

OCT 30 1986 # _____ DEC 11 1986 4

State of North Carolina
Division of Archives and History

Rockingham COUNTY

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Reidsville QUAD

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC

(former) First Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

401 South Scales Street

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Reidsville

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Rockingham

CODE

157

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

King Holdings, Inc. c/o Mr. Elwood King

STREET & NUMBER

King Motor Co., 614 S. Scales St.

CITY, TOWN

Reidsville

— VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Rockingham County Register of Deeds, Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Highway 65

CITY, TOWN

Wentworth

STATE

North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Allison Harris Black, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Black & Black

DATE

Preservation Consultants

November 1985

STREET & NUMBER

620 Wills Forest Street

TELEPHONE

919 828-4616

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Constructed in 1918 on the southeast corner of South Scales and Williams streets in the town of Reidsville, the building which formerly housed the congregation of the black First Baptist Church is a handsome and relatively intact example of late Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture in a small town setting. Although the congregation for which the church was built has moved to a modern facility approximately one-half mile to the east, the building is again being used by a religious group, after standing vacant for a number of years. Unfortunately, urban commercial development has surrounded the site, and pressures for further development render its future uncertain. Small, grassy open spaces to the south and east of the building serve as buffers between the church and the surrounding commercial structures.

The solid masonry building, which replaced an earlier frame church formerly standing on the adjacent lot to the east, is of one to five common bond brick, resting on a high brick foundation providing space for a basement, which has three jack-arched window openings on the front elevation. A brick belt course marks the division between the main level and the basement, and three rows of brick headers top each round-arch opening on the facade, side elevations and towers. Emphasizing the Gothic Revival styling of the building is the three-bay facade which consists of the central gabled bay with its large three-part tracery stained glass window flanked by crenellated towers.

The towers are of unequal height, a characteristic of many late 19th and early 20th century churches; local examples include Main Street Methodist Church (1891) and the Primitive Baptist Church on Lindsey Street (1920). The towers have salient brick buttresses with concrete caps at each exposed corner, and both contain three principal stages, with the transition to the top stage marked by a corbeled belt course. Two round-arched openings occur on each side of this third stage; the brick piers separating them have corbeled caps, with those at the corners being paneled. The middle stage is marked by small, round-arched stained glass windows on two sides. The first stage contains entrances to the building, with that in the south tower opening to the basement, while that in the north tower leads to a vestibule from which the sanctuary is entered. This main entrance opens out to a landing from which opposing flights of brickwalled stairs lead to Williams Street and South Scales Street. The area in the south tower corresponding to the vestibule is used as the current pastor's office.

Each side elevation is composed of seven bays, delineated by buttresses similar to those on the towers, except for the rear two bays. A stained glass window in a round-arched opening fills each of these bays on the main level, with the exception of the third from the rear on the north elevation, which contains a side entrance to the sanctuary. A single flight of stairs rising west to east on Williams Street leads to this entrance. On the basement level, jack-arched windows pierce the wall, five on the north elevation and four on the south elevation. Two brick chimneys rise on the south elevation, in the southeast corner and in the place of the fourth buttress from the front.

The gabled rear elevation is embellished with a rose window. However, ghost marks in the brick work on this elevation indicate that this window was

8 SIGNIFICANCE

____ NATIONAL

____ STATE

X

LOCAL

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1918

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The building which was the home of the black First Baptist Church in Reidsville from its construction in 1918 until the mid 1970s is a handsome representative example of early 20th century Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture in a small town setting. Organized by 1874 by black members of the Reidsville Baptist Church, First Baptist was the first separate church for blacks in the town, part of a larger movement to organize such churches during Reconstruction and the post-Reconstruction era. It has remained the leading black Baptist congregation in Reidsville up to the present day, enjoying steady growth throughout the 20th century. The relatively intact building stands on the southeast corner of South Scales and Williams streets at the southern edge of Reidsville's central business district, in an area which for much of the 20th century was a black residential area. It replaced an earlier frame structure built between 1883 and 1890 on an adjacent lot to the east and was in turn replaced by a new facility in 1975. The attractive brick building has a typical gabled facade flanked by multi-stage towers of unequal height, with a three-part tracery stained glass window centered on the facade, stained glass windows in the bays of the side elevation, and a rose window on the rear elevation. Urban commercial development now surrounds the building, making its future somewhat uncertain; the nearby St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church (built in 1921), which also housed a prominent black congregation, was demolished in the late 1970s.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A. The (former) First Baptist Church is associated with the post Civil War move in the South to establish separate churches for black congregations, being the first such established in Reidsville, and is associated with the steady growth of that congregation through much of the 20th century.

C. It is a handsome and relatively intact representative example of early 20th century Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture in a small town setting.

CRITERIA EXCEPTION

a. The (former) First Baptist Church is significant historically as the former home of the first separate black church established in Reidsville, as the home of this important black congregation as it grew steadily through much of the 20th century, and as a representative example of early 20th century Gothic Revival church architecture.

See continuation sheets

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheets for Multiple Resource

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	61,98,3,0	4,02,42,0,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

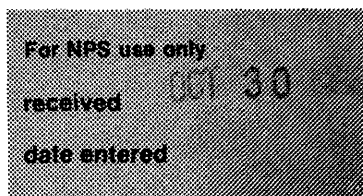
B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property being nominated consists of lot 1, block 3, Rockingham County tax map number 7, as outlined in red on the attached map.

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Continuation sheet DESCRIPTION Item number 7 Page 1

originally higher on the wall and that five round-arched windows on the main level have been removed. It seems likely that this change occurred after the 1920s when a baptistry was constructed in the east end of the church. Two windows and a low doorway open to the basement level on this elevation.

Although the original church furniture was removed when the First Baptist congregation moved to new quarters in 1975, the interior retains much of its original character as most of its finish details remain intact. Beaded tongue and groove wainscotting extends around the large open sanctuary with plaster walls rising above, pierced by the handsome stained glass windows. Dedication panes have been removed from the windows and preserved by the pastor serving the congregation which currently uses the building.

An enclosed staircase leads to the basement from the floor of the sanctuary under the Gothic window in the west (facade) wall. From this wall, the floor slopes in auditorium fashion to the chancel (east) end. At this time, three sections of modern wooden pews separated by aisles fill the sanctuary. At the chancel end, a platform with pulpit and choir loft projects into the sanctuary in front of tall paneled wainscot, behind which is the baptistry. The original baptistry was located on the sanctuary floor. Above this wainscot is a rectangular opening with a panel which slides back to reveal the baptism ritual with the rose window behind.

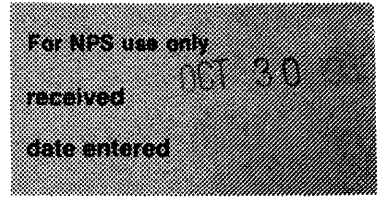
The most notable features of the interior are the open trusswork of the ceiling, which is supported by large square posts topped by heavy brackets, and the ogee arch opening defining the choir loft and baptistry area. The lower three feet of the posts are covered with wainscot identical to that surrounding the sanctuary, and molded capitals accent the upper portions of the posts and the ogee arch. All of the woodwork (with the exception of the baptistry wainscot) is stained a dark color which affords a striking contrast with the white plaster walls. Simple white globes are suspended from the accoustical tile ceiling to light the interior. In the chancel wall, flanking five-panel doors lead to small rooms where flights of steep, narrow stairs rise to the baptistry and adjacent dressing cubicles.

The basement consists of a large open space, containing a furnace and heating ductwork, and two small rooms--one in the northeast corner and one extending along the south wall. The large room probably was originally used as an informal assembly area, while the smaller rooms were used for Sunday School classes. Today, the south room is the present congregation's storage location for clothes collected for the needy, while the other spaces are used for general storage.

As already noted, the furniture used by the congregation for which the church was built has been removed, some changes have been made in the fenestration of the rear elevation (probably when the baptistry was constructed), and a modern ceiling has been installed in the sanctuary. Fortunately, these alterations have not compromised the character or integrity of the building. The

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greatest danger to its future lies in the developmental pressures inherent in its location.

Footnote

¹H. K. Griggs, Reidsville, N. C., Allison Black interviews, 18 June and 24 June 1986.

²Ibid.

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Continuation sheet STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8 Page 1

A handsome example of early 20th century Gothic Revival ecclesiastical architecture, the brick church standing on the southeast corner of South Scales and Williams streets in Reidsville served the congregation of the black First Baptist Church from its construction in 1918 until their move to new facilities in 1975. Established around 1874, this congregation was the first separate black church in Reidsville, with some of its members coming from the congregation of the Reidsville Baptist Church, which was the first congregation organized in the town. Replacing an earlier frame structure which stood just to the east of the present location, the edifice originally was surrounded by dwellings and other churches in a predominantly black-occupied area at the southern edge of the town's central business district.

Throughout the southern United States prior to the Civil War, the great majority of slaves and free blacks attended the same churches as white members of the population, although they were usually relegated to seats in galleries or occasional separate services. In North Carolina, Baptists formed the strongest denomination among blacks, but there were only a few independent churches and a handful of black preachers in the state before 1860.¹ During Reconstruction and the post-Reconstruction era, the newly-emancipated blacks moved to establish separate churches, although a few retained their memberships in the white churches.² The trend was often actively encouraged by whites, as evidenced by the North Carolina State Baptist Convention, which, at its annual meeting in 1867, urged its black brethren to form separate churches and associations. The Roanoke Association had been organized on Roanoke Island in 1865 and was probably the earliest black Baptist association in the state. A state convention was established in 1869, and³ by 1872, there were 282 black Baptist churches in the state with 27,560 members.³ The following ten years saw the membership grow more than three-fold, to 91,132, and by 1888, there were 123,000 black Baptists in the state.⁴

A Baptist congregation for the black residents of Reidsville had been formed by 1874 under the leadership of the Reverend Samuel Jones, drawing black members away from the Reidsville Baptist Church (established in 1869 and now known as First Baptist Church of Reidsville). In his history of the latter church, Richard Saunders quotes church records indicating that Jones and J. McGehee were removed from the church's roles after it was found they had "...united...with a colored church recently organized in this town."⁵ Saunders also included the following comment on the departure of the black members of the Baptist congregation,

'For ten years after the surrender, the colored members affiliated with the whites, but of their own accord withdrew to build their own church. Under the trying days of Reconstruction they continued to kneel in prayer and sing the songs of Zion together, as together they struggled in friendly and cordial co-operation to solve their common problems and to promote the welfare of each other.'⁶

At this time, it is not known where the congregation met for the next nine years.

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In August 1883, a deed was recorded between the Trustees of the Baptist Church (colored) of Rockingham County and William and Sarah A. Lindsey (who had also provided the lot for the first building of the Reidsville Baptist Church) for a lot on the new street (first known as Branch Street and later changed to Williams Street) intersecting with South Scales Street.⁷ By 1890, the Sanborn maps show a frame structure on a site⁸ just to the east of the present church, noted as the colored Baptist Church. Within two years, the Trustees had acquired from W. T. and Lucy A. Baynes the parcel of land on which the brick church was to be built more than a quarter of a century later.⁹ During this period, the church was served by Rev. Charles Coleman and Rev. Willie Graham, who was also principal of the black graded school.¹⁰

The years around the turn of the 20th century apparently brought controversy to the congregation, resulting in a split in the church, which was reported thus in the 22 March 1900 issue of

Webster's Weekly:

The colored Baptists have divided into two congregations. The anti-Slade people hold the church property, while the followers of Parson Slade have bought the Episcopal Church. Our Episcopal friends have been anxious to sell for some time, having decided to build in another part of town.¹¹

Rev. R. L. Slade, who had been the church's minister only briefly, led the formation of a new congregation, known as Zion Baptist Church, which continues in existence today.¹²

Six ministers served the congregation between the split and the arrival of Rev. S. B. Brown in 1916.¹³ In the latter year, the Reidsville Review reported that Rev. L. G. Nichols of Boston had accepted a call to First Baptist, although Nichols apparently did not come to Reidsville. In the same article, it was said that, "This church is classed among the leading colored churches of the State, being noted for the intelligent people it carries; also the businessmen number among its membership."¹⁴ Instead of Nichols, Simpson B. Brown, a West Indian, became the pastor, serving until his death in 1929.¹⁵

It was during Brown's tenure that the handsome new church was erected, a reflection of the congregation's position in the community. The dignified brick building is representative of early 20th century ecclesiastical architecture following small-scale Gothic Revival design, with a gabled facade flanked by crenellated multi-stage towers of unequal height. In this regard, it is similar to the contemporary Primitive Baptist Church on Lindsey Street and First Congregational Christian Church on Montgomery Street. A three-part stained glass window marks the side elevations, and a rose window embellishes the rear elevation. The interior is as well-crafted as the exterior, with a truss-work ceiling, ogee arch at the east end, and beaded tongue and groove wainscoting on the lower portion of large bracketed wooden posts and below the white plaster wall.

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The church enjoyed steady growth throughout the 20th century, under the leadership of only six pastors from the death of Brown until the construction of a new building in 1975. Among these pastors was Rev. C. W. T. Barnes, a graduate of Union Theological Seminary, and Dr. Archie D. Logan, a South Carolina native, who served the congregation from 1943 until his death in 1971.¹⁶ By this time, the membership was nearly 400, much too large for the South Scales Street building, where Sunday School classes were taught in the sanctuary as well as the basement. During the relatively brief tenure of Rev. Earl M. Brown, a new facility was built on Hubbard Street.¹⁷ The current pastor is Rev. O'Kelley Lawson.

A two-story frame dwelling just south of the Scales Street church served as the church parsonage for many years. Standing vacant by the mid 1950s when the current pastor, Dr. Logan, had moved to a residential area of the city, the parsonage was demolished in the 1960s.¹⁸ King Holdings, Inc. acquired the 1918 brick church building in 1977 and has leased it to the Ephesus Seventh Day Adventist congregation since 1984, after it had been vacant for several years. The area in which the church stands has become increasingly commercial in character during the last quarter century; it is now surrounded by commercial establishments, governmental buildings, and parking lots. St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church, a brick building contemporary with First Baptist and located on the opposite corner, which had also served a black congregation for much of the twentieth century, was demolished in the late 1970s.

Footnotes

¹ Rev. Charles B. Williams, A History of the Baptists of North Carolina (Raleigh: Presses of Edwards & Broughton, 1901), pp. 160-161; and Frenise A. Logan, The Negro in North Carolina, 1876-1894 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), p. 164.

² Logan, The Negro, p. 164.

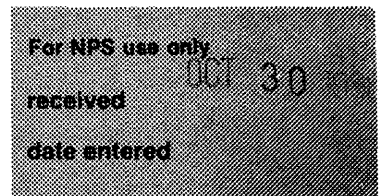
³ M. A. Huggins, A History of North Carolina Baptists, 1727-1932 (Raleigh: The General Board, Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, 1967), p. 268.

⁴ Logan, The Negro, pp. 164-165.

⁵ Lindley S. Butler, Rockingham County: A Brief History (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1982), p. 70; and Richard R. Saunders, Sr., comp., Open Doors and Closed Windows of the First Baptist Church of Reidsville, North Carolina (Reidsville: Mrs. Richard R. Saunders, Sr., 1948), p. 274. Note: It is possible that Reverend Samuel Jones is the Reverend S. M. Jones who was one of the founders of the black Baptist State convention--Williams, A History, p. 162.

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⁶ Saunders, Open Doors, p. 274.

⁷ Rockingham County Register of Deeds Office (hereinafter cited as RCRD), deed book 3W, page 118.

⁸ Sanborn Insurance Company maps, Reidsville series, 1890.

⁹ RCRD, deed book 94, page 97.

¹⁰ H. K. Griggs, Reidsville, N. C., Allison Black telephone interview, 18 June and 24 June 1986. Note: Mr. Griggs is a longtime member of First Baptist Church.

¹¹ Webster's Weekly (Reidsville, N.C.), 22 March 1900, p. 5.

¹² Griggs interview.

¹³ Ibid. Other pastors during this period were Dr. J. O. Crosby, Rev. C. L. Davis, Rev. C. C. Somerville, Rev. A. W. Avery, Rev. B. B. Hale, and Rev. J. C. Milton.

¹⁴ "Accepts Call Here," Reidsville (N. C.) Review, 28 November 1916, p. 1.

¹⁵ Griggs interview; Reidsville City Directory, 1929; and RCRD, Death Certificates, book 16, p. 317.

¹⁶ Griggs interview. Pastors during this period were Rev. T. H. Harris, Rev. Barnes, Rev. R. E. Reeves, Rev. F. O. Bass, Dr. Logan, and Rev. Earl M. Brown.

¹⁷ Charles Dyson Rodenbough, ed., The Heritage of Rockingham County, North Carolina 1983 (Winston-Salem: Rockingham County Historical Society, 1983), p. 114.

¹⁸ RCRD, deed book 258, page 486; Sanborn maps, 1929; and Reidsville city directories, 1954-1969.

¹⁹ RCRD, deed book 711, page 754; and interview with Reverend Todd, pastor, Ephesus Seventh Day Adventist Church, Reidsville, North Carolina, 26 September 1985.