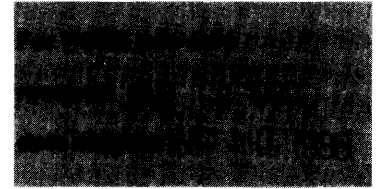


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 A.M.E.  
First African Methodist Episcopal Church

and/or common First African Methodist Episcopal Church

**2. Location**

street & number 521 North Hull Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Athens \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district 10th - Barnard

state Georgia code 013 county Clarke code 059

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name First African Methodist Episcopal Church, Reverend W.R. Wilkes

street & number 521 North Hull Street

city, town Athens \_\_\_ vicinity of state Georgia 30601

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Clarke County Courthouse

city, town Athens state Georgia

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Historic Structures Field Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date August 1975  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources

city, town Atlanta state Georgia

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

---

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The First African Methodist Episcopal Church is located approximately one block from the business district of Athens. Surrounding the Church are twentieth century residential structures. The nominated property includes less than one acre of land.

The First AME Church is a one story red brick building of the medieval style, electically carried out. Built in 1916, the Church has a gabled roof with overhanging eaves. Dormer windows are located on the roof. Round headed stained glass windows ornament the church. A brick belfry with a wood shingle roof is located on the west facade of the church. A vestibule is located in the base of the belfry. A porch with a gable roof is located on the west facade of the belfry. A 1973 educational building is attached to the east facade of the church by a long, narrow hallway.

The interior of the church is of the latin cross design. Entrance into the church is through the vestibule at the base of the belfry. Adjacent to the vestibule is a lounge with restroom. Directly across from the vestibule and lounge on the east wall is a storage space and the pastor's study. On the south wall of the church is the chancel with an alcove and an office area adjacent. A hammerbeamed ceiling supports the roof. The original auditorium style seating is located in the nave of the church.

A 1973 educational building is also located on the property. It is a two story red brick building and is connected to the church by a hallway. It does not contribute to the significance of the property.

Once located on the property was a parsonage. It was torn down in 1969 when urban renewal projects were constructed.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1916 **Builder/Architect** L.H. Persley, architect  
R.F. Walker, builder

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The First African Methodist Episcopal Church is significant to the architectural and religious history of Athens. The medieval style architecture, eclectically carried out, reflects the growing wealth of the black community of Athens. It is a prominent structure in the black community and houses the oldest black congregation in Athens. An early school was established in the first church known as Pierce's Chapel.

Architecturally, the First AME Church is significant as one of the predominant structures to remain in the black community of Athens. Aspects of medieval style architecture are noted in the eclectic building. Some design pretension is noted in the round-headed stained glass windows and hammerbeamed ceiling. It is an example of a high-style structure as opposed to a simple frame building. It has not been significantly altered. Occupying a prominent location in the black community, the structure has survived the urban development that has seen the destruction of many other structures located in the black community.

The Church was organized in 1866 under the statewide leadership of Henry McNeal Turner (1834-1915). The first black man to be appointed an army chaplain in 1863, Turner resigned his position in the army in 1865 in order to assist in the growth of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Georgia. Through his efforts, many AME churches were established in Georgia. The church in Athens was known as Pierce's Chapel, named for Reverend Lovick Pierce, a white minister who was an influential leader in southern Methodism. Prior to the Civil War, Reverend Pierce was the minister for the First Methodist Church of Athens on three occasions and served the black members of the Methodist Church as well as the white congregation. Reverend Pierce helped the black members of the Church to locate a building on the Oconee River in which they could begin a church of their own. The new black congregation named their church Pierce's Chapel in honor of Reverend Pierce.

In this early church, a school for adults and children was held in the basement. The AME Church in Georgia was interested in educating the black community. In 1874, the Education Committee of the AME Church in Georgia stated "the desire expressed upon the part of the Public School boards in a number of localities, to open more schools for the colored children." In Athens, public schools were established in 1885. The school held in the basement of Pierce's Chapel was a forerunner of the public school system of Athens.

(continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Davis, John P. The American Negro Reference Book. Volume I. Chicago: Educational Heritage, Inc. 1966.  
History of Georgia. Volume IV. Atlanta: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1926.

(continued)

# 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre  
 Quadrangle name Athens West, Georgia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

**UMT References**

A 

1	7	2	8	0	1	3	0	3	7	6	0	1	7	5
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

The boundaries of the nominated property are indicated on Clarke County Tax Map, No. 171A2, Block G, Parcel 3, as marked on the enclosed tax map. The nominated property includes all property owned by the current owner.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kacy Ginn, National Register Researcher  
Historic Preservation Section  
 organization Department of Natural Resources date December 27, 1979  
 street & number 270 Washington Street, S.W. telephone 404/656-2840  
 city or town Atlanta state Georgia 30334

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Elizabeth A. Lyon  
 Elizabeth A. Lyon  
 title Acting State Historic Preservation Officer date 12/27/79

**For HCRS use only**  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
W. Ray Luce date 3/10/80  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Attest: Carl A. Durbic date 3/3/80  
 Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Continuation sheet    Significance

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The North Georgia Conference of the AME Church was held in Athens at Pierce's Chapel in 1875. The ensuing year's work was discussed with Bishop Ward presiding. The Conference also met in Athens in 1884.

The First AME Church of Athens formally purchased the property on which the Church now stands in December 1881. A parsonage was located on the property previous to the purchase of the property. The parsonage was torn down in 1969 when urban renewal projects were built.

The Church formulated plans to build a new structure in 1916. The architect for the structure was L.H. Persley of Macon. The builder of the Church was R.F. Walker of Athens. Construction of the Church took almost a year. While the Church was under construction, church services were held in Union Hall on Washington Street.

The ministers of the First AME Church played a significant role in the social and religious development of Athens. Many pastors have served the First AME Church. Reverend Thomas established the school in Pierce's Chapel and helped the church get its ministry underway. During the ministry of Reverend Manning, a new church was built in 1916. Under the leadership of Reverend H.I. Bearden, a major renovation of the parsonage was undertaken. Reverend J.C. Williams assisted in the renovation of the Church and a heating plant was installed under his leadership. Dr. Clayton D. Wilkerson helped the Church to purchase the adjoining lot on which to build a multi-purpose Christian building. The education building was dedicated on June 10, 1973. Throughout the history of the First AME Church in Athens, the ministers have contributed to the growth of the black community in both religious and educational contexts.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Bibliography

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Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1965.

Rogers, Sam L., Director. Religious Bodies. Washington: Government Printing Office,  
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Rowe, H.J. Publisher. History of Athens and Clarke County. Athens: McGregor  
Company, Printers, 1923.

Southern Christian Advocate, August 29, 1858; July 30, 1863; November 23, 1866;  
January 4, 1867; September 21, 1866.

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