

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

Church of the Holy Family, Cahokia, Illinois

The Church of the Holy Family, erected between 1786 and 1799, is a fine extant example in the United States of a typical French Colonial church of upright log construction. This largely unaltered edifice is a unique example of a once common type of structure.

Except for the addition of the two small wings in 1833 and the covering of the exterior log walls with siding for protection against the weather in the 1890's, the church survived into the 20th century without drastic alteration. In 1949-51, the structure was jacked up and the foundations were repaired. The siding was removed, thus exposing the original construction of upright logs. The few logs that had deteriorated were replaced, and also the pierrotage. The exterior was treated with silicone coating to protect the logs and masonry, leaving the original appearance unaltered. The existing metal roof was removed and the building was re-covered with wood shingles; a small belfry was also added at the north end of the roof. The interior was redone with church furnishings, some original and other of the period. The structure is maintained in excellent condition and is open to visitors.

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NSHSB: 12/11/69  
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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS  
SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

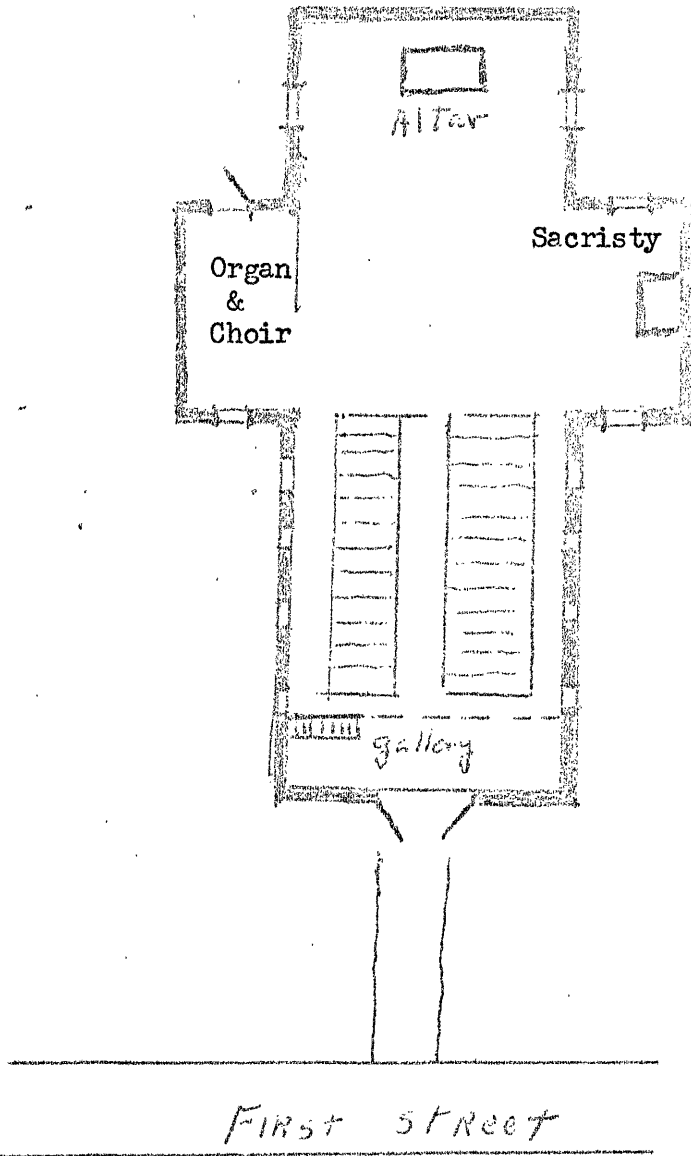
This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 8. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . . (French Colonial Architecture)

STATE	NAME(S) OF SITE
Illinois	Church of the Holy Family

8. References: Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952), 256; Charles E. Peterson, "Notes on Old Cahokia," The French American Review, July-Sept., 1948, 204-206; Charles E. Peterson, "Report on Cahokia, Illinois, and the Holy Family Church," (NPS typescript, St. Louis, March 26, 1948), 24 pp., maps, and photos; Charles E. Peterson, "Report on H.J. Res. 219 -Father Pierre Gibault Monument At Cahokia," (NPS Typescript, St. Louis, June 7, 1939), 18 pp., maps and photos; Rexford Newcomb, Architecture of the Old North-West Territory (Chicago, 1950), 23; Charles E. Peterson, "Early French Landmarks Along the Mississippi," Antiques, LIII (April, 1948), 286-288.

John F. McDermott, ed., Old Cahokia (St. Louis, 1949). Illinois, A Descriptive and Historical Guide (American Guide Series) (Chicago, 1947), 493.

9. Historic American Building Survey: (9 sheets and 3 photos, 1934).



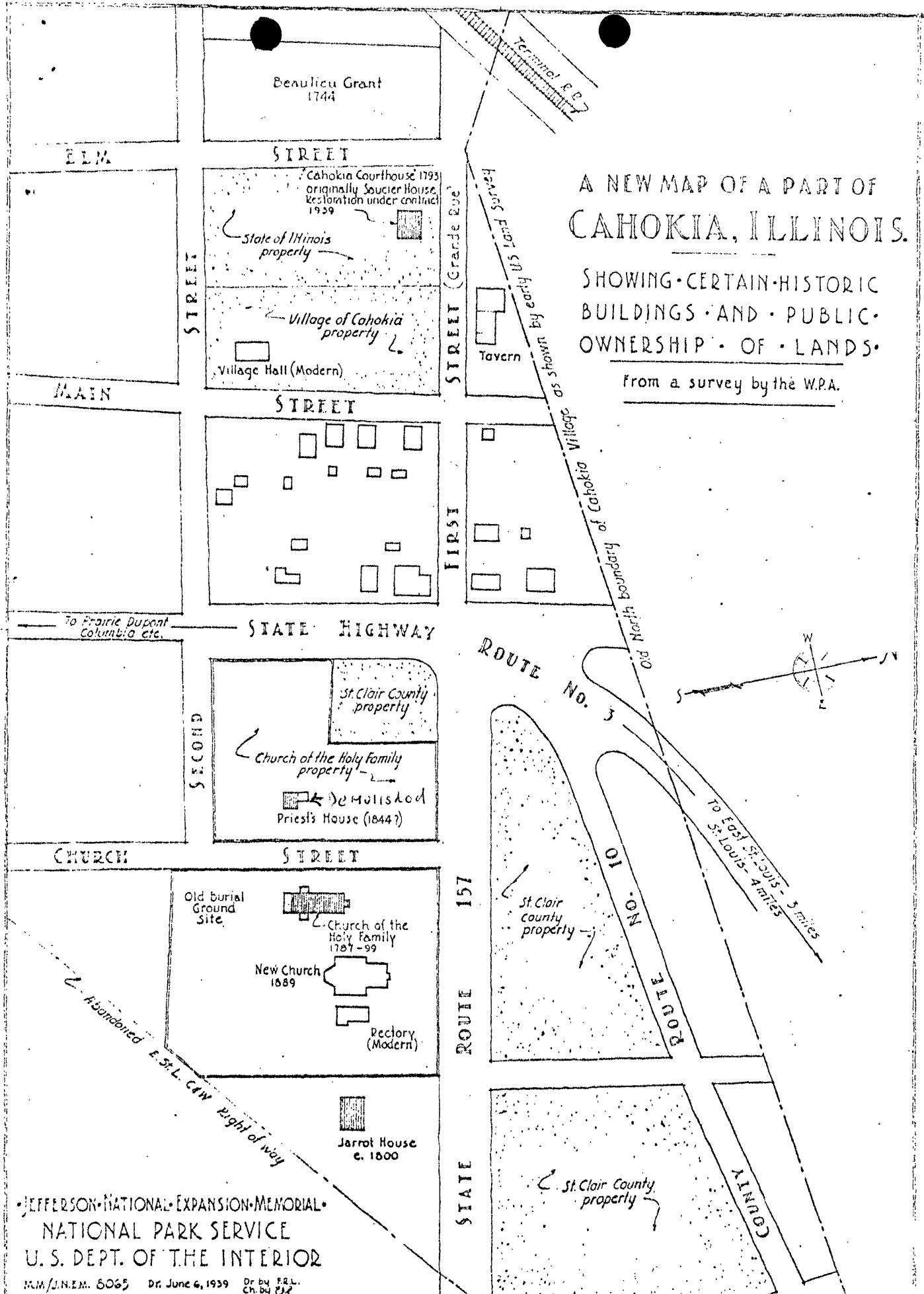
Sketch Plan of the Church  
of the Holy Family,  
Cahokia, Illinois

C. W. Snell, 12/17/68

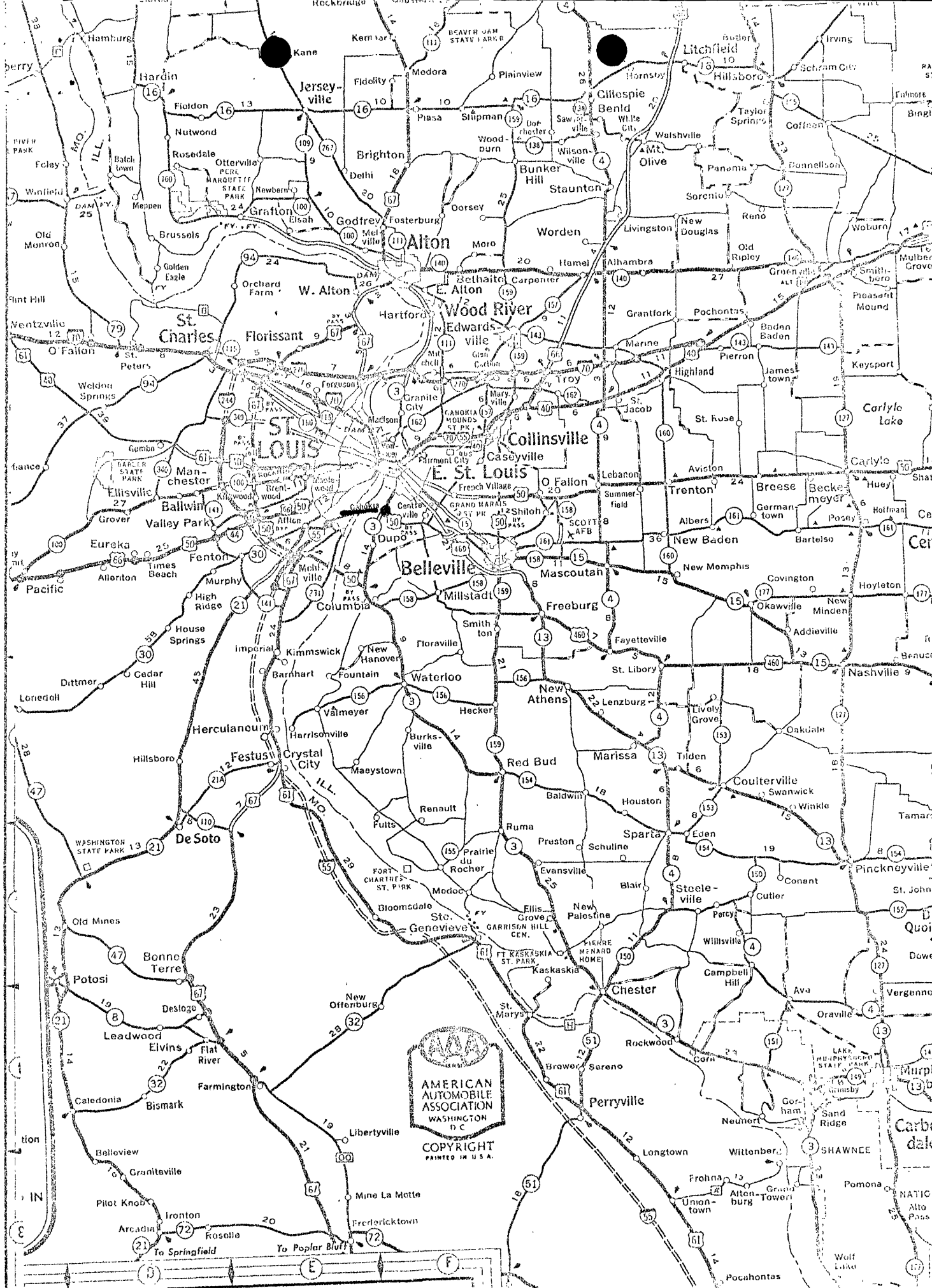
# A NEW MAP OF A PART OF CAHOKIA, ILLINOIS.

SHOWING CERTAIN HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF LANDS.

From a survey by the W.P.A.



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To Springfield  
To Poplar Bluff

Site of National Significance L

Church of the Holy Family, Illinois

Location: St. Clair County, on East First Street, just off Illinois 3, Cahokia.

Ownership: Catholic Church; Reverend Joseph M. Mueller, Cahokia, Illinois.

Statement of Significance

The Church of the Holy Family, erected between 1786 and 1799, is the finest extant example in the United States of a typical French Colonial church of upright log construction. This little-altered edifice is a unique example of a once common type of structure.

History

Cahokia was founded in March 1699 when priests of the seminary of Quebec planted a mission on the site. The old French mission church and mission itself, however, ended with the departure of the last priest, Abbe Forget du Verger, in 1767-68. When Father Paul de St. Pierre, representing the new Roman Catholic Church in the United States, came out to Cahokia from Baltimore in 1786, he found that the original mission church structure had disappeared and that services were being held in a rented room. A revival was soon effected and construction on the present log church was commenced in 1786 or 1787. Completed and dedicated in September, 1799, the structure was used as a parish church until 1891, when it was replaced for this purpose by the newly completed adjacent stone church. The log building was henceforth utilized as a parish school and hall. In 1949-1950, in connection with the 250th anniversary of the town and Holy Family Parish, private funds were contributed for the renovation and restoration of the log church. This work was completed in 1951 and the restored church is now used for Sunday services and is also generally open to visitors.

Condition

The Church of the Holy Family is typically French Colonial in its construction and plan and has a number of features in

common with surviving 18th century Canadian log churches. As originally constructed, Holy Family Church had a simple rectangular plan and was 32 feet wide and 74 feet long. The two small rectangular wings, which give the building its present cruciform plan, were added to the east and west sides of the church about 1833. The east wing was used for choir and organ and the west as a sacristy. The walls of the church (including the later wings) are formed of poteaux sur sole (posts on sill) construction. Heavy, hewn, black walnut timbers, each 12 inches wide, 6 inches thick, and 14 feet high, were erected perpendicularly about one foot apart and were mortised into very heavy timber sills that rested on stone foundations. Facing sides of the vertical wall timbers were grooved to accommodate a pierrotage comprised of rubble stone set in clay, which was used to fill in the spaces between the timbers. On each wall one timber was set diagonally as a wind brace and the exterior walls also sloped inward some five inches from top to bottom.

White oak and black walnut were utilized for the hewn French trusswork of the roof, the timbers being finely mortised and pinned with wooden pegs. The shingled gable roof had curved or "bell cast" overhanging eaves. Five windows were set into each of the long side walls and in the north gable end, above the arched entrance door, there was a round oeuil de bouc (goat's eye) window. Inside there was a gallery at the north end, over the entrance door, and large cottonwood board--made smooth by sprinkling them with sand and rubbing with rock--formed the floor, which sloped downward from front door to altar rail.

Except for the addition of the two small wings in 1833 and the covering of the exterior log walls with siding for protection against the weather in the 1890's, the church survived into the 20th century without drastic alteration. In 1949-51, under the supervision of Architect Guy Study, the structure was jacked up and the foundations were repaired. The siding was removed, thus exposing the original construction of upright logs. The few logs that had deteriorated were replaced, and also the pierrotage. The exterior was treated with silicone coating to protect the logs and masonry, leaving the original appearance unaltered. The existing metal roof was removed and the building was recovered with wood shingles; a small belfry was also added at the north end of the roof. The interior was redone with church furnishings, some original and other of the period. The structure is maintained in excellent condition and is open to visitors.

References:

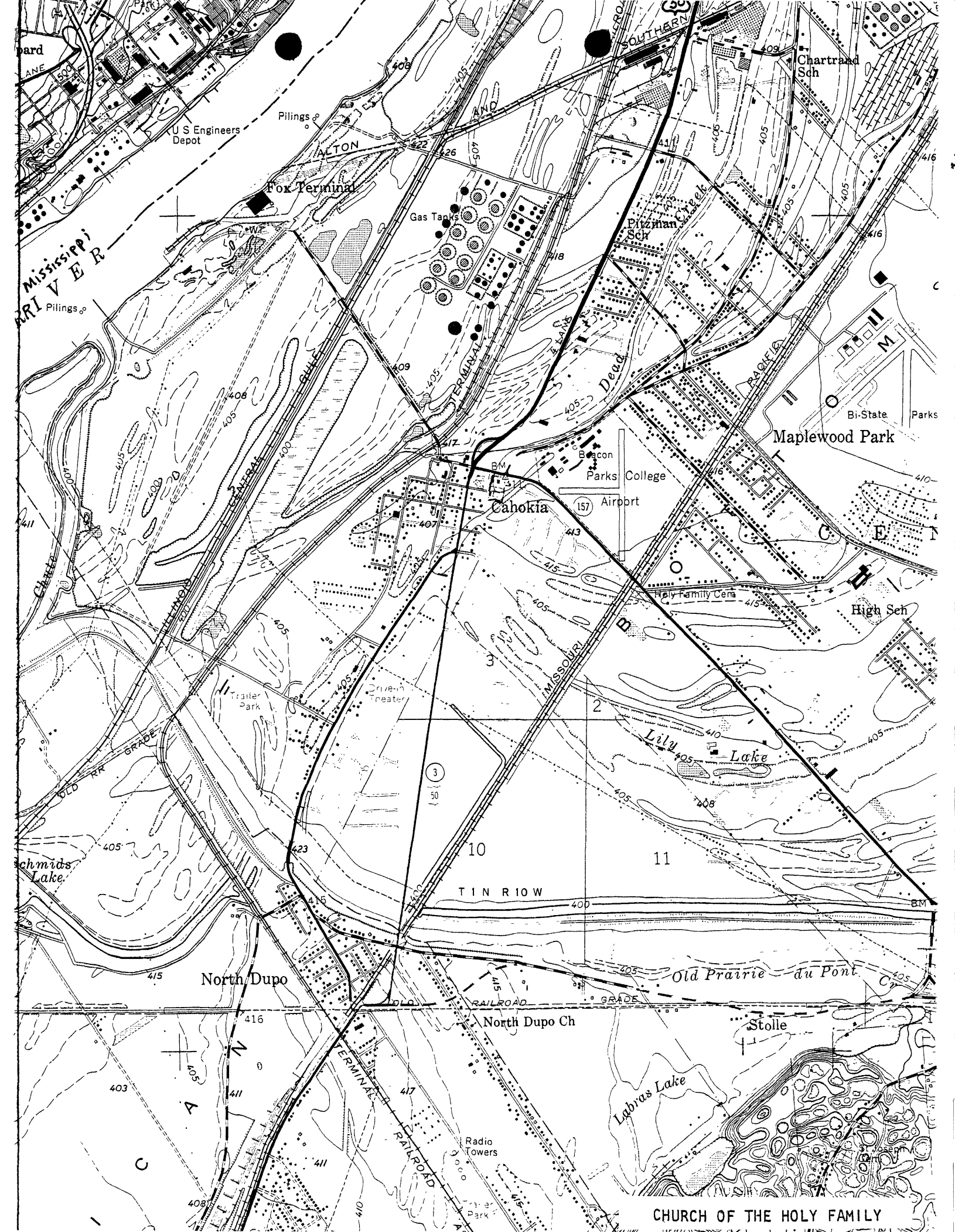
Hugh Morrison, Early American Architecture (New York, 1952) 256; Charles E. Peterson, "Note on Old Cahokia," The French American Review, July-Sept., 1948, 204-206; Charles E. Peterson, "Report on Cahokia, Illinois, and the Holy Family Church," (NPS typescript, St. Louis, March 26, 1948), 24 pp., maps, and photos; Charles E. Peterson, "Report on H.J. Res. 219-Father Pierre Gibault Monument At Cahokia," (NPS typescript, St. Louis, June 7, 1939), 18 pp., maps and photos; Rexford Newcomb, Architecture of the Old North-West Territory (Chicago, 1950), 23; Charles E. Peterson, "Early French Landmarks Along the Mississippi," Antiques, LIII (April, 1948), 286-288; John F. McDermott, ed., Old Cahokia (St. Louis, 1949), Illinois, A. Descriptive and Historical Guide (American Guide Series) (Chicago, 1947), 493; Historic American Building Survey: (9 sheets and 3 photos, 1934).



CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY, ST. CLAIR COUNTY,  
CAHOKIA, ILLINOIS

Boundaries of the Historic District:

Approximately 3.6 acres of land in the shape of a rectangle, including the Church of the Holy Family, the stone church, and the Jarrot House, starting at the southwest corner at latitude  $38^{\circ} 34' 10''$  N. - long.  $90^{\circ} 11' 20''$  W., proceeding northeast about 450 feet to the northwest corner at the junction of Church and First Streets (State Route 157) at lat.  $38^{\circ} 34' 14''$  N. - long.  $90^{\circ} 11' 19''$  W., continuing southeast about 350 feet to the northeast corner at lat.  $38^{\circ} 34' 13''$  N. - long.  $90^{\circ} 11' 15''$  W., going southwest about 450 feet to the southeast corner at lat.  $38^{\circ} 34' 09''$  N. - long.  $90^{\circ} 11' 16''$  W., and returning northwest about 350 feet to the beginning, the southwest corner. Precise boundaries, as described above, are recorded in red on a copy of U.S. Geological Survey Map: Cahokia Quadrangle, Illinois-Missouri, 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic), 1954-Photo-revised 1968, on file with the Branch of Historical Surveys, Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service.



CHURCH OF THE HOLY FAMILY