

Raleigh Department of City Planning
One Exchange Plaza
3rd floor
Raleigh, NC 27602
919-516-2626

www.raleighnc.gov/planning

Fee	_____
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Rec'd By:	_____
Completion Date:	_____

(Processing Fee: \$257.00 - valid until June 30, 2009 - Checks payable to the City of Raleigh.)

RALEIGH HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION

This application initiates consideration of a property for designation as a Raleigh Historic Landmark by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC) and the Raleigh City Council. It enables evaluation of the resource to determine if it qualifies for designation. The evaluation is made by the Research Committee of the RHDC, which makes its recommendation to the full commission. The historic landmark program was previously administered by the Wake County Historic Preservation Commission but has been transferred back to the city; procedures for administration by the RHDC are outlined in the Raleigh City Code, Section 10-1053.

Please type if possible. Use 8-1/2" x 11" paper for supporting documentation and if additional space is needed. All materials submitted become the property of the RHDC and cannot be returned. Return completed application to the RHDC office at One Exchange Plaza, Suite 300, Raleigh or mail to:

Raleigh Historic Districts Commission
PO Box 829 Century Station
Raleigh, NC 27602

1. Name of Property (if historic name is unknown, give current name or street address):

Historic Name: Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church

Current Name: _____

2. Location:

Street 520 Method Road
Address: _____
NC PIN No.: 0794037650

(Can be obtained from <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>)

3. Legal Owner of Property (If more than one, list primary contact):

Name: Saint James AME Church
Address: 510 Method Road
City: Raleigh State: NC Zip: 27609
Telephone No: (919) (832)-(1041) Fax No. () ()-()
E-Mail: _____

4. Applicant/Contact Person (If other than owner):Name: Rebecca O. Spanbauer for Circa, Inc. for Raleigh Historic Districts CommissionAddress: P.O. Box 28365City: Raleigh State: NC Zip: 27611Telephone No: (919) (834)-(4757) Fax No. (919) (834)-(4756)E-Mail: amontgomery@circa-inc.com5. General Data/Site Information:Date of Construction and major additions/alterations: 1923, c.1990Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings: 0Approximate lot size or acreage: 0.36Architect, builder, carpenter, and/or mason: UnknownOriginal Use: ReligiousPresent Use: Religious6. Classification:

A. Category (check all that apply):

Building(s) ☒Structure ☐Object ☐Site ☐

B. Ownership

Private ☒Public ☐Local ☐State ☐Federal ☐

C. Number of contributing and non-contributing resources on the property:

	Contributing	Noncontributing
Buildings	1	0
Structures	0	0
Objects	0	0

D. Previous field documentation (when and by whom): None

E. National Register of Historic Places Status:

Check One:

Entered <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Nominated <input type="checkbox"/>
Determined Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:	Determined Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Date:
Nomination Not Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Removed <input type="checkbox"/> Date:

7. Reason for Request: _____

8. Is the property income producing? Yes ☐ No ☒

9. Are any interior spaces being included for designation? Yes ☐ No ☒

10. Supporting Documentation (Attach to application on separate sheets. Please type or print):

A. Photographs/Slides:

At least two sets of current exterior archival-grade photographic prints (minimum print size 5"x7") of all facades of the building and at least one photo of all other contributing and non-contributing resources. If interior spaces of the property are being considered for designation, please include two sets of photos for these features. Prints may be created by using archival-grade black and white film photography and processing or digital photography. The minimum standard for a digital print is 5x7 at a resolution of 300 pixels per inch (ppi). This translates into a pixel dimension of 1950 x 1350. Digital images must be printed with an acceptable ink and paper combination as determined by the National Park Service. This list can be found at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/policyexpansion.htm#digital> All photographs must be labeled with the name of the structure, address and date the photograph was taken with pencil or archival-approved photo pen. In addition to prints, all digital images should be submitted on a CD-R in TIF or JPG format. Any additional exterior or interior views and views of other structures on the property (color, black and white, or slides) will be helpful.

B. Map:

Please include a map showing the location of the property. A sketch map is acceptable, but please note street names and number. Any other structures on the property should also be shown. Please include a "North" arrow. Map should be no larger than 11" x 17". A tax map with boundaries marked is preferred, which can be found at:

<http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/>.

C. Architectural Significance:

Describe the property, including exterior architectural features, additions, remodelings, and alterations. Also describe significant outbuildings and landscape features. If the owner is including interior features in the nomination for the purpose of design review

protection; describe them in detail and note their locations. Include a statement regarding the architectural significance of the property.

D. Historic Significance:

Note any significant events, people, and/or families associated with the property. Include all major owners. Note if the property has ever been recorded during a historic building survey by the City of Raleigh or by the NC State Historic Preservation Office. If so, who and when? (See application item 6.D.) Please include a bibliography of sources. Information regarding prior designations can be found by contacting the Survey & Planning Branch of the NC State Historic Preservation Office at 919/733-6545 or at: <http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us/spbranch.htm>.

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Section 10A: Photographs



Façade/East Elevation



Northeast corner

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North Elevation



Northwest corner

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Rear/West Elevation



South Elevation

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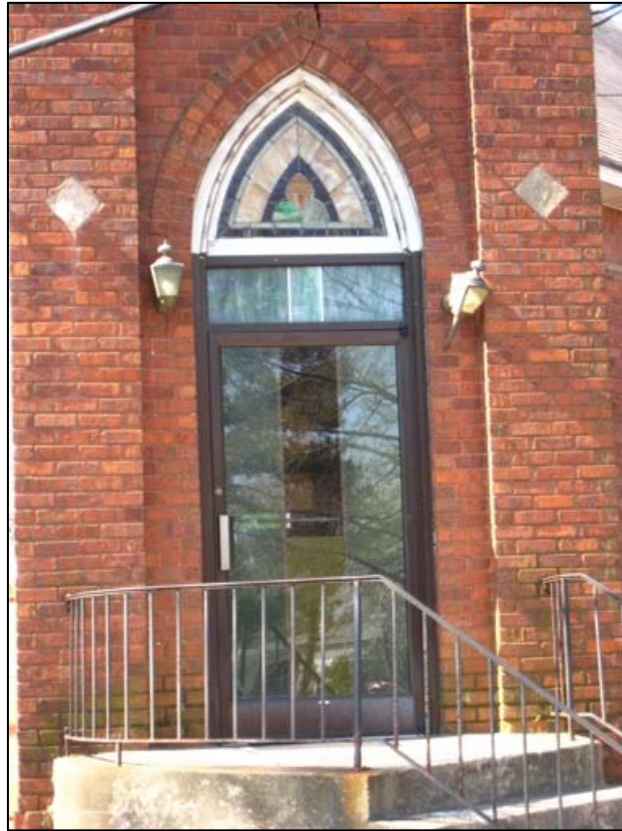


Southeast corner



Steeple Tower (northeast corner)

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Main Entrance (steeple tower)

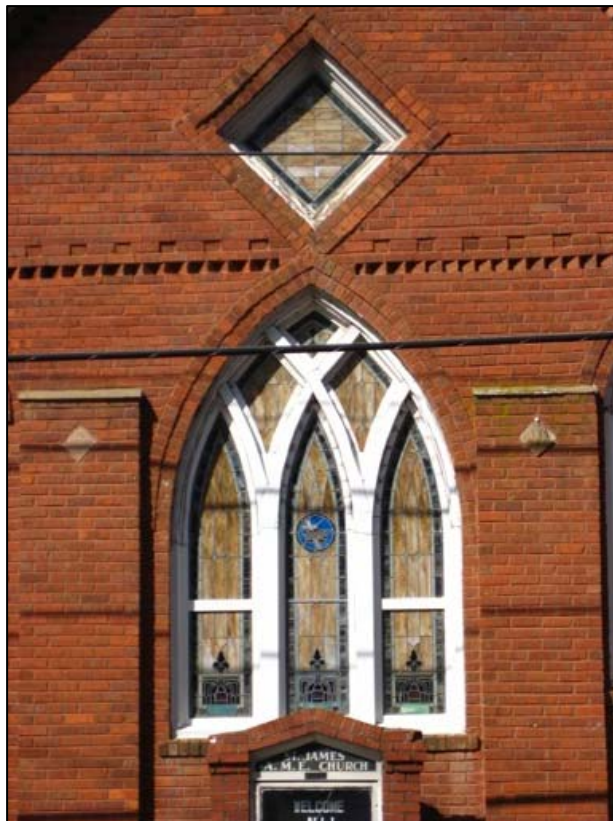


Steeple

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Façade/East Elevation detail



Façade window detail

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Secondary entrance on facade

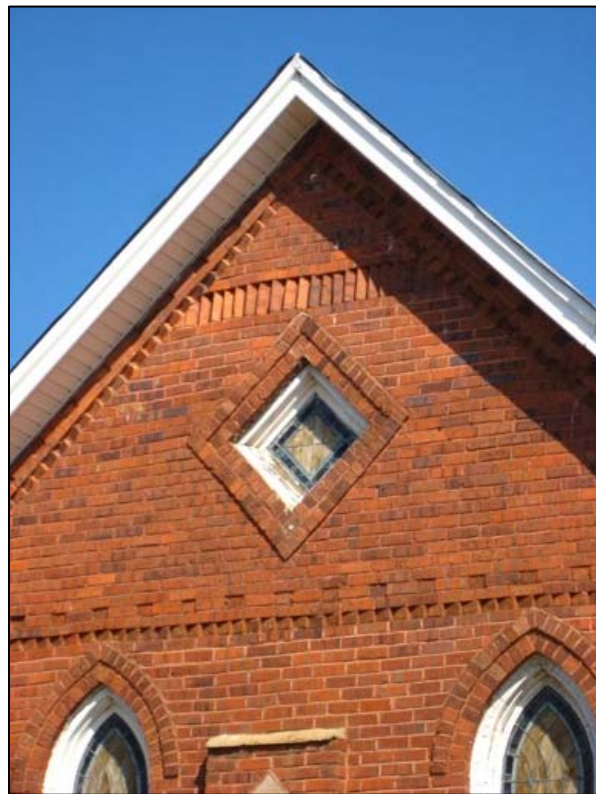


Secondary entrance

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Corbelled brickwork on facade



Corbelled brickwork detail (south gable end)

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Buttresses (north elevation)



Site view (looking south/southwest on Method Road)

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Site view (looking north/northwest on Method Road)



Main Sanctuary (looking west toward pulpit)

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Main Sanctuary (looking east toward Method Road)



View of Pulpit and Choir

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View of Pulpit and Choir



View of South Wing (looking south from main sanctuary)



View of South Wing (looking southeast from main sanctuary toward Method Road)

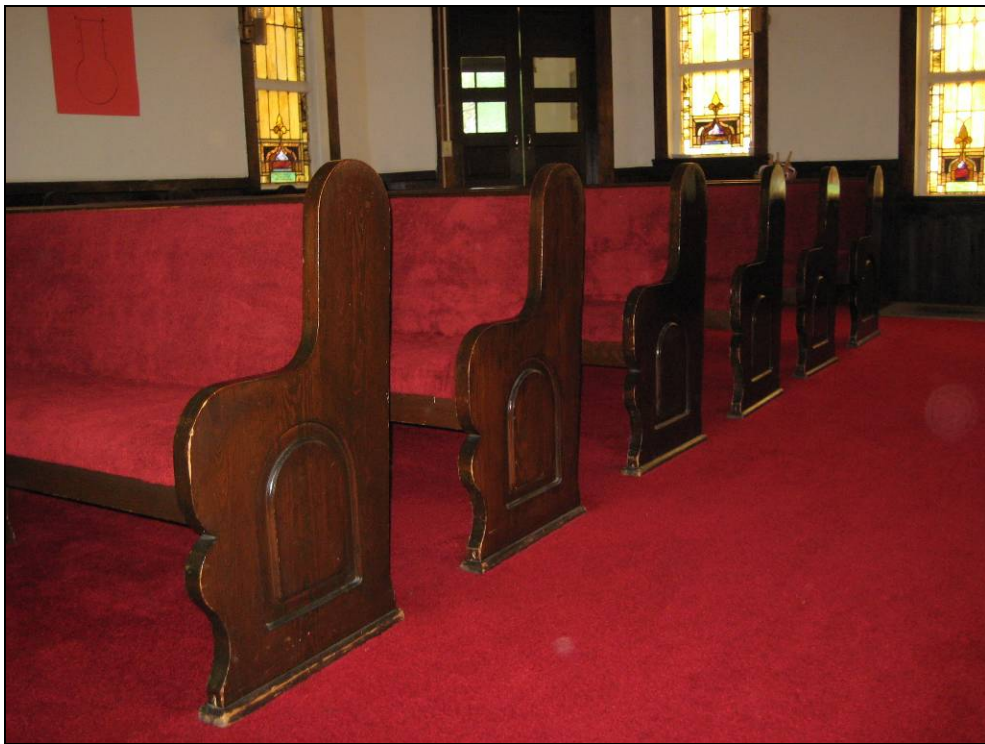


View of Main Sanctuary from South Wing

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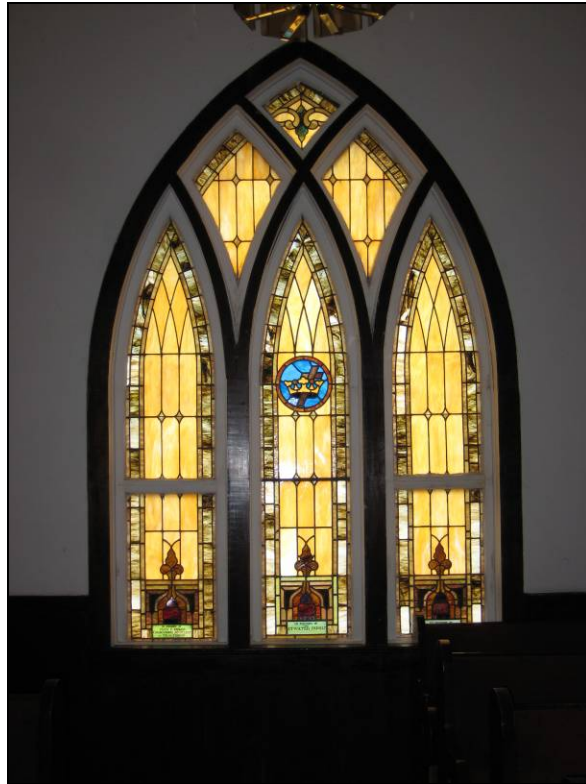


Pews and windows along north wall



Detail of Pews

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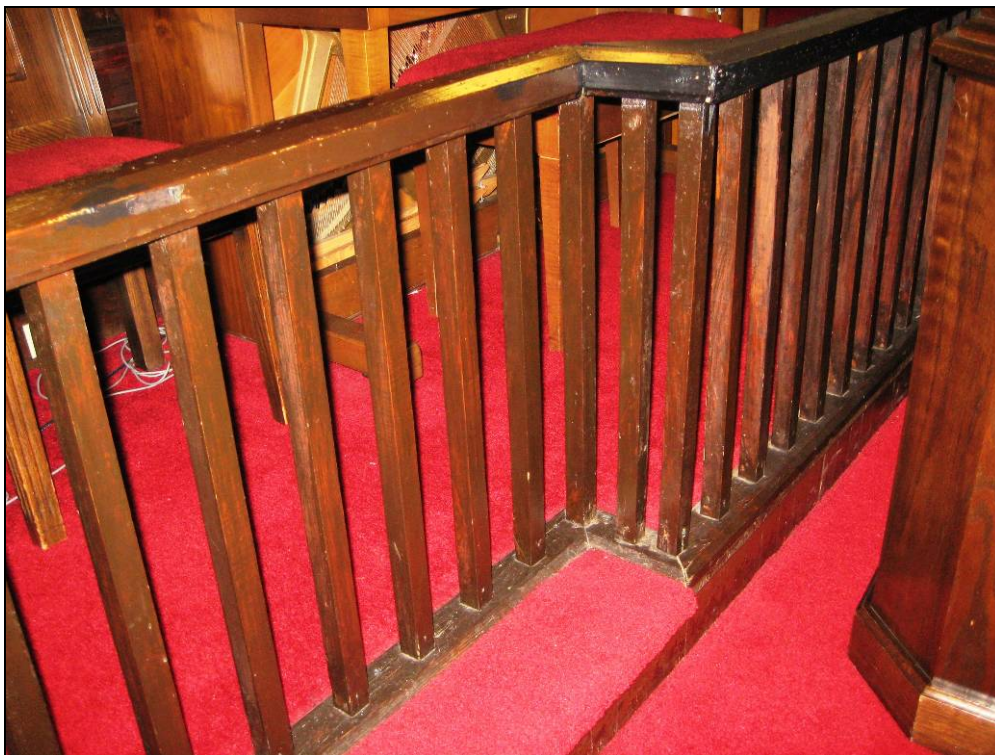
Detail of Window (tripled window on façade)



Detail of Window Trim



Detail of Wainscoting



Detail of Balustrade at front of pulpit/choir area



Detail of Ceiling and Light Fixtures (c.1970)

Section 10B: Maps

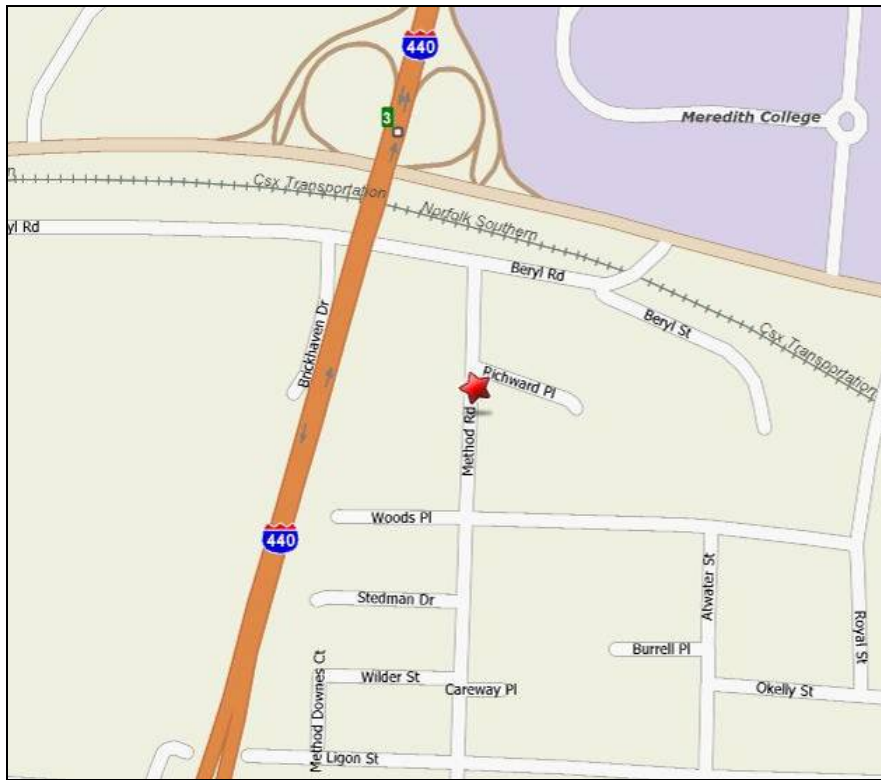


Site Map

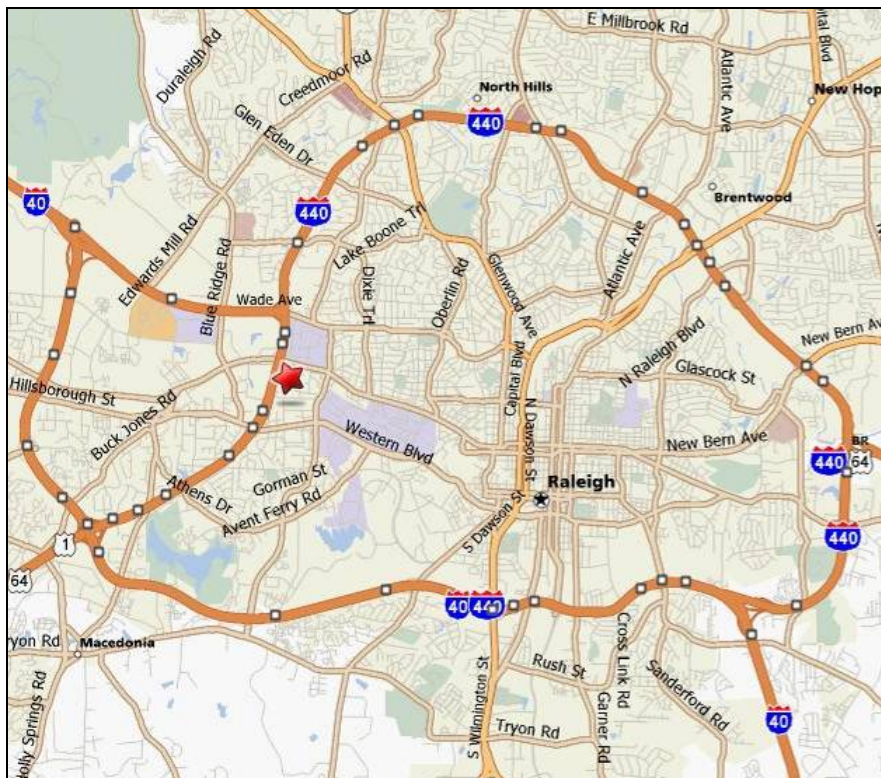


Tax Map

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Location Map 1



Location Map 2

Summary

Saint James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is a Gothic Revival brick church built in 1923 at 520 Method Road in the historic Method neighborhood on the western outskirts of Raleigh. Saint James AME Church stands as one of many examples throughout Raleigh of stylish churches that anchored African American communities that prospered after the Civil War and into the early- and mid-twentieth century. The Method neighborhood was one of a few suburban neighborhoods developed by African Americans after the Civil War; its development continued into the 1950s. Method's residents built many small, compact houses in Victorian-period, early-twentieth century Craftsman, and Minimal traditional and Ranch styles from the late 1800s into the 1950s. Community leaders established Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Berry O'Kelly School (a Raleigh Historic Landmark since 1982), and several stores that secured the community and provided religious, educational, and social connections for its residents. Of the three churches established in method in the 1970s and 1880s (including Lincolnville AME Church and Oak City Baptist Church), Saint James AME Church is the only one that still occupies its early-twentieth-century structure.

Section 10C: Architectural Significance

Saint James African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is built of solid red brick masonry in the Gothic Revival style. It has an irregular form, common for early-twentieth-century Gothic Revival churches. It is a tall, one-story structure with an asymmetrical façade. The main form of the nave is three bays wide and four bays deep; it has a front-gable roof with a tall tower and steeple on the northeast corner. A cross-gable wing extends to the south side and is one bay wide and two bays deep. In the late 1990s, two additions were made to the rear of the c.1923 church. A low-pitched, side-gable, one-story, brick-veneer addition was made in the late-twentieth century to the rear and is attached to the original structure by a gable-roof brick-veneer connector that extends from the rear elevation of the southern wing. A shed-roof, brick-veneer room was added to the rear/west elevation of this southern wing.

The original 1923 building is well-preserved and retains much of its original features on the exterior, including its pointed-arch, stained-glass windows and doorways. The brick-framed sign for the church was also constructed in 1923. The main entrance to the church faces northeast and is set within the steeple tower, which is set diagonally to the main block at the northeast corner of the façade. The front entrance contains a single-leaf door with three tall, solid, vertical panes of colored, textured glass, which is set beneath a tall, pointed-arch stained-glass transom. The south gable wing also contains an entrance on its façade, facing east onto Method Road, with a matching door to the main entrance in the steeple tower, but with a plywood insert in the pointed-arch transom. The door is flanked to the south by one pointed-arch stained-glass window. This entrance is also protected with a later shed-roof portico supported by hollow metal posts that extends from the side elevation of the front-gable bays. Both entrances are reached by small concrete-block steps with simple cast-iron railings.

The front-gable façade is dominated by triple pointed-arch stained-glass windows in the central bay, flanked on each side by a single pointed-arch stained-glass window. A

diamond-shaped stained-glass window pierces each gable on the façade and south gable walls. The bays on the façade and side elevations, as well as the corners of the building, are delineated by engaged buttresses, with concrete caps and recessed, concrete diamond shapes at the top. The gables are also banded with two single courses of decorative, corner-set brick; the cornice is also marked with a course of such brick work. The broad eaves of the roof have been covered with vinyl siding in recent years.

The Gothic Revival style is an eclectic style that was nationally popular in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries for religious, commercial, and institutional buildings. It is characterized by asymmetrical forms and pointed-arch fenestration. Examples can be found in both masonry and frame construction and were popular in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

The interior of Saint James AME Church retains its original pews and overall floor plan, but has some later modifications to the walls and ceilings. The sanctuary features a wide, aisled nave with the pulpit, pews for the choir, and the organ at the west end of the room. An enclosed office is in the southwest corner of the sanctuary, next to the pulpit and choir. The south wing contains additional seating that faces perpendicular to the rows of pews in the main block; the wing is separated from the main sanctuary by a row of square posts. The walls have original stained wood trim and wainscoting; the wainscoting features vertical tongue-and-groove pine boards. Several changes occurred in the 1970s to the wall and ceiling finishes. The original plaster walls were covered with gypsum board and have a skim-coat of textured plaster for decorative affect. The original ceiling (of unknown finish) was covered with acoustical tiles, and the original light fixtures were replaced with modern pendant lights. A stick balustrade with curved corners surrounds the front of the pulpit and choir area. The pulpit is raised by one step above the main floor, and the choir is raised behind the pulpit by three additional steps, which are accessible on each side of the three rows of pews. The original pews throughout the interior are original, and feature pew ends with curved edges. Each end has a round-arch raised panel. The interior of the church features finishes commonly seen in rural, early-twentieth-century Gothic Revival churches throughout North Carolina.

Section 10D: Historic Significance

Saint James AME Church was founded in 1886 in the Method neighborhood in western Raleigh. African American neighborhood communities developed in clusters around Raleigh in the Reconstruction era between 1865 and the 1880s. The Method neighborhood was one of several “Freedmen’s villages” that developed on the outskirts of Raleigh’s city limits. The area included the Oberlin and Brooklyn neighborhoods, which were situated closer to Raleigh compared with Lincolnton and Method itself, which were located further west off of Hillsboro Road (now Hillsborough Street) in what was then rural territory outside of Raleigh. Oberlin and Method would grow to be the two strongest and best developed black suburbs by the turn of the twentieth century. These suburbs offered lower property costs and homeownership opportunities to blacks compared to the Second and Fourth Ward neighborhoods near Raleigh’s core, just south and east of Davie Street.¹

Jesse Mason and Isaac O’Kelly, two African American entrepreneurs who sought to create a suburban neighborhood for blacks after the Civil War, established the Method neighborhood in 1872.² They bought approximately sixty-nine acres from General W.R. Cox, a Confederate veteran who had divided the lands of his former plantation in order to sell them.³ Mason and O’Kelly established their households in this new area, and encouraged their extended families and friends to buy property and build houses there. In the first years of its existence, the neighborhood was called “Save-rent” or “Slabtown,” and the neighborhood experienced a great influx of African Americans looking for less expensive property and easier terms to build houses and escape the housing shortage and poverty that dominated the African American neighborhoods near downtown Raleigh.⁴ The community grew as new residents built vernacular-style houses, at first consisting of single-room log cabins or slab houses (log or frame structures built on timber slabs), which were the fastest and cheapest methods of residential construction.⁵

The neighborhood received the name Method in 1890 after the railroad came through the area.⁶ As residents gained wealth and greater self-sufficiency around the turn of the twentieth century, the crude log and frame cabins were replaced with more stylish vernacular houses, such as one-story, triple-A, hip-roof, cross-gable, or side-gable vernacular Queen Anne houses built with milled lumber and with decorative sawnwork, often inspired by pattern books circulating at that time.⁷ Later, in the 1920s-1940s, residents built mass-produced bungalows designed from popular and widely-circulating plan books or houses from mail-order kits. After World War II, residents constructed

¹ Mattson, pp.9-10.

² Linda Simmons-Henry and Linda Harris Edmisten, *Culture Town: Life in Raleigh’s African-American Communities*, Raleigh, NC: Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, 1993, 2.

³ Richard Mattson, “The Evolution of Raleigh’s African-American Neighborhoods in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” Report to the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, 1988, 11-12, on file with the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, Raleigh, NC; Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 2.

⁴ Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 2.

⁵ Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 2.

⁶ Mattson, 11-12.

⁷ Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 2.

new, restrained, postwar-style houses, including the popular Minimal Traditional houses.⁸

The founding of Saint James AME Church and churches like it occurred within a rise in community-building among African Americans in Raleigh after the Civil War. While the Method neighborhood was primarily residential, citizens organized community-based institutions and small commercial ventures. Berry O'Kelly, Method resident and one of North Carolina's most prominent civic leaders, ran a general store and post office that served Method.⁹ He amassed a large amount of real estate holdings and grew his personal wealth, a large portion of which he injected back into the Method community. His most highly-recognized achievement is the founding of the Berry O'Kelly Training School (designated as a Raleigh Historic Landmark in 1982) in 1914, when Berry O'Kelly bought land and expanded the facilities and curriculum of a smaller subscription school that had been established in Method in 1871-1873. O'Kelly was an active attendee at the Tuskegee Conferences and focused his efforts on educating blacks throughout Method and Wake County during the era of Jim Crow segregation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. By 1923, Berry O'Kelly's school had become one of three rural schools for blacks to be accredited by the State of North Carolina, and by 1931 was the largest high school for blacks in the state. The school sought to train students in traditional academics as well as vocational trades to increase their options for establishing and maintaining sustainable livelihoods.¹⁰

Founded in 1886, Saint James AME Church is an important example of the spirit of community-building and individual and collective improvement that spurred the construction of other churches in Method to serve its residents. These churches included Lincolnvillle African Methodist Episcopal Church (established in 1872; located at 6400 Chapel Hill Road, c.1982); the 1890s church is located in the Village of Yesteryear at the NC State Fairgrounds), Oak City Baptist Church (established in 1873; located at 608 Method Road, c.2000), and Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church.¹¹ Saint James AME Church likely occupied an earlier frame church, but in 1923 constructed the stylish Gothic Revival structure next to the grounds of the Berry O'Kelly Training School. Berry O'Kelly, a prominent member and civic leader, collaborated with Louis Atwater, Zaney Coggins, Louis Mason, Bennett Powell, John Rhone, and Henry Woods to purchase lands to establish the church.¹² Thus, Saint James AME Church was one of several community institutions built and supported by active Method residents and entrepreneurs.¹³

The African Methodist Episcopal denomination was and continues to be an important institution in the African American community in Raleigh and nationwide, attributed with

⁸ Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 2-3, 6, 10-13.

⁹ L. Walter Seegers., *Berry O'Kelly Landmark Application*, 1982, 2-3.

¹⁰ L. Walter Seegers., *Berry O'Kelly Landmark Application*, 1982, 3-4.

¹¹ Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 14-15.

¹² N.A., "Church History of Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church," n.d., on file with the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, Raleigh, NC.; Mattson, 11-12; L. Walter Seegers, *Berry O'Kelly Landmark Application*, 1982.

¹³ Simmons-Henry and Edmisten, 2-3.

providing strength, hope, and positive self-identity for its members. In its naming, African refers to its establishment by people of African descent (though membership is open to all races), Methodism refers to its theological interpretations and practices, and Episcopal refers to its administrative and governmental structure.¹⁴

Founded in 1815 by Richard Allen, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church grew out of the Free African Society, established by Allen and Absalom Jones in Philadelphia in 1787.¹⁵ Allen sought to establish an African congregation to insulate and protect black members of the American Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Churches from the internal racism and strife that they experienced during the Revolutionary and early Federal periods in the northeast. Allen, a former slave in Delaware, established the Bethel AME Church in 1794, which successfully brought suit in Pennsylvania state courts in 1807 and 1815, obtaining the AME Church's right to operate freely and independently of interference from and oppression by the white congregations of the Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Churches.¹⁶ The AME Church "rejected the negative theological interpretations which rendered persons of African descent second class citizens. [It maintains] a theological declaration that God is God all the time and for every body. The church was born in protest against slavery - against dehumanization of African people, brought to the American continent as labor."¹⁷

As a denomination, the AME Church spread rapidly in the antebellum era in the Northeast and Midwest. Though it made small in-roads into a few slave-states before and during the Civil War, the church experienced rapid growth in the South after the Civil War, as newly-freed black men and women were drawn to the church's welcoming and liberating theology. Paradoxically, the upheaval and harsh social backlash experienced throughout the South during Reconstruction and Jim Crow segregation from the 1870s to the 1960s actually spurred the establishment of local AME church, as blacks sought refuge and hope through the church's theology and community of worship. The AME Church expanded greatly throughout the South after the Civil War, and membership rapidly reached 400,000 members in 1880.¹⁸ It was within this context of growth that the Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church was established in Method in 1886.

Bibliography

African Methodist Episcopal Church, website, <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php>, accessed 24 Mar 2009.

Mattson, Richard. *The Evolution of Raleigh's African-American Neighborhoods in the*

¹⁴ AMEC, "Name," African Methodist Episcopal Church, website, <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/index.php>, accessed 24 Mar 2009.

¹⁵ AMEC, "History," African Methodist Episcopal Church website, <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php>, accessed 24 Mar 2009.

¹⁶ AMEC, "History," African Methodist Episcopal Church website, <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php>, accessed 24 Mar 2009.

¹⁷ AMEC, "Welcome," African Methodist Episcopal Church, website, <http://www.ame-church.com/>, accessed on 24 Mar 2009.

¹⁸ AMEC, "History," African Methodist Episcopal Church website, <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php>, accessed 24 Mar 2009.

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19th and 20th Centuries. Report to the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, 1988, on file with the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, Raleigh, NC.
N.A. "Church History of Saint James African Methodist Episcopal Church," n.d., on file with the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, Raleigh, NC.
Seegers, L. Walter. *Berry O'Kelly Landmark Application*, 1982, on file with the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, Raleigh, NC.
Simmons-Henry, Linda and Edmisten, Linda Harris. *Culture Town: Life in Raleigh's African-American Communities*, Raleigh, NC: Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, 1993.
Walker, Bessie. Interview with Rebecca O. Spanbauer, Raleigh NC. 6 May 2009.

Photo Credits

Spanbauer, Rebecca O. Photographs, March 2009.

Boundary Description

The landmark boundary will follow the boundaries of the parcel identified as PIN # 0794037650. This parcel was historically associated with the church. The adjacent parcel is currently owned by the City of Raleigh and is associated with the Berry O'Kelly School, a Raleigh Historic Landmark since 1982.