

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name St. James AME Church

Other names/site number St. James Chapel AME Church, St. James Chapel

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number 516 North Street

N/A
-----

 not for publication

City or town Cape Girardeau

N/A
-----

 vicinity

State Missouri Code MC County Cape Girardeau Code 031 Zip code 63701

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

*Mark A Miles*

*Nov 24, 2013*

Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A Miles, Deputy SHPO

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

St. James AME Church  
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau, Missouri  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Religion/Religious Facility

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Religion/Religious Facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: center steeple church

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone

walls: brick

stucco

roof: asphalt

other:

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

St. James AME Church  
Name of Property

Cape Girardeau, Missouri  
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**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.)

Property is:

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

**Areas of Significance**

Ethnic Heritage (Black)  
Social History

**Period of Significance**

1875-1963

**Significant Dates**

1892  
1926

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

St. James AME Church  
Name of Property

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**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

x \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927 or \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1983

1 16 276330 4132201  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Celine Finney and Steven J. Hoffman, Ph.D.

organization Southeast Missouri State University date July 27, 2013

street & number Department of History, MS2960 telephone 573-651-2808

city or town Cape Girardeau state MO zip code 63701

e-mail shoffman@semo.edu

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

St. James AME Church  
Name of Property

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## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log:

Name of Property: St. James AME Church

City or Vicinity: Cape Girardeau

County: Cape Girardeau State: MO

Photographer: Steven Hoffman

Date  
Photographed: September 3, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 17: South façade and west elevation, facing north-east
- 2 of 17: South façade and east elevation, facing north-west
- 3 of 17: North (rear) elevation, facing south
- 4 of 17: Tower detail showing fan light, deeply recessed entry, circular window, and brick detailing, facing north
- 5 of 17: Detail of stone of stone panel over front entrance listing original construction date and 1892 rebuilding, facing north
- 6 of 17: Detail of basement doorway and stone panel listing 1926 remodel, facing north
- 7 of 17: Detail of stone panel and original 1920s metal light fixture flanking basement door, facing north
- 8 of 17: Detail of original cornerstone on southwest corner of main facade, facing north
- 9 of 17: Detail of tower fan light above entry door from inside tower, facing south
- 10 of 17: Detail of exterior arched window and brick sawtoothing below cornice, east elevation, facing west
- 11 of 17: Detail of brick construction beneath stucco, north (rear) elevation, facing south
- 12 of 17: Interior of sanctuary, facing north-east
- 13 of 17: Interior of sanctuary, west elevation, facing north-west
- 14 of 17: Interior of sanctuary, from behind pulpit, facing south
- 15 of 17: Detail of raised altar, altar rail and choir loft, facing north-east
- 16 of 17: Detail of interior window showing original arched transom window glass, west elevation, facing west
- 17 of 17: Detail of ceiling, choir assembly room with historic light fixture still hang from ceiling

St. James AME Church  
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Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

Figure 1: excerpt from Bird's Eye View, Cape Girardeau, 1885.

Figure 2: excerpt from Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, September, 1900.

Figure 3: excerpt from Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, January, 1908.

Figure 4: excerpt from Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, August, 1915.

Figure 5: excerpt from Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, January, 1931.

Figure 6: St. James AME Church, 1930s.

Figure 7: Photo: Mortgage Burning, August 5, 1945.

Figure 8: Photo: St. James AME Church Sunday School, circa. 1940s.

Figure 9: Location Map

Figure 10: St. James AME floor plan.

Figure 11: Photo Key

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St. James AME Church
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N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

SUMMARY

St. James AME Church, 516 North Street, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, is a one story, stucco-covered brick building with a rectangular plan and a front facing gable. Built in 1875, the church is located in a residential district that was once an independent African-American community located just north of Cape Girardeau's 1859 city limits. The front façade is divided into three bays with a center tower believed to have been added as part of a major rebuilding project that occurred in 1892. The square tower has wide overhanging boxed eaves, a centered round window, a carved stone panel indicating dates of construction and alteration, and a pyramidal roof. The building sits on a raised basement dug in 1926 and outlined by a thick concrete wall topped by a molded water table. A full flight of stairs leads up from the street to a deeply recessed centered arched entryway flanked by windows set in tall, narrow, rounded-arch openings. With the exception of the replacement of some windows in the 1990s, the building retains integrity and is largely unaltered from its historic appearance as of ca. 1926.

ELABORATION

St. James AME Church is located on North Street in an area that was just outside the city limits when the church was constructed. The church has an alley immediately to the west and a parking lot immediately behind to the north; as with most of the buildings in the neighborhood, it sits on a lot elevated approximately three feet above street level. The appearance of the area is that of a typical late-nineteenth century residential neighborhood with sidewalks, mature trees, and relatively small lots with uniform set-backs. The surrounding houses represent a variety of types and styles, ranging from vernacular gable front and side gable houses to Missouri German Vernacular, Queen Anne, American Four Square and Craftsman Bungalow. Although some 1960s infill apartments have been built in the neighborhood, the area retains the look and feel characteristic of a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residential district.

The south elevation of this stucco-covered brick building fronts North Street and is the main entrance to the church (see Photographs 1, 2 and 4). The front facing gable has a centrally placed tower, with wide concrete steps rising from the sidewalk up to a deeply recessed arched opening in the tower. The opening itself is articulated with two reveals cut into the smooth plane of the tower front, and has a historic wood round arched transom window (see Photograph 9). The arched tower opening leads to a small foyer containing leather covered wood double doors leading into the church. A stone panel located immediately above the arched opening is inscribed with the words "St. James Chapel AME Church founded by Rev. B.F. Brooks 1864, built by Rev. S. Rice 1875, rebuilt by Rev. Chs Hunter, 1892" (see Photograph 5). A historic wood circular window, currently covered in paint, is centered in the tower just below the wide overhanging

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boxed eaves and pyramidal roof. The tower is flanked by a non-historic aluminum one-over-one rectangular sash window on the west and a non-historic rectangular single pane window set in a wood frame on the east. Both windows are set in tall, narrow, rounded-arch openings. A triangular pediment is formed by a belt course entablature with simple brick corbelling extending on either side of the tower. The simple brick corbelling pattern is repeated beneath the cornice of the tower itself.

The main body of the church rests upon a raised basement with a thick concrete foundation wall topped by a molded water table. A small wood sash one-over-one basement window is located to the west of the stairway. A doorway to the walk-out basement is located east of the main stairway (see Photograph 6). The metal basement door has a narrow vertical glass panel in the upper portion of the door, and is flanked by glass block sidelights. Although the original door and sidelights were replaced with modern materials, most likely in 1962, the doorway opening retains its original form and design, and its subordinated location below the waterline of the basement wall reduces the visual impact this alteration might otherwise have.<sup>1</sup> A rounded arch carved stone panel inset above the door is inscribed "remodeled AD 1926" (see Photograph 7). The original carved stone church cornerstone engraved with the words "AME Church, erected by Rev. S. Rice, A.D. 1875." rests atop the concrete wall of the raised basement immediately to the west of the basement door (see Photograph 8). Although the glass globes have been replaced, historic light fixtures from the 1926 remodeling flank the arched panel above the basement door (see Photograph 7). Non-historic light fixtures flank the arched opening in the tower and hang from the ceiling of the foyer. The fixtures flanking the door, however, are in keeping with the size, scale and type of fixtures evident in a photograph of the building from the 1940s (see Figure 7). A modern light fixture is attached to the ceiling in the foyer, but it is not visible from the street. Although several of the fixtures on this elevation are not historic, they do not detract significantly from the historic character of the church's façade.

The east and west elevations are identical and consist of five evenly spaced non-historic rectangular wood framed windows set in tall, narrow, rounded-arch openings with stone sills (see Photograph 10). Although the historic windows were replaced in the 1990s in response to a spate of vandalism and the window frames and inset arches are covered with painted aluminum on the exterior, the fenestration pattern remains unchanged and the overall architectural expression of the series of arched openings remains intact. The non-historic material is painted to blend unobtrusively with the rest of the building. Photographs of the interior show that although they are protected from further vandalism from the outside, the original arched transom windows are still present behind the exterior painted aluminum covering and are visible from the interior (see Photograph 16).

<sup>1</sup> "Out of the Past: May 6, 1962," *Southeast Missourian*, May 6, 2012.

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The cornice of both the east and west elevations is highlighted with decorative saw-tooth brickwork consisting of two rows of slightly offset angled brick separated by a single row of flush-laid brick (see Photograph 10). The thick concrete basement wall visible on the front of the building continues along both sides and is interrupted by five evenly spaced non-historic aluminum framed sliding two pane vertically divided basement windows. The molded water table runs along a line formed by the tops of the windows setting the basement level off from the sanctuary level above.

The north, or rear, elevation presents a blank façade and has an open porch with iron railings, flat metal roof and metal door located on the east side of the gable end (see Photograph 3). The door has a narrow vertical glass panel in the upper portion of the door, similar to the basement door on the south elevation. Although the doorway itself is original to the 1892 addition, the door, cement pad, iron railings and flat metal roof were added most likely in the 1962 remodel.<sup>2</sup> The rear porch evident in the 1900 and 1908 Sanborn maps was removed prior to 1915 (see Figures 2, 3 and 4). A small metal chimney or ventilation pipe is attached to the wall where a brick chimney was removed sometime after 1926, revealing the original brick beneath the stucco finish (see Photograph 11).

## INTERIOR

The historic double doors on the North Street entrance open onto a small vestibule flanked by two rooms which leads into the main sanctuary. The church has a center aisle plan with wooden pews and the altar is placed on the northern end of the sanctuary (see Photographs 12, 13 and 14). The pews date from the 1962 remodeling and the curved altar rail and raised choir loft date from a remodeling done between 1910 and 1915 (see Photograph 15). An exit door to the rear and a stairway leading to the basement are located to the east of the altar. Although the interior has been redecorated several times over the years, the original craftsmanship of the 1892 renovation/addition is still evident in the beaded woodwork on the ceiling (see Photographs 13 and 17). The two rooms sited at the south end of the sanctuary, a pastor's study and a choir assembly/storage room, were built as part of the 1962 remodeling.<sup>3</sup> Despite this alteration, however, the sanctuary retains the sense of volume and light that distinguished the original design. In addition, historic light fixtures dating from the 1926 renovation hang from the ceiling in the choir assembly/storage room (see Photograph 17).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Fred Trawick (steward and treasurer, St. James AME Church), interview by Steven Hoffman, Cape Girardeau, MO, September 3, 2013; Cynthia B. Lambert, "Brief History of St. James A.M.E. Church, Cape Girardeau, Missouri," typed manuscript, dated 1956.

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## ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY

St. James AME Church has undergone few exterior changes since 1926. After meeting for several years in rooms located across the street from the current location, the Rev. Spotwood Rice and members of the congregation built the current building in 1875.<sup>4</sup> A major renovation occurred in 1892. Not only was a new parsonage (since demolished) built at this time, but the church itself was extensively remodeled and enlarged.<sup>5</sup> It seems likely that the tower was added at this time, and the sanctuary enlarged to the rear. A bird's eye view map from 1880 shows St. James AME Church as a simple gable front building with only four window openings along the sides instead of the present five (see Figure 1). Although not conclusive, bird's eye views are often remarkably reliable and the change is consistent with a church history that states the congregation "remodeled the church by building it larger."<sup>6</sup> An article in the *Cape Girardeau Democrat* further supports the notion of an extensive remodeling of the exterior, noting that the members of St. James had started work on "an addition to their church," and that, "the work, when completed, will be an ornament to that part of our city."<sup>7</sup> Regardless of whether the tower was original or was added in 1892, the church has existed in its present form and dimensions from at least as early as the 1892 renovation. The Sanborn Insurance Map for Cape Girardeau in 1900 clearly shows a tower in place (see Figure 2).

Between 1910 and 1915 the interior was remodeled again by elevating the wooden floor at the north end of the sanctuary, installing an altar rail, and adding a choir loft. These historic elements remain in use and are an important part of the character-defining features of the sanctuary space (see Photograph 15).<sup>8</sup>

Another major remodeling costing about \$5,500 occurred in 1926. At this time a basement was dug under the church, a steam heating system installed, the sanctuary was redecorated and the "entire exterior was given a coat of stucco."<sup>9</sup> The light fixtures evident in historic photographs from the 1930s and 1940s presumably date from this renovation as well (see Figures 6 and 7; Photographs 6 and 7). If the hipped roof evident in the 1900 Sanborn map is an accurate depiction, it was likely changed to its current gabled configuration in the 1926 remodeling, if not before. Both the 1931 Sanborn map and the photo from the 1930s shows the roof line in its current configuration (see Figures 5 and 6).

<sup>4</sup> Lambert, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> "To All The Good People of Cape Girardeau," *The Cape Girardeau Democrat*, 28 May 1892.

<sup>8</sup> Lambert, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> "St. James Church Being Remodeled," *Southeast Missourian*, August 7, 1926.

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Another renovation occurred in 1962 and altered the appearance of the sanctuary slightly through the addition of two small rooms on the southern end.<sup>10</sup> These changes had no effect on the external appearance of the church, and, due to the relatively small amount of space actually taken, do not significantly affect the look and feel of the overall volume and sense of spaciousness within the sanctuary.

Other than the changes occurring around the door at the rear of the building, the exterior of St. James AME Church remains largely unchanged from its 1926 appearance. The design of the replacement windows does not significantly detract from the overall look and feel of the architectural plan conveyed by the fenestration pattern and the repeated arched motif. In addition, the original arched transom windows remain intact and are plainly visible from the interior (see Photograph 16). Even though the interior of the church has experienced remodeling at various times over the years, with few exceptions the interior spaces of both the main sanctuary level and the basement preserve the basic layout and functions envisioned in the 1926 remodeling. As such, St. James AME Church retains integrity and appears much as it did throughout most of its period of significance.

<sup>10</sup> Trawick, interview; "Out of the Past: May 6, 1962," *Southeast Missourian*, May 6, 2012.

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**Summary:**

St. James AME Church in Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri is locally significant under Criterion A, Ethnic Heritage-Black and Social History. Constructed in 1875 on Cape Girardeau's then northern city limit, St. James AME Church is one of two remaining urban African-American churches in Cape Girardeau constructed during the Reconstruction period and the only one to remain a continuously functioning church. In addition, it is one of the few extant African-American buildings constructed by the black community prior to desegregation in Cape Girardeau, and the only extant communal building in Cape Girardeau's Filbrun Subdivision, a former freedmen's community. St. James AME Church served as the social and spiritual center for Cape Girardeau and vicinity's African-American population. Like other African-American churches nationally, St. James AME Church became the most important institution for providing structure, leadership, and guidance to an African-American community facing a segregated and hostile Anglo-American society. As the only African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church in the city, St. James AME Church provided refuge, opportunity, and an outlet for self-expression while supporting autonomy, education, and black cultural pride. With the largest communal single-room in the area, St. James AME Church was also able to support large functions including conferences and community events. Although the building has experienced some alterations, many in conjunction with St. James hosting the meetings of the annual Missouri Conference of the AME, they do not detract significantly from the integrity of the building and it appears much as it did after its 1926 renovation. The period of significance extends from 1875, the year of construction to 1963, the accepted fifty year closing date when activities begun historically continued to have importance and no more specific date can be defined to end the historic period.

**Elaboration:**

According to a history of the church prepared by a member in 1956, the St. James Society (or Station) was founded in 1863 by Rev. Winston, Rev. Burk, Prof. Samuel Watson, and Uncle Jesse Stanton in the basement of the old First Baptist Church on Lorimier Street in Cape Girardeau where the white Baptists worshipped.<sup>11</sup> In February of 1864, Rev. B.L. Brooks of the Missouri Conference, came to Cape Girardeau and helped organize the establishment of the St. James AME Church with approximately sixty members. When he returned to his post in Chester, IL, he convinced G.W. Means to move to Cape Girardeau to assist the newly formed church and teach school. The congregation quickly grew and by September 1865 there were 115 members.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Lambert, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> George W. Means, John H. Brown, Edmund Smith, Trustees, "Letter from Cape Girardeau, MO," *Christian Recorder*, December 2, 1865.

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Services were held across the street from the present church, initially in a rented room and then in a small building erected by the congregation which later fell into disrepair.<sup>13</sup> According to an account published in the *Christian Recorder*, the official newspaper of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the trustees of the church secured a lot and started building a frame house during the spring and summer of 1865. As of December of that year they had spent about \$460 and estimated the cost of the house and lot would total \$1,000. The house was designed not only to provide a place for worship, but to have "a room in which schools may be held for ourselves and children."<sup>14</sup> It is unclear from the record if they raised the money to complete the building, or if they used it in a partially built form; regardless, it quickly fell into disrepair. They did, however, continue to use it for services. In the months prior to the construction of the new church, a visitor noted that "they continue to worship in the old building, that is itself a disgrace to the city."<sup>15</sup> This building is no longer extant.

The congregation had desired a new building for several years.<sup>16</sup> In 1868, for the sum of \$300.00, Lot 16, Range K in Filbruns Addition was purchased from Henry and Mary Ann Filbrun by John H. Brown, Edmund Smith, and Thomas D. Goins, trustees of the AME Church of the county and city of Cape Girardeau.<sup>17</sup> Although land for the purpose of an AME church was purchased in the center of the Filbrun's Subdivision, construction of the church did not occur until 1875. Post-dating the land purchase for St. James AME by five years was the sale of land for the second African-American church in Cape Girardeau, the Second Colored Baptist Church; its building was not constructed until 1878, and it was significantly smaller than St. James.<sup>18</sup> The Second Baptist congregation sold the building in 2006 and it no longer functions as an active church, leaving St. James AME Church the sole remaining continuously used historic African-American church building in the city.<sup>19</sup>

In 1875, the current St. James AME Church was built under the pastorate of Spotswood (Spotsford) Rice, a literate, half-French businessman and reverend from St. Louis.<sup>20</sup> According to the St. James school superintendent, W.R. Kenney, Rev. Rice acted quickly to build the new brick church. Kenney noted that "The days of Miracles are supposed to be passed; nevertheless, strange things sometimes occur; closely bordering thereon." He went on to observe that "Just seven weeks have elapsed since

<sup>13</sup> Lambert; typewritten history of St. James AME Church, Southeast Missourian archives (undated, circa 1987).

<sup>14</sup> Means, Brown and Smith.

<sup>15</sup> Rev. S.W. Gaines, Church News, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Recorder*, July 29, 1875.

<sup>16</sup> Rev. John R. Loving, News from the Churches, Letter to the Editor, *Christian Recorder*, December 25, 1873.

<sup>17</sup> Cape Girardeau County Record of Deeds Book One 1868, 284-286.

<sup>18</sup> Cape Girardeau County Record of Deeds Book One, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Callie Clark Miller, "City shaped by black history," *Southeast Missourian*, February 13, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> St. James AME Church cornerstone; 1870 Federal Census.

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Rev. S. Rice took the pastoral charge of the place, and, notwithstanding the shortness of the time, we have built a new place of worship, not only an honor to the cause and a credit to our people, but an ornament to the city."<sup>21</sup> In Kenney's account, Rev. Rice did not wait for the officers of the church to act, but instead took matters into his own hands. He "consulted mechanics, and employed them on the easiest terms, and dealers in building materials, of who he obtained liberal donations, and thus the work went on, the offices of the church having only to second his motions." The secret to Rice's success was, according to Kenney, that Rice "laid down the first dollar, and then requested the members of the church, and the friends of the cause to do likewise."<sup>22</sup>

The area the church was located in had originally been platted in 1859 as an extension of the city's northern limits and subdivided in 1864 by Henry Filbrun (also known as Filbrun, and recorded as such on the official 1868 plat), a German landowner in Cape Girardeau. Like many workers throughout North America, many African Americans could not afford the higher rents of the city and found that the periphery offered a good solution by providing cheap land and housing. In some communities, particularly in the South, landowners on the edge of the city subdivided their least profitable property for sale to African Americans.<sup>23</sup> For the free blacks who worked for wages in antebellum Cape Girardeau, as well as the growing number of freedmen entering the city during the and after the war, Filbrun's Subdivision near North Street provided one of the few places in the city African Americans could secure land. Between 1865 and 1869, at least six people purchased land in Filbrun Subdivision and paid between \$200 and \$500 for their parcels of land.<sup>24</sup>

Communities open to blacks were often located near less desirable areas such as cemeteries, train tracks, garbage dumps, and, most typically, bottomland.<sup>25</sup> Filbrun's Subdivision was no exception, with low lying land directly to the north of many of the lots on North Street, and the city's cemetery a short distance to the east. Like other freedman's communities that developed at the same time, the one around St. James initially had several single-family dwellings, a water source, and streets. Later a Masonic Lodge, funeral parlor, boarding house, and stores were added.<sup>26</sup> At this time,

<sup>21</sup> W.R. Kenney, "Great Success," Letter to the Editor, *Christian Recorder*, December 16, 1875.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> 1858 Plat Map of Cape Girardeau City; Filburns Addition Subdivision Plat, 1868; 1870 Plat of the City of Cape Girardeau, Missouri; 1880 Bird's Eye View of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, published by Damm and Staab, St. Louis, Missouri; Cape Girardeau County Deed Indexes; John Kellogg, "The Formation of Black Residential Areas in Lexington, Kentucky, 1865-1887," 25; Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900 to 1950* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: Volume 1, From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Frankfort, Kentucky: The Kentucky Historical Society 1992), 274.

<sup>24</sup> Cape Girardeau County Deed Indexes.

<sup>25</sup> John Kellogg, "The Formation of Black Residential Areas," 35.

<sup>26</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1908; Louise Duncan, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 2005; and Clara Daniels, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 2005.

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no information providing a name of the community has been found. Because of overcrowding and the white landowner's desire to make money, properties tended to be tightly spaced with frame shotgun houses constructed for single families.<sup>27</sup> Most of these communities in other parts of the South, however, had lots large enough to support a garden and a few domestic animals. Filbrun's Subdivision was unique because the lots were too small to support a garden and domestic animals.<sup>28</sup> The lack of space to have a garden and domestic animals also suggests the north Cape Girardeau African-American community worked for wages, and had enough disposable income to purchase needed commodities. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, several houses within Filbrun's Subdivision had stables, and many men who lived in the neighborhood worked as draymen, teamsters, or, in one case, an iceman, and had horses or livestock valued at or more than their white peers.<sup>29</sup> Lot 16, where St. James AME Church sits, is in the exact center of Filbrun's Subdivision, and whether intentional or not, represents the black church as the heart of African-American culture and identity. Placed on a slight elevation with the primary façade fronting Cape Girardeau, the brick building constructed in 1875 created a visual statement of self-identity and community that proclaimed Cape Girardeau's African-American citizens were prospering.

Cape Girardeau's ongoing prosperity and the plentiful job opportunities available to African-American men aided the continued growth of St. James AME Church. The number of African Americans in Cape Girardeau tripled between 1870 and 1880, from approximately 611 to 1,996.<sup>30</sup> The growth and prosperity of St. James was implicitly recognized by the Missouri Conference of the AME when they held the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Missouri Conference at the church in 1883, the first of seven conferences held in Cape Girardeau between the conference's founding in 1855 and 1941.<sup>31</sup> These conferences were significant in the African-American community because they were a gathering time for outside clergy to meet in one location. It was during conferences like these that African-American leaders discussed not only relevant religious matters, but also events that affected the broader African-American culture.<sup>32</sup> Often, it was through these conferences that church leaders from smaller communities gained insight, knowledge and ideas about advancing their local community, and brought this knowledge back to their congregations.

<sup>27</sup> John Kellogg, "The Formation of Black Residential Areas," 38.

<sup>28</sup> 1870 Plat of the City of Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

<sup>29</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1900, 1908, 1915; Cape Girardeau City Directories, 1912-13; 1910 Federal Census; 1872 Cape Girardeau County Tax Records.

<sup>30</sup> University of Virginia Library Historical Census Browser. Available from <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/>. Accessed May 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Lambert; R.R. Wright, *The Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: The Book Concern of the AME Church, 1947), 444-445.

<sup>32</sup> Reverend Deborah Thornton, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006.

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St. James AME Church underwent a significant remodel and addition when the Missouri Conference of the AME's annual conference returned to Cape Girardeau in 1892. Bishop James A. Handy, the presiding bishop of the AME church, presided over the 1892 conference, a significant event for Missouri and Cape Girardeau.<sup>33</sup> In addition, according to a local church history, under the leadership of the pastor at the time, Rev. Charles Hunter, not only did they build a new parsonage and expand the church, but they held one of the "greatest revivals ever held in Cape Girardeau, before or since," with over 200 people being converted.<sup>34</sup> While it seems to have become a trend to remodel or upgrade the church every time it sponsored a conference, the changes at this time were contemporary to other traditional church buildings in the city, giving the church the basic form that it retains to this day.<sup>35</sup>

The growth of St. James AME Church allowed it to play a role in the black community larger than just as a venue for religious services. Due to racial segregation, African Americans were often not allowed to partake in white organizations. Since the African-American church was independently owned and operated, it provided one of the very few places in which blacks could be active and cultivate their own cultural identity.<sup>36</sup> Often, it was the only public building used for communal gatherings, and served as the center of life in many African-American neighborhoods and towns.<sup>37</sup> Opportunities for African Americans to practice leadership skills, develop business expertise, gain oratory experiences and find moral and spiritual comfort were provided in the church.<sup>38</sup> These vocational and educational opportunities were highly valued within the African-American community and supported by the church. As a result, St. James played many roles for Cape Girardeau's black community, from fostering education to providing venues for community and social events.

The commitment of St. James AME Church to educating African Americans in Cape Girardeau was clear from the very beginning, and according to church oral histories, St. James AME Church held school for local blacks in its new building.<sup>39</sup> Literacy was important to blacks for a variety of reasons, but perhaps most importantly, literate

<sup>33</sup> Lambert; Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the A.M.E. Church, 1916).

<sup>34</sup> Lambert.

<sup>35</sup> Linda Redeffer, "Small church, big history; St. James AME church is celebrating 144 years of service and worship," *Southeast Missourian*, September 1, 2007.

<sup>36</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham and London: Drake University Press, 1990), 110.

<sup>37</sup> Hively, Kay. "The Preservation of Missouri's Black Heritage." From Preservation Issues Vol. 7 Issue Number 1. Available from <http://www.umsl.edu/~libweb/blackstudies/heritage.htm> Accessed June 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Hively. "The Preservation of Missouri's Black Heritage."

<sup>39</sup> Daniels, interview, 2005; Duncan, interview, 2005; Louise Duncan, interview by Frank Nickell and Diana Steele, Cape Girardeau, MO, January 11, 2002.

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blacks were able to read written contracts.<sup>40</sup> For Cape Girardeau's African Americans this would have been very important when they sought work with local contractors and other employers, as well as when they purchased land, since a literate person was more difficult to confuse or entrap with dishonest contracts. With high adult illiteracy following emancipation, many black churches in the former slave states opened their doors in the evenings to provide night schools for adults. St. James AME Church helped fill this role in Cape Girardeau.

Helping to establish a school for both adults and children was one of the first activities in which the St. James Mission engaged, even before constructing their first building. By August of 1865, J.M. Wilkinson, the minister charged with caring for the missions in the region, including Cape Girardeau's, noted in his report on conditions in the city that Samuel Newlin was teaching a school with between 80 and 90 students, and that "he has succeeded in building a very neat school-house for the education of freedmen, women, and children." Wilkinson also wrote that he hoped the congregation would "soon be able to get into the new house," as the frame church remained uncompleted due to a scandal involving the person in charge collecting \$175 but refusing to give it over to the church.<sup>41</sup> The plans for the initial frame building constructed by the church included a "room in which schools may be held for ourselves and children," and Wilkinson concluded, "We have teachers with us waiting for the finishing of the house to commence school."<sup>42</sup>

St. James AME Church's continued involvement with conducting a school for blacks in the years immediately prior to the construction of the present building suggests that the current building was likely also used as a school for freedmen in Cape Girardeau. In 1873, two years prior to the construction of the current building, St. James' minister, John R. Loving, wrote "We have an excellent day and Sunday school, numbering some hundred and fifty pupils, under the Superintendence of Brother W.R. Kenney formerly of Zanesville, Ohio. The school is making rapid progress, and is said by the examiners and county Superintendent to be second to no school of a similar grade in the country."<sup>43</sup> Loving explained that Kenney was also superintendent of their Sunday school, so the evidence is clear that St. James had long played a strong role in furthering the education of Cape Girardeau's African-American community.<sup>44</sup> Although specific corroborating documentation is not available at this time for the period after 1875, the likelihood that St. James continued to engage in this type of activity in its new building is not only consistent with what occurred in other communities and what is

<sup>40</sup> Wilbert L. Jenkins, *Climbing Up to Glory: A Short History of African-Americans During the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2002), 163.

<sup>41</sup> J.M. Wilkinson, "Letter from Chester, Ills," Letters to the Editor, *Christian Recorder*, September 9, 1865.

<sup>42</sup> Means, Brown, and Smith.

<sup>43</sup> Loving.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

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shared in the congregation's oral traditions, but it represents a continuation of a clearly established activity of the congregation since its inception.

The early twentieth-century, from 1900 to ca. 1930, was a period of significant change in Southeast Missouri, and St. James AME Church continued to play a leadership role in issues affecting the larger black community. As Cape Girardeau continued to grow, so did the African-American community and St. James. With approximately 100 people living in the Filbrun's Subdivision and nearby streets, and many more commuting from rural African-American communities in the county, St. James AME Church expanded its building again in 1926.<sup>45</sup> By August of that year, a \$5,000 renovation was underway, including the addition of a basement for social functions and the application of the then fashionable stucco.<sup>46</sup> With these changes, the church achieved the overall look and design it retains to this day.

St. James AME Church was not only able to grow physically in the early twentieth century, but it continued to serve the broader population in a wide-ranging fashion. In 1910, the Colored Cemetery Association was formed at St. James AME Church, providing a much needed social welfare function for the African-American community.<sup>47</sup> In July 1911, when the 27<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Negro Grand Lodge of the Knights of Pythias and the 12<sup>th</sup> annual session of its women's auxiliary, the Grand Court of Calanthe, met in Cape Girardeau, the men met in the Masonic Hall on Sprigg Street while the women met at St. James.<sup>48</sup> In addition to providing an important community meeting place, St. James AME Church also provided entertainment for its members. Two additional choirs were added under Reverend W.H. Lacey during the late 1920s, allowing for additional outlets of self-expression and entertainment.<sup>49</sup>

St. James AME Church played a critical role in delivering services to the region's black residents when the Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927 displaced thousands of individuals. Emergency aid, like so many aspects of life in Cape Girardeau, was dealt with in a segregated fashion and so black residents could not count on receiving help from local agencies providing social services to whites. Cots and oil stoves were installed in the basement of St. James, and many of the black refugees stayed at the church. Although the black Second Baptist Church also participated in the relief effort, Rev. McPike, of St. James, took the lead in organizing the relief efforts for blacks. Clothing provided by the general relief effort for whites, which operated out of the state

<sup>45</sup> Cape Girardeau Federal Census 1910, 1900 Daniels, interview, 2005; and Duncan, interview, 2005.

<sup>46</sup> "St. James Church Being Remodeled," *Southeast Missourian*, August 7, 1926.

<sup>47</sup> Lambert.

<sup>48</sup> "Out of the Past: July 25, 1911," *Southeast Missourian*, July 25, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Lambert.

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college's Houck Field House, was distributed to blacks through the operation at St. James.<sup>50</sup>

St. James AME Church also served as the location for high school graduation ceremonies at least into the 1930s. Lincoln High School, the only African-American high school in the county, was constructed in 1890. Although the school building was significantly remodeled ca. 1916, it did not have a facility large enough to support families and friends of those graduating. St. James AME Church, with the largest communal facility, and its continued devotion to education, held commencement exercises in its building for many years.<sup>51</sup>

The Great Depression in Southeast Missouri was particularly difficult. Crop failures, job loss, and loss of property were common. Nationally, the unsurpassed growth and prosperity of the 1920s caused many pastors, eager to attract new members, to mortgage their buildings in order to remodel. With the arrival and continued difficulty of the Depression, nearly three-quarters of urban African-American churches across the country reached their financial limit.<sup>52</sup> Although St. James AME Church continued to be active, adding men's and ladies' choruses, an usher board, and preparing for another annual conference in 1932, it too faced financial difficulty and was unable to remodel as it had in the past.<sup>53</sup> By 1936, St. James AME Church was heavily in debt, but under Reverend L.F. Greene, the congregation raised \$700 in 30 days and saved the building from being sold.<sup>54</sup> Compared to other institutions facing foreclosure and seizure during the Depression, the ability to raise enough funds to save the building suggests the value and importance of St. James within Cape Girardeau's African-American community.

Typical of AME churches throughout the country, St. James AME Church had several choirs, men's and women's clubs, garden clubs, business clubs, Sunday School, Masonic Lodge and the Ladies' auxiliary meetings, and as time went on, clubs and organizations that reflected or reacted to the social and political climates of the time. It is through interviews with parishioners that the role and significance of St. James AME Church can be truly appreciated as there was no black newspaper in Cape Girardeau and the white-owned newspapers often failed to carry news relating to the black

<sup>50</sup> "40 Negro Refugees Get Efficient Care and Help at Cape," *Southeast Missourian*, April 23, 1927; and, "59 Negro Refugees Being Cared for by Colored Folks Here," *Southeast Missourian*, April 27, 1927.

<sup>51</sup> *Southeast Missourian* Newspaper, *Images of the Past in the City of Roses* (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Southeast Missourian Newspaper, 1993), 61; "All Graduates of Lincoln to Go to College; Cape Colored Students to Continue Their Studies," *Southeast Missourian*, June 5, 1923; "Cobb School Graduates Are Presented Diplomas," *Southeast Missourian*, June 4, 1932.

<sup>52</sup> Lincoln, *The Black Church*, 119-120.

<sup>53</sup> Lambert.

<sup>54</sup> Lambert; "Out of the Past: February 19, 1937," *Southeast Missourian*, February 19, 2007.

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community.<sup>55</sup> With no entertainment outlets in or near Cape Girardeau for African Americans, attending St. James AME Church was an exciting social affair that often took all day.<sup>56</sup> During these social gatherings, the church would be standing room only, and people would gather outside the building. In addition to three choirs that attracted large crowds, St. James AME Church also had several charismatic reverends who preached and lead well, and were key to attracting new members.<sup>57</sup> In April 1936, as part of a community event, a “songfest” was held in the afternoon, with historical sketches of the songs being read aloud.<sup>58</sup> Because it was the largest African-American communal building in Cape Girardeau County, it was also able to host “big name groups,” such as Wings Over Jordan, a prominent African-American choir during the 1930s and 1940s, and the Reverend Joe Mays, “The Thunderbolt of the Midwest.”<sup>59</sup>

Evident in the interviews with long-time church members, youth were revered in St. James AME Church. Often a person’s first social appearance was in St. James AME Church when they were presented before the congregation at their baptism. Self-identity at St. James AME Church was taught through Sunday school classes, Youth Days, youth choirs, plays, and Easter Pageants.<sup>60</sup> Holidays, particularly for the children, were eagerly anticipated events, especially Christmas when a Christmas tree laden with gifts was placed at the front of the church. Many children looked forward to attending services at St. James, especially those in the rural areas, because it meant coming to Cape Girardeau the night before and staying with relatives before spending the entire day, with a morning service, followed by lunch, entertainment, and later services.<sup>61</sup> As children grew and went to college, the emphasis on education was again evident in St. James AME Church. Although the congregation gave money weekly to Wilberforce University, scholarships and funds were raised to send students to other universities as well.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Tony Rehagen, “Civil Rights movement causes mid-century split in coverage; Civil rights movement brought black people into the newspaper pages,” pp. 8G and 12G, *Southeast Missourian*, October 3, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Lincoln, *The Black Church*, 55; Daniels, interview, 2005; and Duncan, interview, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Daniels, interview, 2005; Duncan, interview, 2005; Lincoln, *The Black Church*, 117.

<sup>58</sup> “Out of the Past: April 26, 1936,” *Southeast Missourian*, April 26, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Daniels, interview, 2005; Duncan, interview, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Daniels, interview, 2005; Duncan, interview, 2005; Debra Mitchell-Braxton, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006.

<sup>61</sup> Daniels, interview, 2005; Duncan, interview, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> Clara Daniels, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Louise Duncan, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Karenya Jenkins-Stitt, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Reverend Deborah Thornton, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Karen Mitchell, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Mitchell-Braxton, interview; Astoria T. Jetter, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Joan M. King, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006.

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As Cape Girardeau moved into the mid-twentieth century, significant changes were in store not only for the dominant white society, but for the local African-American community as well.<sup>63</sup> As with other cities in the South, Cape Girardeau began to experience African-American emigration north.<sup>64</sup> Few opportunities for black advancement existed in Cape Girardeau, and outside of a single movie theater—where blacks were required to use a side entrance—and the local African-American churches, Cape Girardeau's black population had no outlets for entertainment. Tired of menial and poor paying jobs, as well as the inability to hold respected positions such as store clerk or manager, Cape Girardeau's African-American population began to seek opportunities elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> Significantly improved educational and economic opportunities existed in cities such as St. Louis, Detroit, or Chicago, spurring what has come to be known as the Second Great Migration as African Americans throughout the South migrated in search of a better life.<sup>66</sup> In addition, during World War II, many of Cape Girardeau's African Americans moved west and worked the shipyards in Washington and Oregon.<sup>67</sup> Further facilitating emigration was Cape Girardeau's strategic location along US Highway 61 and proximity to the Illinois Central Railroad. As a result, the African-American population in Cape Girardeau dropped from approximately 1400 to 900 persons between 1940 and 1952.<sup>68</sup>

During this period of emigration and lowered church attendance, St. James AME Church became encumbered in debt and in significant need of repairs.<sup>69</sup> Under Reverend C.L. Williams, however, the mortgage was paid, and a surplus of \$523.74 was used to redecorate the church. The burning of the mortgage in August 1945 was a significant event, celebrated by the congregation (See Figure 7). As Cape Girardeau's African-American population continued to migrate north, those left behind were informed of jobs, housing, and other pertinent events in far off St. Louis or Chicago through weekly letters shared at St. James AME Church.<sup>70</sup> For years, when Southeast Missouri State University held its teachers' conferences and workshops, out of town African-American teachers had no place to stay, eat, or relax in segregated Cape Girardeau. St. James AME Church would open its building, provide meals, and a place to relax between sessions on campus, and church members would provide lodging in

<sup>63</sup> Thomason and Associates, *Cape Girardeau Historic Preservation Plan*, Planning Services Division, Cape Girardeau Missouri, 1999.

<sup>64</sup> "Declining Negro Population Poses Major Problem Here," *Southeast Missourian*, February 2, 1952; Daniels, interview, 2006; Duncan, interview, 2006; Charlotte A. Wade, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Shirley L. Slaughter, interview by Celine Finney, Cape Girardeau, MO, October 19, 2006; Jetter, interview; and King, interview.

<sup>65</sup> "Declining Negro Population Poses Major Problem Here," *Southeast Missourian*, February 2, 1952.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*; Daniels, interview, 2006; Duncan, interview, 2006; Wade, interview; Slaughter, interview; Jetter, interview; King, interview.

<sup>67</sup> "Declining Negro Population Poses Major Problem Here," *Southeast Missourian*, February 2, 1952; Jetter, interview.

<sup>68</sup> "Declining Negro Population Poses Major Problem Here," *Southeast Missourian*, February 2, 1952.

<sup>69</sup> Lambert.

<sup>70</sup> Daniels, interview, 2005; Duncan, interview, 2005.

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their homes to African-American attendees.<sup>71</sup> Loyalty to the church, and comfort from services and socialization with family and friends guided St. James AME parishioners throughout the period of Jim Crow segregation in Cape Girardeau.

Like other segregated cities during the mid-twentieth century, Cape Girardeau began to change in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. During this time, St. James AME Church became a center of civil rights activity and discussion in Cape Girardeau. St. James AME Church provided space for guest orators and meetings for civil rights activists, such as when the Civic Forum met at St. James in 1952.<sup>72</sup> Although, according to historian Frank Nickell, "activity around Cape Girardeau was largely limited to discussion, registering to vote, church and organization membership and a movement to keep black students in school," St. James was an important part of the movement locally. Longtime resident Louise Duncan suggested that she "was very active in the movement through her church, St. James AME."<sup>73</sup> Also in the early- to mid-1960s, the local chapter of the NAACP was formed at St. James AME Church, and several early, influential meetings were held here.<sup>74</sup> When President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the Masons held a memorial service.<sup>75</sup> Like other African-American churches in Missouri, including Olive Chapel AME Church in Kirkwood, Missouri (NR 4/20/2004), a memorial service was held in honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he was assassinated; and St. James has continued to celebrate the legacy of Dr. King up to the present day.<sup>76</sup>

An indication of how important St. James AME had become to the lives of African Americans, not only in Cape Girardeau but throughout the region, is revealed in the activities leading up to the church's preparation for a second century of service to the community. A series of events in 1962 celebrating the church's 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary included a banquet, several public programs, and the dedication of a new Wurlitzer organ with a high-fidelity cabinet attended by representatives of churches from the county and Illinois.<sup>77</sup> Plans were announced in May of that year to completely refurbish the church. According to the newspaper, the plans called for "the exterior walls to be sandblasted, cracks repaired, re-stuccoing, windows repaired or replaced, new front

<sup>71</sup> Daniels, interview, 2006; Duncan, interview, 2006; Mitchell-Braxton, interview; Jetter, interview; King, interview.

<sup>72</sup> "Out of the Past: May 12, 1952," *Southeast Missourian*, May 12, 2002.

<sup>73</sup> Tony Rehagen, "Civil Rights movement causes mid-century split in coverage; Civil rights movement brought black people into the newspaper pages," pp. 8G and 12G, *Southeast Missourian*, October 3, 2004.

<sup>74</sup> Mitchell-Braxton, interview.

<sup>75</sup> Notes from Dan Schoeneberg's interviews from St. James AME Church Members, 1994, handwritten manuscript in possession of author.

<sup>76</sup> Daniels, interview, 2006; Duncan, interview, 2006; Mitchell-Braxton, interview; Jetter, interview; King, interview; Olive Chapel National Register Nomination.

<sup>77</sup> "Out of the Past: March 11, 1962," *Southeast Missourian*, March 11, 2012.

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doors installed, the existing tower repaired, and all surfaces painted; the sanctuary interior will also be renovated.”<sup>78</sup> When the work was done, a homecoming celebration was held in October and over 1,500 people were reported to be attendance for the re-laying of the repaired 1892 cornerstone, which had been removed during the 1926 renovation. Guests were reported to have come from “Poplar Bluff, Commerce, Jackson, Sikeston, Charleston, Unity, Illinois, St. Louis, Arkansas and Cairo.”<sup>79</sup> St. James AME Church, and the African-American community of Cape Girardeau and the region, were ready to face the challenges of a second century of service.

Of the two urban African-American churches constructed immediately after the Civil War in Cape Girardeau—and the only AME congregation to ever be established in Cape Girardeau—St. James AME Church is the only one to remain in continuous use. Today, the congregation’s members are fourth and fifth generation descendants of the early St. James AME congregation.<sup>80</sup> St. James AME Church and its congregation not only continue to hold religious services, and have a choir and a Sunday school, but they also continue to support community activities and organizations important to the black community, such as the NAACP and the Citywide Martin Luther King Celebration Committee; and they continue to reach out locally to help those in need, such as by providing bus tickets to those needing to reach family.<sup>81</sup> The freedman’s community that developed on Cape Girardeau’s northern city limit placed St. James AME Church at the center of its activities spiritually, communally, and physically, and it has remained there ever since.

St. James AME Church’s congregation and building are among the oldest in Missouri, and pre-date seven of the nine previously National Register listed AME churches in Missouri by a decade or more.<sup>82</sup> The remaining two National Register listed AME churches formed congregations in 1855 and 1860 and had church buildings erected in 1859 and 1865.<sup>83</sup> Built in 1875 and enlarged in 1892, St. James AME Church, Cape Girardeau’s only AME church, continues to house an active, vibrant congregation—a congregation in the midst of celebrating 150 years of service to Cape Girardeau and its black community.

<sup>78</sup>“Out of the Past: May 6, 1962,” *Southeast Missourian*, May 6, 2012.

<sup>79</sup> “1,500 Participate in Homecoming,” *Southeast Missourian*, October 8, 1962.

<sup>80</sup> Daniels, interview, 2006; Duncan, interview, 2006; Mitchell-Braxton, interview; Jetter, interview; King, interview; Jenkins-Stitt, interview; and Wade, interview.

<sup>81</sup> Redeffler, “Small church, big history.”

<sup>82</sup> Missouri listed National Register nominations for A.M.E. Church of New Haven; Benton Avenue A.M.E. Church, 2001; Bethel Chapel A.M.E. Church, 1995; Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2004; Quinn Chapel A.M.E. Church, 1974; St. Matthew’s Chapel A.M.E. Church, 1989; St. Paul AME Church, 1980.

<sup>83</sup> Missouri listed National Register nominations for Campbell Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1997; African Church St. Charles, 1980.

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St. James AME Church
Name of Property
Cape Girardeau, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Beginning at the southwest corner of the property at Clyde Street, continuing 45 feet, thence north 197 feet, 6 inches, thence west 45 feet, thence 197 feet, 6 inches to point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

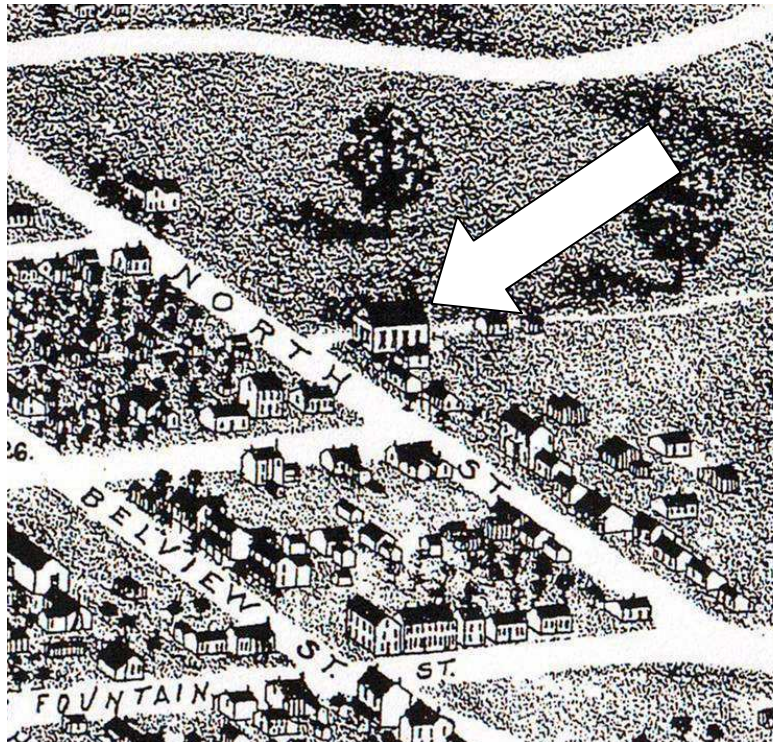
The boundary is the parcel historically associated with St. James AME Church within the city limits of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and is Area 16, Map 719, Section 00, Block 23, Parcel 01200.

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Figure 1



Source: Bird's Eye View, Cape Girardeau, 1880, Special Collections and Archives, Southeast Missouri State University.

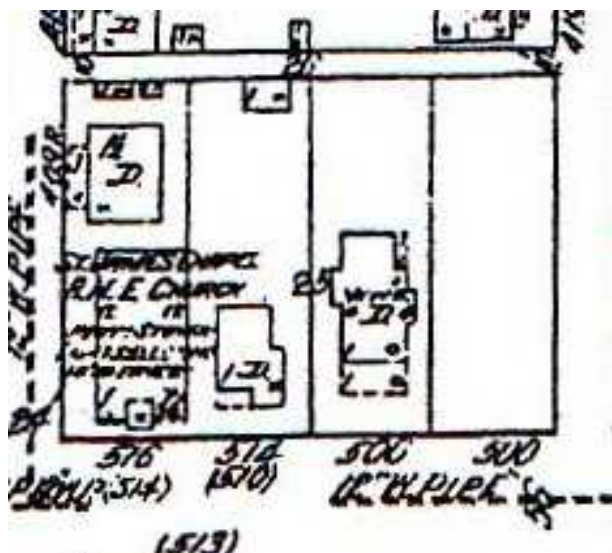


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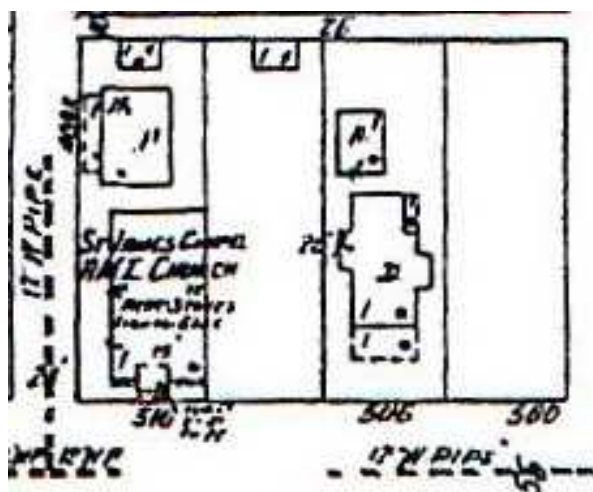
St. James AME Church
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N/A
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Figure 4



Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, August, 1915.

Figure 5



Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, January, 1931.

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St. James AME Church

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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 6



St. James AME Church, 1930s. Photo courtesy of *Southeast Missourian*.

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St. James AME Church

Name of Property

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Figure 7



Mortgage Burning, August 5, 1945. Note the original light fixtures above basement door, and relative size and scale of fixtures flanking the arched opening. Photo Source: St. James AME Church.

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St. James AME Church

Name of Property

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County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 8



St. James AME Church Sunday School, 1940s. Note historic light fixtures. Photo Source: St. James AME Church.

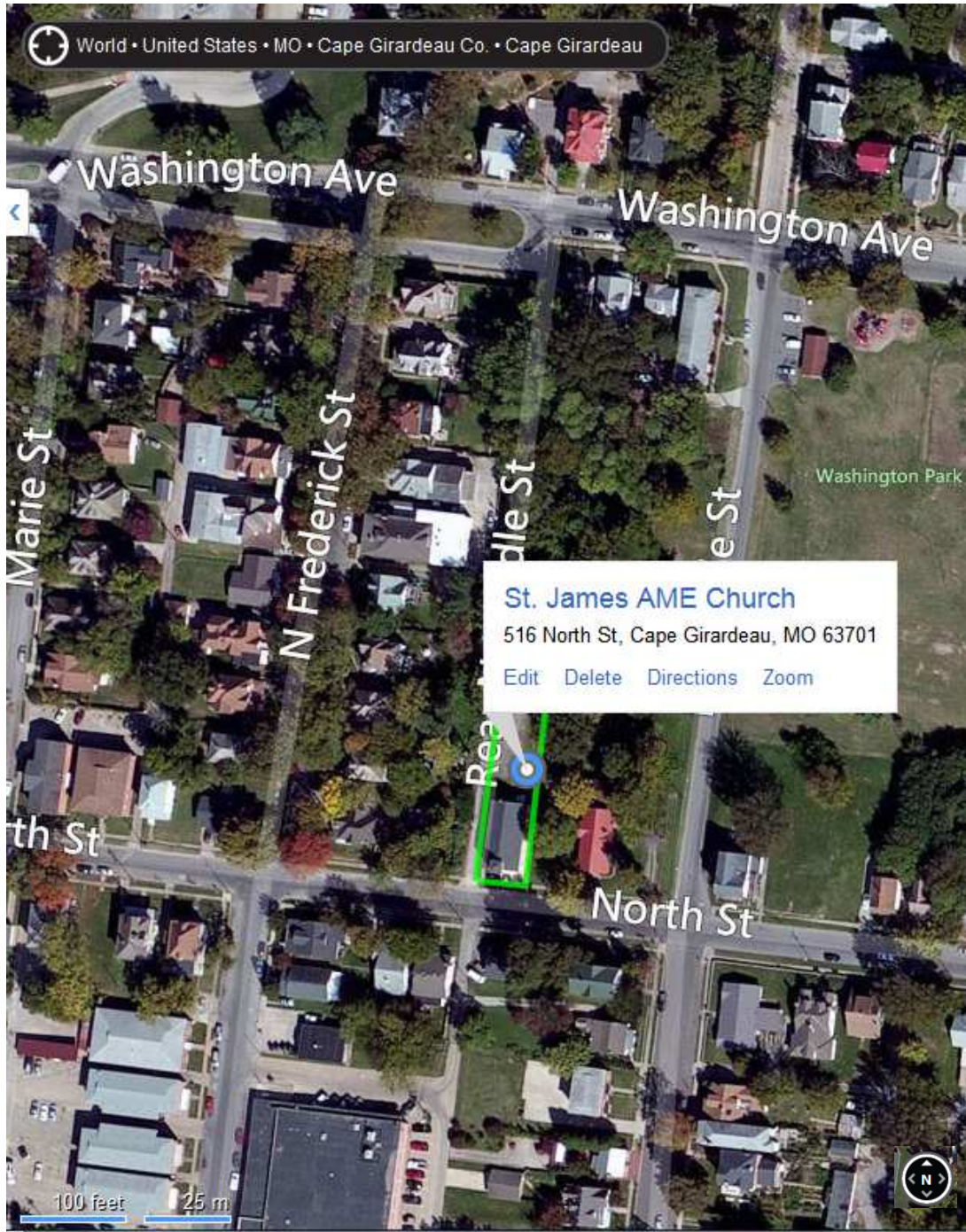
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St. James AME Church
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Figure 9

Location Map



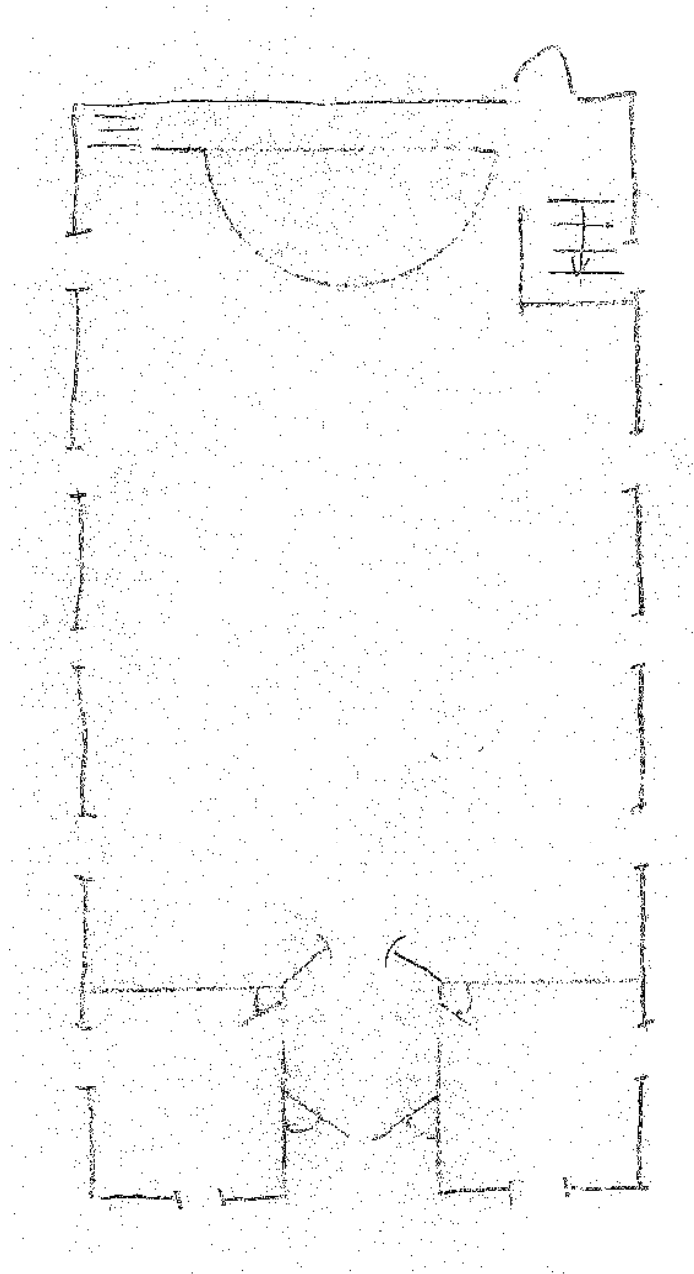
National Register of Historic Places  
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Section number Figures Page 32

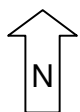
St. James AME Church
Name of Property
Cape Girardeau, Missouri
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Figure 10

Floor Plan



(Not to scale)



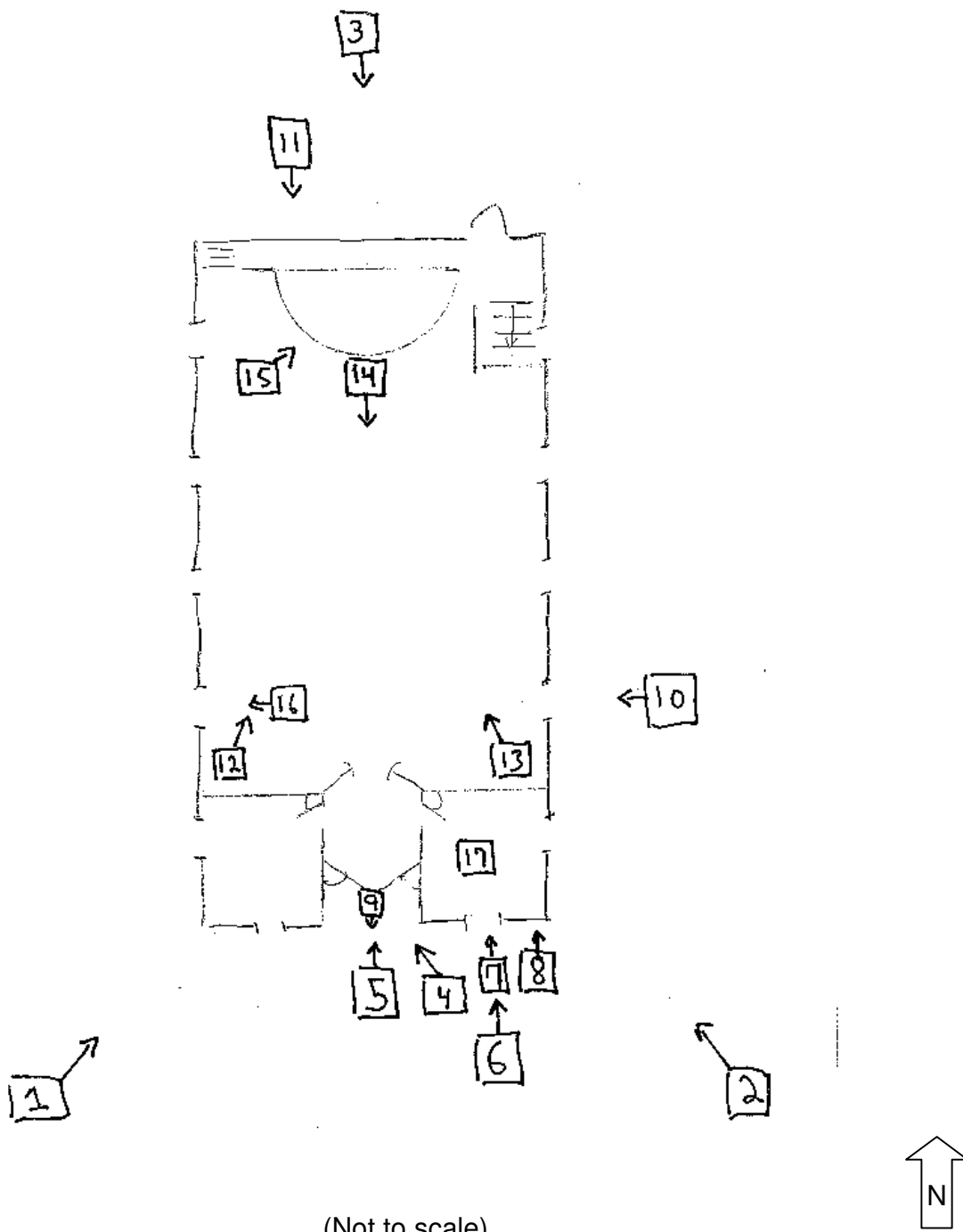
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Figure 11

Photo Key





20 00

4134

4133

Mile 53 +

CAPE GIRARDEAU CO  
ALEXANDER CO

4132

Zone 16  
Easting 276330  
Northing 4132201  
ST. JAMES AME  
CHURCH  
CAPE GIRARDEAU,  
CAPE GIRARDEAU CO.,  
MO

4131

4130

17' 30"

4130

146

146

330

330

24

T 14 S  
R 4 E



**ST. JAMES**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
**CHURCH**

SUNDAY SCHOOL  
8:30 A.M.

CHURCH WORSHIP SERVICE  
10:00 A.M.

BIBLE STUDY  
THURSDAY 6:00 P.M.

WORSHIP  
WILL BE HELD BY MOBILE





ST. JAMES  
METHODIST  
CHURCH







ST. JAMES CHURCH  
1850

W. J. WOODS  
ARCHT.

ST. JAMES CHAPEL  
N.E. CHURCH FOUNDED BY  
REV. F. BROOKS. 1861.  
BUILT BY REV. S. RICE. 1875.  
REBUILT BY REV. C. S. HUNTER. 1892.



WINDMILL  
401920



26



WAVE CHURCH  
ERECTED BY  
REV. S. F. GEE  
A. D. 1875.















God Our Father  
Christ Our Redeemer  
Mary Our Mother





