

AUG 23 1985

MULTIPLE RESOURCES OF ANNISTON
CALHOUN COUNTY, ALABAMA

Historic name: Mount Zion Baptist Church Owner: Mount Zion Baptist Church
Common name: Mount Zion Baptist Church 212 Second (Boundary) Street
Anniston, Alabama 36201
Address: 212 Second (Boundary) Street
Acreage: less than one acre UTM: 16/608240/3723360

Verbal Boundary: South Anniston Land Company, Division 4, Block A, Lot 1.

Architectural Design: Romanesque influences

Date of Construction: 1890-1894

Statement of Significance:

Criterion C - Architecture:

The Mount Zion Baptist Church is significant as an important local example of vernacular black church design of the late 19th century. The use of native materials, the Romanesque and Victorian influences, the building's integrity and the fact that it was designed and constructed by members of the congregation, all contribute to the architectural significance of the building. With the pending demolition of the 17th Street Baptist Church, the Mount Zion Baptist Church will be the last surviving church building, from the late 19th century, that is associated with the black community in Anniston.

Description:

The present church building is the second to occupy the same lot which is located on a prominent slope in an area known as Zion Hill. Zion Hill was originally part of the speculative town of Oxanna which was founded in the early 1880s just outside the outskirts of Anniston and later annexed into Anniston.

The church is a modified Romanesque-style building with an irregular stone foundation forming a raised basement above which is the brick sanctuary with a slightly projecting corner tower capped by a pyramidal roof. The tower is largely unaltered, with a metal finial at the top and a paneled bracketed molding beneath the cone of the tower. The original louvers have been bricked up. The rectangular nave, four bays long, carries a large gabled roof. The facade is essentially three bays wide with a central ground floor entrance that retains its original stoop, chamfered wooden posts, sawn brackets, and a small gabled roof. A large arched window is centered above the entrance, articulated by a brick architrave springing from stone banding which runs across the facade. The window is divided into two sections: a fanlight with a band of beaded molding over a main rectangular section divided into smaller segments.

Other ornamentation includes lightly pilastered lateral walls and a trefoil motif in the vent at the termination of the gable.

The interior is relatively unaltered. The pulpit area and the choir loft in the auditorium are emphasized by a Romanesque archway into which are fitted the old ornamental organ pipes. Double branching stairways from the narthex ascend to a rear gallery. Two aisles divide the three rows of mahogany pews, which are original and feature raised Gothic panels at each pew end. The windows, with original trim, have translucent glass in two-over-two sash with fluted architraves. The auditorium also has beaded sill-height wainscoting.

The lower part, or basement of the church, was built in 1890 and used until the upper part was added in 1894. The stones for the foundation are of local sandstone, hauled by mules from the Rocky Hollow quarry.

A two-story brick addition with a gable roof, largely nondescript and unobtrusive, was added to the rear in the early 1970s.

Historical Summary:

Mount Zion Baptist Church was the second black church organized in the Anniston area and is the oldest one still in existence. It has always been the central social force of the Zion Hill neighborhood, an area that the pastor of the church, Cleveland Jones, calls "throwaway land" because it was hilly and not fit for farming; hence that was where the blacks in Oxanna began to live. The congregation dates from 1879 when a small group met in a brush arbor near the railroad tracks, southeast of the present location. They raised money for the present lot and for each of the successive buildings occupying it, with church members designing and building the structure.

Rough Sketch Map
#19 Mount Zion Baptist Church
Anniston, Alabama

