

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC ST. FIDELIS CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND/OR COMMON "CATHEDRAL OF THE PLAINS"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER corner of St. Anthony St. and Delaware St. NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY, TOWN Victoria VICINITY OF _____ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT _____
STATE Kansas CODE 20 COUNTY _____ CODE 051

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" 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 Most. Rev. Cyril J. Vogel, Bishop of the Diocese, Diocese of Salina
STREET & NUMBER 421 Country Club Road
CITY, TOWN Salina VICINITY OF _____ STATE Kansas 67401

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Register of Deeds
STREET & NUMBER Ellis County Courthouse
CITY, TOWN Hays VICINITY OF _____ STATE Kansas 67601

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE A Survey of Historic Sites and Structures in Kansas
DATE 1957 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Kansas State Historical Society
CITY, TOWN Topeka VICINITY OF _____ STATE Kansas 66612

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

St. Fidelis Catholic Church at Victoria is a large rural church building in a Romanesque influenced style. It is constructed of limestone cut in uniform horizontal courses with individual stones varying in length. The stone face is broken, giving a massive rusticated appearance. The building plan is a typical nave and transept style with dual towers flanking the west entrance. The overall length is 220 feet with a width at the transept of 110 feet and at the nave of 73 feet. The interior height is 44 feet while the twin towers rise 141 feet. The main roof is a double pitch with wood shingles. Four-sided steep pitch roofs top each tower. A dentiled cornice defines the roof line for the main building and the towers.

Buttresses modulate each side of the structure. Windows are long narrow slits rising from a stone sill and terminating in a circular stone arch. The colored glass windows are recognized as being of very high quality. A large rose window is located directly above the triple doors of the main entrance. Centered above it is a niche with a stone statue of St. Fidelis. A projected water base encircles the entire building.

Adjoining the church on the south is a large two-story native stone monastery built in 1901-1903 by the Capuchin Order, which also houses a preparatory seminary of the order.

Basically St. Fidelis Church has not been changed much. Metal doors have been installed in the main entrance, and the interior has been redecorated. The towers now contain electrically operated bells which can be heard seven or eight miles on a clear day.

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When constructed it was the largest Catholic church west of the Mississippi river, having a seating capacity of 1,100. The church is dedicated to St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, a priest of the Capuchin Order who was martyred in 1622.

William Jennings Bryan, after seeing the twin spires of the church rising majestically from the flat lands of northwest Kansas, called it the "Cathedral of the Prairies." Common usage has changed it to "Cathedral of the Plains."

St. Fidelis is one of the largest and most prominent of Kansas' rural churches. Visible for many miles, its twin towers dominate the countryside. It is one of the most outstanding examples of church architecture and construction in Kansas and has been a landmark on the high plains since it was completed.

9.

Bollig, Richard Joseph, History of Catholic Education in Kansas 1836-1932 (Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America, 1933), pp. 82, 83.

Broderick, Robert C., Historic Churches of the United States (New York, Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1958), pp. 138, 139.

Leiker, Victor C., "Towers in the Western Sky Attest Faith of Pioneers," Kansas City Star, April 4, 1948.

"Pioneer's Death Recalls Building Victoria Church," Ellis County News, March 4, 1948.

Raish, Marjorie Gamet, Victoria, the Story of a Western Kansas Town, Fort Hays Kansas State College Studies, General Series, No. 12 (Topeka, State Printer, 1947).

Robinson, James L., "Cathedral of the Plains," Topeka Daily Capital, April 16, 1954.

"St. Fidelis Church" (n.p. n.d.) 6 pp. brochure.

"Tall Spires on the Prairie," Kansas City Star, August 27, 1911.

Watson, John, "St. Fidelis, Cathedral of the Plains," Wichita Evening Eagle, February 5, 1953.



[The page contains extremely faint and illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the paper. The text is scattered across the page and is not readable.]

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6.
Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration
1939 Federal
Records destroyed. Kansas, A Guide to the Sunflower State was issued in 1939.

Historic Sites Survey
1970 State
Kansas State Historical Society
Topeka, Kansas

(C)

(C)

10/1/77

Dear Sir,
I am pleased to hear from you and thank you for your letter of the 27th September.

Yours faithfully,
[Signature]

8 SIGNIFICANCE

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

PERIOD				
<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 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		

John T. Comes, Pittsburg, Pa.

SPECIFIC DATES

1908-1911

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

John Marshall, Topeka, Ks.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Fidelis Catholic Church at Victoria, commonly known as the "Cathedral of the Plains," is a monument to the faith and courage of the Russian-German immigrants who came to Kansas in 1876 to escape oppression in Russia. They established a settlement called Herzog (named for a Russian village) a mile from the Victoria colony, an aristocratic English colonial venture sponsored by George Grant. The English colonists for the most part had departed by the 1880's and their settlement and lands were acquired by the Russian-German immigrants. The two settlements were consolidated under the name of Victoria.

Religion was very important to these immigrants. For the first year or two their church was a frame lean-to attached to the house of one of the parishioners. Larger stone structures were erected in 1878 and again in 1884 as the congregation increased. (The first resident pastor was supplied in 1878 by the Capuchin Order, which has continued to provide the spiritual leadership of the parish.) By 1900 the need for a larger church was again apparent, and it was decided to build a church large enough to serve the present and all future needs.

John T. Comes of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, one of the country's foremost church architects, finished the plans in 1905. These plans were modified in 1907 by a Topeka architect, John Marshall. The E.F.A. Clark Construction Company of Topeka began the construction in 1908; the cornerstone was laid on October 4, 1909; and the building was dedicated on Sunday, August 27, 1911. Construction costs have been estimated at \$132,000.

Engineers estimate that 125,000 cubic feet of stone were hauled from the quarries seven miles south of Victoria. No mechanical or power equipment was available so all stones had to be quarried by manpower and dressed by hand. Hired laborers did the quarrying and construction work, while the parishioners donated their time, horses, and wagons to haul thousands of loads of stone and sand to the construction site.

Bedford stone from Indiana was imported for the ornamental stone in the doorways and for the capitals and bases of the large Vermont granite pillars which support the roof and Gothic arches. The colored glass windows were purchased from a firm in Chicago, and it was only in the late 1940's that it was established that they were made in Munich by one of the oldest colored glass firms in the world. These windows are considered among the outstanding church windows of their type in the United States.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"At Old Victoria," Topeka Capital, September 17, 1910.
 Baier, William, "Victoria Man Resides in Grants Famed Villa," Hays Daily News,
 June 25, 1967.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1
 UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LATITUDE
 Degrees 38 Minutes 51 Seconds 23
LONGITUDE
 Degrees 99 Minutes 09 Seconds 02

Latitude and longitude coordinates defining the center point of a property of less than ten acres.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Richard Pankratz, Director of Historic Sites Survey
 ORGANIZATION Kansas State Historical Society DATE June 30, 1970
 STREET & NUMBER 120 West 10th TELEPHONE 913 296-3251
 CITY OR TOWN Topeka STATE Kansas 66612

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:
 NATIONAL STATE X 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
 TITLE Executive Director DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
 I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DATE
 ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER DATE