

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

1. Name of Property

historic name Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

other names/site number United Methodist Episcopal Church

2. Location

street & number 613 North Garrison Ave. [n/a] not for publication

city or town St. Louis [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis (Independent City) code 510 zip code 63103

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Mark A. Miles

12/07/05

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date

entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].

determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].

determined not eligible for the
National Register.

removed from the
National Register

other, explain
See continuation sheet [].

Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
 St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		1	0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

RELIGION/ religious facility

Current Functions

RELIGION/ religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE VICTORIAN/ Gothic

Materials

foundation limestone
 walls limestone

 roof slate
 other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

Property is:

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

Architecture

Periods of Significance

1880-1912

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Beinke, August. architect
Cann, William A. architect

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

A. Zone 15 Easting 741860 Northing 4280200 B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing D. Zone Easting Northing

[] see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Toft/Executive Director; Susan Sheppard/ Researcher

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis date Nov. 8, 2005

street & number 917 Locust St., 7th Floor telephone 314-421-6474

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63101

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

street & number 613 North Garrison Ave. telephone 314-533-0613

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63103

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Summary

Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is located at 613 North Garrison Avenue, at the southwest corner of the intersection with Dr. Samuel Shepherd Drive (formerly Lucas Avenue) in St. Louis, Missouri. The Gothic Revival style building was constructed in 1880 from a design by St. Louis architect August Beinke. Originally a Methodist church, it was extensively rebuilt from plans by St. Louis architect William A. Cann after being heavily damaged by fire in 1911. The building is constructed of rough-cut limestone, with the west elevation constructed of brick. It is square in form and has a slate roof and a square buttressed tower at the northeast corner. Since the interior of the church was rebuilt after the fire, features such as the remarkable vaulted ceiling enhanced by stained glass windows date to 1911. The ground plan is original. Attached at the south side of the church is the parish house designed in 1883 by an unknown architect.

Site

Located a few blocks to the northeast of the campus of St. Louis University, the church is one of only a few surviving buildings in the 19th century "Piety Hill" neighborhood. The surrounding housing stock has changed considerably, now consisting of mainly 1980s two-story apartment buildings. Across the street on Dr. Samuel Shepherd Drive (formerly Lucas Avenue) is a former police station from the 1930s, now vacant.

Exterior

The church is constructed of rough-cut limestone with a cross-gabled plan, and has a limestone foundation. It features a medium-pitched slate roof and copper gutters. The main facade fronts Dr. Samuel Shepherd Drive and has a gabled front end. There are two front entrances located under limestone pointed gable pediments with buttressed sides. The pediments of the entrance are constructed of smooth limestone and feature a carved cross at the center, above the pointed arch of the door jamb. The buttressed sides of these entrances are of smooth cut limestone. The doors are wooden, richly decorated and located under large stained-glass windows which feature three Gothic arched windows with wooden mullions. Between the two entrances, located in the center of the front facade at the balcony level, is a large Gothic arched stained-glass window with elaborate

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wooden tracery and rosettes. Above this window, at the attic level, is a grouping of three small Gothic arched windows. At the first floor level, immediately below the large stained-glass window, are two paired rectangular stained-glass windows. The large Gothic arched window was apparently added when this wall was rebuilt after the 1911 fire. A photo taken shortly after the fire shows three separate Gothic windows, and additional doors at the first-floor level, where the square windows are now located.

Figure 1: Exterior of Union Methodist Church after fire, from *Post-Dispatch* May 3, 1911.



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A dominant feature of the church is a two-story tower that stands at the corner of Garrison and Dr. Samuel Shepherd Drive. With distinctive features such as a parapeted roof, lancet windows and buttressed corners, the tower visually ties the front facade to the side (eastern) facade, which fronts N. Garrison Ave. At the first floor of the corner tower (on the north and east facades) are Gothic arched stained-glass windows with limestone surrounds. Similar, although taller, lancet windows are at the second-floor level of the tower. Above the windows is a stone stringcourse which separates a slight setback at the top of the tower. The two "corners" on each of the two sides of the tower have distinctive limestone buttressing that culminates into three corner square parapets at the roof of the tower. A 1916 picture of the church shows three pinnacles at the corners of the tower (figure 2). The pinnacles appear to have been added after the 1911 fire, and it is unclear when they were removed. No other major changes have been made to the tower.

At the east facade the cross plan of the church is visible. The gable end facing N. Garrison Ave. has three bays, six symmetrically located windows, three double rectangular stained glass windows at the first floor level and three Gothic wooden tracery windows at the second floor level. Limestone buttresses decorate the corners of this gable wing. The top of the gable has stone coping. Stone dentils decorate the cornice on the main section of the church. To the right of the gable end (and immediately south of the corner tower) are two bays, a repeat of the first-floor paired windows and second-floor Gothic windows which are on the gable end. To the south of the gable end this pattern is seen again, with three bays. At the first-floor third bay (just to the south of the gable end) is a side entrance to the church. It has double wooden doors, accessed by stone stairs. A stone lintel is above the entrance.

Sharing a north wall with the church is a two-story brick parish house with a rough-cut limestone foundation, designed by an unknown architect in 1883. Originally constructed with a mansard roof, it was removed sometime after the 1916 photo of the church was taken (figure 2). It was replaced with the current simple stone parapet. The front facade of the parsonage has three bays; the left two bays project slightly from the front door at the right bay. The original ornately carved Eastlake-style front door and entrance are intact. Notched sandstone drip lintels feature a carved central patera with abstract vegetative wings; corner blocks on either side below the lintel give the window a hooded appearance. The limestone water table forms a sill course for the first floor windows,

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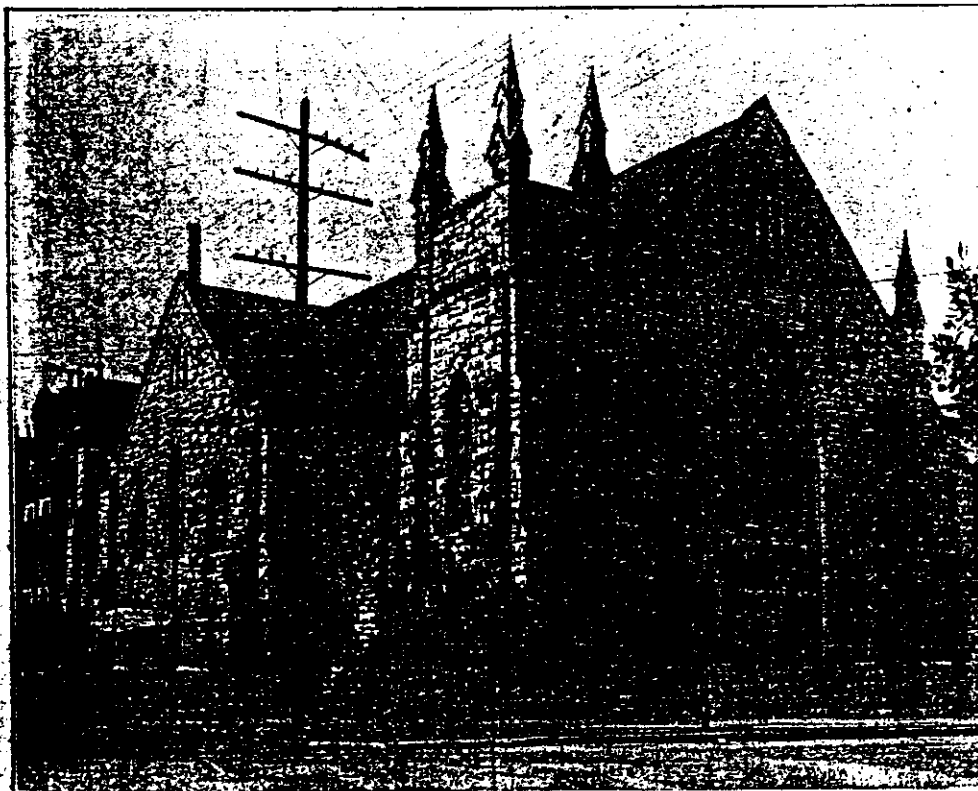
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while the second floor windows have separate sandstone lug sills. The carved wooden frames hold tall, narrow one-over-one, double-hung windows.

At the rear of the parish house is a 1909 two-story addition, also of brick with a limestone foundation. The addition is square in plan and has three bays on the west (rear) facade, with an entrance at the first-floor central bay. The rear of the parish house and church face the church parking lot and apartment buildings. This facade of the church is distinguished from the main facades by being constructed entirely of brick instead of limestone. (The original stone apparently was removed following the 1911 fire.) The west facade is nearly identical in form to the east facade, minus an entrance. Window fenestrations remain the same; all windows are stained glass. The limestone foundation is still visible on the west facade, and windows have brick surrounds and stone sills. The gable end has corner buttresses of brick with stone caps. The cornice is corbelled brick and terra cotta coping is visible.

Figure 2: Washington Metropolitan AME Zion Church, 1916.



FRONT VIEW OF WASHINGTON A. M. E. ZION CHURCH

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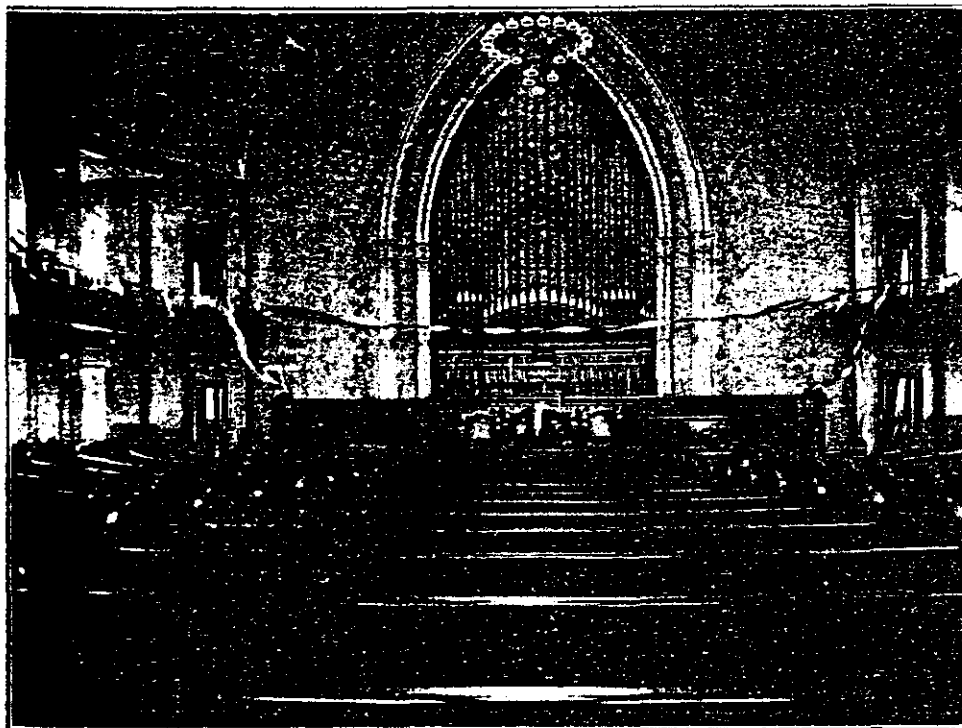
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Interior

Upon entering the church through one of the main entrances at Dr. Samuel Shepherd Drive, one can pass into the main auditorium through the next set of doors, or continue up a staircase to the balcony level. Despite being rebuilt following the 1911 fire, the interior of the church is distinctly Gothic Revival in design, and has changed little since the rebuilding. The focal point is the sanctuary which features an illuminated Gothic arch housing the pipe organ. In front of the organ is the raised pulpit, with the seating for the choir located behind the pastor. The congregation sits in wooden pews which form an informal U-shape around the pulpit.

Figure 3: Interior, 1916. From "The Social Center of Washington Metropolitan AME Zion."



AUDITORIUM OF WASHINGTON A. M. E. ZION CHURCH

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The second-story balcony is curvilinear and only a few pews deep, allowing anyone seated in the church a clear view of the pulpit. The sides of the balcony are wooden with carved rosettes. The balcony is cantilevered, and lacks any visible columns or supports which would obstruct the view of the congregation on the first floor. The elegant lines of the balcony are continued in the wooden ribbed vaults of the ceiling, which often reach into elegant points. At the second story, or balcony level, the large Gothic stained-glass tracery window is visible.

Integrity

The church has undergone few changes since 1911. The Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church at 613 North Garrison Avenue is in excellent condition and retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

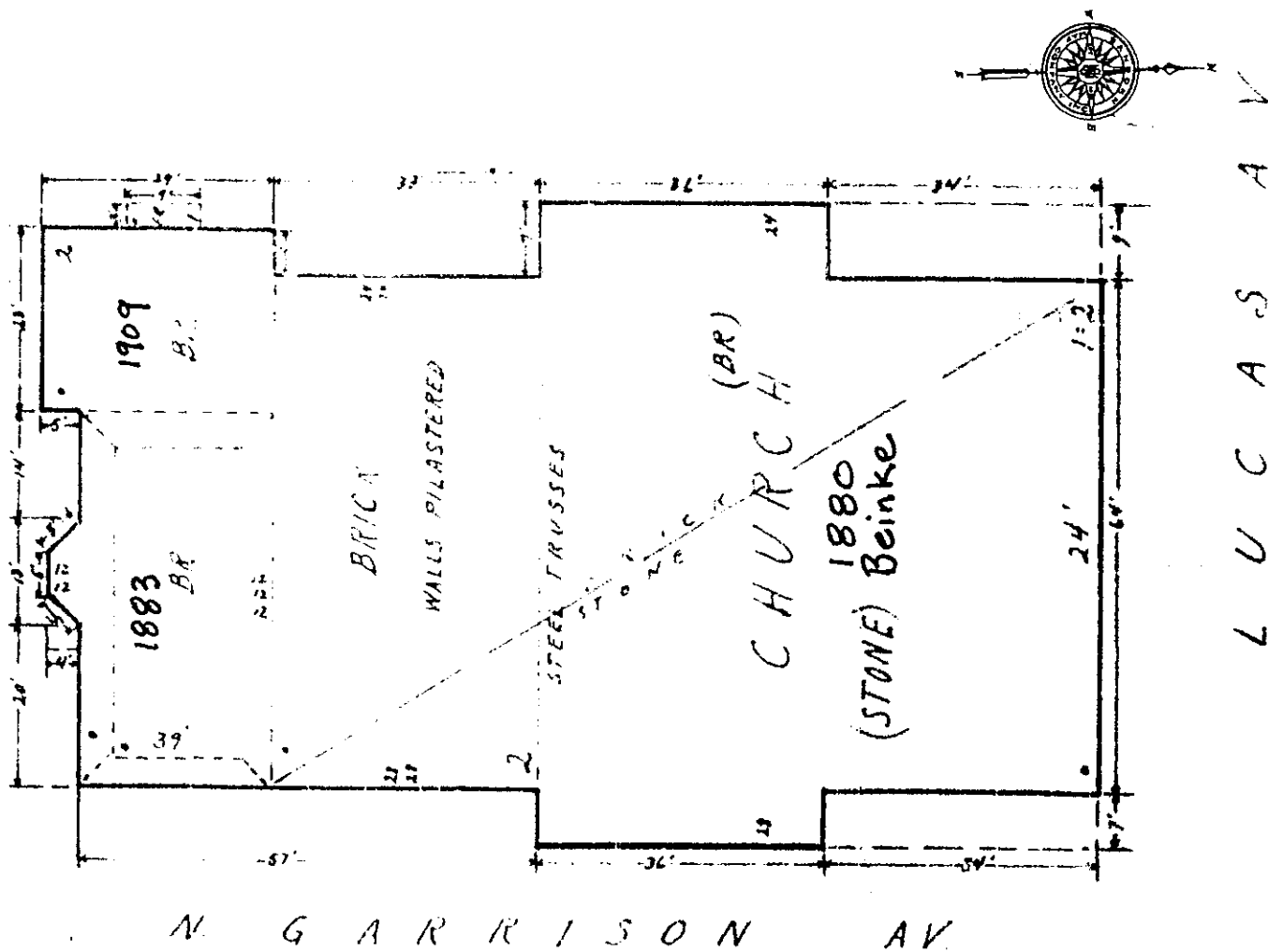
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Figure 4: Floor Plan of the Washington Metropolitan AME Zion Church



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Summary

Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church at 613 North Garrison Avenue in St. Louis, Missouri, is locally significant and eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for **Architecture**. Designed in 1880 by August Beinke, the Gothic Revival limestone building originally housed the Union Methodist Episcopal Church, which traced its abolitionist history to pre-Civil War St. Louis and the first Methodist congregation in St. Louis. Architect William A. Cann, hired after a serious fire in 1911, provided plans for the repair and rebuilding of the church in a manner consistent with Beinke's original design. Only a handful of St. Louis' 1860s, 70s and early 80s churches are extant; most were located in the central corridor where commercial interests or urban renewal displaced neighborhoods and their institutions. Of those that date to this period, the former Union Methodist Episcopal Church is significant as one of the best remaining examples in the Gothic Revival style. In 1915, the congregation decided to sell the building to Dr. Benjamin Garland Shaw and the Washington Metropolitan AME Zion congregation. An activist, a skilled fundraiser and a visionary leader who understood the segregated environment in which he lived, Shaw forged important links to the dominant white community in his pioneering efforts to provide job training and education for black St. Louisans. His work brought him local and national accolades; in 1920, Shaw left St. Louis to become a Vicar Bishop of his denomination. (Additional research may well establish sufficient evidence and context to document an argument for Ethnic Heritage.) Despite repairs and alterations, the church still conveys substantial architectural elements from its original 1880 configuration in addition to its 1911-12 rebuilding. **The 1880-1912 period of significance reflects the date of original construction plus the date when the fire-damaged building was repaired and rededicated.**

Background

The first Methodist minister to settle in Missouri was Reverend John Clark, who came to Ste. Genevieve in 1798 and preached from Cape Girardeau to the Missouri River until his death in 1799. Other Methodist ministers soon followed Clark into the wilderness of Missouri. In the early years of the 19th century, Jesse Walker was instrumental in establishing the first Protestant church west of the Mississippi—McKendree Chapel

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located five miles west of Cape Girardeau.¹ In 1820, he organized the First Methodist Church in St. Louis; in 1821, St. Louis became a separate circuit with 215 members. The following year the Missouri conference met for the first time in St. Louis in the newly completed First Methodist Church.

In 1844, due to the growing dissension caused by slavery, southern sympathizers seceded from the Methodist Church and joined the Methodist Church South to create the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South. (With the exception of those of German heritage, most St. Louis Methodists were pro-slavery.²) Abolitionist Methodists were left without a building or a name until 1845 when the small Ebenezer Chapel was erected on Washington Avenue between 7th and 8th Streets.³ Ebenezer welcomed slaves and free blacks into its congregation;⁴ members even carried arms as protection against their many opponents. But the onset of the Civil War had a devastating effect. In 1852, the congregation had boasted 135 members; by 1861, it had shrunk to only thirty. Ebenezer Chapel closed after failing to pay rent to a southern landowner and presiding elders either left the state or entered the army.⁵ Occupation by northern troops brought a quick reversal of fortune in St. Louis: the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South dissolved while the abolitionist branch began its recovery. In 1862, the Ebenezer congregation reorganized and renamed itself the Union Methodist Church of St. Louis in order to differentiate it further from the southern sympathizers.

Union Methodist Episcopal Church

In January of 1862 at a meeting held at the office of Reverend Dr. Charles D. Elliot, editor of *Central Christian Advocate*, a few Methodists whose businesses had brought

¹ Rev. Robert R. Witten, *Pioneer Methodism in Missouri and the Mission of Methodism*. (Springfield, MO: Witten, 1906). 9.

² John Brod Peters. *St. Louis Globe Democrat*. "Union Methodist Has Heritage of Loyalty." 24 January 1968.

³ J. Thomas Scharf. *History of St. Louis and St. Louis County*, (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts & Co., 1883) p. 1684.

⁴ *St. Louis Star and Times*. "A Church Born of the Civil War: Union Methodist Episcopal Had Its Origin in Little Ebenezer Chapel That Put Up Valiant Fight Against Slavery." 15 May 1933.

⁵ Scharf, p. 1684.

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them to St. Louis⁶ united with the remnants of Ebenezer Chapel and invited the Reverend Dr. Henry Cox of Chicago to lead the new congregation. The first home was the former Union Presbyterian Church at 11th and Locust Streets. But the congregation prospered under the direction of Dr. Cox, growing from 275 to 400 members in just two years. (Dr. Cox required each church member to take an oath of allegiance to the Union.⁷) By 1880, the decision had been made to move west and build a new church. On June 11, Trustees paid \$11,685 for land at the southwest corner of Garrison and Lucas Avenues (now Samuel Shepherd Drive) in the Stoddard Addition—a fashionable neighborhood known as Piety Hill. One month later a building permit was issued for a \$50,000 limestone church in the Gothic Revival style designed by St. Louis architect August M. Beinke (1846-1901).⁸

In 1990, in order to inventory and evaluate St. Louis' historic churches and synagogues, Landmarks Association of St. Louis embarked on a four-year, citywide survey. The final report evaluating over 350 properties dealt extensively with the origins, the local evolution and the enduring popularity of Gothic Revival. Originating in scholarly Anglican church movements of the 1840s and in the writings of John Ruskin and A. W. N. Pugin, the style was quickly exported to the American Episcopal Church where it became orthodox institutional policy. (Richard Upjohn, founder and first president of the American Institute of Architects, is often credited with popularizing Gothic Revival in the United States through his work and his publications.) Neoclassical St. Louis' first glimpse of Gothic Revival was introduced in Episcopal Christ Church's second building (1836-39), demolished. Gradually, other denominations during the late 1840s and 1850s replaced Greek temples with Gothic Revival structures, reflecting the growing national popularity of the style.

It was, however, just after the Civil War that Gothic Revival became the rule for St. Louis' major churches, many of which were built of stone following English models. The dramatic change in church design was noted by authors of Compton & Dry's *Pictorial St. Louis, 1875*:

⁶ Scharf, p. 1687.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The cost for one-thousand-seat building would actually total \$63,842.16. Scharf, p. 1688.

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During the past ten or twelve years a great change has taken place in the style of architecture.... Instead of box-like churches, without form or comeliness or fashioned like some of the Grecian or Roman temples, we have the graceful gothic or old English style of edifice, with turrets, spires, transepts, and arches. The introduction of Warrensburg stone, Ste. Genevieve stone and Scotch granite as building materials has done much to improve the architecture.⁹

Gothic Revival, as a result of influential 19th century English ecclesiologists, had almost become synonymous with "Christian." Thus, in order for a building to be properly churchly, the design must reflect the medieval style which embodied Christian ideals and spirituality. Such a mythologized vision of the Middle Ages idealizing construction of Gothic churches by humble, pious craftsmen (a vision in sharp contrast with the perceived secular cultural chaos of the 19th century) provided the rationale for establishing Gothic Revival as the only true Christian style—a belief which became a standard assumption reverberating deep into the 20th century.

One of the earliest surviving St. Louis examples is Centenary United Methodist Episcopal Church, South (NR 1-16-97) which was built in 1868 from plans by Thomas Dixon of Baltimore with supervision by local architect Jerome B. Legg. Young August Beinke followed Dixon in the tradition of the picturesque English Gothic style when he designed the Union Methodist Episcopal Church twelve years later. Both surviving early Methodist churches are built of rusticated stone, have a steeply pitched front-facing gable roof, an elaborate Gothic-arched tracery window and a square corner tower with buttressing. Union Methodist Episcopal also employs an open timber ceiling, typical of the English parish church type.

Union Methodist Episcopal may have been August M. Beinke's first ecclesiastical design. Born in 1846 in nearby Washington, Missouri, Beinke moved to St. Louis at age eighteen and found his first employment as a carpenter. By 1873, he is listed in the City Directory as an architect. It is unknown what led Union Methodist Episcopal to Beinke in 1880, especially for a substantial building in the English tradition. His next church

⁹ Rich J. Compton & Camille N. Dry. *Pictorial St. Louis-1875*. (reprint, St. Louis: Knight Publishing Co. and Harry M. Hagen, 1971), 79.

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design (St. James German Evangelical at 1507 E. College from 1887) was noted for its interpretation of the *Rundbogenstil*, or the German counterpart of Romanesque Revival.¹⁰ For his 1897 design of Zion German Methodist Episcopal Church at Virginia and Koeln, Beinke turned again to Gothic Revival. Both later churches were executed in brick rather than stone. From 1890 to 1894 Beinke was in a partnership with architect John L. Wees, but for most of his career he worked independently. His obituary in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* ranked him among the "best of his profession in the city."¹¹

The choice of limestone for Union Methodist Episcopal may have helped preserve the **main facades when a fire of electrical origin extensively damaged the building in 1911.** The fire started early on the morning of May 3. When it was discovered at 6:20 a.m. by thirteen-year-old Lester Volk, it had already consumed much of the church. Reporting that same day, a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reporter wrote:

Only the outer stone walls remain, and it is likely that the front wall, facing Lucas avenue, will be razed to prevent danger to passengers on Page [trolley] cars. The loss, estimated at \$50,000, was largely covered by insurance, but gifts toward a fund for rebuilding reached the pastor, the Rev. George Wood Anderson, while firemen were still playing hose on the ruins.¹²

Although a *Post-Dispatch* account stated that the fire did not damage the parish house, it did receive extensive smoke and water damage.¹³ Pastor Anderson and his mother, both of whom resided next door at 3008 Lucas Avenue (demolished 1972), had "narrow escapes of being burned to death."¹⁴

Plans to rebuild the church using most of the original walls were announced in late July; in September of 1911, a building permit for \$26,000 worth of repairs and rebuilding

¹⁰ Mary M. Stiritz. *St. Louis: Historic Churches and Synagogues*. (St. Louis: St. Louis Public Library and Landmarks Association of St. Louis, 1995) 53.

¹¹ *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. "August M. Beinke Dead, Prominent Architect Passes Away After Long Illness." 18 August 1901.

¹² *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Union M.E. Church Ruined by Fire; Six are Rescued." 3 May 1911.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Washington Metropolitan AME Zion files. "Plans Church Amid Fire." Unknown newspaper source. May 1911.

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designed by architect William Anelett Cann was issued to contractor J. C. Settle & Co. Said to have arrived in St. Louis in 1894 from the "south-west," Cann (about whom little is known) had already completed a similar assignment at the Dr. Fry Methodist Church at 2501 Clifton Avenue in the Clifton Heights neighborhood after it was devastated by a fire in 1905. His best known St. Louis works include the Lafayette Square Methodist Church from 1902 and the Taylor/Olive Building (NR 12/12/02) from 1904.

The composite Beinke/Cann church was rededicated on Sunday April 18, 1912 after a Friday night dinner for the architect, contractor and workmen. Over \$40,000 had been spent.¹⁵ But by 1912, the once-elite Piety Hill neighborhood was already in transition. In 1915, the congregation of Union Methodist Episcopal Church decided to sell their refurbished church at Garrison and Lucas and move into the former First Congregational Church in Midtown (NR 7/7/1978) at 3610 Grandel Square. (Union Methodist Episcopal remained at this location until 1952 when the church followed the migration to the suburbs and merged with Christ Methodist Church on Watson Road.)

Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was one of two "Colored" offshoots to emerge in the late 18th century from the Methodist Episcopal Church. James Varick and about thirty other members of the John Street Methodist Church in New York City petitioned Bishop Francis Asbury to hold separate meetings at the church in 1796. Although the group built a church in 1801, it continued to be led by the John Street Methodist Church minister until 1820 when the congregation voted officially to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church and publish its own *Book of Discipline*. Varick's group chose not to join the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which had formed in Philadelphia in 1787, because of differences in organizational structure.

The St. Louis congregation which became Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion church was organized about 1865 as home prayer meetings with the first known pastor, Gary Matthews. Within the same year the small group found a home at 4th and Market Streets. The church moved several times over the next few decades before

¹⁵ *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* "Architect, Contractor and Workmen Banquet Guests in Rebuilt Church." 27 April 1912.

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purchasing a lot on Lucas Avenue in what was then known as Piety Hill. Apparently, white neighbors gave the church \$500 more than it paid in order to convince the congregation to build in another location. The congregation then purchased a lot at 2625 Morgan (now Delmar) Street and built its first building (razed) in the 1880s.¹⁶ In the early 1900s the church became part of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Denomination, and was re-named the Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church after Rev. Jeremiah M. Washington who was pastor at the time.

When the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Garland Shaw became pastor in 1910, he found the congregation heavily in debt; but by 1913, Mississippi-born Shaw and the Trustees were able to raise the money to pay off the debt and dramatically increase membership.¹⁷ Dr. Shaw also became acquainted with Dr. Grant A. Robins, pastor at Union Methodist Episcopal. The pastors and trustees of both churches met many times, until an agreement was reached to sell the UME church to the Zion congregation for \$35,000.¹⁸

The upcoming move was front-page news in the February 26, 1915, edition of *The St. Louis Argus*: "Joy with tears will be witnessed at the Washington Metropolitan AME Zion Church Sunday. The joy of moving to their new home will be uppermost in the hearts of the congregation, and yet the fond recollection the old church, where most of the members found Christ, will doubtless bring tears to many. Dr. Shaw is expected to be at his best.... Sunday will be a great day in Zion."¹⁹ That report was followed by another story a week later extolling the congregation's ability pay off the debt for the Delmar property and acquire the commodious buildings at Garrison: "History making because there is no other church that is so well equipped with every convenience, owned and controlled by the colored people, in the world."²⁰

On March 7, 1915, Reverend Shaw led his flock on foot from their location on Morgan Street to their new home on Garrison Avenue. Washington Metropolitan AME Zion

¹⁶ "Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow: Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, December 31st, 1914 -May 30, 2002."

¹⁷ The Social Center of the Washington Metropolitan AME Zion Church. Argus Publishing Co. St. Louis, MO. 1916-1917.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Farewell Sermon In Old Church Sunday." 26 February 1915. Vol. III No. 47.

²⁰ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Zion Church to Move Sunday." 5 March 1915. Vol. III No. 48.

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church filled to capacity weekly with those coming to hear the charismatic Reverend Shaw in his new location. The congregation increased from 800 to 2,500 members. In addition, pastors throughout the country visited the church to give sermons; by the second week in its new home, the congregation was already welcoming bishops and pastors from North Carolina and Ohio. On nights that sermons were not given, the community could attend banquets or classes such as the "Business and Professional Men's Night" on March 16, 1915 or "Physical Education Night" two days later.²¹ In August, Shaw's congregation hosted a weeklong AME Zion conference attracting more than 200 bishops, general officers and delegates from around the country.

A visionary and yet a realist, Shaw grasped the potential of the new physical plant to provide educational opportunities and especially job training for blacks:

We must not overlook the fact that we have practically no factories, banks, great business houses, etc. to furnish employment for our people. And those that are built by other races are so unionized and overcome with the so-called race prejudice that we are prohibited from working side by side or at all in them. What are we to do with our boys and girls and our people in general? We must prepare them for the things they can get to do, and that is exactly the purpose of the Metropolitan Institutional Church. This is not an age of fools, but an age of intelligence, and intelligent help is wanted in every walk of life. We are therefore calling upon our white friends, who so thoroughly understand this situation, to help us maintain and carry on this work to greater success. No race can run fast while holding another race back.... To carry on this work adequately, \$3,000 annually is needed. Our only source of revenue is from the general public.²²

The success of pilot courses offered at Zion during the fall/winter of 1915-16 convinced Shaw to found the AME Zion Social Center in order to "render practicable service to the members of the church and community, that will enable them to live cleaner, better and more efficient lives."²³ Starting fall/winter of 1916/17, the center offered a number of

²¹ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Bishop Caldwell at Metropolitan Church Sunday." 12 March 1915. Vol. III No. 49.

²² *The Social Center of the Washington Metropolitan AME Zion Church*. Argus Publishing Co. St. Louis, MO. 1916-1917.

²³ *Ibid.*

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free classes including child study and home economics, literature, current events, music, writing and commercial law. (See figure 4.) Courses, taught by professionals who volunteered their services, were supervised by a Board of Directors which included Prof. Frank L. Williams and Jacob Myers—the principal and assistant principal at Sumner High School (NR 4/19/1988), the only high school for blacks in St. Louis at that time. Other teachers from Sumner volunteered to teach at the center (mostly evenings), as did prominent members of the community including a dentist, a lawyer and a well-known surgeon. An employment bureau, a library and a free dental clinic for children were also envisioned.

Figure 4: The Domestic Science Department: “The purpose of this course is to train good cooks for actual domestic service. We expect those who finish this course to successfully engineer the food laboratory of the home.”



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Shaw's work in St. Louis attracted national attention, especially his ability to raise funds. In 1916, Shaw turned down the position of national financial secretary for the AME Zion church (a considerable promotion and pay raise) in order to remain in St. Louis as pastor. The *Argus* noted that "many wealthy and prominent white residents in the West End joined the Negro friends" in urging Shaw to stay in St. Louis. His community work won him a gold medal for meritorious service from the AME Zion General Conference in Louisville in 1916 and the enthusiastic commendation of Mayor Henry W. Kiel who wrote in a letter of 1917:

My dear Dr. Shaw, Too often 'tis true that calamity or death must come along before we pay humble tribute to the virtues of our friends. Too often we fail to appreciate their kindly words and goodly deeds until too late for them to know. In acknowledging my esteem of a fellowman I do not want to wait so long. I must needs decorate him with the laurels that he now deserves. And so with you, I feel impelled to place a wreath of glory on your brow...."²⁴

The *Argus* added to the tributes of the pastor with its warm reviews of Zion's physical plant: "St. Louis has no place of greater worship and a place of socializing...and here is what makes it so: the large spacious auditorium with its circling galleries, its great pipe organ with chime attachments, the ladies' and gentlemen's parlors...the unequalled hospitality of the members and friends of the church, and its affable, congenial and lovable pastor, Dr. B. G. Shaw, makes the above named church one of the greatest in the country."²⁵

Although the building continued to be a source of strength and admiration for the congregation, it was also a grave concern for Shaw due to the burden of substantial operating expenses on top of interest on the outstanding loan. Shaw, in spite of misgivings from some members, embarked in the fall of 1917 on a fast-track rally to raise \$5,000. Near the end of the faltering fund drive, he approached the Board of Trustees of Union Methodist Episcopal Church and asked them to forgive the \$5,000 interest owed on the church property. On a Sunday morning late in December, Mr. G. H. Roose from

²⁴ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Dr. B. G. Shaw Returns to City." 26 May 1916. Vol. V No. 7.

²⁵ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Metropolitan, the Social Center for the Knights of Pythias." 17 August 1917. Vol. VI No. 18.

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Union appeared at the rostrum of Zion. After paying splendid tribute to Dr. Shaw as a friend and a leader, Roose announced the surprising news that Union M.E. Church had voted to deduct \$7,000 rather than \$5,000 from the debt, stating, in part:

They [Union church members] have watched and noted the wonderful work you are doing. They loved the walls of old Union Church and while they were sad when compelled to leave, they are now happy and greatly rejoice because those same walls now house a Colored people who have come to victory. You have made good. This old Union Church with all her splendid history, with her glorious work of the past and present, must bow to your wonderful achievements, is compelled to do you homage.²⁶

Roose also commented that the time Shaw had to spend raising money to pay Union was taking away time needed for his own important programs. "This church is in a position to set the pace of practical Christianity for all the Colored people in this great country. Fortunate are the members of this church in having such a leader. Happy they should be in having a minister who is beloved and honored by all men, a man who thoroughly understands the conditions and needs of his own race as well as the environments in which he is placed."²⁷

The \$7,000 debt reduction from Union combined with gifts from members (and a ten-dollar-a month pledge from Mayor Kiel) brought the total "raised" to \$9,620 in just eight weeks. "When the news leaked out, many stated that Dr. Shaw stood out as being the foremost representative of the AME Zion Church in the great middle west. It was freely predicted that his great work in St. Louis would doubly entrench him as a successful candidate for bishop."²⁸

The prophecy would come true, but not before Shaw experienced unprecedented hostility in St. Louis. Perhaps it was jealousy that inspired G. K. Robinson (editor of the short-lived *St. Louis Independent-Clarion*) to attack Shaw in a muckraking story published in March 30, 1918. Capitalizing on Shaw's presence at the black-owned Keystone saloon when twenty-four men were arrested for vagrancy (all were released), the *Clarion* declared that Shaw was a regular customer of the "Hellhole" who had disgraced his race.

²⁶ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Dr. Shaw Scores Signal Victory" 21 Dec. 1917.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

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A long letter to the *Clarion* from Shaw along with a testimonial from Detective Cooper, the arresting officer, appeared on the front page of the April 5, 1918, edition of the *Argus*. Shaw called statements attributed to him in the *Clarion* the "blackest of untruths." Readily acknowledging that he had indeed been at the Keystone during the "so-called" raid, Shaw countered: "My only mission to the saloons and poolrooms of this city was to invite them to a high and nobler life. Yes, I was there, preaching and trying to save souls for the Kingdom of God, while our managing editor of the *Clarion*, who is a Christian and steward in the Church of God, has been there drinking. The proprietor said he had served him himself."²⁹

The friction between Robinson and Shaw would simmer and erupt again in early 1919. Meanwhile, his ardent supporters at the *Argus* reported triumphantly that Shaw's "conquering article" had thwarted attempts to cheat blacks out of their franchise at the last general election. In response to that success, Shaw "evoked one congratulation after another from both white and black citizens." The *Argus* also remarked in astonishment that after closing the church for more than five weeks because of the influenza epidemic, Shaw had managed to raise over \$4,000 in one night. "Dr. Shaw grows in popularity and in favor with the citizens of St. Louis, white and black."³⁰

The next public disagreement between Shaw and the editor of the *Clarion* started with a hoax in which both men had been fooled. Also misled were other ministers (Wm. H. Peck, Geo. E. Stevens, N. I. Smith, B. F. Abbott, J. K. Parker, O. C. Maxwell and S. A. Mosley) who along with Shaw had unknowingly engaged an out-of-town charlatan to head a patriotic ceremony at the Coliseum honoring Negro troops' contribution to the War. A February 22, 1919 *Clarion* story about the hoax "B. G. Shaw, the Hun of Christianity" (countered first by Shaw in the Feb. 28 *Argus*) was quickly followed by libel lawsuit filed by Shaw in Circuit Court seeking \$10,000 in actual and \$10,000 in punitive damages.³¹

The 10th anniversary of Shaw's arrival in St. Louis (attracting two AME Zion Bishops) was observed with a two-day celebration at the church in late December of 1919. A little

²⁹ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Clarion Charged with Falsifying." 5 April 1918.

³⁰ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Rev. Shaw Scores Another Victory at Zion Church." 29 November 1918.

³¹ *The St. Louis Argus*. "Rev. Shaw Sues St. Louis Clarion." 7 March 1919.

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over two months later, the *Argus* ran a prominent feature reporting that other members of the clergy had intervened to force a settlement in the libel suit after the jury had been selected and opening statements made. Shaw was awarded \$250 in damages by *Clarion* editor Robinson, who acknowledged that he had slandered Shaw, promised to retract the allegations in his newspaper and to repent.³²

Dr. Benjamin Garland Shaw delivered his farewell message to St. Louis as a guest pastor at Union Memorial Church (razed) in late July 1920. Less than a month later, the *Argus* carried a front-page story (dateline Richmond, Virginia) announcing Shaw's appointment as a Vicar Bishop of the AME Zion denomination.³³

The activist tradition Shaw established at Zion would live on. Dr. T. J. Moppins, his immediate successor, used the pulpit to urge women to exercise carefully their newly won franchise and to condemn the apparent resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. In 1923, he was elected head of the Equal Rights League at its annual meeting in Brooklyn, New York. His replacement, the Rev. Harrison H. Jackson (a graduate of Livingstone College) served until his death in 1932. Dr. W. A. Cooper was appointed pastor in 1940. An attorney, author and artist, Cooper is credited in church records with reestablishing important links to the white community—especially to philanthropist Joseph Sunnen who agreed to fund half the cost of a \$100,000 refurbishing complete in 1953. (Sunnen's work on behalf of the church is remembered by a small chapel named in his honor.)³⁴ Later ministers were active in the Civil Rights Movement and in the production of more than 300 units of apartments and townhouses in the neighborhood for low and middle-income residents.³⁵ Although the ambitious job training and education programs established by Shaw did not survive for long after his tenure, new ministries continued to develop. Some from the 1990s dealt with the helping the homeless, the addict and the prison population. The most recent minister, Anthony Witherspoon, has looked toward public/private partnerships to help convert the Art Deco 9th District Police Station into a Community Center.

³² *The St. Louis Argus*. "Rev. Shaw Gets \$250 Damages." 5 March 1920.

³³ *The St. Louis Argus*. 20 August 1920.

³⁴ Stewart, John T. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. "Negro Church Aided by White Layman." 25 July 1953

³⁵ John A. Wright. *Discovering African American St. Louis, A Guide to Historic Sites*. (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 2002), p. 37.

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There is reason to believe that Washington Metropolitan AME Zion could merit consideration for significance under Ethnic Heritage and that Dr. Shaw's contributions to St. Louis history are worthy of special note. Unfortunately, there are not enough secondary sources to help place this particular history into the larger city context. There is not even a detailed history of the church. Exhaustive reading through the *Argus*, the city's longest running black newspaper, might provide additional useful information. So could archives (not available online or by request) at Livingstone College (North Carolina), which was organized in 1879 for aspiring clergy in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

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Boundary Description

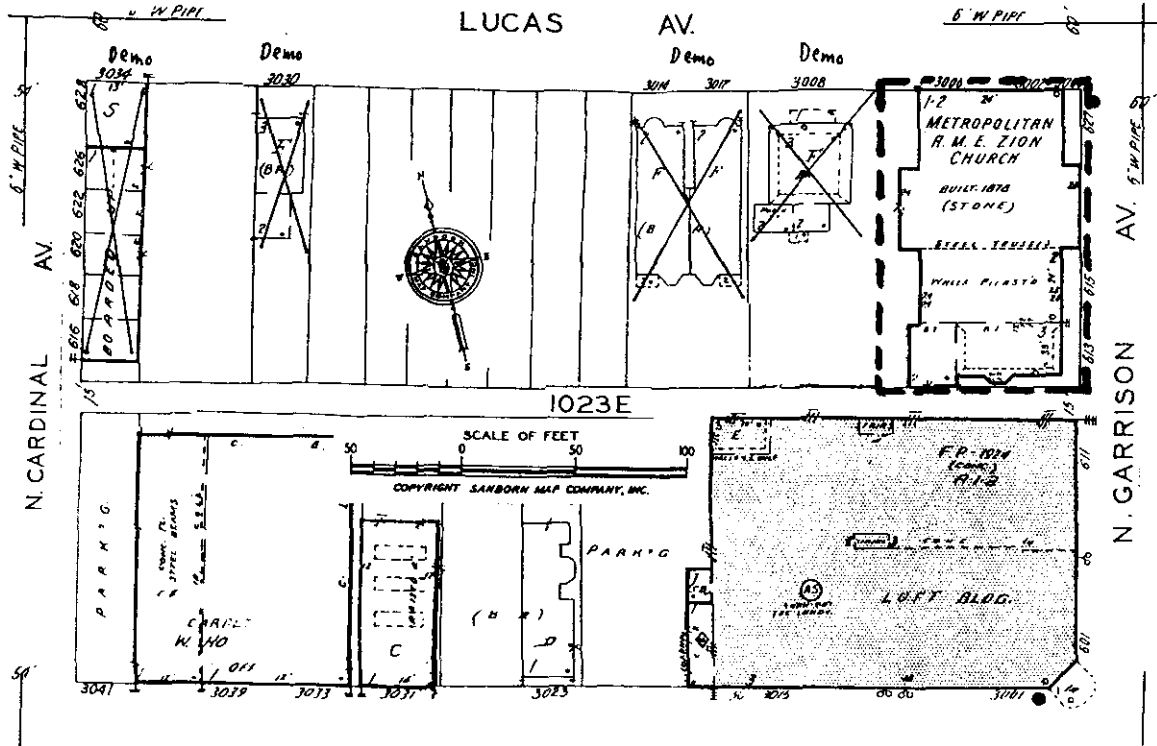
The nominated parcel is located at 613 N. Garrison Avenue on City Block 1023E (formerly 1022) in St. Louis, Missouri. The site is legally known by the Assessor's Office as parcel number 00102303090. The parcel is block 58 of Stoddard's Addition to St. Louis and includes lots 42-45. The property measures approximately 100 feet by 134 feet, 8 inches. The nominated parcel is indicated by a dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Boundary Map."

Boundary Justification

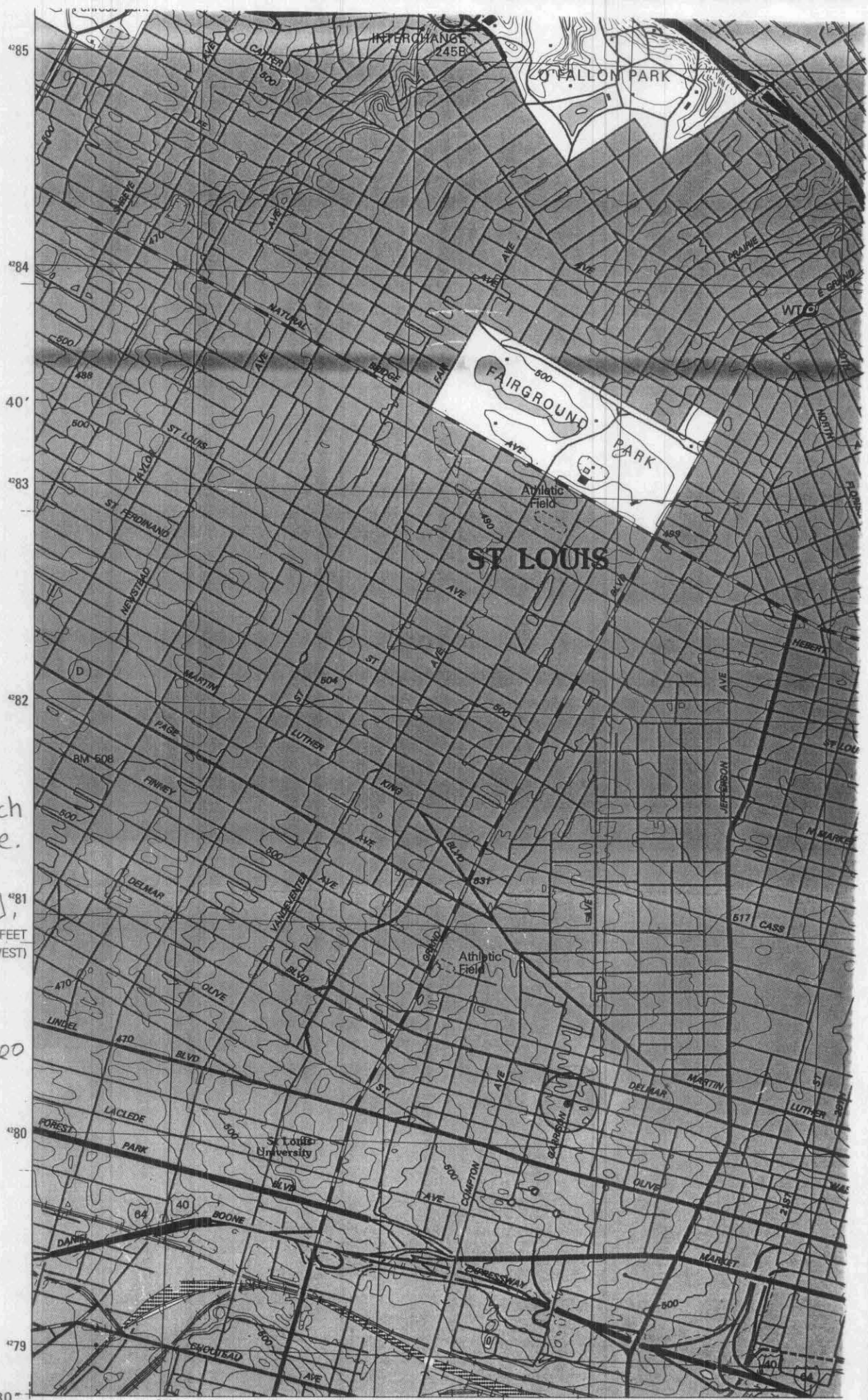
The nominated parcel includes all of the property historically associated with the Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Washington Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Boundary Map

Source: Sanborn Map Company, v. 2W, plate 29, circa 1968.



4280 200
741 860



WMAMEZ Church
613 Garrison Ave.
St. Louis
[Independent City],
MO
Zone 15
Easting 741 860
Northing 4280 200

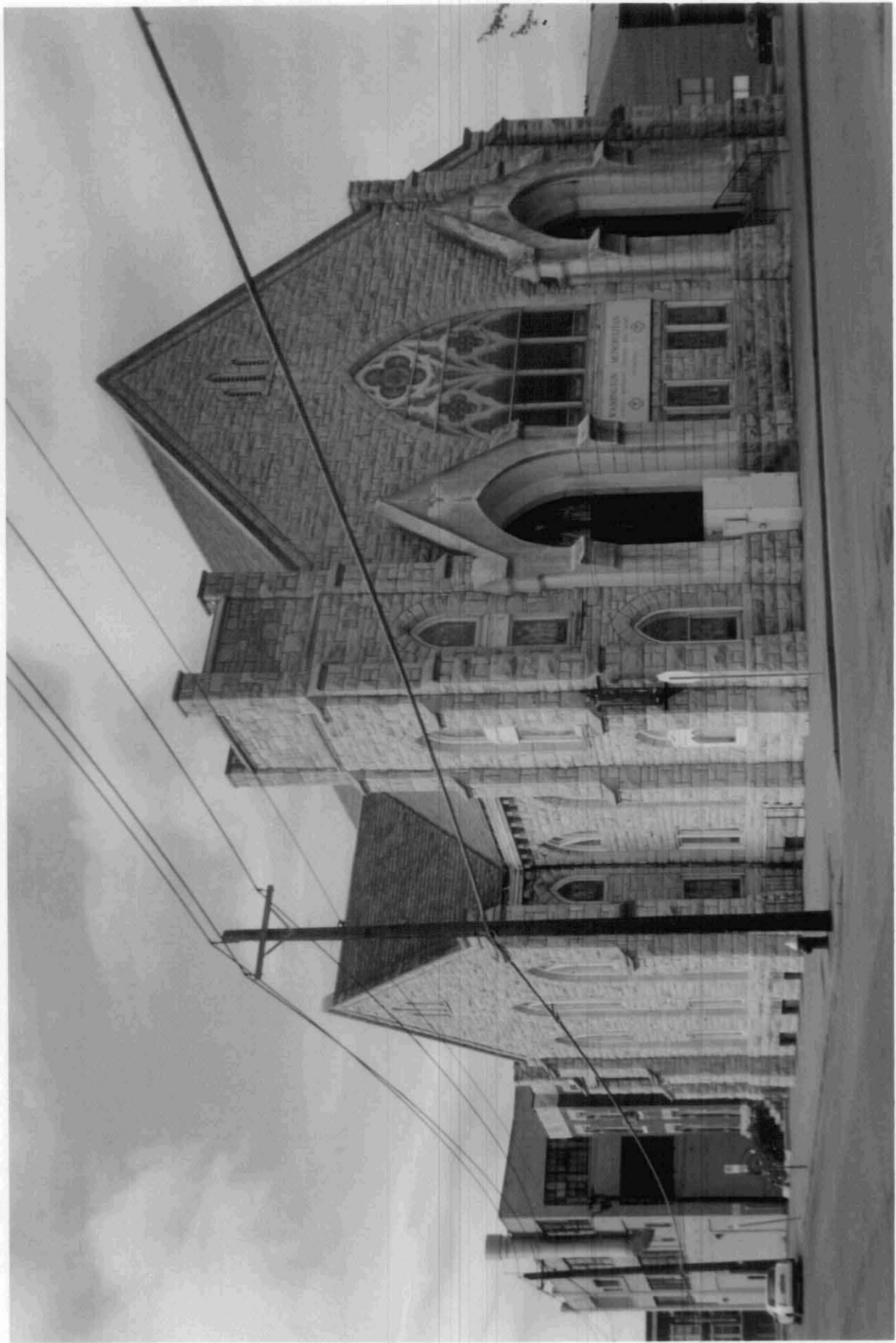
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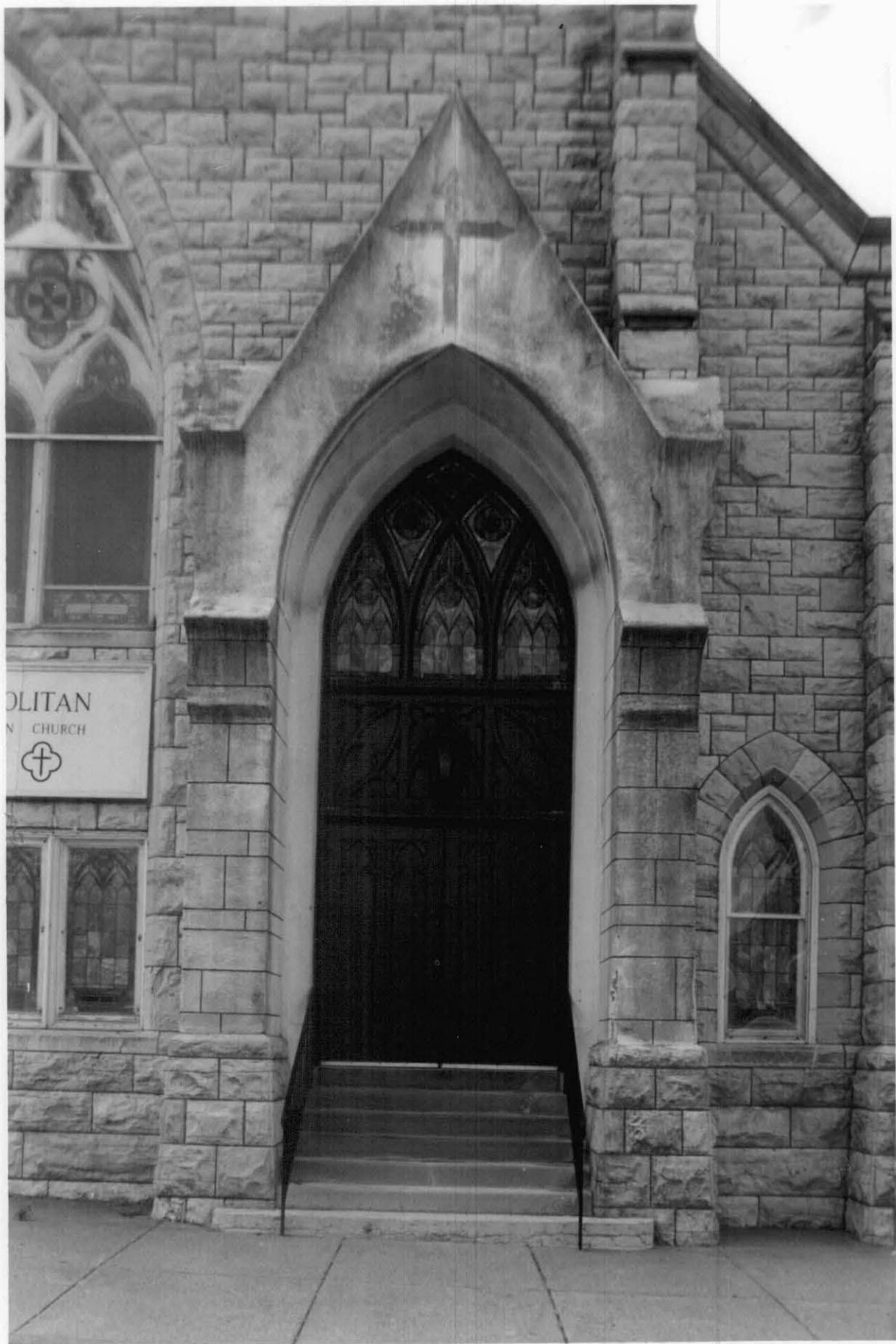
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