

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

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

For NPS use only

received **SEP 12 1986**  
date entered **OCT 9 1986**

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

**1. Name**

historic First United Methodist Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 723 Center Street not for publication

city, town Little Rock N/A vicinity of

state Arkansas code county Pulaski County code 119

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name First United Methodist Church

street & number 723 Center Street

city, town Little Rock N/A vicinity of state Arkansas 72201

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pulaski County Courthouse, Records Office

street & number Markham Street & Broadway

city, town Little Rock state Arkansas

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### SUMMARY

Little Rock's First United Methodist Church is one of Arkansas' best examples of Romanesque Revival architecture. Located on a downtown corner, this building features two street facades rich in finely executed brick details. The juxtaposition of red pressed brick and rusticated granite provides an interestingly textured backdrop for the abundance of stained glass windows.

### ELABORATION

In plan, First United Methodist Church features a large gabled nave with central transept. This arrangement results in an auditorium-like interior which, with U-shaped balcony, seats over 900 people. Three of the four corners of this building are marked by square towers of varying heights. Pyramid roofs, gabled parapets and pairs of tall, narrow stained glass windows lend a sense of verticality to the towers that this massive Romanesque Revival structure otherwise lacks. Smooth pressed brick is highlighted by the rusticated granite foundation and details, especially along the parapet and at window and door openings. Two-story window panels are found in groups of twos and threes throughout the church building and these are further accented by beautifully crafted ribbed brick arches. This series of arches is repeated on the west, or principal, elevation as a part of the entrance treatment. Rusticated granite arches and stone columns encase the three pairs of entrance doors which each feature a stained glass fanlight. A band of terra cotta arches above these doors defines the interior floor levels and serves as a base for the west rose window. Magnificent rose windows are also located on the north and south facades.

The interior of the First United Methodist Church remains much as it was on the day of its dedication in 1900. Two-story columns, an arched ceiling (60 feet high), and the wrap-around balcony or gallery, provide the type of lofty interior space appropriate for worship. Although the interior was redecorated in 1931 as a part of the First Church's Centennial celebration, the original pews, pulpit furniture, and stained glass windows remain in place. A focal point of the sanctuary is John Parks Almand's organ grill, located behind the pulpit and choir loft. The design, executed in plaster and wire mesh, is a modification of a window in the Municipal Palace of Piacenza, Italy, one of the world's most famous examples of Romanesque architecture.

First United Methodist Church now extends along the entire block of Center Street on the east side between 7th and 8th Streets. In addition to the original building located on the southern part of this half block, the church has expanded north to include first an Education Building (1951) and later an Activities Building (1971). Both of these additions have been handled sympathetically in terms of materials and stylistic details.

## 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** 1899–1900 **Builder/Architect** Frank B. Gibb, Little Rock, Arkansas

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SUMMARY

The First United Methodist Church is an important element of the architectural and religious heritage of Little Rock. This handsome brick and granite structure was one of a very few examples of the Romanesque Revival style in Arkansas, and as such is an important component of the surviving historic resources in Little Rock as well as the entire state. Completed in 1900, this building is home to the oldest Methodist congregation in the city and has served as the "Mother Church" for the organization of many other Methodist congregations. The term "Cathedral of Methodism" was used frequently during the 1920's when referring to Little Rock's First Methodist Church. This appellation was a reflection of its large membership, which ranked it not only first in Arkansas Methodism but also as one of the nine largest churches in Southern Methodism.

#### ELABORATION

Designed by well-known Little Rock architect Frank Gibb in 1896, the First United Methodist Church is his only identified commission in the Romanesque Revival style. Gibb was better known for his Classical Revival work (Ada Thompson Memorial Home, Little Rock, National Register listed 8/05/75). Typical of Romanesque Revival structures are the square towers with pyramidal roofs that flank the primary faces, and the repetitious use of semi-circular Roman arches both to define window and door openings and for decorative detailing. These Romanesque details and the outstanding brick craftsmanship displayed in the First United Methodist Church combine to result in "one of the handsomest churches in the entire southwest" according to an Arkansas Gazette article printed the day of the building's dedication.

The original church building remains relatively unchanged from its 1900 appearance. The only exterior alteration has been a realignment of the Center Street entrance stairs. A product of the 1931 Centennial celebration was a redecorating of the sanctuary, which resulted in a new lighting system, a new organ, and a new decorative organ grill designed by Little Rock architect John Parks Almand (Little Rock Central High School, National Register listed 8/19/77; Medical Arts Building, Hot Springs, National Register listed 12/01/78). Additions to the church facility have been handled sensitively, utilizing the same color brick and employing similar yet constrained design details. The 1951 Chapel and Education Building is connected to the original building by a breezeway that features three granite arches. An Activities Building was completed in 1971 and houses statewide Methodist Headquarters offices.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Minutes, Board of Trustees, First United Methodist Church, Little Rock, AR  
Minutes, Board of Stewards, First United Methodist Church, Little Rock, AR  
Deed Book 1, pg. 597; Deed Book 156, pag. 506; Deed Book 661, pg. 377. All  
Deed Books are in Records Office, Pulaski County Courthouse, Little Rock, AR

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Little Rock, AR

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	5	5	6	6	5	0	0	3	8	4	4	4	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 5 and 6, Block 87, original town.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. James H. Rice, Jr., Chairman, History Committee, Colonel A. J. Almand, Trustee  
and member of History Committee, edited by AHPP staff.

organization First United Methodist Church date 10/15/85

street & number 723 Center Street telephone (501) 372-2256

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas

## 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Wilson S. Rice*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

9-8-86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date

10-9-86

*for Almond, Ryan*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

The congregation of the First United Methodist Church was organized in 1831, making it the oldest Methodist Church in the city of Little Rock. From 1868 to 1914 at least five other Methodist churches were established as "missions" of First Methodist, earning this church the title of "Mother Church." One of these offspring congregations is Winfield Methodist Church (National Register listed 12/22/82). The general growth of Protestantism in America in the early twentieth century was paralleled by the progress and growth which, by the 1920's, brought First Methodist Church into a position of prominence. According to the Christian Advocate published in Nashville, Tennessee, of 17,504 churches in Southern Methodism, First Methodist of Little Rock was one of the nine largest. Other churches on this elite list were located in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Memphis, Birmingham, St. Louis, Washington D.C., and Oklahoma City.

Many of Little Rock's most prominent citizens have been, and continue to be, active members of the First Methodist Church. Perhaps the most distinguished member was Governor George Donaghey who served for over a decade as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. His expertise in the building industry (He was responsible for the construction of three downtown office buildings and as Governor oversaw completion of the Arkansas State Capital) was undoubtedly an asset in guiding the maintenance and improvement of the First United Methodist Church's physical plant.

86002845

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

First United Methodist Church  
Pulaski County  
ARKANSAS

SEP 12 1986

Working No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/2/88  
Date Due: 10/9/86 - 10/27/86  
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 10-9-86  
☐ RETURN  
☐ REJECT  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the  
National Register

- ☐ resubmission  
☐ nomination by person or local government  
☐ owner objection  
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity  
☐ dates  
☐ boundary selection

## 8. Significance

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Form Prepared By

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

## 13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_







FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

Little Rock, Pulaski Co.

Front elevation

Photographed by Beth Henderson, April 1986

Negatives on file at AHPP





First Methodist Church

Little Rock, Pulaski Co.

Photographed by Beth Henderson, April 1986

Negatives on file at AHPP





First United Methodist Church

Little Rock, Pulaski Co., Arkansas

Photographed by Don Brown, 1985

Negatives on file at AHPP



First United Methodist Church

Little Rock, Pulaski Co., Arkansas

Photographed by Don Brown, 1986

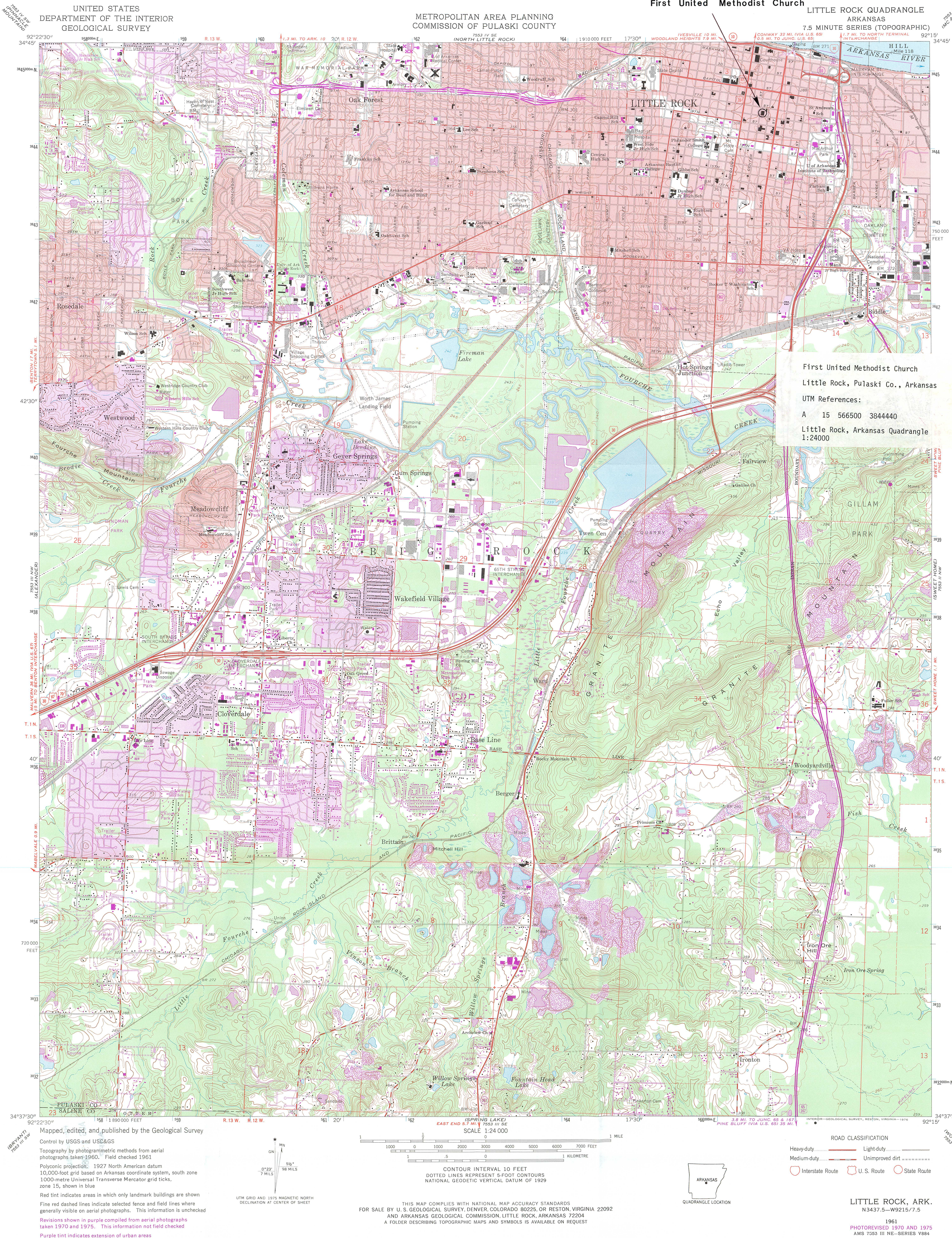
Negatives on file at AHPP

**RECEIVED**

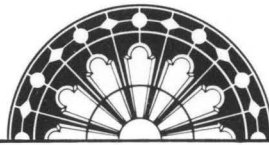
**AUG 25 1986**

**AHPP**









ARKANSAS  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
PROGRAM

September 8, 1986

Carol D. Shull  
Chief of Registration  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1100 "L" Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20240

Re: First United Methodist Church  
Little Rock, Pulaski County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination for the First United Methodist Church. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Wilson Stiles  
State Historic Preservation Officer

WS/TJ/do

Enclosure/s



SEP 12 1986