

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Keachi Baptist Church (c.1880) is a transitional late Greek Revival/Gothic Revival frame structure located in the rural crossroads community of Keachi. The church has received only minimal alterations, and these are confined to the interior and have not had much impact upon the original character.

The c.1880 date used in this nomination is based almost entirely upon architectural evidence. The church history indicates that the land was donated for purposes of erecting a house of worship in 1852, but certain features of the building indicate a date between about 1875 and 1890. These features include some of the moldings, which are not typical of the mid-nineteenth century, and the plate glass weight-hung windows. Although one might wonder if these later nineteenth century features represent a remodeling, this does not seem to be the case because the present building is manifestly all of a piece. Also, there are individuals in Keachi who say they have always heard that the original church was badly damaged in a storm and subsequently rebuilt.

The building consists of a large gabled hall with a small projecting gabled entrance vestibule. Both have a full entablature, corner pilasters with molded capitals, and gable end returns. The rear also features gable end returns and corner pilasters with molded capitals. Openings take the form of two center lancet arches, including the louvered vents in the steeple. The steeple, with its entablature, pilasters, and end returns, echoes the styling of the rest of the church. The front doors feature heavy, intricate bolection moldings reminiscent of the Italianate style.

The fairly plain interior has flushboard walls and ceilings and molded door and window surrounds. The worship space culminates in a low paneled platform with a paneled lectern. The historic auditorium-looking seats appear to have been salvaged from Keachi Female College, originally located across the road. They appear prominently in a photo in a 1901 college handbook.

Alterations:

In the mid-twentieth century a small portion of the rear of the worship space was walled off to create two small rooms either side of the vestibule. This was done with plain boards to match the original, so although the worship space is now a bit smaller, it has the same architectural character. And, of course, this change is not visible from the exterior. Also, the floor has been carpeted, but this is a minor reversible cosmetic alteration.

Significant dates	c.1880
Architect/Builder	Unknown
Criterion C	

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

The Keachi Baptist Church is of state significance in the area of architecture because it is one of very few country Greek Revival churches in Louisiana. It is also of local note as part of DeSoto Parish's distinctly Greek Revival architectural heritage.

Churches of this type, either with or without Gothic Revival touches, are a common archetype in the eastern United States and the Midwest and represent a provincial "watered down" version of high style temple form churches. They range in degree from a fully developed portico, to a pediment-shaped front with columns in antis, to a simpler version with gable end returns and corner

pilasters. Later examples sometimes have hesitant touches of the Gothic Revival, usually a Greek Revival shape and detailing but with pointed arch fenestration. Despite the popularity of the type elsewhere, there are only seven examples in Louisiana, three of which happen to be in Keachi. The seven examples in Louisiana date from the 1850s through c.1880, and two are in the transitional Greek Revival-Gothic Revival style. Of the seven, two have full-width porticos (although one has been badly aluminum sided), one has a fully developed pediment, and the others feature gable end returns, an entablature, and more often than not corner pilasters. Given the rarity of this archetype in Louisiana, it is reasonable to conclude that any intact example would be eligible for the National Register at the state level of significance.

The Keachi Baptist Church also should be viewed within its local historic context. DeSoto Parish was settled principally in the two or three decades prior to the Civil War and is one of three parishes (excluding New Orleans) considered to be major centers of Greek Revival architecture in the state. Although many examples from this architectural flowering have been lost, including the impressive Keachi Female College, an astounding number survive. DeSoto boasts about twenty residential examples of the style, four churches, a Masonic hall, and a temple fronted country store. This special heritage represents the parish's architectural apogee, and any example is an important part of this identity. The Keachi Baptist Church is of particular interest because it represents the persistence of the Greek Revival style well after the Civil War.

Major Bibliographical References

DeSoto Parish Conveyance Records.

DeSoto Parish Historic Structures Survey, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office.