

**ADDRESS: 5001 BALTIMORE AVE**

Name of Resource: St. Paul's Presbyterian Church; Hickman Temple AME Church; Emmanuel Christian Church

Review: Designation

Property Owner: Emmanuel Christian Center Inc.

Nominator: University City Historical Society

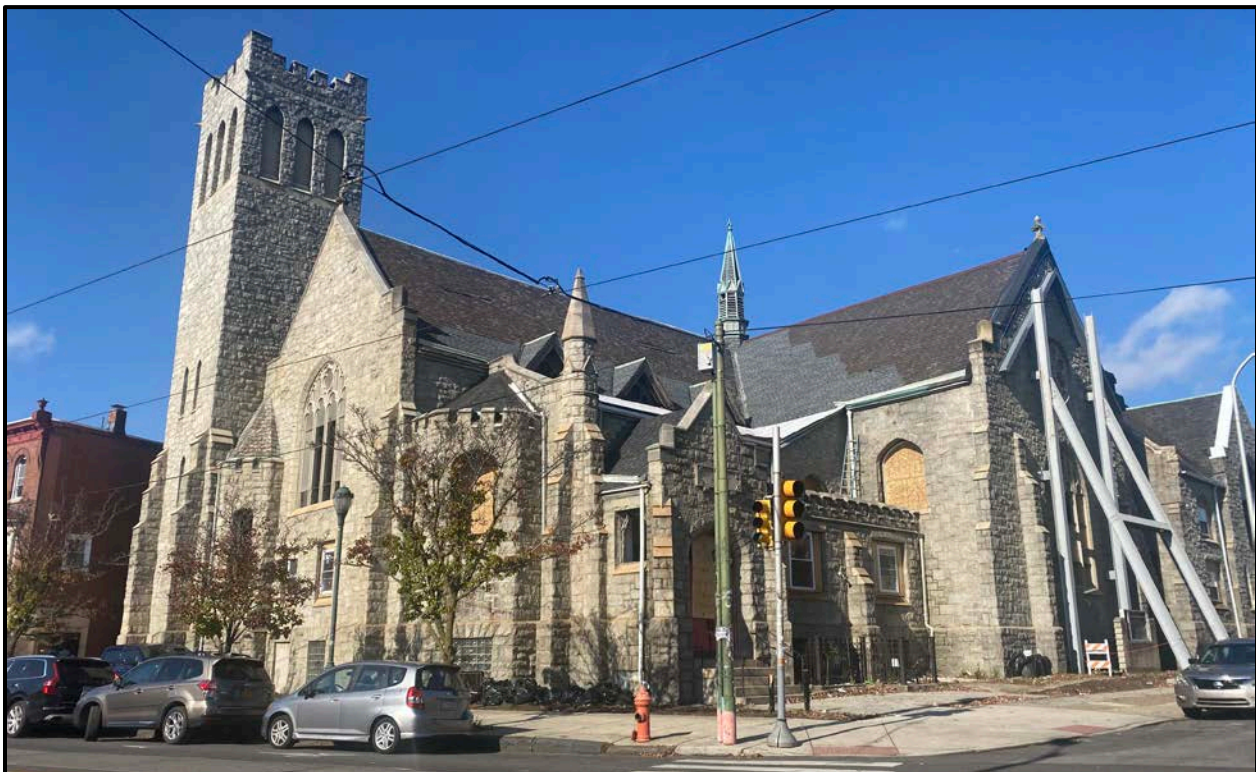
Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, [kim.chantry@phila.gov](mailto:kim.chantry@phila.gov)

**OVERVIEW:** This nomination proposes to designate the property at 5001 Baltimore Avenue as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the Emmanuel Christian Church satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, H, and J. Under Criterion D, the nomination argues that the church embodies distinguishing characteristics of Late Gothic Revival architecture. Under Criterion E, the nomination contends that the church and chapel addition are examples of the work of Isaac Pursell, a prolific church designer in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas. Under Criterion H, the nomination claims that the church represents an established and familiar visual feature in the heart of the Cedar Park neighborhood of West Philadelphia. Lastly, under Criterion J, the nomination argues that the church exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of the Cedar Park community.

The church building has suffered from deferred maintenance over the years, resulting in the installation of a large steel bracing system on the east façade to comply an Unsafe violation. A make-safe building permit was obtained in December 2022 to address an additional Unsafe violation related to the masonry.

At its 14 January 2022 meeting, the Historical Commission accepted the University City Historical Society's request to withdraw the nomination pending review at that time for this property, owing to discussions with the then-owner Hickman Temple AME Church. The property sold in June 2022 to Emmanuel Christian Center Inc. and the University City Historical Society then resubmitted the nomination with updated photographs.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 5001 Baltimore Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation D, E, H, and J.



**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: 5001 Baltimore Avenue

Postal code: 19143

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Saint Paul's Presbyterian Church; Hickman Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church

Current/Common Name: Emmanuel Christian Church

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition: ☐ excellent ☐ good ☒ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Religious

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.*

**6. DESCRIPTION**

*Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.*

**7. SIGNIFICANCE**

*Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.*

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1900 to 1906

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1901, 1905

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Isaac Pursell

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Frank S. Riggs

Original owner: Saint Paul's Presbyterian Church

Other significant persons: \_\_\_\_\_

**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 a bibliography.*

**9. NOMINATOR**

Organization University City Historical Society (UCHS) Date November 20, 2022

Name with Title UCHS Board of Directors Email info@uchs.net

Street Address PO Box 31927 Telephone 215-387-3019

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19104

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: November 21, 2022

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: December 29, 2022

Date of Notice Issuance: April 21, 2023

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Emmanuel Christian Center, Inc.

Address: 5913 Chestnut St.

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19139

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Final Action: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

Nomination for the  
Philadelphia Register of Historic Places



Emmanuel Christian Church  
*formerly*  
Hickman Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church & St. Paul's Presbyterian Church  
5001 Baltimore Avenue  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



*In June 2020, University City Historical Society (UCHS) submitted a nomination of the property at 5001 Baltimore Avenue to the Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) (for consideration of inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places). After discussions over the subsequent 18 months with the then-owner Hickman Temple AME Church, UCHS decided to rescind the nomination and did so formally with a letter to the owner and an email to the PHC in January 2022. The property sold later in 2022. As of November 2022, substantial and unsympathetic alterations are underway at the property, including the removal of nearly all original leaded and stained-glass windows. According to Atlas and as of November 20, 2022, the work is unpermitted. The board of governors at UCHS has voted unanimously to resubmit the nomination with updated photographs illustrating the changes since the initial nomination was submitted.*

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION



Figure 1: The boundary for the proposed designation is delineated in red.  
(Source: Philadelphia Water Department, 2020)

Emmanuel Christian Church is bordered on the south by Baltimore Avenue, the east by South 50<sup>th</sup> Street, the north Catharine Street and the west by mixed-use row homes and is delineated as follows:

All that certain lot or piece of ground, Situate in the 27<sup>th</sup> Ward of the City of Philadelphia, bounded and described according to a survey thereof made by J.H. Gillingham, District Surveyor on July 28, 1900 as follows:

Beginning at the Northwest corner of Baltimore Avenue and 50<sup>th</sup> Street; thence extending North 11 degrees, 1/10 minute East, along the Westernmost side of said 50<sup>th</sup> Street, 137 feet, 2 7/8 inches to the South side of Catharine Street; thence Westward along the South side of said Catharine Street at right angles with the said 50<sup>th</sup> Street, 100 feet to a point in the South side of said Catharine Street;

thence Southward at right angles to said Catharine Street and on a line parallel with said 50<sup>th</sup> Street, 168 feet, 1 inch to the Northerly side of Baltimore Avenue, aforesaid; thence North 83 degrees, 52 minutes, 22 seconds East along the Northerly side of Baltimore Avenue, 104 feet, 7-3/4 inches to the place of the beginning.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The former St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, (also known as Hickman Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church from 1972 to 2022) now known as Emmanuel Christian Church, is located along the northeast side of Baltimore Avenue, at the corner of South 50<sup>th</sup> Street, within a neighborhood of primarily two- and three-story Queen Anne and late-Victorian rowhouses constructed between 1890 and 1910 known as Cedar Park. The church is freestanding and positioned up to the sidewalk right of way along South 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Catharine Street and Baltimore Avenue. While the church is one of the most massive structures in the neighborhood, it remains compatible with the scale of the surrounding buildings. Apart from the bell tower at the southwest corner of the building, the church is only slightly taller than the nearby residential buildings. The building consumes nearly the entire parcel and aside from shrubbery around the building there are no landscaped areas of the property. The church was designed as a Presbyterian Church by famed Philadelphia ecclesiastical architect Isaac Pursell in 1900, dedicated in 1901 and enlarged in 1905.

The building is either one or two stories in height, apart from the large tower on the southwest corner of the building. The chapel on the south side of the building is based on a cruciform plan with smaller ancillary wings. Until very recently, primary elevations fronting Baltimore Avenue and South 50<sup>th</sup> Street elevations exhibit common attributes and details of the Gothic Revival style as presented in an ecclesiastical form including stained glass windows with tracery, lancet windows, Tudor arches and castellation at various points in the building's roofline. Much of the original stained and leaded glass windows have been replaced throughout the building with prefabricated synthetic sash fixtures with plywood infill. Clad in rusticated Wissahickon Schist and other dressing stone, the north (Catharine Street), east (South 50<sup>th</sup> Street) and south (Baltimore Avenue) elevations dominate their street frontage compared to other smaller, primarily residential, buildings nearby.

### South Elevation (Baltimore Avenue)

The nexus of the primary (Baltimore Avenue and South 50<sup>th</sup> Street) elevations is a nearly four-story-tall square stone tower that dominates the building's southwest corner. The tower is a four-sided buttressed structure with a ground-level entrance on Baltimore Avenue. This entrance includes a set of wooden paneled double doors with strap hinges and a transom window which originally featured stained glass and tracery details but is now boarded up. Above the door are three lancet windows with stone sills: one centered on the second story and a pair centered on the third story. At the top of the tower are three enclosed lancet windows on each side with castellated parapets. The window openings were originally open and exposed the church's bell. To the east of the tower is a two-story, side-gabled wing of the building which occupies the southeast corner of the building. An arched stained-glass window with stone tracery paired with two rectangular windows dominates the elevation. Some of the stained-glass panels have been removed from the larger window. The two first floor windows were originally fixed stained-glass but have recently been replaced with modern synthetic sash fixtures surrounded by wood blocks. This elevation is flanked by two corner castellated bays capped with half-conical roofs and slate and/or asphalt shingles. These sections of the building originally stained-glass windows but are now either completely open or boarded up. A buttressed corner pinnacle with a conical roof serves as a transition point between the south and east elevations.

### East Elevation (South 50<sup>th</sup> Street)

The building's most complex elevation is the east elevation, which faces onto South 50<sup>th</sup> Street. It is essentially divided into two sections, with the south being part of the circa 1905 addition which was constructed as a chapel and to house the congregation's extra-curricular and auxiliary programming, as well as Sunday Schools and the north being the original 1900-1901 building. The northern section of the eastern elevation is three bays wide with a protruding two-story central bay. This central bay has a stone, front-gabled porch with a stepped parapet and recessed entrance into the building. The porch's interior has wood paneled wainscoting and door surround. The exterior doors are also wood paneled with plate glass and appear to be original to the building. This porch also exhibits end buttresses and stone steps and stair wall that lead from the South 50<sup>th</sup> Street right-of-way. A wrought iron security gate has been installed at the top of the steps. The first floor of this bay also had two stained-glass lancet windows that flanked the entryway on either side. These windows were recently placed with plywood infill and small one-over-one synthetic sash fixtures. The second floor displays a large window which originally featured stained-glass with stone tracery similar. This window opening is currently completely empty, exposing the interior of the building to the elements. The two flanking bays also exhibited stained-glass tracery windows in triplets with the first-floor windows being rectangular in shape and the second story windows in a Tudor arch configuration. These too have either been removed and/or replaced with modern fixtures and infill. All four sets of windows have stone sills and lintels. The original 1900 date stone is located on this elevation at the building's northeast corner.

The southern half of the building's eastern elevation is the main entrance to the auxiliary chapel, which was constructed in 1905. Designed by the same architect, Isaac Pursell, who design the main building only a few years prior, it exhibits many of the same materials, form and design elements as the 1901 church include a stone exterior, water table and, until recently, stained glass windows. The easternmost section of the building appears as three separate masses of varying heights at the building's southeast corner. The tallest mass, which is part of the building's cruciform plan and likely the church's nave and has a steep roof with three side-gabled clerestory windows which give the appearance of dormer windows. The secondary mass, which is only slightly shorter than the nave wall (the roofline begins at the sill of the clerestory windows) has a slightly-pitched roof; the roof's original slate shingles have been replaced tar paper. The northern half of this section of the building serves as a buttress to the eastern transept. Two large arched windows are present and are likely interior/exterior windows as only the apex of the arch is visible from the right-of-way. These were once stained glass with tracery but now synthetic fixtures with wooden block infill. The lower portion of the windows likely separates the sanctuary with the vestibule at the southeast corner of the building. The outermost mass of this section of the building includes the 1905 date stone and another primary entrance into the building. It features the same set of wood paneled doors with strap hinges with an arched tracery transom window as the bell tower entrance. Above this entrance is a stone panel with the words "Hickman Temple AME Church" transcribed in and Old Gothic font. This entrance is centered within a buttressed stone surround with a front-gabled parapet. A set of stone steps lead from the South 50<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalk to the entrance. To the north of the entrance are two casement windows with modern infill fixtures. Like many of the windows in this building, until recently these were stained glass with tracery. These windows are separated by corbelled buttress. This section of the building has a castellated parapet and is capped by a flat roof with rolled asphalt. To the north of this southeast



section of the building is eastern wall of the east transept. This part of the eastern façade is nearly identical to the south elevation with a large arched stained glass window with tracery and corbeled corner buttresses. A large rose window is present above the arched window. The basement-level windows below the water table have been enclosed with glass blocks.

#### North Elevation (Catharine Street)

This elevation faces residential properties on the north side of Catharine Street. It has a hip and valley roofline which has been recently clad in asphalt shingles which replaced the original slate roofing materials. Measuring eight bays wide and two stories tall, this elevation is constructed in four distinct sections. Each section is two bays wide with window openings featuring stone sills and lintels in pairs and enclosed basement-level windows. The original window fixtures were stained glass, but all the windows on this elevation are in the process of being replaced with synthetic sash fixtures. Some of these fixtures have been installed though many of the apertures are completely open or have been boarded up with plywood. Similar to the eastern elevation of the 1905 chapel, the first-floor windows are rectangular in form and the second story windows exhibit Tudor arches. The first (easternmost) section, which shares a buttressed corner with the northern elevation features a front gabled end with a stained-glass quatrefoil window in the apex. A stone chimney with a decorative buttress separates this easternmost section with the adjacent section (second) which features four windows. The next (third section) is nearly identical to the first section with a quatrefoil apex window and a gable end. It is defined by decorative buttresses on either side. The westernmost (fourth) section varies slightly compared to the rest of the elevation. While it features the two Tudor arch windows on the second floor, instead of a window opening on the western edge of the first floor, a single door with a Tudor arch transom is located at the building's northwest corner. This auxiliary entrance is accessed from a set of stone steps with wrought iron railing. A final buttress is also located at this corner and serves as a barrier between the church and adjacent residential properties.

#### West Elevation

This elevation abuts a residential property on Catharine Street and a commercial property on Baltimore Avenue. Thus, it is not predominately visible from the public right-of-way. However, the design elements and materials remain consistent with the rest of the building as it has a stone exterior and arched window openings with replacement fixtures.



Figure 3: View northwest of the south and east elevations of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue.  
Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.

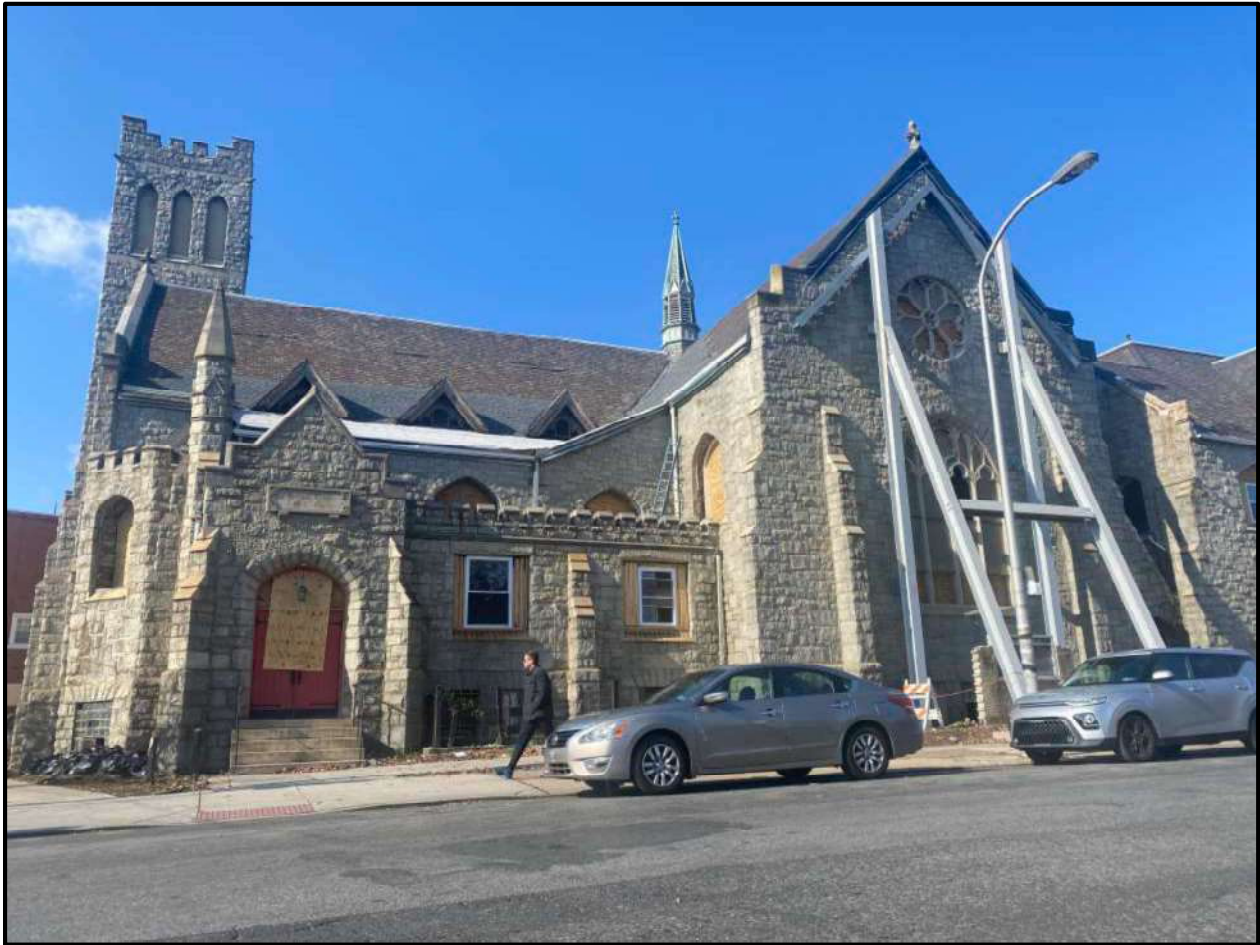


Figure 4: View west of the east elevation of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.



Figure 5: View north of the south elevation of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.





Figure 6: Detail view west of the an entrance on the east elevation of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.



Figure 7: View north of the south elevation of the former Hickman Temple AME Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Jenny Loustau, October 2019. *Note the original stained glass still intact.*



Figure 8: View northwest of the east elevation of the former Hickman Temple AME Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Jenny Loustau, October 2019. *Note the original stained glass still intact.*



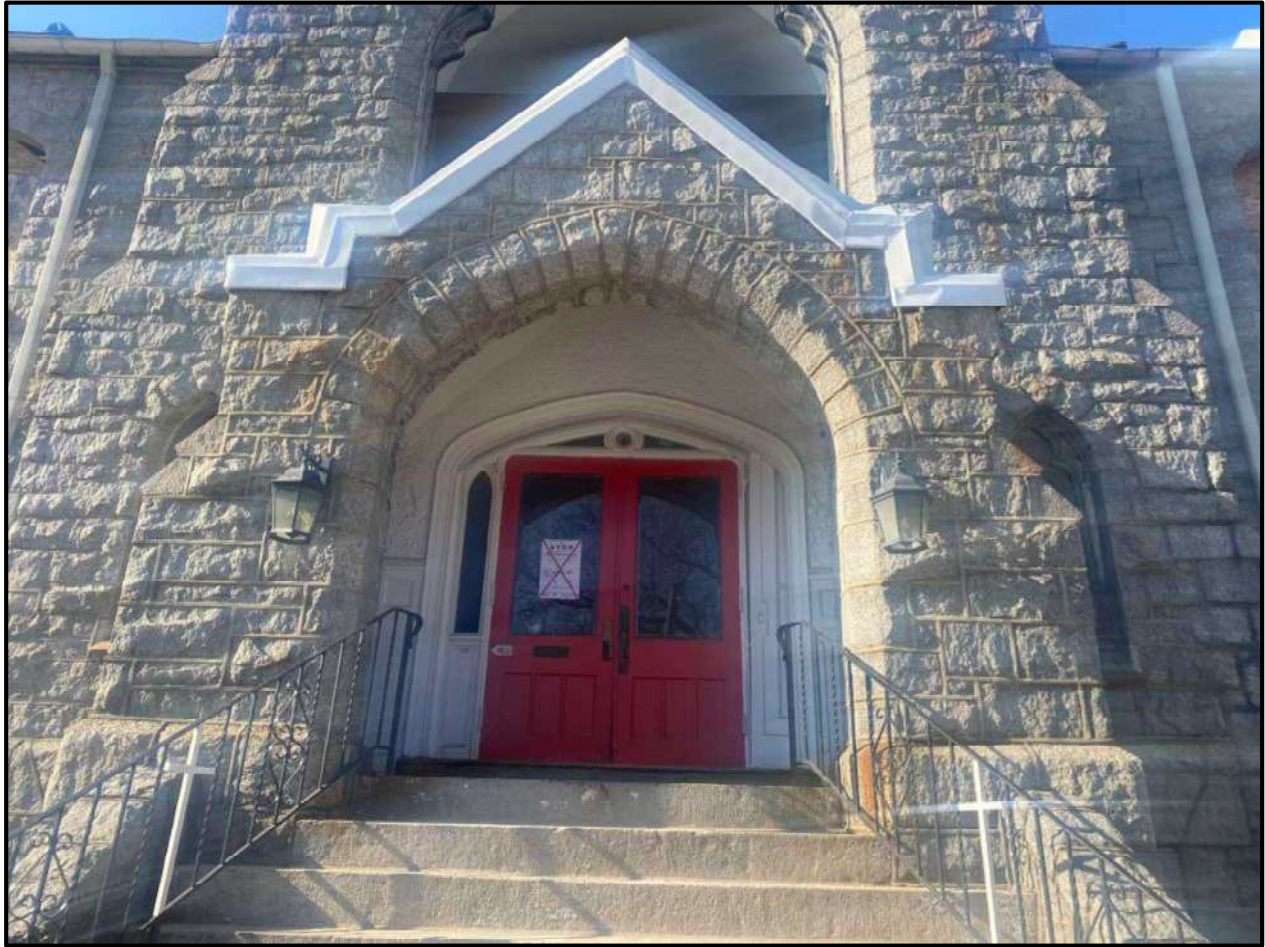


Figure 9: Detail view of the entrance on the east elevation of the circa 1905 chapel addition of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.



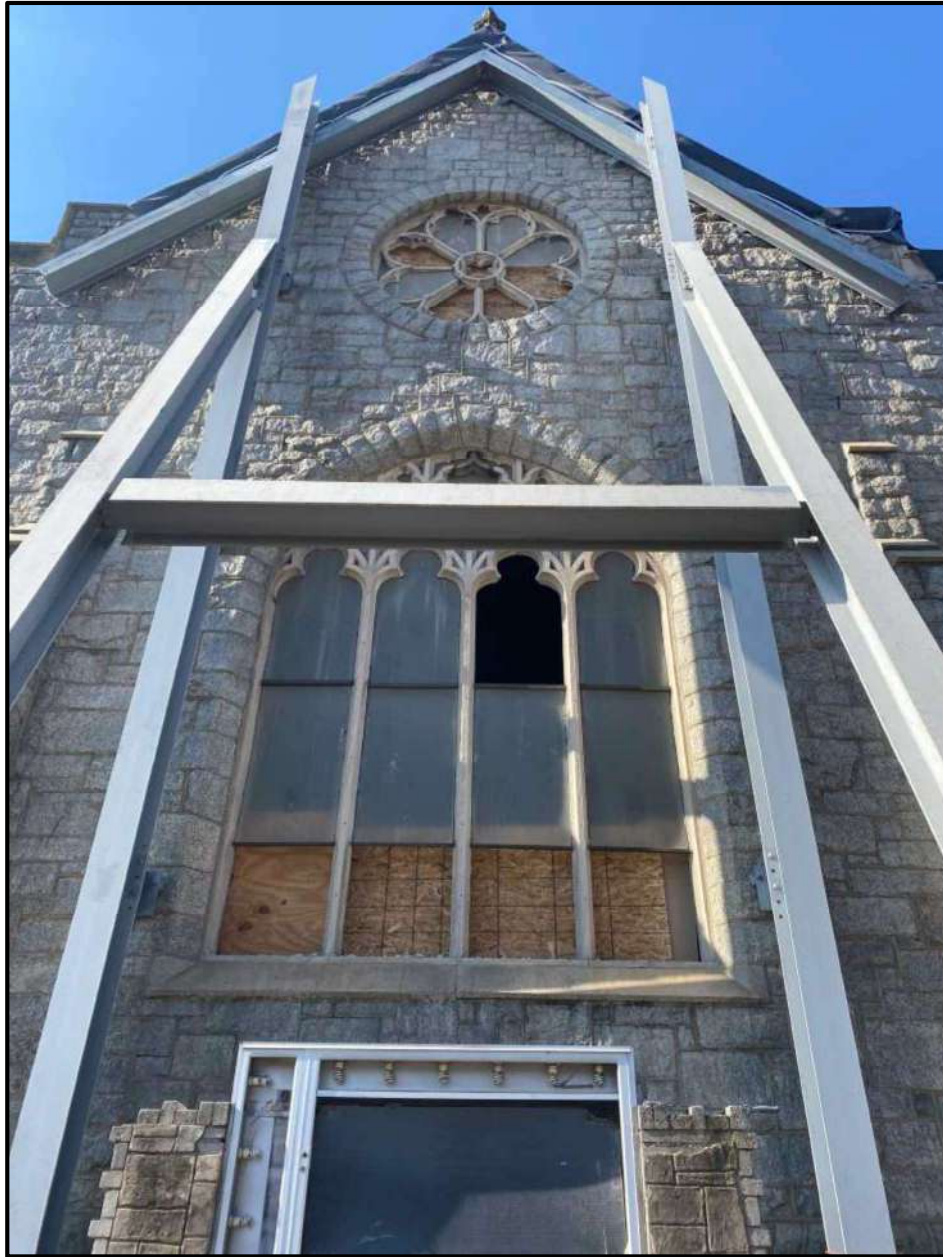


Figure 10: Detail view west of the rose window and lancet window on the eastern transept of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.



Figure 11: View southeast of the 1905 chapel addition of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue.  
Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.

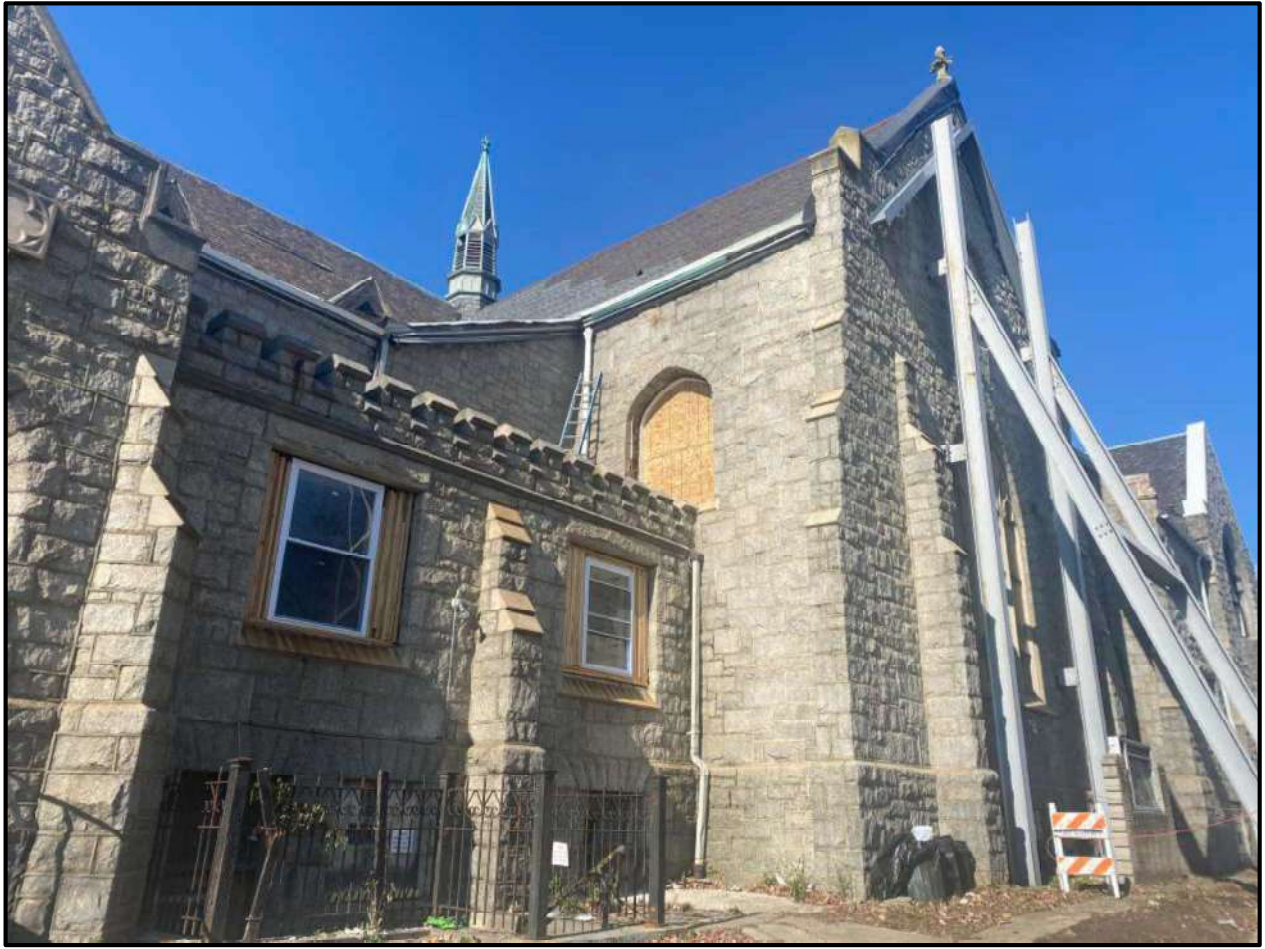


Figure 12: View northwest of the transept of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.



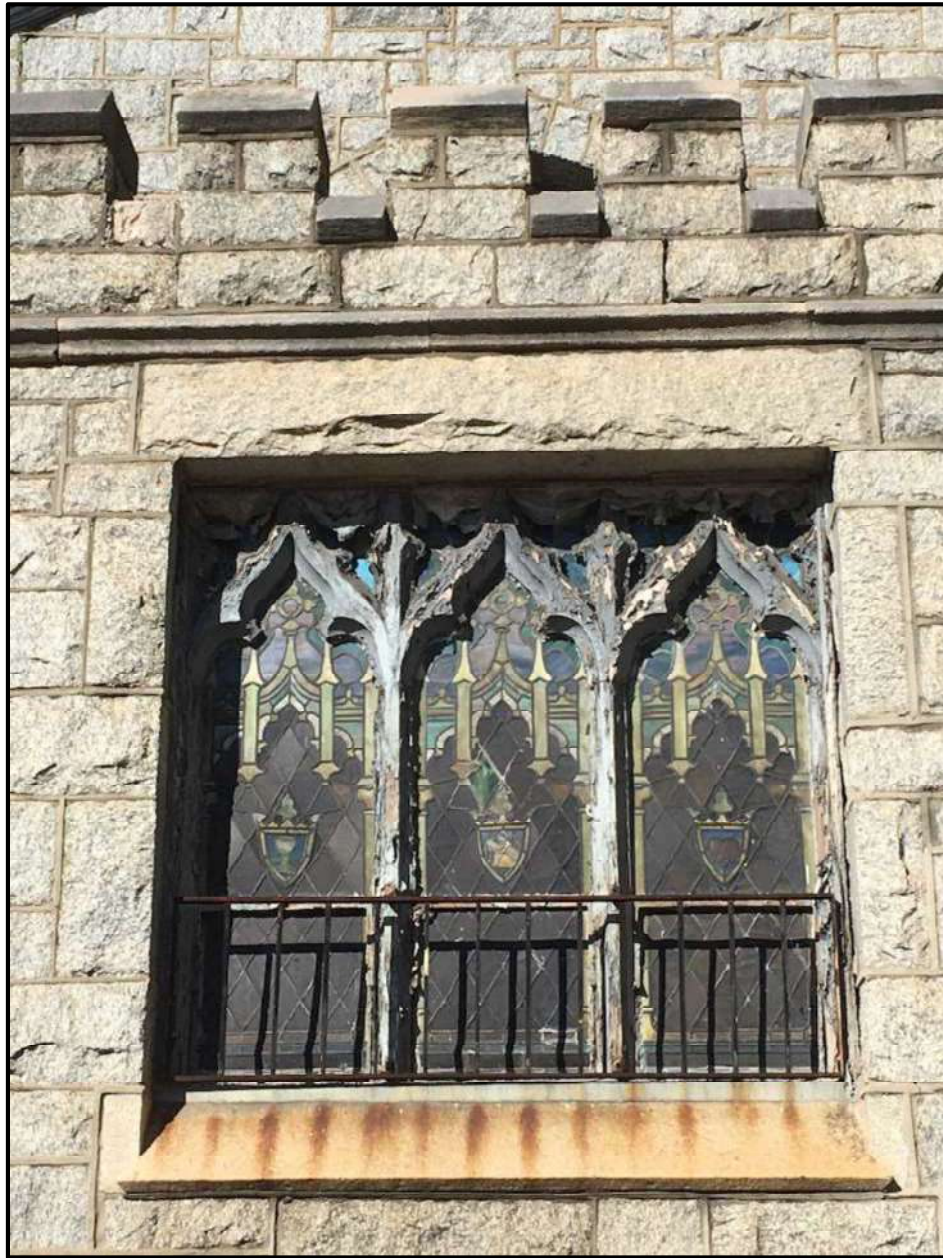


Figure 13: Detail view of triple stained glass window on the east elevation of the circa 1905 chapel addition of the former Hickman Temple AME Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Jenny Loustau, October 2019.



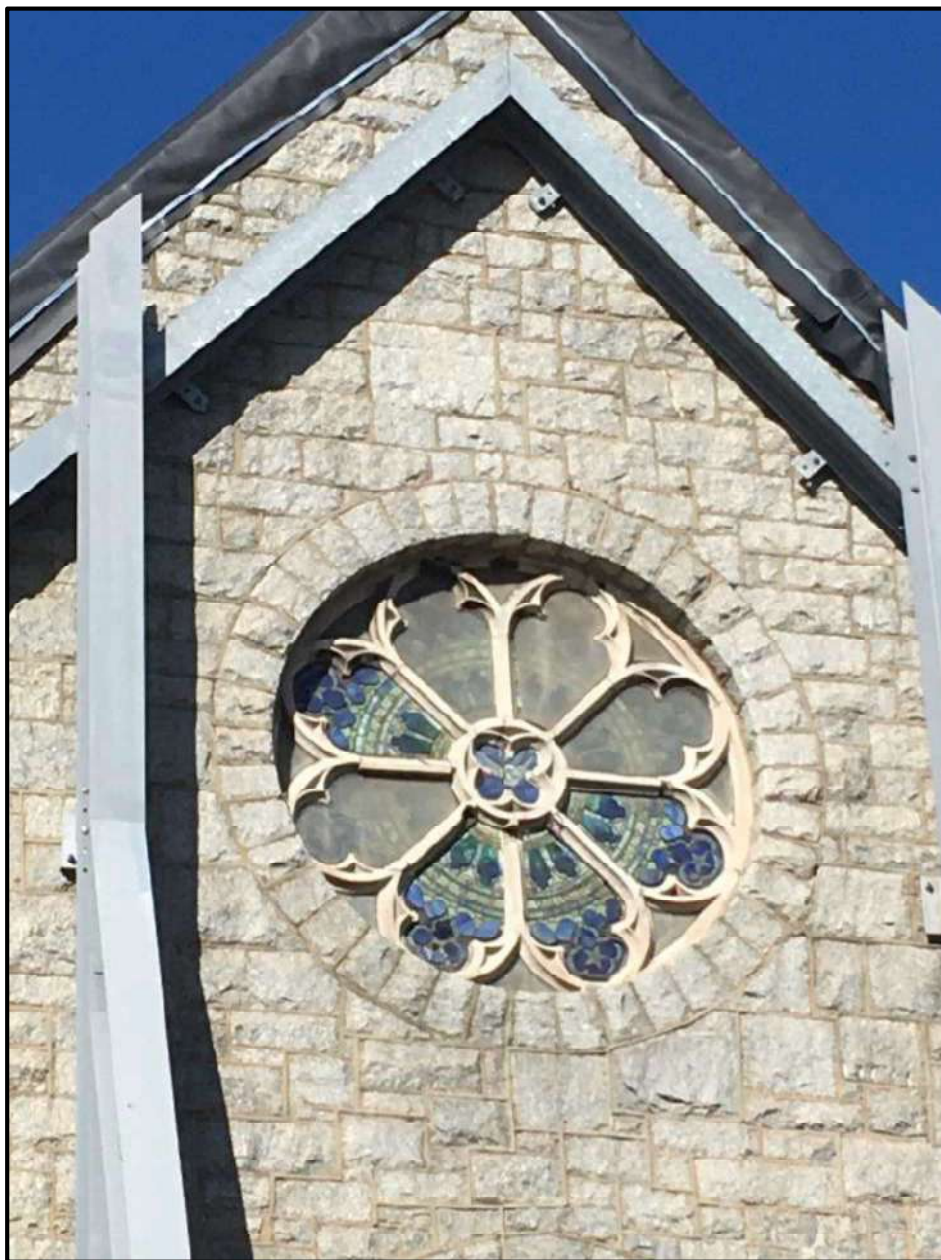


Figure 14: View west of the rose window in the transom of the former Hickman Temple AME Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Jenny Loustau, October 2019.



Figure 15: Detail view of the 1900 date stone on the east elevation (northeast corner) of Hickman Temple AME Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Jenny Loustau, October 2019.





Figure 16: Detail view of the 1905 date stone of the chapel addition of the former Hickman Temple AME Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Jenny Loustau, October 2019.



Figure 17: View southeast of the north of Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.



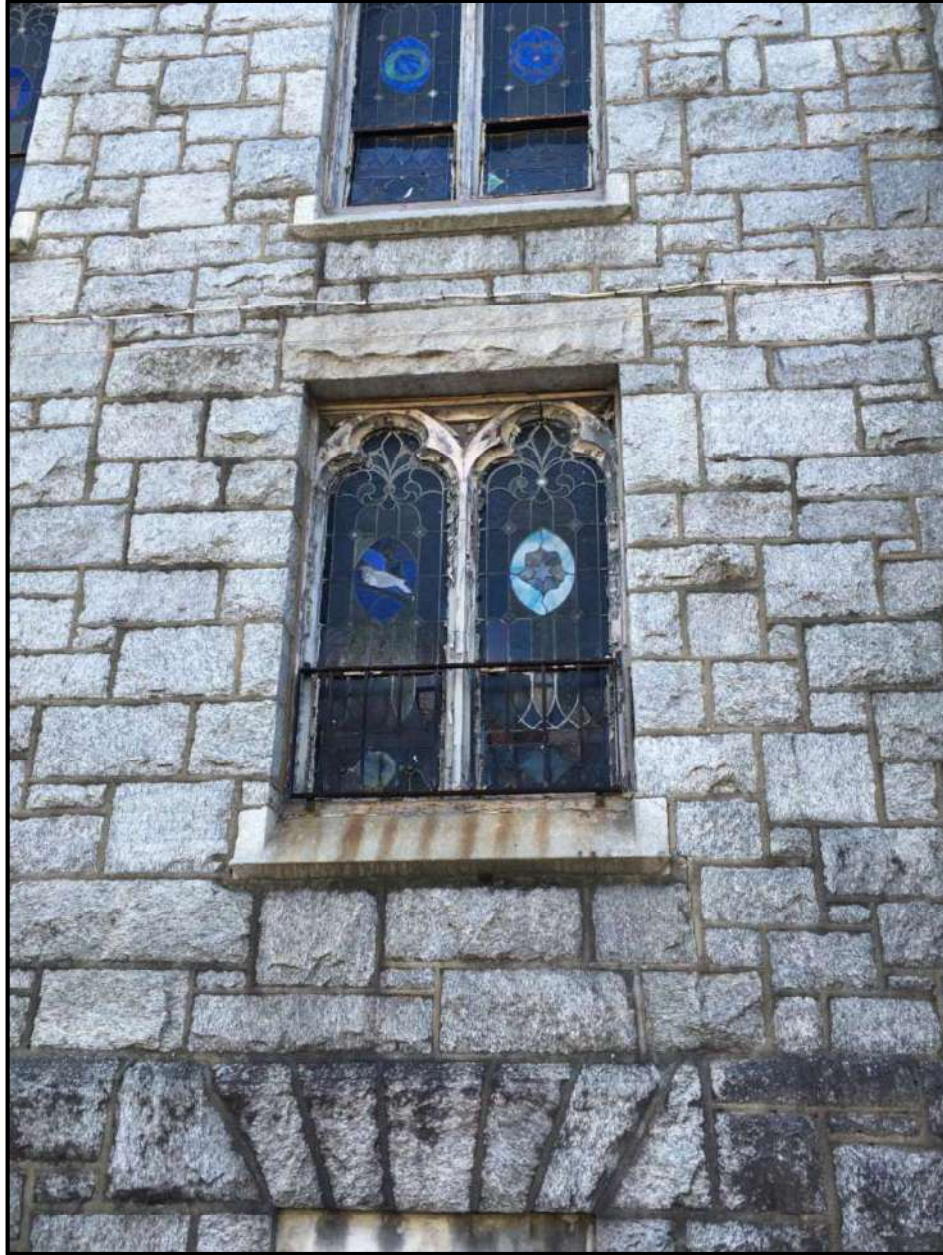


Figure 18: Detail view of double stained glass window on the north elevation of the Hickman Temple AME Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Jenny Loustau, October 2019.

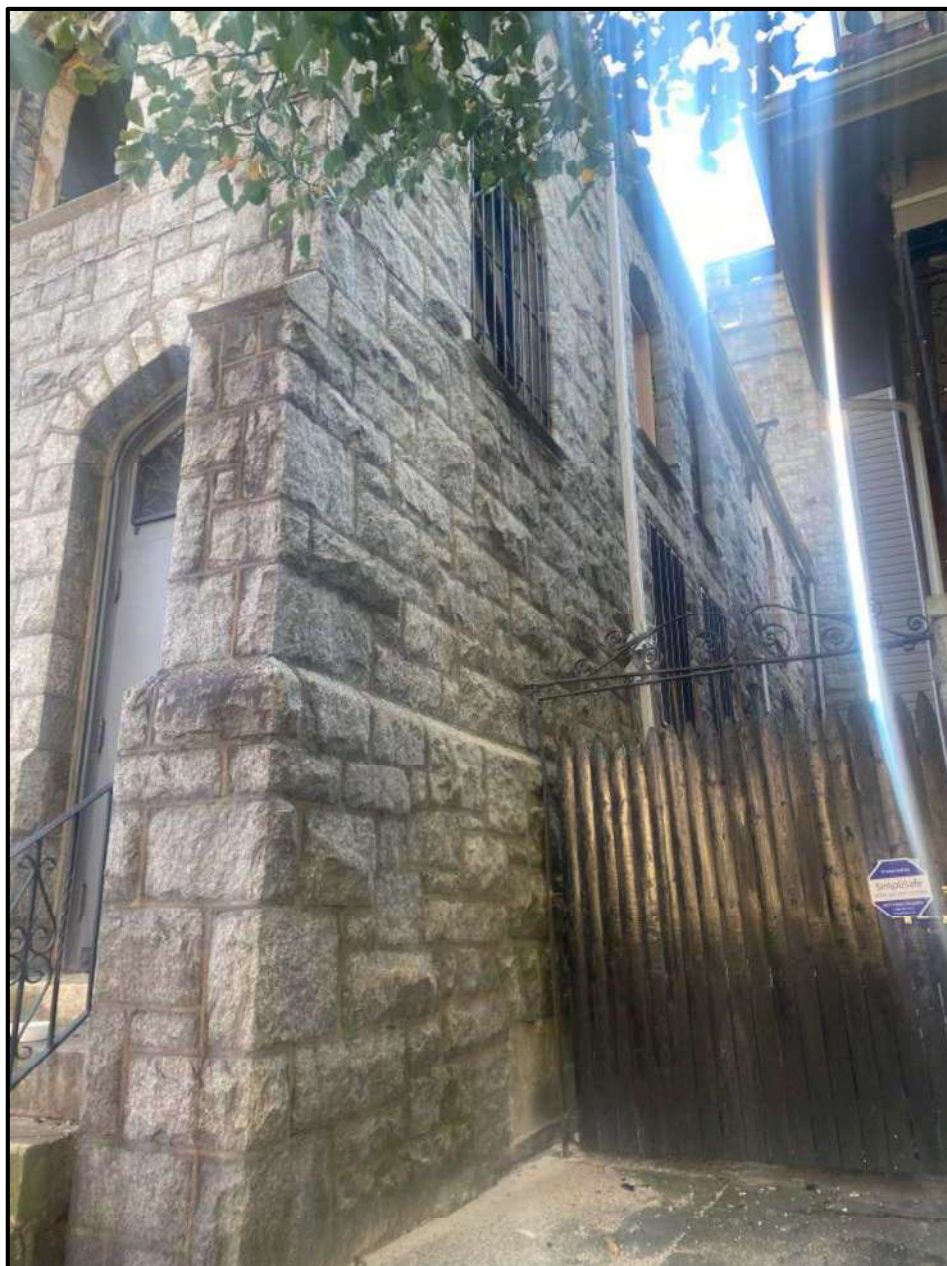


Figure 19: View south of the north elevation of the Emmanuel Christian Church at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Source: Kelly E. Wiles, November 2022.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Emmanuel Christian Church, located at 5001 Baltimore Avenue, is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion in 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:

Emmanuel Christian Church meets the following criteria for designation as set forth by the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 14-2007(5), of the Philadelphia Code:

- (d) Embody distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The Period of Significance is from 1900, the year the cornerstone of the original building was laid, to 1906, when the chapel addition was dedicated and the building as it exists today was completed.



*Criterion J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.*

### **Development of West Philadelphia and St. Paul's Presbyterian**

Until the 1880s, this section of West Philadelphia later known as Cedar Park was beginning its transition from a pastoral component of William Penn's "greene cuntry towne" to an early streetcar suburb. Just prior to the 1682 establishment of Penn's city, the expanse of land that would become West Philadelphia, was settled by William Warner, who named the area "Blockley," after his English birthplace. The Blockley Township would identify the most of present-day West Philadelphia for the next 150 years.<sup>1</sup> In 1811, present-day Baltimore Avenue in West Philadelphia was laid out by the Philadelphia, Brandywine and New London Turnpike Company. The turnpike laid on an existing "leading from Schuylkill to Darby, commonly known as Woodlands Road, where said road diverges from the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike." Along with the Lancaster Turnpike and the West Chester Road to the north, it was one of the major transportation routes in West Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> These thoroughfares were not just traversed by habitants of the Township, but also were accessible to residents of Philadelphia proper, thanks to the Palmer's Permanent Bridge at Market Street which opened in 1805.<sup>3</sup> The road was known as the Chadsford Turnpike and was part of a larger road system which ultimately led to the City of Baltimore through Delaware and Chester counties, Pennsylvania and the State of Maryland.<sup>4</sup>

In 1843, the area surrounding the present-day intersection of Baltimore Avenue and South 50<sup>th</sup> Street was sparse with most of the land owned by the Twaddell (or Twaddell) family, unlike the gridded street of Hamiltonville to the east. The Chadsford Turnpike was the only major road in the area, though it did intersect with Warrington's Lane (near present-day South 47<sup>th</sup> Street).<sup>5</sup> By 1855, parts of West Philadelphia had taken on the ubiquitous Philadelphia street grid after the Consolidation Act of 1845, however development remained minimal.<sup>6</sup> During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, this area of West Philadelphia remained relatively undeveloped farmland with some buildings along the now-named Baltimore Avenue including H.L. Healey's Cherry Hotel and the Greeves House at the intersection of Baltimore Avenue, Warrington Avenue and 47<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>7</sup> A brickyard and lumberyard were also located in the vicinity of the 4700 block of Baltimore Avenue. A horse-drawn trolley also ran along Baltimore Avenue, linking the area to mills in Delaware County.<sup>8</sup> The horse-drawn trolleys were soon replaced with electrified trolley systems throughout West Philadelphia. As historian Robert C. Jackle states:

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<sup>1</sup> "West Philadelphia: The Basic History, Chapter 1," West Philadelphia Community History Center, accessed October 16, 2019. <http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/wphila/history/history1.html>

<sup>2</sup> Faris, John Thomson, *Old Roads Out of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1917), p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> "West Philadelphia: The History; Pre-History to 1854," *West Philadelphia Community History Center*. Electronic document, [https://westphillyhistory.archives.upenn.edu/history/chapter-1#footnoteref37\\_mxikhtk](https://westphillyhistory.archives.upenn.edu/history/chapter-1#footnoteref37_mxikhtk), accessed October 5, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon, Thomas F., *A gazetteer of the state of Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia, PA: T. Belknap, 1832), p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Ellet, Charles, *A map of the county of Philadelphia; from actual survey*. (Philadelphia, PA: Charles Ellet, 1843).

<sup>6</sup> Barnes, R.L., *New Map of the Consolidated City of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia, PA: R.L. Barnes, 1855).

<sup>7</sup> Smedley, Samuel L., *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1862).

<sup>8</sup> Wolfe, Fred & Joan Wells, "History of Cedar Park," Cedar Park Neighbors. Electronic document, <http://www.cedarparkneighbors.org/history>. Accessed November 14, 2019.

Nomination for the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

Emmanuel Christian Church

5001 Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Fall 2022

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“The horsecar, streetcar and rapid transit were introduced to West Philadelphia between 1858 and 1907 and allowed the decentralization of both residence and industry. New residential neighborhoods were created. Transit route location was the primary shaper of West Philadelphia between 1860 and 1910. The physical shape and location of residential and industrial neighborhoods determined who was most likely to reside there during this period. Prior to 1870, transit routes followed development since transit developers could not afford the financial risk of building where there was nothing established. Theirs was the more conservative approach of profiting from traffic generated by the already established areas. After 1870, however, and especially with the introduction of the electric streetcar, route planners anticipated the profits to be generated by opening new areas to settlement.”<sup>9</sup>

By 1895, the blocks south of Baltimore Avenue began to be populated with speculative rowhome developments, however the areas north of the Avenue remained primarily not subdivided and owned by persons with substantial landholdings. Henry K. Shoch, who owned numerous discontinuous lots in West Philadelphia, owned the entire 5000 block of Baltimore Avenue at that time.<sup>10</sup>

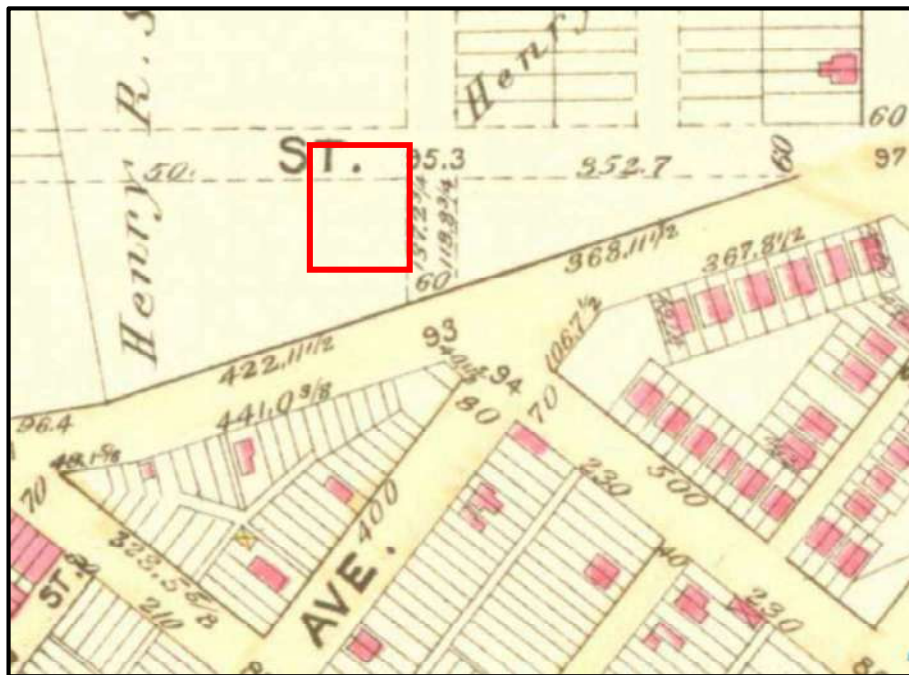


Figure 13: George W. & Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 1895. The future location of Hickman Temple AME is denoted in red.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Carl Jackle, “Philadelphia Across the Schuylkill: Work, Transportation, and Residence in West Philadelphia, 1860 – 1910” (PhD diss., Temple University, 1986), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Bromley, George W. & Walter S., *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia, PA: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1895).; “St. Paul’s Church Solemnly Dedicated.: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 25, 1901.

Early accounts of Saint Paul's Church indicate services began in a tent in June, 1898 as the Baltimore Avenue Presbyterian Mission by one of the church's first elders Samuel M. Pugh.<sup>11</sup> A month later, a Sunday School of 21 members was organized.<sup>12</sup> In October 1899 the congregation was officially organized as Saint Paul's Presbyterian Church with 62 members, and that same year the mission purchased a small frame building, which original was operated as a Methodist church, at 50<sup>th</sup> Street and Baltimore Avenue.<sup>13</sup> The presiding pastor was the Reverend Dr. J.R. Miller, who oversaw the congregation during its first decades and was described as "one of the leading spirits of the Presbyterian Church in the eastern part of the United States."<sup>14</sup> Upon the organization of Saint Paul's Presbyterian, the congregation grew, which resulted in the need for a larger building. They hired contractor Frank S. Riggs and architect Isaac Pursell to build and design their new building. For an approximate cost of \$18,000, they proposed to construct a "one story Port Deposit stone chapel 137 feet by 100 feet with a slate roof and galvanized iron cornice."<sup>15</sup> The building would not only be a sanctuary which could accommodate 700 people but would also have Sunday school rooms, a dining room, library, women's room, prayer room and infant room.<sup>16</sup> On October 14, 1900 the cornerstone was laid with Reverend JR Miller presiding. Several others, including John Wannamaker, made addresses at the event.<sup>17</sup>

The building was dedicated in March, 1901 and the occasion "culminate[d] one of the most rapid growths in the history of the Presbyterian church" as the congregation nearly quadrupled to 250 members since it's founding just two years earlier.<sup>18</sup> A *Philadelphia Inquirer* article which documented the dedication described the new building:

"Saint Paul's Church is fifty-five feet wide by sixty-five feet deep, and is built of Port Deposit stone, with gray granite trimmings. The main entrance is from the centre (sic) of the building on Fiftieth Street. On the ground floor is an auditorium, a library, a women's parlor and a general prayer room meeting room. Around the main room runs a gallery, which, by means of sliding panels, may be transformed into separate classrooms. In the basement is a large room for society purposed and another that can be used as a dining room. In addition to these are a pantry and kitchen. The basement is finished in Southern pine, while upper floors are finished with beautifully-grained oak."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Corner-Stone Will be Laid October 27," *The Times*, October 15, 1900; "Laid Corner-Stone For New Chapel," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28, 1900.

<sup>12</sup> "St. Paul's Church Solemnly Dedicated," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 25, 1901.

<sup>13</sup> "Church Organized," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 20, 1899; "Corner-Stone Will be Laid October 27," *The Times*, October 15, 1900; "St. Paul's Church Solemnly Dedicated," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 25, 1901.

<sup>14</sup> "St. Paul's Church Solemnly Dedicated," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 25, 1901.

<sup>15</sup> "Laid Corner-Stone For New Chapel," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 28, 1900.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Corner-Stone Will be Laid October 27," *The Times*, October 15, 1900.

<sup>18</sup> "St. Paul's Church Solemnly Dedicated," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 25, 1901.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Figure 14 (below): Photographs of original tent and frame building of Saint Paul's Presbyterian Church. "Happenings of Notes Among the Churches," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 6, 1908. Figure 16 (right): Original building at the time of dedication, 1901. "St. Paul's Church Solemnly Dedicated." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 25, 1901.

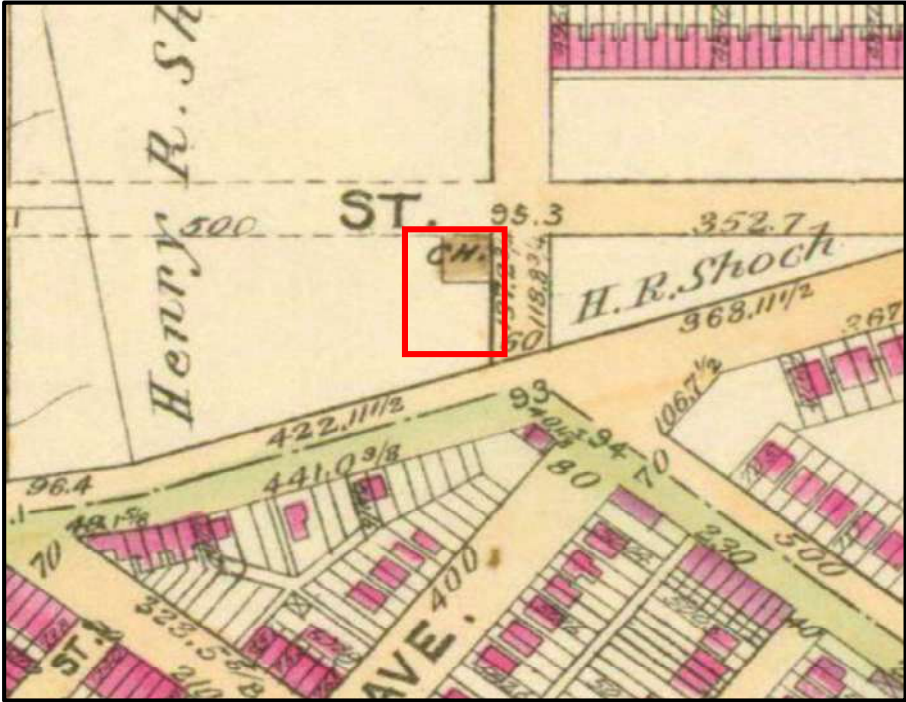
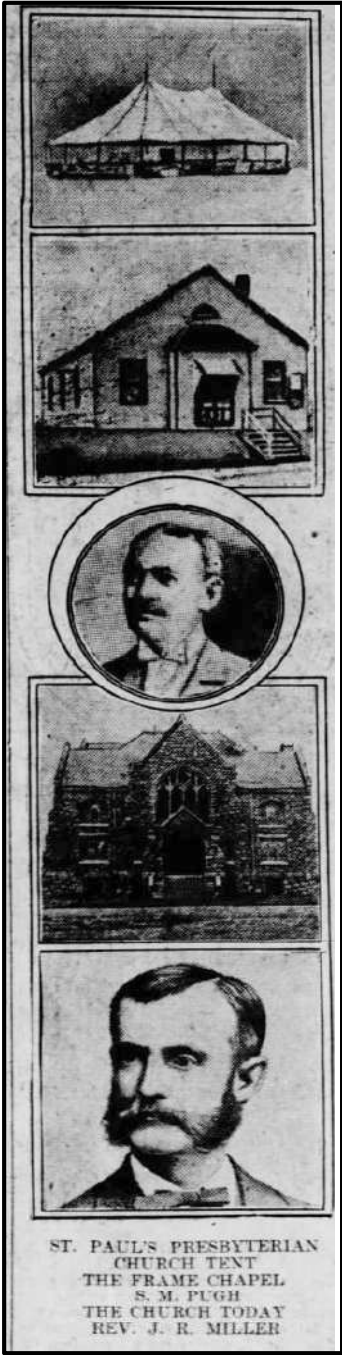
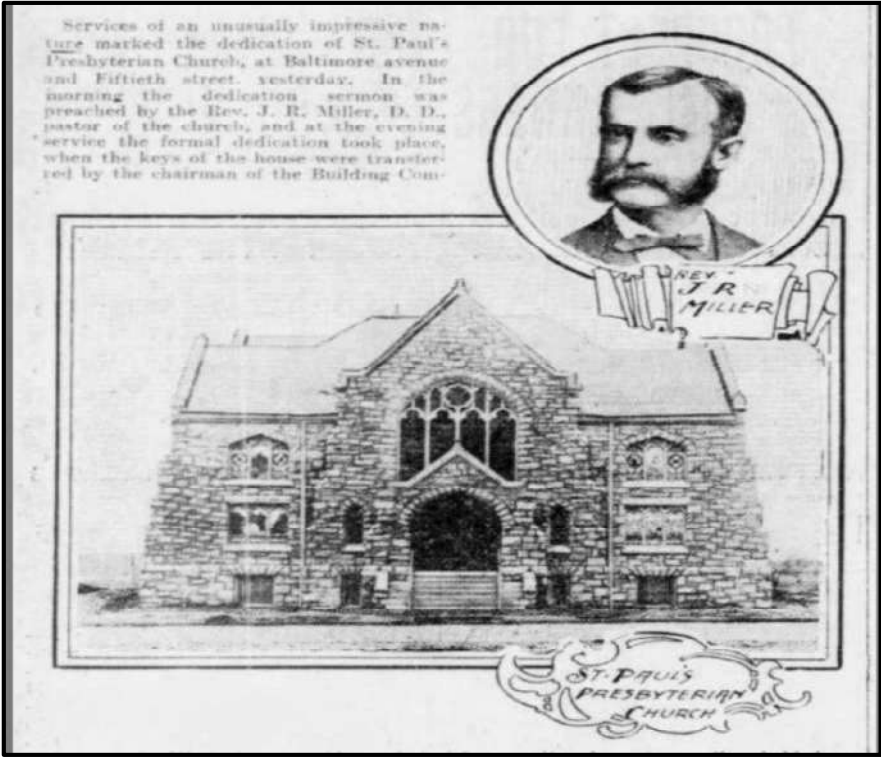


Figure 15: George W. & Walter S. Bromley, *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia*, 1901. The 1900 original building is denoted in red.



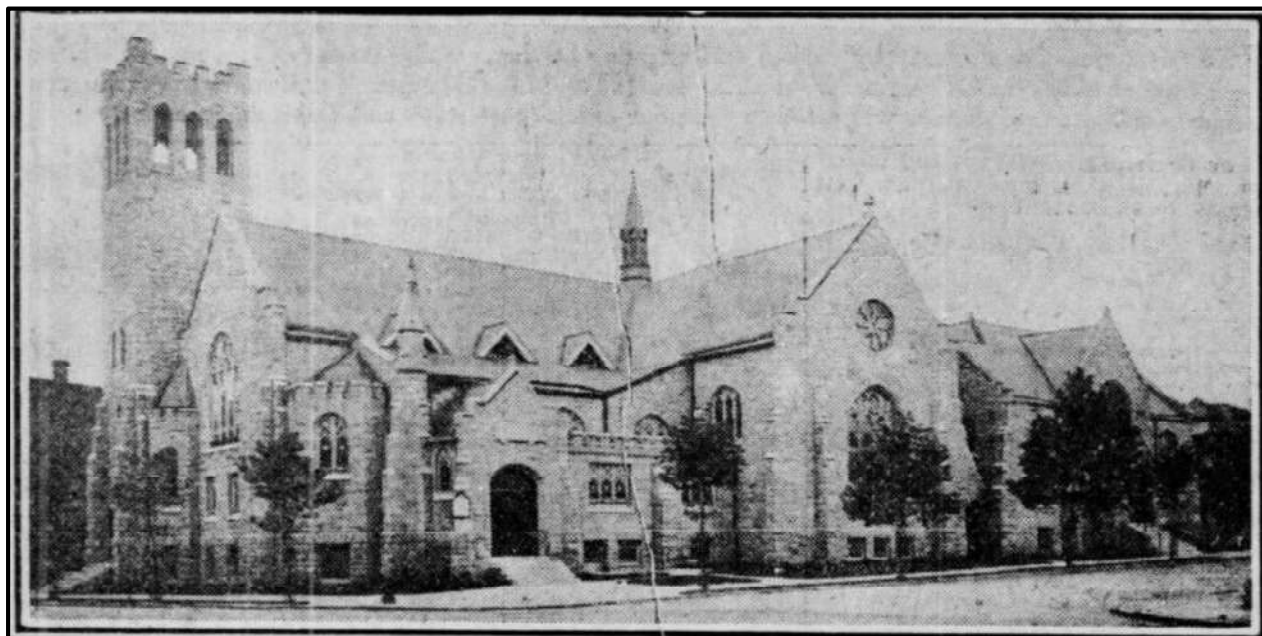


Figure 17: Saint Paul's Presbyterian Church soon after the completion of the chapel in 1906. St. Paul's Church Was Thrown Open For Worship." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 8, 1906.

A mere three years after the church was dedicated, the congregation found it was in need of another expansion to accommodate their "rapidly growing congregation and Sunday School."<sup>20</sup> The congregation again hired Pursell, who in turn hired contractor Thomas Reilley, to design their new chapel addition.<sup>21</sup> Construction began in 1904 and continued into 1905, the year the cornerstone was laid. Dedication of the new wing took place on October 7, 1906.<sup>22</sup> Like the dedication of the original building five years before, the congregation invited John Wannamaker to speak at the ceremony. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* also documented the "New Saint Paul's Church:"

The building is modeled after the perpendicular Gothic, with a tower eighteen feet square by eighty-six feet in height at the southwest corner. The structure is of Port Deposit granite, with Mount Airy granite trimmings, and cappings and finials of Indiana limestone. The roof is of slate and the cornices and conductors are of copper. The audience room is seventy-nine feet six-inches in width by ninety feet. The building is designated with a partial clerestory, with transepts and aisles. A horseshoe gallery extends from the transepts on each side to the Baltimore Avenue front. The audience room floor is pitched toward the pulpit.

The seating capacity of the main floor and gallery is one thousand. The entire ceiling is finished in hardwood, the heavy trusses being encased in oak. The room is lighted with large tracery windows.

<sup>20</sup> "St. Paul's Church Was Thrown Open For Worship." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 8, 1906.

<sup>21</sup> "The latest in Real Estate News." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 24, 1904.

<sup>22</sup> "St. Paul's Church Was Thrown Open For Worship." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 8, 1906.



The organ is on the west side of the room. The pulpit platform is about twenty-four feet wide with pastor's room at the side. In the basement are a number of rooms in which will be used by the Sunday school and for other purposes. The Sunday school chapel, adjoining the church building, is adapted to modern Sunday school work. A large sash connects the two buildings, so that, if necessary, they can be thrown together and used at the same time."<sup>23</sup>



Figure 18: Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in 1907. University of Pennsylvania Archives.

By 1908, Saint Paul's Presbyterian boasted over 1100 congregants and was considered one of the "most flourishing congregations" in the city.<sup>24</sup> At the same time Saint Paul's congregation was acclimating to its new building and chapel, the area around the new church was beginning to flourish with new residences and other neighborhood amenities. Cedar Park Neighbors Board Member Amara Rockar wrote a succinct history of the neighborhood and the actual Cedar Park:

"On G.W. Bromley's 1895 Philadelphia atlas, the land that would become our park is owned by Henry R. Shock, a builder of more than 4,000 homes who would go on to serve as treasurer of the city from 1903 and 1907 under Mayor John Weaver. Shoch began advertising the triangular lot for sale in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1897 as 368 feet of

<sup>23</sup> "St. Paul's Church Was Thrown Open For Worship." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 8, 1906.

<sup>24</sup> "Happenings of Note Among the Churches." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 6, 1906.

Baltimore frontage “ground ripe for improvement.” Unable to find a buyer, Shoch would continue advertising his triangle lot for several more years.

During this period, the neighborhood saw rapid and often speculative tract development of single-family homes and the Baltimore Avenue commercial corridor. Seeking amenities from the city, neighborhoods formed the Cedar Avenue Improvement Association (CAIA) with first meeting in March 1900 at the 4837 Cedar Avenue home of Edward Newton Haag, who became the organizations first president. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported the meeting the next day.

The era’s improvement association like CAIA formed largely in the city’s outlying sections, consisted solely or primarily of men, and acquired power by voting in blocks gaining influence within their wards and the city at large. Within six months, CAIA announced at its monthly meeting at Apollo Parlors at 4918 Baltimore Avenue that the Councilman Edward W. Patton was to introduce an ordinance to change South Street officially on the city plan west of the Schuylkill River to Cedar Avenue.

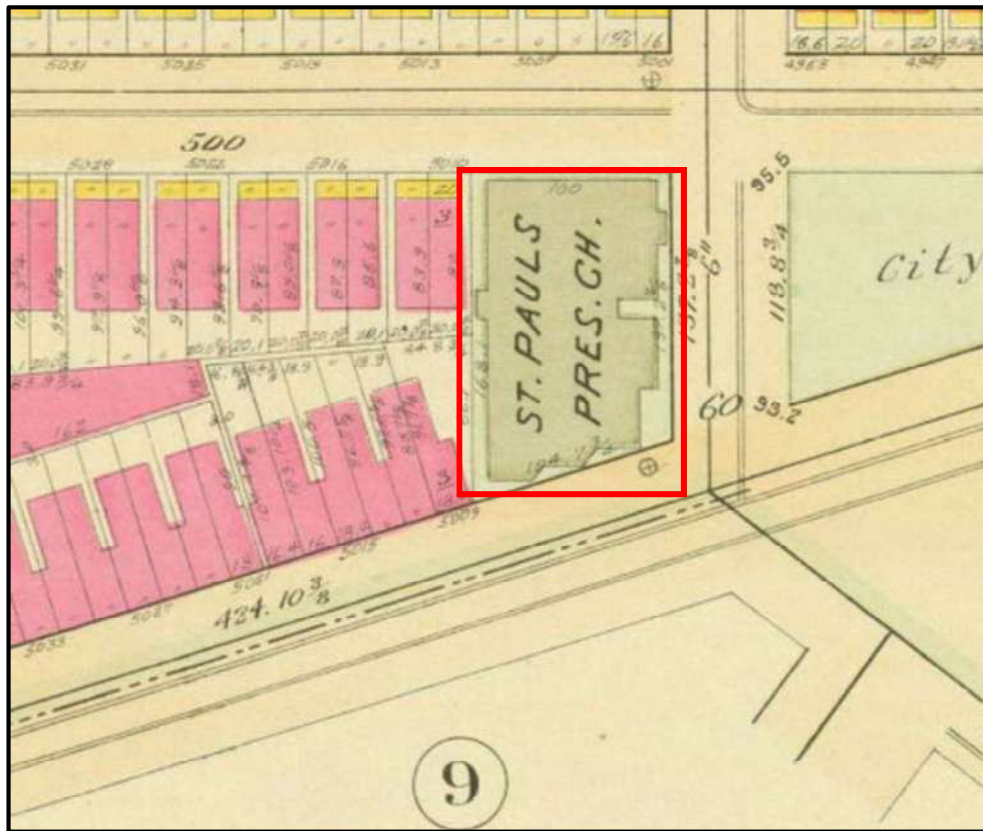


Figure 19: Elvino S. Smith, *Atlas of the 27th & 46th wards of the city of Philadelphia: from private plans, actual surveys & official records*, 1909. The location of St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church is denoted in red.







Figure 21: Baltimore Avenue in 1911 prior to the construction of Cedar Park. Saint Paul's Presbyterian Church is pictured in the background. Interpretive sign placed by Cedar Park Neighbors, Cedar Park.

Throughout the twentieth century, the neighborhood remained dense with residential buildings. Saint Paul's Presbyterian Church continued to worship at their Baltimore Avenue church until it appears they absolved and sold the building to the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1972.<sup>27</sup> It was during this time that Hickman Temple, a congregation associated with the Philadelphia Annual Conference, began their tenure at 5001 Baltimore Avenue. Until recently, the congregation has not only been an integral part of West Philadelphia's religious and spiritual life but also the community at large. Their continuous philanthropic endeavors included providing food, clothing and support services for neighbors but also an active daycare center.<sup>28</sup> In 2017, the congregation was forced to worship at another location due to structural deficiencies in the form of a 9-inch gap forming between the 50<sup>th</sup> Street façade and roof. A steel shoring system was installed to support the wall. Throughout 2018, the congregation sponsored a fruitful fundraising campaign to pay for these repairs. With the help of congregants, local businesses and organizations, and neighbors,

<sup>27</sup> Mortgage, Philadelphia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and Philadelphia Saving Funds Society. September 22, 1981. Mortgage Book 0285:410. On file, Philadelphia City Records, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>28</sup> Lee, Nathaniel, "Hickman Temple AME Church: 'Lighthouse' still burns bright at interim digs." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, June 2, 2018. Electronic document, [https://www.phillytrib.com/religion/hickman-temple-ame-church-lighthouse-still-burns-bright-at-interim/article\\_ca8bcc08-1a63-5dd8-8978-38259586d2ee.html](https://www.phillytrib.com/religion/hickman-temple-ame-church-lighthouse-still-burns-bright-at-interim/article_ca8bcc08-1a63-5dd8-8978-38259586d2ee.html), accessed January 6, 2020.

they raised \$75,000 to assist in the payment for the repairs.<sup>29</sup> Hickman Temple relocated in late 2022 and the building is currently the home of Emmanuel Christian Church.

### The Presbyterian Church in the US and Philadelphia

Presbyterianism is a reform movement of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, started by Martin Luther in 1517 and developed by French theologian John Calvin. A theology student with Calvin named John Knox is credited for bringing Presbyterianism to Scotland where the denomination quickly took root. In 1560, the Scottish Parliament adopted the Scots Confession, and by doing so, agreed to reform. The chief, distinctive features of orthodox Presbyterianism are the elder-led church government, Calvinistic theology, and the absence of prescribed forms of worship. The name Presbyterian comes from the Greek word for “elder,” and elders in the church “seek to discern the will of God for a congregation and vote their conscience before God.”<sup>30</sup>

The First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia was organized in 1698, occupying a site on Market Street. Presbyterians were among the earliest Reform immigrants to the US. In 1706, Francis Makemie and six other ministers established the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the first in the New World.<sup>31</sup> The Synod of Philadelphia was organized in 1716 and, as such, is home to some of the oldest Presbyterian churches in the nation.

In 1743, a second Presbyterian Church was erected at Third and Arch Streets. Both the First and Second Presbyterian Churches had members who were active in the struggle for independence. These included three signers of the Declaration of Independence: Dr. Benjamin Rush; Thomas McKean; and James Wilson. (The congregations of the First and Second Presbyterian Churches in Philadelphia merged in 1949 retaining the name First Presbyterian Church but housed in the Henry Augustus Sims-designed Second Presbyterian Church building at Walnut and 21st Streets.)

After the American Revolution in 1776, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America was formed and in 1789, the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church was held at the Second Presbyterian Church. A schism occurred just prior to the Civil War that was not mended until 1983, when the Presbyterian Church (USA) was established by the merger of United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Presbyterian Church of the United States. Today, Presbyterians are the largest denomination in the US with 2.8 million members as of 2014. Worldwide, there are approximately 75 million Presbyterians.

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<sup>29</sup> Blumgart, Jake, “Hickman Temple AME celebrates a win to preserve its historic church.” *Plan Philly*, September 9, 2018. Electronic document, <https://why.org/segments/hickman-temple-ame-celebrates-a-win-in-the-effort-to-preserve-its-historic-church/>. Accessed January 16, 2020.

<sup>30</sup> “Our Form of Church Government,” History and Beliefs of the Presbyterian Church, <http://www.scfaith.org/history/>, electronic document, accessed October 9, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> “History of the Church,” Presbyterian Historical Society, The National Archives of the PC (USA), <http://www.history.pcusa.org/history-online/presbyterian-history/history-church>, electronic document, accessed October 9, 2019.

***Criterion D: Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen.***

Emmanuel Christian Church is part of a citywide collection of Protestant churches that reflect the use of a hybrid display of flourishes that are embedded in the Victorian era's architectural revival movements. It is a representative example of the Late Gothic Revival architecture. Proximally found in ecclesiastical architecture during that time, the style was also employed on residential and institutional buildings.

Emmanuel Christian Church exhibits many features of the Gothic Revival style, including both large and small features. The rusticated stone exterior harkens back to the ubiquitous churches of Europe. Stained glass windows with stone tracery details can be found throughout the building. These vary in both shape and scale to small eye-level windows found in side corridors and classrooms to the large scale Gothic arched window with accompanying rose window in the sanctuary. Other common features of the Gothic Revival style found in the building include castellated parapets, a central spire similar to the now-lost Notre Dame spire and the corner tower, a standard feature of Pursell-designed churches.

***Criterion E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or professional engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or nation.***

Emmanuel Christian Church is an example of the later works of Isaac Pursell. Pursell was born in Trenton, New Jersey in 1853. After moving to Philadelphia as a young man, he apprenticed with Samuel Sloan. In 1878, he opened an independent office, which is how he practiced during his career, with the exception of the period between 1885 and 1887, when he partnered with Joseph W. B. Fry to form Pursell & Fry. Their partnership is described as "having expired by limitation" while they would continue to practice in adjacent offices at 119 South 4th Street, and the agreement to mutually complete all work contracted with their partnership firm.<sup>32</sup>

Pursell was a prolific church designer in Philadelphia and nearby locations in New Jersey. For a time, he was on a Presbyterian board that publicized acceptable plans for churches.<sup>33</sup> His Philadelphia commissions include Calvary Protestant Episcopal Church in Germantown, the Episcopal Church of the Crucifixion, the Fifth Baptist Church, St. Matthew Church, Temple Lutheran Church in West Philadelphia, and perhaps most notably, St. Paul's Reformed Episcopal Church on Chestnut at 21st Street, and Christ Memorial Reformed Episcopal Church (now demolished) at South 43rd and Chestnut Streets. Many of these churches display the English Gothic revival style, such as the former St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church in East Oak Lane.<sup>34</sup> However, Pursell's commissions, nearly always articulated in a muscular masonry construction, exhibit characteristics from many revival styles.

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<sup>32</sup> *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, Vol. 2, No. 43, October 31, 1887, p. 509.

<sup>33</sup> Tatman, Sandra, "Isaac Pursell." *Philadelphia Architects and Buildings*. Electronic document, [https://www.philadelphia-buildings.org/pab/ar\\_display.cfm/85792](https://www.philadelphia-buildings.org/pab/ar_display.cfm/85792), Accessed October 6, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



According to an article that was published early in his career, Pursell was described in this way:

Mr. Pursell is a thoroughly qualified and able architect who has evinced great skill and ability in the practice of his profession, designing and superintending the construction of many prominent buildings not only in Philadelphia but all across the United States. He has made a specialty of the building of schools and churches...Many of the buildings erected by this responsible architect are much admired for their beauty, while the elaboration of detail and care bestowed upon every department of the work reflects the utmost credit on the skill and judgment of this popular gentleman.<sup>35</sup>

In summary, Isaac Pursell is an architect who influenced church design within Philadelphia and in the larger region. Emmanuel Christian Church is an excellent example of one of his later works and architectural acumen. While most of his designs were large scale and monumental, Emmanuel Christian Church is a more reserved and small scale, but still dominating its Cedar Park corner. Pursell's design talents were respected by his peers and the greater building community; he was interviewed regarding construction projects and trends with a certain frequency. He was elected to become an Associate with the American Institute of Architects in 1901. Pursell died in his adopted home of Wenonah, New Jersey in 1910.

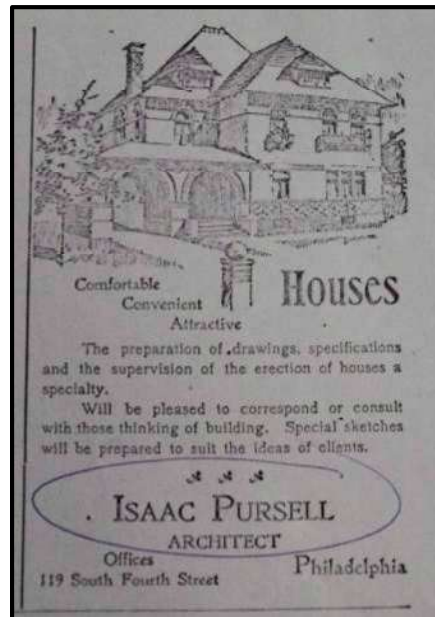
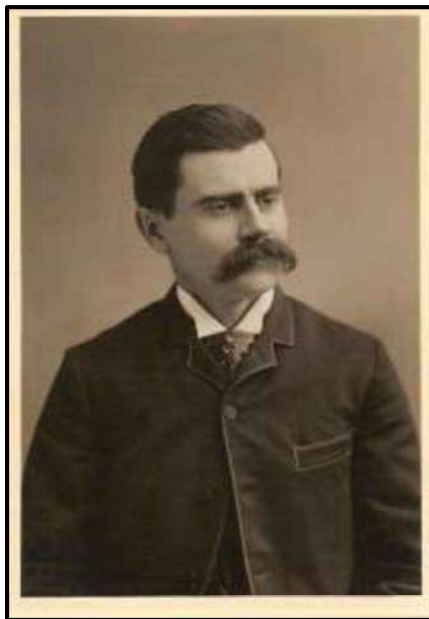


Figure 22 (left): Isaac Newton Pursell in an undated photograph., Nora A. Taylor, *Memorial Presbyterian Church, Wenonah, New Jersey*. Wenonah Historical Society Newsletter, Vol. 15, Issue 1, January 2017.; Figure 23 (right): Advertisement in the Household News, December 1895, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

<sup>35</sup> *Illustrated Philadelphia: Its Wealth and Industries*, (New York, NY: American Publishing and Engraving Company), 1889, p. 129.

*Criterion H: Owning to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;*

Emmanuel Christian Church also meets Criterion H for listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places due to its unique location in the heart of the Cedar Park neighborhood of West Philadelphia. As one of the first non-residential buildings in the neighborhood, it was constructed in tandem with the development of the speculative residential development that defines Cedar Park. Its dominating eighty-six-foot-tall bell tower is visible throughout Cedar Park is a notable feature along the 34 Trolley route and a focal point of Baltimore Avenue, visible from various points along the avenue both to the east and west, as well as the more residential areas along the side streets of Cedar Park. At present, it is only one of three remaining ecclesiastical properties on Baltimore Avenue within the City of Philadelphia limits. Between South 47<sup>th</sup> Street and South 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, Baltimore Avenue boasts Emmanuel Christian Church, the Calvary United Methodist Church at 4740 Baltimore Avenue and Wayland Memorial Baptist Church at 5126 Baltimore Avenue.

This nomination was sponsored by the University City Historical Society. The primary author was Kelly E. Wiles, Architectural Historian and Board Member, University City Historical Society with excerpts of the nomination drafted by Amy Lambert, Architect, Architectural Historian and Board Member, University City Historical Society. Photographs are courtesy of Jennifer Loustau, Board Member, University City Historical Society.

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