

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People

AND/OR COMMON

St. Elizabeth's Convent (Motherhouse)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1663 Bristol Pike (Bensalem Township)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Cornwells Heights

VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Pennsylvania

42

Bucks

017

3 CLASSIFICATION

The site serves as the National Headquarters and Communications Center of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians & Colored People.

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"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM People
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People

STREET & NUMBER

1663 Bristol Pike

CITY, TOWN

Cornwells Heights

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Administration Building

CITY, TOWN

Dovlestown

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None Known

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

Exterior of main Buildings

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Charles Burns designed the Spanish-French missionary architectural complex. In 1892, he had completed five buildings of gray stone with smooth brown columns and red Spanish tile roofs. These buildings were the St. Elizabeth Convent, the Chapel, the Holy Providence, Boarding School, the Laundry Building and Utility Building (see sketch map). The architectural style of these buildings was based on that of the early Spanish-Indian Mission of New Mexico and California. Charles Burns spent many months in Southern Europe, the prototype of mission architecture, visiting schools, churches and monasteries. He got a true feeling for the style and he expressed it in the convent building of blended Spanish-French missionary style. The 2½ story St. Elizabeth's Convent is the main building of the complex and faces south. Extending from the building are two wings - one from the southeast end and one from the southwest end - both continue north as an ell. On the northern side of the convent is a courtyard enclosed by the two wings and a 10 foot high wall. An arcade also surrounds the courtyard. A wide arch with a hipped roof is the entranceway to the courtyard.

The chapel is the southwest ell of the convent. There is a half round window in the center of the north gable and Flemish gable on the southern end. In the center of the Flemish gable is a large semicircular 18 paned window. From the eastern end of the front facade is a bell tower.

The utility building is located on the low ground between the area where the school was located and the chapel. It is made of the same material as the rest of the original structures (graystone) and is three stories high. The ground floor is the boiler room; the first floor is the trade school for boys, and the second floor is the living quarters for male employees.

The 2½ story laundry building is located opposite the southeast wing of the convent. It is constructed of graystone material and is a cruciform plan structure. The Holy Providence Boarding School, which was a two story structure connected to the north of the chapel, burned in 1967 and was torn down by 1973.

The integrity of the exterior of the buildings have been kept intact. Expansions have been achieved by adding extensions. The new buildings have been erected in the same style and of the same material as the original buildings. (These new buildings are the St. Mary's Hall, an extension to the Chapel, and extension to the southwest ell, Mercedes Hall Elementary School, The Crypt, and St. Michael's Hall.)

Architecturally, the convent complex offers evidence of the work of local architects - Charles Burns, Cope and Stewardson, Perrot, Dagil, Cove - working in a set historical style. Additions to the original complex had maintained to this day a sympathetic relationship of material and style, while allowing these architectural groups their individuality.

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 checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Katherine Drexel, aware of the destitute and seemingly hopeless condition of the Native American Indians, and the pitiful post Civil War situation of Black People still living in semi-slavery without means of self help and education, devoted her fortune toward providing schools for both races. Realizing that the education, of the mind must be accompanied by the education of the spirit, she heeded the advice of Pope Leo XIII to dedicate her life to this work under God. She gathered a small group of women and founded a congregation in the Catholic Church called the "Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indian and Colored People," and established the National Headquarters at the Motherhouse, Cornwells Heights, Pennsylvania. She had recognized the injustice done America's two most deprived races, and she had sought to meet their needs with all the resources at her command; the dedication of her own personal life, together with the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, her congregation, and her family fortune as well.

Though noteworthy for the unique architecture of its original buildings and its many succeeding structures, the primary interest in this historic site is centered in its tremendous, far-reaching purpose to provide thorough education and religious training and a new hope for countless numbers of forgotten children and adults among the Indian and Black people. From the beginning, the educational program of the Congregation has had tremendous success. Ever growing numbers of Sisters with superior training as elementary teachers, and later, as high school and college teachers went to establish and staff schools for Black and Indian children. Twenty-two states were covered, from Massachusetts to Texas, and from Virginia to California. In 1955 there were in operation forty-nine elementary schools, twelve high schools, three centers of social service, a house of studies, and in New Orleans, Xavier University. Katherine Drexel's interest in the Black and Indian races extended to many missions outside her own, especially in Africa and other foreign lands. Her work lives on now through the lives of four generations of children and youth who by the thousands have attended the schools she established, from elementary to university.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Francis A. Drexel Family, by Marie E. Letterhouse (Sister M. Dolores)
 Pub. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Printer, Hadden Craftsmen, 1939.

Buckingham Palisades of the Delaware, Leo Fink. Pub. Paulist Press, N.Y. 1960.

The Bouviers. Protrait of an American Family, by John Davis, Pub. Avon Books, N.Y. 1970.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 8 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	510,362,0	473,574,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Sister Mary Ellen Quilty & Sister Elise Sisson / Charles Cromartie, Summer Asst.

ORGANIZATION

St. Elizabeth's Convent / OHP/PHMC

DATE

July 9, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1663 Bristol Pike / Box 1026

TELEPHONE

717-787-4363

CITY OR TOWN

Cornwells Heights / Harrisburg

STATE

Pennsylvania

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

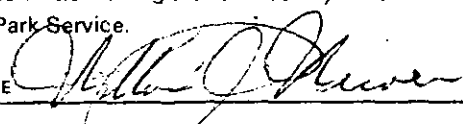
NATIONAL

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



TITLE

Executive Director
 Pa. Historical & Museum Commission

DATE

12/30/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

The Bristol Pike, Rev. S.F. Hotchins, Pub. George W. Jacobs Co. Phila. 1893

The Golden Door, Life of Katherine Drexel, by Katherine Burton, Pub. Kennedy
N.Y. 1957.

Katherine Drexel, Friend of the Neglected, by Ellen Tarry, Pub. Farrer,
Vision Books - no. 32, New York, 1958.

The Door of Hope, The Story of Katherine Drexel, by Katherine Burton (Kurz)
Pub. Hawthorne, New York, 1963..

Katherine Drexel, a Biography, by Consuella Marie Duffy, Pub. Peter Reilly
Company. Philadelphia, 1963.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SAINT ELIZABETH'S CONVENT - Bucks County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

UTM's

Revised Acreage - 8 acres

A	503 630	4435 780
B	503 740	4435 610.
C	503 650	4435 500
D	503 530	4435 730

**SUBSIDERS OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT FOR
INDIANS & COLORED PEOPLE**

Bucks County

ZONE 18 503 620 144 36 746

