

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0678708

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED MAY 25 1979

**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 St. Francis Chapel
Saint Francis of Pointe Coupee

AND/OR COMMON
Saint Francis Chapel

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER NW at La. Hwy 10 on LA 10
La. Hwy 420 East of the intersection with La. Hwy 10 (Old River Road)

CITY, TOWN New Roads VICINITY OF 8th - Gillis Long
STATE Louisiana CODE 022 COUNTY Pointe Coupee CODE 077

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Congregation of Saint Mary of False River Roman Catholic Church
STREET & NUMBER 348 West Main Street
CITY, TOWN New Roads STATE Louisiana

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Courthouse of Pointe Coupee Parish
STREET & NUMBER East Main Street
CITY, TOWN New Roads STATE Louisiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Louisiana Historic Sites Survey
DATE 1978 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS State Historic Preservation Office
CITY, TOWN Baton Rouge STATE Louisiana

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>1930's</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Francis Chapel is situated approximately 100 feet back of the Mississippi River on the extreme outskirts of New Roads. The setting is flat, open, and largely planted with sugar cane. Because the church was moved onto its present site in the 1930's, only the building itself is being nominated to the register, and not the surrounding land. The church was moved to provide for the construction of the levee. The character of the present setting is, however, similar to the original.

The simple rectangular building has an open hall church plan of four bays, with a small balcony over the central front entrance. This balcony is reached by means of a small side stair. The rear (5th bay) of the church is occupied by a chancel sandwiched between two sacristy rooms.

The clapboard building has a balloon frame structure with a truss roof. The small frontal tower has a wood base in the attic which contains two hewn beams which predate the building considerably. The building is raised approximately two feet above the ground on small concrete piers which were built when the church was moved.

The church has a simple gable roof form with a small frontal tower which is set at the ridge of the roof. The two-stage tower has a gable on all four sides with in-set louvred openings which have pointed tops. A small octagonal steeple with a cross surmounts the tower. The front facade is ornamented with barge boards in the gable and attenuated pilasters at the corners. In addition, there is a lancet shaped niche containing a statue of St. Francis. The main front door and all of the windows have lancet shaped frames.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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

1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Francis Chapel is of significance in three areas--architecture, social/humanitarian, and exploration/settlement. The present building, which dates from 1895, is an example of Gothic Revival church architecture. In addition, St. Francis Chapel is of social/humanitarian significance due to the community-wide movement that carried out the disassembling and removal of the old 1760 building when it was threatened by the Mississippi River in the early 1890's and the construction of the present building. Finally, though it dates from 1895, the chapel is of significance in the area of exploration/settlement because, as the building which is the direct descendant of the original St. Francis church, it continues to be the foremost reminder to Catholics in the area that the parish of St. Francis of Pointe Coupee (established 1728) was one of the first parishes established in Louisiana during the French colonial period.

St. Francis Chapel is of architectural significance as a local example of builder Gothic Revival church architecture. It is the oldest extant church building in the New Roads area, and also one of only two examples of Gothic Revival architecture in the vicinity.

The history of St. Francis of Pointe Coupee as a parish dates back to the early eighteenth century. Father Maximin, a French Capuchin, was appointed the first resident pastor of Pointe Coupee in 1728, and this marks the establishment of the parish of Saint Francis of Pointe Coupee, only the eighth parish established by the Catholic Church in the area presently comprising the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Father Maximin remained there only a short time and the area was visited irregularly by priests until Father Pierre, also a Capuchin, was appointed pastor in 1736. The first church, named in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, was dedicated on March 16, 1738. Two bells for the parish church were blessed, and tradition has it that one of these bells is in the steeple of the present building.

In 1760, due to encroachments of the Mississippi River, a new church was built on a different site from the first one. According to an article by Samuel Wilson, Jr., this building apparently stood relatively unchanged until the river again threatened it in the 1890's. Wilson found accounts and illustrations of the building interesting. It "resembled a typical, small, one-story French colonial plantation house surrounded by galleries, a house

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Baudier, Roger. The Catholic Church in Louisiana. New Orleans, 1939. Reprinted 1972 by Louisiana Library Association Public Library Section, 1972. Pp. 119, 132-133, 159, 190, 416.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 per J. Francis BF

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 | 644890 | 3400370
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B [] | [] | []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C [] | [] | []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D [] | [] | []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Rev. Frank M. Uter, Pastor Saint Mary's Church

ORGANIZATION

Restoration Committee of Saint Francis Chapel

DATE

November 1, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

348 West Main Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

New Roads

STATE

Louisiana

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

E. Bernard Lamer

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

2/26/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, SERVICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Charles H. Brown

DATE

5-25-79

ATTEST:

Bill Tolovach

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

May 24, 1979

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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not unlike the Krebs house at Pascagoula, one of the oldest surviving Gulf coast structures. . . The belfry, however, gave the structure an unmistakable church-like appearance." He concluded that it was "unfortunate that this important colonial landmark could not have been saved."

The congregation of St. Francis Chapel remains today very much aware of this 1760 church building. In the chapel is a scale model of the old building, done by J. D. Stonaker, probably in the 1940's or 1950's. According to one newspaper account, "the model is true to scale and complete in every detail. Inside can be seen the tiny alters, pews, and other furnishings, all precise reproductions."

During the course of the nineteenth century, the parish of St. Francis fostered several new parishes. Saint Mary (New Roads) became a parish in 1866, Immaculate Conception in Chenal (now Lakeland) in 1867, and Our Lady of the Seven Dolours at New Texas Landing (Raccourci) in 1872. In 1889, St. Francis ceased to be an independent parish and became a mission of Morganza and finally of New Roads.

As Wilson observed, it was unfortunate that the 1760 building could not be saved when threatened by the Mississippi River in the 1890's. But it was not for lack of effort that the building was lost. The Pointe Coupee Banner for 1891-1895 contains a week-by-week account of the disassembling of the 1760 building and the unsuccessful attempt to reconstruct it. In its issue of 21 February 1891, the Banner noted that the river had already taken most of the cemetery around the old church and that it was coming ever nearer to the building itself. The article went on to call for the preservation of the building, suggesting that since it could not be moved due to the levee at its rear, the church should be dismantled and transported to a new location and rebuilt there.

In the weeks following, the paper reported that it had received "subscriptions toward removing Saint Francis Church" and called for more. On 30 May 1891, it reported, "The river is now well within its banks at Saint Francis church and we may look at any moment for caving which will carry the old church into the river." The paper called for more money. On 25 July 1891 the Banner reported that the women of the area had given a profitable fair for the benefit of St. Francis. Over a year later, on 6 and 13 August 1892, the paper reported that "Messrs. Louis Garon and Ephriam Desormes, two of our foremost carpenters" had been awarded the contract for disassembling the church and had done a good job on the task.

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On 19 November 1892, the Banner stated that Father F. A. B. Laforest, pastor of the church at New Texas and the most important leader of the movement to save the old church, "will at an early date contract with a builder for the re-construction of St. Francis church." However, the article went on, "Owing to the general decayed condition of the timbers the idea of constructing the new building on the same plan as the old will have to be abandoned, and a much smaller edifice built." Thus the original plan to reconstruct the building as closely as possible in its original manner had to be discarded out of necessity. A week later the paper assured its readers that "as much of the old timber will be used in the construction as will be compatible with the solidity and duration in the new structure."

On 1 June 1895, the Banner provided an account of the dedication of the new Saint Francis church, which had taken place on May 29, and gave special thanks to Jules Labatut, who had donated the new site. The dedication, which was the formal culmination of the movement which had begun four years before to save the 1760 building, "drew fully one half of the population of the lower portion of the parish and also many from New Texas, Raccourci and elsewhere." Although the movement failed to save the old building, it had at least succeeded in erecting a new one in which the old would never be forgotten.

The present building has served the Catholics in the area since 1895. It remained on its original site until the 1930's when once again the river forced it to move. At that time, construction of a new levee required that Saint Francis be moved to its present site.

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ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Nolan, Charles E. A Southern Catholic Heritage, Volume 1: Colonial Period, 1704-1803. New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1976.
Pp. xiii-xv, 49-50.

Pointe Coupee Banner, 1891-1895.

Stowell, Blanche. "St. Francis and the River," Baton Rouge Morning Advocate,
23 May 1954.

Wilson, Samuel, Jr. "Religious Architecture in French Colonial Louisiana,"
Winterthur Portfolio 8, pp. 103-104.

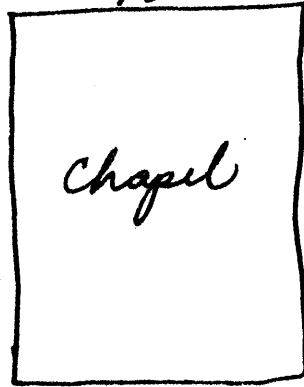
St. Mary's Church

348 WEST MAIN ST.
NEW ROADS, LA. 70760

1 arpent wide (191.87')

117' from road

42'



4 arpents deep
(767.48')