

**Grace United Methodist Church  
2001 Iberville Street**

Landmark Designation Report

March 10, 1998

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Architectural Rating: Green  
Construction Date: 1917  
Architect: Louis A. Gauthier

Site Description

Square 247  
2nd Municipal District, 6th Assessment District  
Zoning: RM-1, Multiple Family Residential  
Owner: Grace United Methodist Church

Nomination Information

Date Nominated: December 13, 1988  
Recommended by: Grace United Methodist Church

The nomination of this property was based upon its architectural and cultural significance. Each of the four areas of criteria used in determining whether a property is worthy of or meets the qualifications for landmark status, as outlined in City Ordinance #5992 M.C.S., will be examined.

History of Property

In 1852 a parcel of land at the corner of Customhouse (Iberville) and Prieur was donated to a small congregation "committed to the establishment of a Lutheran" church. Construction of a small wood frame Greek Revival church began in September and by the following March the church of the Evangelical-Lutheran St. John Congregation was dedicated.

By 1903 this small church was demolished and construction begun on a larger structure. The new church was a masonry Gothic Revival of modest size. By 1917 St. John's moved into larger quarters on Canal Street and the structure was sold to the Grace United Methodist Church, who has held the property ever since.

Architectural Significance

The current church, the second one on this site, is a brown brick Gothic Revival structure. It follows a cruciform (cross-shaped) plan with cross gables. The roof is steeply pitched and still

retains the ridge tiles. At the peak of the gables are rooster comb finials.

All of the windows were originally of stained glass and are quite nice. These windows are very intricate. They do not depict religious figures but are of a decorative nature. Unfortunately some have been damaged and replaced with clear glass. On others the plexiglass covering has been removed. No information was discovered on the designer of the windows.

There are two cornerstones on the building. The first one dates from 1852 and is all that remains of the original church. The second cornerstone was placed sometime between 1920-1921 and commemorates the organization of the Grace United church. The main entrance features a large pointed arch and paneled door with a gable pediment supported by four wood columns resting on masonry piers. On either side of the front entrance are two small pointed arch windows with arched window crowns. Above the door is a moderately sized rose window (several panels are damaged). On either side of the window are two sets of decorative knee brace brackets.

There is a large square tower at the corner of Iberville and Prieur. An old photograph shows the tower, according to a newspaper report at the time of its dedication, the square tower was over eighty feet high. Hurricane Betsy severely damaged the tower and other parts of the building. Repairs were made but the tower was not rebuilt. A hipped roof was placed on the tower, which is topped by a small cross.

On the Prieur side of the tower is another arched door. Above this door is a small arched window and above that is a decorative band of lighter colored brick that circles the tower. Also on the Prieur facade is a very large arched window. It consists of five small arched segments above three larger arched windows. Decorative knee brace brackets that support the roof overhang are on either side of the window. At the rear of the building, on the Prieur Street side, is a five sided aspe which also contains several pointed arch windows.

#### Architect

According to a newspaper article (Times Democrat, pg. 5, Oct. 5, 1903) reporting on the laying of the cornerstone, bids were submitted by various builders. After revisions were made, the bid of Louis A. Gauthier was accepted. No further information on the architect was discovered.

#### Historic Personages

None

#### Cultural, Political, Economic and Social History

In 1852 a group of worshipers broke off from another congregation in order to establish their own church. They formed the Evangelical-Lutheran St. John Congregation. On September 12, 1852 the cornerstone was laid on a small wood frame Greek Revival church at the corner of Customhouse and Prieur Streets. In 1903 this small church was demolished and a larger building was constructed in the Gothic Revival style. In 1917 the Lutheran congregation moved to new

quarters on Canal St. where they worship today under the name of St. John Lutheran Church. The church building was sold to the Grace United Methodist Church.

Grace United Methodist Church came into being through the merger of the Union Chapel and Pleasant Plain Churches. Union Chapel was originally located in a red light district and policemen were not allowing children to attend Sunday school in this area. As Pleasant Plains also had a small membership the congregations decided to merge in the Pleasant Plains church.

In 1915, this building was destroyed by a storm and services were held in a nearby stable. By 1917 the congregation had contracted with St. John to purchase their old building. In April, 1917, "the members marched from the stable to the Little Cathedral." The congregation was named Grace because it was felt that the "Grace of God had brought us thus far and would lead us on." This same congregation still owns the building and continues to worship there.

#### Staff Recommendation

Although the church is a nice example of Gothic Revival architecture, it is not an outstanding one. In addition, in researching the origins of the church, the staff could not find any reference to a historic personage who was associated with the church or with a historic event that occurred there. The church plays an important part in the lives of its members, as all churches should. However, landmark status should be reserved for outstanding historical or architectural examples. As this building fails to adequately meet any one of the four criteria, the staff recommends against landmark designation.

#### Endnotes

"St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church - cornerstone laid" *Times Democrat*, October 5, 1903, pg.5, col.7.

*A History of German Churches in Louisiana (1823-1893)*, Deiler, J. Hanno, pg.65-69.

*History of Grace United Methodist Church 1917- 1963*, 1963.

Historic photographs courtesy of Historic New Orleans Collection