

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Historic Preservation Division

Noel Holcomb, Commissioner

W. Ray Luce, Division Director and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
34 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 1600, Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Telephone (404) 656-2840 Fax (404) 651-8739 <http://www.gashpo.org>

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
Helen Talley-McRae, 404-651-5268
helen.talley-mcrae@dnr.state.ga.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New Hope African Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery Listed in National Register

ATLANTA (January 30, 2009) –The New Hope African Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery, located in Atlanta, Fulton County, was listed in the National Register on January 9, 2009. The property owner sponsored the nomination and a consultant prepared the nomination materials.

The New Hope African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and Cemetery is located on the west side of Arden Road in the now suburban Buckhead community of Atlanta. The congregation began as early as 1869 and obtained legal right to the property in 1872, upon the death of James H. Smith, a white Buckhead resident, who willed the property to the congregation for use as a church and school. The current church building replaced an earlier 19th-century, wood-framed building that burned in 1927. The congregation rebuilt the basement of the church in 1928, which served as the sanctuary until 1936 when the rest of the church was completed.

The New Hope AME Church and Cemetery is significant in the area of ethnic heritage because it documents the development and evolution of an African-American enclave of education and religion during Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era of segregation. In the African-American community, churches played a primary role in serving both spiritual and social needs and often developed other community institutions such as schools and cemeteries. The church property once included a 19th-century tabernacle (razed in 1965) and a 1926 school building (burned in 1942). The parsonage was built in 1926 and renovated in 2003.

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The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) was the first denomination to be formed separately from the established white churches. The AME was founded in 1816 and the New Hope AME Church was one of the first Atlanta-area churches to be formed under the AME denomination.

The New Hope AME Church and Cemetery is also significant in landscape architecture for the cemetery with its historic layout and burial markers. The first documented burial in the cemetery is 1889; however, unmarked graves suggest earlier burials. The cemetery is located on the east side of Arden Road across from the church. Two stone pillars with an ornamental iron gate mark the entrance to the 1.86-acre cemetery. Markers range from simple stones or flat markers to various upright tablets and obelisks.

The New Hope AME Church and Cemetery is significant in the area of architecture as a good example of a rural, vernacular church that has retained its historic building materials and sanctuary plan. It is a rectangular, wood-framed building with two asymmetrical towers on the main façade and granite buttresses on the other elevations. The sanctuary retains its plaster walls and ceiling, wood pews and pulpit.

The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. According to Richard Cloues, deputy state historic preservation officer, listing in the National Register recognizes a property's significance and ensures that the property will be taken into account in the planning of federally funded or licensed projects. In addition, owners of National Register properties may be eligible for rehabilitation tax incentives.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Their mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance. For more information, call 404-656-2840 or visit their Web site at www.gashpo.org.

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