

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Ursuline Convent

AND/OR COMMON

Ursuline Convent

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 1114 Chartres Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
2nd

New Orleans

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Louisiana

CODE

22

COUNTY

Orleans

CODE

071

**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: vacant soon to be museum

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans

STREET & NUMBER

7887 Walmsley Avenue

CITY, TOWN

New Orleans

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Louisiana

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Orleans Parish Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

421 Loyola Avenue

CITY, TOWN

New Orleans

STATE

Louisiana

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

HABS (31 sheets, 1934) (39 photos 1900, 1934)

DATE

1934

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/ Annex

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE  
D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" 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		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1732 the first building for the Ursuline nuns, was under construction. The first of two extant drawings by Andre De Batz of that year, shows the elevation of this large half-timbered structure and three floor plans. The second drawing is a cross section of the building. The convent had been designed by Broutin in 1727 when the nuns arrived in New Orleans from Rouen. Several years were spent in preparing plans and collecting materials for the convent. Michael Seringue was the builder.

Colombage or brick-between-post was the major form of construction in the city. Usually the walls were then given some protective covering of stucco or exterior boarding but the fact that the timbered walls of the Ursuline Convent were left exposed is confirmed by a drawing made as late as 1737. By then the defects of such construction in the humid climate were becoming apparent and the buildings were being constructed of all brick or protected colombage.

By 1745 the Ursuline Convent had deteriorated so badly that plans for a new building of brick were prepared by Broutin. This structure, the present building, was completed about 1750. It is likely that De Batz also took part in the design because several payments are listed to him for work on the new building.

Built of stucco covered brick, the new building could be called Louis XV in style. It is a formal, symmetrical building, severely designed in its lack of ornamentation. No applied orders of pilasters or columns relieved the plain walls. Only the slightly arched window set in shallow moldings, the rusticated quoins at the corners and narrow central pedimented pavilion break the even rhythm of the fenestration. The broad plain hipped roof, broken only by four small low set dormers contrasts well with the multi-windowed facade and completes the austere but not unpleasant, finely proportioned building.

The ground floor was used largely for the dormitory, classrooms, refectory, and infirmary of the orphanage, maintained by the nuns. The second floor contained cells for the nuns, a library, infirmary and storerooms. The winding stairway is believed to be from the original convent, installed in the new building.

The entrance portico was added by the Bishop who also constructed the gatehouse around 1825-30, and reoriented the building which originally faced the river. The Ursuline property covered two city squares, extending to Royal Street. An old ground plan shows a chapel at the corner of Ursulines and Decatur Streets, dedicated to Our Lady of Victory. Near the entrance to the grounds, along the levee, were also a reception house for visitors, the day school and a residence for the chaplain. Between these buildings and the convent were gardens. To the right, moving up from the riverside entrance, were the hospital buildings, and beyond them the military barracks. Adjoining

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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		

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SPECIFIC DATES      1745-1750      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Ignace Broutin & Andre De Batz

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although considerably altered, the Ursuline Convent, erected in 1745-52, is the finest surviving example of French Colonial public architecture in the United States. Designed in 1745 by Ignace Broutin, then Chief Engineer of Louisiana, and the architect Andre De Batz, to replace an earlier building, it is the only public building still standing in New Orleans that is known definitely to date from the French regime. In 1824 the present structure was turned over to the Bishop of New Orleans as a residence, and after 1899 it continued in use as offices for the Archdiocese and still later as a rectory for the adjacent St. Mary's Church. Despite great interior alterations and decay, the Convent is considered one of the most important historical and religious monuments in the United States and is one of the few remaining physical links with the French capitol in Louisiana.

### HISTORY

As early as 1726, it was decided that a group of Ursuline nuns from Rouen should go to New Orleans to establish a hospital for poor sick persons and to provide at the same time an education for young girls of wealthy families.

They arrived at New Orleans in October, 1727, and were temporarily housed in one of the larger houses of the young city. In 1734 their first building, a three story half-timber structure was completed. Due to the humid weather of Louisiana, the exposed timbers and brickwork quickly deteriorated and by 1744, the main building was near collapse.

Plans for the present building were prepared by Andre De Batz and approved by Broutin, the Chief Engineer of Louisiana in 1745. Construction followed in 1748-52. This building was also of half-timber but was protected from the weather by a coat of lime plaster stucco.

In 1823 the Ursulines built a third convent outside the city and presented the building and its land as a gift to the Bishop of New Orleans. The structure was used as a Catholic school for boys until the high cost of operation forced its closing in 1827. It was then leased to the New Orleans Public School System for four or five years. From 1831 to the end of 1834, the convent served as the State House for the state legislature. In 1850

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Barrois, Anna, The Old Ursuline Convent, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1973.  
 Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952.  
 Wilson, Samuel, "An Architectural History of the Royal Hospital and the Ursuline Convent of New Orleans," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol XXIX, No. 3, July 1946.  
 \_\_\_\_\_. "Louisiana Drawings by Alexandre De Batz," Journal of The Society of Architectural Historians, Vol XXII, No. 2, May 1963

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.5

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 5	7 8 3 6 7 0	3 3 1 7 8 5 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The grounds of the Ursuline Convent have greatly diminished, now occupying about one-third of a block. The boundary has been drawn to include all of the remaining land associated with the convent today, which forms a courtyard and creates somewhat of a separate environment for the **building**. ~~The former nuns residence,~~ now an office, carriage house, now a kitchen, St. Mary's Church which dates from 1845, and the 1870 school are within the boundary. Although they do not contribute to the national architectural significance of the landmark, they are, even in

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 Patricia Heintzleman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project original form prepared by Charles W. Snell, 1968.

ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey DATE 5/22/75

STREET & NUMBER 1100 L. Street, NW. TELEPHONE 202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN Washington STATE D.C.

# 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. Designated Oct 1, 1960. date

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

Boundary Certified:  
*George T. ...*  
 3/4/77 date

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
 ATTEST *[Signature]*  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

3/4/77

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the convent at the right, occupying part of the present land on which St. Mary's Church (1845) stands was the convent kitchen. The nuns property made an inverted "L" about where Charter Street now runs, and near the intersection of Chartres and Governor Nichol Streets was the cemetery. Vegetable gardens and playgrounds extended back to Royal Street.

In 1786 after Spanish domin~~ion~~ came to New Orleans, Don Andres Almonaster y Roxas, builder of the Cabildo and Presbytere, donated a new chapel to the nuns, built along Ursuline Street. He also repaired the convent roof at this time. By 1866, the chapel was in poor condition and on the site a seminary was constructed in 1870. This later became St. Mary's Italian School. The lower part of the walls are actually the walls of Almonaster's chapel.

Over the years the building has suffered many interior alter~~ations~~ and much deterioration. Today the convent is undergoing restoration and renovation. The gatehouse has been completed as has a small service building, once used by the sisters of the Holy Family, who served the Bishop. This has been converted and greatly modernized on the interior to serve as offices for the Archdiocese. A similar building behind the convent was probably a carriage house because of the large doorway, but is being done as a restored kitchen.

A garden, not historic to the convent but patterned after gardens of the period, has been put in the front area between the gatehouse and the convent. It may be changed into an herb garden which the sisters are known to have had. The original herb garden was located across the street where the Beauregard house and garden stand today. All of Old St. Mary's Italian School is to be demolished and the rear courtyard area is to be made into a garden and parking area. It is hoped the building will be ready to open in 1976.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

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New Orleans was elevated to the the rank of an Archdiocese and Monseigneur Blanc became the first Archbishop of New Orleans. The convent received its new designation of Archbishoprpic and continued as such until 1899 when the residence was moved to quarters on Explanade Avenue.

In 1845, St. Mary's Church was joined to the northeast end and in 1870 a seminary was constructed which later became St. Mary's Italian School. This structure was built on the site of Our Lady of Consolation Chapel, which was built in 1786 along Ursuline Street behind the convent and incorporated some of the earlier building's walls.

After 1899 the building continued to be used as offices for the archdiocese and as a seminary for priests. It is currently closed and is undergoing extensive exterior restoration and interior renovation with plans for turning it into a Catholic Museum and historic center.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Continuation of Verbal Boundary

**their** restored and renovated state, an important part of the history of the convent as an institution and a community complex. Beginning at the intersection of Ursuline Street and Chartres Street, the boundary runs southeast along the north curb of Ursuline Street to the rear property lines of buildings on Decatur Street, then northeast along this line to the end of Ursuline property at the rear property lines of buildings on Governor Nichols Street then northwest along this line to Chartres Street then southwest along the south curb of Chartres Street to the point of beginning as shown on Sketch Map A.