

St. Mary's Catholic School and
Sinai Hebrew Synagogue
209 North Henderson Street
Jefferson
Marion County
Texas

HABS No. TEX-141

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. TEX-141

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND SINAI HEBREW SYNAGOGUE

Location: 209 North Henderson Street, north corner of the intersection of Market and Henderson Streets, Jefferson, Marion County, Texas

Present Owner: Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club

Present Occupant: School building is unoccupied. Synagogue is used by the Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club once each year for the production of a play.

Present Use: School building is unused. Synagogue is used as a playhouse.

Statement of Significance: Both buildings are representative of the Classical influence in the vernacular architecture of the South.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: On September 8, 1869, Father John M. Giraud purchased Lots 7-8-9, Block 46, Urquhart Survey, from W. P. Williams and Wife (Marion County Deed Book E, p. 419). The property contained the building which later became the St. Mary's School (History of the Catholic Church in Jefferson). On September 11, 1869, Father Giraud deeded the property to Father Burlando of Frederick County, Maryland, with the provision that the property be deeded to the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul as soon as they became a corporate body in the State of Texas (Marion County Deed Book E, p. 421). On May 23, 1871, the Sisters of Charity became a corporate body. They received the property from Father Burlando on November 16, 1871 (Marion County Deed Book H, p. 157). The Sisters of Charity deeded the property to the Hebrew Congregation on May 20, 1874 (Marion County Deed Book K, p. 358). The Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club acquired the buildings in 1954 and secularized them. Around the turn of the century the buildings were used by the Christian Church (A History of Jefferson, 1836-1936).
2. Date of erection: School building date is unknown, but before 1869. Synagogue was constructed in 1876 (Marion County Deed Book L, p. 164).

3. Builder: The builder of the school building is unknown. The synagogue was constructed by W. F. J. Graham (Marion County Deed Book L, p. 164).
4. Original plans: Plan of synagogue was filed for record on September 25, 1876, in Marion County Deed Book L, p. 164.
5. Alterations and additions: An addition to the school building is undated although it appears in a bird's-eye drawing of Jefferson by H. Brosius dated 1872. The stairway to the second floor of the school building has been removed.

The interior of the synagogue has had minor alterations.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with Structures:

Father Giraud purchased, with French Mission money, the property and building which became St. Mary's School. Due to financial difficulties in keeping the school open, the building was sold to the Sinai Hebrew Congregation of Beth-El. The synagogue was constructed next to the school building after an earlier building at the same location was razed.

C. Sources of Information:

History of the Catholic Church in Jefferson (no author or publisher). A copy is in the Jefferson Historical Society Museum.

Marion County Deed Books in the Marion County Courthouse, Jefferson, Texas.

McKay, Mrs. Arch, and Spellings, Mrs. H. A. A History of Jefferson, 1836-1936 (no publisher or date). A copy is in the Jefferson Historical Society Museum.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: As was often the case in the West where timber was plentiful, the buildings were constructed entirely of wood. Classical detail was simplified and built up with simple wooden moldings. The classical influence is most obvious in the school

building with its simple, but monumental tetrastyle portico.

The sanctuary and main entry of the synagogue are on the short axis of the building, thereby distinguishing it from most churches. The simple pediments and round-arched window openings maintain the Classical character on the exterior.

2. Condition of fabric: Poor, in need of repair and renovation. The school portico is unsound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The school building is 48'-4" (four-bay front) x 20'-4". The portico is 22'-4" wide and projects 9'-5".

The synagogue is 37'-3" x 33'-1". The breezeway between the two buildings is 3'-5" wide.

2. Foundations: The school building is constructed on brick foundations. The synagogue was built over the brick foundation walls of a previous building which was much smaller. Brick piers were added to accommodate the larger synagogue.
3. Wall construction and finish: Wall construction of both buildings is wooden frame. With the exception of the northeast side of the school building which is finished with flush boards, the exteriors are finished with lapped siding.
4. Porches: The school building has a monumental two-story wooden portico with four rectangular columns of a simplified order representative of the Tuscan.

The ark in the synagogue is contained in a rectangular projection, 3'-7" x 8'-2" on the southeast elevation directly across from the main entrance. It has a gable roof with heavy cornice which returns to form a pediment.

The roof of the school building connects with the wall of the synagogue forming a covered passageway between the two.

5. Chimneys: There is one large brick end chimney on the northeast elevation of the school building. Two other small chimneys, one in the school building and one in the synagogue, terminate in the attics of the two buildings.

6. Openings:

- a. Doors and doorways: The school building has double, four-panel front doors; four-light side windows and five-light transom. The synagogue has double, four-panel doors.
- b. Windows: The school has six-over-six light double-hung wooden sash units. In the synagogue, the wooden sash is six-over-six light double-hung in round-arched openings.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The school building has a hipped roof. Asphalt shingles cover the original wooden shingles. The synagogue has a pedimented gable roof with asphalt shingles over the original wooden shingles.
- b. Framing: The roof structure of the school building cannot be seen. The synagogue roof structure was framed with 2" by 6" joists of irregular spacing.
- c. Cornice: Cornices on both buildings are constructed from wood with crown and bed moldings. There is a simplified architrave and frieze on both.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The school building contains two stories. It is a central-hall arrangement with one room on either side of the hall. The synagogue is one large room with a balcony. Balcony access is from the exterior only.
2. Stairways: The interior stairway has been removed from the school building. No access to the second floor exists at present. There is a roofed exterior stairway to the balcony of the synagogue.
3. Flooring: 8"-wide vertical-grain pine flooring is in the school building. The synagogue has 5"-wide vertical-grain pine flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: 7"-wide, smooth pine boards were used on the walls and ceilings of the school building. The synagogue has 1" by 4" tongue-and-groove boards on the walls and ceiling. The interior is painted.
5. Doors: Doors in the school building are four-panel. There are no interior doors in the synagogue.

6. Trim: Trim on both buildings is wooden with moldings.
7. Hardware: Doors have iron butts and porcelain knobs with iron latches.
8. Lighting: School building has brass electrical sockets with thumb-turn. In the synagogue the original wall-mounted gas fixtures remain and are in working condition.
9. Heating: No heating in either building. The original fireplace openings in the school building have been filled with masonry.

D. Site:

The main door to the school faces southeast while the main door to the synagogue faces northwest. The site is 150' x 150' with streets on the southeast and southwest. Ground slope is down, rather steeply, from the southwest to the northeast. One large magnolia tree on the eastern corner of the school comprises the major landscape feature. There are no enclosures or outbuildings.

Prepared by Willard B. Robinson, AIA
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made in 1966 during a summer project financed by the National Park Service to record 16 structures in Jefferson and the near-by area. The summer recording team received the cooperation of numerous citizens and organizations which provided office space, lodgings, board, and research assistance. Among the cooperators were the Dan Lester Drilling Company, the Excelsior Hotel, Mrs. A. K. Payne, The Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club and the Marion County Chamber of Commerce.

The project was under the direction of A. Lewis Koue of the Historic American Buildings Survey's Western Office in San Francisco. Supervisor of the recording team was Willard B. Robinson, AIA, of Texas Technological College. The team was composed of student architects Bob J. Fong of the University of Idaho, David L. Bouse of the University of Nebraska, Donald Quackenbush of Washington State University, and Robert M. Swanson of the University of Texas. Photographs were made by National Park Service Photographer, Jack E. Boucher.