

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 29 1976

DATE ENTERED

AUG 16 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Central Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

26 Radcliffe Street

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Charleston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

South Carolina

__ VICINITY OF

CODE

045

COUNTY

Charleston

CODE

019

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

__ DISTRICT

 BUILDING(S)

__ STRUCTURE

__ SITE

__ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

__ PUBLIC

 PRIVATE

__ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

__ IN PROCESS

__ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

 OCCUPIED

__ UNOCCUPIED

__ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

__ YES: RESTRICTED

 YES: UNRESTRICTED

__ NO

PRESENT USE

__ AGRICULTURE

__ COMMERCIAL

__ EDUCATIONAL

__ ENTERTAINMENT

__ GOVERNMENT

__ INDUSTRIAL

__ MILITARY

__ MUSEUM

__ PARK

__ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

 RELIGIOUS

__ SCIENTIFIC

__ TRANSPORTATION

__ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Central Baptist Church

STREET & NUMBER

26 Radcliffe Street

CITY, TOWN

Charleston

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

South Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Mesne Conveyance

STREET & NUMBER

2 Court House Square

CITY, TOWN

Charleston

STATE

South Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina

DATE

1973 (update)

__ FEDERAL STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

South Carolina Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Columbia

STATE

South Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Central Baptist Church was built ca. 1893 by a black congregation and has been continuously used since that time. Of clapboard construction, the church's dominant feature is a tower which projects from the center bay of the front facade. This tower has a double front door sheltered by a hood with a half-timbered effect in its gable. A pendant projects from the center of the hood and the structure is supported by heavy brackets. Located above this entrance is a Gothic-style window with plate tracery, while an octagonal belfry and dome culminate the tower. Now square in plan, this tower was altered from its original octagonal configuration approximately twenty years ago.

With the exception of this tower, Central Baptist Church is essentially "Meeting House" in design with Carpenter Gothic details. On each side of the central tower are double doors with intersecting tracery in the transoms. The side facades are characterized by eight triple-hung arched windows with intersecting tracery. In the 1940s a small addition was made to the rear of the church to provide dressing rooms for the choir.

The gabled roof is covered with standing-seam tin and the boxed cornice features decorative brackets.

Interior: The three front entrances open into a vestibule which is paneled with tongue and groove boards laid in diagonal patterns. The vestibule leads into the sanctuary which features three rows of pews and a gallery among the sides and rear. The front of the church features a semicircular apse which is raised and delineated by a Gothic arch with fretwork and a frieze. Much of the rest of the interior also features carved wooden details: square fluted columns on pedestal bases, paneled wainscoting, turned balusters, and a raised-paneled cornice with pendants. The dominant features of the interior, however, are murals which are of religious scenes.

The church is in excellent condition and retains its original furnishings.

Surroundings: Central Baptist Church is located in a residential area of Victorian-period frame houses. Flanking the church on either side are ca. 1875 "single houses" of one-room depth and arranged in the typical configuration with a two-story veranda on the side. The building adjacent to the right side of the church is currently used by the congregation as the Adult Education Building. Covered with shiplap siding, the building features the original blinds on the 2/2 windows, slender Doric columns supporting the veranda, and a boxed cornice with returns in the gable. This building also is in an excellent state of repair and is included within the nomination.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1891, 1915

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

John P. Hutchinson

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Central Baptist Church is located in Charleston, South Carolina and is significant in terms of both black history and folk art. Locally, it is thought to be one of the first black churches to have been founded and built solely by blacks in Charleston. The interior of the church is notable, containing murals depicting scenes of the life of Christ. These scenes include the Crucifixion, the Ascension and Resurrection, and are signed "Amohamed Milai, 1915."

According to church history, Central Baptist Church was founded in 1891 by a group from Morris Street Baptist Church, an older church in Charleston. (Called by one author, "the leading church of its denomination in the state,"¹ Morris Street Baptist Church led the way in the formation of a Negro Baptist Church association in 1867 and a statewide organization in 1876.) Two years later, the present structure was completed and was first used by the congregation in August 1893.

During its first twenty years, the church grew, and this growth is reflected in the addition of the notable murals of 1915. According to an interview in 1975 of an elderly church member, Mrs. Eva Hunt Hopkins, her grandmother met the artist, Amohamed Milai, at a church convention in Greenville. Milai was from India and was then working in Washington, D.C. According to Mrs. Hopkins, Milai came to Charleston and in 1912 began painting the interior of the church. These murals depict the Procession to Golgotha, the Crucifixion, burial scene, Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, Peter and the other disciple, the empty tomb, Cleopas and another disciple on the road to the village of Emmaus. The altarpiece depicts the Baptism of Christ, while in the apse is the Ascension, and in the gable above is the Resurrection.

Since the paintings were completed, Central Baptist Church has continued to grow. Today it has a strong congregation, as evidenced by the recent renovation of the interior and exterior of the church.

Architecture: Central Baptist Church is an excellent example of the Carpenter Gothic vernacular style of architecture. Victorian churches are rare in Charleston due to the prevalence of finely constructed churches from earlier periods. Outstanding features of this church which are indicative of the style and period are the central double doors with protective hood above, octagonal belfry and dome, tower window with plate tracery, interior gallery on three sides, and Milai frescoes and murals.

(continued)

¹George Brown Tindall, South Carolina Negroes (Columbia: U.S.C. Press, 1952), p. 188.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

The Adult Education Building to the right of the church is a typical Victorian "single house" of the period. It is included within the nominated acreage.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

Central Baptist Church

Charleston, SOUTH CAROLINA

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL

Keeper

Amy Federman 9/1/20

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JUL 23 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

ADDENDUM
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

7. DESCRIPTION

Surroundings: The building adjacent to the right side of the church, which served as an educational building when the church was nominated in 1977, has been moved to 156 Coming Street from its original location at 24 Radcliffe Street. Its removal has not changed the boundaries of the Central Baptist Church nomination.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

The Adult Education Building, formerly at 24 Radcliffe Street, has been moved and does not contribute to the significance of the nominated property. It had no historical association with the church prior to 1972 and was mistakenly included as a contributing property in the nomination.

Mary W. Edmonds

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy SHPO, SC Department of Archives & History,
Columbia, SC

13 July 1990

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

JUL 23 1990

PHOTOGRAPH

Section number _____ Page _____

ADDENDUM

CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH

Central Baptist Church
Charleston, South Carolina
Charleston County

Preservation Consultants, Inc., June 1990

View of church building and lot at right where 24 Radcliffe Street
residence was located formerly.