

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Second Baptist Church (Colored)

other names/site number Second Missionary Baptist Church, Washington Avenue Baptist Church [preferred]

2. Location

street & number 729 North Washington not for publication

city or town Springfield vicinity _____

state MO code 077 county Greene zip code 65804

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide ___ locally.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals
Late Gothic Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone
roof asphalt
walls brick

other wood
glass

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: City of Springfield

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>474660</u>	<u>4118640</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (See the attached continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (See the attached continuation sheet.)

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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Summary:

Washington Avenue Baptist Church is a one-story brick Late Gothic Revival church building with a rectangular plan with projecting wings. It is located at 729 North Washington, in Springfield, Greene County, Missouri. The church is situated on the northern boundary of historic Jordan Creek Valley on the west side of North Washington facing east, adjacent to the southern boundary of Drury University's main campus and across from its School of Architecture. The original church building was constructed in 1885 and partially reconstructed following a 1911 fire that destroyed the roof and severely damaged the interior. The historic building and a 1986 education wing addition almost fully occupy the current lot. It is the only resource on the property and is a contributing building. The Late Gothic Revival church exterior – with its high pitched gable and hip roof, shingled gable pediments, projecting wings, pointed arch windows and prominent bell tower – retains substantial integrity of design, materials, and craftsmanship, except for a modern 1986 addition on the south side and rear elevations and a fluorescent neon sign and metal canopy over the front bell tower entrance. It rests on a rough-faced, random-coursed cut limestone foundation. The original building floorplan is fairly unchanged and consists of a vestibule at the bell tower entrance, large open sanctuary and chancel in the nave, classroom and fellowship area at its rear west portion and a pastor's office and choir room in a north projecting wing behind the chancel. The interior of the sanctuary has been modernized, most recently in 1974. However, these were primarily decorative alterations (paneling, wainscoting, etc.) and surface modifications (e.g., suspended ceiling), which could be reversed through an appropriate interpretive restoration effort. While still a viable building in good condition, Washington Avenue Baptist Church is in certain danger of relocation, deconstruction or demolition, pending a planned sale to neighboring Drury University. The period of significance is determined to be 1885 to 1950, beginning at the date of construction and ending at the minimum age criterion. This ending date is prior to the post-segregation era marked by the integration of Springfield public schools in 1955, which would perhaps be more appropriate to the building's context.

Elaboration:

Washington Avenue Church was once part of a densely populated residential neighborhood of modest bungalow style homes inhabited by Springfield's African-American population and of the businesses they owned. These domestic and commercial buildings have been removed for industrial and institutional development and the neighborhood has been lost.

The properties across Washington Avenue on the east have been acquired by Drury University and are now the site of the John Q. Hammons School of Architecture. The two properties immediately adjacent to the church on the north are owned by Drury University and paved for parking, to which the congregation has access rights. The third property north of the church building, between the parking lot on the south and the Drury Communications Center on the north, is the last remaining historic single dwelling domestic building in this area. The western boundary adjoins properties used for light industry. The grassed

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These are functional in stabilizing the walls but a more sensitive solution could be implemented to better support the building's architectural integrity.

The east-facing façade (*See Photos 1 and 2 and Figure 1*) is of brick construction and has a large shingled gable pediment, which rises 17 feet from the top of the wall to the roof peak. Shingles are presented in a repeating 3-3 butt and sawtooth pattern (3 layers butt shingles followed by 3 layers of sawtooth). Simple, sparsely spaced modillions support the overhanging eave. A large pointed arch stained glass and lead tracery window with lace muttins (9 feet wide by 15 feet tall) is centered beneath and slightly interrupts the shingled gable (*See Photo 3*). The dominant central panel bears the "Cross and Crown" icon, one of only two objective symbols found in the building's 10 stained glass windows. The placement of the left and right side panels of the tracery window have been installed in reversed placement, a condition assumed dating to the 1911 recreation of the church's windows. An overscale square bell tower (10 feet wide and 45 feet high) projects from the southeast corner of the building (*See Photos 4 and 5*). The corners of the tower have set-off buttresses with stone coping. The tower has a flared pyramidal roof with overhanging topstage. The roof terminates in a simple finial. The upper portion of the tower has louvered pointed arch openings on all four sides, each measuring 5 feet wide by 8 feet tall. The exposed corners of the tower on its lower portion have set-off buttresses with cut limestone coping (*See Photo 6*). The bell is intact and functional.

The entrance to the church is through the east side of the bell tower. A later period poured concrete staircase rises to the entrance opening (6 feet wide by 9 feet tall). The entrance has modern double doors of flat surface composition wood. They replace what are thought to have been five-panel wood doors (*See Figure 2*), repeated at the other secondary entrances. Above the entrance is a pointed arch stained glass window (6 feet wide at the lower casing by 4 feet tall at the point). The arched presentation at the entrance is completed with a cut limestone keystone within the soldier bonded brick voussoir around the pointed arch of the top window. The entrance also has a modern metal canopy attached to the bell tower between the double doors and the pointed arch window. A two-sided fluorescent neon sign identifying the church hangs above the arched entrance. Both the canopy and the neon sign were added subsequent to 1951, based on photographic evidence.

Prior to the 1986 education wing addition, the south side of the façade from the eastern view reveals the pitched roofs and side walls of the two gabled projecting wings beyond the bell tower at the west of the building. The south of the building from this perspective is now dominated by the addition.

The north side of the façade reveals the pitched roof and side wall of the gabled projecting wing housing the pastor's office and choir room. The east side of the wing has a secondary single-door entrance (3.5 feet wide by 8.5 feet tall) with modern poured concrete steps and an aluminum awning (*See Photo 7*). This

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The south elevation was significantly altered by the 1986 education wing addition (*See Photo 13*). However, the east portion remains intact. The square bell tower projecting from the southeast of the building has a small stained glass window (2 feet wide by 8 feet tall) between the corner buttresses (*See Photo 14*) and below the pointed arch louvered opening at the top portion of the tower. There is a gabled projecting wing aligned with the north wing. It measures 18 feet wide, 27 feet high at the gable peak and 4 feet deep. The gable pediment repeats the alternating sawtooth and butt shingle pattern from the façade. A pointed arch stained glass window (5.5 feet wide by 18 feet tall) is centered beneath and slightly interrupts the shingled gable. Though slightly smaller than the central window on the façade, this window is still distinctively symbolic, bearing the "Anchor" icon at its apex. A smaller stained glass window (3.5 feet wide by 9.5 feet tall) flanks each side of this projecting wing at the south wall of the nave.

Prior to the 1986 addition, the south elevation had a second gabled projecting wing on its west portion (*See Photo 15 and Figure 6*). Measuring 22 feet wide, 30 feet high at the gable peak and 9 feet deep, this wing was slightly larger than and extended past the existing wing on the east. A pointed arch stained glass window (5.5 feet wide by 18 feet tall) was centered beneath and slightly interrupted the shingled gable. A smaller window (2 feet wide by 8 feet tall) was at the right of the larger central window. These two windows were removed from the original second wing and integrated into the addition. Like the one of the same size in the first south wing, the larger window bears the "Anchor" icon. This second wing provided access to the classroom and fellowship portion of the building. An original secondary service entrance on the east side of the wing and concrete stairs remain and are still in use. The roof of the main portion of the building extended between the original two wings to form an overhanging shed roof covering this secondary entrance. The overhang was tied to the roof of the second projecting wing on the west, extended past the south face of the first projecting wing on the east and was supported by a single wood bracket on the east. This shed roof was removed and rebuilt for adjustments to accommodate connection with the addition, which extends from the southwest corner of the original building (*See Photos 16 - 18 and 20 - 21*).

Exterior: The 1986 Education Wing

The new education wing was added to the original building in 1986, following an arsonist's fire that destroyed an earlier education annex located on the property. The addition was designed by local architects Pellham and Phillips. Although it is judged to be sensitive to the original design and materials of the historic church building, its scale has a significant impact on the overall architectural integrity of the resource. However, the addition only covers the west elevation and the west side of the south elevation and does not structurally intrude into it. Therefore, it could be removed and the full integrity of the historic building would be evident.

The brick addition has an L-shaped plan that wraps around the southwest corner of the original church building. It has a combination gable and flat roof. The southeast arm of the L has a gabled shingle roof that

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decorative alterations (paneling, wainscoting, etc.) and surface modifications (e.g., suspended ceiling), which could be reversed through an appropriate interpretive restoration effort. Overall, the integrity of the original building's interior is substantially intact.

Entrance into the building is at the southeast corner through the bell tower, which forms a square vestibule. The sanctuary is entered from the vestibule at the back, with pews facing the chancel at the north. The curved pews are arranged in three columns separated by two side aisles and form an elliptical seating pattern (*See Photos 22 – 26*). The raised floor has a slight rake declining to the chancel, which may have been a later alteration – potentially at the time that new hardwood floors were laid during the post-Depression pastorate of Rev. M.D. Johnson (1938–1946).³

The sanctuary has a suspended ceiling that drops horizontally at the level of the tie rods used to stabilize the building. The tie rods run north to south in line with the scissors trusses above and are enclosed by 1" X 6" wood casings resembling beams. Remnants of the original plaster vaulted ceiling are evident above the suspended ceiling.

The sanctuary's original plaster walls have been covered with stain-finished wainscoting and modern composition wood paneling above. The wood window casings and sills are painted, but appear to have been originally stain-finished.

The chancel consists of a raised platform beneath a vaulted half-dome and has had some surface alterations, including a suspended ceiling that obscures the top of the half-dome. Two side doors leading from the chancel to the pastor's office and choir room behind it on the north have been covered and replaced with a single central door, presumably during the 1974 renovations. A side door to the pastor's office was added to the north wall to the right (east) of the chancel (*See Figures 10 and 11*). The chancel's platform has been extended forward and across the west side of the north wall to accommodate the baptismal and areas for the choir.

The sanctuary is flanked on the west by an original classroom and fellowship space. This area has been modified to serve as overflow for the sanctuary and has bathrooms added to it. A retaining wall separates the sanctuary from this west portion of the building. The massive chimney rises from the south end of the retaining wall. The pointed arch windows of the original west elevation are still evident and intact on the west wall (*See Photos 27 and 28*).

The scantily recorded history of the building, combined with the physical evidence of the retaining wall suggests that perhaps the west portion of the building underneath the hip roof, including the second projecting wing on the south elevation, was a very early addition to the nave. If this area were in fact

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Interior: The 1986 Education Wing

The interior of the education wing provides an open, versatile and low maintenance space. Walls and ceilings are textured painted white drywall. Doors and windows are trimmed in stained oak wood. Floors are covered in vinyl.

The floorplan consists of three two primary spaces: offices in the southeast arm of the L and a large open fellowship/classroom space in the west arm. Entrance from the east outside into the addition is through the projecting wing into a small entry lobby. A central corridor runs west from the entry into the fellowship/classroom space. Along the corridor are two offices (each 12 feet wide and 12 feet deep) and bathrooms on the south and a pastor's office (12 feet wide and 13 feet deep), coatroom (leading into the original church building) and a kitchen (19 feet by 10 feet deep) on the north. The large fellowship classroom space is fully open and can be partitioned into individual classrooms (*See Photo 35*). The addition also has a pantry, mechanical room and storage closet.

Current Endangerment:

Washington Avenue Baptist Church is situated south of the Midtown National Register Historic District and adjacent to the campus of Drury University, a local private liberal arts college. Drury currently is implementing an aggressive expansion into its surrounding areas, resulting in severe pressures to both designated and undesignated historic resources.

Washington Avenue is included in the Midtown Urban Conservation District and listed as a Springfield Historic Register site (listed 9-14-80). However, it is not a designated building within the Midtown National Register Historic District. Local ordinances germane to historic preservation interests do not provide binding architectural review or protections from demolition.

The church building currently continues its 115-year service as an active house of worship. While in need of minor structural maintenance expected in a building its age, the congregation has been a faithful steward to the building and has actively attended to issues of normal deterioration.

The 1986 addition of the education wing was well integrated into the 1885 building in both design and materials and is supportive of its original character. A well-built expansion, it is a very serviceable wing and is fully functional for the active ministry of the church, aside from the building's overall space constraints. Unfortunately, the scale of the addition relative to that of the original building impacts its architectural integrity.

The one architectural feature most in need of attention is the stained glass and lead windows. The congregation has addressed critical issues to stabilize deterioration, but an intensive restoration effort is required, including reversal of some previous repairs to use more appropriate glass. With continued

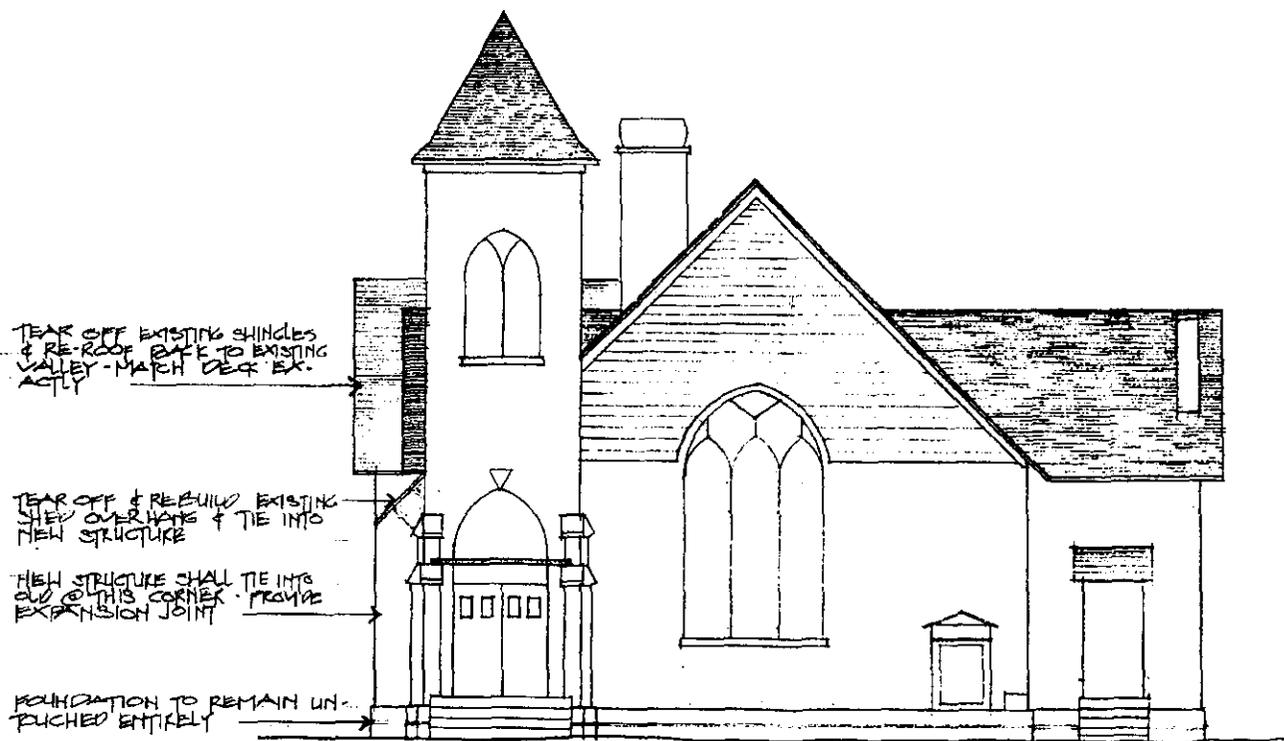
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Figure 1: East Elevation (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition, providing details of the original church building.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806.

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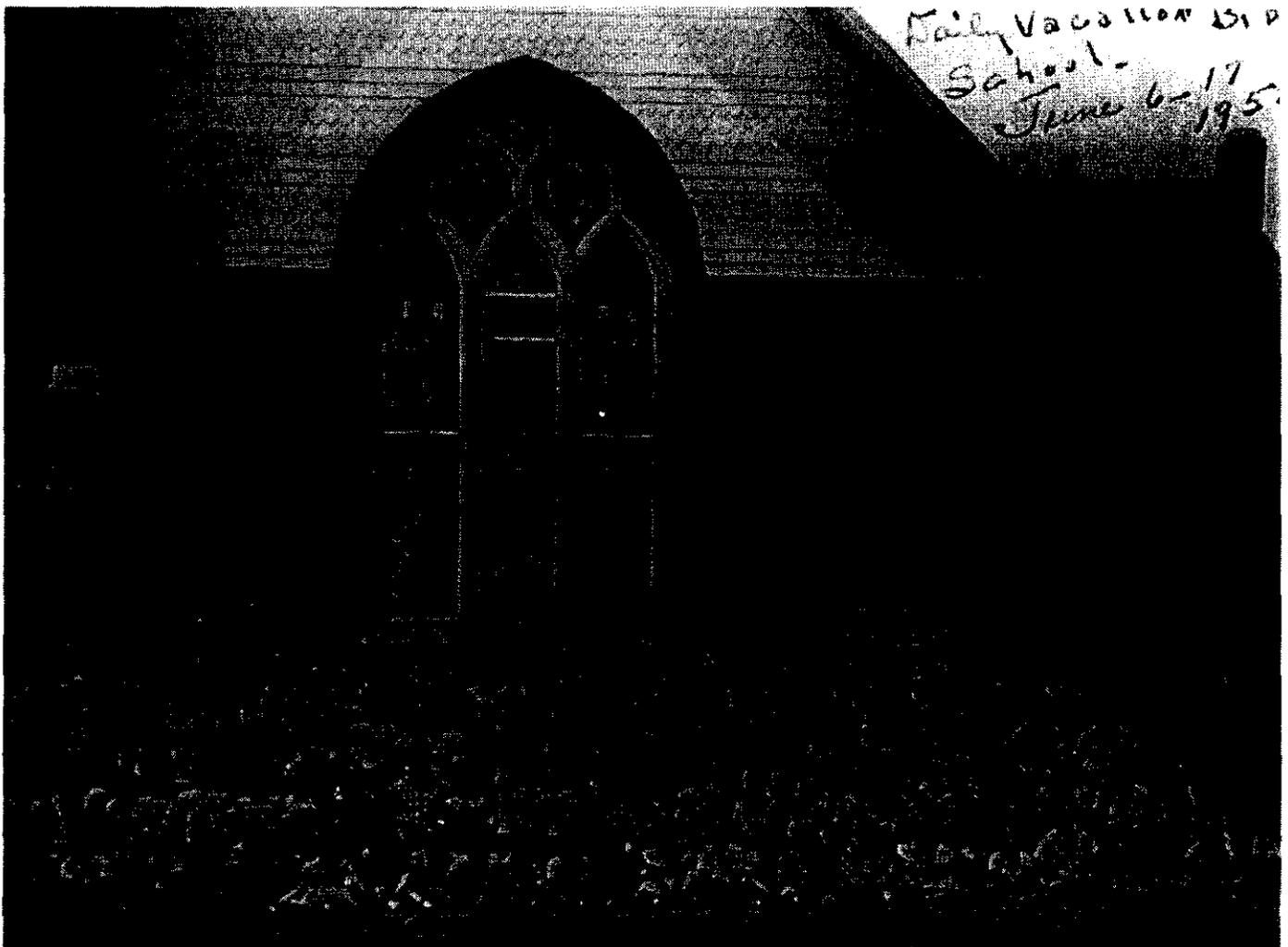
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Figure 3: Historic Photograph – Building Exterior, Primary East Elevation. The church is shown in 1952 during the pastorage of Rev. R.C. Campbell. The side panels of the tracery window remain reversed following the reinstallation of the recreated windows in 1912. The overhanging shed roof over the pastor's office on the north side of the east elevation is shown in its original design. It has subsequently been removed.

(Photo: 1952. From the Dr. Katherine G. Lederer Archives. Used with permission.)



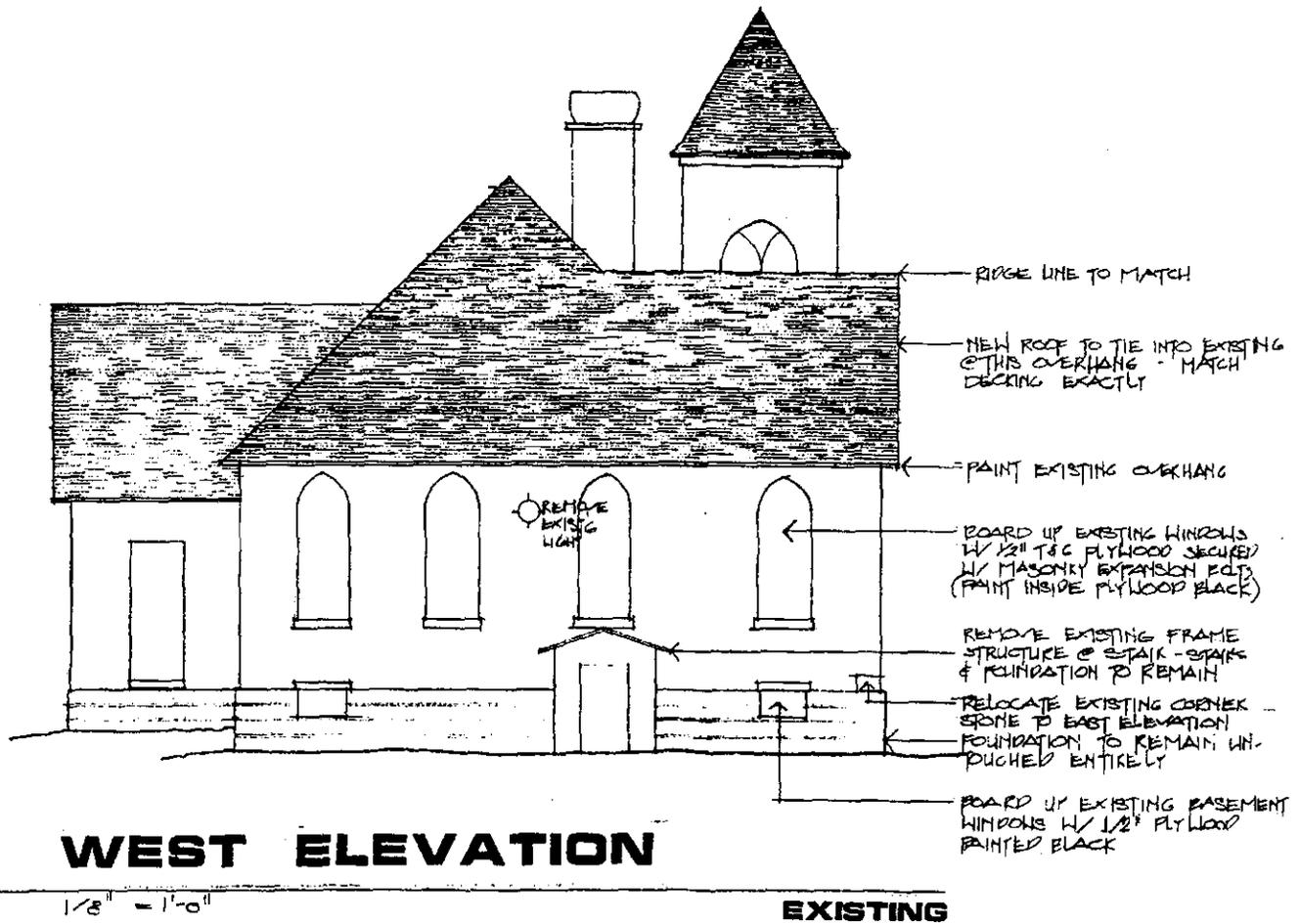
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Figure 5: West Elevation (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition, providing details of the original church building.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806

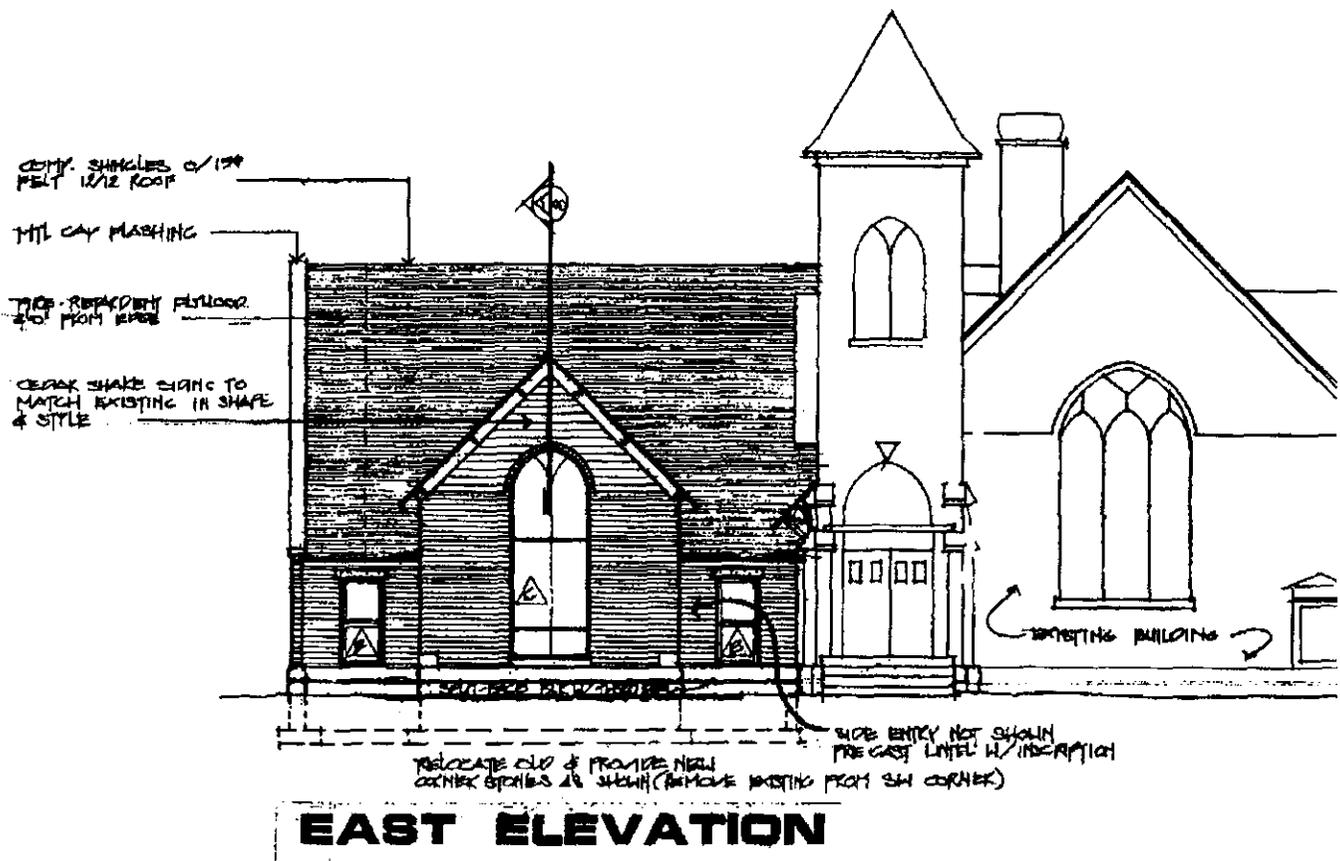
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Figure 7: East Elevation showing relationship of 1986 Education Wing Addition to original 1885 church building. (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806.

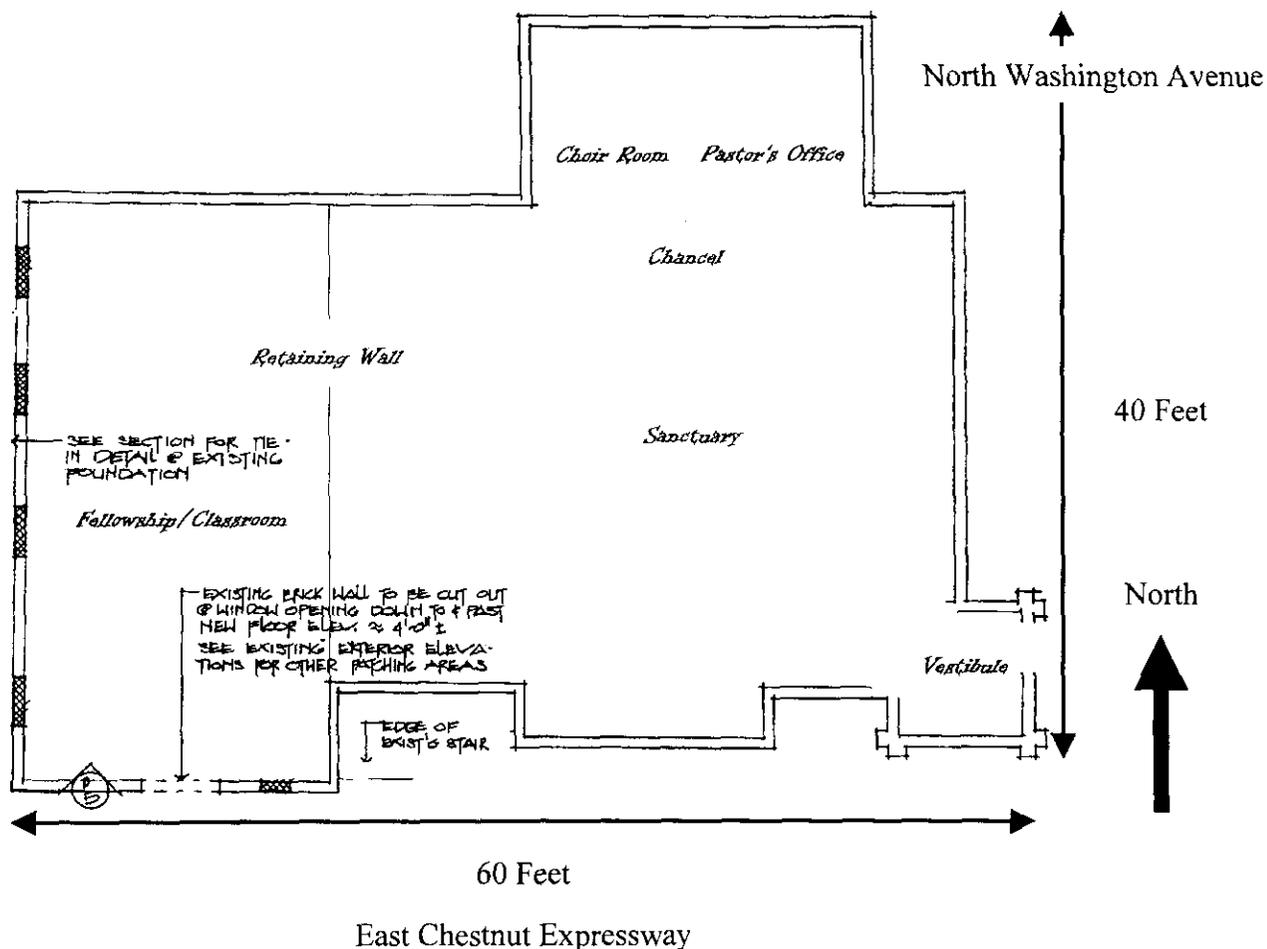
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Figure 9: Floor Plan of Original Building (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition, providing details of the original church building.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806

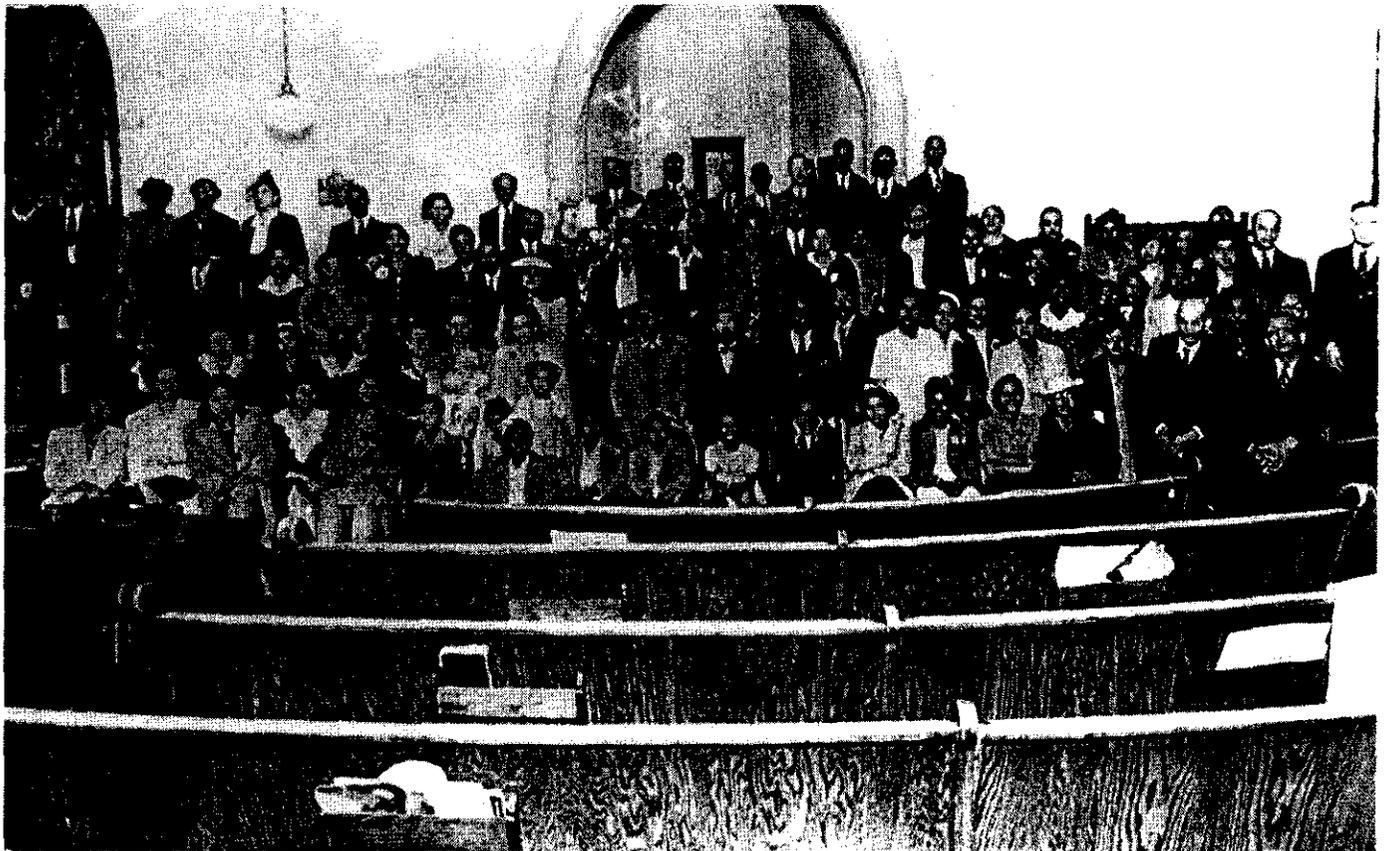
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Figure 11: Historic Photograph – Building Interior. Chancel at North Wall. Clothing styles date this photograph to the 1950's or early 1960's after the building's period of significance. The chancel's vaulted half-dome and the side doors from the chancel to the pastor's office and choir room are still present. Presumably during the 1974 renovations, the chancel side doors were covered and replaced with a single central door. A side door to the pastor's office was added to the north wall to the right (east) of the chancel. The wood frame around the stained glass window at the right of the chancel (west) appears to have been stained, not painted as it appears today. (Photo: 1951. From the Dr. Katherine G. Lederer Archives. Used with permission.)



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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Summary:

Washington Avenue Baptist Church, located at 729 North Washington in Springfield, Missouri, is significant under Criterion A in the areas of ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK and SOCIAL HISTORY, with local significance. As the oldest remaining African-American church building in Springfield, Washington Avenue is an important historic resource that has served the active ministry of the worshipping 133-year old congregation since its construction in 1885. Under ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK and SOCIAL HISTORY, it reflects the role of faith in the social and cultural development of the Springfield community and its African-American population during the post-slavery to pre-integration period. As they faced the trials of cultural and political institutions that oppressed and excluded them, African-Americans turned to their churches for leadership, comfort and hope. Reflected in the Washington Avenue Baptist Church building, their social and religious histories are convergent and provide significant insights to the past, present and future of whites and African-Americans in Springfield. The period of significance is determined to be 1885 to 1950, beginning at the date of construction and ending at the minimum age criterion.

Although the building retains substantial integrity of design, materials and craftsmanship, it is not judged to be currently significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE because of the prominent modern education wing added in 1986. However, if a relocation of the church were implemented, it would not include the addition. Significance under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE should be reconsidered at that time, contingent upon a sensitive restoration of the original building.

Early History

The early history of Washington Avenue Baptist Church and Springfield's other African-American churches is entwined in the socio-economic development of a frontier community that promised prosperity and fullness to the people who settled it. As they faced the trials of cultural and political institutions that oppressed and excluded them, African-Americans turned to their churches for leadership, comfort and hope. As reflected in the Washington Avenue Baptist Church building, their social and religious histories are convergent and provide significant insights to the past, present and future of whites and African-Americans in Springfield.

Because of a natural spring in what is today known as the Jordan Creek Valley, John Polk Campbell in 1829 had selected this area as the future site of Springfield. Mr. Campbell went back to his home in Maury County, Tennessee, and in March of 1830, he returned with his family and slaves to this new frontier. In 1835, Mr. Campbell donated 50 acres of land on the southwest of the creek first known as a branch of Wilson's Creek (and later the Jordan) and laid out the town site. Springfield was incorporated in 1838 – the Public Square is still considered the heart of its downtown.

The first recognized African-American church in Springfield, Wilson's Creek Chapel (Methodist), was built in 1847 on the banks of Wilson Creek.¹ It was established when a slave, Tom Armstrong, petitioned his owner, William Townsend, to construct a log cabin where African-Americans could worship. Springfield

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Mayor Ounce reportedly gave official permission on October 3, 1847.² According to local tradition, the name of the tributary was later changed to Jordan Creek because of the number of baptisms performed in its waters.

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was the most active white congregation to encourage African-American members. The Ozark Presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church met in Polk County on April 4, 1844, and passed a resolution to establish the Springfield congregation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. One of the signers of the constitution for this new Cumberland Presbyterian congregation dated May 19, 1844, was "Leah, a black woman." This congregation later became known as the First Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Cumberland Presbyterians did not divide into separate white and African-American congregations until after the Civil War. The church first met in a log meeting house constructed by the Methodists in the area of the 1200 block of North National. It later constructed a wood frame building at the corner of Jefferson and Olive (just northeast of the Public Square). This building was begun in 1859, but not completed until 1869 because of the interruptions of the War.³ By that time the congregation had become segregated.

A proliferation of African-American churches did not occur until emancipation was ratified in 1865, when religious rights accompanied the newly granted freedoms. Following the Civil War, many newly emancipated slaves immigrated to Greene and surrounding counties, adding greatly to the African-American population already here (By 1875, African-Americans accounted for a quarter of the population of Greene County.). Local white congregations and outside organizations began to support African-American missions of various denominations. And, the African-American community was soon divided into Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists.

The Methodists continued to worship in the log cabin that served Wilson's Creek Chapel until 1865. In that year, an arsonist burned the cabin and the congregation moved to a new church at the corner of Jefferson and Phelps. Three blocks northeast of the Public Square, the land for the new wood frame building was donated by freed slave Fleming McCullah. Rev. Pitts was thought to be pastor at the time and led the church in this position three times before his death in 1889. Wilson's Creek Chapel was renamed Pitts Chapel in recognition of his service to the church and the entire African-American community.

Through the support of the Cumberland Presbyterians, Peter Lair, freed slave and ordained minister, established Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Colored) in 1865. It is not known where this early church met. But, by 1872 the African-American Presbyterians were located in a wood frame building on the southwest corner of Benton Avenue and Water Street. "Father Lair" led the congregation in worship for many years, followed by Rev. T.J. (Thomas Jefferson) Diemer, son of a white slave owner, and Rev. Debo.⁴

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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Washington site. By no later than 1885, Second Baptist Church became the first African-American congregation to cross the Jordan, away from the interests of the developing white community.

The new Second Baptist (current Washington Avenue Baptist Church) property was acquired from A.O. Fairchild and his wife, Catherine, for \$350.00 through a Warranty Deed by Hezekial Fletcher, Trustee for "Second Baptist Church (Colored)," in 1871 (Recorded on October 19, 1871). Ownership of the property was titled by Trustee Deed to the Trustees of "Second Missionary Baptist Church" in 1873 (Recorded on November 12, 1873). This Trustee group included Stephen Frost, Alexander Tyndal, Sylvester Wisener, Peter Emerson Jefferson Peirce, Cornelius Clayton and Henry Frost.⁷ The leadership of the church at this time reflected the history and status of African-Americans in Springfield prior to and during the reconstruction period, as well as their relationships to the majority white population.

Church Trustee Alexander Tindall's (Tyndal) status as slave or freedman prior to the Civil War is not known. But, his wife, Phoebe Isbell Tindall was born in slavery to her white father, Dr. T.J. (Thomas Jefferson) Bailey. Dr. Bailey and his wife, Harriet Robberson Bailey, had no children or "legitimate" heirs. So, at the time of Dr. Bailey's passing, Sister Tindall benefited significantly from his handsome estate. In Item Fourth and Item Fifth of his Last Will and Testament recorded in Greene County on May 1, 1869, Dr. Bailey bequeaths substantial assets and income to "a colored girl named Phebe who was born a Slave to me in February 1849."⁸ The Tindalls were generous to Washington Avenue Baptist Church. The stained glass window in the east projecting wing on the south elevation was dedicated to them by their family.⁹

As an historic figure, Dr. Bailey reflects the complexity of the slavery issue and the many contradictions it presented in Missouri during the period surrounding the Civil War. Upon his death, Dr. Bailey, a former slave owner, bequeathed \$5,000 for the commission of the Union Monument (Bailey Monument) erected in Springfield National Cemetery, a National Register Site (listed on 8/27/99) established in 1867. The monument cites Dr. Bailey's intent to "show his love for the Union and its gallant defenders."

While African-Americans came to Springfield as slaves in the early part of the 19th Century, they also came as freedmen and had the right of property ownership. Land holdings of African-Americans increased following emancipation. In 1876, Hezekial Fletcher and Henry Frost owned property on East Walnut. Brother Fletcher owned land in the Campbell NW ¼ tract in Section 24 of the original City plat patented in 1837 on the southeast corner East Walnut and South Jefferson (This is currently the site of the Marquette Hotel built in 1906, across the street from St. Paul's Methodist Church). Brother Frost's property was in the Dollison NE ¼ tract in Section 24 on the northwest corner of East Walnut and South Hampton. Henry and his son, Stephen, were living at this location at the time of the acquisition of the church's North Washington Avenue site (The lot is currently occupied by a modern one-story apartment house).

Brother Fletcher and Brother Frost, neighbors and fellow Trustees, clearly played a role in the early development of East Walnut Street, now a National Register Historic District (listed 3/21/85). But by the

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Pitts Chapel (previously Wilson's Creek) was the last of the African-American churches to cross the Jordan. On July 8, 1909, torrential rains caused the Jordan Creek Valley to flood, taking many lives and destroying many homes and businesses. The wood frame church building of Pitts Chapel at Jefferson and Phelps is said to have been washed away.¹² In 1911, Pitts Chapel completed a new brick church building at the corner of Benton and Tampa (two blocks west of Gibson Chapel), where it continues its ministry today. It also was built in the Late Gothic Revival style.

For the Baptists and the other African-American congregations, the church at the turn-of-the-century often provided the only hope and source of comfort for a minority population oppressed by prevailing racist sentiments. The most compelling and extreme reflection of racism in turn-of-the-century Springfield was the 1906 Public Square lynching of three African-American men. On Easter Day that year, a riotous white mob hung Fred Coker, Ben Allen and Horace Duncan from the Gottfried Tower at the center of the Square and desecrated their corpses.¹³ Because of the lynching and riot that followed, many African-Americans left Springfield for St. Louis and other larger and more tolerant urban areas. Left behind was a wounded community of both African-Americans and whites which has never fully been healed. While the event received national interest, its cruelties were soon overshadowed by the Great San Francisco Earthquake. No one was brought to trial. The Gottfried Tower was taken down from the Public Square in 1910 and put to use as a bell tower for a south side fire station, eradicating even the physical memories of the event.¹⁴

An account of activities at Washington Avenue at the time of the lynching is not available. However, the families of the congregation at Gibson Chapel just to the south of the Baptist church are said to have sought sanctuary in its basement while the men stood guard through the night.¹⁵ It is reasonable to suppose that the families of the Baptists did likewise.

Structural and Organizational Changes

Since its 1885 construction, the church at 729 North Washington has undergone several structural and organizational changes. Oral history indicates that an addition to the church building was made in 1892. This specific portion of the building is not definitively determined. It could be the west fellowship and classroom area (suggested by the change in roof type and the retaining wall and chimney that separate this space from the sanctuary). Or, it could be the north projecting wing that houses the Pastor's Office and Choir Room (suggested by the different bonding technique used to lay the brick walls at this portion of the building). A cornerstone was reportedly laid for this addition, but it is not evident today.

A cornerstone for the building marks its origination as Second Baptist Church (Colored) in 1885. The congregation also appears to have been variously called Second Missionary Baptist Church, as indicated by the 1873 Trustee Deed that titled the land from Brother Fletcher to the church's Board of Trustees. A later cornerstone dated 1904 indicates that the congregation was rededicated as Washington Avenue Baptist Church. Grand Master of Masons, C.W. Williams of Boonville, MO, reportedly laid this cornerstone.

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Rev. J.S. Dorsey came to the church in 1899 and served for 14 years (one of the longest terms of service). Rev. Dorsey was responsible for mitigating the conflict associated with the name change from Second Baptist and presiding over the re-dedication of the congregation and its church building to Washington Avenue. During his pastorate, the church's congregation and the rest of Springfield's African-Americans faced the fear and grief resulting from the 1906 Public Square. He also led the congregation out of the devastation of the 1911 fire and reconstruction of the church, retiring shortly afterward to a farm in North Springfield. He died in 1934 and was buried at Lincoln Cemetery in Springfield.¹⁸

Rev. D.A. Holmes succeeded the beloved Rev. Dorsey in 1913, but only stayed for a year before accepting a call to Kansas City. Rev. Holmes was the first of several successive pastors who held short tenures. In 1914, the membership was reported to be 250, with a Sunday School of 120.¹⁹

Rev. A.B. Simmons (1929–1938) served during the Great Depression, managing the church's hosting of the Missouri State Convention in 1932. Rev. M.D. Johnson (1938 – 1946) succeeded Rev. Simmons. He presided over the ceremonial burning of a \$1,400.00 mortgage. Rev. O.B. Ware (1946 – 1950) was the last pastor during the period of significance. He was succeeded by Rev. R.C. Campbell, who helped guide the congregation through the period of integration of Springfield Public Schools. The church had a membership of 267 at this time, fairly unchanged from the period immediately following Rev. Dorsey's pastorage 35 years earlier.

The following provides a full list of the known pastors of Second Baptist Church, today known as Washington Avenue Baptist Church.²⁰ Dates of service are noted where available.

Rev. Stephen Frost (1885 - ?)
Rev. A.B. Franklin (1889 - ?)
Rev. F.H. Williams (1895 - ?)
Rev. Dorch
Rev. Bowie
Rev. Stewart
Rev. Miller
Rev. W.A. Brown (1899)
Rev. J. S. Dorsey (1899 – 1913)
Rev. Rev. D.A. Holmes (1913 – 1914)
Rev. W.H. Young (1915 – ?)
Rev. Petty
Rev. Goins
Rev. S.R. Wilson
Re. A.B. Simmons (1929 – 1938)
Rev. M.D. Johnson (1938 – 1946)
Rev. O.B. Ware (1946 – 1950)
Rev. R.C. Campbell
Rev. L.D. Hardiman (? – 1961)

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African-Americans cannot be clearly delineated. This is exemplified in the close association between the churches and the lodges and auxiliaries of the Prince Hall Masons, the social and professional organization of African-American brick masons. The Eureka Lodge and its successor, the Truth Lodge, were closely aligned with Washington Avenue. The central stained glass window with "Cross and Crown" icon in the church's primary façade recognizes the Truth Lodge for its support. It is thought that the earlier Eureka Lodge provided the original windows destroyed in the 1911 fire. (The close association with the lodges also explains the fine brickwork found in the churches).

The Church and Public Education

Following emancipation, the task of educating Springfield's African-Americans became one of the many challenges the city faced during its reconstruction. Under slavery, African-Americans were subjugated by ignorance and illiteracy. With emancipation, education became their hope for self-sufficiency and prosperity. The Freedmen's Bureau established a post in Springfield to help resettle and educate African-Americans.

Over 35 years after Joseph Rountree established the first school in Springfield for the community's whites in 1831, the Freedmen's Bureau School was organized. Two white teachers, Miss Emeline Howard of the Iowa Society of Friends and Mrs. Letitia Townsend of the Northeastern Freedmen's Aid Commission, oversaw the school. It met in Wilson's Creek Chapel Methodist Church (now Pitts Chapel) in its wood frame building at the corner of Jefferson and Phelps. The Freedmen's Sunday School was held for adults who worked during the week.²¹

The Freedmen's School ended in 1867 when the Springfield public school system was established (April 24, 1867) and included a "Colored" School.²² Since no building existed for the segregated school, it continued to meet in Wilson's Creek Chapel Methodist Church. Enrollment the first year was 48 students.

In 1872, Springfield built its first school for African-Americans, the Washington Avenue Colored Public School, between North Washington and Benton Avenues, just east of Drury Lane and north of where Drury College library stands today. The first white school, Central School, was completed a year earlier on the corner of Jefferson and Olive, a block northeast off the Public Square (The school was located just north of the wood frame building completed by First Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1869).

The "Colored School" on Washington Avenue was a handsome two-story brick building. Its location is indicative of the concentration of African-Americans who resided (or were intended to reside) north of the Public Square and across the Jordan Creek. At the time, African-Americans lived and owned property and businesses east of today's Drury Lane and south to the Jordan Creek. And, they continued to reside further south in the area north of East Walnut Street.

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to make room for a parking lot (This parking lot is now just north of Drury's architecture school). Following desegregation in 1955 "New" Lincoln became part of Springfield's integrated public schools and was renamed Eastwood Junior High School.²⁵ It closed shortly after that. Currently part of the Ozarks Technical College campus, the school building is being rehabilitated. This significant cultural resource was individually listed on the National Register on May 31, 2000.²⁶

Springfield Public Schools remained segregated until 1955, following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.²⁷ Under the leadership of Superintendent Willard Graff, Springfield Public Schools was one of the first districts in the country to successfully integrate under the *Brown* decision. One of the important factors in the post-segregation development of Springfield Schools was the integration of the district's faculty. As a first step in this giant leap, Superintendent Graff selected Olive Decatur, an experienced teacher at Lincoln School and revered member of Washington Avenue Baptist Church. The daughter of an African-American maid, Sister Decatur graduated from "Old" Lincoln School in 1917 (one of three students in the graduating class) and was educated at Wilberforce University, a private university founded by abolitionist Wilber Force. She returned to Springfield and taught at both "Old" Lincoln School and "New" Lincoln School.²⁸

Highly esteemed in both African-American and white communities, Sister Decatur was selected as the first African-American to teach at a previously all-white school when Springfield Schools were integrated in 1955. First at Pipkin School and then at Parkview School, she provided leadership that helped make Springfield's successful integration under the *Brown* decision one of the first in the nation. Until her retirement, Sister Decatur continued to be regarded for her contributions in educating Springfield white and African-American youth.

Olive Decatur's half-sister, Roberta Thomas Bartley, was also prominent within the Washington Avenue Baptist Church and the community. Sister Bartley taught Sunday School at Washington Avenue and for 45 years taught at Lincoln School and the integrated public school system. Upon retirement she founded Kiddie Kove Day Care Center, a not-for-profit childcare facility for disadvantaged families. Kiddie Kove is located at the site of the Springfield Negro Clinic (later the segregated Community Hospital), which operated at 914 East Calhoun from 1921 until 1950.²⁹

The estate of Sisters Decatur (d. January 1992) and Bartley (d. December 1992) bequeathed funds that supported the financing of Washington Avenue's current education wing, constructed in 1986 at a cost of \$196,000. The wing's fellowship hall was dedicated to them and bears their names.

Sister Decatur's close association and dedication to Washington Avenue Baptist Church may have been deeply cemented during the early years of her marriage to William J. Decatur. Sister Decatur met her husband, her senior and a professor at Wilberforce, during her years of study at the University. Soon after her return to Springfield, Mr. Decatur was stricken with an undetermined degenerative illness and went to

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End Notes

1. Dr. Katherine Lederer, Many Thousand Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History. (Springfield, MO: Southwest Missouri State University, 1986) p. 28.
2. Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri, Vol. I. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915), p. 612.
3. Duane Meyer and V. Marie Arnold. A Brief History of First and Calvary Presbyterian Church, Springfield Missouri. (Springfield: First and Calvary Presbyterian Church, 1987), pp. 2-3.
4. Pauline Diemer, granddaughter of Rev. Diemer, is a member of Washington Avenue Baptist Church.
5. Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri, Vol. I. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915), p. 611.
6. Another clue may come from the origins of Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church. This early church is said to have been organized in the old Missionary Baptist Church. The land for the current Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church was acquired in 1877. The Baptist Church where organizers first met could have been the Benton and Water location or perhaps the North Washington site acquired in 1871. Dr. Katherine Lederer, Many Thousand Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History. (Springfield, MO: Southwest Missouri State University, 1986) p. 22.
7. Greene County Recorder of Deeds. Book 29, Page 412. (Springfield, 1873). The names of this Trustee group shown here reflect the spelling provided in the Trustee Deed. However, the accuracy of the recorded spelling is questionable. Windows in the church are dedicated to two of these Trustees, with different spellings: Alexander Tindall and Silvester Wisner. Dr. Katherine Lederer advises that the former here is correct, while the later is most likely not.
8. Last Will and Testament of Dr. Thomas Jefferson Bailey, recorded May 1, 1869. Greene County Archives. Greene County Probate Court. Box 112, #449.
9. Dr. and Mrs. T.J. Bailey were faithful members of First Baptist Church. Following Dr. Bailey's death, Mrs. Bailey sought to endow their church in the late 1870's with a large gift. However, a pending suit settled in court at the time ruled in favor of "certain heirs" and deprived the church of this legacy. It has been reported that Mrs. Bailey contested her husband's will benefiting Phoebe Isbell Tindall. This contest could be the suit referenced here. R.I. Holcombe, ed. A History of Greene County, Missouri. (St. Louis: Western Historical Company, 1883), p. 807.
10. Dr. Katherine Lederer, "Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church Observing 112th Anniversary." Springfield! Magazine. (Springfield: June, 1983), p. 38.
11. Dr. Katherine Lederer, "Gibson Chapel Presebyterian Church: They Crossed the Jordan." Springfield! Magazine. (Springfield: November, 1982), p. 38.
12. "Damage to Property Expected To Reach \$500,000," Springfield Daily Republican (Springfield: July 8, 1909), p. 1.

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24. "New Lincoln Is Dedicated." Springfield Leader & Press. (Springfield, May 22, 1931).
 25. "Fifth Junior High Named Eastwood." Springfield Leader & Press. (Springfield, April 7, 1955).
 26. An in-depth discussion of the social history associated with Springfield's segregated public schools is found in the National Register nomination for Lincoln School prepared by Dr. Katherine Lederer. National Register of Historic Places. Lincoln School. Greene County, MO. Listed May 31, 2000.
 27. "Court's Ruling Ended Lincoln School Era." Springfield News and Leader. (Springfield: January 21, 1979), p. 1B.
 28. "Schools Integrated in Two-Year Period." Springfield News and Leader. (Springfield: January 21, 1979), p. 1B. Also, Dr. Katherine Lederer. Many Thousand Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History. (Springfield, MO: Southwest Missouri State University, 1986), p. 35.
 29. Shanna Boyle and Julie March, eds. Crossroads at the Spring: A Pictorial History of Springfield, Missouri. (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 1997), p. 67.
 30. Dr. Maurice Tate, Sr. "Move Tinged with Memories." Springfield News-Leader. (Springfield: September 25, 2000), p. 6A.

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Section 9 Page 40

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Lederer, Dr. Katherine, "Pitts Chapel United Methodist Church Proudly Traces Its Beginnings Back to Log Church Built in 1847." Springfield! Magazine. Springfield: January, 1983

Lederer, Dr. Katherine, "Washington Avenue Baptists Continue a Proud Heritage." Springfield! Magazine. Springfield: August, 1983.

Meyer, Duane and V. Marie Arnold. A Brief History of First and Calvary Presbyterian Church, Springfield Missouri. Springfield: First and Calvary Presbyterian Church, 1987.

Moore, Jr., Dr. John E. "Drury, Church Link Keeps History Alive." Springfield News-Leader. Springfield: May 21, 2000.

National Register of Historic Places. Lincoln School. Greene County, MO. Listed May 31, 2000.

National Register of Historic Places. Second Baptist Church. Newton County, MO. Listed January 4, 1986.

National Register of Historic Places. Springfield National Cemetery. Greene County, MO. Listed August 27, 1999.

Robertson, Jesse M. History of the Negro in Greene County, Missouri: 1865-1871. Springfield: Academic Paper, 1968.

Springfield Area Council of Churches. The History of the Churches in Greene County, Missouri: Sesquicentennial 1833-1983. Springfield, MO: Greene County Sesquicentennial, 1983.

Springfield Daily Republican. "Damage to Property Expected To Reach \$500,000," Springfield: July 8, 1909.

Springfield Leader & Press. "New Lincoln Is Dedicated." Springfield, May 22, 1931.

Springfield News and Leader. "Court's Ruling Ended Lincoln School Era." Springfield: January 21, 1979.

Springfield News and Leader. "Schools Integrated in Two-Year Period." Springfield: January 21, 1979.

Springfield Republican. "Plaza Tower Will Replace Fire Department Belfry." Springfield: March 12, 1910.

Springfield Republican. "Three Negroes Lynched by Mad Mob." Springfield: April 15, 1906.

Springfield Republican. "Troops Sent Here to Preserve Peace." Springfield: April 16, 1906.

Tate, Sr., Dr. Maurice. "Move Tinged with Memories." Springfield News-Leader. Springfield: September 25, 2000.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Second Baptist Church (Colored)

other names/site number Second Missionary Baptist Church, Washington Avenue Baptist Church [preferred]

2. Location

street & number 729 North Washington not for publication
city or town Springfield vicinity _____
state MO code 077 county Greene zip code 65804

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide ___ locally.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals
Late Gothic Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone
roof asphalt
walls brick

other wood
glass

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: City of Springfield

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>474660</u>	<u>4118640</u>	3
2	_____	_____	4	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (See the attached continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (See the attached continuation sheet.)

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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Summary:

Washington Avenue Baptist Church is a one-story brick Late Gothic Revival church building with a rectangular plan with projecting wings. It is located at 729 North Washington, in Springfield, Greene County, Missouri. The church is situated on the northern boundary of historic Jordan Creek Valley on the west side of North Washington facing east, adjacent to the southern boundary of Drury University's main campus and across from its School of Architecture. The original church building was constructed in 1885 and partially reconstructed following a 1911 fire that destroyed the roof and severely damaged the interior. The historic building and a 1986 education wing addition almost fully occupy the current lot. It is the only resource on the property and is a contributing building. The Late Gothic Revival church exterior -- with its high pitched gable and hip roof, shingled gable pediments, projecting wings, pointed arch windows and prominent bell tower -- retains substantial integrity of design, materials, and craftsmanship, except for a modern 1986 addition on the south side and rear elevations and a fluorescent neon sign and metal canopy over the front bell tower entrance. It rests on a rough-faced, random-coursed cut limestone foundation. The original building floorplan is fairly unchanged and consists of a vestibule at the bell tower entrance, large open sanctuary and chancel in the nave, classroom and fellowship area at its rear west portion and a pastor's office and choir room in a north projecting wing behind the chancel. The interior of the sanctuary has been modernized, most recently in 1974. However, these were primarily decorative alterations (paneling, wainscoting, etc.) and surface modifications (e.g., suspended ceiling), which could be reversed through an appropriate interpretive restoration effort. While still a viable building in good condition, Washington Avenue Baptist Church is in certain danger of relocation, deconstruction or demolition, pending a planned sale to neighboring Drury University. The period of significance is determined to be 1885 to 1950, beginning at the date of construction and ending at the minimum age criterion. This ending date is prior to the post-segregation era marked by the integration of Springfield public schools in 1955, which would perhaps be more appropriate to the building's context.

Elaboration:

Washington Avenue Church was once part of a densely populated residential neighborhood of modest bungalow style homes inhabited by Springfield's African-American population and of the businesses they owned. These domestic and commercial buildings have been removed for industrial and institutional development and the neighborhood has been lost.

The properties across Washington Avenue on the east have been acquired by Drury University and are now the site of the John Q. Hammons School of Architecture. The two properties immediately adjacent to the church on the north are owned by Drury University and paved for parking, to which the congregation has access rights. The third property north of the church building, between the parking lot on the south and the Drury Communications Center on the north, is the last remaining historic single dwelling domestic building in this area. The western boundary adjoins properties used for light industry. The grassed

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These are functional in stabilizing the walls but a more sensitive solution could be implemented to better support the building's architectural integrity.

The east-facing façade (*See Photos 1 and 2 and Figure 1*) is of brick construction and has a large shingled gable pediment, which rises 17 feet from the top of the wall to the roof peak. Shingles are presented in a repeating 3-3 butt and sawtooth pattern (3 layers butt shingles followed by 3 layers of sawtooth). Simple, sparsely spaced modillions support the overhanging eave. A large pointed arch stained glass and lead tracery window with lace muttins (9 feet wide by 15 feet tall) is centered beneath and slightly interrupts the shingled gable (*See Photo 3*). The dominant central panel bears the "Cross and Crown" icon, one of only two objective symbols found in the building's 10 stained glass windows. The placement of the left and right side panels of the tracery window have been installed in reversed placement, a condition assumed dating to the 1911 recreation of the church's windows. An overscale square bell tower (10 feet wide and 45 feet high) projects from the southeast corner of the building (*See Photos 4 and 5*). The corners of the tower have set-off buttresses with stone coping. The tower has a flared pyramidal roof with overhanging topstage. The roof terminates in a simple finial. The upper portion of the tower has louvered pointed arch openings on all four sides, each measuring 5 feet wide by 8 feet tall. The exposed corners of the tower on its lower portion have set-off buttresses with cut limestone coping (*See Photo 6*). The bell is intact and functional.

The entrance to the church is through the east side of the bell tower. A later period poured concrete staircase rises to the entrance opening (6 feet wide by 9 feet tall). The entrance has modern double doors of flat surface composition wood. They replace what are thought to have been five-panel wood doors (*See Figure 2*), repeated at the other secondary entrances. Above the entrance is a pointed arch stained glass window (6 feet wide at the lower casing by 4 feet tall at the point). The arched presentation at the entrance is completed with a cut limestone keystone within the soldier bonded brick voussoir around the pointed arch of the top window. The entrance also has a modern metal canopy attached to the bell tower between the double doors and the pointed arch window. A two-sided fluorescent neon sign identifying the church hangs above the arched entrance. Both the canopy and the neon sign were added subsequent to 1951, based on photographic evidence.

Prior to the 1986 education wing addition, the south side of the façade from the eastern view reveals the pitched roofs and side walls of the two gabled projecting wings beyond the bell tower at the west of the building. The south of the building from this perspective is now dominated by the addition.

The north side of the façade reveals the pitched roof and side wall of the gabled projecting wing housing the pastor's office and choir room. The east side of the wing has a secondary single-door entrance (3.5 feet wide by 8.5 feet tall) with modern poured concrete steps and an aluminum awning (*See Photo 7*). This

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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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The south elevation was significantly altered by the 1986 education wing addition (*See Photo 13*). However, the east portion remains intact. The square bell tower projecting from the southeast of the building has a small stained glass window (2 feet wide by 8 feet tall) between the corner buttresses (*See Photo 14*) and below the pointed arch louvered opening at the top portion of the tower. There is a gabled projecting wing aligned with the north wing. It measures 18 feet wide, 27 feet high at the gable peak and 4 feet deep. The gable pediment repeats the alternating sawtooth and butt shingle pattern from the façade. A pointed arch stained glass window (5.5 feet wide by 18 feet tall) is centered beneath and slightly interrupts the shingled gable. Though slightly smaller than the central window on the façade, this window is still distinctively symbolic, bearing the "Anchor" icon at its apex. A smaller stained glass window (3.5 feet wide by 9.5 feet tall) flanks each side of this projecting wing at the south wall of the nave.

Prior to the 1986 addition, the south elevation had a second gabled projecting wing on its west portion (*See Photo 15 and Figure 6*). Measuring 22 feet wide, 30 feet high at the gable peak and 9 feet deep, this wing was slightly larger than and extended past the existing wing on the east. A pointed arch stained glass window (5.5 feet wide by 18 feet tall) was centered beneath and slightly interrupted the shingled gable. A smaller window (2 feet wide by 8 feet tall) was at the right of the larger central window. These two windows were removed from the original second wing and integrated into the addition. Like the one of the same size in the first south wing, the larger window bears the "Anchor" icon. This second wing provided access to the classroom and fellowship portion of the building. An original secondary service entrance on the east side of the wing and concrete stairs remain and are still in use. The roof of the main portion of the building extended between the original two wings to form an overhanging shed roof covering this secondary entrance. The overhang was tied to the roof of the second projecting wing on the west, extended past the south face of the first projecting wing on the east and was supported by a single wood bracket on the east. This shed roof was removed and rebuilt for adjustments to accommodate connection with the addition, which extends from the southwest corner of the original building (*See Photos 16 - 18 and 20 - 21*).

Exterior: The 1986 Education Wing

The new education wing was added to the original building in 1986, following an arsonist's fire that destroyed an earlier education annex located on the property. The addition was designed by local architects Pellham and Phillips. Although it is judged to be sensitive to the original design and materials of the historic church building, its scale has a significant impact on the overall architectural integrity of the resource. However, the addition only covers the west elevation and the west side of the south elevation and does not structurally intrude into it. Therefore, it could be removed and the full integrity of the historic building would be evident.

The brick addition has an L-shaped plan that wraps around the southwest corner of the original church building. It has a combination gable and flat roof. The southeast arm of the L has a gabled shingle roof that

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decorative alterations (paneling, wainscoting, etc.) and surface modifications (e.g., suspended ceiling), which could be reversed through an appropriate interpretive restoration effort. Overall, the integrity of the original building's interior is substantially intact.

Entrance into the building is at the southeast corner through the bell tower, which forms a square vestibule. The sanctuary is entered from the vestibule at the back, with pews facing the chancel at the north. The curved pews are arranged in three columns separated by two side aisles and form an elliptical seating pattern (*See Photos 22 – 26*). The raised floor has a slight rake declining to the chancel, which may have been a later alteration – potentially at the time that new hardwood floors were laid during the post-Depression pastorate of Rev. M.D. Johnson (1938–1946).³

The sanctuary has a suspended ceiling that drops horizontally at the level of the tie rods used to stabilize the building. The tie rods run north to south in line with the scissors trusses above and are enclosed by 1" X 6" wood casings resembling beams. Remnants of the original plaster vaulted ceiling are evident above the suspended ceiling.

The sanctuary's original plaster walls have been covered with stain-finished wainscoting and modern composition wood paneling above. The wood window casings and sills are painted, but appear to have been originally stain-finished.

The chancel consists of a raised platform beneath a vaulted half-dome and has had some surface alterations, including a suspended ceiling that obscures the top of the half-dome. Two side doors leading from the chancel to the pastor's office and choir room behind it on the north have been covered and replaced with a single central door, presumably during the 1974 renovations. A side door to the pastor's office was added to the north wall to the right (east) of the chancel (*See Figures 10 and 11*). The chancel's platform has been extended forward and across the west side of the north wall to accommodate the baptismal and areas for the choir.

The sanctuary is flanked on the west by an original classroom and fellowship space. This area has been modified to serve as overflow for the sanctuary and has bathrooms added to it. A retaining wall separates the sanctuary from this west portion of the building. The massive chimney rises from the south end of the retaining wall. The pointed arch windows of the original west elevation are still evident and intact on the west wall (*See Photos 27 and 28*).

The scantily recorded history of the building, combined with the physical evidence of the retaining wall suggests that perhaps the west portion of the building underneath the hip roof, including the second projecting wing on the south elevation, was a very early addition to the nave. If this area were in fact

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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Interior: The 1986 Education Wing

The interior of the education wing provides an open, versatile and low maintenance space. Walls and ceilings are textured painted white drywall. Doors and windows are trimmed in stained oak wood. Floors are covered in vinyl.

The floorplan consists of three two primary spaces: offices in the southeast arm of the L and a large open fellowship/classroom space in the west arm. Entrance from the east outside into the addition is through the projecting wing into a small entry lobby. A central corridor runs west from the entry into the fellowship/classroom space. Along the corridor are two offices (each 12 feet wide and 12 feet deep) and bathrooms on the south and a pastor's office (12 feet wide and 13 feet deep), coatroom (leading into the original church building) and a kitchen (19 feet by 10 feet deep) on the north. The large fellowship classroom space is fully open and can be partitioned into individual classrooms (*See Photo 35*). The addition also has a pantry, mechanical room and storage closet.

Current Endangerment:

Washington Avenue Baptist Church is situated south of the Midtown National Register Historic District and adjacent to the campus of Drury University, a local private liberal arts college. Drury currently is implementing an aggressive expansion into its surrounding areas, resulting in severe pressures to both designated and undesignated historic resources.

Washington Avenue is included in the Midtown Urban Conservation District and listed as a Springfield Historic Register site (listed 9-14-80). However, it is not a designated building within the Midtown National Register Historic District. Local ordinances germane to historic preservation interests do not provide binding architectural review or protections from demolition.

The church building currently continues its 115-year service as an active house of worship. While in need of minor structural maintenance expected in a building its age, the congregation has been a faithful steward to the building and has actively attended to issues of normal deterioration.

The 1986 addition of the education wing was well integrated into the 1885 building in both design and materials and is supportive of its original character. A well-built expansion, it is a very serviceable wing and is fully functional for the active ministry of the church, aside from the building's overall space constraints. Unfortunately, the scale of the addition relative to that of the original building impacts its architectural integrity.

The one architectural feature most in need of attention is the stained glass and lead windows. The congregation has addressed critical issues to stabilize deterioration, but an intensive restoration effort is required, including reversal of some previous repairs to use more appropriate glass. With continued

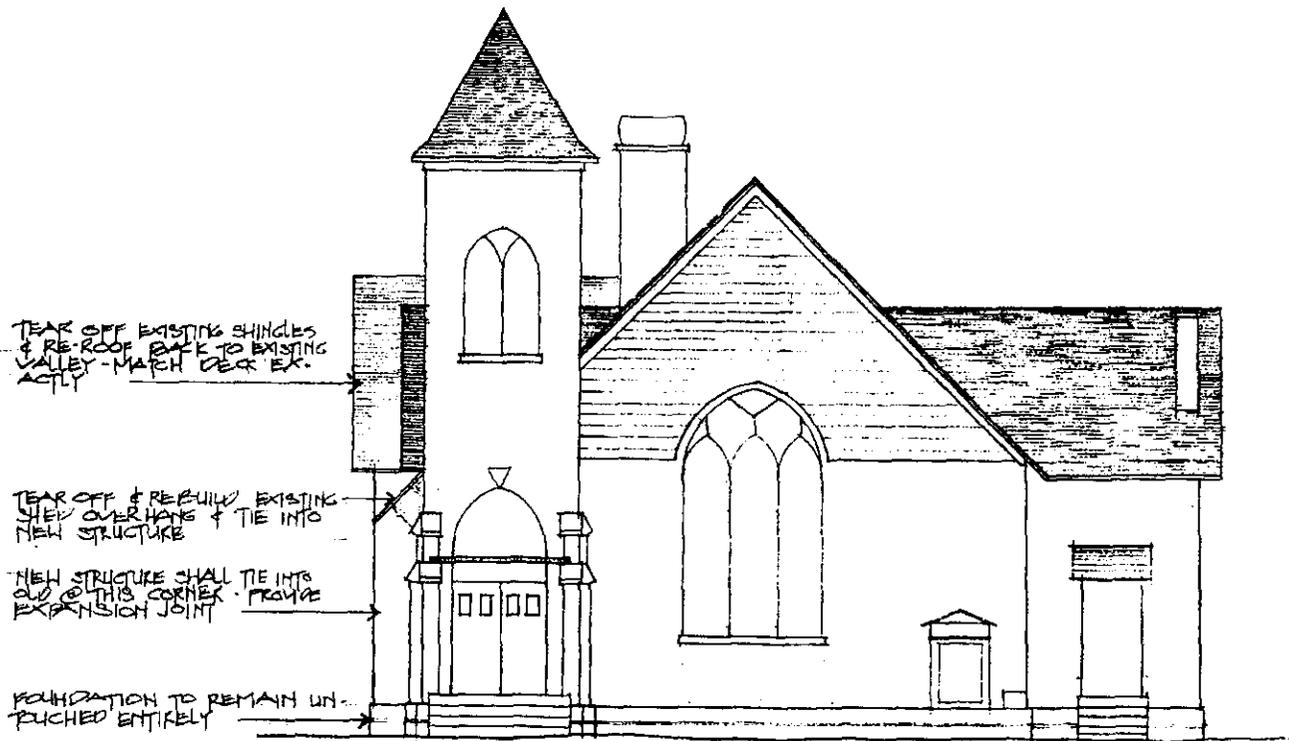
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 1: East Elevation (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition, providing details of the original church building.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806.

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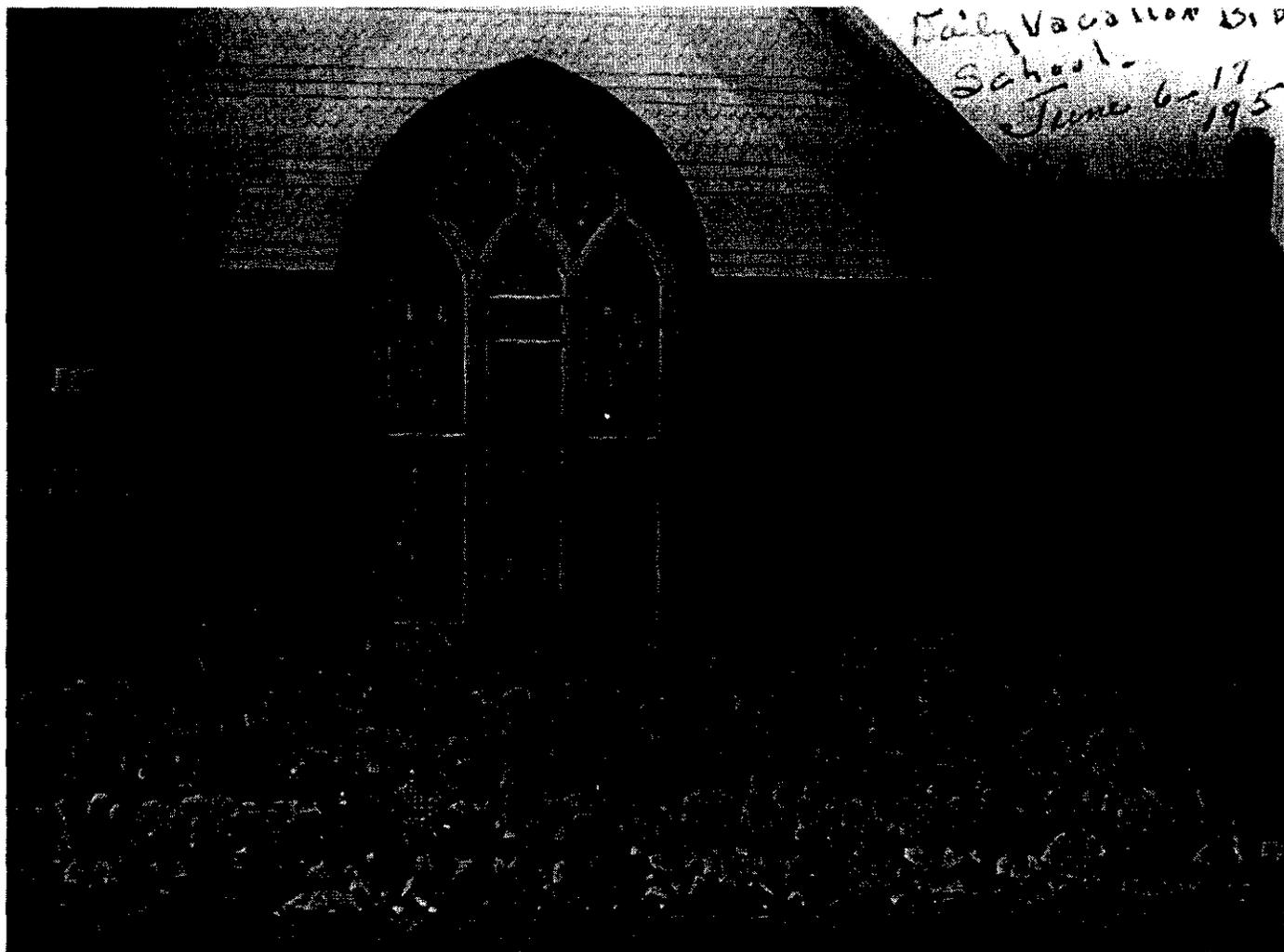
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 3: Historic Photograph – Building Exterior, Primary East Elevation. The church is shown in 1952 during the pastorage of Rev. R.C. Campbell. The side panels of the tracery window remain reversed following the reinstallation of the recreated windows in 1912. The overhanging shed roof over the pastor's office on the north side of the east elevation is shown in its original design. It has subsequently been removed.

(Photo: 1952. From the Dr. Katherine G. Lederer Archives. Used with permission.)



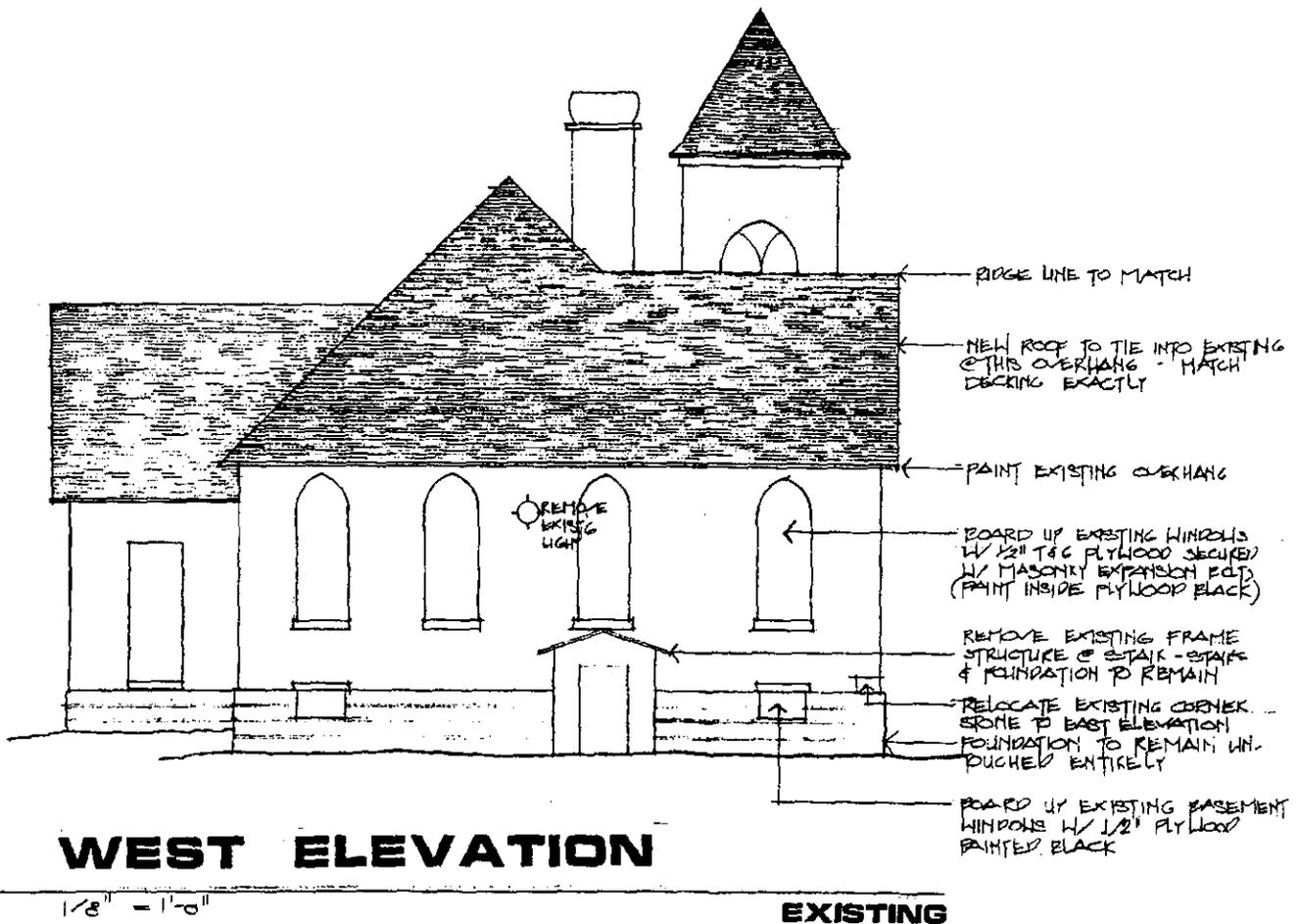
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 5: West Elevation (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition, providing details of the original church building.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806

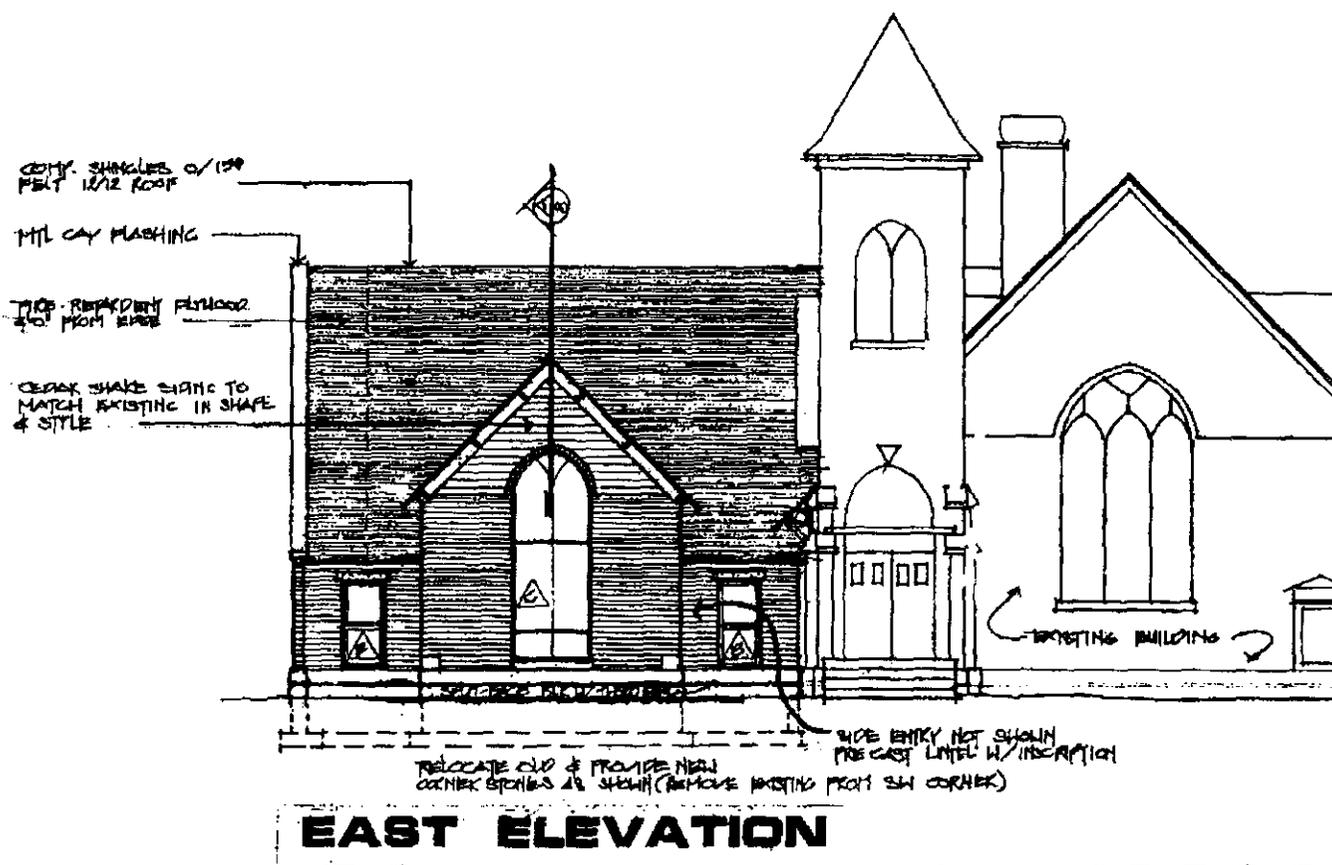
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 7: East Elevation showing relationship of 1986 Education Wing Addition to original 1885 church building. (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806.

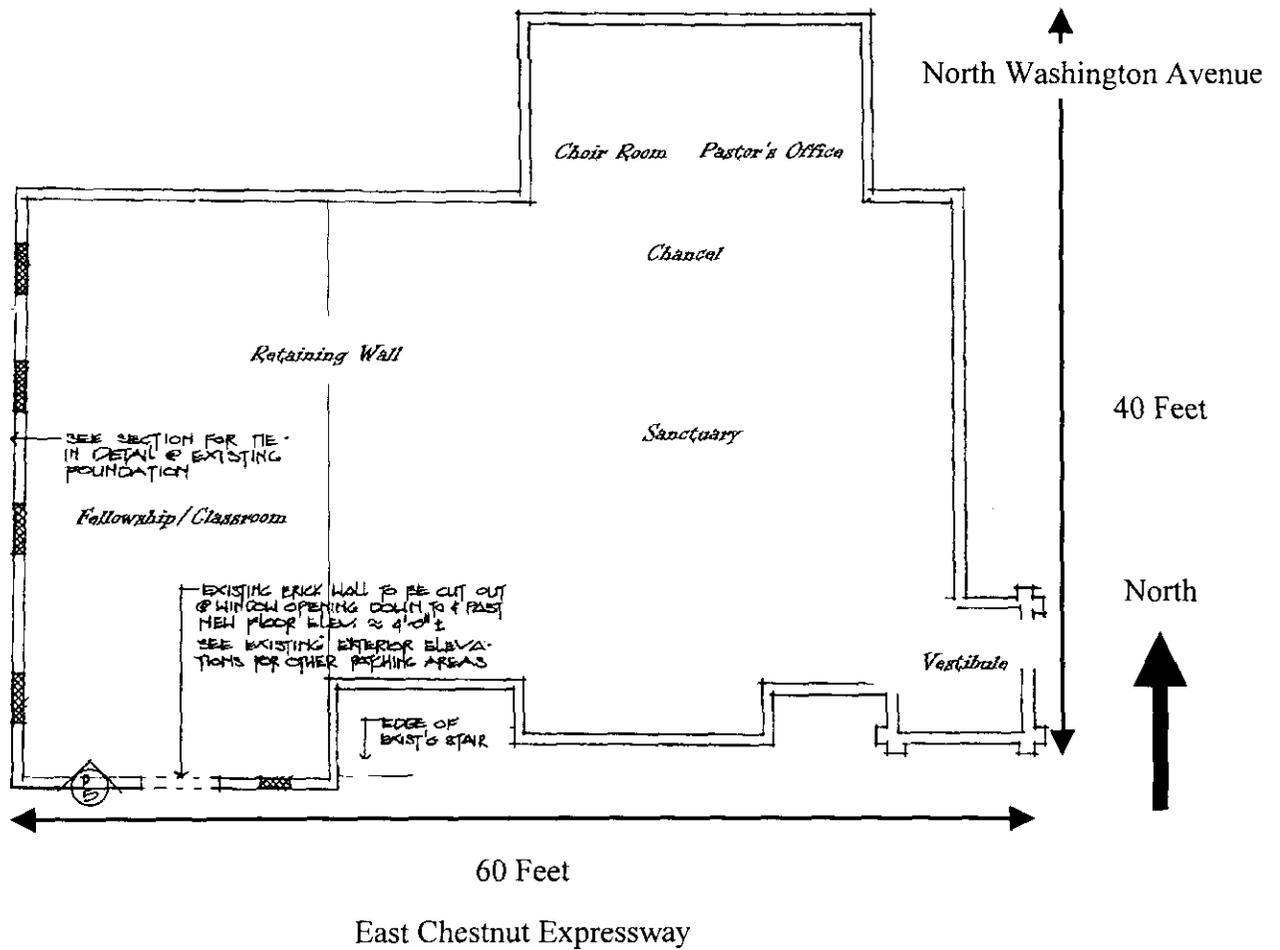
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 9: Floor Plan of Original Building (NTS)



This figure was part of the plans for the 1986 education wing addition, providing details of the original church building.

Source: Washington Avenue Baptist Church
729 North Washington Avenue
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri
Dated 1984
Pellham & Phillips, Architects
Plans on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.; 1147 East Walnut; Springfield, MO 65806

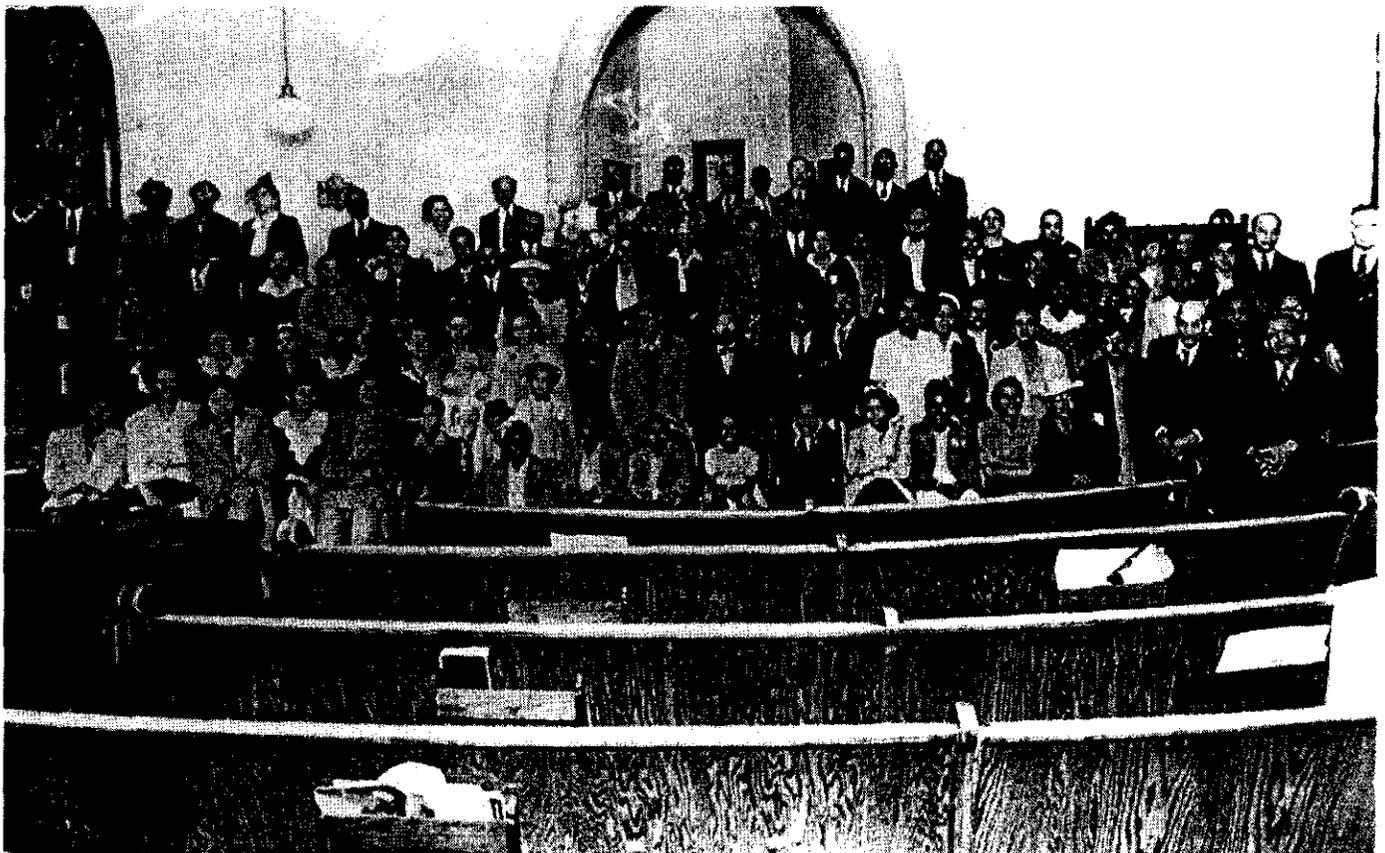
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Figure 11: Historic Photograph – Building Interior. Chancel at North Wall. Clothing styles date this photograph to the 1950's or early 1960's after the building's period of significance. The chancel's vaulted half-dome and the side doors from the chancel to the pastor's office and choir room are still present. Presumably during the 1974 renovations, the chancel side doors were covered and replaced with a single central door. A side door to the pastor's office was added to the north wall to the right (east) of the chancel. The wood frame around the stained glass window at the right of the chancel (west) appears to have been stained, not painted as it appears today. (Photo: 1951. From the Dr. Katherine G. Lederer Archives. Used with permission.)



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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Summary:

Washington Avenue Baptist Church, located at 729 North Washington in Springfield, Missouri, is significant under Criterion A in the areas of ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK and SOCIAL HISTORY, with local significance. As the oldest remaining African-American church building in Springfield, Washington Avenue is an important historic resource that has served the active ministry of the worshipping 133-year old congregation since its construction in 1885. Under ETHNIC HERITAGE-BLACK and SOCIAL HISTORY, it reflects the role of faith in the social and cultural development of the Springfield community and its African-American population during the post-slavery to pre-integration period. As they faced the trials of cultural and political institutions that oppressed and excluded them, African-Americans turned to their churches for leadership, comfort and hope. Reflected in the Washington Avenue Baptist Church building, their social and religious histories are convergent and provide significant insights to the past, present and future of whites and African-Americans in Springfield. The period of significance is determined to be 1885 to 1950, beginning at the date of construction and ending at the minimum age criterion.

Although the building retains substantial integrity of design, materials and craftsmanship, it is not judged to be currently significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE because of the prominent modern education wing added in 1986. However, if a relocation of the church were implemented, it would not include the addition. Significance under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE should be reconsidered at that time, contingent upon a sensitive restoration of the original building.

Early History

The early history of Washington Avenue Baptist Church and Springfield's other African-American churches is entwined in the socio-economic development of a frontier community that promised prosperity and fullness to the people who settled it. As they faced the trials of cultural and political institutions that oppressed and excluded them, African-Americans turned to their churches for leadership, comfort and hope. As reflected in the Washington Avenue Baptist Church building, their social and religious histories are convergent and provide significant insights to the past, present and future of whites and African-Americans in Springfield.

Because of a natural spring in what is today known as the Jordan Creek Valley, John Polk Campbell in 1829 had selected this area as the future site of Springfield. Mr. Campbell went back to his home in Maury County, Tennessee, and in March of 1830, he returned with his family and slaves to this new frontier. In 1835, Mr. Campbell donated 50 acres of land on the southwest of the creek first known as a branch of Wilson's Creek (and later the Jordan) and laid out the town site. Springfield was incorporated in 1838 – the Public Square is still considered the heart of its downtown.

The first recognized African-American church in Springfield, Wilson's Creek Chapel (Methodist), was built in 1847 on the banks of Wilson Creek.¹ It was established when a slave, Tom Armstrong, petitioned his owner, William Townsend, to construct a log cabin where African-Americans could worship. Springfield

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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
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Mayor Ounce reportedly gave official permission on October 3, 1847.² According to local tradition, the name of the tributary was later changed to Jordan Creek because of the number of baptisms performed in its waters.

The Cumberland Presbyterian Church was the most active white congregation to encourage African-American members. The Ozark Presbytery of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church met in Polk County on April 4, 1844, and passed a resolution to establish the Springfield congregation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. One of the signers of the constitution for this new Cumberland Presbyterian congregation dated May 19, 1844, was "Leah, a black woman." This congregation later became known as the First Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The Cumberland Presbyterians did not divide into separate white and African-American congregations until after the Civil War. The church first met in a log meeting house constructed by the Methodists in the area of the 1200 block of North National. It later constructed a wood frame building at the corner of Jefferson and Olive (just northeast of the Public Square). This building was begun in 1859, but not completed until 1869 because of the interruptions of the War.³ By that time the congregation had become segregated.

A proliferation of African-American churches did not occur until emancipation was ratified in 1865, when religious rights accompanied the newly granted freedoms. Following the Civil War, many newly emancipated slaves immigrated to Greene and surrounding counties, adding greatly to the African-American population already here (By 1875, African-Americans accounted for a quarter of the population of Greene County.). Local white congregations and outside organizations began to support African-American missions of various denominations. And, the African-American community was soon divided into Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists.

The Methodists continued to worship in the log cabin that served Wilson's Creek Chapel until 1865. In that year, an arsonist burned the cabin and the congregation moved to a new church at the corner of Jefferson and Phelps. Three blocks northeast of the Public Square, the land for the new wood frame building was donated by freed slave Fleming McCullah. Rev. Pitts was thought to be pastor at the time and led the church in this position three times before his death in 1889. Wilson's Creek Chapel was renamed Pitts Chapel in recognition of his service to the church and the entire African-American community.

Through the support of the Cumberland Presbyterians, Peter Lair, freed slave and ordained minister, established Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church (Colored) in 1865. It is not known where this early church met. But, by 1872 the African-American Presbyterians were located in a wood frame building on the southwest corner of Benton Avenue and Water Street. "Father Lair" led the congregation in worship for many years, followed by Rev. T.J. (Thomas Jefferson) Diemer, son of a white slave owner, and Rev. Debo.⁴

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Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Greene County, Missouri

Washington site. By no later than 1885, Second Baptist Church became the first African-American congregation to cross the Jordan, away from the interests of the developing white community.

The new Second Baptist (current Washington Avenue Baptist Church) property was acquired from A.O. Fairchild and his wife, Catherine, for \$350.00 through a Warranty Deed by Hezekial Fletcher, Trustee for "Second Baptist Church (Colored)," in 1871 (Recorded on October 19, 1871). Ownership of the property was titled by Trustee Deed to the Trustees of "Second Missionary Baptist Church" in 1873 (Recorded on November 12, 1873). This Trustee group included Stephen Frost, Alexander Tyndal, Sylvester Wisener, Peter Emerson Jefferson Peirce, Cornelius Clayton and Henry Frost.⁷ The leadership of the church at this time reflected the history and status of African-Americans in Springfield prior to and during the reconstruction period, as well as their relationships to the majority white population.

Church Trustee Alexander Tindall's (Tyndal) status as slave or freedman prior to the Civil War is not known. But, his wife, Phoebe Isbell Tindall was born in slavery to her white father, Dr. T.J. (Thomas Jefferson) Bailey. Dr. Bailey and his wife, Harriet Robberson Bailey, had no children or "legitimate" heirs. So, at the time of Dr. Bailey's passing, Sister Tindall benefited significantly from his handsome estate. In Item Fourth and Item Fifth of his Last Will and Testament recorded in Greene County on May 1, 1869, Dr. Bailey bequeaths substantial assets and income to "a colored girl named Phebe who was born a Slave to me in February 1849."⁸ The Tindalls were generous to Washington Avenue Baptist Church. The stained glass window in the east projecting wing on the south elevation was dedicated to them by their family.⁹

As an historic figure, Dr. Bailey reflects the complexity of the slavery issue and the many contradictions it presented in Missouri during the period surrounding the Civil War. Upon his death, Dr. Bailey, a former slave owner, bequeathed \$5,000 for the commission of the Union Monument (Bailey Monument) erected in Springfield National Cemetery, a National Register Site (listed on 8/27/99) established in 1867. The monument cites Dr. Bailey's intent to "show his love for the Union and its gallant defenders."

While African-Americans came to Springfield as slaves in the early part of the 19th Century, they also came as freedmen and had the right of property ownership. Land holdings of African-Americans increased following emancipation. In 1876, Hezekial Fletcher and Henry Frost owned property on East Walnut. Brother Fletcher owned land in the Campbell NW ¼ tract in Section 24 of the original City plat patented in 1837 on the southeast corner East Walnut and South Jefferson (This is currently the site of the Marquette Hotel built in 1906, across the street from St. Paul's Methodist Church). Brother Frost's property was in the Dollison NE ¼ tract in Section 24 on the northwest corner of East Walnut and South Hampton. Henry and his son, Stephen, were living at this location at the time of the acquisition of the church's North Washington Avenue site (The lot is currently occupied by a modern one-story apartment house).

Brother Fletcher and Brother Frost, neighbors and fellow Trustees, clearly played a role in the early development of East Walnut Street, now a National Register Historic District (listed 3/21/85). But by the

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Pitts Chapel (previously Wilson's Creek) was the last of the African-American churches to cross the Jordan. On July 8, 1909, torrential rains caused the Jordan Creek Valley to flood, taking many lives and destroying many homes and businesses. The wood frame church building of Pitts Chapel at Jefferson and Phelps is said to have been washed away.¹² In 1911, Pitts Chapel completed a new brick church building at the corner of Benton and Tampa (two blocks west of Gibson Chapel), where it continues its ministry today. It also was built in the Late Gothic Revival style.

For the Baptists and the other African-American congregations, the church at the turn-of-the-century often provided the only hope and source of comfort for a minority population oppressed by prevailing racist sentiments. The most compelling and extreme reflection of racism in turn-of-the-century Springfield was the 1906 Public Square lynching of three African-American men. On Easter Day that year, a riotous white mob hung Fred Coker, Ben Allen and Horace Duncan from the Gottfried Tower at the center of the Square and desecrated their corpses.¹³ Because of the lynching and riot that followed, many African-Americans left Springfield for St. Louis and other larger and more tolerant urban areas. Left behind was a wounded community of both African-Americans and whites which has never fully been healed. While the event received national interest, its cruelties were soon overshadowed by the Great San Francisco Earthquake. No one was brought to trial. The Gottfried Tower was taken down from the Public Square in 1910 and put to use as a bell tower for a south side fire station, eradicating even the physical memories of the event.¹⁴

An account of activities at Washington Avenue at the time of the lynching is not available. However, the families of the congregation at Gibson Chapel just to the south of the Baptist church are said to have sought sanctuary in its basement while the men stood guard through the night.¹⁵ It is reasonable to suppose that the families of the Baptists did likewise.

Structural and Organizational Changes

Since its 1885 construction, the church at 729 North Washington has undergone several structural and organizational changes. Oral history indicates that an addition to the church building was made in 1892. This specific portion of the building is not definitively determined. It could be the west fellowship and classroom area (suggested by the change in roof type and the retaining wall and chimney that separate this space from the sanctuary). Or, it could be the north projecting wing that houses the Pastor's Office and Choir Room (suggested by the different bonding technique used to lay the brick walls at this portion of the building). A cornerstone was reportedly laid for this addition, but it is not evident today.

A cornerstone for the building marks its origination as Second Baptist Church (Colored) in 1885. The congregation also appears to have been variously called Second Missionary Baptist Church, as indicated by the 1873 Trustee Deed that titled the land from Brother Fletcher to the church's Board of Trustees. A later cornerstone dated 1904 indicates that the congregation was rededicated as Washington Avenue Baptist Church. Grand Master of Masons, C.W. Williams of Boonville, MO, reportedly laid this cornerstone.

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Rev. J.S. Dorsey came to the church in 1899 and served for 14 years (one of the longest terms of service). Rev. Dorsey was responsible for mitigating the conflict associated with the name change from Second Baptist and presiding over the re-dedication of the congregation and its church building to Washington Avenue. During his pastorate, the church's congregation and the rest of Springfield's African-Americans faced the fear and grief resulting from the 1906 Public Square. He also led the congregation out of the devastation of the 1911 fire and reconstruction of the church, retiring shortly afterward to a farm in North Springfield. He died in 1934 and was buried at Lincoln Cemetery in Springfield.¹⁸

Rev. D.A. Holmes succeeded the beloved Rev. Dorsey in 1913, but only stayed for a year before accepting a call to Kansas City. Rev. Holmes was the first of several successive pastors who held short tenures. In 1914, the membership was reported to be 250, with a Sunday School of 120.¹⁹

Rev. A.B. Simmons (1929-1938) served during the Great Depression, managing the church's hosting of the Missouri State Convention in 1932. Rev. M.D. Johnson (1938 - 1946) succeeded Rev. Simmons. He presided over the ceremonial burning of a \$1,400.00 mortgage. Rev. O.B. Ware (1946 - 1950) was the last pastor during the period of significance. He was succeeded by Rev. R.C. Campbell, who helped guide the congregation through the period of integration of Springfield Public Schools. The church had a membership of 267 at this time, fairly unchanged from the period immediately following Rev. Dorsey's pastorage 35 years earlier.

The following provides a full list of the known pastors of Second Baptist Church, today known as Washington Avenue Baptist Church.²⁰ Dates of service are noted where available.

Rev. Stephen Frost (1885 - ?)
Rev. A.B. Franklin (1889 - ?)
Rev. F.H. Williams (1895 - ?)
Rev. Dorch
Rev. Bowie
Rev. Stewart
Rev. Miller
Rev. W.A. Brown (1899)
Rev. J. S. Dorsey (1899 - 1913)
Rev. Rev. D.A. Holmes (1913 - 1914)
Rev. W.H. Young (1915 - ?)
Rev. Petty
Rev. Goins
Rev. S.R. Wilson
Re. A.B. Simmons (1929 - 1938)
Rev. M.D. Johnson (1938 - 1946)
Rev. O.B. Ware (1946 - 1950)
Rev. R.C. Campbell
Rev. L.D. Hardiman (? - 1961)

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African-Americans cannot be clearly delineated. This is exemplified in the close association between the churches and the lodges and auxiliaries of the Prince Hall Masons, the social and professional organization of African-American brick masons. The Eureka Lodge and its successor, the Truth Lodge, were closely aligned with Washington Avenue. The central stained glass window with "Cross and Crown" icon in the church's primary façade recognizes the Truth Lodge for its support. It is thought that the earlier Eureka Lodge provided the original windows destroyed in the 1911 fire. (The close association with the lodges also explains the fine brickwork found in the churches).

The Church and Public Education

Following emancipation, the task of educating Springfield's African-Americans became one of the many challenges the city faced during its reconstruction. Under slavery, African-Americans were subjugated by ignorance and illiteracy. With emancipation, education became their hope for self-sufficiency and prosperity. The Freedmen's Bureau established a post in Springfield to help resettle and educate African-Americans.

Over 35 years after Joseph Rountree established the first school in Springfield for the community's whites in 1831, the Freedmen's Bureau School was organized. Two white teachers, Miss Emeline Howard of the Iowa Society of Friends and Mrs. Letitia Townsend of the Northeastern Freedmen's Aid Commission, oversaw the school. It met in Wilson's Creek Chapel Methodist Church (now Pitts Chapel) in its wood frame building at the corner of Jefferson and Phelps. The Freedmen's Sunday School was held for adults who worked during the week.²¹

The Freedmen's School ended in 1867 when the Springfield public school system was established (April 24, 1867) and included a "Colored" School.²² Since no building existed for the segregated school, it continued to meet in Wilson's Creek Chapel Methodist Church. Enrollment the first year was 48 students.

In 1872, Springfield built its first school for African-Americans, the Washington Avenue Colored Public School, between North Washington and Benton Avenues, just east of Drury Lane and north of where Drury College library stands today. The first white school, Central School, was completed a year earlier on the corner of Jefferson and Olive, a block northeast off the Public Square (The school was located just north of the wood frame building completed by First Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1869).

The "Colored School" on Washington Avenue was a handsome two-story brick building. Its location is indicative of the concentration of African-Americans who resided (or were intended to reside) north of the Public Square and across the Jordan Creek. At the time, African-Americans lived and owned property and businesses east of today's Drury Lane and south to the Jordan Creek. And, they continued to reside further south in the area north of East Walnut Street.

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to make room for a parking lot (This parking lot is now just north of Drury's architecture school). Following desegregation in 1955 "New" Lincoln became part of Springfield's integrated public schools and was renamed Eastwood Junior High School.²⁵ It closed shortly after that. Currently part of the Ozarks Technical College campus, the school building is being rehabilitated. This significant cultural resource was individually listed on the National Register on May 31, 2000.²⁶

Springfield Public Schools remained segregated until 1955, following the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.²⁷ Under the leadership of Superintendent Willard Graff, Springfield Public Schools was one of the first districts in the country to successfully integrate under the *Brown* decision. One of the important factors in the post-segregation development of Springfield Schools was the integration of the district's faculty. As a first step in this giant leap, Superintendent Graff selected Olive Decatur, an experienced teacher at Lincoln School and revered member of Washington Avenue Baptist Church. The daughter of an African-American maid, Sister Decatur graduated from "Old" Lincoln School in 1917 (one of three students in the graduating class) and was educated at Wilberforce University, a private university founded by abolitionist Wilber Force. She returned to Springfield and taught at both "Old" Lincoln School and "New" Lincoln School.²⁸

Highly esteemed in both African-American and white communities, Sister Decatur was selected as the first African-American to teach at a previously all-white school when Springfield Schools were integrated in 1955. First at Pipkin School and then at Parkview School, she provided leadership that helped make Springfield's successful integration under the *Brown* decision one of the first in the nation. Until her retirement, Sister Decatur continued to be regarded for her contributions in educating Springfield white and African-American youth.

Olive Decatur's half-sister, Roberta Thomas Bartley, was also prominent within the Washington Avenue Baptist Church and the community. Sister Bartley taught Sunday School at Washington Avenue and for 45 years taught at Lincoln School and the integrated public school system. Upon retirement she founded Kiddie Kove Day Care Center, a not-for-profit childcare facility for disadvantaged families. Kiddie Kove is located at the site of the Springfield Negro Clinic (later the segregated Community Hospital), which operated at 914 East Calhoun from 1921 until 1950.²⁹

The estate of Sisters Decatur (d. January 1992) and Bartley (d. December 1992) bequeathed funds that supported the financing of Washington Avenue's current education wing, constructed in 1986 at a cost of \$196,000. The wing's fellowship hall was dedicated to them and bears their names.

Sister Decatur's close association and dedication to Washington Avenue Baptist Church may have been deeply cemented during the early years of her marriage to William J. Decatur. Sister Decatur met her husband, her senior and a professor at Wilberforce, during her years of study at the University. Soon after her return to Springfield, Mr. Decatur was stricken with an undetermined degenerative illness and went to

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End Notes

1. Dr. Katherine Lederer, Many Thousand Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History. (Springfield, MO: Southwest Missouri State University, 1986) p. 28.
2. Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri, Vol. I. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915), p. 612.
3. Duane Meyer and V. Marie Arnold. A Brief History of First and Calvary Presbyterian Church, Springfield Missouri. (Springfield: First and Calvary Presbyterian Church, 1987), pp. 2-3.
4. Pauline Diemer, granddaughter of Rev. Diemer, is a member of Washington Avenue Baptist Church.
5. Jonathan Fairbanks and Clyde Edwin Tuck. Past and Present of Greene County, Missouri, Vol. I. (Indianapolis: A.W. Bowen, 1915), p. 611.
6. Another clue may come from the origins of Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church. This early church is said to have been organized in the old Missionary Baptist Church. The land for the current Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church was acquired in 1877. The Baptist Church where organizers first met could have been the Benton and Water location or perhaps the North Washington site acquired in 1871. Dr. Katherine Lederer, Many Thousand Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History. (Springfield, MO: Southwest Missouri State University, 1986) p. 22.
7. Greene County Recorder of Deeds. Book 29, Page 412. (Springfield, 1873). The names of this Trustee group shown here reflect the spelling provided in the Trustee Deed. However, the accuracy of the recorded spelling is questionable. Windows in the church are dedicated to two of these Trustees, with different spellings: Alexander Tindall and Silvester Wisner. Dr. Katherine Lederer advises that the former here is correct, while the later is most likely not.
8. Last Will and Testament of Dr. Thomas Jefferson Bailey, recorded May 1, 1869. Greene County Archives. Greene County Probate Court. Box 112, #449.
9. Dr. and Mrs. T.J. Bailey were faithful members of First Baptist Church. Following Dr. Bailey's death, Mrs. Bailey sought to endow their church in the late 1870's with a large gift. However, a pending suit settled in court at the time ruled in favor of "certain heirs" and deprived the church of this legacy. It has been reported that Mrs. Bailey contested her husband's will benefiting Phoebe Isbell Tindall. This contest could be the suit referenced here. R.I. Holcombe, ed. A History of Greene County, Missouri. (St. Louis: Western Historical Company, 1883), p. 807.
10. Dr. Katherine Lederer, "Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church Observing 112th Anniversary." Springfield! Magazine. (Springfield: June, 1983), p. 38.
11. Dr. Katherine Lederer, "Gibson Chapel Presebyterian Church: They Crossed the Jordan." Springfield! Magazine. (Springfield: November, 1982), p. 38.
12. "Damage to Property Expected To Reach \$500,000," Springfield Daily Republican (Springfield: July 8, 1909), p. 1.

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24. "New Lincoln Is Dedicated." Springfield Leader & Press. (Springfield, May 22, 1931).
25. "Fifth Junior High Named Eastwood." Springfield Leader & Press. (Springfield, April 7, 1955).
26. An in-depth discussion of the social history associated with Springfield's segregated public schools is found in the National Register nomination for Lincoln School prepared by Dr. Katherine Lederer. National Register of Historic Places. Lincoln School. Greene County, MO. Listed May 31, 2000.
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Greene County, Missouri

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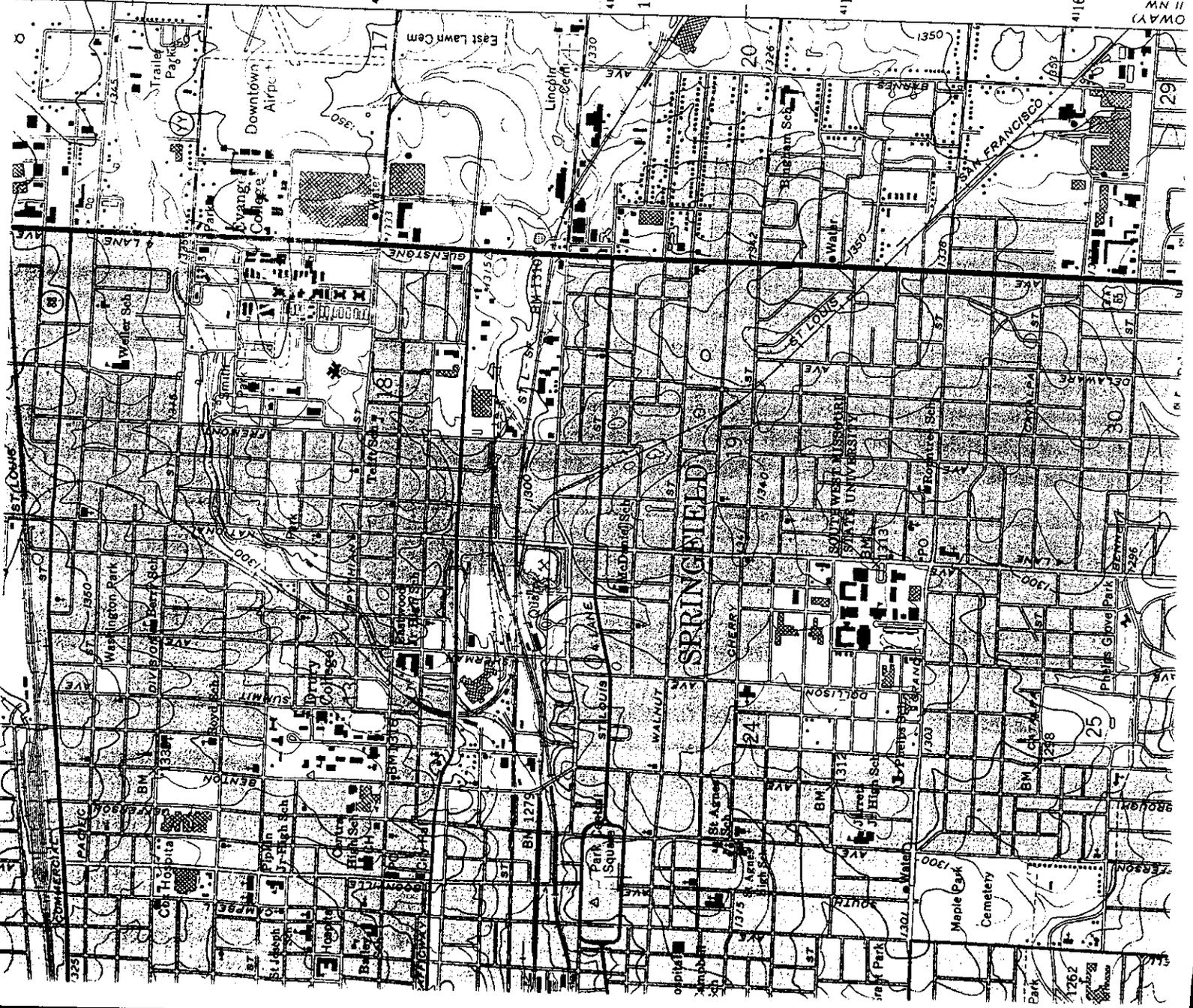
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Washington Avenue Bay
 1211 North Washington
 Springfield, Missouri, MO

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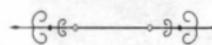
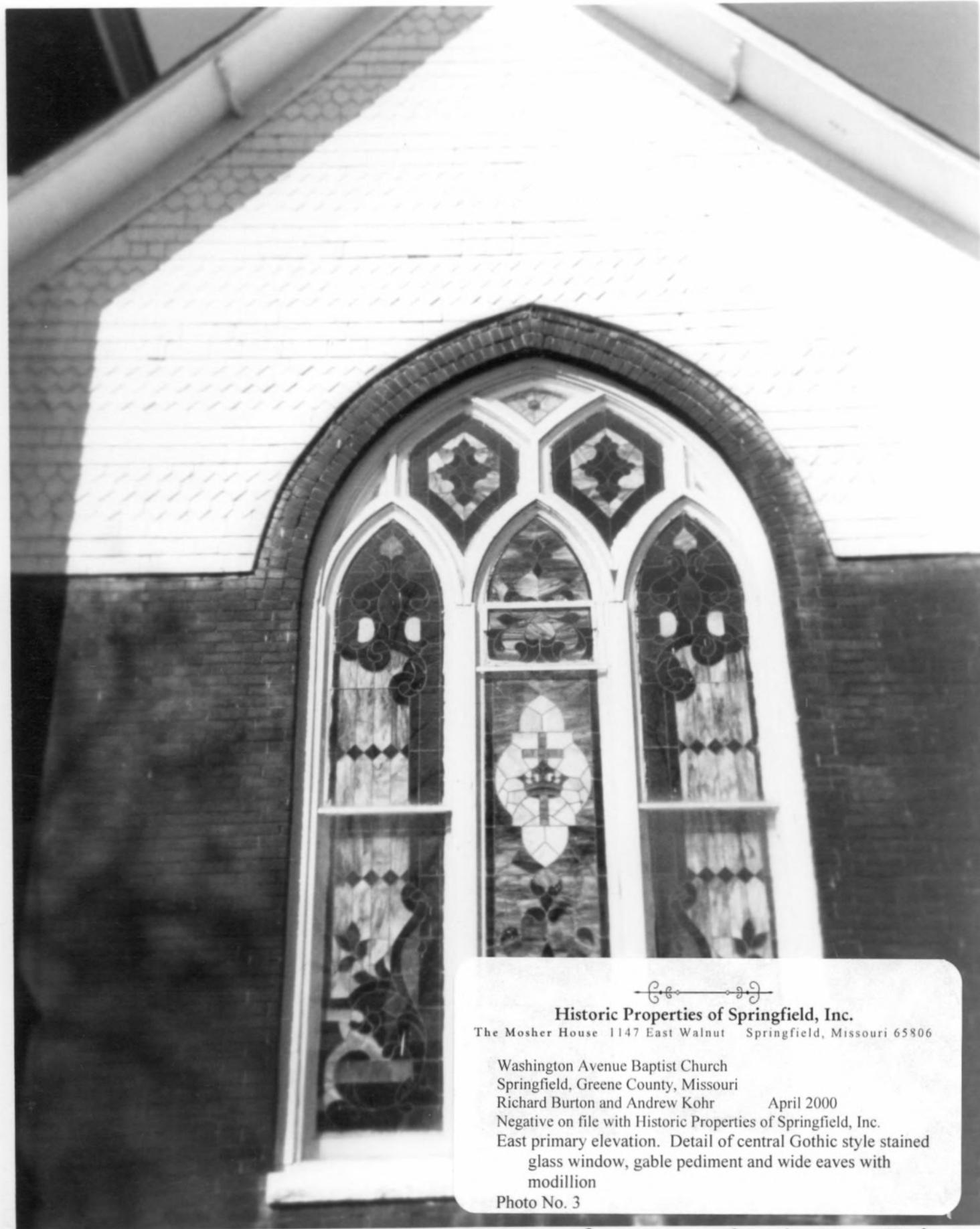
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Washington Avenue Baptist Church Springfield, Greene County, Missouri



Washington Avenue Baptist Church Springfield, Greene County, Missouri



Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.

The Mosher House 1147 East Walnut Springfield, Missouri 65806

Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri

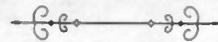
Richard Burton and Andrew Kohr April 2000

Negative on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.

East primary elevation. Detail of central Gothic style stained
glass window, gable pediment and wide eaves with
modillion

Photo No. 3

Washington Avenue Baptist Church Springfield, Greene County, MO Photo 3



Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.

The Mosher House 1147 East Walnut Springfield, Missouri 65806

Washington Avenue Baptist Church

Springfield, Greene County, Missouri

Richard Burton and Andrew Kohr

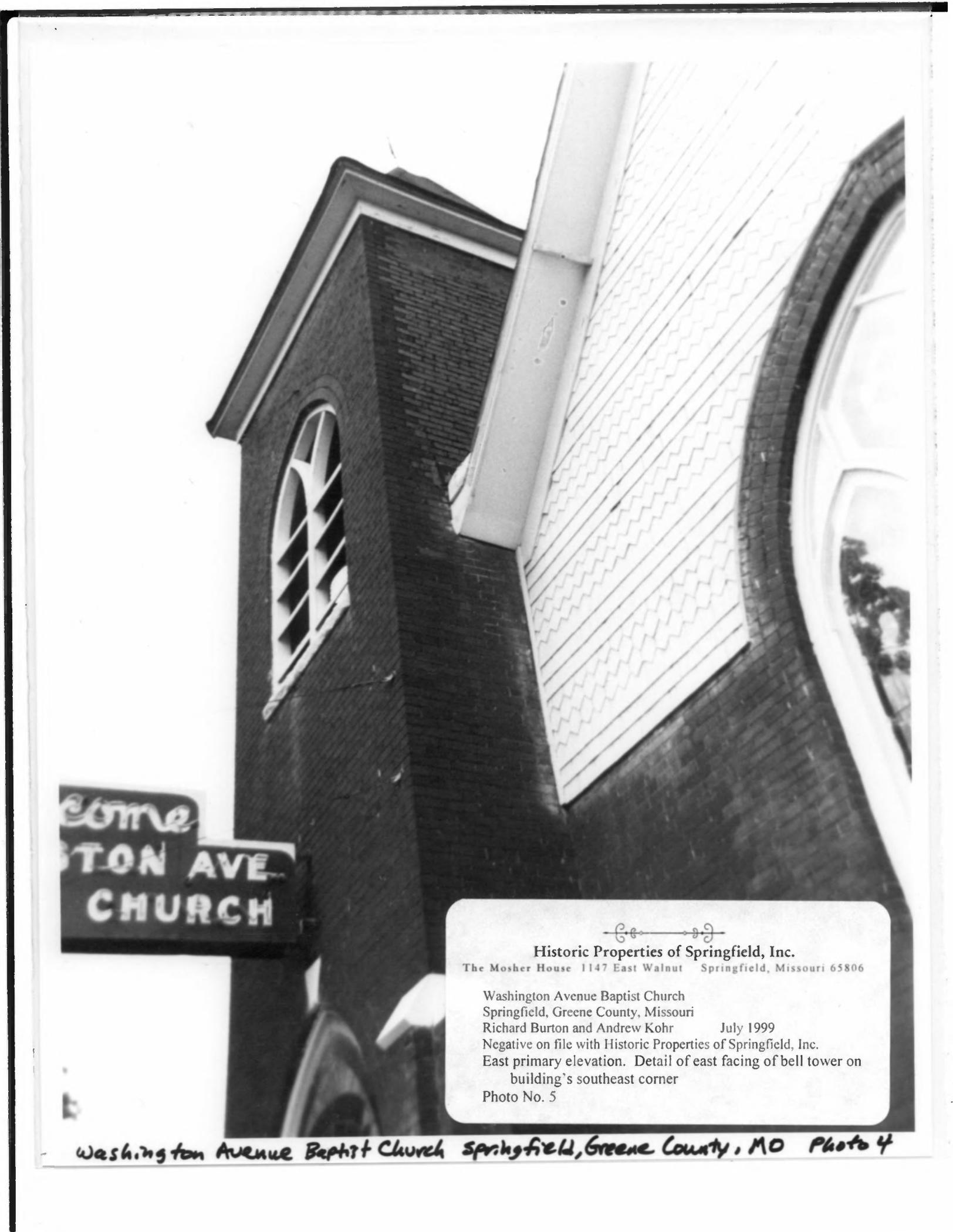
April 2000

Negative on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.

East primary elevation. Detail of upper portion of bell tower on building's southeast corner

Photo No. 4

Washington Avenue Baptist Church Springfield, Greene County, MO Photo 5



Come
WASHINGTON AVE
CHURCH

— — — — —
Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.

The Mosher House 1147 East Walnut Springfield, Missouri 65806

Washington Avenue Baptist Church
Springfield, Greene County, Missouri

Richard Burton and Andrew Kohr July 1999

Negative on file with Historic Properties of Springfield, Inc.

East primary elevation. Detail of east facing of bell tower on
building's southeast corner

Photo No. 5

Washington Avenue Baptist Church Springfield, Greene County, MO Photo 4

