

The Elton United Methodist Church (1911) is a frame Gothic Revival church located on a corner lot in the small town of Elton. Despite a sizable addition, the church remains eligible for the Register as a rare example of the Gothic Revival style within Jefferson Davis Parish.

The church's plan is that of a rectangular worship space with a bell tower containing the entrance vestibule located at the front corner. Behind the bell tower are two rooms. The polygonal bay on the side of the church opposite the tower marks the location of the altar. (It is articulated in the manner of a apse, although it is on the long rather than short side of the church.)

The Elton Methodist Church features lances windows with muntins forming a simple pattern in the manner of tracery. The front, rear and eastern elevations display a single window composed of two lances windows inscribed within a larger lances. Other noteworthy exterior features are gable end returns and the bell tower which has a square first stage, an octagonal second stage, and a flared spire. The interior features a vaulted ceiling and the church's original Gothic Revival curved pews.

The church has experienced the following alterations since construction:

(1) The walls have been covered with paneling and the ceilings with acoustical tiles. The original wainscoting survives in one of the rooms behind the bell tower.

(2) The roofline has been extended over the front door to provide some protection from the elements. The steps are concrete and have a wrought iron railing.

(3) In the 1950s or '60s the church acquired a large rambling frame addition to the rear.

#### Assessment of Integrity:

Of course, the most serious of the above is the addition. Although large, at least it is plain and sheathed in weatherboards. In short, it blends in as well as could be expected given its size. With the exception of one window where the attachment occurred, the church retains its original Gothic Revival styling and hence its National Register eligibility.

Significant dates	1911
Architect/Builder	Jesse Johnson, Contractor
Criterion C	

The Elton United Methodist Church is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a rare example of the Gothic Revival style within Jefferson Davis Parish.

Although its use is not entirely restricted to churches, the Gothic Revival style is most closely associated with religious architecture. The style's popularity is largely the result of a reform effort, known as the Ecclesiological movement, which originated within the Anglican Church in the 1830s. By the 1840s it had reached the United States, where it was first spread through the Episcopal Church. Proponents of the movement believed the Middle Ages to have been an "Age of Faith" in which devout people built "good buildings." These "good buildings" (medieval Gothic churches) were by definition Christian and were considered the most appropriate models for church architecture. The movement's tenets eventually spread beyond the Episcopal Church to indirectly influence members of many Christian denominations. Thus, it is largely as a result of the

Ecclesiological movement that Gothic was seen as the appropriate style for churches for Victorians and later generations of Americans. This influence has lasted well into the twentieth century.

The vast majority of the surviving Gothic Revival churches in Louisiana date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and most of these are of the simple frame type exemplified by the Elton United Methodist Church. Historic photos show that there were once several Gothic Revival churches in Jennings, the parish seat and the only town of any size. However, today there are only two surviving examples of the style in the entire parish, and one of these has suffered a serious loss of integrity. As a rare surviving example of a popular national taste, the Elton Methodist Church is an important building within Jeff Davis Parish.

#### Historical Note

The construction of the Elton United Methodist Church is well documented in church records. Work began in 1910, with the last payment made to the contractor, Jesse Johnson, in March of 1911. The Quarterly Conference records of 1911 list Elton as a charge for the first time.

#### Bibliography

Elton United Methodist Church Records.

Division of Historic Preservation staff knowledge of Jefferson Davis Parish.