

## RALEIGH HISTORIC PROPERTY DESIGNATION APPLICATION AND REPORT

1. NAME OF THE PROPERTY: (If historic name is unknown, give current name or give street address)

Historic Name Wilson Temple United Methodist Church

Current Name, or Address \_\_\_\_\_

2. LOCATION: 1023 Oberlin Road Raleigh Wake  
street city and/or county

3. LEGAL OWNER: Name Wilson Temple United Methodist Church day phone 828-9989

Address 1023 Oberlin Road Raleigh NC  
street city state zip

4. APPLICANT/CONTACT PERSON: Name Rev. Jesse Brunson day phone 828-1244

Address 1023 Oberlin Rd. Raleigh NC 27605-1198  
street city state zip

5. REASON FOR REQUEST: N/A

6. GENERAL DATA:

a. Date of construction and alterations: 1910-1911, 1954, 1989

b. Outbuildings: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No x If yes, number \_\_\_\_\_

c. Approximate acreage or dimensions: .46 acre

d. Architect, builder, carpenter and/or mason: Unknown

e. Use: Original Religious Present Religious

f. Is the property income producing? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No x

7. CLASSIFICATION:

a. Category: building(s) x structure \_\_\_\_\_ object \_\_\_\_\_ site \_\_\_\_\_

b. Ownership: private x public: local \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_

c. Number of resources within property:	Contributing	Non-contributing
buildings	<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>
structures	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
objects	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
sites	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

d. National Register of Historic Places status (check one): Entered (date) \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
 nominated: eligible \_\_\_\_\_ not eligible \_\_\_\_\_ ; not requested x ; removed (date) \_\_\_\_\_

e. Has the property been recorded during a historic survey by the City of Raleigh or the NC Historic Preservation Office? By whom and when E. Kipling Wright, African-American Survey, 1989

8. SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: \_\_\_\_\_ Raleigh Historic Properties Commission, Inc.  
Post Office Box 829 date 5 Aug. 1991  
Century Station  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27602

9. SUPPORTING INFORMATION: (For items c., d., and e., please type or print on separate sheets of paper and attach to this application)
- a. Photographs: At least TWO current exterior black and white photographs of different views must be provided. Photographs must be labeled in pencil with the name of the building, structure, object or site, the address, and the date. Additional exterior or interior views and views of other structures on the property will be helpful. Color, black and white photographs and/or slides are acceptable for additional documentation.
  - b. Maps: Include a map showing the location of the property. A tax map with boundaries marked is preferred. A sketch map is acceptable but please note street names and numbers. Other structures on the property should also be shown. Include a "North" arrow.
  - c. Justification for land to be designated: Describe the physical appearance of the surrounding land area and its use.
  - d. Architectural description and significance: Describe the architectural features, additions, remodelings and alterations. Include a statement regarding the architectural significance of the building.
  - e. Historical significance: Note any significant events, personages and/or families associated with the property. Detailed family genealogies are not necessary. Please list any any additional sources of information.

10. PLEASE RETURN TO:

Raleigh Historic Properties Commission  
Post Office Box 829  
Century Station  
Raleigh, NC 27602

## Wilson Temple United Methodist Church

### 9.(c.) Justification for Land to be Designated

The proposed boundaries for the Wilson Temple United Methodist Church nomination encompass the entire .46 acre tract upon which the church building sits. The lot was donated before the turn of the century for the purpose of constructing a church. Inclusion of the entire current lot is necessary to provide an appropriate setting for the church.

### 9.(d.) Architectural Description and Significance

The Gothic Revival style Wilson Temple United Methodist Church is situated on the west side of Oberlin Road, a few hundred yards south of Wade Avenue. The church faces directly onto the street with a cement driveway at the south elevation and lawns at the north and west walls. The two-story, red brick building has a three bay central projecting section with a front gable. All of the stained glass windows have pointed Gothic arches with brick hoods and brick sills. On either side of the main facade is a double door entryway. Each entrance is accessed by brick steps, above the doors is a pointed Gothic arch which frames a stained glass window with the words "Wilson Temple Methodist Church" emblazoned across the center of the opening.

The current building was erected in 1910, replacing an 1873 wood frame church building. For the most part, the religious structure retains its original integrity. But when Hurricane Hazel came through Raleigh in October 1954, the church sustained heavy damage. The entire roof was removed as were sections of brick walls, pane-glass windows were broken, the steeple was lost beyond repair and interior spaces were water-logged (Frank J. Flagg and Mrs. Tulia Turner interviews, "Raleigh's Roots: An Oral History of the African-American Communities"). During the 1955 rebuilding of Wilson Temple, exterior changes occurred; a two-story bell tower with battlements replaced the steeple, the side entrance was expanded, the upper brick wall gables were made with new brick and stained glass windows replaced the original clear and colored glass windows. The 1955 interior renovations included replacement of the pulpit, pews, choir loft, stair railings and banisters (Mrs. Tulia Turner, taped interview, "Raleigh's Roots: An Oral History of the African-American Communities"). The rear of the original 1910 building has been altered with subsequent renovations and additions in 1914, 1964, 1971 and 1989.

The Wilson Temple United Methodist Church has molded wood window surrounds, wide roof eaves and a brick splashcourse. The steeply pitched cross gable roof of the church is covered with asphalt shingles. A single interior brick chimney stack rises from the southeast corner and a brick and cast stone buttress adjoins the corner entrance tower.

The south and north elevations of the church are nearly identical with three bays each. The forms of the window openings are mirror images with the front elevation: a large double pointed window pair flanked by smaller, single pointed arches.

The southwest corner has been altered on at least four occasions, with the most recent in 1989 when an education wing was added, nearly doubling the square footage of the building.

On the interior, the church has a T-shaped center space with the pulpit and choir loft as the focal point. Solid, light oak pews encircle the remaining spaces. The two corner entrances allow access to the street elevation, while one permits passage to the basement where the old fellowship hall and kitchen remain. A third entrance enables movement to the three room parsonage and beyond that to the new education annex.

The Wilson Temple United Methodist Church is one of two early religious buildings in the Oberlin community, but the other (Oberlin Baptist Church) was completely reconstructed in 1955. The Wilson Temple retains its Gothic Revival style and exhibits a relatively high degree of finish. Although the church sustained damage in 1954, the brickwork and roofline replaced missing sections and did not alter the massing and form of the 1910 structure. With the exception of the castellated tower, expanded southeast entry, and stained glass windows, the original church building appears much as it did in 1910. The well-preserved building has sustained its members in the community since its inception in 1869. For 123 years the various church buildings have provided a spiritual and cultural haven for the African-American populace of the Oberlin community.

#### 9.(e.) Historical Significance

The Oberlin community was established in the late 1860s and was a rural farming area, separated from Raleigh by several miles of woods. Created as a freedman's community, the village enabled African-Americans to own property and receive an education. In 1869, some of the residents of Oberlin organized a Methodist congregation. In several years money and interest were increased among the neighbors. By 1873, community labor erected a wooden frame church building on land donated by a local brick mason, Wilson Morgan. In the following years, Morgan went into public service and was a Republican Senator between the 1880s and 1892 (M. Ruth Little, Raleigh African-American Community Survey Study List, unpublished report, 1991, page 9).

In 1880, another congregation founded the Oberlin Baptist Church and the community thrived through the late nineteenth century. One main artery, Oberlin Road, ran north and south and providing the link from the community to the capital beyond.

The churches helped cement the community together and by 1899 the Wilson Temple congregation consisted of ninety members (Survey and Planning Branch, African-

American Survey File). Support for the Methodist church ran high. In the early 1900s a proposal to establish a more permanent building was wholeheartedly approved. In 1910 the frame church was razed and within a year was replaced by a community-built, red brick Gothic Revival style church building.

In 1954, after Hurricane Hazel ravished the Wilson Temple, support from the congregation was again evident. The building sustained heavy damage and all services were suspended for many months. During this time numerous fundraisers were held in an effort to finance repairs and replace interior furnishings. One such group, the Triangle Circle Club, held afternoon teas. One of the hostesses, Mrs. Tulia Turner, remembers one event netting over four hundred dollars. As a reward for her efforts she was given the honor of selecting materials for the oak banisters, choir loft, pulpit and carpeting (Tulia Tuner, interview, "Raleigh's Roots: An Oral History of the African-American Communities").

Between 1916 and 1968, the church hosted sessions of the annual conferences of North Carolina's black Methodists. After 1968, the United Methodist Church and the United Brethren Church both united to form the United Methodist Church, whereby the denomination integrated its black and white churches (Survey and Planning Branch, African-American Survey File).

The Wilson Temple United Methodist Church is historically significant because it is the earliest and most prominent remaining institution in the once-rural freedman's community. Although the village has been encroached upon from all directions and diminished in size, today the congregation is over three-hundred and twenty-five members strong.

### Bibliography

Brunson, Rev. Jesse. Interview with the author, June 15, 1992.

"'Centennial 1872-1972' Wilson Temple United Methodist Church", privately printed, 1972.

Flagg, Frank. Raleigh's Roots: An Oral History of the African-American Communities, March 8, 1990. Interview, transcript. Richard B. Harrison Library, Raleigh.

Harris, Linda and Mary Ann Black. Raleigh Architectural Inventory. Raleigh: City of Raleigh Planning Department, 1978.

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. Survey and Planning Branch, African-American Survey file, Wilson Temple United Methodist Church.

Raleigh City Directories, 1909, 1915, 1922, 1925 and 1930.

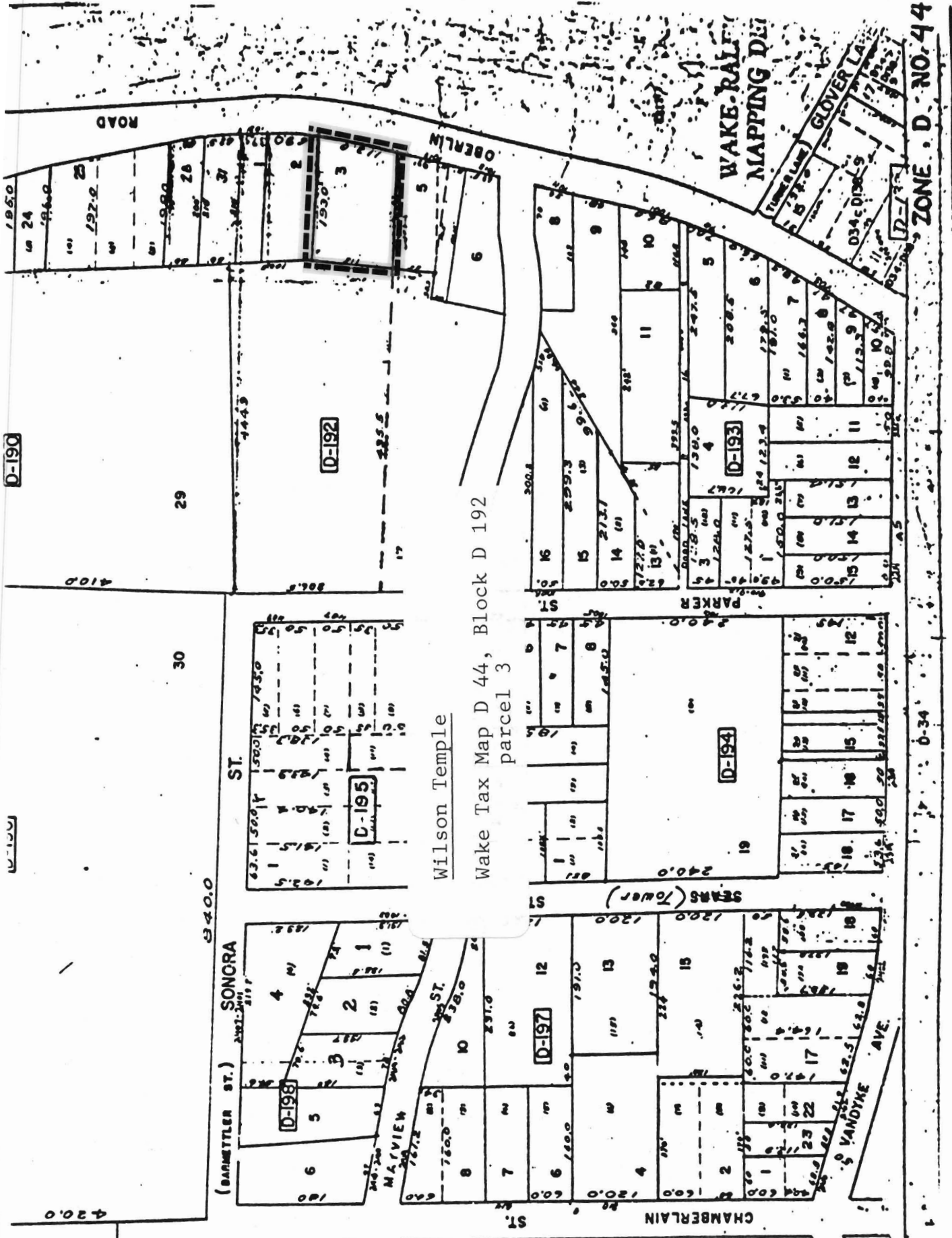
Roberts, Glenn. "Oberlin was once 'village near the city of Raleigh'", Raleigh Times, January 1971.

Turner, Tulia. Raleigh's Roots: An Oral History of the African-American Communities, March 8, 1990. Interview transcript. Richard B. Harrison Library. Raleigh.

Wake County Deeds.

Wake County Tax Records.

Wilson Temple United Methodist Church, "Celebrate and Witness: Dedication and Homecoming Services", Irving-Swain Press, Inc. Raleigh. August 26-27, 1989.



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