

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP 14 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

Ala. Historical Commission REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Convent of Mercy
other names/site number Empress Chandelier

2. Location

street & number 753 St. Francis Street not for publication
city, town Mobile vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Mobile code 097 zip code 36602

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>0</u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Roman Catholic Properties in Mobile, Alabama, 1848-1928
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 5-21-91
Signature of certifying official Date
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Patrick W. Andrews 4/24/92
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/church school _____

Vacant/not in use _____

Religion/church related residence _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

(enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete _____

~~Other/English Early Baroque Revival~~ _____

walls Stucco _____

Other/Institutional Style _____

roof Slate _____

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Convent of Mercy consists of two buildings, the larger constructed in 1908 and the ancillary building constructed in 1928. These structures sit on an entire city block bordered by Springhill Avenue near Broad Street. Over half of the lot is a parking area, bordered by a low brick wall. The earlier building presents an interesting stylistic mix. The bottom half has a Neo-Classic feel while the top half exhibits English or Flemish tendencies. Yet the whole is unified and best classified as English Early Baroque Revival. This structure is 7x4 bays, 3½ stories, stucco with a raised basement with windows. The basement and first two stories are scored to simulate ashlar. The top story and a half is rough stucco. The structure has a water table and the first story windows have rounded top corners. There are bands of rectangular windows at the second story with hood molds. There is a projecting central block with open porch in the first story. The porch openings duplicate the rounded corner motif of the first floor windows. The entrance features double wooden doors with sidelights and transom. This lower half of the building is delineated by a full entablature with frieze, dentil course and cornice. There is a balcony on the projecting block. The top half of the building is defined by cross gable slate roof. The gables are stepped and parapeted with coping. There are modified Palladian windows in the half stories with molded surround and cross. There are a pair of shed roof dormers on either side of the cross gable. A three story frame porch covers the rear elevation. It features box columns, balustrading and lattice screening at each corner. The rear elevation is brick with full length windows with segmental arch lentils.

A frame, gable roofed elevated walkway joins the older building to the 1928 school. The school building is a three story, brick, 5x3 bay structure with a flat parapeted roof. Windows are 6/6 and grouped with lacy iron grilles. There is a concrete water table, belt course and cornice. The double doors feature a transom with molded lancet motif above.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Convent of Mercy

Exterior Integrity

The Convent of Mercy buildings retain their integrity of location, style and design. Windows in the 1908 building have been replaced with tinted plexiglass. There are no other significant alterations.

Interior Description

The first floor of the Convent of Mercy consists of an entry hall with arched openings leading into the other rooms. There is a lateral hall running the east-west length of the building. Rooms open off both sides of the hall. This same plan is repeated on all four floors. A central staircase runs up through the building and a niche with plaster Neoclassical surround is at the landing. To the south side of each hall at each end are a series of three arched spaces, probably prayer cells. The fourth floor is the most intact with hardwood floors, three panel wooden doors with transoms and beaded board closets in the rooms. The overall integrity of this 1907 building is good with original plaster walls and hardware throughout. Some of the lower floors have been carpeted.

The 1928 school building consists of three floors with lateral halls and classrooms off to either side. The auditorium is a T addition. Classrooms have their original multi-light doors and even some original lockers. There have been almost no interior alterations here.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1908
1928

Significant Dates
1908
1928

Cultural Affiliation
NA

Significant Person
NA

Architect/Builder
Downey, A. H. (New Orleans)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE

The Convent of Mercy is locally significant as a fine local interpretation of combining two early twentieth styles in the same building; creating a unique design not found else where in the City of Mobile. The upper floor exhibits characteristics of the English Baroque Revival style with the decorative parapet roof with coping. While the lower portion of the building displays Neo-Classical elements, including the modified Palladian window and a full entablature with frieze, dentil course and cornice.

* * * * *

The Sisters of Mercy came to the Gulf Coast at the invitation of Bishop John Quinlan (Portier's successor) in 1877. They opened a school in Pensacola. Bishop Dominic Manucy, who succeeded Quinlan, brought several sisters of the order with him from New Orleans in 1884. These nuns opened St. Joseph's School, located in the parish of the same name.

In 1895 the nuns established their motherhouse in Mobile and began a high school the same year, which operated on the same premises as the grade school. In 1908 architect A.H. Downey of New Orleans was commissioned to design a convent and school. The resulting building served well until a new school building was added in 1928.

In 1968 the school was closed and the students merged with Bishop Toolen High. The sisters themselves relocated to Spring Hill in 1969. They continue to teach at a several of local Catholic schools. The old buildings were sold and served as a chandelier factory for several years during the 1970s. Today the property stands vacant and is for sale.

Criteria Consideration A

Criteria Consideration A applies to the Convent of Mercy because of the building's architectural merit and high degree of integrity.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

The Catholic Week. Mobile, Alabama November 29, 1979

Mobile Press Register. March 31, 1974

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Mobile Historic Development

Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately 2 acres

UTM References

A 116 3991710 3395400
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The entire city block bounded by Dauphin Street to the south, North Bayou Street to the west, St. Francis Street to the north, Springhill Avenue to the NE corner and North Scott Street to the east.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary conforms to the present legal dimensions of the lot.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John Sledge/Architectural Historian; Steven Kay/AHC Reviewer

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission date _____

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

city or town Mobile state Al zip code 36633

MAY 23 1990

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Section number photo-
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1. Convent of Mercy
753 St. Francis Street
2. Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama
3. John Sledge, photographer
4. August 1990
5. MHDC Negative File -- MB # 185, 190

Photo # Description (Roll/Frame #)

1. Facade, Convent, camera facing S. (185/2)
2. General, camera facing SW. (185/3)
3. General, camera facing SW. (185/4)
4. Rear, general, camera facing W. (185/6)
5. Interior, Convent. Entrance hall, camera facing S. (190/1)
6. First floor, camera facing W. from hall. (190/2)
7. Niche at landing, camera facing S. (190/3)
8. Second floor. Arched cubicles, camera facing SE. (190/4)
9. Fourth floor, camera facing W. (190/6)
10. Dorm room, fourth floor, camera facing N. (190/7)
11. Exterior, school building, camera facing NE. (185/11)
12. Same. Rear general, camera facing NW. (185/8)
13. Interior. First floor, camera facing E. (190/9)
14. Same. Second floor, camera facing (190/11)
15. Same. Classroom, third floor, camera facing E. (190/13)