

SAINT MARY'S CATHEDRAL

A HISTORICAL SKETCH



aint Mary's Parish in Austin was established in 1852 just 13 years after the founding of the town. Like the town, which was originally called Waterloo, the parish began with another name, Saint Patrick's.

For some years, the Catholics were served by priests who traveled from Bastrop. One of these, Father Michael Sheehan, became pastor of the small parish in 1852.

Early in 1853, Father Sheehan moved from Bastrop to Austin. The small Saint Patrick's Church was completed two years later. In 1866, after being pastor for two years, Father Nicholas Feltin changed the name of the church to Saint Mary's of the Immaculate Conception.

The year 1874 witnessed many changes in the Catholic community of the young capital city. Father Edward Sorin, C.S.C., in the name of the Congregation of Holy Cross, assumed the responsibility for Saint Mary's Parish.

The first Holy Cross pastor, Father Daniel Spillard, shortly after his arrival, engaged a noted architect, Mr. Nicholas J. Clayton, to draw plans for a new church. That same memorable

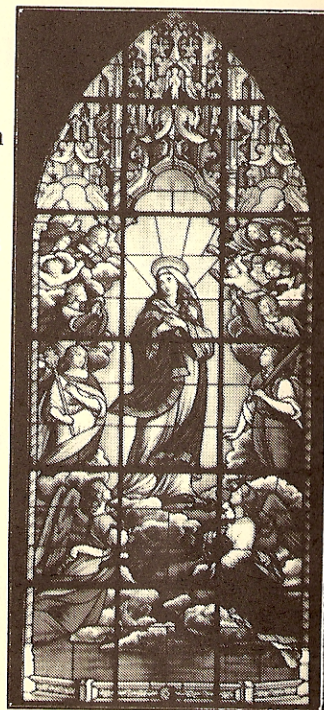
year, the present church was begun. On April 20, 1884, the completed St. Mary's Church was dedicated.

In 1886, Mr. Michael Butler donated a 2,000 pound bell for the church. It was blessed and set in place on July 4th of that year. The bell was cast by the McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore, Maryland.

The stained glass windows were placed in the church in the 1890's.

The windows in the sanctuary were made by Stained Glass Windows of Carmel in LeMans, France. The statement for them is dated 1889 and shows a cost of 4,200 francs for five windows.

The windows in the main part of the church came from the Bavarian Art Institute for Stained Glass in Munich, Germany. Many bear the signature of the famous F. X. Zettler.



The Rose Window, framed by the pipes of the organ, is one of the largest and most beautiful in the state of Texas. For many years this masterpiece was partially hidden by the organ pipes (which were rearranged in 1977). The pipe organ was installed in time to be used for the Easter services in 1893.



n 1947, the church was designated the Cathedral for the newly formed Diocese of Austin. The church was redecorated at that time and the large wooden altars were replaced with limestone altars sculptured by Ira A. Correll, whose works are to be seen in a number of Texas cities.

Later, the desire for a marble altar led to the replacement of the main altar. Carved on the wooden canopy over the altar are grapes and grapevines to symbolize the "vine and the branches." On the side panels are cactus and bluebonnets, a fitting design for the Cathedral in the capital city of Texas.

The Most Reverend Louis J. Reicher was installed as the first bishop of the Diocese of Austin in 1948. He was succeeded as bishop by the Most Reverend Vincent M. Harris in 1971.