

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

MOUNT SALEM METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

AND/OR COMMON

MOUNT SALEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

With permission of the author,
Annette Woolard-Provine.
Submitted in 1983 as a student
paper at the University of
Delaware. Courtesy Center for
Historic Architecture and Design

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

138 East Fourth Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

New Castle

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Delaware

— VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

New Castle

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESI
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTA
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

The Trustees of Mount Salem United Methodist Church

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

— VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Fourth Floor City County Building Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

800 French Street

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

DE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church (now Mount Salem United Methodist) is located at 138 East Fourth Street in the city of New Castle, New Castle County, Delaware. Mount Salem faces south-east onto Fourth Street. The church is set back approximately ten feet from Fourth Street and sits one tenth of a mile from the corner of Fourth and Chestnut Streets. It is bounded to within four feet of its south-west side by nineteenth and twentieth century rowhouses, set slightly closer to the street. The church cemetery extends around the north-west and north-east sides of the church. An empty lot, six more rowhouses, and two twentieth century brick houses fill in the rest of the streetscape to Chestnut Street. Constructed in 1878, probably by the congregation, Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church is a fine example of very vernacular gothic ecclesiastical architecture.

Mount Salem is a small building, 30 feet by 44 feet. There are three bays across the front and sides. The plan of the building is a simple rectangle with a smaller rectangular addition made to the rear of the church at some time after the original construction. This extension juts out about eight feet from the rear of the building and four feet from the south-west side. The church is constructed of red brick in stretcher bond with brick foundation laid in the same pattern. The rear addition is covered by green asphalt shingles.

Three brick steps lead up to the main entrance, centrally located double doors of wood with six molded, recessed panels, two small square panels above four larger rectangular ones. The doors were installed in 1983 into the original pointed archway. The arch over the door is brick, composed of stretchers. The arch keystone is a square stone with a carved fleur-de-lis. There is another entrance on the south-east facade of the rear extension. This is a single wooden door in a wooden frame with a one pane transom.

To the sides of the main entrance are two large, stained glass, pointed arch windows. The windows are inset into recessed panels which echo their shape. The arches are composed of stretcher bricks like the arch above the main doors. Three similar windows line both sides of the church, as well. The recessed panels on the sides, however, are rectangular-shaped.

Above the main entrance is a third stained glass, pointed arch window, smaller and not inset. Above this window is a rectangular tablet on which is carved, "Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church Built 1878." There is also a small stained glass, pointed arch window on the north-east side of the rear extension.

See Continuation Sheets.

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The large stained glass windows are composed of two small square panes sandwiched between four long rectangular panes. The two smaller windows are composed of only the four long rectangular panes. All windows, except the window on the rear extension, are composed of a mixture of pink, green, yellow, and light blue colored panes. The extension window has white panes speckled with blue flecks. According to members of the church, some panes are original while some have been replaced.

The building has a gable roof, with gable facade, made of asphalt shingles. Wooden vergeboards carved in a quatrefoil pattern appear on the facade only. The rear extension has a shed roof.

A small bell cupola straddles the gable ridge toward the facade. The cupola is of wooden construction, about two feet high. It is basically a square frame capped by a low pyramidal roof. The bell itself is only fifty years old, according to congregation members. A small, single, brick chimney sits on the north-east side interior. It is also capped by a low pyramidal roof.

The interior of the church consists basically of one room, the chapel. A small room was created by the rear extension, used as an office and a choir entrance. There is also a foyer at the church entrance where are located two stairwells. The stairwell on the left rises to the balcony while the one on the right descends to the basement.

A balcony stretches across the rear of the chapel, above the front foyer. The walls and ceiling of the chapel are plaster, painted, and otherwise undecorated. The ceiling is flat. The basement beneath the church was dug out in 1933 for use as a youth center. According to church members, some original church furniture remains including carved wooden clergy stalls. The seats and lower backs of these two chairs are of padded leather. The arms, legs, and upper backs are rather ornately carved wood. Spiral columns form a pointed arch back filled in with leaf-like forms. These two pieces have recently been refinished with a wood stain.

Having suffered few and minor alterations, the exterior of the church retains its integrity. A few alterations have been made to the interior, according to the congregation, such as re-arranging the choir stalls and purchasing new pews. A wood stove was removed from the north-east side of of the chapel and modern heating installed earlier in the twentieth century. For the most part, however, the chapel also remains intact.

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Graves are scattered around the north-west and north-east sides of the church as well as a few graves in the front yard. Many of the stones are lightly carved and have become illegible over time. Some are simply rough markers and were never inscribed. No records have been kept of burials and so it is impossible to note when they began taking place. The oldest legible gravestone bears the date 1874 and marks the grave of Henry Lilly, one of the first pastors of Mount Salem. Older and newer gravesites are intermingled. The cemetery is still used today, as is the church itself, by the present Mount Salem congregation.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Built 1878

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal Church qualifies for inclusion on the National Register under criterion "C," architectural significance. Mount Salem is a fine example of very simplified gothic ecclesiastical architecture, a very vernacular interpretation of A.W. Pugin's "true principles of Christian architecture." The formally untutored black congregation who built the church in 1878, no doubt unfamiliar with Pugin, John Ruskin, or the writings of other proponents of the gothic style, simply associated this style with the way a church should look. Unfamiliar though they were with the scholastic principles of the gothic style, the Mount Salem congregation nonetheless constructed a church which conforms to them.

The Mount Salem congregation would have derived their ideas of the gothic style from other area interpretations of it. Gothic became popular in America in the mid-nineteenth century. New Castle, being a port city, would have been exposed to the fashions of Wilmington, Philadelphia, and New York. The gothic style in America took on very academic forms. The psychology which had originally created gothic belonged to Medieval Europe, but the nineteenth century Americans who accepted the style used it for different reasons. They used the ancient motifs in an effort to recall a period which appeared to them more moral than their own. Mount Salem is therefore, a very interesting example of the values, symbolism, and complex architectural principles of the gothic style as they had filtered down from the great builders of the Middle Ages to European scholars and American arbiters of taste and morality in the nineteenth century to a simple congregation of black men in a small town in Delaware.

Many American gothic buildings were simple in comparison to European gothic structures due, in part, to what Pugin called the "necessities of the American Wilderness." Mount Salem is simpler than most due to the resources, education, skill, and finances, available to the congregation. Both the construction and ornamentation of Mount Salem are quite basic, yet the architecture does include many of the scholars' most important characteristics. To Pugin, Ruskin, and others, the brick arches, pointed windows, gabled roof, and the solid brick construction would each have been intellectually pleasing, representing abstract references to the Resurrection, the Trinity, Christian purity, and other-worldly symbolism. To the congregation who built Mount Salem, however, these characteristics signified only a church, gathering place for the believers, a house of peace. Mount Salem Methodist

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Episcopal Church is the architectural synthesis of centuries of European art, faith, and scholarship, contemporary American taste and morality, and the faith and experience of blacks in nineteenth century New Castle.

The present building is actually the second structure occupied by the Mount Salem congregation. According to members of the church, the congregation began in 1854 when thirty blacks, slaves and freemen, left New Castle Methodist Episcopal Church (now New Castle United Methodist) to form their own church. The separation was on friendly terms. Whites, frustrated by the vocal nature of the blacks' worship, and the blacks, frustrated by their exclusion from communion, mutually agreed upon this move. A white member of New Castle Methodist then built for the Mount Salem their first church in 1856 or 1857, a small white frame building, where the present building now stands.

This separation was not uncommon in the 1850's. Although Delaware did not officially abolish slavery until after the Civil War, the institution was dying a natural death by the 1840's, especially in New Castle County. Many black churches were founded at this time. Blacks left other white churches for the same reasons the Mount Salem congregation had left New Castle Methodist. Blacks were usually denied church offices, consigned to the balconies, and excluded from communion.

Mount Salem is almost unique compared to other black churches founded at this time, however. Throughout the 1850's and 1860's, two black men, Peter Spencer and Richard Allen, a former slave from Dover, led an exodus of blacks not just from white churches but from the white ecclesiastical organizations, the Methodist Conferences, as well. Blacks left the white conferences for the same reasons they left the individual churches; blacks were never accorded full priveleges of membership at conferences, never given political authority, and were, for the most part, ignored altogether. Thus blacks created their own organizations and began attending their own conferences.

Blacks kept basically the same liturgy and dogma as that in the white churches, but this separate network afforded them the dignity, independence, and control over their own spiritual lives not found within the white organization. Thus Methodism in Delaware, prior to 1850 split into the Methodist Episcopal and the Methodist Protestants, was now split even further into the African Methodist Episcopal, the United African Methodist Episcopal, and the African United Methodist Protestants, as well.

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Mount Salem, however, made the unusual decision not to join this movement. Rather than joining the African Methodist Episcopal, the congregation continued to send representatives to the white Methodist Episcopal conference, even though these representatives remained unrecognized and powerless until this century. The history of Mount Salem, although an unusual one, is therefore unrecorded by chroniclers of both black and white church histories. Few records were ever kept of black churches within the white conferences and historians of the black conferences would not have written about a black church which was not a part of the movement. The congregation themselves never kept many records of church transactions either; they had neither the time, resources, nor the skills to appoint a full-time church secretary or historian. The present congregation still relies mainly on oral tradition.

Mount Salem began when the first pastor, Henry Lilly, was deeded some land on Vine Street (now Fourth Street) by Henry Williamson, also a black man, in 1854. The first building, a frame church costing \$500 sufficed for the first twenty years. During this time, the church became incorporated by the State of Delaware in 1869 and the congregation elected their first Board of Trustees.

In 1878, the present building was erected on the same property at a cost of \$2000. Many of the workmen were members of the congregation. Another member of New Castle Methodist Episcopal donated bricks from the brickyard at a gasworks then located on Pearl Street. Today this property houses a sailing club. The congregation from Mount Salem carried these bricks from this property across town to their lot on Vine Street. The new building was completed and dedicated on December 15, 1878. Mount Salem Methodist Episcopal became Mount Salem United Methodist in 1939 when the Methodist Episcopal and Methodist Protestants reunited. Many of the black churches rejoined the whites and Mount Salem in 1965.

Mount Salem acquired more land for the cemetery in 1879 and again in 1896. Some gravestones had to be moved when the first frame church was replaced by the present brick building in 1878. Henry Lilly's was one of those moved forward slightly. Other stones were more dramatically relocated during attempts to fill in marshy cemetery ground. During one such effort, stones were mixed-up, and since no records were kept, permanently dislocated. The gravestone of Noah Townsend was one such stone. The cemetery, as well as the church, are still used by the present congregation of Mount Salem.

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The Mount Salem congregation of 1878 constructed a gothic church which conforms to academic principles of which they were unaware. The architectural characteristics of the building are simple in comparison to most gothic structures due to the needs and resources of the church builders but they otherwise conform to stated principles. As an architectural expression of the legacy left by one age to another, as an interpretation of that legacy, and as an expression of the values, needs, and experiences from which that interpretation was made, Mount Salem Methodist Church stands as a monument to the synthesis between the ideologies which created and revived the gothic style with the reality of the blacks' experience in nineteenth century New Castle.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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 Cooper, C. "A Town Among Cities: New Castle 1780-1840." Doctoral Dissertation. University of Delaware. Morris Library. 1983.
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 Garnett, Lydia. Interview with Annette Woolard. New Castle, Delaware. November 6, 1983.
 See Continuation Sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

QUADRANGLE NAME _____

QUADRANGLE SCALE _____

UTM REFERENCES

A [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

D [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

E [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

F [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

G [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

H [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Located on Fourth Street between Harmony and Chestnut Streets, Mount Salem property, including the cemetery, extends from the fence four feet from the south-west elevation to boundary markers at a 45 angle to Fourth Street on north-east edge of cemetery.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE _____ CODE _____ COUNTY _____ CODE _____

STATE _____ CODE _____ COUNTY _____ CODE _____

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Annette Woolard- Graduate Student History Department

ORGANIZATION

University of Delaware

DATE

December 9, 1983

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Newark

STATE

DE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL _____

STATE _____

LOCAL _____

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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