

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED OCT 10 1979
DATE ENTERED DEC 17 1979

**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
Mount Zion A.M.E. Church
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
623 South Magnolia Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Ocala
STATE
Florida 32670
VICINITY OF
12
COUNTY
Marion
CODE
083
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
4th
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Trustees of the Mount Zion A.M.E. Church
STREET & NUMBER
623 South Magnolia Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Ocala
VICINITY OF
STATE
Florida 32670

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Marion County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Ocala
STATE
Florida

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
N/A
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 type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church projects well above the surrounding neighborhood of primarily one-story commercial and residential buildings and parking lots. Mount Zion's most prominent feature is its two-story tower with pyramidal roof located on one of Ocala's major thoroughfares, Magnolia Avenue. The church has a highly pitched gable roof with metal shingles. The exterior walls are brick with corbelled belt courses, window surrounds, and cornice. Although early photographs reveal unpainted brick, the building has been painted a light buff color with white woodwork.

The cross-gabled roof reflects the traditional cruciform plan of the church. The north and south transepts project a short distance beyond the nave walls. A two-story tower is attached at the south-west corner of the church. A metal cross once topped its pyramidal roof.

The main facade and entrance to the church is on the west (Magnolia Avenue). The entrance doors are raised above the street level and are reached by steps. The double entrance doors and transom sash are mill finished aluminum, having replaced the original wood panelled doors with transom sash and colored sidelights. Above the present entrance doors are grouped lancet windows. There are double hung sash windows with colored glass sidelights and lancet transom sashes in the remainder of the church.

The tower has four lancet windows and also a large circular vent on each of its west and south elevations. The vents have lattice infill.

The side elevations of the nave contain regularly spaced lancet windows. A circular vent is centered above the tripartite lancet window at each transept end. On the rear, east elevation a tripartite window is flanked by individual lancet windows.

Additions to the 1891 design are concrete block restrooms adjoining the east side of the tower and a section of the south wall of the nave. A frame choir rehearsal room has been added.

A small vestibule has recently been created in the interior. The nave is entered through this vestibule. Access to the nave can also be gained through a doorway in the tower.

The interior of the church is also characterized by a high ceiling of dark, mahogany-stained narrow decking. The walls are white plaster with wainscoting, colored to match the ceiling finish. Carved wood pews curve between the central aisle and side aisles. There is a seating capacity of approximately 600 persons. The floor, originally flat, now slopes down to the chancel. Evidence of the change of the slope can be seen in the splicing which was done to the trim on side windows which were lowered at the same time. A curving, wood balustrade with heavy turned balusters delineates the altar. Behind the altar, the choir is

(See Continuation Sheet)

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER **7** PAGE **1**

raised and partitioned by a balustrade. The window and door surrounds throughout the interior are stained similar to the wainscoting and ceiling. The chancel rail has been repainted a lighter color in an attempt to imitate golden oak.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	—AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	—ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	—MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
—1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1891

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Levi Alexander, Sr.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Having served the black population of Ocala as a center for social and civic functions as well as for religious services since 1891,¹ the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church is of considerable importance to the community. The church is also the only surviving brick, nineteenth century religious structure in Ocala.

As a result of the devastating fire of 1883 in Ocala, many new buildings and reconstructed old ones were brick. Mt. Zion, begun in 1891, was one of several large brick churches constructed as a result of the fire. Of these churches, only Mt. Zion remains.

Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church was the first brick church owned by a black congregation in the area.² It was designed and constructed by Levi Alexander Sr., a black contractor.³ Alexander, born in Palmer Springs, Virginia in 1854,⁴ learned carpentry in Raleigh, North Carolina and then moved to Ocala between 1880 and 1885.⁵ In Ocala, he constructed several houses in the east section, the old Marion Hardware Building, the original Rheinauers Store, Howard Academy and the A.M.E. Church.⁶ After World War I, his son Levi, Jr. (born in 1886⁷ and graduated from Florida A & M College, Tallahassee in Building Arts⁸) joined him in the business under the name L. Alexander and Son -- Contractor and Builder. This enterprise continued until Levi Sr. retired in the early 1930s. He died on May 30, 1939.⁹

In designing the church, Alexander provided for the enormous enclosed space and fine acoustics which have made Mt. Zion an ideal location to hold community functions requiring large seating capacity (approximately 600 persons). "Every commencement and baccalaureate ceremony for Howard Academy and later Howard High School was held at Mount Zion A.M.E. Church until 1950. State meetings of fraternal organizations, concerts and other cultural activities were held at the Church."¹⁰

An 1892 bird's view of Ocala shows Mount Zion Church prominently on the edge of the town's limits.¹¹ Although Ocala has grown considerably since that date, the church still stands today as a highly visible landmark in the city. This is due not only to its substantial brick construction but also because of its location on Magnolia Avenue, one of the major north-south thoroughfares of Ocala.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less Than One (1)

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	7	3	8	9	4	6	0	3	2	2	8	4	1	0
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

B

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

C

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

D

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that part and parcel of lot 3, Block 25 as delineated in the New Survey South subdivision.

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

Robin R. Strassburger, Historic Sites Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Florida Division of Archives, History & Records Management

DATE

7/20/79

STREET & NUMBER

The Capitol

TELEPHONE

(904) 487-2333

CITY OR TOWN

Tallahassee

STATE

Florida

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

9/26/79

TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 12/17/79

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12/11/79

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

¹Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Commemorative Stone, Ocala, Florida; Susie Smith, personal communications with Mary L. Jennings, Ocala, Florida, February 3, 1979; Central Florida Community College (ed.), The Struggle for Survival (Ocala, Florida: Florida Bicentennial Commission, 1979) p. 25.

²Mt. Zion Historical Research Committee, "Records of Church History," Unpublished manuscript, Ocala, Florida, 1979, p. 3; Central Florida Community College, Struggle, p. 25.

³Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church Commemorative Stone; Central Florida, Struggle, p. 25.

⁴United States Bureau of Census, 1900 Census of Florida, Marion County, located in Florida State Library, Tallahassee, Florida; Wanita Williams, personal communications with William C. Bauer, Ocala, Florida, March 6, 1979.

⁵United States Bureau of Census, 1880 Census of Florida; Florida State Census, 1885, Marion County, located in the Florida State Library, Tallahassee, Florida.

⁶Wanita Williams, personal communications.

⁷United State Bureau of Census, 1900 Census of Florida.

⁸Wanita Williams, personal communications. (Florida A & M University records do not confirm this information.)

⁹Wanita Williams, personal communications; Marion County Health Department, Florida, Certificate of Death Register 4213, located in Ocala, Florida.

¹⁰Mt. Zion Historical Research Committee, "Records," p. 3; Central Florida Community College, Struggle, p. 25.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

¹¹Hudson and Kimberly, Birdseye View of Ocala, Marion County, Florida (Kansas City, Missouri: H & K Publishing, 1892).

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

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Personal communications with Mary D. Anderson. Ocala, Florida,
21 February 1979.
- Central Florida Community College (ed.) The Struggle for Survival.
Ocala, Florida: Florida Bicentennial Commission, 1977.
- Clarke, J. O. D. Ocala, Florida. New York: Republic Press, 1891.
- Florida A & M University Registrar's Office. Personal communications
with Robin Strassburger. Tallahassee, Florida, 27 July 1979.
- Florida. State Census, 1885. Marion County. Microfilm, Florida State
Library, Tallahassee, Florida.
- Hudson and Kimberly. Birdseye View of Ocala, Marion County, Florida.
Kansas City, Missouri: H & K Publishing, 1892.
- Jackson, Walter (86 year old member of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Ocala).
Personal communications with Mary L. Jennings. Ocala, Florida,
19 February 1979.
- Marion County Health Department, Florida. Death Certificate 4213.
Located in Ocala, Florida.
- Mt. Zion Historical Research Committee. "Records of Church History."
Unpublished manuscript, Ocala, Florida, 1979.
- Smith, Mrs. Susie (103 year old member of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Ocala).
Personal communications with Mary L. Jennings. Ocala, Florida,
3 February 1979.
- Williams, Mrs. Wanita (granddaughter of Levi Alexander, Sr.). Personal
communications with William C. Bauer. Ocala, Florida, 6 March 1979.
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County. Microfilm, Florida State Library, Tallahassee, Florida.