

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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date entered

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

## 1. Name

historic First Baptist Church

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number 400 South Broad Street

not for publication

city, town Burlington

vicinity of

state North Carolina

code

037

county

Alamance

code

001

## 3. Classification

**Category**

- district
- building(s)
- structure
- site
- object

**Ownership**

- public
- private
- both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
- being considered
- N/A

**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:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Trustees of First Baptist Church

street & number 400 South Broad Street

city, town Burlington

vicinity of

state North Carolina

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alamance County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Graham

state North Carolina

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Architectural Inventory of Burlington has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981-82  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N.C. Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh

state North Carolina

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The First Baptist Church property takes up approximately half of the block bounded by Broad, Maple, Mebane and East Davis streets. The building presents an impressive monumental facade that dominates the prominent intersection of Broad and East Davis streets at the southeast edge of the Central Business District. The sanctuary, facing Broad at its intersection with East Davis, is fronted by a small lawn along both streets. Two tall hardwoods flank the main facade, and the lawn along Broad Street extends to the recess between the sanctuary and a later addition where there is a memorial garden planted with azaleas and accented with a fountain. Large paved parking lots lead right up to the southwest and southeast sides of the church building.

The original Neoclassical Revival style portion of the First Baptist, begun in 1921 according to a design by architect Herbert Hunter of High Point, North Carolina, is a compact block with slightly projecting corner bays, all faced in buff-colored brick and ornamented in stone. In the classical tradition, order and symmetry reign throughout. The two main stories are on a raised basement, which becomes a full ground story as the lot slopes downward to the southeast. A tall water table of molded striated stone blocks delineates the base of the first floor on all exposed sides of the block. At the top of the building, a carefully detailed entablature with a fasciaed architrave, plain frieze and molded cornice is surmounted by a tall brick parapet with stone coping that conceals the roof. Running horizontally across the middle of the elevations, a stone course carved in a meander pattern is another feature that helps to unify the facades. On the side elevations, this course is interrupted by pilasters and very tall and narrow second-story windows. In the end bays, the windows are contained in very slightly recessed window planes topped with consoles acting as keystones. Between these projecting bays, pilasters extending the full two stories with stone capitals separate pairs of windows without consoles above. On the main facade, the second-story windows are shorter, and rise from the meander course. The muntins of all of the windows are in the pattern of two grids overlaying each other at 45-degree angles.

The Neoclassical Revival styling is manifested most forcefully in the main facade dominated by a monumental temple front. The Ionic hexastyle portico displays the architect's understanding of classical Greek architecture in its correct, though austere, use of elements. The entablature that continued from the main structure bears the name of the church carved in the frieze and the pediment presents a brick field unadorned except for a stone rondel at its center containing a candelabra carved in relief. Stone anthemions project from all three corners of the pediment. The floor of the portico projects beyond the columns to flank the central flight of concrete steps. On the upper portion of the portico wall, five single windows, each with a console above and in its own recessed window plane, rise from the meander course. The three identical entrances are enframed by three-part molded architraves with a molded entablature supported by consoles above.

The interior of the sanctuary contrasts with the overall form of the building in its side walls that curve inward toward the front and the back of the large space open the full two stories to give the impression of a circular auditorium. The slightly curved pews, on a gently downward-sloping floor, are clustered in three banks with two interior aisles and an outside aisle along each wall. The walls stop their inward curve at the front of the sanctuary to form the rectangular area with a platform containing the choir stall in the middle and the organ and piano stalls to either side. Each of these stalls consists of short partitions decorated with rows of arches in raised molding. There is no fixed pulpit. In the upper portion of the wall on either side of the central raised platform at the front of the sanctuary, in the space between the curve of the sanctuary walls and the exterior walls, the organ pipes are concealed behind grilles. Elevated above the choir stall, in the middle of the southeast wall, an arch enframes the baptismal pool, hidden from view behind and below the wall. In the back wall of the pool area, a smaller arch contains a stained glass landscape in the style of Tiffany. Most of the decorative elements are rectilinear. The window muntin motif of the grids overlaid at 45-degree angles to each other appears on the face of the balcony across the rear of the sanctuary, is carved into the ends of

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the pews, and constitutes the grilles concealing the organ pipes. This motif also decorates the central square panel of a grid created on the ceiling by the intersection of pairs of beams in molded casings. (This motif is particularly appropriate to church architecture in its abstraction of the Chi-Rho.) Several brass lanterns in various sizes are suspended from the ceiling, the largest one hanging from the center of the ceiling grid. A molded course at the base of the balcony continues along the curved side walls of the sanctuary to the rectangular alter area, ending at the arch in front of the baptismal pool. Pairs of boxed piers with molding at top and bottom rise from the course between the paired windows to a tall and heavily molded entablature.

Additions to the original building followed its basic design, with similarly-colored brick and water tables, molded cornices and recessed window planes marking the elevations visible from the street. R. R. Markley of Durham designed the educational building connected to the south corner of the original building in 1939. On the northwest side of that addition, a Sunday School and chapel wing, parallel to the sanctuary and with the same setback, was constructed in 1953. The main facade of this 1953 addition recalls the sanctuary portico in its flush pediment above four stone pilasters. A more streamlined version of the original design characterizes the large four-story classroom wing attached to the rear of the sanctuary in 1968 according to plans by Burlington architect Vernon Lewis.

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## 8. Significance

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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 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 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		

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**Specific dates** 1922-23      **Builder/Architect** Herbert Hunter

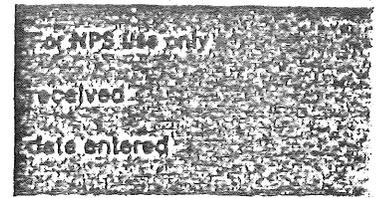
**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** additions 1940 (R.R. Markley), 1953 and 1968 (Vernon L. Lewis)

The First Baptist Church is one of Burlington's two outstanding examples of Neoclassical Revival style church architecture. Standing on the southeast perimeter of the city's Central Business District, the building was erected in 1922-24 by one of Burlington's leading congregations whose growth paralleled the prosperity that was being experienced throughout the community. The First Baptist Church is a prime example of early twentieth-century use of ancient Greek forms in the reserved and stately treatment of the Tonic hexastyle temple front.

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### Criteria Assessment

- A. The First Baptist Church was built by one of the first congregations that evolved from the Union Church, the community's earliest facility for worship and education. It became a leading force in the community, its growth in the first decades of the twentieth century reflecting the economic expansion citywide.
- C. The First Baptist Church is one of Burlington's best institutional examples of the Neoclassical Revival style.

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Not long after the Union Church was constructed on land donated by the North Carolina Railroad Company in 1869, its steadily growing numbers of attendants who adhered to various Protestant denominations began to feel the need for formally organizing individual congregations.<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterians and the Lutherans in the late 1870s were the first to establish congregations, followed by the Episcopalians and the Christians.<sup>2</sup> After a series of meetings led by the itinerant minister, the Rev. G. S. Daugherty, the Baptists decided to form their own church, and on July 28, 1887, just five months after the town had changed its name from Company Shops to Burlington, thirteen Baptists founded a new congregation. At this initial meeting, the Rev. Columbus Durham presided and G. S. Daugherty acted as clerk. The charter members came from Moore's Chapel, Graham Church and Bethel Church, all in Alamance County.

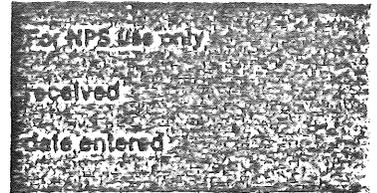
The Baptists continued to meet at Union Church under the leadership of their first pastor, the Rev. A. T. Hord, hired on November 10, 1887. Early in 1888, the new congregation purchased a lot at the northeast corner of East Davis and Mendenhall (now Broad) streets from the North Carolina Railroad Company for \$25.00. Fund-raising led by the Rev. Hord commenced with the laying of the cornerstone in 1889, and by 1891 a frame building with a square corner bell tower was ready for occupancy.

As the Baptist congregation steadily grew, so did the scope of its activities. Baptisms were held in the pond near the Burlington Coffin Company building, and in the early 1890s a Sunday School was organized. For several years services were conducted by a minister only once a month. Rev. Hord was succeeded by Dr. Thomas Hume, a long-time professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in 1889. In spite of the church's imposition of many restrictions upon its membership, such as the prohibition of dancing and attending the theatre and the insistence upon faithful attendance at church services and payment of dues, the First Baptist Church experienced rapid expansion, particularly under its fourth pastor, the Rev. J. C. Hocutt; by 1895, the church auditorium had to be doubled in size. The First Baptist Church early gained a reputation for sponsoring missions, such as the one established in West Burlington in 1898, and for contributing to such other institutions as orphanages. By the turn of the century, the church was self-sustaining and no longer depended upon aid from the State Mission Board. During the first decade of this century, the church building was enlarged again with a Sunday School wing; a parsonage was built on Maple Avenue; and new missions were begun in mill towns along the Haw River.

The tremendous growth and prosperity experienced throughout Burlington beginning in the 1910s was reflected in the further development of the First Baptist Church and its physical plant. Coinciding with the beginning of the Rev. Martin W. Buck's twenty-year tenure as pastor of the church in 1913, the congregation changed its name to the First Baptist Church of Burlington and began a period of unprecedented expansion. With more than 400 members in 1919, the need for a new church was urgent. Plans for a new building began in December of that year with initiation of a fund drive that soon netted more than \$36,000.00. A construction committee was chosen which handled the purchase of the lot across the street from the first church building at the southeast corner of Broad and East Davis streets. The Committee of Twenty-One, charged with overseeing all matters relating to the new church building, retained the High Point architect Herbert Hunter, whose rendering of the new sanctuary first appeared in the church bulletin in January of 1921.<sup>3</sup> His plans were approved in April of that year and construction commenced the following December. The treasurer reported the building's cost of \$102,000.00 when it opened on February 24, 1924.

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The new and much larger building in a grand style reflective of the church's position in Burlington now afforded the congregation the ability to offer more facilities for the community's use as it continued to establish new churches throughout the surrounding area. In 1938, the need for additional space was felt once again and plans began for an education building under the leadership of the Rev. A. D. Kinnett, who was particularly interested in providing space for the church's large and steadily growing library. Plans were approved for a modern Sunday School and Educational Building designed by R. R. Markley of Durham and completed in October of 1940 at a cost of \$50,000.00. By the time the new wing was dedicated in 1944, not only had its cost been paid, but the church had also succeeded in founding Grove Park Baptist Church and Southside Baptist Church. Continued expansion of the church is represented by the 1953 Chapel and Sunday School Building erected next to the 1922-24 sanctuary, and by the large four-story classroom building completed in 1968 according to a design by Burlington architect Vernon Lewis. Concurrent with construction of this latest addition, all of the other church buildings on the site were renovated; the chancel underwent minor changes in its design during a remodelling; and new parking lots were paved.

Notes

1

Unless otherwise noted, historical background of the First Baptist Church of Burlington is taken from Minwal Cates Butler, We've a Story to Tell of Eighty One Years of Growth of the First Baptist Church, Burlington, N.C., 1887-1968, privately published in 1968.

2

W. T. Lasley, "Union Church: Cradle of Religion, Education," The City-County Newspaper, week ending 2 April 1977, p. 8A.

3

First Baptist Church Weekly Bulletin, Vol. II, No. 2, for week beginning 9 January 1921.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheets

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Burlington, N.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	7	6	4	0	9	4	0	3	9	9	4	8	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 36, Lot 3, Burlington Tax Maps, Map #13

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claudia P. Roberts

organization Consultant to the City of Burlington

date 6-1-83

street & number 425 South Lexington Avenue

telephone (919) 227-3603 Ext. 79

city or town Burlington

state North Carolina

# 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Pinf.

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date November 16, 1983

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH



12

W. DAVIS

MAPLE

S. BROAD

(37)

(36)

(35)

(1)

(5)

