

## Mount Moriah African Methodist Episcopal Church: Timeline and Documentary Evidence

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1809 – A group of African-American methodists in Attleborough (now Langhorne) who had been worshipping alongside white methodists leave to form their own independent congregation, the Society of Colored Methodists of Attleborough. Source: Walter W. Jacobs, Jr., “Colored Methodist Society of Attleborough, Bethlehem A.M.E. Church,” in *200th Anniversary Celebration: “Faith That Stands the Test of Time”, 1809-2009*, (Langhorne, PA: 2009), 16.

1816 – The Society of Colored Methodists of Attleborough join four other independent churches to found the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia. Three of the sixteen delegates to the founding convention came from Bucks County, and are recognized as founders of the Church. No minutes were kept for the founding conference, and no record of an annual conference for 1817 has survived. Source: Richard R. Wright, ed., *Centennial Encyclopaedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the A.M.E. Church, 1916), 312; Daniel Alexander Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday School Union, 1891), 18.

1818 – The first record of an AME congregation in New Hope, with 33 members, appears in the AME Church’s annual conference minutes. Source: Payne, 26.

1820 – Future church trustee Edward Smith first appears on the US Census for Solebury Township, which then included New Hope. Source: 1820 US Census for Solebury Township.

1822 – New Hope has an AME congregation of 29. Buckingham Mountain has 15. Source: Payne, 33.

1822 – Edward Smith is a minister for the AMEC’s Bucks County Circuit. Robert Butler is a deacon. Source: Payne, 34; *ibid.*, 39.

1822 – Jarena Lee, the first woman authorized to preach by the AME Church, visits New Hope in November, 1822. She mentions preaching at the home of “brother Butler,” probably Robert

Butler.<sup>1</sup> Source: Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel* (Philadelphia: 1849), 22-23.

1824 – New Hope has an AME congregation of 50. Buckingham Mountain has 10. Source: Payne, 44.

1825 – Edward Smith purchases a small lot next to William Marist’s mill, near the future site of the church. His home likely served as a meeting place before the church was built. Source: Deed Book 54, p.234.

1826 – Edward Smith appears on the Solebury tax rolls, with the notation that he is a black man. No other taxpayers are listed as black.<sup>2</sup> Source: Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Tax Records, 1782-1860, microfilm, Mercer Museum Library, Doylestown, PA, Roll 20.

1837 – Trustees of the AME Church in New Hope purchase land to build a church (54 sq perches, about a third of an acre). Trustees: Edward Smith, Ira Sands, Perry Kinnard [Kennard], John Dorsey, Charles Yeamans [Yeomans]. There is a deed restriction for its use as “a site for a meeting House or Church and Grave Yard wherein to bury people of Colour of the African race and for no other use extent or purpose whatsoever.” Source: Deed Book 47, p.387.

1837 – In December, 1837, Jarena Lee visits the newly built church. She writes in her journal that she preached “in the new church; praise God for it. ‘Long expected, seen at last.’” Source: Lee, 81.

1842 – Jarena Lee again preaches in New Hope. It is the last place she recorded preaching in her journal, before returning to Philadelphia after two years of constant travel. Source: Lee, 96.

1847 – Church members Joseph and Frances Case purchase a lot east of the church. Metes and bounds mention “land now occupied for an African Methodist Episcopal Church & Grave Yard.” Source: Deed Book 76, p.398.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Butler appears as a black head of household in Solebury Township from 1810-1830. After New Hope Borough was incorporated in 1837, Peter Butler is listed as a black head of household in New Hope in 1840, and is named in a number of deeds as a property owner adjacent to the church. Further research into property and estate records may document whether Robert Butler owned property or resided in the vicinity of Mount Moriah. Neither Robert nor Peter are listed in the Recorder of Deeds’ grantee/grantor indices.

<sup>2</sup> Race was not a criterion that was recorded for tax purposes, but some tax assessors chose to add a notation next to the names of African-American taxpayers anyway. In the years when this was done it tends to be consistent throughout the tax list, but there are occasionally omissions.

1847 – Richard Peaker purchases a lot adjacent to “the Grave yard designed for the burial of people of colour of the African race.” Source: Deed Book 74, p.510.

1859 – Joseph and Francis Case sell a small piece of land (0.04a) with frontage on Stoney Hill Road to Mount Moriah trustee Joseph Peaker of Solebury. This lot is the location of the second church. Source: Deed Book 112, p.419.

1860 – Mount Moriah established a Sabbath School some time before 1859. In 1860, they had five teachers, thirty-five scholars, and fifty books to use for instruction. Source: Proceedings of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Philadelphia Annual Conference, 1860 (photocopy), Jeane B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835, fol. 6, item 2), Mercer Museum Library, Doylestown, PA.

1869 – A new brick church is built. The cornerstone is laid Sunday, [November 7?], 1869.<sup>3</sup> Rev. Benjamin Tucker Tanner of Philadelphia, the Secretary of the AME General Conference and editor of *The Christian Recorder*, the official newspaper of the AME Church, delivered the sermon. Source: “Local Miscellany,” *The Beacon* [Lambertville, NJ], October 29, 1869.

1870 – The church property is transferred from trustee Joseph Peaker to new trustees John Anderson and Jacob Merritt of Solebury and Samuel Foster of Hunterdon County, NJ. The deed states that this 0.04a lot contains the new church, and mentions the graveyard as a property boundary. Source: Deed Book 154, p.563.

1870 - A racist mob in Lambertville attacks an African-American caravan returning from a celebration of the passage of the 15th Amendment, which guaranteed African-American citizens' right to vote. Future church trustee Tobias Thomas is struck on the side of the head by a rock, and his companion Edward Jackson is shot through the hand. Future church trustee Philip Peterson is knocked down with a stone. Source: “Outrageous Affair In Lambertville,” *The Bucks County Intelligencer*, September 20th, 1870.

1871 – Mount Moriah is listed in a county business directory as having no regular pastor. Source: Solomon Hersey, *Business Director and Gazetteer of Bucks County, Pennsylvania* (Wilmington, DE: Jenkins & Atkinson, 1871), 191.

1876 – The Mount Moriah community is identified by the racist toponym “Darkey Town” on the map of New Hope Borough in J. D. Scott’s *Combination Atlas Map of Bucks County, Pennsylvania*. This name is not attested to in any other contemporary record, and is likely an

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<sup>3</sup> The phrasing in the article, published on a Friday, is “next Sunday.” It likely means the Sunday of the following week, rather than two days after publication. A more thorough review of the way dates are described in *The Beacon* may provide clarity.

editorialization by the publisher to denote the existence of an African American community, rather than a reflection of a place name that was actually in use. Similarly, the same racist toponym appears in E. P. Noll's *Atlas of Bucks County* in 1891 to mark the African American community adjacent to the AME church in Bensalem Township. Both cases appear to reflect the biases of the publisher rather than an actual place name. Unfortunately, this name has been applied to the Mount Moriah community by later researchers, most notably in the nomination of the Mount Moriah cemetery for the Bucks County Register of Historic Places. It is currently listed on the register as "Darkeytown Cemetery." Source: J. D. Scott, *Combination Atlas Map of Bucks County Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: 1876), 40; *Atlas of Bucks County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: E. P. Noll & Co., 1891), 14.

1877 – The church is repaired, and goes into debt over the cost of repairs. The trustees are sued by Lambertville merchant Cornelius Arnett for the cost of brick, lumber, and other materials. They are also sued by Solebury farmer Cary L. Gordon for materials and labor. The church loses both cases. John Anderson and Tobias Thomas are the trustees named as defendants. John Anderson and Jacob Meret [Merritt] sign (with a mark) the promissory note for Cary L. Gordon. Joseph Peaker signs the note as a witness (full signature). Source: Bucks County Archives, Judgment Dockets (RG 3:06), Docket 21, pages 317 and 330; Bucks County Archives, Judgment Notes (RG 3:37), February Term 1877, cases 92 and 143.

1877 – A writ of *feri facias* is issued to command the sheriff to seize the church property to satisfy the debt. Source: Bucks County Archives, Court of Common Pleas Executions (RG 3:35), April Term 1877, case 44; Bucks County Archives, Court of Common Pleas Execution Dockets (RG 3:03), Docket 21, 587.

1877 – The church property is sold by Sheriff J. D. K. Reinhart to Cary L. Gordon for \$220 on May 1, 1877. Trustees named: Jacob Meret [Merritt] and John N. Anderson. Source: Bucks County Archives, Court of Common Pleas Appearance Dockets (RG 3:01), Docket 29, 548.

1878 – The trustees of the New Hope Colored Methodist Church purchase the Mount Moriah property from Gordon for \$250.75 on July 15, 1878. Apparently the former AME congregation changed denominations. Trustees: Joseph Peaker, Jacob Merritt, John H. Anderson. Source: Deed Book 187, p.234.

[Between 1878 and 1887] – The congregation of Mount Moriah switches denominations and becomes the Congregational Church of New Hope. Three of the four trustees listed on the 1878 deed as Colored Methodists also appear on the 1887 deed as trustees of the Congregational Church. Date of switch unknown.

1880 – Rachel Moore dies on August 9, 1880. She was manumitted in Maryland but her children remained enslaved. She escaped with all six children via the Underground Railroad before settling in New Hope. Her place of burial is not given, but she is almost certainly buried at Mount Moriah. Her sons owned lots next to the church, and records show that two of her daughters are buried there. Source: “Local Affairs,” *The Doylestown Democrat*, August 15, 1880; for an account of the Moore family’s Underground Railroad journey, see: Dr. Edward Hicks Magill, “When Men Were Sold, Reminiscences of the Underground Railroad in Bucks County and its Managers,” in vol. 2 of *A Collection of Papers Read Before the Bucks County Historical Society* (Riegelsville, PA: B. F. Fackenthal, Jr., 1909), 493-520.

1886 – Henry Lee dies on July 14, 1886. A death notice in *The Hunterdon County Democrat* states that he was buried at Mount Moriah. Lee was born into slavery in the South and probably arrived in Pennsylvania by 1836, before his oldest child was born. Source: “Neighborhood Notes,” *The Hunterdon County Democrat*, July 27, 1886; Richard Randolph Parry, “Old New Hope, formerly Coryell's Ferry, Pa.,” in vol. 3 of *A Collection of Papers Read Before the Bucks County Historical Society* (Riegelsville, PA: B. F. Fackenthal, Jr., 1909), 559; 1850 US Census for Solebury Township.

1887 – Trustees of the Congregational Church of New Hope sell Mount Moriah to the trustees of the Colored Methodist Protestant Church of New Hope for \$50 on May 16, 1887. This is apparently just a change in denomination within the same congregation. Congregational Church trustees: Joseph Peaker, Israel Foster, Henry Wright. Colored Methodist Protestant Church trustees: Samuel Skillman, Philip T. Peterson, William Peterson. It is probably under this name that Mount Moriah joined the African Union Methodist Protestant Church, which appears as the denomination in articles in the *Lambertville Beacon* and *Bucks County Intelligencer* from at least 1886-1890.<sup>4</sup> Source: Deed Book 230, p.430.

1886-1890 – Newspaper clippings indicate that Mount Moriah is an African Union Methodist Protestant Church. Searching for a wider timeframe may reveal how long the church was AUMP before switching back to AME. Mount Moriah was part of the New Hope Centreville Circuit, which also included a church founded in the village of Centreville in Buckingham Township during Rev. Peter Selvey’s tenure as the pastor of Mount Moriah. Source: *Lambertville Beacon*, May 14, 1886; *The Lambertville Beacon*, June 1, 1888; “New Hope,” *Daily Intelligencer*, July 10, 1890.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This date range is based on newspaper clippings found in the Mercer Museum’s *Intelligencer* clippings files and in the Jeane B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835), not an exhaustive search of newspapers from the era.

<sup>5</sup> These articles provide the earliest and latest references to the AUMP denomination. The Centreville AUMP Church should not be confused with Mount Gilead, which is a short distance from the village of Centreville. It is the poorly documented Centreville Chapel, located at what would now be the intersection of Bogart’s Tavern Road and the Doylestown Buckingham

1892 – United States Colored Troops (USCT) veteran Charles Fields dies on March 25, 1892, and is buried at Mount Moriah. He qualifies as an indigent veteran, so his burial and tombstones are paid for by the county. The itemized bill refers to one pair of tombstones, which would include both a headstone and footstone. The headstone remains prominently visible, and the footstone with the initials C. F. also survives. Source: Bucks County Archives, County Commissioners' Payment Orders for Indigent Veteran Burials (RG 4:06), payment orders 152 and 212.

1897 – The minutes of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the AME Church mention a congregation in New Hope, indicating that Mount Moriah has switched denominations from AUMP to AME. Source: Proceedings of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Philadelphia Annual Conference, 1897 (photocopy), Jeane B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835, fol. 6, item 6), Mercer Museum Library, Doylestown, PA.

1904 – Former Underground Railroad fugitive Harriete Moore dies, and is buried at Mount Moriah. Source: "Locals," *The Newhope News*, August 5, 1904.

1905 – The membership of Mount Moriah has dwindled to six. Source: *Journal of Proceedings of the Eighty-ninth Annual Session of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* ([Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Concern], 1905), photocopy, Jeane B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835, fol. 6, item 7).

1907 – The New Hope and Buckingham have a combined AME Church membership of six. The reverend assigned to both churches mostly visits them at his own expense, and only in the summer and fall. Source: *Journal of Proceedings of the Ninety-First Session of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: A. M. E. Publishing House, 1907), 44.

1913 – USCT Veteran John Peterson dies January 9, 1913. His funeral service is conducted by the pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Lambertville (also a black church, founded in

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Turnpike (after modern highway construction, Bogart's Tavern Road now dead ends instead of meeting the turnpike). An African-American church was established there in 1888 on the property of Andrew Anthony. In 1898 the church was seized over a debt related to its construction, and Anthony purchased the building to satisfy the debt. His property was auctioned off after his death in 1906. Source: "Religious Notices," *The Daily Intelligencer* (Doylestown, PA), August 9, 1890; "Around the County," *The Central News* (Perkasie, PA), August 25, 1898; Bucks County Register of Wills, Register's Docket, Book 9, p.195; Bucks County Archives, Judgment Dockets (RG 3:06), Docket 32, 509; Bucks County Archives, Judgment Notes (RG 3:37), June Term 1898, case 118; Bucks County Archives, Orphans' Court Papers (RG 5:03), file 18,389.

1897), but he is buried at Mount Moriah. Source: “John Peterson,” *The Lambertville Beacon*, January 13, 1913.

1913 – Former Underground Railroad fugitive Fanny Moore dies April 21, 1913. A death notice in *The Newhope News* states that she was buried at Mount Moriah. Her death certificate indicates that she was born in Maryland in 1838 to William Moore and Rachel Kohl. Source: “Topics Told Tersely: Everything Worthy Of Note That Happened In Newhope This Week,” *The Newhope News*, April 25, 1913; Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Certificate of Death, file 38,577.

1916 – William Peaker dies on October 11, 1916. He served as an AUMP pastor at Mount Moriah in 1889, was the only member of the AME Church on the list of donors of “dollar money” for the AME Church in New Hope in 1897, his funeral service was led by a baptist minister from Lambertville, and he was buried at Mount Gilead. This example suggests that the denominational changes in the later years of the church may have reflected the comparative institutional strength of the various African-American denominations in the vicinity, rather than doctrinal differences within the African-American community. Source: *The Lambertville Beacon*, October 18, 1916; *The Lambertville Beacon*, October 12, 1888; *Proceedings of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Philadelphia Annual Conference*, 1897 (photocopy), Jeane B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835, fol. 6, item 6), Mercer Museum Library, Doylestown, PA.

c.1919 – Baptist services are held at Mount Moriah by Rev. Hall. In correspondence with historian Jeane B. Williams, Myrtle M. Robinson recalls a Rev. Hall who preached in New Hope in the morning and Flemington, NJ, in the evening. Robinson states that she is unsure of the date but that it may have been 1919 or 1920. She is probably recalling Rev. D. A. Hall, the pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church church in Lambertville, NJ, rather than a pastor from Flemington. Source: Letter from Myrtle M. Robinson to Rev. Jeane B. Williams, n.d., Jeane B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835, fol. 10, item 4), Mercer Museum Library, Doylestown, PA.

1921 – Rev. D. A. Hall holds a union service with Rev. J. W. Spencer of Yardley, and the congregations from Yardley and from Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Lambertville. Source: “Mt. Moriah A. M. E. Church, New Hope, Rev. D. A. Hall, Pastor,” *The Lambertville Beacon*, October 10, 1921.

1931 – The AME Church assigns W. A. Allen to serve New Hope. This is the last record of an AME Congregation in New Hope. Source: *Proceedings of the One Hundred and Fifteenth Annual Session of the Philadelphia Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* ([Philadelphia: A. M. E. Book Concern], 1931), 20.

1932 – The Philadelphia Conference’s Committee on Deeds reports that the church building in New Hope requires investigation. Source: *Proceedings of the One Hundred and Sixteenth Annual Session of the Philadelphia Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: The Book Concern, 1932), 30.

1940-1959 – Mount Moriah appears as a tax-exempt property on the New Hope Borough tax rolls. Source: Bucks County Archives, Tax Lists (RG 1:01), New Hope Tax Lists, 1940-1959.<sup>6</sup>

1949 – Church trustees are listed as co-defendants when the county seizes a property adjacent to the church to satisfy unpaid taxes. The action of quiet title names: Joseph Case, Frances Case, John R. B. Case, Richard Case, William Case, Sarah Marten [Martin], Ida Middleton, the heirs of George Moore (deceased), John C. Moore, Ida M. Lane, Rachel A. Russell, Mary J. Clark, the heirs of James Moore (deceased), Hattie A. Lloyd, Azalea Edwards, the heirs of Harry Lloyd (deceased), and the trustees of Mount Maria [Moriah] African Methodist Episcopal Church. The property corresponds exactly with modern parcel 27-003-039, a residential lot. It is possible that this property may have once served as a parsonage.<sup>7</sup> The deed is dated March 14, 1948, after the final judgment in February. The deed provides the court case information: Court of Common Pleas, December Term 1948, case 22.<sup>8</sup> Source: Deed Book 897, p. 589.

1959 – Trustees of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the AME Church sell the Mount Moriah property to Sheldon and Martha Cheney. The church building is described as “ruins.” The parcel is 0.35a and matches the survey done for the plan to combine the church lands with a residential lot. Source: Deed Book 1407, p.205.

c.1959 – The church is torn down. The cornerstone bearing the inscription “Mount Moriah A. M. E. C. 1869” is saved and remains on the property. Three books that were buried with the cornerstone in 1869 are also retrieved from the ruins and saved. These were later given by the owner of the church property Nancy Russell to researcher Jeane B. Williams, who donated them

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<sup>6</sup> The earliest record of tax exempt properties is a page glued to the back cover of the 1940 tax book. The years immediately before and after 1940 only list individuals, and do not have any record of tax exempt properties. There may be a different set of records that included property taxes in addition to these tax rolls.

<sup>7</sup> In an 1890 letter to the editor of *The Lambertville Beacon*, Rev. E. C. Bostick, who served as the pastor of Mount Moriah from 1889-1890, refers to his home as “the parsonage.” This may explain the inclusion of church trustees in the action to quiet title, which invited parties with a potential claim to the property to contest its seizure by the county. Source: E. C. Bostick, letter to the editor, *The Lambertville Beacon*, January 10, 1890.

<sup>8</sup> Court records for this date range have not been deposited with the Bucks County Archives at the Mercer Museum, and are therefore difficult to obtain. Viewing the records would likely require a special arrangement with the prothonotary's office.



to the Mercer Museum. These consist of a copy of *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal*, *The Hymn Book of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, and a copy of The Bible. All are badly degraded and fragmentary. Source: Jeane B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835, Box 2), Mercer Museum Library, Doylestown, PA.

1975 – The Mount Moriah parcel is merged with an adjacent residential lot. Tax parcel: 27-003-038. A note on the plan states that the cemetery is “subject to restrictions or easements of record.” Source: Final plan approved for Sheldon Cheney, April 14, 1975, Plan Book 132, p.16.

1986 – Mount Moriah’s cemetery is added to the Bucks County Register of Historic Places.

c.2005 – Mildred Hopkins (née Wood) is interviewed for the Solebury Township Historical Society’s oral history project. She was born in 1913 and attended the church as a child. When asked about the church, she said:

"they tore it down and they were having a time about who would show up for those people after they tore it down. And there's one great big stone there, and the rest of them you can't find. Don't know if they dug the cemetery up or what they done... My mother used to take us down there all the time because we couldn't go to any other church but when we went down there to find it it was a house."

The stone she refers to is probably that of Charles Fields, the largest stone and one of the few with legible text. When asked if she experienced segregation in New Hope, Mildred Hopkins responded, "Oh yeah. There was segregation all around here." While there weren't shops or restaurants that banned black patrons, she said, "you went in and sat down at a table and they wouldn't serve you until they really had to." Source: Mildred Wood Hopkins, c.2005, interview with Sally Jagoe and David Benner, Oral History Collection, Solebury Township Historical Society, Solebury, PA, <https://soleburyhistory.org/mildred-hopkins/>.

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<sup>9</sup> Unless directly cited, all newspaper articles were found in either the Bucks County Daily Intelligencer Clippings Files (SC-39) or the Jean B. Williams Research Collection (MSC 835) at the Mercer Museum Library. Articles from *The Newhope News* and *The Doylestown Democrat* were taken from the print editions housed at the Mercer Museum Library.

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