

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## **BLACKWELL-ISRAEL SAMUEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH BUILDING** 3956 SOUTH LANGLEY AVENUE

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**Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on  
Chicago Landmarks February 6, 2020**



**CITY OF CHICAGO**  
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development  
Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.*

*The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

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# **Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church Building**

**3956 South Langley Avenue**

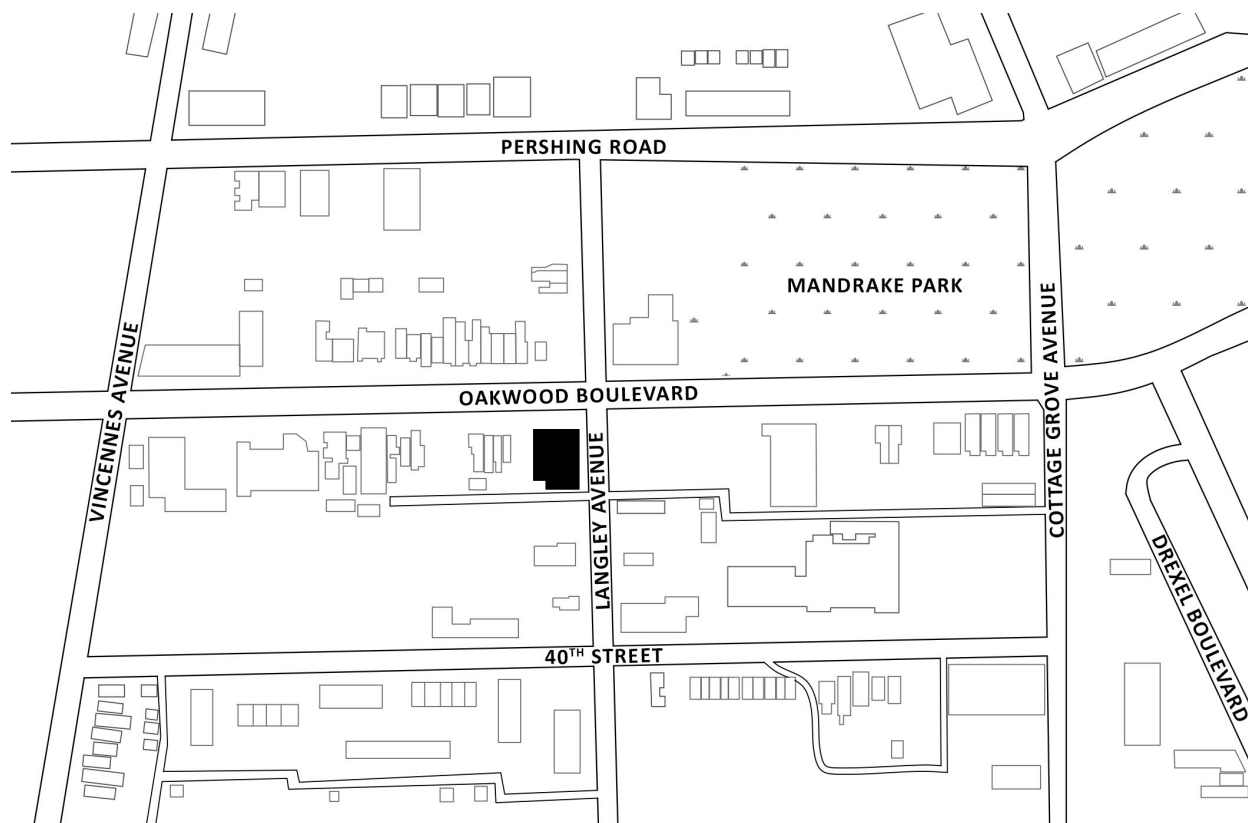
**Date of Construction: 1886**

**Architects: Edbrooke & Burnham**

The Blackwell-Israel Samuel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church building was constructed in 1886 as the second place of worship for the Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church. The church was designed in the Romanesque Revival style by the nationally renowned architectural firm of Edbrooke and Burnham. The exterior features an imposing, rusticated, limestone façade and a towering, central, pyramidal roof. At the north and east facades, cross gables extending from the central roof terminate in large bays. Gable end bases and peaks are accented by arabesque and foliated carvings. Edbrooke and Burnham's design emphasized verticality with its exaggeratedly pitched roofs and corner tower, to evoke the picturesque, and permanence through the use of monumental, classically inspired, rounded arches and a rough-hewn stone exterior, meant to transcend both time and culture.

In 1924, the Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church merged into St. James Methodist Episcopal Church and two years later the congregation vacated the building at 3956 South Langley Avenue for its new church at 46<sup>th</sup> and Ellis Streets (extant). Three years later, Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church (now Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church) relocated from 3700 South Langley Avenue to the former Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church building. This continued use as a place of worship in the Methodist doctrine has maintained the building as a center of religion, education, reform, and community for nearly 135 years.

The building continues to serve as a place of worship under Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church. Both Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church and previously Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church have preserved the original architectural and character-defining features and served as sentinels of Edbrooke and Burnham's only currently known church in the City of Chicago.



**The Blackwell-Israel Samuel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Building, shaded in the above map, is located at the southwest corner of Oakwood Boulevard and Langley Avenue on the border of the Grand Boulevard and Oakland Community Areas.**

# **HISTORY OF OAKLAND COMMUNITY AREA AND BRONZEVILLE**

## *Oakland*

The building is situated within Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood and the current boundaries of the Grand Boulevard Community Area, but is historically associated with the Oakland Community Area. Bounded by 35<sup>th</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets, Lake Michigan, Pershing Road, and Cottage Grove and Vincennes Avenues, the Oakland Community Area was first settled by Samuel Ellis. In 1831, Ellis purchased 135 acres of property along Lake Michigan and operated a tavern at present-day 35<sup>th</sup> Street and Lake Park Avenue.

Over the subsequent two decades, scattered cottages and farms dotted the landscape. In 1851, industrialist Charles Cleaver purchased 22 acres of swampland near 38<sup>th</sup> Street and Lake Michigan from Ellis. On it, he constructed a soap factory and company town that included a commissary, house of worship, town hall, and homes for workers. The development was named "Cleaverville."

Development in the community continued following the opening of the Union Stock Yards, just west of the area, in 1865. New residents flocked to the area because of its proximity to the Union Stock Yards, Camp Douglas, and a commercial district which included numerous popular saloons. The addition of a horsecar line in 1867 improved access to the city center.

Forty years after Ellis's initial settlement and twenty years after the establishment of "Cleaverville," the area was subdivided and renamed "Oakland." At the same time, the creation of Oakwood Boulevard and Drexel Boulevard by the South Park Commission spurred residential development. Within five years, Oakland was an elite community and its streets were lined with mansions built for wealthy Chicagoans.

Transportation in the community was greatly improved with the opening of the Illinois Central Railroad terminal at 39<sup>th</sup> Street and Cottage Grove Avenue in 1881. Nonetheless, a decade later, the elite residents of Oakland began moving out of the community. The mansions they left behind were divided into apartments that housed mostly the Irish working class. The neighborhood became more diverse as African Americans moved into the area, with numbers swelling during the Great Migration (1916-1920), and, by the 1930s, Jewish, German, Canadian, English, and Japanese immigrants were drawn there. A diverse building stock, including single-family residences and apartments, was constructed to accommodate the influx of immigrants.

In 1905, the Abraham Lincoln Center (located at the northeast corner of Langley Avenue and Oakwood Boulevard) was founded by Jenkin Lloyd Jones. It was designed by his nephew Frank Lloyd Wright as a meeting place for people of various races, religions, and nationalities.



Development in the community flourished following the opening of the Union Stock Yards, just west of Oakland, in 1865. New residents flocked to the area because of its proximity to the Union Stock Yards, Camp Douglas, and a commercial district which included numerous popular saloons. Pictured above is the commercial corridor along Pershing Road at Cottage Grove Avenue (Chicago History Museum). Below is a view of the opulent residences of Aldine Square (demolished). Constructed in 1874, between 37th and 38th Streets and Vincennes and Eden Avenues, Aldine Square represents the typical housing stock which lined Oakland's streets and served as residences for elite Chicagoans (Historic American Building Survey).





**Development in Oakland was also spurred by transportation improvements including the opening of the Illinois Central Railroad terminal at 39th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue in 1881, pictured above (Ryerson and Burnham Archives). The bottom photograph depicts the Abraham Lincoln Center (located at the northeast corner of Langley Avenue and Oakwood Boulevard) which opened in 1905 as a meeting place for people of various races, religions, and nationalities (Abraham Lincoln Center 1913 Annual Report).**



## *Bronzeville*

Between 1850 and 1870, the African-American population in Chicago grew from 320 to 3,700. Settlement was concentrated in small pockets of the city and outlying suburbs, with the largest in Chicago's Near South Side. By 1870, a long narrow strip known as the "Black Belt" was established, bounded by Van Buren Street on the north, 39<sup>th</sup> Street on the South, affluent white residential neighborhoods on the east, and by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railyards on the west. Despite its growing population, there remained a disconnect between the area and Chicago's established institutions and networks. In response, the "Black Belt" evolved into an independent and full-fledged commercial, social, and political center.

By 1900, the population of the "Black Belt" had reached 30,000, due in part to the increasing prosperity of the African-American community. By 1908, entrepreneur Jesse Binga founded Chicago's first black-owned life insurance, realty, and financial institution. As financial resources became available, commerce and trade continued to transform and grow into a broad range of professional, commercial, and manufacturing interests.

The next decade marked the beginning of the Great Migration. African-Americans migrated in large numbers from the southern United States to northern cities, including Chicago, with the hope of better lives. However, reality fell far short for many as conditions were still repressive and segregated in the north. Between 1916 and 1920, more than 50,000 African-Americans from the southern United States migrated to Chicago.

Within Chicago, they were restricted to living in the "Black Belt" in white-owned housing that was often dilapidated, overcrowded, and typically more expensive than housing in white areas. By 1920, African-Americans constituted 32 percent of the area's 76,703 residents and by 1950, at its peak population, African-Americans encompassed 99 percent of the community's 114,557 residents. It became a flourishing epicenter of black-owned businesses, civic organizations, and churches and home to a number of prominent intellectuals, politicians, sports figures, artists, and writers. The area was renamed "Bronzeville" by the *Chicago Bee* in 1930.

Due to the isolated nature of the area, Bronzeville's residents worked to establish a self-sufficient community with financial, cultural, and community institutions, free of racial restrictions still enforced in many of Chicago's communities. Because of the rapid growth of population, Bronzeville thrived despite its exclusion from the economic and social mainstream of the rest of the city.

As the African-American population in Bronzeville grew, social clubs and organizations dedicated to developing the community and culture of the neighborhood became even more active. Organizations hosted dances, benefit performances, property owner meetings, classes, lectures, alumni receptions, and civil rights activities in venues like the Blackwell-Israel Samuel (previously Blackwell Memorial) A.M.E. Zion Church building. This and other churches were instrumental in the development of Bronzeville, from both a spiritual and social stand point.

# **HISTORY OF BLACKWELL-ISRAEL SAMUEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH**

Originally constructed as the Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church in 1886, the building has continuously remained a place of worship based on the Methodist doctrine. In 1929, just a few years after Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church had vacated the building, it became home to the current congregation, Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church (previously Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion). Each congregation in their turn has maintained the building as a center of religion, education, reform, and community.

## *Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church: Initial Construction and Development*

The origins of Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church can be traced back to the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple. The Chicago Temple was founded in 1831 by Methodist circuit riders and held its first services in the homes of its members. In 1834, the congregation built a log cabin north of the Chicago River. Four years later, they floated it across the river and rolled it over a series of logs to reach a new site at Washington and Clark Streets.

A conventional brick church was constructed in 1845 to replace the log cabin and served the congregation until 1858. At this time, the congregation's leaders dedicated a four-story, multi-use structure with stores and other businesses on the first two floors and church space for worship and classes on the upper two floors. Simultaneously, a group of congregants founded Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, an offshoot to serve members who had moved to remote southern suburbs, today Chicago's Near South Side Community Area.

A decade later, Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church was formed as a branch of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church to provide a place of worship for members who had continued to move south, away from the growing city center. The new congregation constructed their first church in 1873 at Egan Street (now Pershing Road) and Langley Avenue.

Over the next 13 years, the congregation and its programming expanded and a much larger structure was needed. In 1886, the architectural firm of Edbrooke and Burnham was hired to design and construct the existing building, one block south of the congregation's home. The new church was dedicated in 1887 and featured a second floor sanctuary with dedicated educational, performance, and meeting spaces in a community center on the first floor.

In the community center, Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church hosted lectures, Sunday school classes, socials, concerts, annual meetings, conventions, and commencement services. Prominent local organizations, clubs, schools, and unions which utilized the space include: Chicago Deaconess Aid Society, Ladies Aid Society of Oakland, Volunteers of America, South Side Central Labor and Relief Bureau, Chicago District of the Epworth League, Chicago Training School for City, Home, and Foreign Missions, Christian Citizenship League, Northwestern Glee, Banjo, and Mandolin Clubs, Women's Foreign Missionary Society, and Woman's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U). Events brought notable speakers including



Constructed in 1886 for the Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church the building was designed by the prominent national architectural firm of Edbrooke and Burnham in the Romanesque Revival style. The new church featured a second-floor sanctuary with dedicated educational, performance, and meeting spaces in a community center on the first floor. The pictured photograph was taken in 1911 from the Abraham Lincoln Center at the northeast corner of Oakwood Boulevard and Langley Avenue looking southwest (Chicago History in Postcards Collection).

Sam Porter Jones, Brigadier General Fielding, General Ballington Booth, Illinois Supreme Court Judge Orin N. Carter, General Joseph Wheeler, Mecca Marie Varney (Franchise Department Superintendent for the W.C.T.U), and Emily M. Hill (President of the Cook County W.C.T.U).

Beyond the church walls, congregation members organized picnics, concerts, and festivals throughout the Oakland Community Area. The congregation also opened the sanctuary to other religious congregations to worship including the Isaiah Temple.

In 1924, Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church merged into St. James Methodist Episcopal Church following a devastating fire at St. James. Two years later the congregation moved from 3956 South Langley Avenue to its new church building at 46<sup>th</sup> and Ellis Streets (extant), designed by Tallmadge and Watson. The Langley building remained vacant for three years until it was purchased in 1929 by Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church.

### *Blackwell-Israel Samuel (previously Blackwell Memorial) A.M.E. Zion Church*

The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church was officially recognized in 1821, but the foundations of the Church can be traced back to the late 1700s. In 1796, after facing open acts of discrimination by the white Methodist churches, black parishioners left to establish new churches. These early black churches were independent congregations of the Methodist Episcopal Church denomination and eventually led to the creation of the A.M.E. Zion denomination. The A.M.E. Zion denomination started as an informal meeting of multiple black-founded churches from various cities. The first church collectively run by the A.M.E. Zion, simply named Zion, was built in New York in 1800.

In 1820, after severing ties with the white-dominated Methodist church not ready to accept black ministers, six of the African-American churches gathered for their annual conference and founded the A.M.E. Zion church. Church membership flourished following the Civil War, as northern A.M.E. Zion ministers and members traveled the southern United States to actively help the newly freed people and established A.M.E. Zion branches.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the A.M.E. Zion churches became an integral partner in helping build black communities and developing leadership among the freedmen in the South. In the latter half of the century, the churches played a significant role in the civil rights movement, with many members joining in protests and marches, while individual churches opened their doors to allow civil rights planning meeting and rallies. A.M.E. Zion was also one of the first denominations to ordain women as ministers and promote women by putting them in positions of authority within the Church. Today, the Church has more than 1.4 million members in congregations throughout the United States and leads missionary activities around the world.

Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion church began in 1918 as the small congregation of St. Catherine A.M.E. Zion Church, named after the sainted mother of Bishop George Lincoln Blackwell under whose direction the new group came into being. The congregation held its

services in a rented store in the Hampton Building (demolished) located at Langley Avenue and Pershing Road.

Over subsequent years, the congregation experienced a period of growth and expansion and acquired the former French Evangelical Methodist Episcopal Church at 3700 South Langley Avenue (demolished) in 1920. In 1926, to honor the memory of the Blackwell family after the passing of Bishop Blackwell, the name of the congregation was changed to the Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church. In 1929, Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church secured the

BLACKWELL MEMORIAL A. M. E. ZION CHURCH CLOSES CONFERENCE YEAR



Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion church, one of Chicago's leading Zion churches, close its conference year, Sunday, preparatory to the annual conference which convenes in Detroit, Mich., June 21-25. Top left is the usher board which has done some excellent work to make the year a success. Right now they are planning an event for church. Top center: The Young Women's Missionary Society, Rev. William T. Beck, the pastor of the church is shown in the inset, while he has only pastored the church two years he has done a fine job of reducing the debt and repairing the church building. Top right is Rev. Missouri Grey, evangelist, and her group. She has been conducting revival services for the church. Bottom right: The Women's Missionary Society, one of the most active auxiliaries in the church. Lower left are the choirs. The senior choir is shown at left and the gospel choir at right. Bottom center is the beautiful \$25,000 church edifice.—Gushiere photo.

For the last nine decades, Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church has served as a center of religion, education, reform, and community. The church has opened the building to local and national organizations, clubs, and schools including: the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Conference and National Council, the Michigan Annual conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the local Republican Party, the Nathaniel Dett Club, the Shelby Dramatic Players, the Poro School of Beauty, Church Women United in Illinois, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Pictured above is a *Chicago Defender* article celebrating the closing of the 1939 conference for Black-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church (*The Chicago Defender*).

site of the former Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church. Seven years later, the church was able to amortize the mortgage on this new location.

During the last nine decades, the church has expanded their community programming and services and has maintained the first floor as a community center. The space has been home to the church's own clubs including: the Flower Club, Buds of Promise, Junior Ushers, George Lincoln Blackwell Club, Women's Missionary Society, Blackwell Music Department, William T. Beck Club, Student Exchange Program, Blackwell Link, Senior Choir, Gospel Choir, Children's Choir, Young Adult Choir, Evangelical Memorial Choir, and Blackwell Chorale. These groups hosted teas, fundraisers, meetings, festivals, fashion shows, rallies, banquets, and annual retreats.

Additionally, the church opened its space to local and national organizations, clubs, and schools including: the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Conference and National Council, the Michigan Annual conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the local Republican Party, the Nathaniel Dett Club, the Shelby Dramatic Players, the Poro School of Beauty, Church Women United in Illinois, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). These organizations have hosted annual conferences, musical and dramatic performances, commencement services, political meetings, and membership rallies in the first-floor community center.

Events brought distinguished speakers to Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church including: U.S. Representative Oscar Stanton De Priest, Charles Evers and Vivian Malone from the NAACP, Mary Meeks (the first black woman to hold the position of Vice-President and President-Elect for Church Women United in Illinois), Attorney Thomas N. Todd, President of the Chicago chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1971 and president of Operation PUSH from 1983 -1984, and State Representative Corneal A. Davis.

In 2008, Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church merged with Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church to form Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church. In 2019, the original Blackwell Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church celebrated their 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the former Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church building. Over the last nine decades, Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church has continued as an active congregation and today is led by Reverend Todd N. Jarrett with a dedicated congregation of approximately 80 members, some of whom have been with the church for at least six decades.

## **ARCHITECTURE OF BLACKWELL-ISRAEL SAMUEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH**

### *Architectural Description*

Designed by Edbrooke and Burnham and completed in 1886, the building is a handsome example of the Romanesque Revival architectural style. Introduced in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, the Romanesque Revival style was influenced by the eleventh- and twelfth-century architecture of Europe, which in turn was inspired by the architecture of the





Designed by Edbrooke and Burnham and completed in 1886, the building is a handsome example of the Romanesque Revival architectural style. The revival style features heavy, often asymmetrical masonry construction, usually with rough-faced stonework, deeply recessed windows and entries, and towers with steep roofs. Wide, rounded arches are an important identifying feature, often resting on squat columns. Decorative detail may be found in the stonework and on column capitals. Edbrooke and Burnham designed a striking and subtly detailed exterior composed of rusticated Bedford Indiana limestone with bands of smooth limestone accenting the top of the gables and first and second floors, pictured in the top photograph, embellished with arabesque and foliated carvings at the bases and peaks of the gable ends and arched openings at the windows, doors, portico, and belfry, pictured in the bottom photographs.



ancient Roman and Byzantine Empires. The revival style features heavy often asymmetrical masonry construction, usually with rough-faced stonework, deeply recessed windows and entries, and towers with steep roofs. Wide, rounded arches are an important identifying feature, often resting on squat columns. Decorative detail may be found in the stonework and on column capitals.

At Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church, Edbrooke and Burnham designed a striking and subtly detailed exterior composed of rusticated Bedford Indiana limestone with bands of smooth limestone accenting the top of the gables and first and second floors, a sharp contrast to the dark brick exteriors of All Souls Church (demolished) and Memorial Church of Christ (extant) located one half block to the east.

The building is rectangular in plan on a north-south axis with a main, steep, pyramidal roof over the sanctuary. At the north and east façades cross gables extending from the central roof terminate in large bays. Gable end peaks and bases are accented with arabesque and foliated carvings. These curving, organic motifs are repeated throughout the exterior at arched openings at the windows, doors, portico, and belfry.

Edbrooke and Burnham's design features three distinctive elements at the northeast corner of the structure: the one-story entrance vestibule at the north facade enclosing the main entry and stairs to the sanctuary; the entrance portico at the northeast corner; and the bell tower. At the original main entrance, the projecting bay features three round arched windows at the north elevation. The arches are supported by limestone impostes with foliated carvings. Historically, there was an entrance at the east and west sides of the entrance bay, inset within a round arch, each with an interior stair that met at a central, interior landing, converging into a single stair leading into the main sanctuary space. These entrances have been closed with the east stair reconfigured to serve the entrance from the portico. The entrance bay has bi-level flat roofs with a cornice of profiled stone coping atop recessed limestone panels.

The large, double-arched portico to the east of the main entrance bay uses a similar architectural vocabulary including round-arched openings and a paneled cornice concealing a flat roof. Profiled limestone lintels supported by acanthus-ornamented brackets span the bottom of the arches. From the north, the arch frames an off-center, door-sized opening in the portico's south wall accented with similar brackets and a simple stone balustrade and railings below.

While Romanesque Revival churches typically feature low, hipped roofs, Edbrooke and Burnham emphasized verticality through a steeply pitched pyramidal roof featuring a projecting bell tower. The stone bell tower was originally topped with a wood-framed steeple which was destroyed by fire in 1991.

There is a round arch opening at each façade of the belfry, the upper section of a bell tower in which the bells are housed. The arches are supported by impostes with decorative carving wrapping around each corner, above which faux bartizans extend to the roof. Each of these is topped with a foliate relief carving centered around a single flower. Each corner of the bell tower shaft is enriched by three thin, grouped, Corinthian columns. The north and east façades of the bell tower shaft also feature three narrow, round-arched window openings.



**The double-arched portico to the east of the main entrance bay features round-arched openings and a paneled cornice. Profiled limestone lintels supported by acanthus-ornamented brackets span the bottom of the arches.**





The building is rectangular in plan with a main, steep, pyramidal roof over the sanctuary. At the north and east façades, cross gables extending from the central roof terminate in large bays. Gable end bases and peaks are accented with arabesque and foliated carvings, pictured bottom left. Edbrooke and Burnham's design also features three asymmetric projections including the one-story entrance vestibule at the north façade, pictured top right; the entrance portico at the northeast corner, pictured on the previous page; and the bell tower, pictured at the top left.

Stained-glass windows were designed to be a prominent decorative feature, but most of the original windows have been lost over the years. A handful of original stained-glass windows are set within the two arched windows located at the second floor of the north and east façades and in the arches at the north façade of the projecting entrance vestibule. The windows feature a delicate floral design in jewel tones. Taken en masse, Edbrooke and Burnham's imposing design creates a distinctive presence at the corner of Langley Avenue and Oakwood Boulevard.

### *The Architects: Edbrooke and Burnham*

The former Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church building was designed by the renowned architecture firm of Edbrooke & Burnham. The firm was established in 1879 as a partnership between senior partner Willoughby James Edbrooke and Franklin Pierce Burnham and was responsible for a significant number of public buildings throughout the country including the Georgia State Capitol (Atlanta, Georgia, 1889), Kane County Courthouse (Geneva, Illinois, 1892), the Seventh District Police Station (Chicago, 1888), and the Government Building for the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893).

A native of Illinois, Edbrooke (1843-1896) was born September 3, 1843, in Deerfield. His father was a contractor and builder from New England who settled in Lake County, Illinois in 1836. Edbrooke studied architecture under the supervision of his father until he was old enough to attend school in Chicago.

By 1868 Edbrooke had begun his architectural practice in Chicago and went into partnership with his brothers, who left the architectural design side of the business to Edbrooke, while they handled construction and building operations. His brothers later left the practice and Edbrooke established the firm of Edbrooke & Burnham in 1879. During this partnership, Edbrooke designed several buildings at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana including the Main Administration Building (1879), Washington Hall (1881), LaFortune Student Center (1883), and Sorin Hall (1889). Also notable was his Christ Episcopal Church (Waukegan, Illinois, 1887-1889) and the Mecca Flats (Chicago, 1892). Edbrooke served as Commissioner of Buildings for the City of Chicago under Mayor Roche (1887-1889), a position that put him in charge of building regulations as well as the construction of municipal buildings. He is credited with the design of a dozen school buildings in the city.

From 1891-1893, he served as the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department under President Harrison and initiated the design of at least forty buildings including: the San Jose Post Office (San Jose, California, 1892), the Old Post Office Building (Washington, D.C., 1899), the Federal Court House and Post Office (Martinsburg, West Virginia, 1895), the York Federal Building (York, Pennsylvania, 1895), the Milwaukee Federal Building (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1899), the Federal Archive Building (New York, New York, 1899), and the Federal Court House and Post Office for the Upper Midwest (St. Paul, Minnesota, 1902).

Edbrooke was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. He was also Vice-President and a director of the Illinois State Sportsmen's Association, President of the Lake County Club, and a member of the Oriental Consistory and the Medinah Temple.





Established in 1879, the architectural firm of Edbrooke and Burnham is well-known for their work in Chicago and across the nation including the Georgia State Capitol (Atlanta, Georgia, 1889, bottom right, Jody Cook), the Kane County Courthouse (Geneva, Illinois, 1892, bottom left, Kane County), the Seventh District Police Station (Chicago, Illinois, 1888, top left, Digital Research Library of Illinois History Journal), Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church (Chicago, 1886, center left, Chicago History in Postcards), the Mecca Flats (Chicago, 1891, top right, Chicago Architectural Preservation Archive), and the Government Building for the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, Illinois, 1893, center right, Chicago Postcard Museum).

Born October 30, 1853, Franklin Pierce Burnham (1853-1909) was a native of Rockford, Illinois born to Paul and Sarah Burnham. Burnham was inspired to become an architect by his father who was a carpenter. Burnham was educated at Old Moseley School in Chicago before beginning work at the architectural offices of J. H. Barrows at the age of 14.

Burnham briefly moved to San Francisco, California, following his marriage to Adelia S. Miliken in 1877, but shortly returned to the city following the death of his mother in 1879. While in Chicago, Burnham was named the Kenilworth Company Architect for Kenilworth, Illinois in 1889 and designed several of the planned community's original structures including several residences, a train station, and a church. Burnham also designed residences in Evanston, Chicago, and Kansas City.

Edbrooke and Burnham dissolved their partnership by 1896 due to the uneven division of responsibilities and disputes over who received credit for structures created for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. At the Exposition, Burnham was officially credited only with the Cold Storage Warehouse, while Edbrooke was credited with the United States Government Building and the other official federal exhibits.

Burnham returned to California in 1898 to once more open an independent practice in Los Angeles. In California, he designed twelve Carnegie libraries, nine on his own, and three as part of the firm of Burnham & Bliesner.

The firm of Edbrooke & Burnham only designed a few buildings outside of the Romanesque Revival style including the Georgia State Capital (Atlanta, Georgia, 1889), the Government Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893), and the Main Administration Building at the University of Notre Dame (South Bend, Indiana, 1879). These buildings were designed in the Second Empire and Beaux Arts architectural styles, popular at the time of construction.

The former Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church building is the only currently known church designed by Edbrooke and Burnham in Chicago. Another church attributed to Edbrooke and Burnham is the extant Christ Episcopal Church, located at 410 Grand Avenue in Waukegan, Illinois, also designed in the Romanesque Revival style and completed in 1889.

## CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation” and it possesses sufficient historic design integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State or National Heritage***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church building, formerly the Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church building, has served as a center for community, religion, education, and reform, in the Oakland community and Bronzeville neighborhood since 1886.
- Under the Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church, the building’s first congregation, the building served as a multi-faceted community center. The church hosted their own organizations, but also opened the building to the public and allowed local and national clubs, unions, and associations such as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union to meet and organize in the first-floor educational and social spaces.
- When Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church moved into the building in 1929, they continued to offer use of the building as a center of community, education, and culture. Here, the church’s clubs and community organizations hosted teas, fundraisers, meetings, festivals, fashion shows, rallies, banquets, annual retreats and conferences, musical and dramatic performances, commencement services, political meetings, and membership rallies in the first-floor community center.
- Events hosted at the Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church building brought distinguished speakers including: U.S. Representative Oscar Stanton De Priest, Charles Evers and Vivian Malone of the NAACP, Mary Meeks, the first black woman to hold the position of Vice-President and President-Elect for Church Women United in Illinois, Attorney Thomas N. Todd, president of the Chicago chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1971 and president of Operation PUSH from 1983-1984, and State Representative Corneal A. Davis.



#### ***Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The exterior of the building exhibits fine architectural detailing and craftsmanship through its design and use of materials. Designed in the Romanesque Revival style, the exterior of the building features an imposing, rusticated, limestone façade and a towering, central, pyramidal roof. At the north and east façades, cross gables extending from the central roof terminate in large bays. Gable end bases and peaks are accented with arabesque and foliated carvings. These curved, organic motifs are repeated throughout the exterior at arched openings at the windows, doors, portico, and bell tower.
- Edbrooke and Burnham’s design emphasized verticality with its exaggeratedly pitched roofs and corner tower, to evoke the picturesque, and permanence through the use of large-scale, classically inspired, rounded arches and a rough-hewn stone exterior, meant to transcend both time and culture.

#### ***Criterion 5: Work of Significant Architect or Designer***

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- Edbrooke and Burnham was a nationally recognized architectural firm during the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The firm was responsible for the Main Administration Building (1879), Washington Hall (1881), LaFortune Student Center (1883), and Sorin Hall (1889), all at the University of Notre Dame, Christ Episcopal Church (Waukegan, Illinois, 1887–1889), Mecca Flats (Chicago, 1892), and their most noteworthy building, the Georgia State Capitol (Atlanta, Georgia, 1889).
- Willoughby James Edbrooke is regarded as a prominent nineteenth-century architect and is known for his work at the World’s Columbian Exposition, over forty governmental buildings during his tenure as Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, and numerous municipal buildings as Commissioner of Buildings for the City of Chicago.
- Franklin B. Burnham is a noted architect for his work as the Kenilworth Company Architect for Kenilworth, Illinois, and later his works in California, including twelve Carnegie libraries.

### ***Integrity Criterion***

*The integrity of the proposed Landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value.*

The Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church building retains its historic location, setting, exterior design, materials, and workmanship. Known alterations include: the removal of the steeple in 1991, the loss of almost all the original stained glass windows in the 1970s, roof replacement in 1990, and closing original entrances and enclosing of a portion of the interior staircase prior to 1955.

Today, the Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church building retains the majority of the historic, architectural, and aesthetic features of the original 1886 Oakland Methodist Episcopal Church building. Alterations and maintenance over time have been mostly sympathetic to the original design intent and have preserved the integrity and character-defining features of the building for nearly 135 years.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of Blackwell-Israel Samuel A.M.E. Zion Church, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as follows:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

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University of Illinois at Chicago: City of Chicago Building Permits

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