

JUL 26 1997
#4

Rural Churches of Baldwin County

(Thematic Group)

Contact: Rev. Matheney
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Historic Name: Montgomery Hill Baptist Church

Common Name: Montgomery Hill Baptist Church

Location: East side Highway 59 on County Road 80, Tensaw

Verbal Boundary Description:

Begin at a point 940 feet east of Highway 59 on the Montgomery Hill Road. Thence proceed east and southeast along the southern edge of said road, 400 feet to a point, thence south 429 feet to a point, thence west 360 feet to a point, thence north 572 feet to the point of beginning.

Acreage: 4 UTM: 16/425/030/3447/730

Date of Construction: 1853-4 Architect/Builder: John Blake

Statement of Significance

Criterion C-Architecture:

Montgomery Hill Baptist Church is significant as one of the two surviving antebellum churches in Baldwin County. It is also significant for its Greek Revival detailing, slave gallery and interior graining, rare elements in Baldwin County architecture.

Integrity:

Montgomery Hill Baptist Church maintains its integrity of location, materials, and design. Existence of the original building contract allows for a precise determination of alterations which did not occur until c. 1970. These changes included replacing brick piers with new brick piers and infilling, and installing new steps. Interior alterations were limited to new lighting, carpeting along the aisles and the addition of cabinets at the rear of the slave gallery.

Description:

Montgomery Hill Baptist Church is located on a small hill in the Tensaw Community. There is a cemetery behind the church and two, one-story frame (c. 1960s) outbuildings to the north and south. The Greek Revival Church building is a one-story, clapboarded, 3x4 bay structure resting on a brick wall foundation. There is a pedimented gable roof to the front with a boxed cornice. The main centrally located entrance approached by modern brick steps, consists of double, 4-panel wooden doors with shouldered architrave. Front and side bays are delineated by engaged Doric pilasters with base, capital and

full entablature on the facade and along the sides. The rear elevation has a boxed cornice with a closed return. The 9/9 windows are shuttered.

The front doors open into a vestibule with a stairway on either side leading up to the slave gallery. The second set of doors, leading into the sanctuary itself, are slightly smaller than the main doors, eight feet in height as opposed to nine feet. These inside double wooden doors are also 4-panel with shouldered architrave. The original hardware is also present and the insides of these doors are grained. The sanctuary is a single open space with three rows of pews, an altar, and the slave gallery in the rear. The gallery is supported on two boxed columns with capitals and the front is paneled. The original crude wooden pews are present in the gallery. Pews on the main floor are more elaborate with paneled backs and raised four inches. The vertical flush board wainscoting can be found throughout the room. Exposed beams run across the ceiling and molded window surrounds are present. With its Greek Revival details and decorative treatments such as graining on the doors, Montgomery Hill Baptist Church is a somewhat more elaborate country church than one would expect to find in such a remote area.

Historical Summary:

The area around Tensaw was sparsely settled before the Civil War. Prior to 1840 the few Baptists in the area met at the Holly Creek Union Church. They soon invited Rev. Jacob H. Schobel to preach for them and he organized Montgomery Hill Baptist Church. Thereafter, the congregation, which varied between thirty and fifty, met at members' homes until a decision was made in 1853 to build a church on a parcel of land donated to the congregation. The building committee contracted with John Blake to build the church for \$1,450.

The contract was dated July 25, 1853 and by September 11, 1854 Blake had finished construction of the church. Although Blake had strickly complied with the contract specifications, some minor changes had been made. For example, although the contract originally called for the slave gallery to be supported by two fluted columns, boxed columns were employed. The congregation, numbering eighty whites and twenty-two negroes, immediately began conducting services in the new building. By 1871 the congregation had shrunk to nineteen and did not exceed fifty until 1881. This was due to blacks erecting their own churches and the establishment of other white churches in the area. Montgomery Hill Baptist Church continues service today with some thirty members.

Contributing Buildings	1
Contributing Site	1
Noncontributing Buildings	2
Total	<u>4</u>

#4
Montgomery Hill Baptist Church
Tensaw, Baldwin County, Alabama

Scale 1"=400'

1
46 Ac. (c)

304
10 Ac.

26 Ac. (c)

11
5 Ac. (c)

c. (c)

8.01

9
7.8 Ac.

10
10 Ac. (c)

10.01
12 Ac (c)

10.02
214

10.03

21.01
84 Ac. (c)

MONTGOMERY HILL
BAPTIST CHURCH

