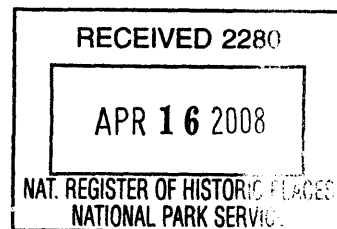


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Aimwell Baptist Church
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 500 Earle Street not for publication N/A
city or town Mobile vicinity N/A
state Alabama code AL county Mobile code 97 zip code 36603

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

J. W. White

4/11/08

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other (explain): _____

Charles B. Beall 5.29.08

for

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion Sub: Religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

roof: Asphalt shingles

walls: Brick veneer

other: _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- 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 (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: Black _____
Architecture _____

Period of Significance 1940 - 1957 _____

Significant Dates 1946 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation N/A _____

Architect/Builder Heningburg, Nathaniel/Builder _____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

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

Name of repository: Mobile Historic Development Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>16</u>	<u>399140</u>	<u>3396580</u>	4	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	5	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	6	_____	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shaun Wilson/Preservation Consultant

organization Mobile Historic Development Commission

date 10-11-07

street & number P.O. Box 1827

telephone 251-208-7281

city or town Mobile

state AL

zip code 36633-1827

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Aimwell Baptist Church

street & number 500 Earle Street

telephone 251-433-2183

city or town Mobile

state AL

zip code 36603

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7. Narrative Description

The Aimwell Baptist Church is located at 500 Earle Street on the southeast corner of its intersection with Lawrence Street, a short distance north of downtown Mobile. The church faces south, and the parcel on which it is sited is relatively flat. A playground is located to the rear of the property, and a parking lot is located to the west. The church is a one-story, Gothic Revival styled brick veneered building, which rests on a full raised basement. It has a concrete foundation and asphalt-shingled roof. The church was constructed over a six-year period beginning in 1940 and ending in 1946.

The south facade features two projecting and crenellated corner towers of the same square plan but different heights. The tower on the east end features a belfry with three, gothic styled arches on all four faces. Both towers feature large-paned, gothic arched windows, one each on the first and second stories. Two eight-paned windows (casement-style, with two lights across and four down) are located at the basement level of the south facade. A belt course divides the basement level from the main sanctuary level. A wide brick and concrete staircase, with dual metal railings, rises from the sidewalk to the triple, gothic arched sanctuary level entrance. The entrance, originally open, is now fitted with glass doors (circa 1975). A centered, eight-spoked round window completes the features on the south facade.

The east elevation features a belt course, dividing the basement from the sanctuary level. Five main sanctuary windows are present along with four basement level windows. The window bays are defined and separated by simple brick buttresses, in the form of shallow pilasters. The large-paned sanctuary windows feature gothic arches, while the basement windows are more casement-style units, of eight panes each. Two entrances are located at the basement level on the east elevation, with one in the tower and the other midway along the building's exterior. The second story of the tower features a large-paned, gothic-arched window.

The west side elevation is identical to the east, except for the deletion, at the basement level, of the tower and centrally located side entrances. A two-story educational building, built in 1992, can now be entered from the church by two hallways leading from each of these two former exterior entry points. Additionally, the sanctuary level windows have been replaced with doorways, in order to reach the second story of the educational building. A courtyard separates the two hallways.

The north elevation features two large paned, gothic arched windows on either side and two centrally located large paned windows. A belt course divides the basement and sanctuary levels. Two exits, with brick and concrete steps, are located on both sides at the sanctuary level. Four individual 4 x 4-paned windows are located at the basement level.

The sanctuary is entered from the large vestibule by a centrally located double door and two side doors. The doors feature gothic-styled arched transoms. Double aisles lead to the dais and central pulpit. Two sections of pews near the altar are set at right angles to the main body of pews. The choir seats are slightly elevated behind the pulpit. A gallery is reached by a staircase on either side of the vestibule. Square columns support the gallery. A staircase near the altar leads to the basement, which has historically been used for

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classrooms, a function that it still serves. The floors of the sanctuary are carpeted. The interior walls are plaster with a wood paneled dado. The ceiling is acoustical tile. The church furniture, i.e. the pews, choir seats, etc., are original to the period of significance.

In 1992, an educational building was added to the church and is reached by the aforementioned hallways on the west elevation. An entranceway at the rear of its east elevation consists of a metal-framed glass door with entrance stoop. It is a two-story brick building with a concrete foundation and a gable roof. Metal-framed, double paned windows are located along its east elevation. The window positions correspond to interior classrooms. The interior features a central hall with adjacent classrooms, offices, and restrooms. The educational building does not detract significantly from the integrity of the original church, as the church has remained unaltered with the exception of the entrances through the west elevation. Additionally, the style, mass, and materials of the educational building are in keeping with those of the original building.

Archaeological Component

Although no formal, archaeological survey has been made of this area, there is potential for subsurface remains. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire area.

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8. Statement of Significance

The Aimwell Baptist Church is significant under Criterion A, in the area of African-American ethnic heritage. The planning for and successful erection of this particular church building parallels and is thus reflective of the overall growth and development of local African-American churches in the northern area of the City of Mobile. The church is significant for housing the congregation's contributions to this local community, particularly its active local missionary department, daycare services, and educational programs. The Aimwell Baptist Church is therefore representative of the institutional foundations needed and the physical infrastructure and facilities required for the growth of the separate African-American communities that developed during segregation.

Furthermore, the church building is significant under National Register Criterion C for its architecture, as it constitutes a good, intact example of the state of African-American church design in the urban South during the middle of the 20th century. The Aimwell Baptist Church displays many features, including offset towers and central entrances, that were also common to early African-American rural churches. As is here tangibly exhibited, these design features were often carried over into an urban setting, but were carried out on a more massive scale.

Historical Summary

Since African-Americans were excluded from the larger white society by segregation in fact and later by law, an entire community, essentially constituting a city within a city, developed along the corridor centered on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. This thoroughfare, which runs along a northwest to southeast axis from downtown Mobile, was first known as Stone Street and later as Davis Avenue, before it was renamed in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the 1980s; despite its changes of specific reference, it has long been known colloquially throughout Mobile as "The Avenue". Beginning in the late 19th century and progressing into the early 20th, an identifiable community grew up along this spine. By 1920, the Avenue, complete with its own churches, schools, recreational facilities, and businesses, reached its height, but would continue to thrive. As the African-American community expanded along the northwestern section of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, institutions important for the continuing viability of the community expanded with it.

During slavery, African-American religious life was centered, for the most part, around the "invisible institution", which was comprised of the distinctive forms of slave song, dance, prayer, and oratory that developed on the praying grounds, in brush arbors, and in slave houses. However, the first independent, nationally organized African-American church was the African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded in 1816 by Richard Allen and located in Philadelphia. In Mobile, the first African Methodist Episcopal congregation was that of the State Street A.M.E. Zion Church (NR listing 9/6/1978), founded in 1829. This church, which was built circa 1850, is located outside the Avenue community, but would have included

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residents from the area. The earliest African-American Baptist church in Mobile was Stone Street Baptist Church, founded circa 1843 (NR listing 8/8/1985) and located at 311 Tunstall Street, just off Stone Street/Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. Baptists estimated that, nationally, nearly 400,000 African-Americans belonged to their churches by 1860 (Merritt 1984, 26).

Following emancipation, most African-Americans not yet affiliated with churches such as the above withdrew from white congregations to found their own churches (Savage 1994, 95). The church was often the first building constructed in the newly-created African-American communities that developed after the Civil War (Merritt 1984, 26). These early post-war churches were most often simple, one-room frame structures of rectangular shape, with gable roofs. Central or offset towers were a common feature, while entrances were usually centered (Merritt 1984, 29). The first churches constructed in the Avenue community follow this pattern.

The Aimwell Baptist Church congregation was founded in 1886. According to the church archive, the congregation was founded by a few former slaves. Their church's first location was in the Orange Grove Tract, which is located to the north of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. The congregation met in a one-room frame house (no longer extant). By 1920, the congregation had increased to nearly 1,700 members, which necessitated the construction of a larger building. The new building was completed in 1920. Records indicate that the building was brick veneer and located only ½ block from the original Orange Grove location (*Aimwell Baptist Church History* 2005).

The Housing Board bought the building located in the Orange Grove Tract in 1930, and it was demolished that same year. Afterwards, the congregation worshipped in the Mill and Timber Hall (also no longer extant), located on Adams Street. The congregation eventually purchased property, located on the southeast corner of Lawrence and Earle Streets and site of its current location, in 1938. They hired a prominent, local African-American contractor, Nathaniel Heningburg, to begin the construction of their new, Gothic Revival-style church. Active construction began in 1940, but the building was not completed until 1946 (Ibid 2005).

Since its founding, the Aimwell Baptist Church has had an active local missionary department. The church has also provided daycare services and educational programs. Over the last 60 years, many children have attended Sunday school programs, after-school programs, or pre-school in the basement facilities. Before full civil rights were obtained, African-American children would have had few opportunities to attend such programs elsewhere. Due to its community involvement, Aimwell enjoys a prominent position in the African-American community. In 1992, an addition was constructed. The new learning center continues Aimwell's mission to provide for the well being of the community. Also, the new addition does not detract from the original building, as the church building itself remains unaltered.

The Aimwell Baptist Church provides an important perspective on the development of the African-American community of the Avenue. The building also represents an important chapter in the development of urban, African-American communities in the South during the 19th and 20th centuries.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

The Aimwell Baptist Church History, obtained from Aimwell Baptist Church Archives; January 12, 2005; manuscript; Mobile, Alabama.

City Directories, Municipal Archives. Mobile, Alabama.

Merritt, Carol. Historic Black Resources. Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1984.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Mobile, Alabama, Municipal Archives. Mobile, Alabama.

Savage, Beth L., ed. African-American Historic Places. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1994.

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10. Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the corner of Earle and Lawrence streets, proceed thence westward along the north side of Earle Street 88 feet to a point, thence northward 140 feet to a point, thence run eastward 86.5 feet to a point on the west side of Lawrence Street, thence southward along the west side of Lawrence Street for 137 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel, which has been historically associated with the Aimwell Baptist Church since its construction.

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Photographic Key

Aimwell Baptist Church
Mobile, Mobile County, Alabama
Shaun Wilson, photographer
February- April 2005
MHDC Negative File- MLK/MPS Rolls 1 and 2

Photo#	Description
1.	Aimwell Baptist Church, exterior, camera facing north (MLK/MPS 1/ 19)
2.	same, exterior, camera facing northwest (MLK/MPS 1/ 20)
3.	same, exterior, camera facing northeast (MLK/MPS 1/ 21)
4.	same, exterior, camera facing east (MLK/MPS 1/ 22)
5.	same, exterior, camera facing south (MLK/MPS 1/ 24)
6.	same, interior, sanctuary, camera facing northwest (MLK/MPS 2/ 26)
7.	same, interior, sanctuary, camera facing north (MLK/MPS 2/ 28)