

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

MAR 27 1989

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
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 St. Matthew's Episcopal Church  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 243 Barrow Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Houma N/A vicinity  
state Louisiana code LA county Terrebonne code 109 zip code 70361

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>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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.

Leslie Tassin March 22, 1989  
Signature of certifying official Leslie Tassin, State Historic Preservation Officer Date  
Dept of Culture, Recreation & Tourism  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

Andrew Byer Entered in the National Register 5/1/89

f Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

---

**6. Function or Use**

---

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
RELIGION - Religious structure

---

---

---

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
RELIGION - Religious structure

---

---

---

---

**7. Description**

---

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

---

---

---

Gothic Revival

---

---

---

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

---

walls weatherboard

---

roof asphalt

---

other 

---

---

---

**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church (1892) is a one-story frame Gothic Revival structure with a two-story front corner bell tower. The church was enlarged in 1913 by the addition of a parish hall which adjoins the nave at a right angle. The matching Gothic Revival styling of the parish hall reinforces the design of the older building and does not compromise its integrity or National Register eligibility. Located in central Houma, the church stands on the corner of a five-lot religious compound which also includes an 1892 rectory, a modern Episcopal school, and the school's playground. The grassy compound is shaded by tall trees which only partially cushion the buildings from the noise of two busy nearby streets. Only the church with its parish hall wing and the rectory are being nominated to the National Register.

The attachment of the church to the parish hall creates an L-shaped plan. Each of the two spaces is basically rectangular in nature, although both church and parish hall are subdivided internally. The church section contains a corner entrance foyer, a nave with a center aisle, slightly projecting transepts, an apse, and a narrow vestment room tucked behind two short rows of pews in the right transept. The parish hall's major space consists of a large meeting room which opens into the nave adjacent to the south transept. A series of smaller chambers (including restrooms, kitchen, and storage area) extends along one side of the hall in a straight line connecting with the transept's vestment room.

The clapboard church reflects the full maturity of the Gothic Revival style as it developed in hinterland areas. Many of the style's most identifiable characteristics are present. Gothic massing is reflected in the steeply pitched roof whose ridge is lined with metal cresting. A round window pierces the resulting front gable in its peak. Narrow pointed arch windows open into the nave on both sides of the structure. Larger pointed and subdivided windows pierce the facade, apse, and north transept, creating Gothic window tracery. The church's main entrance is located in the bell tower, where a set of double doors opens into the foyer. These doors are protected by a pent roof hood from which another subdivided Gothic window rises. Round windows, each divided by geometric tracery, pierce the walls of the bell tower at a higher level. The bell tower also exhibits pointed and louvered spaces subdivided in the same manner as the windows below. Miniature towers rise from each corner of the bell tower's roof, and the steeply pitched roofs of these small towers repeat the pitch of the larger tower's roof. Crosses top both the bell tower and the miniature towers.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Houma, Terrebonne Parish

Section number   7   Page   1  

Another entrance is located on the facade's second corner. This set of double doors is protected by a porch which cuts into the corner at a diagonal angle. Two open Gothic arches give access to this porch. The foundation is vented by grilled oval openings outlined by bas relief scallops. The clapboarded parish hall also exhibits narrow Gothic windows which stretch in bands across its primary elevation. A projecting porch with a pointed gable roof serves as the entrance to this addition. The porch is distinguished by a Gothic arch springing from Tuscan columns. This opening creates the suggestion of a Gothic Palladian window.

The church's interior is also a well-developed expression of the Gothic Revival style. Paneled throughout by stained, diagonal tongue and groove boards above a horizontal tongue and groove wainscot, the space rises to an elaborately ornamented hammerbeam ceiling. Pointed arches open into the transept areas, and the balusters of the chancel rail form a miniature Gothic arcade. The lectern exhibits Gothic quatrefoils. Two large paneled doors roll upward to open the tongue and grooved paneled parish hall to the nave. The old wooden floors of the parish hall are still visible, and the room contains a wooden sliding door which can be used to divide the space.

Assessment of Integrity

St. Matthew's has experienced a number of changes since its construction in 1892. As mentioned above, a stylistically compatible parish hall was added to the church in 1913. Original clear windows were replaced with stained glass, the front window between 1903 and 1908, the apse window by 1911. In 1926 a hurricane destroyed the upper portion of the open bell tower and blew out the windows along one side of the nave. These windows were replaced after the storm, then replaced again by stained glass during the 1950s. Parish members replaced the destroyed bell tower with an inappropriate substitute, but this problem was corrected around 1960 by the erection of a louvered belfry otherwise very similar to the open original. The roof's early polychrome finish was replaced by asphalt shingles. The exterior, once painted in contrasting colors, is now a pure white. On the interior, the altar has been moved out a few feet from its original position against the apse wall, conduits carrying electrical wires have been unobtrusively attached to walls, the church floor has been carpeted, and the vestment room has been changed. The paneling, which had darkened over time, was lightened to its original shade around 1982. The parish hall kitchen has been modernized twice. Most of these changes are minor in nature, and none compromises the integrity or National Register eligibility of the structure.

Contributing Element

The St. Matthew's Rectory (1892) is included as a contributing element because it is contemporaneous with the church. A one-and-one-half story

CONTINUED

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Houma, Terrebonne Parish

Section number 7 Page 2

---

clapboard planter's cottage with a five bay porch, double doors, transom, side lights, and Victorian bays at each end, the rectory was renovated sometime after the turn of the century. Changes to the structure included raising it on tall concrete piers and the addition of a frontal shed dormer which allowed the conversion of the attic to room space. Despite these alterations, the rectory is recognizable as an 1890s structure and retains its eligibility as a contributing element to the St. Matthew's National Register nomination.

**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    N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from Instructions)  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance  
1892  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates  
1892  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder  
Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is an outstanding example of the Gothic Revival style within the context of Terrebonne Parish. The church especially illustrates the adaptation of high style architecture to the simpler needs and resources of a hinterland congregation.

Popular primarily between 1830 and 1860, the Gothic Revival was one of several decorative styles competing for acceptance during the early years of the Victorian era. Promoted through the books of landscape architect and architectural critic Andrew Jackson Downing, the style was applied to residences, churches, and public buildings. It reached Louisiana with the construction of the State Capitol Building in the 1840s. Despite its early popularity, the Gothic Revival was slow to spread to rural Louisiana and made virtually no impact in Terrebonne Parish until around 1890. At that time two outstanding examples appeared there. The first was Ardoyne, a high style plantation house added to the National Register in 1982. The second was St. Matthew's. Because the Episcopal Church had adopted Gothic styling as the appropriate image for its religious architecture during the mid-nineteenth century, the construction by a somewhat affluent congregation of an old-style church was not as unusual as it might otherwise seem. There are two other churches exhibiting Gothic elements in the parish. Both merely insert pointed arch windows into otherwise non-Gothic designs, and neither attempts the verticality and massing usually associated with the Gothic Revival style. Poor attempts at replication, neither church reaches the maturity of design found in St. Matthew's.

St. Matthew's is conspicuous for its characteristic Gothic massing, its pointed arch windows with subdivision resulting in Gothic tracery, its intact paneled interior and hammerbeam ceiling, and its illustration of the Episcopal preference for Gothic design.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Terrebonne Parish Survey, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.  
Site visit by National Register staff.  
Historic photo of church showing original appearance.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approximately .6 acre

UTM References

A 

1	5
---	---

7	2	0	9	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	2	7	6	1	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
 Zone Easting Northing

C 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

  
 Zone Easting Northing

D 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

See continuation sheet

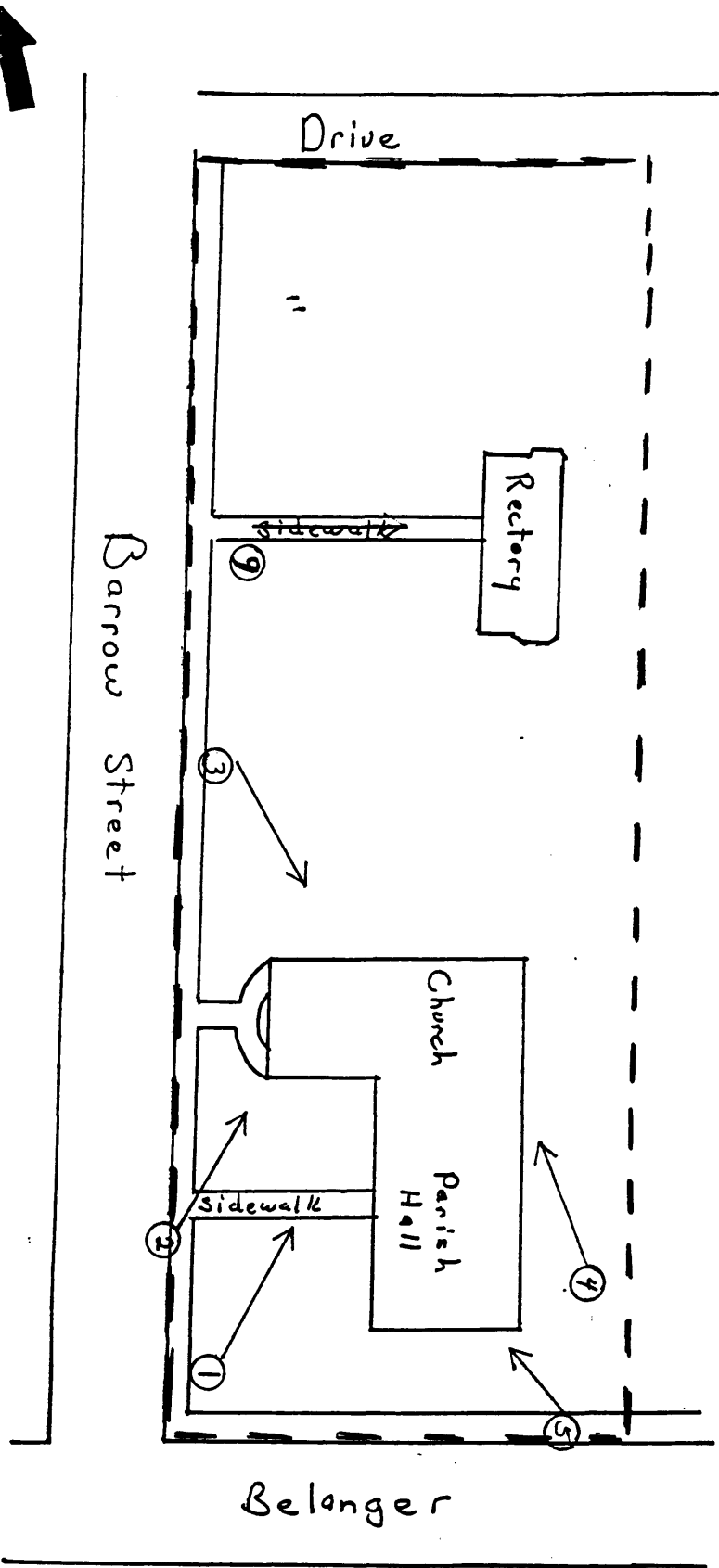
Boundary Justification

Boundaries follow the property line on three sides but cut close to the Church and Rectory on the east side in order to exclude several modern buildings which serve as an Episcopal School campus.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title National Register staff  
 organization Division of Historic Preservation date February 1989  
 street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160  
 city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804



N

--- BOUNDARIES

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

Houma, Terrebonne Parish, LA

Scale: 1" = 40'