

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Grand Cane United Methodist Church ( 1888) is a frame Gothic Revival building located on U. S. Highway 171 in the small community of Grand Cane in rural DeSoto Parish. Despite some alterations and the replacement of the building's principal architectural feature, the church retains its National Register eligibility.

Originally the church had a three story side tower with an octagonal spire and four corner pinnacles. The lower story of the tower contained a vestibule which served as the entrance to the building. In 1959 the tower was taken down to the first story and given a pitched roof. In 1990-91 it was replaced, based upon photographs of the original. Because the, upper stories of the tower are replaced, this description will emphasize the surviving original features of the building.

The nave of the church is a steeply pitched, gabled roof mass four bays deep. Its principal feature is a forward facing Gothic window with twin lancets inscribed within a larger hood molded lancet. Also inscribed is a central glazed roundel with the muntins worked into a quatrefoil pattern. The rounded is repeated on the rear wall of the nave. The sides of the nave feature single lancets, each with a hood molded top. The principal entrance also faces the form of a lancet; here the transom features muntins worked in a tracery pattern.

The interior of the nave features narrow gauge beaded boarding installed so as to form a wainscot at the window sill level. The upper portions of the walls are similarly sheathed, culminating in a faceted false vaulted ceiling. (The walls and ceiling had been covered with paneling and acoustical tiles, respectively. These materials were removed during the 1990-91 restoration project.)

#### Alterations

In addition to the tower replacement, the building has undergone the following alterations:

1. In the 1940s, the last bay of the nave was partitioned off and the altar and pulpit moved forward. This created a new rear space which was partitioned into three small rooms. None of the original detailing was removed in this process. At that time three windows were added to the rear of the church.
2. An original small room at the rear of the vestibule was doubled in size, which meant covering one of the lancet windows on the side of the nave. At some point this window was moved to the base of the tower, replacing a square head window.
3. In 1959 a single story side wing was added near the rear of the nave. (It was attached between two lancet windows.)
4. Originally the upper portion of the front facing gable had a series of collar beams with decorative woodwork in between. This feature no longer exists. (A photo showing this detailing was discovered after the 1990-91 restoration was complete.)

#### Assessment of Integrity

The Grand Cane Church retains the Gothic Revival features that make it DeSoto Parish's most elaborate example of the style, as noted in Item. 8. Significance is not being claimed for the tower because it is largely a replacement, although it should be noted that it is an almost exact copy of the original. Although one wishes the side wing were not there, it should be emphasized that the church, with its strong Gothic Revival character, easily dominates visually.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Grand Cane Methodist Church is significant on the local level because its original Gothic features (see description) establish it as DeSoto Parish's finest example of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture. In this regard it should be noted that all of the parish's Gothic Revival buildings are churches.

During the Victorian era, the Gothic Revival was an extremely important movement in church architecture, particularly among protestant denominations. Victorian theologians asserted

that Gothic, having arisen in the "Age of Faith" (the Middle Ages), was the appropriate style for ecclesiastical buildings. Known as the Ecclesiological Movement, this renewed interest in the Gothic Revival began in England and came to America in the late 1830s, where it had a profound impact. By the end of the Victorian era (c.1900), the Gothic Revival had left a sizable and impressive legacy.

Known primarily for its Greek Revival architecture, DeSoto Parish also has a collection of seven Victorian Gothic churches, an unusually large number for a rural parish. Among these, there is no doubt that the Grand Cane Methodist Church is the finest. Two of the other examples are Greek Revival temple forms whose only Gothic features are simple lancet windows. A third example is a full-blown Greek temple whose portico was enclosed in the late nineteenth century. This enclosure was fitted with straight sided lancet windows. Two of the other remaining examples are fairly plain, with a simple gable roof shape and lancet windows. Finally, there is a sizable frame Gothic church in Mansfield, but it has lost its architectural character, having been completely encased in aluminum siding -- buttresses, window surrounds and all. By contrast, at the Grand Cane Methodist Church, the lancets are not plain but rather are hood molded. In addition, the front elevation features a double lancet surrounded by a large quatrefoil window, all of which is inscribed within a massive hood molded lancet. The quatrefoil window is repeated on the rear elevation. The foregoing are far more elaborate than any features found on the parish's six other examples of the Victorian Gothic style.

#### Major Bibliographical References

Historic photos of Grand Cane Methodist Church, copies in National Register file, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

DeSoto Parish Historic Structures Survey, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.