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DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 9 1977
DATE ENTERED JUN 15 1977

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
 Burns United Methodist Church
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
811 Crocker Street
CITY, TOWN
Des Moines
STATE
Iowa
VICINITY OF
CODE
COUNTY
Polk
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
4
CODE

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	<input type="checkbox"/> 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
Burns United Methodist Church
STREET & NUMBER
811 Crocker Street
CITY, TOWN
Des Moines
VICINITY OF
Iowa
STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Polk County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Des Moines
STATE
Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN
STATE
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

Burns United Methodist Church, built in 1912, is a small (62' x 34'), compact religious structure located on the near northwest edge of downtown Des Moines. The gently sloping land is heavily urban-residential in character, although commercial development is encroaching from the south. It is a changing neighborhood of small, elderly houses and apartment buildings.

The church is one story high, on a raised basement. It is made of brick, laid in eight-course common bond with Flemish variants. The gable roof-sections, covered in composition shingle set in a diamond pattern are at right angles, revealing the interior division into two distinct sections. A shed-roof extension of the east side is similarly functional, covering the rear of a small stage inside. A small, gable-roofed entrance with parapet is set into the angle formed by the two sections of the church, and reached by a short flight of concrete steps.

Windows on the basement level are short, almost square, with flat stone sills and lintels. Main floor windows have stained glass and Tudor arches with brick hoods, except the large window in the sanctuary (front elevation). This shape is repeated in the double-door main entrance, with stained glass filling the arch above the doors themselves. Another Tudor design feature is the half-timberwork of the west section, which begins at the level of the imposts of the window arches and reaches to the eaves.

The exterior of the church conforms closely to the original design, with the exception of small corner pilasters, which appear in the drawings though not on the building itself. A fire in the mid-1940's caused some interior damage; exterior damage was repaired to conform to the original design.

The main floor interior has two basic sections: an auditorium with small stage to the east, classrooms and pastor's study on the west. Flooring is oak, walls and ceiling painted plaster with wood trim. The basement contains kitchen, dining, and living room areas, heating units and washrooms. Some rearrangement of the main floor classroom areas has taken place.

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		Afro-American History	

SPECIFIC DATES built 1912 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Wetherell and Gage, Des Moines

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Since 1930, this structure has been the home of the Burns United Methodist Church, which was organized in 1866 as the first black congregation of its denomination in Des Moines. The church was named for Francis Burns (1809-1863), the first black missionary bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church, who served from 1838 in the American-instituted colony for former slaves in Liberia. Its creation by the Second South Annual Methodist Conference was a recognition of the particular problems and needs of black people, and as a means by which the growing black community in Des Moines might find a focus, self-confidence, and self-definition.

The first census which recorded the black population of Polk County was in 1860, and showed only 13 black persons in the county, indicating that the first congregation of the Burns Church must have been extremely small. Black population in the county, particularly in Des Moines, increased substantially during the late 1860's and 1870's, providing additional membership for the church.

From its founding until the purchase of the present church from the German Emmanuel Methodist congregation in 1930, the Burns church had six successive places of worship. This seems to reflect not only the probably extremely limited finances with which the congregation could work, but, more significantly, a tenacity and will to keep together under changing and peripatetic conditions. The first church was housed in a school building in the city, along with the city's segregated school for black children. In 1873 a small chapel was built, but rising membership (largely immigrants from Missouri) forced a move to a larger building between 1885 and 1887. Between 1907 and the purchase of the Crocker Street church, the Burns congregation moved three more times.

Throughout these peripatetic years, and afterward, the Burns Methodist congregation displayed a remarkable cohesion and continuity. Wherever located, the church was a focus of community, as well as religious life, for many members of Des Moines' black population. Literary societies, "musical evenings", group dinners for fun as well as for financial reasons, were regular activities. The Sunday School program and a variety of charitable efforts, particularly on behalf of the elderly, extended church influence to all ages. Proposed purchase of the Crocker Street church occasioned strenuous efforts by the congregation to raise the necessary funds. For two years, during which the Depression began with the 1929 stock market crash, fund raising dinners were held, a quartet formed among parishioners sang around the state, and other money-producing activities were organized, each perhaps small in itself, but together providing the price of a permanent church.

The Burns Methodist Church today continues to perform its historic function in the community. Although the congregation's funds are limited, interest among parishioners is growing to maintain the building's character, and to achieve recognition of the church's long history of service in Des Moines.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Howard, Lawrence C. "The Des Moines Negro and His Contribution to American Life,"
 Annals of Iowa (3 Series) 30:3 (Jan. 1950), pp. 211-221.
 History of the Burns Methodist Church (compiled by members of the congregation). 102nd
 Anniversary (1968). Privately printed.
 The Midwestern, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Sept. 1908), p. 89
 The Des Moines Weekly Avalanche, Saturday, Jan. 20, 1893.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	44,76,6,0	4,610,46,3,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Southwest corner of block, bounded on south by Crocker Street, and on east by 8th Street,
 Des Moines

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Jack C. Porter, Secretary

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Foundation for Historic Conservation

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

520 12th St.

515/283-4182

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

West Des Moines

Iowa 50265

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

Adrian D. Andersen

TITLE Director, Division of Historic Preservation

DATE 4/26/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Charles Johnson

DATE 6.15.77

ATTENTION DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Ray Ward Jance for

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 6.14.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER