

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

JUL 17 1978

DATE ENTERED

DEC 8 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Liberty Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER 701 Oak Street

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Indiana

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE  
018COUNTY  
VanderburghCODE  
163 ✓**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:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Liberty Baptist Church Congregation

STREET & NUMBER  
701 Oak Street

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana 47713

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Vanderburgh County RecorderSTREET & NUMBER  
City - County Building

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

STATE

Indiana 47708

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**TITLE  
none

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 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

Liberty Baptist Church, located at the eastern corner of the intersection of 7th and Oak Streets, was built in 1886 on the site of an earlier church which had been demolished by a cyclone. The present red brick church was constructed much in the same style and dimension as the earlier Gothic revival structure. The building is three bays wide, seven bays deep, and one story tall. Symmetrically arranged, the main (north) facade is dominated by a projecting center bay tower. The primary entrance to the church is located in this bay; the current extruded aluminum entrance is, of course, a contemporary addition.

Two side entrances into the church are centered in the end bays of the main facade. These entrances are flanked by lancet windows and are surmounted by larger windows of the same profile. Lancet windows mark the bays on the long elevations of the building, framed by buttress forms. The wall surfaces are further ornamented with limestone details, such as engaged pinnacles, moldings, and cap stones (most of which have been painted), and ornamental brick work, such as a molded water table, panels of mouse-tooth and diapering, and corbelling.

The interior of the church proper has been altered in that the depth of the sanctuary has been shortened one bay and contemporary panelling and wall finished have been introduced within the last twenty years. The stained glass windows, however, appear to be original to the building. A limestone faced addition was added in 1965; this addition houses church offices and Sunday School rooms, as well as meeting and dining facilities.

# 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 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 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 1886

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Liberty Baptist Church is an important symbol of the Evansville black community which developed after the Civil War. During the unsettled times in the South at the end of the Civil War, many former slaves traveled North to find a better life and a guarantee of their new freedom. In Indiana Evansville was the focal point for this black migration, and hundreds of blacks crossed the Ohio River in 1865. Evansville's Negro population jumped from ninety-five in 1860 to almost two thousand in 1870. In the last half of the nineteenth century, Evansville had a larger percentage of blacks than any other Indiana city.

The Liberty Baptist congregation was organized on June 13, 1865, in a little brick building on Chestnut and Canal Streets. Although the Deacons and other members were blacks, Colonel Woods, a white devoted to the welfare of former slaves, was the first pastor. Under his leadership the members bought two lots at Seventh and Oak Streets and erected a frame church measuring forty by fifty feet.

After a short time, Elder Green McFarland replaced Woods as pastor and served the membership until he died in 1881. During this time the congregation grew rapidly due in part to the great influx of black immigrants. To accommodate larger numbers, the members constructed a brick church in 1880 at a cost of \$10,000. Unfortunately this structure was destroyed by a cyclone on June 9, 1886. Viewing the disaster as a "test of zeal and devotion to God's work," the trustees started a rebuilding effort immediately. With the help of subscriptions and outside sources, the congregation built the present Gothic Revival structure at a cost of \$19,000. The first service was held in December, 1886.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Evansville South

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 45,0 45,0 4,2 0,2 3,2 0

B               

C                                   

D               

E                                   

F               

G                                   

H               

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE  
Reverend Robert L. Saunders, Pastor

ORGANIZATION  
Liberty Baptist Church

DATE  
May, 1977

STREET & NUMBER  
701 Oak Street

TELEPHONE  
812-422-4658

CITY OR TOWN  
Evansville

STATE  
Indiana 47713

# 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

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 7-10-78

FDR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Charles A. ...*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

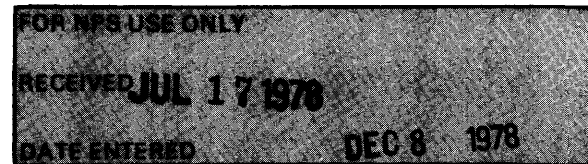
DATE 12-8-78

ATTEST: *Nancy B. Franklin*  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12-4-78

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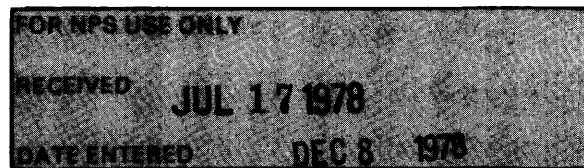
Liberty Baptist is the oldest extant black congregation in Evansville. Although blacks settled wherever they could find housing in the city in the first months after the Civil War, they soon gathered in the area around Liberty Baptist; this section of the city became known as "Baptist Town". The church provided leadership in the religious, social, and political life of the city's black community. A number of other churches developed as splinters from the parent organization, notably McFarland Baptist Church. Liberty Baptist continues to serve the local community through day care programs for children, recreational activities for youth, and assistance with low to moderate income housing.

The structure is representative of the manner in which architecture was used in the nineteenth century. Gothic features such as pointed arches and buttresses were used to identify the structure as a church. The central projecting square tower strongly defines the entrance. Other elements display a variety of uses of brick coursing, such as diapering, mouse-toothing, and corbeling. This decorative approach is more in line with the Neo-Jacobean style from the end of the Medieval Period. In part the overall simplicity of the steeply roofed mass with the projecting central square tower makes reference to sixteenth century English parish churches. This allusion is reaffirmed by the re-entrant corner buttressing and stepped setbacks of the tower beneath its intersection with the eaves. The allusion is interrupted by the relationship of the height of the gable to this part of the tower.

The alteration of traditional proportions and the combination of Gothic and Neo-Jacobean features demonstrates that while nineteenth century architects sometimes looked to the past for inspiration, they did not seek to construct replicas of earlier structures. The eclectic approach as viewed in the Liberty Baptist Church demonstrates how builders of the last century used old elements to create new combinations and uses of styles.

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Reflections Upon a Century of Architecture: Evansville, Indiana. Evansville: Junior League of Evansville, Inc., 1977.