

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received JUL 26 1982
date entered

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

1. Name

historic The First Congregational Church of Marion

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 601 Clay Street NA not for publication

city, town Marion NA vicinity of congressional district 7

state Alabama code 01 county Perry code 105

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 type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> 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
	<u>N/A</u>	<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 The First Congregational Church of Marion

street & number 601 Clay Street

city, town Marion NA vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Perry County Courthouse

street & number Washington Street

city, town Marion state Alabama

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

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

The Congregational Church is a one story, frame structure on brick piers and a brick foundation wall and covered with a gabled roof. The gabled ends feature a narthex and bell tower and a semi-octagonal apse. The main block measures 34' x 58', while the bell tower rises to a height of 48'. Five large 9/9 windows line each side of the structure. This is a restrained design almost void of exterior ornamentation. A small gable with a circular vent rises above the entrance which is set within a triangular headed frame. A simple semi-circular transom surmounts the door. The bell tower rises from the mansard-type roof of the narthex and consists of a rectangular base with round-headed louvered windows topped with an open belfry with short columns supporting the roof. The ceiling of the belfry is pierced with a star design. The exterior remains unaltered.

INTERIOR:

The narthex is very plain with an enclosed stair leading to the belfry on the right wall. A small bathroom has been placed under the stair. The nave has simple heart pine floors, a baseboard with wainscot of wide beaded-board above, plaster walls and simple architrave trim for the windows. The double-leaf entrance door has four narrow vertical panels per leaf. A wide, beaded-board chancel rail with chamfered end posts separates the nave from the chancel. The raised choir and the officer's corner are further subdivided with a similar rail. The pulpit is set on a raised platform within the apse. Slender, one light wide windows are located on either side of the apse. Pews and furniture throughout are very simple. The ceiling, originally plaster with an elaborate cornice, is now celetex tile. The cornice fell early in the history of the church, was replaced and fell again. Until the recent treatment, the ceiling was narrow beaded-board. One original brass lighting fixture remains above the pulpit. The others were stolen and replaced with fixtures from another church in the 1930s.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1871 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

EDUCATION/RELIGION:

The First Congregational Church is primarily significant for its strong associations with Lincoln Normal School, an important black educational institution throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries. No other 19th century structure remains that is associated with the efforts of the local black community and the Congregational Church's American Missionary Association to provide an academic education for black citizens. Only the 1939 Phillips Memorial Auditorium remains of the campus. The close relationship of the church and school is illustrative of the role of the black churches in providing higher education for blacks in the post war years.

ARCHITECTURE:

The structure is a largely unaltered example of an early black urban church. Constructed in 1871 using the skills and labor of congregation members, the building has suffered only the loss of the elaborate plaster cornice and the original ceiling and light fixtures.

The First Congregational Church is the only Reconstruction period Black church in Marion which remains without major modifications, and may well be the only intact survivor from that period in the county. Only two other black churches were built in Marion during the Reconstruction period: the Berean Baptist Church, in 1873, and the Zion United Methodist Church in the mid-to-late 1870s. Both were of the same quality as the Congregation Church, and both have had major renovations, including the application of brick veneer.

Few, if any, Black churches survive in rural Perry County from the Reconstruction period, and none are known that survive without brick veneer or other major renovations. During the period, most Black churches were built by congregation members, and in Perry County, few Blacks with construction skills remained in the rural areas. Consequently, the early churches were frequently built by unskilled labor with second-rate materials, and were replaced or severely modified when congregations acquired sufficient money or skills to do so.

The First Congregational was built for and by a town congregation, many of whom were skilled in construction. It is a substantial and well-crafted building with modest embellishment -- a semi-octagonal apse, a bell tower with nice detailing and a paneled entrance door with a semi-circular light above and triangular facing repeated in the gablet above.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Marion, North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 16 469180 3609840
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ellen Mertins, National Register Coordinator & Idella Childs

organization Alabama Historical Commission date July 22, 1982

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 832-6621

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 22, 1982

For HCERS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 12/17/82

Attest:
Chief of Registration

date 12/7/82

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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In July of 1867, a group of freedmen in Marion established the "Lincoln School of Marion", acquired a lot and erected a small building. In the fall of the following year, the American Missionary Association leased the building and grounds and took over the payment of teachers. The building provided space for a visiting Congregational minister to preach several Sundays and in 1870, the First Congregational Church was preach several Sundays and in 1870, the First Congregational Church was organized and the academy used for a chapel. In 1871, members of the congregation agreed to provide all of the labor for constructing a "chapel", if money for materials could be found. The American Missionary Association donated a building site and \$800. The building was completed in the late fall of 1871. During the early years of the school, the pastors of the church conducted classes. In 1873 the school was deeded to the state of Alabama in return for a state promise to make it a normal school and university for blacks. In 1887 the school was abolished by the state. Ultimately the normal school was reopened in Montgomery (now Alabama State University), and the A.M.A. reopened the school at Marion, at the urging of black citizens who had raised \$300. The school became one of the most noted in the southeast, providing a boarding high school and a normal department. Again in 1897, the determination of local citizens and the school students to continue the school ended the A.M.A.'s plan to abandon the school. Lincoln Normal continued as an A.M.A. supported school until the 1960s when it was sold to the state. In the 1970s the school was closed and most of the buildings demolished.

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1. The American Missionary. February 1872. pp. 29, 20.
2. Sherer, Robert G. Subordination or Liberation? The Development and Conflicting Theories of Black Education in 19th Century Alabama. The University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 1977.
3. "Lincolnite Reunion". Program from the Lincoln Alumni Reunion, July 3-4, 1980.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Commencing at a stake on the south side of Clay Street and ten feet East of the East line of the Gurles land, running last along said Street one hundred and twenty feet, to a stake, thence south two hundred feet to a stake thence West one hundred and twenty feet, thence North two hundred feet to place of beginning on Clay Street.