

Name: Thurmond House
Date: 1850's

Physical description of property and historical significance

Description: Raised on a stone foundation, the 5-bay hewn frame house has a central hall plan with double parlors and a rear "L" wing. Clapboarding on sides replaced c. 1900. Two of original four chimneys survive. House noteworthy for simple Greek Revival details including front gallery, front door, transom and sidelights, and the one surviving mantel.

Significance: This five-bay, central hall plan house, with plain pillars and a transom side-lighted front door is a typical example of the simplest version of the Greek Revival when it was applied to residences in Louisiana.

Dates from the 1850's when it was built by the Thurmond family, early settlers of Mt. Lebanon. Today it is still owned by their descendants.

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mount Lebanon is an old community of approximately thirty buildings which vary in age from 140 years to 3 years. They are spread out along approximately three miles of La. Rt. 154 and La. Rt. 517, two roads which converge to form the center of the community. There is no potential district in Mount Lebanon. The buildings are widely spaced amid rolling countryside, in some cases as much as a quarter mile apart.

The Survey

The survey was accomplished through a systematic inspection of each building. Based upon this it was determined that a thematic group nomination based upon the Greek Revival buildings in the community was the best way to recognize the valuable cultural resources in the area. There are only a few buildings over fifty years old which do not fit this category. These are predominantly small nondescript, bungalows which could only be registered as part of a historic district. Because of the vast open space and the large number of new buildings in the area, a district was clearly impossible. The antebellum buildings of Mount Lebanon all feature simple Greek Revival details including molded capital pillars, and pilasters, transom side-lighted doors, six over six windows and plain molded mantels. Most of the residences have typically Greek Revival central hall double parlor plans, under pitched roofs with five bay gallery fronts. There is also the occasional pediment.

STATEMENT OF Significance

The town of Mt. Lebanon is significant in the areas of architecture, religion, and education.

Mount Lebanon is a small community with eight good substantial representative examples of the provincial Greek Revival. This is a remarkably, high number and concentration for northern Louisiana, an area which was not largely settled until the late 19th century.

The town of Mt. Lebanon began in 1836 when a group of prosperous farmers from Edgefield District in South Carolina settled in the area. During 1836-1837 they established homes, cleared land, opened a post office and several stores, and organized a Baptist church. There were about twelve families in the original group, and at first the settlement was known as the Carolina Colony. Many persons of these original families were related to each other directly or by marriage, and this situation made for a close-knit community with a high degree of shared values.

The community prospered and during the 1840's, other persons were attracted to Mt. Lebanon and its nice homes, expanding trade center, strong church, and congenial society. The village eventually numbered about fifty families, most of which were from South Carolina.

In 1851 a New Orleans newspaper predicted that Mt. Lebanon would become one of the most important towns in north Louisiana. The article said the town was pretty, healthy, and pleasant. In 1860, journalist J.W. Door gave the following description of the town:

It is a delightful town of about three or four hundred inhabitants. It is famous for health, wealth, educational institutions, and good people of South Carolina stock. The town is well built with everything to indicate wealth and refinement. One is likely to want to prolong his stay indefinitely and if spurred by inevitable necessity leaves it with regret.

Mt. Lebanon has significance in the areas of religion and education, because it was a major center of Baptist activity in north Louisiana from the 1840's through the 1860's. It was under the leadership of Reverend George W. Bains in the 1840's that this period of religious significance began. Several other churches were established in the area due to the efforts of Bains and his congregation. In 1847 the Baptists in Mt. Lebanon began to take an interest in education. In 1848, the town hosted a large meeting of Baptists from many areas of the state which resulted in the formation of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, which had as its primary goal the promotion of Baptist education. In 1853 the Convention established Mt. Lebanon University, and an associated Female College, both of which functioned successfully until the coming of the Civil War. But neither institution ever really recovered its viability after the war. The Female College burned shortly after the war and went out of existence. The university struggled along for many years, eventually becoming coeducational, before it expired in the early twentieth century. Mt. Lebanon University was one of the direct ancestors of Louisiana College in Pineville. The town enjoyed a brief return to prosperity after the war, but this economic well-being faded after 1884 when the railroad by-passed it.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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