

MAY 20 1980  
JUL 28 1980

HISTORIC NAME: First Baptist Church COUNTY: Blue Earth  
 CURRENT NAME: CITY/TWP.: Garden City ~~Township~~  
 LEGAL DESC.: Garden City Plat ADDRESS: Highway 169  
 Block 34  
 Lots 5, 6

|                   |                    |                |                             |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| CLASSIFICATION:   | CONDITION:         | SIGNIFICANCE:  | THEME/S:                    |
| Building <u>X</u> | Excellent _____    | Local <u>X</u> | Primary <u>Technology</u>   |
| Structure _____   | Good <u>X</u>      | State _____    | Secondary <u>Settlement</u> |
| Object _____      | Fair _____         | National _____ | Others _____                |
| District _____    | Deteriorated _____ |                |                             |

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_ Restricted X PRESENT USE:  
 VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_ Church  
 OCCUPIED: Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1868 ORIGINAL USE: Church  
 ORIGINAL OWNER: First Baptist Church ARCHITECT/BUILDER:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: First Baptist Church<br>Garden City, MN 56034                        | ACREAGE: Less than one acre <u>X</u>                              |
| LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.: Blue Earth County Historical Society<br>606 South Broad, Mankato, MN 56001 | UTM REFERENCE:<br>Lake Crystal Quad. 7.5<br>15 / 406540 / 4877580 |
| FORM PREPARED BY: Dennis Gimmetad  |   |
| DATE: January 1980   |   |

**DESCRIPTION:**

The First Baptist Church of Garden City is located in the original plat area of the townsite about a block distant from the Watonwan River.

The church, built in 1868, is a simple, rectangular, gable-roofed building, constructed of cement block. The coarsely textured blocks, which measure approximately 10" long x 6" wide x 4" thick, are solid units and were manufactured locally. The restrained, rectilinear detailing of the structure is accomplished through the laying of the block in different wall planes to create five side bays and three front bays divided by pilaster strips; overall proportions are reminiscent of the Greek Revival. Three windows at each side and two at the front are double-hung 4/4, with a slightly arched top and wooden sills. The front entrance is composed of double doors capped by a five-light transom.

Over the entrance on the front gable is a name plate carrying the date of construction. At the front of the gable is a square open belfry with bell, capped by a concave pyramidal roof. This belfry is believed to have been added at a later but undocumented date. The roof of the building is sheathed with wooden shingles.

At the rear of the church is a recent one-story concrete block addition (1959). The interior of the church retains many original features, but the orientation of the sanctuary was reversed when the addition was constructed so that the main entrance is now at the rear through the new wing and the altar area is at the south end.

**SIGNIFIANCE:**

The First Baptist Church in Garden City is important as an early surviving community structure in the most successful of the small pre-railroad townsites of Blue Earth County, and as an extremely early example of vernacular concrete block construction in Minnesota. Garden City (first known as Fremont) was platted in 1856 on the banks of the Watonwan River. Of the many towns platted in the county outside Mankato during this early period, only Garden City later gained the railroad and survived as a sizable settlement. The Baptists of the predominantly American community formed the first congregation of the town in 1858, and constructed their building in 1868. According to the History of Blue Earth County (c.1909), the cement block was manufactured locally by a firm called Geist and Huntzelman, who came to the area from Illinois. Although buildings of solid concrete block, or "artificial stone", have been documented in New York as early as the 1830s, the Garden City Church is the earliest known use in Minnesota. As a visible link with the initial development of the most prominent of Blue Earth County's small pre-railroad urban settlements, and as an early use of concrete block produced by local industry, the First Baptist Church is a significant structure.

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Bibliography

Gebhard, David, and Tom Martinson. A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota.  
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977, p. 277.

History of the Garden City Baptist Church.  
Duplicated, 1959. (Copy in Minnesota SHPO files).

Hughes, Thomas. History of Blue Earth County, and Biographies of its Leading  
Citizens. Chicago: Middle West Publishing Company, 1909(?). p. 161, 164.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**Note: These changes apply to  
First Baptist Church in Blue Earth  
County, Minnesota.**

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** 80001938

**STATE:** MINNESOTA

**COUNTY:** Blue Earth

**RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):**

**CITY:**

**VICINITY OF:** Lake Crystal

**ADDRESS:** U.S. Hwy. 169

**CERTIFICATION DATE:**

**REMOVED DATE:**

**COMMENTS:**

*Nina M. Archabal*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nina M. Archabal  
State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date