

St. Joseph Chapel History Celebrated

It was a gathering 106 years in the making. On May 25, a small but beautiful chapel marked its designation as a historic landmark and its anniversary with descendants from this area's founding families and Schertz city officials on hand to celebrate.

St. Joseph's Chapel, built in 1905, sits along FM 482 (also known as Kings Highway or Old Austin Highway) on a spot that was recently annexed by the City of Schertz. Celebrating a special Mass to mark the occasion were many familiar names including the Schwabs, the Wenzels, the Friesenhahns, the Hubertuses and other families with roads and facilities in this area named in their honor.

A metal plaque that reads "Schertz Historical Site - Saint Joseph Chapel" with wording about the history of the church was unveiled at the ceremony. "We mark this site with a material possession called a historical plaque, but in truth, this place is permanently marked as the House of God, and no

man can offer greater praise than that title," said Schertz Historical Preservation Committee Chairman Dean Weirtz at the dedication ceremony.

The chapel started its life adja-

pel as a historic site," said Barbara Wenzel Boydston, whose great-grandfather, Ignaz Wenzel, donated the property for the school and chapel. "It was slow in coming, but it's a great day."

only expense was for lumber.

Monsignor Albert Hubertus, who led the special Mass, attended school on the grounds. He recalled that by the time he attended there were very few students because people could not make a living anymore in the area. His father also attended the school, but at a time when the area was prosperous and there were a lot more students.



cent to a school that was built on donated land in 1881. The public school became private in 1903 and was staffed by the Sisters of Divine Providence. The chapel was built as a mission church to serve the Catholic population of Comal, Texas. It once was the center of religious devotion, social encounters and charitable activity for the Catholic community.

"It's really nice to have Schertz recognize the cha-

Norbert Schwab, 88, said his mother, a Friesenhahn, attended the church and that he once attended a cousin's wedding there. His dad helped haul rocks out of the hills with wagons and mules when the chapel was under construction. According to Schwab, the neighbors around the area built the church, and his uncle, Gregory Friesenhahn, was the contractor. He said the parishioners built the altar and pews, and without paid laborers, the

"Naturally I am quite happy (about the historic designation) because this area means something special to me and to all of these people," Monsignor Hubertus said. He said at one time some people had given thought to selling the chapel and land. But when the chapel became dilapidated, people with ancestral ties gave money to put on a new roof and get it restored. The chapel's interior was restored last year, and it found new life as students from nearby John Paul II High School now hold weekly services in it.

"I was one of 10 children, and I am the only one left, and I am so proud of what my ancestors did for the community and the foresight they had," Bill Wenzel said of the Wenzel family's involvement in the church's history.



Pictured above: Taking part in the ceremony were (from left) Rev. Anthony Pesek, Monsignor Albert Hubertus, Mayor Hal Baldwin, City Council members Michael Carpenter and David Scagliola and Schertz Historical Preservation Committee Chairman Dean Weirtz. The ceremony was sponsored by Saint Peter and Paul Catholic Church, John Paul II Catholic High School, and the Historical Preservation Committee.

Pictured left: A historical plaque tells the story of St. Joseph Chapel.

BY LUCILLE SIMS THOMAS

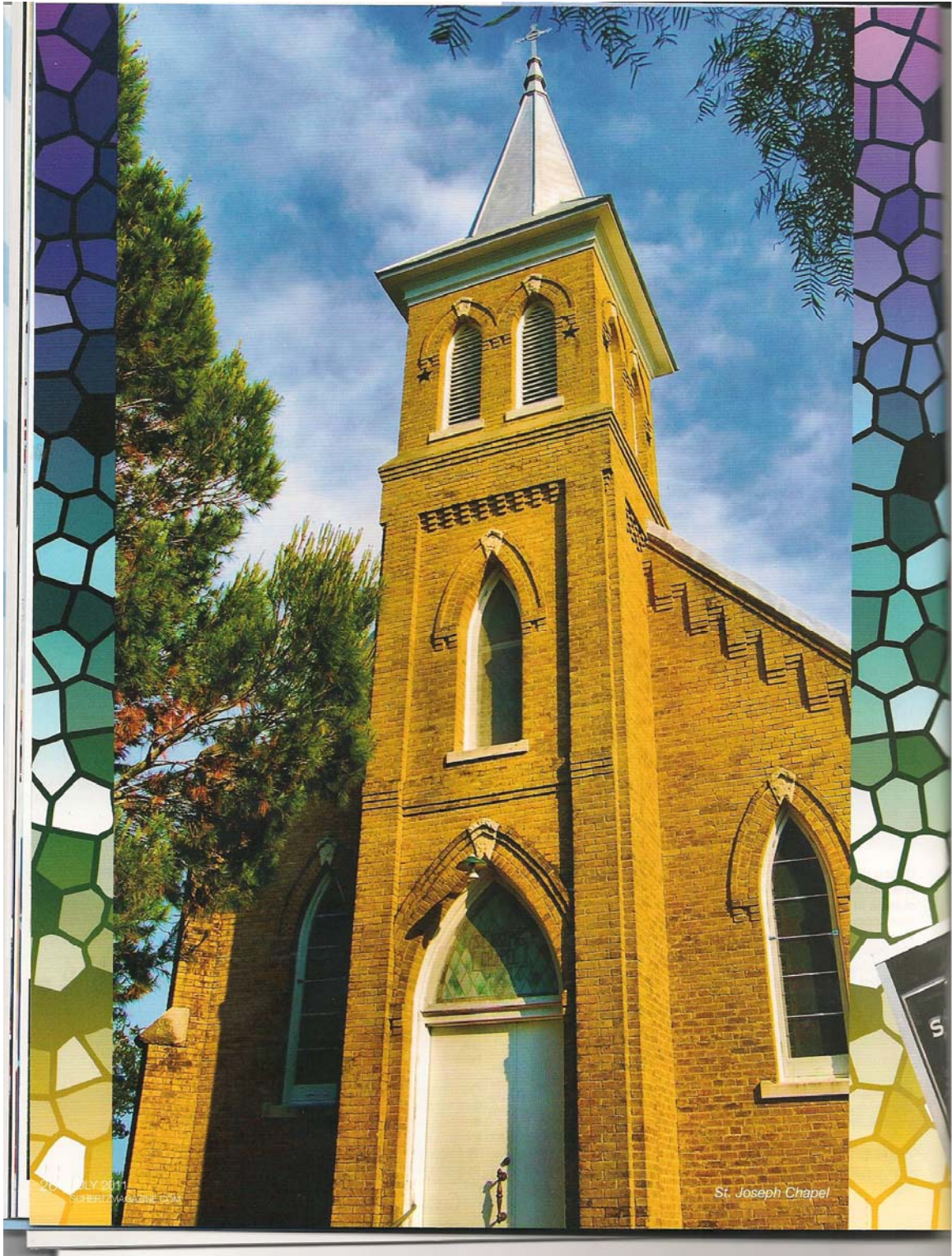


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