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 National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any 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.

1. Name of Property
Historic Name: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex
Other Names/Site Number: N/A
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location
Street & Number: 2400 Napoleon Avenue
City or town: New Orleans   State: LA   County: Orleans
Not for Publication: □   Vicinity: □

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 at the following level(s) of significance:
□ national □ state □ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: □ A □ B □ C □ D

________________________________________  _____________
Signature of certifying official/Title: Kristin Sanders, State Historic Preservation Officer   Date

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property □ meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria.

________________________________________  _____________
Signature of commenting official:   Date

Title: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex  Orleans Parish, LA
Name of Property  County and State

4. National Park Certification
I hereby certify that the property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other, explain: ___________________________

Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action

5. Classification
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

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Category of Property (Check only one box.)

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

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): RELIGION/religious facility; RELIGION: church school; RELIGION/church-related residence

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): VACANT/NOT IN USE
7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.): Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Mission Revival; Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Mediterranean Revival; Modern Movement: International Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
  foundation: brick, concrete
  walls: brick, stucco, concrete
  roof: clay tile, copper, modified bitumen, asphalt
  other: wood, glass, aluminum, steel

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex, located at 2400 Napoleon Avenue in New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, was constructed between 1925 and 1957 as a complete complex of parochial buildings in the Freret neighborhood of Uptown. The complex contains three contributing resources: 1) a Mission Revival church (1925); 2) a Mediterranean Revival-style rectory (1928); and 3) a combined parochial school and convent with a gymatorium (auditorium/gymnasium), which doubled as a parish hall (1957). Near the southwest corner of the site are two non-contributing buildings: 1) a temporary trailer and 2) a prefabricated shed. All of the buildings are vacant. The parcel was subdivided in recent years to legally separate the church and rectory from the school, and today this distinction is marked by chain-link fencing.

Designed by the New Orleans architectural firm of Diboll & Owen, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church is steel-frame construction with hollow-tile infill covered in stucco, stained-glass windows, cast-iron grilles, a red barrel-tile roof, a central clear-span dome over the nave, and a pair of bell towers topped with copper-clad domed roofs and cast-stone ornamentation. The Napoleon Avenue façade is further defined by a three-arch portico with a barrel-tiled overhang and a plateresque cast-stone Mission Revival-style parapet with a central niche and pointed finials. The plastered interior is defined by a spacious, aisleless nave, an apse at the western end flanked by a pair of sacristies, and a narthex and mezzanine-level choir loft at the eastern end. The pews have been removed and some flooring has been demolished due to subsidence of the concrete foundation. The two-story raised-basement rectory, which is attached to the rear of the church by an open-air stuccoed-brick walkway, was designed by New Orleans architect Paul G. Charbonnet. It consists of an interior wood frame with stucco-clad concrete-block exterior walls and a concrete foundation. A one-story steel-frame addition was constructed on the north side of the rectory in 1991. Character-defining features include a side-gable roof with exposed rafter ends; steel casement windows; cast-iron grilles; arched portico entrance with tiled steps; intact layout; and interior finishes such as wood floors, plaster walls, and beamed ceilings in the former dining room. On the western end is a two-story veranda that was historically but not presently screened. The rectory and church are both mid-renovation as part of a stalled historic tax credit project. The parochial school contains sixteen classrooms on the first and second floors; a gymatorium with basketball court, stage, and concrete bleachers; a cafeteria, and a fourteen-cell convent with a dedicated chapel on the third floor. The Mid-century Modern building is steel and concrete construction faced in tan brick with cast-stone detailing, aluminum and glass-block windows, and a flat roof with terrace for the sisters’ use. The layout is intact as are all historic finishes, including patterned terrazzo floors and stairs, aluminum stair railings, plaster and tiled walls, multi-light wood interior doors and transoms, and in-classroom lockers and chalkboards.
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex

All of the contributing buildings possess good exterior and interior integrity. Alterations are minor and/or reversible and do not significantly detract from the historic appearance of the individual buildings or from the complex as a whole, which clearly reads as a complete assemblage of historic parochial buildings that occupies the entirety of a city block.

**Narrative Description**

**Property Overview**

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex is located at 2400 Napoleon Avenue in New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, in a section of Uptown known as the Freret neighborhood. The complex occupies a city block, which is bounded by Napoleon Avenue to the east, Freret Street to the north, Jena Street to the west, and LaSalle Street to the south.

To the west and south of the complex is an early twentieth-century residential neighborhood comprised of predominantly one- and two-story double shotgun houses and bungalows. Napoleon Avenue is a wide north-south thoroughfare with a central grassy median. It is lined with large, early twentieth-century single-family residences and several medical buildings, including the sprawling Ochsner Baptist complex one block to the north (1926; expanded 1980s). A streetcar ran along Napoleon Avenue until the route was discontinued in the 1950s. On the northern side of the complex is Freret Street, a historically low-rise commercial corridor and the main east-west artery of the neighborhood.

The Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex consists of three contributing resources:

1. **Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church** (1925)
2. **Our Lady of Lourdes Rectory** (1928)
3. **Our Lady of Lourdes School and Convent** (1957), which also includes a “gymatorium” (combined auditorium-gymnasium)

In addition, the complex includes two non-contributing resources located at the southwest corner of the site: 1) a temporary one-story metal-clad storage trailer and 2) a small prefabricated shed.

The Mission Revival-style church and the Mediterranean Revival-style rectory were constructed a few years apart and, while designed by different architects, are stylistically cohesive. Both styles were popular in the early twentieth century, and both incorporate stuccoed exterior walls and clay-tile roofs. The Mission Revival style references the simple Spanish Colonial churches of California and the American Southwest, while the Mediterranean Revival style draws more broadly from the Classically derived architecture of the Mediterranean coast, including Italy and Spain. The school and convent, constructed more than a decade after World War II, is a Mid-century Modern building typical of schools constructed by both the Archdiocese and the public school system in the postwar period.

The church and rectory have been vacant since 2008, when the parish merged with two others, St. Monica and St. Matthias, to form Blessed Trinity Parish at the former St. Matthias parish complex at 3928 General Taylor Street in Broadmoor. The school and convent closed following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In 2008, it became Sojourner Truth Academy, a charter school for high school-age students, and in 2012 it became the new home of Holy Rosary Academy and High School, which closed in 2019. The building has been vacant since that time.

The Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex is located within the boundaries of the Uptown New Orleans Historic District (NRHP, 1985), which has a period of significance of 1820 to 1935. The church and rectory are listed as contributing to the district, but the postwar school and convent building is not.

**Site and Setting**

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The parish buildings are arranged on the site to create an interior playground and surface parking lot that cuts laterally through the center of the block. Vehicles access the lot via driveways on the Napoleon Avenue/east side and the Jena Street/west side. A second surface parking lot is located behind the rectory at the southwest corner of the site.

The church is oriented east to face Napoleon Avenue and sits at the southeast corner of the site. Its primary east facade is set back from the street and fronted by a paved walkway and curved sections of lawn. Between the sidewalk and the street are a pair of live oak trees that partially obscure the façade from view. The south façade faces LaSalle Street and is fronted by lawn and a row of mature juniper trees.

The rectory faces LaSalle Street and is separated from the public right-of-way by a strip of lawn, concrete-curbed planting beds, and mature juniper trees. The east façade is connected to the rear of the church (at the southwest sacristy) by a stucco-covered brick open-air walkway with arched openings that is set back approximately thirty feet from the property line to create a small courtyard. To the north of the walkway is another small courtyard. The west façade of the rectory, which is dominated by a two-story verandah, fronts onto Jena Street and the corner parking lot, which has a dedicated driveway on LaSalle Street. A two-car wood-frame garage adjacent to the parking lot was demolished c. 2016.

The L-shaped school and convent dominates the north side of the property. The long side of the L stretches the full length of the block along Freret Street. On the eastern end it is anchored by the gymatorium, which is accessible from Napoleon Avenue as well as from the interior of the site. The short side of the L runs along Jena Street and terminates at the western driveway, which separates the school from the rectory. The primary entrance to the school is at the northwest corner of the building at Freret and Jena Streets, and the convent entrance is at the south end of the Jena Street wing. All three of the building’s street-facing facades are separated from the public rights-of-way by strips of lawn.

1) Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, 1925 (Contributing) | Architects: Diboll & Owen

Overview

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church was completed in 1925 according to the design of Diboll & Owen, a New Orleans architectural firm known for its institutional work. The new church replaced the parish’s original wood-frame church, which also housed a small school and rectory (1905; demolished 1956). The exterior of the new church was designed in the Mission Revival style, a popular choice for churches nationally in the 1910s and 1920s, and the interior was designed in the Renaissance Revival style.

The building is steel-frame construction on a concrete pile foundation with hollow-tile wall infill. The largely unornamented exterior walls are covered in textured stucco. The modified cruciform footprint has a wider-than-average double-height main body, a shallow one-story transept, and a squared-off rather than semi-circular apse flanked by asymmetrical flat-roofed one-story sacristies and a meeting room. The interior is dominated by an expansive clear-span dome over the nave with no side aisles and no structural columns to obstruct views of the sanctuary at the western end. The dome, which was allegedly modeled after the one at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary in Lourdes, France (1899), is concealed beneath the shallow-pitched front-gable roof. The main roof and those of the transept are eaveless and covered in red clay barrel-tile sheds. At the east façade is a decorative parapet defining the primary entrance. The two tower-like structures flanking the entrance are roofed in oxidized copper and topped with copper crucifixes. The flat roofs of the rear sacristies are covered in modified bitumen and bordered by short stuccoed parapets.

The church is mid-renovation as part of a stalled historic tax credit project.

Exterior (Photos 1-2, 4)

The primary east/Napoleon Avenue façade provides the main entrance to the church. A set of wide, shallow concrete steps with contemporary pipe handrails at either end rises up to a three-arch portico with scrolled keystones, a red clay barrel-tile shed roof, and an incised sign band that reads “Deo et Dominae Nostrae des Lourdes.” Beyond the handrails are cast-

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Interiors

The nave was designed to accommodate 750 parishioners. The space has terrazzo floors, which were installed in 1945; plastered walls; and plastered-dome ceiling bordered by a fluted plaster band at the base that is accentuated by gilded cast-plaster blocks with an inset cross design. Where the dome terminates at the walls of the narthex and sanctuary, at either end of the nave, the structural load is carried over to plastered barrel arches that are marked at each end by a gilded...
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Corinthian pilaster. All of the pews have been removed, and the floor has been partially demolished due to subsidence of the concrete foundation, which the parish struggled to manage for decades.6

The empty transept has barrel-vaulted plaster ceilings, plaster walls, and terrazzo floors. Off the north side is the Our Lady of Lourdes grotto, which was formed in molded plaster to resemble the rocky cave near Lourdes, France, where the Virgin Mary was said to appear to fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. Off the south side is the former confessional.

At the western end of the nave is the apse containing the sanctuary. This space has a barrel-vaulted ceiling, plastered walls with Corinthian pilasters and cornice molding, a patterned terrazzo floor with marble bases (installed in 1945), and a Baroque arched-top marble and cast-plaster altarpiece decorated with seashells, gilding, scrollwork, niches, and rosettes. Arched-top paneled-wood doors to the left and right access the sacristies. Flanking the sanctuary and facing the nave are side altars with compatible decorative motifs, and above each is a circular fresco depicting Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection.

To the north and south of the sanctuary are two sacristies, which are private spaces where the priest prepares for mass and where vestments and other items used in the act of worship are stored. The interiors of the sacristies, and the corridor that connects them behind the sanctuary, are simply finished with plaster walls and ceilings (partially removed), picture molding and chair rails, and concrete-slab floors. The south sacristy contains built-in cabinets for vestments and a pair of wall-mounted porcelain-enamedel wash basins. On the southern end of the south sacristy are a meeting room and passageway to the rectory that are finished in a similar manner to the sacristies.

Alterations and Integrity

The modifications made to Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church since its completion in 1925 have little impact on the building’s historic integrity or have gained historic significance in their own right. The exterior remains unchanged. The terrazzo floors, which were installed in 1945, are a historic modification. The removal of the pews and the partial demolition of the floor are associated with essential structural repairs to stabilize the building. The pews, which will not be reinstalled since the church is no longer active, are furniture that is not critical to the interior’s identity as a historic Catholic church.

2) Our Lady of Lourdes Rectory, 1928 (Contributing) | Architect: Paul G. Charbonnet

Overview

The Mediterranean Revival-style Our Lady of Lourdes Rectory was constructed in 1928 behind the church at the southwest corner of the complex. An open-air stuccoed-brick walkway connects the east elevation to the passageway off the south sacristy of the church, which reinforces the relationship between the two buildings. Designed by New Orleans architect Paul G. Charbonnet, the two-story raised-basement building served as a private residence and offices for the parish priest, his assistants, and lay staff. Prior to its completion, the priest resided first on the ground floor of the original combination church-rectory-school building, which was remodeled to serve exclusively as a school until the current school was completed in 1957. In 1911, a two-story Craftsman-style rectory was erected at the northeast corner of the complex, which was converted into a convent when the current rectory was completed (demolished).

The rectory is wood-frame construction with textured stucco-clad concrete-block exterior walls and a concrete foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles, which replaced the historic red clay barrel tiles matching the roof of the church, and has overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends. A cross gable marks the main entrance on LaSalle Street. The building’s historically rectangular footprint was expanded in 1991 with a one-story steel-frame addition erected on the north side of the building.

The raised-basement level of the rectory was historically used for offices, reception, storage, and mechanical equipment. The main floor was relegated to bedrooms for lay staff and to communal spaces, including a dining room, breakfast room, and kitchen. On the third floor were the private quarters of the parish priest and his assistants, including bedrooms and offices.\(^7\)

The rectory is currently mid-renovation as part of a stalled historic tax credit project.

**Exterior (Photos 2-5)**

The rectory’s primary façade is six bays wide and faces south onto LaSalle Street. The main entrance, which accesses the building’s main floor, is placed off-center and consists of a flight of tiled steps leading up to an entrance portico with stuccoed-brick plinths to either side topped with tapered incised pillars. The portico has an arched opening with a crucifix keystoned, paired pilasters with corbels supporting a plain entablature, and decorative iron gates. Centered above the entablature is a niche for a statue (non-extant) flanked by two steel casement windows. Above the niche, filling out the cross gable, is stucco banding culminating in a stucco crucifix. Beyond the portico entrance is a tiled stair landing, followed by a second flight of stairs up to a final landing and a pair of one-light wood entrance doors. Windows throughout the south façade are paired steel casements with transoms on the upper levels and fixed-light steel sashes with cast-iron grilles at basement level. In the upper left corner of the façade is a small balcony with a stucco and barrel-tile railing accessed by a pair of multi-light wood doors.

The east façade, where the walkway connects the rectory to the church, is three bays wide with a regular fenestration pattern and no architectural ornamentation. Like those on the south façade, windows are paired steel casements on the upper levels and fixed-light steel sashes with cast-iron grilles at basement level. The door leading from the walkway into the raised basement is missing and the opening secured by a temporary plywood door.

The north façade, which faces the interior of the site and the rear of the school, is six bays wide and similar to the east façade in its lack of ornamentation. Windows on the upper two levels are paired steel casements. The majority of the first floor is concealed by the 1991 addition. The low-slope roof of the addition connects to the historic façade just below the sill height of the main-floor windows. On the western end of the north façade, near Jena Street, is a one-room-deep two-story appendage topped with a small balcony, which is accessed by a pair of multi-light wood doors. The balcony connects to the top level of the three-story verandah that dominates the rectory’s west façade.

The west façade has a full-width three-story wood-frame verandah and a secondary stuccoed stair accessing the kitchen on the main floor. The rehabilitation work approved for this façade has not been completed. The verandah has a low-sloped roof with exposed rafter ends that was historically supported by monumental stuccoed columns that have been replaced with vertical steel framing members. The simple wood picket railings have also been removed. Windows on the upper two levels are paired steel casements and doors on the basement and main levels are missing.

**Interior (Photos 13-15)**

The interior of the rectory’s raised basement was gutted following Hurricane Katrina-related flooding in 2005 and is currently mid-renovation. It consists of a concrete-slab floor, unfinished gypsum-board partitions on existing wood studs matching the historic layout (per the Part 2 historic tax credit application), and exposed wood columns and joists. The interior of the 1991 addition was also gutted and is one large room with a concrete-slab floor and exposed steel roof framing.

The historic wood stair is located on the north side of the building and opens onto east-west corridors that bisect the main and upper floors. The main floor contains the entrance vestibule off the LaSalle Street entrance, which connects to the corridor through an arched passageway; a spacious dining room; four offices; a breakfast room adjacent to the verandah; a kitchen; and bathrooms. The kitchen components have been removed and the bathrooms reconfigured and refinished as

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part of the rehabilitation project. Floors throughout are wood. Walls and ceilings are plaster, some sections of which have been replaced with unfinished gypsum board. The dining room ceiling is embellished with painted wood beams for a coffered effect. Several interior paneled-wood doors are extant as are most casings and 2"x6" baseboards.

The upper floor is similar in layout and finishes to the main floor, with an east-west corridor, a spacious living area corresponding to the dining room below, several bedrooms and offices, and bathrooms. Floors throughout are wood and walls and ceilings are plaster, some sections of which have been replaced with unfinished gypsum board. Several interior paneled-wood doors are extant as are most casings and 2"x6" baseboards.

Alterations and Integrity

The rectory retains good historic integrity. The most notable alterations are the 1991 addition, which is set back on the secondary north façade, and the gutting of the raised-basement level, which is the least significant interior space. Work completed as part of the stalled renovation project meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Rehabilitation according to the Part 2 application approvals from 2016. The primary south façade of the building is unchanged and retains all of the features that identify it as an early twentieth-century religious residence. The connection between the church and rectory is also intact. On the interior, the character-defining layout of public and private spaces that differentiates a rectory from a typical private residence is extant.

3) Our Lady of Lourdes School and Convent, 1957 (Contributing) | Architect: Philip P. Cazale

Overview

The combined school and convent building was completed in 1957 according to the design of New Orleans architect Philip P. Cazale, a parishioner and experienced designer of postwar schools throughout the city. Unlike the eclectic revival styles of the church and rectory, the school/convent embraces a Mid-Century Modern design language typical of all postwar schools in New Orleans, including both parochial and public facilities. The building replaced a two-story wood-frame school and a two-story wood-frame convent, both facing Napoleon Avenue to the north of the church. The earlier school, which was demolished in 1956, was built in 1905 as a combination church-rectory-school, and the earlier convent, built in 1911 as a rectory and converted into a convent in 1928, was also demolished in 1956.

The L-shaped building is steel and concrete construction faced in tan brick with a concrete foundation and a flat roof. A solid concrete water table defines the building’s base and a plain metal coping marks the roofline. The long side of the L faces onto Freret Street and the short side faces Jena Street. The first two floors of the L house sixteen classrooms, a cafeteria, and administrative offices. At the northeast end, at the corner of Napoleon Avenue and Freret Street, is the double-height gymatorium, which has entrances on Napoleon Avenue and on the rear/parking lot side. At the corner of Freret and Jena Streets, the two-story building rises into a set-back third story, which houses the convent. The main school entrance is also located at the corner of Freret and Jena Streets and is emphasized by a three-story stair tower. A second three-story stair tower bookends the Jena Street façade and provides a dedicated entrance to the convent.

Throughout the school portion of the building, all historic aluminum awning windows were replaced in 2001 with new aluminum sash windows, and several exterior doors were replaced in 2015. Historic windows and doors are extant at the gymatorium and convent.

Exterior (Photos 5-8)

The school/convent has three street-facing facades. Those facing Freret Street and Napoleon Avenue have the greatest visibility given that both streets are busy thoroughfares, while Jena Street is a narrow, secondary street with limited traffic. Additionally, the Freret Street façade occupies the entire length of the block and visually dominates the streetscape. In terms of dimensions, the Freret Street façade is the longest at 279 feet; the Napoleon Avenue façade is 100 feet in length; and the Jena Street façade is 141 feet in length.
The Freret Street/north façade consists of the north side of the gymatorium at the northeast end followed by an unbroken two-story stretch that extends to the northwest corner at Jena Street. The north façade of the gymatorium is seven bays wide and divided into three parts by brick pilasters in correspondence with interior programming. The first bay, on the Napoleon Avenue side, has one small aluminum sash window on each floor corresponding to the boys’ locker room below and an administrative office at mezzanine level. The next five bays correspond to the open-volume gymatorium and feature narrow aluminum sash windows along the upper part of the first floor that are centered below large clerestory windows comprised of aluminum sash windows and glass block. These five bays are further defined by brick pilasters, a slight roof overhang, and a continuous cast-stone sill at the base of the clerestory windows. The final, seventh bay corresponds to the gymatorium’s stage and mechanical rooms at mezzanine level. On the first floor are a pair of aluminum awning windows and above are a trio of geometric cast-stone blocks providing mechanical ventilation.

The north façade steps back approximately two feet where the gymatorium transitions into the two-story cafeteria and classroom section of the building. This section is ten bays wide and is defined by upper and lower bands of replacement aluminum sash windows and glass blocks that are separated at second floor level by a band of vertical corrugated aluminum paneling. The upper band of windows is capped by a band of horizontal metal panels. Each bay is defined by a metal-clad structural column. At bays four through six is a one-story brick-clad appendage corresponding to the school kitchen; this appendage has single and grouped aluminum sash windows and a hollow-metal entrance door, and on its western end are the building’s electrical box and meters. The recessed north façade of the third-floor convent is six bays wide and is partially visible from Freret Street. It has a shallow roof overhang and historic single and grouped aluminum awning windows. This section of the convent houses communal areas, i.e., kitchen, dining and living rooms, and laundry.

At the corner of Freret and Jena Streets, facing Jena, is the main school entrance. The entrance is defined by a solid brick wall with a graduated-brick design in the shape of a crucifix, a projecting three-story stair tower, and a set of brick and cast-stone steps with a deep landing and integrated planters. Historic cylindrical copper light fixtures are extant on either side of the entrance. The entrance doors and upper-level windows of the tower were replaced c. 2015. Moving southward along Jena Street, the short wing of the L provides ten classrooms and the residential wing of the convent. Like the Freret Street façade, the six-bay two-story section is defined by upper and lower bands of aluminum awning windows and glass blocks that are separated at second floor level by a band of vertical corrugated aluminum paneling. The upper band of windows is capped by a band of horizontal metal panels. Each bay is defined by a metal-clad structural column. At the south end, the wing terminates at another projecting three-story stair tower that provides the dedicated convent entrance and an elevator. The entrance is marked by a shallow brick and cast-stone portico and, unlike the school entrance, has a single-step opening. The replacement aluminum storefront door with sidelight was installed c. 2015, and the two aluminum awning windows above are historic. Between the two upper window openings is a brick crucifix. The recessed west façade of the third-story convent matches the north façade with a shallow roof overhang and historic single and grouped aluminum awning windows.

The south façade of the Jena Street wing is predominantly solid brick with a side exit aligning with the central corridor, two aluminum sash windows at the upper floors, which align with the upper central corridors, and a grouping of aluminum awning windows at the third floor corresponding to the convent chapel.

The rear/south façade of the Freret Street school wing overlooks the parking lot on the interior of the site as well as the north facades of the church and rectory. The ground floor has a series of punched openings that are fitted with replacement aluminum sashes and fixed windows. Four double-door exits with replacement aluminum storefront doors open onto the parking lot. A fifth pair of historic three-light steel doors with a four-light transom access the boiler room. A flat-roof metal canopy extends the length of the wing to provide a sheltered play area. At the second level are three bays of fixed aluminum-frame windows corresponding to the school library and three bays of replacement aluminum sash windows and glass blocks corresponding to classrooms. At roughly the halfway point of this wing is a third stair tower that is incorporated into the main volume rather than a projecting mass. The third-floor convent is set back from the second-floor roof line and is similar to the north façade with a shallow roof overhang and historic single and grouped aluminum awning windows. A pair of historic multi-light aluminum doors with glass-block sidelights provides access to the roof terrace, which is bordered by an aluminum railing.
The rear/south façade of the gymatorium is similar to its north/Freret Street façade except at the first floor, which extends southward to create a flat-roofed, one-room-deep storage area and entrance lobby. The entrance’s two pairs of storefront doors with transoms were installed c. 2015 within the existing cast-stone surround. Historic cylindrical copper light fixtures are extant on either side of the entrance, which is reached by a short flight of brick and cast-stone steps. Above the entrance is a small aluminum sash window corresponding to an administrative office at mezzanine level. Across the upper wall of the gymatorium are five large clerestory windows comprised of aluminum sash windows and glass blocks; the openings are defined by brick pilasters, a slight roof overhang, and a continuous cast-stone sill at the base of the clerestory windows. The final upper opening corresponds to the gymatorium’s stage and mechanical rooms at mezzanine level and has a trio of geometric cast-stone blocks providing mechanical ventilation. Openings along the first-floor storage area are small aluminum sash windows situated above a shallow metal-clad overhang.

The east façade of the Jena Street wing, which also overlooks the parking lot on the interior of the site, has replacement aluminum sash and historic glass-block windows on the first and second floors, two multi-light aluminum exit doors, corresponding to classrooms, and a brick incinerator flue. At the third floor, the roof terrace and aluminum railing continue across the front of the recessed convent wing and terminate at the chapel, which sits flush with the exterior wall of the floors below and has two narrow aluminum awning windows lighting the former sanctuary.

The east façade of the gymatorium, which faces Napoleon Avenue, has a centered double-door entrance with historic hollow-metal doors set into a shallow cast-stone and brick portico. The cast stone surround has been decorated with non-historic glazed ceramic artwork in a tree design with a central medallion depicting the Virgin Mary. The windows to the left and right of the entrance and across the second floor correspond to locker rooms, bathrooms, and offices and are predominantly historic aluminum awning sashes in a variety of sizes.

*Interior (Photos 16-27)*

The gymatorium interior is a double-height open volume that functions as both a basketball court and an auditorium with a stage at the western end. On the eastern end is an entrance lobby, locker rooms/bathrooms, and a cantilevered mezzanine level overlooking the court. The painted maple court floor is bordered to the north and south by cast-in-place concrete bleachers with aluminum guardrails and wood-slat benches. The walls are plaster with a glazed-brick wainscoting, and the ceiling is finished in acoustical tiles. The proscenium is a simple graduated plaster surround. Historic folding wood doors close off the stage during games. The wood stage floor projects slightly from the wall plane, with glazed brick below to match the adjacent wall surface. On either side of the stage are pairs of double wood doors with corridors beyond providing backstage access and connecting the gymatorium to the cafeteria. The south gymatorium lobby entrance has a patterned terrazzo floor, plaster walls with glazed-brick wainscoting, and acoustical-tile ceilings. Two pairs of hollow-metal doors access the gymatorium interior. The Napoleon Avenue lobby entrance has plain terrazzo, plaster walls, and a plaster ceiling; a terrazzo and aluminum stair provides access to the mezzanine level.

The cafeteria is located adjacent to the gymatorium and is a large open area with patterned terrazzo floors, plaster walls with glazed-brick wainscoting, and acoustical-tile ceilings. Running along the center of the ceiling is an HVAC soffit.

Classrooms on the first and second floors are arranged along a wide central corridor that runs the length of the L-shaped classroom wings. All corridors are finished with patterned terrazzo floors, plaster walls with glazed-brick wainscoting, and acoustical tile ceilings. Classroom entrances on the second floor are four-light wood-veneer single-leaf doors with operable four-light wood transoms and metal frames; on the first floor, the doors have been replaced with wood-veneer flush doors with rectangular vision panels. Classrooms have vinyl composition tile floors arranged in a variety of geometric patterns, plaster walls with glazed-brick wainscoting, and acoustical-tile ceilings. In most classrooms one wall is taken up by metal lockers. Historic chalkboards with aluminum frames and chalk trays are present throughout. Interior classroom and bathroom doors are wood veneer flush doors.

The three stair towers each have terrazzo floors and terrazzo stairs with aluminum railings. Doors to the stairs from corridors are non-historic wood-veneer flush doors with rectangular vision panels.
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex

The third-floor convent contains dining and living rooms, a shared kitchen, laundry room, bath and shower rooms, fourteen cells, and a small chapel. The spaces are simply finished with vinyl composition tile floors and plaster walls and ceilings. Interior doors are predominantly historic wood-veneer flush doors, with three pairs of horizontal-light wood doors at common-area entrances. The cells, which were the sleeping quarters for the sisters, are arranged along a double-loaded corridor. Inside of each cell are a wall-mounted wash basin and a small closet with built-in shelving. The chapel interior is simply finished with a carpeted floor, unadorned plaster walls, and an acoustical-tile ceiling. At the eastern end is the location of the sanctuary, which has lost its altarpiece.

Alterations and Integrity

The school and convent building possesses excellent historic integrity. Notable alterations are limited to the replacement of most aluminum awning windows in 2001 with sash windows matching the historic light pattern, and the replacement of some multi-light aluminum entrance doors c. 2015 with contemporary storefront doors. Otherwise the building remains much as it was originally designed on both the exterior and interior. On the exterior, intact historic features include the overall footprint and distinctive massing reflecting the building’s complex programming; brick, metal, and cast-stone wall cladding; decorative brick work; fenestration pattern; glass block; and entrance locations, including projecting stair towers. The gymatorium, cafeteria, central corridors, stair towers, classroom layout, and convent layout are all intact, as are all interior finishes, including terrazzo floors, tiled and plaster walls, and acoustical-tile ceilings. Most interior doors and transoms and all three sets of terrazzo and aluminum stairs are also extant.

Assessment of Integrity:

Location and Setting: The Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex possesses integrity of location and setting. The buildings have not been moved from their original locations. They retain their historic setbacks, landscaping features, and site arrangement to convey a sense of tranquility and welcome. The broader setting has also changed little since the period of significance. Napoleon Avenue and Freret Street are still busy mixed-use thoroughfares. The complex is still surrounded to the south and west by early twentieth-century homes, and, to the north, the Ochsner Baptist Hospital complex has been in operation since the 1920s.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship: All of the contributing buildings—church, rectory, and school/convent with gymatorium—possess good integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Alterations are minor and/or reversible and do not significantly detract from the historic appearance of the individual buildings or from the complex as a whole. Each building retains all of its character-defining features, including form and massing, construction materials and methods, stylistic features, fenestration patterns, distinctive layouts, interior finishes, and circulation patterns. Furthermore, the relationship among the buildings remains evident. Overall, the complex clearly reads as a historic twentieth-century assemblage of parochial buildings that developed to meet the needs of its growing congregation and community.

Feeling and Association: The complex’s combined integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship create integrity of feeling and association. Parishioners from the period of significance would easily recognize these buildings if they were to visit today.

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.)

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<th>Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</th>
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<td>Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>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</td>
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Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex  
Orleans Parish, LA  

Criteria Considerations:

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<td>A</td>
<td>Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Removed from its original location</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>A birthplace or grave</td>
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<td>A reconstructed building, object, or structure</td>
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<td>Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years</td>
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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Social History

Period of Significance: 1925-1971

Significant Dates: 1925, 1928, 1957

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): n/a

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above): n/a

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): Diboll & Owen (architects – church); Charbonnet, Paul G. (architect – rectory); Cazale, Philip P. (architect – school/convent)

Period of Significance (justification): The period of significance begins in 1925, when the church was completed, and ends in 1971 (the current fifty-year cut-off), as the complex remained active well into the late twentieth century.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex meets Criteria Consideration A because although built, and owned, by a religious institution, its significance is derived from its role as a longtime social and educational hub within its community, which is separate from religious belief or doctrine.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex in New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana, is historically significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Social History as an excellent example of a complete urban Catholic parish church complex comprising a church, school, rectory, convent, and hall (gymatorium). While various religious faiths, including all Christian denominations, built facilities for their communities, Catholicism is uniquely associated with this type of all-encompassing complex that met not only the spiritual but also the educational, recreational, and social needs of its communities as well as the residential needs of its religious members. Catholicism was the predominant faith throughout New Orleans’s history, and the Catholic school system was the second largest in the city after public schools. New Orleans was once home to scores of urban parish complexes throughout its neighborhoods that served as vital community anchors and ranged in age from the mid-nineteenth century through the post-World War II period. Today, however, the majority of these complexes have been demolished, extensively renovated, or were never fully realized. Our Lady of
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex

Name of Property: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex
County and State: Orleans Parish, LA

Lourdes is one of the few extant complexes that retains all five defining components of its property type. The period of significance begins in 1925, when the church was completed, and ends in 1971 (the current fifty-year cut-off), as the complex remained active well into the late twentieth century.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

History of Catholicism in New Orleans

In a 2008 article published in *Louisiana History*, historian Bambra Pitman writes:

> A New Orleans Catholic school principal one remarked: “Everyone in New Orleans is Catholic. If New Orleanians are not Catholic, they are in a sense catholic with a little ‘c.’” While the first sentence in this observation is an obvious exaggeration, it nonetheless underscores the historical dominance and widespread influence of Catholicism and Catholic culture in New Orleans.8

The history of New Orleans as a predominantly Catholic city, with a major parochial school system and world-famous cultural traditions tied to the liturgical calendar, can be traced back to its founding as a French colony in 1718. Explorer and French Catholic Jean Baptiste Lemoine, Sieur de Bienville, one of the city’s founders and the colony’s first governor, outlawed the practice of faiths other than Catholicism in the new colony in deference to the official religion of the French crown, and this law persisted until Louisiana was purchased by the United States government in 1803.9 In the 1720s, the first permanent place of worship and the city’s first parish, the Church of St. Louis, was constructed on the site of the present-day St. Louis Cathedral on Jackson Square. The first school in the colony was established in 1725 by Capuchin monks and was open to all male children in the colony, including African Americans.10 In 1727, at Governor Bienville’s invitation, twelve Ursuline nuns arrived in the colony to teach women and girls of European, Native American, and African descent.11 (The Ursuline convent, constructed in 1750 at 1100 Chartres Street, is New Orleans’ sole surviving French Colonial building, and Ursuline Academy in Uptown New Orleans today ranks among the city’s leading schools for girls.) Together the Capuchin and Ursuline schools established the state’s strong tradition of Catholic education, as well as the integral importance of men and women religious in the administration of its parochial schools. “As Catholics, colonists of Louisiana embraced Catholic instruction,” writes Laura Ewen Blokker in a historic context prepared for the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation, and “the present strength of Catholic education in Louisiana is a legacy of the state’s historic cultural patterns.”12

The Archdiocese of New Orleans was created as the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas in 1793, when the city was under Spanish rule, covering a vast territory that was eventually reduced to South Louisiana. In 1794, the Church of St. Louis was elevated to the status of cathedral to serve as the seat of the diocese.13 The Archdiocese of New Orleans, like those in other cities, established and oversaw parish churches and schools, cemeteries, and charitable institutions such as orphanages and hospitals.14 Following the Ursuline nuns, who operated a hospital as well as a school, sisters from other orders were recruited throughout the nineteenth century to serve in these institutions as teachers and as nurses, including the Sisters of Charity, the Dominican Sisters, and the African-American Sisters of the Holy Family. By the mid-nineteenth century, the French-speaking orders were joined by those of German and Irish origin to serve the immigrant populations arriving by the thousands and settling throughout the city’s neighborhoods.

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10 Laura Ewen Blokker, “Education in Louisiana” (State of Louisiana, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, 2012), 3.
12 Blokker, “Education in Louisiana,” 2.
The expansion of the original city in every direction in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, from Faubourg Marigny all the way upriver to Carrollton, necessitated the establishment of several new parishes within the Archdiocese. Access to St. Louis Cathedral, and to the schools in the old city, became onerous and the facilities overcrowded. The city’s growth, geographically, ethnically, and demographically, thus fueled the creation of urban parish complexes, i.e., clusters of buildings consisting of some combination of a parish church, a school, a priest’s residence, a convent, and a hall of some type (often incorporated into the school building) where parishioners could hold secular meetings and events outside of their place of worship. In turn, the presence of a parish complex provided a sense of community and belonging that attracted more residents to the area and offered existing residents a reason to settle more permanently.

The second parish created in New Orleans was St. Patrick’s in 1833. The church, located on Camp Street in the American Sector upriver from the original city, was established for an Irish Catholic congregation (NHL, 1974). St. Patrick’s Free School, the city’s first parochial school, was founded on nearby Poeyfarre Street in 1851 (demolished). The school was staffed by the Christian Brothers and changed locations several times over the decades, including a repurposed building adjacent to the church. A two-story brick residence behind the church was purchased in 1859 as a convent for the Good Shepherd Sisters, then for the Sisters of Mercy, who taught in the parochial school, and a rectory adjacent to the church was erected in 1874.

The third oldest parish in New Orleans, St. Vincent de Paul’s, was established in 1838 in the 3000 block of Dauphine Street as the first parish in the downriver suburb of Faubourg Marigny. The church (NRHP, 1976) catered to the French-speaking residents of the neighborhood and eventually included a parochial school, a convent, and a rectory. The fourth parish, St. Theresa’s, was established in 1838 in the Lower Garden District and originally comprised the New Orleans Female Orphan Asylum, operated by the Sisters of Charity, and an integrated chapel where mass was held regularly by priests from St. Louis Cathedral or St. Patrick’s. A permanent church was completed in 1848.

In the 1840s and 1850s, the Archdiocese created sixteen additional parishes throughout the city, for a total of twenty parishes serving thousands of congregants by the onset of the Civil War. Two neighborhoods—Faubourg Marigny and the Lower Garden District—each gained multiple parishes during this period that were defined by ethnicity (and language barriers) rather than geographic boundaries, i.e., French, German, and Irish Catholic congregations. The sixteen parishes established throughout the city were:

- St. Augustine’s, reportedly the first African American Catholic church established in the United States, in Treme (1841)
- Annunciation Parish for both French and English-speaking Catholics in Faubourg Marigny (1844)
- St. Joseph’s for Irish Catholics in northern part of the American Sector (1844)
- St. Mary’s for German Catholics in the Lower Garden District (1845; NRHP, 1974)
- Holy Trinity for German Catholics in Faubourg Marigny (1847)
- Sts. Peter and Paul for Irish Catholics in Faubourg Marigny (1848)
- St. Bartholomew’s (later Holy Name of Mary) in the Westbank community of Algiers (1848)
- Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (later Mater Dolorosa) for German Catholics in Carrollton (1848)
- St. Stephen’s in Uptown (originally the section known as Jefferson City) (1849)
- St. Alphonsus for Irish Catholics in the Lower Garden District (1850; NRHP, 1973)
- St. John the Baptist in Central City (1851)
- Immaculate Conception in the American Sector (1851)
- St. Maurice’s in Holy Cross/Lower Ninth Ward (1852)
- St. Henry’s in Uptown (1856)
- St. Rose de Lima in the Seventh Ward (1857)
- Notre Dame de Bon Secours for French-speaking Catholics in the Lower Garden District (1858)

18 Basic information about these mid-nineteenth century parishes is sourced from the website of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, nolacatholic.org, and Baudier, The Catholic Church in Louisiana.
Every parish was inaugurated with the erection of a church, typically a wood-frame structure that served as a temporary place of worship until funds could be raised for a permanent brick or stone building. Depending on the specific needs of the parish, accommodations were then either built or found adjacent to the church site for a parochial school, a residence for the parish priest assigned by the Archdiocese, and accommodations for sisters invited by the parish priest to operate the school. Eventually the complex also gained a meeting hall, which was located either inside the school (as an auditorium) or in a standalone building.

Most of these nineteenth-century parishes, including their schools, thrived well into the twentieth century, gaining new facilities as finances allowed and congregations grew. However, while many of the churches survive, few of the other parish buildings associated with them are extant. Some of the complexes are partially intact, and Sts. Peter and Paul retains all of its buildings (see Criterion C discussion below). Others were never fully realized, and some were discontiguous and thus never identifiable as a complex.

Following the Civil War, the Archdiocese established six additional parishes that followed a similar pattern of development to the antebellum parishes: St. Michael’s in the Lower Garden District (1869); Our Lady of Good Counsel in Uptown (1887); Mater Dolorosa in Carrollton, which replaced Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish (1888); Holy Name of Jesus in Uptown (1892); St. Katherine’s, for African Americans, in Faubourg St. Mary near Treme (1892); and St. Cecilia’s in the Upper Ninth Ward (1897). By the turn of the twentieth century, New Orleans had 25 total parishes administering to thousands of parishioners. The majority of parishes included parochial schools that were responsible for educating approximately 13,000 students, both white and African American (with an additional 3,000 attending Catholic academies with no parish affiliation). For the sake of comparison, New Orleans public schools had a total enrollment of approximately 31,500 in 1900.

The Archdiocesan school board was created in 1906 to organize and systematize the city’s Catholic schools, which varied in curriculum and teaching methodology based on the background of the particular administrating religious order. Father Leslie Kavanagh, parish priest of the newly established Our Lady of Lourdes Church (the subject property), was appointed as the board’s first superintendent. Recognized as a “seminary scholar, college professor, and educational organizer,” Kavanagh took his new role seriously, attending courses at Harvard University, visiting other dioceses with strong school systems, and attending conferences held by the newly created National Catholic Educational Association, which was founded in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904.

Twentieth-century New Orleans experienced two major waves of population growth that fueled the creation or expansion of its neighborhoods, and the Archdiocese established nearly three dozen new parishes in affected areas to serve Catholic residents. During the first wave, between 1900 and 1930, the city’s total population increased from 287,184 to 458,672, as thousands of European immigrants arrived at the Port of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana industrialized, drawing residents, many of them African American, to the city from agriculture-based communities in search of work. The installation of a water drainage system opened up marshy land towards Lake Pontchartrain for development, transforming the landscape of the city and paving the way for its ascendance into a metropolis. Twenty-one new parishes were established during this period, bringing the city’s total to 46. Nearly all of them had associated schools, and parochial school enrollment increased significantly citywide, from approximately 13,000 in 1900 to about 30,000 by 1940.

19 Basic information about these late nineteenth century parishes is sourced from the website of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, nolacatholic.org, and Baudier, The Catholic Church in Louisiana.
23 Richard Campanella, Bienville’s Dilemma: A Historical Geography of New Orleans (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2008), 43.
The parishes established between 1900 and 1930 are:

- Our Lady of Lourdes in Uptown (1905) *(the subject property)*
- Our Lady of the Rosary in Bayou St. John (1907)
- St. Joan of Arc in Carollton (1909)
- Our Lady Star of the Sea in St. Roch (1911)
- Blessed Sacrament, for African Americans, in Uptown (1915)
- St. Anthony of Padua in Mid-City (1915)
- Corpus Christi, for African Americans, in the Seventh Ward (1916)
- Holy Ghost, for African Americans, in Uptown (1916)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe, for Spanish-speaking Catholics, in Treme (1918)
- All Saints, for African Americans, in the Westbank community of Algiers (1919)
- Holy Redeemer in Faubourg Marigny (1919)
- St. James Major in Gentilly (1920)
- St. Leo the Great in Gentilly (1920)
- St. Matthias in Broadmoor (1920)
- St. Peter Claver in Treme (1920)
- St. Rita in the Fontainebleau area (1920)
- Incarnate Word in Hollygrove (1922)
- St. Monica in Central City (1924)
- St. Mary of the Angels in the St. Claude neighborhood (1925)
- St. Raymond in Gentilly (1929)
- St. Theresa Little Flower in Hollygrove (1929)²⁵

One additional parish, St. David’s, was established in 1937 for an African American congregation in the Lower Ninth Ward.

These early twentieth-century parishes developed in a similar manner to their nineteenth-century counterparts, beginning with a temporary church structure and school or rectory, followed by fundraising efforts to build more permanent structures as the congregation grew. In some cases the parish leased an existing building on a nearby parcel, again as a temporary measure until it could afford its own facilities. Depending on the needs of the parish, the original buildings were sometimes retained and repurposed, and other times they were demolished to make way for newer, larger structures. These practices extended into the post-World War II period, resulting in an eclectic mix of architectural styles and construction methods and materials throughout the city’s parish complexes.

One important difference of these early twentieth-century parishes was the Archdiocese’s foresight in purchasing large vacant parcels in newly developing neighborhoods in anticipation of future expansion. Nineteenth-century complexes, by contrast, which were sited in existing neighborhoods, were typically infill development on whatever land was available and were therefore more ad hoc in character.

The final major wave of population growth occurred during the boom years of the post-World War II period, when New Orleans expanded with new suburbs and reached its peak population of 627,525 in 1960. In 1955, there were approximately 65,000 students enrolled in the Archdiocese’s parochial and high schools (taught by 1,245 sisters and 472 lay teachers), which was nearly equal to the public school system’s 70,000 students enrolled that year.²⁶

New Orleans gained another twelve parishes in the post-World War II period, located predominantly in newly developed sections of the city including New Orleans East and the lakefront neighborhoods:

²⁵ Basic information about early twentieth-century parishes is sourced from the website of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, nolacatholic.org.

These post-war parish complexes, on the whole, were the most cohesively planned and designed, as they were established in areas with sufficient vacant land to accommodate all parish buildings on one site, and the buildings were done in variations on the Modern style using similar construction materials and methods. This shared design language, even if individual buildings were designed by different architects, provided post-war complexes with an overall more harmonious appearance.

In 1970, there were a total of 59 parishes in New Orleans. Nearly all of them included schools and most had some or all of the other buildings associated with urban parish complexes (rectory, convent, and hall). Beginning in the mid-1960s, however, the make-up and operations of parish complexes began to change in fundamental ways due to the impacts of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council or “Vatican II.”

Vatican II convened in Vatican City in 1962-65 to address relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world. It resulted in fundamental shifts within the Catholic faith, in New Orleans and worldwide. The Church wished to demonstrate that it was an active participant in the modern world and that the teachings of its Gospels were relevant to the social issues of the day. For the first time in the religion’s history, mass was delivered in vernacular languages rather than in Latin, priests were permitted to face their congregations, and dialogue with other religions was encouraged. Nuns were no longer required to wear habits nor reside in convents. These shifts coincided with major social movements in the United States such as Civil Rights and protests against the Vietnam War, as well as increasingly liberal sexual norms and ideas about women in the workforce. Nuns and priests began venturing beyond the walls of their houses to engage with these causes, speaking out and sometimes risking arrest in the fight for human dignity and equality. Although many nuns chose to remain with the Church following Vatican II, religious orders struggled to attract new members. Since the 1960s, the population of nuns in the United States has decreased by 75 percent.

New Orleans, beginning in the late 1960s, experienced this decrease in the number of sisters, which led to the gradual introduction of more lay teachers in its parochial schools and the obsolescence of convents on parish grounds. During the 1966-67 school year, for instance, about 1,100 nuns and 1,600 lay teachers comprised the city’s Catholic school faculties; in the 1971-72 school year, those numbers had changed to only 900 nuns and more than 2,000 lay teachers. This trend continued into the 1970s and 1980s. The resulting increase in operational costs to cover the salaries of lay staff forced the Archdiocese to increase tuition fees, which caused a decrease in school enrollments. In addition, the racial desegregation of parochial schools in 1962, and the rise of private non-denominational schools, further contributed to the decline in parochial school enrollment.

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27 Basic information about post-World War II parishes is sourced from the website of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, nolacatholic.org.
30 “Student Loss Placed at 3,248,” Times-Picayune, September 30, 1971. These figures reflect the faculty operating in the entire Archdiocese rather than Orleans Parish only.
Though increasingly burdened by financial troubles, the majority of the city’s parishes nevertheless remained open and adjusted to changing demographics and smaller congregations. By the turn of the twenty-first century, however, the Archdiocese was closing and combining parishes, a trend that accelerated following the upheaval of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. As a result, many parish buildings have been demolished or no longer serve a religious function, and today they sit vacant or have been repurposed for secular use.

**History of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish**

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish was founded in 1905 to serve the growing Freret neighborhood of Uptown New Orleans. Located approximately 1.5 miles inland from the naturally higher ground near the Mississippi River, on low-lying marshy land, the Freret neighborhood remained largely undeveloped until the turn of the twentieth century. However, as the population grew, streetcar lines were added, and upriver suburbs expanded, the land between Carondelet Street to the south and S. Claiborne Avenue to the north opened up for development. Existing north-south thoroughfares, including Louisiana, Napoleon, and Jefferson Avenues, were extended northward, and Freret and Dryades Streets developed into low-rise east-west commercial corridors. Samuel Square, a small public park, was created on Napoleon Avenue between S. Saratoga Street and Loyola Avenue. The Napoleon Avenue streetcar line was extended from St. Charles all the way to S. Broad Avenue in 1903. Tracks were also completed along Freret Street between Napoleon Avenue and Broadway Street, making the corner of Freret and Napoleon an important transit hub for the neighborhood.

In its fledgling years, the Freret neighborhood was sparsely settled with small one- and two-story wood-frame residences, and some larger homes were sited along the wide north-south boulevards. The ninety or so Catholic families in the area belonged to St. Stephen’s Parish, located one mile south at the corner of Napoleon Avenue and Camp Street. The trek to services or to the parochial school, by streetcar, on foot, or by carriage, was described as “inconvenient and often nearly impossible” due to frequent flooding. Thus the Archdiocese of New Orleans determined to carve out a new parish, Our Lady of Lourdes, to take over the north section of St. Stephen’s territory, from Louisiana Avenue to Jefferson Avenue and from the north side of St. Charles Avenue to S. Claiborne Avenue.

The chosen site for the new parish buildings was a vacant square bounded by Napoleon Avenue, Freret Street, LaSalle Street, and Jena Street in the heart of the neighborhood. Our Lady of Lourdes’ first parish priest, Father Leslie Kavanagh, succeeded in acquiring 21 of the square’s 24 lots (approximately 2 acres) for a total of $20,900, providing the parish with ample land for future growth. (Figure 1) Its inaugural church-school-rectory building, completed in September 1905, was sited at the southeast corner of the site at Napoleon and LaSalle. (Figure 4) The two-story wood structure housed six classrooms and a two-room rectory on the first floor, and a temporary church on the second floor, which was designed to be converted into an auditorium once the parish could afford to erect a more permanent church. In addition to holding mass in the space, Kavanagh also promoted it as a cultural center for the neighborhood by hosting musicals. Kavanagh requested the assistance of three Sisters of Christian Charity from Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, to teach at the new school, which had a total of 136 students its first year. Three more sisters arrived the following year, and together they resided in a rented double shotgun house at the corner of Jena and Freret Street, in the same square as the church but on an unaffiliated parcel, with one of the rooms equipped as a chapel. In 1909, the Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of St. Mary took over teaching duties.

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33 Bezou, 7.
34 Baudier, 23.
35 Baudier, 22.
37 Baudier, 29.
38 Baudier, 29.
The city’s parochial school system, which the Archdiocese established in 1906, adhered to the segregationist policies of the Jim Crow South, and Our Lady of Lourdes School was no exception. Enrollment was open to white students only, from the school’s founding in 1905 until 1962. Records show that Kavanaugh, whom the Archbishop appointed as the first head of the Archdiocesan school board, opened a school for African American children around the same time as the white school, in a small wood-frame residence one block away at Jena and S. Robertson Streets (demolished). This short-lived effort ended with the nearby establishment of the African-American Holy Ghost Parish at 2001 Louisiana Avenue in 1916, at which time the Holy Ghost Fathers, with help from the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, became responsible for the education of the neighborhood’s African-American children.

The creation of an “Our Lady of Lourdes Colored School” was no doubt instigated by Kavanaugh’s position as the school board’s first superintendent, which put him in charge of coordinating the segregated system. He treated Our Lady of Lourdes School as an archdiocesan model, and as such was required to provide a facility for African American children in addition to one for whites. Beyond managing segregation laws, Kavanaugh also fought to “standardize and professionalize” the city’s Catholic schools by promoting teacher training and uniform textbooks and examinations. He held this leadership position until 1919. Between 1905 and 1930, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish’s rapid growth spurred a number of major changes to its facilities. First, in 1906, a one-story wood-frame parish hall was erected towards the center of the block to provide a home for the meetings and fundraising events of the parish’s many adult societies, including the League of the Sacred Heart, the St. Ann Society, and the Altar Society (demolished). By 1910, the parish had seven affiliated societies and two hundred students enrolled at the school. To open up additional classroom space, Father Kavanagh vacated his original quarters in the 1905 building and moved into a new two-story residence at the corner of Napoleon Avenue and Freret Street (where the gymatorium currently stands; demolished). The Craftsman-style wood-frame house, completed in 1911, contained thirteen rooms, including offices and a meeting room, for Father Kavanaugh and his assistant. The parish also purchased the three remaining lots in the square, including the rented “cottage convent,” c. 1910, which gave them control of the entire block. The parish also purchased the three remaining lots in the square, including the rented “cottage convent,” c. 1910, which gave them control of the entire block.

By the mid-1920s, the parish population had swelled to nearly three thousand, and 453 pupils attended Our Lady of Lourdes School. The temporary church could no longer accommodate the congregation, and the parish began plans for a new church to be erected on the same site. The wood-frame church and school building was moved from its corner site to the middle of the block facing Napoleon Avenue, and a six-room addition was constructed to increase the number of classrooms. The New Orleans architectural firm of Diboll & Owen, who had recently witnessed the completion of their Chateaufesque design for the Notre Dame Seminary in 1923, was hired to design the new church. The cornerstone was laid in October 1924, and in May 1925 construction was complete. The “impressive” new Mission Revival-style church was built with a 750-person capacity, a domed interior modeled after the Rosary Church in Lourdes, France, a replica of the Lourdes grotto, and altars, statuary, accoutrements, and stained-glass windows donated by parishioners. It became an “architectural centerpiece” of Napoleon Avenue.

His Eminence Cardinal Patrick Joseph Hayes of New York, at Father Kavanagh’s invitation, traveled to New Orleans to attend the dedication. His visit was a historic event for New Orleans’s Catholic community, and the dedication
ceremony was thronged by crowds, from the parishioners themselves to dignitaries, several bishops, a contingent of soldiers, and Mayor Martin Behrman.51

At a reception for the Cardinal that afternoon, parishioner and young attorney William J. Guste spoke passionately about the value of a parish church to its community:

The members of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish….are thankful that through their efforts and sacrifices they are able to contribute an edifice of such architectural skill to the spiritual uses of the parish….Who can comprehend the importance of a parish church? As one strong link in a mighty chain, it contributes its strength and power in ministering to the spiritual needs of untold thousands. The parish church has done more in its simple, constant and positive way to tranquilize the world than all the legislative assemblies and diplomatic conventions of history. The dedication of this church today is therefore a contribution not only to our spiritual, but also to our civic and patriotic, interests.52

The completion of the new church was a major milestone in the history of the parish. As the first “permanent,” i.e., non-wood-frame structure, it symbolized the parish’s maturity and stability two decades after its founding.53

Next, Father Kavanagh turned his attention to the erection of a new rectory that would complement the exterior of the church and accommodate a growing number of assistants and lay staff. The 1911 residence was slated to become a convent for the six Dominican sisters, who relocated from the cottage convent behind it. The “substantial” new rectory, designed by New Orleans architect Paul G. Charbonnet, was constructed just behind the new church, facing LaSalle Street, with a Mediterranean Revival exterior that matched the church’s stucco exterior and red clay barrel-tile roof.54

(Figures 8-9) It comprised a raised-basement level and two upper floors of living and meeting spaces, a full-width screened verandah facing Jena Street, and a covered walkway connecting the basement to the rear of the church. The old convent was demolished to create more outdoor recreational space for the students.

For the next two decades, the completed Our Lady of Lourdes complex served its parish well and few modifications or improvements were made until after World War II. Following Father Kavanagh’s death in 1934, Monsignor Peter M. H. Wynhoven was appointed as pastor; following his sudden death in 1944, Monsignor Charles Greco was appointed as Our Lady of Lourdes’ third pastor. During his brief tenure, Monsignor Greco updated the church interior, including the installation of decorative terrazzo floors and new pews, and made improvements to the school playground for the benefit of the students and the broader community, including the erection of bleachers near the rectory. According to one account, Monsignor Greco “promoted recreational facilities and attracted youth to both daytime and nighttime sports activities such as the parish, perhaps, had never witnessed before. The schoolyard seemed to be continually humming day and night with sports—baseball, softball, volleyball, touch football, basketball—depending on the season.”55

When Monsignor Greco was appointed Bishop of Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1946, Right Reverend Lucien J. Caillouet became Our Lady of Lourdes’ fourth pastor, as the parish was entering the boom years of the post-war period. By 1947, it had grown to 5,075 members, with 492 students taught by eight sisters and four lay teachers. Caillouet was passionate about parochial education and a proponent of promoting new teaching methods and techniques, modern textbooks, and comprehensive facilities. He determined to provide his expanding parish with a new school and convent to replace the “aging and overcrowded” 1905 building, and his plans were finally realized in January 1956, when ground was broken for the million-dollar project.56 The “magnificent …school-convent-auditorium-gymnasium building,” designed by local architect and Lourdes parishioner Philip P. Cazale, was “thoroughly modern and complete in every detail.”57 The Modern-style multi-purpose building provided sixteen classrooms, a library, a kindergarten, a gymatorium with basketball court

51 “Cardinal Hayes Blesses Church,” New Orleans States, May 18, 1925.
52 Bezou, 30-31.
53 Baudier, 37.
54 Donovan, 38.
55 Bezou, 56.
56 “Test Pile to Be Driven Tuesday. – Archbishop Rummel Will Bless Ground,” Times-Picayune, January 28, 1956; Pfeiffer, 70; and Bezou, 66.
57 Baudier, 7.
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex

Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA

County and State

...and stage accommodating up to 1,300 seats, a spacious cafeteria, and a convent for thirteen sisters. (Figure 3) Up to 650 students could attend the school in a given academic year. The nearly 13,000-SF gymatorium was intended to serve not only the students and the parish community but youths citywide as part of the Archdiocese’s Youth Progress Program. (Figures 10-14)

In a booklet created for the building’s September 1957 dedication ceremony, Archdiocese historian Roger Baudier underscored the importance of the new building to the parish as a whole:

[T]he layout, building and facilities newly provided to Our Lady of Lourdes parish...disclose careful study and planning to obtain a maximum of service, accommodations and convenience for all segments of parish activities...The new facilities bring the half-century old parish plant of Our Lady of Lourdes into the ranks of the best equipped parishes of the archdiocese.

Monsignor Henry C. Bezou, in his published history of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, notes that the new building was a culmination point in the parish’s history: “Caillouet gave to Lourdes one of the most valuable and utilitarian plants in the archdiocese. It signalized the completion of an enterprise begun so humbly 52 years before.”

The demographics of the Freret neighborhood began to change in the 1950s and into the 1960s. More middle-class African Americans moved into the area, while the white population decreased as many residents relocated to new postwar suburbs (a trend in urban cores throughout the country fueled by the ascendancy of the automobile and by desegregation). Our Lady of Lourdes School was officially desegregated in 1962 along with all other schools in the parochial system (two years after the public school system), which led to the relocation of more white families from the area and dwindling enrollment numbers. According to historian Coleman Warner, “[r]acial integration of Lourdes...in the 1960s proved costly and painful to a church parish that had ranked among the archdiocese’s strongest.”

The Second Vatican Council also impacted the parish. In 1968, only five Dominican nuns were living in the thirteen-cell convent. By the mid-1970s the sisters had left altogether and the school hired Cynthia Smith, an African American teacher, as its first lay principal (and indeed Smith was among the first African-American laywomen in the history of the Archdiocese to serve in this role). In 1975, the parish gained its first African American pastor, Bishop Harold Perry. By the end of the decade, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish was described as “once a posh parish [that is] now poor and half black” with a “nearly all-black parochial school...struggling by dint of staff’s dedication, begging, and bingo to stay alive.”

Despite its financial difficulties, however, the parish continued to operate until Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when flooding, lack of financing for repairs, and low numbers of returning parishioners prompted the Archdiocese to combine Our Lady of Lourdes with nearby St. Matthias Parish, permanently closing the former parish in 2008. The Lourdes School reopened in 2008 as Sojourner Truth Academy, then became Holy Rosary Academy and High School in 2012. The school closed in 2019.

**Criterion A: Social History**

*Development of the Urban Catholic Parish Complex*

A diocese, or archdiocese, is an ecclesiastical district overseen by a bishop or archbishop, and a parish is a subdivision of the diocese that is managed by an appointed parish priest (also known as a pastor). Most parishes are geographically determined based on the number of Catholics residing in a given area. The bishop has the power to initiate, suppress (close), and modify parishes, while the parish priest is entrusted with the parish’s day-to-day operations, including

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58 Bezou, 75.
59 Baudier, 13.
60 Baudier, 18.
61 Bezou, 66.
62 Pfeiffer, 75.
63 Warner, 349.
64 Pfeiffer, 77, and Bezou, 86.
performing mass and various sacraments (e.g., baptisms), managing finances, erecting parish buildings, and soliciting staff, including sisters, to operate the parochial school. The parish priest also oversees the secular activities of the members of his congregation, known as parishioners, including society meetings and social events such as fundraisers.

The urban parish complex, i.e., the group of functionally related buildings housing all parish activities, developed as a property type concurrently with the dramatic growth of American cities in the nineteenth century. The arrival of many thousands of European immigrants, along with industrialization, the introduction of railroads, and subsequent demographic shifts from rural to urban areas, transformed the country’s cities and towns in myriad ways. In response, dioceses established new parishes to serve specific neighborhoods that had increased in density to the point of overcrowding existing facilities, or had spread too far outward to access existing facilities, or developed concentrations of specific ethnic groups, e.g., Germans, Italians, and Eastern Europeans, who petitioned to worship in their native languages. The parish complex was born from this confluence of historic trends as a distinctly urban property type defined by population density, neighborhood development patterns, transportation/accessibility, and ethnic diversity.

Professor Peter K. Williams defines the urban Catholic parish complex as an “institutional complex providing not only facilities for the celebration of the sacraments but also those for comprehensive educational and social services and the personnel to staff them.” How these components manifested varied depending on the age, location, and needs of a specific parish, but a typical complex consisted of a church, a parochial school, a rectory (priest’s residence), convent (sisters’ residence), and a meeting hall. The meeting hall was either a standalone building or it was integrated into the school as a multi-purpose assembly space (e.g., an auditorium and/or gymnasium).

The Catholic church and its associated buildings are distinct from those of other faiths in key ways. First, the Catholic church is a free-standing building used solely for religious activities. The rectory may be attached to the church via an open-air or enclosed corridor to provide the priest with a private connection between his residential quarters and the sacristy of the church, where he prepares for mass. However, subordinate facilities, such as those for educational and meeting purposes, are never attached to the church and their activities are kept separate from the church interior. Churches affiliated with Protestant denominations and Jewish temples, by contrast, do typically include integrated or attached educational and meeting halls (known as “fellowship” facilities in Protestant faiths). Furthermore, Protestant and Jewish complexes do not include convents on their grounds, as those faiths do not have women religious, nor do they typically provide residences for their religious leaders (ministers or rabbis), who were permitted to live off-site.

In a 1908 article published in *Christian Art*, “The Catholic City Parish,” Pittsburgh-based architect John T. Comes laments the inharmonious nature of urban parish complexes throughout the United States, which had been developed for several decades by that point in what he considered a displeasingly ad hoc manner as finances and space allowed. While this remained a defining aspect of parish complexes well into the twentieth century, Comes’ description of the issue sheds light on their historical development:

> The method of procedure has been somewhat like that of the man with a large family who bought a small lot and built thereon a small house, and as the family increased in numbers, made additions or alterations to it from time to time as required by immediate circumstances….A parish often began by erecting a small frame structure to serve as a chapel on ground scarcely large enough to accommodate it. In time the neighborhood began to grow and develop, and so did the parish, compelling other acquisitions of property and extension of buildings….The additional buildings had to be erected and accommodated to suit the peculiarities of the ground as best they could. The relation of one building to the other was not always as it should be. Often the convent inhabited by the sisters who taught the parochial school was several squares distant, the rectory may have been across the street from the church, and the parochial school placed so close to the church that one interfered with the other in securing ample natural light. The buildings having been erected at various times and generally by different architects, produced a

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result anything but pleasing or edifying, although under the circumstances really nothing better could have been expected.\textsuperscript{69}

Comes goes on to recognize a growing trend on the part of dioceses “when establishing new parishes to authorize the purchasing of sufficient ground to accommodate all of its present and future buildings, namely, church, parochial school, rectory, and convent, and sometimes a lyceum [or hall, which Comes defines as “a sort of Catholic YMCA”].”\textsuperscript{70}

This advance site planning did indeed become the norm for urban parishes in the twentieth century and made it possible for complexes to present a more cohesive appearance in terms of proximity, i.e., within a single city block. However, a new parish could still rarely afford to construct all of its buildings at one time, and thus the age, style, and construction materials of its buildings continued to vary until the post-World War II period. It remained common for parishes to erect temporary buildings, i.e., the “small frame structure” Comes refers to above, and then raze them to make room for larger facilities. If the buildings were not razed then they were, at minimum, expanded and/or remodeled to suit. Architectural styles and construction materials were chosen based on region and the prevailing tastes of a given period. Nineteenth-century churches, for instance, were frequently in some mode of the Romanesque or Gothic Revival, while twentieth-century churches built between 1900 and 1940 embraced the eclectic revival styles that pervaded residential as well as commercial and institutional projects, including Neoclassical Revival and Mediterranean Revival. Subordinate buildings may or may not have been designed to be compatible with the church’s design. Around 1950 onwards, newly established parishes were designed exclusively in some iteration of Modernism. “I doubt,” writes Comes in 1908, “if there are more than a couple of parishes in the country that have all their buildings designed in harmony with their architectural style, in symmetrical arrangement of plan, and convenient intercommunication, treated as a whole rather than as individual units.”\textsuperscript{71} While he intended it as a criticism, this eclecticism became a distinguishing characteristic of the vast majority of the country’s parish complexes, resulting in groupings that uniquely embody their specific locations, site constraints, age, and communities.

The Urban Parish Church Complex in New Orleans

The development of the urban Catholic parish complex in New Orleans mirrored national trends. The extent of a complex depended on its location, including the size of the parcel the parish controlled, and parish finances. Similar to those in other cities, New Orleans’ earliest complexes of the mid- to late nineteenth centuries were typically spread out in a combination of purpose-built and repurposed structures as space allowed, with a purpose-built church as the nexus. There was typically no contiguous site for all of the parish buildings and no shared architectural language, which makes it difficult to identify their functional relationship. The piecemeal evolution and fragmented nature of St. Patrick’s parish (1833), for instance, is typical of these early complexes.

Early twentieth-century complexes, by contrast, such as Our Lady of Lourdes (1905) and Corpus Christi (1916), strived for a more cohesive plan in the form of a legible complex of buildings. Many parishes achieved this by acquiring a sufficiently large parcel of land to build on over time, even if most of them could afford to build only one or two temporary structures on a fraction of the land in their early years. This emphasis on site acquisition was made feasible by the ample amount of vacant land in new neighborhoods as the city’s boundaries expanded and more parishes were established. In terms of site planning and architectural style, early twentieth-century complexes varied based on finances, timing of construction phases, and the individual preferences of the parish priest. Generally speaking, the church was oriented to face the primary thoroughfare, and the rectory was typically adjacent to (either next to or behind) the church to allow the priest convenient access to the sacristies. The school, convent, and parish hall had more flexibility in terms of location on the site depending on the aforementioned factors as well as the size of the school and, by extension, the number of sisters residing in the complex. Stylistically, early twentieth-century complexes ranged from one overarching style to a combination of compatible styles to no regard for stylistic cohesion. Stark differences in style generally occurred when buildings in a complex were constructed many years apart; rather than adhere to a now-outdated style, many parishes (via their architects) chose to adopt whatever was in fashion for institutional design at the time.


\textsuperscript{70} Comes, “The Catholic City Parish,” 62.

\textsuperscript{71} Comes, 61.
Parishes established after World War II, in new neighborhoods such as New Orleans East and the lakefront area, combined future-minded site acquisition with harmonious design. If a postwar parish could not afford to construct all of its buildings at once, then they were at least designed in some idiom of the Modern style, which was overwhelmingly the local architectural style of choice for new institutional buildings between 1945 and 1970. This adherence to the Modern language resulted in the highest degree of cohesion among the city’s parish complexes. While neither is fully intact, the St. Julien Eymard parish complex in Algiers and St. Pius X in Lake Vista are good examples of postwar complexes.

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex

Our Lady of Lourdes exemplifies the urban parish complex as it manifested in New Orleans in the early twentieth century. When the parish was established in 1905, its first priest, Father Leslie Kavanagh, located a vacant city block and set about negotiating with five separate property owners to acquire all but three of the lots (which he succeeded in acquiring a few years later). He made this effort with the knowledge that the parish could afford to build only a single wood-frame church-school-rectory at one corner of the site. The two-story building, which faced Napoleon Avenue near LaSalle Street, was plain with a modest Italianate façade.

When Kavanagh relegated his quarters for classroom use in 1911, he constructed a Craftsman-style rectory next door to the church, which was a logical choice in terms of location but did not harmonize architecturally with the church. Perhaps he realized this missed opportunity, because the new permanent church and rectory, completed in the 1920s, were compatibly designed by two different architects in the Mission Revival and Mediterranean Revival styles, respectively. The church faced busy Napoleon Avenue, while the rectory was physically connected to its rear by an covered passageway.

The current school-convent-gymatorium was not completed until 1957, well into the post-World War II period, and was planned and executed under Right Reverend Lucien J. Caillouet, whose priority was modern teaching methods and facilities. At that time, Modernism was the obvious choice for new schools and other institutional facilities, and thus the building was designed with no stylistic connection to the prewar buildings of the campus. To make room for the massive $1-million multi-purpose facility, the parish demolished the old Craftsman-style rectory (which had been converted into a convent), the original 1905 church-school-rectory, and the old parish hall. Its modified U-shape, with facades on Jena Street, Freret Street, and Napoleon Avenue, created an interior courtyard and parking lot facing the church and rectory. The parish’s ability to erect such as large building on its existing site was due to the foresight of Father Kavanagh over fifty years prior. While it does not relate to the church and rectory in terms of architectural style, it clearly relates to them in terms of its position on the site, and it also illustrates how Our Lady of Lourdes, like so many other local parishes, expanded and adapted over many years to serve its community.

The completeness of the Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex provided comprehensive support to its community, playing a central role as a social, educational, recreational, and spiritual center for more than half a century. This multi-purpose role manifested in many ways during the parish’s history. In its earliest days, Father Kavanaugh opened up the temporary sanctuary to host entertainment such as musicals for the parish’s cultural enrichment. When the church-school-rectory building was completed, he dedicated himself to erecting a parish hall for the use of numerous parish-affiliated societies, which helped promote wholesome social activities and reinforced a sense of community. In addition to housing meetings and fundraising events, the parish hall also functioned as a performance space for the Our Lady of Lourdes Dramatic Club. In the early 1940s, Lourdes’ parish priest, Monsignor Wynhoven, sponsored the neighborhood’s Boy and Girl Scout troops. His successor, Monsignor Greco, prioritized outdoor recreation for the children of the community by creating a welcoming space for daytime and nighttime sports, including bleachers for parents and other spectators. This priority extended into the post-World War II period, with Father Caillouet’s new 13,000-SF gymatorium, which served not only parochial students and the congregation but youths citywide as part of the Archdiocese’s Youth Progress

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72 Warner, 332.
73 Baudier, 25-26, 31.
74 ‘Mr. Tomkin’s Hired Man,” Times-Picayune, November 2, 1914.
75 Bezou, 54.
76 Bezou, 56.
Program. As an auditorium-cum-meeting hall, the multi-purpose space could accommodate up to 1,300 seats (double the total number of students) to serve the greater community. In his study of the development of the Freret neighborhood, author Coleman Warner points to the Our Lady of Lourdes complex as an “all-important” nexus of the community that attracted businesses to the adjacent Freret Street commercial corridor in the early twentieth century through World War II. Churchgoers and students provided a built-in customer base for restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, and other shops operated by local residents.

Comparative Analysis of Extant Parish Complexes in New Orleans

To evaluate how Our Lady of Lourdes compares to other parish complexes in New Orleans, the author surveyed all parishes with schools as of 1965 (55 parishes in total) based on city directory listings cross referenced with Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and Google Street View. The results of the survey revealed that Our Lady of Lourdes is one of only six parishes that have all five defining uses of the property type: church, rectory, school, convent, and hall. Other complexes have lost one or more of their buildings, and in some instances have been demolished in their entirety. Others, following the closure of the parish, have been renovated for secular use and have lost historic integrity (see, for instance, the school and gymnasium buildings at Mater Dolorosa Parish, which lost exterior and interior integrity following a 1980s remodel). Finally, some parishes were never fully developed, either due to lack of finances or lack of need. St. Cecilia’s, for instance, never built a convent because the sisters who taught in its parochial school, the Marianites of Holy Cross, lived a few blocks away in a convent on the grounds of Holy Angels Academy.

Our Lady of Lourdes is a rare example of a fully realized and intact urban parish complex in New Orleans, and therefore is able to convey its historic significance as a longtime multi-faceted community anchor. The other five that survive, listed below in chronological order based on date of establishment, are each discussed below in comparison to the subject property:

1) Sts. Peter and Paul, 2317 Burgundy Street. Sts. Peter and Paul Parish was established in Faubourg Marigny in 1848 for the neighborhood’s growing population of Irish Catholics. The parish began on a site two blocks away, on Marigny Street, in wood-frame buildings housing a church and school. By 1855, however, the congregation was in need of larger facilities and the parish acquired the present site; the school remained in operation on Marigny Street until the current school building was completed in 1900. Today, the complex consists of a Romanesque Revival-style church (1860-62), an Italianate rectory (c. 1875), a Renaissance Revival-style school with an integrated auditorium/hall (1900), and a convent (1890). The convent, a side-hall camelback shotgun house, was erected as a private residence and converted for the parish’s use in 1901. The parish was suppressed in 2001, and in 2018 the complex re-opened as Hotel Peter and Paul (using federal and state historic tax credits).

Sts. Peter and Paul differs from the subject property in that it is a nineteenth rather than a twentieth-century complex, it was established specifically as an ethnicity-based parish for Irish Catholics, and it includes a converted residential building rather than a purpose-built convent.

2) Our Lady of Lourdes, 2400 Napoleon Avenue. Our Lady of Lourdes, the subject property, was the first parish established by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in the twentieth century. It is the only surviving example with a combination school and convent building and the only example of a complex with a purpose-built postwar school building rather than an addition. This combination of pre-war and postwar buildings exemplifies the longevity of parish complexes within their communities.

3) St. Anthony of Padua, 4640 Canal Street. St. Anthony of Padua Parish was established in Mid-City in 1915 and consists of a church (1923), a rectory (c. 1925), a school with attached auditorium (1931), and a convent (1962).
The original 1915 wood-frame church-school-rectory building erected on the site was converted into a convent in 1931 following the completion of the school, then demolished to make way for the new convent in the early 1960s. Two 1950s additions were constructed to connect the rectory and church and to expand the school. All of the buildings, excluding the postwar components, were designed in the Mediterranean Revival style. In 2016, the complex was converted into a campus for Christian Brothers School.

St. Anthony’s differs from the subject property in that it contains a prewar school building, a standalone postwar convent building, and postwar additions to its prewar buildings, thus demonstrating a different development pattern for a twentieth-century parish complex.

4) Corpus Christi, 2001 Onzaga Street. Corpus Christi Parish was established in 1916 for African American Catholics in the Seventh Ward neighborhood. The parish began on the current site in a pair of wood-frame houses purchased to temporarily house a school and church. In 1919, a Renaissance Revival-style combination school and church building was completed (extant) with the intention of building a standalone church when finances allowed. A wood-frame Craftsman-style hall building was constructed c. 1920s and doubled as extra classroom space as needed. The current complex comprises a Mission Revival-style church (c. 1928) and rectory (c. 1928), which is connected to the church by a covered walkway; a Mediterranean Revival-style convent (c. 1930s); and the original school building (1919), which gained an auditorium and cafeteria addition in 1957. A 1946 New Orleans Item article describes Corpus Christi as “the largest Negro Catholic parish in the nation,” with the number of parishioners estimated at 15,000 and nearly 1,600 children enrolled in the school.

The original church in the 1919 building was subdivided c. 1970s, and the wood-frame hall was demolished in 2008. Rear additions were added to the school in 2015, when the building was converted into a community center. The church remains active as Corpus Christi-Epiphany Parish.

Corpus Christi differs from the subject property in that it was established for African Americans, it retains a combination church-school building (although the church interior does not retain integrity), and it is a largely prewar complex with one postwar addition.

5) St. James Major, 3736 Gentilly Boulevard. St. James Major Parish was established in 1920 in the Gentilly neighborhood. The first building on the site was a combination church and rectory completed in the parish’s inaugural year (demolished), and c. 1923 the present school building was completed. In addition to the school, other extant buildings in the complex include a Modern church (1953), a Modern rectory (1953), a Modern auditorium/gymnasium and classroom addition to the school (1955), and a Modern convent (1955) located across Lotus Street from the rest of the complex. Today, the church remains active and the school is closed.

St. James Major differs from the subject property in that the majority of the buildings date to the postwar period, the original school building is extant, and the convent is located on a separate parcel across the street from the rest of the complex.

6) St. Matthias, 3928 General Taylor Street. St. Matthias Parish was established in 1920 in the Broadmoor neighborhood. The parish began in a temporary church and rectory building on the present site. A school with attached auditorium was dedicated in 1929, and the current church and rectory, which connected to one of the church’s sacristies via an open-air walkway, were completed in the early 1940s to replace the original structure.

The convent was located in a repurposed Craftsman-style residence until 1960, when the current convent was completed and the wood-frame structure was demolished.

Today, the church is active as Blessed Trinity Parish, which was established in 2008 from the parishes of Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Matthias, and St. Monica. The school, which closed in 1979, was repurposed in 2015 into the Broadmoor Arts and Wellness Center.86

St. Matthias differs from the subject property in that all of its buildings date to the prewar period except for the convent, which is a standalone building. In addition, the complex shares the block with two unaffiliated private residences.

Conclusion

Urban Catholic parish complexes were a central component of neighborhoods throughout New Orleans, a predominantly Catholic city, for more than a century, providing not only a place of worship but a community center and a quality source of education for generations of parishioners. Parish complexes, and their dates of establishment and growth, marked important milestones for their neighborhoods, as New Orleans matured into a metropolis, neighborhood populations expanded and contracted, and demographics shifted in terms of ethnic make-up, class, religious faith, and age. By 1965, Our Lady of Lourdes was one of more than fifty parishes serving this vital role in its community. Today, it is one of only six parishes that survives intact with all of the uses that define the urban Catholic parish property type, and thus it is one of the few extant properties in New Orleans able to convey the historic significance of the urban parish complex within its community.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

See above

9. Major Bibliographical Resources

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex
Name of Property

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex


“Cardinal Hayes Blesses Church.” *New Orleans States,* May 18, 1925.


“Church dedicated by Archbishop.” *New Orleans States,* November 1, 1923.


“Congregation Helped Erect Corpus Christi Church.” *New Orleans Item,* June 15, 1946.


“Mr. Tomkin’s Hired Man.” *Times-Picayune,* November 2, 1914.


“New St. Anthony School-Convent Unit Dedicated.” *Times-Picayune,* August 31, 1931.


“Saint Matthias Church Blessed.” *New Orleans States*, December 23, 1941.


Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex

Name of Property

Orleans Parish, LA

County and State

_____ Local government

_____ University

_____ Other

Name of repository: _____________________________________

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): ____________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximately 2.1 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: __________

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 29.935066°  Longitude: -90.104090°
2. Latitude: 29.935172°  Longitude: -90.103189°
3. Latitude: 29.934381°  Longitude: -90.103154°
4. Latitude: 29.934281°  Longitude: -90.104054°

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.) The National Register boundary consists of the entirety of Square 584 bounded by Napoleon Avenue to the east, LaSalle Street, to the south, Jena Street to the west, and Freret Street to the north.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.) The National Register boundary corresponds to the historic boundary of the property during the majority of the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Gabrielle Begue/Senior Associate
organization: MacRostie Historic Advisors
street & number: 614 Gravier Street
city or town: New Orleans  state: LA  zip code: 70130
e-mail: gbegue@mac-ha.com
telephone: (504) 655-9707
date: September 2021

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

• Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
• **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

• **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex  
City or Vicinity: New Orleans  
County: Orleans  
State: LA  
Name of Photographer: Gabrielle Begue  
Date of Photographs: March-May 2021

1 of 27: Church: east/Napoleon Avenue façade; camera facing west  
2 of 27: Church: north and west/rear façades; camera facing southeast  
3 of 27: Rectory: west/Jena Street and south/LaSalle Street façades; camera facing northeast  
4 of 27: Connector between church and rectory viewed from LaSalle Street; camera facing north  
5 of 27: Exterior views of rectory and school from Jena and LaSalle Streets; camera facing northeast  
6 of 27: School: north/Freret Street and west/Jena Street facades; camera facing southeast  
7 of 27: School: north/Freret Street and east/Napoleon Avenue facades; camera facing southwest  
8 of 27: School: south/rear façade; camera facing northeast  
9 of 27: Church: nave and apse viewed from choir loft; camera facing west  
10 of 27: Church: choir loft viewed from nave; camera facing east  
11 of 27: Church: apse/altarpiece; camera facing west  
12 of 27: Church: south sacristy; camera facing southwest  
13 of 27: Rectory: dining room, main/second floor; camera facing north  
14 of 27: Rectory: den, third floor; camera facing west  
15 of 27: Rectory: corridor, third floor; camera facing west
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Complex
Orleans Parish, LA

Name of Property
County and State

16 of 27: School: north-south corridor, first floor; camera facing north
17 of 27: School: classroom 103, first floor; camera facing south
18 of 27: School: terrazzo floor detail at corridor turn, first floor; camera looking down
19 of 27: School: cafeteria, first floor; camera facing northwest
20 of 27: School: gymatorium, first floor; camera facing west
21 of 27: School: gymatorium entrance from Freret Street and stair to mezzanine, first floor; camera facing north
22 of 27: School: classroom 201, second floor; camera facing east
23 of 27: Scholl: east-west corridor, second floor; camera facing east
24 of 27: Convent: north-south corridor, third floor; camera facing south
25 of 27: Convent: cell no. 2, third floor; camera facing east
26 of 27: Convent: communal living room, third floor; camera facing south
27 of 27: Convent: chapel, third floor; camera facing northeast

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
FIGURE 1. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908-09 series (Vol. 5, Sheet 514). The boundaries of the parish complex are shown in red.
FIGURE 2. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1937-51 series (Vol. 5, Sheet 514). The boundaries of the parish complex are shown in red.
FIGURE 5. The first purpose-built rectory, corner of Napoleon Avenue and Freret Street, c. 1915. The building was converted into a convent in 1928 (demolished 1956). Source: Roger Baudier, “Our Lady of Lourdes Parish - Dedication” (pamphlet), September 8, 1957/Archdiocese of New Orleans.
OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH COMPLEX
2400 Napoleon Avenue, New Orleans, LA
National Register of Historic Places Nomination
September 2021

FIGURE 8. The LaSalle Street facade of the new rectory, c. 1930. Source: Henry C. Bezou, Lourdes on Napoleon Avenue (New Orleans: Congregation of Notre Dame de Lourdes Church, 1980).
FIGURE 9. Sketch of the Our Lady of Lourdes parish complex in 1928. The one-story parish hall is not shown but was extant at this time. Source: James F. Donovan, *Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, 1903-1928* (1928)/ Archdiocese of New Orleans.
OUR LADY OF LOURDES PARISH COMPLEX, NEW ORLEANS, LA

National Register Boundary Map
September 2021

(C) = Contributing
(NC) = Non-contributing

National Register boundary

Lat/long:
1: 29.935066°, -90.104090°
2: 29.935172°, -90.103189°
3: 29.934381°, -90.103154°
4: 29.934281°, -90.104054°

1. SCHOOL (C)
2. RECTORY (C)
3. CHURCH (C)
4. Shed #1 (NC)
   Shed #2 (NC)

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Plan N

EXISTING LEVEL 3

P3.03

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC PARISH COMPLEX, 2400 Napoleon Avenue, New Orleans, LA - National Register of Historic Places Nomination (Sept. 2021)