

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update and Boundary Increase

Other names/site number: DHR No. 127-0274; DHR No. 127-0237-0698

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 610-614 N. Third Street

City or town: Richmond State: VA County: Independent City

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B X C D

<p>Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>Date</p>
<p>Title :</p>	<p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property _____

City of Richmond, VA
County and State _____

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Religious Facility: Church

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Religious Facility: Church

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Gothic: Second Gothic Revival; Italianate

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival; Late Gothic Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; ASPHALT; WOOD; GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Located in the Jackson Ward neighborhood of Richmond, Virginia, the Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was listed in the National Register in 1975. Most of the original features described in the nomination still remain. The narrative description below describes the changes that have taken place since 1975 and expands upon some of the interior details not included in the 1975 nomination. A 2002 addition also is described herein. The church remains on its original location on the west side of Third Street in the Jackson Ward Historic District (DHR No. 127-0237), a district that is on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP 1976) and is also a National Historic Landmark Historic District (NHL 1978). Formerly flanked on either side by historic dwellings, the church is now flanked on the north side by a paved parking lot and on the south side by the 2002 addition, a large fellowship hall and education space. The exterior of the historic church retains a high level of historic integrity reflecting its evolution from 1857 to the last major remodeling in 1914. Interior changes reflect maintenance and repair to existing architecture along with several upgrades in the sanctuary to accommodate modern-day worship.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Narrative Description

Setting – Updates

Following the 1975 individual listing of the Third Street Bethel Church, the neighborhood, known as Jackson Ward, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The Jackson Ward Historic District was described in the nomination as, “Jackson Ward is a fine nineteenth-century residential neighborhood and internally one of the least altered in Richmond. The area is broadly significant to students of black, urban, and business history and is unique for having been the center of Negro community life in Richmond during a watershed era for that race and the nation.” Third Street Bethel Church was designated a contributing building within the historic district. In 1978, the National Park Service designated the entire Jackson Ward Historic District a National Historic Landmark (NHL), one of only two NHL districts in Richmond. This national designation was due to Jackson Ward’s transcendent importance in African American history beginning in the early 19th century. A nationally significant center for African American business and culture, it was home to the majority of the city’s Black residents as well as the location of banks, clubs, schools and other important institutions. The area continued to thrive into the 20th century as the home and birthplace of nationally recognized businesswoman Maggie Lena Walker and entertainer Bill “Bojangles” Robinson as well as newspaper publisher John Mitchell and numerous other prominent African Americans. The NHL designation of the neighborhood adds to the individual significance of Third Street Bethel Church and the role it played in the neighborhood’s strong dynamics in both the 19th and 20th centuries.

The immediate setting around the church has changed somewhat since 1975. The two-story, brick Italianate rowhouse that stood on the north side of the church is no longer extant and has been replaced with an asphalt surface parking lot for the church. The 18th century, frame Tucker Cottage that stood on the south side of the church was carefully relocated to a vacant lot within the historic district boundaries in 2002 (701 Chamberlayne Avenue). On the vacated site, the church constructed a new education building in 2002.

Exterior – Updates

The exterior of the historic church has changed very little since the property was individually listed in the National Register in 1975. The original nomination describes the architecture of the two major remodelings: the Italianate and Gothic Revival features that date to 1875 and the Colonial Revival and Gothic Revival embellishments of the 1914 remodeling. The 1914 update was done under the pastorate of Reverend S.S. Morris, with J.D. Farrar as the general contractor and Carl Ruehrmund as the supervising architect. The Souvenir Program for the rededication service of August 1914 describes the changes as follows: “painting interior and exterior, metal ceiling and wainscoting in main auditorium, new circular pews and pulpit furniture, new and modern electrical lighting system, rebuilt and improved organ with electric motor attachment, new windows – cathedral style, complete steam-heating system, choir room, pastor’s study, renovated Sunday School and lecture room with additional class rooms, kitchen, modern and

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

ample lavatories, front balcony entrance and newly carpeted floor.” The remodeling was done at a cost of \$14,500.00.

In 2017, the double-leaf wood entrance doors at the street level were replaced with metal doors for security reasons. The top part of the 1914 decorative finial that crowned the front gable is gone. The base remains. The once historic slate shingle roofing has been replaced with asphalt shingles. The lancet windows described for the front of the church are identical on the north and south (side) elevations of the church; however, the south side is now mostly covered by the 2002 Education Building (the windows can still be seen on the interior of the sanctuary). The lower panels of stained glass windows were installed in the sanctuary level windows in the late 1970s and replaced the colored glass diamond-patterned fenestration described in the nomination. However, this diamond-patterned fenestration survives in the second level of the tower and the front gable. The new stained glass windows feature polygon-shaped panes that form a large red cross, set off by a blue background. Each is a memorial window given and dedicated to a named member of the congregation, recognized by an etched pane within the lower vertical part of the cross.

The north side of the church is now quite visible due to the removal of the row houses that once stood next to the church. This elevation includes a side view of the front tower with its two tiers of lancet windows that match the east (front) facades of the towers. Four additional lancet windows at the sanctuary level pierce the east elevation. Three of them have identical quatrefoil tracery and colored glass in the Gothic arch, with a plain wood panel immediately below, which separates the arch from stained glass in the lower two panels of the window. This wood panel is aligned with the interior balcony floor, thus dividing the window between the sanctuary level and the balcony level. The fourth window, located at the end of the north wall, has a smaller version of the 1970s stained glass panels in the top arch. At the ground level, symmetrical with the lancet windows above, are four metal sash windows with exterior security bars. At the very end of the north wall, near the west corner, is a double-leaf entrance to the ground-level kitchen space.

Not mentioned in the original nomination is a rear office and stair tower addition on the main church. Brick, with a flat roof and a single double-hung sash window on the north façade, this addition may have been part of the 1914 remodeling as it still houses some of the functions described in that extensive rebuilding. The rear (west) façade has two rose windows that light the sanctuary on either side of the interior altar. Originally, these rose windows had the same quatrefoil tracery, which was replaced with stained glass contemporary with the other 1970s stained glass windows. The rear stair and office addition are set in on the wall so as not to block the rose windows.

On the south side of the building is the large 2002 addition that serves as the Education Building. It is a large, brick, one-story rectangular shaped, 17,000 square foot edifice, and has a small adjacent parking lot. The east façade faces Third Street, with two sets of double-leaf metal entrance doors set approximately 25 feet apart. Four Gothic-arched stained glass windows are equally spaced on the façade south of the entrances, followed by a single-leaf metal entrance

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

door. The door and window fenestrations are separated on the façade by simple raised brick pilasters that extend from the ground to a simple brick cornice. A simple brick belt course with brick dentils extends horizontally along the façade above the window and door fenestrations, giving the illusion of a two-story building. A row of raised bricks below the windows give the illusion of a water table. The simple brick cornice, belt course and water table continue on the south façade (gable end) of the addition. This south façade has three gothic arched stained glass equally spaced, identical to those on the east façade. Internal gutters pierce the façade just below the cornice and connect to four metal downspouts that extend to the ground. The roof is flat above the cornice on the long east and west facades then forms a gable in the center, with brick gable ends on the north and south elevations. The Education Building attaches to the south (side) wall of the church, via a solid brick hyphen recessed behind the church's south tower.

Interior Updates

The church's street-level front entrance is through two modern double-leaf metal doors. These doors open into the space that is under the 1914 steps and portico and is currently used for storage. A door from this space enters a transverse passage with two sets of stairs along the west wall leading to the sanctuary foyer. The passage features an early twentieth-century pressed tin ceiling with molded tin crown molding. Centered between the two staircases is the entrance into the fellowship hall/kitchen space. The exposed beams are supported by round colonettes with molded ovolo capitals. Drop ceiling panels have been added between the beams. The kitchen and storage areas are separated from the fellowship hall by a semi-circular arch, centered on the back wall and flanked by large wood, triple-leaf paneled doors. This space features plaster walls, simple baseboard and chair rails. The triple-leaf doors have a simple molded surround and bulls-eye corner blocks, all typical of the late nineteenth century.

The double staircases ascend all the way to the balcony level, with a single-run stair to the foyer level and a single-run stair to the balcony level. Newel and corner posts are square with urn-shaped finials. The stairs are open string with turned balustrades and a molded handrail. A molded rail ascends the stairs on the wall with a flat panel below.

The sanctuary is entered on the east wall through centered double-leaf wooden doors that are paneled on the lower half and have opaque glass windows in the upper half. The double doors are on axis with the center aisle. Also entering the sanctuary are side doors leading to each of the side aisles. These are single-leaf, half-paneled, half-glass, identical to the double doors, as are the single-leaf doors that exit the sanctuary on either side of the alter area (west wall). The gallery balustrade remains in place; however, a modern, open, wood extension has been added to the top of the historic balustrade to raise the overall height of the rail. Due to its deteriorated state, the sanctuary's 1914 pressed-metal ceiling was replaced in about 2010 with a reproduction pressed-metal ceiling. In 2015, the nineteenth-century slip pews were replaced with wood, cushioned pews in a similar style and configuration. The stained-glass windows were installed in the 1970s and dedicated in 1977.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

The balcony is entered through double-leaf, wood, paneled and glass doors that are identical to the doors at the sanctuary level. They are centered above the sanctuary double doors. The stair, balustrade, newel and corner posts, along with door and window moldings, survive intact all the way to the balcony level and match those described in the nomination for the sanctuary.

The 2002 addition housing the Education Building includes classrooms, offices, a fellowship hall, meeting spaces and music areas. The interior of the 2002 addition is finished with commercial-grade materials, such as drywall, ceiling acoustic tiles, simply trimmed doors and windows, and low-pile carpet and floor tiles, that are typical of early 21st-century spaces intended to accommodate a variety of uses and to be easily updated as needed.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

ca. 1857 - 1970

Significant Dates

1857

1867

1875

1901

1914

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Ruehrmund, Carl (Supervising Architect, 1914 remodeling)

Farrar, Daniel J. (builder, 1914 remodeling)

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) on February 18, 1975, and in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on June 5, 1975, with significance in the area of Religion and with a period of significance broadly defined as 19th century. The 1975 nomination also notes specific significant dates of 1857 and 1875, which reflect the building's original construction and a major exterior remodeling, respectively. The original nomination did not indicate a level of significance, but this nomination update provides justification for its local significance in this area. The year 1867 is being added as a significant date, when Third Street Bethel AME Church was recognized as the mother church of the AME denomination in Virginia and the congregation's first African American pastor, James D. S. Hall, was appointed. 1901 has been added as a significant date because on August 20, 1901, Maggie L Walker, a nationally significant entrepreneur and civil rights activist, addressed the Order of St. Luke members at the church and laid out her plans for the establishment of a bank, a newspaper and a department store. This speech included her famous quote, "Let us have a bank that will take the nickels and turn them into dollars."

This nomination update also provides documentation to add the Ethnic Heritage: African American area of significance under Criterion A at the local level to Third Street Bethel AME Church's Register listing. Going beyond its role as a religious institution, the church contributed to the broader history of African Americans from the mid-nineteenth through twentieth century and to the Civil Rights Movement. The church provided a space for African Americans to organize and advocate for African Americans during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras and fostered political and social change in Richmond. This nomination update further adds Architecture as an area of significance under Criterion C at the local level of significance. The building is a fine example of the Gothic Revival style as refined by two important remodeling campaigns in 1875 and 1914. The latter remodeling was overseen by Carl Ruehrmund as Supervising Architect and D. J. Farrar as the general contractor, and 1914 is added as a significant date in the church's history.

The Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church meets Criteria Consideration A for historic properties because its significance is derived from its architectural design and its association with important events in Richmond's civil rights history. With this nomination update, the period of significance is more explicitly defined and is extended to include significant events of the 20th century. The period of significance begins in 1857 with construction of the original church and ends in 1970, when then-pastor Reverend E. William Judge became the first African American man in Virginia history to participate in a Governor's inauguration ceremony, when he officiated for Governor Linwood Holton's ceremony in 1970.

This property was individually listed in the historic registers prior to the VLR- and NRHP- and then the National Historic Landmark-designation of the Jackson Ward Historic District, to

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

City of Richmond, VA

Name of Property

County and State

which this property is a contributing resource. The district's VLR listing was on April 20, 1976, and its NRHP listing occurred on July 30, 1976. The NHL designation took place on June 2, 1978.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Religion – Update

The Third Street Bethel AME Church in Richmond, Virginia, was originally listed in the National Register in 1975 for its significance in the area of Religion. Founded in the mid-nineteenth century, the history of Third Street Bethel is representative of African American history in Richmond from the late antebellum period onward. In 1867, the church established the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination in Virginia, providing a place for generations of African Americans to worship freely in their community and enduring despite oppression by outside forces. The church represents generations of African Americans and their struggle for religious freedom and racial equality.

Third Street Bethel AME has its origins in the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church on Franklin Street. A small number of free African Americans had worshipped at Trinity since 1828, but were confined to the upper level balconies, a practice of racial separation during religious services that was common in the United States for more than two centuries. In 1844, the Methodist Episcopal denomination split along geographic lines over the issue of slavery, with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South forming in Virginia and other slave-holding southern states. During the early 1850s, several African Americans organized a new congregation under the direction of Thomas Richmond Hewlett, a free person of color who worked as a cabinetmaker and also served as “exhorter” to the congregation. Born in Richmond in 1827, Hewlett and his wife, Lucy, and their five children lived on 17th Street near the Church Hill neighborhood. Hewlett’s facility with negotiating with whites is credited as a leading factor in the formation of the new African American congregation from the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church (by that time, part of the “South” branch of the denomination). The new congregation’s charter members included Samuel Smith, Diana Smith, Peggy Tyree, Randolph Rully, Rebecca Strange, William Williamson, Elizabeth Young, Delia Pierce, Maria Jackson, and Sara Norrell. In 1852, the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South acquired property for the congregation on North Third Street in Richmond’s Jackson Ward, which at that time already was a hub of African American life in the city. Severe limitations imposed on free African Americans during the antebellum era, including rights to property ownership and freedom of religion, made it very difficult for an African American congregation to acquire property on its own. The first church was constructed here between 1856-1857 by free persons of color as well as enslaved African Americans, and it was named Third Street Methodist Church. As was required under Virginia’s racial codes, the African American congregation in the new church remained under the supervisory control of the white Trinity Church, which had authority to monitor and regulate the

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

practices of the Third Street church and its members. Reverend G. W. Nolley served as the first white pastor to oversee the new congregation.¹

Originating in Philadelphia in 1787, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination sought to release religious control over African Americans by whites of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The AME was the first independent Protestant denomination in the country to be founded by African Americans, and therefore whites viewed it with deep suspicion as a potential force for cultivating slave rebellions. The AME also is uniquely the first major religious denomination in the United States to develop out of racial and sociological issues rather than from theological interpretations. Throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction, the AME migrated south to expand its reach. In 1863, the Bute Street Methodist Church (later known as St. John of Norfolk) became the first AME Church in Virginia. In 1867, the Third Street Church joined the denomination as well, with the hope of separating permanently from the white Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South.²

On May 10-14, 1867, the first conference for the AME denomination convened at the newly renamed Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church; “Bethel” was selected in reference to the denomination’s mother church in Philadelphia. This conference officially established the AME denomination in Virginia, and Third Street Bethel became the first church of the denomination’s 2nd District. It was also recognized as the “mother church of the Virginia Annual Conference.” The church hired its first African American pastor, Reverend James D.S. Hall, that same year. Hall came from the Baltimore Annual Conference. Thomas Richmond Hewlett was ordained a local elder.³ The denomination’s establishment in Virginia was a significant achievement, marking another step towards religious autonomy for African Americans in the early days of the Reconstruction Era, as newly emancipated African Americans were assuming political, civil, and religious rights. In 1874, the rights to the church property were transferred from the white Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church to the Third Street Bethel AME Church for the price of \$1. Thomas Hewlett’s facility at negotiating with whites is again credited with this successful transaction. The African American congregation grew quickly, gaining members and improving the 1857 church to accommodate its growing roster of activities.⁴

¹ “Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church,” from the program for A Bicentennial Presentation of the Dramatization of the Third Street Bethel AME Church Story 1852-1987, May 9, 1987 (Third Street Bethel AME Church, Richmond, VA), n.p.; and T. L. Walker, Secretary Emeritus, “History of Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church,” 1970 Official Directory. Very similar versions of this account of the church’s early history is repeated in various other published and unpublished articles, typescripts, and hand-written documents, copies of which are in the Archives collection of the Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA.

² T. L. Walker, Secretary Emeritus, “History of Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church” (1961).

³ “Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church,” from the program for A Bicentennial Presentation of the Dramatization of the Third Street Bethel AME Church Story; Walker, “History,” 1970 Official Directory.

⁴ “Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church” and various other published and unpublished articles, typescripts, and hand-written documents (Archives collection, Department of Historic Resources,

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

The 1875 remodeling of the church occurred during the pastorate of Rev. W. B. Derrick, who was elevated to the AME Bishopric in 1896. The Rev. Samuel S. Morris served as pastor during the 1914 remodeling of Third Street Bethel AME Church. On May 10, 1916, the Virginia Annual Conference Semi-Centennial took place here. The congregation acquired a parsonage in 1923 while Rev. James S. Hatcher was pastor. During Rev. P. S. Moseley's service, the congregation accomplished a significant milestone by eliminating its mortgage in December 1945. During the 1950s, while Rev. P. O. Walker served as pastor, the church was remodeled again and a new parsonage was purchased at 314 E. Leigh Street.⁵

From the waning days of Reconstruction through the imposition of Jim Crow racial terror by the turn of the twentieth century, and on through the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century, the Third Street Bethel AME Church served as a location for various religious, social, and civic gatherings, contributing to the continued success of an African American-founded denomination that embraced racial autonomy and equality. The church has hosted the annual Virginia AME Conference numerous times and has remained an important religious site for generations. Having begun during the American slavery era and continued through numerous travails, the Third Street Bethel AME Church today stands as a landmark and a dynamic institution integral to Richmond's African American culture and history.

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: African American

Under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage: African American, the church is significant as it provided a space for African Americans to be heard during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras and fostered political and social change. Third Street Bethel AME Church is worthy of historic recognition, as it represents the struggle of generations of African Americans to obtain freedom and equality during periods of oppression and rampant discrimination

In addition to religious history, Third Street Bethel AME Church is locally significant in the area of Ethnic Heritage: African American. for its role in the pursuit for racial equality, from Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement and still today. Many members of the Third Street Bethel AME congregation contributed to the greater community, held active leadership roles in civic, political, and social organizations, and were activists during the twentieth century. Going beyond its purpose as a religious institution, the church nurtured social justice movements, a space for organizational meetings, and a stage for political activism for African Americans in Richmond.

The Third Street Bethel AME Church's location within Jackson Ward is an important aspect of its important role in Richmond's history. The multicultural community developed after the Civil War and persisted through decades of political and social changes. Often referred to as the "Harlem of the South", it was a center of African American business, entertainment, and religion. After World War II, various urban renewal projects caused major disruptions to the

Richmond, VA).

⁵ Walker, "History," (1961).

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

City of Richmond, VA

Name of Property

County and State

social fabric of Jackson Ward, most notoriously due to the 1958 construction of the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike (now part of Interstate 95). The turnpike cut through the neighborhood, causing demolition of dozens of blocks of the densely built urban environment and cutting off its northern end (which has subsequently withered due to its isolation and is not included in the Jackson Ward Historic District). As residents moved elsewhere and local businesses struggled to recover, some historic churches decided to relocate. The Third Street Bethel AME Church, however, remained.

In 1881, Reverend William Washington Browne (1850-1897) moved to Richmond from Alabama, where he had worked to organize a movement against the Ku Klux Klan and been ordained a minister of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, another African American religious denomination. In Richmond, Browne initially served as pastor of the Leigh Street CME Church, but in 1888, he transferred his membership to the Third Street Bethel AME Church. A gifted organizer, Browne joined the Grand Fountain, United Order of True Reformers, an African American fraternal organization and mutual-aid society; such groups emerged during Reconstruction to aid African Americans with medical bills, burial costs, and other needs. Under Browne's leadership as Grand Worthy Master, the True Reformers grew to 200,000 members throughout the country. On April 3, 1888, the True Reformers Bank opened at Browne's residence, making it the first African American-owned bank in the country. Its deposits eventually grew to \$1 million annually. An important symbol of the order's success was the True Reformers Hall, built 1891-1895 at 604 North Second Street in Jackson Ward and financed by the Order. While designed by Bernard Black, a white architect, an African American contractor from Richmond, George Boyd, built it, at a cost of \$24,000. The ambitious brick Romanesque building contained four stories, as did the final version of the St. Luke Building. The first floor contained the lobby of the True Reformers Bank, the offices of the Grand Fountain, and other commercial tenants. The True Reformers Hall second floor contained meeting rooms and the third and fourth floor consisted of a two-story, galleried concert hall.⁶ Browne died on December 21, 1897. His funeral was held at Metropolitan AME Church in Washington DC, and final burial services took place at the Third Street Bethel AME Church.⁷

Another fraternal organization with ties to Third Street Bethel AME Church is the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows. On June 6, 1847, Ruben Clay, Augusta Banian, William T. Forrester, Thomas R. Hewlett, and several others organized a local lodge, the Lone Star No. 1340, that became the "mother" lodge for 18 other lodges in Richmond. A separate women's organization, the Households of Ruth, also was formed.⁸

⁶ Tyler Potterfield, "True Reformers Hall," in Bryan Clark Green, Calder Loth, and William M.S. Rasmussen, *Lost Virginia: Vanished Architecture of the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville, Howell Press for the Virginia Historical Society, 2001), 189; Marlowe, 91.

⁷ Wesley A. Turner Sr., "Bethel Historical Gem No. 16," typescript, no date, among the Archives collection at the Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA.

⁸ Program for "Thanksgiving Services Commemorating the One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of the Grant United Order of Odd Fellows," May 21, 1978. This anniversary event also took place at Third Street Bethel AME Church.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

On August 20, 1901, Maggie L. Walker, an African-American teacher, businesswoman, and advocate for African American and women's rights, spoke at a meeting held at the church for members of the Independent Order of St. Luke, an African American mutual assistance and fraternal organization. She discussed her plans to establish a newspaper, bank, and department store. Here at the church she spoke her well-known phrase, "Let us have a bank that will take the nickels and turn them into dollars". Walker also advocated for employment opportunities for women, recognizing that economic independence was integral to civil rights, and couched her call for action within the religious language of social justice in common use during the early twentieth century: "We want an executive to run a factory, run a paper, run a bank, that will develop something and give some of the noble women work. Brethren and sisters, let us arise, be strong and work, and the Lord will abundantly bless our efforts."⁹ Her speech was a welcoming source of inspiration as Jim Crow segregation deepened its hold on Virginia. Walker was the first woman of any race to charter and serve as president of an American bank. She is known to have attended and been a featured speaker at several events at the Third Street Bethel AME Church. Some of these include a meeting of the Women's Movement for the Betterment of Women in 1917 and a posthumous birthday celebration for Frederick Douglas in 1925 sponsored by various groups including the Council of Colored Women. Walker also served on the executive committee for the Richmond chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Richmond was home to the largest chapter of the NAACP in the American southern states. On April 10, 1922, the Third Street church hosted the chapter's meeting, at a time that Walker served as a chapter executive member. In December 1932, the church hosted a fundraising and membership that Walker helped to organize and execute despite her own failing health. Walker succumbed to illness in December 1934. Her home, located in close proximity to the church in the Jackson Ward Historic District, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1975, the same year that the Third Street Bethel AME Church was listed in the National Register; three years later, Maggie Walker's house became a National Historic Site and was acquired by the National Park Service from the Walker family.

Delia Caskie Jackson (1884-1983) was a lifetime member of the church. In addition to working as an art teacher for Richmond Public Schools, she was an active community member. In 1940, she organized the first Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) for African Americans who were excluded from the whites-only organization in Richmond. Jackson encouraged the city's school system to hire more African Americans for teaching and leadership positions. She also fought for the establishment of what became the Maggie L. Walker High School in 1938, as prior to this Richmond had just one high school, Armstrong High, for African American students and no busing service for them. At the Third Street Bethel AME Church, Jackson started a food bank and served as the president of the Women's Missionary Society for almost 20 years; the society later was renamed in her honor. Jackson also advocated for public housing residents before

⁹ Michael Paul Williams, "Civil Rights Grant will Preserve Legacy of Walker, Church," *Richmond Times-Dispatch* 19 January 2017.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

City of Richmond, VA

Name of Property

County and State

Richmond's City Council, which resulted in passage of several local laws governing tenant rights and landlords' responsibilities for property upkeep.¹⁰

In spring of 1953 Thelma Wilson, a member of the Third Street Bethel AME Church, was one of several African American high school students arrested for alleged disorderly conduct after a situation on a Richmond City bus. Wilson's friend, Florence Robinson, had been ordered to vacate her seat in the front next to a white woman. Seeing there were no other available seats, Robinson refused to move. The bus driver called police, presumably to report a violation of Virginia's segregation law concerning public conveyances. Over 25 police officials arrived to arrest Wilson, Robinson, and three others who came to the defense of their fellow student. The African American community rallied in response and raised money at an NAACP meeting to defend the students in court.¹¹ As of today, Thelma Wilson remains a member of the Third Street Bethel AME Church.

Reverend P. Bernard Walker, pastor of Third Street Bethel from 1950-1961, served as chairman of the Board of Directors for the Richmond Branch of the NAACP, on the board of directors for the Richmond Community Hospital (a hospital established by a group of African American medical professionals), and as president of the Maggie L. Walker High School PTA.¹²

Although the date is uncertain, it is believed Third Street Bethel AME Church organized the first Boy Scout Troop in Richmond for African American children¹³. From its founding, the Boy Scout Alliance (BSA) permitted racial segregation of youth chapters. The first troop for African American boys was founded in 1911 in North Carolina and by 1928 there were over 240 such troops across the country. As was common during the "separate but equal" era of Jim Crow segregation, the troops for African American children faced discrimination in terms of organizational funding and support, as well as access to opportunities available to white Scouts. In Richmond, for example, African Americans were not allowed to use the YMCA facilities to earn merit badges, specifically for swimming. Southern BSA councils did not finally begin to integrate until after 1974.

In 1961, Rev. E. William Judge succeeded Rev. Walker at Third Street Bethel AME Church and became its 38th pastor, and at the time of his appointment, its youngest. A native of Charleston, South Carolina, he had come to Richmond from the St. James AME Church in Norfolk. Judge served as pastor during the tumultuous 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement achieved many long-sought goals, such as passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act,

¹⁰ Louise Howard and Gladys Judge, comp., "Society History – Delia Caskie Jackson – Bethel AME, Richmond," Delia C. Jackson Women's Missionary Society (no date), in the Archives collection of the Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA.

¹¹ "Citizens Alarmed by Bus Arrest of High Schools Kids," *Richmond Afro American*, May 23, 1953.

¹² "Rev. and Mrs. P. Bernard Walker," unpublished typescript (no date), in the Archives collection of the Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA.

¹³ Numerous attempts were made to contact the Boy Scouts of American headquarters in Texas to confirm this. No response was ever received.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

City of Richmond, VA

Name of Property

County and State

but also during the movement's darkest time after the 1968 assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Richmond's reaction to King's assassination had been relatively muted, with riot damage confined to several blocks along Broad Street, a short distance south of Jackson Ward. During a memorial service in King's honor, Judge delivered from the State Capitol steps a speech known as "Wake Up Virginia" about the need for continued progress in civil rights. Two years later, on January 17, 1970, he became the African American man in Virginia history to participate in a Governor's inauguration ceremony, when he officiated for Governor Linwood Holton's ceremony. Five years later, with the support of Judge and the church's historian, the Third Street Bethel AME Church was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. Judge continued to serve as pastor of Third Street Bethel AME Church until 1980.¹⁴

These are but a few examples of the contributions made to Richmond's African American history by persons associated with the Third Street Bethel AME Church. The church itself also was a place to meet, plan, speak, and act during the nineteenth and twentieth century movements for community improvement, social justice, and civil rights. The congregation fostered an atmosphere of activism, faith, and perseverance both in times of oppression and fear and those of great joy and celebration. Today, the Third Street church continues to host NAACP meetings, community outreach programs, and opportunities for activism. Its steadfast presence provides a narrative of the events and people it has fostered, contributing to the African American community's heritage and the history of Richmond.

Criterion C: Architecture

The church was constructed on this site ca. 1857 and is one of only a few pre-Civil War black church buildings that survive in Virginia. The original appearance was likely a relatively austere brick structure with minimal ornamentation. In a neighborhood that was mostly residents of German-origin at that time, it is probable that the labor to construct it was supplied by enslaved persons¹⁵. However, in 1875, when the neighborhood was a flourishing African American community, the church received a significant remodeling that gave it much of its late Gothic Revival and Italianate ornamentation. Historic photos reveal that the church was entered at street level through double-leaf Gothic-arched doors, centered under a tall lancet window, both centered on the gable front façade. It was at this time that the three-story square towers were constructed on each corner of the principle façade. These towers featured narrower double-leaf, gothic-arched entrance doors, flanked by raised brick quoining at the tower corners. Above each tower entrance was a raised brick belt-course which separated the second and third floor lancet windows. The windows were double-hung wood sash, four-over-four. Above the belt-course the

¹⁴ "Pastor Judge Offers Inaugural Benediction," undated typescript (Archives collection at the Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA); Wesley Arnett Turner Sr., "Historic Third Street Bethel AME Church and the First Twenty-Five Years," in Third Street Bethel AME Church Directory (no date).

¹⁵ Calder Loth, *Virginia Landmarks of Black History*, University Press of Virginia: Charlottesville, 1995, pp. 167-168.

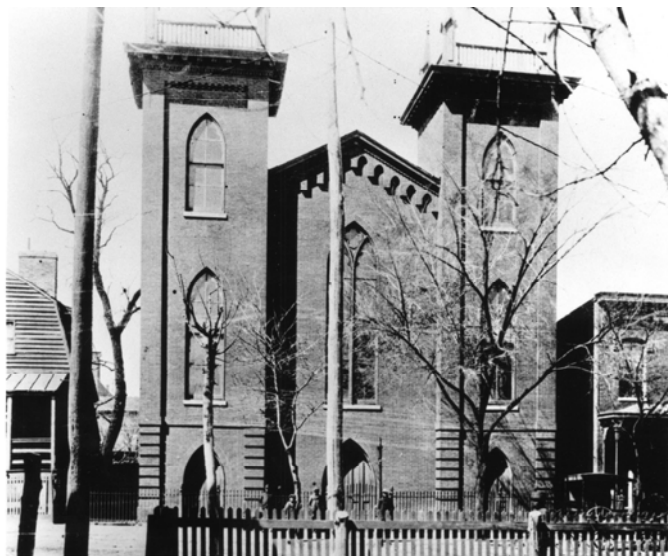
Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

raised brick quoining gave way to simple raised brick pilasters which were connected at the top by a double row of brick dentils. This treatment was repeated on the exterior sides of the towers. The towers were capped with a flat roof with a wooden balustrade that was demarcated in each corner with a square wooden post, topped by a wooden spire. The historic photographs also reveal wide eaves with modillions for each tower roof.



*Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church, ca. 1890
Property of Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church*

An interesting blend of two popular styles from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Italianate features include the heavy overhanging roof eaves of the towers, the symmetrical massing and arrangement of doors and windows, and the first story brick corner quoins. The use of Italianate features on the church is likely an influence from the Jackson Ward neighborhood which is dominated by this style for the majority of the rowhouses that were built during the post-Civil War era. The Gothic Revival, an ever popular style for churches beginning earlier in the nineteenth century, is also easily recognizable in the 1875 remodeling of the church. Also known as High Victorian Gothic, this style was especially popular in the 1870s and was often the style of choice for churches. Features of note for Third Street Bethel Church include, the continued use of masonry, foliated ornamentation of pressed brick, and Gothic-arched window and door openings.

The result of the 1875 remodeling was an imposing and impressive church structure that clearly made a statement about the size and prosperity of the congregation. From its humble beginnings and early struggles prior to emancipation, the congregation had endured much and through it had grown and prospered. The church as an institution was prominent in the African American community, forming the nucleus of all social institutions that developed and grew during reconstruction. Third Bethel's architecture is a fine example of those forces culminating in the creation of a place of permanence for this congregation in the Jackson Ward neighborhood.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

In 1914, as the congregation continued to prosper and grow, the church undertook a second major remodeling. It retained its basic form, incorporating some new design features that were in keeping with the Gothic Revival style, while also including embellishments that reflected the now popular Colonial Revival style. Colonial Revival began to gain favor in the last decade of the nineteenth century and continued to flourish through the mid-twentieth century. The most notable changes to the exterior appearance is the reorientation of the entrance from the street/ground level to the sanctuary level, which is the second story. This was done by reducing in size the tall second floor central lancet window and creating two new entrance doors at the sanctuary level. The entrance doors were reached by twin, side stairs that lead to a covered portico. Below the portico a brick street wall was constructed with a new double-leaf entrance that allowed entrance into the building under the portico. The brick street wall incorporated pressed brick motifs and detailing that are similar to the 1875 façade, as well as square pillar brick lampposts and stone coping along the handrail. The transom windows above the two new entrances included diamond pattern panes that replicated those found in the new lancet windows. The simple wooden sash of the lancet windows were replaced with the ornate Gothic Revival fixed windows. On the interior, an ornate pressed metal ceiling and wainscot were added to the sanctuary and the foyer ceilings. The pews and alter furniture were also replaced at this time. A grand rededication celebration was held for one entire week, July 26 – August 3, 1914.

The Colonial Revival influence is seen in the hipped with central gable portico roof, supported on both corners by paired Doric columns. Equally as prominent, was the replacement of the Italianate-style tower roofs with intersecting pedimented gables and a classical-style cornice.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State



Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church, 1974
Property of Department of Historic Resources

The 1914 remodeling was done under the supervision of architect Carl Ruehrmund and built by general contractor, Daniel J. Farrar. Ruehrmund, a German born and trained architect, arrived in Richmond in 1882 to supervise additions to the Customs House and Post Office. He worked closely with notable Richmond architects Albert Lybrock and Albert Hunt. His many works in Richmond and throughout Virginia demonstrate his ability to design in the many popular styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His works included residential, commercial, educational, industrial, civic and ecclesiastical. Other notable church projects of Ruehrmund's in Richmond include Market Street Presbyterian Church, Hoge Memorial Church, and Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter. Other works of interest in the Richmond area include the 1896 Henrico County Courthouse that is currently in the city limits on Main Street, the 1898 Negro Reformatory in Hanover County, and improvements to the Miller & Rhoads Store building in 1901¹⁶.

Contractor, Daniel J. Farrar, was a prominent African American builder in the City of Richmond. Born in 1862 he learned his trade from his father, Joseph Farrar, who was the son of a free black. A resident of the Jackson Ward neighborhood, he is known to have been involved in the

¹⁶ John Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects: 1835-1955*. New South Architectural Press: Richmond, VA, 1997. p. 392-395

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

City of Richmond, VA

Name of Property

County and State

construction, and sometimes design, of about fourteen Richmond buildings beginning in the 1890s. The 1910 census lists his occupation as contractor and homebuilder. Several buildings attributed to him include the Smallwood Memorial Institute in Claremont, Virginia, the Mechanics Bank Building, the Second Street Bank as well as numerous other commercial, residential, educational and religious buildings. Active in many civic and fraternal organizations, Farrar also served as secretary and treasurer of the Evergreen Cemetery Association¹⁷. An 1895 Richmond Planet newspaper article reported that his business was located on the corner of 3rd and Duval Street, which was one block from the Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church. His residence was identified as 610 N. First Street, which was about two blocks west of the church. The article mentions several residences built or remodeled by his firm, Farrar & Moore, as well as a hall in Fulton for the Grand Fountain, U.O. of True Reformers¹⁸.

Third Street Bethel stands with three other African American churches built during the same period in Jackson Ward. Sixth Mount Zion (NRHP listed, 1996), was organized as a congregation in 1867. It built its imposing Gothic Revival church of brick in 1887, then remodeled it in 1924 to a more Romanesque Revival appearance. Sixth Mount Zion was the church of the Reverend John Jasper, a famous orator in the African American community. Like Third Street Bethel, this church also makes a statement of permanence, prosperity and strength for blacks in Reconstruction-era Richmond. Ebenezer Baptist Church, with a congregation that formed in 1858, built its Victorian Gothic Church at 216 W. Leigh Street in 1873, and then radically altered it to the Neo-classical style in the first decades of the twentieth century. The early 20th century remodelings of both Sixth Mount Zion and Ebenezer were designed by African American architect, Charles T. Russell. Sharon Baptist Church was built ca. 1887, also brick, in the Gothic Revival style, with some similar characteristics to Third Street Bethel's 1885 appearance such as a second floor sanctuary, lancet windows, a single three-story corner tower, and raised brick belt-courses. Each of these churches makes an architectural statement regarding the newly developing, collective strength of an African American community forging an identity in the generations of post-emancipation. As the twentieth century dawned, the church continued as the nucleus of the community from which leaders spoke and organized to resist the oppression of southern Jim Crow laws and propel black citizens into the Civil Rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. This time of new energy in the black community coincides with the pattern of these churches undertaking major remodeling campaigns, thus continuing the architectural statement and symbolism of permanence and strength in a southern city.

¹⁷ Inventory of the Farrar Family Papers, 1875-1964. A collection in the special collections research center, accession number, mss.acc. 2008.71. Swem Library. The College of William and Mary. Abstract.

¹⁸ Richmond Planet, February 9, 1895, "D.J. Farrar"
<https://blackvirginia.richmond.edu/items/show/1350>.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton. *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary*. New South Architectural Press. Richmond, Virginia. 1997.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase
Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA
County and State

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR No. 127-0274; DHR No. 127-0237-0698

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .52 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.437270 | Longitude: -77.436390 |
| 2. Latitude: 37.547650 | Longitude: -77.436510 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.547550 | Longitude: -77.436360 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.436510 | Longitude: -77.436580 |
| 5. Latitude: 37.547190 | Longitude: -77.436390 |
| 6. Latitude: 37.547570 | Longitude: -77.436040 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

City of Richmond, VA

Name of Property

County and State

The historic boundary is coterminous with the perimeter lines of tax parcels N0000040007 and N0000040010 as recorded by the City of Richmond, VA. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Tax Parcel Map and the Location Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary corresponds with the perimeter of the urban lot that has been associated with the Third Street Bethel AME Church since its construction ca. 1857 and is extended to include the tax parcel on which the 2002 addition is located. The boundary thus encompasses all known historic resources associated with the church as well as its historic setting, and takes into account the early 21st century addition.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Laurie Buck, intern, Elizabeth Lipford, staff, Lena McDonald, staff

organization: Department of Historic Resources

street & number: 2801 Kensington Avenue

city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23221

e-mail: lena.mcdonald@dhr.virginia.gov

telephone: 804-482-6439

date: April 15, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Third Street Bethel A.M.E. Church

City or Vicinity: City of Richmond

County: N/A

State: VA

Photographer: Laurie Buck

Date Photographed: January 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 15: Church, exterior, east façade, camera facing northwest

2 of 15: Church, exterior, east façade, camera facing southwest

3 of 15: Church, exterior, east façade, camera facing northwest

4 of 15: Church, exterior, side (north) elevation, camera facing south

5 of 15: Church, exterior, lamppost and gate detail, east façade, camera facing southwest

6 of 15: Church, interior, sanctuary, altar, camera facing west

7 of 15: Church, interior, sanctuary, camera facing east

8 of 15: Church, interior, sanctuary entrance, camera facing east

9 of 15: Church, interior, sanctuary, balcony detail, camera facing southwest

10 of 15: Church, interior, sanctuary, window detail, camera facing north

11 of 15: Church, interior, sanctuary foyer, camera facing north

12 of 15: Church, interior, balcony foyer, camera facing northeast

13 of 15: Church, interior, ground level foyer ceiling, camera facing south

14 of 15: Church, interior, ground level, fellowship hall, camera facing west

Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update
and Boundary Increase

Name of Property

City of Richmond, VA

County and State

15 of 15: Church, interior, ground level, fellowship hall, kitchen door detail, camera facing northwest

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.