

PH 364983

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 7 1977

DATE ENTERED NOV 17 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

****** HISTORIC Bethel Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

~~Highway~~ #68 W

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Fairview

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

01

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Todd

CODE

219

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Bethel Baptist Church

STREET & NUMBER

Highway #68 W

CITY, TOWN

Elkton

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Todd County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Elkton

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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

Bethel Baptist Church stands in Fairview, a tiny community just north of the Kentucky-Tennessee border. The church is dominated both physically and spiritually by the 351-foot-high Jefferson Davis Monument. It was in a log house on the present site of the church that Jefferson Davis was born in 1808. This property is a short distance to the east of the point at which the old road meets what is now called the Jefferson Davis National Highway, the main east-west route in south central Kentucky.

Fairview itself, which straddles the present Christian and Todd County lines, consists of a number of modest 19th-century houses strung out along the north side of the main road, with the Jefferson Davis State Park and Monument on the south side between Route 115 and the Bethel Church. The atmosphere of the area, except for the towering monument and the impressive church building, must be very much what it was a century ago, and even earlier.

In the 1880s, when the old Bethel Baptist Church became inadequate, the church officials decided to secure the Samuel C. Davis homesite upon which to erect a new church. The original church, built in 1885-86 on the site of Jefferson Davis' birth, was seated with reclining opera chairs, a pastor's study, baptistery, dressing rooms and all modern improvements. On August 23, 1900, the 1886 building burned after being hit by lightning. A new structure similar to the earlier one was rebuilt and dedicated on June 16, 1901. The present building contains the marble tablet formerly in the old church commemorating Davis' gift of the land.

The high Victorian Gothic Revival design of the 1886 church and its present replacement is interesting in its own right, particularly in the decorative treatment of brickwork. Although dwarfed by the Davis monument nearby, it is a highly impressive structure, particularly in its modest context.

The body of the church is a five-bayed auditorium with a very steep roof and flat buttresses along the sides. In front of the main gable is the three-part facade consisting of a spired tower to the left (east), a gabled vestibule in the center above which the recessed main gable is visible, and a four-gabled tower without spire on the right (west). There are double doors with colored glass in the pointed arch above in the base of both towers. A large window of similar shape is the main feature of the vestibule wall. There are rectangular, mullioned windows in the second story of the towers. The spire is octagonal and retains its polychrome tile figurations of lozenges. Linking the spire to its rectangular base are small ridgelines dying into the angle sides and small ventilator dormers over the main faces of the base. The four gables of the west tower dip down low at the corners and combine with the spires and double central gables, enlivened by finials, to create a vivid and plastic skyline, characteristic of the High Victorian Gothic mode.

(continued)

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 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 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 1901

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bethel Baptist Church, located in the small town of Fairview, Todd County, near the Kentucky-Tennessee border, is an interesting late example of a brick version of high Victorian Gothic Revival architecture. The church, originally constructed in 1886 and rebuilt in 1901 after a devastating fire, is located on the birthplace site of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America (1861-1865).

The Bethel Baptist Church stands out in sharp contrast to the unpretentious 19th century residences in the vicinity. Leading to this distinction are its high Victorian Gothic-Revival qualities that include; the complexity of its roof line, the use of various materials, heavy details, and a sense of solidity.

The roof line's plasticity is a result of the combination of an octagonal spire with ventilator dormers at its base, double central gables, and a four-gabled tower. Animating these elements are finials at the apex of each. Materials employed include brick, stone, wood, colored bands of slate on the spire, and stained glass. The brickwork, which incorporates common bond, corbels, basket weave, rowlocks, and rows of stretchers and headers, presents an interesting variety itself and brings about a surface complexity also typical of this particular architectural style. The stained glass was produced by the Blum Ornamental Glass Company of Louisville--a noted firm responsible for numerous outstanding structures in the South and mid-West. Those windows of the Bethel Baptist Church were contributed by the citizens of Fairview as well as by individuals from surrounding communities.

Through the use of buttresses and varying brickwork (especially to frame the openings and define the corners), the arrangement of the sections on the north or main facade is such that each section possesses a certain individuality; yet the effective use of scale is successful in uniting them as a whole. This 1901 structure remains relatively unchanged since its erection--the only major alteration being the recent addition of a wing at the rear which does not harm the building's essential architectural integrity.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Meacham, Charles M. A History of Christian County, Kentucky. Nashville: Marshall and Bruce Company, 1930.

Reminiscences of Jefferson Davis. By Distinguished Men of His Time. Baltimore: R. H. Woodward and Co., 1890.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 6	47, 33, 8, 0	4, 07, 73, 6, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Mary Cronan Opel, Historian; Daniel Kidd, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE

June 1977

STREET & NUMBER

104 Bridge Street

TELEPHONE

(502) 564-3741

CITY OR TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

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.

SIGNATURE

Edward W. Yelton

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

7/1/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Robert B. Rettig

DATE

11/17/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

Charles A. Murray

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11.26.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Bethel Baptist Church

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The surfaces share this same kind of nervous elaboration, with corner buttresses, bands of basketwork brick, a corbelled cornice, continuous rows of headers and stretchers defining and connecting the openings, and other brick features, all dotted with inset stone trim. The foundations are of stone.

*Volzovich
7/15/77*

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The original Bethel Baptist Church, founded in 1816, was located several miles west of Fairview. About ten years later the congregation joined the Bethel Association of Baptists. In the 1820s many Baptist congregations were split over the reformation movement introduced by Alexander Campbell, a former Presbyterian minister. Campbell called for a return to a more primitive Christianity, eliminating societies and groups within the congregation which he thought would ultimately result in uniting all Christendom. The reform movement within the Baptist Church resulted in the establishment of the Disciples of Christ or the Christian Church. The Bethel Baptists rejected the reformation movement and agreed not to commune with Reformers or to allow them to preach at their meetings (Williams, p. 280).

In the 1880s, when the original Bethel Baptist Church, located some miles west of Fairview on the road to Pembroke became inadequate, the church officials decided to secure the Samuel C. Davis homesite upon which to erect a new church. (Samuel Davis, the father of Jefferson Davis, settled on the present site of the church and built a log house in 1793. In 1808 Jefferson Davis, who was to become the only President of the Confederacy, was born in the house. Samuel Davis sold the property in 1811.) After the approval of Jefferson Davis was gained, M. H. Clark of Clarksville, Tennessee, proposed to buy the three acres of land which embraced the old Davis house. Ten citizens of Fairview agreed to purchase nine acres and to deed the tract of land to Jefferson Davis. When in 1885 the church building was dedicated, Jefferson Davis presented the deed to the church as a gift. At the same time he presented an engraved communion chalice and plate. (According to Meacham's History (p. 253), "The log house in which Mr. Davis was born, and which was constructed from timbers cut in the neighboring forest, was purchased in 1897 by the Reverend J. W. Bingham and associates, and removed to the Nashville Centennial Exposition, where it was placed on display. It is now said to be in Richmond, Virginia.")

In August 1900, the 1886 church structure burned after being hit by lightning. A new structure similar to the earlier one was rebuilt and dedicated in 1901 and remains in use today.

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Stuart, Dr. E. S. "Historic Fairview." Fairview Review, September 27, 1901.

Williams, F. M. The Story of Todd County, Kentucky. Nashville: The Parthenon Press, 1972.