**1 NAME**
Mount Zion Cemetery: (Methodist Episcopal Burying Grounds; Female Union Band Society Graveyard)

**2 LOCATION**
STREET & NUMBER
27th and Q Streets, N.W.

CITY, TOWN
Washington

VICINITY OF
Walter E. Fauntroy, District of Col.

STATE
District of Columbia

COUNTY
District of Columbia

CODE 001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

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<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
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<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>YES: UNRESTRICTED</td>
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**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME
(Continued on Form 10-300a)

STRFT & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER
Sixth and D Streets, N.W.

CITY, TOWN
Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE
District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites

DATE
May 21, 1975

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Joint District of Columbia/National Capital Planning Commission

CITY, TOWN
Washington

STATE
District of Columbia

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DESCRIPTION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mount Zion Cemetery occupies lots 802 and 803 in Square 1289 in the northeastern section of the Georgetown Historic District. It is located on Mill Road off 27th Street, just north of the intersection of 27th and Q Streets, N.W. The tract is polygonal in shape, approximately three acres in extent. It is divided almost equally on a north-south axis. The Female Union Band Society Graveyard (lot 802) is to the east; the old Methodist Episcopal Burying Ground (lot 803), to the west. The former is 66,500 square feet in area; the latter, 67,300 square feet. The cemetery is laid out principally on a gently sloping plateau which is at its highest point approximately 85' above Rock Creek. The land falls sharply away on three sides, descending to the banks of Rock Creek in the steeply undulating topography typical of the Rock Creek ravine. Old Lyons Mill on the far side of Rock Creek to Georgetown, ascends the declivity along the western boundary of the cemetery. It becomes 27th Street at the southwest corner of the cemetery. Though now abandoned, the old road bed, surfaced with wash gravel, still survives.

Oak Hill Cemetery, founded in 1849, lies to the west of this road. Mill Road, the original access road to the old Methodist Episcopal Burying Ground runs from the end of 27th Street approximately three quarters of the length of the southern boundary of the cemetery. Garages belonging to an apartment building on Q Street and two semi-detached, two-story brick residences are located on the south side of Mill Road. A large high rise apartment building complex, dating from 1939-1940, 2511 Q Street, lies to the southeast of the cemetery. The northern and most of the eastern boundaries of the cemetery abut Rock Creek Park. Originally the cemetery was bounded on the south by the Creek itself. In 1929 an 18,580 square foot parcel of land on the south bank of the Creek, now lot 801 in squares 1288-1289, was condemned for use as parkland.

Mount Zion Cemetery is not perpetually endowed and has not been properly maintained. There are no fences or entrance gates. There are no paths or roads. Many graves are sunken. Most headstones and other markers are tilted or fallen. Ancient wooden markers have decayed. Though the graves have apparently been laid out in rows, there are no plat books showing their location. Records are fragmentary and vague and deal only with twentieth century burials in the old Methodist Burying Ground. Until recently the entire cemetery was grown up in a thick woodland. Underbrush was so heavy that graves were difficult to locate or even reach. Volunteer workers under the direction of the Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation have now cleared trash, debris, ground cover, underbrush and all but the largest trees from the Methodist side of the Cemetery. They have recently been granted a court order to similarly clear the Female Union Band side. Tombstones have been recorded by volunteer workers from Western High School and Washington Technical Institute. All but the largest markers have been removed to facilitate grading the area and planting grass.

There are few large monuments in Mount Zion Cemetery. Most headstones are simple and modest. The earliest graves, located in the old Methodist Burying Ground section near Mill Road, date from the early years of the cemetery. Here marble grave covers seal brick underground vaults. There are a few fenced family plots of later origin.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)
The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Mount Zion Cemetery a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. Although cemeteries are not ordinarily considered eligible for the National Register, Mount Zion Cemetery meets the Criteria because it derives its primary significance from its historical importance. Mount Zion Cemetery's history and that of the generations of Blacks both free and slave interred therein uniquely convey the quality and thrust of Black life and evolving free Black culture in the District of Columbia from the earliest days of the city to the present. It is one of the few remaining physical reminders of the significant contributions of Black people to the development of Georgetown, which during the late nineteenth century was between one fourth and one third Black in population. Further study of Mt. Zion Cemetery is likely to yield information important in history. The Female Union Band Society Graveyard is a tangible reminder of a significant early commercial venture organized and successfully carried on by women. Although Mount Zion Cemetery is located within the boundaries of the Georgetown Historic District, a Category II Landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Places, its historical significance is sufficiently different from the qualities which qualified the Georgetown Historic District for the National Register to merit individual registration.

Mount Zion Cemetery is composed of two separate adjacent cemeteries—the old Methodist Burying Ground and the Female Union Band Society Graveyard—which almost equally occupy an approximately three acre wooded site overlooking Rock Creek Park. The land for the former was purchased in 1809; for the latter, in 1842. No fence separates the two properties and over the years they have come to be known in the community simply as the Mount Zion Cemetery.

The old Methodist Episcopal Burying Ground was purchased by Ebenezer Eliason on behalf of the trustees of the Dumbarton Street Methodist Episcopal Church (then known as the Montgomery Street M.E. Church) for $500 on October 13, 1808. The deed provided that the land be used as a burying ground and subdivided into "lots, lanes or alleys of such dimensions as they (the trustees) or the majority of them, in their judgement and discretion, shall think best and most convenient for the aforesaid purpose." The trustees were given authority to sell lots and out of the proceeds of such sales to enclose the burying ground either with a wall or a post and rail fence.

(Continued on Form 10-300a)
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Beard, Michael. MSS of a history of the Dumbarton Street Methodist Episcopal Church.

Brief for Appellant and Joint Appendix. Mount Zion Methodist Church, Appellant v. Unknown Heirs at Law, Devises and Alienees of Joseph Mason, Trustee, for

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.07+ acres 133,800 square feet

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORHTING

Square 1289, Lots 802 and 803

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 National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE Acting Director, Office of Housing and Community Development

DATE 6/25/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 8/6/75

DATE AUG 4 1975
4. Owner of Property -

Mr. Robert Cell, Chairman
Board of Trustees
Dumbarton Avenue United Methodist Church
3133 Dumbarton Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Mr. George H. Windsor
Mr. Robert T. Smith
Trustees
Female Union Band Society and Estate of Charles L. Norris
1915 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
7. Description - Continued

The appearance of Mount Zion Cemetery contrasts sharply with that of fashionable Oak Hill Cemetery where, on a neighboring ridge, can be seen obelisks and statuary and the elegant Van Ness mausoleum.
8. Significance - Continued

The membership of the Dumbarton Street M.E. Church was at this time almost fifty per cent Black, and included both free men and slaves. On October 21, 1809, the trustees of the Church received $41 for lots of $3 each to be laid out as a burying ground for the colored friends." These lots were paid for by Blacks—probably free Blacks. By 1822 a new section of the burying ground was opened up with lots now selling for $15. The earliest graves which survive today are those of white members of the congregation such as the Eliason family and the wife of Bishop Enoch George.

Apparently the burying ground lost popularity after neighboring Oak Hill Cemetery was chartered by Congress in 1849. Richard P. Jackson, writing in The Chronicles of Georgetown, D.C., published in 1878, reported "There is a disposition to sell this ground and apply the proceeds to other purposes, but this cannot be done. The best way is to turn it over to Mt. Zion Church, on condition that they keep up the fence and put the grounds in order." Mount Zion M.E. Church was formed of the Black members of the Dumbarton Street M.E. Church in 1816. In 1877 Mount Zion Methodist Church had applied for the use of the cemetery. A lease was drawn up in 1879, though not recorded until April 8, 1893. This lease gave Mt. Zion Church use of the burying ground for ninety-nine years. In return Mt. Zion agreed "...to make all needed improvements, fencing, roadways, walks, paths, planting of trees, and such other changes as may make the property suitable for their use and purposes."

The Female Union Band Society is a cooperative benevolent society whose members are pledged to assist one another in sickness and in death. It was founded by a group of free Black women circa 1842. The Constitution and By-Laws of the Society, published belatedly in 1859, pledged to each member assistance when sick— including the payment of $2 a week—as well as a grave and $20 for funeral expenses when deceased. Though its membership has been restricted to women, and preference given to female descendants of the original founders, men have been allowed to serve as trustees or agents. The Female Union Band Society Burying Ground was purchased by Joseph Mason in trust for the Society for $250 on October 19, 1842. The deed was recorded August 8, 1842. The Burying Ground has been maintained by the Society since that time. The last burial, in 1950, was of Mary Logan Jennings, a president of the Society and granddaughter of one of its founders.
9. Bibliography – Continued


District Realty Title Company. Records of Female Union Band Society Graveyard.


Martin Luther King Memorial Library. Washingtoniana Collection. Atlases, newspaper clipping files, directories.

Mount Zion United Methodist Church. Records.


Wesley Theological Seminary Archives. Records of Dumbarton Street Methodist Episcopal Church.