

PH0357324

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 3 1976
DATE ENTERED	AUG 11 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC *1.1* \*\*

St. Joseph's African Methodist Episcopal Church

AND/OR COMMON

Same

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Fayetteville Street at the Durham Expressway

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Durham

VICINITY OF

4th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Durham

063

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Durham Redevelopment Commission, Benjamin Perry, Director

STREET & NUMBER

First National Bank Building

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Durham

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Durham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Durham

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> _EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> _UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> _RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> _ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> _MOVED    DATE_____
<input type="checkbox"/> _FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> _UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church, built in 1891 by Philadelphia architect Samuel L. Leary, stands as one of Durham's more interesting vernacular examples of late Victorian religious architecture. In both plan and composition it is a highly eclectic work, combining the dense massing of Richardsonian Romanesque with elements culled from the Gothic Revival and, to a lesser extent, from the Neo-classical movement.

The church shell, a basilican form eight bays long and three wide, is built of locally fired brick laid in one-to-five common bond and is covered by a steep gable roof sheathed with broad alternating bands of imbricated and regular slate shingles. The whole stands on a brick foundation stuccoed to a height just including the projecting water table. The main (east) facade is dramatized by a two-story square tower slightly projecting from its southern bay. The tower has a louvered belfry and a tall tapering pyramidal spire crowned by an elaborate cast iron finial. Stepped diagonal buttresses, each terminating in a truncated pyramidal-capped bartizan, support the tower and complement the stepped buttresses which reinforce the remainder of the structure. Each bay is punctuated by a tall stained glass lancet window outlined by radiating voussoirs along haunch and crown. A shallow chancel, three bays wide and one deep, projects from the north elevation in the form of a residual transept. The chancel is covered by a low gable roof which features pronounced return ends. In the center of the gable end is a small oculus ornamented with bar tracery. Two severely attenuated lancet windows pierce either outer bay.

The central entrance of the main facade consists of a paneled double door flanked by two-pane sidelights and surmounted by a six-light transom above which is a flat-paneled lintel. The round arched tympanum is filled with stained glass bearing the church name. The easternmost bays of both north and south elevations contain similar pointed-arched entrances of smaller scale.

Classicizing elements also appear on the main facade. In the center of the elevation is a large oculus given a classical context through the use of three courses of radiating voussoirs with four equilaterally placed raised keystones. A unique element is the stained glass portrait of Washington Duke, benefactor of the church, which appears in the center of the oculus surrounded by five bands of concentric circles. Directly above is a lancet sash flanked by smaller one-over-one sash windows. The three openings are knit together by a contiguous pattern of radiating voussoirs so as to form a quasi-Palladian window.

The interior of the church is particularly notable in that the plan orientation is turned at a forty-five degree angle to the axis of the basilican shell thus forming a semi-elliptical radiating plan typical of low church architecture. While the exterior elevation implies that the chancel is in the west end, opposite the main entrance, the chancel is in fact located along the northern side. This juxtaposition of two contradictory types results in a high level of architectural tension, thereby creating a dynamism otherwise lacking in the plan and the elevation when viewed as disparate elements.

Framing the chancel recess is a broadly splayed elliptical transverse arch with flat paneled soffit and archivolt. Engaged reeded posts resting on paneled plinths

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1891 (begun)

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Samuel L. Leary

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church, built in 1891, is a handsome eclectic Gothic Revival church, its exterior form providing an interesting foil to its plan; the fabric is well-preserved, including the vividly painted pressed tin ceiling. The product of cooperation between blacks and whites, the ambitious brick building is expressive of the prominent black community in Durham, outstanding for its early advances in business and education; among the members of the church have been some of the state's most important black leaders.

As early as 1850 there was a post office established at Durhamville, a village settlement named in honor of Dr. Barlett Snipes Durham, on whose land it was located. In 1854 Dr. Durham gave permission for the directors of the North Carolina Railroad to establish a depot on four acres of his land, and the present day city of Durham is the result. Durham's Station eventually became one of the capitals of tobacco trade and cigarette manufacture.

Soon after the end of the Civil War a number of Negroes made their way into the settlement; some purchased land to farm, while others pursued trades. There was from the outset a spirit of cooperation between blacks and whites in Durham's Station, which produced the North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company, and the first black newspaper, bank and hospital.

In 1868 the Reverend Edian D. Markam, a former fugitive slave and a native of Pasquotank County, North Carolina, returned to North Carolina from Canada and settled in Durham's Station, where he purchased from Mrs. Minerva Fowler a small piece of land. On August 20, 1869, he established a six-man congregation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, under the supervision of Bishop Payne of the South Carolina Conference. The first building is described as a "bush arbor" shelter, consisting of four poles with a brush roof, soon replaced by a log church in which Markham taught children during the week and held services on Sunday. This is said to have been the first school for Negroes in Durham. Markham gave the land to the congregation and moved on, leaving fifteen members. Within a few years the Reverend George Hunter, who had replaced the Reverend Lewis Edwards, Markham's successor, erected a frame building, followed a few years later by yet a more substantial frame building. All of these buildings were named "Union Bethel" to honor the first A. M. E. church, organized in Philadelphia by Richard Allen in 1787, and they all stood within four hundred feet of the present church building.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Boyd, William Kenneth. The Story of Durham. (Durham) 1925.  
 Valentine, Rev. J. A. History of St. Joseph's A. M. E. Church. (Durham) 1944  
 Dula, William C. and Simpson, A., C. Durham and Her People. (Durham) 1951  
 Durham County Records, Durham County Courthouse, Durham, North Carolina.  
 Durham County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 1/2

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 | 681951010 | 3984273  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B    |    |     
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C    |    |   

D    |    |   

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mary Alice Hinson, Description; John B. Flowers III, Significance

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Department of Cultural Resources, Div. Archives & History 5 April 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-4763

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

N.S. 27611

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

LOCAL   

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Lamy E. Jim*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 5 April 1976

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Acting*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

*8/11/76*

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

*8-9-76*

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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support the molded impostes at either lateral end of the spring line. A huge, highly ornate pipe organ acts as the focal point of the chancel, centered between the two slender lancet windows.

The altar rail, an Eastlake-style balustrade, bows out into the body of the church, following the contours of the four sections of curving pews. The pews, presumably of a later date, feature scrolled arms above flat-paneled lancet arches. Both east and west sides contain full-length second story wooden galleries which vigorously curve outward along their southern ends. Each gallery is supported by three slender columns and is enclosed by a boldly turned balustrade above a two-tiered flat paneled wainscot identical to that which trims the first-floor walls.

The most dramatic feature of the interior is the treatment of the ceiling. A two-tiered art nouveau chandelier hangs over the center aisle. Buttercup-shaped opalescent glass light fixtures encircle the stem. Pendant drops, terminating in open quatrefoils, fall from the base of each upper tier light fixture. Sheathing the timber frame roof construction is a polychromed pressed tin ceiling. The flamboyant color scheme is composed of a brilliant turquoise accented by gold and superimposed on an off-white field. The ceiling design consists of large coffers formed by rectilinear bands of reeding enriched by plaited ribbons. Identically trimmed diamonds fill each square. Elaborate floral bosses decorate each intersection of the coffer borders. Filling the margin around each coffer is a band of guilloche molding intertwined with delicate avillan crosses. Exposed purlins, decorated with stylized curvilinear ornamentation, divide the interior into three longitudinal areas at right angles to the placement of the pews.

The narthex ceiling is covered by a diaper pattern with a huge octagonal band of guilloche molding inset with tiny fleur-de-lis. The cornice consists of a row of egg-and-dart trim beneath which is a broad border of fleur-de-lis set within elliptical moldings. Roundel wreath medallions occur at each corner of the ceiling. The south end of the narthex contains a stair room to the bell tower. The stair is closed string with a quarter-turn plus landing per story. It features a molded handrail, turned balusters, and a square-in-section chamfered newel with a bluntly beveled pyramidal cap.

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PAGE one

In 1890 a committee was named and plans began for a larger structure. Samuel L. Leary of Philadelphia, whom Washington Duke had brought to Durham to design tobacco buildings, was chosen architect, and the cornerstone was laid in 1891. The Reverend A. J. Chambers was minister of the church at the time, and it was several years later before the building was completed.

The brick for the church were fired in the brickyards of Robert B. Fitzgerald, a black who came to Durham's Station from Pennsylvania in 1866, established his brickworks and eventually became first president of the Mechanics and Farmers Bank when it was established in February, 1907. Early on in the building of the church Washington Duke and Julian S. Carr, tobacco capitalists, contributed heavily to the building fund, and memorial windows in the church sanctuary commemorate their generosity. The name of the church was changed to St. Joseph's A. M. E. Church in 1891.

When the church was completed it was said to be the most handsome church of this denomination in the South. When Booker T. Washington visited Durham about the turn of the century, he said, "In all my traveling I have never seen a finer Negro church than St. Joseph." Through the years St. Joseph's, and the White Rock Baptist Church (whose handsome stone building dating from 1896, was razed a few years ago to make way for the city expressway), were centers for the recruitment of blacks for the capitalistic enterprises that Washington, John Merrick, Dr. Aaron M. Moore, Charles C. Spaulding and other Negro leaders, advocated.

Among the notable pioneer members of the church who have been leaders in the Negro community were John Merrick, founder of North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company, today the largest black owned business in the United States; John M. Avery, vice-president and secretary of North Carolina Mutual; Professor William G. Pearson, one of the earliest and best known black educators in North Carolina; E. D. Mickle, a pioneer in the commercial life of Durham; and Dr. Stanford L. Warren, pioneer black physician, for whom a local public library is named.

The church, now the oldest in Durham still in use, has been sold to the Durham Redevelopment Commission. A new church is now under construction, and the congregation expects to move into it sometime in November, 1975, at which time St. Joseph's will be abandoned. A local bi-racial committee has been formed to explore the possibilities of saving the building and using it adaptively for civic purposes.

The importance of the church to the black community cannot be underestimated. Since slavery days the black preacher was often the key figure in black society; and the church was the one institution that was relatively free of white impingements. For this reason religion occupied a central place in the Blacks' experience. Religious imagery often was a cloak for yearnings for freedom. After emancipation the church became institutionalized through the construction of places of worship and black religion moved from bush arbors to brick edifices. St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church became

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a community center. The first school for Durham's blacks was begun by the minister. The pioneer congregation was composed of persons who contributed significantly to the commercial, cultural, and educational life of black's in North Carolina and the South. In the twentieth century it was a center for Durham's civil rights activities.

In addition, an important feature of bi-racial cooperation in North Carolina since Reconstruction has been a unique working relationship between certain members of the black and white community. St. Joseph's A.M.E. Church is an example of this cooperation. During the last decade of the nineteenth century white tobacco capitalists gave generous donations to the building fund, and today, white citizens are active supporters of the church's preservation and adaptive use.