

PH0352624

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED AUG 2 1976
DATE ENTERED NOV 7 1976

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 ****** Old Asbury Methodist Church

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Walnut & Third Streets
CITY, TOWN Wilmington
STATE Delaware
VICINITY OF CODE 10
COUNTY CODE New Castle 002
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Methodist Mission and Church Extension Society, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER 407 W. Ninth Street
CITY, TOWN Wilmington STATE Delaware
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. New Castle Court House
STREET & NUMBER Public Building, Rodney Square
CITY, TOWN Wilmington STATE Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Survey of Delaware Historic Sites & Buildings, N-174
DATE June-August, 1975
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Hall of Records
CITY, TOWN Dover STATE Delaware

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Old Asbury Methodist Church is a large ashlar-stuccoed building of the Italianate-eclectic style. It has gables facing both west and north and a low pitched roof. Under the roofline are small wooden brackets. The main three-bay facade, that facing west, has three doorways, one double and two single. The doors and elongated second-floor windows are arched at the top in the Italianate style. All of the windows of the building and the doors on the north gable end are capped with keyed lintels. Vernacular rose windows are in the center of both gable ends.

The main entry vestibule has two stairways leading to the second floor. The ceilings and walls of the vestibule are covered with ornamental tin sheets. The same ornamentation is continued on the second floor.

The main floor consists of four offices and a large meeting room. Above the main entry vestibule is the sanctuary vestibule; and above the large meeting room and offices is the sanctuary, panelled in elaborately-carved, dark-stained wood. A gallery is on the north, west, and south walls. Stairs to the gallery lead from the chancel in the east end of the sanctuary and from the sanctuary vestibule.

The original tracker organ is in the chancel. The wooden mechanism remains; however, the blower is now electric. A local organ maker made this organ and also one other, now in Delaware City.

Old Asbury has not always been a large two-story structure. As originally built in 1789, it was a one-story brick building, 35 foot square with a gallery at the west end and a pulpit at the east end. There was also a four-foot-high wall down the middle of the church to separate the sexes. Portions of the original 1789 structure are still visible in the vestibule of the present building.

In 1811 the building was enlarged 20 feet to the east. By 1825 it had again been added to and was 70 by 50 feet. Galleries were added on the north and south, but it remained one story. In 1838 the church was again enlarged; it was extended 10 feet on the west to form a vestibule.

The second floor was added in 1845 when the main floor was lowered two feet and the walls increased by 7 feet, 6 inches. The first floor became much as it is today with four classrooms (now offices), two on each side of the hallway, and a lecture room (50 by 38 feet) in the back. Galleries, 11 feet, 6 inches wide, were built on the north, west, and south walls of the sanctuary.

The elaborate interior panelling was added in 1873. The chapel wing to the north was added in 1875 and the exterior was stuccoed. Finally, the large tracker organ was installed in 1896.

Today, Old Asbury sits on the corner of Third and Walnut streets and is surrounded by an iron fence within which is also the original graveyard which contains the grave of Captain Allan McLane, a noted Delaware Revolutionary officer. Very few eighteenth- or nineteenth-century structures remain in this part of Wilmington. Indeed to the south of the church is the Asbury Garden Apartment Complex, a low-rent urban redevelopment unit. Thus, Old Asbury remains a reminder of the period when this part of Wilmington was a substantial residential section.

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Old Asbury Methodist Church was the first Methodist church in Wilmington. It has been continuously used by Methodists since its construction. Old Asbury is also significant because the three founding bishops of the Methodist Church in America preached there. The physical growth of the church reflects the corresponding development of Methodism in Delaware from a small, much-harassed group to the largest Protestant denomination in the State. Old Asbury is also significant because of its architecture.

Methodism first came to Wilmington in the 1760's when Captain Thomas Webb preached to interested groups under the trees at the corner of King and Kent streets. The Methodists next moved to Captain James Gilpin's storehouse on King Street wharf. Other locations were used by the group, including James Thelwell's house at King and Third streets and the Market House. In 1772 Francis Asbury, later Bishop of the Methodist Church, preached for the first time in Wilmington. Dr. Thomas Coke and Richard Whatcoat, both of whom also became bishops, preached to Wilmington's nascent congregation.

The Wilmington Methodists were a small, but heroic, group of men and women who were harassed continually by non-Methodists. On May 12, 1789, the group acquired a lot on the corner of Third and Walnut streets, the site of the present church, from Caleb and Sarah Way for \$105. The original one-story church was built that summer and was dedicated by Francis Asbury on October 16, 1789.

The founding congregation included 43 white members and 19 Black members. The Black membership was active and grew to about 100 by 1805. In that year they left Old Asbury to form their own congregation. Ezion Church at Ninth and French streets was founded by them.

Old Asbury grew rapidly after 1805 and was one of the largest and most active churches in Wilmington during the nineteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, Old Asbury has felt the missionary zeal. Here met the Ladies Aid, Women's Foreign Missionary Society, Woman's Home Missionary and Home Circle, King's Daughters, and Christian Endeavor. The records of the church and its various missionary organizations are at the Delaware Archives in Dover.

In the twentieth century the membership began to decline as the white population of Wilmington moved to the suburbs. Because there were several active Black churches in the area, Old Asbury could not attract substantial numbers of new members from the growing Black community. An attempt was made in the 1950's to attract Blacks to the church when the church was turned over to the Colored Methodist Church; however, it was unsuccessful and the church was taken over by the Methodist Conference of Wilmington.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Asbury Methodist Church Records, mss. 929.3 A1, Delaware Archives, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.
- Hallman, E. C., Garden of Methodism, 1949.
- History of Asbury Church, mss. 929.3 A1, Vol. V, Delaware Archives, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/2 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	4,5,1	9,7,0	4,3	9,8	6,1,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				
C							D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Old Asbury is bounded on the west by Walnut Street, on the north by Third Street, on the east by the back property line, and on the south by the side property line.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Susanne N. Fox, Research Archivist

ORGANIZATION

Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

May 17, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

Hall of Records

TELEPHONE

(302) 678-5314

CITY OR TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

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

Lauren C. Se...

TITLE

Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

7/30/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

AG:ldg

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

11/10/96

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/2/76

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Today it is run by the Methodist Action Program as a community center and continues in the missionary tradition of the church.

Although modified by its several additions, Old Asbury has outstanding Victorian detail added in the 1870's. The tin-plate wall coverings in the vestibules and sanctuary and the ceiling plasterwork and light fixtures in the sanctuary are well executed and well preserved.

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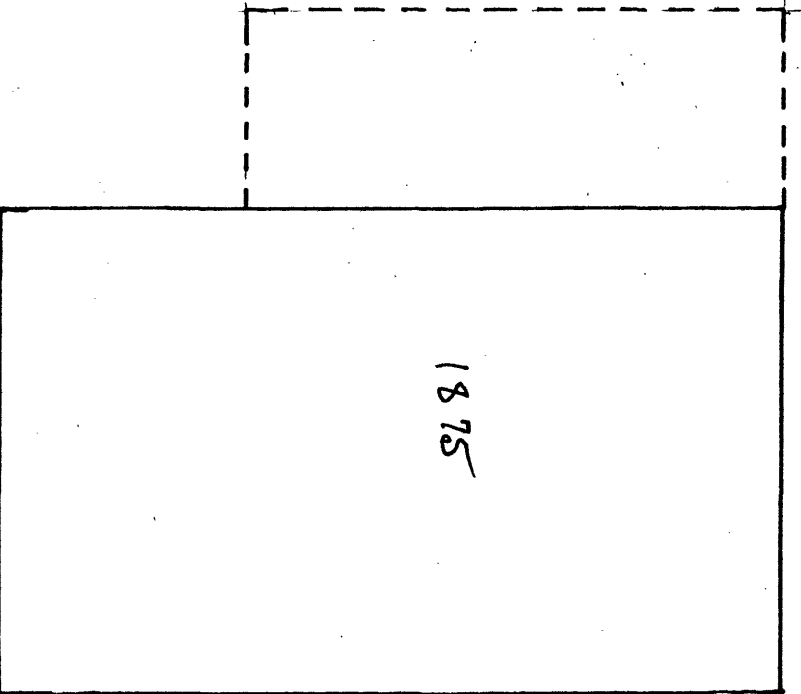
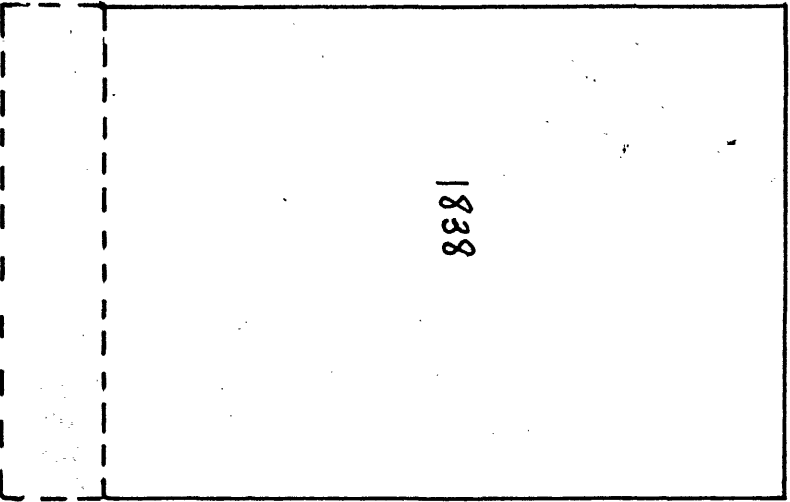
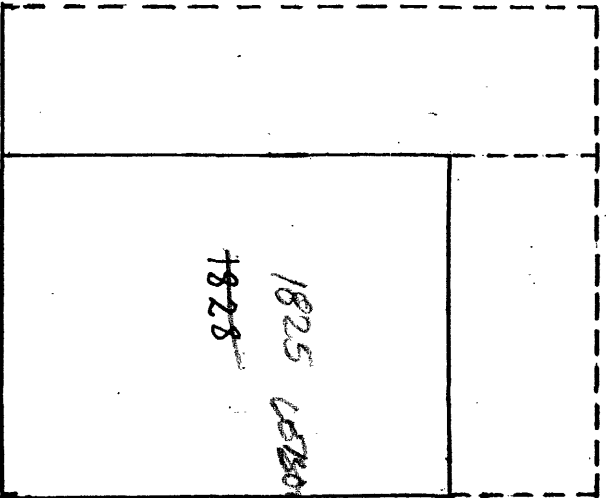
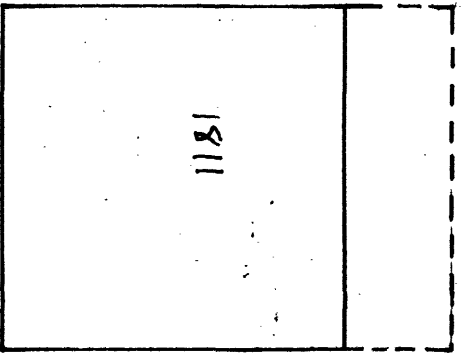
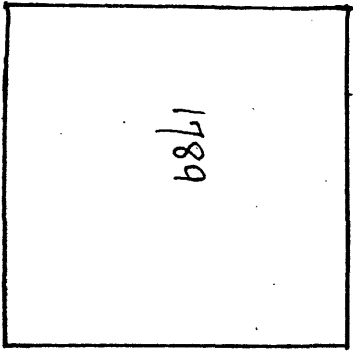
DATE ENTERED

NOV 8 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Lincoln, Anna T., Wilmington, Delaware: Three Centuries Under Four Flags,
1609-1937. Rutland, Vermont: The Tuttle Publishing Company, Inc., 1937.



OLD ASBURY
CHURCH



not to scale