

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Grace African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, MK0049, Listed 5/15/2008

Nomination by Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.

Photographs by Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc., August 2007



Façade view



Side view

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Grace A.M.E. Zion Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 219-223 South Brevard Street not for publication N/A

city or town Charlotte vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

North Carolina Department of Cultural 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 commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<u> </u> entered in the National Register <u> </u> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<u> </u> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<u> </u> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<u> </u> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<u> </u> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<u> </u> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Grace A.M.E. Zion Church
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

Sub: religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE

Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stucco
roof Slate
walls Brick

other Stone
Wood

Narrative Description

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

See Continuation Sheet, Section 7, Page 1.

Grace A.M.E. Zion Church
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
County and State

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 a 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

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: black

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1902-1957

Significant Dates

1902

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hayden, Wheeler and Schwend (architects)

Smith, William W. (builder/contractor)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See Continuation Sheet, Section 8, Page 1.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Section 9, page 1

See Continuation Sheet,

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: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte

Grace A.M.E. Zion Church
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.272 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 514380 3897600
2

Zone Easting Northing
3
4
 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description
See Continuation Sheet.

Boundary Justification
See Continuation Sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Mattson and Frances Alexander

organization Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc. date 20 July 2007

street & number 2228 Winter Street telephone (704) 376-0985/(704) 358-9841

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28205

12. 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

street & number 2100 Randolph Road telephone (704) 376-9115

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28207

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

7. Narrative Description

Facing west, Grace African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church occupies a narrow, urban lot on South Brevard Street in downtown Charlotte. A small lawn supported by an oval-topped, concrete retaining wall separates the church from the street. Once the city's principal African American residential and business district known as Brooklyn, the area around the church is now dominated by modern commercial buildings, parking lots, and a public park (Marshall Park). Parking lots, including one for the church, are located directly to the north and east, and a modern, one-story commercial building stands immediately to the south, obstructing the view of the church's south elevation. The 1921 Mecklenburg Investment Company Building (National Register 1982), a three-story, polychromatic brick commercial structure erected for the use of African American professionals, stands two lots south of Grace Church at the corner of South Brevard and East Second streets.

Grace Church is an ornate, Gothic Revival edifice with exterior walls of deep red brick with red tinted mortar joints. The stuccoed brick foundation rises three feet to a water table. The foundation is scored to simulate coursed stone. Facing South Brevard Street, the main (west) elevation is flanked by two crenellated entry towers of unequal height that are supported by buttresses. The towers have matching Gothic arched entrances that consist of double leaf, eight-foot tall, five panel, oak doors set in heavily molded, wood surrounds and capped by intricate, stained glass transoms. Unless otherwise stated, windows and doors on the exterior are defined by Gothic arched, brick header courses and have rough cut granite keystones and sills.

The north tower exceeds forty feet in height, and its four sides have corbelled brick bands, projecting corner lanterns featuring copper pinnacles and crockets, and soaring lancet openings. A cornerstone with the church's construction date and the inscription, "Deo Religion Et Temperantiae" (God, Religion, and Temperance), is located the base of the tower's northwest corner. Wood trim inserts create trefoil patterns at the top of the lancets above louvered vents. Located at the bottom of the lancet openings, windows with diamond-shaped lights illuminate the tower interior. Treated with corbelled brick bands, the shorter south tower is less ornamented than the north. The only tower opening above the entrance is the segmental arched window with its diamond-shaped lights, jack arch, and granite sill.

Situated between the two towers, the main block of the church has a slate shingled, hip roof and steeply pitched gables with heavily molded, wood cornices centered on the front and side elevations. The gabled bays are framed by corbelled pilasters that rise to pinnacled lanterns with crockets. The bays are punctuated by large, stained glass, Gothic arched windows that flood the sanctuary with a soft, natural light. These wood sash windows have wood tracery in their arches. Above the windows, small, louvered vents, with pointed arches and wooden, trefoil patterns, are capped by lintels of brick headers with brick keystones. Shorter, corbelled pilasters support the granite sills.

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The north and south elevations of the church share similar decorative elements including sanctuary windows flanked by smaller, stained glass windows with decorative, brick and stone treatment. Double, corbelled brick bands run the length of the walls. Small, louvered vents with granite sills are located in the gables above the sanctuary windows. On the north elevation, a projecting, crenellated entry bay echoes the two main towers in its arched openings, paneled oak doorway with stained glass transom, decorative corbelling, and corner buttresses. To the rear of the north elevation (northeast corner of the church), a one-over-one, segmental arched window is flanked by two shed-roofed, brick appendages. A stairwell between these appendages descends to a modern, metal basement door sheltered by a shed-roofed canopy. The north elevation also contains a mid-twentieth century entrance ramp of stuccoed concrete block, scored to match the foundation. The south elevation of the church includes a brick chimney stack capped by brick corbelling and a projecting bay that accommodates the apse in the southeast corner of the sanctuary. This bay has a flat parapet and three bands of corbelled brickwork.

The simple, three-bay rear elevation has segmental arched, one-over-one, wood sash windows and a pair of brick chimney stacks with corbelled brick caps. As with the north side of the church, a corner stairwell capped by a modern, metal canopy leads to a basement doorway.

Inside the church, the large, square sanctuary has a diagonal auditorium plan with concentric arcs of original, oak pews facing the slightly raised, curved chancel. A low rail with turned balusters encloses the chancel. The complex, coffered, wood ceiling is striking as rounded and beaded wood ribs and beaded board panels form angular and sloping patterns of rectangles and triangles. The central ceiling panel features a cutwork sunburst design. Original Gothic Revival, metal and glass light fixtures are suspended from the ceiling which is bordered by a wide, molded cornice.

A parish hall adjoins the sanctuary. Except for one, five-panel door next to the chancel, the original paneled doors that separated the parish hall from the sanctuary have been removed and are stored in the unfinished basement. An original, molded surround with decorative bull's-eye blocks frames the large opening. The scalloped frieze is modern, and modern sheetrock walls now enclose two smaller rooms within the parish hall. Original pine flooring remains intact in all the rooms. Plaster walls and four-foot high, beaded board wainscoting are found throughout the interior.

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Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

8. Statement of Significance

Grace A.M.E. Zion Church meets National Register Criterion A for African American heritage and social history, Criterion C for architecture, and Criteria Consideration A as a religious property, the primary importance of which is historical and architectural. The church has local significance and survives as a rare and important tangible reminder of the Brooklyn neighborhood, Charlotte's principal African American community in the early twentieth century. In common with other major black churches in the early twentieth-century South, Grace Church was important as a central gathering place and community landmark. The parishioners at Grace Church included a number of the city's black elite, many of whom lived and worked in Brooklyn. Located in the Second Ward of Charlotte, Brooklyn was demolished during urban renewal campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s. The residents relocated to a variety of neighborhoods in Charlotte, but Grace Church continued to play a central role in the lives of its members.

Grace Church stands as one of the oldest of the remaining African American churches associated with Charlotte's historic black districts. Along with such churches as Seventh Street Presbyterian (1896), Little Rock A.M.E. Zion (1911), and Mount Carmel Baptist (1921), Grace Church reflects the central role played by churches in the development of the city's African American neighborhoods.

Built in 1901, this well-preserved house of worship is among the finest, turn of the century churches in Charlotte. With its ornate, Gothic Revival elements, Grace Church epitomizes the well-executed and fashionable churches constructed for the preeminent, African American congregations of Charlotte during this period. The Charlotte architectural firm of Hayden, Wheeler, and Schwend provided the plans which were executed by African American builder/contractor, William W. Smith. A Brooklyn resident, Smith also designed and constructed the nearby polychromatic brick Mecklenburg Investment Company Building (M.I.C.) in 1921-1922. Grace A.M.E. Zion Church and the M.I.C. survive as the two main vestiges of Brooklyn. The period of significance for Grace Church extends from its construction in 1901 to 1957. Although the church remained active until 2006, the years after 1957 do not meet Criteria Consideration G for exceptional significance.

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Historical Background and African American Heritage

The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion church originated in New York City in 1796 and grew to play a critical role in the religious, cultural, and political life of African Americans. While blacks were early members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, segregated religious services, restricted leadership roles, and discrimination in religious practices prompted black Methodists to form separate African American denominations. During the antebellum years, the A.M.E. Zion church organized congregations in several major cities in the border South. The church actively opposed slavery and provided many leaders in the Underground Railroad movement as well as refuge for those escaping to freedom. In North Carolina, the A.M.E. Zion church began forming churches during the Union occupation in 1863, and by the end of the war there were A.M.E. Zion houses of worship in New Bern, Washington, Roanoke Island, and Charlotte (Morrill et al 1980: 4-5; Buck 1964: 77, 610; Walls 1974: 39, 50-53, 71-78, 138-171).

In Charlotte, an A.M.E. Zion elder named Edward H. Hill organized Clinton Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in 1865 which had the distinction of being the first black church in the city. Clinton Chapel, as with the A.M.E. Zion church nationally, grew rapidly after the Civil War. Between 1863 and 1896, national membership skyrocketed from approximately 5,000 to nearly one-half million, with much of this growth occurring in the South. By 1880, the thriving Clinton Chapel on Mint Street in downtown Charlotte had 1,193 members and church property valued at \$3,500.00 (Morrill et al 1980: 5; Hood 1895: 56, 85-88; 297).

In 1886, amidst the politically controversial and morally charged Christian Temperance movement, church members divided over the issue of alcohol consumption. Twenty-eight parishioners formally withdrew from Clinton Chapel to establish Grace Chapel. Opposed to drink, the new society took as its credo, "Deo Religion Et Temperantiae" (God Religion and Temperance), which appears on the cornerstone of the present church building. A founder of the new church was W.C. Smith. A native of Fayetteville, North Carolina, Smith was publisher of the *Charlotte Messenger*, the city's principal African American newspaper and an ardent prohibitionist. He declared, "The building of a new church is essential to rid youth of fogey [sic] ideas, sentiments, etc., and bring them up to proper moral sentiments and religious beliefs" (Greenwood 1994: 105-106; *Charlotte Messenger* 1 January 1887).

On August 16, 1887, the newly organized Board of Trustees of Grace Chapel purchased at the cost of \$600.00 a lot on South Brevard Street for a permanent church building. The first church on the site was a frame structure, thirty feet wide and sixty feet long. However, the congregation quickly outgrew the building, and by the late 1890s, the pastor, Dr. John Wesley Smith, had begun a fund-raising campaign for a new brick edifice. In 1898, the frame building was moved to the back of the lot in preparation for the erection of the new facility (Smith and Williams 1930).

Dr. Smith was also the editor of the *Star of Zion*, the national newspaper of the A.M.E. Zion church headquartered in Charlotte. On November 1, 1900, the *Star of Zion* reported that Dr. Smith had raised two thousand dollars for the new church, and that W.W. Smith, a general

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contractor and parishioner, had been hired to build the church. The July 1900 issue of *Manufacturers Record* noted that the plans were designed by the Charlotte architecture firm of Hayden, Wheeler, and Schwend (*Star of Zion* 1 November 1900; Bishir and Southern 2003: 512).

Dr. Smith chronicled the construction in the *Star of Zion*,

We commenced laying brick October 22 at 11 a.m. and we want to roof and slate it if possible before Christmas. It will be a handsome brick church 55 x 90 and ornamented with three towers. Until Dr. A.J. Warner [of Clinton Chapel] begins the erection of his great church, our church will be the largest negro church in Charlotte. In our rally last Sabbath, with 160 members we raised \$800, making over \$1000 that we raised for building purposes in the last six months (*Star of Zion* 1 November 1900).

The cornerstone for the church was laid in 1901, and the building was officially dedicated on July 13, 1902. That day, noted a reporter for the *Charlotte Observer*, was "a red letter day religiously with the members of Grace A.M.E. Zion church". For the dedication, three bishops preached respectively at 11 a.m., 3 p.m., and 8 p.m., and the mid-day service included many white guests. The services continued for seven days and included preaching on successive nights by the pastors of the other black churches in Charlotte, who brought along their choirs and congregations (Morrill et al 1980: 7; *Charlotte Observer* 13 July 1902).

From the beginning, Grace Church was one of the city's most prestigious African American institutions. In 1887, publisher W.C. Smith wrote in the *Charlotte Messenger* that Grace's founders were "progressive, being made up mainly of intelligent young people". He observed that they included many teachers, skilled artisans, and their spouses. In 1893, a black visitor to Charlotte exclaimed, "To say you belonged to 'Grace' signifies almost as much as it did to say, 'I am a Roman citizen.'" Its long roster of pastors and congregants included many of the city's preeminent African Americans. A post at the Grace A.M.E. Zion Church frequently elevated ministers to higher positions in the national church. Following their service at Grace, seven of the church's thirty-six pastors became bishops (*Charlotte Messenger* 9 April 1887; Morrill et al 1980: 9).

Among Grace's outstanding members were Dr. John Taylor Williams (1859-1924) and Thaddeus Lincoln Tate (1865-1951). A physician, educator, and developer, Dr. Williams was twice elected to the Board of Aldermen, and in 1898 was appointed United States consul to Sierra Leone in West Africa. Thaddeus Tate, a successful businessman, joined with Williams and others to erect the Mecklenburg Investment Company Building (National Register 1982), the city's first office building used exclusively for African American businesses. Tate also helped found the Morrison Training School for black youths in Hoffman, North Carolina, where a building is named in his honor (*Charlotte Observer* 30 March 1951; Morrill et al 1980: 9; Greenwood 1994: 106).

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While Grace emerged as the church of the city's black elite, the church was also at times a symbol of class division in the African American community. Critics labeled the new church "the 'paler' church" or the "Winona Circle," referring to an exclusive, local literary and social club. A *Charlotte Messenger* editorial countered that "only two of the male members of this church and about a dozen females belong to the Winona". Smith went on to write that the necessary qualifications for membership were not skin color or society membership but beliefs in prohibition and moral and racial progress (*Charlotte Messenger* 15 January 1887; Greenwood 1994: 106).

Throughout the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, Grace Church was a focal point in flourishing Brooklyn, Charlotte's principal black residential and business area. For example, the city's annual Emancipation Day address was typically given before a packed auditorium at Grace Church. These addresses focused on the key social and economic issues of the day. Here, too, African Americans congregated to advocate temperance, protest Jim Crow laws, and to engage in discussions on the seminal racial issues of the latter twentieth century (Greenwood 1994: 1, 225; Morrill et al 1980: 10).

Located in Charlotte's Second Ward, the Brooklyn community emerged in the early twentieth century to become the city's most important black neighborhood. Charlotte historian Thomas W. Hanchett states that Brooklyn "became a veritable city within the city after 1900, with a full complement of community institutions, including Charlotte's black main street". Serving the needs of African Americans during the Jim Crow era, Brooklyn contained Mecklenburg County's first black graded school, only black library, a host of meeting halls, and a vibrant commercial core concentrated around the 400 block of East Second Street in the heart of the neighborhood. By the 1920s, Brooklyn boasted a full range of black business activities including restaurants, grocers, drugstores, barber shops, undertakers, professional buildings, the Hotel Williams, and the Palace movie theater. The neighborhood was also home to many of the city's African American elites such as Dr. John Taylor Williams whose two-story, Queen Anne residence (now gone) stood facing South Brevard Street north of Grace Church (Hanchett 1998: 127, 129-134).

The moniker "Brooklyn" was evidently inspired by the fast-growing northern city of Brooklyn, which at the turn of the twentieth century was earning much national press for its annexation into New York City. Charlotte's Brooklyn, like its prospering northern namesake, was fast becoming a city within a city, and in the early 1900s, black Charlotteans used the nickname with pride (Hanchett 1998: 130).

Brooklyn's major developers were Dr. Williams and Thaddeus Tate. In addition to the Mecklenburg Investment Company Building, Tate constructed a three-story office building for the Afro-American Mutual Insurance Company and invested in other commercial real estate along East Second Street. Dr. Williams platted a residential subdivision along Hill and Vance streets, at the southern periphery of Brooklyn, that he named Williamsburg. He also built the community's finest hotel and principal drugstore, the Queen City Drug Company (Hanchett 1998: 133-134).

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The Brooklyn community was razed during urban renewal campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s. Now surrounded by modern construction, parking lots, and a city park, Grace A.M.E. Zion Church stands today as one of the few architectural remnants of this once vibrant black neighborhood. Although most of the parishioners subsequently moved to a variety of neighborhoods around Charlotte, church membership remained strong. The church continued to perform its long-standing roles in the African American community--serving as a gathering place for black leaders, voicing African American progress and concerns to the wider community, and nurturing black talent (Morrill et al. 1980: 10).

In 2007, the Grace A.M.E. Zion congregation moved to a modern, larger church building outside downtown Charlotte, and, for preservation purposes, sold the Gothic Revival edifice on South Brevard Street to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. The commission will place historic preservation deed covenants on the property and sell the building for adaptive reuse.

Architecture Context

Grace A.M.E. Zion stands among the finest Gothic Revival churches in Charlotte. As churches grew and prospered in the years before and after 1900, new and larger edifices arose downtown. Many of these were rendered in the picturesque Gothic Revival style which by the late nineteenth century in North Carolina had become a favorite choice among expanding white and African American congregations. During the antebellum period, the Episcopal Church nationwide and in North Carolina began using various forms of the Gothic Revival for new church design, and the style was widely adopted by other denominations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gothic Revival churches were characterized by such medieval-inspired elements as steeply pitched gables, crenellated entry towers, buttresses, and pointed-arched doorways and windows, often treated with stained glass and elaborate tracery. Interiors of elaborate examples boasted high vaulted ceilings or skillfully executed trusswork (Bishir 1990: 234-240, 314-325, 390-395).

In downtown Charlotte, major houses of worship for white congregations, including the surviving First Presbyterian (1895) on West Trade Street, St. Peter's Episcopal (1893) on North Tryon Street, and St. Peter's Catholic (1893) on South Tryon Street, were all erected in the Gothic Revival style. As with Grace Church, these prominent buildings feature buttressed corner towers, and large Gothic-arched window and doorways. Befitting its stature as the principal church established for Charlotte's influential Scotch-Irish community, First Presbyterian is the largest of these churches, distinguished by its soaring, steepled towers and smooth, stuccoed-brick exterior.

By the early twentieth century, Charlotte's sizable black neighborhoods, such as Brooklyn, sections of First and Third wards, and Biddleville, also featured important religious institutions. In addition to Grace Church in Brooklyn, First United Presbyterian in First Ward, and Biddleville's Mount Carmel Baptist survive as fine examples of the Gothic Revival. Built on North College Street in 1907, First United Presbyterian resembles Grace Church in its twin-tower configuration

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and Gothic-inspired elements. The red brick edifice has a steeply pitched gable over its main block flanked by two buttressed towers of unequal size. Tall steeples cap the towers. Gothic-arched windows and doorways and decorative brick corbelling are found throughout the exterior. Inside, the sanctuary has an auditorium plan, and the high ceiling consists of a series of ribbed and pointed vaults of narrow beaded board. The 1921 Mount Carmel Baptist Church on Tuckaseegee Road is a later, more restrained version of the Gothic Revival. The red brick building has a steeply pitched, gable-front form with a crenellated and buttressed corner tower. Simple, cast concrete trim embellishes the exterior. The pointed-arched windows have frosted glass and wooden tracery. In the Gothic style, the tall sanctuary has exposed roof framing of curved struts and slender tie beams (Morrill 1981; Huffman and Hanchett 1983; Hanchett 1998: 121-127, 134-136).

Grace A.M.E. Zion Church clearly features the array of corbelled and crenellated brickwork, heavily paneled doors, pinnacles, lancet openings, and large, pointed-arched, stained-glass windows with tracery that were hallmarks of the Gothic Revival in Charlotte and nationwide. The design of Grace Church is distinguished by the two boldly executed towers of unequal size that flank the center gable. While this basic configuration marked Gothic Revival church architecture in this period, it was particularly popular among African American denominations, especially the A.M.E. and A.M.E. Zion churches. The well-preserved church sanctuary contains a diagonal auditorium plan with a sloping floor, a coffered ceiling with Gothic motifs, and Gothic Revival, metal and glass light fixtures. The sanctuary adjoins a sizable parish hall, originally divided by large folding doors. The auditorium plan and attached meeting room was commonplace in churches by the 1890s. Designed to maximize good seating and visibility for a large audience, this layout rose to popularity with the evangelical Protestant movement in the late nineteenth century (Bishir 1990: 313-325).

Asserting their standing in the city, Charlotte's preeminent black congregations often commissioned important local architects to design new churches. For example, one of the city's foremost architects, Louis Asbury, drew up the plans for Mount Carmel Baptist in Biddleville. Grace Church was designed by the Charlotte architecture firm of Hayden, Wheeler, and Schwend, which was established in the late 1890s and enjoyed commissions throughout the region. In Charlotte, the firm is known to have designed an office building for the Charlotte Consolidated Construction Company (4Cs), Trinity Episcopal Church, and the Elks Temple. None of these buildings survives. Among its commissions outside Charlotte was the 1899-1900 Neoclassical Iredell County Courthouse (National Register) in Statesville (Hanchett 1998: 320; Bishir and Southern 2003: 444).

African American builder/contractor, William W. Smith, was hired to build Grace Church. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Smith earned a reputation as a master mason and contractor for both whites and blacks in the city. In the Brooklyn community, he both designed and constructed the Afro-American Mutual Insurance Company Building (1907), the A.M.E. Zion Publishing House (1910), and the Mecklenburg Investment Company Building (1921). All featured distinctive cream-colored brick facades that were evidently a trademark of his designs. Of these commercial buildings, only the Mecklenburg Investment Company Building, listed in the National Register in 1982, still stands (Hanchett 1998: 131-134).

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Grace A.M.E. Zion Church
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The property being nominated to the National Register conforms to the current Mecklenburg County tax parcel outlined in bold on the accompanying tax map.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundaries encompass the 0.27 acre tax parcel that is associated historically with Grace A.M.E. Zion Church. This tract contains the church, the small, front lawn, and the rear parking lot.

Photographs

The following information pertains to each of the photographs:

<u>Name of Property:</u>	Grace A.M.E. Zion Church
<u>Location:</u>	Charlotte, North Carolina
<u>County:</u>	Mecklenburg County
<u>Name of Photographer:</u>	Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
<u>Location of Negatives:</u>	Survey and Planning Branch North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources 109 E. Jones Street Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2807

Date of Photographs: August 2007

1. Church and Setting, View Looking South Along South Brevard Street
2. Front (West) Elevation, Looking East
3. Side (North) and Rear (East) Elevations, Looking West
4. Side (North) Elevation, Looking South
5. North Elevation, Window Detail
6. Rear (East) Elevation, Looking West
7. Interior, Sanctuary
8. Interior, Chancel
9. Interior, Sanctuary, Coffered Ceiling Detail
10. Interior, Parish Hall