

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NCRS use only  
received **SEP 21 1982**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church

and/or common St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church (D009:24-14)

**2. Location**

street & number 2312 J Street N/A not for publication

city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of congressional district Second

state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 055

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name The Parish Church of St. Martin of Tours

street & number 2312 J Street

city, town Omaha N/A vicinity of state Nebraska

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Omaha/Douglas County Civic Center

street & number 1819 Farnam Street

city, town Omaha state Nebraska

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

A Comprehensive Plan for Historic  
title Preservation in Omaha has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Landmark Heritage Preservation Commission, City Planning Department

city, town Omaha state Nebraska

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church is a small Late Gothic Revival parish church constructed of light grey limestone with a prominent square corner tower. It is located on South Omaha's main street, South 24th Street, at the edge of the central business district in a mixed use area of commercial, residential, and educational properties.

The physical description according to the HABS formula is as follows: limestone walls, laid in coursed ashlar, cruciform plan (60' x 80') with appurtenances and polygonal apse; intersecting gable roof; two story square corner tower with two louvered lancet openings in the second story of each side; two lanceted openings of equal size, with small circular windows above rectangular panelled doors, serve as the main entrances at the street facing sides of the corner tower; stone porch with simple stone balusters and stairs encircles the corner of the tower; large lanceted west window featuring stone tracery is subdivided by a pair of double lancet windows with a rose window above, all containing leaded, stained glass; lancet windows in rectangular shaped recesses occur throughout except for simple rectangular windows at the apse; smooth stone sills occur at every window and are occasionally shared by two windows; circular windows are found in the ends of the cross gable; 20th century stair enclosure of concrete block, made to appear as stone, on south elevation. Interior oak hammerbeam ceiling resting on stone corbels; rood beam; oak pews and pulpit; wide strip pine floors; smooth plaster walls; brass lights with simple stained glass inserts; hand carved oak eagle serves as lectern.

Despite the hardship caused by a serious fire in 1918, the congregation built a new rectory in 1919. Another fire in 1942 was even more disastrous, destroying church records, furnishings, memorial windows, and the organ. Because of the fire damage, both transepts were closed. The southern one became the church office, while the northern space is a small chapel containing the old altar from the St. Clement's Mission. The church furniture and trusswork required repairing and/or refinishing after this fire, except for the high altar which could not be properly repaired.

The rectory is located directly east of the nave on the same lot as the church. The two-and-one-half-story frame rectory has a gabled roof with central gabled dormer and a one-story front porch. The clapboard wall surface is broken by horizontal bands under the windows. The gable ends have a small amount of pseudo-half-timbering. The rectangular shape is only altered by the one-story front porch and the back porch with room above, on the rear.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1899 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

St. Martin of Tours Episcopal Church is architecturally significant to South Omaha and Nebraska as an excellent small-scale example of the Late Gothic Revival style. Built in 1899–1900, the church dates from the early years of the city of South Omaha (which has since been annexed by Omaha) and is a visual, historic, and architectural landmark for both cities.

The Episcopal Church was established in Nebraska with the founding of Omaha's Trinity Cathedral in 1856. Other Episcopal congregations in the city were formed either as missions of parish churches, with the impetus and monetary support provided by the Cathedral. While early attempts at expansion were largely unsuccessful, mission activity prospered under the direction of the The Very Reverend Frank Millspaugh, dean of Trinity Cathedral, in 1876. Millspaugh and his successor, George Worthington, were responsible for founding most of the Episcopal churches in the city today, including All Saints, St. Andrew's, St. Barnabas, St. John's, St. Mark's, St. Philip's, and St. Martin's.

Bishop Worthington wanted to create a systematic form of evangelism, and opened an "associate mission" in Omaha in 1886. Composed of single, young clergymen, the missionaries lived in a quasi-monastic community, operated a school, and serviced the various Episcopal missions. One of these young men, Reverend C. S. Witherspoon, served the "Mission of Our Saviour" in South Omaha, and supervised the construction of a church at 30th and "R" Streets. However, that location was south of the rapidly developing stockyards and packinghouse district, and church members decided to look for another site closer to the residential portion of South Omaha.

Although the members worshipped in rented structures for a time, they were once again able to meet in their own building in 1890. Generous support from the Bishop enabled them to move the 30th and "R" structure to a better location on 23rd Street between "F" and "G" Streets. When 23rd Street was regraded, leaving the church far above the street, the structure was remodeled. In 1892, it became St. Martin of Tours Church, named after the fifth century Christian saint of France.

By the end of the decade, continued growth forced the diocese to consider a new church building. Once again, Bishop Worthington provided assistance and a lot was purchased on the northeast corner of 24th and J streets. The old church building was moved to that site and used while the new church was built.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Omaha South, NE

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	5	2	5	3	0	1	0	1	0	4	5	6	1	6	5	1	9	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing										

B 

Zone			Easting						Northing										

C 

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F 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 8 and 9, Block 91, in the City of Omaha, in the section once named South Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska, which is the historic boundaries of the property.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Penelope Chatfield Sodhi, Preservation Historian  
Lynn Meyer, Preservation Administrator  
 organization Nebraska State Historical Society date July, 1982  
Omaha City Planning Department  
 street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402/471-3850  
1819 Farnam Street telephone 402/444-5200  
 city or town Lincoln state Nebraska  
Omaha

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Marian W. Knott 9/8/82

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

For HCERS use only  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
 Entered in the National Register date 10/21/82  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest: Chief of Registration date

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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Construction of the new Gothic Revival church began in 1899. The limestone used to construct the building was purchased at a "substantial saving" from the residence of Daily Herald founder and editor George L. Miller. Miller's palatial stone castle, located on the shores of Seymour Lake near Ralston, had recently burned and the church was able to salvage much of the undamaged stone. The cornerstone was laid on August 13, 1899, and the building was completed by May, 1901. The former church was retained for use as a rectory.

St. Martin of Tours represents a fine, small-scale product of the Late Gothic Revival style of architecture prevalent in the late 19th century, through its use of the pointed arch, cruciform plan, square corner tower, stone tracery, and leaded stained glass. In massing the 1899 structure is related to the earlier and much larger Trinity Cathedral (1880-83, NRHP, Omaha). In scale, proportion, and material it bears a kinship with Omaha's St. Matthias' church (1889, NRHP). The latter, also a parish church, fused the Romanesque and Gothic Revivals, whereas St. Martin's demonstrates a return to stricter interpretation of English gothicism. The similarities between St. Matthias' and St. Martin's are great enough to possibly attribute the design to the same architect, John H. W. Hawkins. (The 1942 fire destroyed all church records, and the architect is unknown.) Bishop George Worthington chose Hawkins to design St. Matthias' after the approval given for Lincoln's Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (see St. Matthias' NRHP nomination form). As St. Martin's was a mission church, Bishop Worthington probably also selected the architect of St. Martin's. The form and material of all three churches are similar: cruciform plan with square corner tower and an intersecting gable roof. The Romanesque treatment in St. Matthias' is not repeated in St. Martin's, a treatment entirely in keeping with changing tastes by the turn of the century.

St. Martin's has played a role in the history of the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska and has been recognized as an architectural Landmark by the City of Omaha Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission. However, it also needs to be recognized in the context of the history of South Omaha. The city of South Omaha was created by the Omaha, Wyoming, and Chicago investors of the Union Stock Yards Company as a national stockyard and meat-packing center, utilizing Omaha's mid-continent location and outstanding rail connections. In 1883 the investors organized the company and acquired several thousand acres of land. The next spring the town of South Omaha was platted and construction of the stockyards began. Village government was first organized in 1886 (Savage and Bell, pp. 594-646). The new town became Omaha's main industrial center, with a strong working-class and ethnic population. In 1915 the City of Omaha annexed its neighboring creation.

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The Episcopal mission which became St. Martin's originated in the earliest years of South Omaha. It was the first Episcopal mission in the new town and, after the failure of subsequent missions, remains the only parish today. St. Martin's is located on South Omaha's main thoroughfare, South 24th Street, on the edge of the central business district. The use of stone is somewhat unusual in the area and that, with its age and prominent location, make the church a visual landmark on the streetscape.

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