

JONES TABERNACLE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
(Union Methodist Episcopal Church)
2021 Diamond St., north side between N. Woodstock and N. Lambert Streets
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6695

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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Location: 2021 Diamond Street, north side between N. Woodstock and N. Lambert streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Significance: The Jones Tabernacle African Methodist Episcopal Church remains an important landmark to both North Philadelphia's past and present. Designed by the prominent firm of Hazelhurst and Huckel the building's well-articulated exterior underscores Diamond Street's earlier life as one of the most prestigious thoroughfares in late-nineteenth-century Philadelphia. The building's continued use and physical preservation attests to the strength of African-American church congregations in the area, even while surrounding blocks deteriorated.

Description:

Prominently sited on Diamond Street, the U-shaped church complex was designed in the *Rundbogenstil*, made vastly popular at the end of the nineteenth century through the many internationally-known works of Henry Hobson Richardson. The local firm of Hazelhurst and Huckel were clearly influenced by such work with this building, however, the highly active exterior also nods to Philadelphia's "busy" high-Victorian design tendencies. Unlike most other contemporary rusticated church structures in which most of the trim is of smooth, dressed stones, the rock-faced ashlar walls in this building are largely trimmed in rock-faced stones as well. The key feature of the *Rundbogenstil*, of course, is the round-arched opening, of which there is a multiplicity across the exterior of the church, Sunday school, and parsonage. Given the non-liturgical emphasis of Methodist churches, the architects employed an auditory plan with one large volume of space; four iron columns carry the complex open trusswork for the roof. A horseshoe-shaped gallery extends along the rear and sides of the space. The building has been meticulously cared-for and remains in exceptional condition. An early gas and electric chandelier and similar sconces survive in remarkably good shape. The roof is still covered in slates. Two metal cages have been placed around the electric globes flanking the main entry.

History:

Roundels above the massive arch framing the main doors bear the dates "1801" and "1888." Presumably, the earlier year records the date of the congregation's formation elsewhere in Philadelphia. By the 1880s, the congregation—perhaps well-heeled given the purchase of a site on Diamond Street, a thoroughfare developed with high social aspirations—planned a

move to fashionable North Philadelphia.¹ In 1875, the streets perpendicular to the 2000 block of Diamond Street were platted, but not opened; E. D. Stokes and A. R. Little were noted as the owners of the property.²

The congregation retained the services of Edward P. Hazelhurst and Samuel Huckel, Jr., who had founded their firm by 1881.³ Hazelhurst pursued some architectural education at the University of Pennsylvania, and later apprenticed with both Theophilus Chandler and Frank Furness.⁴ Huckel trained in the office of Benjamin Price, a noted church architect and it is likely he was responsible for the bulk of their ecclesiastical commissions.⁵ The church was constructed beginning in 1887 and nominally completed in 1888.⁶

Historian: James A. Jacobs

Works Consulted:

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¹See Donna J. Rilling, "Church of the Advocate," HABS No. PA-6672 and "Church of the Advocate, Rectory," HABS No. PA-6672-C, and James A. Jacobs "1800 Block Diamond Street (Houses)," HABS No. PA-6677 and "3200 Block Diamond Street (Houses & Storefront)," HABS No. PA-6681, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, 2000, for related information detailing development along Diamond Street.

²*City Atlas of Philadelphia by Wards, Complete in 7 Volumes*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, 1875).

³Sandra L. Tatman and Roger W. Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1985), 350.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, 397.

⁶Randall Baron, "Diamond Street Historic District Nomination Form," Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 29 October 1985, inventory, 5, and *Baist's Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, Complete in One Volume* (Philadelphia: G. Wm. Baist, 1888).