

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Iredell County

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER E side S. Center Street between W. Bell
and Garfield Streets (one N of Garfield)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Statesville

VICINITY OF

9th

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Iredell

CODE

097

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church
c/o Rev. G. J. Christopher

STREET & NUMBER

537 S. Center Street

CITY, TOWN

Statesville

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 28677

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Iredell County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Statesville

STATE

North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Laura A. W. Phillips (Winston-Salem)

ORGANIZATION

Consultant for Survey and Planning Branch

DATE

February 4, 1980

STREET & NUMBER

Archives and History

TELEPHONE

919/733-6545

CITY OR TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church, located just north of the northeast corner of S. Center and Garfield Streets in Statesville, was built in 1903 as the third church structure of the congregation on this site.

The late Gothic Revival common bond brick church is three bays wide, seven bays deep, and has a steep gable roof covered with pressed tin. The brickwork detail is quite elaborate. The front boasts two corner entrance towers of unequal height. The south tower is the larger of the two with three stages. The first stage has two pointed-arch entrances. The second and third stages contain pairs of pointed-arch louvered vents on each face. Corbelled brick string courses and brick corner stiles define each stage. The tower is topped by projecting corbelled corners with pyramidal finials. The north tower is smaller with only two stages: a smaller pointed-arch door at the base and only one louvered vent per face on the second level. Above the corbelled cornice is a pyramidal roof.

A large, pointed arch stained glass window is the central feature of the lively facade. Above this window and near the peak of the gable is a round window with a Star of David muntin design. On either side of the large stained glass window are unusual lozenge-shaped projections in the brickwork. The facade has a brick string course about one-third of the way up the wall, and a brick corbelled cornice matching that used on the towers outlines the gable.

The side elevations exhibit pointed-arch stained glass windows with brick arched labels and brick pilasters between windows. A brick and cinderblock addition is attached to the rear of the building.

The interior was not accessible.

6 SIGNIFICANCE

_____ NATIONAL

_____ STATE

 X

_____ LOCAL

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 1903

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church, constructed in 1903, is the oldest structure associated with a black congregation in Statesville. The Methodist congregation, established as Mt. Pleasant in 1868 or 1869, was one of many that formed its own church within the black community soon after the Civil War. The Gothic Revival style of the building, executed in intricate corbeled, paneled, and molded brickwork, is characteristic of the substantial churches built for many black congregations as they gained permanence and prosperity.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Associated with the founding after the Civil War and growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century of black church congregations, especially A.M.E. Zion. These congregations were a focal point of post-Civil War black communities.
- C. Exemplifies the handsome brickwork and late Gothic Revival style characteristic of many turn-of-the-century churches, especially those erected for black congregations. These may reflect the influence of church building publications as yet unidentified.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Center Street African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is the oldest structure associated with a black congregation within Statesville.¹ Constructed in 1903, it is the congregation's third home on the site.²

Antebellum church rolls list numerous "coloured" communicants attending the services of the white dominated congregations of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.³ However, shortly after the Civil War blacks withdrew and established their own congregations. Black Methodists in Statesville, led by Sidney S. Murdock and Alfred Bailey, organized a congregation known as Mt. Pleasant in 1868 or 1869.⁴ Murdock, who served as pastor to the congregation until 1886, donated a lot on South Center Street within the Negro community known as "Depot Hill."⁵ Soon the group became aligned with the A.M.E. Zion denomination, and the name of the church became known as Center Street.

The Gothic Revival brick church that presently occupies the lot is the third structure associated with the congregation on that site. It was constructed during the forceful pastorate of the Reverend W. A. Blackwell.⁶ The two prior churches were of frame construction.

Long prominent in denominational affairs, three of the congregation's ministers later were consecrated bishops; George Lincoln Blackwell, Lynwood Westinghouse Kyles, and William Andrew Stewart.⁷ The church is in use and is maintained by the congregation.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

¹Ruth Little-Stokes, compiler, An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Iredell County, North Carolina (Raleigh and Statesville: Iredell County, City of Statesville and Town of Mooresville in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1978), 90.

²The (Statesville) Landmark, June 26, 1903.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 7	5, 1, 0, 3, 8, 0	3, 9, 5, 9, 2, 4, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Tract 16, Block C, Map 7A-5, Statesville Township, consisting of a city lot.

The property being nominated consists of the church and the city lot on which it stands.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received **OCT 2 1980**

date entered

Iredell County

Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

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Footnotes (Cont'd)

³Homer M. Keever, Iredell Piedmont County (Statesville: Iredell County Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 329.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.; William Jacob Walls, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Reality of the Black Church (Charlotte: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, 1974), 428. Hereinafter cited as Walls, A.M.E. Zion Church.

⁶Cornerstone, Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church, Statesville, North Carolina.

⁷Walls, A.M.E. Zion Church, 590-591, 593, 609.