First Baptist Church

Rev. George Washington Holland arrived in Winston from Virginia in 1878. After holding services in brush arbors, Hinshaw’s Hall, and the homes of worshippers, Holland formally organized First Baptist Church, the first African American Baptist Church in Winston. The congregation purchased a piece of land at the corner of Sixth and Chestnut Streets in the Depot Street neighborhood on July 23, 1879. The United Brethren of Salem sold First Baptist the land, known as Lot 215 ½ on the Plat of Winston, for $75. The congregation built and began to worship in its first church building, a one-story, wooden structure set on brick pillars, in 1882. In 1886, when Winston organized a graded school system, the basement of the church was enclosed and used as a school for African American children.

Construction of a larger, brick church facing onto Sixth Street began in 1897, reflecting the growth of the congregation. The new church was dedicated in July 1902, and the old wooden church was demolished by the spring of 1912. African American craftsmen and artisans were totally responsible for design and construction of the new church. Three-story towers stood at both corners of the main façade, with the western tower supporting a 90’ tall steeple. Pointed arch, stained glass windows allowed light into the building, and light-colored stone impost blocks and keystones accented the door and window openings. The church had forced air heat and was lit by oil lamps. An interior balcony, which housed the choir at the north end of the church, extended down the east and west sides of the sanctuary. Later, the southern end of the church was enlarged to include a choir section and a pipe organ. A baptismal font was installed under the pulpit, replacing the outdoor one that had been used previously.

In 1955, First Baptist moved to a new church building on Highland Avenue in East Winston. The brick church was demolished, and the congregation sold the lot to R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company in 1957. The Sanborn map from that year shows the land in use for surface parking.
Miss Addie C. Morris, a native of Forsyth County, returned to Winston after graduating from Shaw University in Raleigh and serving as a missionary in Africa. Morris, a member of First Baptist Church, came back as a home missionary under the auspices of the Baptist Woman’s Missionary Society in Chicago. In the 1890s, she received permission to build a mission house on the western edge of First Baptist’s lot, facing north onto Sixth Street. The two-story, wooden mission house served as a school for traditional and religious education and a hub of charitable activity. Morris also helped organize the Colored Baptist Orphanage Home in the Belview neighborhood, where she had grown up. She managed the mission house until her death on April 10, 1907. The mission house was demolished before April 1912, but lumber from it was reportedly used to construct an addition to the Orphanage Home.

This information is also available at the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission web site: www.ForsythCountyHRC.org