

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**1. Name of Property**Historic name: Mount Tabor AME Zion Church and Cemetery

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**2. Location**Street & number: Cedar StreetCity or town: Mount Holly Springs State: PA County: CumberlandNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

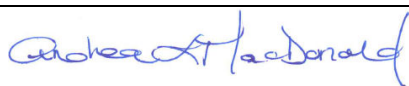
I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

     national      statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A      B X C      D

	1/13/2021
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b></span> <u>Pennsylvania Historical &amp; Museum Commission – State Historic Preservation Office</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	
<p>In my opinion, the property <u>    </u> meets <u>    </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Date</b></span></p> <hr/> <p><b>Title :</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></span></p>	

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐  
Public – Local ☒  
Public – State ☐  
Public – Federal ☐

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒  
District ☐  
Site ☐  
Structure ☐  
Object ☐

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>                    </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register                     

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/Church  
\_FUNERARY/Cemetery

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE  
FUNERARY/Cemetery

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

WOOD/log

WOOD/weatherboard

STONE

METAL

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Mount Tabor AME Zion Church and Cemetery is an African American church and cemetery located on Cedar Street in Mount Holly Springs Borough, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. The church is a rectangular, one and a half-story, log and frame building set on a stone foundation, built c.1886. The Mount Tabor cemetery is located approximately 100 yards southwest of the church, along Cedar Street. The church and cemetery are located in the Mountain Street neighborhood of Mount Holly Springs, historically known as Mount Tabor. The surrounding neighborhood consists mainly of twentieth century single-family residences with wide yards and ample space between properties. Though currently stable with good historic integrity, the church is in poor condition. Overall, the cemetery is in good condition, as headstones have been recently cleaned and conserved, and a fence surrounding the cemetery has been installed. Jointly, the resources retain all seven aspects of integrity.



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## **Narrative Description**

### Mount Tabor AME Zion Church

The Mount Tabor AME Zion Church is a rectangular, 37'-6" by 24'-0" log structure set on a fieldstone foundation. It is one and a half stories with a gable roof. The entire building is clad in weathered clapboard siding. The church is located on a .13 acre wooded parcel along Cedar Street.

The church occupies approximately half of the .13 acre property. The remainder of the site is wooded, covered in dense brush and small to medium sized trees. A partially disassembled stone fence begins in the northwest corner of the property. Wooded property is located to the north and east. A large open field is located to the west. A small family cemetery is within the woods adjacent to the northern property line. This cemetery contains at least five graves from the Johnson extended family. The cemetery pre-dates the church and is not historically associated with the church or congregation, although the families buried in the cemetery attended Mount Tabor during the years it operated.

Because of its deteriorated condition, the western exterior of the church is partially covered in protective tarps and temporary shoring (Photo 1). These tarps can also be seen through the windows in interior photographs as well (Photos 16 & 17).

Typical of vernacular churches, the gable end of the building faces the street; Cedar Street. This primary (south) elevation features a single, central entrance, accessed by a concrete threshold (Photo 2). The entrance consists of a flat, wood replacement door, flanked by wood paneled sidelights with a two-lite glass transom above. The entrance is in poor condition and the glass is missing from the sidelights and transom, which are covered with protective plastic. A small window opening is located above the entrance, near the roof peak.

The east elevation (Photo 3) consists of three, three-over-three wood, double-hung windows. The windows (Photo 4) are in poor condition and have been covered with protective plastic on the interior. On the southern third of the elevation, the log construction is missing and has been replaced with wood studs (Photo 8). This appears have been part of the original design and construction or may be a historic framing repair. The structure is visible through missing clapboard siding.

The rear (north) elevation is a blank façade (Photo 5). A small two-lite fixed window is located at the second level, near the roof peak. Large portions of the log structure and fieldstone foundation are visible (Photo 6).

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The west elevation (Photo 1) is similar to the east elevation, with three, three-over-three, wood double-hung windows. The entire elevation is in poor condition and has been partially covered with protective tarps to limit water infiltration.

The roof consists of corrugated metal sheets in poor condition. A small portion near the primary elevation has been covered with modern metal panels to protect the roof from further deterioration until restoration can take place. Remnants of a brick chimney are located near the center of the roof.

On the interior, the church is typical of a “chapel plan” as outlined in Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) “African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania”.<sup>1</sup> The building consists of a narthex directly inside the door (Photo 9). The narthex is characterized by wood floors, wood plank walls and ceiling. It is a narrow space, with a stair and coal storage closet at the west end (Photo 10). The narthex opens into the sanctuary, which is a large, single room (Photo 12-19). The chancel and pulpit are located at the far end, denoted by a raised platform (Photo 18).

The sanctuary is defined by painted wood plank floors, walls, and ceilings. A single column is located near the center of the room (Photo 19). A worn carpet runs down the center of the room, forming the aisle between pews. A hole in the ceiling, near the column, shows the former location of the heating stove (Photo 20). A second opening in the ceiling allowed warm air to rise to the second floor (Photo 21). Oral histories gathered by the Orton Family Foundation and Greater Carlisle Heart and Soul Project note that the church never had electricity, although some knob and tube wiring existing in the vestibule. Whether this was ever functional is not known. The coal stove provided heat and gas lamps were a source of light. Portions of a wood stair remain in the west corner of the narthex (Photo 11). The second floor consists of two rooms separated by a frame wall (Photo 22). The second floor was mostly likely used as a study for the church pastor and Sunday School teacher.

The church building materials show evidence of being salvaged from another building. The hand-hewn logs suggest an early construction date, prior to the mid-nineteenth century.

During the years it functioned as a church, the interior and exterior looked similar to the way it does now. Oral histories note that the church was unpainted, clad in weathered clapboard from at least mid-century. Photographs of the church from the 1970s show the main entrance with the existing three-light sidelights, transom, and a wood paneled door. A small announcement placard is located to the east of the door. The existing three-over-three wood windows line the east and west elevations. A brick chimney is located near the center of the roof, at the ridge line. On the interior, double wood doors separated the narthex from the sanctuary. Inside, wood pews lined either side of the center aisle. The coal stove was located in the center of the aisle. At the

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<sup>1</sup> Shelby Splain, “African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, January 2020.

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front of the sanctuary, a chancel rail stood in front of a raised platform, where the pulpit, offering plates, and three chairs stood. Pews for visiting choirs stood on either side of the pulpit, as well as an organ and piano. A picture of Jesus hung behind the pulpit. A clock, salvaged from the church in 2016, hung on the wall as well (Figures 5-9).

The church building was used for almost 100 years, from ca. 1886 to ca. 1970. After the last service, the doors were closed and the building was abandoned in place, with furniture, hymnals and even funeral fans left within the building. The church received little maintenance until 2016, when it was rediscovered by the community after an oral history interview with sisters Harriet and Edna Gumby. The Gumby family are descendants from the church's original builder, Elias Parker, and attended the church until it closed ca. 1970. At the time of the interview, the church was in poor condition, with broken windows, vegetation covering the structure, rotted clapboard and crumbling foundations. Since 2016, the church has been stabilized but remains in poor condition.

Mount Tabor Cemetery

The Mount Tabor Cemetery is a segregated cemetery serving the historic Mount Tabor community of Mount Holly Springs. Located on a separate parcel approximately 100 yards southwest of the Mount Tabor AME Zion Church, the church and cemetery are separated by a cluster of three heavily altered 20<sup>th</sup> century homes, and one modern mobile home along Cedar St. The cemetery parcel covers approximately .23 acres and includes between 55-60 burials, with 15 visible headstones and 43 known individual burials dating from 1888 to 2006. Seven of the headstones are government-issued stones for veterans of the United States Colored Troops. The cemetery is defined by grass lawn punctuated with low stone headstones in a variety of styles and materials (Photos 27-30). Graves are defined by older, hand carved headstones, marble United States Colored Troops headstones (Photo 31), and modern, uniform granite or marble headstones (Photo 32). The burials are arranged in individual and family plots. The cemetery is similar to a lawn cemetery design as described by the MPDF, however, it has no uniform layout or standardized design. The cemetery is surrounded by a black aluminum fence.

The cemetery appears much as it did during the Period of Significance. A historic photograph of the cemetery shows the lawn cut short, with uncut grass and recently cleared trees adjacent. At one point, there was likely a wood post and wire fence bordering at least the east side of the cemetery. During the late nineteenth century, the schoolhouse serving the Mount Tabor community was located along the north edge of the cemetery, where a shed now sits. The existing aluminum fence was installed in 2016 in an effort to restore the cemetery.

The last burial took place at the Mount Tabor cemetery in 2006, after which the cemetery was sporadically maintained. Recent efforts to recognize and protect the cemetery have greatly improved the condition, adding the fence and plantings to delineate the cemetery's boundaries. The Mount Tabor Preservation Project cleaned and restored several of the oldest headstones. The cemetery survives in good condition.

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### Integrity

The MPDF references five characteristics that African American churches should retain in order to be eligible for the National Register. The Mount Tabor AME Zion Church retains all of these characteristics, including distinct building form, original stylistic details, design emphasis on windows and doors, original arrangement of spaces used by the congregation, and intact original construction.

Additionally, the Mount Tabor AME Zion church and cemetery retain all seven aspects of integrity.

The church and cemetery have not been moved, and therefore retain integrity of location.

Neither site was renovated or adapted for a new use, giving them excellent design integrity. The church's original form, fenestration pattern, interior and exterior materials, structural components, and interior plan have not been altered since the end of the Period of Significance.

The church and cemetery retain integrity of setting. Cedar Street remains as a rural route on the outskirts of Mount Holly Springs, although the African American community has faded due to deindustrialization and changing employment opportunities. Several new single-family homes were constructed along Mountain and Cedar Street during the mid- to late twentieth century, however, the setting retains the feeling of a rural community.

The church retains its original materials on the interior and exterior, including wood siding, windows, stone foundation, metal panel roof, interior wood floor, carpet, and wood walls. Although the materials survive in poor condition, they have not been replaced since the Period of Significance. The cemetery retains 15 original headstones.

The church and cemetery retain integrity of workmanship through the original design, materials and construction methods. The original masonry foundation and log structure are still evident.

The church and cemetery retain excellent integrity of feeling and association through the physical features that communicate its use as a community church and cemetery. In the church, this includes the raised pulpit platform, arrangement of doors and windows, and clear center aisle between the former pews. In the cemetery, the original headstones and cemetery boundary communicate its usage as a community burial ground.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☒ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☒ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

ca. 1886 – ca. 1970

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Elias Parker

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Mount Tabor AME Zion Church is an African American church built ca. 1886 and an associated cemetery located on Cedar Street in Mount Holly Springs Borough, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. The church was established by formerly enslaved and free individuals who migrated to Mount Holly Springs in search of better quality of life and work opportunities after the Civil War. The church was the heart of the African American community in Mount Holly Springs until the congregation dwindled to approximately three families ca. 1970. With attendance low, the church closed. The church and cemetery went largely unknown until an oral history project drew attention to the resources in 2016. The property is being listed under the Multiple Properties Documentation Form (MPDF) for "African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania, c.1644-c.1970" as a traditional black church with an associated adjacent cemetery property type. The church and cemetery are locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage for their association with the African American community in Mount Holly Springs during the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, and in the area of Social History for Mount Tabor's role in promoting the well-being of Mount Holly's African American community through community programs and organizations. The church is also significant under Criterion C, for Architecture, as a locally significant example of vernacular log design and construction, and is the only known log community building in Mount Holly Springs still extant. The church and cemetery also meet requirements for Criteria Considerations A (Religious Property) and D (Cemetery). The Period of Significance begins c.1886, when the church was dedicated, and ends c.1970, when the church ceased being used.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The community of Mount Holly Springs is located at the northern edge of a gap in South Mountain. The area was initially settled as an iron furnace prior to the Revolutionary War. Mountain Creek, which runs through the borough, provided the opportunity for a multitude of industries to flourish. Within a few decades, iron as well as paper industries were major employers in the area, using water power provided by Mountain Creek. By the time Mount Holly Springs was incorporated as a borough in 1873, the community was home to several paper mills and a weaving mill.<sup>2</sup>

The presence of industry drew free and formerly enslaved African Americans to the area in search of work. These people settled on the outskirts of town, at the base of South Mountain, along Mountain Street. The location was within easy walking distance of Mount Holly Spring's largest

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<sup>2</sup> Sandy Mader, "Mt. Holly Springs," Cumberland County Historical Society, Gardner Digital Library, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://gardnerlibrary.org/encylopedia/mt-holly-springs>.

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paper mill, where many African Americans were employed. The 1850 census shows eleven African Americans living in Mount Holly Springs, likely in the area of Mount Tabor, along Mountain Street.

Due to Mount Holly's location, at a gap in South Mountain, and the small community of free African Americans living there, Mount Holly Springs became a convergence point on the Underground Railroad for freedom seekers traveling northward up the Cumberland and Susquehanna valleys, on either side of the mountain. Regional historian Cooper Wingert's map of the Underground Railroad in south central Pennsylvania shows Mount Holly Springs as a distinct stop on the journey.<sup>3</sup> These people likely travelled through the free black community on Mountain Street to known Underground Railroad points north, including Carlisle and Boiling Springs.

Following the Civil War, the African American community in Mount Holly Springs grew. The presence of an established black community combined with available jobs in the mills brought former slaves from points south to Mount Holly Springs. These migrants, part of the countrywide Great Migration, travelled north to Mount Holly Springs from Maryland, Virginia and even as far as Georgia to escape the oppression of Jim Crow laws and to find greater employment opportunities. By 1880, at least 37 African Americans were living in Mount Holly Springs. Of these 37 individuals, 19 were born in Maryland, Virginia, or other southern states.<sup>4</sup> Census data overlaid on the 1872 Atlas of Cumberland County shows that several of these families and individuals settled on and around Mountain Street.<sup>5</sup> The small community that was established in the Mountain Street neighborhood was informally called Mount Tabor.<sup>6</sup>

At least two other log structures, both houses, dating from the early days in Mount Tabor still stand along Mountain Street, however both have been clad in modern aluminum siding. The Barbara Redmond House, at 80 Mountain St., is listed on the Cumberland County Historic Register (Figure 4). It was built in 1878, directly to the west of the Mount Tabor church. The house is an example of the types of homes built along Mountain Street during the late nineteenth century and one of the few surviving log homes in Mount Holly Springs.<sup>7</sup>

The earliest documentation for the Mount Tabor AME Zion Church congregation begins in 1877, with a newspaper advertisement for a "bush meeting" held in the woods on Friday, August 24.

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<sup>3</sup> Cooper Wingert, *Abolitionists of South-Central Pennsylvania*, (The History Press, 2018), 71.

<sup>4</sup> Lindsay Varner and Dorothy Trigg, Greater Carlisle Heart and Soul Project, "Mt Tabor AME Zion Church and Cemetery" Cumberland County Register of Historic Places Application, Cumberland County Historical Society, July 14, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> F.W. Beer, *Atlas of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania*, (Cumberland County Historical Society, 1976) 35.

<sup>6</sup> Rosalind G. Bauchum, *Elias and Lucinda Parker, The Case for a Civil War Widow's Pension*, (Grandview, Missouri: Purpose Publishing, 2011), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Lindsay Varner, email to author, June, 2020.



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Several ministers from local communities attended the event.<sup>8</sup> As noted in the MPDF, this was typical of early congregations, which began worshipping in local homes or even outside before constructing a church building.<sup>9</sup> The Mount Tabor congregation likely existed informally in the community before the bush meeting and certainly before the physical building was dedicated in 1886. A deed for the purchase of the land the church sits on was filed in 1878, transferring the property from S. M. Leidich to the Mount Tabor AME Zion Church Trustees.<sup>10</sup>

The church itself was constructed by Mountain Street resident, Elias Parker. Parker's journey to Mount Holly Springs was typical of others who settled in the region. He was enslaved and living in Hagerstown, Maryland under the slaveholder William D. Nelson, a physician. During the Civil War, Parker served in the United States Colored Troops, Company "I", 38<sup>th</sup> Regiment. When the war was over, he settled in Mount Holly Springs and married Lucinda Johnson. The Parkers purchased a home at 136 Mountain Street.<sup>11</sup>

Parker was a stone mason as well as a Baptist minister. He built the Mount Tabor AME Zion Church on land directly behind his home, likely for his wife and her family, who were Methodist.<sup>12</sup> The new church was dedicated on Easter Sunday, April 25, 1886.<sup>13</sup>

The church is typical of other early AME Zion churches in Pennsylvania, following a "chapel" plan as described on page 37 of the MPDF. It had no electricity. A central coal stove provided the only source of heat. Gas lamps lined the walls for light. In the summer, foliage from the woods crept in through the open windows.<sup>15</sup>

The sanctuary was used for worship services as well as social gatherings for the community. During the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, formal and informal segregation meant that African Americans in Mount Holly were forced to form their own community ties. The Mount Tabor AME Zion church was at the center of this community. It was the only known African American institution in Mount Holly Springs. The MPDF notes that a church was often the first institution established in segregated communities. The church was the foundation for other vital organizations, such as schools and social services.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *The Valley Sentinel* (Carlisle, PA) Aug 24, 1877, accessed by Rosaline Bauchum December 2-4, 2017, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>9</sup> Splain, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Cumberland County Deeds and Records, "William Bentz & wife to Trustees of AMEZ", Cumberland County Historical Society, 201.

<sup>11</sup> Bauchum, 7-14.

<sup>12</sup> Bauchum, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *The Valley Sentinel*, Wednesday, April 7, 1886, accessed by Rosaline Bauchum December 2-4, 2017, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>15</sup> Carmen James, interview by the Orton Family Foundation, November 15, 2016, Elizabeth V. and George F. Gardner Digital Library, Cumberland County Historical Society, accessed February 28, 2020, <http://www.gardnerlibrary.org/stories/carmen-james>.

<sup>16</sup> Splain, 51.

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With the church as its focal point, the Mount Tabor community provided education, social welfare, and socializing opportunities. Regional newspaper articles from the 1910s provide a snapshot of scholarly meetings, public debates, Rally Days (typically an annual celebration of a new year at the church and promotion of students to higher grades of school and Sunday School), and patriotic celebrations in the church community, in addition to regular worship services. Most notable among these events were those organized by the Tabor A.M.E. Zion Literary Society. In September 1915, the Literary Society organized a debate over the question of whether women should have the right to vote. The local *Sentinel* newspaper noted that, "...a splendid program was rendered. The chief feature of the evening was the debate, Resolved, That women should have the right to vote." The event also included a reading by Miss Gale Watts, of Carlisle, on the right of women to vote, and a "fine tenor solo" by a Mr. Beels, with Edward Swanston accompanying on the organ. Later that year, Literary Society members held another public debate at Mount Tabor with the subject "Resolved that Peace Has Contributed More to Civilization Than War." The public was, "...cordially invited to be present and decide in favor of either side."

In February 1916, the Literary Society, at its regular meeting, presented a public lecture by Rev. E. E. Swanston, pastor at Mount Tabor and Secretary of the Literary Society, on "People in Africa." This event also included the presentation of a paper by Miss Lucinda Gumby, a pupil at the segregated schoolhouse which was located adjacent to the Mount Tabor cemetery, along Cedar Street. For a period, the Mount Tabor minister, Rev. Swanston, served as the school's teacher.<sup>17</sup> While it is not clear how the school's curriculum may have reflected state or local guidance, it is clear that the Mount Tabor church aimed to promote the education of the entire community, student or not. For example, also in February 1916, Rev. Swanston gave a public lecture on, "...the life and work of Abraham Lincoln at the school house for the benefit of his people and school..."

In addition to the church, the Mount Tabor cemetery was established sometime around 1888. Prior to this, the only known burial ground in the Mount Tabor community was a small family cemetery located on land to the rear of the church building. The family cemetery likely pre-dates the church and was used only by the extended family of Elias Parker's wife, Lucinda Johnson. The Johnson family still owns the cemetery today. The Mount Tabor cemetery served the entire Mount Holly Springs African American community, and includes burials of seven United States Colored Troops veterans, including Elias Parker. While it is unclear when the Mount Holly Cemetery, located in the northwest corner of the Borough, first allowed non-white burials, maps from the 1950s still referred to the Mount Tabor Cemetery as the "colored cemetery in Mt Holly Springs." A Methodist cemetery, once located behind a church on Baltimore Ave., was moved and reinterred at Mount Holly Springs Cemetery sometime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it's not known whether or not African Americans had been buried within.

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<sup>17</sup> *The Carlisle Evening Herald*, February 25, 1915, accessed by Rosaline Bauchum December 2-4, 2017, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

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While located close to the church, the cemetery was nondenominational and served as the segregated cemetery in Mount Holly Springs. Newspaper articles from the early twentieth century describe the cemetery as the “burial ground for colored people,”<sup>18</sup> however, the Mount Tabor AME Zion congregation was the apparent caretaker, and certainly associated with the cemetery, if not linked through ownership. A 1916 notice in the *Carlisle Evening Herald* noted that Mount Tabor’s Rev. Swanston had taken it upon himself to organize a meeting for “all friends who have and are in any way interested in the burial ground for the colored people in Mt. Holly Springs...”

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Mount Tabor community surrounding Mountain Street was flourishing. The 1900 census recorded almost 100 African Americans living in the area. In addition to the church and cemetery, the community included several homes, a parsonage for the church, a school, and a smokehouse.<sup>19</sup>

The church was served by a dedicated pastor through at least the 1920s. Eventually, the church became part of a ministering circuit, sharing a pastor with other local churches in Chambersburg, Gettysburg, and Shippensburg. Oral histories recount fellowship celebrations with these other local AME Zion churches as late as the 1960s.<sup>20</sup>

Decreasing segregation combined with the decline of industry in Mount Holly Springs lead many families to move away from the Mount Tabor neighborhood. By 1940, the census recorded only four African American families living in the Mountain Street neighborhood at Mount Tabor. As the African American population in the area declined, the church continued to organize regular Sunday School. Classes were attended by the remaining local residents, including at least one white family. The community cared for the church, repairing the foundation and the roof as needed.<sup>21</sup> Eventually, in 1970, the church closed. The building, which was already only known to a dwindling community, became largely forgotten over the past 50 years. An oral history interview with lifelong Mountain Street resident Harriet Gumby, in 2016, and whose family continued to care for the empty church, lead to the rediscovery of the church by the broader Mount Holly Springs and Cumberland County community. Rallying around the unique story and heritage of the church and cemetery, efforts are underway to preserve and protect the church as a symbol of the African American settlement in Mount Holly Springs.

### Significance discussion

The Mount Tabor AME Zion church and cemetery are locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage and Social History within the context of the MPDF as examples of the

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<sup>18</sup> “See Rev. Swanston” *Carlisle Evening Herald*, Monday February 21, 1916, accessed by Rosaline Bauchum December 2-4, 2017, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

<sup>19</sup> Bauchum, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Carmen James, interview by the Orton Family Foundation

<sup>21</sup> Carmen James, interview by the Orton Family Foundation

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"Traditional Black Church" property type and African American cemetery subtype "Segregated Cemetery." The church and cemetery are an example of African American agency and community building at a time when segregation and racial inequality meant that African Americans were excluded from institutions already established in Mount Holly Springs. The church is also significant under Criterion C, for Architecture, as a locally significant example of vernacular log design and construction and is the only known surviving example of the craftsmanship of Elias Parker, an early resident and congregant at Mount Tabor. It is also the only known log community building in Mount Holly Springs still extant.

The MDPF states that in order to be eligible for the National Register, under Criterion A, churches and cemeteries should have "substantial historical connection to the African American community it served."<sup>22</sup> This connection should not be solely related to the practice of a particular religion. The property 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." Similarly, under Criterion C, "churches can also be found to be important examples of vernacular architecture, and may exhibit expert craftsmanship by local builders, artisans, or tradesmen."<sup>23</sup>

The Mount Tabor AME Zion church and cemetery meets this standard and the NPS criteria considerations for churches and cemeteries by serving as the center of the Mount Tabor community from ca. 1886 to ca. 1970. The church was the civic, educational, and social leader of the community. The congregation financially and physically supported the community's segregated school, sharing the pastor as a teacher and regularly taking up collection for the school during church services.<sup>24</sup> The church hosted literary societies, debates, and regular holiday events for the entire Mount Holly African American community. The cemetery was used by all African Americans in Mount Holly Springs, not only those who attended the church, and the cemetery continued to be used after the church closed. The church and cemetery are the only remaining symbols of the former African American community at Mount Tabor in Mount Holly Springs. The school, parsonage, and many of the original homes that made up the Mount Tabor community are gone. While other AME and AME Zion church buildings and segregated cemeteries remain in surrounding areas, the Mount Tabor AME Zion church and cemetery are a rare example of an African American church and segregated cemetery in a rural community. Though the community it once served has moved on, the church and cemetery stand as a reminder of the free and formerly enslaved individuals who settled in Mount Holly Springs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

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<sup>22</sup> Splain, 52.

<sup>23</sup> Splain, 52, 63.

<sup>24</sup> "Closing Day Exercises of Holly Colored School" Carlisle Evening Herald, April 27, 1915, accessed by Rosaline Bauchum December 2-4, 2017, [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

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### Comparisons

Mount Tabor AME Zion Church is the only known African American church in Mount Holly Springs. During the century that Mount Tabor was active, Carlisle was the closest community with other established African American churches. Bethel AME Church, located on East Pomfret Street in Carlisle, was among the earliest African American congregations west of the Susquehanna River. Due to the size of the community in Carlisle, Bethel AME is a much larger church. The existing church building, constructed in 1867, is a two-story brick building, with an attached parsonage. The church features large, stained glass windows. Numerous renovations have been completed since the church's construction, including an interior renovation after a fire in 1947 and an altered main entrance along East Pomfret Street. Like Mount Tabor, the church served as a social, as well as a religious, space for the community. Bethel AME also has ties to the Underground Railroad route in Cumberland County.<sup>25</sup> However, the size and sustained congregation of Bethel AME make it a difficult comparison to the Mount Tabor AME Zion Church.

Architecturally, the buildings themselves are vastly different. The size, design features and materials of Bethel AME reflect the relative wealth and size of the of the African American community in Carlisle compared to that of the vernacular, log-built, Mount Tabor. In addition, because of its continued use, Bethel AME Church has seen several alterations since its construction.

The St Paul AME Zion Church, located in Gettysburg, was likely part of the same AME Zion conference as Mount Tabor. The existing church was constructed in 1917. St Paul AME Zion Church is a two-story, brick building with stained glass windows and a bell tower. It was the third church used by the congregation, which was established in 1838. St Paul AME Zion is similar in design to Bethel AME Church in Carlisle and is significantly larger than Mount Tabor. St Paul AME Zion's first church building was likely more similar to Mount Tabor, as a small frame building.<sup>26</sup> Though it is a later example of AME Zion churches established in Cumberland County, Mount Tabor is more architecturally similar to early rural AME Zion churches with young congregations than the more substantial buildings that exist in the surrounding urban communities with long established congregations. Many of these early church buildings, such as the first church used by the St Paul congregation, no longer exist.

In western Cumberland County, Shippensburg's Locust Grove cemetery once contained the log Richard Baker AME church. Though the church was demolished by 1920, it would have been the closest local comparable example to Mount Tabor of an African American church and associated cemetery. Like Mount Tabor, the former Richard Baker AME church and Locust Grove cemetery were established in an emerging African American neighborhood, though burials at Locust Grove

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<sup>25</sup> "200 Years of History" Bethel AME Church, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://bethelamecarlisle.org/200-years-of-history/>.

<sup>26</sup> "St Paul A.M.E. Zion Church" accessed March 16, 2020, [https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMBZJK\\_St\\_Paul\\_AME\\_Zion\\_Church\\_Gettysburg\\_PA](https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMBZJK_St_Paul_AME_Zion_Church_Gettysburg_PA).

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date to at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, if not late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The cemetery also served as both the segregated cemetery and the cultural focal point of the community as well. Due to the size and age of the Shippensburg African American community, the Locust Gove cemetery is larger than Mount Tabor, with 76 grave markers.<sup>27</sup> A National Register of Historic Places nomination for Locust Grove, under the MPDF, is currently being prepared.

The Mount Tabor AME Zion Church and Cemetery are rare examples of an AME Zion log church and associated cemetery in Cumberland County. It is likely the only remaining historical example in the region of an African American church serving a small, rural community. Larger towns, such as Gettysburg, Shippensburg, and Carlisle retain AME and AME Zion church buildings and segregated cemeteries, but are difficult comparisons because of the size and sustained population of those communities. In addition, none retain both the church and the associated segregated cemetery in the same area.

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<sup>27</sup> Steven Burg, "Locust Grove Cemetery" National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, January 5, 2020.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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*The Valley Sentinel*. Wednesday, April 7, 1886. Accessed by Rosaline Bauchum December 2-4, 2017. [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: Cumberland County Historical Society

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_



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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** .36 acres (church parcel: 0.13 ; cemetery parcel: 0.23)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Church:

1. Latitude: 40.118186

Longitude: -77.176897

Cemetery:

2. Latitude: 40.117612

Longitude: -77.178099

**Or**

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

2. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

3. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

4. Zone:

Easting :

Northing:

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Please see the attached map. The proposed boundary is the 2019 Cumberland County tax parcels for the church and cemetery, number 23-23-2338-055EX and 23-32-2338-061EX.

### Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The proposed boundary includes the immediate surroundings corresponding with the original deed to the church property and the ground within the cemetery fence. It does not include the family cemetery to the rear of the church, which was not historically associated with the church.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Becky Zeller  
organization: Warehaus  
street & number: 320 North George Street  
city or town: York state: PA zip code: 17349  
e-mail bzeller@warehausae.com  
telephone: 717-815-8515  
date: 1/12/2021

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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## USGS Map (cropped)

N ↑

Quad: Mount Holly Springs, PA

## Coordinates

Church:

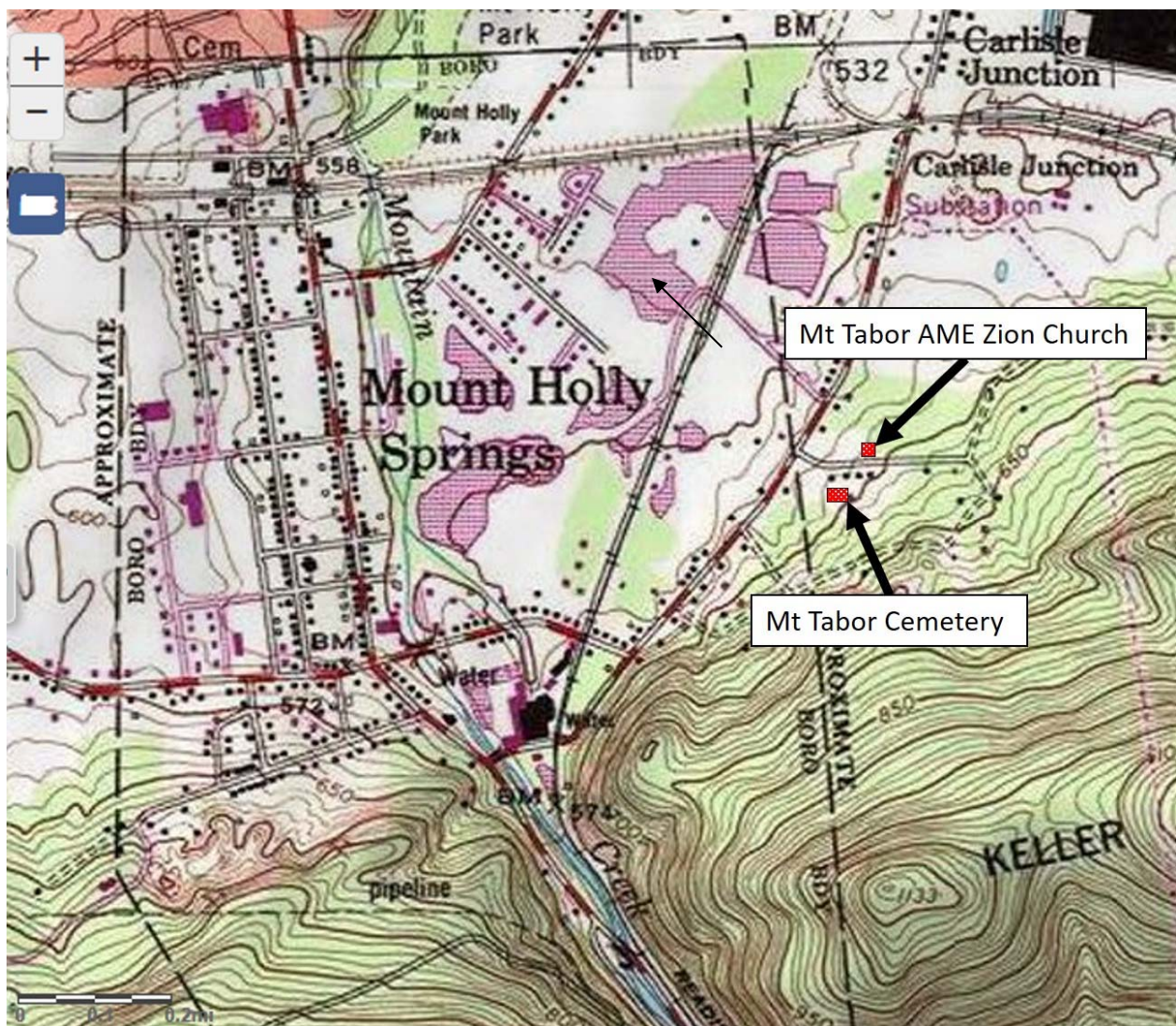
Lat: 40.118186

Long: -77.176897

Cemetery:

Lat: 40.117612

Long: -77.178099





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Site Plan & Photo Key Map



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**Church Site and Photo Key Map**



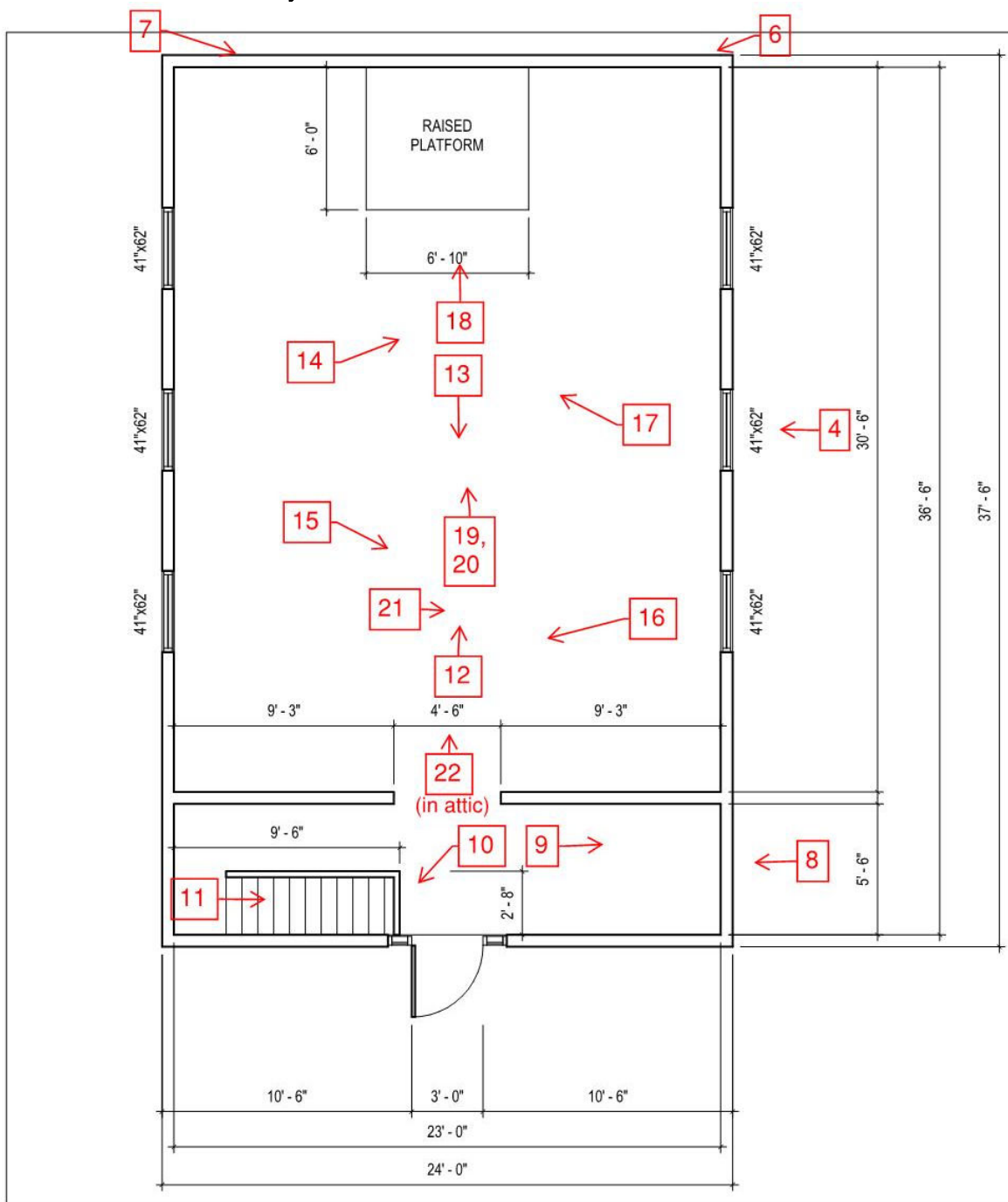
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Church Floor Plan and Photo Key



WARE HAUS	project name / owner: MT. TABOR CHURCH				date: 03/17/20		proj. mgr. BZ	scale: 3/16" = 1'-0"	project no. 2020.0014.00
	drawing set				drawing title		OVERALL FLOOR PLAN		
					sheet no.		A100		

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C:\Users\jwolfgang\Desktop\jobs\Mt. Tabor Church\2020.0014.00 Mt.Tabor Church R19.rvt

3/17/2020 10:13:12 AM



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**Cemetery Site Plan and Photo Key Map**



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**Figure 1.** Mount Tabor AME Zion Church primary elevation along Cedar Street, date unknown.



Citation: Bauchum, Rosalind G. *The Story of Gumby*. Grandview, Missouri: Purpose Publishing, 2015.



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**Figure 2.** Mount Tabor cemetery, looking southeast. Date unknown.



From Cumberland County Historical Society.

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**Figure 3.** Gravestone of Henry Ward, United State Colored Troops. Looking south east in the cemetery. Date unknown.



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**Figure 4.** The Barbara Redmond House, at 80 Mountain Street, built in 1878. The house is an example of the types of homes built on Mountain Street in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.





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**Figure 5.** The sanctuary in 2016, prior to the removal of the original furnishing. Looking north at the pulpit.



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**Figure 6.** Sanctuary, looking south toward the narthex, summer 2016.



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**Figure 7.** Sanctuary, looking east, summer 2016.



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**Figure 8.** The original coal stove in the sanctuary, summer 2016.





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**Figure 9.** The clock that hung in the sanctuary, summer 2016. The clock has since been restored.





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### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Mount Tabor AME Zion Church and Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Mount Holly Springs

County: Cumberland

State: PA

Photographer: Becky Zeller, unless otherwise noted.

Date Photographed: March 11, 2020, unless otherwise noted.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 35. Mount Tabor AME Church, looking northeast along Cedar Street. Photograph by Julia Chain, Spring 2019.

2 of 35. Primary (south) elevation.

3 of 35. East elevation, March 2020. Photograph by Julia Chain, Spring 2019.

4 of 35. Building-typical three-over-three wood double-hung window, east elevation.

5 of 35. Rear (north) elevation.

6 of 35. Detail of log construction, rear elevation.

7 of 35. Detail of clapboard siding, rear elevation.

8 of 35. Detail of fieldstone foundation and change to frame construction from log, east elevation.

9 of 35. Narthex, looking east.

10 of 35. Coal storage under stair in narthex, looking southwest.

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- 11 of 35. Stairs to second floor. Photograph by Julia Chain, Spring 2019.
- 12 of 35. Sanctuary, looking north.
- 13 of 35. Sanctuary, looking south toward narthex.
- 14 of 35. Sanctuary, looking northeast.
- 15 of 35. Sanctuary, looking southeast.
- 16 of 35. Sanctuary, looking southwest.
- 17 of 35. Sanctuary, looking northwest.
- 18 of 35. Sanctuary, looking north, platform for pulpit.
- 19 of 35. Sanctuary, looking north, support column and hymn announcement board.
- 20 of 35. Sanctuary, hole in ceiling for stove pipe.
- 21 of 35. Sanctuary, hole in ceiling to allow warm air into the second floor.
- 22 of 35. Second floor, looking north. Photograph by Julia Chain, spring 2019.
- 23 of 35. Mount Tabor cemetery, looking south.
- 24 of 35. North side of cemetery, looking at entrance.
- 25 of 35. Cemetery entrance, looking south.
- 26 of 35. West side of cemetery, looking east.
- 27 of 35. Cemetery, looking south.
- 28 of 35. Cemetery, looking north. Former schoolhouse was located near existing yellow house.
- 29 of 35. Cemetery, looking west.
- 30 of 35. Elias Parker United States Colored Troops headstone.
- 31 of 35. United States Colored Troops headstones.
- 32 of 35. Gumby family plot.

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33 of 35. Cedar Street, looking east from Mountain Street. Church is located in the background, left side, cemetery is on the right.

34 of 35. Cedar Street leading to the church, looking east.

35 of 35. Mountain Street, looking south toward Mount Holly Springs.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

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