

## **Once in a Lifetime Opportunity – The Historic St. Francis Street Methodist Church for Sale**

Mobile, Alabama is fortunate to have a large number of historic structures and one of the most interesting, the St. Francis Street Methodist Church is now being offered for sale.

Presiding over the intersection of Saint Francis and North Joachim Streets, the St. Francis Street Methodist Church is one of the most historically and architecturally significant buildings in Mobile. It is arguably the finest Aesthetics Movement informed Queen Ann church in lower Alabama. The structure was designed by architect George Watkins of Watkins and Johnson and completed in 1895. The building replaced an earlier 1844 structure which was deemed unfit to accommodate an expanding congregation on account of size and condition.

The building is remarkably intact both within and without. Huge windows and a tall steeple are the dominant exterior features. The steeple, once considerably taller, was crowned by an illuminated cross. Featuring ground floor entry, service, office, and educational spaces, the upper-story sanctuary is literally lifted to another plane. Fine Tiffany-like windows illuminate the building's auditorium. With its artful union of architecture and decoration, the building is testament to fine craftsmanship, as well as an evocative vehicle for the continued revitalization of downtown.

The St. Francis Street Methodist Church also has a rather interesting historical connection to Vanderbilt University. Holland Nimmons McTyeire was the minister at the St. Francis Street Methodist Church in the late 1840s and early 1850s. It was here he met his wife, the local Amelia Townsend McTyeire. He became the Methodist Nashville Bishop and was an integral part of creating "Central University" in 1872 as an institution of higher learning to train ministers. However, a lack of funds delayed its opening. McTyeire's wife, Amelia Townsend, was the cousin of Frank Armstrong Crawford Vanderbilt who was married to Cornelius Vanderbilt the wealthiest man in the country at the time. Cornelius was at a philanthropic point in his career and was planning a college on Staten Island to honor his mother when the McTyeires convinced him to extend an olive branch to the Civil War ravaged south and to fund their university. The \$1,000,000 donation funded the Central University, but he never stepped foot on campus nor did he live long enough to see the name changed to Vanderbilt University.

So, one can argue that the relationships developed at the St. Francis Street Methodist Church led to the creation of Vanderbilt University.

Burton Clark, with Cummins & Associates, has the property listed for sale for \$320,000. For a tour of the property call Burton at (251) 476-6000.