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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

## St. Paul Baptist Church, Allen Parish, LA

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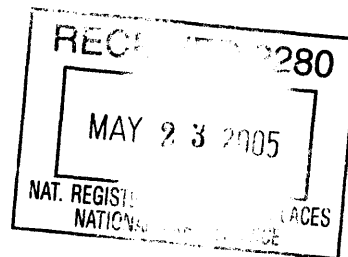
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

### 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: St. Paul Baptist Church; Morehead School

Other Name/Site Number:



### 2. LOCATION

Street & Number 772 Hickory Flats Road

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Kinder

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Allen Code: 003

Zip Code: 70648

### 3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
Nationally:     Statewide:     Locally: X

Jonathan Fricker  
Signature of Certifying Official/Title Jonathan Fricker,  
Deputy SHPO, Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

5/20/05  
Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
Determined eligible for the National Register
Determined not eligible for the National Register
Removed from the National Register

Other (explain):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

7/6/05
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

- Private: X
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property

- Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

- 1

Non contributing

- buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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### 6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: religion                      Sub: religious facility  
Current: vacant                        Sub:

### 7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: no style

Materials:

Foundation: brick  
Walls: weatherboard  
Roof: metal  
Other:

#### Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

St. Paul Baptist Church is a simple frame c.1910 country church with no stylistic influences. It is located in a fairly remote setting in an area known to locals as Hickory Flats. Immediately adjacent to the old church is a modern St. Paul Baptist Church. The old church, no longer in active use, is virtually unchanged from the period when it also served as a public school.

The church is sheathed in narrow gauge clapboards. A forward-projecting tower, attached at the corner, anchors the façade. The tower has a hipped roof and vented openings on each side, near the eaves. The main roof extends to form a skirting roof around the tower at mid-point. The entrance is located on the side of the tower. One wonders if the church was built with a school in mind, for the façade has no windows, and it is here where the blackboard is located. Two-over-two windows pierce the side elevations. Along one side elevation is the remains of a chimney which serviced a heating stove. At the rear are a set of paired two-over-two windows at the center, with what was originally a door to each side. (One of the doors is boarded over.)

The interior survives virtually unaltered. The walls and ceiling are finished in narrow gauge boards. The ceiling is vaulted. At each rear corner, framing the altar, is a tiny room. A historic blackboard occupies several feet of the front wall. The "Morehead Public School" sign above the blackboard is fairly recent.

The only change to the exterior (other than the boarded over rear door) has been the installation of a long and thin name plate (made of wood) to the façade.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A\_\_ B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G\_\_

Areas of Significance: education; ethnic heritage

Period(s) of Significance: 1919-c.1945

Significant Dates: same

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: unknown

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## **State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

St. Paul Baptist Church is significant in the areas of education and ethnic heritage because it represents a major phenomenon in the development of educational facilities for African-Americans – “public” school held in a church. In the early to mid twentieth century the building provided the only education available to children in the immediate area. The period of significance begins in 1919, the first documented use of the building as a school, and ends c.1945 when school ceased to be held there.

### Historic Context:

Louisiana for the most part did not make significant progress in public education until the early twentieth century, whether for whites or blacks. The watchword among late nineteenth century politicians was retrenchment. While provision for public education existed on paper, funding was woefully inadequate for even a single school system, let alone the dual system mandated by segregation. The end result was shameful for both races -- more so, of course, for African-Americans, who received significantly less funding.

Doggedly determined that their children would have an education, blacks often relied upon their own resources, small as they were. What typically developed was a “public” school that was and wasn’t. Actually it was a public-private effort with blacks providing a building and the school board providing some funding, perhaps for a teacher and some supplies. (The arrangement varied from place to place.) The building was space in a lodge or benevolent association hall, or more likely, a church. As T. H. Harris, State Superintendent of Education from 1908-1940, observed: “In most cases Negro churches were used for schoolhouses and the only equipment in these churches were the benches used for church services.”

African-American churches (Protestant) doubling as schools were commonplace in rural Louisiana in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They remained the sole source of public education in some rural areas of the state into the 1940s. Instruction was not religious – there just happened to be “public” school held in a church, or sometimes a one room schoolhouse on church property.

### St. Paul Baptist Church

As is typical for “church schools,” documentation is fairly scanty for the early years. School board minutes show that on November 1, 1913 the superintendent was authorized to establish a “negro school” at Hickory Flat. (The name of the community is sometimes given as Hickory Flat, sometimes Flats.) But whether school began immediately thereafter is not known. The earliest available documentation of St. Paul’s use as a public school is from 1919, via a published account of former teacher Solomon Cole. Educated at Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Cole and his wife returned home to Hickory Flats and St. Paul Baptist Church September 27, 1919. Cole was asked by the school board to be in charge of the school in the church, which he referred to as Morehead Public School. Morehead was the name of a family in the area.

Sam Captain, the oldest former student interviewed for this nomination, was born in 1917 and attended grades 1 through 6 in the candidate. He recalls being a student of Cole’s but was quite certain the school was known by the name of the church. Other former students indicated the same. Perhaps both names were used– one by the school officials and another by the local community. A surviving report card

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for 1935-36 bears the name Morehead Public School. Both names are being given as historic names for the purposes of this nomination.

According to Cole's memoir, published in 1979, there were 168 students enrolled in the school when the school board asked him to take charge, and only one teacher. Two more teachers were hired at his request. One can't help but wonder about Cole's recollections. The number of students sounds too high, and it would have been most unusual for even a white rural school to have 3 teachers. Former students interviewed for this nomination, whose recollections date from the 1920s through the mid-1940s, recall only one teacher (which would have been typical). Students sat on church benches. The church remained the area's public school until the mid-1940s. A new St. Paul Baptist Church was built in the 1960s, but most fortunately, the congregation chose to retain their old building.

## **9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Interviews with former students Berdia Sherman, Allen Morehead, Joseph Robinson and Sam Captain.

Cole, Solomon Lovejoy. *From Whence I Came*. Reverend Cole's autobiography was privately published in 1979.

Allen Parish School Board Minutes, November 1, 1913.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
- 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 (Specify Repository):

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## **10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreeage of Property: less than an acre

UTM References:     **Zone Easting Northing**  
                          15   516860   3379660

Verbal Boundary Description: The western boundary is Hickory Flat Road. The northern, eastern and southern boundaries parallel building elevations, each at a distance of 10 feet.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries were chosen to discretely encompass the candidate. They do not follow historic property lines because to have done so would have meant including a non-historic church on the 2 acre plot.

## **11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: National Register Staff, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation

Address: P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Telephone: 225-342-8160

Date: February 2005

## **PROPERTY OWNERS**

St. Paul Baptist Church