

PropertyID 25979 Subdivision S15680 - Sansom Addition Block Lot 1A Survey # 24 BPL 18

Historic Name St. Helena's Episcopal Church

Common Name St. Helena's Episcopal Church
402 N Main St
Boerne Texas 78006

USGS Quad Extant

Date 1930 Est.

Style Gothic Revival

Architect

Builder Henry Gombert & Ludwig Phillip

Historic religion Current religion

GIS Long -98.733525 Lat 29.79688333

Zoning



Historic Designation: Natl Register district contributing
Texas Historical Marker

Eligible:

Historic District:

Level of Significance local

Period

Threats

Significance:

St. Helena's Episcopal Church is a historic symbol of religious continuity and diversity in the community of Boerne. The structure is architecturally significant as an example of the Gothic Revival style masonry church built in small towns across the U. S. during the first half of the twentieth century. St. Helena's is quite similar in design to the St. John Lutheran Church on James St. built a few years later by the same builders. St. Helena's may have served as a template for the later church design which copied the distinctive shape of the parapets. Additions have eroded the architectural integrity of the church to a small degree but the form of the church as first built remains readily apparent.

Episcopal services were first held in Boerne in 1878 at the Kuhfuss Building. English colonization in Boerne and Kendall County helped the Episcopal Church establish itself in the predominately German hill country. In 1881, the Episcopal Church was formally organized under Rev. William T. Allen and a wooden church built on the site of the present church. A portion of the funds for the church building were received from a Philadelphia Sunday School class who raised funds in memory of a deceased classmate. The Boerne church and a parish church in South Carolina are named in honor of St. Helena and in memory of the child.

The wooden church served the needs of the congregation until the early 1920s when growth demanded a new church be built. The wooden church was demolished in 1929 and the present limestone church constructed soon afterward. A large parish hall was included in the plans for the new church. The hall has been a center for wide variety of community activities for over 75 years. First built as a simple rectangular church with a single bell tower, an expansion completed in the mid 1960s added a new kitchen, chapel, sacristy, classrooms and restrooms to the rear of the church.

The additions blend well with the earlier construction and do not detract from the original church form. The contemporary office and educational building attempts to complement the older building by echoing the distinctive features of the church, including the shape of the front facade and the stone detailing surrounding the windows.

Integrity high **Condition** good

Additions gabled addition to left side; gabled addition to right; rear addition w/ flat roof

Roof gable - cross

Plan irregular

Stories 1

Roof metal - standing seam

Walls limestone -

Porch none

Built Landscape patio/terrace

Natural Landscape

Description:

The Gothic Revival limestone church is set back from the street more than 30 feet, with more than 20 feet to each side lot. A large square tower topped with Medieval style battlements is located in the northeast corner of the front facade. The gabled facades feature distinctively shaped parapets. The front facade parapet is topped by a stone cross. The entrance, reached by a flight of stone stairs, is located at the base of the tower. Heavy wood paneled double doors open into a small vestibule. An arched stained glass transom is located above the doors. A entrance on the left side leads to the basement which is partially above grade.

The tower adjoins the rectangular, front gabled, three-bay nave. Buttresses support the rubble limestone walls of the nave. The nave terminates in a six-sided apse with a pyramidal roof. A gabled extension connects with the left side of the apse. A large gabled addition constructed after 1937 is located on the opposite side of the apse forming a type of cruciform plan. A flat-roofed, one-story addition has been added at the rear of the apse. The cross gabled roof is covered with standing seam metal.

The church features a number of window types including diamond patterned casement windows, casement windows with rectangular panes, and Gothic arched stained glass windows. Three large stained glass lancet windows are grouped on the front facade of the nave. Horizontally divided 2x2 windows are found on the one-story rear addition.

A number of buildings are part of the church campus including a prefabricated utility building, a Craftsman style stone house and a large recently constructed church facility. Located adjacent to the church, the newer building echoes the church in setback, size, massing and materials.

Notes Texas Historical Marker text:

"The first Episcopal worship service in Kendall County was held in the Old Kuhfuss Hall in Boerne in 1873. St. Helena's congregation was organized by Bishop R. W. B. Elliott in 1881, and a small wooden church structure was erected on this site. By 1929 the need for a new church had arisen. The original wooden building was razed to make room for a new limestone sanctuary. Later additions have included educational and office facilities. St. Helena's Church, a part of Boerne history for over a century, has often served as a center of community activities."



Sources Sanborn Maps

Kendall County Appraisal District

Boerne Public Library, Vertical Files #18

Texas Historical Commission 1976 Boerne Survey Data

Garland A. Perry, *Historic Images of Boerne, Texas*. San Antonio, Texas: Perry Publications. 1998: 151

Kendall County Historical Commission *Rivers, Ranches, Railroads, & Recreation: A History of*

Sanborn Maps: 1937

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