

PH0508322

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED OCT 31 1977

DATE ENTERED FEB 17 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

St. Joseph's Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

15 W. Cochran Street

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Middletown

__ VICINITY OF

One

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Delaware

10

New Castle

002

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

__DISTRICT

 BUILDING(S)

__STRUCTURE

__SITE

__OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

__PUBLIC

 PRIVATE

__BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

__IN PROCESS

__BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

 OCCUPIED

__UNOCCUPIED

__WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__NO

PRESENT USE

__AGRICULTURE

__COMMERCIAL

__EDUCATIONAL

__ENTERTAINMENT

__GOVERNMENT

__INDUSTRIAL

__MILITARY

__MUSEUM

__PARK

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

 RELIGIOUS

__SCIENTIFIC

__TRANSPORTATION

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

St. Joseph's Church, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

15 West Cochran Street

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Delaware

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Public Building

STREET & NUMBER

Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Delaware Cultural Resource Survey

N-3890

DATE

1977

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on the northeast corner of West Cochran and South Cass Streets, St. Joseph's Church, built in 1883-84, is a well-preserved example of Delaware ecclesiastical architecture. Built in the vernacular Gothic Revival style at its height of popularity, St. Joseph's has not endured any changes which have significantly altered its architectural character.

A small rectangular building, St. Joseph's is framed of wood and sheathed with German siding, a fabric popular for Gothic frame structures. Square posts mark each of the corners and the simple wooden sill is visible above the brick foundation.

A steeply pitched roof frames the facade of the church. From under its projecting eaves are visible the ends of iron tie rods which provide support for the roof. The roof has been newly sheathed with composition shingles; the roofline is broken by a belfry at the front and a small brick chimney at the rear. A two-story wing, added between 1885 and 1900, projects from the rear of the church.

Six narrow windows pierce each side of the church. Two more windows flank each side of the front entry; there is a blind panel at the bottom of these windows. The window frames take the form of a lancet arch; the top of the sash set in these frames takes the form of a cinquefoil arch. A small double lancet window, set in a single lancet frame, is centrally placed on the facade above the porch roof. A quatrefoil is carved into the peak of the frame.

All of the forms on the facade focus upward. The roof over the entry porch follows the line of the main roof. Set inside it is a lancet arch which frames the doorway. The double doorway, with its strap hinges, fills the bottom of the arch. The impost is marked by a dentil course. Above this is a lancet-shaped fanlight with Y-tracery. Around the doorframe is a heavy hood moulding terminated at each end by an ornamental boss called a label stop. The hood mould terminates in line with the impost. Under this, on each side, are two blind rectangular recessed panels set into the wooden door frame. A bracket is found under the peak of the overhanging porch roof and at the place where the front corners of the porch meets the roof. These are similar to the brackets which are found all along the main roof at the front and rear of the building. These brackets are designed in the Italianate style.

The belfry crowns the facade of the church. The octagonal base gives way to the open drop arches of the belfry. Each drop arch springs from an octagonal column capital. The bottom of each arch is filled by a balustrade. The pierced balusters are flattened and are set so that they seem to form a continuous pattern between the columns. The roof is octagonal and is peaked, terminating in a cross. Set in each of the eight sides is a projecting wooden embellishment in the form of a lancet arch with an inner recessed trefoil arch.

The Gothic influence is also distinctly present in the interior of the church. The nave with its vaulted ceiling and the sanctuary set in a recess outlined by a drop arch all reflect the style.

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The most impressive feature of the nave is the exposed truss system. It is basically in the form of a scissors truss which calls for use of a king post and queen post but no horizontal members. The king post is present here, but missing are the queen posts which provide the stability for this type of framing system. This has caused tensile problems and resulted in wall splay. The principal rafters are exposed and form a visual part of the truss system. They intersect the truss at the ridge rib. The truss system has iron rods encased in the wooden members, the rafters are of wood. Non-structural plaster vaulting ribs spring from decorative plaster corbels on the side walls. These cross the vaulted ceiling diagonally meeting the rib ridge at bosses. The latter takes the form of a crown of thorns. Hanging from the truss system are electric chandeliers which were installed after the church was built. The original lighting was gas.

The nave is divided in half by a center aisle with a set of pews to each side. The pews are of oak, stained walnut. Along the wall are the original radiators. These are still in use today. Also in place are the Stations of the Cross, given by Mrs. Hamilton Morton and Mrs. Edward Lockwood, two of the first parishioners. The stained glass windows are not original, but with their quarrelled panes and beautiful colors, they blend well with the church. Niches in the front wall of the church over the side altars have been removed because they were out of proportion with the rest of the church.

The sanctuary is set in an arched recess and is flanked by small anterooms. One of these rooms is used as the baptistry, the other as an entry from the sacristy located in the rear wing. Originally, one of these side rooms was used by the priest for vesting. Lancet-shaped doorways lead to these anterooms. The hood mould of the arch which forms the sanctuary springs from the capitals of plaster columns. Blind rectangular panels cover the ceiling of the sanctuary ending at the heavy cornice. The cornice, column, hood mould, the corbels on the side walls, and the vault ribbing are all formed out of plaster and painted to simulate walnut. Repainting and regraining was done quite effectively in 1973 by a firm of professional church restorationists from Baltimore. Original stenciling and painting is visible in the attic space over the sanctuary anterooms.

The main altar is set against the plain rear wall of the sanctuary. It is very elaborate with many Gothic details. It was installed in 1926. The small altar in front was made from pieces of an old altar found on the property and was fashioned to blend with the main altar. On the front of each of its uprights are engaged Gothic columns. It is conceivable that part of the original altar of St. Joseph's is contained in this small one.

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The choir loft is in the rear of the church. It is supported by iron columns grained to simulate wood. Two stairs located in the front corners of the church lead to it and the confessionals are located beneath it.

St. Joseph's Church is set on a landscaped lot with a residential area to the east and south, and a commercial area to the north and west.

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 checked="" 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 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 1883-4

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Stevens, Miller & CO.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although some of its first parishioners found "the design and proportion of the church...disappointing," St. Joseph's Church in Middletown is one of the most pleasing examples of Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture in Delaware. Unlike so many of its contemporaries, it has retained its original features and scale. St. Joseph's was built in 1883-84 as a mission church of St. Francis Xavier, better known as "Old Bohemia." The latter, called the "Cradle of Catholicism on the Eastern Shore," ironically, is now a mission church of St. Joseph's. For Stevens, Miller and Company, St. Joseph's provided probably their first attempt at building in the Gothic style. Well-known locally for their work on some of the finer frame, Italianate-Greek Revival peach houses, they chose wood as their building material for St. Joseph's.

St. Joseph's is certainly worthy of note architecturally. It embodies many of the purely Gothic forms, while blending in some of the stylistic elements most popular for the area in which it is built. Scharf's History of Delaware (1888) describes St. Joseph's as a "neat frame structure, Gothic in style, sixty-two by thirty-two feet with spire and bell...." Some of its Gothic forms include the steeply-pitched roof, the narrow lancet windows, and the vaulted ceiling with its vaulting ribs. Scharf mentions the church's spire; however, it is more a belfry than the tall, slender spire so often associated with Gothic architecture. The Italianate influence is represented by the heavy brackets located along the roofline on each end of the building.

The establishment of St. Joseph's came almost two hundred years after the establishment of its mother church, "Old Bohemia," about six miles to the west. In 1855, began a series of events which would shape the history of the parish. In that year came the establishment of the Delaware Railroad in Middletown, bringing with it a rapid population growth. Instrumental in the establishment of the parish were Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Morton, who settled in Middletown in the early 1870's. They came from the area served by "Old Bohemia" and Jesuit priests were frequent visitors when traveling by train. Urged by the latter, they established a Sunday School in their home, teaching catechism and bible history. In 1875, mass began to be offered at their home on alternate Sundays. Finding the space inadequate, the use of the Academy was secured by Edward W. Lockwood, a converted Catholic and member of the school's board of trustees. Several other sites were alternately used, but none proved satisfactory. Mrs. Morton urged the congregation to build its own church. She was supported in her cause by John B. Gaffney, S. J., who was serving the area at the time. Assisted

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Centenary of St. Rose of Lima Mission, 1874-1974, Chesapeake City, Maryland - Hackensack, N. J.: Custombook, Inc. 1974.

Mifflin Lockwood MSS, Archives of St. Joseph's Church, Unpublished.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1888.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY under 1/2 acre
 UTM REFERENCES

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

St. Joseph's Church stands on the northeast corner of the junction of West Cochran and South Cass Streets, which create the southern and western boundaries, respectively. The eastern boundary of the nominated area separates the church and rectory, and is perpendicular to West Cochran Street. The driveway behind the church, perpendicular to S. Cass Street, forms the northern boundary line.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joan M. Norton, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

DATE

March, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Hall of Records

TELEPHONE

(302) 678-5314

CITY OR TOWN

Dover,

STATE

Delaware

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Lauren [Signature]

TITLE

Director, Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs

DATE

3/25/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Robert B. Rettig

DATE

2/17/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

[Signature] **KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

ATTEST:

Charles [Signature]

DATE

2-10-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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by Mrs. Edward Lockwood, Mrs. Morton began to collect money towards her goal. Initially, \$300 was collected and a building lot purchased from Edwin R. Cochran. In October of 1883, the contract for building the church was awarded; the cost would be \$3500.

The obstacles encountered by those first parishioners must have seemed overwhelming. Foremost among these, and the most difficult to overcome, was the intensity of religious prejudice. But as the building of the church progressed, the townspeople experienced a change of heart; some even contributed to the building fund. Bishop Becker celebrated the mass of dedication on October 5, 1884. For a short time the parish prospered. However, the disease which blighted the peach crop in 1886, and so significantly damaged the commercial base of the Middletown area, had its effect on the parish. From 1890 until after World War II, the parish struggled for existence. Then in the 1960's, the dwindling parish began to experience prosperity once again due to a population growth based on local industrialization and urban sprawl.

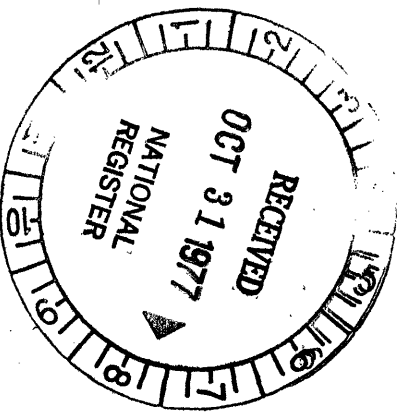
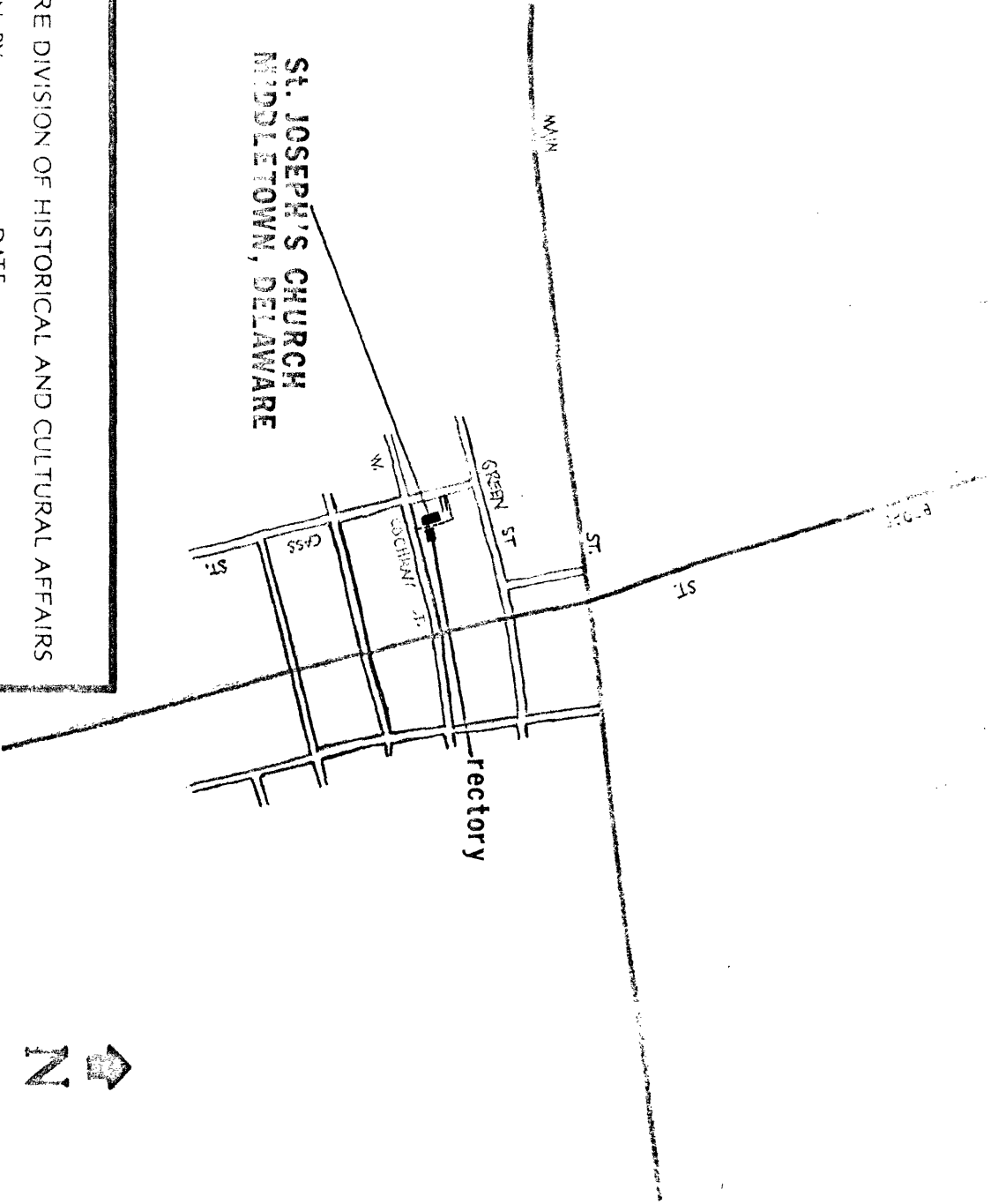
It is due to its hiatus of prosperity that St. Joseph's owes its excellent architectural preservation. The current prosperity and growth of the parish place it in a somewhat endangered position of abandonment or unsympathetic expansion. Therefore, it is important to recognize it as a locally significant expression of Gothic-revival ecclesiastical architecture.

St. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
MIDDLETOWN, DELAWARE

DELAWARE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

DRAWN BY ica DATE 10/77

FILE N-3090 TITLE sketch map



FEB 17 1978