

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: St. Hilary's Mission Church

Other names/site number: St. Hilary's; Old St. Hilary's

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 201 Esperanza Street

City or town: Tiburon State: CA County: Marin

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:	_____ Date
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum/music facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/ Gothic/Second Gothic Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style and method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Well preserved in its original setting, St. Hilary's Mission Church (commonly known as St. Hilary's) is an excellent example of Gothic Revival style with a steeply-pitched front gabled roof, sturdy buttresses, lancet windows, an open front porch and narthex entry. Interior walls and ceiling are all tongue and groove old growth redwood paneling set at oblique diagonals above vertical wainscoting. Sitting on a natural plateau above a knoll that is part of an outcrop of gray green serpentine rock with magnificent views of San Francisco Bay, visible from miles around, it is also home to several native rare plants, including two that are found nowhere else in the world. Since its acquisition in 1959, the building has been restored and maintained to preserve its historic and architectural integrity; its hillside setting is now a wildflower preserve. In 1968, St. Hilary's was designated a Point of Historical Interest by the State of California, the first such recognition in the County of Marin. In 1978, was designated a Tiburon Historical Landmark (Town of Tiburon, Town Council Resolution No. 1053.)

Narrative Description (All figures from the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society Archives except where noted).

Constructed on a plateau overlooking the newly established railroad terminus and town at Point Tiburon (**Figures 1 & 2**), St. Hilary's Mission Church is a balloon-frame, 32 by 50 foot, one-room, ten-bay, single-story building constructed entirely of old growth redwood and Douglas fir. Its exterior walls are weatherboard siding in 9 inch courses are painted stark white contrasting with gray-blue around the foundations. The original substructure is heart redwood supported by mudsills on the ground.

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Figure 1. *St. Hilary's Mission Church circa 1888 from viewed from Corinthian Yacht Club in the Tiburon harbor, with Main St. Tiburon in the foreground, St. Hilary's stands alone on a treeless hillside. The surrounding fence and the north-south trail behind the church appear to have been painted white. Dr. Benjamin Lyford, who donated the land for the church, is known to have painted all of his buildings and even the railroad ties and trestle behind his other property on nearby Strawberry Point white.*

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Figure 2. *St. Hilary's Mission Church overlooks the San Francisco Bay, Belvedere, Corinthian Island and Tiburon circa 1895. The historic stone fence marking the approach to the church from the northeast is clearly visible. The rocky character of the hillside is very apparent.*

At the west entrance, seven narrow wooden steps (with internal, non-original timber structural supports), lead up to an open porch, 6 feet by 18 feet, with a steeply pitched gable roof. Porch roof supports have chamfered corners characteristic of the Gothic Revival style while horizontal bands placed for reinforcement half-way up and at the top of the posts appear to be simplified, squared forms of the Romano-Tuscan mode. An Eastlake chalet-brace and an ornamental canopy of vertical beveled boards are set into the gable ends. Double center-opening doors beneath an original stilted pedimental design with four molded panels lead into a shallow narthex entryway. The original two-panel front double entry doors were replaced in the 1980's with four-panel doors to match the doors that separate the narthex from the nave. (**Figure 3**).

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Figure 3. *St. Hilary's main (west) entrance, December 2012.*

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Figure 4. *St. Hilary's Mission Church circa 1940 viewed from the south with the bell tower (unpainted) and the original unpaved parking area.*

Six stepped pier buttresses made of tongue and groove vertical siding flank the north and south elevations and constructed corner buttresses support the southwest and southeast corners (**Figure 4 & 5**). Decay caused by damp rot fungus necessitated the repairs to some of the buttresses which were rebuilt with subterranean concrete foundations in the 1960s.¹

Ten double-hung, lancet windows (two either side of the entryway on the west façade, and four each on the north and south elevations) are crowned by label hood molds with a small, double-shield and horizontal board adding an ornamental element under their sills (**Figures 4 & 5**). It is assumed that the original windows were glazed with colored glass and hand-stenciled to resemble stained glass like the panel of St. Hilare above the narthex doors (**Figure 9**). Although there is no photographic or written evidence of their existence, over many years fragments were found on the ground that match the glass in the St. Hilare panel. In close up photos of the interior from a newspaper feature in 1953 (*Marin Independent Journal*, Dec. 26, 1953), the windows are

1. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 10.

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a single color. The windows were replaced by modern, cathedral amber glass in 1960 along with the window frames, sashes and ropes.²



Figure 5. South side view showing roof, buttresses and window details, 1970.

A 6 by 18 foot sacristy was added to the buildings east elevation in the 1930s.³ It has a shed roof with asphalt shingles and two non-operable, rectangular sash windows and its white-painted, redwood weatherboard siding matches that of the original structure. Two single doors provide rear entry into the building: the south door opens into the sacristy while the north door led directly to the chancel and was reached by ascending a simple wooden, white-painted, three-step stairway. These stairs were replaced with a handicapped compliant ramp in 1977 (**Figure 6**).

Both the main structure and the porch have steeply pitched gable roofs finished with taper split cedar shakes that were installed in 1967 over the original wood shingles.⁴ The main roof has a scissor truss and ceiling support. Directly beneath the roof are large, circular, louvered vents placed high on both the west and east. Simple wood cornices adorn the eaves and gable ends. Two seven-foot tall, foliated wooden crosses attach to the roof's two gable ends (**Figures 5 & 6**).

2. Glass & Sash, Inc., receipt, Oct. 26, 1960.

3. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 7.

4. Booth and Little, receipt, June 23, 1967.

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Figure 6. North-east view showing roof details as well as the sacristy attached to the rear of the building, handicapped compliant ramp, outhouse before conversion into a restroom and bell tower now painted to match the rest of the buildings, May 2007.

Interior Appearance

The 1888 church building has a 32 by 50 foot rectangular plan with a shallow, narthex entry and a later 6 by 18 foot sacristy addition behind the chancel. At the east end of the nave, the chancel area is raised 14 inches above the main floor, the flooring throughout is 5 ¼ inch brown-painted Douglas fir. Beaded 3 ½ inch redwood matchboard wainscoting runs around the nave, chancel and narthex. Walls and ceiling are also beaded 3 ½ inch redwood tongue and groove paneling set at oblique diagonals to create a herringbone pattern which results in a chevron design at each end pointing upward above the altar area in the east (**Figures 7 & 8**).

The double-swinging four-panel, mortise and tenon, Douglas fir doors which separate the nave from the narthex are set beneath a stained glass window featuring the likeness of St. Hilaire. This window was a gift of Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Lyford who donated the land on which the church was built. A small section of glass in the lower right corner was repaired in 1970 (**Figures 9 & 9a**). Single four-panel, mortise and tenon doors are set either side of the east wall; the door nearest the north wall to the outside is a modern copy. Lancet-shaped wood molding surrounding these doors echoes the Gothic shape of the windows (**Figure 7**).

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Figure 7. Interior view in 1975 showing redwood tongue and groove paneling set at oblique diagonals to create a herringbone pattern, reproduction chandeliers (1966), east entrance doors and other interior details.

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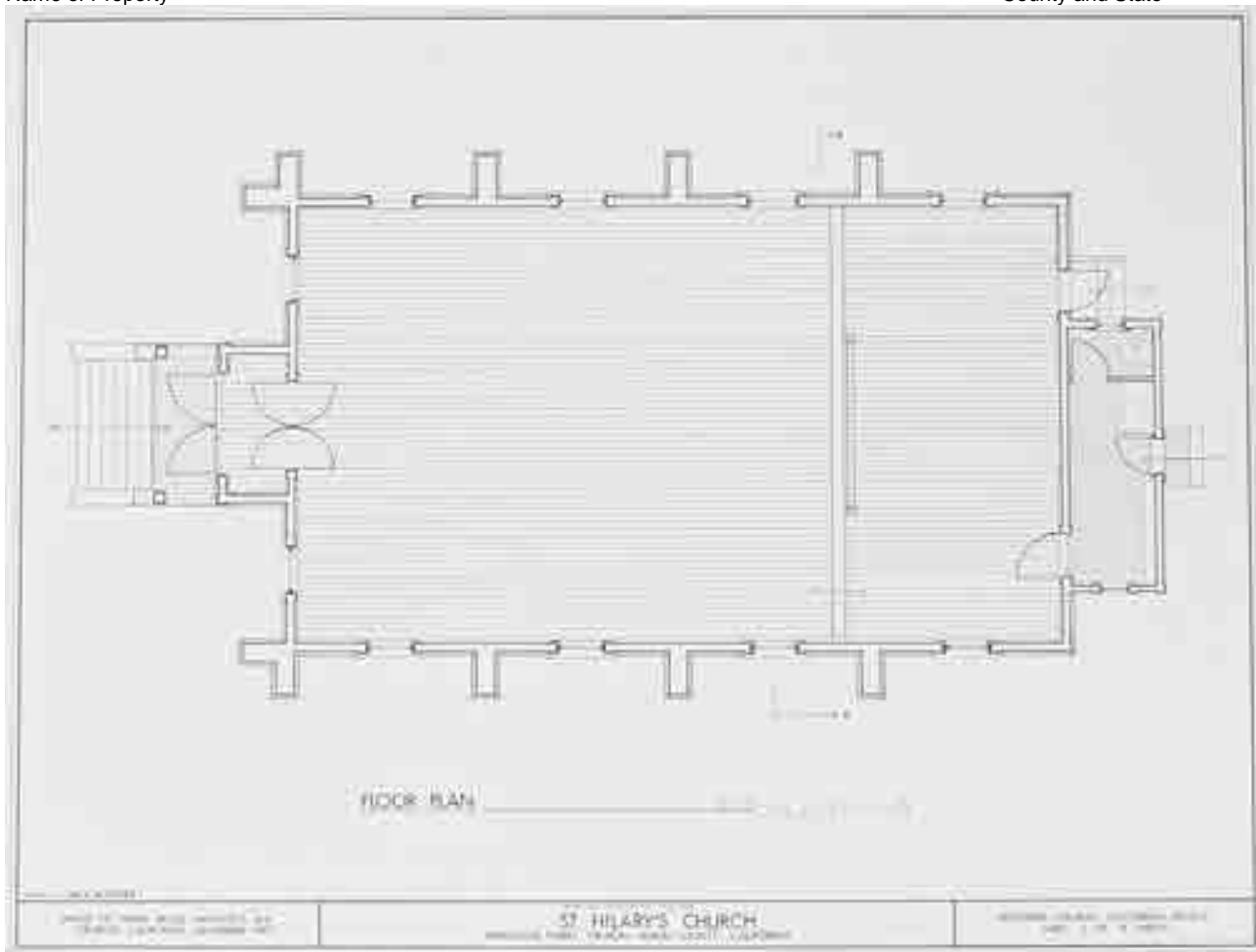


Figure 8. Floor plan drawn in 1977 showing the narthex entry and the 6 by 18 foot sacristy addition behind the chancel as well as door, window and buttress locations.

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Figure 9. Interior photo from 2019 showing the double swinging, four-panel, mortise and tenon Douglas fir doors which separate the nave from the narthex are set beneath a stained glass panel featuring the likeness of St. Hilaire.

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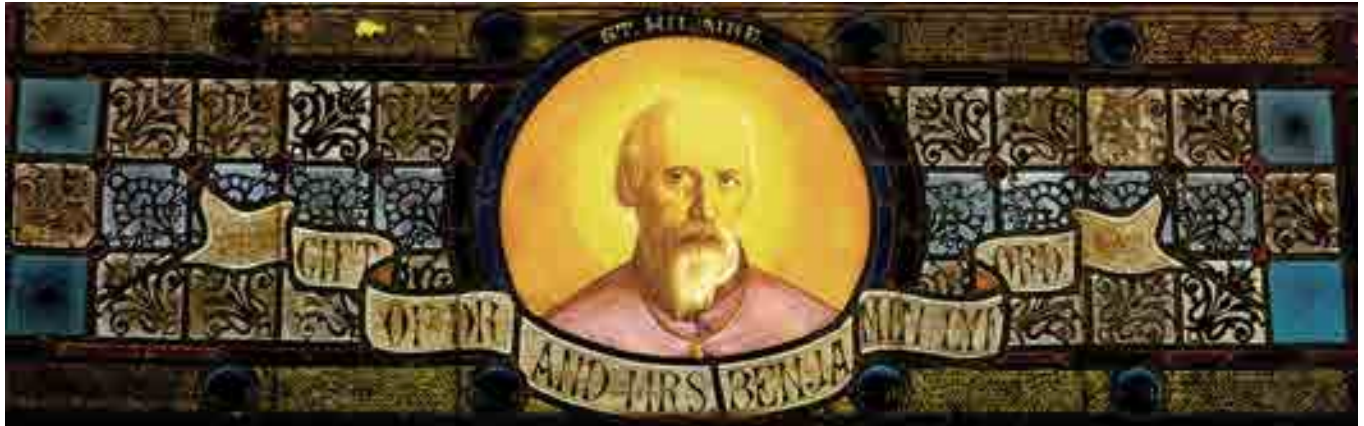


Figure 9a. . *The St. Hilaire stained glass panel circa 1988.*

After the church was de-sanctified in 1954, the confessional, located in the southwest corner of the nave, the altar stone, crucifix, and most of the pews were removed by the diocese. Two original pews were joined by four additional pews from local churches; this remained the only permanent seating, augmented with folding chairs for large events (**Figure 7**). Between 1980 and 1984, 17 reproduction oak pews were made for permanent seating. To bring the building up to modern building codes, water, sanitary facilities and sewage connections were installed in early 1960s. The church was originally illuminated by coal-oil lamps on pulleys and brackets and these were replaced mid-20th century by simple hanging lamps. In 1966 two modern reproduction wrought iron 8 light chandeliers with kerosene type lamp fonts replaced the existing house lights and two sets of three spot lights were added above the chancel. Water damage to the interior wall, as well as damage from the demolition of the confessional and the removal of the pews, was repaired in 1971.⁵

Outbuildings

Also on the property are a bell tower and an outhouse. The bell tower, located on the southeast corner of the property, is a simple, wooden structure in the form of a truncated pyramid standing 14 feet 4 inches tall on an 8 foot 8 inch square base. After the original church bell, donated by railroad tycoon Peter Donahue's daughter, Baroness von Shroeder in 1888 was relocated to the new St. Hilary's Church in Tiburon in 1954⁶. A small cast iron bell, formerly a fire alarm from Belvedere, was installed circa 1964 and the tower was reconstructed to the exact specification of the original and painted white. In 1992, Tiburon architect Warren Callister donated a bell closer to the size to that of the original. Dating from 1911 and purportedly from a church in South San Francisco, the bell was installed and the tower reinforced and repainted.⁷

5. Larry Steelman, receipt, May 19, 1971

6. Joseph Baird, "Architecture of the Belvedere-Tiburon Area." (Ms. on file Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, Tiburon, 1988), 7.

7. Brad Breithaupt, "Old St. Hilary's to get bell," *Marin Independent Journal*, March 2, 1992, B3.

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St. Hilary's outhouse directly behind the main building is the only "sanitary privy" known to survive on the Tiburon Peninsula. Constructed on an unknown date for the convenience of churchgoers, it was used until about 1940. It has a low-pitched gable roof and siding that matches the main structure, with a door at each end and a partition making it a "two-holer" (**Figure 6**). In 2014, the outhouse was converted into a code-compliant restroom. The only change to the original exterior was to close off one of the door openings with matching siding and provide stairs to the new entry door (see nomination photos).

Preservation History and Setting

From 1888 to 1954 St. Hilary's was used for religious services and celebratory events until the congregation moved to the new church. While little is recorded of social events after the church closed, many entertainments, card parties, dances and concerts were held there for the entire community. Later, the building was used by the St. Hilary's Women's Club for parish activities, by the Catholic Youth Organization and as a classroom by the Reed Union School District.⁸ But with no real plan or funds for its upkeep and care, the building was vandalized and became rundown.

Concern for the future of the historic building prompted a group of local residents to form the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society (the Society) in 1959, a non-profit whose purpose was the "acquisition and preservation of structures and property of historical significance."⁹ A single anonymous donation of \$10,000 enabled the Society to purchase the property in 1959 and dedicate it as a local historical monument on October 30, 1960. The Society started raising money to restore the old building with art shows, afternoon teas, parties, walking tours, and books about local history. It now became known as Old St. Hilary's.¹⁰

The Society's restoration of St. Hilary's to its original condition (detailed in the paragraphs above) was part of a master plan for the site and its surroundings as a whole. In October 1959, John Thomas Howell (1903-1994), Curator in the Department of Botany at the California Academy of Sciences, alerted the Society to the many rare and remarkable botanical species that surround the chapel and asked that their preservation be incorporated into the Society's plans.¹¹ "All that is required is let the area alone, completely and always," he wrote. The Society's long term goal then became "[T]o convert Old St. Hilary's Church into a historical library and museum for community use as well as to provide a meeting place for public occasions appropriate to a library and museum; to develop the site as a historical monument and park; to protect the wildflowers by the establishment of botanical gardens; [and] to restore the building in order to preserve the church for its historical and architectural interest."¹²

8. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 9.

9. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 9.

10. *Marin Independent Journal*, October 29, 1960, 2

11. John Thomas Howell, letter, October 25, 1959.

12. *Old St. Hilary's Landmark and Wildflower Garden, Tiburon, Marin County: Historical and Scientific Interest and Magnet for Marin Tourists*. Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, 1964.

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In 1964, the 1.9 acre down slope property below St. Hilary's, now the John Thomas Botanical Garden, was purchased with private donations, funds from the County of Marin and federal government and a loan from the Nature Conservancy and leased by the County, by prior agreement, to the Society for one dollar a year.¹³ In 1968, the County purchased 1.5 acres above St. Hilary's Mission Church with funds that included an \$18,125 contribution from the Society. In 1970, this was dedicated the Caroline S. Livermore Vista Point as a memorial tribute to Mrs. Livermore, a conservation leader in Marin.¹⁴ In 1967, the Landmarks Society also purchased a 30 by 200 foot lot that connects Esperanza and Vistazo West adjacent to the Vista Point and named it Dakin Lane in memory of Suzanne and Richard Dakin, the anonymous donors that funded the initial purchase price.¹⁵ Combined, these properties are known as *Old St. Hilary's Historic Preserve*.

Sections of the original dry-laid stone wall that bounded the property in the north and west are still visible today, as are sections of the stone wall which mark the historic dirt track approaching the property from the north (**Figures 2 & 10**). The original western approach was a "via a narrow, redwood boardwalk that climbed up to the windswept crest of the hill."¹⁶ In the 1920s, an artisan by the name of "Old Joe" built the concrete path and steps to the west entrance.¹⁷ Today, a paved driveway provides access from Esperanza St. with a small car park (**Figures 10 & 11**).

Despite some 20th Century encroachments on the hillside upon which St. Hilary's Mission Church once stood alone, the efforts made by the Society to preserve the character and integrity of its historical setting have been successful. The building's historic boundaries flanked on three sides by land dedicated in perpetuity as a wildflower preserve and open space, means that the building still remains the sentinel-like landmark it was in 1888 (**Figure 11**).

Integrity

St. Hilary's Mission Church has outstanding *historic integrity* with few modifications to the original building since its construction in 1888.

It remains in its original location, keeping integrity of *location*.

The physical environment surrounding the property has changed little since the time of original construction, keeping integrity of *setting*.

The outbuildings and sacristy, built to service the church while it was in use, were constructed or connected to the rear of the church during the period of significance.

13. *An Account of the Wildflower Conservation at Old St. Hilary's Landmark*. Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, 1964.

14. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 13.

15. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 9.

16. Roger Olmstead and T. H. Watkins, *Here Today: San Francisco's Architectural Heritage* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1975), 218.

17. Carol Creighton Ericson, "Old St. Hilary's and the First 80 Years," *St. Hilary's Church Bulletin* (Tiburon), Nov. 28-Dec. 8, 1968.

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During renovations by the Society, the exterior design, materials, and workmanship were all retained and were commensurate with that of the rest of the church building, which also retains integrity of *design, materials, and workmanship* inside and out.

The preservation of the landscape and hilltop setting above Tiburon, visible from miles around as it always has been, allows the property to retain *integrity of feeling and association*.



Figure 10. West view from 2002 showing the stone and concrete steps created in the 1920s.

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Figure 11. *Aerial photo from 1980 showing the concrete path and steps below the entry, the paved car park and driveway as well as nearby mid-century developments.*

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1. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
-

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Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY/Settlement

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1888-1954

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

St. Hilary's Mission Church is eligible for the National Register at the local level of significance under Criterion A for the role it played in the social and personal lives of early Tiburon and Belvedere families as well as the broader pioneer and immigration history of early California and

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the United States and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Gothic Revival style as applied to a small community church. The building is a rare, surviving example of volunteer-built nineteenth century church in Northern California.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A:

Like many other small churches in isolated areas, St. Hilary's provided a place for people to gather and seek solace, comfort and community. It was a working class church, built for the largely Catholic laborers who built and operated the railroads and ferries, milked the cows, turned the butter churns, built the boats, caught the fish, and tended to the houses, horses and gardens of the people who lived on the hills or far off in San Francisco. As an active Catholic church for Army and Naval personnel stationed in Tiburon during World War II, and up to its closure 1954, it was a vital part of the community. These working people's lives went most unrecorded in the news columns, editorials and books of the day, so we can only glean glimpses of them through the memories of their descendants and the few historic buildings left to us. St. Hilary's, standing on its prominent hillside site as it always has, reminds us that once they were here and were a community.

Pre-Industrial Tiburon

Before the railroad came in 1884, there was little settlement or private enterprise on the rugged hills and marshland of the Tiburon Peninsula. The Mexican land grant *Rancho Corte de Madera del Presidio*, which later became Tiburon, Belvedere, Strawberry Point, Mill Valley and part of Corte Madera, had been given to Irishman John Thomas Reed in 1834. Reed used it as a cattle pasture, and to quarry stone, build bricks and extract salt from the marshlands. His daughter Hilarita Reed inherited land on Point Tiburon and Strawberry Point. After she married in 1872, her husband Dr. Benjamin Lyford managed her estates. In 1876, the Lyfords moved from San Francisco to Strawberry Point, building a large home and operating the Eagle Dairy. Hilarita's older brother, John Joseph Reed also ran dairies on the vast peninsula acreage he had inherited.¹⁸

By 1880, the most of the residents of Tiburon besides the large landowners were Portuguese immigrants and disappointed gold-seeking 49ers who worked at the dairies and other small businesses. Census records indicate a total population of 208 (United States Bureau of the Census: 1880). The only industries were dairies, oyster beds, cod fisheries, a few brickyards, two gunpowder factories on the east side of the peninsula, as well as a graveyard for obsolete ships at Point Tiburon. There was no town at all.¹⁹

18. James Heig, Louise Teather and Phillip Molten, *Pictorial History of Tiburon A Railroad Town* (San Francisco: Scottwall Assoc., 1984), 12-15.

19. Heig, et al, *Pictorial History*, 33.

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That pastoral character and geographical isolation ended when California railroad magnate Peter Donahue chose Point Tiburon as the rail-ferry terminus for his San Francisco & San Rafael Railroad. The railroad, later incorporated into the Northwestern Pacific Railroad (NPR), was a key part of the busy passenger and rail link between San Francisco and Northern California. To complete the seven-mile railroad from San Rafael, three tunnels had to be blasted through the coastal hills and a 750 foot wooden trestle constructed across the marshlands near Richardson's Bay.²⁰ By November 29, 1883 the *Marin County Journal* reported: "this [Tiburon] Point has made one grand advance. Its grand waterfront has a fine ferry slip, a long wharf, a railroad track, depot, machine shops, store, boarding houses, etc, part of which are already built, and all will be by spring..."²¹ (**Figure 12**).

An influx of 400 mostly Irish railroad workers then poured into the tiny hamlet of Tiburon where boarding houses, hotels and saloons were hastily constructed to accommodate them. With the coming of the railroad, the landscape, the character and the population of the previously quiet Tiburon was utterly transformed.



Figure 12. Point Tiburon circa 1884 showing the early stages of the railroad terminus development. Angel Island in the background.

20. Victoria Mason Arnett, "A Physical and Historical Description of the Stationhouse of the S.F. & N.P. and NWP Railroad" (Ms. on file Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, Tiburon, 1994), 11-12.

21. Heig, et al, *Pictorial History*, 33.

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Industrial Tiburon and St. Hilary's Mission Church

Three weeks after the railroad opened on May 1, 1884, Tiburon acquired its first post office and polling station, the latter at Savage's Hotel.²² Between 1886 and 1888, buildings at Donahue's Landing (30 miles north on the Petaluma River in Sonoma County), were barged down to Tiburon and relocated on six acres of land on Tiburon's shoreline.²³ (Figure 13). By 1888, railroad employees had begun to build houses for their families in the hills above the newly-filled flatlands occupied by the railroad. Dr. Lyford had also laid out plans for Tiburon's first subdivision, Hygeia adjacent to Tiburon ferry landing; only 30 minutes travel to San Francisco.²⁴



Figure 13. *The Tiburon waterfront circa 1886.* (California State Library)

St. Hilary's Mission Church was built in the summer of 1888 under the supervision of Father Hugh Lagan to serve the railroad's Irish and Italian workers on a 3/4 acre plot given to the Archdiocese of San Francisco by Dr. Benjamin and Hilarita Lyford.²⁵ The church was named for Saint Hilaire, Bishop of Poitiers, patron saint of scholars and in honor of Hilarita and her mother Ylaria Reed. It was a mission of St. Raphael's parish in San Rafael until 1919 when it became a mission of St. Mary's Star of the Sea in Sausalito.²⁶ Father Lagan came from San Rafael to

22. Heig, et al, *Pictorial History*, 77.

23. *Marin County Journal*, July 23, 1885.

24. Heig, et al, *Pictorial History*, 20-21.

25. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 2-3.

26. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 4-8.

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conduct mass at St. Hilary's every other Sunday from 1888 to 1899 and every fifth Sunday, parishioners joined him at Fort McDowell's army chapel on nearby Angel Island.²⁷

Local railroad workers had a hand in St. Hilary's Mission Church construction. Meta-Marie Logan, whose uncle by marriage, Thomas Kennelly, worked as a carpenter for the railroad, recalls a 1946 visit with "Uncle Tom" during which she learned that he had "helped build the Old St. Hilary's Church."²⁸ Parishioners commonly donated their labor to build themselves churches in the American West²⁹ and the railroad had its own mill and employed carpenters who turned out hundreds of boxcars a year.³⁰ The skill and artistry of the builders can be seen in the quality of building redwood paneling on its interior walls and ceilings which has remained structurally intact through earthquakes and weather. (**Figure 7**).³¹

After a "grand musical and literary entertainment" was held to celebrate construction, the little mission church was dedicated on October 21, 1888. People of all faiths attended the blessing of the bell on October 14, 1888 donated by Baroness Von Shroeder, Peter Donahue's daughter.³² Oral histories confirm that events held at St. Hilary's were often attended by non-Catholics. Grace McCombie Wolfe, who was born in Tiburon in 1897, said her father, a Scottish Protestant who worked as a carpenter for the railroad, met her mother at a "St. Hilary's dance."³³

A Center for the Community

For decades, St. Hilary's and the nearby Tiburon School were the only public buildings where local residents could hold meetings, socials or entertainments (**Figure 14**). Miriam Bradley Grbac, whose father, Thomas Bradley was a car oiler with the railroad, said that people had to create their own social life because Tiburon "had no other amusements," recalling card parties at St. Hilary's and gatherings at her family home for the priest and parishioners on Sundays.³⁴ Rose Pariani Polacchi, whose father, Harry Pariani, an Italian immigrant who worked as a gardener for summer residents on Belvedere, pointed out that St. Hilary's Mission Church also provided a common meeting ground for the very different communities of Tiburon and Belvedere.³⁵

27. Russell Keil, Oral History, Landmark Society Oral History Program. (Ms. on file Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, June 10, 1994), 4

28. Meta-Marie Lorigan, letter, March 26, 1997.

29. Margaret Purser, Assoc. Professor, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, Ca., personal communication 1997.

30. Victoria Mason Arnett, "A Physical and Historical Description..." 2-15.

31. James Heig, Shirley Mitchell and Cathy Debs Epstein, *Both Sides of the Track: A Collection of Oral Histories from Belvedere and Tiburon* (San Francisco: Scottwall Assoc., 1985), 108.

32. Louise Teather, "Old, Picturesque St. Hilary's Church Fate Unknown as Congregation Moves On," *Marin Independent Journal* (San Rafael, Ca.), Dec. 26, 1953, M8. Louise Teather, "Old St. Hilary's First 78 Years" (Ms. on file Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, Jan. 1966), 1.

33. Heig, et al, *Both Sides*, 3.

34. Heig, et al, *Both Sides*, 107-113.

35. Heig, et al, *Both Sides*, 182.

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Figure 14. Viewed from the Tiburon Lagoon circa 1920, the large Tiburon School sits on Mar West Street just below St. Hilary's Mission Church.

Early Tiburon was a rough and tumble railroad town with its acres of tracks, machine shops, mills, smithies, foundries, paint shops, lumber yards, and saloons, its residents were workers, dairymen, and laborers. Whereas neighboring Belvedere was developed as a place for wealthy San Franciscans to build summer homes and escape the bustle of the city³⁶ "Well known architects of the day, like Willis Polk, Albert Farr and Julia Morgan designed some of the early mansions. Gordon Blanding, millionaire patron of the arts, bought the island's southern tip and built a Shangri-La for his San Francisco friends. Artist William Keith and novelist Gertrude Atherton were neighbors."³⁷ In 1886, a San Francisco yacht club, the Corinthian, had bought a tip of land on the small island between Tiburon and Belvedere. Incorporated in 1896, Belvedere had more than 50 houses and the plush Hotel Belvedere by 1899. But there was no Roman Catholic Church on Belvedere so St. Hilary's provided opportunities for Catholic families in both communities to socialize.

36. Jack Mason, *The Making of Marin (1850-1975)*, (Inverness: North Shore Press, 1975), 111.

37. Mason, *The Making*, 111.

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St. Hilary's also provided links between Tiburon's pre and postindustrial residents. Mary Bernard Silva, who was born into a local Portuguese immigrant family and lived with her parents and later her husband on all three of the Tiburon peninsula dairies, described an intensely self-sufficient farming community, so isolated from other communities in Marin that many never learned English.³⁸ Grace McCombie Wolfe, whose German grandfather came to Tiburon in the 1860s to work in the brickyards, remembers a childhood of poverty and struggle. "Hilarita was completely separate from Tiburon at that time," she says, "...there wasn't a mile of paving."³⁹ St. Hilary's acted as a magnet to draw these early families into the Tiburon community. Later, during World War II, St. Hilary's welcomed sailors and servicemen from the Anti-Submarine Net Depot and Floating Dock Training Center on Tiburon's eastern shore. They attended services at St. Hilary's, acting as altar boys and participating in social events and dances.⁴⁰

In 1909, direct passenger service to San Francisco moved to Sausalito and Tiburon became primarily a maintenance and repair facility as well as a freight station, transferring more than 350,000 tons a year by rail and steamship ferries. In 1937, the Golden Gate Bridge opened for automobiles, bringing further development to Marin County and freight being moved increasingly by truck instead of railcar. The town of Tiburon was incorporated in 1964 and last freight train left the rail yard in 1967. In its brief history, Tiburon has passed from a pastoral life to a modern world that began with Donahue's "iron horses," and walking beam double end ferries. While there are no signs left of the dairying and fishing industries that once thrived here and only a few signs of the once thriving railroad town; most prominently the original railroad depot on the waterfront, now a museum, placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

38. Heig, et al, *Both Sides*, 188-99.

39. Heig, et al, *Both Sides*, 2.

40. Ericson, "Old St. Hilary's", part III

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Criterion C:

Architectural Style

Carpenter Gothic, is a North American architectural style of Victorian Gothic Revival applied predominantly to wood domestic buildings and small churches. Most Carpenter Gothic churches tend to use simple lines and elements and be relatively unadorned, retaining only the basic elements of pointed cathedral-style arch windows, steep pitched roofs, front-facing gables, wood trim, and strong vertical elements adapted to American light frame construction. Other characteristics are carved porch posts and railings, horizontal board and batten siding, and repetitive jigsaw wood ornamentation made with a steam-powered scroll saw.⁴¹ Local builders would often improvise as they went along using Victorian Gothic and Eastlake features to emphasize charm and quaintness.

These 19th century small churches were often inspired by the work of architect Richard Upjohn (1802-1878), who in 1852 published a pattern book with plans and specifications for the use of pioneers in rural parishes who could not afford church architects and had only frontier carpenter skills to build them.⁴² In many cases, it's difficult to determine whether local carpenters used those plans, worked in line with his general principles, or designed their own.⁴³ While no one is sure whose plans were used in the building of St. Hilary's, Father Hugh Lagen, the first pastor, was an accomplished builder. He had already added to the church in San Rafael, built the rectory and parochial school, and in 1899 built the first church of Saint Patrick in Larkspur in a similar style.⁴⁴

Few Remain Today

While many Carpenter Gothic churches were built in California, very few exist today with their original location, design and setting. As land grew more valuable, some were moved. Others were damaged by fire or earthquake, renovated, expanded to meet the needs of the congregation, torn down or rebuilt. In Marin County, the small white painted churches of the Catholic congregations of Irish, Portuguese and Italian settlers such as Church of the Assumption (1860) in Tomales, Star of the Sea (1872) in Sausalito, Lady of Mount Carmel (1893) in Mill Valley, Lady of Loretto (1892) in Novato are long gone. Those still left in West Marin like Saint Mary's (1867) in Nicasio and Saint Mary Magdalene (1878) in Olema-Bolinas have undergone significant alterations. Christ Church (1882), the oldest church in Sausalito, was altered in 1912

41. John C.S. Poppeliers, et al., *What Style Is It? A Guide to American Architecture* (Washington D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1983).

42. Richard W. E.Perrin, "Richard Upjohn Architect: Anglican Chapels in the Wilderness," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* Vol. 45, No. 1 (Autumn 1961). Richard Upjohn, obituary, *The New York Times*, August 18, 1878.

43. Bonnie Stepenoff, "Wall Street and Main Street: All Saints Episcopal Church in West Plains, Missouri", *Newsletter of St. Louis Society of Architectural Historians* (Winter 2010).

44. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*, 3.

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from Carpenter Gothic to Shingle style. St. Paul's (1868) in San Rafael, expanded, added a Rose window and then moved a few blocks away in 1927.

Excellent Example of Style and Craftsmanship

St. Hilary's in Tiburon is an excellent example of this historic Carpenter Gothic architecture style, represented by the previously referenced architectural elements (Section 7 pages 4-9), and embodies the characteristics of building construction and construction materials used in Marin County and Northern California in the late 19th century. Although not the work of a master, it is a significant and distinguishable building that reflects the construction practices of the late 1880s, specifically the use of old-growth California coastal redwood lumber, no longer available as a building material because of clear-cut harvesting practices.⁴⁵ It is also a fine example of local craftsmanship, as demonstrated by all the exterior and interior details (Don, 1988).⁴⁶

The restoration work done since 1959, as described in Section 7, has been carried out primarily as essential repairs to maintain the integrity of the structure, using like materials and construction techniques. The only noticeable alteration to the outward appearance is the ADA compliant ramp at the rear of the building.

St. Hilary's is in its original location and setting, its design, materials and workmanship unchanged, and is now in its 60th year as a historical museum, wedding venue and musical performance hall.

45. Baird, "Architecture of the Belvedere-Tiburon Area," 7.

46. Don, *Old St. Hilary's*.

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2. Major Bibliographical References

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Baird, Joseph. "Architecture of the Belvedere-Tiburon Area." Ms. on file Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, 1988

Breithaupt, Brad. "Old St. Hilary's to get Bell," *Marin Independent Journal*, March 2, 1992.

Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society manuscripts on file:

"An Account of the Wildflower Conservation at Old St. Hilary's Landmark," 1964

"Old St. Hilary's Landmark and Wildflower Garden, Tiburon, Marin County: Historical and Scientific Interest and Magnet for Marin Tourists," 1964.

"Old St. Hilary's First 78 Years," 1966.

Don, Hillary. *Old St. Hilary's; The First One Hundred Years: From Mission Church to Historic Landmark, 1888-1988*. Tiburon: Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, 1988.

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Poppeliers, John C.S., et al. *What Style Is It? A Guide to American Architecture*. Washington, D.C: The Preservation Press, 1983.

Stepenoff, Bonnie. "Wall Street and Main Street: All Saints Episcopal Church in West Plains, Missouri," *Newsletter of St. Louis Society of Architectural Historians*, Winter 2010.

Teather, Louise. "Old, Picturesque St. Hilary's Church Fate Unknown As Congregation Moves On," *Marin Independent Journal* (San Rafael, Ca.), Dec. 26, 1953.

Upjohn, Richard. Obituary, *The New York Times*, August 18, 1878.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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3. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: three-quarters

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.878679 N Longitude: -122.456130 W

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

County of Marin Assessor's Map Bk. 59-Pg.03, Block 031, Parcel 02
(59-031-02).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This block and parcel number represents the land that was deeded to the Archdiocese of San Francisco by Dr. Benjamin Lyford in 1888 for the construction of St. Hilary's Mission Church.

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4. Form Prepared By

name/title: David Gotz, Landmarks Archivist
organization: Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society
street & number: 1550 Tiburon Blvd, Suite I
city or town: Tiburon state: California zip code:94920
e-mail: lmsarchivist@sbcglobal.net
telephone: 415-435-5490
date: 9-3-2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Location Map

Latitude: 37.878679 Longitude: -122.456130

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Site map (close up)



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Site map (area view)



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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: St. Hilary's Mission Church

City or Vicinity: Tiburon

County: Marin

State: CA

Photographer: David M. Gotz

Date Photographed: May 17 and 19, 2019

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0001
Building and property overview, camera facing south.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0002
Front façade and steps, camera facing northeast.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0003
Southeast façade, camera facing northwest.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0004
Rear façade with bell tower and outhouse, camera facing southwest.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0005
Rear and northwest facades, camera facing south.

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CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0006

Northwest façade, camera facing southeast.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0007

Front and northwest facades, camera facing east.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0008

Front and southeast façades, camera facing north.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0009

Southeast façade, window and buttress detail, camera facing north.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0010

Bell tower and southeast façade, camera facing west.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0011

Interior from nave rear, camera facing northeast.

CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0012

Interior from chancel, camera facing southwest.

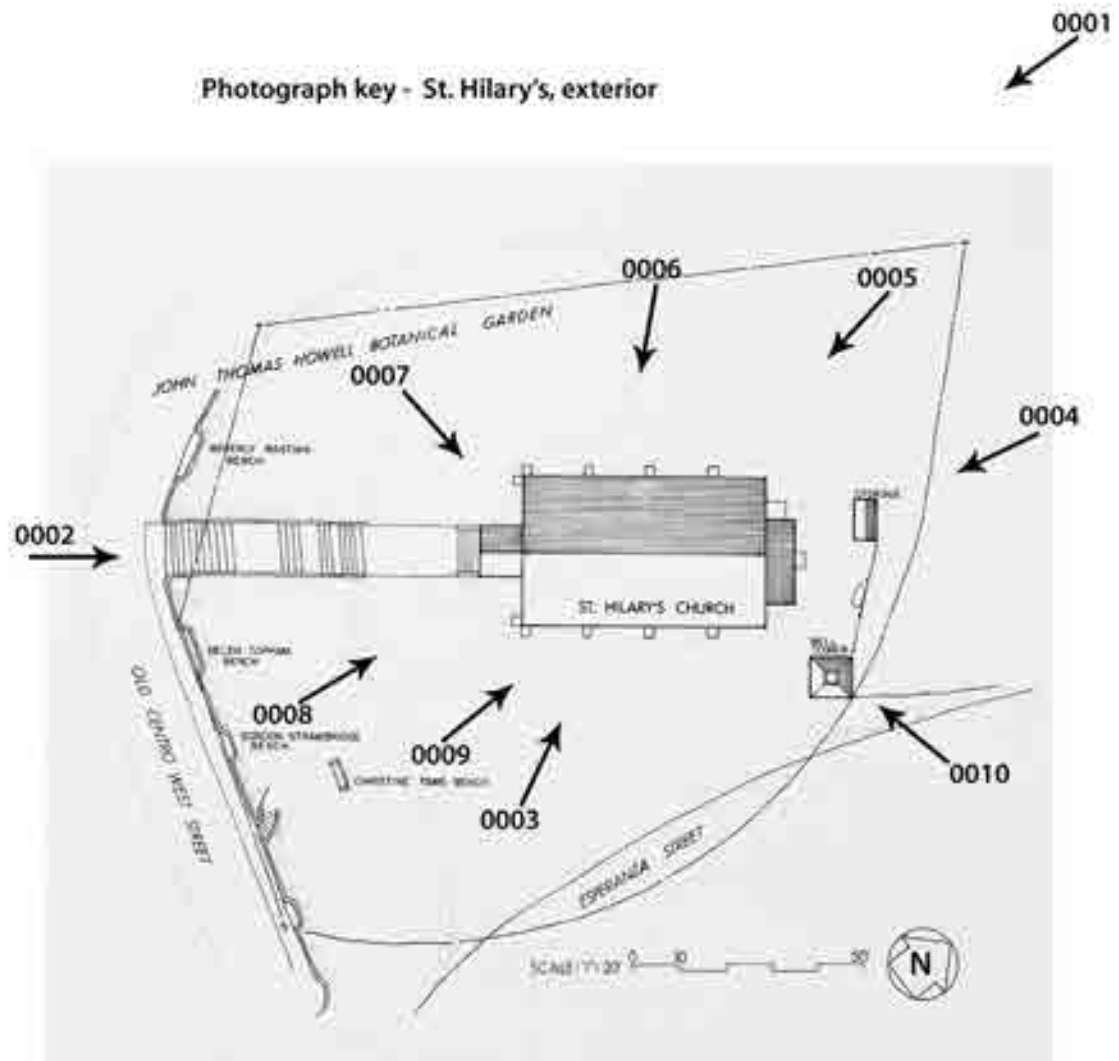
CA_Marin County_ St. Hilary's _0013

Interior chancel and rear entry doors, camera facing northeast.

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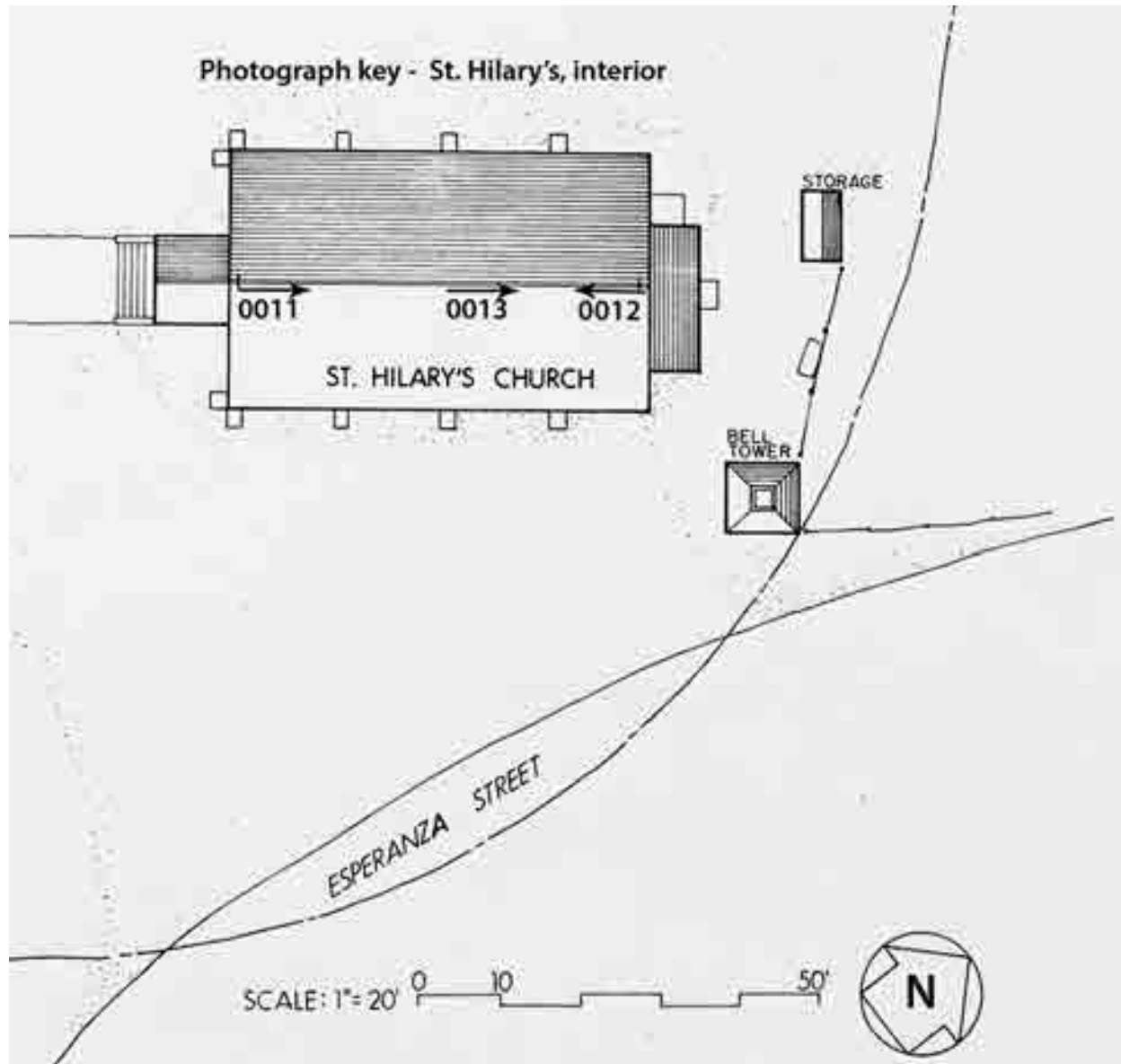
Sketch Map/Photo Key 1 of 2



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Sketch Map/Photo Key 2 of 2



Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.