

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED DEC 19 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Calvary Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

(Known briefly as Second Street and then Saint Paul Baptist Church in early years.)

LOCATION

2nd and Walnut Sts.

STREET & NUMBER

NE 2 and Walnut

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

No. 5

STATE

Oklahoma

CODE

40

COUNTY

Oklahoma

CODE

109

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Calvary Baptist Church

STREET & NUMBER

NE 2 and Walnut

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

VICINITY OF

STATE

Oklahoma

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Oklahoma County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey

DATE

1978

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Oklahoma Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Calvary Baptist is unusual for its design - it is essentially an almost square three-story box - and also for its designer. Russell Benton Bingham (1880-1966) served as both designing architect and building contractor. A Tuskegee Institute graduate with a certificate in architecture, he taught for a time at Hampton Institute before moving to Boley (OK). Moving on to Oklahoma City, he taught building and mechanical arts at Douglass High School for a few years, then organized his own building firm. A member of Calvary, he served as Sunday School superintendent for more than 25 years and as trustee from 1918 until his death. Calvary, then, is remarkable architecturally (as one of the few structures of its kind in this region) and unusual in that it was built and designed by and for Negroes.

Unusualness of Calvary's design rests in part on its almost square central plan. The sanctuary rises two stories in height with bi-level seating on three sides wrapped around the choir and pulpit on the east wall. Ceiling feature and sanctuary focal point is a large arched cross in art glass. All classrooms and service areas are in the basement. Another notable aspect of its design is the strikingly symmetrical Walnut Street (west) facade with its English Tudor fenestration. The low arches are accentuated with the use of white stone against red brick. The stained glass artwork is significant in that it contains what is believed to be the region's only use of a black central religious figure.

The name of the church - Calvary - is symbolically expressed in the principal window mullions and rails. The proportions of their design and the extent of their repetition unmistakably impress on the viewer the importance of the cross of crucifixion at Calvary. All of this is set in a facade with impressive flanking portals. The facade itself is crowned by three separate, low Greco-Roman parapets, one in line with the central sanctuary beyond, the ones on either side terminating the roof structure of the foyer and stairwell leading to the balcony. By design, the stairwell's strong vertical emphasis, together with the separation of parapets, portrays the twin tower effect prevalent in classical architecture, although both stair well and sanctuary have the same roof height.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES **1921 to the present**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Russell Benton Bingham**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Calvary Baptist Church's significance rests on more than age and size. And on more than unusual design and the fact its builder and designer was a black professional and church member (cf. No 7). Although Calvary boasts it has never forgotten that its primary purpose is to "Save Souls" and promote the "Spread of the Gospel Throughout all Nations," it has also adhered closely to the Baptist tradition of serving the community in other than strictly religious areas. In black communities, especially in the South, this tradition is particularly strong and especially significant.

Because of the size and convenience of its facilities Calvary has always been the center of cultural activities in the city's Negro community. From 1903 until 1934, when Douglass High School's new building was opened, the Calvary sanctuary accommodated nearly all black Baccalaureate and Commencement programs. It hosted two meetings of the National Baptist Convention, served as meeting place for the National Federation of Colored Women's Club. On its platform have appeared such visiting celebrities as tenor Roland Hayes, educator Mary McCleod Bethune, labor leader Walter Reuther, politician Adam Clayton Powell, and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

In April 1938 Calvary pioneered a religious service innovation that has since been adopted by most of Oklahoma City's leading churches. A lay speaker was allowed to give the annual message for Kappa Alpha Psi's Guide-Right Service. The message took the place of the regular morning sermon, a common practice now but one quite unusual forty years ago.

It is in the field of civil rights, however, that Calvary has left perhaps its most significant mark on Oklahoma City and, indeed, on all of Oklahoma. In 1957 Mrs. Clara Luper, a Dunjee High School teacher and a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People youth advisor, wrote for her students a play based on the civil rights activities of Martin Luther King Jr. Following a performance at Calvary the cast of 26 young people was invited by an NAACP executive to present the work in New York. Most of the youths had never been out of Oklahoma before and thus had, in St. Louis, their first experience of eating at an integrated lunch counter. Back in "Jim Crow" Oklahoma they determined to do what they could to bring similar integration to their home town. The sit-in movement in Oklahoma City had begun.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Nelson, Mary Jo, "Church proposed as landmark," Oklahoma City Times, August 11, 1978, p. 15
 Trotter, Anthony, "Historical Site Survey for Calvary Baptist Church," February 1978

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Oklahoma City Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5 Minute Series

UTM REFERENCES Oklahoma City Quadrangle

A 14 635255 3925968

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kent Ruth, Deputy

ORGANIZATION

Oklahoma Historical Society

DATE

September 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Historical Building

TELEPHONE

405/884-5456

CITY OR TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

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

TITLE

Harry C. Tompkins M.D.

DATE

10-27-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12-15-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Marcella Sharp

DATE

12-18-78

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**



Church

CONTINUATION SHEET Calvary Baptist ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Then called a "sitdown," the young people's demonstration on behalf of integrated eating facilities began August 19, 1958, following a meeting at Calvary. From the church a dozen youths marched the few blocks to a modest lunch counter in a downtown drug store, where they took unoccupied chairs. When they were not served, they remained quiet and orderly. The demonstration marches became almost a daily ritual, moving to various downtown restaurants and cafeterias as well as other food service spots in hotels and department stores, always under the watchful eye of Mrs. Luper and the NAACP Youth Council. For several years the marches nearly always began and ended at Calvary. In time the marchers were joined by white protestors and by mid-1961 more than 175 Oklahoma City restaurants had opened their doors to Negroes. Before long segregation in eating places in Oklahoma City had virtually disappeared. Throughout the struggle Calvary served as spiritual as well as physical base for the movement. Threats were made to bomb the building. More subtle threats were made to cancel its insurance. But the church was not intimidated. As its 85th anniversary directory puts it: "The congregation kept the faith with these brave young people. God gave the victory to all."

*

Calvary Baptist Church had its actual beginning in the decision of individual members of three Baptist congregations in Tennessee to move to newly opened Oklahoma Territory. On the second Sunday in October 1890 they met in a 20 x 40-foot store building on the corner of 2nd and Hudson in Oklahoma City to organize the Second Street Baptist Church. Within a few months the group bought the building, moved it across the street and a half-block west, where the church remained until 1896. It became Saint Paul Baptist Church then, after moving onto Main Street. In 1900 the church merged with a much smaller Baptist congregation that had been founded in 1889, the year of statehood. Moving to 308 West California, it became Calvary Baptist Church. Here a new building was erected, for \$34,000, which served the growing congregation until the move was made to the new building being nominated herewith for National Register status.