

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 7 1982

DATE ENTERED JUN 3 1982

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

First United Presbyterian Church (Originally First Presbyterian Church)

AND/OR COMMON

Presbyterian Church**LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

130 S.4th Street

CITY, TOWN

Sterling

STATE

ColoradoN/A VICINITY OF

CODE

08N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

4

COUNTY

Logan

CODE

075**CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**NA DISTRICT BUILDING(S)NA STRUCTURENA SITENA OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**NA PUBLIC PRIVATENA BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**NA IN PROCESSNA BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS** OCCUPIEDNA UNOCCUPIEDNA WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**NA YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTEDNA NO**PRESENT USE**NA AGRICULTURENA COMMERCIALNA EDUCATIONALNA ENTERTAINMENTNA GOVERNMENTNA INDUSTRIALNA MILITARYNA MUSEUMNA PARKNA PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUSNA SCIENTIFICNA TRANSPORTATIONNA OTHER:**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

First United Presbyterian Church

STREET &amp; NUMBER

130 South 4th Street

CITY, TOWN

SterlingN/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Colorado**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.Logan County Clerk and Recorder

STREET &amp; NUMBER

3rd and Main Streets

CITY, TOWN

Sterling

STATE

Colorado**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites

DATE

OngoingNA FEDERAL  STATE NA COUNTY NA LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDSColorado Historical Society, 1300 Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Denver

STATE

Colorado 80203

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE NA

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Except for normal weathering and some color changes, the exterior of the First Presbyterian Church is unchanged from its original 1920 appearance. It is a solid, rectangular structure of buff stretcher-bond brick with limestone trim, rising 2½ stories above grade. A brick drum with a metal clad dome crowns the building.

The architectural style is Neo-Classicism. The entrance facade is symmetrical and has a colossal 2-story colonnaded portico containing four fluted limestone columns with Ionic capitals which define the three, set back, single panel, double doors. The doors are glass infilled and with a decorative lintel over each. Three vertical elongated windows occupy the space above the doors. Engaged brick pilasters flank the portico which is surmounted by a full-width, cornice-boxed, plain metal pediment with a plain metal frieze. To the side of the portico is a vertical alignment of three windows, with the two first floor windows decorated with a plain limestone cornice-boxed pediment supported by brackets. A cornice with plain molding surrounds the building.

The side facades of the church are almost identical, each having as its main element a very large stained glass window surrounded by lights which are also filled with stained glass. The glass has been well preserved over the years, repaired when necessary, and is now protected by a mesh screen. The window is a segmental arch at the top and is flanked by pilasters and narrow vertical window openings. The slightly protruding wing which contains this window is surmounted by cornice-boxed pediment of limestone supported by limestone brackets.

The interior of the building consists of a semi-circular auditorium with balconies on the sides and rear, which provide for a seating capacity of 500, with every seat within forty feet of the pulpit. The pews are of oak matching the treatment of the pulpit. The interior has not been changed to any extent except for the removal of a large pipe organ which once stood behind the pulpit. All decorative features have remained intact and reflect the skilled workmanship of the period.

The building shares the lot with a two-story masonry building erected as a pastor's manse, but used for the last twenty years as an educational annex. The building is of similar materials, but is dissimilar in architecture.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1918 BUILDER/ARCHITECT J.C. Fulton Uniontown, PA

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the First United Presbyterian Church of Sterling lies not only in the distinctive architecture and beauty of the building, but also in the major contributions which the church and its congregants have made to the religious, cultural and social life of the community during the church's 101 years of existence as an organization.

The church was established in September 1878, in a sod schoolhouse in a homestead colony three and one-half miles north and east of the present city of Sterling. This antedated the establishment of the town by three years and of the county of Logan by eleven years. The "Old Sterling" colony, as it was later known, had been established in 1874 by people from Mississippi and Tennessee. Most of them were Cumberland Presbyterian and Southern Methodists. Originally they met jointly for religious services in sod homes and an adobe school. In 1875, the Methodist Church South was organized. In September, 1878, answering a request from the Presbyterian settlers, Rev. S.H. McElvain of Greeley rode into the colony on horseback and formed a congregation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The congregation remained in the Cumberland ranks until May, 1906, when it transferred its affiliation to the Boulder Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church, United States of America.

The congregation was the first to build a church edifice within the town of Sterling, although only the second to hold organized religious services in the new town. The congregational leaders of the Presbyterian Church were also the leaders in the establishment of the Town of Sterling, the building of canals and development of irrigation systems, and the building of early roads. In 1881, when the Union Pacific Railroad built its line from Julesburg to LaSalle, Colorado, M.C. King, one of the church's founders, persuaded the railroad to establish the town of Sterling on a site which he donated for the purpose. He also donated land within the new town for the Presbyterian Church. Construction of a small church began in the fall of 1882, and the building was occupied early in 1883. This building became the center for religious, social and cultural activities. At least two other congregations, Southern Methodist and Baptists, held worship services there until they had built churches of their own.

Members of the Sterling church were leaders in the economic developments which probably contributed most to the transformation of Sterling from a small railroad and cattle shipping village into Northeastern Colorado's largest city. These were the development of irrigation systems and irrigated farming, establishment of the sugar beet industry with a sugar refiner in Sterling, and cattle feeding.

Within fifteen years, the 1883 church was unable to accomodate the rapidly growing congregation. A larger church was erected in 1898, adequate in all respects for the towns's population of 900 and a church membership of 150. However, as a result of the economic developments cited above, the city's population increased to 6,500 and the church membership to more than 500 in two decades.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES  
UNNOT VERIFIED

Church records  
Files of the Sterling Republican-Advocate  
Centennial Committee. Looking Back, Reaching Forward: 100-year History of the First  
Presbyterian Church of Sterling, Colorado. Published by the church.  
Conklin, Emma Burke. History of Logan County, Colorado. Sterling: Elbridge Gerry  
Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1928

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Sterling south

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 13 651370 4498320

B         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

South 95' of Lots 1-6, K & S Addition Original Sterling

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

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

N/A

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

N/A

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert H McCaffree

ORGANIZATION

First United Presbyterian Church

STREET & NUMBER

14548 Debra Drive

CITY OR TOWN

Sterling

DATE

Nov. 20, 1979

TELEPHONE

303-522-2998

STATE

Colorado

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL NA

STATE NA

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

*William C. Townsend*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3.27.82

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Delores Byers*

Entered in the  
National Register

DATE

6/3/82

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



Continuation sheet Statement of Significance Item number 8

Page 2

Construction of the present church was begun in 1918. It was completed in 1919, and dedicated in 1920. The guiding light in the project was the pastor, Rev. M. Gatewood Milligan, who contributed ideas for many of its significant features, and insisted that it should be built large enough to accommodate growth and expansion in future generations. As a result of Rev. Milligan's foresight, 61 years later the church comfortably accommodates a congregation twice as large as in 1918. Interior remodeling has been necessary to provide additional space for Sunday School classes, and an adjacent building formerly used as a manse is now fully occupied as an educational annex, but it has not been necessary to enlarge the church building, or to alter the exterior of the sanctuary.

The cornerstone laying ceremonies were held Nov. 28, 1918, during the famous nationwide influenza epidemic. Because of restrictions against public assemblies which closed churches for nearly two months, only a handful of church officials and a few others were present for the ceremony. Despite the cost, between \$100,000 and \$110,000, the church was dedicated free of debt.

Prior to and during the construction, Rev. Milligan was in failing health. He was forced to resign Jan. 1, 1920 becoming pastor emeritus. He continued to live in Sterling until his death in 1924. The church's social hall, located in the basement of the building, was named Milligan Hall and dedicated to his memory.

Because of the magnificent acoustics, the First United Church of Sterling was the site of concerts and other musical programs for many years, being superseded only in the last decade when a larger auditorium with acoustics of similar quality was erected on the Northeastern Junior College campus.

The First Presbyterian Church is one of Sterling's most outstanding structures architecturally and a major local landmark because of its visual qualities. It is also probably the best example of the Neo-Classic style remaining in the town. It remains as a fitting monument to the town's founding pioneers.