

# **The Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation**

## **Landmark Designation Report**

**October 9, 2012**



**Trinity A.M.E. Church**

2130 E. Hoffman Street  
Baltimore, Maryland



COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

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## **Summary**

The Gothic Revival/ Romanesque Trinity A.M.E. Church was designed by Charles E. Cassell in 1906 for the congregation of St. Mark's Reformed Church. Established on the site in 1900, this church served the largely German American community in Collington Square through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1957, the building was sold to the Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church. Established in 1881 in what is now State Center, Trinity A.M.E. was deeply involved in social and political issues throughout its existence, particularly regarding African American rights. After being displaced due to the construction of State Center, Trinity A.M.E. purchased this church, and has served East Baltimore since 1957. The church is important for its architecture and for the role that both congregations have played in Baltimore City's history.

## **Property History**

The congregation of St. Mark's Reformed Church established a church at the northwest corner of Hoffman and Collington Streets on May 30, 1900.<sup>1</sup> The church is located on the northern side of Collington Square. The church first used the house on that property, which had been home to Simon J. Martenet, the city's surveyor and a cartographer.<sup>2</sup> The church purchased the property from the Reformed Church Extension Society, an outreach organization of the Reformed Church, for \$3,500 in 1901.<sup>3</sup> The Society had purchased the property in 1899 to house a Sunday School, which was established in 1898 in the store-room of a grocery store at the corner of E. Preston and N. Bradford Streets just two blocks away.<sup>4</sup>

The church increased from 33 original members in 1900 to 166 members in five years, quickly outgrowing their quarters in the house.<sup>5</sup> In 1906, the congregation announced their plans to construct a church building, and the cornerstone was laid July 30, 1906.<sup>6</sup> Designed by prominent Baltimore architect Charles E. Cassell, the granite Gothic Revival church cost \$30,000 and was completed in 1907.<sup>7</sup> Charles E. Cassell was one of the founding members of the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Cassell designed many other buildings across the city, including the Greenway Cottages, Chamber of Commerce Building, and Saint Katherine of Alexandria Protestant Episcopal Church, all of which are Baltimore City Landmarks.

Members of the congregation and other congregations donated church furniture and memorial windows when the church was constructed.<sup>8</sup> In 1915, a mosaic by Joseph Lauber was installed in memory of Dr. Roth. The mosaic was a reproduction of his painting "Come Unto Me," which was a life-size image of Christ.<sup>9</sup> Joseph Lauber was a celebrated Baltimore-based glass artist who had worked for John La Farge and Louis Comfort Tiffany, and served from 1912-1916 as the assistant director and an instructor at the Maryland Institute College of Art.<sup>10</sup> Industrialist Andrew Carnegie offered to donate \$1,250 for an organ if the church matched his contribution. He regularly donated half of the cost of a church organ to any requesting congregation as part of his extensive philanthropic efforts.<sup>11</sup> The organ was dedicated in 1910.<sup>12</sup>

The original plans for the church included lecture halls and galleries, but only the main church building was completed in 1907, with the plan to add more to the building as the size of the congregation increased.<sup>13</sup> The parsonage was added sometime after 1909. A November 1909 *Sun* article mentions a wedding at the parsonage, though the 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map does not depict the building.<sup>14</sup> A Sunday School was added to the building in 1925.<sup>15</sup> All three of these connected buildings are included in the landmark designation.

In 1957, the congregation sold the building to Trinity AME Church.<sup>16</sup> Trinity AME Church has owned and worshipped in the building since. Trinity A.M.E. Church suffered a three-alarm fire in the Sunday School building in 1971, due to a lightning strike.<sup>17</sup> The building is in very good condition today.

The church contributes to the Baltimore East/South Clifton Park National Historic District.

## **Contextual History**

### *St. Mark's Reformed Church*

The church is located on the north side of Collington Square, which was established in 1880. Collington Square was the third public square established in East Baltimore as part of park-centered housing development plan following the Civil War. The parks were amenities created by housing developers as a way to attract buyers to their neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup> According to architectural historian Mary Ellen Hayward, unlike the other park squares which were developed for the wealthy, Collington Square was developed for the working class, as the houses built facing the Square were only two-story in height.<sup>19</sup>

The church congregation was largely comprised of German immigrants and German Americans in its early years, reflecting the social composition of the surrounding neighborhood.<sup>20</sup> The neighborhood was largely working-class, with citizens employed by the nearby breweries, factories, and other businesses.<sup>21</sup> The church's congregation changed with the surrounding community throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The church was a site of community activities including sports, theater, lectures, and charitable outreach and giving.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1940s, the Church became known as the St. Mark's Reformed and Evangelical Church.<sup>23</sup> By the mid-1950s, the church had merged with Faith Reformed Church, located at the corner of Patterson Park Avenue and Gough Street. The merger resulted in a new name: Faith and St. Mark's Evangelical and Reformed Church, and the church moved to another location.<sup>24</sup> By the mid 1950s, the community demographics in Collington Square had transitioned from German American to African American. In 1957, the congregation sold the building to Trinity AME Church.<sup>25</sup>

### *Trinity A.M.E. Church*

Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1881 when Old Strawbridge Church, located at the corner of Linden Avenue and Biddle Street in what is now State Center, sold its church to the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church congregation.<sup>26</sup> Bethel A.M.E. Church, founded in 1785 and recognized as one of the A.M.E. “mother churches”, purchased Old Strawbridge Church in order to foster a new congregation, which was named Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>27</sup> During the first several years of Trinity A.M.E.’s existence, the trustees of Bethel A.M.E. Church looked after the fledgling church’s finances, collections, and property.<sup>28</sup> Members of Trinity A.M.E. worshipped at its church until 1957, when the State of Maryland demolished sixteen acres adjacent to the Fifth Regiment Armory in order to construct State Center.<sup>29</sup> A plaque marking the former location of the first Trinity A.M.E. Church is located on one of the office buildings at State Center, and members of the church used to visit the site of their first church annually.<sup>30</sup> After the congregation’s displacement, they purchased the former St. Mark’s Reformed Church in 1957 and moved across town.<sup>31</sup>

Trinity A.M.E. Church has a long history of engagement in issues of social and political justice. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the church issued a resolution denouncing lynching, and held a sermon about women’s equality and rights.<sup>32</sup> The church hosted many prominent African American speakers, including Frederick Douglass, Harry Cummings, prominent Baltimore lawyer and first African American member of City Council, and Arctic explorer Matthew Henson.<sup>33</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, church members were involved in the civil rights movement.<sup>34</sup>

Trinity A.M.E. Church has served its community in East Baltimore tirelessly since establishing itself in the neighborhood, offering services and running a food bank for over 20 years.<sup>35</sup> The congregation now uses the parsonage as the W.K. Woods Outreach Center, and the Sunday School is now called the John H. Green Social Hall, named after a beloved church member.<sup>36</sup>

### **Architectural Description**

The property is comprised of three historic buildings: the church, the parsonage, and the Sunday School building. The church, located on the northwest corner of E. Hoffman Street and N. Collington Avenue, faces Collington Square to the south. The Gothic Revival/Romanesque church is constructed from rusticated square-cut coursed Port Deposit granite. The front-gabled façade is three bays wide, with two towers flanking the central bay. The central bay has three large round-arch windows on the first floor and three large pointed arch windows on the second floor, topped with a trefoil plaque, and a cross with a circle sits on the gable peak. The castellated towers both have Roman arch entrances on the first floor, flanked by carved columns, and feature stained glass windows in the upper stories. The larger, taller, buttressed eastern tower houses the church bells. The N. Collington Ave. elevation of the church has five bays, with paired pointed arch stained-glass windows in each bay separated by buttresses, and a very steep

slate roof with triangle-shaped dormer windows. The western and northern elevations abut the other church buildings and are not visible from the street. The church has intricately carved details, such as cherub's heads flanking the main entrances, gargoyles on the eastern bell tower, and carved trefoil and quatrefoil plaques.

The parsonage (now outreach center) is adjacent to the church on E. Hoffman Street. It is three bays wide and two stories tall, with a rusticated stone façade and a large arcaded porch. It has a central entrance flanked by two 1/1 windows, each topped by a delicately carved drip mold hood. A belt course separates the first and second floors, and the second floor has three 1/1 windows, topped by a simple cornice. Three plaques containing paired trefoils are located above the cornice. The other elevations are of brick construction, and the building has a flat roof.

The Sunday School (now Social Hall) is located on the northern portion of the property, at the corner of N. Collington St. and Llewelyn Ave. The primary façade faces east towards N. Collington Ave. The façade is comprised of the same rusticated Port Deposit granite as the church. The two story building is three bays wide, with a wider, slightly projecting central bay that has four 1/1 windows in the first and second floors. The left bay has a 1/1 window in the first and second floors, which is mirrored by the right bay – except that there is a doorway in the first floor. The windows all have stone sills and jack arch lintels, and the second floor windows have delicately carved drip mold hoods. The building has a belt course between the first and second stories, and a simple cornice above the second floor. There is a carved plaque located above the cornice. The building has a castellated roofline, with a central false gable. The northern and western elevations are of brick construction, and the building has a flat roof.

### **Staff recommendation**

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.

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and political issues throughout its existence, particularly regarding African American rights. After being displaced due to the construction of State Center, Trinity A.M.E. purchased this church, and has served East Baltimore since 1957. The church is important for its architecture and for the role that both congregations have played in Baltimore City's history.

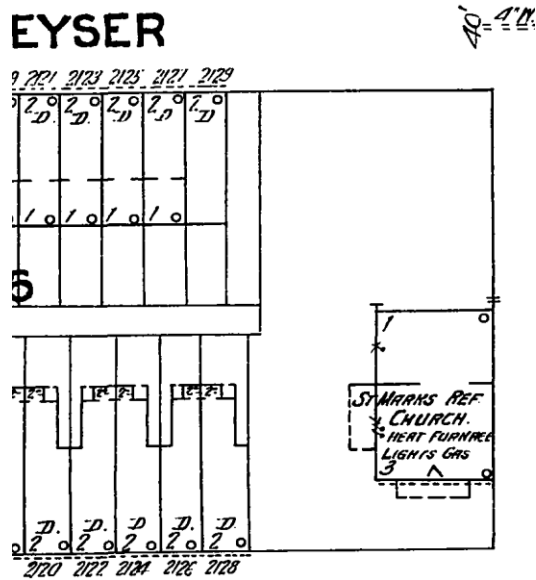
### Locator Map



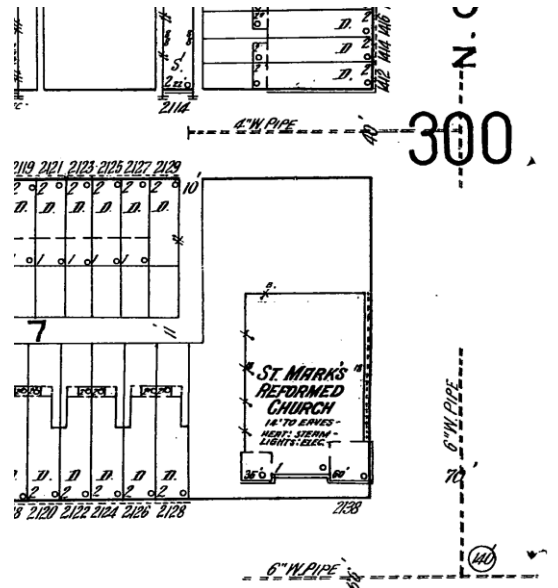


## Historic Maps

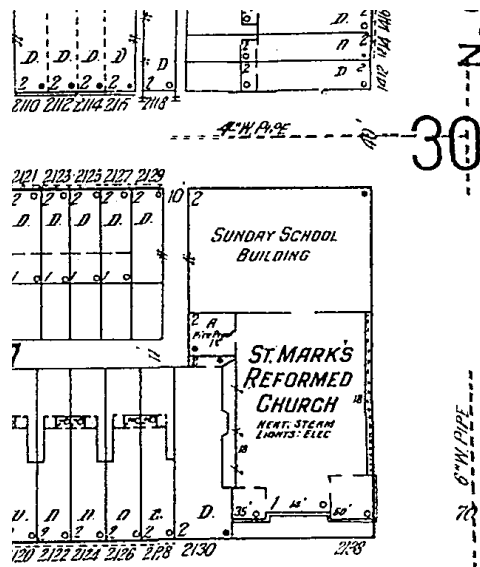
### EYSER



1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the house that the congregation worshipped in for the first few years of its existence. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1901-1902, Vol. 3, 1902, Sheet 316)



1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the church. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1914-1915, Vol. 3, 1914, Sheet 299)



1953 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, depicting the church, parsonage, and Sunday School building. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1914-1953, Vol. 3, 1914, Sheet 299)



## Historic Photos



*Former Martenet residence, which first housed St. Mark's Reformed Church, and was later demolished in order to build the church. Courtesy of the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, Lancaster, PA.*



*St. Mark's Reformed Church, ca. 1907. Courtesy of the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, Lancaster, PA.*



*St. Mark's Reformed Church, date unknown. Courtesy of the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, Lancaster, PA.*



*St. Mark's Reformed Church, view from Collington Square. Date unknown. Courtesy of the Evangelical and Reformed Historical Society, Lancaster, PA.*

## Current Photos

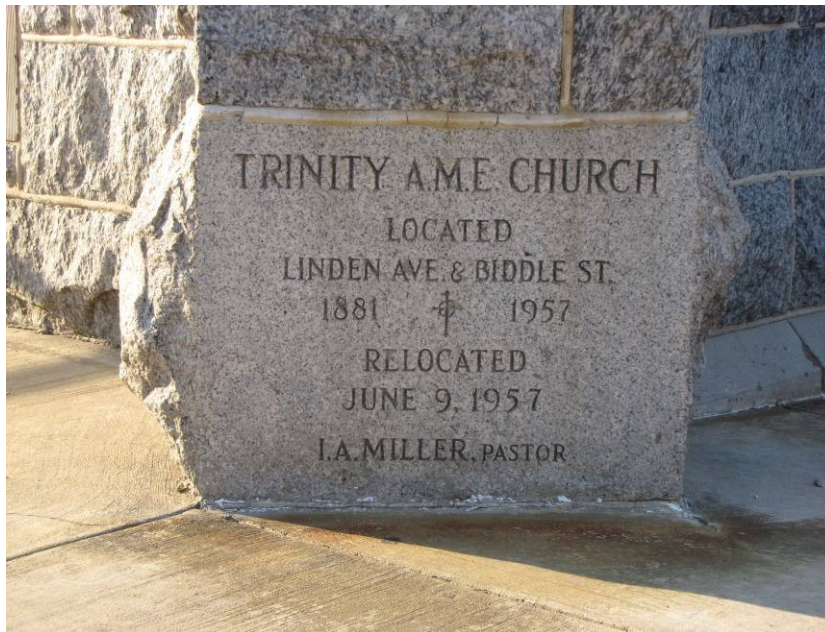


View of the E. Hoffman St. façade, with the former parsonage on the left. Facing north.



View of the Collington Ave. façade, with the former Sunday School on the right. Facing west.





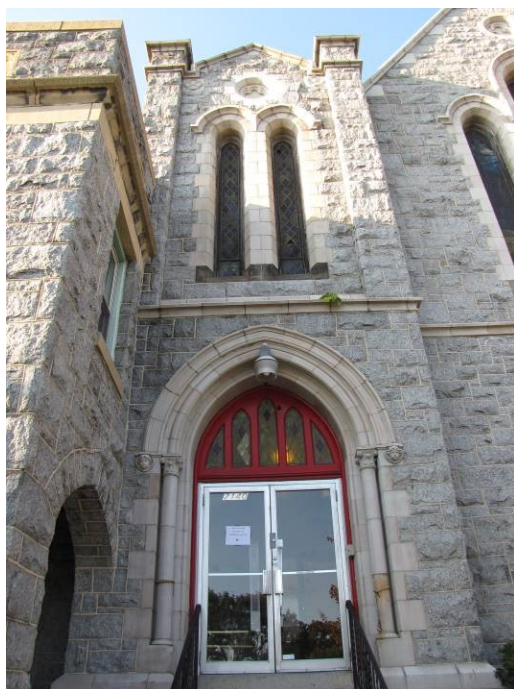
Cornerstone of the church.



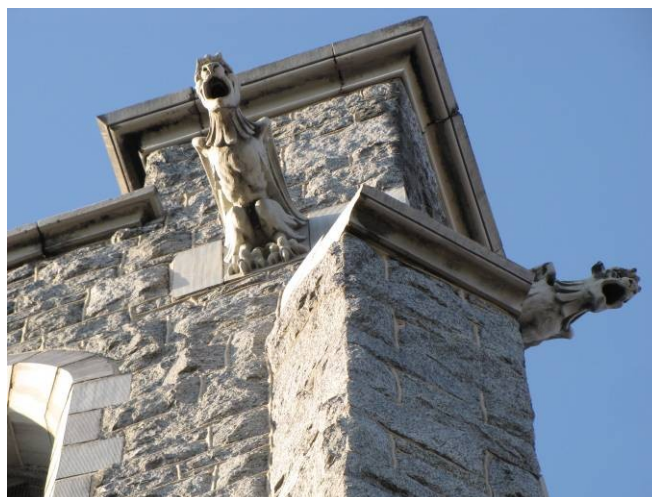
Arched stained glass windows and triangle dormers with stained glass windows, and slate roof.



Detail of doorway with carved column and detail of a cherub's head.



Entrance to church adjacent to parsonage.



Gargoyles on the bell tower.

<sup>1</sup> "St. Mark's Reformed Congregation" *The Sun* (1837-1986); May 30, 1900, pg. 10

<sup>2</sup> "St. Mark's Church Opened: Reformed Congregation Occupies New Building" *The Sun* (1837-1986); Mar 25, 1907, pg. 11; Deed, J. Frissell Martenet to Conrad Clever, March 11, 1899, Liber RO 1777, Folio 379; "Death of Ex-City Surveyor Martenet" *The Sun* (1837-1986); Nov 8, 1892, pg. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Deed, Reformed Church Extension Society to St. Marks Reformed Church, September 11, 1901, Baltimore City Land Records, Liber RO 1920, Folio 27.

<sup>4</sup> "St. Mark's Reformed Congregation"; Deed, Conrad Clever and wife to Reformed Church Extension Society, March 11, 1899, Baltimore City Land Records, Liber RO 1777, Folio 383; Dianne Russell, email communication, information from the Collection of St. Mark's Reformed Church (Baltimore, Baltimore County, Maryland), Church RG 043, Box 1, Evangelical & Reformed Historical Society, Lancaster, PA. September 26, 2012; Photograph of the Grocery Store, Collection of St. Mark's Reformed Church (Baltimore, Baltimore County, Maryland), Church RG 043, Box 1, Evangelical & Reformed Historical Society, Lancaster, PA.

<sup>5</sup> "Five Years a Church: St. Mark's Reformed Congregation Celebrates Anniversary" *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jun 5, 1905, pg. 9

<sup>6</sup> "Rev. Dr. Millard In Old Pulpit," *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 30, 1906, pg. 12

<sup>7</sup> "Theatre to Be Built: Mr. Rife Is Emphatic After Conference In Cincinnati" *The Sun* (1837-1986); Mar 4, 1906, pg. 9; "St. Mark's Church Opened: Reformed Congregation Occupies New Building,"

<sup>8</sup> "Carnegie Offers \$1,250: May Give That Sum For Organ Of New St. Mark's Church" *The Sun* (1837-1986); Apr 8, 1907, pg. 7

<sup>9</sup> "In Memory of Dr. Roth: Mosaic To Be Unveiled In St. Mark's Reformed Church", *The Sun* (1837-1986); May 15, 1915, pg. 10

<sup>10</sup> Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, "Louis Comfort Tiffany at the Metropolitan Museum," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 56, No. 1 ( Summer 1998), .p 31; "Baltimore Artist Praised", *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jun 19, 1916, pg. 14

<sup>11</sup> "Carnegie Offers \$1,250: May Give That Sum For Organ Of New St. Mark's Church"; "Carnegie Deemed Atheist: Church Will Not Ask Him For Money Because Of Remark About" Special Dispatch to the Baltimore Sun *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jan 3, 1904, pg. 1

<sup>12</sup> "Other 23 -- No Title", *The Sun* (1837-1986); May 28, 1910, pg. 7

<sup>13</sup> "St. Mark's Church Opened: Reformed Congregation Occupies New Building"



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- <sup>14</sup> “U. Of M.'S Senior Dance” *The Sun* (1837-1986); Nov 21, 1909, pg. 7; 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps 1914-1915, Vol. 3, 1914, Sheet 299)
- <sup>15</sup> “Negative Appeal Filed Against Garage Permit”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Sep 15, 1925, pg. 11
- <sup>16</sup> “Real Estate Transaction 1 -- No Title”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 28, 1957, pg. F25
- <sup>17</sup> “Death, Power Blackouts Reported During Storms: Inch And A Half Of Rain Drenches City, Eastern Suburb” *The Sun* (1837-1986); Aug 2, 1971, pg. C16
- <sup>18</sup> Mary Ellen Hayward and Charles Belfoure, *The Baltimore Rowhouse* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 72.
- <sup>19</sup> Mary Ellen Hayward, *Baltimore Alley Houses*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pg. 164.
- <sup>20</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Baltimore East/ South Clifton Park Historic District, City of Baltimore, Maryland, National Register # B-5077, Section 8, pg 15.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Section 8, pg 7-9, 11.
- <sup>22</sup> “Amateur Ball Clubs”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jun 17, 1909, pg. 10; “Other 30 -- No Title”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Apr 15, 1910, pg. 10; “To Join for Armament Limit”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Feb 26, 1915, pg. 11; “\$12 Will Save A Baby: Almost Wasted Away On Scant Milk Supply, Twenty Listed for Adoption” *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jun 14, 1914, pg. 12;
- <sup>23</sup> “Obituary”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Apr 3, 1940, pg. 9
- <sup>24</sup> Deed, Faith and St. Mark’s Evangelical and Reformed Church of Baltimore, Maryland, to Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church of Baltimore City, May 24, 1957, Baltimore City Land Records, Liber JFC 121, Folio 19; “Faith Reformed Church: Corner Stone Of A Handsome Building Laid Ky Rev. A. S. Weber”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 17, 1899, pg. 10
- <sup>25</sup> “Real Estate Transaction 1 -- No Title”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 28, 1957, pg. F25
- <sup>26</sup> “A Fatal Fall: Brief Locals”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 25, 1881, pg. 4
- <sup>27</sup> Frank P L Somerville, “After 200 years, Bethel's mission remains the same: liberation and justice”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 5, 1985, pg. 3D; “A Fatal Fall: Brief Locals”
- <sup>28</sup> “One Hundred and Thirtieth Church Anniversary, 1881-2011: Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church” (Trinity A.M.E. Church, 2011), 3.
- <sup>29</sup> “McKeldin Seeks Office Site Speed: 'Let's Get It Built,' Governor Says Of State Center” *The Sun* (1837-1986); Mar 9, 1954, pg. 8
- <sup>30</sup> Personal Communication with Trinity A.M.E. Church Elders, September 6, 2012
- <sup>31</sup> B.J. Phillips “If You Ask Me: This and that about town...”, *Afro-American* (1893-1988); May 11, 1957, pg. 6
- <sup>32</sup> “Woman’s Equality and Rights: Ladies' Night at Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 1, 1889, pg. 4 “Lynchings in Maryland: Colored People Hold a Mass-Meeting and Adopt Resolutions of” *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 31, 1896, pg. 6
- <sup>33</sup> “Frederick Douglass: He Talks, of the Island of Hayti, ‘the Black Man's Country’”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Mar 16, 1894, pg. 8 ; “Honor Harry S. Cummings: Lawyer's Colored Friends Give Reception And Banquet”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Jul 7, 1904, pg. 7; *Harry S. Cummings Papers: A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress* <http://memory.loc.gov/service/mss/eadxmlmss/eadpdfmss/2010/ms010183.pdf>; “Succeeds Mr. Newcomer”, *The Sun* (1837-1986); Oct 21, 1911, pg. 9
- <sup>34</sup> Sonora Johnson, email communication, September 7, 2012.
- <sup>35</sup> “Hunger By Any Other Name” *The Sun* [Baltimore, Md] 22 Nov 2006: 12A.
- <sup>36</sup> “One Hundred and Thirtieth Church Anniversary, 1881-2011: Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church”, pg.5.