

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Blessed Sacrament Academy (Convent of Perpetual Adoration)

and/or common Blessed Sacrament School

2. Location

street & number 1525 Cotton Avenue, S. W. _____ not for publication

city, town Birmingham _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district 6th

state Alabama _____ code 35211 _____ county Jefferson _____ code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name The Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament

street & number P. O. Box 2429

city, town Lafayette _____ vicinity of _____ state Louisiana 70502

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 716 North 21st Street

city, town Birmingham _____ state Alabama 35203

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory _____ has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery _____ state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Convent of the Perpetual Adoration is a symmetrical five (5) bay, four story building with classical form and detailing. It measures 141' x 100' 8". The ground floor is faced with smooth-cut limestone and the three upper stories with cream-colored brick. The end and central bays are treated as projecting pavillions. The central bay receives primary emphasis with the placement of an elaborate classical portico at the second-story level. A wide flight of stairs leads up to the portico, which resembles a baldachin, with two Ionic columns supporting full entablatures and a rounded arch which frames a bas relief of angels kneeling on either side of a monstrance. At the roofline the rounded-arched pediment is repeated, here broken to accommodate a cross finial. Within each end bay is a shallow three-story projection with stone surrounds. Stone lintels are placed above the windows, and a heavily dentiled cornice crowns the building at the roofline.

Most of the interior consists of large, plain rectangular rooms that are not architecturally distinguished. Of exception are the primary rooms at the second-floor level. The entrance hall and the rooms on either side are decorated with delicate egg-and-dart cornice molding, picture molding and the original suspended light fixtures. The chapel, which occupies the central space of the second floor, projecting to the rear balcony, is defined by giant Ionic pilasters and decorated ceiling beams that run between them. The main altar, set with a recess beneath a deep coffered ceiling, is surmounted by a large tabernacle frame; it is flanked by two elaborate side altars along the south wall. Painted stenciling of geometric designs, medallions and arabesques covers the walls and ceiling. Twelve beautiful non-figurative stained glass windows light the chapel.

ALTERATIONS INCLUDE:

1. The East wall creating the "academy entrance and cloak room" has been removed.
2. Ceilings on the ground floor have been lowered in "halls", "children's refectory", "sister's refectory", "serving room", "pantry", and "kitchen".
3. Hall walls have been partially paneled on ground and first floors.
4. Walls dividing the "music room" have been removed. Halls have been paneled partially.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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 1912 **Builder/Architect** A. O. von Herbulis

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE: The Convent of the Perpetual Adoration is architecturally significant as a rare local interpretation of the French Renaissance Revival style. The fine classical detailing on the exterior, particularly the portico, and the unique and beautiful chapel on the second (main) floor of the interior exemplify the architectural quality of the building, the only combined convent and school in the city and possibly the state. Designed by architect A. O. von Herbulis of Washington, D. C., the building is a clear interpretation of French Renaissance motifs (an appropriate choice for an order originally French), including the use of the ground floor as a podium for the upper floors, the use of round-headed full and broken pediments and the combination of restrained planar forms with rich classical detailing. The chapel, which occupies the central space of the second (main) floor, projecting to the rear, is a beautiful classically articulated space. This two-story room with a rear balcony, is defined by gigantic Ionic pilasters and decorated ceiling beams which rest upon them, running across the width of the central space. The main altar, set within a recess beneath a deep coffered ceiling, is surmounted by a large tabernacle frame; it is flanked by two elaborate side altars. Painted stenciling of geometric designs, medallions and arabesques covers the walls and ceiling. Twelve beautiful non-figurative stained glass windows light the chapel. The entrance hall and side rooms to the front of the chapel are decorated with delicate egg-and-dart cornice molding, picture molding and original suspended light fixtures. The other interior rooms are rectangular, strictly functional spaces with little architectural detail. The building has been little altered; the central round-headed pediment was filled at the sides with brick to prevent pigeons from roosting on the ledges. A laundry building was built on the school grounds in 1946 and still stands.

EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE: The Convent of the Perpetual Adoration is significant in the field of education as the earliest Catholic high school and one of the first Catholic elementary schools in Birmingham, as the center for cultural development in the local and Catholic community and as one of the few schools operated by the sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament in the U. S. The school, known as the Blessed Sacrament Academy, developed into a select elementary and high school serving the parish of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church and the Birmingham community, and housed students from throughout the 48 contiguous states, Mexico, Canada and Puerto Rico. Besides serving the community with an excellent academic program, the school was a cultural learning center for the West end and Catholic communities. Foreign languages, piano, organ, violin, guitar and dramatics were taught. The school was also well known for its pageants and plays that entertained the community. The Blessed Sacrament Academy was the last school operated by the sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament in the U. S. Its closing ended 66 years of the sisters' devotion to education in Birmingham and 108 years of devotion to education in the U. S.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 2.78

Quadrangle name Birmingham South

Quadrangle scale 1:2400, 7.5'

UMT References

A	<u>16</u>	<u>513320</u>	<u>317053410</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See area in yellow on attached scale map.

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 Sara May Alice Bowsher Ellen Mertins
 (Alcoholism Recovery Center) (Birmingham Historical Society) (Alabama Historical Commission)
 organization Alabama Historical Commission date October 16, 1980
 street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 832-6621
 city or town Montgomery state Alabama

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Miss B. Howard Jr.
 title SHPO Alabama date October 17, 1980

For HCRS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 Keeper of the National Register Carol D. Shall date 11-28-80
 Attest: Carol Dubois date 11/28/80
 Chief of Registration

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RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE: The Convent of the Perpetual Adoration is religiously significant because it symbolizes the contribution the sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament made to the Birmingham community, and to the nation. Providing 66 years of Christian example and religious instruction, they guided thousands of children from the community, the 48 contiguous states, Mexico, Canada and Puerto Rico in the Catholic faith. From its founding in 1911 to 1974, when it closed, the Convent of the Perpetual Adoration served as a center for those of the Catholic community to gather for worship and for social and festive occasions.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On March 25, 1654, Catherine de Bar, the Blessed Mother Mechtilde, founded the order of Perpetual Adoration in Paris, France. An order of sisters of the Perpetual Adoration was not formed, however, until 1851 when Reverend Aloysius Fuller established a congregation devoted to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the education of youth in Belle Magny, Haute Alsace, France (the present site of the Motherhouse in Europe). In 1872 the Motherhouse sent five sisters to the United States to establish a foundation. They arrived in New Orleans on October 12, 1872 and founded their convent in Waggaman, Louisiana, in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The congregation grew rapidly, and in 1892, became a separate foundation, and the convent in Waggaman, Louisiana became the Motherhouse in America. Sister Augustine became its Superior General.

In 1881, Sister Augustine had passed through Birmingham enroute to New York, and stopped at Elyton Station, less than a mile from where the convent now stands. Tradition holds that Sister Augustin threw a sacred medal on a vacant lot near the station, and beseeched the Virgin Mary to allow her to return to establish a convent on the site. As Mother Augustine, she returned in 1911 at the request of Reverend Patrick Turner (the founder of the Blessed Sacrament parish) to build a convent and open a school. On October 27, 1912 the cornerstone was laid for the convent; the building was dedicated in solemn ceremony on October 8, 1913. The Convent of the Perpetual Adoration, known as the Blessed Sacrament Academy, served as a Catholic high school until 1948, and as a Catholic elementary school until it closed in 1974. The Convent was an educational and social center for the Catholic community in Birmingham.

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"Priest Dedicate West End Convent", Birmingham News, October 8, 1913.

B.S.A Lattice - Being A History of Blessed Sacrament Academy, Blessed Sacrament Academy, 1929.

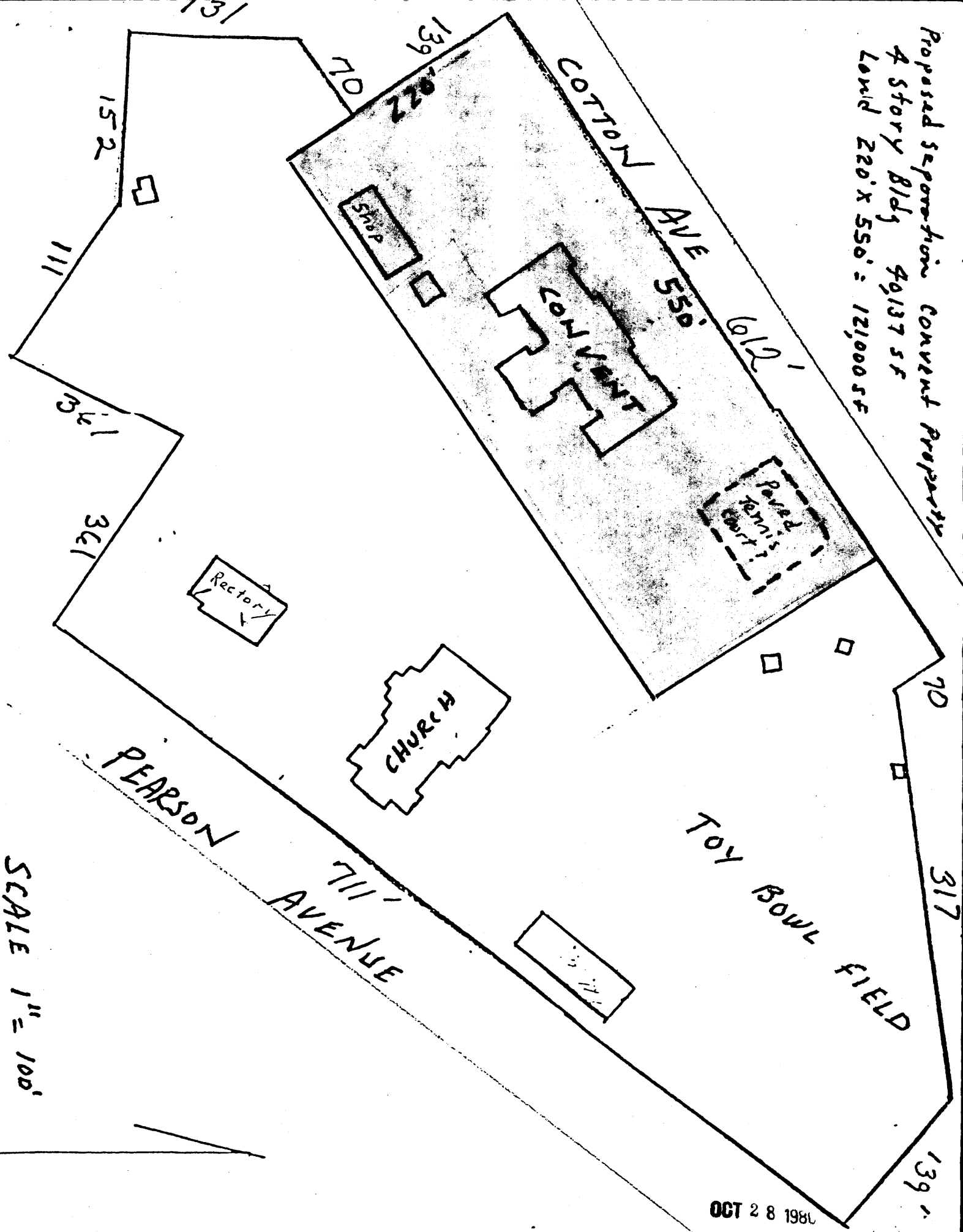
The Catholic Women's Club of West End, Rose Lovett, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, Alabama 1961.

"Blessed Sacrament School Plans Jubilee Celebration", Alabama Catholic Paper, April 21, 1972.

Personal Interview with Rose Lovett, Birmingham, Alabama, August 29, 1980.

Original Building Plans, for Blessed Sacrament Academy, A.O. von Herbulis.

Proposed separation Convent Property
4 Story Bldg 40,137 SF
Lnd 220' x 550' = 121,000 SF



SCALE 1" = 100'

OCT 28 1986