Scarritt Bennett Self-Guided Tour
SCARRITT BENNETT CENTER is a nonprofit conference, retreat, and special events center. Founded in 1988, Scarritt Bennett Center’s mission is to create space where individuals and groups engage each other to achieve a more just world. A beautiful oasis in the middle of Nashville, Scarritt Bennett is committed to social justice work through the eradication of racism, the empowerment of women, spiritual enrichment, and radical hospitality.

The Center’s name honors Dr. Nathan Scarritt and Miss Belle Harris Bennett, founders of the original Scarritt Bible and Training School in Kansas City. From 1924 until 1988, Scarritt Bennett Center’s campus was home to two schools of higher education for Methodists: Scarritt College for Christian Workers (1924-1980) and Scarritt Graduate School (1981-1988). Both schools were outgrowths of a passion for ministry, mission, and social justice. The Center’s focus continues that legacy.

The buildings and grounds are property of the Women's Division of The United Methodist Church and cover ten tree-filled acres. The earliest buildings were built in 1928 with funds raised by the Women’s Missionary Societies and others of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Scarritt Hall, Bennett Hall, the Bell Tower, and Wightman Chapel are known collectively as The Belle Bennett Memorial. Susie Gray Dining Hall, built at the same time, was financed by local funds. Almost every building on campus is named for a woman.

With a magnificent but serene beauty, the campus architectural style is Collegiate Gothic built from various colored Crab Orchard (Tennessee rubble) stone quarried in East Tennessee. Red brick and green slate provide color accents in the stone. The roofs are Vermont slate and the casement windows of the original buildings were imported from England. Mr. Henry Hibbs, noted Nashville architect, won the American Institute of Architects’ gold medal in 1929 for his work on the earliest campus buildings. As other buildings were added to the campus over the years, they were lovingly built in the same style using the same fine materials.
Laskey Hall, the last building erected on Scarritt’s campus, was funded by “Call to Prayer and Self-Denial” offerings from the Women’s Society of Christian Service and the Wesleyan Service Guild. Laskey Hall was built to honor Virginia Davis Laskey (“Mrs. Glenn”) of Ruston, Louisiana. Mrs. Laskey was president of the Women’s Division of The United Methodist Church, a member of the Board of Trustees of Scarritt College, and an advocate for racial justice in Louisiana.

The chandelier in the center of elegant winding stairways between the first and second floors was a gift of Ruth Jones Cadwallader (see Cadwallader Residence Hall). Laskey Hall contains several meeting rooms throughout the building, including the Great Hall, which is the largest meeting space on Scarritt Bennett Center’s campus.

About Virginia Davis Laskey Research Library
On March 9, 2007, the Scarritt Library officially became the Virginia Davis Laskey Research Library, with a focus on organized societies of lay women. The Virginia Davis Laskey Research Library seeks to educate present and future generations on the struggles, faith, and vision of women committed to mission, justice, and peace ministries all over the world.

Personal papers of missionaries and Scarritt College faculty, as well as historic Scarritt College photos, alumni/ae dissertations, and other rare documents concerning the institution’s history as a college are kept in the library’s archival room.
FONDREN HALL

(Built in 1950) Fondren Hall honors Mrs. W.W. Fondren of Houston, Texas. During the Scarritt College days, the first floor of Fondren Hall served as a gym, theatre, and student union. Remodeled in 1990, the first floor now contains Harambee Auditorium, a media center and auditorium. Fondren Hall’s second floor contains four additional classroom-style meeting rooms.

Tucked in the west corner of the first floor is the Mary E. Skinner Chapel. The chapel was built with a donation provided by Mrs. George L. Peyton of Mexia, Texas, as a memorial to Miss Skinner. Miss Skinner was the first Director of the Department of Christian Education of Children of The Methodist Church after union in 1940. Skinner helped raise the standards of Christian education across the denomination, thereby extending and strengthening the ministry of The Methodist Church to millions.

With just 20 seats, today Skinner Chapel is a popular venue for elopements and small, intimate wedding ceremonies.

WIGHTMAN CHAPEL

(Built in 1928) This beautiful place of worship is named in honor of Mrs. Maria Davies Wightman, President of the Women’s Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, from 1894 to 1908. These were crucial years in the struggle for women’s rights in the church and across the nation. The wife of Bishop William May Wightman, Maria Davies Wightman was a pioneer in that struggle who advocated for the training of women as missionaries for the denomination. Along with Miss Belle Harris Bennett, Wightman was named an agent of the Women’s Board and helped secure not only the funds for the building of the Scarritt Bible and Training School, but the rights to build it. Wightman Chapel is dedicated to her memory.

Built in classic gothic cathedral style, Wightman Chapel is an historical and architectural treasure. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached in Wightman Chapel on April 25, 1957. The Chapel was also featured in the PBS television production, “Designed for Worship”, as one of the finest sacred places in Nashville. Built for acoustics, music soars through its Gothic arches from the organ, vocalists, and instrumental groups in concerts. Worshipers pray in its sheltering nave and transept. As many as five brides process down its 80-foot center aisle every weekend of the year.

Wightman Chapel’s original pipe organ was given in memory of Maria Layng Gibson, the first principal of the Scarritt Bible and Training School, when the campus was completed in 1924. That organ was replaced in 1969 by its current organ, which was built by the Casavant Brothers of Quebec. The Casavant is a 26-rank tracker action organ, operating with minimal electrical parts. Funds for the organ were given in honor of Rosa May Butler, former director of Scarritt College’s Music Department, and dedicated to her and C.J. Jones, husband of Ruth Jones Cadwallader.

Notice the inscriptions outside the chapel over the main entrance facing 19th Avenue S., over the side doors into the narthex, and on either side of the archway between Bennett Hall and the Chapel (known as the Wesley Cloister). Inside the chapel on either side of the main entrance the memorial inscriptions are for Maria Davies Wightman and Belle Harris Bennett.

The large wooden cross hanging in the chancel area was given in memory of Katherine Scarritt Dallenbach by her mother, Mrs. Nathan Scarritt, in 1986.
**SCARRITT HALL**

*(Built in 1928)* Scarritt Hall is named in honor of Nathan Scarritt of Kansas City, whose generosity provided the land for the women to build their school. As you walk around the outside of the building, note the endearing carvings of squirrels in the stone on either side of the eastside entrance off the courtyard, as well as the beautiful old lamp fixture.

Inside Scarritt Hall, the Lounge/Gallery at the end of the hall served as college's main lobby. It is now used as a parlor and meeting area. The symbols in the bay windows are of the cross (representing love), an anchor (representing hope), and the Bible (representing faith).

Connecting Scarritt Hall and Bennett Hall on the second floor is the Hall of Presidents, which extends directly underneath the historic Bell Tower and through the Room of Remembrance, giving direct access to the second-floor meeting rooms in Bennett Hall. This area honors those people who gave their time, talents, and money to create or maintain Scarritt College. The Scarritt Seal of Service is depicted in the Cross and Crown design on the window in the Room of Remembrance.

The International Room, located just beyond the Hall of Presidents and Room of Remembrance, was the college’s original library. Its windows bear the coats of arms of the twelve countries where the Methodist Episcopal Church, South had missionaries serving at the time the building was completed. As you enter, they are: (left) China & Brazil; Poland & Czechoslovakia; Mexico & the United States; and (right) Japan & Russia; Cuba & Korea; Belgium & Congo.

**BENNETT HALL**

*(Built in 1928)* The first floor of Bennett Hall is a series of semi-formal parlors decorated with gifts and furnishings that highlight the rich history of Scarritt College and was a popular gathering place for students. Today, these rooms serve as a hospitality area for the Center and the site of numerous banquets and receptions.

The large parlor, known as “the Social Rooms,” has a fireplace on each end, and each fireplace has an inscription over it. Over the north-end fireplace, the quote from Haggai was selected by Maria Layng Gibson to typify the development and enlarging scope of Scarritt College: “I will fill his house with glory said Jehovah of hosts, the latter glory of his house shall be greater than the former, and in this place I will give peace.” Over the south-end fireplace, the quote is from Mark, and refers to Belle Bennett’s service and influence: “Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial for her.”

The second floor of Bennett Hall contains two meeting rooms—Raintree Room and Dogwood Room. On the north end of the building, another fine cloister connects Bennett Hall with neighboring Scarritt Hall. Note the stonework in the arches of the cloister.
HELEN BAKER PRICE INTERNATIONAL GARDEN & LABYRINTH

(Created in 1966) The International Garden is located in front of Gibson Residence Hall and between Ogburn House and Scarritt Hall. This beautiful round garden contains the only permanent outdoor meditation and prayer labyrinth in Nashville. An international peace pole, a gift from Dr. and Mrs. Carlton Young, stands in the garden’s west end, with “May Peace Prevail on Earth” written in seven languages. The original garden was a gift from Mr. Bill Price, a member of the Board of Trustees of Scarritt College. The labyrinth was added in 2004 with funds from a bequest by Martha Wagner.

OGBURN HOUSE

(Built in 1966) Originally built as the residence for the college president, Ogburn House was built with funds donated by Anna Ogburn of Winston-Salem, a benefactress of children in need. Currently, it is a private residence.

SUSIE GRAY DINING HALL

(Built in 1928) The historic Susie Gray Dining Hall was named in honor of Susie Walton (“Mrs. J.J. Gray”) in 1943. Just outside the entrance, the dining hall’s cloister has two inscriptions over the arches, which serve as the Scarritt motto. A quote from William Carey, the inscription over the north arch reads, “Expect Great Things from God.” The inscription over the south arch reads, “Attempt Great Things for God.”

Inside, the Oxford-Eton-style dining hall is ninety feet long, with wooden refectory tables and chairs. The windows bear the seals of the 25 states where the Woman’s Missionary Society had been organized before 1927: (left) Oklahoma, California, Florida, South Carolina, Maryland, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas, New Mexico, Missouri, Alabama, Washington; (right) Oregon, Arkansas, Mississippi, Illinois, Colorado, Arizona, West Virginia, Idaho, Montana, Georgia, Louisiana.

Over the entrance to the serving area hangs a large painting of John Hus before the Council of Constance in 1415. It is a copy of the original by famous Czech artist, Vanceslas Brozik, and was painted by Czech artist, Thomas B. Zizala. The painting was presented to the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in 1935.
GIBSON RESIDENCE HALL
(Built in 1940) Gibson Residence Hall was built with funds collected by alumnae throughout the world to honor Miss Maria Layng Gibson, the first principal of Scarritt Bible and Training School. The Hall contains two floors of guest rooms and a beautiful central parlor on the first floor.

CADWALLADER RESIDENCE HALL
(Built in 1963) Originally named the Charles N. Cadwallader Men’s Residence, this two-story building was made possible by a gift from Ruth Jones Cadwallader of New Orleans, Louisiana.

BRAGG RESIDENCE HALL
(Built in 1950) Bragg Residence Hall honors Grace L. Bragg, President of the Women’s Division of Christian Services from 1940 to 1948. “Call to Prayer and Self-Denial” offerings from Methodist women throughout the United States financed this three-story residence hall. Today, it serves as a comfortable residence for Scarritt Bennett Center’s overnight guests.

STROTHERS MEETING HOUSE
(Built in 1800) Built of hand-hewn logs in Sumner County, Tennessee, near Cottontown, this 20-foot by 24-foot log meeting house was an appointment in the newly organized Western Conference of the Methodist Church. Francis Asbury presided over the first conference west of the Allegheny Mountains on October 2, 1802. The house was eventually moved from its original location to Red River Pike, where it remained a church until 1857.

Strothers Meeting House was moved to the Scarritt campus in 1931 for its preservation. It is owned and maintained by the Tennessee Conference of The United Methodist Church.