

**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: 459 Roxborough Ave.

Postal code: 19128

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: Galilee Baptist Church of the Twenty-First Ward, City of Philadelphia

Current/Common Name: Galilee Baptist 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: Church

**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 2026

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1900-01

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Kennedy and Kelsey

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: H.R. Yocum

Original owner: Galilee Baptist 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 Philadelphia Historical Commission Date April 15, 2026

Name with Title Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, Preservation Planner Email daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov

Street Address 1515 Arch St – 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Telephone (215) 832-2130

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19102

Nominator  is  is not the property owner.

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: April 15, 2026

Correct-Complete  Incorrect-Incomplete Date: April 16, 2026

Date of Notice Issuance: April 17, 2026

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Galilee Baptist Church

Address: 459 Roxborough Ave.

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19128

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: May 20, 2026

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: June 12, 2026

Date of Final Action: June 12, 2026

Designated  Rejected

## 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Situate on the Southeast side of Roxborough Avenue at the intersection of Roxborough Avenue and Mitchell Street in the Twenty-First Ward of the City of Philadelphia; thence extending Southward 117 feet 2 and 1/8 inches to a point in the North side of a certain 30-foot wide private street; thence extending Westwardly along the same 40 feet 7 inches to a point; thence extending Northward 117 feet and 2 and 1/8 inches to a point in the Southeast side of the said Roxborough Avenue, and thence extending Eastward along the same 40 feet 7 inches to the first mentioned point and place of beginning. Being 459 Roxborough Avenue.

OPA Account No. 775299000

Parcel No. 091-N24-0016



Figure 1. 459 Roxborough Ave. Parcel. Source: Atlas.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Galilee Baptist Church, located at 459 Roxborough Avenue, is situated at the southwest corner of Roxborough Avenue and Mitchell Street in the Roxborough neighborhood of Philadelphia. The one-story church, with basement, is constructed of load-bearing rubblestone and features a front facing gable roof.



Figure 2. Galilee Baptist Church, 459 Roxborough Ave., Primary (north) façade, April 2026.

### North Façade (Roxborough Avenue - Primary)

The church entry is on the left bay of the primary (north) façade. It is reached by surmounting ten steps. A classically designed surround encases double-leaf paneled wood doors. The entry projects slightly from the façade and is capped by a pyramidal, hipped roof with a simple wood cornice. A four-part round-arched stained-glass window centered on the façade. The front-

facing gable roof is edged by a simple cornice. The basement level is marked by a ledge that creates a water table that is made of the same rubblestone as the rest of the façade. There are two basement windows with stone lintels.



*Figure 3. Galilee Baptist Church, 459 Roxborough Ave., Mitchell St. (east) Façade. April 2026.*

### East Façade (Mitchell Street)

The east façade has five bays with arched stained-glass windows. The far-right bay forms the projecting bay with the church entry. The other four bays are evenly spaced in the center of the façade. The middle two bays are visually divided by a downspout. A glass block raised basement window aligns with each stained-glass window except for a middle bay that features a basement entry of dressed stone and a sloped metal roof.



*Figure 4. Galilee Baptist Church, 459 Roxborough Ave., Clearview St. (south) Façade. April 2026.*

#### South Façade (Clearview Street; rear)

The south (rear) facade faces onto Clearview Street. It has three bays of stained-glass windows. All are round-arched, and the larger center window matches the window on the primary façade. Smaller round-arched windows flank the center window.



*Figure 5. Galilee Baptist Church, 459 Roxborough Ave., West Façade. April 2026.*

### West Façade

The west (side) façade has five bays with round-arched stained-glass windows. There are five glass-block basement windows. Visibility of this wall is largely blocked by the adjacent building.

## 7. SIGNIFICANCE

Galilee Baptist Church at 459 Roxborough Avenue possesses significance under Criterion J, as exemplifying the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of community, and should be listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, pursuant to Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code. The church was built in 1900 and 1901 and has been continuously used as the congregation's house of worship for 125 years. The congregation is an institution of the Black community in Roxborough/Manayunk, where most of the population was, and remains, of European ancestry. It is also a community institution that has endured, far removed from the historical epicenter of Philadelphia's Black community life.

### Galilee Baptist Church History

The Galilee Baptist Church was organized in 1896 by Black residents in the Roxborough/Manayunk section of northwest Philadelphia. The church's records present slightly varying accounts of the congregation's formation. James S. Fitzgerald, the church Clerk and a trustee from 1923 to 1961, provided a description of congregation's development from its founding through the 1920s. He wrote that the Rev. Joseph Graham organized a Baptist Mission at the southeast corner of Walnut Lane and Pechin Street, above a pool hall during the summer of 1896.<sup>1</sup> (Perhaps this building was also known as Prohibition Hall. When the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported the groundbreaking, it observed that the congregation had been meeting at Prohibition Hall.<sup>2</sup> Another *Philadelphia Inquirer* article identified Prohibition Hall also located at Shur's Lane and Pechin Street. Walnut Lane and Shur's Lane are the same roadway.)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James S. Fitzgerald, "Brief History of Galilee Baptist Church," Undated, Galilee Baptist Church archive, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 3, 1900, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 13, 1893, p. 13.



*Figure 6. Image at Galilee Baptist Church shows possible location of the Baptist Mission that would become Galilee Baptist Church. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.*

Rev. Graham came from Virginia, where he was a member of a congregation called Galilee Baptist Church. He suggested the church name. After meeting at Walnut Lane/Shur's Lane and Pechin Street for a few years, the group was organized as a Baptist congregation by the Rev. Horace Whalen of North Philadelphia's Zion Baptist Church. Rev. Royal Brown served for approximately one year as the congregation's first spiritual leader. <sup>4</sup>

The congregation Charter was incorporated on December 12, 1899, as Galilee Baptist Church of the Twenty-First Ward, City of Philadelphia. The Board of Trustees consisted of: John L. Taylor, 552 Dupont Street, Sharpless White, 542 Dupont Street, Wesley E. McCullough, 6117 Ridge Avenue, Maxie C. Taliferro, Roxborough and Ridge Avenues, and John J. Moore, 554 Dupont

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<sup>4</sup> Fitzgerald, "Brief History," p.1.

Street. The Deacon Board at the time of the first service was identified as: James Robinson, M.C. Taliaferro, Robert Ridley, W.E. McCullough, A.D. Stith, and Richard Moss.<sup>5</sup>

The burgeoning congregation collected funds to construct its own church building. Assisting in the effort to build the church was John S. Trower, who operated a catering company in Germantown. Trower was an influential member of Philadelphia's Black community at the turn of the twentieth century, serving as President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Negro Business League.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, he was well connected in the Baptist community. Although he was a deacon in the Cherry Street Church, near Cherry and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets, he encouraged the development of Baptist congregations in northwest Philadelphia.<sup>7</sup> He helped finance the purchase of the lot for the Galilee Baptist Church. He also assisted in funding the building of the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Germantown.<sup>8</sup>

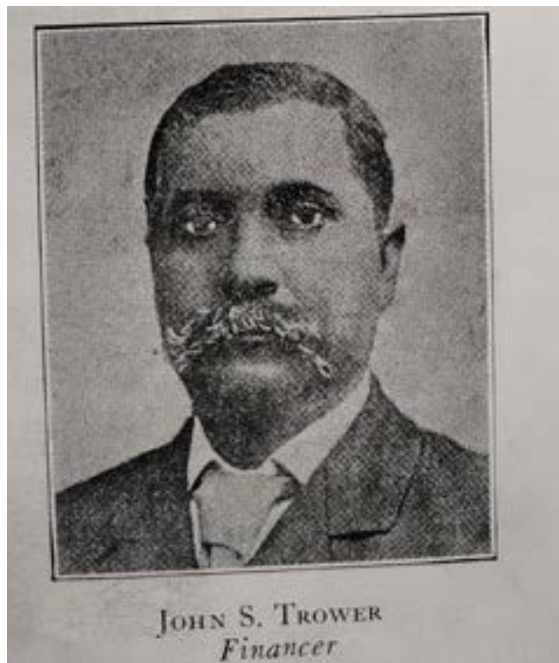


Figure 7. Image of John S. Trower, Financier of Galilee Baptist Church, from 39th Anniversary Program (1935) of the Congregation. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.

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<sup>5</sup> Charter of the Galilee Baptist Church of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward, City of Philadelphia, County of Philadelphia, recorded January 10, 1900.

<sup>6</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer, August 3, 1902, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer, August 31, 1897, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 11, 1896, p. 7.

The construction of the church building is documented in newspapers of the day. On February 22, 1900, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted that Galilee Baptist Church purchased the 46.8 x 117.2 lot at Mitchell Street and Roxborough Avenue.<sup>9</sup>

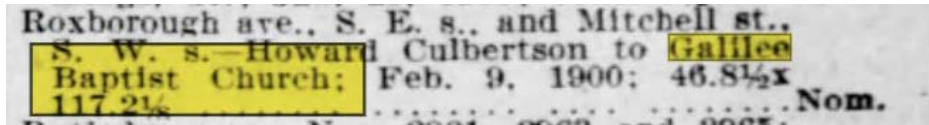


Figure 8. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 22, 1900, p. 14. Source: Newspapers.com.

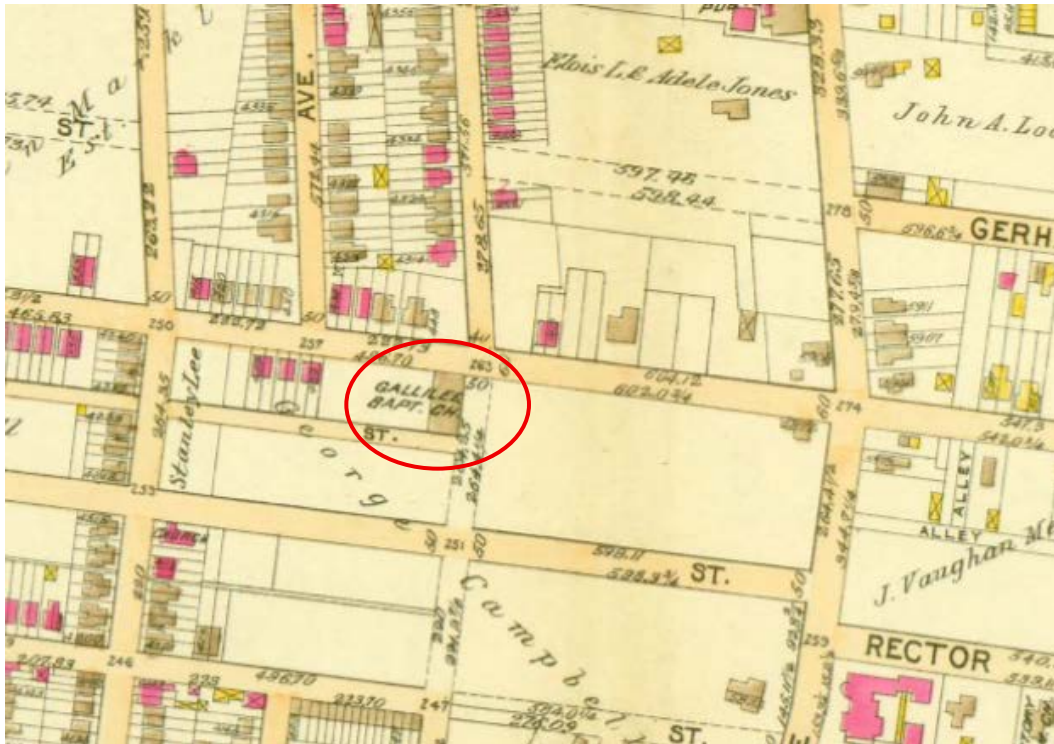


Figure 9. Location of Galilee Baptist Church, G.W. Bromley Atlas, 1901. Source: Philadelphia GeoHistory.

On November 24, 1900, the sub-headline in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* real estate article declared, “Contract Awarded to H.R. Yocum for the New Galilee Baptist Church.” The article identified Kennedy and Kelsey as the building’s architects. Components were identified: a kitchen, two dressing rooms and a pastor’s study in the basement with the “church proper” on the first floor. The church’s cost was estimated at \$6,400.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 22, 1900, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24, 1900, p. 15.

**THE LATEST NEWS  
IN REAL ESTATE**

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Contract Awarded to H. R. Yocum  
for New **Galilee Baptist  
Church** in Roxborough

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**A GERMANTOWN FACTORY**

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Bids Wanted for Tenement House and  
Other Work—Property Changes  
and Other Permits

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The contract for the one-story and basement stone church to be erected at Roxborough avenue and Mitchell street, Roxborough, for the Galilee Baptist Congregation, has been awarded to Contractor Howard R. Yocum. The plans were made by Architects Kennedy & Kelsey, and they show an edifice to measure 40x60 feet. A kitchen, two dressing rooms and a pastor's study will be located in the basement, and the church proper will be fitted up on the first floor. The estimated cost of the work is \$6400.

Figure 10. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 24, 1900, p. 15. Source: Newspapers.com.

The cornerstone of the church was laid on December 2, 1900. The *Philadelphia Times* identified the crowd as greater than 2,500. The cornerstone was laid “according to the Masonic ceremony...under the direction of the Grand Lodge of Free and accepted Masons of the State of Pennsylvania, assisted by the Grand United Order of the True Reformers.” John S. Trower, a deacon at the First African Baptist Church of Philadelphia (formerly known as the Cherry St Baptist Church), gave the dedication address.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The *Philadelphia Times*, December 3, 1900, p. 11.

## NEW CHURCH TO COST \$13,000

### Corner-Stone of Galilee Baptist Church at Roxborough is Laid.

In the presence of more than 2,500 persons yesterday afternoon the corner-stone of the Galilee Baptist Church, Roxborough and Mitchell streets, Roxborough, was laid.

The Rev. Morton Winston, of Germantown, was master of ceremonies and the laying of the corner-stone was according to the Masonic ceremony, which function was performed under the direction of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Pennsylvania, assisted by Roxborough Fountain, of the Grand United Order of True Reformers.

The dedication address was made by Deacon John S. Trower, of the First African Baptist Church, of Philadelphia.

Others who made brief addresses were Rev. E. W. Moore, Rev. Morton Winston, Rev. Alexander Gordon and J. L. Barksdale.

There was deposited in the corner-stone a copy of the Bible, a hymn book, publications from the National Baptist Convention, a report and history of Masonry and some coins of recent date.

The new edifice, which is expected to be ready for occupancy next March, is to be erected of Pennsylvania granite, with sandstone trimmings, in Gothic style of architecture, and when completed will cost \$13,000. It will have a seating capacity of five hundred.

Figure 11. *The Philadelphia Times*, December 3, 1900, p. 11. Source: Newspapers.com.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that on Sunday, December 16, 1901, the first service was conducted in the newly completed Galilee Baptist Church. The Rev. Clarence Parrish would serve as pastor from 1899 to 1912 and it was noted that "The new church is the only one for colored persons in that section of the city."<sup>12</sup> Rev. Parrish headed the congregation until 1912. He helped attract a growing congregation, although the cost of building the church resulted in debt.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 6, 1901, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Undated Galilee Church History, Galilee Baptist Church Archives, p. 1.



*Figure 12 Rev. Clarence Parrish from 39th Anniversary Program (1935) of the Congregation. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.*



*Figure 13. Early Image of Galilee Baptist Church from 39th Anniversary Program (1935) of the Congregation. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.*



Figure 14. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 16, 1901, p7. Source: Newspapers.com.

Rev. Parish left Galilee Baptist Church in 1912 and was replaced in the same year by Rev. William T. Hall who previously was pastor of the High Street Baptist Church in Danville, VA. Aside from pastoral responsibilities, Rev. Hall worked to place the church on a better financial footing. When Galilee Baptist Church paid off its debt for the building, a ceremony burning the mortgage was held. Lucy Taylor, a congregant who had attended the first service at the church building in 1901, did the honors.<sup>14</sup> Rev. Hall was energetic and succeeded in growing the congregation. According to James Fitzgerald, "He walked all over the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward where our people lived and succeeded in encouraging the membership and many were united in the church." Physical improvements in the church building followed: a new pipe organ, electric lights, steam heating system, cement block wall around the side and rear yard, cement pavement and painting of the upper church. Rev. Hall purchased his own home and encouraged congregants to do the same. Rev. Hall's tenure was successful although he "became unsatisfied" and he resigned in 1922 to return to the High Street Church in Danville, Virginia.<sup>15</sup>

In June of 1923 a committee was formed to purchase a house to serve as the church parsonage. The committee succeeded in obtaining the house next to the church, 457 Roxborough Avenue, for \$6,700. Rev. W.O. Harper of the Third Baptist Church of Youngstown, Ohio arrived to replace

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<sup>14</sup> Undated Galilee Church History, p.1.

<sup>15</sup> Undated Galilee Church History, p.2.

Rev. Hall in November. Rev. Harper was, "...a great minister and pastor, members were added and finances increased."<sup>16</sup>

Rev. Harper's apparent charisma resulted in a foray into electoral politics. In 1928 he was part of a group of reform candidates recruited by Dr. T.D. Atkins, a fellow Black pastor who was in West Philadelphia and headed the Progressive Political League.<sup>17</sup> Harper's platform was expressed on a card: "Against oppression of labor by capital. Opposes coal strike conditions in the state. Stands for Enforcement of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution (Prohibition). Opposes the moneyed interests controlling the political destinies of the people. Stands for religious liberty as against organized intolerance."<sup>18</sup>

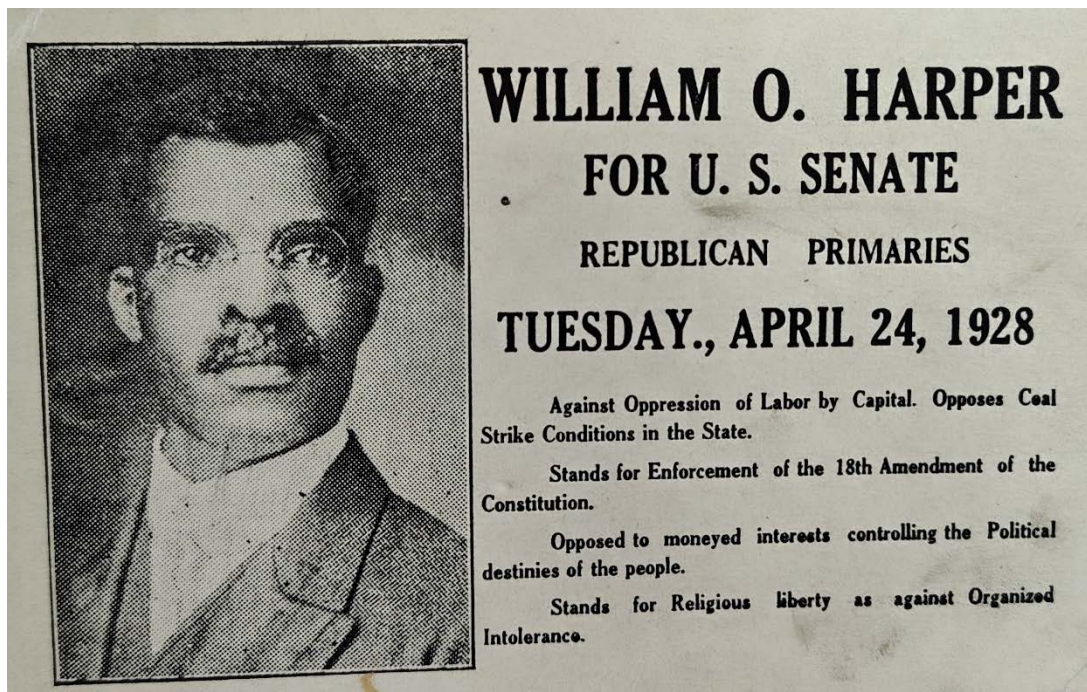


Figure 15. Election Card for William O. Harper, 1928. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.

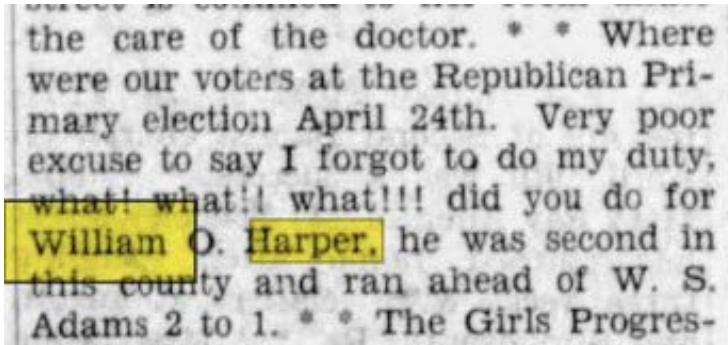
Harper handily lost the primary election to the eventual winner of the general election, David A. Reed of Pittsburgh. An author in the *Philadelphia Tribune*, a newspaper devoted to the Black community in Philadelphia, took Black voters to task for not showing Harper more support, writing, "Where were our voters at the Republican Primary election April 24<sup>th</sup>. Very poor excuse

<sup>16</sup> Undated Galilee Church History, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer, March 6, 1928, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> "William Harper for U.S. Senate," 1928, Galilee Baptist Church Archives.

to say I forgot to do my duty, what! what!! what!!! did you do for William O. Harper, he was second in this County and ran ahead of W.S. Adams 2 to 1.”<sup>19</sup>



the care of the doctor. \* \* Where were our voters at the Republican Primary election April 24th. Very poor excuse to say I forgot to do my duty, what! what!! what!!! did you do for William O. Harper, he was second in this county and ran ahead of W. S. Adams 2 to 1. \* \* The Girls Progress-

Figure 16. *The Philadelphia Tribune*, May 3, 1928, p. 12. Source: *Newspapers.com*.

The congregation’s membership and coffers declined during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Rev. William M. Wiggins succeeded Rev. Harper and led Galilee Baptist Church from 1931 to 1935. Rev. Frank Mitchell, Jr. succeeded Wiggins and had a highly successful tenure as Galilee’s pastor from 1935 to 1951. The program celebrating the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rev. Mitchell in October 1950 illustrates the vibrancy of the congregation.

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<sup>19</sup> The Philadelphia Tribune, May 3, 1928, p. 12.

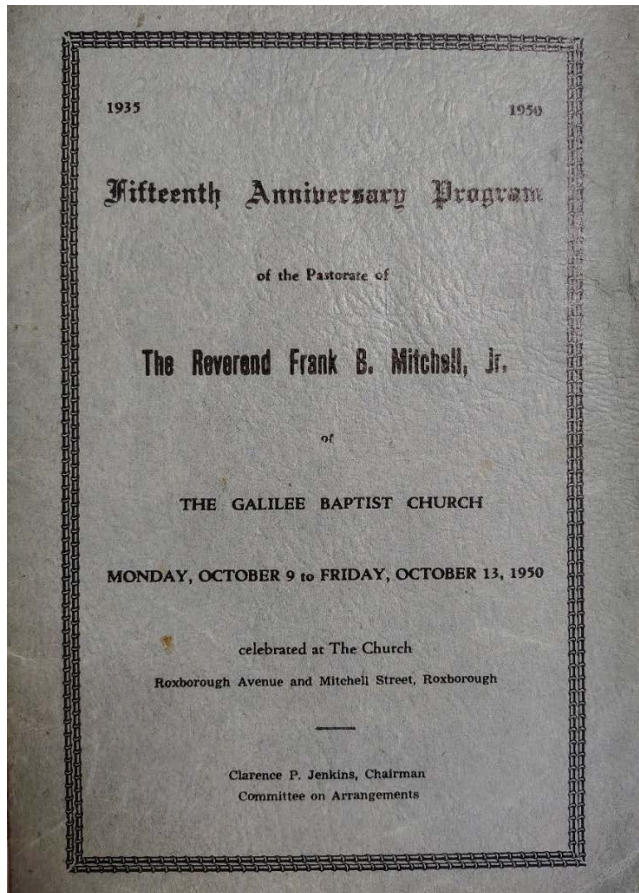


Figure 17. 15th Anniversary Program of Reverend Frank B. Mitchell, Jr., 1950. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.

The Registered Church Members totaled at least 300. The membership was active in numerous groups whose work was extolled in the program:

- Tribe of Benjamin – Begun 1909 – General congregational support
- Little Willing Workers – Assisted the homebound
- Adult Sunday School - Begun 1919 – Served adults in religious education
- Children’s Sunday School - Served children in religious education
- Missionary Society - Begun 1914 - Conducted mission work locally and abroad
- Women’s Bible Class 1 - Begun 1914 – Bible study
- Women’s Bible Class 3 – Begun 1929 – Bible study
- Willing Workers – Begun ca. 1915
- Choir
- The Working Club – Begun 1924 – Raised funds for church building improvements

- Ladies Auxiliary and Men's Usher Board – Begun 1920 & 1923
- Baptist Training Union – Religious youth group<sup>20</sup>

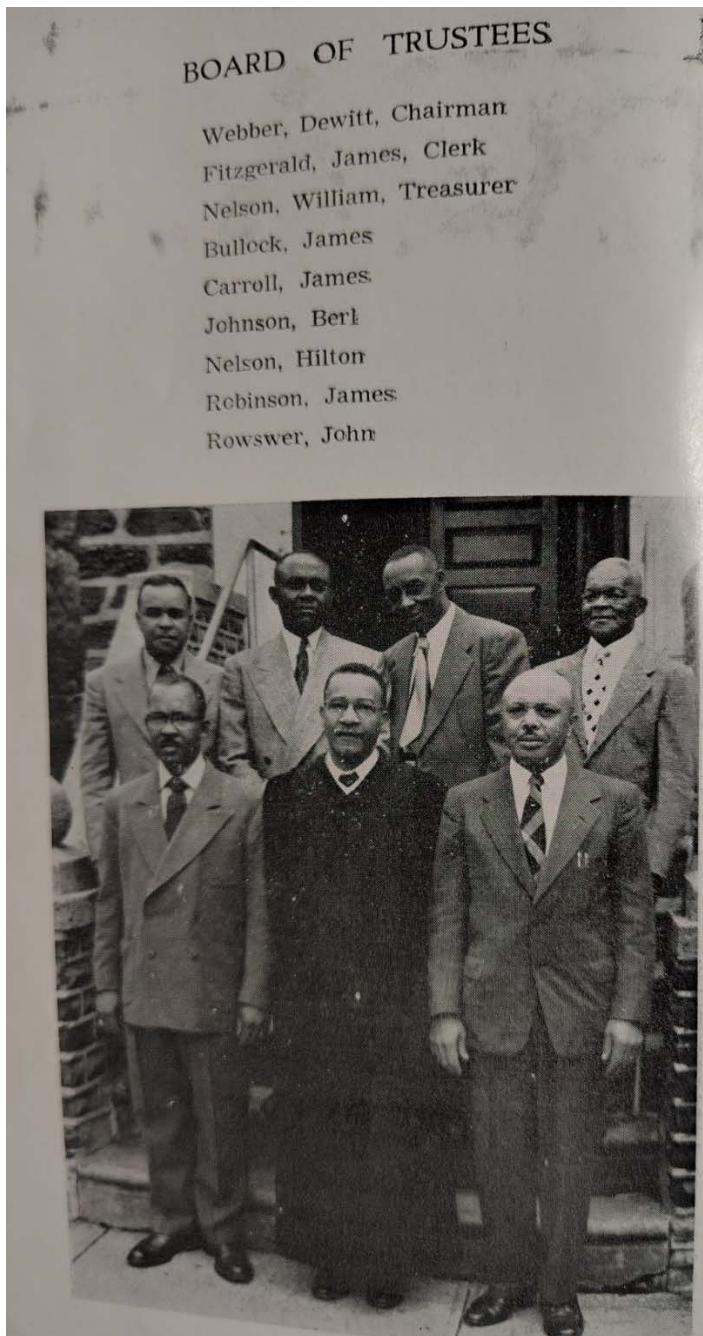


Figure 18. Board of Trustees. 15th Anniversary Program of Reverend Frank B. Mitchel, Jr., 1950. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.

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<sup>20</sup> 15th Anniversary Program of Reverend Frank B. Mitchel, Jr., 1950. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.



THE BOARD OF DEACONS — 1950

ROBERT MOSS, Chairman  
GEORGE SAVAGE, Secretary  
FRANK B. MITCHELL, Pastor  
HENRY WRIGHT  
CLIFTON YANCEY  
ADAM SAVAGE  
THOMAS ROWSER  
PHINEAS SMITH  
GEORGE HENDRICKS  
DENNIS HOPKINS  
NATHAN STRAUGHTERS

*Figure 19. Board of Deacons. 15th Anniversary Program of Reverend Frank B. Mitchell, Jr., 1950. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.*

## LADIES' AUXILIARY AND MEN'S USHER BOARDS

The Ladies' Auxiliary was organized in 1923 under the leadership of the late Rev. Harper, with Mrs. Mildred Wilson as president. In the years to follow, Mrs. Lucy Hunter, Mrs. Mary Turner, and Mrs. Hester Rowser, served as presidents. Miss Marie Patterson organized a Junior Board, who served faithfully during the period the Auxiliary was dormant. The Auxiliary was re-organized in 1949 with Mrs. Lucy Hunter again serving as leader.

The Men's Usher Board was organized in 1920, under the pastorate of the late Rev. Hall, with Mr. James Bullock, as president. The present leader Mr. Jeff Braxton, was elected to serve after the death of Mr. Bullock; and has served as a loyal and faithful president.

Lucy Hunter, President  
 Thelma Harris, Secretary  
 Lucy Hunter  
 Dorenda Brooks  
 Cleo Hendricks  
 Millie Hughs  
 Mary Turner  
 Cladys Webb  
 George Putty  
 John Moss, Jr.  
 Charles Thomas  
 Marie Patterson  
 Dorothy Whitaker  
 Pauline Terry  
 Lois Dukins

Jeff Braxton, President  
 Zadie Morton  
 Roxy Harris  
 Benjamin Stewart  
 James Hunter  
 Helen Alston  
 Nell Brown  
 Florence Stewart  
 Elizabeth Brooks  
 Marion Dennis  
 Jeff Braxton  
 Howard Brooks  
 H. Alston  
 Fred Jones



Figure 20. Ladies Auxiliary & Men's Usher Boards. 15th Anniversary Program of Reverend Frank B. Mitchel, Jr., 1950. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.



### TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

The Tribe of Benjamin was first organized in 1909 by Miss Sarah Williams. It is the oldest auxiliary of the Church in number of years of continuous organization. Miss Williams served as president until her death in 1926, leaving behind her a glorious tradition, which has been faithfully carried on by her two successors Mrs. Marlene Johnson and Mrs. Katherine Carroll.

At this writing the President Mrs. Corine P. McCoy, is ill at home having just returned from the hospital. Mrs McCoy, we can proudly say has continued to lead the Tribe in the noble traditions set by her predecessors.

The Tribe extends to Rev. Mitchell, our best wishes for his continued success in his field.

Corine P. McCoy, President  
Vera Patterson, Vice President  
Clara Baskerville, Treasurer  
Sarah H. Booker, Secretary

Figure 21. Tribe of Benjamin. 15th Anniversary Program of Reverend Frank B. Mitchel, Jr., 1950. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.

Rev. Mitchell left Galilee Baptist Church in 1951 to lead a congregation in West Philadelphia. He was replaced by Rev. Ernest Johnson who served as the pastor until 1959. Rev. Johnson implemented aid positions for deacons and trustees, insisted on written reports by the various auxiliaries at church meetings, and had an interior stairway built to the basement where he installed an office.<sup>21</sup>

The 1960s were characterized by social justice action and organizational development under Rev. T.Y. Rodgers, 1961 to 1964, and J.H. McKissick, 1965 to 1969. Rev. Rodgers was active in 400 Preachers of Philadelphia Organization. The group fought for better conditions for Philadelphia Public School students. On September 10, 1963, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* quoted Rev. Rodgers, that students in the Philadelphia Schools reported substandard building conditions and that the preacher's group was contemplating measures to support the students. They had not taken a position regarding the proposal of Cecil B. Moore, head of the Philadelphia NAACP for a school boycott.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Undated Galilee Church History, p.7.

<sup>22</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer, September 10, 1963, p. 8.

# Negro Pastors Begin School 'Action'

A group of 400 Negro ministers began "direct action" Monday against the Board of Education, in protest to alleged school segregation. But exactly what the "action" was remained a secret.

At the same time, in Woodbury, N. J., 76 elementary school pupils were foiled in their attempt to transfer from the all-Negro Carpenter Street School to three interracial schools. Negro leaders said the children would receive their education at three churches from now on.

## Philadelphia

The "direct action" program was agreed upon Sunday night by the organization known as the 400 Negro Preachers of Philadelphia. About 25 ministers attended the meeting, in the Zoar Methodist Church, 1204 Melon st.

### LIST 65 SCHOOLS

The Rev. Theophilus V. Rogers, Jr., pastor of Galilee Baptist Church, said the ministers had read from their pupils Sun-

day a list of 65 public schools which they deemed "substandard."

They accompanied this with remarks critical of the School Board, charging that "a philosophy of discrimination and segregation is an integral part of the functioning of the public school system . . ."

Mr. Rogers said the ministers had decided not to announce what further measures they would take. Cecil B. Moore, Philadelphia president of the NAACP, has called for a boycott of the schools by Negroes when classes resume Tuesday, but the ministers have not publicly supported this proposal.

### WETTER ANSWERS

Dr. Allen H. Wetter, superintendent of the public schools, said he had no idea what action the ministers planned. He issued a rebuttal to the ministers' remarks.

Dr. Wetter said the schools listed were "not substandard." "In every city school system," he continued, "there are schools at the top of the achievement

scale, and schools which fall lower. These schools which have been named have fine facilities in whom I have confidence."

Dr. Wetter said the schools singled out by the ministers were the ones the School Board had previously announced would receive special attention, with the goal of raising the "achievement level" of the pupils.

The new program is known as the Educational Improvement Program.

The ministers, who have accomplished their objectives in the past by boycotts—or "selective patronage"—called upon their congregations to lend their "support and participation."

"God has led us through 24 victories and no defeats," the ministers said. "We have the assurance that He will guide us through victory number 25."

## Woodbury

In Woodbury, 76 pupils living in the Carpenter Street School area tried to enroll at the West End Memorial School, the Central School and the Evergreen Avenue School.

Figure 22. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 10, 1963. p. 8. Source: Newspapers.com

Business meeting notes from April 4, 1963, provide insight into other congregational activities: School kits for African children/medical supplies to be sent to disadvantaged Africans, Mission Day, 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade participation, religious education programs and a Good Friday film.<sup>23</sup> The congregation drafted and adopted a new Constitution in 1966-67. The extensive document delineated the organization's purpose, organizational structure, induction procedures for new members, and roles of officers and committees.<sup>24</sup>

Rev. Charles E. Jefferies was a significant presence in Galilee Baptist Church during the second half of the twentieth century. Mr. Jeffries, born in 1923, was raised in Roxborough and began to attend services at Galilee at the age of 12. He taught sixth grade in Vineland, New Jersey for more than 30 years. Despite living in southern New Jersey, he remained a significant presence at his boyhood church. He taught Sunday School and was the assistant pastor for 30 years, often

<sup>23</sup> "Galilee Baptist Church Business Meeting," April 4, 1963. Galilee Baptist Church Archives.

<sup>24</sup> "Constitution of the Galilee Baptist Church. 1967." Galilee Baptist Church Archives.

serving as interim pastor when the lead pastor position was vacant. He died in 2000 at the age of 76.<sup>25</sup> Mr. Jeffries was offered the lead pastor position more than once but refused. In 1999 he was honored by the congregation when the former parsonage was renamed the Charels E. Jeffries Education Center.

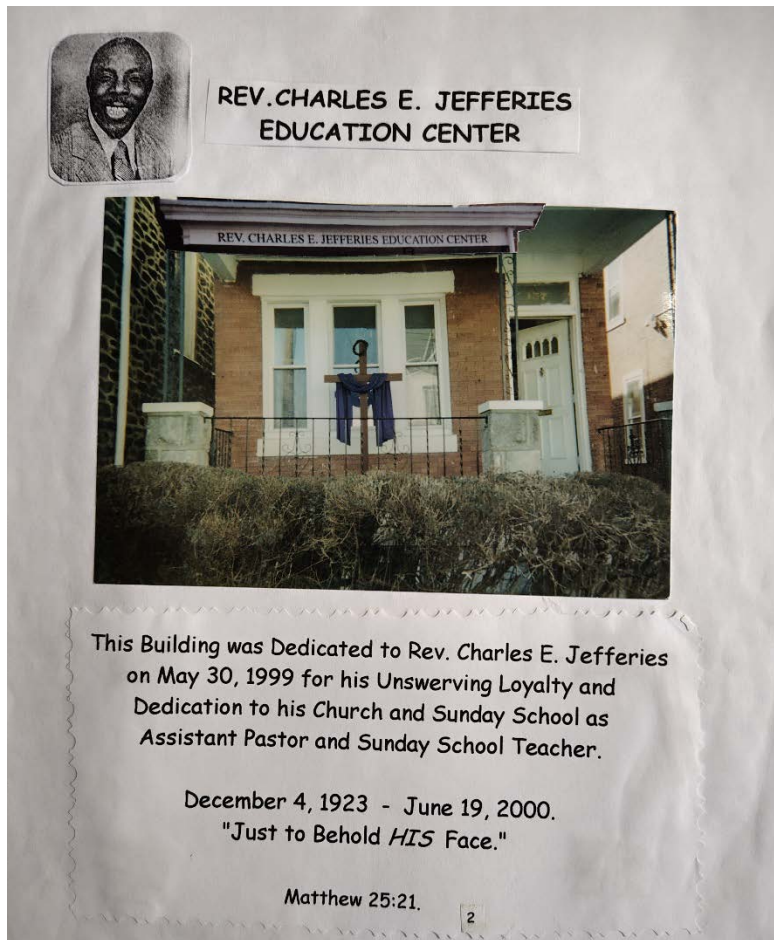


Figure 23. Flyer for Dedication of Rev. Charles E. Jeffries Education Center, May 30, 1999. Source: Galilee Baptist Church.

Rev. Robert Collier, Sr. assumed the position of head pastor in 1991 and served in that position until December 31, 2023. He was from South Carolina, moved to Philadelphia at the age of three and grew up in Germantown. His first pastor position was at Philadelphia National Baptist Church after which he served as an Associate Pastor at Zion Baptist Church.<sup>26</sup> Rev. Collier's

<sup>25</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer, June 25, 2000, p. 27.

<sup>26</sup> "Pastor Robert Collier, Sr. A Poetic Look at his Life." (Undated) Galilee Baptist Church Archives.

accomplishments were many. He bolstered the congregation's organizational capacity by obtaining a van for the church, renaming the education building in honor of Charles E. Jefferies, instituting Laymen's Days Awards, restarting Men's and Women's days, starting a Food Bank Ministry and dedicating the church's lower sanctuary to Rev. Frank Mitchell, Jr. He also guided improvements to the church building itself, including padding for the pews, carpeting the sanctuary and converting the parsonage to an educational annex.<sup>27</sup>

Rev. Dr. Richard Brown, III currently serves as interim pastor for the church. His involvement with Galilee Baptist Church began in the 1980s. He has been the long-time choir director and has served as Interim Pastor since the retirement of Rev. Collier on December 31, 2023. Dr. Brown possesses a Ph.D. in music from Combs College of Music.<sup>28</sup>

#### Black Community Geography in Philadelphia 1700-1950

When it was founded, Galilee Baptist Church was the only Black congregation in Manayunk/Roxborough. While other Black congregations have come and gone in the area, Galilee Baptist Church remains in its purpose-built church building. The significance of the property derives from its role as a Black community institution.

Black enslaved persons lived in Philadelphia from the earliest days of Dutch and Swedish colonization, continuing through the Revolutionary Period. Slavery was outlawed in the 1770s with gradual emancipation fully realized by the 1820s. In 1860, the first census after the consolidation of the county into Philadelphia city, counted 565,529 total residents of whom 22,185 or 4% of the total population were Black. The 1890 census counted a total population of approximately 1.4 million people in Philadelphia of which nearly 40,000 or 4%, were Black. The non-Black and Black populations grew significantly between 1860 and 1890, but the percentages of each group remained almost the same.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "Collier Pastorate Accomplishments." (Undated). Galilee Baptist Church Archives.

<sup>28</sup> The Philadelphia Inquirer, March 17, 1997, p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> DuBois, W.E.B., The Philadelphia Negro, (New York: 1899/1967), p. 47. Accessed from archives.org.

The 1890 census was the last one conducted before Galilee Baptist Church began to form in 1896. The 21<sup>st</sup> Ward encompassed all of what is today called Northwest Philadelphia. The 1890 Census showed that only a minute portion of Philadelphia's Black population lived in this section of the city. The total population of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward in 1890 was 26,900 of which 93 people or one third of one percent were Black. The population of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward did not grow substantially between 1890 and 1900.<sup>30</sup> In 1890, the total population of the ward was 32,168, merely 5,268 more than 10 years earlier. However, the Black population increased markedly from 93 to 464. Despite this increase in the Black population, the small Black community of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward paled in comparison to the 7<sup>th</sup> Ward, located between the Schuylkill River, 11<sup>th</sup>, Spruce, and South streets, that had the largest Black population of any ward in the city, 10,462 or 37% of the total population of the ward. Nonetheless, a critical mass of Black residents lived in the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward that enabled organizing for the Galilee Mission in 1896 with the church building completing construction in 1901.<sup>31</sup>

The concentration of Black Philadelphians is illustrated in W.E.B DeBois's study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, published in 1899. Using the 1890 census, the population of the contiguous 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> wards was 16,780.<sup>32</sup> Not surprisingly, in 1892, 13 Black congregations were clustered near Christian, 6<sup>th</sup>, Spruce and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, Galilee Baptist Church was the first Black congregation to build its own church building in the Manayunk/Roxborough section of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward.

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<sup>30</sup> United States. Census Office. 1890. Abstract of the Eleventh Census: 1890.... Washington: Govt. print. off., 1894.

<sup>31</sup> United States. Census Office. 1900. Census Reports ...: Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken In the Year 1900. Washington: United States Census office, 190102.

<sup>32</sup> DuBois, p. 59.

<sup>33</sup> Emily Cooperman & Matthew Hopper, *African American Churches of Philadelphia, 1778-1949*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. PA-Share, 2011.

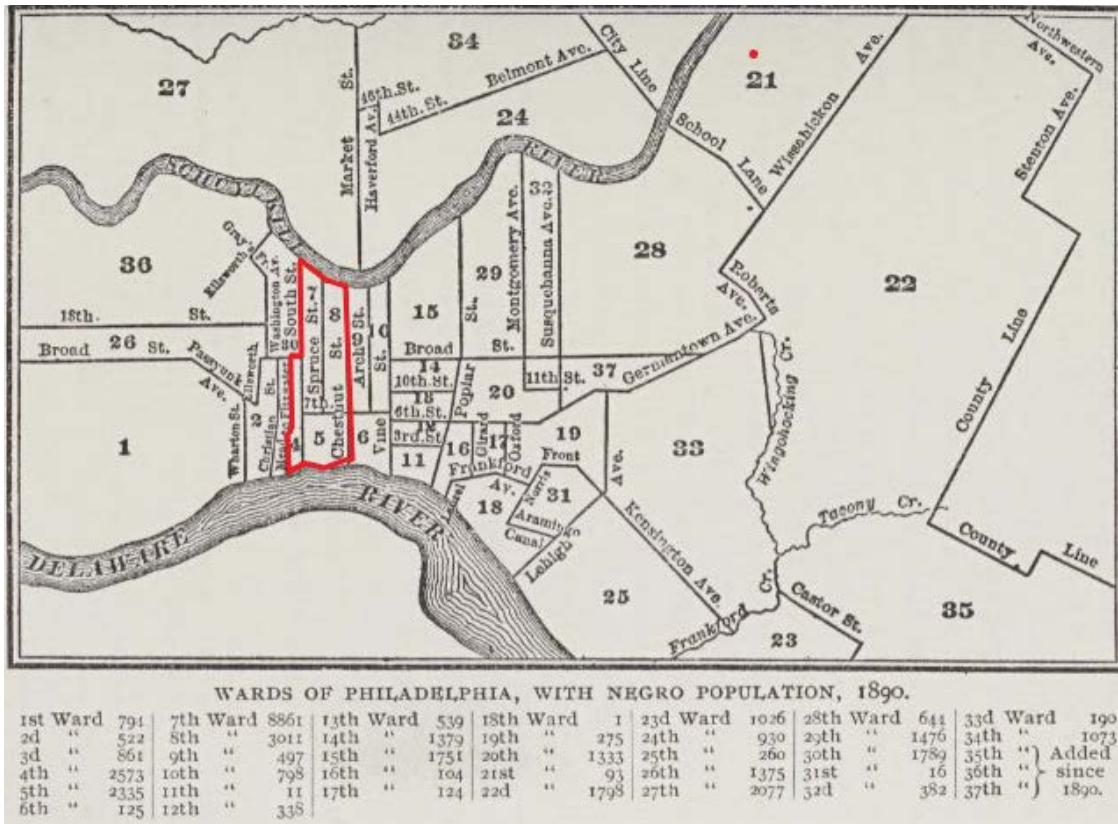


Figure 24. Location of wards 4,5,7 & 8 and approximate location of Galilee Baptist Church in Ward 21. Wards of Philadelphia with Negro Population, 1890. Source: *The Philadelphia Negro*, WEB DuBois. Internet Archive.

### Roxborough and Manayunk

The Wissahickon Creek bisects the northwest portion of Philadelphia before it flows south and empties into the Schuylkill River. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, the creek and the topography isolated this section of the Roxborough Township from central Philadelphia. There was proto-industrial activity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on the creeks and streams of Roxborough. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that the Schuylkill Navigation Company built many canal segments making the Schuylkill River navigable, which promoted industry.<sup>34</sup> By the early nineteenth century, cotton and wool mills were the dominant industries, clustered along the Schuylkill River.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Schneider, Claire G., "Historic Context Statement for Neighborhood Cluster 2, 2008-2009, Roxborough," Architectural Research and Cultural History Historic Preservation Consulting, 2008-09, p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> Schneider, p. 19.

These developments meant a concentration of industrial workers whose residences were clustered near the mills. Streets such as Leverington Avenue and Shur's Lane were comprised of brick and stone rowhouses.<sup>36</sup> Between 1819 and 1850, the population of what became Manayunk Borough (1840) rose from 60 to 6,158.<sup>37</sup> By the 1920s, there were more than 50 manufacturing companies or businesses in Manayunk with textiles and yarns remaining the most popular.<sup>38</sup>

After the 1920s, industrial development trailed off. The impact of the Great Depression was felt, of course, but the trend continued in the ensuing decades. Not that it ceased fully. Even during the 1950s, the Container Corporation of America, for instance, had a factory that employed more than 1,000 people. However, by 1955, a Philadelphia City Planning Commission report identified neighborhood decline due to the loss of Manayunk's industrial base.<sup>39</sup>

Roxborough remained primarily agricultural as opposed to the industrial character of Manayunk.<sup>40</sup> Despite efforts of large landowners to attract development to Roxborough, the largest land use became residential. Large swaths of the area were not developed until the post-World War II period.<sup>41</sup>

Once the growth of the Black community in Manayunk/Roxborough began, a race-based pattern of development could be discerned. An anonymous description of the early years of the Galilee Baptist Church congregation provides a window into this small Black community.

"Roxborough – like most urban cities – remains segregated racially. However, from its earliest settlement it embraced a special kind of segregation. There were areas – very small in size – which hosted only Blacks. There were also areas where two Black families lived side by

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<sup>36</sup> Schmeider, p. 21.

<sup>37</sup> Schmeider, p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Schmeider, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Schmeider, p.26.

<sup>40</sup> Schmeider, p.10.

<sup>41</sup> Schmeider, p.15.

side in semi-detached homes surrounded by their white neighbors. It is largely a working-class/lower-middle class area with churches, businesses, homes, etc. including a semetery(sic) where Blacks are still buried in the back.”<sup>42</sup>

The first meeting of the Galilee Baptist Church at the church building is memorialized with the names of 53 attendees. The residential addresses of 16 of the attendees could be identified between 1900 and 1920. There was a cluster around Leverington Cemetery with a few members living further south, closer to the Manayunk industrial waterfront.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> History of Galilee Baptist Church. Undated. P. 3. Galilee Baptist Church Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Galilee Baptist Church, the Following Named Persons. Registered during opening of the main audience room, December 15, 1901. Galilee Baptist Church Archives.

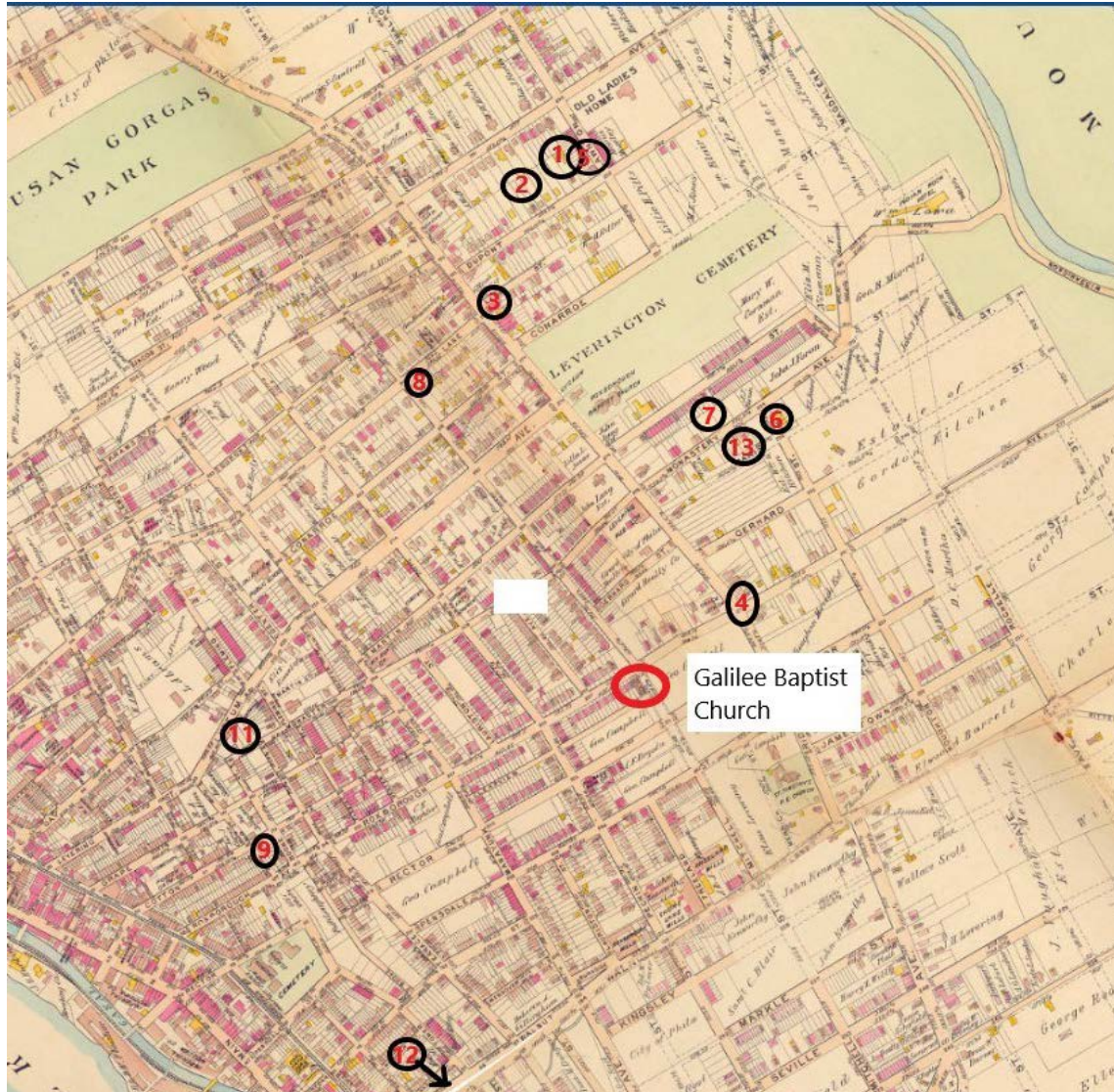


Figure 25. Locations of Participants in First Service at Galilee Baptist Church, 1901. Source: G.W. Bromley, 1910, Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Map #	First	Location	Position/Occupation	Source
1	John L Taylor	552 Dupont St	Trustee - Water Department Laborer	Galilee Baptist Ch. Charter - 1900 Census
2	Sharpless White	542 Dupont St	Trustee - Laborer	Galilee Baptist Ch. Charter - 1900 Census
3	Wesley E. McCullough	6117 Ridge Ave	Trustee	Galilee Baptist Church Charter
4	Maxie C Taliaferro	Roxborough and Ridge aves	Trustee - Driver	Galilee Baptist Ch. Charter 1910 Census
5	John J. Moore	554 Dupont St	Trustee - Coachman	Galilee Baptist Ch. Charter - 1900 Census
6	Major Butler	Houghton near Levering	Laborer	Galilee Baptist Church Charter
7	Frank Carlisle	514 Monastery Ave.	Wagon Driver	1920 Census
8	Louise Garnett	446 Green Ln	Servant	1910 Census
9	Hannah Jackson	4315 Tower St	Servant	1900 Census
	Thomas Mercer	No House Number on Rector St	Laborer, Coalk Yard	1920 Census
11	Matilda Moss	4277 Atewell St	Unknown	1910 Census
	Richard Moss	4277 Atewell St	Factory Laborer	1910 Census
12	Texarkana Ridley	144 East St	Not Listed	1900 Census
	Robert Ridley	144 East St	Iron Worker	1900 Census
13	Daniel Straughers/Strautir/Strawter	550 Monastery Ave	Coachman	1900 Census
14	Henry Thomas	101 Hermit St	Laborer, Iron Works	1900 Census

Figure 26. Chart Showing Names, Occupations & Positions of Attendees of Some Attendees of First Service at Galilee Baptist Church, 1901. Sources: Galilee Baptist Church & Ancestry.com

All the occupations listed, laborers, drivers, etc. are working class. By race and occupation this was a homogeneous group who banded together to form a religious and social community. As stated in one of the Galilee Church histories whose author was not identified, “It is (Galilee Baptist Church) and always has been a Black Church in a white neighborhood.”

### Conclusion

Galilee Baptist Church at 459 Roxborough Avenue possesses significance under Criterion J, exemplifying the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of community and merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, pursuant to Section 14-1004(1) of the Philadelphia Code. The church was built in 1900 and 1901 and has been continuously used as the congregation’s house of worship for 125 years. The congregation is an institution of the Black community in Roxborough/Manayunk where most of the population was, and remains, of European ancestry. It is also an institution of the Black community that has endured far removed from the historical epicenter of Philadelphia’s Black community life.

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