

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**  
 RECEIVED JUN 17 1975  
 DATE ENTERED JUL 24 1975

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

113 South Ninth Street

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

First

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Lafayette

CODE

071

**3 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 type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

The Vestry, St. Peter's Episcopal Church

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 266

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Lafayette County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

STATE  
Mississippi

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1974

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE  
District of Columbia

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT                       DETERIORATED  
 GOOD                                 RUINS  
 FAIR                                  UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Peter's Episcopal Church faces west on a prominent corner three blocks west of the courthouse square in Oxford, Mississippi. Typical of the later Gothic Revival churches built in the Early English mode, St. Peter's closely resembles in plan and detail the small Episcopal churches designed and influenced by Richard Upjohn during the decade of the 1850s. The substantial brick structure consists of a simple nave plan offset by a battlemented entrance tower placed laterally at the northwest corner. A brick parish hall and office addition to the south of the church edifice replaced, in 1956-57, a frame rectory which the parish had erected in 1883 and converted to office use in 1949. Designed by Memphis architect Noland Van Powell, the St. Peter's parish hall annex connects with the church through a south doorway opposite the main church entrance. The three wings of the annex enclose a courtyard which leaves exposed the south wall of the original church exterior.

Punctuated by lancet-arched windows between stuccoed buttresses, the restrained exterior of the original St. Peter's relies almost entirely upon variations in the fine brickwork for ornamentation, a simple sawn vergeboard on the facade being the only applied decoration. Below the vergeboard, the facade fenestration consists of a single circular window centered above a pair of lancets flanked by buttresses. The arched facade windows, the large triplet chancel composition, and the lancet windows at the first and second levels of the tower are glazed with the original grisaille-patterned glass which was designed and manufactured for St. Peter's by Henry Sharp of New York in 1859-60. Completing the exterior of the church is a dormered octagonal spire which rises from within the battlemented parapet of the tower. Sheathed with tin stamped in a simplified fish pattern, the steeple may have been included in some form in the original plans for St. Peter's, but it was not actually added to the church structure until 1893.

Like the exterior, the interior of St. Peter's is characterized by restrained but finely executed features which are not diminished by extraneous ornamentation. The exposed construction of the arch-braced roof rises from impost blocks that terminate in simple acorn pendants, and between the hammer braces the plastered walls are interrupted by lancet-arched window reveals which rise from a panelled dado. Not articulated in the structural outline, the chancel is distinguished from the rest of the church interior only by its elevation one step above the choir, which in turn is raised three steps from the main floor level. The floors of these areas were raised in 1923-27 at the same time that an arch-panelled railing was installed to accommodate the pulpit and further delineate the choir and chancel from the rest of the church interior. Flanking the altar are ornamentally screened enclosures which were constructed to support the pipes for the organ when it was installed in 1961.

None of the moveable furnishings in St. Peter's date from the troubled Civil War years to which the struggling parish was subjected soon after the church edifice was completed. A list of gifts and memorials which today make up the interior fittings of St. Peter's supports the theory that, in the interest of economy, inferior grade temporary furnishings were probably acquired at the outset, to be replaced gradually with items more suited to the quality of the church building. After the church debt was eliminated in 1871, faithful parishioners evidently turned their attentions to equipping the newly-consecrated building with necessary and appropriate fittings

(continued)

# 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 1855-60

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J.F. Dunlap & Co./Noland Van Powell

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

St. Peter's Episcopal Church has, since its completion in 1860, been one of the most important parish churches in the Diocese of Mississippi. The structure itself is unique in Mississippi as a fine example of the Early English style of Gothic Revival church architecture popularized in this country by English born architect Richard Upjohn; and it is ecclesiastically important as both the oldest extant religious structure in Oxford and a once-designated "Cathedral Church" (later "Pro-Cathedral") in the Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi. A number of prominent individuals have been connected with the development of St. Peter's, and the church is today a living monument significant in both the religious and architectural heritages of Mississippi. A collection of bills, receipts, and letters related to the construction of St. Peter's survives in the Mary Buie Museum in Oxford as an important resource in the study of the church structure, and the well-preserved records of the Diocese of Mississippi contain a great deal of data concerning the development of the Oxford parish.

St. Peter's was from its conception a particularly important diocesan mission because of its proximity to the University of Mississippi, established at Oxford in 1848. The actual construction of the church marked the culmination of almost twenty years of Episcopal missionary work in the Oxford community, encouraged and supported by a growing contingent of potential parish members. The town of Oxford, county seat of Lafayette County, Mississippi, was incorporated in 1837, and the first Episcopal services held there were conducted by the Reverend Andrew Matthews of Hernando in 1840. Other clergy from nearby towns held periodic services in Oxford throughout the 1840s, but in 1848 the Right Reverend James Hervey Otey, provisional Bishop of Mississippi, indicated in his journal the influence which the new University of Mississippi was to have on the eventual establishment of a more organized Episcopal congregation and the subsequent construction of a substantial church building:

Sunday, October 22 - At Oxford, Lafayette County, I read Morning Prayer in the Presbyterian Church, baptized three children and preached. This place being in the close neighborhood of the University of Mississippi, which has recently commenced operations, and to which the young from various parts of the State may be expected to resort, should receive immediate attention from the Church. An active and efficient missionary ought now to be on the ground sowing the precious seeds of God's truth. . .

In November, 1850, the Right Reverend William Mercer Green, newly ordained as the first Bishop of Mississippi, was able to report the definite beginnings of an Episcopal parish in Oxford, and his account of his visit there at that time is probably the first recorded mention of actual plans to build an Episcopal church structure in the town:



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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

printed in New York. Published collections of his editorials from these two periodicals were widely circulated in England as well as the United States, and his numerous other writings were equally popular. Thompson came to Mississippi from Trinity Church, New Orleans, in 1882, when he was elected Bishop Coadjutor, and he was Bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi at the time of his death in Jackson in 1902.

In addition to Dr. Barnard and Bishop Thompson, the list of prominent people with close connections to St. Peter's includes Dr. John Millington (1799-1868), Dr. Albert Bledsoe (1809-1877), Jacob Thompson (1810-1885), and Francis Asbury Shoup (1834-1896). Millington, a noted English engineer, author, and teacher who came to Oxford in 1848 to be the first professor of natural sciences at the new University of Mississippi, was one of the early organizers and the first senior warden of St. Peter's parish. Associated with Millington in the founding of St. Peter's, his fellow faculty member Dr. Bledsoe later served as assistant secretary of war in Jefferson Davis's cabinet and became famous in post-Civil War years as the unreconstructed founder and editor of the Southern Review. Prominent in the early political organization of north central Mississippi, Jacob Thompson, who served six terms in Congress (1839-1851) and was secretary of the interior under President Buchanan, became a confirmed member of St. Peter's in 1853 and later contributed liberally towards the construction of the church edifice. Distinguished as a brigadier general in the Confederate Army and later as an inspiring teacher and cleric, Francis Asbury Shoup was teaching applied mathematics at the University of Mississippi in 1868, when he, like Barnard before him, was ordained to the diaconate and began his church career as rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Oxford.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 3

Frederick Augustus Porter Barnard is probably best known for his tenure (1864-89) as president of King's College, New York, during which time his efficient administration expanded the school into the present Columbia University, where Barnard College stands as a memorial to his many contributions. But St. Peter's church, which Barnard served as rector from 1856 to 1861 while he was successively president and chancellor of the University of Mississippi, also reaped the benefits of his dedication and administrative talents. In 1857 Dr. Barnard reported to the diocese that "sufficient means have been at length raised for the erection of a modest building, and a committee has been appointed on the part of the Vestry to enter into the contracts for the work. A suitable lot has been purchased near the Public Square." By deed dated November 19, 1855, the lot on which St. Peter's now stands was purchased by the Vestry from Philip A. and Mary D. Yancey for the sum of six hundred dollars. What became of the lot offered to the congregation by Col. John D. Martin in 1850 is not known, but once the lot "near the Public Square" was acquired, arrangements for building a church proceeded under Barnard's leadership until the structure was completed, albeit without its steeple, in 1860. It is not known whether an architect was employed for the project or not, but in any case Dr. Barnard probably played an important part in the selection of a design for St. Peter's. Although a parish tradition that Richard Upjohn himself furnished the plans for the church has not been substantiated, it is likely that the planners of the Oxford church were familiar with Upjohn's Rural Architecture, published by G. P. Putnam in 1852, and/or with some actual examples of Upjohn's work in other parts of the country, as many features of St. Peter's church resemble elements repeatedly employed by Upjohn in his designs for small Episcopal churches.

Left vacant of regular clergy during the Civil War, St. Peter's was not eligible for official consecration until 1871, at which time Bishop Green pointed out that "through the generous contribution of a few friends, . . . the debt has been extinguished and the building made free to be set apart for God's service." By 1883 a rectory had been completed adjacent to and south of the church building, and by the following year, evidently because Bishop Coadjutor Hugh Miller Thompson resided in Oxford, Bishop Green was referring to St. Peter's as a "Cathedral Church" of the diocese. At Bishop Green's death in 1887, Thompson was elected the second Bishop of the Diocese of Mississippi, and the designation of St. Peter's as "Cathedral", or "Pro-Cathedral," continued at least until 1889, when Rev. John A. Harris was referred to in diocesan records as the "rector of St. Peter's Church" rather than the "dean of St. Peter's Cathedral" as had been customary during the previous five years.

Bishop Thompson (1830-1902) was an important church figure whose close association with St. Peter's lends the Oxford church significance beyond its temporary role as Mississippi's first cathedral. A native of Ireland, Thompson entered the Episcopal ministry in Nashotah, Wisconsin, in 1849. After a number of years as a missionary in Wisconsin, Thompson became rector of Christ Church, New York, where, according to the Dictionary of American Biography, the popular teacher, preacher, and scholar "attracted large congregations." From 1860 until 1871, Thompson edited the Chicago-based American Churchman, and subsequently he became editor of the Church Journal,

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

In the village and neighborhood of Oxford, I found several individuals and families desirous of enjoying our services, and willing to do what they could towards procuring them. They even spoke of attempting to build a church, a liberal individual (Col. Jno. D. Martin) of Holly Springs having presented them a suitable lot for the purpose.

Bishop Green returned to Oxford the following May for the express purpose of holding an organizational meeting of the "friends and members of the church" he had encountered there, and in his comments on the meeting he joined his predecessor in attaching larger-than-local missionary importance to the new parish and its plans to construct a church:

. . . The meeting was opened by calling Prof. John Millington, L.L.D., to the chair. The congregation was then duly organized as "St. Peter's Church" and the Vestry and Wardens elected in Canonical form . . . Nor should I be regarded as showing my undue partiality to this undertaking, when I commend it, as I now do, to the special attention of every portion of the Diocese. At this place is the University of the State . . . There are now between one and two hundred students in the various Departments, and the number is increasing. Among them are to be found some of the sons of the Church . . . To take due care of such, to preserve them from the temptations of a College life, and to keep them in the way in which they have been trained, is certainly the duty of that Church to which they look as to a nursing mother . . . It is upon these grounds, that I now bespeak the favorable regards of the Diocese generally, in the attempt to erect a Church at that place . . . If they should attempt soon to erect a Church, I trust that, for the reasons given above, every part of the Diocese will contribute something toward the undertaking.

In spite of the bishop's enthusiasm, however, the newly organized parish of St. Peter's for some time thereafter continued to attend only occasional services in various provisional quarters. Their interest in their mission did not wane, however, and in 1855 the Reverend Thomas B. Lawson of Grenada introduced a figure important to the future progress of St. Peter's when he reported to the diocese that "from January last this parish has been generally under the charge of the Rev. Prof. Barnard, whose able administrations will make it grow rapidly. They are zealous and faithful in their endeavors to erect a church building, and will no doubt succeed." In a brief report submitted to the diocese in the same year, the Dr. Barnard whose "able administrations" Lawson had praised pointed out to Bishop Green the difficulties inherent in being served by a rector in Lawson's position, "residing at a distance and being encumbered with the care of the churches of Pontotoc and Okolona." As a result of this report the bishop visited Oxford in December of 1856, ordained Dr. Barnard to the ministry, and appointed him the first resident rector of St. Peter's church.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7. PAGE 2

such as the baptismal font (1873), altar cross and vases (1874), altar rail (ca. 1881), lectern (1884), altar (ca. 1887), hymn board (1892), and processional cross (1915).

The extant bills, receipts, and letters pertaining to the labor and materials employed in building St. Peter's reveal much about the craftsmanship and supply sources which contributed to the physical appearance of the church structure. In a "Measurement of the Brick Work on the Episcopal Church at Oxford," a Captain E. C. Boynton calculated that, at twenty bricks per cubic foot of wall, a total of 370,120 bricks would be needed to construct St. Peter's. Accordingly, the records show that \$1,850.60 was paid to J. F. Dunlap & Co. (also called Dunlap & Worley) of Oxford for "Laying 370.120 Ms. of Brick as per Capt. Boynton's measurement at \$5.00 per M., Furnishing Lime Sand and Labor [and] Hauling Brick." On December 23, 1859, a Mr. J. D. Grace of Oxford received a "note for Four Hundred Dollars on Contract for building Episcopal Church in Oxford, Miss.," but whether Grace was connected with Dunlap or acting independently is unclear. At least three separate payments totalling \$1,000 were made to a William Turner (also referred to as W. Turner & Co.), however, "on contract for building Episcopal Church," so it seems likely that more than one builder was involved with the project. M. J. McGuire, who in 1852 was advertising in the Oxford Democratic Flag as an architect and civil engineer, was apparently engaged in the building supply business by the time St. Peter's was constructed, as the available records indicate that he was paid in 1860 and 1861 only for "materials furnished by him on the Episcopal Church," and not for any design services rendered. In November, 1859, St. Peter's was billed by Stratton, McDavitt & Co. of Memphis for 25 barrels of lime and 2 barrels of plaster of paris, and by May 3, 1860, M. Dove of Oxford had received \$178.38 in payment "for plastering the Episcopal Church." As agents for the Western Foundry in Memphis, Stratton, McDavitt & Co. also supplied St. Peter's with the 18 cast iron "Oval Ventilators" which are still in position at regular intervals in the stuccoed foundation of the church. Completing the documented details of the church construction, the itemized bill of G. W. Strickland, who advertised as a "House, Sign, and Ornamental painter" in Oxford newspapers during the 1850s, guarantees "5 cote work and graind oke," suggesting that the pine woodwork in St. Peter's, including the original "264 yards of seats," was initially painted in a faux bois manner rather than stained as it is today.



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CONTINUATION SHEET 2

ITEM NUMBER 9. PAGE 2

- McCrady, Edward. "St. Peter's Episcopal Church Organized in Year 1853,"  
Oxford (Miss.) Eagle, December 16, 1937.
- Oxford, Mississippi. Mary Buie Museum. Kate Skipwith Collection. Scrapbook  
and collected papers related to St. Peter's Episcopal Church.
- Stanton, Phoebe B. The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture, 1840-56.  
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.
- Upjohn, Everard M. Richard Upjohn, Architect and Churchman. New York: Da Capo,  
1969.
- Upjohn, Richard. Upjohn's Rural Architecture. New York: G. P. Putnam, 1852.  
On microfilm at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



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**2 LOCATION**

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\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

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Oxford

Lafayette

Mississippi

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Mississippi Dept. of Archives & History DATE OF PHOTO 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Mississippi Department of Archives & History, Jackson, Mississippi

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 2

Exterior detail: entrance tower, looking southeast

# 1084



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PHOTO CREDIT

Mississippi Dept. of Archives & History

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT

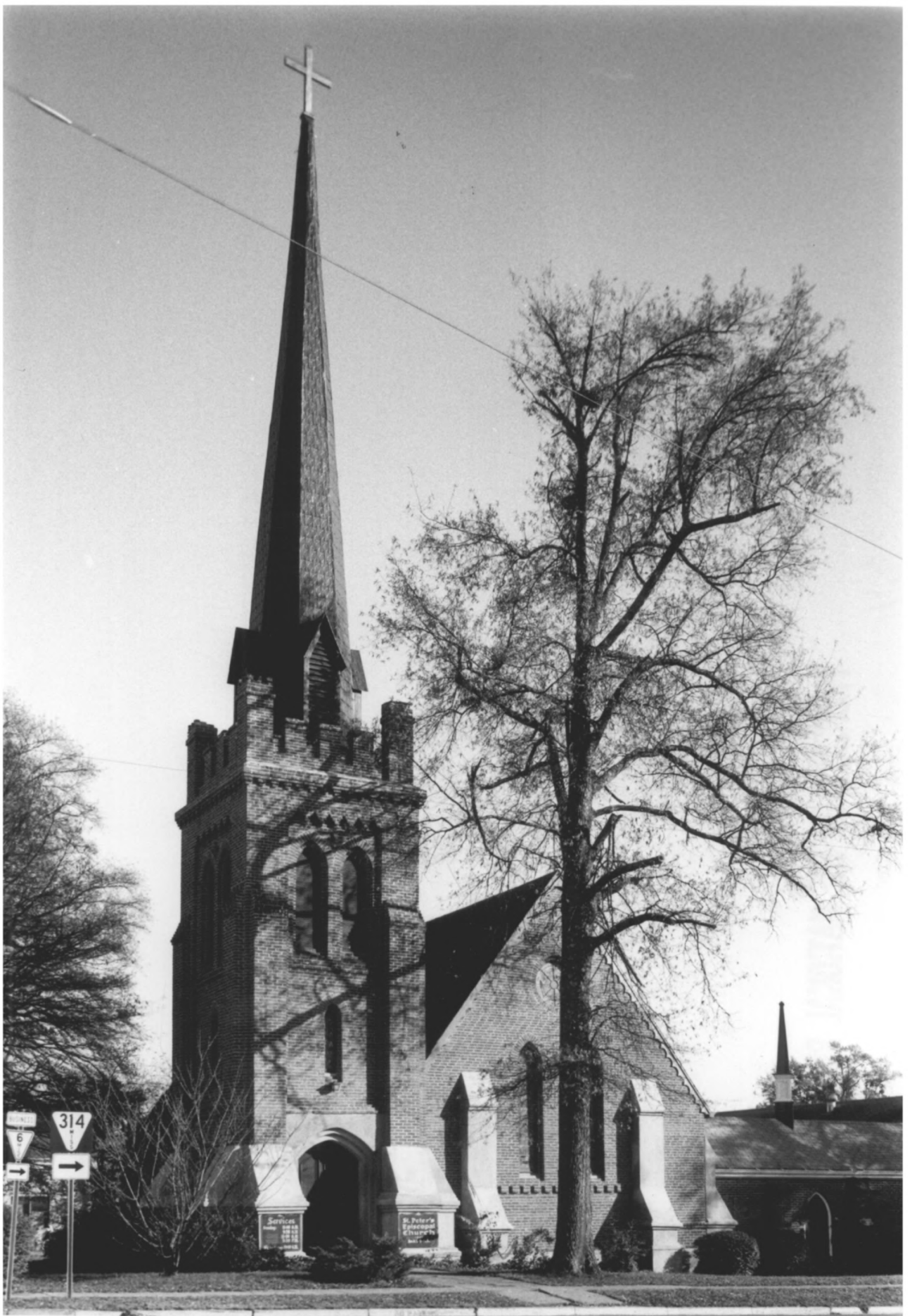
Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

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Interior, looking east toward chancel

PHOTO NO. 3

# 2084



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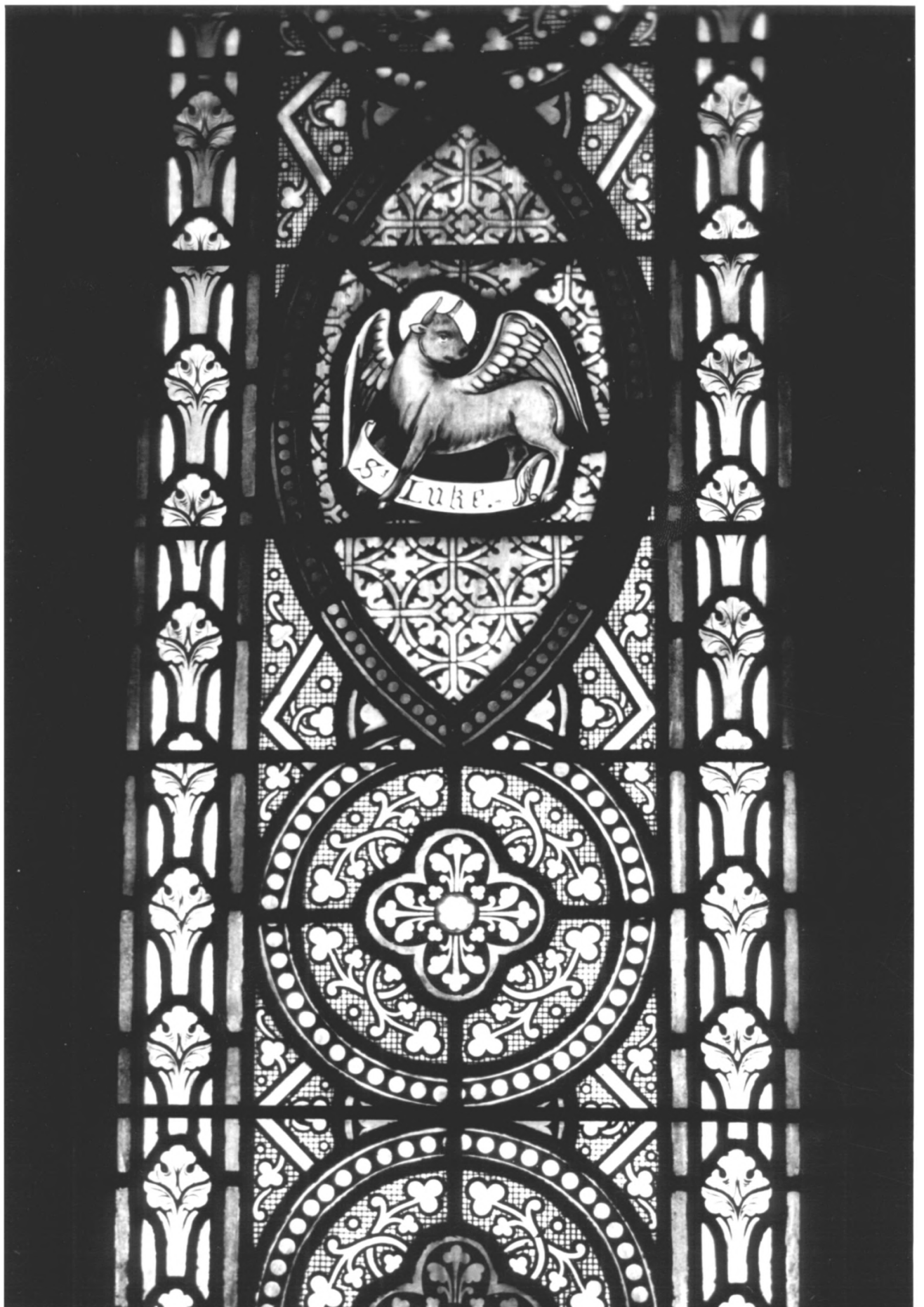
**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 1

General exterior: facade view, looking southeast, with parish hall annex at right

# 3064





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PHOTO NO. 4

In \_\_\_\_\_ detail: original (1860) grisaille-patterned chancel window

424