

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Keachi Presbyterian Church (1858) is a frame Greek Revival temple-form building located on Louisiana Highway 5 in a small crossroads community. A few alterations were made in the 1890s, but they have not destroyed the church's original character.

The Keachi Presbyterian Church was built in the classical temple form, with a pedimented portico across the entire front. The fully developed entablature extends around the side elevations. There are four square Doric columns with matching pilasters.

In the 1890s the portico was enclosed with clapboarding a bit narrower than the original. The clapboarding was placed behind the columns and no original features were lost or damaged. The enclosure gave the church a new double leaf front door and flanking windows, all featuring pointed top transoms.

Inside this enclosure are the original pilasters and the two original towering Greek Revival aedicule motif doorways. These doorways are as tall as the front columns and feature unusual two-tier double leaf doors. The ground level and upper doors are separated by a horizontal molded band. Both sets of doors have bolection molded panels with indented corners on the exterior and the more typical rectangular panels on the interior.

The principal feature of the flushboarded interior is the handsome aedicule motif set behind the raised platform altar. It features paired pilasters and an entablature with a drip molded denticular cornice. All interior door and window surrounds are shoulder molded. The pews are original.

The following alterations were made in the 1890s:

- (1) As previously explained, the front portico was enclosed.
- (2) The architectural evidence indicates that the cupola dates from the 1890s. Its pointed vent openings and narrow gauge clapboarding match the portico enclosure.
- (3) Two multi-pane windows were added to the rear elevation. Their interior surrounds have shoulder molding, but otherwise the molding profiles are more elaborate than those on the original windows.
- (4) A slender lean-to addition was added to the rear, with access provided by two doors inserted between the paired pilasters of the aedicule motif behind the altar. Assessment of Integrity

The most noteworthy of these 1890s alterations is the portico enclosure. Of course the building would be a purer example of the classical temple form had this not occurred but fortunately it was done in a sensitive manner and could be reversed very easily. No original features were lost, and the building's temple form is still clearly dominant. In addition, the church retains all of its other Greek Revival features, such as the imposing aedicule style doorways, the shoulder molded surrounds on the interior, and the handsome aedicule motif behind the altar.

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

The Keachi Presbyterian Church is of state significance in the area of architecture as the finest among a very limited number of country Greek Revival churches in Louisiana. It is also of local note as a part of DeSoto Parish's distinctly Greek Revival architectural heritage.

Country Greek Revival churches of this type are a common archetype in the eastern United States and the Midwest and represent a provincial version of high style examples. 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 windows and doors. Despite the popularity of the type elsewhere, there are only seven country Greek Revival churches in Louisiana, three of which happen to be in Keachi.

The Keachi Presbyterian Church is the finest of these in several respects. The classical temple form, with the portico embracing the entire facade, represented the pinnacle of Greek Revival perfection, and the Keachi Presbyterian Church and the badly aluminum sided Union Baptist Church (also in DeSoto Parish) are the only examples in the state. (Of the five others, one has a fully developed pediment but only corner pilasters, and the others have gable end returns, an entablature, and usually corner pilasters.) Beyond this principal distinction, the Keachi Presbyterian Church is the only example to feature aedicule style doorways, one of only two examples to feature shoulder molds, and the only example to feature such elaborate interior articulation as found in the aedicule motif behind the altar.

The Keachi Presbyterian 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 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 the temple-fronted Keachi Presbyterian Church is an important part of this identity.

Major Bibliographical References

Keachi Presbyterian Church Records (housed at the church).

Historic Structures Survey, DeSoto Parish.