

Describe the present and original (it known) physical appearance

The Church of the Nativity (1859) is a small frame Gothic style chapel located in a semi-rural setting on the edge of the community of Rosedale. It has been altered very little since construction, and, consequently, there is absolutely no integrity problem.

The Church of the Nativity is a simple rectangular three-bay basilican Gothic Revival structure with a steeply pitched roof. On either side of the chancel are two small rooms. The stained glass triple lancet windows behind the false marble altar came from D'Orsay's of New York. Originally the pews had a false walnut graining. The lancet nave windows are stenciled with fleur-de-lis surrounded by a variegated stained border of oak or grape leaves. The exterior board and batten siding retains its original brown color. The fixed louvered shutters and the vertical board doors are original.

The only changes since construction have been the replacement of the front and side exterior steps, the installation of electrical wiring, and the replacement of the roof covering.

These changes should be regarded as inconsequential. The church's Gothic Revival styling remains impressively intact.

Specific dates 1859
Builder/Architect Builder: John Philson

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Church of the Nativity is significant in the area of architecture on the state level as a fine rural example of a church built under the influence of the Ecclesiological movement. This can be seen in its nave and chancel plan and its simple Gothic elements. There are probably fewer than 20 comparable examples in Louisiana. In addition, the board and batten siding exemplifies, as few Louisiana churches do, the mid-nineteenth century fashion for expressing the building materials.

Hence the Church of the Nativity can be said to embody the two leading moralist-reformer trends which affected American architecture during the first half of the Victorian era. These, of course, were the Gothic Revival in church architecture and the romantic rationalism associated with the Stick Style. Despite the popularity of these trends in the eastern states, they hardly touched Louisiana. As a result, the Church of the Nativity stands as a rare example of their influence.

CHURCH HISTORY:

The Church of the Nativity was built in 1859 and consecrated by bishop Leonidas Polk on April 22, 1860. Before the construction of the church Episcopal services were held at the Live Oaks Plantation chapel. Mr. John Philson, who helped organize the parish, directed the construction of the church. In May 1864 the Union army marched down the Rosedale Road and a skirmish was fought on the grounds around the church. The parish has retained the strong rural character that it had when Reverend John Philson founded it.

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