Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES **INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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| CITY, TOWN | Baton Rouge | | state Louisi ana | a | |
| | Daron Monge | | TOUTO TOTAL | • | |

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

__MOVED

__EXCELLENT

__DETERIORATED

__UNALTERED X_ALTERED

X_ORIGINAL SITE

DATE__

__FAIR

__RUINS
__UNEXPOSED

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church is located on the corner of Cadiz and Coliseum streets in a late 19th century urban residential neighborhood consisting of one and two story frame buildings.

The church itself largely reflects construction work done in 1890 and 1924, although parts of the structure, including the foundation, date back further. The documentation suggests that an 1858 building was modified in 1890 and again in 1924. But the modifications were so extensive that the earlier building has been almost completely covered up. Therefore the present building must essentially be considered an 1890 building which was remodeled in 1924.

The building has a second floor nave with a ground floor general purpose room. Originally access to the nave was provided by several staircases set at various corners of the building. Whether all four corners had staircases is not known, but two of the corners have them today. The nave has a 6-bay hall type plan with a chancel flanked by two small sacristies. There are also a pair of small transept arms at each end of the nave, two of which contain the aforementioned staircases. At the corner of the two intersecting streets is a corner tower, which rises a full two stories above the nave.

In 1924 the wood frame church was sheathed in brick up to the cornice line, leaving the wooden shingle style tower exposed. Also in 1924 a corner entrance was created under a double corner arch with a new staircase, which gave direct access to the second floor nave from the street. An upper gallery was built at the rear of the nave, to give additional seating. These last two alterations required the installation of a floor and new partitions which caused the stained glass window pattern to be broken up on the interior. But the windows remain intact.

The nave is simple in character with an exposed truss ceiling and ancillary areas (such as transept arms and the chancel) screened by wood and plaster arches. Nave windows are formed of colored glass panes, of both diamond and rectangular shape, set in wood muntins. The great frontal nave window is flanked by small circular windows, and there is a small circular window in the gable. The most noteworthy feature of the exterior is the two-stage shingled tower. Its boxey lower stage has rectangular openings with louvers which are cut to resemble scalloped shingling. Its octagonal upper stage has a handsome bell cast roof. The two front doors are surmounted by gables on brackets. The 1924 brick facade is partially treated with crenelations.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AR | EAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH | ECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| PREHISTORIC | ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | COMMUNITY PLANNING | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | RELIGION |
| 1400-1499 | ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | CONSERVATION | LAW | SCIENCE |
| 1500-1599 | AGRICULTURE | ECONOMICS | LITERATURE | SCULPTURE |
| 1600-1699 | X_ARCHITECTURE | EDUCATION | MILITARY | X_social/humanitarian |
| 1700-1799 | ART | ENGINEERING | MUSIC | THEATER |
| X _1800-1899 | COMMERCE | EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | PHILOSOPHY | TRANSPORTATION |
| 1900- | COMMUNICATIONS | INDUSTRY | POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | XOTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | INVENTION | | Black History |
| | | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES

1858, 1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church is significant in the areas of black history, "social/humanitarian," and architecture. As a congregation, St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church dates from about 1850 and is the oldest black congregation in the former community of Jefferson City* and one of the oldest in the New Orleans area. In addition, the church has played an extensive role in the life of the surrounding community, and architecturally, the present church building is one of the most outstanding black churches in the state.

Although St. Peter's African Methodist Episcopal Church has been modified over the years, it retains a degree of architectural significance owing to its size and to its use of two high style features which are seldom found in black churches. These are the shingle style side tower and the relatively elaborate stained glass windows of the nave.

The building seems to have been constructed in 1858 as the (white) Jefferson City Methodist Episcopal Church South. St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church was associated with the building almost from the first as the white church permitted the blacks to worship on the ground floor of the building while the white congregation worshipped upstairs. The St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church had begun in 1850, when a group of black people started worshipping together in a small house at Prytania and Valmont streets near the location of the building. They were followers of the principles of Richard Allen (1760-1831), who had founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

During the same year as its construction (1858), the building was damaged by a storm, and the black people helped the whites repair it. But this harmonious relationship between the two groups did not last, because tension between them arose as the Civil War approached, and soon the blacks were no longer allowed to worship on the ground floor. In the early 1860's,

^{*}The community of Jefferson City was incorporated in 1850. Its boundaries were Toledano Street, Joseph Street, Freret Street, and the Mississippi River. It was consolidated by the City of New Orleans in 1870.

| 9 MAJOR BIBLIOG | RAPHICAL REF | ERENCES | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Blassingame, John W of Chicago Pre | | ans: 1860-18 | 80. Chicago: | University |
| George, Carol V. R. <u>Independent B1</u> Press, 1973. | Segregated Sabbaack Churches, 176 | aths: Richard O-1840. New | d Allen and the York: Oxford (contin | University |
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the black congregation assembled at a house at Plaquemine (later Coliseum) and Bordeaux streets, a few blocks from the church building.

Late in the 1860's, St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church was incorporated in Jefferson City under the state Statute of Corporations of 1849. In 1867, the congregation purchased and moved into a building on two lots of the square bounded by Coliseum, Chesnutt, Bordeaux, and Valance streets. The membership increased steadily over the next few years, and a larger building was soon needed.

Meanwhile the membership of the (white) Jefferson City Methodist Episcopal Church South had grown, and in 1876 it moved to a new building at 3900 St. Charles Avenue. It is now known as the Rayne Memorial United Methodist Church. On March 31, 1877, the white congregation sold their old building to the St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church in return for a consideration of \$4,000. This was, of course, the same building on whose ground floor the African Methodist Episcopal Church had worshipped prior to the Civil War.

John Blassingame's <u>Black New Orleans</u>: 1860-1880 (Chicago, 1973) provides a means of placing St. Peter's African Methodist Episcopal Church in some degree of perspective with other black churches in the New Orleans area in that period. Blassingame notes that during 1860-1880, "The strongest Protestant church in the Negro community was the African Methodist Episcopal" (p. 149). In 1860, he notes, there were four African Methodist Episcopal churches in New Orleans. (Presumably this does not include St. Peter, since Jefferson City was still not part of the city.) In 1873 there were ten African Methodist Episcopal churches in New Orleans. (This figure probably does include St. Peter, since Jefferson City was annexed in 1870.)

The church building has been twice remodeled since 1877, once in 1890 and again in 1924. The only names of the building's architects and contractors available are for 1924. The architect was Edward Ganet, and the contractor was A. L. Riley. The cost of the remodeling work of 1924 was \$6,000.

There are no figures available on the church's membership prior to 1915, as extensive church records do not survive from that time. Between 1915 and 1960, the membership totaled over 400. The current membership is about 300.

St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church has always played an important role in the life of the neighborhood around it, particularly in the twentieth century. In the 1920's the church provided space in its ground floor for

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practical nursing classes taught by the staff of Touro Infirmary. During the 1930's, it provided similar space for secretarial and business classes. It also provided space for an employment office associated with the relief programs of the New Deal, especially the WPA. People would come into the office and register for work. They were put to work on various government projects in return for food, clothing, and a small cash income.

During the 1950's, the church again provided space for practical nursing classes, this time taught by staff from the public schools. In 1954 local chapters of the Boy Scouts of America and the Explorers were organized at the church. In 1956, a chapter of the Cub Scouts was organized. In 1974 the Cub Scout pack was awarded a citation by President Nixon.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, the church provided space on its ground floor for classes in voter registration taught by students from Tulane and Loyola universities.

St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church is also the mother church for three other African Methodist Episcopal churches in the area: Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in Bridge City, which dates from the early 1950's; St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church in Carrollton, which dates from 1920; and St. Luke African Methodist Episcopal Church, located at the corner of Congress and Florida Walk streets, which dates from 1924.

Prominent citizens who have been members of St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church include Israel M. Augustine, Jr., Judge, Section I, Criminal District Court, Parish of Orleans; Duplain Rhodes, Jr., prominent businessman; and Dr. William R. Adams, Jr., surgeon.

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Interviews with members of St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church, especially Rev. Halley R. Harris and Mrs. C. V. Taylor.

Jefferson Parish Conveyance Records.

New Orleans Conveyance Records.

Russ, Fannie Rayne and George Russ Ross, One Hundred Years of Rayne Memorial.

St. Peter African Methodist Episcopal Church Records.