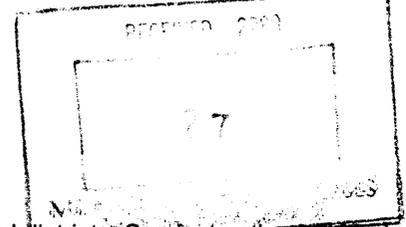


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1011

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Methodist Episcopal Church

other names/site number Monte Vista United Methodist Church / 5RN.782

2. Location

street & number 215 Washington Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Monte Vista [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Rio Grande code 105 zip code 81144

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [ X ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [ X ] locally. ( [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: Melissa Cortez, State Historic Preservation Officer; Date: August 18, 2003

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria.
( [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [X] 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 [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper: John W. Beall

Date of Action: 10.11.03

First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Name of Property

Rio Grande County, Colorado  
County/State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
 public-local  
 public-State  
 public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)  
 district  
 site  
 structure  
 object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>buildings</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>sites</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>structures</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>objects</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>Total</u>

### Name of related multiple property listing.

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility

Religion: church-related residence

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious facility

Religion: church-related residence

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American

Movements: Prairie-School

Queen Anne

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Brick

roof Synthetics; Asphalt

other

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

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**DESCRIPTION**

The First Methodist Episcopal Church is located on the southwest corner of Washington Street and Second Avenue, one block from downtown Monte Vista. Construction began in 1922 on the church which is within a predominately residential area that includes several other older churches (the 1888 St. Stephen Episcopal Church, the 1898 First Presbyterian Church, and the 1909 First Christian Church) along with the 1932 [National Register-listed] Post Office. The building sits on the same site as the original 1886 First Methodist Episcopal Church which was destroyed by a fire in 1922. The church occupies four city lots landscaped with trees, grass, bushes, flowers, a rock garden, and two church signs. An alley on the west includes a small adjacent parking area. The associated 1904 parsonage straddles the two lots south of the church. The building retains its original appearance with the exception of an ADA ramp at the façade corner and an addition that covers the basement entry on the north side. The building is in good condition and exhibits a high degree of integrity in its location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship.

The two-story church measures 78' by 86'6" and has a raised basement of stone, dark brick walls with light colored stone and concrete trim, and a near level roof with a slight pitch that is hidden behind a steeped parapet with a quarry-faced stone coping. The basement walls consist of six courses of quarry-faced native rhyolite ashlar with a water table course and beaded mortar. The walls are purple tapestry brick laid in a running bond. The slightly pitched roof is sheathed in a modified rubberized rolled roofing with a sand ballast. The east face of the building has a crenellated parapet, and each of the corners projects out slightly with a secondary wooden cornice spanning the wall above the upper story windows. Charles J. Anderson of Alamosa created the unusual design of the church, which looks more like a school or other public building. While the form and detailing belie its religious function, the building's massing attests to its Akron Plan interior.

The majority of the windows are wood frame, 1/1 double hung sash with tooled (striated) concrete sills. Fifty-four contain original stained glass, nineteen of these are on the east facade. All non-stained glass windows contain a light frosted glazing. There are three large window openings on the south and north sides that are comprised of a large multi-light window above four double hung windows. The three large stained glass windows on the south side and one on the north side have a religious motif. The east and north sides of the building have a regular, evenly spaced, linear fenestration pattern; the west and south sides have a more random window distribution. The doors throughout the church are single leaf, paneled solid wood, with the exception of the short French doors into the nursery room on the south side and the double doors on the north side addition.

The church faces east onto Washington Street where three series of concrete steps and landings with stone side walls lead to the slightly projecting central entrance bay. The three-portal recessed entry is framed and divided by four buttressed brick pilasters that create a frontispiece culminating in a crenellated parapet. Each pilaster rests on a raised plinth of smooth faced concrete block and has four decorative stepped back buttresses. Each buttress has a slanted concrete cap with a pecked finish and a striated edge. Alternating between the buttressed pilasters on the second level are three windows. Quarry faced stone forms a flat arch with voussoirs above the three portals that lead to the recessed entry porch and five single leaf paneled wooden doors. Narrow windows flank the projecting frontispiece and the façade is broken again by the projecting bays at each corner. Two windows on each of the two floors

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**Continuation Sheet**

First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

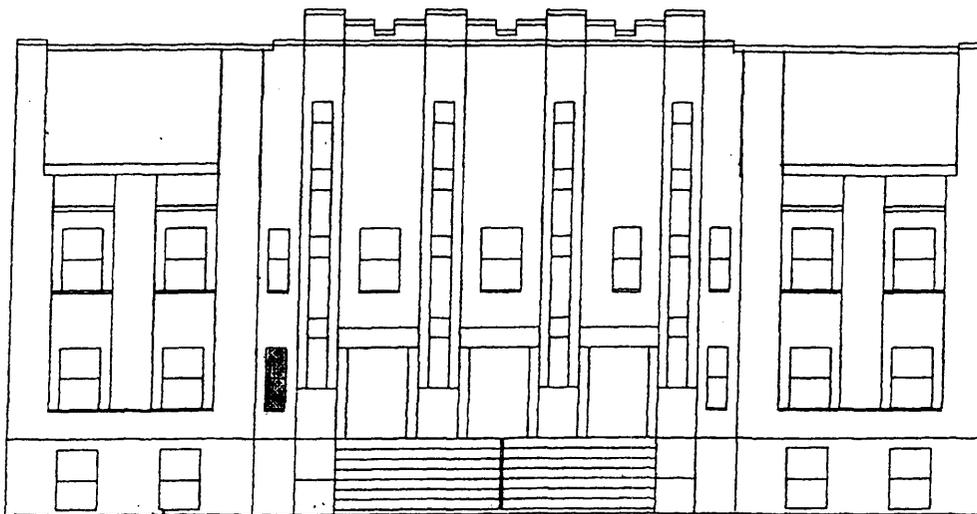
Section number 7 Page 2

punctuate the projecting corner bays. A granite cornerstone was placed at the northeast corner of the building, and an S-shaped ramp built of uncoursed rubble and concrete blocks with a wrought iron railing occupies the opposite corner. A door replaced a lower level narrow stained glass window in order to provide access into the church from the ramp. In the curved space beneath the ramp is a terraced rock garden.

The north side of the building faces Second Avenue. The projecting corners create a recessed central portion where four stepped pilasters evenly divide the space filled with three large stained glass windows. Like those on the east façade, the pilasters rest on a raised plinth of concrete block and the decorative buttressing have concrete caps. A small flat-roofed, stuccoed, concrete block (CMU) addition covers the basement entrance and extends out to the sidewalk; its double leaf wood paneled doors face east. There are two windows on each level of the east projecting corner bay and three windows on each level of the west corner bay. Windows also punctuate the stone walls of the raised basement. The series of four basement windows that flank the covered entry share the same treatment as the three portals on the east face—quarry-faced stone forming a flat arch with voussoirs.

The west side (rear) of the building faces an alley. Its central recessed section formed by the projecting corners is not as deep as the other elevations. Tall, narrow windows punctuate the walls. A decorative motif that is not so much applied to the façade, but integrated into it appears on the upper wall. The series of ten brick pendants united by a horizontal band of stone is reminiscent of a Frank Lloyd Wright design. A wood-framed partially enclosed carport with a breezeway abuts the building's southwest corner. There is also a coal chute opening on this elevation.

The south side faces the parsonage. Like the north elevation, three large stained glass windows occupy the central recessed section. Toward the front of the building there are small French doors at the basement level that access the nursery. A small gabled roof metal shed sits next the building toward the back (alley).



Front elevation of church prior to the installation of the ramp and the replacement of a window opening (shaded) with a doorway.

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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

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*Interior*

At the front entrance of the building, a south door from the recessed entry leads to a vestibule and rest room, located by the sanctuary door. On the north side is a library/meeting room called the Dorcas Chapel and a storage room. The 41' x 63' Akron Plan sanctuary has a 30-foot ceiling above the nave/chancel area and the adjacent assembly room. The sanctuary's sloping wood floor is carpeted. There are three aisles through the two curved sections of oak pews that lead to the offset curved platform of the chancel and the communion rail.

Original paneling of wainscot oak is used as a chancel rail, a choir screen, and forms a backdrop for the chancel. Above the wainscot behind the chancel platform are fifty-seven faux organ pipes. The working organ pipes, for the original Estey two-manual pipe organ, are in a separate room behind the chancel area. The oak console pipe organ is located in front of the choir area. Behind the choir area, a door leads to two offices, a hallway, and stairways that lead to the basement and to the second story. In the second story, there is a room for youth functions, a hallway and a loft above the assembly room stage.

Between the sanctuary and adjacent 30' x 50' assembly room, there are three large openings with overhead doors, each weighing one-ton. A wrought iron railing spans each framed section opening. The carpeted floor of the assembly room is flat, the same level as the back of the sanctuary. The room consists of a large open area, a deep stage, a kitchenette and two stairways. Combined, the two rooms have a 500-person seating capacity. Overlooking the sanctuary and assembly room on the east is an extended balcony. The balcony areas have been remodeled as Sunday school rooms by making permanent dividers for four rooms.

The raised basement includes a large dining hall/activities room, a large kitchen area with three sinks, two large nursery rooms, a wheelchair accessible restroom, four storage areas, and a furnace room. The cement floors in the dining hall and nursery rooms are covered with carpet. All walls are plastered and painted. A steam boiler furnace that heats the entire building through radiators replaced the original hand-fired stoker, converted to gas. At the east end of the basement, a stairway leads up to the main floor sanctuary vestibule. At the west end, there is a stairwell with stairways that ascend to the main floor and to the second story. There are two rest rooms on the landing at alley level, one on either side of the stairway.

There are many interior decorative features. The sanctuary/assembly room areas, including the balcony, have terra cotta trim cornices. Placed in the center of each wall is raised decorative molding beneath the cornices. On each side of this molding in the sanctuary is a projecting scroll corbel. The large stained glass windows are inset with a plaster-relieving arch. All doors and windows on the main floor of the building have dark wood frames. This includes the large framed openings for the overhead doors. Above the overhead doors are eight small wood corbels, four in the sanctuary and four in the assembly room. The many radiators are capped, with one being ornate. The curved balcony wall above the sanctuary has a wood rail, whereas the assembly room balcony rail is solid wood, with a solid wood staircase leading to the main floor. The assembly room stage has a wood wainscot and a proscenium arch with decorative terra cotta trim. Framed accordion doors have replaced the curtains on the stage.

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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

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A summary of the major exterior changes:

- 1969 Unattached S-shaped ramp built on the left front façade; entry door replaces one small stained glass window
- 1973 Storm windows placed over the six stained glass windows
- 1977 North entrance to the basement built as a "living memorial"
- 1981 Storm windows placed over all small windows
- 1992 Ruberoid brand rolled roofing laid
- 1993 Carport and breezeway installed at SW corner (initially a recycling shed)
- 2000 Stone walls flanking front stairs refaced and repaired by John Hoffman, master stonemason.
- 2002 New sidewalk and curb cuts in front; new sidewalks on the north.

A summary of the major interior changes:

- 1947 Kitchen enlarged and improved.
- 1949, 1973, 1974 Carpet laid throughout main floor and basement
- 1955 Ladies' parlor in basement converted to nurseries
- 1974 Kitchenette in Assembly Room installed.
- 1982 Sunday school room partitions added to balcony area.
- 1988 Wheelchair accessible restroom built by vestibule, stairway repositioned.
- 1996 Burnham boiler (furnace) installed.
- 2000 Restroom in basement remodeled for wheelchair access

*Parsonage*

Construction began in 1901 on the parsonage, which sits on the two lots south of the church and also faces east onto Washington Street. The building was completed in 1904. This 1-1/2 story Queen Anne house has a quarry faced stone foundation, painted brick walls, and a complex roofline of steeply pitched gables covered with asphalt shingles. Two red brick chimneys pierce the roof slopes and a variety of decorative shingles (scallop, square and octagonal) cover the numerous gable ends. An oriel window breaks through the cornice line in the gable end on the north side. Below it is a triple window illuminating the dining room. On the south side, a square projecting bay with a hipped roof breaks the cornice line. The façade has a central porch with Tuscan columns supporting the shed-with-gable roof. A recently installed elaborate balustrade connects the columns. Beside the door under the porch roof is a large fixed sash window with a colored light transom. With the exception of those in the living room and dining room, the windows are tall narrow, wood frame, double-hung 1/1 sash. The majority have quarry faced stone lintels and concrete sills; several of the main floor windows have brick radiating voussoirs. Decorative shutters adorn many of the first floor windows. Two double hung 1/1 windows fill the openings at the southeast corner that once contained two Queen Anne windows (an upper sash with a rectangular pane surrounded by smaller squares of colored glass). The nine-room house has hardwood floors on the main level with carpet covering the floor of the upper story. All walls are plastered; some walls are painted while others have wallpaper. Steam-heated radiators provide heat. The fenced back yard includes garden space and a metal shed.

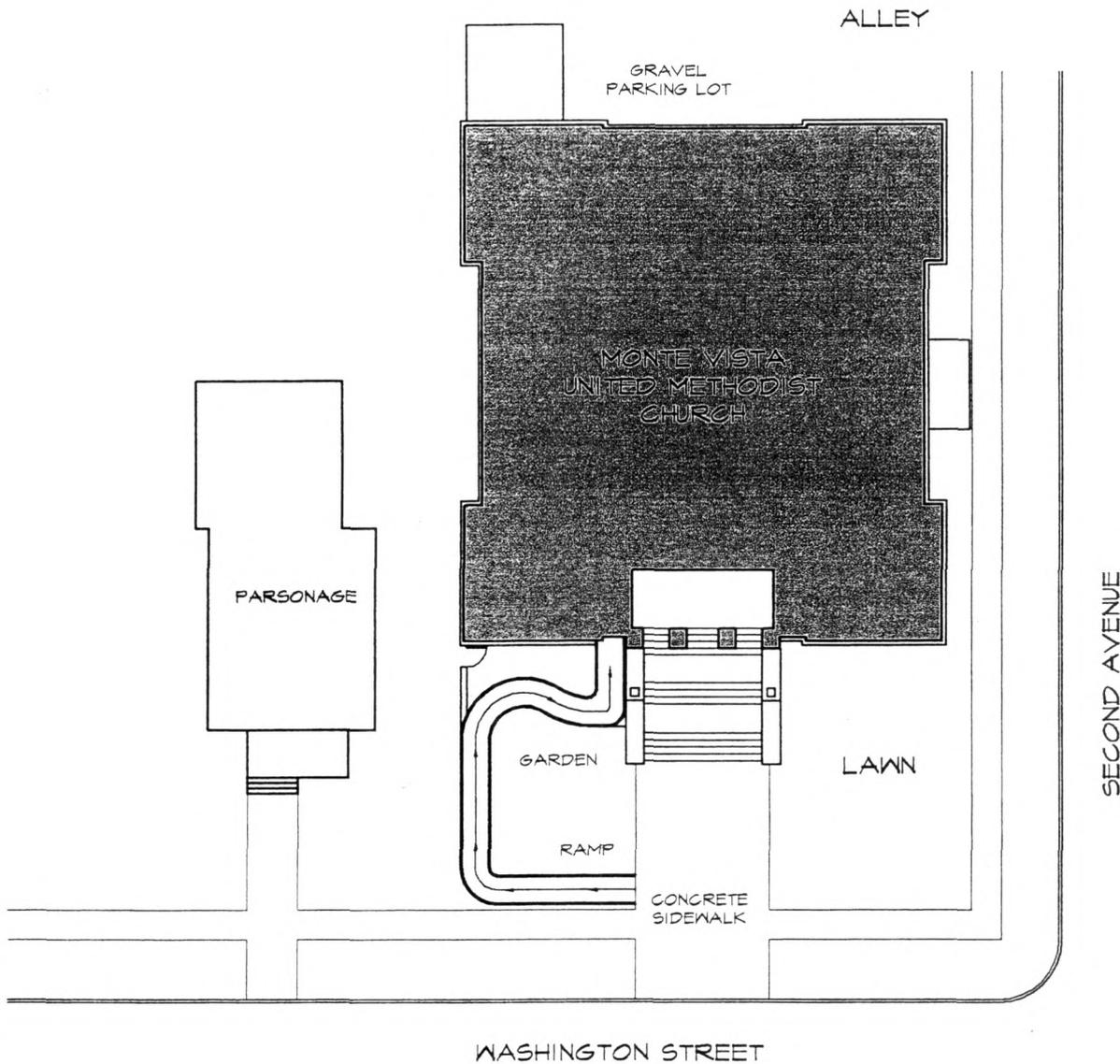
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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
 Rio Grande County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 5

A summary of the major changes to the parsonage:

- 1921 two Queen Anne windows replaced
- 1940s Steam heating plant replaced the original baseburner coal stoves.
- 1946 Brick walls first painted
- 1978 Storage room built on the back.
- 1980 Addition built at the back includes a family room and laundry room.
- 1999 Porch balustrade and decorative shutters installed
- 2001 Interior painting and repair work throughout the building.



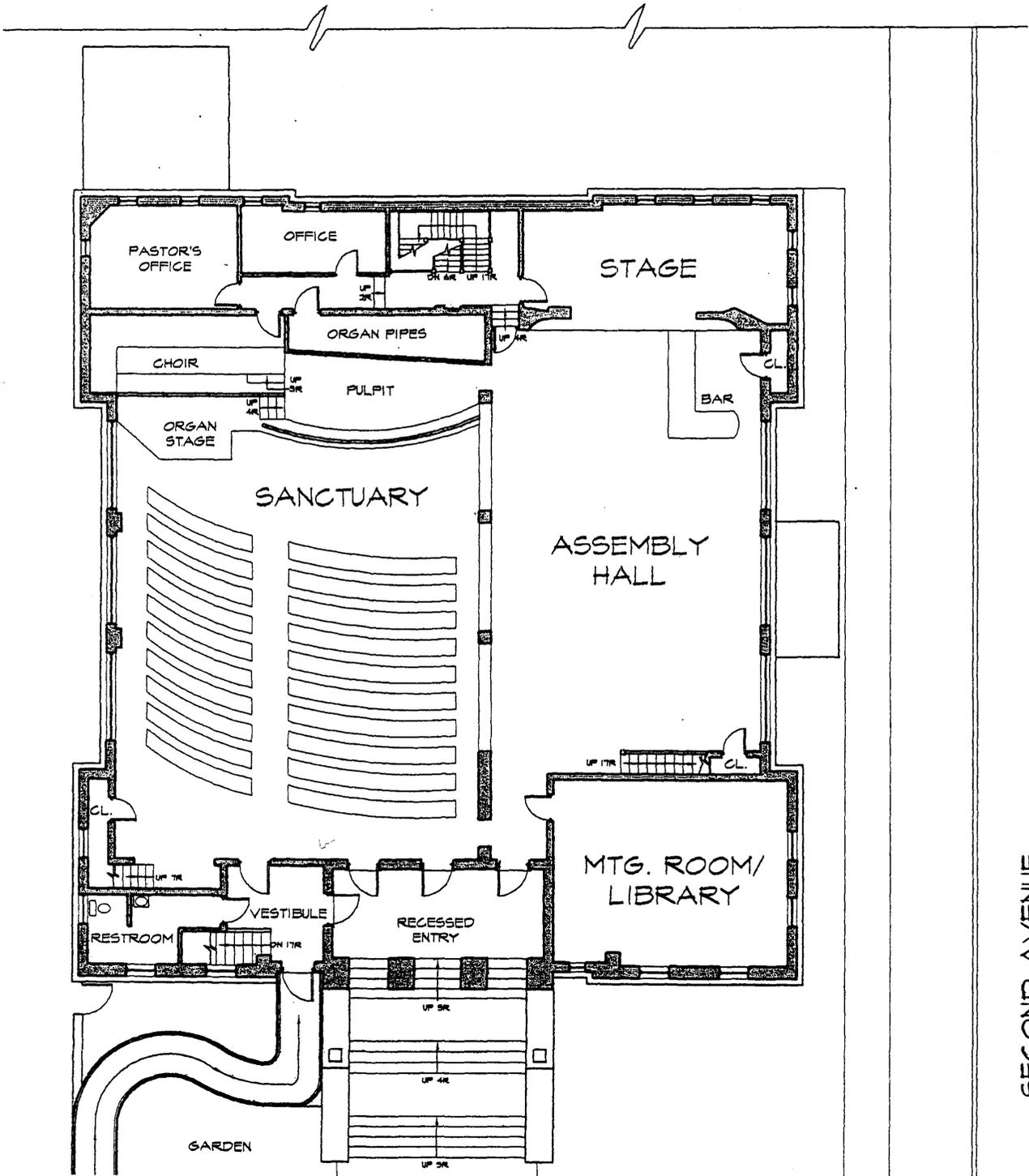
1 SITE PLAN  
 SCALE: 1" = 30'-0"



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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

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SECOND AVENUE

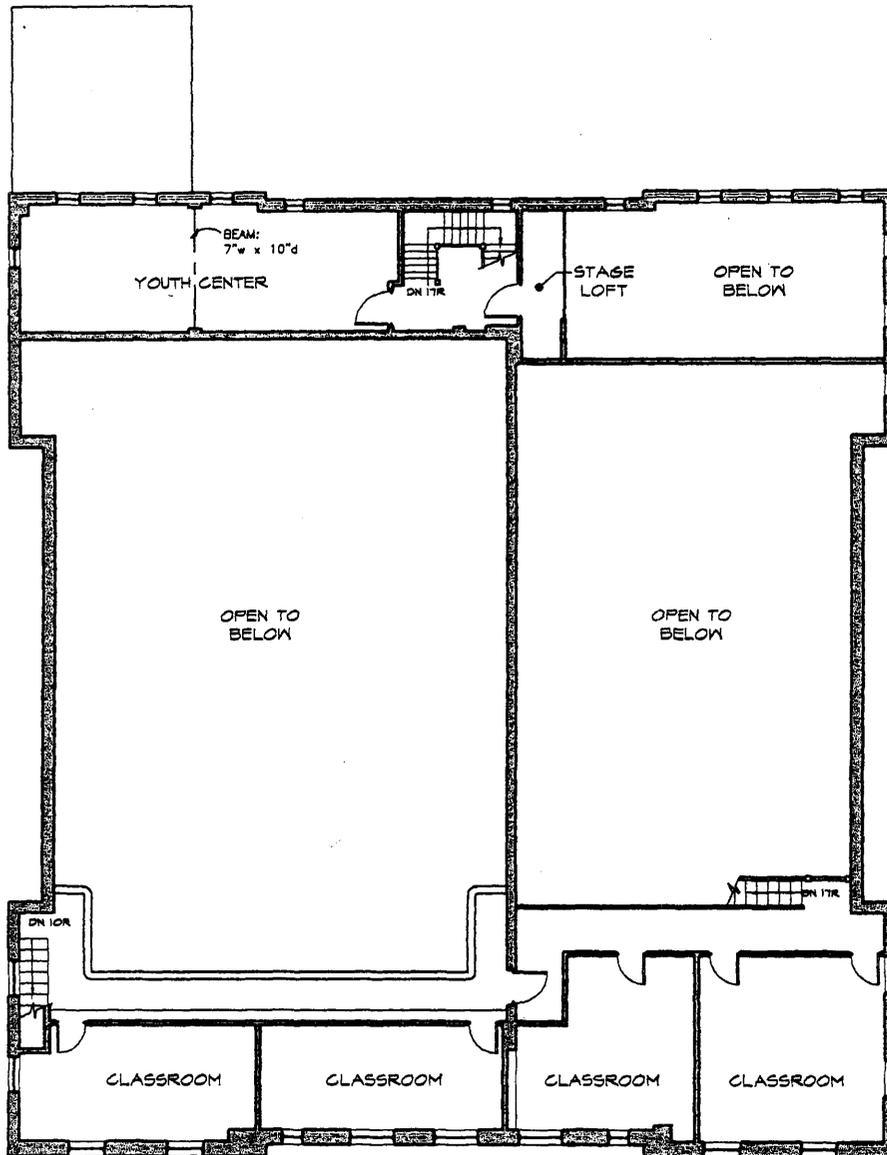
① MAIN FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

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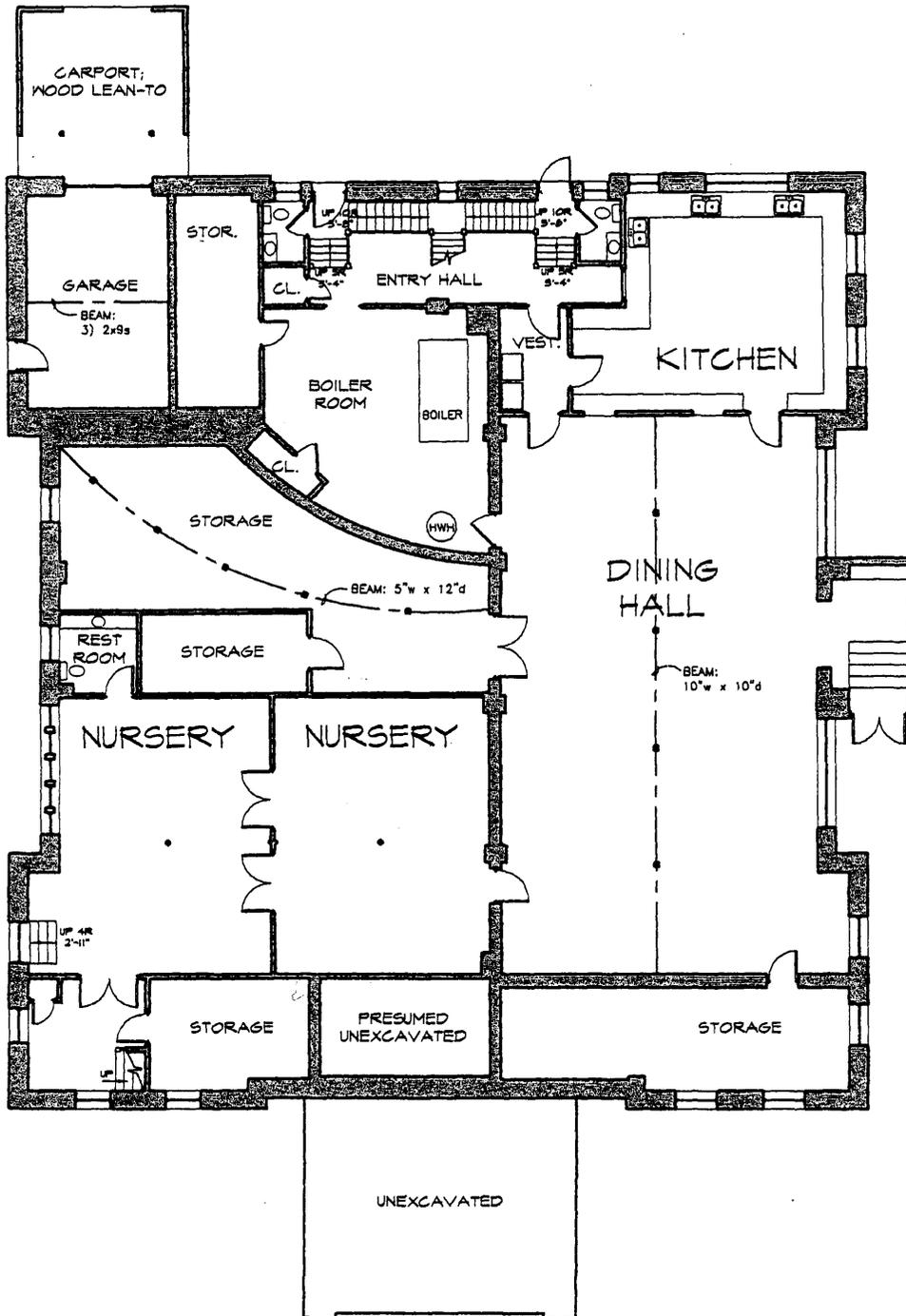
① UPPER FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



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Continuation Sheet

First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

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① LOWER FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"



First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Name of Property

Rio Grande County, Colorado  
County/State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 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  
# \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

### Periods of Significance

1922 – 1938

### Significant Dates

1922

### Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Anderson, Charles J.

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior  
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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 9

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## SIGNIFICANCE

The First Methodist Episcopal Church meets National Register criterion C for its architectural significance as it represents a distinctive method of construction and type. The walls of the 1922 church are an unusual material—purple tapestry brick with a salt glaze. No other building in Monte Vista is constructed using this type of brick. The building also reflects the important elements of the Akron Plan, a Protestant church design utilized during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The church is an adaptation of the Akron Plan with several functional innovations.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church is eligible under criterion A for its association with the social history of Monte Vista. The building with its large seating capacity, auditorium-stage space, kitchen facilities, and flexibility has been host to a wide variety of community activities over the years. Although the building continues to be a focus of social activity, the period of significance ends in 1938 with the construction of a new facility in town, the Central School Auditorium and Gymnasium. As a religious property that derives its primary significance from architectural distinction and historical importance, criteria consideration A applies.

### *Architecture*

The brick used in the walls of the church is known as purple tapestry brick. Although it is larger in size than today's bricks, it was a common size for that time period. It was apparently made from firebrick clay and had a light salt glaze applied to it. Tom Welte of Summit Brick in Pueblo explained that bricks manufactured in the 1920s were made by the press method:

Looking at the brick, I would say that the clay used was a fire clay found in this area, but a lot by Beulah, just west of Pueblo. Clay was put in a mold and a big machine would press the clay together. The brick would then be dried and "fired" in a kiln. I would guess that the brick was fired at a high temperature and flashed. Flashing is where they put excess fuel into the kiln or reduce the amount of oxygen so that the flame/fire does not burn clean and it darkens the brick where it is exposed to the kiln atmosphere. It appears to have a salt glaze on the face. They used to shovel salt into the kiln. It would liquefy and adhere to the face of the brick. Depending on the amount, temperature, clay, etc. a salt glaze could come out a beautiful purple tapestry color such as your brick. Using a salt glaze was very smoky and to my knowledge no one has used a salt glaze since about the 1940s.

The Church Building Committee apparently chose this unusual color and finish of brick manufactured by the Pueblo Brick & Tile Company for their new building. No other building constructed with purple tapestry brick has been found in the town of Monte Vista or the San Luis Valley.

Another material used in the construction of the church, was a locally quarried lava stone or rhyolite. The raised foundation walls are made of this porous stone that results when volcanic foam hardens. The stone was quarried on Dry Creek and the Hathaway Quarry, south and west of Monte Vista respectively. Stone and brick structures replaced the original wood frame buildings in town, and rhyolite was used in a large percentage of the circa 1900 commercial buildings that are still standing in Monte Vista.

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**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 10

First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

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The First Methodist Episcopal Church reflects important elements of the Akron Plan. Lewis Miller, superintendent of the Akron, Ohio school system and Jacob Snyder, a local [Ohio] architect, are credited with the development of the Akron Plan, which promoted efficient movement between the sanctuary and Sunday school classes by the congregation. The plan reflected a religious philosophy that often stressed the importance of Sunday school attendance over church attendance. In 1869 they collaborated on an innovative plan for Akron's First Methodist Episcopal Church. The church featured a semicircular auditorium-like sanctuary with curved seating and a series of classroom around the perimeter that could be opened up to the sanctuary. Their idea was perfected by architect George Kramer and came to be known as the Akron Plan.

Based on a desire for separateness with togetherness, the Akron Plan resulted in large, open, high-ceiling interiors typically incorporating perimeter balconies that allowed all students to be together for opening and closing exercises. Folding partitions provided the flexibility to create separate classrooms for small group study. The design also had the congregation seated in a semi-circular fashion in order to be closer to the pulpit and preacher. The plan evolved into an arrangement where the elevated pulpit moved to one corner and the radial setting was oriented towards this corner. The Akron Plan offered flexibility, comfort and good sight lines. From the exterior, the building possessed a massing that was very different from the more rectangular Basilica plan churches that typically included a center aisle to accommodate the processions of more formal religious services.

The Akron Plan was utilized by Protestant denominations into the early 1920s. By the 1890s, it became the standard for Methodist churches. More than 2,500 churches were built across the country using the basic plan. Many of the interiors were modified over time, particularly with the installation of more permanent partitions in the balcony/classroom area. Such was the case with this Monte Vista church.

Characteristics of the Akron Plan seen in the First Methodist Episcopal Church include the sloping floor, the placement of the curved pews in the large open nave, the assembly room adjacent the sanctuary, and the balcony area divided for Sunday school rooms. However, the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Monte Vista employs an adaptation of the Akron Plan with a number of functional innovations, as noted in the historic structure assessment by Mark M. Jones Associates:

In this church, the sanctuary directly connects with an overflow fellowship hall, separable by three one-ton overhead vertical sliding partitions. The entry, fellowship hall area, and the pulpit are at the same elevation, while the aisles and seating gently slope towards the chancel. The fellowship hall ends in a roomy stage, with a kitchenette serving area beside it.

Numerous architects throughout the country adapted the basic Akron plan, and their designs were executed in popular ecclesiastical architectural styles of the time. For example, two other Akron Plan churches, the Methodist Episcopal Church of Montrose (listed in the National Register) and the First United Presbyterian Church in Loveland (listed in the State Register), were designed in a Romanesque Revival style with crenellated square towers.

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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Rio Grande County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 11

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In a deviation from this pattern, the architectural style of the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Monte Vista almost defies classification. Some see the building as an expression of Art Deco with a vertical emphasis and the illusion of a stepped or set-back façade created by the buttressing effect of the pilasters. However, Art Deco was not publicly realized in this country until the French exposition in 1926, making this 1922 construction a little too early for the style. In addition, the building lacks the ornamentation characteristic of Art Deco. Others see the building as an example of the Prairie Style and reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois (Wheaton 2003). It is interesting to note that both Art Deco and the Prairie Style consciously rejected the popular academic revival styles of the time.

The Prairie Style, a distinctly American style that originated with the Prairie School, was especially popular in the Midwest from about 1900 to 1930. The style is found primarily in domestic architecture, and only rarely used on commercial buildings. In its commercial expression, the style resembles a simplified version of the Sullivanesque with ornamentation (vegetal forms paired with geometric elements) adorning the upper floors, columnar design elements minimized by framing, and an organization of the windows that is both horizontal and vertical. The First Methodist Episcopal Church exhibits some of these characteristics, including a modest use of ornamentation. The ornamentation is employed in the same position as in Sullivanesque buildings—confined primarily at the top of the wall. The decorative element, a series of pendants high on the west wall of the church, is reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's early designs. This ornamentation is not applied to the façade but rather completely integrated into it. In the First Methodist Episcopal Church, ornamentation plays a less central role than the building's massing. This reductive approach will later become an important tenet of modern architecture (Wheaton 2003). The *Monte Vista Journal* when announcing the formal dedication even noted that the building is “constructed of cut brick and following a plan of modern architecture.”

It is difficult to surmise what influences held sway over the architect of the church as very little is known about him. Charles J. Anderson designed the building. The 1922 *Colorado State Business Directory* lists him as a general contractor and designer in Alamosa. The 1920 Colorado census records for Alamosa include a C. J. Anderson, age 51, and family of six with an occupation of “Carpenter, Contractor.” His home was on lot 15, block 14 in Alamosa. He was born in Illinois and was of Swedish descent. A May 22, 1922 *Alamosa Journal* newspaper article announced his new bungalow at the corner of Ross and Second Streets in Alamosa along with other new homes that he designed. Research has found little more about him, and no reference to any other large buildings that he designed.

### *Social History*

The Methodist Episcopal Church has been used for a variety of community activities through the years. The church was chosen over other buildings because of its central location, larger seating capacity, and large basement with kitchen facilities. The other feature that made it desirable was the unusual auditorium style Akron plan with an adjacent assembly room, and stage with lighting and curtains.

Musicals, plays, and other stage productions took place in the assembly hall. The impressive Estey Company pipe organ, still in use, led to numerous organ concerts by local and outside professional musicians. The large kitchen facilities provided a convenient space for luncheons and banquets, utilized by many organizations and youth groups. Although there are three other churches within a block of this

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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
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one, they did not possess the large seating capacity, balcony or stage of the First Methodist Church. The result was that other denominations in town often used the First Methodist Church for funerals of prominent people or weddings that were too large to be accommodated in their own churches. The building was used for many high school-related activities, such as the junior-senior prom banquets, Father-Son banquets, plays, and baccalaureate services. This large building with its several levels of flexible room arrangements allowed both church groups and community activities to occur at the same time. Examples of other types of events held in the church include W.C.T.U. meetings, Highlander Boys Youth functions, youth roller skating parties, weekly meetings for Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls, Monte Vista Boys band, quilting groups, rummage sales, day meetings and annual meetings for numerous community organizations, such as Rotary, Production Credit Association and the Monte Vista businessmen.

While the First Methodist Episcopal Church was a popular venue for many of the town's social activities, it was not the only building to host community activities. There was also the Monte Vista Armory, located two blocks north (within a National Register Historic District). Constructed in 1921, the now vacant Armory was originally home to Troop D of the 127<sup>th</sup> Cavalry of the Colorado National Guard. This larger building was widely used for activities of a different sort, such as high school sporting events and commencement exercises, political meetings, several state conventions, boxing matches, and other large functions. The church and the armory were good complements to each other, as each hosted different types of activities within Monte Vista. The construction of the Central School Auditorium and Gymnasium in 1938 one block west of the church changed this balance. Baccalaureate services, held at the church since 1924, were moved to the new building. Commencement exercises and school band concerts were also relocated to the new facility. With the outbreak of World War II, the military confined the armory to war-related activities, and the Central School Auditorium and Gymnasium became the primary location for large entertainment and recreation events. The church was, and still is, used for many smaller gatherings and functions within the community.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Monte Vista began as a railroad siding called Lariat, established in 1881 by the Denver & Rio Grande Railway. The first mention of Lariat in the *Colorado Business Directory* appears in 1884 [based on information gathered the previous year] with an entry describing it as a post office in Rio Grande County 16 miles west of Alamosa; the only business listed is L. L. [Lillian] Fassett, postmaster and general merchant. A land promoter, Theodore C. (T. C.) Henry, arrived on the scene looking for a likely spot for a new canal venture. T. C. brought potential investors from the east on train excursions. In May 1884, the certificate of incorporation for the Henry Town & Land Company was filed. The new town was named Henry, honoring the promoter. Directors of the Company were: T. C. Henry, Henry J. Aldrich and Chauncey S. Aldrich. The manager of the Henry Town & Land Company, Chauncey S. Aldrich, campaigned to make the area conducive to raising a family. He promoted everything from the abolition of saloons (with a no-liquor clause in each town deed) to the absence of business transactions on the Sabbath. The 1885 directory has an entry for Henry, noting that it was formerly called Lariat. Several more businesses are listed including the Henry Mercantile Co., the *San Luis Valley Graphic*, a drug store and two blacksmiths. The *San Luis Valley Graphic* reported that "inquiries came daily from those seeking new land, particularly the area watered by ditches." That year the town boasted 245 residents.

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The town's promoter, T. C. Henry, had borrowed huge sums of money from the Travelers' Insurance Company of Hartford, Connecticut to build a network of canals that took water from the Rio Grande to irrigate farm land north of the river. When Henry incorporated the town, the town became involved in his canal debts. In July 1885 the Travelers' Insurance Company took over Henry's interests. The town was named Monte Vista and re-platted with incorporation papers filed on January 29, 1886. The 1887 Colorado Business Directory has an entry for Monte Vista noting that it was formerly called Henry. It is described as a growing town 15 miles southeast of Del Norte with a population of 400.

The early days of the town were marked with a spirit of religious cooperation. In May 1884, the Henry Town and Land Company deeded five lots to the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Henry on which to erect a church building. The lots, numbered 17 through 21 in Block 3, were situated on Washington St. one block west of the business block. When the settlement was less than two months old, on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1884, Rev. E. C. Brooks effected the Methodist Church Corporation with thirteen charter members. Formerly the pastor of the First Methodist Church of Greeley, Brooks came from Eureka, Kansas. He arrived in Henry to edit the new *San Luis Valley Graphic* and to pastor The First Methodist Episcopal Church. The articles of incorporation for the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Henry were filed on July 16, 1884 with five elected trustees: Chauncey S. Aldrich, James Goodlander, L. M. Earnest, Ira J. Bloomfield and Lewis H. Cheney. Immediately after the incorporation of the new church, steps were taken to raise money for a church building. On March 19, 1886 (after the town's name change), the Monte Vista Town & Land Company conveyed the same five lots to the Board of Trustees of The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Monte Vista. A building committee was appointed on February 9, 1886 to procure plans and haul stone for the foundation of a church building. Construction began in 1887 on a chapel built of rhyolite stone. An early member of the church, Mary Peachy, conveyed by deed Lot 22 to the church on March 18, 1898. Lots 21 and 22 were then used to build the church parsonage. The foundation was laid in August 1901 and the parsonage was completed in 1904.

The church was partially destroyed in a fire on Sunday April 2, 1922 by an overheated stove. As reported by the *Churches in the Rockies-Southeastern Colorado*, the immediate response was that "a new and larger building will rise out of the ashes." In May 1922, a month after the fire, the members of the church building committee accepted plans by C. J. Anderson, designer and contractor from Alamosa, for a new church edifice. Clean up and excavation from the fire of the original church was started that summer. The foundation was laid with mules and scrapers in October 1922. Useable stones from the old church were cleaned and re-cut by Frank Duran, James Thrasher and William Nash. The re-cut stone was used as needed for the basement walls of the new church. James Thrasher furnished larger new stone from a rock quarry on Dry Creek southwest of town. Common red bricks (blackened by the first church fire) were also reused in the basement walls. The General Contractors were Frank Worth and his son, Wellington. Local stonework contractors were Ed and Will Nash. The unusual face brick, purple tapestry finish pressed brick, arrived in three train carloads from the Pueblo Brick & Tile Company in Pueblo. The Kansas City Stained Glass Co. created the beautiful stained glass windows and the oak pews were obtained through the Centennial School Supply Company.

During the construction period, church services were held in the old Armory, the Woods Mortuary, and the public school buildings. The new church building was completed to the point where it could be occupied early in 1923. A granite cornerstone was presented to the church by W. S. Woods of Monte

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Vista (a mortician) and Arthur D. Marvin of the Marvin Monument Company of Pueblo. The cornerstone, which simply reads "The Methodist Church 1923," was laid and dedicated on Sunday, April 15, 1923. A tin box was placed to the left of the cornerstone, containing documents with the names of the official board and building committee members, the names of contractors and builders, and some church items.

The ladies' Priscilla Society donated \$5,742 toward the \$6,625 cost of the Estey Company two-manual pipe organ, dedicated on Sunday March 9, 1924. The municipal organist of Denver, Clarence Reynolds, was sent by the Chas. E. Wells Music Company of Denver to give a recital on the new organ, on March 20, 1924.

The total cost of the new 16,700 square foot church building was \$63,350.11. In 1910, when the ladies of the church envisioned a new and larger church, they started a building fund and later donated \$3,500 to the project. With 206 names on the list of paid subscriptions, the building was fully financed by March 16, 1924 when the dedication service was held.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church organization name was changed world wide to the United Methodist Church in 1968. In Monte Vista, the name change to the Monte Vista United Methodist Church was incorporated in September 1970.

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First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Name of Property

Rio Grande County, Colorado  
County/State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property** less than one

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 398660 4159500  
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Peggy Barr (additional material by OAHF staff)

organization Monte Vista United Methodist Church date May 2003

street & number 105 West Prospect Avenue telephone 719-852-2518

city or town Monte Vista state Colorado zip code 81144

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Monte Vista United Methodist Church

street & number 215-219 Washington Street telephone 719-852-2853

city or town Monte Vista state Colorado zip code 81144

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

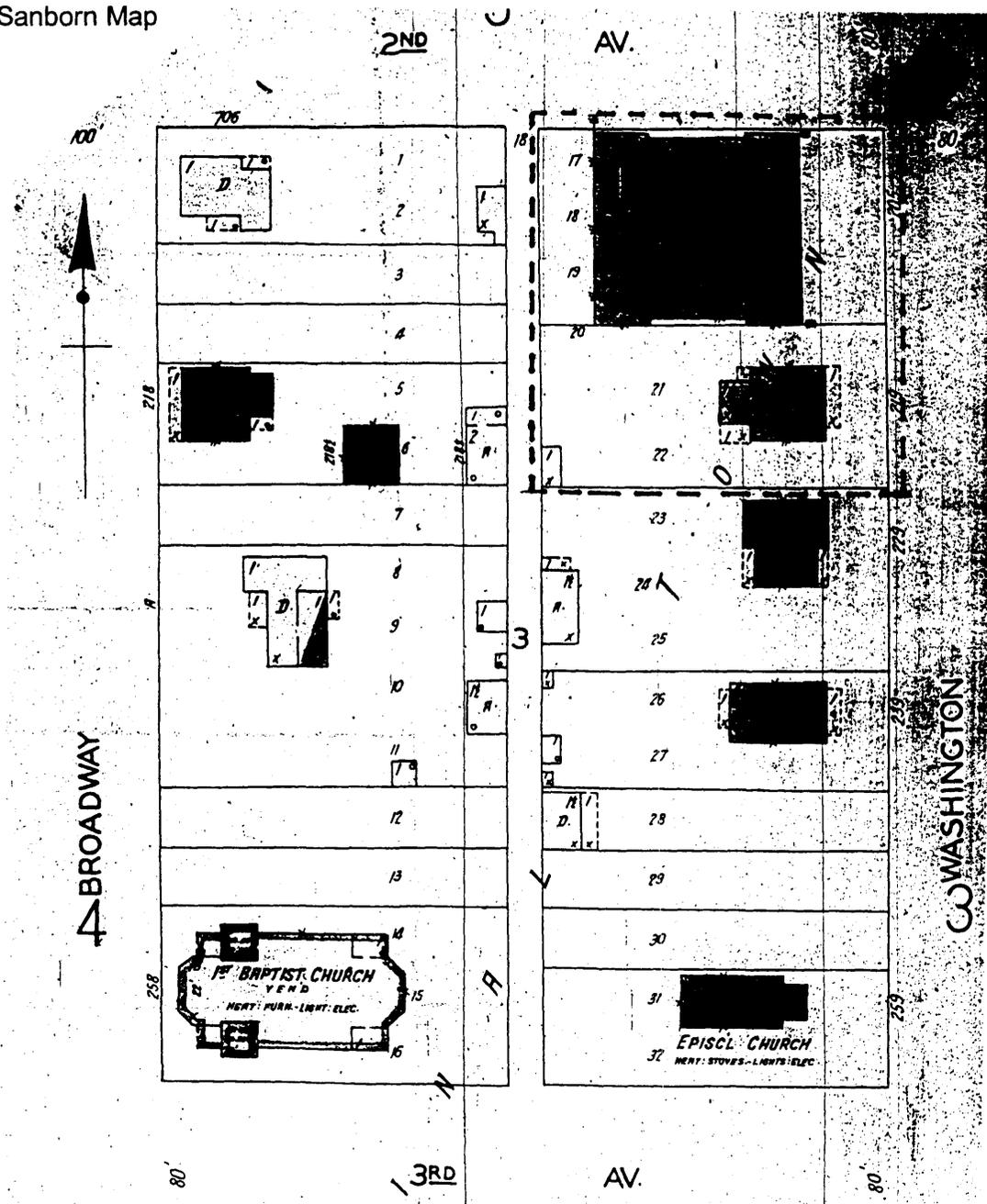
**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lots 17 through 22, Block 3, Monte Vista [Original Townsite].

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel of land historically associated with the church.

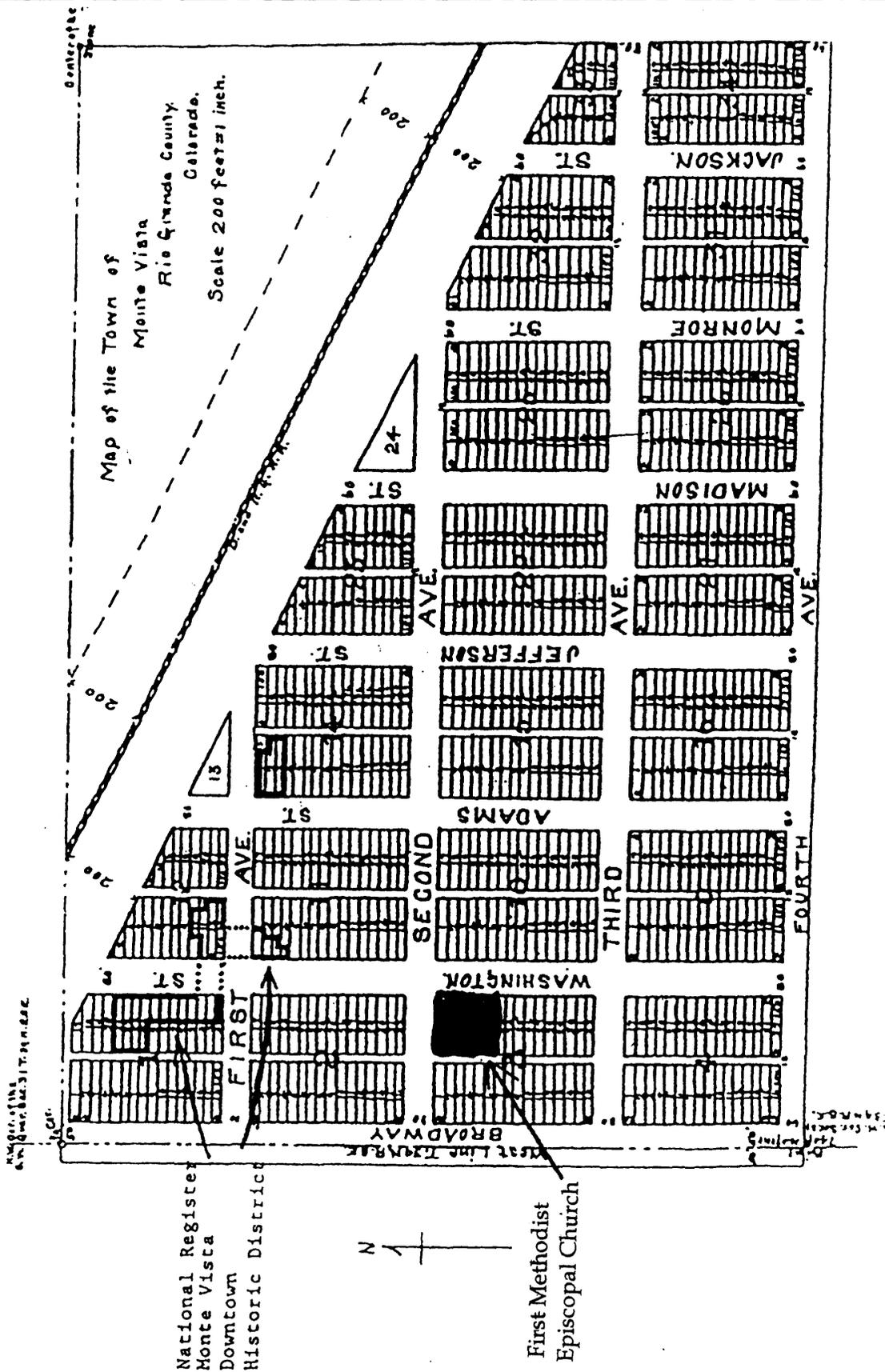
1936 Sanborn Map



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**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of Property: First Methodist Episcopal Church  
Location: Monte Vista, Rio Grande County, Colorado  
Photographer: Dwayne Weyers  
Date of Photographs: January 2003  
Negatives: First Methodist Episcopal Church, 215 Washington Street, Monte Vista

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Photo No.                      Photographic Information; Camera Direction

- 1 Northeast corner of church and northeast corner of parsonage; looking Southwest.
- 2 East façade of church; looking West.
- 3 North side of church; facing Southwest.
- 4 West side (rear) with parking space by alley; looking Southeast.
- 5 South side of church and backyard of parsonage; looking Northeast.
- 6 East facade of church and north side of parsonage; looking Southwest.
- 7 Interior – front of sanctuary; from balcony looking Southwest.
- 8 East façade of parsonage; looking West.

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USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP  
Monte Vista Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series

