

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only
received JUL 3 1984
date entered AUG 2 1984

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Saint, Philip A.M.E. Church

and or common None

2. Location

street & number 613 ~~West~~ Broad Street N/A not for publication

city, town Savannah N/A vicinity of

state Georgia code 013 county Chatham code 051

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Saint Philip A.M.E. Church; the Reverend C.W. Purnell, pastor

street & number P.O. Box 1151

city, town Savannah N/A vicinity of state Georgia 31402

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Chatham County Courthouse

city, town Savannah state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Saint Philip A.M.E. Church is a three-story Romanesque style building constructed in brick and decorative cement. The front or east side of the building is divided into three parts: a central section with three double doors and a large round stained-glass window, a small tower, and a larger bell tower. Both towers contain numerous small arched stained-glass windows. A gabled roof of steep pitch runs from the east to west sides of the building. The north and south sides of the building are divided into six bays by brick buttresses. Each bay contains a one-over-one, double-hung sash window on the first floor and large arched one-over-one, double-hung stained-glass windows on the second and third floors.

The east side or front facade of the building, as well as the north side, are constructed of high-quality brick with a gold hue. The south and west sides are constructed with common red brick. A type of cement which gives the appearance of limestone is used in executing the arches, columns, belt courses, water table, and tops of buttresses throughout the building. The east side of the building has extensive Romanesque detail. Romanesque columns were used around the doors and in the bell tower. Romanesque arches are used around most of the windows.

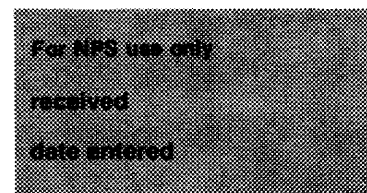
The church is entered on the east side through the vestibule, which is several feet above ground level. Steps in the center of the vestibule lead down into the Sunday school or ground-floor area, while staircases at each end of the vestibule lead to the second floor. This room takes up most of the floor space on the ground floor and is flanked on one side by a lavatory and four teaching areas, which may be divided by movable partitions. On the other side, there are a pastor's study and four additional classrooms. On the second floor, the vestibule opens into the sanctuary through two double doors. The pews in the sanctuary are divided by two aisles which begin at the vestibule entrance. The floor of the sanctuary slopes down to the altar area. The altar area consists of a rounded platform with an altar and deacons' chairs. Behind the altar, there is a recessed choir area and on each side are two small rooms. A staircase from the second-story vestibule leads into the third-floor balcony area. The balcony extends around the sides of the sanctuary all the way to a point parallel with the altar area. Two small rooms equal in size to those on the first floor are located here.

Most of the interior walls are covered with plaster. Modern wooden paneling is used to cover the walls in the Sunday school area and is used as wainscoting in the sanctuary. Cement is used for flooring in the vestibule areas and in the Sunday school area. Pine flooring is used on the second and third floors. Some of the most important interior details are the stained-glass windows. The stained-glass windows are designed in a mosaic pattern using blues and greens. In the sanctuary, each of the stained-glass windows along the north and south sides of the building have pairs of biblical symbols at the bases of the windows,

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such as alpha, omega, ark and lamb, etc. The large circular stained-glass window on the east side of the building commemorates the Georgia Conference, placing a circular panel with Georgia Conference on it in the center and the names of the eight districts of the Georgia Conference around it. A large pipe organ is located at the rear of the choir area. The balustrade rod around the balcony is decorated with Romanesque arches. The larger doors of the building consist of double doors with beveled glass. The smaller doors have six panels. The ceiling of the sanctuary is finished with pressed-metal panels with a medallion design. The sanctuary is illuminated by ornate lighting fixtures which hang from the ceiling and appear to be original. The walls are supported by buttresses, but it is unclear if the buttresses are structural or ornamental. Iron columns support the second floor and the third floor.

Saint Philip church is situated on a flat, sandy lot. Four large shade trees are located in front of the building between the sidewalk and curb. A row of shrubs is located on the north side of the building. The only outbuilding on the property is the modern parsonage located along the west side of the building. It appears to be on the same site as the original parsonage, constructed in 1911. The building is a two-story brick structure built several feet away from the west wall of the church and connected to the church by an enclosed walkway on the second floor.

Saint Philip church is located on West Broad Street, a busy four-lane street located in the central part of Savannah. It is also adjacent to Interstate Highway 16. A modern bank and fast-food restaurant flank the building to the north and south. An older, commercial area is located to the east of the building and low-income housing development is located to the west of the building.

Changes to the property include those that occurred in the 1930s and those that are being completed in 1984. In the 1930s, the upper portion of the south wall collapsed and had to be replaced with bricks that did not quite match. At about the same time, modern wooden paneling was used extensively in the Sunday school area. In 1983, the south stairway off the vestibule was removed and replaced by an elevator. The ground-floor interior was also extensively reworked. Stained-glass windows were reglazed and repainted. The roof was also replaced with a new metal roof.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1911–12 **Builder/Architect** John A. Lankford, Architect
Pharrow Construction Company, Builders

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Saint Philip A.M.E. Church is significant in architecture and religion. In architecture, Saint Philip A.M.E. Church is significant as an excellent example of the use of Romanesque architecture for a religious structure, reminiscent of the origin of the style in the Middle Ages for churches. The columns, arches, stained glass, and masonry are all elements of this style seen in this church, as is its overall form and arrangement. It is also significant as a work of noted black architect John A. Lankford (b. 1874), a graduate of Tuskegee Institute and the Architectural College of Scranton, Pennsylvania. In 1908 and 1912, he was chosen supervising architect by the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church. The church is also significant in religion as the Mother Church of Georgia's A.M.E. churches. This A.M.E. congregation was the first to be founded in Georgia, in 1865. This church has been a focal point for black religions and social life in Savannah since its completion. These areas of significance support the property's eligibility under National Register criteria A and C.

Historical Narrative

Saint Philip A.M.E. was organized on June 16, 1865, by the Reverend A.L. Stanford. It was the first A.M.E. or African Methodist Episcopal congregation to be founded in the state of Georgia. Its founding occurred only months after the end of the Civil War and the official end to slavery. This church is often referred to as the "Mother Church" of the A.M.E. congregations in Georgia.

Earlier church buildings included one on Hull Street that was destroyed in 1896 by a storm. For several years afterwards, the congregation met in a Masonic Hall. In 1905, they held a rally to raise money for a new church building. By 1911, enough funds were available to purchase a lot and hire an architect. The church cost \$35,000 and was constructed by Pharrow Construction Company of Atlanta. By October, 1911, plans had been drawn by John A. Lankford, an A.M.E. member and the official architect for the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church. He designed many different types of buildings, including commercial, residential, and industrial ones throughout the South. His specialty was churches, and he wrote a builders' guide for churches entitled Lankford's Artistic Churches and Other Designs (1924), said to be the first book of its kind published by a black architect.

The church served not only the religious needs of the black community, but social needs as well. It was often the site of concerts as well as commencement

[continued]

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Savannah, Ga.-S.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	4	9	0	4	2	0	3	5	4	8	0	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the nominated property is the current legal boundary which includes the lots originally purchased in 1911 for the church. It is marked on the enclosed tax map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian

Historic Preservation Section

organization Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

date June 13, 1984

street & number 270 Washington Street, S.W.

telephone (404) 656-2840

city or town Atlanta

state Georgia 30334

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Elizabeth A. Lyon
Elizabeth A. Lyon

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/20/84

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Shelores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 8-2-84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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Continuation sheet Significance and
Bibliography

Item number 8 and 9

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8. Significance

exercises. A number of prominent black Savannah citizens worshipped here, and the church was especially noted for the number of teachers and artisans who belonged to the congregation. Two of the more notable members during the 1930s were F.C. Blackshear, president of the Wage Earners Bank of Savannah, and Jesse Brenson, a noted Sunday school illustrator who traveled throughout the state.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Potterfield, Ty, and Dr. Frankie Ellis. "St. Philip A.M.E. Church," Historic Property Information Form, August, 1983. On file at the Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

Wright, Richard R. (ed.) The Centennial Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Volume One. Philadelphia: The Book Concern..., 1916.