

# Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	3138 N Vancouver Ave Portland, Multnomah County	historic name:	Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church
assoc addresses:		current/other names:	Central Methodist Episcopal Church
location descr:		block/lot/tax lot:	
		twنشp/rng/sect/qtr sect:	
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	building	height (stories):	2.0
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant	total elig resources:	1
prim constr date:	1909	NR Status:	Individually Listed
	second date:	1956	date indiv listed:
			09/06/2016
primary orig use:	RELIGION: General		orig use comments:
second orig use:			
primary style:	Gothic Revival		prim style comments:
secondary style:	Late 20th Century: Other		sec style comments:
primary siding:	Vertical Board		siding comments:
secondary siding:	Brick:Other/Undefined		
plan type:			
	architect:		Richard H. Martin Jr.(original design 1909), Hubert Athling Williams (1956 remodel), Marks, Raymond O., (office 1973)
	builder:		
comments/notes:			
1-15-2016 - Property assessed as eligible in HRR, response sent to Raymond Burell, church historian. DJP			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Survey/Grouping Included In:	Type of Grouping	Date Listed	Date Compiled
African Americans in Oregon, 2014	Thematic Grouping		
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed:	09/06/2016	106 Project(s):	None
ILS survey date:		Special Assess	
RLS survey date:	01/15/2016	Project(s):	None
		Federal Tax	
		Project(s):	None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
<p>The 1909 Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church is a two-story, contemporary Gothic Revival church – one story on a raised basement – with a mezzanine overlooking the sanctuary from the west. The church consists of three primary parts. The main volume, which represents the original church and main sanctuary, is located in the northwest corner of the block. On the east side of the main volume is the 1958 addition that was constructed to accommodate the new pulpit and choir. The primary ridge line on the original portion of the building is oriented east-west, with a north and south-facing gable on the sides of the original building and two towers, one in the northwest corner and one in the southwest corner. In the southwest corner of the church is the former parsonage, a 1907, two-story, Foursquare residence on a raised, ground level basement which once contained a two-car garage. In the southeast corner of the building is a 1973, one-story addition that houses an office and pastor's study. The building is wood-frame with corrugated metal and aluminum siding in a clapboard pattern and brick veneer; a concrete foundation; and composition shingle roof. The church retains good integrity to the date of its primary remodel in 1958, which was undertaken to accommodate the church's growing congregation, not long after the building was purchased. Noteworthy features include – but are not limited to – the overall form of the main church building; the overall form of the parsonage; the Povey stained glass windows; the original interior furnishings, including the pews on the mezzanine and light fixtures in the sanctuary; and circulation elements that are remaining from the original church and the 1958 renovation. In the following description, each part of the church will be described separately for clarity, even though the sections are interrelated, with multiple access points.</p>			
HISTORY			
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>			
<p>The Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church of Portland, Oregon, is a prominent ethnic landmark located at the southeast corner of Vancouver Avenue and Fargo Street. For more than 72 years, the church has endured as an important pairing of faith and community service in the Albina neighborhood of Portland. The church is one of the oldest mid-twentieth century African American congregations established in Portland, launched in 1944 in the housing projects in Vancouver, Washington. It was the fifth African American Baptist Church organized in Portland, and for many years maintained the status of having the largest membership of any African-American church founded in Portland and the Pacific Northwest. Throughout its history, the church has played an important spiritual and civic role in the urban center. It is where a grassroots movement of like-minded people from the post-war era came together in support of inclusion and community. As a local foundation, the church contributed to galvanizing social and political action by bringing people together from all walks of life, by creating social bonds when social conditions made efforts difficult and even dangerous. The church itself was all important in motivating people of color during the local Civil Rights movement by actively engaging a populous individually and collectively, by confronting the prevailing political powers within the city, the state and throughout the region. Its structure, culture and its ecumenical platform of education were all fundamental to helping a community sustain the protest actions with few resources and little permanent power. It was also a spiritual refuge for the countless men and women who devoted their lives to the cause of change. The stories of this church are of real men and women of different faiths, backgrounds and cultures reaching out to reconcile with others. The Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the areas Social History and Ethnic Heritage/Black, for its role in changing the lives of its congregation through its promotion of improved social conditions in the post-war and Civil Rights eras. It is also eligible under Criterion B, in the area of Ethnic Heritage/Black, for its association with the Dr. Reverend O.B. Williams and his wife Willia Ida Williams. Reverend Williams was an early founder of the church and grew its membership and influence dramatically. Over nearly fifty years of leadership, Reverend Williams, along with his wife, made a significant difference in the lives of the congregation and ultimately in the social consciousness of the city of Portland across racial lines. The property is significant at the state level, for the church's leadership role, which played out at the city, state, and national levels.</p>			
RESEARCH INFORMATION			
Title Records	Census Records	✓ Property Tax Records	✓ Local Histories
Sanborn Maps	✓ Biographical Sources	✓ SHPO Files	✓ Interviews
Obituaries	✓ Newspapers	State Archives	✓ Historic Photographs

City Directories	Building Permits	State Library
<b>Local Library:</b>	<b>University Library:</b>	
<b>Historical Society:</b>	Oregon Historical Society	<b>Other Repository:</b> Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church archives
<b>Bibliography:</b>		
<p>Anderson, Martha, <i>Black Pioneers of the Northwest: 1800 – 1980</i>, 1980. Ancestry, <a href="http://www.ancestry.com/">http://www.ancestry.com/</a>, 1983 [Genealogy Database]. Article XVIII, Oregon State Constitution, 1857. On file, Oregon Historical Society Research Library. Berardi, Gayle K. and Thomas W. Segady. "The Development of African-American Newspapers in the American West: A Sociohistorical Perspective." <i>Journal of Negro History</i>, 75, 3/4. (Summer - Autumn, 1990), 96-111. Berwanger, Eugene H., <i>The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy</i>. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1967. _____. <i>The West and Reconstruction</i>. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981. Betts, Robert B., <i>In Search of York: The Slave Who Went to the Pacific with Lewis and Clark</i>. Boulder, CO: Colorado Associated University Press; Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, 2000. 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