

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: **4101-4105 Ludlow Street**

BRT/OPA Acct. No. 773125000

Postal code: **19104**

Councilmanic District:

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Oak Street Baptist Church (1845)/Monumental Baptist Church**

Common Name: **St. James Pentecostal Church**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building

Structure

Site

Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: excellent good fair poor ruins

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown

Current use: **House of Worship**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a plot plan and written description of the boundary. **SEE ATTACHED SHEET.**

6. DESCRIPTION

SEE ATTACHED SHEET.

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

[See Attached Sheet]

Period of Significance (from year to year): from

1829 to 1967

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration:

1886/1914

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

David S. Gendell

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Unknown

Original owner:

Oak Street Baptist Church

Other significant persons:

Unknown

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- X (a) **Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,**
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- X (i) **Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or**
- X (j) **Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.**

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

SEE ATTACHED SHEET.

9. NOMINATOR

Name with Title	Oscar Beisert, Historian	Email	Oscar.Beisert@gmail.com
Organization	University City Historical Society	Date	6 May 2016.
Street Address	P.O. Box 31927	Telephone	(717) 602-5002
City, State, and Postal Code:	Philadelphia, PA 19104	Nominators are not the property owners.	

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 12 May 2016

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: 14 July 2016

Date of Notice Issuance: 15 July 2016

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: St. James Pentecostal Church

Address: 4101-05 Ludlow Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19104

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: _____

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

Designated Rejected

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary description of the former Monumental Baptist Church at 4101-4105 Ludlow Street is as follows:

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of Northerly side of Ludlow Street (40 feet wide) and the Westerly side of 41st Street (40 feet wide), thence extending North 78 degrees, 59 minutes West along the said Northerly side of Ludlow Street 48 Feet, 6 inches to a point; thence extending North 10 degrees, 15 minutes 58 seconds East partly through the center of a party wall, 114 feet, 6 inches to the Southerly side of a certain 3 feet wide alley which extends Westwardly from 41st Street and communicates at its Westernmost end with a certain other alley 3 feet 3-1/2 inches in width; thence extending South 78 degrees, 59 minutes East, along the Southerly side of the first mentioned alley 50 feet to the Westerly side of 41st Street; thence extending South 11 degrees 1 minute West, along the Westerly side of 41st Street 114 feet 6 inches to the Northerly side of Ludlow Street, the first mentioned point and place of beginning. Being the Northwest corner of Ludlow and 41st Street, and known as 4104-03-05 Ludlow Street.

Parcel No. 17S12-0145

Tax Account No. BRT_ID 773125000



The boundary for the subject property is in red. Courtesy Philadelphia Water Department.



Corner Stone, ca. 1914. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

This nomination is dedicated to the African Americans who lived their lives in West Philadelphia and have since passed away.



Looking northwest. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

6. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Situated at northwest corner of 41st and Ludlow Streets, the former Monumental Baptist Church is a modest, but important African American house of worship. The building was constructed in two phases: the 1884 Building and the 1914 Building. Situated on the west side of 41st Street, the building reads south to north—the 1914 Building to the 1884 Building. The entire structure is of load bearing, brick masonry construction and is roughly three-stories at its highest point. All of the brick has been painted red and white at the street-facing elevations. Most of the stone trimmings have also been painted.

1914 Building

The 1914 Addition is small-scale, gable-front brick building which faces east onto 41st Street. The primary elevation of the 1914 Addition is articulated in two distinct parts—the tower and the gable-end. This is one of two elevations that is visible from the public right-of-way. The tower faces both east and south, being located at the southeast corner of the 1914 Addition. The tower is essentially two-stories. The first floor features a double door way that is set beneath a sepulchral-like arch, which is likely stone. Projecting from the primary elevation by roughly a foot, the tower features buttresses with stone capping that has been painted white. In the second story of the tower is an arched aperture featuring a wooden louver that is delineated by a stone sill and brick lintel. The crenellation of the tower is simple, but distinctive with stone capping.

Beyond this section of the façade is the gable-end. At the basement level are three windows at center in this section of the primary elevation. The windows are partly guarded by a wrought iron

fence, some of which has been removed. The windows feature stone lintels that have been painted white. At the height of a dado is a string of stone coursing in the first floor. The coursing has been painted white and also serves as the sills for three windows at the center of the elevation. These windows are aligned with those at the basement level. The windows are joined by stone coursing that serves as lintels and has been painted white. Rising above the coursing is a recessed round arch, which is largely blind aside from a central oculus, which is an original wooden rose or Catherine-wheel window. The window is distinctive in its small size, featuring tracery disposed in a radial manner. The recession is otherwise a blind brick surface, which is delineated by a stone lintel. The second, half-story level appears to begin at the apex of the arch. The simple gable end features a pressed-tin metal cornice that delineates the roofline and terminates at the building line of the 1914 Addition with a floriated box cornice.

The south elevation of the 1914 Addition includes the tower at the southeast corner, which is a duplicate façade of the east-facing elevation. Recessed from the tower is a single-story elevation of four paired, mullion windows, which are recessed within brick architraves. Each set of windows is delineated by a project brick pier. The roofline is concealed by the projecting eaves of the front-gable roof. A basement doorway projects into an open yard which creates a recess between Ludlow Street and the south-facing elevation of the 1914 Addition. The remains of the original church edifice are no doubt beneath this surface.

The rear wall is not accessible from the public right-of-way and appears to be entirely covered in vegetation. A slender brick chimney stack rises above the roofline within the south-facing section of the pitched roof.

1884 Building

Appending to the north along 41st Street, the 1884 Building is in form much like the 1914 Building; however, it is older, larger and a more impressive architectural work. Like the 1914 Building, it too appears to have had a tower at the southeast corner, but that structure has been taken down. The 1884 Building is two-and-one-half stories in height with a large central gable. The gable section is flanked by lower, two-story components with entrances at the north and south on 41st Street.

The central section includes three windows at the basement level, which feature stone lintels that are set within a stone base course. The lintels are in the form of Gothic hoods, which are joined in the form of coursing. The windows also feature stone sills, which are separate per window. The coursing has been painted to join the central apertures with the flanking doorways. At the height of a dado is a string of stone coursing in the first floor. The coursing has been painted white and also serves as the sills for three windows at the center of the primary elevation. These windows are aligned with those at the basement level. The windows are joined by stone coursing that serves as lintels and has been painted white. Rising above the coursing in the second floor at center is an inlet of three windows separated by brick piers. The large apertures feature the remains of intricate leaded glass windows. Rising above within the third, half-story is a recessed gothic arch, which is largely blind aside from a central oculus. The small circular window features opaque glazing. This aperture is set within a pallet of brick corbeling that has a crisscross, diamond effect. The recession is delineated by a stone lintel. The half, third story is

the gable end, which terminates at the primary elevation in the form of a framed overhang. This feature emulates a “hammer-beam” roof type, which is distinguished by aesthetic-minded collar braces and pendent posts at the north and south with turned pendills.

Flanking the central section of the primary elevation of the 1884 Building are the aforementioned doorways at the first floor. The aforementioned coursing from the center terminates at the doorway, rising to form Tudor-inspired arched lintels. The double doors are replacement versions of the second half of the twentieth century. In the south component above the doors in the second floor is an inlet of three windows that are divided by brick piers in a miniature form of the central apertures. These slits retain leaded glass window fabric. The north component features a single aperture above the double doorway, which retains a leaded glass window beneath a Tudor-inspired arch. To the south beyond the doorway component is the base of the former tower with two steeped apertures that indicated the former staircase. These openings retain leaded glass windows, being tall and narrow.

The north and south elevations of the pitch of the roof surface is clad in asphalt shingles and features chien-assis spaced out equally to form a row of three. The north elevation features a single aperture with a leaded glass window at the east end, followed by a symmetrically placed mullion windows at the first and second floor. The sixteen windows that form these rows feature leaded glass windows at the first floor. The brick walls are covered in stucco at this elevation. The rear elevation appears to be a blind brick wall.

Integrity

While the tower of the 1884 Building has been taken down, the building retains integrity sufficient to illustrate its significance under Criteria A and J.



Looking northwest. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southwest. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

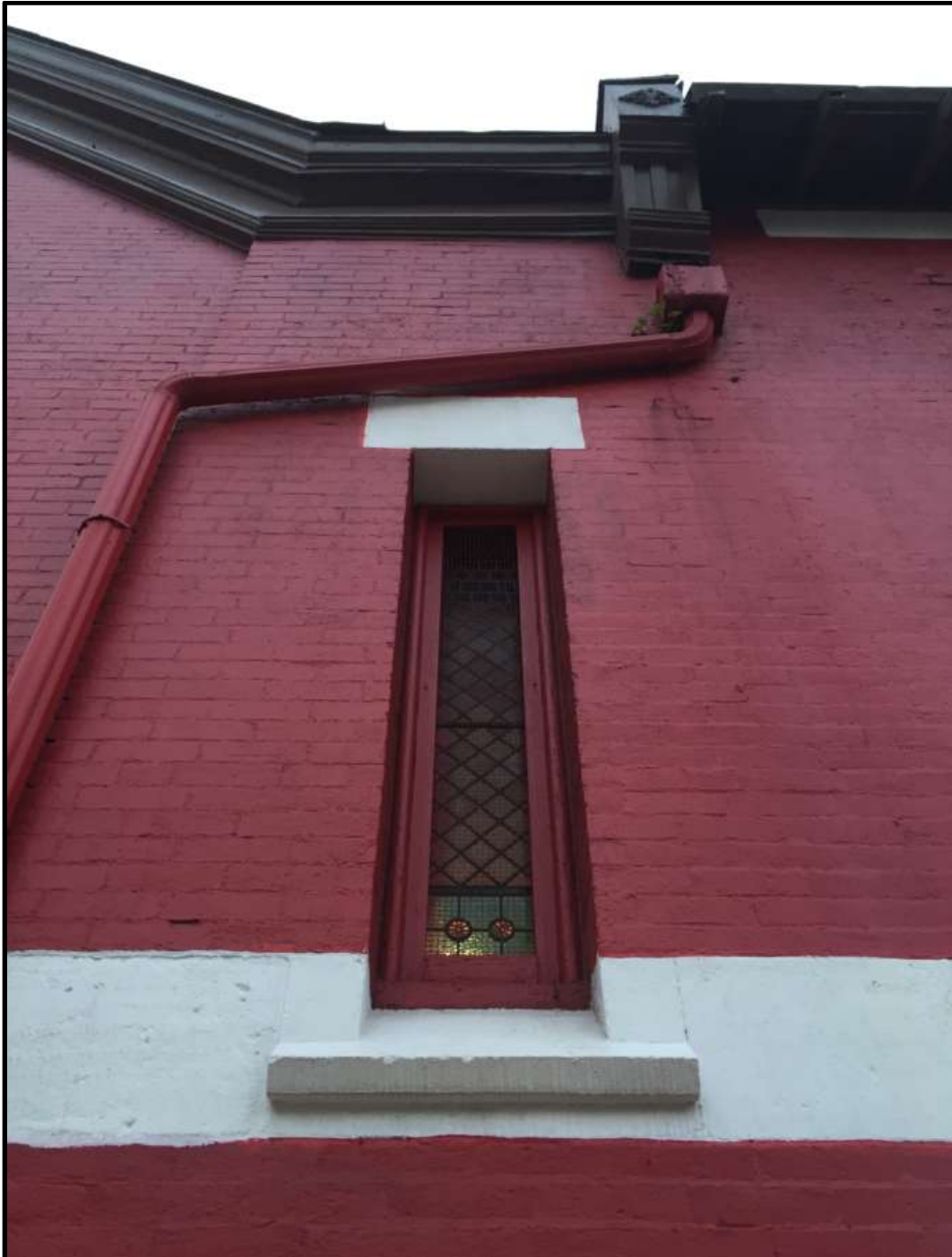


Looking north. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking northeast. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

*Monumental Baptist Church, 4101-4105 Ludlow Street, West Philadelphia
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, May 2016 – Page 7*



Looking west at a leaded glass window of the 18854 Addition. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking northwest. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking southwest. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.

*Monumental Baptist Church, 4101-4105 Ludlow Street, West Philadelphia
Nomination to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, May 2016 – Page 9*



Looking southwest. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Looking west at the gable of the 1884 Addition. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



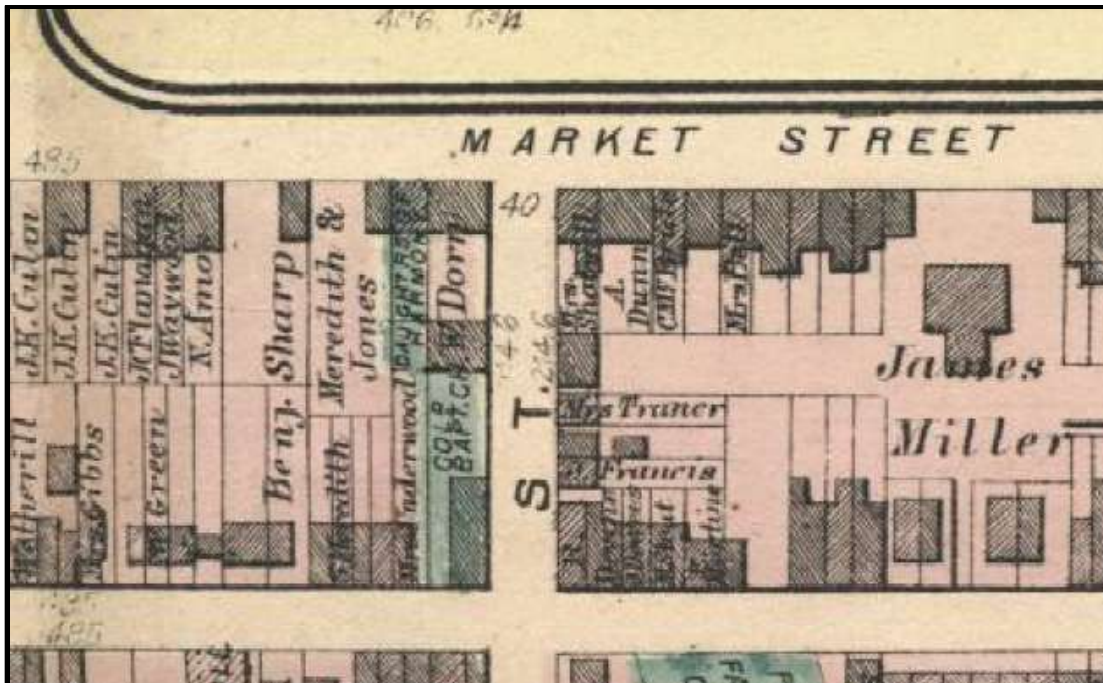
Corner Stone, ca. 1884. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



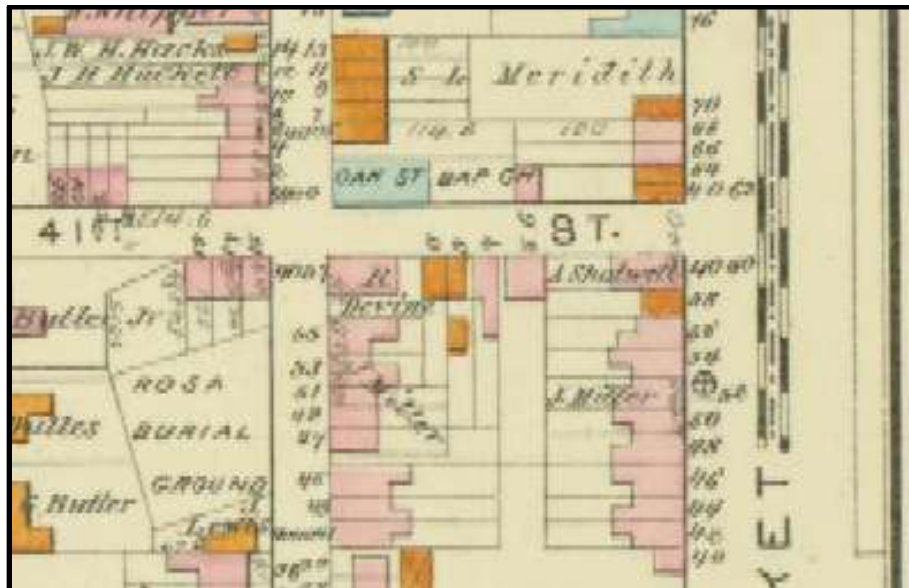
Looking southeast. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



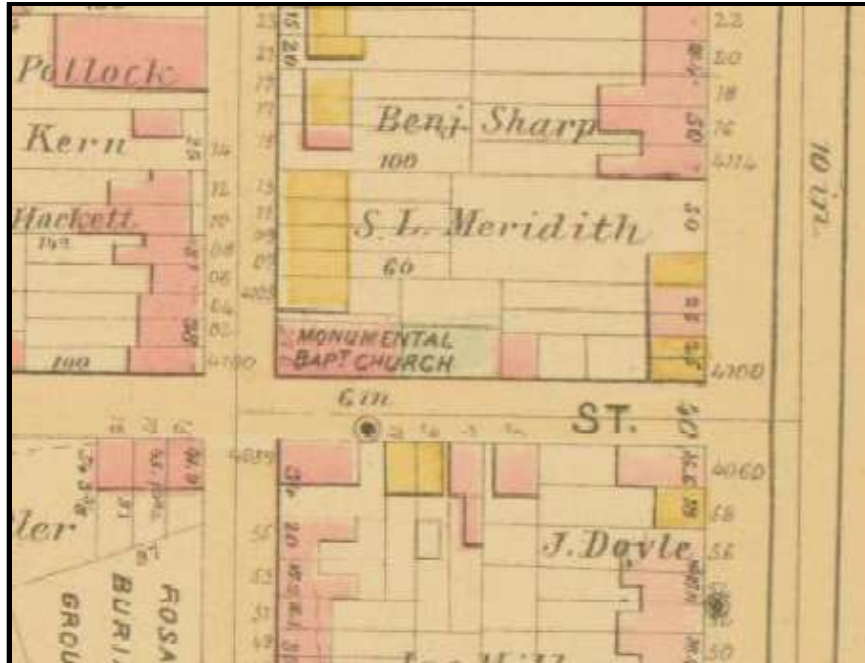
Looking south. Courtesy Oscar Beisert.



Atlas of West Philadelphia including the 24th & 27th Wards of the City of Philadelphia from actual surveys & official records. Philadelphia: G. [Griffith] M. [Morgan] Hopkins & Co., compiler and publisher, 1872. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.



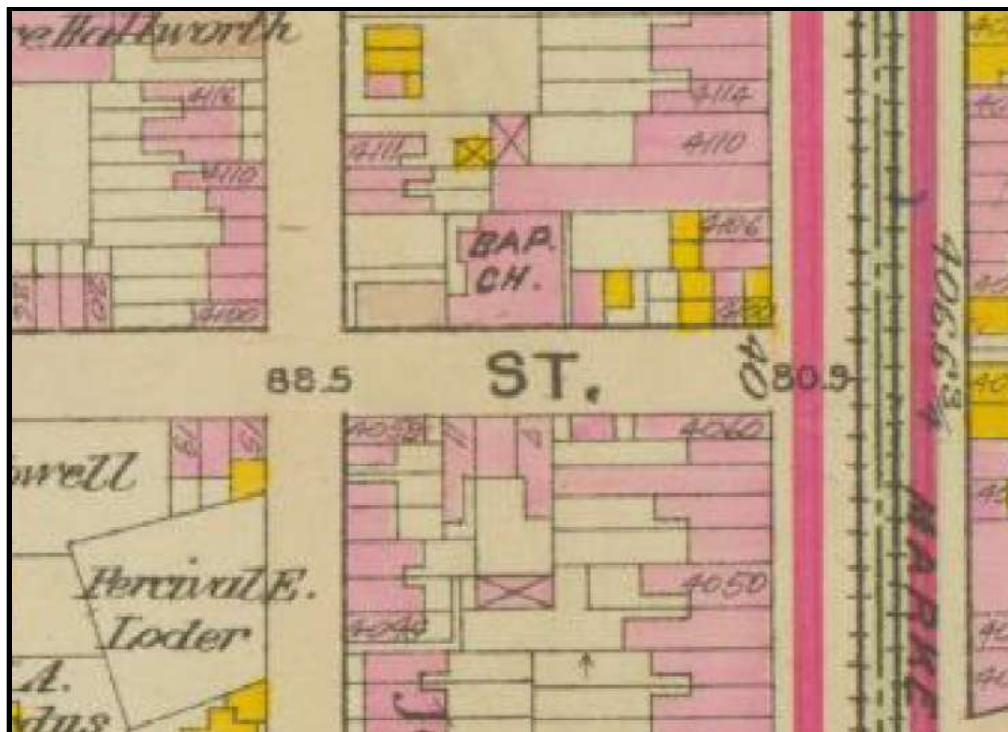
J.D. Scott's 1878 Atlas of the 24th and 27th Wards, West Philadelphia. Philadelphia: J.D. Scott, 1878. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.



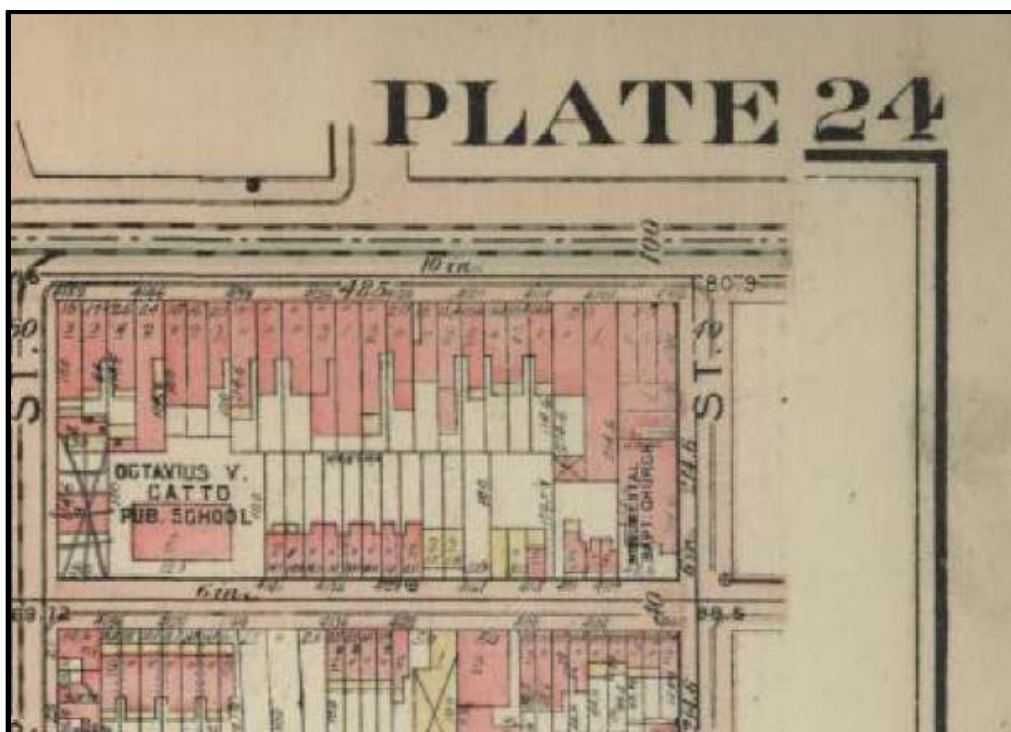
Atlas of West Philadelphia, 24th and 27th wards. Compiled from official records, private plans and actual surveys based upon plans deposited in the Department of surveys, by Wm. G. Baist. Philadelphia: J.L. Smith, 1886. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.



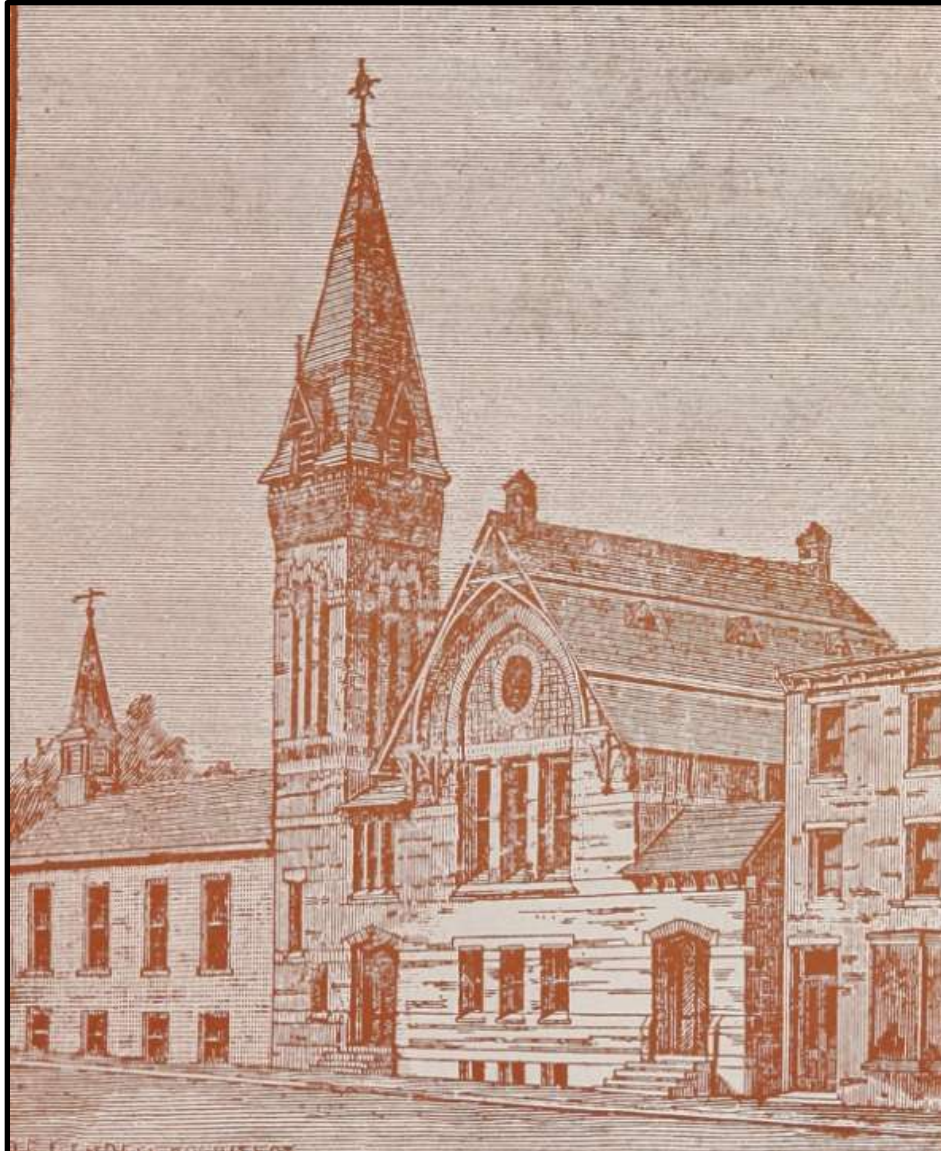
Atlas of the 27th & 46th wards of the city of Philadelphia: from private plans, actual surveys & official records. Philadelphia: Elvino V. Smith, compiler and publisher, 1909. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.



Atlas of Philadelphia (West Philadelphia). (Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley & Co., [1916]).
 Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.



Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, wards 24, 27, 34, 40, 44 & 46, West Philadelphia, from actual surveys and official plans.
 Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley, 1927., Plate 24. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.



Monumental Baptist Church, ca. 1886. Courtesy Hathi Trust.¹

Monumental Baptist Church exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of both Philadelphia's African American community and its subset of the Baptist Church within that context. The congregation, the second oldest African American Baptist congregation in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania as well as the first to settle in West Philadelphia, occupied the site at 4101-05 Ludlow Street from 1829 until 1967. During that period, the congregation anchored the African American community of West Philadelphia.

¹ White, Charles Frederick. *Who's who in Philadelphia: a collection of thirty biographical sketches of Philadelphia colored people...* (Philadelphia: The A. M. E. Book Concern, 1912), pp. 120.

Birth of the African American Church

African American Christianity in the United States can trace its origin to the Great Awakening. Between 1740 and 1790, charismatic revivalists toured the colonies, preaching messages of salvation for all, a movement that became known as the Great Awakening. The Great Awakening made a particularly profound impact on Philadelphia because early eighteenth century Philadelphia was home to one of the largest free black communities in the country.² The movement, which embraced men and women of all races and regardless of background, resonated with African Americans in particular. Historians suspect that the fervor of the Great Awakening's revival meetings resonated because to a degree, the meetings resembled those of their West African ancestors who incorporated emotional experiences such as dancing and shouting.³

Despite the egalitarian values underlying the spirit of the Great Awakening, established religious institutions remained reluctant to grant African American congregants the full rights and responsibilities granted their white counterparts. This fostered the sentiment from which separate African American denominations and congregations grew. Because the Methodist and Baptist denominations are less hierarchical and emphasized formal education of clergy less so than other denominations, most African American converts joined either Methodist or Baptist congregations that were predominantly white.⁴

America's independent African American church was born in Philadelphia when in 1787 a group of African American worshippers led by Richard Allen left predominately white St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church to found a separate, independent African American denomination. Allen was born into slavery in Delaware on the estate of Quaker attorney Benjamin Chew, who later served as Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Six years after Allen bought his freedom in 1780, he and another member of St. George's, Absalom Jones, founded the Free African Society. Established in response to the racial tensions facing cities such as Philadelphia, the nondenominational group consisted of forty-two African American Christians working to create an independent church.⁵

In 1787, African American worshippers of St. George's were relegated to standing along the back wall while pews were reserved for white members. According to Allen's memoirs, on a Sunday in 1787, the church's sexton asked African American members to vacate the main floor to worship in the gallery above. This transpired at the moment in which the pastor was leading a prayer. While praying on the main floor, Absalom Jones and William White were forcibly removed despite their protests, as they had been kneeling in prayer. This incident motivated many of St. George's African American worshippers to leave the church permanently, establishing a church of their own in which they would be safe to worship.⁶

² Smith, Edward D. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877*. Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, p. 23-28.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31-33.

⁵ Griffith, Cyril E. "Richard Allen: The First Prominent Black Religious Leader in Pennsylvania" in John M. Coleman, Robert G. Christ, and John B. Frantz eds., *Pennsylvania Religious Leaders*, Pennsylvania Historic Studies Series 16. Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Planks's Suburban Press for the Pennsylvania Historical Society, 1986, p. 11-12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Consisting of former members of St. George's, the newly formed group contemplated Methodism. With a high number of offended congregants, the members split into two independent churches in 1794: St. Thomas Episcopal Church and Bethel Church. Notably, St. Thomas, led by Absalom Jones, opted to join an existing denomination while Bethel, led by Richard Allen, retained its stronghold. In 1816, Allen founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church—a separate, independent African American denomination. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, known commonly as the A.M.E. Church, is the oldest independent African American denomination in the world.⁷

In the two decades following the establishment of the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas and Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, three other African American churches were founded, including Zoar Methodist Episcopal Church (1796) and First African Presbyterian Church (1807), and First African Baptist Church (1809). In 1809, First African Baptist Church would become the fifth.⁸

Until 1809, African American Baptists in Philadelphia worshipped in primarily white Baptist congregations. First African Baptist Church was established on June 19, 1809 by thirteen former congregants of primarily white First Baptist Church of Philadelphia.⁹ These individuals had “come to Philadelphia from the eastern shore of Virginia to escape the cruel treatment of slave masters.”¹⁰ First African Baptist Church's founding members had seen their Methodist Episcopal counterparts establish a separate African American denomination as well as a separate African American congregation in response to the denomination's failure to grant African American members full rights and responsibilities. African American Baptists faced discrimination as well, but its split, in comparison to that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was less controversial. According to Charles H. Brooks' *Official History of the First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia*, “It is beyond controversy that the relation of the white and colored members of the First Baptist Church was of the most cordial and Christian manner.”¹¹ In fact, First Baptist Church of Philadelphia granted each of the thirteen founding members of First African Baptist Church voluntary letters of dismissal to establish an independent African American congregation “under the care and protection of their Mother Church.”¹² At the Philadelphia Baptist Association's annual meeting in October, First African Baptist Church was welcomed as a member. It became the fifth African American church in Philadelphia as well as the first African American Baptist church in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.¹³

⁷ Smith, Edward D. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877*. Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, p. 35-37.

⁸ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

⁹ Brooks, Charles H. *Official History of the First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.* Philadelphia: 1977, p. 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1-3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹³ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

The founding of First African Baptist Church paved the way for the establishment of other African American Baptist churches in early nineteenth century Philadelphia. The second African American Baptist church, Monumental Baptist Church, was founded on March 24, 1826 in Blockley Township (now West Philadelphia). It was organized by a group of six free African Americans including Abel and Emma Ward, George and Sarah Black, Nancy Francis, and Jacob Gardner. From 1826 until 1829, the small congregation worshipped in the home of Abel and Emma Ward.¹⁴

Monumental Baptist Church has been known by three names over the course of its history. It was known as the African Baptist Church of Blockley Township from its founding in 1826 until 1848; as Oak Street Baptist Church from 1848 until 1884; and Monumental Baptist Church from 1884 to present.

Monumental Baptist Church, 4101-05 Ludlow Street

Under first pastor Rev. George H. Black, the congregation grew from six to twenty-six members. This growth permitted the congregation to become a member of the preeminent association of Baptist congregations, the Philadelphia Baptist Association and also necessitated the purchase of land upon which to build a house of worship. These watershed moments both occurred in 1829.¹⁵

In 1829, the three-year-old congregation purchased a lot at the southwest corner of 41st and Oak Streets (now Ludlow Street) in the community of Roseville¹⁶ for \$180. The lot was deeded to Philip Bartho by Peter Rose and wife Ethel on August 29, 1829.¹⁷ A decade later, on August 3, 1839 (though it was recorded decades later, on July 23, 1856), the lot was transferred from Philip Bartho to trustee and choir director Matthias Black.¹⁸ Upon this land, the congregation built a small frame chapel about which little is known.¹⁹



Left to Right:
Rev. William Jackson, Rev. Kelley, and Rev. Robert Andrew Pinn
Courtesy Monumental Baptist Church.

Rev. George Black, the first pastor, served the church for three years, until resigning in 1829 due to health issues. Rev. Black was succeeded by Rev. Leven Stokely (1830-1834), Rev. George

¹⁴ Monumental Baptist Church Sesquicentennial, 1826-1976. Pamphlet, Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ S. M. Rea and J. Miller, *Map of Blockley Township*. (Philadelphia: Smith & Wistar, 1849).

¹⁷ Recorded on 29 August 1829 in Philadelphia Deed Book A. M. No. 44 p. 462.

¹⁸ Recorded on 23 July 1856 in Philadelphia Deed Book R. D. W. No. 70 p. 15.

¹⁹ Monumental Baptist Church Sesquicentennial, 1826-1976. Pamphlet, Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection.

Black (1835-1837), Rev. John Givens (1837-1840), and Rev. William Jackson (1841-1854). Notably, fourth pastor Rev. John Givens was the church's first to receive a stipend for his services to the church. A former member of Tenth Baptist Church, he received fifty dollars per year. The previous pastors had been volunteers.²⁰

Under fifth pastor Rev. William Jackson, the growing congregation—numbering over one hundred—replaced the 1829 frame chapel at the northwest corner of 41st and Oak Streets, which was meant to be temporary, with a brick chapel measuring twenty-three feet (23') by forty feet (40'). Work on the chapel started in 1844 and was completed in 1845-1846. The cost was sixteen hundred dollars.²¹ In the decade that followed, the church was enlarged, a bell was installed, and the baptistery was replaced.²²

By 1847, according to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society's census of Blockley Township, there were sixty-one African American households living in the community of Roseville, one of the most densely populated villages in Blockley Township. Of the sixty-one households, thirty-three lived on Oak Street (now Ludlow) and only eleven didn't "attend religious meetings." Further, many of these households owned real estate—ranging in value from \$300 to \$500.²³ This census suggests that Monumental Baptist Church anchored the community of Roseville.

Following Rev. William Jackson, the congregation was served by Rev. Samuel Miles (1854), Rev. Edmund Kelley (1855-1859), Rev. Charles Rogers (1862-1863), Rev. Caleb Woodyard (1864-1865), Rev. Frederick Boaze (1865-1866), Rev. Richard Coulter (1867-1868), and Rev. Robert Pinn (1869-1887).²⁴ Of all of the pastors who served the congregation, Rev. Pinn is the best known.

Under Rev. Robert Pinn, who served the congregation for eighteen years, the congregation erected its third and present building.²⁵ In 1867, it purchased a lot immediately north of the parcel it already owned for \$250. The parcel—which the congregation had been using as a burial ground—was deeded to Thomas Watkins on August 12, 1876 by widow Nancy Washington. Nancy Washington inherited the parcel from her husband, William, when he passed away.²⁶ William was a trustee of the church.²⁷

With the exception of the dead who lay in the path of the planned building's foundation, no graves were disturbed during construction of the present building. For this reason, the congregation's name was changed to Monumental Baptist Church.²⁸ Those in the path of the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Census of African Americans in Blockley Township, Pennsylvania Abolition Society. 1847.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Cornerstone Laid: Monumental Baptist Church Takes a New Departure," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 15 September 1884.

²⁶ Recorded on 12 August 1876 in Philadelphia Deed Book D. H. L. No. 71 p. 76.

²⁷ Monumental Baptist Church, "MBC History," accessed 1 May 2016, <http://www.thembc.org/#!/history/yw4wd>

²⁸ "Monumental Baptist Church Built on Graveyard Site," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 24 August 1965.

foundation were relocated to Olive Cemetery, an African American cemetery, in 1884.²⁹ And those that remained were memorialized through the addition of a tablet bearing their names, which was attached to the wall behind the pulpit in the present building.³⁰

On September 14, 1884, the cornerstone of the present building—which contains mementos such as “copies of the church papers,” “secular journals of the day,” and “specimens of coinage”—was laid. The following day, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported: “For many years, the congregation of the Monumental, formerly called the Oak Street Baptist Church have been worshipping in a small time worn building on Ludlow Street, at the corner of forty first. At one time the basement of the church was rented for a public school of an elementary grade, but the drainage and ventilation were not such as the school requirements demanded... Under the ministry of Rev. Robert A. Pinn, the present pastor, the congregation has improved both in numbers and in the social standing and influence of its members, and a movement has been afoot for several months towards the erection on the lot of a new building of brick with handsome brownstone trimmings...”³¹

The eclectic brick building featuring an overhanging gable revealing wood trusses and tall, vertical windows was completed in 1889 at a cost of just \$12,000. It measures fifty-four feet (54’) by fifty feet (50’), and can seat up to 475 people.³² The architect for the 1884 Building was David S. Gendell of 2219 Chestnut Street.³³ The church was damaged by fire in 1895, but was eventually repaired.³⁴

Membership increased dramatically after the construction of the new building. By the turn of the century, the congregation boasted 1,000 members.³⁵

In 1914, the 1845 Building was “rebuilt” as a Sunday school annex at a cost of \$33,000.³⁶ There is evidence that the congregation had been considering upgrading its facilities for some time before 1914. In 1905, it was reported that “John N. Gill & Co. have invited estimates for a one-story church with a basement and gallery of brick and stone, 48.6 x 114.6 feet, at Forty First and Ludlow streets, for the congregation of the Monumental Baptist Church.”³⁷ It is unlikely that any work was done at this time.

Monumental Baptist Church was not alone. According to architectural historian Emily T. Cooperman, “More black churches were constructed or purchased in Philadelphia in the 1880s and 1890s than ever before... As congregations outgrew their former buildings, they purchased

²⁹ “All Sorts, A Condensation of Items of General Local Interest,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 16 April 1884.

³⁰ “Monumental Baptist Church Built on Graveyard Site,” *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 24 August 1965.

³¹ “Cornerstone Laid: Monumental Baptist Church Takes a New Departure,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 15 September 1884.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ White, Charles Frederick. *Who's who in Philadelphia: a collection of thirty biographical sketches of Philadelphia colored people...* (Philadelphia: The A. M. E. Book Concern, 1912), pp. 120.; and 1886 Philadelphia City Directory.

³⁴ “The Latest News in Real Estate.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 14 March 1895), pp. 9.

³⁵ Scott, William H. *Journal of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention*. (Nashville: National Baptist Publication Board, 1905.), pp. 218.

³⁶ Monumental Baptist Church Sesquicentennial, 1826-1976. Pamphlet, Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection.

³⁷ “The Latest News in Real Estate,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 7 June 1905.

property on which to construct new church buildings or they bought existing churches from congregations that had relocated or closed their doors... In both cases, the capability of African American congregations to move into larger, and often elaborate church buildings indicates the growing strength of the African American community in Philadelphia.”³⁸ During this renaissance in church construction, African American congregations built over two-dozen church buildings.³⁹

³⁸ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

³⁹ Ibid.



The proposed archaeological designation is highlighted in black and white stripes and represents the original frontage and square footage of the 1845 Building, as well as the westerly portion of the vacant portion of the lot that has always been vacant since the site was owned by an African American congregation. Courtesy Philadelphia Water.

Criterion I

The former Monumental Baptist Church is likely the oldest site in West Philadelphia that has been continually occupied by African Americans. The site has also always been home to a house of worship and may be the second oldest continually occupied site by an African American religious institution in Philadelphia. From an archaeological standpoint, the site is certainly likely to yield information about the history of the African American community in West Philadelphia.

Maps from the 1870s through 1910s verify that the 1845 Building of the Former Monumental Baptist Church stood at the northwest corner of 41st and Ludlow Streets. The 1914 Building replaced the 1845 Building, leaving a vacant lot at its northerly portion. The subject vacant lot measures roughly fifty feet east to west along Ludlow Street and twenty feet north to south along 41st Street. This rough measurement is the area subject to the proposed archaeological designation. Because the westerly portion of this lot appears always to have been vacant and because the easterly portion contained the 1845 Building until 1914, there is likely archaeological deposits at the least if not a large portion of the 1845 Building's foundation. This would certainly comprise what could be an archaeological site that is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. As a result the former Monumental Baptist Church at 4101-4105 Ludlow Street may be likely to yield important information in history & archaeology and to the cultural understanding of the African American community in West Philadelphia.

Conclusion

The congregation of Monumental Baptist, which remains an active part of the religious community in West Philadelphia, is celebrating the 190th anniversary of its founding this year. Before moving to its current site, it spent 138 years at 41st and Ludlow Streets, where it anchored one of the first African American communities to settle in West Philadelphia. That community sacrificed a great deal to build and sustain Monumental Baptist Church—the only resource associated with the congregation that was built by the congregation. And many of those individuals who lived their lives as members and contributors of Monumental Baptist Church now rest beneath the 1884 building, which was erected atop the congregation’s early- to mid-nineteenth century burial ground.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1886 Philadelphia City Directory.

“All Sorts, A Condensation of Items of General Local Interest,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 16 April 1884.

Atlas of the 27th & 46th wards of the city of Philadelphia: from private plans, actual surveys & official records. Philadelphia: Elvino V. Smith, compiler and publisher, 1909. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.

Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, wards 24, 27, 34, 40, 44 & 46, West Philadelphia, from actual surveys and official plans. Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley, 1927., Plate 24. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.

Atlas of Philadelphia (West Philadelphia). (Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley & Co., [1916]). Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.

Atlas of West Philadelphia, 24th and 27th wards. Compiled from official records, private plans and actual surveys based upon plans deposited in the Department of surveys, by Wm. G. Baist. Philadelphia: J.L. Smith, 1886. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.

Atlas of West Philadelphia including the 24th & 27th Wards of the City of Philadelphia from actual surveys & official records. Philadelphia: G. [Griffith] M. [Morgan] Hopkins & Co., compiler and publisher, 1872. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.

Brooks, Charles H. Official History of the First African Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa. Philadelphia: 1977.

Census of African Americans in Blockley Township, Pennsylvania Abolition Society. 1847.

“Cornerstone Laid: Monumental Baptist Church Takes a New Departure,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 15 September 1884.

Griffith, Cyril E. “Richard Allen: The First Prominent Black Religious Leader in Pennsylvania” in John M. Coleman, Robert G. Christ, and John B. Frantz eds., *Pennsylvania Religious Leaders*, Pennsylvania Historic Studies Series 16. Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Planks’ Suburban Press for the Pennsylvania Historical Society, 1986.

J.D. Scott's 1878 Atlas of the 24th and 27th Wards, West Philadelphia. Philadelphia: J.D. Scott, 1878. Courtesy the West Philadelphia Community History Center.

Map of G. H. Jones, 1874 – Plate 12. Provided by John Manton, Archivist and Historian. Courtesy Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Monumental Baptist Church, "MBC History," accessed 1 May 2016,
<http://www.thembc.org/#!history/yw4wd>

"Monumental Baptist Church Built on Graveyard Site," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia: 24 August 1965.

"Monumental Baptist Church Moving to New Location," *Philadelphia Tribune*. Philadelphia 1 April 1967.

Monumental Baptist Church Sesquicentennial, 1826-1976. Pamphlet, Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection.

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1787-1949.

Recorded on 29 August 1829 in Philadelphia Deed Book A. M. No. 44 p. 462.

Recorded on 23 July 1856 in Philadelphia Deed Book R. D. W. No. 70 p. 15.

Recorded on 12 August 1876 in Philadelphia Deed Book D. H. L. No. 71 p. 76.

Recorded on 15 February 1967 in Philadelphia Deed Book C. A. D. No. 915 p. 328.

S. M. Rea and J. Miller, *Map of Blockley Township*. (Philadelphia: Smith & Wistar, 1849).

Scott, William H. *Journal of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention*. (Nashville: National Baptist Publication Board, 1905.), pp. 218.

Smith, Edward D. *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740-1877*. Washington, D.C. and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988.

"The Latest News in Real Estate." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (Philadelphia: 14 March 1895), pp. 9.

"The Latest News in Real Estate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Philadelphia: 7 June 1905.

White, Charles Frederick. *Who's who in Philadelphia: a collection of thirty biographical sketches of Philadelphia colored people...* (Philadelphia: The A. M. E. Book Concern, 1912).