

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 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

historic name Central Methodist Episcopal Church South

other names/site number First United Methodist Church, Site #GA0362

2. Location

street & number 1100 Central Avenue

☐ not for publication

city or town Hot Springs

☐ vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Garland code 051 zip code 71913

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 for 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.)

Cathie Shattuck  
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/15/11  
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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 the 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

Central Methodist Episcopal Church South

Name of Property

Garland County, Arkansas

County and State

**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 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.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register****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 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Late

Gothic Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone and Concrete

walls Stone

roof Tile

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. birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ 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.

### Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

### Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1914-1915

### Significant Dates

1914-1915

### Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

### Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

### Architect/Builder

John Gaisford, Architect

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Central Methodist Episcopal Church South  
Name of Property

Garland County, Arkansas  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 494901 3818169  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_  
See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

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

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joyce & Neil Thornton, edited by Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator  
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date May 31, 2011  
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787  
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name The Trustees Hold the Property of First United Methodist Church in Trust for the United Methodist Church  
street & number 1100 Central Avenue telephone 501-623-6668  
city or town Hot Springs Arkansas zip code 71901

**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 listing. 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 Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

### Summary

The Central Methodist Episcopal Church South, now First United Methodist Church, located at 1100 Central Avenue, Hot Springs, Arkansas was completed in August 1915 in the late Gothic Revival Style with interior elements of the Carpenter Gothic Style. The church, built of cut Arkansas stone, was designed by John Gaisford, a noted architect of Memphis, Tennessee. The Church has a basement with the main sanctuary above. The front entrance is enhanced by a large stained-glass window above the original double wooden doors.

### Elaboration

The Central Methodist Episcopal Church South, now First United Methodist Church, is located at 1100 Central Avenue in Hot Springs, Arkansas. It is located one block north from the intersection of Central and Grand Avenues, Highways 5, 7, 70 and 270 converge at this intersection. The historic district of downtown Hot Springs begins but a few blocks north of the church. Thus the church occupies a prominent location in the city. The cornerstone was laid November 14, 1914, and the first service was held August 8, 1915. The architect, John Gaisford, designed many churches. He wrote a book "How to Build a Church". Central Methodist Church was built in the late Gothic Revival Style with interior elements of the Gothic Carpenter Style. The building is made of cut Arkansas stone. The sanctuary level is above the basement level and contains a balcony. The building has a tile roof. The windows in the sanctuary are all stained glass.

The building is constructed partly of steel framing, reinforced concrete and stone masonry with wood timber roof framing. The exterior walls are finished with a veneer of pitch-faced cut Arkansas limestone laid in a random ashlar pattern and details of cut limestone copings, window embellishments, diapering panels, and finials.

The exterior conveys the organization of a typical Gothic church exhibiting a nave, transept and choir forming the shape of a cross. The steep-sloped, crossing-gable roof is covered with green glazed terra cotta tiles and includes a transept spire, located at the intersection of the cross (a small stock of original roof tiles, left over from construction, may still be found in the church's sub-basement.)

Throughout the exterior, stained glass windows are of a depressed arch form and exhibit simple Gothic tracery both in the wood window framing and stained glass patterning.

A continuous horizontal limestone coping profile wraps the entire building visually separating the basement and sanctuary levels. This contrasts the inherent verticality of the Gothic style and forms the appearance of an anchored base.

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### Front/East Facade

The symmetrical front facade is centered about a triple-height entry portal of two stained wood doors, a stained glass tympanum window made up of six bays, and a composition of ornate limestone diapering panels exhibiting Gothic tracery. The upper portion of the portal is further articulated by a large limestone arch with stained glass infill separated into multiple bays; dripstones extend upward and become limestone finials at the roof parapet.

To both sides of the central portal are single arched windows at the sanctuary level and tower-like elements, extending above the roof parapet to be capped with limestone copings and finials.

The facade then steps down in height articulating the side-aisles of the nave. The vertical lines made by a pair of buttresses capped in limestone, are countered by horizontal limestone banding. This serves to emphasize the verticality of the double-height central portal.

A matching pitch-faced limestone wall, running parallel to Central Avenue, turns inward to lead one up the stairs to the elevated sanctuary.

### Side/North and South Facades

The side facades are composed of three major elevations: the nave elevation, the transept elevation and the choir elevation. The nave elevation, extending between the front facade and the crossing gable, is divided horizontally into an upper and lower section and vertically into five structural bays by buttresses on the lower level. The lower section is further divided by the horizontal band of limestone sill coping between the sanctuary floor and raised basement. Each bay contains a square window at the basement level and an arched stained-glass window at the sanctuary level, the lower two-thirds of which is two-bays and the upper one-third is four-bays; these windows are articulated with an arched two-piece limestone header with keystone. The front bay of the lower nave is set forward, articulating the interior entry arch and has a small gable element. The upper nave contains five two-bay stained-glass clerestory windows aligned with those of the lower nave; these windows are articulated by dripstones and diapering panels of cut limestone.

The transept elevation mimics the front facade having two vertical tower-like buttress elements on either side of a triple-height gable wall with a large arched opening. Similar to the front facade, dripstones at either side of this opening extend to the roof parapet as finials. Three windows at sanctuary level replace the front facade's entry doors and there are no diapering panels. To either side of the towers are double-height blocks with openings at the basement, sanctuary and balcony levels; at the transept the sanctuary window openings are rectangular rather than arched, but within the opening are two stained-glass arched windows with special tracery.

Finally, the choir terminates the west end of the side facades. The elements of this facade are distorted as they are curving to meet the rear and are best viewed from either of the rear corners of the west facade.

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### Rear/West Facade

The west facade is divided into a central triple-height element and two double-height side elements. The central element is bordered by two tower-like elements matching those of the front portal and side transepts. Four windows at the basement, sanctuary and balcony levels and two windows at the clerestory level articulate the central element of the facade. Dripstones, similar to but shorter than those of the front portal and side transepts, flank the outside edges of the clerestory windows and extend up to form finials at the roof parapet.

The two blocks to either side of the center element are mirror images of each other. Moving outward (north and south) from the tower elements, the curved walls of the choir contain three windows each at the basement, sanctuary and balcony levels. The rear facade then straightens and contains one more window at the three levels before intersecting the side facades with a bi-directional buttress.

Windows at the rear facade's sanctuary and balcony levels match those of the side transept's respective levels.

### Additions

The rear facade was symmetrical at the time of construction. Since then a ramp and entry door have been added to the North end of the west facade. The door is glass and aluminum appearing clearly separate from the original design.

In 1964 an education building was built to the south of the church. During this construction an entry door and elevator were added within the original church. The education building abuts to and partially obscures the southern transept elevation. The education building is Mid-Century Modern style exhibiting vertical lines and pointed arched openings sympathetic to, but clearly of a different period than the Gothic style of the original church.

As the streets to the north and west of the church have been built-up over time, wells have been constructed within the sidewalk partially covering the basement windows, allowing them to remain, generally without modification.

### Interior

The interior of the building is dominated by the sanctuary on the upper level. The lower level contains the choir room, music director's offices, a bride's room and classrooms.

The original Gothic style, originating in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, was primarily restricted to catholic worship spaces. Its organization was based on catholic rituals of the time.

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Though the exterior of the church conveys the organization of a typical Gothic interior, the actual interior varies. It could be speculated that the architect adapted his design to better suite the worship practices of the Methodist denomination.

Through the front doors, one enters an intermediate space or "porch." Doors to either side of a choir loft lead into the main sanctuary space. This main space is much like the nave of a Gothic cathedral with a high central space filled with light colored by stained-glass clerestory windows. Side aisles flank this area and complete the nave; the steel structure permits a large column-free opening to replace the arcade which would have been found in a Gothic nave centuries earlier. This is also where one will recognize the first major variation from a typical Gothic organization; the sanctuary seating faces the front door and the sermon is given from just below the choir loft.

In a typical Gothic organization, the nave would be intersected by a transept, forming a cross. Rather than the crossing space of a transept, the transept and choir are seemingly combined in a large semi-circular space at the end of this church's nave. A skylight of stained glass pays homage to the missing transept element. Stairs to access the balcony and basement levels are contained behind the transept elevations seen on the exterior. At its perimeter, compartmentalized spaces at the sanctuary and balcony levels surround the space. These small rooms are interconnected via sliding doors making them much like the ambulatory found within a typical Gothic organization. Here these spaces are used for the display of the church's history and current events, much like they would have been used to display art, sculpture or relics in the original Gothic style's Catholic tradition.

Throughout the interior woodwork at windows and the ceiling is at once simple and ornate mimicking the stone fenestration of Gothic style, this is a feature common of the Carpenter Gothic Style. Details of the woodwork and ironwork at times reflect those typical of the Arts and Crafts movement contemporary with the time of the building's construction.

Of significant interest are the columns in the sanctuary. A technique known as scagliola was used. The craft began in the early 17th century in Northern Italy mainly for pictorial inlaid table tops. The craft was further developed in Germany as a decorative finish in churches. It caught on in England as a way of imitating marble. By the 18th century scagliola columns were a feature of many important buildings. In the United States scagliola was popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Scagliola work involves pigment impregnated into wet plaster. The traditional labor intensive work makes scagliola an expensive medium. By the end of World War II it became near extinction.

Over the years the scagliola columns in the church had deteriorated. Wendel Norton of Marshall, Arkansas, is one of the very few doing scagliola work. Mr Norton and his staff repaired the columns and caps. This work was completed in 2004.



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The church's unique adoption of the Gothic Style along with its well preserved wood work and detailing further add to its historic integrity.

### Integrity

Today Central Methodist (now First United Methodist Church) remains virtually unaltered since it was built. The original design and much of the historical fabric are intact. This active church, still in use, remains a good example of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century building of the late Gothic Revival Style.

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### Summary

Central Methodist (now First United Methodist) church had its beginning in 1852 when an itinerant Methodist clergyman, Samuel Morris came to town. There were various locations prior to this church being built in 1914-1915 at the present location at 1100 Central Avenue. The current building was built in the late Gothic Revival style, a style that was extremely popular throughout the first part of the twentieth century. The Central Methodist Episcopal Church South, with its masonry construction, lancet windows, steeply-pitched roof, and buttresses, is a classic example of the style, and a great example in Hot Springs. As such, the Central Methodist Episcopal Church South is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance under Criterion C** as an excellent example of the late Gothic Revival style. Since the building is still owned by the church and in use for weekly services, it is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties**.

### Elaboration

Following the preaching of Samuel Morris, Central Methodist (now First United Methodist Church) was first located at the base of North Mountain where Central Avenue turns right to become Park Avenue. The minister was William Chamberlain. This church building burned in 1872.

The church relocated in 1873 to Central Avenue and Chapel Street on property given by the William F. Gaines estate. This building was torn down and a second church was built on the same location in 1889. This church was built with two stories. The second floor was the sanctuary, but the first floor facing Central Avenue was made up of stores to be rented out as a source of income for the church. In 1905 Hot Springs experienced a devastating fire. The church burned down. This was the second church building lost by fire. The city then gave the church a lot on the southwest corner of Central Avenue and Olive Street. This church was dedicated in June 1909.

On September 5, 1913, a woman near Church Street overturned her charcoal for ironing and started a fire that rapidly spread until it became a more disastrous fire than that of 1905. It destroyed many expensive buildings including the Central Methodist Church. Two days later the congregation met in the Princess Theater (now the Malco) and began plans for a new church. The present location of the church at Central and Orange was chosen.

The architect chosen, John Gaisford, of Memphis, Tennessee, was born in Warminster, Wilts, England, October 6, 1875. His training in engineering and architecture was completed at the Birkbeck Institute, Chancery Lane, London, England. Mr. Gaisford was employed in drafting, designing and constructing churches, mansions and business structures in the city of London. He also engaged at this time in the restoration and repair of ancient churches in the western part of England. In 1901 Mr. Gaisford came to America and soon became naturalized. For four years he worked in the East then settled in Memphis, Tennessee. He was the architect for many buildings and churches including the Forrest City and Conway

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United Methodist Churches. When he chose a style for the Central Methodist Episcopal Church South, he looked no further than the widely popular late Gothic Revival style.

The growth of the use of the Gothic Revival style for religious architecture had its roots in the mid-1800s when a belief developed that the use of pagan forms and styles, such as the Greek Revival, was inappropriate for churches. The use of the style was championed in the mid-nineteenth century by such American architects as James Renwick and Richard Upjohn. Upjohn, in particular, was a great promoter of the style, and designed approximately 150 churches in the style from Maine to Alabama and Wisconsin.

Throughout the late nineteenth century, the Gothic Revival remained a popular style for ecclesiastical architecture. The style remained popular through the first part of the twentieth century as well, especially given the drastic increase in money spent on church construction. Between 1900 and 1927, the amount of money spent annually on church construction increased from \$55 million to \$179 million. However, even though the style remained popular during the early 1900s, there was a change in the style. As Carol Rifkind writes in *A Field Guide to American Architecture*, "And while the temper of the times was volatile, flamboyant, and emotional, seen against the eccentricities of the Late Victorian years church architecture was nothing if not careful, correct, and sincere (p. 157)."

Probably the premier church architect of the early twentieth century, Ralph Adams Cram, expressed the thought that went into church architecture in the early 1900s when he wrote, "Build in stone or brick; plan with rigid simplicity; design both interior and exterior with reserve, formality, and self-control; have the mass simple, the composition equally so; imitate no form or detail of larger structures, but work for the dignity and reverence that are theirs. Above all, let the spirit be that of the unchanging Church, the form alone that of the present day" (Rifkind, p. 157).

As a result, when architects utilized the Gothic Revival in the early twentieth century, they mainly used the original Gothic style for inspiration and detailing rather than for building forms and plans. As Cram had said, "We must return for the fire of life to other centuries. We must return, but we may not remain" (Rifkind, p. 157). So it was with the Central Methodist Episcopal Church South. When it was designed, the estimated cost of the new church was \$80,000 and the lot was valued at \$12,000, but with improvements and furnishings by 1916 the enhanced value was closer to \$164,000.

The church building committee composed of W. C. Sorrells, S.W.C. Smith, R. E. Wyatt, F. M. Sigler, and Norval Williams and the minister, H. P. Trimble, reported the church had \$39,000 in cash to proceed with the building. In June, 1914, following an appeal from the building committee and Rev. Trimble, the sum of \$17,000 was subscribed assuring that the church could be built.

The cornerstone was laid November 14, 1914. In 1915 Dr. Theodore Copeland, the minister succeeding Mr. Trimble, wrote an article for the Sentinel Record, the Hot Springs newspaper headlined "Rev. Copeland Is

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Genuine Optimist". He stated that in the midst of devastation from the fire the people of his congregation were building a magnificent church in keeping with the surroundings of the Arkansas Hot Springs.

Since the time of its completion, very few alterations have been made to the church, and the building's appearance has remained much the same as it was when the church was built in 1914-1915. Because of its architecture and location on Central Avenue, one of Hot Springs' main thoroughfares, the church has been one of the most prominent landmarks in Hot Springs, a distinction that it retains today.

### Statement of Significance

The Central Methodist Episcopal Church South building represents a great example of the late Gothic Revival style that was popular throughout the country in the first part of the 1900s. The form and detailing of the building reflect the thoughts and beliefs on church architecture that were prevalent throughout the period. As the twentieth century progressed, there was a shift in the execution of the Gothic Revival style from the flamboyant, exuberant leanings of the 1800s to a more restrained and reserved interpretation in the early 1900s.

As in many of the revival styles of the early twentieth century, the Gothic Revival borrowed detailing and design elements, which were applied to modern plans, rather than the historic forms and plans themselves. Cram expressed it differently when he said:

When a man finds himself confronting a narrow stream, with no bridge in sight, does he leap convulsively on the very brink and then project himself into space? ... No; he retraces his steps, gains his running start, and clears the obstacle at a bound. This is what we architects are doing when we fall back on the great past for our inspiration; this is what, specifically, the Gothicists are particularly doing. We are getting our running start, we are retracing our steps to the great Christian Middle Ages, not that there we may remain, but that we may achieve an adequate point of departure... (Roth, pp. 464-465)

Although the Central Methodist Episcopal Church South utilizes characteristic Gothic Revival detailing in its lancet windows, steeply-pitched roof, and buttresses, all of which emphasize the verticality towards Heaven that was such a hallmark of the style, the details are applied to a strictly twentieth-century plan. Rather than the plethora of self-contained spaces found in Gothic churches of the Middle Ages (i.e., nave, crossing, transepts, chapels, choir, and sanctuary, among others), the plan has one large space on the main floor, the sanctuary.

As a reflection of the late Gothic Revival style in Hot Springs, the Central Methodist Episcopal Church South is the pinnacle. Located on a prominent site in downtown Hot Springs, the church has been a prominent landmark for almost a century. Because of its importance as a great representation of the late

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Gothic Revival style in Hot Springs, the Central Methodist Episcopal Church South is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C** for its architectural significance in Hot Springs. In addition, as the home of an active religious congregation, the building is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties**.

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Roth, Leland M., ed. *America Builds: Source Documents in American Architecture and Planning*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983.

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Legal Property Description:

Subd: H26150 HSR BLK 105

S-T-R: 09-03S-19W

Tax Unit: 061 HOT SPRINGS INSIDE

Legal: BLK 105 LOT PT 8

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains all of the land historically associated with the Central Methodist Episcopal Church South.





















