MONTEVALLO
Main Street
Memories

Montevallo First Baptist Church

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The Montevallo First Baptist Church has been an architectural and spiritual landmark on Main Street since the existing building was constructed in 1910. The church anchors the southwest corner of the Main and Middle Street intersection and for decades was the only church located along the five block downtown Main Street business district.

According to the church cornerstone, as well as local historian, Eloise Meroney, the church was first organized in 1856. A brick church building was built in 1858 on property donated by Edmund King on the spot where the west wing of Main dormitory on the University of Montevallo campus sits today.

In 1878, this building collapsed, presumably from the pressure a poorly reinforced bell tower exerted on its supporting timbers. It was not long after that construction of a new wood frame church began on a Main Street lot (where the church stands today) donated by the future first president of the Girls Industrial School of Alabama, Capt. H.C. Reynolds. This building was eventually converted into Sunday School rooms when the main sanctuary was built in 1910. The wood frame building was veneered with brick at the same time. In 1962 the chuch added a new three story Student Center on a vacant lot between the church and the Plaza Grill Cafe.

This group photo of an all men's Sunday School class in front of First Baptist was probably made around 1920. By 1930, local interest in the class had grown to such an extent that the brother of AC president Carmichael, who was an ordained minister, assumed its leadership and made it non-denominational. At the same time, Eddie Watson, owner of the 500 seat Strand Theatre nearby agreed to let the class meet in his auditorium.

As part of an effort in the late 1970's to preserve and rehabilitate the original building's brick facade and to protect its impressive stained glass windows, extensive renovations were undertaken that also included redesigning the church's bell tower and adding a much taller steeple. From an architectural perspective, the church's elegant wood paneled domed sanctuary makes the building unique and not something normally found in small southern towns the size of Montevallo.

This local souvenir postcard photo shows the church building as it looked following the addition of the two elegant brick staircases.

The three story Baptist Student Center was constructed as an annex to the primary church building. Upon completion, new programs were developed to serve the needs and interests of college students.

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MONTEVALLO MAIN STREET MEMORIES is adapted from the series, THROWBACK THURSDAY, a **Montevallo Historical Society** and **Montevallo Main Street** partnership started in 2018. Each installment revisits commercial and residential life on Main Street and in the downtown area in the early to mid-twentieth century. The series remains available online and may be viewed at **www.historicmontevallo.org** under "Local History".