

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 709, 711-15, and 717-19 S. 12th Street

Postal code: 19147 Councilmanic District: 2

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Union Baptist Church

Common Name: New Hope Baptist Church

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building Structure Site Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: Unoccupied

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1889 to 1916

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: Constructed 1889

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Architects David S. Gendell/Thomas Bennett

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: NA

Original owner: Union Baptist Church

Other significant persons: Marian Anderson

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Name with Title Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian Email Oscar.beisert@gmail.com

Organization N/A Date August 11, 2015

Street Address 205 Rochelle Avenue Telephone 717.602.5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: _____

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: _____

Date of Notice Issuance: _____

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION



Boundary Map

The Union Baptist Church is located at 709, 711-15, and 717-19 S. 12th Street in South Philadelphia. The property consists of:

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground, BEGINNING at a point on the Southeasterly side of 12th Street (50 feet wide) which point is measured Southwestwardly along the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street the distance of 72 feet from a point formed by an intersection of the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street and the Southwesterly side of Bainbridge Street (50 feet wide); thence extending from said point of beginning Southeastwardly the distance of 100 feet to a point on the Northwestern side of Sartain Street (15 feet wide); thence extending Southwestwardly along the said Northwestern side of Sartain Street the distance of 18 feet to a point; thence extending Northwestwardly the distance of 100 feet to a point on the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street; thence extending Northeastwardly along the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street the distance of 18 feet to a point, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

BEING No. 709 South 12th Street, OPA #023276600.

and,

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings thereon erected, SITUATE on the East side of 12th Street, commencing at the distance of 90' Southward from the South side of Bainbridge Street in the 4th Ward of the City of Philadelphia.

CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said 12th Street 54' and extending in length or depth Eastward 100' to a certain 15' wide street called Sartain Street, (formerly called Temple St.).

BEING No. 711-15 South 12th Street, OPA# 771259000.

and,

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground, BEGINNING at a point on the Southeasterly side of 12th Street (50 feet wide) which point is measured Southwestwardly along the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street the distance of 144 feet from a point formed by an intersection of the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street and the Southwesterly side of Bainbridge Street (50 feet wide); thence extending from said point of beginning Southeastwardly the distance of 100 feet to a point on the Northwesterly side of Sartain Street (15 feet wide); thence extending Southwestwardly along the said Northwesterly side of Sartain Street the distance of 36 feet to a point; thence extending Northwestwardly the distance of 100 feet to a point on the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street; thence extending Northeastwardly along the said Southeasterly side of 12th Street the distance of 36 feet to a point, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

BEING No. 717-19 South 12th Street, OPA #023276800.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Within the dense urban context of South Philadelphia, the Union Baptist Church is located at 709-19 S. 12th Street. Set upon a 108' by 100' lot, the building is oriented east-west, facing west on South 12th Street. The building is a spare brick hall, house of worship with Romanesque details concentrated almost entirely on the façade, which is a common trait of interior lots in the dense urban environment that comprises most of the city. Arches, lintels, capstones, and sills are picked out in a light colored stone, likely lime- or sandstone, from a dark fascia brick. The dark brick is mostly laid in running bond, but does give way to a basket-weave pattern at both sides of the building's prominent, centrally located date tablet. This pattern is created via small rows of soldier, stretcher, and header bricks.

Buttressed, asymmetrical towers give the otherwise regular facade a more picturesque appearance; the south tower is crenellated, while taller, north tower terminates in an undulating pyramidal roof. All openings are round-arched with the exception of a band of four squarish windows located above the broad central portal, which happens to be the building's most Richardsonian feature. This aperture is infilled with a modern glass-and-aluminum lattice, surrounding doors of the same material.

The north and south elevations are made of a softer, reddish brick and are un-ornamented save for the round-arched second-floor windows that illuminate the sanctuary. The west elevation, rear wall is the sparest of all, its most notable feature being a blind, metal-clad apse that projects as a bay from the second story.

In 1981, a brick-clad, shed-roof, one-story addition was appended to the south façade of the church. It was designed by the architectural firm Cooper & Pratt and constructed by Domus Enterprises, Inc. In 1986, a two-story elevator tower and one-story elevator machine room, both clad in brick, were added to the north façade of the church. They were designed by Lonnie Rice and built by ABO Construction Co. The additions are considered non-historic for the purposes of this nomination.

In programmatic terms, this is a familiar urban church type, one that gathers more pedestrian functions (S) on the first floor to create an unobstructed worship space above.



Looking east.



Looking east.



Looking east.



Looking north.



Looking southeast.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Union Baptist Church No. 1/New Hope Temple Baptist Church (Union Baptist Church) is a significant resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Located at 709-19 S. 12th Street in the Hawthorne neighborhood of Philadelphia, Union Baptist Church satisfies Criteria for Designation (a), (e), and (j).

(a) Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;

(e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation; and

(j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.



Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Criteria E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation; and

Criteria J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

Union Baptist Church at 709-19 S. 12th Street represents an important architectural type through its Romanesque details within the limited context of purpose-built African American houses of worship in Philadelphia and is architecturally significant as one of the few remaining architect-designed buildings commissioned by an African American congregation during a period recognized as a local Renaissance. Furthermore, historically, the Union Baptist Church congregation was one of the largest in the African American religious community in Philadelphia and the Union Baptist Church at 709-19 S. 12th Street is its oldest extant building. As a result, the Union Baptist Church at 709-19 S. 12th Street exemplifies the cultural, economic, social and historical heritage of both Philadelphia's African American community and its subset of the Baptist Church within that context.

Birth of the African American Church

African American Christianity in the United States can trace its origin to the Great Awakening. Between 1740 and 1790, charismatic revivalists toured the colonies, preaching messages of salvation for all, a movement that became known as the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening made a particularly profound impact on Philadelphia because early eighteenth century Philadelphia was home to one of the largest free black communities in the country.¹ The movement, which embraced men and women of all races and regardless of background, resonated with African Americans in particular. Historians suspect that the fervor of the Great Awakening's revival meetings resonated because to a degree, the meetings resembled those of their West African ancestors who incorporated emotional experiences such as dancing and shouting.²

Despite the egalitarian values underlying the spirit of the Great Awakening, established religious institutions remained reluctant to grant African American congregants the full rights and responsibilities granted their white counterparts. This fostered the sentiment from which separate African American denominations and congregations grew. Because the Methodist and Baptist denominations are less hierarchical and emphasized formal education of clergy less so than other denominations, most African American

¹ Smith, Edward D. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877*. Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, p. 23-28.

² *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

converts joined either Methodist or Baptist congregations that were predominantly white.³

America's independent African American church was born in Philadelphia when in 1787 a group of African American worshippers led by Richard Allen left predominately white St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church to found a separate, independent African American denomination. Allen was born into slavery in Delaware on the estate of Quaker attorney Benjamin Chew, who later served as Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Six years after Allen bought his freedom in 1780, he and another member of St. George's, Absalom Jones, founded the Free African Society. Established in response to the racial tensions facing cities such as Philadelphia, the nondenominational group consisted of forty-two African American Christians working to create an independent church.⁴

In 1787, African American worshippers of St. George's were relegated to standing along the back wall while pews were reserved for white members. According to Allen's memoirs, on a Sunday in 1787, the church's sexton asked African American members to vacate the main floor to worship in the gallery above. This transpired at the moment in which the pastor was leading a prayer. While praying on the main floor, Absalom Jones and William White were forcibly removed despite their protests, as they had been kneeling in prayer. This incident motivated many of St. George's African American worshippers to leave the church permanently, establishing a church of their own in which they would be safe to worship.⁵

Consisting of former members of St. George's, the newly formed group contemplated Methodism. With a high number of offended congregants, the members split into two independent churches in 1794: St. Thomas Episcopal Church and Bethel Church. Notably, St. Thomas, led by Absalom Jones, opted to join an existing denomination while Bethel, led by Richard Allen, retained its stronghold. In 1816, Allen founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church—a separate, independent African American denomination. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, known commonly as the A.M.E. Church, is the oldest independent African American denomination in the world.⁶

In the two decades following the establishment of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas and Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, three other African American churches were founded, including Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church (1796) and First African Presbyterian Church

³ Ibid., p. 31-33.

⁴ Griffith, Cyril E. "Richard Allen: The First Prominent Black Religious Leader in Pennsylvania" in John M. Coleman, Robert G. Christ, and John B. Frantz eds., *Pennsylvania Religious Leaders*, Pennsylvania Historic Studies Series 16. Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Planks's Suburban Press for the Pennsylvania Historical Society, 1986, p. 11-12.

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶ Smith, Edward D. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877*. Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, p. 35-37.

(1807), and First African Baptist Church (1809). In 1809, First African Baptist Church would become the fifth.⁷

Until 1809, African American Baptists in Philadelphia worshipped in primarily white Baptist congregations. First African Baptist Church was established on June 19, 1809 by thirteen former congregants of primarily white First Baptist Church of Philadelphia.⁸ These individuals had "...come to Philadelphia from the eastern shore of Virginia to escape the cruel treatment of slave masters."⁹ First African Baptist Church's founding members had seen their Methodist Episcopal counterparts establish a separate African American denomination, as well as a separate African American congregation in response to the denomination's failure to grant African Americans full rights and responsibilities of membership. African American Baptists faced discrimination as well, but its split, in comparison to that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was less controversial. According to Charles H. Brooks' *Official History of the First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia*, "It is beyond controversy that the relation of the white and colored members of the First Baptist Church was of the most cordial and Christian manner."¹⁰ In fact, First Baptist Church of Philadelphia granted each of the thirteen founding members of First African Baptist Church voluntary provided letters of dismissal to establish an independent African American congregation "...under the care and protection of their Mother Church."¹¹ At the Philadelphia Baptist Association's annual meeting in October, First African Baptist Church was welcomed as a member. It became the fifth African American church in Philadelphia as well as the first black Baptist church in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.¹²

The founding of First African Baptist Church paved the way for the establishment of other African American Baptist churches in early nineteenth century Philadelphia. The third African American Baptist congregation,¹³ Union Baptist Church, was founded on September 18, 1832. Its founder, Reverend Daniel Scott, had arrived in Philadelphia from Petersburg, Virginia in May of that year. Shortly after settling in the vicinity of 8th and Locust Streets in the "southern part of the city," Scott recognized the need for another African American Baptist congregation, and, subsequently, organized Union Baptist Church. Its first twenty-one members, like him, all hailed from Virginia.¹⁴

⁷ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

⁸ Brooks, Charles H. *Official History of the First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.* Philadelphia: 1977, p. 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹² National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ "Union Baptist Church More Than 100 Years Old," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 1 November 1934.

Among the important early leaders of the congregation, James Burrows migrated to Philadelphia from Virginia. Born into slavery in Virginia, Burrows became pastor of First African Baptist Church in 1832 when cousins Samuel Bivens and John Bivens volunteered themselves as collateral in exchange for Burrows' freedom. Burrows planned to earn the amount necessary to purchase his freedom, and then return to Northampton County, Virginia to preach. Having raised the money by 1833, Burrows traveled to Virginia to free the Bivens cousins, but chose to return to Philadelphia to continue leading First African Baptist Church.¹⁵ Burrows would eventually become the third pastor of Union Baptist Church.

Under Rev. Daniel Scott, Union Baptist Church purchased a small lot on the south side of Minster Street (now Addison Street) between 6th and 7th Streets, which was immediately east of James Forten Elementary Manual Training School.¹⁶ Like most early developments in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Philadelphia, the initial cost of the lot likely required a small amount of capitol, but required the payment of annual ground rents to a ground lord. In fact, the plot rented for \$300 per annum, payable in two equal \$150 installments. Because there was no initial substantive cost for the lot, the congregation built its first house of worship on this site; a brick building that contained an auditorium with seating capacity for five hundred, a dedicated Sunday school room, and rooms for the pastor and trustees. It was built at a cost of five thousand dollars. The site included room enough for both the building and a burial ground. Before the building was completed in 1838, the congregation convened at Benezet Hall. Benezet Hall was located at 7th and Lombard Streets.¹⁷

Following Scott, who served as pastor until 1850, Rev. Sampson White (1851-1852), Rev. Jesse Bolden (1854-1861), Rev. James Hamilton (1862-1865), Rev. James Underdew (1866-1875), Rev. Thomas Henderson (1877-1879), Rev. James Rue (1880-1880), Rev. William Wallace (1881-1884), and Rev. William Stumm (1885-1891) each served as pastor of the ever growing congregation.¹⁸ In spite of the high rate of turnover among its pastorate—atypical for an African American Baptist congregation at the time, the church grew steadily. Eventually, Union Baptist Church would form the largest African American congregation in Philadelphia.¹⁹

Union Baptist Church, 709-19 S. 12th Street

Becoming the largest African American Baptist congregation in Philadelphia by the mid-1880s, the church had outgrown its original five hundred-seat building on Minister Street. In 1887, it purchased a lot at 711-15 S. 12th Street

¹⁵ Brooks, Charles H. *Official History of the First African Baptist Church*, Philadelphia, Pa. Philadelphia: 1977, p. 8.

¹⁶ G.M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1875).

¹⁷ "Union Baptist Church More Than 100 Years Old," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 1 November 1934.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

on the east side of 12th Street, ninety feet (90') south of Bainbridge Street in the old municipality of Moyamensing. Moyamensing was already home to of a vibrant African American community. By 1837, eighteen percent of Philadelphia's African American population lived in Moyamensing, which was surpassed only by center city (then at 62 percent).²⁰ By 1849, twenty-one percent of African American churches were located in Moyamensing.²¹

At the new location, the lot, measuring fifty-four feet (54') along 12th Street by 100 feet (100) deep,²² was located immediately north of a livery stable at 717-19 S. 12th Street.²³ At the time of purchase, the site was only partly developed, as it was then three separate parcels. These parcels included a stable on one and rowhouses on another.²⁴ The three parcels needed to assemble the lot were deeded to Union Baptist Church on September 19, 1887. The parcels were procured from George and Elizabeth Gill, who had purchased the property from Alex E. and Esther Harvey on April 9, 1881. As previously explained, this lot was also subject to the Ground Rent Estate. With a small outlay of capitol upon purchase, Gill paid \$300 a year in ground rent, which was paid in two equal payments of \$150. These payments began on April 1, 1881. Though the site was deeded to Union Baptist Church in September of 1887, the sale was initiated earlier that year (indicated by a gap between the date of purchase and date in which the deed was recorded).²⁵ The church paid \$6,200, including \$5,000 in ground rent. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on August 26, 1887, "It is proposed to erect a chapel on the lot, and to defer the building of a church till the money is in hand."²⁶

²⁰ "Statistical Inquiry Into the Condition of the People of Color of the City and Districts of Philadelphia." Philadelphia: Kite & Walton, 1849, 29. Collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

²¹ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

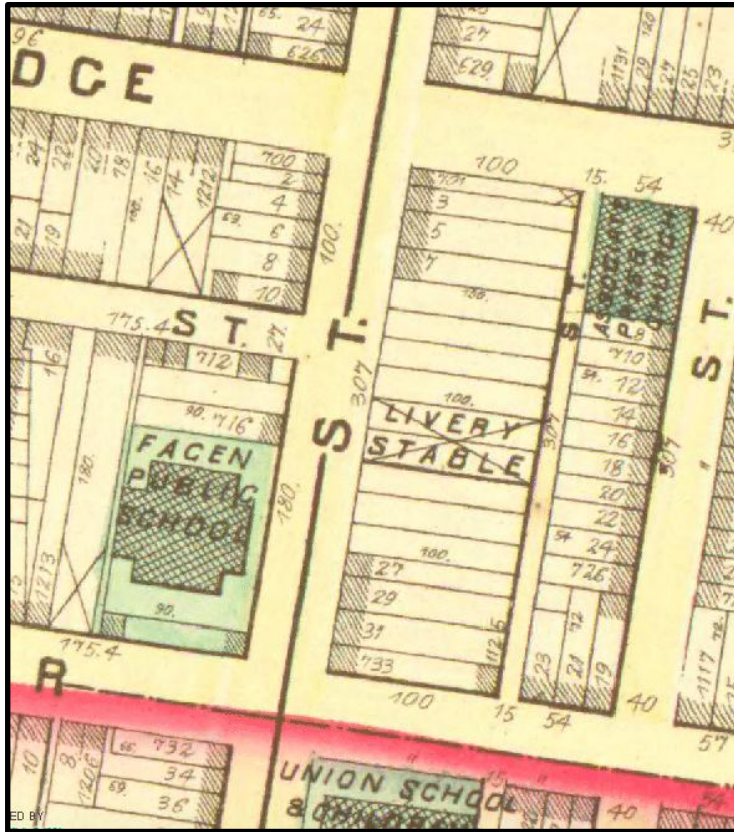
²² Recorded on 2 July 1888 in Philadelphia Deed Book G. G. P. No. 373, p. 545.

²³ G.M. Hopkins, *City Atlas of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1875).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Recorded on 2 July 1888 in Philadelphia Deed Book No. G. G. P. No. 373, p. 545.

²⁶ "Among the Churches. Religious News of Interest Concerning the Different Denominations," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia 26 August 1887.



The subject site in 1875, prior to purchase by Union Baptist Church.
 Courtesy Philadelphia GeoHistory.

On July 13, 1888, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that the church had it sold its Minister Street property, and had temporarily relocated to Liberty Hall, then at 8th and Lombard Streets.²⁷ Later, the City of Philadelphia purchased the Minister Street property, Union Baptist Church’s first home, from the Congregation Sons of Reuben, a Hassidic Jewish congregation, for \$10,000. Congregation Sons of Reuben, more commonly known as Congregation B’nai Reuben, worshipped at the site until its synagogue at the southeast corner of 6th and Kater Streets was completed in 1905. The city subsequently demolished the church and presumably removed the burial ground to create a schoolyard for the adjacent public school, James Forten Elementary Manual Training School.²⁸

Union Baptist Church was not alone in its procurement of a new building site. According to revered architectural historian Emily T. Cooperman, “More black churches were constructed or purchased in Philadelphia in the 1880s and 1890s than ever before...” As the African American population increased, many congregations outgrew their early buildings. The most prosperous of

²⁷ “Preacher and People. What is Going On of Interest in the Church World,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 13 July 1888.

²⁸ “The Latest News In Real Estate,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 19 December 1905.

these congregations planned for new construction. These congregations purchased a lot and/or parcel, which were usually subject to the Ground Rent Estate. Again, this required a small outlay of capitol and the payment of annual rents, but the feudal system often made the construction of a building possible. By this time, the Ground Rent Estate was becoming obsolete, allowing some congregations to immediately buy out the ground lord's stake through a one time payment. Many congregations commissioned new, architect-designed buildings.

The collective success of these African American congregations, as seen through the construction of numerous new houses of worship constitutes a sort-of local Renaissance within the African American religious community in this period. During this renaissance in church construction, African American congregations built over two dozen church buildings.²⁹

Congregation	Circa	Location	Building Status
African American Church of St. Thomas	1889-1890	203-209 S. 12 th Street	Demolished
Berean Presbyterian Church	1884	1906-1926 S. College Avenue	Demolished
Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church	1889	419-423 S. 6 th Street	Extant
Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church	1893	460 E. Rittenhouse Street	Extant
Church of the Crucifixion	1893	620 S. 8 th Street	Altered
Galilee Baptist Church	1900	457 Roxborough Avenue	Extant
Haven Mission Church (Methodist Episcopal)	c. 1887	1511 N. 26 th Street	Demolished
Holy Trinity Baptist Church	1900	1818-1824 Bainbridge Street	Extant
Janes Methodist Church Building	1898	528 E. Haines Street	Extant
Mount Zion Baptist Church	1894	41 W. Rittenhouse Street	Extant

²⁹ Ibid.

North Penn Baptist Church	c. 1910	2419-2425 N. 27 th Street	Extant
Second Baptist Church (Frankford)	c. 1910	1801 Meadow Street	Extant
St. Mary's Episcopal Church	1897	1831-1835 Bainbridge Street	Extant
St. Matthew's African Methodist Episcopal Church	1897	5801 Vine Street	Demolished
St. Michael's and All Angels Church	1889	4238 Wallace Street	Extant
St. Paul's Lutheran Church	1893-1896	312 Quince Street	Extant
St. Thomas Methodist Church (Frankford)	c. 1910	4701 Tackawanna Street	Extant
Tasker Street Baptist Church	c. 1900	2010 Tasker Street	Extant
Union Baptist Church	1893	709-719 S. 12 th Street	Slated for demolition
Zion Baptist Church	1887	1525-29 Brandywine Street	Extant
Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church	1883	1204 Melon Court	Extant

As part of the said Renaissance, African American congregations of all denominations—from African Methodist Episcopal to Roman Catholic—formed its late nineteenth century nucleus at 6th and Lombard in the southeastern section of the city. At the same time, Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church removed to this location as well. was located. Union Baptist's first house of worship was less than a block away from the 'mother church.'³⁰

At 709-19 S. 12th Street, the current building came to its current form in two stages. Dedicated in 1889, the first building—or the first stage of the current building—on the site was designed by architect David S. Gendell (1839-1925), himself a Baptist who designed a number of buildings for Baptist congregations in Philadelphia.³¹

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Under the Rev. L.G. Jordan, who served the congregation from 1891 until 1896,³² the building was enlarged to its current appearance, capacity and form, constituting the second stage of its construction. The congregation commissioned New York City-based architect Thomas Bennett (fl. 1887–1913) to design replace the first building with an even larger house of worship.

Bennett was a prolific architect who more often designed row houses for speculative developers in Philadelphia—particularly in the Germantown neighborhood—and in Brooklyn’s Sunset Park neighborhood.³³ He is referenced in the Philadelphia Inquirer’s real estate section many times, but only once as the architect of a religious building. In 1890, he is credited as the architect of two North Philadelphia churches, Cookman Methodist Episcopal Church and Lutheran Church of the Advent.³⁴ Both churches are extant. An independent, nondenominational congregation now occupies the former while Latino congregation that is a part of the Assemblies of God faith tradition now occupies the latter. Bennett had opened an office in 1892, Philadelphia one year prior to the 1893 commission.³⁵



Union Baptist Church as it appeared in 1953.
Courtesy the City of Philadelphia.

³² Union Baptist Church More Than 100 Years Old," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 1 November 1934.

³³ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Bennett, Thomas (fl. 1887-1913)," by Sandra L. Tatam, accessed August 1, 2015, https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22271.

³⁴ "In Real Estate Circles. New Workshops for Blind Men---Big Building Operations," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 12 April 1890.

³⁵ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Bennett, Thomas (fl. 1887-1913)," by Sandra L. Tatam, accessed August 1, 2015, https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22271.

The new, enlarged building at 709-19 S. 12th Street was dedicated on December 17, 1893. Rev. Theodore D. Miller, pastor of First African Baptist Church, delivered the keynote at the ceremony. On December 18, 1893, the building was described in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*:

The church is a three-story building, 44 x 82. The front is of grey brick, rock-faced, trimmed with Ohio limestone. The first story, or cellar, is well lighted and is used for culinary purposes and a drill room for the Boys' Brigade. The second story or Sunday school room is large, well ventilated and lighted with electricity and divided into five rooms. Two are used exclusively for dressing rooms and two used exclusively for class and committee rooms. The latter two can be thrown into the main lecture room and will seat 450 persons. The third story or auditorium is plain, with stained glass windows, and a swinging gallery that terminates at the pulpit. It is suspended from the main timbers of the roof and is considered by all who see it to be the most unique of its kind in the city.³⁶

Union Baptist Church occupied this building from 1893 to 1916. During this time, give a few details. By 1916, Union Baptist Church boasted 2,100 members and would continue to grow its congregation.³⁷

By the 1910s, Union Baptist Church had again outgrown its building. The church purchased a lot measuring 105 feet by 113 feet at the southeast corner of Fitzwater and Martin Streets in South Philadelphia. Edward L. Wallace sold the property to the Union Baptist Church for \$28,000, which included the former building of the Fitzwater Street Methodist Episcopal Church.³⁸ Union Baptist replaced the building with a design by the firm of Charles W. Bolton & Son (fl. 1906-1942)³⁹ that cost \$125,000 to erect.⁴⁰

After the Union Baptist Church congregation was installed in its new building, the Salem Baptist Church became the second congregation to occupy the subject building. It appears that Salem Baptist Church, which was unincorporated at the time of purchase,⁴¹ rented the building from Union Baptist Church for at least a year before buying it. In a October 20, 1920 Philadelphia Inquirer article, Salem Baptist Church's location is listed as

³⁶ "Joy in the Lord's House. Rev. Dr. Miller's Sermon at Union Baptist Church Dedication," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 12 December 1893.

³⁷ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

³⁸ "Review of Week in Real Estate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 16 March 1913.

³⁹ Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, "Charles W. Bolton & Son (fl. 1906-1942)," by Sandra L. Tatam, accessed August 1, 2015, https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/18688.

⁴⁰ "Union Baptist Church To Mark 128th Anniversary Sun., Sept. 11," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 3 September 1960.

⁴¹ Recorded on 29 October 1921 in Philadelphia Deed Book No. J. M. H. No. 1169, p. 230.

"Twelfth Street, below Bainbridge."⁴² However, the building was deeded to Salem Baptist Church trustees John B. Gardner, Charles C. Motly, and Silas A. Cobbs on October 29, 1921 for \$19,000. This congregation occupied the building until the mid-1930s.

New Hope Temple Baptist Church

The longest occupant, New Hope Temple Baptist Church was the third congregation to inhabit the building upon purchase in 1936.⁴³ New Hope Temple Baptist Church was founded during an era of African American migration to the urban North, which began in 1916 and persisted through the 1920s. Before 1916, the nation's African American population lived mostly in the rural South. By 1910, 89% of African Americans lived in the South while 73% lived in rural areas. The migration was catalyzed by greater availability of jobs in the urban North. This was due in part to the fact that entry into World War I created unprecedented demand for both skilled and unskilled workers.⁴⁴

This is the context in which New Hope Temple Baptist Church emerged. In Philadelphia, some of the newcomers chose to live in South Philadelphia, and either populate historically African American churches or found new congregations. New Hope Temple Baptist Church represents the latter.

Founded in 1926 by Rev. Dewitt Beauford, New Hope Temple Baptist Church was first located at the intersection of 3rd and Queen Streets. It is a close-knit congregation that has been served by just three pastors over ninety years: Rev. Dewitt Beauford, Rev. William Beauford, and Rev. John Coger. Its second pastor, Rev. William Beauford, was the son of the church's founder and first pastor, Rev. Dewitt Beauford.⁴⁵

⁴² "Army Ex-Paymaster to Speak Here," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 20 October 1920.

⁴³ "New Hope Temple: 85 years and counting," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 7 October 2012.

⁴⁴ Frederick Miller, "The Black Migration to Philadelphia: A 1924 Profile," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 108 (July, 1984): 315-16.

⁴⁵ "New Hope Temple: 85 years and counting," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 7 October 2012.



Union Baptist Church in context in 1953. Courtesy the City of Philadelphia.

Located in Hawthorne, a historically African American neighborhood that is bounded by South Street and Washington Avenue to the north and south and by 11th Street and Broad Street to the east and west, New Hope Temple Baptist Church is now one of three congregations in the neighborhood that occupy purpose-built African American religious buildings built prior to 1950. The other churches, both African American congregations, are Rising Sun Baptist Church and Fitzwater Church of God. Rising Sun Baptist Church is housed in a building that was erected by All Saints Protestant Episcopal Church.⁴⁶ Fitzwater Church of God is housed in a building that was first home to Bethesda United Methodist Church.⁴⁷ Like Union Baptist Church, All Saints Episcopal Church and Bethesda United Methodist Church remain active congregations (through merged into other congregations and relocated within the city). During Union Baptist Church's tenure at the site, three other houses or served the neighborhood: All Saints Protestant Episcopal Church, Bainbridge Street Methodist Episcopal Church (now Tindley Temple United Methodist Church, and St. Teresa Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ George W. Bromley and Walker S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1895).

⁴⁷ Cornerstone at Fitzwater Church of God, 1219 Fitzwater Street.

⁴⁸ George W. Bromley and Walker S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1895).

When New Hope Temple Baptist Church acquired the building, it found itself surrounded by a dense neighborhood consisting of row houses, factories, churches (purpose-built and storefront), and a few civic buildings. There was very little green space. Many of the residents of the neighborhood worked in the factories that lined Washington Avenue, which formed the southern boundary of the Hawthorne neighborhood. Among them (from west to east) were National Licorice Company, John Wyeth Chemical Works, Curtis Publishing Company. This corridor was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Factories and warehouses dotted the interior of the neighborhood as well, including Main Belting Company, Philadelphia Macaroni Manufacturing Company, and Apollo Plumbing Supply Company.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Federal Works Progress Administration for Pennsylvania, Land Use-Zoning Project No. 18313, *Philadelphia Land Use Map*, 1942.

Criteria A: Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;

The Union Baptist Church is associated with the life of a significant African American vocalist, the eminent Marian Anderson (1897-1993). Between roughly 1902 and 1916, Anderson attended church regularly in this building; however, more importantly, it was in this building where she first sang in the choir, received her early vocal training, and, subsequently, gave her first public performance. Though Anderson is often associated with Union Baptist Church's third and current building, which Anderson attended after 1916, the Union Baptist Church at 709-19 S. 12th Street is the site of her formative years.

Marian Anderson (1897-1993), Daughter of Union Baptist Church

Marian Anderson. World-renowned contralto. As a child, she sang in this church. Toured Europe & U.S. starting in the 1930s. Her concert at the Lincoln Memorial, 1939, drew 75,000 people. First African American in Metropolitan Opera, 1955. Delegate to UN, 1958. Died 1993."⁵⁰

Inscribed upon a Philadelphia Historical and Museum Commission historical marker in front of Union Baptist Church's current building at 1910 Fitzwater Street, Anderson is often associated with this site, which the congregation has inhabited since 1916. However, it was the Union Baptist Church at 709-19 S. 12th Street that was the actual site of her formative years.

Born in 1897, Anderson was nearly twenty years old by the time Union Baptist Church had completed its current building. Anderson's father, John Berkley Anderson, was a devout member of Union Baptist Church. In Anderson's autobiography, titled *My Lord, What A Morning*, she describes her earliest experience of the church.

Even before I was six I was taken along to church every Sunday, partly, I suppose, to alleviate my mother's burden of taking care of three children. I would take part in the Sunday school and then sit through the main service. After my sixth birthday I was enrolled in the junior choir of the church.⁵¹

Anderson described her first public appearance as well. It occurred shortly after she was enrolled in the choir.

⁵⁰ Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Historical Marker: "Marian Anderson," 1910 Fitzwater Street.

⁵¹ Anderson, Marian. *My Lord, What a Morning, An Autobiography* by Marian Anderson. New York: The Viking Press, 1956, p. 7.

I remember the day when Mr. Robinson gave me a piece of music to take home, and another copy to Viola Johnson. It was a hymn, "Dear to the Heart of the Shepherd." Viola and I were to look it over, and then we would sing it together, she the upper and I the lower part. Mr. Robinson played the melody over for us, and after I heard it enough I could remember it. Viola and I rehearsed it carefully and seriously. Then came the Sunday morning when we sang it in church—my first public appearance.⁵²

It would be the first performance of many at the Union Baptist Church, then of 709-19 S. 12th Street.



Marian Anderson (center) with her mother and sisters, 1910.

⁵² Ibid., p. 8.

Following the death of their father in 1910, the Andersons struggled to make ends meet. At the encouragement of “Aunt Mary,” Anderson’s paternal aunt, the “baby contralto” shared her talents with other churches throughout South Philadelphia, which proved to supplement the family’s income. Anderson slowly gained a reputation for solo performances “for-hire,” regularly attracting out-of-town visitors. During this period, Union Baptist Church attracted visitors from throughout the country. In Anderson’s autobiography, she explained that even the friends and relatives of visitors to the church would look forward to hearing about the visit. In fact, by 1916, Union Baptist Church was the largest African American congregation in America, numbering 2,100 members.⁵³ In addition to Anderson’s solo performances, she also sang with other choirs and musical groups that performed in both religious and secular venues, which included the People’s Chorus, the Baptists’ Young People’s Union and the Camp Fire Girls.⁵⁴

Recognizing that Anderson would benefit from vocal training, members of Union Baptist Church began “Marian Anderson’s Future Fund.” The monies raised sponsored the services of vocal teacher Giuseppe Boghetti. Boghetti had offered to take Anderson on as a student prior to her graduation from the South Philadelphia High School for Girls in 1921.⁵⁵ In her autobiography, she recalled that she would not have been able to pay for the lessons without the church’s help.

They could not begin at once. There was no money for lessons... I should have known that my neighbors and the people at Union Baptist Church would find a way to provide. Mrs. Ida Asbury, who lived across the street from us, and some other neighbors and friends arranged a gala concert at our church... After all expenses, about six hundred dollars was realized, and with that money Mr. Boghetti was engaged to be my teacher.⁵⁶

During the five or more years that Anderson studied under Boghetti, she experienced rejection upon rejection from music conservatories. Simply put, she was black. Nevertheless, Anderson’s break came on August 26, 1925, That night she performed live with the New York Philharmonic, which was a result of the organization’s singing competition. Anderson had won first prize and, incidentally, was able to perform that day in August 1925. In the decades that followed, she would break barriers by performing at Carnegie

⁵³ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16-36.

⁵⁵ National Portrait Gallery, *facetoface*, “From Choir to Civil Rights: Marian Anderson’s Path of Hope,” by Greer Bates, accessed 1 August 2015, http://face2face.si.edu/my_weblog/2014/02/from-church-choir-to-civil-rights-marian-andersons-path-of-hope.html

⁵⁶ Anderson, Marian. *My Lord, What a Morning, An Autobiography* by Marian Anderson. New York: The Viking Press, 1956, p. 49.

Hall, the White House, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Metropolitan Opera House. She was the first African American individual to do the latter when she starred in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* in 1955.⁵⁷



Marian Anderson accompanied by a violinist.
Courtesy the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵⁷ NPR, "Marian Anderson's Groundbreaking Met Opera Moment," by NPR Staff, accessed 1 August 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/deceptivecadence/2015/01/07/375440168/marian-andersons-groundbreaking-met-opera-moment>

Conclusion

In 2008, architectural historian Emily T. Cooperman of ARCH Historic Preservation Consulting inventoried Philadelphia's African American churches on behalf of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia. Intended as a planning tool, the inventory includes a three-tier system that identifies priorities for designation. Within this document, "Union Baptist Church Building No. 2" at 1910 Fitzwater Street is listed as a first tier priority because it is, "Significant in the history of AA Baptist denomination in Philadelphia, important for architectural merit, and for its association with the early life of Marian Anderson."⁵⁸ In addition, Cooperman's inventory includes a list of properties that are individually listed on the Philadelphia of Historic Places. Of the fifteen sites that are on this short list, one is associated with Union Baptist Church: the congregation's first site at 606 Addison Street.⁵⁹

Union Baptist Church, founded in 1832, erected the building at 709-19 S. 12th Street during a citywide renaissance in church construction, of which the African American church played a part. The building, though longest occupied by a congregation that was likely formed of African American transplants from the rural South, tells a story of growth and prominence—in terms of the congregation itself and African American Christianity in Philadelphia. In addition, 709-19 S. 12th Street is the site at which African American vocalist Marian Anderson learned to sing and first sang publically. Though Anderson is often associated with Union Baptist Church's third building, which it has inhabited since 1916, it was, in fact, at 709-19 S. 12th Street that saw her formative years.

⁵⁸ Cooperman, Emily T. Inventory of African-American Historic Church Resources, City of Philadelphia, 2008.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

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Contributors

Upon gaining intelligence about plans that include the demolition of this important undesignated historic resource, Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist worked with members of the community to submit this nomination on August 14, 2015. The following individuals provided substantial assistance required for the completion of the three drafts that led to this nomination, with special gratitude to Rachel Hildebrandt, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist, for all of her dedication and hard work: J.M. Duffin, Archivist and Historian; and Aaron Wunsch, Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania.

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