State of North Carolina  
Division of Archives and History  

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR  
Iredell County  

**1 NAME**  
HISTORIC  
Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church  
AND/OR COMMON  

**2 LOCATION**  
STREET & NUMBER  
E side S. Center Street between W. Bell and Garfield Streets (one N of Garfield)  
CITY. TOWN  
Statesville  
STATE  
North Carolina  

**3 CLASSIFICATION**  
CATEGORY  
-DISTRICT  
-X BUILDING(S)  
-STRUCTURE  
-SITE  
-OBJECT  

OWNERSHIP  
-PUBLIC  
-PRIVATE  
-BOTH  

PUBLIC ACQUISITION  
-IN PROCESS  
-BEING CONSIDERED  

STATUS  
-X OCCUPIED  
-UNOCCUPIED  
-WORK IN PROGRESS  
-ACCESSIBLE  
-YES RESTRICTED  
-YES UNRESTRICTED  
-NO  

PRESENT USE  
-AGRICULTURE  
-COMMERCIAL  
-EDUCATIONAL  
-ENTERTAINMENT  
-ENTREPRENEURIAL  
-INDUSTRIAL  
-MILITARY  
-MUSEUM  
-PARK  
-PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
-RELIGIOUS  
-SCIENTIFIC  
-TRANSPORTATION  

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**  
NAME  
Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church  
c/o Rev. G. J. Christopher  
STREET & NUMBER  
537 S. Center Street  
CITY. TOWN  
Statesville  
STATE  
North Carolina  
28677  

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**  
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC  
Iredell County Courthouse  
CITY. TOWN  
Statesville  
STATE  
North Carolina  

**6 FORM PREPARED BY**  
NAME / TITLE  
Laura A. W. Phillips (Winston-Salem)  
ORGANIZATION  
Consultant for Survey and Planning Branch  
STREET & NUMBER  
Archives and History  
CITY OR TOWN  
Raleigh  
STATE  
North Carolina  
DATE  
February 4, 1980  
TELEPHONE  
919/733-6545
Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church, located just north of the northeast corner of S. Center and Garfield Streets in Statesville, was built in 1903 as the third church structure of the congregation on this site.

The late Gothic Revival common bond brick church is three bays wide, seven bays deep, and has a steep gable roof covered with pressed tin. The brickwork detail is quite elaborate. The front boasts two corner entrance towers of unequal height. The south tower is the larger of the two with three stages. The first stage has two pointed-arch entrances. The second and third stages contain pairs of pointed-arch louvered vents on each face. Corbelled brick string courses and brick corner stiles define each stage. The tower is topped by projecting corbelled corners with pyramidal finials. The north tower is smaller with only two stages: a smaller pointed-arch door at the base and only one louvered vent per face on the second level. Above the corbelled cornice is a pyramidal roof.

A large, pointed arch stained glass window is the central feature of the lively facade. Above this window and near the peak of the gable is a round window with a Star of David muntin design. On either side of the large stained glass window are unusual lozenge-shaped projections in the brickwork. The facade has a brick string course about one-third of the way up the wall, and a brick corbelled cornice matching that used on the towers outlines the gable.

The side elevations exhibit pointed-arch stained glass windows with brick arched labels and brick pilasters between windows. A brick and cinderblock addition is attached to the rear of the building.

The interior was not accessible.
Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church, constructed in 1903, is the oldest structure associated with a black congregation in Statesville. The Methodist congregation, established as Mt. Pleasant in 1868 or 1869, was one of many that formed its own church within the black community soon after the Civil War. The Gothic Revival style of the building, executed in intricate corbeled, paneled, and molded brickwork, is characteristic of the substantial churches built for many black congregations as they gained permanence and prosperity.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A. Associated with the founding after the Civil War and growth during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century of black church congregations, especially A.M.E. Zion. These congregations were a focal point of post-Civil War black communities.

C. Exemplifies the handsome brickwork and late Gothic Revival style characteristic of many turn-of-the-century churches, especially those erected for black congregations. These may reflect the influence of church building publications as yet unidentified.
Center Street African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is the oldest structure associated with a black congregation within Statesville. Constructed in 1903, it is the congregation's third home on the site.

Antebellum church rolls list numerous "coloured" communicants attending the services of the white dominated congregations of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. However, shortly after the Civil War blacks withdrew and established their own congregations. Black Methodists in Statesville, led by Sidney S. Murdock and Alfred Bailey, organized a congregation known as Mt. Pleasant in 1868 or 1869. Murdock, who served as pastor to the congregation until 1886, donated a lot on South Center Street within the Negro community known as "Depot Hill." Soon the group became aligned with the A.M.E. Zion denomination, and the name of the church became known as Center Street.

The Gothic Revival brick church that presently occupies the lot is the third structure associated with the congregation on that site. It was constructed during the forceful pastorate of the Reverend W. A. Blackwell. The two prior churches were of frame construction.

Long prominent in denominational affairs, three of the congregation's ministers later were consecrated bishops; George Lincoln Blackwell, Lynwood Westinghouse Kyles, and William Andrew Stewart. The church is in use and is maintained by the congregation.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

1. Ruth Little-Stokes, compiler, An Inventory of Historic Architecture, Iredell County, North Carolina (Raleigh and Statesville: Iredell County, City of Statesville and Town of Mooresville in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1978), 90.

2. The (Statesville) Landmark, June 26, 1903.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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<th>ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY</th>
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<th>VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION</th>
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All of Tract 16, Block C, Map 7A-5, Statesville Township, consisting of a city lot.

The property being nominated consists of the church and the city lot on which it stands.
Footnotes (Cont'd)


4 Ibid.


6 Cornerstone, Center Street A.M.E. Zion Church, Statesville, North Carolina.

7 Walls, *A.M.E. Zion Church*, 590-591, 593, 609.