

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR 1-24-07

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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 an 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's Catholic Church

other names/site number Site #PH0171

2. Location

street & number 123 Columbia not for publication

city or town Helena-West Helena vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Phillips code 107 zip code 72342

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for 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.)

Cathie Matthews
Signature of certifying official/Title

11/15/06
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
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 the 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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

St. Mary's Catholic Church
Name of Property

Phillips County, Arkansas
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 count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Late Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT
other

Narrative Description

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

St. Mary's Catholic Church
Name of Property

Phillips County, Arkansas
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. birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- 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.**

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)
State

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1936

Significant Dates
1936

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder
Charles Eames, Architect

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

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: _____

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SUMMARY

St. Mary's Catholic Church is an imposing structure located at 123 Columbia Street in Helena, Arkansas. Built in 1936, the Late Gothic Revival building has a cross-shaped floor plan. Its brick veneered frame walls rest on a continuous cast concrete foundation. At the crux of the gabled roofline is a towering steeple clad in diamond-shaped metal shingles and adorned with Gothic-inspired arches and ornamentation. The church, designed by eminent architect Charles Eames, is further complimented by its interior, which features stunning stained glass windows and bold murals.

ELABORATION

Located at 123 Columbia Street in Helena, Arkansas, St. Mary's Catholic Church was constructed in the Late Gothic Revival style. It was designed by the renowned architect Charles Eames, and construction was completed in 1936. The cross-shaped foundation supports brick veneered frame walls with Gothic-style doors, windows, and detailing. Small parapets hide the ends of the gable roofs which support a tall, ornamental steeple. The interior is equally as striking with its carefully-crafted stained glass windows and Byzantine-like murals.

West Façade

The west elevation serves as the front of the church. A Gothic-inspired arch encompasses the wooden, double-door entrance. Under the arch, but above the door, is a beautiful tile mosaic. On a pedestal above the arch rests the Madonna and Child, done by sculptress Caroline Risque Janis. Above the statue on the peak of the parapet is a cross. The arched entryway is flanked by a pair of stationary windows that serve to protect the stained glass behind them. This pattern is echoed on the second-story level of the wall. Brick buttresses at each end of the wall rise just above the second-story windows. The one on the right contains the cornerstone, which proclaims the construction date the construction was started "MCMXXXV."

South Façade

The prominent feature of the south elevation is the two-story wing, which is located slightly right of center. Its wall is fenestrated by two eight-pane stationary windows which are arched at the top. Below and to the left of these windows is a small entryway topped by a gable roof. Like the front, the wing is topped with a gable roof and parapet, and has buttresses that rise to the second level. Gutters line the bottom of the gable roof.

To the left of the wing is a long wall that extends to the front elevation. Buttresses divide the wall into four sections: the first has three staggered single-pane stationary windows, while the other three feature eight-pane stationary windows similar to those on the end of the wing.

The wall on the right side of the wing is shorter than its counterpart on the left. A one-story projection, which wraps around the back of the building to the north elevation, extends out nearly even with the wing's face. A single door on the left of the projection provides an entrance, and a pair of two-paned casement

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windows flank the door on the right. This one story extension is topped with a hipped roof. Above the roof the main wall is adorned with two arched two-pane windows. Again, gutters line the bottom of the gable roof.

East Façade

The one-story projection extends out to the front and sides of the east elevation. Its hipped roof slopes down over a door on the right side, a single-pane stationary window on the left side, and another stationary window in the middle. Gutters wrap around the entire rear projection. Above, three stationary windows are centered under the parapet of the gable roof. The middle one is five-paned with an arched top while the two on each side are only four-paned, but share the arched top.

North Façade

The north elevation is nearly the mirror image of the south elevation, but with some notable differences. One of the windows on the rear one-story projection, which, on the north face, is on the left side of the prominent wing, only has one pane. On the east face of the wing is an all-brick chimney. Finally, on the far right side of the north face has two single-pane stationary windows centered on the first and second floors. The corresponding section on the south face only has three, and they are staggered.

Interior

The interior of the church features a nave with one row of pews on each side. The transept traverses the wide part of the cross-shaped sanctuary and intersects the nave at the front. Stained glass windows, which depict Jesus with different figures from the Old and New Testaments, line the walls of the hall. They were made and installed by designer Emil Frei, whose work also included repairs to the Vatican. Artist Charles Quest painted Byzantine-inspired murals on the rough brick walls behind the altar. Opposite the mural stately organ pipes adorn the back wall of the balcony, and globular light fixtures are suspended from the high, vaulted wooden ceiling. Icons of Jesus and Mary, large and small, are scattered throughout the church.

Integrity

The building remains remarkably well-preserved. Even with the ever-present demand for improving technology, very little has been done to change its appearance. The church is well-maintained, as it continues to be used as a place of worship.

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SUMMARY

St. Mary's Catholic Church was built in 1936 and was the fulfillment of a lifelong dream of Father Thomas J. Martin. He chose three unknown young men to build St. Mary's, and all three men reached international fame, in their own separate fields. The results were a modern church with a medieval feel. The church has stood the test of time and is a crowning achievement of acclaimed architect Charles Eames. St. Mary's Catholic Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **state significance** under **Criterion C** as a good example of the Late Gothic Revival style and as a design by eminent architect Charles Eames. The property is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A** as a religious property.

ELABORATION

St. Mary's Catholic Church was established in Helena, Arkansas in 1936. It was constructed in the Late Gothic Revival Style. The church's architect was Charles Eames. The church was his first large commission, and one that he always spoke of as being one of his finest works. Charles Eames was born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1907. While on a trip to Europe Mr. Eames had studied the work of Walter Gropius, whose theory was that "form follows function", and he studied the works of Mies van de Rohe, who designed with the feeling that "less is more."¹

Charles Eames was brought up in St. Louis and liked to describe himself as a "real Midwesterner."² His father, also named Charles Ormand Eames, a New Englander who brought up his son with Protestant ethics, first fought in the Civil War and settled in St. Louis afterward. In 1901, at the age of 52, he married the beautiful and much younger Celine Lambert, who came from a respectable and well-established local French Catholic family. Charles's earliest years were good in St. Louis, and his earliest memories were his parents playing duets for piano and flute. He later described his family as "super middle-class respectable" but not at all puritanical. His mother was the "most motherly of all motherly types," but there was a certain formality and distance in his relationship with his father, partly because his father was already 58 by the time Charles was born and partly because his job guarding trains for Pinkerton involved him being gone from home.³

After he was shot on the job, Eames father was able to devote a great deal of time to his hobbies of painting and photography, both of which Eames would become interested in later. He also published adventure stories in *The American Weekly*. Some of his creative energy probably rubbed off on his son, but it was after his father's death in 1921 that Charles began to use the out-dated photographic equipment in the house, making wet-plate pictures and mixing emulsions for more than a year before he found out that film had been invented. Fascinated from the start, he became hooked on photography for the rest of his life.⁴

¹ St. Mary's Catholic Church. From church pamphlet. 1998. AHPP Library

² Kirkham, Pat. Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995,

pp.9

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid*

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After his father's death Charles noted, "what had been the family fortune that kept us in reasonable state...disappeared" and the family was left with only a Civil War widow's pension of \$30 per month to live on- plus whatever the son could earn. Charles, his mother, and sister Adele moved in with his two aunts, and later Charles would always speak of the "strong-minded" women who brought him up with great respect.⁵

By the time Eames was 14 years old, while attending high school, Charles worked at the Laclede Steel Company as a part-time laborer, where he learned about engineering, drawing, and architecture (and also first entertained the idea of one day becoming an architect). He had such great drawing and practical skills that he was soon promoted to the engineering shop as a draftsman. A quick learner, he enjoyed the work and was entrusted with small jobs that impressed a rival firm, the Aitkens Mill Company that they offered him a scholarship to study engineering, although, by then Charles had decided he wanted to be an architect.⁶

Charles briefly studied architecture at Washington University in St. Louis on an architectural scholarship. He proposed studying Frank Lloyd Wright to his professors, and when he would not cease his interest in modern architects, he was dismissed from the university in 1928. In the report describing why he was dismissed from the university, a professor wrote the comment "His views were too modern." Also a contributing factor for his dismissal was at this time Charles was working for one of St. Louis's busiest architectural firms, Trueblood and Graf. Eames simply did not understand why the School could or would not embrace new ideas such as those of Wright. The two men who most impressed Charles as teachers were Lawrence Hill, who taught "history and elements," and Paul Valenti, who "enters into a plot with the students and gets them to do interesting things" and who could make the Italian Renaissance "come to life."⁷

While at Washington University, he met his first wife, Catherine Woermann, who he married in 1929. Eames' interests were further broadened when he traveled to Europe in 1929 on a honeymoon financed by his father-in-law. The newlyweds visited France, Germany, and England, sketching buildings old and new, and saw the work of the "pioneers" of the International Style, particularly Mies van der Rohe, Gropius, and Le Corbusier, at the Weissenhof Siedlung in Stuttgart. Eames's architectural work in the prevailing years was eclectic, getting influence from the Colonial Revival and Moderne styles as well as Scandinavian influence.⁸

"Between 1928 and 1930 Eames continued to work for Trueblood and Graf, a firm with "a pretty good tradition," but now on a full-time basis. He learned enough there to open an office with a colleague, Charles Gray, in 1930. There was a lively cultural and artistic scene in St. Louis, and Eames flourished in it."⁹

⁵ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century.*, pp. 10

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 12

⁸ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.13-14

⁹ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.13

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After returning from Europe he went into partnership with Charles Gray, but the Depression made work hard to come by and little is known of what they did apart from a "fairly simple house with reasonably nice Colonial detailing" for Ernest Sweetser, Professor of Engineering at Washington University. They built a few houses when they could and his firm was a part of the restoration of the lightning-damaged St. Louis Pilgrim Congregational Church, restoring the spire and the west door in 1933. "Eames also designed the stained glass windows and mosaics (in collaboration with Emil Frei)."¹⁰

The Depression hit everyone hard on the architectural and building industry, with 63 percent being unemployed. Charles found it difficult to scrape a living, but it was also the psychological depression that finally made him leave the city and reassess his life. In the autumn of 1933 Charles left his home, wife, and daughter and spent eight months in Mexico. He referred to this trip as his "On The Road tour" and it gave him a glimpse of his "wild streak." He spent most of his time in Mexico painting with each picture "a personal memento recalling a fiesta, a fine dinner or a night in jail."¹¹ He was arrested twice but the more serious was in Linares, Nuevo Leon, where he was arrested for having a book on Mexican antiquities in his possession. Local officials thought it showed their country in a bad light. He spent two nights in jail and was only released after the intervention of the American consular office. Mexico introduced him to an immensely rich craft tradition, and he returned home with a small collection of objects which he considered of both artistic and archaeological value, including a wand used in the rituals of the ancient Toltecs.¹²

"Either before or shortly after the Mexico trip he found some work with the Historic American Buildings Survey, a Works Progress Administration initiative, in St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve, and New Orleans. In 1934 he set up a partnership with another old colleague from Trueblood and Graf, Robert Walsh—a collaboration which was to prove his most productive to date. They took what work they could get during those years and between 1935 and 1938 managed to design at least six buildings, including two churches in Arkansas—a small one in Paragould and a larger one in Helena. Built to a traditional church plan and topped by a wooden spire, the impressive Roman Catholic church of St. Mary, in Helena, was designed 'with the manifest intention of making the most simple and extensive use of brick surfaces,' in the manner of the Scandinavian National Romantic Movement."¹³

¹⁰ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 14

¹¹ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 16-18

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 18

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“Eames combined Gropius and van der Rohe’s more abstract works with the plain primitive buildings of the Early Christian Era. They were built in the shape of a Latin cross and always faced east in the anticipation of the coming of Christ. They had a large wall space with very little window space, and they were usually dark with dark ceilings and exposed beams. Mr. Eames followed all these ancient designs. He decorated the large ceiling beams with appropriate religious symbols and kept the brick interior very simple and austere like many of the early church buildings.”¹⁴

Helena was an area noted for its high quality of brickwork and the builder, Vaslau Kesl along with his son Oldrich, was extremely impressed with Charles’s detailed blueprints for the brickwork, and by his professionalism in general. It was fortunate that the Kesl family was in this area at that time, having immigrated to Helena from Czechoslovakia, and since they were from a long line of builders dating back to the 10th century, the construction of a medieval church was familiar to them.¹⁵

“Along with his partner, Robert Walsh, Eames was involved with every aspect of the design, from the construction of the building to the design of the interior fittings, vestments, and vessels in an attempt to provide a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the best Cranbook tradition.”¹⁶

Eames and Walsh supervised everything the women of this Roman Catholic community did, and as it turned out their skills resulted in “marvelous things” for their church. The light fixtures were very remarkable with the brasswork that encloses the white circular globes and features crescent-moon and “star” shapes on the reverse. “The whole project so impressed Eliel Saarinen when he saw illustrations of it in *Architectural Forum* that he contacted the designers and inquired about their forthcoming project. This proved to be an important moment in the career of Charles Eames.”¹⁷

Charles and Robert Walsh went on to design three more houses in the St. Louis area, the Dinsmoor House, the Dean House, and the Meyer House.

“The Meyer House was the largest and most assured of the house designs and was the major achievement of Charles’s St. Louis period. Built in brick, this substantial residence, with five bedrooms, servants’ quarters, library, nursery, wine cellars, and formal gardens, drew on Swedish modernism of the 1920’s,

¹⁴St. Mary’s Catholic Church. From church pamphlet. 1998. AHPP Library

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.18

¹⁷ *Ibid*

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as exemplified by Gunnar Asplund's Stockholm City Library, and had some similarities to Saarinen's own house at Cranbrook. The Meyer's wanted a house that looked up-to-date, and they got an assured piece of Scandinavian modernism to grace their five-acre site."¹⁸

Eames did design some furniture for the living room and dining room of the house. For the living room he designed a veneered card table and four arm-chairs. His chairs owed some influence to the French "Art Deco" style of the mid 1920's than did his more obvious Classical Revival table. For the dining room Charles designed an inlaid sideboard, a white rug, and an acanthus-leafed chandelier. Eames also designed a sectional sofa to fit a bay window in the library.¹⁹

One great influence on him was the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen (whose son Eero, also an architect, would become a partner and friend). At Eliel's invitation, he moved in 1938 with his first wife Catherine Woermann Eames and daughter Lucia to Michigan, to further study architecture and design at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, where he would become a teacher and head of the industrial design department. Through working with Eero and the Eliel, Charles learned many new techniques of design and the importance of work and research. "It was largely through Eero that Charles became a full-fledged modernist, determined to research every aspect of a project and to use the techniques of mass production to improve the human environment for the population at large."²⁰

Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen's first collaboration, an exhibition of faculty work at Cranbrook in 1939, was a precursor of later Eames exhibitions. The Cranbrook exhibition reflected the avant-garde ideas of Herbert Bayer—mainly in the use of strings and wires to hang display stands and to define and organize space. This work not only reveals the pair's awareness of European ideas about exhibition design but also illustrates how much Charles's outlook had changed since his arrival at Cranbrook.²¹

Their second project together was the furniture for the Klienhaus Music Hall in Buffalo. The building was designed by the Saarinens; Charles assisted with the seating; including an armchair that reveals the influences of Alvar Aalto and the American designer Gilbert Rohde, and while Eliel and Eero Saarinen were in Europe he was left to draw all the furniture, including details and specifications. The third and most important collaboration came when Charles and Eero entered the Museum of Modern Art's 1940 Organic Design in Home Furnishings competition and won major prizes in the seating and case furniture categories. Their work displayed the new technique of wood moulding, that Eames would further develop in many moulded

¹⁸ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 22

¹⁹ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 27

²⁰ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 49

²¹ *Ibid*

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plywood products, including, beside chairs and other furniture, splints and stretchers for the U.S. Navy during World War II.²²

In 1941, Charles and Catherine divorced, and he married his Cranbrook colleague Ray Kaiser, moving with her to Los Angeles, California, where they would work and live for the rest of their lives.²³ The Eames's decided to move to Los Angeles not because they saw it as a hotbed of modernism but rather because they felt "the need to get away from the community life at Cranbrook and to work on their own."²⁴ They thought that they could dedicate themselves more to their work more easily in California than in New York, the other place they considered living, where they had "too many" friends and acquaintances. The creative cultural environment of California, and particularly Los Angeles, offered the Eameses an inspirational climate where their talents were their best.²⁵

The Case Study House Program, which began in the 1940's, aimed to produce contemporary solutions to house design and to offer prototypes from which low- and medium-cost housing could be developed, it was organized by John Entenza and publicized by *Arts and Architecture*. This magazine was one of the most influential in suggesting what the postwar home should be like.

"John Entenza had acquired this regional arts magazine in 1938, and under his direction it became more "modern" and national in outlook. In 1942 Charles Eames became an editorial associate and Ray joined the advisory board; he contributed articles and photographs, and she wrote one article and designed a series of covers. It took a liberal stance on issues of race, human rights, and child care, and it advocated equality among the arts, regularly featuring painting, sculpture, architecture, design, photography, dance, and film."²⁶

The magazine wanted architects to design and build homes, and then show them in the magazine and eventually be sold. Eight houses were originally commissioned from Richard Neutra, J.R. Davidson, William Wurster, Sumner Spalding, Ralph Rapson, Whitney Smith, Thornton Abell, and Charles Eames. The houses that were built before 1949 were mainly wood and even some adobe brick. Wood was used mainly because it was post-war and it was more economically feasible to get than steel.²⁷

In the late 1940s, as part of the Arts & Architecture magazine "Case Study" program, Ray and Charles designed and built the groundbreaking Eames House, Case Study House #8, as their home. Although the

²² Charles Eames Biography at www.wikipedia.org

²³ Charles Eames Biography at www.wikipedia.org

²⁴ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.52

²⁵ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.52

²⁶ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.101

²⁷ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.103

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steel-frame Eames House was more popular for its prefabricated industrial components, the modesty, detailing, and colorfulness were the most unique. Since moving to Los Angeles, the Eames's wanted to create their ideal home.

"They knew they wanted an intimate relationship of indoors to outdoors, the privacy of and enclosed living space, and the comfort and ease their apartment offered. Even though they decided on an International Style house they radically altered their ideas. The first design is generally attributed to Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, the catalog compiled by the Neuharts with Ray Eames states that the 1945 design was by "the Eames Office, working with Eero Saarinen," thus giving Ray some credit from the earliest stage. The idea of separate working and living spaces came from the Eames themselves and was retained when the house was completely redesigned by Charles and Ray between 1947 and 1949."²⁸

Charles was involved in designing two Case Study houses: his own and John Entenza's. They both share a site in Pacific Palisades. The Eames house was designed in collaboration with Ray Eames and the Entenza House in collaboration with Eero Saarinen. Though the houses each share a site and an architect they are very different. The Eames House is an open structure with infill panels; the Entenza House conceals its structure and emphasizes the horizontal. They have been called "technological twins but architectural opposites." It can be thought when comparing the two houses that Charles and Ray have a more creative partnership than Charles and Eero.²⁹

The first plan was known as the Bridge House, it was designed by Charles and Eero Saarinen, but since there was a shortage of materials from the war, the materials didn't arrive until 1948 and Charles and Ray had already altered the plans for the house. They had "fallen in love" with the meadow and thought a different plan would better suit it.³⁰

"Whereas the original design was "a minimum house which used a lot of steel," the new version aimed at maximum volume from minimum materials. Space was a key consideration for the Eameses, who regarded it as more important than a swimming pool or a garage."³¹

"As built, the house consisted of two rectangular steel cages, each about 20 feet wide, connected by a brick-pave patio. The larger cage (51 feet long) was the living quarters; the smaller (37 feet) was the studio.

²⁸ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.106

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ Eames Foundation. "History of the House." At www.eamesfoundation.org/history.html. 2004

³¹ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.113

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Together they provided about 2500 square feet of space. The overall effect is reminiscent of traditional Japanese architecture in its emphasis on lightness, elegance, minimalism, and rectilinear geometric form."³²

Between 1945 and 1955, after which date films and exhibitions took up more of the Eameses' time and that of their staff, there were more than twenty projects that went into production. The Lounge Chair and Ottoman and the Aluminum Group were some of the major furniture projects that went into production between 1956 and 1966. After 1967 only six major projects went into production, but since research and development were so important in the Eames office only six projects was a considerable amount.³³

Eames's furniture began with Charles and Eero Saarinen at Cranbrook in 1938. By this time a considerable amount of plywood furniture was being commercially produced in the United States. When Eames and Saarinen entered their molded-plywood chair in the Museum of Modern Arts competition they ended up winning first prize in each category.³⁴ "The 1940 Eames-Saarinen side chair was developed by Charles and Ray Eames into the plastic shell (1950), the wire shell (1952), the La Fonda chair (1961), and the Soft Pad chair (1969), and also influenced the Aluminum Group (1958). The 1940 lounge design influenced the Eameses' 1956 version as well as the 1948 chaise."³⁵

The first of Eames's pieces to be mass produced were splints for the Navy made of plywood. Eames got the idea after talking to a medical friend that said there were problems with the metal splints they were using so Eames designed a molded-plywood splint that was for comfort and easy to transport. Having access to military information, Charles and Ray learned of new materials in plywood production and synthetic glues.³⁶ The splints were made from Douglas Fir and with varying plies to add support where needed, the splint proved effective. The Eames's splint was later officially recognized for their contribution.³⁷

Production expanded and they moved to a new office, taking on a workforce of 22, however the new enterprise was threatened by a cash-flow shortage when delays in payment by the Navy after a trial run of 5000 splints.

"The Eameses sold out to the Evans Products Company, a Detroit based component manufacturing firm with interests in timber and in the West Coast plywood industry, in October 1943, just three weeks before the Navy placed an order for 200,000 splints. The Eames team then became the Molded Plywood Products Division of the Evans Products Company; with Charles as Director of Research and Development....By the end of the war the Eameses had produced

³² Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century, pp. 114

³³ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century, pp. 201

³⁴ Library of Congress. "The Work of Charles & Ray Eames: Furniture." At www.loc.gov/exhibits/eames/furniture.html

³⁵ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century, pp. 210

³⁶ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century, pp. 212

³⁷ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century, pp. 213

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about 150,000 splints and had learned a great deal about the mass manufacture of plywood objects.”³⁸

Having learned about mass production from the splints, the Eameses were now ready to experiment into ventures of mass produced molded-plywood furniture. The Eameses' first mass production was for children's furniture. With things like plywood chairs, desks, and stools brightly stained red, yellow, blue, and magenta, this furniture was promoted as easily cleaned, able to withstand the rigors of classroom use, and suitable for outdoor as well as indoor use. Produced and distributed by the Evans Products Company this furniture wasn't a commercial success; the plywood furniture for adults was the major success for mass produced molded-plywood furniture.³⁹

Charles and Ray saw the need for inexpensive, yet high-quality furniture—for the average consumer. They experimented with ways to design flexibility with everything they did, from their furniture, to stadium seating, to collapsible sofas for the home. The reason for their diverse work was to search for the most comfortable seat and back forms to support the human body. They often opted to use three dimensional shaped surfaces or flexible materials instead of cushioned upholstery.⁴⁰

In 1946, the Museum of Modern Art hosted its first “one-man” furniture exhibition, *New Furniture Designed by Charles Eames*, which featured the plywood pieces designed and developed jointly by Charles and Ray between 1941 and 1946. This show premiered the DCM (Dining Chair Metal) and the DCW (Dining Chair Wood). The presence of Eames furniture in this and other Museum of Modern Art exhibits was an important factor in their increasing popularity.⁴¹

Charles was given a consultancy position at the Herman Miller Furniture Company in 1947. His designs along with Isamu Noguchi and George Nelson ensured that Herman Miller would retain its position as a leader of modernist furniture design in the United States. Nelson discovered Eames's designs after seeing them at the Museum of Modern Art exhibit in 1946, and said his designs were “years ahead” of anything he had even thought about.⁴²

Herman Miller began to market Eames plywood furniture in 1946 and it was featured prominently in the 1948 catalog. The plywood pieces in colors of rosewood, ash, birch, walnut, or even zebra or some other exotic wood were meant to appeal to American middle-class families who were encouraged to go modern by

³⁸ Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.213-214

³⁹ Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.215-216

⁴⁰ Library of Congress. “The Work of Charles & Ray Eames: Furniture.” At www.loc.gov/exhibits/eames/furniture.html

⁴¹ Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.219

⁴² Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.222

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salesmen. The prices were able to be low because the manufacturing time had been reduced significantly to about 10 minutes.⁴³

The Eameses were ready to move on to a new type of material to conquer and wanted to take on aluminum and steel, the materials had a negative stigma with consumers and Charles wanted to break that. However the estimated production costs were high and they felt that it wasn't the right time to try and break the barrier of consumer resistance in buying metal furniture. The Eameses reconsidered and decided to use plastics.

They were not the first to work in plastic, but their designs proved to be the most popular using it. Polyester plastic reinforced with fiberglass, developed during the war by the U.S. Air Force, was perceived as a wonder material that "could do damn near anything." The Eames first venture was the 1948 "La Chaise." It was submitted into the 1948 Museum of Modern Art competition for low-cost furniture, but it never made it into commercial production until 1990. The 1948 designs for metal side and armchairs were chosen to be produced as a cheap plastic chair. The chairs eventually came in a variety of colors and a variety of forms, the rocker, bar, and stacking version, and in 1954 the shells were used for Stadium Seating, Tandem Shell Seating (1963) and School Seating (1964), all of which involved attaching the shells to metal bars. They were also modified, as in the La Fonda chairs, and the Loose Cushion Armchair.⁴⁴

The Eameses successfully adapted the shell form to another material: bent wire. They weren't the first to use this material, but their design was the first to be successfully mass produced. Charles and Ray were fascinated by the increase of ordinary objects produced in wire in the late 1940s and the early 1950s: "If you looked around you found these fantastic things being made of wire—trays, baskets, rat traps, using a wire fabricating technique perfected over a period of many years. We looked into it and found that it was a good production technique and also a good use of material."⁴⁵ Open woven wire was popular because it was light and "modern." These chairs double wire edging received the first American mechanical patent for design. The wire mesh chair was new for people, because of its lightness and it was so different from anything anyone had seen.⁴⁶

The Chaise (1968) was also one of the Eames's most innovative designs and was inspired by Billy Wilder's desire for a couch that he could nap on in his office and it not look like a "casting couch." The 17 inch-wide chaise was taut, elegant, slim, and strong. It resembled some experimental chairs the Eameses did in the 1940's and also resembled the Aluminum Chair. The Chaise had six foam-filled leather cushions held together by zippers and attached to the fabric covered frame at the head and foot. There were also additional small cushions for a head rest or lumbar support.⁴⁷

⁴³ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 223

⁴⁴ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 231-236

⁴⁵ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.240

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.253

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The Eameses also conceived and designed a number of landmark exhibitions. The first of these, "Mathematica, a World of Numbers and Beyond" (1961), is still considered a model for scientific popularization exhibitions.⁴⁸ Charles had a lifelong interest in science and he was very interested in computers and their technology. The California Museum of Science and Industry asked IBM Corporation to contribute a display to its new wing to be opened in 1961. IBM propositioned the Eameses, who had done previous work for them, to come up with a display and the result was "Mathematica: A World of Numbers and Beyond." The basic idea behind it was to present mathematical concepts in a pleasurable way. Mathematica was such a success that a duplicate was installed at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, remaining there until it was moved to the Boston Museum of Science in 1980. With the success of "Mathematica" the Eameses used their confidence to explore more themes and develop more exhibitions. The prestige it brought to IBM led them to again ask the Eameses to contribute a pavilion and an exhibition to the New York World's Fair of 1964. The result was "Think." It was one of the Eameses most elaborate exhibitions. It was followed by "A Computer Perspective: Background to the Computer Age" (1971) and "The World of Franklin and Jefferson" (1975-1977), among others.⁴⁹ The Eameses used the concept of "information overload" with their exhibitions as well as films. Above all, the exhibitions were very educational and were used as a learning tool. Each exhibition was researched thoroughly and they often turned to experts in math, astronomy, and history for their expertise.⁵⁰

Charles would soon channel his interest in photography into the production of short films. From their first one, the unfinished *Traveling Boy* (1950), to the extraordinary *Powers of Ten* (1977), their films were an outlet for ideas, a vehicle for experimentation and education.⁵¹ By 1978 the Eameses had made more than eighty short films; they were recognized as very innovative filmmakers; however, they didn't see themselves as filmmakers but wanting to use these films as communicating ideas rather than for entertainment or creative expression. Charles and Ray Eames were the first people to popularize the computer through film. They understood that people were intimidated by huge amounts of information and wanted them to feel at home with the computer. Realizing that computers were the wave of the future and that they would have to be made "user friendly" the Eameses devoted themselves to explaining them to non-specialist. *The Information Machine* was the first completely animated film produced by the Eames Office in its attempt to show the principles of computers and how its uses could be beneficial.⁵²

Powers of Ten (1968) was used as a teaching aid in many American schools and science museums. It gives a "dramatic demonstration of orders of magnitude by visually zooming away from the earth to the edge of the universe, and then microscopically zooming into the nucleus of a carbon atom."⁵³ In 1977 *Powers of Ten* was

⁴⁸ Charles Eames Biography at www.wikipedia.org

⁴⁹ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.297-299

⁵⁰ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.263

⁵¹ Charles Eames Biography at www.wikipedia.org

⁵² Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.310-350

⁵³ Charles Eames Biography at www.wikipedia.org

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remade with the assistance of MIT physics professor, Philip Morrison, who incorporated new scientific knowledge and wrote and narrated the text.⁵⁴

The Eameses short films were about their interest in collecting toys, and artifacts on their many travels; or even were mundane as filming soap suds moving on pavement. Charles was also a seasoned photographer with images of their furniture, exhibits, and collections, which are all now apart of the Library of Congress.⁵⁵

“The office of Charles and Ray Eames, which functioned for more than four decades (1943-88) at 901 Washington Boulevard in Venice, California, included in its staff, at one time or another, a number of remarkable designers, like Don Albinson and Deborah Sussman. Among the many important designs originating there are the molded-plywood DCW (Dining Chair Wood) and DCM (Dining Chair Metal with a plywood seat) (1945), Eames Lounge Chair (1956), the Aluminum Group furniture (1958) and as well as the Eames Chaise (1968), designed for Charles's friend, film director Billy Wilder, as well as molded plywood leg splints for the US Navy, the playful Do-Nothing Machine (1957), an early solar energy experiment, and a number of toys.”⁵⁶

Charles Eames died in 1978 while on a consulting trip in his native Saint Louis, and now has a star on the St. Louis Walk of Fame.⁵⁷

Phillips County was organized in 1820 under the legislature of the Arkansas territory. The county was named after Sylvanus Phillips, who was a pioneer settler. He along with William Russell and Nicholas Rightor, laid out the town of Helena in 1821. Helena was made the county seat in 1830 and incorporated in 1833. It was named Helena after Sylvanus Phillips daughter, Miss Helena Phillips.⁵⁸

Helena was an old river town and was a main stop along the Mississippi River for commerce. The Civil War interrupted Helena's growth for awhile. The Federal Army were in Helena almost a year when the Battle of Helena was fought on July 4, 1863. This was a bloody battle and was on the same day as the battle at Gettysburg. The Confederates were trying to make an attempt to retake Helena as it was an important supply depot for their campaign against Vicksburg. After the war railroad transportation began to rival river transportation and lumber mills began to line the river. World War I revived river transportation through the agency of the Federal Barge Lines.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Kirkham, Charles and Ray Eames: *Designers of the Twentieth Century*, pp.354

⁵⁵ Charles Eames Biography at www.wikipedia.org

⁵⁶ Charles Eames Biography at www.wikipedia.org

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

⁵⁸ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas*. Chicago, Nashville, and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co. , 1890. pp.739. AHPP Library

⁵⁹ “Helena: Long Ago is Not so Far Away.” Souvenir Program of the Helena 150 Celebration. From AHPP library. 1983

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Early Helena had a mixture of church denominations. The Presbyterian Church was organized long before the Civil War and their church was used as a hospital for Union troops, and as of 1890 there was only one church of this denomination in the county. The Methodist and Baptists were thought to be the pioneer Christian groups working in the county in the very early days. As of 1890 Catholics had a very small church organization, and African Americans had three Baptists and one Methodist Church throughout the county.⁶⁰

The building of St. Mary's was a lifelong dream fulfilled for Father Thomas J. Martin. Father Martin spent all but six years of his priesthood in Helena, and his fondest wish was to leave behind him a beautiful and lasting monument to the church and to the people whom he loved and served for so many years. His grave can be seen at the northeast corner of the church.⁶¹

The stained glass windows were created and installed by Emil Frei. In his lifetime he was considered one of the world's finest window designers, and anytime there was repair work to be done for the Vatican, Emil Frie generally did it. There are a number of ancient church symbols incorporated into the windows of St. Mary's, but most of the symbols are Mr. Frei's own. They interpret, in his own way, the teaching of the church and the Bible.⁶²

The mural on the sanctuary wall was painted by Charles Quest. It, too, was his first large commission. Mr. Eames suggested that the mural be decorative in character, not realistic, and designed in a manner which would relate well to the simple, austere design of the building. A pretty Renaissance in oil would not have been appropriate or successful over the rough brick walls, so Mr. Quest, in keeping with the Early Christian feeling, decided to use pictorial forms similar to the mosaics found in the Byzantine churches.⁶³

Mr. Quest and his wife, Dorothy, spent many months on the sketches and designs for the mural and did extensive research into church history. The background of the mural was done in a grayed-pink, slightly lighter than the church walls. The mural itself symbolizes God, the Father, supporting in His arms and extending to the world His crucified Son. During his lifetime, Mr. Quest's works were exhibited in 89 museums throughout the world, and his works now are in the permanent collections of 42 museums in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, and England.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas. Chicago, Nashville, and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co. 1890. From AHPP library.

⁶¹ St. Mary's Catholic Church. From church pamphlet. 1998. AHPP Library

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ St. Mary's Catholic Church. From church pamphlet. 1998. AHPP Library

⁶⁴ *Ibid*

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It was fortunate that at the time of St. Mary's construction the Kesl family was living in this parish. Vaslau Kesl had come here from Pilson, Czechoslovakia. He and his son, Oldrich, were chosen to build the church. The Kesls had been builders since the 10th century and had passed their skills from generation to generation, so the construction of a medieval church was a familiar task to them. This eliminated the difficult task of importing skilled artisans. They were impressed with the detailed blueprints for the brickwork and professionalism of Charles Eames. The sons and grandsons of these men are still highly respected builders in Helena today.⁶⁵

St. Mary's Catholic Church has stood in Helena at 123 Columbia Street since 1936 and still stands today. The church still serves the community with Mass each Sunday.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Mary's Catholic Church was built in 1936 and was the fulfillment of a lifelong dream of Father Thomas J. Martin. He chose three unknown young men to build St. Mary's, and all three men reached international fame, in their own separate fields. The results were a modern church with a medieval feel. The church has stood the test of time and is a crowning achievement of acclaimed architect Charles Eames. St. Mary's Catholic Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **state significance** under **Criterion C** as a good example of the Late Gothic Revival style and as a design by eminent architect Charles Eames. The property is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A** as a religious property.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*

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St. Mary's Catholic Church. From church pamphlet in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. 1998.

St. Mary's Catholic Church
Name of Property

Phillips County, Arkansas
County and State

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the southwest corner of the Columbia and Phillips Street intersection, proceed southerly for 250 feet along the west side of Columbia to the point of beginning. From the point of beginning, proceed westerly for 250 feet perpendicular to Columbia, thence proceed southerly for 125 feet parallel to Columbia, thence proceed easterly for 250 feet perpendicular to Columbia, thence proceed northerly along the west side of Columbia to the point of beginning.

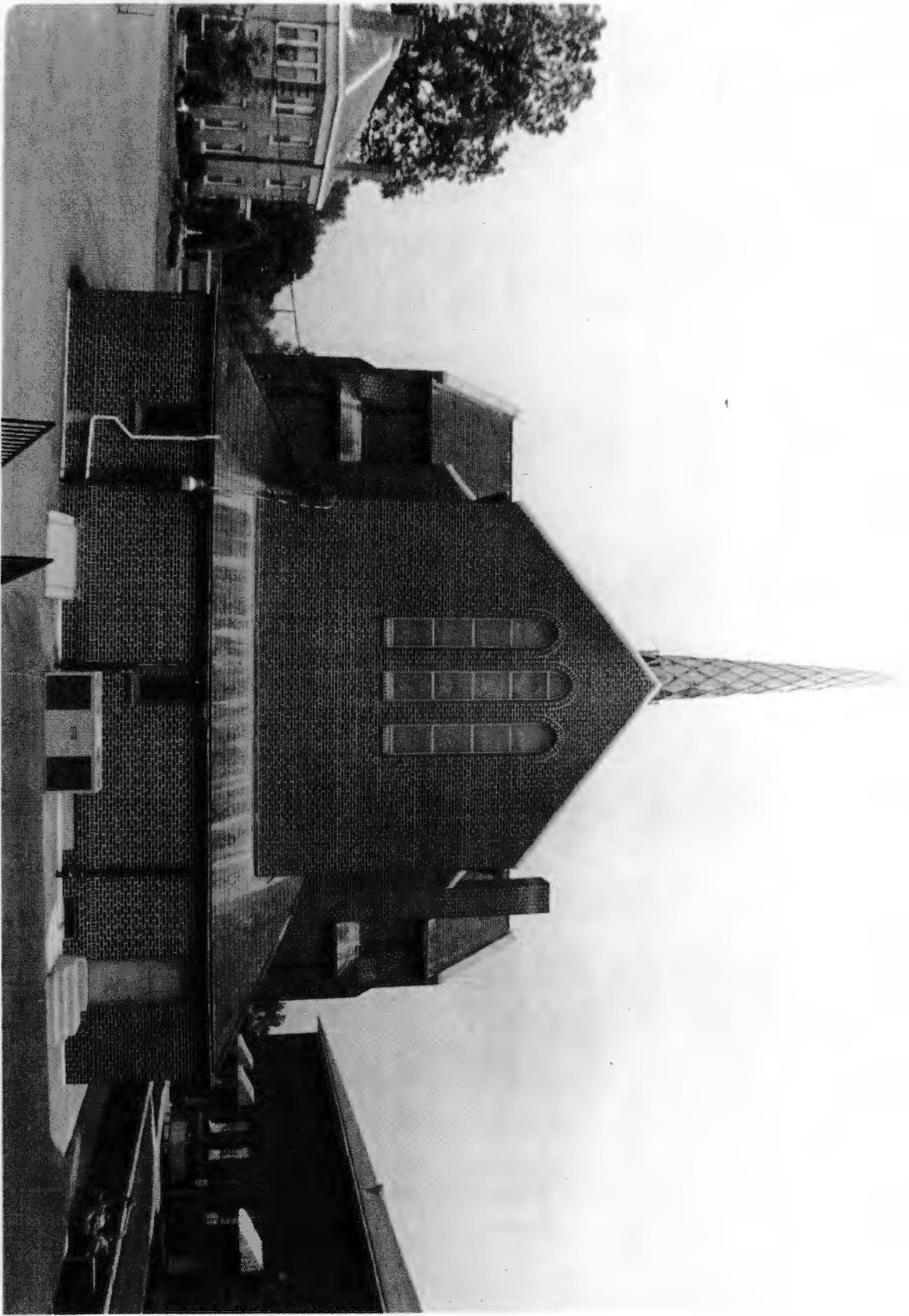
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

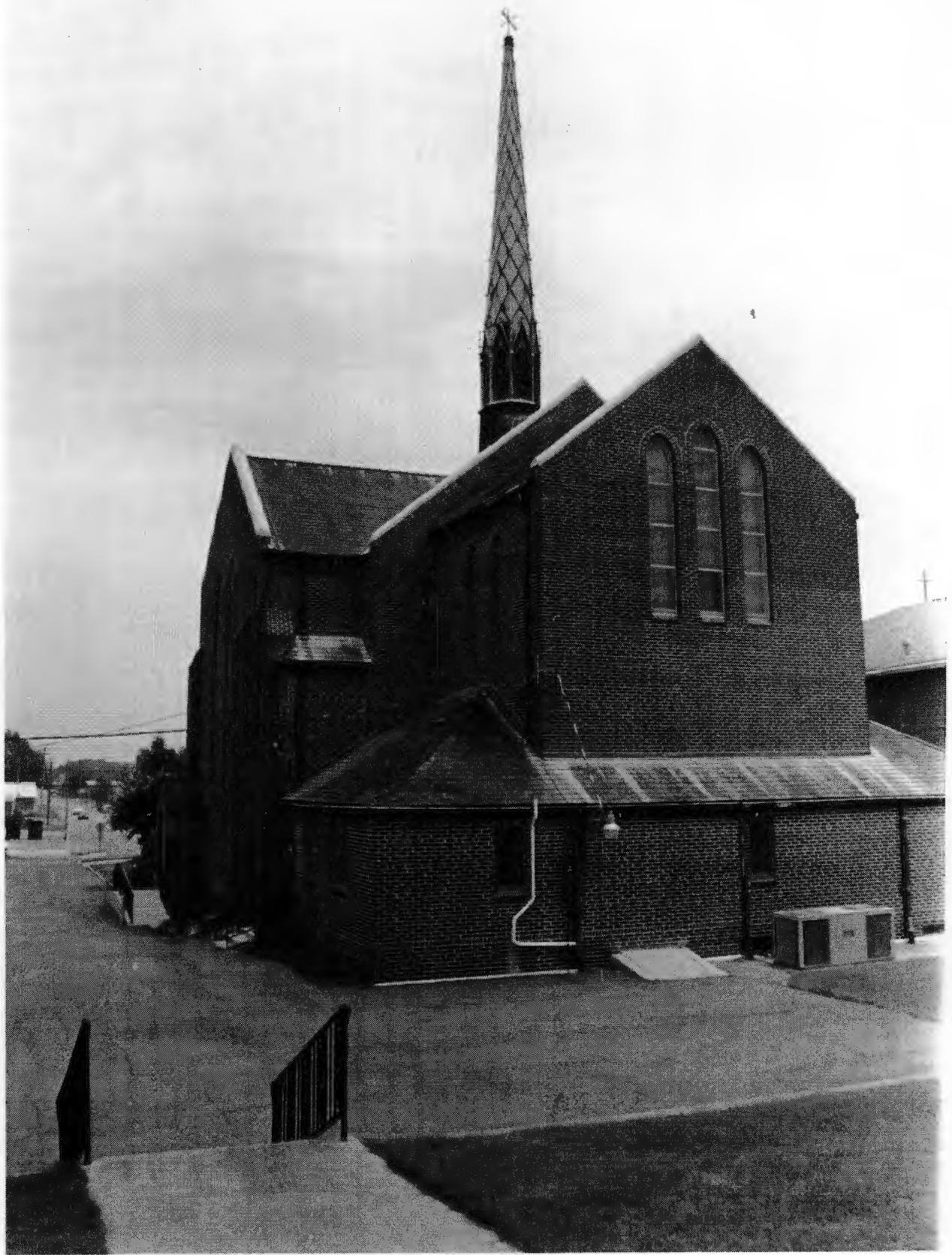
The boundary contains the land that is historically associated with St. Mary's Catholic Church.









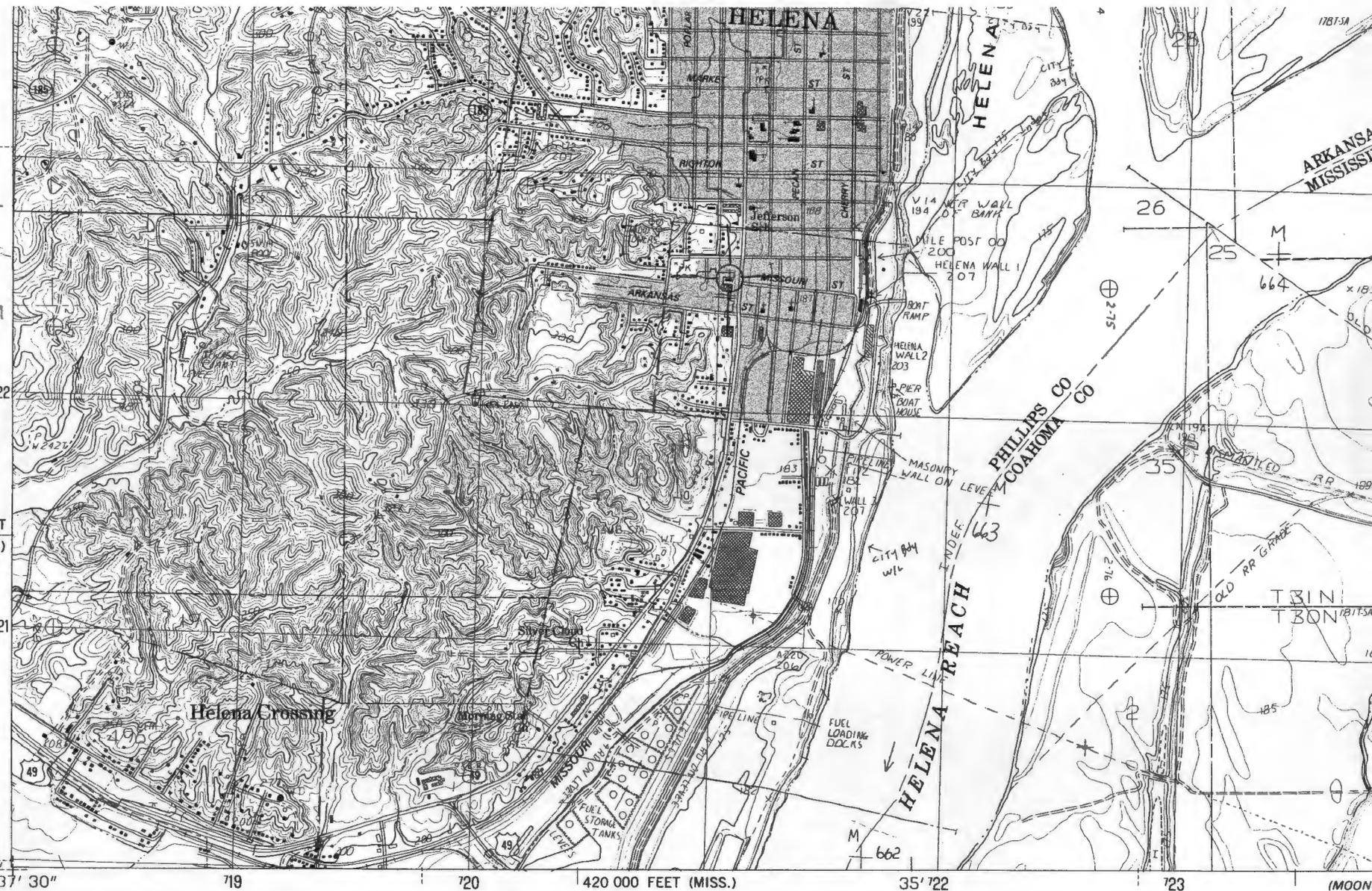








ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
 PHILLIPS COUNTY, AR
 UTM;
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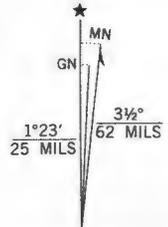


1 460 000 FEET
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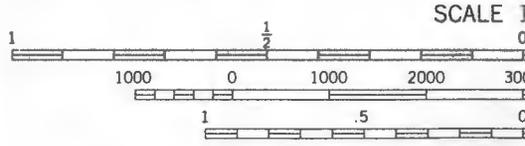
34° 30'
 90° 37' 30"

(FRARS POINT NW)

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
 Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1977. Field checked 1978. Map edited 1982
 Projection: Mississippi coordinate system, west zone (transverse Mercator)
 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Mississippi coordinate system, west zone and Arkansas coordinate system, south zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
 1927 North American Datum
 To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 8 meters south and 9 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



UTM GRID AND 1982 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR INTERVAL
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VE

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATION