

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Methodist Church of St. Petersburg
other names/site number First United Methodist Church of St. Petersburg/ 8 Pi 885

2. Location

street & number 212 Third Street, North n/a not for publication
city, town St. Petersburg n/a vicinity
state Florida code FL county Pinellas code 103 zip code 33701

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Cheryl M. Perry Signature of certifying official Date 8/13/90
Florida State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Alvora Byers Entered in the National Register 9/13/90

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals:
Late Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Brick
Concrete
roof Asphalt
other Stone: Slate
Metal: Copper

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1924-1926

Significant Dates

July 9, 1925

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Baldwin, James J./Whitaker, Charles C.,
Little, James P. & Son

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

Survey # _____
Record # _____

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	7
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3	3	8	6	4	0
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3	0	7	3	2	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The south 90' of Lot 14, and Lots 15 & 16 of Block 17 of the Revised Map of St. Petersburg, Florida 1889 as recorded in Plat Book 1 of the Public Records Office of Pinellas County, Florida.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire city lots (15 & 16) that have historically been associated with the property. The south half of Lot 14 contains the attached noncontributing chapel and elevator tower.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Howard Hansen & Barbara E. Mattick/ Historic Sites Specialist
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date August 1990
street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333
city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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SUMMARY

The First Methodist Church in St. Petersburg, Pinellas County, Florida, is a four story, Gothic Revival Style building with a steel frame and hollow tile, terra cotta block walls faced with red brick and cast concrete trim. It has a mansard-like roof with gables. The building rests on a continuous reinforced concrete foundation. The building plan is rectangular (200' x 100') with a 144' bell tower at the southeast corner. The original Gothic Revival detailing has been little altered. The property includes two attached noncontributing resources located on a separate lot immediately to the west of the main building: a 1950s Gothic Revival Style chapel and a 1977 elevator tower.

SETTING

The church is located on the northwest corner of Second Avenue, North and Third Street, North in downtown St. Petersburg. It fronts on Williams Park, a one square block city park. The area was in a state of flux when the church was built 1924-1925. Originally, the neighborhood was comprised of large single family homes, small winter tourist hotels, and churches. During the 1920s, shops and larger hotels were built in the area. The setting has changed little since the late 1920s, other than the demolition of some of the small hotels and houses near the church after World War II to provide parking areas (Photo 1).

EXTERIOR

The exterior of the church is red brick with cast concrete window and door surrounds and trim. The roof of the main block is pseudo-mansard with steeply sloping sides and a convex, nearly flat central section. The sides are sheathed with gray slate shingles. The roof of the bell tower has slate shingles with a copper finial.

The main facade (south elevation) fronts onto Williams Park, and contains three bays. A 144' bell tower occupies the eastern bay and is the dominant feature of the facade. Buttresses are located at each corner and tracery surrounds the bell chamber (Photo 2). The main entrance to the

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sanctuary, located at the base of the tower, has double, panelled doors with a Gothic arch filled with tracery. It is approached by a nine-step, divided stairway with a metal railing. The slightly recessed, central bay is gabled and completely filled by a very large Gothic arched stained glass window with cast concrete tracery similar to that over the main entrance. The western bay, containing an arched entrance and window flanked by buttresses, is similar to the eastern bay at the base of the bell tower. (Photos 2, 3, & 4)

The east elevation fronts directly onto Third Street, North and integrates the buttressed church nave elevation with a four story Sunday School wing elevation. The sanctuary section of the elevation is composed of five large bays, containing identical Gothic tracery windows flanked by buttresses capped with cast concrete. The beginning of the Sunday School wing is strongly articulated by a higher and more elaborate parapet that rises to a small hexagonal tower that crowns a projecting demi-hexagonal bay, the dominant feature of this wing. The asymmetry of the Sunday School wing contrasts with the rhythmic bays of the nave, but the two are integrated by the strong vertical lines of the buttresses and the heavy string course at the first floor level. The two planes of the mechanical equipment wing at the north end are deeply recessed (Photos 5, 6, 7 & 8).

The north elevation of the building faces a twenty foot alley and is entirely utilitarian in design. It is stepped back in three planes from northwest to southeast. Adjacent to the southeast is a service stairwell that runs the height of the building. The first floor has a string course and cast concrete window architraves which match those on the east elevation (Photo 8).

The west elevation was not designed to be visible, for when the church was built, a three story frame building was located very close to this side of the church. The sanctuary nave section of this elevation is identical to the nave section of the east elevation. The Sunday School section (north half) of this elevation is very plain, with symmetrically placed punched windows and no buttressing. The 1950-51 Gothic Revival Style chapel is connected by one

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story garden walls at the south end of the elevation. A semi-detached 1971, three story elevator tower is located between the chapel and the church (Photos 4, 9, 10, 11, & 12).

INTERIOR

Compared to the exterior, the interior of the church has little ornamentation. The floors are generally gum wood strip flooring covered with "duraflex", a linoleum type tile; the floors in the sanctuary are a combination of stained and varnished maple and gum wood. The basement floor is poured concrete covered with duraflex. The walls throughout the interior are smooth plaster over wood lath.

The church contains four major sections: sanctuary, auditorium, bell tower, and classrooms and offices. The second, third and fourth floors of the southern half of the building house the sanctuary, a large, nearly square room (96' x 86') surrounded by a raking, cantilevered balcony on three sides. The altar is centered on the north wall, and the entrances are in the southeast and southwest corners. The sanctuary seats 1200. (Photos 13 & 14) All of the windows of the sanctuary are of leaded stained glass, manufactured by the George Hardy Payne Studios of Patterson, New Jersey, in 1926. These windows are in the Tiffany style, which incorporates multiple layers of opalescent colored glass, often faceted, with the traditional painted and fired glass. Ten 40" x 60" windows on the lower level of the east and west walls of the sanctuary depict major events in the life of Christ (Photo 15). The large 10' x 18' window on the south wall is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" (Photo 3). The windows above the balcony are in geometric Gothic designs of gold, blue and amber (Photo 15).

Below the sanctuary on the basement (first) floor is an auditorium. A shallow raised stage occupies the south wall.

The bell tower intrudes 22' x 22' into the southeast corner of the sanctuary and contains flights of stairs that run from the sanctuary to the belfry. A similar, slightly

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smaller, stairwell is located in the southwest corner of the sanctuary and auditorium. These stairwells provide formal, public access to the sanctuary and function as a narthex. The basement auditorium has a second entrance located in the center of the east elevation of the building.

The northern half of the church building houses four floors of offices, Sunday School rooms, storage, and mechanical plant rooms. The northwest corner of the building houses boiler rooms, mechanical systems and storage on its four floors. The main entrance to the Sunday School wing is located in the middle of the east elevation, immediately to the north of the auditorium entrance. The entrance lobby is actually a landing of a stairwell that runs from the basement to the fourth floor. On each floor the stairwell opens directly onto an east-west wall that separates the sanctuary from this wing. The plan of each floor of the Sunday School wing is different, but consists of small and medium sized rooms opening off the main corridor or short cross halls.

The bell tower houses a ten bell carillon. The bronze bells were cast by the Meneely Bell Company of Troy, New York, in 1926. The largest bell weighs 2,108 pounds. The original manual lever system was altered to an electronic keyboard in 1964.

ALTERATIONS

The church has undergone only a few major alterations, all of which have been made to the interior. In 1971, the chancel platform in the sanctuary was enlarged and choir pews were placed behind the altar. Several rows of pews were removed from the rear of the sanctuary and a simple glass and wood frame partition was erected to create a narthex area in the rear of the church (Photo 14). Pews were eliminated on the sanctuary floor and balcony, and the remaining pews were more widely spaced. These alterations reduced the seating capacity from 2400 to 1200. In 1983, further modifications were made to the chancel platform and choir loft. The original pulpit and communion table, removed in 1971, were restored and replaced. In 1988-89, structural repairs were made on the bell tower which was

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near collapse. The repairs were made on the interior and are not visible from the exterior.

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

In 1950-51 a Gothic Revival Style chapel was built adjacent to the church's west elevation. It is physically linked to the church by one story high garden walls placed at the north and south ends of the chapel, creating a courtyard. The intrusion on the historic church fabric was minimal and the chapel occupies the site of a historic frame building that limited the visibility of the church's west facade in the 1920s (Photos 4 & 12).

In 1977 a red brick elevator tower was built on the west elevation of the church in the chapel courtyard. Access to the church building was provided by enclosed cross walks at the second and third floor levels, where doors replaced pre-existing windows, with minimal intrusion on the historic building (Photo 11).

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SUMMARY

The First Methodist Church of St. Petersburg, Florida is significant under Criterion C as one of the finest examples of Late Gothic Revival Style architecture in St. Petersburg, and as the work of James J. Baldwin, one of the Southeast's most prolific architects in the 1910s and 1920s.

CONTEXT

In January 1889, the Tampa District Conference of the Methodist Church authorized the formation of a church in St. Petersburg as a mission of the Clearwater church. This effort failed. In 1891 the Florida Conference assigned the Reverend Ira Patterson to reorganize the church, and it became the Methodist Episcopal Church South of St. Petersburg. The first building, a small frame church built in 1892 near the corner of Central Avenue and Seventh Street, served a growing congregation until 1902. At that time, the church exchanged that property for a lot on the corner of Second Avenue, North and Third Street, North, and another simple frame church was erected on the new site. It served the rapidly growing congregation's needs until 1904. The frame building was razed and a red brick, Gothic Revival Style church with a corner bell tower was built in its place by the contracting firm of Henry and Wishard in 1905. This church was demolished in 1924 for the construction of the present building.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

In January 1923, Dr. S.W. Walker, a former president of Florida Southern College in Lakeland, was appointed senior pastor of the church. His style of pastoral leadership energized the congregation during some of the most ambitious and progressive years of its history. In November of that year, a building committee was appointed to secure plans and investigate financial arrangements for a new church. On December 2, the church conference approved tentative plans to construct a new building at a cost of \$200,000.

By early January 1924, the building committee had secured an architect, James J. Baldwin of Anderson, South

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Carolina. The church conference unanimously approved his plans, authorized the preparation of specifications on the basis of a cost of \$200,000, and the hiring of a contractor after competitive bidding. On July 30, 1924, the lowest bid, one for \$260,000, submitted by the Jordan Building Company of Greenville, South Carolina, was accepted. Problems with the construction plans, however, arose in late 1924; the architect became ill, and the contractor failed to complete the required bond. The building committee negotiated a new contract with the construction firm of J.P. Little and Son of Charlotte, North Carolina, to erect the church as planned within twelve months, at a cost of \$265,000.

Construction began in November 1924, and progressed quickly. By July 9, 1925, the exterior shell of the church was completed, the belfry was half finished, and roofers were laying tar paper on the roof decking. In the midst of construction, however, half of the western and parts of the northern and eastern walls collapsed. An intensive investigation of the cause of the building's collapse was ordered by the mayor of St. Petersburg. The resulting report said that several factors led to the structural failure of the building, including "faulty design, poor workmanship, and improper supervision by architect, contractor, and city building department."

Charles C. Whitaker, a civil engineer from Atlanta, Georgia, who had investigated the collapse, was hired to rebuild the structure. He made no changes to the exterior or interior appearance of Baldwin's design. A comparison of Baldwin's plans dated July 7, 1924, with the completed church show that Whitaker inserted steel I-beam posts against the interior face of the exterior walls, and tied them into the steel roof truss system. The result was a steel frame building with brick-terra cotta curtain walls. The church was completed at a total cost of \$450,000 in the spring of 1926, and services were held in the new sanctuary in June.

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ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Gothic Revival Style

The Gothic Revival Style rose out of a late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fascination with the Middle Ages. In the 1830s, this interest was further fostered by the Romantic novels of Sir Walter Scott. Domestic use of the style was promoted by Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing who produced style books for small, rural, frame houses.

The style was best applied, however, to public buildings, especially churches. It is particularly appropriate for ecclesiastical buildings because it incorporates features which bespeak the basic tenets of Christianity, such as trefoil tracery windows symbolizing the Trinity, and upward lines pointing toward heaven. The highest examples of Gothic Revival buildings were masonry, but frame "Carpenter Gothic" forms were also popular. Although use of the style declined in the late nineteenth century, the Gothic Revival Style has never entirely fallen from favor, and it is still employed, especially for churches.

Distinctive features of the Gothic Revival Style include steeply gabled roofs with parapeted ends, towers, crenellation, foliated ornaments, bay and oriel windows, pointed arches, and leaded, stained glass windows and tracery.

Gothic Revival Style in St. Petersburg, Florida

Buildings in the Gothic Revival Style in St. Petersburg, Florida, are extremely rare, numbering less than one percent of the total sites recorded in the city's 1981 "Architectural and Historic Resources Survey". The seven surviving buildings in this style are churches dating from 1887 to 1925. Two churches, St. Bartholomew's Episcopal (1887) and the First Presbyterian Church (Church of God 1901), are "Carpenter Gothic" style buildings. St. Peter's Episcopal Cathedral (1899) and the First Congregational

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Church (1910) also date from the early settlement period of the city. While of masonry construction, they are similar to the frame churches in their vernacular approach to the Gothic Revival style. These four churches and the Bethel A.M.E. Church (1922) were not designed by formally trained architects fluent in the idiom of historicism, as were Trinity Lutheran Church (1924) and the First Methodist Church (1925). The Lutheran and Methodist churches are the only examples of academically correct Late Gothic Revival style buildings in St. Petersburg.

James J. Baldwin

James J. Baldwin was born in 1888 at Ridge Spring, South Carolina. He was graduated from the University of South Carolina in 1904, and then received architectural training in New York. In 1905 he was employed as a draftsman by Milburn Heister and Company of Washington, D.C. While there, he was responsible for work on several courthouses, office buildings, banks, and a railroad station. In 1909 he joined the prominent firm of Reuben H. Hunt of Chattanooga, Tennessee. Later that year he entered into a partnership with Christopher Gadsden Sayre, AIA, of Anderson, South Carolina, which lasted until Baldwin formed his own firm there in 1915. He also established branch offices in Gafney, South Carolina, and Daytona Beach, Florida. In 1926, he moved his main office to Asheville, North Carolina. He moved to Washington, D.C. in the 1950s, and died in 1955.

Baldwin's designs were primarily for public buildings, several of which are listed in the National Register: nine county courthouses and one residence in Georgia, all in the Classical Revival or Neoclassical Style; and the John C. Calhoun Hotel in Anderson, South Carolina. He also designed the Neoclassical Style Cherokee County Courthouse in North Carolina. Baldwin was also the architect for numerous churches, many of which were Baptist. Among these were the First Baptist Church of Tampa, Florida; the Community Methodist Church at Daytona Beach, Florida; and the Chestnut Street Methodist Church in Asheville, North Carolina. Some of his educational designs included high schools at Greer

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and Gafney, South Carolina, and the Girls' High School and Calhoun High School in Anderson, South Carolina.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The First Methodist Church, designed by James J. Baldwin, is an imposing, four story landmark in downtown St. Petersburg. It is significant as an excellent and rare example of the use of the Late Gothic Revival Style in the city. Distinguishing features which mark it as a fine example of the style include: the large bell tower, Gothic arched windows and entrances with tracery, the bay on the east elevation, and cast concrete capped buttresses and crenellated parapets. The leaded stained glass windows, designed with multiple layers of opalescent colored glass, follow the Medieval practice of depicting Biblical scenes. Only one other building in St. Petersburg, Trinity Lutheran Church, approaches the fine execution of the Late Gothic Revival Style architecture employed at the First Methodist Church.

James Baldwin's designs are located across the Southeastern United States, but even though he had an office in Daytona Beach, Florida, only three of his buildings, all churches, are recorded in Florida. The First Methodist Church is the only example of Baldwin's use of the Late Gothic Revival Style in the state.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Baldwin, James J., "First Methodist Church, Architectural Plans (3 sheets) 1924". On file at the First Methodist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida.

First Methodist Church, "Minutes of Called Meeting, July 30, 1924". On file at the First Methodist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida.

_____, "Quarterly Conference Records, Spring 1924 and Winter 1924". On file at the First Methodist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida.

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St. Petersburg City Planning Department. "St. Petersburg's Architectural and Historic Resources". City Hall Printing Department, 1981.

St. Petersburg Times. July 10, 14, 15, and 21, 1925.

Secondary Resources

Dodd, Randell. A Centennial History of the First United Methodist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida. St. Petersburg, Florida: Central Printing Co., 1989.

Herndon, Joseph L., "Architects in Tennessee Until 1930," M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, May 1975.

Telephone Conversations

Bishir, Catherine, Office of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer. Telephone conversation with Barbara Mattick, July 19, 1990.

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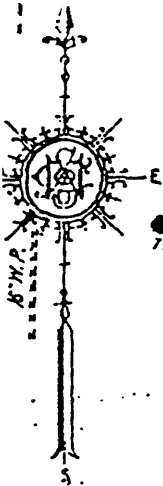
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Chandler, Andy, Office of the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer. Telephone conversation with Barbara Mattick, July 19, 1990.

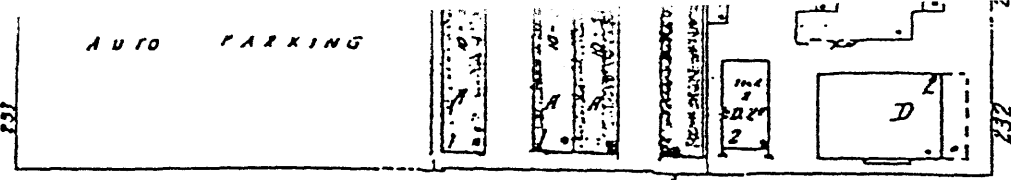
Curtis, Debbie, Office of the Georgia State Historic Preservation Officer. Telephone conversation with Barbara Mattick, July 19, 1990.

Wells, John, Office of the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer. Telephone conversation with Barbara Mattick, July 19, 1990.

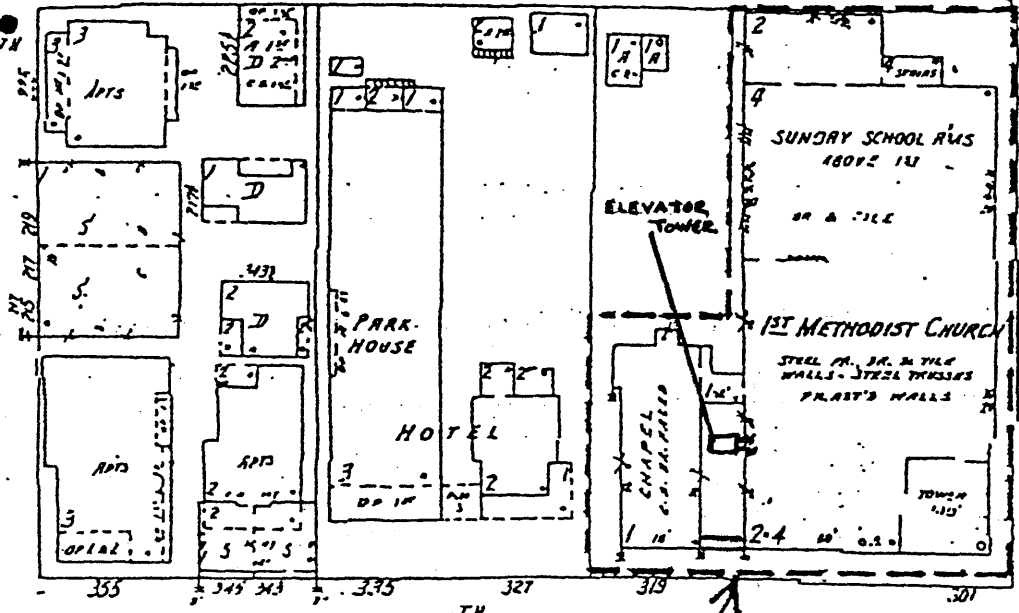
SITE PLAN



NOT TO SCALE



ST. N.



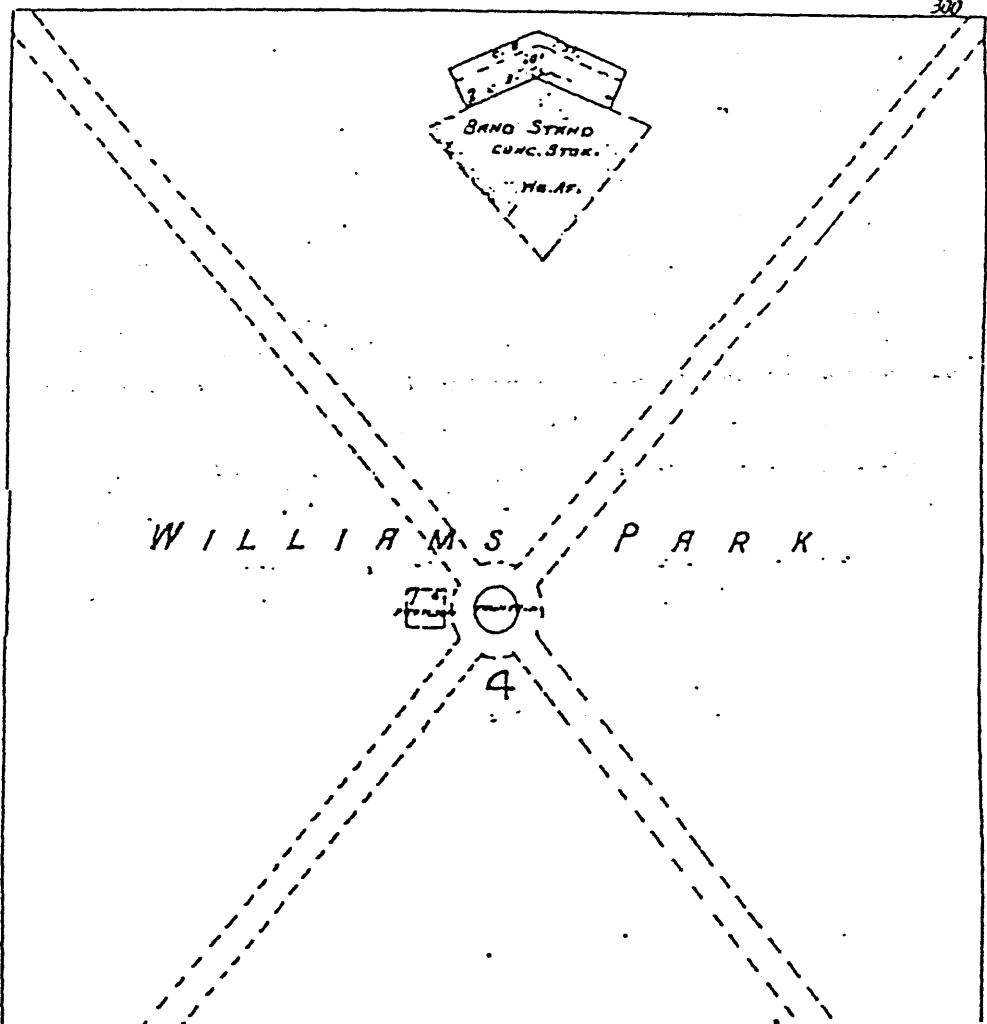
ST. N.

SITE BOUNDARY
5" W PIPE

2ND AV. N

12

8" W PIPE 4TH

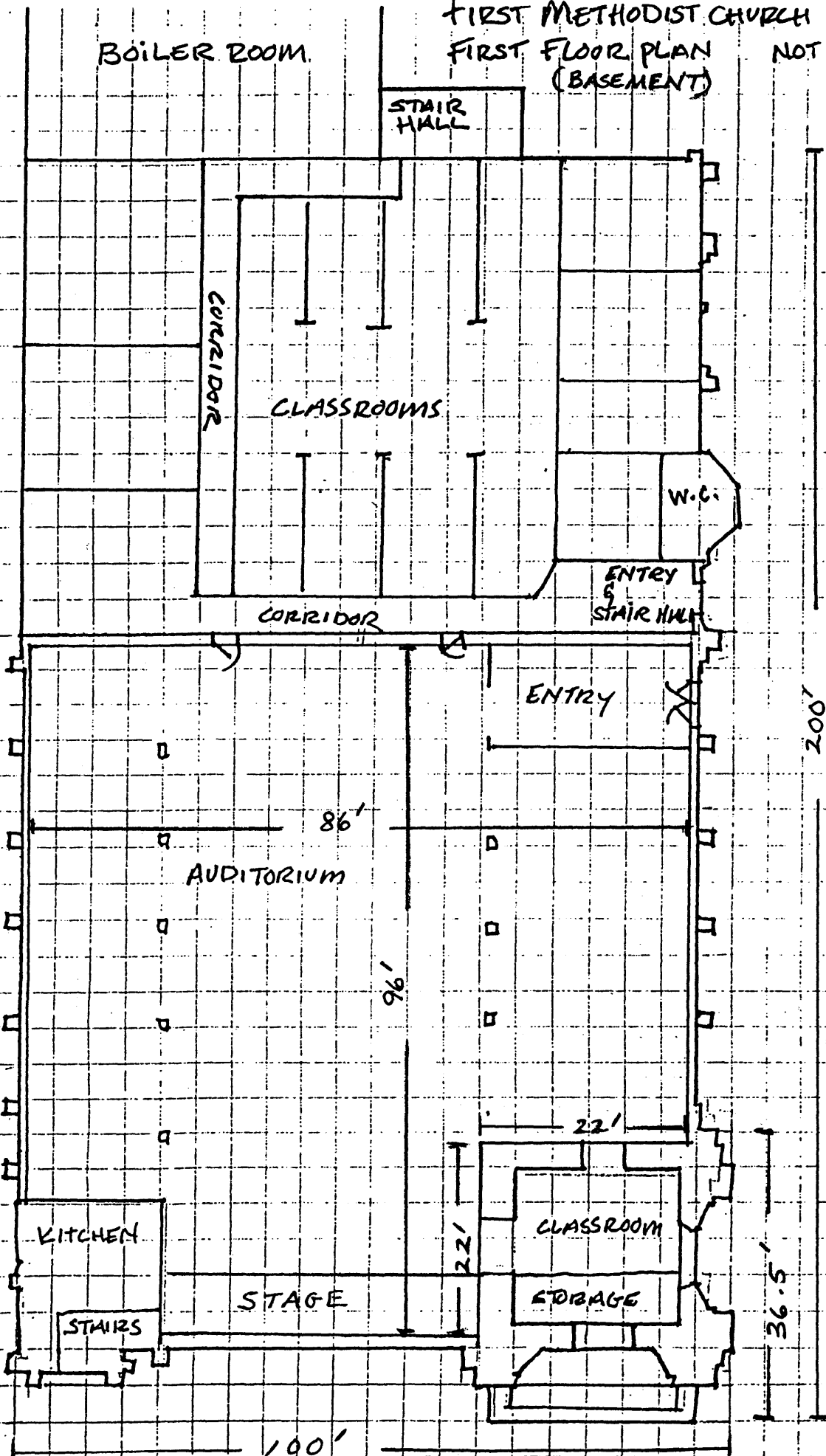


3RD

BASED ON
1952 SANBORN MAP

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH ST. PETERSBURG
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
(BASEMENT)

NOT TO SCALE



BOILER ROOM

STAIR HALL

CORRIDOR

CLASSROOMS

W.C.

ENTRY
&
STAIR HALL

CORRIDOR

ENTRY

AUDITORIUM

86'

96'

200'

KITCHEN

STAIRS

STAGE

22'

CLASSROOM

STORAGE

22'

36.5'

100'

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, ST. PETERSBURG
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

MECHANICAL

STAIR HALL



NOT TO SCALE

OFFICES AND CLASS ROOMS

RECTOR'S OFFICE

STAIR HALL

CHANCEL
ALTAR

96'

SANCTUARY

86'

200'

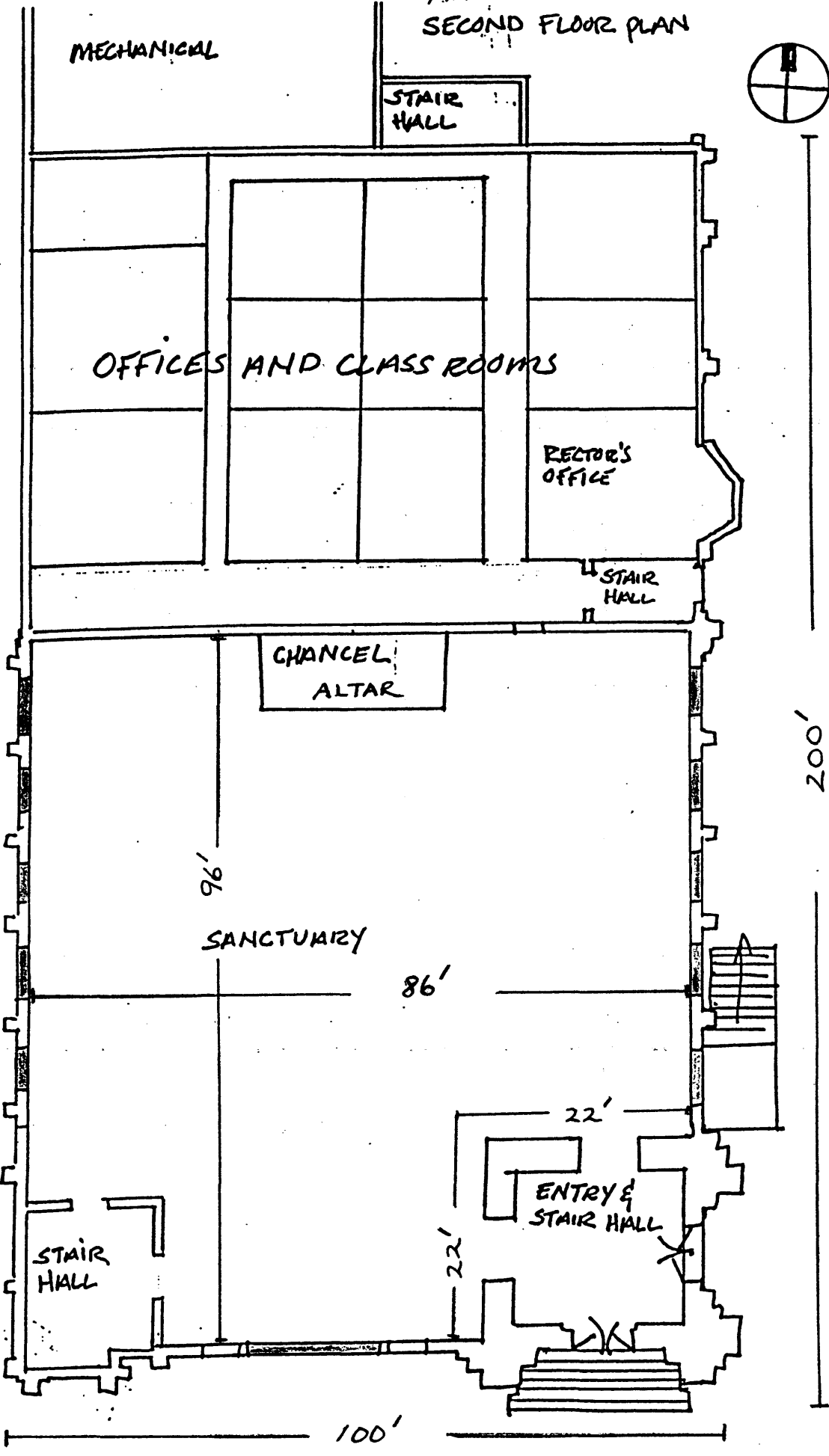
22'

ENTRY &
STAIR HALL

22'

STAIR HALL

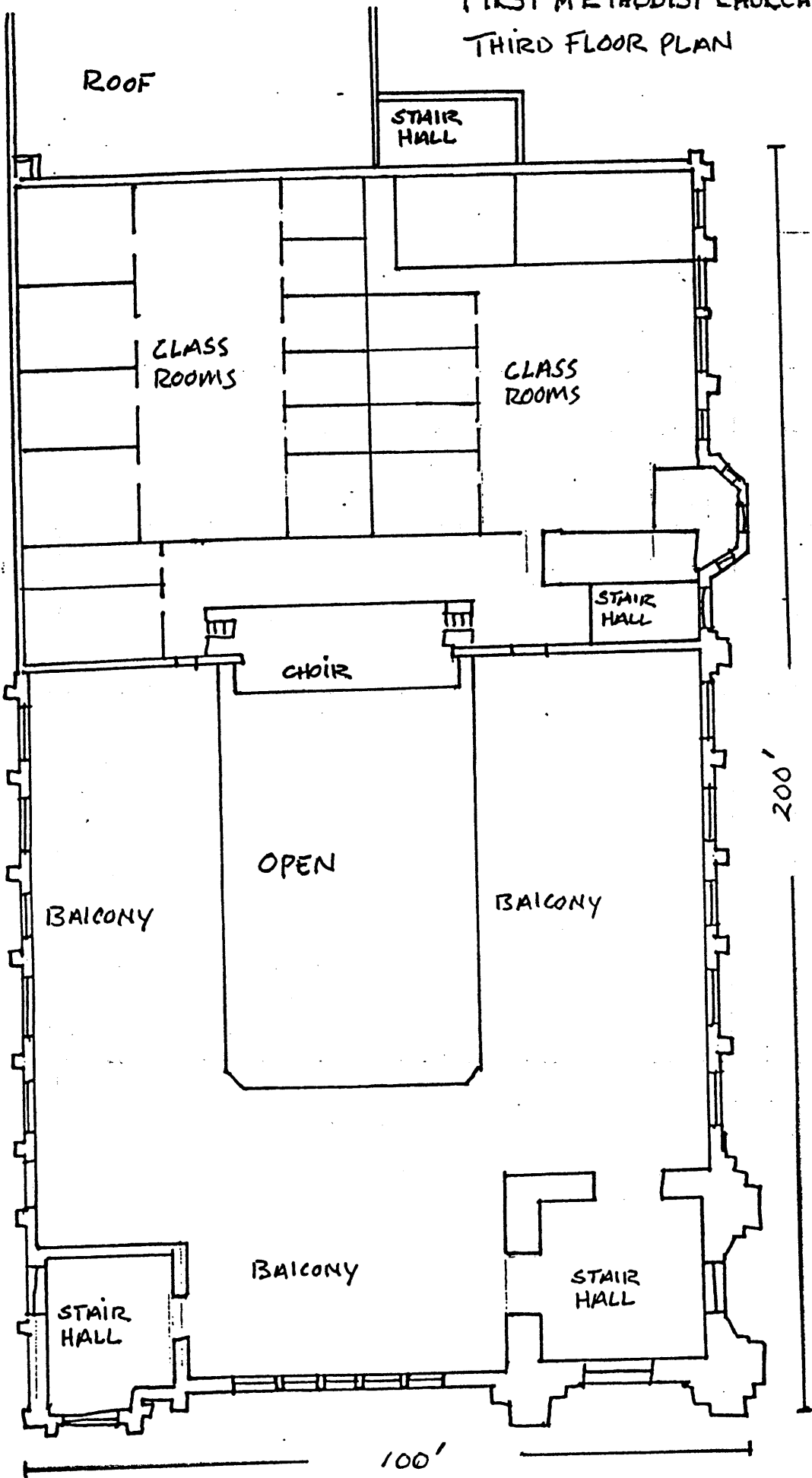
100'



FIRST METHODIST CHURCH, ST. PETERSBURG
THIRD FLOOR PLAN



NOT TO SCALE



ROOF

STAIR
HALL

CLASS
ROOMS

CLASS
ROOMS

STAIR
HALL

CHOIR

OPEN

BALCONY

BALCONY

200'

STAIR
HALL

BALCONY

STAIR
HALL

100'

FIRST METHODIST CHURCH ST. PETERSBURG
FOURTH FLOOR

STAIR
HALL

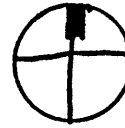
CLASS ROOMS

CORRIDOR

STAIR
HALL

OPEN UPPER PART OF SANCTUARY

STAIRS TO
BELFREY



NOT TO SCALE

200'

100'