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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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name OUR LADY OF PEACE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
other names/site number NOTRE DAME de la PAIX

## 2. Location

street & number 13281 HWY 644

NA	not for publication
NA	vicinity

  
city or town VACHERIE  
state Louisiana code LA county ST. JAMES code 093 zip code 70090

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  local

 Signature of certifying official/Title Nicole Hobson-Morris, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 4-1-13 Date  
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

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**4. 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:)

*Joe Edson W. Beall*  
 Signature of the Keeper

5.22.13  
 Date of Action

**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	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
2	1	<b>Total</b>

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

NA

**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  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOTHIC REVIVAL  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK  
\_\_\_\_\_  
walls: BRICK  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: METAL  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other: CONCRETE, WOOD  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church is located in Vacherie, Louisiana, which is in St. James Parish. Located nearly seven miles from the west bank of the Mississippi River, the church is about 50 miles from both Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Vacherie is a bedroom community that possesses several recently developed subdivisions, all of which are encircled by numerous fields of sugar cane. Construction of the church began in 1893 and finished in 1900 at a cost of nearly \$43,000. Built of red brick, the building follows a Gothic Revival design and its verticality dominates the surrounding area. The building is 80' wide and 120' long, and a 70' high bell tower dominates the front. On the exterior, the structure appears to be two stories tall but on the interior it is one high-ceiling story. The building has experienced little alteration, has never experienced serious neglect, and it definitely retains its National Register integrity.

**Narrative Description**

**EXTERIOR:**

The church building known as Our Lady of Peace is a large brick structure that dominates the skyline of the Vacherie community in St. James Parish, Louisiana. Built on an east-west axis, approximately 45 feet from State Highway 644, the building follows the traditional cruciform architectural plan. At the western end, the altar is set in an Apse. There is a north-south Transept and a west-east central aisle in the Nave with seating on both sides. There are also side aisles. Since its construction, parishioners have witnessed the rays of a rising sun through the windows in the eastern end of the building.

Attached to the main structure's west side stands a 70' brick bell tower. The base of the tower is square and is supported by double-stepped corner buttresses. The top of the tower base tapers to connect to an octagonal area housing the bells. A copper roof and a cross rest at the top. Under the eaves, there are a course of corbelled bricks that resembles large dentils, a row of quatrefoils set

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into the brick wall and two belt courses. Each of the octagonal sides of the tower is visually dominated by an opening containing rectangular louvered copper shutters. The base's tapered top begins just below these shuttered openings and features a full width drip plate and a brick belt course. Below, on the face of the square base, there is a rectangular window with 30 panes of colored glass, six panes high and five panes wide. Underneath this window, there is a niche set in the brick wall. The niche features a bas relief carving with a Gothic arch over the top and spandrels with attached columns on each side. Set in the niche rests a statute of Mary with the Christ child sitting on her lap.

At the western front of Our Lady of Peace, there is a steeply pitched gable roof that features a peak topped by a square extension with a cross at the top. Slightly below the roof's edge runs a course of bricks that resembles dentils as a corbelling course. There are two rows of Gothic windows. The first set (consisting of two windows) is smaller, two panes wide and three panes high. Each window is made of colored glass and topped by Gothic drip plates. Below the set, there are four Gothic styled windows that are five panes high and five panes wide. Each of the windows is topped with a Gothic styled drip plate; each also has concrete window sills. At the base of the building's front, there are two plaques and a gabled entryway that mimics the larger west end portion of the structure. It has dentils along its gable edge and presents a square-like extension at the gabled peak that is also topped by cross. A corbelled entrance surround in the shape of a Gothic arch is centered within the gable and a set of wooden double doors surmounted by a wooden panel with a cross provides access to the interior.

On the north side of the building, the masses of the Transept and the Nave dominate the visual presentation of the building. From this side you view a steeply pitched copper roof with dentils below the eaves and a corbelling course. There are four large Gothic styled windows on the Nave's brick wall but one is hidden by a large bush. Like the windows on the western front, these windows all use colored glass panes; three of the windows measure ten panes high and five panes across. The first of the windows, the one closest to the front of the church, is split in half by a portion of the brick wall. At the bottom, the window is rectangular with a five by five pattern. In the separated Gothic styled top, there are three rows of panes, each narrower than the one below. All four of the windows face north and have a Gothic styled drip plate at the top, a concrete sill, and are separated by buttresses on the nave wall.

On the Transept's western exterior wall, there are two windows with colored glass panes. The first of these, at the bottom level, is behind the same large bush mentioned above; it is rectangular, five colored glass panes across, six panes high and features a drip plate above. The upper window on this wall is in the shape of a pointed Gothic arch and also features a drip plate as well as a concrete sill. Like other parts on the structure, the steeply pitched copper roof is quite visible and there are dentils under the eaves as well as a corbelling course. In addition, there are buttresses at each of the corners and all of the windows rest on concrete sills.

The Transept's northern exterior features a brick wall terminating in a steep gable peak. This wall has three sets of windows facing north. There are brick dentils under a parapet gabled wall as well as a corbelling course and buttresses at each corner. At the top, the two window openings are covered by copper louvered inserts to ventilate the attic; both windows have Gothic drip plates and concrete sills. Below this, the middle row contains two arched windows, each five panes wide and



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seven panes high at the arch's point. Each also has Gothic drip plates and concrete sills above a row of brick dentils. The lower two rectangular windows feature brick lintels and concrete sills. They are separated by a metal double door.

On the eastern side of the transept and apse, there is a small brick room that is used for storage of vestments and other items used in church services. The extension is square with a hip gabled roof attached to the transept wall. At the top, under the eaves there is a continuation of the use of dentils as well as a corbelling course. In addition, there is a door that opens to the northern side with concrete steps, a buttress, a small Gothic styled stained glass window on the eastern side and a drip plate. Above the room is the transept upper brick wall that continues with dentils under the eaves as well as a corbelling course and a buttress at the end of the extension.

The eastern end of the building that incorporates the Apse is polygonal. It has a steeply pitched polygonal roof with dentils under the eaves and a corbelling course. There are four Gothic styled windows with accompanying drip plates and concrete sills.

On the south side where the walls of the Apse meet the southern Transept arm there is a matching small storage room attached to the Transept and Apse. This room is nearly identical to the room on the northern side except the door to this room is on the eastern side with concrete steps. Also the stained glass window faces to the south. In the 1980s, a small aluminum canopy was placed over the door to protect individuals from the weather.

With the exception of an attached air conditioning system, the south side of the church replicates the brickwork and design features that are present on the north side. There is a gable end parapet presented by the Transept arm as well as dentils under the eaves and corbelling on the walls; spacing for the windows remains the same for the transept windows. Each of the windows has a drip plate, concrete sill and the Transept corners feature a buttress. There are Gothic vents at the top of the Transept arm extension, Gothic windows at the mid-level and rectangular windows at the bottom level. On the Nave section of the south wall, there are four Gothic styled windows with colored glass panes, drips plates and concrete sills. However, the air conditioning system has requisitioned the window adjacent to the bell tower and it is now used to move air in and out of the building.

## **INTERIOR:**

The interior of Our Lady of Peace features a large open seating area for at least 625 members of the congregation. A main aisle divides the seating and along each of the walls there is a side aisle. Seating is also available in the south side of the transept but on the north side it is limited. Here several rows of pews have been removed and replaced with a four stepped platform for the choir. Upon entering the building, the highly decorative features of the church capture the attention of the visitor.

The first of these is the high vaulted ceiling. From a short overhang section at the entrance where a choir loft extends out for twenty feet, there is a vaulted ceiling that runs the length of the church's main aisle and along each side until it joins the vaulted ceiling in the transept. As indicated, the ceiling is rounded and supports pressed tin plates painted white with a quatrefoil design; along the sides, the ceiling is painted a dark blue. The vaulted apse ceiling is also painted dark blue and

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features a flowering vine pattern. At the center panel of the Apse ceiling is a life sized portrait of Mary with the infant Jesus. In every other panel, there are portraits of angels gazing at Mary. Although this is the most dramatic part of the ceiling, it is not original.

A second striking feature is the twenty-four bonded Faux Marble columns that stand in the Apse and along the side aisles in the nave. Each of the columns is composed of three plain clustered columns and rests on a five-foot wooden base. Their capitals are stylized versions of the Corinthian order that are topped by square impost blocks and spandrels; all of this is tied into the vaulted ribbing above the outside aisles through dropped pendants (bosses) on the walls. Vaulted ribbing is also present in the ceiling of the Apse.

The third striking interior feature of Our Lady of Peace church is the tile floor. During the construction of the building Rangia shells (fresh water clams) covered the floor. After preparing the surface, heavy Spanish tiles from Barcelona, Spain were purchased and laid; these tiles are over two centimeters thick. Early in the process, the workers discovered that they had made a mistake in measuring the floor. They needed more tiles to finish the floor. But there was a problem: the Spanish-American War of 1898! Unable to secure more matching tiles, the workers used three non-matching patterns that were pieced together, and, in some areas, the cement floor is visible. More conspicuously, the excellent presentation of the patterning of tiles can be viewed in the center aisle as well as on the side aisles. Our Lady of Peace administrative staff members indicate that the underside of the floor tiles bears the stamp of the Barcelona manufacturer. Fr. Magin Palmer (who helped supervise the construction) had purchased the tiles and the marble for the altar in 1897, while visiting relatives in Spain; during the period of the church's construction, he made three buying trips to the Iberian Peninsula.

There is a fourth significant element to the interior of the church. Upon entering, the parishioners pass under a low twelve foot ceiling for about twenty feet; the ceiling marks the choir loft. At present the choir sings in the northern arm of the Transept but the loft is used for additional seating on more formal celebrations. A small portion of the loft is taken up by organ pipes that are very visible from the main seating area below. There is a balustrade railing that extends across the front of the loft and it has wooden turned balusters. Access to the choir loft is provided by a separate door in the vestibule at the western end of the building. Here you will find a small staircase that is used by both choir members and individuals wishing to enter the bell tower. At the bottom of the staircase, near the entry, there is a small open space that, initially, was used for baptisms. Recently, it has been converted into a confessional for the administration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In 1955, Rev. Daniel Becnel had the muralist Milo Piuz create a mural on the wall. Piuz who was a protégé of the famed Dutch Benedictine monk, priest and artist, Dom Gregory de Wit, painted a mural depicting St. John the Baptist baptizing Jesus in the River Jordan. An angel stands above Jesus, holding his cloak. At the side of the mural, the artist added a Biblical quote from Matthew 3:17: "This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Given the similarity between the figures in the painting and the figure on the front door jamb's "Angel of Silence," Piuz probably carved the "Angel."

The mural for the Baptismal room was painted by Milo Piuz who worked with the famous muralist Dom Gregory de Wit. Who is Gregory de Wit? He was a Dutch Benedictine Monk, best known for his murals in the St. Meinrad Abbey in Indiana, Sacred Heart Church in Baton Rouge and the refectory and Church of St. Joseph Abbey (National Register) in St. Benedict, Louisiana, near

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Covington. Milo worked with de Wit to complete his Louisiana paintings before spending several weeks at Our Lady of Peace in 1955. Milo returned to home in Switzerland in 1970.

The last of the notable interior decorative features is the Apse. In this area, there is a semi-circle of 10 columns that partially encircle the marble altar. Here you find the ceiling mural of the Virgin and Child as well as the escort of several Angels. Even more significant are the stained glass windows that Rev. Daniel Becnel had installed in 1953. Reverend Becnel commissioned the Massachusetts firm of Charles J. Connick to create the five pictorial stained glass windows for the rear wall of the church as well as the other windows in the building.

Connick had studied medieval stained glass techniques in France before opening his studio in 1912. Considered the best known of the stained glass artists in America at this time, he revived techniques used in the thirteenth century. Connick and his staff believed strongly in their medieval approach and did not employ nineteenth or twentieth century methodologies. Over time the previous windows in Our Lady of Peace and their casing units had been damaged by storms and violent weather.

Designed by Orin E. Skinner of the Connick firm, the five windows featured the following: In the central window there is a depiction of the crucified Christ flanked on either side by two windows containing life sized images of the four evangelists—Mark and Matthew to the left, and Luke and John to the right. The central window includes symbols of Christ's passion and self-sacrifice. There are a crown of thorns, a pair of whips, a ladder, a reed with sponges at its tip, a wounded heart with a cross at its top, and a mother Pelican feeding her own blood to three young birds in their own nest. Below the cross is a chalice suggesting the connection with the Catholic Church's sacrament of Communion known as the Eucharist. This central window also contains the images of two angels, Mary, and an evangelist with book and writing quill. Finally, at the bottom level appears a scripture quotation from John 12:32: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself."

## **ALTERATIONS:**

There are four alterations to the church's exterior architectural character but none have impacted its Gothic Revival style. The first of these is the copper roof. Damage from a 1992 hurricane mandated preventive change that could weather the stress produced by high winds, driving rains and flying objects such as hail and tree branches. The second alteration is at the front entrance. In 1951, a local carpenter replaced the aging church doors with treated ash wood using three quarter framing bolts and neo-Gothic-like hinges. Calling upon his experience as a member of the Baton Rouge Diocese Arts Commission, the resident priest, Fr. Daniel Becnel, directed the remodeling and design. He also had a visiting European muralist/woodworker carve a wooden figure in the door handle with his finger to his lips: parishioners refer to this figure as "The Angel of Silence." A third notable alteration is the air conditioning system that was added to the building in the early 1960s and, for the most part, the duct work remains hidden from the front by the bell tower. Finally, the last of the exterior changes is the double metal door in the Transept's south side.

In addition to the painted ceiling mentioned above, which does not appear to be a historic alteration, a few other changes to the interior were ordered by the procedural mandates of Vatican II which directly affected the placement of the altar in the Apse portion of the building. As a result, workers

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removed the communion railing, replaced floor tiles and placed the solid marble altar facing the congregation. But these losses are relatively small when one considers the strong architectural statement made by Our Lady of Peace.

### **MITIGATION AND CONCLUSION:**

There is no doubt that the church's integrity remains intact. The impact of the exterior and interior changes /additions is relatively small when you consider the strong architectural statement made by Our Lady of Peace. All of the intensively styled Gothic Revival features on the building remain. In short, the church building is so well preserved in its original state that it can sustain the few changes and losses outlined above. Furthermore, its location, setting, workmanship, materials, and feeling remain intact. And as will be seen in part 8, it retains both direct associations with important events in the history of African Americans in St. James Parish and is the most closely associated surviving site related to other events.

As 1)one of a limited number of architectural landmarks within both Vacherie and St. James Parish, and 2) as the only example of the Gothic Revival style within Vacherie and as the finest example within the parish, Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church is an outstanding candidate for National Register listing.

### **CONTRIBUTING ELEMENT:**

One contributing element exists within Our Lady of Peace's almost one acre parcel. Built immediately after the church in 1901, the rectory has always been associated with the church building. It is a two story brick structure with a hip gabled roof, full width front and back porches (a small area on the upper rear porch has been enclosed for storage purposes), a central hall with 3 rooms on each side of the hall for a total of 6 rooms per floor, and a Gothic Revival second storey transom and sidelights. The second floor maintains the original French doors on the front porch while recent remodeling activity has bricked-in the matching first floor doors and replaced them with aluminum framed windows. In the 1960s, welders reworked the railing from the church's Apse into "porch posts" on the front of the building and carpenters used clapboarding to cover-up the briquette-entre-poteau on the second floor. Although the building has received these alterations the building's important stylistic features are clearly evident and justify the rectory's classification as a contributing element to Our Lady of Peace's nominating form.

### **NON-CONTRIBUTING ELEMENT:**

There is one non-contributing element that is on the site. It is an outdoor restroom facility that is used for church fairs and festivals. Located at the southeastern corner of the parcel, it is a concrete block and wood frame structure with separate entry's for male and female guests and is covered with aluminum siding. Built in 1986, it has a flat shed-like pitch to the roof that is covered with tin and the remnants of a plastic tarp from our last hurricane season.

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**NOTE:** The USGS Topo Map incorrectly lists Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church as Our Lady of Mercy.

**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.
- Not applicable

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage/Black

**Period of Significance**

1893—1900 Architecture

1893—1908; 1942—1956 Ethnic  
Heritage/Black

**Significant Dates**

1893-1900

1893-1908; 1942-1956

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Benjamin Morgan Harrod (New Orleans, La.)

Paul Andry (New Orleans, La.)

Built by the Church Community

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.
- Not applicable

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The years of 1893-1908 and 1942-1956 are the periods of significance for the Criterion A case. During the first period, the resident priest used construction of the church by its entire congregation – both black and white members working together —to built racial unity within the Vacherie community. During the second period a later priest actively promoted an integrated church community free from the ever tightening restraints of segregation.

The period of significance for the Criterion C case is 1893-1900, the period in which the church was constructed.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

Although the candidate is a religious building, it is being nominated under Criterion C because of its fine late nineteenth century Gothic Revival design that makes it a landmark within Vacherie and St. James Parish. It also meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration A (religious properties) because it is significant within Ethnic History, a historic context that is not religious in nature.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church has local and parish wide significance under Criterion C: Design in the area of Architecture because it is the only architectural landmark in the St. James Parish community of Vacherie as well as being an architectural landmark parish wide. Additionally, it is the most notable example of the Gothic Revival architectural style in St. James Parish. The church's Gothic verticality is very expressive of its domination of the built environment in the parish. The period of significance for this case is 1893—1900, the years when construction of the church took place.

Our Lady of Peace is also locally significant under Criterion A: Event in the area of Ethnic Heritage/(by both black and white members working together) and later during the Jim Crow Era. The periods of significance for this case are 1893—1908 and 1942—1956. As will be evident from the following narratives, the church was the site of some of these efforts (direct association) and remains the focus of others that were instigated by the church in the broader community. Since some of the locations of the latter no longer survive or can no longer be identified, the church is the surviving resource most directly associated with these events.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church is significant because of its landmark status within the architectural patrimony of both the Vacherie community and the parish of St. James. The building's extensive ornament makes it the strongest and best example of the Gothic Revival style in the parish.

**INTRODUCTION:**

Having been established in 1807, St. James is one of Louisiana's older parishes. The Vacherie community, however, began as a German settlement in the first half of the eighteenth century.

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Settlers came to the area by crossing a lake that would later be called Lake Des Allemands (The Germans); from here, they moved on to settle the Gulf coastal lowlands in the parish. The Germans found the land to be especially attractive because of fertility and proximity to the Gulf of Mexico's natural resources. Here they could maintain their ethnic identity, their cultural uniqueness and their family cohesiveness. (The 2000 US Census revealed that 90 percent of the people who live in Vacherie were born there.) Within a short time, early nineteenth century civil records referred to the community as "Brule dit Des Allemands," or the German Settlement, or "Derriere de La Vacherie." Other immigrants who came to the area included those of Acadian descent and African slaves who were purchased in New Orleans to work in the nearby sugar cane fields.

Almost all of Vacherie's early settlers professed a religious allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. Those individuals who wanted to attend religious service or to receive the several Sacraments offered by the church faced formidable obstacles. If their family owned a mule and a cart they could cross over the nearby fields for a fifteen mile ride along dirt paths to the Church of St. James, upriver from their community; or, if the family owned a boat, they could cross a portion of Lake Des Allemands and then follow Bayou L'Eglise to the Church of St. John the Baptist in Edgard. Very few, if any, sought to have their community incorporated into the boundaries of either religious parish.

Recognizing the problem, the Archdiocese of New Orleans supported local community members who wanted to construct their own mission chapel in Vacherie. On May 2, 1854, Joseph Stein, a local farmer, agreed to sell a tract of land to the Archdiocese for a cemetery and a chapel. Early records indicate that Stein and his neighbors, as early as 1830, had been using a portion of the site for a cemetery.

The towering Gothic rural church is the third church building in the Vacherie community. As early as 1856, there was a small wooden structure that served as a chapel. Later in 1869, a much larger wooden building was erected and it had a capacity of nearly 650 church members. After thirty years and numerous hurricanes, the building faced serious renovations. Instead of maintaining a structure that provided little protection from the high winds of hurricanes, Fr. Magin Palmer decided to erect a more substantial brick building. Using some of his own funds, he led the construction of the present building that remains nearly unchanged from its 1900 completion date.

### **CRITERION C: DESIGN, AREA OF ARCHITECTURE.**

The planning and construction of Our Lady of Peace began in 1893 after the assignment (1889—1908) of Fr. Magin Palmer to the Vacherie Catholic Church as its resident pastor. From the Island of Mallorca which is east of Spain in the Mediterranean Sea, Fr. Palmer had served for several years as an assistant Pastor at the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans. Evidently, he used his prior service in New Orleans to contact the architectural firm of Benjamin Morgan Harrod and Paul Andry who were considered one of the City's outstanding architectural partnerships. Harrod attended Harvard and after graduation he worked on the Panama Canal, the Roosevelt Dam in Arizona and developed the designs for several New Orleans firehouses, the Southern Athletic Club, the Metairie Cemetery and the Confederate Monument in the Greenwood Cemetery. Harrod's partner, Paul Andry, received his education at the University of Louisiana (later Tulane). He designed the Morris Public Baths and the facility for the St. John Berchman's Asylum for Negro Children; he also designed several of the buildings on the Sophia Newcomb College for Women campus. At the age of nineteen, his career



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received a significant boost when he won the competition to design Gibson Hall on the Tulane campus.

Records from the Harrod and Andry firm are housed at the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library on the Tulane campus. These records suggest that the two architects contemplated using the centuries old plan of the basilica with transverse arms or Transepts, resulting in a cruciform building for Our Lady of Peace. Shaped like a cross, it measures 120 feet in length and 80 feet in width across the transept. In the words of the noted architectural historian, Robert Heck, the Vacherie structure reflects the high Gothic idiom of Eclecticism. Notations in Benjamin Harrod's notebook discovered by the church's historian Rev. Henry Gautreau indicate that Harrod owed an intellectual debt to John Ruskin who experimented with medieval stylistic expression that found favor in the United States during the middle years of the nineteenth century.

According to the handbook of styles in Louisiana, authored by Jonathan and Donna Fricker and Patricia Duncan, the Gothic Revival style conjures up romantic images of Medieval England. After viewing the style in the Louisiana Statehouse, Mark Twain blamed Sir Walter Scott whom he claimed had "ruined the people" with his "medieval romances." Like other architectural styles, the Gothic Revival embraced a wide range of buildings from churches, to residences, to schools and to prisons. Initially the early builders who used the Gothic format focused on garden pavilions before endorsing the style for home construction.

In the 1830s, the English Gothic Revival came to be looked upon as a religion and not an architectural style. It provided an enduring notion that Gothic is a Christian style per se, and as such, is singularly appropriate for churches. This idea was part of an overall reform effort in the Anglican Church known as the ecclesiological movement. Ecclesiologists looked to the Middle Ages as a sublime period in British history. It was the Age of Faith when devout and good people built "good buildings." As one advocate explained "A Gothic Church in its perfection, is an exposition of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, clothed upon with material form." Others, in the field of architecture, considered the Gothic style the only Christian style.

Architecturally, the overall emphasis of the Gothic Revival church is upon verticality, a hallmark of the style. Like its medieval prototype, the main worship space (the nave and the altar area) are clearly differentiated on the exterior. The pointed arch that includes a window is the feature most closely associated with the style. Structural support rests with piers called buttresses. Oftentimes towers can provide an entry point which culminates in a simple pointed projection called a pinnacle. Like the Old State Capital building in Baton Rouge, the towers' top edges can be furnished with indentations known as crenellations or battlements.

In almost every instance, the design format for Our Lady of Peace matches up to the architectural characteristics found in Gothic Revival style structures as described above. On the exterior the nave and the chancel sections of the building that extend for 120' are clearly differentiated and separated by an 80' Transept that is on a north-south axis. Inside, these sections are even more clearly presented because in the Transept section the Faux Marble clustered columns stand parallel to each other on the side aisles while in the chancel section they form a semi-circle. Moreover, in the Transept portion of the church, the original tiles are still very prominent but in the Apse section the area is set off by the use of light gray marble squares that have replaced the original tiles. In

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addition, the apse area features polygonal walls filled with stained glass windows that are set in pointed arched frames and drip plates that are features most commonly associated with the influence of the Revival Gothic style. Moreover, supporting brick buttresses are found on the four corners of the building as well as at strategic points along the exterior walls. And finally, near the entry to the church, there is a 70' bell tower.

When all of these design features are considered, Our Lady of Peace presents itself as the only pure Gothic Revival structure in St. James Parish. The National Register lists twenty-one sites in the Parish. Ten of these sites, such as the house on Laura Plantation and the house on St. Joseph Plantation, represent the French Creole architectural style; five, such as Oak Alley, represent the Greek Revival style; others represent styles such as Romanesque, Renaissance, Classical Revival and Queen Anne. Of the listings not one of the buildings in St. James Parish stands alone as an unblended representative of Gothic Revival architectural style. The Lutcher United Methodist Church features a blending of both the Queen Anne and Gothic Revival style features. Beyond the building's windows there is a noteworthy absence of the exceptional verticality found in Our Lady of Peace, or buttresses, or the pronounced separation of worship space from the altar. Considering the fact that the Lutcher church was built in 1901, a year after the completion of Our Lady of Peace, the possibility exists that the Vacherie building's design influenced the construction pattern of the United Methodist Church. As the crow flies, the two communities are separated by less than fifteen miles.

The author of this application serves as a contract surveyor for the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office and has served in this capacity for nearly 37 years. Over these years, he has completed nearly 16,000 site survey forms in six South Central Louisiana Parishes including Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. James and Terrebonne. The survey for St. James revealed very few structures in the Vacherie area over 50 years old, as most of the construction reflects the recent demand from the nearby petro-chemical job market. For the immediate Vacherie area, less than 1.5 miles from the church stands the Desire Plantation House which was added to the National Register in 1986. A Creole structure built around 1835, the building served as a small factory for Perique based tobacco production at the end of the nineteenth century. Approximately seven to ten miles away, there are several plantation homes but they reflect French Creole or Greek Revival styling. However, for Vacherie, the Standing Structures Survey revealed a community dominated by undistinguished buildings. Other than three or four small grocery stores and a fast service filling station, there are no commercial buildings in the community. The population base served by Our Lady of Peace numbers nearly 3,500 residents most of whom live in structures that could be classed as shotguns, bungalows, modern day ranch houses and neo-Creole styled cottages.

In conclusion, Our Lady of Peace will make an excellent addition to the 21 St. James Parish sites already on the National Register especially because of its fine Gothic Revival design and its status as a community and parish landmark.

#### **CRITERION A: EVENT, AREA OF ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK**

Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A: Event because of the special place it has held in the ethnic history of Louisiana's St. James Parish over the years. First, under the leadership of Fr. Magin Palmer and at a time when

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blacks usually worked for whites, both races worked side by side to construct the church. Second, Fr. Palmer insisted that both races have equal access to the completed building's facilities until health forced the priest's resignation in 1908. Third, Palmer took a very active role in providing education for his church's African American members during the same period. Finally, in the 1940s and 1950s the church was again the instigator, and often the site of, efforts to provide education for black children and equal access to religious activities.

### 1893-1908

Significantly, from the beginning of its history, Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church has extended membership privileges to all Catholics in the Vacherie area including members of the African American community. The historian of the church, Rev. Henry Gautreau, indicates that as early as 1854, membership privileges were extended to local free people of color and slaves. From the present day lay-out of the nearby cemetery, for example, it would seem that white parishioners were buried on the left side of the main aisle and blacks on the right side. Recently when the cemetery's right side lacked space, the black parishioners were given space on the left side; a back portion of the cemetery was reserved for Protestants of both ethnic groups.

The construction of Our Lady of Peace represents a most interesting historical event in south central Louisiana: Our Lady of Peace church members built their church, and Rev. Magin Palmer used the actual construction of the church to establish a common bond within the Vacherie community. Without regard for racial background, he invited both black and white members of his congregation to join in with the construction project. Black artisans worked on all levels of this activity. They prepared the foundation, laid bricks, helped with the framing of the structure and nailed the slate to the roof. All throughout this activity, they worked alongside their white neighbors. For example, together they cut a trough through a nearby large Indian mound; both black and white workers filled baskets and wagons with Rangia shells (fresh water clams) that they later scattered over the building's foundation site. On weekends and holidays when the volunteers were not working in the nearby sugarcane fields or doing other chores, they dug footings for the building's foundation. Next, they hauled bricks and heavy timbers from the local railroad depot. It was the whole community working together, according to F. Henry Gautreau. He interviewed parishioners who told about their work related experiences on the building and the experiences of their parents and grandparents. They recalled the activities of young boys and girls, black and white, who carried two and three bricks at a time in their hands or in their aprons to the bricklayers working on the church walls.

Fr. Palmer's willingness to encourage both black and white members of the parish to take part in the construction of the structure enabled him to challenge the racial norm that existed throughout south Louisiana. Black artisans had worked at almost every level of the construction project, and they had worked alongside of their white neighbors. Under Palmer's leadership, the Vacherie church also ignored the seating practices that were followed in other Catholic and Protestant churches in Louisiana. Unlike these other congregations, Palmer placed African Americans on the same level as their white neighbors. Although separated by the middle aisle, black and white congregants both occupied seats in the front of their church: whites were seated on the left side of the middle aisle and blacks on the right side. Moreover, Fr. Palmer refused to draw any racial lines when it came to the administration of the Sacraments of the church. There were no racial waiting lines for the Holy Eucharist in Our Lady of Peace. When one considers his actions against the backdrop of events

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throughout the South and Louisiana in the 1890s, the Vacherie church stepped to the forefront in the effort to promote racial justice and harmony.

Before he became pastor of the Vacherie church, Fr. Palmer had served as an Assistant Pastor at the New Orleans Cathedral. It was a time when the Archdiocese expressed greater concern about the role of African Americans in church activities. In 1888, the Archdiocesan Chancellor, L. A. Chasse, indicated that the lack of educational opportunities was a major problem for the south Louisiana black community. Freedmen were flocking to the public and protestant schools and churches in the larger urban communities. They wanted to be able to read and to write, but within the Catholic parishes they found a lack of opportunities to attend the schools maintained by the local church parishes. Bishop Chasse also acknowledged that blacks faced impediments to seating for church services. Forced to sit in the choir lofts or at the back of the church, these arrangements reflected the broader segregationist patterns found in secular society. Black Catholics found the presence of segregation uncomfortable and contradictory to the broader messages proclaimed within the church community. Recognizing the need for a more affirmative leadership, Archbishop Francis Janssen told local parishes to expand the opportunities for African Americans to participate more fully in the church's rituals without the encumbrances of segregation. He wanted them to be a part of the church's social life. Archbishop Janssen firmly believed that blacks had a role to play in the broader south Louisiana Catholic Church. He feared that unless the church became more active in promoting black participation they would pack their religious bags and take their families to seek religious involvement elsewhere.

The concern of the Catholic hierarchy was not shared by the great majority of Louisianans or by southerners across the South. In the last half of the nineteenth century African Americans increasingly faced restriction on their civil rights so recently obtained during the Civil War and Reconstruction Era. In particular, at the same time that Chancellor Chase bemoaned the flight of African Americans from the Catholic Church, southern legislators were establishing what historians call the Jim Crow Era. Segregation became the order of the day in Louisiana and in the other states of the former Confederacy. Southern states such as Louisiana forced African Americans to accept a second class citizenship. To name but a few of these restrictions, they were forced to ride in separate railroad coaches, use separate railroad waiting rooms, bathrooms, drinking fountains, schools, hospital facilities, and entrances to public buildings. In fact, by 1910, white supremacists, in Louisiana as well as the rest of the South, had established in the words of the famed African American historian, John Hope Franklin, "the pattern for the constitutional disfranchisement of the Negro. The law, the courts, the schools and almost every institution favored the white man. This was white supremacy."

The appointment of Fr. Palmer as pastor of Our Lady of Peace, however, greatly invigorated the role of the Vacherie Catholic Church in the secular and religious life of local African Americans. His color blindness on behalf of his congregation indicates his personal contempt for the restrictive action of the state's racist oriented legislature. He sought to live the Gospel that he preached. In the first place, he expanded the role of Our Lady of Peace in providing educational opportunities to the local black community. In 1890, the St. James Parish School Board announced that it planned to operate two schools in the area: one for blacks and one for whites. A problem developed for the Board when they failed to receive any applications from teachers who were qualified to teach at either school. Hearing of the situation, Fr. Palmer used the predicament to construct a wooden building (no longer

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extant) on the property of the church. Funded by the local school board, he used the building as a parochial school for all of the parish children regardless of their color. A former teacher described the building for Fr. Gautreau as a "long barn like building separated into teaching spaces by blackboards. There was no ceiling, only the rafters and the roof. The children used homemade benches that had no back rest." Interestingly, the parents of the children paid a 25-cent monthly "tuition" if they could afford it.

Fr. Palmer used the building for many of the parish extra-church activities, but it primarily served as a school for the young people of the community. They attended classes from 9 to 3, and received their instruction in the French language. In 1892, the national Catholic Directory reported that at least 48 black students were attending the school along with 138 white students. Palmer served as the school's "principal" until 1902 when he sought the help of nuns from the Order of the Immaculate Conception. He asked them to provide teachers for classroom instruction at Our Lady of Peace. Also, in the same year, because of a lack of funds caused by the construction of the new church building, Fr. Palmer sought financial assistance from the New Orleans Archdiocese. Specifically, he stated that the parish needed financial help to further his efforts to promote the "evangelization of [N]egro children." All of the money that he had raised locally, he wrote, "had been turned over to the nuns for their classroom activities."

An acute attack of rheumatism forced Fr. Palmer to retire from the active ministry in 1908; it did not take long for the racial goodwill that he had promoted at Our Lady of Peace to unravel under his successors. Rev. Joseph Gardes who came to Vacherie in 1913 (-21) evidently came under the influence of some racially motivated church members who disliked the seating arrangements. Without warning and without explanation, he announced that under his administration blacks would be segregated during the services and they would be forced to sit in the pews at the back of the church. He provided no explanation for his decision but under his tenure the right front section of the church was off-limits to African Americans during services. One of the black members of the congregation told Fr. Gautreau that she had refused to accept the new seating arrangement; Fr. Gardes retaliated during a Sunday mass service. At the communion rail he ignored the individual and moved on to the next person to dispense Holy Communion. All of this had an effect on the white membership of Our Lady of Peace. In their eyes, Fr. Gardes' racism ushered into the church the racially restrictive policies of the south Louisiana secular community. For the time being, the average church member from Vacherie would find "legitimacy" in their racism when they mimicked the behavior of their church leadership.

### **1942-1956**

Fr. Palmer's racially inclusive policies continued to unravel until early in the 1940s. In 1942, Fr. Augustin Delnom decided to confront Our Lady of Peace parishioners who resisted an attempt to integrate local Catechism classes. Apparently the white members expressed open hostility to any and all efforts to merge the classes into a single integrated class. Up to this point, black children were forced to receive their instruction outside of the church building under a nearby tree. Fr. Delnom refused to accept the continuation of this practice. He ordered all future class meetings to be held inside the church. Then, he used Fr. Palmer's model: he placed the white children in the pews on the left side of the main church aisle and the black children on the right side. According to Fr. Gautreau, Fr. Delnom resisted all attempts by white parishioners to overturn this arrangement.

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Before the 1950s, the Vacherie Catholic Church had been identified with a localized promotion of racial justice. Usually on their own, a number of the priests had used their leadership role to promote racial harmony within their church community. In 1946, the role of Our Lady of Peace changed markedly with the assignment of the first American born priest to serve as pastor. Born up-river, in the small rural community of St. Gabriel, Fr. Daniel J. Becnel came to Vacherie a short time after his ordination. Before Becnel's arrival all of the pastors at Our Lady of Peace had been born in France or Spain; they had delivered their sermons in French. Fr. Becnel became the agent of change. He introduced the use of the English language to the pulpit. Furthermore, he secured the services of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. Originally, they had intended to work in China, but after the 1946 regime change, they decided to come to work in Vacherie in what they called a "Negro Apostolate."

The nuns' arrival marked the beginning of an expansion of Our Lady of Peace's role in the education of African Americans. In 1953, Archbishop Francis J. Rummel of New Orleans had issued a pastoral letter directing an end to the various forms of segregation that had "crept into some of the religious practices." While the response varied from church to church, Fr. Becnel used the Archbishop's directive as a call for action. With the Sisters of Mercy, he brought Our Lady of Peace to the forefront in the promotion of religious education for African Americans. The nuns were used to reach out to black Catholics in the river parishes of south Louisiana. They taught up to 50 religious education classes a week. Even though they lacked adequate facilities, the nuns' conducted classes on nights, weekends, and whenever they were able to find classroom space in church owned facilities. Oftentimes, they received local permission to use public school classrooms for their instructional activities.

Moreover, during this time, Fr. Becnel returned African Americans to the seating arrangement that had existed under Fr. Palmer. Black church members had informed Becnel that they could not effectively participate in the religious services from the pews at the back of the church. If they could be closer to the main altar, they argued, the level of their involvement would naturally increase. Becnel's support of their request and the personalized efforts of the Sisters of Mercy helped to spark the religious vocation of Terry Steib, an African American, who later was elevated to the position of Bishop of Memphis, Tennessee. From an early age, his mother claimed that he had wanted to join the priesthood. He received encouragement from Fr. Becnel and the nuns which helped him during his studies in spite of local white resistance. For example, Fr. Gautreau revealed that Steib underwent a period of ostracism by white altar boys who resented his presence in their group. Also, he often lacked funds to meet his seminary expenses and he encountered isolation from other seminarians when he visited home during the summer. If this was not enough, Bishop Steib's parents faced intimidation and threats from whites in other river parish communities.

Of course, much of what was going in Vacherie during the 1950s reflected the massive resistance that white Louisianans mounted during the Era of the Civil Rights Revolution. With the arrival of the radio, television, print journalism and the personal mobility fostered by the automobile, the St. James community could not remain on the fringes of everyday American society. For Vacherie and the other river parish communities, it was hard to escape the struggles going on in the state and across the nation. Organized opposition found expression in White Citizens Councils who held public meetings throughout the state, and who organized protest demonstrations in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Racist literature was often handed out at these gatherings. The impact of all of this was felt

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in the state Legislature where legislators passed 225 pieces of legislation restricting inter racial contact.

To say the least, Fr. Becnel encountered the racist hostility of the local community for his stand on racial justice. In 1953, he endured a six-month boycott by white parishioners who refused to attend church services at Our Lady of Peace. On other occasions he had face to face confrontations with individual white church members. They wanted to roll-back the changes that Becnel had instituted and to halt the work of the Holy Cross Sisters. He refused to back down. On one occasion, tempers flared to such a point, Fr. Becnel had to flee the church's rectory for protection. He took refuge in the home of a black parishioner. Fr. Becnel had been warned that a group of community malcontents called "fire breathers" were planning to mob him at the church. The nuns even encountered hostilities toward their apostolic work. During one night, shots were fired into their residence, later, rumors spread that the "fire breathers" were planning to burn down their convent. For the nuns, these hostilities were an everyday affair. They told friends that someone had tried to run their car off the road one night after their religious education classes.

Even though he failed to appease his congregation, Fr. Becnel maintained his commitment to racial justice and harmony. He stood on firm ground in that Our Lady of Peace had a lengthy identification with these policies. Ultimately, in 1956, he would be transferred to a Baton Rouge parish.

The early stand for the principles of racial justice and harmony by Fr. Palmer had established a base line for Our Lady of Peace Church and the Vacherie community. Without a doubt Fr. Palmer's success stemmed in part from his decision to build a new church and to build it with the labor of all of his parishioners without regard to the color of their skin. The verticality of the Gothic style symbolized the upward path of the racial policies promoted by the several priests who served Our Lady of Peace parish. In the 1960s and afterwards, the Catholic churches in south central Louisiana would mimic the efforts of Fr. Palmer, Fr. Delnom and Fr. Becnel. By this time, nonetheless, the Vacherie church already had nearly seventy-five years of Civil Rights experience. In the area of Ethnic Heritage/Black, Our Lady of Peace provided the common ground where several parish priests waged a crusade for racial justice in spite of the racism that surrounded the community. Frs. Palmer, Delnom and Becnel all used the church pews to promote the inclusion of the black members into the religious community. In other areas of south central Louisiana local priests took a different journey with their African American membership. To the southwest of Vacherie, in Thibodaux, Louisiana, local Catholics promoted the construction of separate Catholic churches for their black members. In Thibodaux, the church built St. Luke's and in Houma, Louisiana, forty miles to the southwest, they built St. Lucy's. At a time when racism or Jim Crowism dominated the white mindset, Our Lady of Peace followed a different path and provided an example of the role that churches could play in taking that first step toward racial justice for all of its church membership.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See Above.



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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bennett, James B., RELIGION AND THE RISE OF JIM CROW IN NEW ORLEANS (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

Brasseaux, Carl A., ACADIAN TO CAJUN: TRANSFORMATION OF A PEOPLE (Oxford, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 1998).

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Franklin, John Hope, FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM: A HISTORY OF NEGRO AMERICANS (New York, N. Y.: Knoph, 1967).

Fricker, Jonathan, Fricker, Donna, Duncan, Patricia L., LOUISIANA ARCHITECTURE: A HANDBOOK ON STYLES (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana Studies-USL, 1998).

Gautreau, Jr., Henry W. (Rev.), A HISTORY OF NOTRE DAME DE LA PAIX—OUR LADY OF PEACE CHURCH PARISH (Vacherie, La.: Self Publication, 2008).

Hair, William Ivy, BOURBONISM AND AGRARIANISM IN LOUISIANA, 1877-1900 (Baton Rouge, La.: LSU Press, 1995).

Heck, Robert W. and Otis B. Wheeler, RELIGIOUS ARCHITECTURE IN LOUISIANA (Baton Rouge, La.: LSU Press, 1995).

Interview with Ms Pamela Folse. Ms Folse is the Pastoral Associate at Our Lady of Peace and a former Managing Editor of the Vacherie newspaper THE ENTERPRISE. Her family has a length history in the Vacherie area both as a member of Our Lady of Peace and the local community.

Wiebe, Robert, THE SEARCH FOR ORDER, 1877-1920 (New York, N.Y.: Hill and Wang, 1968).

**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 #       xxx
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #       xxx
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #       xxx
- Not Applicable

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** Less than an acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

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

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**  
Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 29.944323 | Longitude: - 90.682144 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:             |

**Or**  
**UTM References**  
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 723700 | Northing: 3314940 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The following describes the property boundaries of the property known as Our Lady of Peace situated in the Parish of St. James on the western side of the Mississippi River in the unincorporated community known as Vacherie/Lower Vacherie to wit: Southwest Quarter of Southwest Quarter (SW ¼ of SW ¼) and the eastern half of Southwest Quarter of Southwest Quarter (E1/2SW1/4SW1/4) of

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section eighteen (18), Township Thirteen South (13s), East of Range Seventeen (17e) containing .92 acre of land used solely for said church building.

Be it known that on the USGS Quad Map Lower Vacherie that the church building known as Our Lady of Peace is mistakenly referred to as Lady of Mercy Church. At no time, in the lengthy history of Our Lady of Peace, has the parish or the building been called Lady of Mercy Church.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundaries were chosen to encompass the historic resource and as much of its historic rural setting as possible while excluding additional acreage that includes a modern building and modern cemetery.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title J. Paul Leslie, PhD Professor of American History Nicholls State University  
organization South Central Planning and Development date January 2013  
Commission street & number 1302 Hwy telephone 985-447-5216  
city or town Thibodaux, state La. zip code 70301  
e-mail jpl@charter.net paul.leslie@nicholls.edu

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: OUR LADY OF PEACE CATHOLIC CHURCH

City or Vicinity: VACHERIE, LOUISIANA

County: ST. JAMES PARISH

State: LA.

Photographer: PAUL LESLIE

Date Photographed: APRIL 21, 2012

LASHPO Digital Archives

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 19: Front view of Our Lady of Peace, camera facing east
- 2 of 19: Front (West) and side (South) diagonal view – camera facing northeast  
NOTE: Building showing in bottom left corner is outside the nomination boundaries
- 3 of 19: Closeup of upper section of bell tower – camera facing northeast
- 4 of 19: North side view of Rectory – camera facing south
- 5 of 19: South side of church and rear of bell tower – camera facing west, northwest
- 6 of 19: South side view – camera facing east
- 7 of 19: West and north sides of restroom (non-contributing element) – camera facing southeast  
NOTE: building visible on right side, center, is not within the boundaries
- 8 of 19: Rear apse and south storage room – camera facing west
- 9 of 19: Rear apse and north storage room – camera facing southwest  
NOTE: Roof visible on left side near center is atop the Rectory
- 10 of 19: North side brick work detail —camera facing east
- 11 of 19: North side of church—camera facing southeast
- 12 of 19: Interior -- Back of church and choir loft
- 13 of 19: Interior -- 1897 Barcelona Floor tiles in main aisle

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- 14 of 19: Interior -- sacristy, Altar view
- 15 of 19 Interior -- stained glass window
- 16 of 19: Interior -- vaulted ceiling over altar/sacristy area
- 17 of 19 Interior -- vaulted ceiling and clustered columns forming side aisle
- 18 of 19 Interior -- closeup of clustered column with stylized Corinthian capital
- 19 of 19 Interior -- mural

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

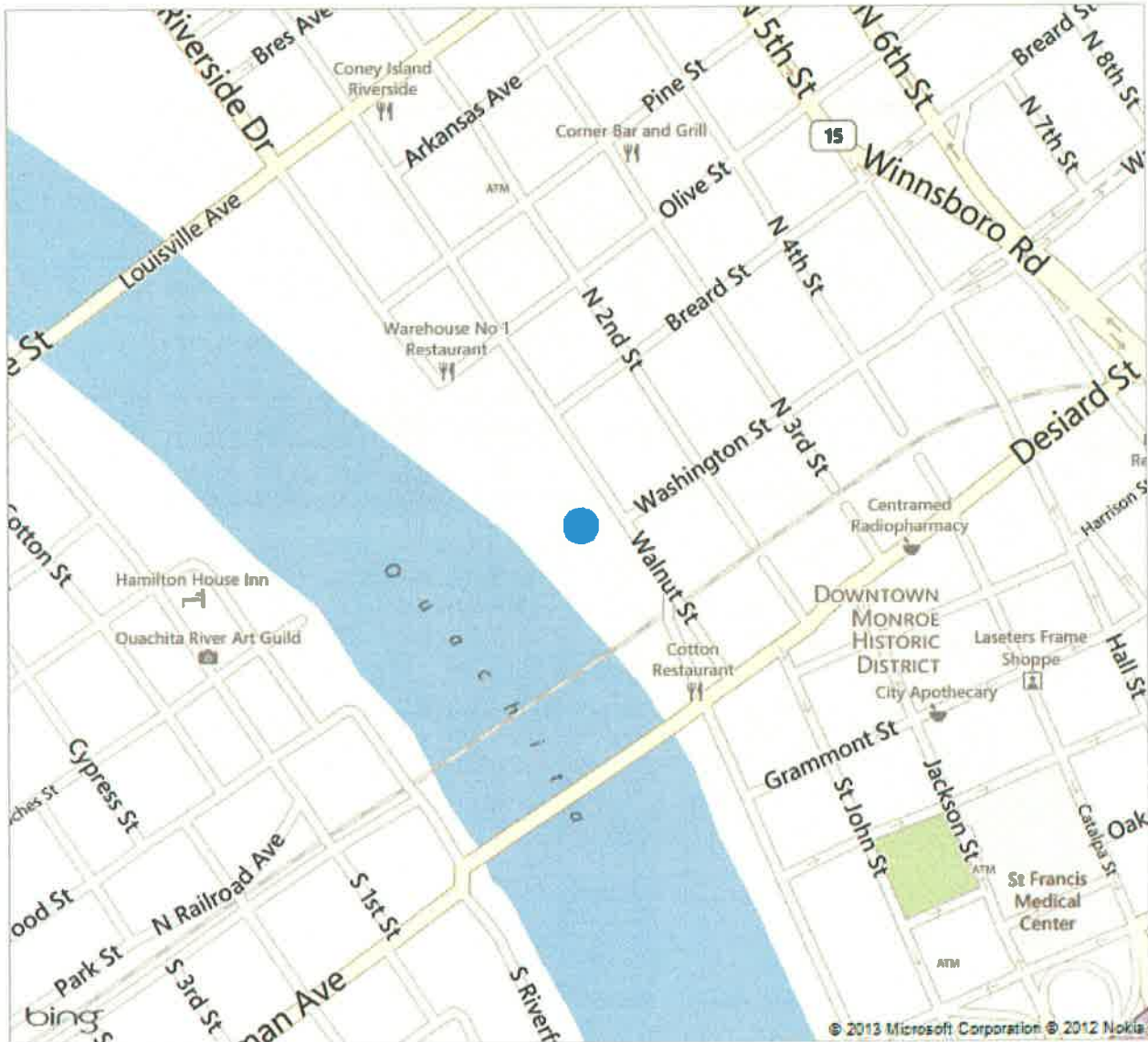
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

bing Maps

215 Walnut St, Monroe, LA 71201

Ouachita Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc/Ouachita Candy Company, Inc.  
Monroe, Ouachita Parish, LA

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32.503143 -92.119637 Scale: 1 inch = 500 feet

OUR LADY of Peace Catholic Church  
 VACHERIE, LOUISIANA - ST JAMES PARISH

A - Our lady of Peace Catholic Church

B - Rectory

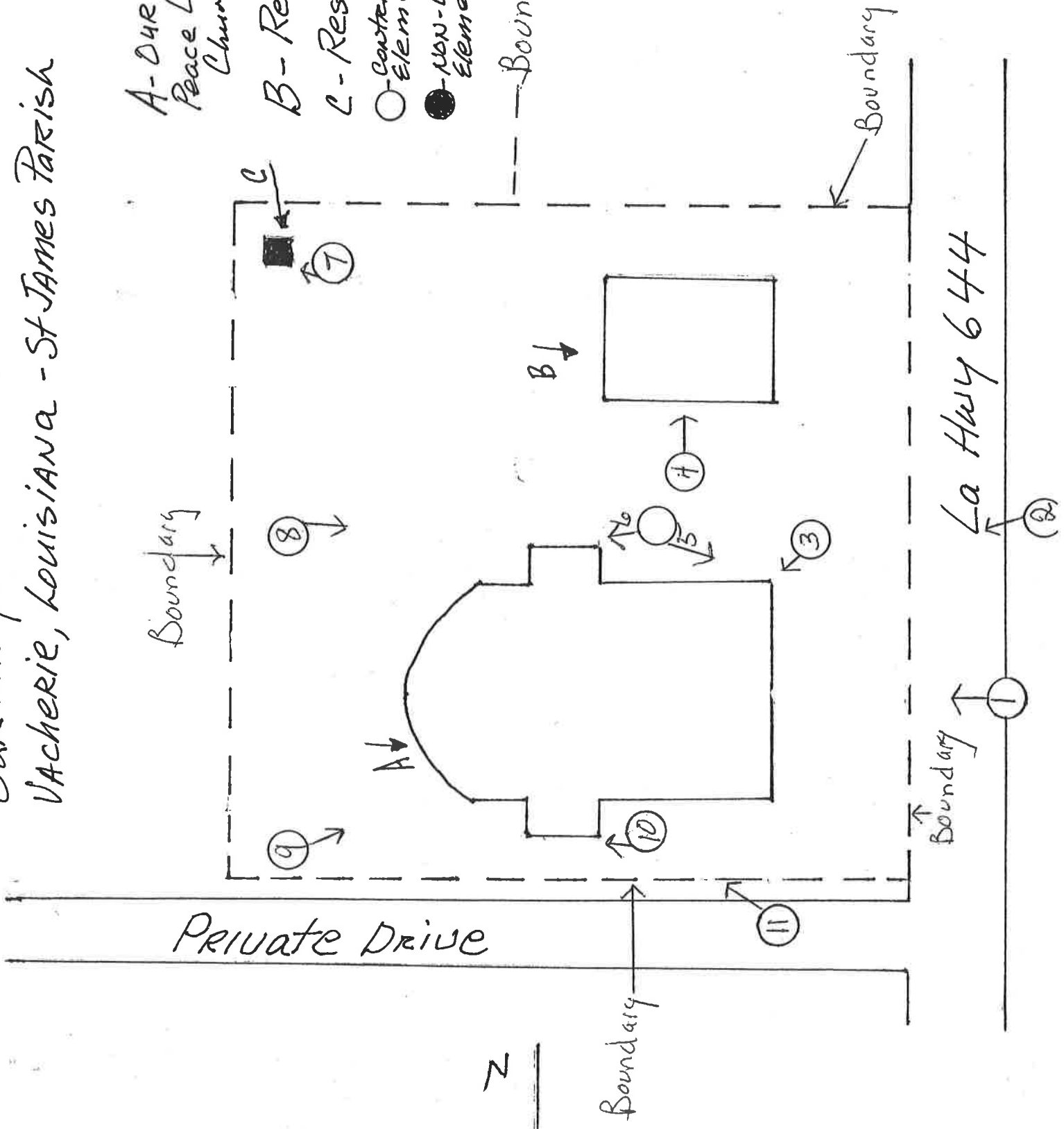
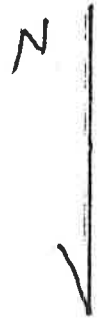
C - Restroom

○ - Contributing Element

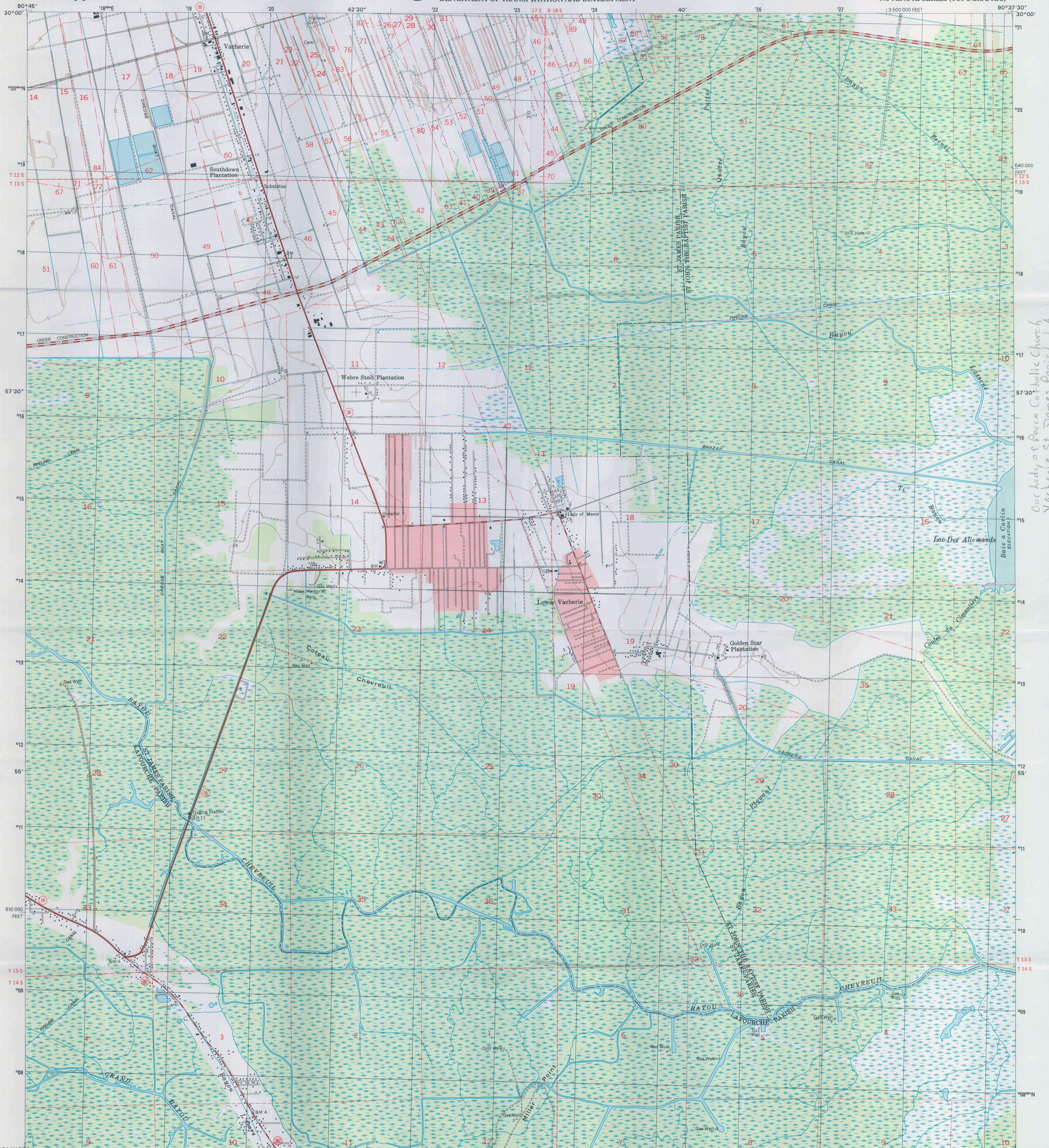
● - Non-contributing Element

--- Boundary

1" = 40'

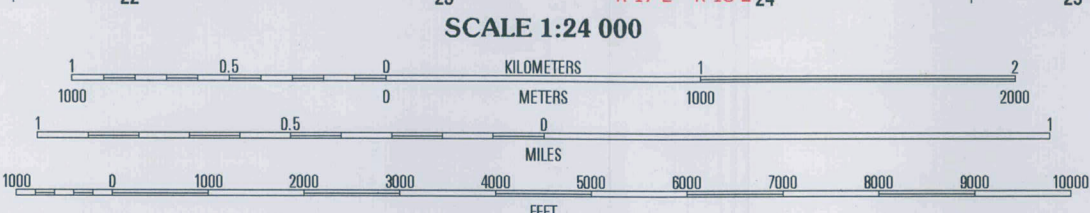
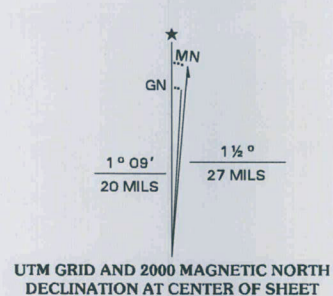






Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church  
Vacherie, St. James Parish, LA  
15/143300 9314940

Produced by the United States Geological Survey in cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. Topography compiled 1962. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1998 and other sources. Public Land Survey System and survey control current as of 1962. North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 15 10 000-foot ticks: Louisiana Coordinate System of 1983 (south zone). North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software. This quadrangle covers a subsidence area. Landmark buildings verified 1962.



CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929 TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1	2	3	1 Convent
4	5	6	2 Latcher
7	8	8	3 Reserve
			4 Leagues
			5 Lac Des Allemands
			6 Thibodaux
			7 Kenner
			8 Bayou Boeuf

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

LOWER VACHERIE, LA 1998

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 AND LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

LA 203A

NIMA 7843 1 NW-SERIES V885

LA St. James Parish - Our Lady of Peace







St. Elizabeth's Church  
Catholic Church

1888

St. Elizabeth's Church





Our Lady of Grace  
Catholic Church



7771  
6661









*Celebrating  
20 Years  
of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration*

Our Lady of Peace  
Adoration Chapel

13281













GENTLEMEN

LADIES

















St. Peter  
the Church































THIS · IS · MY · BELOVED

· SON  
· IN  
· WHOM  
· I AM  
· WELL  
· PLEAS · ED  
· +





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: LOUISIANA, St. James

DATE RECEIVED: 4/05/13                      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/26/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/13/13                      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/22/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000299

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    5.23.13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_

DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



JAY DARDENNE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**State of Louisiana**  
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM  
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PAM BREAU  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

April 1, 2013

TO: Mr. James Gabbert  
National Park Service 2280, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor; National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" Street, NW; Washington, DC 20005

FROM: Patricia Duncan, Architectural Historian, National Register Coordinator  
Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation *Patricia Duncan*

RE: Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church, St. James Parish, LA

Enclosed please find a nomination form with supporting materials for the above referenced property or historic district. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 225-219-4595.

PD/pld  
Enclosures:

- 1 Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- NA Multiple Property Nomination form
- 2 CD with electronic images, nomination and latitude/longitude map
- 19 Photograph(s)
- 1 Original USGS/NOAA map(s)
- 1 Location/Latitude-Longitude Maps
- 1 Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
- 0 Piece(s) of correspondence
- 0 Other \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Please ensure that this nomination receives substantive review
- \_\_\_\_\_ This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- \_\_\_\_\_ The enclosed owner(s) objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_ constitute a majority of property owners. [3 letters from original (same) owner; 1 letter from new owner]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: