

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: <sup>89</sup>~~900~~00475

Date Listed: <sup>2</sup>~~6/19/90~~

Poplar Chapel AME Chapel  
Property Name

Richland  
County

LA  
State

N/A

Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Amy Federman  
Signature of the Keeper

9/25/90  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Criterion Consideration B should be checked because the church was moved on its lot.

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DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

475

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

MAY 05 1989

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Poplar Chapel A.M.E. Church  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number LA Hwy. 135  not for publication  
city, town Rayville  vicinity  
state Louisiana code LA county Richland code 083 zip code 71269

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

Jonathan Fricker May 1, 1989  
Signature of certifying official Jonathan Fricker, Deputy SHPO, Louisiana Date  
Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Mark J. Baker Entered in the National Register June 2, 1989  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

no style

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

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walls weatherboard

---

roof asphalt

---

other 

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---

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Poplar Chapel A.M.E. Church (1903) is a frame, four bay, basilica style structure located in a rural setting southwest of Rayville. Although the building best fits the "no style" category, Queen Anne Revival influence can be seen in a band of imbricated shingles across the front. Also, the twin towers are remotely related to Romanesque Revival precedents. Despite some alterations, the building retains its National Register eligibility as a rare survivor of a vernacular archetype.

The pitched roof structure culminates in a somewhat monumental front with two forward projecting towers of unequal height. The taller contains a belfry marked by louvered openings while the shorter is merely an architectural "dummy." Both towers have a pyramidal roof and a second skirting roof part way up. These two skirting roofs connect with a band of imbricated shingles which runs across the facade of the church to link the towers. The massing of the asymmetrical facade is enlivened somewhat by the fact that the upper portion of each tower is slightly smaller than the lower. In addition, the massing is further enlivened by a sharp angular frontal gable set between the towers. The exterior of the building is sheathed in narrow gauge clapboards and features oversized corner boards accenting the various parts. To the rear of the church is a contemporaneous service wing which contains the chancel.

The nave is plain and largely modern, with acoustical tile, new six over nine windows and plywood wainscoting. However, the wall covering is superficial and the original beaded board is still underneath. To the rear of the nave is a chancel stage area flanked by service spaces.

Aside from the alterations noted above, the only other noteworthy changes are as follows:

1. In 1926 the entire church was turned on its lot to face a new road which had just been put in by the state. The building itself was not altered.
2. In about 1940, a small enclosed vestibule was added to the entrance between the towers.

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Poplar Chapel A. M. E. Church, Rayville vicinity, Richland Parish, LA

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Assessment of Integrity

Despite these alterations, the building still retains its significant massing, its exterior accenting elements and most of its exterior surface treatment. In short, it retains its architectural identity. In its present condition it is still one of only two known examples of its vernacular type in northeastern Louisiana.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1903  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1903  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Poplar Chapel is of local architectural significance as a rare and early example of a vernacular rural black church within the context of northeast Louisiana.

Poplar Chapel is fairly typical of churches associated with rural black congregations from across the South during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has the basic basilican form with square head windows and an elementary chancel. As with many of the finer examples, the principal elevation is accented with a pair of square towers culminating in pyramidal steeples. These are remotely related to the late nineteenth century Romanesque Revival. Poplar Chapel also features a modicum of Queen Anne treatment in its imbricated shingled band across the front.

Churches of this ilk were undoubtedly the grandest architectural manifestations of rural black life and culture during the period. Expressing the highest aspirations of each community, they were far more pretentious than sharecropper cabins, cotton houses and plantation stores. This pretention can be seen at Poplar Chapel in its relatively monumental facade with its twin pyramidal towers and its imbricated shingle ornamentation. Churches like Poplar Chapel have not survived in great numbers in northeastern Louisiana. Many were abandoned by rural black populations as they immigrated to the cities. Others, where the congregation survived, were either replaced or were bricked over to give them a new look. As far as the State Historic Preservation Office is aware, Poplar Chapel is one of only two Pre-World War I rural black churches that survive in the region with any degree of integrity.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

1903 cornerstone.  
Tape-recorded interviews with older members of the congregation.

- Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A
- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than 1 acre

UTM References

A 

1	5
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6	0	9	6	8	0
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3	15	8	15	0	12	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

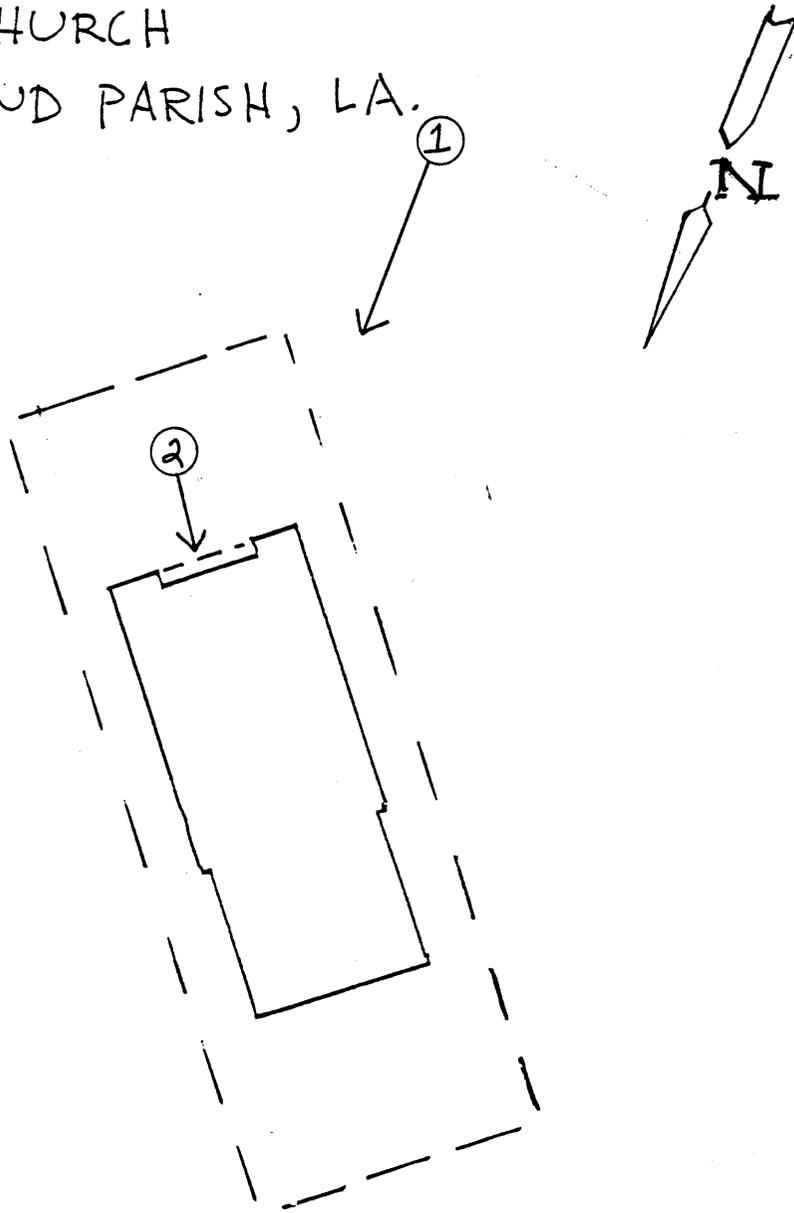
Boundaries were drawn to encompass the significant resource. They do not follow property lines because to have done so would have meant including a cemetery that does not meet the criteria exceptions.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title National Register Staff  
organization Division of Historic Preservation date February 1989  
street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 342-8160  
city or town Baton Rouge state Louisiana zip code 70804

POPLAR CHAPEL  
AME CHURCH  
RICHLAND PARISH, LA.



BOUNDARY  
SCALE 1" = 30'