

**Baltimore City  
Commission for Historical and  
Architectural Preservation**

**Landmark Designation Report  
August 12, 2014**



**Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic**

700 Poplar Grove Street  
Baltimore, Maryland



Commission for Historical & Architectural Preservation  
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## Significance Summary

This property is eligible for designation for its role in Baltimore City's history and for its architecture. Today located in the Franklintown Road neighborhood of Baltimore City, a church has stood on this site since 1835, when Summerfield Methodist Episcopal Church was established by Col. John Berry. This church played an important role in Baltimore Methodism through its existence. The current church was designed by Wyatt & Nolting and George Norbury MacKenzie in 1920. Since 1954, this church has been home to Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic. Founded by Bishop Randolph A. Carr in 1934, this church founded a separate denomination in 1945 that today has member churches across the U.S. and internationally.

## Property History

This property has been the site of a church since 1835, when Summerfield Chapel was established and constructed by Col. John Berry and Thomas L. Berry. A devout Methodist, Col. Berry had purchased property in the area, and wanted a Methodist Episcopal Church nearby, as the closest one was three miles away.<sup>1</sup> The Berry family was very prominent in the Methodist Church, the U.S. military, and Baltimore business and society, and served as benefactors for this church. When it was established, the church was located in Baltimore County, in what was then known as Five Mills. It was constructed on a plot of land on the Calverton Turnpike (now N. Franklintown Road) given by George Myers and his wife.<sup>2</sup> A stone chapel was dedicated in the fall of 1836.<sup>3</sup> The church was expanded in 1878, and in the 1880s, a Sunday School building was constructed.<sup>4</sup>

By 1920, the congregation had outgrown the stone chapel. While the chapel had several additions since its construction in 1835, it only seated 275, and there were over 450 Methodist families in the parish.<sup>5</sup> The decision was made to demolish the original chapel and construct a new church. The present church was designed by G.N. MacKenzie and Wyatt & Nolting, a prominent Baltimore architectural firm. George Norbury Mackenzie, III worked for James Bosley Noel Wyatt and William G. Nolting. Both Wyatt and Nolting were Fellows of the AIA.<sup>6</sup> Their partnership resulted in prolific and varied work, with their most significant work being the Baltimore City Courthouse, which is a Baltimore City Landmark.<sup>7</sup> MacKenzie designed other buildings both as part of the Wyatt & Nolting firm and individually, such as the National Registered-listed Baltimore General Dispensary, located at the intersection of W. Fayette St. and N. Paca St.<sup>8</sup>

The bid for the construction firm described the church as "1 and 2 story, 100x250 ft. stone, stone and concrete foundation" for approximately \$75,000.<sup>9</sup> In April 1920, the building contract was awarded to the firm of Hicks, Tase & Norris. The building contract described that the church was to have a "stone exterior; 2 stories; wood floors; steam heat; non-fireproof; tin, slate and slag roof; electric lights; hollow fireproof tile; ventilation; 48x110 ft., with wing 56x29 ft."<sup>10</sup> An article published in *The Christian Advocate* following the completion of the church stated that "'A fine plant has been erected with adequate Sunday school rooms, an auditorium that will seat 900, a gynasium, and other desired features."<sup>11</sup> The cornerstone was laid on July 19, 1920, and the church was dedicated on April 25, 1921.<sup>12</sup>

On December 16, 1954, the church was sold by the Central-Summerfield Methodist Church to Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus (Apostolic).<sup>13</sup> Rehoboth Church has been the steward of this building ever since, and has requested this Landmark designation.

### **History of Summerfield Church**

The church was founded by Col. John Berry, a Methodist and veteran who served at the Battle of Fort McHenry during the War of 1812.<sup>14</sup> The church was named after John Summerfield (1798-1825), an Irish Methodist minister. A convert to Methodism who died at the age of 27, his mere seven years of preaching made him famous in England, Ireland, and the eastern United States, where he preached in several cities including Baltimore.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, he made a strong impression on Col. John Berry, who not only founded Summerfield Church in 1835, but also named his son John Summerfield Berry, who was born in 1823.<sup>16</sup> As the founders of the Summerfield Church, the Berry family served as patrons and active members of the church.

The church began with only ten members. By 1839, it was part of the Methodist church circuit (first the Baltimore Circuit, later the Summerfield Circuit), which was served by three pastors. In 1878, the church became a station on the Methodist Church, which meant that the church had its own minister.<sup>17</sup>

At the time of its 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1911, Summerfield Church was acknowledged as having “figured conspicuously as an important point of city Methodism in pace with such compeers as old Light Street, Eutaw, Charles, South, and East Baltimore Stations.”<sup>18</sup> The church hosted well-attended annual revivals, except during 1861-1862, when soldiers were camped in the neighborhood during the Civil War.<sup>19</sup> Along with serving the spiritual needs of its members, Summerfield also served the social needs of the community through organizations such as the Ladies’ Aid Society, the Calverton Brotherhood of Summerfield Circuit, and the West Baltimore Epworth League.

Like his father who established the church, Gen. John Summerfield Berry was a benefactor of the church, and served as the recording steward for over 30 years.<sup>20</sup> Upon his death, he was recognized as one of the most prominent lay members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and his *New York Times* obituary stated that he was “for over half a century one of the most earnest workers for the good of the city and State.”, as he served as the Speaker of the House of Delegates in the Maryland Legislature, the Adjutant-General for the State of Maryland. He was also a member of the convention that created a new Constitution for Maryland in 1864, and was the only slaveholder among the group who advocated for the abolition of slavery.<sup>21</sup> He was also very active in the Methodist Church, and served as the recording steward for Summerfield Church for 30 years, and served as president on several boards of trustees for Methodist aid groups, such as the Home of the Friendless, and Home for the Aged.<sup>22</sup>

On May 14, 1954, Summerfield Church merged with Central Methodist Episcopal Church. The merged congregation worshipped at Central’s church at the intersection of

Gelston Drive and Wildwood Parkway in Edmonson Village.<sup>23</sup> The Summerfield Church was sold to Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic on December 16, 1954.<sup>24</sup>

### **History of Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic**

Rehoboth Church was officially founded in April 1934 by Bishop Randolph A. Carr. The church is celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014. In the founding of this church, Bishop Carr also created a sect of the Apostolic Faith Church: the Church of God in Christ Jesus (Apostolic).<sup>25</sup> Rehoboth Church was the headquarters of the organization.<sup>26</sup> The Apostolic Faith church is a Pentecostal Christian denomination founded in the early twentieth century with headquarters in Portland, OR.<sup>27</sup>

The congregation was founded in the early 1930s as a church of five members, meeting in the Presstman Street home of Mother Mayfield. She asked for the assistance of the leadership of the Church of God in Christ in growing her church, and Elder Randolph A. Carr was sent to them. They began having tent-meetings twice a summer on Gilmor St. Bishop Carr soon purchased a church on N. Mount Street, which offered a permanent home for the congregation. The small congregation then left the Church of God in Christ for the doctrine of the Apostolic Doctrine in Jesus Name, and was renamed Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic, Inc.<sup>28</sup> In 1945, the congregation branched off from the larger Apostolic organization, forming its own denomination. The same year, the congregation moved to another church on N. Fulton St. and Riggs St.<sup>29</sup> In 1954, the congregation purchased the former Summerfield Church at 700 Poplar Grove St, where they are still located today. The congregation recently undertook extensive interior renovations and improvements to the property.<sup>30</sup>

Rehoboth Church has benefitted from strong, long-tenured leadership, with only three pastors during its 80-year existence. Bishop Randolph Carr was the founder of the sect and the pastor of Rehoboth Church from 1934 until his death in 1970.<sup>31</sup> At the time of Bishop Carr's death, there were over 10,000 members of the Church of God in Christ Jesus (Apostolic).<sup>32</sup> Bishop William S. Barnes became the Presiding Bishop of the organization and the pastor of Rehoboth Church following the death of Bishop Carr, serving for 17 years until his death in 1987. During his tenure, Bishop Barnes and other members began spreading their faith nationally and internationally through evangelism.<sup>33</sup> Since 1988, Bishop Keith Allen has served as the Presiding Bishop and pastor of Rehoboth Church. Prior to taking this position, he was the International Evangelist for the Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic.

In 80 years, this small church has grown into an organization of over a hundred churches across the United States and internationally.<sup>34</sup> Rehoboth Church serves the spiritual and social needs of its congregation, the larger community of the denomination, and also serves its neighborhood. The church founded a nursery school, and established and ran Vision Christian Academy, a college preparatory school.<sup>35</sup> In the late 1990s, when the Rosemont neighborhood was suffering from increased violence and several shootings, the church offered after-school activities for neighborhood youth, providing them with a safe place to socialize. Phillip Randall, a deacon at Rehoboth Church, stated that "We endeavor to save everybody," Randall said. "We don't want to lose anybody."<sup>36</sup>

## **Architectural Description**

The church is a 2-story granite edifice, designed by one of Baltimore's most prominent architectural firms. It has many of the features common of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Gothic Revival architecture, embracing many of the typical features of the style, such as Gothic arched windows and buttressing. However, the building lacks the ornamentation common of earlier Gothic Revival churches.

The property has no historic designation at this time.

## **Staff Recommendations**

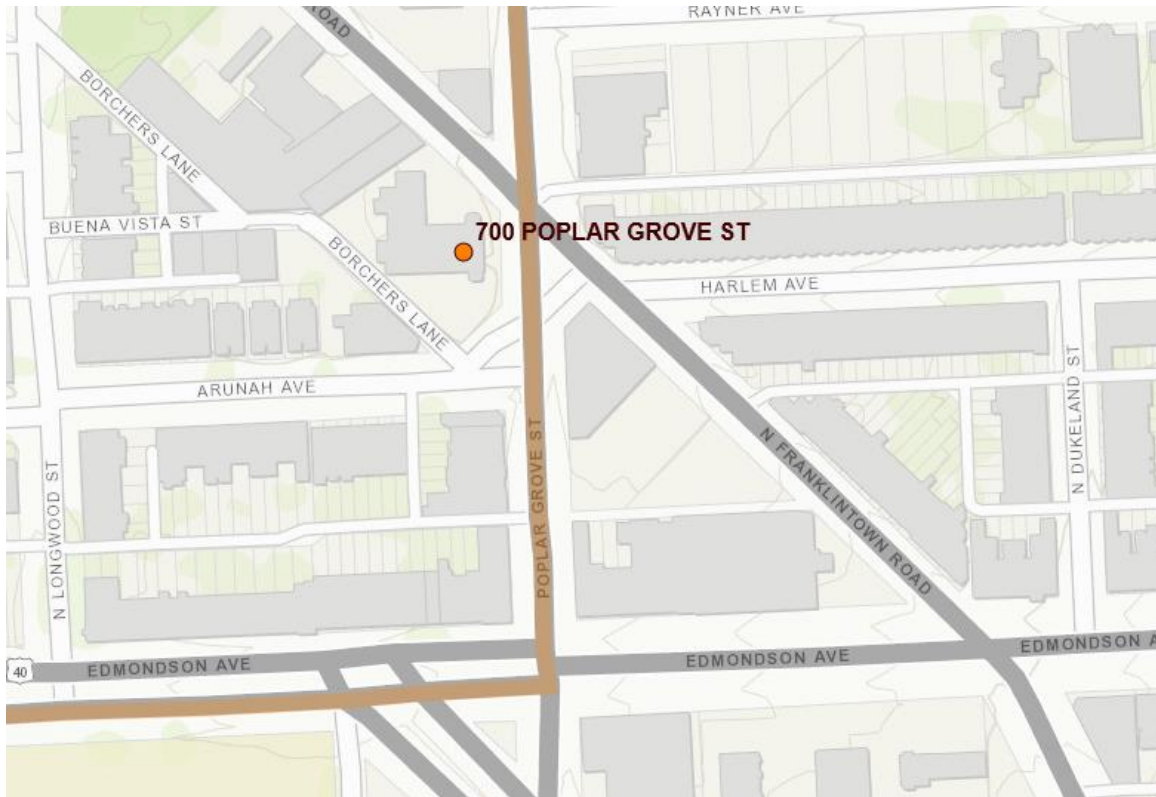
The property meets CHAP Landmark Designation Standards:

B. A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object which:

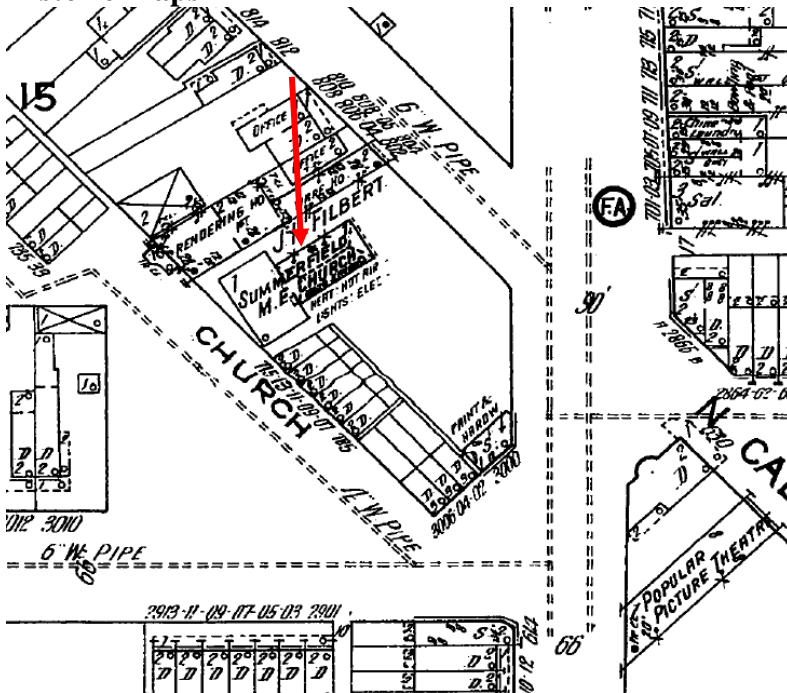
1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

This property is eligible for designation for its role in Baltimore City's history and for its architecture. Today located in the Franklintown Road neighborhood of Baltimore City, a church has stood on this site since 1835, when Summerfield Methodist Episcopal Church was established by Col. John Berry. This church played an important role in Baltimore Methodism through its existence. The current church was designed by Wyatt & Nolting and George Norbury MacKenzie in 1920. Since 1954, this church has been home to Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus Apostolic. Founded by Bishop Randolph A. Carr in 1934, this church founded a separate denomination in 1945 that today has member churches across the U.S. and internationally.

## Locator Map

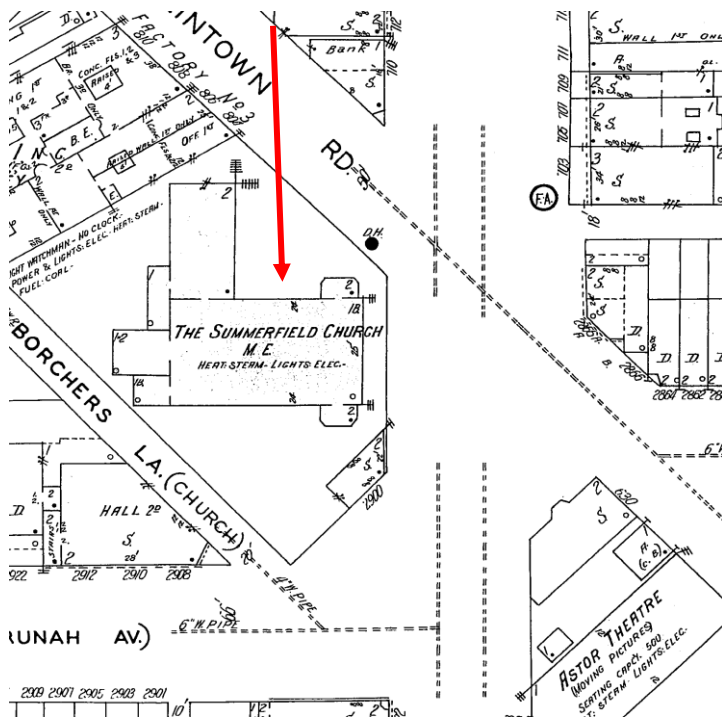


## Historic Maps



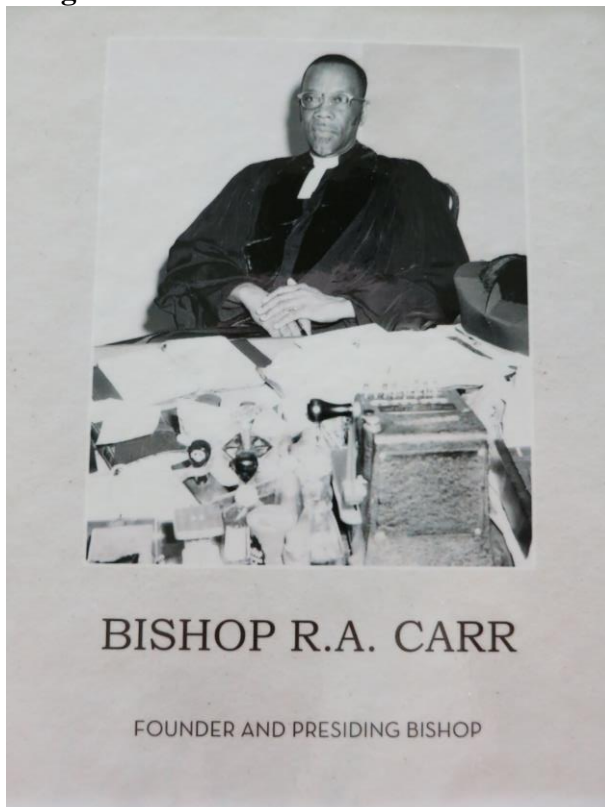
1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the original circa 1841 church.. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1914-1915, Vol. 6, 1914, Sheet 583)





1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, showing the current church, constructed 1921. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1928-1936, Vol. 8, 1928, Sheet 801)

## Images



Bishop Carr, founder of the church. Photo courtesy of Bishop Keith Allen.





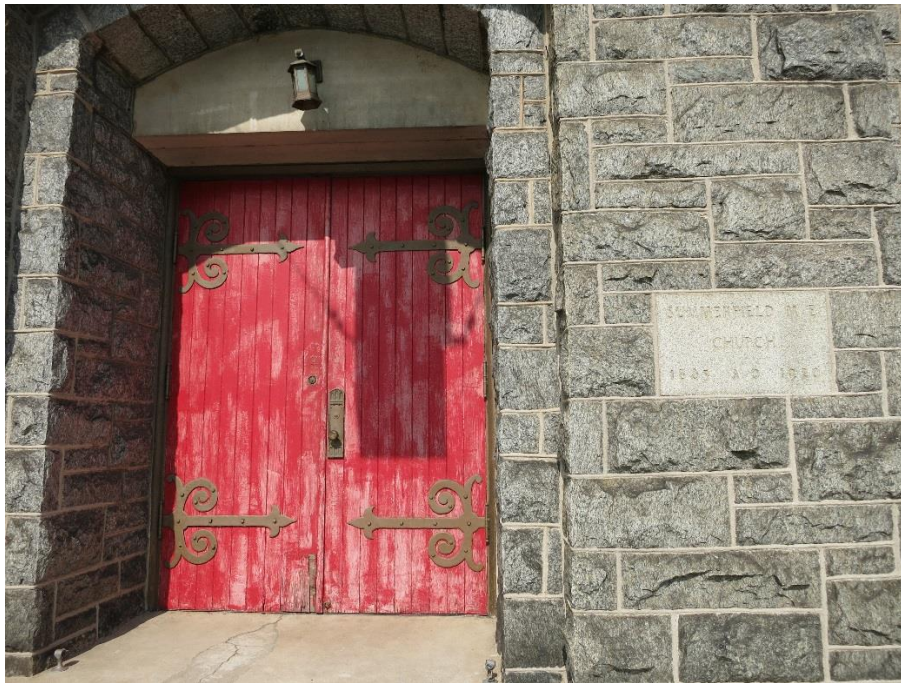
Church services of Rehoboth Church in the mid-twentieth century. Photo courtesy of Bishop Keith Allen.



Side elevation viewed from N. Franklinton Rd.



Side elevation viewed from Arunah Ave.



Front entrance and original Summerfield Methodist Episcopal Church datestone.





<sup>1</sup> “CENTENNIAL SERVICES: Sermons in Several Methodist Churches--A Sketch of Summerfield Church”, Reported for the Baltimore Sun, The Sun (1837-1988); Dec 1, 1884; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 1

<sup>2</sup> “CENTENNIAL SERVICES: Sermons in Several Methodist Churches--A Sketch of Summerfield Church”

<sup>3</sup> “CENTENNIAL SERVICES: Sermons in Several Methodist Churches--A Sketch of Summerfield Church”

<sup>4</sup> “CENTENNIAL SERVICES: Sermons in Several Methodist Churches--A Sketch of Summerfield Church”,

<sup>5</sup> *The Christian Advocate*, Vol. 96, (publisher unknown), 1921, pg 997. Available as a Google ebook.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Pencek “James Bosley Noel Wyatt” Baltimore Architecture Foundation, <http://baltimorearchitecture.org/biographies/james-bosley-noel-wyatt/>; “William G. Nolting (1866-1940)”

The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, <http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/ahd1032720.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Bill Pencek

<sup>8</sup> “Baltimore General Dispensary” Landmark Hunter <http://landmarkhunter.com/140052-baltimore-general-dispensary/>

<sup>9</sup> *Engineering News-Record*. Vol.84, No. 6, January 1, 1920. (New York: McGraw-Hill Company), pg. 98. Available as a Google ebook.

<sup>10</sup> *Manufacturers Record*, Volume 77 (Baltimore: Manufacturer’s Record) April 8, 1920, pg. 147. Available as a Google ebook.

<sup>11</sup> *The Christian Advocate*, Vol. 96, (publisher unknown), 1921, pg 997. Available as a Google ebook.

<sup>12</sup> “CHURCH CORNERSTONE IS LAID: Two Bishops Attend Summerfield M. E. Ceremony”, The Sun (1837-1988); Jul 19, 1920; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 7; “Summerfield M. E. Church Is Formally Dedicated” The Sun (1837-1988); Apr 25, 1921; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 16

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- <sup>13</sup> Deed, Central-Summerfield Methodist Church to Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus (Apostolic). Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber MLP 9672, Folio 510.
- <sup>14</sup> "Finding Aid to Col. John Berry Collection, MS 3119" H. Furlong Balwin Library, Maryland Historical Society, <http://www.mdhs.org/findingaid/col-john-berry-collection-ms-3119-1812-1822>
- <sup>15</sup> Abel Stevens, *A Compendious History of American Methodism : Abridged from the Author's "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church"* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1867), pg. 553-554. Available as a Google e-book; Robert Drew Simpson, "Guide to the John Summerfield Papers" The General Commission on Archives and History, The United Methodist Church. Website updated 12/8/2003; accessed 8/7/2014. <http://catalog.gcah.org/publicdata/gcah2424.htm>
- <sup>16</sup> "GEN. JOHN S. BERRY IS DEAD: Expires Of Kidney Disease At The Age Of 78 Years", The Sun (1837-1988); Jan 4, 1901; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 10
- <sup>17</sup> "CENTENNIAL SERVICES: Sermons in Several Methodist Churches--A Sketch of Summerfield Church"; *American Methodist Bicentennial 1766-1966*, pg. 41
- <sup>18</sup> "JUST CELEBRATED ITS 74TH ANNIVERSARY", The Sun (1837-1988); Nov 12, 1911; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. L5
- <sup>19</sup> "CENTENNIAL SERVICES: Sermons in Several Methodist Churches--A Sketch of Summerfield Church"
- <sup>20</sup> Henry Elliot Shepherd, *History of Baltimore, Maryland, from Its Founding as a Town to the Current Year 1729-1898* (S.B. Nelson), 1898, pg. 386; "GEN. JOHN S. BERRY", The Sun (1837-1988); Jan 5, 1901; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988) pg. 7
- <sup>21</sup> "JOHN S. BERRY DEAD.: Was a Well-Known Citizen and Business Man of Baltimore.", Special to The New York Times. New York Times (1857-1922); Jan 4, 1901; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2010), pg. 2; "GEN. JOHN S. BERRY IS DEAD: Expires Of Kidney Disease At The Age Of 78 Years"
- <sup>22</sup> "GEN. JOHN S. BERRY IS DEAD: Expires Of Kidney Disease At The Age Of 78 Years"
- <sup>23</sup> *American Methodist Bicentennial 1766-1966*, pg. 41
- <sup>24</sup> Deed, Central-Summerfield Methodist Church to Rehoboth Church of God in Christ Jesus (Apostolic). Baltimore City Superior Court (Land Records) Liber MLP 9672, Folio 510.
- <sup>25</sup> "Bishop Randolph A. Carr, Sect Branch Founder, Dies", The Sun (1837-1988); Oct 29, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. A17
- <sup>26</sup> "Raymond R. Collier Native of Baltimore", The Sun (1837-1988); Apr 9, 1987; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 1F
- <sup>27</sup> "History" Apostolic Faith Church, <http://www.apostolicfaith.org/OurFaith/History.aspx>
- <sup>28</sup> Bishop Keith G. Allen, "OH GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD CELEBRATING OUR 80th CHURCH ANNIVERSARY"
- <sup>29</sup> Bishop Keith G. Allen, "OH GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD CELEBRATING OUR 80th CHURCH ANNIVERSARY"; "Minister Denies He Was Expelled; Says He Quit", Afro-American (1893-1988); Sep 22, 1945; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Afro-American (1893-1988), pg. 18
- <sup>30</sup> Bishop Keith G. Allen, "OH GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD CELEBRATING OUR 80th CHURCH ANNIVERSARY"
- <sup>31</sup> "Bishop Randolph A. Carr, Sect Branch Founder, Dies"
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- <sup>33</sup> "Two services scheduled for Bishop Barnes, 77" The Sun (1837-1988); Apr 8, 1987; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. 3B; Bishop Keith G. Allen, "OH GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD CELEBRATING OUR 80th CHURCH ANNIVERSARY"
- <sup>34</sup> "Bishop Randolph A. Carr, Sect Branch Founder, Dies", The Sun (1837-1988); Oct 29, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1988), pg. A17
- <sup>35</sup> Bishop Keith G. Allen, "OH GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD CELEBRATING OUR 80th CHURCH ANNIVERSARY"
- <sup>36</sup> Dana Hedgpeth and Kristine Henry "Killing latest tragedy in area; Rosemont residents say shooting of boy, 14, a symptom of decay; 'Gotten used to it'; Seven people shot, three dead since 1996 in same community: [FINAL Edition]" The Sun [Baltimore, Md] 07 Dec 1998: 1B.