

First Calvary Baptist Church

1036-1040 Wide Street

Norfolk

First Calvary Baptist Church was organized in 1880, and the congregation rented a small vacant frame church on Church Street for their sanctuary. They worshiped in the rented building until 1916, when the present building was dedicated. The new church was constructed at a cost of \$43,065 by the Norfolk firm of Mitchell and Wilcox. Few families that belonged to First Calvary commanded high incomes. Nonetheless the congregation managed to pay the building costs in two years. The Second Renaissance Revival style building is one of only a few such churches found in the Norfolk/Tidewater area. Its most distinctive features are the generous use of terra cotta in its facade and its stained-glass dome supported by massive arches. These features serve to make First Calvary an architectural landmark, placing it among the best early 20th-century black churches in Virginia. The church congregation has grown and prospered among Norfolk's large and active black Baptist community, which continues to regard the church as a major focal point of black cultural and spiritual life in the city. [CA 10/15/87, 87001853]