

Architectural And Historic



Survey

Identification

STREET ADDRESS: 632 West Main Street	HISTORIC NAME: Delevan/First Baptist Church
MAP & PARCEL: 29-1	DATE / PERIOD: 1877-1883
CENSUS TRACT AND BLOCK: 1-303	STYLE: Victorian Romanesque
PRESENT ZONING: M-1	HEIGHT (to cornice) OR STORIES: 1 storey
ORIGINAL OWNER: Delevan Baptist Church	DIMENSIONS AND LAND AREA: 12,980 sq. ft.
ORIGINAL USE: Church	CONDITION: Good
PRESENT USE: Church	SURVEYOR: Thomsen/Bibb
PRESENT OWNER: First Baptist Congregation	DATE OF SURVEY: 1977/1985
ADDRESS: 632 West Main Street	SOURCES: City/County Records
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901	Alexander, <u>Recollections of Early Ch'ville</u>
	Richard T. McKinney, <u>Keeping the Faith</u>

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

First Baptist Church is an excellent example of Victorian Romanesque style. The building is rectangular in form, three bays wide by six bays long. A high single-storey facade fronts on Main Street, but because of ground slope, the main floor is raised above a full-storey basement at the sides and rear. Construction is brick, common bond on the facade, American elsewhere. A square, projecting tower of brick forms the central bay on the entrance facade. Above the peak of the roof gable, the tower supports a large octagonal lantern on a square base, both of wood. The lantern is decorated with attenuated corner pilasters and is covered with a domed roof. Matching projecting towerlets stand at the facade corners and rise slightly above the roof eaves. The main structure is covered with a gable roof of red, composition shingle. Eaves are finished with a white-painted projecting wood cornice above a corble-arch supported brick overhang. Projecting piers suggestive of pilasters separate the bays along the side wall of the main floor and serve to buttress the high walls. A corbelled brick water table separates the basement from main floor. Main floor windows, one each bay, are high, semi-circular headed, double-hung sash with leaded stained glass. Basement windows are large, six-over-nine-light, double-hung sash. Main entry is through paneled, double doors, with segmental-arch lintel, in the base of the tower. A single window like other main-floor windows is located in the tower above the door. A low, wrought iron fence, with alternating tall and short piles, and gothic-motif gateposts, surrounds the church yard.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

In 1863, the 800 black members of the Charlottesville Baptist Church petitioned for, and were granted, approval to separate from the church and form their own congregation. They conducted services in the parent church for awhile and later in the basement of the old Delevan Hotel, taking its name for the congregation. Built in the 1820's by General John H. Cocke of Bremo as a temperance hotel, the building had later housed a classical school and had been used as a military hospital during the Civil War. A free school for blacks had been conducted there since the War. The hotel was popularly known as "the Mudwall" because of the terre pise wall that enclosed the property. The congregation purchased the hotel building in 1868 (ACDB 68-76). When the deteriorating old building was condemned in 1876, it was demolished, and work was begun immediately on the present church building. The cornerstone was laid on November 7, 1877, and Builders and Mechanics Liens give December 12, 1883 as the date of completion (ACDB 82-458, 83-76). It was dedicated on January 2, 1884, but apparently was not yet quite ready for occupancy, as there is a record of the first service being held there in the basement on July 3, 1884. With the completion of the new building the congregation changed its name from "the Delevan Baptist Church of Charlottesville" to "the First Colored Baptist Church of Charlottesville".

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Delevan Baptist Church, #104-0376
Charlottesville, Virginia**

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7. Architectural Description (additional information):

Located at 632 West Main Street, at the corner of 7th Street in Charlottesville, the cornerstone for the First Baptist Church (now the Delevan Baptist Church) was laid in 1877 and the building completed in 1883. This rectangular three-bay brick building is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style and features a projecting brick square entrance tower topped by an octagonal wooden lantern on a square base. The main entry is at the base of the tower through paneled double-leaf doors with a segmental-arched lintel. Matching projecting brick towers stand at the façade corners and rise slightly above the roof eaves. The gabled roof is clad in asphalt shingles. The six-bay sides of the brick building are articulated into bays by projecting piers that also serve to buttress the high walls, and contain double-hung, round-arched stained-glass windows and a corbelled brick cornice. The rear of the building has a hip-roofed rectangular apse with a taller gable-roofed projecting. A corbelled brick water table separates the basement level from the main floor. The basement level windows contain square-headed six-over-nine double-hung windows.

8. Significance Statement (additional information):

Originally listed as part of the Charlottesville Multiple Resource Area nomination, the Delevan Baptist Church was placed in the Virginia Landmarks Register on October 20, 1981 and in the National Register of Historic Places on October 21, 1982.

First Baptist Church, now known as the Delevan Baptist Church, is directly related to the African-American community that was growing in the eastern portion of the proposed Fifeville-Castle Hill Historic District by the 1870s and is a significant contributing resource and visual landmark within this area. Black Baptists who had formerly worshipped at Charlottesville's white First Baptist Church purchased the property on which the Delevan Hospital stood (formerly known as "Mudwall") in 1868 and began construction in 1877 of what would be called the First Colored Baptist Church, completed ca. 1883. Although several other Baptist congregations split off from the "first" church, this building made a bold statement for the African-American community in downtown Charlottesville. It stands today as the only institutional building within the proposed district's boundaries and would have been convenient to the growing number of African-Americans in the Fifeville and Castle Hill neighborhoods.

