

Historic Significance and Integrity Assessment Report for Listing Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission Church on the Scottsdale Historic Register

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission Church

3821 N. Brown Avenue, Scottsdale, Arizona
Scottsdale Historic Register No. SHR –01-7
Zoning Case No. 1-ZN-2001

Background

In July of 1999 the City Council adopted Resolution No. 5324 and Ordinance No. 3242 which established the Scottsdale Historic Register (SHR), the City's official list of historic and archeological resources with special significance in the United States, Arizona and Scottsdale history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture. Since that time the Scottsdale Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has been identifying properties that should be considered for designation on the SHR. Numerous groups and efforts have recognized Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church (OLPH) as an important building in the history of the development of the community. In 2000, as part of an Intensive Survey of Downtown Scottsdale, the church building also was identified as an architecturally significant resource. It is owned by the Catholic Church and has been leased to the Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra since 1977.

Historic Context: Early Town Building, 1908-1933

Scottsdale's historic development followed a pattern typically found in Western communities. Like other Arizona cities and towns, the provision of a reliable water supply was critical to sustaining the community's vitality after its initial settlement in the late 1800s. With the construction of Granite Reef Dam in 1908, followed by Roosevelt Dam in 1911, Scottsdale shared in the population boom that transformed the Salt River Valley. A main line rail connection to the national railway system completed into the Valley in 1924 provided further impetus for growth and development. During this period Scottsdale grew slowly, but steadily, as a small market town principally providing services for families involved in agriculture.

Within the core of the original Scottsdale town site are several extant buildings that represent this early period of the community's development. The date they were built, the different building types and style of their construction, their uses over the years, as well as their location, illustrate the traditional pattern of community development that occurred in Scottsdale, Arizona and throughout the West in the early twentieth century.

Description

The historic Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church building is located at 3817-21 N. Brown Avenue on a 75 feet by 125 feet lot at the southeast corner of Brown Ave. and 1st Street (the southeast corner of what was previously known as First Street and Sheridan Avenue according to the original plat). The structure

is set 15 feet back on the west from Brown Avenue and 20 feet on the north from 1st Street. The property is on Parcel No. 130-23-177.

The design is a simple regional interpretation of the Spanish Colonial Revival style of building. The building is laid out in a one-story rectangular plan. It has a medium-pitched gable roof sheathed in corrugated metal with heavy rafters and a battered curvilinear parapet wall extending above the roofline on the west front façade. The walls are three adobe bricks thick and the finish is battered, white smooth stucco. A bell tower attached to the northwest corner of the structure gives the building an asymmetrical building form along its front façade. Ten concrete buttresses support the building's south exterior wall. A chimney is also present on the building's south side. A recessed round arch defines the building's main entry, which consists of simple, double doors. There are five single pane rectangular wood frame windows without sills or lintels. Four have the original stained glass. Two small windows flank the entry. Three larger windows are located above the entryway and in the north and west walls of the bell tower. The north side bell tower window has been boarded and an air conditioning unit installed in the opening. A simple wrought iron light fixture provides detailing above the entry arch.

An arcade, added after the original structure was completed, joins the east side of the bell tower and is attached to the north side of the building. The arcade has four round arches and a gable style corrugated metal roof similar to the main roof and exposed wooden eaves flush with the wall surface. A similar course of concrete, horizontal molding defines both the front façade and arcade columns.

Other modifications to the original structure are apparent. The exterior arcade has been enclosed to create interior space, although the original arches are still evident. A stucco addition with a horizontal sliding metal window and shed type roof was added to the south end of the rear (east) elevation. Another room with a single exterior door joins this rear addition to the arcade. The roof pitches on the rear additions do not match each other or the original roof.

History

Churches were typically one of the earliest community buildings constructed as part of the permanent settlement of a town. Worship was a unifying practice and a means of bringing civilization to the frontier. Typically, church buildings were built in more distinctive architectural styles than the other buildings of a settlement. Their design and the quality of their construction was considered important because the building represented the pride the community members had in the particular religious group to which they belonged. Our Lady of Perpetual Help is an excellent example of this aspect of the historic development of communities in the West.

The Catholic Church had an early presence in the Valley with a main church in downtown Phoenix and other mission churches to serve those who lived in outlying areas. For many years, the Catholic residents of Scottsdale had to travel to other locations or attend services in makeshift facilities with visiting priests. By the late 1920s, however, the parish had grown to a sufficient size to establish a mission to serve Scottsdale. Soon plans were made to build their own church building. The economic hard times brought by the Depression made the task of assembling the necessary funds a difficult task. A site was selected in Scottsdale's original town site near the barrio where the first Hispanics settled as they migrated to the valley to work in the cotton industry. Rev. Antimo Nebreda, signed the Warranty Deed on March 22, 1926, purchasing the land from Mr. Henry George of Scottsdale, Arizona, for a sum of \$600. That transaction was in favor of the Most Rev. Daniel P. Gercke, Bishop of the Diocese of Tucson,

who provided the payment for the purchase of the three lots on which the diocese would build a future church. Additionally, it is general knowledge that the \$600 was covered by donations to the diocese by Mr. Frank Brophy (Banker) and Mr. A.F. Mahoney (Merchant). Robert Evans, then owner of the Jokake Inn, provided the plans for the building, equipment, and tools. Donations from the Catholic community, locally and from other parts of the nation, provided funds for building materials. Volunteer crews of parishioners, primarily from the

Hispanic community, constructed the building. The workers fashioned thousands of large adobe bricks, each weighing 50 pounds, for its exterior walls. The church was completed in 1933, serving as “a symbol of community togetherness, pride and hard work” as was noted by *The Scottsdale Daily Progress* in an October 1983 article announcing the structure’s 50th anniversary.

The stained-glass windows were made by Bernabe Herrera, a Scottsdale tinsmith and later the parish catechism teacher. Each family made its own pew. The finished church seated 150 people and the first Mass was celebrated in October 1933. Over the next twenty years the parish steadily grew and a larger church at Miller Road and Main Street was built in 1956. Since that time, the historic Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church has remained a vital community space, used by numerous groups. The Scottsdale Symphony Orchestra has rented the building since 1977.

Significance

The original OLP Church is historically significant for a number of reasons. Its form and design is an excellent illustration of the building that typically occurred as settlements became established as permanent towns. Further, as the only remaining church building from Scottsdale's early history, it provides physical testimony as to the importance of the Catholic Church and other religious groups in the development of Scottsdale and the Valley. Its location, construction history and uses over time also provide tangible evidence of the local Hispanic families' contribution and role in the evolution of Scottsdale. Architecturally, the building is one of the most notable structures within the Downtown and it is an excellent example of adobe construction. Although modest in scale and appearance, the building exhibits a high degree of integrity with many intact features that represent the distinctive characteristics of the local interpretation of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture.