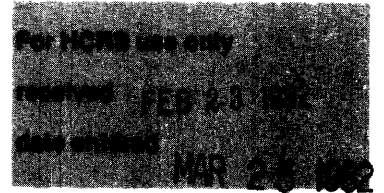


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



**1. Name**

historic St. Mary Help of Christians Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

Southwest intersection of York Street and Park  
street & number Avenue

not for publication

city, town Aiken

vicinity of

congressional district Third

state South Carolina

code 045

county Aiken

code 003

**3. Classification**

**Category**

\_\_\_ district  
☒ building(s)  
\_\_\_ structure  
\_\_\_ site  
\_\_\_ object

**Ownership**

\_\_\_ public  
☒ private  
\_\_\_ both

**Public Acquisition**

N/A in process  
N/A being considered

**Status**

☒ occupied  
\_\_\_ unoccupied  
\_\_\_ work in progress  
**Accessible**  
☒ yes: restricted  
\_\_\_ yes: unrestricted  
\_\_\_ no

**Present Use**

\_\_\_ agriculture  
\_\_\_ commercial  
\_\_\_ educational  
\_\_\_ entertainment  
\_\_\_ government  
\_\_\_ industrial  
\_\_\_ military  
\_\_\_ museum  
\_\_\_ park  
\_\_\_ private residence  
☒ religious  
\_\_\_ scientific  
\_\_\_ transportation  
\_\_\_ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Bishop of Charleston, A Corporation Sole

street & number 119 Broad Street

city, town Charleston

vicinity of

state South Carolina 29401

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Barnwell County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Barnwell

state South Carolina 29812

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Inventory of Historic Places  
in South Carolina

has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes ☒ no

date 1980

\_\_\_ federal ☒ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records South Carolina Department of Archives and History

city, town Columbia

state South Carolina 29211

## 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

Located within the city limits of Aiken, South Carolina, the St. Mary Help of Christians complex is a spatially and visually unified building group consisting of St. Claire's Chapel, constructed in 1879-1880 in the Gothic Revival style to serve the Catholic community in Aiken; St. Mary Help of Christians Church, constructed in 1905 in the Gothic Revival style to serve the needs of a growing congregation; and the rectory, constructed ca. 1930. A bronzemadonna by Gustave Doré is located in the vestibule of St. Mary Help of Christians Church.

#### St. Claire's Chapel:

St. Claire's Chapel is a small brick Gothic Revival building constructed 1879-1880.<sup>1</sup> The building has a steeply pitched gable roof with slate shingles, a small narthex, and small cross gables at the south end, which accent the rectangular body of the building. The facade (north elevation) has three uncoupled lancet windows above the narthex and single lancets flanking the narthex. Double-shouldered pier buttresses are located at the corners of the building; similar buttresses, alternating with paired lancet windows, define the bays along the east and west elevations. Three large uncoupled lancets pierce the south wall. Apart from the removal of the original bellcote, the chapel is unaltered.<sup>2</sup>

The chapel has an open wooden scissors truss roof, with the chamfered beams and purlins accented, respectively, in tan and aqua paint. The walls are lined with vertical boards and a chair rail is placed along the east and west walls. The original ventilated pews are embellished with quatrefoil cutouts. A communion rail is located in front of the rosewood altar. Three painted glass windows depicting St. Claire and two angels form a religious tableau on the south wall. These panels were painted by Nicolas Lorin of Chartres, France.

#### St. Mary Help of Christians Church:

St. Mary Help of Christians Church is a large brick Gothic Revival church designed by McMurphy and Story, architects.<sup>3</sup> The building was constructed in 1905. The facade (north elevation) has a tripartite composition with a central gable section flanked by an eastern tower with a steep gable roof, and a western tower with a tall broached spire. Three arched entrances correspond to the three sections of the facade. The wall treatment is bichromatic, employing contrasting stone on the buttress weatherings, the window and door arches, and the archivolts. A central traceried window is located above the main entrance; single and paired lancet windows are located in the towers. Raked corbeling embellishes the central gable end. The east and west elevations employ Florentine pointed arches, brick buttresses, and contrasting stone trim.

The nave of the church is rectangular, with an ornate polygonal apse at the south end. A fine blue and gold filigree style painting on the vault of the apse, together with the enframing florentine arch, creates a center of visual and symbolic interest. Balance is established by flanking statuary niches, which are decorated with painted fleurs-de-lis and enframed with Florentine arches. The nave features a massive hammer-beam timber roof, with trefoils inset between the pendant posts, hammer beams, and braces. The major members are accented with gold leaf. The north wall retains a choir loft and a large stained glass window in the geometric mode. Stained glass windows in Florentine arches are also located along the east and west walls and in the apse.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1879–ca. 1930 **Builder/Architect** See descriptions of individual buildings.

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The St. Mary Help of Christians complex in Aiken, South Carolina, is an architecturally significant building group, including the 1879–1880 St. Claire's Chapel, constructed to serve the Catholic community in Aiken, and St. Mary Help of Christians Church, designed by McMurphy and Story and constructed in 1905 to meet the needs of a growing congregation.<sup>7</sup> These two buildings represent two distinct phases of the Gothic Revival in America. Also contributing to the historic character of the complex is the ca. 1930 rectory. Artistic distinction is evident in the Doré Madonna, located in the vestibule of St. Mary Help of Christians Church, and in the three painted glass windows in St. Claire's Chapel, which were executed by Nicolas Lorin, a master of French art glass.<sup>8</sup>

### Additional Information

In 1867 the Right Reverend Ignatio Persico established the first parish church on the site of St. Mary Help of Christians Church. A small frame building served the Catholic congregation for eleven years until it was demolished in a tornado in 1878.<sup>9</sup> Celestine E. Eustis, a winter resident of Aiken and a devout Catholic, used her wealth and influence to build a more durable church. According to local tradition, Miss Eustis commissioned James Renwick, Jr. to undertake the design of the new church, and after the plans were completed, building contractors Laird and Ott started construction. At approximately the same time, Celestine Eustis engaged Monsieur Nicolas Lorin of Chartres, France, who painted the three glass windows installed in the chapel, which was called the Church of St. Claire of the Holy Cross.<sup>10</sup>

From ca. 1880 to 1903 the chapel served the needs of the Catholic community in Aiken; however, as the town became increasingly popular as a winter resort, wealthy northerners so swelled the congregation that during the pastorate of Father John A. Seidl a decision was made to construct a larger church. McMurphy and Story, architects from Augusta, Georgia, were granted the commission, and in the fall of 1905 St. Mary Help of Christians Church was completed.<sup>11</sup> Between 1942 and 1953 the interior of the church was decorated by Renardo Ilario Panzironi of New York City.<sup>12</sup>

St. Mary Help of Christians Church continues as an active Catholic church. The smaller St. Claire's Chapel is used as a place of meditation and for special functions.<sup>13</sup>

### Architecture:

The St. Mary Help of Christians Church complex is an architecturally significant building group, illustrating two distinct phases of the Gothic Revival in America. St. Claire's Chapel is a significant example of Gothic Revival architecture in the Early English mode. The chapel, with its exposed construction and functional integrity and in its subordination of ornament except as the enrichment of the basic construction of the building, is representative of the Ecclesiological phase of the Gothic Revival, during which strict

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

DATE LISTED

See continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.9

Quadrangle name Aiken, S.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 17 433195 3713178  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                        

D                        

E                        

F                        

G                        

H                        

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the red line on the accompanying Aiken County Tax Map #30-051, drawn at a scale of 1 inch = 100 feet. This boundary includes the historic church, the chapel, the associated church buildings, and the tree-shaded lot.

### 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 Charles Lowe, John Wells

organization S. C. Department of Archives and History date           

street & number 1430 Senate Street telephone (803) 758-5316

city or town Columbia state South Carolina 29211

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

   national   X   state    local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Charles E. Lee (crl) 2/8/82

Charles E. Lee

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Lynn A. Beebe  
Keeper of the National Register

date March 25, 1982

Attest: Lynn A. Beebe  
Chief of Registration

date 3/25/82

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date entered

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Dorè Madonna:

The Dorè Madonna, located in the vestibule of St. Mary Help of Christians Church, is a life-size bronze statue, modeled in 1880 in the Nineteenth Century Romantic style.<sup>4</sup> The statue stands approximately sixty-four inches high and rests on a base five feet in circumference. Gustave Dorè's signature is located between the Madonna's feet, while the impress of Thiébaud Frères Fondateurs is to the rear of the base. Originally exhibited in plaster form at the Paris Salon of 1880, the statue was later cast in bronze. On March 5, 1966, the Madonna was damaged by fire. Repair and cleaning were done by Salvatore Schiove of the Roman Bronze Works, Corona, New York.<sup>5</sup>

The statue portrays the Virgin Mary in a frontal pose, with head inclined to the right as she upholds the haloed Christ child, whose body symbolically foreshadows the Crucifixion. An expression of resignation is on the face of the infant, while that of Mary is maternal and serene. Textural qualities are added to the sculpture through the folds and drapes of the Virgin's robes, the vigor of the movement contrasting sharply with the overall staticity of form and quietude of expression. The subjects are treated in a naturalistic fashion, the rendition being nonidealized. According to critic Jacques Caso, "in its simplicity of intention and feeling and in its stylistic reserve" this work illustrates a departure from Dorè's more allegorical works, showing an intimate, personal approach to the subject.<sup>6</sup>

Surroundings:

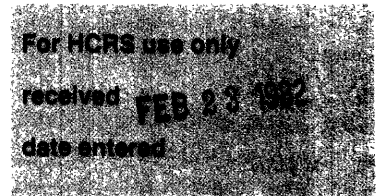
The St. Mary Help of Christians complex also includes the rectory, a two-story brick building with a central gable constructed ca. 1930. Contained in the nominated acreage but not contributing to the historic character of the complex are the parish hall, a two-story building of brick with rusticated lintels constructed in 1952 and a garage constructed ca. 1965. The complex is located in a business district near the center of Aiken.

Appendix:

Local tradition holds that James Renwick Jr. (1818-1895), the architect of the Smithsonian Institution Castle in Washington, D.C., and of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, was the designer of St. Claire's Chapel in Aiken. Circumstantial evidence supports this attribution, since Renwick designed three buildings in Washington, D.C., for W.W. Corcoran; Miss Celestine Eustis, patroness of St. Claire's Chapel was the aunt and co-guardian of W. W. Corcoran's grandchildren. Additionally, Renwick was known to admire the Chartres (France) glass painter Lorin, probably the same Nicolas Lorin who prepared three windows for the St. Claire's Chapel. Renwick was well versed in Ecclesiological Gothic Revival design, and the design of the Chapel of St. Claire is consistent with Renwick's documented work. Conclusive evidence on this point has not yet been discovered, however.

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adherence to historical precedent of English Gothic building was demanded.<sup>14</sup> The exposed brick buttresses on the exterior, the open scissors truss roof, and the original interior woodwork are noteworthy.

St. Mary Help of Christians Church is representative of the later phases of Gothic Revival design when the harsh requirements of the Ecclesiologists were less influential. The bichromatic exterior of the church and the employment of Florentine arches in the windows and entrances, as well as the apse enframement with its stylized voussoirs, suggest an Italian Gothic influence. The English art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) in such publications as *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) has advocated the use of Italian Gothic forms and motifs, especially polychrome construction. The influence of the English Decorated Gothic is also evident, in the tracery of the facade windows, and in the trefoils that embellish the framing of the hammer and beam roof. The use of painted decoration in the apse is in striking contrast to the academic correctness of St. Claire's Chapel; the Ecclesiological architects and critics condemned such applied decoration as inappropriate in Gothic architecture, and especially so in churches. The contrast between St. Claire's Chapel and St. Mary Help of Christians Church demonstrates not so much a shift in the use of Gothic forms and details, but rather in the philosophy of their overall deployment and integration in building design.

Art:

St. Claire's Chapel is artistically significant because it retains three nineteenth century painted glass windows executed by Nicolas Lorin of Chartres, France, a master of both painted and stained glass. Nicolas Lorin (1815-1882) achieved an honorable reputation in Europe as a master of religious art glass.<sup>15</sup> During his career he completed projects for twenty churches and cathedrals in France, notable ones being in the cathedral at Orleans,<sup>16</sup> Saint-Sauveur de Verdun,<sup>17</sup> and the basilica of St. Denis. Foreign commissions included Canterbury Cathedral, the Cathedral of St. Croix in Vienna, and various churches in Brussels.<sup>18</sup> Apart from St. Claire's Chapel, Lorin's only other known commission in the United States was a water color project on glass titled "Scenes de la Vie de la Sainte Vierge," which was completed in 1874 for a cathedral in New York.<sup>19</sup>

The religious tableau in the St. Claire's Chapel was commissioned ca. 1880 by Miss Celestine E. Eustis.<sup>20</sup> The central panel depicts St. Claire holding the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament while the adjacent windows show angels in attitudes of prayer.<sup>21</sup> All three panels are rendered with a richness of hue and dexterity of detail not often seen in southern churches of the period. The left window bears the signature, "N. Lorin."

Sculpture:

The Gustave Doré Madonna in St. Mary Help of Christians Church is artistically significant as an example of Nineteenth Century Romantic sculpture by an artist of international reputation.<sup>22</sup> Gustave Doré (1833-1883) is primarily recognized for his genius as an illustrator. His engravings can be seen in select nineteenth century editions of Balzac, Tennyson, Coleridge, and the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Despite his success, Doré felt it necessary to establish his reputation in other media. Favoring religious-historical themes, he pro-

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duced several monumental canvases. Interest in sculpture came late in his career, when in 1871 he modeled a clay bust of Christ.<sup>24</sup> Six years later Doré made his formal attempt to establish his reputation as a sculptor by exhibiting his work Fate and Love (Le Parque et L'Amour) in the Paris Salon of 1877.<sup>25</sup> Following this debut he modeled Glory (1878) and Night (1878), both allegorical works; and in the same year he unveiled The Vine, a massive ten foot high vase in the shape of an Italian wine bottle. This sculpture, "teeming with winged cupids, fauns, and bacchantes," was exhibited in the 1878 Exposition Universelle, the Salon of 1882, the Columbian Exposition of 1893, and the California Midwinter Exposition in San Francisco (1894).<sup>26</sup> His last work was a monument to Alexander Dumas (1883), erected in Place Malesherbes, Paris, after Doré's death.<sup>27</sup>

The Madonna was modeled in 1880 and exhibited in the Salon of that year, placing third in the competition. Originally wrought in plaster, the work received favorable reviews from L'Artiste, and L'Art, whose critic wrote the following:

A third-place medal--and that is really quite little--rewarded the effort of M. Gustave Doré. M. Doré modeled a life-sized Madonna standing and holding the infant Jesus in her arms; the latter, in stretching out his little arms like an unruly child, evokes the spectacle of the last scene of the Passion drama. M. Doré had until now shown himself more intemperate than reasoned. This time he must be accepted in earnest as a creator of statues.<sup>28</sup>

The Madonna expresses a different facet of Gustave Dore's character. Instead of symbolism the figure of Virgin and Child reflects a simplicity and directness that has its main appeal on an emotional level. Because of this different subject approach, Dore's Madonna is a distinct and unique expression in his sculptural career, a career which is becoming the subject of study in the field of artistic scholarship.

The Madonna was cast in bronze by the Thiebaut foundry in Paris shortly after the 1880 Paris Salon. It was purchased by a Mr. Kinney, who interred the statue in an island chapel on Kenlon, his Butler, New Jersey, estate. His daughter, Beatrice Kinney Lamontagne, acquired the sculpture after his death. A winter resident of Aiken, in 1947 she donated the Madonna to Monsignor George Lewis Smith and St. Mary Help of Christians Church, where it remains today, as a memorial to her husband, Harry Lamontagne.<sup>29</sup>

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>History of Saint Mary Help of Christians Church and Aiken Missions: Compiled for the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary (Aiken, S. C.: St. Mary Help of Christians Church, 1942), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Photograph, ca. 1880, located at St. Mary Help of Christians Church, Aiken, S.C.

<sup>3</sup>History of Saint Mary, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>Jacques Caso, "A Little-Known Sculpture by Gustave Doré: The Madonna," Bulletin, University of New Mexico, University Art Museum, 1973, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Letter, Rosamond K. McDuffie to Margaret Marion, 23 September 1980, National Register Files, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

<sup>6</sup>Caso, p.6; Peter Fusco and H. W. Janson, The Romantics to Rodin: French Nineteenth-Century Sculpture from North American Collections (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980), pp. 238-241.

<sup>7</sup>History of Saint Mary, pp. 38, 47.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup>A Short History of St. Mary Help of Christians Parish and the Aiken Missions (Aiken, S.C.: St. Mary Help of Christians Church, 1953), p. 14; History of Saint Mary, pp. 48-49.

<sup>13</sup>History of Saint Mary, p. 41.

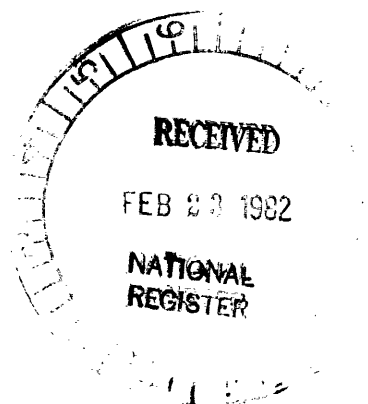
<sup>14</sup>Calder Loth and Julius T. Sadler, Jr. The Only Proper Style: Architecture in America. (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1975), p. 58.

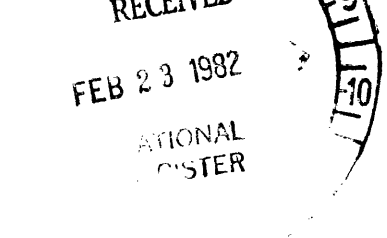
<sup>15</sup>Emile Bellier de la Chavignerie and Louis Auvray, Dictionnaire Général des Artistes de l'Ecole Française, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1882), 1:1058; Bergründet von Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler, 37 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag von E. A. Seemann, 1929), 23:396; E. Benezit, Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs, 3rd ed., 6 vols. (France: Jacobs-Loyer, 1976), 6:744; Courier de L'Art 2 (26 Octobre 1882), p. 516.

<sup>16</sup>Courier de l'Art 2 (26 Octobre 1882), p. 516.

<sup>17</sup>Bellier, p. 1058

<sup>18</sup>Courier de l'Art, p. 516.



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- <sup>19</sup> Bellier, p. 1058.
- <sup>20</sup> History of Saint Mary, p. 39.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Fusco and Janson, pp. 238-241.
- <sup>23</sup> George C. Williamson, Bryan's Painters and Engravers (New York: MacMillan Co., 1903), p. 82.
- <sup>24</sup> Fusco and Janson, p. 238.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Nigel Gosling, Gustave Doré (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), pp. 53-54.
- <sup>28</sup> Fusco and Janson, figure 114.
- <sup>29</sup> Dorothy K. MacDowell, "Virgin and Child," Aiken Standard, July 1970; A Short History, p. 12.