

**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: 4740 Baltimore Avenue

Postal code: 19143

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church

Current/Common Name: Calvary United Methodist Church; Calvary Center for Culture & Community

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: Worship space; theater; community center

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 1905 to 1907

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1905-1907

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: William R. Brown, Gillespie & Carrel; Dull & Peterson

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Kendrick & Roberts, Inc.

Original owner: Calvary M.E. 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 University City Historical Society Date July 3, 2023

Name with Title Amy Lambert, President Email info@uchs.net

Street Address P.O. Box 31927 Telephone 917-510-3442

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19104

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: October 20, 2023

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: October 24, 2023

Date of Notice Issuance: October 27, 2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Calvary United Methodist Church

Address: 4740 Baltimore Ave.

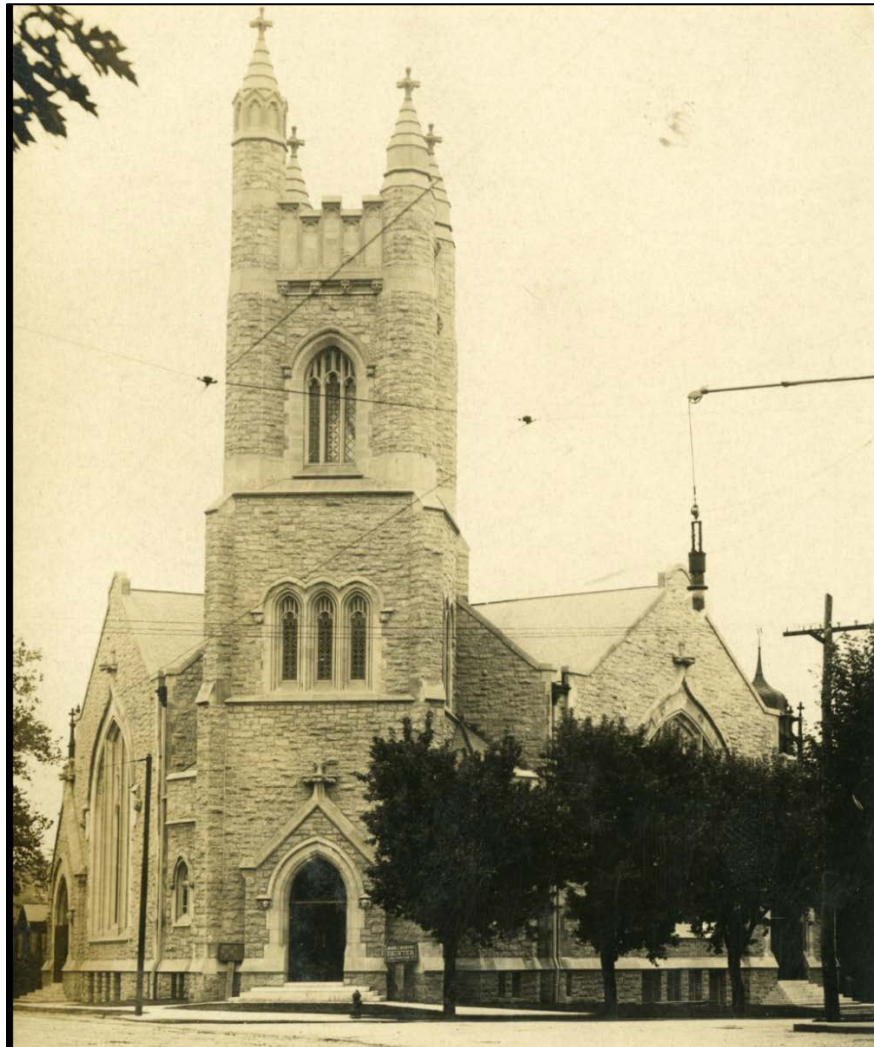
City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19143

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: May 22, 2024

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: December 13, 2024

Date of Final Action: December 13, 2024

X Designated Rejected



NOMINATION OF
4740 BALTIMORE AVENUE
CALVARY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
(originally, CALVARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH)
TO THE
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
OCTOBER 2023

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

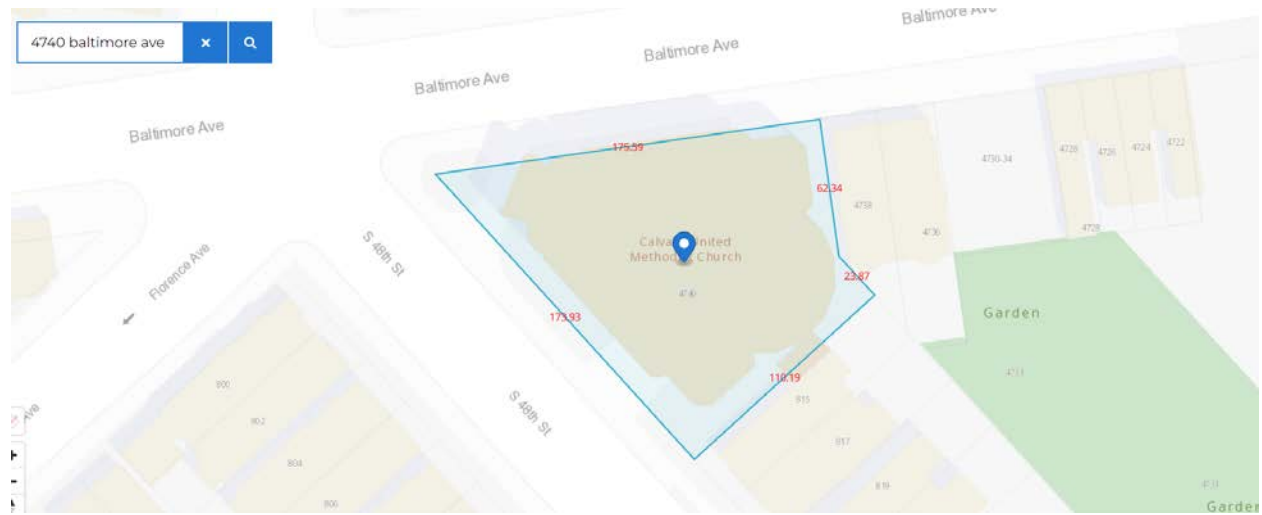


Fig. 1. Parcel map from website of the Office of Property Assessment, City of Philadelphia.

All that certain lot of piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected at 4740 Baltimore Avenue AKA 801 S. 48th Street, Philadelphia, PA, 19143 situate in the City of Philadelphia on the south side of Baltimore Avenue described as follows: Beginning at the point of intersection of the south side of Baltimore Avenue with the northeast side of S. 48th Street; thence southeast along the northeast side of S. 48th Street approximately 174 feet; thence northeast along a line at right angles with said S. 48th Street and along the property line of 815 S. 48th Street 110 feet; thence northwest along a line parallel with said S. 48th Street approximately 24 feet; thence north along a line at right angles with said Baltimore Avenue approximately 62 feet to the south side of Baltimore Avenue; thence westward along the south side of Baltimore Avenue approximately 176 feet to the point of beginning. Being 4740 Baltimore Avenue AKA 801 S. 48th Street.

Note that the southern boundary cuts through a non-historic shed. The property at 815 S. 48th Street, also owned by Calvary United Methodist Church, is outside of the designation boundary.

The property is Office of Property Assessment Account No. 774060000.



Fig. 2. Aerial perspective of Calvary Church from the south. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

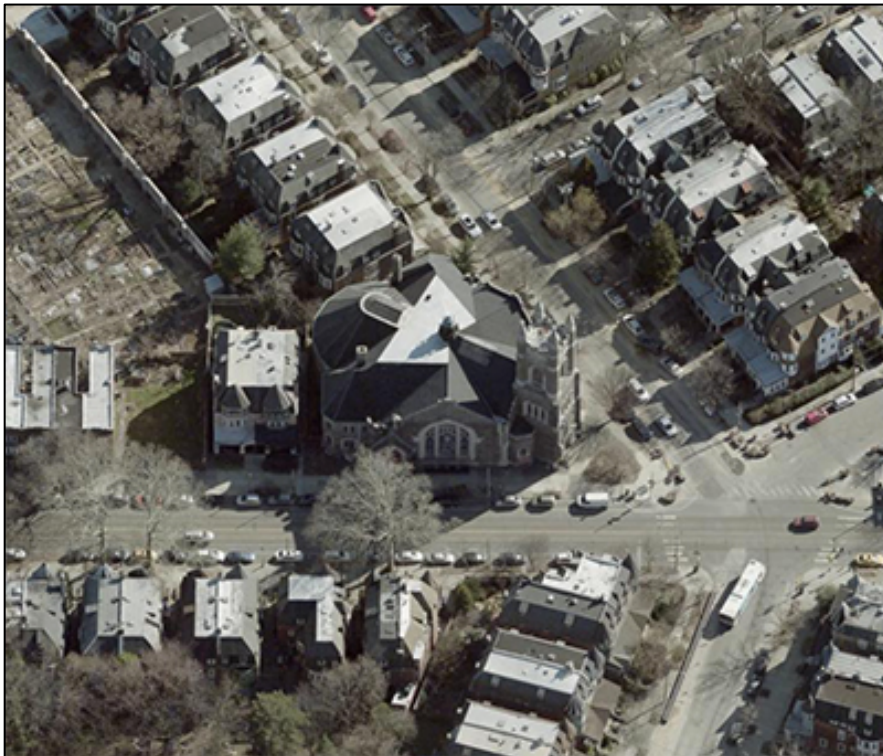


Fig. 3. Aerial perspective of Calvary Church from the north. Source: Pictometry, Atlas, City of Philadelphia.

6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION



Fig. 4. Primary elevation of at S. 48th Street & Baltimore Avenue.

All photos in this section taken by Amy Lambert, 5/23/2023.

The building at 4740 Baltimore Avenue (AKA 801 S. 48th Street) is a Gothic Revival church in the English style. Clad in Avondale granite with limestone trim, the building was completed in 1907 and was originally known as Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church. It is in the Cedar Park neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The neighborhood is comprised primarily of two- and three-story Queen Anne and late-Victorian rowhouses constructed roughly between 1890 and 1910. The church is freestanding and positioned with the primary entrance and tower centered directly in the wedge-shaped corner intersection. While the church is a massive structure in the neighborhood, it remains compatible with the scale of the neighborhood. Apart from the tower, the church is only slightly taller than the nearby residential buildings. The building consumes nearly the entire parcel but a small, landscaped patch of grass with a sign is in front of the building. The building

maximizes its presence within the wedge of its site, with the tower confidently announcing the corner entry which is flanked on either street side by end gable walls holding enormous Tiffany Studio windows in the openings.

Apart from the large front tower, the granite building is two stories in height above a basement. The semi-circular chapel on the south side of the building is behind the sanctuary, which complements the polygonal parcel. This configuration was a “common feature” of ecclesiastical architecture of this period which were “based on triangular or semicircular plans with converging rather than parallel lines of sight” indicating the late nineteenth century theatrical turn in Protestant church design.¹ The building exhibits common features of ecclesiastical Gothic Revival architecture including large stained-glass windows by Tiffany Studios with tracery that dominate several facades, crenellation, limestone trim and detailing, and Tudor arches. Many of the window and door fixtures are original to the building. The building has a complex roofline, which is now clad in asphalt shingles. Roof profiles include hipped, half-hipped and gabled. The prominence of the building along Baltimore Avenue makes it a neighborhood landmark.

Primary Elevation (facing the main intersection and the northwest)

The building’s primary elevation is affixed to the southwest corner of South 48th Street and Baltimore Avenue. It is dominated by a ten-story tower in three telescoping levels that serves as the building’s focal point. The first level of the tower features the building’s primary entrance. It is centrally located in a slightly-protruding, front-gabled bay topped by a stone cornice with a plumaged finial. The original wooden double doors feature heavy tracery and are capped by an arched transom window. A quoined limestone surround accompanies the entrance and connects to a stone belt course that wraps around the entirety of the building. The entrance is flanked by two small chapel-like features, one either side with half-hipped roofs and centrally-located stained-glass arch windows; the western side also has a ground-level pedestrian entrance below the window and the eastern side has two one-over-one basement windows. The fenestrations at the middle level of the tower are identical. They each feature a set of three lancet stained-glass windows encased in limestone quoined surrounds. A datestone that reads “CALVARY CHURCH METHODIST—EPISCOPAL ANNO DOMINI 1905” is located at the northwest corner buttress of the elevation.

The top level of the tower is recessed from the bottom portions and has identical fenestration on all four sides in the form of a central arched window opening. Within each

¹ “How the Calvary Building Came to be in 1906, *Calvary Center*, electronic document, <https://www.calvary-center.org/how-the-calvary-building-came-to-be-in-1906.html>, accessed June 5, 2023.

opening are three lancet windows, the central of which is slightly larger than the two flanking windows; each exhibits stone tracery. The tower terminates with limestone castellation featuring decorative tracery and animated facial reliefs. Four spires with plumage details are located at each corner of the tower, the northwest one of which is slightly taller than the three others.



Fig. 5. Primary (northwest) elevation dominated by the granite tower and taller corner spirelet within the wedge of the five-point street intersection.

North Elevation (Baltimore Avenue)

Fronting Baltimore Avenue, the building's north elevation has a front-gabled parapet and features one of the most prominent fixtures of the building: a large three-bay stained glass Tudor arch window. The window is accompanied by a quoined limestone surround with tracery and plumaged finial and dominates most of the plane of this elevation. To the east of the stained-glass window is a protruding entryway, which is accessed by a set of stone steps. This secondary entrance mirrors the one at the tower with a front-gabled parapet with a plumage finial. A set of original wooden double doors with tracery with an arched transom window and sidelights provides access to an ancillary hallway leading to the sanctuary and stairwell. The entire entryway is surrounded by a thick limestone arch with cherub reliefs at the base.

Around the corner from this entrance is a secondary utilitarian door that provides access to a stairwell. The second story of the stairwell features a one-over-one leaded stained-glass window and a castellated parapet. Directly to the east of the stairwell has several one-over-one window fixtures on the first and second story. The first story windows have quoined limestone surrounds and the second story has limestone sills and lintels. The northeast corner of the building also features a window on the first and second stories.



Fig. 6. North elevation along Baltimore Avenue.



Fig. 7. Side entry doors along Baltimore Avenue.



Fig. 8. Baltimore Avenue elevation showing massing.



Fig. 9. Elevation along S. 48th Street.

Southwest Elevation (South 48th Street)

Fronting South 48th Street, and practically identical to the north elevation, the building's southwest elevation has a front-gabled parapet and features one of the most prominent fixtures of the building: a large three-bay stained glass Tudor arch window. The Tiffany Studios window is accompanied by a quoined limestone surround with tracery and plumaged finial and dominates most of the plane of this elevation. To the south of the stained-glass window is a protruding entryway, which is accessed by a set of stone steps. This secondary entrance mirrors the one at the tower with a front-gabled parapet with a plumage finial. A set of original wooden double doors with tracery, an arched transom window and sidelights provides access to an ancillary hallway leading to the sanctuary and stairwell. The entire entryway is surrounded by a thick limestone arch with cherub reliefs at the base.

Around the corner from this entrance is a secondary utilitarian door that provides access to a stairwell. The second story of the stairwell features a one-over-one leaded stained-glass window and a castellated parapet. Directly to the east of the stairwell has several one-over-one window fixtures on the first and second story. The first story windows have quoined limestone surrounds. The second story has limestone sills and lintels. The northeast corner of the building also features a window on the first and second stories.



Fig. 10. Side entry doors along S. 48th Street.



Fig. 11. Entry door for office along S. 48th Street.

East Elevation

Most of the east elevation is not visible from the public right-of-way due to the proximity of the nearby buildings on Baltimore Avenue. However, the massing, fenestration and limestone details mimic those of the southwest elevation, a mirror copy.



Fig. 12. Rear of building at Baltimore Avenue.



Fig. 13. Rear of building at S. 48th Street at the west elevation.



Fig. 14. Northwest corner of building showing rear of both properties and west elevation.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE



Fig. 15. The southwest elevation of the main sanctuary showing one of two enormous Tiffany Studio windows. This is "Resurrection". It measures 22 feet wide and 32 feet tall. It is inscribed "In Memoriam/George May."

Calvary United Methodist Church, originally known as Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, is historically significant and should be listed individually on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, and H as delineated in Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code. The church meets Criterion D as a representative example of late nineteenth century ecclesiastical English-Gothic style architecture with its theatrical organization of spaces and bold presence at a major

Note that Criterion E was not included in designation by PHC



intersection. It meets Criterion E through its association with a few architects including Architects of Record Brown, Gillespie & Carrel. Criterion H is satisfied by the building's announced presence within a wedge-shaped site at its five-pointed street intersection and landmark status along Baltimore Avenue, in sight from the street and its trolleys for blocks in either direction. The building is located within the National Register of Historic Places-listed West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District. The following history is extracted from the 2006 *Calvary Centennial Commemorative Visitor's Guide*, with architectural history by Michael Lewis from a 1989 Clio Group study.

The Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church congregation was founded in 1895, at a time when the Cedar Park neighborhood was under development from its rural farmland character. The church directly benefited from the ensuing population boom in West Philadelphia. Starting in a tent at the corner of 48th Street and Baltimore Avenue, the congregation built a plain, square wooden cottage on the site, which was soon overwhelmed by the quickly burgeoning congregation.



Fig. 16. The 1862 Smedley Atlas of Philadelphia shows the plan of the emerging Cedar Park neighborhood with an extension of the city's grid. The Cherry Hotel is called out on Baltimore Avenue near the terminus of Warrington's Lane.

This stretch of Baltimore Pike was still a rural outpost until about the mid-1880s when the streetcars and new construction threatened the continued existence of the taverns and remaining farms. Electrified trolleys were in place by the mid-1890s, allowing residents to

commute to the city for work, an attractive feature of suburban living at the time. A stop on the Pennsylvania Railroad (now SEPTA Regional Rail) was included at S. 49th Street and Chester Avenue. Farms were replaced by speculative development on either side of Baltimore Avenue, but mostly to the south of it. While a diversity of housing types was constructed including apartments, some detached, and some rowhouses, the prevalent housing type was the three-story, Queen Anne “twin,” or semi-detached structure. These houses were attractive to prospective purchasers from more congested parts of the city, not just because of the broad, tree-lined streets, but also because the porches of these houses with balconies and bay windows, were novel and exuberant architectural features.



Fig. 17. The Cherry Tree Inn was on Baltimore Avenue at Warrington's Lane (now S. 47th Street) one block from the Calvary site. It was demolished not long after the church had its first build, demonstrating a pivot point in the development of Cedar Park. This watercolor by Frank H. Taylor is from 1896. Source: Castner Scrapbook, vol. 27, Free Library of Philadelphia.

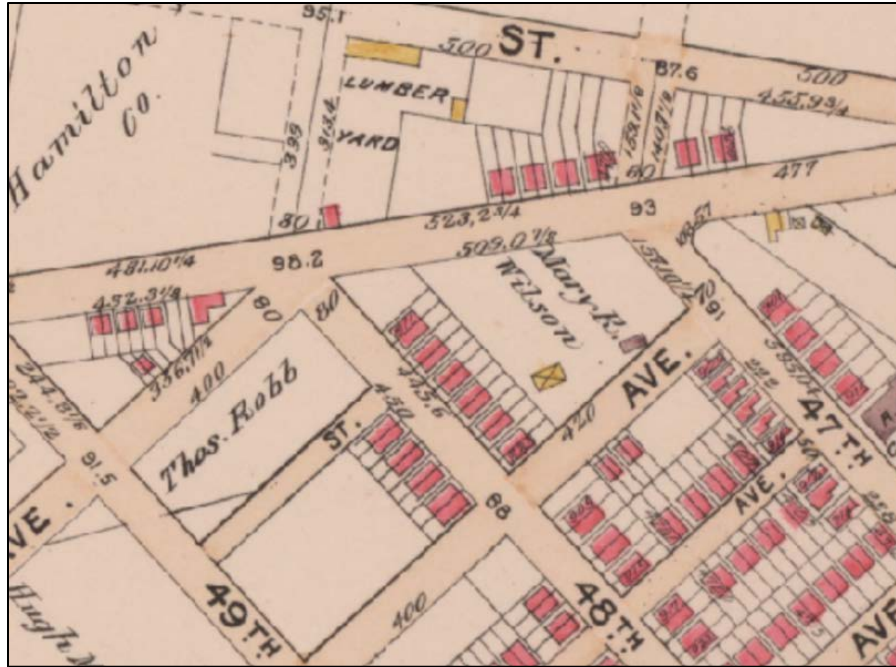


Fig. 18. The 1895 Bromley Atlas shows the turnover of what would be the Cedar Park neighborhood from farmland dotted with taverns and lumber yards to an extension of the streetcar suburbs to the east along Baltimore Avenue, like Spruce Hill.

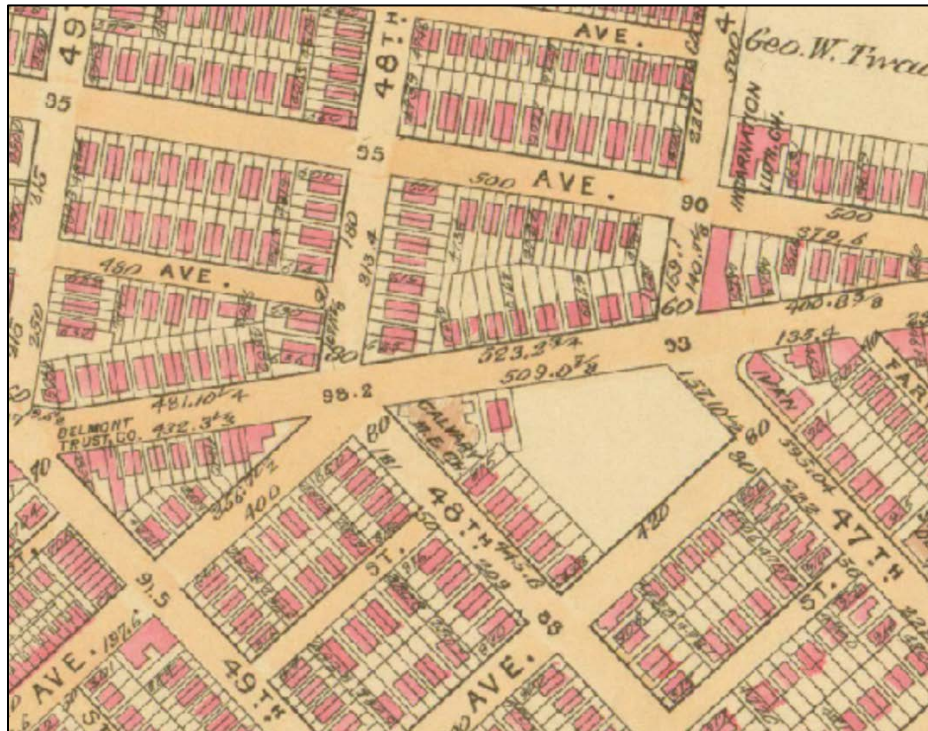


Fig. 19. The 1910 Bromley Atlas shows the majority of the Cedar Park neighborhood has been infilled except for the block behind Calvary Church over to S. 47th Street, the former location of the Cherry Tree Inn and terminus of Warrington's Lane.

In 1897, Calvary M.E. Church chose the firm of Dull & Peterson to activate the wedge-shaped site in West Philadelphia with a design that would accommodate their congregation and have “every comfort and convenience” introduced.² John Dull (1859-1949) was a noted Philadelphia architect who had worked with Theophilus P. Chandler, Jr. and the Wilson Brothers. His ecclesiastical designs for the Germain Evangelical Church, the Swedish Lutheran Church and the Congregation Ruben Synagogue likely contributed to the decision to hire the firm. Dull was a founder of Drexel Institute’s architecture program and a talented PAFA-trained artist, particularly in watercolor.³

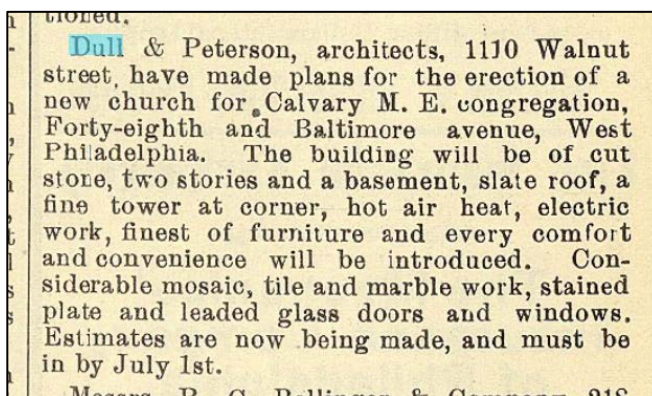


Fig. 20. Entry in the PRERBG, June 30, 1897, discussing the plans by Dull & Peterson for the new church. The detail of the interior program and materials aligns with the English gothic style planned for the site and ultimately included in the as built scheme by other architects.

Dull & Peterson completed their plans by June of 1897 and proposed to erect the church in two phases: a two-story stone chapel with attached community rooms to be built first along Baltimore Avenue to be followed a few years later by a sanctuary and tower. The chapel structure was dedicated on October 8, 1898. The chapel served its purpose of housing the congregation until early 1904 when the new minister, Dr. Albert E. Piper, proposed the sanctuary’s addition. John Dull was summoned to complete his original plan. He spent the early months of the year preparing the drawings as discussed in the *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*. Yet his 1897 scheme was now viewed as hopelessly out of date and Dull was discharged as architect for reasons that the nominator was unable to locate definitively. There were structural problems with the chapel that may have contributed to Dull’s departure and that likely contributed to the building’s demolition, but few clues remain as to the wholesale changeover in firms.

New architect William R. Brown was hired in the fall of 1904. He was already preparing the plans in September when he engaged with the firm of Gillespie & Carrel as associate

² *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, June 30, 1897.

³ Sandra Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985).

architects. All three were from New York. By January 1905, the plans were advanced enough for contractors to begin building. Brown, Gillespie & Carrel completely revised Dull's original scheme. The corner tower was preserved down to the taller corner spirelet, but nearly everything else was altered. Dull's rambling, asymmetrical design for the site was discarded in favor of a bold & symmetrical plan that perfectly fit the site, anchored at the tip of its wedge shape by the entry tower, fanning out from there with flanks at both S. 48th Street and Baltimore Avenue for large windows, culminating in a rear chapel, half-round in plan, with offices nestled in each corner that had direct street access.

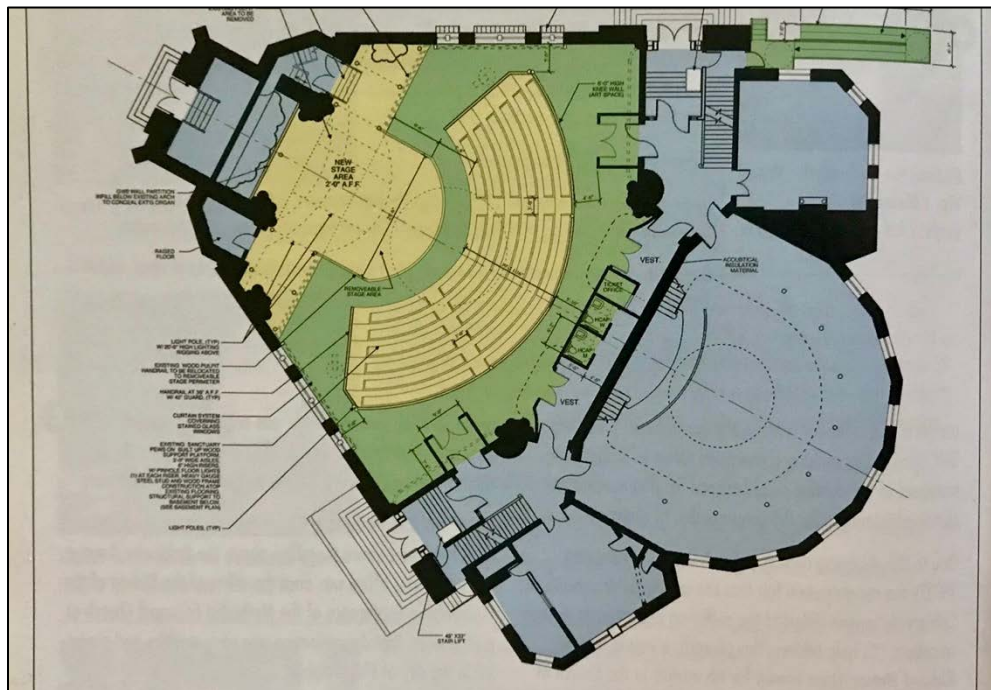


Fig. 21. Plan of the first level of the church by Boise Holland Architects, 2006, for a sanctuary/theater restoration project. Source: Calvary Centennial Commemorative Visitor's Guide

Plans were advanced enough by January 1905 for contractors to begin bidding, yet construction was delayed for nearly a year, possibly because of the structural issues in the Dull & Peterson chapel. A mention in the Real Estate section of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* at the time stated that "portions of the present building on the site are to be utilized," indicating an intention to reuse and incorporate part of the Dull & Peterson structure.⁴ This may not have been possible structurally or may have been too costly. The same newspaper report indicated that builders William R. Dougherty & Henderson Company, Limited, issued a request for proposals.⁵ But news went quiet after that for about a year perhaps due to decisions related to the existing 1897 building.

⁴ The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "Real Estate News," January 18, 1905. (See Fig. 26.)

⁵ *Ibid.*

In January 1906, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that congregant William J. Faux of 4503 Chester Ave. gave \$10,000 to the church specifically for the erection of the corner tower, in memory of his father. As a snapshot of the early years of the church when the congregation matched the grandeur of the building, Mr. Faux made his living in coal and the railroad, and his father had been a personal friend of President Lincoln. In the wake of Calvary's dedication in November 1907, a sardonic editorial note in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Fig. 24) mentioned that \$100,000 had been raised over the course of two Sundays.⁶ The cornerstone was laid on April 14, 1906. Construction bids were accepted in May 1907 with builders Kendrick & Roberts, Inc., awarded the construction contract. The church was dedicated on November 24, 1907.

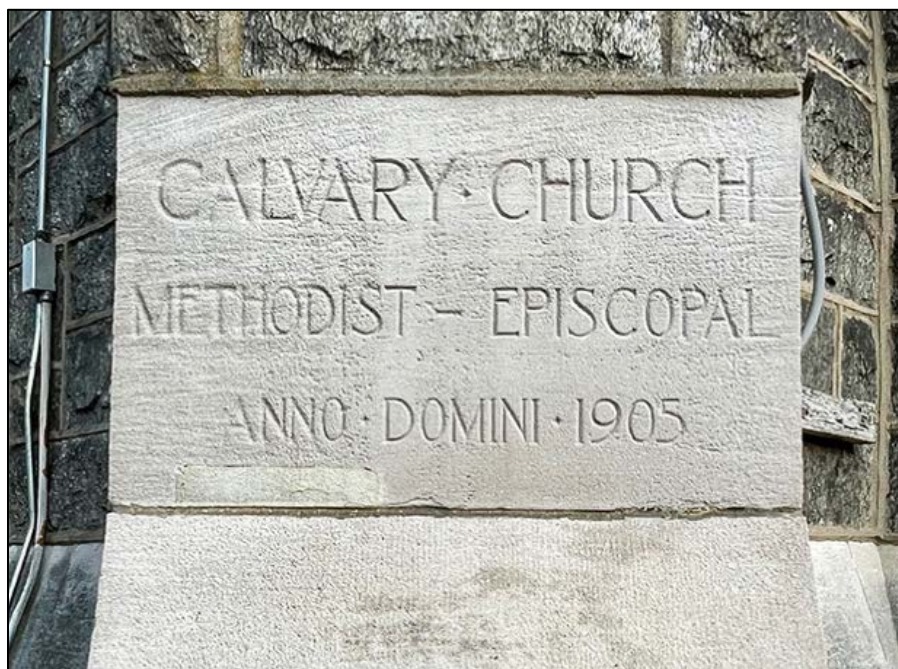


Fig. 22. The dedication stone for Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church.

⁶ "Editorial Comment," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 26, 1907, 8.

Kendrick & Roberts, Inc., builders, Bailey Building, have submitted bids to J. F. Mayer, Jr., and H. W. Greene, associate architects, Marshall and Poplar streets, for the assembly building to be built for Jacob Sterns, Esq., at 813-15-17 North 5th street. It will be three stories and basement, with all modern improvements. They also have been awarded the contract to build the handsome new stone edifice for the Calvary Presbyterian congregation at Forty-eighth and Baltimore avenue. The present church now there will be demolished and upon the site the magnificent stone and marble structure will be built at an estimated cost of \$100,000 to \$125,000, and when finished will be one of the most imposing edifices in this city (details previously noted). The plans are by Gillespie, Carroll & Brown, associate architects, New York City.

Fig. 23. *PRERBG*, May 10, 1907, announcing Kendrick & Roberts as the builders and estimated construction costs of up to \$125,000.

—Times are hard and money tight, eh?
Yet Calvary Methodist Church managed
to raise \$100,000 in two Sundays' glean-
ings. Its members must wear long stock-
ings.

Fig. 24. Excerpt from "Editorial Comment," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 26, 1907, page 8, two days after the church's dedication. Accessed via newspapers.com June 19, 2023.

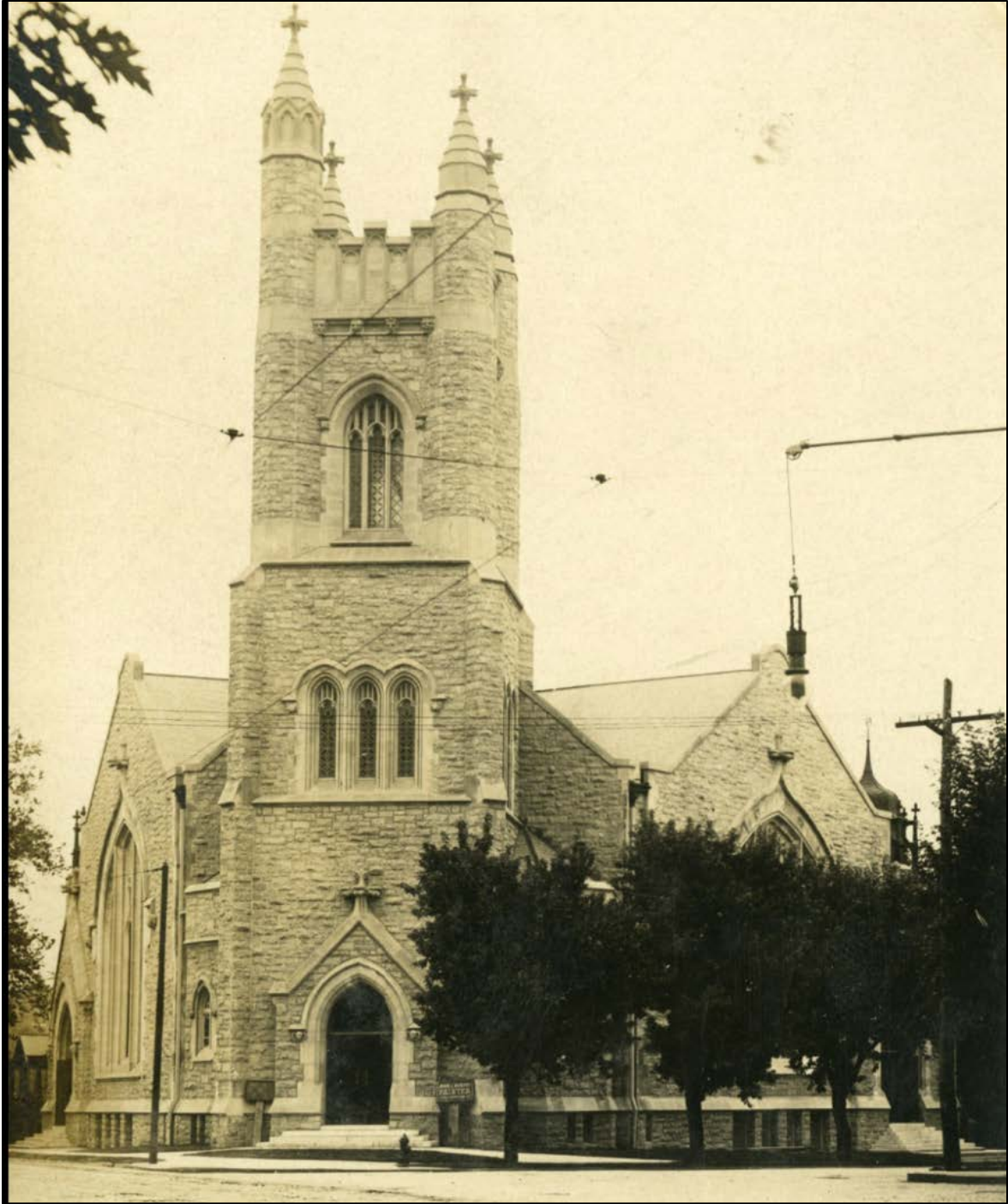


Fig. 25. A 1907 photograph of the recently completed Calvary M.E. Church. Source: Robert Sklar Postcard Collection, University of Pennsylvania Architectural Archives. Accessed: June 18, 2023.

What is curious about the 1907 iteration of the design is that while it makes much more sense of its challenging, wedge-shaped site, it does so in a manner that aligns the design more with the curvilinear auditoriums and plans that characterize Protestant churches of

the late nineteenth century. The plan is straightforward but with a dazzling spatial plan that connects different access points to large, dramatic volumes that contain the preaching spaces above an interconnected warren of support spaces in the semi-recessed basement. The sanctuary plan is entirely characteristic of Methodist practices, whereby two aisles between pews that curve toward the preacher displace the center aisle within a “preaching box” which would have implied a processional path to the altar, more common in Catholic or Episcopal churches.⁷

A 1905 mention in the Real Estate news section of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* lists the interior spaces of the church per level. In the basement were to be a large assembly room, church parlor, dining room, kitchen, gymnasium and furnace room. On the first floor would be an auditorium, Sunday school, Epworth League room, library and infant classroom. A ladies’ parlor and class meeting rooms would be fitted up on the second floor.

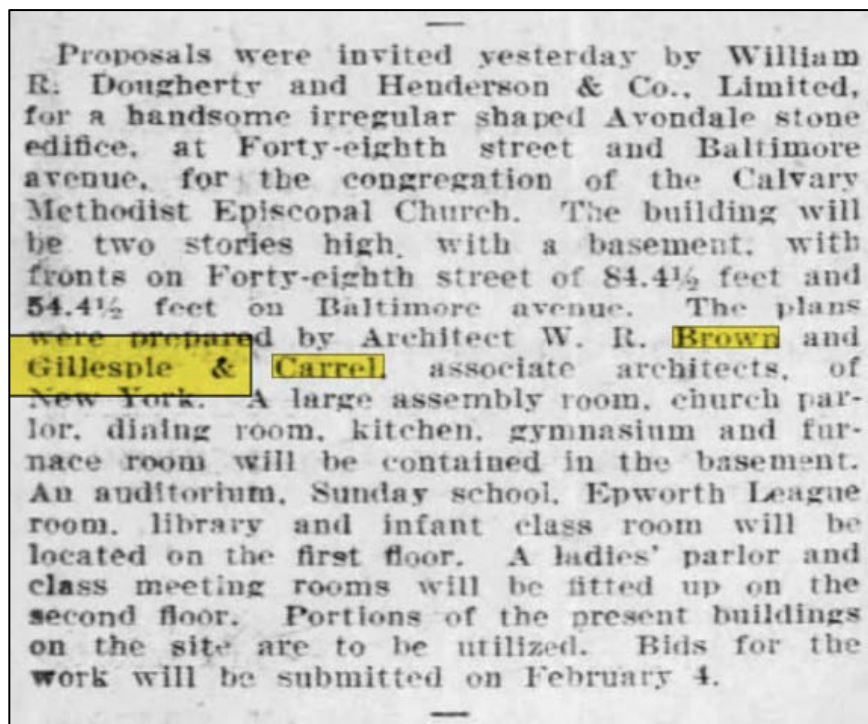


Fig. 26. Excerpt from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 1905, describing the interior rooms in the new building which was being prepared at the time by William Brown, architect, and Gillespie & Carrel, associate architects.

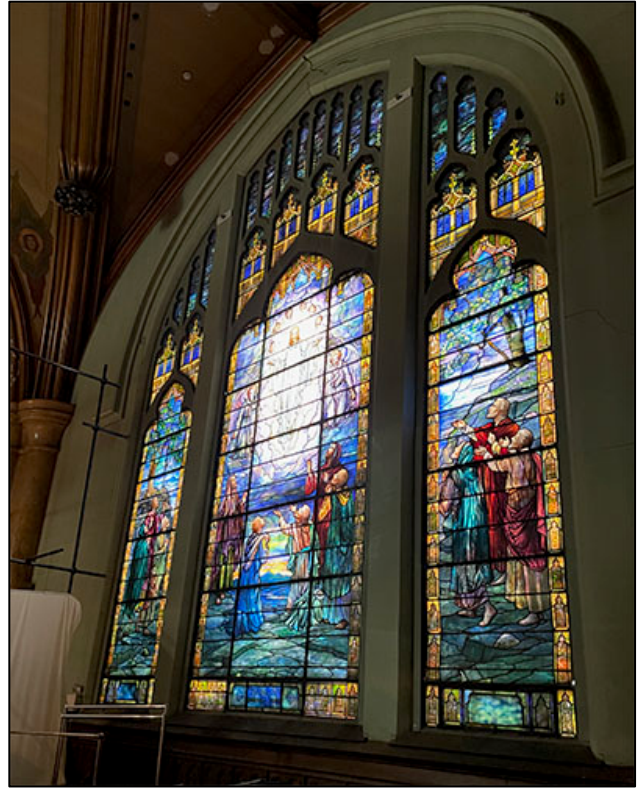
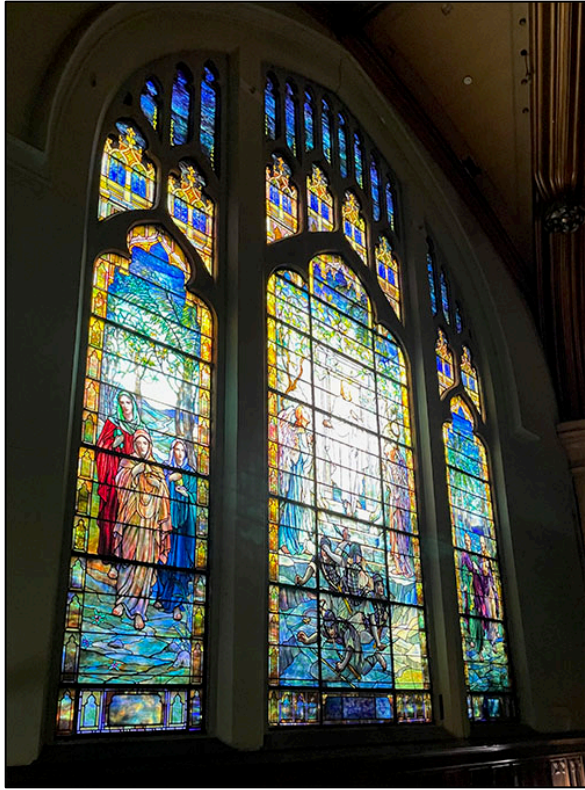
While the original sanctuary has undergone significant renovation in recent years for conversion into a theater space, the remainder of the building retains much of its original and polychromatic color and material scheme. This highly decorative design, in stark

⁷ Michael Lewis, nomination for Christ Methodist Episcopal Church, 435-41 N. 38th Street, Philadelphia, 2016.

contrast to the austere exterior, evokes a Pugin-esque English Gothic style that was replicated in several Protestant churches nearby, including the 1875 Thomas Webb Richardson-designed Northminster Presbyterian Church in Powelton Village. While 1907 was outside of the era of late Victorian design in Philadelphia, the church may have decided that the interior should continue the trend of eclecticism and polychromy that matched the ambitions of the decidedly upwardly mobile congregation. This church may have been Methodist, but it seems to have eschewed the sparse minimalism that earlier churches like St. George's in Old City expressed, and played with color, texture, and materiality more befitting late Victorians of a certain class. The extraordinary collection of decorative glass throughout the building is a testament to the wealth of the early congregation.



Fig. 27. Interior doors with decorative leaded glass lights, mosaic floors, original light fixture and painted transom details. Note that no interior designation is included as part of this nomination.



Figs. 28 & 29. Left, interior of “Resurrection” at 48th St. Right, “Ascension” at Baltimore Ave.

Aside from small scale repair work in 1908 to exterior tower stone due to a lightning strike, no significant work seems to have occurred for over forty years after the initial build. The church was damaged, however, in the winter of 1946-47 by a windstorm and again by lightning in 1952 which was repaired to the tune of \$4,000.00 by contractor F.B. Davis and Sons and completed in 1953.

The neighborhood remained relatively unchanged until the 1950s and 1960s when demographic changes created a more diverse West Philadelphia. Many churches lost their membership due to the flight of parishioners to the suburbs or Northeast Philadelphia. Concurrently, the later waves of the Great Migration brought Black southerners to Philadelphia and many churches were sold to Black congregations. Calvary (United Methodist Church, by then) defied that trend by keeping its congregation while opening doors to serve an ever more diverse population. After several failed attempts to sell the building, the congregation decided to work with members of the community, devising a plan to turn its ministry into not only restoration of the building, but also into redevelopment of the gigantic spaces for new uses, taking quite literally to heart and stretching to the limits the widely touted Methodist vision of “open hearts, open minds, open doors.” The Calvary Center for Culture and Community was formed in partnership with the community and has set a new model for the redevelopment of urban churches in a way that both continues and broadens the positive impact of churches and church

buildings in the larger surrounding community. The building now houses not just one, but many religious congregations and several community groups of many stripes.



Fig. 30. 1955 photo of Baltimore Avenue at S. 49th Street looking east back toward Calvary Church with its tower in the background. Source: Philly History. Accessed: June 8, 2023.



Fig. 31. The tower with dominant spirelet along Baltimore Avenue. Undated photo by Charles Washington. Source: West Philadelphia Community History Center. Accessed: June 8, 2023.



Fig. 32. Detail of Resurrection window by Tiffany at Calvary M.E. Church.

Decorative Glass & Interior Schemes in Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church

The main artistic treasures of Calvary Church are the signed Tiffany glass windows found in the main sanctuary walls, one along Baltimore Avenue, the other along S. 48th Street, that depict Resurrection (48th) and Ascension (Baltimore). These windows measure 22' x 32'. Resurrection depicts the moment in the Easter story in which the resurrected Christ stands to greet the three women who have found his body missing from the tomb. Ascension depicts the resurrected Christ figure ascending into the heavens, surrounded by a semicircle of cherubs, with his disciples watching in awe from a romanticized panorama below.

These Tiffany windows are copies of designs made ten years earlier for the Calvary Methodist Church in Pittsburgh. The Philadelphia windows, however, are significantly larger than the Pittsburgh examples and show all the signature techniques of Tiffany Studios including opalescent and drapery glass, vitreous paint, plating, enamels, machine texturing, lead came, acid etching and copper foil. Some of the glass is three layers thick, highlighting the opalescent glass at its finest.

The beautiful stained-glass dome originally installed in the sanctuary is the work of John Lafarge. It was sold to a wealthy Midwestern collector-conservator in 1994 but soon returned to the church following a community outcry over their removal. However, the boxed-up glass currently sits under the theater seating in the main sanctuary. It includes an amber background geometric pattern with darker oval centerpieces depicting twelve angelic faces.

The triptych canvas painting in the rear of the sanctuary depicts the Sermon on the Mount by H. Hanley Parker, 1906. Though resembling a mural, it is in fact one of the largest oil paintings in a church in Philadelphia. The ceiling angels and other mural paintings are also the work of Parker.

The large yellow marbled columns are scagliola (faux marble) made of plaster. Many nineteenth century buildings used scagliola columns, including the Academy of Music in Philadelphia.

The chapel in the rear of the site contains two murals in the balcony by Richard Watson commissioned in 1978. Watson is responsible for the contemporary artwork at the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia. The murals were inspired by the Year of the Child. Additionally, there are seven windows in the chapel containing memorial stained-glass installed after the construction of the church.

History of the Methodist Church in the U.S. and Philadelphia

What is today known as the United Methodist Church (UMC) in America began as a revival movement within the Church of England led by brothers John (1703-1791) and Charles (1707-1788) Wesley in the eighteenth century. Their father Samuel was an Anglican priest. In 1739, as students at Oxford University, the brothers began a study and prayer group called the "Holy Club," with a particular emphasis on reaching out to the underprivileged. Their disciplined piety attracted the mocking nickname "Methodists," although the name and dedication to organized study remained. John Wesley was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1728. The brothers' mission was never to establish a new church, but rather to reform the Church of England from within, hence the name of the American followers, the Methodist Episcopal Church. Neither John nor Charles Wesley ever formally renounced their Anglican faith.

After a short and unsuccessful missionary stint in the colony of Georgia, John Wesley became inspired by the readings and commentary of Martin Luther. A spiritual awakening led him to begin a traveling ministry with a dynamic energy, visiting the English countryside to preach to as many people as possible wherever possible, including in barns, graveyards, and other open-air locations. A unique aspect of his ministry was the organization of people into classes or societies for prayer or study as finding guidance in the Bible is a major tenant of Methodism. Other tenants include social outreach and

spiritual discipline, harnessed to be used against the social ills of alcoholism, slavery, and despair. The Methodist movement is both liturgical and evangelical in its expression. The theological driving force for the Anglican reform movement is the idea that salvation is attainable to all; to Wesley, God did not have a pre-ordained elect on whom was disposed grace. This democratic perspective on God's love and Christian salvation, in addition to the study and social outreach imperatives of Methodism, has historically appealed to a wide variety of people. In particular, the universalist message was well received by people outside of organized religion, including the working class, small merchants, artisans, and others who rejected the worldliness of the gentry.⁸ In the U.S., the appeal of Methodism to former slaves was also strong. In fact, Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and Absalom Jones, today considered a saint within the Episcopal Church, were former slaves born into the Methodist hot spot of the mid-Atlantic region.⁹

As the American colonies grew, Methodism crossed the ocean in the form of itinerant preachers, including Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke. Their arrival coincided with the Great Awakening, the name given to eighteenth century religious revival that is credited as personalizing Christianity. In Philadelphia, St. Georges Methodist Church was founded in 1769 at the corner of N. 4th and New Streets. It is the oldest continually operating Methodist church in the United States, and it was here in 1771 where Asbury, who called the church "the cathedral of Methodism" in America, preached his first American sermon. Historic St. Georges, as the church is known today, is also the site of the archives of the Methodist Church's Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. The region around Philadelphia, including New Jersey and the Delmarva peninsula, was considered the "garden of Methodism," where camp meetings, a cornerstone of nineteenth century Methodism, occurred. These meetings were considered important evangelistic events, even if Asbury expected a certain amount of order as opposed to emotion.

The church was also the site of the rebellion of Allen and Jones. As opposed to slavery as the Quakers, the Methodist claim that anyone could embrace God through conversion and Bible study was appealing to many. Allen noted that Methodists were plain and simple, and emphasized extempore preaching and an eagerness to speak before black audiences.¹⁰ In 1785, both men were licensed by St. Georges to preach as lay ministers, drawing many black worshipers. Not long after, however, a segregated seating policy and newly constructed balcony for black congregants rankled Allen and Jones who led a historic walkout. Allen subsequently founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Jones established an independent church, the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas.

⁸ Dee E. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 94.

⁹ Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University, 2008), 39.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

The Bethel A.M.E. Church on S. 6th Street near Lombard is called “Mother Bethel” and celebrated its bicentennial in 2016.

The Methodist movement is known for having a strong emphasis on music, and Charles Wesley is credited with gifting the denomination with music. The Rev. Alfred T. Day, III, calls Wesley the poet laureate and great writer of Methodism.” The Methodist Hymnal was considered a prayer book, and many members in the early years of the church took their hymnals home for the week for daily devotions.¹¹ “I Love to Tell the Story” by William G. Fischer of West Philadelphia’s Christ M.E. Church (435-41 N. 38th Street) is number 156 in the *United Methodist Hymnal*.

What is today known as the United Methodist Church was formed in 1968 by combining the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church, itself formed in 1939 from the reunion of the northern and southern factions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, split over the issue of slavery in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Founded in 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church was the first American Methodist denomination. Methodists were the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. in the early nineteenth century. Today, Methodists number over 7 million in the U.S. and approximately 12 million worldwide.

Conclusion

Calvary United Methodist Church, originally known as Calvary Methodist Episcopal Church, is historically significant as a representative example of late nineteenth century ecclesiastical English-Gothic style architecture designed by Brown, Gillespie & Carrel, which stands as an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood. For these reasons, the property merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

¹¹ David Bjorlin, “Stuck in the Middle: The Role of Sunday School Hymnals in the Hymnody of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” *Methodist History*, 52:3, April 2014, 13.

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