

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE**

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: **2038-48 E. Cumberland Street**
Postal code: **19125-1314** Councilmanic District: **7**

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: **Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church**
Current/Common Name: **Urban Worship Center**

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building Structure Site Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown
Current use: **House of Worship**

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): **1872 to 1875**
Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **Built: 1872, Rebuilt: 1875**
Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Unknown**
Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: **Moore, Crouse & Fisher**
Original owner: **Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church**
Other significant persons: **Unknown**

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. Nominator: Historic Preservation Team, East Kensington Neighbors Association

Author: **Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian**

Date: **19 December 2019**

Email: **keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org**

Street Address: **1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320**

Telephone: **717.602.5002**

City, State, and Postal Code: **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107**

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: December 19, 2019

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: December 17, 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: December 18, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Urban Worship Center, Inc.

Address: 2038-48 E. Cumberland Street

City: Philadelphia

State: PA

Postal Code: 19125

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 20 January 2021

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 12 February 2021

Date of Final Action: 12 February 2021

Designated

Rejected

NOMINATION

FOR THE

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



Figure 1. The side (east) and primary (north) elevations of the subject property. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

THE CUMBERLAND STREET METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

■
BUILT 1872, REBUILT 1875
■

**2038-48 E. CUMBERLAND STREET
KENSINGTON
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19125-1314**



Figure 2. The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in blue. Source: Atlas, City of Philadelphia, 2019.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the designation of the subject property is as follows:

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, SITUATE on the Southerly side of Cumberland Street at the distance of 92 feet and 6 inches Westward from the Westerly side of Coral Street in the City of Philadelphia. CONTAINING in front or breadth on the said Cumberland Street 92 feet, 6 inches and of that width extending in length or depth 90 feet.

BEING KNOWN AS No. 2038-48 E. Cumberland Street.

Map Registry No. 019N140006

OPA Account No. 777104000



Figure 3. Top: The primary (north) elevation of the Main Block and the Chapel. Source: Google. Figure 4. Bottom left: The primary (north) and side (west) elevations. Figure 5. Bottom right: The primary (north) elevation of the Chapel. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Set within a section the dense residential and industrial urban landscape that defines so much of Philadelphia, the former Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church is a largely detached building that faces north at 2038-48 E. Cumberland Street in the Kensington neighborhood. It is prominently situated at the southwest corner of Coral and Cumberland Streets, and is, in scale, an architectural landmark among terraces of brick houses, factories and vacant lots. The building is entirely of red brick, masonry construction, featuring a finer brick at the street facing elevations. Based on the ubiquitous urban ‘preaching box’ form, the Main Block’s plan is of a rectangular footprint, containing a low first or basement story with a large room for lectures and classrooms and a two-and-one-half-story second or principal story. Appending the Main

Block, there is a two-story Chapel that projects from the southwest corner along the rear property line. Commissioned in 1872 and rebuilt in 1875, the subject building is designed in the Italianate style.

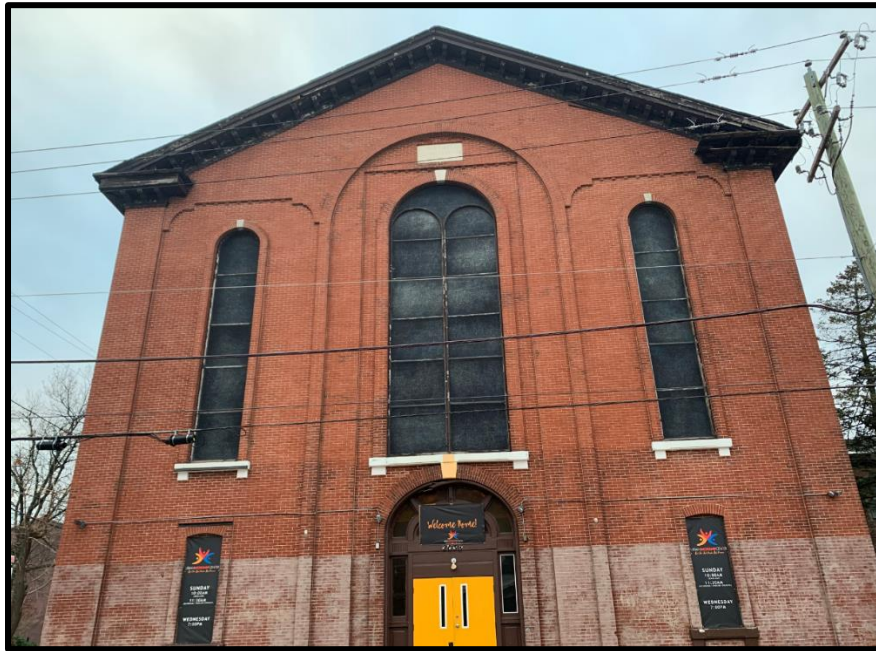


Figure 6. Top: The primary (north) elevation of the Main Block. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

The primary (north) elevation of the Main Block is three bays in width set within a three-and-one-half-story, gable-front façade. This façade is dominated by four recessed brick niches, two of which define the central bay and are flanked by the third and fourth niches within the two flanking bays. The central bay is dominated by a large, full arch niche within which is a rectangular niche with scalloped corners. Near the top of the full arch, but above the rectangular niche, an original marble tablet is set within the brick façade. The marble contains an inscription: Built 1872, Rebuilt 1875. Two arched openings are set within the rectangular niche, including a low full arch double doorway with sidelights at the ground floor and a much larger, full arch window above. This window and the flanking windows feature a frame-like architraves that projects from the façade, embellished by brackets at the base of the sill and a marble keystone. The flanking bays feature single rectangular niches that are also vertically oriented with scalloped corners at the top. Centered within the niches of the east and west bays are single blind windows on the first or basement story with tall and narrow windows defined by full arch tops above on the upper level. Like the central window these openings are defined by the same brick architraves in the form of frames with marble keystones and bracketed sills. The windows all appear to be original and/or from the nineteenth or early-twentieth century with wooden architraves and stained glass. The gable front is defined by an open pediment formed by the meeting of the cornice at the gable end on the primary (north) elevation and the returns of the cornices the side (east and west) elevations. The cornices are comprised of projecting eaves with moldings supported by large brackets.

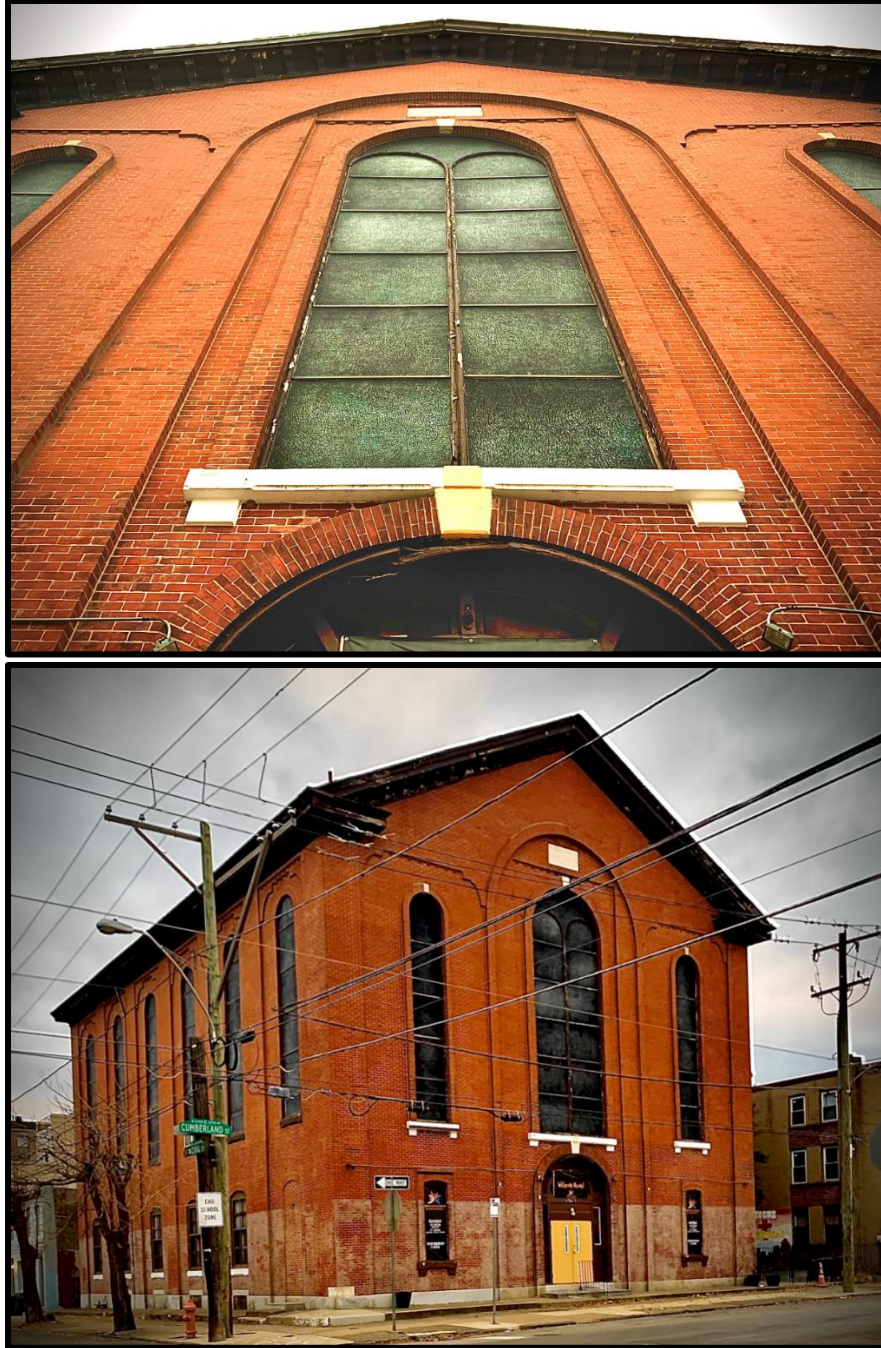


Figure 7. Looking up at the brick details of the central bay of the primary (north) elevation. Figure 8. Bottom: The primary (north) and side (east) elevations. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.



Figure 9. The side (east) elevation. Figure 10. The corner stone dated "1873." Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

The side (east) elevation of the Main Block is six bays in width set within a three-story façade. This elevation is dominated by six niches, which are delineated by simple brick pilasters. Each bay is dominated by a large, rectangular niches that span the three levels, featuring scalloped corners at the top. Centered within each bay are single-story openings that are defined by segmental arch tops and stone sills. Each opening features a wooden architrave and a four-over-four sash window. Also centered within each bay at the principal story are tall and narrow openings that are defined

by round arch tops. These openings each include wooden architraves and windows with stained glass. The windows all appear to be original and/or period with wooden architraves and stained glass. This elevation features the same continuous cornice as was previously described.

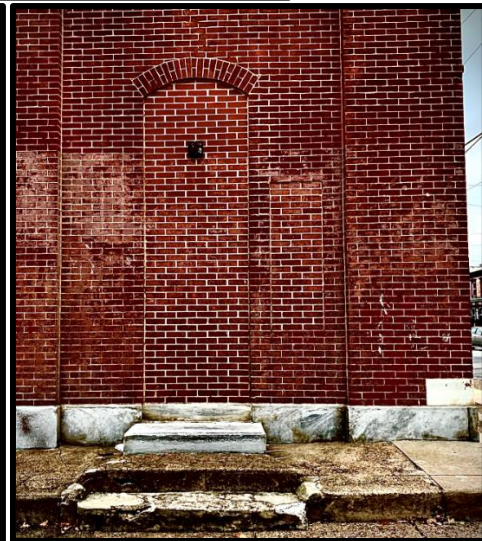
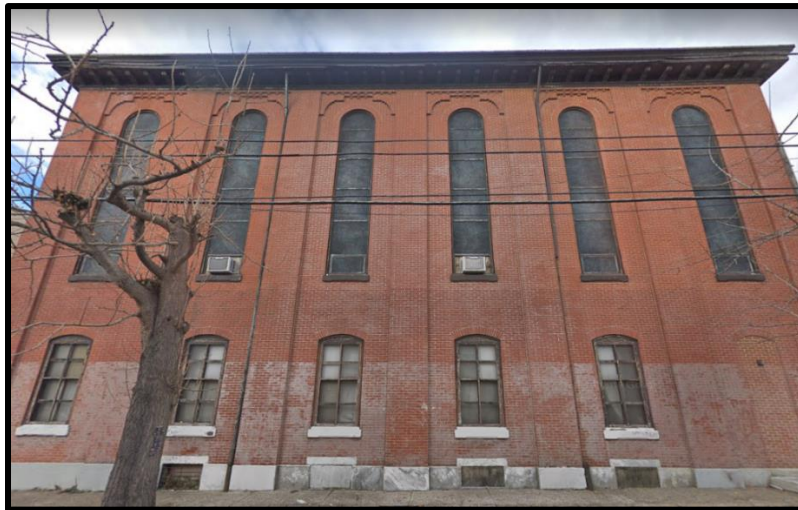


Figure 11. Top: The side (east) elevation of the Main Block on Coral Street. Source: Google. Figure 12. Bottom left: Looking northwest at the side (east) elevation of the Main Block on Coral Street. Figure 13. Bottom right: An infilled doorway near the northeast corner of the building in the side (east) elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.



Figure 14. Top: The rear (south) elevation of the Main Block and the Chapel from Letterly Street. Figure 15. Bottom: Looking northeast towards the rear (south) elevation of the Main Block from Letterly Street. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2019.

The side (west) elevation mimics the same fenestration as the side (east) elevation, facing onto an open side yard. At the rear of the side yard is the primary (north) elevation of the Chapel, which is a simple two-story brick structure. The Chapel is four bays in width with a symmetrical arrangement of apertures including a pedestrian door. The Chapel is connected to the Main Block by a brick hyphen. The rear (south) elevation of the Main Block is a largely blind brick wall with two windows—one per floor at the east and west sides of the façade. The rear (south) elevation of the Chapel features a similar array of apertures to the primary (north) elevation.

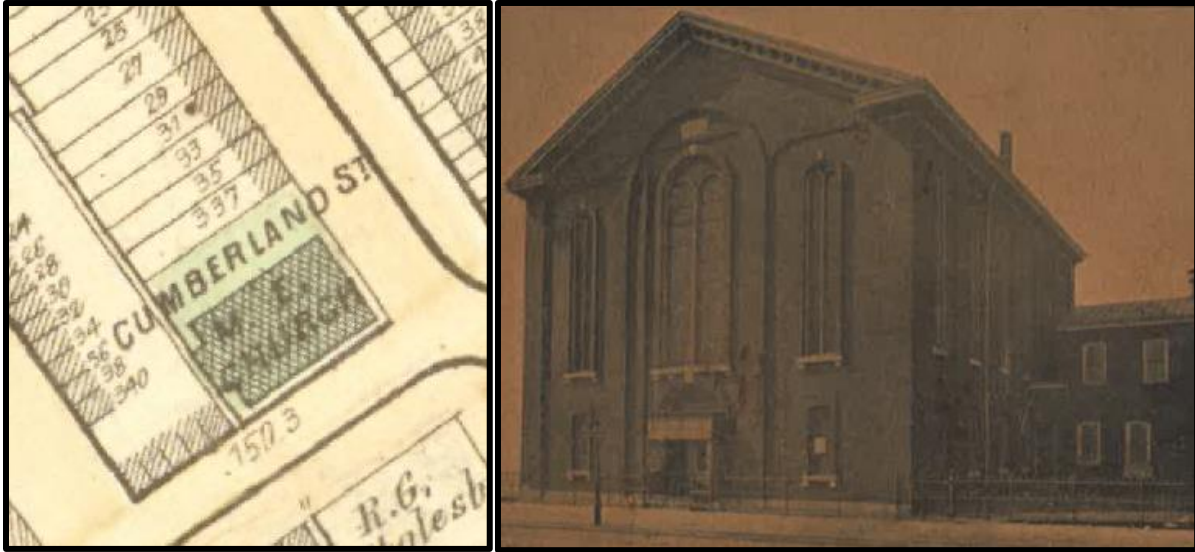


Figure 16. 1875 Philadelphia Atlas by G.M. Hopkins. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network. Figure 17. The Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church, c1897. Source: 25th Anniversary Pamphlet, Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church at 2038-48 E. Cumberland Street is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

(c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; and*

(d) *Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.*

The period of significance is limited to the years of construction from 1872 to 1875.

Historic Overview: Conceptually devised at a meeting on March 31, 1872, the Cumberland Street M.E. Church was formally established as a congregation on August 22, 1872.¹ The subject property was purchased soon afterwards. Planning for the new house of worship began immediately, which included completing a design modeled on the Haines Street M.E. Church of Germantown. A permit for construction of the new building was issued on October 5, 1872. After taking bids, the building firm of Moore, Crouse & Fisher were contracted to construct the new house of worship for \$13,640, and work began soon afterwards.² Once the basement was completed, a cornerstone ceremony took place on April 25, 1873, after which construction

¹ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 5. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection. ; and "New Church Enterprise," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 August 1872, 7.

² Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 8. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

continued through the end of the year until the building was nearing completion.³ On January 25, 1874 a fire gutted the building and required it to be almost entirely reconstructed.⁴ Once the restoration of the building was completed, a formal dedication ceremony was held on October 24, 1875.⁵ A historic context detailing the early history of the congregation and the construction of the subject building is presented after the statement of significance for Criteria C and D.

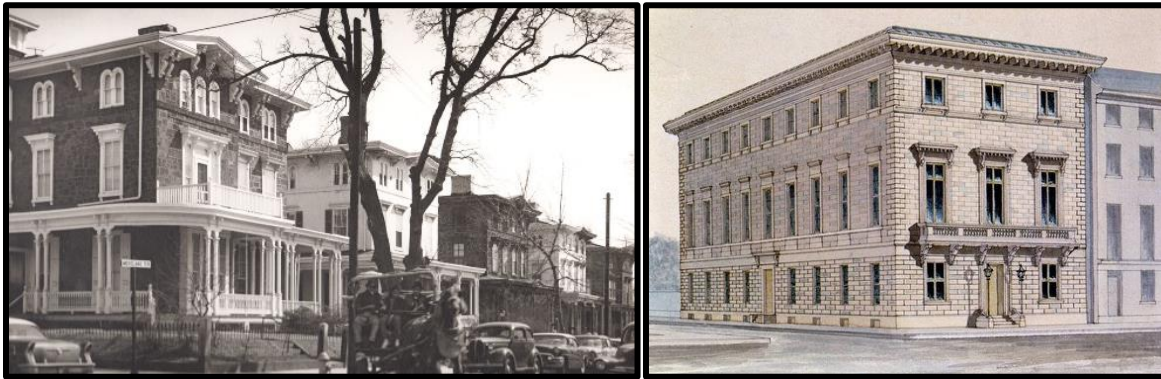


Figure 18. Left: Italianate houses line Woodland Terrace, one of the greatest of early suburban blocks in West Philadelphia. Source: Philadelphia History Museum. Figure 19. Right: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia (1845), 219 S. 6th Street, Washington Square, Philadelphia (extant). Source: The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

CRITERION D

The former Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church embodies distinguishing characteristics of the Italianate style, satisfying Criterion D. The Italianate style was prevalent in American architecture between 1840 and 1885, being employed in a wide variety of building forms and types that can be found in the historic built environments of urban, suburban, and rural America.⁶

Originating in England as part of the Picturesque Movement, the Italianate style emerged as a reaction to formal classicism, generating ideal romantic designs for a country house or a suburban villa.⁷ While these rural building designs adhered to the tradition of “informal Italian farmhouses,” Italianate architecture in urban areas took on the style of Palazzos and “formal Renaissance townhouse,” which became particularly common in cities and towns of the northeastern United States.⁸ City dwellings were usually “austere square or rectangular boxes,” chaste and controlled in the application of decorative details.⁹ Perhaps the most formal residential result in American

³ “Cumberland St. M.E. Church, Laying the Corner Stone To-Morrow,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 April 1873, 2.

⁴ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 October 1873, 2.

⁵ “Religious Matters,” *The Times*, 25 October 1875, 1.

⁶ McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 283-286.

⁷ Lockwood, Charles, Ciccone, Patrick W., and Taylor, Jonathan D. *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Row House*. (Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2019).; and McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 283-286.

⁸ McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 283-286.

⁹ Lockwood, Charles, Ciccone, Patrick W., and Taylor, Jonathan D. *Bricks and Brownstone: The New York Row House*. (Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2019).

cities was the emergence of New York City’s ubiquitous “brownstone,” which included thousands of Italianate row houses built throughout the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn in brown sandstone. In Philadelphia and other cities, red brick continued to define the urban landscape, featuring bracketed cornices and other characteristic details.

Beyond domestic architecture, the Italianate style was employed in commercial, institutional, religious, and other building types.¹⁰ One of the first palazzo-style buildings in America, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia at 219 S. 6th Street on Washington Square was designed by the eminent Philadelphia architect John Notman in 1845.¹¹ Beyond the more formal, palazzo-style, institutions and religious organizations collectively commissioned the Italianate style for their buildings, including houses of worship. In the “still growing cities” of the northeast, including Philadelphia, characteristics of the style were adopted and merged with other fashionable motifs to create distinctive, local vernacular buildings. There were two major phases, the earliest of which occurred in the late 1840s through the 1850s, producing buildings that embraced the austerity previously described. By the 1860s and 1870s, the post-Civil War years saw an increase in church construction in cities of the northeastern United States.¹² During this time the style evolved to form a second phase, to become a “High Victorian Italianate,” producing more elaborate works.¹³ Though in working class neighborhoods, church edifices were distinctly Italianate, while being understated in red brick.¹⁴



Figure 20. Left: The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Camden was built on the same form and also influenced by the Italianate style. Source: dvrbs.com. Figure 21. Right: St. Benedict the Moor Church (1869), 342 West 53rd Street, Hell’s Kitchen, Manhattan, New York City was designed in the Italianate style for an African American congregation. Source: [https://www.revolvy.com/page/St.-Benedict-the-Moor-Church-\(New-York-City\)](https://www.revolvy.com/page/St.-Benedict-the-Moor-Church-(New-York-City)).

¹⁰ Stern, Robert A.M., Mellins, Thomas, and Fishman, David. *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age*. (Monacelli Press, 1999).

¹¹ Gallery, John Andrew, ed. (2004), *Philadelphia Architecture: A Guide to the City* (2nd ed.), Philadelphia: Foundation for Architecture, ISBN 0962290815, 51

¹² Stern, Robert A.M., Mellins, Thomas, and Fishman, David. *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age*. (Monacelli Press, 1999), 279.

¹³ McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America’s Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 283-286.

¹⁴ Stern, Robert A.M., Mellins, Thomas, and Fishman, David. *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age*. (Monacelli Press, 1999), 286.

As previously stated, the subject building is a highly intact specimen of the Italianate style. Often referred to as a ‘preaching box’, the gable-front building with its rectangular footprint is a principal subtype of the Italianate style, which defines the subject property with its prominent gable-front facing north onto Cumberland Street.¹⁵ The building form is one typically associated with churches in Philadelphia and throughout the United States articulated in the Italianate and other style, a subject that will be expounded upon under Criterion C. Features of the Italianate style include buildings with the following characteristics: “two or three stories (rarely one story); low-pitched roofs with moderate to widely over-hanging eaves having decorative brackets beneath; tall, narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above; windows frequently with elaborated crowns, often of inverted U shape...”¹⁶ Each elevation of the subject building is set beneath the original cornice, which culminates in the primary (north) elevation in a broken pediment. The cornice itself features decorative brackets, which are characteristic of the style. The primary (north) and the side (east and west) elevations feature “tall, narrow windows” with full arch tops, featuring original and/or period stained-glass. The central window at the primary (north) elevation is set within a larger blind arch, while all the others are centered within brick niches. The windows within the primary (north) elevation are also distinguished in the Italianate style by bracketed frames that are employed at both the first and second floors. These openings also feature characteristic keystones, another distinguishing characteristic of the said style. While certain structural components of the Greek Revival style lingered in its associated building form and stripped pilasters, these features were subdued and dominated by those of the Italianate.



Figure 22. Left: The Thomas Hart Stable, N. Broad Street, Philadelphia (extant) was designed in the Italianate style and, like the subject property features a bracketed pediment, full arch top windows, and subdued pilasters, almost all of which is articulated in red brick. Source: Curbed Philly. Figure 23. Right: The David Farragut School (1873), West Kensington, Philadelphia is an Italianate style school at 170 W. Cumberland Street, built at the same time as the subject property. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Farragut_School_\(Philadelphia,_Pennsylvania\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Farragut_School_(Philadelphia,_Pennsylvania)).

¹⁵ McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 283-286.

¹⁶ McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 284.



Figure 24. The Haines Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Built March 1858. Source: The Germantown Historical Society.

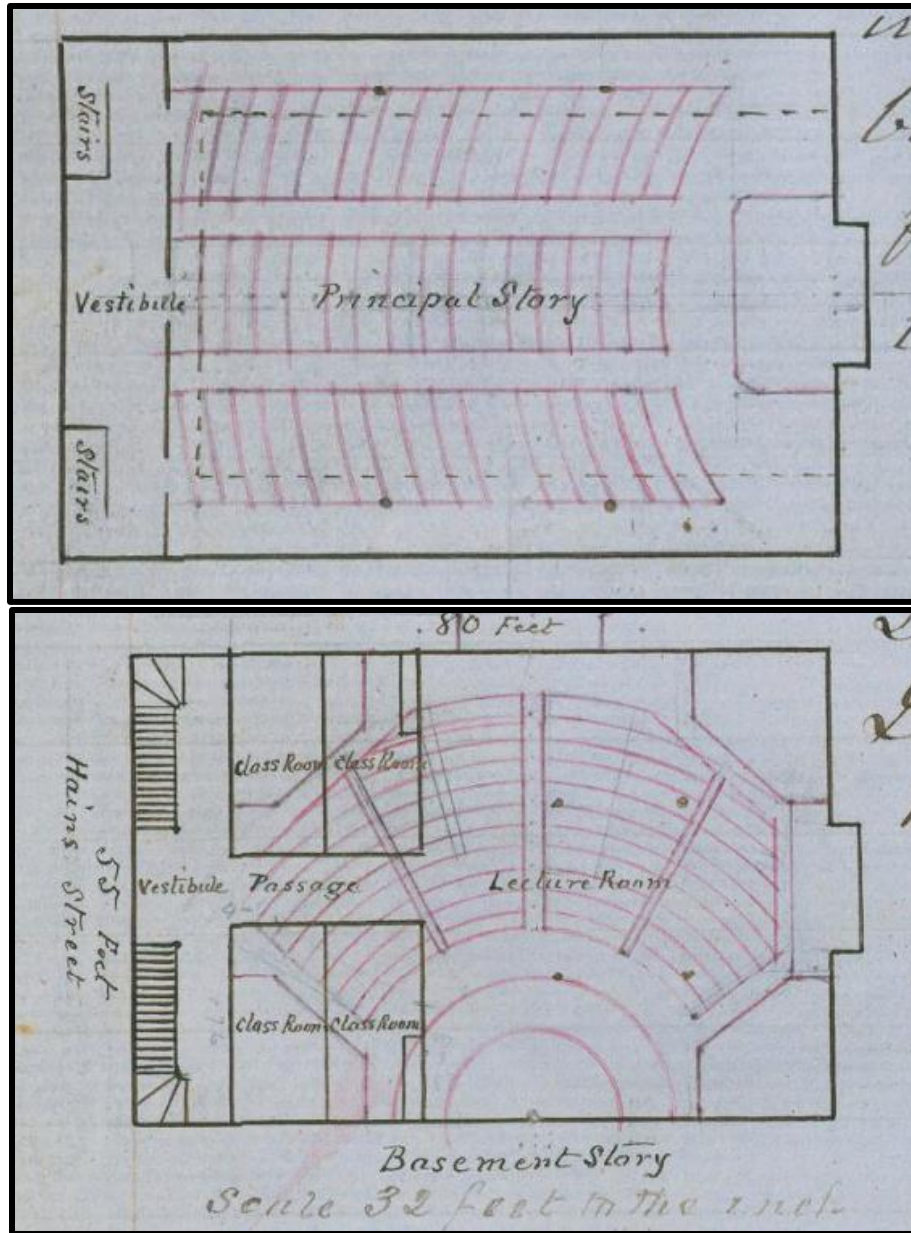
CRITERION C

The former Cumberland Street M.E. Church reflects the environment of the United States, Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia in the third and early fourth quarters of the nineteenth century when the architecture of church edifices was characterized by the Italianate style. Specifically, the design of the subject property is based on a ubiquitous urban ‘preaching box’ church type of red brick construction with a distinctive Italianate treatment, making fashionable in the 1870s, a popular building form that remained in use throughout much of Philadelphia’s eighteenth and nineteenth century history.

Planning for a new house of worship at the southwest corner of Cumberland and Coral Streets, the budding Kensington congregation’s “committee on observation and plans” visited “a number of churches,” deciding on a design that was inspired by the Haines Street M.E. Church of Germantown.¹⁷ When the “model for the exterior elevation” was selected by the larger organization on September 17, 1872 at Livezey’s Hall, the congregants voted on an improved version of the Haines Street church, creating a more purely Italianate house of worship. The fashionable treatment was set upon a building form that was long familiar in American institutional

¹⁷ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 7. Source: Oscar Beisert’s Personal Collection.

and religious architecture—particularly, within auspices of Philadelphia’s conservative taste palette. At the time when the Cumberland Street M.E. Church was receiving estimates for the construction of their new building, Philadelphia boasted 92 M.E. congregations according to the city directory of 1875-76.¹⁸



The Haines Street M.E. Church inspired the design and layout of the subject property. Figure 25. Top: From the insurance survey of 1859, the “Principal Story” plan of the Haines Street M.E. Church. Figure 26. Bottom: Also from the insurance survey of 1859, The “Basement Story” plan of the Haines Street M.E. Church. Source: Insurance Survey S10295: Methodist Episcopal Church, The Philadelphia Contributionship for the Insurance of Houses from Loss by Fire. Via online archives.

¹⁸ Philadelphia City Directory, 1875-76.

Like the edifice built by the Haines Street congregation in 1859, this group of Methodists in Kensington were not the first to select this specific building form or the Italianate style as the most attractive and practical combination for standards driven by budget and utility. Like the subject property, the Haines Street building was a simple red brick box with a gable-front façade that stylistically represented a transition from Greek Revival to Italianate, featuring classical pilasters, a pediment, tall and narrow windows with full arch tops, and frames for each opening.



Both of the buildings shown above are examples of Methodist Episcopal Churches, as they evolved in Philadelphia, in the simple, red brick 'preaching box' with a gable front, featuring a low first floor and a sanctuary above on the second. While St. George's was a Georgian vernacular and St. Paul's shows the influence of the Greek Revival style, these buildings relate in form to the subject property. Figure 27. Top: St. George's Methodist Church (c1763-1812), 235 N. Fourth Street, Philadelphia. Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia, https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/digitool%3A99376?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=8483f38efed45a3be944&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=10. Figure 28. St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church (1838), Catherine Street above 6th, Philadelphia. Source: Drawn by J.L. Magee, Library Company of Philadelphia, https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/digitool%3A63572?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=2704f8d2654acf5ca44&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=26



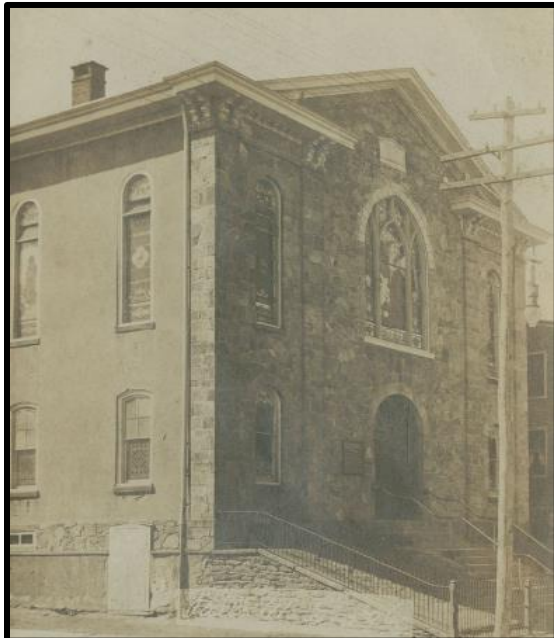
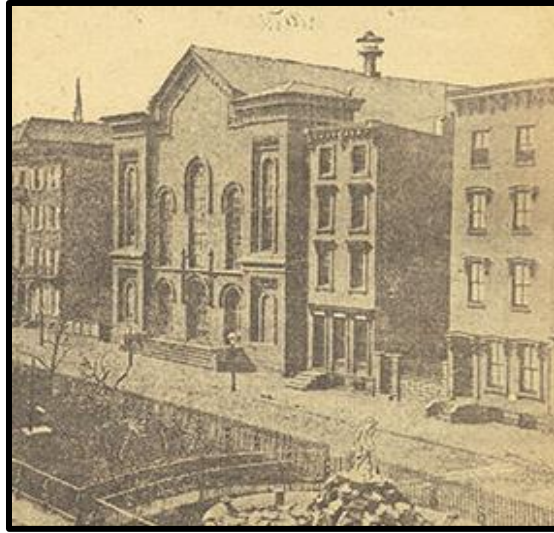
Figure 29. Left: The subject building is built on a commonly known form and plan, while also being a beautiful example of the Italianate style. Source: Flickr. Figure 30. Right: “Old Brick” is a Methodist Episcopal Church on Richmond Street in the Fishtown neighborhood near the Delaware River waterfront. While of the Greek Revival style, the building form is similar to the subject property. Source: Hidden City Philadelphia.

The ‘preaching box,’ as it was built in the tight, urban format that created and defined Philadelphia in the nineteenth century, was well known in this protestant denomination. The building form was commonly known with its gable-front and rectangular plan. The first or basement story was almost always low, often partly below grade, being divided into meeting rooms and possibly a lecture room. The second or upper floor was the principal floor, containing a two- and two-and-one-half-story sanctuary.

St. George’s M.E. Church of Philadelphia, located on N. Third Street below George Street, was built in the eighteenth century and altered in the early nineteenth century to its present appearance, standing as an early and simple prototype for dozens of its offspring congregations that would rise throughout Philadelphia. The building form was used and adapted by many local M.E. congregations: Conhocksink ME, Germantown Avenue above Columbia Avenue (demolished); Haines Street M.E. (demolished); Hancock Street M.E., Hancock Street above Girard Avenue (extant); Mount Carmel M.E., Germantown Avenue above Broad Street (extant with a new façade); Ridge Avenue M.E., Ridge Avenue, Roxborough (extant); St. John’s M.E., Third Street below George Street (extant); Tasker M.E., Fifth and Snyder Streets (extant); Union M.E., Fourth Street below Arch Street (demolished). As these churches were constructed in the late eighteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth century, fashionable architectural styles shifted from Georgian to Greek Revival and from Greek Revival to Italianate. While there are many pure examples of each style, many hybrids of these styles combined also exist. The building form was hardly limited to the M.E. churches. Numerous Presbyterian churches were designed on the same old lines, as were many other denominations. While the design of subject building and so many others employed this ubiquitous building form, the age-old ‘preaching box’ was reinvented time and time again with designs that embodied the fashionable architectural styles of the day. Illustrations shown above and below help to articulate the evolution of this building form, which would eventually feature so many different versions of an Italianate style treatment.



The two churches shown above show the stylistic transition of the gable-front 'preaching box' from Georgian to Greek Revival to Italianate, the bottom example being a mixture of Greek Revival and Italianate like the Haines Street Methodist Episcopal Church. Figure 31. Top: Old Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church of West Philadelphia (1830), Ludlow and Thirty-third Streets, Philadelphia (demolished). Source: Castner Scrapbook, v. 28, Churches 3, page 79, Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 32. Bottom: Cohocksink Methodist Episcopal Church (1857), Germantown Avenue near Columbia. Source: Library Company of Philadelphia, https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/digitool%3A99285?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=8483f38efed45a3be944&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=25



All located in Philadelphia, the four churches shown above each have similarities to the subject property, as is described in each caption below. Figure 33. Top left: 1st United Presbyterian Church, S. Broad and Lombard Streets, Philadelphia (demolished) is a church edifice designed in both the Greek Revival and Italianate styles as applied to the typical gable-front 'preaching box'. Figure 34. Top right: St. Philip's Episcopal (1841), Spring Garden Street, east of N. Broad Street (demolished) deviates from the ubiquitous 'preaching box' form, but clings to the gable front, featuring an Italianate cornice as well as full arched top windows that are both framed and hooded. Source: Castner Scrapbook, v. 28, Churches 3, page 61, The Free Library of Philadelphia. Figure 35. Bottom left: Falls Methodist Episcopal Church (1872), East Falls, Philadelphia is another example of a gable-front church building with a stone façade that features a similar pediment and cornice type as the subject property with Italianate influence. Source: The Library Company of Philadelphia, https://digital.librarycompany.org/islandora/object/digitool%3A97022?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=2704f8d2654acf5ca44&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=0&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=31. Figure 36. Bottom right: Mariners' Presbyterian Church (1868), Front Street above Pine (demolished) is a red brick, gable-front 'preaching box' with an Italianate cornice, and three full arch windows across the façade that are set within blind niches like the subject property. Source: White, William Prescott, and Scott, William H., *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia: A Camera and Pen Sketch of Each Presbyterian Church and Institution in the City*. (Allen, Lane & Scott, 1895).



Showcasing Italianate features, the building shown above in Salem, Massachusetts deviates in pure form from the subject building, but features a pediment, red brick, and full arched tops on its three windows that span the façade. Figure 37. Left: The First Baptist Church, at 54 Federal Street in Salem, Massachusetts. The photograph, taken between 1865 and 1885. Source: The New York Public Library. Figure 38. Right: The former First Baptist Church in recent years. Source: <http://lostnewengland.com/category/architecture/italianate/page/3/>



The buildings shown above are both similar in form and stylistic treatment to the subject property. Figure 39. Left: Friends Meeting House (1859), 144 E. 20th Street, Manhattan, New York City features the same broken pediment in its gable front, as well as tall and narrow windows across the façade. The building is also similar to the subject property in form with a low first floor with the sanctuary above. Source: <http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/0018.pdf>. Figure 40. Right: St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church (1862), 7558 Amboy Road, Staten Island, New York City is, like the subject property, of red brick construction with a broken pediment and three tall and narrow windows across its façade with full arch tops that are set within recessed archways. Source: <https://hdc.org/testimony/hdc-designation-testimony-for-backlog95-hearing-october-22-2015/>.

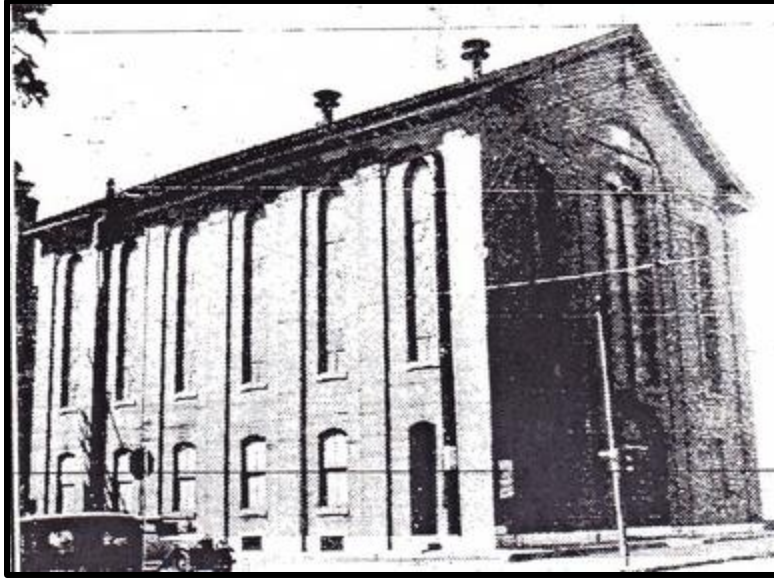


Figure 41. A photograph published in the *Philadelphia Daily News* of the Cumberland Street M.E. Church. Source: Donna Di Giacomo via Pinterest.com <https://i.pining.com/originals/0a/83/cb/0a83cb5ae0fc18e32ce7b9935ca63608.jpg> accessed on 21 November 2019.

Historic Context: Built by the congregation for which it is named, the Cumberland Street M.E. Church began conceptually as a “Mission School” at a meeting of the Sunday School Association at Summerfield M.E. Church on March 31, 1872. A Committee on Missions was formed to select a location and gather other information required to form a congregation. The congregation was officially formed on April 28, 1872, when the Committee on Missions voted to move forward with its establishment. This meeting was held in Livezey’s Hall at northeast corner of Frankford Avenue and Sergeant Street, which is where the founding congregation would first meet. Another committee was formed and the proposed “school” was established on May 5, 1872 with Thomas Baker, Superintendent; Frank W. Getz, Assistant Superintendent; A.A. Rutter, Secretary; M.L. Shoemaker, Treasurer; Charles W. Murray, Librarian; and seventeen teachers on staff.¹⁹ The church was officially organized and named Cumberland Street M.E. Church on August 22, 1872 at Livezey’s Hall.²⁰

¹⁹ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 5. Source: Oscar Beisert’s Personal Collection.

²⁰ “New Church Enterprise,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 August 1872, 7.

Michael L. Shoemaker,	Laura Peacock,
Mary A. Shoemaker,	Charles D. Reiff,
Emma R. Shoemaker,	Hattie Reiff,
Charles W. Shoemaker,	Henry McCartney,
D. Webster Shoemaker,	Mary McCartney,
Thomas Baker,	Mary J. McCartney,
Elizabeth Baker,	Hannah McCartney,
Annie V. Baker,	Emma McCartney,
Joseph W. Baker,	William H. Fisher,
D. B. Wendle,	Amelia Fisher,
Kate S. Wendle,	Sarah J. Fisher,
Joseph Crouse,	Ellen T. Moore,
Sarah A. Crouse,	John Lilly,
Sallie J. Crouse,	Rebecca Lilly,
Frank W. Getz,	Charles Thompson,
Mary L. Getz,	Susan Pomroy,
Benjamin H. Wiley,	John Allen, jr.
Elmira Wiley,	E. C. Beebe,
William G. Wiley,	Catharine Beebe,
Elizabeth Flennard,	Charles Beebe,
G. Harry Buch,	George W. Beebe,
Leah Buch,	Mary A. Stevens,
George J. Zeigler,	Prucilla Braddock,
Lillie B. Zeigler,	Ellen Braddock,
Alfred Tothill,	Jennie Braddock,
Philippa Tothill,	Sallie A. Braddock,
John Reese,	George Roberts,
Hanna J. Reese,	Hannah M. Roberts,
Charles W. Murray,	Emily Roberts,
Kate A. Murray,	Elizabeth Roberts,
William Marr,	Jane Roberts,
Jane M. Marr,	Sallie Woodleton,
William Booth,	Susan Aschenfelter,
Annie Lathrop,	Jacob Kisselbach,
E. Florence Lathrop,	Kate Kisselbach,
Charles W. Jones,	Mary Schaeffer,
Joshua Allen, Sr.	Sarah A. Hague,
Rhoda Allen,	Richard W. Clifton,
Winfield S. Allen,	Elizabeth Clifton,
Samuel Carver,	Rachel Christy,
Rose Ann Carver,	Emma Batty,
Anna L. Reese,	Susan Allen,
Jacob S. Duval,	Sarah A. Hague,
Barbara Duval,	William Margemm,
George McVaugh,	Mary Kennedy,
Rebecca McVaugh,	John Stone,
Cornelius Peacock,	Eliza Stone,
Jemima Peacock,	Kate A. Masser,
Dr. Thomas H. Peacock,	Emily Graff,
Malinda Hague Peacock,	John Uber,
Emma Peacock,	Mrs. John Uber.

Figure 42. A list of the founding members of the Cumberland Street M.E. Church. Source: Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 6. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

The subject property, then just a vacant lot, was purchased between August 26 and September 17 for the sum of \$4,625. The Board of Trustees and others donated the funds used to purchase the property. A Committee on Observations and Plans was formed, including Brothers Shoemaker, Duval, Carver, Baker and Zeigler. This committee visited “a number of churches” deciding on a designed modeled on the Haines Street M.E. Church of Germantown. The design of the new building was passed by an organizational vote on September 17 at Livezey’s Hall. The Trustees oversaw raising money for the construction of the new house of worship. A Building Committee was then formed, which included the following Brothers: Thomas Baker, Joshua Allen, Sr., Jacob S. Duval. D. B. Wendle, Joseph Crouse, Alfred Tothill, and Louis Zeigler. Almost immediately plans for the erection of the new building were underway, as described in the 25th Anniversary pamphlet of the congregation:

The permit for the erection of the building was taken out October 5th, 1872, the number of which was 1335, cost \$6.00. Excavations were begun, cellar walled, and first floor joist laid.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees held March 6th, estimates were received from Moore, Crouse & Fisher and Humphreys & McDowell, at \$13,640. aryl \$4,500. respectively, and the contract was awarded to Moore, Crouse & Fisher for \$13,640.²¹

Laying the cornerstone of a new church was often announced in Philadelphia newspapers and the Cumberland Street M.E. Church was no different, the program for which was announced by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on April 23, 1873. The two-paragraph article projected the cost of the building, which was described as “brick—60 by 80 feet—costing besides ground, \$21,000...”²² On April 24, 1873 the cornerstone ceremony took place at the subject property, which was described in the 25th Anniversary pamphlet as follows:

Preparations had been made by flooring the entire first floor of joist, and arranging benches for the seating of the congregation, which was large and orderly. The Pastor, T. M. Griffith, acted as chairman of the meeting, which was graced with a large attendance of preachers from the surrounding churches, who evinced a lively interest in the prosperity and success of the enterprise.

The public press was likewise fully represented by a corps of reporters, who gave extensive notices in the daily papers of the exercises with a full description of the church building.

The services commenced by singing an anthem by the choir, under the direction of Dr. Thomas H. Peacock, leader...

Laying of the corner-stone by Bishop Simpson at the north-east corner of the building. A box containing the following articles was deposited therein never to be revealed again until the destruction of the building. Bible used in the Sabbath School from its organization, May 5th, 1872. Methodist Episcopal Church Hymn Book. Methodist Discipline. Methodist Almanac 1873. List of officers and members of the church. List of officers, teachers and scholars of the school.

A copy of the Christian Advocate, Home Journal and Sabbath School Advocate. A copy each of the daily papers, viz: Public Ledger, Inquirer, The Press, Public Record, The Age, Evening Bulletin, The Telegraph, Star, Herald, All Day Item, The Day. The hymn sang at the corner-stone laying. An English six-pence. Postal currency and the minor coins of the day.²³

²¹ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 8. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

²² “Cumberland St. M.E. Church, Laying the Corner Stone To-Morrow,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 April 1873, 2.

²³ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 9-10. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

As the construction progress, the congregation held meetings at the subject property, the first of which took place on July 31, 1873. The Lecture Room of the new building was dedicated on October 5, 1873.²⁴ Nevertheless, the congregation continued meeting at Livezy's Hall, where a Sunday School of nearly 250 students met on the Sabbath. In just one quarter the church gained an additional 100 members, reaching a \$20,000 net worth by January 7, 1874. Construction of the building continued through "the summer, fall and winter."

When the building was nearing completion, a fire broke out at 6:30 AM on January 28, 1874 as a result of a spontaneous combustion, which destroyed the interior of the building. The fire was reported on by various papers with the loss reported on as being approximately \$15,000 by at least one publication.²⁵ Nevertheless, the decision to rebuild was immediate, and an appeal to other congregations led to an initial donation of \$7,851.12 from roughly 35 churches. The house next door was also purchased at a cost of \$2,300. Plans to rebuild included the following:

In re building, a chapel was added on the west side, south end of the church, containing four rooms on the first floor for classrooms, and one room in the second story for the Infant School. The room adjoining the church, first floor, was: fitted up for the Sunday-school. Library, with cases, etc. A vault was also built under the chapel, on the front, in the center, abandoning the one formerly used, which was at the corner of church. The vault has been a source of revenue, the receipts from which ran as high as sixty-five to seventy dollars per month, but other churches in the neighborhood having provided vaults, has materially reduced the revenue of ours.

In re-building, the contract for the window and door frames was awarded to Moore, Crouse' & Fisher for \$30.75, they being the lowest bidders. It was also ordered that in re-building an inscription stone be placed in the gable end, above the large window with this inscription:—Built 1873. destroyed by fire, and rebuilt 1875.

The house adjoining the church was fitted up for the use of class meetings, and Sister Ruddell was put in charge of the house at a salary of \$10 for the first month, and \$8 per month thereafter. Brother John Reese was awarded the contract for plastering; estimates for glass were received and contract was awarded to Marshall & Bro. for \$1.341; the contract for the seats to Lewis Thompson & Co. for \$1,735 .75 for the audience room, and the seats in lecture-room, to the same parties at \$1.30 per foot. Sunday, July 11th was set apart for the dedication of lecture room; Brother J. Langley preached the sermon from text, Psalm, 68:43: "Though ye have lain

²⁴ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 October 1873, 2.

²⁵ *Intelligencer Journal*, 29 January 1875, 2.

among the pots, ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."²⁶

A dedication of the "Audience Room" took place on Sunday, October 24, 1875.²⁷ The new building was described by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* at that time as follows:

The edifice is of brick, with marble dressings, measuring 60 feet on Cumberland street and 80 feet on Coral street. The first story is 13 feet high in the clear, having four class rooms, a lecture room 40 by 60 feet, a 12-foot vestibule, and double stairway leading to the upper floor. It is 29 feet high, and 57 by 77 feet, with side gallery, with lights from the ceiling, and with a capacity for accommodating comfortably 650 persons. The work of construction was commenced in October, 1872, on a lot previously secured at a cost of \$4600, and was finished in the most costly manner, the windows being of stained glass and the walls beautifully frescoed. The pews were arranged in semi-circle and beautifully upholstered, and the pulpit was finished in a very handsome manner.²⁸

An Auditing Committee reported that the cost of rebuilding the Main Block and the Chapel, purchasing the properties at 2034 and 2036 E. Cumberland Street, and furnishing the Main Block, Chapel, and parsonage was \$30,406.24 with a balance of \$15,865.53.²⁹ In the early years the building was also outfitted to serve as a Sunday-school Library and a Library and Reading Room for a Lyceum. The Lyceum was founded as a private subscription library, providing a service to the neighborhood, while also raising funds.³⁰

At the time the building was completed, there were roughly 400 members.³¹ From this time forward the congregation grew steadily. In 1880, the church was the site of a great religious revival, which was described by the congregation's pastor at the time, Reverend Kessler:

In January a great revival started with an all-day meeting on the 13th, but Sabbath, the 30th, was the crowning day. I have often read about the days of power, but never had the privilege of seeing it such a wonderful manner as on this Sabbath. On an invitation to join, thirty came forward in the morning; seventy-five to one hundred in the afternoon; forty-five in the evening.³²

²⁶ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 12. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

²⁷ "Religious Matters," *The Times*, 25 October 1875, 1.

²⁸ "Dedicating a Church," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 October 1875, 2.

²⁹ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 12. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

³⁰ Pamphlet: *History of the Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church and Sabbath School and the Various Societies* [1872-1897]. (Philadelphia: Lonabaugh & Sons, 1897), 14-15. Source: Oscar Beisert's Personal Collection.

³¹ "Dedicating a Church," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 25 October 1875, 2.

³² "Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church, 2038-2048 East Cumberland Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania." Survey (photographs, written historical and descriptive data), Historic American Buildings

The former Cumberland Street ME Church served its original congregation from the time of its construction for nearly 100 years when it merged with Union Tabernacle Presbyterian Church in 1974-75. The congregation then vacated its original building, and the subject property is now home to the Urban Worship Center, an Assembly of God affiliated congregation. The new congregation rented the subject property from until 2009 when it purchased the building.³³

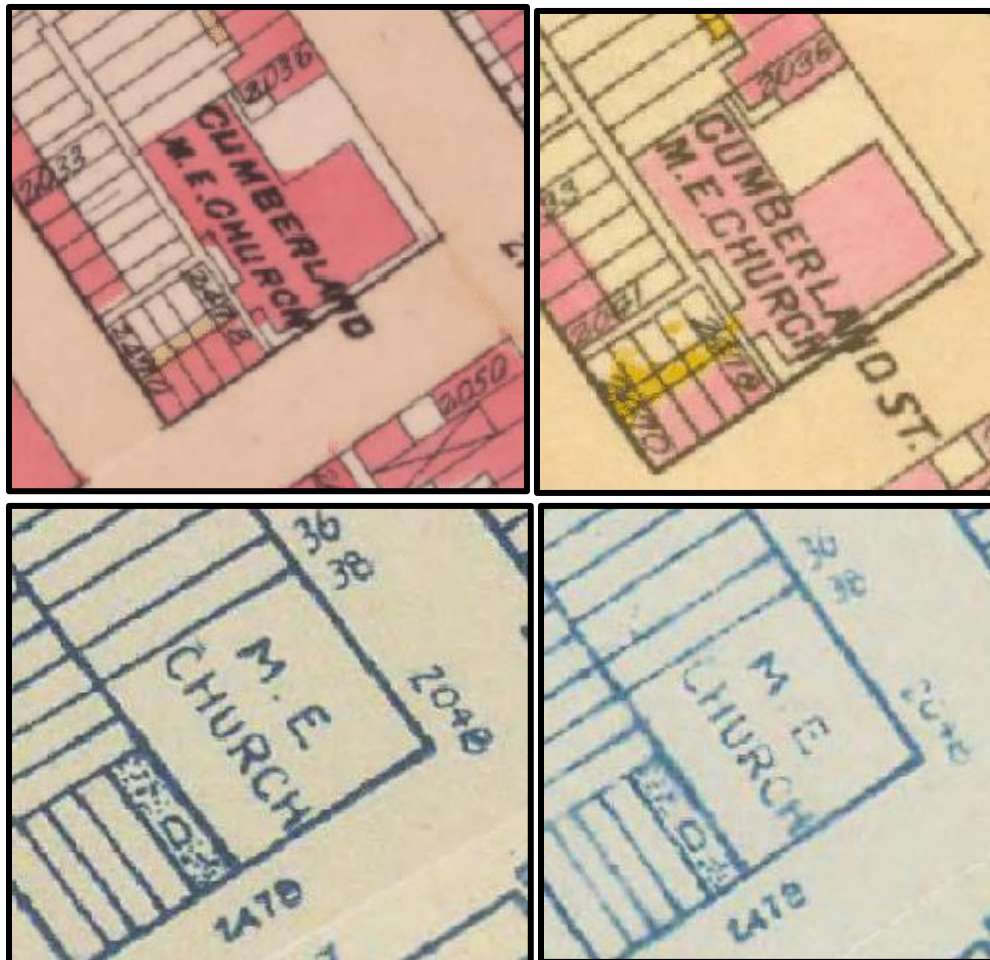


Figure 43. Top left: 1895 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley. Figure 44. Top right: 1910 Philadelphia Atlas by G.W. Bromley. Figure 45. Bottom left: 1942 Land Use Maps by the Works Progress Administration. Figure 46. Bottom right: 1962 Land Use Maps by the Works Progress Administration. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2014. From Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS No. PA-6787; <https://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/pa/pa4100/pa4157/data/pa4157data.pdf> accessed 21 November 2019).

³³ "Cumberland Street Methodist Episcopal Church, 2038-2048 East Cumberland Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania." Survey (photographs, written historical and descriptive data), Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2014. From Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS No. PA-6787; <https://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/pa/pa4100/pa4157/data/pa4157data.pdf> accessed 21 November 2019).

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Nominator: Historic Preservation Team of the
East Kensington Neighbors Association.

Organizational Author: Keeping Society of Philadelphia

Primary Author (s): Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservationist

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Kelly Wiles, Architectural Historian

The following sites were used to create the nomination:

Ancestry.com
Germantown Historical Society
Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network
Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Newspapers.com
Philadelphia Architects and Buildings
Philadelphia Contributionship Digital Archives
Proquest Historical Newspapers

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