

ADDRESS: 2101-07 N BROAD ST

Name of Resource: Berean Presbyterian Church/Bethlehem Presbyterian Church

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Berean Presbyterian Church

Nominator: Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Staff Contact: Laura DiPasquale, laura.dipasquale@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 2101-07 N. Broad Street as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the current Berean Presbyterian Church, constructed in phases between 1875 and 1887 for the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church is significant under Criteria for Designation D, E, and J. Under Criterion J, the nomination argues that the establishment and rapid expansion of Bethlehem Presbyterian Church in the 1870s and 1880s and its transition to the Berean Presbyterian Church in the mid-twentieth century exemplifies the development of the North Philadelphia community from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. Designed by architect T.P. Chandler, one of Philadelphia's most influential architects of the late nineteenth century, the nomination argues that the property satisfies Criterion E, and that the octagonal church embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Gothic Revival style, satisfying Criterion D.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 2101-07 N. Broad Street satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, and J.



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 (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

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

Street address: 2101-07 N Broad Street

Postal code: 19122

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Bethlehem Presbyterian Church; Broad & Diamond Streets Presbyterian Church

Current/Common Name: Berean Presbyterian Church

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 and related ministries

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1870 to 1955

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1875 (sabbath school); 1887 (church); alts. 1909, 1915, 1945-67

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Theophilus Parsons Chandler, Jr.

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: A. Raymond Raff

Original owner: Bethlehem Presbyterian Church

Other significant persons: _____

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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

- ☐ (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,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☒ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☒ (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
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization Philadelphia City Planning Commission Date April 23, 2021

Name with Title David Fecteau, City Planner, Ashley Losco, Intern Email David.Fecteau@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor Telephone 215-683-4670

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19102

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 4/23/2021; revisions received 8/31/2021

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 10/22/2021

Date of Notice Issuance: 10/28/2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Berean Presbyterian Church

Address: 2101-07 N. Broad St

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19122

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

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

5. Boundary Description

2101-07 N. Broad Street is situated at the northeast corner of N. Broad Street and Diamond Street. The rectangular property extends 100 feet along N. Broad Street and of that width between parallel lines 160 feet along Diamond Street to N. Watts Street.



Figure 1: Boundary of 2101-07 N. Broad Street, delineated in blue. The rectangular property is situated at the northeast corner of N. Broad Street and Diamond Street, extending in width 100 feet along N. Broad Street, and in depth 160 feet along Diamond Street to N. Watts Street.

6. Description



Figure 2: Berean Presbyterian Church at 2101-07 N. Broad Street includes the Sanctuary, designed by T.P. Chandler and constructed in 1887, and connected Sabbath school building, constructed between 1875-76, and modified several times between approximately 1887 and the mid-twentieth century. See Appendix A for historic photographs.

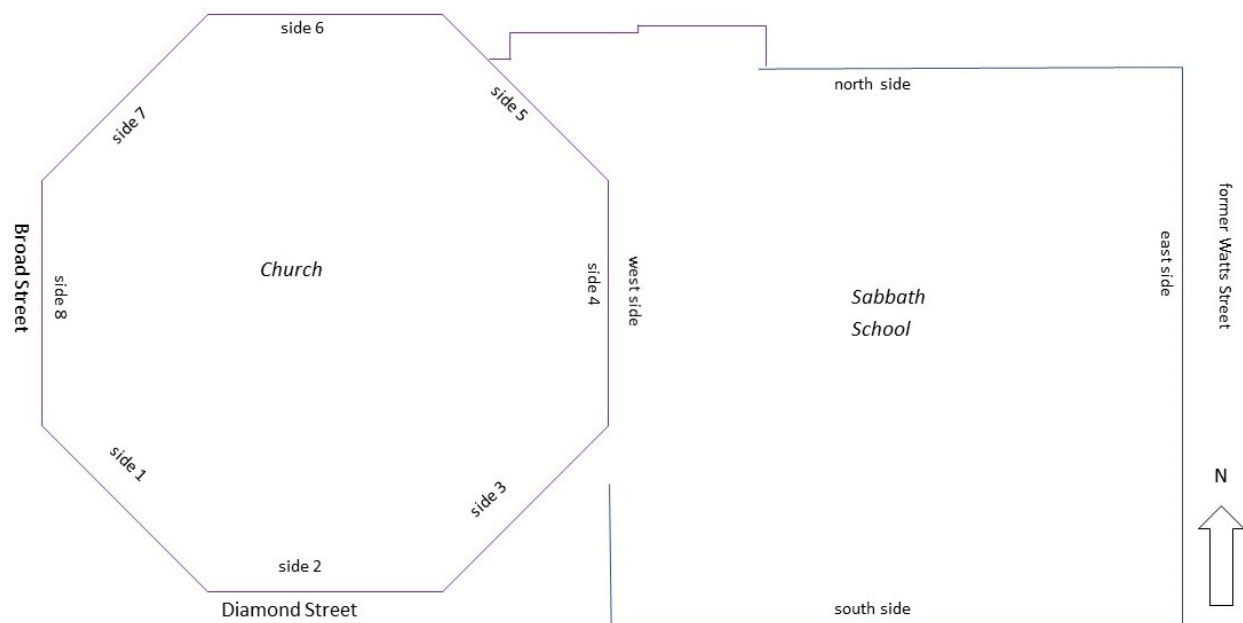


Figure 3: Sketch diagram showing Berean Church and Sabbath School.

Church

This octagonal Gothic Revival church was built in 1887 of random ashlar Chester granite with smooth limestone trim.^{1,2} The church was designed as an extension of an earlier building to the east that included both a chapel and the Sabbath School. The church has a steep conical roof with lower cross gables, terminating in a roof cap, with a vent, and crowned by a cross. The original ornate spire that projected from the roof was removed after 1923. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles. Aluminum gutters are located where the roof valleys meet the church's walls. The downspouts are aluminum. There are three entrances: one on Broad Street, one at the corner of Broad and Diamond, and one on Diamond Street.



Figure 4: Side 1 is the southwest elevation and front entrance at the corner of Broad and Diamond Streets.

¹ The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, v. 2, n. 29, p. 353, 08/01/1887

² In early Christianity, the octagon symbolized the seven days of creation plus the day of Jesus' resurrection.

Side 1 is the southwest elevation of the church and the main entrance. Within the gable and clerestory is a large stone framed circular window opening with a pentagram made of stone mullions with Plexiglas covering the light panels. Below the window are barbed quatrefoils set within the main wall, one on each side. The northeast wall below the column has a parapet wall with two stone arch framed window openings. The windows were removed and replaced with concrete. A sign advertising the church partially covers the bottom half of the windows. The wall terminates with another parapet wall with crenels and very thin stone arch framed window openings and single panes of glass. The parapet wraps around the corner to transition to Side 2.

A vestibule projects from the main wall. It has a gable roof clad with asphalt shingles and a floral finial at the peak. The walls are also made of smooth cut ashlar stone. Within the gable is a stone lancet arch with an engraved inscription reading, "We have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him." Within the arch, is a transom window above the entrance doors, with seven lights divided by stone mullions. The center light has a Celtic cross design. The door opening has a stone frame with figures of the Holy Family and three wise men carved in bas-relief on either side. The entrance has red finished, wood paneled doors, each with four carved panels and four carved arches within each panel. The entrance to the vestibule is flanked on each side by stone columns with pointed turrets.

Leading to the entrance are four stone steps with black wrought iron railings on each side. Each railing has a straight balustrade and bottom rail. Ornamental balusters are designed as arches with curlicues leading from the balustrade down toward the bottom rail.



Figure 5: Side 1 vestibule entrance steps and rail.

The northwestern wall of the vestibule has two stone arch framed window openings. The window is a casement window with a single pane of glass.

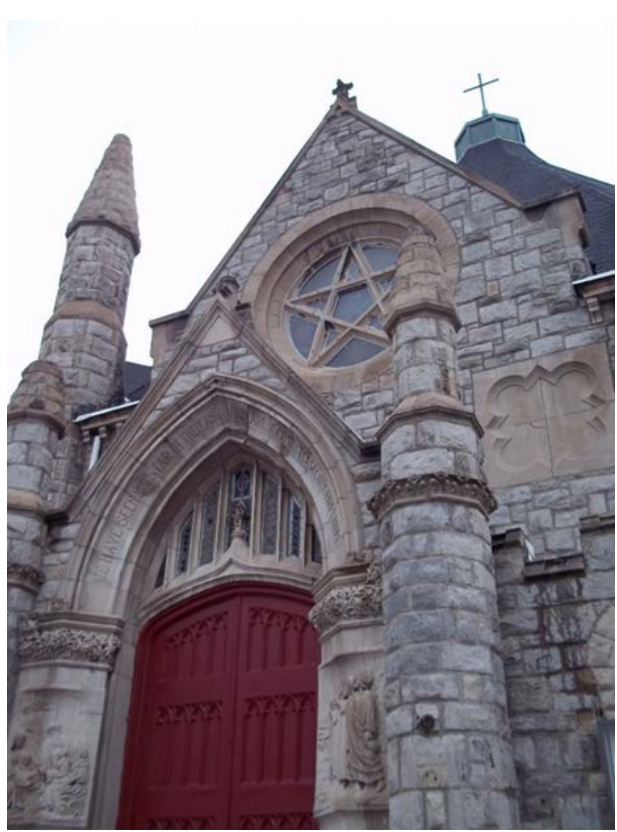


Figure 6: Side 1 vestibule. Inscriptions and bas relief figures are visible from the entrance.



Figure 7: Side 1 vestibule. The inscription and transom with seven lights are still intact.

Side 2. This is the south elevation of the church, which faces Diamond Street. In the main wall of Sides 2 through 8, exception for 4 and 5, are stone lancet arch window openings with a stained-glass triptych with framed steel members. Most of the original glass appears to be intact and is covered with protective Plexiglas.

This side also has a parapet wall which projects from the south elevation and is a continuation from the parapet wall on the south elevation. The wall has a flat roof and crenels. There are six stone arch framed window openings, with the window openings paired off in twos. Each window opening has a casement window with one single pane of glass. The parapet wall wraps around the corner with three very thin stone arch framed window openings and single panes of glass. This wall continues into Side 3. There are also three window grates visible at the ground level.



Figure 8: Side 2: The south façade of church and Sabbath School on Diamond Street.



Figure 9: Side 2 is the south façade of the church. Three sets of lancet windows with original glass covered in plexiglass (top). Images are shown on the wall from west to east. Three basement windows are covered with black metal grates (bottom). The middle window is obscured with a black panel which has a star cut into it.

Side 3: Side 3 is the southeast elevation of the church, which also faces Diamond Street. Along with the stained-glass triptych, a vestibule projects from the main wall of Side 3. It has a gable roof clad with asphalt shingles and a floral finial at the peak and a cherub in the center of the gable. The walls are also made of smooth cut ashlar stone.

Within the gable is a stone, lancet arch and a tympanum with a stone carved pentagram and floral rinceaux. The arch frames the red finished, wood paneled doors. Each door has three carved panels, each with three smaller vertical panels. The stone arch and the doors are flanked by two columns with flat turrets and one cherub head at the height of the door. Three concrete steps lead to a landing with a decorative wrought iron railing. The landing leads into the vestibule. The vestibule is the side entrance to the church and the Sabbath School, which is attached to Side 4 of the church and runs perpendicular to Side 3.



Figure 10: Multiple roof lines are visible in the top picture, while the bottom picture shows the full extent of the stairs and railing.

To the west of the vestibule is the continuation of the parapet wall from Side 2. There are two lancet arch framed window openings. The opening top lancet window has been replaced by a modern double-hung window. The bottom window above the sign board, appears to be original.

Side 4. The east elevation of the church is attached to, and obscured by, the Sabbath School.

Side 5. The northeast elevation of the church is attached to, and obscured by, the Sabbath School.

Side 6.

From east to west along the north elevation of the church and school the brick façade of the school transitions to the stone façade of the church. A large portion of the church and school are obscured by a party wall from a building that used to stand where the McDonald's parking lot is. Asphalt shingles cover each visible roof section.

The easternmost portion of the Sabbath school has a pitched roof. Three small double-hung aluminum windows are visible. All have metal security grates on them. Above these, a large lancet window is flanked by two narrow windows. All three of these are covered by asphalt shingles. The roof terminates in a small chimney.

Moving east, the next portion of the Sabbath School, two small double-hung aluminum windows are visible, without security grates. They are both set within lancet arches. This section has two brick chimney stacks, back to back, each with a brick crown. Aluminum flashing and gutters are visible on this addition as well. Moving east to the church, two columns flank a gabled end. A stained-glass triptych within lancet arches is visible. The windows are covered with protective plexiglass. A floral finial sits on the roof peak.



Figure 11: Side 6 is the north elevation of church and Sabbath School adjacent to McDonald's parking lot.

Side 7. This is the northwest elevation of the church.

A vestibule projects out from the main wall of Side 7. It has a gable roof clad with asphalt shingles and a floral finial at the peak. The walls are also made of smooth cut ashlar stone. Within the gable is a carved, stone pentagram. Below the pentagram, is a stone, lancet arch with a decorative pattern set in the clerestory. The peak of the arch appears to be deteriorated since large cracks are visible. Within the stone, arch door opening are red finished metal doors without any ornamentation.

Leading up to the doors are five stone steps with a decorative black wrought iron railing. The northern railing exists but appears to be damaged, while the southern railing has been removed to accommodate a wheelchair ramp. The remaining railing has a straight balustrade and bottom rail. The balustrade has a series of curlicues closest to the vestibule door. The pattern of the balusters is no longer discernible, but it used to mimic the rails at the entrance to the Sabbath School. A metal wheelchair ramp has been built over the steps which lead to the doors.

A parapet wall is attached to the east of the vestibule, partially obscured by the wheelchair ramp. The parapet wall has a flat roof and crenels. Within the wall are three stone lancet arch framed window openings with casement windows and a single pane of glass. At ground level below the windows are three metal grates.



Figure 12: Side 7 is the northwest elevation of church, with vestibule, partially obscured by a party wall.



Figure 13: Side 7 is the northwest elevation of church, with a wheelchair ramp partially obscuring the basement windows.



Figure 14: The vestibule at the northwest elevation of the church.

Side 8. This is the west elevation of the church which faces Broad Street.

Three large lancet windows dominate the façade. Each has stained glass and is covered with protective plexiglass. Three window grates are visible at ground level. Two aluminum downspouts drop down from either side of the windows. Two large stone columns are on either side of the windows.



Figure 15: Side 8 is the west elevation of church with windows visible on Broad Street.

Sabbath School

The Sabbath School building was constructed between 1875 and 1876, and altered in 1887 with the construction of the new church, and again several times in the twentieth century, including in 1909, 1915, and between 1945-1967.

South side of the Sabbath School

The transition between the church and the school begins about halfway down the block on Diamond Street, after the vestibule entrance to the church. The school is built of brick and stone. This elevation of the school is divided into three sections.

The first section has two sets of lancet windows on the first floor. These are divided into double hung aluminum on the lower half with what looks like the original leaded glass on the top half. Metal security screens cover both windows. The second-floor windows each have three lights supported by stone tracery. Below these are double-hung aluminum replacements. Below the westernmost window is a basement window is a black metal grate with curlicues in the center.

The second section has four concrete steps that lead to a landing and the entry door. The steps have three decorative metal railings which are identical. Each railing has a straight balustrade and bottom rail. Straight balusters are sandwiched between curlicues connected to the baluster and the bottom rail.

The entrance has what appears to be metal fire doors, painted red, with a transom above, all within a lancet arch. The words "Sabbath School" are carved in wood above the transom window. Above this are three quatrefoils.

Three windows flank the door. The lower windows are divided into double hung aluminum on the lower half with what looks like the original leaded glass on the top half. Metal security screens cover both windows. The upper window is double-hung aluminum. This section has basement-level windows. The eastern window is covered by a decorative grate, while the western window does not have one.

The third section has a basement-level window covered by a decorative metal grate. Above the grate is a first floor and a second-floor window. The first-floor window is divided into double hung aluminum on the lower half with what looks like the original leaded glass on the top half. A metal security screen covers this window. The rectangular second-floor window is double-hung aluminum. The stone on one side of the window, from the sill to about halfway up to the lintel, appears to be damaged.

The roof is covered in asphalt shingles.



Figure 16: The south side of the Church and Sabbath School along Diamond Street.



Figure 17: South side of the Sabbath School on Diamond Street. Three basement windows are covered with black metal grates which have a curlicue design. A fourth window has been filled with glass block. Images are shown on the facade from west to east: window one (top left), window two (top right) and window three (bottom left), and window four (bottom right).



Figure 18: South side of the Sabbath School on Diamond Street. Three original metal rails are visible.



Figure 19: South side of the Sabbath School on Diamond Street. The red metal fire doors have a plate glass transom window above. The words SABBATH SCHOOL are also visible as well as three quatrefoils.

East side of the Sabbath School

The east elevation is twelve bays wide and is divided into four sections. The first bay is the base of a former tower that has been reduced in height and is clad in the same random ashlar as the south elevation of the Sabbath School. The remaining 11 bays are clad in random rubble masonry. Two original spires have been removed during one of the previous renovations.

There are six rectangular basement windows which have been filled with glass blocks or covered with plexiglass. One window retains a black metal grate. A former doorway at ground level, within a lancet arch, has been filled with concrete. Another window and door at the far (northern) end of this façade has been filled with concrete. A metal door with a roll-up gate is present along this façade as well. The lower sash of most of the first floor windows have been replaced with a rectangular double hung aluminum window. The original upper sash remain.

The second-floor windows have been replaced with rectangular double hung aluminum windows. A projecting bay under the central gable has been removed but the three lancet arch windows remain. The lower portion of the three windows now have double-hung aluminum windows. One lancet arch window flanks each side of the former bay. Both appear to have the original windowpanes with three lights supported by stone tracery. Two original wood lancet windows remain.

Four rectangular windows on the second story have been covered in what looks like concrete panels.

Windows at the third story have either been removed or covered. On the third floor, a large lancet window has been filled with concrete, while the bottom portion has been replaced with a three-pane aluminum window. Two smaller double-hung rectangular windows flank the lancet arch. They appear to be the original windows.



Figure 20: East side of the Sabbath School on Watts Street from Diamond Street. Source: Cyclomedia. 2020

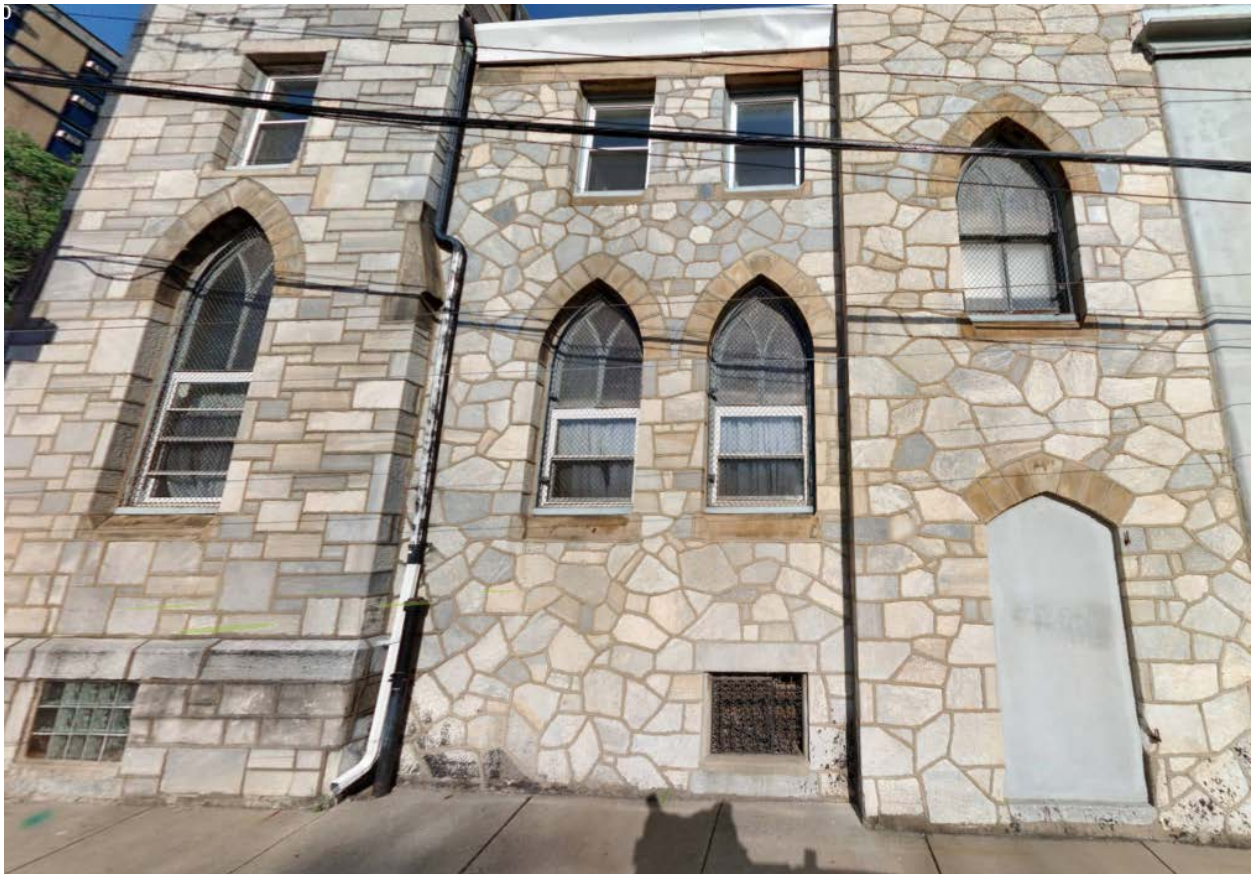


Figure 21: Details of the east side of the Sabbath School along Watts Street. Source: Cyclomedia, 2020.



Figure 22: East side of the Sabbath School on Watts Street. Source: Cyclomedia.

North side of the Sabbath School

This elevation is divided into three sections. A party wall runs along the whole first floor. The back is red brick in a running bond pattern. This elevation is dominated by a prominent front gable outlined in a stepped corbelled brick pattern.

The two-story section at the back of the school has one rectangular double hung window on the second floor with a black metal security grate. The second section has two rectangular double hung windows on the second floor with black metal. These sit under two third floor windows, one rectangular, and the other a large lancet window. Both third floor windows are covered with asphalt shingles. The third section has two lancet window openings on the third floor. The original windows have been replaced with rectangular double-hung aluminum windows. The top portions of each arch appear to have been filled in.



Figure 23: This is the north elevation of the church. It abuts a McDonald's parking lot.

7. Significance

Constructed in phases between 1875 and 1887 for the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, the existing Berean Presbyterian Church at 2101-07 N. Broad Street is significant under Criteria for Designation D, E, and J.

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;

J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community

Under Criterion J, the establishment and rapid expansion of Bethlehem Presbyterian Church in the 1870s and 1880s and its transition to the Berean Presbyterian Church in the mid-twentieth century exemplifies the development of the North Philadelphia community from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. Designed by architect T.P. Chandler, one of Philadelphia's most influential architects of the late nineteenth century, satisfying Criterion E, the octagonal church embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Gothic Revival style, satisfying Criterion D.

Criterion J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community

Bethlehem Presbyterian's congregation built their church during a period of exponential growth in Philadelphia's population. The City's population increased by over 480,000 between 1860 and 1890, adding over 100,000 people each decade. Presbyterian church members citywide numbered approximately 30,000 by 1880.³ Still relatively undeveloped into the 1870s, North Philadelphia became a release valve for the overcrowded conditions in South Philadelphia where European immigrants arrived, many of them entering through Washington Avenue Immigration Station between 1870 and 1910. The Great Migration in the early 1900s added to the demand for housing and social and religious services. As demand grew, so too did the neighborhoods and social institutions to serve them.

Groundwork for what would become Bethlehem Presbyterian Church began in 1867, when the Central Presbytery of Philadelphia tried to establish a mission at 12th Street and Montgomery Avenue, in what was still a relatively rural area north of the city proper. In 1873, the Central Presbytery renewed its efforts, and a small congregation of 34 people was organized. The congregation soon built a small wood frame chapel at the northeast corner of Broad and Diamond Streets. "The little church, a sturdy pioneer in the then almost barren northwest district, opened its doors, saying 'Come,' and in less than three years the congregation took possession of a second building, a pretty stone edifice, to which a grassy lawn, stretching to the west, and rows of maple trees gave a rural aspect," an 1893 newspaper retrospective notes.⁴ Perhaps anticipating continued exponential growth, the new chapel and Sabbath School opened in 1876 with a combined seating capacity of 1,700, the church's membership having already grown to over 400 and the Sabbath School to over 600 by the close of the decade.⁵

³ *A Brief History of the Presbytery of Philadelphia: 1717-2017*. Presbytery of Philadelphia. <https://presbyphl.org/about-us/history/>

⁴ *The Times*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 10 April 1893, p. 2.

⁵ *The Times*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 28 April 1879, p. 4. And Rev. William P. White, D.D. and William H. Scott. The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City. Philadelphia. 1895, p. 149.



Figure 24: Detail of 1862 Smedley atlas showing little development near Broad Street north of Montgomery Avenue (the east-west street partially outlined in blue and orange). The present-day location of the church is outlined in red. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

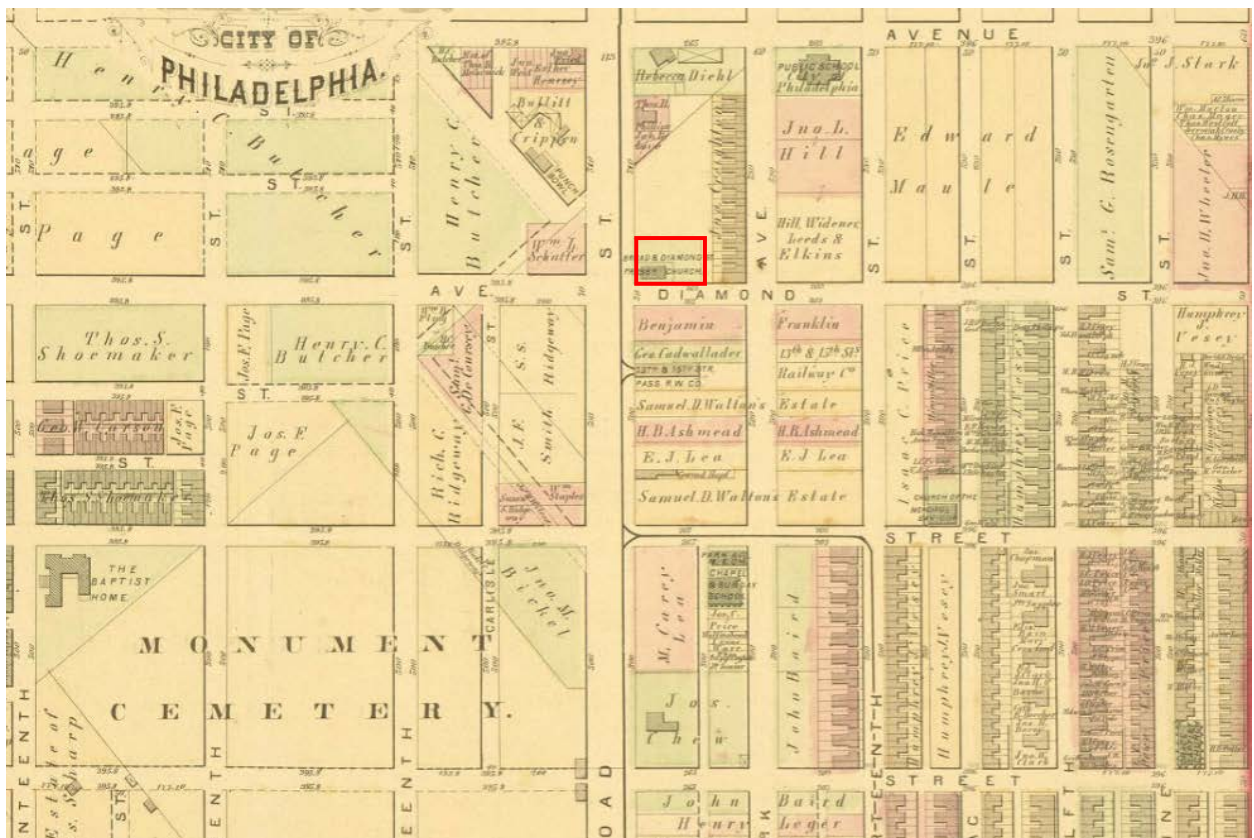


Figure 25: Detail of the 1875 Hopkins atlas of the 28th Ward showing the original church at Broad and Diamond, with increasing, but still relatively limited surrounding development. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/GMH1875.PhilaWards21_28.026.PlateV

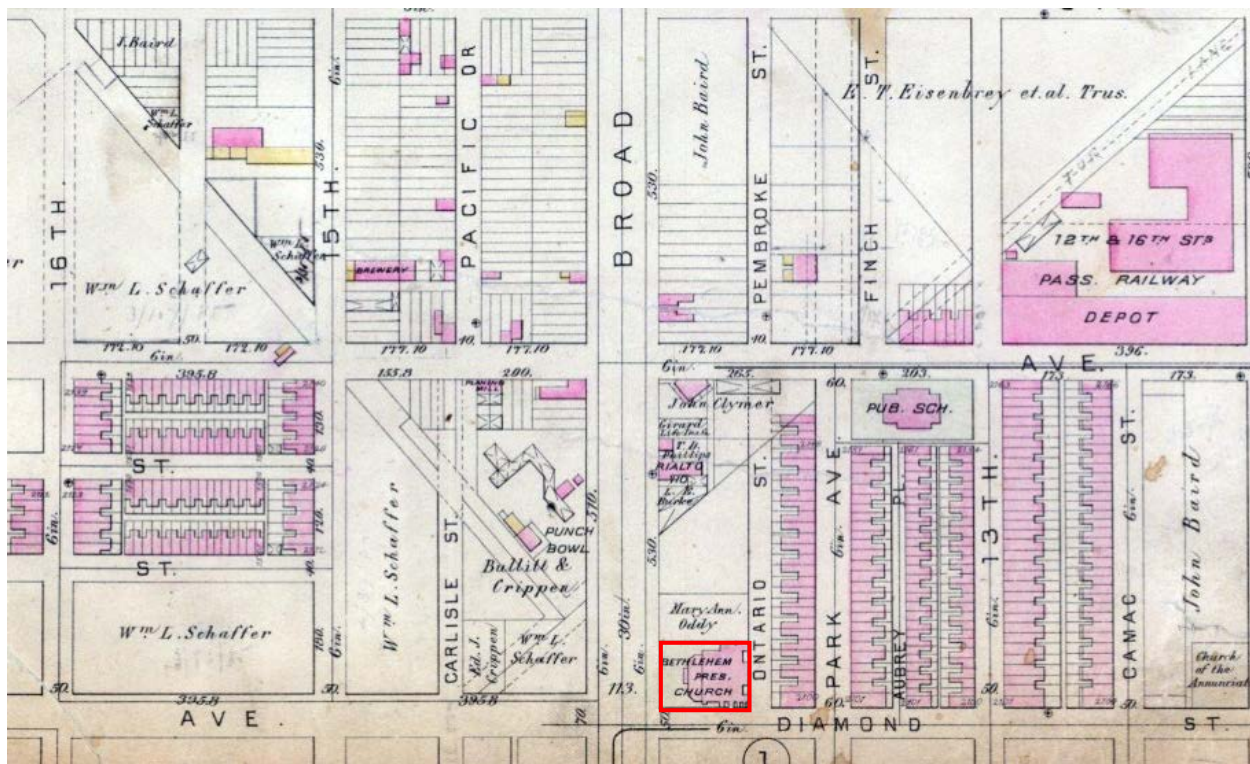


Figure 26: Detail of 1884 Hopkins atlas of the 28th Ward, showing increased development near Broad and Diamond, as well as a larger footprint for Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, expanded in 1876. Source: Historic Map Works.

<http://www.historicmapworks.com/Map/US/841472/Plate+005/Philadelphia+1884+Wards+21+and+28/Pennsylvania/>

The exponential growth of the church mirrored that of the city. By 1887, the congregation had already outgrown its enlarged facilities, and looked to expand again. Competing for visibility and membership along what by then had become the city's most elite thoroughfare, the Central Presbytery and Bethlehem Presbyterian selected architect Theophilus Parsons Chandler, Jr., one of the preeminent ecclesiastical architects in the city, to design their new church. Competition for monumental designs during this period was fierce, with remarkable new religious buildings popping up on nearly every other corner, along with elaborate social clubs, theatres, and businesses to serve the burgeoning population of North Philadelphia. When Chandler received this commission, his challenge would have been to match the grandeur of roughly a dozen worship sites on or near N. Broad Street, built or under construction, between Spring Garden Street and Lehigh Avenue. These included: the Moorish Rodeph Shalom at Broad and Mount Vernon, designed by Frank Furness under Fraser, Furness & Hewitt in 1869-70; the Gothic Oxford Presbyterian Church, built in 1879 and designed by architects Savery and Scheetz; the Union Methodist Episcopal Church, now Jones Tabernacle African Methodist Episcopal Church, at Diamond and Lambert Streets, built between 1888 and 1889 and designed by Hazlehurst and Huckel; the Romanesque Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church at Broad Street and Susquehanna Avenue, built between 1889 and 1896 and designed by Edwin Forrest Durang; the Romanesque Baptist Temple at Broad and Berks Streets, opened in 1891 and designed by Thomas P. Lonsdale; the Gothic Revival George W. South Memorial Church of the Advocate at 18th and Diamond Streets, built between 1887 and 1897 and designed by Charles Burns; and the Italian Renaissance Keneseth Israel Synagogue at Broad Street and Columbia Avenue, dedicated in 1892 and designed by Hickman and Frotcher (See Figure 28 and Figure 29). Of those, Berean is one of only a handful remaining.

Aided by advances in transportation infrastructure, within 20 years, almost every block in this section of North Philadelphia was built out. By the time the current church was built in 1887, the congregants numbered 878, and school membership numbered 1,285.⁶ A *Philadelphia Inquirer* piece from October 1887 hailed the design as an “important addition to the architectural ornaments of that section of the city,” noting that the new church would be “100 feet long on Broad Street and 85 on Diamond Street, or, including the chapel already built, 160 feet long on Diamond Street, making it one of the largest churches in the city.”⁷

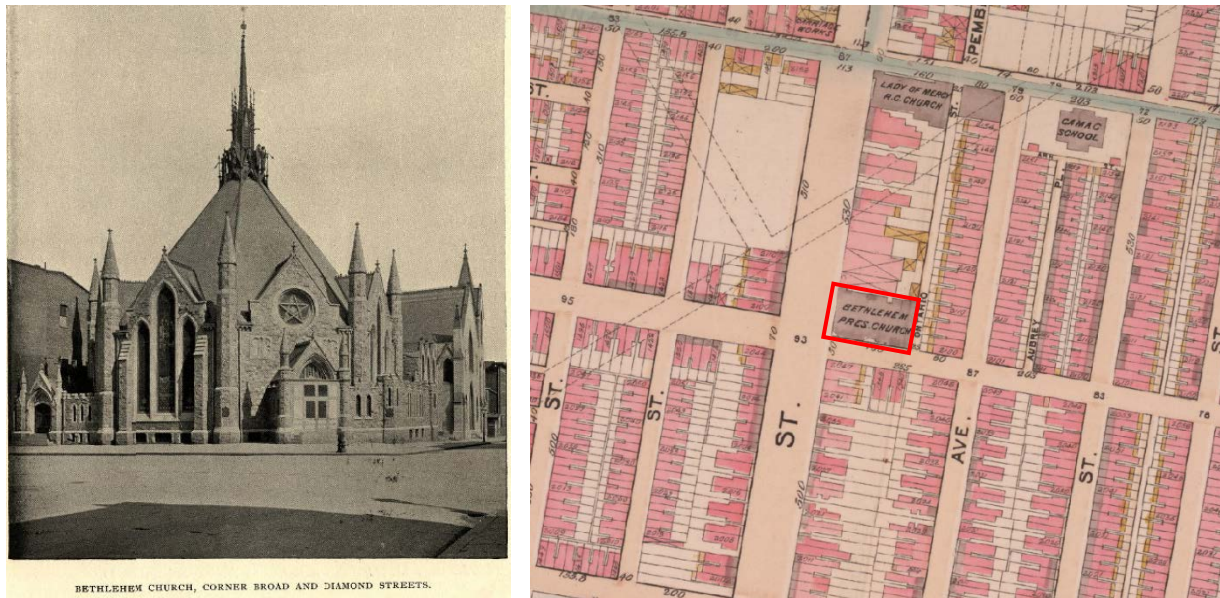


Figure 27: Left, the earliest known photograph of the church, taken in 1895, from William P. White and William H. Scott, *Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, a Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City*. Right, detail of the 1895 Bromley atlas showing the completed church and surrounding development. The vacant land across Broad Street would soon be occupied by the 2nd Armory building, and the remaining blocks to the north filled with rowhouses. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.



Figure 28: Left, the Moorish Rodeph Shalom synagogue, designed by Fraser, Furness & Hewitt c. 1869-71. Photo from Temple University Libraries. Middle, the site of Keneseth Israel is now owned by Temple University. The synagogue was demolished and is now Klein Hall. Photo by City of Philadelphia Department of Records. Right, the site of Oxford Presbyterian Church is now Morgan Hall, a high-rise dormitory owned by Temple University. Photo by the Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁶ White & Scott, *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia: A Camera and Pen Sketch...*

⁷ "Bethlehem Church: Laying of the Corner-Stone and Description of the Edifice," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 25 October 1887, p. 2.

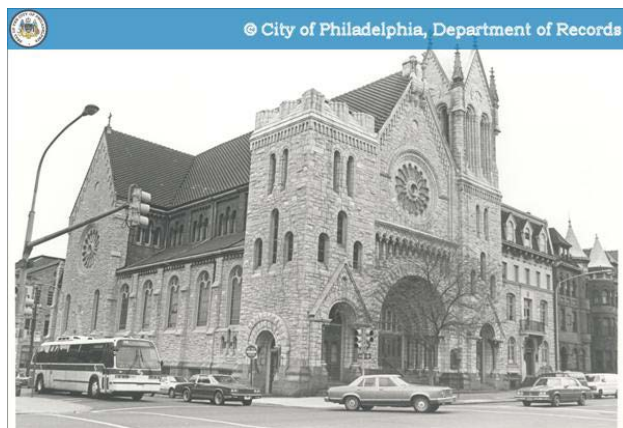
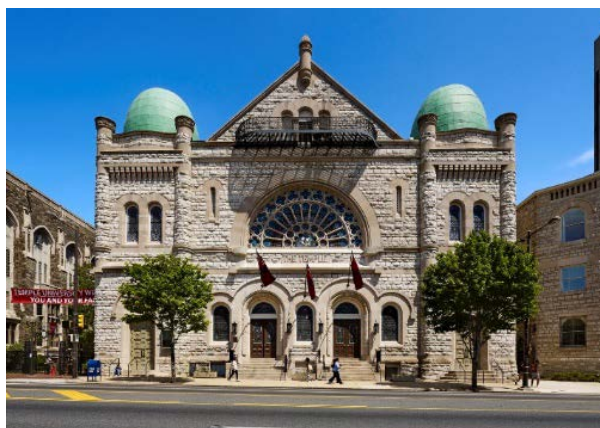


Figure 29: Left, The former Baptist Temple is now a Temple University Performing Arts Center. Photo by Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. Right, the former Our Lady of Mercy Roman Catholic Church, which used to anchor the north end of the block where Berean Presbyterian Church sits, is now a gas station. Photo by City of Philadelphia Department of Records.

The character of North Broad Street changed quickly over the first decades of the twentieth century. Many of the thoroughfare's wealthier long-time residents were aging and abandoning the city for more prestigious suburban neighborhoods. At the same time, the neighborhood was experiencing a new influx of activity as cultural and civic institutions increasingly located along the street.⁸ While many constructed purpose-built structures, others established themselves in former residences. In 1900, Peter A.B. Widener donated his mansion at Broad and Girard to the Free Library of Philadelphia, which established the Josephine Widener Memorial Library in the converted residence. Elkins' mansion was incorporated into a 10-story Majestic Hotel, and the Willis Hale-designed Lorraine Apartment building was converted into the Lorraine Hotel.⁹ The opening of Roosevelt Boulevard (known originally as Torresdale Boulevard, or just "The Boulevard"), which connected to Broad Street in Hunting Park just after the turn of the century, and the incorporation of North Broad Street into the Lincoln Highway, one of the earliest transcontinental highways for automobiles in the United States, in 1913 ushered in the automobile age on North Broad. By the 1920s, the automobile industry itself had also taken root along North Broad Street, helping to solidify its transition to a commercial corridor. Over the course of the mid-twentieth century, wealthy property owners along Broad Street continued to leave the city for the suburbs, and the demographics of the area shifted from predominantly white to African American.

As the white population began declining in the 1950s in North Philadelphia, many congregations merged with other congregations in the suburbs. Growing black congregations took over the larger buildings that the white congregations left behind. In 1955, with the number of congregants declining, Bethlehem Presbyterian's congregation merged with Holy Trinity Church in the Logan neighborhood. At the same time, the Presbytery of Philadelphia approved the petition of the Berean Presbyterian Church, previously located at 1924 S. College Avenue, to relocate to the former Bethlehem church building at Broad and Diamond Streets.¹⁰ Rev. Benjamin Glasco Sr., D.D., known as "one of the most dynamic

⁸ Benjamin Leech, Nomination of 1314-16 N Broad Street (the Legendary Blue Horizon) to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places (2014), 27. Available: http://www.preservationalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/nominationform_BlueHorizon.pdf

⁹ Bradley Maule, "North Broad Rising," Hidden City, April 11, 2017, accessed October 09, 2017, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2017/04/northbroad-rising/>.

¹⁰ "Church Merger Wins Presbytery Approval," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 18 May 1955, p. 25.

evangelists in the Presbyterian life in Philadelphia,” directed the church’s relocation, where it has been located ever since.¹¹

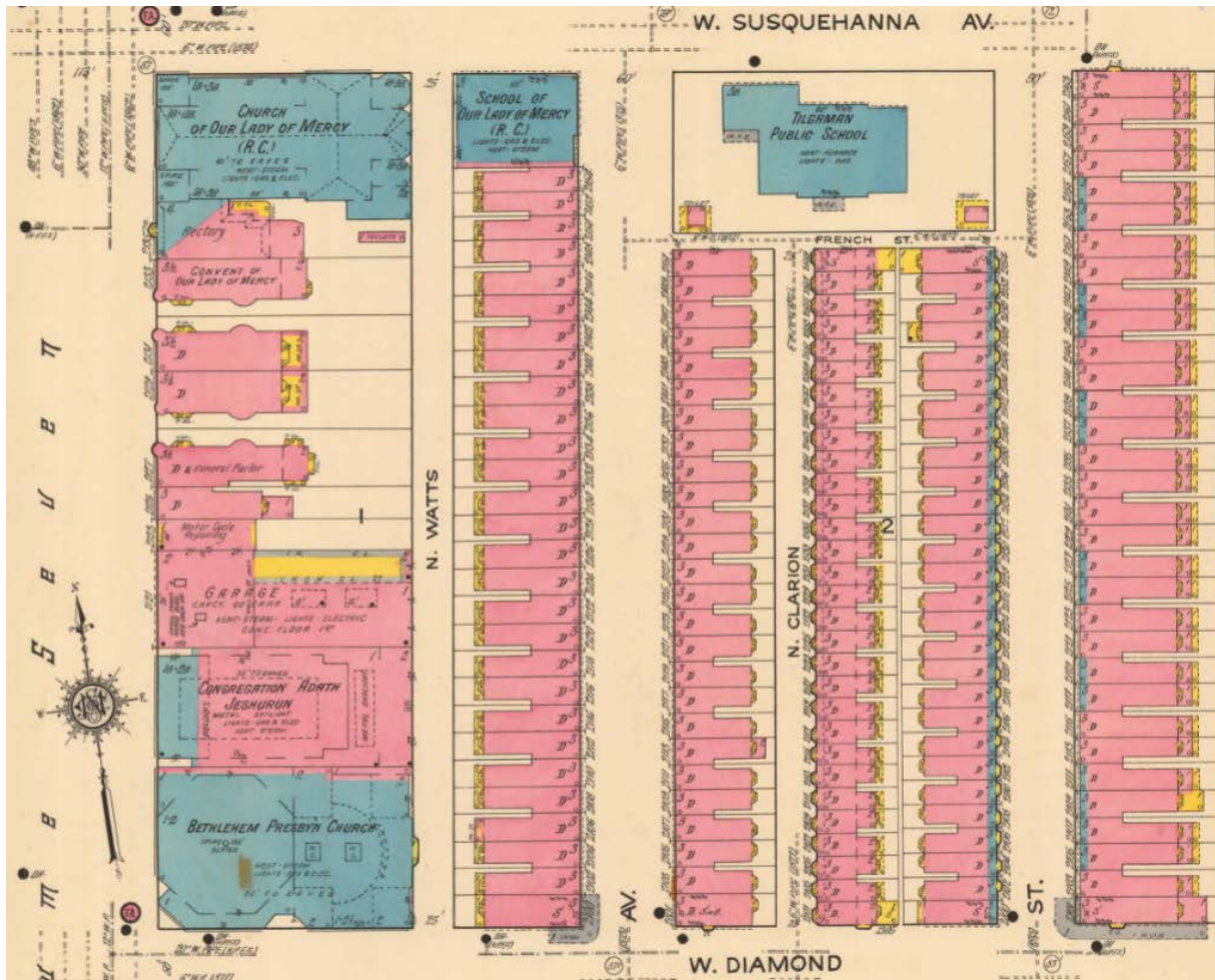


Figure 30: Detail of the 1917 Sanborn map showing Bethlehem Presbyterian adjacent to Congregation Adath Jeshurun, constructed in 1911 to serve the large Jewish population of North Philadelphia, as well as a large garage to accommodate the increasing interest in automobiles. Source: Penn State University Libraries, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Philadelphia, Vol. 8, sheet 755. <https://digital.libraries.psu.edu/digital/collection/maps1/id/18033>

Along North Broad Street, this story is playing out again as another generation ages and demand for religious spaces declines. Black populations are declining as Whites, Latinos and people of more than one race increase in population.¹² Demand for apartments has also risen rapidly since the early 2000s due to developers responding to increasing apartment prices in neighborhoods adjacent to Center City and a perceived undersupply of apartments for Temple University students within walking distance to the University’s main campus. Some of the most attractive sites for apartment buildings are spaces which used to host black social service organizations and churches because these lots are larger than the average rowhome lot and can accommodate more residential units.

¹¹ “Our History: Rev. Matthew Anderson, Founder (1848-1928). Berean Presbyterian Church. Available: <https://www.bereanpresbyterian.org/our-history>. For additional information on the history of Berean Presbyterian Church, as well as Bethlehem Presbyterian, see Appendix B.

¹² *A City Transformed. The Racial and Ethnic Changes in Philadelphia Over the Last 20 Years*. The PEW Charitable Trusts Philadelphia Research Initiative. June 1, 2011.

Criterion D: Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen, and Criterion 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

Berean Presbyterian Church, originally Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, was designed in 1887 by Theophilus Parsons Chandler, Jr., the founder of the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Architecture, and one of Philadelphia's most significant late-nineteenth century architects. Educated at Harvard University and the atelier of Joseph Auguste Emile Vaudremer in Paris, T.P. Chandler was a purveyor of high-style design, often based off European models. When he returned to the United States, Chandler worked in several Boston offices before moving to Philadelphia in 1872.

While he was instrumental in the design of Ridley Park, Chandler is perhaps best remembered for his church and country house designs. Chandler frequently employed Gothic Revival elements in his ecclesiastical designs, including pointed arch windows and doors, front-facing gables with decorative incised trim, steeply pitched roofs, and castle-like towers and spires.¹³ Chandler's Berean design fits into a continuum of Gothic Revival churches which he designed in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington D.C., Wilmington, and the Philadelphia suburbs from the late 1800s through the early 1900s. These include the Church of the New Jerusalem at 22nd and Chestnut Street, built in 1881; Trinity Episcopal Church in Wilmington, Delaware, built in 1890; and the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, built between 1903 and 1905 (see Figure 32 through Figure 35). Similar features employed in these designs include masonry structures of stone or brick, triptych windows, large wood double-doors, quatrefoil motifs, stone finials, and carved floral rinceaux.

The church at 2101-07 N. Broad Street stands out among Chandler's work, and within the city of Philadelphia, for its unusual octagonal shape. Although the reason for the octagonal shape is unknown, Chandler may have looked to the Gothic English Chapter Houses in York Minster and Lincoln from the thirteenth century, which employed similar octagonal shapes and conical roofs (Figure 31). Other earlier examples of octagonal Presbyterian churches in the United Kingdom could have provided additional inspiration, including that of a congregation in Norwalk, East Anglia, in the United Kingdom, who built an octagonal chapel in 1756 so congregants in each corner were an equal distance from the pulpit.¹⁴ The eight sides of an octagon also symbolize the resurrection of Christ.¹⁵

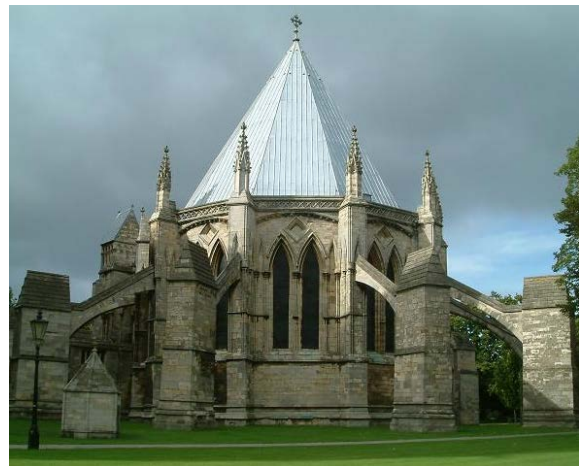


Figure 31: The Gothic octagonal Chapter House at Lincoln Cathedral. Source: Wikipedia.

It is unclear whether Chandler also modified the façade of the Sabbath School building to which the new church was attached, or designed the new church building to stand out from but be compatible with the existing building. Differences in the texture of the stone cladding of the conjoined structures, visible in

¹³ <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/gothic-revival.html>

¹⁴ Churches of Norfolk. Octagon Chapel, Norwich. <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/norwichoctagon/norwichoctagon.htm>

¹⁵ The Early Christian Symbols of the Octagon and the Fish. Agape Bible Study. <https://www.agapebiblestudy.com/documents/The%20Sign%20of%20the%20Fish.htm>

early historic photographs, suggests the latter. Additional modifications were made to the Sabbath School building in 1909, 1910, and 1915 by J. Franklin Stuckert and his son F. Russell Stuckert.¹⁶ Furness, Evans and Company renovated part of the church's interior in 1915 including a new gallery and stairways.¹⁷ Substantial exterior modifications to the Sabbath School building, including the removal of the front gable along Diamond Street and western tower and alteration of the roofline, appear to have occurred in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁸

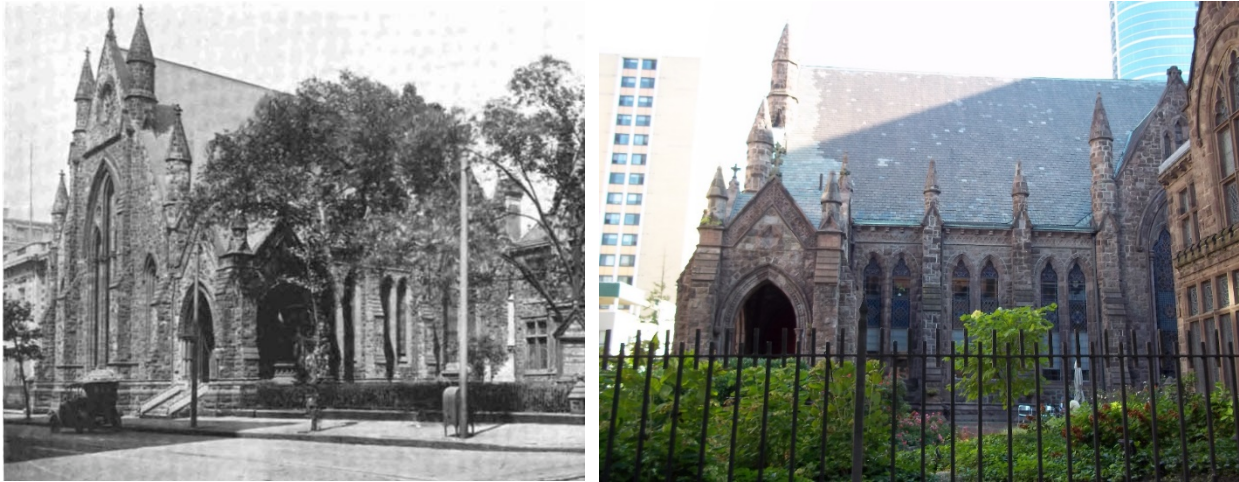


Figure 32: The former Church of the New Jerusalem at 22nd and Chestnut Streets. Left, c. 1901, from Moses King, *Philadelphia and Notable Philadelphians*, p. 32. Right, present-day, photo by David Fecteau.



Figure 33: The former Church of the New Jerusalem contains elements in common with Berean Presbyterian, including parapet walls, turrets, finials, and Gothic and lancet windows. Photos by David Fecteau.

¹⁶ *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v.24, n.45, p.717, 11/10/1909; v.24, n.47, p.751, 11/24/1909; v.25, n.3, p.33, 01/19/1910; v.25, n.15, p.231, 04/13/1910; and v.30, n.13, p.199, 03/31/1915. Although relatively little is known about the Stuckert family, the father and son duo were well-respected and designed many churches and synagogues diverse styles. These include Holy Temple of Deliverance, formerly First Congregational Church of Germantown, at 124 W Seymour Street; Adath Jeshrun Synagogue, 1705-13 N 7th Street; United Baptist Church, formerly Hebron Memorial Presbyterian Church, 1254-64 N 25th Street, built in 1893; and St. Paul's German Reformed Church, at 1810 Wharton Street, built approximately 1890. They also became designers for Horn and Hardart's the Philadelphia automat company.

¹⁷ *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, v.30, n.22, p.344, 06/02/1915

¹⁸ Aerial photographs available on historicaerials.com appear to show a change from the straight gabled roof to the current hipped configuration between 1948 and 1967.



Figure 34: Chandler designed Trinity Episcopal Church, 1108 N. Adams Street in Wilmington, Delaware. The church shows many of the same elements as Berean Presbyterian, including turrets, Gothic and lancet arches, triptych windows and quatrefoils. The church is still used for worship. *Photos by David Fecteau.*

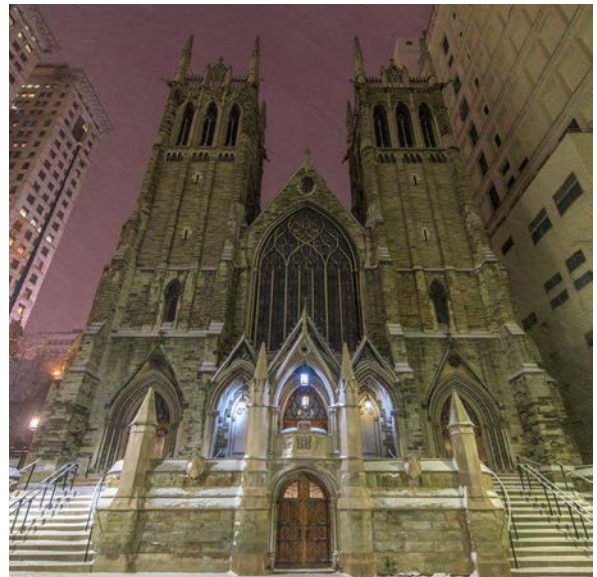


Figure 35: Chandler designed First Presbyterian Church, 320 6th Avenue in Pittsburgh, which is still used for worship. Left, Chandler's 1905 sketch. Source: Theophilus P. Chandler, Jr. Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia. Right, photo by Dave CiCello, First Presbyterian Church.

Conclusion

Designed by T.P. Chandler, one of Philadelphia's preeminent late-nineteenth century architects, for Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, 2101-07 N. Broad Street embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Gothic Revival style in an unusual octagonal form. Constructed in phases between 1875 and 1887, the present-day Berean Presbyterian Church exemplifies the development of the North Philadelphia community from the mid-nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries.

Appendix A: Historic Photographs



BETHLEHEM CHURCH, CORNER BROAD AND DIAMOND STREETS.

Figure 36: Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, 1895, from William P. White and William H. Scott, *Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, a Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City*. Source: Philadelphiabuildings.org.



Figure 37: Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, 1898-99, from *The Book of its Bourse & Co-operating Bodies*, Philadelphia, Lippincott Press, p. 49. Source: Philadelphiabuildings.org.



Figure 38: Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, Broad and Diamond Streets, c. 1923. Source: Library Company of Philadelphia. <https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/Islandora%3A62999>



Figure 39: Berean Presbyterian Church, c. 1980. Source: Peter Olson Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Appendix B: Church Histories

Bethlehem Presbyterian

Bethlehem Presbyterian began as an organization in 1867 when the Central Presbytery of Philadelphia established a mission at 12th Street and Montgomery Avenue, organized under Reverend John P. Conkey. On February 10, 1873, the Central Presbytery appointed a committee to investigate establishing a church in the territory around 12th and Norris Streets.

On April 1st of that year, the Presbytery received a petition from the committee to establish a church. The Presbytery granted the request and passed a resolution allowing the committee to meet on April 10th at Bethune Hall, 12th Street and Montgomery Avenue, to organize a church. That committee adopted the name Broad and Diamond Streets Presbyterian Church. Reverend Matthew Newkirk served as their pastor.

The congregation began work on a wood frame chapel at 2101 N Broad Street in May 1873, on a lot purchased for \$25,000¹⁹, roughly \$552,000 in 2021. They dedicated the chapel on June 22nd and began holding Sabbath School there with 50 members on that day. The Court of Common Pleas granted a charter of incorporation on November 12, 1873.

Church members added a Sabbath School building, beginning construction in October 1875. The school opened in April 1876. The Court of Common Pleas approved a name change in March 1877 to Bethlehem Presbyterian Church. In 1884, Reverend B.L. Agnew, D.D. became Bethlehem Presbyterian's pastor. At that time, the church had 268 members and the Sabbath School 665.²⁰

On May 25, 1887, the Board of Trustees adopted plans for the new church and authorized its erection on June 15th. In August, they awarded a construction contract to Catanach and Son for just under \$100,000²¹, about \$2.8 million in 2021. Excavation began soon after. Architect Theophilus Chandler requested estimates for interior finishing of the church in November 1888.²² The congregation dedicated the new building on May 5, 1889 with an address by Temple University's founder Reverend Russell Conwell, D.D. He would later speak at the church's 40th anniversary along with Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. At the time of its dedication, there were 878 church members and 1,285 Sabbath School members.²³

The first generation of Bethlehem Presbyterian's elders lived within walking distance to the new church. This may be why they chose to build it at Broad and Diamond. Elders included William H. Brooks, Philip Conrad, Thomas E. James, Thomas E. Mulford, Augustus Pfaff, J.W. Strong, M.D. and George N. Weygandt. None of their houses survive, having been demolished during Urban Renewal.

- William H. Brooks lived at 2207 Van Pelt Street. Voters elected him to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives where he served from 1883 until 1892. He held various jobs including

¹⁹ Rev. William P. White, D.D. and William H. Scott. The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City. Philadelphia. 1895.

²⁰ Rev. William P. White, D.D. and William H. Scott. The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City. Philadelphia. 1895.

²¹ Rev. William P. White, D.D. and William H. Scott. The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City. Philadelphia. 1895.

²² The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide, v. 3, n. 47, p. 563, 11/26/1888

²³ Rev. William P. White, D.D. and William H. Scott. The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City. Philadelphia. 1895.

receiver of the Spruce and Pine Passenger Railway Company, chief of the Philadelphia Highway Bureau, a tax collector for the IRS, and a building contractor.

- Philip Conrad may have been a baker, whose business was located at 2700 Neff Street. The street was in Port Richmond and has since been renamed Indiana Avenue. There is no other Philip Conrad listed in Boyd's Co-Partnership and Business Directory.
- Thomas E. James lived at 1807 Park Avenue. Searches revealed many men listed in city directories with the same name. Occupations held by men named Thomas James in 1864 included: mason, porter, rigger, and a waiter.
- Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Mulford lived at 2132 N. Camac Street. By 1906, they had moved to 519 Penn Street in Camden, New Jersey.
- Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Pfaff lived at 2102 N. 13th Street. By 1896, they had moved to 1522 W. Lehigh Avenue. In 1898, Pfaff is listed as a house painter at 2353 N. 21st Street.
- Dr. and Mrs. Strong lived at 2049 N. 13th Street. Dr. Strong was a member of the Columbia Club at Broad and Oxford Streets. This was a social space for privileged individuals.
- A Mr. and Mrs. George H. Weygandt lived at 2125 N 13th Street. Since this was a unique last name, it's likely that the Mr. Weygandt at 13th Street was the church elder mentioned above.

In 1955, with the number of congregants declining, Bethlehem Presbyterians' congregation merged with Holy Trinity Church in Logan. This left room in May of that year for Berean Presbyterian Church's congregation to move into the building, under Reverend Benjamin Glasco, D.D. This came after Berean rejected a merger proposal from the Oxford Presbyterian Church in 1943, located then at Broad and Oxford Streets. Oxford Presbyterian is now located at 8501 Stenton Avenue.

Berean Presbyterian

The congregation that inherited Bethlehem Presbyterian church and Sabbath School began as the Gloucester Presbyterian Mission of the Lombard Central Presbyterian Church. Chartered on January 1, 1878 and led by Dr. John B. Reeves, its first meeting place was Milton Hall, 1914 Fairmount Avenue. That building today is within the Spring Garden Historic District.

The mission organized as a church in June 1880 with 26 members.²⁴ According to a history written by the church's first pastor, Matthew Anderson, the need for a church was clear. Nearly 6,000 black residents lived in what was then the City's northwest with only a small Methodist chapel to serve them.²⁵

The Central Presbytery found a pastor just out of college at Lincoln University to lead the new congregation. Reverend Matthew Anderson, D.D. worked with a small group of parishioners and built a congregation. They erected their first church in 1884 at 1924 South College Avenue for \$32,000, approximately \$865,000 in 2021 dollars.²⁶ The church, made of blue marble, was 60 feet wide and 60 feet deep.

²⁴ Rev. William P. White, D.D. and William H. Scott. The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City. Philadelphia. 1895.

²⁵ Matthew Anderson, A.M. Presbyterianism and Its Relation to the Negro. Philadelphia. 1897.

²⁶ Matthew Anderson, A.M. Presbyterianism and Its Relation to the Negro. Philadelphia. 1897.

On May 14, 1891, the congregation celebrated the payment of all its debts. By 1895, it was one of three black congregations in the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

Like other congregations, Berean established social service organizations as part of their mission. Two notable organizations were the Building and Loan Association and the Berean Institute.

The congregation founded the Building and Loan Association in 1888 to encourage homeownership among black men. It became the nation's oldest black-owned and operated savings and loan. Berean Federal Savings Bank eventually merged, ceasing to exist in 2003.

They also founded the Berean Manual Training and Industrial School (later Berean Institute) in 1899 to give job skills to young black men. All the original buildings on the College Avenue site have been demolished. The property is now home to Philadelphia Technician Training Institute which runs classes in a building that dates to the 1970s.

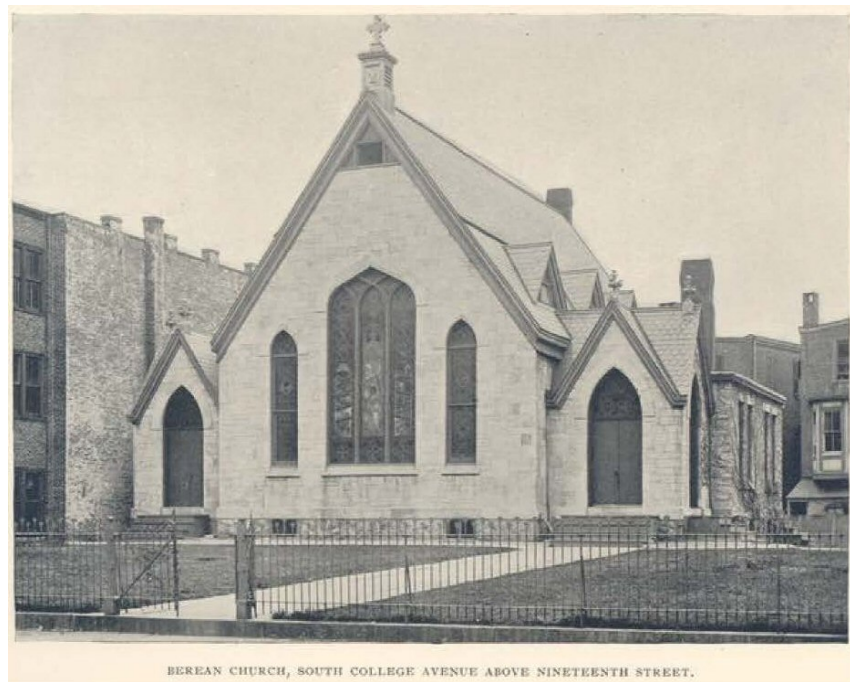


Figure 40: The original Berean Presbyterian Church was demolished so the congregation could build the Berean Institute. Photo by the Presbyterian Historical Society.

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