

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received DEC 15 1983  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Florida Baptist Building (~~1924-1932~~)

and/or common Rogers Building (1932-1959) 218 West Church Street Building

2. Location

street & number 218 West Church Street N/A not for publication

city, town Jacksonville N/A vicinity of

state Florida code 12 county Duval code 031

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name George Register

street & number 218 West Church Street

city, town Jacksonville N/A vicinity of state Florida

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clerk of Circuit Court

street & number 103 Duval County Courthouse

city, town Jacksonville state Florida

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

# 7. Description

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

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

The Florida Baptist Building, designed by Jacksonville H.J. Klutho and constructed in 1924, is a five-story commercial building, rectangular in shape, located within a well maintained business and commercial area of downtown Jacksonville. The building displays modest classical decorative features on its north facade, though its clean and functional lines reflect commercial design common to the nineteen twenties. With the exception of alterations to the main floor entryways and a small one-story rear addition, the building is unchanged from its original appearance and remains in good condition.

The 218 West Church Street Building, originally known as the Florida Baptist Building, designed by renowned Jacksonville architect Henry John Klutho and constructed in 1924, occupies lots five and six of Block 45 in downtown Jacksonville, Florida. The block is bounded by Church (north), Julia (west), Duval (south), and Hogan (east) streets. The building is located approximately in the middle of the block, presenting its main facade, 45 feet in width, to the north against Church Street. The original five-story building extends southward 95 feet to nearly the middle of the block where it is joined by a 56' by 16' one story addition, constructed in 1954. The east facade of the addition continues the original facade, but its west facade extends 11 feet beyond the original building.

Three other buildings are located within Block 45. East of the Florida Baptist Building is the Florida Federal Reserve Bank Building (1923-24), set on an east-west axis facing Hogan Street, its back facade ten feet east of the Florida Baptist Building's east facade. The bank, a classical Second Renaissance Revival style building, presents a striking contrast to the clean, functional lines of the Florida Baptist Building. The Seminole Club Building (1902-03), exhibiting a Colonial Revival influence, occupies the southeast corner of Block 45, immediately southeast of the Florida Baptist Building. The central portion of the block west of the Florida Baptist Building now consists of a parking lot that stretches from Church to Duval Street. A modern multi-story building of non-descript design fills the entire west face of the block along Julia Street.

The Florida Baptist Building is located within a fully urban context that offers in its vicinity a number of notable buildings whose origins reside in the so-called Jacksonville Renaissance, a quarter century of enthusiastic construction and significant architectural achievement that occurred after a disastrous 1901 fire. Although the block of buildings immediately north of Block 45 contains nothing of note, the block to its immediate east is filled by the St. James Building, considered by many students of Henry J. Klutho to have been his magnum opus. Constructed in 1912, the St. James Building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Another Klutho creation, the 1902 Thomas Porter Residence, a striking Neoclassical Revival style building, is situated at 510 North Julia Street, about in the middle of the block that is diagonally northwest of Block 45. At the southwest corner of the intersection of Julia and Church streets, just west of the Florida Baptist Building rests the Ambassador Hotel (1923), a Georgian Revival building designed by the Atlanta firm of Hentz, Reid, and Adler, also on the National Register. Still another Klutho creation in close proximity to the Florida Baptist Building is the magnificent First Baptist Church (1903) at the northeast corner of Church and Hogan Streets, diagonally northeast of Block 45. The buildings in this area are generally well maintained and populated by day when business hours are observed.<sup>1</sup>

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1924

**Builder/Architect** H.J. Klutho (Architect)

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Florida Baptist Building fulfills criteria A, B and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Designed by renowned Jacksonville architect H.J. Klutho and constructed in 1924 under the financial auspices of the Florida Baptist Convention, umbrella organization for the state's most numerous and powerful religious congregation, it is representative of commercial construction in the nineteen twenties. It was built in the waning years of the so-called Jacksonville renaissance, a quarter century of remarkable architectural achievement during which the city was virtually recast from the ashes of a disastrous fire. The building's initial occupants included the U.S. Veteran's Bureau and the Intelligence Unit of the U.S. Treasury Department, both engaged at the time in highly contentious historical circumstances.

The 218 West Church Street Building, originally named the Florida Baptist Building and later the Rogers Building, has occupied a significant and varied place in the architectural, religious, and governmental history of Jacksonville. The building was designed by renowned architect Henry John Klutho, Florida's leading exponent of the Prairie Style school of design; constructed under the financial auspices of the Florida Baptist Convention amid swirling controversy within the leadership of the powerful congregation; and occupied for a time by federal agencies immersed in contentious historical circumstances of their own. Of the four criteria used in evaluating entries for the National Register of Historic Places, the 218 West Church Street Building fulfills three: It was designed by the most influential architect in northeast Florida, probably one of the two most significant practitioners in the state's history; though unpretentious in design and appearance, it represents a style characteristic of commercial structures in the nineteen twenties; and, the building was associated with a religious institution and governmental agencies that played important roles in state and national affairs.

Officials of the Florida Baptist Convention, umbrella organization for congregations throughout the state, approved plans in 1923 for a building to house denominational offices and the Witness Press, a church publishing organization.<sup>1</sup> Despite strenuous objections by some church officials to the financial risk, Convention director S.A. Rogers obtained approval to construct a building that would provide rental income and offer potential for expansion. To that time, no other state convention had constructed its own office building. Opponents to the project thought their fears confirmed when, shortly after the building's completion, the Depression struck Florida. The Convention's corporate shadow, the Florida Baptist Building Corporation, struggled hard throughout the nineteen thirties to meet mortgage notes on the building.<sup>2</sup>

The building's architect, Henry John Klutho (1873-1964), had earned the title "Designer of the Skyline" for his contributions to the architectural reconstruction of Jacksonville following a disastrous 1901 fire. Beginning with the Dyal-Upchurch office building (1901), City Hall (1902), and the Public Library (1904), Klutho went on to transform Jacksonville's urban landscape in the distinctive native expression of the Prairie School. Klutho's work was not confined to Jacksonville. He designed the state's first official governor's residence (1906) and the 1923 extensions to the state capitol in Tallahassee.<sup>3</sup> Although he is remembered principally for the work he performed in the century's first two decades, Klutho remained capable of creative brilliance, as shown

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

## Published Materials

Broward, Robert C. "Jacksonville: Southern Home for the Prairie School." Historic Preservation, "January, 1978", pp. 16-19.

(See Continuation Sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than one

Quadrangle name Jacksonville

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

## UTM References

A 

1	7	4	3	6	5	4	0	3	3	5	5	4	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

This building is located within lots 5 and 6 of Block 45 (Hart's Map of Jacksonville). All significant features of the building are contained within these two lots.

## 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 William R. Adams/Paul L. Weaver, III, Historic Sites Specialist

organization Division of Archives, History & Rec. Mgmt. date November 23, 1983

street & number The Capitol telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida

# 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 George W. Percy

title George W. Percy, State Historic Preservation Officer date 12/5/83

## For NPS use only

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

for [Signature] Keeper of the National Register date 1/12/84

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

Chief of Registration

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Although architect Klutho is principally remembered as Florida's leading exponent of the Prairie School of design, he returned to a traditional style with the Florida Baptist Building, combining modest classical decorative elements with a pragmatic approach that characterized commercial design in the nineteen twenties. Because the building was situated in mid-block and surrounded on three sides by other buildings, only the north or main facade offers interesting detail (photo no. 1). Here the building exhibits a juxtaposition of strongly accented vertical and horizontal lines, three street entrances and three columns of grouped and, in the center row, paired windows emphasizing the verticality of the buildings, the horizontal stressed in a projecting cornice and canopy, spandrels decorated with geometric patterns highlighting each floor, and a decorative band of bead molding between the first two floors and along the base of a small third floor balcony.

With the exception of the one-story rear addition, the only changes made to the original facade of the building have occurred on the first floor. An ashlar scored water table that begins 18 feet back along the east and west facades wraps the north facade's first floor. The original configuration consisted of three doorways, a pair in the center entryway and two recessed flanking doorways set within expansive bay windows on either side of the main entrance (photo no. 10). A small canopy covered the center entryway. By 1953 the recessed entryways had been replaced by plain glass fronts, leaving only a main entrance (photo no. 11). Later, the two flanking entryways were returned, the doorways slightly recessed within a glass front that reaches from about three feet above the sidewalk to a canopy that presently extends along almost the entire north facade. The windows and doors are now metal sash and thus, it must be said, the first floor is distinguished only in that it complements the vertical emphasis of the entire facade.

The first floor is separated from the upper floors by a slightly projecting band or stringcourse of decorative bead molding that caps the ashlar water table. Three columned stone bands containing the window groupings rise vertically along the north facade, interspersed by beige common brick pilasters that complete the exterior surface of the remainder of the facade. The center band contains a pair of windows on each floor, the flanking bands groups of three windows. Between each window grouping is a spandrel featuring a decorative circle cut within the stone. Below the center pair of windows on the third floor is a small balcony. A wrought iron railing and bead molding along the balcony base complementing the bead molding along the stringcourse above the water table provide decorative elements for the balcony (photo no. 3). The vertical window columns end above the fifth floor where they meet a concrete horizontal band on the face of which is carved the site's name, "Florida Baptist Building." Above that band is a projecting dentiled cornice that is symmetrical with the band and the stringcourse above the water table, wrapping

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the north facade from a distance of 18 feet along the east and west sides of the building. The north facade is capped by a stepped parapet on which the construction date, "ERECTED A.D. 1924," is recorded (photo no. 2).

The interior of the building is devoid of significant architectural detail. A contemporary newspaper description of the building's construction noted that the interior corridor and staircase walls were to be covered with "marbleoid" for acoustical purposes. The lobby entry was to have consisted of Alabama marble.<sup>2</sup> If these materials were employed they are no longer evident. Although interior renovation is clearly needed in various sections of the building, the exterior elevations appear to be in fine condition and, as noted above, with the exception of the entryway and the inconspicuous addition, unchanged from its original appearance. After six decades of consistent use, the building is structurally solid and stable, testimony to its excellence of design and construction.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See photo no. 9 for 1983 aerial view of Block 45 and its vicinity.

<sup>2</sup> Jacksonville Florida Times-Union, September 21, 1924, pp. 16-17.

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in his design of the Larimer Library (1930) in Palatka, which subtly anticipates the Art Deco Style that became popular in the ensuing decade. The Florida Baptist Building, on the other hand, displays little flamboyance, and with its strong emphasis on vertical lines suggests a departure from Klutho's Prairie School formulations and indicates his versatility as a designer. The building represents a return to classical design, although the conservative effect that it produces reflects the pragmatic concerns of commercial construction in the hastily expansive nineteen twenties and, very probably, the instincts of its owners.<sup>4</sup>

In keeping with desires of Convention officials, the original four story building was designed to permit expansion. And, indeed, hardly had construction ended when one of the renters, the U.S. Veteran's Bureau, did request additional space. Thus, before the building was a year old, a fifth story was added.<sup>5</sup> Within another year, the Bureau, rocked by the revelation of financial misdeeds committed during the Harding Administration by Bureau Director Charles R. Forbes, evacuated the building. The Baptist landlords must, however, have looked with favor upon the activities of two other federal agencies that settled into offices on the third and fourth floors in 1928. These were the Prohibition Bureau and the Intelligence Unit of the United States Treasury Department, charged with the often unpopular task of enforcing the Eighteenth Amendment.<sup>6</sup>

The Southern Bell Telephone Company occupied one floor of the building in 1928, while in the nineteen thirties, the Rogers Building, the name officially given it in 1932, served as the operating headquarters for several insurance companies, including Independent Life, which were in the process of converting Jacksonville into the insurance center of the southeast.<sup>7</sup> From 1946 to 1954, Jacksonville architect Mel Greeley located his office in the Rogers Building. During that period, Greeley directed the affairs of the Florida State Board of Architecture.<sup>8</sup>

The Florida Baptist Convention sold the building in 1959 and moved to new premises. The 218 West Church Street Building is presently the headquarters for Register and Cummings, a Jacksonville engineering firm. The building is one of a diminishing number of Klutho buildings and a vestigial link to an enthusiastic era of commercial and architectural development in Florida's major port city. To the building's east rests the classically styled Florida Reserve Bank Building (1923-24), similarly a remnant of the Jacksonville renaissance. Though stylistically different, the two, in fascinating juxtaposition, architecturally express the varying elements of romanticism, nationalism, and pragmatism that characterized American civilization in the early part of the twentieth century.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Edward Earl Joiner, A History of Florida Baptists (Jacksonville: Convention Press, 1972), p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Florida Baptist Convention, Annual Report 1925-1926 (Jacksonville: Convention Press, 1926), p. 92. A letter printed in the report and signed by two Convention officers declared that "It is a fact that some of our

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people have never fully approved the erection of this building" and suggested that "for the perfect harmony" the directors of the Corporation be instructed to offer it for sale. The audit reports submitted to the officers of the Convention and printed in the annual reports reveal the financial problems the building suffered throughout the nineteen thirties.

<sup>3</sup>Jacksonville Florida Times-Union, March 4, 1964; Robert C. Broward, "In the Land of the Blind: John Henry Klutho and the Prairie School of Architecture in Jacksonville" (unpublished manuscript, 1976), Jacksonville Public Library; and Robert Broward, "Jacksonville: Southern Home for the Prairie School," Historic Preservation (March, 1978), pp. 16-19.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Robert Broward, Jacksonville Architect, Jacksonville, Florida, by telephone, November 24, 1981 and August 22, 1983.

<sup>5</sup>Jacksonville Florida Times-Union, September 28, 1924, p. 23 and December 14, 1924, p. 21; City of Jacksonville, Office of Building and Zoning, City Hall, Building Plans 132/24 and 770/24.

<sup>6</sup>Florida Baptist Convention, Annual Report 1927-1928 (Jacksonville: Convention Press, 1928), p. 41. The building's tenants are also listed annually in the city directories. R.L. Polk and Company, Polk's Jacksonville City Directory (Jacksonville and Richmond: R.L. Polk and Company, 1924, 1959), passim.

<sup>7</sup>Jacob Bryan IV, "Insurance History of Jacksonville," paper presented to the Second Conference on Jacksonville History, February 24, 1978, copy in the Jacksonville Public Library. The name of the building was changed from the Florida Baptist Building to the Rogers Building because some tenants objected to the necessity of placing "Baptist" on their letterhead. "Baptist Building Becomes Rogers Building," Florida Baptist Witness, February 18, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Polk's Jacksonville City Directory 1946-1954, passim.

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No. 132-24; 770-24; and 641-54.

Oral Interview

Broward, Robert. Jacksonville Architect. November 24, 1981 and August 22, 1983.  
Telephone interview. Jacksonville, Florida.