

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED SEP 23 1976

DATE ENTERED

APR 18 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME** \*\*

HISTORIC

St.  
~~Saint~~ Francis Xavier Convent

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

1021 Crawford Street

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Vicksburg

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fourth

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Warren

CODE

149

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Religious Sisters of Mercy

STREET & NUMBER

1021 Crawford Street

CITY, TOWN

Vicksburg

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Warren County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Cherry Street

CITY, TOWN

Vicksburg

STATE

Mississippi

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1975

\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

STATE

Mississippi

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located at 1021 Crawford Street in downtown Vicksburg, Mississippi, is the Saint Francis Xavier Convent, an L-shaped, three-and-a-half-story Gothic Revival structure built in 1868. It was designed by Father Jean Baptist Mouton (1831-1878), who was also the architect for churches and related buildings in Corinth, Columbus, Iuka, and Macon, Mississippi (Price, p. 104).

In spite of its Gothic trimmings, the convent's form is more closely related to the symmetrical Georgian fashion of seventy years earlier than to the picturesque variety of mass characteristic of the nineteenth century eclectic revivals. The structure is of brick laid in common bond with an all-stretcher veneer on the facade. A center gabled pavilion projects slightly from the building's mass and is elaborated by equilateral and lancet fenestration with trefoil transoms and corbeled sills. Protecting the entrance is a three-bay porch of clustered columns supporting a freely designed arcade. Flanking the double leaf front door are a pair of niches. Remaining fenestrations on all elevations are regularly spaced, with six-over-six glazing, heavy label molds and bracketed sills.

The plan of the convent is derived from period domestic architecture rather than from any specialized functional arrangement. A center stair hall running through the building is separated from an entrance vestibule by a carved wooden screen. Double parlors occupy the space west of the stair hall, and the chapel and chapel parlor are opposite. Interior woodwork consists of doors with four fielded panels, similar jambs and soffits, and wide architraves with large rolled backbands which return to become baseboard caps. Typically, the staircase has a heavy octagonal newel, turned balusters and simple, scrolled step-ends. Original soapstone mantels remaining in the double parlors are designed with arched fire chambers and keystones. The chapel is the largest and most altered room in the convent. Originally, the north wall was divided into a three-bay arcade with sacristies in the end bays. In 1937, when an annex was constructed behind the chapel, the sacristies were relocated in it and the end bays were opened to become part of the sanctuary. Incongruous ceiling and floor tiles have been installed within recent years and the original chandeliers removed. Existing pews date from 1946. The interior design of the basement and residential floors, which retains much of its original character, is sparse and strictly utilitarian.

ANNEX IS U-SHAPED BRICK SECTION VISIBLE TO REAR RIGHT

LEBOVICH

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1868

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

J. P. Mouton

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Saint Francis Xavier Convent is significant as one of the largest and best-preserved examples of Gothic Revival architecture in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The Sisters of Mercy, for whom the convent was built, have exercised great influence in the state of Mississippi in the areas of education and public health during the past 116 years.

At the request of the Most Reverend William Henry Elden, bishop of Mississippi and the Reverend Francis Xavier Lerdy, pastor of St. Paul's Catholic Church, Vicksburg, six Sisters of Mercy arrived in Vicksburg on October 12, 1860. They purchased the John D. Cobb house directly west of the present convent for \$8,000 and soon began a school for black and white students. With the advent of the Civil War, and the extended siege of Vicksburg in 1863, the Sisters turned their attention from education to the care of wounded soldiers. Not limiting their charitable activities to Vicksburg, they visited hospitals in other parts of Mississippi as well as in neighboring Alabama and Louisiana. Their convent/<sup>Cobb House</sup> was used as a barracks, first for the army of Confederate General John C. Pemberton before the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, and later by Federal General Henry Slocum, before it was finally recovered by the Sisters on August 15, 1864. The school was reopened in September of that year.

The present convent building was constructed in 1868 at the cost of \$30,000. It is one of the most significant designs of the Reverend Jean Baptist Mouton, whose other Mississippi works are also in the Gothic Revival style considered so appropriate for ecclesiastical architecture. Although Mouton relied on symmetry as the basis of his composition, specific Gothic motifs, such as the prominent label molds, trefoils, and pointed-arch fenestration, give the building's mass much needed variety and interest. The structure stands today as one of the finest and most prominent local examples of the Gothic Revival style.

The Sisters of Mercy expanded their educational service to Mississippi in the twentieth century by establishing schools in twelve communities throughout the state. In addition, the Sisters operated the Vicksburg City Hospital from 1878 to 1905. In 1943, the Sisters took over operation of the Vicksburg Sanatorium from which has grown the Mercy Regional Medical Center, one of the leading health facilities in the state. As in the past, the Sisters of Mercy continue to play a significant humanitarian role in Mississippi.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bernard, Mother Mary. The Story of the Sisters of Mercy in Mississippi, 1860-1930. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1931.

DeMuth, Sister Elizabeth Jean. "A Brief History of St. Francis Xavier Convent, Vicksburg, Mississippi." 1976. On file, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	5
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6	9	9	7	4	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

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D 

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

William C. Allen, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

DATE

August 12, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 571

TELEPHONE

(601) 354-6218

CITY OR TOWN

Jackson

STATE

Mississippi

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Robert R. Hilliard*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

September 16, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

CHIEF

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

*4/18/77*

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

*3-18-77*

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Saint Francis Xavier Convent

Gerow, Richard Oliver. Catholicity in Mississippi. Natchez: n.p., 1939.

Jackson. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Order of the Sisters of Mercy, Vicksburg, Mississippi. Papers 1879-1887, 1961.

Price, Beulah M. D'Olive. "The Rev. John Baptist Mouton: Confederate Chaplain." Journal of Mississippi History 14(1962):102-6.

Vicksburg. St. Francis Xavier Convent. Unpublished Journal of Mother Ignatius Sumner. Unpublished Journal of Sister Angela Fedou.

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ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

AMENDMENT  
SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER CONVENT  
VICKSBURG  
WARREN COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

6 - REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
(Cobb House: 1 photo)  
1936 Federal  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C.

7 - DESCRIPTION

Standing a few feet west of the convent is the original home of the Sisters of Mercy known as "The Cobb House," a two-story brick structure traditionally dated 1832. The symmetrical five-bay composition, the wooden lintels with corner blocks over each window and door, and especially the center frontispieces with Ionic columns in antis relate this design to other Vicksburg buildings dating from the 1830s. In 1937 the present hipped roof replaced a wooden third floor which was added to the Cobb House in 1885 to provide additional space for pupils boarding at the academy. The disappearance of a single-bay, possibly two-tier, portico sheltering the entrance is the only other major alteration to affect the original exterior of the Cobb House. By contrast, the interior has been subjected to many alterations which have left only a fraction of its original integrity intact.

8 - SIGNIFICANCE

The neighboring Cobb House served as the convent of the Sisters of Mercy from 1860 until the larger Gothic Revival structure was completed in 1868. Except when interrupted for one year (1863-1864) by the Civil War, the Cobb House has been in continual service as a school operated by the Sisters of Mercy. In addition to its educational impact, the Cobb House is a locally significant example of early Greek Revival design notable for its pair of Ionic frontispieces so characteristic of Vicksburg domestic architecture during the 1830s.