

Calvary Episcopal Church
102 North Second Street
Memphis
Shelby County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-182

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

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12-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

HABS No. TN-182

Location: 102 North Second Street, Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee.

Latitude: 35° 08' 51"

Longitude: 90° 03' 01"

Present Owner and Occupant: Calvary Episcopal Church.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: This church is the oldest public building in the city of Memphis and is the first Episcopal Church in Shelby County. Organized in 1832, the church building was started in 1838 and was consecrated in 1844.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1841; enlarged in 1884.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The vacant lot was sold to the Vestry of Calvary Church by Philip W. Alston in 1841, but this transaction was not recorded until he sold the church an additional 38-1/2 feet fronting on Adams Street in 1871. The single-entry chain of title is found in the Register of Deeds of Shelby County.

1871 Deed June 26, 1871 recorded June 26, 1871 in
 Book 82 page 377
 Philip W. Alston
 to
 Vestry of Calvary Church

4. Alterations and additions: The tower was added in 1848. The chancel and sanctuary were constructed in 1881.

Calvary Church was "enlarged...and the interior was changed and improved" in 1884, according to a newspaper article published in 1907.

The basement was remodeled in 1968. Air conditioning was installed at an unknown recent date. (Other changes were not recorded at the time this survey was written).

- B. Historical Context: The church was served by the Right Reverend James H. Otey, first bishop of the Diocese of Tennessee, in 1858-9. Two of its rectors later became bishops: Reverend Charles Todd Quintard, rector in 1857, and Reverend David Sessums, rector in 1884-7.

Quintard, who was ordained to the diaconate and to the priesthood at Calvary Church, was formerly a physician and instructor of anatomy at the Memphis Medical College. He authored a report on the health and sanitation conditions of Memphis in 1853; later his war memoirs (as a Confederate chaplain) were also edited and published.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The edifice is a typical example of a 19th century American church, having a tower and a rectangular plan. In the interior the church's east end includes an apse and sanctuary.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent; the building is well maintained and is in top condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures approximately 48' north to south x 140' east to west x 50' to top of roof and 90' to top of tower. It is six bays long and is one story high. The plan is rectilinear with a large rectangle for the major bulk of the church and a tower projection on the west and an apse and sanctuary on the east.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Walls: The walls are of red/brown brick laid in common bond with headers every sixth course. There is a stucco (scored to resemble cut stone) base on the north, south and west (front) facades. The "stones" measure 12" x 30". Along the flanks of the building there are brick buttresses (17" x 25" lower, 17" x 17" upper). The stepped buttresses have stone caps at the set-back which corresponds to the window spring lines.
4. Structural system, framing: The building is constructed with brick bearing walls carrying scissor trusses with king post extensions and horizontal iron tie rods. The tie rods have two vertical ties to truss members. There are diagonal braces from the walls to truss members.

5. Stoops, etc.: The main entrance has a 5-step stoop with railings. The lesser entries flanking the main entrance also have stoops and railings. On the north elevation there is a sheltered entrance to the Bethlehem Chapel, and it has a gable roof with pinnacled buttresses.
6. Chimneys: There is brick chimney on the south side of the church.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Double entry doors are situated on the west face of the tower. Each door is 3'-5" x 8'-5" x 3-1/2" and have three vertical panels over square panels containing quatrefoil patterns and vertical panels. The doors are set within a tudor arch having patterns to correspond with the pattern below. Doors at the sides of the west front are 3'-11-1/2" x 6'-1-1/2" and have four panels. These doors are set within tudor arches. The Bethlehem Chapel has double doors in a pointed arch opening. They measure 3'-5" x 6'-10".
 - b. Windows: The pointed-arch windows are 4'-0" wide and 12'-0" high with colored glass; the windows are pivoted on the vertical axis. The interior sill is 3'-9" high. Basement windows are 4'-0" x 3'-2" high with double-hung sash. The apse window on the east (rear) side is a bluntly pointed-arch with three vertical panels of colored glass. In the tower are tall lancet openings. At the second level they measure 5'-3" wide x 20'-9" high (triple lancet) and at the third level they measure 4'-4" x 9'-6" (double lancet).
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof has a raised sheet metal surface. The roof of the apse and sanctuary expansion are also gables but have two different slopes. The surface material is the same.
 - b. Cornice: There is a simple wood cornice with board soffit.
 - c. Tower: The tower, situated on the center front part of the church, stands approximately 90' high. There are buttresses at the northwest and southwest corners. They measure 21" x 42" and they step back with ascent. The second level is marked with triple lancets and the third level has double lancets. The fourth level has blind recessed discs. The parapet is crenellated.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The completely remodeled basement is not discussed in this report. The main floor contains a simple large hall measuring approximately 50' x 90' x 50' to ridge (20' high side walls). The entrance vestibule is below the tower on axis. The east end of the church includes an apse and sanctuary.
2. Stairway: The sanctuary is raised above the hall floor. There are three risers to the sanctuary.
3. Flooring: In the hall 2-1/2" oak floor boards; within the sanctuary parquet flooring of oak is found. The vestibule contains slate tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are of plaster painted white. There are two pilasters supported on scrolled brackets at the upper reaches of the west wall. They probably serve as partial support for the tower. The ceiling is of dark wood.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The west wall has double doors connecting the vestibule and the hall. They measure 3'-5" x 8'-7" x 1 3/4" and are covered with red naugahyde. The doors are topped with a pointed-arch transom having colored glass. The door and transom are encompassed by wood trim surround. Above the doors is a 6' diameter wheel window. To either side are doors measuring 3'-10" x 7'-10", covered with red naugahyde.
 - b. Windows: (Not recorded).
6. Decorative features and trim: In the sanctuary there are oak railings, choir pews and Communion rails. The pulpit is of walnut and copper. The Bible stand is of marble and has a cast-iron eagle against which the Bible is placed.

There are three arched openings across the church to separate the hall from the sanctuary. These arches are carried on octagonal columns which have multicurved archivolt. The center arch is larger and higher.

Flanking the apse are screens in front of the organ pipes. There is a 9'-3" high white screen about 7' from the rear wall. It contains coat hooks and racks on its back side.

The tower contains a bell inscribed "L. De bezear, Phila 1841. Gather the People Sanctify the Congregation, Joel 2 26". It measures 3'-0" diameter.

There are walnut pews.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning: Air conditioning system has been installed, with its ducts exposed on one side of the church roof.
- b. Lighting: Modern lighting is used.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building is situated in downtown Memphis. It is located on the southeast corner of Second and Adams Streets with its principal facade facing to the west. To the south is a court functioning as the service court. To its south is the Parish Hall. To the east is an alley.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Secondary and published sources:

Davies-Rodgers, Ellen. The Romance of the Episcopal Church in West Tennessee, 1832-1964. Brunswick, Tennessee: Plantation Press, 1964, pp. 103, 110-31, et passim.

Newspaper article:

"Seventy-Fifth Anniversary," Memphis Commercial Appeal (November 10, 1907).

2. Primary and unpublished sources:

Property records. Register of Deeds of Shelby County. (No address given).

Prepared by: Richard H. Hulan
HABS Historian
HABS West Tennessee Project
Summer 1972

Robert C. Giebner
HABS Project Supervisor
HABS West Tennessee Project
Summer 1972

Edited by: Susan McCown
HABS Historian
Spring 1985

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This 1972 project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Tennessee Historical Commission and the West Tennessee Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona), project supervisor, and Richard H. Hulan, project historian (Nashville).

Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer, took the photographs of the building in 1974.

The written data was edited in the Spring of 1985 by Susan McCown, HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, for transmittal to the Library of Congress.