

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Walnut Creek Baptist Church (c.1870) is a four-bay, gable roof, wooden meeting hall located in a pastoral setting in western Lincoln Parish. The building has been little altered in the past fifty years and hence easily retains its National Register eligibility.

The church is raised about two feet above grade on small borders. It features six over six windows and raised panel doors. The building's only exterior decoration is its gable end returns. The interior walls and ceiling feature a board and batten treatment. A polygonal, stepped platform, known as the "pulpit," was moved to its present location at the south side of the church c.1900. (It originally was at the north end.) It features three richly paneled and molded lecterns which appear to be original to the church. In 1918 these lecterns were given a somewhat raw and primitive false marbling treatment with gray and blue the dominant colors. Also in 1918 the old exterior shutters were removed. The only more recent change the building has undergone is the installation of new wood flooring over the original floors.

Assessment of Integrity:

In our opinion the marbleizing of the lecterns is an asset to the church. Other changes such as moving the "pulpit," the removal of the shutters, and the re-flooring should be regarded as minor.

Adjacent to the church is a sizable historically associated cemetery which has been in use since the 1860's. It is listed as a contributing element.

Specific dates c.1870, 1918
Builder/Architect Builder: Walnut Creek Baptist Church

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Walnut Creek Baptist Church is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a rare surviving example of an important North Louisiana building type. It is locally significant in the area of art because of its very unusual false marbling

The Walnut Creek Baptist Church is a well-preserved example of an austere mid to late nineteenth century country frame church. It represents a local North Louisiana unpretentious building tradition. Architecturally speaking, churches of this ilk should be regarded as remote descendants of provincial Greek Revival temple form church. They are generally associated with the Methodist and Baptist sects and represent a building type which is a vital part of the material culture of the Upland South.

But it is an archetype which is rapidly disappearing. Because these churches are in rural locations, many are no longer actively used and hence face an uncertain future Many are already gone. Although there is no exact count or survey to indicate how many churches of this type there once were across northern Louisiana, it is reasonable to assume that many rural communities had them. But today, for example, there are probably fewer than ten remaining examples in the nine parishes in the eastern half of North Louisiana.*

The Walnut Creek Baptist Church is also architecturally important within the context of Lincoln Parish because it is one of the parish's two or three oldest structures. Almost all of Lincoln Parish's older buildings date from the post-1890 period.

The church is also locally significant because of the false marbling on the lecterns. It represents a vernacular interpretation of what was then a dying art. Although it lacks the polish of high style marbling, it has a peculiar intensity which can be seen as indicative of the folk mindset. It is certainly a very unusual work of architectural embellishment. The State Historic Preservation Office is not aware of another comparable example in the nine parish area in the eastern half of North Louisiana.

*This figure covers the following parishes: Madison, East & West Carroll, Ouachita, Jackson, Richland, Union, Lincoln and Morehouse. It is based upon a windshield survey of East Carroll and Madison Parishes, comprehensive surveys of Union and Lincoln Parishes, and general knowledge of the remaining areas on the part of the staff of the State Historic Preservation Office.

Major Bibliographical References

Louisiana Historic Standing Structures Survey Files, LA State Historic Preservation Office.

Historical information supplied by the applicant. Copy in Register file, LA State Historic Preservation Office.