Rural Churches of Baldwin County

(Thematic Group)

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Historic Name: St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Common Name: St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Location: West side County 83, Elberta

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lot 32, Block 13 in the Town of Elberta. Begin at the northwest corner of the intersection of County 83 and Oak Street, thence proceed north 390.8 feet to a point, thence west 431.5 feet to a point, thence south 390.8 feet to a point, thence east 431.5 feet to the point of beginning.

Acreage: 3.8   UTM: 16/442/500/3364/960

Date of Construction: 1927   Architect/Builder: Unknown

Statement of Significance

Criterion C-Architecture:

St. Mark's Lutheran Church is significant as the best Medieval Revival religious building in Baldwin County. Its squat tower, buttresses, Gothic windows and brick construction are reflections of then popular Medieval and English Gothic academic revivals. It is also significant as a more permanent ediface constructed in a rural community where frame buildings had predominated.

Integrity:

St. Mark's Lutheran Church retains its integrity of location, materials and plan. Exterior integrity is excellent with vinyl siding under the eaves, rear baths added in 1940s and stained glass windows (1953) as the only significant changes. Covered walkways to the west and north connect the church to a parish hall and classrooms. Both of these latter structures are non-historic (1967). The parish hall is a large one-story brick building and the classrooms smaller, gable roof units to the west, or rear of the church.

Much of the interior was redone during the 1950s. Floors were carpeted, acoustic tile ceiling installed, chancery paneled and pews replaced. The walls and paneled balcony are original.

Description:

St. Mark's Lutheran Church sits on the west side of County 83 and several blocks north of Highway 98 which bisects Elberta. The Medieval Revival building is a one-story, 3x5 bay brick with a parapeted gable roof front and a two-story

parapeted tower at the southeast corner. There are stepped buttresses along
the facade, at each corner of the tower and down the sides delineating each
bay. The central entrance consists of double wooden doors with strap hinges,
stained glass lancet transom and concrete trim. A large round stained glass
window (with white concrete trim) is in the wall above. Coping is present
along the parapeted roofline and tower. A large stained glass lancet window
is present on either side of the entrance (one in the tower). The second
story of the tower has paired louvered lancet vents in each face. There are
side entrances in the south face of the tower and north side of the building.
There is a concrete water course all around and all windows have stone sills.
The rear wall is plain brick with a one-story brick bath (1940s). Covered
walkways on the rear and north sides connect the church to 1960s additions.

Inside, a vestibule runs north-south the width of the building. A paneled
stairway runs up the east wall (south of the entrance) to the balcony. Walls
have modern paneling, ceilings are dropped and floors carpeted. The sanctuary
is entered through swinging doors and is an open space with a center aisle and
pews to either side. The balcony runs the width of the east wall and has a
paneled front and an organ added in 1974. The chancery is paneled halfway up
the wall with a denticulated top border. This and the chancery rail were added
during the 1950s. A raised, paneled pulpit with beaded board interior paneling
stands to the north side. The arched ceiling has acoustic tile and suspended
lantern lights. Walls are plastered and the windows have stone sills.

Historical Summary:

Elberta was settled in 1906 by German immigrants, many of whom came to
Baldwin County via the mid-west. These immigrants engaged themselves in truck
farming, which was made possible by a spur line of the L&N from Bay Minette to
Foley (five miles west of Elberta). Many of these settlers were Lutheran and
appealed to the Missouri Synod for assistance in forming a church. In 1908 the
congregation was organized with fourteen charter members by the Rev. W. C. Kohn
of Chicago. The Baldwin County Colonization Company gave 3.8 acres of land in
the town for a church. A simple one-story frame structure was dedicated in 1909
and services were held in German. This rude building stands west of the present
church. It was not included in the nomination because of an impending move to
the Baldwin Heritage Museum. The more imposing brick church was erected in 1927.
Classrooms and the parish hall were added in the 1960s. German language services
continued until 1977. The present congregation numbers over 300.

Contributing Buildings	1
Noncontributing Buildings	2
Total	3

N

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2015

202 (s)

217

202 (s)

4

217

93

93

90

216

5

216

390.8

431.5

BLK. 13

32

431.5

LUTHERAN CHURCH

OAK Street

431.5

90

390.8

390.8

390

BLK. 12

33

1

2

3

4

390

53.04-18-04

STREET

STREET

122

122

244

122

102.5

31

186.8

30

196.8

28

197.8

27.4

196.8

27.1

122

1

2

3

4

5

122

102.5

47

10

BLK. 14

75

94

244

94

244

94

94

ILLINOIS

20

B

A

75

65

21

65

75

121.8

186.8

29

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186.8

186.8

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186.8

27.02

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186.8

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186.8

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169

75

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27.4