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AND/OR COMMON	Old Des Peres Churc		Church)		
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COURTHOUSE.
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. St. Louis City Recorder of Deeds Office, City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

12th & Market Streets

CITY, TOWN

STATE

St. Louis Missouri 63107

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

100 Historic Buildings in St. Louis County

DATE

1970

—FEDERAL _STATE X_COUNTY _LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Buildings Commission St. Louis Dept. of Parks & Recreation

CITY. TOWN

STATE

Missouri

63105

Clayton

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DES PERES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Old Des Peres Church (Old Stone Church) is a rectangular, one-story stone meeting house with a partially dug-out basement.

EXTERIOR

Over-all dimensions

The church is 25'4" long on the east and west facades and 40'6" long on the north and south facades. The roof rises 20'6" above ground level at its ridge.

the many term attended to the contract

Wall Construction of the first treatment of the meaning of the second second

The walls of Old Des Peres Church are of coursed rubble which is composed of native limestone secured in concrete. The cornerstones are more rectangular in shape and are generally larger than the stone blocks of the main wall mass.

Openings

Windows. There are no windows at the level of the partial basement. There are, however, four rectangular foundation openings, two on each of the north and south facades, which were left between the foundation blocks during construction.

The first story windows are six-over-six light, double hung sash and are located on the north and south facades, four to each wall. Each window has a wooden lug sill and is topped by a flat arch with radiating voussoirs of wedge-shaped cut stones. In addition, each is flanked by a pair of shutters, painted black, of unknown date. These windows and shutters are currently operable.

Doorways & Doors. The only entrance into the church is at the first story level on the east facade. This entranceway is recessed 21 inches from the outer wall surface. It features a four-light transom, plain wooden reveals, painted white, with an ovolo molding surrounding its entire outer edge. The double doors, which are separated from the transom by another ovolo molding, are composed of two wooden leaves, painted white, with four vertical rectangular recessed panels, two above and two below, in each leaf. These doors have been restored, and they are thought to be original.

The doorway is topped by a flat arch with radiating voussoirs cut into wedge shapes, a similar arrangement to that over each of the windows. Access to this appears to be of the same entrance is over a rough poured concrete slab which composition as that used to construct the walls. The only entrance to the basement is through a trap door which measures 2':X 3' and is located at the foot of the chimney along the interior south wall at the west end of the church.

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Chimney

A single plain red brick chimney is located 12'6" from the west end of the church on its south wall. It projects into the sanctuary about 1' and is approximately 2' in width.

<u>Roof.</u> A gable roof covers the church. It is edged by a plain wooden box cornice, painted white, which forms broad eaves at the east and west ends. The original wooden shingles have been replaced by cedar shake shingles.

Decorative Features

These include the flat, slightly radiating arches over the doorway and all the windows, the plain wooden box cornice, and the ovolo moldings in the entranceway all of which have been previously mentioned.

INTERIOR

Basement. There is no true basement, but only a pit which is dug out of the earth under the center of the church and runs its full length. There are no walls or flooring in this area. Stone piers which support the first floor are located here and appear to be original. The foundation is of coursed limestone rubble of the same type used in the construction of the remainder of the church. At an unknown date, a small propane fired furnace was installed here and equipped with a single vent through the floor in the center of the sanctuary.

First Floor. Access to the first floor sanctuary is directly through the entrance in the east facade. This area occupies the entire first floor of the structure. A recently acquired wood stove sits in front of the chimney against the south wall. The central west end of the church is occupied by a podium 2' in height. There is no pulpit.

The lower walls of the sanctuary are covered by vertically placed tongue and groove wainscoting to a height of 0'32". Each panel is 4" in width. This zone is topped by a decorative molding formed by a broad fillet, a smaller recessed fillet, a scotia, and a still smaller fillet in succession from top to bottom. Above the molding and continuing to the ceiling the walls are composed of plaster, painted white. The ceiling is barrel vaulted and covered with wooden tongue and groove boards painted white which are placed on the east-west axis and run the length of the sanctuary. Each of these boards is 3" in width.

The floor is composed of tongue and groove oak planks resting on hand hewn oak joists.

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ALTERATIONS

Old Des Peres Church exists in a condition close to the original. The exceptions which have already been noted are the addition of a furnace vent in the floor of the sanctuary, the repainting and refurnishing of the interior, the refinishing of the exterior wood trim, and the installation of a new cedar shake shingle roof. In addition, a lighting fixture has been added which hangs from the apex of the vaulted ceiling at the west end of the church. It should also be noted that in May, 1874, the ceiling and roof of the church, which were supported by heavy timbers, fell in, wrecking much of the building but sparing the walls. The structure was soon completely repaired. As a consequence, the present barrel vault may not reproduce the original appearance of the ceiling.

SITE

Old Des Peres Church (Old Stone Church), Frontenac, Missouri is located on the east side of Geyer Road, approximately one (1) mile south of Clayton Road. It faces eastward toward a cemetery on the eastern half of the property. Three large oak trees dominate the area immediately south of the church. A line of trees and shrubs encloses the north, east and south sides of the cemetery. West of the church and across Geyer Road is an area which was formerly used for tying horses during church services and, later, as a parking lot. It is overgrown with shrubs and trees at the present time. Today, the church is bordered on all sides by an upper middle class residential area. About 100' directly south of the church a small modern shed has been built.

CONDITION

Old Des Peres Church is in sound condition. It is noteworthy that none of the exterior walls or flat arches have sagged or buckled to any apparent degree. The joists which support the floor planks and which rest on the stone foundation piers are the originals of hand hewn oak and remain sound. As already mentioned, the roof and the wooden trim on the exterior of the church have been repainted and restored to very near their original condition. In addition, wooden pews, painted ochre, have recently been obtained from Linn, Missouri and have been installed in the sanctuary. They are believed to be similar in form to the originals.

PRESENT STATUS

The current status of Des Peres Presbyterian Church is threatened by the proposed widening of Geyer Road, which runs by the northwest corner of the church. The

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congregation has instigated a law suit with the City of Frontenac, Union Electric Company and Southwestern Bell Telephone Company to protect the property and to collect damages already incurred. It

FOOTNOTES

- 1. This is the assumption of Mr. H.L. Harwood whose family joined the church as early as 1870. Mr. Harwood subscribes to the tradition that the rock was quarried at the nearby Des Peres Quarry on Manchester Road (Highway 100).
- These doors can be seen on photos of the church as early as the 1930's.
 They were damaged in the 1950's or 1960's by vandals. They were removed, restored and reinstalled in 1976.
- 3. Data exerpted from National Register Inventory-Nomination Form prepared by Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, Des Peres Restoration Committee, March 1, 1976.
- 4. Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, personal interview with Noelle Soren, December 15, 1977.
- 5. <u>Ibid</u>. The paint is new. Up to 15 layers of old paint were removed during this restoration.
- 6. This was installed between 1955 and 1965. According to Minutes of the Session:

 Des Peres Presbyterian Church, January, 1955-October, 1965, no publisher.
- 7. A Short History of Des Peres Church circular prepared by church staff, 1972 p. 2.
- 8. William Bodley Lane, AIA, personal interview with Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, February 15, 1975.
- 9. Data exerpted from National Register Inventory-Nomination Form prepared by Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, Chairman Des Peres Restoration Committee, March 1, 1976.
- 10. Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, personal interview with Noelle Soren, December 15, 1977. This restoration concerned only the wood trim. It is now painted white, but this does not represent its original condition. The trim was originally stained with a solution made of pulverized brick dissolved in a solvent. This fact was discovered when the trim was stripped.

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									·	
11.	Ibid.	This is	according	to Mr.	Sam	Vouga,	Vouga	Lane,	Frontenac,	Missouri

12. Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, telephone conversation with Noelle Soren, December 26, 1977.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

SPECIFIC DAT	ES 1834	BUILDER/ARCH	HITECT	-
1700-1799 X_1800-1899 1900-	ARTCOMMERCECOMMUNICATIONS	ENGINEERING EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT INDUSTRY INVENTION	_MUSIC _PHILOSOPHY _POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	THEATERTRANSPORTATIONOTHER (SPECIFY)
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PÉRIOD '	ARCHEULUGY-PREHISTORIC	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	ECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	X. RELIGION

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Des Peres Presbyterian Church, Frontenac, Missouri, is significant as an early stone meeting house of solid and lasting construction, and as the location of the pulpit from which Elijah Parish Lovejoy, the well-known abolitionist minister, preached during his stay in the St. Louis area from 1834 to 1837.

The Des Peres Presbyterian Church, which was constructed in 1834, is noteworthy as a pioneer church because it is the oldest stone Protestant church building to survive in the state. It features plain utilitarian design and lasting construction of native limestone. It is one of the few early churches in Missouri which utilized native stone, since most of these structures are of brick or frame construction. In addition, its incorporation of flat arches of cut stone voussoirs to insure structural strength above the doors and windows is unusual in the stone church architecture of Missouri. Solid stone lintels are usually used.

History of the Church

Des Peres Presbyterian Church was organized in the latter part of March, 1833 by Reverend William S. Potts and others in the nearby home of a Methodist minister which was rented for the occasion. Rev. Potts had come to St. Louis from Philadelphia in 1828 to be pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in St. Louis. It was at his suggestion that a colony which was later to be called Des Peres Presbyterian Church be established to serve members of the first Presbyterian Church who resided in "the county". In 1834, three acres of land were donated, one acre each by David Small, David Hatshorn and Stephen Maddox, for the site of the church and graveyard. The actual construction of the building was begun and virtually completed that same year.

One of the first ministers sent to Des Peres by the American Home Missionary Society in New York was Elijah Parish Lovejoy, a protege of Reverend William Potts. This well-known abolitionist also served as editor of the St. Louis Observer, which was basically a religious newspaper organized by a group of St. Louis businessmen. Lovejoy wrote an editorial for the Observer in 1835 which criticized the St. Louis Times, another local paper, for an article they published which called for mob action against a group of women who had organized a Sunday School for black slaves. This was Lovejoy's first public stand against slavery. By 1836, his bpposition to slavery and the treatment of slaves had strengthened, and he made these feelings clear in his editorials. The pro-slavery element in St. Louis at that time felt

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that Lovejoy's editorials were not to be endured; an angry mob destroyed his presses and threw much of his printing equipment into the Mississippi River.

In July, 1836, Lovejoy decided to move his presses across the river to Alton, Illinois. Since Illinois was a "free state", Lovejoy felt that he could publish his opposing views to slavery there in relative safety. This was not to be, however. Four more times his presses were destroyed and his printing equipment thrown in the river. But, even with all the setbacks, the <u>St. Louis Observer</u> was becoming more popular around the nation. Money was raised from the subscribers for the purchase of new equipment. In the fall of 1837, Lovejoy and his friend, Reverend Edward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, convened the meeting of a state anti-slavery Convention in Alton, in an attempt to solidify the efforts on behalf of the cause of abolition. The meeting ended in failure for Lovejoy who was condemned for publishing his dissenting opinions on the abolition of slavery. On November 7, 1837, while defending his presses from yet another mob trying to destroy them, Lovejoy was shot and killed. The leaders of the mob were later tried and found not guilty.

During the Civil War, Des Peres Church was as philosophically divided as the State of Missouri. Many of its members were slaveholders while others supported abolition. Tradition holds that the Old Church was used as one of the stations on the underground railroad during the war, though there is no historical documentation to confirm or deny this claim. It is historically confirmed, however, that a portion of the cemetery to the East of the church was reserved for the burial of slaves, though its exact location is unknown.

Between the years 1840 and 1870 the Reverend John N. Gilbreath occasionally served as the minister of Des Peres Church. This humanitarian is notable locally as the founder and principal of the Des Peres Institute, a scientific and military academy for boys. There were 16 buildings in the educational complex which was located at the southwest corner of Geyer and Manchester Roads in Des Peres. This academy, whose curriculum covered elementary through collegiate levels, closed permanently during the early years of the Civil War. In addition to his career as an educator, Gilbreath also served as the first postmaster of the Des Peres Post Office in 1848.

Old Des Peres Presbyterian Church and cemetery were used regularly until the mid 1950's. At that time, a new building, the new Des Peres Presbyterian Church was erected at the intersection of Clayton and Geyer Roads. The use of the old church was suspended in June of 1956. On June 3, 1975, the Old Des Peres Church Restoration Committee was awarded \$750.00 in matching funds by Bird and Son, Inc. of East Walpole, Mass. as a part of its Historic Grant Program. Competition

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for these funds was nation wide; of 800 projects under consideration, 115 were finally selected for funding. The money was used to replace the roof of the church. Recently, since its restoration, the building has become a non-sectarian chapel and has been used for weddings.

The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history as outlined in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan". The Des Peres Presbyterian Church is, therefore, being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "Architecture" and "Society".

FOOTNOTES

- 1. Elijah P. Lovejoy, letter to American Home Missionary Society. November 21, 1834. In this letter Lovejoy states that construction has been underway for some time. See also "A Short History of Des Peres Church", taken from church records, March 2, 1871.
- 2. This statement is based on a survey of the Protestant Churches found in The Missouri Historical Site Catalogue. In addition, out of 121 Protestant churches in the catalogue, Des Peres is the 3rd oldest of any construction. The older churches are the McKendree Log Chapel, Cape Girardeau County (1819) and the Palmyra Methodist Church, Marion County, (1831) which is of brick construction. See Dorothy J. Caldwell, Missouri Historical Sites Catalogue (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1963), p. 163, 23 and 105.
- 3. This statement is based on a survey of the churches found in Dorothy Caldwell, ed., The Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue (Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1963) pp. 1-195.
- 4. Data exerpted from National Register Inventory-Nomination Form prepared by Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, Chairman, Old Des Peres Restoration Committee, March 1, 1976.
- 5. Facts concerning the primary history of the church are taken from "A Short History of Des Peres Church", taken from church records, March 2, 1871 and A Short History of Des Peres Church, circular prepared by church staff, 1972.
- 6. Rev. Robert P. Farris, "Protestantism in the West", The Herald and Presbyter, May 14, 1902, pp. 12-13.
- 7. At present, the church can account for only two acres of land (See Section 10-Verbal Boundary Description). The location of the third acre and the reasons

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- 7. for its loss are unknown. Reverend Tabscott, the present pastor, assumes that some of the church's land was unlawfully assimilated into the residential building sites which surround the church today. From Rev. Robert Tabscott, personal interview with Noelle Soren, December 15, 1977.
- 8. See supra, Section 8, n. 1.
- 9. Rev. A.J. Norton & Rev. H.H. Kellogg (eds.), <u>Presbyterian Reporter Vol. 6</u> (Chicago: 1900) p. 4.
- 10. Paul Simon, <u>Lovejoy</u>, <u>Martyr to Freedom</u> (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 31.
- 11. <u>Ibid</u>. pp. 57-70.
- 12. <u>Ibid</u>, pp. 169-185. According to Reverend Tabscott, almost all documentation for the early church has disappeared. Fortunately the original letters of Elijah Lovejoy are preserved at the New York State Historical Society, Missouri Historical Society, Colby College in Waterville, Maine, The Hastings Library at the University of Michigan, The Madison County, Illinois Historical Society in Springfield, The American Home Missionary Society in New York City and The Wiskal Wickett Collection at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas, among others.
- 13. Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, personal interview with Noelle Soren, December 15, 1977. Many older members take this tradition as fact. Principal among these is Mr. Sam Vouga, Vouga Lane, Frontenac, Missouri 63131.
- 14. Data exerpted from National Register Inventory-Nomination Form, prepared by Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, Chairman, Old Des Peres Restoration Committee, March 1, 1976.
- 15. A Short History of Des Peres Church, circular prepared by church staff, 1972. According to these records, the church had no regular pastor until early in 1955.
- 16. Carl F. & Florence Stalwyk, <u>Des Peres</u>: A <u>History of Des Peres</u>, <u>Missouri</u> (Des Peres: City of Des Peres, 1976) p. 4.
- 17. Linda Wallace, "Grant Will Assure New Life For Historic Frontenac Church", St. Louis [Missouri] Post-Dispatch June 17, 1975, p. 7C.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- 1. "A Church in The County Wrapped in 105-year-old Tradition". St. Louis [Missouri] Globe Democrat, April 12, 1938.
- 2. "A Short History of Des Peres Church", a summary taken from church records of March 2, 1871.

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- 3. A Short History of Des Peres Church. Circular prepared by the church staff (1972).
- 4. Caldwell, Dorothy J., ed.. <u>Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue</u>. Columbia: State Historical Society of Missouri, 1963.
- 5. Data exerpted from a National Register Inventory-Nomination Form prepared by Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, Chairman, Old Des Peres Restoration Committee, March 1, 1976.
- 6. Farris, Rev. Robert P. "Presbyterianism in the West", <u>The Herald and Presbyter</u>. May 14, 1902.
- 7. Gill, McCune. The St. Louis Story, Vol. I. St. Louis: Historical Record Association, 1952.
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- 9. Lovejoy, Elijah P. Personal correspondence with The American Home Missionary Society. November 21, 1834.
- 10. March, David D. <u>The History of Missouri</u>, Vol. I. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1967.
- 11. McCandless, Perry. A History of Missouri, Vol. II. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972.
- 12. <u>Minutes of the Session</u>: <u>Des Peres Presbyterian Church</u>, January, 1955-October, 1965.
- 13. Neunreiter, Mrs. Robert L. Personal interview with Noelle Soren. December 15, 1977.
- 14. Neunreiter, Mrs. Robert L. Telephone conversation with Noelle Soren. December 26, 1977.
- 15. Norton, Rev. A.J. and Rev. H.H. Kellogg, eds. <u>Presbyterian Reporter</u>, Vol. 6, No. 4.
- 16. Scharf, Thomas J. <u>History of St. Louis City and County</u>, Vol. II. Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts & Co., 1893.
- 17. Simon, Paul. <u>Lovejoy</u>, <u>Martyr to Freedom</u>. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964.

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- 18. Stalwyk, Carl F. and Florence G. <u>Des Peres</u>: A <u>History of Des Peres</u>, <u>Missouri</u>. Des Peres: City of Des Peres, 1976.
- 19. Tabscott, Rev. Robert. Personal interview with Noelle Soren. December 15, 1977.
- 20. Thomas, William L. <u>History of St. Louis County, Missouri</u>, Vol. I. St. Louis: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911.
- 21. Wallace, Linda. "Grant Will Assure New Life for Historic Frontenac Church". St. Louis [Missouri] Post-Dispatch, June 17, 1975.

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A certain lot of ground situated in the county and state aforesaid being a part of section 23 township 45 range 5E containing one acre and bounded as follows:
Beginning at a stone from which the meeting house bears south 50 degrees west 50 links and running south 4 chains 25 links to a stone; thence east 2 chains and 36 links to a stone; thence north 4 chains and 25 links to a stone thence west 2 chains and 36 links to the place of beginning.

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2. Mrs. Robert L. Neunreiter, Chairman Old Des Peres Church Restoration Committee 539 Bambury Way Kirkwood, Missouri 63122

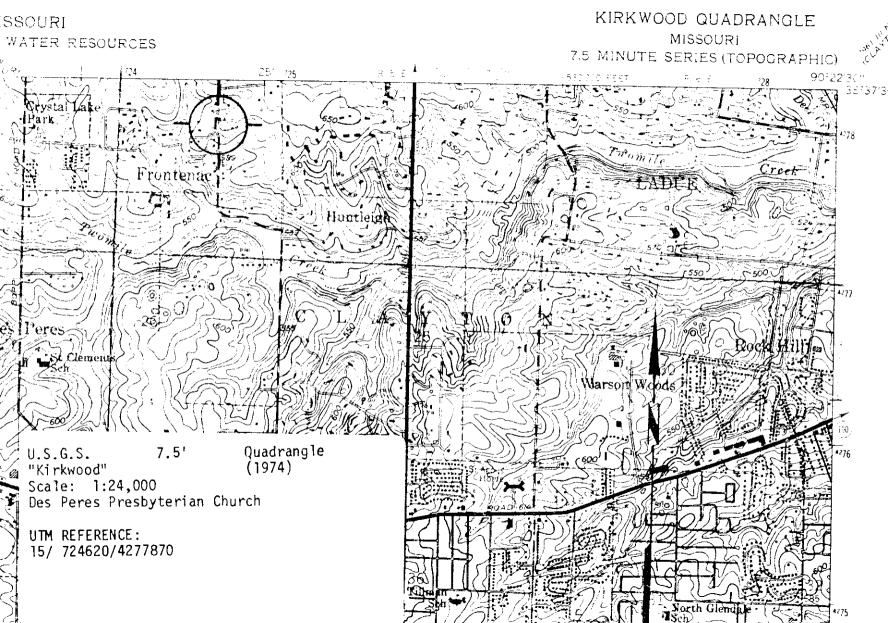


Photo Log:

Name of Property:	Des Peres Presbyterian Church
City or Vicinity:	Frontenac
County: St. Louis	County State: MO
Photographer:	Robert Neunreiter
Date Photographed:	Jan. 1978

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 8. View towards NW.
- 2 of 8. E façade, detail, main doorway.
- 3 of 8. View to NE.
- 4 of 8. S façade, detail of windows.
- 5 of 8. View toward NW, including the cemetery in the foreground.
- 6 of 8. The land owned by the church on the W side of Geyer Rd. This is the area which formerly served as a parking lot.
- 7 of 8. Interior, sanctuary, view toward E.
- 8 of 8. Interior, sanctuary, view toward W.















