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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

SEP 14 1990

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Ala. Historical Commission

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 St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 808 Springhill Ave. city, town Mobile state Alabama code AL county Mobile code 097 zip code 36602

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Roman Catholic Properties in Mobile, Alabama, 1848-1928

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 of certifying official: Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office) Date: 5-21-91

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. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:) Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/religious structureReligion/ church-related residence

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion/religious structureReligion/ church-related residence**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brickwalls Brickroof Slateother wood**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church is oriented southeast on a large lot adjacent Springhill Avenue in downtown Mobile. The two story rectory stands immediately behind the church while the rest of the block serves as parking. There are a few scattered live oak trees and the north, east and west sides of the block have chain link fencing.

The church itself is an impressive example of the Gothic Revival. It is sixty by one hundred feet, brick with a granite water table and a one hundred and twenty foot tower. The building is a classic medieval reproduction with a gable (slate) to the front nave, a 120 foot centered square tower, transepts and apse. It is 3x8 bays. The facade is dominated by the tower, which has a central entrance of paired wooden doors with Tudor arch tops and corbeled in, battlemented parapet over the entrance. There is a one story flat roof battlemented vestibule on either side of the tower, each with double wooden doors. The tower features monumental buttresses with a set of tripled stained glass Tudor windows in the second story and tripled louvered vents in the third story. The top of the tower is battlemented with an octagonal battlemented turret at each corner.

The building's side elevations feature large Tudor stained glass windows delineated by buttresses. There is lancet corbeling around the eaves, copper guttering and parapeted gable ends. The transepts are buttressed and include each a pair of tall Tudor windows and large stained glass window above. There is a copper cross atop each transept. The rear elevation features a one story flat roof battlemented addition surrounding a semi-circular apse.

Immediately to the rear of the church stands the rectory, constructed at the same time. The rectory faces Springhill Avenue and is a two story, brick, low hip slate roof, 5x5 bay structure. The entrance consists of double wood doors with windows, transom and Tudor arch top, all corbeled in. Windows are 2/2 with Tudor arches. There is an attached one story aluminum canopy over the entrance steps. Centered above is a pair of Tudor casement windows. Eaves have lancet corbels and there is a centered parapet with copper cross atop. There are four interior chimneys.

The church is entered by the tower and double wooden doors with stained glass windows lead into the sanctuary. The interior consists of a large nave with four rows of pews and open transepts. The aisles are covered by low arches and a high arch covers the nave. There are no columns supporting these arches. The walls are clad with marble wainscoting. The stained glass windows (imported from Germany) are interspersed with the stations of the Cross.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church

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Lantern lights are suspended along each side of the nave. The marble chancery rail extends across the west end of the interior. The apse features free standing Corinthian columns with gilded capitals to either side and massive engaged Corinthian pillars behind. The marble altar is carved with a scene of the Last Supper and the high altar is marble as well with intricate carvings and spires.

Each transept includes a large round stained glass window with a niche below containing statuary. A small free standing semi-circular balcony over the main entrance includes organ pipes but no seating.

Integrity

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church retains its integrity of location, materials and design. The original Gothic cupolas atop the tower corners were destroyed by Hurricane Frederic in 1979. There are no other exterior changes of note. Interior integrity is excellent as well.

**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

1907  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1907  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

Diboll and Owen of New Orleans  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Criterion C: Architecture

Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church is significant under National Register Criterion C as an important high style example of the Second Gothic Revival in Mobile. The high style design, quality materials and workmanship are typical of Catholic architectural endeavors in the city. The property is further significant for the Rectory, contemporary with the church and stylistically compatible through its details. No other rectory in the city is so architecturally similar to its church as this one.

\* \* \* \* \*

St. Joseph's Parish is the third oldest in Mobile. It was formed in 1857 to serve Catholics too far removed from the downtown Cathedral and the Church of St. Vincent de Paul in south Mobile. The Jesuits of Springhill College were entrusted with the erection of a church, which they built close to the city hospital in 1858. This brick building served the new parish, which was made up primarily of German immigrants.

As the city grew and expanded it was decided to build a new church. The cornerstone was laid in 1907 and completion took over a year. Diboll and Owen of New Orleans were the architects and G. A. Chamblin of Mobile the contractor.

In September of 1908 the Mobile Daily Register wrote a short article about the newly completed church calling it "one of the handsomest churches in the state." The paper noted the lack of interior columns as a "striking feature" resulting in an "entirely open interior." The church had a seating capacity of 800. The paper called the rectory "a large and substantial structure."

The old 1858 church building was used as a school. As Mobile continued to grow and expand to the west the Parish suffered from commercial intrusion and inner city blight. The school closed in 1969 (the old church building had been incorporated into a new 1920s building) and the school building was sold in 1972. St. Joseph's continues its service to the community despite the erosion of its surroundings.

Criteria Consideration A

Criteria Consideration A applies to this property because of its architectural merit and high degree of interior and exterior integrity.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

The Catholic Week. Friday, 23 November 1979.

The Mobile Daily Register. 1907. 1908.

**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**

Acreeage of property Approximately 1

**UTM References**

A 

1	6
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3	9	9	0	6	0
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3	3	9	5	5	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The entire block bounded on the N (205') by St. Louis Street, E (276') by North Bayou Street, S and SW by Springhill Avenue (45' and 214') and W (135') by North Jefferson Street.

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 October 1, 1990  
street & number P O Box 1827 telephone (205) 438-7281  
city or town Mobile state AL zip code 36633

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number photo-  
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1. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church  
808 Springhill Avenue
2. Mobile Mobile County, Alabama
3. John Sledge, photographer
4. February 1990
5. MHDC Negative File MB #178

Photo #	Description (Frame #)
1.	Facade, camera facing NW (3)
2.	General, camera facing N (6)
3.	General, camera facing S (11)
4.	Church and Rectory, camera facing NE (8)
5.	Interior, nave, camera facing NW (14)
6.	Same, camera facing SE (15)
7.	Same, N transept, camera facing NE (16)
8.	Rectory, facade, camera facing N (9)
9.	Same, camera facing S, rear (10)