

16-5407-2-200 (Rev. 10-74)

24-40-0110-55

NR 0 3-74

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

AND/OR COMMON

Church of St. Mary's

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

St. Mary's Mountain

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Altus

X VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Arkansas

CODE

05

COUNTY

Franklin

CODE

047

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

___ DISTRICT

___ PUBLIC

X OCCUPIED

___ AGRICULTURE

___ MUSEUM

X BUILDING(S)

X PRIVATE

___ UNOCCUPIED

___ COMMERCIAL

___ PARK

___ STRUCTURE

___ BOTH

___ WORK IN PROGRESS

___ EDUCATIONAL

___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___ SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

___ ENTERTAINMENT

X RELIGIOUS

___ OBJECT

___ IN PROCESS

___ YES: RESTRICTED

___ GOVERNMENT

___ SCIENTIFIC

___ BEING CONSIDERED

X YES: UNRESTRICTED

___ INDUSTRIAL

___ TRANSPORTATION

___ NO

___ MILITARY

___ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

The Reverend Lawrence Miller, O.S.B. (guardian)

STREET & NUMBER

Church of St. Mary's; Route 1, Box 5

CITY, TOWN

Altus

X VICINITY OF

STATE

Arkansas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Franklin County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Ozark

STATE

Arkansas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help rests atop Pond Creek Mountain overlooking the Arkansas River Valley. This quiet hilltop in western Arkansas is an appropriate setting for one of the state's most interesting and unusual churches.

Reminiscent of Romanesque architecture, this basilica style church is built of hard white sandstone cut from a nearby quarry. These stones are rock-faced with margins and are cut in various rectangular sizes and set in a broken course. The two-foot-thick walls enclose an area measuring 117 feet by 56 feet.

The nave rises a full storey above the one-storey aisles. A gable roof of galvanized steel shingles covers the nave with a shed roof over each aisle. Enclosing the apse on the east elevation is a semi-decagon bay with a conical roof. At the southeast corner of the building a 120-foot bell tower rises a full storey above the nave.

The wide center facade rises one storey above the flanking bays. Three semi-elliptical-arched openings on the projecting center bay give access to the small enclosed porch. The center arch leads directly to the main double door entry to the church. Above the wide stringcourse at the second-storey line, three semi-circular arched windows are set Palladian-style into a wide half-circle arch. The pediment features a round window and a cross above the ridge line.

All the windows around the church are of stained glass set in semi-circular arches. Like the three entry arches, the windows set in stone have small keystones. The ten windows of the tile-sided nave walls are set in simple wooden frames.

The four-storey bell tower has a separate arched entry on the south elevation. Stringcoursing separates the window openings on each storey of the square tower. Slender paired windows on the second storey, round windows on the third storey and triple vented-arches on the fourth storey are interesting features on the tower. On the fourth floor are four melodic bells, together weighing more than three tons.

The interior of St. Mary's Church makes it one of the most beautiful buildings in Arkansas. Corinthian capiteled columns support the arcades which separate the nave from the aisles. Pressed tin in a fleur-de-lis pattern covers the walls of the upper nave, while the ceilings have a clover-like pattern.

Each of the stained glass windows depicts a Biblical character or event and bears a dedicatory script in German. Twelve small murals, each measuring 3½ by 5 feet, decorate the white plastered walls. Illustrating scenes from the life of Christ, these small murals were painted by a German artist, Fridolin Fuchs, during 1915 and 1916. The German captions painted by Fuchs were replaced with English inscriptions in 1964. Fuchs also painted figures in the extradors above the high altar and large murals set into the arches at the front of each aisle. The domed ceiling above the apse was hand stenciled by Fuchs.

Original to the church is a communion railing of cherry and walnut. Hand-carved by a local parishoner, this railing is made from trees grown in the area. Side

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

altars, added in 1918, contain ten different kinds of wood. Another later addition came in 1924 when a pipe organ was installed.

Over the years minor repairs have been made to keep St. Mary's Church in its excellent condition. Though changes in the form of artwork and furnishings have been made, there have been no significant alterations to the structure. Resting on its original site, St. Mary's Church represents an unusual architectural style in Arkansas.

6 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREA 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input 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 Sept. 2, 1902 (dedication) **BUILDER/ARCHITECT**
May 24, 1901 (cornerstone laid)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of Arkansas' most architecturally significant churches is the Church of Our of Perpetual Help near Altus, Arkansas. This impressive edifice was constructed atop Pond Creek Mountain overlooking the Arkansas River Valley. Completed in 1902, the church was built to serve the German- and Swiss-Catholics who immigrated to Franklin County in the late nineteenth century.

The records of the congregation begin with the arrival of the first priest in 1879. The Reverend Father Beatus Maria Ziswyler was sent by the Little Rock Diocese to serve the Catholic congregation at Altus. During the first year services were held in the upstairs room of Father Ziswyler's two-storey log cabin, but by 1881 a frame church had been constructed. Father Ziswyler's cabin, the frame church and the later stone church were all built near the same site on a forty-acre tract donated by the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad.

The congregation of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, also known as St. Mary's, grew rapidly. By 1883 the parish had forty-five families and operated two missions of its own. Further immigration of German and Swiss families combined with the rapid growth of coal mining in Franklin County to cause a relatively rapid population increase in the 1890's.

This population increase brought a corresponding need for a larger church. On January 28, 1900, the congregation of St. Mary's Church voted to erect a new church building. Architectural plans were partially drawn by a priest in St. Louis, and, though never quite completed, were used to build the church. The actual construction was supervised by Father Placidus Oeschle, the local parish priest, and John Riedt, a stone mason from St. Louis.

In February, 1901, the conerstone of St. Mary's Church was laid. Into the 25" x 18" x 27" cornerstone was set a copper box containing documents, contemporary newspapers and a few coins. On September 2, 1902, the church was completed, and dedicatory ceremonies, presided over by the Abbot of the nearby Subiaco Academy, were held.

Designed to seat 500 persons, St Mary's Church was built in a basilica style. The choice of this particular style was due in part to the fact that much of the labor on the new church was performed by local parishoners. According to Father Oeschle, "Our workmen could easily erect such simple construction, and this was one of the important features that guided us." *

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

St. Mary's Church is constructed of hard white sandstone cut from a nearby quarry. The basilica style church has the typical features of a center nave rising above the aisle, transept and projecting altar area. A somewhat unusual feature is the 120-foot bell tower rising from the southeast corner of the church. Original interior features include the numerous stained glass windows, pressed tin ceiling and a communion railing carved from cherry and walnut trees grown on Pond Creek Mountain.

The most significant interior features of the church are the murals painted by Fridolin Fuchs, a German artist employed by Father Oeschle. From January, 1915, until April, 1916, Fuchs painted on the white plaster twelve "stations," small murals measuring 3½ feet by 5 feet. Reminiscent of European church murals, these paintings depict various scenes from the life of Christ. Each station was inscribed with a German text, as were the written dedications in each of the stained glass windows. Fuchs, who was paid \$600.00 plus room and board, painted the faces of several individuals involved in St. Mary's Church into his murals. His own likeness and that of Father Oeschle, who assisted him, appear in the stations on either side of the high altar. Fuchs also stenciled and painted holy figures on the domed ceiling above the altar.

Other unusual features of the church include the massive bells and the pipe organ. On Thanksgiving Day, 1902, four bells, the largest weighing 2,712 pounds, were installed in the top of the four-storey bell tower. These melodic bells added further to the European flavor of the church. In 1924 a pipe organ, still operable with a hand-pumped bellows, was installed in the organ loft at the rear of the church.

Built by German and Swiss immigrants, the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help was a tangible symbol of the congregation's origins. Religion played a most important part in the lives of these Catholic immigrants, and the church at Altus, reminiscent of old parish churches in Germany and Switzerland, was in part a recreation of the society they had left behind. St. Mary's murals, painted by the German artist Fuchs, give the church an artistic flavor unique in Arkansas.

Significant because of its architecture, artwork and relationship with the German-Swiss immigrants in Franklin County, St. Mary's is one of the most important church buildings in Arkansas.

* Ernie Deane, "A Church That Stands High on a Hill," Arkansas Gazette, December 30, 1962.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Dean, Ernie. "A Church That Stands High on a Hill." Arkansas Gazette, December 30, 1962.
- Goodspeed Publishing Company. Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Arkansas. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889.
- Lucy, J.M. "The Catholic Church in Arkansas." Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association, Vol. II, Little Rock: Democrat Printing and Lithograph Company, 1908.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 5	4 3 1 1 8 0	3 9 2 3 2 7 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

14 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Djanna Kirk, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE

12-9-75

STREET & NUMBER

300 West Markham

TELEPHONE

501 - 371-1639

CITY OR TOWN

Little Rock

STATE

Arkansas

15 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Anne Bartley



TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 12-9-75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE one

Oeschle, Placidus. "Historical Sketch of the Congregation of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at Altus, Arkansas." Privately printed, 1930. Archives, Arkansas History Commission.

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2 LOCATION

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VICINITY OF

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Arkansas

COUNTY

Franklin

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

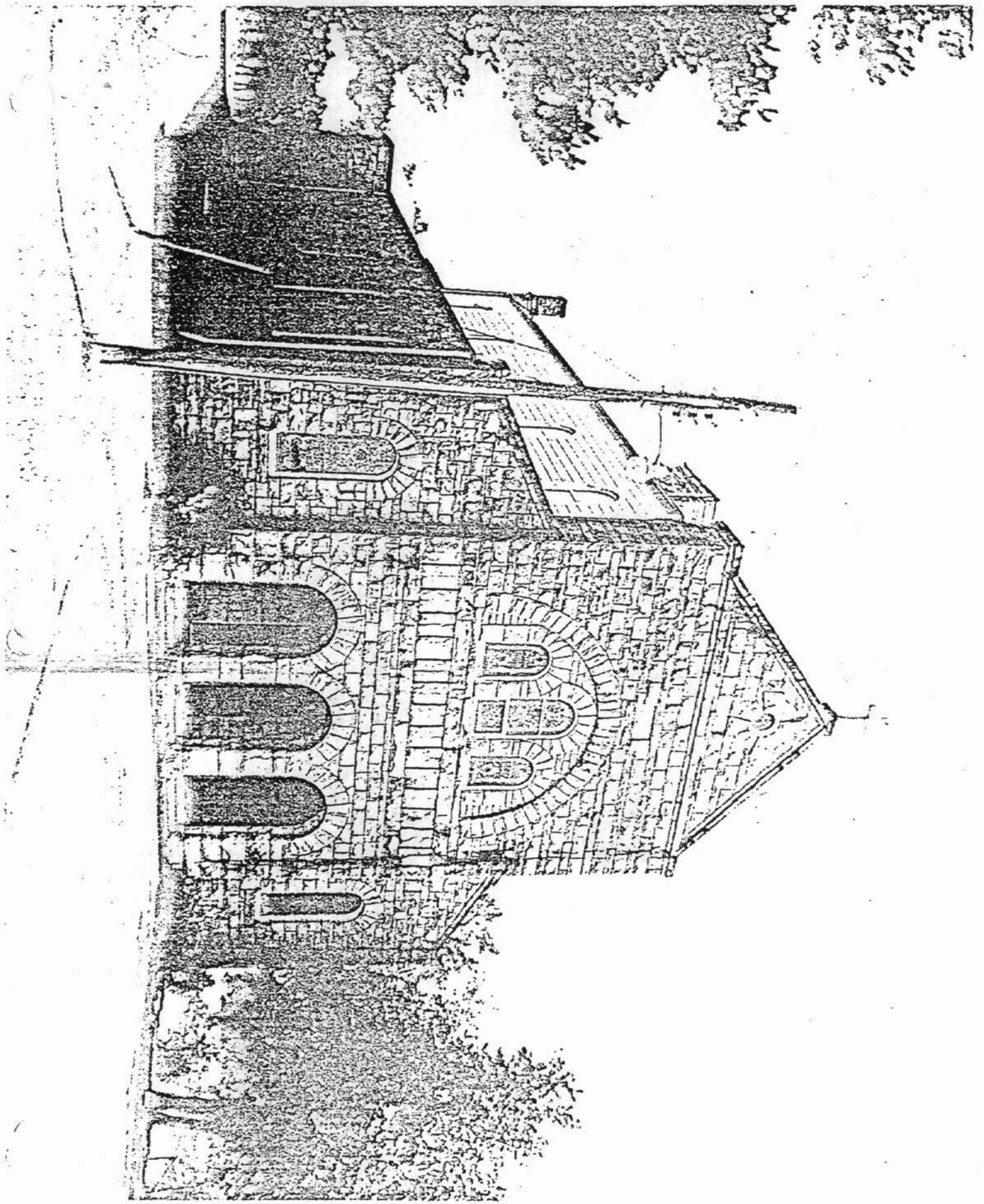
4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

North elevation and facade, viewed from the northwest

PHOTO NO.

1



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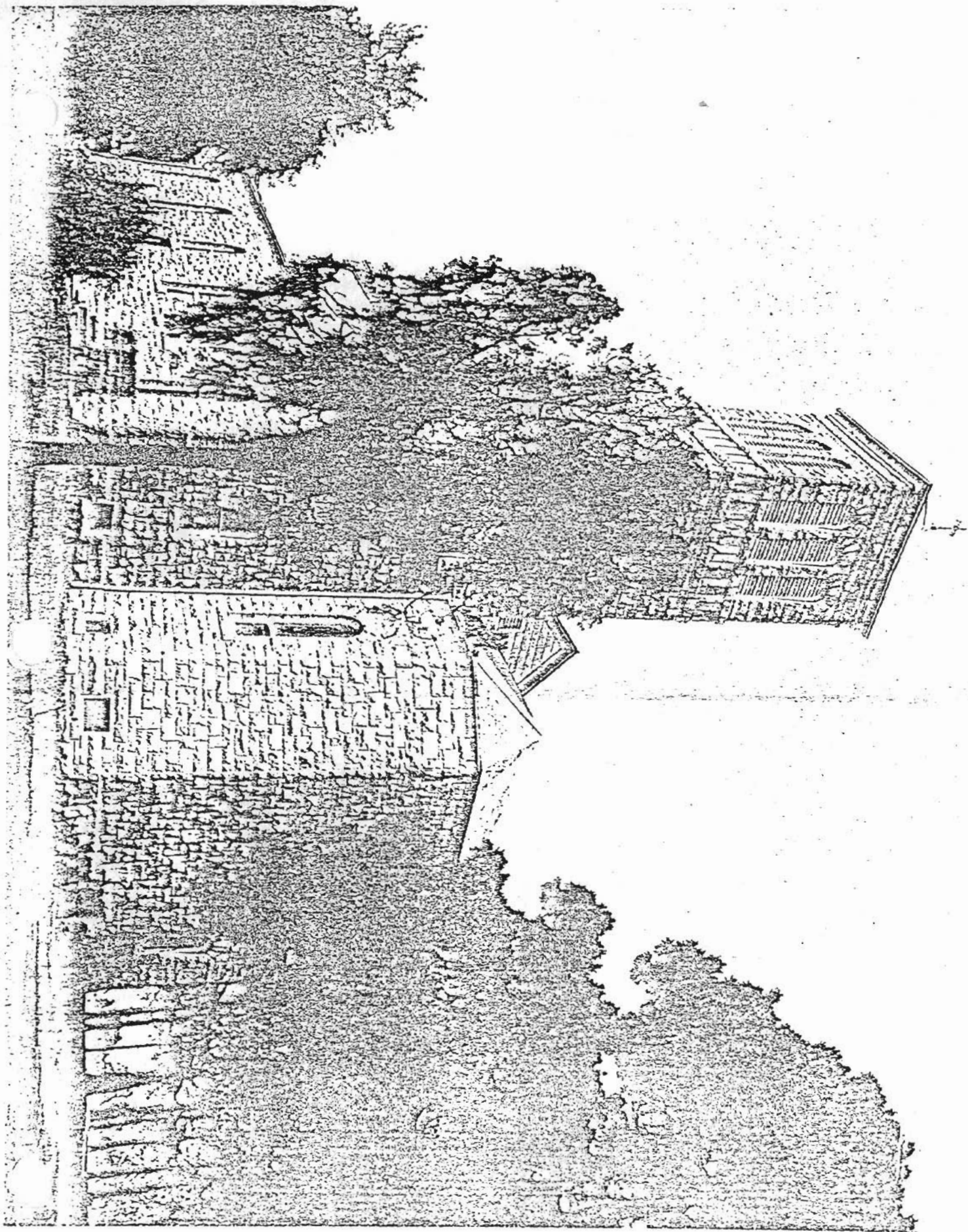
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PHOTO NO.

South and rear (east) elevations, viewed from the southeast

2



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
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
Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

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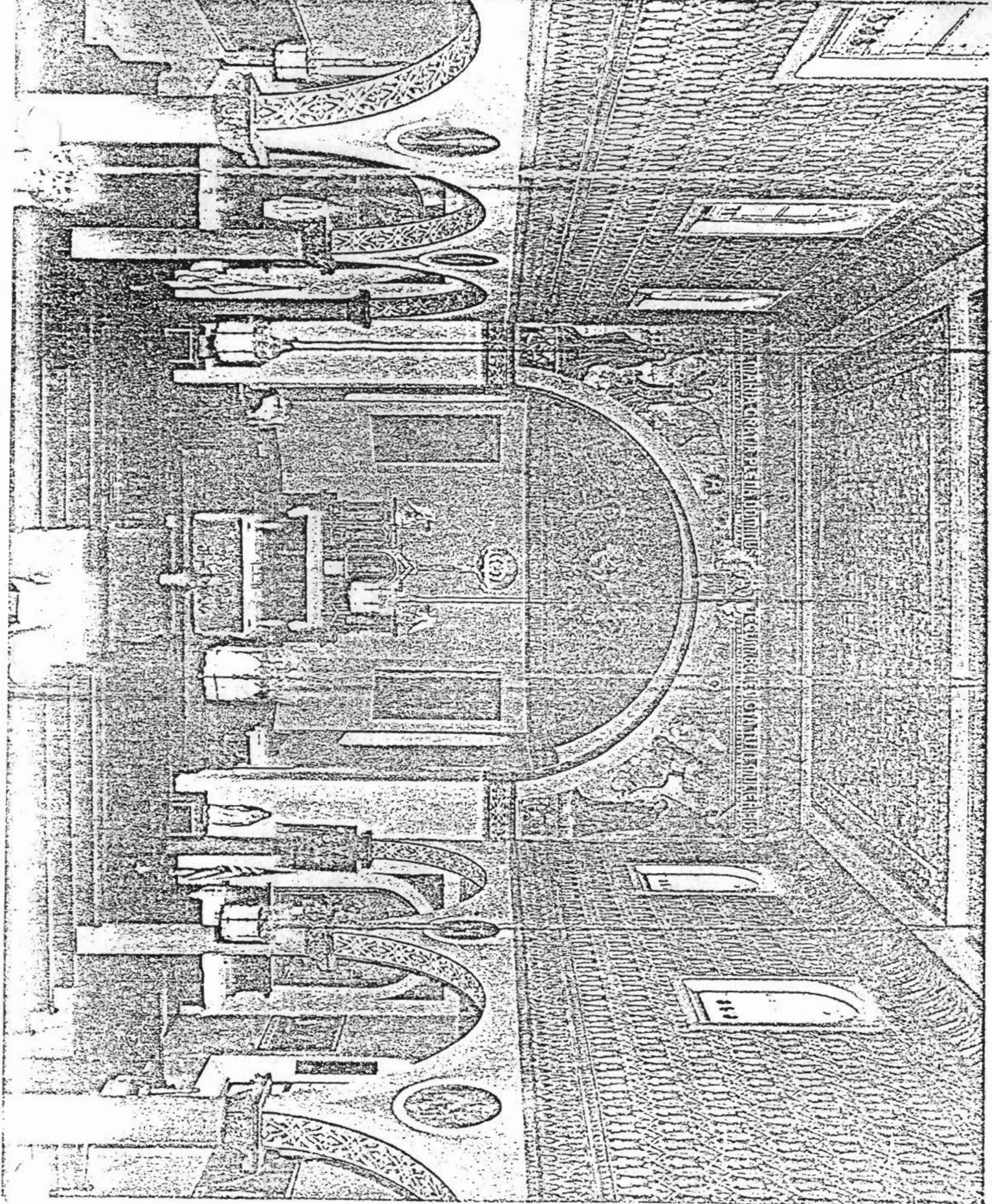
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Interior of the church, viewed from the west choir loft

PHOTO NO.

3



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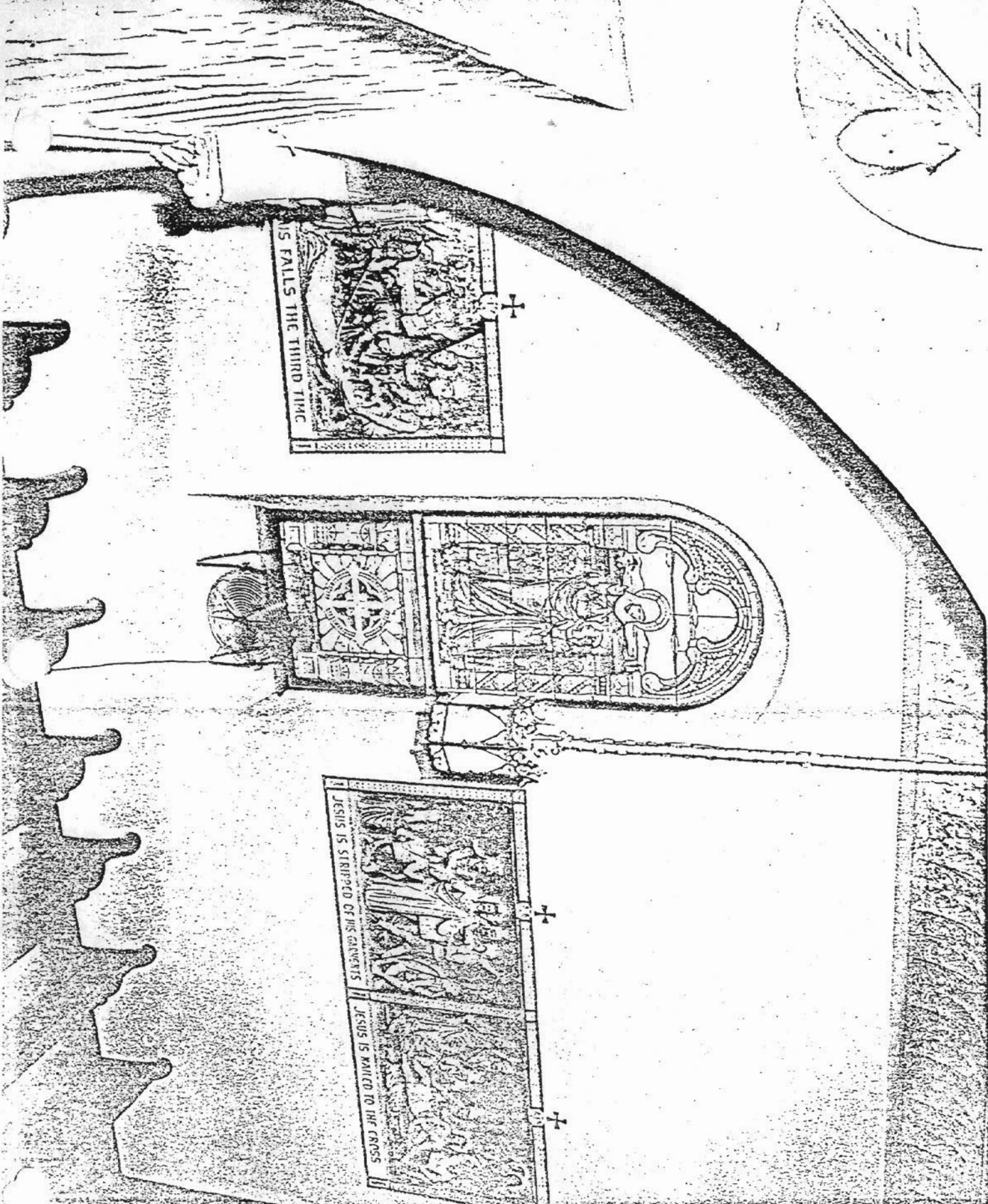
4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Detail of Fuchs murals and stained glass window, north wall

PHOTO NO.

4



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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PROPERTY MAP FORM

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COUNTY

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STATE

Arkansas

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE

United States Geological Survey, Ozark Quadrangle

SCALE

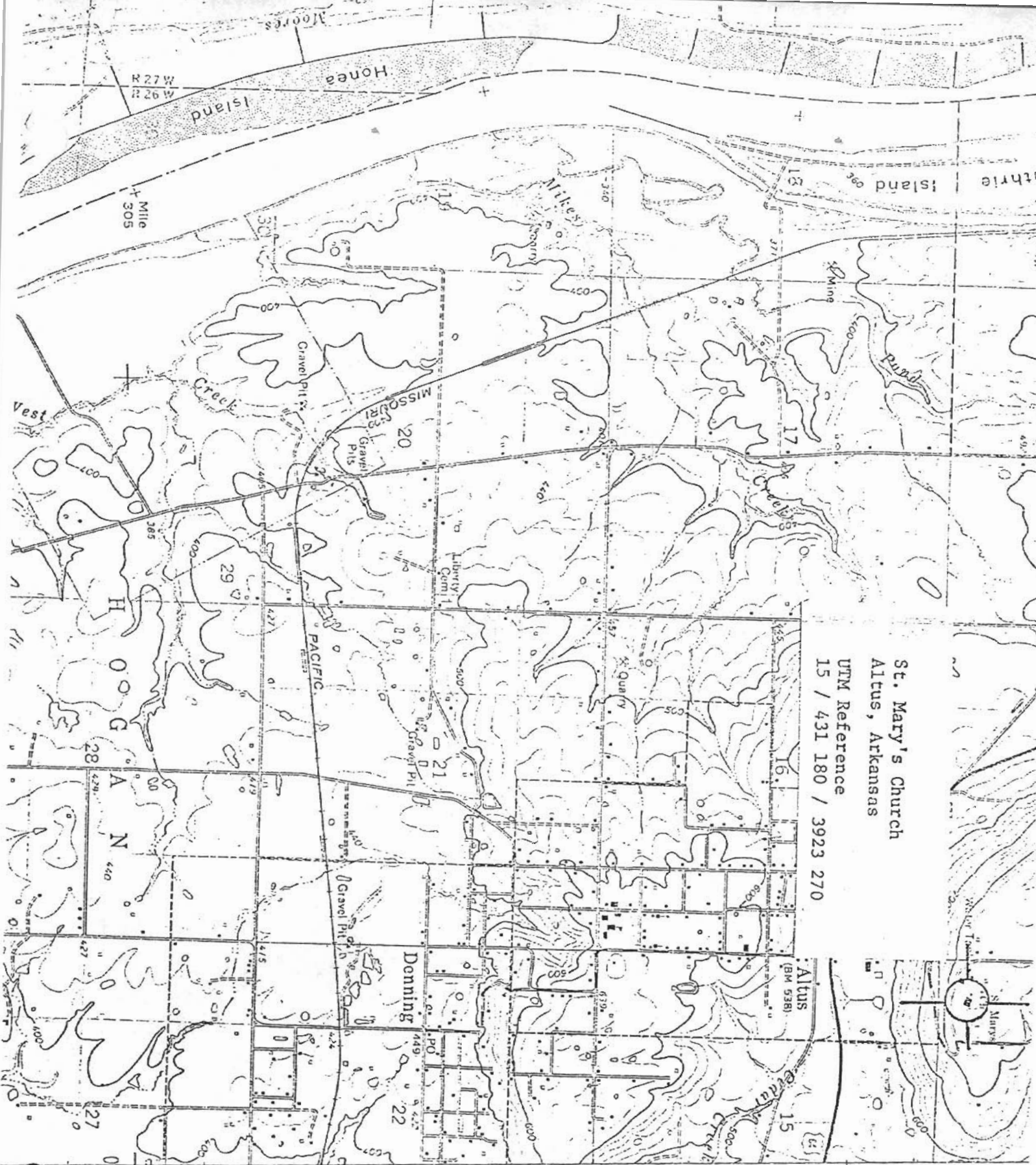
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DATE 1966

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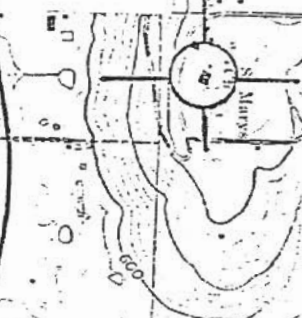
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



St. Mary's Church
Altus, Arkansas

UTM Reference
15 / 431 180 / 3923 270



COAL HILL 4.5 MI.
RUSSELLVILLE 31 MI.

(COAL HILL)
7254 1 NW

3919 25' 3920 3921 3922
3019 25' 3920 3921 3922