

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED DEC 29 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 16 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME **

HISTORIC Greenville Baptist Church, First Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

written Downtown Baptist Church *see letter 1/3/78*

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

101 West McBee Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Greenville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#4

VICINITY OF

STATE

South Carolina

CODE

045

COUNTY

Greenville

CODE

045

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 (Exterior)
- 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

Downtown Baptist Church

STREET & NUMBER

101 West McBee Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Greenville

VICINITY OF

STATE

South Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Greenville County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

East North Street

CITY, TOWN

Greenville

STATE

South Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina

DATE

1973

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

South Carolina Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Columbia

STATE

South Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

Downtown Baptist Church is a large Greek Revival structure located in downtown Greenville, South Carolina. Constructed in 1858, it was designed by Samuel Sloan, noted architect of the mid-to-late 19th Century.

Set upon a high raised basement, Downtown Baptist Church features six Ionic columns supporting a pediment and tall central spire. It is constructed of brick covered with stucco. Numerous concrete steps lead to the portico which has three double glass entrance doors, each capped by a pediment. Above each entranceway is a window with vertical mullion. The side facades have six bays separated by pilasters, each bay featuring a stained glass window. On the basement level there are 8/8 windows and an entranceway (all of which are parallel to the main floor windows).

Alterations were made on all three of these facades ca. 1915. As shown by the architect's drawing and an early photograph, there was originally one front door, while the side windows were probably shuttered and included sixteen lights per sash. The stairway has also been widened one bay on each side.

Ca. 1914 a Sunday School building was added to the rear of the church. In 1940 this building was remodeled and an auxiliary building was erected. In 1950 a three story structure was added. In 1956 church growth again required new educational facilities, and construction began on another addition which was completed ca. 1957.

Interior: The interior features a central row of pews with one smaller row on each side. Balconies featuring recessed panels and supported by metal columns extend along the sides and rear.

The basic plan of the interior has been maintained with the exception of changes made in 1915. At that time the sanctuary was enlarged approximately seventeen feet, the floor was made to slope, and the original two rows of pews were replaced by three. The pulpit area was changed and enlarged with the addition of an organ loft and choir gallery. During this remodeling the original perspective-painted architectural features (including Corinthian columns and stenciled cornice) were removed. Nevertheless, despite these alterations, the basic design of the decorative elements was maintained (see photographs no. 6 and 7).

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 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1858 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Samuel Sloan

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

For many years Greenville, South Carolina, has been a stronghold of the Baptist denomination in the state, and Greenville's Downtown Baptist Church has been one of the focal points of that strength. Organized in 1831 with ten members, the church by 1930 had become, "by far the largest church in Greenville County...."¹ Still maintaining an active congregation, Downtown Baptist Church is one of the very few mid-19th Century public structures remaining in Greenville.

In 1851 Furman University, a Baptist denominational school, was established in Greenville, strengthening the church, as well as making new demands upon it. In 1852 James C. Furman, later president of the school and son of Richard Furman for whom it was named, wrote:

I wish the Baptists of the state would show the same wisdom which the Episcopalians of the low country do in putting up attractive buildings in important places in the up country. ... Our building which is larger than theirs scarcely contains our congregation. We have had to put down a double row of chairs on the aisles. If my means were such as to allow my subscribing liberally, I would urge upon our people the erection of another building.²

In 1854 a building committee was formed to study the possibility of a new church. The prominent architect Samuel Sloan was employed, and in 1858 the present structure was completed.

The following year the strength of the Baptist church in Greenville was further evidenced by the opening of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Greenville where it remained until 1877. (The meeting which resulted in the establishment of the seminary in Greenville was held in May 1858, at Downtown Baptist Church, and the seminary's first home was the old meeting house of the church.)

(continued)

1. James M. Richardson, History of Greenville County, South Carolina (Atlanta: A. H. Cawston, 1930), p. 64.

2. Laura S. Ebaugh, A 19th Century Diary of Greenville, South Carolina (Greenville: Greenville County Historical Society, 1966), pp.16-17, taken from letter from James C. Furman to sister Maria, June 18, 1852, Archives, Furman Univ., Greenville, S. C.

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In the years that followed, Downtown Baptist Church grew steadily. In 1882 the church hosted the Southern Baptist Convention, and by 1889 it had held eight sessions of the State Convention. In 1890 the name of the church was changed from Greenville Baptist to First Baptist Church.

During the 20th Century the church continued to grow, and by 1956 the congregation numbered more than 2500. During these years several additions were made to the church, expanding Sunday School and office space; but by the 1970s many in the congregation felt the need for a larger building. At that time a majority of the congregation moved into a new building, taking the name of First Baptist with them. A sufficiently large group chose to remain in the older structure, and in 1974 they organized as Downtown Baptist Church. Today Downtown Baptist has an active congregation and is one of the very few mid-19th Century public structures remaining in downtown Greenville.

Architecture: Designer of the church was Samuel Sloan (1815-1884), who, according to the Dictionary of American Architects (deceased), was "One of the most distinguished of early American architects...."³

Downtown Baptist Church has been altered on both the interior and exterior since its completion in 1858. Additions have also been made to the rear of the building. According to Harold N. Coledge, professor of architecture at Clemson University who wrote his doctoral dissertation on Sloan,

...the additions to the original building have not destroyed Sloan's design nor injured its front appearance in any major degree. ... Hence, the present church building is one of the few early Sloan works which still stands in a reasonably original condition.⁴

3. Henry F. and Elise R. Withey, Dictionary of American Architects (deceased) (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), p. 558.

4. Harold N. Coledge, Letter to Herbert H. Provence, October 9, 1975. (copy at South Carolina Department of Archives and History).

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE one

Daniel, Robert Norman. A Century of Progress Being the History of the First Baptist Church, Greenville, South Carolina. Greenville: First Baptist Church, 1957.

Ebaugh, Laura S. A 19th Century Diary of Greenville, South Carolina. Greenville: Greenville County Historical Society, 1966.

"Historical Sketch," First Baptist Church Manual and Directory. 1920.

Richardson, James M. History of Greenville County, South Carolina. Atlanta: A.H. Cawston, 1930.

Information provided by Mary C. Simms Oliphant, local historian, October 1975.