

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church (1902) is a large brick basilican plan Gothic style church located near the center of the small bayou town of Paincourtville, Despite a few changes, the church retains enough architectural integrity to merit listing in the National Register.

The twin towers and the bays are set off by ornamental buttresses which have inset lances shaped panels, The gabled front of the narthex has three lances openings on the first story, three lances windows on the second story, and a small rose window inscribed in the gable, An unusual feature of the exterior is the fact that most of the lances openings are blind in the upper portion, Each blind area has a single inscribed foil motif. The aforementioned rose window has a similar treatment, The facade is enlivened by the fact that much of it is taken up by apertures of various sorts, It is further enlivened by several blind arcade strips and by the lower buttresses which protrude above the gabled tower tops.

The interior features a small transept and three semi-hexagonal apses, Virtually all of the impressive vaults and multi-shaft piers are executed in wood. Both the aisles and the nave feature ribbed groin vaulting, The second story of the nave features a blind triforium gallery, There is no clerestory, The elaborate pulpit and canope date from 1906, Most of the stained glass windows date from between 1906 and 1910, The windows are extremely intricate with painted scenes and figures? complete with drapery, facial features, architectural settings, foliage, sky, and elaborate trim,

In 1914 the present decorative paintwork was executed, Much of the painting is stenciled and has a rather Victorian character except for the fact that the colors are more muted than one would expect in nineteenth century ecclesiastical painting, The main effect of the painting is to emphasize architectural members and to fill in panels, The blind triforium gallery features a series of ten painted panels depicting lurid figures which represent heresies such as Lutheranism and naturalism,

Since construction the following losses of integrity have occurred to the building:

1. In 1909 the original spires were blown down in a storm.
2. In about 1955 the original wood altar was replaced by a larger Italian marble altar in the Gothic style.
3. Later a tiny rear wing was added to contain air conditioning equipment.
4. In about 1960 the organ, which had been mounted in the narthex, was taken out.
5. Also about that time the aforementioned shafts of the piers were painted creme color, They previously had exposed wood surfaces.
6. Recently unobtrusive plexiglass sheets were mounted on the outside of the stained glass windows.

#### Assessment of Integrity

Most of the aforementioned losses of integrity should be regarded as minor. The only exception to this is the loss of the spires. But inasmuch as these were lost in 1909, the church has been without them for most of its existence, Moreover, the church is still a landmark within the parish for the reasons stated in Item 8. Finally, many Gothic churches did not have spires; hence their loss has not decreased St. Elizabeth's quality as an example of the style.

Specific dates                    1902  
Builder/Architect                Architect F. B. Dicharry

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)  
Criterion C

St. Elizabeth Catholic Church is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a landmark within the context of Assumption Parish and because it is an important example of late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century church architecture within the context of southern Louisiana.

The state's historic standing structures survey documents a total of 292 fifty plus year old buildings in Assumption Parish. Most of these are small frame residences. Among this group there are about thirty larger monumental structures -- i.e. , sugar mills, plantation homes, and churches. The survey reveals that, of the parish's ten 50+ year old churches, St. Elizabeth is one of the four largest and most pretentious. It also features what is undoubtedly the most elaborate interior decorative paintwork in the parish.

In addition, St. Elizabeth is a superior example of a late-nineteenth/ early-twentieth century church within the context of southern Louisiana. Many large Roman Catholic churches were built in the region during this period. Most of these can best be described as flamboyant hodgepodes of Gothic, Romanesque, Renaissance and Baroque architectural features.

St. Elizabeth is unusual in this regard because its design is purely Gothic in origin, and its lines are quiet and relatively subdued.

#### Major Bibliographical References

Conveyance Records, Assumption Parish.

Historical sketch of church, based upon church records, provided by Rev. Robert S. Mylie, Pastor, St. Elizabeth Catholic Church.