

243

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

FEB 15 1994

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 an 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 Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church

other names/site number SUM-243-13

2. Location

street & number 104 N. Prospect Street N/A not for publication

city or town Akron N/A vicinity

state Ohio code OH county Summit code 153 zip code 44304

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara Power, Dept. Head - Planning 2-7-94
Signature of certifying official/Title Inv. & Registration Date
Ohio Historic Preservation Office

State of 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 certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Entered in the National Register 3/17/94 Date of Action

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.)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Contributing Noncontributing
1 buildings
sites
structures
objects
1 0 Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

RELIGION/religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

foundation brick

walls brick

steel

roof synthetic

other glass

Narrative Description

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

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A

- 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance

1928-1943

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wardner, Herbert L.

Sommerville, John O.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	4 5 7 1 2 0	4 5 4 8 2 3 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jeffrey D. Brown/Regional Coordinator

organization Ohio Historic Preservation Office date April 8, 1993

street & number 201 3rd Street NE telephone 216-438-0404

city or town Canton state Ohio zip code 44702-1231

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church

street & number 104 N. Prospect Street telephone 216-434-5800

city or town Akron state Ohio zip code 44304

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

RECEIVED**FEB 15 1994****NATIONAL
REGISTER**

Section number 7 Page 1 Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Summit Co., Ohio

The Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church is a Neo-Classical Revival style building, located adjacent to a public park north of Akron's downtown commercial district. Completed in 1928, the church is rectangular in plan and rests on a raised brick foundation. The steel frame walls are faced with red brick laid in a common bond pattern and set off from the foundation brick by a stone watertable. The raised three-bay front entrance features classical door surrounds and entablatures; the doorways are flanked by two small rectangular windows with stone lintels and brick sills. A classical pedimented portico, with a broad cornice, modillions, and a large cartouche of cornucopias, is supported by four Ionic columns. Tall, round-arched, stained glass windows on the side facades have brick sills and stone keystones. The corners of the building are distinguished by brick quoins and small octagonal windows with brick and stone trim. A simple stone cornice is surmounted by a brick parapet capped with stone.

The lower sanctuary, in the basement, is arranged on a modified Akron Plan, with three Sunday School rooms on each side of the sanctuary. The main sanctuary is also almost entirely original, with classical door surrounds, six-panel doors, fluted pilasters, prominent coved crown moldings, a balcony facing the altar, and original pews, lighting fixtures, and pipe organ.

The only major alteration to the church was the construction of an addition to the rear of the building in 1963. This addition is compatible in design, scale, and materials, but is distinguishable from the earlier building by a slightly lighter color of brick. The only other notable changes occurred about 1980, when the center front door was converted to a window, without affecting the classical surround and entablature, and the deteriorated portico columns were replaced with exact copies of the originals. In all other respects, the church remains essentially as built, exhibiting a high state of architectural integrity.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Summit Co., Ohio

The Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church is significant, under Criterion A, for its association with African-American history in the city of Akron. In addition to their religious functions, black churches played primary roles as educational, social, and cultural institutions, maintaining and perpetuating black families and African-American culture in the face of prolonged and systematic racial discrimination.

Akron was founded in 1825, and had few black inhabitants in its early years. The black population began to grow in the decade preceding the Civil War, but the 1860 census still showed only 24 black residents. Akron became a city in 1865, and the need for unity and spiritual strength led to the formation of the city's first black congregation, A.M.E. Zion Church, in 1866, as blacks were still excluded from most white churches and faced limited educational and economic opportunities. Meetings were held in private homes and halls until a lot was purchased and a small building erected on S. High Street in 1882. As Akron's black population increased (to 278 by 1880) several other black congregations were founded in the 1880s.

Black churches in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were critically important for helping preserve family unity and as institutions providing an educational setting for families and black organizations, as well as lecture halls for orators. The church was one of the strongest black institutions, meeting spiritual as well as some social and educational needs (McClain:107). By 1900 Akron's population of 42,728 included 525 blacks. "Although the black population remained small, blacks nevertheless continued to be conscious of their particular needs in a society which had not absorbed them, nor considered them as equals." (McClain:112). However, in the years between 1900 and 1920, rapid industrial growth tied to the expansion of the rubber industry led to a tripling of Akron's population, including an influx of southern blacks; the city's black population increased eight-fold, from 657 to 5,580. This growth also brought increasing racial hostility and discrimination. Blacks were prevented from living in the "better" residential sections, and most blacks were employed in menial capacities, regardless of education or abilities. Blacks pursuing higher education were forced to attend black colleges such as Wilberforce, and it wasn't until 1921 that the University of Akron produced its first black graduate, Emmer Lancaster (a member of A.M.E. Zion). Lancaster received his law degree in 1927, co-founded the Summit

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Summit Co., Ohio

County Colored Democratic Club in 1928, and served as a local president of the NAACP. The local chapter of the NAACP was organized at the A.M.E. Zion Church, and its first president was Rev. James H. McMullen of the church. Other prominent members of the congregation included George Mathews, Akron's first black hotel owner; the first black city council member, Edward Davis; the first black Akron School Board member, the Rev. Dr. Eugene Morgan; and Akron's most prominent black businesswoman, Mary Upperman, wife of A.M.E. Zion's Rev. L.N. Upperman - Mrs. Upperman owned and managed one of Akron's largest "Negro" grocery stores, conducted an employment bureau, operated a laundry and a rooming house, and eventually became sole proprietor of the only "colored" drug store in Akron at that time, the Globe Drug Store. (More recent prominent members include Judge James R. Williams, appointed as an attorney-general by President Carter; Thaddeus Garrett, Jr., the first appointed black Congressional page, who was designated as Special Assistant for Urban Affairs by Vice-President Rockefeller; and Shelton Lee, Jr., the first black appointee to the U.S. Naval Academy).

A.M.E. Zion, along with other black churches, continued to grow in the 1920s. The need for a larger building led to the drawing of plans in 1926, the hiring of a black contractor, and the dedication of the newly completed church, named the Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, on August 12, 1928. The church continued to serve not only as a place of worship, but also as a meeting place for other black organizations and as a lecture hall for black orators. As the Depression deepened in the 1930s, blacks were hit harder than any other group in the city. According to the Federal Relief Administration (cited in McClain) blacks were the first to be laid off and the last hired, and 20% of the city's black population was on relief, although they comprised only 4% of the total population. Black churches were instrumental in helping black families and in providing educational, religious, and social programs. "Suffering under the double handicap of being black and poor, Negro residents continued to face the unenviable task of motivating their children to remain in school and complete their education. Black churches, speakers, and organizations maintained their supportive role of aiding black families in meeting that challenge." (McClain:246). A.M.E. Zion Church also became the principal location for feeding unemployed blacks throughout the Depression.

From the days before the Civil War, when churches were the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Summit Co., Ohio

only organized social outlet available to slaves, up to the present time, the church has been the single most important institution in the lives of African-Americans. Racial barriers - political, economic, and social - under which black Americans lived, contributed to the growth of black consciousness and culture, particularly in social organizations and the churches. Churches served dual roles, as both religious institutions and social outlets, implementing activities that strengthened family ties, instilled a greater sense of black pride, and fostered a tradition of self-help and unity in the face of pervasive discrimination. As focal points of the black community, churches helped maintain and pass on black culture through worship, music, singing, readings, speeches, dinners, meetings, and other events. Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, representing the oldest black congregation in Akron, has always been prominent among the city's black churches in fulfilling these various roles and responsibilities, partially reflected in the fact that many of Akron's most distinguished and successful African-Americans have been members of this church; it is significant as a leading exemplar of the vital role churches have played in the heritage of Akron's African-American community.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E. Zion) Church is the second oldest Black denomination in the United States. Rather than endure discrimination and prejudice at the hands of the John Street Methodist Episcopal Church, black leaders withdrew and founded the A.M.E. Zion Church in 1796. Today the A.M.E. Zion Church is the second largest Black Methodist body in the United States.

The period of significance extends from 1928, when the church building was dedicated, to 1943, the fifty-year cutoff for National Register significance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1 Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Summit Co., Ohio

Bibliography

McClain, Shirla R.

The Contributions of Blacks in Akron: 1825-1975. Ph.D.
dissertation, University of Akron, 1975.

Anon.

Homecoming Anniversary: 125 Years. Wesley Temple A.M.E.
Zion Church, 1991.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

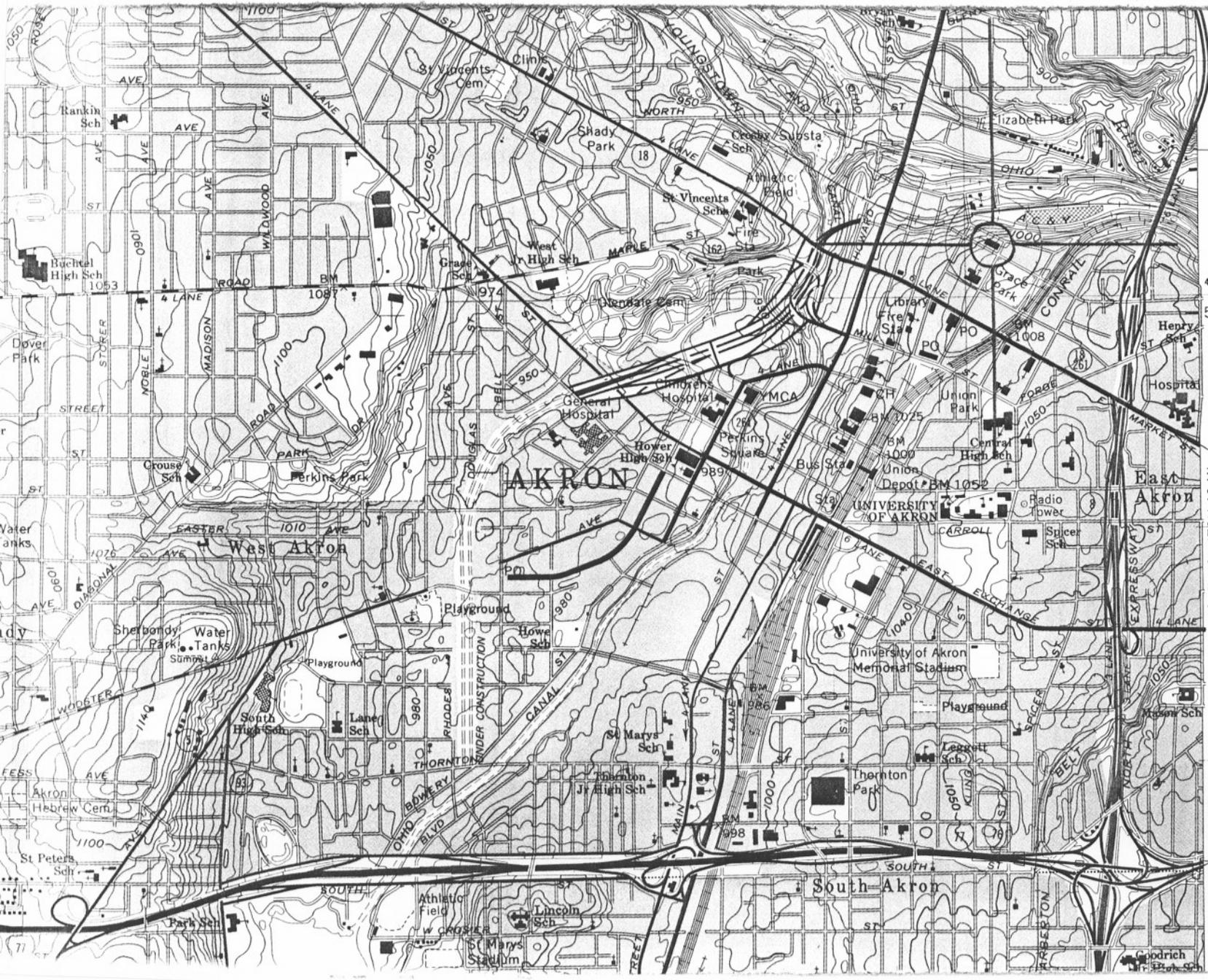
Section number 10 Page 1 Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, Summit Co.,
Ohio

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 7, Akron Plat Book #34 (part of allotment made for Charles Rawson)

Boundary Justification

Boundary is based upon legally recorded lot description, and includes the property historically associated with the nominated building.



Wesley Temple
 A.M.E. Zion Church
 Summit Co., OH
 UTM: 17/457120/4548230

4548
 5'

NORTH CANTON 16 MI. ↗

4546

T. 2 N
 (AKRON EAST)
 4766 (11 SW)

YOUNGSTOWN 40 MI. ↘

T. 1 N.