

The Spring Ridge Baptist Church (1892) is a single story plain frame building located in a clearing in the rolling wooded countryside of northwestern Catahoula Parish. Situated between the small hamlets of Enterprise and Aimwell, the church is accessible by a network of mainly gravel roads. Alterations have been relatively minimal.

The church has a simple gabled roof form, three bays deep. The only exterior decoration is its gable end returns, one of which is missing. Windows are four over four. Two doors pierce the front, while there is one central door at the rear. The frames are original, but the doors are c.1930 replacements. The round head stained glass window between the two front doors is a 1950s replacement of a square head window. The stark interior is sheathed in flush boards. The pulpit, located on a raised platform, is built of the same type of boards. Oddly enough, the pulpit is located at the front of the church.

Changes beside those mentioned above are concrete steps with wrought iron railings and tapered concrete piers instead of the original stone supports.

Assessment of Integrity:

All in all, the above mentioned changes have had a relatively minimal impact on the historic appearance of the church. It still easily conveys its character as a stark frame church in a remote setting, a once common character-defining component of the North Louisiana landscape.

The Spring Ridge Baptist Church is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a rare surviving example of an important North Louisiana building type.

The building is a well-preserved example of an austere country frame church. As such, it represents a local North Louisiana unpretentious building tradition associated with the Upland South settlement patterns of the region. From an architectural standpoint, churches of this type should be regarded as remote descendants of provincial Greek Revival temple form churches. Generally associated with the Methodist and Baptist sects, they represent an archetype which is a vital part of the Upland South building tradition.

But it is a building type which is rapidly disappearing. Because these churches are in remote locations, many are no longer actively used and hence face an uncertain future. Also, some have been "modernized" with brick veneer or asbestos siding. Although there is no specific survey to indicate how many churches of this type there once were across northern Louisiana, it is reasonable to assume that they were once common, given the settlement patterns of the region. They were the rural North Louisiana church type. But today, for example, Catahoula Parish has only one other example, and it has serious integrity problems. There are most likely less than a dozen remaining examples in the eastern half of northern Louisiana where Spring Ridge is located. (This figure is based on comprehensive surveys of some parishes, windshield surveys of some, and general State Historic Preservation Office staff knowledge.)

Historical Note:

Spring Ridge Baptist Church was organized in 1873 about a half mile from the present site. Interviews conducted with older members about twenty years ago indicated that the present church was built in 1892. Because this date is believable given the architectural evidence, it is being used in this submission. The building has not been used on a regular basis for forty or so years, but homecoming services are held annually.

Bibliography

Historic Structure Survey Files, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.