# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

**RECEIVED** JUL 17 1978

**DATE ENTERED** DEC 8 1978

## 1 NAME

- **HISTORIC** Liberty Baptist Church

## 2 LOCATION

- **STREET & NUMBER** 701 Oak Street
- **CITY, TOWN** Evansville
- **STATE** Indiana

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building(s)</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Work in Progress</td>
<td>Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>In Process</td>
<td>Yes: Restricted</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

- **NAME** Liberty Baptist Church Congregation
- **STREET & NUMBER** 701 Oak Street
- **CITY, TOWN** Evansville
- **STATE** Indiana

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

- **COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.** Vanderburgh County Recorder
- **STREET & NUMBER** City - County Building
- **CITY, TOWN** Evansville
- **STATE** Indiana

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- **TITLE** none

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[Form No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONDITION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>EXCELLENT</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>GOOD</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>FAIR</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DESCRIPT THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Liberty Baptist Church, located at the eastern corner of the intersection of 7th and Oak Streets, was built in 1886 on the site of an earlier church which had been demolished by a cyclone. The present red brick church was constructed much in the same style and dimension as the earlier Gothic revival structure. The building is three bays wide, seven bays deep, and one story tall. Symmetrically arranged, the main (north) facade is dominated by a projecting center bay tower. The primary entrance to the church is located in this bay; the current extruded aluminum entrance is, of course, a contemporary addition.

Two side entrances into the church are centered in the end bays of the main facade. These entrances are flanked by lancet windows and are surmounted by larger windows of the same profile. Lancet windows mark the bays on the long elevations of the building, framed by buttress forms. The wall surfaces are further ornamented with limestone details, such as engaged pinacles, moldings, and cap stones (most of which have been painted), and ornamental brick work, such as a molded water table, panels of mouse-tooth and diapering, and corbelling.

The interior of the church proper has been altered in that the depth of the sanctuary has been shortened one bay and contemporary panelling and wall finished have been introduced within the last twenty years. The stained glass windows, however, appear to be original to the building. A limestone faced addition was added in 1965; this addition houses church offices and Sunday School rooms; as well as meeting and dining facilities.
Liberty Baptist Church is an important symbol of the Evansville black community which developed after the Civil War. During the unsettled times in the South at the end of the Civil War, many former slaves traveled North to find a better life and a guarantee of their new freedom. In Indiana Evansville was the focal point for this black migration, and hundreds of blacks crossed the Ohio River in 1865. Evansville's Negro population jumped from ninety-five in 1860 to almost two thousand in 1870. In the last half of the nineteenth century, Evansville had a larger percentage of blacks than any other Indiana city.

The Liberty Baptist congregation was organized on June 13, 1865, in a little brick building on Chestnut and Canal Streets. Although the Deacons and other members were blacks, Colonel Woods, a white devoted to the welfare of former slaves, was the first pastor. Under his leadership the members bought two lots at Seventh and Oak Streets and erected a frame church measuring forty by fifty feet.

After a short time, Elder Green McFarland replaced Woods as pastor and served the membership until he died in 1881. During this time the congregation grew rapidly due in part to the great influx of black immigrants. To accommodate larger numbers, the members constructed a brick church in 1880 at a cost of $10,000. Unfortunately this structure was destroyed by a cyclone on June 9, 1886. Viewing the disaster as a "test of zeal and devotion to God's work," the trustees started a rebuilding effort immediately. With the help of subscriptions and outside sources, the congregation built the present Gothic Revival structure at a cost of $19,000. The first service was held in December, 1886.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME: Evansville South

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING
--- | --- | ---
A | 4,16 | 4,50
B | 4,20 | 3,20
C | 4,50 | 4,20
D | 5,00 | 2,40
E | 5,20 | 2,00
F | 5,40 | 2,00
G | 5,60 | 3,00
H | 6,00 | 3,00

QUADRANGLE SCALE: 1:24000

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE
--- | --- | --- | ---

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Reverend Robert L. Saunders, Pastor

ORGANIZATION
Liberty Baptist Church

STREET & NUMBER
701 Oak Street

CITY OR TOWN
Evansville

STATE
Indiana

DATE
May, 1977

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set down by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

TITLE
Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE
7-10-78

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE
12-8-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE
12-4-78

CHEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE
12-4-78

GPO 921-809
Liberty Baptist is the oldest extant black congregation in Evansville. Although blacks settled wherever they could find housing in the city in the first months after the Civil War, they soon gathered in the area around Liberty Baptist; this section of the city became known as "Baptist Town". The church provided leadership in the religious, social, and political life of the city's black community. A number of other churches developed as splinters from the parent organization, notably McFarland Baptist Church. Liberty Baptist continues to serve the local community through day care programs for children, recreational activities for youth, and assistance with low to moderate income housing.

The structure is representative of the manner in which architecture was used in the nineteenth century. Gothic features such as pointed arches and buttresses were used to identify the structure as a church. The central projecting square tower strongly defines the entrance. Other elements display a variety of uses of brick coursing, such as diapering, mouse-toothing, and corbeling. This decorative approach is more in line with the Neo-Jacobean style from the end of the Medieval Period. In part the overall simplicity of the steeply roofed mass with the projecting central square tower makes reference to sixteenth century English parish churches. This allusion is reaffirmed by the re-entrant corner buttressing and stepped setbacks of the tower beneath its intersection with the eaves. The allusion is interrupted by the relationship of the height of the gable to this part of the tower.

The alteration of traditional proportions and the combination of Gothic and Neo-Jacobean features demonstrates that while nineteenth century architects sometimes looked to the past for inspiration, they did not seek to construct replicas of earlier structures. The eclectic approach as viewed in the Liberty Baptist Church demonstrates how builders of the last century used old elements to create new combinations and uses of styles.
Bibliography


Property: Liberty Baptist Church
State: Indiana
Working Number: 2-17-78 3617

TECHNICAL
Photos 9
Maps

CONTROL
OK 2-17-78

HISTORIAN
Accept 11-17-78

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN
Accept 10-2-78

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER
Inventory 
Review 

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF
Accept
Franklin 12-1-78

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up 2-4-74
Federal Register Entry 2-4-74
Send-back 
Re-submit 
Entered DEC 8 1978

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service WASO No. 7
1. Liberty Baptist Church
Evansville, Indiana
R. W. Tapp
1977
Evansville Dept. of Metropolitan Dev.
Main (north) facade

JUL 17 1978

DEC 8 1978
2. Liberty Baptist Church
Evansville, Indiana
R. W. Tapp
1977
Evansville Dept. of Metropolitan Dev.
Church taken from southwest corner of
7th & Oak Streets
July 10, 1978

Dr. William J. Murtagh  
National Register of Historic Places  
Heritage Conservation & Recreation Services  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Dr. Murtagh:

Please find enclosed a National Register nomination for the Liberty Baptist Church in Evansville, Indiana.

This nomination has been reviewed at several meetings of the Indiana State Professional Consulting Committee, and it is unanimously recommended.

Very truly yours,

Joseph D. Cloud  
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure
ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE          INDIANA

Date Entered    Jul 7/ 1978

Name

Kimmiller's Store
Kosciusko County Jail
Stone, Judge Earl S., House
Liberty Baptist Church
Halsted, Melvin A., House
Wayne County Courthouse

Location

Freelandville
Kosciusko County

Warsaw
Kosciusko County

Noblesville
Hamilton County

Evansville
Vanderburgh County

Lowell
Lake County

Richmond
Wayne County

Also Notified

Honorable Richard G. Lugar
Honorable Birch Bayh
Honorable David L. Cornwell
Honorable Floyd J. Fithian
Honorable Elwood H. Hillis
Honorable Philip R. Sharp

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Joseph D. Cloud
Director
Department of Natural Resources
608 State Office Building
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

NR   Byers/bjr   1/3/79
**NAME as it appears on federal register:** Liberty Baptist Church

**LOCATION street & number** 701 Oak St.

**city / town** Evansville

**vicinity of** IN

**state** Vanderburgh

**county** MW

**OWNER** PRIVATE

**EXISTING SURVEYS** HABS

**SURVEYS FUNDED?** YES

**ADMINISTRATOR:** Rev. Robert L. Saunders

**CONDITION**

- altered
- unaltered
- moved
- reconstructed
- unknown
- excavated

**OWNERSHIP** PRIVATE

**SURFACE AREA** 0.08 acres

**FEATURES**

- SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1
- SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2
- SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3
- NOT INTACT-0
- NOT INTACT-1
- NOT INTACT-2
- NOT INTACT-3
- NOT APPLICABLE-7
- NOT APPLICABLE-8
- NOT APPLICABLE-9

**ACCESS** YES - Unrestricted

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

- ARCHEOLOGY - prehistoric
  - COMMERCIAL - 1
- ARCHEOLOGY - historic
  - COMMUNICATIONS - 1
  - EXPLORATION - 1
  - LITERATURE - 1
- AGRICULTURE
  - CONSERVATION - 1
  - HEALTH - 1
- ARCHITECTURE
  - ECONOMICS - 1
  - INDUSTRY - 1
  - MUSIC - 1
- ART
  - EDUCATION - 1
  - INVENTION - 1

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLE(S):**

- ENGINEERING - 1
- LANDSCAPE ARCH. - 1
- POLITICS / GOV'T. - 1
- RELIGION - 1
- SCIENCE - 1
- SOCIAL / CULTURAL - 1
- TRANSPORTATION - 1

**ARCHITECT:**

**MAJOR ALTERATIONS:**

- major alterations:
- historic events:

**FUNCTIONS:**

- dates of initial construction:
- major alterations:

**INSTITUTIONAL:**

**NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP**

**CLAIMS:**

- 'first'
- 'oldest'
- 'only'

**READERS INITIATE:**

**DATE:**

**ADDITIONAL SPACE NEEDED:**

**NUMBER:**