

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Assumption Church is approached via a gravel road which terminates in a set of nineteenth century cast iron gates in front of the main entrance. The boundaries of the nominated area were chosen to include the church, its setting, and the cemetery, and to exclude the adjacent modern Parish Hall and the nearby modern ranch houses. The surrounding land, near Bayou Lafourche, is open and flat with several large oaks flanking the church.

The church has a pitched roof-basilican plan with a central square tower at the narthex. Adjacent to the tower is a stair leading to a small second-floor gallery. The five bay nave terminates in an apsidal chancel with one-story ancillary spaces.

The exterior bearing walls are of brick with a timber roof and interior wood columns which were inspired by gothic compound colonettes. The exterior buttresses do not appear to be structural.

The exterior resembles a small English medieval Parish Church having a square frontal tower, buttresses, 4-centered arch fenestration and battlements. The interior features the aforementioned columns supporting a bracketed cornice, and a paneled ceiling which has tracery shaped motifs cut into each panel. The present altar area is modern but does not represent a major intrusion into the historic character of the interior. The front doors are not original, but most of the 19th century leaded stained glass windows remain. Although the exterior has been lightly sandblasted, it has not noticeably affected the exterior appearance of the building.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

There are relatively few mid-19th century Gothic Revival churches in Louisiana¹ probably no more than a dozen. Although the Assumption Church is not an outstanding example, it has the overall form of a medieval English Parish Church and it has all the essential visual elements of the mid-century Gothic Revival, i.e., the battlements, the tower, the 4-centered arch fenestration and the buttresses. In addition to being an example of a rare type, the Assumption Church is a handsome, well-proportioned building and a local landmark in the village of Plattenville.

Assumption Parish was formed in April of 1793 at the request of the Canary Islanders and Acadians who had been settling the area since 1779.¹ The first church was "little more than a shack" ² and was replaced in 1819 by a larger, more permanent structure on another site. This, in turn, was replaced by the extant church in 1856, which was located "a little to the front of the site of the first church of 1793."³ Once the parish "Fabrique", or council of wardens, had determined in the early 1850's the need for a larger church building, a committee was appointed to travel to Thibodaux, some twenty miles to the south, to measure the Catholic church there and to report on its dimensions.⁴ The Fabrique then contracted with one Wilson Grisamore "to build a Church of Assumption for the amount of \$13,500 after the plan of the Catholic church of Thibodaux (sic) using the same dimensions, with the bell tower being fifteen feet higher than the one at Thibodaux."⁵ This mid-century example of one-upmanship produced a competent English Gothic church which was rendered even more unique in its area by the burning of its model, St. Joseph's Church in Thibodaux, in 1916. The contracted cost of the new church was paid to Mr. Grisamore across a four year period, with an additional sum of \$1129.48 being paid him for "extra work" in 1855, and the church seems to have been essentially complete by 1856.⁷

Bibliography

Baudier, Roger. The Catholic Church in Louisiana. New Orleans: Louisiana Library Association, 1972

Contract between the Fabrique of the Church of the Assumption and Wilson Grisamore, contractor. MSS. dated July 25, 1853. Assumption Courthouse, Napoleonville.

Fabrique de l'église Paroissiale de l'assumption. Mss. ASM 27, Archives of Catholic Life Center, Baton Rouge.

Rapport du comité de Surveillance pour les travaux de la Nelle églis. Loose-leaf MSS in ASM 24, Archives of Catholic Life Center, Baton Rouge.

Footnotes

1. Baudier, Roger, *The Catholic Church in Louisiana*, p. 220.
2. Ibid, p. 221.
3. Ibid, p. 353
4. This committee's report, entitled Rapport du comité de Surveillance pour les travaux de la Nelle églis, is a loose-leaf insert into the Fabrique's meeting records, filed at ASM 24 in the archives of the Catholic Life Center, Baton Rouge.
5. Contract dated July 25, 1853, on file at the Assumption Courthouse, Napoleonville.
6. Entry for 24 May, 1855, in the Fabrique de l'église Paroissiale de l'assumption, ASM 27 in the archives of the Catholic Life Center, Baton Rouge.
7. Baudier p. 353.