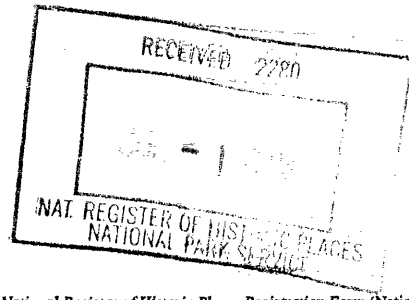


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



891

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 any 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. Augustine's Catholic Church
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 113 Virginia Street N/A not for publication
city or town Austin N/A vicinity
state Nevada code NV county Lander code 015 zip code 89310

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones SHPO 6-26-03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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 commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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):

for
Signature of the Keeper Edson H. Beall Date of Action 8/14/03

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category

Subcategory

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------|
| RELIGION | religious facility |
| RELIGION | church school |
| RELIGION | church-related residence |

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category

Subcategory

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival
Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	Stone
walls	Brick
roof	Metal
other	Wood

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 the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

ART

Period of Significance

1866-1940

Significant Dates

1866

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Architect/Builder

Jolly, Rafael (mural artist)

Jolly, Duff (mural artist)

Kilgen, Henry (organ maker)

Reddit, Alexander (1939 renovations)

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):

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately 0.12 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing	
1 11	494010 4371300	3 11	
2 11		4 11	

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>J. Daniel Pezzoni</u>	date	<u>June 1, 2003</u>
organization	<u>Landmark Preservation Associates</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 464-5315</u>
street & number	<u>6 Houston St.</u>	zip code	<u>24450</u>
city or town	<u>Lexington</u> state <u>VA</u>		

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>Jan Morris (anticipated owner in July 2003)</u>		
street & number	<u>PO Box 503</u>	telephone	<u>unknown</u>
city or town	<u>Austin</u> state <u>NV</u>	zip code	<u>89310</u>

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 7 Page 1

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description

Summary

St. Augustine's Catholic Church is located at 113 Virginia Street in Austin, Lander County, Nevada. Austin is situated at an elevation of approximately 6,600 feet above sea level in Pony Canyon near the northern end of the Toiyabe Range and near the geographic center of the state. The town lies in the watershed of the Reese River, a tributary of the Humboldt River, and it is served by US Highway 50. The northwest-facing church was built in 1866 on a steeply sloping site bounded by Virginia Street on the northwest, Court Street on the southwest, and Water Street on the northeast. The one-story, nave-form building is constructed of American-bond brick on a granite basement and it has a front-gable roof with decorative rafter ends and recent corrugated metal roofing. (The church was probably originally covered with tin; a photograph from ca. 1930 shows what might have been tar paper and batten roofing). Centered on the front elevation is a three-story entry and belfry tower with a tall spire. A ca. 1900 sacristy addition extends at the rear east corner. The interior walls are covered with murals painted about 1940 depicting scenes from the Bible and other subjects. In the gallery is a Henry Kilgen organ in an ornate Gothic organ case. Both the main level and the basement, the latter historically used for classroom and living space, retain many traces of historic decorative painting, wallpaper, and floor treatments.

Exterior

The front tower is the building's dominant feature. The tower's first story contains a wide entry under a segmental/jack arch. The entry has double-leaf four-plus-four molded panel doors surmounted by two two-panel wooden transom panels. The door bears traces of reddish graining that is identical to that on the basement door (described below). In front of the entry are semicircular concrete steps. In the tower's second story are three round-arched window openings, those on the southwest and northeast sides blind, that on the northwest side with two round-arched windows (an Italianate-style feature). All three window openings have granite sills, as do the building's other windows. Each of the two northwest windows have six-light sash with mid-twentieth century amber and blue rippled glass. The tower's third story has lancet-arched belfry openings with wooden louvers and granite sills (these lancet-arched openings are the principal exterior Gothic Revival-style features). Above the belfry the brickwork slopes back to form a base for the octagonal-section spire. The spire has a paneled base, metal sheathing on the spire itself, and a wood cross finial with chamfered extensions and molded and rounded tips. The 1886 Sanborn map described the tower and spire as being 75 feet in height.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 7 Page 2

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

Flanking the tower are secondary entries with plywood replacement doors and granite steps with ridged traction surfaces. These entries and the tower entry open onto a forecourt with battered granite retaining walls on the southwest and northwest sides. A fence of wire-nailed construction with decorative pickets and square-section corner posts extends along the forecourt's southwest and northwest sides, and until recent decades wooden steps descended to Virginia Street. Historic photographs suggest the forecourt dates to the early twentieth century, although it is similar in form to a forecourt platform that originally occupied the same spot.

On the southwest elevation are four windows and on the northeast elevation are three windows (the location of the fourth window on the northeast side is occupied by the sacristy). The tall window openings have segmental/jack arches and contain paired six-over-six windows with blue and amber glass like that in the entry tower windows. The blue panes occupy the inside edges of the windows so that the amber panes form a frame around them (the tower windows have a similar pattern). The present window glass dates to the mid-twentieth century; it replaced glass in at least three colors (possibly including the colors blue and yellow) randomly arranged.

The ca. 1900 sacristy has a corrugated-metal shed roof, American-bond brick walls, a one-over-one window, and a bricked-up jack-arched entry, which retains its granite sill. The present sacristy replaces an earlier, probably original one; the 1890 Sanborn map shows a small brick wing at this location. High on the rear southeast elevation is a round window with a radial pattern of red, blue, purple, green, and light yellow stained glass with a small cross in red glass at the top. This window replaced an original cruciform window before 1900; the semicircular relieving arch associated with the original window remains. On the roof ridge above is a wood cross similar to that on the spire.

The granite basement level has a seven-bay southwest elevation with a center entry. The entry is sheltered by a mid-twentieth century gabled stoop and is reached by concrete steps made in 1937 (the entry appears not to have had a stoop originally). The entry contains a four-panel door with wavy light red graining in the panels and darker red on the moldings. The entry and door have a granite threshold, a three-light transom, and a decorative bell pull. The six-over-six basement windows have brick-quoined frames.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 7 Page 3

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

Interior: Main Level

The main level has plaster on brick walls, rough floor boards (probably originally carpeted), and a gambrel-like five-segmented ceiling with beaded board sheathing and a molded cornice. The ceiling is supported along its center line by temporary timber shores inserted recently. The ceiling boards are painted light blue, a color that probably dates to about 1940 (earlier the ceiling may have had a light brown painted or varnished finish). Three milk-glass lamps hang from circular medallions on the ceiling; the medallions are created by molding strips applied to the ceiling boards and are painted pink-beige with diamond-like stars in gold. The medallion centers and lamp attachments are painted blue with diffuse rays extending into the pink-beige. The main level's molded door and window surrounds, plain baseboards, and woodwork are grained in imitation of yellow pine.

Murals were painted about 1940 on all four walls of the nave. The murals occupy the upper halves of the side walls above a frieze of pink, red, yellow, and blue tulip-like flowers; stencilled blue crosses with banners; and stencilled garlands of green ivy-like leaves. Green stenciling with a repeating arch and cross design extends under the cornice of all the walls except the northwest one and also extends down the corners flanking the altar. The same stenciling in dark green and turquoise appears under the mural between the center and south entries on the northwest wall. Above the windows is blue stenciling with crosses. The murals on the side walls have arched gold (painted) frames. The plaster on which the murals are painted has been described as a "mud-based plaster-like" finish with limestone added to lighten it.

The murals depict the following subjects. The left side of the altar (southeast) wall portrays Christ risen from the tomb accompanied by an angel blowing a trumpet and holding a palm frond. The right side portrays a similar angel, a young woman (Mary Magdalene?), and a group of women walking toward Jerusalem. Above the round window at the top of the wall is Christ in heaven with two putti. The southwest wall begins at the east end with St. Augustine and an angel or an apparition of the Christ Child with a putti descending to place a bishop's miter on the saint's head. Next is a small mural portraying the young Augustine with his mother, St. Monica, at the moment of his conversion. Next is an adoration scene with the infant Christ, Mary and Joseph, and the three Magi. Next is the Flight into Egypt. Next, under the gallery, is Christ in a field of grain.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 7 Page 4

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

On the northwest wall, under the gallery and between the south and center entries, is Christ with a lame man and a figure that may be a Pharisee. Above the gallery on the left is a woman (St. Cecilia?) playing at an organ accompanied by a choir of three angels, putti, and shafts of heavenly light. To the right is Christ with children in reference to the suffer little children to come unto me verse in the Bible. The northeast wall begins at the west end with the infant Christ with shepherds. Next is the Assumption of Mary. At the east end of the northeast wall, above the north confessional and doorway into the sacristy, is a large mural of the Crucifixion with Christ on the cross, a young woman (Mary Magdalene?) hugging the foot of the cross, the Virgin Mary with other women, a mounted Roman soldier, and a darkened sun and other celestial objects.

The dais at the altar end of the nave appears to be a reworking of an earlier dais and an altar rail appears to have once extended across it. Against the southeast wall are three tables of cut-nailed construction. All three have fronts and sides with a design of fluted pilasters supporting lancet arches; in the spandrels above the arches are quatrefoil plaques with gilded center buttons. The table bases and the panels inside the arches are marbled stone color with black veining. The long middle table has panels painted with tendrils and blue ribbons. The left table, which once supported a statue of Mary holding the Christ Child, has a center panel painted with a rose. The right table, which once supported a statue of St. Joseph holding lilies, has a center panel painted with a lily. On the middle table is a crucifix cabinet of pinnacled Gothic design. A reredos with a red and gold harlequin-like pattern stood on the middle table in the mid-1960s. The wall itself preserves the ghost outline of a large altar that must still have existed when the nave was painted ca. 1940. The present altar, which stands forward on the dais, is constructed of plywood with two panels with gilded designs.

Flanking the dais against the side walls are two confessionals of grained, cut-nailed, beaded board construction. These are Gothic in design with pointed crestings and lancet-arched openings. At the top of the crestings are simple cross finials with black-veined white marbling. In the spandrels below are stylized cross plaques with curved and chamfered extensions and marbling like the finials. The sides of the confessionals have lancet panels; the panels facing the congregation have been painted over but ca. 1940 stenciling with ivy-like leaves, white crosses, and rays of heavenly light shows through the brown paint. Inside the confessionals are decorative balustrade sections and slatted screens between the two compartments, surfaces painted light pink, and nineteenth-century carpets on the floors.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 7 Page 5

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

The pews are arranged with two aisles and a solid railing that divides them down the center. There were formerly more pews than at present as demonstrated by ghost traces on the walls to front and rear. Across the front of the middle pews is a solid railing stiffened by wrought iron stays. The ends of the pews are vibrantly grained in yellow and tan (stylized yellow pine graining) and have curved arm rests at the ends painted brown, identifying numerals painted in silver on black on small tin plaques, and tin card slots that presumably once displayed the names of those who had use of the pews. The graining on some pews portrays pine knots with cross-like cracks. The name and numeral plates have been removed from the end of a pew near the gallery stair revealing earlier, browner graining.

The gallery at the nave's west end stands on tapered and chamfered posts with molded caps and yellow marbling, and it projects at the middle to provide room for the organ. Under the gallery is a Kalamazoo Brilliant cast-iron stove with nickel fittings. A boxed winder stair entered through a beaded batten door with a decorative lock box and porcelain knob rises to the gallery in the north corner. Under this stair is a ladder-like stair to the basement, accessed through another beaded batten door. The gallery railing has openings with curved upper and lower ends; wrought iron stays with arrowheaded ends stiffen the railing.

The organ has a brass plaque over the keyboard that identifies the maker as "Henry Kilgen/Church Organ Builder/St. Louis, MO." It dates to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The organ screen is Gothic in design with a pointed cresting containing a trefoil lancet-arched opening, flanking battlemented wings with smaller trefoil lancet openings, pinnacles, trefoil and quatrefoil piercings, and paneling. The pipes are painted light blue, dark red, and mat and reflective gold with floral and foliated stenciling. The bellows arm projects on the left side. Scrawled on sections of the organ mechanism are initials ("BHS") and instructions for assembling the organ ("No 30 S[it]uate to hold upright roller on pedals check action"). Behind the organ is a round-arched opening that provides access to the second floor of the tower. This space was originally intended to contain the organ and choir.

The sacristy has a beaded matchboard ceiling, plaster walls once painted a yellow-green color, and a linoleum floor mat with a 1921 issue of the Salt Lake City *Tribune* used as underlayment. The linoleum has a rosette and octagon pattern, perhaps meant to evoke marble inlay, in shades of blue-green, gray, and white. Built against one wall is a brick vault for the host, with a green metal door

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CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 7 Page 6

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

and a cross formed from projecting bricks. Also in the room are a nineteenth-century vestment dresser, a grained armoire, and beaded clothes-hook rails.

Interior: Basement

The basement contains three original spaces: a large schoolroom lighted by five of the six windows on the southwest elevation, a smaller room at the west end of the school room (illuminated by the westernmost basement window), and a narrow unfinished storage space along the northeast side. An unfinished modern bathroom in a drywall enclosure occupies the south corner of the schoolroom. There is evidence for a former partition wall that roughly bisected the schoolroom and, associated with it, a possible former vestibule. A tradition that the room incorporated a folding partition may be corroborated by the presence of a mortise in the floor near the partition evidence. The ceiling presently has exposed circular-sawn joists--higher at the east end under the dais--but there are remnants of two former cloth ceilings. The baseboards and door and window trim are plain (the windows have no jambs). The exterior door has molded recessed panels, brown graining, and a large iron lock box. At the east end of the schoolroom is a Sterling Oak stove (no. 230), and in the north corner is a high matchboard wainscot, perhaps evidence of a former kitchen area. The doorway between the schoolroom and the smaller room has a three-light transom.

The schoolroom preserves multiple layers of late nineteenth and early twentieth century wallpaper. The earliest paper has a pattern of blue florets and light gray vertical stripes on white. Most of the papers have vertical stripes, several were hung with top border papers, and two of the papers have floral wreath or swag designs and appear to have been hung upside down. One border has a geometric design in dark green and gold. A small fragment of paper with a gold Greek key design survives under a window, and a strip of paper with a Chinese lattice and foliage design in gold survives on the northeast wall. An especially decorative paper survives over a doorway into the storage area: it has a pattern of decorative wood panels (with grain) separated by astragal moldings, all rendered in shades of light gray and reminiscent of period ashlar-pattern papers. One of the later papers is stamped "U.W.R.C. of N.A./Union Made." In addition to the wallpapers are shreds of a green cloth wall covering. The southeast wall may not have been covered originally for it has a white painted dado with dark gray above.

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CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 7 Page 7

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

Another notable decorative feature of the schoolroom is the floor, which is comb painted with an arcing brown on yellow pattern like circular-saw marks. The floor painting occurs only in the east half of the room, and it was not done in a rectangular area at the center of the room, which may have been covered by a carpet or matting; nor was the painting done at various points along the walls, which may have been covered by furniture or built-in features.

The smaller room has at least two layers of historic wallpaper. In the storage area are piled architectural elements from the main level such as balustrade sections and doors (all grained), kneelers, and what may be a dismantled confessional. The brick partition between the storage area and the two south rooms has a pattern of recesses formed by missing bricks that might have served as scaffolding sockets. Resting on top of the wall are the ends of the schoolroom ceiling joists, some painted with the number 18 in black (the joists are 18 feet long). An iron barred vent on the northeast wall is now covered. This room was originally intended to serve as furnace room. Round stove pipe holes high in the brick wall between the storage/furnace room and the schoolroom may be associated with an original furnace heating system; at one of the holes fragments of a late 1860s French-language newspaper are adhered to the wall.

Integrity Statement

St. Augustine's Catholic Church possesses very good architectural integrity from the period of significance. The church retains virtually all of its exterior and interior character-defining features. Especially notable is the survival of decorative finishes and traces throughout the building, even multiple generations of finishes such as the basement wallpapers. The presence of the organ, historic altar furniture, and other furnishings also contributes to the building's integrity. Detracting from the integrity is the recent shoring in the nave; however, this was intended as a temporary measure and presumably will be removed when the building is rehabilitated. The integrity of the church's setting is good, with many historic dwellings and commercial buildings and only a few modern buildings in close proximity. St. Augustine's hillside setting gives it commanding views of the Austin Historic District, the sagebrush-covered walls of Pony Canyon, and the Reese River Valley.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 8 Page 8

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance

Summary

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, located in Austin, Nevada, is Nevada's oldest Catholic church building and also one of its finest. Construction of the imposing brick building overlooking Austin's downtown was begun and largely completed in 1866. The exterior is distinguished by a bell tower with Gothic Revival and Italianate details; the interior retains many early features including grained pews, Gothic confessionals, and a decoratively painted Henry C. Kilgen organ in a Gothic case. In 1939 the parish hired Rafael Jolly to paint murals for the interior, and the vibrantly colored scenes of events in the lives of Christ and St. Augustine are today the building's artistic highlight. The basement, used as a school and living quarters, preserves decorative floor painting and early wallpapers. From St. Augustine's Parish priests such as Fr. Edward Kelly and Fr. Dominick Monteverde fanned out to establish Catholicism in eastern Nevada and Utah in the 1860s and 1870s. With Austin's eventual decline St. Augustine's was made into a mission church, and services there ceased at the end of the twentieth century. A rehabilitation is now being considered.

Applicable Criteria

St. Augustine's Catholic Church meets Criterion A and is eligible in the religion area of significance as Nevada's oldest surviving Catholic church building and as the mother church for many central and eastern Nevada Catholic churches. The property is also eligible under Criterion C in the art area of significance for its spectacular murals, nineteenth century wallpaper remnants, and decorative finishes including marbling, graining, and painted flooring. The period of significance extends from the date of construction in 1866 until 1940, the completion date of the murals, a time span that also encompasses the period of the property's religious significance. St. Augustine's Catholic Church is eligible at the state level of significance. The building is located in the Austin Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Information in support of eligibility appears throughout this section.

Acknowledgments

A number of organizations and individuals assisted in the preparation of this report. The nomination was sponsored by Lander County with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the Nevada Commission of Economic Development, and it is one of ten nominations

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET⁷

Section 8 Page 9

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

prepared for prominent historic landmarks in Austin in 2003. The nomination was assisted by the present (June 2003) owner of the property, the Catholic Diocese of Reno, and by future owner Jan Morris of Austin. Others who provided assistance included Allen D. Gibson, Deputy District Attorney, Lander County; Christy Caronongan, Administrative Assistant, Lander County Executive Director's Office; Ray H. Williams Jr., Ray and Irene Salisbury, Phillip "Poncho" and Joan Williams, and Joy Brandt with the Austin Historical Society; Ray "Ramey" Williams III, Austin; Dee Helming and Herbert Wallace "Wally" Trapnell, The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Sally J. Cook, Austin; Br. Matthew Cunningham, FSR, Chancellor, Diocese of Reno; the Rev. Estelle Shanks, Austin; Lisa Gandolfo, Austin; Bernie Walker, Reno; Gail Utter, Lander County Deputy Assessor, Austin; Marvin Wholey, Reno; Sara Larson, Director of Museums, North Lake Tahoe Historical Society, Tahoe City, California; Jason Stratman, Library Assistant, Missouri Historical Society Library, St. Louis; and Mella Rothwell Harmon, Architectural Historian/National Register Coordinator, Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.

Historic Context

Silver was discovered in Pony Canyon in May 1862 and within a year the population of the nascent community of Austin and its immediate vicinity stood at nearly 1,000. The Comstock Lode boomtown of Virginia City provided a staging area for the settlement of Austin and in many respects served as a template for Austin's economic, demographic, and architectural development. Austin was made the seat of Lander County on September 2, 1863, and in November 1864 the town's population was reliably estimated at approximately 6,000, briefly making Austin the state's second largest community. Austin rapidly passed through the three incipient developmental stages identified by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office as characteristic of the state's mining towns: the settlement stage (provisional architecture and haphazard organization), the camp phase (more permanent frame buildings and town platting), and the town phase (masonry construction, public buildings, established infrastructure, and stylistic sophistication).¹

¹ Neu, "Austin Historic District;" Abbe, *Austin*, 56; Hulse, *Silver State*, 79; and Harmon, "How to Prepare Nominations," 8-9. One authority claims a peak Austin population of 10,000 in the summer of 1863 (Nevada State Historical Society, *Nevada*, 259). Another suggests a peak population of approximately 8,000 (Smith, "Austin, Nevada," 7).

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 8 Page 10

St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

By the end of 1866 Austin boasted two substantial brick churches (Austin Methodist and St. Augustine's Catholic), several banking houses, the *Daily Reese River Reveille* newspaper, the International Hotel (moved from Virginia City), and hundreds of brick, stone, wood, and adobe mining structures, commercial buildings, and dwellings. American-born whites constituted the majority of the population; Chinese, English/Welsh, Irish, and "civilized Indians" were important groups as well. Austin also experienced, to a degree, a fourth phase of Nevada mining town development: partial abandonment, as the silver played out and the town's economy and population contracted at the end of the nineteenth century. Austin's status as a trade center for central Nevada prevented it from becoming a ghost town, but the town's population declined to 702 by 1900 and stands at about 300 today.²

The area that would eventually comprise Nevada was originally a part of the Diocese of Sonora. In 1863 the Austin area fell under the Vicariate Apostolic of Marysville, and at the end of the nineteenth century it was transferred to the Vicariate of Utah (1886-91) and the Diocese of Salt Lake (1891-1931). Since 1931 St. Augustine's parish has been a part of the Diocese of Reno. Nevada's first Catholic church was built in Virginia City in 1860 or in Genoa the same year (accounts differ), and Carson City's first Catholic church was erected soon after. The original church buildings in these three communities and also one erected in Gold Hill in 1864 are now gone, although the basement level of Virginia City's 1862 Catholic church survives as the basement of St. Mary in the Mountains, erected in 1876. St. Augustine's Catholic Church, first used for worship in 1866, is therefore regarded as Nevada's oldest surviving Catholic church building. Fewer than a dozen Catholic churches existed in Nevada in 1881, according to Myron Angel's state history of that date.³

St. Augustine's parish has its roots in Austin's Irish community. The 1870 federal census reported 288 Irish residents, as a group second only to American-born whites in number, and many of these lived in Austin, the county's largest community. As early as May 1863 an Irish Relief Society

² Neu, "Austin Historic District;" Abbe, *Austin*, 58-59; and Harmon, "How to Prepare Nominations," 9.

³ "Nevada Catholic History;" "Nevada's Catholic History;" Nevada State Historical Society, *Nevada, A Guide to the Silver State*, 89; and Angel, *History of Nevada*, 205.

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existed in Clifton (a contemporary community absorbed into Austin), and the Austin Circle of the Fenian Brotherhood was a leading political and social institution beginning in 1865. St. Augustine's Parish was organized in December 1864 and was first visited by Fr. Patrick Manogue of Virginia City and Fr. Patrick O'Reilly of Gold Hill. The first dedicated parish priest was Fr. Edward Kelly. Ordained in 1865, Kelly temporarily assisted Fr. O'Reilly in Gold Hill before moving on "to establish the Church in Austin," as Catholic historian Bernice Maher Mooney has phrased it. In the summer of 1866 Kelly was relieved by Fr. Dominick Monteverde; Kelly went on to Salt Lake City, where he is credited with being the major force in establishing the Catholic Church in that city, but he returned to Austin for extended periods through the end of the decade.⁴

The Fenian Brotherhood played an important role in funding the construction of St. Augustine's. The Austin Circle's first St. Patrick's Ball in March 1866 added \$500 to a church construction fund already in existence, and fundraising before and during a Ladies Fair and Ball held in November netted over \$4,000. The site for the church was chosen in early August 1866. On August 7 the *Reveille* published a note from Fr. Monteverde, "who recently succeeded Father Kelly in the charge of the Catholics of this district," thanking B. P. Rankin for donating part of the site and thereby enabling Monteverde "to erect the church in a central position, and where it will be an ornament to the town." The law office of Henry Mayenbaum, which occupied the site, was moved across Virginia Street. Grading commenced on August 8 and was nearly completed by August 18 when the *Reveille* reported:

Considerable excavation has been required to adapt the lot to the building, which will be undertaken immediately. Large blocks of granite are already on the ground, where they were hauled gratis yesterday by James H. Burgess, for which act of liberality Father Monteverde returns his thanks.

By September 10 Fr. Monteverde had received plans and specifications for the building and he announced the opening of bids for the brickwork. Monteverde had just arrived from a trip to the

⁴ Abbe, *Austin*, 58, 75, 76; *Reese River Reveille*, May 30, 1863 and September 16, 1939; and Mooney, *Salt of the Earth*, 39-40, 42.

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St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

west on the 10th, suggesting the possibility he had been consulting with his superiors on the church.⁵

In its October 23, 1866 issue the *Reveille* published a detailed description of the church then under construction. Of the "little gem of a church" the paper wrote:

The church fronts on Virginia Street, and is 54 feet long by 34 feet wide. There is a basement on Court street, built of stone, 50 feet long by 17 feet wide and 10 feet high, designed for a school room or dwelling; the space on the upper side of this room is to be devoted to a furnace room, from which flues already extend. Above the basement the building is of brick, with walls 16 inches thick and 17 feet high, plastered and finished at the top with an ornamental cornice. The ceiling of the church will be arched, and its greatest height [*sic*] will be 24 feet from the floor. A tower stands directly in the center of the front of the church; the walls are of brick 20 inches thick and it is 12 by 11 feet in the clear. The brickwork extends to the peak of the roof 39 feet above the ground, where it will be surmounted by an octagon reaching six feet above the peak of the roof. Above this ornamental base there will rise to the height of 40 feet a light and graceful fluted spire, holding a cross seven feet in height. This will give the height of 92 feet from the ground. Besides the vestibule or main entrance through the tower there is a small door on either side of the tower. The organ and choir will occupy a small room over the vestibule, which is lighted from the front by an elegant Gothic window. The belfry is directly over this room, and will be neatly latticed on three sides. The church will be lighted by eight windows, four on either side, 9 feet 6 inches long by 4 feet 8 inches wide; they will be mullioned, which will give them an appearance of greater height. The body of the church will contain 52 pews, each capable of seating four persons, which will afford seats for 208 persons. The pews will be entered from the nave and two aisles, the former three feet wide and the latter two and a half feet wide. The sanctuary will be raised one foot above the floor of the church, and will be 11 feet deep, and inclosed [*sic*] by a neat railing extending across the church. Inside this inclosure the altar will be placed on a dais 14 inches above the platform. Immediately over the altar there is a window in the form of a cross, 12 feet high by 9 feet broad, which is to be

⁵ *Reese River Reveille*, March 17, August 7 and 18, September 10, and November 15, 1866 and July 1, 1867.

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filled with tinted glass bearing a painting of the Crucifixion. The effect of this symbolic window, reflecting the splendor of the rising sun, will be very impressive. A door will lead from the sanctuary into the sacristy on the northeastern [east] corner of the building. The baptismal fount will be placed on the left side of the vestibule. Ultimately a handsome gallery will extend across the front portion of the church. The brickwork of the building is about completed, and the roof is ready for its secure covering of tin.

A number of observations can be made from this description. There is no evidence for the window mullions and pew arrangement originally planned for the church; either these were done differently than planned, or they were changed at an early date. The use of the term "Gothic" to describe the window in the second story of the tower is interesting. A modern architectural historian would classify the double round-arched window as Italianate, although the round arch form was also typical of the Romanesque style, which a nineteenth century observer might lump together with the Gothic style.⁶

On November 17, 1866 Fr. Monteverde held mass in the building's basement, and on December 22 the *Reveille* reported that after the following day's mass "the pews will be selected, and preferred seats will be awarded to the highest bidders." The *Reveille* also noted: "At midnight [Christmas Day] the Catholic Church will be opened for the first time for the celebration of the usual Christmas service. An effective choir will be in attendance and the midnight service generally will be highly impressive." Although the church was in regular use after Christmas 1866, work on the building continued for a number of years. Proceeds from the 1867 St. Patrick's Ball were applied "towards the completion of the Catholic Church," and the building may not have been finished until 1870. The earliest photographs to show the church, dating to the late 1860s, indicate that the tower lacked a spire for a number of years.⁷

⁶ *Reese River Reveille*, October 23, 1866.

⁷ *Ibid.*, November 17 and December 22, 1866, March 19, 1867, and March 22, 1961; Jackson, *Treasure Hill*, 87; and Abbe, *Austin*, 75. One of the late 1860s photographs cited appears in Paher, *Nevada Ghost Towns* (p. 167). Another was published in the March 22, 1961 issue of the *Reveille*, dated 1868, but the same photo in the collections of the Nevada Historical Society is dated 1874 (Lander book image no. 7).

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A school opened in the church basement in 1867. In May of that year, A. B. O'Dougherty, late of Union College in San Francisco, announced the opening of "St. Augustine's School" (the paper erroneously printed it as "St. Austin's School"). Subjects included English, English Composition, Latin, Greek, Commercial Arithmetic, and Bookkeeping. It is not known how long Prof. O'Dougherty's school met, but in August 1871 the Sisters of Mercy opened a school in an Austin residence intended for girls who had completed public schooling. Pupils from as far away as Belmont and Eureka may have attended. Nuns are known to have conducted catechism classes in the church basement in later years.⁸

St. Augustine's was the mother church and parish headquarters for a number of Catholic churches founded in central and eastern Nevada in the late nineteenth century. Fr. Monteverde ministered to the entire area from the late 1860s into the 1880s, and he built St. Brendan's Church in Eureka (1867) and the Catholic church at Ruby Hill (1880). Also under St. Augustine's were churches in Battle Mountain, Bodie, Belmont, Ione, Hamilton (Hamilton's church was likely built by Fr. Monteverde), and Cherry Creek. So zealous was Fr. Monteverde in founding churches that in 1869 Austin's Catholics complained that their own church would have been completed sooner had he invested more of his time and effort at home. Austin's population decline and a concomitant loss of church membership resulted in St. Augustine's demotion to mission church status by 1902. The church regained some of its old status in 1921 when Bishop Joseph S. Glass made it the headquarters of the central Nevada area with Battle Mountain and Eureka as missions under its care, but this rise in fortunes was short lived.⁹

The brief resurgence after 1921 is reflected in a weekly column written by the parish priest and published in the *Reveille*. In the late 1930s the parish prepared to celebrate its 75th anniversary by undertaking a series of renovations. A Confraternity of the Laity was formed in 1937, and one of its first projects involved hiring Will Wholey and others to make concrete steps for the entrance to the

⁸ *Reese River Reveille*, May 25, 1867 and August 26, 1871.

⁹ Mooney, *Salt of the Earth*, 60; Jackson, *Treasure Hill*, 87; "Visitor's Guide to Greater Austin;" "Welcome to Austin;" and *Frontier Shepherd* (Summer 1979). Mooney lists Fr. Monteverde as the founder of a Catholic church at Ruby Hill twice, suggesting he was responsible for churches in both communities by that name, in Eureka and White Pine counties.

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basement rectory (as the space was then identified). The parish held a Diamond Jubilee picnic at Big Creek on September 17, 1939, and on the 30th the first detailed report of the renovations appeared in the *Reveille* column:

The St. Augustine's church has been partly decorated. In front we see a picture of the Resurrection, and in the back a picture of St. Cecilia, both painted by Rafael Jolly. Different other things have been undertaken as the fixing of the old rectory inside and the sacristy.

The column concluded: "Let us push the work forward and see the rectory and church renovated before next spring." The following week it was suggested in the column that the angels in Jolly's Resurrection scene expressed the concept of the Custodians Angels, although this may only have been a convenient tie-in to a recent feast day.¹⁰

In mid-October 1939 on the columnist's attention turned to renovations by Alexander Reddit. On October 14 it was reported that Reddit had repaired, replastered, and repainted the sacristy walls, and on November 11 he was described as "the steeple-jack who has been repainting the steeple." Others were at work too. Floyd Caughey built new steps for the front of the church, Gus Laurent installed a bathroom and sewer system in the basement, and a Mr. Casady also did work in the bathroom. On December 16 the columnist wrote:

The departments [*sic*] under the church have been fully decorated and the old rectory is slowly getting a new appearance, among those working on it being Father Van Skee and Mr. Al Reddit . . . A window bench and new bookcase have been put in by Mr. Al Reddit. With the glass doors the parish rectory under the church has been made lots more cheerful. A special donation towards the decoration of the hall was given by Mrs. Tillie Walsh.

The Walsh family, especially Mary Walsh, was a major contributor to parish improvement projects during the period. Mary Walsh, for example, donated the decorative gates of the Calvary (Catholic) section of Austin Cemetery in 1930.¹¹

¹⁰ *Reese River Reveille and the Austin Sun*, May 1, 1937 and September 9 and 30 and October 7, 1939.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, October 14, November 11, and December 16, 1939 and January 27 and February 24,

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The mural painting continued through the summer of 1940. On August 31, 1940, the *Reveille* reported:

R. Jolly of the Jolly bothers, decorative artists of Lake Tahoe, has completed the additions to the mural paintings on the walls of St. Augustine's Catholic church in Austin . . . Practically all the wall space available for mural paintings has been filled with excellently rendered and highly interesting representations of sacred characters and scenes. This beautiful series of mural paintings includes the following subjects: the Resurrection, the Crucifixation [*sic*], the Assumption, the Nativity, Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me, St. Cecilia, Flight into Egypt, Adoration of the Magi, Conversion of St. Augustine, St. Augustine and the Angel, Christ and the Rich Young Men. These paintings, ten in all [actually twelve], reflect great credit on the artist and beautifully enrich and add interest to the interior of St. Augustine's church, which never in its long history has been in so perfect and well-kept condition as it is today.

A search of the *Tahoe Tattler* newspaper and other sources conducted by North Lake Tahoe Historical Society Director of Museums Sara Larson has not turned up information on Rafael Jolly or the Jolly Brothers, so the *Reveille* article may be in error. The article does, however, reinforce the impression that the Jollys were from the Nevada/California border area; longtime church member Lisa Gandolfo recalls that "Fell" Jolly was from Reno and was accompanied by his brother "Duff."¹²

Estelle Shanks, who came to Austin in September 1939 to attend school, recalls that in late 1939 or 1940 Rafael Jolly operated a studio in an abandoned building on Main Street where he painted Nevada landscape scenes such as cottonwood groves and mountain springs. Jolly also gave informal lessons to high school students in still life painting. The Jolly studio was probably located in Austin's Works Progress Administration Recreation Center, which occupied the former Silver Dollar Bar on Main Street. According to a December 7, 1940 *Reveille* article, the center exhibited

1940; Pezzoni, "Austin Cemetery."

¹² *Reese River Reveille and the Austin Sun*, August 31, 1940; Sara Larson and Lisa Gandolfo personal communication.

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"original drawings and paintings, burnt work and copper embossing" and artwork by Austin grade school students. Demonstrations by professional artists, such as a pottery demonstration by Edmin M. Dill, were sponsored by the Austin High School during the period, presumably in conjunction with the WPA initiative.¹³

Older Austin residents and former residents recall active church life during the second quarter of the twentieth century but also a gradual diminishing after the Second World War. The basement schoolroom was divided in two in the 1930s, possibly by a folding partition, and catechism was taught there in the summer. (Folding doors were in use in Austin schoolrooms as early as 1867.) The nuns who taught catechism stayed in the church basement, as did the priest when he visited Austin (the 1907 Sanborn map noted that the basement was used as a dwelling). The Knights of Columbus also used a basement room and a sign identifying their meeting place was once attached to the basement entry stoop. By the early 1950s the number of parishioners in attendance at mass had dropped to around 20 with perhaps 30 to 40 attending on important holidays. Because of the difficulty of heating the church in the winter, mass was often celebrated in the residence of parishioner Bernie Walker.¹⁴

By the 1980s St. Augustine's had begun to suffer the effects of age. University of Nevada Reno student Pat Simpson surveyed the building in 1984 and commented that it was threatened with demolition. In 1988 parishioners Tom and Yvonne Rinaldi examined the church and noted that the walls were leaning outward. Daniel M. Cashdan, a Las Vegas engineer, examined the church for the Diocese and confirmed the wall condition but noted that the structure was stable. In 1999 the church was reexamined by Reno engineer J. Clark Gribben, who recommended shoring as a short-term response to roof stresses and horizontal force at the top of the walls. Timber shoring was subsequently inserted in the nave. Gribben's recommendations were incorporated into an overall structural rehabilitation plan prepared by Jon Benedetti of the Sparks firm Q&D Construction in

¹³ *Reese River Reveille and the Austin Sun*, September 9, 1939, and December 7, 1940; Estelle Shanks personal communication.

¹⁴ *Reese River Reveille*, December 24, 1867; 1907 Sanborn map; and Lisa Gandolfo, Estelle Shanks, and Bernie Walker personal communication.

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2000. In June 2003, while this nomination was in preparation, sale of the church to Jan Morris was imminent. Ms Morris is considering rehabilitation options and a new use.¹⁵

Architectural and Artistic Analysis

St. Augustine's Catholic Church is typical of nineteenth century church architecture in its simple rectangular nave form, front gable roof, and front bell tower. Its Spartan appearance is relieved by the bare minimum of stylistic references: the Gothic Revival lancet-arched openings and Italianate double round-arched window in the tower. In its basic form and detail St. Augustine's is similar to the Austin Methodist Church, built the same year (1866) of brick with a rectangular nave form, tall square-headed side windows, and a bell tower (offset) with restrained Italianate detail. St. Augustine's also shared with its Methodist counterpart a round-arched organ alcove.¹⁶

St. Augustine's original organ was described in December 1872 as being in "deplorable condition." It was replaced after 1875 by the present organ, made by Henry C. Kilgen of St. Louis, Missouri. Kilgen appears to have begun making organs in St. Louis between 1875 and 1880, according to city directories. He was probably related to George Kilgen of the famous organ-making firm Geo. Kilgen & Son, which relocated to St. Louis from New York City in the 1870s.¹⁷

Little is known about the various builders who worked on St. Augustine's through the years, but one of the masons may be identified. According to the traditions of the Wholey family, John C. Wholey (1848-1925) worked on the church. The Irish-born Wholey would have been only eighteen when the church was built in 1866, but he was still present in the Austin area during later, smaller projects such as the rebuilding of the sacristy and forecourt walls. Wholey worked on St. George's

¹⁵ Simpson, "St. Augustine's Catholic Church;" Q&D Construction structural rehabilitation report; correspondence provided by Br. Matthew Cunningham, Diocese of Reno; Jan Morris personal communication.

¹⁶ Pezzoni, "Austin Methodist Church."

¹⁷ *Reese River Reveille*, December 26, 1872; Ochse, *History of the Organ in the United States*, 298-299; and Jason Stratman personal communication.

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Episcopal Church in Austin, built in 1877-78. Another Wholey family member, Will Wholey, built concrete steps outside the basement entrance in 1937.¹⁸

A clue to the original appearance of the nave is provided by a photograph, apparently taken in 1899, that was offered for sale on Ebay while the nomination was in preparation. The photograph was taken from the north end of the gallery and shows the altar wall, confessionals, and the front pews. The ceiling was painted a light color, probably white, whereas the walls were painted a darker color without stenciling of other decorative painting. The three altar tables with their floral painting were present, but there was no retable as suggested by the present ghost outline on the altar wall. It is difficult to determine from the photograph whether the present graining scheme had been executed, although the graining is identical to that in Austin's 1877-78 St. George's Episcopal Church and very similar to graining in the 1867-68 Austin Masonic and Odd Fellows Hall, which was remodeled after an 1881 fire.¹⁹

St. Augustine's mural painter Rafael Jolly was well named considering the strong Renaissance influence in his work. A rigorous comparative analysis of Jolly's St. Augustine's murals may identify specific sources, whether in the academic canon or in more accessible traditions such as contemporary Bible illustration. Perhaps a priest or a sponsor such as Mary Walsh supplied images for him to copy. Of Jolly's murals, one in particular stands out as different. The Resurrection scene on the altar wall appears empty and pale compared to (for example) the full and brilliantly colored Crucifixion scene that adjoins it. This may have been an intentional effect designed to give the painting an ethereal quality, or perhaps it was intended that the mural should not compete with the altar furnishings and circular stained glass window. Another interpretation would be that the Resurrection scene was not finished, but the description in the September 30, 1939 *Reveille* makes it clear that the Resurrection scene was one of the first ones painted.²⁰

¹⁸ Albert, *Odyssey of a Desert Prospector*, 117-118; Pezzoni, "St. George's Episcopal Church;" *Reese River Reveille and the Austin Sun*, May 1, 1937; and Marvin Wholey personal communication.

¹⁹ Ebay website (item # 3224404027, advertized May 2003); Pezzoni, "St. George's Episcopal Church;" and Pezzoni, "Austin Masonic and Odd Fellows Hall."

²⁰ *Reese River Reveille and the Austin Sun*, September 9, 1939

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Section 10 Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area corresponds to Lander County tax parcel 01-079-01.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated area correspond to the present boundaries of the parcel on which the church stands.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

1. 1. Subject: St. Augustine's Catholic Church (same for all photos)
 2. Location: Lander Co., Nv. (same for all photos)
 3. Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni (same for all photos)
 4. Photo date: March 2003 (same for all photos)
 5. Original negative archived at the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office,
 Carson City, Nv. (same for all photos)
 6. Description of view: Northeast and northwest (front) elevations. View looking south.
 7. Photograph number appears at beginning of entry (same for all photos)

2. 6. Northwest and southwest elevations. View looking east.

3. 6. Southeast elevation. View looking northwest.

4. 6. Altar (southeast) wall in nave.

5. 6. Gallery (northwest) wall in nave.

6. 6. Southwest, northwest, and northeast walls of basement schoolroom.

7. 6. Decorative painting on basement schoolroom floor.