

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 24 1976
DATE ENTERED DEC 12 1976

DATA SHEET

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC ST
~~Saint~~ Cecilia Academy
AND/OR COMMON
Saint Cecilia Motherhouse

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
8th Avenue and Clay Street
CITY, TOWN
Nashville
STATE
Tennessee
VICINITY OF
Fifth
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Fifth
COUNTY
Davidson
CODE
47
CODE
37

CLASSIFICATION

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

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
The Saint Cecilia Congregation of the Dominican Sisters
STREET & NUMBER
8th Avenue and Clay Street
CITY, TOWN
Nashville
STATE
Tennessee
VICINITY OF

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Davidson County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Nashville
STATE
Tennessee

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN
STATE
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Saint Cecilia Motherhouse was built in four stages. Each building is joined at its end wall, forming a linear central axis parallel to the extended main facade. The building reached its final form in 1903. The earliest section of the convent dates from 1862, and the three subsequent additions comprise the monumental structure. Each phase of construction represents a continuum of architectural styles popular during the late nineteenth century in America. The matching brick bearing wall with limestone foundation wall construction was applied throughout. Located at the crest of a hill, the building affords a splendid view of the city.

Saint Cecilia Academy was founded in the early Greek Revival style residence built on the site for John F. Erwin and his wife Lavinia Robertson Erwin. Bishop James Wheland hired Mr. H. M. Akeroyd to draw the architectural plans for the academy. The Akeroyd plan provided for a main front facing south, the convent west, and the academy east. The basic plan was finally realized with the construction of the 1903 addition. Finances were limited and only one portion of the design was completed during the 1860s. Influenced by the Italianate style, the architectural detail is modest by comparison to other buildings of the same period. The facade is distinguished by identical, two story bays which appear on the south wall. The tall, Italianate-style windows feature carved-wood enframements and symmetrical placement. The low, hip-style roof line is accented by widely spaced cornice brackets which are paired. The red brick bearing walls are divided horizontally at each story level by narrow limestone belt courses, and vertically by engaged brick piers. The original main entrance faced east. Great stone steps led to the raised portico entrance which also featured a lower entrance leading to the basement level. This entrance was removed when the 1903 addition was constructed across the same elevation. Today, the original double doors can be seen in the interior passage which extends through the center of the building. The carved poplar woodwork and paneled transom in the semi-circular-shaped door casing are typical of the carpentry work for this section. The hand-cut limestone foundation wall was laid by Mr. Hugh Burns, a stone mason from Kentucky. The original quarry is located on the site. Mr. W. F. Taylor was the contractor for the brickwork, the plasterer was William Stockell. Mr. Charles Melton was the painter, and William Simmons did the carpentry.

The academy enrollment had increased substantially by 1880 and a second addition was built. The Akeroyd plan featured a projecting center bay facing south. Mr. J. L. Smith was hired as the architect. The Tanksley Brothers firm did the interior plastering, and Mr. H. C. Melton was the paint contractor. The architectural design was influenced by the late phase of the Italianate style. This rectangular shaped addition was larger and more elaborate in detail than the earlier construction. A recessed portico entrance is located in the bay and great stone steps with ashlar stone side railings lead to the first story main entry. The masonry stone work was done by Phillips and Simmon, contractors with Owman and Steward. The portal entry features carved wood pilasters and semi-circular arched lintel. The entry design includes heavily molded enframements and a semi-circular-shaped transom, set with hand-etched frosted lights. The same etched-glass motif reappears in the interior doors which lead from the main foyer to the central passageway, which serves to connect all of the principal rooms to the same hallway.

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A third addition was constructed at the west end of the 1880 building in 1889. Following the Akeroyd plan, this wing contained the long awaited chapel and the living quarters for the sisters. The rectangular plan forms an ell at the back, where a u-shaped courtyard is formed by the massing of the three buildings. The 1889 building includes five stories, and the lowest floor is a basement built beneath the extension of the basement level which is now above ground due to the natural contours of the site. Six symmetrically placed bays across the front correspond to the design of the earlier buildings. The more elaborate detail of the Romanesque style is the predominant theme, evident in the polychromatic effect, which includes such features as the patterned brick, Cyclopean rusticated masonry, and ornamentation of the window labels executed in stone and brick. Where the windows are paired they are enhanced by stone or stone and brick corbeled-out labels, projecting at the crest of the arch. The top cornice features paired and single wood brackets, in two sizes, like the ones in the adjacent building. The main focal point is the window treatment for the chapel. A very ornate stained glass window depicts the patron saint, Cecilia, and the transom panel, side lights, and other stained glass windows in the same elevation complement the design. The semi-circular, brick lintel arch features corbel courses highlighted by a wide, rusticated stone key at the cresting. The wall-gable design is accented by an ornately carved stone cap surmounted by an ashlar-face, sculptured stone, cross attached at the ridge. The gable end configuration includes step-corbie brick, tiles, and patterned brickwork as decoration above the window. Located at the southwest corner, the chapel apse is terminated by an octagonally shaped tower at the second story level. Built in the Romanesque style, church law restricts additional construction above the altar area of the chapel. The end wall of this building features a carved stone statue of Saint Joseph contained in a mansard style tower above the roof. Both this tower and the apse roof have the original slate roof cladding. An inscription in the west end wall gives the 1888 cornerstone date.

The 1903 addition was constructed across the east end of the building. It was planned as the academy wing which included the refractory for students, private rooms for boarders, junior study hall, additional classrooms, science rooms, and dining room area. Brown and Brown of Nashville were hired as architects. This addition was the final realization of the Akeroyd plan. The construction and materials harmonize with the earlier buildings. The twelve additional bays at the front are decidedly less ornate in design and detail. The main entrance to the old academy wing features a recessed entrance, and the arch-headed canopy design is accented by a stone cross attached above the portal. The large, double-leaf doors lead to the basement level which is constructed above ground. The academy was moved to new buildings located in Nashville in 1957. The old academy building is now the Motherhouse for the Congregation.

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In the present condition, the convent shows minor alterations from the original form. The interior space has remained consistent with minor alterations made for accommodating new uses for the many activities. Kitchen, service rooms, and dining rooms are located in the basement level. The first floor of the 1880 section is the principal reception area. The 17' by 13' reception foyer is flanked by two formal parlor rooms furnished in Victorian style which matches the heavily carved moldings and dark stained white poplar woodwork and floors. The walls are plastered and painted, and the rooms feature the original cast-iron fireplaces and gas lamps which have been converted for electricity. The chapel is located at the far end of the central hallway. The apse altar and matching side altars are executed in the Bavarian Gothic style, and they feature numerous pinnacles hand-carved from white poplar wood. Arranged in the typical monastic practice, double rows of pews line the side aisles, facing into the nave.

The walls of the chapel were once used as the background for the hand-painted murals depicting angels and garlands of flowers. The floor of the nave slants toward the altar railing which divides the nave and apse. Engaged Corinthian-style pilasters in the end wall decorate and reinforce the design for the arched apse entrance. The lovely stained-glass windows noted for their realism and colorful detail, depict the story of Saint Cecilia. A matching set of stained-glass windows at the opposite wall depict the story of Saint Dominic. The jewel-like colors cast a soft glow of light across the interior of the chapel. The windows are accented by colored glass lights and beveled jewel glass insets.

The cemetery located in the west lawn has grave markers dating from the 1860s. There are several original buildings located in the area behind the convent. The two story brick laundry and one story steam plant buildings were erected in 1904. The design for the present garden is contemporary with the 1904 period when the limestone masonry perimeter walls were added. The formal atmosphere of the garden is enhanced by the conformation of the circular path of the carriage drive which continues an extended circuit around the perimeter of the building. An early feature of the garden were the lythia, chalybeate and lime-water springs which are now capped off. The academy once included 150 acres. This tract has been reduced to the present twenty acres. The 1908 brick barn burned in 1960, thus ending the hundred year era of agricultural production for the academy. The Motherhouse of Saint Cecilia convent is the permanent home for the sisters of the Dominican Congregation in Nashville.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1862; 1880; 1889; 1903 BUILDER/ARCHITECT H.M. Akeroyd, J.L. Smith, Brown & Brown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Saint Cecilia Motherhouse, the convent for the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia, is located on the corner of Eighth Avenue and Clay Street in Nashville, Tennessee. Established in 1860, the convent is the site of the first Roman Catholic school in the state. The monumental building was built in four phases of construction and reached its final form in 1903. The first permanent building, constructed in 1862, and its subsequent additions are consistent with late nineteenth-century revival styles, which expressed specifically the Italianate and Romanesque influences in the architecture of the period.

The original plan for the academy was initiated at the time of the Civil War by Mr. H. M. Akeroyd, an Englishman and Nashville architect. Akeroyd was associated with William Strickland. He is recognized for his design of the original library at the State Capitol, one of Strickland's most famous buildings in Nashville. The Akeroyd plan for the academy was used for each subsequent addition built by other architects who are well known for their work in the city.

The first academy building was expanded by 1880. The 1889 addition included the long-awaited chapel, and the 1903 addition expanded the classroom area. The chapel is the most delightful feature of the convent. Large windows on each side contain magnificent stained-glass lights which are signed by F. X. Zettler, a master craftsman of the Royal Bavarian Art Institute of Stained Glass, Munich.

A landmark in Nashville, this building has been in continual use, occupied by the same congregation of sisters for over 116 years. The convent remains basically in its original form. Few alterations have been made and the interior plan has remained essentially the same for each use of the building. Both the exterior and interior reflect the original quality of workmanship, and these features have been conscientiously maintained by the Dominican sisters, who are aware of preserving this fine institution in keeping with its historic heritage.

Beginning in the twelfth century, the basic role of the Dominican sisters has been the education of young women. Saint Cecilia Motherhouse, the convent of the Dominican sisters, is significant and worthy of recognition for the lasting contribution to education that the teaching sisters have made to the Nashville community. Since 1860 the congregation has worked to promote the ideals of parochial education in Tennessee.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lenahan, Kyran L. "An Historical Study of the Saint Cecilia Motherhouse, Nashville, Tennessee," an unpublished manuscript in the Tennessee Historical Commission files, June, 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 20.8

UTM REFERENCES

D	1,6	51,77,6,0	4,00,45,8,0	A	1,6	51,79,6,0	4,00,46,6,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,6	51,78,2,0	4,00,43,2,0	B	1,6	51,80,2,0	4,00,43,8,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gail Hammerquist, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

July, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

170 Second Avenue North

TELEPHONE

(615) 741-2371

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Herbert L. Hansen

TITLE

Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

9/21/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Active

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

12/12/86

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/6/76

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In August of 1860 the Right Reverend Bishop James Wheland, the second Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Tennessee, brought four Dominican sisters to Nashville from St. Mary's convent at Somerset, Ohio. The school opened in temporary quarters at the site, and the 1862 building was designed as a boarding school for girls and a convent for the sisters who taught there. The sisters experienced many hardships during the initial stages of the founding of the academy. Saint Cecilia's Academy was the only substantial school building constructed in Nashville during the Civil War. This was the only school the Union forces allowed to remain open and Union soldiers were bivouacked in the fields adjacent to the academy. The first commencement exercise of 1862 graduated two female students. The congregation of sisters and enrollment have increased since that time. As a result of the success of the academy and in response to local needs, other schools were established in Chattanooga, Clarksville, Jackson, Winchester, McEwen, Memphis, Gallatin, Oak Ridge and Tullahoma. Sisters from Saint Cecilia also teach in schools located in other states. The academy moved to new buildings on Harding Road in Nashville in 1957. In 1960, the Congregation established Aquinas Junior College, the first Catholic College in Nashville. Traditionally, Saint Cecilia Motherhouse is maintained as the permanent home for sisters teaching in schools located across a wide geographic area of the South.