

**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 and 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 any 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

historic name Second Baptist Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1100 East 24th Street (aka 2412 Griffith Avenue) N/A not for publication

city or town Los Angeles N/A vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90011

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

California Office of Historic Preservation
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 commenting or other official _____ 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION – Religious Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION – Religious Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN – Lombardy Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

roof Synthetic, Clay Tile

walls Brick, Concrete

other

Narrative Description

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

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.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage - Black

Period of Significance

1926 - 1958

Significant Dates

1926 – Building Constructed

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Williams, Paul R., architect
Marsh, Norman, architect

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

City of Los Angeles, Office of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property

Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	—	_____	_____	3	—	_____	_____
2	—	_____	_____	4	—	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Assessor Parcel Number 5131-021-025, which corresponds to the attached map.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) The legal lot the building historically and currently occupies.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Teresa Grimes and Christina Chiang

organization Christopher A. Joseph & Associates date 6/01/08

street & number 523 W. 6th Street, Suite 1134 telephone (213) 417-4400

city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90014

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 Second Baptist Church

street & number P.O. Box 11037 telephone _____

city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90011

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 the 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 Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Second Baptist Church
Los Angeles, California

DESCRIPTION

The Second Baptist Church is located at the southeast corner of East 24th Street and Griffith Avenue in the City of Los Angeles. The surrounding neighborhood is predominately occupied by single-family residences and a few churches. The two-story steel-framed structure is Lombardy Romanesque Revival style. Cast concrete trims the brick walls, which are laid in a Flemish bond pattern. A series of very low-pitched gabled roofs fit with clay tiles cover the building. The building has two main parts that are joined together: the sanctuary and the Sunday school. It retains all main aspects of integrity.

The street (northeast) elevation on 24th Street contains the sanctuary with three parts in its façade. One part has a front-facing gable with a rose window, a three-story tower on the northwest end, and a low-pitched roof on the southwest end. The central gable has a row of header bricks outlining the cast concrete inset of windows. Compound arches with twisted column shafts surround the recessed concrete wall with the rose window on top and three, arched windows on the bottom. The mullions on the rose window are decorative, twisted columns. The mullions on the arched window are plain columns with a simple capital and corbel. The Flemish bond brick becomes a border that defines the gable's sides that continue into a corbelled top under a denticulated roofline. These corbels have decorative cast concrete end pieces.

On both the tower and roofed sides off these central windows are two entrances. Over each of the entrances is a segmental pediment that extrudes to become a canopy. A shield, which folds into ribbons on the ends, decorates the tympanum. Two cast stone Corinthian columns underneath two corbels and a panel with the words "SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH" engraved surround non-original metal double doors. The northwest doorway has a double stair in front of it and the southeast doorway has a single stairway entered on the southeast. Both have a concrete cast balustrade that has been plastered over and covered with a flagstone veneer. Each side has a narrow, recessed window on the second story.

The bell tower has paired arched openings on all four sides with each divided by a central, column mullion. The upper part of the tower has been plastered over and a flattened balcony with a corbel table on the bottom has been removed, leaving a plastered over rectangle under a stringcourse. The pyramidal roof tops a corbel table with a stringcourse on its bottom that continues on all four sides. A non-original wooden cross sign with the words "2nd Baptist Church" has been added to the top of the tower.

The corner (south) elevation features the entrance for the Sunday school classrooms and two wings on either side. Over the entrance is a segmental pediment decorated by a shield, which folds into ribbons on the ends. Two cast stone columns underneath two corbels and a panel with the words "SUNDAY SCHOOL" engraved surround the original double wooden doors with square panels and a central square

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Second Baptist Church
Los Angeles, California

window. The Flemish bond brick becomes a border that defines the gable on the sides that continue into five corbels near the roofline. These corbels have decorative cast concrete end pieces. A rectangular window lies over the doorway. A double stair in front of the doorway has a concrete cast balustrade that has been plastered over and covered with a flagstone veneer.

The wing that connects to the tower has square windows on the second story divided by brick pilasters that are connected by corbels. Attached to the wing that is next to the tower's entrance, a one-story mass functions as the church office. The arched doorway with a double-header brick border leads to recessed doors with a segmental pediment space. Five casement windows are to the northwest of the doorway. Two rectangular casement windows are on the first story, one each between the three northeast pilasters on the tower side.

On the other (northeast) wing that is on Griffith Avenue, the second story also has square windows divided by brick pilasters that are connected by corbels. The first-story windows are large, arched windows with a single-header brick border and a panel of header bricks underneath the window. On the southeast corner, it has a stairway to the basement had a concrete cast balustrade that has been plastered over and covered with a flagstone veneer. On the southwest corner of the wing is another cast stone entrance with a simple, arched doorway decorated with a cartouche resting on a ledge. A simple molding surrounds the arched doorway with non-original metal double doors. A stair with a southeast approach to the doorway has a concrete cast balustrade that has been plastered over and covered with a flagstone veneer. This entrance on the corner is a two-and-one-half-story tower with a brick corbel table and side-gabled roof. Over the doorway is a paired arched window divided by a central, column mullion.

The southeast elevation facing the alley is painted brick with evenly spaced rectangular window openings. The heights step down from two and one-half story to two stories with double height ceilings down to a lower two story.

The southwest elevation has two parts. The first is a continuation of the street façade, with walls covered with Flemish bond brick and rectangular window openings. The second-story window might have had a flattened balcony, because a plastered over rectangle is left under the window. The rest of the elevation is painted brick with buttresses between pairs of double-height, narrow and long arched windows.

The exterior of the building is mostly unaltered with the following exceptions: selective replacement of original doors, the loss of the balcony on the tower, and the alteration of the balustrades. The building is currently undergoing a major rehabilitation that will be completed at the end of 2008.

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Second Baptist Church
Los Angeles, California

SIGNIFICANCE

The Second Baptist Church is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A as it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. It meets the registration requirements for churches outlined in the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) Form for Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles. Constructed in 1926, the Second Baptist Church is significant as the home of one of the oldest and most prominent African American congregations in Los Angeles. It satisfies Criteria Consideration A for religious properties as it derives its primary significance from its historical importance to the African American community.

No single institution was of greater importance to the social history of African Americans than the church. Founding churches gave blacks some of their first experiences in organizing their own institutions after emancipation. The first African American church organized in Los Angeles was in 1872, First AME. In 1885, the Second Baptist Church was organized. Methodist and Baptist continued to be the most prevalent denominations among African Americans as members left to form their own congregations.

Second Baptist was formed by a small group of blacks who attended the white First Baptist Church. After meeting in small, temporary structures, in 1892 they moved into a two-story Gothic Revival style church at 740 Maple Avenue. In a few short years the congregation had outgrown the building and purchased property on Paloma Avenue, which was the home to several other black churches.

Second Baptist was well connected to the black church nationally, taking a leadership role in the Western Baptist Association and evincing an ability to recruit nationally known ministers. A good example was Thomas L. Griffith, who became pastor in 1921. A dynamic preacher and former Army chaplain, Griffith immediately spearheaded an effort to build a new edifice for Second Baptist.

By the time Second Baptist had enough funds to build a new edifice, they decided it should be located further south and secured a site at Griffith Avenue and 24th Street. Griffith's vision for such a massive facility seemed outrageous to many people in 1924, but he anticipated a great influx of African-Americans to Los Angeles in the not-too-distant future. The building cost the church's congregation \$200,000 and it could seat more than 2,000 people for public and private meetings – about 10% of Los Angeles' black population at the time. In 1925, they commissioned Paul Williams, a talented young African American architect, to design their new building. He enlisted Norman Marsh to develop the structural plans. At the dedication ceremony in 1926, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., the well-

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Second Baptist Church
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known pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, gave the sermon, which lauded the new building as the “most elaborate” Baptist church on the West coast.i

The church’s legacy has left a moral imprint on Southern California. Members of the congregation fought restrictive housing covenants and racial discrimination in many forms at public beaches, swimming pools, and restaurants. In 1954, the congregation of Second Baptist raised and contributed \$1,500 to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to pay for the printing of the briefs used in the arguments before the United States Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case that desegregated public schools. Before WWII, the church was the largest meeting space owned by the African-American community in the western U.S. In 1928, when the NAACP convened its first national conference west of the Mississippi, the church was used as one of the venues; W.E.B. DuBois was a featured speaker. Keynote speakers during the 1949 NAACP convention, held again in Los Angeles, included United Nations statesman Dr. Ralph Bunche; Roy Wilkins, secretary of the NAACP; and actor, writer and civil rights activist Paul Robeson. The church has played host to many other African-American dignitaries, including educator Mary McLeod Bethune, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Sr., Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr., civil rights activist Malcolm X, newspaper publisher/editor Charlotta Bass, and others.

Second Baptist has also had a distinct role in the lives of two Nobel Peace Prize laureates (1950 and 1964). The church was the source of the first scholarship for Ralph Bunche to attend UCLA. And very significantly, Second Baptist played a little-known yet pivotal role in the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The church was the West Coast “home” for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; he spoke here many times throughout his career. Second Baptist church leaders mentored the young Dr. King, and participated with him in local and national civil rights activities. Second Baptist was the first and last Los Angeles congregation to host Dr. King, between May 1956 and March 1968.

Although the building is not being nominated under Criterion C, it is important to note that it was designed by renowned architect Paul R. Williams. One of the most successful and talented architects to practice in Los Angeles during the middle of the 20th century, Williams worked his way through the University of California by teaching art until he became a certified architect in 1915. He was the only African American licensed west of the Mississippi as early as the 1920s. Much of his work was residential and included mansions for film stars including Lon Chaney, Lucille Ball, and Tyrone Power. He also designed a number of important landmarks associated with the African American community including the 28th Street YMCA (1926), the Hudson-Liddell Building (1928, demolished) the Golden State Lodge for the Order of the Elks (1930, demolished), the Angelus Funeral Home (1934), and the second building for Golden State Mutual Life Insurance (1948-49).

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Second Baptist Church
Los Angeles, California

REFERENCES

Building Permits

Sanborn Map, 1950, vol. 4

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument Application, 1978

Barnes, Ada. *History of Second Baptist Church, 1885-1931*. Los Angeles: The Mirror, 1931.

Bradford, Gardner, "Our Gay Black Way: Central Avenue," *Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine*, p. 5, 10.

Engh, Michael. "A Multiplicity and Diversity of Faiths: Religion's Impact on Los Angeles and the Urban West, 1890-1940," *Western Historical Quarterly* vol. 28 (Winter 1997) p. 466.

Flamming, Douglas. *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

"Will complete a building on Maple between 7th and 8th Streets," *Southwest Builder & Contractor*, 3/15/1893, p. 1.

"Architects Norman Marsh and Paul Williams prepare plans for church building at 24th and Griffith," *Southwest Builder & Contractor*, 2/6/1925, p. 56.

ⁱ Engh, "Practically Every Religion," p. 205-206.

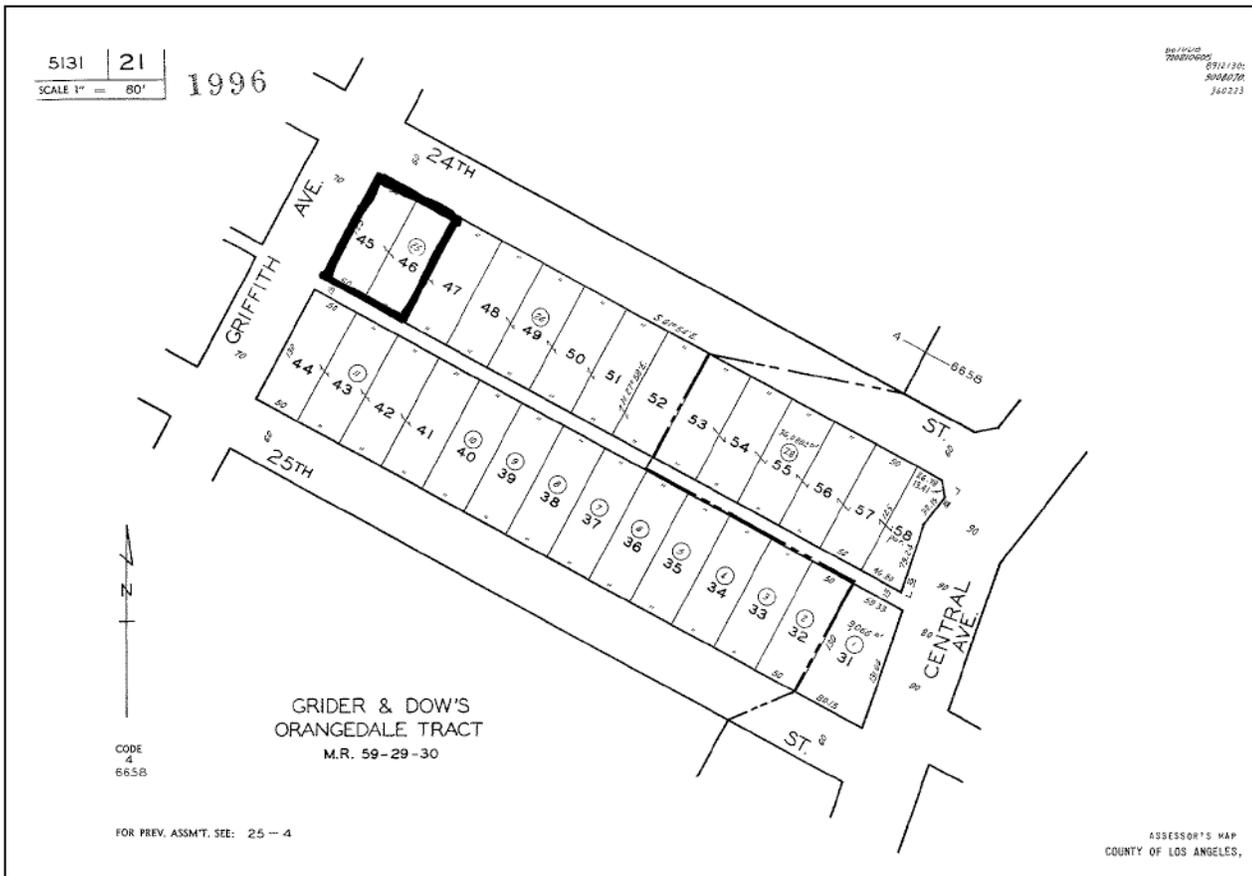
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Second Baptist Church
Los Angeles, California

SKETCH MAP



Property boundary outlined in bold
Source: Los Angeles County Tax Assessor

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HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



Source: Los Angeles Central Library, no date