

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0689 912

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
NOV 27 1978	
RECEIVED	
DATE ENTERED	JUN 19 1979

**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 Church~~/First Congregational Church

AND/OR COMMON

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

105 Courtland Street, N.E.

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

__ VICINITY OF

5th - Fowler

STATE

Georgia

CODE

13

COUNTY

Fulton

CODE

121

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

__DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

__STRUCTURE

__SITE

__OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

__PUBLIC

PRIVATE

__BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

__IN PROCESS

__BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

__UNOCCUPIED

__WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__NO

PRESENT USE

__AGRICULTURE

__COMMERCIAL

__EDUCATIONAL

__ENTERTAINMENT

__GOVERNMENT

__INDUSTRIAL

__MILITARY

__MUSEUM

__PARK

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

__SCIENTIFIC

__TRANSPORTATION

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ ✓

STREET & NUMBER

105 Courtland Street, N.E.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fulton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

160 Pryor Street, S.W.

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Preservation Section, Architectural Survey of Fulton County

DATE

1975

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Section

CITY, TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia 30334

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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 Congregational Church, located on the northeast corner of Courtland and Houston streets, is a modestly-scaled example of early-twentieth-century eclectic religious architecture. It incorporates many aspects of Italian Renaissance vernacular and some elements of the Spanish Mission style in an original composition intended for a dense urban situation.

In plan, the First Congregational Church is essentially a rectangle with its long axis oriented in a north-south direction. In mass, it is cross-gabled, with projecting square or rectangular towers at the northwest, southwest and southeast corners. The principal facade faces south on Houston Street and features a gable, with a rose window above and an arcaded-entry porch under a shed roof below, flanked on either side by projecting corner towers. A facade of secondary importance faces west on Courtland Street; it also features a gable, but with a Roman-arched window above and tripartite windows on the main-floor level below, flanked by a corner tower to the south and a larger projecting rectangular mass to the north. The east elevation is similar to the west, but simpler in its detailing and painted uniformly white. The north end of the building, which originally faced adjacent buildings on the block, is a simple gable, painted white, with plain segmental-arched windows.

A major design feature of the First Congregational Church is a projecting tower at the southwest corner of the building. Square in plan, the tower is set on a raised foundation and rises through two stories to a cornice, above which is an arched belfry capped by a pyramidal tile roof. The tower is subdivided horizontally by a tiled pent roof, above and below which are tall, narrow, round-headed stained-glass windows paired at the lintels. Simple, widely-spaced modillions decorate the underside of the eaves. This tower not only provides a focus for the architectural design of the building by itself but also, by standing at the corner of the street intersection, helps relate the church to its urban environment and identifies it as a landmark building.

Other notable design features characterize the exterior of the First Congregational Church. Tall, narrow, round-headed stained-glass windows are set singly or in pairs on the south, east, and west facades, and occasional round windows with quadrant keystones highlight these elevations. The entrance porch, painted white to distinguish it from the mass of the building, has an arcade of paired Ionic columns rising/descending with the entry stairways and a curvilinear gable over the main entrance. A similar curvilinear gable rises above the west side of the northwest tower, facing Courtland Street. One of the outstanding features originally found on the outside of the church was the Connally water fountain, which provided a much-needed service to black passersby of earlier generations.

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The entire church building is of masonry construction. Materials consist almost exclusively of smooth, hard, buff-colored brick laid in common bond on a raised foundation of rough-faced, random ashlar stone masonry. Details such as lintels, sills, and copings are executed in light-colored cut stone. Tiles are used on the tower roofs.

The interior of the First Congregational Church consists primarily of an open auditorium seating 1,000 people. The auditorium is basically rectangular in plan, with indented corners (reflecting the intrusions of the semi-detached corner towers on the exterior); the space is created by a cross-vaulted ceiling, finished in pressed tin, under the cross-gabled roof. Pews are arranged in a semi-circular fashion and are serviced by perimeter aisles, by two full-length radial aisles, and by a half-length radial aisle opening to the rear. A balcony supported by thirteen-inch columns of a simple Tuscan order extends around three sides of the auditorium. The surrounding walls, painted green, carry stained-glass windows placed singly or in groups of three. Above the auditorium, centered in the crossing, is a stained-glass skylight in the form of a Renaissance dome.

The only interior wall to receive notable architectural treatment is the north wall. An arcade consisting of a large central arch and two smaller flanking arches supported on Ionic pilasters rises from floor to ceiling. The flanking arches are blind; the central arch leads to a small choir lighted by stained-glass windows. Below the spring line of the central arch is a second, smaller arcade consisting of four niches, four Ionic half columns and a central flattened arch framing a stained-glass window. Beneath this superstructure, serving as a base, is panelled wainscoting. The wainscoting also projects forward around a semi-circular proscenium which serves as the focal point of the auditorium.

As with most Christian churches, the interior of the First Congregational Church features symbolism in many aspects of its decor. The number of windows and doors, the number of columns, the niches and the arches all carry symbolic meanings; the stained-glass windows portray episodes in Christian history; the only feature peculiar to this church and its history is a stained-glass window of Abraham Lincoln, whose role in the emancipation of slaves in the United States is thus revered.

Other interior spaces, less important architecturally, include an office, a library below the belfry, and a kitchen, a ladies parlor, a sewing room, and a public restroom in the basement.

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It should be noted that the first church building of the First Congregational Church, which the present building replaced, was built in the late 1860s. This original building was a smaller, red-brick, medieval-style building with a single spire. And at some time in the more recent past, the church was surrounded by three large frame buildings housing a gymnasium; a home for single, working women; and a parsonage.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) History
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1908

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Builder: Robert E. Pharrow
Alexander Campbell Bruce and Arthur
Greene Everett

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Congregational Church, founded in 1867, was one of the most socially-conscious churches during the period of 1890-1930. The Reverend Henry Hugh Proctor, who came to First Church in 1894 as its first black minister, verbalized some of the contributions that First Church made to the black community:

At the time it [First Church] was opened, it met in each of its facilities a special need. There was no Y.M.C.A. for colored young men in the city, and ours was the only gymnasium in the city for that group. There was no Y.W.C.A. in the city, and our home for young colored women was the only one of its kind in Atlanta. There was an employment bureau, and in this we served the people of both races in the city. A water fountain outside the church [breaking the color line] was the first water fountain opened in the city. Our trouble bureau was a clinic for all sorts of ills. Our prison mission served the man at the very bottom. Our Music Festival brought the best musical talent of the race to the city, and attracted great audiences of both races....

Other ministries offered by First Church during this period were: a day nursery, classes in domestic science, and industrial classes for the blind. Furthermore, the Atlanta Interracial Commission, formed in 1919, the National Medical Association, organized in 1894, and the city's first black Boy Scout troop were all organized in First Church. The church provided many facilities to accommodate these activities. Besides having an auditorium to seat 1,000 people and a basement that contained Sunday-school facilities, there were a library and a reading room, a gymnasium, a kitchen, a shower bath, an engine room, and lavatories.

It is interesting to note that the composition of First Church's congregation is predominantly middle-class black. Some of the past and present members are Norris B. Herndon, son of the founder of the Atlanta Life Insurance Company; Robert E. Pharrow, who constructed the present structure of

[continued]

7

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Porter, Michael Leroy. Black Atlanta: An Interdisciplinary Study of Blacks on the East Side of Atlanta, 1890-1930 (Atlanta: doctoral dissertation, Emory University, 1975).
- Aiken, Mrs. Walter (daughter of Henry A. Rucker). Private interviews held in her home and office, Atlanta, April 21, 1973, and July 24, 1973.
- [continued]

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Northwest Atlanta

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

16A 18 74,2 3,3,0 3,7 3,8 1,4,0

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the northeast corner of the intersection of Courtland and Houston streets and running with Houston Street east 83.3'; thence northeast 100'; thence west 92.67' to Courtland Street; thence with Courtland Street 100' to point of origin, [continued]

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

Michael L. Porter, Ph.D./Martha Norwood, Historian/Richard Cloues, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Sec. July 1978

STREET & NUMBER

270 Washington Street, S.W.

DATE

TELEPHONE

(404)656-2840

CITY OR TOWN

Atlanta

STATE

Georgia 30334

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

Elizabeth A. Lyon

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

10/13/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Charles M. Jones
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1.19.79

ATTEST:

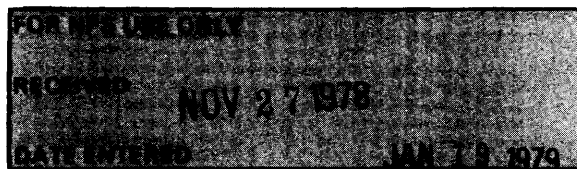
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

1/10/79

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First Church; NAACP executive Walter White's family; Henry A. Rucker's family; United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young's family; the family of Grace Townes Hamilton, a black female member of the Georgia General Assembly; and Jesse O. Thomas, former director of the Atlanta Urban League. The reason for such an august group of individuals is the influence of Atlanta University and the fact that the Congregationalists emphasize education. Booker T. Washington spoke at the dedication ceremonies of First Church in 1909.

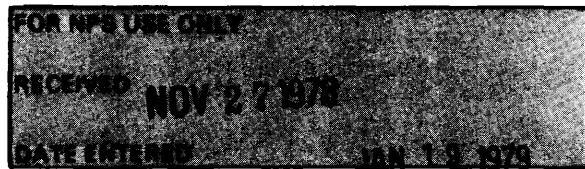
In summary, the First Congregational Church is significant to the history of the black community in Atlanta not only through its spiritual leadership since its conception in 1867, but through its activities of a social and humanitarian nature. The architecture is representative of the Beaux-Arts Classical Revival style and was designed by two of Atlanta's most notable architects.

The architecture of this church enhances the established historical significance. A fine example of early-twentieth-century eclectic religious architecture, it incorporates many aspects of Italian Renaissance vernacular and some elements of the Spanish Mission style in an original composition intended to highlight its corner location in a dense urban setting.

It was designed by Alexander Campbell Bruce and Arthur Greene Everett. Bruce moved to Atlanta in 1879 and formed a partnership with Thomas H. Morgan. He was the co-architect for the Georgia Institute of Technology, the county courthouse, Confederate Veterans Home, Kesse Lee Building and North Avenue Presbyterian Church. Outside of Atlanta, his works included the Cotton Exchange in Mobile, Alabama, and the Newton County Courthouse in Covington, Georgia. Bruce was the first member of the American Institute of Architects to locate in Atlanta. His work on First Congregational Church was done after his retirement in 1905. Everett practiced most of his life in Boston, where he designed the Journal Building and dormitories at Harvard College, among others. He worked for several years with McKim, Mead and White in New York, and during that time, he assisted with the plans for the Boston Public Library. Like Bruce, his work on First Congregational Church took place after his retirement. In 1891, he became a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and served as city building commissioner of Boston at one time. The builder, Robert E. Pharrow, was a black Atlantan and member of this church.

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Bibliography &

CONTINUATION SHEET Verbal Boundary ITEM NUMBER 9 & 10 PAGE 2

9. Proctor, Henry H. Between Black and White, Autobiographical Sketches (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1925).
Voice of the People, March 1, 1902; "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Celebration of Homer C. McEwen, pastor of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ" (1972).
Russell, David Alexander, Jr. The Institutional Church in Transition: A Study of First Congregational Church of Atlanta, Georgia (Atlanta: Atlanta University thesis, 1971).
Houston Street wall plaque on First Church building.
Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn. Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970).
Cloues, Richard. Architectural investigation of the site, July 1978.
10. with metes and bounds as shown on a Fulton County tax map for District 14, Land Lot 51, Square 0008. Unit 036 (now Unit 093), excepting existing rights-of-way for public roads.