

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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MARCH 11 1991

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal Church
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 530 N. 5th Ave. E. N/A not for publication
city, town Duluth N/A vicinity
state Minnesota code MN county St. Louis code 137 zip code 55805

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Ian R. Stewart Date March 4, 1991
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.

Melissa Byers 4/16/91

- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Melissa Byers Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Religion, religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Religion, religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Late Gothic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
walls brick

roof asphalt/shingles
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage/Black

Social History

Significant Person

N/A

Period of Significance

1900-1940

Significant Dates

1900

1913

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

- Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 - previously listed in the National Register
 - previously determined eligible by the National Register
 - designated a National Historic Landmark
 - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Fort Snelling History Center
Saint Paul, Minnesota

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	5
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5	6	8	9	9	5
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5	1	8	2	7	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is the:
North 50 feet of lots 82 & 84 Duluth Proper First Addition, East 6th St.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the portions of city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jacqueline Sluss

organization Thomas R. Zahn & Associates, Inc. date July 16, 1990

street & number University Club, 420 Summit Avenue telephone (612) 221-9765

city or town Saint Paul state Minnesota zip code 55102

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, Duluth, St. Louis Co., Minnesota

Section number 7 Page 1

St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, at 530 Fifth Avenue East, is a simple one story brick church sitting on a high rough-faced stone basement. The church sits on a corner lot with a corner, two-story bell tower. The simple rectangular massing has a parapeted gable roof with Tudor Revival detailing in the windows and bell tower.

The main facade is on the gabled end that faces Fifth Avenue. The facade is composed of the stone basement level that housed the early congregation (1900-1913) and still displays the original entrance door with stone lintel that is centered on the dominant gable end. The upper (main) level has the later entrance incorporated into the corner bell tower. Access to the main double-door entrance is provided by a simple concrete stair with pipe railing from the walk along the secondary street facade. The entrance is capped with a slightly projected brick banding. To the right of the entrance is a centered, large four-panelled stained-glass window framed in a Tudor arch that rests on a stone sill. To its right is a smaller single stained-glass window. Both windows are capped with patterned brickwork .

The upper level of the tower has two sets of louvered openings (one set on each of the two major street facades). The tower's parapeted top displays stone capped battlements.

The secondary street facade is composed of three window bays and the corner tower. Each bay contains a three-panelled stained glass window within a Tudor arched frame. Each window bay sits within slightly projected piers.

The back gable elevation displays a secondary entrance, a single-story projected brick massing, and a small chimney. The projected alcove, with gabled roof, displays a grouping of two tall and two (center) short stained glass windows. Access to the back entrance is provided from the sidewalk by concrete stairs parallel to the front entrance stairs.

The interior displays the grouped, Tudor-arched windows; a domed ceiling; inclined seating arrangement; and a front, raised choir loft and lectern area. The dome and front alcove are framed with equi-spaced electrical light fixtures on the ceiling.

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St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, Duluth, St. Louis Co., Minnesota

Section number 8 Page 1

St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal Church is significant under criterion A for its central role in the social and religious organization of the Black community in Duluth and as the only building in the city built by Blacks for Black use. One of two main Black churches in the city, it was the first Black congregation and was founded in 1890. Repeating the pattern of social organization within other Black urban communities in Minnesota, the church, as a center of religious and social activity, was frequently a center for the discussion of the economic, political and civil rights issues of the day.

The Black community in Duluth during the period of significance was small and hovered around 400 persons between 1910 and 1930, declining to a low of 314 persons in 1940. The population was scattered throughout the city but a majority lived in the east Hillside neighborhood where St. Mark's is located. This area is now the locus of most of the Black population. Most Blacks in Duluth worked as porters for private and public rail companies and as dock and boat workers. Others were employed in service jobs or as barbers and restaurateurs. In the 1920s, United States Steel recruited Black workers from Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia and settled them outside Duluth in the company town of Gary. Although many of those workers were driven out by the difficult climate, some stayed on to build the Black community.

Membership within St. Mark's A.M.E. Church reflected the small size of the Duluth community. When the Church basement was built in 1900, membership was at twelve permanent members and 13 probationary members. Church records indicate membership increased through the years and reached 68 (27 men and 41 women) in 1910 but declined to 59 in 1914. (Records not available for the ensuing years.) The present membership stands at an estimated thirty-six.

Although Black churches, nation wide, have never embraced all Black Americans in its membership, its influence in all aspects of Black life has been great. Benjamin Mays, noted Black scholar has called the Black church a bastion of freedom of expression in contrast to the segregated life within the larger society. It has traditionally supplied much of the core of black leadership, nationally and locally, and has, by opening its doors to civil rights groups, nurtured those organizations through their formative years. Since the turn of the century when Black churches began to enjoy more economic stability, they have increasingly reached out into the

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St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, Duluth, St. Louis Co., Minnesota

Section number 8 Page 2

larger Black community with social programs such as child care and education, adult classes, and public speaker forums. The history of St. Mark's followed that pattern.

St. Mark's was one of several institutions that developed in the small Duluth community at the turn of the century: political clubs, Masonic and fraternal organizations, and a Black press. Although the press was not a mainstay institution in Duluth, Blacks in Duluth continued to keep abreast of current events with Black newspapers from the Twin Cities and Chicago. In addition, Blacks in Duluth heard nationally and regionally important speakers and artists who made the circuit between St. Paul, Minneapolis and Duluth. While smaller social clubs waxed and waned, St. Mark's and the Masonic orders continued to evolve. The Doric Masonic Lodge was formed from members of the church in 1891 and Masons, who met there through the years, purchased the stained glass windows for the church. Masonic and fraternal orders were important to black communities not only because they provided a framework for socialization, but often took care of funeral expenses. Masonic membership, nation wide, traditionally came out of church membership and for this reason their goals and agendas often dovetailed.

A disposition toward social activism grew out of the community of the church as Blacks struggled with the relative isolation within the larger community. After the lynching of three Blacks on a Duluth street corner in 1921 (the only incident of it's kind in Minnesota history), a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was organized in the same year. Since then, the NAACP, St. Mark's, the Calvary Baptist Church and the Masonic orders have remained at the core of community organization and involvement.

St. Mark's involvement in the larger Black community derives from the fact that it has historically been one of two Black owned "public" edifices in Duluth, the other being the Calvary Baptist Church (Calvary was purchased from the German Methodist Episcopal Church and remodeled in 1938). Even in the larger metropolitan Black communities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Black owned and built public buildings were rare and it was typical that most gatherings took place in private residences, community houses and churches. Like churches in those larger communities, St. Mark's was host to Masonic meetings and local NAACP meetings. According to one interview with an elderly Church steward, the NAACP used the church to conduct interviews

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St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, Duluth, St. Louis Co., Minnesota

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on the social conditions of the Black community in Duluth and had information meetings concerning employment opportunities in the city. The church welcomed Black intellectual and father of the NAACP, W.E.B. DuBois to Duluth in 1921. DuBois was in Duluth, no doubt, to encourage the establishment of a local chapter of the NAACP following the lynchings. In the 1930s, St. Mark's and Calvary Baptist were alternate hosts for the Sunday Forum, weekly discussions of issues important to the Black community. St. Mark's hosted Clarence Mitchell from the St. Paul Urban League in 1938 who spoke on the topic of "Race Relations." The church, also concerned with educational opportunity for Blacks in Duluth, established a scholarship fund for higher education. That fund still exists.

Because of the small size of the church, finances were often strained and St. Mark's petitioned the wider community for assistance. Out of this appeal, an open and amicable relationship developed between the Black community and individuals within the larger White community. When the congregation decided that they would like to build their own church building in 1910, the Duluth Herald printed a public request for financial assistance and received it. In 1934, the church was saved from a mortgage foreclosure by the sale of a rare photograph of Abraham Lincoln's inauguration donated by Mr. Norman Spindler, a Duluth collector. In 1937, the holder of the mortgage on the church donated the sum of the debt to the members of St. Mark's.

St. Mark's has played a significant role in the development and stabilization of the Black community in Duluth since 1890. As a center of religious and social activity in the community, the church has provided a sense of belonging and has nurtured a social consciousness that it shares with other important Black institutions that include Calvary Baptist Church, the NAACP and the Masonic orders.

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St. Mark's A.M.E. Church, Duluth, St. Louis Co., Minnesota

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