

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

For NPS use only

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

received AUG 4 1987

date entered NOV 25 1987

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

1. Name

historic First Baptist Church

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 10th Avenue at 11th Street (NW corner) n/a not for publication

city, town Greeley n/a vicinity of

state Colorado code 08 county Weld code 023

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> n/a in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name First Baptist Church Board of Trustees

street & number 10th Avenue at 11th Street (NW)

city, town Greeley n/a vicinity of state Colorado 80631

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Weld County Courthouse

street & number 915 10th Street

city, town Greeley state Colorado

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Ongoing federal state county local

depository for survey records Colorado Historical Society 1300 Broadway

city, town Denver state Colorado

7. Description

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <u>n/a</u> 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 <u>n/a</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Baptist Church is a Neoclassical style building located in the downtown section of Greeley at the corner of Eleventh Street facing east onto Tenth Avenue. Neoclassical elements of the building include its symmetrical arrangement, large pedimented portico, unfluted Ionic columns, unenriched entablature, parapet, unadorned roofline, and smooth wall finish. Built in 1911, it is a rectangular building on a raised foundation measuring 65' by 90'. The building is topped by an unenriched parapet. Paneled pedestals are set into the parapet and entablature at the corners of the building and to each side of the large pediment in the central bay. The entablature frieze is plain, excepting roundels located above each column. Block modillions set above the denticulated corona support the cornice.

The symmetrical front elevation consists of three bays defined by pairs of unfluted stone Ionic columns which stand on pedestal bases resting on the water table of the raised foundation. The central bay is a large pedimented portico. The large central pediment, with plain tympanum, is supported by columns, and extends out above a round arched panel of lozenge pattern transoms. Set into the panel of transoms, directly above the doorway, is a smaller central pediment. At the top sides of the arch label is a triangular section of decorative carved stonework. The label of the central bay arch stops at the impost. The side bays of the front elevation have windows with architraves. A stained glass roundel is set in both bays just below the entablature and below that is a window with the lower sill resting on the water table of the raised foundation. Neoclassical design is reinforced on the north and south elevations with the entablature, pediments and arched windows with large lozenge pattern stained glass, similar to the window in the central arched entry in the front elevation. A roundel with stained glass is located on the north elevation and a window with a semi-arched hood is found on the south.

The exterior of the building retains much of its original integrity. At the front, the original broad stairway leading up to the main entry from the street, was re-designed in 1964 as a double stairway with intermediate landings which run toward the building and then turn to run parallel with the front walls. The stairway is set behind a brick wall and podia. The original double front doors of paneled wood were replaced by all glass doors. At the northwest rear, there is a two story brick addition, constructed in 1964, which blends with the older building brick color, height and window alignment. This 7300 square-foot addition had eighteen rooms on three levels and provided eleven new classrooms, a nursery area, offices, a small second kitchen and restrooms. In the lower level is a small chapel, the Garden Room and an adjoining outdoor sunken garden on the southwest rear which is separated from the street by a brick wall. These alterations do not significantly detract from the overall integrity of the building's Neoclassical design.

On the interior, the auditorium, which is a large rectangular room with high ceilings, retains its original mahogany pews, woodwork and beamed ceiling lights. The main floor seats about 500 persons while balconies along the sides and rear seat approximately 300 persons. At the front of the auditorium there is an Excedra-form apse of leaded patterned

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stained glass. At either side of the apse are pilasters defining small arched openings which contain the organ pipes and the baptistry which are both concealed by wooden grille-work. The organ was purchased in 1927 from the old Orpheum Theater in Denver. Around the tops of the walls is a dentiled molding. The ceiling has beams which have light globes running the length of each beam. The brass ceiling chandeliers are not original.

In addition to the auditorium, the original building has two floors of rooms at the rear which include the library, prayer room, treasurer's office, classrooms, storerooms, and restrooms. In the lower level of semi-basement, additional rooms include kitchen, restrooms, and the Fellowship Hall, which accomodates 400 people and has a stage and ticket booth. A 1975 refurbishing project included roofing, cleaning the exterior brick, electrical work, painting throughout, and new heating system. Additional repairs were made in 1986.

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"/> N/A landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1911 **Builder/Architect** T. Robert Wieger

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The First Baptist Church meets Criterion C for its architectural importance in the community of Greeley. The building is significant as Greeley's first Neoclassical style building and as one of Greeley's prominent downtown landmarks. Other than the 1917 Weld County Courthouse, three blocks away, the First Baptist is the only other building in Greeley that reflects that national Neoclassical trend of the early 20th century. The building meets Criterion A for its educational significance in its association with the "Greeley Plan", an innovative bible study course. In 1919, the church gained state recognition for its leadership and innovation in establishing these credit courses for high school and college students.

The Union Colony, which later became known as Greeley, was founded by Nathan Meeker in 1870. After the founding of the Union Colony, several church denominations were organized, but the Baptists were the first to complete a building in 1871 on lots donated by the Union Colony. The Baptist congregation was awarded \$500 by the Denver Pacific Railroad, who offered a prize for the first church building to be constructed. The original building was wood frame and clapboard and had one room. Additions were made in 1889 and 1894, but by 1907, the congregation had outgrown the old building. In 1909, the trustees sold the property to the Elks Lodge and bought the property of Mrs. J.N. Sanborn at the corner of 10th Avenue and 11th Street, two blocks from the old building. The new \$43,000 Neoclassical church building was dedicated on March 5, 1911.

The Reverend Dewitt D. Forward, pastor from 1907 to 1912 and under whose guidance the new building was constructed, instituted what was known as the "Greeley Plan", which allowed high school and college credit to students who attended bible study classes in the church school. In 1919, the church received state recognition as the foremost Baptist church school in Colorado. This plan was subsequently adopted by other Greeley churches.

Not only did the educational program gain recognition, but also the physical plant. The design of the church school facilities in the rear of the building were considered very progressive. It attracted students from the University of Chicago who came to Greeley to study the building. The Greeley Weekly Tribune, on March 9, 1911, repeated a story published by the University of Chicago Press which noted the First Baptist Church in Greeley as one of the most perfectly appointed and best equipped Sunday School plants in America.

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The architect of the church building was T. Robert Wieger, a Denver architect who is perhaps best known for the Georgian style Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The design of the church building is an excellent representation of the Neoclassical style, which became popular throughout the country following the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Other than the Weld County Courthouse (1917), it is the only other public building in the classical style in Greeley. The courthouse was listed in the Register in 1978.

In recent years, many of the neighboring church congregations have moved out of the downtown area or have replaced their buildings with newer structures leaving the First Baptist and St. Peter's as the oldest church buildings in Greeley.

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Bibliography

Greeley Weekly Tribune - March 9, 1911, "New Baptist Church is Model House of Worship."

"Historical Sketch of the First Baptist Church, Greeley," published on its 75th anniversary: 1871-1946.

"Historical Facts Concerning the First Baptist Church," compiled by Mary D. Mason, Greeley, Colorado 1938.