

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property: Redeemed Temple of Jesus Christ
Historic name: Virginia Avenue Baptist Church; Friendship Baptist Church (preferred)
Other names/site number: Miracle Temple of Faith Baptist Church

2. Location
Street & Number: 734 First Street, S.W. [] Not for Publication
City or town: Washington [] Vicinity
State: DC Code: 001 County: _____ Code: 20024 Zip Code: _____

3. State/Federal Agency Certification
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Alan M. Burchan DC SNPO 9/2/04
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DC State Historic Preservation Office 9/2/04
State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification
I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
() see continuation sheet
 determined eligible for the National Register
() see continuation sheet
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other, (explain:)
Wilson Beall 11/19/04
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

WASHINGTON, DC

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input type="checkbox"/> District	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Sites
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total
Name of related multiple property listing		Number of contributing Resources previously listed in the National Register <u>0</u>	
<u>N/A</u>			

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
<u>RELIGION/Religious Facility</u>	<u>VACANT/NOT IN USE</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
<u>LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival</u>	foundation: <u>BRICK</u>
<u> </u>	walls: <u>BRICK</u>
<u> </u>	roof: <u>ASPHALT</u>
<u> </u>	other: <u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Narrative Description

Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets

FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

WASHINGTON, DC

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark x in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark x in all the boxes that apply.)

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

Period of Significance

1886 to 1965

Significant Dates

1886; 1956; 1965

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

African American

Architect/Builder

James A. Boyce (Builder)

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

previously listed in the NR

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of add. data:

State SHPO office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.015 (16,664 square feet)

UTM References

1 11/8/ 13/25/489 430/5/430

Zone Easting Northing

2 11/8/ //////////////// ////////////////

Zone Easting Northing

3 11/8/ //////////////// ////////////////

Zone Easting Northing

4 11/8/ //////////////// ////////////////

Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary consists of the current city lot on which the building is located. The lot occupies the northeast corner of First and H Streets, Southwest.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The church has occupied this city lot since its original construction in 1886.

See continuation sheet

FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

WASHINGTON, DC

Name of Property

County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Emily Thompson, Architectural Historian

Organization EHT Traceries, Inc. Date March, 2004

Street & Number 1121 5th Street, NW Telephone (202) 393-1199

City or Town Washington State DC Zip code 20001

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Square 643 LLC

street & number 61 D Street, SE telephone (202) 412-1902

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20003

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of the Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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DESCRIPTION

Description Summary:

The former church building located at 734 First Street, S.W., is a two-story, brick building that once stood prominent in its location. Constructed in 1886 and characterized by two corner towers flanking a central gable façade, the original structure illustrates a vernacular interpretation of the Romanesque Revival style with some Gothic Revival details (namely lancet arch windows).

The building is situated on a level parcel of land on the east side of First Street, S.W. Its façade faces west toward a portion of First Street that was cut off from the rest during the mid-20th century when the historic street plan of the greater area was reconfigured as part of a major urban renewal effort. The original portion of the church building, measuring five bays wide (including towers) and five bays deep, was constructed in 1886 (D.C. Building Permit No. 869, October 1, 1886 issued to Virginia Avenue Baptist Church). The assemblage of one- and two-story additions on the rear (east) elevation of the building principally date to 1930. The one-story addition on the north elevation of the building was completed in 1952.

General Description: Original Church Building

The original and main block of the church building is a two-story brick structure with a rectangular footprint and interior basilican plan. The building rests on a solid concrete foundation and is capped by a front-gable roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. The building's original pressed brick exterior is finished in an asbestos-based stucco treatment that covers most of the original exterior walls but leaves the corbeled brick ornamentation exposed. The facade (west elevation) of the building, facing First Street, is dominated by a large gable, flanked by two square towers that project above the gable's peak. The three-bay central block is ornamented with decorative brick corbeling, as typically seen in Romanesque Revival architecture. Corbeled brick at the edges of the towers creates paneled pilasters with bases and capitals, while spaced corbeling accentuates the steep angle of the cornice and signifies the separation between stories. The more Gothic-inspired lancet-arched openings include stained glass windows on the first and second stories and three symmetrically arranged entries on the first story (a principal entry on center of the main façade and secondary entries in each tower).

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A large paired window with lancet arch at the second story provides a focal point for the façade, with a single lancet-arched window set to either side. Windows and doors are accentuated by corbeled brick surrounds and are linked by corbeled brick string courses. The facade is further ornamented by round, louvered vents in the towers, a molded cornice, and inset blocks molded with floral patterns. The towers are capped by pyramidal-shaped roofs sheathed in the original slate shingles with metal flashing. The roof of the north tower is significantly lower than that of the south tower, following a massing pattern typical to churches of the period.

The side elevations of the original church are significantly simpler in presentation than the ornamented façade. They are five bays deep, with evenly-spaced segmental-arched windows divided by simple brick pilasters suggestive, as is common to the style, of medieval buttressing. A corbeled brick string course links the sills of the windows on both stories. The window openings on the side elevations are fitted with stained glass presented in very simple, geometric patterns. These appear to be original to the 1886 church. A square brick stove chimney is located at the southeast corner of the church. The building is in severely deteriorated condition and has been vacant since 2001.

Additions

The original rear elevation of the church is a plain brick wall that holds two small stained-glass windows. This original rear wall is largely obscured and the windows are completely covered by circa-1930 one- and two-story additions. A simple two-story, front-gable addition projects from the center of the rear elevation and is partially supported on two freestanding piers. This addition is without ornamentation. Flanking this rear extension to the south is a two-story shed-roof addition that accommodates a rear stair. This addition, which is also without ornament, includes double hung, wood sash windows on its south elevation and the second story of its west elevation. At the first story, openings for a window and door are cut into the south elevation, but the openings have been boarded over. The additions are in severely deteriorated condition.

Built onto the north elevation of the church is a one-story, concrete block structure clad in brick veneer. The facade of this addition, completed in 1952, is finished in yellow brick and has a shallow-sloped, front-gable roof. The gable end is clad in vertical composite board. The addition includes a projecting central entry with recessed doors. The addition is in severely deteriorated condition.

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Summary Statement of Significance:

The church building located at 734 First Street, S.W. is significant as an example of the important cultural and social role that churches played in the late-19th and 20th century development of Washington's African-American communities. Located at the corner of First and H Streets, S.W., the building was commissioned in 1886-87 by the Virginia Avenue Baptist Church, one of the city's oldest African-American congregations. It faces west toward First Street, a closed street of the historic L'Enfant Plan. Its Romanesque Revival façade with its tall corner towers command the corner site, historically part of a modest-scaled African-American neighborhood of residences and retail. By the early 1900s, the congregation assumed the name Friendship Baptist Church and for more than 60 years it provided spiritual and physical support for its congregants and the surrounding community. At the time, however, it was a community that was viewed by most of the outside world as a poverty stricken and blighted area in need of major improvement.

In 1946, Congressional authorization aimed at correcting the social ills of the District of Columbia directed an extensive urban renewal project that soon led to the mass demolition of urban fabric in Southwest Washington. It was a project so vast that it erased almost all evidence of development and settlement patterns throughout the area. However, Friendship Baptist Church remained standing—its preservation the product of the effort of its congregation and pastor, Reverend Benjamin H. Whiting. Reverend Whiting used his political influence to press the Redevelopment Land Agency to keep his church building standing. Stressing its important role in the community and strong relationship with Randle Elementary School and Southwest Health Center, Reverend Whiting prevailed and saved the building from demolition. As a result, this church building is a document of the struggle for cultural continuity amid dramatic mid-century changes in Southwest Washington. In 1965, the Friendship Baptist congregation constructed a new church at Delaware Avenue and I Street, S.W., and nine years later, it sold its First and H Street property to Miracle Temple of Faith Baptist Church. In 1982, Miracle Temple sold the property to the Redeemed Temple of Jesus Christ, which occupied the building for nineteen years. In 2001, the building's doors were closed as its physical deterioration overcame the congregation's ability to maintain its operation.

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The church, commonly known today as Redeemed Temple, is one of only two historic church buildings left standing in Southwest Washington. While no longer serving as a house of worship, the building remains oriented to a closed L'Enfant street that once served as a thoroughfare.

As one of only a handful of extant buildings associated with the pre-urban renewal history of Southwest, the church building represents an important aspect of that history—when the land held a myriad of 19th and early 20th century residential, religious, public, and commercial buildings; when the buildings and infrastructure of the area were part of the street framework of the L'Enfant Plan; and when traditional patterns of community represented 19th century culture.

The property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A:

- for its significant association with the history of pre-urban renewal Southwest Washington as seen through its historic association with one of the city's earliest African-American congregations, the Virginia Avenue Baptist Church (later known as Friendship Baptist Church), which was established in 1875; and
- for its role as a center of support for its surrounding community in the early and mid-20th century and as a continuing source of community through the social turmoil caused by Southwest Urban Renewal efforts in the 1950s.

The property is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C:

- for its significant illustration of a vernacular interpretation of late 19th century academic religious architecture that was designed for, built for, and used by an African American congregation;
- for its significant illustration of a popular interpretation of the academic style commonly associated with religious architecture of the late 19th century; and
- for its siting on First Street, S.W., a L'Enfant street that was closed as a result of the 1950s urban renewal plan, and its role in retaining a sense of the historic street configuration.

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The property qualifies for eligibility under Criterion Consideration G for its achievement of significance during the period of urban renewal in Southwest Washington, D.C.

The period of significance for the property extends from 1886, when the church building was constructed, until 1965, when Friendship Baptist church left the building for a new structure.

Resource History and Historic Context:

Development of African-American Churches in Washington (circa 1820-1900)

From the late 18th century, when the District of Columbia was first established, through the Reconstruction era following the Civil War, the city of Washington was a locus for free blacks. Although not an ideal setting, it was viewed by many African Americans of the time as a center of political freedom for people of color. In Washington, as in other cities, abolitionists often were affiliated with religious institutions, as were philanthropic groups whose mission was to evangelize Washington's growing African-American population to follow their specific brand of religious worship. Beginning around 1820, African Americans began to exert their independence, organizing religious congregations separate from white congregations and constructing their own churches. Washington's Baptist churches, such as the Virginia Avenue Baptist Church, demonstrate this historical pattern.

In 1866, a number of African-American Baptists organized the First Baptist Church of South Washington on Sixth Street between G and H Streets, S.W. Shortly thereafter, in 1875, 54 members of First Baptist led by Reverend R.S. Laws left to organize the Virginia Avenue Baptist Church. In 1886, the Virginia Avenue Baptist Church constructed a church at 734 First Street, S.W. The original building permit indicates the Reverend R.S. Laws of Virginia Baptist Church as the building's owner; no architect is listed, but James A. Boyce is noted as the builder.¹ Soon after the construction of the building, the congregation renamed itself the Friendship Baptist Church.² This church formed the community center of its residential neighborhood, providing community outreach programs and spiritual support to its neighboring community. The congregation initiated a number of minor changes to the church, including a rear extension of the

¹ Washington, D.C. Building Permit # 869, dated October 1, 1886. The 1900 Federal Census indicates that James Boyce (born c1845) was a white resident of Washington, D.C. and was employed as a watchman.

² *Washington Post*, 23 Oct 2003, District Extra, p. 3

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sanctuary and an additional stair on its east end. In the late 1940s, the congregation planned a large addition to the church to serve an educational purpose. The addition was to be executed in a crenellated Medieval Revival style that complemented the original façade of the church. Although the church received a building permit from the District of Columbia for a three-story addition, it was not constructed. Instead, a modest, one-story gabled roof addition to the north side of the main block of the church was designed by the well known, local African-American architect R. I. Vaughn and completed in 1952.³ In 1965, the Friendship Baptist congregation erected a new church one block away at Delaware Avenue and I Streets, S.W. Nine years later, the congregation sold the 1886 structure at 734 First St., S.W., to the Miracle Temple of Faith Baptist Church.⁴ In 1982, the Redeemed Temple of Jesus Christ purchased the church from Miracle Temple of Faith Baptist Church and occupied it until 2001.⁵ The building had deteriorated to such a state that it was determined impractical and infeasible for the congregation to continue to hold services in the building and the doors were closed. Although Redeemed Temple attempted for several years to sell the structure to another congregation, none was interested, most likely due to factors such as the poor condition of the structure and associated high repair costs. The building has been vacant since Redeemed Temple relocated its congregation.

Urban Renewal in Southwest (circa 1946-1960)

The traditional social and community structures developed by African-Americans in Southwest, with churches at the center, faced extraordinary challenges in the 1950s as a result of urban renewal legislation. In 1946 Congress created the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA), giving it a “unique authority to acquire land in blighted neighborhoods and oversee its improvement.”⁶ The National Capital Park and Planning Commission’s Comprehensive Plan, released in 1950,

³ Although no building permit for one-story addition has been located, the cornerstone indicates that the date of construction, 1952, and the architect, R. I. Vaughn. A 1951 building permit (# A-23791) indicates that plans for the addition were originally much more ambitious. Vaughn’s design called for a three-story extension to the east elevation of the building and a large addition to the north elevation almost equal to the original church in height, scale and mass. The proposed north addition was to be executed in a crenellated Medieval Revival style that complemented the original façade of the church.

⁴ *Washington Post*, 23 Oct 2003, District Extra, p. 3

⁵ *Washington Post*, 23 Oct 2003, District Extra, p. 3

⁶ “L’Enfant Plan of the City of Washington, D.C.,” National Register Registration Report.

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emphasized the decentralization of the Federal core, changes in zoning to create lower densities and discourage strip retail, and the “redevelopment of blighted areas within the city.”⁷ Given the RLA’s authority, the Comprehensive Plan authorized vast condemnation, demolition, and redevelopment of urban areas.

The RLA’s first efforts were directed toward Southwest Washington. Despite community concern about displacing families and businesses, great support was expressed at every public hearing and the plan for Southwest was approved by all reviewing agencies. In the end, however, the urban renewal program displaced and relocated 1,050 of the 1,300 families living in Southwest from about 1953 through 1955.⁸ Thirteen of the fifteen churches standing in Southwest in 1955 were demolished.⁹ Only Friendship Baptist and St. Dominic’s Catholic Church at 515 Sixth Street, S.W. (Square 466) remain.

Initial RLA plans would have bulldozed the Southwest redevelopment area entirely. The 1955 RLA Annual Report shows a model for the new Southwest without Friendship Baptist, but in the 1956 Annual Report model, Friendship Baptist is shown. While this change may have been influenced by a change in leadership within the RLA, it most likely was secured by the efforts of Friendship Baptist Reverend Benjamin H. Whiting and his congregation to save their church. Whiting forestalled Friendship’s demolition by emphasizing the civic complex formed by the church and the adjacent Randle School and Southwest Health Center. As the *Washington Afro-American* quoted, Reverend Whiting argued that “Friendship is one corner of the triangle that serves the people of Southwest. Randall Jr. High School and the Southwest Health Center make up the other two corners, one serves the mind, one serves the body, and we serve the soul.”¹⁰ John R. Searles, Jr., executive director of the RLA, was quoted as telling the congregation that the Friendship Baptist church building would “stand ‘as a beacon between the old and the new in southwest Washington.’”¹¹

⁷ “City of the Future,” *The Washington Post*, 22 Nov 1950 (10).

⁸ “13 Churches To Be Demolished,” *Washington Afro-American*, 15 Oct 1955, p.1-2.

⁹ “13 Churches To Be Demolished,” *Washington Afro-American*, 15 Oct 1955, p.1-2.

¹⁰ Charles S. Tyler, “Efficient Social Program Helpful,” *Washington Afro-American*, undated clipping. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washingtoniana Division, vertical file, “Churches, Baptist Friendship.”

¹¹ “13 Churches To Be Demolished,” *Washington Afro-American*, 15 Oct 1955, p.1-2.

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Conclusion

The African-American congregation for whom the church was constructed has ties to the free black population of Washington, D.C. prior to the Civil War. The church was constructed at a time when the African-American community in the city was exerting its strength through religious institutions. Most of the extant architecture in Southwest was demolished during these urban renewal initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s. The urban renewal of Southwest during the 1950s brought about the demolition of thirteen of the area's fifteen churches, but the extraordinary effort of the Friendship Baptist Church congregation influenced the RLA to retain its church building. The original 1886 structure of the Virginia Avenue Baptist Church (Friendship Baptist Church/Redeemed Temple) is one of few remaining examples of pre-urban renewal architecture in Southwest, and is a critical link to the history of the community.

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Major Bibliographic References

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All photographs are of:
FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH
734 1st Street, S.W.
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc., photographer

All negatives are stored with the DC State Historic Preservation Office:

- 1) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
View Southeast
1 of 11

- 2) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
West Elevation, View Southeast
2 of 11

- 3) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
1952 Addition, West Elevation
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- 4) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, D.C.
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
View Northeast
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- 5) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
View Northeast
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- 6) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
South Elevation, View West
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- 7) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
View Northwest
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- 8) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
East Elevation, View West
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- 9) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
View Southwest
9 of 11
- 10) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
View Southwest
10 of 11
- 11) Friendship Baptist Church
Washington, DC
EHT Tracerics, Inc.
3/11/2004
DC SHPO
Cobblestone Paving, First Street, S.W.
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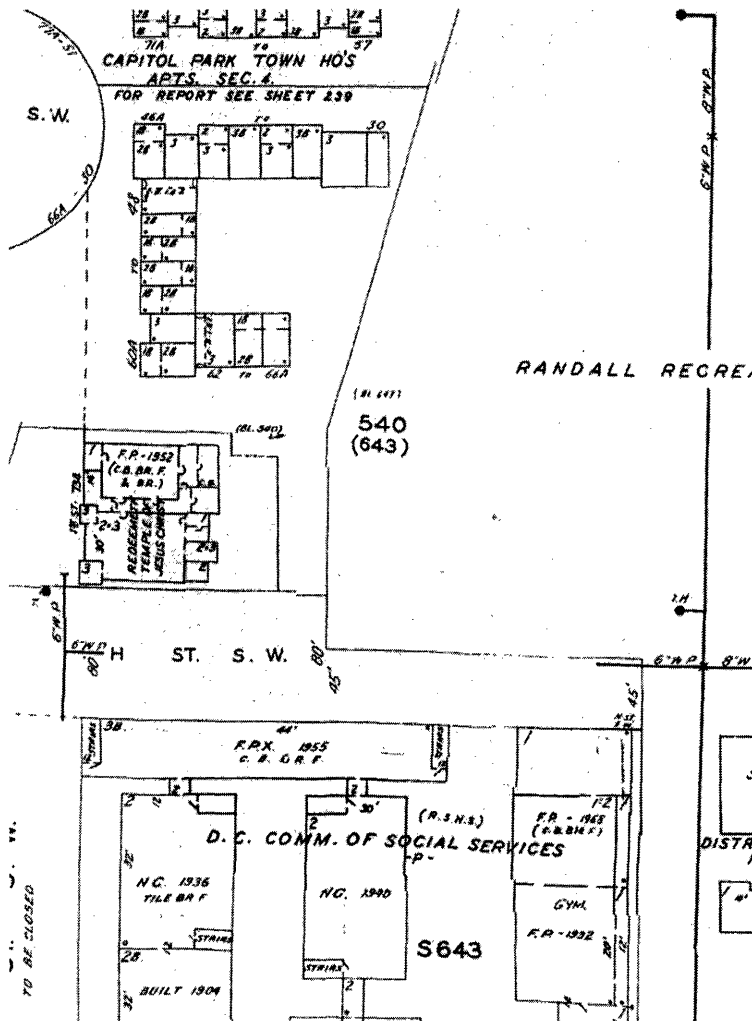
Friendship Baptist Church

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

SITE MAP



Friendship Baptist Church
734 First Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C.
Sanborn Map, 1991