

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property

County and State

Section number _____ Page _____

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

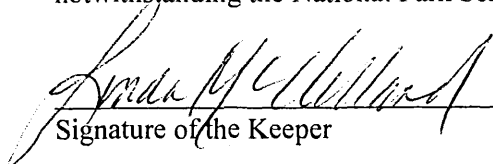
NRIS Reference Number: 08001132

Property Name: St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School, and Grottoes

County: Butler State: Nebraska

Multiple Name: NA

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

December 04, 2008

Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 5. Classification

The Category of this property is, hereby, changed to "district," and the Count of Resources amended to add one contributing site, for a total of 7 contributing resources. This amendment recognizes the disparate nature of the resources making up the property, including the landscape containing the grottoes.

Section 10 Geographical Data

The Acreage of this property is, hereby, entered as 1.5.

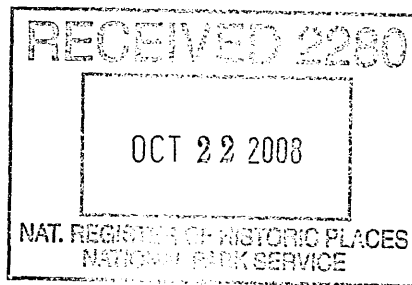
The staff of the Nebraska State Historic Society was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



OMB No. 1024-0018

1132

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. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School and Grottoes

Other names/site number Assumption Catholic Church/ BU06-001

2. Location

Street & number 336 West Pine Street

Not for publication

City or town Dwight

Vicinity

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Butler

Code 023

Zip code 68635

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

Oct. 9, 2008
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that 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): _____

[Signature] 12/4/08

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes
Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska
County and State

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	
3		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
3	2	Objects
6	2	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
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RELIGION/religious facility
- RELIGION/church school
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/monument/marker
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/work of art
- LANDSCAPE/garden

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RELIGION/religious facility
- DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/monument/marker
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/work of art
- LANDSCAPE/garden

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/Late Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete block
Walls Brick, limestone
Roof Asphalt
Other

Narrative Description

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

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes
Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska
County and State

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 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1914, 1921, 1934

Significant Dates

1914 – Construction of church

1921 – Construction of school

1934 – Grottoes and shrines dedicated

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

J. M. Nachtigal, architect

Henry Olson, builder

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 for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes
Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property _____

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	666103	4549757	3.			
2.				4.			

[] 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 Jill E. Dolberg, Historic Buildings Survey Coordinator
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date August 14, 2008
street & number 1420 P Street telephone (402) 471-4773
city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68508

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/title Lincoln Diocese, Most Reverend Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz
street & number 3400 Sheridan Boulevard telephone (402) 488-0921
city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68506

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 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 ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSt. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes

Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School and Grottoes are located in Dwight, Nebraska, which is in Butler County. Dwight is thirty-five miles northwest of Lincoln, Nebraska's state capital. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Dwight's population in 2008 is 244. Dwight lies in flat lying plains that make good agricultural land, which attracted a large concentration of Czech settlers to the area in the late 1800s.

Church

The 1914 Gothic Revival church is generally rectangular in plan, measuring 155 by 43 feet, with an apse to the rear of the church and a small room on either side of the apse that is visible from the outside of the building. An asphalt shingle, gabled roof follows the rectangular footprint of the interior. The front façade contains a central bell tower entrance located under a high recessed Gothic arch, with an arched stained glass window below. Paired Gothic arched stained glass windows are located above the entrance. The front façade also contains a small roundel window in stained glass. A broached spire, with clocks on each of the four primary sides, graces the bell tower.

The church has a foundation made of concrete block. The walls are primarily yellow glazed brick with engaged buttresses of brick and stone help provide support to the walls. The church retains its original stained glass windows. Aside from the large window above the main entrance, there are two large panels on the front façade. There are also five main panels along the east and west elevations and two windows in the apse, all in a Gothic arch formation. There is also a set of tripartite Gothic windows on the east and west side that are set within the confessionals, and break up the rhythm of the larger windows along the longitudinal side of the building. In addition, there are paired Gothic windows in the offices or dressing rooms off of the apse. Some of the saints depicted in the stained glass windows seem to match with the donors' names, in that the donors chose to donate depictions of their name saints.

The sanctuary continues the building's Gothic theme. The sanctuary has high, vaulted ceilings with decorative pendants with acanthus leaves where the vaults meet. It contains pews of rich oak, each decorated with Gothic arches. The pews have clasps for holding hats and tags for names. The arcaded colonnade altar rail is decorated with Corinthian columns and Gothic arches. The oak confessional continues the Gothic theme with arches, trefoils and Gothic spires. The apse and side altars contain large altars with statuary. Each side altar contains a tabernacle, although now the Eucharist is kept only in the High Altar. The High Altar contains a depiction of the Last Supper. The baptismal font is original, and depicts John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. Stations of the Cross are found between each of the Gothic windows along the sides. A choir loft, where the pipe organ is found, is located at the rear of the church. The loft has an open rail with square balusters and is supported by two chamfered pillars.

School

The 1921 School is a rectangular shaped, two-story building with a garden level basement. From the front elevation, the west two thirds of the building appears very symmetrical, with a slightly stepped back portion on the eastern third of the building that reads as an addition, but due to the presence of the ornate secondary entrance that is similar to the main entrance, is likely to have been built at the same time. The building is a yellow glazed brick structure with a flat roof. It has a concrete block foundation with brick exterior. The façade contains an ornate entrance on the main façade that features Gothic tracery and small spires in limestone, as well as a carved name plate in stone that says, "ST MARY'S SCHOOL" and above in a stylized shield the date "1921". A limestone cross is mounted at the top of the parapet. A Tudor arch in limestone creates an entrance over the doorway, which features original doors with two panels and a glass panel in each, and a six-light Tudor-arched transom above the doors.

The school has almost all of its original windows, which are one-over-one, double hung windows. A set of three windows is found above the front entrance at the landings of the stairs on each floor. On either side of the stair corridor, a set of six ribbon windows allows light into the classroom spaces on each floor, with a solitary window on the side closest to the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes

Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

stairs. A belt course of stone is found below the first floor windows and above the second floor windows. Limestone crosses in relief are set in the brick work just under the parapet on the front of the building.

The east elevation of the school faces the grotto garden and the church, and contains the school's secondary entrance. This entrance is a bit like the main entrance, but in miniature. Instead of running the full height of the building, it merely embellishes the entrance to the top of the first floor. Like the main entrance, it features Gothic tracery, but to a lesser extent. It has a decorative transom window over the door, which is under a Gothic stone arch, capped by a diminutive cross. The door matches the paired doors on the front of the building. A limestone cross in relief is also set in the brick work under the parapet on this elevation. Most of the windows on this elevation are set singly, but there is one set of four nine-over-nine, double hung windows placed to the left of the entrance.

The north elevation of the school faces a large flat school yard. This elevation has experienced more change than the others, due to the loss or covering of several windows on the first floor. There are two small vestibules attached to the north side of the building and the one on the east contains an informal entrance into the building. It appears to no longer be used, as the door is in disrepair. An enormous cross on the west side of the north elevation was created in decorative brickwork. Limestone crosses in relief are set in the bricks just under the stone parapet.

The west elevation, divided in half down the middle, contains an enormous decorative brick panel on the right, and a set of six one-over-one double hung ribbon windows on each floor on the left. A limestone cross in relief is set in the brick work just under the stone parapet.

Grottoes and Shrines

The grottoes contain several shrines, beautiful rock gardens and fountains. The shrine in the center of the grotto garden is the Mother of Grace. Her statue is carved of Carrara marble, and is set on a pedestal of red granite rocks that have been laid in various levels to create a plinth. Arched steps allow the petitioner to approach her, and urns of what appears to be quartz lie beside her feet and the steps.

A small chapel is situated to the northeast of the shrine of the Mother of Grace. The chapel is built of varied colored brick, nine by ten feet, and will seat only four people. The altar is finished in white marble with the columns of the front in onyx and the spiral columns on each side of the picture of the Mother of Perpetual Help in red Verone marble. The picture of the Mother of Perpetual Help is a reproduction of an ancient Grecian painting and was blessed by Pope Pius XI. The lower part of the altar is a glass reliquary, in which lies a statue of St. Cecilia, representing her martyrdom. It is a replica of a Stefano Maderno statue in Rome. This statue is unusual in that it has actual garments and human hair on her head. Parishioners made the dress and donated their hair for the statue. The fingers on her hands, three open on one hand and one open on the other, represent the early Christian belief, "I believe in Three Persons in One God."

One of the larger grottoes is the "Grotto of Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane," which is found in a cave-like structure at the northwest portion of the grotto garden. Gethsemane is the scene where Christ sweat drops like blood and was betrayed by Judas. The statues of Christ and the visiting angel are made of terra cotta and weigh 1800 pounds. They are accompanied by three sleeping apostles. There are also two doves that were brought from Czechoslovakia and donated by Caroline Vogeltanz. One is lying dead and the other stands nearby. In a Czech story, these doves loved each other deeply and had mated for life, and even after the one died, the other remained faithful, just as a married couple does.

The Grotto of St. Jude Thaddeus is connected to the Gethsemane cave, and creates an arched walkway, under which one can walk to the back of the school yard. The grotto is made of tufa rock, more commonly called petrified moss. This rock was brought in from the Black Hills in South Dakota. The statue of St. Jude the apostle is holding a medallion of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes

Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

Christ in his right hand, as it is said that he wrought miracles and conversions with the picture of Christ. In his left hand he holds a club, the instrument of his martyrdom.

A small lily pond with koi fish and a trickling fountain is situated in front of a shrine to St. Michael. Although there was historically a lily pool in the garden, this current pool represents a slight reconfiguration of the original after a storm caused some damage to the property in 1997. In addition, a new three-fountain pool flanked by two raised flower beds was added in front of the Mother of Grace shrine. The three fountains represent the trinity, and the pool and flower beds were intended to draw the eye to the Mother of Grace. Due to their age, these elements do not contribute to this nomination.

Historic Integrity

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School and Grotto Garden, on the whole, exhibit excellent historic integrity. The church itself has changed very little since it was constructed in 1914. In fact, many of the changes that were encouraged during the Vatican II Council of the 1970s have been undone, including the reinstallation of the original communion rail. The most visible alteration to the church is the addition of ADA ramps to allow for easier access to the building for people in wheel chairs, and yet this was not insensitively done. The school, from the exterior, has changed very little. In converting first floor classrooms to apartments, some alterations were necessary, however schools lend themselves well to this type of alteration, and the work was reviewed by the Nebraska SHPO. The grotto garden has changed, perhaps, the most of any of the features of this complex. In 1997, a storm toppled several trees, damaging features of the garden. As a result, the lily pond and fountains were reworked, so these newer elements are considered non-contributing. However, the grottoes, shrines, and chapel were unharmed, and remain in their original configurations with no changes whatsoever. As these features are the main focus of the garden, the elements still exhibit sufficient integrity to significantly represent their history.

Buildings	Assumption Church	Contributing
	Assumption School	Contributing
	Chapel	Contributing
Objects	Grotto of the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane	Contributing
	Saint Jude Thaddeus	Contributing
	Shrine of the Mother of Grace	Contributing
	Lily and Koi Pond	Non-Contributing
	Trinity Fountain	Non-Contributing

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes

Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

The first Czech settlers came to the southwestern section of Butler County before the town of Dwight existed. For almost two decades, Catholics in the area had to travel to Brainard, nine miles away, to celebrate mass. As the number of Catholics increased, an interest developed in establishing a parish in Dwight. By 1895, approximately thirty-five Catholic families had settled within a five mile radius of Dwight. This group felt there was a need for a cemetery near Dwight to serve their population. On January 1, 1896, Dwight organized a new parish by the name of "Catholic Congregation of St. Mary of the Assumption."¹

The first St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church was a frame building, measuring sixty-eight feet long by thirty-two feet wide, and was constructed on land donated by the Chicago Northwestern Railroad Company. The building was designed and built by Frank Sobotka, and completed at the end of August, 1899. The parish grew quickly. In 1910, the parish consisted of eighty families; four years later, the number of families had doubled. There was a need for a larger church facility.²

At a special meeting in March, 1914, the congregation decided to build a new church. A committee was formed, and it immediately set out to solicit funds for the construction of the building. They hired J. M. Nachtigal, an architect from Omaha, to design the building. Bids for construction were soon accepted, and Henry Olson of Loup City was given the contract, having bid \$18,076.38.

The high spire houses a four faced clock which strikes every half hour and is illuminated at night. The clock cost \$582 and was donated by Catholic and non-Catholic families in the area. One of the bells in the tower came from the Methodist church in the defunct town of Ware, which was once located approximately four miles northwest of Dwight.³ Ware existed for only eight years, from 1895 to 1903. ⁴For many years, the bells were rung ten minutes before Sunday Mass, for the Angelus at noon every day, and when a body was being brought into the church for a funeral. Before the clock and bells were converted to run electronically, it took 268 turns a week to keep the clock running and the bells ringing.⁵

The stained glass windows cost \$1,023.00, and were donated by families. They depict the following saints: St. Michael the Archangel, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Cecilia, St. Wenceslaus, St. John the Baptist, St. John Vianney, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Joseph, St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. John the Evangelist, and St. George. The altars were purchased by the parish and the statue of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary which still stands above the main high altar was taken from the first church. The final cost of the church, with the building and the furnishings, was \$30,000.00.⁶ The new church was dedicated on September 22, 1915, and officially incorporated on October 14th. At the time of the dedication of the church, a debt of \$6,000.00 remained on the church. It was completely paid by 1918.

Once the debt was paid, Father Michael Pazourek urged the people of Dwight to consider giving their children a Christian education. As the Dwight community was almost entirely Catholic, support for building a school was almost unanimous. At a 1920 meeting, parishioners agreed to finance the school's construction, and the first pledges from this meeting amounted to \$20,000.00.⁷ In studying other Catholic schools in Nebraska to determine a design suitable for Dwight, the committee found a school in Duncan that appealed to them, and hired that school's architect, Charles Wurdeman, to draw similar plans for Dwight.

¹ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 25.

² *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 29.

³ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 30.

⁴ *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names* 27.

⁵ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 31.

⁶ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 32.

⁷ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 55.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes

Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 5

The project soon ran into difficulties, however. Building materials and labor costs had increased greatly since they had built their church. For example, the yellow glazed bricks cost \$27.00 per thousand in 1914, but cost \$54.00 per thousand in 1920.⁸ There were also difficulties in obtaining lots for the school near the church. In 1914, the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad had sold lots on this block for \$50.00. To obtain seven of the necessary ten lots for the school, the parish purchased them from Brainard banker A. K. Smith for \$3,500.00, at ten times the cost they would have been six years earlier. The three remaining lots were owned by a retired farmer who had built a home and several outbuildings on the property. After his death, the parish was able to obtain them for \$3,005.00, and sell the buildings for \$1500. Crop prices also dropped during this period, making parishioners incomes meager, and creating a challenge for collecting on promised pledges. The construction stalled in the spring of 1921, and a lien was placed on the property, requiring all of the bills to be paid before more materials could be acquired and work could recommence. John Hotovy and Matthew Hotovy each donated \$5000.00 toward the project to ensure its success.⁹

The final cost of the school was \$92,000.00. The new yellow glazed brick building measured 160 by 70 feet. The grade school had three classrooms and the high school had four. There was a library, science laboratory, a large auditorium, and a chapel. The east side served as a residence for the Sisters and the north side had a dormitory for boarding students. For the first several years, the school was staffed by the Ursuline Sisters of York, Nebraska. In 1930, the Ursulines were replaced by the Notre Dame Sisters of Omaha. The school was very successful in fine arts and athletics until 1961, when Bishop James V. Casey decided to close Assumption High School and consolidate it with Aquinas Central Catholic School near David City.¹⁰ Assumption School continued to operate the grade school until 1974, when the Notre Dame Sisters announced they would cease staffing the school. Since then, the school has become apartments. A total of 5,846 students attended school at Assumption school, and 432 high school students received their diplomas there.¹¹

The grottoes and the small chapel between the church and the school were the idea of Father Benedict Bauer O.S.B., pastor at Dwight from 1931 through 1943. During his years at seminary, Father Bauer had vowed that if Mary, the Mother of God would help him become a priest, he would build a shrine in her honor. Shortly after his arrival in Dwight, he approached the parishioners with his wish to fulfill his promise on the grounds between the church and school. At the center of the grotto garden is the shrine to the Mother of Grace, fabricated in Carrera marble. She stands in an elevated and central position, leaving no question as to whom this garden is dedicated.

The small chapel is one of the smallest complete and functional churches in the world. It will seat four, and appeals to the Mother of Perpetual Help. The altar, which was donated by J. Krenk and his family, is finished in white marble with columns in onyx and red Verone marble. An indulgence of one hundred days is granted to those who pray before the painting of the Mother of Perpetual Help, a reproduction of an ancient Grecian painting that was blessed by Pope Pius XI, who was the head of the church from 1922 to 1939.¹²

The largest grotto is the Grotto of the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, in which Christ sweats drops like blood and was betrayed by Judas. The grotto contains five figures, an angel, Jesus Christ, and three sleeping disciples, within a cave-like structure. Nearby, a second grotto of tufa rock houses a life size statue of St. Jude, the patron saint of hopeless

⁸ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 56.

⁹ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 58.

¹⁰ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 67.

¹¹ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 72.

¹² *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 78.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes
Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska
County and State

Section 8 Page 6

or lost causes.¹³ In addition to these major shrines, there are plantings around smaller statues and shrines to other saints throughout the garden, in addition to countless angels that seem to be either praying or standing guard over the saints.

The parish embraced the project, and nearly every family helped furnish the 175 tons of stones used in the construction of the grottoes. Since Dwight had reached the apex of its population with the 1930 census, with a population of 323¹⁴, the contribution of so many families to such a project at this time is not insignificant. The design and landscaping of the garden was done by Father Bauer himself, and the work was done by some of the men of the parish. The grottoes were blessed and dedicated on October 28, 1934 by Bishop Louis Kucera. Nearly five hundred cars were parked around Assumption Church to witness the ceremony, and they seemed to have come from all over the state to be present for the occasion.¹⁵

Architecture

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church and School are architecturally significant buildings. The church itself is a striking example of the Late Gothic Revival style, featuring Gothic arched doors and window openings with Gothic windows within. The arches are repeated in the features of the high altar, the pews, and the shape of the ceiling itself. Other Gothic motifs are found as well, such as the quatrefoils in the light fixtures, and the tracery and quatrefoils in the carving of the altar. The school is architecturally significant as well, featuring additional Gothic elements in its embellishments, as well as limestone crosses in the brickwork under the parapet. The doorways feature the most elaborate ornamentation, with a limited amount of tracery in the masonry, and a Gothic or a Tudor arch over the doorway.

The grottoes themselves are likewise significant, creating a striking visual landscape that captures the eye more forcefully than either the church or the school, regardless of their architectural distinction. The size of the grottoes and their varied themes and appearances make this area unique in Nebraska. According to the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey database, there are very few grottoes found in Nebraska at all, and most are very small in scale and feature a small statue of one saint. In this case, the collection of the scene in Gethsemane, St. Jude in the tufa rock cave, the Mother of Grace in the center of the garden, and the diminutive, yet striking chapel have made Dwight a regional Catholic destination for tourism and worship.

Criteria Evaluation

Dwight was established by Czechoslovakian immigrants 140 years ago, and continues to be a community united by their common heritage and their faith. St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School and Grottoes are eligible for the National Register due to their architectural value. The church meets the requirements established under criterion consideration A in that it derives its primary significance from its architectural distinction. The scale of the church and school show the importance this community placed on its religion. The church has always been the spiritual and social center of Dwight, and the edifices that they built to house these functions reflect this well. Assumption Church is massive compared to the size of Dwight itself. It was built in this scale in order to better serve the entire Catholic community of the surrounding vicinity. Its architectural distinction illustrates the importance placed on its planning and design.

¹³ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 80.

¹⁴ *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names*, 26.

¹⁵ *Centennial History of Assumption Parish*, 82.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, School & Grottoes

Name of Property

Butler County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 9,10 Page 7

Bibliography:

Centennial History of Assumption Parish, Dwight, Nebraska: 1899-1999. Marceline, Missouri: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1999.

Harris, Cyril M., ed. *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture.* New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses.* Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1997.

Olson, James C., and Ronald Naugle. *History of Nebraska.* 3rd edition. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1997.

Perkey, Elton A. *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names.* Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1982.

Verbal Boundary Description:

All of block 15, Original Town, Dwight, Butler County, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes all of the land historically associated with St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, St. Mary School, and the grottoes and shrines found in the garden that lies between the two buildings.