

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0693286

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 12 1978

DATE ENTERED JAN 23 1979

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

First Baptist Church, Bakersfield, California

RECEIVED

SEP 18 1978

AND/OR COMMON

Same

OHP

**LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1200 Truxtun Avenue

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bakersfield

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

18

STATE

California

— VICINITY OF

CODE

06

COUNTY

Kern

CODE

029

**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

William C. Kuhs, Marcia C. Kuhs, Wilbur Rickett &amp; Virginia Rickett

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1815 Ridgewood Drive

CITY, TOWN

Bakersfield

STATE

California 93306

— VICINITY OF

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Kern County Hall of Records

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1415 Truxtun Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Bakersfield

STATE

California 93301

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

A Guide To Architecture In Los Angeles and Southern California  
by Gebhard & Winter

DATE

1977

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kern County Library

CITY, TOWN

Bakersfield

STATE

California 93301

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

The First Baptist Church nestles in all its splendor and regency in the very heart of the civic and financial center of downtown Bakersfield, California.

Built of reinforced concrete with the board pattern of the forms left in place as a tactile surface of the finished concrete....reveals the sober massiveness and symmetry of the exterior. The entire building is painted in a solid warm earth tone and capped with a handsome red tile roof.

The bell tower, 70 feet tall, is in the center of the south facade and has become the landmark of identity to this outstanding church building. The tower base forms the south and west entrances leading to a vestibule, then to the narthex. The large entrance doors, made of white oak, are richly carved and adorned with ironed grilles and wood screen mouldings. Entrance arches surround the doors in relief concrete forms with raised sculpture spirals adding to this handsome frame. The bold use of formed concrete, that abuts the base corners, rises majestically in size to the tower roof. Small blind arches in stages and smaller mullioned windows preserve the Romanesque character of the bell tower.

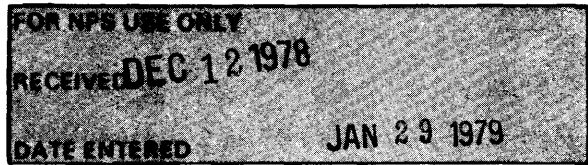
Among other delights of the south facade....is the series of vaulted arches forming a tile roofed arcade, stylistically linking the Fellowship Hall to the west with the tower and sanctuary. Beyond this arcade is formed the open plaza....adorned with greenery and a view of the high arched stained glass windows of the narthex.

The Fellowship Hall on the west corner is designed in Mission Revival style. The interior with its lofty ceilings, of dark brown exposed trusses and rafters, opens functionally to the outdoor plaza area through a series of double-glassed doors.

To the east of the tower....is the nave. Built in Romanesque style....in the form of a Latin cross. The nave, long and stately, is divided along its length by a system of arches..resting on sturdy piers which separate the nave and aisles. To enable members to circulate with ease, the plan provides a beautiful system of continuous aisles. These bound the nave and extend to the transepts....crossing in front of the chancel. The superb creamy-white finish of the walls is offset by a 36-foot high ceiling, elaborately adorned with a giant system of dark brown exposed wood trusses and rafters....handsomely carved. An undisputed example of superb craftsmanship. Hanging from the beams that span the nave are heavy chain-wrought iron circle candle light fixtures, designed and imported from Italy. This same ceiling design is duplicated in the Fellowship Hall. High on the north and south walls above the arches are the magnificent stained glass windows, designed especially for this building by the eminent artist J. L. Judson of the Judson Studio in Pasadena, California. Each carries a unique and significant sequence of Bible history from Moses to the Apostle Paul.

continued

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The nave is joined to the east by the raised chancel and Gothic choir. The high half dome rounded ceiling is divided by majestic exposed wood beams with small stained glass windows for wall relief. Twin transepts to the north and south adjoin the raised chancel.

Such proportions of the nave and the elegance of the chancel and choir beyond give the interior a lightness and gaiety which is heightened to the west by massive arched, stained glass windows rising from the narthex at grade to the ceiling....some 36 feet above and which forms the backdrop for the west balcony of the nave.

Beyond the narthex a system of wide and spacious corridors connect the small chapel, with its arched walls done in relief, the ladies' parlor with its warm decor and pleasant fireplace, the children's library, conference rooms, choir room, administrative offices and pastor's study.

The second floor over the above areas and on the north side of the building, overlooking the open plaza, are found a series of additional junior and intermediate classrooms for Bible Study.

Except for one small addition, the church has not been altered since its completion, testimony to its excellence of design and methods of construction.

Dimensional and structural highlights, taken from the original plans, dated 1930-31, which we have in our possession, are as follows:

I. Structure

Type: U.B.C. Type III N

|        |           |                      |                      |
|--------|-----------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Areas: | Basement: | under chancel        | 1,400 sq. ft.        |
|        |           | under ladies' parlor | 700 sq. ft.          |
|        |           |                      | <u>2,100</u> sq. ft. |

|             |                        |                       |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Main Floor: | sanctuary              | 5,600 sq. ft.         |
|             | Sunday School & Chapel | 6,900 sq. ft.         |
|             | Fellowship Hall        | 3,100 sq. ft.         |
|             |                        | <u>15,600</u> sq. ft. |

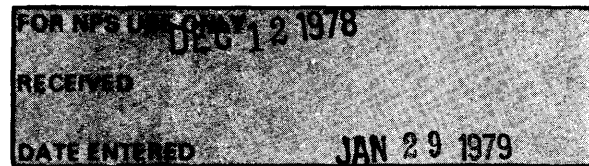
|               |              |                      |
|---------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Second Floor: | nave balcony | 1,900 sq. ft.        |
|               | classrooms   | 5,900 sq. ft.        |
|               |              | <u>7,800</u> sq. ft. |

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| Total - original floor area (not including covered walks) | <u><u>25,500</u></u> sq. ft. |
|---|------------------------------|

continued

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**II. Materials**

Roof: Tile Roofing. Small area of composition and gravel. Wood roof framing. Plaster on metal lath ceiling. Exposed wood trusses and rafters with celetex ceiling. (nave and Fellowship Hall)

Second Floor: Wood framing. Hardwood floor. Carpet over except balcony of nave. Plaster and metal ceiling.

Main Floor: Concrete slab on grade...have wood framing - social hall, chapel, Sunday School. Carpet over except Fellowship Hall.

Exterior Walls: Reinforced concrete.

Interior Walls: Some concrete. Others wood stud with gypsum lath and plaster.

Footings: Reinforced concrete.

Basements: Reinforced concrete.

Condition: Good, in general (except for roof leaks). The building was exceptionally well designed and constructed for its day.

The above documented by Minner and Davis, Structural Engineers, 1716 Oak Street, Bakersfield, California, 93301, June 2, 1978.

One small addition in 1956:

Designed by Whitney Biggar, AIA, and son of original architect Chas. H. Biggar.

Location: Northeast corner of building.  
Size: 3,300 sq. ft.  
Use: Choir room and additional pastor study.  
Construction: Cement block. Stucco finished to match original exterior.  
Reason: Growth of congregation and staff.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> _SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _1700-1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> _ART                     | <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> _POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> _OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> _INVENTION              |  |   |

SPECIFIC DATES 1931-32 BUILDER/ARCHITECT J. Currie-M. A. Dulgar  
Charles H. Biggar, AIA

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Baptist Church building is without question the finest remaining example of its architectural type, not only in Metropolitan Bakersfield and Kern County, but the entire Southern San Joaquin Valley of California.

The sanctuary to the east is a classic example of Romanesque....a style of architecture which arose in Western Europe toward the end of the 9th century and which lasted until the rise of Gothic in the 12th. Romanesque was a compound of many influences - Roman, Byzantine, Carolingian and Ottonian, Viking, Celtic, Saracenic. The architecture of this period is unified by certain characteristics of a distinctly international flavour. This is because its greatest patron was the Christian church and this building facade significantly captures this authenticity to a remarkable degree.

Christian influence was omnipresent. In Romanesque architecture, as in this church, this is seen, so obviously, in the cruciform plan, the bell tower and the cloister. The original inspiration behind most early Romanesque churches was naturally the early Christian basilica, with its low side aisles and its high nave with clerestory windows above the side-aisle roofs, and at the east end its large apse with the pulpit in front of it. This church duplicates this inspiration and detail above with great accuracy. During the Carolingian period - the fact that the medieval masons liked to build thick walls and to arch over all openings is vividly reproduced in this building as most exterior walls are 10 inches thick and the vast majority of all openings therein are arched.

The Romanesque builders liked a high central nave, and to produce this they would frequently make a second story over the side aisles, roofed with large timber trusses....its low side at the aisle outside wall, its high crown inward above the clerestory windows, forming a high and lofty gallery. This effect is carried out with remarkable accuracy in this building.

The Romanesque centuries saw the development of stained glass for window use, thus combining light and the glory of their decorative effect in one element. This period also placed the necessity for additional light and the development of the clerestory window. This church reflects the use of both in wide abundance and artistically designed.

A vivid Romanesque detail at one point in history was the chancel, choir and ambulatory with a half cylinder covered with a half-conical roof and roofs of different heights to be located at the east end of the nave. This is reproduced most accurately in this building.

5)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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continued

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .80 Acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Gosford, CA, Kern County

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5 Minute

UTM REFERENCES

A 11 316960 3916160

B         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot Nos. 5 through 8, inclusive, Block 288, City of Bakersfield, County of Kern, California.

### 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

Wilbur Rickett Owner

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Individual, Property Owner

September 14, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

2901 H Street

805-327-1486

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Bakersfield

California 93301

# 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

*Kroy Miller*

TITLE

DATE

12-4-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

1-29-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

1-26-79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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Among the exterior features in Romanesque architecture which grew to great importance during the 9th to 12th centuries was the bell tower. Starting in Italy in the 9th century as the simplest kind of square tower, with little arched windows and repeated horizontal cornices to give it height, it gradually achieved, especially in France, a grace of outline which were the first steps toward the creation of the Gothic spire. Our research indicates the bell tower of this church could be a duplicate of the tower built in the 13th century for the Cathedral of Assisi located in central Italy, 14 miles southeast of Perugia, a city of old walls and a citadel in ruins. Assisi was the birthplace of Francis of Assisi, who in 1200 founded there the mendicant order that bears his name. This tower....a Bakersfield landmark....is characterized especially by the boldness of its structure and the extraordinary vividness and dramatic power....so typical of Romanesque style.

To the west of the tower and joined by a tiled roofed, arched open arcade is the Fellowship Hall building. As noted by authors and architectural historians David Gebhard and Robert Winter in their book "A Guide to Architecture in Southern California" (1977), this architectural style is Mission Revival....which represents another interesting period in architectural history and the spreading of Christian religion. The early Spanish influence of mission design was widespread throughout the southwestern region of America and played such a vital role in the history of California.

So this one outstanding church building unaltered represents a fusion of two historical styles of architecture....Romanesque and Mission Revival.... a building of true historical significance and architectural authenticity.

This building is one of the best examples of architectural concrete in the City of Bakersfield and is a living memorial to the skill and craftsmanship produced in concrete construction during the '20s and '30s by our local people. It is one of the oldest buildings in the downtown business district. The Bakersfield area has few buildings that are over 50 years old. This is largely due to natural disasters that have plagued the community, namely the great fire of 1889, the major floods in 1893 and 1914, and the series of catastrophic earthquakes in 1952. The National Board of Fire Underwriters Report of 1956 had the following comments on the 1952 earthquakes:

"296 structures, principally commercial and public buildings in a 64 block central city area....were considerably damaged. Building collapses were few, but after a year's time 90 buildings

continued

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had been torn down, 210 had been or were undergoing major structural repair and decisions were pending on demolition or repair of the remaining 96 for a total of 396."

Yet - the First Baptist Church was the only religious building in downtown Bakersfield not to suffer any damage. What a superb testimonial to the design, engineers and builders who were responsible for creating this historical landmark in 1930-31.

The outstanding architect was Charles H. Biggar of Bakersfield. Born in Danville, Illinois, 1882, of Scotch parentage, father a cabinetmaker, learned his trade in Scotland. Raised in Danville, studied medicine for 3 years at the University of Michigan, transferred to University of Illinois and graduated from the School of Architecture in 1908. Studied at Sorbonne in Paris, France for three years. Returned to Chattanooga, Tennessee, worked as architectural draftsman for two years. Moved to Los Angeles, associated with the firm of Clement, Morgan and Walls. Served as an officer in the Army during World War I and established his own architectural office in Bakersfield upon his return. He was responsible for the creative design of many outstanding buildings in Metropolitan Bakersfield and the County of Kern until his untimely death in 1946. His achievements include:

The Bakersfield High School Campus, one of the largest enrollments in California.

The original Bakersfield Junior College Campus.

The East Bakersfield High School.

The First Baptist Church.

The Kern County General Hospital.

The Bakersfield Californian (newspaper).

The Taft High School, and many others.

A prominent community and civic leader and highly respected for his design and architectural skill.

The general contractors were James Currie and M. A. Dulgar, the leading contractors in Bakersfield during the late '20s and early '30s. This architectural and builder team....produced a building of true architectural and structural significance for their period in history.

The Bakersfield Californian in its issue of Friday, April 13, 1968, before Easter Sunday, carried a cover picture and story which said, "The architectural majesty of this facade of the First Baptist Church

continued



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floodlighted at night, with its Spanish arches, the noble bell tower and the handsome landscape make this edifice one of the great showplaces of Bakersfield. We use this one church for it symbolizes the aspirations of mankind everywhere for a better, more meaningful life."

A building of true architectural achievement....inherent in the lines and proportions and perspective of the building itself; it reveals to the responsible eye an inner logic in which every individual feature has its own specific relationship with every other one, and with the whole. A miraculous fusion of two artistic architectural traditions - Romanesque and Mission Revival....built in the depression and a time of economic decline....it represents a period in local history that is one of faith and courage to build. The First Baptist Church must be preserved and found worthy of recognition and listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The First Baptist Church is an exceptional example of the successful use of reinforced concrete to create a forceful architectural statement based on historical styles popular in California during the teens and 1920's. The decades of the 1920's represents a remarkable period in the history of California architecture in the use of reinforced concrete. Not only was concrete utilized for structural purposes, but its use was openly advertised in the exposed surfaces of buildings. The pattern of the boards which form the surfaces of the forms within which the concrete was poured very often formed the tactile surface of the concrete wall. The use of concrete also encouraged the architects of this time to simplify surfaces and details, so that the resulting buildings tend toward an abstract quality normally associated with "Modern" architecture, sculpture and painting. The First Baptist Church exemplifies the above technique.

Furthermore the building is exceptional in its fusion of the Romanesque and Mission Revival into a forceful modern statement. One of the most popular historic images for institutional buildings in California during the teens and 1920's was the Northern Italian Romanesque. This specific historic imagery was employed for schools, libraries and churches. In the case of the First Baptist Church, the Romanesque image was mixed with the earlier Mission Revival in a **unique** modern statement.

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82.5 17<sup>th</sup> STREET 82.5

82.5'

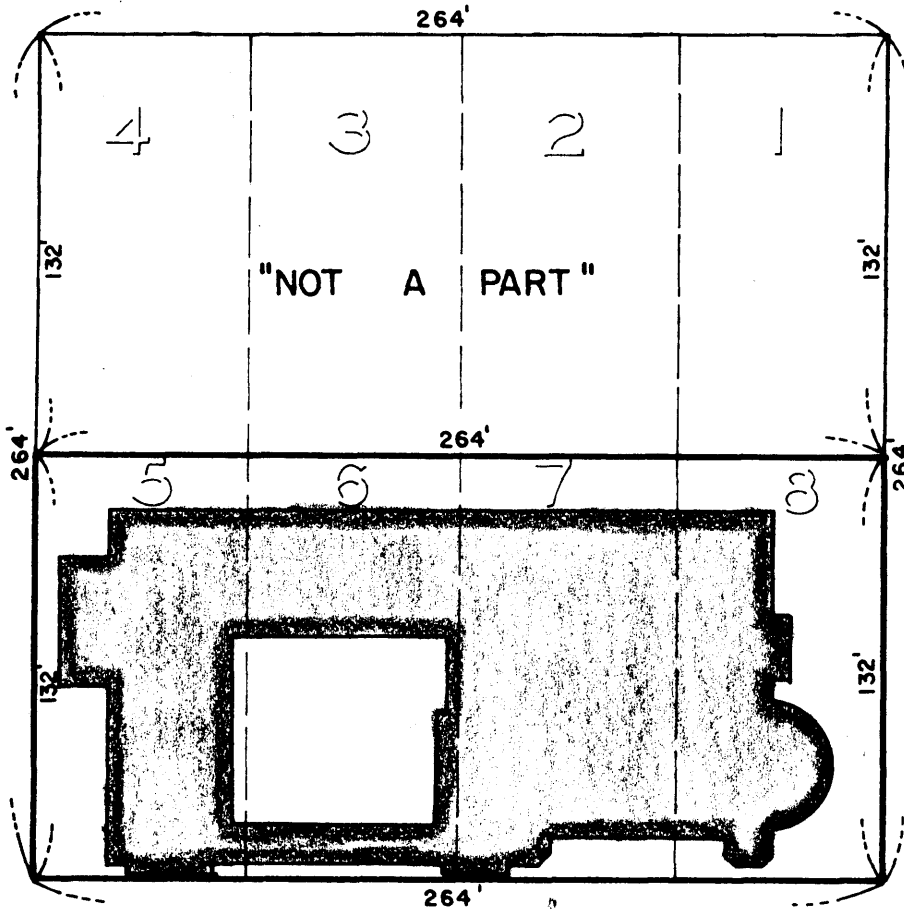
82.5'

L STREET

M STREET

82.5'

82.5'



115.5' TRUXTUN AVENUE 115.5'

RECEIVED  
DEC 12 1978

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

SKETCH MAP 10.a.1

NORTH

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
LOTS 5-8, BLOCK 288, CITY OF  
BAKERSFIELD, KERN CO., CALIFORNIA

CIVIL  
ENGINEERS

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
SURVEYORS

DATE: SEPT. 8, 1978

Revised  
Date By

RICKETT WARD & DELMARTER  
2801 N. ST. BAKERSFIELD, CALIF. 93301 PHONE 327-1488

NO. 10810

DRWG. BY: W. DEIFEL

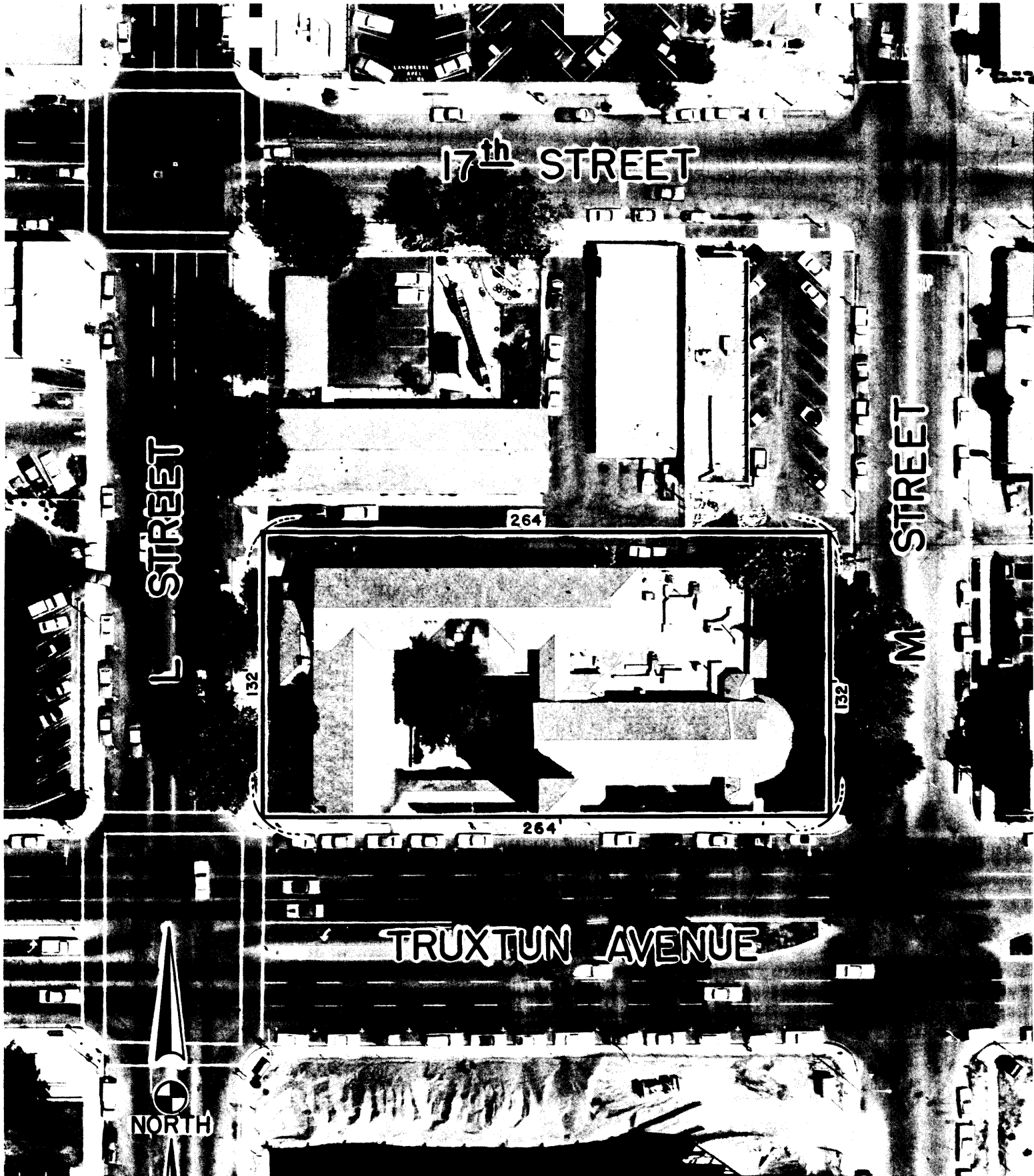
5-26-78 W.D.

SURVEYORS

SH. "ONE ONLY"

APPR. *Walter Rickett*  
R.C.E. 5853

SCALE: 1" = 60'



17<sup>th</sup> STREET

L STREET

M STREET

TRUXTUN AVENUE



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH  
 SKETCH MAP 10.a.2

CIVIL  
 ENGINEERS

REGISTERED  
 PROFESSIONAL  
 ENGINEERS

DEC 12 1978

SCALE: 1" = 60'

DATE: SEPT. 11, 1978  
 DRWG. BY: W. DEIFEL  
 APPR. *Wilbur Rickett*  
 R.C.E. 5853

Revised  
 Date By  
 9/26/78 W.D.  
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**RICKETT WARD & DELMARTER**  
 2801 N ST. BANBURY, CALIF. 95831 PHONE 327-4886

NO. 10810

SURVEYORS

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