

PINEVILLE CHAPEL
State Road S-8-204
Pineville
Berkeley County
South Carolina

HABS SC-438
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
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PINEVILLE CHAPEL

HABS NO. SC-438

Location: South Carolina Highway 45 (State Road S-8-204), Pineville vicinity, Berkeley County, South Carolina.

The coordinates for the Pineville Chapel are 80.029363 W and 33.430004 N, and they were obtained in September 2012 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: As a contributing resource to the Pineville Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Pineville Chapel is one of two early nineteenth-century country churches remaining in Berkeley County, South Carolina, today.

Description: Pineville Chapel is a one-story, rectangular, wood frame structure resting on top of a brick pier foundation. The exterior of the chapel is clad entirely in weatherboard siding. The roof of the main, rectangular portion of the building is side-gabled with flared eaves and standing seam metal cladding.

The west (front) façade features a square bell tower which projects from the rectangular portion of the building and rises fifty feet above ground level at its highest point, it is one of the building's most significant architectural features. One of two main entrances to the chapel is located on the west façade at the base of the tower. The three-story tower features a single, centered window on the west façade of its second and third floors. It is accessed by an interior wood stair with the top, open deck accessed by a ladder from the third floor through an opening in the shallow hipped roof. The open deck is surrounded by a simple wood banister and topped by a steeply pitched, hipped roof spire. Also on the west façade, are two nine-over-nine-light windows with paneled shutters, one on each side of the central bell tower.

The south façade features the second of two main entrances to the chapel. The three panel, double doors are surmounted by a transom light, and flanked on both sides by two nine-over-nine-light windows with paneled shutters, identical to the main windows on the other three facades. The south façade of the bell tower contains no openings; the open deck and steeple are identical on all four sides.

The north façade of the chapel is nearly identical to the south façade, the one critical difference being the substitution of a large twelve over twelve light window in place of the double door entrance. However, like the south façade, this large window is flanked on both sides by two nine over nine light windows with paneled shutters.

The east façade of the chapel features the other pedimented gable end of the roof. Located in the center of the pediment is a half moon, louvered opening, which

serves as ventilation for the attic space. The east façade is generally considered the rear of the chapel and has a small projecting hexagonal sacristy, which is entered through a six panel door. On either side of the door, on the north eastern and southeastern faces of the sacristy are nine-over-nine-light windows of a slightly smaller scale than the windows on the main rectangular part of the chapel. These windows likewise feature paneled shutters. The sacristy has a shallow pitch hipped roof with flared eaves and standing seam metal cladding. Like the west façade, the east façade features one nine-over-nine-light window on each side of the central sacristy projection.

The interior of the chapel retains much of its original federal style detailing. It is a large rectangular room with a vaulted ceiling. The plan of the interior is defined by one long east/west aisle, with the bell tower and main entrance to the building on the west end, and the chancel, altar, and sacristy on the east end. A short north/south aisle runs from the second main entrance on the south side of the building and terminates at its intersection with the east/west aisle. The east/west aisle is flanked on both sides by long, bench pews; there are nine rows of pews on the north side of the aisle and seven rows on the south side of the aisle.

There is a second floor gallery at the west end of the chapel – located over the main west entrance – which is supported by four slender, federal style columns. The column capitals have delicate moldings and carvings that are typical of the federal style. The gallery is accessed through a door on the second floor of the bell tower. The door is flanked on both sides by small four-over-four-light windows. The gallery measures 7'-0" x 15'-0".

The chancel is located at the east end of the building, and is composed of three ascending stepped platforms. The first step runs the width of the interior and features two pulpits; a small pulpit on the north side of the altar, and a larger, elevated pulpit on the south side of the altar. The second step features the altar railing, 2'-4" high, which surrounds three sides of the altar. The third and highest step measures 7'-0" x 7'-0" square; it contains a simple wood altar in the center with three panels on the front face, and one panel on each of the side faces. Behind the altar on the east interior wall, is a Palladian window. Like a classic Palladian window, it is three bays. Below the large arched window of the center bay, there is a door which leads to the sacristy beyond. On each side of the large center bay, is a narrow bay with double hung windows that are one light wide by three lights high in each sash. Defining each bay of the Palladian window are slender federal style pilasters, which feature the same delicate molding and carving details of the gallery columns. Two columns project from the east wall, in front of each of the two outermost pilasters of the Palladian window. The columns are identical in appearance to the pilasters, but do not have capitals. These columns, connected to the wall by short arched boards, give the altar a feeling of enclosure.

The north interior façade features five bays, each occupied by a double-hung window, the same as described on the north exterior. Paneled wainscoting, 3'-2"

high, runs the length of the wall. There is a cornice molding at the springing point of the vaulted ceiling at 14'-4" up the wall, with the total height to the top of the vaulted ceiling being 19'-4". The south interior façade is also made up of five bays. The configuration of doors and windows is the same as described on the south exterior. The same paneled wainscoting and ceiling details run the length of the south interior.

Pineville Chapel is an excellent example of vernacular architecture, not only as an early nineteenth-century, wood frame, country church, but also because most of its original, defining architectural features survive intact.

History: Nestled between Lake Moultrie and Lake Marion in an area wooded with pine trees, Pineville Chapel, in the Pineville National Historic District, stands as an amazingly intact remnant of South Carolina's plantation culture.

Early settlers established their plantations, growing rice and indigo, along the various river systems in Berkeley County. By 1790, planters recognized the unhealthy conditions that arose during the summer months - from June to October - as fevers and disease became common due to mosquitos which bred in the rice fields and swamps of the low lying lands. Desiring to avoid these conditions, rural planters established inland settlements, particularly in drier areas wooded with pines, beginning in the late nineteenth century. The small Pineville community was established in 1795 after one wealthy planter, James Sinkler, established a homestead in the area as a retreat for his family from his nearby Laurel Hill plantation. By the early nineteenth century, Pineville was a thriving summer retreat with as many as one hundred structures and nearly eight hundred residents, many of which were slaves. At its height, the town boasted an academy, racetrack, library, and, of course, Pineville Chapel.

The chapel, known at the time as the Church of the Redeemer, was built in 1810 as a chapel of ease for St. Stephen's Parish, whose church was located in the town of St. Stephen, South Carolina. Like St. Stephen's, Pineville Chapel served the predominantly Episcopalian citizens of the area. Many plantation owners who summered in Pineville were actually of French Huguenot descent but had adapted their religious practices to suit the English traditions that were preferred in Berkeley County. The chapel was first headed by Reverend Charles Blair Snowden, an episcopal minister, who led services there during the summer months. Services were suspended when the Pineville population would return to their plantation homes after the first killing frost.

Most of Pineville was destroyed in 1865 by Union troops. The few surviving buildings witnessed a gradual change in the surrounding landscape from densely wooded summering community to a sparsely populated agricultural community. Today, this area of Berkeley County remains mostly undeveloped. The Pineville National Historic District is composed of four residential structures and one church - Pineville Chapel. It is one of two surviving early nineteenth century wood frame

churches in Berkeley County. The Chapel has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since February 10, 1992, as a contributing resource to the Pineville National Historic District.

Sources:

“National Register nomination: Pineville Historic District,” National Park Service, 1991. The district has been proclaimed locally significant for its role as a pineland village and has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The full nomination form can be found with the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia, South Carolina.

David B. Schneider, Sarah Fink, and John Laurens, “Berkeley County (South Carolina) Historical and Architectural Inventory-1989,” Preservation Consultants, 1989. The survey was conducted to benefit the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.