

Eighth Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church
(Faith United Methodist Church)
1227-31 8th Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5855

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
EIGHTH AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
(Faith United Methodist Church)

HABS No. PA-5855

Location: 1227-31 8th Avenue

Date of Erection: 1902

Description: This substantial stone church on a corner lot is built in random ashlar with carved stone details. A gabled pavilion on each facade intersects a central hipped roof with square tower that rises over the rounded interior sanctuary space. The corner entrance and bell tower, taller in height although now somewhat truncated, has entrance bays at each street front. Below the two street-front gables are large stained-glass windows--the western one is arranged in three round-arch sections, the southern is a single arched window in tribute to merchant Clement Jaggard and his wife Annie Jane Wright Jaggard. With the exception of small pointed-arch windows at roof height on the tower fronts, all window and door surrounds display Romanesque-style arches. The interior is organized as an amphitheater; the three-manual pipe organ was a gift of Andrew Carnegie.

The church building extends back to the east along 13th Street in several sections; an additional towered section joins a separately conceived back section with cross-gable roof line, and to a flat-roofed, two-story addition beyond that.

At present the bell tower ends in a vinyl-covered stump with a short hipped roof. An old photograph shows the flat-topped stone structure topped by an eight-sided open pavilion with cone-shaped roof. This was removed by 1967; the vinyl was added twenty years later. Other alterations include sandblasting, repointing, and the encasing of stained-glass windows in aluminum, all completed in 1967. An adjacent parish house was razed.

History: The current stone church on this site was built in 1902 to house the 8th Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, replacing the earlier brick structure that dated from 1870. The earliest church structure on this site was the temporary pine chapel built by the Second Methodist Episcopal congregation after its organization in February 1868--the name change to 8th Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church accompanied the erection of a permanent building. Through denominational mergers, the congregation became Eighth Avenue Methodist in 1939 and Faith United Methodist in 1972. This latest change occurred through the merger of Eighth Avenue Methodist with the newly formed Methodist Faith Evangelical United Brethren congregation, whose church at that time was located at 6th Avenue and 11th Street. "The new congregation, the only one of its kind in the Altoona area, adopted the name of the former Faith Church and the building of the former Eighth Avenue Church" (Altoona Mirror).

Rev. W. M. B. Glanding discussed the early organization of the church in a 1916 article, "Eighth Avenue When the City was a Village." Mr. J. W. Wehner purchased the corner lot for the congregation. The first pastor was Rev. W. Maslin Frysinger. Glanding reported that while the first brick church was being erected, a storm caused one wall to fall through the chapel roof destroying everything but the cabinet organ.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888, 1894, 1909. Africa, 176. Altoona Mirror (August 29, 1967; October 11, 1968; November 24, 1973; October 28, 1978; March 25, 1987). Altoona Tribune (January 15, 1916). Photographs in Altoona Mirror files.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.