

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Arizona Methodist Church was constructed c.1880 in Arizona in central Claiborne Parish. The frame vernacular Greek Revival church retains its original architectural character, including all of its exterior features and some of its interior features. The changes that have been made do not detract from its significance as one of the best known examples of Greek Revival church architecture in northern Louisiana and as the landmark of the Arizona vicinity.

The rectangular building retains all of its major Greek Revival elements. These include the following:

- (1) Friezes and gable returns on both the front and rear gables, architrave molding on the eaves, and pilaster cornerboards on all four elevations. The gable returns, friezes, and cornerboards give the feeling of columns with full entablatures.
- (2) Pediment-shaped moldings over the windows on the side elevations.
- (3) Identical pediment-shaped moldings over the ransomed rear doors.

The classically inspired round arched fanlights over the central entrance and windows are another distinctive exterior feature.

Although the only apparent major change to the exterior has been the addition of the small pyramidal roofed bell tower, there have been numerous alterations to the interior of the church. Nevertheless, it retains its molded window surrounds, round vaulted plank ceiling, and plank walls in the two rear Sunday School rooms. A major interior renovation was done c.1940, when the following changes were made:

- (1) The vestibule was converted into two Sunday School rooms and a small vestibule.
- (2) The altar was moved forward and two Sunday School rooms created behind it.
- (3) The walls were covered with fiberboard.
- (4) New flooring was installed.

None of the changes noted above detract from the structure's significance as an important example of rural Greek Revival church architecture in northern Louisiana and as the landmark of the Arizona community.

Specific dates c.1880
Builder/Architect Doss Pennington, Builder

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Arizona Methodist Church is locally significant in the area of architecture as one of the best examples of rural Greek Revival church architecture in northern Louisiana and as the landmark of the rural area around the Arizona community.

Churches of this style (i.e., "watered down" versions of a Greek temple) were common in the eastern states between 1830 and 1860, but there are few examples to be found in northern Louisiana, which was settled during that era.* Although the style is generally thought of as dying out after the Civil War, examples of it were built in rural areas throughout the state well toward the end of the century. There are only six known examples of these churches in the thirteen northernmost parishes in the state. Except for the one at Athens, which has a full pediment, the others have less pronounced Greek Revival features or have been more altered. The Arizona Methodist Church is distinguished from them by its pilaster cornerboards, gable returns, and pediment-shaped moldings over its windows and doors.

On a more local level, this church building is the only surviving historic landmark of the

Arizona community, which during the postbellum period was a thriving town with a substantial cotton mill and academy.

*The settlers' devotion to the ideals of the Classical Age can be seen in the names chosen for neighboring towns like Homer, Athens, and Sparta.

Bibliography:

Historic Standing Structures Survey, Claiborne, Union, Lincoln, Webster, Bossier, Caddo, Bienville, Morehouse, Ouachita, and East Carroll Parishes. On file in LA State Historic Preservation Office.

Robinson, Dorris. Historical sketch of Arizona Methodist Church. On file in LA State Historic Preservation Office.

Conveyance Records, Claiborne Parish.

Arizona Academy Site Historic Marker File. LA State Historic Preservation Office.