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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday School  
Other names: Wharton Wesley United Methodist Church; Wharton Memorial United Methodist Church  
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

### 2. Location

Street & number: 5337 Catharine Street  
City or town: Philadelphia State: PA County: Philadelphia  
Not for Publication: NA Vicinity: NA

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  local Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Andrea L. MacDonald 10/10/2019  
Signature of certifying official: Date  
Andrea L. MacDonald/Deputy SHPO/Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission  
Title/State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
Signature of commenting official: Date  
Title/State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register
  - determined eligible for the National Register
  - determined not eligible for the National Register
  - removed from the National Register
  - other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] 12/2/19  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

Private:

Public – Local

Public – State

Public – Federal

#### Category of Property

Building(s)

District

Site

Structure

Object

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

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### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** RELIGION/Religious Facility

**Current Functions:** RELIGION/Religious Facility

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## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** Late Gothic Revival

**Principal exterior materials of the property:** Stone, Terra Cotta

### Narrative Description

The Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church was designed in 1905 by Philadelphia-based architect Wesley Leshner Blithe, with a Sunday School addition in 1915 by the Philadelphia firm Stearns and Castor. The Late Gothic Revival style building is entirely clad in stone with terra cotta detailing and consists of three primary sections, the cross-gabled Sanctuary (1905) with multi-storied stained glass windows oriented to face Catherine and 54<sup>th</sup> Streets, a 3-story crenelated bell tower (1905) with elaborate entrance surrounds at the southwest corner of the sanctuary, and a three-story Sunday School wing (1915), lower in height than the sanctuary and tower, consisting of a small auditorium, classrooms, and a kitchen and social hall, to the north. The building is located in a primarily residential section of West Philadelphia dense with two story brick rowhomes and duplexes. The property and its setting have experienced very few changes, and the building retains both its exterior and interior integrity.

The property is located at the northeast corner of S. 54<sup>th</sup> and Catharine Streets. The rectangular parcel is bounded by Catharine Street to the south, S. 54<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, Walton Avenue to the north and residential properties 5335 Catharine Street and 5334 Walton Avenue to the east. Along the building's south elevation and the southern half of the west elevation are grass beds with limited landscaping and a concrete edger. The beds are bisected by sets of stone steps with metal railings that lead to the elevated Sanctuary entrances. Along the streets on the west and north sides of the property are paved concrete sidewalks with street trees. The western elevation of the Sunday School wing is accessed via sidewalk pavement that continues from the sidewalk up to the building's edge. A paved concrete driveway and parking area with grass buffers and contemporary chain link fencing, accessed from Catherine and Walton Streets, wraps around the east and north sides of the building, forming an ell-shaped parking area.<sup>1</sup> There is a contemporary concrete ramp with a painted, pipe metal railing alongside the south end of the east elevation.

The property is located 0.1 miles north of the SEPTA rail line, 3.5 miles southeast of City Line Avenue and 3.5 miles southwest of City Hall. The West Philadelphia Streetcar Suburb Historic District (NR 1998) is located four blocks to the northeast and the Cobbs Creek Automobile Suburb Historic District (NR 1998) is located ten blocks to the southwest. The existing neighborhood developed largely at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was largely built out by 1910.

The building was constructed in two phases: the southern half containing the sanctuary dates to 1905, and the northern half containing the Sunday school dates to 1915. The sanctuary is anchored by a 3-story bell tower at the southwest corner of the building. The northwest, northeast and southeast corners of the sanctuary contain truncated, 2-story versions of the bell tower and the center of each exposed

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<sup>1</sup> Although this is a contemporary feature, it is possible that at least a portion of this space was always used for parking in some form, given the density of the surrounding neighborhood and available documentation.

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elevation contains a centered, double-height stained glass window with flanking single-height stained glass windows and a steeply pitched gable roof. (The rear elevation is hidden by the Sunday School wing.) The bays are separated by projecting, tiered stone pilasters with terra cotta detailing and triangular capitals. There is also terra cotta detailing throughout including stringcourses, a water table cap and window and door surrounds.

Because of the composition of the bell tower and the double-height windows, each exposed elevation of the original, Sanctuary portion of the church building is essentially divided into three sections. On the south elevation, facing Catharine Street, the westernmost section contains the bell tower (Photograph 1). There is a double-leaf, carved wood door with an arched, carved wood transom at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, a single arched window with leaded glass and tracery and a quoined terra cotta surround at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, and a large, open arched window with tracery and a quoined terra cotta surround at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. The roofline of the campanile is crenelated with a terra cotta cap. The center section features a double-height stained glass window with flanking, single-height stained glass windows. All of the windows have tracery, a terra cotta surround and sill and an exterior storm window. This section has a steep gabled roof with a terra cotta cap and a terra cotta cross at its peak. Below the cross is a rose window. The easternmost section is a truncated version of the bell tower with a matching double-leaf, carved wood door with arched, carved wood transom at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and paired arched windows with leaded glass and tracery and a continuous quoined terra cotta surround at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The roofline is crenellated with a terra cotta cap.

The west elevation of the Sanctuary portion of the building, facing S. 54<sup>th</sup> Street, is a mirror image of the south elevation (Photographs 2 and 3). The bell tower is to the south, the double-height window is in the center and the truncated bell tower is to the north.

The east elevation, facing the interior of the block, matches the west elevation except for the outermost bays of the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and the northernmost bay on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor (Photographs 6 and 7). The southernmost bay was originally a window opening, as can be seen in the 1911 postcard, but was converted into an entrance in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The single-leaf, metal replacement door with stucco transom was installed within the existing window openings so much of the original, terra cotta surround remains. The northernmost bay on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor contains a tripartite, arched, stained glass window in a continuous terra cotta surround. The east elevation of the bell tower is only exposed at the top portion and therefore contains two, arched lancet windows below a large arched window with leaded glass and tracery and a quoined terra cotta surround. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor contains tripartite arched windows with leaded glass and tracery and a continuous quoined terra cotta surround at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

The north elevation of the Sanctuary portion of the church is primarily obscured by the 1915 Sunday School addition, but portions remain visible (Photographs 4 and 6). At the east end of the elevation are paired 1/1 replacement windows with contemporary infill and arched terra cotta heads in a continuous arched terra cotta surround. The top portion of the center gable is also visible above the roofline of the 1915 addition. It has no openings. The north elevation of the bell tower matches that of the east elevation.

The perimeter of the sanctuary roof is flat with a prominent, steel center cross gable. There is also a stone chimney near the northeast corner.

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The 1915 Sunday School wing abuts the north elevation of the sanctuary. While it is similar in terms of style, scale and material, it clearly reads as an individual space with a distinct function. The 2 ½-story building is clad in similar granite with pilasters separating the bays. The addition does not contain the distinctive terra cotta detailing as the earlier section, but there is a stone cap along the flat roofline.

The west elevation of the Sunday School, facing S. 54<sup>th</sup> Street, is four bays wide and is slightly recessed from the façade of the sanctuary (Photograph 4). Its roofline is also lower. The bays are visually divided by stone pilasters, with the northernmost bay set within a modestly projecting stairtower. The raised basement's outermost bays contain double-leaf wood doors with arched, paneled wood transoms and arched stone surrounds. The doors of the bay closest to the Sanctuary are below grade and accessed by a flight of steps, which lead into the fellowship hall. The two center bays contain tripartite 1/1 replacement aluminum windows with 1-panel aluminum transoms.<sup>2</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, the northernmost, tower bay contains a small, 1-light tracery window. The three window bays contain tripartite 1/1 replacement windows, linked to the windows above by aluminum panels. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor windows also contain tripartite 1/1 replacement aluminum windows, with 1-panel arched aluminum transoms. The northernmost, tower bay contains a large arched window with stone tracery and a crenellated stone head. A 1915 datestone is located on the northwest corner of the addition, facing both S. 54<sup>th</sup> Street and the rear parking lot.

The north elevation is five bays wide with the three center bays projecting slightly from the end bays (Photograph 5). In the raised basement, the westernmost bay contains glass block infill. The second through fourth bays from the west contain tripartite 1/1 replacement aluminum windows with 1-panel aluminum transoms with stone bases. The easternmost bay contains a paired 1/1 replacement aluminum window with a 1-panel aluminum transom. On the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, the westernmost bay has no openings. The second through fourth bays from the west contain tripartite 1/1 replacement windows with 1-panel aluminum transoms. The easternmost bay contains a 1/1 replacement aluminum window with 1-panel aluminum transom. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, the westernmost bay contains a large arched window with stone tracery and a crenellated stone head. The second through fourth bays from the west contain small tripartite 1/1 replacement aluminum windows with 1-panel aluminum transoms. The easternmost bay contains a 1/1 replacement aluminum window with 1-panel aluminum transom.

The east elevation is four bays wide. In the three northernmost bays, the raised basement contains tripartite 1/1 replacement windows with 1-panel aluminum transoms (Photograph 6). The 1<sup>st</sup> floor contains tripartite 1/1 replacement windows and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor contains tripartite 1/1 replacement windows, which are separated from those on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor by aluminum panels. In the southernmost bay, the raised basement has no openings. The 1<sup>st</sup> floor contains a contemporary single-leaf metal door to the south of a 1/1 replacement window. The elevated entrance is located up six concrete steps with a painted pipe metal railing. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor contains paired replacement aluminum windows with 1-panel aluminum transoms.

The perimeter roof of the Sunday School portion of the church is building is flat with a large rectangular section in the center, over the auditorium space, that has a shallow projecting gable.

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<sup>2</sup> The windows were replaced in 1983.

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### *Interior*

The interior of the sanctuary is primarily open in plan, dominated by large D'Ascenzo Studios' opalescent stained glass windows and an elaborate wood ceiling. The sanctuary's walls each have the same general configuration, with a centered, double-height arched opening flanked by single-height openings. On the west, south and east elevations, the large centered windows contain stained glass (Photographs 10 and 12-14), as do the flanking smaller windows, and smaller circular windows above the large windows. On the north elevation, the center opening is recessed and contains space for the choir behind the raised, curved pulpit (Photographs 8 and 11). The pulpit-wall's outer openings, along with the recesses of the center opening, contain exposed organ pipes (Photographs 11 and 15). Along the majority of the south wall's upper level is an open balcony with carved wood cladding and a metal railing (Photograph 10).

The finishes in the sanctuary are entirely intact from the time of construction. The space has a carpeted floor below curved wood pews that are separated by aisles radiating from the pulpit. At the east end of the pulpit is a stone baptismal font and a carved wood altar rail separates the pulpit from the nave. The walls of the sanctuary are of painted plaster with carved wood wainscoting. The impressive stained glass windows have stone tracery and stone surrounds. The windows were designed by the prominent Philadelphia firm of D'Ascenzo Studios. Period advertisements by the firm show that all of the windows had been installed by 1909. The upper portion of the double-height windows contain Biblical scenes, such as the Last Supper and the Resurrection, while the lower portion contains decorative, geometric designs. The single-height windows contain Biblical figures (Photographs 10 and 12-14; Figure 3). These designs were completed in opalescent glass, a treatment made popular by Louis Comfort Tiffany and used regularly in the United States between 1880 and 1920. The technique generally combines two colors of glass in a swirling, almost marbled pattern, which both reflects and refracts the light. Because it lets in less light than translucent stained glass, it was typically used in spaces with additional electric lighting sources, such as in the subject property. The ceiling is an exposed timber cross gable with elaborate decorative timber framing (Photographs 8-10, 12 and 13). The original metal chandeliers with exposed bulbs remain (Photographs 8, 12 and 14).

The sanctuary has stairways in the northwest, southwest and southeast corners (Photographs 17 and 18). The northwest stairway is L-shaped, and the remainder are U-shaped, and all have wood treads and risers, carved wood railings and balusters, carved wood wainscoting and terrazzo landings. To balance the plan, there is also a small office space in the northeast corner.

The basement under the sanctuary contains operational and storage space. The operational spaces, such as the choir room, meeting hall and offices have a combination of historic and contemporary finishes, including linoleum floors and plaster partitions. In the storage spaces, the finishes are more utilitarian.

The plan of the Sunday school is largely the same on all floors. On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors, there is an open, double-height space, which was used as a chapel and meeting area. Surrounding this, on both floors, are smaller classroom, administrative and bathroom spaces arranged in a linear fashion around the perimeter of the floor plate (Photographs 19 and 20). In general, the perimeter spaces are separated from the main space by solid walls with single-leaf door openings. However, the west wall originally contained glazed and paneled wood doors that could be raised up, similar to garage-style doors, to increase the single volume of interior space. These were unfortunately removed in 1983, leaving only the wood frame. The basement is similarly organized with an open, center space that was another meeting area, and ancillary spaces to the east and west, including a commercial-style kitchen in the

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southeast corner (Photograph 22). As was originally found on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, the side rooms are separated from the main space by glazed and paneled wood doors that are recessed up toward the ceiling. As above, these allowed for a considerable flexibility of space depending on what use was needed at a given time. The original finishes in the Sunday school are also generally intact with carpeted and wood floors, painted plaster walls, carved wood surrounds, trim, railing and framing and removable wood, folding chairs. The basement finishes were slightly modified in the 1983 with linoleum tile floors and a dropped acoustical tile ceiling. There is an L-shaped stairway in the northwest corner that provides access between all floors (Photograph 21). It has wood treads and risers, carved wood railings and balusters and carpeted landings. There is no elevator.

### *Integrity*

Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday School retains integrity, as it has been virtually unaltered, continually occupied by the same denomination for the same function since the time of construction. Photographic postcards from 1906 and 1911 show no change to the exterior of the sanctuary other than the installation of exterior storm windows and the introduction of a door and the addition of a handicap ramp on the east elevation. On the interior, there have been no changes to the original configuration or fabric and finishes, other than replacement of the original carpet. On the exterior of the Sunday school, the windows have been replaced but the original openings remain. The exterior doors have also been replaced. On the interior of the Sunday school, the original configuration and finishes remain almost entirely intact. Although some contemporary finishes have been introduced in the basement, the entire addition continues to easily convey its original function.

As such, the design, materials and workmanship of both the original sanctuary portion and the Sunday school addition remain from the time of construction and there have been no substantial alterations, other than the select replacement of windows and doors in their existing openings in the Sunday school. The dominant materials, including stone and terra cotta, are both intact and representative of both the period and of the Late Gothic Revival style. The site retains its original configuration since the land for the addition was purchased in 1915. The impressive stained glass windows and elaborate wood ceiling continue to dominate the sanctuary's interior and convey the trends of the denomination and the period, and the goals of the congregation. The high quality of the historic design, materials and workmanship convey not only the original commitment and care taken by the original congregation but also convey the priorities and trends of the times.

Finally, the location, association, feeling and setting of the subject property since the last phase of construction was completed in 1915 remain intact. As there has been no substantial changes to the site or building, it continues to read as an ecclesiastical place that served as an anchor of the neighborhood. Moreover, the active operation of both the church and the Sunday school clearly express the original feeling and association of the property. The property continues to play the same role in the Methodist community of West Philadelphia as an active participant of this historic, urban neighborhood.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture

**Period of Significance:** 1905-1915

**Significant Dates:** 1905, 1915

**Significant Person:** NA

**Cultural Affiliation:** NA

**Architect/Builder:** Wesley Lesher Blithe, Stearns & Castor



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## Statement of Significance

The Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church is significant under Criterion C, Architecture. It is an important local example of a Methodist Episcopal church from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reflecting the Auditorium Plan in the Sanctuary, and a version of an Akron Plan Sunday School wing. The property is an intact example of the work of Philadelphia-based architect Wesley Leshar Blithe, who was primarily known for his Methodist and Presbyterian commissions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church provides a distinct intertwined narrative regarding the building and the people who found solace within it. The building offers a physical embodiment of the denomination's priorities and trends and showcases the congregation's commitment through masterful finishes such as the intricate stained glass windows and elaborate ceiling. The period of significance begins in 1905 and ends in 1915, encompassing the original construction and the addition of the Sunday School wing.

### *Church History*

In early 1841, members of Philadelphia's Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church and the Bethesda Mission Church "united for the purpose of building a church for the mutual accommodation" of their parishes, both of which could not accommodate either of their growing congregations.<sup>3</sup> This was part of a larger national trend in the Methodist Episcopal church, which was the largest and most prevalent denomination in the country at this time.

On December 25, 1841, the Rev. James Smith of the Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church appointed a new Board of Trustees from both congregations to oversee a new church to be located in the Southwark neighborhood of Philadelphia.<sup>4</sup> Southwark, located in southeast Philadelphia, was one of the earliest English settlements in Philadelphia county. From that time onward, the neighborhood was a lower-middle and middle class residential neighborhood continually replenished by immigrants, primarily from Europe.

The new church, located at 342 Wharton Street, was dedicated on October 15, 1842, with 400 members, including many "leaders, local preacher and active church-workers" (Figure 1).<sup>5</sup> It was named the Wharton Street Methodist Episcopal Church Sabbath School and the Rev. William Elliott was its first minister.<sup>6</sup> When the church was incorporated on July 19, 1843, its official name was listed as The Wharton Street Methodist Episcopal Church, of the District of Southwark and the County of Philadelphia.

Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, church members began relocating at a "rapid outflow" from the Southwark neighborhood for West Philadelphia, in keeping with larger population shifts in the city at that time.<sup>7</sup> As such, it was decided that the church should move also, and a new, "eligible and

<sup>3</sup> *History of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church of Southwark, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1890): 115.

<sup>4</sup> The board members were David H. Kollock, Thomas T. Tasker, William C. Poulson, John Ashcraft, Aaron Garretson, Francis Scoffin, George Mitchell, John Whartenby, William Dopson. *History of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church of Southwark, Philadelphia*, 101.

<sup>5</sup> *History of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church of Southwark, Philadelphia*, 116.

<sup>6</sup> *History of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church of Southwark, Philadelphia*, 116.

<sup>7</sup> "Journal and Yearbook of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church" (Philadelphia:

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commodious” site was purchased from John Megraw for \$9,000 on January 19, 1905.<sup>8</sup> The purchase was financed by a bequest from parishioner Mrs. Mary Brown and her son, James.<sup>9</sup>

The new neighborhood in which the church found itself was one undergoing tremendous, primarily residential growth. In comparing a 1901 Bromley Atlas and a 1909 Smith Atlas, the neighborhood surrounding the church is barely recognizable. The 1901 Atlas shows primarily open land with some scattered blocks or portions of blocks infilled with continuous stretches of identical rowhouses. Although the grid of streets has been laid, the majority of the open lots do not conform to this structure, with ownership lines reflecting the earlier, more rural landscape. In contrast, the 1909 Atlas shows the vast majority of land developed, primarily with single or paired houses or rowhouses. The neighborhood also now offers supporting resources such as parks, schools and churches. Even the undeveloped lots now have property lines that conform to the street grid and there is no evidence of the earlier agricultural use of the area.

As is often the case, developing neighborhoods offered religious buildings affordable, available and sizeable tracts of land while the churches then served as a draw for future residential development. Shortly after Megraw sold the land to the church, and perhaps partly because of it, he constructed seventy-eight 2-story paired rowhouses on the south side of Catharine Street and on both sides of Webster Street between 54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Streets at a cost of \$375,000.<sup>10</sup> Described as having front porches, side yards and nine rooms, including a reception hall and laundry, along with a refrigerator and hot water heat, the houses were clearly catering to a certain upwardly and westwardly mobile population.

A temporary chapel was constructed at a cost of \$3,000 in order for services to continue prior to the construction of the permanent church.<sup>11</sup> The move and sale of the former church was seen by the larger Methodist community of Philadelphia as neither a defeat nor a consolidation, but a choice in keeping with the tenets of Methodism, which did not call for the maintenance of church buildings, but instead mandated the need to “follow and reach the attainable people.”<sup>12</sup> If the congregation was moving, it was the duty of the church to move with them.

On July 5, 1905, Wesley Leshner Blithe was engaged to draw plans for a “new edifice, Sunday school and young people’s building.... The church will be built first and the other structures later.”<sup>13</sup> The

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M.E. Book Room, 1905): 62.

<sup>8</sup> “Journal and Yearbook of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” 62; “The Latest News in Real Estate.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (19 January 1905): 15. Prior to construction, the site first appears on an 1878 Scott Atlas as an empty lot owned by John P., E.E., and W.W. Twaddell and no changes are shown on an 1895 or 1901 Bromley Atlas.

<sup>9</sup> “Wharton Memorial Church Dedicated.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (8 April 1907): 4. Unfortunately, nothing is known about either Mary Brown nor her son.

<sup>10</sup> “The Latest in Real Estate News.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (16 June 1905): 9. The article also notes that Megraw owns 196 other houses in the immediate area.

<sup>11</sup> “Journal and Yearbook of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” 62. When the permanent church was constructed, the frame chapel was relocated on site. “Real Estate.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (16 October 1905): 5.

<sup>12</sup> “Journal and Yearbook of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” 62. The former Wharton Street Church was sold to the Polish Roman Catholic Church to be occupied by the St. Casimiras congregation. Both the church building and the St. Casimiras congregation remain today.

<sup>13</sup> “With Architects and Builders.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (1 July 1905): 11.

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estimated cost was \$100,000 and Blithe was officially awarded the contract in early October. An article from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* from August 1905, stated that the church was to be constructed of Port Deposit stone with terra cotta detailing and in the Perpendicular Gothic style. It was to have a seating capacity for 1,000 with an open timber ceiling, oak framing and detailing, monumental window openings, a double organ flanking the pulpit and a chair gallery in the rear.<sup>14</sup> The stained glass windows were to be designed by the prominent Philadelphia firm of D'Ascenzo studios, sparing no expense in the commission of the church.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the new church took place on October 25, 1905, the cornerstone was laid on March 1, 1906, and the church was dedicated on April 7, 1907. It was named the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, in reference to the congregation's former location (Figures 2 and 3). A 1909 Smith Atlas shows the footprint of the new church with a frame building – the former temporary chapel – to the northeast (Figure 4).

By 1913, discussions of the Sunday school building had begun and, in December, the lot at the southeast corner of 54<sup>th</sup> Street and Walton Avenue (adjacent to the existing church's lot) was purchased from Joseph K. Marshall.<sup>15</sup> By early 1915, \$30,000 had been allocated for the construction of the new addition.<sup>16</sup> In June of that year, the Philadelphia firm of Stearns and Castor were commissioned to design the 2-story stone building to the north (rear) of the church.<sup>17</sup> Frank E. Wallace was hired as the builder.<sup>18</sup> Dedicated the "Sarah A. Hicks Memorial Church House," the Sunday school opened on February 27, 1917.<sup>19</sup>

The Sunday school wing provided spaces for a fellowship hall for the entire congregation, classroom spaces, a chapel, and meeting and office spaces. From the time that the church was initially established, it served to provide not only a religious sanctuary to its parishioners, but a more comprehensive support system as well. As indicated by the fact that the original plans for the subject property always included a Sunday school, its role was evidently considered to be integral to the congregation. The delay in construction was most likely a funding issue.

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<sup>14</sup> "The Latest News in Real Estate." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (11 August 1905): 6. Port Deposit stone, or gneiss, resembles granite with a medium to dark color and an even, granular texture. Because it is both durable and malleable, it is a favored building material and was used on such buildings as the United States Naval Academy, the Boston Public Library and the United States Treasury Building.

<sup>15</sup> "Church Buys Lot." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (5 December 1913): 13.

<sup>16</sup> "Churches." *Paint, Oil and Drug Review* 60 (1915): 21.

<sup>17</sup> A 1906 rendering shows that Blithe designed at least the edifice of the Sunday school. It appears that Blithe's Sanctuary design was intended to accommodate a later addition when the time was right. Stearns and Castor's completed design is similar but not identical to Blithe's vision.

<sup>18</sup> "Bids Opened, Contracts Let." *The Christian Advocate* 43:24 (16 June 1915): 43. It is not known why Blithe was not commissioned to build the addition.

<sup>19</sup> Not much is known about Sarah Hicks, but a period article refers to her a "an active worker and member of the church." "Congregation to Open New Memorial House." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (26 February 1916): 9. She was also the mother of George Washington Baker Hicks, who initially worked for the Philadelphia development company of Wendell and Smith and later "served in the state legislature and as the executive director of Philadelphia's Comprehensive Plans Committee, a predecessor to the City Planning Commission." "Overbrook Farms." *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places* (2004): 11. At the time of construction, two-thirds of the cost was raised by the congregation and the remaining one-third was donated in honor of Sarah Hicks. This is the presumably the reason for the building's name.

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A 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows both the church and the Sunday school, but the frame building is no longer present (Figure 5). There is no change on the 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance map.

The subject property continued to operate as the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, known later as the Wharton Memorial United Methodist Church, until the early 1970s when membership began to decline substantially.<sup>20</sup> This decline was due to a number of factors, including an aging population, a general slowing of church membership, a relocation of urban populations and a shifting of church dogma. In order to preserve their congregation, the church merged with the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church of West Philadelphia, also known as the John Wesley Methodist Church, which was home to a thriving African-American congregation, but one with a deteriorating building and experiencing the challenges of change, as well.<sup>21</sup> Since that time, the two merged congregations have continued to operate under the single umbrella of the Wharton Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, marking over 100 years of uninterrupted worship at this location. Currently, the congregation, which totals approximately 150, is predominantly African American, reflecting both the composition of the original Wesley M.E. Church and the current surrounding neighborhood. At the present time, the church is included as part of a pilot program operated jointly by the Community Design Collaborative and Partners for Sacred Places, both based in Philadelphia. Titled “Infill Philadelphia: Sacred Places, Civic Spaces,” the objective of the program is to expand the offerings of under-used historic religious resources and re-envision them as providers of expanded and perhaps non-traditional services or programs so that they can remain viable community assets.

#### *The Role of Architecture in the Methodist Episcopal Church*

As with most ecclesiastical architecture, the architecture of Methodist churches in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reflects a combination of varying traditional stylistic and plan approaches to church design with liturgical adjustments that were specific to the Methodist denomination and a growing evangelical emphasis in many Protestant congregations. In particular, from the 1870s onward, there were two interior configurations that are frequently found in Methodist churches—Auditorium Style Sanctuaries, and Akron Plan Sunday Schools.

Most primary church spaces—sanctuaries—were organized around an Auditorium plan, which was characterized by having a centered, curved dias (resembling a stage) with a centered pulpit and radiating aisles that provided access to the curved pews. Typically, the space also had a sloped floor and often rear or side balconies.<sup>22</sup> This configuration optimized conditions for hearing, viewing and seating, and maximized the proximity of the minister to the congregation, “underscoring the Methodist emphases of preaching rather than liturgy.”<sup>23</sup> Prior to this time, most Christian denominations designed their religious spaces – including this congregation’s original Wharton Street building – around an elongated cruciform plan, which physically and hierarchically separated the clergy and the laity. After the Civil War, a decrease in formality coincided with an increased importance of the charismatic

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<sup>20</sup> The United Methodist Church was founded in Texas in 1968 and was the primary successor to the Methodist Episcopal Church.

<sup>21</sup> The John Wesley Methodist Church was founded in 1893 in northwest Philadelphia. Their final church was located at N. 42<sup>nd</sup> and Parrish Streets in Philadelphia.

<sup>22</sup> The Broadway Tabernacle, constructed in 1836 in NYC, was the first church interior in the US with an auditorium layout. “First Methodist Episcopal Church South.” *National Register of Historic Places* (2015): 8:1.

<sup>23</sup> “Centenary M.E. Church, South.” *National Register of Historic Places* (1996): 8:3.

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sermon, and new interior configurations were sought.<sup>24</sup> The Auditorium plan was considered the solution and was actively used in church design through the 1920s.

The second, but no less important, space most frequently found in Methodist churches was a formal Sunday school area. Originating as a way to reach child laborers (and sometimes illiterate adults, too) and teach them to read as well as provide religious education, Sunday schools became popular in the early 1800s. The presence of Sunday schools was paramount to the tenets of Methodism, which was centered in evangelicalism and used early religious education as one of the most straightforward ways to pursue this objective. While less rooted in theology, the configuration of Sunday schools also frequently adopted a repetitive design. The school was ideally located in close proximity to the sanctuary in order to foster communication and collective worship between adults and children. In some cases, the wall between the two spaces was a moveable partition to fully integrate the two groups.<sup>25</sup> The school itself typically had an open central space, often with a platform or stage, which could be used as a secondary Chapel, as needed. More formal classrooms and administrative spaces were typically arranged around the perimeter of the space. Initially, these spaces often had wedged footprints to create a radiating appearance. The classrooms frequently had moveable partitions that allowed the spaces to be opened to see and hear the Sunday school leader on the platform at the beginning and closing portions of the Sunday school session, enabling the group to participate together, and then divide for age-specific lessons or programming in the middle of the session. This configuration was known as the Akron Plan, named after its first implementation in the First Methodist Episcopal Church in 1866 in Akron, OH.

The sanctuary of the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church is a perfect reflection of the Auditorium Plan and the Methodist principles that such a configuration was intended to project. The focal point of the sanctuary is a centered, curved dias that serves as the preaching pulpit. Radiating from the pulpit are five aisles that access rows of curved pews that are positioned on a slightly sloping floor. There is also a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor balcony at the rear of the space.

Because the Sunday school was constructed after the church, there is not full openness between the two spaces, but rather an immediate proximity. The addition itself is also typical with a centered, open space with a shallow stage. On both floors, the central open space is flanked by smaller rooms with fixed and operable partitions to maximize flexibility. The emphasis on flexible space continues in the basement with the fellowship hall, which can be opened into one large hall or divided into smaller rooms.

The repetitive designs for Methodist churches was partially in response to the programmatic religious requirements, but also from an outgrowth of church pattern designs that were produced by architect Benjamin D. Price for the Methodist Episcopal church at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 6). These plans were published in a nationwide catalog and orders not only came with the plans, but with photographs of actual churches that had been constructed according to those plans.<sup>26</sup> These two elements resulted in a standardized aesthetic for Methodist church design, many of which elements can be found at the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, as discussed above.

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<sup>24</sup> “First United Presbyterian Church of Braddock.” *National Register of Historic Places* (2018): 8:16.

<sup>25</sup> “First Methodist Episcopal Church South.” *National Register of Historic Places* (2015): 8:2.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin D. Price, “Catalogue of Architectural Plans for Churches and Parsonages Furnished by the Board of Church Extension of the M. E. Church” (Philadelphia, PA: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1889).

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*Wesley Leshar Blithe (1873-1946)*

Wesley Leshar Blithe was born in Philadelphia and studied at numerous local institutions including the Franklin Institute, the University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. After spending a year in Europe, he returned to Philadelphia and established an independent practice where he completed educational, residential and commercial commissions, but ultimately became best known for his work on Methodist churches. Other prominent Methodist churches designed by Blithe (in addition to Wharton) include the Fletcher Methodist Church at 54<sup>th</sup> and Master Streets in Philadelphia (1907, demolished), a substantial chapel addition to the St. Matthew Methodist Episcopal Church at 5240 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia (1908, extant), the Methodist Episcopal Church of West Chester, PA (1916, extant), the St. Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church in Havertown, PA (1922, extant) and the Oak Lane Methodist Episcopal Church at 1200 W. Cheltenham Avenue in Philadelphia (1924, extant). He also designed the Tennent Presbyterian Church at 52<sup>nd</sup> and Arch Streets in Philadelphia (1907, demolished) and the Fox Chase Presbyterian Church and Sunday school at Oxford Avenue near Loney Street in Philadelphia (1915, extant).

Blithe designed the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church in the Late Gothic Revival style, which was the predominant style of church construction in the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Stemming from the Romantic movement in Europe, the Gothic Revival style embodied Christian art and architecture in the Medieval period. It was initially popularized in the United States by Alexander Jackson Davis in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and found more widespread acceptance through the later publications of Andrew Jackson Downing. More specifically, the church derives many of its design elements from the Perpendicular Gothic style, which emphasized a streamlined verticality on the exterior, particularly through its soaring oversized windows. On the interior, elaborate timber ceilings were often installed in the place of the more standard stone vault.

Many of the archetypal elements of this style are found at the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, including pointed arch openings, pitched gable roofs, asymmetrical massing, decorative masonry detailing and notable tracery with leaded glass. Stylistically, this was a departure from the congregation's original church, which was designed in a more restrained, Federal or Georgian style.

Of Blithe's extant projects, the two that are most in keeping with the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church are the Methodist Episcopal Church of West Chester (1916) and the Oak Lane Methodist Episcopal Church (1924) (Figures 7 and 8). Like the subject property, both buildings are designed in the Late Gothic Revival style; clad in rough, gray stone with terra cotta detailing. Both have the bell tower as a focal point, which is surrounded by prominent window openings set into asymmetrical massing. Both properties also have a sanctuary, which is positioned as the primary element of the building, with a secondary Sunday school to the rear. Although also designed in the Late Gothic Revival style, both Sunday school buildings clearly read as being functionally distinct from the church itself.

*Stearns and Castor (1895-1917)*

The Philadelphia architecture firm of Stearns and Castor was founded in 1895 by George R. Stearns and Horace W. Castor. The firm, which had a focus in engineering, completed a range of projects from residences, bridges and hospitals to theaters, religious buildings and factories. Among their more

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prominent clients were John B. Stetson, the Methodist Hospital of Philadelphia, Horn and Hardart, Lit Brothers, the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Frankford Improvement Company. The firm was dissolved in 1917 over a controversy concerning the design of the Masonic Hall in Elizabethtown, PA, but both architects continued to practice independently.<sup>27</sup>

Although not particularly known for their religious commissions, the firm completed numerous such works and additions, including the Providence Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia (1897), the Eppworth Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia (c. 1899, extant), the Rehoboth Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia (1904), the West York Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia (1905, extant), the Trinity Church and Sunday School in Wilmington, DE (1907, extant), the Central Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday School in Philadelphia (1910, demolished), the Chester Avenue Baptist Church in Philadelphia (1914) and the Frankford Avenue Baptist Church in Philadelphia (1914).

Although the firm is best known for their work in the Colonial Revival style, their religious commissions are predominantly designed in the Gothic and Late Gothic Revival styles, in keeping with period trends. The two works most in keeping with the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Sunday school are the Philadelphia City Mission & Church Extension Society of the M. E. Church in Philadelphia (1895, extant) and the St. Paul Reformed Church in Philadelphia (1904, extant). Although both were much earlier than the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Sunday school, they have the same stone cladding, lighter stone or terra cotta detailing, prominent windows, anchoring corner campanile, and similar, but not identical, facades.

#### *D'Ascenzo Studios (c.1905-1954)*

D'Ascenzo Studios was founded in Philadelphia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Nicola D'Ascenzo. Although he originally worked independently, he later expanded into a collaborative studio that he likened to "an orchestra composed of a group of artists but directed by an individual. It is in the ancient guild spirit where men worked for the love of the thing they created."<sup>28</sup> The work of the studio can be found in academic, religious and commercial buildings throughout the country, including the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and the Washington Memorial Chapel in Valley Forge, PA.

In many religious projects, multiple stained glass studios would work together, each firm taking an individual window or windows. However, in the Wharton St. Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, the D'Ascenzo Studios alone designed every single piece of stained glass. It was also one of D'Ascenzo's earliest, if not the earliest, and most comprehensive commissions, acting as a turning point in his career and establishing him as a formidable artistic presence. Other projects in which the studio was the sole stained glass artist include Saint Francis de Sales Church and St. James Methodist Episcopal Church complex, both in Philadelphia. The Victorian-Byzantine style Saint Francis de Sales Church<sup>29</sup> is stylistically in opposition to the Wharton St. Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church but the

<sup>27</sup> The AIA did not approve of its members entering the competition, but Stearns and Castor proceeded without their approval.

<sup>28</sup> "D'Ascenzo Studios." [https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/23357](https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/23357). Accessed on May 9, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Designed in 1907 by Philadelphia architect Henry D. Dagit

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work of D'Ascenzo in both has many similarities including the striking use of color, the detailed composition and the elaborate religious narrative.<sup>30</sup> Another early commission was the St. James Methodist Episcopal Church complex, which was designed in 1910 by the Philadelphia firm of Morris & Erskine. Comparable to the subject property in date, style and denomination, the windows themselves are also comparable in design and scope.<sup>31</sup> The Wharton St. Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church is the only known collaboration between the studio and Wesley Leshner Blithe.

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<sup>30</sup> "St. Francis de Sales Church." *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places* (2019): 26.

<sup>31</sup> "St. James Methodist Episcopal Church." *Philadelphia Register of Historic Places* (2016): 14.



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"The Latest News in Real Estate." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (11 August 1905): 6.

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"With Architects and Builders." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (1 July 1905): 11.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 #
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other:

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N/A

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**Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than 1 acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: NAD 83

Latitude: 39.949723

Longitude: -75.230572

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated boundary of the Wharton St. Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Sunday School property is shown on the accompanying Figures 10a and 12.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire area associated with the church during the period of significance. No known historically associated extant resources or parcels have been excluded.

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**Form Prepared By**

name/title: Logan I. Ferguson, Senior Associate

organization: Powers and Company, Inc.

street & number: 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1717; Philadelphia, PA 19107

e-mail: logan@powersco.net telephone: (215) 636-0192 date: May, 2019

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps and Plans:**
  - A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Sunday School

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Photographer: Robert Powers, Powers and Company Inc.

Date Photographed: November 7, 2018

<i>Photo #</i>	<i>Description, with camera facing direction noted</i>
1.	South elevation, view northwest
2.	West elevation, view east
3.	West elevation, Entrance, view east
4.	North and west elevations, view southeast
5.	North elevation, view south
6.	East elevation, view southwest
7.	East elevation, view northwest
8.	Sanctuary, view north
9.	Sanctuary, Ceiling detail, view north
10.	Sanctuary, view south
11.	Sanctuary, Pulpit, view north
12.	Sanctuary, view southeast
13.	Sanctuary, Stained glass detail, view east
14.	Sanctuary, view southwest
15.	Sanctuary, Organ pipe detail, view east
16.	Sanctuary, view west
17.	Sanctuary, Stairway, view east
18.	Sanctuary, Stairway, view south
19.	Sunday school, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, view south
20.	Sunday school, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, view north
21.	Sunday school, Stairway, view northwest
22.	Sunday school, Basement, view north

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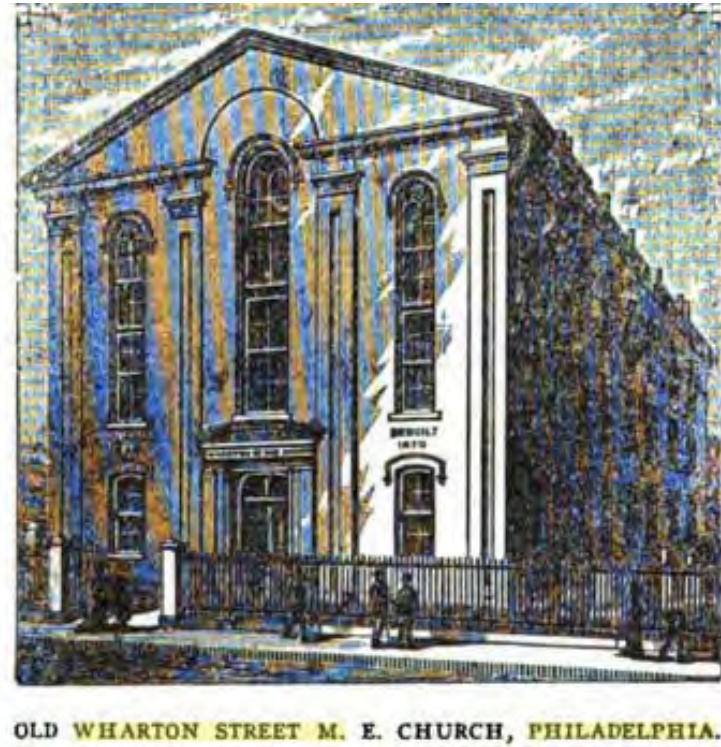
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3.	Stained Glass Window of the Last Supper by D'Ascenzo Studios, Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, soon after installation. Courtesy of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
4.	Smith Atlas, 1909, showing church property pre-Sunday School addition.
5.	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1925, showing Sunday School addition.
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7.	Comparison photo: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1916. West Chester, PA.
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**Figure 1** – Wharton Street Methodist Episcopal Church, at the congregation’s earlier location, 342 Wharton Street, Philadelphia, PA.

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**Figure 2** – 1911, Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church.



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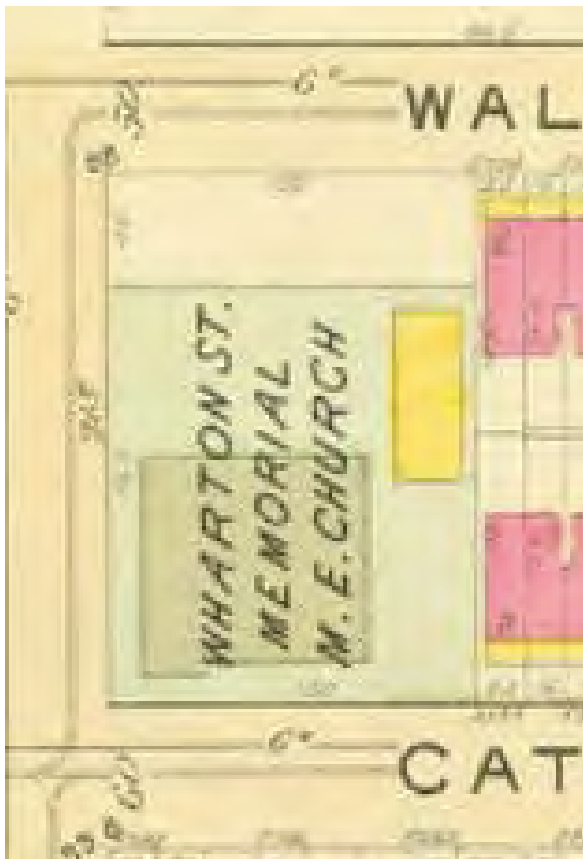
**Figure 3** – Stained Glass Window of the Last Supper by D’Ascenzo Studios, Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church. Note that the original chandeliers remain.  
Courtesy of The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Sunday School

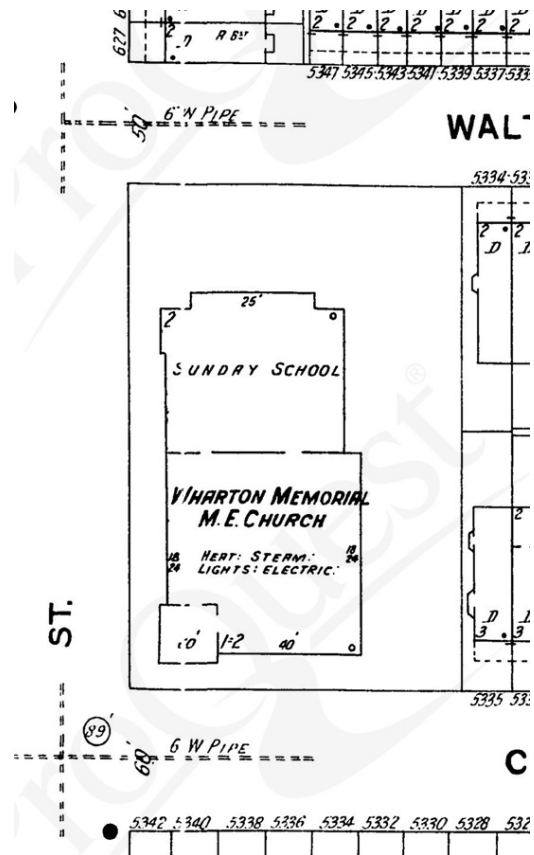
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**Figure 4 (left)** – Smith Atlas, 1909, showing the temporary frame building that pre-dated the permanent Blithe building, in yellow.



**Figure 5 (right)** – Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1925, showing the Sunday School addition.

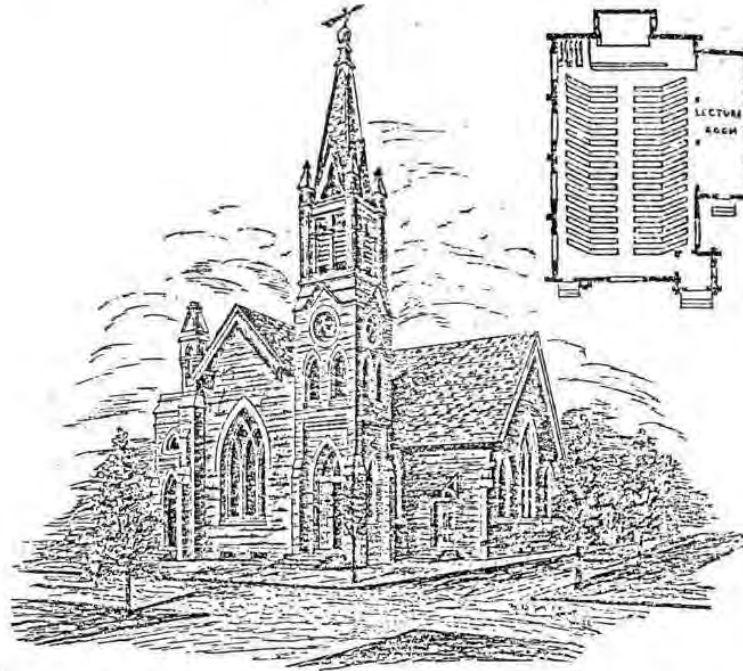


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ARCHITECTURAL PLANS.—CHURCHES.



CHURCH PLAN, No. 47 A.—PERSPECTIVE AND GROUND PLAN.

Price List, { No. 47, \$20. Plans for Brick.  
                  { No. 47 A, \$25. " " " or frame.  
                  { No. 47 B, \$30. " " Brick.

The tower is 10x10 feet, 70 feet high. The walls are 16 feet. The ceilings of No. 47 and No. 47 A, are plainly plastered, 24 feet high in the middle. The ceiling of No. 47 B, is 30 feet high in the middle, lined with wood. The rafters being exposed and ornamented.

No. 47 is 36x55 feet; it contains 280 full seats in the pews. It contains but one room, the lecture-room being omitted.

No. 47 A, is 36x60 feet; it contains 310 full seats in the pews. The lecture-room is 14x36 feet, connecting with the auditorium by folding doors making all the space available.

No. 47 B, is 36x60 feet; it contains 310 full seats in the pews. The lecture-room is 20x36 feet, connecting with the auditorium by folding doors.

The sizes above given do not include the pulpit recess, which projects 6 feet.

Where labor and materials are cheap, No. 47 will cost about \$4,000 and No. 47 B, about \$6,000.

See No. 48.

**Figure 6** – “Church Plan No. 47.” Benjamin D. Price, *Catalogue of Architectural Plans for Churches and Parsonages Furnished by the Board of Church Extension of the M. E. Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Methodist Episcopal Church, 1889).

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**Figure 7** – Methodist Episcopal Church, 1916, West Chester, PA; also a Blithe design.



**Figure 8** – Oak Lane Methodist Episcopal Church, 1924. 1200 W. Cheltenham Ave, Philadelphia, PA, also a Blithe design.

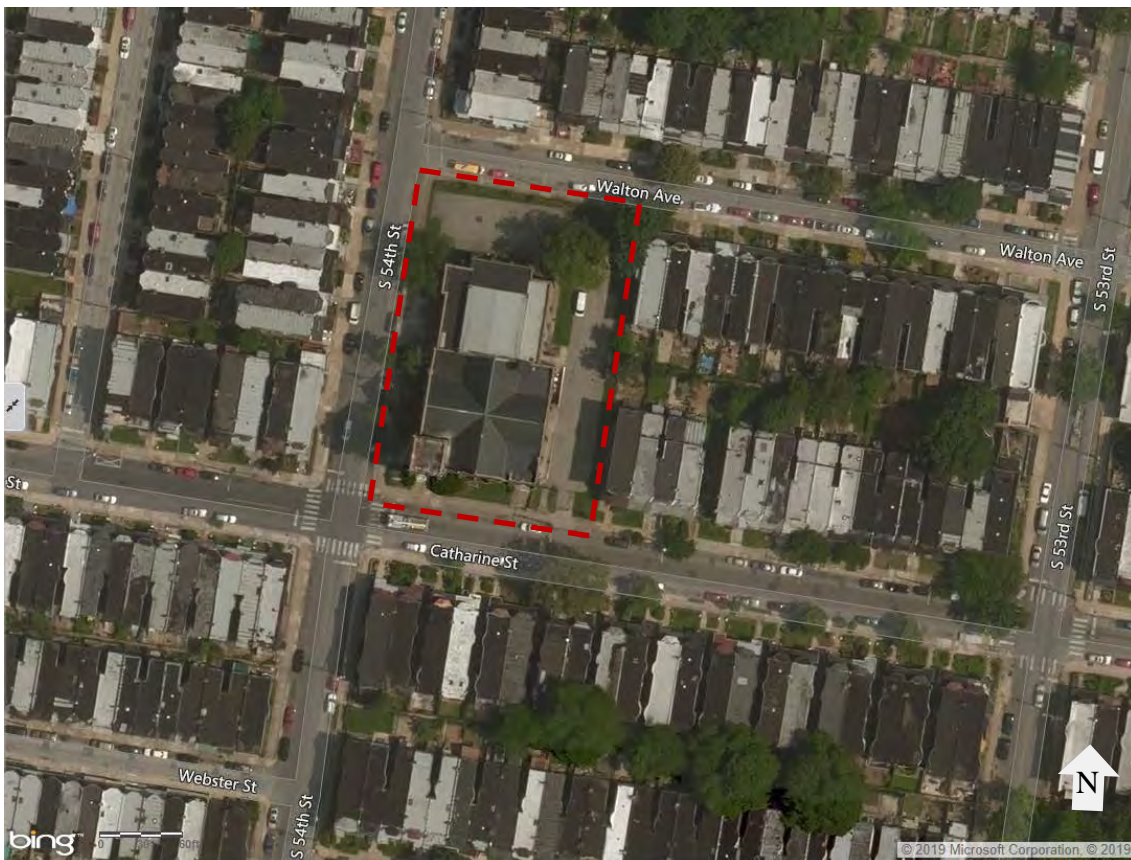


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**Figure 9** – USGS Map excerpt (Philadelphia Quad.). Showing location of property as red rectangle.  
Latitude: 39.949723 Longitude: -75.230572



**Figure 10a:** Current Aerial View, showing National Register boundary. The church with addition and adjacent historically-associated paved driveway and parking areas, and landscaped areas, steps and fencing are encompassed within the boundary.

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**Figure 10b** – Current Aerial View, showing approximate boundary. The entire property, including paved driveway and parking areas, and landscaped spaces, steps and fencing associated with the church is included within the boundary.



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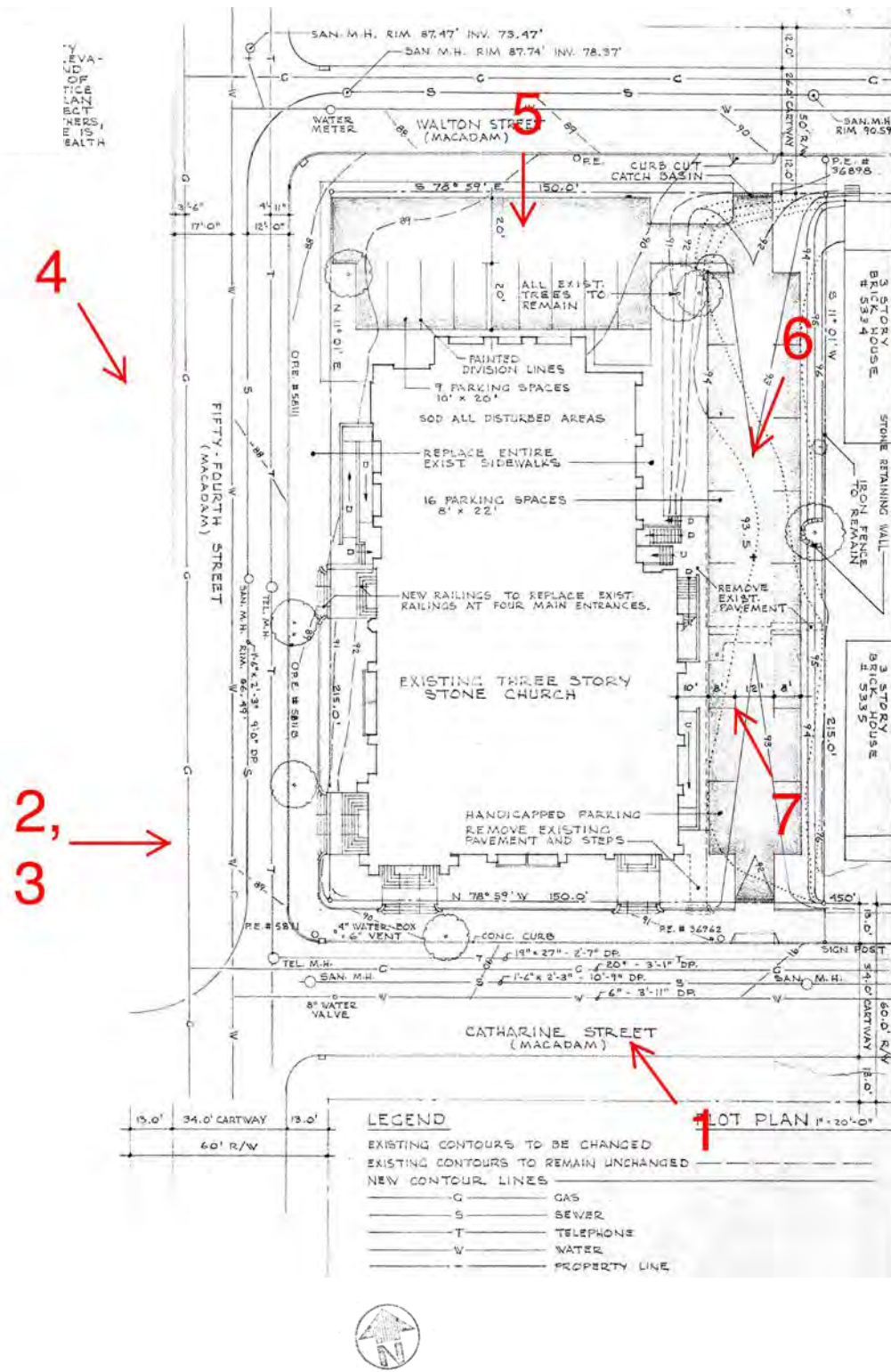


Figure 11a: Site Plan with exterior photo key.

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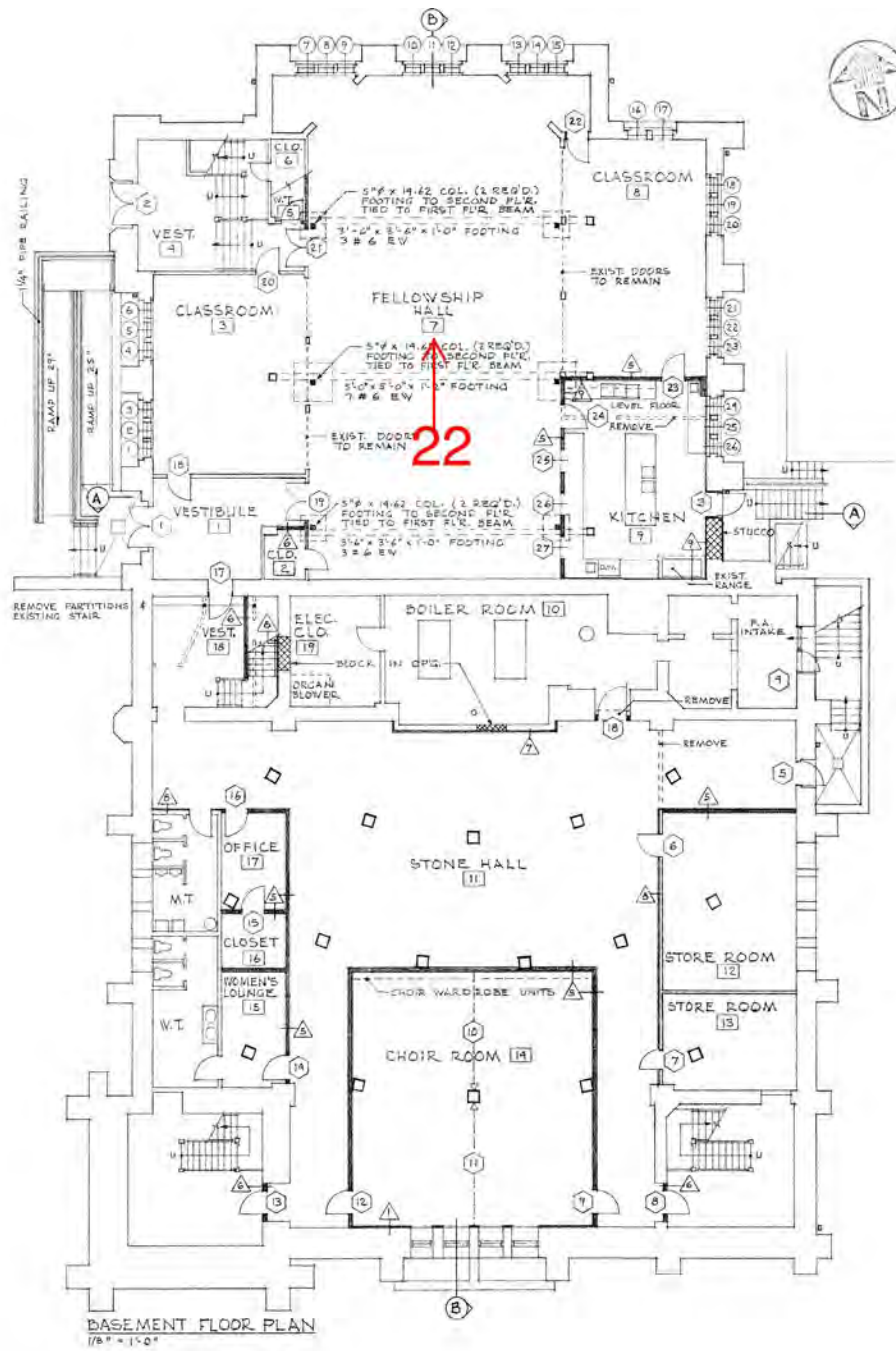


Figure 11b: Basement Plan of Sanctuary and Sunday School, showing interior photo key.

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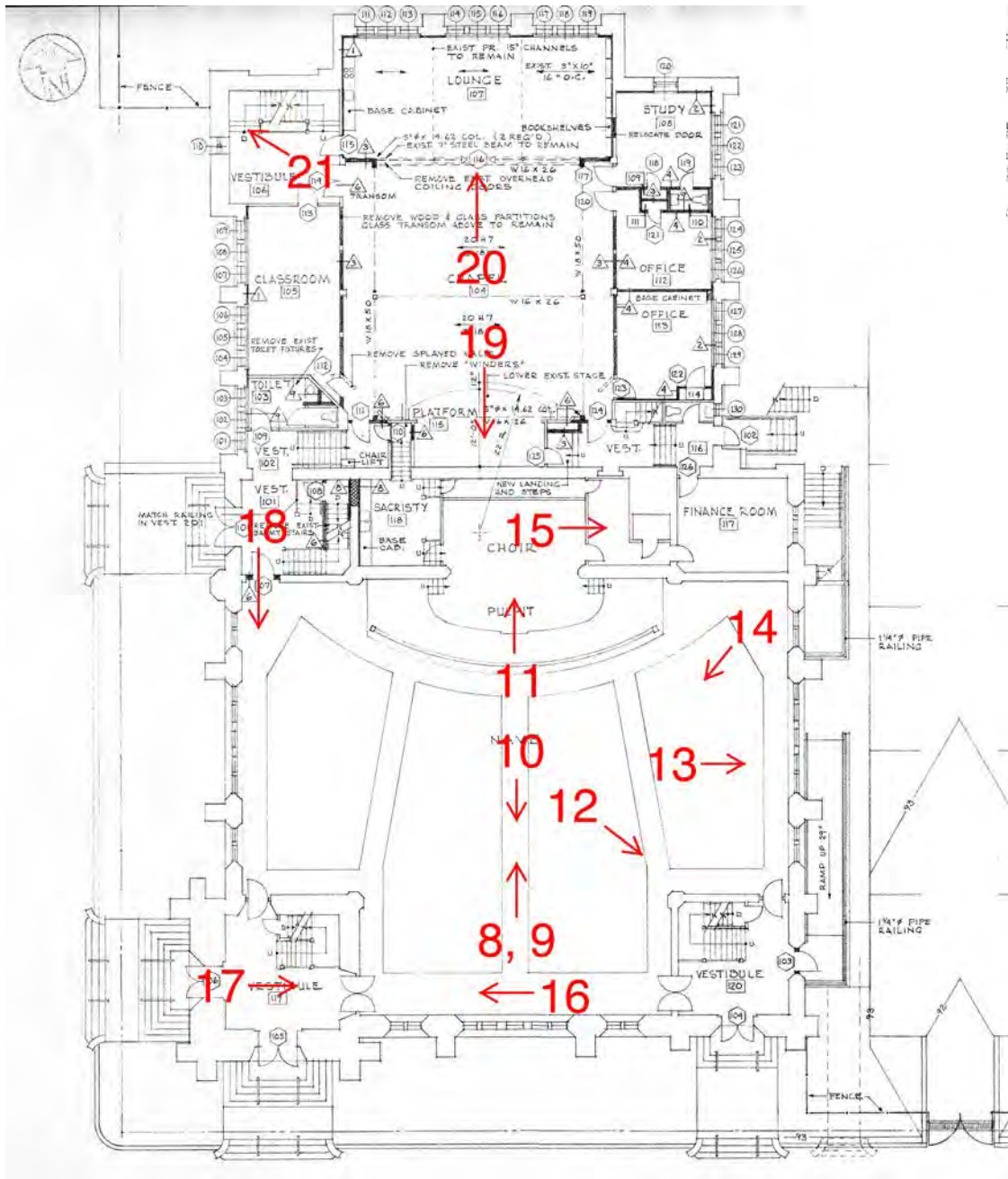


Figure 11c: Main Level of Sanctuary and Sunday School, showing interior photo key.

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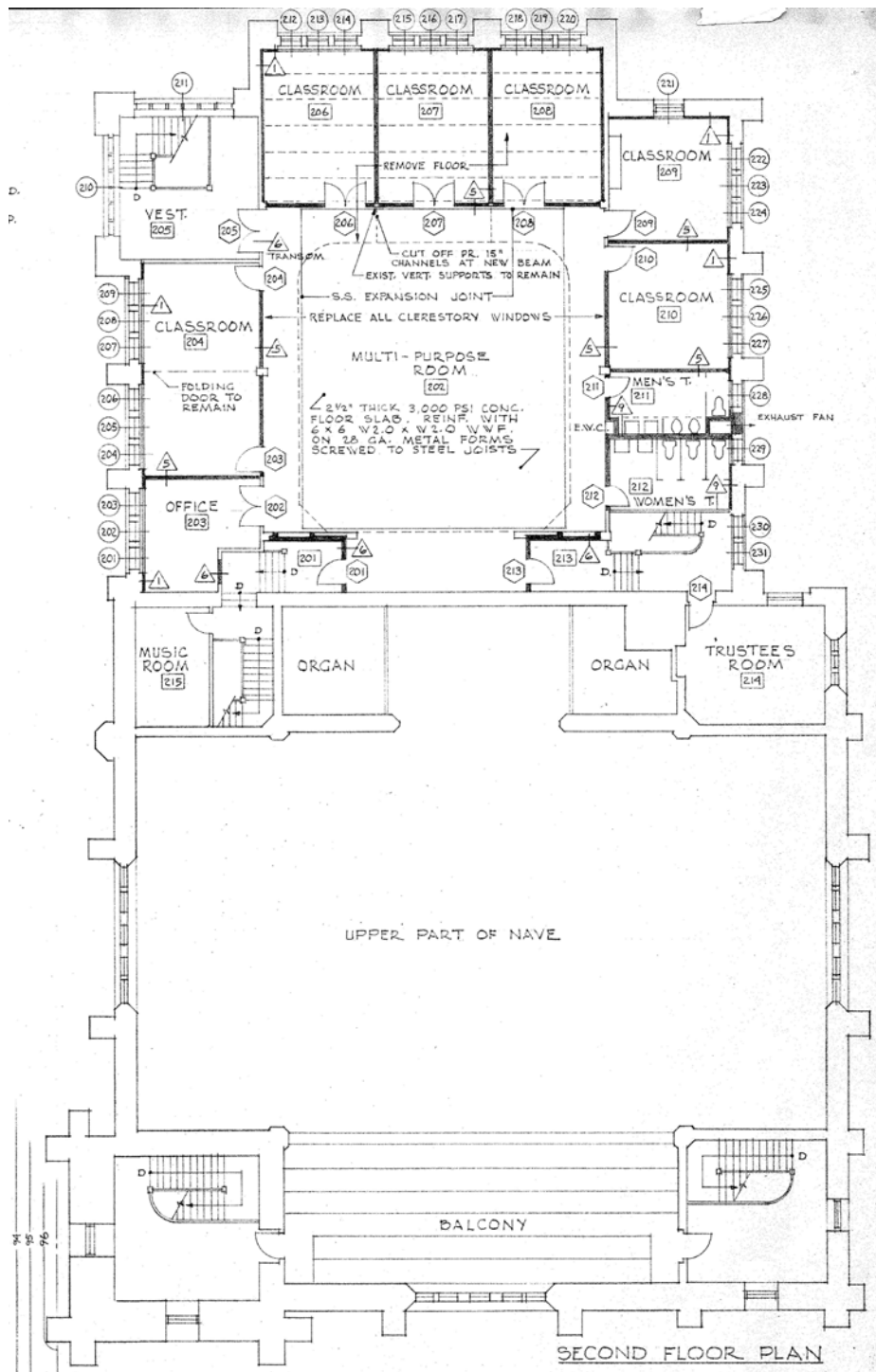
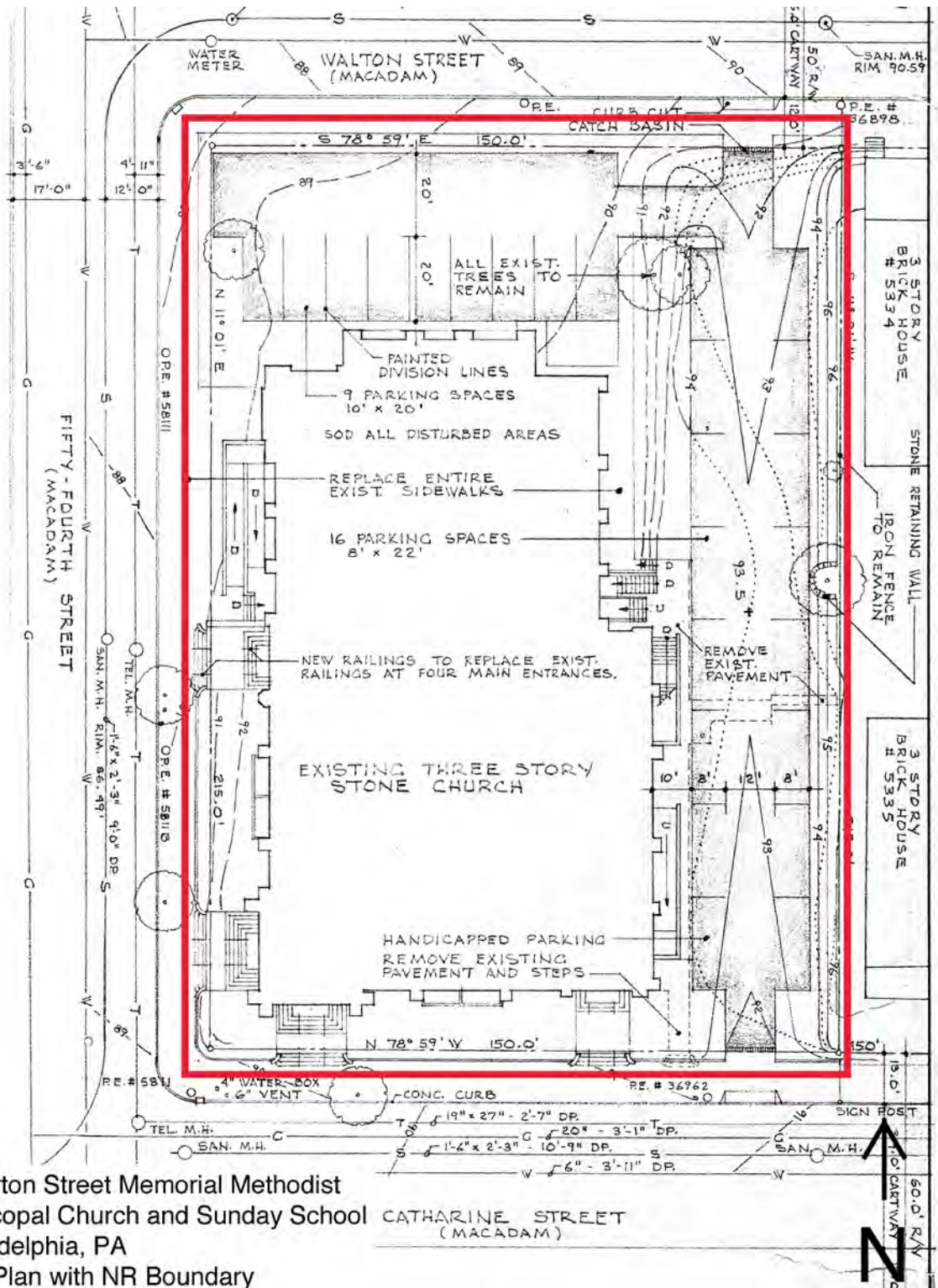


Figure 11d – Upper level of Sanctuary and Sunday School



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Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday School  
Philadelphia, PA  
Site Plan with NR Boundary

Figure 12 – Site Plan with NR Boundary. The boundary encompasses the entire area associated with the church at this location.

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**Photograph 1** – South elevation, view northwest



**Photograph 2** – West elevation, view east



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**Photograph 3** – West elevation, Entrance, view east



**Photograph 4** – North and west elevations, view southeast



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**Photograph 5** – North elevation, view south



**Photograph 6** – East elevation, view southwest



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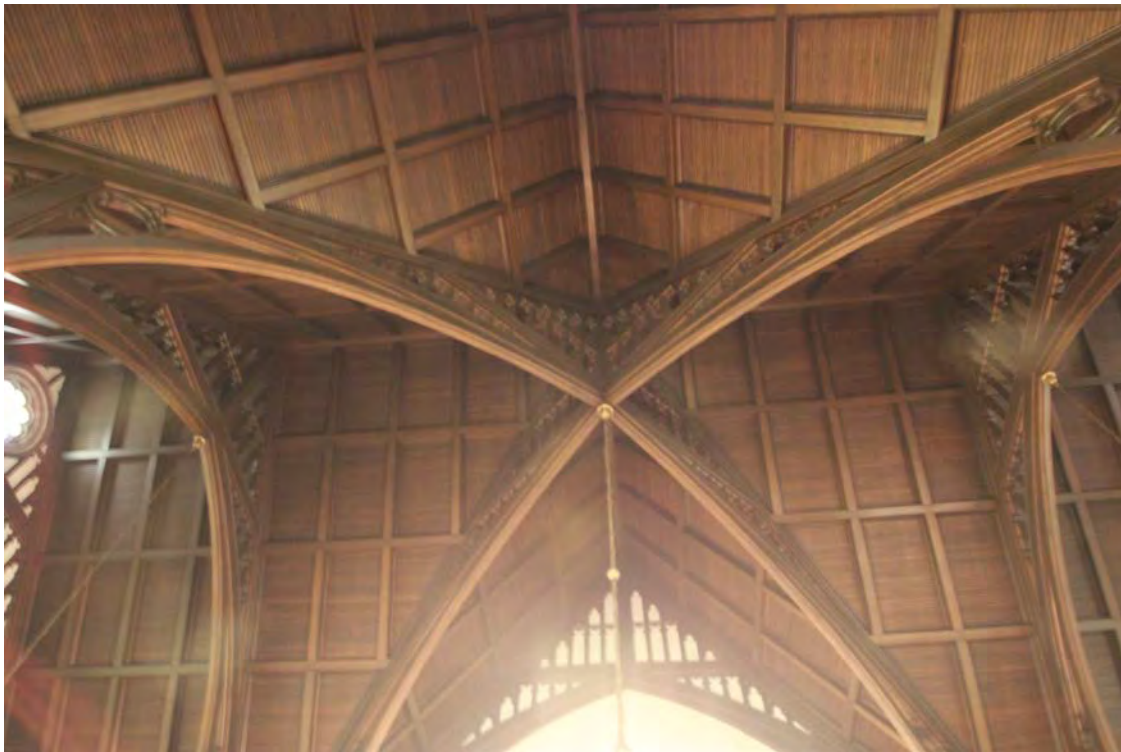
**Photograph 7 – East elevation, view northwest**



**Photograph 8 – Sanctuary, view north**

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**Photograph 9** – Sanctuary, Ceiling detail, view north



**Photograph 10** – Sanctuary, view south



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**Photograph 11** – Sanctuary, Pulpit, view north



**Photograph 12** – Sanctuary, view southeast



Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Sunday School  
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA  
County and State



**Photograph 13** – Sanctuary, Stained glass detail, view east



**Photograph 14** – Sanctuary, view southwest



Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Sunday School  
Name of Property

Philadelphia, PA  
County and State



**Photograph 15** – Sanctuary, Organ pipe detail, view east



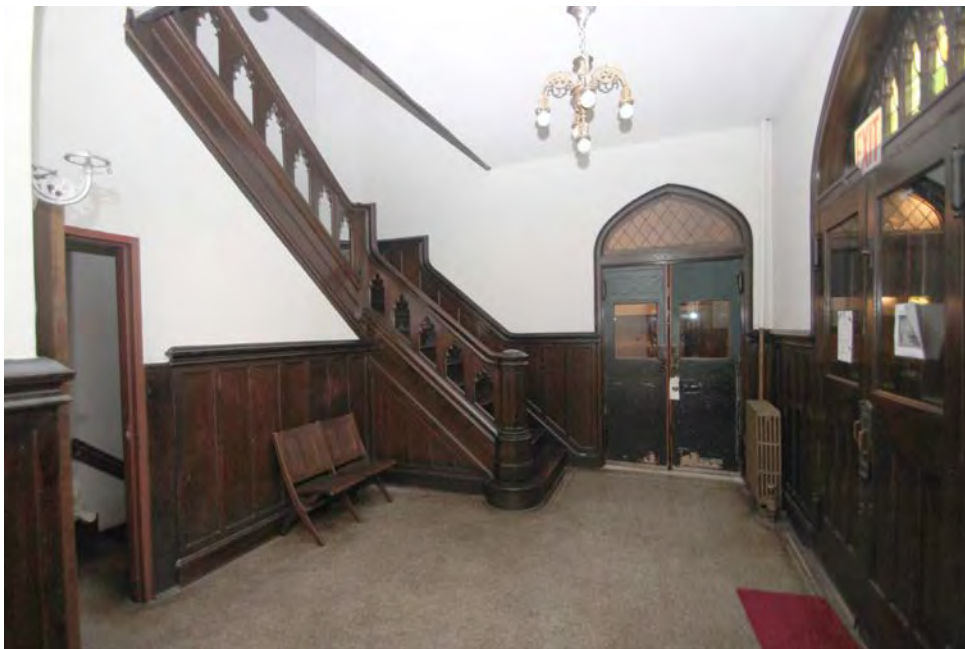
**Photograph 16** – Sanctuary, view west

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**Photograph 17** – Sanctuary, Stairway, view east



**Photograph 18** – Sanctuary, Stairway, view south

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**Photograph 19** – Sunday school, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, view south



**Photograph 20** – Sunday school, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, view north



Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Sunday School  
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**Photograph 21** – Sunday school, Stairway, view northwest



**Photograph 22** – Sunday school, Basement, view north

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.













CHICK  
AND  
FISH  
RESTAURANT

ST. MICHAEL'S  
CHURCH









096





HANDICAPPED  
PARKING  
2 SPACES



































PRAYER  
CHANGES THINGS





Children's  
Learning









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday School

Multiple Name:

State & County: PENNSYLVANIA, Philadelphia

Date Received: 10/16/2019      Date of Pending List: 11/12/2019      Date of 16th Day: 11/27/2019      Date of 45th Day: 12/2/2019      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100004703

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      12/2/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary NR Criterion: C.  
Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria AOS: architecture; POS: 1905-1915; LOS: local.

Reviewer Lisa Deline

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239

Date 12/2/19

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION

1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102  
Tel: 215.686.7660

Robert Thomas, AIA  
Chair

Jonathan E. Farnham, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

22 May 2019

Elizabeth Rairigh  
Division Chief, Preservation Services  
PA State Historic Preservation Office  
400 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

Re: 5337 Catharine St, Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church & Sunday School

Dear Ms. Rairigh:

I am writing in response to your request that the Philadelphia Historical Commission provide its official Certified Local Government recommendation on the nomination proposing to add the Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday School, 5337 Catharine Street, located in West Philadelphia, to the National Register of Historic Places. At its monthly public meeting on 10 May 2019, the Philadelphia Historical Commission reviewed and discussed the nomination and accepted public testimony.

The Commission agreed that the building satisfies Criterion C in the Area of Architecture as a local example of the work of William Leshar Blithe, who was primarily known for his Methodist and Presbyterian commissions. The Commissioners recognized that the nomination is currently a draft but requested that footnotes be completed and overall nomination edited prior to completion. The Commission supported the National Register nomination for 178-180 W Huntington Street.

Thank you for providing the Philadelphia Historical Commission with the opportunity to comment on this amendment.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Farnham", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan E. Farnham, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION



October 15, 2019

Joy Beasley, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service, US Department of Interior  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington DC 20240

Re: Sykes Brothers Yarn Mill, Philadelphia  
Third Presbyterian Church, Delaware County  
Wharton Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church and Sunday School, Philadelphia

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Enclosed please find the National Register of Historic Places nominations for the above properties. Included is the signed first page of each nomination, CDs containing the true and correct copies of the nominations and letters of support, and CDs with tif images. The proposed action for the properties is listing in the National Register. Our Historic Preservation Board members support the nominations.

If you have any questions regarding the nominations or our request for action, please contact me at 717-783-9922 or [afrantz@pa.gov](mailto:afrantz@pa.gov). Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Sincerely,



April E. Frantz  
National Register Reviewer

enc.