

MULTIPLE RESOURCES OF ANNISTON  
 CALHOUN COUNTY, ALABAMA

Historic name: Saint Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church  
 Owner: First Christian Church  
 1327 Leighton Avenue  
 Common name: First Christian Church  
 Anniston, Alabama 36201  
 Address: 1327 Leighton Avenue

Acreage: less than one acre UTM: 16/608970/3725009

Verbal Boundary: Anniston City Land Company Map, Lots 10, 11, and 12 in Block 32, described as follows: beginning at the southeast corner of Leighton Avenue and Fourteenth Street, thence running along the south boundary line of Fourteenth Street 190 feet, thence south 140 feet, thence west 190 feet, thence north along the eastern boundary of Leighton 140 feet to the point of beginning.

Architectural Design: Gothic, with Victorian decoration

Date of Construction: 1888-1889

Statement of Significance:

Criterion A - Social/Humanitarian:

The St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church is significant as representing the attitude held by the original founders of the industrial town of Anniston that northerners were welcome both as a symbol of the binding of the wounds following the War Between the States and to insure the increased productivity of the town's industry. The church was constructed by the Methodist Episcopal Church, which at that time was the northern branch of the Methodist denomination that had split prior to the war over the issue of slavery.

Criterion C - Architecture:

St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church is significant as one of three large Victorian Gothic church buildings in Anniston that utilized native sandstone in the construction. The three churches, the others being Parker Memorial Baptist and St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church (NRHP 1978), were constructed during the period of rapid growth experienced by Anniston during the late 1880s and were all built under the skilled supervision of English master stonemason Simon Jewell.

Description:

The church building located on the southeast corner of Leighton Avenue and Fourteenth Street is a Gothic structure with Victorian influences constructed of native sandstone ashlar, set on a raised basement of slightly different stone, with a gabled roof and subordinate cross gables. The dominant feature is an entry and bell tower on the north side with a Gothic pointed-arch door, circular windows with a Star of David design set in tracery on each face of the tower at the second stage, and at the third stage, horizontal wooden siding which replaced the original pierced triple lancets in the belfry opening about 1940. The slate spire is also a replacement, and the pinnacles that rose from the tower are gone.

The large gable at the front (west) side features a prominent, richly colored stained-glass window composed of paired pointed-arch windows with a round window above which echoes the Star of David tracery. The large composition is flanked by single lancet windows. The central design is echoed on all sides of the building. Each of the gable peaks is embellished with carved wooden ornamentation of Victorian persuasion with pierced Greek crosses in diamond patterns, quatrefoils, and brackets.

The sanctuary is cruciform in shape and has two shallow transepts each with a trefoil window in the middle flanked by two pointed windows. Above the baptistry is a rose window set into a Gothic arch, flanked by two smaller pointed-arch windows. The pews are original.

The grounds contain several of the decorative iron lamp posts that were at one time in downtown Anniston, and can now also be found in Glenwood Terrace.

#### Historical Summary:

The Methodist denomination, which had split along sectional lines during the 1840s over the slavery issue had still not reunited at the time of the construction of St. Paul's in 1888-1889. The building was, therefore, constructed at a cost of \$50,000 by the northern branch of the Methodist denomination. The active congregation of St. Paul's became a symbol to the citizens of Anniston that religion had no geographic lines in the industrial city of the New South that welcomed Northerners and Southerners alike.

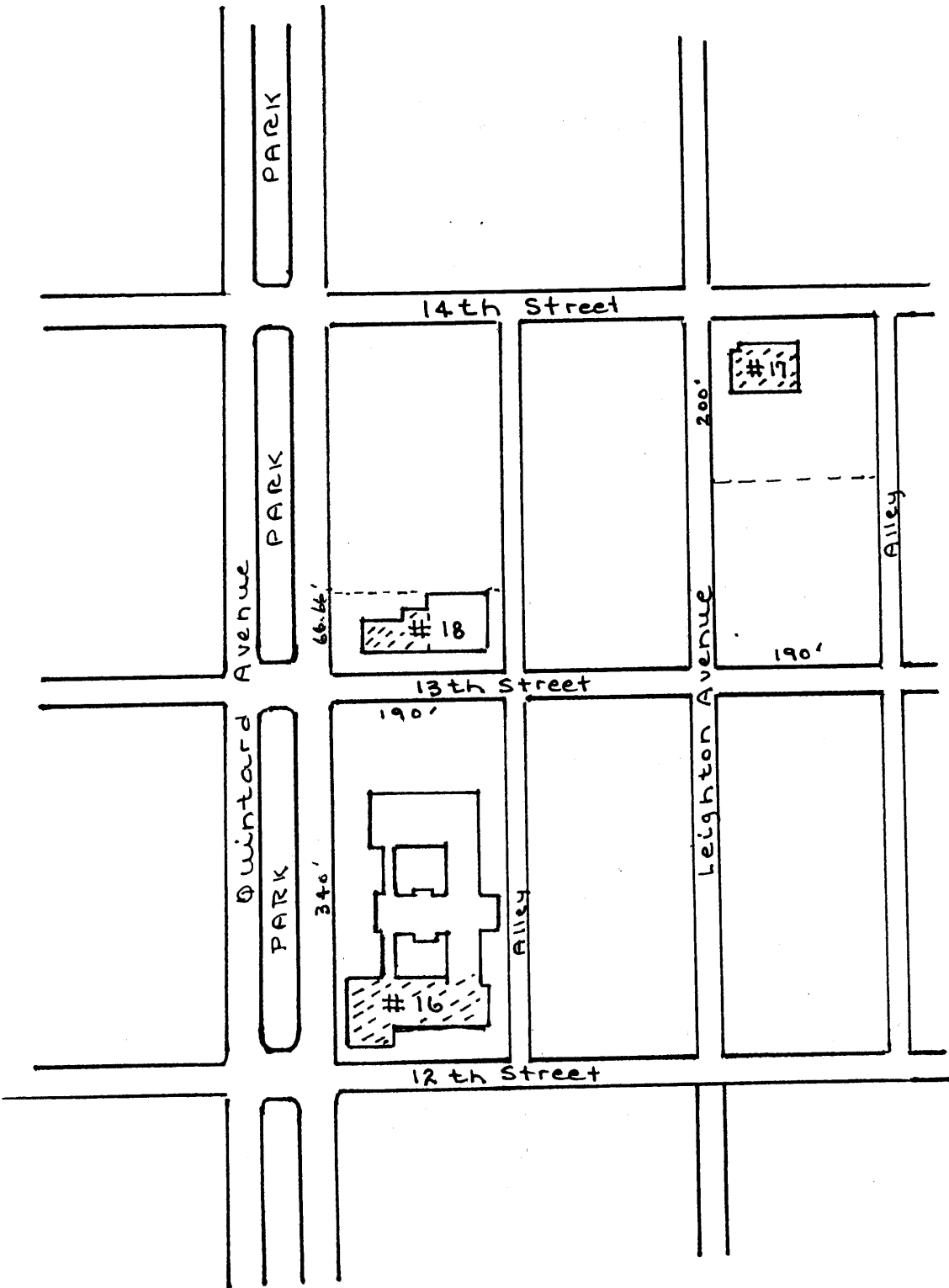
The Methodist Episcopal congregation did not thrive past that generation, however, and by 1920 the building had been acquired by the First Christian congregation, who had organized on June 7, 1885.

The congregation undertook repairs and renovation of the stone building that had sat vacant for several years. They floored the basement for new classrooms, a kitchen, stage and storage; they replaced the gas lighting system with electricity, installed a heating system, and made the modifications in the bell tower.

Rough Sketch Map

- #16 Parker Memorial Baptist Church
- #17 St. Paul's Methodist-First Christian Church
- #18 Temple Beth-El

Anniston, Alabama



Saint Paul's Methodist Church  
about 1895

from the Nonnenmacher Scrapbook  
Anniston-Calhoun County Public  
Library



*St. Paul's Church*