

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

For NPS use only

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

received **JUL 12 1985**

date entered **AUG 8 1985**

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

**1. Name**

historic Stone Street Baptist Church

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number 311 Tunstall Street

NA not for publication

city, town Mobile

NA vicinity of Congressional District 1

state Alabama

code 01

county Mobile

code 097

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Trustees of Stone Street Baptist Church

street & number 311 Tunstall Street

city, town Mobile

NA vicinity of

state Alabama 36603

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Mobile County Courthouse

street & number 109 Government Street

city, town Mobile

state Alabama 36601

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970-present  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery

state Alabama

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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

The Stone Street Baptist Church is located at the southwest corner of Tunstall and Chestnut Streets, just north of Davis Avenue. The church is 1½ stories in height and sheathed in yellow brick. A gable roof with ridge running perpendicular to Tunstall Street covers the major portion of the building, with a small hip intersecting the gable at the rear which covers two small offset wings. The facade is composed of a three bay, recessed portico upheld by four columns of a rudimentary Scamozzi order and flanked by a pair of square towers.

The building combines medieval and classical motifs. Elements that reflect this medieval association include the lancet openings provided for the windows along the building's flanks and the three facade entrances. False buttresses that occur along the sides and the crenelated parapets on the facade towers (the northernmost one capped by a cone-like bellcast roof with finial) reinforce this medieval association.

Classical elements can be seen in the podium base and columnar porch. Piercing the gable pediment is a pointed window beneath which runs a frieze embellished with bezants and stylized triglyphs.

The interior of the church has been modified over time. The large seating area for the congregation contains wooden pews taken from a Jewish synagogue. The small balcony at the rear of the church provides additional seating. The interior walls have been covered by sheetrock although the beaded board wainscot exists behind the sheetrock. Beaded board ceilings are still present under the accoustical tile of the balcony. Original window sash has been replaced by aluminum members infilled with colored glass.

There exists no documentation showing or describing the original appearance of the Stone Street Baptist Church. Photographic evidence, however, reveals the building's appearance following its 1909 remodeling. Clearly depicted in the photograph is a frame structure with lancet headed windows and a bell tower along the facade. With the 1930s remodeling, the character of both the interior and exterior was modified to suit the congregation's needs and taste.

# 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 1931 Builder/Architect ?

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

### Criterion C - Architecture

The Stone Street Baptist Church is significant as an eclectic/vernacular reworking of a mid-nineteenth century frame church by laymen who strove to create a more monumental and heroic building to house their congregation. This project, undertaken at the height of the Depression by the deacons of the church, looked to other examples of architect-designed ecclesiastical architecture in the city. In addition, oral history states that an unnamed source book gave inspiration to the deacons who sought to achieve an "Asiatic" look (in the vernacular/folk tradition, more properly interpreted as picturesque or exotic) for the building.

Black churches that might have influenced the Stone Street deacons included such buildings as the St. Louis Street Baptist Church, 114 N. Dearborn St., the State Street AME Church, 502 State St., the St. Michael Street Emanuel AMC Church, 656 St. Michael St., and the Big Zion AME Church, 112 S. Bayou St. These churches were all constructed of brick and may have conveyed a sense of strength and permanence that the deacons found desirable to emulate in their new church design. The designs of these churches relied heavily on medieval or renaissance precedents---crenelated towers, lancet windows and false buttresses.

Other churches in Mobile's downtown area may have provided classical models such as Christ Episcopal Church, 114 St. Emanuel St., Government Street Presbyterian Church, 300 Government St., or the First Baptist Church at 806 Government St. There are unmistakable classical references in the 1930s redesign of Stone Street: the suggestion of the church as a temple is seen through the orientation of the gable end to the street and the placement of the building on a low podium base. The large columns at the entrance also suggest classical precedent.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Louise Erskine, Research notes on Baptist Church History, unpublished research, 1975; Frederick Douglas Richardson, The Stone Street Baptist Church--Alabama's First, 1806-1982, Futura Printing Inc., 1982; Sarah King Rice, The History of the Stone Street Baptist Church, recording of oral history.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Mobile

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	3	9	9	3	1	0	3	3	9	6	2	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

Lot at the northwest corner of Chestnut and Tunstall Streets, 108' x 109'

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

state	NA	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne S. Bantens, Mobile Historic Development Com., & Shirley D. Qualls, Historic Res. Coordinator

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date August 15, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone (205) 261-3184

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

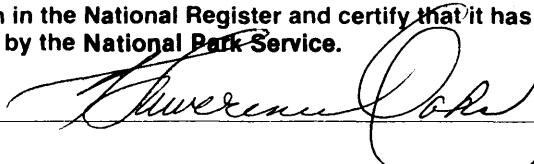
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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



title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6-12-85

### For NPS use only

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

  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 8/8/85

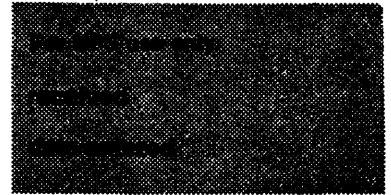
Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Historical Summary

Stone Street Baptist Church, Mobile (1870); 1909; 1931

The 1931 construction of Stone Street Baptist Church was the second building venture of this church congregation at the southwest corner of Chestnut and Tunstall Streets. Although documentation dating as early as 1843 indicates the existence of a black church at this site, there is no mention of the church name or denomination. In fact there is no documentation justifying the presence of this congregation at this site until the 1870s.

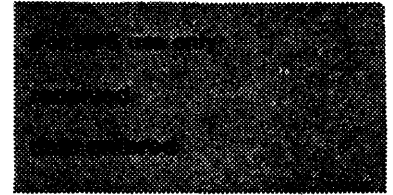
The "original" congregation of the Baptist denomination in the city of Mobile was organized in 1835. Utilizing several meeting places prior to 1839, the congregation finally settled in a newly completed plain brick church building on a lot on the north side of Saint Anthony Street. This congregation disbanded in 1840, then immediately reorganized under the name of St. Anthony Baptist Church, appropriate to its location. In 1843 the trustees of Saint Anthony Street Baptist Church purchased a plot of land situated at the southwest corner of Chestnut and Tunstall Streets "for the use and benefit of the African Branch of said Church" (Deed Book 5, Old Series, page 387). Within a period of two years, following the acquisition, two frame buildings of two stories were situated on this property according to the City Engineer's maps completed or updated to ca. 1845. Twenty-five years later (1870) the title to the property was transferred to the trustees of the Stone Street Baptist Church. During the approximate 150 years, from the establishment of the original Baptist congregation in Mobile, many changes have occurred in local endeavors and relationships within the denomination; yet, from the 1846 accomplishment of a separate African Church Branch, this site has been used continuously by a black congregation of the Baptist denomination in Mobile.

There is no clear description or early photograph in existence documenting the original appearance of the Stone Street Baptist Church building prior to 1909. The 1878 Hopkins Atlas documents only an "all-frame building." According to the cornerstone, the church was "rebuilt" in 1909. A photograph taken shortly after the 1909 construction reveals a frame building with lancet headed windows and a bell tower along the facade. Sanborn Insurance Maps, updated to 1922, also attest to frame construction of the building.

During the 20th century, appointments have included twelve pastors, with deacons and one interim pastor supplying pastoral services as needed. In 1922 Stone Street Baptist boasted a full membership that had "outgrown the present structure"; yet, the congregation was without a pastor. Somehow the search for a pastor who would provide years of continuous service had eluded the membership. Seeking its seventh pastor since 1902, the congregation settled on Rev. M. C. Cleveland, Sr. Cleveland, who for many years served on the Selma University Board of Trustees as Chairman (named Chairman Emeritus until his death in 1975) instituted a program for rebuilding the church. Hoping to achieve a construction comparable to other distinguished churches in the city, the deacons and pastor consulted a source book for inspiration, and began noting local examples of ecclesiastical architecture. Possessing a wealth of members with construction experience and expertise, the laymen of the church blended architectural elements to convey a sense of strength and permanence, while planning to achieve an exotic or picturesque religious monument. By 1931 the "brick modernization" of the church was completed, and an additional cornerstone added to the building. The Sanborn Maps of Mobile issued in 1924 and updated to 1948 show a veneered building having the outlines of the present church, including the porticoed entrance.

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Historical Summary

Stone Street Baptist Church, Mobile

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Shortly thereafter, due to a lack of space to house the Sunday School, the deacons had plans drawn for an annex; however, this construction did not take place until 1941.

In 1932 Rev. Cleveland was called to pastor the Day Street Baptist Church in Montgomery. Again the congregation had to initiate a search for stable leadership. Dr. C. T. Hayes of Dothan accepted the call, and immediately instituted efforts to relieve the church of the building debt inherited from the past administration. Within a period of eight years, under the leadership of Rev. Hayes, the church not only cleared its debt but also completed the greatly needed annex. The church did not enter another building venture until the 1950s, after the installation of its present pastor Dr. C. A. Tunstall.

Realizing the need in the community for a religious complex, the trustees of Stone Street Baptist submitted in 1950 a proposal for a building expansion program to the congregation. Although the congregation agreed with this need, the plan was rejected in favor of repairing and remodeling the interior of the sanctuary. The bulk of this work was executed by the chairman of the Deacon Board, Zack Fisher, a local contractor. The work was completed in 1954, and included repair of the foundation, reconstruction of the floors and replacement of all rotted wood. Deacon Fisher also constructed two storage areas for choir robes, and installed new pews.

In 1979 Stone Street Baptist Church suffered severe damage as Hurricane Frederick literally snatched the roof off the building. The pastor appointed a Church Building Committee, which in turn commissioned the services of the Mac-Pon Construction Company of Birmingham to replace the roof. While the roof repair was in process, the pastor requested that the committee also investigate the possibility of rejuvenating efforts to construct an educational building. After viewing several plans, the committee settled on a plan used by a neighboring church (Martin Lutheran Church) on Davis Avenue. This plan incorporated folding petitions, thereby conserving space and greatly reducing costs. Financing the project became the next concern. Several attempts to negotiate a loan with local banks proved unsuccessful. Finally, a loan was secured from Birmingham entrepreneur Dr. A. G. Gaston. Gaston had proposed to render assistance to black churches in Mobile damaged by the storm. The construction was completed in 1981, again utilizing the services of the Mac-Pon Company. The building bears the name of Charles A. Tunstall, the pastor.

Today Stone Street Baptist is recognized as one of Alabama's most influential black Baptist churches. Its invaluable support in the surrounding community involving social justice, education and spiritual enrichment is reflected in the respect and admiration afforded the pastor and congregation throughout the years. This church building, an achievement of laymen who successfully utilized resources available to them, has and continues to be an inspiration to the historically black neighborhood it serves.