

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Presbyterian Church
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 234 East Main Street ☐ not for publication
city, town Rock Hill ☐ vicinity
state South Carolina code SC county York code 091 zip code 29730

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Historic Properties of Rock Hill

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility 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. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Mary W. Edmonds

Signature of certifying official

4/21/92
Date

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy SHPO, S.C. Dept. of Archives & History

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian period

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Slate

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

First Presbyterian Church of Rock Hill consists of two major sections, the sanctuary, completed in 1895, and the educational building, built in 1922 with some minor modern additions. The sanctuary was designed by noted South Carolina architect Charles Coker Wilson. It has a polygonal central block with an octagonal roof capped by a cupola. There are eight gables projecting from this central block, five of which contain round stained glass windows which light the sanctuary. Principal entrances are on Main Street and Saluda Street, each consisting of three pairs of double doors flanked by brick pilasters and rounded-arch multi-light transoms set within stepped brick surrounds. There is a portico with large brick arches at the west end of the Main Street facade. At the east corner is a five-story bell tower with triple windows set in rounded arches at the first level, rectangular windows at upper levels, vertical brick panels, an open fifth level above a corbelled cornice, and a flared pyramidal roof with a finial. There is a secondary gable on the Saluda Street facade with a steep gable roof and a smaller entrance. Several of the larger gables have finials and are flanked by crest-like finials. The roof is slate. There are thin terra cotta bands along several wall surfaces.

The interior of the sanctuary lies under the main roof and features large ceiling arches which highlight the five circular stained glass windows. The windows are flanked by engaged columns and have keystones above and smaller arched windows below. From the apex of the ceiling hangs a large chandelier. The ceiling arches descend to engaged fluted columns. Two of the windows, above the main entrances, are behind small balconies with balustrades of turned balusters. The organ and pulpit area project into the sanctuary, with pews placed in a curved pattern and the floor sloping to the pulpit in the southwest corner. On the west side are two rectangular stained glass windows with Biblical scenes.

The 1922 educational building, designed by Rock Hill architect A. D. Gilchrist, extends to the rear of the sanctuary, with a long wing parallel to Black Street. The Saluda Street facade has steep gable roofs over the entrance doors. The sanctuary has had no major alterations except to the tower. In 1926, a tornado toppled the original tower. The current tower is somewhat shorter than the original. There are two small additions to the educational building. On the east end of the rear wing is a small addition housing a stairwell. On the west facade is a modern office addition.

☐ See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

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

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Religion

Architecture

Period of Significance

1894-1926

Significant Dates

1894

1922

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Charles Coker Wilson, Roanoke & Columbia

A. D. Gilchrist, Rock Hill

Watkins & Hardaway, Inc., Birmingham, AL

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The First Presbyterian Church of Rock Hill is significant in two areas: the importance of the congregation to the development of the religious and cultural life of Rock Hill and the quality of the architectural design by noted South Carolina architect Charles Coker Wilson.

First Presbyterian Church began as a mission of Ebenezer Presbyterian in 1855 and was originally known as Antioch Chapel.¹ Located on the Steele property south of the infant village of Rock Hill, it was created for the convenience of members of Ebenezer who lived in the vicinity. Among the early supporters of the church was Mrs. Ann Hutchison White and her family. It is thought that Rev. John G. Richards, pastor of Ebenezer, preached one of the first sermons in Rock Hill at Antioch Chapel in the spring of 1855.² As the village grew, it was decided that Antioch should be closer to the center of the population, and the present lot on Main Street was purchased from Alexander Templeton Black for \$79 in 1858.³ The chapel building was moved to the new lot. In 1859, Bethel Presbytery met at Antioch, the first church court to meet in Rock Hill.⁴ The group grew as the village expanded, and by 1869, fifty-two members of Ebenezer petitioned for the organization of a separate church at Rock Hill. The organization was accomplished on November 13, 1869, and the new group took the name First Presbyterian Church.⁵ The minister of Ebenezer continued to serve both groups. In 1873, plans were begun for the construction of a new brick church, and it was completed by 1875.⁶ The old chapel was sold to the city and moved to the southeast corner of Black and Saluda Streets where it was used as a school until 1888.⁷ The first full-time pastor, Rev. William Beatty Jennings, was called in 1883. Soon, First Church became active in the formation of daughter churches. A chapel in the Pineopolis area of the city was built in 1883-84 to serve workers at the new Rock Hill Cotton factory. This chapel, originally located in the mill village at the corner of Ebenezer Avenue and Wilson Street, was later moved to the Standard Mill Village and replaced with a larger chapel on Wilson Street.⁸ The church also became involved in the development of educational opportunities in Rock Hill. Rev. J. S. White, stated supply, was instrumental in leading the establishment of the first public graded school in Rock Hill in 1888.⁹

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See full list of bibliographical references in the Multiple Property submission, Historic Properties of Rock Hill. The following references pertain to this individual nomination:

"First Presbyterian Church, Centennial Sunday." Rock Hill, S. C.:
By the church, 1969.

"Profile of an Architect," SCAIA Review of Architecture, Vol. 3, 1963.
Sprunt, Rev. Alexander. A Brief History of the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church: From Its Founding as a Chapel to April 1895. Abbeville, S. C.: Hugh Wilson, Printer, 1895.

White, William Boyce, Jr. History of First Presbyterian Church of Rock Hill, South Carolina. Rock Hill, S. C.: By the church, 1969.

☐ See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

S. C. Department of Archives and
History, Columbia, S. C.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property ±1.75 acres

UTM References

A 1 7 4 9 7 7 0 0 3 8 6 4 3 7 0
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Parcel 627-18-06-001 as listed in the York County tax records, and is represented on the accompanying planimetric map #76 for Rock Hill, S. C., and drawn at a scale of 1" = 200'.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city lot which has historically associated with the property since 1858.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul M. Gettys

organization Paul M. Gettys Associates date 28 September 1990

street & number 4180 Cureton Ferry Road telephone (803) 329-3567

city or town Catawba state S. C. zip code 29704

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Along with Bethel Presbytery, the church built and sponsored Presbyterian High School in 1891.¹⁰ This building later became the first public high school and is now part of the Withers Building complex of Winthrop College.

As the congregation continued to grow, a new sanctuary became necessary. After interviews with several architectural firms, a committee selected Charles Coker Wilson. Construction of the present sanctuary began in 1894 and was completed in March 1895.¹¹ By 1907, the church had become an influential congregation, not only locally but on a statewide level as well. It was¹² the largest Presbyterian congregation in South Carolina at that time. Over the years, three current or former ministers have served as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S., the highest church office in the denomination.¹³ About this time, the first pipe organ in Rock Hill was installed by local builder Julian Starr in 1905.¹⁴ As the Oakland section of Rock Hill developed a larger population, a movement was undertaken to form a daughter church in that area. In 1913, Oakland Avenue Presbyterian Church was organized with 192 members from First Church.¹⁵ The church completed a new educational building in 1922, designed by Rock Hill architect A. D. Gilchrist.¹⁶ On November 26, 1926, a tornado struck Rock Hill and caused damage to several downtown buildings. The bell tower of the church was toppled. It was soon replaced with a shorter tower.¹⁷

First Presbyterian Church has achieved significance through its influence in the City of Rock Hill. The cultural, educational, and religious life of the city have been influenced by the church from the earliest years of the village. The congregation led in the creation of public primary education, and it formed the first secondary school. It has helped to shape a number of neighborhoods through the development of chapels and missions in the mill villages, and through the creation of a daughter church in the Oakland section. Its pastors and members have provided enlightened leadership in numerous civic, business, and cultural affairs of the city.

A second major area of significance is the architectural design and the importance of the architect of the sanctuary, Charles Coker Wilson. From plans submitted by a number of architects in early 1894, a church committee selected Wilson's concept.¹⁸ The building¹⁹ was constructed by Watkins and Hardaway, Inc. of Birmingham, Alabama. The design is a combination of a number of influences of the Late Victorian period, including elements of Romanesque Revival and Late Gothic Revival. The Octagonal central block with projecting gables, the rose windows, and the five-story bell tower provide strong statements of the ecclesiastical nature of the building. The level of architectural detailing and the impressive facade provide evidence of the wealth and

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influence of the congregation. The interior of the sanctuary utilizes the Akron plan, with pews angled in a circular alignment to provide excellent site lines to the pulpit.

The architect, Charles Coker Wilson (1864-1933), was one of the important and successful South Carolina architects of the period. Born at Harts-ville, he was educated at the University of South Carolina and later studied at l'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.²⁰ During his practice, he did extensive work in college architecture, including buildings at the University of South Carolina, Coker College, Presbyterian College, Wake Forest College, and entire campus designs at Meredith College in Raleigh and Chicora College in Columbia. Other projects included a number of high schools, hospitals, homes, textile mills, hotels, and office buildings. He served as Columbia's City Engineer and as Architect for the State House in Columbia for a number of years.²¹ He organized the South Carolina Association of Architects (now AIA) and served as its first president.²² Wilson had a major influence on architecture in South Carolina for a number of years.

First Presbyterian Church was designed during the early part of Wilson's career. He began his practice in Roanoke, Virginia in 1890.²³ The church was designed while he practiced there.²⁴ By 1895, he had moved to Columbia.²⁵ The project was undertaken prior to his study in Paris, which occurred between 1899 and 1900.²⁶ Many of his later buildings reflect the incorporation of Beaux Arts elements, while the church predates that influence and reflects an eclectic mixture of Late Victorian design elements. The quality of the design and the importance of Wilson to South Carolina architecture add to the significance of the church.

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FOOTNOTES

¹William Boyce White, Jr., History of First Presbyterian Church of Rock Hill, South Carolina. (Rock Hill: By the church, 1969), p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 4.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 5.

⁵Ibid., p. 6.

⁶Ibid., p. 9.

⁷Ibid., p. 9.

⁸Ibid., p. 11.

⁹Douglas Summers Brown, A City Without Cobwebs. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), p. 207.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 209.

¹¹Rev. Alexander Sprunt, D. D., A Brief History of the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church: From Its Founding as a Chapel to April 1895. (Abbeville, S. C.: Hugh Wilson, Printer, 1895), p. 18.

¹²White, p. 12.

¹³"First Presbyterian Church, Centennial Sunday," (Rock Hill, S.C.: By the church, November 16, 1969), p. 3.

¹⁴White, p. 13.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸Sprunt, p. 18.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 18.

²⁰"Profile of an Architect," SCAIA Review of Architecture, Vol 3, 1963, p. 25.

²¹Ibid., p. 27.

²²Ibid., p. 25.

²³Ibid., p. 25.

²⁴Sprunt, p. 18.

²⁵"Profile of an Architect," p. 25.

²⁶Ibid., p. 25.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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Name of Property:

First Presbyterian Church
Historic Properties of Rock Hill
multiple property submission

Location of Property:

York County, South Carolina

Photographer:

Paul M. Gettys

Location of negatives:

Paul M. Gettys Associates, 4180 Cureton
Ferry Road, Catawba, S.C. 29704

Date:

September, 1990

Photograph # 1: Facade (SW)

Photograph # 2: Facade (S)

Photograph # 3: Saluda Street Facade and Educational Building (NW)