

FROM CROSSROADS TO COUNTY SEAT

A Bicentennial Look at Georgetown, Delaware

*Compiled Under the Auspices of the
Georgetown Historical Society*

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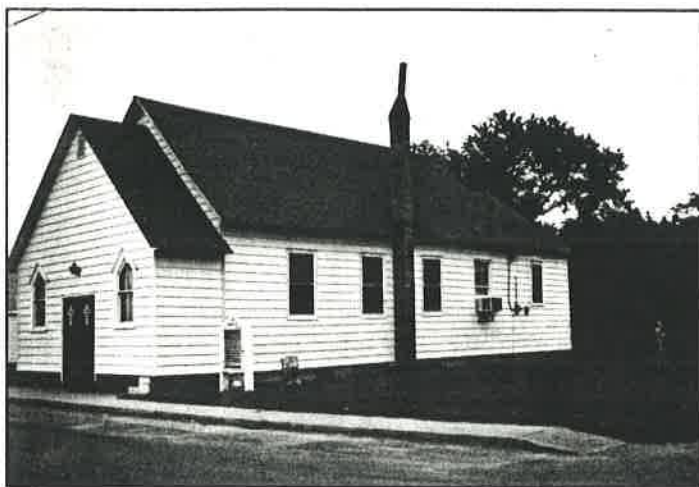
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Prospect A.M.E. Church. (Courtesy of James B. Boyer)

PROSPECT AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Railroad and Adams Street

The history of Prospect African Methodist Episcopal Church is a long and distinguished one.

The land on which the church and burial grounds presently sit was purchased from Mr. William Edward Harris by the trustees of the church, Messrs. Moses Robinson, Timothy Jacobs, Curtis Jacobs, George Ratcliffe, and Isaac Waples, on November 13, 1839. The cost of the land was 31.87 1/2. The transaction was officially registered within the office of the Recorder of Deeds on January 13, 1840.

The first building erected on said location was used as both a church and a community schoolhouse for black youngsters.

In his book *16 Miles From Anywhere*, William J. Wade describes the latter situation as follows:

"Beginning about 1866, a school for black children was conducted in the Prospect A.M.E. Church on Railroad Avenue.

Georgetown did not take kindly to the black school.

In 1867, a black female teacher at the school was frightened out of town by a rock throwing mob. A report of the incident stated that Georgetown residents were deeply opposed to any education for black children."

In 1867, a new structure was built. The trustees received the deed on this building on June 1, 1900, at the cost of \$60.00.

The officers who supervised said transaction were Bros. Robert and George Woolford, Moses Draper, John Short, Harry Ingram, Minor Ingram, and Riley Roberts.

The geographic location was at the time known as African Row.

For many years Prospect was the leading church within what we called the "Georgetown Circuit". The other churches were Dickerson Chapel in Millsboro, and Antioch in Frankford.

In 1885, the officers of all three churches within the circuit purchased land in Georgetown, in order to erect a parsonage (the site is where Prospect's present

parsonage sits).

The land on which the Hall was built was purchased in 1959 for \$1,577.78. The property was bought from a sheriff's sale (Frank Dickerson was sheriff). Mr. George E. Jones was the previous owner.

Extensive remodeling and renovations of note took place during the administrations of the Reverends M. P. Jackson, M. E. Harmon, and J. W. Smith.

For 150 years, Prospect, "the church by the railroad tracks", has served as lighthouse throughout the community of Georgetown, leading men and women, boys and girls from the turbulent rocks along the stormy seas of life.

(From the 150th Anniversary History of Prospect African Methodist Episcopal Church)

SAND HILL METHODIST CHURCH

In the early days, this immediate locality was called Sandhill, due to its unusually sandy soil. In the late 1850s local farmers, believing that a church was needed in their area, united and chose a board of trustees composed of local men. Board members were William Pettyjohn, Eli Roach, George Pettyjohn, Levin Dutton, Charles Tunnell, David Dodd, and William Hancock. The name chosen was Sand Hill M. E. Church. The board found a site, and two local landowners and their wives (Dr. William and Angelina Marshall and James and Ann Reed) each sold to them for a token payment of \$1.00 each the two pieces of ground which comprise the present church lot of 1.46 acres. By July 1859 the building had been raised, and it was dedicated on Sunday, November 20 in that year.

Its first minister was Rev. John T. Reed (1824 - 1899), and the church was also called Reed's Chapel in his honor. He and his family remained here until 1866 when they moved to Frankford, Delaware where he continued to serve as a minister as well as a merchant. In 1885 he left Delaware to minister in other areas, finally locating in Portsmouth, Virginia in 1896. He was instrumental in the founding of Broad Street M. E. Church there.

A camp meeting was established at Sand Hill Church in about 1888. In that year, Peter J. Hart and his wife Hannah became owners of the land adjoining the church lot on the north side, now the corner across the side road. On it a camp meeting ground was laid out, lots subscribed, and cottages built. These structures, called "tents" in recognition of their having been made of canvas in the early days, typically had fronts which were hinged to open outward in imitation of tents. Camp meetings, where visiting ministers preached, were great social events for an area. In those times of limited travel and opportunities, many people first met their future spouses at them. Sand Hill camp meetings ceased about 1905.

The church has not had a congregation since 1972, and no regular services have been held there since that time.