

TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH (118 South Person Street)

The Tabernacle Baptist Church occupies the southeast corner of Hargett and Person Streets. The main elevation faces Moore Square, one of the two remaining downtown parks which were laid out in 1792 in the original plan of the city of Raleigh.

The Late Gothic Revival building is characterized by a balanced, yet asymmetrical composition. This is the result of the incremental growth of the original building since its erection in 1881. The church underwent six remodelings from 1881 to 1909 before it obtained the appearance it has today. The building is constructed of brick, scored and stuccoed to imitate smooth ashlar masonry.

The main (south) facade presents a geometric progression of architectural elements. Three square towers, each increasing in height from west to east, punctuate the facade. Two gable-roofed blocks are separated by the towers. The east block, the nave, is proportionally larger than its western counterpart.

The word "tabernacle" often refers to a temporary place of worship, an appropriate term for the Tabernacle Baptist Church of Raleigh since it has a history of relocation and remodeling. The church was formally organized on November 15, 1874 when 10 members of the First Baptist Church left the congregation to form the Swain Street Baptist Church, which was located between Swain and Davie Streets.

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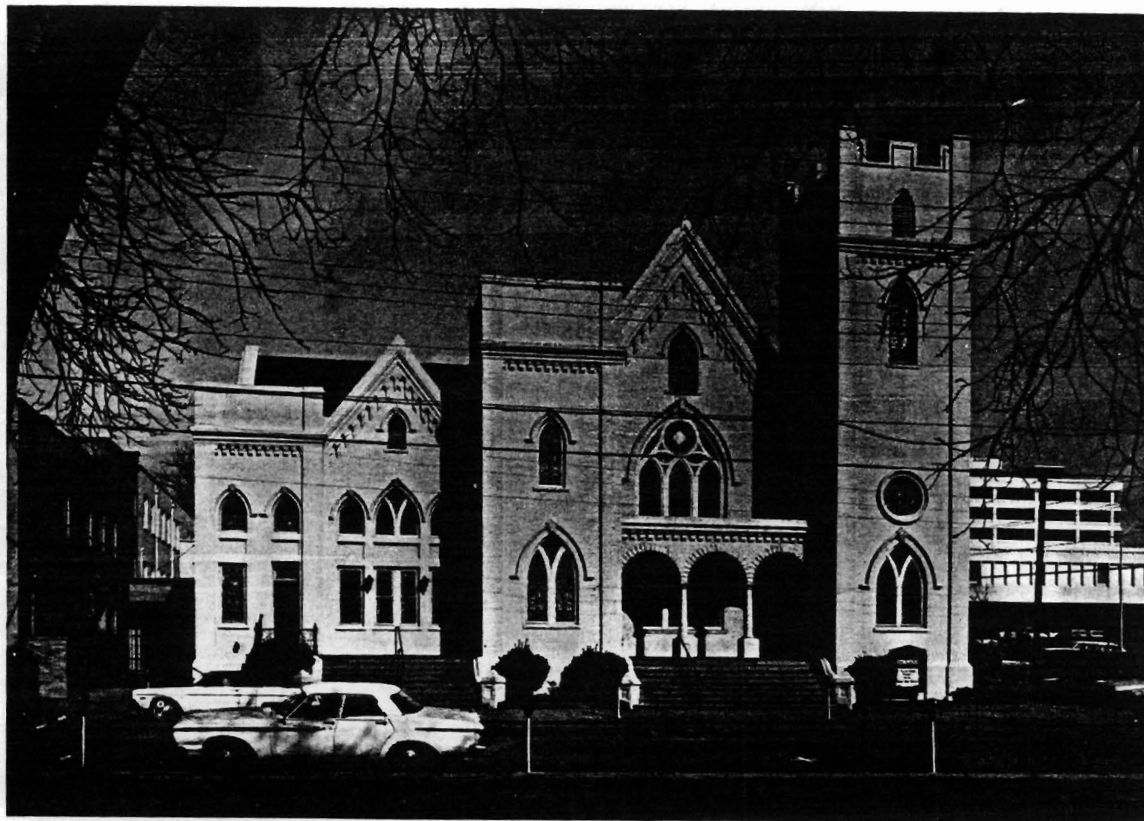
gable-front building with a projecting central tower. The first alterations to the building were directed by Pastor Thomas Dixon, Jr., renowned for his book The Clansman. It was under Reverend Dixon's pastorate that the name of the church was changed to Tabernacle Baptist. The church underwent a final remodeling in 1909.

James Matthew Kennedy, a Raleigh architect, was contracted in 1909 to renovate the church and to double the seating capacity. Kennedy's plans called for the addition of the transverse wings, the main facade loggia and the southwestern block and stair tower. In order to give the face-lift of the church a unified appearance, Kennedy stuccoed the exterior walls.

The Tabernacle Baptist Church is one of the landmarks of the Moore Square area. Across the eighteenth century wooded park stands another fine building of James Matthew Kennedy's design, the City Market. Kennedy (1880-1948), a native of Wayne County, received the fundamental training for his architectural career at the Agricultural and Mechanics College in Raleigh (now North Carolina State University), graduating in 1903. The early years of his building career were centered around the railroad industry. A Raleigh Chamber of Commerce report of 1910, "Raleigh Illustrated", states that Kennedy was the assistant building superintendent of the Atlantic Coast Line from Richmond to Savannah, and shortly thereafter the architect for the Norfolk and Southern road. This line had headquarters in Raleigh and Kennedy remained here to establish a private practice in 1907. Kennedy designed many notable buildings in Raleigh aside from the two outstanding ones on Moore Square. Among these are the Raleigh Woman's Club (destroyed 1960s) and Murphy School on Person Street. Kennedy was versatile and also designed many residences in the city.

Perhaps the most intriguing fact about the Tabernacle Baptist Church is that it was never destroyed and rebuilt; its picturesque appearance results from over twenty years of renovations and additions. The expansion of the building traces the gradual evolution of a small congregation into one of Raleigh's major centers of worship.

This statement of significance is taken from An Architectural and Historical Inventory of Raleigh, North Carolina (1978), p. 71.



## TABERNACLE BAPTIST CHURCH

The Tabernacle Baptist Church occupies the northwest corner of Hargett and Person streets. The main elevation faces Moore Square, one of the two remaining downtown parks which were laid out in 1792 in the original plan of the city of Raleigh.

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