

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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 sub-categories 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. Joseph's Catholic Church

other names/site number CRS # N-13687

2. Location

street & number 1012 French Street

not for publication

city or town Wilmington

vicinity

state Delaware code DE county New Castle code 003 zip code 19801

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

[Signature] DESABO December 2, 2003
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 commenting or other official _____ 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature] 1/14/04
Elsa H. Beall

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 | Non-contributing | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|
| <u>2</u> | <u>0</u> | buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | objects |
| <u>2</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

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

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/ religious facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/ religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) **Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Neo-Gothic

foundation STONE/granite
roof CERAMIC TILE
walls BRICK
other CONCRETE

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" in one or more boxes for 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.
- 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" in all the boxes that apply.)

- 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)

RELIGION
ETHNIC HERITAGE / Black

Period of Significance 1947-1954

Significant Dates 1947, 1954

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (See continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

_____ 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

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

Name of repository: Wilmington Public Library

Every Evening
1894 History of Wilmington: The Commercial, Social and Religious Growth of the City During the Past Century. Compiled by the Every Evening.

Pearce, B. Ben
1998 Historical Vignettes of African American Churches in Wilmington, Delaware. Chaconia Press, Wilmington, De.

Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church
1990 One Hundred Years of Service to God and His People. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Wilmington, Delaware. Commemorative booklet.

St. Joseph's Industrial School
1951 St. Joseph's Industrial School 75th Anniversary. Clayton, De.

Scharf, Thomas
1888 History of Delaware. L.J. Richards & Co., Philadelphia.

The Delawarean
1905 "Great Opportunities, Home-seeker's Paradise." Newspaper supplement, 11/4/1905

Maps Consulted

1901 Baist Atlas of Wilmington
1936 Franklin Survey of Wilmington
1998 Sanborn Insurance Company Map
1999 New Castle County Tax Parcel Maps

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property <1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|-----------|---------------|----------------|
| 1 | <u>18</u> | <u>449095</u> | <u>4370305</u> |

Verbal Boundary Description

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debra Campagnari Martin, Preservation Planner

organization City of Wilmington, Delaware date 2001; Revision: 08/18/2003

street & number 800 N. French Street telephone 302-571-4402

city or town Wilmington state DE zip code 19801-3537

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 Diocese of Wilmington

street & number 500 West Street telephone 302-654-5920 (rectory)

city or town Wilmington state DE zip code 19801

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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St. Joseph's Catholic Church
name of property
New Castle County, Delaware
county and State

=====

Agency Certification

In my opinion, St. Joseph's Catholic Church does meets / does not meet the
National Register Criteria.

James M. Baker

James M. Baker
Mayor
City of Wilmington, Delaware

Nov. 9, 2001

Date

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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St. Joseph's Catholic Church
Property Name

Wilmington, New Castle County
County, State

Physical Description

Built in 1947 to replace the church lost to fire on December 31, 1945, the St. Joseph's Catholic Church building is a three-bay, one and one-half-story brick and cast stone edifice executed in the neo-Gothic style. The church is connected to the 1954 rectory (also rebuilt) to the south by a hyphen whose façade was fashioned as a sculpture niche. The facades face north/northeast and front on North French Street in the northern part of Wilmington's central business district. The lot slopes dramatically offering space for an additional full level below the two levels visible from French Street.

The church facade exhibits an elbowed parapet at the front of the front-gabled roof. Cast stone coping has been applied to the skyward edges only. The roofing material is flat clay tile. A pseudo-bell tower and cross at the gable apex surmount the projecting center section of the building. Tripartite lancet windows with cast stone surrounds and wide mullions dominate the facade above the main entrance; the windows contain stained glass currently protected by exterior clear panels. A similarly detailed surround encloses the double-leafed, oak doors. Above the doors, the surround includes an embossed frontispiece reading "ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH" surmounted by a relief symbol of a cross over a shield. The doors are flanked by narrow single lancet windows with cast surrounds. Each flank of this symmetrical facade contains a set of tripartite windows with false foil details. A small quatrefoil opening (filled in where a light would be) is centered above the lancets. The brick bond pattern is composed of six rows common bond and one row Flemish bond. Low brick walls flank the main entrance stairs. The southern side is a planter filled with shrubs. The northern side hides the handicap access ramp. The sides of the building are buttressed, with six on the north side and four on the south side (the stairwell and basement entry interrupt the southern elevation). There are no openings along the back (east) wall other than for the rose window. The foundation is dressed granite, parged on the inside basement level.

The sanctuary interior is distinguished by a double barrel-vaulted ceiling; plastered-covered "exposed" beams with a design of a cross and olive branches painted on the collars; a balcony over the narthex; pendant lantern light fixtures; oak pews and chestnut/oak trim, doors and confessionals; marble, Gothic-inspired altar rails; a rose window over the chancel area in the rear (east) wall; many stained glass windows as well as Arts and Crafts-influenced interior doors with plain stained glass.

The main altar area contains a pre-Vatican II high altar with Gothic design elements. The

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predominant material is a cream colored marble with contrasting insets and pilasters. The present altar also uses the cream marble and contrasting insets, as does the altar rail. Two recessed side altars, located to each side of the main altar, hold statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary (north side) and St. Joseph (south side). The marble is similar to that in the main altar. The marble baptismal font currently rests near the St. Joseph side altar. A third side altar on the south side of the church contains multiple statues. A figure of St. Anthony is in repose in a glass-fronted, cream-colored faux-marble crypt in this niche.

Stained glass windows are featured in all elevations of the church. The center facade contains a large depiction of St. Joseph and two angels, while the small lancets contain simple organic designs and memorials. The north side windows are dedicated to (from west to east): St. Patrick, Our Lady of Fatima, St. Veronica, St. James, The Blessed Virgin Mary, The Resurrection, The Infant of Prague, St. Susanna, St. Peter and St. Michael. The south side windows are dedicated to (from east to west): St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, the Holy Family, St. Benedict the Moor, St. John, and the Sacred Heart. The southern niche contains a double lancet window with stained glass, facing to the west. Stained glass with stylized crosses is also found in pointed arch windows to either side of the main altar, high in the walls and facing north and south. The rose window above the chancel area is one of the most striking features of the sanctuary.

Other statues include a painted plaster figure of Blessed Martin de Porres, salvaged from the 1945 fire, currently placed to the north of the main altar. The statue is significant to this parish as a venerated figure of African American ancestry (the statue was created prior to the elevation of Martin De Porres to sainthood, which occurred in 1962). A dedicated space in the rear of the church identifies a former area of display for this statue. Statues probably dating to the mid 20th century are found outside: to the north is a statue of St. Joseph holding the infant Jesus, surrounded by two other children; to the south in the hyphen niche is another statue of St. Joseph. Both statues appear to be cast stone.

The basement level of the church includes a large open function hall and stage. Numerous small rooms behind the stage include storage, restrooms and kitchen facilities.

The Rectory is a 2-story, 3-bay building with a brick veneer laid in running bond. Cast stone details like a second story belt course at the lintel level above the second story windows and coping at the roof line, complement the style of the church. An enclosed front porch of cast stone and large windows dominates the street-level façade, but offer a view of the original

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entry arrangement of a simple Colonial Revival surround and door with three horizontal glass panes above a large panel. Paired replacement windows flank the main entrance. At the second story, the center bay contains a double window, while the side bays contain one window each. The facade is topped by a low parapet topped off with a cast stone cross. The roof is flat. The north and south elevations are five bays wide by three stories tall. These elevations retain their original 2/2 horizontal paned windows that are regularly arranged with concrete sills as their only decoration. The rear is similarly simply detailed.

A one story hyphen connects the buildings at the street and was detailed as a large cast stone statuary niche. It now houses a statue of St. Joseph on a concrete pedestal flanked by two concrete planters. The interior was not accessible.

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Statement of Significance

St. Joseph's Catholic Church is being listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its architectural significance to the City of Wilmington as an example of mid-20th Century Gothic Revival/Eclectic style on a small scale. The church is also significant under Criterion A for its association with the Josephite Fathers and the work they did to establish community services for the Wilmington African American community dating from the late-1880s. Although none of the buildings from that period remain, the existing church building replaced the earlier structure that was destroyed by fire in 1945, the church was rebuilt during the Josephite period and therefore represents the importance of their contribution to improving the secular aspects of the lives of Wilmington's African American population.

The Josephite Order of the Sacred Heart was founded with the mission of evangelizing to the African American population through education and social service. In Delaware, the Josephite Fathers, through the leadership of Father John DeRuyter, established a mission presence with a complex in Wilmington with the St. Joseph's Church, rectory, convent and orphanage (last three non-extant), located on French Street. Beyond evangelization, these priests were concerned with the welfare of the African American community in America, and they employed strategies used by others to successfully bring their disadvantaged student population into society as self sufficient and productive members.

St. Joseph's Mission Society was established and trained in Mill Hill, England, with the mission to evangelize outside of Europe. In the United States, St. Joseph's Seminary opened in Baltimore, Maryland in 1888 with the mission to evangelize America's black population. Mill Hill graduate Father John DeRuyter arrived in Wilmington to begin St. Joseph's Mission in 1889, having labored for similar purposes in Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia. He was responding to an invitation from Bishop Curtis to minister to the black Catholics of Wilmington who had ceased to congregate because a lack of leadership and discrimination in predominately white churches.

Upon his arrival, Father DeRuyter was assisted by local resident John Crawford in gathering approximately 50 black Catholics who wished to worship together, and secured the use of the basement of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church (E. Sixth and Pine Streets) in which to celebrate Mass. St. Mary's parishioners were predominately of Irish and German heritage. Father De Ruyter immediately began to solicit other parishes for funds to build a church, which soon became a campaign for a school, as well. While Father DeRuyter probably noted quickly the poor state of black schools, his educational goal was in keeping with a Josephite philosophy maintaining that there is no more effective missionary agent than the free school (St. Joseph's 1990).

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St. Joseph's Wilmington mission erected their first buildings, a school and teacher's residence, in 1890 in the 1000 block of North French Street on a parcel measuring 125 by 200 feet. A contemporary newspaper account indicated that the laying of the school cornerstone was the cause for one of the largest gatherings of Catholics in the City, drawing county participation as well (Every Evening 1894). While the building campaign for the construction of the church continued for a number of years, mass was celebrated on the first floor of the school and classes were taught in the basement. With the help of Mother Katherine Drexel (now St. Katherine Drexel) of Pennsylvania, herself dedicated to serving the spiritual and educational needs of African Americans and Native Americans, Father DeRuyter staffed the school with Franciscan Sisters from Glen Riddle, Pa. A rectory was added to the property in 1891-1892.

In 1892 St Joseph's constructed the first black orphanage for boys in America on their site. In 1893 the school and orphanage had 16 staff members. Shown on the 1901 Baist Atlas as a great, sprawling structure to the north of the church and school, the orphanage included a free dispensary and operating room. The effort was supported by charitable contributions from across the country. The orphanage averaged about 80 boys, but was said to have space for 200 (Every Evening 1894). While the orphanage was transferred ca. 1930 to a site in Clayton, Delaware (also the location of St. Joseph's Industrial School from the early 20th century) the school expanded and continued to operate. The school provided elementary education up through 8th grade; Howard High School, Philadelphia's Southeast Catholic High School and the St. Joseph's Industrial School provided secondary education. Graduates of St. Joseph's School were among the first to integrate Salesianum High School, a Catholic institution, on November 14, 1950. Salesianum was the first secondary school in Delaware to establish integrated classes. Due to changing needs of the community, St. Joseph's School and former orphanage complex was demolished in 1956.

A church sanctuary separate from the school was not established until after 1901, and possibly as late as 1930, as evidenced by reference to a \$10,000 expansion project that added 12 feet to the front and the rose window to the rear of an existing building-- probably the original school (St. Joseph's, 1990). This coincides with the expansion of the school made possible by the relocation of the orphanage to Clayton, in Kent County. The church and rectory were destroyed by an electrical fire on New Year's Eve, 1945. The church was rebuilt and opened in 1948. The rectory followed in 1954. Both structures remain largely unchanged to the present.

From its humble beginnings, the complex in the 1100 block of French Street grew to occupy the majority of the block, with facilities dedicated to spiritual, educational, residential and medical needs of the black community. St. Joseph's philosophy was spread in the greater community as well,

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establishing two mission churches: Our Lady of Mercy in Belvedere (southwest of Wilmington) in 1929; Blessed Sacrament at 712 Scott Street, Wilmington, in 1936. St. Joseph's continues in its founding mission to the present day, while expanding its program to serve the underserved wherever needed, such as in the areas of prison ministry and AIDS and homeless outreach. St. Joseph's also serves the central business district, offering daily and holy day masses for downtown workers. The tenure of the Josephites ended in 1993, and the parish has been lead by the Franciscan Order since 1995.

Integrity

The St. Joseph's Church and Rectory are located in the same space occupied by the original mission buildings. Developed as the first permanent Catholic mission to African Americans in Delaware, the parish remains committed to this purpose, though African American Catholics presently worship in parishes throughout the City. Though the acreage formerly associated with the Josephite complex has been severely reduced by the construction of corporate buildings in recent years, the Church remains the spiritual center of the mission. The church and rectory still reflect the peaceful feeling of an urban sanctuary despite the change in land use and scale of the buildings surrounding them.

The buildings themselves are simple and well designed, reflecting the original "mission" purpose in the use of dominant Mission and neo-Gothic architectural details. The original materials of the complex were brick and stone, as are the current buildings. The charming and well-executed architectural details of the exterior and interior of the church have been changed very little since 1948.

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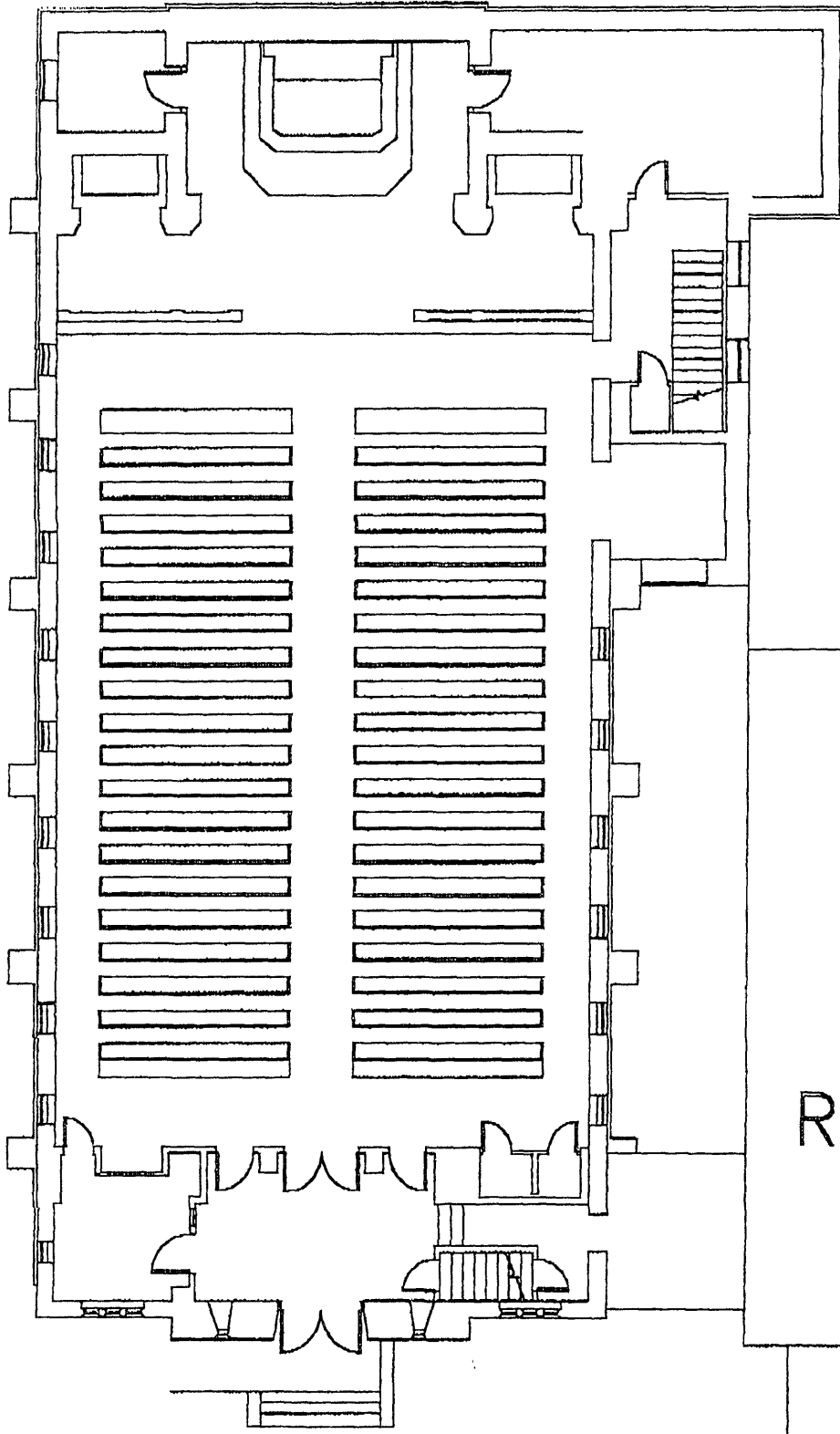
Wilmington, New Castle County
County, State

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundary includes the remaining property associated with the St. Joseph's Catholic Church and Rectory. The boundary described takes into account the reduction of the property size that began with the demolition of the school in 1956 and continued until 1999 with the purchase of much of the remaining open space associated with the church by commercial interests. Mid-rise office buildings now occupy adjacent space to the north, east and south of the church and rectory.

Boundary Description

Beginning at a point 95 feet north of the northeast corner of 10th and French Streets, thence 104 feet north along French Street to a point; thence east 140 feet, in a line perpendicular to French Street to a point; thence south 104 feet, in a line parallel to French Street to a point; thence west 140 feet to the point of beginning, containing approximately one-third of one acre.



St. Joseph's Catholic Church
1012 French Street
Wilmington, New Castle County, DE

Floor Plan

RECTORY

St. Joseph's Church



720

St. Joseph's Catholic Church
 1012 French Street
 Wilmington, New Castle County, DE

Tax Map 1"=100' N ↑