

Old Zion Baptist Church
E side US Rte. 29, S of intersection
with Ste. Rte. 775
North Garden vicinity
Albemarle County
Virginia

HABS VA-995

HABS,
VA,
2-NOGAR.V,
1-

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

REDUCED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013

Addendum to
Old Zion Baptist Church
North Garden vicinity
Albemarle County
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

OLD ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

HABS No. VA-995

Location: Between U. S. Rte. 29 and Va. Rte. 775, approx. .5 mi S. of intersection of U. S. 29 and Va. Rte. 692. North Garden vicinity, Albemarle County, Virginia

Present Owner: Trustees of Zion Baptist Church.

Present Occupant: None.

Present Use: Storage for church. Demolished by 1980.

Statement of Significance: The Zion Baptist Church has served the black community of North Garden for over one hundred years. The combination of its sophisticated decagonal shape and the simple vernacular wooden structure make it the only building of its kind in Albemarle County. There are plans to destroy this unique building in the near future.

I. Historical Information

On February 21, 1871, 7/8 of an acre was sold to the trustees of the "North Garden Colored Free Church." The trustees were these people: Earlett Burley, Ira Yancey, Frank Henry, A. Howard, and Robert Brown. A man named John Toole sold them the land for 50\$ with these terms: "Upon the following trust and conditions and none other - That the said piece as parcel of Land shall be used for the erection of a place of Religious Worship for the North Garden Colored Free Church and for a place for the Burial of the Colored people. It being distinctly understood by the granter and Grantees to this Deed, that there shall be no Store, Tavern, booths, Liquor Store or trading or selling of any character or description allowed or permitted to be carried on or conducted on the said tract of Land."

The church was built in the same year, 1871. The architect is unknown. The first pastor was Reverend J.H. Bowles. The original structure consisted of the decagon-shaped building. It was used for church meetings and Sunday School; baptism was performed in the creek below the church.

In 1913, M.Y. and Ethel Sutherland sold 2 acres to the church trustees for \$50. The trustees at this time were Ira Yancey, Garret Henry, George Carter, Joseph Shelton, and Washington Walker. In 1932 the membership of Zion Baptist Church was 100 to 150. An addition was built on the back end of the church sometime before 1932. The church and the schoolhouse nearby were an integral part of the community.

But gradually the church members felt the need for a larger building. They built a new concrete block church less than 100 feet away from the old one. They moved over to the new church in 1960, and have since used the old church for storage. In 1969, Zion Baptist Church sold "1.69 acres more or less" to the State Highway Commissioner for a State Highway Project. The cost was \$2,348. The present pastor is Reverend Albert Walker. The church property now consists of 1.18 acres, with the two buildings, a creek and a cemetery. The old wooden church is in poor condition and will probably be torn down shortly.

Since the church record have been lost, little more is known about the structure. A local legend (which we couldn't verify) was related to us by Mrs. Elizabeth Hart Kelley of Charlottesville. The story says that a carnival came through North Garden about 100 years ago. They built a platform and set up a merry-go-round on top of it. The rural folks had never seen the likes of this merry-go-round; one woman from the nearby hills was so captivated that she sold her only cow for \$30 and rode on the merry-go-round until she had spent it all. Then, when the carnival moved away, the Zion Baptist Church was built on the site of the merry-go-round. If this tale were indeed true, it might serve to explain the unusual shape of the church.

Sources of Information

1. Written Material from Deed Office, Charlottesville Courthouse
 - a. Deed Book #66, page 345.
 - b. Deed Book #160, page 324.
 - c. Deed Book #453, page 520.
2. Interviews
 - a. Sadie Carter, clerk of Zion Baptist Church, Charlottesville, Virginia
 - b. Elizabeth Hart Kelley, who employs Linda Robinson, a member of the Zion Baptist Church congregation, Charlottesville, Virginia
3. Photographs from the Acheson-Hench negative file, Manuscripts Division of Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia
4. U.S.G.S. topographical map of Covesville quadrant, 7.5 minutes, 1967

II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a nineteenth century vernacular structure built in typical wood frame construction.
2. Condition of Fabric: Poor. Demolition is scheduled for summer, 1975.

B. Description of Exterior

1. The plan of the main church is a decagon, having ten equal sides. Each side is approximately 12 feet long, and the sanctuary is forty feet across. The roof of the main church hips up to a small steeple centered over the sanctuary. An addition was made to the building's west side sometime between 1871 and 1932.
2. Foundations: The main church has a lower foundation of mortared field stone capped with 4 courses of brick laid in common bond. The brick is pierced on several sides with air vents, and there is access to a crawl space through an opening in the stone on the building's southwest side. The addition has a poured concrete foundation.
3. Structural system, framing: 2"x10" floor joists, 20" on center, span north - south, bearing on the foundation walls and 2 equally spaced wood beams. The walls are framed with 3"x4" wood studs, approximately 14" on center with diagonal braces. The roof framing has primary rafters at the corners with purlins and intermediate rafters between.
4. Wall finish and color: 6" clapboard siding painted white. There are 2+3/4" wide corner boards at the angles.
5. Doorways and doors: The entrance is located in the east side of the church. It is hung with 2 five-panel doors above which is a semi-diagonal shaped transom echoing the building's plan. Most of the hardware has been removed. There is a five-panel door into the sacristy in the addition. It has the same surrounds as the windows.
6. Windows: Each side of the main church (except the east and west sides) has a double-hung wood window centered in the side. The windows have two-over-two-light sash. The surrounds are very simple.

7. Steps: There are concrete steps before the entrance on the building's east side and before the door into the sacristy in the addition.
8. Roof: The roofs of the main church and the addition are tin.
9. Steeple: The lower stage of the steeple is decagonal, with clapboard walls and corner boards. The upper stage is covered with wood shingles.
10. Chimneys: Two chimneys protrude above the roof on the building's north and south sides. They are brick and have a simple cap.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: The main church consists solely of the sanctuary. There is a platform for the altar and organ (which has been removed) on the west side. The addition on the west side contains a shallow apse and a small sacristy.
2. Flooring: Wood flooring about 4 1/2" wide in random lengths. In places this has been covered with carpet or linoleum.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: In the sanctuary and the apse the walls have 2 1/2" wide tongue and groove panelling applied at a 45 degree angle to the floor. The same siding applied parallel to the walls covers the sloping ceiling. The sacristy walls are covered with the same siding applied horizontally. Walls are painted white and the ceiling is blue. The chimneys are brick covered with plaster.
4. Doorways and doors: The only interior door is a five-panel door leading from the apse into the sacristy. Its surrounds are the same as those of the windows in the addition.
5. Windows: Interior window surrounds in the main church are very plain. Those in the addition have slightly more elaborate casing mouldings.
6. Trim: The only trim is a base and corner boards. All interior trim is painted grey.
7. Furniture: There is no furniture in the building. The pews were moved to the new church building where they are still in use. Also in the new church building is the organ, powered by foot pedals, which was used in the old church.

8. Lighting: The remains of a brass chandelier hang from the apex of the ceiling. There are also several light sockets on the walls. All wiring was added after the church was built and it is completely exposed.

9. Heating: The old church was heated by two stoves (probably wood-burning stoves) which had flues attached to the chimneys.

D. Site: The new church building is to the south of the old church. To the north of the old church at the bottom of a hill is a creek, formerly used for baptisms. Beyond the creek is the cemetery, and to the north of the cemetery is an old schoolhouse, now used as a private residence by Oleta Bunch. The Zion Baptist Church property is bounded on the west by U.S. Route 29, on the north, by the property of Oleta Bunch. It is bounded on the east by Virginia Route 775, and on the south by a patch of woodland.

III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was developed by students at the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, under the direction of K. Edward Lay, in 1975. The documentation was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey, and was neither produced under the supervision of HABS nor edited by HABS staff.