

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED AUG 9 1977  
DATE ENTERED JAN 30 1978

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. Joseph's Cathedral

AND/OR COMMON

St. Joseph's Old Cathedral

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

225 NW 4

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

40

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

No. 5

COUNTY

Oklahoma

CODE

109

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_\_DISTRICT

\_\_\_PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

\_\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

\_\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_PARK

\_\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_\_BOTH

\_\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_OBJECT

\_\_\_IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_NO

\_\_\_MILITARY

\_\_\_OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Oklahoma City Diocese, Roman Catholic Church

STREET & NUMBER

1521 N. Hudson

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Oklahoma

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Oklahoma County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Oklahoma Statewide Survey

DATE

1975

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

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

Oklahoma Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED Basically

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

Blue Hill was in the northwest corner of Oklahoma City in 1894 when officials of the growing St. Joseph's parish paid \$750 for three lots at 4th and Harvey on which to build their new church. Excavation for the basement began Oct. 19, 1902. The cornerstone, proclaiming "founded by the '89ers," was laid December 17, 1902. The impressive structure, completed in less than two years, was dedicated December 18, 1904. So impressed was Pope Pius X with the church organization in the young territory that he soon raised the Vicariate of Indian Territory to a diocese. St. Joseph's became Oklahoma City's first cathedral in 1905.

Basement of the church is of stone and concrete. Church itself is of red brick with cut-stone trim. Architecturally (the original architect left town before the basement was completed, taking the plans with him), it is a relatively plain Gothic structure, 64 feet by 138 feet. Basically it is a rectangle with buttresses on either side separating seven tall arched windows featuring imported stained glass.

A soaring tower covers the main entrance at the head of the nave. It is flanked by twin corner towers, also square and supported by buttresses. The central tower is topped by a shingled steeple and the traditional cross. The shorter towers are flat-topped, crenelated, their corners marked with miniature towers. Exterior ornamentation is limited to brick work in the cornices of the towers and the church itself, white cut-stone panels near the top of the two corner towers and similar stone work on the many buttresses.

Interior of St. Joseph's was refurbished throughout in the \$250,000 restoration completed in 1976. Fortunately, most of the original features and furnishings survived the years of neglect that preceded restoration so that the nave today looks much as it did when the church was completed.

The arched windows with their imported stained glass panels have been painstakingly cleaned and protected with a plastic finish to give the interior a soft natural light. Walls, vaulted ceilings, and two stately rows of columns separating the nave from the side aisles have all been smoothed and carefully hand-painted. Cracked pews and scuffed floor have been restored, cushioned and carpeted. Original brass and gold features of both religious and historical value have also been polished and restored.

# 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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1902 to the present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Joseph's "Old" Cathedral is something more than a handsome monument to Catholicism in Oklahoma's capital city. It stands, in a sense, as a fitting memorial to both religion and education in early-day Oklahoma City ... and to the character of the pioneer citizens who fashioned that city from virgin prairie following the famed "run" of April 22, 1889.

\* \* \*

On the day of the run itself - a Monday - J. K. McGinley erected a tent on Main Street and opened a grocery store. Early the next Sunday morning - April 28 - the Rev. N. F. Scallan stood in the tent before an old table and intoned the Latin words of the mass, "In nomine Patre, et Filio, et Spiritu Sancto . . ." Oklahoma City's first Roman Catholic mass and - because several Protestant denominations had not yet gathered - first religious service had begun.

Formal organization of the parish began May 19. Three lots were purchased on Harvey four blocks north of Main. Construction of a frame building was begun August 4 - the first actual church building of any denomination in the new city. Father Scallan stayed on as pastor the first year, organizing Oklahoma City's first school. Classes were held in the church.

Lots on which the present St. Joseph's stands (across the street from the frame church) were purchased in 1894 for \$750. Cornerstone of the impressive red brick Gothic structure (proudly proclaiming ". . . founded by the '89ers . . .") was laid Dec. 17, 1902. The church was completed in 1904 and dedicated December 18. The following year it became Oklahoma City's first cathedral. Then in 1925, with the city expanding in all directions, a new seat for the diocese was declared. St. Joseph's became the "old" cathedral. Commercial buildings soon engulfed the church. Parishioners moved to new areas of the city, taking church membership with them to newer congregations. In time neglect, and vandalism, reduced St. Joseph's to a dilapidated shadow of its once-proud elegance.

Finally, in 1975, a \$250,000 restoration of St. Joseph's got under way. It was completed in 1976. Emphasis throughout was on preserving all features and furnishings of both religious and historical value. Hand-painted walls and vaulted ceilings have been carefully preserved, as have the original imported stained-glass windows. Original brass and gold pieces have been restored, pews and floor refinished. Today St. Joseph's stands much as it did when dedicated in 1904 - its slender steeple now dwarfed by the much taller towers of a major city, but its handsome Gothic bulk still an impressive memorial to the spiritual values brought to their new homeland by the capital's first settlers.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hamilton, Lynn, "Progress Changing Face . . ." The Sunday Oklahoman,  
 October 19, 1975, Sec. a, p. 20  
 Morgan, Bill, "First City Church . . ." Oklahoma City Times, Dec. 5, 1953  
 ---- "Early Church Built Among Flowers," The Sunday Oklahoman, Febr. 20, 1936

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	14	6134458	3926228	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kent Ruth, Deputy

ORGANIZATION

Oklahoma Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

Historical Building

CITY OR TOWN

Oklahoma City

DATE

November 1976

TELEPHONE

405/884-5456

STATE

Oklahoma

# 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

*Harry L. DeYoung*

TITLE

DATE

8-5-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*W. M. [Signature]*

DATE

1-30-78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles [Signature]*

DATE

1-24-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

JAN 30 1978

(Number all entries)

St. Joseph's Cathedral

13 January 1978

Memo to Herbert Brito:

This is a follow-up to our telephone conversation this afternoon concerning the architectural significance of St. Joseph's (Old) Cathedral in Oklahoma City. Thank you for the opportunity to amplify - justify, perhaps? - some of the statements made in our nomination.

What is needed more than anything else, perhaps, is to recall that St. Joseph's was erected just 13 years after Old Oklahoma was thrown open to settlement. This was a flat, virtually treeless plain on the frontier then. Now in just over a dozen years the bustling new city had put up an impressive red brick church with soaring tower that was an immediate landmark.

It is in this contest, of course, that words like "impressive," "handsome," "soaring," and "landmark" must be considered. Had St. Joseph's been erected in Boston or Philadelphia in 1902-1903, it might well have been overlooked - then and today. In Oklahoma City with its cluster of two and three-story business buildings and one and two-story frame residences it could not be overlooked conveniently. Indeed, atop a modest hill, it in fact overlooked the sprawling city itself!

As for whether or not it is "handsome," that's a judgment call. We feel strongly that it is. Its lines are strong, clean, unmarred by excessive ornamentation. Considering these features, when the church was built, and where, we feel eminently justified in nominating St. Joseph's for National Register status.