

First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

ATLANTA (June 1, 2020) – First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 29, 2020. The property is located at 1328 Peachtree Street, NE in midtown Atlanta (Fulton County). First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta sponsored the nomination and prepared the nomination materials.

Founded in 1848, the congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta (originally Presbyterian Church of Atlanta) acquired a lot at the corner of Peachtree and 16th Streets in 1914 to build a larger church in a then more residential area of Atlanta than their original Marietta Street location. Walter T. Downing was selected to design the first phase of the church in 1915 in the Late Gothic Revival style, and the church continued to expand throughout the 20th century with additions designed by other prominent Atlanta architects, including A. Ten Eyck Brown, employing elements of the style.

First Presbyterian Church is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an excellent, intact example of a Late Gothic Revival-style church and for its association with prominent Atlanta architects Walter T. Downing and A. Ten Eyck Brown. The Late Gothic Revival style, popular in ecclesiastical, educational, and commercial architecture during the early twentieth century, is demonstrated in the church's repeated use of the pointed arch, emphasis on verticality, utilization of stone as the primary building material, and detailing such as window tracery and crenellation.

The church's Late Gothic Revival-style design showcases the work of architect Walter T. Downing, who designed the initial 1915-1919 church complex, which included the primarily sandstone narthex, sanctuary, parlor, chapel, initial meeting room, and lower portion of the bell tower, and A. Ten Eyck Brown, who completed the bell tower and designed the 1928-1929 addition southwest of the sanctuary, composed of brick in American bond with sandstone window and door surrounds and quoining. Downing and Brown were prolific in Georgia, designing many public buildings in the popular styles of the day.

First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta is also significant under Criterion C in the area of art due to its collection of exceptional stained-glass windows by three master stained-glass designers and studios: Louis C. Tiffany of Tiffany Studios, Nicola D'Ascenzo of D'Ascenzo Studios, and the Willet Studio. The Tiffany and D'Ascenzo windows, also known as the ten history windows in the church's sanctuary, were installed between 1919 and 1940. The windows by Tiffany showcase his innovative use of opalescent glass, and his creation of many new, rich colors in varying degrees of translucency.

Following Tiffany's death in 1933, D'Ascenzo completed the final four designs, emulating Tiffany's methods. Later windows designed by the Willet Studio and installed in the sanctuary, chapel, and narthex represent a revival in interest in more traditional Gothic-style windows typical of 13th-century France, favoring deep red and blue hues and stylized figures in contrast to Tiffany's expanded palette and more representational, realistic-looking figures.

The National Register of Historic Places is our country's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. The National Register provides formal recognition of a property's architectural, historical, or archaeological significance. It also identifies historic properties for planning purposes and ensures that these properties will be considered in the planning of state or federally assisted projects. National Register listing encourages preservation of historic properties through public awareness, federal and state tax incentives, and grants. Listing in the National Register does not place obligations or restrictions on the use, treatment, transfer, or disposition of private property.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Its mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance.

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to sustain, enhance, protect and conserve Georgia's natural, historic and cultural resources for present and future generations, while recognizing the importance of promoting the development of commerce and industry that utilize sound environmental practices.

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