

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania, c. 1644-c. 1970
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Pennsylvania
State

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

 X New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania, c. 1644-c.1970

B. Associated Historic Contexts

The following historic contexts may also be associated with African American churches and cemeteries in Pennsylvania between c. 1644 and c. 1970. In some instances, it may be more appropriate to evaluate and list a property in the National Register of Historic Places under these contexts depending on the nature of the property, its primary associations, and the area(s) of significance.

- The Era of Reconstruction: 1861-1900 (Nationwide context, 2017)
- Vigilance in Pennsylvania: Underground Railroad Activities in the Keystone State, 1837-1861 (Statewide context)
- Underground Railroad Resources in the United States (Nationwide context, rev. 2000)
- African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949 (Regional context, 2010)
- Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States (Nationwide context, 2000, with 2004 supplement)
- African American NHL Assessment Study (Nationwide context, 2008)

C. Form Prepared by:

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.



Signature of certifying official

Deputy SHPO
Title

April 24, 2020
Date

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission - State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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Create a Table of Contents and list the page numbers for each of these sections in the space below.

Provide narrative explanations for each of these sections on continuation sheets. In the header of each section, cite the letter, page number, and name of the multiple property listing. Refer to *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* for additional guidance.

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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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1: 60-100 hours (generally existing multiple property submissions by paid consultants and by Maine State Historic Preservation staff for in-house, individual nomination preparation)
- Tier 2: 120 hours (generally individual nominations by paid consultants)
- Tier 3: 230 hours (generally new district nominations by paid consultants)
- Tier 4: 280 hours (generally newly proposed MPS cover documents by paid consultants).

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting reports. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

This Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) will help people interested in documenting, evaluating, and nominating properties associated with the Black Church experience and all types of African American cemeteries throughout Pennsylvania between c. 1644 and c. 1970 for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This MPDF covers the years between c.1644 with the first documented case of Africans and African Americans living in the area now defined as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and ends c.1970. Properties with a period of significance that extends into the 1970s will not need to meet Criterion Consideration G if the important association can be clearly understood and assessed within the context presented in this MPDF.¹

The MPDF focuses on explaining how the Black Church and African American cemeteries as community institutions are significant in Pennsylvania and how that significance is reflected in the built environment; it is not intended to provide a definitive academic and public history or sociological study about the history and role of these two institutions in African American culture in Pennsylvania. Black churches and cemeteries survive as testaments to community-building by and for African Americans and often share a symbiotic relationship of origin and support. As community institutions, African American churches and cemeteries both provide important evidence about African American agency (principally the efforts to promote equality, parity, and autonomy), settlement patterns, cultural and religious influences, economic development, social relationships, and genealogy. In Pennsylvania, outside of the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas, these two institutions are often the only remaining physical evidence of an earlier African American community; in such locales, African American communities often can only be dated by the age of the oldest local African American congregation or the earliest burial in the local African American cemetery rather than by dates of any extant residential or commercial building construction.² Their survival can tell us many things about the history of that African American community.

This MPDF focuses on traditional church buildings associated with the group of Protestant denominations known as the Black Church. For the purposes of this MPDF, these are:

- African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church;
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church;
- Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church;
- National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBC);
- National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA);
- Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and
- Church of God in Christ (COGIC).³

Although this MPDF does not address properties associated with other Protestant and Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam, or other religions in African American history and culture, the history and historical sources explored in

¹ Many scholars are now using an expanded period of time for the Civil Rights Era in American history (traditionally narrowly interpreted as the 1950s and 1960s) from the late 1930s and into the 1970s to more fully understand and explain the social, political, legal, and economic activities and implications of this period of the 20th century. MacLean, Nancy. "The Civil Rights Movement: 1968—2008." Freedom's Story, TeacherServe®. National Humanities Center. August 13, 2019. <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1917beyond/essays/crm2008.htm>.

² See Shelby Spain, "Pennsylvania's African American Historic Resources: Survey Report of Findings." Harrisburg: PHMC, November 2009.

³ See C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.

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this MPDF may assist nomination preparers for properties relating to denominations and faiths not covered in this document.

Additionally, while there are many different types of properties – houses, neighborhoods, schools, businesses, sites, etc. – that can tell the story of African American religion in Pennsylvania, this MPDF's focus on Black Church denominations in Pennsylvania means that most properties will more closely reflect a traditional concept of a church building. Outdoor and non-traditional worship spaces – such as camp meeting grounds, commercial storefronts or private homes – are not addressed in this document and will need to be evaluated individually; however, the information and guidance offered herein can be used in documenting and evaluating such places for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

This MPDF also focuses on cemeteries associated with African American history in Pennsylvania, principally African American and segregated cemeteries as sites or historic districts. This MPDF does not cover the history, traditions, and material culture of burials in general or African/African American burials in particular; rather, it discusses cemeteries as community institutions to individually or collectively mourn, honor, and celebrate our dead. Individual graves are also not covered in this document.

While the geographic scope of this MPDF is statewide, it is intended to be most helpful for nomination preparers working with African American churches and cemeteries in communities *outside* of the metropolitan areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Churches, and to some degree cemeteries, are well documented in these areas of the commonwealth, due in part to the large proportion of African Americans living in those parts of Pennsylvania, historically and currently, and universities and other research institutions with academics and researchers interested in these topics. Furthermore, the mother African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church is in Philadelphia and the history and evolution of this denomination has been studied and analyzed at length. In recent years, the uncovering of African American cemeteries in Philadelphia by construction activities has resulted in a greater understanding of the history and fate of many African American burials there.

Churches and cemeteries associated with some aspect of African American or other history in Pennsylvania may also be significant for reasons beyond those explored in this document, and they can be nominated independently of this MPDF. Nomination preparers may also use other studies and publications about the Underground Railroad, the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, Civil Rights, or other topics that can provide additional context needed to evaluate African American churches and cemeteries for listing in the National Register. Not all African American churches and cemeteries in Pennsylvania will be eligible for listing in the National Register under this MPDF as a community institution significant at the local, state, or national level. For some properties, the church or cemetery may not be considered to be important per the registration requirements outlined in this document, or the physical integrity of the property may be too compromised to convey its significance as a community institution.

Finally, this context can be used for a variety of purposes by anyone interested in African American history in Pennsylvania. Primarily, it is intended to support the evaluation of African American churches and cemeteries for National Register eligibility, whether for a nomination, qualifying for grant funds, or state or federal compliance review. This context can also be helpful for other activities that seek to identify and celebrate African American history through social programs, local history events, state historical markers, or heritage tourism. It can also be a valuable resource for education and outreach activities around African American history in the commonwealth and as groundwork for future research on this topic.

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Terminology and Concepts

The following terms will be used throughout this historic context:

Agency

The concept of “agency” is critical to understanding African American history in Pennsylvania. This is not “agency” in the sense of a business or governmental department that provides goods and services or a person acting on an agency’s behalf.

This “agency” is a social science perspective and refers to the proactive and self-directed strategies any individual or group develops to take control of their lives and futures. While institutionalized racism made them the targets of terrorism, discrimination, and bigotry, African Americans were in no way passive recipients of whatever American society dealt them. While “opportunity” for African Americans was hedged with massive restrictions, research shows that in fact they continuously challenged and overcame the barriers to education, political participation, economic success, and above all, community.

Repeatedly, African Americans in Pennsylvania made it clear that *they* would define their own standards of participation in the commonwealth’s economic, cultural, and political life. They created their own communities, institutions, and opportunities.

Baptist

The Baptist family of denominations originated in the 17th century with English Puritanism, and the term came from the belief that baptism should be reserved for people old enough to understand and commit to Jesus of their own volition. Two hallmarks of the Baptist religion are adult baptism and autonomous local congregations.⁴

Black Church

For the purposes of this MPDF, the term “Black Church” is used throughout to streamline the narrative as an effective shortcut to refer to the seven historically predominant black Protestant denominations and to discuss the broader role of the Black Church as an institution and community builder in Pennsylvania. This is not to suggest that the Black Church is monolithic but to acknowledge the shared origins, history, and culture of African American church denominations, particularly when the role or work of the whole is greater than that of the individual denomination.

African Americans and scholars of African American and religious history have long recognized the existence and role of the Black Church in America.⁵ African American sociologist W.E.B. DuBois was the first to identify the importance of religious institutions and their influence in the black community by one collective name when he titled his 1903 study of African American Protestant religions, “The Negro Church.”⁶ Until then, there was not one word or phrase that represented all of the denominations of independent Black Churches. Carter G. Woodson, one of the first scholars to study African American history, also helped the term “Negro Church” enter the public vocabulary when he published *The History of the Negro Church* in 1921.

This terminology is used throughout the country and is not specific to Pennsylvania. As the word “negro” fell out of favor, it was replaced with “Black”; today, this term is used to collectively refer to the seven major historic Black

⁴ “Religious Group: Baptist,” The Association of Religion Data Archives: Quality Data on Religion, http://www.thearda.com/denoms/families/F_96.asp.

⁵ Lincoln and Mamiya, 1; “The Black Church.” PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/black-church>.

⁶ “The Black Church.” PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/black-church>.

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denominations that emerged in the United States after 1787 as independent groups founded by, run by, and ministering to African Americans.

For the purposes of this MPDF, the denominations included in the Black Church are:

- African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church;
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church;
- Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church;
- National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBC);
- National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA);
- Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and
- Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

In Pennsylvania, AME, AMEZ, and Baptist churches are more common; CME and COGIC are less common. While this MPDF does not address properties associated with other Protestant and Christian denominations, Judaism, Islam, or other religions in African American history and culture in Pennsylvania, the history and historical sources explored in this MPDF may assist nomination preparers for properties relating to denominations and faiths not covered in this document.

Caretaker Cemetery

A caretaker cemetery is one in which the graves have been moved there from a different cemetery.

Cemetery

For the purposes of this MPDF, the term “cemetery” is used to mean an area of land set apart for the ritual burying of human remains. They can range in size and appearance from a small family plot in a rural area to a church graveyard and to a large suburban memorial park. Individual grave sites are not covered by this MPDF, but every other type of burial place associated with an African American community may be evaluated under this context. The cemetery may include formal landscaping, fencing, grave markers, buildings, or structures. The terms used to describe cemeteries in this MPDF can be found in the National Park Service’s [Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places](#).

Church

This historic context focuses on the resources associated with the “Black Church” in Pennsylvania.⁷ The most common place associated with the Black Church in Pennsylvania is a church building. The term “Church” with a capitalized “C” is used when referring to the organization as a whole (as in “the African Methodist Episcopal Church”) or the word is part of the official name of a building; “church” with a lower-case “c” is used when referring to building built for the purpose of Protestant religious expression. A church property might include multiple buildings, landscape features, structures, objects, and may include a related graveyard.

Class

African American economic and social demographics were as complex as any other part of society. There were rich African Americans (some were extremely rich), as well as poor and middle class. There were old established families that had been in their communities for generations and new families that came with cycles of immigration from the south into the north in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

⁷ See Splain. “Pennsylvania’s African American Historic Resources: Survey Report of Findings.” Harrisburg: PHMC, November 2009 and Stutman, Craig, et al. “Draft African American History in Pennsylvania Theme Study: The Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political Legacy of African Americans in Pennsylvania, 1690-2010.” Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2009.

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Economic differences, location, church affiliation, and nativity were typically reflected in class distinctions; the class distinctions that existed in the white communities also existed in African American communities and were no different. For example, migrants from southern state that arrived during the Great Migration tended to be Baptists or Pentecostals, working class or poor, and less educated. Older established black families, often more financially well-off and members of the African Methodist Episcopal church, often condescended to new incomers they saw as uncouth.

Congregation

Congregation is used to mean a group of people belonging to a particular denomination organized for religious worship at a specific geographical location or place. Congregation and church should not be used synonymously. For the purposes of this MPDF, "African American congregation" is defined as a group of African Americans that gathered regularly for the purposes of religious worship and self-identified as such.

Denomination

Denomination is used to mean a group or branch of a religion within a particular faith tradition.

Graveyard

A graveyard is an area of land reserved for the burying of dead people that is historically and functionally related to a church or place of worship. Graveyards are typically found on land owned by the congregation, part of the church property, and adjacent to the church building; in some cases, the graveyard may be near, but not adjacent to, the church building. In some cases, particularly in urban areas, a church may survive and the churchyard, including the graveyard, has been lost, and vice versa; the graves and stones may have been moved together, separately, or not at all and still exist below neighboring properties. When graveyards survive, they should be considered and evaluated as part of the church property and not independently.

Family Cemetery

A family cemetery is a small, private burial place for members of an immediate or extended family on land historically owned by said family; some family cemeteries, particularly early cemeteries in rural areas, may also include neighbors.⁸

Independent Cemetery

An independent cemetery is one created and used solely by and for the burial of Africans and African Americans and exist as evidence of racial segregation and African American agency in Pennsylvania. Independent cemeteries will vary in size, location, arrangement, grave markers and landscape based on the characteristics of the broader African American community they serve. They may have no formal plan or design or may survive as an example of a designed cemetery from the rural (c.1833 – 1875), lawn (c.1900-present), or memorial park (c.1900-present) categories.

Intentional Community

Sometimes African American communities in Pennsylvania started as intentional communities, which can be traced to all different eras and locations throughout Pennsylvania. An intentional community for the purposes of this MPDF is a largely self-sufficient community that was established by and/or for African Americans at any point in history. These communities were intentionally settled and driven by African American agency rather than de facto segregation. Many of them no longer exist as other than archaeological sites. Some African American churches and cemeteries can be traced to early intentional communities. It was more common, however, that African American communities started as a result of de facto segregation. This led to establishing an isolated community physically separate from a neighboring white community or an enclave or neighborhood within the larger white community. In both instances, community building almost always started with a church and a place to bury their dead.

⁸ See "Private Family Cemetery" definition in <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=09>.

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Lawn Park Cemetery

Beginning after the Civil War and continuing into the 1920s, Lawn Park cemeteries are characterized by a pastoral, park-like or lawn setting but are smaller in scale and less picturesque than the larger, rural cemeteries.

Legacy Cemetery

A legacy cemetery is one in which the graves are original to the cemetery and not relocated from a different cemetery.

Methodist

The Methodist family of denominations follow the teachings of John Wesley, who broke away from the Anglican Church of England in the 18th century. Wesley believed in and promoted an emphasis on personal holiness rather than the strict hierarchical structure of the Anglican church, which closely follows that of the Catholic religion.⁹ Methodism was made famous by its camp meetings and circuit ministers, who regularly traveled between locations – or stations as they were called - preaching to small congregations. As congregations became more numerous, and grew and thrived, circuits were eventually abandoned.¹⁰

Memorial Park Cemetery

Beginning in 1913 with the establishment of Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California. Memorial Parks are intended to be large sections of pastoral and uniform lawn areas for flat stone or bronze markers that do not stand out above the ground.

Non-sectarian Mutual and Municipal Burial Grounds

Between c. 1820 and c. 1840, Non-sectarian Mutual and Municipal Burial Grounds were typically located on the outskirts of a town or urban area and separate from a religious setting. The cemeteries were typically designed on a geometric grid plan with wide pathways and plantings with a perimeter enclosure. These cemeteries were independently owned and controlled by a company, association, or municipality that sold affordably priced lots.

Pentecostal

The Pentecostal family of denominations started in the early 20th century in California and stressed enthusiastic worship and New Testament expressions of faith and the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues and healing.¹¹

Potter's Field

Widely used in Pennsylvania between c. 1700 and c. 1820, Potter's Fields are cemeteries for people who could not afford a grave or were not associated with a congregation.

Racism

In documenting African American history in Pennsylvania, particularly outside of the larger urban areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, one must acknowledge that the social and economic conditions for African Americans in the commonwealth rivaled those of southern states. Pennsylvania might have been a hotbed of abolitionism and an active staging ground for the Underground Railroad, but the attitudes of much of Pennsylvania throughout the commonwealth were racist and violent toward African Americans, well into the mid-20th century. This is not a blanket statement to suggest that all Pennsylvanians were racist but to illustrate that Pennsylvania was not unlike its neighbors to the south

⁹ "Methodist Family," The Association of Religion Data Archives: Quality Data on Religion, http://www.thearda.com/denoms/families/trees/familytree_methodist.asp.

¹⁰ Richard R. Wright, *The Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: A.M.E. Church, 1947.

¹¹ "Religious Groups: Pentecostal," The Association of Religion Data Archives: Quality Data on Religion, http://www.thearda.com/denoms/families/F_94.asp.

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when it came to equality, civil rights, segregation, and Jim Crow policies and practices. Racism, institutionalized and otherwise, is a pervasive and critical force that wove through every aspect of African American life in the commonwealth.

Religion

The definition of religion in this document is the one established by the National Park Service in National Register Bulletin 16A: the organized system of beliefs, practices, and traditions regarding mankind's relationship to perceived supernatural forces.

Rural Cemetery

Popular between c. 1833 and c. 1875, the Rural Cemetery is a large, park-like and picturesque cemetery in a rural setting, often outside of an urban area, that is chosen for its accessibility and natural beauty. Rural cemeteries are often divided into plots and include landscape features, structures, statues, monuments, and other types of grave markers.

Segregated Cemetery

A segregated community cemetery is a public- or privately-owned and operated cemetery with one or more plots set aside or designated exclusively for the burial of African Americans. The hallmark of a segregated cemetery is the physical separation of burials by race through restrictive covenants or other means, which is indicative of a community's relationship with its African American members. Segregated cemeteries will vary in size, location, arrangement, grave markers and landscape based on the characteristics of the broader community it serves. Segregated cemeteries can be of any type: non-sectarian municipal cemetery (1810s-1860s), rural cemetery (1830s-1900), lawn park cemetery (1900-present), or memorial park (1913-present).

Slave Cemetery

A slave cemetery is a small, private burial place for enslaved Africans and African Americans on land owned by slaveholders.

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The Black Church in Pennsylvania: A Brief History

The history of African American religious institutions in Pennsylvania weaves through every other aspect of black experience, from the very first days that individuals of African descent set foot in the New World, usually as slaves or indentured servants, to the present day. The question of whether slaves would even have an organized religion was not a subject that many Pennsylvania slave owners worried themselves about until the mid-18th century; mostly they just ignored the spiritual activities of their slaves. While there is little documentation concerning the acceptance and organization of earlier belief systems among Africans in Pennsylvania, there is extensive evidence regarding the impact that Christianity had among African American communities in the commonwealth.¹² The study of African American history begins with an understanding of the role of independent black churches.

In establishing independent Christian churches, black Pennsylvanians created their first and most enduring truly autonomous institutions.¹³ Independent churches emerged around the idea for freedom to worship in their own way and as a reaction to racism. Founding of these churches represented a physical, rather than spiritual, separation from white congregations that did not welcome or accept African Americans. Independent churches also evolved in their role in African American culture. As the number of black churches grew throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, their role and mission changed from a place where African Americans could worship free of racism and bigotry to epicenters of the African American community to unify and mobilize African Americans toward social change.

Following the establishment of independent black churches, the Black Church became the source of and foundation for institutions and organizations in African American communities of all shapes and sizes. In larger population centers, particularly Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, additional institutions arose to address needs specific to black urban communities; in some cases, these established institutions meant that churches could focus on their original purpose.

However, churches remained central to African Americans' survival in small, isolated, and rural communities throughout the commonwealth; in most cases, this single institution had to meet many needs to help sustain the secular and spiritual life of the local African American community. In the 20th century, black churches continued to support the community in practical matters like a place to worship or get an education; at the same time, the Black Church also returned to its roots as the place where African Americans went to seek equal treatment and respect as the cornerstone institution of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

The significance of the Black Church in Pennsylvania lies in its role as a community builder, community sustainer, and community sanctuary rather than solely as a place of worship or expression of religious faith. Black churches associated with African American history in Pennsylvania provide a critical and physical link to the stories of the people of that community.

c. 1644 – late 18th century: Early Religious Experiences of Enslaved and Free Africans and African Americans

The belief systems and practices of free or enslaved Africans in the years between the first known Africans and African Americans in Pennsylvania c. 1644 and the founding of the first independent black church in Pennsylvania – and the country – in 1816 are not well documented in Pennsylvania's historic record. During this time, Pennsylvania's African

¹² See Joe William Trotter, Jr., *African Americans in Pennsylvania: Shifting Historical Perspectives* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 26.

¹³ See Craig Stutman, et al, "Draft African American History in Pennsylvania Theme Study: The Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political Legacy of African Americans in Pennsylvania, 1690-2010" (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2009) and Shelby Splain, "Pennsylvania's African American Historic Resources: Survey Report of Findings" (Harrisburg: PHMC, November 2009).

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American community would have been comprised of enslaved and free people, particularly after Pennsylvania passed a law calling for gradual abolition beginning in 1780.

It is likely that when they arrived in Pennsylvania, enslaved Africans continued to practice their religious beliefs and traditions as they did in Africa before being brought to the colonies. Although there is a lack of scholarship on what the beliefs and traditions in Pennsylvania may have been, historians do know that “most Africans believed in a Supreme Creator under whom there were various lesser gods usually associated with natural phenomena like thunder, lightning, rain, earth, fertility, spring, summer and fall. All had the power to do good or ill, and it was important to propitiate them by invoking various forms of Obeah or magic through the use of various charms and talismans called minkisi,” particularly in the Southern colonies.¹⁴

If their owners allowed or encouraged the adoption of one of the European white religious denominations, in many cases enslaved Africans adopted the Christian Protestant denomination of their masters either wholly or blended with their African beliefs. In Pennsylvania during this time period, their masters were likely Quakers (Religious Society of Friends), Anglicans (the Church of England), Methodists, or Presbyterians as these were most popular among European-American landowners wealthy enough to own slaves.¹⁵ The religious diversity of Pennsylvania during the 19th century was much broader than those mentioned, but there is little evidence to show that followers of other religions (like the many smaller groups from German-speaking Europe) owned slaves or were involved in missionary work among free or enslaved African and African Americans.

However, converting slaves was controversial. Some whites and slave owners were simply apathetic. For those who were not, there were sharply opposing opinions concerning the effect conversion would have on the institution of slavery. On one side, many whites feared that “conversion might lead to a demand for emancipation” because slaves would be encouraged to organize and act as one body.¹⁶ Others saw only the positives that Christian religion could have for saving the souls of Africans. While it is difficult to discover in the historical record the existence of African or African-inspired religious traditions in Pennsylvania before 1750, scholars C. E. Pierre and Carter G. Woodson have noted that numerous incidents of religious conversion and baptism of individuals of African descent occurred in the commonwealth during the early part of the 18th century.¹⁷

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (Society), established by the Anglican church in London in 1701, was one group that dispatched missionaries to the New World to convert slaves and freedmen. Some accounts suggest that as early as 1712 the Society sent missionaries to Pennsylvania and baptized a number of individuals of African descent. During that year, Revered G. Ross baptized “12 adult Negroes” in the Anglican Church in Philadelphia. The Society continued to be active in Pennsylvania throughout the early 18th century, baptizing Africans and African Americans in Philadelphia, West Chester, Lancaster.¹⁸

¹⁴ Richard Middleton, *Colonial America: A History, 1565-1776* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1992) 300.

¹⁵ While Quakers are widely recognized as leaders of the abolition movement in the 18th and 19th centuries, it is less widely recognized that Pennsylvania’s Quakers were slave traders and owned enslaved Africans and African Americans. For more information, see Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

¹⁶ Middleton, 300.

¹⁷ C.E. Pierre, “The Work of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts Among the Negroes in the Colonies,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 1, October, 1916, 349, 354-55; Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, Washington D.C.: Associated Publishers, 192, 11.

¹⁸ C.E. Pierre, “The Work of the Society”, 355.

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Other religious denominations, such as the Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Moravians and Quakers also sent missionaries from Europe to America, some of whom were sympathetic to the cultural, religious, and social needs of both slaves and freedmen. Quakers believed in providing a “Christian education” for their slaves but did not, in practice, allow slaves or freedmen to participate in their Meetings; this education was more likely “godly advice and reading.”¹⁹ One striking example of this early segregation comes from the Society of Friends (Quakers) who segregated their Philadelphia Meeting. In 1756, the Philadelphia Meeting accepted a proposal allowing African American Quakers to hold segregated meetings at the “Bank Meeting House at 3 O’clock P.M.” on “the Fourth day following each Quarterly Meeting.”²⁰

The Moravians were extremely zealous in efforts to convert African Americans and when successful, treated them with “religious equality” in their churches and baptized them.²¹ There are some baptisms of slaves and freedmen recorded in Lutheran congregations of the time, particularly in and around the Philadelphia area. In his seminal work *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, Edward R. Turner includes many references to the proselytizing work of itinerant preachers, or exhorters in unusual places: “Work of some value was also done by wandering negro exhorters, who appearing at irregular intervals, assembled little groups and preached in fields and orchards.”²²

It was the Episcopal Church, however, that may have had the most profound and lasting effect on Pennsylvania’s early and growing African and African American population. Christ Church in Philadelphia, an active congregation and now part of Independence National Historical Park, is recognized as the birthplace of the American Episcopal Church. The congregation dates to 1695 and the current building to 1744. In the context of this study, Christ Church is remarkable for its role in the religious lives of Pennsylvania’s enslaved and freedmen. Absalom Jones, who would play an important role in founding the Black Church in the early 19th century, was ordained here as the nation’s first black priest. The church established a school for the “religious instruction of negroes” and would eventually baptize many of Philadelphia’s slaves and freedmen.²³

It is difficult to quantify the number of free or enslaved African and African American Christian converts in Pennsylvania between c. 1644 and 1816, but resources like the runaway slave advertisements in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* during the 18th century can reveal some information about the nature, practice, knowledge, or preaching of religious beliefs among this population, both men and women. They can also reveal the locations and patterns where religious activity occurred.

Advertisements often illustrate the religious roles slaves played within their communities, as shown in these examples:

“RUN away from the Subscriber, a Negroe Man, named Dick, known by the Name of Preaching Dick: ...”²⁴
(August 1745)

¹⁹ Edward Raymond Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, (Washington, D.C.: The American Historical Association, 1911) 43.

²⁰ Henry Cadbury, “Negro Membership in the Society of Friends,” *Journal of Negro History*, 21, no 2(1936): 153. See also Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*, (Philadelphia: Quaker Press, 2009).

²¹ See Turner pages 44 and 57.

²² Turner, 45.

²³ Turner, 45; Turner’s history provides specific primary resource references for his conclusions. Christ Church, “The History and People of Christ Church.” <https://www.christchurchphila.org/history/>.

²⁴ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 22, 1745.

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Moses Grimes, an African American who ran away from John Hales of Lombard Street in Philadelphia, was described as “very religious, preaches to his colour, walks before burials, and marries.”²⁵ (November 1772)

Escape of a slave from James Young, “living near Chambersburg, Cumberland County.” When Young made a plea for the return of his slave, a “Mulatto fellow named John Hill,” he described him as “a Methodist Preacher” who had “formerly lived in Charlestown, Maryland”.²⁶

While many whites supported the adoption and practice of Christian religions among Africans and African Americans in Pennsylvania, this sentiment did not always extend to a willingness to open their services and churches to them. William Penn’s ideals of religious tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity did not extend to racial tolerance within most of the commonwealth’s established Christian congregations. For example, while some Episcopal and Moravian churches allowed enslaved and free Africans and African Americans to join them, they did not extend complete membership or equality.²⁷

Racist attitudes forced Africans and African Americans to use the church at different days and times than their white members, worship in a basement or other secondary location, find another building altogether, or even gather outside in woods, orchards, or fields on unconsecrated ground. As a result, places other than traditional church buildings became places of worship for Pennsylvania’s early African American community. Because most white congregations were willing to share their religion but not their churches, a new phase in the evolution of African American religious history in Pennsylvania started: the emergence of independent black churches and congregations.

Late 18th century to 1865: Emergence and Spread of Black Church Denominations in Pennsylvania

In the years following the Revolutionary War, African Americans in Pennsylvania began asserting more control over their own religious practices. This control was often represented as individuals having options about where and how they would worship.

Some African Americans chose to attend churches in denominations with integrated or independent black congregations, establishing autonomous control over their affairs while remaining part of the larger white denominational organization.²⁸ Philadelphia, the birthplace of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church, is also the birthplace of several other early and important independent black congregations during this time period. The following congregations are all examples of independent black congregations within largely white denominations:

- Philadelphia’s African Zoar Church (also known as the African Zoar United Methodist Church and the Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church) functioned as an independent African American congregation affiliated with United Methodist Church. The Zoar congregation met in their own building, which had been dedicated in 1796, but were served by a white pastor until 1835.²⁹

²⁵ Pennsylvania Gazette, November 25, 1772.

²⁶ Pennsylvania Gazette, June 6, 1778.

²⁷ Turner, 134.

²⁸ While these congregations are important to Pennsylvania’s religious and African American histories, they are not the subject of this study.

²⁹ Roger Lane, *William Dorsey’s Philadelphia & Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, 231-232; Matt Sauer and Neeta Desai. “Spotlight on Mother African Zoar United Methodist Church,” in *Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia*, Summer, 1996, Vol. 13, no. 2; Christine McKay, “Inventory of the Zoar United Methodist Church records, 1841-1984,” Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, www.nypl.org/research/manuscripts/scm/scmgzoar.xml. Matt Sauer and Neeta Desai contended African Zoar United Methodist

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- The First African Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia was founded in 1807 by John Gloucester, a former slave from Tennessee who had been baptized in the Presbyterian faith by his former master Gideon Blackburn. Gloucester's church remained within the Presbyterian polity and its founding marked the establishment of the first black Presbyterian congregation in Pennsylvania and the young nation. First African built its first church in 1810 at Seventh and Bainbridge Streets in Philadelphia.³⁰
- In 1809, the thirteen African American congregants at Philadelphia's predominantly white First Baptist Church "received their voluntary letters of dismissal" and left to form the First African Baptist Church. Following the church's creation, it was "immediately recognized as a regular Baptist congregation at the annual meeting of the Philadelphia Baptist Association in October 1809." The congregation met in a building at 10th and Vine under the leadership of its first pastor, Henry Cunningham.³¹

Others chose to leave denominations run by a white hierarchy that practiced segregation and condoned or tolerated slavery and joined wholly new denominations, fully independent and self-governing that met their needs and beliefs; these new Black Church denominations are the subject of this study. For many of the African American congregants who left the established white churches, they could not rationalize and justify what they saw as a disconnect between biblical and church doctrine that called for the just and compassionate treatment of all people with the legally- and religiously-condoned institution of slavery.

There were two Black Church denominations active in Pennsylvania during this period and they reveal a great deal of information about Pennsylvania's early African American communities: the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, founded in 1816 in Philadelphia by Richard Allen, and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church, officially formed in New York City in 1821.³²

Both are rooted in Methodism and adopted an Episcopalian polity, that is one that recognizes bishops as the head of the church. In his landmark study on African Americans in Pennsylvania, Turner observed that, "Pennsylvania as in other places Methodism seems to have exerted a preponderating influence upon the religious life of the negroes, and the African Methodist Church was soon more flourishing than any other negro denomination."³³ They share remarkably similar stories about how and why were formed, with the only real difference being the location where the splits from the Methodist Episcopal Church occurred. There is no significant theological distinction between the Methodist, AME and AMEZ denominations.

Church's "first meeting place was at an abandoned butcher shop at 4th and Brown Streets," and it was "dedicated by Bishop Francis Asbury in August of 1796" and that "in 1883, Zoar purchased a red brick structure at 12th and Melon streets, a site that it still occupies."

³⁰ Matthew Hopper, *From Refuge to Strength: The Rise of the African American Church in Philadelphia, 1787-1949*, 7; See also Shelton B. Waters, "We Have This Ministry: A History of the First African Presbyterian Church Philadelphia" PA: Gloucester Memorial and Historical Society, 1994.

³¹ Hopper, 8.

³² For an explanation of each of these denominations, see appendices.

³³ Turner, 136.

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Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, July 1829. Illustration by William Breton. From the collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

During this period, African American congregations spread outward from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh into the small cities and towns of Pennsylvania. From Philadelphia, the AME church spread across the southern half of Pennsylvania along the Mason-Dixon line toward Pittsburgh and into the central counties. At the same time, the AME Zion Church was moving southwest from New York City, first into the north east and north central portions of Pennsylvania and eventually throughout the commonwealth. In his history, Turner writes that the “Colored churches were earliest and most prosperous in Philadelphia. In small towns negroes continued for a long time to attend the churches of white people, but in the larger cities such as Pittsburg [sic] and Columbia they had religious organizations and church buildings of their own.”³⁴

³⁴ Turner, 136.

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By 1813, there were at least six active African American congregations in Philadelphia.³⁵ They were: St. Thomas' Protestant Episcopal, with 560 congregants; Mother Bethel AME, with 1,272 congregants; Zoar Methodist Episcopal, with 80 congregants; Union AME, with 74 congregants; First African Baptist, with 80 congregants; and First African Presbyterian Church, with 300 congregants. In Pittsburgh, there were six black churches by the 1840s --Presbyterian, Baptist and four AME congregations-- but only the four AME churches survived into the Civil War.³⁶

Between these two metropolitan centers, early AME and AMEZ congregations can be found throughout the commonwealth in the first half of the 19th century. Bucks, Lancaster, Beaver, Fayette, Washington, Susquehanna, and Crawford counties all had active AME and AMEZ congregations. In most other locations, particularly in the less populated areas of the state like Susquehanna and Crawford counties, there was only one African American church in the area. All began as small congregations meeting in homes, other buildings, or outside until the congregation was able to purchase an existing church building or build a new building for their congregation. In some locations, like Bucks County, there were several congregations with dedicated churches.

These early congregations and their churches share many similarities. They were founded by small groups of free Africans or African Americans, most of whom were escaped or formerly enslaved people, who were inspired by the work of Richard Allen, Peter Spencer and others to establish an institution to meet their unique needs. Some of these early congregations survive in some way today, either as the original church body or through consolidations and collaborations with other local congregations.

The majority of the congregations began meeting in local homes before collecting enough funds to construct a small church building. The few early 19th century buildings that survive are examples of simple, vernacular churches: rectangular in plan, one- to one-and-a-half stories tall, stone, brick or frame construction, a gable roof oriented with the gable to the street, a central door in the gable end, and small windows along each side to light the sanctuary. The doors typically open to the sanctuary, where pews are arranged in rows facing a pulpit at the far end of the building. Many of the early churches were demolished and replaced with new, modern buildings throughout the 19th century as their congregations and wealth grew.

The spread of the AME and AMEZ denominations in the early 19th century meant that these congregations could establish graveyards for their members adjacent to or near the church building; if land was not available, congregants were typically buried in municipal or private cemeteries in a designated church plot. One of the earliest examples is the Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia, which purchased land about half a mile south of its Sixth and Lombard location c.1810 for burials of church members. Before it was abandoned in the mid-1860s and eventually made into a park, anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 African Americans were interred in Bethel Burying Ground.³⁷

³⁵ William Edward Burgha DuBois, *The Negro Church*; Report of a Social Study Made under the Direction of Atlanta University; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1903.

³⁶ Matthew Pinsker, "Vigilance in Pennsylvania: Underground Railroad Activities in the Keystone State, 1837-1861," (Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania Context Study, 2000) 86.

³⁷ Aaron Wunsch, et al, "Bethel Burial Ground." National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form. Philadelphia, July 2015, Section 7, 5.

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Mt Frisby African Methodist Episcopal Church and graveyard, founded 1856, in Union Township, Berks County illustrates relationship between church and graveyard.

In 1850 and 1860, information about religion in the U.S. states and territories was collected as part of the federal non-population census for those years. Census takers, who at the time were federal marshals and assistant marshals, interviewed clergy and religious leaders rather than individuals and collected information about the number of churches, how many people they could accommodate, and the value of church property.³⁸

While they provide a broad profile of Pennsylvania's religions, they provide little context for understanding Pennsylvania's religious landscape with regard to African American churches and congregations. The 1850 census lists twenty active denominations in Pennsylvania along with the category of "Minor sects." Any churches identified as "African" without any further qualifier were counted as "Minor sects." The methodology for the church census also qualifies that the enumerators did not count "slight shades of difference in sentiment or form of government" when

³⁸Anne Farris Rosen, "A Brief History of Religion and the U.S. Census." Pew Research Center Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008.

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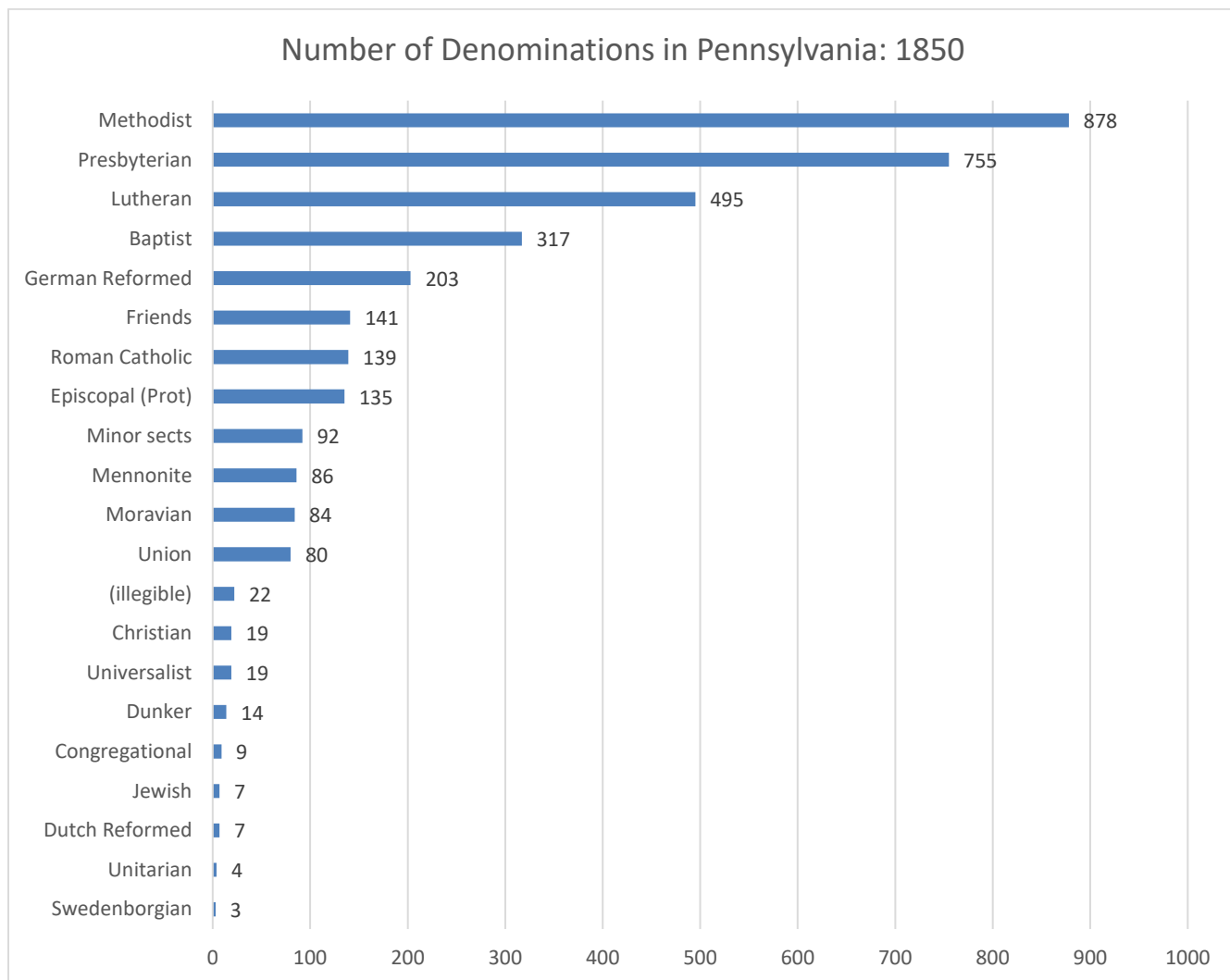
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classifying churches and “all varieties of Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians, are included under their general heads, except where distinctly specified.”³⁹

The 1850 census counted 3,509 churches serving Pennsylvania’s 2.3 million people. These churches were identified as follows:



*Number of Denominations in Pennsylvania in 1850.*⁴⁰

In 1857, Philadelphia had eighteen African American congregations “described by a negro as ‘flourishing,’” including seven Methodist Episcopal, two Protestant Episcopal, two Methodist, one Congregational, three Baptist and three Presbyterian.⁴¹

³⁹ Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census. Report of the Superintendent of the Census for December 1, 1852; to which is appended the report for December 1, 1851. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1853) 29.

⁴⁰ Data taken from Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census. *Report of the Superintendent of the Census for December 1, 1852; to which is appended the report for December 1, 1851.* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1853).

⁴¹ Turner, p 136.

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Since their inception, black churches have rarely ever served the single purpose of providing a place to worship. It was during the late 18th century to 1865 period that black churches begin to define their multi-faceted role in Pennsylvania's African American culture.

In this period, Pennsylvania's African Americans approached community building through the establishment of the church as a cultural institution. The founding of a congregation, followed by a home for that congregation, emerged as the priority for establishing sustainable communities for free Africans and African Americans. The church served as the springboard for other important activities and community institutions, either through the leadership of church members or as host to the groups that gathered there. In this pre-Civil War period, three notable activities in Pennsylvania can trace their roots back to the black church and all revolve around the drive for freedom: anti-slavery societies, equal rights, and humanitarian aid through the Underground Railroad.

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, black congregations focused on the issues of abolition and repatriation (the returning of Africans and African Americans to Africa). In the commonwealth's cities and large towns, particularly along the southern border between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, abolition and anti-slavery societies sprang up in the 1830s and 1840s. The connection to these groups is both physical and cultural: many groups started in or regularly met at local black churches and many black church leaders were founding or instrumental personalities.

There are several examples of the connection between black churches and anti-slavery organizations. In Philadelphia, for example, the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) met at Adelphia Hall in Philadelphia in 1833. This progressive interracial group included Robert Purvis and James McCrummell, a minister and dentist. In 1835, the Philadelphia Vigilance Association (PVA, and also known as the Vigilant Association of Philadelphia) was organized to assist fugitive slaves and African American "persons in distress" and was the first large-scale organization whose leaders were mainly African American and, not uncoincidentally, church leaders. The PVA selected three of the city's most prominent African Americans to serve as its executive officers: McCrummell as president; James Needham, a successful barber and director of the St. Thomas' African Episcopal Church Juvenile Singing School, as treasurer; and Jacob C. White Sr., barber and founder of the Lebanon Cemetery, the first African American burial ground in Philadelphia, as secretary.

By 1839, PVA had become operated primarily by African Americans, especially as many of the city's black leaders left other abolition societies and joined its ranks. Throughout its history, the PVA boasted such members as the famous Underground Railroad operator and author William Still (1819/1821–1902); mathematician and later principal of the Institute for Colored Youth, Charles Reason (1818–1893); and founder of the First African Presbyterian Church, Steven Gloucester.

The Harrisburg Anti-Slavery Society was established in Pennsylvania's capital city in 1836, with much of its constituency from the Wesley Union African Methodist Episcopal Church located on the corner of Third and Mulberry streets. The Union African Methodist Episcopal (UAME) building shared the space with the AME church for ten years from 1829 to 1839. At the same time in Pittsburgh, the Juvenile Anti-Slavery Society (JASS) was formed in 1838, which many of the sons of the city's African American leaders joined. Founded by David Peck, son of John Peck, who became its president, and George B. Vashon, son of John Vashon, who became its secretary, the society's supporters spoke out against slavery in their churches and in meetings held at their homes. Scholar C. Peter Ripley has documented that these types of young men's societies, which began to crop up in African American communities throughout the northern states after the formation of JASS, were often affiliated with religious institutions and functioned as groups "where boys as young as eleven years old delivered antislavery speeches."⁴²

⁴² *Colored American*, November 23, 1839.

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Terror and prejudice continued to mount throughout the commonwealth, but so too did a movement among African Americans to deal with bigotry and hatred, placing them at the forefront of the struggle for equal rights during the 19th century. The African American Convention Movement, with origins in Pennsylvania, was both national and statewide in scope. Leaders from throughout Pennsylvania eventually took part in these events, which typically were held at independent black churches. The movement's groundbreaking national meeting, which drew delegates from seven northern states to discuss the plight of African Americans, was held in September 1830 at Philadelphia's Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church on Sixth Street, between Lombard and Pine.

At the convention, which became known as the Pioneer National Negro Convention, the issue of colonization quickly became the primary agenda item. The delegates believed that only emigration to another country could solve the challenges that had arisen because of the dearth of civil rights in the United States. Pennsylvania's delegates included Richard Allen (1760–1831), elected convention president; Belfast Burton (circa 1772–1849), a Philadelphia physician, elected its vice president; Philadelphia educator (and later writer for the *Colored American*) Junius C. Morel, elected as the convention's secretary and William S. Whipper (1804–1876), entrepreneur and lumber magnate who had represented the interests of much of the southeastern and south central regions of the commonwealth.⁴³

The following year, in 1831, the National Convention met in Philadelphia's Wesleyan AME Zion Church, between Fifth and Sixth and Lombard streets. Known as the First Annual Convention of the People of Colour, this delegation included at least three leaders from Pittsburgh's black community who joined the delegates from southeastern Pennsylvania who had attended the preliminary convention. The new delegates from the western part of the commonwealth were John Vashon, John Peck, and the Reverend Abraham Lewis of Pittsburgh's Bethel AME Church. Peck was identified as a delegate from Carlisle, Cumberland County, to which he had recently moved.

Seventeen years lapsed before Pennsylvania's African American citizens organized another statewide convention, which took place in Harrisburg on December 13–14, 1848. Recognized as the State Convention of the Colored Citizens of Pennsylvania, the conference was held at the Wesleyan Union AME Church and drew even more members from around the commonwealth than had the previous meeting. The president of this gathering was John B. Vashon, and the committee selected to oversee the proceedings was made up of individuals from fifteen counties.

Organizations and extensive networks aiding fugitive slaves existed throughout the first half of the 19th century in various regions of the commonwealth. Segregated and interracial, some of these networks operated as visible groups that fought for freedom and equal rights in the streets, newspapers, and church services; others needed to operate in a secretive, invisible way. In almost all Pennsylvania communities that hosted black churches, some type of humanitarian aid network existed through groups like vigilance committees or the Underground Railroad. In some cases, the members of the local congregations founded vigilance committees or were active supporters; in other cases, the church buildings were used as a meeting space or safe harbor for an Underground Railroad station. In most cases, churches and congregations provided support to fugitive slaves and the abolition movement.

The relationship between black congregations and these formal and informal networks is well documented through scholarly books and publications and is therefore not reiterated here. For general information about vigilance committees and Underground Railroad activities in Pennsylvania, see Charles Blockson's *The Underground Railroad*

⁴³ Bella Gross, "The First Annual Negro Convention," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 31, no. 4, 435-443; John W. Cromwell, "The Early Negro Convention Movement," *The American Negro Academy*, Occasional Papers no. 9, Washington D.C.: Academy, 1904, 3-20; Howard Holman Bell, ed., *Minutes of the Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864*. New York: Arno Press, 1969; Benjamin Brawley, *A Social History of the American Negro*, New York: Cosimo, 2005. (Reprint of 1921 Edition), 186-188; Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, New York: Citadel Press, 1951, 105-115; Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite*.

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(New York: Prentice Hall, 1987) and William J. Switala's *The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008). For historic contexts and guidance for documenting historic places associated with the Underground Railroad, see PHMC's *Vigilance in Pennsylvania: Underground Railroad Activities in the Keystone State, 1837-1861* (2000-H001-042) historic context and the National Park Service's *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States: Theme Study*.

1865-1930s: The Church during Reconstruction, the Beginning of Jim Crow, and the Great Migration

The years between the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the start of the Great Migration in 1916 includes two profound periods in American history: Reconstruction and the beginning of Jim Crow. The Reconstruction era starts in 1865 as the United States begins the difficult process of rebuilding its physical, social, economic, and political institutions after the defeat of the South in the Civil War. It ends in 1877 when a political backlash against the acceptance and integration of free African Americans in society, particularly southern society, results in the Compromise of 1877 to put Rutherford B. Hayes in the White House and the removal of the last northern troops from the south.

In the post-Reconstruction era, the advances made by and for African Americans toward a free and equal society in the South were slowly chipped away as the patterns and behaviors of the pre-Civil War years returned.⁴⁴ In the 1890s, Jim Crow laws began to emerge, formally throughout the southern states and informally in Pennsylvania, which established the benchmark "separate but equal" treatment of African Americans. These laws, which in reality did not require equal anything – education, housing, recreation, public facilities, etc. – for blacks, allowed southern states to continue with the social culture embedded in slavery and northern states to be comfortable with this treatment of blacks. It is during this period that African Americans, after gaining the vote during Reconstruction, were disenfranchised once again as local and state governments passed laws that stipulated voting requirements, such as literacy or land ownership.⁴⁵

For Pennsylvania, this period marks a period of transition as well. The abolition of slavery fifty years earlier did not abolish racism, particularly in the small cities, towns and rural areas of the commonwealth. Despite being north of the Mason-Dixon line, even Pennsylvania communities that actively supported abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in the 19th century did not always welcome permanent black settlers. In the early 20th century, many such communities also became supporters of the activist and hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Legal segregation operated in Pennsylvania well into the 20th century, and de facto Jim Crow rules applied in housing, education, and labor well after the passage of state and federal equal rights legislation through the last quarter of the 20th century.

The relationship between Pennsylvania's black churches and the Reconstruction and early Jim Crow eras is defined by the expansion of AME and AMEZ churches throughout the commonwealth and into the south and the diversification of black denominations in the commonwealth as black migrants from the south moved north in search of safety, jobs, and family. It was during this period that the Black Church solidified its role as a critical social welfare organization to meet the needs of Pennsylvania's African American communities as they changed to accommodate Southern migrants moving north. Black Church congregations filled a need for secular education, food, clothing, shelter, and support in African American communities that local, state, or federal governments could – or would – not. As one scholar noted, "Now that physical emancipation had been achieved, black churches looked to address racial and economic oppression."⁴⁶

One way to understand the history and evolution of black churches in Pennsylvania during this period is to analyze census data and denominational histories for Pennsylvania as a whole as well as its urban centers. The first federal census for this period is 1870. The Census Bureau used the same methods to collect data on religion as in the 1850 and

⁴⁴ "Reconstruction Vs. Redemption." <https://www.neh.gov/news/reconstruction-vs-redemption>.

⁴⁵ "Jim Crow Laws." <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedom-riders-jim-crow-laws/>.

⁴⁶ Kendra H. Barber, "Whither Shall We Go? The Past and Present of Black Churches and the Public Sphere," *religions*, 3/18/2015.

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1860 census and lumped together related denominations in broad categories, which provides little insight into the growth of the black churches in Pennsylvania. When taken together, the numbers show a growth in most denominations since the 1850 census and the addition of 2nd Adventist, United Brethren, and Evangelical congregations. The 1880 religion census expanded the types of information gathered from religious leaders about their congregations but stopped short of capturing a complete picture.⁴⁷

In 1890, census taking related to religion in the United States improved significantly with the collection of more detailed information and abandonment of broad categories. The Statistics of Churches in the United States collected as part of the 11th census reported 145 denominations in the U.S. represented by 164,885 organizations. For the first time, black church denominations were listed specifically with details like church seating capacity, property value, number of members, number of edifices ("buildings owned and used for worship"), and number of organizations (churches, mission stations when separate from congregation, chapels when they are separate from churches, and societies or meetings among groups that designate such organizations).

The 1910 Negro Business Directory, employed as a tool to uncover numerous denominations and congregations for the purposes of this document, yields information about the religious experiences of African Americans that is rich and detailed. One phenomenon the Directory reveals is the growth and spread of the black Baptist Church which, apart from Philadelphia, did not attract large numbers until doing so in the Pittsburgh region during the mid- to late 19th century (and in the rest of the commonwealth by the early 20th). Along with the Great Migration of people from southern states came a sizable number of African Americans who practiced the Baptist religion, and many churches were established after they settled in various cities where the employment opportunities were strongest.⁴⁸

For instance, in McKeesport, Allegheny County, just south of Pittsburgh, the town, in 1910, counted among its "population of colored people, 1,200," two churches, one Baptist and one AME. For the "colored population" of 200 in Rochester, Beaver County, about forty miles north of Pittsburgh, there was one church and it was for a Baptist congregation. This was largely because the coal, railroad, hotel, and domestic service industries essentially employed an African American population that came from the South, where the primary Christian religion adopted by the enslaved population was one of the Baptist denominations. In the center of the commonwealth, at Altoona, Blair County, three churches served 800 African American residents: "AME, 1; AME Zion, 1; Baptist, 1." In Johnstown, with its 500 African American residents, there were only two churches, an AME and a Baptist, and Bellefonte, Centre County, counted one active AME congregation.⁴⁹

Harrisburg, with its population of 4,500 African Americans in 1910, had ten congregations: "AMEZ., 2; AME, 1; Presbyterian, 1; Episcopal, 1; M.E., 1;" and "Baptist, 4." Profiling a minister from the AMEZ church who had also been a successful businessman (and also was a noted educator as well), the Directory noted that:

Rev. W. H. Marshall is a graduate of the grammar high schools of Harrisburg, being one of the first colored boys to graduate from the High School. He became a teacher in our public schools, where he has remained for several years. He was ordained a minister in the AME Zion Church, and held a charge in Wrightsville and Middletown, where he labored for several years in connection with his school work. He is now pastor of Harris AME Zion Church, this city, which was recently built at a cost of \$6,000. Mr. Marshall's

⁴⁷ See Rosen.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of African Americans coming North from 1890-1940 and bringing along either their Baptist faith or other denominational practices, see Milton C. Sernett's *Bound For the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁴⁹ *Pennsylvania Negro Business Directory* (Harrisburg, PA: Jas. H.W. Howard & Son, 1910) 41, 43, 51.

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work in this city as a teacher and minister has been exceedingly successful, and its impress for good has been felt by the entire community.⁵⁰

In nearby Steelton, where the "Pennsylvania Steel Company has for years...been large employers of Negro labor, both skilled and unskilled," two of the three churches were Baptist (the third was AME) as most of the community's African American residents were new migrants looking for jobs. The same was true for Connellsville in Fayette County, where the coal industry was beginning to attract southern migrants and where three-quarters of the African American population of 1,000 residents worshipped in its three Baptist churches (the remaining church was AME). By 1910, Wilkes-Barre added to its AME and AME Zion congregations two new Baptist churches. In the far northwestern section of Pennsylvania, in Meadville, Crawford County, and Erie, Erie County, only one church was identified in each community in 1910, and both were recorded as AMEs.⁵¹

By the close of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, sociologists, economists, historians, and other social scientists began noticing, and studying, African American culture from a scientific and socio-cultural perspective. W.E.B. DuBois published numerous studies during this period that capture important information about African American history in general and in the commonwealth. He was one of the first, outside of Church leaders, to note in 1898 that:

The Negro Church is the only social institution of the Negroes which started in the African forest and survived slavery; under the leadership of priest or medicine man, afterward of the Christian pastor, the Church preserved in itself the remnants of African tribal life and became after emancipation the center of Negro social life. So that today the Negro population of the United States is virtually divided into church congregations which are the real units of race life.⁵²

Beginning around the time the United States entered World War I in 1916 and lasting into the 1920s, approximately 450,000 African Americans migrated from the South into the North, including Pennsylvania, in what is called the Great Migration. This large movement of people was spurred by failed Reconstruction-era policies, growing Jim Crow segregation and hostility, and Northern industries needing inexpensive labor. One of the results of this migration was the development of extensive networks based on ties of family, friends, and church, to share information about job opportunities, potential threats, and other matters of common interest.

In many respects, Black Church congregations, in Pennsylvania and throughout the country, became "cultural brokers" to help African Americans from the rural south transition to northern urban life.⁵³ Southern transplants poured into the industrial centers of the North, which were new environments requiring social, emotional, and labor skill sets, some of which were totally alien to the rural agrarian backgrounds from which they came, and which magnified the challenges of acculturation. The challenges of adjustment were dauntingly immense and the opportunities for exploitation probably unlimited. Moreover, in such an environment, the importance of acculturating institutions was enhanced; the significance of the church as the only autonomous institution became even more critical. Church-sponsored social service work, some of which had started in the Reconstruction era, took on a greater role in the African American community. In particular, the AME Church published special editions of its newspaper about migration and migrant-led efforts for education and humanitarian aid. Many of the Black Church-led social service organizations like hospitals and care homes across the United States, and in Pennsylvania, date to this period.

⁵⁰ Pennsylvania Negro Business Directory, 80-84.

⁵¹ Pennsylvania Negro Business Directory, 91-92, 118-119.

⁵² William Edward Burgha Du Bois, *The Negro Church; Report of a Social Study Made under the Direction of Atlanta University; Together with the Proceedings of the Eighth Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems*, held at Atlanta University, May 26th, 1903 (Atlanta, GA: Atlanta University Press, 1903) ii.

⁵³ See Lincoln and Mamiya.

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Comparing data available from the 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936 U.S. Religion Censuses provides a snapshot of the active Black Church denominations in Pennsylvania during the period of the Great Migration. Because these censuses were populated largely by self-reported information from schedules provided to church administrations and congregations in all states and the District of Columbia, a degree of caution should be used when consulting them for individual denominational and church histories. When looking at the number of congregations, members, and church buildings for the Black Church denominations, clear trends emerge.⁵⁴ All but one of the denominations – the CME church – show significant bumps in the number of congregations between 1916 and 1926. This is likely a result of southern migrants moving into Pennsylvania during and after World War I as part of the Great Migration. The most significant jump in this period is for Baptist congregations.

⁵⁴ Church buildings includes halls and church buildings for the purposes of this MPDF. Because COGIC congregations are not well represented in these censuses, despite being known to exist in Pennsylvania during the reporting period, they are not included in this analysis. The Baptist group is that identified as “Negro Baptist” in the census records.

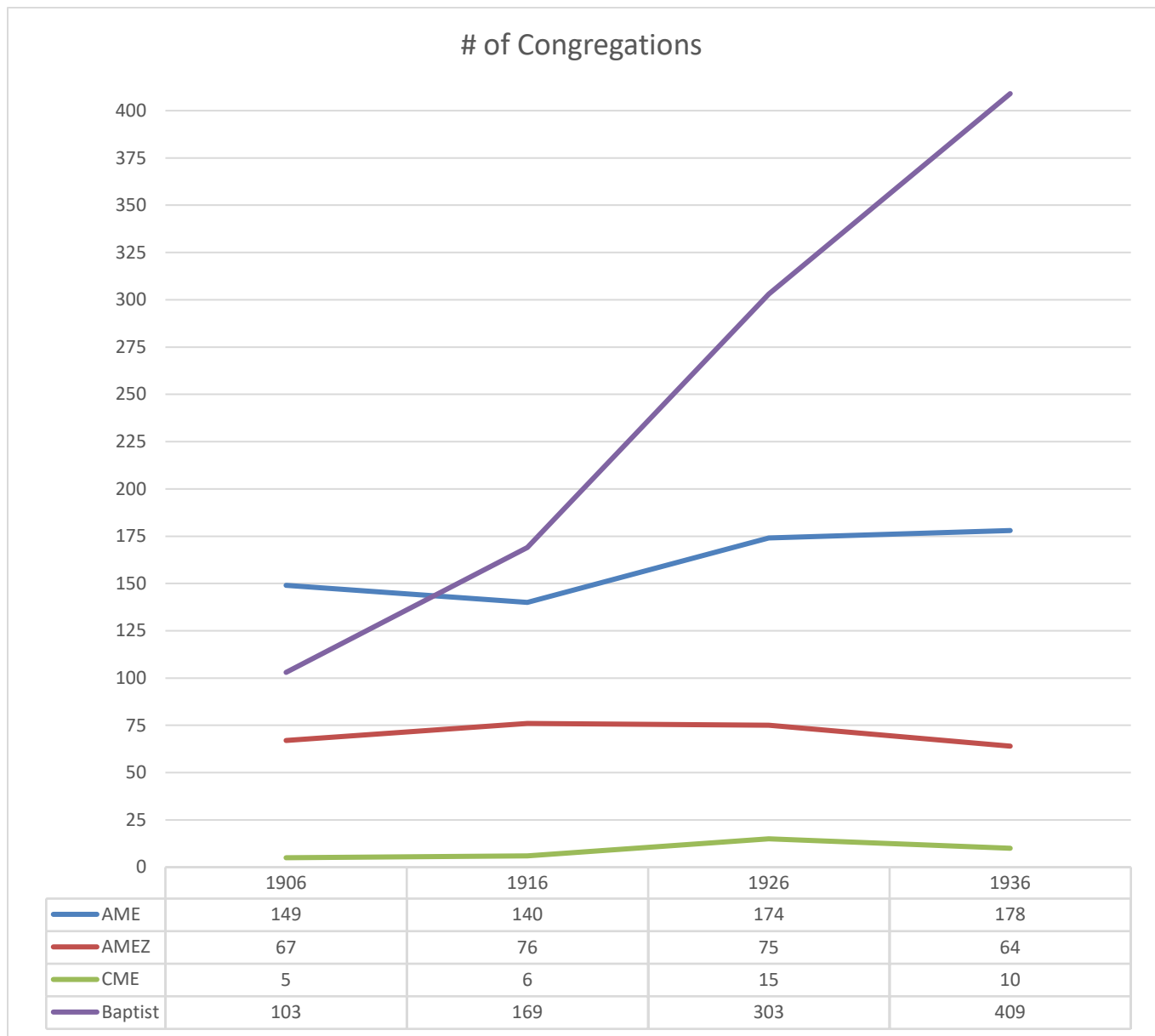
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This graph compares the rise in congregations for four Black Church denominations in Pennsylvania between 1906 and 1936.⁵⁵

While the number of congregations increased by about 75%, membership in the Baptist denomination increased almost 250%, meaning almost 60,000 new African Americans entered Baptist congregations in Pennsylvania in this period. Other Black Church denominations only increased marginally in keeping with general population gains.

⁵⁵ Data used in this chart were gathered from the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor's *Census of Religious Bodies* for 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936.

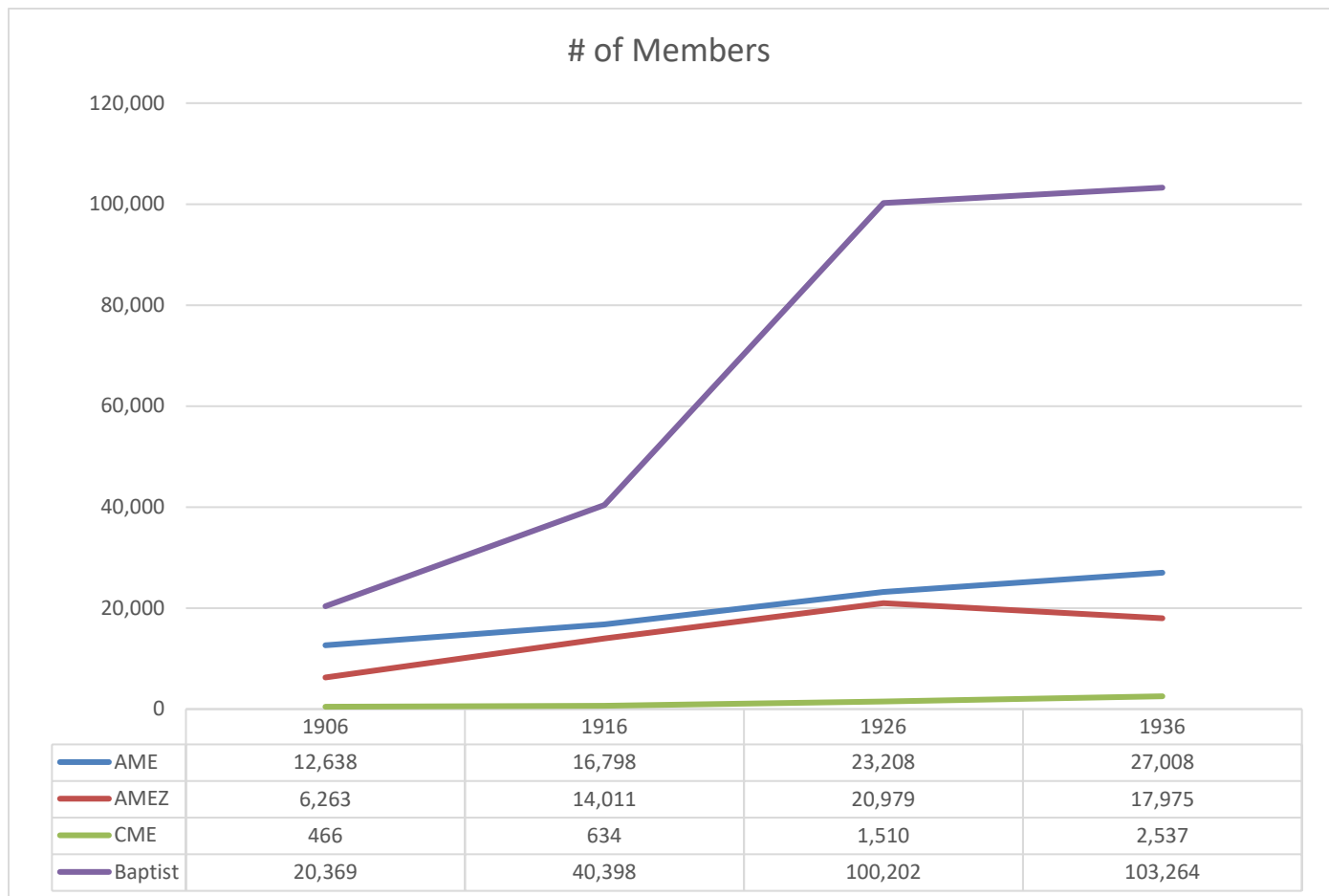
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This graph compares the changes in membership for four Black Church denominations in Pennsylvania between 1906 and 1936.⁵⁶

There was a strong relationship between the church and labor in Pennsylvania during this period. The Great Migration of African Americans coming north from the South in search of work, with many settling in the industrial regions, had an immense effect on black churches, as much of the focus and needs of the congregations revolved around the need for work. A 1925 study in the *Journal of Religion* cites Philadelphia and Pittsburgh as examples where African American church leaders in the south migrated north with their congregations to establish new churches where they could safely practice their faith⁵⁷ In most circumstances, however, existing churches had to absorb those willing to join them or recent migrants established new congregations like those they had left in the South. The author explains how congregations shifted between the buildings that housed their worship:

Moreover, old churches were strengthened by the migration, although the churches of the North by no means appealed to all of the migrants. New churches had to be built to care for the influx of people. As negroes crowded areas occupied by white people, they took over the buildings formerly used by white religious groups. There is some evidence that white religious bodies desired negro organizations of the same faith and order to continue worship at their churches. But denominational scruples were soon

⁵⁶ Data used in this chart were gathered from the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor's *Census of Religious Bodies* for 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936.

⁵⁷ Miles Mark Fisher, "The Negro Church and the World-War," *The Journal of Religion* (vol. 5, no. 5, 1925, pp. 483–499, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1195717) 486.

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broken down by the presence of many negroes in the communities; so that a Jewish synagogue or a Presbyterian building or a Methodist Episcopal church house was sold to Baptists, or an Episcopal structure or a Baptist edifice to the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. The main consideration was to get buildings which could no longer serve white constituents.⁵⁸

Often, migrants would write letters to their friends and families in the South encouraging them to make the move north for better wages and treatment; these letters were often read in southern churches, reinforcing the role of the church in African American lives. In particular, by 1917, the CME leadership realized the impact of the Great Migration on the Church. In his 1925 history of the Church, C.H. Phillips noted that at the spring 1917 meeting, bishops considered:

The question of migration, the large number of our members to leave the South, causing depletion of our membership, and anxiety for their welfare after reaching the North, was one of the outstanding questions that required discussion... The senior bishop has called the College of Bishops to meet in a few days in an extraordinary session, for the purpose of planning a solution of the pressing problem created by the exodus of the Colored people from the South, especially our members. The Church finds itself now at a crisis; not because we have not done our duty, but because in the course of the unravelling of the Divine plan, new, and unforeseen duties have come to us—duties which bear the earmarks of a genuine test. There has never been a time in the history of the Church when the Church body needed united leadership more than at the present time.⁵⁹

The communities with an active and large industrial bases were often home to more than one Black Church congregation during this period. For examples, the communities of Mount Union, Huntingdon County and its neighbor Kistler, Mifflin County are a microcosm of what was happening throughout the commonwealth. Several brick industries supported a substantial black community (along with Eastern European and other ethnic groups) that grew during the Great Migration and established multiple Black Church denominations: Bethel A.M.E. (1917), the Mount Hope Baptist Church (1918), and Tabernacle Church of God in Christ (1928).⁶⁰ In his work *African Americans in Mercer County*, historian Roland Barksdale-Hall wrote, “between 1908 and 1944, African American newcomers to the Shenango Valley organized ten Baptist churches; three holiness churches; and a Catholic, a Colored Methodist Episcopal, and an African Methodist church.”⁶¹

For employers, alliances with black churches were driven by their desire to “develop a dependable and efficient force of employees,” and to this end “industrialists supported churches that espoused the work ethic and preached thrift and sobriety to individual workers.”⁶² Chiefly in western Pennsylvania, “employers ... developed a particularly close relationship with black churches.” However, in western Pennsylvania, the church leaders also supported the union cause in the 1930s. Dennis C. Dickerson characterized the organizing drives for the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1936 and 1937 as productive in recruiting African American union members.

⁵⁸ Fisher, 486.

⁵⁹ C. H. Phillips, *The History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America: Comprising Its Organization, Subsequent Development and Present Status*, (Jackson, Tennessee, Publishing House C.M.E. Church, 1925) 498.

⁶⁰ R. Cummins McNitt, “The History of the Black Community of Mount Union, PA: Is This a Jim Crow Place?” (Master's Thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1987) 19. Regarding the place of origin for many of the “Shantytown” and Kistler residents who migrated from the South in the 1910's 20's and 30's, this supported by the 1920 and 1930 Federal Census for Mount Union Borough, Huntingdon County, and Kistler Borough, Huntingdon and Mifflin Counties. Shelby Splain, “Pennsylvania's African American Historic Resources: Survey Report of Findings.” (Harrisburg: PHMC, November 2009).

⁶¹ Roland C. Barksdale-Hall, *African Americans in Mercer County* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2009) 20-22.

⁶² Shifting Historical Perspectives, 388.

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Adding to these successes in the increase in enrollment of African American steel workers in the union cause was an almost simultaneous recommendation by the National Negro Congress which, with the CIO, "sponsored a conference of black leaders in Pittsburgh to discuss strategies for recruiting black laborers into the steel union" in 1937.⁶³ Among the influential African Americans who attended the conference were individuals from virtually every walk of life, including Bishop William J. Walls, head of the Allegheny Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and Robert L. Vann, editor of the Pittsburgh Courier. Their campaign was the primary reason the labor movement gained momentum among African American workers, despite the setbacks which would occur in the years to come, as these men had, Dickerson wrote, "all agreed to extensive use of church pulpits, the radio, and the press as the best ways to bring blacks to an awareness of SWOC."⁶⁴

On the clergy's side during this period in the 1930s, "black clergymen believed the numerical growth of their congregations resulted from increased employment opportunities in local industries," and since "they and their churches benefited from industrial philanthropy, few among the black clergy protested against racial discrimination in hiring, promotion, and job assignments."⁶⁵ Essentially, in the age of lynching, "black ministers and denominational leaders recognized that increased employment prospects for blacks in the Pittsburgh vicinity meant greater opportunities to found new congregations and add to the membership of existing churches," so they commonly avoided criticizing employers for unfair treatment and instead, preached a strong work ethic to the congregations.⁶⁶ Ministers held powerful positions not only in aiding parishioners' adjustment but in directing their allegiance—to political parties, labor unions and reform causes.

The church became a powerful influence in the search for equality, or at least fairer treatment, for black Pennsylvanians in the workplace. However, by the 1930s, after considerable migration to the Pittsburgh area, black clergymen supported organized labor and "openly denounce[d] unfair employment practices against the black worker."⁶⁷ By 1946, Horace Cayton, a black sociologist and columnist for the Pittsburgh Courier, wrote that "few Negro preachers dared to oppose the United Steelworkers of America and other such unions since it would mean the sure loss of their congregations," declaring that "the unionization of black workers allowed their ministers to speak out against industry's discriminatory treatment of black employees and facilitated the occupational advancement of several black steelworker-preachers."⁶⁸

1930s-1970s: Black Churches and the Civil Rights Era

For more than three centuries black Pennsylvanians have persevered in their quest to be made whole—to exercise the full benefits and responsibilities of equal citizenship. When the Civil Rights Movement burst upon the American stage in the middle of the 20th century, it drew upon all the earlier institutional and organizational efforts to achieve social, civil and political rights. Many tend to think of the movements for civil and political rights as a mid-20th century phenomenon and Southern in its focus. Yet black Pennsylvanians knew that segregation and discrimination were not exclusively Southern phenomena. The African American struggle for "unalienable rights" has been ongoing since the earliest days of their presence in Pennsylvania, in the resistance to slavery, in the campaign for independent churches, in the pursuit of education, and in the search for good jobs.

⁶³ Shifting Historical Perspectives, 398.

⁶⁴ Dickerson, *Out of the Crucible*, 135, 137.

⁶⁵ Shifting Historical Perspectives, 389.

⁶⁶ Shifting Historical Perspectives, 395.

⁶⁷ Shifting Historical Perspectives, 388-389.

⁶⁸ Shifting Historical Perspectives, 399.

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From the beginning, independent churches provided the platform from which other initiatives would be launched. Even after the creation of national organizations such as the Urban League, the NAACP, and the National Council of Negro Women, churches remained a central institution and resource. With the rise of the national organizations, African Americans in Pennsylvania began a new direction in this agitation for equality: they stood for public office; they pressed lawmakers to pass equal rights laws and the courts to uphold them; and they put themselves in personal danger on the streets, at public pools, in restaurants, at universities and public schools, and at the voting booth to achieve equality.

During this period, Black Church congregations in Pennsylvania remained a source of service and leadership to African Americans throughout the struggle for civil rights; examples can be found throughout Pennsylvania, not only in the urban centers of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, that illustrate the role of Black Church congregations in this arena. Whether providing facilities, funds, or direction for voter registration, sit-in organization, industry boycotts, or inspiring speeches, the community church was the pivotal spiritual and physical guiding force for many individuals. In this period, Black Church congregations continued in their social and beneficial roles that started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and started to address the issues of segregation in education and recreation as well as in the workplace and the voting booth.

There are stories across the commonwealth that illustrate the roles Black Churches continued to play, as both leaders and supporters, in the 20th century as African Americans in Pennsylvania continued their fight for civil rights. These stories touch on many different aspects of life – education, recreation, work, shopping – and show that the fight for civil rights was not limited to abolition activity before the Civil War or to the well-known battles of the 1960s.

For example, in Tredyffrin Township, Chester County, the Mt. Zion AME story is about equal rights in education. It illustrates the role of a local church congregation in the fight against school segregation in suburban southeastern Pennsylvania in the 1930s; these events are known locally as the “School Fight” and more broadly as the “Berwyn Segregation Case.” This case, in which the local Black Church was a critical player, has been referred to by historians as the “dress rehearsal for the modern civil rights movement.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ David Canton, “A Dress Rehearsal for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: Raymond Pace Alexander and the Berwyn, Pennsylvania, School Desegregation Case, 1932-1935” (*Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 75, Number 2, Spring 2008) 275.

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Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Tredyffrin Township, Chester County.

The schools in Chester County had been integrated since the passage of the Public School Act in 1834 but, a century later, that began to change as two critical things were happening in this area of Pennsylvania: an influx of migrants from the South fueled racist beliefs in the predominantly white community, and the growing popularity of the theory that African American students learned best from African American teachers. By segregating schools, whites argued, economic interests and real estate values were protected, children were prevented from socializing and potentially marrying outside their race, and African American students could have a more appropriate educational experience.⁷⁰

Beginning in 1930, school boards in Chester and neighboring Delaware County adopted segregation policies that called for the physical separation of white and African American students in different classrooms or different buildings. In 1932, two adjacent school districts in the vicinity of Mt. Zion AME collaborated to reorganize as the new Tredyffrin-

⁷⁰ Robert J. Wise and Seth Hinshaw, "Mount Zion A.M.E. Church." (National Register of Historic Places Inventory/ Nomination Form, Wise Preservation Planning, Chester Springs, PA, January 2015, Section 8) 15.

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Easttown School District. In the reorganization, elementary schools were officially segregated, and African American students were sent to the older school buildings while white students were sent to new (and newer) schools.

The area's African American community immediately organized to protest the new policies. Petitions were filed, schools were boycotted, a civil lawsuit was filed and interviews were given as the fight between the African American community and the all-white school board escalated. By 1933, the "School Fight" was being reported on across the country, particularly as African American parents who boycotted the schools and ignored the compulsory school attendance laws were jailed. By 1934, it had grown large enough to be a factor in Pennsylvania's upcoming gubernatorial and U.S. Senate elections when Mt. Zion's pastor Rev. William L. Johnson wrote a widely published letter to Governor Pinchot informing him that "the 500,000 negroes of Pennsylvania will vote against you solidly" if he didn't intervene and end the school segregation.⁷¹ The "School Fight" ended in the spring of 1934 when Pennsylvania Attorney General William Schnader formally supported the African American families. The school board realized that it would likely not win the civil lawsuit, of which the commonwealth was now one of the complainants, and officially desegregated the public schools.

Mt. Zion AME served as the "home base" for the "School Fight." Founded in 1849 as the New Centreville AME Church and renamed in 1901 to coincide with the construction of a new church and changes in its administration, Mt. Zion AME was one of the few African American congregations along the "Main Line," which has long been recognized as a predominantly white, upper and upper middle-class community, immediately west of Philadelphia in Delaware, Montgomery, and Chester counties. Many of the African American families directly affected by the school segregation were members of Mt. Zion AME and church leaders were among some of the most prominent and effective voices in the fight. As a community institution, Mt. Zion AME provided space for community and strategy meetings, classrooms for students who boycotted the public schools, a place to get food or other assistance, and for leaders to organize legal representation and outside assistance.⁷² In one notable event in March 1933, national NAACP leaders, the editor of the influential African American newspaper the Philadelphia Tribune, and a Congressman from Chicago led a standing room only meeting at Mt Zion.

Discrimination and segregationist policies and practices were not isolated to education. As Jim Crow segregation became even more firmly rooted in Pennsylvania in the years following the Great Depression, African Americans found themselves also excluded from recreation amenities like swimming pools, golf courses, and resorts. As the predominant, if not only, African American institution in many of Pennsylvania's communities, Black Church congregations were also active in the fight for civil rights in the arena of recreation and entertainment.

The story of Fairview Park in Salem Township, Westmoreland County illustrates this relationship between Black Church congregations and recreation. In 1916, over forty African American congregations from several denominations formed the Monongahela Valley Sunday School Association (MVSSA) to facilitate recreational and education opportunities for African American Sunday School groups in and around Pittsburgh.⁷³ In 1945, MVSSA purchased land for a small amusement park, swimming pool, and picnic grove in southwestern Pennsylvania. The group developed Fairview Park as a destination for all African Americans – regardless of their religious affiliation – as an alternative to other regional amusement parks like Kennywood and West View Park that practiced unofficial policies of segregation.

⁷¹ Wise, 15.

⁷² Wise, 15.

⁷³ Shelby Splain, "Fairview Park" (National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form. Keystone Preservation Group, Doylestown, PA, December 2010, Section 8) 1. Congregations active in the MVSSA included several AME, Baptist and independent bodies from the Pittsburgh metropolitan area as well as Bethel AME in Greensburg, Hopewell Baptist Church in Jeannette, Calvary Baptist in New Kensington, First Baptist Church in Arnold, and Shiloh Baptist in Apollo.

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The park illustrates the tangible connection between the Black Church, Jim Crow segregation, and African American life in the commonwealth. Following housing and education, recreation was one of the most widely segregated aspects of life in the early and mid-20th century.⁷⁴ Amusement parks with pools and dance halls were some of the most commonly segregated places because of the potential for physical contact between races, either directly or indirectly. Complicating the relationship between segregation and recreation was that, unlike education, recreation and leisure activities were viewed as “optional” experiences and so it was therefore not necessary to accommodate African Americans.

During this period, one of the most successful and widely replicated approaches African Americans used in the fight for civil rights were “selective patronage” campaigns. Reverend Leon Sullivan is most often credited with developing the “selective patronage” approach during his time as pastor of the Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia from 1950 to 1988. This tactic operated on the theory that the combined purchasing power of African Americans was powerful enough that, when taken from a company or product, it would have a negative economic impact on said company or product. It was particularly useful in the labor arena in forcing companies to hire African American workers and to provide equal employment treatment and benefits.

These organized boycotts were often referred by the slogan “Don’t Buy Where You Don’t Work” that was printed on flyers and pamphlets to be distributed through churches and neighborhoods. The campaigns were typically deployed in three steps over a period of several weeks, and Black Church congregations were instrumental in their success. In the first step, ministers introduced the campaign to their congregants during Sunday sermons. The second step followed a few weeks later as ministers reinforced the importance of participating in the campaign and flyers and pamphlets were placed in local African American businesses. The last step was to distribute these materials more widely.⁷⁵ In Philadelphia alone, African Americans boycotted Tasty Baking Company, Gulf Oil, A&P Markets, and at least two dozen other companies and secured upwards of 2,000 jobs for African Americans.⁷⁶

This non-violent, grassroots form of protest quickly spread from Philadelphia to other parts of the country after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noticed its effectiveness and began encouraging its use. In Pennsylvania, similar campaigns were started in Black Church congregations in Pittsburgh, Erie, and other areas with large African American communities. In Coatesville, for example, St. Paul AME Church and Tabernacle Baptist Church both participated in “selective patronage” campaigns.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Splain, “Fairview Park,” 5.

⁷⁵ Amy J. Cohen, “From Boycotts to Black Power,” (*Pennsylvania Legacies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2010, pp. 32–33, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5215/pennlega.10.2.0032) 32.

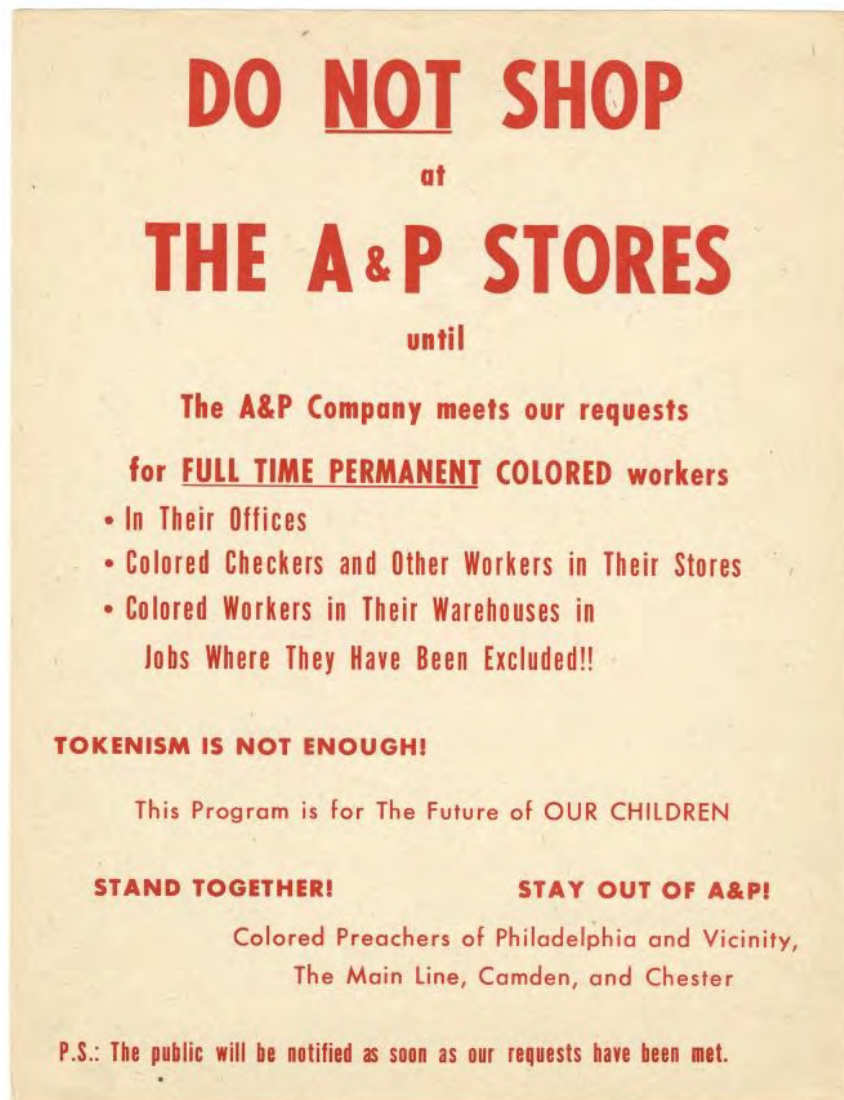
⁷⁶ Guian A. McKee, “‘The Walls of Jericho Must Come Down!’ Civil Rights and Employment in Post–World War II Philadelphia,” (*Pennsylvania Legacies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2010, pp. 24–31. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5215/pennlega.10.2.0024), 28.

⁷⁷ Jean K. Wolf, “St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church,” National Register of Historic Places Inventory/Nomination Form Section 8, December 12, 2012) 19.

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From the Thelma McDaniel Collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, c.1966-1971. Note that the "Colored Preachers of Philadelphia and Vicinity, The Main Line, Camden, and Chester" are issuing this call to action.

Black Church Congregations since 1970

Demographic changes across the commonwealth, beginning in the late 20th century and into the 21st century, have significantly impacted congregations across the religious spectrum, and those belonging to the historically Black Church are no different. Across the commonwealth and the country, church attendance started to fall in the last few decades of the 20th century. Black Church congregations, like many mainline Protestant congregations, have declined in size because of demographic and cultural changes. Aging populations, combined with cultural trends toward individual faith, not institutional worship, translates into fewer new members attending and financially supporting faith-based institutions.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ See Issue 4 in *#PreservAtionHappensHere: Pennsylvania Statewide Historic Preservation Plan 2018-2023*, 90.

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One result of this demographic shift is that many congregations made difficult decisions about their older and historic church buildings. In Pennsylvania's African American communities, Black Church congregations followed four general paths:

- They remained viable and based at their historic church. One example of this is Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Monongahela in Monongahela, Washington County.
- They grew smaller and sold their property to consolidate with another congregation or purchase a newer, smaller church. One example of this is the AME church in Bedford, Bedford County.
- They lost their historic building to a natural disaster or through urban renewal and either rebuilt, moved to a new location, or disbanded. One example of this is the COGIC congregation in Mt. Union, Huntingdon County.
- They disbanded and their building was sold or abandoned. One example of this is the Mt. Tabor AME church in Mount Holly Springs, Cumberland County.

Examples of each of these scenarios can be found throughout the commonwealth in rural and suburban areas, cities large and small, and in older and newer African American neighborhoods. While these scenarios are not isolated to the decades after 1970, they did occur more frequently. In more recent years, a renewed and concerted effort to identify, recognize, and celebrate places associated with Pennsylvania's African American history has led to more congregations and communities preserving their historic churches.



Mt. Tabor AME Church in Cumberland County was rediscovered during a community engagement project that led to a discussion about the Carlisle area's African American history.

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Black Church Architecture

In many cultures, churches are considered sacred spaces and the physical representation of a religion and its adherents. The floor plan, architectural style, art, furniture, and arrangement of spaces and elements in a church can often reveal theological, philosophical, and socio-ethnographical information about its congregants and the evolution of denominations.

Depending on the congregation's size and wealth, the churches were either architect designed as high-style examples of their type or vernacular adaptations executed by local builders with only a few stylistic expressions on a simple building form. On the outside, most Protestant churches from the 19th and early 20th century were designed in popular architectural styles such as the Classical Revival, Gothic Revival, or Romanesque Revival. The Gothic style, in particular, "conjured powerful images of continuity with the devout spirit of medieval Christianity, forging an emotional link between contemporary Protestantism and an idealized era."⁷⁹ No matter the design, shape, size, or particular denomination, almost all churches have an exterior architectural element to draw the eye upwards towards the heavens; this is achieved through the use of tall towers, steeples, or, less frequently, domes.

Across Pennsylvania in the 18th and early 19th century, the rectangular meetinghouse with gable roof form was the basic template for most Presbyterian, Quaker, Baptist, and Methodist church buildings.⁸⁰ By the mid-19th century, the arrangement of spaces within Protestant churches can generally be broken down into three sections:

- The narthex, where members enter a church. This area is located immediately inside the church's main entrance and before members enter the sanctuary. In small churches, there may not be a division separating the narthex from the sanctuary.
- The sanctuary (or nave), where the congregation sits, stands, or kneels during the service. This is the main body of the church and contains seating (pews) and circulation patterns (center aisle, side aisles, etc.) that were arranged according to the plan of the church.
- The chancel, where the pulpit for delivering the sermon, choir loft (seating), and communion table are typically located.

Eventually, most churches featured stained glass windows that illuminated the sanctuary and sometimes the chancel. These can be plain, multi-light widows with simple colored glass or intricate works of art depicting different symbols of Christianity, such as a fish, bread, a goblet, a cross, or a lamb. The number, quality, and design of the stained-glass windows will vary depending on denomination, class, and finances of the congregation. At the turn of the 20th century, many Methodist congregations that originally eschewed Gothic pointed arch windows and stained glass eventually adopted them in new church buildings or during renovations.⁸¹

Churches in the African Methodist family (AME, AMEZ, CME), Baptist, and COGIC denominations do not differ significantly from other Protestant churches of the same time and place with regard to style, plan, and features. The AME Church, specifically, has noted that its split with the white Methodist Church in the late 18th century was because of social differences over slavery and equal rights and opportunity within the Church rather than theological differences. As such, African Methodist churches follow the same teachings, doctrines, order of service, etc. – and by extension,

⁷⁹ Carl Lounsbury, "God Is in the Details: The Transformation of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Early Nineteenth-Century America" (*Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2006, pp. 1–21. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20355366) 9.

⁸⁰ Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia, Mo: University of Missouri Press, 2003) 11.

⁸¹ See Wise, Section 7.

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church design – as their white counterparts. Church architecture, plan, or decoration is not an area within which the African Methodist Churches sought to distinguish themselves from white Methodist Churches.

A brief survey of available literature has found no evidence that churches built or adapted for African American congregations have historically been designed with any specific physical characteristics (unique spatial patterns, architectural styles, massing characteristics, etc.) that might distinguish them from European-American church buildings of their era. Historians of African American religion since at least the 1930s have maintained that Christian denominations established by African Americans generally modeled their places of worship after corresponding European-American models. Sociologist Guy B. Johnson affirmed this relationship between white and African Methodist Churches in a 1934 *American Journal of Sociology* article: “Almost every denomination known to white people is also found among Negroes, and with insignificant exceptions, the Negro creeds, rituals, ceremonies, church architecture, etc., are patterned after the white.”⁸²

This claim has been periodically revisited over time by a handful of scholars and studies, though none have found compelling evidence to significantly challenge this general conclusion. With a few minor exceptions outlined below, there appears to be a consensus that churches constructed by African American denominations are typically indistinguishable in physical characteristics from churches constructed by equivalent white denominations, and no specific architectural style or building form is uniquely associated with any particular African American denomination.

The most recent and most directly relevant study, a 2018 dissertation by Christopher Scott Hunter, closely examined six representative African American church buildings across the southern U.S. for evidence of any physical characteristics directly associated with specific African American cultural identities or religious practices. It concludes that the churches “were influenced in design by several concepts such as regionalism, architectural styles of the time, and the local design vernacular, similar to many European churches constructed in the same community,” but not influenced by any identifiable cultural or religious tradition specific to the African American experience.⁸³

Other studies have identified some potential exceptions to this conclusion, though these are mostly minor design characteristics that may or may not be evident in a broad sample of resources. While they certainly warrant future investigation, none yet appear significant as character-defining features applicable to a statewide historic context statement.

In this review of available literature regarding African American church architecture, it should be noted that no resources specifically addressed Pennsylvania churches beyond Philadelphia; existing scholarship has focused either on urban areas in the North (Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, etc.) or on the rural and urban South. However, there is little evidence to suggest that patterns of design would have originated in the rural north and not been reflected (or more likely disseminated from) urban centers like Philadelphia, which has played a major role in the creation and evolution of African American churches from the 18th century to the present.

In *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch*, the authors note that “whether by design or as a result of economic limitations the churches African Americans built prior to the Civil War were, for the most part, boxlike frame or brick buildings in the meetinghouse style.”⁸⁴ After the Civil War, small congregations, new congregations, and rural and suburban congregations continued to use the simple, meetinghouse form for Methodist, Baptist, or COGIC churches. In

⁸² Guy B. Johnson, “Some Factors in the Development of Negro Social Institutions in the United States,” (*American Journal of Sociology*, November 1934) 332.

⁸³ Christopher Scott Hunter. *Influences of African American Religious Practices on the Architecture of Early African American Church Buildings, 1842-1917*. (PhD Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2018) 166.

⁸⁴ Loveland, 12.

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Pennsylvania, beginning in the early 19th century and extending to the early 20th century, newly built African Methodist houses of worship followed the “Chapel Plan,” which called for a basic rectangular shape oriented with a gable end toward the street and the altar opposite the entrance. In the mid-19th century, many congregations started constructing a full basement below the sanctuary for a “raised Chapel Plan.”⁸⁵ In the mid-19th century, Protestant denominations began building auditorium-style churches, which abandon the traditional rectangular or cross church plan in favor of a square one that places the chancel in a corner with the sanctuary on all three sides. Auditorium plan churches were popular with the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Congregationalist denominations and those of the Black Church.⁸⁶

Regardless of their plan, Black Church buildings will include a narthex, sanctuary (nave), and chancel; in smaller churches, the narthex may be absent as a separate space. The chancel is the focal point of the sanctuary; in Methodist churches, it can be arranged on a series of platforms set behind the chancel rail, which physically separates the congregation from the liturgical activities of the service. Congregants kneel at the chancel rail when receiving communion. Immediately behind the chancel rail is the communion table, with the pulpit elevated behind that, and the choir loft elevated behind that.⁸⁷ Like many churches, Methodist churches can be decorated quite elaborately with stained glass or marble. However, their decorations are usually more symbolic than literal, such as stained-glass windows showing symbols of Christianity, and very rarely will they have any depictions of Jesus or God.

The AME church provides little guidance on the construction and appearance of its churches: “Let all our churches be built plainly and decently, but not more expensively than is absolutely unavoidable.”⁸⁸ In 1908 and 1912, John Anderson Lankford had been appointed to the role of supervising architect for the AME Church, which garnered him commissions throughout the United States and internationally. Lankford was born in Mississippi in 1874 and was educated in a number of schools, including architectural and mechanical drawing courses from the International Correspondence School in Scranton, PA.⁸⁹ Lankford’s work was located largely in the South and included college buildings, churches for a variety of denominations, several residential and commercial buildings in Washington, D.C. and “hundreds of other buildings throughout the country.”⁹⁰

In 1916, Lankford wrote and published “Lankford’s Artistic Church and Other Designs” and authored an article on church buildings in the May 1916 AME Review titled “The Church Edifice.”⁹¹ Later AME Church encyclopedias do not refer to the role of supervising architect, suggesting that the position may have been a short-lived one and related to the extensive building campaigns for the Church’s colleges and community buildings taking place in the early 20th century rather than for the design and direction of individual churches. As an architect, AME church member, and grandson-in-law to the AME Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, Lankford believed that African Americans should build their own churches, designed to fit their practical and spiritual needs, rather than move into churches built for white congregations; he does not, however, elaborate on how, for example, a Presbyterian church built for a predominantly white congregation would

⁸⁵ Wise, Section 7. This nomination includes several examples of AME churches in Pennsylvania that follow the Chapel Plan and raised Chapel Plan.

⁸⁶ Loveland, 33.

⁸⁷ Wright, 347.

⁸⁸ A.M.E. Church. *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 1878) 287.

⁸⁹ Sandra L. Tatman, “Lankford, John Anderson (1874-1946).” *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*.

https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/882164.

⁹⁰ Lynn Gomez Graves, “Chapelle Administration Building,” (National Historic Landmark Nomination Form. Designated December 8, 1976) 7-8.

⁹¹ R. R. Wright and J. Russell Hawkins. *Centennial encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal church*, (Philadelphia: Printed by Book concern of the A. M. E. church, 1916) 277. Hard copies of either publication are limited to one or two repositories in the south and no online editions were located at the time of writing.

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not meet the needs of an AME congregation. In his role as supervising architect, Lankford promoted church building and maintenance through a booklet made available to AME congregations.⁹²

In recent scholarship, there has been some research into some building features specific to Black Church churches. For example, art historian Julian Smith Pleasant notes that many Black Churches feature an enlarged rostrum to accommodate church Elders, and many AME churches feature specific iconography in their stained-glass windows. Some sources reference an “Amen Corner,” defined as a place in the traditional black church near the pulpit where older members, particularly women, sat and led the congregation in responsive “amens” to the minister.⁹³ In a survey of rural southern Black Churches, architectural historian Carol Van West has identified the prominence of elaborate datestones and suggests a vernacular tradition distinct from white churches (though more research would be necessary to support this hypothesis). She also identifies two common features which have emerged within the second half of the twentieth century: “bell monuments” and hand-painted baptismal pool signs.

⁹² Graves, 7. The presence of Lankford-designed churches in Pennsylvania is unknown but some based on his booklets may exist.

⁹³ Geneva Smitherman, *Black Talk: Words and Phrases from the Hood to the Amen Corner* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000) 47.

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African American Cemeteries in Pennsylvania

For all cultures, cemeteries are among the most valued, and valuable, archaeological and historic resources in Pennsylvania. Cemeteries can provide insight into settlement patterns, burial practices, cultural and religious influences, economic development, social relationships, and genealogy. These physical places serve as the primary means of an individual's recognition of family history and as expressions of collective religious and/or ethnic identity. They can also be a connection to a community's history, people, and events that have shaped a shared experience, whether it be positive or negative. In most places and cultures throughout the United States, cemeteries are viewed as places requiring respect and reverence; this, combined with family history, religious affiliation, or ethnic identity often generates emotional connections.

In 1682, William Penn acquired the land that is now the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and he created a space where all religions could be practiced without persecution. White settlers and free and enslaved Africans and African Americans quickly established their own religious communities and traditions, including burial practices. Generally, from the earliest periods of settlement to the early 19th century, church graveyards, Potter's Fields, and cemeteries on private land were the norm; by the 1830s, municipal and privately-owned cemeteries with inviting landscapes, like Rural Cemeteries, Lawn Park, and Memorial Park designs, were also established in Pennsylvania and continue in use to the present day.

For Pennsylvania's African American communities, cemeteries often fell into one of the following categories: a church graveyard, a slave cemetery, a family cemetery, an independent cemetery, and a segregated cemetery.⁹⁴ These are characterized more by the treatment of burials as guided by African American agency and race relations than by their date of construction, design, or ownership. Most cemeteries in Pennsylvania were either de facto or legally segregated from their inception and only integrated in the mid-20th century as Civil Rights battles secured equal rights and treatment for African Americans in death as in life. Examples like the historically integrated cemetery in Bellefonte, Centre County are rare. Independent and segregated cemeteries can date to any period and exhibit characteristics of Potter's Fields or cemetery designs and aesthetics from the Rural Cemetery, Lawn Park, and Memorial Park movements of the last one hundred and fifty years.

Cemeteries, of any type, are one of the most consistent and surviving expressions of agency within the African American community and are often the only remaining tangible evidence of an African American community or history and offer important and telling information about settlement patterns. However, in many communities, cemeteries also tell the story of how whites and African Americans coexisted in the commonwealth over the last three hundred years.

18th and early 19th-Century Enslaved and Free African American Cemeteries

In her essay "On the Wrong Side of the Fence: Racial Segregation in American Cemeteries," Angelika Kruger-Kahloulou argues that scientific racism, along with its corresponding emphasis on racial, ethnic, and/or religious stratification, has played a centuries-long role in determining where individuals have been laid to rest in North America, beginning with the arrival of both Europeans and Africans during the early 17th century and lasting well into the 20th. As she notes, "In the North American colonies, segregated burial facilities appear to have been the rule."⁹⁵ In such cases, there was a designated area typically set aside for Africans and African Americans, such as in the farthest corners of the property, in the unimproved sections, or along boundaries. She cites several examples of places of burial for African Americans,

⁹⁴ Each of these terms is defined in the "Terminology and Concepts" and "Associated Property Types" section of this MPDF.

⁹⁵ Angelika Kruger-Kahloulou, "On the Wrong Side of the Fence: Racial Segregation in American Cemeteries," in Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally, eds., *History and Memory in African American Culture*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 133.

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which “might be evocatively referred to as an ‘African reservation,’ as in Shawshine Cemetery, in Bedford Massachusetts, or simply as ‘Burial Ground for Negroes,’ ‘For Negro People,’ or ‘Colored.’”⁹⁶

Although none have been formally identified or evaluated for listing in the National Register, scattered burials of enslaved Africans or African Americans have been documented on lands once owned by slaveholders in Pennsylvania from the early and mid-18th century. For example, Mohn’s Farm Slave Graveyard in Elizabeth Township, Lancaster County is a slave cemetery located on a 1740s farm property. A local historian in 1913 described a slave graveyard approximately 500 feet from the house, which had been built 1747 by Sise (Suis or Svsen) Balthazer.⁹⁷ Free African Americans in rural Pennsylvania who owned land during this same period would most likely have been buried on their own property in a family cemetery. The Dennis Farm in Brooklyn Township, Susquehanna County which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, has a family cemetery for members of the African American Dennis family and their neighbors.

Free Africans and African Americans in small towns and urban areas, or who did not own land in rural areas, were buried in a church graveyard or in an independent or segregated cemetery, including Potter’s Fields.⁹⁸ Potter’s Fields are land set aside to bury those (of any race) who could not afford a grave or who did not belong to a church; it was not uncommon for independent African American cemeteries to grow from early Potter’s Fields. Potter’s Fields existed throughout Pennsylvania, in cities and the country, until the early 19th century when non-sectarian mutual or municipal cemeteries were established. Some Potter’s Fields were not separate cemeteries initially but were areas in a vacant portion of an existing church graveyard or a designated community burial ground for paupers, foreigners, the enslaved, prisoners, and the unidentified. It is often difficult to trace Potter’s Fields since they were usually unmarked and were often used for short periods of time.

Segregated cemeteries are documented as early as 1755 in the Germantown settlement near Philadelphia, when public ground for a cemetery was purchased at Bowman’s Lane and Pulaski Avenue for “a Separate and distinct Burying Ground for all Strangers and Negroes and Molattoes [sic] as die in any part of German Town.”⁹⁹ In Philadelphia, for example, it was not until several African Americans started a petition against the city in 1782 to “fence in the Negro burial ground in the Potters field” (that being Potter’s Field located at Sixth and Walnut) that African-Americans would begin to have some success in gaining respect and control over their own interments.¹⁰⁰ This trend would continue in 1790, when Absalom Jones, Mose Johnson, and Cyrus Bustill led a contingent of the newly established Free African Society to petition the Mayor for sole control over the African-American section of Potter’s Field. In Carlisle, Cumberland County, the 18th-century founders had set aside two plots of land for residents: the Old Cemetery, for whites, was five acres in a nice area outside of the community, while Lincoln Cemetery, for African Americans, was only .75 acres in an area with poor drainage.

⁹⁶ Kruger-Kahloulou, 133.

⁹⁷ Email correspondence from Gordon Reed to author, October 2018.

⁹⁸ See Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation and Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, “Cemetery Preservation and Recordation: Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania.”
<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/cemetery-preservation/index.html>.

⁹⁹ Charles R. Barker, *A Register of the Burying-Grounds of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia: 1944 Bound Mss. Volumes at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania) 113. Additionally, between the years of 1705 and 1813, the city of Philadelphia itself had purchased several tracts of land for the interment of “strangers,” the most noteworthy among them perhaps being the burial ground situated in the locale known as present day Washington Square (adjacent to the intersection of Sixth Street and Walnut). Also known as “Potter’s Field” or “Stranger’s Burial Ground” (a quandary that has sometimes caused historians to confuse both locales), African-Americans were buried here and at the other public burial grounds named “Stranger’s Burial Ground” between the South side of 9th and 12th Streets along Lombard.

¹⁰⁰ Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia’s Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) 94.

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Church congregations, too, practiced segregation in their graveyards when African Americans worshipped at the church. Beyond the public cemeteries, particular religious denominations such as the Lutherans, Episcopalians, Catholics, Methodists and Baptists would either deny African Americans a place for burial within their church graveyards or would simply relegate them to a segregated spot.¹⁰¹ Even among the many disproportionately abolitionist-espousing 18th- and 19th-century Quaker congregations, there often existed a brand of racism that was associated with burials. Using Middletown Friends Meeting in Delaware County as his example, African American sociologist Richard R. Wright, Jr. alleges that among their 1703 records it was stated that "'Friends are not satisfied with having Negroes buried in the Friends' burying ground,'" and thus it was required to "'fence off a portion for such cases,'" and as late as 1798 the same group asserted that "'Negroes are forbidden to be buried within the walls of the graveyard belonging to this Meeting.'"¹⁰² As Black Church congregations, particularly the AME and AMEZ denominations, were established, many created their own graveyards at or near the church property.

Beginning around the 1820s, urban communities began to re-examine the handling of burials, especially in association with epidemics. In the settled areas of the commonwealth, concerns of overcrowding and health hazards led to a campaign for a new type of burial place. The answer became a mutual or municipal non-sectarian cemetery located on the fringes of a town or urban area and separate from the graveyards that were immediately adjacent to most churches. An early precedent for this was Connecticut's New Haven New Burial Ground, founded in 1796, with these same intents. The change also represented a new attitude towards order and beautification of burial grounds. The cemeteries were designed on a geometric grid plan with wide pathways, suitable plantings, and enclosed by a stone wall or cast iron fence. Lots were sold to families at prices affordable to the lower to middle classes. Underground brick vaults were part of a more sanitary design.

These cemeteries were independently owned and controlled by a company or association, usually for profit-making purposes, or by a municipality. Some municipalities developed similar formal cemeteries on the edge of town, but they were usually less successful than the private ones. Between 1826 and 1830, at least four such cemeteries were founded in Philadelphia on the southwest edges of the city and gained popularity for their security against grave robbers.¹⁰³ They all excluded African Americans, although each usually had a section for "Strangers." As cities grew, some of these cemeteries were dismantled and the bodies reinterred to new cemeteries so the land could be used for real estate development. In some rural areas and small towns throughout Pennsylvania, these early non-sectarian cemeteries remain active.

Whether urban or rural, these cemeteries were segregated from the 18th through the mid-20th centuries, almost to the same degree as those states south of the Mason-Dixon line.¹⁰⁴ In some instances, cemeteries operated by municipal or public entities or cemetery companies outright banned African Americans from buying plots or burying their dead; in others, they were happy to take African American money but only on the condition that the plot was located in an area separate from those owned by whites. In segregated cemeteries, African American burials were made in an area considered the least desirable because of soil conditions, accessibility, viewsheds, or proximity to water. Because cemeteries reflected the hierarchy of American society, African Americans were treated poorly and placed again at the bottom of the list behind other groups of slightly higher socioeconomic status.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹Kruger-Kahloula, 135-137.

¹⁰²Richard R. Wright, *The Negro in Pennsylvania: A Study in Economic History* (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1912) 35.

¹⁰³ Grave robbers looted burials for the purposes of stealing goods and in many cases, bodies, to sell to medical colleges and universities for studying.

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Jackson, *Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989) 7.

¹⁰⁵ Kruger-Kahloula, 135.

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There were, however, rare instances of integrated cemeteries where there were no formal or informal practices related to segregating African Americans in death as they were often in life. For instance, the Allegheny Cemetery (Pittsburgh, Allegheny County) included in its 1844 charter that every person had a right to “dignified” burial regardless of “race, color, or creed.” Of the Shreiner’s Cemetery in Lancaster City, the Civil War and Reconstruction era champion of African American Civil Rights Thaddeus Stevens eloquently espoused his wish to be buried at such a site because it was “not limited by charter rules as to race.”¹⁰⁶

Mid-19th through Mid-20th Centuries: The Business and Politics of Cemeteries

By the mid-19th century, along with the blossoming of African American Church and their graveyards across the commonwealth, African American-owned and -operated cemetery companies also began to appear, which helped the African American community exert a great deal more control over their congregants’ death rites and burials. In many parts of the North, local and state officials simply dismissed black communities’ requests to protect African American burial grounds.¹⁰⁷ In such cases, “African churches and mutual aid societies stepped into the breach, creating cemeteries for black parishioners and performing burial services for black families who could not afford them.”¹⁰⁸ These companies were formed to purchase public or private land, often in joint-stock form, with the intention to serve the larger needs of the African American community that was perhaps shut out from other burial opportunities. However, cemetery as mirror of community was not limited only to segregated cemeteries.

In her essay on African American cemeteries, Kruger-Kahloulou also lays out the politics at play in some African American cemeteries that emerged during this period, particularly when these cemeteries were established by and for African Americans:

When black communities were able to exercise authority over their graveyard they did not practice indiscriminate burial. The spatial structure of black cemeteries in the United State reflects ordering principles such as biological descent, cultural community, and social hierarchy. The dead are assembled according to family ties and/or membership in the community, church, fraternal society, et cetera.¹⁰⁹

The emergence of cemetery or burial companies coincides with the rise of the Rural Cemetery Movement in the mid-19th century. Beginning in the 1830s, the Rural Cemetery movement influenced the design of new burial grounds, particularly in urban areas, across the country for the next forty to fifty years. In the 1830s, three major cities in the United States—Boston, Philadelphia, and New York—established large rural cemeteries on sites carefully chosen for accessibility and natural beauty. Mt. Auburn (1833) in Boston, Laurel Hill (1836) in Philadelphia, and Greenwood (1838) in Brooklyn, established park-like, picturesque cemetery patterns that quickly influenced other American cities as Victorian concepts of death and burial flourished.

Yet as scholar Desiree Henderson has noted, Rural Cemeteries such as Mt. Auburn (right outside of Boston), Laurel Hill (adjacent to Philadelphia), or Greenwood Cemetery (located on the outskirts of New York), were in no way to be defined as truly “democratic” institutions. As such, Henderson has stated that:

¹⁰⁶ Kruger-Kahloulou, 136.

¹⁰⁷ See Richard S. Newman, *Black Founders: The Free Black Community in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia: The Library Company, 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Newman, 26. A mutual aid society is one that provides benefits or assistance to its members, typically for such things as death, sickness, disability, and age. Life and health insurance are examples of mutual aid societies.

¹⁰⁹ Kruger-Kahloulou, 138.

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While the cemeteries described themselves as non-denominational, they were essentially Protestant, and Catholic and Jewish communities continued to utilize their own graveyards. While they claimed to be open to individuals of all walks of life, the interred were almost exclusively members of the upper or middle class; the price of burial plots was steep, well beyond the means of most Americans. In fact, as the popularity of the cemeteries ascended, plot ownership and extravagant monument design became status symbols within elite society. And, while the cemeteries had no stated restrictions on race, both interred and visitors were overwhelmingly white. Special plots were sometimes set aside for blacks or the poor, a segregated structure that closely mirrored the segregation that characterized American society as a whole.¹¹⁰

In the “African-American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County” study from the 1980s, scholars Lawrence Glasco, Ronald C. Carlisle and Arthur B. Fox noted that “Nineteenth-century burial practices and policies, with respect to African-Americans, differed from region to region and city to city.” More specifically, these authors have asserted that:

Some cemeteries in strongly abolitionist areas, such as Syracuse, New York’s Oakwood Cemetery or Cambridge, Massachusetts’ Ash Grove Burying Ground, did not exclude on the basis of race....Many urban cemeteries begun during the “rural cemetery” movement of the nineteenth century did not legally exclude blacks, but informal segregation did exist.¹¹¹

It was also not uncommon during this period to displace African American burials in the name of progress; in some areas of Pennsylvania, like the area around Philadelphia, the practice can be traced to the early 19th century. As urban areas began to expand because of advances in transportation and population growth, the small communities, open space, and even burial grounds adjacent to Pennsylvania’s cities were usurped for new housing, industry, and roads. In some cases, cemeteries were absorbed into the expanding community; in others, cemeteries were condemned. If cemeteries were condemned, the graves and related markers were to be moved; however, evidence found during construction projects in the 20th century suggest that while markers may have been moved, graves were not. For African American cemeteries or burials, graves and monuments were typically moved either to a new independent African American cemetery or to a plot within a segregated cemetery. In such cases, the new cemeteries can be considered “caretaker” cemeteries.¹¹²

In the case of Carlisle’s Union Cemetery, a prominent local African American businessman was the patron for one of the two African American cemeteries in the borough. A former slave turned entrepreneur, Robert Thompson, Sr. (1828-1900) purchased the land for Union Cemetery after the first cemetery for African Americans, Lincoln Cemetery, became full. Opened in 1905, this large cemetery has over 300 tombstones and includes reinterred graves from the Lincoln Cemetery as well African American veterans from all wars since the Civil War. The Thompson family owned the cemetery for several generations before turning it over to the Borough of Carlisle.¹¹³

The formal or informal segregation of cemeteries did not end as Pennsylvania’s African American population grew dramatically during the Great Migration. It was not until the mid-20th century, as African Americans took on Civil Rights battles in all aspects of life and society, that legal or de facto segregation in Pennsylvania’s cemeteries stopped. In fact,

¹¹⁰ Desiree Henderson, “‘What is the Grass?’: The Roots of Walt Whitman’s Cemetery Meditation,” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* (Vol. 25, no. 3, Winter 2008) 95-96.

¹¹¹ Eliza Smith Brown, Daniel Holland, Laurence A. Glasco, *African American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County*, (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg: PHMC Press, 1994) 87.

¹¹² For definition of a caretaker cemetery, and its companion legacy cemetery, see “Terminology and Concepts” section.

¹¹³ Dr. Steven Burg, et al. “Central Pennsylvania Hallowed Grounds Driving Tour: Burial Sites of United States Colored Troops in Adams, Franklin, and Cumberland Counties,” <http://centralpahallowedgrounds.blogspot.com/>.

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until the 1950s, about 90% of all public cemeteries in the United States enforced some type of racial restriction.¹¹⁴ Segregated cemeteries, and the right to choose where you are buried through buying a plot, were challenged in the courts in the 1950s and 1960s in two cases, in particular, that influenced how public and private cemeteries handled the issue of race. Up until 1955, courts did not consider cemeteries to be “public accommodation” and therefore did not need to adhere to civil rights protections. In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that “state enforcement of racially restrictive covenants in land deeds violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.”¹¹⁵ Closely following the heels of this decision was President Harry S. Truman’s Executive Order 9981 which officially desegregated the military and, by extension, national cemeteries. Twenty years later, in 1968, the Supreme Court ruled in the *Jones v. Mayer* case and reaffirmed the 1866 civil rights law that African Americans were guaranteed equal rights in purchasing personal property and making and enforcing contracts, like buying a cemetery plot.¹¹⁶ Despite the legal end to the segregation of cemeteries, there is some evidence that it persisted in parts of the commonwealth until the 1970s.¹¹⁷

Mid-19th Century – Present: Cemetery Design

African American cemeteries, whether independent or segregated, often incorporated popular period design trends for the landscapes and markers.

Beginning c. 1830, the Rural Cemetery Movement emerged as the aesthetic of choice for wealthy urban areas. Also considered a landscape or garden cemetery, these burial grounds are often designed—or at least influenced—by an architect, landscape architect, or horticulturist. Typically located outside city limits, these privately owned and operated cemeteries not only offered a peaceful resting place for the deceased but also provided a quiet place for people to honor the dead, experience nature, and appreciate monuments, statuary, and plantings as works of art.¹¹⁸ Rural Cemeteries typically include many plots, or groupings, of graves of middle-class or wealthy people with a common affiliation, whether religious, familial, ethnic, or otherwise. These plots were owned and operated by voluntary associations—often from churches or fraternal/benevolent societies—that sold individual plots to private owners, who in turn marked and maintained the graves.¹¹⁹ Prominent citizens often hired the finest architects to design large, elaborate mausoleums, obelisks, or beautifully sculpted monuments for their own plots.¹²⁰

Rural Cemeteries generally adapted to the existing topography or manipulated it to create the ideal picturesque landscape. Depending on the scale of the cemetery and the wealth of its patrons, rural cemeteries included winding roads, paths, stands of mature trees, perennial plants and bushes, bodies of water, boundary fencing, entry gates, chapel, and administrative buildings.¹²¹ Individual plots could be defined by carved granite stonework, sculpted rails and gates, or iron fencing. Marble and granite grave markers and highly sculpted, three dimensional monuments were most common, with mausoleums for the wealthiest and most prominent families. The elaborate sculptures achieved by the stone craftsmen of the day are unparalleled in any subsequent cemeteries.

¹¹⁴ “The Persistent Racism of America’s Cemeteries”, January 16, 2017. <https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/01/america-s-segregated-cemeteries-are-important-troves-of-forgotten-black-history.html>.

¹¹⁵ “Persistent Racism.”

¹¹⁶ Kruger-Kahloul, 133.

¹¹⁷ See Yvonne J. Milspaw, “Segregation in Life, Segregation in Death: Landscape of an Ethnic Cemetery,” (*Pennsylvania Folklife* 30:1, 1980).

¹¹⁸ “Rural Cemetery,” The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <https://tclf.org/category/designed-landscape-types/rural-cemetery>.

¹¹⁹ Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1992), 5.

¹²⁰ See Woodlands.

¹²¹ “Rural Cemetery.”

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Pennsylvania's cemeteries that can be described as part of the Rural Cemetery Movement were typically segregated cemeteries; few examples of an independent cemetery in the Rural Cemetery Movement can be found throughout the commonwealth, typically near the urban areas of Philadelphia and Allegheny counties. In cemeteries from this period, grave markers for African American burials were typically of marble or local stone, even slate in some parts of Pennsylvania. They tended toward simple slab shapes, or small memorials, but still larger and more sculptural than earlier decades. Overall, markers were becoming more standardized and evident of the evolving monument industry.

Lawn Cemeteries and Memorial Park, sometimes called park or town, cemeteries started to emerge as a popular type of cemetery at the turn of the 20th century. The Lawn and Memorial Park styles sought to minimize different marker styles and above-ground features in the landscape in favor of uniformity and ease of maintenance with the advent of the lawnmower. While these two designs were democratizing in that all markers regardless of color, class, or wealth were the same, they were often segregated.

Located within a settled area (in contrast to the rural cemetery, which was placed outside city limits), lawn cemeteries were often placed in or near neighborhoods, commercial corridors, schools, churches, or municipal buildings. They provided a non-secular alternative to the church graveyard for communities that had no need for or could not afford a more elaborate Rural Cemetery. As the second generation of the earlier non-sectarian municipal burial grounds of the early 19th century, Lawn Cemeteries were also segregated and could be divided into plots by family or affiliation.

These cemeteries are characterized by a pastoral, park-like or lawn setting but are smaller in scale and less picturesque than the larger, rural cemeteries. Ranging in size and design from small and simple to large and elaborate, lawn cemeteries were rationally organized and more formal in appearance with family monuments set in large lawn areas and trees and shrubs strategically placed. This aided the landscaping staff, now able to use lawnmowers to maintain the grounds. Drives, now paved and wide enough to accommodate cars, and paths are common design features; benches and other types of seating and dedicated areas for reflection are not as common in Lawn Cemeteries as they were in rural cemeteries. Additionally, standardized, industrialized granite cutting, and machine lettering changed grave marker designs and assemblages, creating the grave marker sizes and shapes still used today. As a result, Lawn Cemeteries took on a more uniform, less sculpted look. Changing attitudes towards death, brought about by hospitals and professional funeral homes that handled the dying and the dead, meant this new balance of formalism with nature was accepted.

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African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania: Role and Significance

African American churches and cemeteries in Pennsylvania are two of the most important historic institutions in Pennsylvania's African American communities and are linked through their shared ability to connect African Americans to their past, tell a more complete story of a community's history, and survive as examples of African American agency in the commonwealth.

In life, Black Church denominations and their churches in Pennsylvania served as more than a place of worship: they united African Americans, allowed them to gain and exhibit independence, and equipped and propelled them towards demanding and securing social rights. As a "place," Black Church denominations and their churches are tangible evidence of the establishment, evolution, persistence, and continuity of African American ethnic identity through the programs, institutions, and community these denominations fostered in Pennsylvania's African American communities.

African American cemeteries also provide the tangible connection to "place" for Pennsylvania's African American communities. The rise, growth, and achievements of Pennsylvania's African American communities is told in the community's cemetery, whether it is an African American cemetery (one established by and for African Americans) or a segregated cemetery (where blacks were often treated in death as they were in life). In many instances, a surviving cemetery is the only evidence of a once active African American community.

Of these two institutions, the role and significance of the Black Church in African American culture has been more widely studied than that of cemeteries. As scholar Theodore Hershberg concluded there are "...two basic reasons the all-black church has long been recognized as the key institution of the Negro community: first, an oppressed and downtrodden people used religion for spiritual sustenance and for its promise of a better life in the next world; second, with the ability to participate in the political, social, and economic spheres of the larger white society in which they lived sharply curtailed, Negroes turned to the church for fulfillment of their secular needs."¹²² However, this sentiment can also be extended to cemeteries. Together, African American churches and cemeteries provide great insight into African American history throughout the commonwealth.

The denomination of a Black Church congregation can suggest things like the age and class of the congregation and settlement patterns in the area such as if its founding members are native Pennsylvanians or migrants from the South moving north after the Civil War. Multiple denominations and/or multiple congregations of the same denomination in a specific area indicates the size of the African American community, the location of the African American neighborhoods, the demographics of the community, and patterns of settlement and displacement within an area. The age of the congregation can suggest things about its founding members, early settlement patterns in the area, and the causes it championed.

From the establishment of Mother Bethel in Philadelphia in 1816 until the organization of the NAACP in New York City in 1909, Black Churches constituted the sole autonomous black institution, one beyond white control intellectually or economically. Churches became the institutional heart of African American culture and almost always the locus of the local black community, not only the source of spiritual nourishment but a physical haven, place of community support, and center of resistance. About the centrality of the church throughout this history, John Hope Franklin observed:

This establishment of separate houses of worship for Negroes, as inconsistent as it may seem with the teachings of the religion which they professed, gave the Negroes an unusual opportunity to

¹²² Theodore Hershberg, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Philadelphia: A Study of Ex-Slaves, Freeborn, and Socioeconomic Decline," *African Americans in Pennsylvania: shifting historical perspectives* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 26.

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develop leadership. Cut off as they were from participation in the political life of the community and enjoying only a very limited amount of educational opportunities, their religious institutions served as a training ground for many types of activities.¹²³

The Black Church served various purposes. It was a foundation for institutions and organizations that emerged subsequently in cities. In larger population centers, particularly Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, additional institutions like Avery College (college founded in Pittsburgh in 1849) or the Berean Institute (a technical school founded in 1899 in Philadelphia) arose to address needs specific to black urban communities. Churches remained central to African Americans' survival in the small, isolated, and rural communities throughout the commonwealth. In addition to spiritual guidance, the church provided opportunities for formal education and often served as classroom and later contributed to the development of black colleges. Access to formal education provided one vehicle from which to launch a seemingly endless struggle for social justice. Though not the sole advocate for change, the Black Church was critical because these denominations provided true freedom for black Pennsylvanians to engage in both the spiritual and secular pursuit of emancipation.

The Black Churches' contributions to the civil rights movement was immense; churches filled "a vacuum" by "expand[ing] their jurisdiction to include political and social, as well as religious, concerns."¹²⁴ The development and advances that African Americans made in the church led directly to progress in procuring civil rights because the church "served as both the training ground and the operating base for religious leaders....who in turn were seen by many whites and Blacks as the Black community's secular leaders as well."¹²⁵ Black churches "had become and remained the arena for developing leadership skills" illustrated by the fact that, in African American communities, spiritual and political leaders were often the same—a point further evidenced by the representation of reverends and Black Church leaders during the Civil Rights Era.¹²⁶

The location of the church can indicate community settlement patterns. Churches would have been built or congregations would have met in the area in which they lived. A congregation could have one or many homes throughout its history, from an initial meeting location where a congregation was organized to a more permanent home in the 20th century. The location of the church would move with the African American community as it grew, moved willingly or was displaced from an area. A church's architectural design and floor plan, while not unique to the Black Church Protestant denominations, can reflect the African American community's economics and place on the social strata at a point in time.

Similarly, the location of a cemetery is often reflective of the historic state of race relations in a community. African American cemeteries were often relegated to less desirable areas on the edge of a settled area which could serve no other purpose like agriculture or housing. In segregated cemeteries, the African American plots were typically at the outer edges of the cemeteries where land was difficult to dig for burials, unpleasant for loved ones to visit, or largely inaccessible. The removal and reinterment of African Americans' remains, either from or into, an African American or segregated cemetery can reveal the political, cultural, and social forces at play in a community where African Americans and whites coexist.

The age of a cemetery (African American or segregated), determined by the date on a headstone or by historic research and confirmed by archaeology, provides insight into the size and demographics of the African American community with

¹²³ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of American Negroes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948) 162-63.

¹²⁴ Emma Jones Lapsansky, "'Since They Got Those Separate Churches': Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia," *African Americans in Pennsylvania: shifting historical perspectives*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 101.

¹²⁵ Lapsansky, 101.

¹²⁶ Lapsansky, 101.

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clues to spur additional research through genealogy or local history. The earliest date on a gravestone (or determined through historical research or archaeological investigations) can provide insight into abolitionism in the area, early slave centers, or even pockets of settlements. The date of the last burial in a cemetery can suggest how long an African American community remained in the area, when segregation ended, or the cemetery abandoned.

In many respects, African American cemeteries are the only places to tell the stories of individuals and families. Individual graves, or collections of graves, in the cemetery often reflect broad themes in local, state, and national history. For example, a cemetery can hold graves of enslaved Africans and African Americans that tell the story of Pennsylvania before abolition and the Civil War or contain plots for families or entire communities that moved from the South to Pennsylvania during the Great Migration looking for work and opportunity. Some cemeteries in Pennsylvania can also contain graves of one, or many, African Americans who served in the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T) or as Buffalo Soldiers; in these instances, these servicemen are remembered for their contributions only by their gravestones.

Beyond their physical and obvious role in a community, Black Church congregations and cemeteries often serve as the de facto historical societies for the African American community. With regard to churches, one scholar summarizes this role accurately: "Since many of the historical events that affected each black community and its members were debated or took shape around the church, these buildings... often constitute important artifacts and physical monuments symbolic of the history of individual black neighborhoods."¹²⁷ For most ethnic and cultural groups, cemeteries are places of identity, commemoration, remembrance, and, for some African American communities, empowerment. As one writer has noted,

Communities... formed in the cemetery span the lifetimes of several generations. The inclusion of trips to the cemetery in African American homecoming rites underlines the function of family graves in traditions that foster a strong sense of community identity. The graveyard, locus memoriae in the literal sense, provides the members of a given community with geographic and historical roots. It's a place to return to, in life or in death.¹²⁸

Recognizing the importance of this multi-layered responsibility is critical to understanding the role and significance of the Black Church and African American cemeteries in Pennsylvania. In the 20th century, the built environment of African American communities has been shaped to a large extent by natural and man-made events; examples of intact and unaltered historic African American communities are rare as most have been irrevocably compromised by natural disasters, through mid-20th century urban planning, particularly through public housing initiatives and transportation infrastructure, and terroristic threats. What often remains in these cases is a church and cemetery.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Brown, African American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County, 100.

¹²⁸ Kruger-Kahloula, 145. Homecoming, also referred to as Decoration Day or the African American Memorial Day, has historically been a day of work and celebration when African American communities come together to clean the grounds, maintain the graves, and celebrate community and family with parades and picnics. Traditionally held on or around the federal Memorial Day holiday, these celebrations are more common in the South than the North and vary in popularity and prevalence depending on the local African American community. See David Roos, "One of the Earliest Memorial Day Ceremonies Was Held by Freed Slaves," May 28, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/memorial-day-civil-war-slavery-charleston>. The Locust Grove Cemetery in Shippensburg, Franklin County remains the site of an active homecoming event in Pennsylvania.

¹²⁹ See Splain.

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F. Associated Property Types

Properties considered under this context are those associated with Black Churches between c.1644 and c.1970, which may be individual church buildings, church buildings with an associated parsonage or rectory, and/or an associated cemetery, or African American Cemeteries independent of an associated religious building. Subtypes of Cemeteries include family, slave, independent, and segregated classifications. As community institutions, these historic places embody the stories of Pennsylvania's African American community and provide a tangible connection to those stories.

Churches and cemeteries that retain integrity may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B, C, or D. The criteria, which are explained in the National Park Service's (NPS) *Applying the Criteria for Evaluation*, are for properties:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

There are also criteria considerations that certain types of properties must meet, and which must be considered *in addition to* the four listing criteria (Criteria A, B, C or D). Churches and cemeteries each have their own Criterion Consideration: Consideration A for church buildings and Consideration D and sometimes Consideration B for cemeteries. More specifically, the "Criteria for Evaluation" in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, Part 60 Section 4 states (emphasis is this author's):

Ordinarily *cemeteries*, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures, *properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes*, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years *shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify* if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or *if they fall within the following categories:*

- a. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance;
- b. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event;
- d. a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.¹³⁰

It is important that nomination preparers present statements of significance that are in line with the applicable Criterion Consideration as well as the Criterion under which the property is being nominated. Properties must be able to illustrate through history, context, and integrity the role the church or cemetery played as community institution in the history, development, and sustenance of the African American community at the local, state, or national level. The Criteria and Criteria Considerations are listed and explained in Bulletin 15: *Applying the Criteria for Evaluation*.

¹³⁰ 36 CFR Part 60.4 - While the National Register language uses "cemeteries" as the general term for all places of burial, Criterion Consideration D does apply to all types of burial grounds as noted in this context.

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A discussion of the methods used to identify and develop the following list of associated property types can be found in Section H: Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods.

Property Type: Traditional Black Church Churches

This MPDF applies to buildings and sites whose primary use was for the practice of religious worship by one of the Black Church denominations. Properties must reflect through history, context, and integrity the impact of the church on the history and development of the African American community. Eligible properties covered by this MPDF will be buildings that follow the traditional concept of a church building; in addition to a church building, the property may or may not include a graveyard and ancillary resources. African American churches significant primarily for their association with the Underground Railroad should be evaluated under those state and national contexts.¹³¹ African American churches in Philadelphia should first be evaluated under that context.¹³²

While there are many different types of properties – houses, neighborhoods, schools, businesses, storefronts, outdoor sites, etc. – that can tell the story of African American experience and its relationship to religion in Pennsylvania, they are not covered by this MPDF and will need to be evaluated individually. This MPDF does not extend to other properties owned or used by Black Church denominations that served as the physical meeting space for the social, cultural, educational, benevolent, and/or community outreach activities sponsored by a particular congregation. Additionally, this MPDF is not intended to be used to evaluate properties associated with African American history in Pennsylvania that are independent congregations, non-Protestant denominations, Jewish, Islam, or other faiths although the historic context presented in Section E may help in preparing National Register nominations for buildings or sites associated with other denominations and faiths.

To meet Criteria Consideration A, nomination preparers should focus their research and writing to show how the property is significant at the local, state, or national level for reasons *other than* the particular religion practiced there. The Statement of Significance arguments will need to make the case that the church is either eligible for architectural, artistic, or engineering merits (Criteria C), its ability to yield further information (Criteria D), or is important for another reason, such as the congregation's leadership in Civil Rights or local school desegregation efforts, the spread of the Baptist denomination into southwestern Pennsylvania, or as the home church and office for a minister who was a prolific composer of hymns that are still used weekly across the country (Criteria A). A church will likely not be eligible if it solely served as the place of religious services for a community or is the oldest building by a congregation in a geographic area. The *impact* of that service must be presented and assessed.

Eligible properties could include, for example, a church building constructed for a different faith group and later acquired by a Black Church congregation, or an archaeological site that is the location of a demolished church built by an African American congregation. It is important to note that the church does not have to have been originally constructed by an African American congregation; in many instances, the church being nominated may have been built by another, non-Black Church congregation but will have acquired its significance later through association with one or more Black Church congregations. Additionally, for the purposes of evaluating properties as potentially eligible under this cover, a congregation need not be incorporated at the time of the association with a property, nor own the property in which it worshipped, nor be formally affiliated with an established religious denomination, although the majority of properties eligible under this cover will be associated with Black Church denominations.

¹³¹ See [Vigilance in Pennsylvania: Underground Railroad Activities in the Keystone State, 1837-1861](#) and [The Underground Railroad Resources in the U.S. Theme Study](#).

¹³² See [African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949](#).

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Most historic properties associated with the Black Church fall within the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh urban areas until the mid-19th century. Within the non-metropolitan communities across Pennsylvania, a church congregation is traditionally the first documented institution in any community. From this organization, other religious and secular institutions may have developed depending on the size and nature of the community. The church as community institution functioned in various capacities, such as providing community meeting space for social, cultural, educational, and benevolent activities that impacted the development and sustenance of the associated African American community and served the greater good but may not specifically be related to the congregation.

There can be one, or many, Black Church denominations and congregations within an African American community depending on its size, age, and demographic profile. Larger communities will likely have a more diverse socio-economic cross section of residents, and therefore may be home to more than one denomination or multiple churches for one denomination. As a result, churches in larger communities may have a more focused role in the community. Smaller communities may only have one denomination with one church, therefore broadening the church's role and impact in all aspects of African American life. Church buildings and the associated congregations may have a local or regional area of service.

When considering the role of the Black Church and its impacts on the African American community, a discussion of denomination will be important because it may relate important information about the socio-economic and geographical history of the local African American community. It will be important to identify the relationship between the date of the establishment of the congregation and its history and that of the property and establish why the property is significant with respect to a congregation's history. For example, a community that has or had a Baptist congregation may have a substantial population that emigrated from the South during the Great Migration. It will be important to distinguish between *congregation* and *church building* when attempting to identify the presence of a pre-Reconstruction Era community. Many of the extant Black Church buildings date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries and represent the second or third home of a much older congregation; preparers should summarize the congregation's history prior to discussing the nominated building, but focus the case for significance on their occupation of the nominated building.

Properties associated with Black Churches outside of the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh urban and metropolitan areas will be rare until the mid-19th century; as such, properties that represent Black Churches in non-metropolitan Pennsylvania before the mid- 19th century are likely to be significant as tangible products of African American community building.

Associated Features

Churches will represent a range of chronological periods and architectural styles and will survive both with and without integrity. Buildings will be the most common resource nominated. The church property may include associated resources such as other buildings or structures (i.e. privies, horse sheds or garages, parsonages or rectories, gazebos or picnic pavilions), graveyards, or the sites of known resources. Objects within the nominated boundary can include features such as a monument, fencing, signage, or fountain. Churches may or may not have an associated graveyard (a site) on the property, or sites of ancillary resources.

Churches should retain the following characteristics from the period of significance:

- Distinctive building form with typically a square or rectangular shape, one- to one-and-a-half stories tall with a gable roof and projecting tower. Later additions may have altered the form into an "L" or "U" shape.
- Stylistic details of the Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, or other styles, although many early and/or vernacular churches will lack any formal indicators of style.
- Design emphasis, if any, on windows, main entrance, and tower (if present).

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- Arrangement of spaces as used by the Black Church congregation.
- Original construction. Material replacements or coverings may not negatively impact church integrity of materials if made as part of the continued use of the church.

Churches may also retain, but are not required to have, the following features from the period of significance:

- Adjacent graveyard. A graveyard is an area of land reserved for the burying of church members that is historically and functionally related to a church or place of worship on land historically adjacent to the church. Graveyards typically include grave markers, a fence or wall to mark the boundary, paved or unpaved paths, and grass or other plantings. The types of grave markers and boundary demarcations vary based on date of construction and wealth of the congregation. In many cases, particularly in urban areas, a church may survive and the churchyard, including the graveyard, has been moved and built upon;¹³³ the graves and stones may have been moved together, separately, or not at all and still exist below neighboring properties. When graveyards survive, they should be considered and evaluated as part of the church property and not independently.
- Ancillary resources and landscape features within the nominated boundary may also include an adjacent parsonage, lawn/landscape, parking areas, playground, utility sheds or similar structures, fencing, and signage. When counting resources and determining boundaries, contributing resources will be those that are historically and functionally related to the church on land adjacent to the church building being nominated. Consult with the SHPO to assess whether visually or physically separated resources, like a graveyard or cemetery, should be included within the boundary.

The condition and retention of original fabric in churches (and associated graveyards when they exist) will vary substantially across the commonwealth depending on a number of factors, including:

- Active and continued use, whether by the original congregation, later congregation, or another entity. Churches that have been abandoned or mothballed tend to be in poorer condition than those still used, regardless of use.
- Date of construction, with earlier (pre-1900) frame churches surviving in the poorest condition and later (post-1900) masonry churches surviving in better condition.
- Demographics of the denomination or group actively using the church. Wealthier and larger congregations, whether the original congregation or not, may have been able to consistently invest in property maintenance and upgrades.

Registration Requirements

Black Church properties evaluated under this associated property type may be significant at the local, state, or national level as a community institution that had an important role in the African American community. A church must be able to convey its importance and impact on the history and development of the African American community through history, context, and integrity.

The church building should have a substantial historical connection to the African American community it served. This connection could be measured in a number of ways, for example by the length of time a church building was used by one or more congregations or the impact of an accomplishment, program, or individual at a specific point in time. A church building will not necessarily be eligible solely because it served as the place of religious services for a community or is the oldest property associated with a congregation in a geographic area.

¹³³ A churchyard is an enclosed area surrounding or adjacent to a church that can include, but is not limited to, lawn(s), ancillary buildings, playgrounds, or a graveyard.

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In general, most churches evaluated for listing in the National Register under this MPDF will be nominated under Criterion A and satisfy Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties because their significance will most often lie in their associations to broad patterns of history and not only an association with a specific denomination. Few churches will likely be considered eligible under Criterion C and even fewer under Criteria B and D.

Criterion Consideration A, Religious Properties

Criterion Consideration A is not a National Register criterion under which a property is listed, but rather a “test” a religious property must meet in order to be considered for listing. To satisfy Criterion Consideration A, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes must be demonstrated to possess primary significance from their architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance. A religious property (or a former religious property) can be eligible for its architectural or artistic merits (Criterion C), association with an important person (Criterion B), ability to yield important information (Criterion D), or as the location of an important event or activities, such as a speech by a politician, or a convention that led to important changes within the denomination, or a series of meetings or programs that impacted regional education, statewide Civil Rights laws, or local efforts to ensure fair housing practices, or the general well-being of the community (Criterion A).

If the property was owned by a religious entity during the period of significance, or was actively used for religious purposes during the period, or is *currently* owned by a religious entity or used for religious purposes, the box next to Consideration A should be checked on the National Register form along with the primary Criterion(a) that also apply. Nomination preparers should refer to the National Park Service’s *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* for further guidance.

Listing Under Criterion A: Churches associated with important events, activities, or trends

The majority of properties nominated under this context will be significant under Criterion A. A church may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A if it possesses a strong association with important events, activities, or trends at the local, state, or national level in Pennsylvania between c. 1644 and c. 1970 and retains integrity. To be eligible under Criterion A:

- the church must be directly associated with significant historical events, patterns of events, or themes that affected the African American community it served, and
- the property must retain sufficient physical character to be able to convey the importance it held within that specific period.

If nominating a church covered by this MPDF under Criterion A, the following National Register Areas of Significance are anticipated to be most common; more than one Area can be selected but each must be supported in the historical narrative. Additional Areas of Significance may also apply; a full list is available in the National Park Service’s *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*.

- Ethnic Heritage – Black because the church was built by and for African Americans or is associated with an African American community.
- Exploration/Settlement for the church’s role in the establishment of intentional or segregated African American communities and neighborhoods during the Colonial era of Pennsylvania’s settlement.
- Social History for church’s role in promoting the well-being of African American communities or in black social activism, civil rights, community programs and organizations. When exploring the Social History Area of Significance, important areas to investigate are abolition and assistance, voting rights activism, public school

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integration, the creation of new community groups and organizations, merchant boycotts, serving as meeting places for civil rights and social reform groups, and involvement with the civil rights projects.

- Religion for the church's role in the evolution and/or growth of the denomination.



St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, Coatesville, Chester County. St. Paul's is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with an Area of Significance as "Ethnic History – Black" for the history and influence AME congregation housed in this building had in seeking equality and civil rights for African Americans in Coatesville and Chester County between 1894 and 1962.

Listing Under Criterion B: Churches associated with people important in the history of the church, congregation, or denomination

A church may be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B if it has a strong association with the productive life or accomplishments of an important individual, and reflects the appearance the property had at the time of that association. The church must be able to communicate a meaningful and tangible link to a prominent person in the history of the church, congregation, community, and/or denomination in Pennsylvania. An individualized context will be necessary that presents the person's accomplishments or influences within an appropriate perspective, and identification of other properties associated with the person will be required as part of the nomination.

If nominating a church covered by this MPDF for its association with an important individual, it is anticipated that the most common National Register Areas of Significance considered are those listed below; more than one Area can be

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selected but each must be supported in the historical narrative. Additional Areas of Significance may also apply; a full list is available in *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*.

- Ethnic Heritage – Black if the race of the associated person is African or African American.
- Exploration/Settlement for the person's role in the establishment of intentional or segregated African American communities and neighborhoods during the Colonial era of Pennsylvania's history.
- Social History for the person's role in social activism, civil rights, or the community's well-being and their use of the church to accomplish their goals. Examples of a person's accomplishments could be within the themes of abolition and assistance, voting rights activism, public school integration, the creation of new community groups and organizations, instigating merchant boycotts, or organizing the congregation and community for civil rights and social reform efforts.
- Religion for the person's role in leading changes within a denomination or expanding the reach of a denomination.
- Performing Arts for the person's role in authoring, supporting, and distributing hymns, choirs, and other musical expressions.



Reverend Dr. Charles Albert Tindley (1851-1933) is widely recognized as one of the founding fathers of American gospel music and was a prolific hymn writer during his time in Philadelphia. His church, the Tindley Temple United Methodist Church, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2011 under Criterion B because of the building's association with Rev. Dr. Tindley and his work while pastor of that congregation.

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The church should be one of the primary properties associated with that person and their achievements during the period in which that person achieved significance, or their productive career. Nomination preparers should consult the National Register bulletin for properties eligible under Criterion B to establish the necessary context, history, and level of documentation.

Listing Under Criterion C: Churches that are important for architectural or artistic merits

To be eligible under Criterion C, a church must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or must represent the work of a master or that possess high artistic values. With the potential exception of the type of church patterned after St. George's Methodist Church in the earliest periods of African American church construction in Philadelphia, there is no evidence to date that African American churches differed significantly from religious buildings for non-African American congregations.

In Pennsylvania's rural areas, towns, and small cities, the vernacular tradition of the one-story, rectangular, gable-entrance church building is a dominant property type for most churches, including Black Church buildings, until the early 20th century. These buildings typically have modest or limited high-style architectural character. Beginning in the mid-19th century, African American congregations in Pennsylvania increasingly bought existing churches from congregations that were relocating or building new churches or could afford to build a new church in popular styles, many of which are architecturally significant. The most common style influence reflected at this time is varying interpretations of late Gothic Revival style. Although influenced by Gothic design, few churches built by Black Church congregations have Gothic-influenced lancet windows; fewer still have stained glass, although several churches use an imitation type of stained glass where colored plastic sheets are applied over the glass windows.

Rural and small-town churches can also be found to be important examples of vernacular architecture, and may exhibit expert craftsmanship by local builders, artisans, or tradesmen. The poor condition of abandoned or neglected buildings does not necessarily negate integrity; consult with the PA SHPO staff for further assistance in understanding and evaluating the eligibility of vernacular resources.

If nominating a Black Church for its architectural significance, in addition to another area of significance or solely for architectural merit, the nomination will require an individualized assessment of the building's architectural significance and integrity, and comparisons will need to be made to similar churches in the area, regardless of denominational affiliations. If the church is an important example of an 1860s design, for example, the property should be compared to other mid-19th century churches in the area.

If an architecturally significant property is not eligible for other themes such as Social History, the only area of significance indicated on the form will be Architecture (Criterion C), as the church is a good example of a period church building, either in the vernacular tradition or a popular period style. If the name and race of the church's builder and/or architect can be identified, the church may also be assessed as an important example of their design or a surviving example of their craftsmanship.

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The Camp Curtin Memorial Mitchell United Methodist Church is home to a historically African American congregation in Harrisburg, Dauphin County. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture as an example of the Gothic Revival style.

Listing Under Criterion D: Churches that may be likely to yield important information important about the congregation or community

While Criterion D has frequently been pursued only for archeological sites, it can successfully be applied for surviving buildings and structures, as well. It is possible that Black Church properties—whether as sites of former buildings or structures, or as existing resources—may contribute important information to the study of the congregation’s material culture, religious practices, or the community’s use of the property beyond religious activities.

In order to nominate a property under Criterion D, the property must be demonstrated to contain important information that can contribute to our understanding of history. Establishing that this information potential exists will require extensive documentary research, physical investigation, and analysis. For guidance on assessing the appropriateness of nominating a Black Church property under Criterion D, please consult the National Register Bulletins *How to Evaluate the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* and *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archaeological Properties* and request nomination examples from the PA SHPO.

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Integrity

As with all eligible properties, Black Church properties must physically reflect the period for which they are determined to be important and be able to successfully convey significance. It is important to identify each property's distinct character-defining features, and to assess which of the National Register's seven aspects of integrity are most relevant for that property's ability to convey its areas of significance within its period of significance. For example, if a small rural church is considered to be important because of the role it played in maintaining a sense of community and serving as the location for decades of religious, social and civic events, then vinyl siding and replacement windows may not compromise the integrity of a frame church if the building remains recognizable. In this case, the workmanship and materials aspects of integrity may be considered less important than the aspects of setting, feeling, and association.

Nomination preparers and evaluators of potentially eligible properties will be confronted with issues of integrity that are typical of all properties associated with Pennsylvania's African American communities.¹³⁴ When assessing the integrity of African American resources, it is important to keep in mind the concept of African American agency, the typical geographic location of the properties in question, and the socio-economic conditions that have largely shaped the built environment of Pennsylvania's African American community. The ability of the property to demonstrate the concept of agency within the challenges of the property's time and place should be given weight in any consideration of eligibility. Not all aspects of integrity need carry the same weight, and some aspects may be considered more important depending on the reasons the property is important or the period of significance. In some cases, the age or the rarity of resources, associated events, or the relevant historic period may enable a property to absorb more change, damage, or loss of historic features while retaining sufficient integrity to be eligible for the National Register.

The National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* provides guidance for evaluating integrity. It states that for Criteria A and B "a property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance" during the period of significance, and that "a basic integrity test for a property associated with an important event or person is whether a historical contemporary would recognize the property as it exists today."¹³⁵ Recognition of a property can be contingent upon the primary resource's individual appearance, but can also be impacted by the setting of the property and its current relationship to its surroundings. Therefore, the integrity of only the primary resource—in most cases a church building—cannot be judged only on one aspect of integrity.

The National Register identifies seven aspects of integrity. Not all aspects must be present for a property to be considered to retain integrity, and not all aspects need to be weighed equally. Relevant aspects of integrity should be identified and assessed in each nomination. The seven aspects are summarized below as they might frequently relate to Black Church properties.

Location

In most cases, integrity of location should survive for churches being considered under this MPDF. Moved properties may retain integrity if they were moved during the period of significance and were used by the same congregation in the same way. Preparers should include in the Statement of Significance (Section 8 narrative) the broader community context at the time the church was moved and discuss what bearing municipal programs, local attitudes, or other factors had on relocating the church.

¹³⁴ See Craig Stutman, et al, "Draft African American History in Pennsylvania Theme Study: The Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political Legacy of African Americans in Pennsylvania, 1690-2010" (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2009) and Shelby Splain, "Pennsylvania's African American Historic Resources: Survey Report of Findings" (Harrisburg: PHMC, November 2009).

¹³⁵ National Park Service, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2002) 46, 48.

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If the building was moved after the period of significance, and prior to the move was found to be eligible for Criterion C, it may still be considered eligible for architectural significance dependent on the retention of key aspects of integrity, likely including design, materials, workmanship and setting. Please consult the PA SHPO for specific guidance in assessing the integrity of such properties and if Criterion Consideration B applies.

Design

Integrity of design may or may not survive, depending on the degree to which the property has changed over time. Design is likely to be the aspect of a church's integrity that has been most altered after the church's period of significance. A property's design reflects its functions as well as aesthetics. Adapting a building for an entirely new use after the period of significance ends could compromise its integrity, as the original use is no longer evident. This may happen if the interior worship space now has extensive additions and an entirely different floor plan with partition walls, for example. The building's basic form and fenestration pattern, its spatial arrangements, and structural components should survive and be identifiable, even if the plan, original materials and stylistic expressions have been changed through additions or alterations. Common elements of design that may have been altered include exterior wall materials, exterior ornamentation, and windows. Landscape elements such as fencing and plantings can also be important parts of a property's design and help reflect its period of significance.

Setting

Integrity of setting may or may not survive, depending on the extent of change of the surrounding properties or streetscape. For most churches nominated under this MPDF, the property's setting will be directly linked to the history and type of the African American community of which the church is a part.

For urban and suburban churches, substantial changes to the surrounding neighborhood through natural disasters, urban renewal programs of the 1960s and 1970s, economic disinvestment, and, increasingly, gentrification will have likely affected the church's setting. It will be important for preparers to address broader community changes as part of the Section 8 narrative to establish the nature and scale of alterations to the surrounding African American neighborhood. In many cases, these changes may actually relate to the Criterion A arguments for significance being made, as these changes will be inextricably linked to the church's evolving role in changing communities.

In small town and rural churches, changes in setting may be less dramatic but more often linked to transportation improvements, population shifts related to changing employment patterns (such as deindustrialization) and changing real estate markets. Where setting has been compromised, it will be important for preparers to discuss broader community changes.

For churches that had an adjacent graveyard as an associated resource, the alteration of the associated graveyard may or may not be a crucial factor in assessing the overall setting. For individual graves or entire graveyards or cemeteries relocated to a new site, or when the relationship between the church and graveyard or cemetery has visually or physically changed dramatically during or after the church's period of significance, preparers should discuss when and why the graveyard was moved or the relationship disrupted. Alterations to graveyards or associated cemeteries should not generally compromise a church property's integrity unless it is established that the graves themselves have lost integrity. In cases where the relationship between the church and its graveyard has changed dramatically and substantially, such as with the construction of a new road or the improvement of an existing road, preparers should consult the PA SHPO for assistance with drawing boundaries, particularly for discontinuous districts.

Landscape features including fencing, driveways, picnic groves, plantings, etc. should also be considered in assessing the integrity of setting.

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The loss or obscuring of original or early materials will likely be common for many Black Church properties. A loss of materials should not automatically disqualify a property for listing in the National Register under Criterion A or B if other aspects of integrity such as design, feeling, and association survive.¹³⁶ Common alterations include the replacement of windows, application of siding on the exterior and paneling and other finishes (such as paint over stone) on the interior, removal of historic furnishings, and additions. Churches built before 1900 that survive without any material changes will be rare. To be eligible under Criterion C, churches will generally need to retain integrity of materials. Modifications made during the period of significance will not diminish the integrity of materials.

For many congregations in Pennsylvania during and after the period covered by this MPDF, particularly those that are small, poor, aging, or in small towns or rural communities, funds for church maintenance were sparse. Deferred maintenance and unsympathetic material replacements may be representative of the socio-economic challenges faced by the congregation, specifically, or the African American community, generally. It is important to consider changes or alterations to a church's exterior and interior features and materials as an investment to keep an important community institution open and active; these changes speak to the importance of the property within the community.

For churches that have experienced materials replacements, preparers should include a discussion of the original and replacement interior *and* exterior materials in Section 7 and the socio-economic context of the congregation and wider African American community, if possible, in Section 8.

¹³⁶ A basic integrity test for Criterion A and B eligibility is whether a congregation member within the period of significance would still recognize the property. This is important to keep in mind for all aspects of integrity, but especially for materials and workmanship. For Criterion C eligibility, retention of design, materials, and workmanship are often the most relevant aspects of integrity.

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Mt. Tabor Church, Mt. Holly Springs, Cumberland County. The Mount Tabor Church in Cumberland County was built in 1860 and abandoned about 1970. Despite its deteriorating condition, it retains all aspects of integrity, including materials and workmanship. Poor condition is not equivalent to a loss of integrity.

Workmanship

Integrity of workmanship will likely have been lost if integrity of design and materials has been lost. This loss is most often illustrated in the removal, replacement, or covering of exterior features such as cornices, wood trim, or decorative brickwork, or interior features such as altar rails, woodwork, painted wall murals or decorative plaster, or pews. When considering integrity of workmanship, it is important to consider the church in its totality, not just interior or exterior features on their own. Preparers should note in the narrative description (Section 7) whether original features that contain evidence of workmanship have been lost or covered by new material or construction. In Section 8, the narrative should explain when and why these changes were made during the church's history.

Retention of workmanship may not be a crucial aspect of integrity for properties nominated under Criterion A or B, but could be very important for properties nominated under Criterion C. Workmanship is not limited to high-style or architect-designed buildings and can also be an important feature of vernacular buildings. Often congregation members

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who were tradesmen or artisans volunteered their labor and expertise in the construction of their community's church. Evidence of their skills often remain in the exterior and interior details of the building, including masonry work, carpentry, plaster, ironwork, and trims.

Feeling

Properties retain the integrity aspect of feeling when they possess sufficient physical features to evoke the sense of a particular period of time. The aspect of feeling may or may not survive depending on the extent of changes to the other aspects of integrity over time, particularly after the period of significance ends. Often, if a church property remains in use as a place of worship and its setting has not been dramatically altered, it will retain both the aspects of feeling and association. Feeling and association are aspects that are more important for properties nominated under Criterion A and B, but not crucial for properties nominated under Criterion C.

Association

Integrity of association means that the property is sufficiently intact to convey the property's direct relationship to an important person, event, or theme. Like feeling, the aspect of association requires the retention of sufficient physical features to convey its historic character. For example, the church building's original materials and workmanship may be obscured, but the overall property's appearance and setting make it readily clear that this was the community's church.



St. Paul AME Church, Coatesville, Chester County in 2012 (left) and in 1947 (right). These photos show that St. Paul's AME Church may have lost integrity of materials and workmanship because of the changes to the original windows, roof, and entrance but the aspects of feeling and association remain intact. For this particular nomination, the retention of those aspects—along with location and setting—convey the church's significance Under Criterion A as an important community institution.

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Property Type: African American Cemeteries

Cemeteries eligible for listing under this MPDF will be those associated with African Americans in Pennsylvania at some time between c. 1644 and c. 1970. Cemeteries are, in and of themselves, a type of African American institution that serves and benefits the welfare of an African American community.¹³⁷

There are four sub-types of historic African American Cemeteries in Pennsylvania that are addressed in this MPDF. They can be found across class and geographic boundaries. None of the burial places identified in this study are distinctly African American in type, design, condition, and features. Integrated cemeteries, meaning those where the location of graves is not restricted by race, are not covered under this MPDF. The four subtypes are:

- Family Cemetery
- Slave Cemetery
- Independent Cemetery
- Segregated Cemetery

The National Register of Historic Places Bulletin *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* notes that burial grounds, as a general rule, do not qualify for listing. Emotional connections to burial grounds can make it difficult to objectively evaluate their significance and integrity for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. However, burial grounds may embody values beyond personal or family-specific emotions, such as for their artistic merit or reflection of cultural practices, or in conveying settlement patterns, or as expressions of a community's development, that make them eligible for listing in the National Register.

A cemetery that is evaluated as an individual property is treated either as a historic site, if the property is relatively straightforward with just a few types of resources, or as a district if it is more complicated and has a variety of resources including graves, markers, gatehouse or chapel, fencing, plantings, paths and drives, and other features. A cemetery that is a site may or may not possess above-ground features that convey their significant historical associations, but still must retain integrity. A cemetery district, like other historic districts, is more than an area composed of a collection of separate elements; it is a cohesive landscape whose overall character is defined by the relationship of the features within it. When counting resources and determining boundaries, secondary/associated resources within the boundary should be historically and functionally related to the cemetery. Nomination preparers should consult with the PA SHPO to assess whether visually or physically separated resources should be included within the boundary.

Subtype: Family Cemetery

A family cemetery is a small, private burial place for members of an immediate or extended family on land historically owned by said family; some family cemeteries, particularly early cemeteries in rural areas, may also include neighbors.

¹³⁸ Family cemeteries are found in rural areas on large, typically agricultural, properties. Historically, family cemeteries were located on well-draining land away from the residence and other buildings and typically included grave markers and fences or walls; these features may or may not survive. Grave markers can vary between simple stone slabs to large monuments, and fencing can be stone, brick, wood, or metal depending on the age, location, and wealth of the family.

¹³⁷ For the purposes of evaluating properties under this category, the term cemetery in this MPDF is used to mean an area of land set apart for the ritual burying of human remains that is not a graveyard (adjacent to a church or place of worship). The terms used to describe cemeteries and other burial places in this MPDF can be found in the glossary of *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*.

¹³⁸ See "Private Family Cemetery" definition in <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=09>.

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In Pennsylvania, African American family cemeteries will be rare. Few African American families owned large tracts of land in rural areas, for agricultural uses or otherwise. One example of this rare type is located on the National Register-listed Dennis Farm in Susquehanna County, which was settled in 1793 when Prince Perkins, a free African American emigrated from Connecticut. The Perkins-Dennis family still owns the property.



1 The family cemetery on the Dennis Farm in Brooklyn Township, Susquehanna County.

Subtype: Slave Cemetery

A slave cemetery is a small, private burial place for enslaved Africans and African Americans on land owned by slaveholders. Slave cemeteries are believed to exist in the southern half of Pennsylvania, particularly in the areas in close proximity to the Mason-Dixon line in large agricultural properties. Like family cemeteries, slave cemeteries were set apart from the developed areas of the property and marking of such graves usually was ephemeral.

Because of the nature of slavery and Pennsylvania's gradual abolition starting in 1780, there is no clear understanding of how many slave cemeteries might be located throughout the commonwealth. Over time, the precise locations of many burial places of this kind have been lost. Oral tradition may be all that remains to mark the general vicinity of a gravesite. In assessing sites such as these, the standards of integrity require that the gravesite be verifiable by archeological testing or by visual traces, even if the traces are natural markers, such as a solitary stand of trees preserved in a cultivated field. A single grave of an enslaved African or African American is not considered a cemetery; if only one is known through physical evidence or historical research, archaeological testing must show that there are additional burials before the area can be considered a slave cemetery.

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Surviving examples, when identified, will be from the 18th and early 19th centuries and likely have little to no above-ground evidence of its existence. Examples with grave markers or fencing will be rare. If a slave cemetery does survive, it should be evaluated as an individual resource but also be evaluated as a site potentially contributing to the significance of a larger cultural landscape, such as the homestead area or plantation to which the slaves were associated.

Subtype: Independent Cemetery

An independent cemetery is one created and used solely by and for the burial of free Africans and African Americans in Pennsylvania sometime between c.1644 and c.1970 and survives as an enduring example of African American agency. Independent cemeteries exist as evidence of racial segregation and African American agency in Pennsylvania.

There are no particular physical or cultural characteristics of a cemetery or its graves that make it an independent cemetery. These cemeteries are found throughout the commonwealth and date from the early 19th century through the early 20th century; earlier and later examples may also exist. They can be found throughout Pennsylvania in all types of settlements and municipalities, often in areas unsuitable and undesirable for other uses. Ownership and management, historically and currently, may be private or public. They may have been started by a specific group, for example a fraternal or benevolent organization; or individual, for example the person who provided the land on which the cemetery is located; or by a church, for example the local AME congregation.¹³⁹

These cemeteries can be classified as a legacy cemetery, meaning its African American burials originated there, or as a caretaker cemetery, meaning the African American burials have been moved there, or both. If the graves of African Americans were moved to the cemetery during the cemetery's period of significance, this would not diminish the cemetery's integrity; consult the PA SHPO for additional guidance.

Depending on the number and wealth of the African American community members buried in the cemetery, the size and characteristics of the cemetery will vary. Some of these African American cemeteries were small and without much design or many features, like the early Non-sectarian Mutual or Municipal Burial Grounds (c. 1820 – present) while others were expansive, formally designed cemeteries that rivaled those of the white community. The cemetery may have no formal plan or design or may survive as an example of a Rural Cemetery (c.1833 – 1875), Lawn Park (c.1900-present), or Memorial Park (c.1900-present) cemetery in Pennsylvania; each are described in the cemeteries portion of this MPDF. Based on its size, this type of cemetery may or may not be divided into separate plots for various family or other affiliations. In smaller communities, these cemeteries will likely contain graves from most or all members of the local African American community, regardless of religious affiliation, membership in a fraternal or benevolent organization, military service, gender, or occupation.

One example of the smaller, plainer type of African American cemetery is the Freedom Road cemetery in Loyalsock Township, Lycoming County, with its few remaining slab gravestones and steps. An example of a more formal cemetery is Eden Cemetery in Collingdale, Delaware County, which contains 53 acres and monuments and memorials to some of Pennsylvania's most well-known African Americans.

¹³⁹ Graveyards that survive with their associated church should be evaluated as part of the church property type. Graveyards that have been separated from their associated church or the church has been lost, as well as religiously-affiliated cemeteries, should be evaluated as an independent cemetery.

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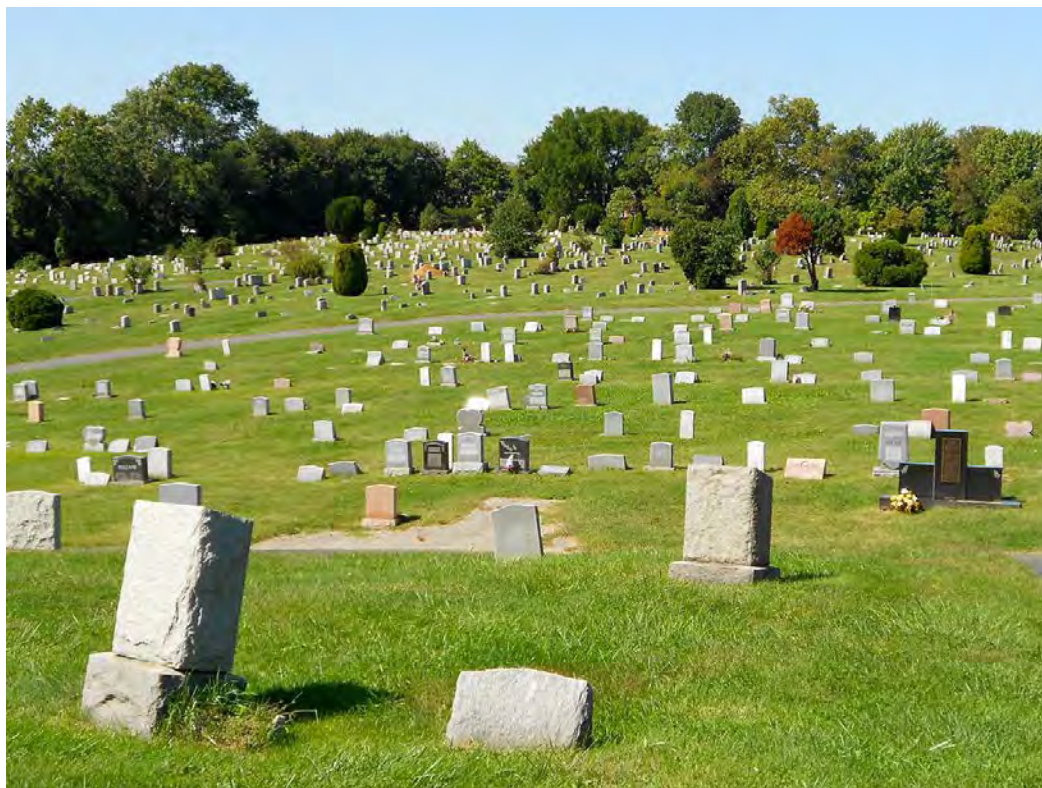
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2 Freedom Road Cemetery, Loyalsock Township, Lycoming County



3 Eden Cemetery, Collingdale, Delaware County

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Independent cemeteries may contain burials that represent a broad or narrow period of time between the first and last burials and may or may not remain active, i.e. still accepting new burials.

In addition to the graves themselves, some common features of independent cemeteries are:

- grass, trees and vegetation related to grave markers; these may be deliberate or organic plantings.
- grave markers and/or funerary art; typically, headstones and monuments, and these will likely be stone and vary in type and design.
- organized layout or plan; the rigidity of the layout or plan will vary based on topography, maintenance, sophistication of original cemetery design, and siting of graves and grave markers.
- entrance drive and paths; if they exist, these will be paved, unpaved, or both.
- boundary fencing or walls and gates; if they exist, historically or currently, these will be constructed of stone, wood, brick, or metal or a combination thereof.
- signage; if they existed, signs were typically small plaques near the entrance or a simple wood sign.
- service building; a historic or modern shed may exist for maintenance equipment.

Larger, formal cemeteries, particularly in urban areas, would be more likely to contain one or more of the following features:

- benches
- formal internal circulation design
- interior fencing and gates around distinct plots
- mausoleums
- monuments and sculpture
- gatehouse, chapel and/or office building.

The grave markers in independent cemeteries were typically modest in design and no particular ethnic associations were identified as part of this MPDF. They are typical of their time and place and the variety, quality, and design of the grave markers is reflective of locally-available materials and the class and wealth of the deceased. To date, there is little to no evidence that independent cemeteries contain markers with uniquely African American motifs; additional research is needed into this topic. Using the terminology provided in National Register Bulletin *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, the following types of grave markers are likely to be found in independent cemeteries:

- Bevel marker
- Flush marker
- Monolith marker
- Monument or obelisk (both in varying sizes and decoration)
- Stele
- Tablet.¹⁴⁰

Grave markers will typically include demographic information like name (full or partial), dates of birth and death (if known), and, in some cases, bible verses or other phrases. Some may also include symbolic designs, either inscribed on

¹⁴⁰ For photographs and examples of these types of grave markers, see <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/cemetery-preservation/symbolism/index.html>.

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the stone or carved into the stone like, for example, an affiliation with a particular fraternal lodge. Veterans' graves are typically identified with their service, such as United State Colored Troops (USCT) or Buffalo soldiers.

The condition and integrity of these cemeteries will vary. Abandoned cemeteries, with current ownership and responsibility unclear, are often unmaintained, with toppled, damaged, or missing grave markers, overgrown vegetation, and broken or missing boundary walls or fencing.

Subtype: Segregated Cemetery

A segregated community cemetery is a public- or privately-owned and operated cemetery with one or more plots set aside or designated exclusively for the burial of African Americans in Pennsylvania that was established between c. 1644 and c. 1970. The hallmark of a segregated cemetery is the physical separation of burials by race through restrictive covenants or other means, which is indicative of a community's relationship with its African American members.

These cemeteries are found throughout Pennsylvania in all types of municipalities and date from the early 19th century through early 20th century. Segregated community cemeteries can be large or small, located in or adjacent to settled areas, be privately or publicly owned, and contain one or more separate plots. Plots are small discrete areas within the larger cemetery physically separated from other graves either by location, circulation patterns, and/or boundary demarcations. Plots for African Americans were often located in the least desirable area of the cemetery property, such as toward the back of the property in an area that may be hard to access, at the edge of a transportation or industrial corridor, or in a poorly graded or maintained section.

These cemeteries can be classified as a legacy cemetery, meaning its African American burials originated there, or as a caretaker cemetery, meaning the African American burials have been moved there, or both. If the graves of African Americans were moved to the cemetery during the cemetery's period of significance and remain segregated, they do not diminish the cemetery's integrity.

African American plots within segregated cemeteries will likely contain graves for many members of the local African American community. Within a large segregated cemetery, there may be more than one area with plots reserved for African Americans based on their church or religious affiliation, membership in a fraternal or benevolent organization, or military service. African American communities that did not have an African American church or a church with a graveyard would have buried their dead in this type of cemetery if they did not have access to or interest in an African American cemetery.

Segregated cemeteries can be of any type: Non-sectarian Mutual or Municipal Burial Ground (c. 1820 - present), Rural Cemetery (c. 1830 – c. 1870), Lawn Park cemetery (c. 1900-present), or Memorial Park (1913-present); each are described in the cemeteries section of this MPDF. Depending on the type of cemetery, and the number and wealth of the African American community members buried in the segregated cemetery, the size and characteristics of the cemetery will vary. In addition to the graves themselves, some common features of segregated cemeteries, regardless of their type, may include:

- grass, trees and vegetation related to grave markers; these may be deliberate or organic plantings.
- benches
- chapel
- grave markers and/or funerary art; headstones and sometimes footstones, and these will be stone and vary in type and design.
- internal circulation, including paved or unpaved paths

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- boundary fencing, walls and gates; if they existed, these were typically built of stone, brick, or metal or a combination thereof.
- interior fencing and gates
- signage
- mausoleum(s)
- monument(s)
- sculpture
- gatehouse, chapel and/or office building
- service building; a historic or modern shed may exist for maintenance equipment.

The grave markers in African American cemeteries were typically modest in design. Using the terminology provided in *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, the following types of grave markers are likely to be found in African American portions of African American cemeteries (see the glossary of the *Guidelines* for definitions of these and other common cemetery features):

- Bevel marker
- Flush marker
- Monolith marker
- Small monument or obelisk
- Stele
- Tablet.¹⁴¹

Grave markers will often include demographic information like name (full or partial), dates of birth and death (if known), and, in some cases, bible verses or other phrases. Some will include symbolic designs, either inscribed on the stone or carved into the stone, common to burials of the same period and circumstance. Veterans' graves are identified with their service, such as United State Colored Troops or Buffalo soldiers. Within the African American plots, mausoleums, elaborate monuments, and large obelisks are unusual, as are buildings and structures other than a maintenance shed.

The condition of these cemeteries will vary but are usually still active and maintained. The National Register boundary for segregated cemeteries would likely be the entire cemetery property, not only the African American plot(s), because the importance of the cemetery under this MPDF is likely the story it tells about community race relations. Preparers should consult with PA SHPO to determine the appropriate boundary.

Registration requirements for African American Cemeteries

Decisions about the relative significance of cemeteries can only be made with knowledge of the events, trends, and technologies that influenced a community's practices of caring for and commemorating the dead, and with some understanding of similar resources in the region. This MPDF seeks to provide context for evaluating the significance of African American cemeteries in Pennsylvania; the National Register Bulletins *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* and *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* provides additional guidance and examples for evaluating cemeteries under the National Register criteria.

In general, historic African American cemeteries evaluated under this context will most often be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for their associations to broad patterns of history and may also need to satisfy Criterion Consideration D. Under Criterion A, an African American cemetery is eligible if the movement

¹⁴¹ For photographs and examples of these types of grave markers, see <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/cemetery-preservation/symbolism/index.html>.

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of African Americans into the area had an important impact, if other properties associated with the African American community are rare, and if few documentary sources have survived to provide information about the African American history in the area. It will be less common to find cemeteries eligible for association with a person (Criterion B), artistic or aesthetic value (Criterion C), or in their ability to yield information important in prehistory or history (Criterion D). The registration requirements described in this section apply to all four subtypes of cemeteries identified in this MPDF.

Like churches, cemeteries are a kind of property not usually considered for listing in the National Register. They *can* be eligible, however, if they meet special requirements, known as Criteria Considerations. Because this property type is a cemetery, Criterion Consideration D (Cemeteries) will apply. And because the relocation of historic African American cemeteries is a documented practice in Pennsylvania throughout history, Criteria Consideration B (Moved Properties) may also apply. Criteria Consideration A may apply if the cemetery was once or is currently owned by a religious organization. If a cemetery is associated with a church, consult the PA SHPO to determine if the church and cemetery should be evaluated and nominated together.

Criterion Consideration D, Cemeteries

Criterion Consideration D is not a National Register criterion under which to list a property, but rather a “test” a cemetery must meet in order to be considered for listing. Criterion Consideration D outlines the reasons for which a cemetery can be nominated for listing. Cemeteries serve as a primary means of an individual's recognition of family history and as expressions of collective religious and/or ethnic identity. Because cemeteries may embody values beyond personal or family-specific emotions, the National Register criteria allow for listing of cemeteries under certain conditions.

A cemetery can pass the Criterion Consideration D test if it meets one or more of these conditions:

- Contains graves of persons of extraordinary importance, meaning the persons (more than a single grave) buried in the cemetery must have made extraordinary contributions to local, state, or national history; their accomplishments must stand out when compared to others active in the same field during the same period.
- Dates from an early period within its geographic or cultural context, such as an association with settlement patterns of free African Americans post-abolition, or an early period of an African American community's development.
- Possesses distinctive design features; meaning its architectural or artistic values (folk art, vernacular and high-style examples) as well as aesthetic or technological achievement in the fields of city planning, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, mortuary art, and sculpture.
- Has an important association with historic events, including general events that illustrate broad patterns in our history, such as reflecting the changing demographics of an African American community as a result of the Great Migration or deindustrialization.

Nomination preparers will need to approach their historical research and writing of the nomination's history and statement of significance to show how the cemetery is significant at the local, state, or national level because of its association with persons of extraordinary importance, a particular historic period, design or aesthetic values, or a specific event or broad patterns of history and/or culture, or because it has the potential to yield important information.

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Criterion Consideration B, Moved Properties

Relocated properties are generally not eligible for listing in the National Register unless the property continues to be significant for architectural or construction merits or is the surviving property most importantly associated with a significant person or event. Criterion Consideration B is not a National Register criterion under which to list a property, but rather a “test” a moved cemetery must meet in order to be considered for listing. Criteria Consideration B addresses the evaluation and listing of properties, including cemeteries, that have been moved from their original or historical location. Normally, properties that have been moved – like buildings or sites – have lost their integrity. National Register Bulletin *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* provides specific guidance on applying Criterion Consideration B for moved properties. A property removed from its original or historically significant location can be eligible if:

- it retains sufficient features to convey its architectural importance and integrity
- it is the surviving property most importantly associated with a historic event or an important aspect of a significant person’s life.

In addition, the Bulletin *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places* provides specific examples in understanding when relocated burial places can be considered eligible after relocation. If a cemetery was moved to a new location *before or during* the cemetery’s period of significance, Consideration B does not apply. If a cemetery was relocated *after* the period of significance, Consideration B does apply and the nomination must illustrate how the cemetery meets the Criterion Consideration B test. Historic African American cemeteries that have been moved will generally not meet the “architectural value” test. They may meet the “most importantly associated” test, particularly if the cemetery is the only surviving property that tells the story of the African American community in a specific time and place.

An example of a nominated property that contains a large section of reinterred burials is the Eden Cemetery in Collingdale, Delaware County and it can serve as a useful model. Nomination preparers should contact PA SHPO staff for further guidance regarding moved properties.

Listing under Criterion A:

Under Criterion A, the events or trends with which the cemetery is associated must be clearly important. The cemetery must communicate a tangible link to the events or patterns for which it is important and retain integrity.

Under this Criterion, the creation and use of the cemetery should reflect the African American community’s history, demographics, and characteristics. The following National Register Areas of Significance will be the most often considered for a historic African American cemetery being evaluated under this context; successful nominations may be listed for multiple areas of significance:

- Ethnic Heritage – Black because the cemetery is the final resting place for African Americans; it is anticipated that all nominations made under this MPDF will include this area of significance, and likely one additional area.
- Exploration/Settlement for the cemetery’s role in the founding of intentional or segregated African American communities and neighborhoods. The age of a burial place might be considered early relative to the period for which we have information about human activity, or relative to the exploration, settlement, and development of an area by a particular group. An example of a cemetery nominated under this area is the Dennis Farm property in Brooklyn Township, Susquehanna County, which was listed in the National Register in 2014.
- Social History for the cemetery’s representation of important aspects of a community’s history, representing an evolving sense of community, a specific event, ethnic association or ethnic diversity, or broad patterns in local

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attitudes and behavior toward and between the races, or changing burial practices. The Bethel Burying Ground cemetery in Philadelphia was listed in the National Register in 2016 for its significance under the area of Social History.

Although some African American cemeteries may include graves of African Americans with military service, “military” should not be included as an area of significance. However, the presence of United State Colored Troop (USCT), Buffalo Soldiers, and other military service-associated burials should be discussed in the context of the local community and its connection, through these soldiers, to the larger story of segregated military troops and their achievements.

Listing under Criterion B:

Historic African American cemeteries may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion B if they contain a collection of graves of individuals that are of outstanding importance to the community, or even at the state or national level. These cemeteries would have an area of significance of Ethnic Heritage – Black and likely at least one additional area that relates to the reason the people are considered extraordinarily important. The other Areas of Significance will depend directly on the specific achievements or events for which the deceased individuals are significant. Nomination preparers should use the guidelines found in National Register bulletins for evaluating and documenting properties associated with significant persons and for evaluating and registering cemeteries to develop such a nomination, as well as consulting directly with the PA SHPO.

Listing under Criterion C:

Historic African American cemeteries may be eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for their artistic and/or architectural merits. This includes vernacular and folk as well as high-style influences. The following National Register Areas of Significance may be appropriate to consider for a historic African American cemetery being evaluated under this context:

- Ethnic Heritage – Black because the cemetery is the final resting place for African Americans; it is anticipated that all nominations made under this MPDF will include this area of significance, and likely one additional area.
- Architecture, Art, or Landscape Architecture if they represent the work of a master, successfully convey the artistic values of their period, or reflect period landscape design as a rural, lawn, or memorial park cemetery. If the name and race of the cemetery’s architect or prominent grave carver can be identified, the cemetery may also be an example of their work or a surviving example of period artistry or craftsmanship.
- Community Planning and Development if the cemetery’s placement within a rural, neighborhood, suburban or urban setting reflects specific trends in burial practices or reflects the land usage decisions made by municipal officials, landowners, or developers.

Listing under Criterion D:

Historic African American cemeteries may be eligible under Criterion D for their potential to yield information about cultural or ethnic groups, or burial practices, or the settlement or development of an area, if the information has the potential to be important.

If a cemetery is being nominated for Criterion D significance under this MPDF, it is anticipated that “Ethnic Heritage – Black” will be included as an area of significance. Additionally, at least one other area of significance, often related to material culture or social history, that conveys the type of information contained within the burials or the site overall will be included.

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The other Areas of Significance will depend directly on the specific research questions developed in assessing the cemetery's information potential, and the type and value of information expected to be gained. The Bethel Burying Ground in Philadelphia is an example of such a Criterion D nomination.

Nomination preparers can find additional guidance for nominating cemeteries under Criterion D in the National Register bulletins for evaluating and registering cemeteries and archeological properties (relevant especially when no above-ground evidence of the cemetery is readily visible). Nomination preparers should use the guidelines for defining and placing this link in the appropriate context according to the National Park Service's *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*.

Integrity

To assess integrity, consider whether the cemetery and its setting convey its most important period(s) of use. Identify the ways that the original design and the materials of construction, decoration, and landscape have been retained. Study the site to determine whether the property's ability to yield significant information has been compromised by later ground disturbance beyond the period of significance. If the cemetery retains no above-ground evidence, or if the above-ground integrity has been lost, and the property is being treated as an archeological site, then whether most of the burials and other features are intact will be a key factor in assessing integrity.

For all four types of historic African American cemeteries covered in this MPDF, integrity should not be measured by what has been lost but rather by what is retained. Not all aspects of integrity need carry the same weight, but some aspects may be considered more important depending on the reasons the cemetery is important or the period of significance. In some cases, age or the rarity of resources, events, or historic period, may allow a greater tolerance for change, damage, or loss of historic features. The National Register Bulletin on evaluating cemeteries provides some integrity scenarios and additional guidance that can supplement what is provided below.

Location

Integrity of location should survive for cemeteries. If a cemetery has been entirely relocated, with graves interred in a new location, the original cemetery location will not qualify for the National Register. (Relocation of cemeteries out of urban areas was relatively common.) If graves or plots were relocated into a different existing cemetery during that recipient cemetery's Period of Significance, integrity of location for the recipient cemetery survives. The re-interment of a large quantity of graves may impact the recipient cemetery's integrity of design, setting, feeling and association. In such an instance, retention of integrity will depend on the reasons the recipient cemetery is considered important, and its period of significance.

For very early cemeteries, including slave and family cemeteries in rural areas and urban cemeteries that may have been built over by later generations, the location of the sites may not be definitively determined without appropriate archeological testing. Nomination preparers and/or property owners interested in determining the nature of the burials should consult with the PA SHPO, local universities or their local Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology chapter for assistance through research, ground-penetrating radar, or other techniques.

Design

For cemeteries, integrity of design is closely tied to the integrity aspects of setting and feeling. It addresses the conditions within the cemetery and relates to the overall physical appearance of the cemetery as a whole and the spatial relationships within the cemetery between landscape features; man-made elements (if they exist); graves; family, fraternal, or other designated plots (if they exist); etc. Integrity of design can be affected in various ways, including the following:

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- Cemeteries that are enlarged and their landscape altered or "improved" in keeping with changing tastes. Improvements may include the addition/alteration of open space and vegetation; the removal, alteration, or construction of new features or buildings; or altered/new circulation patterns. Preparers must be able to distinguish between non-historic development and historic period development, which is development that happened during the cemetery's period of significance.
- Activities that maintain and perpetuate a landscape established during the period of significance do not diminish or destroy integrity of design. Although beautification efforts may make a cemetery more attractive or be intended to better honor those buried there, replacing the original features may have diminished the cemetery's authentic historic character.
- The amount, distribution, and type of non-historic features and nature of modern development. If an existing cemetery is enlarged after its period of significance or less than fifty years from the date of nomination, the entire cemetery may not be eligible for listing in the National Register. In such examples, if the original area has remained essentially intact while modern expansion occurred beyond or around it, then the historic portion might qualify if it is reasonable to draw boundaries that exclude the non-historic areas.

However, if the design and character of the historic cemetery during the period of significance was defined by scattered gravesites and continued use of the cemetery included modern infill (graves or otherwise), the entire cemetery still may be eligible if the proportional number, size, and scale of new features are not so imposing as to overwhelm the overall historic appearance. Once the non-historic features begin to dominate, and one's impression is of a modern cemetery with isolated historic burials or clusters of historic gravesites, then the overall historic character of the cemetery has been lost, and it would not retain integrity of design.

Changes that occurred during the historic period may reflect cultural beliefs and practices and contribute to a cemetery's significance. In order to appropriately evaluate the impact of changes, one must determine not only which features are crucial components of historic character, but also why they are important. For example, is a fence or wall important because it provides a sense of solid enclosure, or because of its materials and design, or both. The answer will help determine the physical attributes a cemetery must retain to possess integrity of design.

Setting

Setting relates to what is happening around and outside of the cemetery boundaries. For cemeteries that were located in areas for their peaceful or isolated settings, or designed with vistas of open space or sky, modern development around the cemetery may diminish the original design and siting intent. In these instances, integrity of setting may be lost. If the cemetery was closely associated with a church that was within sight of the cemetery, and the church has been demolished, and perhaps that site developed, that loss could impact the setting. If the cemetery was part of a neighborhood of houses and businesses of the same period, and those properties and the streetscape have experienced substantial change in recent years, that could impact the setting.

Materials

Integrity of materials applies to individual grave markers as well as other man-made features within the cemetery, including roads and pathways, boundary demarcations including walls and fences, benches and other outdoor furniture, monuments and sculpture, etc.

A cemetery has integrity of materials if it retains all or majority of the original fabric and fabric installed during the period of significance. Some material deterioration or replacement in kind is to be expected, particularly for older cemeteries as many gravemarker materials, such as wood and marble, are especially vulnerable to weathering and

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constant exposure. Likewise, vegetation in overgrown cemeteries can be damaging. For very early cemeteries—especially slave and family cemeteries—the grave markers may have been ephemeral, and the exact location of graves uncertain without archeological testing. Integrity of materials is crucial for cemeteries being nominated under Criterion C, but is not as critical for cemeteries being nominated under Criteria A, B, or D. Evidence of original or early materials is often a goal of further study and research of cemeteries proposed for listing under Criterion D.

Workmanship

Integrity of workmanship in cemeteries is closely associated with integrity of materials, particularly for grave markers, monuments, boundary demarcations, and other man-made features within the cemetery. Original materials and materials repaired/replaced during the cemetery's period of significance will generally retain integrity of workmanship. Often, due to long-term exposure to the elements and the inherent longevity of the grave marker's material, epitaphs and decorative aspects of grave markers may have eroded or been rendered illegible to the eye. Integrity of workmanship should generally be retained for cemeteries being nominated under Criterion C, but is not as critical for cemeteries being nominated under Criteria A, B, or D.

Feeling

Integrity of feeling, like setting, may be altered by late 20th-century changes to the physical character of the cemetery and its surroundings. As with integrity of design and integrity of setting, integrity of feeling should be measured by the nature and extent of the changes to the property after the period of significance. In general, it is hoped that visitors to the cemetery today will still experience the site in a similar way that visitors to the cemetery during its period of significance would have experienced.

Association

Integrity of association should always survive as the direct link between the cemetery and the event, theme(s), person, or design it represents.

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G. Geographical Data

Properties located within the boundaries of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are eligible for listing under this MPDF. While there are regional trends in settlement and population changes, the general themes are consistent across Pennsylvania.

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H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

This Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for “African Americans Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania, c. 1644-1970” is based on a multi-year historical and survey study of the history of African American churches and cemeteries in Pennsylvania.

This MPDF is largely based on the 2009 draft African American history in Pennsylvania theme study by Craig Stutman, et al. and the findings of the corresponding historic resources survey by Shelby Splain.¹⁴² Specifically, Section E: Statement of Historic Contexts builds on the chapters about religious organizations and institutions and civil and political rights developed by Stutman in 2009. The historic resources survey completed by Splain in 2009 informs Sections E and F of this MPDF. With the assistance of a 2016 National Park Service Underrepresented Communities grant, PA SHPO staff updated and expanded the 2009 theme study, conducted additional research about the Black Church and African American cemeteries in Pennsylvania, and verified and updated the list of known churches and cemeteries from the 2009 survey.

2009 Studies

The 2009 theme and survey study were part of a broader statewide initiative – *African American History in Pennsylvania; Communities in Common* - to document and highlight the history of African Americans throughout rural and suburban Pennsylvania. Funded in part by a 2008 Preserve America grant to the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC), the initiative included:

- The 2009 theme study and survey outlining the history, context, and associated property types for African American history and experience;
- the nomination of properties associated with African American history in Pennsylvania to the National Register of Historic Places;
- award of historical markers to identify the locations of people, places, sites, buildings, and events significant to African American, Pennsylvania, and national history;
- public workshops;
- a small grants program;
- special essays by historians and scholars on ExplorePAHistory.com;
- an exhibit in the State Museum of Pennsylvania.

The theme study and survey were developed by a project team that included National Register and Public History staff from PHMC, a historian from the African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP), an independent historian, a historic preservation consultant, and two project interns. The PHMC and AAMP staff served as project coordinators, reviewers, and community liaisons, and provided guidance on the project goals, methodology, and reporting. The project historian completed the research, and the preservation consultant conducted the field surveys used to inform this study.

2009 Theme Study

The 2009 theme study contained several in-depth contexts that each deal specifically with the development of one aspect of the African American experience in rural and suburban Pennsylvania; that is, areas of the commonwealth outside of the metropolitan areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. These contexts are organized as topical chapters

¹⁴² See Craig Stutman, et al. “Draft African American History in Pennsylvania Theme Study: The Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political Legacy of African Americans in Pennsylvania, 1690-2010,” (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2009) and Shelby Splain, “Pennsylvania's African American Historic Resources: Survey Report of Findings,” (Harrisburg: PHMC, November 2009).

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related to the major themes of slavery, religion, industry, education, humanities, and politics, and each covers the period 1644 to 1965.

The theme study drew extensively from primary and secondary sources. Because of the challenges inherent in writing a comprehensive historical narrative of such scope, depth, and importance for a topic that heretofore had not been seriously explored, the project historian developed a methodological framework to condense, summarize and analyze both quantifiably large and intellectually disparate forms of data without sacrificing the historical integrity of the project.

This methodology started with a secondary-source historiography examining over a century's worth of professional and amateur historical accounts, essays, journal articles and texts concerning Pennsylvania's African American history, whether thematic, era-based, or synthetic. Primary sources were used to connect the known and national trends and key dates in African American history to Pennsylvania's history and explore stories that provided a fuller picture of rural and suburban African American life in Pennsylvania from the 17th through 20th centuries. Primary sources included oral histories, contemporaneous newspaper accounts, diaries, autobiographies, census records, maps, local and family histories, photographs, and other unique documents, many of which were found at local, county and state historical societies, college and university archives and libraries, and from African American individual, organizational and church-based repositories.

Researchers and nomination preparers using this MPDF can contact the PA SHPO for the full theme study methodology.

2009 Historic Resources Survey

In early 2008, staff from PHMC provided the project's preservation consultant with a list of nine communities to be surveyed and analyzed both to inform this MPDF and to develop the associated property types and registration requirements. PHMC's staff selected the communities based on geography, size, location, and known general developmental history to create a survey sampling that would represent a cross-section of different community types and experiences; Philadelphia and Pittsburgh were excluded from consideration for survey given the quantity of scholarly research which had been completed in those communities prior to this study, but historical research for the narratives included extensive work in both cities. The surveyed communities were:

In Eastern Pennsylvania:

- Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County
- Stroudsburg, Monroe County
- Coatesville, Chester County

In Central Pennsylvania:

- Williamsport, Lycoming County
- Mount Union, Huntingdon County
- Bedford, Bedford County

In Western Pennsylvania:

- Meadville, Crawford County
- Indiana, Indiana County
- Washington, Washington County

In an effort to compile the most comprehensive list possible, the survey communities and additional properties were not vetted by time period, historical periods, function, style, etc. Given the broad nature of the companion 2009 theme study and the overarching goal to document and understand the history of the African American community in

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Pennsylvania rather than just a single component of that history (i.e. labor, Underground Railroad, or housing), the research team felt that it was important to identify as many historic properties as possible without prior disposition regarding what those properties might offer. The only requirement for being included within the survey was that the historic property(s) have significant (rather than tenuous or tangential) associations with the African American community in some context at some point in history. Properties were generally not excluded from the survey based on their integrity because, often, the lack of integrity, particularly within traditionally African American neighborhoods, is just as illustrative of the African American experience as those that retain their integrity. However, given the exceptionally broad nature of African American history in Pennsylvania, the project team placed the following parameters on the survey scope of work:

- The metropolitan areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh were not included because of the body of available, sound scholarship on the African American communities of the commonwealth's largest cities.
- Properties largely associated with the Underground Railroad were not studied because of the extensive recent initiative by the National Park Service and because of the body of available lay and academic scholarship on this particular property type and culture.

Several limits of the study should be noted. As with any such initiative, time and financial restraints required the research team to be as efficient and effective as possible within the baseline scope of work. Political, social, and economic conditions which characterized African American communities in the 18th and 19th centuries, combined with institutional prejudice that did not seek to record or preserve the African American experience, made locating properties a challenge. More importantly, however, is that the target communities did not reveal properties associated with all themes or eras. Where possible, the survey scope was expanded to identify at least one surviving example of a historic property that represent a particular era or theme.

The following methodology was used for researching and nominating properties significant for their association with the African American experience in Pennsylvania. It is a hybrid of traditional and specialized methodologies that is based on similar methodologies from comparable studies in Pennsylvania, guidance found in National Register Bulletins, and tested field techniques. It included the following steps:

- Readings about African American history in Pennsylvania that included a presentation and discussion about the broad historical periods and concepts that constitute a significant part of the African American experience in Pennsylvania;
- Background research into the broad history and development of each community;
- Research specific to the African American experience in each target community, principally primary and secondary source data provided by Dr. Craig Stutman about each community, region, and theme (i.e. slavery, entertainment, settlement, etc.)
- Review of primary source data collected by the survey team, principally census and Sanborn map data from multiple years;
- Collection of graphic documentation through on-line databases and physical repositories;
- Oral history transcripts from interviews conducted by Dr. Craig Stutman and Mr. Ivan Henderson;
- Analysis of data and resulting settlement patterns, principally using Google Earth Pro, census data, and period maps.
- Reconnaissance and comprehensive-level field survey, targeting historic properties as directed by above data.

The complete methodology for the 2009 survey is available on the [PHMC website](#).

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The following methodology was used for developing this MPDF:

Review of the 2009 theme study for material relevant to African American churches and cemeteries in Pennsylvania between c. 1644 and c. 1970. This initial step involved taking the 2009 theme study chapters about slavery, religious organizations and institutions, and the quest for civil and political rights and using them as primary source documents to form the basis of this MPDF's Section E. Because this MPDF is arranged chronologically by subject, key themes, events and dates were gleaned from the 2009 study and reorganized according to major time periods. Once this was completed, the context outline was examined critically to determine where additional research and explanation was needed.

Primary and secondary-source research related to the history and development of Black Church denominations nationally and in Pennsylvania was conducted based on the analysis of the 2009 source material. This step included finding, reviewing, and synthesizing data from a number of varied sources to provide a fuller understanding of the history, development, role, and significance of Black Church denominations in Pennsylvania. Sources consulted for this MPDF include federal religious census records, late 19th- through mid-20th-century denominational histories, late 19th- and early 20th-century sociological studies by W.E.B. DuBois and others, local and regional African American histories, and nominations for African American churches listed in the National Register. The Tennessee study *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African American Churches in the South* by Theresa Douglas, et al. was especially helpful to understanding the history of Black Church denominations in the United States, and portions of this study are used in the appendix to this MPDF to assist nomination preparers.

Primary and secondary-source research related to African American cemeteries north of the Mason-Dixon line and in Pennsylvania. This step included finding, reviewing, and synthesizing data from a number of varied sources to provide a fuller understanding of the history, development, role, and significance of African American cemeteries in Pennsylvania. Considerably fewer primary and secondary sources for African American cemeteries were identified during this research than for Black Church denominations. While some scholarship exists for slave, public and private cemeteries in the Southern states, there is little scholarly study for those same cemeteries in the North. Resources particularly helpful in developing this component of the MPDF include PHMC's cemetery website, local and regional African American histories, and nominations for cemeteries listed in the National Register.

Development of inventory of representative list of Black Church congregations and cemeteries from desktop survey, primary source research, and 2009 survey findings. Because of the decade that passed since the 2009 theme study and survey, the survey findings related to Black Church denominations and African American cemeteries covered in this MPDF were verified using Pennsylvania's Cultural Resources GIS (CRGIS), Google maps and street views, and correspondence with local contacts and the PA SHPO's Community Preservation Coordinators. Surviving churches and cemeteries that fit the parameters of this MPDF were organized by county and municipality. Next, local and regional histories, the PA SHPO's CRGIS online database, and early 20th-century directories and community-based sociological studies were consulted to further develop the list of known, surviving Black Church denomination churches and African American cemeteries, particularly outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Analysis and Synthesis of findings. This final step involved the synthesis of the primary and secondary resource data collected to illustrate the history, development, role and significance of African American churches and cemeteries in Pennsylvania in this MPDF.

Based on the nature and number of primary and secondary sources uncovered during the process of researching and writing this MPDF, there are still large gaps of understanding about the history of African American churches in rural

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and, to some degree, suburban Pennsylvania and African American cemeteries. This MPDF provides insight into the role and significance of these important African American institutions in Pennsylvania but more study is needed.

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Appendix A: Overview of Black Church Denominations & Religious Census Data

The following section provide basic information about the Black Church denominations and understand the religious landscape known to African Americans in Pennsylvania throughout the 19th and 20th century. Additional essays covering the history and profile of each of the Black Church denominations covered in this MPDF are included in the appendices. For the purposes of this MPDF, the Black Church denominations are:

- African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church;
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church;
- Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church;
- National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBC);
- National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA);
- Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and
- Church of God in Christ (COGIC).¹⁴³

In Pennsylvania, generally, religions predominantly associated with African American culture and history were of the Christian faith and within the Protestant tradition. This includes denominations that are part of the Black Church as well as smaller congregations of denominations that are now extinct. In the early 20th century, Islam followed Christianity in popularity but was very small in number when compared to Protestant denominations and was typically isolated to urbanized areas. Small numbers of predominantly African American Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish congregations were in the commonwealth, typically in urban areas.

Beginning in the late 19th century and continuing into the 20th century, the federal census started counting and tracking religious organizations in the United States. While this census data is important for understanding larger trends and patterns of development, it should not be relied on exclusively when researching individual congregations or all congregations within a given area or determining significance of a particular church property. If research shows that a congregation or church was overlooked, human and methodological errors in census taking or transcription or the lack of an actual church building for a small congregation could have resulted in the congregation not being counted. For example, census figures from 1890 to 1936 show that there were no AME congregations in Adams or Lehigh counties however both counties – one along the Maryland border and the other near the New Jersey and New York borders – have at least one active congregation that dates back to the early 19th and 20th centuries, respectively.¹⁴⁴

This section is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview and explanation of each denomination but rather to provide basic information to understand the religious landscape known to African Americans in Pennsylvania throughout the 19th and 20th century.¹⁴⁵ A statement about their presence and activities in Pennsylvania, largely based on census data, is included at the end of each profile.

¹⁴³ See Lincoln and Mamiya, 1.

¹⁴⁴ For more information, see Rosen.

¹⁴⁵ With the exception of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination section, the profiles of the other Black Church denominations are taken wholly from “Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African American Church in the South” prepared by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, funded in part by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, in July 2000. The AME denomination history is treated to a more comprehensive examination because it was founded in Pennsylvania and has historically been the most common Black Church denomination in the commonwealth. While the Tennessee study focused on rural African American churches in the South, which have a slightly different history and role with in the African American community, the summaries provide an excellent overview of each denomination, particularly for the five of seven Black Church denominations that began south of the Mason Dixon line.

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The following illustration shows the relationship between denomination, religions, and faith traditions and the placement of the Black Church denominations within the larger framework of American religion.

In this illustration:

- the gray diamonds indicate the major world faiths;
- the purple squares represent the two major traditions within the Christian faith;
- the green ovals show the predominant religions in the Protestant and Apostolic traditions;
- the blue rectangles show the Black Church denominations within the Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal religions;
- the individual congregations within each denomination are orange circles, and
- the boxes outlined with heavy black lines are those within the Black Church.¹⁴⁶

Note: While this MPDF does not address properties associated with other Protestant and Christian denominations outside of the Black Church, Judaism, Islam, or other religions in African American history and culture, the history and historical sources explored in this MPDF may assist nomination preparers for properties relating to denominations and faiths not covered in this document. Synagogues, mosques, temples, and other places of worship associated with African American religious history in Pennsylvania not addressed in the scope of this MPDF may be eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and this MPDF may help support such nominations.

¹⁴⁶ Illustration developed from the Association of Religion Data Archives religion family trees website
http://www.thearda.com/denoms/families/trees/familytree_christian.asp.

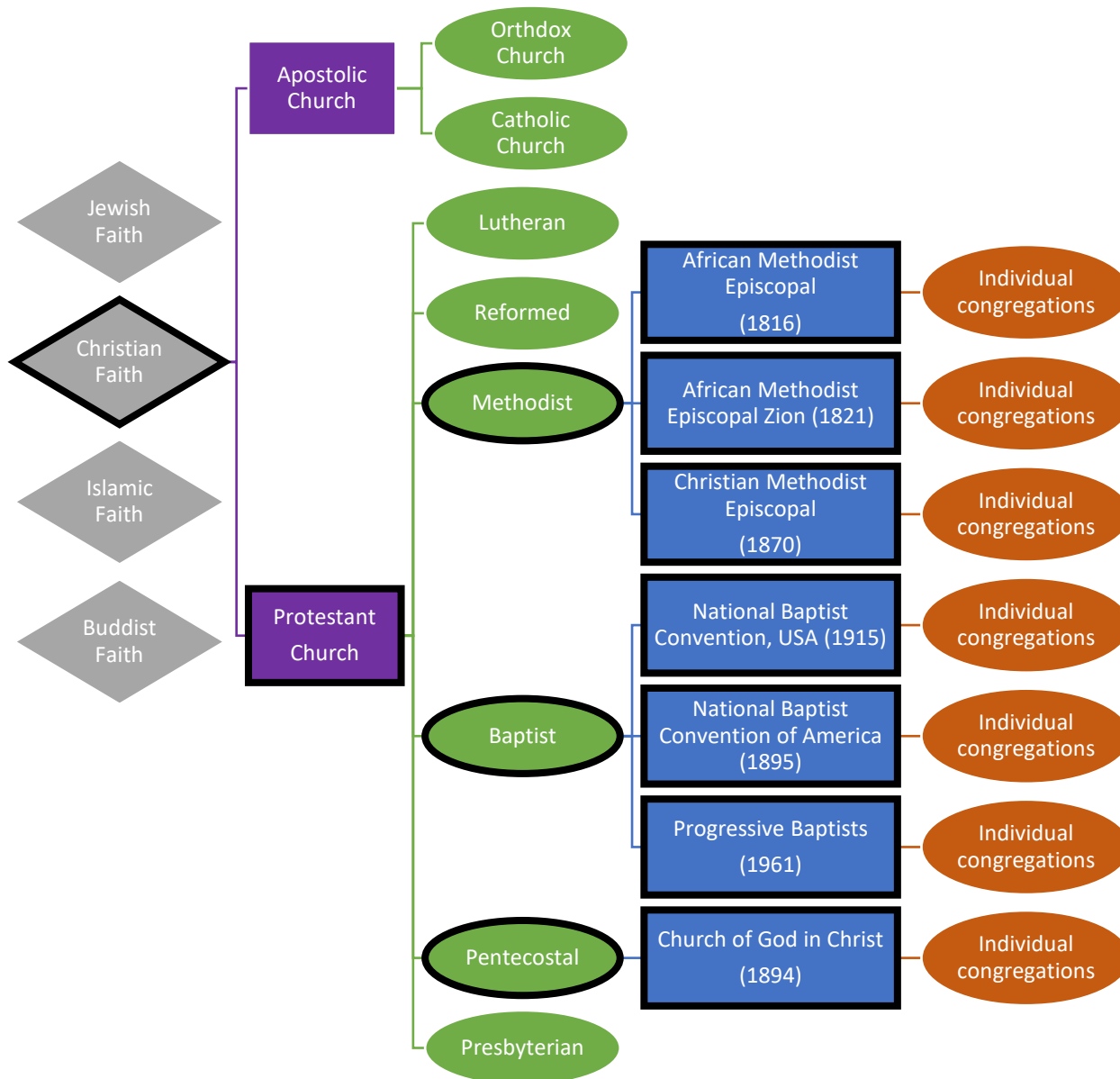
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African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, often referred to by its initials as the AME church, was established in Philadelphia in 1816 by Richard Allen, a black minister and community leader who was born into slavery in Philadelphia in 1760. The AME Church remains one of the largest black denominations in Pennsylvania and many of Pennsylvania's AME congregations were founded between 1790 and 1900.

Allen first embraced the Methodist religion in 1777 while enslaved to the wealthy Stokely Sturgis Family in Delaware. Shortly after that, Allen purchased his freedom and spent several years as an itinerant minister in Lancaster, York, Radnor, and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; Wilmington, Delaware; New Jersey; and Baltimore, Maryland. He attended the First Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore in 1784 and witnessed "the beginning of the Episcopal church amongst the Methodists" as Methodists officially separated from their parent denomination, the Church of England.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, he was also appointed as an informal minister of the newly established Methodist Episcopal Church. It was in this capacity that Allen arrived back in Philadelphia in February 1786 and started preaching in St. George's United Methodist Church, a predominantly white congregation.

Between February 1786 and November 1787, racial discrimination against African Americans attending services at St. George's escalated, a reaction largely caused by the influx of many African Americans who joined the congregation. Allen recalled in his autobiography that, "they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall, and on Sabbath morning we went to church and the sexton stood at the door, and told us to go in the gallery."¹⁴⁸ Allen led a mass walk-out of African American congregants in November 1787 after dealing with these multiple and prolonged acts of discrimination. Allen saw the unfolding hostility as being the final straw that led to him and Jones eventually forming an independent church by and for African Americans. He described the walk-out in his autobiography: "But my dear Lord was with us, and we were filled with fresh vigor to get a house erected to worship God in."¹⁴⁹

Around the same time, Allen, Episcopal preacher Absalom Jones, and other free Africans and African Americans in Philadelphia started talking about forming a religious society that would meet the heretofore unmet social and cultural needs of Philadelphia's free African American community, which was continuing to grow as more slaves were emancipated after Pennsylvania passed An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery in March 1780. On April 12 1787, Allen and his peers formed the nondenominational Free African Society (FAS) to hold religious services and act as a mutual aid society for Africans and African Americans, regardless of their religious beliefs, to provide assistance to sick, widowed, or orphaned African Americans; help with the burying of the dead for African American families; promote literacy; and overall assist with the stabilization and growth of the African American community.

Over the next several years, Allen and Jones preached, under the auspices of the Free African Society, in a rented "store room" to former congregants of St. George's and the city's African Americans in search of African-centered worship. However, Allen and Jones parted ways because of religious and ideological differences. As a multi-denominational organization, there were several competing belief systems at play and FAS was heavily supported by Quakers. In 1789, Allen left FAS because he felt its worship sessions were becoming too similar to Quaker meetings that he believed were not in keeping with his Methodist background.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ See Sernett, 143-144.

¹⁴⁸ See Sernett, 145-146.

¹⁴⁹ Sernett, 145-146.

¹⁵⁰ Sernett, 147; See also Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 109-115.

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Allen and his followers established Bethel Church at 6th and Lombard Streets in Philadelphia in July 1794 as the “new place of worship for America’s first Black Methodist Society”.¹⁵¹ Bishop Asbury, one of the first bishops of the predominantly white Methodist Episcopal Church in America, was in Philadelphia and agreed to open the new church.¹⁵² The first church was a blacksmith shop that Allen had moved to the new church’s location near Sixth and Lombard streets and renovated. As the first and founding church for the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, this Philadelphia church was historically – is still often – called “Mother Bethel”. By 1805, Bethel’s congregation numbered close to 500 people and the original building was replaced by a larger structure to house the growing community. Allen served as Bethel’s spiritual and administrative leader and was ordained as deacon in 1799, making him the first ordained African American in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Technically, Bethel was still under the jurisdictional control of the all-white Methodist Episcopal church hierarchy at St. George’s.

While Allen had succeeded in creating a “Black Methodist Society” in Philadelphia in 1794, he had not yet succeeded in securing autonomy from the white Methodist church; Bethel “remained within the jurisdictional control of higher all-white religious bodies ... including full control over property.”¹⁵³ From its founding, Bethel Church closely embraced the tenets of Methodism yet Allen attempted to dissolve its connections with the organized Methodist church that were, in his eyes, restrictive because they did not allow Mother Bethel to function as a truly independent black church.¹⁵⁴

Between 1794 and 1816, the relationship between the two Methodist Episcopal congregations – one black and one white – was tense at best as St. George’s regularly tried to exercise control over Bethel’s property, clergy, and finances because they saw Bethel as an extension of their church, not as its own body in and of itself. In 1796 and again in 1807, Allen had drawn up an accord containing specific language explaining his church’s ideological and theological departure from the white Methodist and the Methodist Episcopal Church. The narrative survives in a document which has come to be known as “The African Supplement.” Meant to shake off the control of the elders from the Methodist Church’s governing body, “The African Supplement” was formulated as a response to the institution’s hold on the church. Broken down into seven articles, several of the “African Supplement’s” sections emphasized the separation that Allen’s Bethel Church was hoping to achieve from the Methodist Church’s formal hierarchy.¹⁵⁵ In the third and sixth articles, Allen declared that the right to elect preachers should come from within the congregation and not from the white church’s leadership.

Regardless of Allen’s attempts at independence, the Bethel Church remained legally and theologically (at least to an extent), connected to the Methodist Church’s hierarchy, which imposed its oversight on virtually all matters of a religious nature. Concerning this tense situation, scholar Richard S. Newman stated that, “as far as white elders were concerned, black congregants must always defer to white clerics.” Newman also noted that after the 1807 version of “The African Supplement” was issued, it was seen as a move to reaffirm and move forward with Bethel’s original 1796 pledge of “sovereignty.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopalian Church, “Brief History.” <https://www.motherbethel.org/content.php?cid=18>. There are many conflicting dates for the establishment of the AME church. Some sources use 1787 and the founding of FAS as the start of the AME church, while others use the 1794 date because of the establishment of the first Bethel Church, and others use 1816 based on the court case that legally recognized Bethel as its own organization. For the purposes of this MPDF, the 1816 date is used.

¹⁵² Sernett, 150.

¹⁵³ Herbert Aptheker, ed., *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, (New York: Citadel Press, 1951) 67.

¹⁵⁴ For an excellent overview of the growth and development of Mother Bethel and the early AME church, see Carolyn Stickney Beck’s *Our Own Vine and Fig Tree: The Persistence of the Mother Bethel Family*, New York: AMS Press, 1989 and Howard D. Gregg’s *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Nashville: AME Sunday School Union, 1980.

¹⁵⁵ Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 228-230.

¹⁵⁶ Richard Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, The AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008) 162-164.

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In 1807, Allen and the Bethel Church congregation voted to amend its articles of incorporation with the “African Supplement” and started the legal battle that would eventually rule in their favor. In response, white Methodists and their lawyers began an almost decade-long campaign to regain control of what they thought was now a renegade congregation. The Methodist Episcopal Church of Philadelphia hired a lawyer, Joseph Hopkinson, who argued that Bethel Church had broken “the union between the two churches” by “obtain[ing] a supplement” that was essentially “void” and had illegally seized power from white Methodist elders. The white Methodists believed Mother Bethel Church was under “illegally enshrined black control.”¹⁵⁷

Because of this, Hopkinson alleged, Allen and Bethel Church had broken the contract, and the Bethel Church was legally in the hands of the Methodists. Immediately following Hopkinson’s declaration, white Methodists “ordered to the sheriff to sell Bethel Church” on June 22, 1815. What was supposed to have been the coup de grace for the black Methodists became a reversal of fortune for the leaders of the white church, who mistakenly believed they would outbid Allen and the Bethelites for the church. With assistance from Philadelphia’s African American community and using money he had earned from his business dealings over the years, Allen procured the church with the highest bid that day.¹⁵⁸

However, the battle was still not over. As a “Methodist” church, Allen would be required to defer to the resident elder and accommodate him in Bethel Church. In December 1815, Robert Burch, the new white presiding elder, attempted to preach at Bethel, but he was blocked by the congregants who filled the church and “stuffed” benches and chairs in the aisles to prevent him from taking the pulpit.¹⁵⁹ In response, on January 1, 1816, the Methodist Conference filed suit against Bethel “for a writ of mandamus [for Burch] to be reinstated to Bethel’s pulpit.”¹⁶⁰

Among those arguing on behalf of Allen’s Church was Horace Binney, who effectively persuaded the judges that “The African Supplement” did take precedent over the Methodist bylaws, and that the congregants of the Bethel Church were entitled to vote as they pleased in regards to issues concerning the preaching of white elders and ministers, as well as other details regarding the operation of the church. A few months later, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court agreed and sided with Allen and Binney, and Bethel officially achieved its autonomy as a church that was able to utilize the term “Methodist” but still remain independent.¹⁶¹ The nine-year battle over Bethel Church was finally resolved and Bethel Church and St. George’s United Methodist Church were two separate entities.

In April 1816, Allen brought fifteen African American men from other black Methodist congregations in the mid-Atlantic region to Philadelphia to discuss the future of Bethel Church. They arrived from the Society of Colored Methodists in Buckingham Township, Bucks County, PA; from Mt. Pisgah church in Salem, NJ; and congregations from Wilmington, DE, and Baltimore, MD. This meeting is considered the first General Conference to establish and organize the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.¹⁶² They adopted the “Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church”, with which they were familiar because of their original in St. George’s ME Church in Philadelphia. A new Protestant denomination, controlled by African Americans and dedicated to their welfare, had been officially established.

The first General Convention of the newly created African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church commenced in Philadelphia on April 9, 1816. Documents prove that Allen was “elected and ordained Bishop,” and a resolution passed

¹⁵⁷ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 164.

¹⁵⁸ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 164-166.

¹⁵⁹ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 166-168.

¹⁶⁰ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 166-168.

¹⁶¹ Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet*, 168-169.

¹⁶² “A Brief History.”

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by the convention, “RESOLVED, That the people of Baltimore and Philadelphia and other places who may unite with them shall become one body under the name and style of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States of North America, and that the Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church be adopted as our Discipline until further orders, excepting that portion relating to presiding elders.” The resolution was signed by Daniel Coker, Richard Williams, Edward Williamson, Henry Harden, Stephen Hill, and Nicholas Gilliard.¹⁶³ When Allen issued the first “Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church” in 1817, the primary difference between it and the same document for the Methodist Episcopal Church is the removal of the pro-slavery provisions and office of presiding elder.¹⁶⁴

Soon after its organization, the AME denomination expanded throughout the mid-Atlantic from its centers in Philadelphia and Baltimore. AME records cite there being seven churches, one bishop, two conferences, no schools, seven ministers, and four hundred members with total property valued at \$25,000 in 1816.¹⁶⁵ Congregations belonged to a “conference” and “district” as their organizing structure. The physical boundaries of conferences and districts have changed repeatedly throughout AME’s history as the number of congregations grew in the western territories and southern states, particularly after emancipation. For the purposes of researching and understanding the development of AME congregations relative to this MPDF, nomination preparers should understand the basic organizational structure of the AME denomination. For specific information on the boundaries and jurisdictions of conferences and districts, preparers should reference Smith’s *History of the AME Church* and Conference minutes.

The AME denomination is organized with an episcopal form of government, meaning it is hierarchical in nature and is led by bishops, and is connectional in the Methodist tradition, with each local church part of the larger connection that provides a system of communication and accountability. The General Conference is considered the “supreme body” of the AME denomination and is convened every four years. Local congregations are also referred to historically as “stations” and several stations make up a circuit.¹⁶⁶ Each circuit belongs to a Presiding Elder district, and several of these constitute an Annual Conference. A number of Annual Conferences make up an episcopal district. The leadership structure of the church includes pastors, Presiding Elders, and Bishops, who act as the chief officers of the AME denomination.¹⁶⁷

The definition of a circuit by the AME church is “is an appointment in which there are two or more preaching places,” requiring the pastor to circulate through two more churches preaching to congregations within his remit.¹⁶⁸ The following entry from the 1947 *Encyclopedia of the AME Church* provides an explanation of itinerant ministers and the circuit system: an itinerant “is one who moves, travels, goes from place to place. In early Methodism, because of lack of preachers and smallness of congregations, they had to go from church to church and that was called itinerating. Afterwards several churches formed a circuit; if two, the pastor came twice a month to each; if three or more, he moved according to the need of the churches.”¹⁶⁹ As an area’s population grew, a pastor’s circuit tended to get smaller to eventually support a “station,” with an established congregation.

¹⁶³ James A. Handy, *Scraps of African Methodist Episcopal History*, (Philadelphia: AME Book Concern 1902) 15.

¹⁶⁴ Powerful Artifacts, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Wright, *Centennial*, 5.

¹⁶⁶ Wright, *Encyclopedia*, 1947. Station is defined as “a charge which consists of one self-supporting church as over against a “mission” which is not self-supporting and a circuit which has two or more churches on one charge.” Here “church” is used to mean “congregation”.

¹⁶⁷ African Methodist Episcopal Church, “Structure of the Church,” <https://www.ame-church.com/structure-of-the-church/>.

¹⁶⁸ Wright, *Encyclopedia*.

¹⁶⁹ Wright, *Encyclopedia*.

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While the 1816 meeting was known as the First General Convention, the July 9, 1820, gathering was formally considered the First General Conference of the AME Church, an event that also took place at the Bethel Church in Philadelphia. While conventions for the newly established church occurred in selected cities and circuits on an annual basis, the General Conference met every four years. This first “official” General Conference was historic because it was convened to address, in Allen’s own words, “larger questions than we had when we met in 1816.”¹⁷⁰ On the first day of the meeting, one of the questions posed was: “What are the duties of the General Superintendent or acting Bishop?” The response was:

“To preside over all our Conferences, to affix all the appointments of the traveling ministers, in conjunction with his assistants, at the Yearly Conference, but in the interval of the Conference he shall exercise his judgment, in conjunction with one or more of the preachers having the charge of the neighboring circuit or stations, and the Quarterly Conference where he wishes the preacher removed from . . . that no preacher remain on one circuit or station longer than two years, unless the Bishop, in his godly judgment, sees fit otherwise. He is to travel through the connection. He is to ordain Bishops, Elders and Deacons.”¹⁷¹

Other business at the 1820 convention addressed education. It was decided that “Where there are ten children, whose parents will allow it, meet them once a week; but where this is impracticable, meet them once in two weeks. Organize Sunday Schools, instruct the children.”¹⁷²

The geographical spread of the AME Church before the Civil War was largely restricted to the northeast and Midwest states and territories. Conference boundaries had been established at the 1820 General Conference. Pennsylvania was divided between the Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Ohio Conferences: Harrisburg, Chambersburg, and Lewistown circuits went to Baltimore; Philadelphia and Bucks County went to Philadelphia; all congregations north of Bucks County went to New York; and Pennsylvania west of the Allegheny Mountains went to Ohio.¹⁷³ According to the 1916 Centennial Encyclopedia, “In Boston, Newport, New Bedford, New York, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Washington, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, Sacramento and other Northern and Western cities, where there were a hundred or more Negroes, a church was organized.”¹⁷⁴

By the mid-1820s, AME congregations could be found in New York state, Charleston, SC, Washington, DC, Piscataway, NJ, and Ohio. In 1824, the Philadelphia Annual Conference included churches in eastern and central Pennsylvania and five in Western Pennsylvania. By 1830, a new Western Annual Conference was organized for all churches west of the Alleghenies and included fifteen pastors and approximately 1,200 members. Statistics for 1836 show that there were eighty-six churches with a total property value of \$125,000, two bishops, four conferences, no schools, twenty-seven ministers, and 7,594 members in the AME Church.¹⁷⁵ By 1846, there were six Annual Conferences (Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Ohio, Indiana, Canada) with 71 circuits that include 296 churches and “preaching places”, and over 17,000 members. In 1852, the size of the connection was such that three episcopal districts were created to organize the growing membership.¹⁷⁶ By the 1850s, congregations formed in Stockton, Sacramento, San Francisco and

¹⁷⁰ Wright, *Encyclopedia*.

¹⁷¹ Wright, *Encyclopedia*, 47.

¹⁷² Wright, *Encyclopedia*, 49.

¹⁷³ Wright, *Encyclopedia*, 49-50.

¹⁷⁴ Wright, *Centennial*, 5.

¹⁷⁵ Wright, *Centennial*, 5.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Spencer Smith and Daniel Alexander Payne, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church: Chronicling the Principal Events In the Advance of the African Methodist Episcopal Church From 1856 to 1922*, (Philadelphia: Book concern of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1922).

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other parts of California. In 1852, the AME Church started its own weekly magazine, “The Christian Recorder”; numerous other church-sponsored publications were started by the end of the 19th century.¹⁷⁷

Although the AME Church was banned in many areas of the south before the Civil War - many slaveowners felt the church would empower enslaved Africans and African Americans and become a catalyst for revolts – missionaries were sent into southern states, particularly Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Louisiana.¹⁷⁸ As the Civil War progressed, AME missionaries would often move into areas where the Confederate government had collapsed and minister to newly freed slaves. Well into the Reconstruction era, AME congregations had been founded in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee.¹⁷⁹ The number of AME Church congregations in the country swelled with the opening of the south and African Americans had the freedom to choose their own religions. By 1866, the AME Church counted 286 churches (congregations rather than actual buildings) – an increase of 200 in thirty years – with a total value of \$825,000. There were three bishops, ten conferences, one school, 265 ministers for the 286 churches, and 73,000 members.

From the beginning, Allen and the other founding AME Church members believed that one of the core missions of the AME church, aside from spiritual direction, was to improve relations between blacks and white and to instill a sense of civic pride in the African American community by providing direction on how to live, act, dress, and worship. In 1817, the AME church published the first edition of *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* as the instruction manual for members of the AME church and is considered the “oldest book of law published by Negroes in the United States of America.”¹⁸⁰

The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church covered the denomination’s history, beliefs, teachings, practices, and denominational organization and duties. AME Church leaders promoted, and required of their members, high moral standards for behavior in and out of church, an education, and neat physical appearance. Sections of the *Discipline* are devoted to the expectations of itinerant preachers, singing in church, conservative dress, the dangers of entertainment (namely drinking alcohol, dancing, and gambling), among other things.¹⁸¹ For example, the 1947 edition of the *Encyclopedia of African Methodism* strongly cautions followers about their appearance, stating that they should be comfortable and neat but eschew “costly apparel” and “putting on gold” because those things make an “undue display of wealth” and the money used to purchase them could be better used to help “less fortunate brethren.”¹⁸² The AME Church hoped to uplift the black race by pointing the way.

When AME Church missionaries moved into the southern states, they set moral examples of dignity, education, and neat physical appearances for the southern African Americans in hopes of alleviating some of the prejudices against color.¹⁸³ For example, the *Discipline* did not condone emotional outbursts at its services, expected congregants to approach the altar with respect and reverence, and did not allow speaking in tongues. These social and cultural expectations continued well into the 20th century as the *Doctrines and Disciplines* was updated frequently, and subsequent editions were published throughout the 20th century.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the boundaries of circuits, districts, and conferences would expand and shrink as new congregations emerged and old ones closed or merged with others. The Church organized a formal Sunday School

¹⁷⁷ Wright, *Centennial*, 6.

¹⁷⁸ See Smith, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*.

¹⁷⁹ Powerful Artifacts, 7.

¹⁸⁰ Wright, *Encyclopedia*, 12.

¹⁸¹ See *Discipline*, 1817 (<https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/ame/ame.html>, accessed 1/15/2019) and later versions of same.

¹⁸² See 1947 encyclopedia.

¹⁸³ Powerful Artifacts, 8.

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department in 1882 that developed curriculum and wrote and distributed all of the literature for Sunday School programs in AME churches across the country and internationally. In 1892, the Church Extension Society was started with the goal of helping small congregations build churches and keeping debt-burdened churches from being sold.¹⁸⁴

By the turn of the 20th century, there were congregations in every southern state and in Liberia, Bermuda and South America and church-sponsored “institutions of higher learning” in “nearly every State in the South.”¹⁸⁵ The number of active congregations had increased 2,000% between 1866 and 1896, bringing the number of congregations to 4,850, with nine bishops, fifty-two conferences, twenty schools, 4,365 ministers, and 518,000 members. The value of church property also increased by a staggering amount to \$8.6 million.¹⁸⁶ Statistics for 1916 showing a steady increase across all areas:¹⁸⁷

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| Members in the US | 620,000 |
| Missionary Field | 25,000 |
| Bishops ordained | 39 |
| Active Bishops | 13 |
| Pastors | 6,554 |
| Local Preachers | 6,437 |
| Number of Churches | 6,000 |
| Number of Parsonages | 2,748 |
| Sunday School members | 231,828 |
| Teachers and officers | 5,851 |
| Books in library | 150,000 |
| Church schools in US | 16 |
| Church schools in West Indies | 2 |
| Church schools in West Africa | 3 |
| Church schools in South Africa | 3 |
| Students in Missionary Schools | 4,725 |
| Annual Conferences | 79 |
| Publishing Houses | 2 |
| Newspapers | 6 |

By the mid-20th century, the AME Church had focused its growth in many African countries, South Africa, Mexico and West Indies. The 1947 *Encyclopedia of African Methodism* provides the following statistics for 1946: seventeen

¹⁸⁴ 1916 Centennial 6.

¹⁸⁵ 1916 Centennial, 6.

¹⁸⁶ 1916 centennial, 5.

¹⁸⁷ Centennial, 12.

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Episcopal districts with thirteen in the U.S., a substantial educational presence in South Africa, 110 annual conferences, fourteen active Bishops, over 8,000 minister, and more than 8,500 churches.¹⁸⁸

AME Church In Pennsylvania

As the earliest Black Church denomination and the only one founded in Pennsylvania, the AME had more congregations and churches in the commonwealth than the other denominations of the Black Church. However, counting of AME congregations and their associated church buildings in Pennsylvania at any given point in history is challenging. The self-reporting nature of the federal census in the 20th century combined with the largely anecdotal accounting of the 19th century are important factors when assessing the accuracy of the data in Pennsylvania. The urban areas of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, where the African American populations were among the highest in Pennsylvania, had earlier and more congregations than many other parts of the commonwealth.

In addition to Bethel AME, the “Mother” AME church in Philadelphia, there were other AME congregations in that city.¹⁸⁹ Outside of Philadelphia, Bucks County was home to a number of AME congregations dating from the first two decades of the 19th century. Adjacent to Philadelphia County, the Delaware River, and the Lehigh Valley, Bucks County was one of the three original counties created by William Penn in 1682. By the 1790s, sixty-two African and African American heads of household call Bucks County home, particularly in the central Bucks County area of Buckingham. Local histories credit the Underground Railroad with bringing more free black men and women to the area between 1830 and 1840.

In lower Bucks County, the Society of Colored Methodists, an independent black congregation of the white Methodist denomination, began meeting in a private home in Attleboro (now Langhorne Borough) in 1809. In 1816, they were one of the original congregations to form the AME church with Richard Allen. After the founding of the AME church, over the next four years, several congregations emerged through the central and lower Bucks areas to serve the needs of the free African and African American families in the area. Bethel AME Church in Yardley Borough was founded in 1817 and was known locally as “The Colored Church”. Mount Moriah AME Church, in what was originally Solebury Township but is now New Hope Borough, was founded in 1818. Local history cites Mount Moriah as the third oldest congregation in the area, the first two being the Solebury Friends Meeting and the Solebury Presbyterian Church.

In 1820, John Wesley AME Church was founded in Newtown Borough and Little Jerusalem AME Church (also known as Old Jerusalem AME Church) was founded in Bensalem Township, the latter of which is documented as an Underground Railroad stop for conductor Robert Purvis as he moved slaves from the Delaware River to points north. The current church dates to 1830, with renovations in the 1860s and 1890s, and contains a pulpit crafted by Richard Allen. The Mount Gilead AME Church on Buckingham Mountain in Buckingham Township was founded in 1822. The current church building was built in 1852 and replaced an early log structure on the same foundation; both buildings are documented as stops on the Underground Railroad.

Moving westward along Pennsylvania’s southern border, AME congregations were founded and many thrived from the 1820s through 1840s. In Chester County, Ebenezer Church in East Whiteland Township was founded in 1832 and by the early 1840s, the Hosana Church in the Hinsonville area was started. By 1843, the Hosanna church was established in

¹⁸⁸ 1947 Encyclopedia, 12. For more specific information about AME Church activities during this period, see also the “Chronology of African Methodism” on pages 13-19.

¹⁸⁹ See African American churches in Philadelphia MPDF for information about these congregations.

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Chester County and played a seminal role in the Underground Railroad.¹⁹⁰ In Coatesville, the congregation of St. Paul AME Church dates to 1863 and was first housed in a building in the intentional community of Hayti, an unincorporated place west of Coatesville. In 1882, the congregation purchased a lot at 7th and Merchant Streets in the East End and in 1883, the local Trinity Episcopal Church donated their Gothic Revival-style frame building to the congregation. Alterations to the building date to ca. 1912. This congregation is one of the oldest African American congregations in Chester County and has continuously served the African American community of Coatesville since the mid-19th century.

The City of Reading's first black congregation founded the Bethel AME church there in 1837 and is a well-documented Underground Railroad site. In Union Township in southern Berks County, the Mt. Frisby AME Church was established by the black families living in the area of Hopewell, Joanna, and Birdsboro furnaces in 1856. Known as the Six Penny Colored Church because it was located in the valley of Six Penny Creek, the church counted among its first members escaped slaves who eventually resided in the region because they were given shelter and work in the region's furnaces. At least nine African American families lived adjacent to its grounds in 1860 as a "Negro colony centered around the new church."¹⁹¹ Attendance eventually waned, and the church as an institution completely ceased to operate by the late 1880s.

In northeastern Pennsylvania, in the picturesque community of Montrose, Susquehanna County, the Bethel Church was established in 1848 with the purchase of a building "bounded on the east by the center of the Bridgewater and Wilkes-Barre Turnpike Road." In addition, the AME Zion Church on Berry Street, in Montrose, was established, according to Debra Adleman, first "in 1844 in a small home where the old country jail stands," and then built on Berry Street, where "the building still stands" but "the electricity is disconnected."

Fifty miles south of Montrose, according to Emerson J. Moss, influenced by the Bethel AME movement, in 1848 "a Negro congregation was formed by the Rev. Thomas M. C. Ward in Wilkes-Barre which met in private homes. One home was reportedly at North Main and North streets and another at North Pennsylvania Avenue and Jackson streets, an area where most Negroes resided at the time." After moving to a building on "Mechanic's Alley between Washington and Canal [Pennsylvania] streets," which was "dedicated on November 30, 1856," the church was formally incorporated as the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Wilkes-Barre on August 3, 1869, first at 146 South Fell Street and then at 172 South State Street "where the church remained until 1918."¹⁹²

Lancaster, York, Adams, and Franklin counties, which border Maryland, also had early black congregations. In Lancaster County alone, there were almost a dozen active black churches. Bethel AME in Lancaster City was founded in 1817 by fifty free Africans and African Americans as the St. James African Methodist Church; they met first in a local tavern and in 1821 built a small church in the area of Lancaster known as Churchtowne. In 1848, the church was incorporated as "The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the City of Lancaster" and became known as Bethel AME.

In Franklin County, St. James AME Church congregation in Chambersburg can trace their history to the 1810s and have been worshipping in the same location since 1839; the Greencastle Bethel AME Church congregation also dates to the same period. Both Carlisle and Shippensburg in Cumberland County had old congregations dating to the first two

¹⁹⁰ *Colored American*, "Of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America," October 21, 1837. By the 1840s, these families had become the force behind the founding and rise of the Hosana Church, which went through practically every possible independent black church affiliation through the 1880s—AME, AME Zion, AUMP, UAME—and they, along with other African American Hinsonville residents, typically supported one another in business, cultural, and social endeavors.

¹⁹¹ Joseph E. Walker, *The Dynamics of a Nineteenth Century Iron-Making Community* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), 312.

¹⁹² Emerson Moss, *African Americans in the Wyoming Valley, 1770-1990*, Wilkes-Barre: Wyoming Historical and Geological Society and Wilkes University Press, 1992, 51-52.

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decades of the AME Church's existence; the former is cited as the location where popular Bishop Daniel Payne was first introduced to the denomination and also operated school in the basement for African American and Native American children.¹⁹³ Similarly, York County had at least two active congregations in the 1820s: Bethel AME in York and one in Wrightsville.

Farther north of the Mason-Dixon line, Harrisburg, Dauphin County can claim one of the earliest AME congregations from 1817, which, after a brief dissolution, was reorganized in 1835 and remains in existence today. In Mifflin County, an AME congregation was active in Lewiston by 1838 and by 1842 had a church building and school. The presence of a mid-19th century AME congregation in Williamsport, Lycoming County is credited to the city being the northern terminus of the Susquehanna River branch of the Underground Railroad.¹⁹⁴

Pittsburgh's first independent African American church was Bethel AME, organized in 1818 "in a downtown home between Third and Fourth Avenues near Smithfield Street by three freedmen: James Coleman, George Coleman, and Abraham Lewis."¹⁹⁵ In the same year, the St. Paul AME congregation was formed in Washington, Washington County, by an intentional community of free blacks about an hour southwest of Pittsburgh near the border of West Virginia. It would be four more years until an AME circuit was formally established for this area of Pennsylvania. The first congregation in the Monongahela Valley in Washington County, was the Bethel AME church founded in 1833.¹⁹⁶

The 1850 federal religious census does not count the number of AME congregations separate from all other Methodist denominations, so it is not useful in understanding the presence of the AME Church in Pennsylvania during this period. In 1890, the first year that African American denominations are counted in the federal census, Pennsylvania has 87 active congregations with a total of 11,613 members.¹⁹⁷ Pennsylvania's total African American population at the time was 107,596, meaning that approximately 11% of the population belonged to an established AME congregation. There are 112 AME church buildings, with a seating capacity of 39,900 seats. The value of church property, which would include churches, rectories, or other property owned by the Church equaled \$605,000.

Beginning in the late 19th century and continuing into the 20th century, the federal census started counting and tracking religious organizations in the United States. While this census data is important for understanding larger trends and patterns of development, it should not be relied on exclusively when researching individual congregations or all congregations within a given area or determining significance of a particular church property. If research shows that a congregation or church was overlooked, human and methodological errors in census taking or transcription or the lack

¹⁹³ Rev. Jeane B. Williams, "The African Methodist Episcopal Church Moves into Central Pennsylvania," 1996 from <https://www.lycoming.edu/umarch/chronicles/1997/3.%20WILLIAMS.pdf>.

¹⁹⁴ Williams.

¹⁹⁵ Splain and Stutman. Also known as the Wylie Avenue Church, it was rebuilt on the "Hill District site at Wylie Avenue and Elm Street in 1906," and "the current structure was built in 1959" at 2720 Webster Avenue.

¹⁹⁶ For more information on AME churches in Philadelphia, see African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949, African American Resources of Philadelphia (1996-M001-101). For more information on AME churches in Pittsburgh, see Brown, Eliza Smith and Ronald C. Carlisle, Ph.D. "The African American Experience in Southwestern Pennsylvania: An Historic Context for Nine Counties" (Final Review Draft prepared for the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, June 1997).

¹⁹⁷ The Statistics of Churches in the United States was part of the 11th Census, conducted in 1890 (the U.S. Census collected data on religion through the 1936 census, though the 1890 Census was the first to count the number of members). The Census collected data on church seating capacity, property value, number of members, number of edifices ("buildings owned and used for worship"), and number of organizations (churches, mission stations when separate from congregation, chapels when they are separate from churches, and societies or meetings among groups that designate such organizations). The data are organized by counties (counties are the cases). Measures for religions in Indian Territories are also included.

<http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/1890CENSCT.asp>.

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of an actual church building for a small congregation could have resulted in the congregation not being counted. For example, census figures from 1890 to 1936 show that there were no AME congregations in Adams or Lehigh counties however both counties – one along the Maryland border and the other near the New Jersey and New York borders – have at least one active congregation that dates back to the early 19th and 20th centuries, respectively.

According to the census data, almost half of Pennsylvania's counties did not have any congregations in 1890: Adams, Armstrong, Butler, Cambria, Cameron, Carbon, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Fulton, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Lawrence, Lehigh, Mercer, Monroe, Montour, Northampton, Perry, Pike, Potter, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Union, Warren, Wayne, and Wyoming; there was a similar, but much shorter, list in the 1936 census. This, however, does not mean that Black Church congregations and churches did not exist; research for individual churches or communities may show that there were AME congregations active at this time.

| 1890 Census: AME Churches | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>County</i> | <i># of Orgs</i> | <i># of Members</i> | <i>#of Church Edifices</i> | <i>Church Seating Capacity</i> | <i>Property value in \$</i> |
| TOTALS | 87 | 11,613 | 112 | 39,900 | \$605,000 |
| PHILADELPHIA | 11 | 3,540 | 12 | 8,900 | 192,630 |
| WASHINGTON | 10 | 660 | 7 | 2,750 | 25,400 |
| ALLEGHENY | 9 | 1,705 | 12 | 4,950 | 160,700 |
| CHESTER | 5 | 723 | 9 | 2,050 | 21,150 |
| DELAWARE | 5 | 632 | 7 | 3,000 | 32,405 |
| BUCKS | 4 | 328 | 7 | 1,200 | 9,100 |
| CUMBERLAND | 3 | 469 | 5 | 1,550 | 22,700 |
| FAYETTE | 3 | 431 | 4 | 1,350 | 11,000 |
| LANCASTER | 3 | 330 | 5 | 1,900 | 21,350 |
| MONTGOMERY | 3 | 251 | 4 | 1,400 | 18,500 |
| VENANGO | 3 | 148 | 3 | 900 | 13,000 |
| CENTRE | 2 | 136 | 3 | 650 | 1,950 |
| DAUPHIN | 2 | 297 | 2 | 1,050 | 8,500 |
| FRANKLIN | 2 | 333 | 3 | 950 | 7,065 |
| LACKAWANNA | 2 | 58 | 3 | 600 | 2,800 |
| LEBANON | 2 | 120 | 1 | 150 | 600 |
| BEAVER | 1 | 51 | 1 | 400 | 3,000 |
| BEDFORD | 1 | 35 | 1 | 200 | 1,100 |
| BERKS | 1 | 120 | 1 | 800 | 6,000 |
| BLAIR | 1 | 33 | 1 | 225 | 2,500 |
| BRADFORD | 1 | 54 | 3 | 150 | 2,150 |
| COLUMBIA | 1 | 20 | 2 | 250 | 500 |
| CRAWFORD | 1 | 153 | 1 | 500 | 4,000 |
| ERIE | 1 | 27 | 1 | 350 | 3,000 |
| GREENE | 1 | 29 | 1 | 350 | 3,000 |
| LUZERNE | 1 | 59 | 1 | 450 | 3,000 |

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| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----|---|-----|--------|
| <i>LYCOMING</i> | 1 | 168 | 1 | 800 | 15,000 |
| <i>MCKEAN</i> | 1 | 21 | 1 | 300 | 1,700 |
| <i>MIFFLIN</i> | 1 | 28 | 2 | 275 | |
| <i>NORTHUMBERLAND</i> | 1 | 29 | 2 | 150 | 2,300 |
| <i>SCHUYLKILL</i> | 1 | 127 | 1 | 200 | 900 |
| <i>TIOGA</i> | 1 | 130 | 1 | 250 | 3,000 |
| <i>WESTMORELAND</i> | 1 | 178 | 2 | 500 | |
| <i>YORK</i> | 1 | 190 | 2 | 400 | 5,000 |

A comparison of the 1890, 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936 religious census' provides insight into the size and distribution of the AME Church in Pennsylvania in the early 20th century.

| Year | # of congregations | # of members | # of Halls | # of Churches | Seating Capacity | Value (\$) |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>1890</i> | 87 | 11,613 | - | 112 | 39,900 | \$605,000 |
| <i>1906</i> | 149 | 12,638 | 6 | 143 | 42,765 | \$985,790 |
| <i>1916</i> | 140 | 16,798 | 3 | 136 | - | \$1,145,390 |
| <i>1926</i> | 174 | 23,208 | - | 159 | - | - |
| <i>1936</i> | 178 | 27,008 | - | 162 | - | - |

The 1916, 1926, and 1936 census each provide county-level membership data for the AME congregations in Pennsylvania; this information can be viewed in the Appendices. While it does not give as comprehensive a picture of the AME church in the commonwealth in the early 20th century, the comparison with the 1890 membership data illustrates where AME church membership grew or declined.

The 1906 census, sixteen years later, does not provide the level of detail for the AME Church as the 1890 census. Unfortunately, at the county level, all African Methodist denominations are counted as one unit and is not useful for assessing the changes in AME church locations and membership. The census did, however, provide a snapshot for AME churches in certain municipalities:

| 1906 Census: AME Churches | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Municipality | # of orgs | # of members | # of Halls | # of Churches | Seating Capacity | Value (\$) | # of Sunday Schools | # of Scholars |
| <i>Allegheny, Allegheny County</i> | 2 | 539 | 0 | 2 | 1,125 | \$55,000 | 2 | 225 |
| <i>Pittsburgh, Allegheny County</i> | 4 | 1,465 | 1 | 3 | 2,200 | \$132,400 | 5 | 1,037 |
| <i>Chester, Delaware County</i> | 2 | 395 | 0 | 2 | 850 | \$15,000 | 2 | 398 |
| <i>Harrisburg, Dauphin County</i> | 1 | 300 | 0 | 1 | 600 | \$40,000 | 1 | 270 |
| <i>Philadelphia, Philadelphia</i> | 14 | 3,675 | 0 | 14 | 7,180 | \$257,000 | 14 | 2,527 |

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| 1890 – 1936 Census: AME Churches | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| COUNTY | # of members: 1890 | # of members: 1916 | # of members: 1926 | # of members: 1936 |
| TOTALS | 11,613 | 16,798 | 23,208 | 27,008 |
| <i>Allegheny</i> | 1,705 | 3,407 | 3,980 | 3,568 |
| <i>Armstrong</i> | | | 21 | 14 |
| <i>Beaver</i> | 51 | 100 | 608 | 379 |
| <i>Bedford</i> | 35 | | 14 | |
| <i>Berks</i> | 120 | 80 | 160 | 172 |
| <i>Blair</i> | 33 | 126 | 189 | 137 |
| <i>Bradford</i> | 54 | | | |
| <i>Bucks</i> | 328 | 196 | 182 | 236 |
| <i>Butler</i> | | 21 | 27 | 11 |
| <i>Cambria</i> | | | 52 | 85 |
| <i>Centre</i> | 136 | 67 | 70 | 65 |
| <i>Chester</i> | 723 | 1,083 | 896 | 1,331 |
| <i>Clearfield</i> | | 35 | 28 | 68 |
| <i>Clinton</i> | | 57 | 18 | 24 |
| <i>Columbia</i> | 20 | 20 | 18 | 13 |
| <i>Crawford</i> | 153 | 103 | 174 | 151 |
| <i>Cumberland</i> | 469 | 159 | 137 | 144 |
| <i>Dauphin</i> | 297 | 427 | 534 | 845 |
| <i>Delaware</i> | 632 | 1,206 | 1776 | 2376 |
| <i>Erie</i> | 27 | 56 | 150 | 133 |
| <i>Fayette</i> | 431 | 476 | 489 | 575 |
| <i>Franklin</i> | 333 | 170 | 205 | 235 |
| <i>Fulton</i> | | 18 | 16 | 21 |
| <i>Greene</i> | 29 | 44 | 22 | 60 |
| <i>Huntingdon</i> | | | 83 | 89 |
| <i>Indiana</i> | | | | 2 |
| <i>Juniata</i> | | 64 | | |
| <i>Lackawanna</i> | 58 | 155 | 200 | 265 |
| <i>Lancaster</i> | 330 | 320 | 270 | 247 |
| <i>Lawrence</i> | | 52 | 206 | 99 |
| <i>Lebanon</i> | 120 | | 36 | 175 |
| <i>Luzerne</i> | 59 | 214 | 234 | 305 |
| <i>Lycoming</i> | 168 | 168 | 130 | 433 |
| <i>McKean</i> | 21 | 52 | 50 | 48 |
| <i>Mercer</i> | | | 45 | 109 |
| <i>Mifflin</i> | 28 | | 18 | 20 |

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| 1890 – 1936 Census: AME Churches | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| COUNTY | # of members: 1890 | # of members: 1916 | # of members: 1926 | # of members: 1936 |
| <i>Monroe</i> | | 28 | 32 | 58 |
| <i>Montgomery</i> | 251 | 961 | 1,157 | 706 |
| <i>Montour</i> | | 16 | 18 | 13 |
| <i>Northampton</i> | | | 52 | 154 |
| <i>Northumberland</i> | 29 | 14 | 22 | |
| <i>Philadelphia</i> | 3,540 | 5,029 | 9,078 | 12,117 |
| <i>Schuylkill</i> | 127 | 32 | 113 | 127 |
| <i>Sullivan</i> | | | | 83 |
| <i>Tioga</i> | 130 | | | |
| <i>Union</i> | | 134 | | |
| <i>Venango</i> | 148 | 182 | 189 | 95 |
| <i>Warren</i> | | | | 26 |
| <i>Washington</i> | 660 | 940 | 961 | 751 |
| <i>Wayne</i> | | 147 | | |
| <i>Westmoreland</i> | 178 | 330 | 430 | 317 |
| <i>York</i> | 190 | 109 | 118 | 126 |

An examination of other sources does provide some additional understanding of where AME congregations are located throughout Pennsylvania. An analysis of the 1910 Negro Business Directory, Wright's 1912 *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, and the 1928 *Negro Survey of Pennsylvania* clarifies the locations for some AME congregations but cannot be considered as accurate as the official census; it does, however, provide some clues for research. As stated earlier, additional congregations and associated church buildings may have active during one or more of these time periods but not captured in these informal counts.

| County | Municipality | # of congregations: 1910 | # of congregations: 1912 | # of congregations: 1928 |
|------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Adams</i> | Gettysburg | 1 | | |
| <i>Allegheny</i> | Pittsburgh | 3 | | 4 |
| <i>Allegheny</i> | McKeesport | 1 | | |
| <i>Allegheny</i> | Sewickley | 1 | | |
| <i>Beaver</i> | Bridgewater | 1 | | |
| <i>Beaver</i> | New Brighton | 1 | | |
| <i>Bedford</i> | Everett | 1 | | |
| <i>Berks</i> | Reading | 1 | | |
| <i>Blair</i> | Hollidaysburg | | 1 | |
| <i>Blair</i> | Altoona | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Blair</i> | Tyrone | 1 | | |

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| County | Municipality | # of congregations: 1910 | # of congregations: 1912 | # of congregations: 1928 |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Bradford</i> | Bradford | 1 | | |
| <i>Cambria</i> | Johnstown | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Centre</i> | Bellefonte | 1 | | |
| <i>Chester</i> | West Chester | 1 | | |
| <i>Chester</i> | West Grove | 1 | | |
| <i>Chester</i> | Coatesville | 1 | | |
| <i>Clinton</i> | Lock Haven | 1 | | |
| <i>Columbia</i> | Columbia | | 1 | |
| <i>Crawford</i> | Meadville | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Crawford</i> | Titusville | 1 | | |
| <i>Cumberland</i> | Carlisle | 1 | | |
| <i>Cumberland</i> | Shippensburg | 1 | | |
| <i>Dauphin</i> | Harrisburg | 1 | 2 | |
| <i>Dauphin</i> | Steelton | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Delaware</i> | Chester | 2 | | |
| <i>Erie</i> | Erie | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Fayette</i> | Uniontown | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Fayette</i> | New Haven | 1 | | |
| <i>Fayette</i> | Vanderbilt | 1 | | |
| <i>Fayette</i> | Connellsville | 1 | | |
| <i>Fayette</i> | Brownsville | 1 | | |
| <i>Franklin</i> | Chambersburg | 1 | | |
| <i>Greene</i> | Waynesburg | | 1 | |
| <i>Huntingdon</i> | Huntingdon | 1 | | |
| <i>Lackawanna</i> | Scranton | | 1 | |
| <i>Lancaster</i> | Lancaster | 1 | | |
| <i>Lancaster</i> | Columbia | 1 | | |
| <i>Lancaster</i> | Marietta | 1 | | |
| <i>Lancaster</i> | Parksburg | 1 | | |
| <i>Lawrence</i> | New Castle | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Luzerne</i> | Wilkes-Barre | 1 | | |
| <i>Luzerne</i> | Pittston | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Lycoming</i> | Williamsport | | 1 | |
| <i>McKean</i> | Kane | 1 | | |
| <i>Montgomery</i> | Norristown | 1 | | |
| <i>Northampton</i> | Easton | 1 | | |
| <i>Philadelphia</i> | Philadelphia | 17 | 17 | 19 |
| <i>Venango</i> | Franklin | 1 | 1 | |

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| County | Municipality | # of congregations: 1910 | # of congregations: 1912 | # of congregations: 1928 |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Venango</i> | Oil City | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Warren</i> | Irvine | | 1 | |
| <i>Washington</i> | Washington | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Washington</i> | Monongahela | 1 | | |
| <i>Westmoreland</i> | Monessen | | 1 | |
| <i>Westmoreland</i> | Greensburg | 1 | | |
| <i>Westmoreland</i> | Scottdale | 1 | | |
| <i>Westmoreland</i> | West Newton | | 1 | |
| <i>York</i> | York | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>York</i> | Wrightsville | 1 | | |

Beginning in the last quarter of the 20th century, AME churches in Pennsylvania faced the same challenges that many other Protestant Christian denominations faced – a declining and aging population of churchgoers. This happened to AME congregations regardless of age, location, and history. In some communities, AME congregations merged with neighboring churches while others continued to shrink. In others, churches were closed and abandoned, like Mount Tabor in Mount Holly Springs, Cumberland County, or sold. On a national level, membership in the AME church jumped significantly in the 1950s through 1970s and by 2010 has leveled out around 2.5 million members. At the same time, however, the number of congregations dropped significantly – from just over 6,000 in 1951 to below 4,000 in 1978.¹⁹⁸ As of 2010, Pennsylvania ranked 8th in the country in the number of AME congregations with 150. Interestingly, Pennsylvania is the only northern (north of the Mason Dixon line) state in the top ten.

¹⁹⁸ From http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_937_t.asp.

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African Methodist Episcopal Zion¹⁹⁹

From "Denominational Histories" by Teresa Douglas, Heather Fearnbach, Rebecca Smith, and Carroll Van West in *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African American Churches in the South*, 2000.

Historically associated with the AME Church is the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church. In 1796 the blacks who worshipped in the John Street Methodist Church of New York City withdrew from the congregation because of resulting tensions and discriminatory treatment when their numbers had risen over forty percent of the membership. Also, dissension among the black congregation had peaked from the white controlled church's refusal to fully ordain black preachers and allow them to join the conference as itinerant ministers. Under the leadership of Peter Williams, a former slave employed at the John Street Church, some of the former members organized a separate African chapel. It met at member William Miller's cabinetmaker's shop. Local African American preachers of the John Street Church conducted services there until the building of a new house of worship was completed in September of 1800. In 1801 the chapel was incorporated as the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of the City of New York with Peter Williams and Francis Jacobs as signatories.

From 1800 to 1819 the Zionites existed as an independent congregation within the Methodist Church. During this time the Methodist Church supplied the black congregation with ministers. Ultimately the arrangement proved to be unworkable because the blacks began to resent the control the whites exercised over their affairs. The Zionites asked Bishop Richard Allen of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to ordain a minister for them. William Lambert was sent to Philadelphia to be ordained but when he returned he shunned the Zionites by establishing a new church. The Zionites believed Bishop Allen of the AME Church had encouraged Lambert to desert them and that he was only interested in building up the AME Church. This suspicion was correct; Bishop Allen did indeed want to unite all black Methodists into one church.

In consequence, the Zionites convened their first annual conference on June 21, 1821, in New York City, with representatives from four other congregations in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and New York. This conference is commonly accepted as the official organizing meeting of what became the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination, although a total break with the Methodist Episcopal Church did not occur until after the 1824 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1822 James Varick, then pastor of Zion Church, was elected the first superintendent and became regarded as the founder of the denomination. In 1848 the word Zion was officially added to this African Methodist Episcopal church to make clear the distinction of this denomination from Allen's AME Church.

Because of the contention between the two churches and early leaders, the AMEZ Church was determined to be a distinct entity from the AME Church in the beginning despite both their origins in the Methodist Episcopal Church: "Both of these Churches came out from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion in New York and Bethel in Philadelphia, and each independent of each other. Each is an offshoot from the mother of Methodist Episcopal Churches."²⁰⁰ For all intents and purposes, the AME and AMEZ Churches did not significantly differ in their teachings, doctrines, organization, or administration; rather, the differences in them were rooted in personality and historical mistrust.²⁰¹

Because of internal dissension and competition from the AME Church, the Zion Church experienced only modest growth prior to the Civil War. Starting with 1,400 members and twenty-two preachers in 1821, the church in 1860 numbered 4,600 with 105 preachers. Expansion was limited in these years to the northeast but gained momentum in the south following Emancipation. Long known as "The Freedom Church," AME Zion claims such abolitionist luminaries as

¹⁹⁹ Powerful Artifacts, 2000, pages 9 to 11 except where noted.

²⁰⁰ Hood, 133.

²⁰¹ See "Bethel vs. Zion" in Hood, 133.

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Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Reverend Jermain Louguen, Catherine Harris, Reverend Thomas James, and Frederick Douglass, who was licensed as a local AME Zion preacher. Many Zion members, pastors, and church officials were abolitionists and were intensely involved with the Underground Railroad.

Like the AME Church, Zionites went as missionaries into the south during Reconstruction and founded AME Zion Churches throughout the southern states. By 1884 the church had grown to 300,000, and in 1896 membership stood at 350,000. In the second half of the nineteenth century foreign mission programs were established in South America, Africa, and the West Indies. The twentieth century brought a third major period of expansion with the growth of cities and the migration of African Americans to the North and West following the two world wars. After a decline in membership in the 1940s and early 1970s, the AMEZ Church has been growing steadily.²⁰²

AMEZ In Pennsylvania

AMEZ congregations were located throughout Pennsylvania in the 19th and 20th centuries but were second to the AME congregations in number and influence in the commonwealth. At various times in the denomination's history, Pennsylvania was divided among the New York, Philadelphia, Genesee, Allegheny, and other conferences. Hood's *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* from 1895 provides a brief history of the Philadelphia Conference, the first for Pennsylvania:

The Philadelphia Conference was organized May 25, 1829, Bishop Christopher Rush presiding. There were seventeen preachers present, including three from the New York Conference. This Conference originally included about half of New Jersey and the whole of Pennsylvania; in 1837 its bounds were extended to include Washington, D. C., and in 1844 Baltimore was added. The western part of Pennsylvania was taken from this Conference in 1849 to form the Allegheny Conference, and in making up the Genesee Conference a few counties in the northwestern part of the State were taken off of the Philadelphia Conference. This Conference was also weakened at a little later period by the formation of the Southern Conference, afterward called the Baltimore Conference, so that in 1864 it was the smallest Conference in the connection excepting the Southern Conference. In 1872, however, it and the Southern (or Baltimore) Conference were consolidated, and it is now known as the Philadelphia and Baltimore, and is the largest of the Northern Conferences. This Conference has furnished bishops as follows : J. J. Clinton, S. T. Scott, J. D. Brooks, and J. J. Moore.²⁰³

Descriptions of the other conferences which claimed part of Pennsylvania are also included. In 1821, the Wesleyan Church in Philadelphia is counted as having 300 members and a congregation in Easton with eighteen members.²⁰⁴ Congregations were also noted in Harrisburg and "western country, State of Pennsylvania" in 1829.²⁰⁵ This was most likely the John Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion Mission started in Pittsburgh in 1836 in "Charlotte Maloney's home on Roberts Street," which moved to Linton Street where a "one-story building" was purchased and "affectionately known as 'Little Jim.'" The church then moved to an ornate "Gothic structure" at "40-42 Arthur Street" but was demolished in 1945.²⁰⁶ By 1843, several more AMEZ congregations had been established in the commonwealth: two

²⁰² From http://www.thearda.com/denoms/D_1322.asp.

²⁰³ Hood, 226.

²⁰⁴ Bradley, 91.

²⁰⁵ Bradley, 103.

²⁰⁶ Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, *A Legacy in Bricks and Mortar: African American Landmarks in Allegheny County*, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, 1995, 41, 56-57; Glasco, *WPA History of the Negro in Pittsburgh*, 232.

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each in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and one each in Harrisburg, York, Carlisle, Shippensburg, Lewistown, Bellefonte, Williamsport, and Johnstown.²⁰⁷

Montrose in Susquehanna County, for example, had an early AMEZ congregation. Of the AME Zion Church's founders, Morris believed "a congregation was formed in 1842 by the Rev. Thomas Jackson," which ended after the minister left the region but was "revived again in 1845 by the Rev. Phillip Lamb and the Rev. Peter Fulmer" and typically gathered in private homes for worship. According to Moss, in May 1850, "Jacob Hill, Richard Hazen, John Thomas, Jacob White and Henry Brown" acting as "trustees for the African AME Zion Church," purchased "a lot for 400.00 on East Northampton Street for a church and school house." The church later moved to "220 East Northampton Street, near the corner of Welles Street," and had a congregation of 500 strong.²⁰⁸

The 1850 federal religious census does not count the number of AMEZ congregations separate from all other Methodist denominations, so it is not useful in understanding the presence of the AMEZ Church in Pennsylvania during this period. One of the published AMEZ histories also mentions, in addition to the congregations mentioned earlier, that there were AMEZ congregations in Brownsville, Blairsville, and Bedford. Congregations are also mentioned in the following places in Moore's history of the denomination: Washington, Mt. Pleasant, Allegheny City, Franklin, Mansfield, and Uniontown.²⁰⁹

Beginning in the late 19th century and continuing into the 20th century, the federal census started counting and tracking religious organizations in the United States. While this census data is important for understanding larger trends and patterns of development, it should not be relied on exclusively when researching individual congregations or all congregations within a given area or determining significance of a particular church property. If research shows that a congregation or church was overlooked, human and methodological errors in census taking or transcription or the lack of an actual church building for a small congregation could have resulted in the congregation not being counted.

In 1890, the first year that African American denominations are counted in the federal census, Pennsylvania has 62 active AMEZ congregations with a total of 8,689 members.²¹⁰ Pennsylvania's total African American population at the time was 107,596, meaning that approximately 8% of the population belonged to an established AMEZ congregation. The census counted 55 AME church buildings, with a seating capacity of 17,625 seats. The value of church property, which would include churches, rectories, or other property owned by the Church equaled \$256,150. The AMEZ denomination was substantially smaller than the AME congregations in Pennsylvania during the same period.

| 1890 Census AMEZ | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>County</i> | <i># of Orgs</i> | <i># of Members</i> | <i>#of Church Edifices</i> | <i>Church Seating Capacity</i> | <i>Property value in \$</i> |
| TOTALS | 62 | 8,689 | 55 | 17,625 | 256,150 |
| ALLEGHENY | 9 | 1,905 | 9 | 3,500 | 109,500 |

²⁰⁷ Bradley, 104.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 59.

²⁰⁹ John J. Moore, History of the A.M.E. Zion Church in America, Founded in 1796, In the City of New York, 1884.

²¹⁰ The Statistics of Churches in the United States was part of the 11th Census, conducted in 1890 (the U.S. Census collected data on religion through the 1936 census, though the 1890 Census was the first to count the number of members). The Census collected data on church seating capacity, property value, number of members, number of edifices ("buildings owned and used for worship"), and number of organizations (churches, mission stations when separate from congregation, chapels when they are separate from churches, and societies or meetings among groups that designate such organizations). The data are organized by counties (counties are the cases). Measures for religions in Indian Territories are also included.

<http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/1890CENSCT.asp>.

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| | | | | | |
|----------------|---|-------|---|-------|--------|
| CUMBERLAND | 7 | 526 | 5 | 1,550 | 8,850 |
| YORK | 5 | 754 | 5 | 1,400 | 16,800 |
| PHILADELPHIA | 4 | 1,140 | 2 | 1,500 | 12,100 |
| CHESTER | 3 | 391 | 2 | 700 | 4,500 |
| DAUPHIN | 3 | 530 | 3 | 1,000 | 10,500 |
| DELAWARE | 3 | 169 | 1 | 250 | 1,200 |
| GREENE | 3 | 365 | 3 | 750 | 7,550 |
| BEAVER | 2 | 63 | 2 | 500 | 2,000 |
| INDIANA | 2 | 131 | 2 | 375 | 5,650 |
| MERCER | 2 | 29 | 1 | 175 | 1,000 |
| ADAMS | 1 | 104 | 1 | 200 | 2,000 |
| BEDFORD | 1 | 386 | 1 | 600 | 8,000 |
| BLAIR | 1 | 75 | 1 | 200 | 4,000 |
| BRADFORD | 1 | 260 | 1 | 300 | 2,000 |
| BUCKS | 1 | 94 | 1 | 250 | 1,000 |
| CAMBRIA | 1 | 165 | 1 | 350 | 8,000 |
| FAYETTE | 1 | 277 | 1 | 400 | 6,000 |
| FRANKLIN | 1 | 155 | 1 | 300 | 4,000 |
| HUNTINGDON | 1 | 95 | 1 | 300 | 5,000 |
| LANCASTER | 1 | 28 | 1 | 150 | 300 |
| LAWRENCE | 1 | 67 | 1 | 250 | 3,500 |
| LUZERNE | 1 | 316 | 1 | 500 | 16,000 |
| LYCOMING | 1 | 182 | 2 | 500 | 3,000 |
| MIFFLIN | 1 | 44 | 1 | 200 | 500 |
| MONTGOMERY | 1 | 35 | 1 | 400 | 1,600 |
| NORTHUMBERLAND | 1 | 17 | 1 | 150 | 600 |
| SUSQUEHANNA | 1 | 220 | 1 | 300 | 2,000 |
| VENANGO | 1 | 81 | 1 | 300 | 4,000 |
| WASHINGTON | 1 | 85 | 1 | 275 | 5,000 |

As with the AME Church, the census data shows that half of Pennsylvania's counties did not have any AMEZ congregations in 1890: Armstrong, Berks, Butler, Cameron, Carbon, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Fulton, Jefferson, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lebanon, Lehigh, McKean, Monroe, Montour, Northampton, Perry, Pike, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Tioga, Union, Warren, Wayne, Westmoreland and Wyoming; there is a similar, but shorter, list for 1936. This, however, does not mean that Black Church congregations and churches did not exist; research for individual churches or communities may show that there were AME congregations active at this time.

A comparison of the 1890, 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936 religious census' provides insight into the size and distribution of the AMEZ Church in Pennsylvania in the early 20th century. After an slight increase in the first two decades of the 20th century, the AMEZ Church in Pennsylvania began to decline by the Second World War. An examination of other sources does provide some additional understanding of where AMEZ congregations are located throughout Pennsylvania. An analysis of the 1910 Negro Business Directory, Wright's 1912 *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, and the 1928 *Negro Survey of*

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Pennsylvania clarifies the locations for some AMEZ congregations but cannot be considered as accurate as the official census; it does, however, provide some clues for research. It does reaffirm the trends shown in the census figures.

| <i>Year</i> | # of congregations | # of members | # of Halls | # of Churches | Seating Capacity | Value (\$) |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1890 | 62 | 8,689 | - | 55 | 17,625 | \$256,150 |
| 1906 | 67 | 6,263 | 6 | 62 | 18,285 | \$339,630 |
| 1916 | 76 | 14,011 | 13 | 63 | - | \$776,600 |
| 1926 | 75 | 20,919 | - | 72 | - | - |
| 1936 | 64 | 17,975 | - | 56 | - | - |

The 1916, 1926, and 1936 census each provide county-level membership data for the AMEZ congregations in Pennsylvania. While it does not give as comprehensive a picture of the AMEZ church in the commonwealth in the early 20th century, the comparison with the 1890 membership data illustrates where AMEZ church membership grew or declined.

| AMEZ | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| COUNTY | # of members: 1890 | # of members: 1916 | # of members: 1926 | # of members: 1936 |
| TOTALS | 8,689 | 14,011 | 20,919 | 17,969 |
| ADAMS | 104 | 30 | 140 | 30 |
| ALLEGHENY | 1,905 | 4,329 | 5881 | 9148 |
| ARMSTRONG | | 50 | | |
| BEAVER | 63 | 66 | 293 | 1105 |
| BEDFORD | 386 | 90 | 125 | 110 |
| BERKS | | | 50 | |
| BLAIR | 75 | 38 | 303 | 158 |
| BRADFORD | 260 | 12 | | |
| BUCKS | 94 | 31 | 212 | 125 |
| CAMBRIA | 165 | 150 | 269 | 400 |
| CHESTER | 391 | 116 | 100 | 95 |
| CUMBERLAND | 526 | 420 | 298 | 262 |
| DAUPHIN | 530 | 671 | 703 | 336 |
| DELAWARE | 169 | 24 | 385 | 49 |
| ERIE | | | 106 | 111 |
| FAYETTE | 277 | 250 | 227 | 392 |
| FRANKLIN | 155 | 100 | 325 | 125 |
| FULTON | | | 103 | |
| GREENE | 365 | | | |

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| AMEZ | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| COUNTY | # of members: 1890 | # of members: 1916 | # of members: 1926 | # of members: 1936 |
| HUNTINGDON | 95 | 34 | 136 | 24 |
| INDIANA | 131 | 55 | 284 | 100 |
| LANCASTER | 28 | 12 | 25 | |
| LAWRENCE | 67 | 95 | 123 | |
| LEHIGH | | 23 | 75 | 112 |
| LUZERNE | 316 | | | |
| LYCOMING | 182 | 150 | 146 | 100 |
| MERCER | 29 | 75 | 141 | 316 |
| MIFFLIN | 44 | 20 | | |
| MONTGOMERY | 35 | | | |
| NORTHAMPTON | | 140 | 55 | 70 |
| NORTHUMBERLAND | 17 | | | |
| PERRY | | 14 | | |
| PHILADELPHIA | 1,140 | 6,349 | 9,305 | 3560 |
| SOMERSET | | 41 | 75 | 42 |
| SUSQUEHANNA | 220 | 23 | | |
| VENANGO | 81 | 100 | 61 | 270 |
| WASHINGTON | 85 | 35 | 116 | 198 |
| WESTMORELAND | | 168 | 540 | 451 |
| YORK | 754 | 300 | 317 | 280 |

For 1906, unfortunately, at the county level, all African Methodist denominations are counted as one unit and is not useful for assessing the changes in AMEZ church locations and membership. The census did, however, provide a snapshot for AME churches in certain municipalities:

| 1906 Census AMEZ | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Municipality | # of orgs | # of members | # of Halls | # of Churches | Seating Capacity | Value (\$) | # of Sunday Schools | # of Scholars |
| Allegheny, Allegheny County | 1 | 375 | 0 | 1 | 800 | \$10,000 | 1 | 225 |
| Pittsburgh, Allegheny County | 3 | 820 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Johnstown, Cambria County | 1 | 54 | 0 | 1 | 250 | \$10,000 | 1 | 56 |
| Harrisburg, Dauphin County | 3 | 640 | 0 | 3 | 1,350 | \$29,700 | 3 | 379 |

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| 1906 Census AMEZ | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Municipality | # of orgs | # of members | # of Halls | # of Churches | Seating Capacity | Value (\$) | # of Sunday Schools | # of Scholars |
| <i>Philadelphia, Philadelphia</i> | 6 | 2,005 | 3 | 3 | 1,775 | \$62,230 | 6 | 595 |

| 1936 Census AMEZ | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| County | Municipality | # of congregations: 1910 | # of congregations: 1912 | # of congregations: 1928 |
| <i>Allegheny</i> | Pittsburgh | 2 | | 5 |
| <i>Allegheny</i> | Sewickley | 1 | | |
| <i>Beaver</i> | Bridgewater | 1 | | |
| <i>Bedford</i> | Bedford | 1 | | |
| <i>Blair</i> | Altoona | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Cambria</i> | Johnstown | | 1 | |
| <i>Clinton</i> | Lock Haven | 1 | | |
| <i>Cumberland</i> | Carlisle | 1 | | |
| <i>Cumberland</i> | Shippensburg | 1 | | |
| <i>Dauphin</i> | Harrisburg | 2 | 1 | |
| <i>Dauphin</i> | Middletown | 1 | | |
| <i>Fayette</i> | Uniontown | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Franklin</i> | Chambersburg | 1 | | |
| <i>Huntingdon</i> | Huntingdon | 2 | | |
| <i>Lancaster</i> | Marietta | 1 | | |
| <i>Lawrence</i> | New Castle | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Luzerne</i> | Wilkes-Barre | 1 | | |
| <i>Lycoming</i> | Williamsport | | 1 | |
| <i>Northampton</i> | Bethlehem | 1 | | |
| <i>Northampton</i> | Easton | 1 | | |
| <i>Philadelphia</i> | Philadelphia | 5 | 5 | 12 |
| <i>Venango</i> | Franklin | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Warren</i> | Irvine | | 1 | |
| <i>Washington</i> | Washington | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>York</i> | York | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>York</i> | Wrightsville | 1 | | |

Beginning in the last quarter of the 20th century, AMEZ churches in Pennsylvania faced the same challenges that many other Protestant Christian denominations faced – a declining and aging population of churchgoers. This happened to AME congregations regardless of age, location, and history. In some communities, AME congregations merged with

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neighboring churches while others continued to shrink. In others, churches were closed and abandoned, or sold. As of 2010, there were 51 active AMEZ congregations in Pennsylvania, ranking it 7th in the United States.²¹¹

²¹¹ From http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1322_d.asp.

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Christian (Colored) Methodist Episcopal Church²¹²

From “Denominational Histories” by Teresa Douglas, Heather Fearnbach, Rebecca Smith, and Carroll Van West in *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African American Churches in the South*, 2000.

The earliest recognized Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) church is Capers Memorial CME Church in Nashville. It dates to 1866 and its leaders had a prominent role in the creation of the formal CME convention in 1870. In that year, Capers members along with about forty black Methodists in West Tennessee broke from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and formed an independent denomination more reflective of issues central to the black community.²¹³ Advanced education, community involvement through outreach, and spiritual growth were just a few of the tenets of the founding group, that became the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America (CME) on December 16, 1870, in Jackson, Tennessee.

Compared to the earlier African American Methodist organizations, the new CME church was more conservative. Old segregated “colored churches” within the white Methodist Church, South, comprised its initial members. White conservatives within the Methodist Church, South, had urged their black brethren not to join the AME or AMEZ movements. They encouraged, however, the creation of another separate black Methodist organization for several reasons. First, increasing racial prejudice during the Reconstruction years meant that white members wanted the black churches out of their organization. Second, a separate black organization eliminated white financial responsibility for black Methodist activity. As Lincoln and Mamiya explain, “the strategy appeared to be to formulate an arrangement that would create a separate church for the former slaves which would retain unofficial ties with the parent church rather than become a part of the existing African [Methodist] movement.”²¹⁴ In 1870 the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, turned over all titles to “colored church property” to the CME church, making the separation of white and black Methodists official.

Due to its historical relationship with the white Methodist church, the CME church was sometimes derisively referred to as the “old slave church.” From its inception, the CME Church eschewed political activity in favor of a devotion to spirituality, in what members considered to be a more black controlled and dominated church and services. In county seats and larger towns in West Tennessee, the church became popular with middle-class and professional African Americans. CME congregations mushroomed from 1870 to 1880, claiming 78,000 members by 1880. Early bishops included William Henry Miles, Richard H. Vanderhorst, Isaac Lane, Lucius H. Holsey, and Joseph A. Beebe.

The key church leader was Bishop Isaac Lane, who was the fourth bishop of the CME. Born a slave in Madison County, Tennessee, Lane established a CME school, that later became Lane College, in Jackson in 1882. His daughter, Jennie Lane, was its first teacher and principal. His son, James Franklin Lane, became the college’s president in 1907 and served in that role for the next thirty-seven years. During its first fifty years, the CME Church promoted the foundation of twelve colleges, four of which are still in operation: Lane College (Jackson, TN), Paine College (Augusta, GA), Texas College (Tyler, Texas), and Miles College (Birmingham, AL).

²¹² *Powerful Artifacts*, pages 11-12.

²¹³ The Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MEC, S) was established in the southern United States after a split with the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) over the issue of slavery during the General Conference of the MEC in Louisville, KY in 1844. It existed as MEC, S until 1939 when the Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Protestant denominations joined to create the Methodist Church. MEC, S congregations that objected to the 1939 merger reformed as the Southern Methodist Church.

²¹⁴ In *Powerful Artifacts* as quoted from C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 8.

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By 1890, church membership totaled 103,000, the vast majority of whom were in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. The Great Migration and missionary activities during the first half of the twentieth century led to church members establishing congregations in eighteen states by 1945. The broadening of the membership base also coincided with a broadening of the church's mission and its level of activism in community affairs. In the 1920s, for instance, Bishop Charles H. Phillips led the church to become more activist in the region-wide anti-lynching campaigns of that era. CME colleges and churches supported the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s by providing meeting sites and voter registration centers and supporting activist ministers. It was also during this period that the CME Church changed its name from the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (1954) and moved its headquarters from Jackson to Memphis in 1970. Since the 1960s, membership in CME Churches has grown steadily, counted by the first decade of the 21st century as 850,000 with 3,500 churches in the United State and Internationally.²¹⁵

CME In Pennsylvania

Christian (Colored) Methodist Episcopal Church congregations gained a foothold in Pennsylvania in the early 20th century, particularly during the Great Migration. Before then, only a handful of congregations were located in the commonwealth according to the 1890 census.

| 1890 Census: CME | | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>County</i> | <i># of Orgs</i> | <i># of Members</i> | <i>#of Church Edifices</i> | <i>Church Seating Capacity</i> | <i>Property value in \$</i> |
| TOTALS | 6 | 247 | 2 | 310 | \$1,400 |
| <i>BUCKS</i> | 1 | 50 | 1 | 200 | \$1,000 |
| <i>COLUMBIA</i> | 1 | 32 | 1 | 110 | \$400 |
| <i>DELAWARE</i> | 1 | 58 | | | |
| <i>MONTGOMERY</i> | 1 | 25 | | | |
| <i>NORTHAMPTON</i> | 1 | 18 | | | |
| <i>PHILADELPHIA</i> | 1 | 64 | | | |

Beginning in the late 19th century and continuing into the 20th century, the federal census started counting and tracking religious organizations in the United States. While this census data is important for understanding larger trends and patterns of development, it should not be relied on exclusively when researching individual congregations or all congregations within a given area or determining significance of a particular church property. If research shows that a congregation or church was overlooked, human and methodological errors in census taking or transcription or the lack of an actual church building for a small congregation could have resulted in the congregation not being counted.

The 1906 census, sixteen years later, does not provide the level of detail for the AMEZ Church as the 1890 census. For this year, unfortunately, at the county level, all African Methodist denominations are counted as one unit and is not useful for assessing the changes in AMEZ church locations and membership. Also, whereas the AME and AMEZ denominations are called out specifically in the municipalities listed in the 1906 census, the CME is not; it is likely these congregations were counted with other small black Methodist congregations as "African Methodist Bodies." However, a

²¹⁵ From http://www.thearda.com/denoms/D_1424.asp.

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comparison of the 1890, 1906, 1916, 1926, and 1936 religious census' provides insight into the size and distribution of the AMEZ Church in Pennsylvania in the early 20th century.²¹⁶

| <i>Year</i> | <i># of congregations</i> | <i># of members</i> | <i># of Buildings</i> |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1890 | 6 | 247 | 2 |
| 1906 | 5 | 466 | 5 |
| 1916 | 6 | 634 | 5 |
| 1926 | 15 | 1,510 | 8 |
| 1936 | 10 | 2,537 | 9 |

A tour of northern CME congregations in 1917 revealed that "We had few congregations north of the Mason and Dixon line before the migration. Now we have a large number of places where our Church is prospering. The most rapid development of the Church, as a result of the exodus is most marked in cities like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Pittsburgh, Pa., and in such States as Illinois, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, California, Nebraska, Michigan, and other States."²¹⁷

In his essay, "The Black Church in Industrializing Western Pennsylvania, 1870-1950," Dennis C. Dickerson describes the origin of the CME Church in this part of the commonwealth:

The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, a southern-based denomination, had no congregations in Western Pennsylvania before the World War I black migration. At the 1916 session of the Washington-Philadelphia Annual Conference, Bishop Lucius H. Holsey and the delegates approved the creation of a new Pittsburgh district. Bishop Randall A. Carter, who was assigned to the Pittsburgh area, believed "that thousands of our C.M.E.s would be coming to the city for employment." In May 1917 the denomination gave Carter \$2,000 to purchase property for a new C.M.E. congregation in Pittsburgh. His Episcopal colleagues also raised money in their respective districts for "the Pittsburgh work." As a result of this national support, three Colored Methodist Episcopal congregations, the Carter Chapel, the Cleaves Temple, and the Beebe, were organized in Pittsburgh by 1926. The C.M.E. Church also spread to Monessen, Donora, Ford City, Johnstown, Vandergrift, Brownsville, Washington, and to the steel town of Farrell "where our people are coming by the hundreds."²¹⁸

As of 2010, Pennsylvania ranked 20th in the number of active CME congregations in the United States with 13.²¹⁹ Like with the AME and AMEZ churches, Pennsylvania ranks highest in northern states with CME congregations; Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, and Louisiana each have over 100 congregations.

²¹⁶ While the 1926 and 1936 census' count CME congregations in Pennsylvania for those years, the census data by county does show the location of these congregations.

²¹⁷ Charles H. Phillips, *The History of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (Jackson, TN: Publishing House CME Church, 1925) 498.

²¹⁸ Dennis C. Dickerson, "The Black Church in Industrializing Western Pennsylvania, 1870-1950" in *African Americans in Pennsylvania: shifting historical perspectives*, 1997, 337-338.

²¹⁹ From <http://www.thearda.com/mapsReports/maps/ArdaMap.asp?Map1=157&map2=&alpha=>

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Church of God in Christ (COGIC) ²²⁰

From “Denominational Histories” by Teresa Douglas, Heather Fearnbach, Rebecca Smith, and Carroll Van West in *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African American Churches in the South*, 2000.

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC), headquartered in Memphis, is estimated to be the second largest black religious denomination in the United States and is characterized as a Pentecostal denomination. Followers of Pentecostal faiths embrace the spiritual gifts that early Christians first received on the day of Pentecost (the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Jesus). COGIC emphasizes all the gifts of the Spirit, particularly speaking in tongues, which is testimony to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Although the convening of the first Pentecostal General Assembly of the church in Memphis during November 1907 is regarded as the official founding date, the antecedents of the church date much earlier. COGIC’s architect was Charles Harrison Mason, who in November 1878 at the age of twelve, became a professing Christian at the Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church near Plumerville, Arkansas. In 1893 the Mt. Gale Missionary Baptist Church in Preston, Arkansas, licensed Mason into the ministry.

In 1895 Mason met C.P. Jones, J.E. Jeter, and W.S. Pleasant. These radical holiness preachers conducted a revival in Jackson, Mississippi, the following year. The dogmatic teachings of Mason resulted in his alienation from the Baptist Church, but this did not stall his ministry. His meetings continued to take place in an abandoned cotton gin house in Lexington, Mississippi. Despite Mason’s independent stance, persecution still followed him. Five pistol shots and two double barreled shotgun blasts disrupted one meeting, wounding several worshippers. Such attacks failed to discourage Mason and his followers. Instead, they founded the holiness sect known as the Church of God. In 1897 Mason envisioned the name “Church of God in Christ,” and the name change gave Mason’s church its own distinct identity.

1907 marked a maturation point in Mason’s efforts to establish a distinctive church when he and Elders D.J. Young and J.A. Jeter attended the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. There, under the teaching of W.J. Seymour, Mason became a believer in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and in tongues as witness to this baptism. Upon his return to Memphis, where his church was now located, Mason proclaimed speaking in tongues a New Testament doctrine. C.P. Jones split with Mason over this issue and led the non-Pentecostal faction of COGIC, which eventually became known as the Church of Christ (Holiness), U.S.A. Mason’s followers retained the COGIC name and convened the first Pentecostal General Assembly in Memphis in 1907. Representatives from twelve churches attended the initial meeting.

Between 1907 and 1914, the Church of God in Christ was the only incorporated Pentecostal body in the nation. Mason ordained both white and black clergy, since both needed licenses of ordination, but whites and blacks generally gravitated to separate congregations. Many of the white clergy ordained by Mason helped to form the Assembly of God Church in 1914. COGIC grew in numbers and influence, especially in urban areas, in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Nationally, the number of COGIC congregations and members started growing at the same pace, settling somewhere in the range of 3,400 congregations, from 1947 to 1960. Between 1965 and 1982, COGIC membership spiked dramatically in the United States: the number of congregations more than doubled to 9,982 and membership jumped from 425,000 to over 3.7 million. ²²¹

²²⁰ In *Powerful Artifacts*, pages 15-16, this essay is adapted from the COGIC entry by Randolph Meade Walker, “Churches of God in Christ,” Carroll Van West, et. al. eds, *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture* (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998), 162.

²²¹ From http://www.thearda.com/denoms/D_988_t.asp.

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COGIC In Pennsylvania

An understanding of COGIC in Pennsylvania is limited. Numerous Pentecostal denominations were active in Pennsylvania in the early 20th century and it is often difficult to trace these congregations in the census records. There are variations of the Church of God in Christ names, some of which are legitimate denominations, and others that are difficult to research. COGIC's leader, Rev. Charles Mason, appointed Philadelphian Rev. Ozro T. Jones, Sr. as the state overseer of Pennsylvania in 1926. Jones led the city's Holy Temple Church of God in Christ between 1925 and 1972 and was Mason's successor as leader of the denomination.

COGIC only appears once in the religion census in 1926, with eleven congregations, 1,073 members, and six church buildings. This number may be higher given the known shortcomings of the religion census reporting. While this census data is important for understanding larger trends and patterns of development, it should not be relied on exclusively when researching individual congregations or all congregations within a given area or determining significance of a particular church property. If research shows that a congregation or church was overlooked, human and methodological errors in census taking or transcription or the lack of an actual church building for a small congregation could have resulted in the congregation not being counted.

Throughout the mid-20th century, the majority of Pennsylvania's COGIC congregations were located in the southern half of the commonwealth. One of the earliest COGIC congregations in Pennsylvania was founded in Coraopolis Borough, Allegheny County in 1904 and originally met in a former schoolhouse before purchasing a former Methodist church in 1927. On the opposite side of the commonwealth, the Holy Tabernacle Church of God in Christ was founded in Coatesville c. 1910. By the 1920s, a COGIC congregation was active in Mount Union, Huntingdon County. A list of church financial contributions and the ministerial roll for Pennsylvania and Delaware in the 1926 Yearbook of the Church of God in Christ suggests that, in addition to several in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, there were also active congregations in the following places: Chester, Delaware County; Steelton and Harrisburg in Dauphin County; Lancaster, Lancaster County; Erie, Erie County; Tyrone, Blair County; Johnstown, Cambria County; Turtle Creek, Allegheny County; Beaver Falls and Woodlawn (now part of Aliquippa), Beaver County; Uniontown and Connorsville, Fayette County; and Monessen and Greensburg, Westmoreland County.²²² The 1936 religion census, while it does not provide county-level data for COGIC congregations, does show that Pennsylvania's COGIC congregations are unevenly divided between urban and rural congregations with 26 in the former category and 5 in the latter.²²³

Small congregations continue to emerge, principally along the southern half of the commonwealth, through the mid-1950s. By mid-century, the number of congregations increased about 500% in only thirty years, bringing the number of COGIC churches in Pennsylvania to 110 and members to about 13,000.²²⁴ With the exception of congregations in Erie, New Castle (Lawrence County), Mount Union (Huntingdon County), and Liverpool (Perry County), all are located in the southern third of the commonwealth.

²²² 1926 Yearbook, 102.

²²³ 1936 religion census, part 2, vol 1, pg 443.

²²⁴ 1955 Yearbook, 115.

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Baptist²²⁵

Adapted from “Denominational Histories” by Teresa Douglas, Heather Fearnbach, Rebecca Smith, and Carroll Van West in *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African American Churches in the South*, 2000.

The Baptist denomination is one of the oldest and largest denominations in the United States, and a leading faith among African Americans. Exposed to the faith as it spread throughout the south in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, African Americans found not only a spiritual experience that spoke to their African heritage, but also a rare opportunity for independence and equality in an otherwise brutally racist world. A sustaining source of strength and solidarity through the trying times of Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement, the Baptist church has been more than a spiritual force in black communities; it has played a central role in their social, political, and economic lives as well. The number of black Baptists reflects the denomination’s status as a leading institution among African Americans. Figures from 1990 estimate over eleven million African Americans belong to eight major black Baptist associations. The largest among these, the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., consists of over 7.5 million members, making it the largest black organization in the world. As such a significant force in black communities, the development of the Baptist denomination plays a primary role in African American history.

The Baptist faith first appeared in the south in the late seventeenth century with the First Baptist Church of Charleston, South Carolina. This early group of Baptists were Calvinist in doctrine, preferred an educated clergy, and worshipped in an orderly fashion. By the mid-1700s, however, another Baptist group arose in the south that came to shape the defining regional character of the faith. Its leader was the dynamic evangelical preacher Shubel Stearns, who traveled and led revivals throughout the South. He adhered to a modified Calvinism, which offered the possible salvation for all who had a personal conversion experience with God. The masses found this doctrine, Stearns’ emphasis on antiworldliness, and his spontaneous, emotional preaching greatly appealing. These characteristics came to determine the basic nature of the Baptist faith in the south as the majority of congregations that developed adopted Stearns’ doctrine.

The first black Baptist churches began in the south in the last half of the eighteenth century. The African Baptist or “Bluestone” Church formed on William Byrd’s plantation in Mecklenburg, Virginia in 1758 is the earliest church whose origin date is verifiable. The Silver Bluff Baptist Church near the Savannah River in South Carolina might also claim this title, but its origin dates cannot be confirmed. Its significance, however, is well known. Scholars estimate that slave George Liele established Silver Bluff between 1750 and 1775 during which time he spread the Baptist faith through mission work at nearby plantations. Liele eventually gained his freedom and for a time settled in Savannah, where he became a well-known preacher, before moving to Jamaica c. 1782. Liele left behind many slave converts who continued to spread the Baptist faith among African-Americans. Among them were Andrew Bryan and Jesse Peters, who established the First African Church of Savannah c. 1788. Black churches soon spread throughout the region, especially in areas with a concentration of free blacks. Other evangelical faiths were also sweeping through the south in this era, but the Baptist faith obviously held something special for African Americans as by 1800 there were over 25,000 black Baptists in the United States.

The Baptist faith appealed to blacks, the majority of whom were slaves, for a variety of reasons. The faith’s beliefs, rituals and practices had much in common with African religious traditions; its message of eventual salvation gave them hope beyond their current life of enslavement; and, more than any other denomination, it offered them some degree of equality and freedom. Many aspects of the Baptist faith, such as its concepts of visions, spiritual journeys, rebirth,

²²⁵ Adapted from *Powerful Artifacts*, pages 17-22. For the purposes of this MPDF, this section covers the three Baptist denominations that help comprise the Black Church: National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (NBC); National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA); and Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC).

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healing, and prophecy, shared many similarities with African religious traditions and values. In addition, the Baptist emphasis on congregational autonomy and individual religious experience gave blacks some degree of self-determination. With limited white authority, blacks were allowed to preach and could start their own congregations. The ability to form and conduct their own religious services was a step toward independence and the message of salvation in the next life gave enslaved African Americans an inner strength to meet the harsh realities of their current situation. As slavery became an increasingly pressing national issue, Baptists, like other denominations, split over the question. Initially Baptists tried to remain neutral claiming that slavery was a political and not a religious issue. But the issue came to head in 1845 when the election of a slaveholder to the national board was denied. Southerners then withdrew and formed the Southern Baptist Convention.

After emancipation African Americans rapidly withdrew from white churches to form independent congregations. Finally free to worship as they chose, a large percentage of blacks chose the Baptist faith, and the number of black Baptists rose from 150,000 in 1850 to 500,000 in 1870. Some white congregations assisted the fledgling churches in establishing facilities and organizing administrative systems, while others cut all ties with African Americans. Creating their own religious institutions and associations was extremely important to the newly freed people.²²⁶ Like owning their own land and educational establishments, the ability to freely worship in their chosen manner and space was a large step toward independence and self-determination. Desiring to distance themselves from both southern discrimination and northern paternalism, African American Baptist congregations retained only marginal relations with white congregations and gradually began to develop a separate network of black associations.

The first all-black Baptist associations were formed in the west. In Ohio, African Americans organized the Providence Association in 1834 and the Union Association in 1836. Illinois' Wood River Association was established in 1839, and the Amherstburg Association in Michigan began in 1841. In 1864 these four associations formed the Northwestern and Southern Baptist Convention, a regional association which represented eight states. The first regional organization, however, was the American Baptist Missionary Convention formed in 1840 by members from the New England and Mid-Atlantic areas. The first attempt at a national black Baptist association came in 1866 when the Northwestern and Southern Baptist Convention merged with the American Baptist Missionary Convention to form The Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention. The national organization, which held its first meeting in Nashville in 1867, lasted twelve years, until 1879. By then the national organization was splitting into separate regional conventions.

Three major regional organizations arose out of the disbanded Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention. The Baptist Foreign Mission Convention of the United States of America formed in Alabama in 1880. Covering eleven states, its headquarters were in Richmond, Virginia, and its primary activities included missions to Africa and addressing social issues. In 1886, The American National Baptist Convention formed in St. Louis. Its over one million members came from nine thousand churches in seventeen states. The third regional association emerged in 1893 in Washington, D.C. Titled "The National Baptist Educational Convention of the United States of America," the organization focused on training and educating clergy. On September 28, 1895, these three regional organizations merged to form the National Baptist Convention of the United States of America (NBC, USA), which became, and has remained, the most prominent African-American Baptist organization in the country. It would later split into two institutions, the National Baptist Convention, USA (unincorporated) and the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. Reverend E.C. Morris served as the first president, and the association immediately formed subsidiaries addressing foreign missions, home missions, and education. It later added publishing in 1897. The convention was also very active in supporting education and racial equality issues.

²²⁶ Baptist "associations" function as networking and support groups for Baptist churches for training, administrative and ministerial support, and partnership on local and regional issues. Conventions are large annual gatherings that address issues of doctrine and practice that impact the individual, autonomous churches.

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The Baptist church remained a source of strength, solace, and solidarity in African American communities at the turn of the century as the enactment of Jim Crow laws confirmed that severe racism still existed. Throughout the Jim Crow years, black churches grew in numbers and in membership. Black Baptist ministers, who were important leaders and authorities in the community, increased from 5,500 to 17,000 between 1890 and 1906.

Despite their strong affinity, African American Baptists did experience internal conflicts. The Baptist tendency toward schism over policy and ideology resulted in significant divisions among the members of the National Baptist Convention. The first split came in 1897 with the appointment of a new secretary to the Foreign Mission Board and the movement of its headquarters to Louisville. Conflicting loyalties and resentment over the new publishing activities caused some members to withdraw from the organization and form the Lott Carey Foreign Missionary Convention. The Lott Carey faction largely consisted of the well-educated members of the NBC, reflecting a class and ideological division within the convention. The two groups reconciled by 1905 and remained separate but affiliated organizations.

A major split, however, came to the National Baptist Convention in 1915. With more than three million members, the convention split over a ten-year conflict involving leadership and control of the publishing division. Dissenting members formed the National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA), which subsequently initiated the National Baptist Publishing Board. After the split, NBC, USA incorporated (NBC) and created the Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention. The NBCA became a leading black institution in its own right and developed programs for home and foreign missions, education and training, and benevolent activities.

Conflict returned again to the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., in the early 1960s as members disagreed over how to respond to the era's impending social issues. Under the leadership of Reverend Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, the organization had become increasingly conservative during the 1950s. Jackson strongly opposed the civil disobedience strategy of Martin Luther King, Jr., and prevented the convention from participating in the civil rights movement. In 1961 King and others withdrew from the NBC and founded the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

Baptists In Pennsylvania

The autonomous and independent nature of the Baptist denomination, coupled with its complex history of schisms, makes researching African American Baptist congregations in Pennsylvania challenging. As the authors of *Powerful Artifacts* note:

A hallmark of Baptist polity is the strong autonomy of individual congregations, a characteristic that has eased, and to some degree encouraged, the many divisions within the Baptist faith that have emerged over time. If unresolvable conflicts over basic doctrines and practices arose within a congregation, the usual outcome was that the group that disagreed with the church's current direction would splinter off and form a separate autonomous congregation.²²⁷

Much of the existing scholarship discusses the Baptist denomination and its churches, associations, conventions, etc. focuses on the south and in the context of slavery and Reconstruction. Woodson in his *History of the Negro Church* provides some insight into the early presence of African American Baptist churches in Pennsylvania:

As a matter of fact the Baptist churches were among the first separate organizations established in the North for Negroes, and as the free Negroes and fugitives were in the course of time driven out of the

²²⁷ *Powerful Artifacts*, 17.

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South by the intolerable conditions obtaining there during the reactionary period, the northern Negro Baptist churches multiplied and their membership increased. Practically all large urban communities of the North had some Negro Baptists. Philadelphia was especially well supplied. There was the First African Church founded by Negroes in 1809, with a membership of 257, under Richard Vaughn in 1846. The Union Colored Church, with a membership of 200, was in charge of Daniel Scott. J. Henderson was the pastor of the Third African Baptist Church, with a membership of only 61, and William Jackson ministered to a similar number in the so-called African Church.²²⁸

In his 1903 work *The Negro Church*, W.E.B. DuBois focuses only briefly on Regular Baptists (Colored) activities in the northern states. He states specifically that he doesn't address the "many colored Baptists in Northern States, who are mostly counted as members of churches, belonging to white associations."²²⁹ This suggests that there were existing African American Baptist congregations at the turn of the 20th century but none that could be considered independent of white congregations and allowed to self-govern.

This changed dramatically in the 1910s and 1920s as the industrial boom of the early 20th century brought southern migrants – many of whom were Baptist - into the northern states during the Great Migration. Prior to World War 1, there were at least thirty Baptist churches in Pittsburgh, two of which were established in the 1860s and 1870s. Smaller Baptist churches were also located in the satellite communities surrounding Pittsburgh.

Baptist churches dominated religious life in the coal patch towns of western and southwestern Pennsylvania. A promotional pamphlet for the Pittsburgh Coal Company in 1939 attempted to highlight the good relations it fostered with its African American employees and stated that, "within the past few years" the company had made an effort to "promote a definite industrial, social and civic program with [its] Negro employees and families living in the numerous villages of the company."²³⁰ The pamphlet lists eighteen African American coal patch villages and listed the following statistics: 11 baseball teams, 8 mushball teams, 2 basketball teams, 5 children's game rooms, 9 recreation leaders, 12 leisure time classes, 21 churches, 72 church auxiliaries, and total church membership of 82.²³¹ The sponsors of these various activities show, besides active women's and men's social and political clubs in coal patch towns, the undeniable presence of the Baptist church. There was a strong connection between the church and the individuals, who brought their preference to live and worship as Baptists to the region. The document also provides information about recreational pursuits, choral and instrumental groups, schools in the region, libraries, and the condition of company housing, all of which were photographed to document the "progress" among African American miners.²³²

Tracking the growth and location of Baptist churches in Pennsylvania through the religious census is exceptionally challenging, and the statistics are not recounted here, because of the staggering number of Baptist denominations captured in the census and the frequent schisms and unions that occurred over the denomination's history in the United States. Capturing the total number of Baptist churches and members would be misleading because it would include all congregations, not just those of Black Baptist churches; for example, in the 1916 religion census, fifteen different Baptist denominations are counted.

²²⁸ Woodson, 120-122.

²²⁹ DuBois, 40.

²³⁰ Activities Month Celebration: Pittsburgh Coal Company Villages From May 13th to June 17th Nineteen Hundred and Thirty-Nine." Pittsburgh: The Company, 1939. The Pamphlet is found in both the African-American and the Coal Collections at the Heinz History Center, HD8039.M62 P693.

²³¹ Activities Month Celebration

²³² Activities Month Celebration

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In 1906, the National Convention (Colored) Baptist is listed as active in Pennsylvania with 103 congregations totaling 20,369 members and 85 church buildings capable of seating 30,928 people.²³³ The following communities are shown to have Baptist congregations, either only National Convention (Colored) Baptist denominations or combined with the Northern Baptist Convention.

| 1906 Census: Baptist | | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Municipality | # of orgs | # of members | # of Churches | Seating Capacity | Value in \$ |
| <i>Allegheny, Allegheny County</i> | 7 | 1,328 | 7 | 2,930 | \$157,000 |
| <i>Pittsburgh, Allegheny County</i> | 19 | 5,991 | 12 | 6,175 | \$255,500 |
| <i>Johnstown, Cambria County</i> | 4 | 596 | 4 | 1,400 | \$85,500 |
| <i>Lancaster, Lancaster County</i> | 2 | 312 | 2 | 450 | \$13,000 |
| <i>McKeesport, Allegheny County</i> | 1 | 304 | 1 | 600 | \$19,000 |
| <i>Newcastle, Lawrence County</i> | 4 | 960 | 3 | 2,500 | \$91,000 |
| <i>Scranton, Lackawanna County</i> | 12 | 3,887 | 12 | 7,000 | \$246,600 |
| <i>Wilkes-Barre, Luzerne County</i> | 5 | 1,582 | 4 | 1,800 | \$87,300 |
| <i>Williamsport, Lycoming County</i> | 7 | 1,717 | 7 | 3,350 | \$153,200 |
| <i>Philadelphia, Philadelphia County</i> | 16 | 7,227 | 12 | 6,175 | \$255,500 |

By the 1926 census, African American Baptist churches are counted as one unit being “Negro Baptist Churches.”²³⁴ The numbers from this and the 1936 census can provide some insight into African American Baptist denominations in Pennsylvania at this time. In 1936, the “Negro Baptist” category was the leading denomination in Pennsylvania; it was also the most popular in all but four of the states listed.

| Year | # of congregations | # of members | # of Buildings |
|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1926 | 303 | 100,202 | 235 |
| 1936 | 409 | 103,264 | 314 |

A comparison of county-level data for each of the three Baptist divisions in Pennsylvania from 1916 to 1936 illustrates trends in settlement and the relationship between Baptist churches and industry in places like Allegheny County, Fayette County, Philadelphia County, and Delaware County in the early 20th century.

| Baptist Counties: | National Convention, 1916 | Negro Baptist Churches, 1926 | Negro Baptists, 1936 |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| TOTAL | 40,398 | 100,202 | 103,264 |
| <i>Allegheny County</i> | 15,145 | 24067 | 34818 |
| <i>Armstrong County</i> | 58 | 400 | 609 |
| <i>Beaver County</i> | 270 | 1187 | 2076 |

²³³ 1906 census.

²³⁴ 1926 census.

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| <i>Baptist Counties:</i> | National Convention, 1916 | Negro Baptist Churches, 1926 | Negro Baptists, 1936 |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>Berks County</i> | 60 | 410 | 426 |
| <i>Blair County</i> | 170 | 265 | 162 |
| <i>Bucks County</i> | 126 | 196 | 839 |
| <i>Butler County</i> | 20 | 28 | 40 |
| <i>Cambria County</i> | 140 | 610 | 494 |
| <i>Chester County</i> | 338 | 1235 | 1921 |
| <i>Clearfield County</i> | | 39 | 200 |
| <i>Columbia County</i> | | 40 | |
| <i>Crawford County</i> | | 146 | 145 |
| <i>Cumberland County</i> | 105 | 204 | 120 |
| <i>Dauphin County</i> | | 1733 | 1818 |
| <i>Delaware County</i> | 1,099 | 2301 | 4210 |
| <i>Elk County</i> | | | 75 |
| <i>Erie County</i> | | 190 | 190 |
| <i>Fayette County</i> | 1,590 | 3123 | 4205 |
| <i>Greene County</i> | | 33 | 291 |
| <i>Huntingdon County</i> | 83 | 85 | 291 |
| <i>Indiana County</i> | | 175 | 108 |
| <i>Lackawanna County</i> | | 321 | |
| <i>Lancaster County</i> | 35 | 180 | 65 |
| <i>Lawrence County</i> | 267 | 629 | 1358 |
| <i>Lebanon County</i> | 29 | 55 | 134 |
| <i>Luzerne County</i> | | 124 | |
| <i>Lycoming County</i> | 336 | 248 | 204 |
| <i>Mercer County</i> | 144 | 250 | 1025 |
| <i>Montgomery County</i> | 1,207 | 3,384 | 4729 |
| <i>Northampton County</i> | | 395 | 450 |
| <i>Philadelphia County</i> | 17,544 | 55,021 | 37551 |
| <i>Schuylkill County</i> | | 75 | 75 |
| <i>Somerset County</i> | | | 150 |
| <i>Susquehanna County</i> | | | 76 |
| <i>Venango County</i> | | 20 | |
| <i>Washington County</i> | 1,242 | 1,897 | 2819 |
| <i>Westmoreland County</i> | 390 | 961 | 1505 |
| <i>Wyoming County</i> | | | 85 |
| <i>York County</i> | | 175 | |

The three Baptist bodies included in the Black Church – the National Baptist Convention, USA, National Baptist Convention of America, and the Progressive National Baptist Convention – all have active congregations in Pennsylvania in the early 21st century. The National Baptist Convention, USA ranks 17th in the country with 100 congregations;

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National Baptist Convention of America ranks 19th in the country with eight congregations; and Progressive National Baptist Convention ranks 5th in the country with twenty-one congregations.

Other African American Denominations in Pennsylvania

In addition to the Black Church denominations active in Pennsylvania between c. 1644 and c. 1970, there were also other independent black denominations worshipping in Pennsylvania in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Using census data, other African American denominations active in Pennsylvania in the 19th and early 20th centuries, in addition to those of the Black Church, included:

- Union African Church and Associated Methodist Bodies
 - Colored Methodist Protestant Church (CMP),
 - African Union Methodist Protestant Church (AUMP),
 - Union American Methodist Episcopal Church (UAME)
- Colored Primitive Baptists.

While churches important for their association with these denominations would not be nominated to the National Register under this MPDF because they are not considered part of the Black Church, these congregations may have historically used church buildings that are eligible to be nominated under this cover. This MPDF can, however, assist preparers with listing churches important for their associations with the Union African and Colored Primitive Baptist denominations by providing a broad context for understanding the history and role of religion and black denominations in African American life.

The Union Church of Africans and Associated Methodist Bodies

The third of the independent black Methodist churches to splinter from the white hierarchy in the early 19th century was the Union African Church, founded by Peter Spencer in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1813. Most of the early manifestations of this church appeared in the southeastern section of Pennsylvania by the 1820s, bordering Spencer's original Wilmington, Delaware, congregation.

Like the AME and AME Zion denominations, the Union Church of Africans was founded as a reaction to racism and segregation.²³⁵ In 1805, Peter Spencer and other black congregants left the Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, which had been established in Wilmington Delaware in 1789, and formed their own church, the Ezion Methodist Episcopal Church in the same city. Ezion remained under the financial and ecumenical control of Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Conference, which meant that white ministers were sent to preach to the all-black congregation.

Spencer, William Anderson, and several other men were unhappy with the connection to Asbury and the ME Conference and left Ezion, which continued to function as an independent black congregation, to establish the Union Church of Africans in 1813.²³⁶ The church remained under Spencer's leadership until his death in 1843. In the 1850s, dissension in

²³⁵ See <http://dehistory.org/peter-spencer-churches>.

²³⁶ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.48; Harry V. Richardson, *Dark Salvation: The Story of Methodism as it Developed Among Blacks in America* Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1976.; Lewis V. Baldwin, *Invisible Strands*. While an active debate continues in the academic community whether Spencer's church actually predated Allen's Bethel Church in its shedding of white Methodist authority, the church made its way into Pennsylvania at least by the early 1820s. Some of the debate centers on the fact that, although Spencer appears to have established

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the church led to legal action and in 1865, Spencer's Union Church of Africans split into two new organizations, both of which had a small number of congregations in Pennsylvania. The Union Church of Africans became the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church (UAME) and retained its headquarters in Wilmington. The second group from the split joined with the First Methodist Protestant Church to form the African Union First Methodist Protestant Church (AUMP), also based in Wilmington. Nationally, these denominations have been dormant since the mid-20th century.

Delaware County is home to one of Pennsylvania's earliest Union African Methodist Episcopal churches, started in the 1820s by a freed slave from Delaware named Robert Morris. Morris started his congregation in a local home in Chester and built the first church – a simple frame building – in 1832. The congregation remained strong through the late 19th century, thoroughly remodeling the church in the 1880s. This congregation was one of a handful in southeastern Pennsylvania during this period.

As of 1837, there were at least seven congregations with active members in Pennsylvania, which the *Colored American*, a national black journal, enumerated as: "New Garden, 200 Pennsburgh, 50 East Fallowfield, 65 Lancaster City, 25 Chesnutt Hill, 40 Kingessing, 75 Old Chester, 50 Philadelphia, 350 Haddington Village, 20 New London, 80 Little Brittain, 100, and Columbia, 20."²³⁷ The 1906 and 1916 Religious Censes show about twenty active UAME congregations, eight AUMP congregations, six CMP congregations.

Colored Primitive Baptists in America²³⁸

In the early 1800s benevolent and missionary activities became increasingly prevalent among Baptists and other denominations. As their efforts grew, they began formal organizations to manage their operations. Although many Baptists strongly supported missionary activity, those who were staunch Calvinists strongly opposed it and, as controversy erupted over the issue, an anti-mission movement quickly emerged. Advocating the simplicity and freedom of the primitive church, which they saw as a model to emulate, antissionists were also opposed to the elaborate organizations that missionary work required.

Baptists involved in the anti-mission movement became known as Primitive Baptists. The title "Primitive" then refers to the original or pure church and faith of the apostles. Their cardinal doctrine is a rigid predestinationism and they reject all auxiliaries not in scripture including seminaries, Sunday schools, and Bible societies in addition to missionary organizations—because these outreach programs are viewed as vain and offensive to basic church doctrines. Nonetheless, regional and national Primitive Baptist associations do exist, but authority is vested in the local church. Associations generally meet annually and are primarily social in nature. It is common for individual congregations to meet once a month, particularly in rural areas where ministers travel and preach at a different church each week. Members then will often attend a neighboring church on the weeks when their local church does not meet.

Although originally a white denomination, Primitive Baptists have gained an even greater following among blacks. After having withdrawn from white congregations at the close of the Civil War, African Americans initiated their own congregations, which were on the average more progressive than those of whites, operating both conventions and Sunday schools. In 1907 black Primitive Baptists formed the National Primitive Baptist Convention of the United States of America, which in 1990 had an estimated 250,000 members.

his church in 1813, he attended one of the first AME organizational meetings in Baltimore in 1816, where he disagreed with Allen and their relations ended.

²³⁷ *Colored American*, "Of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America," October 21, 1837.

²³⁸ Adapted from *Powerful Artifacts*, pages 17-22.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania, c. 1644-c. 1970

Name of Multiple Property Listing

Pennsylvania

State

There were few Colored Primitive Baptist congregations active in Pennsylvania. In 1906, there were only two active congregations in Pennsylvania; by 1936, this number grew to 17, primarily in the industrial regions populated by Southern migrants during the Great Migration.

Other African American Church Congregations in Pennsylvania

In addition to the Black Church and other African American denominations active in Pennsylvania between c. 1644 and c. 1970, there were also black congregations within the traditionally white denominations. Using census data and previous studies, some African American congregations active in Pennsylvania in the 19th and early 20th centuries included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Seventh Day Adventist,
- Christian Church (American Christian Convention),
- Churches of Christ,
- General Eldership of the Churches of God in North America,
- Methodist Episcopal Church,
- Presbyterian Church in the United States of America,
- Protestant Episcopal Church, and
- Roman Catholic Church
- Church of God
- National Spiritual Alliance of the United States of America
- Evangelical Lutheran
- Disciples of Christ
- Kodesh Church of Emmanuel
- United Holy Church of America, Inc.²³⁹

While churches important for their association with these denominations would not be nominated to the National Register under this MPDF because they are not considered part of the Black Church, these congregations may have historically used church buildings that are eligible to be nominated under this cover. This MPDF can, however, assist preparers with listing churches important for their associations with the Union African and Colored Primitive Baptist denominations by providing a broad context for understanding the history and role of religion and black denominations in African American life.

²³⁹ This list is developed from the 1906, 1916, 1926 and 1936 census data. Denominations may have changed, merged, or gone dormant since the census data was collected. This list should not be considered comprehensive; in several census years, there were entries for "All other denominations" that included African American denominations and congregations.