

## Rural Churches of Baldwin County

(Thematic Group)

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Historic Name: Twin Beach A.M.E. Church

Common Name: Twin Beach A.M.E. Church

Location: South side County 44, .3 miles west County 3, Fairhope

Verbal Boundary Description:

Begin at a point on the south side of County 44 .3 miles west of County 3. Proceed west 452 feet to a point, thence south 278 feet to a point, thence east 452 feet to a point, thence north 278 feet to the point of beginning.

Acreage: 2.8

UTM: 16/412/730/3374/480

Date of Construction: 1925

Architect/Builder: Axal Johnson

Statement of Significance

Criterion C-Architecture:

Twin Beach A.M.E. Church is significant as one of three ornamental concrete block churches in Baldwin County. It is also significant for its medieval eclecticism, particularly evident in the twin towers and buttresses, making it the highest style building in the locale.

Integrity:

Twin Beach A.M.E. Church retains its integrity of location, materials, and design. Exterior alterations are limited to the replacement of the original sash with aluminum crank windows, a clay tile rear addition, and carpeting on the front steps. Interior integrity is excellent with only carpet down the aisles and on the pews and altar as recent additions.

Description:

Twin Beach A.M.E. Church sits on a small knoll on the south side of County 44, just south of the Fairhope city limit. The building is a one-story, 4 by 7 bay ornamental concrete block ediface with a gable roof to the front and a pair of two-story square towers with double pitched pyramidal roofs at each side. Each tower has an entrance, paired six panel wooden doors with lancet stained glass transoms and a stuccoed second story with louvered lancet vents. They have boxed cornices and tin pyramidal roofs. The front gable between the towers is stuccoed with a pair of lancet windows in the facade. There is a soldiered brick water table all around, and the windows have brick sills and soldiered trim over the lintels. Two pane casement windows with brick sills are present

below the water table and provide light and air for the basement. Three concrete buttresses are located along each side of the building and there are two interior chimneys with corbeled caps and hoods. There is a one-story, clay tile flat roofed addition at the rear. There are two rear entrances through this addition.

Each tower serves as a vestibule leading into the sanctuary, a one-room space with an aisle down the center. Walls are plastered with a buttress each side. The altar is curved with balustraded railing and the choir stall behind is paneled with beaded board. The ceiling is somewhat lower over the choir stall and the arch is defined by wood molding. The entire ceiling is curved and varnished beaded board. All windows have wooden surrounds and the pews have paneled ends. The floor is wood with carpet down the middle. The wooden pulpit is elaborately carved and was originally part of a hearse. To either side of the choir stall is a small room, one the pastor's office and one vacant.

The basement is entered from the west tower. This space is carpeted and paneled. A single beam runs north and south down the center, supported on a single iron column. There is a small kitchen in the southwest corner.

#### Historical Summary:

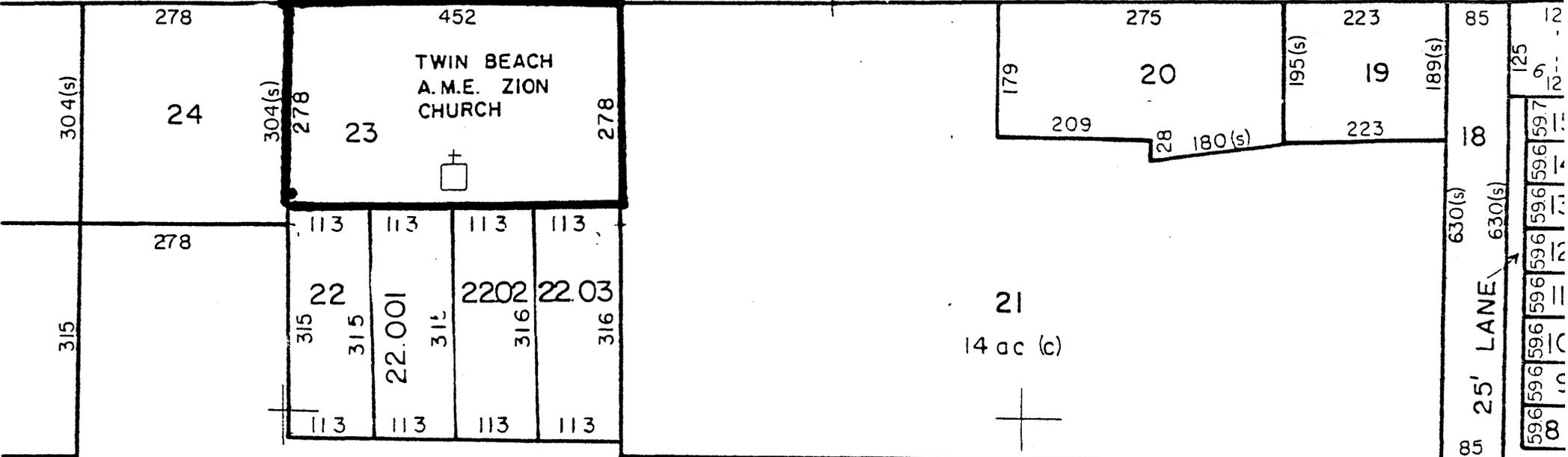
In 1867, a number of blacks living in the vicinity of Battles Wharf formed a congregation known as Zion Chapel. The town of Fairhope did not yet exist. Most whites on the Eastern Shore lived along the bay at Battles and Point Clear. After the Civil War the black population of freed slaves was complemented by others who chose to move into the area and farm. The small congregation held worship services in a brush arbor until a frame building was constructed several years later. Fire and storm claimed this and subsequent structures until a more enduring building was provided. In 1925 the present church was constructed by Axal Johnson, a black craftsman. The church members, who numbered over two hundred, chose to build with concrete blocks molded to resemble stone. This material was popular in Fairhope from c. 1905 to c. 1935 in residences, businesses and churches. The Twin Beach A.M.E. Church has remained outside Fairhope's city limits, though in close proximity. The communities of Houstonville and Tatumville, once small villages with individual identities, have merged with the city or are dependent on it. Twin Beach A.M.E. Church retains a congregation of some 150 persons.

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BEACH

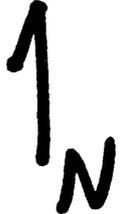
RD

50' R



Twin Beach A.M.E. Church #10  
 Fairhope, Baldwin County, Alabama

Scale 1"=200'



37

77 ac (c)

40