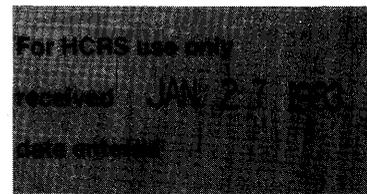


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic First Baptist Church of St. Paul

and/or common First Baptist Church of St. Paul

**2. Location**

street & number 499 Wacouta Street N/A not for publication

city, town St. Paul N/A vicinity of congressional district 4th

state Minnesota code 22 county Ramsey code 123

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name First Baptist Church and Congregation of St. Paul

street & number 499 Wacouta Street

city, town St. Paul N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 55101

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ramsey County Courthouse

street & number 15 W. Kellogg Boulevard

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 12/80 - 11/82  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Ramsey County Historical Society 75 W. 5th Street

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Baptist Church, built in 1875, is located in the northeast corner of downtown St. Paul on the edge of Lowertown, formerly an exclusive residential area which by the 1880's became the wholesale commercial and warehouse center of the city. The church is situated one block from Interstate 94 and is surrounded by turn of the century wholesale and manufacturing buildings. The last remaining house in downtown which is still used as a private residence is located diagonally across the street from the church.

First Baptist Church is an asymmetrical three bay Gothic Revival style building constructed of rockfaced coursed ashlar Kasota dolostone with smoothly dressed limestone trim. The principal facade of the church, facing Ninth Street, is dominated by a tall octagonal steeple atop a three story rectangular stone bell tower, the two of which combine to reach a height of 125 feet. The church's original steeple, 40 feet taller than the present spire featured a base with gabled projections and a clock which rested on the third story of the tower. The original spire was probably slate covered and was ornamented with a decorative band of geometric tiles half way to the top and a tall finial at the peak. This spire was razed in 1945 because the building was settling unevenly, and not replaced until 1967 when architect Milton Bergstedt designed a smaller lead-coated copper spire similar to the original spire minus the base. The three story stone tower originally featured a pointed arched double leaf entrance beneath a stone gable on the first story, pointed arch stained glass windows with Gothic tracery on the second story, and pointed arched ventilators on the third story. During the 1967 spire replacement, the third story of the tower was altered to include simpler gabled projections which rise above the pointed arched ventilator on each facade. The tall buttresses which define the corners of the tower are original.

The main gable end of the church, which has also experienced some alterations, contains a centrally located large pointed arched stained glass window with Gothic tracery and smoothly dressed limestone trim. This window was rebuilt in 1958-59. Immediately above this window in the gable end of the building is a small triangular ventilator with rounded corners. Two pairs of small double hung pointed arched stained glass windows flank the main entrance and a small pointed arched double leaf door is located at the western edge of the main facade.

The main entrance of the church, centrally located below the large stained glass window, originally consisted of double wooden doors topped by a pointed arched transom (probably stained glass) within a stone pointed arch. In front of the doors was a three bay open entrance porch with intersecting gabled roof supported by four Composite Order columns. This entrance porch was removed at the same time that the original spire was demolished in 1945. In 1971 Minnesota sculptor Hillis Arnold was commissioned to design three sets of pointed arched double leaf copper doors to replace the church's original doors. The new doors feature simple raised symbols and figures depicting the history of First Baptist Church, as well as religious subjects.

The side and rear walls of the church are also constructed of rockfaced Kasota Dolostone and contain fenestration and detailing similar to that on the main facade. The interior sanctuary of the church is basically intact and features a gabled ceiling supported by ornate wooden hammerbeams stained dark brown. A richly carved wooden loft, set within a large pointed arch, holds a massive pipe organ which was built by Steer and Turner Organ Company of Springfield, Massachusetts and installed when the church was constructed. The organ was rebuilt in 1939 and 1958. The wooden pews of the church, which seat 800 people, are arranged in concentric curves facing the organ loft. Two of the ten pointed arched stained glass windows which light the sanctuary date from the time of the church's construction. The only alterations to the sanctuary have been the removal of the large chandeliers and the obscuring of the fine stencilled designs on the walls with new paint. In 1886 St. Paul architect

## 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 type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" 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** 1874-1875 **Builder/Architect** William W. Boyington, Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Monroe and Romaine Sheire, Builders  
The First Baptist Church of St. Paul is historically and architecturally significant as the oldest Baptist church congregation in Minnesota, as the most costly church built in St. Paul at the time it was dedicated in 1875 and the only local church known to be designed by Chicago architect William W. Boyington, as the survivor of a once exclusive residential neighborhood which existed in the Lowertown area of downtown St. Paul, and as one of the oldest buildings still standing in Downtown and the only nineteenth century building in Downtown designed in the Gothic Revival style.

Unlike most other early St. Paul churches, the First Baptist church congregation originated as a Baptist Sunday School organized in 1847 by Harriet Bishop, Minnesota's first school teacher and a missionary and author. Bishop arrived in St. Paul in 1847 and opened the State's first permanent public school where she also taught Sunday School. Two years later, in 1849, the First Baptist Church was organized with twelve constituent members including Bishop, who remained a member until her death in 1883. Much of the early history of the church has been preserved, thanks to Bishop, who meticulously prepared an illustrated handwritten history of the church. An excellent and more recent history of First Baptist Church entitled A Church in Lowertown was published by the congregation in 1975.

Presumably because several of the early members of the church lived in the exclusive residential neighborhood which was once located in Lowertown, immediately east of the present church, the congregation constructed its first frame building on the site of present day Mears Park in 1851. At that time the grade of the block was much higher, and the site was nicknamed "Baptist Hill". In the same year that the church was constructed, the congregation's first Baptism occurred in the Mississippi River, an event which was reportedly attended by a large crowd of Indians and whites who lived in the area. A few years later, around 1857, a baptistry was constructed in Trout Brook on the eastern edge of Lowertown.

In 1861 the congregation traded its lot and building on the future site of Mears Park for a lot at Wacouta and 8th Street, after an attempt to purchase a lot for a new church in 1857 was halted by a financial panic in that year. Contractor/architect Monroe Sheire, a member of the church who later designed the Alexander Ramsey House near Irvine Park, was commissioned to design the congregation's second church, a stone building dedicated in 1862. By 1872 the congregation numbered over 300 members and the stone church was becoming inadequate. In 1874 the congregation made plans to construct their present church, located one block north of the stone church designed by Sheire.

The architect who designed the present First Baptist Church was Massachusetts born William W. Boyington (1839-1898), who studied architecture in New York and practiced in Chicago most of his life. Boyington was actively involved in rebuilding much of Chicago following the fire of 1871, and designed numerous institutional buildings, hotels, and churches for cities all over the Midwest. In some cases, Boyington did not actually visit the site of a proposed building, but simply sent plans from Chicago. This may be the case with the First Baptist Church. The contractors who built the present church

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Building Permit No. 8367, City of St. Paul Building Permits Division.

Sommerdorf, Norma, Ed. A Church in Lowertown: The First Baptist Church of St. Paul. St. Paul: First Baptist Church, 1975.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name St. Paul East, Minn

Quadrangle scale 7.5

### UMT References

A 

1	5	4	9	2	9	2	0	4	9	7	7	5	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Northeasterly 2 feet of Lot 7 and excluding southeasterly 140 feet of southwesterly 30 feet, Lot 8, Horace Thompson's Subdivision.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Survey Research Assistant

organization Ramsey County Historical Society date 10/31/81

street & number 75 W. 5th Street telephone (612)222-0701

city or town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 1-12-83

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register date 2/24/83

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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

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

First Baptist Church of St. Paul, St. Paul, Ramsey County

Continuation sheet

Item number 7,8

Page 1

7. J. Walter Stevens designed an \$18,000 2½ story brick addition to the rear of the church, which was demolished in 1967. Two rear additions and several interior alterations were made in the 1950's and 1960's and the building was sandblasted in 1958.

Today the church is in good repair and, despite its many alterations, remains a fine example of early Gothic Revival church design in Minnesota. The replacement of the church spire in 1967 and the installation of the new copper doors in 1971 both financed largely by St. Paul businessman Norman B. Mears have given momentum to the revitalization of the entire Lowertown area which is currently in progress.

8. were Monroe Sheire and his brother Romaine Sheire. The church was dedicated May 30, 1875, and was acclaimed as the largest and most costly religious building in St. Paul at the time.

Since the church was built in 1875, the Lowertown area has changed dramatically. The church originally stood near the mansions of James J. Hill, Henry P. Upham, Henry Sibley, A.H. Wilder, and Horace Thompson. During the late nineteenth century, however, expanding railroad yards and wholesale and manufacturing businesses drove the residents of Lowertown to other neighborhoods like Summit Hill and Dayton's Bluff. The houses that remained were subdivided into small apartments and urban renewal and freeway construction led to their demolition during the 1950's and 1960's. In the late 1960's, one of the last of the mansions, the Conrad Gotzian House at the northwest corner of Wacouta and 9th Streets, was demolished by the church for the construction of a parking lot. Today the church is surrounded by industrial buildings and parking lots instead of large Victorian homes. Despite these changes, however, the First Baptist Church has remained viable and has made important contributions to the city. Even today the church is a symbol of the rejuvenation of the Lowertown area and the revitalization of downtown St. Paul.