

Historical African American Churches In Lancaster County

Church records are one of the most important sources of information in genealogical research. Unfortunately, records were frequently lost due to fire and/or poor storage or the churches died out and no one was interested in maintaining the records. Below is a partial list of the early African American Churches in Lancaster County taken from *Churches and Cemeteries of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania: A Complete Guide* by A. Hunter Rineer, Jr. Those listed in bold are still in existence and some have active congregations.

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church [Lancaster City]

Founded in 1817, the original church was destroyed by fire in 1879 and rebuilt. Church records are maintained by the church and begin in 1924. A graveyard is attached to this church. (p. 211)

African Methodist Episcopal Church [Lancaster City]

This congregation existed from 1873 to 1876, but no records are known to exist. (p. 211-212)

African Union Church [Lancaster City]

This congregation was active from 1829 to 1861. There are no known records or graveyard. (p. 217)

St. Paul's African Union First Colored Methodist Protestant Church [Lancaster City] (Former names St. John's church, St. Paul's Union American Methodist Episcopal Church and St. Paul's American United Methodist Protestant Church)

Founded in 1900, no mention is made of church records in entry check with the church. Several other churches were at this location and the entry mentions an *AME Zion Church* in 1899. 9p. 219-220)

Hilltown African Methodist Episcopal Church [Colerain Township]

Congregation active from 1852 to 1903 when the property was sold and the cemetery destroyed. No known records survive. (p.65)

Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church [Columbia Borough]

Founded in 1817, the congregation existed in several locations in its history. The first church burned in 1832. Another church was built in the same general area around 1848, named the *First Colored Wesley Methodist Church*. The Present church was built in 1921. No records are known to exist from before the 1930's. There is a graveyard at the rear of the church. (p.68-69)

Union Black Church [Columbia Borough]

Congregation was active from 1823 to 1880s. There are no known records. (p. 69)

Conestoga African Methodist Episcopal Church [Conestoga Township]

(also listed as African Baptist)

This congregation was active from 1839 to around 1904. This church too was a victim of fire and the congregation dissolved. No records were saved. The **Conestoga African Cemetery** still exists and a record of the gravestone inscriptions was made. The records for the graveyard can be found at the Lancaster County Historical Society and the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. (p. 78-79)

Asbury African Methodist Episcopal Church [Fulton Township]

Congregation was active from 1844 to 1870. No known records survive. (p. 192-193)

Asbury African Methodist Episcopal Graveyard still exists and gravestone inscriptions were recorded and are available at the Lancaster County Historical Society and the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society.

Mount Sinai Union American Methodist Episcopal Church[Fulton Township]

Founded in 1837, there is no mention of records or their location, inquire at the church. There is a graveyard, **Mount Sinai Union American Methodist Cemetery**, burials began in 1918. (p. 189)

Rigby Union American Methodist Episcopal Church [Fulton Township]

Congregation was active from 1837 to 1876. Rigby Cemetery allowed burials from 1837 to 1918. Both properties owned by Mt. Sinai Church. (p. 189)

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church [Marietta Borough]

Founded in 1819, the first church was destroyed by fire. Current building was built in 1970. There were no records, as of 1939, check with church to see if anything has been recorded since. The **Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Cemetery** next to church burials began in 1819. (p. 304)

Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [Marietta Borough]

Congregation was active from 1861 to 1900. Building is gone. There are no known records. **Wesley African Methodist Cemetery** is still on the site. (p. 305)

Florin African Methodist Episcopal Church [Mount Joy Borough]

Congregation was active from 1858 to 1912. The church burned that year and all records were destroyed. (p. 319)

Macedonian African Methodist Episcopal Church [Mount Joy Borough]

(alternate spellings: Massadonia and Macademia)

(also known as Mount Joy African Methodist Episcopal Church)

Florin African Methodist Episcopal congregation moved to this location after the fire. The congregation was active here from 1913 to 1961. No records are known to exist from this location. (p.319-320) The **Lincoln Cemetery** in Mount Joy Township was owned by this congregation. (p. 331)

Union African Methodist Episcopal Church [Providence Township]

Congregation was active from 1872 to 1880s. Building is gone. No known church records. The **Union African Methodist Episcopal Cemetery** still exists and a record of gravestone inscriptions is available at the Lancaster County Historical Society. (p. 360)

St. Peter's African Methodist Episcopal Church [Salisbury Township]

Congregation was active from 1849-1899. Building is gone. No known church records. The **St. Peter's Cemetery** still exists, but no records were made of the inscriptions. (p. 390)

As stated above, this is by no means a complete list and the entries include information on the locations and conditions of the churches and cemeteries as well as historical notes and sources. Mr. Rineer also includes information on several graveyards listed as Slave or

Black/Negro, sadly most of these sites are now barely visible or badly overgrown.

In researching early church records, check all of the churches in the area in which your ancestors lived. Segregation did occur, but it varied from church to church at various points in history.

It might also be useful to check with the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society as there were at least two active African American congregations.

Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church [Salisbury Township]

(Also known as Welsh Mountain African Mennonite Church)

Founded in 1899, there is no cemetery. (p. 393)

South Christian State Mennonite Church [Lancaster City]

(also known as Lancaster Mennonite Colored Mission or the Mennonite Gospel Mission)

The church was founded in 1933. (p. 217-218)