

Rural Churches of Baldwin County

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#7

(Thematic Group)

Contact: Stan Persons
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Historic Name: St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Common Name: St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Location: North side Oak Avenue, Magnolia Springs

Verbal Boundary Description:

Begin at a point on the north side of Oak Avenue 312 feet southwest of County 49. Thence proceed southwest 125 feet to a point, thence northwest 300 feet to a point, thence northeast 100 feet to a point, thence southeast 235 feet to a point, thence southwest 104 feet to a point, thence southeast 100 feet to the point of beginning.

Acreage: .7

UTM: 16/425/900/3363/320

Date of Construction: 1901

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Statement of Significance

Criterion C-Architecture:

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is significant as one of three frame vernacular Gothic Revival religious buildings in Baldwin County. It is also significant for its unaltered interior which features a cathedral ceiling with exposed trusswork, beaded board walls and a cross of magnolia leaves placed over the altar in 1902.

Integrity:

St. Paul's Episcopal Church retains its integrity of location, materials and design. Exterior changes are limited to a rear addition (a one-story, frame, gable roofed office added in 1982) and a small shedroof storage bin on the west side of the building.

The interior integrity is excellent. Changes are limited to new light fixtures and a metal panel with a Bible scene in the window behind the altar.

Description:

St. Paul's Episcopal Church is a one-story, frame building with a steeply pitched gable roof to the front and a three-story tower on the side. The 1x3 bay building rests on a brick pier foundation. Sawn braces are present in the gable and the tower has a pyramidal roof, louvered lancets in the second story and a corner entrance cut diagonally into the base allowing access to the

sanctuary. Doors are double 6 panel and have the original hardware. The facade of the building has a set of three 1/1 lancet windows. There is a small, one-story gable transept on the northeast side with a 1/1 lancet window and 4 panel lancet door on the southeast side. The apse, a subordinate gable with sawn braces and a one-story, gable addition attached to this in 1982, are at the rear.

The sanctuary itself is a single open space with a cathedral ceiling, varnished beaded board walls and ceiling, original pews and altar. A small chair rail runs around the interior and the beaded board runs diagonally below this. There is a central aisle with pews to either side and chamfered posts on the altar. A cross made of cured magnolia leaves and placed over the altar in 1902 remains in place.

Historical Summary:

Magnolia Springs was founded in 1871 by winter-weary mid-westerners. Attracted by the natural springs and salubrious climate, these people constructed hotels and vacation cottages along the banks of the Magnolia River. The community was officially named Magnolia Springs in 1885; it had been known as Magnolia Plantation. Though there had been an active turpentine operation in the area before the Civil War, it was the mid-westerners who fashioned and built the community.

There was no church of any denomination in Magnolia Springs for many years. Devout residents held services in each others homes and invited preachers from nearby communities. In the 1890s land was donated for a church and a community hall with the latter soon completed. Construction of an Episcopal Church lagged until sufficient funds had been raised. Building began in 1901 and the church was consecrated in 1902 by Bishop Robert W. Barnwell. St. Paul's Episcopal Church survived the 1916 hurricane, though it was blown off its foundations. St. Paul's remained the only church in town for nearly fifty years and continues services to this day.

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St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Magnolia Springs, Baldwin County, Alabama

Scale 1"=200'

