

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: **2437-49 Frankford Avenue**

Postal code: **19125**

Councilmanic District: **1**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Frankford Avenue Baptist Church**

Other Name: **Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: **Church**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary. **SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED SHEET.

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

[See Attached Sheet]

Period of Significance (from year to year): from

1889-1984

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

Completed: 1889

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

Isaac Pursell, Architect

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Unknown

Original owner:

Frankford Avenue Baptist Church

(originally known as the Mount Zion Baptist Church)

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- X (a) **Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,**
(b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
or
- X (c) **Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,**
- X (d) **Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,**
- X (e) **Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,**
(f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
(g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
(h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
(i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- X (j) **Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.**

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

SEE ATTACHED SHEET.

9. NOMINATOR

OSCAR BEISERT, ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATIONIST; ANDREW FEARON, KORH DIRECTOR; AND AMY MILLER, EKNA Historic Preservation Committee

Name with Title **See above** Email **info@korheritage.com**

Organization **Kensington and Olde Richmond Heritage, LLC** Date **June 7, 2016.**

Street Address **P.O. Box 3703** Telephone **NA**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, PA 19125** Nominators are not the property owners.

P HC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 7 June 2016; 20 July 2016 (revised)

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 21 July 2016

Date of Notice Issuance: 21 July 2016

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Frankford Avenue Holdings LLC

Address: 223-225 Market Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19106

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

Proposed for Historic Designation in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Place



The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church, Kensington. Courtesy Amy Miller.

**The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church
2437-49 Frankford Avenue
Kensington, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

*The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church, 2437-49 Frankford Avenue, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Spring 2016 – Page 1*

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The parcel and building portion subject to this nomination for the Frankford Avenue Baptist Church at 2437-49 Frankford Avenue is limited to the following boundaries:

PREMISES "A"

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground situate in the Thirty-first Ward of the City of Philadelphia, County of Philadelphia and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, on the Easterly side of Frankford Road and commencing at the distance of 54 feet Northward from the Northerly line of Hagert Street (formerly known as Adams Street).

CONTAINING in front or breadth on said Frankford Road 17 feet and extending of that width Eastward between lines parallel at right angles with said Frankford Road in length or depth 100 feet.

PREMISES "B"

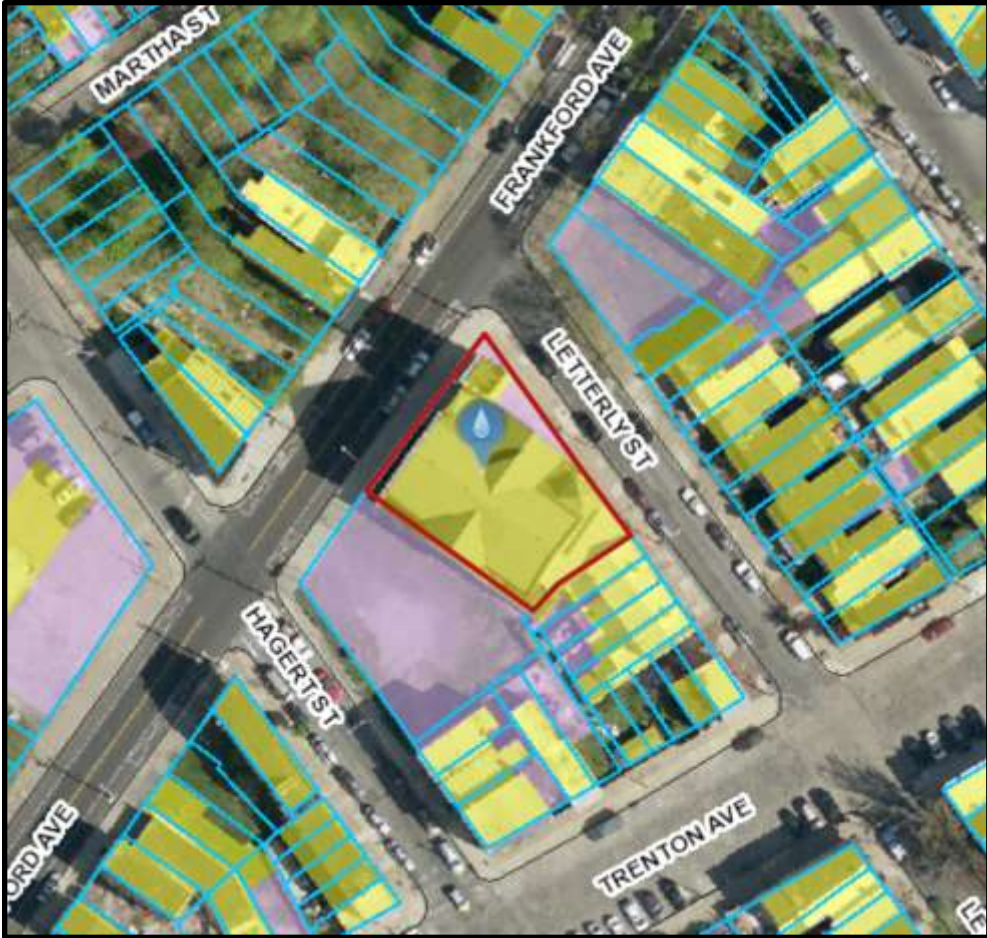
ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground, situate on the East side of Frankford Avenue in the Thirty-first Ward of the City of Philadelphia, County of Philadelphia, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

BEGINNING at the distance of 59 feet 11 inches Southward from the South side of Aramingo Street (Letterly) and extending thence Southwardly along said Frankford Road 17 feet; THENCE Eastwardly along the Northwardly line of the next described lot at right angles with said Frankford Avenue 100 feet to a point; thence Northward along ground now or formerly of the Sepviva Estate 41 feet 2-1/8 inches to Aramingo Street and at right angles therewith; thence Westward along said Aramingo Street 17 feet; thence Southwardly along the rear of the third herein described lot and at right angles with Aramingo Street, 28 feet 11-3/4 inches to a point; thence Westwardly along the South line of the said third herein described lot and at right angles with said Frankford Road 87 feet 9-1/4 inches to place of beginning.

PREMISES "C"

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground situate in the Thirty-first Ward of the City of Philadelphia, County of Philadelphia, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as aforesaid;

BEGINNING at the Southeast corner of said Frankford Road and Aramingo Street extending thence Southwardly along said Frankford Road 59 feet 11 inches to the North line of the above described lot of ground; thence extending along the same at right angles with said Frankford Road 87 feet 9-1/4 inches to a corner; thence Northward further along the first described lot and at right angles with Aramingo Street and thence 28 feet 11-1/4 inches more or less to said Aramingo Street and thence Westwardly along the same 102 feet 3 inches to place of beginning.



The boundary for the subject designation is outlined in red. Courtesy Philadelphia Water.



Looking southeast. Courtesy Andrew Fearon.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Reflecting the fashion and taste for eclectic architectural forms and styles in the second half of the nineteenth century, the former Frankford Avenue Baptist Church features two distinct parts—its primary façade and its cruciform sanctuary. The house of worship is essentially two stories, featuring three stages at its highest elevations. The facades that face onto Frankford Avenue and E. Letterly Street (late Aramingo Avenue) represent a fantastical assemblage of architectural forms and features articulated in stone that bejewel a basic cruciform of load-bearing, red brick masonry construction. The redbrick portion of the building may well represent the earlier period of construction—the original building envelope, while its outer appearance is the work of the Victorian architect.

Comprised entirely of Wissahickon Schist and other dressing stone, the street-facing elevations include the northeast elevation at Aramingo Street and the northwest elevation at Frankford Avenue. The nexus of these elevations is a fairly tall, square stone tower that dominates the corner—its point at the corner being due north. The tower is the leader, as well as the first of five total components of the street-facing stone elevations. An additional sixth component appends the north elevation in the form of a door-less row

house of red brick. The first component, the tower, is the nexus of the building, serving as its entrance porch and bell tower. It is set with the second component, also a tower, in the northwest absciss of the cruciform. The third and fourth components are by far the largest, fortifying the street-facing gable ends of the cruciform. A smaller, diminutive tower comprises the second component and, mimicking a turret, complicates the building's readability as a typical church design.

First Component. The tower features four sides, three of which are exterior facing elevations. Two entrances are within the tower—one facing Frankford Avenue to the northwest and the other facing E. Letterly Street to the northeast. Double wooden doors are set within deep recesses formed by Romanesque arches that are joined at the façade by stone coursing. In the second stage are pairs of loop windows with stone sills. While doors are absent from the west facing elevation, the coursing and loop windows are continued, the pair on each façade being joined by slender bands of rusticated stone that form the lintels. Above the coursing is a blind section of the stone façade at the base of third stage. The third and final stage features lancet windows that may have originally been open to expose the bell, but have been filed. These pairs of apertures at each elevation are distinguished by arched lintels of the continued Romanesque theme. A course of rusticated stone separates the arched apertures from the crenellation of the tower. The intersection of the street with Frankford Avenue creates an angle in the Parthian architecture combining classical with autochthonous features.

Second Component. Recessed between the square tower and the northwest-facing gable end, the second component is a diminutive turret-like tower that further embellishes, but also complicates the Frankford Avenue façade. The two has three sides emulating a six or eight sided structure that is otherwise concealed. The first stage of the tower is blind stone wall, which continues to the second to a three bay elevation. Within the center bay and first stage is a large stone plaque that was designed to be within the wall, which reads:

Frankford Avenue
Baptist Church
Organized Remodeled
1859 1889

Each elevation of the second component features lancet windows that are set with arched apertures also adhering to the Romanesque style. The tower features a conical roof with a decorative iron weathervane that mimics the Elizabethan taste. The cornice of the tower is a strange hybrid of dentil moldings and crenellation.

Third and Fourth Components. The gable ends of the cruciform are elaborate architectural statements in the context of Frankford Avenue. The northeast and northwest elevations, components three and four, are large two-story, three stage facades. The principal and largest story from the exterior is the second. Each elevation is dominated at

the primary, second floor by the impressive stained glass windows that are set within three arched apertures in the Romanesque style and characterized by stone lintels and sills. The central stained glass window in each elevation is the largest, characterized by tracery, which delivers a strong historic, but distinctly Victorian-hybrid foliation. The cusps and foils are formed by wooden muntins. Flanking the main window in each elevation are smaller arched windows that are connected by horizontal bands of stone coursing. The Frankford Avenue, northwest elevation is larger at the head of the nave, its third stage being large enough to host a pair of arched loop windows. At the first floor each elevation features rectangular windows that align with the larger, more impressive windows above. The gable ends of the cruciform roof feature corbie-steps that serve as parapets, masking the pitched roof. At the nexus of each gable stands a finial of an indiscernible style.

Fifth Component. Continuing easterly along the E. Letterly Street, component five is a two-tiered façade of stone. This northeast-facing elevation is one that has a flat roof above its first two bays. Recessed, the second two bays form the second section, which articulated as a diminutive tower with a hipped roof. The tower features an admixture of crenellation and dentils as the cornice. The steeply pitched hipped roof has a weather vane in the Elizabethan taste.

Sixth Component. Three bays wide, the sixth component is a Colonial Revival addition to the building and appears as a door-less row house façade. One-over-one replacement windows are set within a fenestration of six windows defined by brick lintels with stone embellishments and sills. A simple wooden or pressed tin metal cornice is extant.

The second part of the building, beyond the façade is a cruciform that is of loading-bearing, red brick masonry construction. This is visible from the west at Trenton Avenue and the south within a vacant lot that once housed buildings that obscured this portion of the building. The southwest gable end of the cruciform interrupts the view of red brick and is flanked by large arched windows. The roofline at this elevation is delineated from the façade by tiers of brick corbelling. From an alley off Trenton Avenue the southeast gable end of the cruciform features a large expanse of red brick with only two visible windows—a square window or vent in the third stage and a circular window that is at center within the second stage.

Physical Integrity

The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church retains integrity of association, design, location, materials, setting, and workmanship sufficient to convey its historical significance.



Looking south. Courtesy Amy Miller.

*The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church, 2437-49 Frankford Avenue, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.
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Looking east. Courtesy Andrew Fearon.



Looking west. Courtesy Amy Miller.



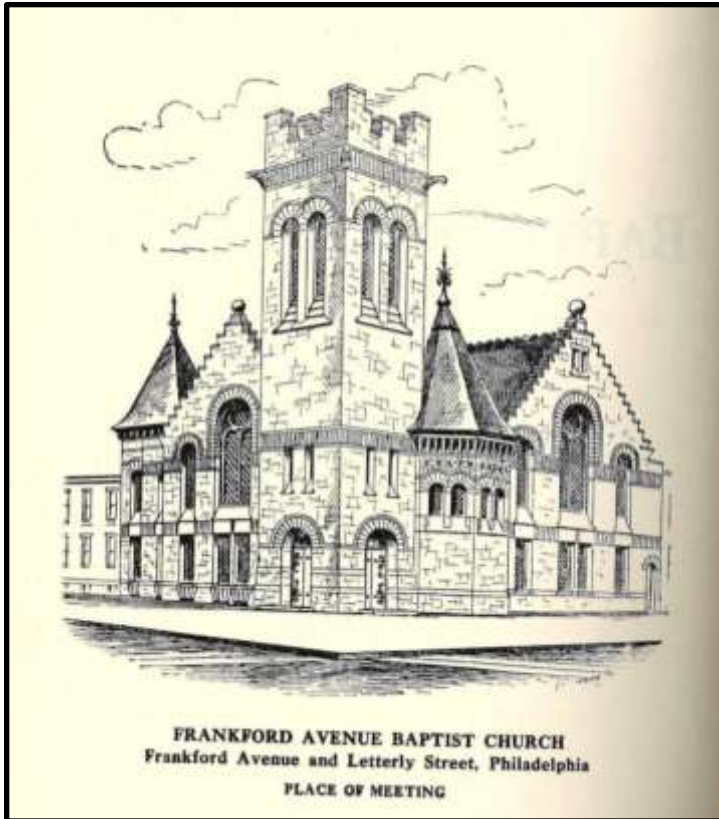
Looking southwest. Courtesy Amy Miller.



Looking northeast. Courtesy Andrew Fearson.



Looking north. Courtesy Andrew Fearon.



Frankford Avenue Baptist Church. Ca. 1920s. Courtesy the Baptist Archives.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church at 2437-49 Frankford Avenue is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places under the following criteria:

- (a) *Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;*
- (c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;*
- (d) *Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;*
- (e) *Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; and*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.*

The Period of Significance for aforementioned Criteria as related to this building is ca. 1889 to 1984.

CRITERION A and CRITERION J

The former Frankford Avenue Baptist Church was founded in the mid-nineteenth century and evolved over time to the architecturally significant structure standing at the prominent corner today. As the population of Kensington grew so did the Frankford Avenue Baptist Church—this being exhibited in the end product of their house of worship. This stone building represents the development of the Baptist denomination in Kensington and Philadelphia, as well as the types of religious communities that lived in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the congregation started out in a small building and, as their membership and financial resources grew, the building was improved—first a larger building, later stained glass. This physical evolution represents the economic and historical heritage of the community.

Fishtown and the Greater Kensington neighborhood was once a dense industrial section of the city with much of its space dedicated to residential, commercial, and institutional purposes. Religion was an important component of community life in Kensington and the built environment representing that aspect of the community is ever-diminishing. The 1895 atlas shows at least six churches in the nearby area: McCauley's Reform Presbyterian Church, Messiah Baptist Church, Cumberland Methodist Episcopal Church, St Michael's Lutheran Church, the Good Shepherd P. E. Church, and Frankford Baptist Church. Today, only half of those churches remain standing.

The former Frankford Avenue Baptist Church represents both the development of Kensington as a one of the few remaining churches in this specific locality, as well as the cultural, economic and historical heritage of the Baptist congregation that worshiped in the building.



Source: 1895 Philadelphia Atlas, G. W. Bromley. Courtesy Athenaeum of Philadelphia and philageohistory.org

*The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church, 2437-49 Frankford Avenue, Kensington, Philadelphia, Pa.
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Historic Context: The Baptist Church in Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Baptist Association is the oldest association of Baptist churches in America. It began at the organization of five Baptist churches in 1707. The congregations consisted of mostly Welsh- and English-Baptists that had settled in the larger region, which included Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The first Baptist congregation to take root in Philadelphia was the Lower Dublin Baptist Church, (now Pennepack Baptist Church). Founded in 1688, the congregation became the mother church of four Baptist congregations between 1688 and 1698. Their offspring included First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, which was founded in 1698.¹

The Baptist Church would increase in congregations and membership throughout the eighteenth century. In 1762, the Philadelphia Baptist Association was comprised of twenty-nine congregations with a total of 1,318 members. At the time of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Philadelphia Baptist Association boasted forty-two churches with an impressive increase to 3,013 members.

While the Revolutionary War led to a decline in active membership, the Philadelphia Baptist Association experienced a resurgence in the following decades. By 1812, there were 63 churches and a total of 4,365 members that were part of the Philadelphia Baptist Association. These numbers represent tremendous growth within a recently consolidated Philadelphia Baptist Association, which no longer included congregations in states as far away as Maryland and Virginia. It included only congregations in Pennsylvania.²

As the immigrant population of Philadelphia increased in the nineteenth century so did the Philadelphia Baptist Association and its overall membership. In the mid-nineteenth century many congregations constructed small building for worship, but after the Civil War, Baptists congregations were building new houses of worship and improving smaller buildings to unrecognizable, but impressive works of Victorian architecture. Of the buildings constructed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there are eighty-one extant purpose-built houses of worship in Philadelphia, including those that have been adapted for nonreligious use. Half of these buildings were constructed between 1875 and 1900. Twenty-eight of these buildings are twentieth century. And only thirteen of these buildings were constructed prior to 1875.³ While the core of the subject building appears to be pre-1875, the extant building appears as it did at the completion of the Pursell design and the later addition.

The Frankford Avenue Baptist Church (1857-1984)

The Sunday School of the Frankford Avenue Baptist Church began in 1857 by Mr. Tolan and I. M. Corson on Frankford Avenue about a half-mile north of its present location. They were assisted by Joseph W. Bucknell and the Tenth Baptist Church, under which

¹ Priest, Gerald. "The Philadelphia Baptist Association and the Question of Authority." *The Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (12). (Detroit: 2007), pp. 51-80.

² Newman, A.H. *American Church History Series: A History of the Baptist Church in the United States*. (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1894).

³ Preservation Alliance's Historic Religious Properties Inventory (2011) Philadelphia Architects and Buildings: https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/27073

the school became a mission. The school moved to Coral Street, and later a small chapel was built on Cumberland St, which opened in 1858. This became the Cumberland Street Baptist Church in 1859.⁴ On March 1, 1859, Reverend Young took charge of the Frankford Avenue Baptist Church at the request of the “Baptist Committee on City Missions.” The church was organized with twenty-six constituent members, which grew to 125 by 1861.⁵ Rev. Young remained with the congregation until 1861, when he left to take charge of the First Baptist Church of Haddonfield, New Jersey.⁶

Following Rev. Young, R Reverend Cailhopper was installed as pastor in 1862, serving congregation until 1864. In time the prospering congregation needed a larger building, and plans were made for the purchase of lots at Frankford Avenue and Aramingo Street. The church, the subject site, was then erected church on Frankford Ave where it is presently located. After the departure of Rev. Young, Reverend S. H. Mede was installed as pastor in 1865, another short tenure. Rev. Mede was followed by Reverend George L. C. Hanna in 1868.

Rev. Hanna came with the completion of the new church building in 1868, which was constructed at a total cost of \$15,700.⁷ The congregation was then named the Mount Zion Baptist Church, which became official in April 1869 when the corporate name of the church was changed.⁸ The Reverend Joseph L. James became pastor in 1873, and \$3,500 was spent to furnish the church. In 1874, the Hebron Church merged with Mount Zion Baptist Church, and the congregation was renamed the Frankford Avenue Baptist Church. This occurred at the opening of Reverend C. Wilson Smith pastorate. Reverend J. Alpha Mullen, who continued until 1879, who served very briefly.

Reverend Charles H. Thomas was installed as pastor in 1879, and it was during his pastorate that the membership was greatly enlarged. He leveraged this body to absolve the congregation’s outstanding debts. As a testament to Rev. Thomas’ labors, 58 souls were baptized into the church, all of which took place within the first three months of 1880.⁹ While the statistics for 1881 are not known, the congregation received 50 additional “converts by baptism” in 1882.¹⁰ One of the longer serving pastors, Rev. Thomas removed from the congregation in 1888.

Following Rev. Thomas in 1888, Reverend T. P. Coulston was installed. In the last years of the decade, funds were raised to erect an annex to the church, which was to accommodate the “primary department”. The Sunday School counted more than 750 officers, teachers, and scholars.¹¹

The current appearance of the church was achieved in 1889 through major alterations to the original building. The project was executed during the pastorate of Reverend C. T.

⁴ *Kensington: City Within a City*. By. S. Baxindine. Philadelphia, PA: Keighton Printing House, 1891.

⁵ “The Chestnut Hill Baptist Church” by Robert Melville Hunsicker”

⁶ “A History of the First Baptist Church of Haddonfield” by Sarah Crawford Hillman

⁷ *Kensington: City Within a City*. S. Baxindine. Philadelphia, PA: Keighton Printing House, 1891

⁸ The Evening Telegraph, Philadelphia PA, 3 October 1868, page 4

⁹ Philadelphia Inquirer, 19 March 1880, page 3

¹⁰ The Times, Philadelphia, 15 July 1882, page 2).

¹¹ Philadelphia Inquirer, 15 June 1888, page 2

Morgan, who notably “remained in the pulpit during the summer”.¹² The major building project at the church done between 1889 and 1890 repaired and enlarged the existing church building, and added a large pipe organ. The congregation commissioned the eminent church architect Isaac Pursell. Mr. Luekings & Mr. Rhoads served as the general building contractors. The improvements included a fashionable façade of Avendale stone with Indiana limestone trimmings. The cost of the completed project was more than \$30,000. The “main audience room” was designed to accommodate semi-circular pews, seating 800 people.¹³

On September 22 1889, the cornerstone of the enlarged church was laid.¹⁴ By November 1889, the roof was complete, being noted as “ready for the plasterers.”¹⁵ Dedication services were held on October 19, 1890.¹⁶

The project included the installation of beautiful stained glass windows, all of which were gifts. Two large stained glass windows merit special attention. The first, in memory of Rev. Q. H. Kennard, D.D., represents the sower and reaper.¹⁷ The second memorial window was donated in honor of Harry M. Haywood, a parishioner who was tragically lost at sea in November 1888, while sailing upon the Reading Company’s steamer, *Allentown*. This memorial window cost about \$300, including symbols of the Order of the Odd Fellows. At the time it was noted as “the only such window known in the world”.¹⁸

By 1893, Reverend Charles Warwick had taken over the ministry.¹⁹ He was followed by Reverend Charles Winberger (aka Winbigler), who was installed in 1897.²⁰ Reverend Winberger’s pastorate attracted 358 new souls to the congregation in just a few years.²¹

In September of 1901, lightning struck the church, causing about \$300 in damage to the steeple and loosening the stones about the base.²² This accident was followed by \$4000 in alterations and improvements in 1903. The improvements included a new choir loft; the enlargement of the auditorium; and a more robust organ.²³

¹² Philadelphia Inquirer, 9 August 1889, page 8

¹³ *Kensington: City Within a City*. S. Baxindine. Philadelphia, PA: Keighton Printing House, 1891

¹⁴ (Public Ledger Almanac, 1890)

¹⁵ Philadelphia Inquirer, 11/15/1889, page 5, and (Philadelphia Inquirer 27 December 1889, page 8)

¹⁶ Public Ledger Almanac, 1891

¹⁷ *Kensington: City Within a City*. S. Baxindine. Philadelphia, PA: Keighton Printing House, 1891

¹⁸ Asbury Park Press, Asbury Park NJ, 14 September 1906, page 8) (The Times, Philadelphia PA, 27 October 1890)

(*Kensington: City Within a City*. S. Baxindine. Philadelphia, PA: Keighton Printing House, 1891)

¹⁹ The Evening Journal, Wilmington, DE, 8 May 1893, page 5.

²⁰ “Christian Work: Illustrated Family Newspaper,” Volume 62, March 18, 1897.

²¹ The Washington Times, Washington DC, 6 October 1902.

²² The Times, Philadelphia PA, 12 September 1901.

²³ Philadelphia Inquirer, 5 March 1903, page 8.



The Reverend H. Watson Barras. Ca. 1900-1916. Courtesy Baptist Archives.

The Reverend H. Watson Barras was installed in 1903, remaining through 1916.²⁴ Under Rev. Barras, the church was enlarged with an addition in 1914. The project was designed by the architectural firm of Stearns & Castor (fl. 1895 - 1917). The firm designed a two-story (2) brick addition with stone trimmings, which appended the church along Aramingo Street.²⁵

A later pastor, Reverend C. C. Meeden was installed in September 1961.²⁶ The congregation closed in 1984.

²⁴ Philadelphia Inquirer, 12 March 1903, page 4.

²⁵ Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, v. 29, n. 18, p. 283, 5/6/1914, Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, v. 31, n. 23, p. 376, 6/7/1916.

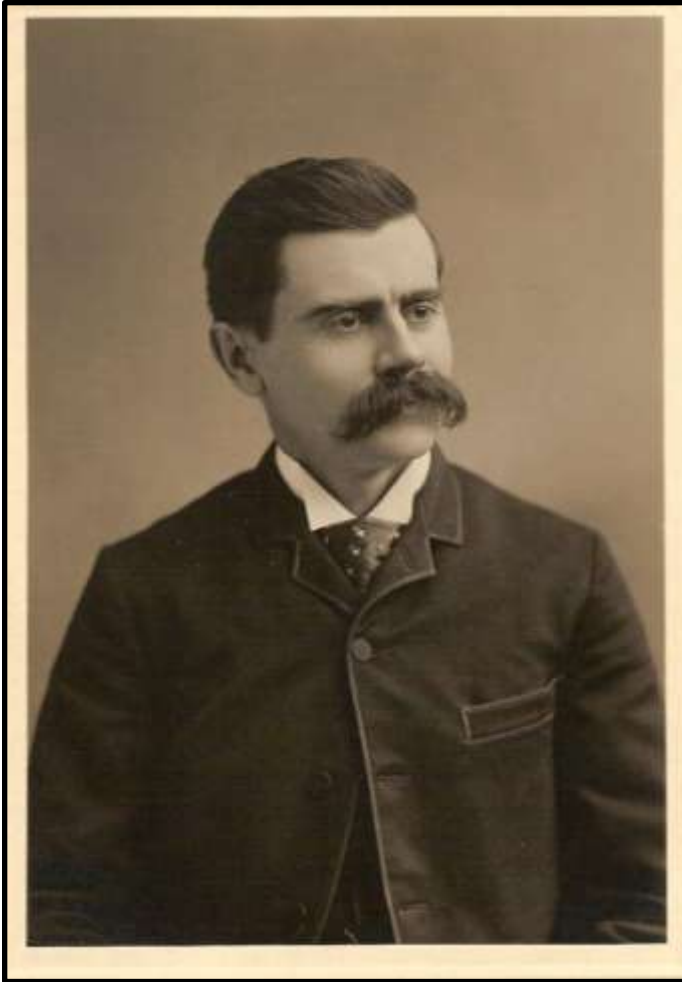
²⁶ Alton Evening Telegraph, Alton IL, 19 September 1961, page 4.

CRITERION C and CRITERION D

The former Frankford Avenue Baptist Church was designed in an eclectic Romanesque Revival style, influenced also by the Gothic and Tudor Revival styles. into a fantastical house of worship articulated in stone. The design employs a combination of forms, materials, ornamentation, and textures to create a unique visual effect, borrowing architectural forms and motifs from earlier periods of architectural history.

Eclecticism is the hallmark of the Victorian period and this is especially true with the employment of the Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival styles in late nineteenth century Philadelphia. The architect, Isaac Pursell is known to have designed a number of stone buildings that produced eclectic architectural works.

As a singular work of the Romanesque Revival style with Gothic and Tudor Revival influences, the character defining distinctive of the said architectural style includes round-topped arches over windows and doors, masonry walls—in this case stone with a rusticated finish, squared stonework, towers of several forms, and the use of asymmetry in the overall design. Elements of the Queen Anne Revival include the gable-front roof type, a mixture of masonry wall finishes, and also asymmetry. Elements of the Gothic Revival include the cross gable roof type, the design of the primary tower, and arches within the façade. Largely representing the Romanesque Revival style, the building embodies distinguishing characteristics of the aforementioned architectural styles, as well as an overall feeling of Victorian eclecticism. Furthermore, the combination of these architectural styles represents a larger trend towards Victorian eclecticism in late nineteenth century Philadelphia, reflecting that period environment characterized by a distinctive architectural style.



Isaac Pursell. Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

CRITERION E

Designed by Isaac Pursell, the building is a fine example of his work. The architect is known to have designed a large body of churches, employing eclectic stylistic motifs and almost always articulated in stone. Many of the design elements of the aforementioned architectural styles were present in his works. These features include asymmetry, arches, rusticated stone, various tower forms, etc. Elements of the Gothic, Romanesque and Tudor Revival styles were often present in his works.

Pursell is an architect that influenced church design on a local level and within the wider region. A number of religious and civic structures designed by Pursell are included on the National Register of Historic Places: Tygarts Valley Church (1883) in Huttonsville, West Virginia; Makemie Memorial Presbyterian Church (1887) in Snow Hill, Maryland; St. John's Episcopal Church (1890) in Charleston, West Virginia; Hill Crest Community Center (1911) in Clinton, Indiana; Christ Memorial Church (1887) at 4233-4257 Chestnut Street in the West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District; and Memorial Presbyterian Church (1904), Wenonah, New Jersey.

Mr. Pursell is a thoroughly qualified and able architect who has evinced great skill and ability in the practice of his profession, designing and superintending the construction of many prominent buildings not only in Philadelphia but all across the United States. He has made a specialty of the building of schools and churches . . .

Many of the buildings erected by this responsible architect are much admired for their beauty, while the elaboration of detail and care bestowed upon every department of the work reflects the utmost credit on the skill and judgment of this popular gentleman.²⁷

Issac Pursell's earliest known commission was his design for the Moravian Church of the Holy Trinity, Oxford Street, in North Philadelphia, completed in 1879. His designs for Baptist congregations included the Mantua Baptist Church, 40th Street and Fairmount Avenue (now vacant) and the Lehigh Avenue Baptist Church (now Morris Chapel Baptist Church), 12th Street and West Lehigh Avenue, completed between 1885 and 1887.²⁸

²⁷ *Illustrated Philadelphia: Its Wealth and Industries* (1889, p. 129).

²⁸ *Isaac Pursell (1853-1910)*. Born in June of 1853 in Trenton, New Jersey, Isaac Pursell apprenticed under the eminent Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan. In 1878, Isaac Pursell opened an independent office. Between 1885 and 1887, he partnered with Joseph W. B. Fry, working alone after the desolution of the firm.

8. SOURCES CITED/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Contributors.

Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist
J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian
Andrew Fearon, Architectural Conservator—Director of KORH
Ken Milano, Historian
Amy Miller, EKNA Historic Preservation Committee

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