

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee

1. ✓ First Baptist Central Church (~~No. 1 on Sketch Map and Photo Nos. 1-6~~)

Location: 521 North Central Avenue
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Owner of Property: First Baptist Central
521 North Central Avenue
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Description: The First Baptist Central Church is a 45' x 55' religious building with red brick wall finish laid in the common bond consisting of a stretcher/header course every seventh course. It has two stories and gable roof over the sanctuary. Two and one-half three story towers located at southwest and northwest corners of the building, frame facade.

On the west side, fenestration includes a centrally located large round arched window opening with sixteen fixed pane windows framed with smooth masonry surrounds. The round arch has three layers of red brick laid in rowlock pattern and is keyed with smooth masonry element. The second story facade has four, 1/1, double-hung wood windows with stained glass of religious design. All of these windows have plain masonry lintels and lug sills. In the third story of the tower, there are two rectangular-shaped openings covered with metal panels. Both have plain masonry lintels and lug sills. In the gable end of the facade, there is a segmental arched opening with plain masonry lug sill. The arch is keyed and the opening has been covered with metal panel.

There are two entryways in the facade, one in each tower. Both have metal double doors with glass panels and single paned transoms. Above the transoms are plain masonry lintels.

The first floor of the north side has a band of three fixed pane windows and four single fixed pane windows, two on either side of the band. All have three lights. All but the window on east end of north side have plain masonry lintels and lug sills. The exception has a segmental arch consisting of three layers of brick laid in rowlock pattern. The second floor of the north side has four, 1/1, double-hung wood windows with stained glass of religious design. The third story of the tower on the northwest corner has two rectangular-shaped windows in north wall and one of the same design in west wall. All tower openings have plain masonry lintels and lug sills.

The first and second floors of the south side have similar fenestration to north side, however, there is no window in the upper level of the tower on the southwest corner.

The rear, or east side, has a metal ventilator grille in gable end of the second story.

Two additions have been completed to the rear--a 25' x 60' weatherboard finish section in the mid-1950s and a 12' x 25' concrete block section in the late 1960s. Both have pitched roofs with gables.

The large addition has two small fixed pane windows on north side, four small fixed pane windows in east wall, and a metal door with glass panel in the center of the north side. It has a small gabled porch supported by diagonal brackets.

The small addition has two, 1/1, double-hung wood windows on east and west sides, three 1/1, double-hung wood windows on south wall, and a wood panel door with light in upper half near southeast corner of the south wall.

The structure, however, retains its historic integrity.

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Although the additions are constructed of different materials, they do not detract from the overall architectural integrity of the original building because of their location in the rear and similar colors to main building.

For more than 68 years, the First Baptist Central Church has remained intact.

Statement of Significance: The First Baptist Central Church is historically significant because: (1) it is the oldest black church building in Okmulgee having served the community for more than 68 years, (2) it is one of the oldest remaining properties of any type located within the black residential area of Okmulgee which once had the largest black community in Oklahoma outside of Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Muskogee, and (3) it is among the oldest remaining black Baptist churches in eastern Oklahoma.

Built in 1915, the First Baptist Central evolved from the oldest black congregation in Okmulgee, the New Hope Baptist group, organized in 1892. Because of increased membership, the congregation outgrew their original structure and the present church was completed in 1915 as the first brick church for blacks in Okmulgee.

Church membership has fluctuated over the years at approximately 200-250 making it one of the largest all-black congregations in eastern Oklahoma. For more than 68 years, First Baptist Central has served the black community of Okmulgee by providing a place of worship and a social outlet for blacks during an era when racial separatism prevailed in Oklahoma.

Major Bibliographical References:

Franklin, Jimmie Lewis, Journey Toward Hope. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

Eighty-Fourth Anniversary Observance. Marceline, MO.: Walsworth, 1976.

Personal Interview: P.W. Jackson (Minister), July, 1983.

Quadrangle Name: Okmulgee North, OK.

Scale: 7.5 minutes

UTM: 15/231040/3946510

Verbal Boundary Description: N ½ of Lot 8 and Lots 9-10, Block 15,
Original Townsite of Okmulgee, OK.

2. Eastside Baptist Church (~~No. 2 on Sketch Map and Photo Nos. 7-10~~)

Location: 219 North Osage Ave,
Okmulgee, OK 74447

Owner of Property: Eastside Baptist Church
219 North Osage
Okmulgee, OK 74447