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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. John Baptist Church

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 31925 Lacroix Road N/A not for publication

city or town Dorseyville N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Iberville code 047 zip code 70788

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jon Fricker 12/14/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Jonathan Fricker, Deputy Date
SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): _____

JP Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register Date of Action
Guym Lapley 1/21/94

St. John Baptist Church
Name of Property

Iberville Parish, LA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

no style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls weatherboard
roof metal
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage/Black

Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance

c. 1871-1893

Significant Dates

c. 1871-1893

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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

Name of repository:

St. John Baptist Church
Name of Property

Iberville Parish, LA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	5	6	7	7	1	0	0	3	3	3	9	6	2	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

3

Zone			Easting					Northing						

2

Zone			Easting					Northing						

4

Zone			Easting					Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Please refer to sketch map.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date November 1993

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name St. John Baptist Church

street & number 31925 Lacroix Road telephone (504) 545-3475

city or town Dorseyville state Louisiana zip code 70788

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

St. John Baptist Church, Dorseyville, Iberville Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 1

St. John Baptist Church is a large frame building located in the small rural African American community of Dorseyville. It was built sometime between 1871 and 1875. The church's stylistic influences are so slight that the term "no style" is being used in the architectural classification section of this form. Despite a few alterations, the building easily retains its National Register eligibility as a symbol of the earliest history of Dorseyville.

St. John Baptist is a basilican plan building five bays deep with a second story gallery on three sides of the interior. The basic form and appearance of the church is mainly related to low-key rural Greek Revival churches of the mid-nineteenth century -- i.e., a clapboarded structure with tall windows, a partial entablature and a forward facing gable. However, unlike this prototype, St. John has a three stage entrance tower at its center. The detailing of the tower is largely Italianate. The first stage features a round arch entrance surmounted by a pediment. This in turn is surmounted by another pediment with an inset lunette. The second and third stages feature round arch louvered openings. Capping the tower is a low pyramidal steeple. Flanking the tower is a pair of secondary doors with unusual beveled edge boards attached in a manner suggestive of raised panels. The side windows are very unusual. Each tall opening features a six over six window at the top and at the bottom. These are separated by a central plain board marking the floor level of the interior gallery.

Many of the interior surrounds feature built up boards suggestive of Greek Revival fluting. The dominant feature of the interior is the previously mentioned gallery which has decorative horizontal panels below the railing.

St. John Baptist Church has experienced the following alterations:

(1) Early in the building's history jigsaw ornamentation was added to the peak of the pediment on the first stage of the entrance tower.

(2) A gabled single story addition was placed on the rear during a 1950s remodeling project. It contains a space for the choir and ancillary rooms. An eighty year old member of the church remembers that the back wall originally had two windows. It appears that when the addition was built, a wide arched opening was cut in the back wall to set off the newly created choir loft. The previously mentioned older member states that the arched surround has been there as long as she can remember; however, it is extremely unlikely that it is original (i.e., a wide arched surround on a back wall inscribing two windows).

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St. John Baptist Church, Dorseyville, Iberville Parish, LA

Section number 7 Page 2

(3) Also, in the 1950s the ceiling was fitted with celotex tiles, the walls were covered with paneling, and the posts supporting the balcony were encased in paneling and capitals were added. (Whether the original posts had capitals is not known.)

(4) Air conditioning units with ducts reaching almost a full story were added to the side elevations (two on each side).

(5) Some of the exterior sheathing has been replaced -- specifically, that on at least the first stage of the tower and some of the boards along the bottom of the building. Because the gauge was matched, this is only evident upon very close inspection.

(6) Sometime in the twentieth century the main front doors were removed and replaced with shorter doors. The space between the top of the doors and the base of the arch was filled with a single sheet of glass.

Assessment of Integrity:

Although the church has experienced some change over the years, almost all modifications have been on the interior or to the rear. The exterior looks much as it did when the building was completed, and there is no question that someone from the historic period would recognize it instantly.

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St. John Baptist Church, Iberville Parish, LA

Section number 8 Page 1

St. John Baptist Church is locally significant in the areas of ethnic heritage and exploration/settlement because it represents the earliest history of the African-American community of Dorseyville. The period of significance was chosen to represent the early history of the community. It spans from the construction of the church (c.1871) to 1893, by which time Dorseyville had a school (see below).

Dorseyville takes its name from Reverend Bazile Dorsey, the first pastor of St. John Church and the recognized founder of the community. Surrounded by sugarcane plantations, the village developed in the years immediately following the Civil War as a place for black agricultural workers to live. According to a cornerstone on the church, St. John was organized in 1868 and incorporated September 19, 1869. "B. Dorsey" is also inscribed on the stone. Conveyance records show that the property was acquired on October 30, 1871. An October 23, 1875 purchase of additional land refers to the church as being built.

The community was sufficiently established to appear on Mississippi River Commission maps of 1879-80. Various buildings are shown in what is labeled "Dorcyville," and the village's present layout was in place (two long streets running perpendicular to the Mississippi River). In 1881, a post office was established at Dorseyville, remaining in operation through 1918. By 1893, local children had a school, thanks to the efforts of St. John Baptist Church under the leadership of Reverend Dorsey. In a public/private arrangement very typical of black education in Louisiana at the time, the church provided a building and the parish school board some financial support. The two room school taught grades 1-7.

Unfortunately, little survives to represent the early history of Dorseyville. Although the school building is still there, it has been altered to such an extent that it would not be recognizable to someone from the historic period. Most of the residences are either modern or significantly altered older buildings. Surviving historic buildings include a small minority of homes (late nineteenth/early twentieth century) and St. John Baptist Church.

Although there is no written record of the founding of Dorseyville, it seems likely that it grew up around St. John's, given the early founding of the congregation and construction of the church building (i.e., just a few years after the end of the Civil War). Expressing the high aspirations of newly freed slaves and the pivotal role of the church in black culture, St. John is a large, rather pretentious building within its context. As a powerful visual reminder of Dorseyville's early history, it is an excellent candidate for the National Register.

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St. John Baptist Church, Dorseyville, Iberville Parish, LA

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Bibliography

Conveyance Records, Iberville Parish.

Mississippi River Commission Maps, 1879-80.

Cornerstone on St. John Baptist Church giving date congregation organized and incorporated.

Riffel, Judy, editor. Iberville Parish History. Baton Rouge, Le Comite des Archives de la Louisiane, 1985.

Historical background on Dorseyville school, including a historic photo and cornerstone bearing date of 1893. Copy in Register file, Division of Historic Preservation.

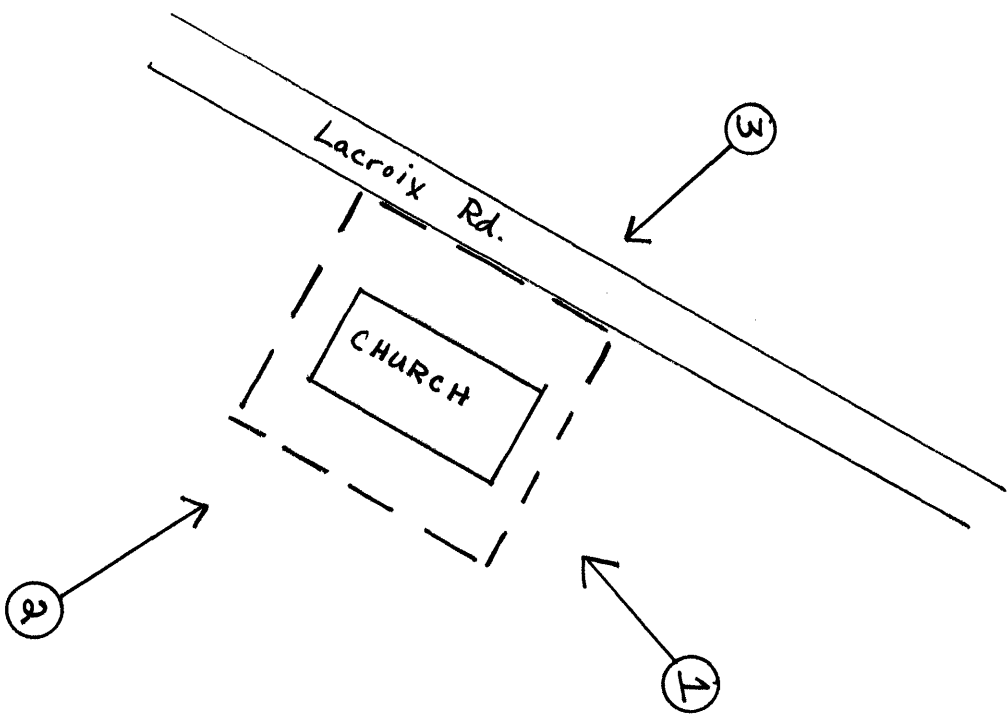
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

St. John Baptist Church, Iberville Parish, LA

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The boundaries were chosen to encompass the significant resource. They do not follow property lines because to have done so would have meant including various non-contributing elements.



St. John Baptist
Church
Dorseyville
Iberville Parish, LA

↑
N
1" = 60'
--- BOUNDARY