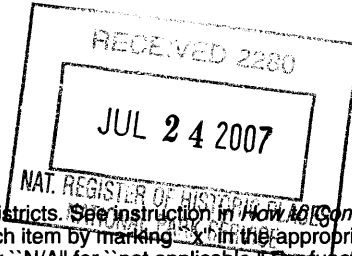


914

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Presbyterian Church

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 212 E. 1st St. [N/A] not for publication

city or town Atoka [N/A] vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Atoka code 005 zip code 74525

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] State Historic Preservation Officer 7-23-07
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Oklahoma Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register See continuation sheet.
- other, explain See continuation sheet.

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper 9.6.07 Date of Action
Edson W. Beall

First Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Atoka County, Oklahoma
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility: church

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque Revival

foundation concrete
walls brick; concrete; stucco
roof asphalt; tin
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

First Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Atoka County, Oklahoma
County/State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Periods of Significance
1913-1930

Significant Dates
1913

Significant Person(s)
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Faudree, Alderman - builder

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO

First Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Atoka County, Oklahoma
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 14 764210 3808275
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing [] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kelli E. Gaston, History/Survey Coordinator

organization Oklahoma SHPO date June 1, 2007

street & number 2401 N. Laird Ave. telephone 405-522-2713

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73105

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Leonard Steer

street & number 205 S. Pennsylvania telephone 580-364-0053

city or town Atoka state OK zip code 74525

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**First Presbyterian Church
Atoka County, OklahomaSection number 7 Page 1**DESCRIPTION****Summary**

The Atoka First Presbyterian Church is an elegant brick building designed in the traditional Protestant meetinghouse form, with an eclectic mixture of styles and materials. Although predominantly Romanesque Revival in style, this former church is reflective of the time period in which it was constructed, combining elements of the most popular styles from the second decade of the twentieth century. The influence of the Arts and Crafts movement is especially evident, in the emphasis on honesty of materials and craftsmanship. The church building was designed to meet the needs of the congregation, and in this instance, form certainly follows function.

The First Presbyterian Church of Atoka sits just three blocks east of busy U.S. Highway 69/75, but it is seemingly a world away. The church is not visible from either the highway or even most of the main downtown streets. It is relatively isolated within this small rural town. When it was constructed in 1913, the church was on the outskirts of town. The focus of the downtown area has since shifted from Court Street, one block north of the church, to the west on Mississippi Street where Highway 69/75 cuts through town. Now, the church is located on the southern edge of the commercial district and on the northern edge of an older, poorly maintained residential neighborhood. The nearby commercial buildings are nondescript brick buildings; the homes are of simple clapboard construction.

On the corner of this quiet side street, the First Presbyterian Church of Atoka stands out as an exceptional example of the architecture of a different time. Built by local contractors, the Faudree Brothers, this church is not elaborate, but its architectural details and emphasis on craftsmanship reflect the values and needs of its congregation and of those hired to bring that vision into existence. The First Presbyterian Church is locally outstanding for its architecture and is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C at the local level of significance.

Architectural Description

Stylistically, the First Presbyterian Church of Atoka is predominantly Romanesque Revival, with the infusion of some Craftsman details. The Romanesque Revival style was popular for public buildings, particularly between 1880 and the early decades of the 1900s. This style utilized simplified masonry arches and arched windows. Romanesque elements found in First Presbyterian Church include its hipped roof, bell tower, heavy masonry, and the repeated use of the rounded arch. The Craftsman style emerged from the Arts and Crafts Movement of the same time period. This movement was a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and the disconnect between a worker and his product resulting from mechanization and mass production. The widely overhanging eaves, use of natural materials, and overall emphasis on craftsmanship, the hand troweled frieze, the pebbledash basement, and woodwork throughout the building, indicate an allusion to the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Exterior

First Presbyterian Church, with its modified rectangular plan of the church and pentagonal projection on the east, stands out from the street. It seems somehow odd and different in terms of its massing and form. It is upon closer examination that the uniqueness of this structure truly becomes apparent. The exterior walls consist of three contrasting bands of masonry: a stucco-like substance referred to as

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National Park Service

First Presbyterian Church
Atoka County, Oklahoma

Section number 7 Page 2

“pebble-dash”¹ at basement level, a cast stone water table, and red pressed brick laid in a stretcher bond on the remainder of the exterior walls. There is a hand-troweled frieze in a fan motif. The pebbledash used on the exterior of this building is unusual in that the pebbles are mixed in with the aggregate of sand and cement instead of being applied directly to the finished surface.²

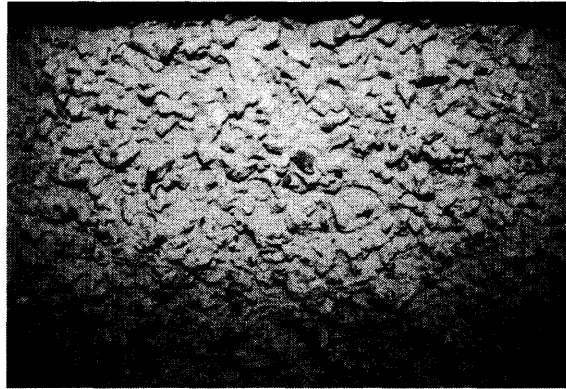


Photo 1

Close up of pebbledash on basement level of exterior, First Presbyterian Church, Atoka, OK. Photograph by Kelli E. Gaston, 2003.

The roofline of the building is extremely complex, with a combination flat and flared hipped roof (see Figure 1). Over the sanctuary, the roofline peaks to a pyramid, with a series of two half hips on its west end that are graduated in height. On the east end, there is a flared half hip roof section that does not extend to the end of the building. This flared half hip covers a vaulted ceiling area in the educational wing of the church. Located below the flared half hip is a flat roof section that extends to the edge of the building. This portion of the roof covers several alcoves in the education wing that have a lower ceiling height. The building’s bell tower has a flared hip roof with decorative metal finials. The front entry stoop has a half hip roof. The roof itself is finished with composition shingles except on the tower and the entry stoop, areas that retain the original pressed tin sheeting. The eaves are closed and have a wide overhang.

¹ *Indian Citizen Democrat* (Atoka, OK), 5 June 1913.

² “Pebbledash” is also known as “rock” or “slash” dash and is generally defined as an exterior stucco finish containing crushed rock, large pebbles, or shells that are imbedded in a stucco base. It is usually applied in two coats of cement and sand on to which pebbles are thrown before the second coat is dry. It is often used on Queen Anne and Arts and Crafts style properties. See Harris, Cyril, *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2006), 823; and *The Illustrated Architectural Dictionary*, available online at <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/bah/a/DCTNRY/p/pebble.html>, (May 2007).

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

First Presbyterian Church
Atoka County, Oklahoma

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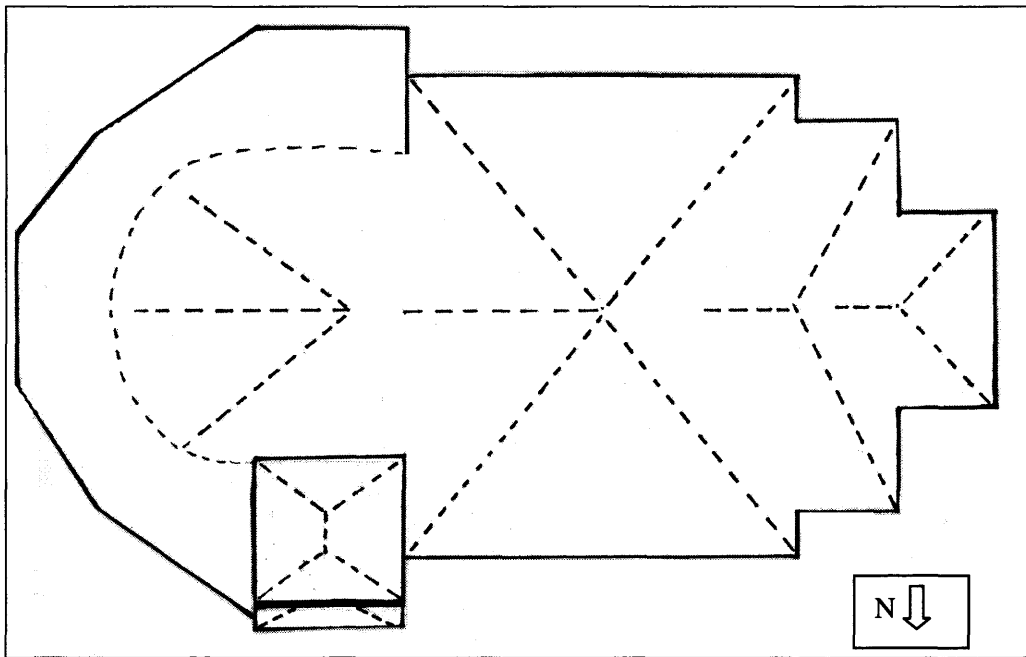


Figure 1

Rough sketch of the roofline of First Presbyterian Church, Atoka, OK. Not to scale.

The north elevation is asymmetrical, with the main entry and a square bell tower located off center. The bulk of the building is made up of the sanctuary, to the west of the bell tower. The smaller educational wing is located to the east of the tower and entry. The bell tower projects one story above the main entry of the church and dominates the facade. The central entry features a double door of carved hardwood located within a Romanesque-like arched recess. The archway is made from four brick header courses with cast stone springers. The entry is accessible from either the cascading square cast stone steps or a plywood wheelchair ramp. Both the stairs and the ramp have metal railings. The bell tower has two bands of windows. The lower band, just above the entry, contains four windows. Two are just above the entry stoop and two are located on the east side of the tower. Originally these windows were all 4/2 hung wood windows, with the upper sash being banded with arched panes, while the two panes of glass in the bottom sash were rectangular. However, the glass in the opening to the right of the entry has been replaced with a single fixed pane. The second, higher band in the bell tower consists of eight openings, two on each side of the tower. These openings are each located within a rectangular recess in the brick. The openings are arched and feature an arched brick lintel consisting of two header rows. The sill is made of a single header course of brick. The glass is missing from these openings, but the muntins remain.

To the left of the entry is a single 4/2 wood window with the same type of sash as that found in the bell tower. This window serves to provide lighting for the stairwell to the basement. A basement level window is located beneath this main level window. Its square opening has been covered over with plywood. To the right of the entry and tower is the sanctuary. The sanctuary area is recessed several feet from the entry and tower area. On the north elevation of the sanctuary, there are four unusual double windows. These windows consist of a large arched head tracery with double four over two double hung windows below. The upper sash of these 4/2 windows is also banded and arched like in the tower. The glass in these original windows is obscured. Three of these windows are located along the main wall of the sanctuary, but the fourth and most western window is located in the stage area at the west end of the building. The west end of the north elevation has several recesses inward from the

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**First Presbyterian Church
Atoka County, OklahomaSection number 7 Page 4

main wall to accommodate the interior stage. The fourth arched head window on the north elevation is located within the first recess, with the westernmost recess having no windows. At the basement level along the sanctuary wall, there is a band of awning-type windows, each with four panes of glass. Two such windows are located beneath each of the large arched head windows in the sanctuary seating area, with one located beneath the arched window in the stage area.

The east elevation of the building contains the educational area of the former church. It was designed to have alcoves opening from a central meeting area. In this building, there are five alcoves expressed on the exterior in a pentagonal shape. Each alcove features a double window with a 4/2 banded sash. These windows have wooden sills and lintels. On the exterior, the boundaries of each alcove are expressed with a simple cast stone pilaster. The window placement on the basement level mimics that found on the east end of the main floor. There are two awning windows located within each segment of the pentagonal shape of the building. Originally, each window had four panes of glass. Several of these have been broken over the years and now contain only one larger pane. These windows also have wooden sills and lintels. Beneath the eaves of the hipped roof section on the east end of the building is a band of clerestory windows. These seven narrow windows each have six arched panes. The section of the roof under which these windows are located also mimics the pentagonal shape of the educational area of the building.

The south elevation mimics the north elevation, with the exception of the main entry and tower. Like on the north wall, the south elevation features four arched head windows with obscured glass, as well as seven awning-type windows at the basement level. The recesses along the main sanctuary wall are also repeated at the back of the building. There is a rear exit located at the basement level. This exit has a small gabled metal stoop covering the doorway. Also visible is a slope brick chimney.

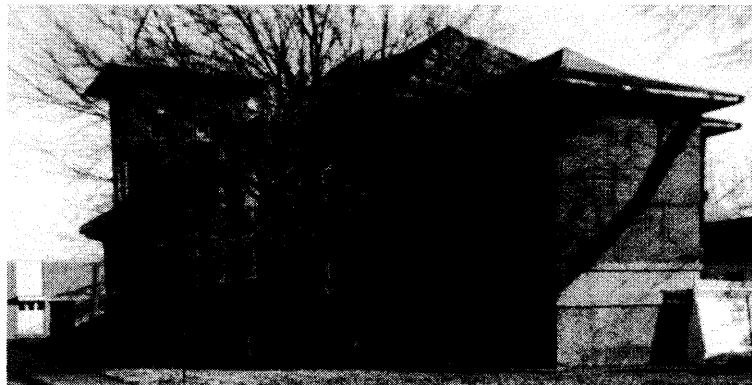


Photo 2

West end of the church looking to the southeast. Photograph by Kelli E. Gaston, 2003.

The west elevation of the building contains the stage area of the church. This end is narrower than the majority of the church building to accommodate its function. There are no doors, with the only windows being two four paned awning-type windows that open into the basement.

Interior

The east wing, with its pentagonal shape, was referred to as the Sunday school. This space was divided into five alcoves used for classrooms, a church office, a restroom, and a large central meeting

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space that served as a classroom and as an overflow for the main sanctuary. The entry to each alcove is arched, with the openings to the restroom and church office being the only alcoves with doors. This space alludes to the Akron Sunday school, popular from the late nineteenth century through the early decades of the twentieth century. It has a slightly vaulted ceiling. Both the walls and ceiling are of painted plaster, except the west wall that consists of a paneled wood moveable partition that divides the room from the main sanctuary. The original wood floors remain throughout the main floor. The front entry opens into the Sunday school area.

The west wing served as the sanctuary and is accessible through double wooden doors located near the front door in the Sunday school area. A second sanctuary entrance to the educational wing is located in the southeast corner of the room. The original wooden floors slope from the back of the seating area to the stage area at the front. The stage area is slightly elevated with a bead board platform. The flooring surface of the stage has been carpeted. This area is accented by decorative plasterwork along the ceiling. The oak altar rail and original curved wooden pews remain, even though the church is now privately owned and is not used for religious purposes. The auditorium has vaulted plaster ceilings with painted inset panels. The original pendant light fixtures that hang from the centers of these inset panels remain as well, complete with original glass globes.

The basement is accessible from a wooden staircase located to the left of the main entry. The exterior basement walls are of concrete, as are the floors. Pine bead board lines the basement interior walls and the ceiling consists of painted plaster. The area consists of a reception space, a kitchen area, storage, and the mechanical systems located under the sanctuary space. The space is supported with square concrete posts.

Alterations

The First Presbyterian Church of Atoka retains a high degree of integrity. In terms of location, the First Presbyterian church remains at its original site. The original design, in terms of such elements as proportion, ornamentation, and materials is virtually unchanged. The setting has been altered somewhat as the city has grown and changed around this original structure. The grounds have fallen into disrepair because no one occupies the building regularly or properly maintains it, but such damage could be easily corrected. As for materials, the church retains its original materials, with only minor changes to windows and the roof. Workmanship involves "evidence of artisans' labor and skill."³ A few examples of such work include the hand-troweled frieze and other masonry elements that are in almost perfect condition after more than ninety years. The final two elements of integrity, feeling and association, are more difficult to establish. Feeling "results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character."⁴⁶ In Atoka, this building is certainly distinct. The preferred method of construction at present is sheet metal for commercial, community, and religious buildings. Such buildings are certainly functional and utilitarian, but they lack the creativity and workmanship of the past. Within such surroundings, the style and materials of First Presbyterian Church convey the building's historical character in comparison to the materials and methods of the

³ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (2002), by Patrick W. Andrus, ed. Rebecca H. Shrimpton, available online at www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm, (May 2007).

⁴Ibid.

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present. Finally, in terms of association, the direct link between this building and the early history of Atoka is not easily apparent. That this building is different and old is easily evident, and anyone who is willing to take the time to explore its history can easily discover its connection to Atoka's past. The June 5, 1913 *Indian Citizen Democrat* contained an original photograph of the church as part of an article describing the plans for the dedication service. In comparing the original building to the present, very little change has occurred. The original roofing material has largely been replaced, a stair railing has been added at the main entrance, and the heating and cooling systems modernized, but a visitor from the past familiar with the original building would easily recognize it and feel at home inside even today.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

First Presbyterian Church
Atoka County, Oklahoma

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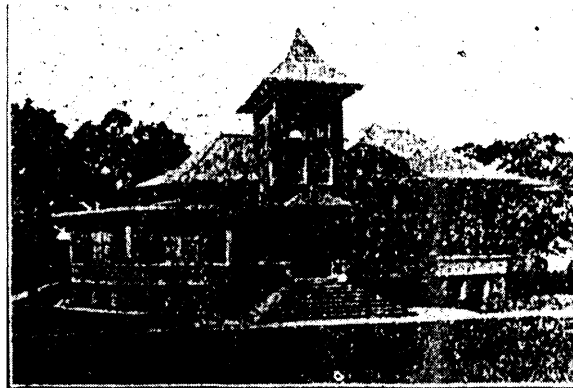


Photo 3

First Presbyterian Church, Atoka, OK; *Indian Citizen Democrat* (Atoka, OK), 5 June 1913.



Photo 4

First Presbyterian Church, Atoka, OK. Courtesy of the Atoka County Historical Society, date and photographer unknown



Photo 5

First Presbyterian Church, Atoka, OK. Photograph by
Jim Gabbert, 2007.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

First Presbyterian Church
Atoka County, Oklahoma

Section number 8 Page 8

SIGNIFICANCE

In April 1913, the one hundred plus members of the First Presbyterian Church of Atoka, Oklahoma rejoiced in the completion of their new facility, the first permanent structure to house a congregation originally founded in 1883. For many years, the church served as a gathering place for church members and the community alike. But today, this building sits unoccupied, the congregation having died or dispersed to other regions and religions. Only the building remains of this once vibrant group, a landmark to Atoka's past now deteriorating due to lack of proper maintenance.

The First Presbyterian Church of Atoka stands in stark contrast to other buildings in Atoka today. Business owners have demolished many original buildings or covered the original brick facades in aluminum or some other form of siding. Only the main floors of buildings such as the Oklahoma Building, built in 1909, are now in use and even that floor has been significantly altered, with the creation of numerous partitions, the lowering of the original tin ceilings, and the removal or covering of original windows. This church, however, remains virtually unaltered on the interior or the exterior. First Presbyterian Church of Atoka is locally significant for its architecture and for the degree of integrity that the building retains. No longer in use as a church, it meets criteria consideration "a."

Historical Background

The city of Atoka was originally a Choctaw village, named in honor of Chief Atoka. It remained a village until 1872, when the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas railroad began building the first rail line through Indian Territory. The MK&T ran through Atoka on its route to Denison, Texas. Almost overnight, the city of Atoka sprang up, as businesses moved from the nearby Indian trading post at Boggy Depot to be near the new rail line.⁴ The Dawes Act and the allotment of Indian lands mandated by the *Atoka Agreement* in 1897 only served to increase white settlement within the area.⁵

The Presbyterian Church had a long-standing presence in the area. In 1840, Presbyterian missionaries established the first church in the area at Boggy Depot.⁶ However, the Presbytery did not organize a church in Atoka until December 9, 1883.⁷ The congregation's original building was a frame structure built on the outskirts of town in 1897.⁸ In April 1907, the church obtained the lot on East First from the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. The frame church was moved to the new location on East First. The congregation quickly outgrew its original facility, and that building was sold and moved off the lot on

⁴*Tales of Atoka County Heritage* (Atoka, OK: Atoka County Historical Society, 1982), 11.

⁵"Allotment information for Eastern Oklahoma BIA Region," available online at <http://www.indianlandtenure.org/ILTFallotment/specinfo/sg%20Eastern%20Oklahoma.pdf>, (May 2007).

⁶William H. Underwood, "A History of Atoka County" (M.A. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1931), 20.

⁷Mrs. Joe Ralls and Mrs. Vincent Howard, "History of the First Presbyterian Church, Atoka, Oklahoma," (Atoka, OK: privately printed, 1980, photocopied), 1.

⁸Patent Deed, Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations of Indian Territory to the Trustees of the Atoka First Presbyterian Church, filed April 27, 1907, Atoka County, OK, Book 9, Pg. 156.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
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Atoka County, OklahomaSection number 8 Page 9

August 1, 1912. Work on the present building began on September 2, 1912⁹ and was completed in April 1913. Church membership continued to grow after construction of the new facility. That trend would continue until the 1930s, when numbers began to drop off. By 1962, there were only 46 active members. That number would continue to decrease in subsequent decades and in the 1990s, the Oklahoma Presbytery closed the church.¹⁰ The building was sold to a private individual in April 2001.

The congregation of First Presbyterian Church included some of the most influential people in the area. Many of the members were business owners, lawyers, judges, and educators. One outstanding example was Thomas Memminger, a former state legislator and president of the Atoka State Bank, who was an active church and community organization member.¹¹ Others include Judge Joseph G. Ralls who was educated in Illinois and Ohio, before moving to Indian Territory to practice law. He was a United States Commissioner and served on the State Bar Commission and the State Board of Education.¹² David C. Blossom moved to the area from Wisconsin and it was in his home that local individuals organized the Presbyterian Church of Atoka in 1883. He was an active businessperson, the owner of a mercantile and an insurance agency.¹³ Like these examples, most of the members of the church moved to the Atoka area for a specific business or vocational purpose. Many left the community after several years, or the elders remained and their children left. But during their years in Atoka, members of the First Presbyterian Church attempted to recreate elements of the society to which they were accustomed in their new surroundings. The church building was central to achieving that goal.

Architectural Significance

The First Presbyterian Church of Atoka is locally significant for its architecture due to its type of construction and the high artistic value visible on the interior and exterior of the church.

Type of construction generally refers to a period, type, or method of construction used in a building. The First Presbyterian Church of Atoka was designed to meet the needs of a growing, yet relatively small Protestant congregation. Members chose a type of plan that is a very simple example of the rectangular Protestant meetinghouse. Instead of adopting the theatre-type church so popular across the country at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century,¹⁴ this congregation

chose to relate back three centuries to a type of Protestant architecture originated by Sir Christopher

⁹*Indian Citizen*, 5 June 1913.

¹⁰Ralls, 15-16.

¹¹Underwood, 68-69.

¹²*Tales of Atoka County Heritage*, 345-346.

¹³*Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁴The transition in Protestant church architecture from meetinghouse to theatre is discussed extensively by Jeanne Halgren Kilde in *When Church Became Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

First Presbyterian Church
Atoka County, Oklahoma

Section number 8 Page 10

Wren.¹⁵

The meetinghouse emphasized the Protestant focus on worship and on the interaction between the minister and his congregation. Although First Presbyterian Church could seat several hundred people if the overflow space was utilized, the main sanctuary remains an intimate space. The focus of the church's design was on the individual congregant's ability to listen and participate during the service and other activities. The building was designed completely around those functions. This can be seen in the sloping floors and curved pews of the sanctuary, elements that helped to draw one's attention to the front of the room, to the altar and the speaker. In the east wing of the building, the use of alcoves allowed the space to easily be divided for the purpose of teaching different age groups. Yet the central space in the educational wing could be used as a classroom, meeting space, or as overflow for the sanctuary. There is no space wasted on hallways. Instead, every part of the building has a specific function. In terms of its time period, First Presbyterian Church is the only example of a Romanesque Revival church in Atoka County, and the eclectic mix of Romanesque and Craftsman elements found in the building further distinguish it from other religious and public buildings found nearby.

High artistic value in a building relates to its quality of artistry or craftsmanship. There is no stained glass or elaborate stonework. Instead, locally available and more common materials were used in the construction of this church. Most of the decorative elements are structural. Other details, such as the frieze, are examples of outstanding craftsmanship but are not flashy. The overall simplicity of the space illustrates the spare aesthetic traditional to most Protestant groups, a concept that originated with a rejection of the mysticism Protestants associated with Roman Catholicism. As such, it reflects the members of this church.

The artistic value of any building is established by comparing it to comparable works in the community. First Presbyterian Church of Atoka is architecturally unique among churches in the area. In 1915, another substantial church was constructed in downtown Atoka, the First United Methodist Church. Neoclassical in style, this building with its ornate stained glass windows and numerous full-height

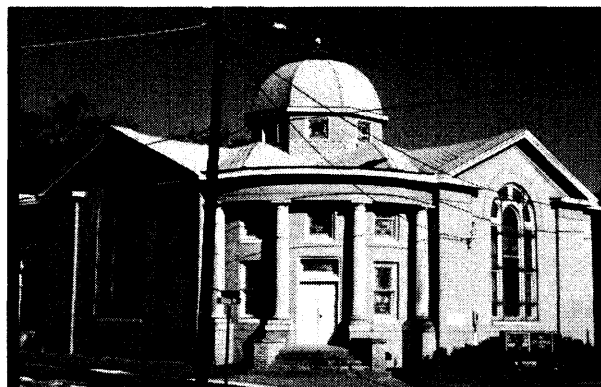


Photo 6

¹⁵ Wren designed church buildings with simple rectangular plans that emphasized the congregation's ability to see and hear and see the proceedings. At the same time, he rejected details seen as too Catholic. See Andrew L. Drummond, *The Church Architecture of Protestantism: An Historical and Constructive Study* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1934).

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First Methodist Church, Atoka, OK. Courtesy of the Oklahoma SHPO, date and photographer unknown.

columns on its portico contrasts greatly with the simplicity of the Presbyterian Church located just down the street. The First United Methodist Church was listed in the National Register in 1980. Other churches in Atoka are of much newer construction, such as First Baptist Church built in the 1960s in a Gothic Revival style, and Southside Baptist Church, a circa 2000 metal building recently clad in brick.

Although not outstanding enough to be considered "master craftsmen," the Faudree Brothers were a locally prominent construction company. The value of their artistic skill is seen in the Presbyterian Church and in other projects with which they were involved. Alderman Faudree and his brother were responsible for the construction of several local buildings during the early twentieth century. One such building was an older First Baptist Church, completed in 1913, in the Gothic Revival style. That particular building was more ornate than the Presbyterian Church, with stained glass windows and a rounded spire. First Baptist was dismantled in the 1960s to accommodate the growing congregation of that church.¹⁶ In 1904, the Faudrees built the Pioneer Library, a wooden structure with a prominent



Photo 7

First Baptist Church, Atoka, OK. Courtesy of the Atoka County Historical Society, date and photographer unknown.

¹⁶*Indian Citizen Democrat*, 3 April 1913.

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hipped roof on South Mississippi. This building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. The Faudrees were also responsible for constructing a fire station and the Abe Zweigel Hardware in downtown. The Zweigel Hardware Store, a brick Commercial Style building, was also listed in the National Register in 1980.¹⁷ Both the Zweigel building and the fire station were destroyed within the last ten years. A new brick and sheet metal post office replaced the Zweigel building; a parking lot stands in place of the original fire station. The Merchant's National Bank in nearby Lehigh in Coal County was also a project of the Faudree Brothers. This bank was listed in the National Register in 2006.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATION A

The First Presbyterian Church in Atoka is no longer used for religious purposes. Empty now, its significance lies in its unique architectural properties within the context of Atoka, Oklahoma. Since its significance lies in its physical qualities and since it no longer functions as a religious facility, it meets criteria consideration "a."

CONCLUSION

The First Presbyterian Church of Atoka is representative of the professionals and business people who settled in Atoka County in the early twentieth century. The architectural style of the building is indicative of their beliefs, but also of the society that they were working to create in this relatively new state. The importance of this building is heightened because it is one of a few remaining works of the locally prominent Faudree Brothers and because such workmanship and use of materials are virtually unheard of at present. The church stands as a remarkably preserved link to Atoka's past for future generations. The First Presbyterian Church of Atoka is locally outstanding due to its historical connection to the settlement and growth of Atoka County, as well as the integrity of its architecture.

¹⁷Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, "Atoka County, Oklahoma Listings on the National Register of Historic Places (2007)," available online at <<http://www.ocgi.okstate.edu/shpo/shpopic.asp?id=80003250>>, [May 2007].

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

North ½ of Lot 1, Block 39, Original Townsite.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Area historically associated with the church.