

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The St. Philomene Church and Rectory Complex (c. 1888) consists of a stuccoed brick Gothic style church and a frame late Greek Revival rectory located in the small town of Labadieville on the west bank of Bayou Lafourche. Changes in the complex have been relatively few and minor.

CHURCH:

The five-bay basilican plan parish church has a small crossing and a central frontal tower over the narthex. (According to church records, the arms of the crossing were added a few years after the church was completed.) The tower and the facade are accented with angle buttresses and protruding pinnacles. They are also ornamented with blind lances arcades and bands of stylized quatrefoils. (The latter could also be crosses, the mason's intent is not clear.) All windows and doors are of the two center type, which marks them as early Gothic in style. The exterior culminates in a graceful octagonal spire. The interior features false vaulted ceilings with tiny parallel ribs which resemble board and batten siding. The aisles are separated from the nave by pillars with foliated capitals and multiple shafts formed of colonettes. There is also a second story gallery with a lances panel front. The apse culminates in a semi-circular series of pointed arches with vaults that merge in an elaborate fan form.

The following changes have been made in the church:

1. A new organ with a large cabinet has been installed over the narthex. It occupies most of the aforementioned second story gallery.
2. Most of the old exterior doors have been replaced with modern glass doors.
3. The sacristy area behind the apse has been modernized.
4. Two of the rear doorways have been fitted with aluminum awnings.

RECTORY:

The frame story-and-a-half rectory has a central hall plan, three rooms deep, with a rear kitchen wing. The building is conservatively styled with Greek Revival square post galleries and six over six windows. It could almost be taken for a c. 1850 plantation house were it not for its large plate glass transoms and side lights and its Italianate mantels. Also, the columns have articulated bases, which is not a Greek Revival convention, and the front door obviously dates from the late-nineteenth century. The rectory is listed as a contributing element because it is contemporaneous with the church and because it is a vital part of the overall significance of the church complex (Item 8).

Since construction the rectory has been fitted with 2 small lean-to bathrooms and the attic story has been reworked for an apartment for the priest.

Assessment of Integrity:

In the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office, the described changes in the church and the rectory should be regarded as minor.

Specific dates	C. 1888
Builder/Architect	Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The St. Philomene Church and Rectory Complex is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is an architectural landmark within the context of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century buildings of Assumption Parish.

The Louisiana Comprehensive Historic Sites Survey has identified some 284 50+ year old

structures in Assumption Parish, the vast majority of which date from the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth centuries. St. Philomene Church is one of two churches which represent the apex of architectural styling and sophistication in the parish during this period. Both are large well-developed brick Gothic Revival churches. Their superiority to the vast majority of the parish's patrimony is evident if one contrasts them with the cottages, shotgun houses, and plantation houses and stores which predominate in the area. Whereas the two churches represent strong, studied, and specific stylistic statements, the mass of other buildings merely partake of the current builder styles of the time, such as Eastlake, late Greek Revival, or Queen Anne Revival. None can be said to represent a specific overall reference to this or that particular historical style in the way that the churches can.

One might think that the 1896 Romanesque Revival Assumption Parish Courthouse would offer some competition to the two churches as an architectural landmark. But it is only vaguely Romanesque Revival, and in truth, it most closely resembles a simple Italianate villa of the 1840'S or '50'S.

The two churches which represent the height of architectural development in the parish during this period are St. Elizabeth (N.R.) and St. Philomene. Of these, St. Philomene is noteworthy for two reasons: (1) Unlike St. Elizabeth, St. Philomene retains its original spire. (2) Unlike St. Elizabeth, the St. Philomene complex remains its contemporaneous rectory. Hence it can be seen as a superior example, within Assumption Parish, of a church property complex of the period.

Major Bibliographical References

Louisiana Comprehensive Historic Sites Survey, Assumption Parish,

Research. Report (with supporting primary and secondary sources), prepared by John A. Meyer and Joseph A. Casse, Jr. Copy in National Register file at LA State Historic Preservation Office.