

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Baptist Church

other names/site number Negro Baptist Church, Elm Street Baptist Church

2. Location

street & number Corner of Elm and Sinclair Streets N/A not for publication

city or town West Baden Springs N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Orange code 117 zip code 47469

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Ronald R. Kalla

2-2-94

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State of 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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

First Baptist Church
Name of Property

Orange County, IN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:

Late Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

First Baptist Church
Name of Property

Orange County, IN
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

Period of Significance

1920 - 1944

Significant Dates

1920

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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:

First Baptist Church

Name of Property

Orange County, IN

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
Zone Easting Northing
2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Zone Easting Northing
4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Jean Bateman, Vice President and Director

organization West Baden Historical Society date January 30, 1993

street & number Kimball Acres telephone 812/936-4811

city or town West Baden Springs state IN zip code 47469

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name West Baden Historical Society

street & number P.O. Box #6 telephone 812/936-4811

city or town West Baden Springs state IN zip code 47469

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Orange County, IN

The First Baptist Church of West Baden Springs, Indiana is a simple, one-story vernacular Gothic Revival wood frame building. The lot on which it is located is rectangular in shape and located at the intersection of Sinclair and Elm Streets in the West Baden Springs Company addition to the town. The church faces south and the lot slopes gently to the north so that the rear of the building is raised approximately two feet off the ground while the front of the church rests almost directly on the ground. The site has mature shade trees to the south and east of the church. The rear (north) part of the site is currently overgrown.

The building is rectangular in plan with a square belfry projecting from the south facade. It is built on a concrete foundation. A section of foundation on the west elevation is constructed of 8" by 8" wood posts and concrete block infill. A series of rectangular openings covered by wooden doors are located just above ground level on each elevation. While it is uncertain what their function was, it is believed these openings served as vents to allow the unfinished basement to dry more quickly. It is known that the site was subject to flooding, particularly during spring months.

The church is sheathed with narrow clapboard and its simple gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle. Openings on the south, east and west are triangular-topped with simple molded hoods, a treatment that suggests pointed-arch Gothic Revival openings. The two windows and door on the north elevation are simple rectangular openings in the wall.

Entrance to the church is gained through a double-door portal in the belfry. The sanctuary is raised several feet off the ground so this entrance reached via a steep set of concrete stairs. The entry is capped with a triangular two-light transom. Two triangulated double hung sash windows flank the belfry. The upper sash of these windows is divided into three lights; the lower sash divided into two lights. Glass in the lower sashes is colored blue while that in the upper sash is green with yellow in the topmost light.

The second stage of the belfry contains louvred triangulated openings on each face similar to the windows below. The belfry is capped with a flat roof.

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Orange County, IN

The east and west elevations are almost identical, each being punctured by four triangulated windows like those on the facade. However, on the east elevation at the north end of the structure, there is a small square double-hung window. A vertical seam part way along each of these elevations gives evidence that the northernmost third of the building is an addition thought to have been built within a year of the original building. The addition is covered by a partial hip roof. As previously mentioned, openings on the north elevation are rectangular rather than the triangulated form found in the original section of the building. The doorway on this elevation is a simple paneled door with a glass light in the upper third. A handicap ramp, added at a later date, extends from this doorway eastward toward Elm Street.

The interior of the building is divided into vestibule, sanctuary, and educational rooms. The vestibule and sanctuary are enriched by a vertical board wainscot topped by a chair rail. Fiberboard paneling has been installed over the original plaster above the chair rail. Accoustical ceiling tile has been attached to the plaster on the tri-planar ceiling.

The tongue-and-groove oak floor in the sanctuary is sloped toward the altar (north) end of the space. All woodwork is painted. The sanctuary is entered from the vestibule via two four-panel doors with decorative trim. The center aisle is flanked by original wood pews and theatre seating.

A rectangular recess in the north wall of the sanctuary appears to have been originally intended as the focus of a centrally located altar space. However, the addition of rooms to the north may be what fostered the construction of a quarter circle raised platform in the northwest corner of the sanctuary. The platform is rimmed by a low balustrade. A doorway on the platform and one to the east of the altar recess lead to educational rooms at the rear of the church. These rooms are simple and functional with flat plaster walls and painted tongue-and-groove flooring. Access to the basement of the building is gained through a hinged opening in the floor in this area.

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The First Baptist Church, Elm and Sinclair Streets in West Baden Springs, Indiana is significant under criterion A for its association with the large African-American community located in West Baden during the early twentieth century. The congregation of the First Baptist Church was formed in 1909, but the actual church structure was built in 1920. The congregation consisted of members of the African-American population who came to the town of West Baden to be employed at the West Baden Springs Resort Hotel. The Reverend C.R. Parrish served as the church's first pastor and was one of its founding fathers. The church became the center of African-American culture in West Baden Springs and the neighboring resort town of French Lick; and the members of the church were well-known throughout the county. As the success of the resort deminished, so did the African-American population. By the 1960s, the congregation had dwindled to a fraction of what it once was and the church eventually closed its doors.

Land for the church was acquired in 1909 when Lee W. Sinclair, owner and operator of the world famous round-domed West Baden Springs Hotel Resort and President of the West Baden Springs Company, deeded Lot #2 of the Town of West Baden to officers of the church. The members of the church board who accepted Mr. Sinclair's gift were: James Palmer, Robert J. Holden, and William M. Scott. The deed was recorded on March 1, 1909. The deed stipulated that the donation of the land did not include gas, oil, or mineral rights. Especially emphasized was the exclusion of all rights to "alkaline waters, sulfur water, and all sulfasaline waters under said premises, or flowing in, upon or through the said property, now known, or found therein, thereon, or there under." To understand this clause it must be remembered that the success of West Baden was due to its "Sprudel" and other mineral waters, just as the neighboring town of French Lick became famous for its Pluto Water.

Mr. Sinclair's interest in having the First Baptist church built was to accommodate the many black waiters, maids, porters, chefs, and other hotel employees who flocked to West Baden Springs from Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee and other southern states. At a time when segregation was

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First Baptist Church
Orange County, IN

an accepted way of life, African Americans were delighted to have their own church in a community which offered them a better life style, with good homes for their families. Census data shows that the church membership was proportional to the overall African-American population in Orange County. The size of the African-American population was directly connected to the success of the area's resorts. Census records show that after the West Baden Springs Hotel closed in the 1930s, there was a significant drop in the black population.

The actual church building was not erected until 1920. In October 1920, land for the parsonage of the church was purchased. Lot #1, adjoining the church site, was sold to the church's Board of Directors by Peter M. and Emma Clark for \$850.00. The deed was recorded on October 26, 1920. The pastor's home, which was completed in the early part of 1921, was a frame, bungalow style structure which served the various pastors of the church for more than 40 years. The house later became a rental property. Time and neglect eventually took their toll and the old rectory collapsed.

The First Baptist Church was the only gathering location for the African-American community of French Lick and West Baden Springs. As the focal point for the social and religious activities alike, the congregation of the church became well known for its civic involvement. Church preference, politics, and race made no difference at all in those whom they chose to help. The most memorable event in which the entire congregation participated was the periodic tag sale. Held during the late 1920's, these sales were forerunners to today's flea markets and yard sales. People from miles around arrived early for this special event. On display were such items as stitched and sewn goods of all sorts, baked goods, and the very popular souvenirs which advertised West Baden Springs hotels, inns, boarding houses, and the town itself. Proceeds from the tag sales were used for the many projects sponsored by the church. While donations were made to a few state and national organizations, church members were more concerned with giving assistance to locals. The proceeds bought shoes for needy children, sent flowers and gifts to the ill, provided food, and helped pay medical expenses for families in need. Women of the

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First Baptist Church
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congregation cooked and cleaned house for the sick and elderly and the men of the church regularly aided in painting and repairing homes of elderly individuals unable to do the work themselves.

Other social gatherings of the church included the annual pig roasts and a ladies' circle which was known as the Twilight Club. The group met at members' homes. For these occasions, the ladies were attired in elegant gowns, hats, and jewelry. Notes of the activities of the club, including teas, parties, and numerous projects were reported on the society page of the Springs Valley Herald, French Lick's weekly newspaper.

One fine quality which the First Baptist church was known for in West Baden Springs and Orange County was its gospel choir singing. The choir's singing was regarded by many as the most beautiful in the valley. People were known to sit outside in front of the church just to listen to the singing while services were being held inside. The choir was regularly invited to perform at churches throughout the county.

Although the Great Depression of the 1930's wreaked havoc throughout the successful resorts and businesses of the Springs Valley and caused many people to move away in search of employment elsewhere, the First Baptist Church continued its mission to serve the community.

There were several individuals of the congregation who were known throughout West Baden Springs and Orange County. Of particular note is George Waddy, Y. C. Wiggington, and Birdie Sebree. George Waddy is remembered in the community as the owner of the Waddy Hotel. This hotel served individuals of African-American heritage and was known throughout the nation for its fine hospitality. Y. C. Wiggington was well known in the community for his service during World War I. He attained the rank of Major while in the service, something that was not common at the time for minorities. The most widely known individual of the congregation was Birdie Sebree who served as the assistant and nurse for Dr. H. L. Miller for almost half a century. Dr. Miller was a highly respected person and a typical, old

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fashioned country doctor. Quite a few families were acquainted with Birdie Sebree who helped in the treatment of their ill.

In 1964, a flood inundated West Baden Springs' lower section and water filled the church. Several men and boys assembled at the church to survey the damage. After the water subsided mud had to be shoveled out before the actual cleaning and scrubbing could get under way. After a tremendous cleanup effort the church was put back in order, however, the busy, useful days of the once-prosperous church had drawn to a close. The membership dwindled and many of the faithful leaders of the church passed away or were too elderly to continue their service. The church closed its doors within a year of the flood.

The church building stood empty for a number of years. In 1984 two young ministers, Keith Howard and Henry K. Beatty, opened the church under the name "West Baden Christian Assembly." The ministers conducted worship services there until 1988.

In 1992 the church was donated to the West Baden Historical Society. As the last surviving member of the church, Mrs. Dorothy Smith signed the deed turning the church and its property over to the historical society. In the agreement of transferal, the historical society agreed to make a contribution to a trust fund for the upkeep of the Knights of Pythias Cemetery where many of the church members are buried. The historical society plans to restore the building and turn it into a museum.

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Smith, Dorothy, wife of Artie Smith, Owner of Waddy's Hotel (Colored Hotel) and
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First Baptist Church
Orange County, IN

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots numbered one (1) and two (2) in the addition of the West Baden Springs Company to the Town of West Baden, Orange County, Indiana.

Boundary Justification

This is the historic boundary of the property.

-First Baptist Church
-Corner of Elm & Sinclair Streets
West Baden Springs
Indiana

UTM REF:
16 533 740 4268 210



