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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

___X___ New Submission _____ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

African American Churches in Virginia

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Sanctuaries of Governance and Social Structure: The Role of African American Churches from Reconstruction to Civil Rights, 1861-1968

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

Julie V. Langan SHPO 12/2/2025
Signature of certifying official Title Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

_____ _____
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Create a Table of Contents and list the page numbers for each of these sections in the space below.
Provide narrative explanations for each of these sections on continuation sheets. In the header of each section, cite the letter, page number, and name of the multiple property listing. Refer to *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* for additional guidance.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

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Introduction

The material herein is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Department of the Interior or the National Park Service.

The purpose of this Multiple Property Document (MPD) is to provide a historic context and registration requirements for Virginia's African American churches. Herein, the historic context "Sanctuaries of Governance and Social Structure: The Role of African American Churches from Reconstruction to Civil Rights, 1861-1968," has been developed. This MPD may be updated in future to add contexts that concern churches from other historic periods, and additional property types such as denominational schools, seminaries, camp meeting sites, and other significant places, events, and people associated with African American churches in Virginia. The examples cited herein are intended to be illustrative of a representative range of clergy, congregations, and individual church members who played significant roles in the history of African American churches and their associated religious doctrine, social history, and Black history. It is anticipated that updates to this MPD, as well as individual nominations prepared under this cover document, also will add contexts regarding such persons, places, and events.

Acknowledgements

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In memory of Gloria Johnson Gilmore, deceased, founding President of One Shared Story – this project was her vision.

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Historic Context

Sanctuaries of Governance and Social Structure: The Role of African American Churches from Reconstruction to Civil Rights, 1861-1968

From the origins of the transatlantic slave trade onwards, spiritual gathering places have promoted self-empowerment and resistance, even within a system of oppression intended to strip individuals of autonomy. Enslaved persons in the colonial and antebellum United States created what historians have called "invisible institutions" outside of White control to serve their spiritual needs. These gatherings, which occurred in secret and under the cover of darkness, were held in individual dwellings and at brush arbors (or "hush" harbors). The religious gatherings provided a sense of community, educational instruction, and opportunities to disseminate ideas among enslaved and free African Americans. At times, these gatherings sparked nationally-significant uprisings, such as Gabriel's Conspiracy in 1800 and Nat Turner's Insurrection in 1831. More often, the "invisible institutions" that developed prior to the Civil War became the congregations that later established churches during the Reconstruction Era (c. 1861-c. 1902).[1] Many of these newly formed churches continued to meet in homes or at outdoor locations until they amassed the capacity to purchase land and erect physical sanctuaries.

During Reconstruction and well into the early twentieth century, African American religious communities elected leaders and organized hundreds of new churches. They formed or joined larger regional and statewide conventions that established networks throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and provided communities with support and resources for creating other institutions such as schools, mutual aid societies, and fraternal organizations for social improvements. Many church leaders also served as community leaders and political activists during the Reconstruction Era and throughout the Long Civil Rights Movement.[2]

Many congregants viewed "the church" as an all-encompassing community center and an alternative path to meet their social, civic, educational, and spiritual needs. Churches, therefore, served as "sanctuaries of governance" from the colonial era through the mid-20th century, when White supremacy precluded African Americans' participation in most government, commercial, social, and educational sectors in Virginia. The physical church buildings or other gathering places, such as brush arbors and revival campgrounds, provided space for organizing, educating, and advocating for civil rights without interference from hostile outsiders. Many church leaders and congregation members also were persuasive negotiators with political acumen and rhetorical skills who secured and protected civil rights for Black citizens through participation in local, state, and national movements.

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[1] The Reconstruction Era historically was defined as beginning in 1865 with the defeat of the Confederate States of America and ending in 1877 with the ascension of Rutherford B. Hayes to the presidency, in part due to an agreement with Southern Democrats to end U.S. military occupation of the South. In the 2017 National Historic Landmarks Theme Study, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1861-1900*, a more broadly defined period was utilized for the period, beginning with the self-emancipation of three enslaved African Americans who reached Fort Monroe in Virginia, then under the command of U.S. General Benjamin Butler. The study placed the end of Reconstruction at 1900, four years after the U.S. Supreme Court created the "separate but equal" legal doctrine with its *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, two years after a violent coup in Wilmington, North Carolina, unseated a democratically elected local government, and one year before U.S. Congressman George White's last term ended. For the purposes of this MPD, the end of Reconstruction is placed at 1902, when a new state constitution that enshrined the "separate but equal" doctrine in state law.

[2] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall is credited with originating the term "Long Civil Rights Movement" in the article, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History*, March 2005, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/movinglr/longcivilrights.pdf pp. 1233-1263.

The multifaceted roles that African American churches and spiritual gathering places played in offsetting the impact of White supremacist practices are the subject of this Multiple Property Submission. The physical fabric of African American churches embodies the lived experiences of their congregations over decades, and generations, of time. Additionally, many of these churches evolved as their congregations celebrated opportunities for expansion and physical improvement of their properties. Therefore, the historic context and registration requirements herein are specific to African American churches in Virginia and their typical physical characteristics over time.

African American Churches and Multiple Property Submissions

Many African American churches have been the subject of vandalism and hate crimes that have resulted in sometimes catastrophic damage to the historic resources. This issue leapt to national attention in 1995-1996, when arsonists burned more than thirty rural churches in Tennessee and other southern states.[3] Among the churches lost to a suspicious fire in 1996 was Glorious Church of God in Christ in the city of Richmond, Virginia. In response, in late 1997, the Center for Historic Preservation (CHP) at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), in cooperation with the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Office of Sponsored Programs at MTSU, launched the Tennessee Rural African-American Church Project. This first-of-its-kind statewide survey of Black churches created a network of scholars, activists, preservationists, and church congregations interested in documenting the historical significance of such churches.[4] A statewide reconnaissance survey of 350 rural churches followed, along with a Multiple Property Submission that addressed the rural African American church as "a distinct and significant property type" and facilitated nominations of such churches for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).[5] As the project progressed, several SHPOs and other organizations, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation, expressed interest in broadening the reach of the Multiple Property Submission. The resultant publication, *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), provided a template and guide for surveying churches in a format that was accessible to the general public as well as historic preservation professionals.[6] Since 2000, SHPOs in other states and in Washington, D.C., have completed similar projects.[7] The groundbreaking work in the study of Tennessee's historic African American churches, the *Powerful*

[3] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Burning of African American Churches in Tennessee and Perception of Race Relations: Executive Summary of a Community Forum Held July 10, 1996, Memphis, Tennessee, by the Tennessee Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights* (Atlanta: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1996), https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12b876summ.pdf, p. 1-2. The U.S. Congress passed the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996 as part of the federal response to the attacks.

[4] Nancy C. Tinker, Rural African American Church Project, *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, March 1, 2018, https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/rural-african-american-church-project/.

[5] Carroll Van West, *Historic Rural African American Churches in Tennessee, 1890-1945,* Multiple Property Documentation Form, approved November 30, 1999, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/135817337.

[6] *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf.

[7] Examples include Pennsylvania's *African American Churches and Cemeteries in Pennsylvania, c. 1644-c.1970* at https://pahallowedgrounds.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/African-American-Churches-and-Cemeteries-in-Pennsylvania-c1644-c1970.pdf; Washington, D.C.'s *20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974*, Maryland's *African-American Historic Resources of Prince George's County, Maryland,* at https://apps.mht.maryland.gov/medusa/PDF/NR_PDFs/NR-MPS-01.pdf, and Oregon's *African American Resources in Portland, Oregon, from 1851 to 1973* at https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/mpd_final.pdf.

Artifacts guide, and its associated Multiple Property Submission were referred to in early stages of conceiving this MPD concerning Virginia's historically Black churches.

How to Use This MPD

This MPD will facilitate nominations of significant Black church properties in Virginia for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and/ or the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR). Due to a variety of circumstances, the historic records of church congregations may be incomplete. However, the historic context herein provides the framework and context within which a church may be nominated, regardless if written records specific to that church have been lost. Oral history, historic photos, and the recollections of congregation elders often are valuable sources of information that may be included in a nomination for a church. There is much about these church-centered communities that has yet to be discovered and incorporated into The Nation's story. The buildings, structures, contents, and fabric of these sites may be the only evidence remaining to document the work of these communities to seize citizenship and expand democracy.

Both the VLR and NRHP recognize three levels of significance for historic properties: local, state, and national. All three levels are equally important to the historic registers. Local significance most often is used to nominate properties for the reason that significant historic trends, events, and people with which the property is associated most often affected its local community. Some properties may be significant to a broader geographic area that encompasses multiple localities or an entire state. A property's significance at the statewide level is demonstrated by the reach of its influence due to important historic events and/ or people at the property. As an example, a pastor who helped to expand the presence of a particular religious doctrine may have been significant at the statewide level. The church where he or she was based during their time as a circuit rider, therefore, may have statewide significance as the place most closely associated with the pastor's historically significant work. The individual churches where he or she preached from time to time may be significant at the local level as a place where the pastor's influence and their religious doctrine was felt in its community. National significance is ascertained in a similar fashion. A property with national significance is directly associated with the history of the United States because it illustrates the nationwide impact of events or persons. At times, a property may have more than one level of significance.[8] Staff at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) will assist applicants with identifying the applicable level(s) of significance for the resources that will be nominated for listing in the VLR and/or NRHP.[9]

"A Nation Within a Nation": African American Christianity During the Slavery Era

The Black Church[10] stands as a unique cultural and religious phenomenon in the United States as a whole, and in Virginia specifically. During Virginia's slavery era, from 1619-1863,[11] Christianity was deployed as a means

[8] Far more detailed guidance about determining a property's level of significance is available in the National Register Bulletin, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation,* which is available online at https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB-15_web508.pdf.

[9] DHR's staff directory is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/staff-directory/.

[10] The term, "Black Church," is used herein just as Harvard University history professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., defined it in his book, *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song:* "Although there is no monolithic 'Black Church,' just as there is no monolithic 'Black vote' or 'Black perspective,' for clarity throughout this book, I will use the phrase the 'Black Church' as a way to acknowledge the importance of institutions of organized religion to African Americans over time." See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), p. 1.

[11] Upon President Abraham Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, slavery became illegal in Virginia and other Confederate states in open rebellion against the United States. African Americans continued to be enslaved by many Virginian enslavers, however, until Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia surrendered to U.S. forces

to subjugate enslaved Africans brought to the Virginia colony. Over time, Christian doctrine became a source of enlightenment and liberation as African Americans developed their own interpretations of biblical texts. The histories and doctrines of Protestant denominations and the Roman Catholic Church provided the underpinnings of Black Christian churches. However, the creativity, intellectual fortitude, courage, determination, and sheer joy with which African Americans have shaped Christianity to provide spiritual sustenance through the best and worst of times belongs only to them. Moreover, the Black Church has been the bedrock upon which Black individuals and communities have built the institutional, organizational, financial, social, and political skills to contest White supremacy across centuries that encompass the late European Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the Modern era, up to the present.

In 2021, historian Henry Louis Gates Jr. stated: "No pillar of the African American community has been more central to its history, identity, and social justice vision than the 'Black Church.'"[12] Eddie S. Glaude Jr., professor of African American Studies, reflected on W. E. B. Du Bois's sociological studies that showed how the Black Church

> stood at the epicenter of Black life. Voluntary associations that addressed the social and economic needs of the community formed within its walls. Church buildings provided the physical space for the education of children. They also offered space for political debate and organizing. Here one acquired a sense of the religious worldview of a captured people, for "the Negro Church," under the brutal weight of slavery and Jim Crow, gave its members and its community languages to imagine themselves apart from the dehumanizing practices of white supremacy.[13]

An unknown number of Africans forcibly transported to the Virginia colony between 1619-1776 were Christians before their enslavement. The Roman Catholic Church had proselytized in African nations and among Africans living in Europe at least since the early 15th century, before European colonization of North America began. The African continent also was home to a diversity of indigenous religious practices as varied as its peoples, and Islam had reached the continent during the 10th century. Whether brought by force to English colonies such as Virginia or traveling with European explorers, Africans absorbed religious and cultural influences and created new belief systems in a dynamic exchange that continued throughout the colonial era.[14]

Anglican Church doctrine of the Virginia colony stated that all Christians were equal in the eyes of God; a Christian should not enslave a fellow Christian. Liberation stories in the Bible, enslavers feared, might

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under the command of Ulyssess S. Grant on April 9, 1865. Although widely considered to be the end of the U.S. Civil War, several large Confederate armies remained in operation for several more months, but eventually surrendered as well. The war's end came on August 20, 1865, when President Andrew Johnson issued a proclamation with the ending statement, "And I do further proclaim that the said insurrection is at an end and that peace, order, tranquility, and civil authority now exists in and throughout the whole of the United States of America." Along with the Confederate surrender came the end of legal slavery, the abolition of which, except as punishment for a crime, was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution's 13th Amendment on December 6, 1865. See Trevor K. Plante, "Ending the Bloodshed: The Last Surrenders of the Civil War," *Prologue Magazine*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Spring 2015), as corrected on November 30, 2016, https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2015/spring/cw-surrenders.html.

[12] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), p. 1.

[13] Eddie S. Glaude Jr., *African American Religion: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 4. "Jim Crow" is a reference to the racial caste system which operated primarily, but not exclusively in southern and border states, between 1877 and the mid-1960s. Its name is derived from an 1820s White minstrel show performer named Thomas "Daddy" Rice, who performed a racist comedy act while in blackface. Beginning in the 1880s, the term "Jim Crow" began to be used as shorthand for practices that required physical separation of Black people from White people. The framework of laws that supported legally-mandated segregation are called Jim Crow laws.

[14] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), p. 17-21.

encourage Africans to believe that conversion to Christianity would end their enslavement.[15] In 1662, the colonial government removed this concern by enacting legal codes that assigned a child's enslaved status based on the birth mother's civil status while explicitly excluding consideration of her religion. By 1701, missionaries for the Church of England asserted that Christianity would make enslaved Africans more obedient and productive by emphasizing the inferiority of enslaved persons, obedience, and the importance of hard work to achieve a better life in the next world.[16]

Three religious denominations are foundational to the Black Church in Virginia: Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), each originating during the late colonial to early republic period. During the mid-18th Century, predominantly White preachers organized revivals promising salvation to anyone who repented. African Americans were welcome, and some enslavers permitted enslaved people to participate in the camp meetings. Informed primarily by Baptist and Methodist theology, the movement swept across the English colonies of North America and became known as the First Great Awakening. The radical, egalitarian nature of the Great Awakening, in which Black and White worshippers came together, was a marked departure from the strict racial and class hierarchy that prevailed in Southern colonial society. The movement contributed to the growth of Baptist and Methodist denominations and to the origins of the earliest all-Black Church congregations in Virginia.[17]

The earliest documented all-Black Baptist churches in Virginia were Bluestone, which first met in 1774 on William Byrd III's Bluestone Castle plantation,[18] and First Baptist, which began to meet at William Ludwell Lee's plantation near Williamsburg, in 1776.[19] The AME and AMEZ denominations formed in 1794 and 1796, respectively. For well over a century, the majority of African Americans in Virginia, both free and enslaved, belonged to one of these denominations. Between the mid-19th to early 20th century, additional Protestant denominations emerged, and African American membership in the Roman Catholic Church increased slightly. During the latter half of the 20th century, membership and religious identity continued to diversify.

The Unseen Geography of Black Worship and Autonomy

Following the aborted slave revolt known as Gabriel's Conspiracy in 1800 and Nat Turner's Insurrection in 1831, both led by enslaved preachers, Virginia's General Assembly restricted the religious freedom of African Americans. By law, Black congregations were forbidden to meet without the presence of a White minister. Enslavers and the preachers they permitted to speak to their enslaved workers attempted to suppress biblical stories they found problematic, to no avail.

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[15] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), p. 16, 21.
[16] Stephanie Rosel Reiss, *Religion and Resistance: African Baptist Churches in Virginia*, Ph.D. dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1997, Paper 1539626089, https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4t7y-wf05, p. 9-10; Eddie S. Glaude Jr., *African American Religion: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 34-35; Rachel Ferguson, "The Black Church: A World Within a World," Acton Institute, February 5, 2023, https://www.acton.org/religion-liberty/volume-33-number-1/black-church-world-within-world.
[17] Rachel Ferguson, "The Black Church: A World Within a World," Acton Institute, February 5, 2023, https://www.acton.org/religion-liberty/volume-33-number-1/black-church-world-within-world.
[18] The Byrd landholding was located in an area that was then part of Lunenburg County and now is within today's Mecklenburg County. See Herbert A. Elliott, "Sir Peyton Skipwith and the Byrd Land," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography,* Vol. 80, No. 1 (January 1972), p. 52-59.
[19] William Montgomery, "African American Churches in Virginia (1865–1900)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/african-american-churches-in-virginia-1865-1900;

Figure 1. (Top) Historic photo of the remains of a brush arbor associated with the Hickory Hill Slave and African American Cemetery (NRHP 2020; 042-5792) in Hanover County (Image Source: Hickory Hill Slave and African American Cemetery, National Register nomination, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/042-5792/, p. 40. Photo by Julia Zimmerman, 1989). (Bottom) Reenactment of an outdoor service with a newly built brush arbor at Alexander Hill Baptist Church (NRHP 2017; 014-5054) in Buckingham County (Image Source: Farmville Herald, *June 22, 2017).*

Black Virginians refused control over their spiritual practices. Both enslaved and free people of color continued to meet secretly in outdoor brush arbors, nondescript utilitarian buildings, and private dwellings, as well as purpose-built sanctuaries (Figure 1).[20] Enslaved preachers taught their peers that Christian professions of faith also could be "expressions of belief in imminent political freedom."[21] Resultant Christian doctrines and practices formed what is termed an "invisible institution." For all their complexity, Black churches were not discernible to White enslavers and overseers.[22] Through African American spirituals, enslaved people could embed calls for liberation from enslavement within religious celebration.[23]

Instead of feeling powerless, as enslavers wanted them to believe, enslaved African Americans experienced joy and hope through worship of a God who liberated oppressed peoples and struck down powerful elites. The biblical stories of liberators such as Moses, who led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, became a prominent feature of Black worship, as did knowledge that worshippers had been created in the image of God, that Christ

[20] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 14. The terms "brush arbor" and "hush harbor" both refer to outdoor meeting locations, often consisting of a small clearing with a lean-to shelter composed of wood poles, saplings, and brush vegetation. A photograph of the remains of a brush arbor is included in the nomination for Hickory Hill Slave and African American Cemetery at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/042-5792/. Clandestine indoor religious meetings were held for the same purposes as those in outdoor settings.

[21] William Montgomery, "African American Churches in Virginia (1865–1900)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/african-american-churches-in-virginia-1865-1900.

[22] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 24.

[23] "African American Spirituals," Library of Congress, no date, www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495/>. Spirituals are considered to be a category of folk music that generally dates to the slavery era.

had died for them, and that their aspirations of freedom were universal.[24]

In what Nicole Myers Turner termed "hush harbors,"[25] "enslaved people mapped 'rival geographies' and articulated a politics of freedom through movement to illicit spaces at unapproved times."[26] This uniquely African American geography of Virginia connected enslaved people among rural plantations, in cities and towns where they were hired out, and on the waters where Black watermen plied Virginia's rivers, bays, and the larger Atlantic coast. Enslaved African Americans and free persons of color exercised their autonomy by creating a landscape of kinship, communication, and transportation networks, including formation of the Underground Railroad. Thus was the "Nation within a Nation," as historian Henry Louis Gates Jr. observed, formed within the shadows where African Americans joined together in worship, received comfort and courage to resist enslavement, and erected in their imaginations their own nation as they planned for the day when Christianity's promise of freedom and deliverance finally came.[27]

Early African American Denominations, Congregations, and Churches in Virginia

Baptist Denomination

Reaching Massachusetts in the 1630s, the Baptist denomination insisted on separation between church and state, an opposite doctrine to that of the English Crown's state-sponsored Anglican Church. The denomination became widespread during the First Great Awakening of the 1730s-1740s when Baptist and Methodist ministers held camp meetings and revivals during which hundreds of people were inspired to seek baptism and profess their faith.[28] At this time, the denomination regarded White and Black congregants as equal in the eyes of God; integrated religious services were the norm. Black preachers delivered sermons to White, mixed, and all-Black congregations. Likewise, White ministers preached to Black gatherings. This democratic orientation proved more appealing to Africans and African Americans than the preachings of Anglican missionaries. They became members of the Baptist denomination en masse for the first time.[29] The denomination had parallels with African

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[24] Rachel Ferguson, "The Black Church: A World Within a World," Acton Institute, February 5, 2023, https://www.acton.org/religion-liberty/volume-33-number-1/black-church-world-within-world. Ferguson noted that fellow scholar Albert Raboteau has argued that the secrecy of African American worship thus imbued enslaved people with the understanding that their enslavement did not define them and "gave them the dreams of freedom that inspired them to take hold of it when the chance finally came."

[25] The terms "brush arbor" and "hush harbor" both refer to secret religious gatherings of African Americans, including both enslaved and free persons. The "brush arbor" is more specifically defined and described as an outdoor meeting location, often consisting of a small clearing with a lean-to shelter composed of wood poles, saplings, and brush vegetation.

[26] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 14

[27] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), p. 35, 63-64.

[28] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), p. 40-43; *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf., p. 17-18; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 22-23.

[29] Membership in churches other than the Anglican Church had been strongly discouraged by the English Crown throughout the colonial era, as the Anglican Church was the established church in the British empire. Most White elites disdained the egalitarianism of the First Great Awakening. Enslavers had begun allowing the people they enslaved to attend Anglican religious services by the mid-18th century. At this point in time, heritable slavery had been firmly entrenched in Virginia's legal codes for decades and the established church's doctrine had evolved to include legitimized enslavement of fellow Christians. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021), p. 40-43; *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf., p. 17-18; C. Eric Lincoln and

religious traditions, "such as … concepts of visions, spiritual journeys, rebirth, healing, and prophecy," and a belief that the sacred permeated the world, allowing spiritual freedom despite the bonds of enslavement.[30] The emotional release characterizing Baptist worship encouraged the individual expression lacking in enslaved African Americans' work. Additionally, the autonomy of each Baptist congregation, a tenet of Baptist faith, allowed both free and enslaved Black Baptists a measure of independence.[31]

Many of the earliest Black Baptist congregations originated in Virginia's rural Tidewater, later relocating to urban settings. In 1758, enslaved people at William Byrd III's Bluestone Castle plantation[32] in Lunenburg County (in an area now part of Mecklenburg County) organized the first documented all-Black Baptist congregation in the English colonies. The congregation moved to Petersburg in 1820 and was renamed African Baptist Church (today's First Baptist Church, 123-5002).[33] Williamsburg's First Baptist Church "traces its origins to a non-denominational congregation of both enslaved and free African Americans who worshipped in the open air under a brush arbor" at William Ludwell Lee's Green Spring plantation (NRHP 1978; 047-0006), located "about 2 miles west of Williamsburg."[34] The church moved to Williamsburg by 1776 and, in 1781, was formally named the African Baptist Church. The congregation grew substantially under the leadership of two enslaved preachers, Moses and Gowan Pamphlet, and joined the Dover Baptist Association during the late 18th century.[35] Later, "First" was added to the name, indicating that the congregation was the first Baptist church in Williamsburg. Baptist congregations often included "Second," or "Third," to indicate their roots in earlier

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Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 22-23; and Eddie S. Glaude Jr., *African American Religion: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 34-35.

[30] *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 18-19.

[31] *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 17-19; Stephanie Rosel Reiss, *Religion and Resistance: African Baptist Churches in Virginia*, Ph.D. dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1997, Paper 1539626089, https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4t7y-wf05, p. 13-14.

[32] Herbert A. Elliott, "Sir Peyton Skipwith and the Byrd Land." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography,* Vol. 80, No. 1 (January 1972), p. 52. The name of the specific Byrd property in Lunenburg County is rarely mentioned in secondary sources about the earliest documented Black Baptist congregation. Elliott's article concerns the means through which Skipwith acquired several of Byrd's extensive landholdings, including Bluestone Castle. The Baptist congregation's name is variously reported as Bluestone Baptist Church, African Bluestone Baptist Church, and Bluestone Church. It seems logical, therefore, that the group originated at Bluestone Castle. Additionally, one of the earliest Black Baptist associations in Virginia was named Bluestone Colored Baptist Association, likely an acknowledgement of this church's already-lengthy historical presence in central Virginia. See, for example, Stephanie Rosel Reiss, *Religion and Resistance: African Baptist Churches in Virginia*, Ph.D. dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1997, Paper 1539626089, https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4t7y-wf05, p. 15; Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 18, *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 18, and *Minutes of the Second Annual Session of the Colored Shiloh Baptist Association of Virginia* (Petersburg: The Daily Index Office, 1866), p. 36.

[33] William Montgomery, "African American Churches in Virginia (1865–1900)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/african-american-churches-in-virginia-1865-1900. African Baptist Church later was renamed Harrison Street Baptist Church and now is named First Baptist Church. In South Carolina's Lowcountry, the Silver Bluff Baptist Church was founded not long afterward and often is cited as the earliest Black Baptist church in the colonies but its founding date has yet to be confirmed with historic records. The founding date of the Bluestone congregation once was thought to be 1774 and still is reported as such in some sources. More recent works, such as Lincoln and Mamiya and *Powerful Artifacts,* report the correct founding year for Bluestone Baptist Church.

[34] David Lewes and Mary Ruffin Hanbury, "First Baptist Church," National Register nomination, December 21, 2016, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/137-5071/, p. 13.

[35] David Lewes and Mary Ruffin Hanbury, "First Baptist Church," National Register nomination, December 21, 2016, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/137-5071/, p. 13-14.

congregations. Churches that grew large enough to necessitate creation of additional congregations often were termed "mother" churches. These early congregations in town settings often were comprised of both enslaved African Americans and free people of color. In Richmond, the formation of First Baptist Church, Second Baptist Church, and Third Baptist Church is an example of the "mother" church and successive congregations. Each of these churches originally was established by White congregations and African Americans, particularly those who were enslaved, also attended services. Both First and Second Baptist split into all-White and all-Black congregations prior to the Civil War.[36]

Additional Black Baptist congregations included unnamed groups in York and James City counties, as well as King and Queen Baptist Church in King and Queen County, all of which were organized during the early 1780s; Davenport Baptist Church in Prince George County, founded in 1788; a Baptist church organized in Nottoway County by "Uncle Jack," a licensed African American preacher during the late 18th century; Elam Baptist Church in Charles City County, founded in 1810; and Fincastle Baptist Church in today's Botetourt County, organized c. 1831.[37] Between c. 1800-c. 1820, however, the majority of Black Baptist churches coalesced in Virginia's cities, including the First Baptist and Gillfield Baptist churches[38] in Petersburg, First Baptist Church in Norfolk, and African Baptist Church in Fredericksburg.[39] Importantly, enslaved African Americans often were permitted to travel to attend church services. Such freedom of movement became increasingly rare due to the slave codes passed by the General Assembly after Gabriel's Conspiracy in 1800 that required Black congregations to be supervised by a White pastor, providing false assurance to enslavers that Black congregants were under their control. Further, groups of Baptist congregations formed associations that held annual meetings where they shared ideas regarding doctrine, educational materials, and other resources, giving early-19th-century Black Baptists experience in institution building.

Following the Nat Turner Insurrection in 1831, additional legal limitations were placed on the movements and activities of both enslaved persons and free people of color. As the Baptist denomination became mainstream during the early 19th century, its leadership abandoned its radical embrace of racial equality.[40] By the 1810s, a growing percentage of its membership was wealthy enslavers. In 1845, southern Baptists split from their northern counterparts to form the Southern Baptist Convention, which unequivocally supported the continuation of slavery. Enslavers still allowed enslaved people to attend religious meetings on their properties, believing it lessened resistance to enslavement. The relatively small number of independent Black Baptist churches stayed active, with congregations made up of free people of color and, to a lesser extent, enslaved persons. Black

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[36] Lenora McQueen, Morven Historian, email communication to Lena McDonald, Commonwealth Preservation Group, September 1, 2025.

[37] Luther P. Jackson, "The Planting of Negro Churches," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 16 No. 2 (April 1931), p. 185, 188-189, 190-193; Garnett Ryland, *The Baptists of Virginia, 1699-1926* (Richmond, Va.: Baptist Board of Missions and Education, 1955), p. 156, citing Robert B. Semple, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Baptists in Virginia* (Richmond, Va.: N.p., 1810); Stephanie Rosel Reiss, *Religion and Resistance: African Baptist Churches in Virginia*, Ph.D. dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1997, Paper 1539626089, https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4t7y-wf05, p. 18.

[38] The original name of Gillfield Baptist Church was Sandy Beach Baptist Church and the congregation's first house of worship was located in the Pocahontas Island area of Petersburg. The Pocahontas Island Historic District (123-0114) was listed in the NRHP and VLR in 2006. The community's two churches were destroyed by storms and floods that struck the area during the 20th century.

[39] Stephanie Rosel Reiss, *Religion and Resistance: African Baptist Churches in Virginia*, Ph.D. dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1997, Paper 1539626089, https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4t7y-wf05, p. 19-21, 27, 30; Luther P. Jackson, "The Planting of Negro Churches," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 16 No. 2 (April 1931), p. 188. First Baptist Church (123-5002) and Gillfield Baptist Church (123-5001) in Petersburg are both contributing resources in the Halifax Triangle and Downtown Commercial Historic District (NRHP 2019; 123-5494). First Baptist Church also contributes to the Poplar Lawn Historic District (NRHP 1980, 2006; 123-0094).

[40] Baptist leaders and individual members had taken strong stances against slavery during the mid-to-late-18th century, including David Barrow, John Leland, and Robert Carter III, all of whom manumitted the people they had enslaved.

Baptists maintained their spiritual practices in anticipation of a time when slavery would be abolished. The denomination was well positioned for explosive growth after Emancipation in 1863.[41]

African Methodist Episcopal Denomination

Methodism arrived in the English colonies of North America in 1766 during the First Great Awakening. As did their Baptist counterparts, White and Black Methodists expressed egalitarian principles that included calls to end to race-based slavery. Among the best known and most influential Methodists was Richard Allen, a man born enslaved in Philadelphia in 1760, who converted to Methodism in 1777. Allen was persuasive in the conversion of his enslaver, Stokeley Sturgis, who, motivated in part by religion and in part by economic necessity, offered Allen manumission. [42] In 1783, after Allen completed purchase of his freedom, he was an itinerant preacher through the mid-Atlantic region for several years before returning to Philadelphia, where he participated in formation of the Free African Society in 1787 along with Absalom Jones and several other free people of color.[43]

By the 1790s, tensions among White and Black Methodists increased as White members sought to restrict African Americans' participation in the church, actions strongly resisted by Black congregants. In 1794, after White members attempted to relegate African Americans to seats in the balcony of a Philadelphia church, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones led an exodus of Black members from St. George's Methodist Church and they formed a new church, dubbing it Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to signify its racial makeup. After striking pro-slavery elements, they adopted much of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Resentful White Methodists attempted to assert control over Bethel AME but Allen sued in Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 and won the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution. In 1816, sixteen delegates from five churches, located in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Wilmington, Delaware, Attleborough, and Salem, New Jersey, convened to incorporate the AME Church organization and elect Richard Allen as their first bishop. The AME denomination adhered to a hierarchical organizational structure similar to the Methodist Episcopal Church, although lacking the office of "presiding elder."[44]

The new denomination quickly spread across Northern and Midwestern states. In 1882, in Charleston, South Carolina, Morris Brown established a large congregation that acquired property and built a sanctuary. An insurrection allegedly plotted by Denmark Vesey, a manumitted African American, prompted White

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[41] Luther P. Jackson, "The Planting of Negro Churches," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 16 No. 2 (April 1931), p. 181-182; *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 19-20.
[42] In 1780, the Pennsylvania state legislature had passed an act that gradually abolished slavery in the state, with the majority of enslaved people freed by 1810; between 1840-1850, the last few dozen enslaved people gained their freedom.
[43] Gary B. Nash, "New Light on Richard Allen: The Early Years of Freedom," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (April 1989), p. 332-336; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 51. The Free African Society (FAS) "assumed both religious and secular functions" as it was devoted to abolition of slavery and to serving the spiritual needs of African Americans. Within a few years, leadership of the FAS, including Jones, opted to affiliate with the Anglican Church in England (which, after the American Revolution, was termed the Episcopal Church in the newly formed United States). Although Allen was invited to pastor at the FAS's new church in 1794, he declined the offer, preferring to remain a Methodist.
[44] *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 7; Charles Spencer Smith, *A History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1856-1922* (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the A.M.E. Church, 1922), full transcription at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cssmith/smith.html, p. 13-14.

Charlestonians to destroy the church, execute Vesey, and ban the AME denomination out of fear of revolts against slavery. This series of events hampered the faith's expansion into Southern states until the Civil War.[45]

African Methodist Episcopal Zion Denomination

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) denomination has its origins in New York City. In 1796, Peter Williams led an effort to organize a Black congregation separate from John Street Methodist Episcopal Church, which was controlled by its White membership. The Black congregation incorporated in 1801 as the "African Methodist Episcopal Church [called Zion] of the City of New York," upon completion of its sanctuary and existed as an independent church within the Methodist denomination for almost 20 years.[46] Over time, African American members began to resist the control of the hierarchical White leadership of Methodism over all property owned by the denomination. They founded a new denomination in 1820, the AMEZ. James Varick was elected first bishop and is considered the denomination's founder.[47] Relationships between the AME and AMEZ were strained. Richard Allen had failed to convince New York City Methodists to unite with the AME, and his decision to send an AME missionary to New York alienated those who had followed Peter Williams into the AMEZ congregation. Dissension among AMEZ members, meanwhile, stymied the denomination's growth beyond its northern origins through the first half of the 19th century.[48] Yet its reputation grew wide: AMEZ earned the moniker "Freedom Church" in the Antebellum era after nationally-known African Americans joined its ranks, including Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Frederick Douglass. Other abolitionist AMEZ members included Rev. Jermain Louguen, Catherine Harris, and Rev. Thomas James. AMEZ formed part of the Underground Railroad, with churches in northern states serving as way stations for freedom seekers from slaveholding southern states. After the Civil War began, the AMEZ denomination, like many religious groups based in the North, sent missionaries to evangelize among thousands of freedom seekers who had reached Union-held territory, including in northern Virginia and in the Tidewater region.[49]

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[45] *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 7; "Denmark Vesey," National Park Service, July 17, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/people/denmark-vesey.htm.

[46] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 56.

[47] John Jamison Moore, *History of the A. M. E. Zion Church in America: Founded in 1796, in the City of New York* (York, Pa.: Teachers' Journal Office, 1884), p. 37-40, p. 56-59; *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 9-10; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 57-58.

[48] John Jamison Moore, *History of the A. M. E. Zion Church in America: Founded in 1796, in the City of New York* (York, Pa.: Teachers' Journal Office, 1884), p. 34-35; *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 10; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 58. Moore's description of Allen's actions is indicative of the difficult relationship between AME and AMEZ leaders as it continued through the late 19th century.

[49] *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 10; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 58.

Union American Methodist Episcopal Church/ African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church/ African Union Methodist Protestant Denomination

Historically, the Union American Methodist Episcopal, later renamed the African Union Methodist Protestant (AUMP), denomination was, and remains, among the smallest of Black Methodist denominations in the country. The denomination also is "the oldest incorporated independent African American denomination in the country…"[50]

Peter Spencer, who was manumitted after his enslaver's death, moved from Maryland to Wilmington, Delaware, where he joined the Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1805, Spencer and 23 congregants decided to organize their own congregation, citing the need for control of their worship practices and autonomy from the White-dominated Methodist Episcopal church. Writing in 1920, Bishop Daniel James Russell stated, "This new and independent church was legally recorded at Dover, Del., September 18, 1813, under the title of Union Church of Africans, with the following trustees: Peter Spencer, John Kelly, John Simmons, Scotland Hill, David Smith, Jacob March and Benjamin Webb. Afterwards called the African Union Church, since changed to our present title, the 'African Union Methodist Protestant Church.'"[51]

Since 1814, the AUMP has hosted an annual religious festival in Wilmington. Combining annual conference, quarterly business meeting, and revival, it is considered the nation's "oldest continuously celebrated African American religious festival."[52] Under Spencer's leadership, the church sent missionaries to Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Virginia, among other states. They organized church congregations and schools, founding 31 new churches by the time of Spencer's death in 1843. After the Civil War, the Rev. Father Lewis founded an AUMP church in Norfolk, Virginia. He also served as the denomination's 13th president.[53] The AUFCMPC merged with the Union Church of Africans on November 25,

[50] D. P. Sefton and Patsy M. Fletcher, "Saint Paul AUMP Church," National Register nomination, September 15, 2010, on file at the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/s/wsm4diotmtdfaqv/StPaul%20NR%20Final.pdf?dl=0, p. 7; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 48-49.

[51] Daniel James Russell, *History of the African Union Methodist Church* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Union Star Book and Job Printing and Publishing House, 1920), p. 6-8, 10. The names of the two earliest AUMP churches may be erroneously recorded in some secondary sources and/or there may be confusion due to a split in the original congregation that led to formation of a second church. Lincoln and Mumiya identify Spencer's church as the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church. However, Sefton and Fletcher state that it was named the African Union Methodist Protestant Church and that "the denomination was incorporated in 1813 as the African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church (AUFCMPC)..." Today, the African Union Church founded during the early 19th century is named the Mother African Union Church. The inclusion of "mother" in the church's name indicates its role as a founding congregation that organized additional congregations under the denomination's leadership. For the slightly varying accounts of this history, see D. P. Sefton and Patsy M. Fletcher, "Saint Paul AUMP Church," National Register nomination, September 15, 2010, on file at the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/s/wsm4diotmtdfaqv/StPaul%20NR%20Final.pdf?dl=0, p. 7; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 48-49; and "History: The Mother African Union," Mother AUNFCMP Church, no date, https://motherafricanunion.org/history.

[52] D. P. Sefton and Patsy M. Fletcher, "Saint Paul AUMP Church," National Register nomination, September 15, 2010, on file at the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/s/wsm4diotmtdfaqv/StPaul%20NR%20Final.pdf?dl=0, p. 7.

[53] "History: The Mother African Union," Mother AUNFCMP Church, no date, https://motherafricanunion.org/history; Daniel James Russell, *History of the African Union Methodist Church* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Union Star Book and Job Printing and Publishing House, 1920), p. 19.

1865, after which, the denomination was renamed African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church in America. The name was later shortened to African Union Methodist Protestant.[54]

Civil War, 1861-1865

Between 1861-1865, the Civil War destroyed the institution of slavery as it had existed in Virginia since the late 17th century. On December 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that enslaved people in all states in open rebellion against the United States were free.[55] Thousands of emancipated persons in Virginia fled the plantations, towns, and cities where they had been held in bondage to reach territory held by U.S. troops. In these areas, freedpeople could find paid employment and feel safer from recapture by enslavers and Confederate soldiers. The settlements created by freedpeople were dubbed "contrabands camps."

The term "contrabands" came into use following the May 24, 1861, arrival at Fort Monroe of three freedom seekers who explained that they had been ordered to work on a Confederate artillery battery at Sewell's Point in Norfolk. The commander of Fort Monroe, Major General Benjamin F. Butler, would not acquiesce to enslavers' demands to force the three men back into their custody.[56] Working within the legal framework of the period, Butler classified the freedom seekers as "contrabands of war," because they were considered property under the federal laws then in place and any property used by the Confederates in their uprising against the United States was subject to confiscation by the U.S. military. Butler explained his reasoning in letters to General-in-Chief Winfield Scott and U.S. Secretary of War Simeon Cameron, including that the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was a U.S. law and, therefore, not applicable in the Confederate states. While he qualified that he would return freedom seekers to enslavers who swore allegiance to the United States, he also held that women and children, who were far less likely to engage in war-related labor, were not subject to return to enslavers. Enslavers who fled their own homes to seek more secure environs deeper within Confederate territory, in Butler's view, had discarded their property, including the people they held in bondage, and were not entitled to its return.[57] No one in the U.S. military nor the Lincoln administration countermanded Butler's decision. The consequences were immediate and far reaching. All places in Virginia held by U.S. military forces were now considered "free lands" where slavery would not be permitted. In northern Virginia, by 1865, a total of 68 forts and 93 batteries encircled Washington, DC. All of the city of Alexandria was quickly occupied by federal troops after the war began.[58] U.S. military troops and sailors also held much of Virginia's coastline, with Fort Monroe one of the most important installations in the Tidewater region. Large freedmen's communities also formed in Hampton

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[54] Daniel James Russell, *History of the African Union Methodist Church* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Union Star Book and Job Printing and Publishing House, 1920), p. 20.

[55] Slavery within Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Maryland, slaveholding states that had not seceded, remained legal throughout the war.

[56] Andre Fleche, "United States Colored Troops, The," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* Virginia Humanities, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/united-states-colored-troops-the/.

[57] Rebecca Calonico, Fort Monroe (2013 Update and Boundary Increase), National Register nomination, March 15, 2012, https://wordpress-851339-3533967.cloudwaysapps.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/114-0002_FortMonroe_2015_NRHP_final_redacted.pdf, p. 90-91, 98. Despite Butler's assertion that enslavers who left their homes had forfeited both their real and personal property (enslaved people were categorized as personal property), during the Reconstruction Era, most often former enslavers regained ownership of their real property, although they first had to swear an oath of allegiance to the U.S. in order to do so.

[58] In Fairfax County, however, Mount Vernon, home of George Washington, was considered "neutral territory" with both U.S. and Confederate troops avoiding it throughout the war The Mount Vernon Ladies Association (MVLA) sent Sarah Tracy, Upton Herbert, and Mary McMakin to manage the estate for the war's duration. No one at Mount Vernon had been enslaved since the MVLA's purchase of Mount Vernon from John Augustine Washington. See Kristen Brill, *Gender and Nationalism in Civil War Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2022), p. 24.

and Norfolk. Along the Chesapeake Bay, freedom seekers made their way to U.S. naval ships and patrol boats, even swimming, if necessary, to attain their freedom. Approximately 500,000 men, women, and children reached U.S. military lines across the Confederate and border states by the war's end.[59]

Equally important, the presence of numerous Black men of fighting age, deeply familiar with southern landscapes, convinced some U.S. military commanders to enroll freedom seekers and free Black men in their military units. Frederick Douglass argued to Lincoln that Black Americans had the right to take up arms to defend the U.S. Both Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton were persuaded to support the proposal. When Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, he included language authorizing Black men to enlist in the U.S. military. The U.S. military's leadership and the Lincoln administration agreed to accept volunteers in a segregated branch of the U.S. Army named the United States Colored Troops (USCT). On May 22, 1863, Major Charles W. Foster took charge of the Bureau for Colored Troops within the War Department. Over 185,000 African Americans served in the USCT. [60] In Virginia, the volunteers, many of them formerly enslaved or whose relatives were enslaved, joined USCT units raised in the Tidewater and Northern Virginia regions. The 2nd USCT Cavalry, Battery B of the 2nd USCT Light Artillery, 2nd USCT Infantry, 10th USCT Infantry, 23rd USCT Infantry, and 38th USCT Infantry all were mustered in Virginia by 1864.[61]

Discrimination against Black servicemembers in the U.S. military was endemic, ranging from lower pay to denial of recruiting bounties and aid for dependents. The soldiers, however, refused to tolerate unequal treatment, in some cases laying down arms in protest. The U.S. government responded unevenly, but eventually Congress passed legislation to equalize pay for Black and White soldiers. Racial segregation of the soldiers, however, was considered a matter of course not up for discussion among White military or civilian leaders.

Burial of USCT soldiers in national cemeteries that the U.S. military created after the Civil War represented a significant acknowledgement by the federal government that these soldiers warranted the nation's highest respect and perpetual care of their interments. Church and other private cemeteries across Virginia also have interments of USCT veterans. The distinctive, carved, marble, tablet-style grave markers issued by the federal government to these veterans varied over time. The earliest markers included a sunken shield and, in raised lettering, the veteran's name and the military unit with which they served. After the 20th century, the markers began to include the person's death date and the design changed to sunken lettering, while the shield was no longer used.[62]

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[59] Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation1861-1867, Series 1, Volume 1: The Destruction of Slavery (New York, New York: Cambridge University Press (syndicate), 1985), p. 12, as referenced in Rebecca Calonico, "Fort Monroe (2013 Update and Boundary Increase)," National Register nomination, March 15, 2012, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://wordpress-851339-3533967.cloudwaysapps.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/114-0002_FortMonroe_2015_NRHP_ final_redacted.pdf, p. 90-91, 98; "Freedom's Fortress," National Park Service, February 17, 2016, https://www.nps.gov/articles/featured_stories_fomr.htm.

[60] Andre Fleche, "United States Colored Troops, The," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* Virginia Humanities, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/united-states-colored-troops-the/. For a comprehensive history of the contributions, valor, and sacrifices of the USCT during the Civil War, see Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862-1865* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1998).

[61] Andre Fleche, "United States Colored Troops, The," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* Virginia Humanities, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/united-states-colored-troops-the/; Rebecca Calonico, Fort Monroe (2013 Update and Boundary Increase), National Register nomination, March 15, 2012, https://wordpress-851339-3533967.cloudwaysapps.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/114-0002_FortMonroe_2015_NRHP_ final_redacted.pdf, p. 86.

[62] Lena S. McDonald, "Grave Markers for Veterans: Military History in a Rural Cemetery," Virginia Department of Historic Resources, October 29, 2021, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/blog-posts/grave-markers-for-veterans-military-history-in-a-rural-cemetery/.

As the amount of U.S.-held territory in Virginia increased during the war, "slaveholders near Union armies in northern Virginia, southeastern Virginia, and along the Chesapeake Bay reported frequent mass exoduses."[63] Ultimately, freedom seekers from throughout Virginia opted for self-emancipation rather than waiting for liberation.

Missionaries and Formation of New Congregations

Emancipated African Americans eagerly embraced their new freed status by claiming their right to freedom of worship without constraints imposed by White authorities. At military camps, USCT soldiers and civilian men and women held religious services and used wages from employment as laborers, nurses, cooks, laundresses, sutlers, and other occupations to acquire books for Sunday schools. Religious societies whose members were convinced that all people had the right to read sacred texts provided material and financial aid. The Baptist, AME, and AMEZ denominations sent hundreds of African American missionaries to Union territory held in the Confederate states throughout the war. Emancipated people responded eagerly, forming congregations at each of the "contrabands camps," where many worshipped for the first time without interference or supervision by White clergy and enslavers. White missionaries from Protestant denominations and wealthy abolitionists also traveled to Virginia's contraband communities seeking to convert freedpeople, to offer church membership, and to provide much-needed food, clothing, medicine, and educational opportunities.

The first "Sabbath School," established on September 15, 1861, by American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) missionary L. C. Lockwood, taught adults and children. Two days later, Mary S. Peake, a free African American, opened a "day school" for African Americans in Hampton. Peake had been educated in Alexandria before the war began. "Day schools" were attended by students during the day only; the term was used to differentiate them from boarding schools where students lived fulltime during the academic term.[64] In 1863, General Butler used government funds to continue Peake's work, opening the Butler School for Negro Children. The ABHMS, meanwhile, opened schools in U.S. military-held territory in Norfolk, Newport News, Portsmouth, Yorktown, and Suffolk. In addition to ABHMS, the Society of Friends, National Freedmen's Relief Association, and Boston Educational Society opened schools in Virginia while the war still raged.[65]

Community Building during the Reconstruction Era and the "Separate but Equal Doctrine," 1865-1902

The surrender of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia to U.S. military forces at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865, brought an end to slavery in Virginia.[66] Approximately 500,000 emancipated

[63] Jaime Martinez, "Slavery during the Civil War," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/slavery-during-the-civil-war.

[64] Due to Virginia's lack of a statewide public education system prior to the Civil War, private boarding schools were among the few options available for formal education in Virginia.

[65] Ira Berlin, Steven F. Miller, and Leslie S. Rowland, "Emancipated Citizens," *Constitution* Vol. 6 (Fall 1994), https://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Emancipated%20Citizens%20(Constitution).pdf, p. 78–79; Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), p. 137-138.

[66] The end of slavery in Virginia was a legally complex process. The creation of West Virginia and its admission to the U.S. in June 1863 resulted in a process of gradual emancipation for enslaved African Americans under the age of 25 in the new state. Meanwhile, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation allowed slavery to continue in the parts of Virginia that were held by the U.S. military, including Accomack and Northampton counties, the Hampton Roads counties of Elizabeth City, Norfolk, Princess Anne, and York, and the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, but people who had self-emancipated from parts of Virginia loyal to the Confederate States could live freely. In 1861, the Restored Government of Virginia was formed by people who swore loyalty to the U.S. Originally based in Wheeling in present-day West Virginia, the Restored Government moved to Alexandria in 1863 when West Virginia became a separate state. The Restored Government organized a constitutional convention in 1864 for the purpose of abolishing slavery in the portions of northern Virginia under its control. In February 1865, the Restored Government also ratified the 13th Amendment to the

people now were free to live independently. The vast majority, however, had few of the resources required to do so. For example, One Shared Story recently completed an analysis of County Personal Property Tax Assessments for five counties in Central Virginia (Buckingham, Cumberland, Fluvanna, Louisa, Orange) for the 1867 tax year.[67] The aggregate value of personal property taxed in the five counties totaled $1,768,022. Of this, only $28,434 (1.6 percent) in personal property value was attributed to Black men. Yet the number of Black men over age 21 taxed that year was 6,249 while the number of White men of the same age was 5,199.[68]

The newly free were faced with securing housing and employment, legalizing marriages, and reuniting families. To accomplish their goals, they needed supportive communities, like the ones they had experienced in their antebellum churches and brush arbors/hush harbors.

In contrast, free people of color had lived in Virginia since the colonial era. As individual enslavers chose to manumit some or all of their enslaved population, the number of free people of color in Virginia gradually increased. By 1860, census data showed that 58,062 free persons of color lived in Virginia. Most of Virginia's cities hosted neighborhoods that included free people of color, with Petersburg, Richmond, Alexandria, and Norfolk home to the largest populations. Many free people of color had enslaved relatives, including spouses and children. In cities, towns, and rural areas, free people of color worked as skilled tradesmen, ditch diggers, railroad builders, teamsters, washerwomen, cooks, stevedores, watermen, coal miners, domestic servants, farm laborers, and other types of paid employment, often alongside enslaved African Americans. A small number of free Black landowners farmed their own property. Despite the racial oppression of antebellum Virginia, many free people of color, particularly those whose families had been free for generations, had attained a degree of literacy, acquired property, were experienced at managing their households and finances, and were skilled at negotiating the legal restrictions under which they lived. During the war, free people of color suffered numerous deprivations due to both Confederate and U.S. military forces confiscating their property without compensation. Both sides also forced African American men to work for them in various roles; refusal to do so resulted in imprisonment or worse.[69]

Due to the knowledge and skills they had amassed, after the war ended, free people of color often rose to leadership positions in their communities as newly emancipated people looked to them for guidance. Another source of leaders came from the religious groups that sponsored ministers and teachers to serve in the newly forming communities of freedpeople. Many of these skilled individuals, such as Mary S. Peake, had lived as free people in Virginia prior to the war, while others moved to Virginia from Northern and Midwestern states. Enslaved people who had been entrusted with management responsibilities by their enslavers, and had been

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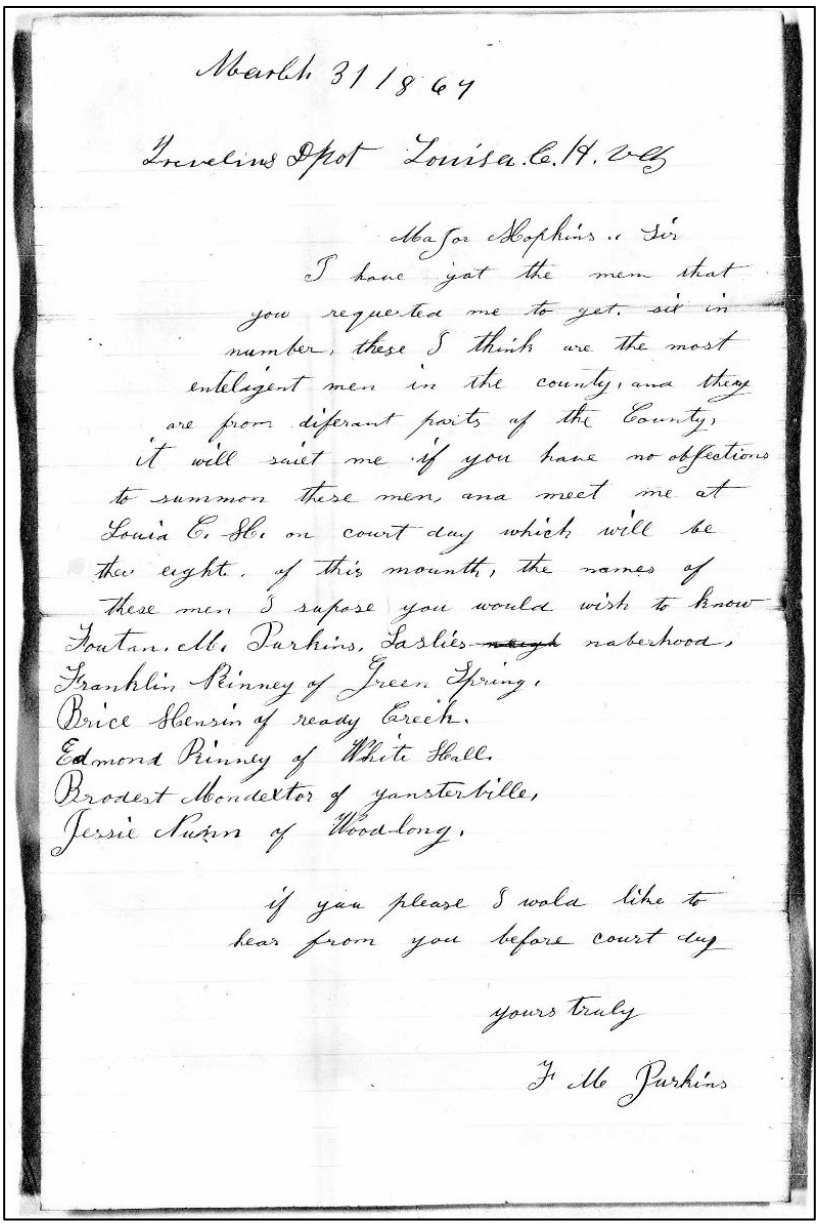
U.S. Constitution, which ended slavery, except as punishment for a crime, throughout the country. Upon the Confederate surrender at Appomattox Court House in 1865, the U.S. military enforced the Emancipation Proclamation and 13th Amendment across all of Virginia. Additional information is at Brent Tarter, "The Abolition of Slavery in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/the-abolition-of-slavery-in-virginia.

[67] One Shared Story is a nonprofit organization dedicated to researching and creating publicly accessible information about hidden history in Central Virginia.

[68] The nonprofit organization One Shared Story obtained copies of the 1867 County Personal Property Tax for these five central Virginia counties from various sources, including the Library of Virginia, Louisa County Clerk of the Court, and Fluvanna County Clerk of the Court. Assessments were transcribed by volunteers at One Shared Story to a common spreadsheet template and combined for this analysis.

[69] Susanna Lee, "Free Blacks during the Civil War," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/free-blacks-during-the-civil-war. Important to note is that enumerations of free people of color often included individuals with mixed African American, White, and Native American lineage as well as members of the resident Native American tribes in Virginia. White census takers did not utilize consistent methods for identifying free people of color. Census records from 1790-1860 are rife with errors about the identities of people who were perceived not to be solely of White heritage.



March 31 1864

Trevelins Depot Louisa C.H. Va

Major Hopkins Sir
I have got the men that
you requested me to get. six in
number, these I think are the most
enteligent men in the county, and they
are from diferant parts of the County,
it will suit me if you have no objections
to summon these men, and meet me at
Louisa C. H. on court day which will be
the eight. of this mounth, the names of
these men I supose you would wish to know
Fountan. M. Purkins, Laslies ~~neigh~~ naberhood,
Franklin Binney of Green Spring,
Brice Hensin of ready Creek.
Edmond Binney of White Hall.
Brodest Mondextor of yansterbille,
Jessie Nunn of Woodlong,

if you please I wold like to
hear from you before court day

yours truly

F M Purkins

Figure 2. Correspondence from Fountain M. Perkins to Major Hopkins, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Image Source: One Shared Story).

The document above states, March 31, 1864, Trevilians Depot, Louisa C.H. [illegible], Major Hopkins, Sir, I have got the men that you requested me to get. Six in number. These I think are the most intelligent men in the county, and they are from different parts of the County, it will suit me if you have no objections to summon these men, and meet me at Louisa C. H. on court day which will be the eighth of this month, the names of these men I supose[sic] you would wish to know – Fountain M. Purkins [sic], Laslie's naberhood [sic], Franklin Binney of Green Spring, Brice Hensin of ready [sic] Creek, Edmund Binney of White Hall, Brodest Mondextor of yansterville [sic], Jessie Nunn of Woodlong. If you please I would like to hear from you before court day, yours truly, F. M. Purkins [sic]

taught to read and write and to manage transactions, accounts, and regional commerce, also became community founders, as did self-taught individuals who possessed intrinsic traits and skills that made them effective leaders. These early groundbreakers often can be traced in post-war historic records as they moved into positions of respect and leadership in the new freedpeople's communities. For example, some of the earliest records from the Freedmen's Bureau Offices include correspondence identifying respected Black men in Virginia's counties, like the list provided by Fountain M. Perkins (Figure 2). A freedman and licensed Baptist pastor, he founded at least five Baptist churches in the Louisa County area, as well as serving as the first preacher at the newly formed African American First Baptist Church in Louisa, the local seat of government. Perkins began to participate in local politics as the war drew to an end. In 1867, he became a candidate to Virginia's Constitutional Convention, then was elected to represent Louisa County in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1869. In October 1869, Perkins voted to ratify the 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution, one of the requirements Virginia had to meet in order to be readmitted to the United States. Although he opted not to run for re-election, Perkins remained active in Republican party politics for another 20 years.[70]

Although defeated, White populations in the former Confederate states, including Virginia, balked at accepting a new social order that entailed equality with Black citizens. In 1866, the Virginia General Assembly, still dominated by conservative White delegates and senators, passed an act "for the punishment of Vagrants." That was the opening salvo in a campaign to regain White authorities' control over Black Virginians. "Vagrants" included any Black person not employed in paid labor

[70] Lisa Clemmer & Dictionary of Virginia Biography, "Fountain M. Perkins (1816 or 1817–1896)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/perkins-fountain-m-1816-or-1817-1896.

or who had refused to work for low wages. Local authorities were empowered to arrest these individuals and hire them out to work in much the same way enslavers had done during the slavery era.[71] Virginia's vagrancy laws were designed to subvert the spirit, if not the letter, of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in December 1865, that made both slavery and involuntary servitude illegal, yet allowed those convicted of crimes to be forced to work. Other former Confederate states passed similar laws, outraging the "Radical" Republicans who controlled Congress.[72] In response, the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution were ratified, guaranteeing the citizenship and civil rights of African Americans, including recognition of their equality in the eyes of the law. Ratified in July 1868, the 14th Amendment confirmed that Black Americans were citizens of the U.S. and that all citizens were entitled to due process of law. The 15th Amendment, ratified in February 1870, extended the franchise to Black men.[73] During the same period, the U.S. Congress passed legislation collectively known as the Reconstruction Acts that among other things, required former Confederate states seeking readmission to the U.S. to write new state constitutions that included provisions to democratize southern society.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the Freedmen's Bureau, was established after the Civil War to begin the process of rebuilding the former Confederate states. Established by an act of Congress in 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau maintained a presence in the southern states until 1877.[74] The Bureau had many tasks that served the needs of Black and White civilian populations. The military troops worked with benevolent societies, such as the American Missionary Association, wealthy philanthropists, and Black churches to establish public schools from the elementary through college levels for children and adults. They enforced contracts (including for labor and for land sales) between former enslavers and freed persons, helped Black people find relatives, and/or relocate. They assisted Black veterans with obtaining back pay, bounty payments, and pensions. The Freedmen's Bureau also helped to legalize marriages of freedpeople that, prior to the Civil War, had not been recognized under state law when enslaved people were considered property. The Bureau's hospitals and temporary camps, where clothing and food were distributed, were available both to Black and White people. Much of this work was accomplished in just three-and-a-half years, from June 1865-December 1868.[75]

In the midst of this change, enraged White people who resented the new social and political order carried out reprisals against African American communities. Churches and schools were evidence of emancipated people's success in embracing their new freedoms and these were targeted in particular by arsonists. A fire destroyed First African Baptist Church in Petersburg in May 1866. Gillfield Baptist Church and St. Stephen's Episcopal

[71] "The Battlefront in Virginia: 1861 to 1876," Virginia Museum of History and Culture, no date, https://virginiahistory.org/learn/story-of-virginia/chapter/reconstruction.

[72] "Radical" Republicans were so named due to their commitment to abolishing slavery and to ensuring the rights and equality of African Americans after the Civil War. They also advocated, with little success, for harsh penalties against Confederates who had supported secession from the U.S.

[73] Most American women could not vote until ratification of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.

[74] As noted in the introduction to this MPD, the Reconstruction Era historically was defined as 1865-1877, coinciding with the span of the military occupation of the former Confederate states. For the purpose of this MPD, the Reconstruction Era is understood to extend from c. 1861-c.1902, coinciding with the period when slavery began to be dismantled in Virginia through the approval of a new state constitution that enshrined the "separate but equal" doctrine in state law.

[75] "The Freedmen's Bureau," National Archives, Research Our Records, African American Heritage, no date, https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau?_ga=2.131340751.1335478042.1711646823-291601855.1705958387; "The Freedmen's Bureau," National Archives, Educator Resources, no date, https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/freedmen#:~:text=Funding%20limitations%20and%20deeply%20held,persistent%20racial%20attitudes%20and%20discrimination; "The Freedmen's Bureau: New Beginnings for Recently Freed African Americans," National Museum of African American History and Culture, no date, https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/freedmens-bureau-new-beginnings-recently-freed.

Church also were attacked, but remained intact. Petersburg authorities responded to the attacks, offering a substantial $5,000 reward for capture of the arsonists. Local residents and churchgoers swiftly donated money to rebuild the church, surprising Freedmen's Bureau agent Stuart Barnes. He wrote that the African American community was inspired by the support they received, rather than intimidated by the arsonists. Such resilience was much needed during Reconstruction.[76]

The Freedmen's Bureau responded to the "White terrorists [who] threatened and attacked teachers and students, and burned down schoolhouses along with Black churches and businesses to intimidate Black communities."[77] Vigilante gangs, most notoriously the Ku Klux Klan, founded by virulent racist Nathan Bedford Forest, were responsible for the violence. Wearing disguises and masks, they often committed their crimes at night against unarmed Black communities. When possible, vigilantes were arrested and tried, although their use of disguises and lack of cooperation among White communities hindered such actions. The Bureau also helped to marshal resources for repairing or replacing damaged buildings, equipment, and furnishings.

Church Leadership Becomes Democracy Proving Ground

During the immediate post-war years, African American men and women began to utilize their newly acknowledged civil rights by engaging in political organizing at the local and state levels. Whether free before the war or emancipated during it, Black people displayed a sophisticated grasp of the necessity to participate in the political process in order to secure their rights. One of the first, and most important, opportunities to do so came in December 1867-April 1868, when Virginians met at a constitutional convention in the city of Richmond, chaired by John C. Underwood, a federal judge.[78] Republicans, including 24 Black delegates, held the majority of seats at the convention, in part because many White Virginians had refused to exercise their own right to vote for candidates while African Americans had enthusiastically embraced the franchise. Of the 24 Black delegates, nearly half were teachers or ministers or members of Black churches.[79] As required by the Reconstruction Acts passed by the U.S. Congress in 1867, Virginia's newly written state constitution included the creation of the first statewide public education system, franchise for Black men, and reorganization of the structure of local governments to make them more democratic. All of these were designed to empower Black residents as well as lower-income White Virginians by making local and state governments more responsive to the will of their constituents. A large majority of Virginia's voters ratified the constitution in 1869; the reasons that Black and White Virginians approved the constitution are varied and unknowable, although a desire to reenter the U.S. likely was a commonly held sentiment. Virginia was readmitted to the U.S. on January 26, 1870.[80]

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[76] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), p. 26.

[77] "The Freedmen's Bureau: New Beginnings for Recently Freed African Americans," National Museum of African American History and Culture, no date, https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/freedmens-bureau-new-beginnings-recently-freed.

[78] Virginia's 1851 constitution had ceased to be in effect upon the state's secession from the U.S. The Restored Government of Virginia had adopted a new constitution in 1864 that applied to those parts of Virginia held by U.S. military forces. After the Civil War ended, the constitution became applicable throughout Virginia until a new document was drafted and ratified in 1868. For additional information, see Sara Bearss, "Constitutional Convention, Virginia (1864)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/constitutional-convention-virginia-1864.

[79] For information about each of the delegates, see Virginia Biography, the Dictionary of, Encyclopedia Virginia staff & Stephanie Shaw, "African American Legislators in Virginia (1867–1899)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/african-american-legislators-in-virginia-1867-1899.

[80] "Attendance Records of the State Constitutional Convention, 1867-1868," Library of Virginia, no date, https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/items/show/258.

The rapid formation of local church congregations and the development of statewide religious associations played an important role in weaving new Black citizens into the tapestry of democracy. "As many as 80 percent of African Americans belonged to a church in postwar Virginia, most of them identifying as Baptist."[81] Baptists exemplified the swift and successful community progress and network building among Black communities through formation of church associations. The earliest documented of these was the Union Baptist Association, founded near Norfolk in 1864, in territory controlled by U.S. military troops. After the war's end, such organizations began to form in more areas. The Colored Shiloh Baptist Association (CSBA) formed on August 11, 1865, in central Virginia, with four churches in the city of Richmond, one in Manchester (part of present-day Richmond), and two in Petersburg and churches in surrounding rural areas.[82] In Table 1, below, data from the churches providing reports to the CSBA from 1865 to 1873 included tallies of membership and numbers of Sunday School students. A "member" was a person who had been accepted into a church and baptized; nonmembers who may have participated and/or relied on the community church for support were not included in the counts.[83]

Table 1. Membership and Sunday School Students at Baptist Churches Affiliated with the Colored Shiloh Baptist Association, 1865-1873.

Year	Churches	Members	Sabbath School Pupils
1865	7 (+ 8 applications)	9,074	2,500
1866	28	14,648	34,577
1867	75	25,122	36,460
1868	*Published Proceedings Not Obtained*		
1869			
1870	126	37,773	37,402
1871	190	44,953	38,102
1872	236	47,597	38,110
1873	271	55,859	Not Reported

After the Virginia Baptist State Convention (VBSC) was formed as the statewide organization in 1868, the CSBA continued to function and serve the growing church network as a regional association. Many delegates lived near the CSBA's base in the Richmond/Petersburg area and continued to attend their annual meetings. Participation in the CSBA dropped off as associations in other regions developed and as the annual VBSC meeting moved to different locations around the state. The 1869 VBSC meeting proposed a solution to the difficulty of travel by designating 16 areas for the formation of regional associations.[84] As the number of congregations grew and the regional associations fully expanded across Virginia, published directories of churches and delegates became roadmaps for politicians looking to build or communicate with a constituency. The constitution of religious associations, their rules, elections, and participation of delegates developed

[81] William Montgomery, "African American Churches in Virginia (1865–1900)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/african-american-churches-in-virginia-1865-1900.
[82] Charles Irons, "Colored Shiloh Baptist Association," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/colored-shiloh-baptist-association.
[83] Researchers at the nonprofit organization One Shared Story compiled the data in Table 1 through review of the annual reports and other records maintained by the Colored Shiloh Baptist Association. Copies of this material are in the African-American Baptist annual reports, Virginia, 1865-1990, microfilm collection at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, call number Film 1656.
[84] The Virginia Baptist State Convention, "1869 Minutes of the Second Annual Session of the Virginia Baptist State Convention," *Historic Black Churches and Pastors*, accessed April 23, 2025, https://onesharedstory.org/HBCP/items/show/21, p. 15-16.

members' experience and honed their political abilities in a structure that was similar to that of local and state governments.[85]

Nearly 100 Black Virginians served in the two houses of the General Assembly between Virginia's Constitutional Convention of 1867 and the implementation of a new constitution in 1902 (discussed below). More than half of these men were ministers, trustees, deacons, or members of Black churches, or listed their occupation as "teacher." Many of their names appear in published religious association proceedings as delegates to state and regional meetings.[86] Luther P. Jackson, a significant scholar and civil rights activist who worked with Carter G. Woodson, wrote a recurring newspaper column about "Rights and Duties in a Democracy" during the 1940s.[87] Jackson used his column to educate readers about both the rights and responsibilities that African Americans held toward themselves, their communities, and the nation. He also wrote about the historical contributions of Black men and women. In a column published in the *New Journal and Guide* in August 1945, Jackson described the important leadership of Virginia ministers born during the slavery era. He explained how these men labored for the welfare of their communities during Reconstruction and were instrumental to emancipated people exercising their rights: "Owning land themselves they continually advocated land ownership for their fellow men; and having education themselves they continually advocated it for others. Some of them shared a portion of their land to build a school as well as to build a church… To them Christianity and nonvoting are incompatible."[88] The prominent involvement of religious leaders in Reconstruction Era political activity demonstrates the interconnections among religious and civil life in nascent freedpeople's communities.

Town and Urban Communities

Prior to the Civil War, the majority of African American freedpeople were concentrated in rural areas of Central, Southside, and Tidewater Virginia, but growing numbers of Black residents lived in towns and cities. After the war, emancipated African Americans who already lived in or relocated to towns or cities typically settled in neighborhoods that already were home to free people of color. When an existing neighborhood reached capacity, African Americans settled wherever landlords and landowners were amenable to renting or outright selling lots and dwellings. In an era of limited transportation, Black workers also sought to live close to places of employment. Northern investors and savvy dispossessed Southern elites seized opportunities to rebuild an economy devastated by war. Tobacco-related industries boomed during Reconstruction, as did related warehouses, prizeries, stemmeries, railroad depots, and riverfront docks across the state. New manufacturing concerns that relied on coal and timber extracted from western Virginia were established as well. New railroad networks knit Virginia together and connected extractive industries to manufacturing facilities, and linked the Commonwealth's cities to larger markets in the rapidly expanding Midwestern and heavily

[85] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 41.
[86] Occupations of the African American members of the General Assembly was collected by researchers at the nonprofit organization One Shared Story.
[87] Jackson's manifold career included his tenure as a history professor and chair of the History Department at Virginia State College (today's Virginia State University). After earning degrees from Fisk University, Columbia University, and a doctorate from the University of Chicago, Jackson conducted groundbreaking research in the history of African Americans by utilizing primary source materials, "including birth, marriage, and death records, tax records, property deeds, legal and court records, military records, and other government documents," newspapers, family papers, and oral history interviews. The exacting research and analysis that Jackson undertook provided a methodology for documenting the histories of people often marginalized or excluded from historical narratives written by White historians. See "Luther Porter Jackson – Highlighting Black History," Document Bank of Virginia, Library of Virginia, 2025, https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/items/show/290.
[88] Luther P. Jackson, "Rights and Duties in a Democracy: Sixteen Model Ministers," *New Journal and Guide,* August 4, 1945, p. A8.

industrialized Northern states. Discriminatory practices, however, often limited African Americans to the most dangerous, difficult, and low-paying jobs. The aforementioned vigilante violence against Black people also remained a perennial threat throughout Reconstruction. Furthermore, White elites dedicated themselves to regaining political power in Virginia, which included finding new ways to limit the rights of African Americans and other people of color.

Despite these existential threats, freedpeople found ways to achieve autonomy and security by establishing shops and retail services within rapidly growing neighborhoods of African Americans. Long-established areas that had been home to free communities of color for decades drew the most activity during the early years of Reconstruction. These places served as incubators for African Americans to engage in the essential aspects of community building, including establishment of public schools, churches, and small businesses. In Virginia, among the best-known of these neighborhoods is the Jackson Ward Historic District (NHL 1978; 127-0237) in the city of Richmond. Here, new businesses established by entrepreneurial beauticians, barbers, dressmakers, and tailors, as well as those that sold goods at shoe stores, drug stores, and grocery stores, became available to a small but growing class of Black consumers. Funeral homes became an increasingly important business as African Americans took control of their funerary rites and burial practices. As educational opportunities expanded and the younger generations of freedpeople gained both schooling and experience, professional services, such as banking, life insurance, dentistry, and medicine, became available in cities and in some larger towns by the late 19th century. Along with churches and schools, over the course of Reconstruction, the gradual formation of fraternal and sororal orders, benevolent societies, and mutual aid associations also began to provide essential services and expertise to community uplift.[89]

Reconstruction Era Black Community Institutions

Following emancipation, Black Virginians typically focused their efforts on acquiring a small amount of land, building homes, and creating communities centered around a church and public school.[90] In rural areas, freedmen's communities frequently were located near former plantations because former enslavers now relied on paid agricultural workers to keep their lands productive. Financial constraints also prompted many former enslavers to sell small parcels of their land to individuals they had formerly enslaved. Numerous such communities persisted well into the 20th century and an unknown number remain today. For example, in his oral history interview, Horace Scruggs III cited the example of a freedpeople's community in Fluvanna County. "… West Bottom Baptist Church, it's at a crossroad. It is probably less than three miles from a plantation, a very large plantation called Glen Arvon. Right across from West Bottom Baptist Church was a George Vowles [sic] store. And then there was a Rosenwald school less than 100 yards from the store. So you had all of these elements kind of in the same space. And between the church and Glen Arvon the plantation was Oak Hill

[89] "Jackson Ward and Its Black Wall Street," National Park Service, June 22, 2021, https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/jackson-ward-and-its-black-wall-street.htm; Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," *The Public Historian* Vol. 27 No. 4 (Fall 2005), p. 34-35. Documentation of historic resources associated with Black-owned businesses is addressed sporadically in nominations for historic districts and individual properties. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources, however, has collected all of the nominations of places in Virginia that have been listed for their significance in the area of Ethnic Heritage: Black at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/?jsf=jet-engine:register&tax=collection:342. The collection is updated on a quarterly basis as new nominations are approved.

[90] Detailed discussion of African American community building after the Civil War is available at Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

Cemetery. So you have people living, a business, their religion, their schooling, their education and their …burial all in this kind of very compact area."[91]

A church was almost always the first community institution to be established because, "As W.E.B. Du Bois observed, Black churches are 'curiously composite institutions, which combine[d] the work of churches, theaters, newspapers, homes, schools and lodges.'"[92] Although creation of Virginia's first statewide public education system in 1870 represented a major step toward democratizing society and improving overall individual and community wellbeing, the school system was racially segregated. Woefully inadequate public funding for schools serving Black students forced most African American communities to finance operation of public schools themselves between 1870-c. 1900. Such schools often were housed in private dwellings, rented spaces, or makeshift buildings during this period. As communities became more established through the late-19th century, land for a cemetery also would be acquired, typically by a church congregation. Depending on the congregation's preferences, nonmembers also could be interred in church-owned cemeteries. Such sharing of resources was necessary, as many people did not own land of their own or did not have space for a family cemetery. Fraternal lodges, mutual aid associations, and benevolent societies began to proliferate in African American communities by the late 19th century. These groups provided both social and service activities to their communities, with a mission of aiding people in need. Support from within the Black community was necessary due to the indifference of White-dominated local, state, and federal governments to the continued difficulties facing African American citizens in a racially divided society. Therefore, a church, public school, cemetery, and fraternal or mutual aid organization were the four pillars that supported African American communities in rural areas, towns, and cities. These institutions represented the first instance of Black Virginians exercising control over their education, religious services, burial of their dead, and community building. It is difficult to overstate their significance. Each type of institution is discussed in more detail below.

Churches

From the colonial to the antebellum era, in Virginia's largest cities and towns, free people of color had established all-Black church congregations, such as:

- Gillfield Baptist Church in Petersburg (123-5001)
- First Baptist Church in Norfolk (NRHP 1983, 83003297; 122-0040)
- Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Roanoke (NRHP 1994, 94001092; 128-0234)
- Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria (NRHP 2004, 03001423; 100-0049)
- First African Baptist Church in Richmond (NRHP 1969, 69000348; 127-0167)
- African Baptist Church (today's Court Street Baptist Church) in Lynchburg (NRHP 1982, 82004569; 118-0156)
- Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) in Fredericksburg (NRHP 2015, 15000907; 111-0096)

Enslaved persons in these urban settings also may have been permitted to attend these newly organized churches. As noted above, since Gabriel's Conspiracy in 1800, enslavers and the Virginia General Assembly had enacted laws that limited basic freedoms of worship and assembly for enslaved people and free people of color. As soon as the Civil War ended, African American congregants assumed control of their worship and these churches became central to building new communities as emancipated people began to create new lives

[91] Horace J. Scruggs III and Alice Matthew Scruggs, oral history interview, One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, September 14, 2024.
[92] Rachel Ferguson, "The Black Church: A World Within a World," Acton Institute, February 5, 2023, https://www.acton.org/religion-liberty/volume-33-number-1/black-church-world-within-world.

for themselves. As congregations grew, often a group of members would split to form a new church. For example, in Lynchburg, the downtown congregation of Court Street Baptist Church (NRHP 82004569; 118-0156) facilitated expansion first by organizing Sunday schools in the city's outlying sections where freedmen's communities had formed; these served as a means to reach those who could not reach the city's core. Over time, separate congregations grew from the Sunday schools, including Diamond Hill Baptist (NRHP 11000026; 118-0060-0057), White Rock Hill Baptist, and Eighth Street Baptist Church (118-0199). Consequently, "Court Street Church is regarded as the mother church of all the city's black Baptist congregations."[93] In a rural setting, an example of a mother church is Alexander Hill Baptist Church (NRHP SG100001495; 014-5054). In an oral history interview, Charles White recounted that, by the 1890s, the church had over 500 members, which far exceeded the building's capacity. During Sunday worship services, members stood outside to listen through open windows and doors. A group of members decided to form a separate congregation, in part due to the need for more space and to differences in worship styles. The new Jerusalem Baptist Church was erected in 1896 by the church members. Two other churches also formed from Alexander Hill's congregation, Salem Church in the Allensville neighborhood of Buckingham and Warminster Church in Buckingham County, both of which continue to be active today.[94]

While the Baptist denomination remained the largest in Virginia, various Methodist denominations comprised a substantial proportion of Reconstruction Era congregations. Both John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP 13000987; 008-5030) in Bath County and Mount Olive Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP 04001542; 053-0994) in Loudoun County are examples of all-Black congregations that opted to remain within the Methodist Episcopal denomination, one that had included both White and African American members since the First Great Awakening. The AME and AMEZ denominations had been marginalized across slaveholding states following the alleged 1822 insurrection plot by Denmark Vesey of South Carolina and Nat Turner's Insurrection in 1831 because both men had been Methodist preachers. Each denomination, however, rebounded after the Civil War, in large part due to the many Northern missionaries who came South during the war and early years of Reconstruction.

As emancipated African Americans founded rural communities, establishing a place of worship was often the top communal priority. A building was not necessary for services to be held. In Gloucester County, members of the Zion Poplars Baptist Church (NRHP 99000970; 036-5001) came upon a site with seven united poplar trees. The natural formation was recognized as a sacred place marked by God. African Americans' recognition of such sacred places is an example of the West African religious influences maintained and passed down through generations of enslaved people:

> The seven poplar trees, therefore, were considered to be sacred, hence the inclusion of the word "Zion" in the name of the church. In the African-Baptist worldview, Mount Zion was the sacred place where God met with his people. In the case of the Zion Poplars Baptist Church, the seven united poplar trees constituted a kind of "Zion" or a sacred place that was reserved for worshipping God. Literally and figuratively, the history of Zion Poplars Baptist Church is rooted in the seven united poplar trees. [95]

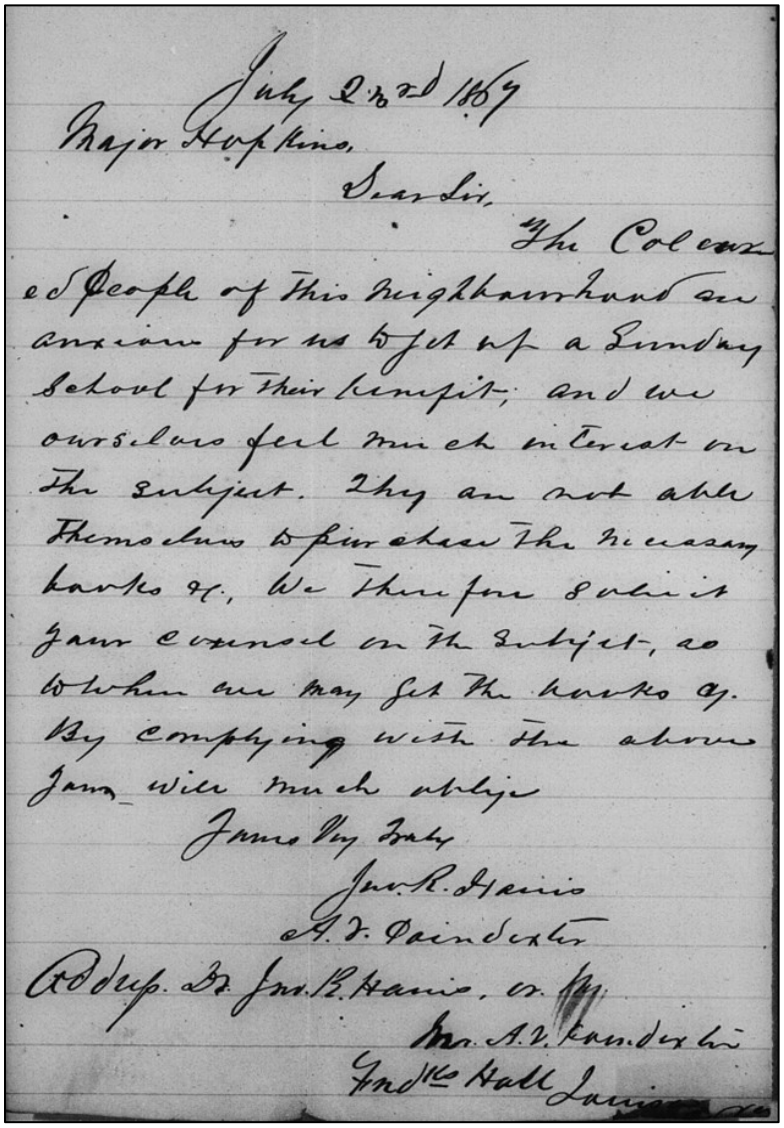
[93] S. Allen Chambers, "Court Street Baptist Church," National Register nomination, May 10, 1982, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/118-0156/, continuation sheet 3.
[94] Charles W. White Sr., oral history interview, One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, November 21, 2024.
[95] Natalie S. Robertson, "Zion Poplars Baptist Church," National Register nomination, August 1998, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/036-5001/, section 8, p. 6.

In 1894, the congregation built a sanctuary among the poplar trees that is an outstanding example of rural Gothic Revival design with lancet windows, variegated wood shingle siding, and a pyramidal-roofed, four-story entrance tower with a belfry. Along with their worship space, the congregation established a cemetery where many of the first generation of church leadership are interred. Among them are Joshue Brown, a USCT veteran. Congregants traveled miles to attend services, arriving by foot, horse-drawn cart, boat, and ferry, with the latter two modes necessary due to Gloucester County's many streams and its location along the Chesapeake Bay.[96]

As discussed above, between 1865-1877, the Freedmen's Bureau assisted African American rural and urban communities with land transactions and establishment of churches and schools. Black pastors Anthony Binga Jr. and James Heyward Blackwell, both in the city of Richmond, and James Solomon Russell in Brunswick County made tremendous contributions to the cause for literacy and education; so did many others. In Sunday school, African American adults who had been barred from attending school learned to read and write. The ability to read the Bible themselves was a powerful incentive for many Black families to embrace and encourage literacy. Black children poorly served by underfunded public schools could be tutored in Sunday school. Demand for education was so great that the literacy rate among Black Virginians rose from about 30 percent in 1860 to 70 percent in 1910.[97]

In rural Louisa County, Freedmen's Bureau staff worked with the newly formed Freedmen's Baptist Church to secure needed supplies and materials. Researcher Elaine Taylor of the Louisa County Historical Society identified digitized records pertaining to the Bureau's work in the Freedmen's Bureau Louisa Field Office files (Figure 3). Louisa courthouse records show requests for Sunday school books, efforts to conduct and fund a school, and a contract to purchase a former Methodist Church. The latter purchase did not occur, as First Baptist Church opted for a different location. The records are demonstrative of the types of activities carried out by the Freedmen's Bureau in partnership with local Black communities.

[96] Natalie S. Robertson, "Zion Poplars Baptist Church," National Register nomination, August 1998, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/036-5001/, section 8, p. 7.
[97] Antonio Bly, "Literacy and Education of the Enslaved in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/slave-literacy-and-education-in-virginia. The 1860 literacy rate includes free people of color and enslaved African Americans.



July 23rd 1867
Major Hopkins,
Dear Sir,
The Colored people of this neighbourhood are anxious for us to set up a Sunday School for their benefit; and we ourselves feel much interest on the subject. They are not able themselves to purchase the necessary books &c. We therefore [illegible] your counsel on the subject as to whom we may get the books [illegible]. By complying with the above [illegible] will much oblige
Yours very truly
Jno R. Harris
A. Y. Poindexter
Address by Jno. R. Harrison [illegible]
Mr. A. Y. Poindexter
Fnd [illegible] Hall Louisa CH.

Figure 3. Excerpt from Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872, Contracts, May 1865-September 1866 (Image Source: Elaine Taylor and the Fredericksburg Historical Society).

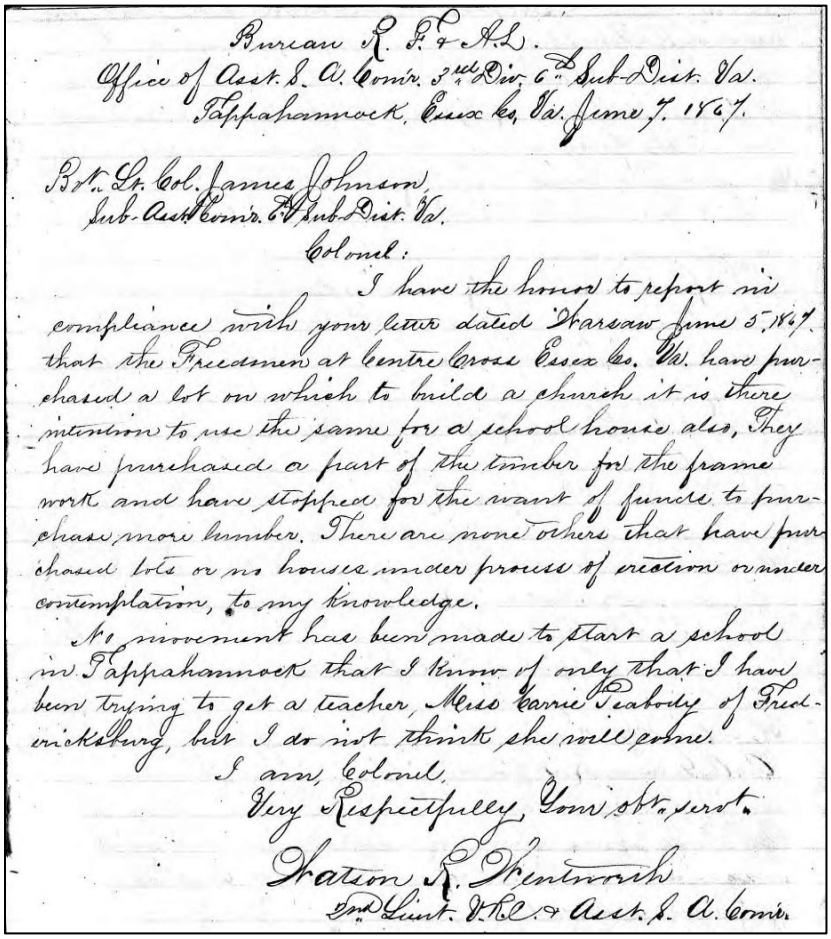
The document states, "July 23rd, 1867, Major Hopkins, Dear Sir, The colored people of this neighborhood are anxious for us to set up a Sunday school for their benefit and we ourselves feel much interest in the subject. They are not able themselves to purchase the necessary books &c. We therefore [illegible] your counsel on the subject as to whom we may get the books [illegible]. By complying with the above [illegible] will much oblige. Yours very truly, Jno. R. Harris, A. Y. Poindexter, Address by Jno. R. Harrison [illegible] Mr. A. Y. Poindexter, Fnd [illegible] Hall, Louisa CH."

Mrs. Bessida Cauthorne White, trustee and historian of Angel Visit Baptist Church in Essex County, Virginia, shared through oral history and original documents her research on the work of the emancipated people in the Centre Cross area to provide for their community. In 1867, the Freedmen's Bureau Tappahannock Office reported on the community's progress with constructing a church that would also be used as a school (Figure 4). The community here, which included a very active Women's Missions group, raised money and acquired property. Over time, the people of Centre Cross successfully established a cemetery, a school, the Rappahannock Industrial Academy, a benevolent home, and, in 1917, rebuilt their sanctuary after the original building was destroyed by arson.

The Freedmen's Bureau report from the Tappahannock Office speaks to the dedication and industry of the Centre Cross community. The congregation is fortunate to have found such an important report from their history, having lost all of their original founding documents to the 1917 fire. Many historic African American churches have similar difficulty verifying their history due to loss of original documents.

Schools

After religious sustenance, education was one of the most important functions of Black churches. The earliest schools for African American freedpeople were established during and immediately after the Civil War, often in response to the urging of Black communities, by missionary organizations and wealthy philanthropists.[98] Starting in 1865, the Freedmen's Bureau often partnered with congregations to establish community schools (Figure 5). From the 1860s-1880s, it was common for a public school to be housed in a church, as congregations were eager for their children to attend school and the church often was the only building of suitable size for classwork. Although creation of a statewide public education system had been a requirement for Virginia's readmission to the U.S., the process was flawed from the beginning. First, over vocal opposition among Black and some White political leaders, the new public school system was racially segregated. Second, as White elites still opposed public education in order to preserve their own power, funding for the new school system was far from adequate for decades. Construction of new schools proceeded slowly, with those for White children prioritized. Consequently,



Bureau R. F. & A. L.
Office of Asst. S. A. Com'r. 3rd Div. 6th Sub-Dist. Va.
Tappahannock, Essex Co, Va. June 7, 1867.

Bvt. Lt. Col. James Johnson,
Sub-Asst Com'r. 6th Sub Dist. Va.

Colonel:

I have the honor to report in compliance with your letter dated Warsaw June 5. 1867. that the Freedmen at Centre Cross Essex Co. Va. have purchased a lot on which to build a church it is there intention to use the same for a school house also. They have purchased a part of the timber for the frame work and have stopped for the want of funds to purchase more lumber. There are none others that have purchased lots or no houses under process of creation or under contemplation, to my knowledge.

No movement has been made to start a school in Tappahannock that I know of only that I have been trying to get a teacher, Miss Carrie Peabody of Fredericksburg, but I do not think she will come.

I am, Colonel,
Very Respectfully, Your Obt. Servt.

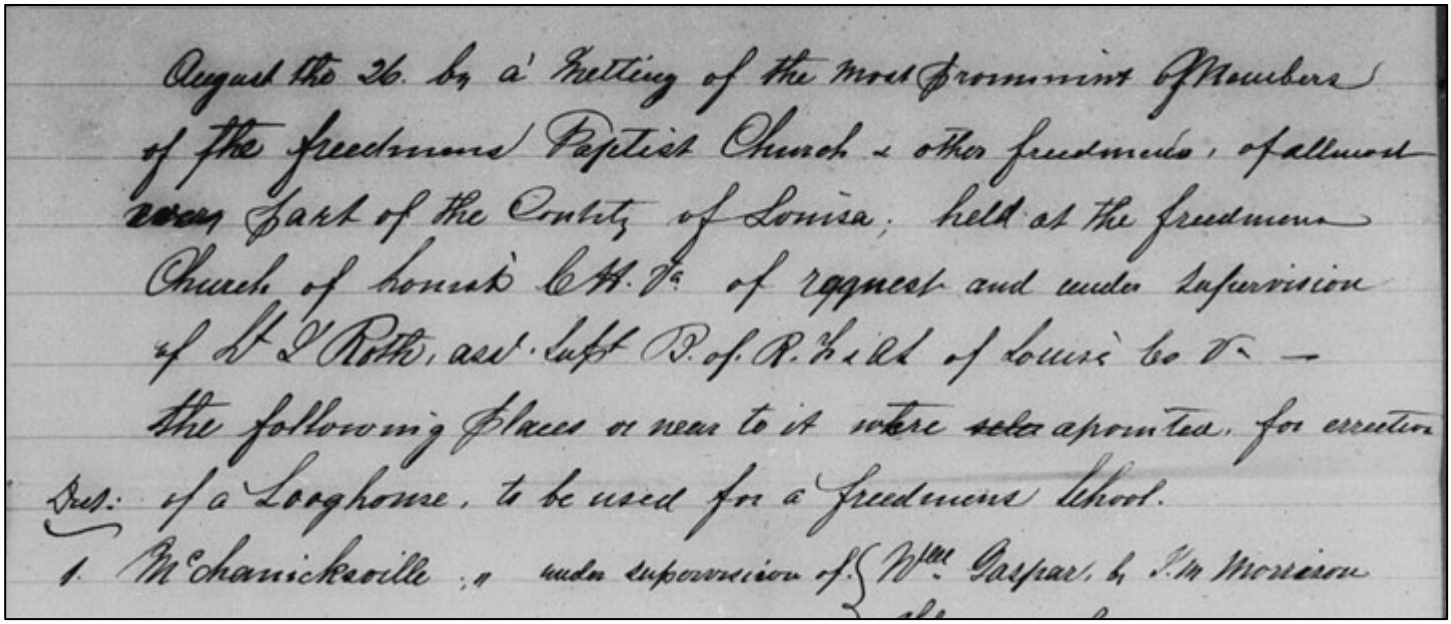
Watson R. Wentworth
2nd Lieut. F.R.L. & Asst. S. A. Com'r.

Figure 4. Correspondence from Watson R. Wentworth to Lt. Col. James Johnson, June 7, 1867 (Image Source: Bessida Cauthorne White).

The document above states "Bureau of F&AL, Office of Assistant S. A. Com'r. 3rd Div. 6th Sub-Dist Va., Tappahannock, Essex Co., Va., June 17, 1867, [illegible] Lt. Col. James Johnson, Sub-Asst. Com'r 6th Sub-Dist. Va., Colonel: I have the honor to report in compliance with your letter dated Warsaw June 5, 1867 that the Freedmen at Centre Cross Essex Co. Va. have purchased a lot on which to build a church it is there [sic] *intention to use the same for a schoolhouse also. They have purchased a part of the timber for the frame work and have stopped for the want of funds to purchase more lumber. There are none others that have purchased lots or no houses under process of creation or under contemplation, to my knowledge. No movement has been made to start a school in Tappahannock that I know of only that I have been trying to get a teacher, Miss Carrie Peabody of Fredericksburg, but I do not think she will come. I am, Colonel Very Respectfully Your Obt. Servt.,Watson R. Wentworth , 2nd Lieut. F&RAL Assist S. A. Com'r."*

[98] Detailed discussion of the history of African American schools in Virginia is available at Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

schools for Black children were held in makeshift quarters, such as churches, private dwellings, and rented commercial space for many years.



August the 26. by a Metting of the most prominint Members of the freedmens Baptist Church & other freedmen, of allmost every part of the County of Louisa, held at the freedmens Church of Louisa C.H. Va. of request and under supervision of Lt L Roth, asst. Supt B. of R. Field of Louisa C.H. the following places or near to it were selected apointed, for erection of a Loghouse, to be used for a freedmens School.
1. Mechanicsville, " under supervision of Wm. Gaspar, & J.M. Morrison

Figure 5. Excerpt from Records of the Field Offices for the State of Virginia, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1872, Contracts, May 1865-September 1866 (Image Provided by Elaine Taylor and the Louisa County Historical Society). The document above states, "August the 26. In a meeting of the most prominent members of the freedmen's Baptist Church and other freedmen of almost every part of the County of Louisa, held at the freedmen's Church of Louisa CH Va. of request and under supervision of Lt. L. Roth, asst. Supt. B .of R. Field of Louisa CH the following places or near to it were approved for erection of a log house, to be used for a Freedmen's School. Among the places included on the list were Mechanicsville, Zanesville, and Louisa Court House," along with names for proposed supervisors.

Of the African American churches that have been listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, many are known to have functioned as schools as well, at least during the 1860s-1870s, and sometimes longer. In addition to doubling as schoolhouses during the school year, churches included Sunday school as part of weekly community activities to provide adults with educational opportunities, too.[99] Public school teachers often led Sunday school classes. Few, if any, alterations had to be made to African American churches in order for them to double as schools. Consequently, a church's historic function as a public school may be indicated only in church records, oral history, historic photos, or other archival materials.

Over time, as both school enrollments and church congregations grew, housing public schools in separate buildings became increasingly necessary. African American community leaders, which almost always included at least one or two preachers, used a combination of diplomacy, tact, determination, and confidence to convince White school officials to accept establishment of schools for Black children. Due to the paucity of public funding for schools, particularly those for Black children, African American church congregations often had to agree to help establish a public school by donating land for it and, not infrequently, the materials and labor with which the schoolhouses were erected. In cases where a separate, purpose-built school was erected on church-owned land, the building typically was of frame construction with one, two, or three classrooms. While used as a public school, the building and the land on which it stood typically were owned by the local school board.

[99] For example, see John R. Kern and Michael J. Pulice, "St. John's Episcopal Church," National Register nomination, April 2008, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/139-0008/, p. 4, 6.

When the building ceased use as a public school, localities were free to dispose of the buildings as they preferred. Typical scenarios included returning ownership of both the building and land to the party, such as a church's board of trustees, that originally had donated them; selling the schoolhouses and sometimes moving the building to a new location; and retaining ownership of the building and land without immediately finding a new use for the property. It has not been unusual for church congregations to purchase the building and land at a later date, sometimes several decades after the public school function ceased. Similarly, some localities opted to return ownership of the school property to the original donor many years after a schoolhouse was unoccupied and unused.

A small sampling of churches known to have housed and/or sponsored public schools include:

- Alexander Hill Baptist Church in Buckingham County (NRHP 2017, SG100001495; 014-5054)
- Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria (NRHP 2004, 03001423; 100-0049)
- Cedar Hill Church in Rockbridge County (NRHP 2002, 01001570; 081-5466)
- Davis Chapel in Alexandria (NRHP 2004, 03001428; 100-5015-0006)
- First Baptist Church in Louisa County (054-5592)
- First Baptist Church in Williamsburg (NRHP 2017, SG100001050; 137-5071)[100]
- First Baptist Church in Covington (NRHP 2002, 01001518; 107-0039)
- Lomax African Methodist Episcopal Church in Arlington County (NRHP 2004, 04000038; 000-1148)
- Wharton Memorial Baptist Church in Mecklenburg County (NRHP 2021, SG100006387; 058-5127)

When unable to persuade local school boards to take responsibility for school construction, Black rural community members would take matters into their own hands to finance and build public schools for their children. These one- or two-room schoolhouses often stood alongside a church to serve as a public elementary school. Extant examples are rare, but one such school – the Champlain Colored School (028-0414) – has been documented at Antioch Baptist Church (028-5024) in Essex County's Occupacia-Rappahannock Historic District (NRHP 2020, SG100005837; 028-5084). Local school districts were supposed to fund salaries for teachers but paid Black teachers far less than White teachers. Black community members, again, made up the difference; they offered teachers free room and board, supplemented their salary with private donations, or used a combination of tactics.[101]

Furthermore, some of the schools created under the auspices of the Freedmen's Bureau remained in operation for decades. For example, in Montgomery County, Capt. Charles S. Schaeffer, an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau and later an ordained Baptist pastor, successfully advocated for the Baptist Church to create a private elementary school in 1866, several years before the county's public school system was established. From this beginning grew the Baptist-sponsored Christiansburg Industrial Institute (NRHP 79003056; 154-5004), which also received support from the Friends' Freedmen's Association, a private organization in Philadelphia sponsored by the Society of Friends. Schaeffer served as the school's principal for 39 years. Academic and religious coursework was taught alongside the "industrial training" that was widespread across Virginia at both

[100] See David Lewes and Mary Ruffin Hanbury, "First Baptist Church," National Register nomination, December 21, 2016, on file at the Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/137-5071/. The National Register nomination for First Baptist Church in Williamsburg concerns the sanctuary built in 1956. The congregation's 1856 church was razed during the 1950s as part of the Colonial Williamsburg project. First Baptist Church's association with Reconstruction Era schools is discussed on page 15 of the nomination.

[101] Caitlin Sylvester and Heather Staton, "Occupacia-Rappahannock Rural Historic District," National Register nomination, March 2020, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/028-5084_Occupacia-Rappahannock_RHD_2020_NRHP_FINAL_public.pdf, p. 90.

public and private schools for Black children.[102] In 1895, the school was reorganized under the direction of Booker T. Washington, who greatly expanded the curriculum.[103] The school remained in operation until the 1940s, when it was acquired by Pulaski and Montgomery counties and the City of Radford for use as a public school.

Individuals motivated by religious beliefs also established schools for African Americans immediately after the Civil War. Tuition may have been charged in some cases; more often, these schools operated through private donations. In Harrisonburg, Martha Smith and Phoeby Libby, natives of Maine, founded a "mission school" in 1868. Classes convened in an upper story of the Scanlon Hotel before moving to the basement of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.[104] Also to aid emancipated African Americans, religious organizations sponsored parochial schools that provided instruction to children during the day and adults during evenings. Examples include the Presbyterian Church-sponsored Thyne Institute in Chase City, Mecklenburg County, and the Episcopal Church-sponsored Saint Paul's Normal and Industrial Institute, founded by the Reverend James Solomon Russell in 1883 in Lawrenceville, Brunswick County.[105]

Chronic inequities intrinsic to Virginia's segregated public school system became apparent within a few years of its creation in 1870. To address these, a group of African American men formed the Virginia Educational and Historical Association in 1875. Educator John W. Cromwell served as the first president, while three clergymen, Rev. James H. Holmes, Dr. W. B. Derrick, and Dr. Walter H. Brooks held leadership roles. The organization dedicated itself to gathering "statistical and historical matters of special interest to the Negro race; to promote the cause of education; 'to aid in the instruction of such youths as by their persevering talents and general worth, give promise of usefulness to the State and country; to encourage by the dissemination of useful knowledge the development of scientific and mechanical ideas; and generally to incite the colored race to the highest achievements.'"[106] The involvement of three pastors is indicative of the important leadership roles that Black clergymen held during Reconstruction. Another individual who personified this was the Reverend George Douglas Wharton in Mecklenburg County, where the church he led was renamed in his honor as Wharton Memorial Baptist Church (NRHP SG100006387; 058-5127). In addition to serving as pastor from

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[102] "Industrial training" was intended to train Black children for employment in a myriad of jobs due to the rapid industrialization occurring in Virginia. In reality, however, the training primarily was to prepare students only for menial positions as farm laborers and domestic servants, thus replicating the antebellum social order when enslaved African Americans had performed such work. Furthermore, inclusion of industrial training ameliorated some of the hostility among White Virginians who resented public expenditure on any type of schooling for Black students. To signify that industrial training was a priority, many public and private schools included "industrial" as part of their name as late as the 1940s. This topic is explored in depth in the African American Schools in Virginia MPD. See Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

[103] Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, "Old Christiansburg Industrial Institute," National Register nomination, April 6, 1979, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/154-5004/ , on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/154-5004/.

[104] The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, conference formed in Virginia in 1846; congregations with conservative Southerners who supported enslavement created the conference after splitting with antislavery congregations. In 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, joined eight other denominational conferences to create the United Methodist Church conference in Virginia. See "XIII. Historical Statement," *Journal of the Virginia Annual Conference*, https://doc.vaumc.org/2012Journal/Historicalstatement.pdf, p. 201.

[105] The Rev. James Solomon Russell's remarkable career and contributions to the Episcopal faith are discussed in detail by Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Victoria Leonard in the "Saint Paul's College 2024 Additional Documentation and Boundary Increase," National Register nomination, August 2024, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/251-0003/.

[106] Alrutheus Ambush Taylor, *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Virginia* (Washington, D.C.: The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1926), p. 157-158. Taylor's writing included a quote from an article that appeared in the Richmond *Enquirer* on August 25, 1875.

1897-1932, Wharton helped to found an elementary school on property donated by the church, operated a store to serve Black patrons and a land company to facilitate pooling of resources so that local African Americans could purchase land.[107] Often such individuals were among a community's best-educated residents and their oratorial and pastoring skills made them effective advocates both for spiritual and temporal needs.

Churches also opened private schools that served African American students from the elementary through secondary level. For example, in Norfolk, the Presbyterian Church, a White-controlled denomination, opened the private Norfolk Mission College for African Americans in 1883 (Figure 6). The need for such a school had been identified by the Reverend Matthew Clark, who worked for the Freedmen's Mission of the United Presbyterians board and served as the school's first principal. Enrollment climbed to 1,050 students within the first few years of operation. In addition to math, science, and history classes, the school offered Latin and biblical studies. In 1916, the City of Norfolk acquired the school and converted it for public use as Booker T. Washington High School; between 1924-1955, the building served as Paul Dunbar before it was demolished by the City.[108] Another Presbyterian-sponsored school existed in rural Mecklenburg County. Founded in 1876 with the Reverend J. J. Ashenhurst as its first principal, the school provided Black students an elementary through secondary curriculum for 70 years. In partnership with Saint Paul's College in neighboring Brunswick County, the Thyne Institute also offered secondary training for teachers; from the late 19th through early 20th century, teacher training at the secondary level was all that was required for elementary school teachers. Many African American teachers, however, pursued advanced education at colleges such as Saint Paul's and Virginia State College (today's Virginia State University). In 1893, boarding facilities were added to the Thyne Institute's campus to allow African American students to live at the school. Boarding was a necessity for students from the many parts of Virginia where secondary education was not offered for Black students in segregated public schools; on occasion, students from farther afield, including Northern states, also were drawn here. Mecklenburg County acquired the school in 1946 and converted it for use as the County's first public high school for African American children.[109]

Figure 6. Norfolk Mission College Building as it Appeared on May 29, 1955, during Observance of the School's 77th Anniversary and Annual Alumni Association Reunion (Image Source: Presbyterian Historical Society, https://digital.history.pcusa.org/islandora/object/islandora:160298).

[107] Janet Pines Robinson, Gray O'Dwyer, and Marc C. Wagner, "Averett School and Wharton Memorial Baptist Church and Cemetery," National Register nomination, November 8, 2020, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/058-5127/, p. 16-17, 20. Wharton Memorial Baptist Church is discussed in greater detail in Section F as a representative example of a rural church-related historic district.
[108] "January 9, 1883, The Norfolk Mission College Begins Classes," African American Registry, no date, https://aaregistry.org/story/the-norfolk-mission-college-begins-classes/.
[109] Marianne Julienne & Brent Tarter, "The Establishment of the Public School System in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/public-school-system-in-virginia-establishment-of-the; "About Us," Thyne

Among the innumerable African American clergy who advocated for schools in their communities is the Reverend Isreal Cross. Born enslaved in Nansemond County in 1832, Cross was permitted to learn to read and write, receiving much of his instruction from his enslaver's White children. Cross's intellectual and spiritual traits prompted a White minister to offer Cross the use of his personal library so that he could become a preacher. All of these activities occurred during the period in Virginia's history when state law forbade enslaved people from being taught to read and write. What prompted the exceptions for Cross is unknown. After the Civil War, Cross briefly attended a seminary in the city of Richmond before returning to his homeplace, where he formed Mount Sinai Baptist Church (NRHP 07000193, 133-5249) and Piney Grove Baptist Church. Cross also advocated for education and land ownership as expedient means of racial uplift. Records demonstrate that Black property owners acquired land in the vicinity of the two churches. Likely due to his being educated, and to his engaging personality, Cross accumulated considerable landholdings and donated several plots of land to the Nansemond County School Board for the construction of public schools for Black children. He also convinced officials to permit multiple classrooms if the Black community provided the necessary labor. In exchange, the County paid each teacher's salary.[110]

Cemeteries

Honoring the dead has been intrinsic to human culture for millennia. Throughout Virginia's slavery era, however, enslaved people had been permitted no say in the burial of their relatives and friends. Whether in urban burial grounds such as the city of Richmond's Shockoe Bottom African Burying Ground and Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground (aka "First" and "Second" African Burying Grounds) or on rural plantations, the burials for enslaved people typically were marked only by fieldstones and grave decorations such as seashells, bottles, and other items made by those who remained. At the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground, Kitty Cary's interment is known to have had a painted pine plank grave marker at one time, while another person, recorded as "Old Aunt Sally" had a white marble headstone. In 1877, Almert Michaels, former superintendent of the burial ground, described Shockoe Hill "as a burial place for colored persons, and had all the appearances of an old burial ground; indeed, nearly every spot designated as a burial place had been buried on, and many of the places had been twice or thrice buried on. That portion of the hill immediately in rear of the Hebrew burial ground, was used as a burial ground for paupers and strangers."[111]

White enslavers rarely marked the burial grounds, and the vast majority of these types of cemeteries have been lost.[112] In towns and cities, a racially segregated, publicly-owned cemetery, such as the Shockoe Bottom African Burying Ground and Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground in Richmond, may have been the only option available for African Americans. At these municipal cemeteries, both enslaved African Americans and free people of color were interred. In some cases, cemeteries where African Americans were interred later were referred to as "potter's fields" in period records. Indigent persons, convicted criminals, and those without

Institute Memorial, Inc., no date, https://www.thyneinstitutememorial.com/blank-1; "A History of Thyne Institute, 1876-1953," MacCallum More Museum & Gardens, no date, https://www.maccallummore.org/thyne-institute.

[110] Kimble A. David, "Mount Sinai Baptist Church," National Register nomination, June 2, 2006, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/133-5249/, p. 8/5, 8/10.

[111] Lenora McQueen, Morven Historian, email communication to Lena McDonald, Commonwealth Preservation Group, September 1, 2025. The portion of land that was immediately behind Hebrew Cemetery was sold to the Hebrew Cemetery in 1882, and referred to in the deed as having been used as a potters field.

[112] Erasure of Black cemeteries has not been limited to those for the enslaved. See L. Daniel Mouer, Lenora McQueen, Ryan K. Smith, and Steve Thompson, Lenora McQueen, Ryan K. Smith, and Steve Thompsonet, Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Historic District," National Register nomination, February-March 2022, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-7231/, and Lynn Rainville, *Hidden History: African American Cemeteries in Central Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

family to claim them may also have been buried in these cemeteries, without regard to their race. Potter's fields usually were located in marginal areas prone to erosion, recurrent flooding, or other environmental problems, and localities provided little maintenance. Such issues were problematic for the Shockoe Bottom African Burying Ground, which prompted African Americans to petition for establishment of the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground around 1799. Throughout the 19th century and the Jim Crow era of segregation, families often had limited say in the care and use of such municipal cemeteries. Through at least 1900, local governments could close potter's fields and segregated municipal cemeteries for Black persons and redevelop the land, as occurred with the Shockoe Bottom African Burying Ground and Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground in Richmond and to countless others across Virginia.[113]

Free people of color, however, did sometimes purchase land for their own cemeteries in order to maintain control of the interments. Such acquisitions usually were done through pooling resources among church congregations, fraternal organizations, and mutual aid/benevolent societies. An example of this approach are the Barton Heights Cemeteries (NRHP 02000364; 127-5679) in the city of Richmond. The property consists of six contiguous cemeteries, Phoenix (later renamed Cedarwood), Union Burial Ground (also known as Union Mechanics), Methodist, Sycamore, Ebenezer, and Sons and Daughters of Ham, which were established between 1815-c. 1879 and encompass approximately 12.6 acres. The NRHP nomination for the cemeteries explains, "The cemeteries are significant because they represent early efforts by African Americans to establish their own cemeteries through burial societies that offered death benefits, the most basic of insurance… The cemeteries are the visible reminders of the work of nineteenth-century African American burial societies... As the forerunners of the benevolent organizations and fraternal orders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, these burial societies formed important cultural and economic foundations for the African American community in 19th-century Richmond."[114] During the late 19th century, due to construction of the suburban, incorporated Town of Barton Heights for White residents, new burials in the cemeteries ceased after the Town's attorney deemed them a public nuisance. In 1900, the Town passed an ordinance that prevented new burials from occurring.[115] The City of Richmond acquired the cemeteries in 1934 and has maintained them ever since.[116]

Along with churches, therefore, many African American communities established new cemeteries as soon as they could. In rural areas, many Black landowners would place a small family cemetery on their land, typically

[113] In 1894, Virginia became the first state to pass a law to regulate the practice of embalming decedents. Techniques for embalming were developed during the Civil War and were improved upon steadily. Also by the 1890s, improved understanding of public health needs prompted local and state governments to require more careful oversight of cemeteries. Regulations that required a means for perpetual care of cemeteries were not established until the 1910s Detailed discussion of Richmond's earliest municipal cemeteries for African Americans is at L. Daniel Mouer, Lenora McQueen, Ryan K. Smith, and Steve Thompson, Lenora McQueen, Ryan K. Smith, and Steve Thompson, "Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground Historic District," National Register nomination, March 2022, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-7231/.

[114] Denise I. Lester and staff of the Department of Historic Resources, "Barton Heights Cemeteries," National Register nomination, August 30, 2000, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-5679/, Section 8, p. 4; Lenora McQueen, Morven Historian, email communication to Lena McDonald, Commonwealth Preservation Group, September 1, 2025.

[115] Such challenges to African Americans' cultural practices were common throughout Virginia during the slavery and segregation eras. Although such discrimination is no longer legal, Black Americans still are routinely subject to excessive public and legal scrutiny. See Elijah Anderson, *Black in White Space: The Enduring Impact of Color in Everyday Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022).

[116] Denise I. Lester and staff of the Department of Historic Resources, "Barton Heights Cemeteries," National Register nomination, August 30, 2000, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-5679/, Section 8, p. 8.

some distance from their dwelling and well, and located in back or side yards as space permitted.[117] In rural areas, African American landowners often are recorded in deeds as donors of one to two acres of land for the construction of a church and creation of a cemetery. White individuals who supported the blossoming of African American church congregations also have been recorded as donors of land. In other instances, church congregations acquired property adjacent to their sanctuaries or as nearby as possible for cemeteries. As the membership needed time to raise funds to acquire land suitable for interments, creation of a church cemetery sometimes occurred years after the congregation was founded. Conversely, congregations sometimes raised enough funds to buy land large enough for a sanctuary and cemetery. The cemetery was established quickly, while the congregation met in a brush arbor or other suitable location while raising money to build the sanctuary. By the turn of the 20th century, Black churches in rural settings often had secured enough land to include both a sanctuary and a cemetery; therefore, the dates of the earliest interments may not coincide with construction of the first sanctuary on the property. The fact that a church's cemetery may be discontiguous from the church's sanctuary is not detrimental to its historic integrity; rather, such relationships are indicative of conditions during a property's period of significance.[118]

In many towns and cities, Black churches often lacked space for creating a cemetery of suitable size near their sanctuaries. Pooling resources to meet a community, however, was a hallmark of Reconstruction Era communities. Therefore, benevolent societies formed to purchase a tract of land and sell plots to their membership at cost; these groups are discussed below. Burial insurance also became available through mutual aid and benevolent organizations, making it possible for lower-income African Americans to pay for burials. Middle- and upper-income African Americans also formed corporations to create a privately-owned cemetery where burial plots could be purchased. In the city of Richmond, the East End and Evergreen cemeteries were examples of this cemetery type.

Mutual Aid, Benevolent, and Fraternal Societies

Most urban Black communities and many rural communities also established a fourth community pillar – a mutual aid/ benevolent society and/or fraternal organization. For Black Virginians during Reconstruction, mutual aid and fraternal organizations provided a social outlet as well as a community improvement mechanism and a means for pooling resources to assist families and individuals in distress due to unexpected illness, injury, or death. Frequently, churches provided meeting space for these organizations until lodge facilities were constructed. One example was the Prince Hall Masonic Order, which dates to the American Revolutionary War period, when Black masons were excluded from the masonic orders to which luminaries such as George Washington belonged. Private mutual aid societies sometimes were dedicated to specific needs, such as funeral and burial costs; support for unemployed, disabled, or ill community members; and aid for widows and orphans. The Grange movement also reached Black farmers during the late 19th century. Although not as pervasive in Virginia as in Midwestern states, the Grange aided farmers with improving agricultural methods and working together to manage agricultural processing and railroad shipping costs. Virginia had an especially active Colored Knights of Pythias organization. John Mitchell Jr., publisher and editor of *The Richmond Planet*, became supreme chancellor of the Virginia Colored Knights of Pythias in 1894 and

[117] New burials in family cemeteries largely ceased in Virginia by the mid-20th century due to the emergence of the modern funeral industry.
[118] Joanna Wilson Green, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, email communication to Lena McDonald, Commonwealth Preservation Group, May 1, 2025; Lenora McQueen, Morven Historian, email communication to Lena McDonald, Commonwealth Preservation Group, September 1, 2025.

developed Woodland Cemetery (043-0742) in eastern Henrico County 22 years later. A women's auxiliary to the Knights of Pythias also formed as the Independent Order of Calanthe.

A representative example of a Black church with ties to mutual aid and fraternal orders is the Third Street Methodist Church (today's Third Street Bethel AME Church; NRHP 1975; 127-0274) in the city of Richmond. The congregation was organized in 1850, and three years earlier, in June 1847, members of the church, including Ruben Clay, Augusta Banian, William T. Forrester, and Thomas R. Hewlett, had organized the Odd Fellows Lone Star No. 1340 Lodge, which became the "mother" lodge for 18 other lodges in Richmond; a separate women's lodge, the Households of Ruth, formed about the same time. In 1881, Reverend William Washington Browne 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. Browne initially served as pastor of the Leigh Street CME Church but, in 1888, he transferred to the Third Street Bethel AME Church. Browne also joined the Grand Fountain, United Order of True Reformers, a Reconstruction Era African American fraternal organization and mutual-aid society that provided aid to 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.[119] An example of a Virginia-based fraternal order was the Imperial Order of King David, founded in Richmond in 1908 by W.B.F. and Adelaide Thomson. The organization consisted of men and women who embodied "honest integrity, peaceful industry and graces that go to make a good citizen."[120] Its activities focused on community service, public health, and education programs, and offered financial benefits, such as life insurance policies, designed to serve the needs of African Americans, most of whom were not served by White-owned financial institutions.[121]

Reconstruction Era Communities

Today, an unknown number of Virginia's Reconstruction Era communities are still actively occupied. Due to an array of factors, including development pressure, outmigration of African Americans in search of better opportunities, and the decline in land ownership among African Americans in rural areas, many communities have been lost. Documentation and preservation of these communities have been carried out by local historians and descendants who have maintained a rich cultural heritage rooted in the accomplishments of the Reconstruction Era.[122] Research collections that are publicly accessible, however, have more limited information. An illustrative example is the aforementioned West Bottom community in Fluvanna County. Documentation of surviving historic resources in the West Bottom community did not occur until March 2023,

[119] Browne died in 1897. Although initially highly successful, the True Reformers order crumbled during the early 20th century due to its unsustainable financial structure. See Laurie Buck, Elizabeth Lipford, and Lena McDonald, "Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update and Boundary Increase," National Register nomination, April 15, 2019, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-0274/, p. 15.
[120] "Rising Fraternal Order," *Richmond Planet*, November 15, 1930; *Fourth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Insurance of Virginia… Covering Business of 1909* (Richmond, VA: Davis Bottom, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1910), pp. 927-29.
[121] "The Imperial Order of King David," Advertisement, *The Richmond Planet*, November 15, 1930, p. 9.
[122] Research of Reconstruction Era communities among historic preservation professionals has historically occurred to a lesser extent. During the 20th century, historic preservation programs primarily focused on properties associated with wealthy White individuals. Federal, state, and local governments gradually created historic preservation programs, with the 1960s marking the creation of widespread programs. The National Register of Historic Places was established in 1966 under the National Historic Preservation Act. Virginia's statewide preservation program began in 1966 with the creation of the Virginia Landmarks Register and legislation that authorized conservation easements. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources has endeavored to diversify its programs since 1999.

when six historic resources, including the site of a Rosenwald school and five dwellings, were identified.[123] By this time, the Rosenwald school had been demolished at an unknown date and three of the historic dwellings were no longer occupied. Additionally, Oak Hill Cemetery (032-5153), also known as West Bottom Church Cemetery, was not delineated by a professional archaeologist until 2022. Working with local descendants, DHR cemeteries specialist and anthropologist Joanna Wilson Green described the cemetery as

> an evolved funerary landscape that represents the post-Emancipation settlement and history of West Bottom, established in 1865 by freed slaves. The archaeological consultant posits that the sheer number of unmarked and non-traditionally marked graves, however, may indicate a much earlier origin for the cemetery. In this light, it may actually represent a burial ground for enslaved persons from the Glen Arvon and Cleveland plantations that evolved as the community was freed and settled in the area.[124]

In contrast, Glen Arvon (032-0015), the former plantation associated with West Bottom's founders, was documented in 1958 with a Historic American Buildings Survey inventory form and listed in the VLR and NRHP in 1976.

Figure 7. 2nd Willisville Chapel, built 1924, Willisville Historic District (Image Source: Department of Historic Resources, 2021).

In recent decades, collaborative projects among descendant communities, local historians, genealogists, and other researchers have brought the history of Reconstruction Era communities to the wider public. The Willisville Historic District (NRHP SG100004746, 053-5116) in Loudoun County is an example of how rural communities were established and persevered up to the present. Black residents who had chosen to stay close to where they had lived prior to the Civil War founded the crossroads village during the mid-1860s. Approximately 30 similar settlements once existed in Loudoun County, and Willisville is among the handful that remain.

In 1868, the Freedmen's Bureau assisted with the founding of a school for the community. The modest log building also housed the small Methodist Episcopal congregation that had been organized by this time. In 1872, nearby White landowner Townsend Seaton began carving small lots from his former plantation to sell to African American families. He sold approximately one acre to John and Delia Howard, three acres to Lucinda Willis, three acres to George Evans, and three acres to Henry Jackson. The lots were on land poorly suited to farming cash crops but these pioneering families had the necessary expertise to make them productive subsistence farms. In 1875, another White landowner, John Armistead Carter, sold one-acre lots to Sarah Jackson and to George Tebbs.

[123] The DHR identification number for the Rosenwald school is 032-0377, and the five dwellings are recorded under the inventory numbers 032-5185, 032-5186, 032-5187, 032-5188, and 032-5189.

[124] Joanna Wilson Green, "Oak Hill Cemetery/ West Bottom Cemetery," 032-5153, Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond. The African American Cemetery and Graves Fund, a program managed by Green, was established in 2020 and requires an appropriation from the General Assembly each fiscal year to continue operations.

These plots formed the core of Willisville. In addition to improving their land, most of Willisville's residents worked on neighboring White-owned former plantations where they and/or their ancestors had been enslaved. In 1884, the Methodist Episcopal congregation built a parsonage for their preacher and a cemetery was created next to the building that still served as both church and schoolhouse. In 1924, White landowner Mary Dulany Neville donated land to the congregation for a new church sanctuary. Congregation members built the new chapel with local fieldstones and finished the interior (Figure 7). The vast majority of Virginia's rural Black churches that predate the 1950s are modestly-sized buildings that, like Willisville's, were designed and completed by Black carpenters, stonemasons, and brick masons. They erected these buildings from local materials, including lumber from trees they felled, stone collected from outcrops and farm fields, and bricks manufactured on site, making these buildings the epitome of vernacular architecture. Listing of the Willisville Historic District in the VLR and NRHP was made possible by residents and descendants who shared their history and records to have a nomination prepared during the 2010s.[125]

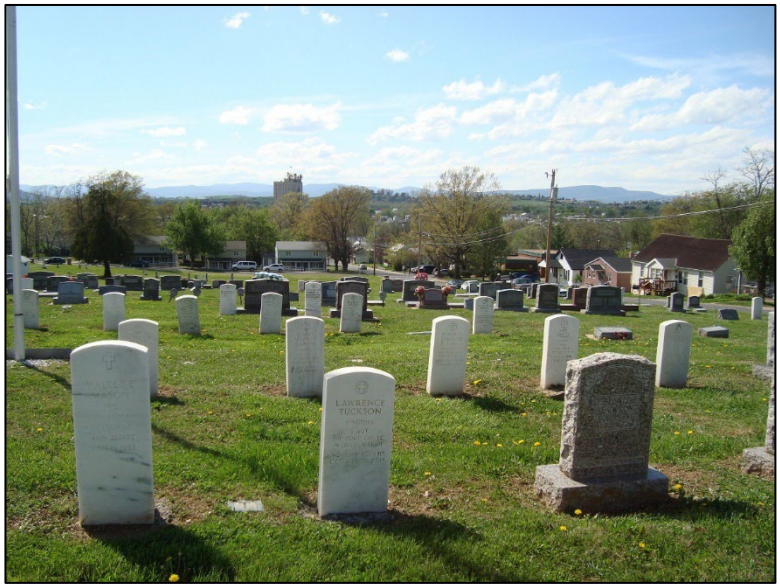

Figure 8. Newtown Cemetery in Harrisonburg (Image Source: Carole Nash, 2014).

In Harrisonburg in 1860, the African American population included 277 enslaved persons and 113 free persons of color. That nearly one-third of the local Black community was not enslaved was unusual for most of Virginia. It is highly likely that these two groups interacted regularly and that families included both enslaved and free members. Furthermore, these 390 persons constituted 28 percent of the town's total population of 1,414. After the Civil War, emancipated people from neighboring Rockingham County were drawn to Harrisonburg as well. A new neighborhood, known simply as Newtown, began to coalesce on the town's northeastern edge in Zirkle's Addition, which consisted of former farmland that had been opened for residential development. Local transaction records record that cemetery trustees acquired a tract of slightly less than one acre from Jacob and Nancy Zirkle on May 18, 1869, for the rather steep price of $250. The deed specified that the land would be used as a burial ground for all persons of color, making it an early example of a privately owned, community cemetery dating to Reconstruction (Figure 8). The original trustees were George Hermon, Squire Pollard, Jessie Banks, Stephen Hughes, and Harrison Green; of whom, Pollard and Banks were members of the local John Wesley Methodist Church. Research to date has not identified any religious or fraternal organizations associated with the purchase of the land; such records can be difficult to locate and access. The interconnections among the cemetery, the Bethel AME Church and Dallard-Newman House Historic District (NRHP SG100001851; 115-5132), the Dallard family (discussed more below), and the continual presence of a public school for Black students from 1882-1996 directly across the street from the cemetery illustrate the

[125] Jane Covington, Willisville Historic District, National Register nomination, August 2019, www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/053-5116_Willisville_Historic_District_2019_NRHP_FINAL.pdf, p. 10, 23-24, 27, 29, 34, 39.

intertwined relationships of community institutions with church congregations and congregational members.[126] Such associations warrant exploration when researching historic Black churches in any community.

Harrisonburg's African American population more than doubled over the next 20 years, reaching 997 people by 1880. The preceding year, freedman Ambrose Dallard and several other trustees for the Colored United Brethren in Christ Church had attempted to purchase a lot for erection of a new church and cemetery, but the transaction did not succeed. In 1893, Ambrose and Harriet Dallard, with their son-in-law George Ambrose Dallard, provided land for neighborhood residents to erect the Bethel United Brethren in Christ Church. A carpenter-builder in the community, Ambrose Dallard served as construction foreman for the church; he also is known to have constructed houses for his daughters and likely worked on other projects in Newtown and Harrisonburg. The Church of the United Brethren was a White-majority denomination that had welcomed African American members and created a Freedman's Mission after the Civil War to aid with formation of new congregations. The Reverend Theodore K. Clifford served as the group's first pastor. Born a free person of color, Clifford had served in the USCT during the Civil War. He joined the Brethren's Virginia Conference in 1887.[127] To raise money for the construction project, the Brethren congregation held social events that included "a Christmas entertainment in December 1892…Valentines, Easter, Strawberry, and Neck-Tie festivals; an "Anniversary Festival and Panorama" in November 1893; Tom Thumb and Golden Fruit Tree entertainments; a lawn party with ice cream and cake; 'Belshazzar's Feast;' and a 'Battle of Jericho…'"[128] The congregation's historical records have been preserved, and the documents include detailed information about the building's construction, making it a rare opportunity to study the period's vernacular construction methods and materials, as well as the priorities of the congregation at the time of construction.

Maturation of Black Religious Associations

Black religious associations had significant impacts throughout Virginia due to their direct association with the formation of African American churches, creation of sophisticated communication and resource-sharing networks, and function as training grounds for political organizing. Individual churches that participated in a religious association exercised these influences to benefit their local communities, while also being keyed into events and activities from well beyond their boundaries. In an era that predated radios, telephones, or even well-maintained roads for overland travel, the ability of African Americans to marshal such resources is a testament to the skills and intellectual genius of Black religious leaders during Reconstruction. From the individual fibers that represent individual congregations, the religious associations and their leaders wove a cloth that blanketed the Commonwealth. Such collective efforts were necessary and vital as White elites continued to chip away at the rights of African Americans during the 1880s-1890s. With traditional government institutions once again being closed off, Black Virginians built their own institutions, with churches often serving as alternative spaces for community governance.

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[126] Dr. Carole Nash, Mary Ann Mason, and Ruth Toliver, "Newtown Cemetery," National Register nomination, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/115-5129/, p. 10-12; J. Daniel Pezzoni, "Bethel AME Church and Dallard-Newman House Historic District," National Register nomination, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/115-5132/, p. 11-12.

[127] J. Daniel Pezzoni, "Bethel AME Church and Dallard-Newman House Historic District," National Register nomination, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/115-5132/, p. 11.

[128] J. Daniel Pezzoni, "Bethel AME Church and Dallard-Newman House Historic District," National Register nomination, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/115-5132/, p. 13. According to the nomination, "The church closed in 1909 and many of its members switched their membership to the John Wesley Methodist Church. In 1919 the church building was acquired by the African Methodist Episcopal denomination and it has served as an AME church since."

In addition to the aforementioned Virginia Baptist State Convention and the Colored Shiloh Baptist Association, Virginia's African American churches and pastors continued to organize religious associations at a rapid pace throughout the Reconstruction Era. The Library of Virginia in Richmond holds copies of historic records on microfilm for the following organizations:

> Allied Baptist Bodies of Virginia (also called Baptist Allied Bodies of Virginia); General Association of Virginia; First Foreign Mission District to the Baptist State Convention of Virginia; Virginia Baptist State Convention; Virginia Baptist State Sabbath School Union; Women's Baptist Educational and Missionary Association of Virginia; Amelia-Nottoway-Dinwiddie Baptist Protective Association; Banister Baptist Association; Baptist Sunday School Convention of Southwest Virginia; Berean Sunday School Convention; Berean Valley Baptist Association; Bethany Baptist Association; Bluestone Baptist Association; Brackett-Morrell Baptist Association (formerly Shenandoah Association); Buck Marsh Corresponding Meeting of Baptist Brethren of Color; Cedar Grove Missionary Baptist Association; Cherry Stone Baptist Association; Chestnut Know District Primitive Baptist Association; Chickahominy Baptist Association; Colored Shiloh Baptist Association; Corner Stone Baptist Association; District Baptist Gathering; District Sunday School Convention of Southwest Virginia; Eastern Shore Baptist Sunday School Convention; First Sunday School Convention of Northern Neck, Virginia; Flat Top Baptist Association; Halifax Sunday School Union; Harmony Baptist Sunday School Convention; Hasadiah Baptist Association; Lebanon Virginia Baptist Association; Macedonia Baptist Association; Mattaponi Baptist Association; Mt. Pleasant Baptist Sunday School Association; Norfolk, Virginia Union Baptist Association; Northern Neck Baptist Association; Northern Virginia Baptist Association; Northern Virginia Union Baptist Sunday School Convention; Old School (Roanoke) Primitive Baptist Association; Pamunkey Baptist Association; Passover Baptist Sunday School Convention; Piedmont District Primitive Baptist Association; Rappahannock Union Baptist Sunday School Convention; Riverside Baptist Association; Rockfish Baptist Association; Schaeffer Memorial Association; Second Ketocton Primitive Baptist Association; Shenandoah Valley Free Baptist Association; Shiloh Colored Baptist Association; Slate River Baptist Association; South James River Baptist Sunday School Convention; Southside Rappahannock Baptist Association; Southwestern District Baptist Sunday School Convention; Star of the East Baptist Association of Virginia; Sunny Side Baptist Association; Tuckahoe Baptist Association of Virginia; Valley Baptist Association; Virginia Baptist State Convention; Virginia Western District Baptist Sunday School Convention; and Wayland Blue Ridge Baptist Association.[129]

The Library of Virginia's holdings may not be complete for all of these associations, and records for some organizations may not be included in the collection.

Nicole Myers Turner's comprehensive study, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia,* examined the interrelationships among Black churches and Virginia's politics as emancipated African Americans exercised the civil rights gained through ratification of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution. By "defining black capacity for obtaining political office, securing education, and negotiating biracial coalitions called on churches and other institutions to perform in different ways," Turner argued, African Americans were securing the resources they needed to become equal participants in American society.[130]

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[129] African-American Baptist annual reports, Virginia, 1865-1990, microfilm collection at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, call number Film 1656.

[130] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 2.

Turner reviewed hundreds of historic records of Baptist, AME, and AMEZ church associations from the 1860s-1900s, as well as census data, election returns, and newspaper articles, through which "the interwoven threads of community, social, and political life to come into full view."[131] Freedmen's Bureau records, travelers' accounts, and local government records also provided important data. The period that Turner covers includes Emancipation, the Civil War's end, the Freedmen's Bureau's brief existence from 1865-1877, Virginia's readmission to the U.S., the end of military occupation of Virginia, the very brief ascendance of radical Republicans and their embrace of African American political leaders, the steady erosion of African Americans' civil rights after Reconstruction, the imposition of the "separate but equal" doctrine by the U.S. Supreme Court that provided a legal basis for racial segregation, and the resultant rise of Jim Crow segregation in Virginia.

Note that identification of individuals who are significant under Criterion B for their contributions to the creation and operation of Black church associations in Virginia has not been conducted as of this writing. Considerable potential exists for many persons to be identified through future investigations and this MPD can be updated accordingly.

Baptist Church Associations

Black Baptists organized their first independent church association in 1863, the Norfolk Union Baptist Association (NUBA). The above-mentioned Colored Shiloh Baptist Association (CSBA) followed in 1865.[132] In 1867, a gathering named the "Plan of the Union Committees" in the city of Richmond planned the unification of the Northwestern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention to create what was called the Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention (CABMC). Its leadership reached out to Baptist leaders nationwide, encouraging them to form state conventions to affiliate under the CABMC. The organization survived for 12 years. The CABMC split due to doctrinal differences among members; the organization's relatively short duration does not diminish its significance. The late 19th century was a time for Virginia's African Americans to explore and formulate their religious preferences without interference from White overseers. Consequently, various religious organizations and congregations formed, evolved, dissolved, and otherwise changed over time. The Virginia Baptist State Convention (VBSC) also formed in 1867 as the first statewide organization comprised of Black Baptists and has been continuously active up to the present.[133]

The rapid proliferation of Baptist church associations is apparent in a comparison of organizations that existed in 1866 and those that had been established by 1890 (Figure 9). The presence of these associations throughout Virginia illustrates the invisible geographic network through which Black communities in rural, town, and urban settings communicated with one another and shared resources. The maps further demonstrate how the Black church associations served as a template for political organizing among Virginia's African American communities and the rapidity with which sophisticated networks were created.

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[131] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p 3.
[132] Charles Irons, "Colored Shiloh Baptist Association," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/colored-shiloh-baptist-association; Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 34-35.
[133] The Virginia Baptist State Convention," 1869 Minutes of the Second Annual Session of the Virginia Baptist State Convention," *Historic Black Churches and Pastors*, accessed April 23, 2025, https://onesharedstory.org/HBCP/items/show/21, p. 15-16; Douglas Thompson, "Virginia Baptist State Convention," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/virginia-baptist-state-convention.

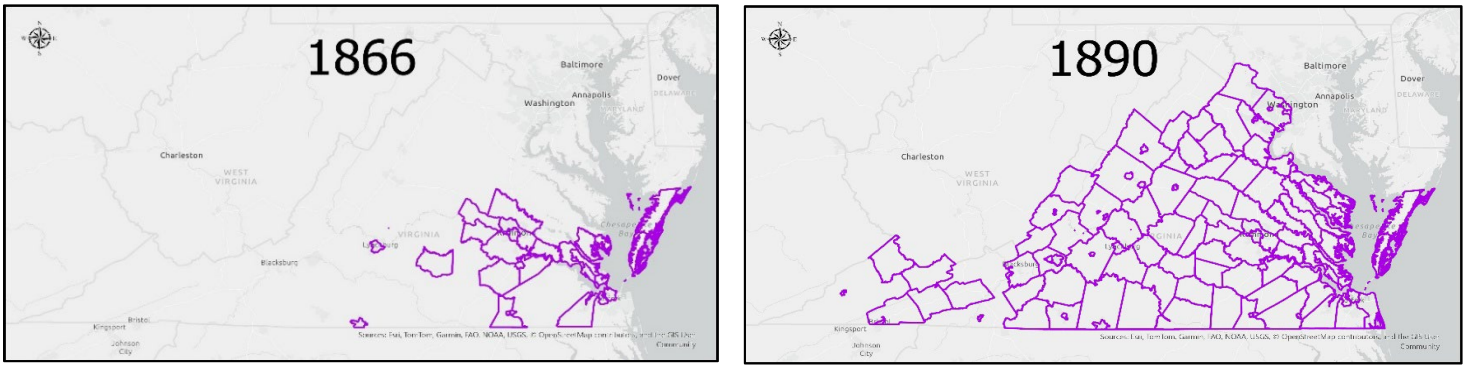

Figure 9. Maps of Virginia showing locations of Baptist church associations by locality (locality boundaries are outlined in purple). Comparatively few associations had been established in 1866, but by 1890, an association existed in most Virginia localities (Image Source: One Shared Story, 2025).

African Americans developed Baptist doctrine, supported Baptist engagement with congregants, communities, and schools, and came together in communal fashion to celebrate their faith through associations. Further, they supported Baptist "polity," which encompasses the entire purpose of the faith's engagement with individual congregants, congregations, and wider communities, including the various institutions, such as schools and orphanages, supported by Baptists. In temporal terms, the church associations became proving grounds for the development and implementation of democratic principles. Leaders and members honed their political acumen, and managed complex operations and finances.[134] This political training, Turner notes, built upon the skills and knowledge generations of enslaved African Americans and free people of color gained while navigating and resisting the oppression of slavery. Another consideration was the extent to which cooperation and engagement with White Baptist organizations would occur. Some African Americans argued in favor of cooperative relationships with White Baptist organizations while others strongly believed that Black Baptist churches should be entirely independent. In a similar fashion, public schools for Black children, in which only Black teachers taught, were almost universally desired. As Turner explained, through church associations, "From the way [African Americans] depicted themselves as having deep roots in Baptist history to the way they claimed leadership in providing aid to freedpeople, their desire for religious freedom and political engagement intertwined, illustrating the intersection between religion and politics at both a rhetorical and a practical level."[135]

Democracy is intrinsically chaotic as multiple perspectives, opinions, and recommendations must be taken into account in an egalitarian fashion in order for the governing model to function as intended. Among Baptists, their new autonomy of worship and action encouraged a variety of interpretations of Baptist doctrine and biblical scripture to arise. Class divisions also became an issue, as more formally educated African American Baptists from the North and Midwest had greater financial resources than the newly emancipated Baptists of the South. Worship practices also affected the sense of unity as Black Baptists in southern states preferred a more physically and emotionally expressive worship style than their counterparts elsewhere. The multifaceted nature of the faith became apparent as numerous new associations emerged from the handful created between 1863-1866. At the national level, in 1880, the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention of the United States of America formed under the leadership of the Rev. W. W. Colley in Alabama and placed its headquarters in the city of Richmond. The American National Baptist Convention followed in 1886 in St. Louis, followed by the National

[134] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 35.
[135] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 35-36, 38.

Baptist Educational Convention of the U.S.A. in 1893 in Washington, D.C. The assorted groups merged in 1895 to create the National Baptist Convention U.S.A. The unity proved brief, as the Lott Cary Foreign Missionary Convention broke off in 1897 due to rivalries among Baptist leaders. [136]

Relationships among Virginia Baptist associations also were complex. The earliest Baptist association was the General Association of Separate Baptists of Virginia, an organization composed of White churches. In 1783, the members decided to split into "Upper" and "Lower" districts. The James River served as a dividing line. Goochland County, south of the river, became the home of the Dover Baptist Association, founded in 1784. Many Black Baptist congregations affiliated with the Dover Association during the slavery era because of state laws that required them to operate under supervision of White pastors. After Emancipation, these congregations withdrew to form new associations, including the aforementioned NUBA and CSBA. The 1869 proceedings of the VBSC explain that, because of difficulties with traveling to its annual meeting in the city of Richmond, a plan for 16 district associations was approved.[137] The Mattaponi Baptist Association of Virginia, Tuckahoe Baptist Association of Virginia, and Chickahominy Baptist Association of Virginia were among the resultant new groups that formed.[138] Due to the autonomy favored by the Baptist denomination, some individual Black congregations chose not to affiliate with any of these associations.[139]

Splits also occurred within church associations created by Black Virginians. As was stated in a brief history of the organization, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, later renamed the Baptist General Convention of Virginia, was organized on June 20, 1899, at First African Baptist Church (NRHP 69000348; 127-0167) in Richmond. This meeting took place one month following an Annual Session of the VBSC, held at the First Baptist Church in Lexington on May 10-13, 1899, where controversy had erupted over control and governance of the Virginia Seminary and College, a postsecondary school established by Black Baptists. A compact, accepted in 1896 by the VBSC, ABHMS, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC, an antebellum interracial organization controlled by White Baptists), and the Virginia Baptist General Association (VBGA, also controlled by White Baptists) stipulated that African American Baptists in Virginia would raise fifteen thousand dollars toward construction of the new Virginia Union University (VUU) in Richmond and twenty thousand dollars toward the debt of the Virginia Seminary and College in Lynchburg.[140]

The VBSC, however, supported the Virginia Seminary and determined that the manner in which the compact was being fulfilled prioritized VUU over the earlier Lynchburg institution. In part, the disagreement stemmed

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[136] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 27-29. The *Inventory of the Church Archives of Virginia: Negro Baptist Churches in Richmond* prepared by The Historical Records Survey of Virginia, Division of Professional and Service Projects, Works Progress Administration (Richmond, Va., June 1940) discussions the formation of Baptist associations in Virginia and lists those affiliated with each association, including both state and national organizations. The full text of this document is available online at https://exploreuk.uky.edu/catalog/xt7mkk94bb94#page/2/mode/1up.

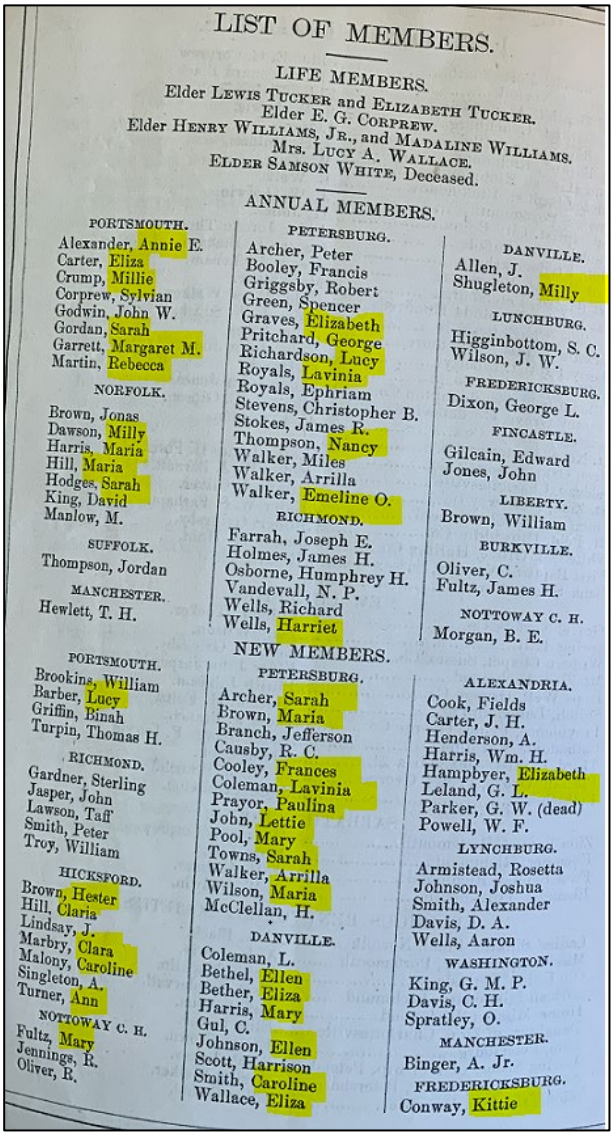
[137] The Virginia Baptist State Convention, "1869 Minutes of the Second Annual Session of the Virginia Baptist State Convention," *Historic Black Churches and Pastors*, accessed April 23, 2025, https://onesharedstory.org/HBCP/items/show/21, p. 15-16.

[138] Note that two of the associations include the names of two Virginia tribes, Mattaponi and Chickahominy. The association names, however, indicate geographical places rather than tribal affiliation. The history of Christianity among the indigenous peoples of Virginia is not within the purview of this MPD. Distinguishing place names based on tribal languages from the tribes themselves can help to avoid confusion.

[139] Names and brief histories of each Baptist association are found in the *Inventory of the Church Archives of Virginia: Negro Baptist Churches in Richmond* prepared by The Historical Records Survey of Virginia, Division of Professional and Service Projects, Works Progress Administration (Richmond, Va., June 1940).

[140] "Historical Sketch," Baptist General Convention of Virginia, no date, https://nebula.wsimg.com/8e77462adb7d6aa16e199966dd1a0dfc?AccessKeyId=C176CF639D4E7E136A22&disposition=0&alloworigin=1. The Virginia Seminary and College and Virginia Union University are discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

from the desire among many Black Baptists to break away from interracial organizations to focus on racial uplift and spiritual sustenance among African Americans. By prioritizing VUU, they felt that the ABHMS, SBC, and VBGA sought to remove the independence of Virginia Seminary and make it an affiliate under VUU. For these reasons, some members of the VBSC rejected the compact at the 1899 meeting in Lexington. An opposing group believed that the compact would assure VUU's future and make it a leading seminary at the national level. The two contingents were dubbed "Race Men" and "Cooperationists," respectively. Following what came to be known among observers as the "Battle of Lexington," the Cooperationists withdrew from the VBSC to form the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV). The Reverend Dr. Richard Wells, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, city of Richmond, was elected as the first president of this new body. The first Annual Session of the newly formed BGAV occurred October 18-20, 1899, at the recently established Eighth Street Baptist Church (118-0199) in Lynchburg, with representation from thirty-two churches, one missionary society, and one association.[141]



LIST OF MEMBERS.

LIFE MEMBERS.

Elder Lewis Tucker and Elizabeth Tucker.
Elder E. G. Corprew.
Elder Henry Williams, Jr., and Madaline Williams.
Mrs. Lucy A. Wallace.
Elder Samson White, Deceased.

ANNUAL MEMBERS.

PORTSMOUTH.
Alexander, Annie E.
Carter, Eliza
Crump, Millie
Corprew, Sylvian
Godwin, John W.
Gordan, Sarah
Garrett, Margaret M.
Martin, Rebecca

NORFOLK.
Brown, Jonas
Dawson, Milly
Harris, Maria
Hill, Maria
Hodges, Sarah
King, David
Manlow, M.

SUFFOLK.
Thompson, Jordan

MANCHESTER.
Hewlett, T. H.

PETERSBURG.
Archer, Peter
Booley, Francis
Griggsby, Robert
Green, Spencer
Graves, Elizabeth
Pritchard, George
Richardson, Lucy
Royals, Lavinia
Royals, Ephriam
Stevens, Christopher B.
Stokes, James R.
Thompson, Nancy
Walker, Miles
Walker, Arrilla
Walker, Emeline O.

RICHMOND.
Farrah, Joseph E.
Holmes, James H.
Osborne, Humphrey H.
Vandevall, N. P.
Wells, Richard
Wells, Harriet

DANVILLE.
Allen, J.
Shugleton, Milly

LUNCHBURG.
Higginbottom, S. C.
Wilson, J. W.

FREDERICKSBURG.
Dixon, George L.

FINCASTLE.
Gilcain, Edward
Jones, John

LIBERTY.
Brown, William

BURKVILLE.
Oliver, C.
Fultz, James H.

NOTTOWAY C. H.
Morgan, B. E.

NEW MEMBERS.

PORTSMOUTH.
Brookins, William
Barber, Lucy
Griffin, Binah
Turpin, Thomas H.

RICHMOND.
Gardner, Sterling
Jasper, John
Lawson, Taff
Smith, Peter
Troy, William

HICKSFORD.
Brown, Hester
Hill, Claria
Lindsay, J.
Marbry, Clara
Malony, Caroline
Singleton, A.
Turner, Ann

NOTTOWAY C. H.
Fultz, Mary
Jennings, R.
Oliver, R.

PETERSBURG.
Archer, Sarah
Brown, Maria
Branch, Jefferson
Causby, R. C.
Cooley, Frances
Coleman, Lavinia
Prayor, Paulina
John, Lettie
Pool, Mary
Towns, Sarah
Walker, Arrilla
Wilson, Maria
McClellan, H.

DANVILLE.
Coleman, L.
Bethel, Ellen
Bether, Eliza
Harris, Mary
Gul, C.
Johnson, Ellen
Scott, Harrison
Smith, Caroline
Wallace, Eliza

ALEXANDRIA.
Cook, Fields
Carter, J. H.
Henderson, A.
Harris, Wm. H.
Hampbyer, Elizabeth
Leland, G. L.
Parker, G. W. (dead)
Powell, W. F.

LYNCHBURG.
Armistead, Rosetta
Johnson, Joshua
Smith, Alexander
Davis, D. A.
Wells, Aaron

WASHINGTON.
King, G. M. P.
Davis, C. H.
Spratley, O.

MANCHESTER.
Binger, A. Jr.

FREDERICKSBURG.
Conway, Kittie

Figure 10. Partial list of members attending the Second Annual Session of the Colored Shiloh Baptist Association in 1866, p. 8. Names of women are highlighted in yellow (Image Source: One Shared Story).

Black Women in the Black Church

Following Emancipation, African American women seized opportunities for religious freedom with fervor equal to that of Black men. Yet Victorian-era norms did not regard women as natural leaders of church congregations and many denominations would not consider ordaining women pastors. With property rights curtailed upon marriage in Virginia, most women had difficulty claiming property rights. Wealthy women whose parents had provided for their financial independence, regardless of marital status, and widows whose husbands had done the same in their wills, were an exception but their numbers were small. Few newly emancipated women owned property.[142]

[141] One Shared Story has posted digitized copies of the historic minutes and proceedings of various Black Church associations in Virginia. The minutes of the 20th Annual Meeting of the VBSC include additional details regarding the split; a digitized copy of the document is at https://onesharedstory.org/HBCP/files/original/e0925dd4ce5dad4625b047d24417a64e.pdf.

[142] Exceptions certainly existed, such as the aforementioned Mary Ann Lumpkin of Richmond, whose donation of land helped to establish the Richmond Theological Seminary (today's Virginia Union University). Also important to note is that some scholars include in their arguments that African American denominations and congregations did not undertake thorough examination of their doctrinal foundations during Reconstruction or in the decades thereafter, much of which was imbued in traditional race, class, and gender norms that were flawed in some fashion. For example, see TaResa Green, "A Gendered Spirit: Race, Class, and Sex in the African American Church," *Race, Gender, & Class* Vol. 10, No. 1, *Race, Gender, and Class in American Politics* (2003), p. 115-128.

Lacking financial means and recognition of their leadership potential, African American women were not expected to hold positions with authority over church doctrine, property management matters, discipline of members, and other matters of importance to a congregation's wellbeing. Nicole Myers Turner undertook a thorough examination of the processes through which the empowerment of Black men to serve as pastors, deacons, and elders in congregations, and as bishops and archbishops in the denominations where such hierarchical, centralized structures existed. Turner concluded that the ascension of men to these leadership ranks often came at the cost of women's autonomy and opportunities to pursue their own ambitions.[143]

Overcoming these challenges, Black women helped to create religious associations during the earliest years of Reconstruction (Figure 10) and proved to be skillful fundraisers and money managers.

Turner's research of the African American Baptists records revealed that women were often the most successful at raising funds for missions. As benevolent committees were formed in churches and associations, about half of the presidents were women. As Turner stated, "Women took leadership roles in benevolent societies to begin marshaling resources and to improve the economic footing of the community. Even though missionary work was initially defined as a male task involving church establishment and fundraising, it was relatively quickly shorn of its pastoral component, and women stepped into the breach."[144]

For example, successful women's fundraising and missions work is intrinsic to the long history of the Centre Cross community and Angel Visit Baptist Church (028-0374). Local researcher Bessida Cauthorne White pored over historic records to create an unpublished manuscript, "History of the Old Folks Home" (Figure 11). White found that, in 1894, the Women's Baptist District Missionary Convention (WBDMC) passed a resolution to make provisions for the benefit of the aged. The women started to gather and direct funds for that purpose. In 1901, they opted to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Southside Rappahannock Baptist Association (SRBA) to purchase 160 acres of land for the purpose of an Industrial Academy and to provide a location for the Old Folks Home. The women supplied seed money of $100 for the purchase and provided another $100 when the SRBA was unable to complete the purchase. The Rappahannock Industrial Academy opened its doors in 1902. The WBDMC continued to raise money to bring their vision to fruition and was able to fund the Old Folks Home and open it with staff in 1909.

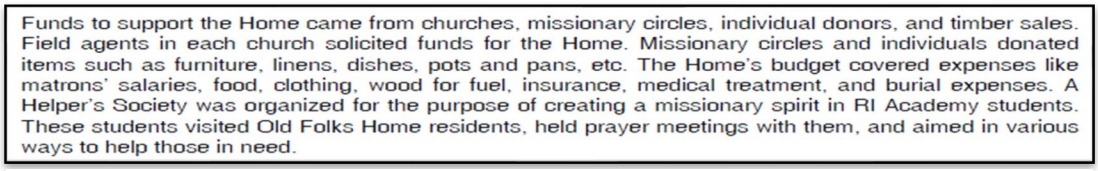

Funds to support the Home came from churches, missionary circles, individual donors, and timber sales. Field agents in each church solicited funds for the Home. Missionary circles and individuals donated items such as furniture, linens, dishes, pots and pans, etc. The Home's budget covered expenses like matrons' salaries, food, clothing, wood for fuel, insurance, medical treatment, and burial expenses. A Helper's Society was organized for the purpose of creating a missionary spirit in RI Academy students. These students visited Old Folks Home residents, held prayer meetings with them, and aimed in various ways to help those in need.

Figure 11. Bessida Cauthorne White, "History of the Old Folks Home," no pagination (Image Source: One Shared Story).

[143] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 58.
[144] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 45.

RELIGIOUS BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES.

Ladies' Sinking Fund, Norfolk..... .....L. A. Black.
Missionary Society, Portsmouth.....A. H. Lewis.
Old Union, Petersburg..... .....Nellie Macklin.
African Missionary, Richmond.....N. P. Vandervall.
Home Mission, Richmond..... .....Taff Lawson.
Daughters of Zion, Charlottesville.....Eliza Carter.
Zion, Petersburg..... .....Emily Brown.
Loving Sisters of Worship, Petersburg.Sarah James.
Sisters of Temperance, Petersburg.....Arrilla Walker.
Zion Travelers, Danville..... .....Ellen Bethel.

Figure 12. Virginia Baptist State Convention, "1873 Minutes of the Sixth Annual Session of the Virginia Baptist State Convention," Historic Black Churches and Pastors, accessed April 23, 2025, https://onesharedstory.org/HBCP/items/show/28, 1873 minutes, p. 17.

Further information about the participation of African American women in religious associations is available in the minutes for the VBSC's annual meetings, as well as those for regional associations. For example, in the proceedings for the VBSC's 1873 meeting, the list of participants included a section dedicated solely to benevolent societies (Figure 12).

Besides fundraising and buying land, Black women found other ways to exercise influence in their churches. Elder women sought to manage matters concerning improper conduct by female congregants and to discuss a male member's poor treatment of a woman. Often, these issues required delicacy and diplomacy due to the potentially inflammatory nature of the alleged behaviors. Male congregational leaders were consistently willing to include women held in high regard in resolving disciplinary matters.[145]

However, especially in centrally-organized denominations, few men were willing to depart from traditional interpretations of scripture that abjured women from holding leadership positions over men, including their ordination. Turner argued that, during Reconstruction, Black men were intent upon claiming their full rights of citizenship in a rigidly gendered society in which males were heads of household, religious institutions, government, and virtually all aspects of public life. Through their ability to wield power and control, Black men would ascend to positions equal to those of White men, thereby improving the lot of their race and of the country as a whole. African American women, meanwhile, were the cohering element in congregational functions, ranging from their consistent financial donations, their willingness to perform routine housekeeping of church property, their organization of communal events such as church suppers and collections of clothing and furniture for those who faced sudden difficulties, and other acts of service that extended beyond the church's walls into the larger community.[146]

By the late 19th century, growing numbers of African American middle-class women had found ways to gain toeholds in educational, social, and governmental institutions using the same argument that White women had. While acknowledging their role was confined to their homes, husbands, and children, women seeking wider opportunities claimed that any matter pertaining to the welfare of the "domestic sphere" fell within their

[145] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 63-65.
[146] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 78-80. Such work by Black men on behalf of African American people played into the "politics of respectability" that prevailed during the Victorian era and well into the 20th century. Brianna Nuñez-Franklin explained, "Respectability is a set of social guidelines dictating acceptable behavior, from clothing to the way someone interacts with those around them. 'Respectability politics' refers to the way that people attempting to make social change present their demands in a way that are acceptable to the dominant standards in their society." While often a lens for examining the women's suffrage movement, "respectability politics" was intertwined with matters of race and class as well. See Brianna Nuñez-Franklin, "Democracy Limited: The Politics of Respectability," National Park Service, November 14, 2023, https://www.nps.gov/articles/democracy-limited-the-politics-of-respectability.htm.

domain.[147] That included public health, social welfare, education for children, scientific childrearing principles, nutrition, eliminating child labor, and temperance. Marilyn Mellowes reached a similar conclusion during her research for the American Experience documentary series, *God in America.* She wrote that Black women "organized social services, missionary societies, temperance associations and reading groups. They fought for suffrage and demanded social reform. They wrote for religious periodicals, promoting Victorian ideals of respectability and womanhood..."[148] Through these means, middle- and upper-class Black women sought to contribute in their own distinct ways to racial uplift and social improvements. The accomplishments of women such as Nannie Helen Burroughs, a leading educator in Washington D.C., Ida B. Wells, a nationally-known journalist, Madame C. J. Walker and Maggie Lena Walker, both founders of hugely successful companies, and Nellie Pratt Russell, [149] educator and founder of the first all-Black women's Greek letter sorority, extended into mainstream American culture.

In working-class urban neighborhoods and lower-income rural communities, the contributions of African American women are not as widely known. Strong support for public schools has been among the most thoroughly researched topics.[150] Black women also provided vital financial support to their families by working outside the home. Although "respectability politics" argued that a man should be the sole provider for a family, the realities of inadequate pay rates for working-class men of all races meant that their wives, and often their children, also had to engage in wage labor to sustain the family. Within the Black church, contributions of Black women of Virginia in matters of leadership and doctrinal development are not as well documented. Most congregation histories, however, include stories about important male and female leaders, a rich topic for future research.

In at least a few instances, Black women served as pastors for organized congregations. One was Bettie Thompson, who founded the James Street Holiness Church (108-6168) in Danville in 1891 (Figure 13). Born during the early years of Reconstruction in a freedpeople's community in Raleigh, North Carolina. Thompson joined the Holiness movement as a young woman. The Holiness movement emerged during the 19th century from the Second Great Awakening.[151] Eschewing the hierarchy of the Methodist church from which it sprang,

[147] For additional information, see, for example, Deborah L. Rotman, "Separate Spheres? Beyond the Dichotomies of Domesticity," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (August 2006), p. 666-674. Rotman utilized archaeological and anthropological methods to examine gendered spaces within the Deerfield, Massachusetts, community during the late 19th to early 20th century.
[148] Marilyn Mellowes, "The Black Church," American Experience, no date, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/godinamerica-black-church/.
[149] Russell may not be quite as well-known as her counterparts. Additional information about her contributions are at Jess Archer and Jeryl Rose Phillips et al., "Lawrenceville Historic District 2021 Update," National Register additional documentation, July 1, 2021, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/251-5001/.
[150] Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.
[151] Additional discussion of the Holiness movement is in subsequent sections below.

Figure 13. Undated portrait of Bettie Thompson (Image Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

Holiness congregations allowed both men and women to preach. Thompson responded to her calling in 1896 by moving to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she preached. By the late 1890s, she had moved to Danville, where she made a name for herself preaching door to door. With what must have been considerable charisma and oratorical skills, Thompson soon amassed a group of supporters and established a "mission" at a local grocery store. In 1891, a congregation was organized and purchased land on James Street to build a church (108-6168). African Americans from other denominations viewed Thompson with suspicion, possibly in part due to the emotionally expressive style of worship of the Holiness movement, as well as newer doctrines such as sanctificationism (an act of God that removed sin from the worshipper) and perfectionism (the possibility for God to turn an ordinary person into a saint). Critics alleged that Thompson was so divisive marriages dissolved over whether to follow her, and members of mutual assistance and fraternal societies withdrew due to misguided belief in their own imminent sanctification. Despite such strong feelings, the James Street Holiness Church remained active until 2017. Early 20th century census records, as well as Thompson's death certificate, consistently listed her employment title as preacher, pastor, or minister.[152]

Black Churches and Communities Address Need for Clergy

As new congregations mushroomed, a dire need for trained Black clergy arose. A wave of ordained pastors reached Virginia during and immediately after the Civil War but their numbers were inadequate to meet demand. Church congregations managed the shortage by establishing the practice of having one minister lead multiple congregations. Horace Scruggs III, who produced the documentary film "Reconstructed: The Rebuilding of African-American Communities Through Faith and Education" (2022), discussed how community networks were strengthened by the sharing of ministerial resources. The custom of Black churches in rural areas holding worship services on either "first and third" or "second and fourth" Sundays started during Reconstruction, with the minister traveling from week to week between the churches. Generally, congregants would attend a neighboring church in their community or follow their shared pastor to his other church on weeks when preaching did not occur at their home church. Quarterly, or each fifth Sunday, Sunday School Unions were held, which combined all churches in the area. During the 20th century, fifth Sunday programs frequently became an occasion for collaborating churches to highlight their youth through recitations, singing, skits, and other performance opportunities for students. These localized denominational networks also provided connections for the creation and coordination of progressive leagues during the Long Civil Rights movement.[153] The connections that were established in these spaces also resulted in individuals from other congregations

[152] "James Street Holiness Church," VCRIS record 108-6168, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond. The James Street Holiness Church was recommended eligible for the VLR and NRHP by the Virginia State Review Board in 2020.
[153] Horace J. Scruggs III and Alice Matthew Scruggs, oral history interview, One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, September 14, 2024.

forming deep relationships with one another in much the same way that church associations encouraged inter-church relationships to flourish.

Formal instruction for African American ministers and preachers in Virginia was needed to provide education to those called to pastor. In 1867, the National Theological Institute in Washington, D.C. established a campus in the city of Richmond, Virginia, under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS). Headed by veteran abolitionist Dr. Nathaniel Colver, the school leased the former Lumpkin's Jail, located in Richmond's Shockoe Bottom and known as "the Devil's Half-Acre" for imprisoning and auctioning enslaved people. Mary Ann Lumpkin, who had been enslaved by Robert Lumpkin as a child, and who at 13 bore the first of five children he fathered, was emancipated during the Civil War. Able to read and write, Mary Ann Lumpkin donated the site to the school upon Robert Lumpkin's death to further educational opportunities and religious autonomy for her peers.[154]

Among the school's early supporters were the Reverend James H. Holmes, an emancipated man who became the first Black pastor First African Baptist Church (NRHP 69000348; 127-0167) in the city of Richmond, and the Reverend Richard Wells of Ebenezer Baptist Church and Pastor George Jackson from Halifax County. In September of 1868, the Reverend Charles H. Corey took over the school, renamed the Colver Institute in honor of Nathaniel Colver in 1869. The school taught general education classes and admitted Black women and others not studying for theological training. Coursework included Grammar, Arithmetic, Geography, Spelling/Reading, and biblical study. In January 1870, the school moved into a hotel located in Shockoe Bottom with financial help from the Freedmen's Bureau. Corey was named president, while Holmes and Wells were among the newly created Board of Trustees. A decade later, due to increasing demand as Black Baptist churches proliferated across the former Confederate states, the ABHMS decided to narrow the school's curriculum solely to training Black Baptist ministers and its name accordingly changed, this time to Richmond Theological Seminary. Meanwhile, in 1883, the ABHMS used a donation by Joseph C. Hartshorn of Rhode Island to establish Hartshorn Memorial College, for women named in honor of Hartshorn's deceased wife, Rachel. In 1897, Richmond Theological Seminary merged with the Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C. and, in 1900, were reincorporated as Virginia Union University. The same year, the school moved to its present site at the corner of Richmond's Brook Road and Lombardy Street and the historic campus is still in use today (NRHP 82004590; 127-0354).[155]

In May 1886, during the 19th annual session of the Virginia Baptist State Convention (VBSC) at First Baptist Church in Lexington, the Reverend Dr. Phillip F. Morris, pastor at Court Street Baptist Church (NRHP 82004569; 118-0156) in Lynchburg, offered a resolution authorizing the creation of a new seminary. Two months later, plans were made to obtain a charter for the coeducational school. The VBSC approved the plans the following year in Danville at their annual business meeting. In 1888, the VBSC convened in Lynchburg,

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[154] Jenna Dawkins, "Uncovering the Story of an Enslaved Woman at Lumpkin's Jail," April 16, 2018, https://virginiahumanities.org/2018/04/uncovering-the-story-of-an-enslaved-woman-at-lumpkins-jail/.

[155] Suzanne Durham & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "Charles Henry Corey (1834–1899)," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/corey-charles-henry-1834-1899; "University History," Virginia Union University, no date, https://www.vuu.edu/about-union/history; Virginia Landmarks Commission Staff, "Virginia Union University," National Register Nomination, May 10, 1982, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-0354/, continuation sheets 1-2. Sources differ on the date that Hartshorn College became part of Virginia Union University. Both Durham and the National Register nomination report that the merger occurred in 1896, at which time the name Virginia Union University came into use, while the University's website states that the merger occurred in 1932. Another information source, the *Inventory of the Church Archives of Virginia: Negro Baptist Churches in Richmond* prepared by The Historical Records Survey of Virginia, Division of Professional and Service Projects, Works Progress Administration (Richmond, Va., June 1940), also discusses the founding of Virginia Union University but includes some outdated information.

where the school's name, Lynchburg Baptist Seminary, charter, location, plans for its first building, and a contract for its construction all were approved. The Lynchburg Baptist Seminary is today's Virginia University of Lynchburg (NRHP 11000035; 118-5297). Rev. Morris was appointed its first president, envisioning the school with an all-Black faculty and staff operating entirely with support from the Black community. This approach distinguished the new school from the Baptist seminary in the city of Richmond and other African American postsecondary schools across Virginia with White donors and faculty. The cornerstone of the first building was laid in July 1888.[156] Operating costs exceeded the Black community's resources and Morris reached an agreement with the ABHMS for financial support. He resigned as president in 1891 to focus on fundraising. Gregory W. Hayes became president, and was equally assertive in keeping school operations among African Americans, although he accepted donations from White individuals and organizations out of necessity.

The VBSC split after Hayes and other advocates for racial autonomy clashed with those supporting cooperative relationships with Whites who left the VBSC to form the General Association of Virginia (Colored) and shifted support to Virginia Union University. Following the schism, donations from Black supporters to the Lynchburg Baptist Seminary increased.[157] Vernon Johns, a native Virginian from Prince Edward County who graduated from the seminary in 1915, served as its president from 1929 to 1934. He placed the school on a firm financial footing despite the duress of the Great Depression. Johns later moved to Alabama where he pastored Dexter Street Baptist Church from 1947 to 1952. A skilled orator and writer, endowed with a fiery temper and indefatigable personality, Johns achieved a national profile in the Long Civil Rights Movement.[158]

Another Reconstruction Era seminary that accepted African Americans was founded by the Episcopal Church in Petersburg. Although Episcopal leadership espoused beliefs in racial equality and sent missionaries to African American communities, adherence to racial hierarchies continued. As Episcopal ministers required extensive academic training, African American Episcopal congregations who wanted Black ministers could not always be served. In 1869, the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia refused to admit African American students to its seminary in Alexandria. Church officials planned a seminary "annex" to the new all-Black St. Stephen's Episcopal Church's normal school in Petersburg.[159] In 1878, the branch seminary opened under the direction of Reverend Thomas Spencer, a White minister. It was the first theological seminary for African Americans established by the Episcopal Church in the U.S. In 1884, the seminary and the St. Stephen's Normal and Industrial School received a state charter, at which time the name changed again, to the Bishop Payne Divinity and Industrial

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[156] "History," Virginia Union University, no date, https://wp.vul.edu/history/; The school's name has been changed five times, as follows: to Virginia Seminary in 1890; to Virginia Theological Seminary and College in 1900; to Virginia Seminary and College in 1962; to Virginia College-Virginia Seminary in 1967' and finally to Virginia University of Lynchburg in 1996. The VBSC was organized at Zion Baptist Church in Portsmouth on May 9, 1867, and is discussed in greater detail below in subsequent sections of this MPD.

[157] Ashley Neville and John Salmon, "Virginia University of Lynchburg," National Register nomination, September 3, 2010, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/118-5297/, Section 8, p. 9.

[158] "Johns, Vernon," Stanford University, The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, no date, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/johns-vernon. Johns's niece, Barbara Johns, was a key organizer and leader of the 1951 student walkout at Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville. The nationally significant event was directly associated with the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling that found school segregation to be unconstitutional. These events are discussed in more detail below. Also see Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

[159] The term "normal" school was used to identify public schools where teacher training also was offered. Such schools were created during Reconstruction to train thousands of teachers for employment in Virginia's newly created public school system. During the early 20th century, "normal" school training gradually transitioned from the secondary to postsecondary level.

School.[160] The new seminary provided academic and theological training to Black men from all Protestant denominations, including Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and the newly formed Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME).[161]

Among the seminary's first students were James Solomon Russell; Thomas W. Cain, at the time also an instructor at St. Stephens Normal School; Mr. Stinson, pastor of a Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; C. D. Cooley, pastor of a Baptist congregation; and teenager George Freeman Bragg, who would go on to become an Episcopal priest, newspaper publisher, and outspoken civil rights advocate.[162] Russell and Bragg, both of whom stayed in Virginia after seminary, remained in touch with one another throughout their lives. During his four years at the seminary, Russell took courses in the Old and New Testaments, church governance, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and also assisted the Reverend Giles Buckner Cooke at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, where Russell "led Sunday school, acted as church treasurer, and served on the vestry."[163] Russell organized his first church, Ascension Episcopal Church (058-5575) in Mecklenburg County in 1879, while he was still a seminary student; the church was included in the selective survey of churches that was conducted in support of this MPD. Russell was ordained "to the deaconate" in the Episcopal Church on March 9, 1882.[164] He later wrote in his autobiography, *Adventure in Faith*, that, while at the seminary, he found Cooke to be "exacting," self-disciplined, and invested in his religious vocation.[165] He also observed that Cooke, and other White leaders in the church, held the dual desire to educate emancipated people for their wellbeing and autonomy and to educate White people against racism and prejudice.[166] Although conciliatory at first glance, Russell's thoughts on the matter demonstrated a realistic understanding of the levers of power in American society during the late 19th century. Russell, for the most part, along with many of his seminary peers, decided to spend his career working

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[160] William Obrochta & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "Giles Buckner Cooke (1838–1937)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/ cooke-giles-buckner-1838-1937/; George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1922), p. 174; Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, eds., *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, A User Friendly Reference for Episcopalians* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2000), as cited at "Bishop Payne Divinity School" at "An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church," https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/bishop-payne-divinity-school/; and "Bishop Payne Divinity School," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, no date, at https:// encyclopediavirginia.org/8677hpr-38b8536d02a6a33/. The new name honored James Payne, a White clergyman and the Episcopal Church's first Bishop of Liberia. The *Encyclopedia Virginia* webpage cites a 1925 pamphlet entitled *Our Church Industrial High Schools for Negroes: The Bishop Payne Divinity School/ The Junior College*, published by the American Church Institute for Negroes. According to the pamphlet, more than 100 alumni had entered the ministry by the mid-1920s and constituted almost two-thirds of the Black ministers then working in the United States and abroad; the basis for this claim is not known. After 1910, the seminary's name was shortened to Bishop Payne Divinity School, at which time it began to offer the Bachelor of Divinity degree.

[161] William Henry Ruffner, *Virginia School Report, 1871: First Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, For the Year Ending August 31, 1871* (Richmond, Va.: C. A. Schaffter, Superintendent Public Printing, 1871), p. 17-18; George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1922), p. 174; Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), p. 89-94. Bishop Payne Divinity School closed in May 1949 but, in June 1953, its assets were merged with Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, where the campus's library today bears the name Bishop Payne Library.

[162] George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1922), p. 219-220.

[163] Philip Stanley & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "James Solomon Russell (1857–1935)," *Virginia Encyclopedia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/russell-james-solomon-1857-1935.

[164] "Story of The St. Paul Normal and Industrial School [Catechetically Arranged]," Lawrenceville, Virginia, 1919, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t3cz75g91&seq=3, p. 8.

[165] William Obrochta & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "Giles Buckner Cooke (1838–1937)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/ cooke-giles-buckner-1838-1937/.

[166] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 93-94.

for change from within the Episcopal system of governance, while others, including his schoolmate George Freeman Bragg, opted to advocate for change in larger society as well as within the church.

Independent Black Denominations and Congregations Continue to Grow

African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Denomination

One of the few AME congregations permitted to organize in Virginia prior to the Civil War, albeit under White supervision, was the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church (124-0050) within the Portsmouth Olde Towne Historic District Extension (NRHP 83004251; 124-0034). Despite this restriction, the church acted as a station on the Underground Railroad. The 1857 building that housed the congregation remains extant and is one of a handful of surviving antebellum Black churches.[167] Third Street Bethel AME Church (NRHP 75002117; 127-0274) in the city of Richmond stood at the heart of a thriving community of free people of color. Originally named the Third Street Methodist Church, the congregation was organized in 1850 by African American members of the Trinity Methodist Church. Today's sanctuary dates to 1856; significant remodeling and expansion occurred in 1875 and 1914. On May 10, 1867, the AME Virginia Conference was formed at this church, at which time the church attained its present name. The Reverend J.D.S. was appointed the newly renamed congregation's first pastor and as the Presiding Elder for the Richmond District.[168]

The AME denomination grew rapidly in Virginia due to numerous missionaries dispatched by Bishop William Paul Quinn to follow U.S. forces across the Confederacy during the Civil War. Thousands of new members were converted, many of whom left Methodist Episcopal Church, South, congregations controlled by White members.[169] Between 1860-1884, the AME's overall membership mushroomed from 20,0000 to almost 400,000.[170]

The Reverend Dr. Israel L. Butt, presiding elder of AME Norfolk District, Virginia Conference, wrote the *History of African Methodism in Virginia* in 1908, laying out the history of the denomination. Butt was born enslaved in Norfolk County. He fled with his father in 1862 for the U.S. military lines in the city of Norfolk. At 16, he enlisted in the USCT in 1864, serving in Company A, 38 Regiment. His military service took him to Texas, where he became a Christian. After the war, Butt returned home to Norfolk where a Northern teacher at St. John's AME Church (NRHP 86003441, 122-0211) tutored him. He attended night classes at an Odd Fellow's Hall on Bute Street taught by the Reverend J.D.S. Hall, pastor at St. John's. Butt joined St. John's AME Church in 1867 and received a license as an "exhorter" in January 1874; exhorters were lay members of the church, and the post was a stepping stone to Butt's licensure as preacher in March 1876. He organized the St. James Church congregation in his home the same year and a Sunday school that was held in congregant Isaac Lewis's house. The new congregation quickly set about building a sanctuary. The cornerstone was laid in

[167] Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff, "Portsmouth Olde Towne Historic District Expansion," National Register nomination, January 1983, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/124-0034/, section 8, p. 1.
[168] Laurie Buck, Elizabeth Lipford, and Lena McDonald, "Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update and Boundary Increase," National Register nomination, April 15, 2019, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-0274/, p. 13; "This is Our Story, This is Our Song," Third Street Bethel AME Church, 2025, https://www.thirdstreetbethel.org/ame-church-history. Third Street Bethel AME Church is located in the Jackson Ward Historic District (127-0237), which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1978.
[169] The Methodist Episcopal denomination split over slavery in 1844, with Northern White members who argued for abolition and Southerners who supported continuation of slavery.
[170] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 53-54.

May 1876 by a local Masonic lodge, and the building was completed in 1878, the same year that Butt was ordained a deacon. He was made an elder in 1881. Butt's formal education continued throughout his life, he attained a Doctor of Divinity degree from Wilberforce University in 1903 and completed a correspondence course from Payne University in Alabama in 1905.[171]

Butt's *History of African Methodism in Virginia* recounts the creation of St. John's AME Church in 1863 and its membership in the AME's Baltimore Conference shortly thereafter. In 1867, the Virginia Conference was organized at a meeting in the city of Richmond. [172] Butt describes the Virginia Conference's annual meetings and routine matters also identified by Turner in her study of Black Church conferences during Reconstruction. Finances, appointments, and elections of leadership, ordinations, and policies were presented, discussed, and voted upon at each meeting. Butt's book lists dozens of AME deacons, elders, ministers, and other officeholders, and brief biographical sketches of church leaders.[173] This is a rich source of significant individuals associated with the AME denomination in Virginia during Reconstruction. Conference attendees also discussed matters such as temperance, a rapidly growing social cause during the late 19th century.[174]

The AME denomination had a long tradition of emphasizing formal education leadership and lay members, but, since 1832, education for African Americans in Virginia had been hard to obtain. Many emancipated persons after the Civil War were illiterate. The need for highly educated and trained ministers received considerable attention during Reconstruction. For example, the topic was discussed at the AME Virginia Conference's 1873 meeting, where six AME pastors read essays on the subject of literate ministers. Throughout Butt's book are included various schools established and supported by individual AME churches and the Virginia Conference as a whole.[175] In purely practical terms, AME's educated leadership and laity positioned the denomination well in rapidly industrializing late-19th-century Virginia.

African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ)

In the 1895 book, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, the Reverend J. W. Hood chronicled the history of the denomination from its founding to its centennial. The AMEZ denomination had limited presence in slaveholding states and fared somewhat poorly in comparison to other Methodist denominations in northern states. In 1863, there were only 92 ministers pastoring about 5,000 members. Within about 20 years, however, the AMEZ membership stood at 300,000 people. Much of its growth was attributed to southern congregations. Hood describes the Reconstruction Era as one of "flourishing."[176] With growth came

[171] Israel L. Butt, *History of African Methodism in Virginia, or Four Decades in the Old Dominion* (Hampton, Va.: Hampton Institute Press, 1908), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/butt/menu.html, p. 17-20.
[172] Israel L. Butt, *History of African Methodism in Virginia, or Four Decades in the Old Dominion* (Hampton, Va.: Hampton Institute Press, 1908), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/butt/menu.html, p. 32, 34.
[173] Israel L. Butt, *History of African Methodism in Virginia, or Four Decades in the Old Dominion* (Hampton, Va.: Hampton Institute Press, 1908), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/butt/menu.html, p. 63-74, 110-114, 159-167, 226-233. Butt's book concludes with a description of the career of architect John Anderson Lankford, who attained his training at Lincoln Institute, the State College, and School of Mechanical Arts, all in Missouri. Lankford designed numerous churches for Black congregations during his career; see p. 250-252 of *History of African Methodism in Virginia.*
[174] Israel L. Butt, *History of African Methodism in Virginia, or Four Decades in the Old Dominion* (Hampton, Va.: Hampton Institute Press, 1908), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/butt/menu.html, p. 43-44.
[175] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 85; Israel L. Butt, *History of African Methodism in Virginia, or Four Decades in the Old Dominion* (Hampton, Va.: Hampton Institute Press, 1908), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/butt/menu.html, p. 94.
[176] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 58; J. W. Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; or, The Centennial of African*

growing pains, including internal disputes over appointments of bishops and financial matters, but congregations appear to have been united in terms of doctrine. Hood noted that, at the 1868 General Conference, the AMEZ's *Doctrines and Discipline* "was more thoroughly revised than at any other period since the first Discipline was adopted."[177]

Hood was dispatched to North Carolina in 1864, where he successfully organized a new church. Although a yellow fever epidemic caused great loss among the community, in December 1864, the North Carolina Conference was organized. From that, the Virginia Conference formed in 1866, encompassing the portion of Virginia south of the James River. Parts of southwestern Virginia were assigned to the Tennessee Conference and a few counties remained with the North Carolina Conference. Twenty-five AMEZ clergy attended the organizing meeting under leadership of Bishop J. J. Clinton. Among the Virginia Conference's early presiding bishops were the Reverend Dr. James H. Manley, who pastored at the AMEZ Church in Petersburg before being assigned to a church in Tennessee. The Reverend W. H. Newby was credited with establishing a new AMEZ church in the city of Franklin, starting with a membership of just three persons.[178]

As other denominations did, the AMEZ faith supported a seminary, Zion Wesley Institute, founded in Concord, North Carolina. The AMEZ's leadership was in concordance with other Methodist denominations regarding the importance of formal education for its clergy and laity. Speaking at the 1878 annual conference, A. S. Richardson, a professor at the seminary, said "We shall never firmly establish ourselves as a connection until we have a good seminary of learning. We want a supply of good ministers, and a good institution alone will give them to us. Our people are yearly becoming better educated, and we must have a ministry to instruct and assist them. Education will secure this, and education we must have."[179]

Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Denomination, 1866-1870

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), originally named Colored Methodist Episcopal, emerged from the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, (MECS) denomination. The MECS had formed in 1845 when Northern and Southern Methodists split over the issue of slavery. Although present in Virginia, the CME is far more populous in states farther south. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, emancipated Black members of MECS churches that had been controlled by White leadership contemplated how they would proceed with their newfound freedoms.

Adherents to other denominations, including Baptist, AME, and AMEZ, preferred to establish all-Black churches and associations where they could exercise racial autonomy and independence. Missionaries from each of these denominations succeeded in drawing thousands of converts from the MECS. Many Black MECS members, however, disliked that northern missionaries sometimes assumed strong leadership roles, including

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Methodism (New York: A.M.E. Zion Book Concern, 1895), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hood100/menu.html, p. 85.

[177] J. W. Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; or, The Centennial of African Methodism* (New York: A.M.E. Zion Book Concern, 1895), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hood100/menu.html, p. 96, 100-101, 104-105.

[178] J. W. Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; or, The Centennial of African Methodism* (New York: A.M.E. Zion Book Concern, 1895), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hood100/menu.html, p. 86-87, 95, 119-126, 353-354, 356-359. AMEZ ministers are routinely moved from church to church, in keeping with the same practice in other Methodist faiths.

[179] J. W. Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; or, The Centennial of African Methodism* (New York: A.M.E. Zion Book Concern, 1895), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hood100/menu.html, p. 115. The Zion Wesley Institute grew to become today's Livingstone College.

assuming control of church property. Rivalries among AME and AMEZ churches also could be confounding. Interracial relationships, however, played at least as large a role in the decision making processes for Black MCES members. Many found the approach of interracial cooperation to be preferable, particularly in areas where the "Radical" Republicans of the postwar era engendered the greatest hostility among the defeated White populace. In the Deep South, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan and other terrorist activities also prompted many freedpeople to seek the most cordial relationships possible with their White counterparts. Finally, most of the MECS leadership displayed no interest in equal partnering with its African American members. Although MECS officials had invited African Americans to remain in MECS congregations, much of the White membership had little desire to continue interracial worship services with Black members relegated to separate seating. That African American congregants would retain the secondary status of the antebellum era ran counter to the freedpeople's needs. Due to all of these influences, the White MCES officials agreed to work with African American church members to form a new denomination. Between 1866-1870, the two groups negotiated a process for withdrawal of the freedpeople from the White churches, including transfer of some church properties to the newly independent congregations. Indicative of the MCES's conservativism, however, transfer of these properties came with the condition that the new denomination avoid political activity of any kind. The denomination's original name, Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, was selected to signal that it would be comprised solely of African Americans.[180]

The CME was formally organized on December 15, 1870, at a general conference presided over by Robert Paine, senior bishop of the MECS. A total of 41 freedmen were elected to leadership positions. William H. Miles, who had been ordained a deacon in 1859, and Richard H. Vanderhorst, previously a member of the AME Church, were elected the CME's first bishops. Although the CME's original eight conferences did not include one in Virginia, the denomination took root here. Just six CME churches have been included in the VDHR's Virginia Cultural Resources Information System (VCRIS). Four of these were organized in rural Halifax County, just north of the North Carolina border, during the 1870s. St. Paul's CME Church (041-5122), founded in 1871, is located in a rural part of Halifax County west of the Town of Halifax. Union Grove CME Church (041-5098), founded in 1872, stands in a rural area northwest of South Boston. The Williams Temple CME Church (041-0174-0018) stands in the proposed News Ferry Historic District, a Reconstruction Era community north of the Dan River. The Ebenezer CME Church (130-0006-0583) was founded in 1878 in the Dickerson neighborhood of South Boston.[181] William Banks, Paul Carter, Lewis Carter and Lewis Pate are credited as the founders. The new congregation, like many African American churches of all types during Reconstruction, originally met in a brush arbor setting. Elijah Hodges donated a parcel in South Boston for the church's first sanctuary, a log building, which would be replaced in 1896 by a frame building.[182] The sequence of spaces, from brush arbor to log to frame construction, also was commonly repeated by Black congregations throughout the Commonwealth. The CME denomination expanded during the Great Migration of the early 20th century as rural African Americans moved to urban areas in the South as well as large cities in the northeast and Midwest. The other two CME churches recorded in VCRIS likely are associated with this historical trend. Broomfield

[180] J. W. Hood, *One Hundred Years of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; or, The Centennial of African Methodism* (New York: A.M.E. Zion Book Concern, 1895), available online at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/hood100/menu.html, p. 61-62; *Powerful Artifacts: A Guide to Surveying and Documenting Rural African-American Churches in the South* (Murfreesboro, Tenn.: Middle Tennessee State University, July 2000), https://irp.cdn-website.com/2c253136/files/uploaded/Powerful-Artifacts.pdf, p. 11.
[181] Ebenezer CME Church currently meets in a brick sanctuary that was reconstructed following a disastrous fire in 1966. The building is a contributing resource in the listed South Boston Historic District (NRHP 1986 with 2009 Boundary Increase; 130-0006).
[182] "Historical Reflections of Ebenezer CME Church," Ebenezer Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, 2021, https://ebenezercmesobo.org/.

CME Church (127-5856) in the city of Richmond's Blackwell Historic District (NRHP SG100003544; 127-5817), was founded in 1926, while St. Stephen's CME Church (138-5054) in Winchester, was founded in 1928.

Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Denomination, late 1860s-1870s

James Howell, born free in Philadelphia, came to Virginia in 1864. An elder in the AME church, he had not been ordained a minister due to a lack of formal education. Howell traveled on his own recognizance through Norfolk, Hampton, Newport News, and Petersburg, attempting in each city, without success, to found an AME church. He finally reached the small community of Skipwith in Mecklenburg County, about five miles west of Boydton. Here, Howell was successful, but not within the AME denomination. In a bid to become a preacher, Howell joined a group of emancipated African Americans who had left the local White-controlled Baptist and Episcopal churches but had yet to form a church of their own. Howell was instrumental in creating what became the Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church during the late 1860s. A gifted organizer, Howell traveled between Mecklenburg County in Virginia and the community of Warrenton across the state line in North Carolina. Turner explains that, together with "Nicholas Coleman, George Washington Taylor, Samuel Barner, and Wilson Taylor (Mecklenburg); John McDowell Bishop, Charles and Alfred Brown, Miles Green, Phillip Farrer, and Payton Edwards (Brunswick); and Alfred, Macklin, and Washington P. Russell, and Hercules 'Harkless' Coleman (Palmer-Springs, Warrenton, North Carolina," several new, independent Black congregations were organized.[183] In 1869, Howell met with other leaders of the new churches to plan a new denomination, Zion Union Apostolic Church (ZUAC).

Interestingly, although the ZUAC was established in part because of Howell's frustration with formal education requirements of the AME and other Methodist denominations, the ZUAC's membership considered joining the Episcopal Church in 1878. What transpired between the two denominations has not ever been entirely clear, partially because ZUAC records were lost and the Episcopal Church's records tell only that denomination's side of the story. It appears, however, that James Solomon Russell, a native of Mecklenburg County, may have been influential in the contemplated union. Russell had struggled for years to find the money needed to attend postsecondary school, beginning with Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute in 1875. After being forced to withdraw due to financial needs, Russell returned to Mecklenburg County, where he taught school at various locales in southside Virginia and across the state line. By this time, Russell had formed a relationship with Mary "Pattie" Buford, a member of the Episcopal Church in Lawrenceville who devoted considerable time and money to aiding freedpeople's communities and advocating for public schools. Buford gave Russell a copy of the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. Its contents and the orderliness of its guidance to worship resonated with him. When he attended the local Zion Union Apostolic Church's annual conferences in 1877 and 1878 in Brunswick County, he suggested that the denomination adopt a style of worship more similar to that of the Episcopal Church. At least some of the membership agreed with him.[184] The proposal ran aground, in part likely due to the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia's checkered approach to welcoming Black members to the majority-White denomination.[185] The Episcopal Church required years of formal instruction and training before

[183] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 24.
[184] Information about the number of Zion Union Apostolic members in 1877-1878 was not readily available during research for this nomination project. During the 1870s, the denomination reorganized and, today, this Christian Methodist denomination is known as the Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Churches of America and primarily is found in Southside and Tidewater Virginia. See https://rzua.org/.
[185] Philip Stanley & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "James Solomon Russell (1857–1935)," *Virginia Encyclopedia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/russell-james-solomon-1857-1935); "The Reverend James Solomon Russell, 1857-1935," at the Archives of the Episcopal Church, "The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice, Leadership

a person could become ordained a priest, which was opposite to the philosophy that Howell and his compatriots had sought for the ZUAC. The Episcopal Church, however, also offered greater resources and opportunities that appealed to ZUAC members interested in utilizing religious associations to build up denominational organizations, financial resources, real estate holdings, and other assets that enhanced Black autonomy.[186]

The Episcopal Church's insistence that ZUAC clergy attend the newly formed Bishop Payne Divinity School in Petersburg as a requirement of ordination apparently scuttled the proposed union.[187] Additionally, the two denominations could not reach agreement regarding worship practices. The wealthier, whiter Episcopal Church's worship services were formal and rooted in tradition extending back to the Anglican Church of the colonial era. The emancipated people who comprised much of the ZUAC incorporated worship practices with West African religious influences preserved through generations of slavery. The more physical, emotive, and expressive forms of worship during services were part of the spiritual sustenance of freedpeople. Church members were disinclined to change their ways to satisfy the White-controlled Episcopal Church.[188] Likely as part of the fallout from the prolonged negotiations, the ZUAC denomination reorganized itself in 1882 and, thereafter, took the name Reformed Zion Union Apostolic Church (RZUA). The denomination was active in Virginia throughout the twentieth century up to the present day, although its membership has always been less numerous than those of the Baptist, AME, and AMEZ denominations.

Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church struggled to retain African American members after the Civil War. During the antebellum period, many of its wealthiest members in Virginia had been enslavers. After the war, their social and political status kept them influential in southern congregations despite their greatly reduced financial circumstances. At the same time, the denomination offered African Americans opportunities beyond the reach of newly forming Black Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), and other all-Black denominational churches and conventions. As Turner explains, free exercise of religion factored into larger social and political networks during Reconstruction. Formal education of would-be Episcopal priests would do more than endow those individuals with ministerial training. Students would manage interactions with both well-meaning and contemptuous White church leaders, understand the inner

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Gallery," https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/leaderships/clergy/russell. With regard to the shortcomings of the historical record, for example, George Freeman Bragg, a colleague of Russell's in the Episcopal Church, wrote about the ZUAC in 1922 merely that, "By some means the movement miscarried; but the Bishop and a number of the ministers, actually entered the Church, and were prepared for the diaconate at the Bishop Payne Divinity School." See George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1922), p. 134. According to another writer, the effort collapsed after the ministers at ZUAC opted not to require their congregants to use the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, which essentially disaffiliated its churches from the Episcopal denomination. See Gay W. Neale, "Martha 'Pattie' Hicks Buford (1836–1901)," *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, Library of Virginia (2001), http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/dvb/bio.asp?b=Buford_Pattie_Hicks. Undeterred, Buford shifted her energies to establishing a hospital for local Black residents. A detailed analysis of the political, religious, and social underpinnings of the Zion Union Apostolic Church's interactions with the Episcopal Church is in Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), p. 81-105.

[186] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), p. 89-94.

[187] For additional details about the Episcopal Church's failed efforts with the ZUAC, see Joan Gunderson, "Segregating the Sacred in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 1864-1948," Panel presentation: "How Southern Protestants Made (and Remade) Race," American Society of Church History, 5 January 2009, New York City, https://www.academia.edu/104019967/_Segregating_the_Sacred_in_the_Episcopal_Diocese_of_ Virginia_1865_1948_?ri_id=453328

[188] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner, p. 82-86.

workings of these institutions, and form networks with their peers that would continue far beyond their seminary years. Over time, these same individuals and their networks would build up denominational organizations, financial resources, real estate holdings, and other assets. Such community building became crucial as the Jim Crow era of segregation began during the 1890s.[189]

Eager to grow its membership but unprepared to treat Black members as equal to White congregants, the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia struggled for decades to meet the needs of its African American members, as scholar Joan Gunderson discusses in detail. During and after the Civil War, the Episcopal Church sponsored adult literacy classes and Sunday schools. In Petersburg, which would become a locus for the Episcopal Church's Black membership, such schools were staffed by Northern White women and volunteers from the local Grace and St. Paul's Episcopal Churches both of which included Black members.[190] Meanwhile, the Rev. Churchill Gibson assisted local Black Episcopalians with forming a new, all-Black congregation. St. Stephen's Church met in the Petersburg Freedmen's School building. In 1869, however, leaders in the Diocese of Virginia refused to admit deputies from St. Stephen's Church to the leadership council, displaying their inconsistent treatment of African Americans. St. Stephen's remained a supervised mission without representation on the Council rather than a full-fledged church.[191]

Nonetheless, the new church quickly grew to include a parish day school for children and the St. Stephen's Normal and Industrial School in 1878.[192] Bishop Francis M. Whittle had recruited James Atwell, a Black deacon, to serve at St. Stephen's Church. Upon being ordained a priest, Atwell left St. Stephen's in 1873. Atwell's replacement, Giles Buckner Cooke, a White former Confederate officer, had been ordained by the Episcopal Church in 1871, at which time he opened Big Oak Private School. Upon his appointment to St. Stephen's, Cooke merged his school with the St. Stephen's parish day school to form a private normal school; Cooke's writings show a paternalistic attitude toward African Americans, believing that they needed guidance from White people in order to succeed.[193] But for the White women who worked at the day school, however, St.

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[189] Nicole Myers Turner, *Soul Liberty: The Evolution of Black Religious Politics in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.5149/9781469655253_Turner,p. 89-94.

[190] Joan Gunderson, "Segregating the Sacred in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 1864-1948," Panel presentation: "How Southern Protestants Made (and Remade) Race," American Society of Church History, January 5, 2009, New York City, https://www.academia.edu/104019967/_Segregating_the_Sacred_in_the_Episcopal_Diocese_of_Virginia_1865_1948_?ri_id=453328, p. 3; William Obrochta & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "Giles Buckner Cooke (1838–1937)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/ cooke-giles-buckner-1838-1937/.

[191] Joan Gunderson, "Segregating the Sacred in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 1864-1948," Panel presentation: "How Southern Protestants Made (and Remade) Race," American Society of Church History, 5 January 2009, New York City, https://www.academia.edu/104019967/_Segregating_the_Sacred_in_the_Episcopal_Diocese_of_Virginia_1865_1948_?ri_id=453328, p. 10-11. Continued advocacy by a small number of White bishops and clergy did eventually lead to seating of a handful of Black clergy on the Council.

[192] A "normal" school served as a teacher training school. Initially, such schools were not always four-year institutions. The creation of Virginia's first statewide public school system in 1870 caused enormous demand for teachers and the Virginia Board of Education sought to certify teachers as quickly as possible by providing them with a smattering of academic course and instruction in pedagogical methods. During the late-19th century, "industrial" schools were intended to teach young Black men in-demand industrial and related agricultural trades, such as metal-working, wheelwrighting, carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, wagon building, operation of coal-fired engines, and saw and gristmill operation. As new technologies emerged, training in additional trades was offered.

[193] William Obrochta & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "Giles Buckner Cooke (1838–1937)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/ cooke-giles-buckner-1838-1937/. Paternalism among White people toward Black people was rooted in beliefs that Black people were less capable than White counterparts at managing their own affairs and, therefore, needed benevolent leadership provided by socially and morally superior White leaders.

Stephen's continued to have a mostly Black congregation. The other two Episcopal churches in Petersburg retained largely White memberships.[194]

The first graduate of the Petersburg seminary, discussed above, James Solomon Russell became one of the most accomplished Episcopal priests of the first generation after the Civil War. He moved to Brunswick County in Southside Virginia, near where he had grown up, and "he founded St. Paul's School (later college). The combination of St. Stephen's Normal School, Bishop Payne Seminary and St. Paul's [College] shaped the racial geography of the postwar Episcopal Church in Southside Virginia." Ordained a priest on February 9, 1887, Russell dedicated the rest of his life to advancing opportunities for Black parishioners and students. His career placed him in a key position for preaching Episcopal Church doctrine to new Black members, organizing new congregations throughout Southside Virginia, and training new Black clergy. Thanks to Russell's prodigious energy and gift for fundraising, Saint Paul's College grew steadily from its 1883 founding until Russell's death in 1935. Under his leadership the college included an advanced teacher training program and transitioned from the "industrial school" model of the late 19th century to a liberal arts college. After weathering the Great Depression, the school grew again into the 1970s. The private college served African American students until its closure in 2013.[195]

Meanwhile, the Episcopal Church continue to waffle over management of plummeting Black church membership as freedpeople organized their own congregations independently or as part of other denominations. In1870, the Diocese of Virginia had 144 Black members, a huge drop from 8,500 a decade earlier. Episcopal leaders considered an assortment of proposals between the early 1870s-1890s. In 1874, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church contemplated creation of a "national missionary district" composed of Black clergy and lay members, but the effort failed.[196] In 1883, a group of White church leaders, including bishops, clergy, and laymen, met at the "Sewanee Conference" to discuss the place of Black clergy and laity in the church. Establishment of a separate Episcopal Church for Black people was considered and rejected. Instead, a plan to create a segregated "missionary organization," the "Sewanee canon," within each diocese was approved. Later that year at the church's general convention, Black leaders killed the proposal.

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[194] Joan Gunderson, "Segregating the Sacred in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 1864-1948," Panel presentation: "How Southern Protestants Made (and Remade) Race," American Society of Church History, 5 January 2009, New York City, https://www.academia.edu/104019967/_Segregating_the_Sacred_in_the_Episcopal_Diocese_of_Virginia_1865_1948_?ri_id=453328, p. 3. Gunderson cited the following sources: Edward L. Bond and Jo Gundersen, *The Episcopal Church in Virginia 1607-2007* (Richmond: Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 2007), p. 123-124; *St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia, 1861-1950,* published on the Occasion of the 89th Church Anniversary in Richmond, Virginia, May 1950, n.p.; Thomas W. S. Logan, Sr., Collection, Archives, Bishop Payne Library, Virginia Theological Seminary; Grace Church Parochial Report, *Journal of the Ninety-Seventh Annual Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Virginia held in Epiphany Church, Danville, on the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st of May, 1892,* Richmond: Wm Ellis Jones, Steam Book and Job Printer, 1892, pp. 191-192.

[195] Joan Gunderson, "Segregating the Sacred in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 1864-1948," Panel presentation: "How Southern Protestants Made (and Remade) Race," American Society of Church History, 5 January 2009, New York City, https://www.academia.edu/104019967/_Segregating_the_Sacred_in_the_Episcopal_Diocese_of_Virginia_1865_1948_?ri_id=453328, p. 5-7; "Story of The St. Paul Normal and Industrial School [Catechetically Arranged]," Lawrenceville, Virginia, 1919, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t3cz75g91&seq=3, p. 7; "The Reverend James Solomon Russell, 1857-1935," at the Archives of the Episcopal Church, The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice, Leadership Gallery, https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/leaderships/ clergy/russell.

[196] Creation of parallel organizations, such as the proposed "national missionary district," arguably provided autonomy and leadership opportunities for Black Episcopalians. This trend also, however, dovetailed with the White supremacist desire to maintain strict racial segregation in all aspects of daily life, which reached its maturation with the establishment of Jim Crow segregation at the turn of the 20th century. In consequence, parallel institutions for Black teachers, business owners, women's suffragists, women's club members, bankers, newspaper publishers, and most other professions and interest groups were founded after White people refused to integrate existing organizations.

Just two years later, however, the Episcopal Church established the Church Commission for Work Among Colored People. The new body was intended to serve as an umbrella for the church's ministry to African Americans in southern states.[197]

In 1886, the Diocese of Virginia attempted to establish a state-level "Colored Missionary Jurisdiction" to which all Episcopal churches with Black memberships would be assigned. In 1889, the Diocese proposed allowing the "Colored Missionary Jurisdiction" to elect two clerical and two lay representatives to the Council. They would be involved only in matters concerning their race, reducing Black members to token representation in the Diocese's governance. Black clergy opposed the proposal, with Russell, Bragg, and other Black priests organizing a protest. The plan failed in the full Council meeting. Ultimately White leadership of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia proved unable to reconcile itself to working with Black clergy and church members as equals. In 1892, the Diocese of Southern Virginia was split from the Alexandria-based Diocese, taking with it the vast majority of the Church's Black churches and members. [198]

On October 11, 1893, the new diocese appointed Russell its first "Archdeacon of Colored Work." The position required him to travel throughout the diocese spanning Southside Virginia from the coast to the state border with Kentucky. Russell used this position in much the same way as he advocated for improved educational opportunities for Black Virginians. He ministered to fledgling "mission" churches, encouraged the establishment of new churches in Black communities, and lobbied the Diocese of Southern Virginia for funds and clergymen for the new congregations.[199] For the remainder of his ministry, Russell held a high profile in the Diocese of Southern Virginia and the Episcopal Church. He twice was offered a post as a suffragan bishop in other dioceses, Arkansas in 1917 and North Carolina in 1918. He declined both to stay in Virginia. In June 1917, the Virginia Theological Seminary, to which he had been refused entrance in 1873, granted him an honorary doctorate of divinity; he was the first Black priest to be so honored.[200] In 1931, the Diocese of Virginia granted voting rights to Black clergy on its leadership council. The Diocese of Southern Virginia followed suit in 1935.[201] In 1933, Russell attempted to convince the Diocese of Southern Virginia to remove

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[197] George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1922), p. 151-152; "Timeline - African Americans and the Episcopal Church," in *The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice,* https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/timeline-church. White resistance to integrated institutions was virulent throughout the U.S. and extended to all racial and ethnic minority groups, but the relatively recent end of race-based slavery and the concentration of the American Black population in the former slave-holding states made such resistance especially noticeable in the South.

[198] Joan Gunderson, "Segregating the Sacred in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, 1864-1948," Panel presentation: "How Southern Protestants Made (and Remade) Race," American Society of Church History, 5 January 2009, New York City, https://www.academia.edu/104019967/_Segregating_the_Sacred_in_the_Episcopal_Diocese_of_Virginia_1865_1948_?ri_id=453328, p. 11; Philip Stanley & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "James Solomon Russell (1857–1935)," *Virginia Encyclopedia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia. org/entries/russell-james-solomon-1857-1935).

[199] Philip Stanley & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "James Solomon Russell (1857–1935)," *Virginia Encyclopedia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/russell-james-solomon-1857-1935); George Freeman Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1922), p. 134.

[200] "Story of The St. Paul Normal and Industrial School [Catechetically Arranged]," Lawrenceville, Virginia, 1919, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc2.ark:/13960/t3cz75g91&seq=3, p. 8.

[201] "Timeline - African Americans and the Episcopal Church," in *The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice,* https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/timeline-church.

references to race from its constitution and canons, but the diocese declined.[202] Archdeacon James Solomon Russell died on March 28, 1935. His autobiography, *Adventure in Faith*, was published the following year.[203]

Holiness-Pentecostal Churches

The Holiness-Pentecostal religious movement arose from within but independent of existing Protestant denominations. The doctrine emerged during the 1830s from Methodist denominations, including the MEC, AME, and AMEZ, as well as from Baptist churches. The movement began as an effort to reform Wesleyan Methodism and to allow worshipers direct experience with God.[204] Both African American and White people participated in the movement, American Holiness "has been described as a doctrine of 'a second work of grace; leading to perfection, a belief that spread among Wesleyan Methodists in the 1840s."[205] Stymied for a time by the Civil War, the Holiness-Pentecostal Movement emerged with renewed energy during Reconstruction. Formed in the 1860s, the National Holiness Association had a nationwide reach and held nearly 70 "interdenominational camp meetings and revivals" between 1867-1887.[206] Charles F. Parham, a White minister who had founded the Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, is credited with articulating a foundational element of the Holiness-Pentecostal movement: "a third tenet for salvation, after water baptism and sanctification, known as baptism in the Holy Spirit."[207] Speaking in tongues (or glossolalia) was one proof that Holy Spirit baptism was occurring.

Interactions among African American and White preachers of the Holiness-Pentecostal Movement created a rich theological doctrine. The repeated cross-pollination between Black and White preachers, churches, and congregations is somewhat difficult to untangle. Interracial revivals occurred but, by the late 19th century, the American Holiness movement began to segregate in ways similar to other Protestant faiths. Although they shared many of the foundational insights of African American and White religious leaders, the denominations would grow apart over the course of the 20th century. Denominations created by the Holiness-Pentecostal faithful are Church of God, United Holy Church of America, Inc., Church of God in Christ, Church of the Living God, and Church of Christ Holiness, all of which are comprised of African American churches. The

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[202] Philip Stanley & *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, "James Solomon Russell (1857–1935)," *Virginia Encyclopedia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/russell-james-solomon-1857-1935).

[203] Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, eds., *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, A User Friendly Reference for Episcopalians* (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2000), as cited at "Saint" at "An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church," https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/saint and at "Lesser Feasts and Fasts" at https://www.episcopalchurch.org/glossary/lesser-feasts-and-fasts-the-lff//. In 1996, the Diocese of Southern Virginia named him a local saint in recognition of his ministry to the community. In 2015, the Episcopal Church included Russell on its denominational calendar of saints and in its publication, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*, used for devotion or catechism and for public worship services throughout the church. James Solomon Russell's feast day is March 28.The term "local saint" means that, in accordance with church doctrine, such individuals are recognized first at the lower level and, over time, by higher levels of the church.

[204] Such reforms are part of the larger "Restoration Movement" that swept across many Protestant denominations and argued for reunification of all Christians under teachings of the New Testament. While historically significant in the history of American religion, the Restoration Movement is not within the scope of this MPD as of this writing.

[205] John Spain, "St. John's United Holy Church of America, Inc.," National Register nomination, June 2024, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-7209/, p. 10.

[206] "African-American Pentecostal and Holiness collection 1876-1989," Collection Overview, The New York Public Library Archives & Manuscripts, no date, https://archives.nypl.org/scm/20946#descriptive_identity; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 76-78.

[207] "African-American Pentecostal and Holiness collection 1876-1989," Collection Overview, The New York Public Library Archives & Manuscripts, no date, https://archives.nypl.org/scm/20946#descriptive_identity.

Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Holiness Church, and Pentecostal Free-Will Baptist are historically White churches.[208]

United Holy Church of America, Inc., 1886

The United Holy Church of America, dating to 1886, is thought to be the earliest African-American Holiness church founded between the 1880s-1900s. The faith traces its origin to Method, North Carolina, and a camp meeting led by the Reverend Isaac Cheshier in May 1886. Many attendees left their churches to participate in the Holiness movement. On October 13, 1894, Cheshier led what was recorded as the church's "first Convocation" in Durham, North Carolina, and included G.A. Mials, H.C. Snipes, S.S. Freeman, G.W. Roberts, and L.M. Mason. During the meeting, agreements were made to create a new faith, originally known as the Church of North Carolina, then the Holy Church of North Carolina and Virginia. Durham was chosen as the church's official headquarters. In October 1900, during a convention called by the Reverend C.C. Craig, a "Discipline for the Government of the Churches" was prepared by H.C. Pettiford, H.C. Snipes, L.M. Mason, G.W. Roberts, Mrs. Emma E. Craig, and Mrs. L.J. Roberts. In September 1916, a new name, The United Holy Church of America was selected and the church incorporated two years later. In 1920, the Northern District Convocation, the first of several districts, was established in Philadelphia by Bishop H.L. Fisher and Bishop G.J. Branch with other general officers. At this point, the faith's original churches were organized into the Southern District, which included Virginia.[209]

To date, just one United Holy Church of America, Inc., church in Virginia has been listed in the NRHP and VLR. St. John's United Holy Church of America, Inc. (NRHP SG100010723; 127-7209) in the city of Richmond began in 1915 when Reverend William Fountain and his wife preached on the corner of 17th and Franklin streets. The couple had moved to Richmond from Manchester on the south side of the James River. With the aid of new congregants, the couple established a church and purchased a property at 29th and M streets for services. The congregation purchased a second parcel on the east side of North 28th Street, where they erected a sanctuary in 1931. Congregational history indicates it was the first new church in the city to be built by a Black Pentecostal Church. The original frame sanctuary was replaced by the extant brick sanctuary during the 1930s.[210]

Church of God in Christ, 1897

Charles Harrison Mason, an African American born in Tennessee, founded the Church of God in Christ denomination. A Baptist, he had been called to preach at a young age and graduated from the Minister's Institute of the Arkansas Baptist Church in 1895. Mason and fellow Baptist preacher, Charles Price Jones of Mississippi, preached together at camp meetings, during which they emphasized Holiness doctrine. Although attendees received their teachings well, the two preachers were expelled from the State Baptist Association. Mason founded a new denomination that he called the Church of God. After returning to Tennessee in 1897, he

[208] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 77-79.
[209] "Church History," United Holy Church of America, Inc., no date, http://www.uhcainc.org/about-us/#; "United Holy Church of America, Inc.," Holy Temple Church, 2024, https://www.holytemplechurch.net/about/uhc/.
[210] John Spain, "St. John's United Holy Church of America, Inc.," National Register nomination, June 2024, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-7209/, p. 11.

incorporated the organization with the name Church of God in Christ (COGIC).[211] During the 20th century, COGIC grew to be one of the most popular Holiness-Pentecostal faiths among Virginia's African Americans.

Roman Catholic Church and St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart

Although African Americans have generally comprised a small percentage of Roman Catholic Church members in Virginia, African American parishioners have attended the church since at least the 1840s. In Norfolk, by 1842, African Americans were among the congregants at St. Patrick's Catholic Church. Records from 1886 state that Black Catholics were assigned to a segregated section of the choir of St. Mary's for worship. St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart (often known as the "Josephites") founded in England in 1866 with the intention of aiding African Americans, sent its first contingent to the U.S.; during the 1890s, the Josephites became an independent American Catholic order. In September 1889, they founded the parish of St. Joseph in Norfolk to serve the city's emancipated African Americans. Eight hundred people were baptized and over five hundred converted in the parish's first twenty-five years. In May 1893, a church and its associated elementary and high school were dedicated in a two story brick building. St. Joseph's School had the city's first high school marching band. Their football team, the Praying Saints would later be chief rivals with Norfolk's segregated Booker T. Washington High School. The congregation moved into the former Cumberland Street Methodist Church on Freemason Street in 1932 and remained an all-Black church into the early 1960s. At this time, downtown Norfolk was in the midst of a long period of Urban Renewal that caused demolition of thousands of dwellings and dislocation of numerous residents, with African American neighborhoods disproportionately affected. The Catholic diocese sold St. Joseph's church and school to the City of Norfolk for demolition. The money funded an expanded St. Mary's Academy, including construction of a 1963 school building, and bolstered capacity for St. Mary's Church to receive many new members. In 1961, Catholic officials assigned the St. Joseph's congregation to St. Mary's, essentially merging congregations. Occurring at the height of the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement, the merger created substantial friction among those who welcomed the changes and those who resisted. Some African American members were disappointed that a new St. Joseph's would not be built. As the surrounding neighborhood shifted primarily to an African American population, most White members left for churches closer to where they lived in the suburbs. Priests assigned to St. Mary's continued to be White until 1975 when Father Walter C. Barrett became its first African American associate pastor. Other St. Joseph's parishes were established in Virginia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including in the cities of Alexandria and Richmond, and in Arlington County.[212]

Access to high school education for African Americans was exceedingly rare in Virginia at the time. Private Catholic high schools that taught African American students occasionally accepted non-Catholic students. The most famous of these were St. Francis de Sales School for Girls and St. Emma's Military Academy, both located in Powhatan County. Katharine (née Catherine Marie) Drexel, founder of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People in 1893, purchased the land for St. Francis de Sales School using funds from her personal fortune. Primarily intended to provide educational opportunities to African American women, the school also accepted Native American women. The adjacent St. Emma Industrial and Agricultural College (later renamed St. Emma's Military Academy) opened in January 1895. Louise Drexel Morrell, who

[211] Charles Harrison Mason Founders Celebration, "About Bishop C.H. Mason," Church of God in Christ, Inc., 2017, https://www.cogic.org/foundersweek/about-c-h-mason/.

[212] Marcus R. Pollard, "St. Mary's Church 2019 Update," National Register additional documentation, August 25, 2017, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/122-0024/, p. 13. In celebration of recently completed renovations and its historically significant status in the region, St. Mary's was declared a Minor Basilica on December 8, 1991, the 250th anniversary of the parish. It was the first majority African American basilica in the United States and is one of only five predominantly African American Catholic parish communities within the 135 parishes of Richmond Diocese.

was Katharine Drexel's sister, and husband, Edward de Veaux Morrell sponsored St. Emma's with their personal fortune. Both schools quickly came to be highly regarded for their academic rigor and extensive coursework. Students from throughout the U.S. attended the schools, although the majority of them came from Virginia and other southern states. Both closed during the early 1970s as school desegregation created new educational opportunities for African American students.[213]

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Churches of Christ, c. 1835, 1917

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Churches of Christ are linked by shared heritage in the Stone-Campbell Movement, named after the primary founders of this branch of Christianity. In Kentucky, Barton Warren Stone (1772-1844) was a Presbyterian minister and, in Pennsylvania and today's West Virginia, father-and-son pastors Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) championed the idea of "one Church of Christ upon earth." Stone and the Campbells were important figures in the Second Great Awakening that occurred c. 1795-c. 1835. Religious scholars place Stone and the Campbells among the theologians who founded "primitivism," which emphasized the New Testament's teachings. Similar to the First Great Awakening, both White and African American people participated in the religious fervor.[214] Three faith traditions with similar names, but distinct histories, are associated with Stone-Campbell churches: Disciples of Christ (Disciples of Christ), Churches of Christ, and Christian Churches/ Churches of Christ. Although rooted in Stone-Campbell teachings, the three traditions often disagreed with one another. The Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ built a strong presence among Virginia's African Americans during the late 19th to early 20th century. Adherents largely avoid use of the term "denomination," preferring "Protestant free-church." Three tenets of these churches are that "individual congregations are … the pinnacle of church expression, are independent/autonomous organizations, and advocate the separation of church and state."[215]

Churches associated with the Stone-Campbell Movement included congregations with African American and White members. As was typical of antebellum churches, those in the South were controlled by White clergy. Black men could be elected "exhorters," permitted to preach to African Americans if the gathering was under White supervisions. They could also be elected deacons, and serve disciplinary and administrative functions pertinent to Black congregants. Independent African American congregations also included elders and board members. During and after the Civil War, most interracial congregations in the South divided into all-White and all-Black churches. During Reconstruction, the Disciples of Christ joined in the general effort by private religious organizations to establish schools for freedpeople, with its Christian Woman's Board of Missions, organized in 1874, taking a leading role. Converts also were welcomed to existing and newly forming congregations.[216]

The Disciples of Christ met with immense success in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina and, after 1900, began to grow in popularity in Virginia, too. The current Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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[213] For a detailed history of St. Emma's and St. Francis de Sales, see Victoria Leonard, Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Kayla Halberg, "Belmead Boundary Increase 2024," National Register additional documentation, June 2024, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/072-0049/.

[214] "A Brief History of the Stone-Campbell Tradition," Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 2025, https://discipleshistory.org/history/.

[215] "A Brief History of the Stone-Campbell Tradition," Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 2025, https://discipleshistory.org/history/.

[216] Hap C.S. Lyda, William K. Fox, Edward J. Robinson, W. Ray Kelley, "African Americans in the Movement," originally published in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnavant, and D. Newell Williams, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 11-21; republished with permission at https://discipleshistory.org/wiki/african-americans-in-the-movement/.

traces some of its beginnings to 1917, when Preston Taylor, minister of the local Gay Street Christian Church, led African American congregants in founding the National Christian Missionary Convention (NCMC). The group organized separately from White members of the Disciples of Christ in order to exercise their independence and foster their own spiritual needs. With Jim Crow segregation enshrined in state and local laws across the country, such self-segregation often was the best means for Black people to maintain autonomy of spirituality and worship practices. Between the 1940s-1960s, a process of integration began, with the NCMC voting in 1944 to expand their partnership with the United Christian Missionary Society; desegregation of congregations during the 1960s; and reorganization of a fully integrated Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1969.[217]

The Churches of Christ saw a similar period of growth among African American communities during the early 20th century, which has been traced through contributions of writers and ministers. Tennesseans S. W. Womack and Alexander Cleveland Campbell, who collaborated on production of the "colored page" of the Churches of Christ publication, *Gospel Advocate,* brought Black voices into the faith's many activities, while Samuel Robert Cassius (1853-1931) traveled throughout the North, Midwest, and West writing stories for the *Gospel Advocate* and *Christian Leader*, among others. In 1907, George Philip Bowser, a preacher and journeyman printer, opened a school in Nashville, Tennessee, for education of clergy and lay members, while also publishing the church's first Black-owned periodical, the *Christian Echo*. Marshall Keeble, who began his long career preaching in Nashville, received financial support to become a nationally-known, traveling evangelist. Keeble successfully established numerous Black congregations and conducted baptisms during his travels. By the early 1940s, Keeble presided over the Nashville Christian Institute, which served African American preachers and church workers. From 1939 to 1950, Keeble served as an editor of *Christian Counselor*, published by the Gospel Advocate Company. By 1945, the Churches of Christ included 103 Black clergymen nationwide. During the late 1940s, the church's Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, was founded, and today remains a predominantly Black college.[218]

From Jim Crow to World War II, 1902-1945

White Opposition Hardens into Law

For Virginia's African Americans, the recalcitrance of White citizens toward racial equality remained an obstacle throughout Reconstruction. As early as 1866, over the vocal objections of political opponents, the conservative White majority in the General Assembly passed a series of laws, known as "Black Codes." Their purpose was identical to antebellum- and colonial-era laws designed to force individuals of African descent into permanent lower legal status.[219] African American political leaders and their White allies fought to retain the civil rights that African Americans were imbued with by the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution. The Black Codes were abrogated by the 1870 constitution that Virginia ratified as a condition for rejoining the

[217] Mark G. Toulouse, "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ," originally published in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnavant, and D. Newell Williams, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 178-183; republished with permission at https://discipleshistory.org/wiki/christian-church-disciples-of-christ/. In 1970, Black Disciples formed the National Convocation of the Christian Church, which continues to meet biennially to address needs specific to their African American congregants.

[218] Thomas H. Olbricht, "Churches of Christ," originally published in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnavant, and D. Newell Williams, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 213-220; republished with permission at https://discipleshistory.org/wiki/churches-of-christ/; Keith Huey, "American Origins of Churches of Christ," Rochester Christian University, 2024, https://rcu.edu/american-origins-of-churches-of-christ/.

[219] For in-depth discussion of Virginia's complicated political realm between 1865-1880, see Jane Dailey, *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

U.S. Between 1779-1884, the Readjuster Party succeeded in passing additional civil rights protections for African Americans; the Readjuster Party was a short-lived offshoot of the Republican Party during Reconstruction. Its name owed to its members' advocacy for "readjusting" Virginia's repayment of debts in order to allocate more public funds to the newly created statewide public school system. During the 1880s, the alliance of Black and White Republicans began to lose ground in both elections and popular opinion.[220] White politicians opposed to racial equality slowly regained the lion's share of power and influence in Virginia's General Assembly.

In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court gave White supremacists a major victory in the *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* case. Introducing the doctrine of "separate but equal" in constitutional law, the court ruled that separate (segregated) public accommodations could be made among Americans based on race. Despite strenuous efforts of Black Americans to protect their civil rights, Southern states began to restructure their laws to include "separate but equal" provisions. Most rewrote their constitutions accordingly, erasing many gains made by Black Americans during Reconstruction. The legal framework of segregation was called "Jim Crow."[221] The ideology enforced White supremacy over African Americans through laws that enforced systemic racial discrimination.[222] In former Confederate states, including Virginia, as Jim Crow segregation became law, acts of intimidation, racial terror, and lynching became common. African Americans were forced into second-class citizenship.[223] Similar discriminatory laws targeted other racial and ethnic groups throughout the United States, not just in the South and, together, comprised a political and legal system that placed White people at the apex of a racial hierarchy.

Virginia's 1902 Constitution

In 1902, conservative White politicians called a constitutional convention in the state capital of Richmond to replace Virginia's Reconstruction Era constitution. Dominated by White elites, they had little interest in the needs and preferences of Black and poor White residents.[224] They drafted a new constitution that enshrined the "separate but equal" doctrine throughout state law. The general public was not provided opportunity to vote on the new constitution. Instead, the political leaders used legal maneuvers to ratify the constitution themselves.

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[220] Brent Tarter, "The Readjuster Party," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/readjuster-party-the. The Readjusters sought to increase Virginia's budgetary appropriations for public schools. To do so, they argued for slowing repayment of debt that Virginia accrued for internal improvement projects prior to the Civil War.

[221] The term "Jim Crow" originated with a racist 19th-century caricature that quickly became a pejorative epithet aimed at Black men. From the late-19th and early 20th century, "Jim Crow" was the appellation given to the segregation and disenfranchisement laws that were being enacted across the country, especially in the former Confederate states, including Virginia. Jim Crow segregation ended during the 1960s with the successes of the Long Civil Rights Movement, notably passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Fair Housing Act of 1968. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall is credited with originating the term "Long Civil Rights Movement" in the article, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History*, March 2005, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/ows/seminars/tcentury/movinglr/longcivilrights.pdf pp. 1233-1263. The origins of the "Long" Civil Rights Movement extend back to the colonial era when enslaved Africans sought freedom through various means and resisted the imposition of legally-justified lifelong, heritable enslavement. Further information about the "Long" Movement can be found in the webinar series by the Michigan Council for the Social Studies at https://mcssmi.org/The-Long-Civil-Rights-Movement.

[222] *Driving While Black: Race, Space, and Mobility in America*, a 2020 film directed by Ric Burns and Gretchen Sorin.

[223] "Reconstructing Citizenship," National Museum of African American History and Culture, no date, https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/reconstruction/citizenship.

[224] Susan Breitzer, "Constitutional Convention, Virginia (1901–1902)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/constitutional-convention-virginia-1901-1902; "Jim Crow to Civil Rights in Virginia," Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Learning Resources, Black History, no date, https://virginiahistory.org/learn/jim-crow-civil-rights-virginia/. Detailed discussion of the Jim Crow era is available in J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race Politics and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of Virginia Press, 2002).

Thus began the "Jim Crow" era of segregation in Virginia. Poll taxes and literacy tests were introduced in order to disenfranchise Black voters and poor White voters who could not afford the tax and/or did not know how to read. The 1902 constitution formalized customary racial segregation in all public accommodations, both publicly and privately owned. Disfranchising tens of thousands of voters increased power for the Democratic political machine for decades. The Republican Party, favored by African Americans since the 1860s, was marginalized. During the 1920s, conservative U.S. Senator Harry F. Byrd Sr. began his decades-long dominance of the Democratic machine and used his considerable influence to stymie civil rights progress into the 1960s. Furthermore, the county court system, with officials chosen by local residents, was abolished. The General Assembly was given authority to appoint judges and other local officials, concentrating even more power in the Democratic machine.[225]

In places where Jim Crow became the law of the land, White authorities often exerted considerable energy and attention to dividing public spaces. Virginia was no exception. The long list of segregated spaces in Virginia encompassed schools from the elementary through university level, including facilities for deaf and blind students, public libraries, hospitals, retirement and nursing homes, mental hospitals, orphanages, prisons and juvenile detention facilities, cemeteries, parks, restaurants, hotels, streetcars, trains and train stations, automobile service stations, beaches, theaters, music halls, retail shops, and any other public-serving space that conceivably could be approached by a Black person.[226]

Jim Crow laws had myriad other effects. While the early 20th century's rapid technological advances brought modern infrastructure to White business districts and neighborhoods, including telephones, electricity, public water and sewers, and paved streets and sidewalks, Black neighborhoods and communities often were overlooked by local governments dominated by Whites.[227] In Richmond's suburban "West End," Westwood was founded in 1876 by emancipated African Americans. The community took root around Westwood Baptist Church. From the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century, numerous suburban developments, all restricted to White residents, surrounded the community. All were equipped with modern utilities and infrastructure, but the City of Richmond did not extend these public services to Westwood itself.[228]

Some of the worst effects of the Jim Crow era played out in Virginia's segregated public schools. The intrinsic inequality of racially segregated schools and the continued suppression of Black Virginians' civil rights meant that Black schools received a fraction of the public funds White schools did. Along with inadequate schoolhouses, Virginia's Black students and teachers contended with "plain backless benches, crude, homemade double desks, and badly abused, discarded desks from white schools… And there is a general

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[225] Susan Breitzer, "Constitutional Convention, Virginia (1901–1902)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/constitutional-convention-virginia-1901-1902.

[226] Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," *The Public Historian* Vol. 27 No. 4 (Fall 2005), p. 15. Although no federal laws were passed requiring racial segregation, federal authorities permitted states to pass laws that restricted access to federally-owned property, such as national parks, and federal employees enforced such laws at these properties. For more information about segregation in Virginia's national parks, see Erin Krutko Devlin, *Segregation in Virginia's National Parks* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, July 2022), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-I29-PURL-gpo195366/pdf/GOVPUB-I29-PURL-gpo195366.pdf. A story map on this topic is at https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/segregation-in-virginia-national-parks-1916-to-1965.htm.

[227] J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race Politics and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 50.

[228] Selden Richardson, *Built by Blacks: African American Architecture and Neighborhoods in Richmond* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008), p. 132-141. During the mid-twentieth-century, Westwood also survived attempts by City officials to justify its destruction for the creation of a municipal park. The neighborhood received a state historical highway marker summarizing its significance in 2021.

absence of window shades, maps, charts, globes, supplementary reading material, a sufficient amount of blackboard, and such other aids as are commonly necessary to make school work effective."[229] Older generations understood that education was crucial to improving their own and their children's lives. Black communities all across Virginia organized and advocated for their schools. Community representatives repeatedly and skillfully negotiated with local school districts, almost all managed exclusively by White administrators, to steer as much investment as possible toward Black schools. Black communities also held private fundraisers to purchase equipment and for maintenance. They met the requirements of private philanthropic educational programs to obtain grants and other types of support. The Rosenwald Fund, for example, required the locality and the Black community each to raise one-third of the funds needed to build a school, with the remainder supplied by the Fund. Fundraising rallies, church donations, and special dinners were among the tactics used. These built community and social cohesion while improving neighborhood schools. [230]

Individuals also pitched in to provide education. In Mecklenburg County, the Reverend George Douglas Wharton led Wharton Memorial Baptist Church (NRHP SG100006387; 058-5127), which was renamed in his honor. Pastor from 1897-1932, Wharton helped to found an elementary school on property donated by the church, operated a store for Black patrons, and owned a land company to facilitate pooling of resources so that local African Americans could purchase land.[231] The oratorical and pastoring skills of Black individuals made them effective advocates both for their communities' spiritual and temporal needs.

Churches Become Alternative Government Spaces

The abrogation of Black Virginians' civil rights through Jim Crow forced them to create autonomous civic, social, religious, educational, and economic spaces to meet their needs. Church sanctuaries in the countryside, towns, and cities served all of these purposes as they were the beating heart of many African American communities. Church members came together weekly to worship and pray; the denial of such sacred rights remained within the living memory of surviving emancipated people. Sanctuaries had space for large, secular meetings. In rural areas, they often were the only place with enough space. The interiors were arranged and furnished to accommodate speakers, had seats for audiences, and room for attendees to circulate. They were places where Black residents felt valued and cherished, offering comfort during discussions of distressing topics.

White government and law enforcement officials were somewhat respectful of the sanctity of Black churches, largely because of the political tradition known as the "Virginia Way." Starting during Reconstruction, Virginia's White elites had prided themselves on maintaining peaceful, cooperative racial relations. They disdained the violence and racial terror found in the Deep South, considering such acts the work of ignorant, poor White people. Virginia's elites expected decorous communication with African Americans, but also required that White supremacy remain in place. As Christian leaders in their communities, Black pastors and

[229] M. V. O'Shea, *Public Education in Virginia: Report to the Educational Commission of Virginia of a Survey of the Public Educational System of the State* (Richmond: Davis Bottom, Superintendent Public Printing, 1928), p. 284.
[230] Bryan Clark Green, "Rosenwald Schools in Virginia (012-5041)," Multiple Property Documentation Form, June 30, 2007, On file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, www.dhr.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/012-5041_Rosenwald_Schools_2004_NRHP_MPD_FINAL.pdf. In addition to this MPD, nominations of historically African American schools are facilitated by the African American Schools in Virginia MPD, approval pending as of February 2025.
[231] Janet Pines Robinson, Gray O'Dwyer, and Marc C. Wagner, "Averett School and Wharton Memorial Baptist Church and Cemetery," National Register nomination, November 8, 2020, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/058-5127/, p. 16-17, 20. Wharton Memorial Baptist Church is discussed in greater detail in Section F as a representative example of a rural church-related historic district.

deacons were accorded a measure of respect. Successfully navigating such relationships required considerable courage, skillful negotiating skills, and political acumen on the part of African Americans. However, the Virginia Way did not prevent racial terrorism in the Commonwealth. Lynching, arson, and other acts of vigilante violence occurred; it is impossible to know the full extent of the violence because White officials did not record all of the crimes.[232]

Shiloh Baptist Church (NRHP SG100001852; 259-0162-0007) in Middleburg, Loudoun County, represents the many roles African American churches and their leaders played from Reconstruction into the mid-20th century. The Reverend Leland Warring and eight congregants formed Shiloh Baptist Church in 1867, and Warring was pastor for the next 20 years. His successor, Reverend Richard P. Dawson, held the position for 46 years. Under his leadership, a sanctuary was erected in 1911 that still stands today. The church organized a Deacon Board, Men's Club, and Women's Auxiliary. During the 1920s, the Reverend George W. Coleman expanded programming to include an Usher Board, Missionary Society, and Junior Choir. Throughout, church members, along with the local Odd Fellows fraternal order, supported surrounding underfunded African American public schools. They contributed substantially to build schoolhouses and provide transportation for students at their own expense. The Shiloh Baptist Church's trustees registered with the Loudoun County Court for the first time, to secure title to the church's property in accordance with state law.[233]

In an oral history interview, James Grimstead, Chairman of the James Solomon Russell-Saint Paul's College Museum and Archives, recalled how Churches served many needs in their communities:

> "…all of the churches that I was involved with had food banks, they had soup kitchens. They also provided community programs such as musical programs, community concerts where people could just come and they didn't have to worry about paying but they could just come and get a bit of what the community had to offer…"[234]

Both of these examples demonstrate that the multifaceted cultural significance of African American churches was a lynchpin in community wellbeing during the segregation era. As alternative government spaces, churches served the needs of congregation members and the wider community in the spiritual, cultural, and civil realms.

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[232] In-depth analysis of the "Virginia Way" is available online by Emily A. Martin Cochran, *"It Seemed Like Reaching for the Moon": Southside Virginia's Civil Rights Struggle Against the Virginia Way, 1951-1964,* Ph.D. dissertation, 2021, University of South Carolina, https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7244&context=etd. Regarding a White elite's defense of the "Virginia Way" see, for example, *Richmond News Leader*, "Not the Virginia Way. (February 9, 1926)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 9, 2021, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/primary-documents/not-the-virginia-way-february-9-1926/.

[233] Judith James and Gerri Nelson, "Shiloh Baptist Church," National Register nomination, May 31, 2017, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/259-0162-0007/, p. 11-12. Because religious properties and cemeteries are not subject to property taxes, local governments historically did not track changes in ownership over time. The lack of such records often causes difficulties with ascertaining current property ownership and obtaining clear title. Equally important, recording property ownership in legal documents was another highly fraught aspect of the Jim Crow era. Unscrupulous White government officials weaponized legal processes to deprive African Americans and Virginia's resident Native American tribes of their property rather than recorded their ownership. Therefore, rather than risk being cheated out of their property, many African Americans avoiding having wills, deeds, and other legal documents recorded at their local government. Instead, they left property to heirs, which is a legally accepted practice but can lead to multiple people claiming ownership and, again, deprive ownership to so those entitled. For a detailed analysis of these issues, along with recommendations for remedies, see Ja'Lia Taylor and John R. Lewis, "The Forgotten People: Honoring the Voices of Black Rural Americans," The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, 2024, https://www.cbcfinc.org/capstones/economic-opportunity/the-forgotten-people-honoring-the-voices-of-black-rural-americans.

[234] James Grimstead, oral history interview with One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, December 20, 2024.

Individual church members were important civil rights advocates. Business owner John Wesley Wanzer was a leader in many arenas. He helped to found the Loudoun Countywide League and served as its president. He founded a chapter of the NAACP and served trustee of the local Odd Fellows lodge. In the 1910s, Black Virginians organized countywide leagues to raise funds, serve as community forums, undertake advocacy campaigns, and martial efforts toward communal goals. The organizations became training grounds for community leaders who ran yearslong campaigns to wrest concessions from school officials. Countywide Leagues arrived in most Black communities before the NAACP; their memberships often overlapped. In 1939, Wanzer led the Countywide League's Board of Trustees in an attempt to purchase land for a high school. The County School Board had neglected to build a secondary school for Black students. White people boycotted Wanzer's businesses; financial and economic threats often used against African American civil rights leaders. Undaunted, Loudoun's Countywide League held its first "Negro History Week" at Shiloh Baptist Church the following year.

Black clergymen possessed the skills to help peers navigate the political and legal options available to them after Jim Crow laws permeated Virginia. They often were among the best educated members of their communities, were used to leading, and had experience managing congregations. As is explained above, after religious sustenance, education was one of the most important functions of the Black Church.[235] The career of Reverend Beatrice Henry Hester (1895-1972), a relentless advocate for civil rights and education, illuminates the interconnections that typified African American churches, schools, and civil rights advocacy during the Jim Crow era. Upon completing a divinity degree at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Hester became pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) in Fredericksburg. During the 1920s, Hester hosted adult literacy classes to help African Americans register to vote, although discriminatory practices still prevented most Black Virginians from successfully registering and voting. Hester did not hesitate to call out government officials and departments for discriminating against Black Fredericksburg residents. From 1925-c. 1928, Hester published a weekly newspaper, *Shiloh Herald*, decrying in fiery editorials voter suppression, lack of educational opportunities, and violence against African Americans. Nationally-known African American activists, including W. E. B. DuBois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Thomas Calhoun Walker, and the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., spoke at the church during Hester's tenure. Hester taught at the private Fredericksburg Normal and Industrial Institute, also known as Mayfield High School. Established in 1905, in part due to the leadership of Shiloh's previous pastor, the Reverend James E. Brown, the school provided the only high school classes available to Black students in the city and surrounding counties. During Hester's time, the school was absorbed into the local public school system.[236]. Through the leadership of charismatic, dedicated, and energetic individuals like Hester, Black communities organized and mobilized intertwined campaigns to promote education and civil rights that eventually brought down every excuse for "separate but equal" schooling in Virginia.

As opportunities to access secondary and advanced education became available to Black students, churches once again organized support networks for their children and schools. In oral histories provided for this MPD, Louise Crockett and Patricia Austin recounted how the Wytheville Training School (139-0025) in Wythe County provided high school classes for their region when the public schools for Black children only offered

[235] Antonio Bly, "Literacy and Education of the Enslaved in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/slave-literacy-and-education-in-virginia. The 1860 literacy rate includes free people of color and enslaved African Americans.

[236] Heather Dollins Staton and Mark Olson, "Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site)," National Register nomination, May 2015, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/111-0096/, p. 20-24. The *Shiloh Herald* likely fell victim to the onset of the Great Depression. The church was listed in the National Register and the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2015.

education through seventh grade. The school was located on the same site as a Freedmen's Bureau school since the 1860s. Built in 1883 and originally named the Wytheville Colored Normal Institute, the schoolhouse remained in continuous use for more than 80 years. In 1926, the school was reclassified as a county training school. Such schools offered high school academic coursework as well as vocational training classes. Students from Grayson, Carroll, Bland, and Wythe counties attended the school; at this time, local school boards often entered agreements to support a "regional" high school to minimize operational costs. This parsimonious tactic made it difficult for many Black children to attend high school, particularly if the school was not within their home community. However, obtaining a high school diploma gave students access to better careers and a path to higher education, which prompted Black families and communities to go to great lengths to make such opportunities available to their children. The neighboring Bethel AME and Franklin Street United Methodist churches would work together to make the students feel at home throughout the school year by hosting suppers and seeing to their needs. The four-room training school held all its large programs, including its Baccalaureate graduation ceremonies, at Bethel AME Church (139-0028), which could seat more than 500 persons, while the school provided a venue for social and community events. Communal support for students to attend college also occurred, with church congregations among the organizations to provide financial contributions. Many alumni who have collaborated with research for this MPD remember their home churches taking up collections to aid with purchases of books, transportation, and other needs of college-bound students. When the college graduates moved away to pursue careers, they made sure to return to these churches for annual homecomings and to donate money back to their churches, thus creating intergenerational cycles of mutual support.[237]

Churches as Spaces for Resistance

Continuing practices that began during Reconstruction, African American churches maintained and even expanded their considerable material and financial support of public schools, especially in underfunded rural school districts. The tenacity with which Black congregations marshaled support for their schools demonstrated their refusal to accept the inferior status that the Jim Crow era demanded of them. The sanctified role of churches in Virginia culture uniquely positioned them to organize resistance against White supremacy and to support schooling for Black children. White supremacists may have believed they were on the winning side by denying African Americans their rightful share of public resources, yet the resistance of African American churches assured that essential resources were directed to Black students and that those children would grow up knowing they and their education were valued by their elders. Community cohesiveness around education contributed significantly to the civil rights victories of the 20th century. Even when violence was directed at churches and church members, and the long, hard grind of racism became overwhelming, the Black Church provided spiritual renewal and support.

In Princess Anne County (now part of the City of Virginia Beach), Pleasant Ridge School (NRHP SG100010898; 134-0399) opened in 1918 alongside the Asbury Christian Fellowship Church. Previously a schoolhouse for White children, the one-room building was moved on site to replace an earlier school that had burned.[238] Rowena T. McFadden, a teacher from 1936-1946, recounted that the school had a tin stove and brick chimney in the center of the room; students maintained the supply of wood, tended the fire, and helped with chores. The stove was replaced every year. Water was provided in a bucket placed on the bookshelf at the back

[237] Patricia Austin and Louise Crockett, oral history interview, One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, January 13, 2025.

[238] *Deed and Will Books, Princess Anne County, Virginia*, #61, p.234: September 4, 1886; Henley, *Glimpses of Down-County History*, 130-32. Because wood- and coal-burning stoves were used to heat rural African American schools, most of which were frame construction, fires at schoolhouses were not unusual. Schools, however, also were targeted by vigilantes seeking to intimidate African American communities.

of the room. The students sat five to a bench, their desks the back of the bench in front. Before electrical wiring was installed during the early 1940s, the only light shone through the building's large windows. Outside, privies were erected according to the period's sanitation guidance. To alleviate overcrowding and redress the high student-to-teacher ratio, younger students attended school in the morning, until eleven o'clock, and older students from eleven to three o'clock. Approximately twenty-five students were at each school session. The staggered schedule meant that the children received half as much instruction that White students received. The school year ran from September to June, although students often were absent when helping their families with spring planting and fall harvesting, or working for pay on other local farms. Indicative of the community's socioeconomic status, about half of the Pleasant Ridge students could not afford school supplies or books.[239]

A 1983 interview with Reverend Johnnie E. Williams and his wife, Nevia, is an excellent early oral history of Pleasant Ridge. Mr. Williams served as president of the Pleasant Ridge School PTA. He organized a committee of parents to attend a School Board meeting to request a new school; he believed this was part of what led to the construction of the Seaboard Elementary School in 1956. During this time, the curriculum spread from first grade through seventh, with the school term beginning in late September and ending in March, so that children could help their families plant crops. Mrs. Williams remembered some students only arriving at school in mid-October, after the cotton had been picked.[240]

In addition to "the three R's", reading, writing, and arithmetic, students learned domestic skills such as sewing and cooking. On Fridays, there were etiquette programs, and students reviewed the Sunday School lesson. At recess, they played "hide in the woods" or hopscotch. The girls built houses from pine boughs and straw while the boys teased them. Mrs. Williams recounted how students alternated taking the wash bowl towels to be washed and ironed at home, and that her walk to and from school totaled over five miles. Students brought their lunch in pails. Sometimes the teacher brought a hot lunch made by Effie Munden from the farm across Princess Anne Road; Mrs. Munden herself had taught children at Charity Neck School. The Pleasant Ridge School's library consisted of a cabinet that still stands at the back of the schoolhouse today.[241] Pleasant Ridge School continued as a one-room public school until 1956, when all remaining students moved to the new Seaboard Elementary School.

Great Depression, New Deal, and World War II, 1930-1945

The worldwide economic crash known as the Great Depression began during the second half of 1929 with a series of events that caused economic activity to plummet in the U.S. The most infamous was the stock market collapse of October 1929, precipitated by rampant speculation and an unsustainable, rapid increase in stock values. With values far exceeding stocks' worth, investors rushed to sell to avoid losses, but too few were willing to buy at vastly inflated prices. The market collapsed on October 28-29, 1929, sending shock waves

[239] Henley, *Glimpses of Down-County History*, 131-32; Marcus Pollard, Victoria Leonard, Colleen Betti, David Brown, "Pleasant Ridge School Historic District," National Register nomination, December 22, 2023, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/134-0399/, p. 19.
[240] Mary Reid Barrow, "Halls of academia were only one-room," *The Beacon*, January 11/12, 1983, p. 6; Marcus Pollard, Victoria Leonard, Colleen Betti, David Brown, "Pleasant Ridge School Historic District," National Register nomination, December 22, 2023, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/134-0399/, p. 19.
[241] Mary Reid Barrow, "Halls of academia were only one-room," *The Beacon*, January 11/12, 1983, p. 6; Mary Reid Barrow, "Restoring a School, History," *Virginian-Pilot*, November 19, 1997, p. B1; "Schools," *The Virginian-Pilot*, September 14, 1945, p. 34; Marcus Pollard, Victoria Leonard, Colleen Betti, David Brown, "Pleasant Ridge School Historic District," National Register nomination, December 22, 2023, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/134-0399/, p. 20. The 1945 article described Pleasant Ridge School as being "a one-room school with grades one through three," serving a total of twenty-five pupils, five fewer than the year before.

throughout the U.S. economy and soon spreading internationally. Economic conditions worsened during 1930-1931 as a series of regional "panics" caused banks to fail and bank customers to lose their life savings. The frozen financial markets paralyzed economic activity across the U.S. and forced a steep decline in industry and commerce, leading to widespread unemployment.

Elected to the U.S. presidency in 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt had campaigned on the promise to end the Great Depression by offering a "New Deal" to Americans. Following his March 1933 inauguration, Roosevelt introduced a plan deploying the federal government's resources on several fronts to jumpstart the national economy. "Work-relief" programs were a central component of the New Deal. They included the Public Works Administration, Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, Federal Writers Project, Federal Works Agency, Social Security Administration, and others to replace the millions of lost jobs caused by the Depression. Through "work-relief," federal administrators averred that employment and a fair wage would build American morale more effectively than charitable outlays of food, clothing, and shelter. Importantly, most work-relief projects were designed to benefit the public; these created an investment in American infrastructure that paid dividends for decades afterward. Construction projects, large and small, modernized services, and/or public infrastructure.[242]

While federal policy did not officially sanction racial segregation, neither did federal officials contest these practices. Consequently, African Americans and other underrepresented communities were not served by New Deal-era work-relief programs to the same extent as White communities. In Virginia, public works projects were segregated in multiple ways. With state and local authorities' input, federal agencies that provided funding and administrative oversight selected projects that, for the most part, benefitted only White communities. On school construction projects, the majority of public works funding was spent on White schools. Work-relief labor forces were organized into all-White, all-Black, and other racially based groups, and kept separate from one another even while they worked on the same project. Longstanding, rampant discriminatory practices in Virginia meant fewer African Americans and other underrepresented communities were offered jobs per capita received fewer employment opportunities than White Virginians. Furthermore, jobs offered to them typically were the most difficult and dangerous tasks. Although African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration (WPA), Civil Works Administration, and other agencies built publicly-owned parks, recreational facilities, stadiums, and auditoriums, they were not always granted admittance upon completion.[243] An example is the Norfolk Azalea Garden, which received a WPA grant that employed approximately 200 African American women who created a 25-acre garden in a year using only hand tools. The garden opened in 1938. African Americans were refused entry until the 1960s.[244]

With the exception of some Northern Virginia localities near Washington D.C. where expanding federal employment opportunities helped to buoy the economy, the Great Depression persisted in Virginia until the outbreak of World War II in Europe on September 1, 1939. Despite a widespread isolationist movement in the U.S., the war brought about sudden and prolonged demand for defense industry workers at Hampton Roads shipbuilding facilities and at chemical and munitions plants in other parts of the Commonwealth. The following

[242] Ronald L. Heinemann, *Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion (*Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), p. 34-39, 94, 99.
[243] Ronald L. Heinemann, *Depression and New Deal in Virginia: The Enduring Dominion (*Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), p. 82-83, 185.
[244] Nate Code, "Land and Labor Acknowledgement Statements," Norfolk Botanical Garden, March 24, 2023, https://norfolkbotanicalgarden.org/garden-for-all/.

September, the U.S. instituted a draft that pulled massive numbers of military personnel to Virginia and created new impetus for modernizing Virginians' lives.[245]

The war years brought new challenges to African American churches, particularly those in areas with a rapidly expanding federal installation. In York County, the Rev. Frank E. Segar, pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church (NRHP RS100008134; 099-5091) from 1926-1967, led the congregation through a difficult period when the U.S. government condemned the church's property to establish Camp Peary in 1943. The rural congregation raised money to acquire a new parcel and to build a new church; some materials were salvaged from its previous sanctuary, a necessity due to wartime rationing of construction materials. Segar also was a member of the York-James City-Williamsburg Branch of the NAACP, the Countywide League that advocated for school improvements, the Tidewater Baptist Ministers' Association, and the Order of Good Samaritans, a temperance organization. His multiple leadership roles were typical of his peers and demonstrates that people like him impacted many aspects of community life.[246] In Fairfax County, Woodlawn Methodist Church had to relocate when Fort Belvoir expanded. The congregation voted to move to the nearby Gum Springs community, with which it had longtime historic and kinship ties. The church left behind its historic cemetery, one that remains in use but within a highly secure military base that is much harder for the public to access than in previous decades.[247]

Many Americans went to war with the slogan of "battling to protect democracy." African Americans saw opportunities to organize efforts to register voters. Luther P. Jackson, a significant civil rights activist and researcher associated with the Virginia Voters League, organized voter registration drives in various parts of Virginia. He often worked with African American and White pastors, such as the Reverend J. A. Carter, whose pastoral duties required travel throughout rural Campbell, Appomattox, and Prince Edward counties, the Reverend H. W. McNair in Amelia County, and the Reverend Charles C. Webber, who also was a union member and worked with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, in the city of Richmond.[248] Church sanctuaries, Sunday school classrooms, and fellowship halls served as classrooms where Black residents were taught how to fill out a voter registration application and what to expect of "literacy tests" and other methods used to deny them the right to vote. Community organizers advertised these efforts as citizenship education, a topic of public concern during World War II when the Allies stood against the totalitarian Axis Powers. During the 1950s, "citizenship schools" were more formally organized by Esau Jenkins and Septima Clark of South Carolina with support of the Highland Folk School in Tennessee. Citizenship schools were held in churches throughout the South.[249]

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[245] The war's Black veterans came home well equipped to organize and participate in civil rights actions and, accordingly, were targeted by White supremacist with racist violence. For example, see Bryan Greene, "After Victory in World War II, Black Veterans Continued the Fight for Justice at Home," *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 30, 2021, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/summer-1946-saw-black-wwii-vets-fight-freedom-home-180978538/ and Equal Justice Initiative staff, "Lynching in America: Targeting Black Veterans" (Montgomery, Ala.: Equal Justice Initiative, 2017), https://eji.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/lynching-in-america-targeting-black-veterans-web.pdf.

[246] David Lewes, Elizabeth J. Monroe, and Mary Ruffin Hanbury, "Oak Grove Baptist Church Historic District," National Register nomination, June 2022, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/099-5091/, p. 23.

[247] Kristie L. Person, "Woodlawn Cultural Landscape Historic District," VLR nomination, October 5, 2015, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/029-5181/, p. 47.

[248] Larissa M. Smith, *Where the South Begins: Black Politics and Civil Rights Activism in Virginia, 1930-1951*, Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 2001, p. 180, 240, 252.

[249] "Civil Rights Movement History, 1954, Citizenship Schools (1954-196?)," Civil Right Movement Archive, no date, https://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis54.htm#1954ccs.

Advances Made by the Long Civil Rights Movement

Black Virginians were determined to improve their everyday lives despite the dire straits of the Great Depression and a world war. In 1930, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began charting the legal strategy for the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation. Virginia became a proving ground for important legal arguments. Dr. Charles Hamilton Houston, a legal strategist on the faculty of Howard University's law school, worked directly with African American communities in Loudoun County as he was conceptualizing a plan to undermine the "separate but equal" doctrine by means of public school equalization lawsuits. In 1935, Houston agreed to serve as the NAACP's first general counsel. From this position, he recruited some of the finest legal minds of the period, including Thurgood Marshall, who had been Houston's star student at Howard University. Like many of his peers, Houston worked long hours with single-minded determination. He traveled the country without regard for his safety to document racist practices, including unfair treatment of African Americans in courts, schools, transportation, and other aspects of public life.[250] In 1934, the Virginia State Teachers Association (VSTA), an organization of Black educators, began to coordinate with the NAACP and to seek opportunities for litigation based on vastly unequal salaries paid to Black teachers versus their White counterparts. The intimidation tactics used to prevent African Americans from resisting discrimination meant that those who stepped up to participate in lawsuits had to be courageous and committed to persevering through litigation. Not everyone could withstand the threats to their livelihoods and physical safety.[251] Over the next decade, the *Alston v. Board of Education of the City of Norfolk* became a landmark case in the salary equalization campaign. A similar victory in *Dorothy Roles et al v. School Board of Newport News*, however, led Newport News officials to obfuscate and delay compliance with the ruling until, in 1945, the Newport News School Board was found to be in contempt of court. The costliness of the City's actions prompted some localities to settle similar suits.[252]

The string of legal victories occurred alongside other wartime trends in Virginia. The military and civilian populations of the Hampton Roads region surged, including in Norfolk, Newport News, Hampton, and Portsmouth due to the rapid growth of military bases and defense-related industries. Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia saw similar growth and massive suburbanization, with the 1941-1943 construction of The Pentagon, particularly impactful. Both federal agencies and military installations in around the capitol city expanded in scope and scale. Defense industries sprang up across Virginia, reviving local economies. By the time the war ended in August 1945, Virginia's military-industrial-federal government complex was firmly rooted, and has characterized the Commonwealth since. Black Virginians faced the dissonance of fighting for

[250] For a detailed discussion of Houston's legal strategy, see the African American Schools in Virginia MPD, approval pending as of February 2025, and Larissa M. Smith, *Where the South Begins: Black Politics and Civil Rights Activism in Virginia, 1930-1951*, Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 2001. Hundreds of books and articles have been written about the NAACP's legal tactics between the 1930s-1960s. Among the books that are specific to Virginia are Margaret Edds, *We Face the Dawn: Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and the Legal Team that Dismantled Jim Crow* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018); Brian J. Daugherity, *Keep on Keeping On: The Implementation of* Brown v. Board of Education *in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016); Genna Rae McNeil, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); Oliver White Hill Sr., *The Big Bang: "Brown v. Board of Education" and Beyond; the Autobiography of Oliver W. Hill Sr.*, Jonathan K. Stubbs, ed. (Winter Park, Fla.: Four-G Publishers Inc., 2000); and Matthew Lassiter and Andrew Lewis, eds., *The Moderates' Dilemma: Massive Resistance to School Desegregation in Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

[251] Larissa M. Smith, *Where the South Begins: Black Politics and Civil Rights Activism in Virginia, 1930-1951*, Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 2001, p. 84-85.

[252] Larissa M. Smith, *Where the South Begins: Black Politics and Civil Rights Activism in Virginia, 1930-1951*, Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 2001, p. 88, 125-126; Ada F. Coleman, "The Salary Equalization Movement," *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Spring 1947), p. 240-241; Doxey A. Wilkerson, "The Negro School Movement in Virginia: From 'Equalization' to 'Integration,'" *The Journal of Negro Education,* Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 1960), p. 19.

democracy abroad while facing discrimination, lynching, and racial terror in the U.S. military and on the home front. Many returned home resolved to overturn Jim Crow segregation. More than desegregation, African Americans needed equality to gain full American citizenship and be on equal footing with White Americans in the muddled processes of democracy.

Sheltering Spaces for the Civil Rights Movement, 1946-1968

During and after World War II, the NAACP's use of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment became the keystone to legal cases involving a range of discriminatory practices that impinged on African Americans' civil rights. An example is the 1944 decision, *Steele v. Louisville and Nashville Railroad et. al.*, in which attorney Charles Hamilton Houston's argument rested on an interpretation of the federal Railway Labor Act that required a labor union to represent all employees at a unionized workplace, without regard to race and including non-members of the union. The Supreme Court agreed, on the basis that equal protection was required with regard to labor relations.[253] During the late 1940s, NAACP attorneys tested whether use of racially restrictive covenants in property deeds would be interpreted as a violation of equal protection under the law through three cases, *Shelley v. Kraemer* from Missouri, *McGhee v. Sipes* from Michigan, and *Hurd v. Hodge* from Washington, D.C., were considered by the U.S. Supreme Court. Each case concerned restrictions on sale of private property to African Americans through use of covenants embedded in deeds. The Supreme Court found that such covenants were constitutional because they pertained to private actions but also ruled that state courts could not enforce the covenants as that would be a state action, which the equal protection clause forbade.[254]

In 1946, President Harry S Truman established The President's Committee on Civil Rights. Its charge was to examine how African Americans' constitutional rights could be upheld. Truman was influenced to do so in part by the international human rights movement that emerged during World War II in response to Axis Powers committing crimes against humanity.[255] The committee's December 1947 report, *To Secure These Rights*, documented discrimination nationwide with regard to voting rights, education, housing, and "public accommodations," meaning hotels, restaurants, theaters, and other places open to the public. The report included four essential rights: to "safety and security of the person," to "citizenship and its privileges," to "freedom of conscience and expression," and to "equality of opportunity."[256] Acting upon the committee's recommendations, in July 1948, Truman signed Executive Orders 9980 and 9981 to desegregate, respectively, the federal workforce and all branches of the U.S. military; however, they were given years to complete the process. Truman astonished White supremacists. A grandson of enslavers in the border state of Missouri,

[253] "Charles Hamilton Houston, Lawyer, Architect of the Civil Rights legal strategy: 1895-1950, Americans Who Tell the Truth," 2024, https://americanswhotellthetruth.org/portraits/charles-hamilton-houston/; "Steele v. Louisville Nashville Railroad Co. et al.: Enforcing Non-Discriminatory Representation under the Railway Labor Act," Casemine, 2024, https://www.casemine.com/commentary/us/steele-v.-louisville-nashville-railroad-co.-et-al.:-enforcing-non-discriminatory-representation-under-the-railway-labor-act/view.

[254] "Charles Hamilton Houston: 'The Man Who Killed Jim Crow,'" Harvard & The Legacy of Slavery, Harvard University, 2024, https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/alumni/charles-hamilton-houston; "Charles Hamilton Houston," NAACP, 2024, https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/civil-rights-leaders/charles-hamilton-houston; "Charles Hamilton Houston, Lawyer, Architect of the Civil Rights legal strategy: 1895-1950," Americans Who Tell the Truth, 2024, https://americanswhotellthetruth.org/portraits/charles-hamilton-houston/; DC Historic Preservation Office, "Civil Rights Tour: Legal Campaigns – *Hurd v. Hodge,* Landmark Supreme Court Case," *DC Historic Sites*, 2024, https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/1030; "Shelley v. Kraemer," *Oyez,* 2025, www.oyez.org/cases/1940-1955/334us1.

[255] The international human rights movement included racial equality and encompassed rights of indigenous, ethnic, and religious groups, of women and children, and of individuals, as well as concepts such as intellectual freedom and freedom of conscience.

[256] Charles Erwin Wilson, *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), available online at https://blackfreedom.proquest.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/civilrights1.pdf, p. 6, 8-9.

Truman had brought learned racial prejudices into adulthood and seemed an unlikely harbinger of a new phase in the civil rights struggle.[257]

Southern Democrats, or "Dixiecrats," virulently opposed any civil rights measures for African Americans. A substantial presence in state and local politics in Virginia and other southern states, they joined White Citizens Councils and other "massive resistance" efforts to thwart racial desegregation.[258] By the 1950s, many conservative White Virginians had convinced themselves that the racial equality movement was an international Communist conspiracy.[259] Unlike the more infamous Ku Klux Klan, which historically appealed to working-class White supremacists, White Citizens Councils were composed of White elites: doctors, lawyers, ministers, bankers, politicians, government officials, and businessmen. Originating in Indiana in 1954, White Citizens Councils introduced language that became common tropes for a sanitized White supremacist movement. They emphasized the importance of "states' rights" and "constitutional liberties" as covers to permit White people to continue oppressing African Americans and other minority communities. Anticommunist propaganda also was a commonly deployed tool to attract White supporters. Just as the labor movement had been plagued by accusations of communism since the 19th century, the Long Civil Rights Movement was accused of being a front for international communism, led by the Soviet Union, to allow takeover of the U.S. Copycat organizations sprang up throughout the country, including Virginia. Dr. Hatley Norton Mason, Sr., a respected physician during his lifetime, also was a committed segregationist who participated in the Sons of Confederate Veterans and served as president of the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties, Virginia's version of a White Citizens Council.[260]

Generally speaking, the Long Civil Rights Movement's work during the 1950s-1960s has been somewhat overlooked in the national discourse regarding the Movement's history, successes, leadership, and challenges. Even nationally significant individuals whose Civil Rights activism occurred in Virginia have not always been well recognized. As an example, the University of Richmond describes the Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker as "a major figure in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, as well as a prominent minister, theologian of the black religious tradition, and scholar and composer of black gospel music." [261] Walker's civil rights activism began during his tenure as pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church in Petersburg. The National Register nomination for the William R. McKenney Library (NRHP RS100010351; 123-0009) details Walker's leadership in the desegregation of the Petersburg Public Library and organization of demonstrations at lunch counters.[262] After meeting the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. while he was attending the seminary at Virginia Union University, Walker left Gillfield to become the first full-time executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).[263] Comprised of ministers, preachers, and pastors from throughout

[257] "Harry S Truman and Civil Rights," National Park Service, Harry S Truman National Historic Site, no date, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/TrumanCivilRights_NatlPark.pdf.
[258] "Dixiecrats," *Encyclopedia of Alabama,* 2024, https://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/dixiecrats/.
[259] Adam Dean and Ashley Spivey, "The Virginia History and Textbook Commission," *Encyclopedia Virgini*, September 6, 2022, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/the-virginia-history-and-textbook-commission.
[260] "Civil Rights Movement History, 1954, White Citizens Council Formed (July)," Civil Right Movement Archive, no date, https://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis54.htm#1954wccf; Jay Gaidmore, "A Guide to the Dr. Hatley Norton Mason, Sr., Papers, 1793-1968 (bulk 1952-1968)," Library of Virginia, October 15, 1999, https://www.lva.virginia.gov/findaid/27922.htm.
[261] "Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker," University of Richmond, Boatright Memorial Library, no date, https://library.richmond.edu/collections/rare/walker.html.
[262] Joanna McKnight and LaToya Gray Sparks, "William R. McKenney Library," National Register nomination, December 19, 2023, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/123-0009/, p. 24-27.
[263] "Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker," University of Richmond, Boatright Memorial Library, no date, https://library.richmond.edu/collections/rare/walker.html.

the South, the SCLC was a formidable civil rights organization formed by King and fellow pastoral leaders Fred Shuttlesworth and C. K. Steele. Dedicated to nonviolent resistance methods, the SCLS coordinated local civil rights projects and is emblematic of the significance of African American churches in the Movement. Walker, however, is barely known beyond those with particular interest in the Long Civil Rights Movement.

The SCLC was representative of the significant role of Black churches in the Long Civil Rights Movement, and the deep divisions that existed among religious leaders, congregations, and individual members. Many ministers argued that the proper, primary role of churches was to serve the spiritual needs of their members and communities, and to aid those facing sudden or ongoing challenges due to illness, unemployment, and other problems. Intermingling politics and religion offended many congregants who believed that the two should remain separate in order to preserve the sanctity of their churches and their own spiritual aspirations. Civil rights agitation, they argued, belonged in the courts, not their sanctuaries. King, Shuttlesworth, Walker, Steele, and other Black pastors who held nationally significant positions also were accused of being "radicals" by some politically conservative African Americans, especially those with concerns about potential Communist influences. Countless congregations in places with violent White supremacists rightly feared reprisals against themselves and their institutions were they even suspected of involvement in civil rights activism. This fear divided African Americans and fractured the sense of solidarity, mutual aid, and self-help that had been vital underpinnings through Black history in the U.S.[264]

Yet African American churches, members, and pastors played indubitably significant roles in guiding their communities through the tumult of the 1950s-1960s, just as they had for generations beforehand. With quiet dignity, the congregation of the Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site) (NRHP 15000907, 111-0096) in Fredericksburg made a special collection on Sunday, March 18, 1956, to support the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, that Rosa Parks had provoked on December 1, 1955, when she refused to surrender her bus seat to a White man.[265] In the city of Richmond, the Reverend P. Bernard Walker, pastor from 1950-1961 of Third Street Bethel AME Church (NRHP 75002117; 127-0274) followed in the footsteps of generations of pastors with his community advocacy. He held many leadership roles, serving as chair for the Richmond NAACP chapter's board of directors, as a board member of the all-Black Richmond Community Hospital, and as president of the Maggie L. Walker High School Parent Teacher Association. [266] These four positions embraced the most pressing concerns of many African Americans: their spiritual needs, healthcare, education, and civil rights.

Supporting Students' Activism and Accomplishments

As is discussed in the MPD for African American Schools in Virginia, Black high school students took a leading role in some of the most dramatic and decisive events of the Long Civil Rights Movement's successes during the 1930s-1960s.[267] The first was the student walkout at Robert Russa Moton High School in Farmville, Prince Edward County, led by sixteen-year-old Barbara Johns, niece of nationally-known civil rights activist the

[264] "Civil Rights Movement History, 1957, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Founded (Aug)," Civil Right Movement Archive, no date, https://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis57.htm#1957sclc. The church's involvement in Virginia's Long Civil Rights Movement includes numerous other activities, events, and people; see the nomination for additional information.
[265] Heather Dollins Staton and Mark Olson, "Shiloh Baptist Church (Old Site)," National Register nomination, May 2015, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/111-0096/, p. 27.
[266] Laurie Buck, Elizabeth Lipford, and Lena McDonald, "Third Street Bethel AME Church 2019 Update and Boundary Increase," National Register nomination, April 15, 2019, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-0274/, p. 17.
[267] Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

Reverend Vernon Johns. On Monday, April 23, 1951, students lured school principal Boyd Jones away from school with a pre-arranged phone call. Johns and her compatriots assembled all 450 students and, after requiring teachers to leave, explained their plan for a student strike to protest their school's grossly overcrowded conditions and lack of adequate funding, equipment, and facilities. The students voted to proceed with the strike. That afternoon, the strike committee called the Reverend L. Francis Griffin of First Baptist Church to inform him of their actions. Griffin, a gritty, committed civil rights activist, immediately gave the students contact information for attorney Oliver Hill, the NAACP special counsel for the southeastern region of the United States.[268]

With little patience for the "Virginia Way," Griffin headed the local NAACP branch and served on the Moton Parent Teachers Association (PTA). His frequent appearances at county school board meetings, where he argued for improvements to African American schools, made him a well-known figure to Prince Edward County authorities. Griffin and the church congregation where he pastored, First Baptist Church (NRHP 13000046; 144-0027-0167), offered their sanctuary as a meeting space for the student strikers and NAACP attorneys Spottswood Robinson III and Oliver White Hill. They had traveled from the state capital of Richmond to tell students to call off the strike, as the national NAACP organization was investigating cases in other states in order to file a lawsuit challenging segregated schools. The students' dedication to their cause, which at that time was to equalize schools, persuaded the attorneys that they had found the case they needed. Rather than arguing another case for equalization, however, they decided to press for desegregation of Virginia's schools.[269]

Local and state officials and Virginia's White residents were outraged and contemptuous of the student walkout. African Americans in many communities justifiably feared violent reprisals. The Moton students, still led by Barbara Johns, and the Reverend Griffin remained steadfast. Griffin, in a fierce rebuttal to local critics, said in a sermon at First Baptist Church, "…I don't have a thing and never will have at the price of human dignity. Still, I will have that which no man can take from me, my individual right to think as I choose and inner freedom…"[270] As a measure of his devotion to the cause, Griffin also organized a petition signed by parents of 117 Moton High School students, including his daughter, for a lawsuit to end segregation of local schools. The case, *Dorothy E. Davis, et al. v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, et al.*, named after the first person who signed the petition, was heard by a three-person panel of federal district judges in the city of Richmond in February 1952. Virginia Attorney General J. Lindsay Almond joined the defense team, which also included two lawyers from elite Richmond firms. Robert Carter joined Hill and Robinson to represent the plaintiffs.[271]

Hill immediately made clear that his intention was not to sue for equalization of conditions at Moton High School to that of the local high school for White students. Instead, he would "'demonstrate by evidence the

[268] John Kern and Lena Sweeten McDonald, "First Baptist Church," National Register nomination, October 2012, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/144-0027-0167/, p. 12.
[269] John Kern and Lena Sweeten McDonald, "First Baptist Church," National Register nomination, October 2012, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/144-0027-0167/, p. 12-13; Margaret Edds, *We Face the Dawn: Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and the Legal Team that Dismantled Jim Crow* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), p. 208-210; Jarl K. Jackson and Julie L. Vosmik, "Robert Russa Moton High School," National Historic Landmark nomination, December 1994, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/144-0053/, p. 10-12.
[270] John Kern and Lena Sweeten McDonald, "First Baptist Church," National Register nomination, October 2012, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/144-0027-0167/, p. 13.
[271] Margaret Edds, *We Face the Dawn: Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and the Legal Team that Dismantled Jim Crow* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), p. 216-219.

invalidity of segregation itself."[272] Federal judges Charles Sterling Hutcheson, Armistead Dobie, and Albert V. Bryan, heard the case at the federal district courthouse in downtown Richmond. They ruled that there was "no harm in segregation" for either race.[273] The next year, *Davis v. County School Board* was grouped with four similar lawsuits in other segregated states before the U.S. Supreme Court. Oliver W. Hill and Spottswood Robinson III, along with Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund represented the Prince Edward County plaintiffs. On May 17, 1954, *Davis v. County School Board* and the similar lawsuits were ruled on simultaneously by the U.S. Supreme Court. In a ruling known as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the Supreme Court declared that laws requiring racial segregation in public schools were unconstitutional and instructed that school systems be desegregated "at all deliberate speed."[274]

With the support of Griffin and First Baptist Church, the Moton students' strike had succeeded, insofar as the Supreme Court finally invalidated the justification for racially segregated public education. Virginians' response to the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling is described in detail in the "African American Schools in Virginia" MPD and has been the subject of dozens of scholarly studies, articles, and books.[275] Overall, White government officials at state and local levels resisted desegregation of public schools for more than a decade. The most extreme case occurred in Prince Edward County, home of Moton High School. After being ordered on May 1, 1959, to integrate the county school system, the County Board of Supervisors in June chose to exercise its "local option" by voting not to fund its schools. White parents with means organized private schools, most notably, the Prince Edward Academy, for their children through state tuition grants and county tax credits.[276] No public schools operated in Prince Edward County from 1959 to 1964. During this 5-year span, few options existed for the county's African American children. Some families sent their children to live with friends and relatives so they could continue attending school. But many families were unable to afford tuition for their child to attend school outside the county. Again, local Black churches stepped up to serve a community need by offering their Sunday school classrooms, fellowship halls, and sanctuaries for activists to use during the shutdown. Volunteers, including African American teachers formerly employed at local public schools, held classes in church buildings, fraternal halls, private dwellings, and other spaces to provide some education for the affected students. Freed of state curriculum restrictions, these schools also provided citizenship, Black history, arts, and current events instruction, as well as recreational activities.[277] In 1961, newly elected President John F. Kennedy, and recently appointed U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy were prodded to take action regarding Prince Edward County's refusal to operate a public school system. Robert Kennedy was persuaded to help raise funds for the Prince Edward Free Schools, also known as "freedom schools," which operated from

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[272] Margaret Edds, *We Face the Dawn: Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and the Legal Team that Dismantled Jim Crow* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), p. 220.

[273] Margaret Edds, *We Face the Dawn: Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and the Legal Team that Dismantled Jim Crow* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), p. 219-233.

[274] The complexities of the *Brown v. Board of Education decision* are discussed in numerous books and articles. For example, see Robert J. Cottrol, Raymond T. Diamond, and Leland B. Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education: Caste, Culture, and the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003) and Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004) [reissue]). A pithy summary of the landmark ruling is at Margaret Edds, *We Face the Dawn: Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and the Legal Team that Dismantled Jim Crow* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), p. 234-258.

[275] Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

[276] "The Closing of Prince Edward County's Schools," Virginia Museum of History and Culture, 2024, https://virginiahistory.org/learn/civil-rights-movement-virginia/closing-prince-edward-countys-schools; Katy June-Friesen, "Massive Resistance in a Small Town," *Humanities*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (September October 2013), https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/septemberoctober/feature/massive-resistance-in-small-town.

[277] The Virginia State Teachers Association had dropped "State" from its name by this time; the organization continued as the Virginia Teachers Association until its merger with the Virginia Education Association in 1967.

1963-1964, but the Justice Department had little effect on the slow pace of litigation working its way through the federal court system.

At significant personal risk to himself and his family, Griffin continued his activism by filing another lawsuit, *Griffin v. County Board of Prince Edward County*, in which his children were plaintiffs, to require the local school system to reopen. Griffin once again withstood intense pressure to give up the litigation. The case finally reached the U.S. Supreme Court in March 1964 and, two months later, the justices ordered County officials to reopen its public schools. NAACP attorneys Frank D. Reeves, Henry L. Marsh III, and Samuel W. Tucker had argued the case. The extraordinary circumstances in Prince Edward County were not repeated in other Virginia localities. In 2003, the General Assembly apologized for its role in depriving the county's African American students of five years of public education owed to them. Prince Edward County "held a symbolic graduation ceremony for the 'lost generation'."[278]

Griffin was far from alone in risking his safety to advance the Long Civil Rights Movement in Virginia. Lynchburg's Diamond Hill Baptist Church (NRHP 11000026; 118-0060-0057), during the 1958-1963 pastorate of the Reverend Virgil Wood, became

> a place where mass meetings were held to plan actions to register voters, to turn out the vote or to promote racial healing in the City. It was a place where meetings were held about the integration of public schools or the desegregation of local lunch counters, or to plan protests against unfair hiring practices. It was a rallying point where participants gathered to begin demonstrations and marches, and where audiences assembled to hear speeches by various luminaries in the local and the national Civil Rights movement. and organizations.[279]

Wood was credited with instigating many of these actions. He served on the Lynchburg Interracial Committee, formed by Lynchburg's city manager in an effort to ameliorate racial tensions. Students at nearby Dunbar High School attended many of the meetings at Diamond Hill Baptist Church. At Wood's invitation in 1961, Reuben Lawson, an NAACP Legal Defense Fund attorney, met with students, parents, and community members at the church to discuss desegregating the city's schools. Lawson soon filed Lynchburg's first school desegregation lawsuit, *Jackson v. The School Board of the City of Lynchburg Virginia*. The lawsuit petitioned the court to have students Cecelia Jackson, Linda Woodruff, Owen Cardwell, and Brenda Hughes admitted to the all-White E.C. Glass High School. In November 1961, Judge Thomas Michie ordered the Lynchburg School Board to admit two of the students to Glass High, and asked the City to submit a plan for desegregating the entirety of the city's public school system. The school board complied in February 1962 with a proposal to desegregate one school grade per year over twelve years. Although Judge Michie approved the plan, the plaintiffs appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court and won a reversal. City officials opted to continue litigation, and the NAACP, as well as local African Americans, pressed on for almost a decade. During the legal maneuvers, the City of Lynchburg

[278] "The Closing of Prince Edward County's Schools," Virginia Museum of History and Culture, 2024, https://virginiahistory.org/learn/civil-rights-movement-virginia/closing-prince-edward-countys-schools; Ronald Heinemann, "Moton School Strike and Prince Edward County School Closings," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/moton-school-strike-and-prince-edward-county-school-closings.
[279] Kevin L. Moore, "Diamond Hill Baptist Church," National Register nomination, May 25, 2010, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/118-0060-0057/, p. 8/6.

proposed several methods for desegregation, none of which were approved by federal courts until 1971, making Lynchburg one of the last Virginia localities to desegregate its schools.[280]

Young people, religious leaders, and church congregations participated in many other civil rights demonstrations that are beyond the scope of this MPD. For example, on February 20, 1960, Frank Pinkston and Charles Sherrod led a march of approximately 200 fellow students and faculty at Richmond's Virginia Union University to the downtown commercial district to desegregate lunch counters at department stores and pharmacies. Students juggled activism with coursework, conducting sit-ins in shifts, during which they were not served by lunch counter staff, so they could keep up with their classes. In addition to lunch counters, the upscale restaurant at Richmond's landmark Thalhimer's department store also was targeted. This time, upon refusing to leave, 34 of the activists, aged 18 to 23, were arrested. The students became known as the "Richmond 34." Convicted of violating the law, their case eventually was overturned. After a year of persistent demonstration, Richmond's downtown stores agreed to desegregate in January 1961, largely due to the financial pressure of boycotts by Black customers and White allies.[281] During the 1950s-1960s, at Loudoun County's Shiloh Baptist Church (NRHP SG100001852, 259-0162-0007), Deacon Board chair, Countywide League member, and NAACP chapter president William McKinley Jackson led efforts to integrate Middleburg's public swimming pool, community center, and public library, all of which required extraordinary courage. In 1961, Jackson worked with a group of Howard University students on a successful effort to desegregate Middleburg's restaurants peacefully. Church member Rosa Lee Carter acted as a teacher and community organizer for decades, earning her the title "Mother of the Church;" many local Black residents depended on her for help with navigating civil regulations and processes made cumbersome by uncooperative White officials. Another Shiloh deacon, Charles "Jack" Turner, was elected to the Town Council in November 1967, in addition to participating in the Countywide League and local Masonic Temple. From 1967-1969, as a member of the local Parent-Teacher Association, Turner participated in the final push for school desegregation in Loudoun County.[282]

Gloria Johnson Gilmore, one of the founders of One Shared Story, recalled that she had attended nonviolent resistance training as a young teenager offered through her church, Zion Hill Baptist Church in Keswick, Virginia. Although she was too young to participate in the events, she remembered the leadership planning for the sit-ins to desegregate the department store lunch counters in Richmond, and theaters and restaurants in Charlottesville. Mrs. Gilmore's older sister, Dorothy Johnson Ellis, had married and moved to Richmond by that time and she connected the Civil Rights Movement to Zion Hill Baptist through the church's longtime activist pastor, the Reverend Dr. R. A. Johnson.[283] (Conversation with Robin Patton of One Shared Story on 04/09/2025.)

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[280] Kevin L. Moore, "Diamond Hill Baptist Church," National Register nomination, May 25, 2010, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/118-0060-0057/, p. 8/7-8/11; Bob Vay, "USDC Western District of Virginia, Lynchburg Division, Civil Action Case #534-Jackson et al vs. School Board of Lynchburg," Desegregation of Virginia Education (DOVE), August 28, 2018, https://dove.gmu.edu/index.php/2018/08/28/usdc-western-district-of-virginia-lynchburg-division-civil-action-case-534-jackson-et-al-vs-school-board-of-lynchburg/. The complexities of the Lynchburg desegregation process are indicative of the immense challenges faced by African Americans to achieve equal educational opportunities for their children. The discussion of such circumstances in this MPD can barely touch on the most salient aspects and further research for nominations of individual schools will be necessary. The variety of reference sources cited in this MPD are intended to provide an accessible place for researchers to begin their investigations.

[281] "Civil Rights Movement History, 1960, Richmond Desegregation Campaign (1960)," Civil Right Movement Archive, no date, https://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis60.htm#1960richmond.

[282] Judith James and Gerri Nelson, "Shiloh Baptist Church," National Register nomination, May 31, 2017, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/259-0162-0007/, p. 12-16.

[283] Gloria Johnson Gilmore, conversation with Robin Patton, 4/9/2025.

During oral history interviews with One Shared Story, Charles White Sr. discussed Jerusalem Baptist, his home church in Buckingham County, Virginia. He described the many ways that the congregation supported students and participated in the Long Civil Rights Movement. The congregation helped to raise money for building the Cartersville School, which was accomplished without grants from outside philanthropic funds. A pastor at Jerusalem had been the founder of the local NAACP chapter and the church provided space for NAACP voter training. The community also established "The Voters League." The League met at Jerusalem Church and allowed the community to represent a unified position for school improvements and to participate in the school desegregation movement. Such activities required caution due to local opposition among White residents to African Americans engaging in political activism.[284]

Just across the James River in Fluvanna County, a similar community group for political action formed under the leadership of the Reverend Horace J. Scruggs Jr. His widow, Alice Matthews Scruggs, and their son, Horace Scruggs, III, shared information about Rev. Scruggs's political activism. He founded the Progressive League to press for better educational opportunities for Black students. The group used their political power to send community leaders like Mrs. Bertha Mae Armstrong as representatives to County committees. They pushed for new schools for Black students during Virginia's "Separate but Equal" phase and helped select and support students who were the first to desegregate local schools during the 1960s. The Reverend Scruggs also pastored New Hope Baptist Church in Albemarle County and Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Goochland County. His career is another example of how church networks could sustain and grow a social movement. Notably, in 1976, Rev. Scruggs was the moderator for the Centennial Celebration of the Slate River Baptist Association, one of the first regional associations to form after the Civil War.[285]

Civil rights demonstrations in Virginia did not always unfold peacefully. During the summer of 1963 in Danville, the Danville Christian Progressive Association (DCPA), an SCLC affiliate led by the Reverends Lendall Chase, Lawrence Campbell, and Alexander Dunlap, along with Julius Adams and Arthur Pinchback, filed a lawsuit to desegregate the city's public spaces, including hospitals, schools, and cemeteries, and to desegregate the City's workforce. City officials refused to meet with the civil rights activists who staged a sit-in at the mayor's office. The demonstrators were arrested and charged with "inciting to riot." Thirteen were convicted. National civil rights organizations, including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) sent field secretaries to assist. On June 10, as people knelt in prayer on the steps of City Hall, police and deputized private individuals attacked them with clubs and firehoses, injuring dozens of people who then were arrested and refused medical treatment. Local African Americans posted their own properties to help the jailed demonstrators pay bails far in excess of the crimes of which they had been accused. The event came to be known as "Bloody Monday" for the level of violence committed against people who refused to fight back. Daily marches continued in Danville. The Reverend Chase headed a march on June 13 that resulted in a 9-hour demonstration at City Hall with speeches, singing, and a lecture on Black history given by SNCC member James Forman. "Local church women" provided soft drinks and sandwiches, performing the kind of necessary background work that rarely captures media attention. With police massing, the Reverend Chase called for the demonstrators to fall back to a church for a meeting. In an astonishing display of force, local police, equipped with submachine guns and a tank, set up roadblocks to try to prevent people from attending the meeting. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Danville on July 11, 1963, and spoke at High Street Baptist Church (108-0182), long a center for spiritual and social support. Condemning the actions of Danville police, he said, "I've seen some brutal things on the part of policeman all

[284] Charles W. White Sr., oral history interview, One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, November 21, 2024.
[285] Horace J. Scruggs III and Alice Matthew Scruggs, oral history interview, One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, September 14, 2024.

across the south but very seldom, if ever, have I heard of a police force being as brutal and vicious as the police force here in Danville, Virginia."[286] Over the long summer, 600 demonstrators were arrested. City officials and business owners maintained their resistance to desegregation throughout the year. Only after passage of federal civil rights legislation in 1964, 1965, and 1968, as well as repeated lawsuits striking down segregationist practices, did Danville's White leaders begin to concede to the necessity for desegregation. Some of the legal cases against protesters who had been arrested lingered for a decade, until a circuit court judge finally suspended the last six cases.[287]

With passage of the federal 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, Black Americans secured the civil, social, and political rights to which they were entitled as equal citizens. The Civil Rights Act included a ban on racial discrimination in hiring and employment practices, opening up a far more diverse array of professions and occupations than historically had been available. Resistance against desegregation continued to be deployed in Virginia and throughout the U.S., including continued violence. In 1966, Second Bethel Baptist Church in the city of Richmond was bombed in an attack attributed to the Ku Klux Klan. The hate group also held repeated rallies in Virginia, testing Governor Mills E. Godwin's ability to manage the situation according to the "Virginia Way."[288] In 1968, a major victory came when the Fair Housing Act outlawed discrimination in provision of housing on the basis of race, and required equal access to rental and owner-occupied property. Massive Resistance laws, however, still stymied desegregation in most localities. In the spring of 1968, a lawsuit filed in 1965 by Black parents in Virginia seeking to integrate local schools, *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County,* reached the U.S. Supreme Court, along with similar cases filed in Tennessee and Arkansas. Alexandria native Samuel Wilbert Tucker (June 18, 1913−October 19, 1990) argued the case.[289] The Supreme Court decision, *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County,* on May 27, 1968, forced all school districts to complete desegregation of all public schools at all levels. The decision overturned the last of Virginia's state-level Massive Resistance and similar resistance nationwide.[290] The same year, passage of the

[286] King's quote is included in the nomination for the Mechanicsville Historic District. See Katherine F. Coffield and Alison S. Blanton, "Mechanicsville Historic District," National Register nomination, October 2013, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/108-5607/, p. 17. High Street Baptist Church is a contributing resource within the district. The nomination includes additional information about the Civil Rights Movement in Danville and about High Street Baptist Church.

[287] "Civil Rights Movement History, 1963, Danville VA, Movement (May-Aug)," Civil Right Movement Archive, no date, https://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis63.htm#1963danville; Emma Edmunds, "Danville Civil Rights Demonstrations of 1963," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/danville-civil-rights-demonstrations-of-1963.

[288] John Kneebone, "Ku Klux Klan in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* December 7, 2020, https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/ku-klux-klan-in-virginia.

[289] Tucker was a lifelong civil rights activist and attorney. "In August 1939 he organized at the Alexandria Public Library one of the earliest sit-ins in the struggle for equal rights…As the Virginia NAACP's (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) lead attorney for decades, Tucker tried scores of discrimination and segregation cases related to schools, teacher pay, and jury selection before local, state, and federal courts… Tucker sat on legal teams that litigated to reopen Prince Edward County's public schools when they closed rather than desegregate after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), as well as to end tuition subsidies for white students to attend private academies." See "Changemakers: Samuel W. Tucker (1913-1990)," Library of Virginia, no date, https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/changemakers/items/show/402.

[290] Sara K. Eskridge, "Thomas B. Stanley," *Encyclopedia Virginia,* https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/stanley-thomas-b-1890-1970/), as cited in *Preliminary Information Form for Martinsville Historic District 2019 Boundary Increase*, Kayla Hallberg, Commonwealth Preservation Group, Norfolk, VA, 2020. Since the 1940s, Virginia's public universities and colleges, segregated since their founding dates, had admitted only an occasional student of color when a parallel education program was not available at Virginia State College (today's Virginia State University). Two of the oldest schools, the College of William & Mary and the University of Virginia, also have documented the presence of enslaved individuals on campus who worked on construction projects, for individual faculty members, and for students attending the schools. See https://www.wm.edu/sites/lemonproject/ and https://mel.virginia.edu/.

Fair Housing Act outlawed discrimination in provision of housing on the basis of race, another important legal victory.

Continuity of Traditions

Although the legal victories of the Long Civil Rights Movement transformed everyday life in Virginia, African American churches continued to serve their historically significant roles to their congregations and communities. The spiritual, emotional, and kinship ties of Black churches are manifested through their long traditions of homecomings, reunions, and anniversary celebrations. These annual gatherings are historically and culturally significant for multiple reasons. During the segregation era, many African Americans moved from their hometowns to seek better opportunities elsewhere. Maintaining family ties, however, was of immense importance, serving as an emotional and spiritual touchstone for people forced by circumstances to be away from one another. In an oral history interview, Bessida Cauthorne White described the homecoming tradition at length.

> [For homecomings, the] Second Sunday in August for as long as anybody could remember all day is meeting. No, no "G" on the end of that word. "Meetin" with dinner on the grounds… Folks came in droves from the North. You know … not too many folks stopped in Washington as they migrated, you know, because Washington, D.C. was still much "the South." [People moved to] Baltimore, South Jersey, Philadelphia and New York. And it's interesting that what we see is that folks from certain communities migrate to certain communities. So, for some reason, folks from Ozeina, which is where [Angel Visit Baptist Church] is, many of them went to Glen Cove, Long Island. So if you look in the census, if you're missing somebody and you can't find them, then you might want to look in the 1920 census in Glen Cove or 1930 census, because you might find that… Angel Visit member that you're missing. But anyway, folks went all those places you know … as far as Hartford and Boston, but they all came back. And so it was a big, big deal. And at a point buses would come like, we had a large contingent of members in Philadelphia. And so I think it's Vine Memorial Baptist Church would bring a whole bus of folks, for homecoming… And literally dinner was on the grounds. There was a table out back. And of course, different churches did this different ways. We've heard of people who did the food from the car trunks. Well, that's not how it was done at Angel Visit, there was a table out back, a long table that ran the width of the back of the church with an A-frame top on it… Each woman in the church cooked a whole meal, and she had her space at that table, and she set up her whole meal. And you knew, - Well, I'm gonna eat dinner with Miss Robinson, but then I'm going to get dessert from Miss Jones. And that's how that worked. And they had their spaces, and you didn't mess with somebody else's space at that table. But we have this wonderful photograph from the early '70s that shows people on the grounds. And we've got our group of church leaders now who are in their 60s are toddlers in that picture… And so folks came for a second Sunday in August, homecoming, and they stayed the week for revival. So, you know, we didn't have so many options for vacations and that like, we went off on a cruise or all those things that we might do now. And so that was how people arranged to do their vacation and they came and stayed the week, they stayed with family because, of course, there were few hotels, and the few in large part were not available to us. And so, they stay with family. And what we learned now, what we know of is revival. That was Monday through Friday evening. Okay. And there was a guest preacher who did the whole revival. What we learned from some of the oral history is that early on, and we don't have exact dates for this, revival took place in the daytime, and there was a meal served each day Monday through Friday for revival. And so that's, you

> know, there were a few people about 20 years ago who were old enough to remember that… It was a really, really big deal. And we still celebrate homecoming on the second Sunday in August.[291]

In recognition of the multifaceted significance of the Black Church, preservation of historic sanctuaries has been prioritized by congregations in cities, towns, and rural areas across Virginia. Many more desire recognition as they seek to determine the best path forward with programs such as the Virginia Landmarks Register, National Register of Historic Places, state historical highway marker program, and other options.

[291] Bessida Cauthorne White, oral history interview with One Shared Story and Commonwealth Preservation Group, January 3, 2025.

F. Associated Property Types

This MPD includes churches and church-based historic districts associated with African American churches in Virginia. Specific resource types discussed below are based on the results of archival investigations completed as of this writing. A resultant nomination will provide explanation of the property's current condition, significance, and integrity, as well as explain how the property meets the Registration Requirements described below.

Applicable NRHP Criteria

Criterion A

Resources that are individual churches or church-based historic districts may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for their direct associations with significant events and broad patterns of history. To be considered for listing under Criterion A, a property must be associated with one or more significant events or patterns that occurred over time as discussed in the historic context in Section E. Resources may be eligible for listing under Criterion A in the following areas: (1) **Social History**, for their significant association with the Civil Rights Movement, social/civic activism, and/or their contributions to everyday African American life; 2) **Religion,** for their significant association with the organized systems of beliefs, practices, and traditions promulgated by the various faiths that comprise the Black Church; and (3) **Ethnic Heritage: African American**, for their significant association with the experiences of African Americans in Virginia, including events associated with self-liberation, Emancipation, the creation of African American community institutions, and the Long Civil Rights Movement. Individual churches may have additional areas of significance that have not yet been covered in this MPD. The broadly defined period of significance covered by the historic context, Sanctuaries of Governance and Social Structure: The Role of African American Churches from Reconstruction to Civil Rights, c. 1861-c. 1968, begins with the onset of the Civil War and ends with passage of the last major federal legislation, the 1968 Housing Act, associated with events during the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement. Material herein concerning the origins of African American churches in Virginia also may be used for development of a period of significance that begins prior to 1861. Individual churches and church-based historic districts also may be significant for a period that extends beyond 1968.

Criterion B

In order for a property to be considered eligible for listing under Criterion B, the resource must illustrate the achievements of an individual whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented, and are associated with the historic context of this MPD; additional significance beyond the historic context herein also may be present. According to NPS guidelines on applying the National Register Criteria for Eligibility, "A property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person who is a member of an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group. It must be shown that the person gained importance within his or her profession or group." Additionally, the subject property must be associated with the significant person's "productive life, reflecting the time period when [they] achieved significance. In some instances, this may be a person's home; in other cases, a person's business, office, laboratory, or studio may best represent [their] contribution."

Although numerous research projects have documented significant individuals associated with African American churches in Virginia, no systematic, statewide effort to document such individuals has been

conducted. In communities across Virginia, whether in a rural, town, or urban setting, individuals who made significant contributions in accordance with the registration requirements of this MPD likely lived and worked. Additional research and oral history interviews may reveal individually significant persons and/or critically important details to support the development of a successful Criterion B argument, as limited site-specific research was conducted as part of the archival research during preparation of this MPD.

Criterion C

Resources associated with this MPD may be eligible for listing under Criterion C in the area of **Architecture** if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the "work of a master." Currently available research has demonstrated that many of the properties identified herein are illustrative of a distinctive "type" or collection of distinctive resources. For example, in rural settings, 19th- and 20th-century, one-story, frame, front gable church sanctuaries featuring vernacular interpretations of Gothic Revival style have been recorded across Virginia. Lancet-arched windows and an entry bay centered on a gable end façade are typical exterior elements. A projecting entry bay with a steeple, belfry, and/or louvered vents is a common, although not universal, feature. Examples of belfries rising from a gable roof and of off-centered towers with belfries also have been recorded. Evolution over time commonly occurred at African American churches, with additions being the most common; such spaces usually were meant to accommodate additional membership and/or functions. In some instances, an unfinished basement may have been renovated to provide finished space for a kitchen and fellowship/meeting area. Exterior cladding with new materials also occurred during the 20th century; many frame and concrete block churches received brick veneer during the second half of the 20th century or less often, stone-like cladding such as Permastone. Frame churches also may have been reclad with aluminum or vinyl siding. More stylistic variation is seen in churches that are located in urban settings, with examples that include Gothic Revival, Georgian Revival, Colonial Revival, and Greek Revival, among others. In Appendix A, photos of a selected assortment of churches that have already been listed in the VLR and NRHP are illustrative of the stylistic variations that are found in Virginia's African American churches.

Properties may also be eligible under Criterion C if they represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (i.e., historic districts). In Virginia, a commonly found example of such a district concerns late 19th to early 20th century churches that are collocated with African American schools and cemeteries. Between c. 1865-c. 1931, church congregations often sponsored and supported schools for African American children by providing monetary donations as well as land upon which to build a school. As these schools were closed, ownership of the building often eventually reverted to the church trustees and the building would be used for other purposes, including Sunday school, community meetings, and storage. By the late 20th century, some of the former buildings had been rehabilitated to serve as museums and community centers. Cemeteries were established as soon as a congregation had the means to acquire sufficient land for burials. For many Black communities, their church cemeteries represented their first opportunity to utilize burial practices of their own preference and in accordance with their own religious faith. Properties that include a church as well as a cemetery, former schoolhouse, outdoor worship area, garden, purpose-built buildings such as Sunday school annexes and fellowship halls, or some combination thereof, are classified as historic districts for the purposes of this MPD.

Criterion D

Resources associated with this MPD may also be eligible for listing for their significance in the area of **Archaeology (Historic: Non-Aboriginal)** due to their potential to yield important information about history (or

pre-history). Most often resources listed under Criterion D are archaeological sites. No archaeological investigations were performed as part of the development of this MPD. However, there is the potential for archaeological resources to be identified that are associated with known resources that are no longer extant. This may include sites of earlier church sanctuaries, privies, drinking water supply, outdoor baptismal resources, brush arbors, school building sites, unmarked burials, and other features. Additional research and investigation will be required in order to nominate properties that are significant under Criterion D in association with this MPD. To date, archaeological investigations at African American churches has not been routinely conducted in Virginia. Should future investigations occur, this MPD may be updated to include registration requirements for African American school properties with significance in the area of Archaeology or a related discipline. Important to note is that current professional archaeological practices avoid potential disturbance of human burials as much as possible. Today, noninvasive investigations methods, such as surface inspection, aerial video or photography, and ground penetrating radar are widely utilized to identify potential locations for unmarked burials and to delineate the boundaries of a cemetery. Such methods may contribute to establishing a property's significance under Criterion D while avoiding potential damage to burials.

Criteria Considerations

Regulations for the National Register and Virginia Landmarks Register programs have established that some property types, including cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the past fifty years are not typically considered to be eligible for the National Register. [292] Such properties may be listed, however, if they meet the following Criteria Considerations:

A. a **religious property** deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance. For the purposes of this MPD, all properties that will be nominated were originally established by a religious organization and/or received funding from religious organizations for doctrinal purposes. The historic context in Section E and the registration requirements in Section F provide the framework for establishing a religious property's significance and satisfaction of Criteria Consideration A. As is explained in Section E, African American churches between c. 1861-c. 1968 served secular needs that were important to their historic African American congregations and communities in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage: African American. A property also may have significance in the area of Religion while still meeting Criteria Consideration A if the resource is associated with specific aspects of the organized system of belief, practices, and traditions that are character-defining to African American churches between c. 1861- c. 1968, such as the church's role in establishing presence of a Protestant religious denomination in Virginia; in the establishment and/or promulgation of the Pentecostal/Holiness movement's tenets; or due to the contributions of a religious leader in developing one or more of a particular faith's doctrinal statements. Furthermore, the historic context in Section E provides evidence that Education may be an additional area of significance for some African American churches. As noted above, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and/or Archaeology (Historic: Non-Aboriginal) may be applicable as well.

B. a building or structure **removed from its original location** but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or

[292] Beth L. Savage and Sarah Dillard Pope, *National Register Bulletin, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, revised 1997), p. 25. This bulletin provides detailed guidance about each criteria consideration and examples of property types that meet them. Nomination authors are advised to review this bulletin closely before beginning work on a nomination for a property that must meet one or more of the criteria considerations.

event. For the purposes of this MPD, such properties include church sanctuaries and other buildings, such as schoolhouses, fellowship halls, and annexes, that were relocated during their period of significance as part of the overall property's historical use, resources that were relocated to prevent their demolition during 20th century infrastructure development projects such as urban renewal and highway construction (events that themselves typically are of historic significance in Black communities and neighborhoods in the areas of Community Planning and Development and/or Social History), or resources that were relocated after their original function ceased in order to preserve them for other uses. Specific circumstances of a given resource's relocation must be described in the property's nomination.

C. a **birthplace or grave** of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life. With regard to individuals of historical significance in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History and/or Religion, for the purposes of this MPD, their birthplace or grave may be nominated if the criteria consideration is met.

D. a **cemetery** which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events. For the purposes of this MPD's context, church cemeteries are likely to be located on the same parcel as the church sanctuary and other resources owned by the congregation. In some instances, a cemetery is located on a discontiguous parcel due to a variety of factors, such as relocation of the church sanctuary and/or the need for additional space for interments. In such cases, Criteria Consideration D is likely to be applicable, and the property's nomination will explain the cemetery's significance in conjunction with its association with an African American church.

E. a **reconstructed** building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived. For the purposes of this MPD, reconstructed church sanctuaries and related buildings may meet Criteria Consideration E. Should a reconstructed building be proposed for nomination under this MPD, the specific circumstances of the reconstruction project must be described and its significance under one or more of the areas of significance identified above must be demonstrated.

F. a property primarily **commemorative** in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own exceptional significance. For the purposes of this MPD, a commemorative property, such as a statue, garden, landscape design, or other resource type, may meet Criteria Consideration E. Should a commemorative property be proposed for nomination under this MPD, the specific circumstances of the property's creation, design, age, tradition, and/or symbolic values must be demonstrated and the property must have significance under one or more of the National Register eligibility criteria and be associated with the historic context described in Section E.

G. a property achieving **significance within the past 50 years** if it is of exceptional importance. The association of many African American churches with significant events during the late 20th century has been demonstrated in numerous documentary films, archival collections, oral history interviews, court records, and other sources. African American churches have continued to be associated with the Long Civil Rights Movement up to the present. "Exceptional" significance is understood to refer to historic events, trends, and/or individuals considered by their associated audiences, participants, peers, members, scholars, and/or others to have been particularly important in the property's history. Nominations for properties to which Criteria Consideration G is applicable must detail the specific circumstances of the exceptional significance.

Evaluating Historic Integrity

There are seven aspects that are assessed to determine whether or not a resource retains historic integrity to convey its significant associations. These aspects are Location, Setting, Design, Materials, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association. A significant resource is not required to retain all seven aspects of integrity in order to be eligible for nomination under this MPD. Rather, the aspects of integrity that are associated with the property's specific area of significance are needed. Evolved aspects of integrity may be identified and associated with the nature of the property's historic significance. An important quality of many resources that may be nominated under this MPD is that they typically are associated with individuals and communities during a period of political, economic, social, civil, and educational restrictions. As such, the integrity of a resource that is associated with an area of significance identified in this MPD must be evaluated according to the pervasive circumstances of the period of significance as African American people and communities experienced them. For example, some buildings may have been originally constructed for one use, but altered to accommodate a change in use (e.g., churches that once doubled as public schools, and former schoolhouses on church property that were adapted to serve as fellowship halls) or were expanded over time to accommodate a growing congregation and additional congregational activities, such as Sunday school, summer Bible school, outdoor worship services, baptisms, and homecomings and reunions).

Some resources associated with this MPD are no longer in use and have been vacant for a number of years. While vacancy has often led to significant deterioration, poor physical condition does not automatically equate to poor integrity. Instead, the presence of character-defining features that are most closely associated with the property's period and area(s) of significance are to inform the integrity analysis. During their property's period of significance, property owners often carried out repairs utilizing readily available materials and workmanship as needed for routine maintenance; such changes do not automatically constitute a loss of integrity. With regard to some churches, changing local code requirements during the mid- to late-20th century, in particular, may have prompted repairs, renovations, and alterations that were mandatory in order for the building to remain in use. Furthermore, alterations made during a property's period of significance, such as additions or material changes, were frequently viewed as improvements that symbolized a congregation's progress or were associated with an event or trend that a community would have celebrated. When evaluating a property's integrity of workmanship, design, and materials, such alterations and repairs that are associated with any or all of the above factors are to be examined in the context of the resource's area(s) and period of significance.

As is explained in Section E, church congregations often established cemeteries for interments of their membership and, at times, the larger Black community. Cemeteries may have been created simultaneously with construction of the church sanctuary or at an earlier or later date. When a congregation owned enough land, typically at least one to two acres, for both a sanctuary and cemetery, then two resources were contiguous. Acquisition of a separate parcel for a cemetery, however, was not unusual in rural settings and, to a lesser extent in town and urban settings. When the two resources are discontiguous, the spatial relationship should not be considered detrimental to the property's integrity, but rather, understood as representing the conditions within which the church congregation operated during the property's period of significance.

Within historic Black neighborhoods, extensive demolition, displacement, and new construction occurred between c. 1940-c. 1980 due to highway construction and urban renewal projects carried out by federal, state, and local governments. In the vicinity of Virginia's many military installations, churches occasionally were required to relocate after acquisition of land by the federal government to facilitate expansion of the installation. Local zoning practices that permitted establishment of land uses, such as industrial, large-scale waste disposal, recycling, energy generation and transmission, mining, and similar activities incompatible with a religious

property and/or a residential neighborhood also are common in both urban and rural settings. Such projects and land uses were rooted in professional practices now identified as structural and environmental racism. A resource affected by activities such as these will have changes to the location, setting, feeling, and association of historic properties in areas where they occurred. The consequences of such activities and projects are part of the significance of surviving resources associated with African American churches between c. 1861- c. 1968 because they are illustrative of the many challenges overcome by Black religious congregations during the segregation era and the fight for civil rights for African Americans at a level unprecedented in the nation's history. Analysis of a property's integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, therefore, must take into account the effects of incompatible infrastructure construction on an individual property and, furthermore, such factors should be understood as important to that property's overall integrity rather than eroding its integrity.

An important late-20th to early-21st-century alteration to historic-age churches is provision of ramps and/or an interior elevator to meet standards established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Passed by the U.S. Congress in 1990, the ADA was a landmark civil rights law that that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in many areas of public life, including employment, education, transportation, and many public and private places that are open to the general public, such as churches, theaters, government buildings, and commercial buildings and shopping centers. Most African American churches in Virginia that are still in use now have added elements, such as paved sidewalks, railings, wood or concrete ramps, and paved parking areas, that comply with the ADA and increase the ability of all congregants to access the religious and communal spaces of their property. Such elements should be understood as part of the property's overall history and setting rather than an erosion of it

Associated Property Types

Analysis of the survey data from the 25 sites surveyed in association with this MPD, as well as review of existing records in the Virginia Cultural Resources Information System (V-CRIS) at the Department of Historic Resources and research completed for this project, has yielded considerable information about the array of African American church properties across the Commonwealth. Important to note is that the observations about the associated property types within this MPD are based primarily on the 25 properties that were surveyed in association with this project and church properties that have already been listed in the NRHP. The data, therefore, shown on the included maps and in the tables and content of this MPD is not comprehensive and should not be interpreted as such.

Characteristics of the 25 church properties surveyed for in this project are as follows:

● Associated with a historic African American congregation.

● Represent different Protestant denominations and Catholicism

● Feature a range of exterior wall materials, such as wood, brick, stone, concrete block, and aluminum and vinyl siding; windows with different types of sash materials and of glass lights, the latter of which include stained, clear, art, obscure, etched, colored, silver stain, and streaked; and interior finish materials, including plaster, hardwood flooring, wood trim, sheetrock wall and ceiling covering, carpet, tile, and other floor coverings. Within interior spaces, later finishes, such as sheetrock and carpeting, may have been applied over older materials, such as plaster and beadboard on walls and ceilings, and wood flooring.

● Located throughout the State.

● Church-based historic districts include buildings and related resources, such as cemeteries, schoolhouses, fellowship halls on the property, as well as picnic pavilions, storage sheds and structures, gardens, and outdoor worship areas.

Property Type 1: Churches

This property type includes Black churches that were operable between c. 1861-c. 1968. Some of the church buildings may have been constructed and operable prior to 1861 and occupied by either an all-White, all-Black, or mixed congregation. From c. 1861- c. 1968, most purpose-built churches associated with this MPD had all-Black congregations; at times, a small number of White members may have been present in some congregations, such as Pentecostal/ Holiness churches during the early 20th century and mainline Protestant churches starting during the mid- to late 20th century. The African American churches may be found in rural, town, and urban settings. Starting in the 20th century, particularly after World War II, Black churches also began to be established in suburban settings.

Description:

Figure 14. In rural Buckingham County, Alexander Hill Baptist Church (NRHP 2017; 014-5054) is of log construction with later wood weatherboard siding, as seen in 2017 (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

The assortment of building variations, dates of construction, and evolution of this property type reflect the rapid creation of African American congregations after the Civil War, their growth during the 20th century, and the adaptability of congregations to meeting the needs of their local communities between c. 1861– c. 1968. In addition to the images embedded in the text below, additional photos of historic African American churches are included in Appendix A at the end of this MPD. This period's unencumbered flowering of African American religious expression, for the first time in the Commonwealth's history, is of transcendent significance and warrants including the range of church properties as is currently known to have existed. For example, during the 1860s, some mixed congregations split, and the resultant all-Black congregations purchased or were given an antebellum church for their own use. The first generation of churches to be constructed during and immediately after the Civil War often were of log construction; extant examples of such buildings are exceedingly rare today, and documentation of them is made more complicated by later application of weatherboard or some other type of siding (Figure 14). Many church congregations, particularly in town and rural settings, utilized frame construction; however, subsequent improvements and additions to late-19th to early-20th-century churches may have received a brick or stone veneer at a later date. In urban settings, brick and stone construction were common by the late 19th century and continued in use during the 20th century. After World War II, newer construction methods and materials, such as curtain walls, plate glass, and steel trusses, may have been incorporated in the church's original design.

In Virginia's larger towns and cities, where substantial populations of African Americans lived in discrete neighborhoods, many Black churches often were located within or immediately adjacent to the neighborhood. In rural areas, the church was located on a site selected by the congregation based on several factors, including whether the land could be acquired through purchase or donation, convenience of location for most congregants, adequacy of the acreage to meet the congregation's needs, and/or proximity to an existing or newly formed enclave of Black residents. During the 20th century, discriminatory practices, such as racially restrictive covenants, redlining, limitations on private financing, and zoning, influenced locations of newly built churches. The willingness of White landowners to sell land to an African American congregation also played an important role, even after laws forbidding discriminatory treatment were passed during the 20th century.

Surveyed examples of churches erected between c. 1861-c. 1968 are typically one to two stories in height, sometimes built on a raised basement, frame or (less often) brick construction, with a gable roof clad with standing-seam metal or composite shingles. The buildings vary in size, style, construction method, and materials. Such churches may also include historic additions or alterations that accommodated a congregation's changing needs.

Vernacular and high-style versions of the Gothic Revival style appear to be the most ubiquitous design influence on Virginia's African American churches. Churches in rural, town, urban, and suburban settings with Gothic Revival design elements have been identified throughout Virginia. A character-defining feature of such buildings is the lancet window. Size, number, and placement of lancet windows vary from one property to the next and typically were utilized only in sanctuary spaces. Other window shapes also may be present in the original church building and particularly in later additions that served administrative, meeting, education, and other functions. As noted above, one or more types of window glass may have been used in the church windows. Windows in additions typically have clear glass or, in some cases, some type of obscure glass, such as a pebbled or frosted treatment.

Other common Gothic Revival stylistic influences include rose windows, spires mounted on a rooftop or projecting tower, decorative brickwork at entries, windows, and cornices, brick or stone water tables, a belfry with louvered vents or other decorative elements, and a pyramidal or conical roof atop a multiple-story tower with an entry bay, belfry, spire, and/ or other treatments. For frame buildings, widespread availability of mass-produced wood ornamentation also allowed for inclusion of decorative embellishments typical of the late Victorian era, such as brackets, molded window surrounds, and railings and balustrades. Where present, such elements are proportional to the scale, massing, and style of the building, with architect-designed churches typically being larger than vernacular buildings.

For African American congregations in urban and suburban settings that had financial resources to do so, an architect may have designed a building in a style other than Gothic Revival. Early 20th-century Colonial Revival, Classical Revival, Georgian Revival, and other revival styles have been commonly documented, as have mid-20th century Modern Movement styles, such as New Formalism or International Style.

In rural, town, and urban settings, brick veneer often was installed on frame and concrete block churches during the 20th century. The addition of a brick veneer demonstrated a congregation's growing financial resources and its longevity in the community. Other cladding materials, such as stone veneer, aluminum siding, and vinyl siding, likewise were considered achievements as a means to improve and protect a historic building. In town and urban settings where congregations had greater financial resources, stone or brick construction may be original to the building. Some congregations opted to use concrete blocks to build exterior walls due to the material's durability, availability, and affordability. When used, concrete block typically is painted. Concrete

block also has been found often on foundations originally consisting of brick piers. The concrete block is laid in courses and fills the spaces between the piers, thus enclosing the crawlspace and shoring of the building's overall support. Such concrete block may be painted, unpainted, parged, or otherwise treated. Rock-faced and smooth concrete block have been found at different churches during surveys.

Regardless of exterior features, interior floor plans generally included a vestibule with one or more entries to the sanctuary. At churches that originally lacked a vestibule, an entry block often was erected at a later date. The entry bay often was a telescoping addition on a sanctuary's gable façade; at times, this bay may have been expanded laterally to include restrooms, an office, storage space, or other functions. The sanctuary typically was oriented toward the rear wall, where the pulpit was located, as well as a choir loft, a piano, organ, or other musical instrument(s), and, in some cases, an indoor baptistry. Pews were arranged facing toward the pulpit with aisles dividing them and, if space permitted, along each perimeter wall. Larger sanctuaries also may have had a balcony at the rear of the space, accessed by one or two flights of stairs leading up from the vestibule. The staircases may originally have been opened, but most are enclosed to conform to current building codes. Over time, most congregations added onto the original sanctuary to create space for additional functions, including administrative offices, choir rooms, Sunday school classrooms, a kitchen, and/or a fellowship hall. Such additions are associated with the congregation's growth over time and the communal and educational functions intrinsic to African American churches, and should not be considered as detracting from the original sanctuary's architectural significance. As noted above, elements that were added to a church, such as a brick or concrete ramp to one or more entries, for ADA compliance do not detract from the property's integrity of design.

Many of the African American churches that have been listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places are known to have functioned as schools, at least in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. Such buildings doubled as schoolhouses during the school year, and the emphasis on Sunday school as part of weekly church activities was meant to provide adults with educational opportunities, too.[293] Public school teachers often led Sunday school classes. Few, if any, alterations were made to African American churches in order for them to double as schools. Consequently, a church's historic function as a public school may be indicated only in church records, oral history, historic photos, or other archival materials. Churches that doubled as schools between c. 1870-c. 1931 may be nominated under this MPD as well as under the MPD entitled "African American Schools in Virginia,"[294] so long as the nominated property meets the registration requirements of each MPD.

Over time, as both school enrollments and church congregations grew, housing public schools in separate buildings became increasingly necessary. Due to the paucity of public funding for schools between c. 1870-c. 1931, particularly that for Black children, African American church congregations often would negotiate with local school officials to establish a public school on church property by donating the land and, not infrequently, the materials and labor with which the schoolhouses were erected. In cases where a separate, purpose-built school was erected on church-owned land, the building had many, if not all, of the typical design characteristics of one- or two-room public schools operated by local school districts at the time. While used as a public school, the building and the land on which it stood typically was acquired from the church by the local school board. After the building ceased use as a public school, the schoolhouse and its land could be reacquired by the congregation, which usually found a new use for the building.

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[293] For example, see John R. Kern and Michael J. Pulice, "St. John's Episcopal Church," National Register nomination, April 2008, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/139-0008/, p. 4, 6.
[294] Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form, March 2025, approval pending at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond.

Examples of African American Churches

In Appendix A, photos of a selection of listed churches and links to their respective nominations are provided for further information.

Figure 15. Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, showing original and 2002 addition as they appeared in 2018 (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

The majority of African American churches that have been listed in the VLR and NRHP to date are owned by Baptist congregations. In Richmond's Jackson Ward neighborhood, the Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP 1975; 127-0274) was erected in 1857 for its African American congregation (Figures 15-16). Originally a rather plainly designed building with brick load-bearing walls and a street-level entrance to the ground floor, the building was extensively remodeled in 1875 and 1914 with Gothic Revival and Italianate features; some Colonial Revival elements were added in 1914. Documentation of the two campaigns is limited and it is not clear when major changes were made. For example, the 1975 nomination states that the church's main entry was moved to the first story in 1875, where the sanctuary is located, with the enclosure of the street-level entry, addition of two flights of stairs, and enlarging of two windows to create entries. Additional documentation prepared in 2019 states that the entry was moved during the 1914 remodeling work. Either way, Colonial Revival influence is evidenced by the portico at the main entry, which has a hipped roof with central gable and is supported at each corner by paired Doric columns. A pressed brick veneer was added to the façade in 1875, with embellishments made in 1914, and it is not clear which elements date to 1875 versus 1914. The facade's front gable cornice now consists of a guilloche band over stylized machicolations and a crowning finial. At each end of the façade, multiple-story towers were added in 1875 and remodeled in 1914. The towers now have large lancet windows set within slightly recessed brick panels, a brick cornice with dentils, and cross gable roofs with pedimented bays. The windows are decorated with quatrefoils, below which are wood panels with arched or rectangular panels, and colored glass lights. Each tower's Italianate-style flat roof with ornamental balustrade was rebuilt in 1914 with intersecting pedimented gables and a classical-style molded cornice with brick dentils.

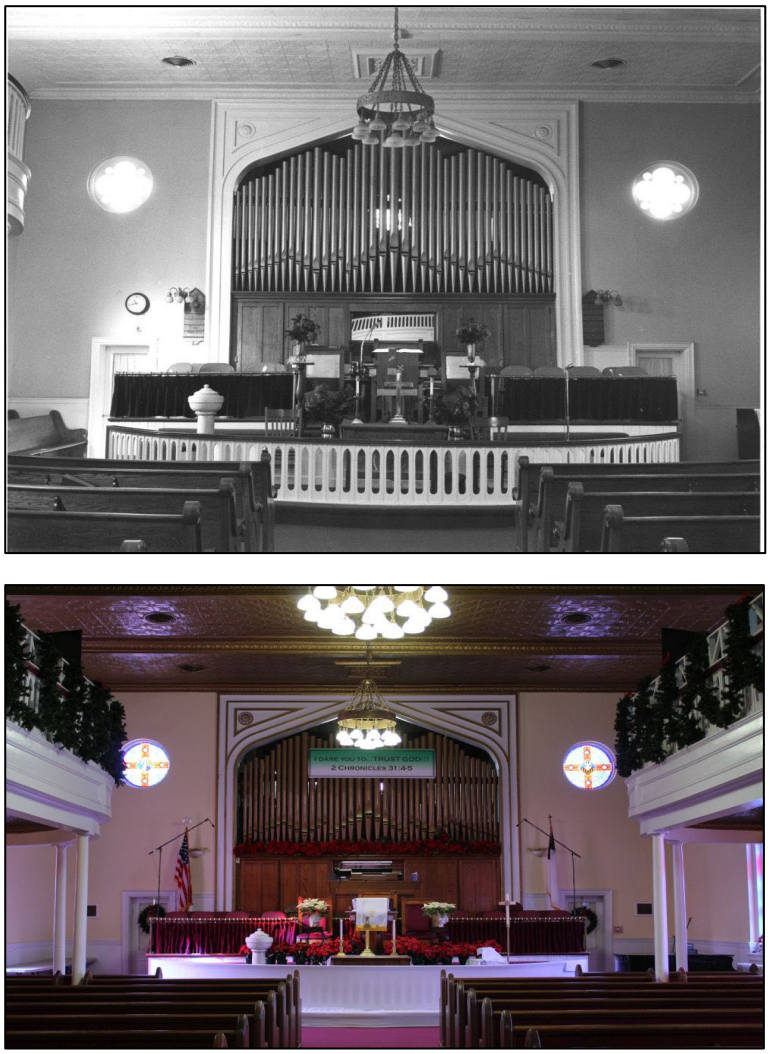

Figure 16. View of altar in Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1974 (top) and 2018 (bottom) (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

The sanctuary's interior was remodeled during the 1875 and 1914 campaigns, with the most noteworthy features being an ornate pressed metal ceiling and wainscot that were added to the sanctuary and the foyer (Figure 16). Minor interior remodeling also has occurred since the church was listed in 1975. The centered, double-leaf, paneled, half-glass wood doors are on axis with a center aisle. Side entries lead from the vestibule to each of the side aisles and have doors matching those of the centered entry. The upper gallery retains a historic balustrade, with a modern, open, wood extension that raises the rail's overall height. A staircase from the vestibule to the gallery retains its historic newel, corner posts, and balustrades, along with door and window moldings at top and bottom. The sanctuary's deteriorated 1914 pressed-metal ceiling was replaced in about 2010 with a reproduction pressed metal ceiling. The current stained-glass windows were installed during the 1970s and dedicated in 1977. In 2002, the church was expanded with an addition on its south side that is designated as the Education Building. The brick, one-story, rectangular, 17,000-square-foot edifice displays mild Gothic Revival influences, primarily through use of Gothic Revival windows with stained glass.

Third Street Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church originally was listed for its significance in the area of Religion. In 2019, additional documentation provided the basis for the property's significance in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American under Criterion A and Architecture under Criterion C. The property also contributes to the Jackson Ward Historic District (127-0237), designated a National Historic Landmark in 1978.

In Bedford County, Olive Branch Missionary Baptist Church (009-0135) displays the typical design characteristics of rural African American congregations during the late 19th to early 20th century (Figures 17-18). The congregation was organized in 1881 and is affiliated with the African Baptist Missionary Society of Richmond that was founded in 1815 by two African American ministers, Collin Teague and Lott Carey. The church's straightforward design is typical of the denomination's preferences for "modesty."[295] The c. 1896 frame building is clad with weatherboard siding and the front gable roof has a raking cornice with returns. A two-story, projecting bell tower features an unadorned primary entry, centered on the façade, a wraparound pent roof between the first and second stories, lancet openings with fixed wood louvers at the second story, and a

[295] Stephanie Rosel Reiss, *Religion and Resistance: African Baptist Churches in Virginia*, Ph.D. dissertation, College of William & Mary, 1997, Paper 1539626089, https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4t7y-wf05, p. 41.

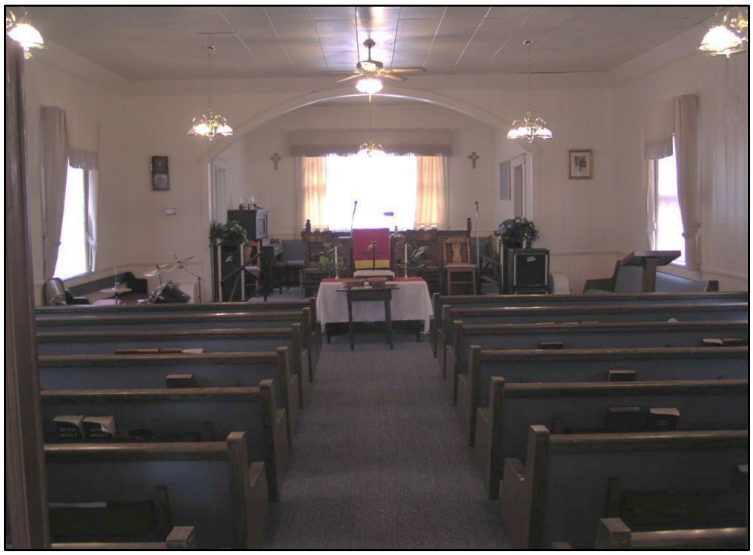

Figure 17. Olive Branch Baptist Church as it appeared in 2006 (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

Figure 17. Cemetery at Olive Branch Baptist Church; the tablet marker is an example of a marble grave marker issued by the federal government for military veterans (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

pyramidal roof with a molded wood cornice and crowned with a tin finial. Standing-seam metal covers all of the roofs. A frame addition was constructed circa 1920 and spans the rear gable wall. It includes a finished basement, while the original building has only a crawlspace. The façade's shed-roofed extensions to either side of the bell tower date to the 1990s. The entries have replacement, flush panel doors. The windows have 6-over-6, double-hung wood sash with clear glass installed in the late 1990s that replaced historic colored glass lights. Replacement of historic glass lights may have occurred due to changing aesthetic preferences as well as due to damage to historic lights for which no in-kind replacements could be found.

The sanctuary's interior retains its original beaded matchboard wainscot, now painted white, and the original ceiling is concealed by a dropped ceiling with acoustical tiles. Wallpaper covers the upper walls and the earlier flooring is carpeted. All of the light fixtures are modern replacements. The pulpit is located beyond the sanctuary's original rear wall within the 1920s rear addition. The arched opening has wood casing that has been painted. Also on the property is the cemetery, which was established about the same time as the church was built, c. 1896. The cemetery includes numerous unmarked burials; according to the property's nomination, many burials once had uncarved stone grave markers, but these were moved into a pile after 1973. The cemetery has a small number of post-1960 machine-cut gravestones, several metal markers of the type often provided by funeral homes during the early- to mid-20th century, and one marble tablet marker, for Obry Hopson, issued by the federal government for military veterans (Figure 18, above). The metal marker issued by the funeral home at the time of Hopson's interment also is present, indicating that the military marker was installed sometime afterward. Large oak trees heavily shade the cemetery, allowing just enough sunlight for scattered groups of traditional evergreen plantings.

In Mathews County, enslaved African Americans belonged to the Old Baptist Church of Hudgins (later Mathews Baptist Church). According to an 1858 membership roll, of the total 795 members, 445 were recorded as African Americans. In 1863-1864, the White leadership began to consider inviting the congregation's Black members to form their own church. In 1864, the first meeting of the newly formed Second Baptist Church Mathews (the name later changed to First Baptist) occurred in a small log cabin; the group originally was classified as a "mission," which meant they remained under control of the Old Baptist Church. The following year, 291 Black worshippers submitted a request for dismissal from Old Baptist Church and First Baptist was reclassified as an independent church. The first two buildings where the congregation held services were lost to fire. In 1867, the new congregation had purchased a half-acre of land and constructed the church building (057-5017). Peyton Collin, Harry Cosby, and Carter Hayes managed the acquisition. This half-acre lot today makes up a portion of the current property. [296]

Figure 18. First Baptist Church Mathews (Image Source: Commonwealth Preservation Group, 2024).

The visually striking Gothic Revival sanctuary is a one-story, three-bay, rectangular, wood frame building with rear and side additions that create a larger L-shape (Figure 19). The exterior walls of the sanctuary are clad with vinyl siding over wood siding and the building rises from a brick pier foundation with concrete block infill. The main sanctuary has a front gable roof with composite shingles, while the additions have a cross-gable roof with composite shingles. Two interior chimneys are present in the sanctuary. Lancet-arched stained glass windows are symmetrically spaced along the façade and side elevations. Tinted glass panes were installed in the windows c. 1910; these were replaced with stained glass lights in 1978. The primary entrance is centrally located on the façade and consists of double wood panel doors with a stained glass arched transom,

[296] "Church History," *First Baptist Church 1865-1965: To Celebrate Our 100th Anniversary* (N.p.: Taylor Publishing Company, [1965]), no pagination.

and is accessed by a brick stoop. Since the sanctuary's completion in 1867, improvements and additions have been made to the church that are characteristic of the evolution of form of African American churches in Virginia. These additions include the c. 1910 steeple, distinguished by a decorative vergeboard and a mix of shingle and lap wood siding. A bell was added to the tower (c. 1920), a choir room and study (c. 1949), and an annex consisting of a multi-purpose room, kitchen, classrooms, choir room, offices, and bathrooms (1968). The c. 1949 and 1968 additions have vinyl siding, concrete foundations, and double-hung, vinyl, replacement sash windows. Throughout the 1970s, the congregation made additional improvements and renovations to the interior of the church including new carpeting, as well as systems upgrades, roof replacement, site drainage and cemetery improvements, and new signage. An ADA ramp was installed near the annex entrance in 1989 and the sanctuary's exterior wood siding was covered with vinyl in 1990 for ease of maintenance. The church is an excellent representation of a rural, wood frame Gothic Revival style church with folk Victorian decorative details that are characteristic of local craftsmanship.

Significance:

African American churches that were active during the span between c. 1861-c. 1968 are significant in the areas of **Ethnic Heritage: African American** and **Social History** and/or **Religion**. Additional areas of significance also may be identified, including **Architecture, Landscape Architecture,** and **Archaeology (Historic – Non-Aboriginal)**. Regarding Criterion A, African American clergymen and church members often deployed a combination of diplomacy, tact, determination, and confidence to negotiate the changing circumstances of Virginia society during and immediately after the Civil War, through Reconstruction and the onset of Jim Crow segregation, and the activism associated with the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s-1960s. The aforementioned Averett community in Mecklenburg County, the Reverend George Douglass Wharton followed a course similar to Cross's. A Pennsylvania native, Wharton graduated from Hampton Institute in 1880, then moved to Mecklenburg County to establish a new church. With his formal education, Wharton also was employed as a teacher in the community-built school that had been acquired and established by local Black residents in a two-room log dwelling. Wharton's activities expanded to include buying and selling land in the vicinity of the new church and school; the crossroads village of Averett soon formed, as a result. Wharton guided the creation and activities of the "Rural Realty Company, which was owned as a co-op by local residents and sold over 3,000 acres of land during its existence."[297] At this time, cooperative purchase, ownership, and sale of land was a commonly utilized method that allowed African Americans to purchase incremental amounts of land, consolidate the parcels, and sell them to a community member, often either at cost or with a small profit to aid the co-op with future purchases. The Averett Graded School operated as a public elementary school between c. 1882-c. 1940, originally in a log building and then in a two-room, frame schoolhouse erected in 1910 by community members. As many as 100 students filled the building during the 1920s-1930s, which still stands on church property today. A baseball field and a general store also were built in Averett.[298] After the school closed, the church purchased the building for use as a fellowship hall. Averett also had the Averett Union

[297] Janet Pines Robinson, Gray O'Dwyer, and Marc C. Wagner, "Averett School and Wharton Memorial Baptist Church and Cemetery," National Register nomination, November 8, 2020, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/058-5127/, p. 15-17. Cooperative purchase, ownership, and sale of land was a method that allowed African Americans to purchase incremental amounts of land, consolidate the parcels, and sell them at cost to a community member.

[298] The baseball field is associated with the historically significant popularity of the sport among African Americans, whose enthusiastic support of the professional and semiprofessional Negro Leagues was legendary. From the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, many African American communities across Virginia, and the country, formed baseball teams that played against one another. These teams were proving grounds for players who went on to become semiprofessional and professional players. Traveling teams also visited local communities to play, and often were accompanied by a manager or scout on the lookout for new talent. The recreational aspects of Virginia's historically African American communities warrant further study and documentation.

Lodge #235, a Masonic lodge that met in an addition constructed on the schoolhouse for this purpose in 1959.[299] The confluence of all of these social elements at Averett, with the church at its center, is demonstrative of the significant roles that congregations and pastors played in creating and maintaining the sense of communal support and mutual aid that sustained African Americans through the worst times of Jim Crow segregation and unchecked White supremacy.

During the segregation era and the Long Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century, African American churches served as spaces for organizing, educating, and training activists and volunteers who participated in voter registration, civic education, anti-segregation demonstrations, marches and other activities that, together, created the momentum to dismantle Virginia's racially segregated way of life. African American pastors and congregation members also were involved in litigation that contributed to the striking down of various racially discriminatory practices and laws in the Commonwealth and nationwide.

With regard to Criterion C, Virginia's high-style buildings designed by professional architects historically have been subject to considerable study and are demonstrative of the extensive variation of styles that African American congregations have selected for their sanctuaries. In *Virginia Landmarks of Black History*, a compendium published in 1995, Court Street Baptist Church (118-0156) in Lynchburg was described as "the most conspicuous historic landmark of the city's Afro-American heritage."[300] Designed by local architect R.C. Burkholder and erected by African American artisans and tradesmen, the building was listed in the VLR in 1981 and the NRHP in 1982. Its areas of significance were identified as Architecture, Black history (now termed Ethnic Heritage: Black), and Religion. Its architectural design is based on the Italianate style, which is evidenced by its vertical massing with an unusually tall spire, slender, paired, round-arched windows with brick, arched hood molds and set within symmetrically ordered, slightly recessed bays, and segmental-arched primary entry surmounted by a triple window. Norfolk's 1906 First Baptist Church (NRHP 1983; 122-0040; see Appendix A for image) was designed by "a master of the [Richardsonian Romanesque] style, architect Reuben H. Hunt, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and is considered an "outstanding" example of the style and one of Hunt's "most important works."[301] In the city of Richmond, the monumental, Greek Revival style Fourth Baptist Church (NRHP 1979; 127-0318) dates to 1884. Listed for its significance in the areas of Architecture and Religion, the building's façade is composed of "a distyle portico in antis elevated on a high podium… [with] two unfluted Doric columns and paired pilasters supporting an understudied

[299] Janet Pines Robinson, Gray O'Dwyer, and Marc C. Wagner, "Averett School and Wharton Memorial Baptist Church and Cemetery," National Register nomination, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, November 8, 2020, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/058-5127/, p. 17-18.
[300] Calder Loth, ed., *Virginia Landmarks of Black History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1995), p. 53.
[301] Calder Loth, ed., *Virginia Landmarks of Black History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia 1995), p. 64, 66.

Doric entablature" and a ramped architrave framing the primary entry.[302] In contrast, the sanctuary's interior features Victorian-era decorative attributes. The pulpit is dominated by an oak-and-metal pipe organ set between pilasters. The pulpit and altar are also constructed of raised panel oak and the windows contain wood sash with stained glass lights that depict various scenes.

In Charlotteville, Zion Union Baptist Church, built in 1965, is a noteworthy example of a mid-century Neo-Expressionist, A-frame church (Figure 20). Designed by prominent Virginia architect Milton Grigg, the church's striking facade, Wrightian masonry detailing, and articulated roof structure make it a stylistically sophisticated example of a quintessential mid-20th century church typology. The front and rear elevations are defined by angled walls, while the roof extends beyond the primary side walls of the building and is supported by a series of four concrete piers tied into the main roof joists on each side elevation. The piers sit on brick masonry walls that enclose the basement level. The front elevation is further defined by the large, central steel crucifix which supports the A-frame roof at its peak. A pair of wooden doors is located several feet behind this large square column, with a concrete segmental arch awning above the doors extending outward to intersect with the steel member. Since 1955, Neo-Expressionism most often has been deployed on public and religious buildings in Virginia. The building's dramatic form with a soaring gable roof and expanse of multi-colored, fixed glass panes within a grid-like metal structural frame are in keeping with Neo-Expressionist design tenets, which emphasize cantilevered roofs, asymmetry, fragmented lines, organic forms, irregular shapes, and avoidance

Figure 19. Zion Union Baptist Church in Charlottesville (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

[302] Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff, "Fourth Baptist Church," National Register nomination, May 15, 1979, On file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-0318/, p. 2.

of right angles.[303] As an example of Black Modernism, the building's design is imbued with social and cultural meaning in "the spatial and formal [built] embodiment of black cultural projects."[304] Zion Union Baptist Church previously occupied a c. 1907 church in Vinegar Hill, a historically African American neighborhood that coalesced during Reconstruction and was demolished in 1965 by the City of Charlottesville during an urban renewal project. Zion Union was the only one of two African American congregations in Vinegar Hill that survived the displacement. The new sanctuary's design speaks to the congregation's strength, resilience, optimism, and defiance in the face of willful destruction.

More modestly scaled African American churches that were the product of vernacular design, construction methods, and materials also may be significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Such buildings embody the talents and skills of Black carpenters, masons, and other tradesmen who utilized building forms, framing and joinery methods, and decorative motifs that were specific to their communities and, often, to their religious faith. A fine example of vernacular architecture is Bath County's John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church (NRHP 2013; 008-5030; Figure 21, below). Located in Bath County, the congregation was formed by a Reconstruction Era community. The church is an example of an evolved building that grew according to the congregation's needs and still displays its multiple layers. The 1873 church is log construction later clad with weatherboard siding. A rear extension for a choir loft dates to 1923, while a one-story frame addition (top left; bottom right) was constructed in 1982. Within the 1982 addition, the finishes are typical of the period, but a section of the original logs on the church has been exposed. The church's vestibule has beadboard and tongue-and-groove ceiling and wall finishes. The sanctuary retains original wood trim, tongue-and-groove beadboard wainscoting, synthetic paneling over plaster walls, narrow beadboard ceiling finish (concealed by acoustic tiles), and handmade wood pews, chancel, and altar. The doors from the vestibule appear to be handmade and have later plywood over their panels featuring a grain-painted cross design. John Wesley M.E. Church was listed under Criterion C for its significance in the area of Architecture and under Criterion A in the area of Ethnic Heritage: African American as Bath County's first Black church.

[303] Melina Bezirdjian and Lena Sweeten McDonald, *New Dominion Virginia, Architectural Style Guide* (Richmond: Department of Historic Resources, 2014), p. 47.
[304] Dr. Charles L. Davis, II, interviewed for "What is Black Modernism?" National Trust for Historic Preservation, November 12, 2024, https://savingplaces.org/stories/black-modern-architecture-davis.

Figure 20. John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church in Bath County: church with additions (top left), sanctuary (bottom left), handmade door (top right), and hallway within addition looking toward the original log building (bottom right) (Image Source: *Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).*

Registration Requirements:

In order to qualify for listing under this MPD, African American churches must be directly associated with the Sanctuaries of Governance and Social Structure: The Role of African American Churches from Reconstruction to Civil Rights, c. 1861- c. 1968 historic context that is presented in Section E of this MPD. Nominated properties must be significant in the area of **Ethnic Heritage: African American** and one or more of the following areas of significance: **Education, Social History**, and/or **Architecture**; additional areas of significance may be identified for a nominated property and will be justified in the nomination form. The

nominated property also must meet Criteria Consideration A for religious properties and, if applicable, Criteria Consideration D for cemeteries. The nominated property's period of significance will include at least some portion of the span between c. 1861-c. 1968. The period of significance for an individual church may begin prior to c. 1861 and/ or extend past 1968, depending on the property's unique characteristics. Because churches often have maintained historically significant activities up to the present, an appropriate end date for the period of significance may be 50 years prior to nomination of the property; thus, Criteria Consideration G also may be applicable in some cases. Nominated properties will retain sufficient physical integrity that conveys their significant association with one or more of the areas of significance identified herein.

Aspects of Integrity

Location and Setting:

The African American Church resource type, inclusive of its rural, town, urban, and suburban variants, often was situated within a segregated residential area during its period of significance. The type often remains in its original location. Some churches, however, may have been moved for a variety of reasons as described above. Relocation of the building from its original parcel, if such work occurred during the property's period of significance, will not affect integrity of setting. If the building remains on its original parcel but was moved after its period of significance, the building's integrity of location and setting is considered to be largely intact. The circumstances of the building's relocation after its period of significance are to be evaluated on an individual basis when evaluating its integrity of location.

Due to urban renewal and highway construction between c. 1940-c. 1990, widespread destruction of African American neighborhoods occurred in Virginia. Relocation of a church sanctuary or other resource on the property due to such practices may have taken place during or after the property's period of significance. The planning practices that caused fragmentation and erasure of Black neighborhoods are themselves often significant historic trends and events. Therefore, the building's relocation affects the property's integrity of location and setting but does not automatically eliminate such integrity. It is possible, for example, that the relocated building will have integrity of location and setting due to significance it may have gained in the area of Community Planning and Development and/or Social History and/or other areas of significance.

With regard to setting, in rural areas African American churches often stood within or near a residential enclave situated along the outskirts of a town or within an unincorporated Black community with origins that extended back to the Reconstruction Era or earlier. In urban areas, such churches generally were located within a segregated Black neighborhood. Suburban churches may have congregations that relocated due to urban renewal, highway construction, or other major projects that displaced Black urban neighborhoods. Some suburban congregations formed as African American developers established new, middle class, all-Black neighborhoods between the 1910s-1960s. The setting of a church property may have been entirely residential in character, or have included a mix of residential and other uses, such as commercial, recreational, educational, institutional, and social. Because many Black neighborhoods experienced extensive demolitions due to c. 1940-c. 1990 highway construction, urban renewal projects, and/or local zoning for land uses and activities incompatible with a neighborhood's or individual resource's original character, the setting of an African American church may have been altered. In such cases, these alterations are part of the resource's integrity of setting rather than a negative effect because the consequences are part of the direct association of surviving resources with significance in the area of Ethnic Heritage: African American and related areas of significance such as Social History and Community Planning and Development. The incompatible activities and uses are illustrative of the many challenges overcome by Black congregations and communities prior to and during the

dismantling of Jim Crow segregation and establishment of civil rights for African Americans at a level unprecedented in the nation's history. Inappropriate industrial and commercial development also represents the persistence of structural racism that has negatively impacted majority-Black neighborhoods since the passage of federal civil rights legislation during the 1960s.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship:

The design, materials, and workmanship of an African American church typically have changed considerably over time. From the late 19th through the early 20th century, sanctuaries often were erected by local carpenters and masons to meet a congregation's specific needs and financial means. Some churches were designed by professional architects, particularly those for large congregations in urban locales. Talented artisans also designed and built churches utilizing vernacular methods and materials and incorporating elements that were specific to African American culture, including carpentry, framing, and joinery methods, as well as decorative motifs and designs for altar rails, choirs, pulpits, pews, and other sanctuary elements. Within the universe of churches in Virginia, therefore, building form, footprint, size, and massing, location of entries and windows, and interior plan varied accordingly. Availability of materials sometimes dictated a building's individual features. Careful examination of a building may be necessary to determine original design elements and materials. Historic photos, correspondence, organization records, and oral history also may provide helpful insight into a church's design and materials and their evolution over time.

The materials used to erect all variations of African American churches were often amassed through donations. During the late 19th to early 20th century, salvaged materials from other types of earlier buildings, as well as leftover materials from another project, may have been used. The quality of donated materials is likely to have varied, necessitating subsequent replacement of poor-quality materials and those subject to hard use. Over time, African American churches transitioned from being primarily log to frame and masonry construction. Wealthier, larger congregations in Virginia's cities, such as Petersburg, Richmond, Norfolk, and Alexandria, often could afford to purchase new materials and to build their churches to their specific aesthetic preferences.

Replacement of materials in kind is appropriate when needed to keep a resource in good repair and active use. Where historic materials have been replaced with functionally and/or visually similar but newer types of synthetic materials, a resource's integrity of materials and workmanship is somewhat diminished depending on the extent of the replacement materials and whether the alterations occurred during the property's period of significance. Some materials, such as asbestos, aluminum, and vinyl siding, asphalt shingles, and aluminum-framed window sash were introduced during the middle decades of the 20th century and are, themselves, of historic age and may have significance in their own right, even if such materials replaced earlier finishes such as weatherboard siding, wood shingles, and wood-framed sash. As has been noted repeatedly herein, newer materials often have been applied over historic or original materials, which remain intact even if they are obscured from view. The layers of evolution a church has undergone speaks to its congregations changing circumstances over time and can be of significant study value.

Extensive use of replacement materials after the property's period of significance may result in proportional erosion of integrity, depending upon the resource's materials, design, and workmanship during its period of significance. Additions on buildings that date to the resource's period of significance and allowed the building to continue or expand its historic use do not erode integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Those alterations that postdate the period of significance are to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to understand the resource's continued integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Alterations often include additions to facilitate expanded programming, a fellowship hall with a modern kitchen that accommodated communal

activities, Sunday school classrooms, office space, restrooms, and mechanical rooms for heating and air conditioning equipment.

For the most part, sanctuaries erected between c. 1861-c. 1930 in rural and town settings embody the vernacular construction methods of their time and place. As noted above, such buildings offer an opportunity to study the work of artisans and craftsmen, and how they evolved from the original construction with repairs made over time. Construction methods changed considerably during the 20th century with the introduction of standardized, mass-produced materials as well as building codes for light, ventilation, heating, and safety. Consequently, repairs made during the latter years of a church's period of significance may demonstrate such evolution in workmanship. Poorly rendered repairs made after a property's period of significance can adversely affect a building's integrity of workmanship, depending on the extent to which earlier workmanship has been erased or removed. During the early to mid-20th century, newer, more affordable construction materials, such as concrete block, sheetrock, composite shingles, and dimensional lumber, were selected when a congregation was replacing an older building or erecting their first church. It was not unusual for the congregation to upgrade the exterior and/or interior materials as financial circumstances permitted. As with the evolution of earlier buildings, such alterations to early to mid-20th century churches are not automatically detrimental to integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. Instead, they offer opportunities for further study into topics such as the socioeconomic conditions of the congregation and evolution of aesthetic preferences that held symbolic meaning for the church members over time.

With regard to historic-age churches that continue to be open to the public today, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that may be applicable to assure equal access to and within the interior. Such retrofits to comply with the ADA's accessibility requirements shall not be considered alterations that impair the property's integrity. Typical alterations include erecting a ramp to permit entry to the building's main entrance and/or alternate entrances, widening of some doors, and/or removal or lowering of thresholds at exterior or interior room entries.

The following table lists the common physical features of the 25 African American churches erected between c. 1861 - c. 1975 that were surveyed as part of this MPD project.

Table 1: Common Elements of Churches, c. 1861-c. 1975

Element	Typical Components and Materials
Stories	Generally, one to two stories
Foundation	Continuous, pier, or raised Materials: brick, concrete (block or formed), stone (fieldstone, cobblestone, limestone, random rubble), wood, parged
Structural System	Frame or masonry (brick, concrete block, stone)
Exterior Treatment	Typically, wood siding, brick, stucco, wood shingles, stone, aluminum siding, or some combination, though materials may vary. Common alterations to exterior materials include vinyl, composite, stucco, asphalt, asbestos, brick veneer, or some combination of such materials.

Element	Typical Components and Materials
Roof	Typically gable (side, front, or cross) or hipped, though shape may vary. Roof details may include exposed rafter tails, overhanging eaves, gable end vents (often louvered), belfry/steeple, and chimneys. Materials: most common are composite shingle or standing seam metal, though some include pressed metal, tin, or asphalt shingles.
Entrances	Typically, single or double leaf; usually wood. Common replacement materials include fiberglass, composite, metal, metal framed glass, or some combination.
Windows	Typically, some combination of wood or aluminum, single-hung, double-hung, or fixed windows with clear or stained-glass, though they may range in style and material. Common replacement materials include vinyl windows.
Additions	Historic additions are common, but not requisite for listing. Common additions may include bell towers, entry vestibules, fellowship halls, and/or educational wings. Documented examples of entry vestibules include configurations with contemporaneous or later lateral extensions to house restrooms, offices, closets, and other functions. If additions were constructed after the period of significance, they should not overwhelm the original building, unless they are specifically tied to the use of the property as an African American Church during the resource's period of significance.
Interiors	Interiors were not evaluated as part of this project; however, they should generally retain their historic plan and circulation pattern. Many churches historically include interior elements such as sanctuaries, vestibules, classrooms, and/or fellowship halls. Common interior alterations include additional interior partitions, installation of kitchen and bathroom fixtures, removal of flooring materials such as wood, carpeting, and asbestos or other vinyl covering, covering of original wall and ceiling finishes with gypsum wallboard, thin layers of mass-produced wood paneling, and paint.
Secondary Resources	Churches may have secondary resources, but they are not required for listing. Common secondary resources include cemeteries, historic signage, memorials/monuments, outdoor gathering spaces (e.g., pavilions or shelters), fellowship halls, outbuildings, and other educational buildings.

Feeling and Association:

Location of an African American church within or adjacent to a historically segregated area of residential resources, or mixed with commercial, recreational, educational, religious, and social uses, will contribute to the resource's integrity of feeling and association. The retention of associated historic-age properties in proximity to the church property contributes to its integrity of setting and, therefore, integrity of feeling and association. It will not be atypical, however, for an African American church to be in a location affected by the types of extensive demolition, displacement, new construction, and/or incompatible land uses and activities noted above with regard to integrity of location. A resource affected by such activities will have changes to its location, setting, feeling, and association. Analysis of these four aspects of a property's integrity, therefore, must take into account the effects of such alterations on an individual property and, where applicable, should be understood as contributing to that property's integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.

Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship contribute to integrity of feeling and association related to the African American Church's original period of construction and subsequent evolution to meet its congregation's needs. Alterations associated with subsequent significant events may affect the property's integrity of feeling and association with regard to its original construction period. Such alterations, however, if significant in their own right, will not eliminate the property's overall integrity of feeling and association. Remodeling, additions, and other alterations associated with meeting a growing congregation's needs and expansion of activities are likely to be significant in their own right and, therefore, will not erode the property's overall integrity of feeling and association.

Property Type 2: Church-based Historic Districts

This property type is comprised of church-based historic districts that include a church building and other associated resources, such as a cemetery, former schoolhouse, earlier sanctuary, parsonage, and/or fellowship hall. With all-Black or majority Black congregations, the churches were operable between c. 1861-c. 1968. Some of the church buildings may have been constructed and operable prior to 1861 and occupied by either an all-White, all-Black, or mixed congregation. From c. 1861- c. 1968, most purpose-built churches associated with this MPD had all-Black congregations; at times, a small number of White members may have been present in some congregations, such as Pentecostal/ Holiness churches during the early 20th century and mainline Protestant churches starting during the mid- to late 20th century. The African American churches may be found in rural, town, and urban settings. Starting in the 20th century, particularly after World War II, Black churches also began to be established in suburban settings.

Description

The churches that comprise the nucleus of church-based historic districts are identical to the individual churches described above. The additional resource that most often accompanies a church is a cemetery. Such cemeteries are more often found in rural and town settings where land was cheaper and more plentiful. In urban settings, some congregations also acquired land for their own cemeteries, but members just as likely could have opted for interment in a segregated municipal cemetery or in one of the many privately-owned cemeteries exclusive for African Americans that were established in Virginia's cities after the Civil War. Due to the rise of the modern funeral and cemetery industry after World War II, post-1945 churches in suburban settings are far less likely to have an accompanying cemetery.

As is indicated by the church cemeteries that have been documented to date, burials may have been grouped according to kinship but were not required to be so arranged. Traditional plantings, such as periwinkle, cedar,

yucca, and other evergreen plants, may be present. Use of evergreen plants often correlated with belief in the eternal afterlife but could have other symbolic significance. Many of the earliest burials were marked with fieldstone head- and footstones. By the early 20th century, marble and granite grave markers may have been installed. An important type of folk marker was handmade and hand-inscribed using concrete, a material that became widely available during the early 20th century, had the advantage of being more durable than wood markers and more affordable than granite or marble, and, unlike traditional fieldstones, could be customized with identifying information. Starting immediately after the Civil War, burials for military veterans could be marked with a tablet-type marble headstone issued by the federal government; although design details of these have changed over the years, the use of marble in a tablet form has remained consistent. Church cemeteries often have an original section that includes unmarked burials, as well as a later section characterized by use of 20th- and 21st-century machine-cut grave markers of granite, marble, or other material.

After cemeteries, a public school for the community's school-age children was prioritized, especially for churches founded during the early years of the Reconstruction Era. As described in Section E, many churches doubled as schoolhouses during the week. As financial circumstances permitted and growing enrollments required, African American congregations donated land to local school boards and frequently sponsored construction of a schoolhouse. As these early one- and two-room schoolhouses were replaced over time, ownership of the donated buildings and land often either reverted back to the church or was purchased by the church. The school buildings easily were converted to other uses, such as for Sunday school classes or for a fellowship hall.

For a related purpose, space for Sunday school classes and/or social gatherings often was prioritized by congregations. Such spaces usually were created by adding on to the church building or by finishing an existing basement, if suitable space could be created. Examples of purpose-built education buildings and fellowship halls, however, also have been documented, such as at Mount Calvary Baptist Church (NRHP 2016; 068-0417). Such buildings may have later been connected to the church via a hyphen, making it difficult to perceive the property's evolution solely through visual inspection.

Education buildings are associated with African Americans' emphasis on education, especially during Reconstruction, as many Emancipated people had been denied opportunities for formal instruction of any kind. For this reason, Sunday schools often were taught by public school teachers during Reconstruction and provided a means of increasing literacy among a community's adult population. Black churchgoers also strongly desired to read the Bible themselves to know the word of God and interpret biblical lessons, rather than relying on an intermediary, such as a pastor, to tell them what was in the Bible. During the slavery era, the only option to attend religious services involved supervision by a White pastor who likely was instructed by enslavers on the lessons to be taught to enslaved worshippers. A central aspect of spiritual freedom, therefore, was for Black church members to decide for themselves both what to read and what lessons to gain from different portions of the Bible.

Fellowship halls often were built contemporaneously with Sunday school classrooms and it was not unusual for such a space to be in the same building as the classrooms. For many congregations, the first fellowship hall was located in the church basement. Except in the Tidewater region where water tables are quite high, basements were a common feature of church buildings from Reconstruction through the mid-20th century. Finishing a basement was a relatively inexpensive method for creating a fellowship hall. Over time, as indoor plumbing and electricity became more commonplace, a kitchen typically was added to the fellowship hall. The purpose of the fellowship hall was manifold and changed over time. Originally, these spaces, like the sanctuaries, comprised a community's largest indoor spaces that were suitable for meetings, social gatherings, dances, fundraising

events, and holiday meals, as well as religious rituals such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms. As a congregation grew, a basement fellowship hall often became too cramped and a new hall would be constructed as an addition to the church or in a separate building; alternatively, a former schoolhouse could be adapted for this purpose. During the 20th century, as homecoming and family reunion traditions became increasingly important, a capacious fellowship hall provided a means for congregation members to maintain kinship ties with relatives who had moved to other locations.

Practical needs also were addressed early in each congregation's history. A well would be dug to provide drinking water and privies would be constructed. These elements were particularly ubiquitous at churches in rural settings and some towns, but may not have been needed in urban settings by the late 19th century. As noted above, however, modern infrastructure such as public water and sewer often came slowly to Black neighborhoods, necessitating continued reliance on well water and a "sanitary toilet," which was a 20th-century version of a privy that was built of concrete block and had a concrete septic tank beneath it, long after indoor plumbing had become commonplace in a town or city. In rural areas, indoor plumbing was adopted on an uneven basis that was determined more by a congregation's financial circumstances than construction of public water systems.

Other elements that are often found in church-based historic districts include a designated space for outdoor worship services, a picnic pavilion that facilitates gatherings for an assortment of purposes, a utility shed for lawn care and building maintenance equipment, a playground area for children, and ornamental plantings in raised beds or gardens. One or more memorials may be present as well. Such commemorative objects typically concern a deceased pastor or congregation member, an event important in the church's history, or monetary contributions that served a particular need, such as a remodeling campaign or construction project. Some churches have memorials or signage that relates their church's history and/or marks the site of a previous church building. The types of objects and structures that serve commemorative purposes are as variegated as the congregations across Virginia. Signage bearing a church's name, address, pastor's name, days and times of worship services, and other information are usually placed toward the front of the property. Such signage can date from a church's construction through to the present day. Some types of monument signs have proven to be relatively simple to update, with the original painted wood sign replaced by a panel to which removable letters and numbers can be applied, which, in turn, may have been replaced by an electric sign that displays an assortment of information. All of these secondary resources that date to a property's period of significance are likely to be classified as contributing. Those that postdate the period of significance may be noncontributing but rarely will be of such scale that they detract from the overall integrity of the church property. As noted above, prosperous congregations may have commissioned a landscape architect to prepare a formal design for their property; insufficient information, however, currently is on hand to establish typical characteristics of such sites.

Figure 21. Site of the 1870 church (top) and the 1951 church with 2008 addition at left (bottom) at Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

Examples of Church-Based Historic Districts

A representative example of a church-based historic district is Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (NRHP 2018; 089-0360) in Stafford County (Figure 22). The church and cemetery were founded shortly after the Civil War by newly emancipated African Americans living in the area. The property includes three resources: the site of the original church building, constructed in 1870; a cemetery that began with the earlier church and continued in use into the 2010s, and the Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church, constructed in 1951. The location of the 1870 church's site remained in the congregation's collective memory for decades and, during the 2010s, limited archaeological testing confirmed the location of foundation elements and other cultural deposits. The site is classified as a contributing resource in the district. The 1951 church building was a representative example of a rural, one-story building with Gothic Revival elements that was constructed with concrete blocks, which later received a stucco finish. A rear addition was constructed in 1976, also of concrete block, to house a pastor's office, choir rooms, classrooms, restrooms, and storage spaces. In 2008, an ADA-compliant front addition created an at-grade primary entrance with an elevator in the foyer that provides access to the main level's sanctuary and the fellowship hall in the raised basement Additional features on the property include a well and pump house, both of which date to 1951. The well is concrete curb lined with a concrete top cover. The nearby pump house is a one-bay structure with a low pitch roof covered in asphalt shingles.

The Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church was in use as early as 1868 (Figure 23). The earliest interments were former enslaved persons from the White Oak area of Stafford County. The vast majority of graves from this period are unmarked, but fieldstones that serve as head- and footstones are present on some burials. Most of the unmarked graves are located in a distinctive green space just east of the site of the 1870 church. Additionally, immediately behind the extant church is another area with unmarked interments. Grave markers began to appear with early-20th-century interments and are a variety of types, styles, and materials, including uninscribed stone, (4), handmade concrete (14), concrete block (2), tin/metal staked plaques from funeral homes (9), machine-cut granite (26), machine-cut marble (2), and bronze (3), making for a total of 60 marked graves. The range of marker types and the continued practice of various forms of grave decorations are associated with important aspects of African American burial practices.

Figure 22. Cemetery at Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

In Fauquier County, Silver Hill Baptist Church and School (NRHP 2022; 030-5180) is another representative example of a church-based historic district (Figure 24). The property includes a c. 1903 school, a c. 1902 church with five additions, c. 1903 schoolhouse, c. 1900 cemetery, c. 1960 well, and c. 2000 sign, all of which are contributing, except for the sign, which postdates the property's period of significance. The frame church, although now clad in vinyl siding, displays elements of the Gothic Revival style, including a projecting three-story tower with a belfry and a pyramidal roof with flared eaves, lancet vents with wood louvers on the belfry, and diamond vents with wood louvers directly below the belfry. The double-leaf entry doors on the tower's primary entry are replacements. The building's interior has been remodeled with carpeting, sheetrock wall and ceiling cladding, and replacement light fixtures. A circa 1945, one-story addition is at the rear of the sanctuary. A c. 1970, one-story, gabled-roof addition houses the fellowship hall and extends south from the rear addition. A c. 1975 addition is on the east side of the sanctuary. A c. 2008 addition is on the north side of the church and a c. 2010 addition is off the c. 1970 addition. The additions were constructed to house additional functions as the congregation grew, as well as modernized heating and plumbing systems. Along with the fellowship hall, the additions include a pastor's office, restrooms, choir loft, administrative office, a boiler room, and a kitchen. Such elements are typical of African American churches that have remained in use for generations and continue to function as such today.

Figure 23. Silver Hill Baptist Church (left) and Cemetery (right) (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

Figure 24. C. 1903 schoolhouse (top) and c. 1960 well and c. 2000 sign at Silver Hill Baptist Church (bottom) (Image Source: Virginia Cultural Resources Information System, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond).

The c. 1903 school is a one-story, one-bay, one-room, frame building with stone piers (Figure 25). The relatively unaltered interior includes hardwood flooring, and painted wood boards covering the walls and ceiling. There are approximately 70 gravestones and multiple uncut fieldstone markers in the cemetery. The majority of the headstones are machine-cut granite markers. Older markers generally are upright, while some newer markers are flush to the ground. The earliest marked interment dates to 1914; the cemetery remains in use today. The c. 1960 well likely replaced an earlier well, the location of which is not known. The extant well is built of poured concrete and has a circular cap with a square base. The monument-style sign was added c. 2000 and is of a common type consisting of stretcher-bond brick veneer over concrete blocks with a painted wood sign panel mounted on each side.

Significance:

African American church-based historic districts are significant in the areas of **Ethnic Heritage: African American** and **Social History** and/or **Religion**. Additional areas of significance also may be identified, including **Architecture, Landscape Architecture,** and **Archaeology (Historic – Non-Aboriginal)**. The significance of church-based historic districts is largely the same as that for individual African American churches from the same period. The districts are associated with a lengthy period during which Emancipated African Americans established their own communities, generally with a church at the heart of the neighborhood. From this nucleus, other community resources sprang, often including a cemetery and public schoolhouse. Additional resources were added over time as the congregation's preferences required and finances permitted, such as additions with fellowship halls and Sunday school classrooms, wells, privies, outdoor worship spaces, baptistries, picnic shelters, and playgrounds. The strictures of the Jim Crow era of segregation meant that African American churches served multiple purposes beyond their religious role. As alternative places of governance during the segregation era, when White-controlled government offices disenfranchised and ignored their African American constituents, Black churches provided opportunities for spiritual sustenance, education, social gatherings, and meeting spaces. Through these means, the churches created spaces of Black resistance to their attempted segregation through passage of segregation laws. Over the course of the Long Civil Rights Movement, pastors and church members participated in the range of organizations that Black people created to lobby collectively for public resources, such as Countywide Leagues to help African Americans register to vote, School Leagues to argue for larger portions of public funding for segregated schools, and NAACP and other civil rights organizations involved in litigation to strike down various discriminatory practices. During the 1950s-1960s, when the Long Civil Rights Movement began to achieve major gains in recognition of constitutional rights, Black churches

served as spaces for organizing, educating, and training activists and volunteers who participated in voter registration, civic education, anti-segregation demonstrations, marches and other activities.

With regard to architectural significance under Criterion C, church-based historic districts possess the same physical and aesthetic attributes as individual churches, as described above. Moreover, the historic districts are distinct entities that meet a Black community's most essential needs, including religious worship, education, social gatherings, mutual aid, and resistance to White supremacy. The design of such districts warrants understanding as a collective expression of a community's sense of identity. Due to changing needs over time, this sense of identity often is multi-layered with no one aspect that is necessarily more significant than another.

Registration Requirements:

In order to qualify for listing under this MPD, church-based historic districts must be directly associated with the Sanctuaries of Governance and Social Structure: The Role of African American Churches from Reconstruction to Civil Rights, c. 1861- c. 1968 historic context that is presented in Section E of this MPD. Nominated properties must be significant in the area of **Ethnic Heritage: African American** and one or more of the following areas of significance: **Education, Social History**, and/or **Architecture**; additional areas of significance may be identified for a nominated property and will be justified in the nomination form. The nominated district also must meet Criteria Consideration A for religious properties and, if applicable, Criteria Consideration D for cemeteries. The nominated district's period of significance must include at least some portion of the span between c. 1861-c. 1968, but can begin prior to c. 1861 and/ or extend past 1968, depending on the property's unique characteristics. Because church-based historic districts often have maintained historically significant activities up to the present, an appropriate end date for the period of significance may be 50 years prior to the nomination of the property. Criteria Consideration G may be applicable in some cases. Nominated districts will retain sufficient physical integrity that conveys their significant association with one or more of the areas of significance identified herein. Important to note is that church-based historic districts may include discontiguous components due to the forced relocation of Black churches and neighborhoods to make way for urban renewal projects, highway construction, expansion of Virginia's numerous military installations, or other circumstances. One such example is the aforementioned Oak Grove Baptist Church Historic District (NRHP 2023; 099-5091), which is composed of 5 discontiguous components dispersed across a 1.5-square-mile area.

Aspects of Integrity

Location and Setting:

The church-based historic district resource type, inclusive of its rural, town, urban, and suburban variants, often was situated within a segregated residential area during its period of significance. The type often remains in its original location. Some churches, however, may have been moved for a variety of reasons as described above. Relocation of the sanctuary from its original parcel that occurred during the property's period of significance will not affect its integrity of setting. If the building remains on its original parcel but was moved after its period of significance, the building's integrity of location and setting is considered to be largely intact. The circumstances of the building's relocation after its period of significance are to be evaluated on an individual basis when evaluating its integrity of location.

Due to urban renewal and highway construction between c. 1940-c. 1990, widespread destruction of African American neighborhoods occurred in Virginia. Relocation of a church sanctuary or other resource on the

property due to such practices may have taken place during or after the property's period of significance. The planning practices that caused fragmentation and erasure of Black neighborhoods are themselves often significant historic trends and events. Therefore, a building's relocation affects the property's integrity of location and setting but does not automatically eliminate such integrity. It is possible, for example, that a relocated building associated with a church-based historic district will have integrity of location and setting due to significance it may have gained in the area of Community Planning and Development and/or Social History and/or other areas of significance.

With regard to setting, in rural areas African American church-based historic districts often stood within or near a residential enclave situated along the outskirts of a town or within an unincorporated Black community with origins that extended back to the Reconstruction Era or earlier. In urban areas, such districts generally were located within a segregated Black neighborhood. The higher land costs and smaller parcels typical of urban settings also may have resulted in dispersal of district elements across multiple places. Suburban churches usually are located on larger parcels with ample space, but are less likely to have the early schools and cemeteries that typify earlier properties. The church congregation may have relocated due to urban renewal, highway construction, or other major projects that displaced Black urban neighborhoods. Some suburban congregations formed as African American developers established new, middle class, all-Black neighborhoods between the 1910s-1960s. Therefore, the setting of a church-based district may have been entirely residential in character, or have included a mix of residential and other uses, such as commercial, recreational, educational, institutional, and social. Because many Black neighborhoods experienced extensive demolitions due to c. 1940-c. 1990 highway construction, urban renewal projects, and/or local zoning for land uses and activities incompatible with a neighborhood's or individual resource's original character, the setting of a church-based historic district may have been altered. In such cases, however, these alterations are part of the resource's integrity of setting rather than causing a negative effect because the consequences are part of the direct association of surviving resources with significance in the area of Ethnic Heritage: African American and related areas of significance such as Social History and Community Planning and Development. The incompatible activities and uses are illustrative of the many challenges overcome by Black congregations and communities prior to and during the dismantling of Jim Crow segregation and establishment of civil rights for African Americans at a level unprecedented in the nation's history. Inappropriate industrial and commercial development also represents the persistence of structural racism that has negatively impacted majority-Black neighborhoods since the passage of federal civil rights legislation during the 1960s.

As is explained in Section E, church-owned cemeteries may have been created simultaneously with construction of the church sanctuary or at an earlier or later date. The two resources may be located on the same, or adjacent, parcels, typically if the congregation owned at least one to two acres of land during the historic period. In many instances, however, acquisition of a separate parcel for a cemetery occurred, typically in rural settings and, to a lesser extent in town and urban settings. When the two resources are discontiguous, the spatial relationship should not be considered detrimental to the property's integrity of location and setting. Instead, the discontiguous are understood as representing the conditions within which the church congregation operated during the property's period of significance.

Design, Materials, and Workmanship:

The design, materials, and workmanship of church-based historic districts often represent development over time because few congregations had the resources to erect a church, school, fellowship hall, and/or education building simultaneously. From the late 19th through the early 20th century, sanctuaries and other buildings and structures in such districts often were erected by local carpenters and masons to meet a congregation's specific

needs and financial means. In urban locales, where larger congregations had more resources, the entire church property, including the sanctuary, circulation network, fences, and site design were likely prepared by professional architects. Although comparatively rare, districts like these appear urban settings; more often, churches located in town and rural settings had sufficient land to include an adjacent cemetery as well as some or all of the aforementioned additions, such as a school house, fellowship hall, or education wing. Talented artisans also designed and built churches and related resources, especially schools, utilizing vernacular methods and materials and incorporating elements that were specific to African American culture, such as carpentry, framing, and joining methods and aesthetic attributes such as design motifs, altar rails, pulpits, choirs, and pews. Within the universe of churches in Virginia, therefore, building form, footprint, size, and massing, location of entries and windows, and interior plan varied accordingly. Availability of materials sometimes dictated a building's individual features. Careful examination of a building may be necessary to determine original design elements and materials. Historic photos, correspondence, organization records, and oral history also may provide helpful insight into a church's design and materials over time.

The materials used to erect all variations of African American churches, related schools, and other buildings were often amassed through donations. During the late 19th to early 20th century, salvaged materials from other types of earlier buildings, as well as leftover materials from another project, may have been used. The quality of donated materials is likely to have varied, necessitating subsequent replacement of poor-quality materials and those subject to hard use. Over time, African American church buildings transitioned from being primarily log to frame and masonry construction. Wealthier, larger congregations in Virginia's cities, such as Petersburg, Richmond, Norfolk, and Alexandria, often could afford to purchase new materials and to build their churches and other resources to their specific aesthetic preferences.

Replacement of materials in kind are appropriate when needed to keep a resource in good repair and active use. Where historic materials have been replaced with functionally and/or visually similar but newer types of synthetic materials, a resource's integrity of materials and workmanship is somewhat diminished depending on the extent of the replacement materials and whether the alterations occurred during the property's period of significance. Some materials, such as asbestos, aluminum, and vinyl siding, asphalt shingles, and aluminum-framed window sash were introduced during the middle decades of the 20th century and are, themselves, of historic age and may have significance in their own right, even if such materials replaced earlier finishes such as weatherboard siding, wood shingles, and wood-framed sash. As has been noted repeatedly herein, newer materials often have been applied over historic or original materials, which remain intact even if they are obscured from view. The layers of evolution a church-based historic district has undergone speaks to its congregations changing circumstances over time and can be of significant study value.

Extensive use of replacement materials after the church-based district's period of significance may result in proportional erosion of integrity, depending upon the resource's materials, design, and workmanship during its period of significance. Additions on buildings that date to the resource's period of significance and allowed the building to continue or expand its historic use do not erode integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Those alterations that postdate the period of significance are to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to understand the resource's continued integrity of design, materials, and workmanship and how the additional space facilitated continuation of historic activities.

For the most part, church-based historic districts erected between c. 1861-c. 1930 in rural and town settings embody the vernacular construction methods of their time and place. As noted above, such districts offer an opportunity to study the work of artisans and craftsmen and how they evolved from the original construction to repairs made over time. Construction methods changed considerably during the 20th century with the

introduction of standardized, mass-produced materials as well as building codes for light, ventilation, heating, and safety. Consequently, repairs made during the latter years of a church's or schoolhouse's period of significance may demonstrate such evolution in workmanship. Poorly rendered repairs made after a district's period of significance can adversely affect a resource's integrity of workmanship, depending on the extent to which earlier workmanship has been erased or removed. During the early to mid-20th century, newer, more affordable construction materials, such as concrete block, sheetrock, composite shingles, and dimensional lumber, were selected when a congregation was replacing an older building or erecting their first church. It was not unusual for the congregation to upgrade the exterior and/or interior materials as financial circumstances permitted. As with the evolution of earlier buildings, such alterations to early- to mid-20th century resources are not automatically detrimental to integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. Instead, they offer opportunities for further study into topics such as the socioeconomic conditions of the congregation and evolution of aesthetic preferences that held symbolic meaning for the church members over time.

With regard to historic-age buildings that continue to be open to the public today, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that may be applicable to assure equal access to and within the interior. Such retrofits to comply with the ADA's accessibility requirements shall not be considered alterations that impair the property's integrity. Typical alterations include erecting a ramp to permit entry to the building's main entrance and/or alternate entrances, widening of some doors, and/or removal or lowering of thresholds at exterior or interior room entries.

As explained above in the description of the church-based historic district resource type, most cemeteries within these districts do not display a formal landscape design. Instead, burials most often are grouped according to kinship. In some instances, an "old" section of a church cemetery may contain the earliest burials, which may be marked with fieldstone head- and footstones and, in some cases, the types of metal markers provided by funeral homes during the early 20th century. After 1900, African Americans utilized a variety of materials to mark graves, including handmade, hand-inscribed concrete markers, government-issued marble tablet markers for military veterans, machine-cut granite markers, and other types. The variety of markers can be an important design element as these resources may be the only still-extant representation of a particular craftsman's work.[305]

Feeling and Association:

Location of a church-based historic district within or adjacent to a historically segregated area of residential resources, or mixed with commercial, recreational, educational, religious, and social uses, will contribute to the resource's integrity of feeling and association. The retention of associated historic-age properties in proximity to the district contributes to its integrity of setting and, therefore, integrity of feeling and association. It will not be atypical, however, for such a district to be in a location affected by the types of extensive demolition, displacement, new construction, and/or incompatible land uses and activities noted above with regard to integrity of location. A resource affected by such activities will have changes to its location, setting, feeling, and association. Analysis of these four aspects of a property's integrity, therefore, must take into account the effects of such alterations on the district and, where applicable, should be understood as contributing to that property's integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Within the boundaries of the district, non-historic intrusions will affect the integrity of setting, feeling, and association. Those that are small in scale and clearly subordinate to the contributing resources are unlikely to erode integrity to a problematic degree. Where larger

[305] For further discussion of the significance of African American craftsmen who created customized markers see Dr. Angelita D. Reyes, "Patrick Robert Sydnor Log Cabin," National Register nomination, July 17, 2007, and 2012 Additional Documentation, November 2012, on file at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/058-5076/.

intrusions are present, the circumstances of the alterations must be considered to evaluate if the district retains the necessary integrity to be eligible for listing in the historic registers.

Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship contribute to integrity of feeling and association related to the church-related historic district's original period of construction and subsequent evolution to meet its congregation's needs. Alterations associated with subsequent significant events may affect the district's integrity of feeling and association with regard to its original construction period. Such alterations, however, if significant in their own right, will not eliminate the district's overall integrity of feeling and association. Remodeling, additions, and other alterations associated with meeting a growing congregation's needs and expansion of activities are likely to be significant in their own right and, therefore, will not erode the district's overall integrity of feeling and association.

G. Geographical Data

This MPD covers the entirety of the Commonwealth of Virginia, which is composed of 95 counties and 38 independent cities and includes 190 incorporated towns within the counties. Through a combination of research and staff expertise, variations in African American Churches over time have been identified and described herein. Reconnaissance-level survey was undertaken for resources across the Commonwealth in 20 counties and independent cities: Albemarle County, Appomattox County, Buckingham County, Caroline County, Charles City County, Charlottesville (Independent City), Essex County, Fincastle (Independent City), Fluvanna County, Greene County, Hampton (Independent City), Louisa County, Mathews County, Mecklenburg County, Newport News (Independent City), Norfolk (Independent City), Northumberland County, Prince Edward County, Richmond (Independent City), and Roanoke (Independent City). This project focused on identifying 25 extant resources across different regions of Virginia with an emphasis on historic resources that had not been subject to recent historic resource documentation and/or may have their NRHP eligibility recommendations changed as a result of this MPD. Survey sites were identified through research, review of existing records in DHR's Virginia Cultural Information System (V-CRIS), Commonwealth Preservation Group (CPG) and One Shared Story (OSS) partner expertise, and public engagement. Hundreds of African American churches in Virginia have been recorded in DHR's Virginia Cultural Resources Information System (V-CRIS) and selective review of this data was undertaken as part of the development of this MPD.

Through this combination of research and fieldwork, a total of 25 properties were identified and surveyed across the Commonwealth for their association as African American churches in Virginia (Figure 26). Based on additional research, 23 of the surveyed resources were recommended potentially eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in association with this African American Churches in Virginia MPD; 2 resources were identified for further study to determine whether or not they would be potentially eligible for individual listing in the NRHP in association with this MPD. All 25 surveyed resources were recorded in the Virginia Cultural Information System (VCRIS) (see section H).

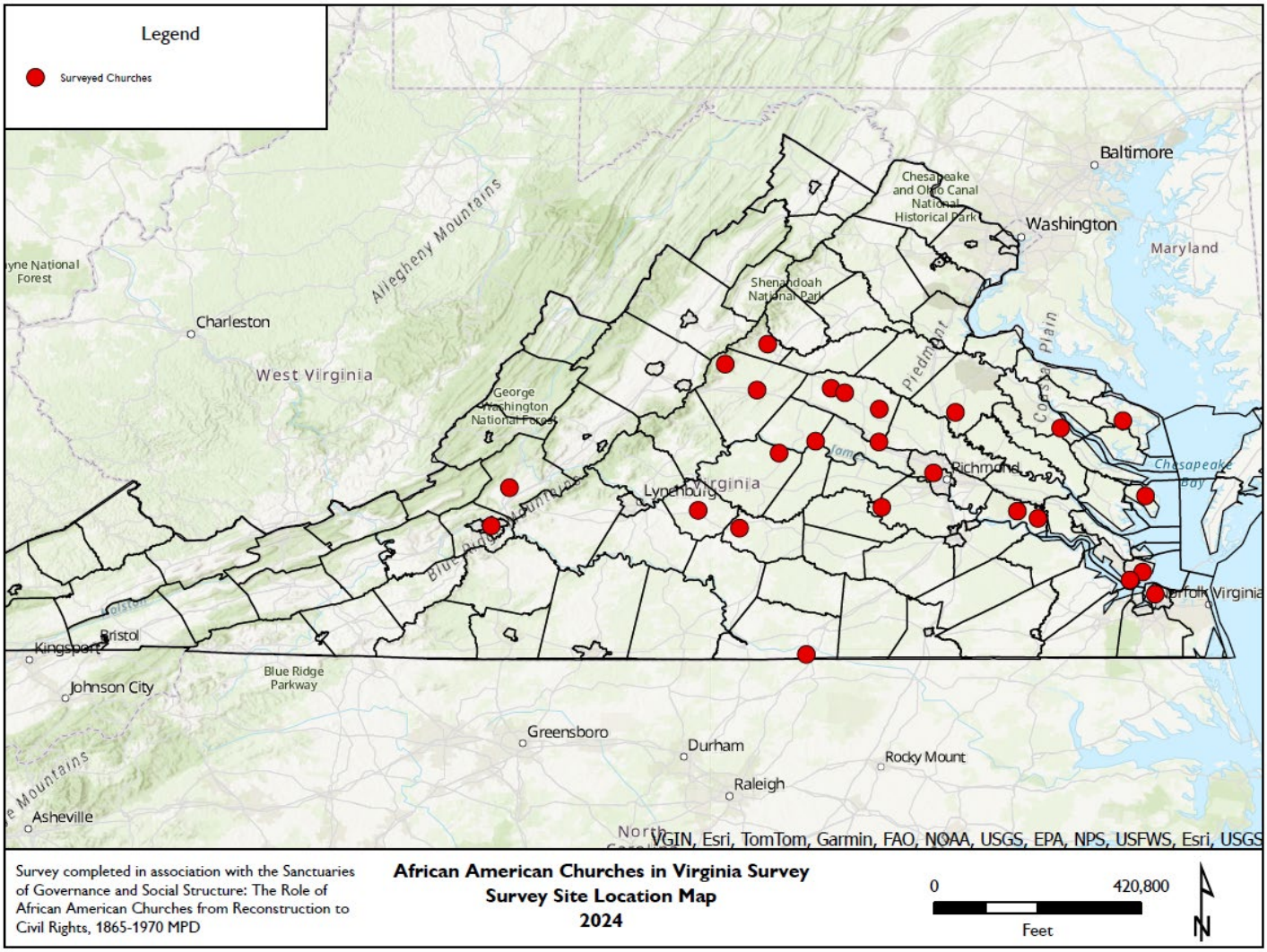

Figure 25: Locations of the 25 African American Churches surveyed in association with the African American Churches in Virginia MPD.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

This document was prepared by Commonwealth Preservation Group (CPG) for One Shared Story (OSS) as part of the "Sanctuaries of Governance and Social Structure: A Collaborative Project to Recognize the Role of African American Churches from Reconstruction to Civil Rights," which was funded through the National Park Service (NPS) Historic Preservation Fund's African American Civil Rights grant program. The material herein concerns churches throughout Virginia that were founded and attended by African American community members from the Civil War through Civil Rights Eras, 1861 - 1968. Individual churches may have periods of significance with different start and/or end dates.

Research & Evaluation Methods

Research for this MPD included a large geographic area across the Commonwealth of Virginia. A variety of primary and secondary resources concerning the historic themes described herein were collected and used to prepare this context document. Numerous secondary resources, National Register nominations for a variety of churches, and digitized primary and secondary resources were utilized. Research also included reviewing available online sources such as photograph collections, newspaper databases, maps, Ancestry.com, museum and library websites, newspaper articles, obituaries, etc.

Resources associated with this MPD were identified and evaluated using several methods. First, One Shared Story conducted statewide public engagement meetings both virtually and in-person in order to share information about this project and to gather information about potential churches for inclusion. The Sanctuaries of Government project website was also used to share information about the project, and to crowdsource location and historical information about African American churches statewide. The GIS-based form asked for details such as address, known historical information, etc. The results of the crowdsourced data were compared to a query of previously surveyed churches recorded in VCRIS. A total of 25 churches were selected for reconnaissance level survey to support the project, including a combination of churches that have never been surveyed before and those that have. One Shared Story and CPG evaluated churches for survey based upon available research and information to support surveyor assessments, as well as location, denomination, and construction or alteration year. The purpose of the selection was to identify and evaluate a variety of church types in order to analyze commonalities in architectural form as well as historic context.

Traditional historical documents and secondary sources, as well as oral histories, were consulted to document the role African American churches played in civil rights activism, education, civic engagement, political organization, and community support.

With regard to information sources used for the preparation of this MPD, online collections comprised the majority of the primary and secondary sources that were utilized. This research model was used to demonstrate the easily accessible websites that all researchers and preservationists of Virginia's historic African American churches may access for their needs. Considerable debt is owed, in particular, to the Library of Virginia and its extensive collections of digitized primary sources and archival collections held at its downtown Richmond facility. The Library of Virginia maintains a guide to its collections concerning historic African American churches and congregations at https://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/African_American_Churches.pdf. The website "Documenting the American South" has an extensive collection of digitized historic period publications entitled The Church in the Southern Black Community at https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/index.html. The collection includes autobiographies and biographies of various religious leaders, assorted church documents, sermons, histories of

various Black church denominations, encyclopedias, and other published materials. The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) denominations are particularly well represented in the collected. Together, these texts present a history of how African Americans experienced and transformed Protestant Christianity into the central institution of Black community life. Coverage begins with White churches' conversion efforts, especially after the American Revolution, and continues into the first quarter of the 20th century. *Encyclopedia Virginia* was repeatedly referenced throughout the historic context, particularly concerning formation of independent African American churches in Virginia during the Reconstruction Era. Also consulted during research of specific places and individuals across Virginia, online collections maintained by the Library of Congress, the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, private hosts such as ProQuest, Project Muse, Hathi Trust, and Google Books, Virginia's public and private universities, and local museums and libraries. The Internet Archive captures an immense collection of freely available, digitized historical documents as well as born-digital content from the 1990s-2020s that might otherwise be lost. All of the masters' theses and doctoral dissertations cited herein were obtained through online websites that host digitized collections, including those offered by universities within and beyond Virginia as well as privately-operated sites. Links to all of the online sources are included in their citations throughout this document and in the MPD bibliography.

Researchers are cautioned, however, that many records are not yet digitized and are often housed at local museums, libraries, historical societies, denominational headquarters, and other organizations. Important records about specific churches that may be nominated under this MPD are likely only available in physical form held by local repositories. Archival records for some Black church organizations may be found at repositories such as Virginia Union University in Richmond and the Baptist Historical Society at the University of Richmond. Historical leaders in Black communities often are revealed only through the minutes of religious association proceedings and in records kept by individual congregations. The people identified in historic records are important to their descendants and to illuminating the cultural significance of the work of these congregations within their communities.

Furthermore, digitized materials easily disappear. Some services, such as Internet Archive and the Wayback Machine, store websites for future research needs. Most specialized organizations, such as the Library of Virginia and Documenting the South, have immense online collections that are unlikely to be removed altogether, but the specific weblinks may change over time. If so, then searching for the item through the organization's online catalog or website may lead to the digitized file.

Survey sites were identified through the review of available survey data maintained by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) as part of its Virginia Cultural Resources Information System (V-CRIS), an online database that includes options for public access, as well as through collaboration with One Shared Story (OSS), statewide partners, and various public engagement efforts with the community at large. Public engagement for this project as a whole and for the identification of historic African American churches in Virginia included three virtual statewide partner organization meetings, two in-person community engagement events, five oral history interviews, and the use of an Esri GeoForm to crowdsource locations and information on historic African American Churches in Virginia. One additional in-person community engagement event was scheduled but subsequently cancelled due to a lack of participant registration. A final virtual statewide engagement meeting will be held at the end of the project.

Through the use of DHR's existing V-CRIS data, CPG and OSS research, and public engagement, a list of approximately 120 potential survey sites was developed. This list was then further reviewed by CPG and OSS to determine which sites would be selected for survey to achieve the project goal of 25 surveyed resources;

considerations for survey selection included factors such as geographic location, available or known history of the site, construction date, whether or not the resource appeared extant from available aerial photographs, how recently the resource had been surveyed (if applicable), and previous eligibility determinations by VDHR (if applicable).

While the 25 sites surveyed as part of this project share a significant association as African American Churches from the Reconstruction to Civil Rights eras, National Park Service guidance at the time of the preparation of this MPD articulates that individual listing in the NRHP typically requires property-specific historical research and justification of significance that is connected to one or more of the areas of significance identified in this MPD. In order to determine whether a resource is potentially eligible for listing within the parameters of the current project, CPG conducted limited property-specific research using information provided by OSS and public engagement efforts, as well as online repositories of information such as digitized Sanborn maps, historical newspaper databases, church histories, and results of online searches. Where CPG was able to find site-specific research material that supported the historical significance of the property and its association with the areas of significance identified in the MPD, and the site's integrity was in accord with the Registration Requirements herein, the property was recommended as potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP in VDHR's V-CRIS. In cases where CPG was unable to find additional sources of information on a given property, and it retained at least some of the integrity aspects as explained in the Registration Requirements, a recommendation for further study was made in V-CRIS. There were no instances in this project where CPG recommended a surveyed resource as not eligible for listing in the NRHP. Additional research and future survey may reveal new information that warrants the re-evaluation of any of the resources that have been surveyed to-date. For example, future oral history interviews and additional community engagement are likely to yield additional information about historic African American Churches in Virginia.

The following list of sites in Virginia that were identified for survey for their association as an historic African American church from the Reconstruction to Civil Rights Eras and were surveyed as part of this project. Further research and survey investigations likely will identify additional historic places not included in the list below and this MPD can be updated accordingly in the future.

Table 2. Sites Surveyed for their Association with the African American Churches in Virginia MPD

DHR ID #	Resource Name	Address	Jurisdiction
002-1127	Mt. Carmel Baptist Church	4904 Browns Gape Turnpike, Crozet, VA	Albemarle County
006-5092	Galilee Baptist Church	1044 Old Courthouse Rd, Appomattox, VA	Appomattox County
014-5146	Chestnut Grove Baptist Church	20 Virginia Mill Rd, Arvonia, VA	Buckingham County
016-5294	Reedy Baptist Church	15076 Dry Bridge Road, Ruther Glen, VA	Caroline County
018-0062	Elam Baptist Church	13060 The Glebe Ln, Charles City, VA	Charles City County
018-0212	Mt Zion Baptist Church	11651 Wilcox Neck Rd, Charles City, VA	Charles City County
020-0716	Beulah Baptist Church	21205-21209 Hull Street Road, Moseley, VA	Chesterfield County

DHR ID #	Resource Name	Address	Jurisdiction
028-0374	Angel Visit Baptist Church	29566 Tidewater Trail, Tappahannock, VA	Essex County
054-0352	Mt Garland Baptist Church	4000 Buckner Rd, Bumpass, VA	Louisa County
054-5480	Bright Hope Baptist	9833 Poindexter Rd, Louisa, VA	Louisa County
054-5592	First Baptist Church of Louisa	102 Meadow Ave, Louisa, VA	Louisa County
054-5593	Saint Mark Baptist Church	4596 Factory Mill Rd, Maidens, VA	Louisa County
057-5017	First Baptist Church Mathews	9654 Buckley Hall Rd, Mathews, VA	Mathews County
058-5575	Ascension Episcopal Church	3092 Palmer Springs Rd, Boydton, VA	Mecklenburg County
066-5059	First Baptist Church Heathsville	3585 Courthouse Rd, Heathsville, VA	Northumberland County
073-5047	Sulphur Spring Baptist	1743 Sulpher Spring Rd, Prospect, VA	Prince Edward County
104-5606	Zion Union Baptist Church	1015 Preston Ave, Charlottesville, VA	City of Charlottesville
114-5143	First Baptist Church Hampton	229 N King St, Hampton, VA	City of Hampton
121-5625	Saint Augustine's Episcopal Church	2515 Marshall Ave, Newport News, VA	City of Newport News
122-1018	First Baptist Church Bolling Brook	120 Filbert St, Norfolk, VA	City of Norfolk
127-7217	Westwood Baptist Church	915 Glenburnie Road, Richmond, VA	City of Richmond
128-6657	Mt. Zion AME Church	2128 Melrose Ave NW, Roanoke, VA	City of Roanoke
200-5006	Columbia Baptist Church	116 Rivanna St, Columbia, VA	Fluvanna County – Town of Columbia
218-0028	First Baptist Church of Fincastle	6529 Blue Ridge Turnpike, Fincastle, VA	Botetourt County – Town of Fincastle
302-0013	Shiloh Baptist Church	71 Shiloh Rd, Stanardsville, VA	Greene County – Town of Stanardsville

Project Parameters and Limitations

This Multiple Property Document (MPD) and its associated survey data analysis focused on the Commonwealth of Virginia, as defined in Section G above. The primary objective of this MPD is to provide a historic context for evaluating African American churches from the Reconstruction through Civil Rights eras within Virginia, and was accompanied by a reconnaissance survey of 25 extant historic African American churches. Existing VDHR V-CRIS data, CPG and OSS expertise, and public engagement efforts were used to identify properties, but the number of surveyed resources for this project was limited to 25 resources. As described above, resource selection focused on considerations such as geographic location, available or known history of the site, construction date, whether or not the resource appeared extant from available aerial photographs, how recently the resource had been surveyed (if applicable), and previous eligibility determinations by VDHR (if applicable). Although the project was successful in identifying 25 resources within Virginia that were established and served as African American churches during the Reconstruction to Civil Rights eras, the project's timeline and budget limited the depth of property-specific research that could reasonably be completed for each of the surveyed resources. Future research and survey will likely expand the list of historic African American churches that may be found potentially eligible for NRHP listing under this MPD.

Research for the development of this historic context relied heavily on available online resources. However, future researchers should be cautioned that many records are not yet digitized and are often housed in local museums, libraries, historical societies, school boards, denominational archival repositories, and other organizations. Important records about specific churches that may be nominated under this MPD are likely only available in physical form held by local repositories and the Library of Virginia in Richmond.

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List of Abbreviations

AME – African Methodist Episcopal

AMEZ – African Methodist Episcopal Zion

ABHMS – American Baptist Home Mission Society

CABMC – Consolidated American Baptist Missionary Convention

CME – Christian Methodist Episcopal

DHR – Department of Historic Resources

MPD – Multiple Property Documentation Form

NRHP – National Register of Historic Places

RZUA – Reformed Zion Union Apostolic

VBSC – Virginia Baptist State Convention

VLR – Virginia Landmarks Register

ZUAC – Zion Union Apostolic Church

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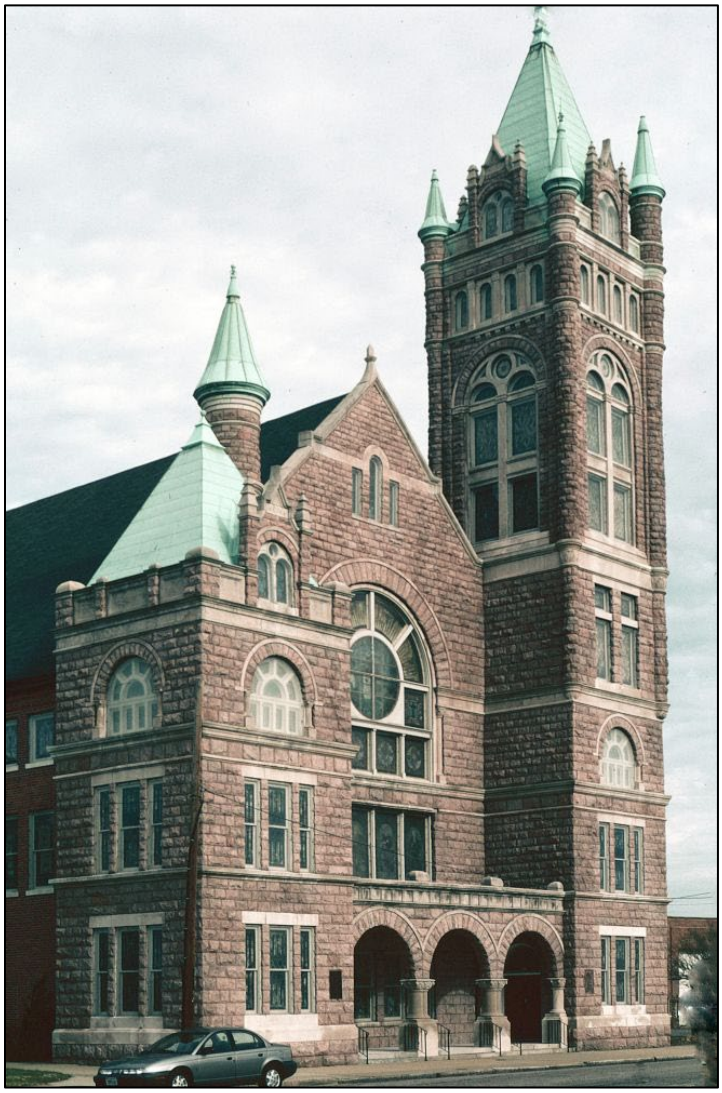
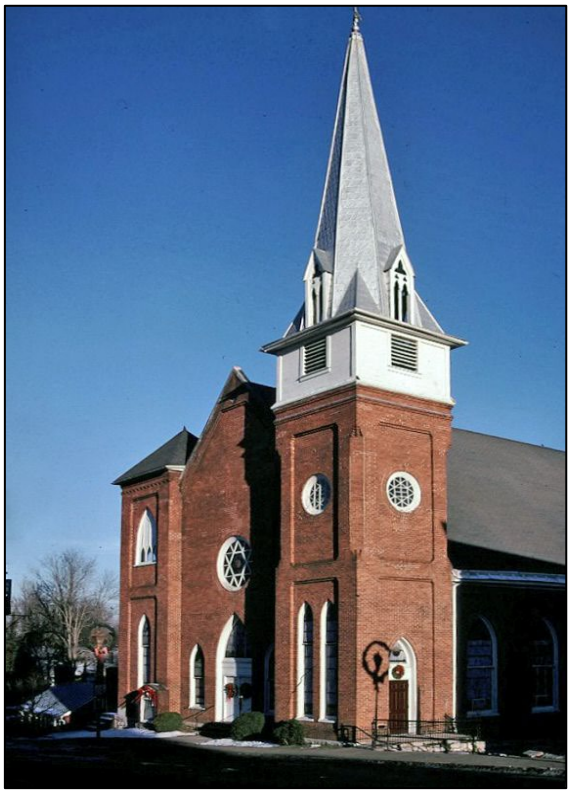
Appendix A: Selected Additional Images of African American Churches in Virginia

Big Stone Baptist Church (060-0435) as it appeared in 2022. Located in Montgomery County, the property was listed in the VLR and NRHP in 1989. The sanctuary (at right) was completed in 1880. The subordinate wing (at left) postdates 1989. In addition to the church, the property includes a cemetery and a concrete block privy. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/060-4035/.

Delevan Baptist Church (104-0376) as it appeared in 2016. Located in the City of Charlottesville, the property was listed in the VLR in 1981 and NRHP in 1982. The sanctuary was completed c. 1883. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/104-0376/.



First Baptist Church as it appeared in 1999. Located in the City of Norfolk, its African American congregation was organized in 1830. The congregation built its first church that year, replacing it in 1906 with the current Romanesque Revival edifice that was designed by Tennessee architect Reuben H. Hunt, who specialized in ecclesiastical designs. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/122-0040/.



Lexington African Baptist Church (today's First Baptist Church) (117-0027-0063) was listed in the VLR and NRHP in 2006. Located in the City of Lexington, the church's congregation was organized in 1867 and the current edifice dates to 1894-1895. The sanctuary is distinguished by its barrel vault, ribbed ceiling. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/117-0027-0063/.

First Calvary Baptist Church (122-0073) was listed in the VLR and NRHP in 1987. Located in the City of Norfolk, the congregation was organized in 1880 and grew to include more than 1,500 members. The Reverend Dr. Percy J. Wallace, pastor from 1908-1922, led First Calvary to become one of the most influential Black churches in the country. Dedicated in 1916, the Georgian Revival church was designed by Mitchell & Willcox of Norfolk. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/122-0073/.

Lomax African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was listed in the VLR in 2003 and the NRHP in 2004. Located in Arlington County, the congregation was organized in 1863 among residents of Freedmen's Village and relocated to Nauck in 1874. The current Gothic Revival building dates to 1922 and is the third church on the site. The property also includes a parsonage (above) and a cemetery. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/000-1148/.

Located in Orange County, Mount Calvary Baptist Church was listed in the VLR and NRHP in 2016. Built in 1892, the church has character-defining features of the Gothic Revival style that are representative of vernacular interpretations of the style in Virginia's rural settings. The sanctuary's design is typical of rural Baptist churches dating to the late 19th/early 20th century, with a pulpit at the rear end wall, and three groups of pews divided by two aisles. The chamfered chair railing, painted wood trim, choir loft, and pulpit are original while the carpeting covers the original pine flooring and painted wood paneling clads the walls, covering the original plaster. The property also includes resources typically associated with a church-based historic district. Along with the church, the property features a historic cemetery that is directly across the road and an 1892 well near the sanctuary. The fellowship hall and shed (top right) date to the 21st century. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/068-0417/.




Mount Sinai Baptist Church was listed in the VLR in 2006 and the NRHP in 2007. Located in what once was a rural area Nansemond County and now is part of the City of Suffolk, the congregation was formed by the Reverend Israel Cross in 1867. The current church was designed by architect Richard Herman Riedel and constructed in 1921 by local brick masons who were members of the congregation. Additions to the sanctuary date to 1964 and 2000. The cemetery (bottom right) dates to 1920 and features flat brick and concrete burial vaults along with an assortment of grave marker types. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/133-5249/.

Mt. Olive Methodist Episcopal Church was listed in the VLR in 2004 and the NRHP in 2005. Located in Loudoun County, the building dates to 1890; the interior's reeded wainscoting and window trim are original to the building, while the distinctive wood trim in the sanctuary (above) was added between 1900-1910. Due to loss of historic records, the date of the congregation's organization is not known. The property is associated with the Reconstruction Era community of Gleedsville. Emancipated African Americans and the first generation born after Emancipation erected the church utilizing vernacular methods and materials. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/053-0994/.

St. John's United Holy Church of America, Inc., was listed in the VLR in 2021 and the NRHP in 2024. Located in the City of Richmond, it is the only example of a church associated with the Pentecostal/Holiness movement in Virginia that has been listed in the Registers. The church was constructed in 1931-1932. The raised basement's finishes (top right) are typical of fellowship halls in African American churches in rural, urban, town, and suburban settings. The sanctuary's interior is distinguished by the decorative, square-coffered, pressed metal ceiling. The center aisle is not a common feature in Protestant churches but has been documented in various denominational sanctuaries. The nomination is at https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/127-7209/.

Saint Augustine's Episcopal Church (121-5625) is located in the City of Newport News. The congregation was first organized in 1897 as St. Paul's Mission, established out of St. Paul's Church in downtown Newport News for African-American Episcopalians. The Reverend Joseph F. Mitchell served as the congregation's first vicar, and the mission was assisted by James Solomon Russell, founder of Saint Paul's College and a long-serving archdeacon of the church. The extant church dates to 1962 and is good example of the Contemporary style as it appears in Virginia. A one-story hyphen connects the sanctuary to a contemporaneous International Style wing. The architect is not known at this time. The building is recommended eligible for the VLR and NRHP based on the 2024 selective survey and research conducted as part of this MPD project.