

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received **OCT 3 1983**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic St. Joseph Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 4th <sup>and</sup> Clay Streets not for publication

city, town Owensboro vicinity of

state Kentucky code 021 county Daviess code

**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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" 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 Archdiocese of Owensboro

street & number 1600 Frederica Street

city, town Owensboro vicinity of state Kentucky

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Daviess County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Owensboro state Kentucky

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title KY Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date June, 1977  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

## 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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

St. Joseph's Church is located at the corner of Fourth and Clay Street approximately one mile southeast of the Owensboro Central Business District. Owensboro is located on the Ohio River thirty miles east of Evansville, Indiana, and 150 miles west of Louisville. The neighborhood surrounding the church consists of modest frame houses built during the last quarter of the 19th century. Although the church has always served the neighborhood and was built as the neighborhood grew, this nomination includes only the church because the neighborhood has been substantially altered with the demolition of houses and the widening of streets during the 20th century.

St. Joseph's Church is a particularly well executed version of the type of brick, Nave plan Gothic Revival church which were erected in many of Kentucky's small towns and neighborhood parishes during the last half of the 19th century. It resembles in scale and detail churches located in Frankfort, Shelbyville and Falmouth and doubtlessly other Ohio Valley communities.

The brick is laid in seven course American bond. The main facade which is 43 feet in width and divided into three bays is dominated by a square central tower, capped with a handsome bell tower and eight sided spire. The central bay which contains a center pointed arched opening door on the first level and a double pointed arched window above the second level. A steeply pitched pediment articulated in stone surmounts the door and the recessed openings in the flanking bays. On the tower and bell tower as well as in the eaves, very attractive corbelling tables are utilized.

The 86 foot long sides of the church are divided into six bays by salient buttresses. Each bay features a pointed arch window which contains a stained glass depiction of one of the twelve apostles. These attractive windows, which are now protected by a thick additional glazing on the exterior, were purchased in Munich, Germany. The side walls and apse area both utilize the corbel table in the cornice.

The interior of the church consists of a center aisle and two somewhat narrower side aisles. The pews, tile floor, balcony and balcony railing, altar and altar rail remain as originally constructed. The fourteen stained glass windows are the most notable feature of the interior space which carries through the Gothic theme in the vaulting found in the nave and apse. The only notable alteration is the wood paneling added to the first five feet of the side walls.

In addition to the original church, the site also includes a low one-story addition approximately 15 feet by 20 feet which is attached to the apse on the east side. It was added in the 1890s. The adjacent Italianate Parish house is situated on the adjacent lot to the east. This side passage, two-story house has experienced some alterations, particularly in the addition of a later porch; but it retains its overall character.

A church school is located behind the church along Clay Street which consists of two buildings. Since the older section built in 1924 is effectively separated from the church by a newer architecturally unsympathetic addition built in the 50s, the boundaries of the nomination have been drawn to exclude the school.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Ethnic History

**Specific dates** 1878-1880 **Builder/Architect**

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

St. Joseph's Church is significant as the best example of the Gothic Revival style of architecture in Owensboro and as the focal institution in the history of the German Roman Catholic community of Owensboro and Daviess County.

Like most Kentucky cities situated along the Ohio River, Owensboro attracted a substantial settlement of Irish and German Catholic settlers beginning in the 1850s. In Owensboro, most members of the German Catholic community first settled briefly in rural areas of Southern Indiana before migrating to Owensboro. By the mid-1860s, the growth of the German Catholic population and its concentration in the Sweeney's and Triplett's precincts of southeast Owensboro insured the development of an ethnic community identity. At St. Stephen's Church, German-speaking parishioner were required to sit in the back of the church away from the rest of the congregation.

Because of the segregation of German parishioners at St. Stephens and the interest of German Americans in being led by a German-speaking priest, religious instruction in German was organized in 1868 and a new church was built in 1871. The first St. Joseph's Church was a frame structure which burned in 1878 after being struck by lightning. Determined to rebuild, the parish acquired land at Fourth and Clay Streets and began to erect the new St. Joseph's during October, 1878. Funding for the new church was provided completely by members of the Parish and by soliciting funds from German Catholics in Illinois.

Members of the church dedicated the new edifice on March 7, 1880, but did not receive the approval of the Bishop until 1883 due to his commitment to building the church at another site.

St. Joseph's served the religious needs of the German Catholic community until 1948 when the parish was united with St. Paul's Church. Although regular services have been discontinued and the adjacent school has been closed, St. Joseph's continues to be used for special services and remains as the symbol and focal point of the German Catholic population of Owensboro.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Orrahood, Mrs. Joyce, KY Historic Resources Inventory Form, 1970.  
 St. Joseph's Parish, "Seventy Fifth Anniversary Program," no date.  
 Spiess, Fr. Eugene, "Brief History of St. Joseph Parish," no date.  
 Winks, Martine, "Personal Communication," June, 1983.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1/2

Quadrangle name Owensboro East

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	4	8	6	7	6	0	4	0	7	2	6	8	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

C 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

D 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

E 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

F 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

G 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

H 

Zone		Easting						Northing					

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Clay & 4th Streets and running east 125 feet, along 4th Street, thence south 110 feet along the east property line of the St. Joseph's church rectory; thence west 125 feet to Clay Street; thence north 110 feet to the point of origin, thereby not including the modern

### 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 Robert M. Polsgrove, Historic Sites Program Manager

organization Kentucky Heritage Council date September, 1983

street & number 9th Floor, Capital Plaza Tower telephone 502/564-7005

city or town Frankfort, state Kentucky

## 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 Mary Cuman App

title State Historic Preservation Officer date September 23, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 11/3/83

for Melrose Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation sheet St. Joseph's Church Daviess County, Kentucky Item number 10 Page 1

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church school and parking lot located south of the church.