

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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## Black Baptist Churches in Okmulgee

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

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Description: The Eastside Baptist Church is a two-story, detached, rectangular-shaped religious building with gently pitched hip roof rising to a domed cupola in center of roof ridge. It is finished with red brick laid in running bond with a stretcher/header course every seventh row. There is a raised basement level.

The facade, or west side, is dominated by a two-story portico with pedimented roof. The four simplistic columns support a plain entablature and rest on red brick pedestals which feature a soldier course at the upper level. First floor fenestration consists of five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows set in wooden frames. Second floor window arrangement includes five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows. The entryway features a large metal door with glass light topped by a Gothic arched window of two lights. The raised basement level has a band of three casement windows north of portico and a band of three casement windows and band of two casement windows to the south of the portico. The entryway is reached by a series of ten steps flanked by small stepped columns of red brick with masonry capitals.

The north side is almost identical to the facade. The raised basement, however, has two bands of four casement windows to the east of the portico and one band of three casement windows to the west. A double wood panel door is located in center of raised basement level.

The south side has seven 1/1, double-hung wood windows with segmental arches. Near the southeast corner is a wood panel door with segmental arch. A wooden stairwell with railings leads from ground level to this door.

First floor fenestration of rear, or east side, has five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows and a smaller, 1/1, double-hung wood window. The second floor has five sets of paired, 1/1, double-hung wood windows. The raised basement level has four sets of casement windows, three of which have two lights and the third has two lights.

Decorative elements include the two-story portico on north and west sides which feature four simplistic columns, pedimented gable, and pointed arch entryway. Additional elements include two belt courses of brick laid in soldier fashion which divide the three levels, decorative brickwork around windows and doors, brick sills laid in rowlock fashion, and segmental arches over windows and doors on south and east sides. The dome-shaped cupola has a finial.

Other than the brick on the east and south walls being painted, the property has retained its original character, fabric, and design for more than 62 years.

Statement of Significance: The Eastside Baptist Church is historically significant because: (1) it is the second oldest black Baptist church in Okmulgee having served the community for more than 62 years, and (2) it is among the oldest unaltered black churches in eastern Oklahoma.

Built in 1921, Eastside Baptist Church houses one of the oldest black congregations in Okmulgee. Founded in 1903 as the Zion Bethel Church, the first services were held in a small frame residence where the nominated property now stands. Because of membership growth, the frame structure became too small and the present structure was completed in 1921.

The church has been a community focal point during its 62 year history. From 1931 to 1949, baccalaureate and commencement exercises for the all-black Dunbar High School were held at Eastside.

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Membership has fluctuated throughout the church's history from 150 to 225 members making it one of the largest black congregations in eastern Oklahoma. For more than 62 years, the Eastside Baptist Church has retained both its historic and architectural integrity.

Major Bibliographical References:

75th Church Anniversary of the Eastside Baptist Church, 1903-1978. Okmulgee, Oklahoma, 1978.

Personal Interviews: T. Oscar Chappelle, Jr., July, 1983.

Quadrangle Name: Okmulgee North, OK.

Scale: 7.5 minutes

UTM: 15/232080/3946290

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 13-15, Block 38, Original Townsite of Okmulgee, OK.

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Both buildings have housed continuous religious services since their construction - - First Baptist Central for more than 68 years and Eastside Baptist for over 62 years. These two black Baptist Churches played a vital role in the religious and social history of Okmulgee's black community by providing a place of worship for early black residents as well as a social outlet for black families during a period in Oklahoma's history when the black church was a stabilizing and cohesive for blacks living in a segregated society.