

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First United Methodist Church of Columbia is a large one-and-one-half story frame structure which features a combination of three rather different historical styles - Gothic, Romanesque, and bungalow. It is located in an early to mid-twentieth century residential area of the parish seat of Columbia. Completed in 1911, it received a substantial addition in 1939 that complements the older structure through the use of the same materials and design elements. This addition was so successfully woven into the original that it enhances the broad, low-slung character of the church. Other than this addition, which should not be considered detrimental to the building's integrity, the church has been altered very little over the years.

The rectangular clapboarded church has an irregular roofline because it has two front towers of unequal height. Both towers have low, overhanging tripped roofs, bands of dentils underneath windows, and false buttresses. The taller of the two has a recessed belfry with round arched louvered openings and large scroll volute braces. The shorter one has pairs of stylized quatrefoil windows underneath its eaves. The church's main entrances are in these towers and have pointed arched openings and doors with recessed panels whose shapes are influenced by the Gothic mouchette motif. The central window on the facade is essentially a large fanlight with its segments repeating the motif of the stylized quatrefoil windows in the shorter tower. All the other windows are paired with round arched lights. There is a dado beneath the first story windows.

Gothic features include:

- (1) the mouchette motif doors
- (2) the pointed arch doorways
- (3) the false buttresses on the towers
- (4) the stylized quatrefoils set in some of the windows

Romanesque Revival features include:

- (1) the round arch windows in the taller tower
- (2) the double arch windows of the nave and narthex

Bungalow features include:

- (1) the extended rafter ends
- (2) the broad low mass
- (3) the squat pyramid shaped tower roofs
- (4) the dado

In 1939, the building was enlarged by an addition on the south and east elevations. The addition has almost identical features as the main block. These include the clapboard wall covering, paired windows with round arched lights, exposed rafters and large "fanlights" (which in the addition have only louvers).

The church appears to retain its original pews and altar furnishings set behind a semicircular railing. The sanctuary retains its beaded wainscoting and has undergone only a few renovations, which include the installation of an acoustical ceiling and wooden roll-up partitions on the west side of the building. This originally was the southern wall of the church, but now the opened partitions lead into Sunday School rooms in the 1933 addition.

Except for the addition, the exterior of the Columbia Methodist Church has received almost no alterations. The new iron stair railings on the facade and the wheelchair ramp on the north elevation do not alter the significance of the building in any way, and the addition itself is a complement to the older building. Built of the same materials and using the same design elements,

it is now inseparable from the whole.

Specific dates            1911; addition - 1939  
Builder/Architect        Architect Unknown (1911)  
                                 Contractor: Frank Masselin & Son, Monroe (1911)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)  
Criterion C

The First United Methodist Church is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is an architectural landmark in the town of Columbia.

Although the river port town of Columbia was incorporated in 1847 there is nothing left to represent its early development. In fact, the town's oldest surviving structures date from the turn-of-the-century, and these are mainly plain one-story Queen Anne Revival cottages. Columbia's later historic building stock consists almost exclusively of nondescript bungalows and equally nondescript 1920's commercial buildings.

Against this architectural background, the First United Methodist Church is noteworthy in the following respects:

- (1) It is one of the largest historic structures in Columbia.
- (2) It has probably the most elaborate massing of any historic structure in town For example, it is the only one with towers,
- (3) In contrast to the conventional, even humdrum, historic building stock described above, the church features a striking and exotic blend of Gothic, Romanesque, and bungalow features.

#### Major Bibliographical References

History of the First United Methodist Church, Compiled by Mrs. Willie D. Lee. Copy in National Register File, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office, Baton Rouge.