

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Episcopal Church of the Nativity
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 212 Eustis Avenue not for publication
city, town Huntsville vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Madison code 089 zip code 35801

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 7/21/87
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

same

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

mid-19th C.

Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof metal (on wood truss)

other cast-iron components used as trim

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Adhering generally to what the Gothic Revivalists would have called the "Middle Pointed" style of 14th-century English architecture, the Church of the Nativity is an aisled nave-and-chancel structure with a monumental entrance tower at the northwest corner.

The sanctuary is approximately 54 by 100 feet, about 50 feet to the roof ridge-line and about 151 feet to the top of the spire. Brick bearing-wall and wood frame construction, six buttressed bays. The three-stage bell tower is capped with a broached octagonal spire pierced by four tall lucarnes containing narrow lancet windows topped by small quatrefoil openings. The upper part of the spire contains additional small quatrefoil windows proportioned to the width of the spire face at their respective vertical locations.

The brick bell tower is about 18 feet square, with two projecting stepped buttresses at each corner of about 2'-6" by 3' at their bases. The sloping buttress-steps (shoulders) are capped by heavy cast-iron covers with small steps like slate-edges cast into their top surfaces.

The bell chamber has two tall, wood louvered lancet openings on each of the four walls. The bell bears a cast inscription indicating it was made in Sheffield, England in 1865 (the original bell was removed during the Civil War for its metal). The lower part of the bell tower has various lancet and trefoil windows at its different levels, and five levels of brick watertables.

The northwest front gable of the nave has a large wood-traceried lancet window of stained and painted glass of about 8 x 15 feet over a carved limestone band above the entry. The stone band is inscribed "Reverence My Sanctuary" in a Gothic-style font. The double wood doors are built of beaded layered planking. The rimlock hardware is of a design typical of the 1850s. The doors and hardware give every indication of being original. The front gable of the nave is topped by a sheet copper boxed cross with fleur-de-lis cusps. The apse is topped by a cross of more slender proportions and appears to be of cast iron. Old photographs indicate an elaborated cross was once on the spire; the present simple one dates from 1957.

The apse is a semi-octagonal projection containing three large figurative stained and painted glass lancet windows which 1859 records indicate are original, along with the rest of the geometric- and floral-pattern stained and painted glass in the nave. Sacristy and vesting rooms adjoin the apsidal sides. The apse ceiling is a ribbed pointed segmental-arch vault of plaster on wood frame and lath. The ribs are

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D NHL #4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1857-59

Significant Dates
1857-59

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK THEME

XVI: Architecture

E: Gothic Revival

2: High Victorian Gothic

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person Frank Wills

Architect/Builder
Frank Wills & Henry Dudley
Hugh N. Moore (local contractor)

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

The Church of the Nativity is one of the most pristine examples of Ecclesiological Gothic architecture in the South.¹ It is also among the country's least-altered and most intact examples of the work of the noted Ecclesiological architect Frank Wills.

As one of that select group of cosmopolitan architects "approved" and, nurtured by the New York Ecclesiological Society in the 1850s, the English-born Wills, and his compatriot, partner and posthumous successor Henry Dudley, are among those who stood at the fountainhead of the Gothic Revival movement in American religious architecture. Wills' 1850 publication Ancient English Ecclesiastical Architecture, like Richard Upjohn's Rural Architecture which appeared two years later, powerfully determined the course of the American Gothic Revival. Wills and Upjohn, along with James Renwick and John Notman, each contributed a distinctive stylistic strain to the movement. And Wills himself was a pivotal figure in the dissemination of Puginesque principles across the continent during the mid-nineteenth century.² His commissions ranged as far afield as San Francisco, while in Canada he became Ecclesiology's single most influential architect, with such benchmark designs as those for the Anglican cathedrals at Fredericton and Montreal.³

¹ James Patrick, "Ecclesiological Gothic in the Antebellum South," Winterthur Portfolio, vol. 15, no. 2 (Summer 1980), pp. 117-38.

² See Phoebe B. Stanton, The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840-1856 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 129 ff., 191-93, 287, 293n, 296; also William M. Pierson, Jr., Technology and the Picturesque: The Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles in the series American Buildings and Their Architects (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1978), pp. 201-02, 204, 470n.

³ Philip J. Turner, Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal (Montreal: McGill University Publications, Series XIII, Art & Architecture, No. 17), 1927; Stanton, Gothic Revival, 127 ff.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Parish office, Church of the Nativity

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.599 acres

UTM References

A

1	6
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5	3	8	1	3	0
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3	8	4	3	0	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See Continuation Sheet

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the original building and grounds as well as the 1886 Wilson Cary Bibb Chapel to the east and the later parish hall (Ridley Hall) and offices to the west.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title R. Gamble, AL Hist. Comm.; Harvie Jones, FAIA; Dr. Frances Roberts, Parish Historian
organization Alabama Historical Commission date _____
street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone contact R. Gamble 205/261-3184
city or town Montgomery state AL zip code 36130-5101

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embellished, and a floral plaster boss caps their apex. The present semi-octagonal format of the apse clearly shows on the 1861 map and the 1871 birds-eye view of Huntsville, and it is apparent that this is the original 1859 configuration.

The roof over the main body of the church is double-sloped. The side aisles slope at about 7 in 12 up to a clerestory vertical break. The clerestory windows are circular, each containing three trefoil stained glass lights. These windows tilt at mid-height to open. The operating chains are still in place. From the clerestory the roof of the nave itself slopes up sharply, at about 22 in 12, to the ridge line.

The roof construction is heavy timber (oak) post-&-beam, with wooden "arches" providing visual effect and some diagonal bracing. The center-aisle roof has deflected and spread, pushing the columns out of plumb by several inches--a usual problem with this type of framing.

The present hanging lights in the nave were, according to parish historian Dr. Frances Roberts, installed in 1938.

Each bay of the side aisles is lit by a traceried window containing original, geometrically patterned and floral stained and painted glass. The bottom section of each window tilted at its mid-point to open. The wood tracery produces a pair of trefoil-arch lancets topped by a quatrefoil. Each bay of the side aisles is marked by a metal-capped, stepped brick buttress on the exterior.

Church records cite a cost item of \$1,573.30 for "stained glass" at the time of construction, while a contemporary letter remarks on the beauty of the glass and goes on to say that "the aisle windows are now in and delight everybody." Dr. Roberts' research reveals that the small bottom panels of these side-aisle windows were left blank, with the names of individuals being added at various times as each window was dedicated to the memory of a church member. The nameplates in the apse and west front windows are original, according to Dr. Roberts.

The tracery and frames of all windows are heavy carved wood with prominent concave edges. The exterior edges of the windows are articulated by projecting moulded brick hood moulds of a lancet cross-section, and chamfered brick jambs and sills.

The exposed interior wood is oak, presently with a dark stain and varnish. Some scratched places beneath later paint on the inner face of the east bell-tower doors indicates a "golden oak" natural finish, and it would not be surprising to find that

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all the interior wood might originally have been this lighter and brighter finish, with the darker finish coming with the ageing of the varnish and/or darker stain in the late Victorian period.

The interior walls are plastered brick. The ceilings are stained planking except at the apse, described above. The floors are 5/4 x 6 inch (generally) heart pine, which the Church records indicate were originally covered with carpeting. They are now covered with 1950's carpeting over a plywood layer, but the original wood floor is still in place except for an approximately four foot wide strip along each side wall. This part of the floor may have been a victim of rot and termites since this area directly adjoins the outside earth beyond the porous brick sidewalls and is thus subject to moisture penetration and termite infestation.

The pews are original, and have lancet-top, moulded-edge ends with quatrefoil cutouts. The carved marble baptismal font is also original, although the present brass pulpit and lectern date respectively from 1915 and 1907.

An early photograph in the parish archives, coupled with the recollections of Dr. Roberts, indicates that a small organ--evidently the original--was built into a still-extant arched niche at the west side of the apse (\$1,035 was paid for the first organ, as noted in the 1857-59 construction records). When the present organ and traceried organ screen were installed in the southeast corner of the nave during the 1940s, a small doorway was cut through the arched niche where the original organ had stood, into the adjacent vestryroom.

In the beginning, the raised area at the front of the church occupied only the apse, which accommodated the original wooden pulpit and lectern as well as the altar. Three risers at the front of the apse led from the nave up into the wooden-floored apse. At the rear of the apse, the railed platform containing the wooden altar table was raised one additional step above the apse floor. The choir at this period sat on the same level as the congregation, in pews at the front of the nave.

In the early 1940s, the raised floor within the apse was extended one bay forward into the nave to provide space on the platform for the choir. However, the choir pews and rails themselves are, judging from their design and construction, original. When the platform was extended, it was covered with ceramic tile. The present ceramic tile dates from the 1980s. A single tile from an old English church is incorporated in the floor before the altar case. The carved and paneled wooden wainscot beneath the apse windows was added in the 1940s. The present altar-case, rail and chairs are evidently of the same period.

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The elaborate cast-iron gate and gateposts at the main entry are of the same design documented to be latter 1850s in two other Alabama locations by Robert Gamble of the Alabama Historical Commission and it is therefore likely they are original, or perhaps from shortly after the Civil War. The cast-iron fence posts are inscribed "Wood and Perot, Makers, Phil.", and S.J. Creswell, Maker, Phil.". The east fence is of smaller and simpler proportions and is a combination of cast posts and wrought rails and pickets.

The roof surface of both the 1886 Chapel and the 1859 Sanctuary are inverted-lancet stamped metal shingles. Thus these roofs may date from the same time period, and it is possible they date from 1886, since stamped metal shingles were in common use at that time. When the deteriorated spire was replicated in 1957 the same pattern of stamped galvanized metal shingle was installed on the spire.

In 1956 it was observed after a storm that the wood-frame spire was noticeably leaning. An investigation revealed heavy insect damage throughout, coupled with some rot. In 1956 and 1957 the spire was carefully replicated (with the exception of the cross) and rebuilt with a wood sheath on a steel primary frame that is structurally independent of the brick tower, so as to eliminate further wind-stress on the brick tower. Wind-stress of the original spire anchors had warped the tower 18 inches out of square as measured on the diagonals, and the tower could no longer accept these stresses. The effect of this warping can be seen at the spire broaches. In 1988 the brick tower was found to be on the verge of collapse of the top third due to these stress-deformation voids and moisture/freeze deterioration of the mortar. The tower was stabilized using a highly-resilient natural mortar developed in Holland for this purpose (Jahn M-40 Injection mortar) and utilized by such institutions as Columbia University, the National Parks Service, and many other European and U.S. historic preservation projects. This work did not affect the appearance of the tower.

In the early 1970s the brick faces of the Sanctuary were improperly cleaned with abrasives and hard mortar was troweled onto the surface of the old joints. Fortunately, a recent investigation shows this hard mortar barely goes into the brick joints, so it has not stressed the bricks as it would if the mortar had been tuck-pointed an inch deep into the joints. The main detriment of this work has thus been esthetic; the joints appear to be too wide and too straight. As the walls re-patinate, the appearance is softening. The brick walls at the Chapel are in their original condition except for some minor work on part of the south (rear) wall.

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In 1951 an Ambulatory was built behind the apse, with a low, flat roof so as not to intrude on the stained glass at the apse.

The Chapel is a contributing structure within the boundaries of the Landmark. Wilson Cary Bibb Memorial Chapel - 1886. Architect and builder unknown. Approximately 31 by 64 feet, 5 bays, brick, buttressed, steep gable roof supported by stained wood trusses with arched bottom chords resting on bracketed hammer-beams. In 1951, a harmonious entry was added to the northwest side. Stained wood plank ceiling. Plaster-on-brick interior walls, heart-pine floor now covered by c. 1920s thin, narrow planks. Simple, attractive side windows of grids of leaded stained glass squares of varying but harmonious hues within lancet openings. The altar is most interesting, being built in-place of unglazed terra-cotta tiles in varying patterns and moulds. The altar and glass have an Arts and Crafts flavor. The Chapel contains a number of simple, light benches thought to be original to the room. They too have an Arts and Crafts flavor. The backs are horizontally slatted and the ends are rectangles with a quatrefoil cutout.

In 1986 an old Moeller organ from a Victorian church in Petersburg, Virginia was installed behind the existing screens at the altar end of the room. The floor in these two small screened areas was lowered to conceal the tops of the organ pipes.

NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

Ridley Hall - 1952 - Wm. J.J. Chase and Associates, Architects & Engineers, Atlanta. Activities room (called "Rumpus Room" on the plans) about 35 x 90 feet including the small lobby. The interior side walls of the Activities Room take a simple material-concrete block-and elevates it to considerable dignity by the device of alternating 4 & 8 inch high courses. Six bays, buttressed brick and concrete-block walls. Front and side walls are simple but harmonious with the adjoining Sanctuary. Arcade connection to the Sanctuary N.W. entry, creating a pleasant small brick-paved courtyard between the two buildings. Basement, and three-story 35 x 71 foot classroom building to rear (south), plus kitchen, etc. "Banister Room" parlor next to the S.W. entry to the Sanctuary.

Joffrion Hall - 1982 - Joyce, Pearson, Prout, P.A. Architects, Huntsville. Three story brick veneer building south of Ridley Hall containing various activity and class rooms, designed in a harmonious manner with the other buildings.

Office Building - Pre 1884, probably 1870s (?). Adjoining small commercial building purchased in the 20th century. The building next to it to the west is documented to have been built in 1866, and this building is a near-twin, based on the facade evidence. Windows altered, interior is 1970s. Shown on 1884 Sanborn map. There is also an adjoining 1970's office structure that is non-contributing.

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The Church of the Nativity is one of thirteen surviving houses of worship in the United States known to have been designed by Wills, or born out of the Wills and Dudley collaboration (see Appendix A for a listing of U.S. and Canadian commissions). Of these, all but one are in the Gothic Revival style (Christ Church in Oberlin, Ohio, adheres to a modified Romanesque format). Among the six larger, aisled Gothic churches within this group--including the Nativity as well as St. George's, Flushing; Newark's House of Prayer; St. John's, Troy; Trinity Church in Claremont, New Hampshire; and Trinity, Mobile--the Church of the Nativity appears to be exceptional in having remained so little changed since its completion in 1859. It is also unusual in having been built at a single campaign, including apse and 150-foot spire.⁴ Few of Wills' surviving American buildings more cohesively express the typical trademarks of his design than the Church of the Nativity. These include a tall, slender broached spire punctuated by lucarnes; a long narrow nave covered by a sharply pitched roof and flanked by dim, low side aisles; traceried windows; and a trussed interior roof structure.

A feature unique to the Church of the Nativity among documented Wills designs is the polygonal apse, in contrast to the deep, rectangular chancel advocated by the most doctrinaire of the American Ecclesiologists. This reflects an increasing tendency--first initiated by Richard Upjohn in his 1850 designs for Trinity Chapel, New York--to draw inspiration from non-English, and especially French, versions of medieval Gothic design.⁵ Since the Church of the Nativity was evidently Wills's last commission

⁴ Appendix A gives a synoptic construction history of the thirteen Wills or Wills and Dudley, churches known to be extant. In four of these, the chancel area has either been remodeled or added since the initial completion of the building. The towers of both Holy Trinity Church in Nashville and Trinity, Mobile, remained unfinished for some 30 years after the churches were consecrated, while the Claremont, New Hampshire church lost its corner tower and spire to a storm in 1938. One of the churches--Christ Church in Oberlin, Ohio--is Romanesque or Norman rather than Gothic in its stylistic detail, though the overall massing of the building generally adheres to Ecclesiological principles. Six of the churches are in the Northeast, six in the Southeast, and one in the Midwest. Not included in this listing is St. Paul's Cathedral, Syracuse (1883-85), designed by Henry Dudley himself in the Wills and Dudley manner. Although a good example of Ecclesiological design--with some overtones of High Victorian Gothic--the church postdates the florescent 1850s period of the Gothic Revival by nearly thirty years.

⁵ See Everard M. Upjohn, Richard Upjohn: Architect and Churchman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 108 ff., 112-113, 174 ff.; also, Spiro Kostof, A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 637.

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before his untimely death in Montreal in April 1857, the apsidal east end of the church hints at what could have become a new departure in the Wills vocabulary had the architect lived on. (It is conceivable that Wills was influenced by the long Roman Catholic tradition of the polygonal apse as seen in the Montreal region and throughout Quebec.)⁶

The Church of the Nativity also represents the skillful translation of sophisticated Gothic concepts into brick, wood, and metal in a region largely lacking a tradition of stone craftsmanship. Indeed, the Nativity's elaborately trussed wooden ceiling, with cusped trefoils accentuating the Gothic arches that spring from clustered piers to cover both nave and low-lying side aisles, is probably one of the best and earliest constructions of its type to be found in the American hinterland. In this respect, the design is true to the admonition of the New York Ecclesiological Society that its recommended architects should adapt to American circumstances. Moreover, an honest expression of materials and construction techniques, as well as of liturgical function, in the architecture of any given church was a cardinal Ecclesiological principal--an objective in their quest for a "moral" architecture. Here again, the Church of the Nativity is an exceptionally lucid and coherent example of Ecclesiological ideals.

As one of Frank Wills' least-altered designs--probably the least altered of his larger American houses of worship--the Church of the Nativity is a major monument to Ecclesiological thought and practice in architecture.

* * * * *

Construction History

As early as January 9, 1856, Henry C. Lay, minister of the Church of the Nativity from 1847 to 1859, wrote a letter to his wife from Mobile, Alabama, in which he described another Wills and Dudley building, Trinity Episcopal Church, then under construction in that city. Although the structure was not complete, the Rev. Mr. Lay

⁶ To be sure, Wills' design for Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal, retained the rectangular choir or chancel area favored by English tradition--though whether this was an architect or building committee decision is unknown. Yet certainly, Wills would have known the great new St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church (1847), with its tall polygonal apse towering over Montreal's mid 19th-century cityscape only two blocks from the site of the new Anglican cathedral. Interestingly enough, subsequent Anglican churches in the city--St. James the Apostle (1864), St. George's (1870), and St. John the Evangelist (1877-79)--all utilized the polygonal apse anticipated in the layout of the Church of the Nativity. Thirty years later, Henry Dudley also included a polygonal apse as part of his design for St. Paul's Cathedral, Syracuse, New York.

⁷ See Pierson, Technology and the Picturesque, 204-05

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reported that this Gothic revival church with its lofty nave and beautiful clerestory windows was very similar to the earlier Christ Church in New Orleans.⁸ Apparently Lay was so impressed with the Mobile church that he chose the same New York firm to draw up plans for a new sanctuary in Huntsville to replace the original church structure which had been completed in 1847, and was no longer adequate to serve the needs of a growing congregation.

Two lots adjacent to the original church building on the corner of Eustis and Green were acquired by the vestry early in 1856 at a cost of \$3,923.⁹ A building committee, composed of Henry C. Lay, George P. Beirne, and Samuel Cruse, worked diligently over the next three years to raise the necessary funds by subscription, to secure the plans, and to hire Hugh N. Moore, a local builder, in order to construct the church. It was completed in time for Easter Eve services on April 23, 1859.¹⁰

Because Hugh Moore was unfamiliar with the techniques of construction for Gothic architecture, Lay asked Frank Wills for help. On February 28, 1857, Lay wrote Wills that he wished to engage a certain Mr. Mason whom Wills had recommended to supervise the work on the church, and that Mason could come down and begin his duties on May 1, 1857, at a salary of \$15.00 per week.¹¹ Five days later, on March 4, 1857, Lay wrote Wills, "We need the expert advice now so send Mr. Mason on to Huntsville now." He also reported that Hugh N. Moore was having difficulty locating long timbers for the spire. He said that the contractor could make one of three thicknesses spliced and bolted like long beams on railroad bridges, but they needed the architect's instructions on the matter. What effect Wills' sudden demise in Montreal, on April 23rd, may have had on these projected arrangements is unknown.¹² We can only presume that the dead architect's partner, Henry Dudley, immediately took up the reins.

⁸ Henry C. Lay to Elizabeth Lay, January 9, 1856, from Mobile, Alabama, in Folder 14 of Henry C. Lay Papers, No. 418, in the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. Hereafter cited as Lay Papers. Christ Church, New Orleans, was not a Wills and Dudley building.

⁹ Vestry Minutes of Church of the Nativity, Huntsville, Alabama, Vol. I (no page numbers) and Deed Books AA, p. 422; AA, p. 514, Probate Office, Madison County Courthouse, Huntsville, Alabama.

¹⁰ Vestry Minutes, April 13, 1859, April 25, 1859.

¹¹ Henry C. Lay to Frank Wills, February 28, 1857, from Huntsville, Alabama. Recorded in Henry C. Lay's Letter Book, 1854-1858, Lay Papers.

¹² Henry C. Lay to Frank Wills, March 5, 1857, in Henry C. Lay's Letter Book, Lay Papers.

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From May 1857 until December 1858 progress on the building's construction was slow but steady. Elizabeth Lay wrote to her husband on December 15, 1858, telling him that "The church is progressing. The aisle windows are in and delight everybody."¹³ On April 13, 1859, the vestry voted to start renting pews in the new church on Easter Monday, April 25. The first service in the new edifice was held on April 23rd, Easter Eve.¹⁴

W. P. Mills, in his sketch furnished for the Huntsville Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror 1859-1860, wrote that Huntsville citizens were very proud of the newly erected Episcopal church because of its beauty of architecture and unsurpassed interior arrangements.

The Episcopal church is a splendid specimen of Gothic architecture. The building consists of nave, with aisles, chancel, vestry and organ chamber. The length inside is 104 feet, width of nave and aisle 50 feet, height (sic) of tower and spire 151 feet. The chancel is lighted by three lancet windows of beautifully stained glass, with figures descriptive of Biblical incident. The aisles and nave are lighted by windows of tracery of varied description. There is a tower on the north-west corner, it is in two stages, flanked with buttresses while, the spire is octagonal and broached. The interior roof is open, with timbers exposed and paneled (sic). The entrance is through the west end of nave and tower. It is calculated that the church will accommodate 600 persons. The late Frank Wills, Esq., of New York, is the designer of the edifice and Mr. Hugh Moore of Huntsville, the builder.¹⁵

¹³ Elizabeth Lay to Henry C. Lay, December 15, 1858, from Huntsville, Alabama, Folder 22, Lay Papers.

¹⁴ Vestry Minutes, April 13, 1859, April 25, 1859.

¹⁵ William's Huntsville Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror, Volume I - 1859-60, Huntsville: Coltart and Son, No. 10 Commercial Row, 1859. Reprinted by the Strode Publishers, Huntsville, Alabama, 1972. pp. 15-16.

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A brief history of the church written seventy-three years later, in 1933, by The Reverend Cary Gamble adds additional information about the Wills and Dudley connection. Mr. Gamble stated that Frank Wills died before the church was completed and that Henry Dudley¹⁶ became the consulting architect as the construction of the church progressed.

Shortly after the church was completed, much of the original plastering fell and had to be replaced because of dry rot. Other repairs were made to the exterior of the building at a total cost of \$2625.00. This money was in addition to the original construction cost, which was detailed in Sam Cruse's account of the financing and construction of the new edifice filed in the Minute Book of the vestry on March 12, 1861.

According to this account, sixty-four members and friends of the congregation raised \$29,291.93 through subscriptions ranging from \$4,000 to \$10 per contribution. Added to this amount was a special collection of \$2,901.05 given to the rector to buy a font, stained glass windows, gas fixtures and carpeting. Other sources of revenue totaling \$3,607.41 were gained from the sale of the church rectory (\$2,508.25), two organ concerts (\$102.75), rent of an old building (\$60.00), sale of surplus lumber (\$114.00), and a loan from George P. Beirne (\$822.41). As of March 12, 1861, the church still owed \$1764.74 for repairs, making the total cost of the new church \$37,565.13.

In detailing the expenditures made to complete the project, Samuel Cruse listed the net cost of the lots as \$3,423.65 since \$500 had been received from a sale of the structures on the property. Payment to the architects for plans and supervision of construction was \$855.10. Other items were listed as follows:

Cost of lumber with freight and also the freight on stained glass, furnace, carpeting, spittoon, paint, oil and organ..... \$ 3,837.10
(Since this amount was listed in brackets along with the architect's fees, it appears that some of these purchases were made by the architects and shipped to Huntsville to be used in the construction.)

Digging foundation, filling up lots, and grading,

¹⁶ History, Year Book and Church Directory, Church of the Nativity, Huntsville, Alabama, 1933, New York: Cathedral Publishing Co., 1933. (no page numbers)

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trees, and grass.....	299.20
Stonework on the building and gates.....	408.00
Hugh N. Moore's account of brick work and carpentry.....	16,690.84
Stained glass windows.....	1,573.30
Plastering account with W. Clapp of Montgomery.....	1,106.72
Tinning, guttering roofs.....	1,770.89
Lightning rods.....	104.85
Furnace, original cost and repairs.....	421.00
Gas fixtures.....	458.00
Paint, oils, and painting.....	325.79
varnishing.....	401.40
Tiles for the chancel.....	224.55
Organ \$1,000 allowance to McKonn of \$30 and incidentals of \$5.00.....	1,035.00
Font, cost of and carriage and repairs.....	273.35
Carpeting for aisles and pews.....	426.25
J. Dickson's hardware bill.....	300.00
Iron fence, cost and freight and painting.....	655.46
Small expenditures for spittoons, brushes, numbers for pews, organ and lectern cushions and labor.....	187.14
Pavements and curbing.....	162.50
John H. Moore's bill of repairs for replastering, repainting, and varnishing the interior of the building and the roof with general repairs.....	2,625.00

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Total.....	\$37,565.13
To balance due.....	\$1,764.74

Cruse's accounting was a complete financial report which¹⁷ indicated that the new edifice was entirely completed with all its furnishings.

Because of the Civil War period from 1861-1865, the vestry of the church continued to owe George B. Beirne the sum of \$2587.15 which he had advanced in order to clear the church building of debt. On March 29, 1867, Beirne agreed to take a new note for the debt amounting to \$2611.81 at 8% interest.¹⁸ From time to time, the vestry continued to make repairs on the building, and in 1886 a chapel¹⁹ was built on the east side of the church in keeping with the original architecture. In 1952 a new parish house was added, again in keeping with the original Gothic structure. In 1982 Joffrion Hall, a three-story Sunday School annex was dedicated, thus completing a master plan which would furnish adequate facilities for Nativity's 1400-member congregation.

¹⁷ Vestry Minutes, March 12, 1861.

¹⁸ Vestry Minutes, March 29, 1867.

¹⁹ Vestry Minutes, April 27, 1883, July 20, 1886.

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No. 8 Statement of Significance

APPENDIX A

DOCUMENTED WILLS OR WILLS & DUDLEY CHURCHES EXISTING IN NORTH AMERICA (1989)

(This listing is based on an initial tally found in Dr. Phoebe Stanton's The Gothic Revival & American Church Architecture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967). Additional information has been generously provided by the following individuals and organizations: in Ottawa, Mr. B.N. Hallett of the Historical Resources Branch, National Archives of Canada, and Ms. Constance Johnson, Ms. Meryl Oliver, and Ms. Janet Babek of Heritage Canada. In the United States, Ms. Betty Chauvin, Office of Cultural Development, State of Louisiana, Baton Rouge; the Connecticut Historical Commission, Hartford; the Office of New Jersey Heritage, Trenton; Mr. Andrew Dolkart, New York Landmarks Preservation Commission; the Maryland Historical Trust; Christine Fonda, Dover, New Hampshire; Mr. Paul Stevenson, Department of Community Development, Syracuse; Mr. Doug Mouncey, St. Paul's Cathedral, Syracuse; the Rev. James Putnam, Skaneateles, New York; and Mr. Richard Lothrop, Oberlin, Ohio)

UNITED STATES *

Alabama: Church of the Nativity, Huntsville (built as designed, 1857-59; chancel floor, original pulpit and lecturn replaced early 20th century; spire strengthened and rebuilt 1956-57).

St. John's Church, Montgomery (1854-55; nave lengthened and chancel added 1869-70; interior renovated).

Trinity Church, Mobile (1853-1880; church dismantled and rebuilt at new location, 1946; spire destroyed by Hurricane Frederick 1979 and rebuilt).

Connecticut: St. Peter's Church, Milford NR (1850-51; reroofed 1873 choir wing 1924; roodscreen removed & chancel floor raised).

Louisiana: Christ Church, Napoleonville (1853; left a "naked ruin" by the Civil War; restored 1869 and immediately struck by lightning; again restored 1870; belfry added 1896)

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- Maryland: St. Mary's Church, Emmorton (1851; small rural stone church; original stained glass replaced by opaque lights; cypress roof replaced by asbestos shingles).
- Mississippi: Chapel of the Cross, Annandale (1854; small rural church; essentially unchanged)
- New Hampshire: Holy Trinity Church, Claremont (1853; original corner tower destroyed by storm, 1938)
- New Jersey: The House of Prayer, Newark (1849-53; interior damaged by fire late 19th century; chancel renovated 1896)
- New York: St. George's Church, Flushing (1853-54; chancel rebuilt 1894, J. King James, architect; also later wood shingle spire)
- St. John's Church, Troy (1853-58; organ loft added at rear 1864; chancel redecorated and original center-pulpit arrangement replaced by altar-centered arrangement 1880; chancel damaged by fire 1905; center doors and porch added to vest front 1907-08)
- Ohio: Christ Church, Oberlin (1855-59; chancel and vestibule added 1868; stained glass windows installed 1955-61)
- Tennessee: Holy Trinity Church, Nashville (1852-53; upper stage of tower completed 1887; interior severely damaged during Civil War, including loss of original stained glass, altar, pews, and fittings; battlements of turret removed after 1940)

*Because of their strong physical resemblance to documented Wills and Dudley commissions, two other American churches have been suggested as products of their hand: the Church of the Nativity in Union, SC (1856-59) and Trinity Church, Natchitoches, LA (1857-60). The South Carolina church--a small stone Gothic structure--is strikingly similar to St. Anne's Chapel in Fredericton, New Brunswick, as well as St. Mary's Church, Emmorton, Maryland. The Louisiana church on the other hand is a brick Romanesque or Norman-style building akin to Christ Church, Oberlin, Ohio. Although it was projected to have a corner tower (never finished), Trinity Church in other respects is very similar in conception to the Ohio building.

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CANADA

New Brunswick: Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton (1845-53;
virtually unaltered)

St. Anne's Chapel (now Christ Parish Church)
Fredericton (1846)

Anglican Church, Burton (c. 1850)

Quebec: Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal (1857-59) Upon Wills' death in 1857,
completion supervised by architect Thomas Seaton Scott of Montreal.

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The church is at the northwest corner of Eustis Avenue and Greene Street, on a parcel running 222' west by southwest along Eustis Avenue from a point at the intersection of Eustis and Greene, thence turning 90 degrees south by southeast and running 150' to a point, thence turning 90 degrees east by northeast and running approximately 20' to a point, thence again turning 90 degrees south by southeast and running 150' to a point, thence turning 90 degrees east by northeast and running parallel to Gates Avenue approximately 60' to a point, thence turning 90 degrees north by northwest and running approximately 90' to a point, thence turning 90 degrees east by northeast and running 150' to a point on Greene Street, thence turning 90 degrees north by northwest and running approximately 207' along Greene Street to the point of beginning.

