

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (Lava Rock Structures in South Central Idaho 72)

SITE NAME: Jerome First Baptist Church

SITE NUMBER: 99

LOCATION: 1st Ave., E.
First Avenue East and Buchanan Street, Jerome, Idaho

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: First Baptist Church
First Avenue East
Jerome, ID 83338

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Jerome, 7.5 minute

ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the First Baptist Church and the property on which it stands, Lots 9 through 13, Block 62, Jerome Townsite. Legal description on file at Jerome County Courthouse, Jerome, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/703560/4733120

DATE OR PERIOD: 1931

ARCHITECT OR BUILDER: Ed Gill, T. C. Miller,
H. T. Pugh

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: local

CONDITION: good, altered, original site

DESCRIPTION:

The tall, one-story, gable-roofed First Baptist Church is approximately 32 by 70 feet. It has a high basement. This corner building faces Jerome's North Park across First Avenue East, and its long left wall parallels North Buchanan Street. The front, on the narrower dimension, features an outset square tower approximately two stories high. The main entrance at ground level is through double wooden doors with carved panels in a high, round-arched opening. Single pane sidelights beside the door have an etched floral design. A single-paned, half-round transom above the door is shaped to fit the arch. Centered above the entry at the mezzanine level is a panel of three sash windows of eight panes each. Above the panel is a flush, continuous concrete lintel, approximately twelve inches wide, inset into the stone approximately eight inches on each end. A continuous, outset, sloping slip sill is approximately four inches wide. Centered in the top one-third of the tower is a tall, round-arched, louvered window with a narrow, outset, slit, concrete sill. Similar windows are set into the openings approximately four to six inches. Outset square columns on each corner of the tower are several feet higher than the flat roof. A narrow outset course of concrete approximately six inches wide extends between the columns about a foot below the tops of the tower walls. The main body of the building has a shingled gable roof with plain, wooden molding instead of eaves. A narrow window with a round arch above it is on the front wall

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light basement window is below the round arched window. "The First Baptist Church, 1909 - 1931" is inscribed into a flush, rectangular, polished black marble plaque above the watercourse left of the left basement window. A concrete course is at the top of the left wall. The rear gable wall has a Flemish treatment with concrete coping on its edges. A columnar effect is achieved on the four corners of the main body of the building where the sloping roof line terminates in a horizontal section about two feet wide with a projecting, shaped concrete cap. On the full length of the left wall and on the rear wall is a concrete watercourse approximately eighteen inches below the top of the wall. It is approximately twelve inches wide and is outset approximately four inches. This course wraps approximately two feet around the sides of the gable facade. A similar concrete watercourse serves as continuous lintels for the double-hung daylight basement windows. The top edge of the course is angled. The lower course also wraps around the front to the edge of the tower. There are six tall, rectangular, double-hung symmetrically-set windows on the left wall. The watercourse at the top of the wall serves as a continuous lintel for the three windows to the right, but three shorter windows at the left have separate concrete lintels below the watercourse. Each window has a separate sloping, outset, concrete slip sill approximately four inches. These windows are set about midway in the openings. The concrete courses, lintels, and sills have been painted white. A small shed-roofed frame addition shelters a basement entrance about midway on the left wall. The large half-round window with an etched floral design in it above the entrance in the tower was broken by a vandal and was replaced with a clear panel after the accompanying photograph was taken. The right wall of the building is not visible because it abuts a new frame addition built in 1978, which extends perpendicular from the right wall. The frame addition has a tall square tower at the extreme right corner with four stone columns with round arched frame openings between them, repeating the lines of the stone columns of the tower in the original building. Although large and modern in design, the addition is compatible with and clearly discernible from the original structure.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The First Baptist Church is significant both as an example of Romanesque style church architecture and for the fine craftsmanship it exhibits. The church was designed by T. C. Miller and Ed Gill, who were members of the congregation. The square centered bell tower is reminiscent of the Old World originals of church architecture. It also provides the church with an imposing high profile, which announced that this building is a significant public building in the community. The mixture on the tower of traditional round arches with a panel of double-hung windows with concrete lintels and sills exemplifies the eclectic nature of the church's design and displays the range of skills of mason H. T. Pugh as well. The lots facing North Park were donated to the congregation in 1909 when Jerome was established by the developers of the tract, the North Side Land and Water Company, but the congregation was not able to plan for a larger building until the late 1920's. A 1930 newspaper story reported on the ground-breaking ceremony. It stated, "This ceremony does not mean that a church building will be erected at once. It does mean that a start will be made . . . Roughly it is expected the completed building will cost around \$12,000." Most of the news story, which was a full column long on the front page, is made up of the editor's urgings that the

church provide parking space for automobiles on the grounds. His exhortations show both the growing number and the growing importance of automobiles to the community. He states, "Back in the horse drawn vehicle days, churches, and especially country churches, that is churches in the country at community centers or in small towns took into consideration hitching or tying spaces for teams . . . So the idea of parking space on the church property is by no means new--it is old stuff. These days whether obliged to or not, most of the congregation drive to church services with their cars, at any rate prefer to, thus creating a congestion about the church property." He goes on to describe the special occasions when people might be drawn to the church, and states, "Many auto drivers are reluctant to get into a jam of traffic such as might occur on such occasions, and possibly for this reason, do not attend." One has to experience the tranquility of Jerome, Idaho, even today, to appreciate the true magnitude of the traffic jams the editor describes.

According to his daughter, H. T. Pugh considered this building among his finest. The tall centered tower with round arches was first seen in the Sugarloaf School (site 81). His competent use of concrete is evidence in the carefully executed water course, roof edge coping, and other concrete elements in the building. The stones were carefully selected for their reddish color. The stones vary in size from small to quite large. They are closely fit together in a pattern suggestive of a mosaic. The slightly recessed joints give emphasis to the colors and textures of the relatively flat faces of the stones. This was to be the last large public building on which Pugh would demonstrate his ability to form round arches. The First Baptist Church is the only stone church building in Jerome, and it is one of two in the area of the nomination. (See the Methodist Church in the Shoshone Historic District) The addition is set back on the lot, so that three walls of the original stone building are highly visible as the corner anchor of the present complex. Though larger than the original building, the addition was designed to maintain the architectural integrity of the original structure. The small frame shelter for the basement entrance could easily be removed.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

North Side News (Jerome). December 5, 1930.

Hart, Annie Mae Pugh, interview with Marian Posey-Ploss, Jerome, Idaho, July 8, 1978.



Lava Rock Structures in South Central Idaho
Jerome First Baptist Church, site 99

310 First Avenue East
Jerome, Jerome County, Idaho

Photograph by Duane Garrett
1977

Negative on file at the Idaho State Historical Society,
Boise, Idaho

View from southwest

Photograph one of one