

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received **MAR 1** 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic St. Joseph Church-Convent of the Most Holy Sacrament Complex

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number intersection of Lavousier and ^{7th} ~~Seventh~~ Streets N/A not for publication

city, town Gretna N/A vicinity of

state LA code 22 county Jefferson Parish code 051

3. 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"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: senior citizen home (convent)

4. Owner of Property

name St. Joseph Church Attn: Reverend Francis J. Carabello, Pastor

street & number P. O. Box 466 504-368-1313

city, town Gretna N/A vicinity of state LA 70053

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson Parish Courthouse

street & number no specific street or mailing address

city, town Gretna state LA 70053

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records LA State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA

7. Description

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 Good (church) ruins
 fair (convent) unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The St. Joseph Church-Convent of the Most Holy Sacrament Complex consists of a 1926 Spanish Colonial Revival style church, a convent/boarding school which was built in 1899 and enlarged in 1907, a landscaped yard, and a c.1940 school building which is considered a non-contributing element. This ecclesiastical complex is located at the intersection of Lavousier and Seventh Streets in downtown Gretna. It has suffered some alterations over the years, but not enough to imperil its National Register eligibility.

The present church/convent/school complex began in 1899 with the construction of the Convent of the Most Holy Sacrament/Infant Jesus College. The building was used both as a boarding school (Infant Jesus College) and a convent/residence for the Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament who staffed the boarding school and the parish elementary school. A wing was added in 1907 which contains the chapel. The first St. Joseph Church was built in 1859, but it has been replaced more than once. The present Spanish Colonial Revival style church dates from 1926. The elaborately styled church is in front, and the larger though less elaborate convent is in the rear, an arrangement common in church and convent establishments throughout the world. An arcade runs along each side of the church, and on the west side the arcade opens onto a grassy landscaped yard with an ornamental terra cotta fountain in the center. Obviously the intended effect was that of a monastic cloister. In addition to the landscaped yard, the complex also features a line of live oak trees which form a link between the church and the convent.

The Convent/Boarding School:

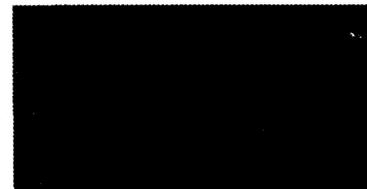
Begun in 1899 and extended in 1907, the three story brick convent/boarding school appears at first glance to have been built all at once. Its interiors are large and plain with standard turn-of-the-century details--i.e., beaded wainscotting, transoms, etc. The only exception to this is the second story chapel with its stained glass lancet windows and its decoratively painted apse ceiling. For the most part, the exterior, with its segmentally arched plate glass windows and cast-iron columns, appears to have been derived from the commercial vernacular of the period. Exceptions to this include the gables with their inset round arch windows, the corbel tables, and the protruding apse of the chapel, all of which were inspired by the Romanesque Revival style. Other exceptions include the Gothic windows of the chapel and the Italianate entrance porch.

Since construction the convent/boarding school has undergone minor alterations, including the stuccoing of a small portion of the exterior brick, the installation of a few partition walls, the replacement of a few doors, the installation of an exterior fire stair, and the covering of some of the windows. In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, these changes should be regarded as minor.

The Church:

Constructed in 1926, the stuccoed masonry basilican plan church has a three part entrance pavilion which is richly treated with Spanish Baroque details. These include elaborately scalloped doorways, multiple scroll volutes, Persian columns, urns, statues in niches, composite columns with decorated shafts, undulating architraves, and decoratively sculpted oeil-de-boeuf motifs. The upper part of the single rear tower features similar ornamentation. In contrast to the flamboyant exterior, the church's interior

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7. Description (continued)

has an almost neo-classical severity. Bays are set off by flat composite unfluted pilasters and slight ribs in the otherwise plain barrel vault. The apse features a half domed ceiling.

Since construction the exterior of the church has not been altered. A few decorative embellishments were added in the interior in 1947-48 and later (for example, carved friezes depicting the Stations of the Cross). It should be noted, however, that the church's significance rests solely upon its exterior articulation. Also, a small glass vestibule has been installed at the front entrance. This feature is easily removable.

Non-contributing Element:

The only other change in the complex has been the construction of a c.1940 stuccoed masonry school building. This has not had a major impact upon the complex as a whole. It is only two stories high and it echoes the red tile roof of the church. Moreover, it is set off to the side and hence does not interrupt the direct view between the church and the convent.

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/ 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 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			

Church--1926

Specific dates Convent--1899, 1907 **Builder/Architect** Church Architect: William Richard Burk

Convent Architect: James McNally

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criterion C

The St. Joseph Church-Convent of the Most Holy Sacrament Complex is locally significant in the area of architecture because both singly and collectively its buildings are architectural landmarks within the context of Jefferson Parish.

Taken together, the two buildings represent Gretna's most pretentious architectural grouping. Both buildings tower over the surrounding one and two story commercial-residential area. Moreover, of the numerous institutional building groupings in Jefferson Parish, the St. Joseph Church-Convent of the Most Holy Sacrament Complex is the second most pretentious in terms of scale and architectural styling. The buildings are also interesting because they can be seen as a cross-section of the highest architectural taste in the parish during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The convent, which was begun in 1899, is loosely based upon a number of different historical styles of architecture (Romanesque, Gothic, Commercial Italianate) without being heavily indebted to any of them. By contrast, the church, which was constructed in 1926, follows the then popular Spanish Colonial Revival style, and is a very specific and studied reference to a particular period of Spanish architecture.

Beyond this, each building is architecturally significant in its own right, as follows:

The Convent:

Of the numerous turn-of-the-century buildings in the parish based upon the popular commercial vernacular, the convent is by far the finest. It has the only three story cast-iron gallery and some of the parish's most elaborate brickwork, including corbel tables, pointed arches, and an apse formed of rounded brick. It is also much larger than any other comparable building in the parish. For these reasons, the convent is a landmark within the context of Jefferson Parish's turn-of-the-century architectural heritage.

The Church:

Most of Jefferson Parish's 50+ year old buildings date from roughly the same period as St. Joseph Church and would normally be classified as eclectic in style. There are nine major examples of early-twentieth century architecture in the parish, eight of which are designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. All are large institutional buildings. St. Joseph Church is among the parish's finest examples of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture because it is one of only four which feature rich churrigueresque articulation. Indeed, in a revival style which was known for its effervescent flamboyance, St. Joseph Church is probably the parish's most outlandish example. It is the only one whose facade features two types of columns as well as scalloped doorways and free-standing statues. In addition, it has the greatest degree of sculptural relief of any comparable example in the parish.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property @ 2 acres

Quadrangle name New Orleans East, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	5	7	8	3	7	6	0	3	3	1	2	7	4	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 See attached sketch map. Boundaries were drawn to encompass the significant elements of the complex. The landscaped yard was included because its fountain echoes the styling of the church. Moreover, the yard appears as a deliberate reference to a monastery cloister. Therefore, it contributes to the architectural identity of the complex as a historic religious property.

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Assisted by: Owner (Item 4)

name/title National Register Staff
Division of Historic Preservation
 organization State of Louisiana

Dr. Mary Curry
3330 N. Causeway Blvd.,
Room 303

date January 1983 Metairie, LA 70002
504-834-7700

street & number P. O. Box 44247

telephone 504-342-6682

city or town Baton Rouge

state LA 70804

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 B. DeBlieux
 Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date February 23, 1983

For NPS use only

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

James M. Dwyer

date 4/15/83

Keeper of the National Register

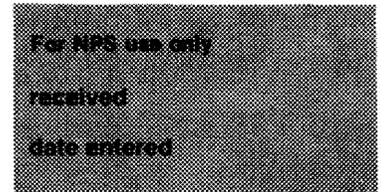
Attest: *Patrick Andrews*

date 4/14/83

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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the Most Holy Sacrament Complex

8. Statement of Significance (continued)

NB: For the record, the State Historic Preservation Office would like to note that the Louisiana State Review Committee for the National Register recommended that the St. Joseph Church-Convent of the Most Holy Sacrament Complex be nominated for significance at the state level in the area of architecture. A committee member felt that the church was a superior example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style within the context of Louisiana. After giving the matter careful consideration, the State Historic Preservation Office decided to leave the nomination at the local level of significance for two reasons: (1) It would be difficult to prove state significance for the church. (2) Even if the church could be proven to be of state significance, the complex as a whole is not.

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9. Bibliography

Jefferson Parish Conveyance Records

Archives of the Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament, Lafayette, Louisiana

Swanson, Betsy. Historic Jefferson Parish from Shore to Shore. Gretna, Pelican Publishing Company, 1975.

Baudier, Roger. St. Joseph Parish of Gretna, La. Centennial Dedication. Gretna, Rau's Ex-Cel Printery, 1958. This is a history of the parish compiled for the centennial dedication. Copy in National Register file at LA State Historic Preservation Office.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH — CONVENT OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT Gretna, LA

The rectory (c.1930) was not included in the nominated area because it has no architectural significance and has been greatly altered.

