

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **DEC 6 1983**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Scottish Rites Temple

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 351 St. Francis Street N/A not for publication

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of 01

state Alabama code 01 county Mobile code 097

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: (Lodge)

4. Owner of Property

name Scottish Rites Bodies

street & number 351 St. Francis Street , P.O. Box 1274

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mobile County Probate Court

street & number 109 Government Street

city, town Mobile state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state AL

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Scottish Rites Temple, on the exterior, embodies all the characteristics of an Egyptian Revival building. The large rectangular mass has smoothly stuccoed, battered walls that rise 65 feet to a cavetto cornice formed by a roll molding below the concave curve with a squared molding at the crown. The flat roof is concealed behind the wall that is extended to form a solid parapet around the terraced roof. Two small square towers with cavetto cornices rise above the front elevation on Claiborne Street and another crowns the northwest corner on St. Francis Street. The wall surfaces on both the Claiborne and St. Francis Street elevations are centered at sidewalk level by monumental entrances. On either side the walls take the form of an Egyptian pylon. The entrances both have heavy battered jambs that are crowned by the usual cavetto entablature. Above the entrance in the panel between the pylons, there are six deeply recessed openings--three in two tiers--which form simple windows. On the Claiborne Street elevation, about six feet above sidewalk level, windows are cut deeply into the wall and follow a pattern of one opening, then three, then one. The St. Francis Street side follows the same general pattern, however, the rhythm here is 2, 5, 1.

The rear west wall retains the original 7 bays formed by stepped salient buttresses that existed from the old 19th century church that previously stood on this site. George Rogers incorporated the old wall in his new building. It is visible only from the rear parking drive or when approaching town from the west. He also retained the old belt courses that mark the first step of the buttresses and the cornice level. Above this he built a plain wall parapet that runs level with the cornice of the rest of the building. In addition, he retained the old church kitchen and Sunday School rooms that still form part of the interior of the Scottish Rites building.

The interior of the building has been altered by the lowering of the high ceilings. The auditorium ceilings that were originally 30 feet in height were lowered to about half that height five years ago. The ceremonial rooms on the second floor have the original ceiling heights. The interior is four stories toward the front and two stories at the rear.

The most startling and unique feature on the exterior are the highly stylized and busy sphinx figures that guard the entrance from their position on the cheeks of the stairway.

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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1921–22 **Builder/Architect** George B. Rogers

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecture:

The building is important as a distinctive example of its type. It embodies certain Egyptian Revival characteristics in its large unbroken massing, the batter of its wall and entrance jambs, the typical cavetto cornice above the door entablature and the half round roll of the top cornice molding. The sloping walls rise in an unbroken plane for 65 feet, relieved by the shadow formed by the pylon-like entrances on both the St. Francis and Claiborne Street elevations. All these characteristics are derived from the 19th Dynasty of Egyptian history. The stylized busty sphinx figures placed on the cheeks along Claiborne Street are a romanticized use of an Egyptian figure that does not reflect either the use or the proportions of the original. Even though the style captured the imagination of architects from the 1830s, the middle of the 19th century, and again in the 20th century following the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamen in the 1920s, very few buildings were actually constructed in this style and fewer still have survived. It is the only example in Mobile and the only one on the Gulf Coast in which the entire building is of Egyptian design.

Architect:

George Rogers was a significant architect in Mobile history, designing many of the important buildings along Government Street such as the Mobile Public Library or the Maschmeyer House at 1209 Government. The Hunter Home on Old Shell Road in Springhill and the Spanish Churrigueresque Revival church on the corner of Broad and Government are also his design. Rogers was the first Mobile architect to be made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

Integrity:

The exterior of the Scottish Rites Temple has not been altered from its original 1921–22 configuration. The roof had to be replaced following Hurricane Frederic of 1979; however, the original roof terrace plan was not altered. An elevator still gives access to the roof terrace despite the fact that it is no longer used.

On the interior, the historic fabric remains intact despite the lowering of the auditorium ceiling height from 30 feet to about 15 feet.

* * * * *

The lot upon which the Scottish Rites building stands was made of two original lots. The parsonage of the St. Francis Street Methodist Church occupied the corner lot while the St. Francis Street Baptist Church occupied the second lot west of the corner. In 1906 the St. Francis Street Baptist Church was purchased by the Scottish Rites Association and the building was used for their activities. In 1920 the St. Francis Street Methodist parsonage lot was purchased and George Rogers was retained to make the plans for a new building that would occupy both lots. In the new construction Rogers retained the west wall of the church. The Mobile Commercial Register of Thursday, September 1, 1921, stated the building cost \$150,000 to construct.

9. Major Bibliographical References

History of the Scottish Rites Order in Mobile; Mobile Press Register, September 1, 1921; Maps including the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and City Atlas (1878); City Directories.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property (.44) less than one

Quadrangle name Mobile

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	3	9	9	8	0	5	3	3	9	5	6	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at the southwest corner of St. Francis and Claiborne, run west on the south side of St. Francis 162 ft., then south and parallel with Claiborne 135 ft., then east for 58 ft., then north for 24 ft., then east for 105 ft., then north 111 ft. to the place of beginning.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth B. Gould, Architectural Historian

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date March 15, 1983

street & number P.O. Box 1827 telephone (205) 438-7281

city or town Mobile state Alabama 36633

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 

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11/29/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

1/5/84


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

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During World War II the building was occupied by the Army and used as an aviation intercept center with tracking maps set up for spotting all aircraft in the southeast area of the country. At the close of the war the Army returned the interior to its original configuration.

The Scottish Rites Bodies were organized in Alabama before statehood in 1819. Before 1855 the Scottish Rites degrees 4th to 33rd were organized in Mobile, although that organizational process was not completed until after the Civil War. For years the membership was kept secret and from 1890 to 1901 the organization was discontinued due to the public disclosure by a Mr. Morgan of a history of the organization including their secret rituals. The Rites were reorganized in 1901.

Community service is one of the concerns of the Rites. In keeping with this, they sponsored a Tuberculosis Sanitarium in Springhill and aid the Florence Crittenton Home.

Architectural styles frequently follow archaeological discoveries. Carter's exploration of the Valley of the Kings in Egypt, 1903-12, and the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamen in 1922, Egyptian styles had a revival. George B. Rogers, a Mobile architect, was extremely sensitive to historic periods and designs and incorporated at one time or another all revival styles into his building designs. In the case of the Scottish Rites building, the Egyptian revival was his inspiration.

The building was designed by one of Mobile's best known architects of the early 20th century who drew his inspiration from many different historic styles.

The building embodies the characteristics of the Egyptian period known as the 19th Dynasty. It is the only example in Mobile of a building done in the Egyptian Revival style.

The use of the Egyptian style as late as 1921 illustrates the influence that archaeology can exert on popular building styles.