

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church

Other names/site number: Skillman AME Church

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 189 Hollow Road

City or town: Montgomery Township State: New Jersey County: Somerset

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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 X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:	_____ Date
_____ 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	

Mount Zion AME Church
 Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
 County and State

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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

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.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE - museum

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

No Style

Materials:

(enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property
Foundation: stone
Walls: wood, weatherboard
Roof: asphalt

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is a simple, one-story, one-room, wood-frame, front-gabled building located on a rural, winding road at the base of the Sourland Mountain in Montgomery Township, Somerset County, New Jersey. The church’s small size and vernacular interpretation is representative of the economic means of its small African-American congregation at the turn of the 20th century when it was built. Both the exterior and interior of Mount Zion feature little to no ornamentation, with what little architectural details being simple adaptations of typical church features. The building’s rectangular double-hung wood windows, for example, contain wood-board stiles to give the appearance of arched units. The interior of the church features evenly-spaced pews facing a central, raised pulpit platform. The back supports of the pews are reversible, allowing them to be rearranged to face forward to the altar and communion rail, or backward to face other congregants. In this way, the building takes advantage of all available space and its functionality as a social space is made evident. A non-contributing, circa 1960, single-story, community hall is located to the rear of the approximately 0.21-acre lot. Mount Zion AME Church has seen few alterations since its construction between 1899 and 1902 and retains its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, location, feeling and association.

Narrative Description

Mount Zion AME Church is located in Montgomery Township, Somerset County, at the southern base of Sourland Mountain (Photograph 1, Figure 1). It is about one-half mile west of a former railroad station stop known as Skillman, after which the church vicinity takes its name. The immediate area is rural and wooded though marked by occasional swaths of farmland. Some residential development spanning the mid-19th to late-20th century is limited to the sides of nearby roads, including Hollow Road. The church is on a 0.21-acre lot facing west on Hollow Road, approximately 15 feet from the street, and is accessed by a dirt drive extending eastward from Hollow Road. To the rear of the church is a small unpaved parking area and a non-contributing, circa 1960, single-story, wood-frame community hall (Photograph 2). The community hall is in poor condition and in the process of being removed. Hollow Road is sunken about three feet below the elevation of the church and the surrounding landscape, which provides the church with the appearance of being slightly elevated. Mature trees border the north and east property lines, while the lot itself remains fairly bare excluding the presence of an older tree at the northeast corner the church. To the south, on an adjacent property, is a field enclosed by a wood-plank fence.

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

Mount Zion is a one-story, one-bay-wide and three-bay deep, gable-front building (Photograph 3, also see attached plans). The asphalt shingle-clad roof is steeply pitched with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters (Photograph 4). An interior brick chimney projects from the north roof slope. The building is rectangular plan of 20 feet by 30 feet, excluding an overhanging apse on the rear elevation, which is spanned by an asphalt-shingled pent roof (Photograph 5). The exterior is clad in vertically-laid, 9.5-inch-wide beadboard, painted white. The only exterior ornamentation is a sawn picket detail visible in the gable ends of the façade and rear elevation. A single doorway, which is spanned by a transom light, serves as the façade's only opening. A plain wood door, painted red, contains a cross-shaped window. It is spanned by a gable-front hood supported by turned-wood posts on a concrete platform (Photograph 6). The platform bears an inscription of "7/15/60"; it is surmised that the platform and the hood above it were added in 1960. A non-historic outdoor bulletin board is contained within a plexi-glass fronted box attached to the façade to the right of the main door. A rear entrance featuring a three-light transom is located in the south bay and is accessed by a concrete stair, also likely dating to 1960. Three 4-foot-wide, 5-foot 5-inch tall double-hung, two-over-one sash, wood windows are evenly-spaced along both side elevations. An identical window is located in the north bay of the rear elevation. The top sash of each window is designed to give the appearance of an arch, with the panes shaped semi-circularly to accommodate expanded, curved stiles (Photograph 7). The window glass, which appears to be original, is textured and frosted. A parged stone foundation is visible above-grade. A carved brownstone cornerstone at the southwest corner of the façade reads, "Nov. 19, 1899" (Photograph 8).

The church interior features a tall, truncated, flat ceiling beneath a small attic space. Two modern ceiling fans and a modest, four-light chandelier are lined parallel with the roof ridge and central aisle (Photograph 9). The ceiling and walls are lined in darkly stained, vertical beadboard (Photograph 10). The window and door frames have simple, wood moldings. The floor beneath the contemporary carpet is hardwood. The interior brick chimney or flue, painted white, is located in the center of the north elevation and is connected to a space heater placed between the pews. The central aisle is bound by seven pews to the south and six to the north (Photograph 11). Each pew features simple bench ends with scrollwork caps. Some pews feature hinged, reversible back supports (Photographs 12 and 13).

The apse projects approximately 2 feet from the rear elevation, and is accessed by one stair bordered by a simple communion rail with a turned wood balustrade (Photograph 14). The pulpit on a raised platform is flanked to the north by an electric organ and a piano. Interior windows and doors have simple rolling vinyl pull-down shades and red fabric valances with gold trim. The interior walls are adorned with framed religious scenes, portraits of former pastors and certificates and plaques recognizing individuals who have made contributions to the church.

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

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.)

- 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE
ETHNIC HERITAGE - BLACK

Period of Significance

1899-1958

Significant Dates

1899-1902

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

Architect/Builder
Hight, Elmer (builder)

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, built in 1899-1902 on Hollow Road in Montgomery Township, Somerset County, is a small, modest, one-room, rural black church. It represents the evolution of African-American heritage in the Sourland region of central New Jersey. The Sourlands were a historically remote, hilly, and rough terrain. Following the gradual emancipation of New Jersey's slaves beginning in 1804, the Sourlands attracted, along with many poor whites, a free black population that lived on the edges of New Jersey's economy. They worked small farms, orchards, quarries, potteries and sawmills. From the 1860s to the early 1900s, the Sourlands supported a thriving peach industry with African-Americans becoming known for weaving peach baskets and providing farm labor during the summer harvest. Blight crippled the peach industry starting about 1900, eventually leading to the abandonment of orchards. An outward migration took place as the population of the Sourlands moved off to towns and cities in search of work. A diminishing number of African-American families persisted carrying on rural traditions, much of it centered about activities at Mount Zion AME. The church played a pivotal role in sustaining ethnic identity since there were few other African-American institutions around which to organize independent social, cultural or religious activities. Due to dwindling membership, the church stopped holding regular services sometime in the 1930s or 1940s. By 1958, the end of the church's period of significance, Mount Zion AME had no pastor and its fate was uncertain. In 1958, a new period in the church's development was inaugurated. A small group of African-American families and Sourlands descendants still living in the area decided to re-open the church for regular Sunday services. The church offered a place to continue African-American social traditions including regular family and community reunions. Soon the one-room Mount Zion AME Church began to be recognized as one of the few places left in the Sourlands to offer a unique physical reflection of the historical African-American experience of this sub-region of New Jersey. In 2005, the church closed due to dwindling attendance. It is currently under redevelopment as an African-American heritage museum.

Mount Zion AME Church is noteworthy for its material integrity, including interior and exterior finishes, reflecting a very modest, vernacular interpretation of rural black church architecture. The church's character-defining features are its simple wood-frame construction, vertical beaded-board siding, front-gable with centered entrance, gable-end picket detail, projecting rear apse, and false-arch windows. The interior also features significant material finishes including gambrel ceiling and walls covered in dark-stained vertical beadboard, simple wood moldings, hardwood floors, and wood pews with reversible back supports. This architectural pattern physically identifies the building as a church in a most simple and unassuming way. This architecture befits the modest means of the rural African-Americans who conceived the building as a place of worship and socialization. Mount Zion AME Church is recommended eligible at the local level under Criterion A for its historic association with the ethnic heritage of African-

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ

County and State

Americans in the Sourlands and under Criterion C as a humble specimen of rural black church architecture with a high level of material and design integrity as compared to other surviving examples of the rural black church property type in New Jersey. The church's significance derives from its historical associations and architecture and not its religious affiliation per Criteria Consideration A.

Historical Background of African-American Heritage in the Sourlands

New Jersey's Sourlands are an approximately 90-square-mile area dissected by a 17-mile-long, plateau-like ridge known as Sourland Mountain (max. elevation approximately 570 feet), extending eastward from the Delaware River at Lambertville, Hunterdon County to the western end of Hillsborough Township, Somerset County (Figure 1). The Sourlands compose parts of five townships – West Amwell and East Amwell, Hunterdon County; Hopewell, Mercer County; and Hillsborough and Montgomery, Somerset County. Settled in the early to mid-18th century by a mix of Dutch and English colonists, the Sourlands developed a cultural identity based on natural resources extraction, rural industries and small family farms separated by relatively even intervals. These farms generally were less prosperous than the farms of the surrounding valleys of the Delaware and Raritan watersheds. The very name Sourlands, which could be derived from the Dutch *sauer landt*, may suggest how ill-suited the soils and rough terrain were to traditional field crops, but the origins of the name are somewhat obscure.¹

Well into the first half of the 20th century, the Sourlands remained a remote part of New Jersey, known as a source of lumber, rock quarries and hard-scrabble farms. Its greatest period of economic prosperity was from the 1830s to the mid-1890s when peach orchards spread up the southern Mercer and Somerset county sides of the Sourlands and down the other side into Hunterdon County and on northward. Peaches were a major cash crop. By the 1880s, Hunterdon County had become the greatest peach growing region in New Jersey, if not the nation, claiming over two million peach trees, nearly half of the state's total. In the mid-1890s, an insect known as the San Jose scale, a pest imported from the West, reached Hunterdon County and the Sourlands. By 1899, Hunterdon County farmers had chopped down a million peach trees, and by 1909 only 300,000 trees were left. The center of New Jersey's peach industry shifted southward to escape the scale. While other parts of Hunterdon County turned to dairying and row crops, the peach

¹ Hubert G. Schmidt, *Agriculture in New Jersey, A Three Hundred Year History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973), pp. 13-14; East Amwell Bicentennial Committee, *A History of East Amwell, 1700-1800*, 2nd Edition (Flemington, N.J.: Hunterdon County Historical Society, 1979), pp. 1-98; Sourland Regional Citizens Planning Council, *The Sourland Legacy: A report by the Sourland Regional Citizens Planning Council* (Neshanic Station, N.J.: 1989), pp. 5-11, 14-19; Richard W. Hunter and Richard L. Porter, *Hopewell: A Historical Geography* (Titusville, N.J.: Township of Hopewell, Historic Sites Committee, 1990), pp. 13-18; Mt. Zion Methodist Church, *The Sourland Mountains – A Brief History*, on-line at www.mtzionnj.org [manuscript attributed to Heather, circa 1990, accessed September 2017]; T. James Luce, *New Jersey's Sourland Mountain* (Neshanic Station, N.J.: Sourland Planning Council, 2001); Anthony Lipari, *Sylvia Dubois, Put's Tavern and Buttonwood Corner: An Examination of Nineteenth-Century African American Life on Sourland Mountain*, M.A. Thesis, Monmouth University, West Long Branch, N.J., 2015, pp. 57-60.

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

blight crippled agriculture in the Sourlands. Rural farms and crossroads villages disappeared, and new forests began to grow over abandoned farmland.²

African-Americans were present in the Sourlands from the colonial period onwards, first as slaves to white landowners, and then as free blacks following the passage of New Jersey's gradual abolition law in 1804.³ Abolition provided opportunities for former slaves to seek freedom and it was about this time that a growing number of African-Americans took up residence in the Sourlands. The counties to the east, including Somerset and Middlesex counties, were in 1810 among New Jersey's largest remaining centers of slave ownership and this may account for the Sourlands attracting free blacks who might not have been able to afford to purchase prime farm land but might have been able to gain a small stakehold in the marginal grounds of the Sourlands. Escaped slaves also made their way to the Sourlands. The nearby towns of Hopewell and Pennington were documented stops on a branch of the Underground Railroad. African Americans were also working as laborers in Sourlands pottery, lumber and peach industries.⁴

The number of African-Americans living in the Sourlands is difficult to gauge because of the methodologies that were used in the 19th and early 20th centuries to collect census data. The data often lack sufficient specificity to determine if residents were living in the Sourlands sections of the townships or in the surrounding valleys and towns, however, some approximations are possible. The total African-American population of the townships that make up the Sourlands was never large; the number of individuals categorized by the census as "black" or "mulatto" is roughly estimated to have peaked around 500 during the middle third of the 19th century. Nor were African-Americans concentrated in one area of the Sourlands, as judged by mid-19th-century atlas maps and the distribution of blacks among the census records. Most lived on widely scattered farms although there were some clusters of perhaps as many as a half-dozen households living in proximity to one another. Both Pennington and Hopewell, the two larger towns to the south of the Sourlands, had minor concentrations of black households on certain streets. These families linked to the families on the mountain, often through churches and intermarriage. Some specific small crossroads villages in the Sourlands, like Buttonwood Corner, Stoutsburg and Minnietown, were noted as having small black communities, but none of these villages were exclusive black enclaves.

A Sourlands place name frequently associated with black settlement was Buttonwood Corner near the intersection of Zion-Wertsville Road and South Hill Road, with perhaps a third of its population living within about a half-dozen black households at about the time of the American

² Hubert G. Schmidt, *Rural Hunterdon, An Agricultural History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1946), pp. 133-136; John Cunningham, *Garden State: The Story of Agriculture in New Jersey* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955), pp. 137-38; Schmidt (1973), pp. 185-186; Lipari (2015), p. 68.

³ Schmidt (1946), pp. 243-255; Robert W. Craig, Black Historic Sites in New Jersey, submitted by the New Jersey Historical Commission (October 12, 1984), pp. 3-13, on file at the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.

⁴ Giles R. Wright, *Afro-Americans in New Jersey, A Short History* (Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1988), pp. 25-27; Hunter and Porter (1990), pp. 33-34; Sourland Regional Citizens Planning Council (1989), pp. 20-21; Lipari (2015), pp. 68-70.

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

Civil War. Although the number of black individuals was no more than three or four dozen, the crossroad was noted as having a black identity in a state where African-Americans averaged less than 5 percent of the total population over most of the 19th century.⁵ The crossroads itself was within East Amwell Township, but portions of the dispersed settlement also crossed well eastward into the townships of Hillsborough and Montgomery. Buttonwood Corner had a tavern until 1814, a store from the 1840s through the 1860s, and a one-room black school that was built prior to 1881. Buttonwood Corner was also the first location of the Mount Zion AME church from *circa* 1845 to 1890.⁶

With the complete collapse of the peach industry during the first decade of the 20th century, the many African-Americans who worked as farm laborers, orchard hands or basket makers struggled to hang on. A review of population census schedules for 1900 indicates the African-American population in the five townships making up the Sourlands had declined to no more than 270 individuals from its peak near 500 or so in the middle decades of the 19th century. Of these 270 individuals, it is difficult to gauge how many actually lived on the mountain, but it was probably a minority. Roughly half were listed as boarders within white-headed households where they worked as farm laborers or servants. Most of these blacks did not live on the mountain but on farms and in towns off the mountain. Some may have migrated to the mountain for seasonal work. This was a persistent demographic pattern, even as early as the 1830s a majority of African-Americans in Sourlands townships lived in households where they were the only black person, indicating their status as servants and farm laborers.⁷ In total, there were no more than 50 black-headed households in all of the five Sourlands townships by 1900.⁸ The African-American heads of families were presumably those most likely to own land, and it was apparently land ownership that tied some of these families more firmly to the Sourlands, while squatters, renters and boarders were more likely to move on and seek work elsewhere. By the 1930s, the African-American presence in the Sourlands had dwindled even more significantly. One reason may have been a general generational shift as younger generations left their parents' homes to seek social and economic opportunities no longer available in the Sourlands.⁹ By the late 1950s, a grouping of no more than a half-dozen families in the eastern Sourlands near Mount Zion AME Church was considered the only cohesive remnant of the community remaining. Over the next 50 years, these families and their descendants and friends sustained the Mount Zion AME Church and the memory of African-Americans in the Sourlands.

⁵ Ibid, p. 16; Lipari (2015), pp. 80-82.

⁶ Otley, Van Derveer & Keily, *Map of Somerset County, New Jersey, Entirely from Original Surveys* (Camden, N.J.: Lloyd Van Derveer, 1850); Samuel C. Cornell, *Map of Hunterdon County* (Lloyd Vanderveer and S.C. Cornell: 1851); Frederick W. Beers, *Atlas of Hunterdon County, New Jersey* (New York: Beers, Comstock & Cline, 1873) and *Atlas of Somerset County, New Jersey* (New York: Beers, Comstock & Cline, 1873) ; Craig (1984), pp. 32-33, 55; Lipari (2015), pp. 62-67.

⁷ Lipari (2015), pp. 81-82.

⁸ Census Place: East Amwell and West Amwell, Hunterdon County; Hillsborough and Montgomery, Somerset County; Hopewell, Mercer County, *1910 United States Federal Census* (database on-line at www.ancestry.com). Provo, Utah: 2004 [accessed August 2017]

⁹ Schmidt (1973), p. 236.

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

The First Mount Zion AME Church Congregation, the 1850s to the 1890s

In the early decades of the 19th century, a self-consciously African-American community developed in New Jersey, organized principally around churches. Salem City's Mount Pisgah AME opened in 1800 and is usually regarded as the oldest African-American church in New Jersey.¹⁰ The Mount Zion congregation in the Sourlands was formally affiliated to the AME in 1866, although it had existed as an independent African-American church since at least the mid- or late 1840s. The original church was located near Buttonwood Corner about 1 mile west of the Sourlands village of Rock Mill (Figure 2).¹¹ This church is noted as an "African Church" on the Otley, Van Derveer & Keily *Map of Somerset County, New Jersey*, published in 1850. The first Mount Zion AME Church was on the north or Hillsborough Township side of Zion-Wertsville Road just east of the county line between Somerset and Hunterdon counties, and about 2 miles northwest of the present-day location of the second Mount Zion AME church on Hollow Road that is the subject of this nomination.

The first Mount Zion AME has been associated with the black families who were living at Buttonwood Corner. The Mount Zion AME was quite possibly formed as blacks withdrew from the nearby Zion Methodist Episcopal Church, which had constructed a building known as Willow Chapel near Rock Mill on Zion-Wertsville Road in 1843. The post office at Rock Mill was renamed Zion around 1900 because the name Rock Mill conflicted with another post office name. AME church ministers from Pennington and Princeton reportedly began visiting Mount Zion as early as 1845. The church was referred to in AME records as "the Mountain" or "Sorrell Mountains" congregation.¹² The Mount Zion AME was officially affiliated to the AME in 1866 at a time when AME churches were spreading throughout the Northeast and Midwest. African-Americans sought out religious autonomy and escape from the interference and racism encountered in interactions with white Methodist leaders. The AME traced its origins to the Bethel AME, established in Philadelphia in 1794 by Richard Allen, Absalom Jones and others.¹³ Prior to the Civil War, the AME enjoyed its greatest success in larger towns and cities of the Northeast and Midwest, but during and after the Civil War, the AME entered its most significant period of denominational development, spreading its religious and cultural mission into rural areas of the North as well as reaching out to blacks in the former states of the Confederacy.

The Mount Zion AME fits a pattern of denominational expansion and outreach into what had historically been underserved rural areas and regions. A very active, early and well known AME church known as Bethel AME was established in the town of Pennington in 1816. Bethel AME

¹⁰ Craig (1984), p.5.

¹¹ Unfortunately, no official church records for the Mount Zion AME survive, so most of what is known comes from secondary sources, oral history (mostly collected in the 1960s or later) and fragmentary primary sources.

¹² Otley, Van Derveer & Keily (1850); Mt. Zion Methodist Church; Craig (1984), p.5.

¹³ According to his autobiography, published in 1833, Richard Allen lived in Pennington, New Jersey at the home of Hopewell Township resident (and Pennington Methodist Church founder) Jonathan Bunn for several months between 1783 and 1784. It was Bunn's son and daughter-in-law, Joshua and Fanny, who, in 1847, sold the land upon which Pennington's Bethel AME now stands to the parish. For more information, see Richard Allen, *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Martin & Boden, Printers, 1833) and Bethel Pennington AME Church, *Our History*, on-line at <http://www.bethelpennington.org/history/index.htm> [accessed November 2017].

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ

County and State

was within reach of some residents of the western Sourlands who could come off the mountain to attend church in town, but too far for those living in the eastern Sourlands to attend on a regular basis. A rival to the AME for the attention of rural African-Americans was the Baptist church, which as far as is known, did not have a church building in the Sourlands, although it was a strong presence in Hopewell Borough just beyond the southern edge of the mountain.¹⁴

Mount Zion AME clearly served only a small fraction of the African-American population of the Sourlands, since most lived too far away along winding roads to attend regularly, but it was a cultural and social center for the affiliated families in the eastern Sourlands, especially those clustered around Buttonwood Corner and Rock Mill. These local families numbered perhaps as many as 40 to 50 individuals in the middle decades of the 19th century if census records are to be judged.¹⁵ Church attendance, however, was not universal; in 1881, for example, an official report of the AME noted that Mount Zion AME had only eight active members and a building in poor condition. The Rev. William Middletown was sent by the AME to “take charge,” repairing the building, increasing membership to 18 members and establishing a Sunday school with “28 scholars.”¹⁶ Despite the small size of the congregation, the Mount Zion AME appears to be the only exclusively African-American denomination with a church building in the Sourlands. African-Americans in other sections of the Sourlands likely traveled to the surrounding towns of Hopewell, Pennington or Lambertville to attend churches in those towns. Alternatively, they may have held services in private homes or attended white-led churches. There may have been other small churches in the Sourlands that were attended by African-Americans, but the documentary record is largely silent about them.¹⁷

The relative isolation of Mount Zion AME meant that great emphasis was placed on special days and times when the church could serve as an organizing force for events that drew the wider community together. Mount Zion AME was known throughout the Sourlands and neighboring areas for its popular outdoor camp meetings or “quarterlies” near Rock Mill.¹⁸ These were highly anticipated events, featuring preaching, singing and food, attracting both blacks and whites.

¹⁴ Hunter and Porter (1990), pp. 194-205; Walter Greason, *The Path to Freedom, Black Families in New Jersey* (Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2010), pp. 68-69; African Methodist Episcopal Church, *Our History* (Nashville, Tenn.: AMEC 2017), on-line at www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/ [accessed August 2017].

¹⁵ Lipari (2015), pp. 83-90.

¹⁶ Joseph H. Morgan, *Morgan's History of the New Jersey Conference of the A.M.E. Church, from 1872 to 1887, and of the Several Churches, as Far as Possible, from Date of Organization with Biographical Sketches of Members of the Conference.* (Camden, N.J. : S. Chew 1887).

¹⁷ A candidate in this regard is the Hopewell Mountain Christian Church on Mountain Church Road in Hopewell Township. It was established in 1844 as an offshoot of the American Methodist church. It was part of a “Christian” church movement marked by a conservative interpretation of the Bible and the creation of a hoped-for new denomination under the leadership of William Lane, a white minister, of Milford, New Jersey. Several Christian churches were established in Hunterdon County but the denomination failed to flourish. The church building survives as a single-room, three-bay, front-gabled, wood-frame structure with a small belfry and three 20th-century frame additions to the rear. The limited information on the history of this particular church is unclear whether it may have catered to African Americans. It remained in use until the early 1980s. For more information, see Hopewell Township Cultural Resources Survey, Inventory # 1106-3-10 [Mountain Christian Church (May 1984), on file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, New Jersey and Hunter and Porter (1990), pp. 203-205.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ

County and State

There were popular carriage or wagon parades showing off fine horses and decorations.¹⁹ Tensions between the races escalated, however, coinciding with a hardening of racial attitudes that came in the Jim Crow era of the late 19th century. Silvia Dubois, an elderly freed slave, stated in 1883 that the African-American churches and camp meetings at Rock Mill, Pennington and Hopewell had recently been disturbed by groups of white men, sometimes drunk, shouting curses and slurs.²⁰ The frustration of the times was felt in a statement that it was “a disgrace to the more respectable white people of the neighborhood that they have not done more to protect the colored church [sic].”²¹ According to one source, the original Mount Zion AME church on Zion-Wertsville Road may have burned about 1890.²² The timing was highly unfortunate for a relatively small rural African-American congregation that could not afford to immediately rebuild and whose families were experiencing the fallout from the economic collapse of the Sourlands peach industry.

Construction of the Mount Zion AME Church, 1899-1902

In 1899, Corinda and Spencer True agreed to allow Mount Zion AME to build a new church on their property on the east side of Hollow Road near the railroad station stop of Skillman in Montgomery Township, Somerset County. Skillman was about 2.5 miles southeast of the original location of the Mount Zion AME church near Buttonwood Corner and near the southern edge of the Sourland Mountain where it opens into a valley formed by Rock Brook east of Hopewell Borough. Skillman was named after a prominent Dutch family that had lived in the area since the early 18th century but it was not adopted as a place name until the construction of the Delaware & Bound Brook Railroad between 1874 and 1879. The railroad built a station at Skillman Road about one-half mile east of Hollow Road and named the station Skillman. Around 1900, the State of New Jersey established the New Jersey State Village for Epileptics on a 250-acre complex at Skillman. At its new location, the Mount Zion AME Church was often referred to as the Skillman AME Church.

Corinda True was reportedly a driving force in the construction of the new church. The land on which the church was built was part of a 5.24-acre lot purchased in 1881 by her first husband, William H. Reasoner.²³ He was born in Hillsborough Township *circa* 1841 and drafted into the

¹⁹ Eva M. Kyle, *The Skillman AME Church and Its Camp Meetings* (March 18, 1990); “The Mountain Church at the Foot of the Mountain,” *Van Harlingen Historian* (Fall 1994), pp. 3, 8; Delores Grover Varner, *History of Mt. Zion AME Church*, Typescript (2014).

²⁰ Silvia Dubois’ affiliation with Mount Zion AME may run deeper than her reminisces of the camp meetings on Sourland Mountain. Records indicate that Dubois’ funeral was held at “the African church on the mountain,” with services provided by Reverend W. H. Pitman. She is buried at Stoutsburg Cemetery. For more information, see Larison (1883), Lipari (2015), pp. 92, and Stoutsburg Cemetery, *Stories: 1888 Deaths*, Hopewell, New Jersey, online at <http://www.stoutsburgcemetery.org/stories/silvia-dubois/> [accessed November 2017].

²¹ Cornelius Wilson Larison, *Silvia Dubois (now 116 years old): A Biography of the Slave Who Whipped Her Mistress and Gained Her Freedom* (Ringo, N.J. 1883), pp. 122-124; “Silvia Dubois, Slave of the Sourlands, Related Life Story to Larison,” *Princeton Recollector*, Volume V, Number 4 (Winter 1980), pp. 1, 8-9.

²² Craig (1984), p. 55. The original documentary source for the fire has not been located.

²³ Somerset County Deed 4096/352, David O. Vorhees to William R. Reasoner (April 1881), microfilm, on file at the New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, N.J.

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

Union Army in 1863, attaining the rank of Corporal in the 11th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery.²⁴ Corinda married Reasoner at the United Methodist Church of Pennington in 1870. At the time of the wedding, Reasoner listed his occupation as a farmer.²⁵ According to his military pension record, Reasoner became an invalid in 1884 and died in 1889.²⁶ Corinda was remarried to Spencer True in 1891. Spencer worked as a farm laborer.²⁷ About 1909, the True house near the church burned and the family relocated to a farm near Skillman and then moved into Hopewell Borough. Corinda and both of her husbands are buried in the Stoutsburg Cemetery, a private African-American cemetery established in the Sourlands *circa* 1858.²⁸ The cemetery is located on Province Line Road in Hopewell Township approximately one mile west of Mount Zion AME. Like the church, the cemetery is a touchstone for the descendants of African-American families that once populated the Sourlands.²⁹

The cornerstone for the new Mount Zion AME Church was laid on Corinda True's Hollow Road property in November 1899 but there is evidence that the congregation struggled to raise the necessary funds to complete the building right away. The congregation members lived mostly near Skillman and include the True, Terry, Brophy and Grover families.³⁰ The official centennial encyclopedia of the AME, published in 1916, stated that Rev. John Henley Robinson "completed the Mount Zion AME Church at Skillman at a cost of \$500 in 1902," at least two years after the laying of the cornerstone. Rev. Robinson served the Pennington and Skillman circuit from 1901 to 1904.³¹ Methodist ministers had a long tradition of circuit riding, i.e. traveling within a specified area to conducting missionary activities and provide services to new congregations, often too small or isolated to maintain their own full-time minister. This was also among the earliest documented associations of Mount Zion with the larger Bethel AME congregation in the Borough of Pennington. The relationship between the two churches has remained strong into the early 21st century with congregants making regular visits to each other's churches. The Rev. Robinson was born a slave in Virginia in 1854 and moved to New Jersey after the Civil War with his family. He was educated in Camden County public schools and the Pennington Seminary (later known as the Pennington School) and was ordained in Trenton in 1898. Between 1898 and at least 1916, he held numerous appointments to AME churches and circuits in central New

²⁴ William H. Reasoner, *U.S. Colored Troops Military Service Records, 1863-1865* [database on-line at www.ancestry.com], Provo, Utah, 2007 [accessed August 2017].

²⁵ Wm. H. Reasoner, Marriage Record in the *New Jersey, United Methodist Church Records, 1800-1970* [database on-line at www.ancestry.com], Provo, Utah, 2016 [accessed August 2017].

²⁶ William H. Reasoner, *U.S. Civil War Pension Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934*, Series Number: T288, Roll 386 [database on-line at www.ancestry.com], Provo, Utah, 2000 [accessed August 2017].

²⁷ Spencer True, Census Place: Hillsborough Township, Somerset, New Jersey, Roll 994, p. 4A in the *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line at www.ancestry.com, Provo, Utah, 2004 [accessed August 2017].

²⁸ Corporal William H. Reason, *Find a Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line at www.ancestry.com], Provo, Utah, 2012 [accessed August 2017].

²⁹ Beverly Schaefer, "Two Women Seek the Truth about a N.J. Burial Ground – and Slavery in the Garden State," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 26, 2016).

³⁰ "More on the Black Community," *Van Harlingen Historian* (Winter 1994-95), p. 7.

³¹ Pennington Borough is located in Mercer County, about 9 miles southwest of Skillman. The Delaware & Bound Brook Railroad served both communities.

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

Jersey. He is also credited with playing a major role in reviving the camp meeting tradition at Mount Zion AME from the early 1900s to the 1920s.³²

Oral tradition collected from Mount Zion AME Church members beginning in the 1960s corroborates the struggles the black families of the Sourlands had in paying for the new church's construction. According to the recollections of congregants Edith True and May Robinson, the pews were salvaged from the burned church on Zion-Wertsville Road³³ while J. Elmer Hight (b.

1876), a white carpenter of Blawenburg village in Montgomery Township, is credited with being paid to help build the church according to an oral history collected in the 1980s.³⁴ Although the Trues allowed the church to be built on their land, no formal deed or payment was recorded. Edith True, granddaughter of Corinda and Spencer True, did not formally deed the property to Mount Zion AME until 1987, nearly 85 years after the building's construction, and then only for a symbolic consideration of \$100.³⁵

In 1921, Corinda True passed away while hanging out wash in the yard of A. J. Brophy in Skillman, and the Mount Zion AME Church property passed to her children Samuel Reasoner and Scudder S. and May Matilda True.³⁶ The church continued to hold its popular camp meetings at the nearby farm of Tom Brophy on what became known as Camp Meeting Avenue, a short distance to the northeast of the church. Ministers of the Pennington AME congregation continued to serve Mount Zion as part of their circuit.

³² Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: 1916), pp. 189-190.

³³ There are several written recollections and retellings in printed and on-line sources, all dating to the 1980s or later, that suggest that the church was disassembled or moved to Skillman from its original location on Sourland Mountain (e.g. Kyle 1990); however, no primary documentation or physical evidence for this has been found. If contemporaneous sources are correct that the original Mount Zion AME Church burned in 1890 and that the congregation paid \$500 to build a new church in 1899-1902, it seems unlikely that the original church was moved nearly a decade after it burned and that so much would have been paid to a carpenter. Physical inspection also reveals the church's existing construction to be entirely consistent with a *circa* 1899-1902 date of construction with no visible signs of charring and salvaged members. The best judgment based on primary sources and physical evidence is that the datestone of 1899 is correct and the church was built largely, if not entirely, with new materials and completed in 1902. The National Register of Historic Places Criteria Consideration for moved properties does not apply.

³⁴ J. Elmer Hight, Census Place: Montgomery, Somerset County, New Jersey, 1910 United States Federal Census (database on-line at www.ancestry.com). Provo, Utah: 2004 [accessed August 2017]; Federal Highway Administration and New Jersey Department of Transportation, *I-95/695 from I-295 in Mercer County to I-287 in Somerset County, Historic Resources, Technical Support Document* (1977) [Mount Zion AME Church is referenced as Site #73, NJHPO opined the church eligible under Criterion A in 1982, which was reaffirmed by a Certificate of Eligibility in 2016 (Saunders to Katmann, April 22, 2016)], on file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.; "State Survey: Afro-American Historic Sites," *Van Harlingen Historical Society Newsletter* (Spring 1983), p. 2.

³⁵ Somerset County Deed 1656/15, Edith True to Mount Zion M.E. Church of Skillman, New Jersey, Inc., October 15, 1987, on file at the Somerset County Clerk, Somerville, N.J.; Kyle (1990).

³⁶ "Mrs. Spencer True Drops Dead in Yard," *The Hopewell Herald* (December 20, 1920).

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Mount Zion AME fell on hard times. The camp meetings ceased about 1930 (reportedly over a dispute whether local farmers could charge a parking fee) and church attendance dwindled, likely due to the combination of the faltering economy and the general migration of rural blacks to cities in search of work. Regular services ceased sometime in the 1930s or 1940s and by 1957 the church had been closed without a pastor for many years.³⁷

Post Period of Significance: Revival and Preservation of the Mount Zion AME Church, 1958-present

In 1958, Mount Zion AME Church reopened through the dedication of a small group of African-American families and Surlands descendants still living in the area. Among the leaders of the revival were Mae True, May Robinson, Eva Kyle, Wilmer and Bessie Grover, and their daughters Delores Grover Varner and Virginia Grover Turner. Ministers were appointed by the AME Conference and included Rev. Lawton James (1958-1963), Rev. Tierras DuVal (1963-1965), Rev. Susie Titus (1965-1968), Rev. John Henry Ford (1968-1994), Rev. Denzel A. Turton (1994-2004) and Rev. Tom Hills (2004-2005). During the 1960s, the church founded a special event named "Cousins Day," rekindling the spirit of the camp meetings. Cousins Day provided an opportunity for community reunions, perpetuation of cultural traditions including family stories and foodways, and worship, and also served as an important source of fundraising to keep the church in good repair. There were also efforts to document the church's history with a series of articles in the *Princeton Recollector* beginning in the mid-1970s, followed by an entry in New Jersey's Black Historic Sites Inventory in 1984.³⁸ Eva Kyle wrote a semi-official history of the church and its camp meetings in 1990 based on her memories.³⁹ Regular church members, however, remained small in number, so in 2005 the congregation determined to close the church. The period between 1958 and 2005 represented its own distinct and significant period in the church's history, one in which there was a reawakening of interest in Mount Zion AME church and recognition of its significance to local history. The potential of extending the period of significance to the period from 1958 to 2005 should be considered once it reaches the National Register's 50 year cut-off.

A new period in the church's historical development began in the early 2010s when a path forward to preserving the building as a historic site and a museum was realized. In 2012, Mount Zion AME Church partnered with the Sourland Mountain Planning Council to obtain a grant to repair windows and paint the church.⁴⁰ In 2016, the Sourland Conservancy received funding from the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission to undertake an architectural conditions assessment and a preservation plan for the Mount Zion AME Church. This county grant included funds for preparing this nomination and developing plans for converting the church into the Stoutsburg Sourland African-American Museum.⁴¹

³⁷ Princeton History Project, "Camp Meeting United Country Folk," *Princeton Recollector: A Monthly Journal of Local History*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1975), pp. 1, 16-19; Varner (2014).

³⁸ Princeton History Project (1975) and Craig (1984).

³⁹ Kyle (1990).

⁴⁰ "Mount Zion Church 100 Years Old" (1966), newspaper clipping, personal collection; Kyle (1990); Varner (2014)

⁴¹ "E.D. Report: The Sourland Mountain African-American Museum," *Sourland Journal* (Spring 2016), p. 3.

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

Architectural Significance of Mount Zion AME and Comparative Evaluation

The Mount Zion AME Church near Skillman has simplicity of form, economy of materials, and lack of architectural ornamentation reflecting the modest means of the people who conceived and fabricated the building as a place of worship and socialization. The gable-front orientation, centered entrance, rectangular plan and single bay and single pile construction, arched windows in the side elevations and a shallow rear apse, combine to create the distinctive characteristics of a rural black church type, and one of very humble construction. The New Jersey Historical Commission's survey of Black Historic Sites in New Jersey identified the rural black church as one of two distinct 19th-century black church types. The rural black church was a "rectangular, frame building, often 20 feet by 30 feet with a plain exterior. Some exhibit projected entries, belvederes, and stained glass windows, but usually these embellishments were added after the Civil War."⁴² The rural black church property type stands in contrast to another 19th-century black church type, a larger, more architecturally elaborate church usually found in neighborhoods of towns and cities with larger black populations. As a specimen of a small rural black church, most significant in this instance is Mount Zion AME's high level of material integrity and archetypical single-room, gable-front design of 20 feet by 30 feet and use of materials, which includes rubble stone foundation, simple vertical bead-board siding, frosted patterned window glazes with false-arch sash, interior stained-wood finishes, and unusual reversible wood pews, which seem reminiscent of seats found in railroad passenger cars.

There are no surviving comparable examples of rural black churches in New Jersey's Sourlands. The closest architectural comparison is the Hopewell Mountain Christian Church, a non-denominational and apparently non-racially affiliated church. Its front-gabled, wood-frame building, erected in 1844, is topped by a small belfry and consists of a single-room, three-bays wide. Its integrity is compromised somewhat by three 20th-century additions.⁴³ The Mount Zion Methodist Church of 1843 on Zion-Wertsville Road in Hillsborough Township is a Gothic Revival-style stone church, much more elaborate than Mount Zion AME. It is also historically white led and affiliated. Comparable rural AME churches in other regions of New Jersey are mostly found in South Jersey. These include the National Register-listed Mount Zion AME Church in Woolwich Township, Gloucester County, which began as a one-story, one-room, front-gabled church in 1834, but underwent later improvements and was enlarged in 1959; the Bethel AME Church in Greenwich Township, Cumberland County, which also began as a modest one-room church in 1838-41 and was expanded in 1885; and the Mount Zion African Union Methodist Protestant Church (AUMP) in Marshalltown, Salem County, a front-gabled, three-bay church that was built in 1847 and rebuilt in 1879. All three of these churches were once part of small rural black settlements that have since disappeared.⁴⁴ Other comparable

⁴² Craig (1984) pp. 21-22.

⁴³ Hopewell Cultural Resource Survey (May 1984) and Hunter and Porter (1990), pp. 203-05.

⁴⁴ Laura A. Aldrich, Bethel African Methodist Church, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (March 1999), on file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.; Elaine Edwards, Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church and Mount Zion Cemetery, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (September 1999), on file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.; Frank L. Greenagel, "White Walls, Black Churches," *The New Jersey Churchscape*, No. 20 (December 2002), on-line at www.njchurchscape.com [accessed January 2017]; Janet Sheridan, "Marshalltown" in Robert W. Craig, editor,

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

examples include the 1873 Trinity AME Church in Wrightsville, Burlington County and the *circa* 1902 Mount Pisgah AME Church in Washington, Warren County.⁴⁵

DRAFT

Down Jersey: From Bayshore to Seashore: A Guidebook for the Annual Conference of the Vernacular Architecture Forum (May 7-10, 2014), pp. 138-150.

⁴⁵ Craig (1984) pp.10, 65

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Research for this nomination benefited greatly from access to the family collections and African-American history research materials gathered by Elaine Buck of Hopewell, N.J. and Beverly Mills of Pennington, N.J.

- 1900 *United States Federal Census*. Database on-line at www.ancestry.com. Provo, Utah: 2004 [accessed August 2017].
- 1910 *United States Federal Census*. Database on-line at www.ancestry.com. Provo, Utah: 2004 [accessed August 2017].
- African Methodist Episcopal Church. *Our History*. Nashville, Tenn.: AMEC 2017. On-line at www.ame-church.com/our-church/our-history/ [accessed August 2017].
- Aldrich, Laura A. Bethel African Methodist Church. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. March 1999. On file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.
- Allen, Richard. *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Martin & Boden, Printers, 1833.
- Beers, Frederick W. *Atlas of Hunterdon County, New Jersey*. New York, New York: Beers, Comstock & Cline, 1873.
- . *Atlas of Somerset County, New Jersey*. New York, New York: Beers, Comstock, and Cline, 1873.
- Bethel Pennington AME Church. *Our History*, Pennington, New Jersey. On-line at <http://www.bethelpennington.org/history/index.htm> [accessed November 2017].
- Cornell, Samuel C. *Map of Hunterdon County*. Lloyd Vanderveer and S.C. Cornell, 1851. [Craig, Robert W.]. "Black Historic Sites in New Jersey." [Report of the New Jersey Black Historic Places Survey.] Submitted by the New Jersey Historical Commission. October 12, 1984. On file at the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.
- Cunningham, John. *Garden State: The Story of Agriculture in New Jersey*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1955.
- "E.D. Report: The Sourland Mountain African-American Museum." *Sourland Journal*. Spring 2016. p. 3
- East Amwell Bicentennial Committee. *A History of East Amwell, 1700-1800*. 2nd Edition. Flemington, N.J.: Hunterdon County Historical Society, 1979.
- Edwards, Elaine. Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church and Mount Zion Cemetery. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. September 1999. On file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.
- Federal Highway Administration and New Jersey Department of Transportation. *I-95/695 from I-295 in Mercer County to I-287 in Somerset County, Historic Resources, Technical Support Document*. 1977. On file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.
- Greason, Walter. *The Path to Freedom, Black Families in New Jersey*. Charleston, S.C.: The History Press, 2010.

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

- Greenagel, Frank L. "White Walls, Black Churches." *The New Jersey Churchscape*. No. 20. December 2002. On-line at www.njchurchscape.com [accessed January 2017].
- Historic Building Architects, LLC. Condition Assessment Report, Stoutsburg Sourland African-American Museum, May 2017.
- Hopewell Township Cultural Resources Survey. Inventory # 1106-3-10 [Mountain Christian Church]. May 1984. On file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, New Jersey
- Hunter, Richard W. and Richard L. Porter. *Hopewell: A Historical Geography*. Titusville, N.J.: Township of Hopewell, Historic Sites Committee, 1990.
- Kyle, Eva M. *The Skillman AME Church and Its Camp Meetings*. March 18, 1990.
- Larison, Cornelius Wilson. *Sylvia Dubois (now 116 years old): A Biography of the Slave Who Whipped Her Mistress and Gained Her Freedom*. Ringoes, N.J.: Fonic Publishing House, 1883.
- Lipari, Anthony. *Sylvia Dubois, Put's Tavern and Buttowntown Corner: An Examination of Nineteenth-Century African American Life on Sourland Mountain*. M.A. Thesis. Monmouth University, West Long Branch, N.J. 2015.
- Luce, T. James. *New Jersey's Sourland Mountain*. Neshanic Station, N.J.: Sourland Planning Council, 2001.
- "More on the Black Community." *Van Harlingen Historian*. Winter 1994-95. p. 7.
- "Mount Zion Church 100 Years Old." 1966. Newspaper clipping, personal collection.
- "The Mountain Church at the Foot of the Mountain." *Van Harlingen Historian*. Fall 1994. pp. 3, 8.
- Morgan, Joseph H. *Morgan's History of the New Jersey Conference of the A.M.E. Church, from 1872 to 1887, and of the Several Churches, as Far as Possible, from Date of Organization with Biographical Sketches of Members of the Conference*. Camden, N.J.: S. Chew, 1887.
- Mount Zion AME Church. National Register Survey File. On file at the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Trenton, N.J.
- Mt. Zion Methodist Church. The Sourland Mountains – A Brief History. on-line at www.mtzionnj.org [manuscript attributed to Heather, circa 1990, accessed September 2017].
- "Mrs. Spencer True Drops Dead in Yard." *The Hopewell Herald*. December 20, 1920.
- New Jersey, United Methodist Church Records, 1800-1970*. Database on-line at www.ancestry.com. Provo, Utah: 2016 [accessed August 2017].
- Otley, Van Derveer & Keily. *Map of Somerset Count, New Jersey, Entirely from Original Surveys*. Camden, N.J.: Lloyd Van Derveer, 1850.
- Princeton History Project. "Camp Meeting United Country Folk." *Princeton Recollector: A Monthly Journal of Local History*." Vol. 1, No. 4, October 1975, pp. 1, 16-19.
- Schmidt, Hubert G. *Agriculture in New Jersey, A Three Hundred Year History*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973.
- Schmidt, Hubert G. *Rural Hunterdon, An Agricultural History*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1946.
- Sheridan, Janet. "Marshalltown." In Robert W. Craig, editor. *Down Jersey: From Bayshore to Seashore: A Guidebook for the Annual Conference of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*. May 7-10, 2014. pp. 138-150.

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

“Silvia Dubois, Slave of the Sourlands, Related Life Story to Larison.” *Princeton Recollector*, Volume V, Number 4 (Winter 1980), pp. 1, 8-9.
Somerset County Deed 1656/15. Edith True to Mount Zion M.E. Church of Skillman, New Jersey, Inc. October 15, 1987. On file at the Somerset County Clerk, Somerville, N.J.
Somerset County Deed 4096/352. David O. Vorhees to William R. Reasoner. April 1881. Microfilm. On file at the New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, N.J.
Sourland Regional Citizens Planning Council. *The Sourland Legacy: A report by the Sourland Regional Citizens Planning Council*. Neshanic Station, N.J.: 1989.
State Survey: Afro-American Historic Sites.” *Van Harlingen Historical Society Newsletter* Spring 1983, p. 2.
Stoutsburg Cemetery. *Stories: 1888 Deaths*. Hopewell, New Jersey. On-line at <http://www.stoutsburgcemetery.org/stories/silvia-dubois/> [accessed November 2017].
U.S. Civil War Pension Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934. Database on-line at www.ancestry.com. Provo, Utah: 2000 [accessed August 2017].
U.S. Colored Troops Military Service Records, 1863-1865. Database on-line at www.ancestry.com. Provo, Utah: 2007 [accessed August 2017].
Varner, Delores Grover. History of Mt. Zion AME Church. Typescript. 2014.
Wright, Giles R. *Afro-Americans in New Jersey, A Short History*. Trenton, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1988.
Wright, Richard R. *Centennial Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* Philadelphia: 1916, pp. 189-190.

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

Mount Zion AME Church
Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

Acreeage of Property approximately 0.21 acre

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 18T Easting: 523691 Northing: 4474092

Verbal Boundary Description

 (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with Block 25001, Lot 4.01, a 0.21-acre lot.

Boundary Justification

 (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary consists of a narrow trapezoidal parcel of approximately 65 feet x 205 feet (0.21 acres) on which the church is located. The narrow western boundary is located parallel to Hollow Road. This represents a portion of a former 5.24-acre lot that was owned by Corinda and Spencer True in 1899-1902 on which they allowed the church to be built. The smaller 0.21-acre parcel was not formally set off by True descendants as church property until 1987, and thus represents an approximation of the land that the True family set aside for church activities.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Patrick Harshbarger and Erin Frederickson
organization: Hunter Research, Inc.
street & number: 120 West State Street
city or town: Trenton state: NJ zip code: 08608
e-mail: pharshbarger@hunterresearch.com
telephone: 609-695-0122
date: August 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
- **Photographs** Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels (minimum). Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must

Mount Zion AME Church

Name of Property

Somerset County, NJ
County and State

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: Mount Zion AME Church

City or Vicinity: Skillman, Montgomery Township

County: Somerset

State: New Jersey

Photographer: Patrick Harshbarger

Date Photographed: March 9, 2017

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

Photograph 1: The south elevation and façade of Mount Zion AME Church and the rear garage, looking northeast from Hollow Road.

Photograph 2: The façade of Mount Zion AME Church and the garage, looking east from Hollow Road.

Photograph 3: The façade and north elevation of Mount Zion AME Church, looking southeast from Hollow Road.

Photograph 4: Exposed rafters on the south elevation, looking east.

Photograph 5: The south and rear elevations, view looking northwest.

Photograph 6: The front entrance, portico and picket detailing in the gable front, view looking east.

Photograph 7: Detail of window on north elevation, view looking southeast.

Photograph 8: Cornerstone located in foundation, view looking east.

Photograph 9: Interior view, ceiling fan and chandelier, view looking northwest.

Photograph 10: Interior view of east elevation, including apse, pulpit, rear entrance and windows, view looking east.

Photograph 11: Interior view of west and north elevations, including pews, chimney flue, main entrance and fenestration.

Photograph 12: Interior view, detail of pews showing bench-end scrollwork and hinges, view looking south.

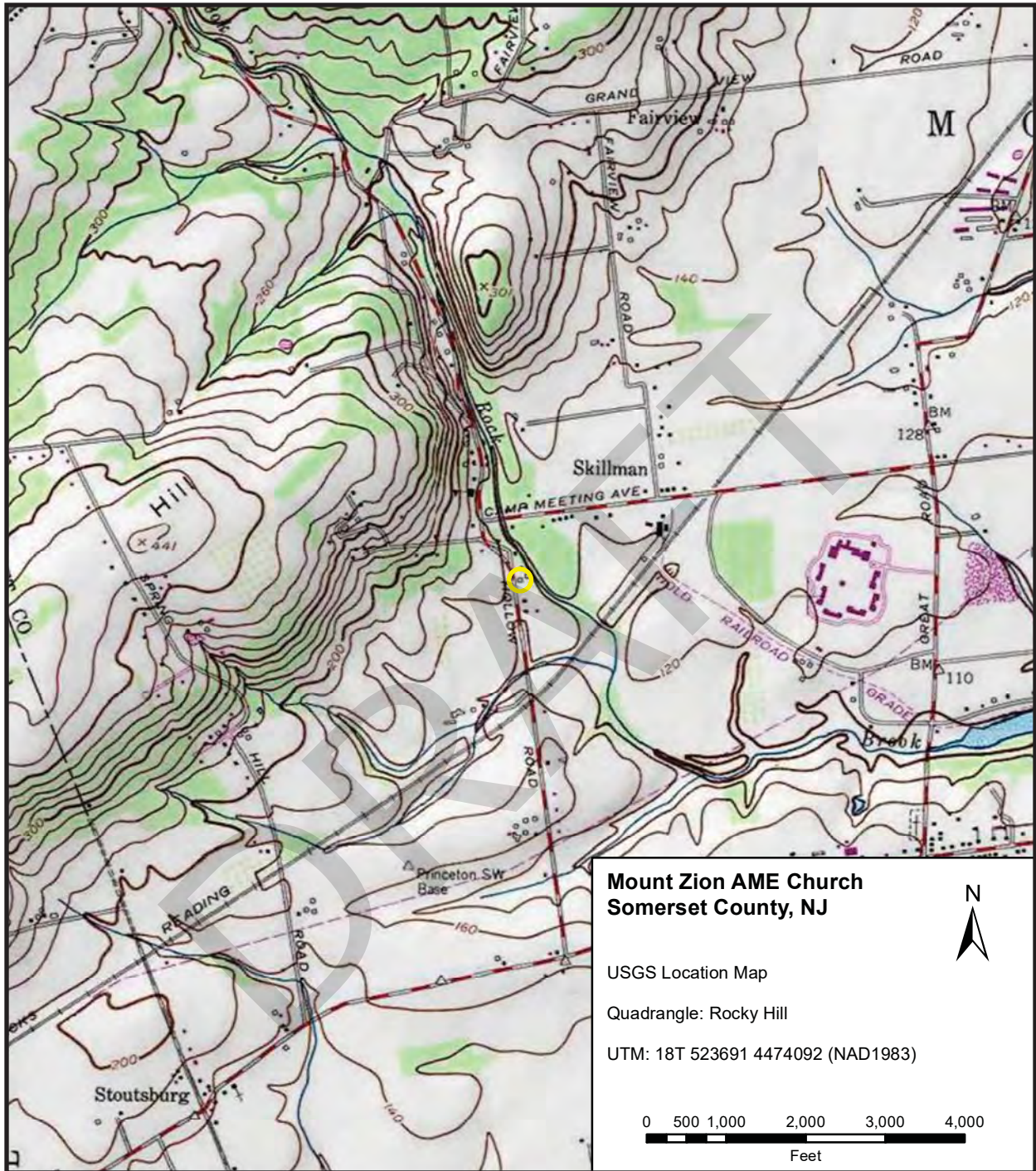
Photograph 13: Interior view, detail of pew hinge at wall, view looking north.

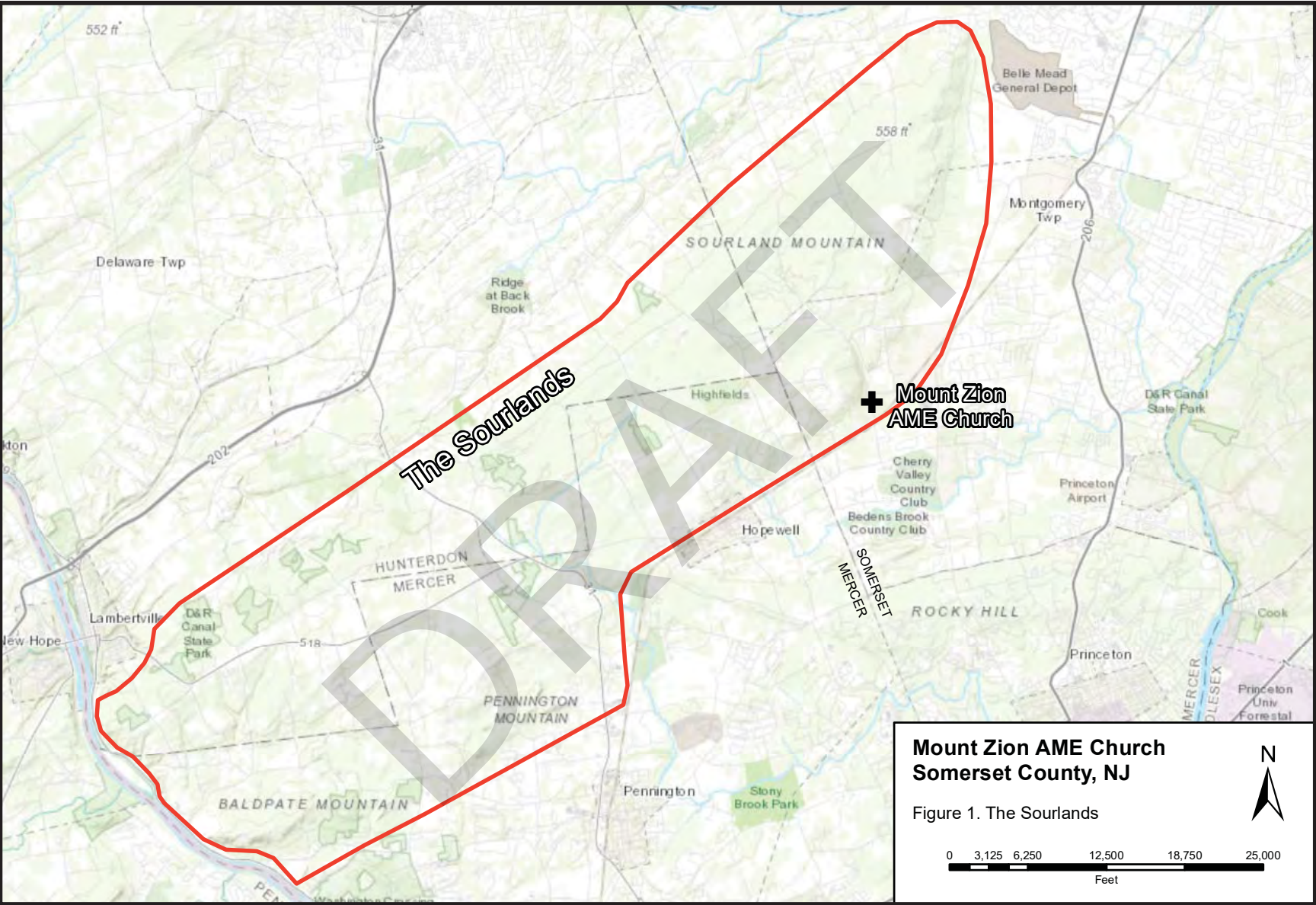
Photograph 14: Interior view of recessed apse, pulpit platform and communion rail, view looking northeast.

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 100 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.

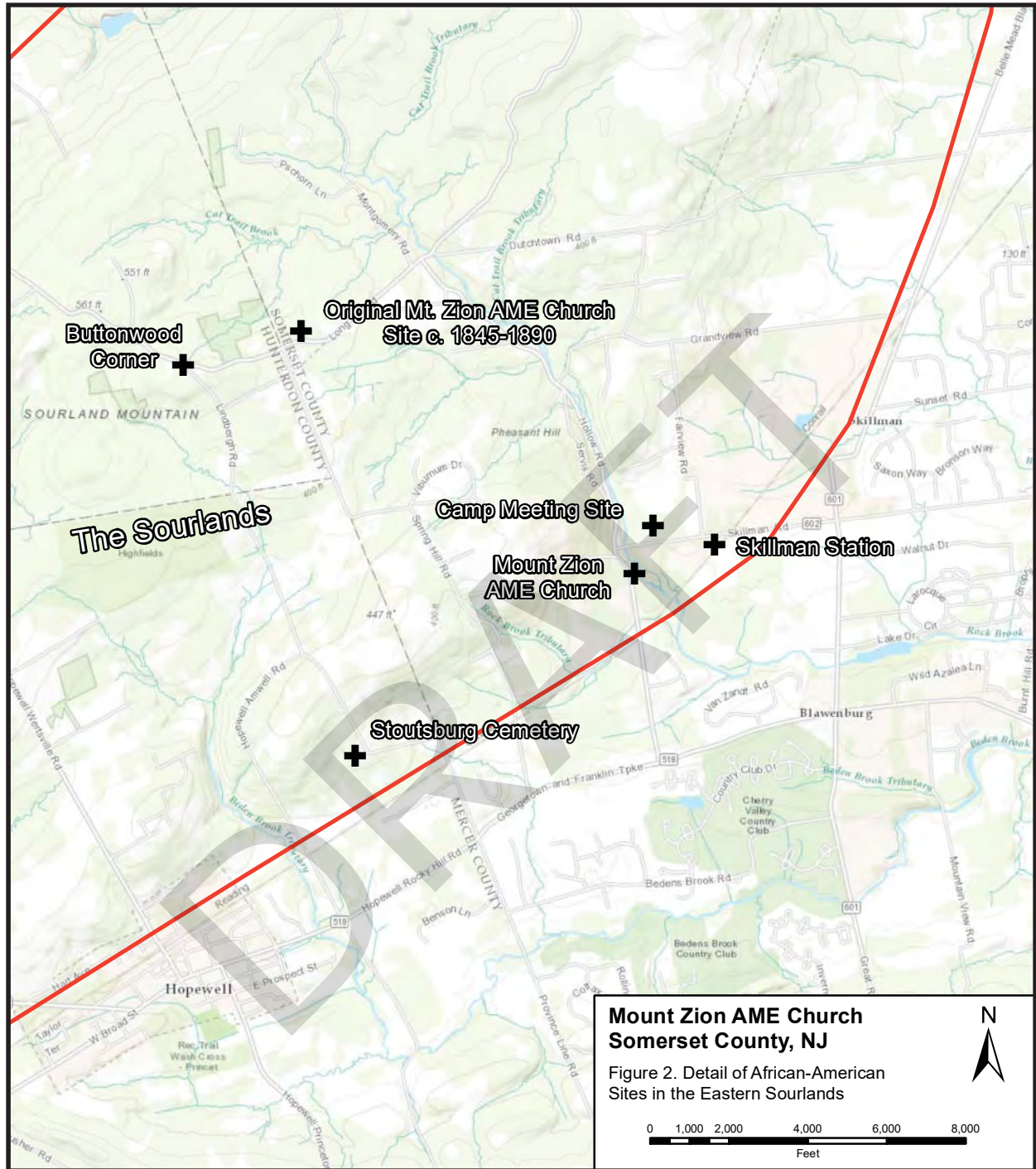
MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY





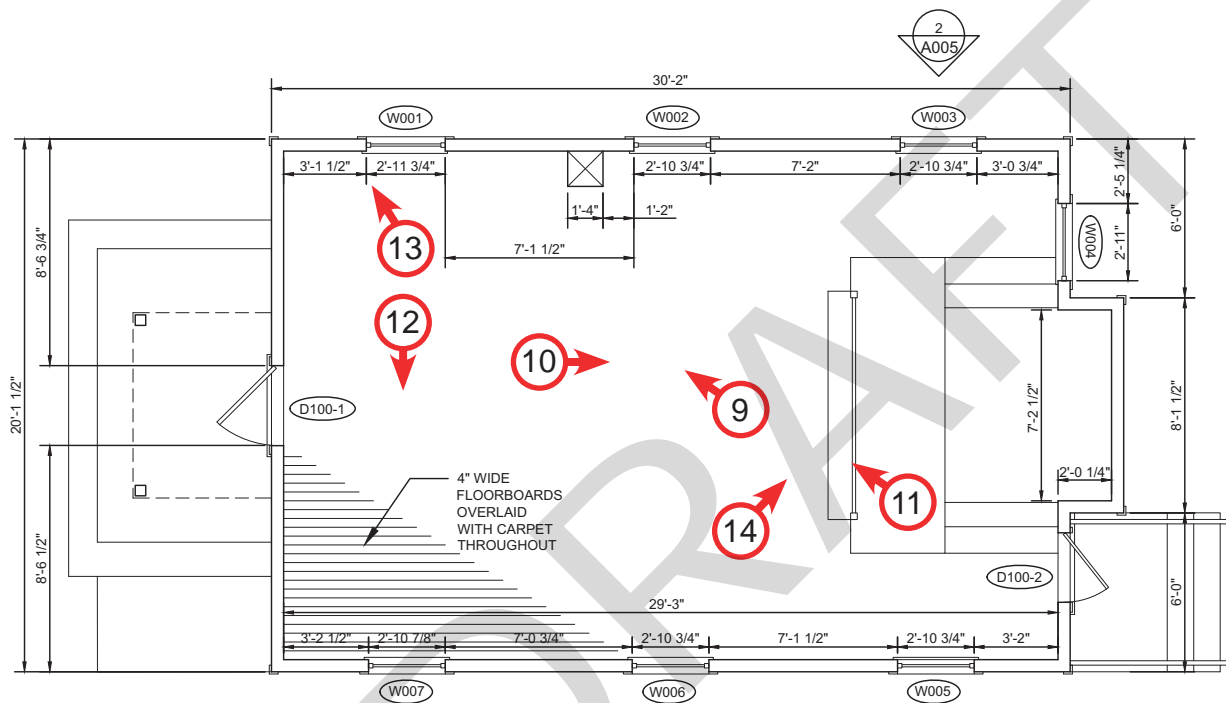
MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY


MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY





MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



 Photograph Number and Direction

Historic Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
 TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333


Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
 Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:
 Condition Assessment Report
 Stoutsburg Sourland
 African American Museum
 189 Hollow Road
 Skillman, NJ 08558
 B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. N.J.# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



0 1' 5'

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

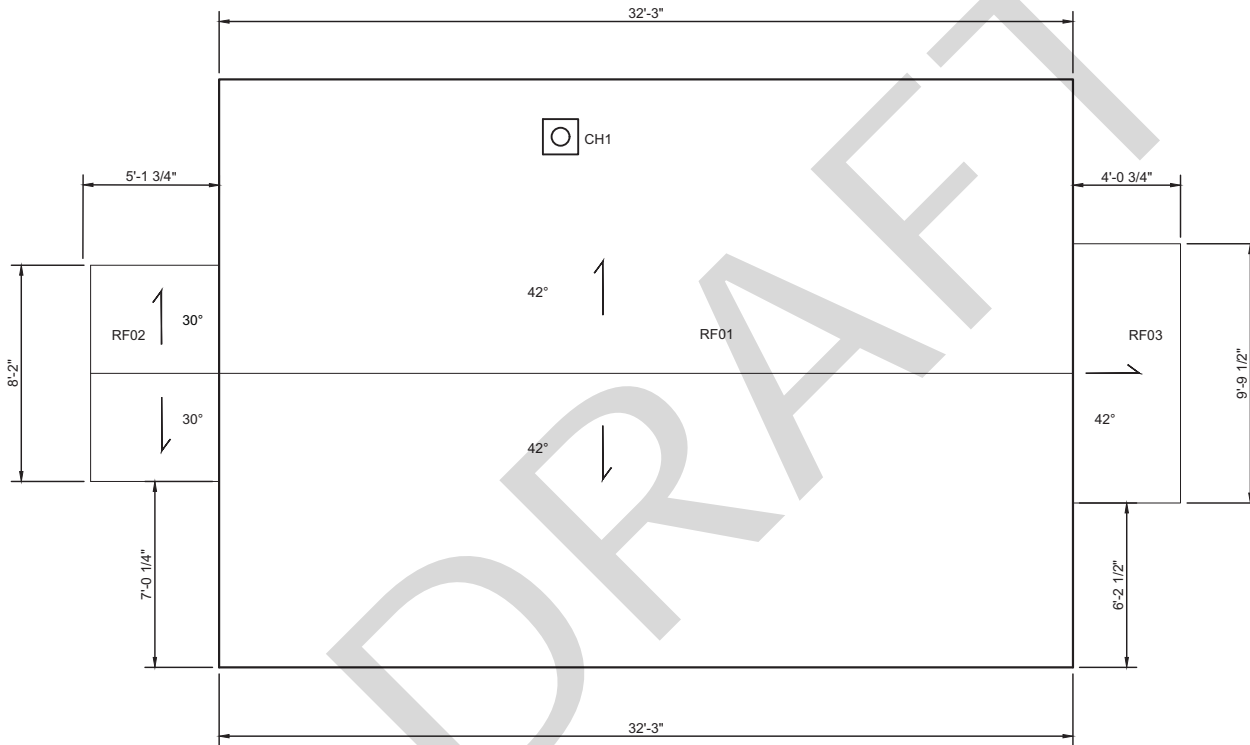
DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

DRAWN BY: AL, SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

Floor Plan
A001



Historic
Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
Stoutsburg Sourland
African American Museum
189 Hollow Road
Skillman, NJ 08558
B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. N.J.# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"






DRAWN BY: AL, SE

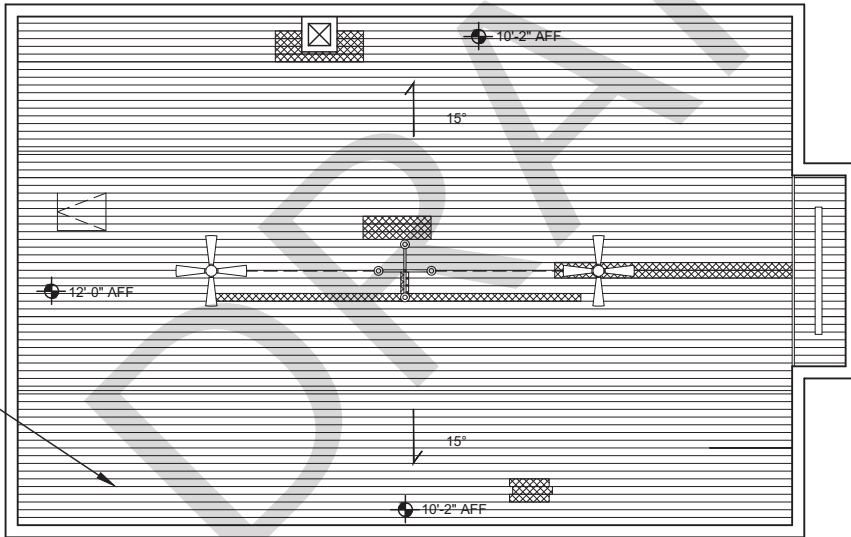
REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

Roof Plan

A002

KEY:

	CONTEMPORARY FLUORESCENT LIGHT FIXTURE
	CONTEMPORARY CEILING FAN
	HISTORIC LIGHT FIXTURE
	EXPOSED CONDUIT
	REPLACE MISMATCHED OR DAMAGED WOOD TO MATCH HISTORIC PROFILE



Historic Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
 TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
 Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
 Stoutsburg Sourland
 African American Museum
 189 Hollow Road
 Skillman, NJ 08558
 B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. NJ# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

DRAWN BY: AL, SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

RCP

A003

Historic
Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
Stoutsburg Sourland
African American Museum
189 Hollow Road
Skillman, NJ 08558
B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. N.J.# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"
0 1' 2'



SCALE: 1"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

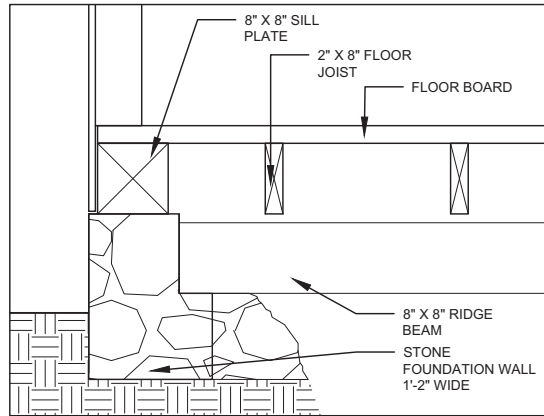
SCALE: AS NOTED

DRAWN BY: AL, SE

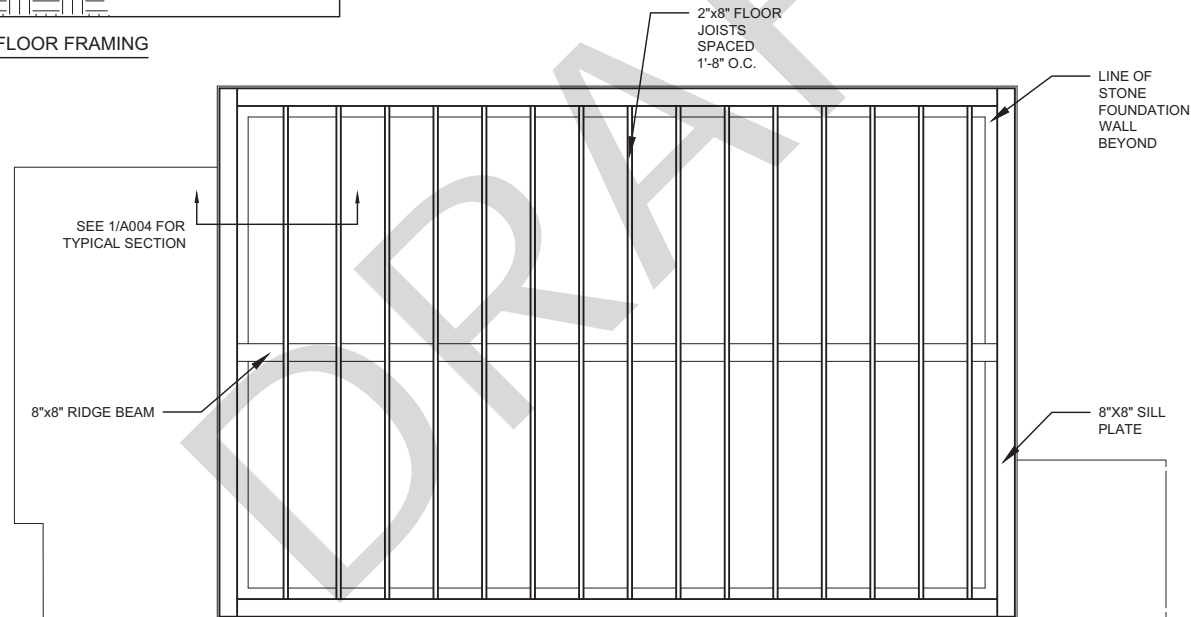
REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS DATE

Framing Floor Plan

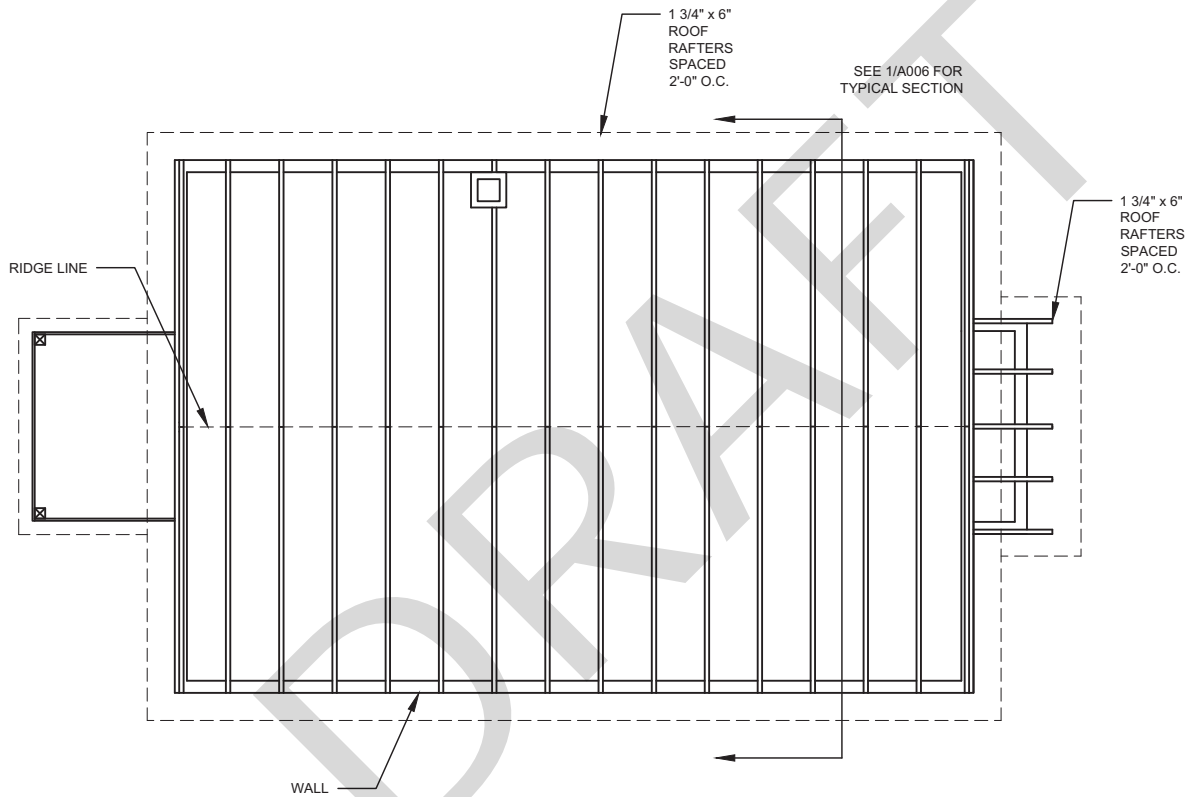
A004



1 SECTION OF FLOOR FRAMING
A004 SCALE: 1"=1'-0"



2 FRAMING FLOOR PLAN
A004 SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"



Historic
Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
Stoutsburg Sourland
African American Museum
189 Hollow Road
Skillman, NJ 08558
B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. N.J.# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

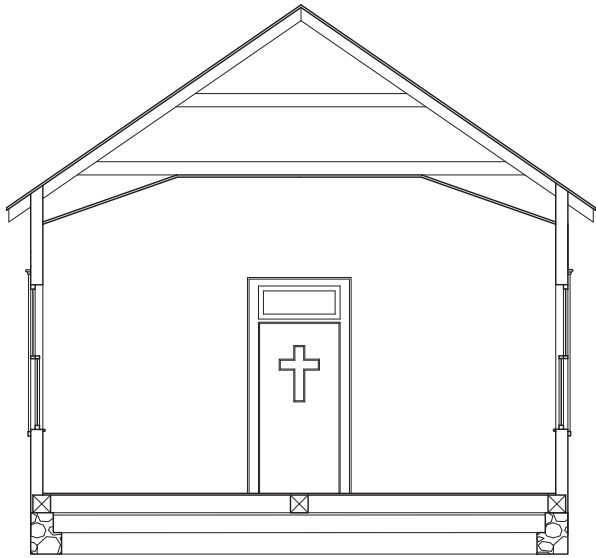
SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

DRAWN BY: AL, SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

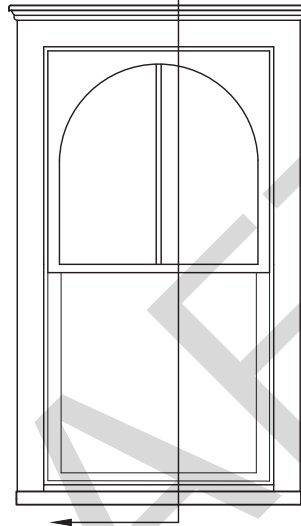
Framing Plan Attic

A005



1 HORIZONTAL SECTION
A006 SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

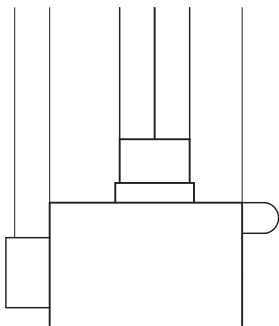
SEE 3/A006 FOR TYPICAL SECTION



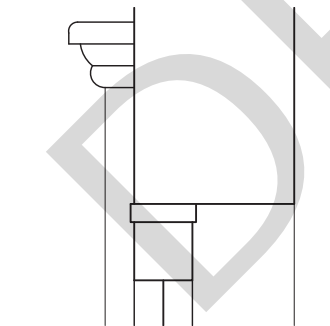
2 WINDOW ELEVATION EXT. TYP.
A006 SCALE: 3/4"=1'-0"



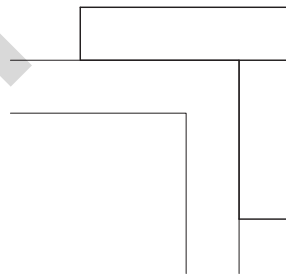
3 WINDOW SECTION
A006 SCALE: 3/4"=1'-0"



4 WINDOW SILL
A006 SCALE: 3"=1'-0"



5 WINDOW HEADER
A006 SCALE: 3"=1'-0"



6 CORNER TRIM DETAIL EXT.
A006 SCALE: 6"=1'-0"



7 PICKET TRIM DETAIL EXT.
A006 SCALE: 1"=1'-0"

Historic Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

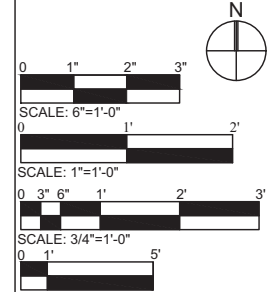
Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:
Condition Assessment Report
Stoutsburg Sourland
African American Museum
189 Hollow Road
Skillman, NJ 08558
B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. N.J.# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: AS NOTED

DRAWN BY: AL, SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS DATE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

Details

A006

**Historic
Building Architects, LLC**

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
Stoutsburg Sourland
African American Museum
189 Hollow Road
Skillman, NJ 08558

B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. NJ# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DRAWN BY: SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

North Elevation

A007



11'-3"

2'-0"
O.C.

5'-5-1/2"

4'-0"

1'-6-3/4"



Historic
Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
Stoutsburg Sourland
African American Museum
189 Hollow Road
Skillman, NJ 08558
B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. NJ# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DRAWN BY: SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS DATE

East Elevation

A008



Historic
Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
Stoutsburg Sourland
African American Museum
189 Hollow Road
Skillman, NJ 08558
B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. N.J.# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DRAWN BY: SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

West Elevation

A009



Historic Building Architects, LLC

312 West State St. Trenton, NJ 08618
 TEL 609 393 3999 FAX 609 393 4333

Certificate of Authorization # AC 245
 Expires 01/31/2018

PROJECT:

Condition Assessment Report
 Stoutsburg Sourland
 African American Museum
 189 Hollow Road
 Skillman, NJ 08558
 B25001 L3

SEAL:

ANNABELLE RADCLIFFE-TRENNER R.A. N.J.# AI 13776

KEY PLAN:



SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DATE: 5/10/2017

SCALE: 3/8"=1'-0"

DRAWN BY: SE

REVISIONS & SUBMISSIONS	DATE

South Elevation

A010

MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



PHOTOGRAPH 7

MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY



MOUNT ZION AME CHURCH, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY





Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 1



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 2



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 3



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 4



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 5



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 6



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 7



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 8



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 9



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 10



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 11



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 12



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 13



Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, Somerset County, NJ
Photo 14