Preserving a church

Old Convent building now major attraction at Rural Life Museum

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— David Floyd, director of Rural Life Museum.

By JULIE KAY
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Nearly 25 years ago, the members of College Grove Baptist Church could see the handwriting on the decaying wood walls.

The little church's congregation had dwindled to only a few, and the structure was in disrepair.

So the remaining members decided the only way to save the building was to enter into an agreement with the Rural Life Museum. The museum would move the church to its site near Essen Lane and repair the structure.

"The church has become one of the most popular things here and is certainly one of the most photographed," said David Floyd, director of the Rural Life Museum.

Visitors include various community choirs that perform inside and outside the church during the Christmas season.

The building wound up at the museum with the help of the late Steele Burden, who donated the land for the museum.

Burden, according to Floyd, was looking for a church in the 1970s to place on the property that already housed other historic buildings he had acquired.

The group of buildings on the museum grounds in representative of plantation life in the 19th century, such as a school house, overseer's house, slave cabins and a general store.

Burden felt strongly that a church be added since...