

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF HARTWELL, HART COUNTY, GEORGIA

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY #24

I. IDENTIFICATION

HISTORIC NAME: Hartwell Methodist Episcopal Church, South
 CURRENT NAME: First United Methodist Church
 STREET ADDRESS: Howell Street
 CITY: Hartwell
 PRESENT OWNER: First United Methodist Church
 MAILING ADDRESS: 301 Howell Street
 CITY: Hartwell
 STATE: Georgia
 ZIP CODE: 30643
 CURRENT USE: church
 ACREAGE: less than one acre
 U.S.G.S. QUADRANGLE: Hartwell, Georgia
 U.T.M. REFERENCE: Z17 E321960 N3802770
 V.B.D. OR TAX MAP NUMBER: H-15-1-1 (64' X 175' corner lot)

II. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT CONDITION:

This building is a Gothic Revival-style church. The building is faced in red brick and rests on a rusticated granite foundation. The structure is Greek-cross in plan and is covered by a steep cross-gable roof. Within two arms of the cross, at the intersection of Webb and Howell Streets, is a granite and brick buttressed bell tower terminating in brick gables surmounted by an original slate-roofed spire capped with a finial. Four smaller spires project from the upper corners of the bell tower. The tower also features lancet-shaped openings with horizontal louvers covering the bells. Lancet-shaped stained glass windows dominate the Howell and Webb street facades of the church. Each of four entrances to the building are lancet-shaped doorways: two located at the base of the bell tower, and one within the arms of the cross at both the southeast and southwest corners of the structure. The exterior is further characterized by granite bands which cap the gabled walls, granite stringcourses within the gables, a unique polychromatic brick detailing on the west or altar wall, and terra-cotta detailing on the tower.

The Sunday School wing of the church extends from the southern arm of the cross and is composed of a gable roof positioned transversely to the church proper. The Sunday School wing contains a large lancet-shaped stained glass window on the Webb Street facade. The Sunday School wing consists of the original Sunday School space in the main body of the church plus a Sunday School addition built on to the south end of the church.

The interior of the structure is composed of two sections: the sanctuary encompassing the Greek-cross in plan, and the Sunday

School wing to the south. The sanctuary is characterized by exposed ceiling beams, wooden wainscoting, parquet floors, and original wooden pews. The altar has received minor alterations. In 1952, an education building containing an expanded Sunday School was added to the south of the church building. Interior alterations include the addition of a choir loft in 1963 at which time some of the original pews were removed. During this alteration, the Sunday School wing was altered considerably. The permanent wall separating the sanctuary and Sunday School was removed and a moveable wooden partition was provided in its place. The partition is removed periodically to provide for additional sanctuary seating from the Sunday School wing. In the early 1980s, a recreation building was constructed to the south of the education building but separated from it by a driveway (this new building is not included in the nominated property).

PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER: 85

III. HISTORY

ORIGINAL OWNER: Hartwell Methodist Episcopal Church, South
 ORIGINAL USE: church
 ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Willis F. Denny, architect
 HISTORIC ACREAGE: same as present
 DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1897
 DATE(S) OF ALTERATIONS: 1952, 1963

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (FROM ORIGINS TO PRESENT):

The Hartwell Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was established in 1854, the same year as the founding of the town. Lot 57 of the original city plan was marked for the site of a future Methodist Church. Church services were held initially in the temporary courthouse, a wooden building on the northeast corner of the square. A brick courthouse was constructed in 1856 in the center of the town square; the courtroom provided for the Methodists' worship space. A wooden school building also provided worship space prior to the construction of a church structure.

In 1859, Lot 57 (and a portion of Lot 109) was sold to the Methodists. A frame structure was built by J. R. Kay, a local building contractor. The History of Hart County refers to the first structure as "large and comfortable, well lighted with spacious windows, and tall steeple--a notable church for its day." This structure was the only church building in Hartwell until after the Civil War; its use was extended to other denominations including the Baptists and Presbyterians.

The present brick structure was constructed in 1897 by plans from the Atlanta architect Willis J. Denny. Didschueneit, a German interior designer from Atlanta, was responsible for the interior woodwork. Tiffany glass windows were made by the W. R. Orr Company of Atlanta. The largest stained glass window is

dedicated to John R. Kay, the builder of the first church structure. He died the year this building was completed.

The names of the Methodist Church in Hartwell chronicle the various mergers within the larger Methodist denomination. An article from The Hartwell Sun of January 15, 1983, explains the mergers: "The United Methodist Church has evolved from several mergers. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, came from the split that occurred between the North and South in 1844. The two churches, along with the Methodist Protestant Church, merged in 1839 to form the Methodist Church. The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church."

IV. SIGNIFICANCE

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA: B, C
 AREA(S) OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Religion
 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL):

This structure is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival used in late nineteenth-century church design. Its picturesque massing, steep gabled roofs, corner bell tower with buttresses, pointed-arch windows, and brick and stone construction are characteristics of the style. It is one of the largest historic buildings in Hartwell, and its prominent corner location has made it a community landmark. The structure also is architecturally significant as a work of the Atlanta architect Willis F. Denny. Denny (1874-1905) is noted in Georgia for his ecclesiastical, commercial, and residential designs. His Atlanta commissions include the A. G. Rhodes Residence, the Piedmont Hotel (now demolished), the First Methodist Church, Inman Park Methodist Church, and St. Mark's United Methodist Church. This church is a good representative example of Denny's work.

The Hartwell Methodist Episcopal Church, South is important in terms of religion as the only intact historic church building in the multiple resource area. The historic Baptist Church has been replaced with a modern structure and the Presbyterian Church has undergone major exterior alterations. This Methodist Church was the earliest congregation established in Hartwell. The Methodist Church building stands as the only tangible reminder of the role played by religion in the history of Hartwell.

CONTRIBUTING/NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

Contributing building(s): 1

V. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS: Historic Structures Field Survey: Hart County, Georgia

SOURCES OF INFORMATION: "History of the Methodist Church", by Mrs. Grover C. Dudley, secretary, 1964; Baker, John William, The History of Hart County; Hartwell Sun, various issues; Interviews with: Phyllis Green, secretary, Methodist Church; Andrea Niles, Department of Natural Resources/Historic Preservation Section; Mrs. Curran W. Cashion.

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VI. SITE PLAN/SKETCH MAP/FLOOR PLAN

Attached sketches are intended only to help illustrate the nominated property. No scale is provided or implied, unless otherwise noted. Boundary markings are simply general indications of the extent of the nominated property; the actual boundary description, unless otherwise noted, is the current legal description of the property which coincides with the current tax map number cited in Section I of this form. Also, note that the orientation of the various sketches differs from sketch to sketch; each is provided with a north arrow for clarity.

