

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

982



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Mary Congregational Church

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 213 South Louisiana Avenue NA not for publication

city or town Abbeville NA vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Vermilion code 113 zip code 70510

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide X locally. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Gerri Hobdy*

July 7, 1999

Signature of certifying official/Title Gerri Hobdy, LA SHPO Date  
Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the  
National Register
- removed from the National  
Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

8/12/99

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1            | 0               | buildings  |
| —            | —               | sites      |
| —            | —               | structures |
| —            | —               | objects    |
| 1            | 0               | Total      |

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Religion

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sub. Religious Facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Religion

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sub. Religious Facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

\_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" next to 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.
X 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" next to all that apply.)

- X A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or a grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1905

Significant Dates

1905

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

NA

- 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

St. Mary Congregational Church

Name of property

Vermilion Parish, LA

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than an acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 15 583540 3315740

2

3

4

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date May 1999

street & number P.O. Box 44247 telephone (225) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name St. Mary Congregational Church

street & number 213 South Louisiana Avenue telephone (318) 893-1695

city or town Abbeville state LA zip code 70510

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The St. Mary Congregational Church is a small frame building located on the edge of a residential district in Abbeville, Louisiana. Built in 1905 to replace an earlier building, the church features elements of the Gothic Revival style of architecture. Alterations have been confined to small rear appendages and to the interior.

The three bay, gable fronted church has a prominent corner tower. The three-stage square tower marks the entrance of the building and projects slightly from the front and side walls of the church. All three stages of the tower are ornamented with similar details. The first two stages have small projecting "roofs" or canopies that wrap around all of the exposed sides of the tower. These mock roofs, as well as the low-pitched pyramidal roof on the third stage, are all ornamented with brackets. The unusual design of these openwork brackets denotes a floral motif popular during the late Victorian era. Arches with pointed tops also decorate each tier of the tower, in the form of a window and door on the first floor and wood slatted vents on the second and third stages.

The church's pointed top windows and front door should be viewed as Gothic Revival arched fenestration. The windows are evenly spaced on the front and two sides of the building. The thin muntins that divide the panes of colored glass in the windows are designed to give the impression that two narrow arches are grouped within the framework of one larger pointed arch. The window design is indicative of tracery work popular in Gothic and Gothic Revival architecture. The steeply pitched main roof is accentuated by plain bungalow type brackets at the front and rear gables, which would indicate an early re-roofing project.

The rear elevation has a gabled extension of unknown age. The minister indicated that it is a relatively new addition, but architectural evidence is inconclusive. The extension, though shorter than the original church, shares the same weatherboard, decorative features, and windows. Within the last twenty years, two smaller additions have been added to the rear of the church to accommodate a kitchen/dining area and offices for the minister. Although these additions are obviously new, they are built of similar materials as the original building.

The interior of the church has been modernized to include a tiled ceiling and paneling. The ceiling has not been lowered, and the original beaded board wainscoting is still in place.

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St. Mary Congregational Church

Name of property

Vermilion Parish, LA

County and State

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(8-86)

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Assessment of Integrity:

St. Mary Congregational Church is being nominated to the Register as a rare example of the Gothic Revival taste in Vermilion Parish. Because it retains all of its original Gothic Revival features, there is no integrity issue.

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The St. Mary Congregational Church is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a rare example of the Gothic Revival style in Vermilion Parish.

Although its use is not entirely restricted to churches, the Gothic Revival style is most closely associated with religious architecture. The style's popularity is largely the result of a reform effort, known as the ecclesiological movement, which originated within England's Anglican Church in the 1830s. By the 1840s it had reached the United States, where it spread through the Episcopal Church. Proponents of the movement believed the Middle Ages to have been an "Age of Faith" in which devout people built "good buildings." These "good buildings" (medieval Gothic Churches) were by definition Christian and were considered the most appropriate modes for church architecture. The movement's tenets eventually spread beyond the Episcopal Church to indirectly influence members of many Christian denominations. Thus, it is largely as a result of the ecclesiological movement that the Gothic Revival became the church style of choice for Victorians and later generations of Americans. This influence has lasted well into the twentieth century.

Vermilion Parish, although a long settled parish, is dominated by turn-of-the-century and later architecture. It has a complement of Queen Anne Revival and Craftsman (Arts and Crafts) residences. However, the parish is largely lacking in resources reflecting the Gothic Revival style. According to the standing structures survey, only four of the 668 buildings over 50 years of age display Gothic styling. Two of these four are undistinguished examples which have Gothic elements applied to their facades. The St. Mary Congregational Church is one of the two remaining, more fully articulated examples. As a rare, though late, example of a popular national style, the St. Mary Congregational Church is an important building within Vermilion Parish.

**Historical Note**

The St. Mary Congregational Church also fits within a larger picture of evangelism and education in the South after the Civil War. The land and financing for the current building were given the St. Mary Church by the American Missionary Association (AMA) in 1905. The AMA, founded in New York in 1846, was a benevolent society whose goals were to abolish slavery and establish schools and churches for minorities in the South and West. The association first appeared in Louisiana near the

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end of the Civil War where they concentrated their efforts in larger cities such as Baton Rouge and New Orleans and near forts and camps where large numbers of Native Guards (all black Union troops) were camped.

By the mid-1870s the AMA was dominated by Congregationalists. While their primary goal was to educate, they redoubled their efforts to build churches and to expand the membership of the denomination. By 1885, when the St. Mary Congregational Church was first established, there were thirteen AMA financed churches in Louisiana. Today, very few of these congregations are still meeting. To date, St. Mary's is the only known all-black Congregationalist church still meeting in the state.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

DeBoer, Clara Merrit. *His Truth is Marching On: African Americans Who Taught the Freedmen for the American Missionary Association 1861-1877*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Haywood, Jacquelyn Slaughter. "The American Missionary Association in Louisiana during Reconstruction." Diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1974.

Richardson, Joe M. *Christian Reconstruction: The American Missionary Association and Southern Blacks, 1861-1890*. Athens: U of Georgia Press, 1986.

"The Field: List of Missionaries and Teachers." *The American Missionary*. Feb. 1886: 41-42.

St. Mary Congregational Church  
Name of property

Vermilion Parish, LA  
County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

See attached property plat map.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

Boundaries follow the property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the church. (They are also the current legal boundaries.)

St. Mary  
Congregational  
Church

Vermilion Parish  
Louisiana

1" = 60'

