

MORE THAN JUST A BUILDING THE SACRED SPACE THAT IS FIRST CHURCH

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY WAYNE HESTER IN *CENTURY OF WORSHIP, 1872-1972*

The dust from the bustling, new, industrial city had barely time to settle on the exquisite High Gothic First Methodist Church at the corner of Fourth Avenue North and Nineteenth Street. It seems that after only six years in this, the second building of First Methodist Church, the congregation had grown far past the capacity of the pristine structure. A building committee was appointed to seek a new location for erecting a grand new edifice. Its members were T.T. Hillman, an early industrialist who had come from Philadelphia to seek his fortune in the mineral-rich area, Mr. William Hood, and Mr. C.P. Williamson. All sites under consideration by the three-member committee are not known. What is known is that the property at the southeast corner of 6th Avenue North and 20th Street was being considered. After being approached about the property, the members of the Elyton Land Company, primarily Episcopalian, became concerned that Methodists might move onto the main avenue of the city. They denied its use as a site for the new First Church, choosing to reserve that parcel for their own congregation (now Cathedral Church of the Advent). Eventually the Elyton Land Company gifted the land First Church is now located on (as it did many other white protestant congregations). However, it did not do that for our neighbors down the street at Saint Paul United Methodist Church who had to purchase their land (which they did 2 years before First Church was formed). In the fall of 1891 the stone structure at Sixth Avenue North and 19th Street was completed at a cost of \$160,000.

The Architects

It's hard to say why the members chose a firm of architects from Akron, Ohio—the firm of Weary and Kramer—for the new structure. It appears that this firm had extensive experience in “broad-bodied, auditorium churches with their rank upon rank of curving pews preferred by the evangelical Victorians of that age.”

The Style

The church is the state's finest example of Romanesque Revival, a style resurrected by New York architect Henry Hobson Richardson in his 1877 design for Trinity Church, Boston. Unique to this and subsequent churches of this style were the use of rounded arches for major openings, bands of closely spaced arched windows (particularly at upper stories), a keen sense of materials and detailing, dark somber coloring, and - in most cases depending upon building function—a massive, square tower usually above the entrance.

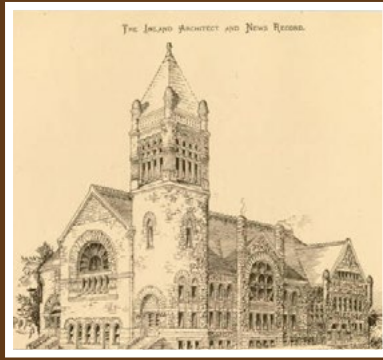
Be part of our story collecting project! Please reach out to betsyhunter@gmail.com if you know a member with a great story or if you can help collect and write our stories! And on May 1st there will be a grand story collecting event after church in the dining room. Please come!

STORIES FROM
150
YEARS

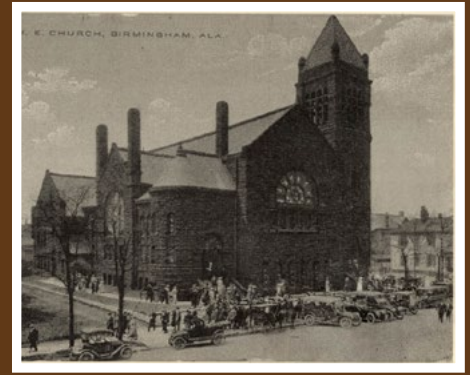




The first Sanctuary was built by the newly formed congregation in 1872, at the corner of 6th Avenue and 21st St N on land donated by the Elyton Land Company.



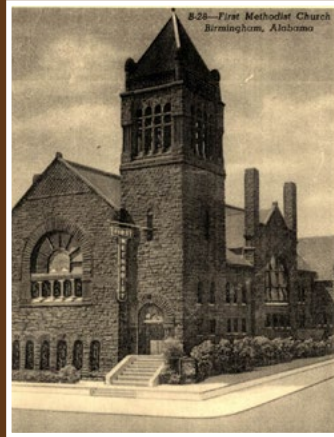
Architectural rendering of the congregation's soon to be built third building at the corner of Sixth Ave and 19th Street North, c. 1891



Cars, alongside horse & buggy, are seen here in what is probably a photo c. 1910. Note the homes facing the side of the church on 19th Street.



Early undated photo with what appear to be unpaved roads.



The hanging sign indicates this picture is likely from the 1950s.



Interior, date unknown



Interior, date unknown



The city grows around the church, date unknown

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