

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only  
received AUG 1 1984  
date entered AUG 30 1984

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

**1. Name**

historic First United Methodist Church of Columbia

and/or common Same

**2. Location**

street & number 222 W. <sup>7th</sup> Seventh Street N/A not for publication

city, town Columbia N/A vicinity of

state Tennessee code 047 county Maury code 119

**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 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	<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
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Bishop Edward L. Tullis

street & number Scarritt College

city, town Nashville N/A vicinity of state Tennessee

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Maury County Courthouse

street & number Public Square

city, town Columbia state Tennessee

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Maury County Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Tennessee Historical Commission

city, town Nashville state Tennessee

## 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

Situated on the north side of West Seventh Street a block and a half west of the Maury County Courthouse, the First Methodist Church of Columbia is the best example of Romanesque Revival ecclesiastical architecture of Maury County and one of the finest in South Central Tennessee. The massive brick church, built in 1875 by Anthony Gholson after a plan by architect W. K. Dobson, is one of the largest and most prominent buildings in downtown Columbia.

The church is a large rectangular brick hall church with flanking entrance towers on the south elevation. It is constructed of a pale red brick, laid in common bond for the lower courses and stretcher bond above. The building rests atop a dressed stone water table on a foundation of rough-faced coursed ashlar cut limestone, and is topped with a steep gabled roof of standing-seam tin.

The main elevation of the church faces south to West Seventh (Market) Street. This facade is flanked by the two square towers. The entry tower at the southeast corner is only one story high and has a gabled roof; the southwestern tower is three stories high, strengthened by corner buttresses and topped with a tall pyramidal tin shingle roof. The upper two levels feature paired, arched openings. The second story openings are filled in with brick and the third story arches feature wide louvered panels. This tower contains an 1800 pound bell cast in Cincinnati; the bell is supposedly mounted in a precarious manner and is not used today. At the base of each tower heavy six-panel wooden double-leaf doors with rounded arch tops provide access to the sanctuary; they are reached by coursed stone steps.

Behind the towers the main church walls, supported by brick wall buttresses, rise to the steep gable peak of the church sanctuary. The main feature of this front is the large rose window in the center of the wall. This window memorializes President James K. Polk, and local tradition holds that the outside wooden frame which forms a twelve-pointed star pattern is constructed from boards taken from Polk's old home, which stood two blocks to the west. Higher on the wall is a small opening framed by a six-pointed star with the date of the church's construction, "1875". At the southwest corner, above the entry tower, a octagonal bartizon tower projects from the corner. A corbel table of dogtooth brick follows the eaves of the roof below a molded wooden cornice, and is also featured on the two towers. A small enclosed one-story shed section with three rounded arch stained glass windows was added to the front of the church in the late 1960s; this section is constructed of a pale brick matching the original structure, and is not recognizable from the street as an addition. At the top of the high gable peak is a simple wooden finial topped with a wooden ball.

The east and west sides of the sanctuary are each three bays deep. The bays are separated by plain brick wall buttresses and the brick corbel table and wooden cornice continue along both sides. In the center of each bay is a stained glass memorial window; the windows are set in rounded arch openings under radiating brick voussoirs with keystones and dressed stone sills. The double windows are separated by molded wooden tracery. On the east side, stone steps lead down to double-leaf diagonal batten doors opening into a basement or crypt. On the west side, the lower part of the rear bay is covered in part by an entrance to a modern education building addition.

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The sanctuary was extensively remodeled in late 1967 and early 1968; at this time the original pews and chancel furniture were replaced, and the rear shed section was added to provide for additional space. The sanctuary does retain its original stained-glass windows and cove ceiling.

The building is in good shape overall, despite being sandblasted about 1970. There has been some damage from the intrusion of water at the top of the southwest tower.

A Sunday School at the immediate rear of the building was added in 1904 and remodeled in 1915; it is included in the nomination as a contributing part of the building. This section is two stories tall and is topped with a high hipped roof of composition shingles. At least five other major buildings and additions have been constructed along or joining the sanctuary, but are excluded from the nomination, as they are not integral parts of the historic structure and lack historical significance or architectural merit.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input 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** 1873-76 **Builder/Architect** W.K. Dobson, Architect; Anthony Gholson, builder

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The First Methodist Church in Columbia, Tennessee is nominated under National Register criteria A and C for its local significance to Columbia and Maury County in ecclesiastical architecture and for its associations with the establishment and growth of Methodism in Columbia. The 1876 brick building reflects the transition between the Gothic and Romanesque Revival styles of architecture, and is important in tracing the evolution of the styles. The First Methodist Church is the mother church of the city; the congregation was organized in 1820, and a Methodist church has stood on the present site since 1836.

Soon after settlement began, preachers came to the frontier. On September 14, 1807, the Western Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church created the Duck River Circuit, and appointed Zadock Thackston as the first preacher. Thackston arrive in Maury County two months prior to its creation in November of the same year. Methodists in the area organized class meetings and camp meetings, summer affairs of continuous preaching and fellowship. In 1812, Tennessee Methodists organized the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Fountain Head, Tennessee, near the present community of Portland. The Conference had sixty-one preachers and 22,699 members.

In 1820, Columbia citizens heard Thomas Madden preach at a camp meeting at Peter's Camp Ground and arranged for the Conference to send him to Columbia as minister. During his pastorate, a frame church was erected on South Main Street near Ninth. According to Nathan Vaught, who worked on the church, "The Church building was to be 50 ft. long and 35 ft. wide with a gallery across one end."

By 1836, the congregation had outgrown the frame building, only fifteen years after their organization. They purchased a lot at Market and High from David Looney for \$1,000. Vaught was contractor in charge of the carpentry work, and again described the new brick building: --"The audience room measures 60 ft. by 44 ft. inside and 22 ft. to the ceiling, with a gallery across one end extending a short distance on either side." The church was described as a handsome structure with a large basement for a Sunday School.

In 1851 the Methodists established a female college in Columbia, which operated until 1863 when Federal troops burned all the frame buildings and confiscated Corinthian Hall for a hospital. A second school, Halycon Hall, opened in 1854, and also was closed in 1863.

During the Civil War, the Methodists continued to meet, though on a limited basis. Immediately after the war the Tennessee Conference appointed Confederate veteran J. P. McFerrin for a stint as pastor. He was returned to Columbia in 1873, and was minister when, on the morning of April 4, 1874, a workman repairing the roof accidently set the church afire, and it was destroyed. According to the local paper, "its steeple tottered and fell and its bell was silenced." The congregation met the next night and began plans for a new church on the same site.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Garrett, Jill. "The New Methodist Church", (Columbia) Daily Herald Supplement, 15 Sept., 1973  
Jackson, Mrs. John Blair, et al. History of First Methodist Church, Columbia, TN  
1820-1984. Columbia: 1984.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Columbia, TN

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>16</u>	<u>496710</u>	<u>3941080</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Because of the amount of alterations and additions made to this building and site, the nominated property includes only the land upon which the building sits.

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Quin, Historic Preservation Planner  
organization South Central TN Development District date 4-84  
street & number P. O. Box 1346 telephone (615) 381-2040  
city or town Columbia state Tennessee

## 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.

Deputy  
State Historic Preservation Officer signature Herbert E. Huger  
title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission date 7/24/84

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 8/30/84

for Delores Byer  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The construction of the new church is well documented, as Alfred Horsely, a member of the church, was editor of the weekly Columbia Herald and Mail. In August 1875, W. K. Dodson was announced as the architect for the new church. Anthony Gholson began the foundation and brick work in March, 1876, and completed it six months later. Nathan Vaught once again recorded details of the construction: "the foundation of the building is of the following dimensions, the audience room is 70 ft. long and 41 ft. wide inside, and 28 ft. 8 in. to the ceiling. The front is put up in the modern style, with two towers one of which is one story high, the other is three stories high to accomodate a fine bell and a spire to rest on."

In April, 1876, the new cornerstone was laid in an impressive ceremony. Members of the congregation and friends met at the Masonic Hall and marched to the new church. The procession was headed by the Columbia Helicon Silver Band, followed by two ministers, Judge John V. Wright, the speaker for the day, the Sunday School teachers and children. The Blue Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, and Knights Templar in full regalia. At the church, places of honor at the corners of the building were given to a Mrs. Porter, a long-time member of the church, and the 76-year old Nathan Vaught, builder of the 1837 church. Miss Ida Jamison, organist, played for the group; the Rev. John Hamilton read a prayer, and the Rev. Dr. H. A. Jones of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church read the lesson, followed by Judge Wright's address. Articles were presented for deposit in the cornerstone, including two one-hundred dollar Confederate interest-bearing notes, presented by Edward Kuhn, who gave them so that "in coming ages when the building would crumble and fall under the weight of rolling years, the people might know by these mementoes that a people had suffered and fallen in a cause they believed to be just." As the band played the grand "Old Hundredth", the ceremony ended and the crowd dispersed. Jesse and Gus Powell painted the roof of the building in July; Sherrill and Sons plastered the walls, and one thousand dollars was raised for carpet by August.

Memorial windows to honor Dr. A. W. Smith, Sarah Ann Hamilton, the Revs. A. L. P. Green and Isaac Milner, Dr. Thomas Maddin, and the Children of a Dr. Young. A large rose window in memory of James K. Polk was placed high on the south wall in October, 1876. In the center is a likeness of Polk with the inscription "James K. Polk, 10th President of the United States." (Polk was eleventh president, and joined the Methodist church only on his deathbed.) Over the center of the window is a white dove descending; on the right a sword and scales of justice; on the left a square and compass; and below an open Bible. Local folklore holds that the wooden frame was made from lumber from Polk's old house, which stood a block and a half to the west, but this story cannot be confirmed. The stained-glass windows drew protest; old members decried the windows as the work of "new-fangled Methodists." But the controversy was settled when the Rev. J. B. McFerrin spoke out in favor of the Polk window.

Nathan Vaught led the subscription for the new bell, which arrived in August 1877 and was placed in a temporary housing in front of the church. Members of the congregation took turns ringing the bell all night long! The bell was cast in Cincinnati and weighed 1,800 pounds. With the aid of the tackle of Columbia engineer F. M. Vaughn, the bell was placed in the tower in April 1878. Sadly, the Methodists seldom if ever ring the bell today.

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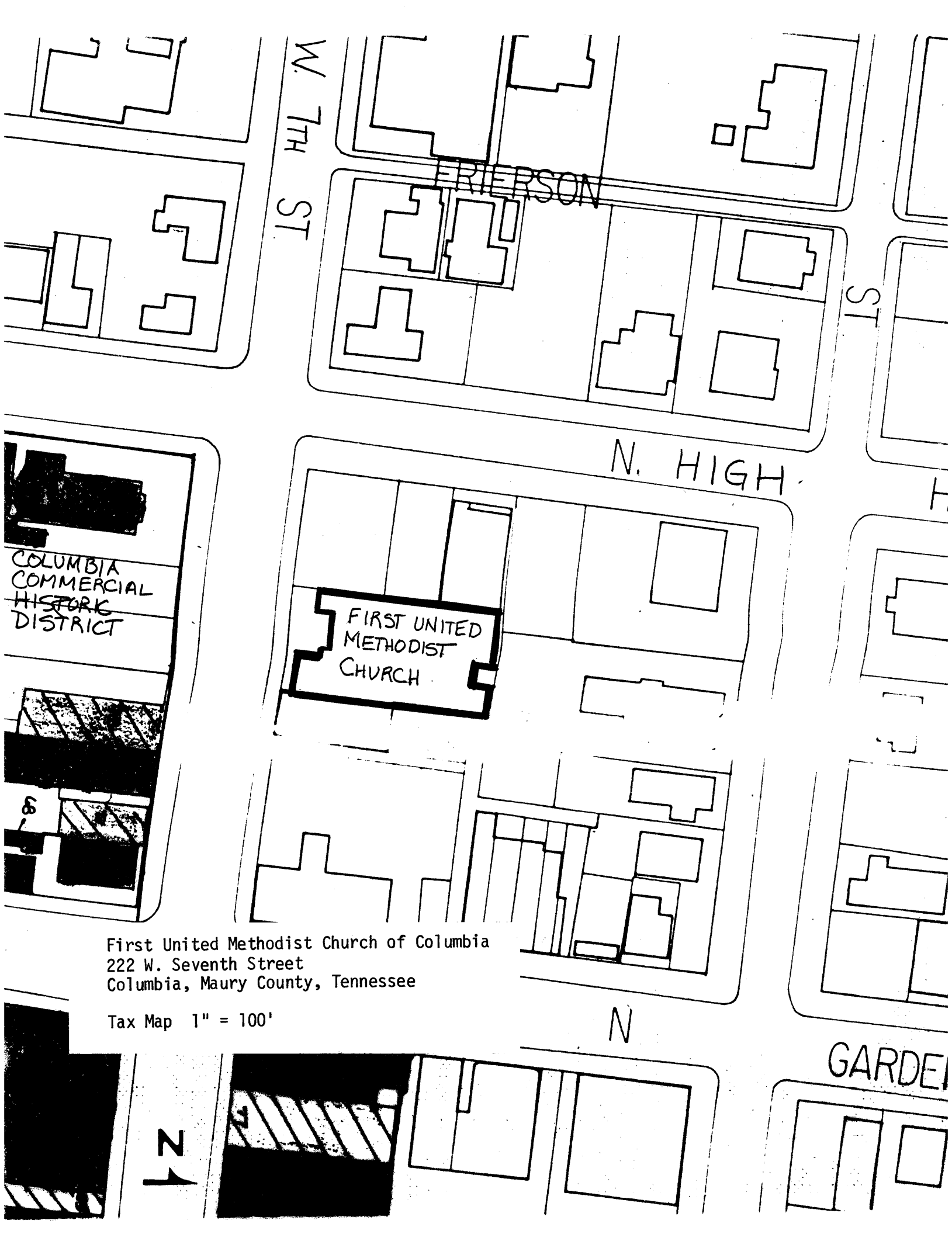
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The congregation has grown steadily over the years. In 1859, 204 members were recorded; in 1880 the number was 363; in 1904, 450; and in 1920, the number was 873. By 1945 the congregation had grown to 1,346, and in 1983 the congregation numbered 1,364 members. It should be noted that three other Methodist Churches were established in Columbia during this time. The name of the church was also evolved. In 1820 the church is simply recorded as the "Methodist Church." In 1845, after the Southern Church was formed, the title became "Methodist Episcopal Church, South", which was changed in 1885 to the "First Methodist Episcopal Church, South." After union with the other branches of the church in 1939, the word "South" was dropped. In 1968, after consolidation with the United Brethren, the church was renamed "The First United Methodist Church of Columbia."

Additions have continuously been made to the church. In 1904 a Sunday School annex was constructed on the northeast side of the church; this section was remodeled in 1915 and again in 1941, when a second floor was added. The parsonage on North High Street was razed and replaced with a modern Education building. The interior of the sanctuary was renovated and given its present appearance in late 1967 and early 1968. The most recent addition is the large Fellowship Hall to the west of the sanctuary, a large steeply gabled brick structure which replicates the cornice and some details of the original structure. It was completed in 1982 during the pastorate of the Rev. Robert H. Lewis, Jr., and was dedicated on November 28th of that year.

Architecturally, the building exhibits the characteristics of two revival styles of architecture. The steep gable, traceried stained-glass windows, and pointed arch window frames reflect the lingering Gothic Revival, and the round headed doors, dogtooth brick cornices, and doubled rounded arch bell louver windows in the west tower convey the influence of the prevailing Romanesque Revival. Although the interior has been extensively remodeled, it retains its original plan and features an interesting ceiling and the fine stained-glass memorial windows. The additions to the building are quite extensive, but do not intrude on the original 1876 church building.



W. 7TH ST

RIPERSON

N. HIGH

S

H

COLUMBIA  
COMMERCIAL  
HISTORIC  
DISTRICT

FIRST UNITED  
METHODIST  
CHURCH

First United Methodist Church of Columbia  
222 W. Seventh Street  
Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee

Tax Map 1" = 100'

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