

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCERS use only
received
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic LITTLE JERUSALEM (BENSALEM) AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1200 Bridgwater Road not for publication

city, town Cornwells Heights vicinity of congressional district 8

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Bucks code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Bensalem African Methodist Episcopal Church

street & number 1200 Bridgwater Road

city, town Cornwells Heights vicinity of state Pennsylvania 19020

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Bucks County Courthouse

street & number Court Street

city, town Doylestown state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 6/19/79 federal state county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Little Jerusalem (Bensalem) Church was built in 1830 and has seen at least two renovations, c. 1860 and c. 1896. This one room structure, is only one and $\frac{1}{2}$ stories with a gable roof.

Set on a low rubble stone foundation partially mortared, the structure has heavy, 8" x 10" rough-hewn mud sills.

Its heavy frame walls have shiplap wooden siding nailed with cut nails. Some of the siding boards are beaded. The wooden skirt boards almost completely cover the foundations. In 1931 the entire structure was covered with asbestos shingles. In the 60's the front facade was stuccoed to cover damages by vandels. Also at this time the main doors were replaced and the front flanking windows covered. Full windows still exist under the present slit-like openings.

The gable roof is covered with asbestos shingles. The cornice is unusual and bespeaks of its early age with its ovalo detailed cornice.

Windows in this three by two bay structure are 6/6 behind front window covering and 6/9 on the side elevation. The original cast iron shutter hardware is still present on the window jambs and sills.

The gable end, gothic-type window located on the front facade was probably added in the c. 1860 or c. 1890 alterations.

The interior of the structure is essentially intact and retains original woodwork and hardware.

The central-roof chimney leads through the loft and to a stove pipe opening in the center of the ceiling. Until the 1960's a Griswold-Erie #6 stove was located in the center of the room.

The random width floor boards, some 10 to 11 inches wide, are fairly short, only 4 to 6 feet long and are secured by cut nails.

The walls have waist level wainscoating with chair rail and no baseboards. A molded cornice is located at the ceiling height. Ovalo molding is located on the windows and door castings.

Pews are of vertical saw, hand painted board. Located in the left rear corner is a built in cabinet with what appears to date from the c. 1860 or c. 1890 alteration.

The pulpit and altar rail have early mold patterns and are assembled only by joinery, no nails or screws visible. They are probably early and date from early to mid 19th century.

Surrounding the church is the early cemetery associated with the church. It contains graves of black civil war veterans.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) <i>Black History</i>
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1830

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Bensalem A.M.E. Church of Bridgewater, located in Bucks County, is said to be one of the oldest Negro churches in Amercia, dating back to 1820 A.D. Bensalem was founded by The Reverend James Miller under the supervision of Richard Allen, founder of African Methodism and the first African Methodist Episcopal church in America in the city of Philadelphia.

Four Negro families (The Briggs, Bosleys, Fraizers and Mounts) were among the original settlers in the Bucks County area and the first members of the Bensalem A.M.E. Church. Under the astute guidance and pastorate of the Reverend John Butler, a Sabbath School was established in 1848. Bensalem A.M.E. Church is still located in the same spot on which it was originally founded.

In 1896, the original building was remodeled during the pastorate of the Reverend George W. Gibbs. At that particular time, fifty different pastors were recorded as having served at this point. There is a burial ground connected with the church where most all of the old members are interred.

The last oldest member was the late Mr. LeRoy Allen, who was a member for 67 years and was honored by the Philadelphia Conference, with 16 ministers and presiding elders in attendance at his funeral rites when he died in October 1931. There are 8 direct descendants of the original membership in the Church, who are still living here.

The Church for a time, only had services during the summer months. Services are now held the year round and serves the community of Bridgewater, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

CHURCH RECORDS

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .46

Quadrangle name Beverly, Pennsylvania-New Jersey

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	8	5	0	6	4	8	0	4	4	3	8	5	6	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Starting at a point in center of Bridgewater Road moving southeast for 422.36 feet to point, then moving west 29.14 feet, then northwest 402.06 feet then east for 92.40 feet to starting point.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Reverend Jeane B. Williams, Pastor

organization Bensalem A.M.E. Church

date

street & number 251 Highland Avenue

telephone 215-688-3763

city or town Wayne

state Pennsylvania

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Ed Weintraub, Director

title Office of Historic Preservation

date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

Send 9/4/80

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Little Jerusalem (Ben Salem) A.M.E. Church

Bucks County
Continuation sheet

Item number 7 & 8

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What was the nature or extent of removals to the building?

Original records for the church and any changes were not kept. Because of persecution and a disagreement with Richard Allen records were not submitted to the A.M.E. Conference. Therefore, other than visual inspection, no records of these changes remain.

What was the nature and extent of Black settlement in Bucks County?

Little Jerusalem was the only Black church in Bensalem Township during the period 1820-1930. Most Blacks living in Bensalem Township worshipped here and held their social and religious activities at this church. A Sabbath School was established at the church in 1848 so area Blacks could learn to read and write. The extent of the Black population in Bucks County during the nineteenth century is not known.

Richard Allen, as the first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Connection, supervised the establishment of this congregation. He also built the pulpit presently located in the sanctuary of the church.

The church is still a part of the AME Connection. The adjacent graveyard contains many tombstones marking the resting place of members of the 19th century congregation.

Local oral history indicates the congregation was founded in 1820 and the church built in 1830.

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Little Jerusalem A.M.E. Church, Bucks County

Continuation sheet

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Battle, J.H.ed. History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia:
A.Warner and Co., 1887, p.352.

Davis, William W.H. History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Pipersville,
Pa.: A.E.Lear, Inc., 1905., p. 297, 300-5.

1810 Census of Bucks County: Free Blacks in County- 783.

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Continuation sheet

Item number

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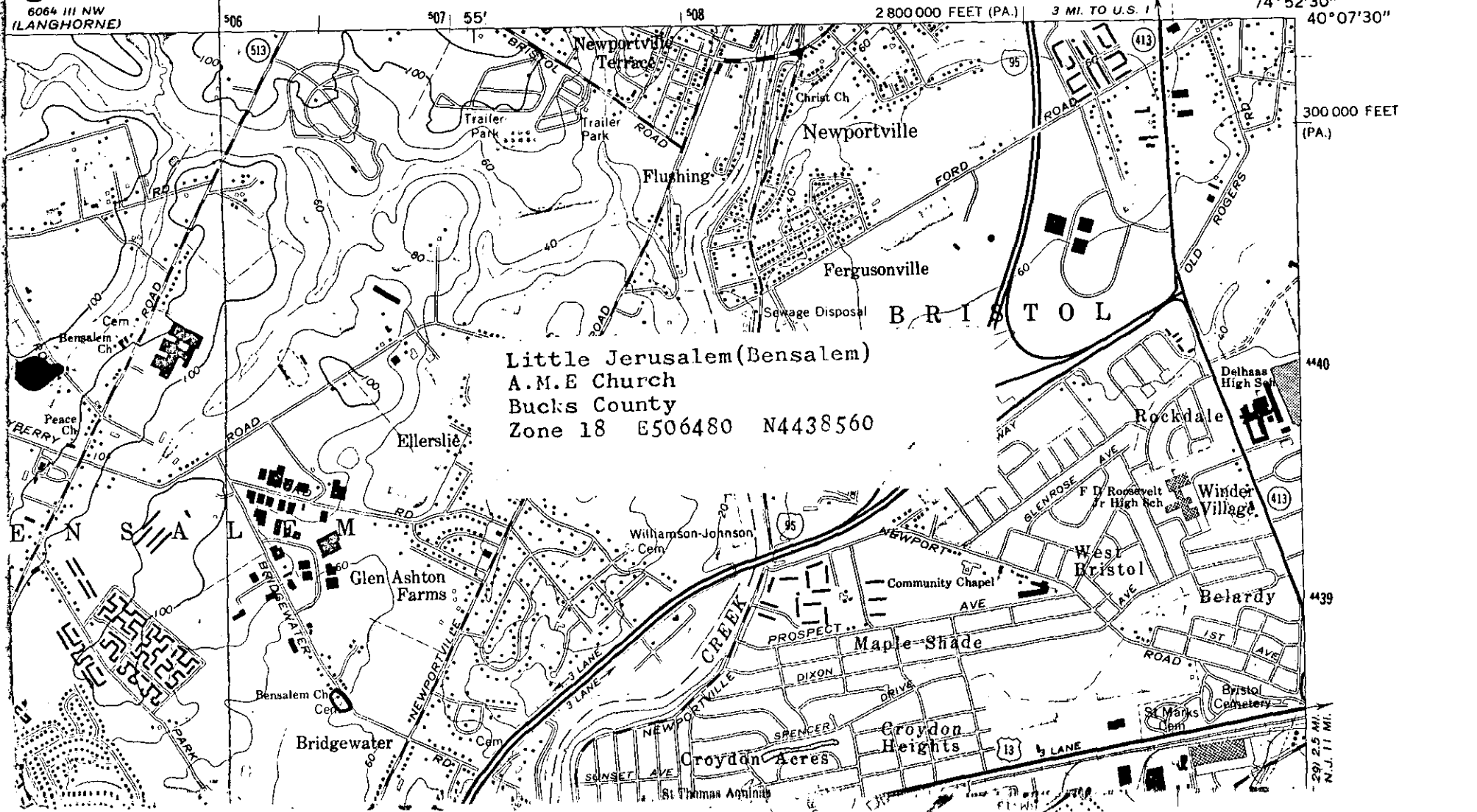
date entered

This early Black church while altered and cosmetically covered with asbestos siding still possesses original materials and workmanship. Beneath the siding all of the heavy shiplap wooden siding with handcut nail is present. Even the early windows remain under later slit window coverings. The interior of the church is 90% intact and retains its original woodwork and hardware. No layout or floorplan changes were ever made to the structure. This building has excellent restoration potential because of its remaining features. Ben Salem will be restored meticulously using early photos and physical investigations to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards of Rehabilitation.

BEVERLY QUADRANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA-NEW JERSEY
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

606 III NE
(TRENTON WEST)

6064 III NW
(LANGHORNE)



Little Jerusalem (Bensalem)
A.M.E Church
Bucks County
Zone 18 E506480 N4438560

2 800 000 FEET (PA.) 3 MI. TO U.S. 1

74° 52' 30" 40° 07' 30"

300 000 FEET (PA.)

440

439

29.25 MI. N.J. 11 MI.