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5/4/98

Jill,

Enclosed please find a diskette which includes the intro copy for "Heavenly Places" and resource list. Texas Historical Commission's Jim Steeley said he'd be glad to look copy over if we wanted. If so, please give him a "thanks" somewhere. I've also included photocopies of resource info which may be harder for the fact-checker to locate--please return when done. As per my email conversation with Mike, I'll do the long captions when final selection of photos is done.

I've also included photos for use in "Heavenly Places" and others. Please pass along to Mike. Thanks.

As usual, call with any questions. Historic Homes copy is in the oven rising, hopefull done by early next week.

Story by Randy Mallory

Heavenly Places

Form follows faith at Texas' great houses of worship.

For centuries people have created sacred sites to experience what architectural historian Roger G. Kennedy calls "reverence in the face of the Mystery." (#8, p. 75)

Prehistoric Caddoans of East Texas once performed rituals in thatched temples atop burial mounds which still rise from the ground at Caddoan Mounds State Park. An even more ancient West Texas culture summoned supernatural powers by painting mystical images on rock cave walls now protected at Seminole Canyon State Park. Other Indian groups celebrated cosmic convictions through song and dance inside medicine lodges and wherever they found themselves in the great outdoors. (#16; #17, p. 80; #20, pp. 214, 275, 295, 310)

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries, Franciscan friars brought to the Spanish province of Texas a new religion and a new place of worship. The mission church--built inside a large walled compound using native labor and materials--served as the center of a self-sufficient way of life. Resplendent with towers, elaborate carvings, and colorful frescoes, some of these large stone and adobe structures resembled churches back in Spain. The most usual layout took

the shape of a Latin cross, topped by a dome at the crossing, and accommodated formal Catholic rituals. This design (cruciform plan) evolved from the ancient Roman basilica or courthouse, in which a judge sat on an elevated platform at the end of a long rectangular hall (basilican plan). (#21, pp. 1, 5; #9, pp. 37-39; #22, p. 36; #8; 14. p. 13.)

In the dimly-lit, reverberating, arched stone spaces of Texas' surviving Spanish mission churches--such as San Antonio's Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña and El Paso's Nuestra Señora de la Concepción del Socorro--visitors experience much of the awe and majesty of medieval European monasteries.

(#8, p. 136; #21, p. 10)

During the early and mid-19th century, a flood of immigrants from the U.S., central Europe, and the British Isles spilled across Texas. In this vast and demanding land, they quickly set up homesteads for safety and survival. (#22, p. 37; #21, pp. 35-36) As soon as possible, they built houses of worship for inspiration and community fellowship. (#19, pp. 17, 81) In the meantime, ministers fanned the flames of religious fervor by holding services wherever they could--under trees or brush arbors and in homes, shops, and even saloons. (#21, p. 37; #11, p. 47) For fledgling towns eager to attract settlers, having a local church proved a righteous drawing card. (#21, pp. 38, 71)

Throughout Texas history, wave after wave of immigrants have erected sacred sites to fit their faiths. (#21, #22, others)

Catholics, Lutherans, and Episcopalians focused on traditional "high church" liturgies. As a result, their churches embraced centuries-old cruciform or basilican designs, fraught with stained-glass windows and arches crafted in round Roman or pointed Gothic fashion. A raised altar stood prominently at the east end of a narrow vaulted interior. Like a signpost of spiritual presence, one

or two tall bell towers stood at the entrant west end. (#22, p. 38; #13, p.136; #10, p. 12) (Since 5th century Europe, churches traditionally assumed west entrances so arriving worshippers would face the altar...and the Holy Land in Jerusalem.) (#10, p. 12; #9, p. 46; #21, p. 166; #13, p. 139)

Early non-liturgical groups like Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians focused primarily on preaching. Thus a Protestant church of the day tended toward a plain, box-like plan, often appointed with a roof-top belfry and lofty spire. Inspired by simplicity, these churches took on the classical look of the Greek temple. Its sensible, straightforward lines (based on post-and-lintel construction) proved relatively easy to build in a frontier lacking resources and artisans. Arranged for hearing the Word and seeing the preacher, interiors featured wide sanctuaries with pews close to the pulpit. Ample windows let in daylight and, in summer, cooling breezes. Some preaching churches eventually adopted auditorium-like plans furnished with angled or curved rows of seats comfortable enough to endure long-winded sermons. (#8, pp. 73, 159; #21, pp. 42-47; #22, p. 39; #9, p 14)

Texas' economic boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries evoked a resounding "Amen" from religious builders of all beliefs. Increasing wealth and confidence--along with improved rail transportation and mass-produced materials like cast iron--allowed congregations to build as ostentatiously as any region of the country. (#3. p. 421; #22, p. 39; #9, pp. 94-96) Most of the state's grand historic churches date from this gilded Victorian era--including St. Mary's Cathedral in Austin, St. James Episcopal Church in La Grange, and First Presbyterian Church in Galveston. (#21, p. 89; #22, p. 39; #3, pp. 421-31) As the late Willard B. Robinson, professor of architecture at Texas Tech University, pointed out in his classic *Reflections of Faith; Houses of Worship in the Lone Star*

State , these structures "were viewed collectively as yardsticks of social stability and barometers of moral climate..." (#21, p. 74)

To bear that burden (and bolster membership), church building programs borrowed freely from great architecture of the past...sometimes with rousing success. A dizzying array of so-called revival styles--Classical Revival, Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival, Renaissance Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and others--tried to capture the essence of time-tested techniques. Many church designers even contrived eye-catching effects by combining two or more styles in the same façades, a pervasive practice known as "Eclecticism." (#15, p. 3; #22, p. 39-40; #21, p. 89)

Few in number in the 19th century, impressive synagogues began appearing in the state's ethnic enclaves, such as Corsicana's onion dome-topped Temple Beth-El (now a community facility). Some synagogues were cubical (such as El Paso's Temple Mt. Sinai, now part of El Paso Community College-Rio Grande Campus) or domed (such as San Antonio's Temple Beth-El), expressing Jewish identity without looking like a Christian church. (#13, p. 144; #15, p. 47; #21, p. 154)

"Looking like a church" became increasingly difficult to define, especially in the Twenties and Thirties when radical ideas about building design emerged in the U.S. and abroad. A new breed of architects sought "an architecture true to its own time; one that was not based on historical models," writes University of Texas at Arlington architecture professor Jay C. Henry in his *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945* . (#15, p. 40)

The resulting cubical skyscrapers and commercial buildings of the Twenties and Thirties became the secular norm. Yet most church-goers still preferred to worship in traditional-looking places. "The psychological requirements...that a church should be a tall space with a steeple remained all

but impossible to ignore," notes Houston architect/author Gerald Moorhead. (#21, pp. 197-198; #22, p. 40)

Rapid social change ultimately convinced various faiths to experiment with grafting bold contemporary styles onto their architectural roots. (#21, pp. 196-7)

"Architects and congregations are no longer rigidly bound to traditions. We can select from many design possibilities which reflect where the church is headed," says longtime religious architect Charles Tapley of Houston. "Many traditional styles are very expensive to build, so we look for new ways to build practical structures which express exuberantly what the people believe in."

Recently, sprawling suburban super-churches mix religious and social functions under one roof. Ironically, the "worship center" concept recalls the era of the all-encompassing Spanish mission and pioneer church. "Just like the early days of Texas, many religious facilities serve as the centers of their communities. Their multi-use spaces provide a safe environment for many kinds of congregational and civic activities," says Austin architect Ben Heimsath.

While some of the state's finest religious structures fell long ago to the wrecking ball--victims of urbanization--many endure, inspiring believers and nonbelievers alike.

To experience these heavenly places is to experience the state's rich religious, cultural, and architectural heritage. As Texas A&M University professor of architecture David G. Woodcock puts it: "Rather than just places to sing and pray, these structures speak to who we are and who we were." Perhaps more importantly, writes Roger G. Kennedy in his ethereal *American Churches*, "if we contemplate an icon (or a cathedral) with sufficient intensity and fixity, we may be able to grasp the invisible reality lying behind it." (#8, p. 80)

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As we discussed earlier, I'm doing an article for *Texas Highways* on church architecture. We decided on a photo essay format covering the entire historical period. I'll write basic introductory copy, plus elaborated captions for the photos selected.

The quandry, of course, is which structures to select. This can hardly be comprehensive, yet I don't want to omit obvious choices of outstanding architecture. I'm interested in telling the story of religious architecture in Texas, not simply featuring the most imposing structures. I want to provide diversity by era, style, religious group, ethnicity, and geography.

The structures should be in good shape, so we might look at ones which have been restored faithfully or particularly well-maintained.

I'm a writer, not an architect or historian, so I'm sure there are many holes in the below list, based on research to date. Some categories may need work; the literature seems inconsistent on terminology. I want the article to be accurate, enlightened, and representative, so I would appreciate your help. Please delete, add, or comment. I'll need to produce a final list of 15 or so contenders. I'm sure we can give you a "thank you" mention, or perhaps I can do a phone interview and quote you in the copy.

I've relied primarily on these resources for styles and structures:

1. *Reflections of Faith* by Willard B. Robinson
2. *19th Century Churches of Texas* by Lavonia J. Barnes
3. *Texas Public Buildings of the 19th Century* by Willard B. Robinson
4. *Architecture in Texas 1895-1945* by Jay C. Henry
5. *Texas Architect* article by Gerald Moorhead on church architecture
6. *Texas Architect* magazine of 3/4 1997 on Sacred Places

I. Spanish Missions

A. **La Iglesia de Misión Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña**, San Antonio (1740-1755), oldest un-altered structure in Texas

B. **Door detail of La Iglesia de Misión San José y San Miguel de Aquayo**
Mission Church, San Antonio (1768), Hispanic Baroque, 1930s reconstruction (Steeley)

B. **Misión Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de Socorro**, El Paso (1683/1847), pueblo influenced

II. Antebellum

A. Box Meetinghouse--rural, Greek Revival

1. Baptist Church, Plantersville (1872, but representative)
2. Baptist Church, Anderson (1855)
or Providence Baptist Church, Chapell Hill (1873)
3. **Ebenezer Baptist Church**, La Grange (1860, by/for slaves)

4. Greenhill Presbyterian Church, Mt. Pleasant (1860)
 5. **Salado Methodist Church**, Salado (1890), simple rural, restored 1996 (use as example of meetinghouse?)
- B. **First Methodist**, Marshall (1860), urban, Greek Revival
- C. French Gothic
1. St. Mary's Catholic Church, Galveston (1847)
 2. **Cathedral of Immaculate Conception**, Brownsville (1859)

III. Victorian/Eclectic

A. Gothic Revival

1. **St. Louis Catholic Church**, Castroville (1870), French Gothic
2. **Christ Church Cathedral**, Houston (1893), English Gothic Revival, restored 1994 (**detail** of choir)
3. **St. James Episcopal**, La Grange (1885), Queen Ann (shingled) by Richard M. Upjohn Jr. (son)
4. First United Methodist Church, Weatherford (1893)
5. First Methodist, Corsicana (1896), typical plan
6. **St. Mark's Episcopal Church, San Antonio (1859-75) by Richard Upjohn (via Steely)**

B. Romanesque Revival

1. **Church of the Annunciation**, Houston (1884), by Nicholas Clayton
2. Grace-First Presbyterian Church, Weatherford (1896)
3. First Presbyterian Church, Paris (1891)
4. Zion Lutheran Church, Fredericksburg (1853)

C. Immigrant/Ethnic Church

1. St. Olaf's Lutheran Church, Cranfills Gap (1886)
2. **Wesley Brethren Church**, Brenham (1866), esp. interiors
3. Nativity of Mary, Blessed Virgin Catholic Church, High Hill (1908), painted interior

D. **Akron Plan Church**

Methodist churches in Elgin, Roxton, Temple and First Christian, Fort Worth (via Steely)

IV. Early 20th Century Eclectic--*still mostly Gothic Revival*

Beaux-Arts Classic, esp. Baptist and Presbyterians

- A. **Sacred Heart Catholic Church**, Galveston (1904), Moorish/Clayton
- B. **St. Anthony Cathedral**, Beaumont (1907), Italian Renaissance
- C. Mission Revival/Spanish Colonial
 1. First Methodist Church, Alpine (1925)
 2. First Congregational Church, Fort Worth (1906), existent?
 3. **Loretto Academy Chapel**, El Paso (1923), Trost & Trost, mixed with several styles
4. *Episcopal Church of the Advent, Brownsville (1927), Spanish Baroque*

- D. Moorish Onion Top
1. Temple Beth-El, Corsicana (1900)
 2. **St. Michael's Syrian Orthodox Church**, Beaumont (1936) E. St. Clement's Episcopal Church, El Paso (1910), hammer-beam roof
- F. Central Christian Church, Austin (1928), Italian Romanesque
- G. Palladian
1. First Methodist Church, Austin (1928)
 2. First Presbyterian Church, Orange (1910)
 3. **First Christian Church, Ft. Worth (1914), Akron**
 4. *First Methodist, Paris (1919-1924), with other styles*
- H. First Baptist, Amarillo (1929); large Sunday School wing
- I. Church of the Merciful Saviour, Kaufman (1909), Shingle Style
- J. **First Methodist Church, Royse City** (1904), Carpenter Gothic but suggestive of Prairie School (by James Flanders) (*or 1st Meth in Pittsburg (1904) or St. John's Meth. in Stamford, (1910) both Flanders' Prairie School*)
or.....Hubbard church, (1913), Flanders (via Steely)
- K. ***Mount Sinai Synagogue, El Paso (1916), Trost & Trost, Prairie School***
- L. *Third Church of Christ, Scientist, Dallas (1932), various eclectic (Lemmon)*
- M. University Methodist Church, Austin (1907), Italianate by Frederick Mann, ext. influenced red tile on white limestone look of UT campus (via Steely)
- V. Modern/Postmodern until Present
- A. **Chapel of St. Basil**, Univ. of St. Thomas, Houston (1997), Philip Johnson (mention other de Menil chapels?)
 - B. **Prince of Peace Catholic Community**, Plano (1994), Cunningham
 - C. Notre Dame Catholic Church, Kerrville (1989), German-Spanish
 - D. **Chapel in the Woods**, Texas Woman's Univeristy, Denton (1939), or Trinity University Chapel, San Antonio (1966)--O'Neil Ford
 - E. **Chapel at Pope Orphan's Home, IH-30, Ft. Worth , Fay Jones (via Steely)**

Please give me some top-of-the-head feedback on this list, either by email or regular mail. I need to send in a list of suggestions soon, so I'd appreciate a response from you this week, if possible. Thanks again for your help.

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TEXAS HIGHWAYS, SEPTEMBER 1998
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"HOUSES OF WORSHIP"

NOTE: Underlined structures should be deleted first.

SPANISH COLONIAL ERA

1. **La Iglesia de Misión Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña** (Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church), San Antonio (1740-1755), probably oldest un-altered structure in Texas
2. **Misión Nuestra Señora de la Concepción de Socorro**, El Paso (1683/1847); especially interior--pueblo influence

ANTEBELLUM ERA & IMMIGRANT

3. **Baptist Church**, Anderson (1855), with steeple
4. **St. Mary's Cathedral** (basilica), Galveston. (1848), Gothic
OR
St. Louis Catholic Church, Castroville (1870), French Gothic
5. **Unity of the Brethren**, Wesley/Brenham, (1866); painted church

VICTORIAN ERA

6. **St. Mark's Episcopal Church**, San Antonio (1859-75), English Gothic, Richard Upjohn Sr.
7. **First Presbyterian Church**, Galveston (1876/1889), Romanesque
8. **St. Mary's Cathedral**, Austin (1873-1884), Gothic; Nicholas J. Clayton
9. **St. James Episcopal**, La Grange (1885), Queen Ann (shingled) by Richard M. Upjohn Jr., exterior

POST-VICTORIAN/PROGRESSIVE ERA

10. **First Christian Church**, Ft. Worth (1914)--Akron Plan, domed, Palladian
11. **Perkins Chapel**, SMU, Dallas, (1951), Georgian Revival, Mark Lemmon
12. **Chapel in the Woods**, TWU, Denton (1939), Regionalism, O'Neil Ford

MODERN ERA

- **13. **Chapel of St. Basil**, Univ. of St. Thomas, Houston (1997), Philip Johnson
14. **Prince of Peace Catholic Community**, Plano (1994), Gary Cunningham

15. **Marty V. Leonard Community Chapel at Lena Pope Orphan's Home,**
Ft. Worth (1992), Fay Jones
16. **Temple Emanu El,** Houston (1949), Wroughtian by MacKie & Kamrath
17. **Sri Meenaskshi Temple,** Pearland (1984), Indian temple/Hindu

**Here's an idea: package it together with two other nearby de Menil chapels (the new Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum and the Rothko Chapel) to make a wonderful stand-alone feature for a future issue. All three have very interesting stories and arresting architecture.