

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. James Episcopal Church is a late Gothic Revival idiom structure with an aisled cruciform plan. Constructed in 1889-1895, it was designed by Col. W. L. Stevens, architect. It contains 5,913 square feet including the basement.

The building's foundation is of corbelled brick piers with 6" x 8" cypress sills and 2" x 12" floor joists. The exterior masonry walls are 1'7" thick, red brick, laid in common bond, The structure was recently repointed with red mortar. Interior walls are wood lathe and plaster above a 3'6" high arcaded cypress wainscot. The interior is supported by arch-braced trusses, the largest in the nave spanning approximately 35'.

The building has an east-west orientation with the apse on the eastern end and a square bell tower on the southwest corner. The narthex may be entered from doors in the north, west, or south sides.

The west side of the tower has triple lances arches with a single arched brick label mold. These windows contain stained glass.

The doors on the south and west sides are each contained in a compound equilateral arch with ogee arch-shaped label mold topped with a Celtic cross. The door facing south leads into the bell tower, while the western door enters directly into the narthex. Above each label mold are six rampant arches, three on each side, with a larger lances arch surrounding the Celtic cross. The door on the northern side appears to be a simple arch, and a brick covered walk butts against the exterior wall of the narthex on that side. Above the doors and on all four sides there are round windows with semicircular brick label molds. The corners of the tower are ; marked by brick buttresses.

Above the buttresses is a string course. On each side of the tower there are three narrow slot-like recessed brick panels with squared brick label mold above. Over this are equilateral arches topped by label molding. Tracery within these form pairs of lances arches. Louvers cover the bells installed there.

The top edge has denticulation above small lances arches on each side. A Latin cross tops the tower. The western end of the nave also contains a lances arch with tracery and is topped by a Latin cross.

Three windows, each a lances arch with brick label mold and each containing stained glass, adorn both sides of the rear of the nave. Buttresses separate the windows and mark the corners of the transepts.

Both large transept windows are lances with tracery over stained glass. Each is topped by an ogee-shaped label mold and then a rose window.

The arched nave windows in front of the transepts have been bricked in on the south side of the building but still contain glass on the north side.

The apse itself is half an octagon with an ambulatory. The altar rail is wood with brass standards and the Chancel chairs echo the Gothic Revival motifs of the structure. The panels on the apse walls were hand carved by the Rev. J. L. Tucker, DD, Rector, 1899-1906 and his son, the Rev. Louis Tucker, 1906-1909. Each panel has a different design.

The three windows in the apse were originally clear glass with tracery forming three lances arches, but were replaced with Tiffany stained glass in 1910.

SPECIFIC DATES 1889
BUILDER/ARCHITECT W. L. Stevens

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Congregation of St. James Church was founded in 1844. An "Episcopal Congregation of Baton Rouge" had been granted a 10-year charter in 1820, but the charter was not renewed. "St. James Church of East Baton Rouge" was officially reorganized shortly after a visit from Bishop Leonidas Polk (the Fighting Bishop of the Confederate Army) in January of 1843.

The original frame church was constructed in 1845-1846 and the present structure in 1889-1895. The existing church is the second oldest Gothic Revival church in the City of Baton Rouge. Because of its side tower and substantial proportions, it is closer in feeling to the ecclesiastical, mid-century Gothic Revival style than the older church, St. Joseph's, whose massing is symmetrical and whose proportions are thin and papery. The church is also a local landmark. The architect was Col. W. L. Stevens; the contractor was W. H. Miller. Stevens was later prominent in the Spanish-American War and served as the state's Adjutant-General.

The Congregation of St. James was, for 98 years, the only established Episcopal parish in the city.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interview with Raymie Edmonds, Architect, AIA

Church Records: St. James Episcopal Church