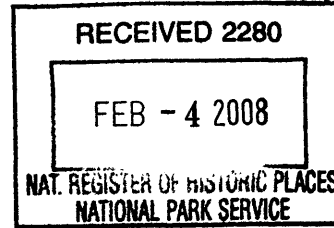


NPS Form 10-900
(January 1992)
Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)

OMB No. 10024-0018



United States Department of Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Baptist Church

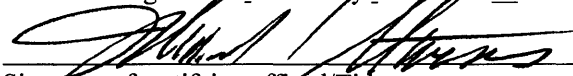
other names/site number

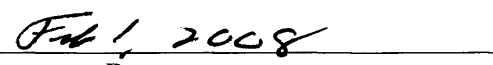
2. Location

street & number	201 Third Avenue	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Osceola	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Polk	code 095
			zip code 54020

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature of certifying official/Title


Date

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

First Baptist Church

Polk

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and

State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Patrick Andrews

Signature of the Keeper

3/12/2008

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- structure
- site
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> contributing | <input type="checkbox"/> noncontributing |
| 1 | buildings |
| | sites |
| | structures |
| | objects |
| 1 | 0 total |

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

COMMERCE/specialty store/professional

SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

GOTHIC REVIVAL

Materials

Foundation STONE

walls STUCCO

roof ASPHALT

other STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

First Baptist Church
Name of Property

Polk
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria
qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1910

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Jones, Harry Wild (attributed)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

First Baptist Church

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Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 523048 5018531
 Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
 Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
 Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
 Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eric J. Wheeler

organization

street & number 223 23rd Street North

city or town La Crosse

state WI

date

June 2007

telephone

608-785-7383

zip code

54601

First Baptist Church

Polk

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
 A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Glyn and Cynthia Thorman	date	June 2007
organization	Red Horse Properties	telephone	715-755-2692
street&number	827 218 th Street	zip code	54020
city or town	Osceola	state	WI

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The First Baptist Church is a Gothic Revival inspired one story church that was completed in 1910 for the Baptist community in Osceola. This Craftsman influenced church building replaced an earlier simple wood frame church built by the Osceola Baptists in 1860-1863. The gable roofed rectangular shaped church measures 40 feet by 78 feet and has a distinctive cobblestone and stucco exterior with over two dozen stained glass windows. A square bell tower is situated over the main entrance and the west end of the church features an unusual polygonal rotunda. There is currently a full basement. This building served as the First Baptist Church in Osceola until early 2006.

Site

The church building is located on the north end of the Osceola commercial district at the northeast corner of the intersection of Cascade Street and Third Avenue. The building is oriented lengthwise, west to east on a single lot measuring 50 feet by 112 feet. The main entrance to the church is on the south side towards the west end facing Third Avenue. There is a secondary basement level entrance on the east end with treated timber retaining walls surrounded by a decorative metal fence. A blacktop parking lot surrounds the building on the north and east sides. A concrete sidewalk extends along the perimeter of the site on the south and west sides. A street-light, utility pole and fire hydrant are also located on the south perimeter of the lot. The balance of the single lot is well-established lawn with shade trees on the northeast and southwest corner. A recently installed commercial sign of appropriate size, shape and color is located on the southwest corner of the lot directly in front of the building.

Exterior

The main structure of the mostly rectangular building is constructed of load bearing wood frame walls surfaced with cobblestone and mortar below the window level and smooth-finish stucco on the upper half of the wall. The asphalt-shingled gable roof terminates in a multi-planed hip roof on the west end over the rotunda. There is a slight up-turn or "kick" to the edge of the roof along the eaves on both the south and north sides. The eaves are open on both sides and the rafter tails are exposed on the east gable end. Placement of the leaded stained glass windows is symmetrical and features rectangular sets of triple, double and some single pane windows.

Starting on the Third Avenue side of the church, the south façade features the main church entrance and a 35 foot tall bell tower on the west end. The 6 foot deep by 16 foot wide cobblestone entry has flanking concrete capped buttresses surmounted by a recessed shaped parapet wall with central gable. The metal-framed entry door and glass surround is not original, and may date from the 1990s. A smaller entrance with a windowless utility door is located on the east end of the south facade and is covered by a flat roof extension with wood frame supports. The stucco-clad bell-tower repeats the motifs of the entry with four pairs of concrete capped buttresses and a concrete capped parapet with central gables on all four sides. Large pointed arch Gothic style louvered openings are located towards the top of the tower on three sides. A central mullion bisects all three of these openings and is ornamented at the top with a religious cross symbol. Three sets of three Gothic style

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Section 7 Page 2

First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

stained glass windows are placed evenly along the south façade. The cobblestone lower wall has a concrete cap and extends to the sill of the three sets of windows set into the stucco-clad upper wall. A cobblestone stepped-wall encloses the stoop leading to the east end utility entrance.

Continuing west past the main entrance, the west façade features a polygonal projecting bay or rotunda that is the most distinctive design aspect of what is otherwise a rather typical simplified basilica plan church. The unusual footprint of the west end of the building is based on a twelve-sided polygon that extends past the rectangular mass of the church with seven of the twelve sides comprising the exterior and interior walls. The rectangular gable roof terminates on the west end in a seven-plane hip roof over the rotunda. The rotunda roof has a similar surface and kick as the rectangular gable roof. The upper section of the rotunda roof terminates above the eaves level of the main roof. This provides space for a three foot tall band of five three-panel and one two-panel clerestory frosted glass windows set in the upper wall of the rotunda. The lower level roof is also a seven-plane hip roof with similar asphalt roof without the kick above the eaves. The upper wall of the lower level rotunda is punctuated with a similar band of five three-panel and one two-panel grouping of stained glass windows. The cobblestone lower wall of the south façade extends past the main entrance and around the lower wall of the rotunda at the same height.

Continuing around the rotunda on the west to the north side of the building, the west end of the north façade is defined by a shallow two-foot deep gable-roofed projecting bay that mirrors the footprint of the entry area on the south façade. The gable roof of the north-side bay meets the main roof at right angles at the same eaves level and has a similar kick and exposed rafter tails as the main roof. The one-story rectangular projecting bay has a similar cobblestone lower level and stucco upper level punctuated by a pair of pointed-arch stained glass windows set in a tall narrow rectangular window opening. This shallow bay on the north and deeper projecting entry on the south give the floor plan of the building a slight cruciform appearance.

Following east along the north wall there is a 30-foot tall brick chimney extending from the basement that continues up the exterior of the north wall through the overhanging eaves and terminates at a point several feet above the roof line. The chimney is supported by a metal rod extending from the north side of the roof to a point about 2/3 up the south side of the chimney. The chimney was likely built in 1960 when the basement was enlarged and the heating plant modernized. The exterior of the north side is an extension of the stucco upper wall punctuated by three sets of Gothic style triple stained-glass windows and two tall narrow single windows. The two single windows on the east end are of similar size and scale as the sets of three-panel windows. The placement, size and scale of the three triple-panel stained glass windows on the north side match the stained glass windows on the south side. Past the projecting bay the lower wall is comprised of rough-cut ashlar stone and not the rounded, decorative cobblestone seen on the south façade and rotunda. There are two small air conditioning units located at grade level on the north wall just east of the chimney. Five metal ventilators are located along the upper edge of the north side of the main roof just below the ridgeline.

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First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

Continuing to the rear or east façade of the building the ashlar stone wall continues the length of the east wall at varying heights because of the drop in grade level from north to south. The stone on this wall extends below grade and is the flat, less decorative stone also seen on the north lower wall. There is a modern metal-framed glass door entry on the south side of this lower wall which provides access to the basement level. The most prominent ornamental feature of the east wall is a large circular opening with a highly decorative religious stained glass window. An exterior light aimed at the window is located just above and to the right of the window. There is a tall narrow opening on the north side of the east wall that punctuates the concrete water table dividing the ashlar stone and stucco surfaces. The opening which was originally another rear entry is currently boarded up. Another small window opening is located on the south side of this façade over the lower-level door and just above the water table.

Interior

The interior is divided into two main areas separated by series of ten-foot tall recessed panel mahogany-stained birch folding doors. The rectangular sanctuary or auditorium on the east end of the church occupies about 2/3 of the floor area; the multi-sided rotunda on the west end contains the balance. The exterior entry on the west end provides access to the rotunda straight ahead and the auditorium to the right through two sets of double swinging-doors.

The auditorium has a cathedral ceiling that is covered with a fibrous acoustical tile that is likely not original. A pair of covered support beams that run from the top of the wall to the top of the ceiling are placed evenly along the length of the room. Two evenly spaced metal tension rods extend horizontally across the auditorium at the junction of the top of the wall and the ceiling. A third tension rod spans the area at the front of the auditorium. These metal rods are 1 inch in diameter and are located at about twelve feet above the floor level. This reinforcement modification was made in the early 1940s to keep the south wall from leaning out. Six suspended light fixtures with colored glass shades provide lighting in the auditorium and appear to be original. Four recessed lights in the ceiling provide additional illumination. Two large ceiling fans are located at the apex of the ceiling support beams. Additional natural light is provided in the auditorium by a large six-petal frosted glass rose window in the upper gable end of the west wall. A large round stained glass memorial window is located in the upper gable end of the east wall of the auditorium.

The lath and plaster walls on the north and south sides have a large memorial stained glass window in the middle flanked by a pair of three stained glass panels of similar size and shape. All of the stained glass windows in the auditorium have Gothic style pointed arches and the flanking sets of windows have diamond shaped pattern panes surrounding a central religious symbol. Dark stained oak paneling covers the north and south walls to chair rail height at the base of the stained glass windows. The paneling is not original and was likely added in the 1960s.

The floors in the auditorium are hard maple with a clear finish. An elevated stage area about three feet tall and twenty feet wide by sixteen feet deep is located in the middle of the east end of the auditorium. This platform was likely designed to provide a more visible and audible position for worship leaders. This elevated space is

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First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

flanked by two small ten-foot square rooms with doors leading to the stage area and directly into the auditorium. Currently the two rooms are used for storage but historically were used for worship purposes. At the rear of the stage area, a low wooden riser runs along the walls of the flanking rooms and rear wall. A built-in wooden bench partitioned into three seats sits atop this riser. Directly in back of the bench is a decorative wooden wall panel running nearly the width of the back wall. The modestly decorated back panel has three symmetrical arched insets separated by four pilaster-like motifs capped by a cornice that is concave on either end. On the southeast end of the auditorium decorative horizontal wooden trim extends from the chair rail on the south wall curving up into and around the stage area. The curve of the trim in the southeast corner matches the curve of the cornice on the back panel. A pair of decorative wall sconces flank the entry doors on either side of the platform. There are no built-in pews in the auditorium, however there are several pews in the building that were donated by the Osceola United Methodist Church to the Baptist church in the 1967. One original pew remains in the building. Other than the ceiling tile and oak paneling, all of the interior finish, windows and built-in features appear to be original and intact.

The rotunda on the west end of the building is a significant architectural feature of the church building and provides the most distinctive interior space. The rotunda is divided into a large central meeting room or chapel, five trapezoidal small classrooms and a small pastor's office. (This floor plan, known as the Akron plan is discussed in greater detail in Section 8.) There is also an interior basement entry with a recently reconstructed staircase and entry/vestibule leading from the main doorway into the rotunda. The entry has two sets of double swinging doors, a basement access door and a pair of small closets on either side of the entry door. One of the closets leads to the bell tower, which has a functional bell. Access to the rotunda from the vestibule/entry is through a pair of swinging doors. The interior surface of the open ceiling has intersecting planes that match the polygonal form of the exterior roof. The surfaces meet at the apex of the ceiling from which a large five-lamp chandelier is suspended. All of the interior surfaces have lath and plaster walls with mahogany-stained birch trim. Directly below the junction of the ceiling and walls on the west end is a row of five three-panel sets and one two-panel set of frosted glass clerestory windows. A horizontal band of trim runs along the bottom of these windows and around the upper wall of the rotunda. On the gable end of the east wall of the rotunda the large six-petal rose window brings natural light from the clerestory windows into the auditorium.

The interior of these partitioned spaces and the chapel have lath and plaster walls and mahogany-stained birch trim as in the auditorium. The five classrooms each have a set of triple panel windows with diamond shaped leaded glass panes. The pastor's office is located on the north side of the rotunda area in the projecting bay. This is a space that is wider and deeper than the classrooms and has a taller double panel stained glass window and ceiling fan. The basement stairwell on the south side of the rotunda has a pair of stained glass windows similar in scale and detail to the windows found in the classrooms. The flooring in the rotunda is clear finished hard maple as in the auditorium.

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First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

Basement

The original basement occupied a small section at the east end of the church and contained two coal-fired furnaces. In 1960, the basement was completely excavated to within four to six feet of the original stone foundation and new interior basement walls of conventional concrete block construction were added. Two evenly spaced, laminated two by twelve inch beams supported by steel posts that run the entire length of the building were likely added at this time. Other updates during the early 1960s basement expansion included the addition of bathrooms, a kitchen and a large dining hall area. In the mid-1960s an extensive four-phase interior and exterior restoration project focused on the masonry walls and stained glass windows. The maintenance and updating projects undertaken by the Baptist congregation preserved the structure and maintained the historic character of the church building for nearly 100 years.

In 2006, the basement was extensively remodeled to accommodate adaptive re-use as retail space. Public restrooms, plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems were upgraded to meet applicable building codes. Electrical service was upgraded from 100 amps to 400 amps. Access to the basement from the exterior is through a new glass door installed below grade level. The basement door leads to a short hallway leading into two retail spaces currently occupied by a bakery and a yarn shop. The yarn shop is located on the east end and the bakery is in the center and extends to the north wall as does the yarn shop. The hallway runs along the south wall and leads to two new bathrooms and a new interior stairway on the west end of the basement. The utility/furnace area is located along the north wall to the rear of the bakery.

Floor surface is a combination of new ceramic tile and epoxy-coated concrete. Basement walls and new partition walls are painted drywall. The walls in the bakery area have several window openings designed to convey a historic storefront appearance. The lowered tile ceiling provides a cavity for evenly placed recessed lights that illuminate the separate basement areas. The two bathrooms at the end of the hallway were enlarged to meet ADA standards and have new ADA approved fixtures. The fixtures and finish throughout the basement have been selected to provide a safe and attractive retail atmosphere and also convey an appearance consistent with a historic property.

Integrity

The First Baptist Church building retains excellent integrity. The exterior is essentially unaltered and shows all historic architectural elements to be intact. Historic photos of the church from soon after completion in 1910 show the exterior to be recognizably the same as it is today. Church records and a thorough inspection by the current owner indicate that preventive maintenance was routinely undertaken in order to preserve the important architectural and ecclesiastical elements. No major interior or exterior additions or alterations have been made with the exception of the basement in the 1960s and the recent changes for commercial use. The exterior surface, most of the interior finish and all of the stained glass windows are intact. For these and other reasons the First Baptist Church attracted the interest of a local preservation-minded businessman as a good opportunity for conversion to commercial use. Two retail businesses are currently operating in the lower level and potential uses of the auditorium and rotunda on the main level are planned to be consistent with the historic architectural integrity of the First Baptist Church building.

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Section 8 Page 1

First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located on the northern edge of the Osceola Commercial Historic District, the historic First Baptist Church building in Osceola is locally eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Architecture. Completed in 1910, the building is an exceptionally well-preserved example of an early 20th century Gothic Revival style church designed for a small Baptist congregation in rural northwestern Wisconsin. The basic Gothic Revival style of the church is accented by several design innovations and Craftsman details that display the influence of the noted Minneapolis architect, Harry Wild Jones. The Akron Plan rotunda on the west end of the church is a design feature that reached its peak of popularity in American Protestant churches in the early 20th century. A variation of the Akron plan is seen in churches designed by Jones. Historical evidence indicates that Harry Wild Jones is to be credited as the architect of the First Baptist Church of Osceola.

Historical Overview - Village of Osceola

The Village of Osceola is located in southwestern Polk County on the east bank of the St. Croix River, ten miles southwest of county seat St. Croix Falls and about thirty miles northeast of the Twin Cities metro area. Polk County was organized in 1853 when it was split off from St. Croix County and named in honor of James K. Polk, the eleventh president of the United States. The earliest settlement began in the St. Croix Valley after a treaty in 1837 between the Chippewa and Sioux tribes and the US government removed the Indian population to reservations in northern Wisconsin or further west in Minnesota. The first permanent community in Polk County was established at St. Croix Falls in 1838 following the expansion of logging enterprises in the area.¹

The history of Osceola on the St. Croix River began in May of 1844 when William Kent made the first land claims in the area. Kent and several others had ventured up-river from Fort Snelling to investigate suitable sites for a water-powered mill on the St. Croix River. They discovered a twenty-five foot waterfall located on Osceola Creek just upstream from the confluence with the St. Croix. (These falls are now known as Cascade Falls and are a popular natural feature located on the south edge of downtown Osceola off Cascade Street.) Kent immediately recognized the potential for power production and in 1845 a flutter wheel powered sawmill was in operation on the site. A steamboat landing and grain mill was established at the same time and settlement of the nascent river town began. For the first ten years, the community was known as Le Roy in recognition of an early pioneer. In 1859 the name of the village was changed to Osceola Mills. This name was chosen in honor of Chief Osceola (1804-1838), a Seminole Indian who captured the imagination of many Americans because of his valiant resistance to the US government takeover of Indian lands in Florida. Several municipalities in the eastern US and Midwest are named for Chief Osceola. In 1897 the word Mills was dropped and the village from then on has been known as Osceola.²

As the lumber business expanded in the St. Croix Valley, the steamboat traffic increased, and Osceola became a

¹ Easton, Augustus B, ed. History of the St. Croix Valley, Vol II, Chicago: H. C. Cooper, Jr and Company, 1909.

² Walking Tour Guide of Osceola, City of Osceola, 1998.

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Section 8 Page 2

First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

regular stop on the river-way between St. Croix Falls to the north and the growing river towns downstream. Steamboat manufacture began in Osceola in 1854, and a total of ten steamboats were built in the village over the next several decades. Osceola continued to be an important steamboat landing on the St. Croix through the early 1900s. Railroad development came to the St. Croix Valley in the 1880s and eventually brought an end to the predominance of the steamboat trade. In 1883 the Minneapolis and St. Croix Railroad Company was formed, and by 1887, the railroad had reached Osceola.³ The railroad brought more settlers to the village and surrounding countryside. By 1900, commercial activity in the village was well developed with a variety of retail and service businesses located along the two block Cascade Street commercial district located north of the mill-site and rail line. Although not as large a community as St. Croix Falls to the north and Stillwater to the south, Osceola has remained an important commercial and population center on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix River.

Historical Overview – First Baptist Church of Osceola

The First Baptist Church of Osceola was one of the first church communities organized in Polk County. A traveling Baptist minister, Reverend S. T. Catlin (1819-1878), preached in the village in 1854 and then returned in 1857 to officially organize the First Baptist Church of Le Roy, as the village was known at that time. Catlin came to Hudson, Wisconsin in 1851 and ministered at St. Croix Falls and Taylors Falls before coming to Osceola. He served in several other churches in western Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota during his career, and returned to Osceola where he served as minister until his death at age 59. Reverend Catlin served a total of 17 years at the Osceola church and was a true pioneer preacher. He arrived in the St. Croix valley when there were only a few residents, most of those involved in the lumber business. He lived and preached in the village during the time that Osceola became well established as a center of commerce and the First Baptist Church a leading religious community in Polk County.⁴

In 1860, Catlin and the five other founding members of the First Baptist Church began a church building on the north side of the commercial district on a lot donated by Rice Webb, one of the founders of the church. The simple, gable-roofed, 24-foot by 32-foot wood frame structure was completed in September of 1863. In 1870, as the church community grew under the leadership of Reverend Catlin, a 14-foot addition with a steeple and bell tower was added to the church building. This first of three First Baptist Church buildings in Osceola served the church community until the second building (the subject of this nomination) was completed in 1910. The 1863 church building stood on the same lot where the 1910 church building is now located and was moved to the east end of the lot to make way for construction. The first church building served as a gymnasium and reading room for the Baptist community until it was removed sometime before 1926.⁵

At the turn of the 20th century, there was growing interest in the Osceola Baptist community for building a new, larger more modern church. Hiram and Laura Kendall, a recently arrived couple from Minneapolis, dedicated a

³ *Osceola: A Village Chronicle*, Osceola Historical Society, 1994.

⁴ Harding, May Benjamin, *Of Men and A River*, 1961. (Unpublished manuscript located at Osceola Public Library)

⁵ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, Map of Osceola, Wisconsin, 1911, 1926. New York: Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1911, 1926.

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First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin

great deal of money and time towards that goal and apparently spearheading the effort to build a new church. They had a very successful business in Minneapolis and Laura Kendall was a professor of music at the University of Minnesota.

*“When the H.N. Kendalls moved here from Minneapolis at the dawn of this century...the Osceola Baptist Church received a powerful booster shot. Both Hiram and Laura Kendall were dedicated Baptists of great talent...and they poured their gifts in the local Baptist Church. Soon they had plans going for the outstandingly beautiful new country church with lavishly lovely memorial windows. The church was designed and blueprinted by their son-in-law, Jay Van Booskirk...The artistic cobblestone work on the church stands today as a memorial to two skilled local craftsmen, Chris Green and Eric Klung...”*⁶

An additional major contribution for a new church was also obtained from Judson Roundy, a principal in a large wholesale grocery business based in Milwaukee. In 1909, after funding was mostly secured, local contractor Arne Kvaal was hired for the carpentry work and Green and Klung offered their services for the masonry. Construction was completed early the next year and the church was dedicated in March of 1910.⁷

Architecture

The First Baptist Church building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture because of its significance as an intact example of early 20th century Gothic Revival church architecture with a distinctive blend of early modern Craftsman decorative elements and Akron Plan design features.

The Gothic Revival style was introduced into the United States in the early 1830s and was based on the picturesque medieval architecture of France, England and other western European countries from the 11th to 14th centuries. In the US this style is most often seen in churches, although the style was adapted in a variety of forms in the 19th and early 20th centuries for residences and commercial buildings. Similarly, many churches built in the US from the historic period to today show the Gothic Revival style in a variety of interpretations. In the First Baptist Church building Gothic Revival exterior elements include the simple rectangular gable roofed basilica form, pointed arch or lancet stained glass windows, and louvered lancet shaped openings in the bell tower. The gable-shaped parapet over the entry, repeated at the top of the bell tower with crenellations, is another Gothic Revival element. The large six-segmented interior rose window is a somewhat simplified expression of the traditional highly ornamented rose windows seen in many Gothic Revival style churches.

The American Craftsman style has roots in the late-19th century British Arts and Crafts movement led by artistic pioneers John Ruskin and William Morris. In the US, the term Craftsman originated with the name of a magazine published at the turn of the 20th century by furniture maker Gustav Stickley, a strong advocate of the

⁶ This is an excerpt from an article appearing in the Osceola Sun, 16 December, 1976 written by Grace Pilgrim Bloom and quoted in an Osceola Baptist Church History written by the church for their centennial in 1976. This may be the source of the attribution for the church design to Jay Van Booskirk. Chris Green may actually be Frank Green.

⁷ “The New Building at Osceola,” The Wisconsin Baptist, Volume XII, Number 4, April 1910, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, pg. 7.

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Arts and Crafts aesthetic.⁸ The American movement was a design reform ideal that encouraged originality, simplicity of form, local natural materials, the visibility of handicraft, and an emphasis on local craftsmanship. The most outstanding example of the Craftsman influence in the First Baptist Church is the exterior cobblestone lower wall and entry. This well preserved element contrasts with the stucco upper wall and stained glass windows to give the church building a distinctive exterior which is simple, yet attractive. The flared eaves or roof-edge kick is another element that shows the Craftsman influence. This design feature is subtle and is often seen on Bungalows and other Craftsman influenced homes built between 1900 and 1940. Interior features that show the Craftsman influence include mahogany-stained birch trim that contrasts with the light-colored walls. Also, the horizontal extension of portions of the trim in both the auditorium and rotunda evoke the interior stringcourse motif seen in many Craftsman buildings.

Akron Plan

Another architecturally significant design feature of the First Baptist Church is the multi-sided, half-round rotunda located on the west end of the building. Research indicates that this distinctive design is not unique to the Osceola church, but is an adaptation of an innovative church plan developed in Ohio the late 1860s and ultimately used by over 2000 churches in North America. The plan was named for the city of Akron, Ohio where the design was first used in the construction of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in 1871. The plan originated with local inventor and Sunday School Superintendent Lewis Miller who worked with architect Jacob Snyder in realizing the design. Lewis Miller was a devout Methodist who later collaborated with John Heyl Vincent in establishing the Chautauqua Institution in 1874 where teachers were trained in this new style of Sunday School.⁹

Though relatively unknown today, the Akron Plan Sunday School was a popular aspect of church design developed in the late 19th century in response to the growing public education movement in the United States. Akron Plan Sunday Schools are characterized by a rotunda or rounded arrangement of small rooms facing a central open area or chapel where a lectern or pulpit could be placed. The half-round arrangement of rooms could be separated from the open area by sliding or folding double doors. That design enabled a number of Sunday school classes to be held in individual rooms, with all having access to a general prayer or lesson session as well. The Akron Plan design came to be interpreted in a variety of different ways, including an amphitheater shaped sanctuary or auditorium, depending on the size and needs of the particular church community. However, the initial motivation for this type of design was to better advance the mission of religious education.

Sunday School became an important part of the mission of many Protestant churches in the early 19th century. The Methodist Church was at the forefront of the Sunday school movement, which later attracted the support of many other denominations. Traditionally Sunday school classes were held in the church auditorium where

⁸ Gustav Stickley (1858-1942) was born near Osceola, Wisconsin and reportedly worked in masonry construction in the area as a young man.

⁹ "A Brief History of the First United Methodist Church of Akron." From site: www.acorn.net/fumcakron/history.htm; Internet.

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children of all ages, and sometimes adults, attended the same lessons. As in the one-room schoolhouse, the teaching style could not be tailored to each age group, and the mix of children of different ages led to discipline problems. Following the model of public education in the late 19th century, many Christian educators believed that Sunday schools should be graded, allowing children of the same age to be taught together in a style and manner appropriate to their developmental level. The uniform lesson system was developed to provide for the same weekly religious material taught in a manner suited to each grade level. The uniform lesson system gained wide popularity in main-line Protestant denominations in the late 1800s.

The Akron Plan Sunday School was a design response to the uniform lesson system. The arrangement of individual rooms facing an open rotunda served the need for group recitation and prayer and the need for separate rooms for graded religious instruction. The open rotunda area provided a central location for the pastor or Sunday school superintendent to open the daily scripture lesson within sight of all of the students seated in their separate classrooms. The teachers could then close the doors, separating each classroom from the rotunda and begin the day's lesson. After the individual lessons were taught at each grade level, the doors could be reopened and the students would recite the scriptural passage for the day and the session would end with a group prayer. Disenchantment with the concept of the uniform lesson system in the early 20th century caused the decline in popularity of the Akron Plan Sunday school. Christian educators came to believe that the content of Sunday school lessons, not just the style and manner of teaching, should be tailored to each age group. Sunday School buildings became more like public school buildings using separate classrooms for each grade, eliminating the need for a central rotunda. Although many churches with Akron Plan designs still exist, most have modified the Sunday school areas to accommodate contemporary needs.¹⁰

One variation of the Akron Plan was the "combination plan" in which the auditorium plan sanctuary was joined with an Akron Plan Sunday School wing. This concept was advanced by architect George Washington Kramer in his 1897 book "The What, How and Why of Church Building." Kramer was considered one of the foremost church designers of his day. Many other variations on the Akron Plan were incorporated into churches across the US, particularly for large urban congregations.

The First Baptist Church in Osceola is a variation of the Akron Plan that was adapted by the designer for a small-town or country church to serve the needs of a small community of worshippers. The overall size of the church is 40 feet by 78 feet and the open chapel area in the rotunda is less than 25 feet in diameter. When the folding doors dividing the auditorium from the chapel are pushed back, the elevated platform area on the east end of the auditorium is clearly visible from the chapel. This layout allows children and teachers seated in the chapel to see and hear the pastor on the east end of the auditorium. This is one design variant of the Akron Plan that seems well suited to the needs of the Baptist community in Osceola in the early 20th century. The five trapezoidal classrooms are quite small and likely could not have served more than a few students at a time. Instead of an upper tier of classrooms seen in larger Akron Plan churches, the Osceola church has a row of clerestory windows that bring in natural light and convey a sense of height and openness.

¹⁰ The information concerning the design and history of the Akron Plan was found in an article written by Christopher Stephen Jenks in the Common Bond, December 1995 issue published by the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

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The balance of the floor plan to the east of the rotunda is of the traditional rectangular basilica form with seating, lighting, and partitions typical of small town and rural churches of the time period. However, the Akron Plan concept and the variations seen in the First Baptist Church in Osceola indicate that the designer who created the plans for this church was aware of popular trends in Protestant churches and had the training and skill to incorporate appropriate modifications for the Osceola church. Research of existing historical evidence indicates that Harry Wild Jones was the designer of the plans for the First Baptist Church of Osceola.

Architect – Harry Wild Jones (1859-1935)

Harry Wild Jones was born in Schoolcraft, Michigan into a family with strong connections to the Baptist Church. His father and both his paternal and maternal grandfathers were Baptist ministers. His paternal grandfather, the Reverend Doctor Johnathon Taylor Jones, was a Baptist missionary in Thailand for many years and his maternal grandfather, Reverend Doctor Samuel Francis Smith, was the author of the national hymn *My Country 'Tis of Thee* and several other well-known sacred hymns. Harry graduated from the Providence, Rhode Island University Grammar School in 1878, and attended Brown University in Providence from 1878-1880. He then transferred to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture in 1882. After graduation, Jones was employed in the office of Henry Hobson Richardson in Boston where he worked for one year. Richardson (1838-1886) is considered one of the pre-eminent architects of the late 19th century. He helped to introduce the aesthetic of the Arts and Crafts movement to his clients and was a pivotal figure in the movement to establish a new paradigm for American architecture.

*“...[Richardson] created in his own terms disciplined but fresh and diversified architectural forms for the American society of his day: and he left an individual legacy rich in potential development for those who sought similar ends....in particular Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.”*¹¹

Harry Wild Jones' creative vision was no doubt influenced by his association with Richardson during his three years in Boston. In 1883 Jones married and came to Minneapolis to become established as an architect. He traveled for several months of study in Europe and began his own architectural practice in 1885. Jones practiced in Minneapolis for nearly fifty years and became recognized as one of the most respected architects in the region. He is well known as the architect of the Butler Building in 1908 (now Butler Square), and Lakeside Chapel (1910), as well as many public buildings and private residences in Minneapolis.

An equally important part of his legacy is the churches that he designed for the Baptists and several other Protestant denominations across the upper Midwest and in Asia. Jones had a career-long interest in ecclesiastical design which likely reflected his religious family heritage. He lectured on the topic of church architecture and was considered to be an expert on the topic. He was one of the founders of the University of Minnesota School of Architecture and was very active in a number of community organizations including the

¹¹ Gorman, James F., Three American Architects: Richardson, Sullivan and Wright, 1865-1915, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991.

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Calvary Baptist Church of Minneapolis. Jones is considered by architectural historians to be one of the leading Minneapolis-based architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Harry Wild Jones and the First Baptist Church of Osceola

Although the original blueprints have not been found and there is no listing of the Osceola church in the Harry Wild Jones manuscripts collection at the University of Minnesota or the Minnesota Historical Society, there is compelling evidence that Jones was the designer of the plans for the church.

A lead article in the statewide Baptist magazine from April, 1910 celebrating the "New Building at Osceola" is the best written evidence. This description matches the Osceola church in every aspect.

"The plan submitted and accepted was that of Mr. Harry W. Jones, of Minneapolis. It involved a cobblestone wall about half way up and cement to the eaves, with a low tower, and the west end of octagon form. The interior is of birch with mahogany finish. Between the angles of the octagon are embraced the Sunday School class rooms and library. These small rooms all open into the prayer room. Folding doors separate the prayer room from the main audience room."

The article continues quoting from an earlier article in the Osceola Sun:

*"It is the most beautiful structure of its kind outside of the large cities....it is doubtful if there are any that exceed it in convenience and beauty. The members of the Church are to be congratulated on furnishing Osceola with the finest church building in Northwest Wisconsin."*¹²

An advertising booklet produced by Harry Wild Jones in July 1912 shows an "Exterior of Model Church on 50-foot Lot" and a floor plan of a "Model Church on 50-foot Corner Lot" that are nearly identical to the Osceola church building.¹³

Elizabeth Vandam, the biographer of Harry Wild Jones, believes that her research confirms that the Osceola First Baptist Church was designed by Jones. She found a photo of the church identified as "Baptist, Osceola, Wis" in one of Jones' private scrapbooks that he gave his children as a family keep-sake. These scrapbooks were compiled sometime between 1930 and 1934 and contain only photos of his designs that were still standing. These are photos of buildings that Jones personally visited and presumably took credit for. Also, the First Baptist Church in Russell, Iowa was built in 1913 and is nearly identical to the Osceola church building. The Russell church is credited to Jones and still stands.

¹² The Wisconsin Baptist, April 1910, pages 7 and 8.

¹³ "Churches, Harry Wild Jones, Architect, Minneapolis, July 1912." Original booklet is in the manuscript collection of the Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota.

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Jones specialized in designing churches and he produced basic designs for different denominations. Often, these plans were modified because of cost considerations. This seems to be the case in Osceola. Other churches in Wisconsin identified by Vandam as designed by Harry Wild Jones include Emmanuel Evangelical Church in Eau Claire; Congregational Church in Ladysmith; Whiting Memorial Baptist Church in Neenah; First Baptist Church in Superior; and Immanuel Baptist Church in Wausau.¹⁴

The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory from 1987 identifies the designer as Jay Van Booskirk without any cited source. This misinformation may have originated from an informal church history written earlier and then repeated in the article in the December 16, 1976 Osceola Sun referenced earlier in this section. There does not appear to be any other verified historic documents that confirm that Jay Van Booskirk designed the plans for the church. It is possible that he had some architectural design experience and was involved in adapting plans provided by Jones. As mentioned earlier, he was the son-in-law of the H. N. Kendalls who were major contributors to the church building project and apparently very influential in the First Baptist Church in Osceola.

There are some differences in the “model plans” created by Jones and the Osceola church. The overall footprint appears to be smaller, the partitions on the east end are fewer and much simplified, and the robing rooms, toilets, and pastor’s study are removed or relocated. Some exterior elements are also changed. Most noticeably, the masonry buttresses that appear in the model plans created by Jones were not built in the Osceola church. The lack of buttresses on the outer walls required the installation of three metal tension rods in the 1940s to keep the walls from tipping out. These interior and exterior alterations may have been made due to cost considerations and could have been implemented by local contractors without collaboration by Jones.

Historical Context

The Osceola Commercial Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. The two block-long historic district includes the intact historic streetscape in the 100-200 blocks of Cascade Street just to the south of the First Baptist Church. The district was extended to the north to include one building directly across the street from the church at 105 Third Ave. The First Baptist Church would undoubtedly have been included in the district if the historic continuity on the east side of the north one-half of the 200 block of Cascade Street had been intact.

The First Baptist Church is included in the City of Osceola Historic District and the Baptist Church is one of two churches identified in the Osceola Historic Walking Tour Guide. The other church is the United Methodist Church, which dates from the same time period but has been substantially altered resulting in a loss of historic integrity.

¹⁴ Communication with Elizabeth Vandam, January-March 2007.

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Conclusion

The First Baptist Church building in Osceola is locally eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Architecture. The church building is an exceptionally well-preserved example of an early 20th century Gothic Revival style church designed for a small Baptist congregation in rural northwestern Wisconsin. The basic Gothic Revival style of the church is accented by several design innovations and Craftsman details that display the influence of the architect, Harry Wild Jones. The Akron Plan rotunda on the west end of the church adds to the architectural significance as an intact example of a once popular late 19th century design innovation in Protestant churches.

The current owners, Glyn and Cynthia Thorman/Red Horse Properties, have completed a major restoration of the interior basement and rotunda that has preserved the historic and architectural integrity of the building. The church building has been successfully adaptively re-used for commercial purposes. This project will support heritage tourism in the region and encourage other businesses in the Osceola Commercial Historic District to similarly apply for the benefits of Historic Preservation Tax Credit program for income-producing historic buildings. For the reasons outlined above, Glyn and Cynthia Thorman/Red Horse Properties seek listing of the First Baptist Church of Osceola on the National Register of Historic Places.

Criteria Consideration A

While constructed for use as a church, the building's significance is in the area of architecture, thereby meeting the requirements of Criteria Consideration A.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the First Baptist Church of Osceola is defined by the lot lines of Lot 4 Block 14, Original Plat of the Town (now Village) of Osceola. The church building sits entirely on this lot. This uniform rectangular parcel has 50 feet of frontage on the west side facing Cascade Street and 112 feet on the south side facing Third (formerly Cedar) Avenue. The parcel size is estimated to be about 5600 square feet or about .13 acre.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the immediate setting of the historic site of the First Baptist Church and correspond to the historic parcel for the property.

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The following information pertains to all 10 photographs:

First Baptist Church of Osceola
Osceola, Polk County, Wisconsin
Photographer: Eric J. Wheeler, November 2006
Negatives in the collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin

Photograph 1 of 10
Street scene at Cascade Street and Third Avenue, looking northeast

Photograph 2 of 10
South façade, looking north

Photograph 3 of 10
South façade, entry detail, looking north

Photograph 4 of 10
South facade, rotunda detail, looking north

Photograph 5 of 10
West façade, looking east

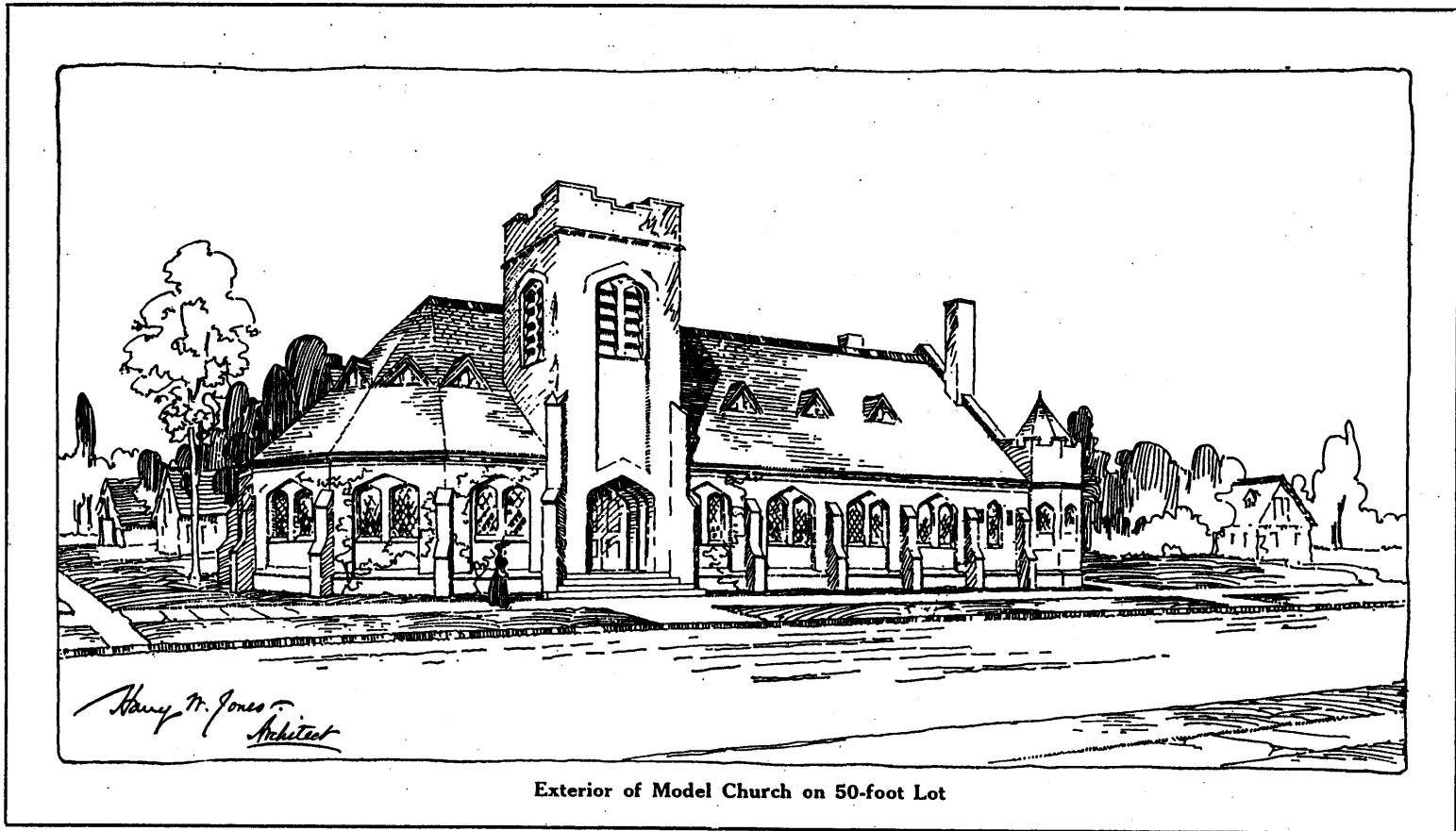
Photograph 6 of 10
East and North facade, looking southwest

Photograph 7 of 10
Interior of sanctuary/auditorium, looking east

Photograph 8 of 10
Interior of sanctuary/auditorium, looking west

Photograph 9 of 10
Interior of rotunda, looking north

Photograph 10 of 10
Interior of basement, looking west



**Figure 1: First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, WI
-Exterior view of Model Church
from 1912 promotional booklet by
Harry Wild Jones**

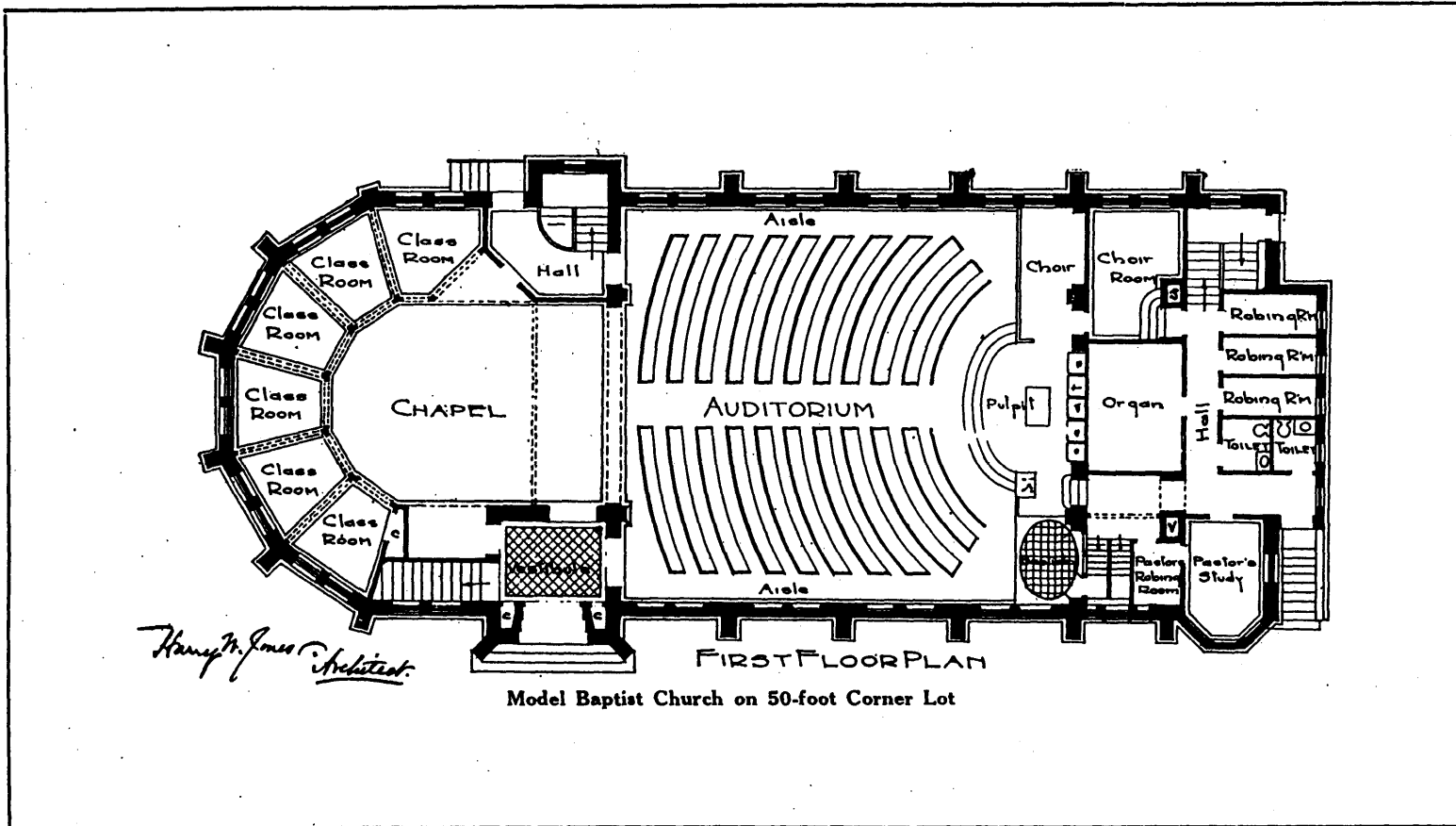


Figure 2: First Baptist Church
Osceola, Polk County, WI
-Floor plan of Model Baptist Church
from 1912 promotional booklet by
Harry Wild Jones