

VLR-4/21/81 NRHP-9/9/82

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic First Baptist Church

and/or common n/a

2. Location

street & number 1100 Court Street (E corner Court and Eleventh streets) ^{n/a} not for publication

city, town Lynchburg ^{n/a} vicinity of congressional district Sixth (M. Caldwell Butler)

state Virginia cade 53 county (in city) code 680

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	n/a being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name First Baptist Church, c/o Pastor

street & number P. O. Box 1159

city, town Lynchburg ^{n/a} vicinity of state Virginia 24505

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clerk's Office, Lynchburg City Courthouse

street & number 900 Court Street

city, town Lynchburg state Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys (2) (~~\$10~~ Continuation Sheet

(1) Historic District Survey, Lynchburg,
title Virginia has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date May 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records City of Lynchburg, Division of Planning

city, town Lynchburg state Virginia

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Baptist Church is built of hard-pressed red brick on a rough granite foundation. At salient points, notably in the three gable walls of the church, stone and terra-cotta trim of a golden hue adds a decorative note of contrast. The major external features are the tower and spire which project from the southwest corner of the modified cruciform church. Measuring 180' to the iron finial, the spire gave the church the distinction of being the city's tallest building upon completion. The main entrance to the church is contained within the base of the tower and is recessed within an arch decorated with voussoirs of terra cotta. To the right of this entrance is a rounded appendage with a conical roof, containing the first runs of the stair leading to the spire. The shaft of the tower, which is relatively unadorned in its first stages, is supported on each face by steeply sloping angle buttresses. In silhouette, these buttresses give the shaft a slightly tapering appearance and visually prepare for the increased slope of the spire. Above the ridge of the church roofs, the tower has a double-arched window in each face. Directly above these windows, each face contains a row of smaller arched windows. A simple cornice terminates the brick tower and serves as a base for the broach spire. At the transitional stage between the broaches and the octagonal sectioned spire, each face has a lucarne, or dormer window, divided by mullions into a double-lancet form.

The main facade of the church, facing Eleventh Street, and the two sides are centered with large rose windows framed within Gothic arches covered with hood moldings. Wooden tracery defines the pattern of the rose windows within the arches. Below the rose windows, each wall contains a row of seven closely spaced lancet windows, also capped with hood moldings. Each gable is filled with decorative terra-cotta panels above a triple window of narrow rectangular sections. Gables are terminated with raking cornices which rest upon engaged columns set within the walls. Between the projecting front wall of the auditorium and the tower is a one-story vestibule, balanced on the opposite side by a secondary entrance.

Straddling the roof above the crossing is a fleche. Its eight louvred faces originally acted as ventilators for the gas chandelier suspended directly below. The louvred stage is capped with an octagonally sectioned spire whose form echoes on a greatly reduced scale the slope of the main spire.

To the rear, the exterior of the church displays a great variety of projecting and receding planes covered with an equal variety of gabled, hipped, and rounded roof sections. Contained within are the original Sunday School rooms, a pastor's study, and church parlor. To the rear of these wings, the building terminates in a large rounded "apse." Although this feature was original, in 1902 it was taken down and rebuilt further from the auditorium to provide additional classroom space. While the apse would seem to imply visually and liturgically that there is a deep chancel within, such is not the case.

When the church was dedicated in 1886, the local press carried an enthusiastic account of the interior:

Far above you, resting on slender columns and lofty arches, the ceiling artistically grained, lit up by a chandelier of cobweb workmanship and some twenty gas jets on the four walls; before you a vast amphitheatre sloping down towards the baptistry, encased in purest Vermont marble, draped with purple plush velvet and bearing the inscription, "Buried with Him in Baptism," and surrounded by a platform covered with a soft carpet of bright hue. Above the baptistry, clad in sombre walnut, is the great organ.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1884-86 **Builder/Architect** John R. Thomas (architect)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Baptist Church is a major architectural landmark for the city of Lynchburg and is a most accomplished example of High Victorian Gothic architecture. Construction was begun in 1884, and although several additions have since been made, the original portion stands essentially as it did when it was completed in September 1886. In addition to its architectural merit, the church houses an old and influential Baptist congregation and stands as evidence of a period of impressive growth and prosperity in Lynchburg.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the time of its dedication in 1886, the First Baptist Church was described in the Lynchburg News as being "in the Romanic (sic) style of architecture of the thirteenth century, and at a later period, when the rounded windows and dome-shaped roofs of the old Basilica made way for pointed arches (sic) and gables." It was a valiant, if garbled, attempt to describe a building the likes of which had not been seen in the city before. Designed by New York architect John Rochester Thomas, the church was and remains an impressive example of the High Victorian Gothic style. Seeds of this style had been sown as early as 1849 with the publication of John Ruskin's Seven Lamps of Architecture. In both this work and in his later Stones of Venice, Ruskin promulgated the beauty and truth of medieval architecture, not as found in his native England, but primarily in Italy. He was not, however, a copyist but hoped that the spirit which produced the best examples of past architecture could be revived to inspire the designers of his time to better works. Among the aspects of Italian architecture which he most admired were bold and contrasting uses of color and material, differences in scale and texture, and a restrained use of ornament.

Lynchburg's First Baptist Church manifests all these "Ruskinian" characteristics to a marked degree. The dark red brick walls contrast with the yellow stone and terra-cotta trim, and although the trim is decorative, it demonstrates a degree of structural integrity. Gable ends display prominent horizontal bands of stone exactly at the point where, inside, the ceiling of the sanctuary terminates. Dominating the entire composition is the massive tower and steeple, whose outline is mimicked by the delicate fleche over the crossing of the main roofs. Projecting and receding planes play a prominent role in the design and provide yet another theme of contrasts.

True also to Ruskinian principles, the church owes no allegiance to a specific structure of the past. Actually, it is as much indebted to German Gothic as Italian, but in all aspects it combines elements of the Gothic vocabulary in a manner expressive of its own time.

In addition to its intrinsic architectural merit, the church stands as an impressive monument to an expansive period in the history of Lynchburg and central Virginia. During the 1880s, Lynchburg had pretensions of becoming "the Pittsburgh of Virginia, and perhaps of the South." Even Harper's Weekly, in its issue of December 4, 1886, suggested that "if one wants to see what the new south is," one should come to Lynchburg. The First Baptist

9. Major Bibliographical References

Loth, Calder, and Sadler, Julius Trousdale. The Only Proper Style. Boston, 1975.
Moss, J. Calvin. The First Baptist Church, Fiftieth Anniversary. Lynchburg, 1936.
White, Blanch. The First Baptist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia. Lynchburg, 1965.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Lynchburg, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification Occupying city lot at E corner of Court and 11th Sts., measuring 152' X 165', the 165' fronting on Court St. JUSTIFICATION: The bounds have been drawn to coincide with those of the lot of which the church and the churchyard are situated.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title S. Allen Chambers for Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date April 1981

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

H. Bryan Mitchell

H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date

MAY 10 1982

For HCERS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
date
Keeper of the National Register
Attest
date
Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

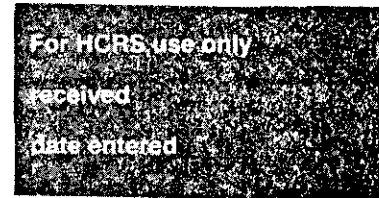
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

First Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 6,7

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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1969, 1971 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

7. DESCRIPTION

In more mundane terms, the sanctuary was a typical auditorium church, where the comfortably seated congregation had unobstructed views of the pulpit, choir loft above, and gilded organ pipes behind. Pews were curved and radiated from the focal point of the pulpit. The two main aisles lead diagonally from the two corner entrances down to the pulpit. A narrow central aisle extends only as far toward the pulpit as is necessary before the narrowing ranks of pews can be entered as easily from the side aisles. The slender columns noted in the dedicatory account are of clustered Gothic design, and although grained to appear as wood, they are actually of iron. The seating area of the sanctuary, which remains largely as it was originally is essentially a rectangular space measuring 85' x 75'. The arrangement of the columns and the pattern of the stained pine ceiling, however, create at least a suggestion of a cruciform space. Among the most impressive features of the interior are the rose and lancet windows in the rear and side walls. These are all filled with the original stained glass, which was manufactured in Lynchburg by William A. Hefferman. The glass is colored in bright primary colors and arranged in abstract geometrical patterns.

By the 1920s, the enrollment of the Sunday School had increased to the point that a new Sunday School annex had to be built. Designed by Lynchburg architect Stanhope Johnson, the new addition faces Eleventh Street to the left of the church. Completed in 1928, it harmonizes well with the older building in scale, material, and design. In 1941, the interior of the sanctuary was modified with the creation of a divided chancel. Space for the chancel was taken from the old Sunday School, and the old organ and raised choir were removed. Architect for this renovation was again Stanhope Johnson. Woodwork in the new chancel, including a high wainscot, choir pews, pulpit, and communion table, is decorated with Gothic molding. The focal point of the new chancel is a stained-glass window, also of Gothic design, containing in its central panel a rendition of Holman Hunt's well-known painting, "Christ, the Light of the World." This window and four smaller memorial windows installed at the same time were made by the Payne Studios of Patterson, New Jersey. Below, Gothic paneling, which disguises the baptistry when not in use, acts as a reredos. At the same time the chancel was created, the old chandelier and wall lights of the sanctuary were replaced with wrought-iron chandeliers.

The steeply sloping lot on which the church stands maintains much of its original aspect. Massive granite retaining walls capped with the original iron fence separate both the Court and Eleventh Street yards from the sidewalks below. On Court Street, an opening is cut into the retaining wall to provide an entrance to the basement. The entrance to the churchyard, which is at the intersection of the two streets, is emphasized by two iron posts with globe lights. Within the churchyard, walks are of flagstone, and ornamental planting has been kept to a minimum.

**United States Department of the Interior
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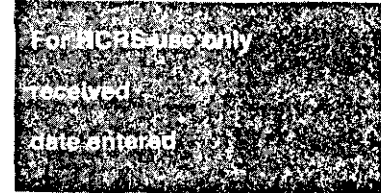
**National Register of Historic Places
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First Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 8

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

Church, which had been dedicated only three months earlier, was then the largest church edifice in the city and much larger than its congregation warranted. It was a time of enthusiasm and expectation, however, and nothing but the biggest and best would do.

The church, which is the fourth building in which the congregation has worshiped, houses the city's oldest Baptist congregation. Dating its establishment from a meeting held in July 1815, the church has subsequently been responsible for the organization of nine other Baptist churches in and around Lynchburg. First Baptist Church has also played a significant role in the history of its denomination in the state. In 1893 the Baptist Young People's Union of Virginia was organized in response to letters sent to other churches by the already-existing Baptist Young People's Union of the Lynchburg church. In 1919 it was instrumental in securing for Lynchburg the Virginia Baptist Hospital. During the 1930s, the church contributed more to the state denominational organization than any other congregation. In the 1950s, the church played a decisive role in the purchase and development of Eagle Eyrie, an estate ten miles west of the city, to serve as the Virginia Baptist Assembly Ground and summer camp.

During this same period, the members of the church struggled with the question of whether to remain at the downtown location or to move to a suburban site, which would have been more convenient to many of its members. The decision was reached to remain. Now, as the church building approaches its centennial year, it becomes ever more appreciated as one of Lynchburg's architectural and historical landmarks.

SAC

USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24,000)
Lynchburg, Va. 1963(PR1978)

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1100 Court St.,
Lynchburg, Va.

UTM References:

17/664380/4141980

