D.C. HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

APPLICATION FOR
HISTORIC LANDMARK

APPLICATION TO:

__X__ Designate
_____ Rescind
_____ Amend

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Property Name: First African New Church
Address: Washington, DC 20001-5006
Square & Lot Number: Square 358, Lots 0802, 0007, and 0008.
Present Owner: Joyce Silberstang, Union Court Development, LLC.
Original Use: Religious
Present Use: Vacant
Date of Construction: 1887-1895
Date of Major Alteration: 1896
Architect: Pelz, Paul J.
Architectural Style/Period: Late Victorian, Second Empire

NAME OF APPLICANT: Cardozo-Shaw Neighborhood Association
(If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purpose is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.)

Address and Telephone of Applicant:
Cardozo-Shaw Neighborhood Association
Bryan Martin Firvida, President
P.O. Box 72784
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 588-5808

Researched and Written by:
Paul K. Williams
Kelsey & Associates, Inc.
1605 7th Street, N.W., Suites 7 & 8
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 462-3389

DATE: March 5, 2003

SIGNATURE: [Signature]
310.21 A STATEMENT OF THE PREHISTORIC, HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL AND/OR CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION:

The large church structure at 2105-2107 10th Street is significant both for its architectural history, having been designed by well known architect Paul J. Pelz, and for its social history, as a structure and site that has been continually occupied and owned by an African American religious congregation from 1879 to 2002. The original congregation had been founded by a congregation consisting of freed slaves and black Civil War officers and their dependants from nearby Fort Campbell, located at 6th and Florida Avenue. As such, this structure stands as one of only a few church buildings exclusively owned by an African American congregation throughout its entire history.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE STRUCTURE & RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS

The history of the religious building at 2105-2107 10th Street is unusual from most church structures constructed in Washington. Its current building has evolved from a major addition and substantial alteration in 1896 to an existing, one story brick building that had been constructed without a building permit sometime between 1887 and 1895. In 1896, it was significantly expanded by its congregation with the addition of a large sanctuary on the third floor and a large corner tower, designed by well-known architect Paul J. Pelz, creating the church building that remains to this date.

Throughout the years, the building has been used by a large variety of Church congregations as a place of worship. The adjacent corner lot at 10th and V Street was the site of a wood frame church for many years prior to the brick one story church building that formed the basis for the structure that remains today. Its origins can be traced to the Northwest corner of Vermont and T Streets, N.W., in 1878, when the Abyssinian Baptist Church was first listed in the City Directory. At the time, Reverend Henry Bailey was in charge of the small congregation that worshiped in a one story, frame church building. According to the directory that year, Reverend Bailey lived at 1818 Vermont Avenue, and the year later at 1814 Vermont Avenue. Apparently an assistant pastor included Reverend W. Waring who then lived at 1930 12th Street, N.W. The church was classified as "miscellaneous-colored" in the year city directories.

However, on March 14, 1879, the Abyssinian Baptist Church obtained a permit numbered 1879 to move their frame building to the “corner of 10th and V Street, N.W.” The cost of this move was estimated at $50.00. It is assumed that the church moved its church due to the increase of land value at Vermont and T Streets, as several large homes were constructed that year and the year prior across the street, and to gain a larger lot at 10th and V. Early maps show the new location of the frame church resting directly on the corner of 10th and V Streets, with a large rear yard facing 10th Street and Union Court alley, where two brick dwellings would later be erected. Its congregation stemmed from freed slaves, black Washington residents, and Civil War soldiers and their dependants that had been stationed at nearby Fort Campbell at 6th and Florida Avenue.

Along with the move came a name change for the church, and possibly new ownership. The 1881 City Directory lists the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church at 10th and V Street, N.W. It was organized in 1880. The pastor in attendance was listed as Reverend Peter C. Louis. Services were held at 11 am and 7:30 pm, with Sunday school at 3 pm. City Directories classify the church as “Methodist Episcopal-Colored.” Trinity would remain at the 10th street address until 1892 when the church was renamed “Zion.” On March 28, 1882, the church obtained a permit numbered 966 to “repair building where damaged by fire.” Washington DC Fire Department records indicate that a fire had occurred on January 30, 1882 that had caused an estimated damage of $250.00. The actual estimation of repairs to the church in the permit was $130.00.

Just a year later, in a letter dated March 5, 1883, the Trinity “Independent” Methodist Church requested repairs from city officials. They “desired to remove the flat felt roof and first run a comb roof thus and cover it with tin. We further desire to build a vestibule on the outside front, ten feet across by as many feet deep as you can
possible allow towards V Street and we will cover it also with tin. The frame will need to be screwed up and leveled after its brick foundation, all of which we beg you to look into careful consideration and oblige us to the very best of your ability according to the laws of the District of Columbia governing such improvements.” They estimated the cost of their repairs as $350.00.

An 1887 Baist map shows the square-shaped, wood frame building at the corner of 10th and V Street, with a vacant rear yard facing the Union Court alley (where the present day, brick church structure stands today). The lot at the time measured 25 by 95 feet, and comprised all of lot 7 and 8 on the Square. At the time, the lots along Union Court alley remained devoid of development, although they had been subdivided into lots suitable for individual, small scale, residential development. Sometime between 1887 and 1896, a one story, brick church building was erected at the rear of the lot, apparently without a building permit. It is likely that the older wood frame building was no longer viable for maintenance, and a replacement building constructed at the rear of the lots, facing 10th Street, while the congregation continued to worship in the older structure. The brick, one story building was mentioned in an expansion permit dated 1896, when the church was significantly added onto to create what is the present day building at 2105-2107 10th Street.

City Directories indicate a change in name beginning in 1892 from Trinity Methodist to Zion Church. The Zion Church had been organized in 1883 by Reverend Peter C. Louis, the same pastor as Trinity, according to the 1892 City Directory. Reverend Louis lived close-by at 2100 Vermont Avenue and he provided services from 11 to 7:30 pm. Sunday School was held at 3 in the afternoon. The church remained classified as “Methodist Episcopal-Colored” and named “Zion” through 1894.

In 1894, the church changed ownership again, this time to the “First Colored Society of New Jerusalem.” They too utilized the building as a church, and applied on November 17, 1894 to “replace portions of weather boarding upon sides and rear of said premises — to replace part of sill on side, and to repair front steps of said premises.” They estimated the cost of replacement as $40.00.

By 1896, however, the church had changed ownership again, this time to the First African New Church Society, which listed their address as “10th c V NW” in the year city directories, which classified the church as “Swedenborgian-Colored” in the church directory. That organization obtained a permit dated January 15, 1896 to significantly expand a pre-existing brick structure on the site that had been built without a building permit sometime after 1887, when it does not appear on a Baist map. Permit numbered 994 indicated that they had hired architect Paul J. Pelz to design an upper floor atop an existing brick structure and to design a corner tower. The alteration resulted in the form of the church building seen today, and serves to explain the presence of a large sanctuary on the raised, second floor, as well as a far more grand and carefully designed larger sanctuary on the top floor of the building. The cost of the addition was estimated at $6,500.00.

ARCHITECT PAUL J. PELZ

Paul Johann Pelz (1841-1918), the son of Eduard Ludwig and Henrietta (Helfensrieder) Pelz, was born in Germany. His father went to New York in 1851 while Paul remained in Germany with his mother until his education was completed. After joining his father in Hoboken, N.J. in 1858, Paul was apprenticed to a New York architect, Detlef Lienau. By 1864, Pelz had become the chief draftsman for the firm. Two years later, he left Lienau’s office and came to Washington, D.C. where he eventually became chief draftsman of the U.S. Lighthouse Board.

In 1873, Pelz and John L. Smithmeyer, another Washington architect, won a competition for the design of the Library of Congress. Smithmeyer had been born in Austria in 1832. Thirteen years later, Congress authorized construction of the library. Smithmeyer was appointed architect of the project, but was removed after a disagreement over the choice of construction materials. Pelz was then retained by Gen. Thomas L. Casey, Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, to carry out the original design. The 1880 census reveals that Pelz lived with his wife Louise and their two
children on Fayette Street (today 35th Street) in Georgetown. Their children included Karl, who had been born in 1870, and Beatrice, who had been born in 1876. His father-in-law Henry Kipp and sister-in-law Clara Kipp also resided with the family, along with a black servant named William Smallnod and a white servant named Susan Wood.

Other buildings designed by Smithmeyer and Pelz included: the Academic Building, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Army and Naval Hospital, Hot Springs, Ark.; Carnegie Library and Music Hall, Allegheny, Pa.; Administration Building at the Clinic Hospital, University of Virginia; and the Chamberlain Hotel, Fort Monroe, Va. Independently, Mr. Pelz planned a number of residences and office buildings in Washington, including the McGill Building once located at 9th and C Streets, N.W. (destroyed in 1973).

For an office, Pelz rented room 10 in the Riggs Bank Building at 1503 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Pelz was married twice. His first wife, Louise Dorothea Hoboken, N.J., died in 1894 - leaving two children: Karl and Beatrice. On February 23, 1895, Pelz married Mrs. Mary Eastbourne (Riter) Meem.

BUILDING HISTORY AND RELIGIOUS USE 1896-PRESENT

The First African New Church Society continued to utilize the newly configured structure from the time it was altered in 1896, when the City Directory revealed that it housed the “New Jerusalem Church.” New Jerusalem had been founded in 1896, though several City Directories claim earlier dates. First located on North Capital near B Street, the congregation of New Jerusalem was led by Reverend Jabez Fox in beginning in 1885. Reverend Fox lived at 320 Indiana Avenue N.W., along with William Steele Sexton. The church was classified as “Swedenborgian-Colored.” The next record of New Jerusalem appeared in 1891, when Reverend Frank Sewall presided over the congregation. At this time the congregation met at 1801 Massachusetts Avenue N.W. The City Directory entry states that Reverend Frank Sewall was the temporary pastor. Reverend Sewall lived at 1618 Riggs Place at the time.

When the congregation moved in 1898 to the church at 2105-2107 10th Street, a permanent pastor was still absent. Services were conducted from 10 am to 2, and then again at 8 pm. Sunday is at 3:15. The 1899-1900 tax assessment indicates that the church property was then valued at $6,544: $5,000 assessed to the building and the remainder toward the land. At the time, the ownership was recorded as “Christian A. E. Spamer & others,” likely a trustee of the church.

By 1902, Reverend James E. Thomas has taken over services and remains pastor until 1906, when the church can no longer be traced as New Jerusalem. On May 4, 1905, the church was purchased by the People’s Seventh Day Adventist Church. That organization paid a Mr. and Mrs. Lewis G. Sheafe $10,000 for both the property and building. He had purchased it on April 25, 1905 for an undisclosed sum from Christian A. E. Spamer, a widower.

Up until 1904, no listings for “Seventh Day Adventists” were included in City Directories. The first church to appear in the directories was listed that year as a Seventh Day Adventist Church, was one ministered by Reverend Lewis C. Sheafe. His congregation then met on 8th Street, between F and G Streets N.E. He apparently personally purchased the building at 2105-2107 10th Street, and was reimbursed from his congregation. Reverend Sheafe was then residing at 83 L Street N.W. It is interesting to note that the New Jerusalem Church at 2107 10th Street changes its listing from “Swedenborgian-Colored” to “Colored-Seventh Day” just before the sale in 1905.

The Peoples Seventh Day Adventist Church had been organized in 1903 by Reverend Lewis C. Sheafe. Just prior to moving into 2105-2107 10th Street, his congregation met at The United Order of True Reformers Building close by at 1200 U Street (today an individual NR landmark). After their move to 2105-2107 10th Street, Reverend Sheafe held services on the Sabbath (Saturday) from 10 am to 11:30 am, with prayer meetings on Wednesdays at 7:30 pm. The 1908 City Directory entry listed the church under “Seventh Day Adventist-Colored.” Reverend Sheafe was then listed as a renter at 2021 8th Street at the time. He moved to 1223 S Street NW with his wife, Mrs. Lucy P. Sheafe, by 1914.
According to the 1920 Census, Reverend Sheafe, then 61 years of age, became a boarder at the house of Thomas and Jennie Boyd, located at 529 U Street NW. Along with the Boyd family, and various other roomers, Reverend Sheafe lives with a relation named Doris E. Sheafe, aged 6. His wife was not enumerated at the time. The census shows that Reverend Sheafe was 61, married, and his race was registered as mulatto. He was a native of Maryland, as were his parents. By 1922, Reverend Sheafe moved to 905 R Street, N.W.

During the early 1920s, City Directories change, no longer delegating a separate section for church or clergy. Due to this alteration, information concerning services and clergy is limited. However, the Church at 2105-2107 10th Street remains named “Peoples Seventh Day Adventist Church” until the late 1920s. Street address searches indicate that 2105-2107 10th Street had been renamed “Peoples Seventh Day Baptist Church” beginning in the early 1930s. It was slightly altered in 1937 to “Peoples Seventh Day Baptist Independent Church.”

Interestingly, a permit dated July 7, 1921 indicates that the church desired to build an outside meeting space “to be a permanent, open, one story pavilion, to conduct religious services” on the empty lot to the south that had been formerly occupied by the one story frame church. The cost of the structure was estimated at $2,300. It had been designed by architect John B. Tyrrell, and was to be constructed by J. J. Plamenborn.

A Directory of Churches and Religious Organizations in the District of Columbia, published in 1939, shows that Reverend Clayton O. Mason acted as pastor for People's Seventh Day Baptist Church. Reverend Mason took up residence at 1214 East Howard Road, S.E. The congregation obtained a repair permit on April 22, 1940 to repair the slate and tin roof of the church building at an estimated cost of $150.00.

The 1943 City Directory shows the names of more than one congregation practicing at 2101-07 10th Street N.W. They included People's Seventh Day Baptist Independent Church, Temple Baptist Church, Holy Trinity Apostolic Church, and Rising Star Baptist Church.

The 1946 entry reveals the introduction of a new pastor, Reverend Luther W. Chrichlow, to the People's Seventh Day Baptist Church. He would remain pastor until 1956. At this time of his employment, Reverend Chrichlow resided at 1455 W Street N.W., along with his wife Martha A. Chrichlow. She indicated in the directories that she was a teacher at a public school. His appointment was mentioned in the Washington Afro-American on July 27, 1946 along with a photograph. He had been born in Yazoo City, Mississippi, and held an A.B. degree from Howard University. He was also a graduate of Alfred University in New York State, and just prior to his employment had returned from the British West Indies where he and his wife had spent several years as missionaries. From 1944 to 1946, he had served as a U.S. Army chaplain, with 23 months of overseas duty in the Pacific Theatre.

The Peoples Seventh Baptist Independent Church was listed again at the address in the 1960 City Directory, but no pastors or clergy were recorded. The church changed to Morning Light Baptist Church in 1964, but is registered as “Vacant” in 1970, shortly after racial riots devastated the neighborhood and many other parts of Washington. Envelopes found at the church reveal the name “True Deliverance Church of God” at the location in 1971, with pastor Rev. Albert Venson. At the time, the church functioned as a center for clothing distribution to the homeless. The church building itself apparently does not reopen for services until 1982.

Pentecost Baptist Church becomes the new name and is led by Reverend Howard Walter Scott and his mother, Reverend Thelma W. Scott. Both lived at 616 14th Street, N.E. Reverend Thelma Scott's other children played active roles in the church as well; Walter L. Scott was one of the first members of the church, and daughter Dorothea Lewis was Senior Deaconess (Walter's funeral was held in the church on July 1, 1990). Jean Scott was the pianist and music director. Pentecost Baptist Church was abandoned for the last time between 1992 and 1993.
UNION COURT HISTORY

Unfortunately, little is known about the adjoining alley today coined Union Court. It is shown as a mostly vacant alley in an 1887 Baist map of the Square, with only eight small dwellings extant on the street. The 1880 census of the alley reveals that the entire alley was inhabited by black residents with many family members in each dwelling: from two to seven individuals in each small house. Their jobs ranged from washerwoman, laborer, to servant. Two small brick dwellings were constructed at "2105 and 2107 alley between V & W Street & 9th and 10th" following a permit issued June 7, 1889 to H. W. Dowling. Located on lots 51 and 52, they were to measure just 12 and one half feet wide by 30 feet deep. The cost to construct both homes was estimated at just $1,000.00. The Congressional Committee on the District of Columbia included reference of Union Court alley in a report entered into the record on April 18, 1918. It listed six owners of property in the alley, all of whom apparently rented the dwellings or small shops. They included Edward P. Swartz, Anderson D. Powell, James A. Toomey, Harry Norment, and Sarah M. Wescott.

EARLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES IN WASHINGTON

Two African American churches existed in Washington as early as 1820, the Israel on Capitol Hill and the Mt. Zion in Georgetown, both Methodist. By 1870, the total number of black churches in the District of Columbia had risen to twenty-three; twenty in Washington, as listed in Boyd's directory of 1870, and three in Georgetown: Mt. Zion, Ebenezer, and Colored First Baptist.

The saga of blacks churches in Washington is not always a pleasant one. Although whites and slaves customarily worshipped together in the white man's church, early tolerance and integration gradually changed to prejudice and segregation. There are, of course, exceptions to white prejudice. At the same time, Blacks wanted to form their own churches because newly won freedom seemed to dictate it.

A New Englander wrote in 1837:

It is a notorious and immemorial custom of New England and other parts of our land, to assign certain seats, generally in an obscure corner of the gallery, to the colored people...and whole societies have been thrown into excitement, because colored men have purchased pews.

It's true that blacks occupied the galleries, or balconies, in most Washington churches. Rev. Benjamin Bittinger could recall in 1910 that many years before, in the old Bridge Street Presbyterian Church, the colored had occupied the west gallery. Up to 1820, "the colored members Occupied the galleries and entered heavily into all the services" of Ebenezer Methodist Church on Capitol Hill. Then dissident Black members of this congregation separated to form the Israel Bethel A.M.E Church. The remaining blacks in the Ebenezer congregation gained a separate place of worship in 1838. In 1860 'Colored Ebenezer,' as it was known, won its independence from white supervision and is today called Ebenezer United Methodist Church in southeast Washington.

The slavery issue did, unfortunately, divide many white churches. According to historian Constance Green, no church in Washington took an official anti-slavery position in the sense of taking political action. Conservatism characterized even the Quakers, the Congregationalists, and the Unitarians. No church actually split over the issue before the Civil War, but tensions ran high. Southern tempers flared over enforced Northern stances. For example, the rector of Ascension Episcopal Church resisted his bishop's order to pray in thanks giving for Union victories; his reward was seizure of the church for use as a Union hospital. As of 1851, only one church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, stood squarely for Southern values. No Presbyterian church of Southern persuasion was ever organized. And although you would expect a Northern church like the Congregational to be weighted with abolitionists, this same church was ravaged by a post-war controversy over admitting three blacks as members. The conflict ended with the conservatives' ouster, and formation of the second Congregational church in Washington.
Even the Sunday schools were not immune to racial distinctions. In 1819, the First Baptist Church started the first Sunday school in Washington. As a “union” school, teachers represented all denominations, presumably Protestant, and “the colored children were also admitted to a separate part of the school and were instructed and cared for.” The First Baptist, Christ Church Episcopal, and First Unitarian were among the first churches to admit blacks “on equal terms.”

In 1827, the pastor at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Georgetown founded the first seminary for colored girls, while he himself taught the colored boys. As the Catholic Church forbids discrimination, active colored laity were always a part of Holy Trinity life. They were incorporated into the normal parish life of worship and education. Additionally, “the Catholic Church was free in all of its privileges to all persons regardless of color” making it unnecessary for blacks to organize separately until their new post-war status caused the hierarchy to think it wise to establish some churches especially for them.

Because of his anti-slavery sentiment, St. John's Lafayette Square denied membership to future Secretary of State William H. Seward when he arrived in Washington about 1850. To compound the “problem,” his wife supported the Miner School for colored children. Trinity Episcopal Church did, however, accept Seward, placing pressure on St. John’s to eventually do the same.

Despite truly Christian motives on the part of some whites, unfortunately not all could cope and general dissension began, says historian William Hazard Williams, over blacks waiting to sit in the main sanctuary of white churches, rather than at the rear or in the galleries. The result was the orderly formation of black Sunday schools and churches beginning in 1820; interestingly, that years black population nearly equaled the number of slaves. Nat Turner’s slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831 could have accelerated the movement, too: frightened white churches in Washington, excluding the Catholic, actually expelled black members after this, Williams maintains.

Israel Bethel, Nineteenth Street Colored Baptist and Fifteenth Street Presbyterian were self-sustaining elements of the Washington black community before the Civil War. The Nineteenth Street Baptist Church gained its independence in 1839, after just six years of white control. Following the war, St. Augustine Catholic, St. Mary’s Episcopal, and the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer figured as the first black churches of these denominations in Washington.

Rapid growth of black churches after the Civil War was probably due as much to white injustice as to black desire for self-reliance. Andrew Rothwell, a perceptive Baptist chronicler, wrote in 1867 that although nearly all the white Baptist churches in the city counted a small number of blacks, “yet for the most part they prefer to connect themselves with their organizations.” He went on to say that black meeting houses were “entirely inadequate to the accommodation of the large numbers of persons that desire to attend them” and that a worthy cause for a knowing philanthropist would be “assistance...to these brethren in enabling them to extend and improve their houses of worship.”

In nineteenth century Washington, churches played an important part in community life. As inspiring as the tenacity of individual churches is the ecumenical spirit in which helped them together to survive and thrive. A prime example of good will was the frequency with which established Parishes shared their facilities with others less advantaged. The earliest instance found Lutherans in Georgetown along Presbyterian minister Balch to use the church for the first Presbyterian service in the District of Columbia in 1779. That same year Georgetown Lutherans engaged an Episcopal minister because Lutheran clergymen were scarce. When Dr. Balch returned to Georgetown the following year to start a Presbyterian church, he in turn opened his doors to other denominations, such as the Episcopalians of Georgetown, who heard Rev. Walter Dulany Addison of Prince George’s County preach there in 1794. “Union,” or interfaith, prayer meetings were commonly held at different Georgetown churches.
Baptists and Presbyterians helped each other greatly. In 1823, Dr. James Laurie of the F Street Presbyterian Church invited the First Baptist Church to hold the Baptist Triennial Convention at the Presbyterians' spacious Willard Hall at 14th and F Streets. Presbyterians once again extended aid to Baptists about 1843, offering the First Presbyterian Church for meetings while the E Street Baptist Church was being built. The E Street Baptist returned the kindness in 1859, then in 1862, when the steeple of the First Baptist Church, 13th Street, fell and destroyed the roof, the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church accommodated Parishioners from both churches in its recently completed structure, a stone's throw from the Baptist disaster.

A unique instance of congregational understanding occurred in the years 1897-1898. While the new Jewish temple was being built for the Washington Hebrew Congregation on 8th Street between H and I Streets, N.W., the First Congregational Church and the Carroll Institute, a Catholic organization adjoining St. Patrick's Church, both about three blocks away, donated space for Hebrew services. There is evidence of cooperation in other areas besides church sharing, namely, charitable activity. The union Sunday school started by the Baptists in 1819 comprised teachers from all faiths. By the 1840s, however, various churches had formed their own Sunday schools, probably because, as Methodists discovered, their views clashed with those of the union teachers. But happily, Sunday schools from all over the city gathered together annually, the Fourth of July as a favorite date for interfaith gathering. The National Intelligencer of May 25, 1855 lists the Sunday schools which participated in a parade and meeting at the Smithsonian Institution. In 1857, the women of all the churches sponsored a union festival to raise money for the YMCA.

By the Civil War, Washington seethed with humanity: soldiers, military families, transient poor, gamblers, prostitutes, and freed slaves. Most of the churches responded to so many needs by converting to Union hospitals - Holy Trinity Catholic, First Unitarian, and Epiphany Episcopal, to name a few. Others mounted relief efforts through organizations like St. Ann's Orphan Asylum (founded 1860) and Providence Hospital (1861). St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum (1825), St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum (1855), and the Young Men's Christian Association continued to operate.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT

In February of 1871, Congress passed a bill that established a new Territorial Government for the District of Columbia; in short order, the new government established a Board of Public Works to undertake a massive program to modernize the city. As part of an expenditure that ultimately neared $20 million, many of Washington's formerly primitive streets were graded, paved, and provided with sewage systems. By 1872, U Street and both 14th and 11th Streets were paved with stone, providing easy transportation to undeveloped areas within the city limits. Although this city government ultimately failed due to severe corruption, the results of the building improvement campaign had a lasting impact on the development of the neighborhoods surrounding the emerging U Street Corridor.

Following the Civil War, this new neighborhood attracted individuals in a wide range of professions, and was already emerging as racially diverse. Census records from 1880 reveal that blacks, whites, and mulattos were often found intermixed throughout the neighborhood, although African-American residents tended to be clustered in groups of labor-class dwellings farther away from the improved streets and trolley lines. Homes that were first built along U Street in the 1870s and 1880s were quickly adapted into businesses after it became clear that the corridor was emerging as a commercial center for the community. The children below were captured at 10th and S Street.

By 1882 the city's streetcar system was expanded to include much of the neighborhood. Between 1880 and 1900 the area became fully developed, with rows of town homes and commercial buildings cropping up on every square. Many of the older wood-framed residences were replaced with more substantial and larger brick dwellings. The area continued to attract both blacks and whites of lower to middle income levels, remaining a socially, economically and racially diverse neighborhood until the beginning of the twentieth century. By the turn of the century, groups of professional and middle class whites had emerged in patterns of close proximity of the Streetcar
lines on 7th and 14th Streets, with African-American residents living somewhat farther away from the improved streets and trolley lines.

However, social forces and racial segregation legislation enacted during the first few decades of the twentieth century began to drive shifts in the diversity of the neighborhood, until it became a predominantly African-American middle income area. The various reforms and laws aimed at protecting the African-American population in Washington during Reconstruction were eventually ignored and then legally dropped from the city's legal code in 1901. As racial hostility and segregation increased in downtown sections of the city around this time, many blacks relocated to the neighborhood; at the same time, suburban areas outside the city were beginning to draw the white population away from the intermixed neighborhoods of the inner city. This exodus, combined with restrictive covenants that barred African-Americans from other parts of the city, created a neighborhood surrounding U Street that was increasingly exclusive of whites.

During this period, an entertainment and commercial center began to emerge along U Street, with African-American leaders at the time promoting racial solidarity and self-sufficiency. One of the largest African-American events on the street was the annual Easter Parade, adding to numerous upper class activities such as debutante balls and social organizations’ formal dinners being held in many of the important buildings along the street.

The vitality of the neighborhood was internationally recognized at the American Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition of 1900, and a display entitled “Negro homes, churches, and business in Washington, DC” featured the row of houses one block north on 11th Street (1900 block, even side). Just two years later, the United Order of True Reformers hired black architect John Lankford to design a towering, multi-use building at 1200 U Street to house their benevolent society and offer large meeting rooms for neighborhood society meetings and dinners. The United Order of True Reformers, a society of former freed slaves, at one point was the largest banking institution in the country, with over 10,000 depositors all along the mid-Atlantic coast.

In addition to the large residential population, African-American churches, schools, businesses, and fraternal organizations did much to support and promote the neighborhood during this time. Standing in the shadow of Howard University, founded in 1866, the first African-American parochial school was built in 1880 on Vermont Avenue at U Street. It was known as the Garnet School, named after prominent abolitionist Henry Highland Garnet. Around the turn of the century, numerous African-American churches had established themselves in the vicinity; these included the First African New Church at 2105 10th Street and the Berean Baptist Church at 2033 11th Street (1901), as well as a number of churches that evolved from chapels built in Civil War encampments on the land during the war, including Lincoln Temple at 10th and S, and Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Many articles and news features focused on the activities taking place throughout the U Street corridor, and were recorded in Washington’s preeminent African-American newspaper, The Washington Bee. Its long-term editor Calvin Chase and such organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) served as catalysts to continue the neighborhood’s “City within a City” mentality.

In 1913, John Whitelaw Lewis founded the Industrial Savings Bank at 11th and U Streets to serve the financial needs of the growing community. The Prince Hall Masonic Temple at 1000 U Street was built in 1922 to the design of black architect Albert Cassell, and has landmark status in both the DC and National Registers of Historic Places, as is the first YMCA built by and for blacks, the large Anthony Bowen YMCA at 1816 12th Street, built between 1908 and 1912.

As a result of this building and development activity, the U Street corridor evolved into an area where African-American business and entertainment establishments thrived. The Census shows that in the mid 1880s, only 15 African-American-owned businesses were located in the surveyed neighborhood. By 1920, however, over 300 such businesses had been established, ranging from theaters, nightclubs, jazz clubs, billiard halls, and restaurants. U Street is legendary for having attracting entertainers such as Nat King Cole, Pearl Bailey, "Jelly Roll” Morton, Ray Charles,
Madame Evanti and Duke Ellington. Evanti, a preeminent opera singer famous throughout the world, lived at 1910 Vermont Ave., in a home now designated a National Historic Landmark. Relatives of Duke Ellington owned homes at 1805 13th Street and 1212 T Street, which brought the jazz legend frequently to the neighborhood. With this activity and promotion, U Street became known as the “Great Black Way,” the “Black Broadway,” and the “Black Man’s Connecticut Avenue.”

Smaller nickelodeon theaters such as the Minnehaha, built in 1909 at 1213 U Street (now Ben’s Chili Bowl), were replaced with larger entertainment facilities to accommodate crowds. The Lincoln Theater, built in 1921-23 at 1215 U Street, was considered by The Washington Bee as “perhaps the finest and largest theater for Colored people in the world.” Several of the supporting private and public jazz clubs were dispersed throughout the neighborhood. Its earlier companion, the Howard Theater at 620 T Street, was designed and built in 1910 by architect J. Edward Storck, and predated any black entertainment venue in Harlem. The basement of the Drug Store at 11th and U Streets offered a private club known as the Bohemian Caverns, which opened in 1926 and catered to elite African-Americans in a setting designed to replicate a cave. With African-American entertainers such as Duke Ellington barred from staying at downtown hotels during this time period, John Lewis, owner of Industrial Bank, commissioned the Whitelaw Hotel and Apartments to be built at the corner of 13th and T Streets in 1919, to the designs of black architect John Lankford.

Entertainment venues on U Street in the 1920’s and 1930’s included Oriental Gardens, Lincoln Colonnade, Murray’s Casino, Republic Gardens (at the same location as today’s nightclub by the same name), Boulevard Café, Crystal (later Bohemian) Caverns, Capitol City Ballroom, Hollywood Inn, the Dreamland Cabaret, and the Booker T, Howard, Lincoln, and Republic Theaters. Entertainers during this century that appeared on U Street have included Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis, Jr., Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Moms Mabley, Marian Anderson, Lens Home, Red Foxx, Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Fats Walker, Bessie Smith, Mills Brothers, and Count Basie. Later, clubs along the street continued to host the early performances of later legendary performers like Diana Ross and the Supremes, Aretha Franklin, and comedian Bill Cosby.

The U Street corridor continued to thrive as an African-American neighborhood, until the urban riots of the late 1960s caused many of the residents to move to the suburbs. Major race riots occurred at the intersection of 14th and U Streets in April of 1968, as riots tore through U Street, Shaw and Columbia Heights. The area fell into further decline, ironically, with the construction of the U Street/Cardozo Metro station along the corridor during the 1980s, as traffic was disrupted and residents displaced, causing most businesses located along the street to fail.

Beginning in the early 1990s and continuing to this day, the area has witnessed a dramatic revitalization (along with many of the neighboring residential areas), with many of the former abandoned homes and businesses being brought back to life with a new vitality. The racial diversity that once marked the area’s strength before the turn of the century has leapt back, with ethnic groups from all over the world taking up residence and establishing businesses along the corridor. Most of the area was historically surveyed and became a both a local and National Register historic district effective January 1, 1999.

Bohemian Caverns, erstwhile jazz club turned hotel then abandoned after the riots, re-opened in April 2000, with a fully re-built cavern interior in the basement and restaurant/jazz club on the upper floors. Its owner has set the trend of re-establishing U Street as a jazz center-of-gravity for the city of Washington and the mid-Atlantic region. Many other smaller clubs and jazz-themed restaurants have opened along U Street in its wake. Many other buildings and institutions have been reborn along the corridor: the Lincoln Theater is operated by the city and is home to some of Washington’s most cutting-edge film festivals and African-American cultural and heritage events; the True Reformer Building has been purchased by a foundation whose mission in part is to rebuild the inner city through historic preservation and promotion of the arts and education; the Freemason’s Hall is being renovated; and, the twin apartment buildings at 1328-1332 U Street were rescued from demolition by preservationists’ last-minute petitions and protests, and now house luxury apartments and a unique and thriving home furnishings business.
In 1998, after years of planning and a halting construction schedule, the African-American Civil War Memorial was opened to great fanfare at the eastern entrance to the U Street/Cardozo Metro station (which was renamed to include the name of the memorial); it memorializes over 200,000 blacks that fought for the Union during the Civil War, and attracts legions of visitors and tourists looking for their family name in much the same way the Vietnam War memorial does. In 1999, the Metro’s Green line was extended by two stations to connect with the outer branch of the line, shifting the U Street station’s status from terminus to “stop on the way,” bringing more traffic through, and greater familiarity with, the area. Several significant land improvement projects have been recently completed or are near completion, including the Lincoln Square condominiums at U Street between 11th and 12th Streets, and the demolition of the abandoned Children’s Hospital to make way for the Harrison Square luxury community.
310.22 IF PROPERTY IS PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION PRINCIPALLY FOR ITS ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE, A DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY, INCLUDING WHERE POSSIBLE ITS LOCATION AND PRESENT APPEARANCE:

The property located at 2105-2107 10th Street retains nearly all the architectural details and physical qualities historically associated with the property since its initial construction between 1887 and 1895, and the substantial addition by architect Paul J. Peltz in 1896.

The land parcel is part of Square 035, lot 0802, 0007, and 0008 in the Northwest quadrant of Washington DC. This parcel compromises the southwest corner of the Square, which is surrounded by V Street to the south, W Street to the north, 10th Street to the west, and both Vermont and Florida Avenues to the east. To the immediate north of the parcel is located an alley, coined Union Court. The surrounding streets of the Square are on the original city street plan for Washington, DC, a plan that has been attributed to architect Pierre L’Enfant.

Description and Relationship of Lots 802, 007 & 008

The rectangular parcel that is today Lots 0802, 0007, and 0008 covered by this nomination have been tied together historically since the original frame church building was moved to both lots 007 and 008 in 1879. Each of those lots then faced V Street and were 25 feet wide each, by 95 feet deep. The frame structure rested on both lots beginning in 1879 (see additional documentation 1.) Between 1887 and 1895, the congregation of the frame church built a brick church on the northern half of lots 007 and 008 (2105-2107 10th Street) while retaining the frame structure on the southern portion (see additional documentation 2.) When the brick church structure received a third floor sanctuary and tower addition and expansion in 1896, it was noted that the portions of lots 0007 and 0008 on which it resided had been renamed 0802. After the frame church was razed on lots 007 and 008, the brick church erected an outside sanctuary on the site, adjacent to the church. The three lots included in this nomination have been owned by church occupying 2105-2107 10th Street from 1879 to October 31, 2002.

Building Description

The church structure itself can be described as a simple gothic design with corner tower. The church appearance is largely the work of architect Paul J. Peltz, who was hired to add the third floor sanctuary and large corner tower in 1896 onto an existing one story raised basement building which was completely engulfed in Pelt’s design. The edifice facing 10th Street (west façade) is characterized by long narrow paired gothic windows with wooden sash windows. On the third floor level is a tripartite window under one large Gothic arch. The tower has similar treatment with gothic arches over the main entrance and on the second and third floors with a variety of paired windows. The north façade of the building (covered in ivy) features a large gothic arched stained glass window on the third floor. The south side of the church is a solid brick wall, with the exception of a fire escape door and stair. The east façade of the church is also mostly brick, with the exception of a paired Gothic arch window treatment on the third floor.

The interior of the structure features a raised basement that has been split into several small bathrooms and storage rooms. The tower serves as the stairwell, leading from the main entrance on the ground floor to the second floor, which is dominated by a large rectangular sanctuary (likely the original sanctuary in the one story building before 1896). It is entered by twin wood paneled doors, and features simple wood moldings and a somewhat low ceiling. The remainder of the second floor is split into bathrooms, a pastor’s office, small kitchen, and storage rooms.

Continuing up the tower stairs to the third floor, one enters the complete floor that serves as a large sanctuary with an extensively wood paneled cathedral ceiling. A portion of the original one story building roof can be seen on the west façade. The sanctuary features a raised altar on the south end, and a stained glass window on the north end. It is largely an open floor plan.
310.24 A MAP SHOWING THE EXACT BOUNDARIES OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR
DESIGNATION; THE SQUARE AND LOT NUMBERS OR PARCEL NUMBER; SQUARE FOOTAGE OF
PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION; NORTH ARROW, AND CONTIGUOUS STREETS, IF
ANY:

2105-2107 10th Street, Northwest
Square 358, Lots 802, 0007, and 0068
Approximate Square Footage: 4,750
310.25 CONTEMPORARY GOOD QUALITY PHOTOGRAPH(S) OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED FOR 
DESIGNATION WHICH WILL PROVIDE A CLEAR AND ACCURATE VISUAL REPRESENTATION 
OF THE PROPERTY AND ITS SETTING; SPECIFY VIEW, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND LIST 
CREDITS, IF ANY. 8 X 10 GLOSSY PHOTOGRAPHS ARE PREFERRED. IN ADDITION, APPLICANT 
MAY SUPPLY SLIDES. APPLICANT SHALL SUBMIT TWO COPIES OF EACH PHOTOGRAPH OR 
SLIDE.

Summary of Contemporary Photographs


1. Front (East) Façade, camera facing west.
2. Front (East) Façade and north façade, camera facing southwest.
3. Front (East) Façade and south façade, with south vacant lot, camera facing northwest.
4. South façade, camera facing north.
5. Detail main door, Front Façade, camera facing west.
6. Detail tripartite window, Front (East) Façade, camera facing west.
7. Interior view of Main Door, Front (East Façade) and Stairwell leading to second floor hall.
8. Interior hallway, second floor, view into bathroom, camera facing east.
10. Interior kitchen area off second floor hallway, camera facing west.
11. Interior double doors off of second floor hallway, into second floor sanctuary, facing west.
12. Interior second floor sanctuary, camera facing southwest. (Note three bricked windows in west wall)
13. Interior second floor sanctuary, camera facing north.
15. Interior stairhall, leading from second floor to third floor sanctuary. Camera facing east
17. Interior third floor sanctuary, northeast corner, camera facing northeast.
18. Interior third floor sanctuary, north wall, showing stained glass window. Camera facing north.
19. Interior third floor sanctuary, east wall, camera facing east.
20. Interior third floor sanctuary, ceiling detail.
21. Interior stairwell, leading from third floor to tower, northeast corner of building.
22. Interior ceiling detail, northeast tower structure.
23. Interior basement room detail, camera facing west.
24. Interior basement room detail, camera facing south.

Summary of Additional Documentation

1. 1887 Baist Map, showing wood frame Church at 10th and V Street, N.W.
2. 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, showing brick church building at 2105-2107 10th Street, N.W.
3. Circa 1946-1956 Vintage Photograph of Services Sign. Sheldon Collection, Historical Society of 
   Washington.
4. Circa 1946-1956 Vintage Photograph of 2105-2107 10th Street, showing front (west facing façade). Sheldon 
   Collection, Historical Society of Washington.
5. Undated Vintage Photograph of 2105-2107 10th Street, showing front façade (west facing façade). Library of 
   Congress, LC-A7-5303/901065.
6. Washington Afro-American July 27, 1946 clipping on Rev. Luther Critchlow. Washingtoniana Division, 
   MLK Public Library.
7. Church Funeral Programe, Saturday, April 22, 1972. Owner's Archives
310.26 A LIST OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC AND OTHER SOURCES USED TO PREPARE THE APPLICATION:

Current Source Material


*District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites.* Historic Preservation Division, DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, 1990, with supplements.


**Period Source Material**


Washington Historical Society. *Vertical Files, Street Files, Photographic Index.*


Photo 1. Front Façade, camera facing west.
Additional Documentation 1. 1887 Baist Map, showing wood frame "Trinity" Church at 10th and V Street.
Additional Documentation 2. 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, showing *brick* church building at 2105-2107 10th Street.
PEOPLE'S
SEVENTH DAY
BAPTIST
CHURCH
ORGANIZED...1904
SERVICES
SABBATH SCHOOL 9:30 A.M
SABBATH WORSHIP 11:00 A.M
TUES. PRAYER SERVICE 7:30 P.M

REV. LUTHER W. CRICHLow
PASTOR
1455 W ST. N.W. DU. 3372


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Additional Documentation 4. Circa 1946-1956 Vintage Photograph of 2105-2107 10th Street, showing front (west facing façade). *Sheldon Collection, Historical Society of Washington*
New Minister Installed
WASHINGTON AFRO-AMERICAN
by Seventh Day Baptists
JUL 27 1946

The Rev. Luther W. Critchlow was installed Sunday as pastor of the People's Seventh Day Baptist Church. When Dean Abia J. C. Bond of the School of Theology, Alfred University, N.Y., was the speaker.

Born in Yazoo City, Miss., the Rev. Mr. Critchlow holds an A.B. degree from Howard University. He is a graduate of Alfred University and recently returned from the British West Indies, where he and his wife spent several years as missionaries.

Served in Pacific Theatre. From 1944 to 1946 he served as a U.S. Army chaplain, with 23 months of overseas duty in the Pacific theatre to his credit.

The guest speaker assured the new minister that in time of need

for spiritual help that Christ was ever present to give strength to the believer.

REV. LUTHER CRITCHLOW

"LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world. Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art GOD."

Psalm 90:1-2

Funeral Services Of

JANIE WILSON

Saturday, April 22, 1972
11:30 A.M.

TRUE DELIVERANCE CHURCH OF GOD
2107 Tenth Street, N.W.
Rev. Albert Venson, Sr., Pastor

INTERMENT
Lincoln Memorial Cemetery

Arranged by
Funeral Committee — Mrs. Minor - Mrs. Venson

Additional Documentation 7. Church Funeral Programme, Saturday, April 22, 1972. Peter Means Archives