



Peoples Presbyterian Church  
Name of Property

Denver, Colorado  
County and State

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Mission

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Peoples Presbyterian Church is a two-story brick building at the southeast corner of York Street and East 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue in northeast Denver. The nearly square block covers most of its lot from street to alley, with an open parking lot to its immediate south. Constructed in 1922, the church building is a good example of the Mission architectural style with high historic integrity.

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### Narrative Description

The 1922 church building stands on the southeast corner of the intersection of East 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue and York Street in the Skyland (or North City Park) neighborhood of Denver. Across the street at the northeast corner of 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue and York Street is a small market. There is a small shopping area on the north side of East 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This is one of the few commercial areas in the predominately residential Skyland neighborhood. The Whittier neighborhood lies to the west of York Street. The surrounding area consists primarily of single-family residences, most of which were built in the first four decades of the 1900s. Two blocks to the south is the City Park

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Golf Course (5DV.5311, National Register listed 17 September 1986, NRIS.86002198), City Park, and the Denver Zoo (both 5DV.50, National Register listed 17 September 1986, NRIS.86002190).

The two-story brick Mission style building has a nearly square-shaped plan (70' x 72') and a flat roof with parapets at the west and north walls. The basement is partially below grade and has a dining hall, kitchen, furnace room, and children's room. The two above-grade floors contain the sanctuary, fellowship hall, and offices on the first floor and meeting rooms and classrooms on the second floor. Along the street sides of the property is a detached concrete sidewalk with a grassed curb strip on the north and a rock curb strip with plantings on the west. A low retaining wall of modern (post 2003) concrete masonry units runs along the west side of the building. A ca. 1970s modern brick pedestal with a sign for the church sits at the building's northeast corner. A city alley forms the property's eastern boundary with a row of parking along the building. The lot directly south of the building is undeveloped and accommodates a parking lot within the east half, accessed from the alley. Grass covers the west half to the sidewalk. A wood fence demarcates the south boundary of the property.

## **Exterior**

The building is generally composed of red brick in a running bond with brown brick accents. The basement level consists of brown brick terminating in a water table of brown brick soldiers. On the building's street-facing sides, double vertical rows of brown brick headers, resulting in a stylized pilaster, define each corner, and a projecting stringcourse of brown brick headers with regularly spaced projecting brick medallions defines the roof line, above which are shaped parapet walls. Sparingly used terra cotta tile also serve as decorative accents above the stringcourse. Most windows, except for a few originals at the basement level, are nonhistoric vinyl double-hung sash, which were installed ca. 2003.

### *West-facing side*

The west-facing side along York Street is the building's main façade and features two distinct bays: the sanctuary on the south and the church offices on the north. The south bay is set back 6' from the plane of the north bay and has a full-width brick porch with large brick piers, sandstone coping, and a hipped roof with red asphalt shingles and exposed rafter tails. Eleven concrete steps with stepped brick cheek walls with sandstone coping and metal pipe hand rails lead up from grade to the main entrance at the center of the porch. At the point where the stairs enter the porch is an arched brick opening, which extends above the porch roof, visually breaking the eaves of the roof and creating a shaped parapet above. A historic globe sconce light fixture is at either side of the entry arch. A set of historic paneled wood double doors with single lights leads from the porch to the sanctuary foyer. At either side of the doors is a double-hung, one-over-one vinyl window covered with metal security bars. At the north wall of the porch is another paneled wood door with a single light that enters into the north half of the building.

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At the south bay's second story are three window openings with brown brick trim, each with a blind arch finished with stucco and a diamond-shaped tile insert above, and arched brick trim surrounding the stucco. The three windows within these openings are modern vinyl double-hung sash. Above the decorative header course projects a large triangular brick parapet that terminates in a small square at the point. Within the parapet are two stylized crosses of white tile located at the corners, which flank a central brick circular decoration with four white tiles forming a square around a diamond-shaped tile inset in the center.

The north bay has an entrance to the basement level just north of the porch, with six concrete steps with brick cheek walls leading down from grade. Projecting brickwork forming a stylized pediment further defines this entrance, which has a six-panel wood door with two vertical lights. Two original four-over-two wood double-hung windows are to the north of the entrance at the basement level. The first floor features three modern windows with brick sills. At the second floor is another set of three windows with blind stucco arches, as found at the second floor of the south bay. Above the decorative stringcourse is a centered small rounded parapet, within which are four tiles that form a diamond, flanked on either side by a single tile inset.

#### *North-facing side*

The north side of the building has a centered arched parapet with six diamond tile insets regularly spaced above the decorative stringcourse. Six vinyl double-hung windows are on the second floor, with the farthest windows at each end featuring the same blind stucco arch with brick trim and tile inset as found on the west-facing side. The four windows in between are set within brown brick trim and share a decorative stucco spandrel with a corresponding window below at the first floor. A fifth window with a brick sill at the first floor is directly below the farthest west window at the second level. An original wood single-panel door with three-light window is at the eastern most end; the steps below this entrance have been removed. At the basement level are five regularly spaced windows that correspond with the windows above. Three of these are the original four-over-two double-hung wood windows; the second from the west is a vinyl sliding sash, and the window to the west of the first floor door is a vinyl double-hung sash.

#### *South-facing side*

The south side of the building has the same decorative stringcourse at the roof line as the west- and north-facing sides. Below the stringcourse are three small cross-shaped openings that allow for water drainage from the roof. The west end of the south side features the south end of the porch. At the building's approximate midpoint are two tall stained glass windows with transoms; the transom of the eastern window features an "A" (or alpha), with an open bible in the main window, whereas the western window features a chalice and has an "Ω" (omega) in the transom. To the east of these windows is an above-grade, nonhistoric three-panel wood door with a stained glass transom featuring a white dove. A concrete landing and ramp with metal-tube handrails leads down to grade after wrapping the corner of the east side of the building. At the basement level, between the two stained glass windows above, is a below-grade door with twelve

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steps leading down from grade at the west. A wood shed roof with posts protects these stairs, whereas metal-tube railings and mesh panels prevent falling into the stairwell. To the west of the basement entrance are two sliding sash vinyl windows.

### *East-facing side*

The east side along the alley lacks the stringcourse and other decorative features of the other sides. The roofline is flat. One above-grade entrance is just north of the wall's midpoint. The entrance is accessed from grade by six concrete steps with brick cheek walls and metal-tube handrails and features a six-panel wood door that is believed to be nonhistoric. To the north of the door is a vinyl double-hung window with metal security bars. To the south of this entrance is a below-grade door accessed by twelve concrete steps, which are covered by a corrugated plastic shed roof supported by metal posts. A below-grade sliding-sash window is just to the north of the door. Two vinyl double-hung windows are at the second floor at the north end. Five window openings at the first floor have been infilled with brick; three of these are at the location of the sanctuary and are presumed to have been infilled at the time the sanctuary was remodeled following a fire in 1952. The other two openings are to the north of the first-floor window and appear to have been infilled at a different, unknown time, as the brick is different from the other infilled areas.

### **Interior**

The interior of the building is believed to generally keep its original layout, but its finishes are largely not original to the building's period of construction. Entrance into the sanctuary from the front porch is through a foyer with wood six-paneled double doors and a picture window to either side. A small set of stairs within the foyer leads to the choir loft above, which is currently used for overflow. The wood pews are believed to be original. A door at either end of the sanctuary's north wall leads to the north half of the building. An arched proscenium at the east end frames a slightly raised stage. The far east wall above the stage has two arched shallow niches with wood shelves below.

The north half of the building has a large fellowship hall with a small raised stage and two administrative offices. Two sets of stairs lead down to the basement and up to the second floor. The second floor has three classroom/meeting rooms along the north wall and an interior music room. Two restrooms are at the east wall. The north half of the basement is also accessed by exterior doors at the west and east and houses a large open dining hall with kitchen and ca. 1970s wood paneling on the walls. Restrooms are located near the east exterior entrance. The south half features an open children's room accessed by an exterior door at the south. The furnace room is to the east.

### **Alterations**

No historic photographs of the building have been found. On 6 April 1949 the church received a permit to excavate for a basement below the sanctuary, which included removing masonry

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partitions and replacing them with 10" I-beams. The excavation resulted in construction of the children's room at the south and the installation of a new heating plant and egress door at the south side. In 1952 a fire destroyed much of the interior of the building. The total cost of the fire damage was estimated at \$30,000. The sanctuary was subsequently remodeled and rededicated on 13 February 1953; as mentioned above, the window openings at the east side were presumably infilled as part of this remodeling. The door at the building's north side was removed from service and its exterior stairs to grade removed when restrooms were reconfigured at the east end of the first floor; this is presumed to have occurred in the 1950s due to the interior remodeling. The brick sign pedestal at the northwest corner of the building was built ca. 1970s. The stained glass windows and south entrance transom in the sanctuary were installed in original openings ca. 2000.

Original windows throughout the building were four-over-two wood double-hung sash, and were replaced (except where noted) ca. 2002-03. The 1983 survey form shows the west side with all of its original windows, whereas a 2002 survey form shows the same side with only the south bay having its original windows; the north bay has the current nonhistoric vinyl windows. All nonhistoric windows have been fitted into the original openings, with no blocking.

### Integrity

Overall, the building retains a high level of integrity. Its integrity of *location* and *setting* are high in that the building remains in its original location and is surrounded by an urban neighborhood of small commercial buildings and single-family homes as it was when first constructed. *Feeling* and *association* also remain high in that the building has continuously served as a house of worship and other related religious and social activities for its surrounding neighborhood. Although the interior was damaged by fire in 1952, the church's *design* has high integrity, with only some window openings infilled as part of the sanctuary remodeling in 1953. Integrity of *materials* and *workmanship* are high as well, with such intact features as the restrained ornamentation through the use of brickwork, including the stylized pilasters and pediments. Very little on the exterior of the building, particularly the street façades, has changed from the time of construction, save for the installation of new windows within the original openings. The character-defining features of this Mission style building, such as its prominent porch with overhanging eaves, terra cotta ornamentation, and curvilinear parapets, remain intact.



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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1922

1955-66

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1955

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Andrew Kundert

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Peoples Presbyterian Church is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of *Architecture*. The building is a good example of Mission style architecture, easily recognized by its curvilinear parapet walls, prominent porch with overhanging eaves, and restrained ornamentation overall. The building is also locally significant under Criterion A in the area of *Ethnic Heritage: Black* for its long-term association with the Peoples Presbyterian Church, a historically black congregation that has continuously attracted and welcomed black Presbyterians and that has been recognized for its community service. The period of significance for Architecture is 1922, the year the building's construction was complete, and 1955-66 for Ethnic Heritage, when Peoples Presbyterian Church first occupied the building to a date fifty years in the past.

Peoples Presbyterian Church meets the burden of Criteria Consideration A because its significance stems from its being an example of an architectural style and from a historical theme other than religion.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criterion C: Architecture**

The church is fairly unusual in its specific application of the Mission style to a religious building; though the style is rather common for churches, the Peoples Presbyterian Church lacks much of its ecclesiastical features and appears almost residential. Mission style churches typically exhibit features such as towers that clearly signify their religious use, and they may be asymmetrical in plan or have wings or arcades that partially enclose an open space associated with the church, thereby evoking a serene retreat from the surrounding setting. Examples of Mission style churches in Denver include St. Patrick's Mission Church (5DV.109, National Register listed 4 November 1979, NRIS.79000593), Holy Rosary Church and School (5DV.349, State Register listed 10 March 1999), Park Hill United Methodist Church (5DV.9152, State Register listed 9 June 2004), and Sixth Avenue Community Church (5DV.10975, National Register listed 17 December 2010, NRIS.20101217). All of these examples include towers as character-defining features, and many are L-shaped in plan or have arcades that create a buffer of open space from the street for the activities within.

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### Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage

The Peoples Presbyterian Church (formerly People's Presbyterian Church) was founded in 1906 in Denver and is the oldest continuously active black congregation of Presbyterians in the city. The congregation and its leadership have from the beginning offered a counterpoint to predominantly white congregations that were not necessarily welcoming of others. The Peoples church is a relatively rare Presbyterian congregation in a city where most black churches are Baptist, followed by Methodist and Church of God in Christ denominations.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the physical homes of the Peoples Presbyterian Church, including the 2780 York Street building, have reflected the movement of the black middle class community through Denver's neighborhoods.

### Historical background

The church building was constructed in 1922 by the Hyde Park Presbyterian Church. Organized in 1889, Hyde Park was the first Presbyterian church in the northeast area of Denver and took its name from the 1887 Hyde Park School that was a prominent neighborhood landmark (5DV.2066, Denver City Landmark 16 February 1988).<sup>2</sup> After a series of temporary homes, by 1895 the congregation had built its own church at East 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and Humboldt Street, where they remained until a fire destroyed much of the building in 1920. The land, church, and manse were subsequently sold to the Galilee Baptist Church (current status unknown).<sup>3</sup> The Hyde Park congregation decided to buy new property at East 28<sup>th</sup> Avenue and York Street. When purchased in 1921, "[t]he new church site was in the heart of one of the newer additions to the city and much building activity had added greatly to resident [sic] population," which did not yet enjoy a church in the vicinity.<sup>4</sup>

While temporarily housed in a canvas tent on the new site in June 1921, the congregation changed its name to Clayton Community Church to reflect the name of its new neighborhood (then called Clayton's Addition), which was formally approved by the Denver Presbytery on 20 September 1921. The plans for the new building were approved on 14 September 1921; church records and the city's building permit do not indicate an architect. Attorney O. A. Erdman, who served as head of church construction activities for the Denver Presbytery, laid the cornerstone on 16 October 1921.<sup>5</sup> Based on various church histories and the building permit, the contractor is believed to have been Andrew Kundert, a church elder and lumber merchant.<sup>6</sup> The church was dedicated in 1922 and at that time had a membership of 182.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Billingsley, *Mighty Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform*. Oxford University Press (1999), 119.

<sup>2</sup> Jesse Penney Martin, *Golden Anniversary: History of Hyde Park Presbyterian Church and Clayton Presbyterian Church, 1899-1939*. May 1939, 5. In collection of Western History Department, Denver Public Library.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Cooper, *The Story of Our Presbytery of Denver 1870-1950*. Denver: self-published, 1950, 58. In collection of Western History Department, Denver Public Library.

<sup>6</sup> Martin, 15; Cooper, 58; Building Permit #3888, 12 September 1921 (2754 York Street, Hyde Park Church). City and County of Denver Building Permits in the collection of Denver Public Library. The building permit gives only the name "Knudert" for the builder, which is believed to be a misspelling of Andrew Kundert's name.

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By 1927, the congregation had grown to 307 members. In just a few years, however, these numbers rapidly declined: by 1935 the membership was down to 175. Eventually the Clayton Community Church congregation was formally dissolved by the Denver Presbytery in January 1955.<sup>7</sup> The building was subsequently purchased by the People's Presbyterian Church congregation.

### *People's Presbyterian Church*

On 26 June 1906, the People's Presbyterian Church (later changed to Peoples) was established by the Committee on Home Missions of the Presbytery of Denver in a vacant storeroom at 25<sup>th</sup> and Larimer streets with sixty-six members. Years earlier, in December 1882, a group of black Presbyterians, including two pastors, formed the first black Presbyterian congregation in Denver known as the Fifth Presbyterian Church. Just a few months later, in April 1883, the congregation dissolved.<sup>8</sup> When People's organized in 1906, it was the only black Presbyterian congregation in the city. The congregation elected three Ruling Elders and Rev. D. D. Cole as its first pastor, who served from June 1906 to January 1909.

Negotiations for a house of worship began soon after the organization of People's Presbyterian Church. In 1908, the Trustees purchased the property at East 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Washington Street in Denver, known then as the First Cumberland Presbyterian Church (built 1883, 5DV.202.3, contributing to the San Rafael Historic District, National Register listed 20 June 1986, NRIS.86001353), for their house of worship. It was during this same time, in the early 1900s, that Denver's African-American population began to relocate from north of downtown along Larimer and Blake Streets to the Five Points neighborhood, where this church building is located.<sup>9</sup> In March 1909, Reverend H. A. Gibson from the Presbytery of Yanktin, North Carolina, was elected pastor. The pastor-elect died just two weeks after arriving in Denver.

Reverend Joseph Adolphus Thomas-Hazell assumed pastoral charge in June 1909 after accepting a call to serve the church while visiting Denver as a Catawba Presbytery (North and South Carolina) commissioner to the General Assembly of the U.S. Presbyterian Church, which was then in session at Denver's Central Presbyterian Church. Reverend K. C. Powell wrote of the church in October 1910 under the title *The Negro Church That Came to Life*: "It is just now the privilege of Denver Presbyterians to rejoice with their colored brethren... There are 8,000 colored people in Denver, and work among them is done by the Methodist, Baptist and Protestant Episcopal churches, but there seems a well defined need for the type of religious life in the ideal of Presbyterianism."<sup>10</sup> Presbyterianism is distinguished by its government of representative elders (or *presbuteros* in the New Testament's Greek) that emphasizes the active leadership of both ministers and church members.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Peoples Presbyterian Church Fiftieth Anniversary, 1906-1956*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Cooper, 33.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Norgren, "San Rafael Historic District, 5DV.202" National Register of Historic Places nomination form (1985), Sec. 8, p. 5. On file with History Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Denver.

<sup>10</sup> *Peoples Presbyterian Church Fiftieth Anniversary*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> "Presbyterian Distinctives," Presbyterian Mission Agency, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/101/distinctives/> (accessed 7 December 2015).

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*Rev. J.A. Thomas-Hazell's Leadership*

When Rev. Thomas-Hazell became the pastor in 1909, he faced a declining fellowship and a \$10,000 debt on the property at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Washington. During his leadership, the church membership grew by over 100 percent.<sup>12</sup> A few years later, while still serving as pastor for the People's church, he supported the creation of a church and established a homesteading enterprise in the black settlement of Dearfield in Weld County.

On May 5, 1910, O. T. Jackson filed a claim on 320 acres of land in Weld County, Colorado in order to establish an agricultural colony for 200 African-American families. This settlement became known as Dearfield (5WL.744, National Register listed 4 August 1995, NRIS.95001002), a name suggested by one of the town's citizens, Dr. J. H. P. Westbrook from Denver. The Denver Presbytery and People's Presbyterian Church appear to have been involved with the settlement of Dearfield from early on: in May 1914 the Presbytery built Dearfield's first church, which measured 24' x 36' and was named Union Presbyterian Church. Later that year, "owing to the close relationship of the Union Presbyterian Church of Dearfield, a mission to the People's, a pastoral call from the Union Church was extended to [Rev. Thomas-Hazell]," which the church's Session approved.<sup>13</sup>

As quoted by historian Melvin E. Norris in his Ph.D dissertation, Jackson wrote in a May 1915 article in *Western Farm Life Journal* of "a boarding house and store combined, built and maintained by Rev. Thomas-Hazell of the People's Presbyterian Church of Denver. Rev. Hazell is the only negro preacher who has taken an active part in the establishment of Dearfield."<sup>14</sup> Another leader of People's, Reverend Lionel B. West, also contributed to the mission work there.<sup>15</sup> By 1921, 700 people lived in Dearfield. After several prosperous years, the Great Depression arrived and the town's agricultural success significantly declined, leading to its eventual abandonment.

In addition to supporting Dearfield and its own community in Denver, People's Presbyterian Church was also active in promoting the betterment of African Americans beyond Colorado. As an example, in September 1914 the People's Session (or governing board of elders) discussed a proposal of the U.S. Presbytery to place "all colored work of the Church" under the advisory of a special board. People's Session resolved to register its protest, stating that "if any such action prevail, viz., the creation of a special Board for Colored Work of the Church, it will be regarded by the farsighted men and women of color of the Church as segregating and discriminating against the Negroes in the Presbyterian Church of the U.S.A., and nothing but mental aberration and dissatisfaction will occur."<sup>16</sup> Another example was the presentation of an address in 1915 on "Negro

<sup>12</sup> *Peoples Presbyterian Church Fiftieth Anniversary*, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *People's Presbyterian Church Session Minutes*, 2 September 1914.

<sup>14</sup> O.T. Jackson, "Agricultural Negro Colony in Eastern Colorado," *Western Farm Life Journal* (Denver), 11 May 1915, quoted in Marvin Edward Norris Jr., *Dearfield, Colorado, the Evolution of a Rural Black Settlement: an Historical Geography of Black Colonization on the Great Plains*. Dissertation (Ph.D), University of Colorado at Boulder, 1980, 146. In the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library Collection, Denver Public Library.

<sup>15</sup> *Peoples Presbyterian Fiftieth Anniversary*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> *People's Presbyterian Church Session Minutes*, 28 September 1914

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Exclusion to U.S. Citizenship.”<sup>17</sup> People’s Presbyterian Church also welcomed black progressive leaders to speak in front of its congregation, such as James D. Brooks, the secretary general of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, in March 1921, at which nearly 300 people attended.<sup>18</sup>

Thomas-Hazell served as pastor for People’s Presbyterian Church from 1909-22 and then again from 1943-49 when the pastor at the time, Rev. Mark M. Gibson, was granted a leave of absence to serve as a chaplain to the U.S. armed forces during World War II.<sup>19</sup> In the 1940s Thomas-Hazell served as director for a number of community forums in Denver on various issues involving the black community, such as one on the “National Minorities’ Contribution to the Program of National Defense.”<sup>20</sup> By 1921, Thomas-Hazell had bought a small farm in south Denver at 3800 E. Mexico Avenue (5DV.11332, demolished 2013), where he lived until his death ca. 1951.<sup>21</sup>

### *Peoples Presbyterian Church at 2780 York Street*

The end of World War II brought a rush of rural and other workers to urban locations in search of jobs and economic prosperity in Colorado. In the decade from 1950-60, the black population in Denver nearly doubled from 20,177 to 39,992. The relocation of the U.S. Air Force Finance Center from St. Louis, Missouri to the former Denver Medical Depot (3800 York Street, 5DV.5142, National Register listed 3 June 1998, NRIS.98000650) was a particular influence on the People’s Presbyterian Church. The Air Force Finance Center was formally dedicated on 31 July 1951, and at its peak during the Korean War in 1953 employed 3,000 people.<sup>22</sup> This major employer brought an influx of workers and their families from the St. Louis area, a metropolis with a large African-American Presbyterian population.<sup>23</sup> Despite the 1946 renunciation by the Presbyterian General Assembly of the principle of segregation within the church, in the 1950s many Presbyterian congregations either actively resisted racial integration or developed a paternalistic posture and attitude towards African Americans, predicated on the belief that assimilating different cultures weakened church unity; in 1957 only 14 percent of Presbyterian churches in the U.S. had some form of racial integration.<sup>24</sup> With only one Presbyterian congregation in Denver open to them, many of the new residents from St. Louis joined the People’s Presbyterian Church.

As the congregation grew significantly, a new location was sought to accommodate the increased membership. On 1 February 1955, at the Annual Corporation Meeting of the People’s Presbyterian

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<sup>17</sup> *The Colorado Statesman*, 20 February 1915, 5.

<sup>18</sup> “Negroes’ Self Respect and Self Maintenance Will Command Respect of Others: Hon. James D. Brooks on “The Garvey Movement,” *The Colorado Statesman*. 5 March 1921, 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Peoples Presbyterian Fiftieth Anniversary*, 4; Colleen O’Connor, “The Landmark Home of an African-American Pioneer is to be Leveled,” *The Denver Post*. 6 April 2013, 13A.

<sup>20</sup> *The Colorado Statesman*, 12 December 1941, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Colleen O’Connor. “Thomas-Hazell House: Doomed Homestead Preserved in Pictures,” *The Denver Post*. 23 April 2013, 2A.

<sup>22</sup> R. Laurie and Thomas H. Simmons, “Denver Medical Depot, 5DV.5142,” National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 1998. On file with History Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Denver

<sup>23</sup> Roy Carroll, interview with E. Warzel 3 December 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew E Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History*, 237.

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Church there was a unanimous vote to move to 2780 York Street, former location of the Clayton Community Church that had been dissolved the month before due to low membership, and which was only ten blocks away from the Air Force Finance Center. The property was purchased through terms offered by the Presbytery and included the future purchase of a manse (eventually located on Josephine Street a few blocks north). The name “People’s” was subsequently changed to “Peoples,” minus the apostrophe, to signify its stance of welcoming all people within its new community.<sup>25</sup>

From 1950 to 1957, the Church experienced tremendous growth: the congregation grew to more than five hundred members and the church became self-supporting, no longer needing to receive regular financial assistance from the Presbyterian Board of National Missions.<sup>26</sup> Two Sunday morning services were conducted to accommodate the large membership. Mamie Eisenhower, the First Lady of the United States and a Presbyterian who had spent much of her childhood in Denver, offered congratulations to the congregation on at least two occasions: for the church’s acquisition of the new location at 2780 York Street and in celebration of the Church’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1956.<sup>27</sup>

In 1977 the Air Force Finance Center relocated from 3800 York Street to Lowry Air Force Base. Partly as a result of the nearby facility’s closure, many families within the congregation no longer lived in the immediate area. The demographical composition of the neighborhood changed, with the black middle class residing farther out from the city core. The church established civic action programs designed to hold on to its members and to serve new needs within the neighborhood. These included its “Feed the Hungry” program, which served meals to several dozen people in the church’s basement dining hall on regular occasions. In 1996, Denver Mayor Wellington Webb approved a resolution on the church’s 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary recognizing Peoples Presbyterian Church and its important contributions to the citizens of Denver. The church’s “Feed the Hungry Ministry” program’s director received a Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award in 2003.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Carroll.

<sup>26</sup> *Peoples Presbyterian Church Fiftieth Anniversary*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> “First Lady Biography: Mamie Eisenhower,” National First Ladies’ Library <http://www.firstladies.org/biographies/firstladies.aspx?biography=35> (accessed 1 December 2015); *Peoples Presbyterian Church Session Notes*, 4 February 1955; *Peoples Presbyterian Church Fiftieth Anniversary*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> Bob Jackson, “Six Will Receive King Humanitarian Awards,” *Rocky Mountain News*. 30 December 2002, 14D.



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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\_\_\_\_\_. “Thomas-Hazell House: Doomed Homestead Preserved in Pictures,” *The Denver Post*. 23 April 2013, 2A.

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*Historical Note;*

*Peoples Presbyterian Church Fiftieth Anniversary, 1906-1956* [July 1956 program];

*Peoples United Presbyterian Church 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1906-1981* [June 1981 program];

*Session Minutes 1906-1918, 1952-1963;*

*City and County of Denver Resolution No. 59, Series of 1996, Re: 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Peoples Presbyterian Church.*

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: History Colorado

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** 5DV.1078

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: 13 Easting: 503468 Northing: 4400757

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for State Register listing includes the property historically owned by the church from York Street to the alley, including the open lot to the building's direct south.

The Denver Assessor's Office states that the legal boundary of the church and its property, including the open lot to the south, is the following: L 1 TO 4 INC & N 17.5 FT OF L 5 EXC

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REAR 8 FT FOR ALLEY BLK 16 ASHLEYS ADD & L 1 TO 4 INC & N 17.5 FT OF L 5  
BLK 21 CLAYTONS ADD.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary reflects the land historically associated with the church.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Roy Carroll, Jacqueline Crawford, Daphne Rice-Allen (volunteers for property owner) (edited by E. Warzel)

organization: Peoples Presbyterian Church

street & number: 2780 York Street

city or town: Denver state: CO zip code: 80205

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

date: 29 January 2016

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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### Photo Log

Name of Property: Peoples Presbyterian Church

City or Vicinity: Denver

County: Denver State: Colorado

Photographer: Erika Warzel

Date Photographed: 3 December 2015

Negatives: digital TIF files on file with History Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

#### Photo No.                      Photographic Information

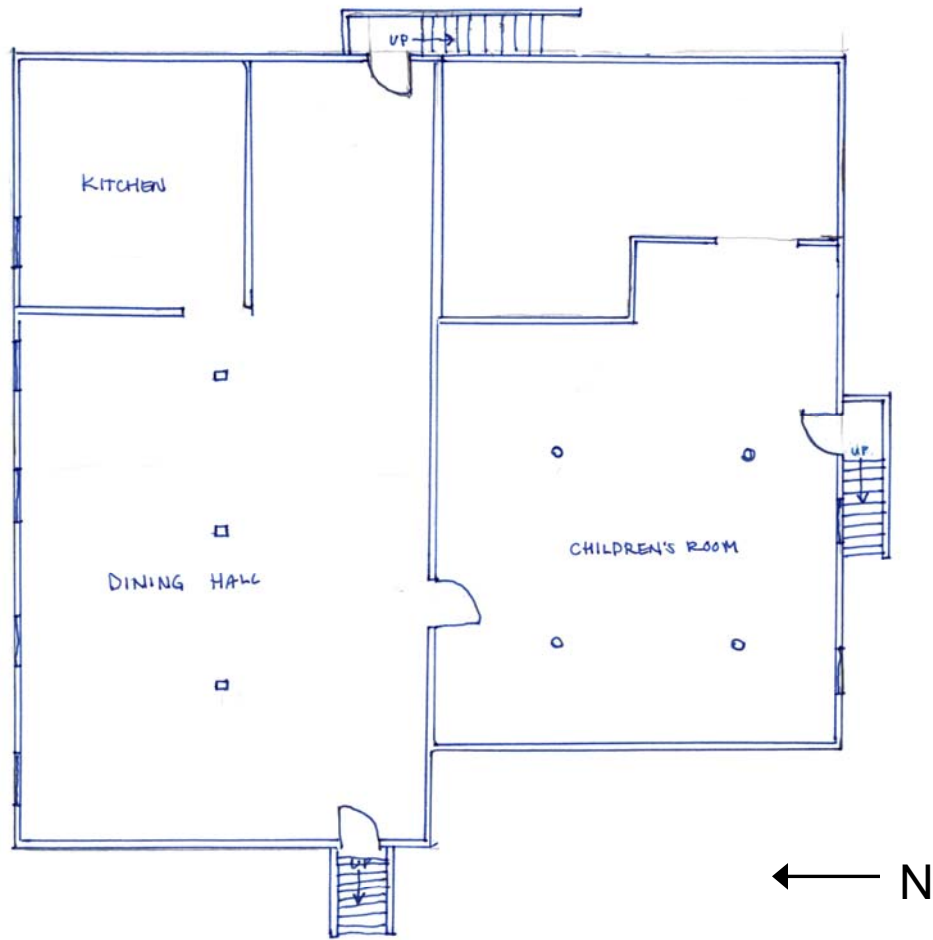
- 1 West-facing side, camera facing east
- 2 North-facing side, camera facing south
- 3 East-facing side, camera facing west
- 4 West half of south-facing side, camera facing north
- 5 East half of south-facing side, camera facing north
- 6 Detail of entrance doors into sanctuary foyer
- 7 Detail of north door at front porch
- 8 Interior of sanctuary, camera facing southeast
- 9 Interior of sanctuary with view of foyer and choir loft above, camera facing west
- 10 Interior of fellowship hall on first floor, camera facing northeast
- 11 Interior of dining room and kitchen in north basement, camera facing east
- 12 Interior of children's room in south basement, camera facing south
- 13 Second floor hallway, camera facing north
- 14 Second floor classroom, camera facing northwest

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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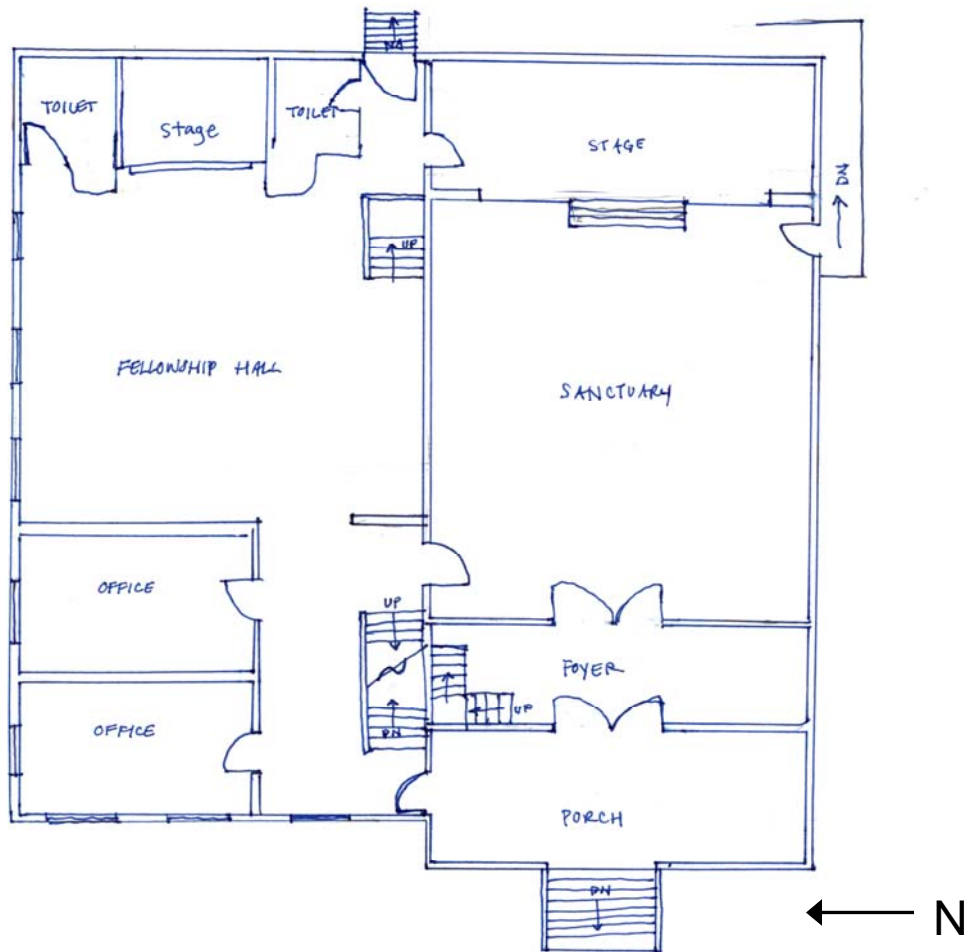
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Basement Floor Plan, sketch drawn by E. Warzel, December 2015 (not to scale)

Peoples Presbyterian Church  
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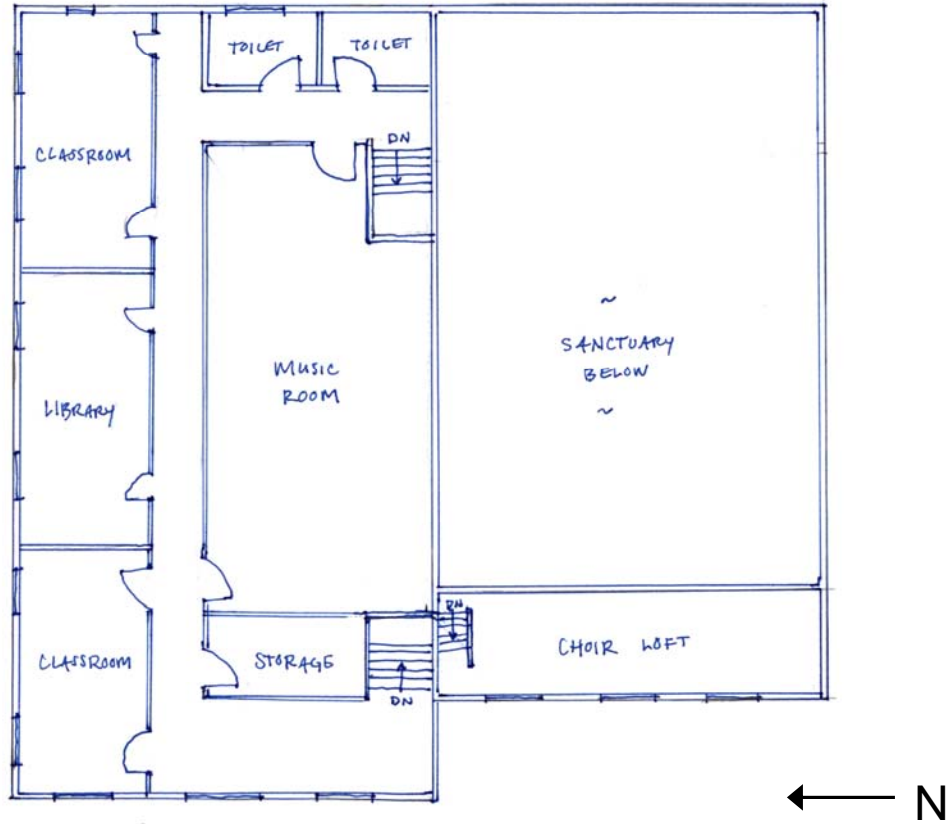
Denver, Colorado  
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First Floor Plan, sketch drawn by E. Warzel, December 2015 (not to scale)

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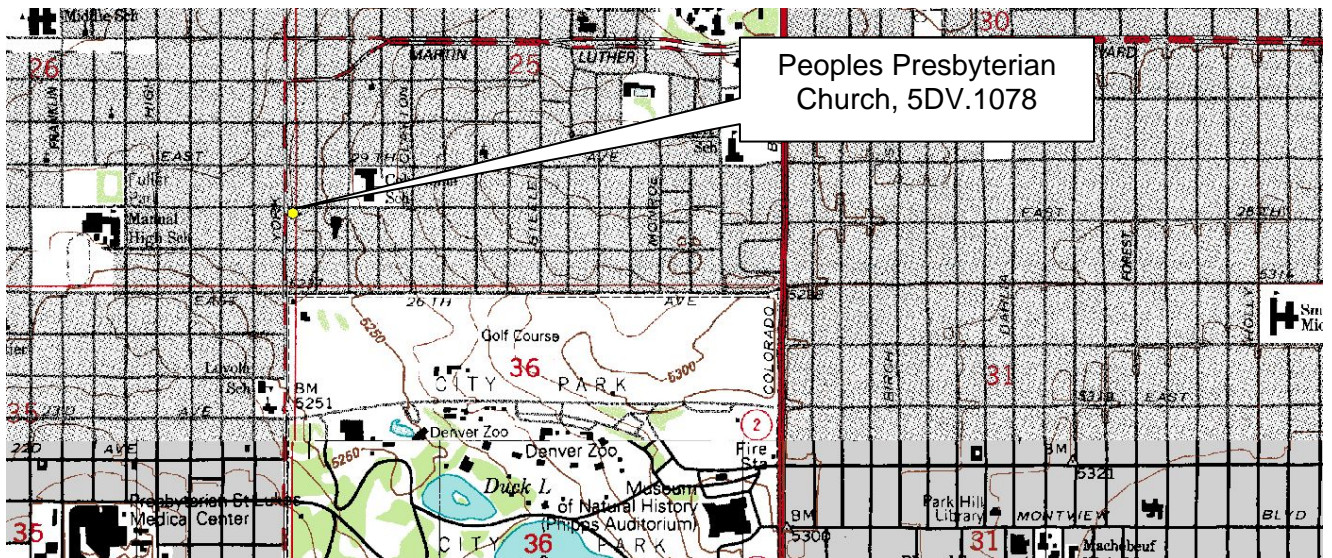
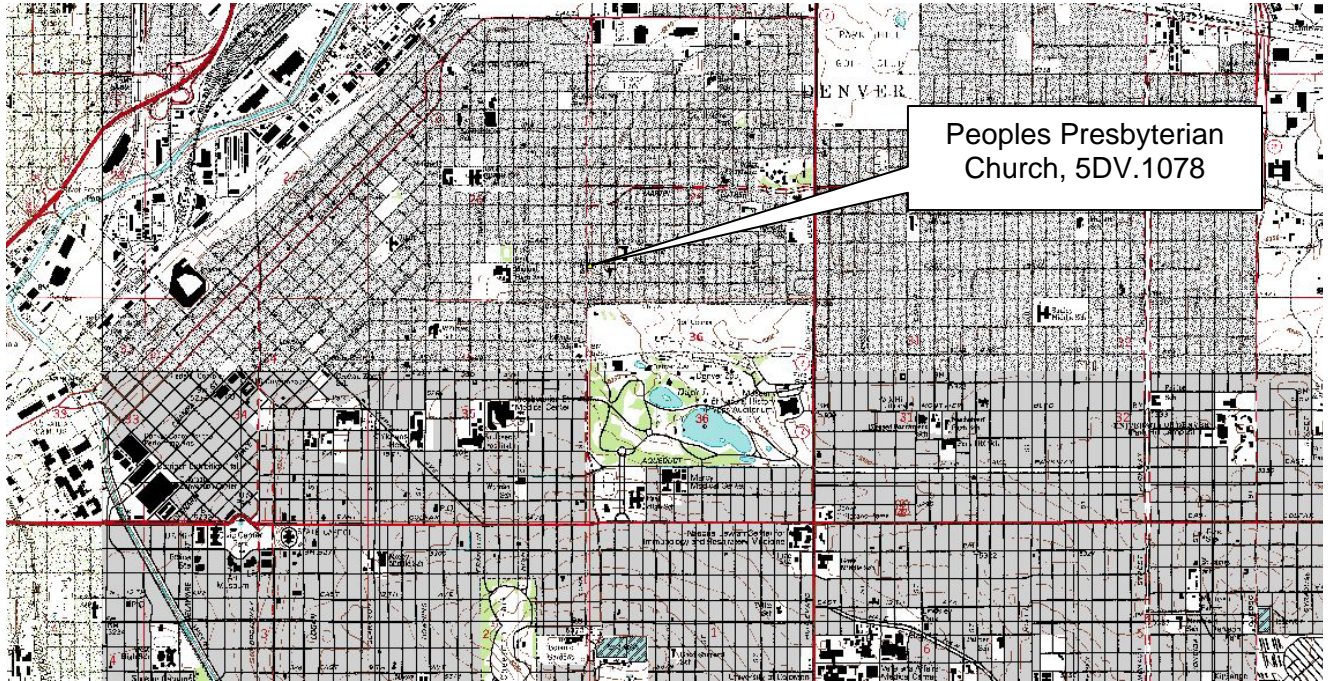
Second Floor Plan, sketch drawn by E. Warzel, December 2015 (not to scale)



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**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Commerce City, Colorado Quadrangle





Google earth

feet  
meters

