

First Baptist Church
Hampton Street, between Sumter
and Marion Streets
Columbia
Richland County
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-251

HABS

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

40-COLUM.
5-

Location: Hampton (formerly Plain) Street, between Sumter and Marion Streets, Columbia, Richland County, South Carolina

Present Owner and Occupant: First Baptist Church

Present Use: Church

Brief Statement of Significance: This fine example of an ante-bellum church was the site of The South Carolina Secession Convention on December 17, 1860.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The First Baptist Church was organized in 1807, and the first house of worship erected in 1811 at the southeast corner of Hampton (then Plain) and Sumter Streets. This area later became a grave yard when the present church building was erected. In 1930 a Sunday school building was erected over this grave yard, and all stones adjacent were removed and placed against the perimeter wall or within the building. A complete map of grave locations was prepared and a listing of graves was graven on a marble slab, now in the lobby of the building.

The church building now standing was erected in 1859 (architect unknown) and was the site of the Secession Convention of December 17, 1860. On passing through Columbia in 1865, General Sherman gave orders that the building should be burned. Through error in understanding the order, the original (1811) building, still standing at that time at Hampton and Sumter Streets, was burned.

The first pastor of the church was Reverend Dr. Jonathan Maxey, first President of South Carolina College (now University of South Carolina). Maxey had previously been president of Rhode Island and Union Colleges, and was a brilliant orator, scholar, and educator. Maxey is buried in the grave yard of the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia. In 1841 the church had a membership of 405 (49 white and 356 negro). It was determined to build a new church building (the present structure) in 1856 and the then pastor, Dr. James Pattigru Boyca subscribed \$10,000 to the building fund. At the close of the war in 1865 the total membership was 33, all white. During the pastorate of Dr. William C. Lindsay (1877-1910) this church founded three other churches: Park Street, Tabernacle, and Southside.

The original building has a Roman Tuscan portico and Tuscan pilasters down the sides, all rendered in molded brick. The building, before additions, was approximately 56' wide by 84' long, with balcony

down each side and at front over entrance vestibule. In 1941 the rear wall was removed, pushed back, and the church made 35' longer. At that time the proscenium arch was replaced with a rectangular proscenium of great width to allow for an adequate choir and baptistry. The original high pulpit and steps with carved volute flankers were retained and pushed back to the new location. In 1949 the exterior walls of the side aisles under the balcony were removed and 15' side aisle seating provided. The old upper wall and pilasters are supported on steel columns, encased in fluted Doric wood columns, matching the original work. During the 1941 alterations the building was completely air conditioned. All alterations have been done in a scholarly manner to preserve the character of the original structure.

The brick of the building was painted a dirty brown around the turn of the century. During the 1949 alterations this paint was carefully removed, exposing a very lovely range of color--light tan and dark pink. The congregation is very conscious of the value of the building as a historic structure, and it is kept in beautiful repair and maintained in fine condition.

Sources of information: Old Church records and Historical Marker. Helen Kohn Hennig, Sasqui-Centennial History of Columbia (1936). David Duncan Wallace, South Carolina, A Short History (Published 1934; revised and republished 1951).

Prepared by Walter F. Petty
AIA Preservation Officer
December 1961

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A handsome, Greek-Revival church with a tetrastyle portico.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Original (1859) church was 56' wide x 84' deep; 35' was added to the rear of the church in 1941; 15' was added to the east and west sides of the church in 1949. The church has two stories.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Wall construction: 17" and 24" solid brick, laid in common bond, five stretcher rows to one header row; Tuscan pilasters between windows and at corners.

4. Porches: Handsome tetrastyle Roman Tuscan portico, frame pediment over unfluted Tuscan columns of molded brick with brick capitals and brick floor on portico.

5. Chimneys: One brick chimney.

6. Openings:

e. Doorways and doors: Front doors--center entrance consists of a pair of large, wood, double doors with pilasters and projecting horizontal entablature with heavy consoles; smaller, flanking, wood double doors with transoms and fan lights, framed by masonry arch, enlarged from original windows.

b. Windows and shutters: Above the front doors are three windows set in brick reveals having double-hung wood sash with arch-head sash above, ten-lights over ten-lights plus fan; same on sides.

7. Roof:

e. Shape, covering: Gable roof, sloping side to side (sloped about 7/12), with pediment to front. Pediment is of matched boards without decoration.

b. Cornice: Large, simple, wood cornice, with brick string course below at line of capital tops.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: Auditorium with stepped balcony around three sides supported by fluted columns. Open balustrade around.

2. Stairways: Two - one on either side of entrance door - leading to the balcony.

3. Flooring: Wood - carpeted.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.

5. Doorways and doors: Wood.

6. Trim: Wood, molded.

7. Hardware: Not original.

8. Lighting: Electric.

9. Heating: Central heating - air conditioned.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: Faces north on a built-up city street; set slightly back from street.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: Several other modern buildings of the church are connected to the main building.
4. Welks: Brick paving outside church.
5. Landscaping: Small box gardens around column bases.

Prepered by James C. Massey, Architect
National Park Service
July 1961