

THE HISTORY OF ST. STEPHEN CATHOLIC CHURCH

WEATHERFORD, TEXAS

- Founded in 1882, the parish was serviced in private homes by missionary priests under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Galveston-Houston diocese.
- First recorded baptism on July 30, 1882.
- From the beginning of the established church building, the priests at St. Stephen ministered in a widespread area.
- No absolute record of when the original building was raised. A publication in 1877 provides the following comment: "...up to this period, the Catholics have not constructed a church in Weatherford, but it is their intention to do so at an early day. An eligible site has been selected on the north side of the creek, and as soon as arrangements can be effected, the work will go forward at once...."
- Three Sisters of the Incarnate Word came to Weatherford from San Antonio in 1888 to establish St. Mary's Convent in a small five-room cottage to provide religious education.
- Between 1888-89, an early wooden church burned (the first recorded church building).
- The present red brick Chapel and a wood frame rectory on South Main Street in 1902.
- In 1928, a new brick rectory was erected, demolishing the existing wooden rectory.
- During the building of the rectory, excavation occurred beneath the church to create a parish hall in the basement.
- In 1951, renowned artist Douglas Chantor was enlisted to re-do the church interior, painting in subdued tones of ancient masonry with hand-applied imported marbled paper and gold leaf accents.
- On November 24, 1953, priests of the Irish Province of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (S.A.C.), founded by St. Vincent Pallotti, arrived.
- As a mission church, a Catholic community was establish in Granbury with the first Mass said on July 21, 1963.
- Ground breaking for the present day Holy Spirit Parish Hall was held on September 10, 1978
- First Mass in the new was on May 25, 1980.
- The present day main church was dedicated April 21, 1988.
- Purchase of a portion of the adjacent golf course occurred in January 2008.
- Original red brick church (Chapel) was restored to its original multi-color painted interior in 2008.