

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received AUG 27 1984
date entered OCT 10 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

TR
historic German Catholic Churches and Cemeteries of Lawrence County (1872-c. 1930)
Thematic Resources
and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number See Inventory Forms N/A not for publication
city, town See Inventory Forms N/A vicinity of
state Tennessee code 047 county Lawrence code 099

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic Group	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Most Rev. James D. Niedergeses, Bishop of Nashville
Diocese of Nashville
street & number 2400 Twenty-First Avenue, South
city, town Nashville N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 37212

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds
street & number Lawrence County Courthouse
city, town Lawrenceburg state Tennessee 38464

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date N/A N/A federal state county local
depository for survey records N/A
city, town N/A state N/A

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The nominated thematic group consists of four churches (three having accompanying rectories) and two cemeteries in Lawrence Co., Tennessee, historically associated with late-nineteenth century German Catholic settlers. The properties are located in the towns of Lawrenceburg (pop. 8,889), Loretto (pop. 1,557), St. Joseph (pop. 762) and the abandoned community of St. Mary. The four churches are: first Church of St. Joseph (1872), a vernacular frame building; second Church of St. Joseph (1885), a Gothic Revival stone building with a small frame rectory c. 1915 and a small cemetery; Sacred Heart of Jesus Church of Lawrenceburg (1886-89), a Gothic Revival brick building with a vernacular, brick rectory c. 1898; and Sacred Heart of Jesus Church of Loretto (1911), a Romanesque Revival brick building with a Four Square brick rectory c. 1930. All of the buildings continue their original use except for the first Church of St. Joseph, which has served as a parish school and is now used for storage. The St. Mary Cemetery is the only remnant of the deserted settlement of the same name. It is still an active cemetery and contains several interesting nineteenth century monuments. All of the nominated properties retain their architectural and historical integrity.

The 1872 Church of St. Joseph is no longer used as a church. For years the structure served as a parochial school for the parish, but now the building is only used for storage. The parish maintains the building, which is located on the grounds of the present church. This is the earliest Catholic church building in Lawrence County and probably the oldest building in the incorporated town of St. Joseph, Tennessee. The building is a small, rather plain frame structure, about twenty-five by eighteen feet in dimension, erected on stone piers.

The three other church buildings feature ornate interiors, with arched ceilings, a large hall sanctuary with semicircular apse containing the chancel, elevated rear galleries, and stained-glass windows of the highest craftsmanship. The three churches have been only slightly altered by the addition of modern heating and electrical systems, and provision for handicapped access.

The 1885 Church of St. Joseph is a large ashlar cut-stone structure built by parishioners from stone they quarried nearby. It features a square-bodied central bell tower with a short octagonal steeple covered with tin shingles. The church has one of the most elaborate interior decoration of any ecclesiastical structure in south central Tennessee, featuring elaborately carved main altar and side altars, lathe-turned balusters supporting the chancel rail and the elevated rear gallery, a three-arched ceiling, excellent stained-glass windows, and walls and panels painted with the stations of the cross and other religious scenes. Much of the decoration was the work of the Rev. John Sliemers, parish priest from 1901 to 1903, and again from 1914 until his death in 1934. The exterior stucco is original.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Lawrenceburg, the third but only surviving Catholic church in the county seat, was begun by parishioners of the Church of St. Joseph in 1886, and completed in 1889. Members of the church contributed the materials, made the brick, and erected the building with their own skilled labor. Sacred Heart is built of a dark brown brick, laid in stretcher bond, and rests on a stone foundation. The church is built on a large rectangular plan with a rear apse section containing the chancel and altar. A tall central bell tower at the front is topped with a high copper spire. Both the bell tower and the walls are reinforced by corner buttresses with stone weatherings: brick wall buttresses of similar fashion divide the building's sides into five principal bays. The pointed-arch window openings contain paired lancet windows with stained-glass "kites" at the top. The central, or tower, window on the southwest front is particularly fine; a pointed-arch frame features tripartite lancet windows and a large rose window with stone mullions.

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Thematic Resources

The 1911 Sacred Heart of Jesus Church at Loretto embodies characteristics of both the Victorian Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles of architecture. The dark-red brick building follows a rectangular plan with rear apse and features a tall front tower with a low pyramidal roof. Both the bell tower and the outside walls are supported by stepped brick corner buttresses with stone weatherings at the shoulders. A corbel table of dogtooth brick encircles the structure and is also featured on the upper two tiers of the bell tower. The interior is somewhat similar to that of the church of St. Joseph, with its three-arched ceiling and elevated rear gallery, but the effect is much more restrained. Much of the early decoration was removed or covered during later remodeling but the church retains its basic interior form. The various stained-glass memorial windows are particularly interesting.

The rectories at Lawrenceburg, St. Joseph and Loretto are included in the nomination as contributing elements of the church property for their associations with the establishment and conduct of the churches. The St. Joseph rectory is a small frame structure with a gabled roof of tin shingles and a half-hipped porch. The building originally consisted of two rooms downstairs and a loft above but a service ell was added to the rear and the southwest side in the early twentieth century. The rectory at Lawrenceburg is a two-story ell-shaped structure of dark red brick construction with a cross-gable roof; this rectory was completed in 1898, and is still in use today. The Loretto rectory is a two-story, Four Square style building of brick constructed around 1930.

The St. Mary's Cemetery is included as the only surviving remnant of the St. Mary's German Catholic settlement located five miles southeast of St. Joseph off Rascal Town Road. The small log church which serviced the community, was built in 1872 and is no longer extant. Located on the nominated property are the white iron cemetery gate, and approximately twenty monuments which date from the late-nineteenth century.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1872–c. 1930 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The German Catholic Churches and Cemeteries of Lawrence County TR are nominated under National Register criteria A and C for their historical and architectural significance to Lawrence County and south central Tennessee. The group is comprised of four churches (three having accompanying rectories) and two cemeteries associated with the German Catholic settlement in Lawrence County which began in the 1870s. Three of the churches and the cemeteries are in active use, as are the rectories, and the remaining church has been used as a school for many years. The nominated properties are the most significant structures and sites connected with Lawrence County's historic German Catholic community. As a group, the churches are the most outstanding examples of ecclesiastical architecture in the county.

The German Catholic settlement began with the visit to the county seat of Lawrenceburg during the winter of 1869–70 by representatives of the Cincinnati German Catholic Homestead Society. The society was interested in purchasing land for resettlement; members and friends in the Ohio Valley were suffering from the financial depression which followed the Civil War. The Rev. Henry Huesser, pastor of a church in the Cincinnati area and member of the visitation committee, stayed in Lawrenceburg to purchase land and organize the settlement. After three months Huesser relocated to Loretto.

The Homestead Society purchased 15,000 acres of land in 1869, and 1870, for the most part to the north and west of Lawrenceburg. Within two months, fifty families settled in the area, and others followed over the next two years. The majority of the settlers were of German extraction, mostly Alsatian, but the group included a number of Poles. Most of the settlers were artisans and mechanics, in such trades as carpentry and joinery, painting, harness-making, cigar-making, and blacksmithing. Few had had experience in farming, but some became rather successful; others fitted into other jobs in the community.

On October 24, 1870, the first Mass in Lawrenceburg was celebrated by Father Huesser in an old home once located on Fain Court, near the site of the old depot. The first church building in Lawrenceburg was a frame structure on the western edge of town at Groh Street and Buffalo Road. In 1872, two fathers of the Precious Blood settled across the street in an abandoned farmhouse. Before long, over ninety families belonged to the small church of St. Joseph, and a new wooden church on Bergen Street was dedicated on May 18, 1872, by Bishop Feehan (now demolished).

In 1873, the Sisters of the Precious Blood established a convent on Palmer Street in Lawrenceburg. The convent and the old church served as the county's first parochial school. In 1886 parishioners began work on the present brick structure, which was completed about 1889. Members of the congregation contributed all the skilled labor necessary for the erection of the church. The church was consecrated in 1890 by Bishop Joseph Rademacher and given the name and protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The present rectory was built the same year. The bell tower was not added until the 1890s.

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A convent and school were established in 1874 by a small group of about twenty families at New Einsiedeln, near what is now the rail stop of Brace in the Ethridge vicinity. Because the settlement was so small, services were held in the chapel of the convent. New Einsiedeln was abandoned about 1893 when the church was consolidated with Sacred Heart Parish, Lawrenceburg. No religious buildings associated with this settlement remain.

Holy Trinity Parish was to the west of Lawrenceburg. This consisted of a small building and a grave yard, neither of which survive. Near St. Joseph a small log cabin church marked the settlement of St. Mary, established about 1872. Only the cemetery remains from this community.

Father Huesser started the church at St. Joseph in 1872. He remained as pastor until 1876, when the Fathers of the Precious Blood took over the management of St. Joseph and other local parishes. They remained until 1899, when diocesan priests from Nashville took charge. The first church building was erected during Huesser's stay, and the small frame building survives as the old parish school/ storage building.

The present stone church was erected in 1885, under the Rev. Paul C. Rohjans. Father John W. Sliemers, who was priest in charge from 1901 to 1903 and again from 1914 until his death in 1934, was responsible for much of the decoration of the interior.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Loretto, was started as an outgrowth of the Lawrenceburg settlement. Huesser relocated to Loretto in 1871, and a frame church and a rectory were erected. The frame building was used as both a church and a school. From about 1873 until 1898 the Fathers of the Precious Blood managed the church. A new church was built during the tenure of the Rev. Louis Kempf; this 1911 structure combines elements of the Gothic and Romanesque styles of architecture in brick. The original frame church is no longer standing.

The importance of the small St. Mary Cemetery is based on its being the only remnant of the German community of the same name and its containing monuments of excellent craftsmanship, many of which have inscriptions in German.

The settlement of German families in Lawrence County as a group under Catholic auspices is unique in rural Tennessee history. These settlers brought a religious and ethnic diversity to the area which it had lacked before. Although their uniquely German customs and folkways have not survived, the architectural and religious legacy of these people is still very evident in Lawrence County as shown by the nominated properties.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet *(individual sheets)*

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property See Inventory Forms

Quadrangle name See Inventory Forms

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References See Inventory Forms

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Inventory Forms

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Quin, Historic Preservation Planner
South Central Tennessee
 organization Development District date May 1984
 street & number P.O. Box 1346 telephone 615-381-2040
 city or town Columbia state Tennessee 38402

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

Deputy
 State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert E. Hoyer
 title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 8/21/84

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

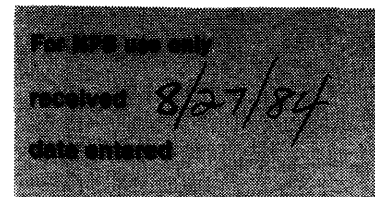
Patrick Andrews date 10/10/84
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Mark Ross date 10/11/84
 Chief of Registration

See Continuation Sheet for other listings

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Continuation sheet

Item number

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name German Catholic Churches and Cemeteries of Lawrence County TR
State TENNESSEE

Accept Cover - P. Reed 10/1/84

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. St. Joseph Church

Entered in the
National Register

fu Keeper

Alvin Byers 10/1/84

Attest

2. Sacred Heart of Jesus Church

Entered in the
National Register

fu Keeper

Alvin Byers 10/1/84

Attest

3. Sacred Heart of Jesus Church

Entered in the
National Register

fu Keeper

Alvin Byers 10/1/84

Attest

4. St. Mary's Cemetery **Substantive Review**

fol Keeper

Patrick Andrews Accept 10/1/84

Attest

Accept P. Reed 10/1/84
WE

5.

Keeper

Attest

6.

Keeper

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

8.

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest