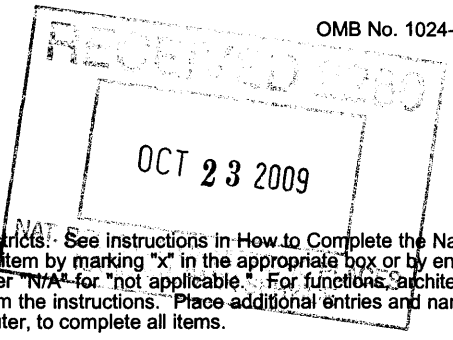


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

962



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Baptist Church of Boca Grande

other names/site number FMSF #LL947

2. Location

street & number 421 4th Street West N/A  not for publication

city or town Boca Grande N/A  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Lee code 071 zip code 33921

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara C. Mattick / Interim SHPO 10/21/2009  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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  See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson V. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

12-2-09  
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	2	buildings
0	1	sites
0	0	structures
0	1	objects
1	4	total

Name of related multiple property listings

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Church

RELIGION/Fellowship Hall

LANDSCAPE/Garden

ART/Statuary

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Church

RELIGION/Fellowship Hall

LANDSCAPE/Garden

ART/Statuary

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:

Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1915-c.1928

Significant Dates

1915

c.1928

Significant Person

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Arch: Unknown

Blder: Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State Agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of Repository

#

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BOCA GRANDE  
Name of Property

Lee Co., FL  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	3	7	4	3	9	0	2	9	5	9	0	8	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mikki Hartig, Carl Shiver, Historic Preservationist; Andrew Waber, Historic Sites Specialist; Barbara Mattick, SHPO

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date October 2009

street & number 500 South Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name First Baptist Church of Boca Grande c/o Pastor Gary Beatty

street & number 421 4th Street W. MAIL: P.O. Box 337. telephone (941) 964-2386

city or town Boca Grande state FL zip code 33921

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BOCA GRANDE  
BOCA GRANDE, LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
SIGNIFICANCE

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**SUMMARY**

The First Baptist Church of Boca Grande, located at 421 4th Street West, Boca Grande, Florida, is an excellent example of an early 20th Century Carpenter Gothic Revival church with a Combination Plan interior. Completed in 1915, the church is well preserved and minimally altered. The church is of balloon frame construction with original beveled wood siding on the exterior and is covered by an intersecting gable roof dominated by a wood frame bell tower containing the original church bell. Original lancet windows pierce each elevation. Two other buildings are on the site. A one-story Frame Vernacular church parsonage, completed in 1934, is east of the church building and is a noncontributing building due to the alterations to the facade and its interior. The D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall, immediately north of the church building, was completed in 1962 and is a noncontributing building due to being less than 50 years old. A non-historic fenced memorial garden and non-historic masonry statue are also on the site and a non-historic metal storage shed is located adjacent to the fellowship hall and the parsonage.

**SETTING**

The Town of Boca Grande is located in the Lee County portion of Gasparilla Island on the west coast of Florida. Gasparilla Island is a seven-mile long island bordered by the Gulf of Mexico on the west and Charlotte Harbor on the east. Two-thirds of the island is located in Lee County and one-third is located in Charlotte County. The island is one of a chain of islands that separates the gulf from the harbor. The closest major cities are Ft. Myers to the south and Sarasota to the north. Boca Grande has often been referred to as the tarpon fishing capital of the world. The population of the island swells from 600 to over 3,000 during the winter tourist season.

The church occupies a corner site adjacent to the commercial center of the island near the Gulf of Mexico. Situated on the northeast corner of 4th Street West, and Gilchrist Avenue, the church is one block west of Park Avenue, which is the main thoroughfare on the island. The primary facade is oriented facing 4th Street West. A pedestrian sidewalk extends along the frontage of the property facing 4th Street West as well as along the west elevation facing Gilchrist Avenue. Front yard setbacks along those streets, as well as the side yard setbacks of adjoining properties on the north and east, are minimal. The church parsonage also faces 4th Street West. The church fellowship hall is found at the rear of the church on the north. It has one exterior wall facing Gilchrist Avenue but it is oriented towards 4th Street West with its primary entrance facing the south and the rear wall of the church building. Mature royal palm trees, bushes, shrubbery and a variety of flowering plants are on the site.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BOCA GRANDE  
BOCA GRANDE, LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
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**DESCRIPTION**

**Church Building**

Exterior

The First Baptist Church of Boca Grande is a Carpenter Gothic Revival church building completed in 1915. The structure has an irregular ground plan. The exterior walls are original beveled wood siding over a balloon wood frame. Steep intersecting gable roofs, with wide projecting open eaves, cover the structure. Each roof plane is surfaced in composition shake shingle. Concrete block piers provide the foundation system. A wooden bell tower rises above the roofline at the juncture of the intersecting roof planes on the north. The base of the bell tower is square but tapers to the open belfry where the church bell hangs. The upper section of the bell tower is surfaced in shiplap siding, differentiated from the beveled wood siding that is used on the exterior of the remainder of the building. Corner wood posts, with wood knee braces, support the octagonal spire above the bell tower opening, which is bordered by a wooden balustrade on its four sides. The bell hangs within the open space beneath the spire. White asphalt shingles cover the sides of the spire, which is topped by a lightning rod. (Photos 1-4)

The primary (north) elevation, facing 4th Street West, is asymmetrical. Concrete steps flanked by stepped masonry side walls provide access from the sidewalk to the main entrance. A simple metal handrail is attached to each side wall (Photo 2).

The main entrance to the church is offset to the west. Paired paneled wood doors, each with a single fixed light, provide access to the interior of the building. East of the entrance are two evenly and independently placed 4/4-light double-hung sash lancet windows. Non-historic multi-colored window film has been applied to the interior of the windows. Centered above the two windows is a fixed two-light lancet window (Photo 2).

The west elevation of the main block of the church is symmetrical. Fenestration on this side of the church includes two 4/4-light independently placed wood double-hung sash lancet windows with non-historic multi-color window film applied to the interior of the glass. Centered above the two windows is a small two-light fixed wood lancet window void of window film. A square wood louvered attic vent is set within the wall near the roof peak. A contemporary concrete handicap ramp with a simple vinyl-clad handrail is also located on this elevation (Photos 3-7).

North of the projecting east elevation is a one-story c.1928 frame addition. The addition has beveled wood siding on the exterior and is covered by a hip roof tied into the west slope of the roof on the main block. The hip roof is surfaced in asphalt shingles matching that on the primary roof planes. A single 4/4-light wood lancet window is the only fenestration that pierces the west wall of the addition. The north elevation of the addition

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BOCA GRANDE, LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA  
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faces a covered breezeway attached to the adjacent fellowship hall. This elevation has a single entrance door and a small fixed single light fixed window. The west elevation of the addition has a single 4/4 wood lancet window (Photos 3-7).

On the east side of the church is a wall projection covered by a hip roof. Two narrow matching 1/1 lancet windows pierce the east wall of the projection. The stained glass in the windows is not original but was installed in 2007. The flat wall planes at either side of the projection each feature a 4/4 wood lancet window with applied colored window film. (Photo 8)

Interior

A small entrance vestibule is accessed through the main entrance to the church. Decorative milled wood brackets adorn the corners of the opening to the main sanctuary from the vestibule (Photos 9-10). The primary space of the church has an open irregularly shaped plan. The central part of the sanctuary is open, with three sections of seating (Photos 10-12). Another section of seating with church pews is found west of the main sanctuary and seating area. This area was originally separated from the main sanctuary and contained Sunday school rooms, in keeping with the Combination Plan. This plan advocated efficiency through the placement of Sunday school rooms adjoining the main worship area. When the addition on the north was constructed in c.1928, the former classroom space was opened up to the sanctuary permanently to provide for additional seating in the church. A partial wall, surfaced in wood and supported by wood posts with decorative brackets, now separates the two seating areas. The church piano is in front of the main seating area on the south and a small choir loft is beyond the piano. The original church pulpit is centered in front of the seating. Beyond the pulpit is an alcove. The church organ is located against the east wall of the main block south of the alcove (Photo 13). Pine wainscoting aligns all interior walls of the sanctuary except in the alcove behind the pulpit. The original schoolhouse globe ceiling light fixtures remain in the sanctuary.

The original sanctuary remains virtually unaltered since construction and the seating area, created from former Sunday school classrooms in c.1928, also remains virtually unaltered since that time. There is seating for 126 worshipers in the church, which retains its original upholstered oak seats and pulpit. In 2003, the original church seats were sent to Michigan to be restored and widened. It was discovered that the company performing the work was the same company that made the seats in 1915. The oak pews in the area of the sanctuary expanded in c.1928 are also original. The flooring of the sanctuary is original pine, covered in carpet in some areas.

A door on the north side of the sanctuary accesses the c.1928 Sunday school classroom and bathroom addition (Photo 14). The original north wall of the church was retained when the addition was built, including the two original wood lancet windows in the wall. A hallway in the addition, running west to east, accesses two rooms

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and two restrooms (Photo 15-16). A small room for sound equipment is at the north end of the hall. Pine bead board wainscoting extends along the walls of the hallway (Photos 14-16). Carpet covers the original pine flooring in the hall and the two former Sunday school classrooms, one of which is presently used as a choir room and the other as a nursery (Photo 17). The bathroom flooring is non-historic ceramic tile.

Alterations

In 2003, a complete renovation of the church was undertaken with the specific intent of maintaining its historic interior. A new roof was installed and the original pine floors were refinished. During the time the work was being done on the church, the church held services in the fellowship hall. Just one Sunday prior to moving service back into the church, a fire gutted the fellowship hall. The fellowship hall was rebuilt and, at the recommendation of the pastor, the hall was renamed the D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall.

In 2003, an Indiana couple donated a church carillon. In 2004, a professional sound system was added to the sanctuary and the parsonage was remodeled and refurnished. In 2006, Plexiglas was installed to protect the church's original windows. A baptistery was added in 2005, the same year the garden was formally named the Robert & Betty Lindner Victory Garden.

Parsonage (non-contributing)

Exterior

Located northeast of the church is the church's parsonage, which was completed in 1934. Due to the alterations made to the facade, with the enclosure of the front porch, and alterations to its interior, it is considered a noncontributing building. This residential structure is oriented facing south and is one-story in height. It has a rectangular plan with a front-facing gable roof with wood knee braces supporting the projecting eaves. Exterior walls are covered with drop wood siding. The structure rests on wood piers (Photo 18).

The primary elevation is symmetrical and features a full-width enclosed entrance porch on the west. The main entrance to the house is at center. On the south, three vinyl-clad 1/1 single hung sash windows fill the original screened porch openings above original wood knee walls. A single matching window is on the south wall on the east side of the porch. A louvered wood attic vent is at the top of the front gable wall (Photo 18). There is no fenestration on the west wall of the enclosed porch

Two original 1/1 wood double hung sash windows pierce the east elevation of the house. A brick chimney is near the center of the same wall. All of the remaining windows are original 1/1 wood double hung sash windows and all of the windows, with the exception of one small window on the north (rear) of the main block, are obscured by metal Bahamas shutters that were installed in 2003 (Photos 18-19).



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On the north side of the structure is a secondary entrance and small open entrance porch. Wood steps access this entrance (Photo 19).

Interior

The Parsonage floor plan includes a living room/dining room space, two bedrooms, kitchen, a single bath and the enclosed front entrance porch, a portion of which has been combined with the south bedroom. The other section of the enclosed porch is presently in use as a home office. It appears that an original interior wall between the kitchen and dining areas has been removed. The kitchen was last updated in 2003 and the single bathroom was also updated at that time (Photos 20-21).<sup>1</sup> Interior walls are presently surfaced in drywall. Flooring is original heart pine except in the kitchen where ceramic tile was installed over the wood floors in 2003. Interior wood doors, trim and baseboards are original.

Alterations

The front porch of the parsonage was enclosed in the 1980s. The enclosure originally featured aluminum awning windows. The existing 1/1 vinyl-clad windows and vinyl Bahamas shutters on the enclosed porch were installed in 2007.

**D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall (non-contributing)**

The D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall is located immediately north of the main church building. It is a non-contributing building to the site. The one-story building has a simple rectangular plan. An open covered breezeway runs between a portion of the hall and the church. (Photos 22-23) Construction is of stucco over concrete block resting on a poured concrete slab foundation. A low-pitched gable roof, surfaced in asphalt shingles, covers the structure (Photo 24).

There are three entrances to the fellowship hall. One, with paired vinyl clad paneled single-light entrance doors, is near center on the south side of the building under the breezeway connecting the building to the church. Another entrance is also on the south but is located east of the breezeway (Photo 23). The third entrance, with a single entrance door, is on the east end wall (Photo 24). Windows are aluminum 1/1 single-hung sash units and three part aluminum single-light casement units with fixed single lights flanked by single lights at either side.

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<sup>1</sup> Beatty, Pastor Gary, present pastor and pastor at that time in a telephone interview with Mikki Hartig, Historical & Architectural Research Services, on February 12, 2009.

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Contemporary Bahamas style shutters obscure the two windows on the west end wall.

The interior of the fellowship hall is divided into four parts that include a large open space, the pastor's office, a library, and an office for clerical support. Interior walls are drywall and carpet covers the concrete floor (Photos 25-26).

**Robert and Betty Lindner Victory Garden (non-contributing)**

The church has maintained a reflective garden on the property located east of the church for many years. The garden was restored and improved with new statuary and fencing in 2001. A three-foot high vinyl clad picket fence presently encloses the space and benches provide for reflective seating. A contemporary masonry statue of Rebecca at the Well overlooks the garden from the northern edge of the garden (Photos 27-28).

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**SUMMARY**

The First Baptist Church, completed in 1915, is significant at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of a Carpenter Gothic Revival church built during the early part of the 20th Century. The church exhibits characteristics of the style with its balloon frame construction, vertical emphasis, lancet windows, arched window openings, and bell tower. The original sections of the interior of the church remain virtually unaltered as well as the interior space that was converted from former Sunday school rooms in c.1928.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The earliest settlers of Gasparilla Island came to the island during the later 1800s. They were fishermen and their families who migrated to the area for the seafood bounty of Charlotte Harbor. By 1879, a successful fish ranch with permanent structures and 30 employees was in operation on the island. With no means of preserving their catch for shipping, fish were salted. In the later part of the century, an ice factory in Punta Gorda and ice station houses built along Charlotte Harbor greatly improved the ability to send fish to northeastern markets.<sup>2</sup>

The island played a significant role in the development of southwest Florida's economy. The United States government reserved the two miles of northern Cayo Costa, a nearby island, and two miles of southern Gasparilla Island from general land sales on November 17, 1882. In 1890, the federal government constructed a lighthouse at the southern tip of Gasparilla Island to serve as a military installation and to help guide schooners, fishing boats, and freighters in transport. Eventually, quarantine docks and a customs office were also built on the island to inspect the boats.

The history of Gasparilla Island and Boca Grande is strongly linked to the phosphate industry. In the 1880s, phosphate was discovered on the banks of the Peace River, north of Arcadia, Florida. Phosphate mined from the area was barged down the Peace River to Port Boca Grande and loaded onto schooners. For over fifty years, Boca Grande, which has one of the deepest natural ports on the coast of Florida, played a major role in the shipping of phosphate.<sup>3</sup>

The central section of Gasparilla Island was eventually available for homesteading. Eventually, these lands, conveyed from the federal government to various individuals, were all acquired by either John Wall, a Tampa

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<sup>2</sup> Hoeckel, Marilyn, and VanItallie, Theodore. Boca Grande, Images of America. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, Boca Grande Historical Society and Barrier Island Parks Society, Arcadia Publishing, 2000, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 139, excerpted from an undated and unpublished history entitled "Peace River Valley, The Puritan's Utopia".

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attorney, or by Albert Gilchrist, a Punta Gorda politician who became governor of Florida in 1909.<sup>4</sup> Gilchrist served as a United States deputy surveyor, beginning in 1897. He worked hard as early as 1888 lobbying the state government to survey the islands around Charlotte Harbor, including Boca Grande. There were settlers on several south Florida coastal islands who desired to purchase their homesteads. Once the land became available for homesteaders, he acquired the claims of several homesteaders who did not receive patents from the United States government. He purchased 818 acres on Gasparilla Island at a cost of \$8,500.

On January 29, 1897, Gilchrist was able to plat the land he acquired on Gasparilla Island. Boca Grande was laid out on the widest part of the island. It featured six blocks along the Gulf front in the south central portion of Gasparilla Island, which was where Gilchrist envisioned as the most suitable part for residential development.<sup>5</sup> Although the plat was filed, Boca Grande still consisted of only the lighthouse and a "cluster of camps and a few rickety dwellings for fisher folk."<sup>6</sup> For nearly a decade, the streets were not laid out and no lots were sold.

The American Agricultural Chemical Company (AAC), owned by Peter Bradley, played a pivotal role in the development of Boca Grande. By 1900, the AAC dominated the phosphate industry of Central Florida. Known as the founding father of Boca Grande, Bradley maintained his office in Boston but preferred to be personally involved in certain business details and took an active role in the construction and expansion of the town and the Gasparilla Inn in its first years.<sup>7</sup>

The AAC determined that a railroad would be more efficient in transporting phosphate to the port rather than barges. Rail transportation also provided local fishermen with an efficient means of transporting their catch from Gasparilla Island and other nearby ports. Bradley and AAC executives decided to form a railroad company, the Alafia, Manatee and Gulf Coast Railway. They extended the 6-mile Hull-Liverpool railroad 40 miles south to Boca Grande Pass and connected it with Arcadia, Florida. The AAC determined that the proposed terminus of the railroad should be located about a quarter mile north of the lighthouse on the harbor side of Gasparilla Island. Construction of the railroad began in 1905 and was completed in 1907. The railroad company underwent a name change in July 1907, becoming The Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railroad (CH&N).<sup>8</sup> Trains began to arrive in early 1908.<sup>9</sup> Boca Grande soon acquired a growing market for goods

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<sup>4</sup> "History of Boca Grande", Breeze Newspapers, 2006, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Plat Book 1, Page 7, Hoeckel and VanItallie Public Records of Lee County, Florida.

<sup>6</sup> Boca Grande, Images of America, p.8 and "excerpted from *Peace River Valley, The Puritan's Utopia*: an undated and unpublished history, by Robert Lee Thompson, pg. 41.

<sup>7</sup> VanItallie, Theodore, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> VanItallie, Theodore, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 7, and Arnold, Anthony unpublished history of American Agricultural Company history, undated, p. 121, copy on file at Gasparilla Inn and with Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, Florida.

<sup>9</sup> Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 58, excerpted from an undated and unpublished history entitled "Peace River Valley, The Puritan's

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF BOCA GRANDE  
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transported by train. At first, a small wood frame depot was built on the corner of Park and Fourth Street. In 1910, a much larger brick Mediterranean Revival building was completed that replaced the older building.<sup>10</sup>

Just prior to the arrival of the railroad, Bradley and his senior associate, James Gifford, of AAC's law firm, reviewed the 1897 plat of Boca Grande filed by Albert Gilchrist. Inspired by other railroad owners who developed resorts in Florida such as Henry Flagler on the east coast and Henry Plant on the west coast, Bradley decided to develop the island as a "high class" winter resort.<sup>11</sup> Gifford formed the Boca Grande Land Company as an entity of the AAC.<sup>12</sup> The State of Florida chartered the company on April 29, 1907, to buy, sell, and develop real estate.<sup>13</sup> Gilchrist and John Wall of Tampa became partners in the company and held their first meeting in John Wall's Tampa office. Wall was elected Secretary and Treasurer. Gilchrist was elected President. In exchange for building the railroad, the AAC was given a land grant of property on Boca Grande. Bradley purchased Gilchrist's and his partner John Wall's local land holdings for \$100,000, and the officers of the Boca Grande Land Company filed a new plat on January 9, 1908.<sup>14</sup> Gilchrist and Wall apparently maintained some continued financial interest in the endeavor, as they remained officers of the corporation. The AAC financed the real estate venture with funding furnished through the Peace River Phosphate Mining Company. Employees of the CH & N. Railroad operated the real estate company. The Boca Grande Land Company promoted the development of the island. To assure that the island would be upscale, the lots on Gulf Boulevard and Gilchrist Avenue were restricted to the building of residences only at a minimum cost of \$4,000 and \$3,500, respectively.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Charlotte Harbor had become widely known for its excellent tarpon fishing. In 1909, the officers of the Boca Grande Land Company decided to build the Hotel Boca Grande on the island, which was later renamed the Gasparilla Inn. At first, the hotel was small and intended only for the use of visiting directors and officers. In 1912, the railroad company built half a dozen homes on Second Street after enlarging the hotel. Railroad employees built one or two homes, one of which was built by L.M. Fouts, the manager of the railroad. Within a few years, wealthy buyers purchased some land on the island for the construction of new homes.<sup>15</sup> Hoping to take advantage of the influx of people drawn to Boca Grande by the railroad and hotel, some earlier settlers and individuals constructed commercial buildings in the center of the town to service them.

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Utopia."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pgs 7-8

<sup>11</sup> VanItallie, Theodore, Peter Butler Bradley, Part I-Founding Father of Boca Grande, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/HistoricPreservation/HistoricDistricts/BocaGrande.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Plat Book 1, Page 37, Public Records of Lee County, Florida.

<sup>15</sup> Boca Grande, Lives of an Island, The Boca Grande Historical Society, Edited by Charles Blanchard, published by the Boca Grande Historical Society, 2006, pg. 12.

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In 1915, the Gasparilla Inn was almost doubled in size, drawing more visitors and spurring the further development of the commercial center of Boca Grande. The Boca Grande Land Company hired Carl Rust, of the renowned Olmsted Brothers firm of Boston, to landscape the Inn and the central section of the island, which was the commercial center. Subsequently, a variety of new residents came to the island to make it their home and some to start new businesses.<sup>16</sup>

During this time, the Pilot Association was established to assist any ship coming into port whose master was not acquainted with the channels and required a competent local captain. The Johnson family originally made up this association. It still exists today and several members of the church are members of the Pilot Association.

First Baptist Church

The First Baptist Church of Boca Grande is the oldest congregation in Boca Grande. After the establishment of the phosphate business and the construction of the railroad on the island during the first decade of the 1900s, the population grew and the establishment of businesses began. There were no churches on the island. The need for a Christian ministry for island residents became apparent, and in 1909, the Reverend R.W. Harrell helped organize the First Baptist Church of Boca Grande.<sup>17</sup> The second oldest congregation, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, was also established in late 1909, although, according to their *Diocesan Journal*, it was not established as a mission until 1911.<sup>18</sup> Originally, services for the First Baptist Church of Boca Grande were held whenever a pastor arrived in Boca Grande, usually on the second and fourth Sundays of each month. Many services were held outdoors.

Between 1911 and 1913, the congregation began preparations for the construction of a church building on the island. They formed a committee to devise a plan for erecting the building and secured a loan for \$1,000 from the Southern Baptist State Mission Office in Jacksonville, Florida, for its construction. The members also started a building fund to repay the loan amount. A parcel of property was acquired and ground was broken in 1913, with much of the work performed by church members themselves. Many of them were railroad workers who came to the island to build the railroad. Outside help and skilled labor was brought in as necessary. The steeple was constructed by hand. The bell in the steeple was originally a locomotive bell donated to the church by the Atlantic Seaboard Railroad. It remains in use today as a call to worship. Construction of the church building was completed in 1915. Although St. Andrew's Episcopal Church had been meeting in their own building since late 1909, it was a single-family residence similar to several houses on the island. The house was built for the use of railroad workers who came to build the railroad for the shipping of phosphate and was

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<sup>16</sup> Boca Grande, Images of America, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> Many of the church records were destroyed in a fire in the fellowship hall in 2003.

<sup>18</sup> "The People of St. Andrew's, 1908-1998, published by St. Andrews Episcopal Church of Boca Grande, ©1998- St. Andrew's Episcopal Church of Boca Grande

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moved from its original site to its present location.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the First Baptist Church of Boca Grande is the first building built as a church on the island.

A Sunday school was organized for the First Baptist Church and deacons were appointed as called for according to the book of Acts in the New Testament of the Bible. The ladies formed a Women's Society that aided in the care of the visiting Pastor. As more families moved to the island and the congregation grew, the women welcomed these new residents and invited them to worship. The Women's Society contributed greatly in building the church membership and furnishing the church and later the Parsonage.

The church building not only served its members for religious purposes, it also served as a center for informal socializing and special events. The local Methodists attended Baptist revivals and the Baptists attended the Methodist meetings. An adult and youth choir was formed and the children attended youth camps in the summer. As the population of the island grew so did the church membership. Many members traveled by boat to church. The church was a member of the Peace River Baptist Church Association and the church and its members participated in off-island activities as well.

Until 1934, visiting pastors known as circuit riders continued to serve the congregation. Some of those pastors that served from 1911 until 1934 were the Reverends R.W. Harrell, Charles Martin, and J.W. Mayes. The Reverends A.J. Holt, J.N. Thompson, J.E. McLeod, M.W. McVaig, R.C. Alderman and J. Sutley also served the congregation.

In 1934, a parsonage was built to provide living accommodations for the purpose of acquiring a full-time pastor. The parsonage was completed in 1935 and the first resident pastor, the Reverend Perry Tomlinson, received the call and moved in. A celebration dinner to dedicate the parsonage was held on the grounds to mark that day, May 8, 1935.

As the congregation continued to grow, two Sunday school rooms were added to the north side of the church and air conditioning was added in 1955. In 1962, it was determined that the church needed a fellowship hall, which would also accommodate an office and extra Sunday school rooms. A committee was formed and an offer to purchase land north of the church was made. The owner of the land refused the offer so a decision was made to build on the original church site connecting the hall to the church by a breezeway on the north. A church building fund was established. When the fund reached \$2,000 and each family donated a number of concrete blocks, the work on the hall began. Once again, members of the congregation did as much of the work as possible.

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<sup>19</sup> "The People of St. Andrew's 1908-1998," published by St. Andrews Episcopal Church of Boca Grande, ©1998- St. Andrew's Episcopal Church of Boca Grande, pp. 3-4.

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In the 1960s, the church moved its membership from the Peace River Baptist Association to the Southwest Florida Baptist Association and gained independent ownership of the church land, which was previously owned by the Baptist Holding Company.

**Architectural Context**

Carpenter Gothic Revival

The Boca Grande Baptist Church is an excellent example of an early 20th Century Carpenter Gothic Revival church. Gothic Revival architecture began in England in the early 1800s as a reaction against the rigidity of classic forms. One of the most exciting changes that came forth was the change from regular and sometimes symmetrical plans to a variety of shapes. The style allowed the plan to grow naturally from within until it became a final form based on the owner's needs and the site.

The style was never as popular as Greek or Italianate styles. It gained its most popularity in residential architecture between 1840 and 1860. However, it remained a popular style for churches nationally through the 1940s. Alexander Jackson Davis built the first American Gothic Revival house in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1832. He was the first American architect to promote the style in his book Rural Residences. Andrew Jackson Downing, a friend, helped popularize the style through his pattern books and public speaking. Due to the fact it seldom fit into city lots, Gothic Revival was mostly promoted as a rural style. The style was further made popular with Downing's 1842 book, Cottage Residences, with thirteen editions printed up to 1887.<sup>20</sup>

The architectural style of the Boca Grande Baptist Church could be more particularly classified as Carpenter Gothic. Carpenter Gothic, sometimes called Carpenter's Gothic or Rural Gothic, is a North American architectural style-designation for an application of Gothic Revival architectural detailing and picturesque massing applied to wooden structures built by carpenters. The abundance of North American timber and the carpenter-built vernacular architecture on which it was based made this improvisation of Gothic Revival a natural evolution. With the invention of powered saws for cutting wood and the advent of balloon framing, carpenters gained the tools they needed. This resulted in a demand for quickly built dwellings and structures and provided the impetus for the development of wooden Gothic or Carpenter's Gothic.

The Carpenter Gothic Style is most often characterized by its profusion of decorative sawn details. The fact that most of these details were originally designed to be built of stone did not prevent American carpenters from interpreting them in wood. Utilizing a steam-powered saw or scroll saw, a carpenter with a small crew could build a relatively large structure in a matter of months.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~twp/architecture/gothic/>



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The style gained a visually appealing distinction with its steep pitched gable roof and millwork ornamentation. Window frames were made from wood to simulate English Gothic details. Carved porch railings or balustrades were often used. Exteriors were most often of painted board and batten siding. These buildings had such a variety of shapes, they could be added to at anytime without diminishing their visual appeal.<sup>21</sup>

Combination Plan

The Boca Grande Baptist Church's interior plan is an example of the Combination Plan, which was an interior plan used primarily by non-liturgical churches. It incorporates two different plans, the Akron Plan for the former Sunday school classroom area and the Auditorium Plan for the sanctuary or worship area. The concept of the Akron Plan is attributed to Lewis Miller, an industrialist who was trying to devise a way to make the use of Sunday school space more efficient. His idea was to have small classrooms separated from a larger, central space by flexible partitions or folding doors. With such an arrangement, when individual class time was over a simple removal of the partitions would enable the classes to join into one group without having to go from one location to another. It was first used in the First Methodist Church of Akron, Ohio, in 1868.<sup>22</sup>

Although the idea of the Akron Plan was Miller's, it was the architect George Washington Kramer who implemented and promoted the plan. Kramer's designs included his own distinctive Auditorium Plan for the sanctuary. This design was distinguished by a horseshoe or semi-circular pew arrangement. A pulpit platform was usually located in one corner of the building, with the entrance to the sanctuary at the diagonally opposite corner. The church organ and choir were usually placed behind the pulpit, and the altar-table, with a baptismal basin, was often placed in front of the pulpit. Usually the floor was inclined toward the pulpit. When combined with the Akron Plan, small classrooms adjoined the large worship area, usually to the side, separated from the larger area by movable partitions, such as sliding doors or screens. From the pulpit in the corner, the preacher could easily address people in both the auditorium and the Sunday school area. This plan provided a very flexible and cost effective arrangement that was highly suitable for the concepts of worship and Sunday school instruction that were in vogue at the time. Interestingly enough the plan, which evolved out of reactions against the Gothic Revival Style, was often incorporated into Gothic Revival Style churches. Many churches kept their preferences for the exterior appearances of the style but saw the advantages of the new interiors.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Walker, Lester, American Shelter, An Illustrated Encyclopedia of The American Home, The Overlook Press, Woodstock, New York, 1997, pg. 128.

<sup>22</sup> First Christian Church, Pensacola, Florida, National Register Nomination (NR listed 14 Apr 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

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**Architectural Significance**

The Boca Grande Baptist church is architecturally significant as a surviving example of the Carpenter Gothic Revival Style. The projecting pinnacled tower, steep-pitched gable roof, open eaves, and pointed arch windows displayed on the church incorporated within a wood frame building are indicative of the Carpenter Gothic Revival Style. The Boca Grande Baptist Church is also significant through its interior plan, which exhibits features of the Combination Plan that came into style with non-liturgical churches in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church, like many Protestant churches built at the time, incorporated the Combination Plan within a Gothic Revival Style building. A hallmark of the plan was the arrangement of spaces so that areas peripheral to the sanctuary could easily be converted to Sunday School classrooms and back again to use as part of the auditorium. In c.1928, the Sunday School room at the rear of the sanctuary were permanently converted to use as sanctuary seating for the congregation. The seats, however, are still arranged in a semicircle around the pulpit, the main focal point of the interior of the church, consistent with an Auditorium Plan.

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Plat Book 1, Page 7.

Plat Book 1, Page 37, Public Records of Lee County, Florida.

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Beatty, Pastor Gary, telephone interview with Mikki Hartig, Historical & Architectural Research Services, Sarasota, Florida on February 12, 2009.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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### **Verbal Boundary Description**

Block 19, Lots 8 & 9, Plat of Boca Grande

### **Boundary Justification**

The boundaries encompass the entire parcel of property historically associated with the First Baptist Church of Boca Grande.

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**LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. First Baptist Church of Boca Grande
2. 421 4th Street, W., Boca Grande, Lee, FL
3. Unknown
4. C.1935
5. Historical & Architectural Research Services, 1325 Cocoanut Ave., Sarasota, Florida 34234
6. Primary facade and west elevation, looking northeast
7. Photo 1 of 28

1. First Baptist Church of Boca Grande
2. 421 4th Street W., Boca Grande, Lee, FL
3. Historical & Architectural Research Services, 1325 Cocoanut Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34234
4. October 22, 2008
5. Historical & Architectural Research Services, 1325 Cocoanut Avenue, Sarasota, FL 34234
6. Primary facade and west elevation, looking northeast
7. Photo 2 of 28

**Items 1-5 are the same for photographs 2-16.**

6. Primary facade and partial West elevation, looking northeast
7. Photo 3 of 28

6. West elevation, looking east
7. Photo 4 of 28

6. West elevation, looking slightly northeast
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6. West elevation, looking southeast
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6. Partial west elevation, looking northeast
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6. East elevation, looking west
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- 6. Entrance vestibule, looking southwest.
- 7. Photo 9 of 28
  
- 6. Sanctuary with entrance vestibule in background, looking southwest
- 7. Photo 10 of 28
  
- 6. Sanctuary with former classroom c.1928 expansion in background, looking northwest
- 7. Photo 11 of 28
  
- 6. Sanctuary, looking north
- 7. Photo 12 of 28
  
- 6. Sanctuary with church organ and pulpit and alcove in the background, looking east
- 7. Photo 13 of 28
  
- 6. Entrance from sanctuary into c.1928 classroom addition, looking north
- 7. Photo 14 of 28
  
- 6. C.1928 classroom addition hallway, looking east
- 7. Photo 15 of 28
  
- 6. C.1928 classroom addition hallway, looking west
- 7. Photo 16 of 28
  
- 6. Former Sunday school classroom, presently a nursery, looking north
- 7. Photo 17 of 28
  
- 6. Parsonage primary facade looking south
- 7. Photo 18 of 28
  
- 6. East and north (rear) elevations of parsonage, looking southwest
- 7. Photo 19 of 28
  
- 6. Parsonage living room with kitchen in background, looking east
- 7. Photo 20 of 28
  
- 6. Interior view of parsonage living room with south bedroom entrance in background, looking northwest
- 7. Photo 21 of 28

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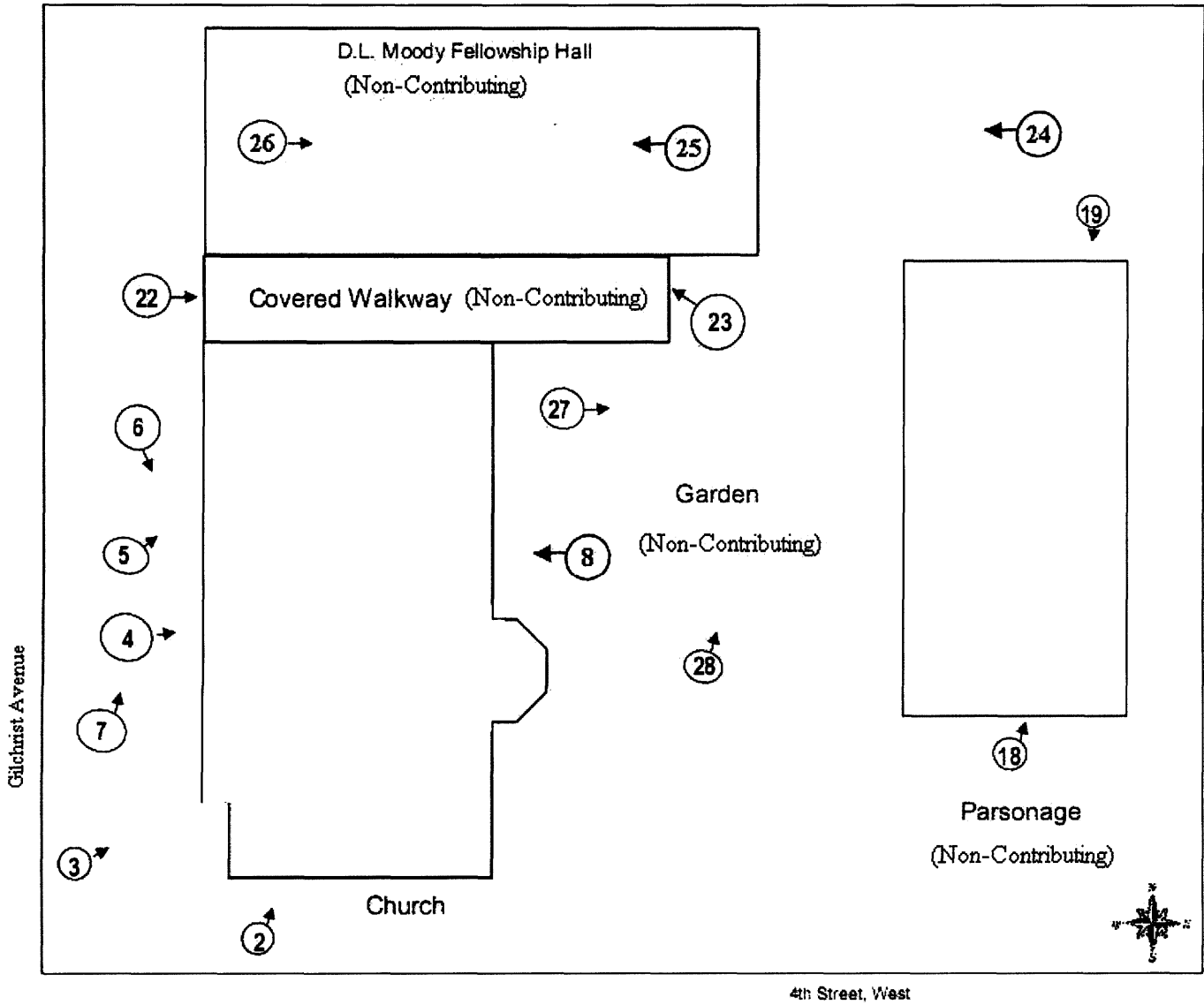
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- 6. Breezeway between D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall and First Baptist Church, looking east
- 7. Photo 22 of 28
  
- 6. Breezeway between D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall and First Baptist Church, looking west
- 7. Photo 23 of 28
  
- 6. East elevation of D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall with parsonage on north (left), looking west
- 7. Photo 24 of 28
  
- 6. D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall, main room looking west
- 7. Photo 25 of 28
  
- 6. D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall, main room, looking east
- 7. Photo 26 of 28
  
- 6. Garden view with Rebecca at the Well statue & D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall in background
- 7. Photo 27 of 28
  
- 6. View of Robert and Betty Lindner Victory Garden with Rebecca at the Well statue in foreground and D.L. Moody Fellowship Hall in background, looking north
- 7. Photo 28 of 28



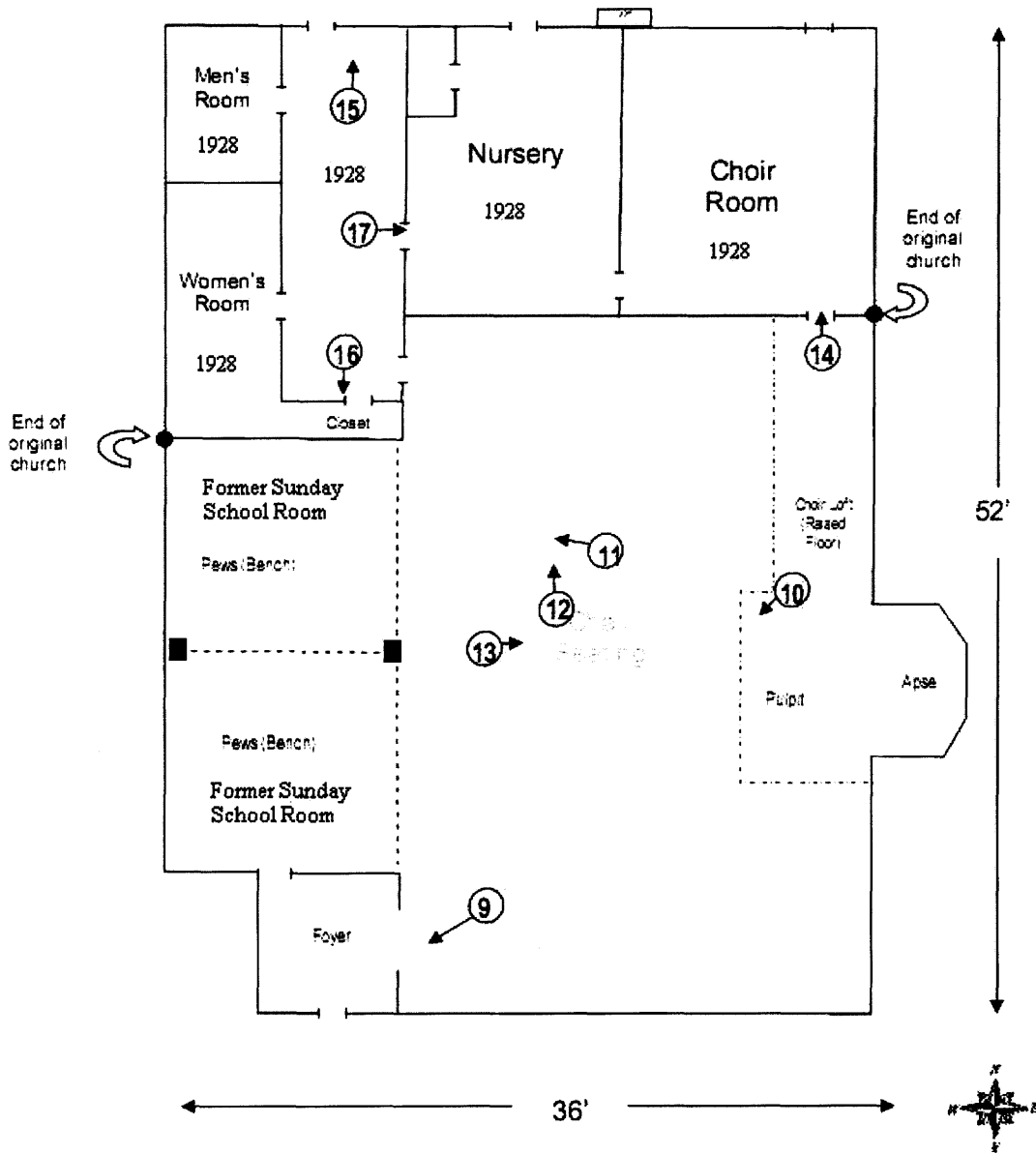
**First Baptist Church of Boca Grande**  
**Boca Grande, Lee County, FL**

**SITE PLAN (Not To Scale)**



**First Baptist Church of Boca Grande**  
**Boca Grande, Lee County, FL**

**MAIN CHURCH BUILDING FLOOR PLAN (Not To Scale)**



**First Baptist Church of Boca Grande  
Boca Grande, Lee County, FL**

**PARSONAGE FLOOR PLAN (non-contributing) (Not to scale)**

