St. Mary's for the first time in 1946. In 1957 the building was wired for electricity and new stations of the Cross were mounted. The original wooden pews with carved shields on the faces of the curved armrests were supplemented with a number of replicas in 1958. Heat is provided by a propane furnace installed in 1964, and storm windows were acquired in 1967.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1884

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Peter Book (Builder)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of St. Mary's derives from its status as the oldest Catholic church still in use in the state of North Dakota; the effective simplicity of its architectural design; and its association with the family of the Marquis de Mores (1858-1896), a French nobleman who founded the town in which the church is located.

Medora on the Little Missouri River in the Dakota Badlands was laid out in 1883 by the Marquis as headquarters for his commercial scheme of slaughtering cattle on the range and shipping the meat to consumers in refrigerated railroad cars. The town quickly prospered and by 1884 had acquired 251 permanent settlers, one of whom was Peter Book, a builder who also owned a local brickyard. In July, 1884, Book was awarded the contract for St. Mary's by Medora, Marquise de Mores, who built the church for the town which was her namesake. Construction progressed rapidly, with the completed edifice being blessed on November 2, 1884, by Father Martin Schmitt, priest of Mandan parish and its missions. The first baptism and the first marriage in the new church both took place on December 30, 1884, with the groom, carpenter Jim Butler, furnishing pews for the building during the following year. In the early months of its existence, the church was also the setting for a school taught by a Miss Finger, who came from South Heart.

In 1886 the Marquis de Mores and his family departed Medora following the collapse of his meat-packing venture, which occurred chiefly for two reasons: an Eastern taste for corn-fed rather than range-fed cattle and a price war initiated by competing packers. The town of Medora, being almost entirely dependent economically on the de Mores enterprise, entered a decline which lasted for nearly a century.

St. Mary's passed to the care of the resident pastor of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Dickinson, in 1887. During the present century, responsibility for it has been assumed successively by pastors at Beach, Belfield, South Heart, and Sentinel Butte. The patron of the church has also changed through the years: Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (1890s); Sacred Heart (1896-ca. 1920); St. Mary's (officially, 1938-present). The donation of St. Mary's to the community of Medora was reaffirmed in 1920 by Louis and Paul Manca de Vallombrosa, sons of the Marquis and the Marquise de Mores; a legal instrument of the donation was drawn up in 1925.

During the mid-1960s, Medora underwent a tourist boom generated by restoration and promotional activities of the Gold Seal Company of Bismarck, which capitalized

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Backes, Raymond C. Chapel in the Badlands. Sentinel Butte, North Dakota: St. Mary's Church of Medora, 1970.

Maddox, Dawn. Personal inspection, February 17, 1977.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,3	61,25,4,0	5,19,65,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dawn Maddox, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of North Dakota

DATE

May 3, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Liberty Memorial Building

TELEPHONE

(701)224-2666

CITY OR TOWN

Bismarck

STATE

North Dakota 58505

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

James E. Sherry

TITLE

N.D. State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE May 3, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. M. ...

DATE

12/2/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST

Charles ...

DATE

11/30/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

on the locale's colorful cattle-town origins. St. Mary's single Sunday service consequently became hopelessly inadequate, and eventually three weekend services during the summer months were instituted. Currently, hundreds of visitors are served each week during the tourist season, although the permanent congregation of the "Chapel in the Badlands" remains small.