RECEIVED 2280 700
AUG 21 2015
Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Beard Congregational Church
Other Names/Site Number: N/A
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 402 Granger St
City or town: Erath State: LA County: Vermilion
Not for Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets, meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

Phil Boggan 8/14/15

Signature of certifying official/Title: Phil Boggan, State Historic Preservation Officer **Date**

Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title: **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

✓ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other, explain: _____

10-5-2015

Signature of the Keeper **Date of Action**

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

x	Private
	Public – Local
	Public – State
	Public – Federal

Category of Property (Check only **one** box.)

x	Building(s)
	District
	Site
	Structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1	1	Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): Education: School; Religion: Religious Facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.): Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.): No Style

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
foundation: concrete piers
walls: Cypress weatherboard
roof: Asphalt Shingle
other:

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Beard Congregational Church is located on Granger Street within the southwestern portion of the city of Erath in Vermilion Parish, Louisiana. Built in 1916, this one story simply designed frame church is clad in original wood siding, has two over two wood windows with decorative pointed frames, a central entry with double doors and two lite transom, and a front gabled metal roof. The interior is one large room with some minor cosmetic updates that still features its original beaded board half walls, chair rail, and six panel wooden doors. There is a non-contributing addition attached to the rear of the church that has been used as a recreational hall and storage space. Overall, Beard Congregational Church retains a high degree of integrity despite some minor cosmetic updates dating from the last 40 years or so and remains eligible for listing on the National Register.

Narrative Description

Beard Congregational Church is a simple frame 1916 country church with no stylistic influences. It is located in the small rural town of Erath Louisiana. The old church, no longer in active use, is virtually unchanged from the period when it also served as the school for African American children. The small wooden structure perched on pillars is framed in cypress wood, and sheathed in narrow gauge clapboards. The old church has an asphalt shingled roof that has a vented opening in the front. There are two sets of two over two windows that graces the old church. Two of the windows are boarded up for safety and security. There is a set of wooden steps with a wooden rail on each side to enter the building. There is a pair of double doors at the front entrance. The interior is virtually unaltered save for the addition of carpet, wood paneling above the beaded board, and a more modern ceiling material at the original ceiling height. The only changes are purely cosmetic. The floor boards are covered with indoor/outdoor carpet. There is a door located in the rear of the church that leads to an outdoor facility that was once used as a church hall.

<u>Setting</u>
The area around the church is historically a residential area with several of the houses on the street dating to contemporaneous with the church or just after and a few more modern houses

mixed in. Located one block west of the house is the current Dozier Elementary, which was the location of the school once it outgrew Beard Congregational Church. This whole residential area is about 1-2 blocks from the main commercial areas of Erath.

Façade (East)

The façade of the church features a fenestration pattern of window, central entry, and window. The two windows are two over two wood windows with a decorative frame that has a pointed top. The central entry features a set of replacement double doors topped by a two lite transom. The entire façade is clad in original wood siding. The front gable has an apron front framing the gable. A louvered attic vent is centrally located in the gable, which is also clad in original wood siding. A small wooden stoop with what appears to be the original balustrade provides access to the doors. The two handrails that are by the steps themselves are more modern while the balustrade on the sides of the entry porch appear to be original.

North Elevation

This elevation features four windows matching those on the façade. Also clad in original wood siding, there is a simple smooth wood entablature at the cornice line with a small piece of ogee molding. The very back of this elevation features a small hipped roof over the altar area. Also at this elevation, the non-contributing rear addition is found, located directly to the rear of the original church building. It is not connected to the church building; there is a gap between the two buildings.

The north elevation of the addition is also clad in wood siding, painted white. There are 2 windows on this elevation with a gap between the back wall and the non-contributing hall.

Rear Elevation (West)

The rear elevation of the main church building is mostly hidden by the non-contributing addition. The rear elevation of the addition has a set of double two over two (horizontally) aluminum windows and a centrally located six panel door. A small triangular attic vent sits in the gable end. A set of three concrete steps leads to the door.

Because the non-contributing addition is one story and at a smaller scale than the original church building, one can see the upper half of the rear elevation of the church building. The altar area extends from the rear with a metal hipped roof. Two windows are located in this extension and are flanked by a two over two wood window, like those elsewhere on the church building, on the right and an original exit door on the left.

South Elevation

This elevation directly mirrors the north elevation.

Interior

The interior of the building is rather simply. It is one large room with pews lining each side and a center aisle approaching the altar area. A simple balustrade separates the sanctuary space from the altar area. Bead board makes up half the wall throughout with a simple chair rail topping it. The original wall finish was likely plaster, but it has been covered with mid to later 20th century paneling. It is unknown what the original ceiling finish was, but it is currently large panels in a grid, at the original ceiling height. Modern fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling. The flooring was

originally, but is currently covered with carpeting.

Non-contributing Resource

There is a non-contributing rear building, constructed in 1966, attached to the back of the church via a walkway between the original rear exit door of the church and the entry door to the newer building. The interior of the addition is one large open space currently used for storage. The newer building is considered non-contributing because it was built after the period of significance and does not relate to the building's significance as the only location for African American children to attend school from 1916-1941.

Alterations and Integrity

As stated previously, the only alterations to the building are cosmetic updates to the interior of the church and the non-contributing rear building. Beard Congregational Church retains its integrity of location, setting, feeling, association, design, craftsmanship, and materials. Beard Congregational Church would be recognizable to any of the children who attended school here during the period of significance. Thus, it remains eligible for listing on the National Register.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

x	**A**	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

Criteria Considerations:

x	**A**	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
	B	Removed from its original location
	C	A birthplace or grave
	D	A cemetery
	E	A reconstructed building, object, or structure
	F	A commemorative property
	G	Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.): Education, Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance: 1916-1941

Significant Dates: 1916, 1941

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion D is marked above): N/A

Architect/Builder (last name, first name): Dozier, Robert; Dozier, Frank; Jesse, Alcide

Period of Significance (justification): The period of significance is from 1916, the year that school began being held in the church, to 1941, the year that classes stopped being held there as a formal school was built.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): The building is currently owned by a church group, but is not being listed for religious reasons. Rather, it is being listed for its significance with the education of African American students in Erath from 1916-1941.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Beard Congregational Church is locally significant under Criterion A: History, in the areas of education and ethnic history: black. It represents a major phenomenon in the development of educational facility for African American students during a time when segregation was alive and well. The building represents the only opportunity for local African American children to receive an education beginning in 1916, when the home of Robert and Frances Dozier could no longer adequately house the growing number of students, and ending in 1941 when a modern elementary school was built for African American children in Erath.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

History of Erath

The Town of Erath is one of the youngest communities in Vermilion Parish having only been officially created in 1899. Early settlers to Vermilion Parish tended to settle along the coastal regions of the parish near water reserves. As Erath is located on the plains of the parish, it took longer for settlers to take the chance on the area. In 1848, surveyors' maps show no land owners in the area. By the 1850s, land was purchased in the area by the Primeauxs, Sevenne Primeaux in particular. Following the Primeauxs, and the Civil War, other landowners moved into the area. One of these landowners, Patrick O'Toole, would become important as Erath developed. O'Toole was rescued from the streets of New Orleans by Sevenne Primeaux and brought to Erath to be raised with the Primeaux children. He later purchased land of his own in the town. [1]

As Erath (not officially named Erath until 1899) grew, another man, August Erath, from nearby New Iberia, also became very influential in the formation of the town. August immigrated to New Orleans from Germany in 1860 and soon moved to New Iberia in nearby Iberia Parish. He owned a brewery, seltzer water factory, an ice plant, and a hardware store in New Iberia. He also started purchasing land in the future town of Erath. Mr. Erath purchased land from Primeaux's heirs as well as Patrick O'Toole.[2]

[1] "The History of Erath, Louisiana." www.vrml.k12.la.us/ehs/history/historylink.htm. Accessed 5 May 2015.
[2] Ibid.

Around the same time that Mr. Erath was buying up land in the area, the Southern Pacific Railroad laid a railroad from New Iberia to Abbeville. August Erath had a close relationship with railroad officials and brought forth a business adventure to bring the railroad to the town where he had purchased land (Mr. Erath never actually lived in Erath). The branch line to Erath from New Iberia was finished in 1893 and the branch station was named "Erath." Once the line was in place, August Erath had a plat drawn up and began selling lots in the area.

One purchaser of these lots was a Dr. Joseph Kibbe, from Abbeville, who would become very influential in Erath as he set up the first medical practice, pharmacy, lumber yard, and post office in the town. He became known as "The Father of Erath."[3]

By 1899, Erath had a population of 400 and was incorporated as a village. The first mayor of the village was Frank Williams. In 1910, the Bank of Erath was established and ten years later, the Erath Sugar Company was created. It was within this ten year period that the nomination property, the Beard Congregational Church, was constructed on Granger Street.

By 1923, Erath had over 1000 citizens and on July 12 of that year, Erath officially became a town.[4] As of the 2000 census, there were just over 2000 people living in Erath.

Criterion A: Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black

Education in Louisiana

Education in Louisiana at the turn of the 20th century was in a horrible state. One important event that occurred in relation to education was the adoption of the new state constitution in 1898. It enabled local special tax elections for the support of public schools. It also mandated that schools would be segregated by race. Following the adoption of this constitution and under the guidance of state superintendent T.H. Harris from 1908-1940, "public education in Louisiana was enabled to grow and develop to respectable status."[5]

This respectable status was true only for white schools. While the overall condition of education was still poor throughout the state, it was immensely poor for African American children. Throughout the state, the physical plant for white schools was valued at over $6 million. The physical plant for African American schools was valued at just $250,000. It is estimated that this number was even lower as the majority of schools, like the school at Beard Congregational Church, were actually churches or lodges and not actual public school buildings. In some cities, such as Baton Rouge, New Orleans, and Shreveport, substantial school buildings were constructed. In smaller towns, one room or multiple room frame school houses were constructed. The Rosenwald fund, which made many rural schools possible from 1916 to 1932, contributed to the construction of 392 schools as well as houses for teachers and shops.[6] For other places, like Erath, it wouldn't be until the 1940s when more substantial separate school buildings would be constructed.

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Laura Blokker. "Education in Louisiana." *Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation*. N.d. Web. 6 March 2015.
[6] Ibid.

Educational History of Erath

The first schools were authorized for all wards of Vermilion Parish in 1876. Schools around the Erath area were located in the residence of Minos C. Broussard, next to the Methodist Church, and next to the residence of Desire Hebert, south of Erath. These were all schools for white children. Henry High School, established in 1877, graduated its first official student in 1900. The first official school house in Erath was built in 1893, just after the railroad came through town. By 1903, the student population had outgrown the three room school and a new two story frame school was built. By 1923, another new school was needed and this time, a three story brick school building was constructed.[7]

It was during these years Robert and Frances Dozier established a classroom for African American children in their home and later, when the class size outgrew their home, at Beard Congregational Church. There were no other educational opportunities for African American children in Erath prior to the Doziers opening up their doors.

The Dream of the Doziers and Beard Congregational Church

A Dream ....."Some said, an Impossible Dream." Robert Dozier was a rare man who dared to dream, in the hopes of educating his children, at a time when prejudice was prevalent throughout society. The year was 1911; two generations preceding Dr. Martin Luther King's stand for civil rights and his famous words, "I Have a Dream." Like Dr. King, Robert Dozier had a dream. His, was one of offering an education to his children and grandchildren. But, in Erath, a small rural town in Southwest Louisiana, educational opportunities for African American children were virtually nonexistent. Realizing this, Robert and Frances Dozier took fate into their own hands. They decided not to sit and wait patiently for society to eventually offer their children what most people take for granted. This unique couple offered their children, "the gift of an education."

Robert Dozier and his wife Frances, native Kentuckians, moved to Avery Island, Louisiana. Shortly afterwards, the couple settled in Erath, with their ten children: Adeline, Arthur, Frank, Henry, Libby, Lizzie, Mary, Pinkie, Sally and Willie. Robert Dozier was employed at a local lumberyard, while his wife worked as a mid-wife in the area. Together, they decided to provide their children with the advantages of an education.[8]

Around 1911, the Dozier's hired a teacher, Mrs. Gracie Milton Neal of Abbeville, to enter their home and teach the African American children in the area. She offered these children the advantages of a new learning environment. During this time, Mrs. Neal lived in the Dozier home. To help accommodate the students, each morning Mrs. Dozier would lean the bed against the wall instantly transforming the bedroom into a school room. This routine continued until1916, when it was decided that the Beard Congregational Church, which was located right next to the Dozier home, would serve the dual purpose of a school and a church. Mrs. Alberta Price of New Orleans was the first teacher.[9]

[7] "Erath School History." www.vrml.k12.la.us/ehs/history/historylink.htm. Accessed 5 May 2015.
[8] "The History of Dozier Elementary (Erath, Louisiana)." www.vrml.k12.la.us/ehs/history/historylink.htm. Accessed 5 March 2015.
[9] Ibid.

According to Mrs. Alice David, the granddaughter of Robert and Frances Dozier, the students would walk to school every morning, with some students walking as far as 3 miles each way. To the left of the church at the time (Mrs. David is 91 today), there were no buildings and the students used the open land as their playground. [10]

Over the next twenty five years, Mrs. Gracie Neal of Abbeville, Harold Gilbert of New Iberia, and Lizzie Lee Brown (Robert Dozier's granddaughter) of Erath, respectively taught in the church. Student enrollment steadily increased and by 1941, the church could no longer accommodate the classes. At this time, concerned parents approached the Vermilion Parish School Board for assistance. The School Board purchased 1.01acres of land. Construction of the small building was estimated at $890. Doors to the new two room wooden school opened in 1942 bearing the proud name R.F. Dozier Elementary.

The new school, R. F. Dozier (in honor of Robert and Frances), operated until 1968 when it was closed to integrate with Erath High School. It would reopen the following school year. By 1972, Dozier Elementary was established as the primary school for Erath children in the first through third grades.[11]

Beard Congregational Church stands today as a reminder of the only educational option for African American students in Erath. It was because of Robert and Frances Dozier and their commitment to educating their own children, that generations of African American children received an education. For almost 30 years, the school that arose from the dreams of the Doziers and that operated in Beard Congregational Church had a profound and significant impact on the education for African Americans in the town of Erath. The building is significant under Criterion A: History for the role it played in the educational history and lives of African Americans in Erath from 1916 until 1941, when a new elementary school for African American students was constructed.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

9. Major Bibliographical Resources

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Blokker, Laura. “Education in Louisiana.” *Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation*. N.d. Web. 6 March 2015. http://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/hp/nationalregister/historic_contexts/Education_in_Louisiana.pdf.

David, Alice Dozier. Personal Interview , 2015.

Azare, Ruby. Personal Interview, 2015.

“The History of Dozier Elementary (Erath, Louisiana).” www.vrml.k12.la.us/ehs/history/historylink.htm. Accessed 5 March 2015.

“Erath School History.” www.vrml.k12.la.us/ehs/history/historylink.htm. Accessed 5 May 2015.

[10] Alice David. Personal Interview, 2015.
[11] “The History of Dozier Elementary (Erath, Louisiana).”

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
_____previously determined eligible by the National Register
_____designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
_____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

__x_ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): __N/A_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than an acre.

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
1. Latitude: 29.956383 Longitude:-92.037870

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
That certain lot or parcel of land lying and being situated in the town of Erath, measuring 50 feet front North and South, by 125 feet East and West, bounded on the South by Mrs. Alecia Comeaux, her heirs or assigns, East by Granger Street, North by Francis Dozier, his heirs or assigns, and west by Primeaux Street, together with all buildings and improvements thereon situated appertaining.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundaries chosen reflect the historic boundaries of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dana Comeaux
organization: N/A
street & number: 2621 Isadore Rd
city or town: Erath state: LA zip code: 70533
e-mail: danacomo@msn.com

telephone: 337-577-3937
date: March 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Beard Congregational Church
City or Vicinity: Erath
County: Vermilion
State: LA
Name of Photographer: Jessica Richardson
Date of Photographs: March 6, 2015

1 of 12: Façade of building; camera facing west.
2 of 12: View of the northern elevation; camera facing southeast.
3 of 12: View of the rear elevation of the non-contributing addition; camera facing southeast.
4 of 12: View of the southern elevation of the church and addition; camera facing east.
5 of 12: View of the southern elevation of the church; camera facing north.
6 of 12: Close-up view of the transom above the main entrance; camera facing northwest.
7 of 12: View of the interior of the church looking towards the altar area; camera facing northeast.
8 of 12: View of the interior of the church looking towards the main entrance; camera facing southeast.
9 of 12: View of an original interior door along the rear elevation; camera facing northeast.
10 of 12: View of the altar rail and altar area; camera facing southwest.
11 of 12: View of the center hall and main entrance from the altar area; camera facing east.
12 of 12. Close-up of the original bead board wainscoting and sign; camera facing southwest.

Figure 1. Lizzie Lee Brown, granddaughter of Robert and Frances Dozier. Ms. Brown taught school at Beard Congregational Church. Image courtesy of the author.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Beard Congregational Church, Vermilion Parish, LA

Latitude: 29.956383 Longitude: -92.037870

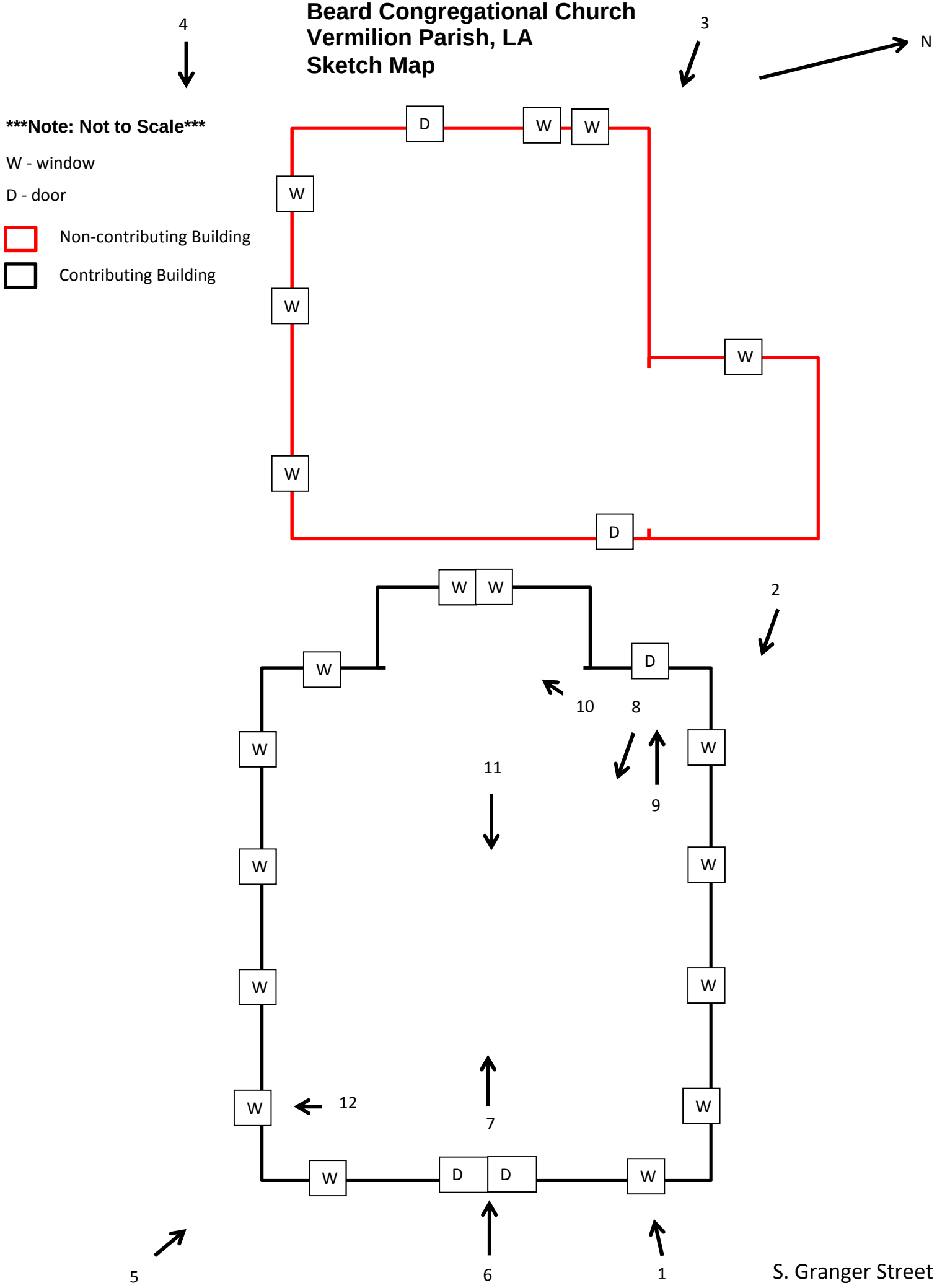
Beard Congregational Church, Vermilion Parish, LA

Latitude: 29.956383 Longitude: -92.037870

Beard Congregational Church, Vermilion Parish, LA

Latitude: 29.956383 Longitude: -92.037870

Beard Congregational Church
Vermilion Parish, LA
Sketch Map



INTEX

SODA-A
TURN BOTT

Welcome To
Beard Congregational Church
Established 1916
Robert & Francis Dozier
Founders

Welcome To
Beard Congregational Church
Established 1916
Robert & Francis Dozier
Founders