

Presbyterian Church
600 East Jefferson Street
Jefferson
Marion County
Texas

HABS No. TEX-150

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. TEX-150

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Location: 600 East Jefferson Street, Jefferson, Marion County, Texas

Present Owner: Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Present Occupant: Presbyterian Church Congregation

Present Use: Church

Statement of Significance: Among the oldest Presbyterian churches in the State, this structure with its decorative brickwork is a good example of early ecclesiastical architecture in Texas.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The Cumberland Presbyterian church has owned the building throughout its history.
2. Date of erection: 1873 /J. A. R. Mosely, The Presbyterian Church in Jefferson (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1946), p. 9/.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Builder: John Ligon /Mrs. Arch McKay and Mrs. H. A. Spellings, A History of Jefferson 1836-1936 (no publisher or date), p. 14/.
5. Alterations and additions: There have been only minor changes to the interior of the building.

B. Historical Events Connected With the Structure:

The Jefferson Presbyterian Church was organized between 1846 and 1850. By 1870, the congregation was the largest in the city and probably among the largest in the State. Owing to reports of the splendid new edifice, the General Assembly - the highest gathering of the church representatives - met in Jefferson in 1875 /Mosely, op. cit., pp. 1, 6/.

C. Sources of Information:

McKay, Mrs. Arch, and Spellings, Mrs. H. A. A History of Jefferson 1836-1936 (no publisher or date). A copy is in the Jefferson Historical Society Museum.

Mosely, J. A. R. The Presbyterian Church in Jefferson.
Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1946.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Giving this building character on the exterior is the interesting brickwork. Window and door openings, cornice and string courses are detailed in a rather unusual and bold manner.
2. Condition of fabric: Generally good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Over-all dimensions are 46' x 75'. The narthex projects 8' on the south and the semicircular apse projects 8' on the north. Brick pilasters divide the east and west walls into five bays.
2. Foundations: Brick, 1'-6" thick.
3. Wall construction: Brick, 1'-6" thick.
4. Porches; exterior stairways: The stairway to the narthex doors is constructed with iron treads and ornamental iron risers. It is 11'-8" wide.
5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The double doorway to the narthex has a steep pointed head constructed from brick with triangular transom beneath. Four doorways to the ground level have low segmental pointed heads constructed from brick.

The doors to the narthex are 3'-2" x 9'-6" and have six ornamental panels with heavy moldings. The transom above is made of diamond-shaped panes of colored, etched glass.

Doors to the ground floor are 4'-6" x 7'-2". They have three vertical panels and tapered top rails.

All exterior doors have iron thresholds.

- b. Windows: Ground floor window openings are similar to the door openings on this level. Windows are coupled, four-over-four light, double-hung, wooden sash glazed with clear glass.

The first floor windows on the flanks of the auditorium are coupled, wooden, double-hung sash. The bottom sash is glazed with clear glass whereas the top, or fixed, sash is leaded glass with colored, etched panes of diamond shape. The top rail of each of the coupled windows is pyramidal, echoing the shape of the opening. The diamond-shaped space between the windows at the top also contains colored, etched glass. There are single pointed windows of similar character in the apse and narthex.

On either side of the base of the tower there are round windows glazed with clear glass.

On the tower above the main entrance door is a round-arched opening with brick hood. The opening is filled with a wooden louver. On each of the four sides of the tower above the roofline is a pair of smaller round-arched openings now filled with solid wooden doors.

All openings have iron sills.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gabled roof with standing-seam, sheet metal roofing. The apse is covered by a half-dome with sheet metal roofing.
- b. Framing: Heavy timber trusses, spaced about 15' on center. Over these are 2" x 8" joists. The builder apparently failed to adequately resolve lateral thrust from the trusses. Consequently, the upper part of the walls has moved outward nearly three feet.
- c. Cornice: Heavy ornamental brick cornice and parapet. Each pilaster is surmounted by a sheet metal pinnacle.
- d. Tower: The brick tower is surmounted by a square wooden stage with a clock face painted on each side indicating the hours of Sunday services. This is topped by a wooden spire of octagonal section, covered with sheet metal and crowned by a weather vane.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The church is a two-story structure. The ground floor is slightly below grade. This floor is open except for two rows of iron columns and several partitions that apparently have been added in recent years.

The main, or upper floor is approximately 9' above grade. Except for the narthex and the semi-circular apse which project outward, this is all in one space for the church auditorium. There are pews for 275 people. This section of the church is no longer in use; services are now held on the ground level.

2. Stairways: The main interior stairway, which is in the tower, is approximately 13' wide. It rises approximately 4'-6" in a straight run with narrow landings at the top and bottom. There are no handrails. Risers and treads are wooden.

There is a small L-shaped stair to the basement at the back of the auditorium. It has no handrail although there is a protective railing with turned balusters around the opening in the floor.

3. Flooring: The ground floor has a concrete slab of recent date. The first floor has 5"-wide tongue-and-groove, vertical grain pine flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: On the ground level, walls and ceiling are unfinished except in a section that is now used for services. There, the walls have been recently plastered and the ceiling has been covered with painted wooden paneling.

The first floor walls are plastered. The coved ceiling is finished with narrow tongue-and-groove boards.

5. Doors: Doors between narthex and auditorium are 3'-2" x 9'-0" and match the exterior narthex doors in design.

Ground level doors are four-panel and are apparently recent.

6. Decorative features and trim: Door and window casing is 8" wide with heavy molding. Windows have a 5" apron. Over each window in the auditorium is a heavy wooden cornice with dentils which abuts the room cornice. The baseboard is 6" high and plain. A heavy molding outlines the ceiling cove.
7. Hardware: There are heavy iron butts and iron latch hardware with porcelain knobs.

8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Lighting: Modern electrical fixtures.
 - b. Heating: Small gas space heaters.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The building is on a north-south axis with the narthex located on the south. The site is nearly dead-level.
2. Walks, driveways, etc.: There are no drives; the only walk is from the street to the narthex and is concrete.
3. Landscaping: Landscaping is insignificant, consisting of some foundation planting.

Prepared by Willard B. Robinson, AIA
Supervisory Architect, HABS
National Park Service
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made in 1966 during a summer project financed by the National Park Service to record 16 structures in Jefferson and the near-by area. The summer recording team received the cooperation of numerous citizens and organizations who provided office space, lodgings, board, and research assistance. Among the cooperators were the Dan Lester Drilling Company, the Excelsior Hotel, Mrs. A. K. Payne, the Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club, and the Marion County Chamber of Commerce.

The project was under the direction of A. Lewis Koue of the National Park Service's Western Office in San Francisco. Supervisor of the recording team was Willard B. Robinson, AIA, of Texas Technological College. The team was composed of student architects: David L. Bouse of the University of Nebraska; Bob J. Fong of the University of Idaho; Donald Quackenbush of Washington State University; and Robert M. Swanson of the University of Texas. Photographs were made by National Park Service Photographer, Jack E. Boucher.