

SBR Draft

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Mt. Canaan Baptist Church
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 60 Sycamore St.
City or town: Paris State: Texas County: Lamar
Not for publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (nomination request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (meets does not meet) the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:
 national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

_____ State Historic Preservation Officer		_____
Signature of certifying official / Title		Date
Texas Historical Commission		
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____	_____
Signature of commenting or other official	Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government	

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register.
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	1	objects
1	1	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Religion: religious facility

Current Functions: Religion: religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Gothic Revival

Principal Exterior Materials: Wood, Asphalt shingles, Glass

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 6-8)

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: Criteria Consideration A (Religious Properties)

Areas of Significance: Social History, Ethnic Heritage: Black (*local level of significance*)

Period of Significance: 1910-1973

Significant Dates: 1910

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: NA

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 9-14)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 15)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. Part 1 approved on (date)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Lamar County Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than 1 acre

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 33.648348° Longitude: -95.555452°

Verbal Boundary Description: Property ID# 19958 TEXAS & PACIFIC ADDITION, BLOCK 5, LOT E PT OF 11 & E PT OF LOT 12, 60 SYCAMORE ST (0.152 acres)

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes all property historically and currently associated with the nominated building.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Sandra Massey (Member) with assistance from Bonnie L. Tipton (Historian), Texas Historical Commission and Dr. Corey Capers (Texas State University-San Marcos)

Organization: Mt. Canaan Baptist Church

Street & number: 60 Sycamore St.

City or Town: Paris State: TX Zip Code: 75460

Email: skmassey4@yahoo.com

Telephone: (903) 227-0669

Date: 8/1/2022

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 16-17)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 18-29)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 30-40)

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photograph Log

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church
Paris, Lamar County, Texas
Photographed by Bonnie L. Tipton
July 25-26, 2022

Photo 1: Looking west at Mt. Canaan Baptist Church and Cotton Compress where congregants historically worked.

Photo 2: Looking southeast across the Texas & Pacific Railway tracks at the church (center background), compress (right), and former gin (left).

Photo 3: North elevation, camera facing south.

Photo 4: Northeast oblique showing one of two main entrances. Camera faces southwest.

Photo 5: Detail of northeast tower.

Photo 6: Original cornerstone beneath siding on the west elevation. "Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Erected 1910, Rev. M.B. Atkins"

Photo 7: Northwest oblique showing the second of two main entrances. Scalloped fascia is original. Camera looks southeast.

Photo 8: West elevation showing rear addition. Camera looks northeast.

Photo 9: Dentilled wood molding and modest "capitals" top corner posts. Camera looking northwest at south elevation.

Photo 10: Rear (south elevation) additions supported the growing congregation. Camera looks north.

Photo 11: Historic-age siding on the east elevation. Camera looks northwest.

Photo 12: Sanctuary. Camera looking southwest.

Photo 13: Sanctuary. Camera looking northeast.

Photo 14: Baptismal and mural on south wall of sanctuary.

Photo 15: Hallway, view west.

Photo 16: Original molding, transom, and door inside the dining room. Camera looks east.

Photo 17: The kitchen (now enclosed) is in an area that was likely a porch added in 1939. Looking south inside the southwest corner of the building.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Narrative Description

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, built in 1910 in Paris, Lamar County, is a one-story wood frame church with a modified cross plan and asymmetrical corner towers that stand as a vernacular expression of Gothic Revival ecclesial style. It is of pier and beam construction with a mix of wood and vinyl siding and an asphalt shingle cross gabled roof. Located two blocks south of the Texas & Pacific Railway tracks, it is on a grassy lot across from the city's cotton oil mill and refinery. The church and industrial buildings are the only extant resources that document the former TP Community, an African American enclave that developed in the early 20th century at the southern edge of Paris. Since its original construction in 1910, the small self-supporting congregation has built rear additions, made interior alterations, and performed routine repairs to improve, modernize, and maintain the building for subsequent generations. Evident in this work is a pattern of reusing historic materials to supplement non-historic materials in new construction and/or repairs. Overall, it retains good integrity—particularly of location, setting, design, association, and feeling—to convey its historic significance.

Setting

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church is at the southernmost citylimits of Paris, Lamar County, approximately one mile south of the county courthouse and across the former Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks. It is on a corner lot at Sycamore Street between South Main Street and Church Street, two primary thoroughfares in Paris. The large Paris Cotton Oil Mill and Refinery is across South Main Street. Many congregants, particularly in its early years, worked for the mill or railway company. Topographically, the area is flat with mature trees. Streets around the church are paved but without curbs or sidewalks. Historically, the neighborhood was known as the “TP Community” with modest frame residences next to cotton industry buildings on blocks around the church. Today, Mt. Canaan Baptist Church is the only extant resource left of that community. The area is characterized by light industry buildings between vacant lots.

The nominated boundary is a 0.15-acre lot with the sanctuary sited against the east property line and set back from the roadway. Because the lots at the corner of S. Main and Sycamore are undeveloped, there is a large grassy lawn surrounding the front and west sides of the building. Mature trees characterize the south end and east side of the property. A concrete sidewalk is centered with the church's north elevation and starts after the drainage ditch. It curves to the northeast and northwest corner entrances. A wood ramp for wheelchair access leads to the northwest entrance. An Official Texas Historical Marker (2015) is a non-contributing object erected alongside the sidewalk leading to the northeast entrance. (See continuation sheet X for marker text.)

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church

Exterior

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, built in 1910 in Paris, Lamar County, is a modest one-story wood frame church with a modified cross plan and asymmetrical corner towers that stands as a vernacular expression of Gothic Revival ecclesial style. It is of pier and beam construction with a mix of clapboard, wood, and asbestos siding and an asphalt shingle cross gable roof. Over the decades, efforts to refurbish and repair the church resulted in alterations and additions that reflect a broad pattern common to these types of resources. Windows on the main building are non-historic metal frame in the original openings. The church also has non-historic doors, wood and asbestos siding, and roof materials.

As the church grew in size and expanded their programming, the congregation constructed additions to the rear (south) elevation. Discerning dates for the additions, however, is complicated by the church's reuse of early 20th century materials on mid-and-late century sections. The nomination, therefore, used the following information to discuss alterations: There is evidence of changes in 1939, which are reflected on a 1946 Sanborn map. Church documents

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mention subsequent alterations up to the 1970s. By making these larger changes to the rear elevation, the congregation overall preserved the 113-year-old building's historic cross-plan form, scale, and overall design.

The **north** elevation faces Sycamore Street with a prominent steeply pitched front gabled façade. The original bargeboard with scalloped end detail decorates the otherwise plain roofline. This detail is repeated on the west and east gables and above entrances. A paired window, originally 4/4 wood frame, punctuates the center of this elevation. A large metal cross is above the window. Non-historic wood siding now covers the once exposed pier and beam foundation and the church's cornerstone. **(Photo 6)**

Entrances to Mt. Canaan Baptist Church are in the towers built into the northeast and northwest corners of the cross plan. This design feature reflects the popularity of Gothic vocabulary in religious architecture. Historically, each entrance was double doors with a simple wood surround and transom. Non-historic double doors replaced the original and siding covers the transoms. Each tower is chamfered at entrance level but become four-sided above the roofline and topped by pyramidal roofs. Both originally featured a spire. The **northeast** tower is taller with simple brackets supporting the roof and louvers now cover the north and south side openings. A historic photo reveals this may have housed a bell. The **northwest** tower is shorter and squatter without any elaborations.

The **west** elevation faces S. Main Street and the oil mill. There are two distinct parts to this façade that demonstrate the building's physical evolution: the main sanctuary structure and a recessed addition added after 1946 with its own modifications made up to 1970. The main sanctuary portion is fenestrated (north to south) with a single window, paired windows under the front (west-facing) gable, followed by another single window and a small window for the interior restroom. These last two windows are evidence of the 1939 addition that infilled the rear wing's west and east elevations, which are now covered by non-historic vinyl siding and the continuous roof line. The post-1946 rear addition is recessed approximately three feet from the main sanctuary's wall plane. **(Photo 8)** Its west elevation is faced with an early 20th century lap siding and wood panels with corrugated metal at the building's base. Wood dentil cornice molding **(Photo 9)** under the roofline may date to the early 20th century. Its location here suggests the material was removed from one part of the original structure and reused here. Three non-historic windows punctuate the addition's west elevation.

The **south** elevation has three converging rooflines illustrating different alterations the church made in the mid-and late-20th century. The west section, covered in a partially hipped roof, is clad in 1930s-era drop siding and continues the dentilled cornice molding. The east section, slightly recessed from the west section, has a shed roof with a mix of wood paneling and siding and paired late 20th century metal frame windows. **Photo 8**, taken where these sections converge, shows modest classical vocabulary expressed in a corner wood post with a flat "capital" and the dentilled molding. These materials also evidence a pattern of reuse in each improvement project the church undertook. However, it is not clear if other wood "columns" existed on other parts of the building.

The **east** elevation is close to the property line and partially obscured by trees. Like the west elevation, there are two distinct parts to this façade: the main sanctuary structure and a recessed addition added after 1946 with its own modifications made up to 1970. From north to south, the first three window openings are symmetrical with the west façade. Alterations to the sanctuary added a door (covered by a metal awning) with concrete steps and a small window where the original rear wing was infilled in 1939. Further south, a wood porch extends from the post-1946 addition, which is recessed from the sanctuary section. The addition has lap siding, a door opening to the porch, and paired windows with simple wood molding. Wood siding infill was used to retrofit mid-20th century windows into the early 20th century window opening.

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Interior

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church's interior is designed with a traditional sanctuary that opens off the two entry vestibules. The sanctuary historically and currently occupies the church's 1910 footprint. Pews are arranged in a center row of eight with two rows of pews in the west and east wings, all facing the altar. The wood floors, recently refinished, are original. Furniture—pews, altar, piano, lectern—ceiling fans, drop ceilings, and wood panel wainscot date to 1970 and later. Two pews for the church's choir face the congregation from behind the altar. A baptistry is centered on the south wall with a mural of Jesus that was painted by a church member in the 1940s.

The church's rear floorplan evolved between 1939 and 1970 as the congregation expanded its programming for its growing membership. Single doors on the south walls of the east and west sanctuary wings are evidence of the first (1939) addition that created, what is now, a small classroom (west) and meeting room (east). A narrow hall runs parallel to the sanctuary with restrooms, office, and small lounge. Double-doors from the hallway lead to the dining and kitchen areas in the rear addition. Common materials throughout the interior included red carpeting, vinyl flooring, and bedboard walls. Evidence of re-purposing historic materials is also apparent on the interior. The post-1946 dining room, for example, features a wood door with wood molding and transom more common to early 20th century buildings.

Integrity

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church retains good integrity to convey its historic significance, especially aspects of location, design, setting, feeling, and association.¹ It is at its original location south of the Texas & Pacific railroad tracks in the former TP Community. Despite the loss of the 1911 Bankhead School and residences, the church and remaining industrial and railway resources continue to convey the historic setting. The building's historic design is evident in its modest scale, asymmetrical corner towers, cross-plan, overall form, and interior arrangement. Since its original construction in 1910, the small self-supporting congregation has built rear additions, made interior alterations, and performed routine repairs to improve, modernize, and maintain the building for subsequent generations. Evident in this work is a pattern of reusing historic materials to supplement non-historic materials in new construction and/or repairs. As one of three extant historically-Black churches in Paris, and the only extant socio-cultural institution resource associated with this particular Black enclave, these refurbishing efforts highlight the building's ongoing importance to the local community. Thus, the period of significance extends up to 1973 and includes these material changes. Mt. Canaan Baptist Church remains strongly associated with its descendant community, whose recent preservation efforts include obtaining an Official Texas Historical Marker.

¹ Integrity issues for sites associated with people of color and marginalized communities have been well documented. However, although the historic places may lose some integrity, the importance of these places to the marginalized communities is significant and strong. See National Council on Public History's History@Work blog post, "Repairing National Register Nominations: Underrepresented Communities and Integrity," available online at: <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/repairing-national-register-nominations-underrepresented-communities-and-integrity/>, 21 July 2020; National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Preserving African American Places: Growing Preservation's Potential as a Path for Equity," available online at: <https://savingplaces.org/equity-report>, October 2020; and the recent opinion by Sara Bronin, "How to Fix a National Register of Historic Places that Reflects Mostly White History," in the *Los Angeles Times*, available online at: <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-12-15/historic-preservation-chicano-moratorium-national-register>, 15 December 2020 for additional discussion around integrity and minority spaces.

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Statement of Significance

The 1910 Mt. Canaan Baptist Church is a historically African American church in Paris, Lamar County. Its congregation was initially organized in the late 19th century and worshipped in members' homes. In 1903, trustees purchased land in the TP Community, an African American working-class residential district named for the Texas & Pacific Railway. They constructed a wood frame vernacular Gothic Revival church, completed in 1910, to serve the neighborhood's mill workers, cotton ginners, and teachers at nearby Bankhead Elementary School. Its significance derives from the centripetal role Blacks churches have traditionally played in U.S. history. For more than 120 years, Mt. Canaan Baptist Church provided a venue that nurtured and supported Black Parisians socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. It is the oldest extant African American church building, having survived the 1916 fire that devastated Paris, and one of three extant resources associated with the city's once-thriving Black community. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage: Black. The period of significance being in 1910, corresponding with the completion of the building that stands today, and ends in 1973, the 50-year threshold for listing in the National Register. The property derives its primary significance from its historical associations, and thus satisfactorily meets Criteria Consideration A (Religious Properties).

Lamar County was established as an act of the Fifth Congress of the Republic of Texas on December 17, 1840 and organized by election on February 1, 1841.² What became Paris, the county seat, began as a settlement along the Republic's Central National Road, which connected it to Dallas and San Antonio. Since its beginning, Paris has served as the economic and governmental center of Lamar County and northeast Texas. The most profound influence on the town, however, came from the cotton industry. For more than 100 years, practically every aspect of cotton was realized in Paris, from cotton grading, brokering, and processing to shopping. It was the single most important factor shaping its social, economic, architectural, and cultural development.³

The arrival of the Texas and Pacific Railroad in 1876 and the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad in 1887 created town limits for Paris at its south, west, and north sides. By the 1880s, five railroad lines were built in Paris. The cotton compress and warehouse (now demolished) were built in 1880-1881, and a nearby cottonseed oil mill was built in 1882-1883. The city's industrial district formed one mile south of the county courthouse. Its anchors were the cotton compress, adjacent warehouses, the oil mill, and two train stations—the Texas & Pacific and later, the Paris and Mt. Pleasant Railroad (1911).⁴

In the late 19th century, the cotton industry sparked the city's first major population boom. In a ten-year period, 1880-1890, it jumped from 3,900 to 8,250 people. Of the total reported, nearly 2,000 newcomers were Black working-class families who joined an established and sizable Black middle class already in Paris.⁵ By 1920, the city's population rose to 15,000 and rose steadily to its peak of 25,000 in 1980 when West Texas' cotton

² The nominated building's contextual history is related to the MRA *Historic Resources of Paris, Texas* but that document does not outline social history themes by which Mt. Canaan Baptist Church is evaluated. Adapted from: National Register of Historic Places, *Historic Resources of Paris, TX*, Paris, Lamar County, Texas, National Register #64000850.

<https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/64000850/64000850.pdf>; Louise W. Hagood and Skipper Steely, *The Paris Cotton Press, 1880-1978*, Texas Historical Commission Marker Application, 2013. On file at the Texas Historical Commission. National Register of Historic Places, *Historic Resources of Paris, TX*, Paris, Lamar County, Texas, National Register #64000850. Rev. Michael Massey, *Mt. Canaan Baptist Church*, Texas Historical Marker Application, 2015. On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

³ Haywood and Steely, "Context."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Haywood and Steely, "Context."

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companies came to dominate the industry. Paris demographics would remain 12-22% African American through each subsequent decade.

Black migrants came to Paris from rural parts of Lamar County and Texas, as well as Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The cotton gin and oil mill offered them ample opportunities for employment in processing and distribution. Another major employer was the railway companies transporting freight and passengers through Paris. Seasonal work in cotton planting and harvesting also created a transient labor force of African Americans. Although this working class was critical to the cotton industry's success, there were at times they were viewed with suspicion and derision by Paris' white and middleclass Black citizens.

Located in the industrial district was a Black enclave, the "TP Community," a name inherited from the Texas & Pacific Railroad and the residential addition it platted. Surveyed in 1887 (**Figure 2**), the Texas and Pacific Railway Co. Addition was approximately 14 blocks bordered by S. Main Street (west), P&T railroad tracks (north), 25th Street (east), and Paris Blvd. (south). It is possible the railway company platted the neighborhood to house its workforce because many male members of the TP Community were employed at the cotton compress one block away or at the gin located on Sycamore Street. It was also on Sycamore Street that they chose to build Mt. Canaan Baptist Church in 1910.

Modest wood-frame residences and stores were constructed on blocks surrounding the church. The Bankhead School, the segregated grammar school, was built two blocks away from Mt. Canaan in 1911. It operated until c. 1965 when the local school district integrated Bankhead and Gibbons High School (the Black high school) with the white public schools. Through the mid-and-late 20th century, the neighborhood's development was limited to auto, industrial, and rail-related buildings but it remained a residential area through the early 1970s. According to census records, neighbors of Mt. Canaan Baptist Church included Will and Lucille Johnson who lived at 55 Sycamore. Johnson was among the original trustees listed in the 1903 deed. Individuals who lived near, and likely attended services at, Mt. Canaan were educators at Bankhead School, domestic workers for Paris' white families, day laborers, in addition to working in the cotton and railroad industries.

The TP Community was geographically separate from Paris' established Black district north of the courthouse plaza. This district was roughly bounded by Pine Bluff (south), E. Provine (north), E. 27th (east) and S. Church (west), with neighborhoods like Boardtown and Grangertown. The latter area was named for C.C. Granger, a Northern transplant who came to teach school in Paris and sold parts of his property to African Americans on which they built homes.⁶ By the 1920s, a distinct business district called "Guest's Corner" developed around the intersection of E. Tudor and N. 24th (now NE 5th). Anchored by the Alhambra and Buford Theaters, Black-owned businesses—tailors, butchers, grocers, physicians, undertakers, and shopkeepers—operated throughout these streets and surrounded by many wood frame houses. Gibbons High School, originally opened in 1884 but moved to a larger site on E. Provine where it operated through the mid-20th century.

Black churches were numerous in Paris. When Mt. Canaan officially organized its first Board of Trustees c.1900, there were two Baptist churches (St. Paul's and Olive Branch), an African Methodist Episcopal Church, two Colored Methodist Episcopal Churches, a Christian Church, and a Congregational Church. All seven were within a half-mile of each other. In less than 20 years, of the nine total Black churches in Paris, six were Baptist denomination. Mt. Canaan, however, was the only church in its section of Paris.⁷

⁶ "Quiet Juneteenth Planned for Paris," *Paris News*, June 18, 1947; "Backward Glances," *Paris News*, February 27, 1953.

⁷ City Directories, 1902 and 1917, on file at the Paris History Center.

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In March 1916, a massive fire leveled more than 1,440 buildings causing \$11 million in damages.⁸ Mt. Canaan was spared, but the area consumed included most of the Black district north of the courthouse. **(Figure 9)** At least six of the community's ten churches were damaged or destroyed in the conflagration, including: St. Paul's Baptist Church (628 N. 22nd), Olive Branch Baptist Church (722 N. 22nd), Calvary Tabernacle/Mt. Calvary Baptist Church (NE Corner E. Booth and N. 23rd), Ebenezer AME Church (702 N. 24th), Truevine Christian Church (NE corner Tudor and Cross Streets), and Rusk Street Congregational Church (604 N. 21st). Astonishingly, within four years Black residences, churches, businesses, and Gibbons High School were rebuilt.

Black Freedom in the Context of White Supremacy

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church is one of the oldest Black churches in Paris, Texas. It is one of three extant historic Black churches in the city and of the three, the only one located in the city's southside and devoted to working class Black Parisians. Between its founding and the 1970s it played a significant role in establishing and maintaining a strong Black community in south Paris with ties as far away as Dallas to the southwest and Texarkana to the east.

Its founding congregation, which first began to have weekly prayer meetings in the homes of members in 1886, follows the post-bellum pattern of Black Americans establishing independence from the supervision and patronage of white denominations.⁹ As scholar Alwyn Barr has written, "separate Black religious denominations, especially the Baptist and Methodists continued to grow during the late nineteenth century . . . Negro [sic] Baptists organized a state convention counted. . . 50,000 members by 1880 and grew to 111, 138 in 1890 because of its participatory style and the autonomy of congregations."¹⁰ While some of this increase may have come from conversions, immigration from rural areas played a large part. During the 1880s, the Black working-class population in Paris grew by nearly 2,000 and the overall Black population by 187%, largely to meet the labor demands of the cotton processing industry. These jobs were more stable and offered more autonomy than sharecropping in the rural areas surrounding Paris. That the emerging congregation maintained its identity after the demolition of the Chisum Ranch Community instead of joining the other Black Baptist churches in Paris is consistent with the character of Black freedom. Rather than being individualistic, it was communal in nature.¹¹ Church congregations provided a means to maintain the integrity of communities of transplanted rural Texans, with their distinctive needs and means of religious expression.

Despite the need for Black labor, many longtime residents found the rural immigrants to be a threat to Paris's established order as they had "fewer ties to local leaders and to churches and other institution." Their fears seemed to be a trigger for greater hostility and violence towards newly arrived Black Parisians. In 1892, one year prior to the

⁸ "On March 21, 1916, a fire swept through Paris that consumed 264 acres and 1,440 buildings and killed three people. Property loss was estimated at \$11 million. Paris was founded in the mid-1840s, and many of the town's historic structures were lost in the fire including the Federal Building and Post Office, the Lamar County Courthouse and Jail, City Hall, numerous commercial buildings, and several churches. Substantial rainfall in Paris last occurred 51 days prior, and winds gusting up to 60 mph that day likely contributed to the city's dryness. Although no one is certain how the fire started, it is known that there was a small trash fire burning near Sid Long's timber warehouse on SW 4th street and Frisco Avenue, and an alarm was sounded at 5:30 p.m. The high winds quickly set fire to roof shingles in the surrounding blocks. Mayor Ed H. McCuiston sent out appeals to nearby fire departments after he decided that widespread conflagration was imminent. Bonham, Cooper, Dallas, Honey Grove and Hugo, Oklahoma, answered the call, and the fire was under control by 3:30 a.m. Chamber President Henry P. Mayer prepared a sign for a meeting the following day that simply read "Smile." The slogan was adopted quickly and encouraged residents to rebuild the city with optimism. The Civic League, which had organized just two days before, shifted its focus from beautification to sanitation because the fire left many residents living in tents and shacks. Paris was reconstructed quickly with the help of out-of-town architects, local builders, and citizens." – Official Texas Historical Marker #18466, "Origin of the Paris Fire of 1916."

⁹ Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of Negroes in Texas, 1528-1971* (Austin, 1973), 66.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, 1990), 6.

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gruesome and highly ritualized lynching of Henry Smith, “whites lynched four [B]lacks in Paris, three of them on September 6 for “rioting” and another on September 23 for rape.”¹² Some middle-class Black Parisians seem to have shared the concerns of their white counterparts, helping to apprehend Henry Smith and even asking to participate in his execution.

It was in this environment when the Mt. Canaan congregation moved to a house on Abrams Alley in an area designated for Black Parisians. According to the 2015 Texas Historical Marker application, they worshipped there until 1900 after which they moved to the current location. The deed for the property says otherwise, with the date of 1903 as the first payment for the land and the building not being completed until 1910, making it unclear where the congregation met between 1900 and 1910. Nonetheless, by 1910 Mt. Canaan Baptist Church had established itself in the TP Community when it built the wood-frame church nominated today.

After 1910, Mt. Canaan thrived, gaining members from the laboring community in which it was embedded as well as outliers in the county who travelled to the church by train. Notices of church activities appeared 100 miles away in the region’s most important Black newspaper, the *Dallas Express*, which shows Mt. Canaan’s ties to Black communities and churches throughout the region. For example, on September 6, 1919 the *Express* reported, “The Baptist District Missionary Institute convened last week at the Mt. Canaan Baptist Church.”¹³ Nearly two months later the *Express* reported on a revival at Mt. Canaan held in led by a preacher from Texarkana:

The Mt. Canaan Baptist Church had a successful revival, baptized 40 members raised \$112.09, restored 40 members. Rev. Evans conducted the revival. A banquet was given in honor of pastor Widlow (?) and the Rev. Evans of Texarkana. The church is in splendid condition. The Rev. Evans is a great preacher.¹⁴

Despite (or maybe because of) the success of Paris’s Black community and institutions, anti-Black hostility continued as evidenced in the 1920 lynching of two Black men, only one example of the 43 Black Texans lynched between 1883 and 1923 and the last in Lamar County. Herman and Ervin Arthur, sharecroppers, were lynched on July 6, 1920 after shooting J. H. and William Hodges, the owners of the land they rented. The Arthur brothers, along with their families were vacating the property after a dispute with the Hodges over an alleged debt. When the Hodges showed up demanding payment. When the Arthurs refused, the Hodges knocked over a stove full of food and threatened to kill Herman. Herman, who was a veteran, refused to pay or stay. Both parties had shotguns and the Arthurs shot the Hodges in self-defense. They subsequently left for Oklahoma but were apprehended and brought back to Paris to be lynched. Unlike in the early lynchings, Black Parisians were united in opposition to the lynching and led by veterans from World War I, stayed in their homes, but took up arms in self-defense.¹⁵ After the lynching, many Black Texans left Lamar County. The rest of the Arthur family left for Chicago with the help of the local Prince Hall Masonic lodge and some sympathetic whites and many more followed them. “From 1920 to 1930, the number of [B]lack (Americans) in Lamar County shrank from 12,970 to 9,382,” a loss of 3,588 citizens.¹⁶

¹² Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas Between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin, 2001), 19-26.

¹³ *Dallas Express*, Dallas, Texas, September 6, 1919, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, October 30, 1919, p. 3

¹⁵ Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 167-168.

¹⁶

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

The 1910 Mt. Canaan Baptist Church

Churches, such as Mt. Canaan, provided a sanctuary in the face of such continued anti-Black violence and racism. In the midst of such hostility, the church undertook its work of saving souls and building community. The origin of Mt. Canaan Baptist Church was in prayer gatherings held in the northwest part of Paris at an area then known as Chisum's Ranch. Chisum's Ranch was a well-known Black settlement established and owned by the late W. C. (Tony) Chisum. All the houses, including a schoolhouse (known as the red school) were painted boxcar red. In 1887, the Santa Fe Railway took over the greater part of the property for shops, round house, and switch tracks, which displaced the community. Oral tradition suggests that some of these early congregants moved into the historically Black neighborhoods of Paris.

From this humble start, the Rev. Sam McCarley and his small group organized the church. The members met from house-to-house until the gathering grew too large. A small church was then organized in a house in, what was then called "Abrams Alley." By c. 1900, the Rev. J. B. Adkins assumed leadership of the congregation and it was under his leadership that Mt. Canaan's Board of Trustees was organized. Adkins worked alongside four trustees: Brother Noel Lee, Brother John Black, Brother Will Johnson and Brother Dolphus Heard to establish the church. A warranty deed from 1903 documents they purchased the nominated property from M.J. and Josie Booker, a Black couple who may have lived in the TP Community.

In 1910, they constructed a one-story wood frame church with Gothic Revival towers and a large interior sanctuary. The new church was in an area of Paris not yet serviced by any religious group. Church historian Mrs. Virginia Harris recalled that most of the male members of the church worked at the oil mill, the cotton compress and the cotton gin—all located within three blocks of Mt. Canaan. The church was also located very near two train stations which both played a significant part of the growing membership of Mt. Canaan because they brought people from outside the town to take part in worship services.

Many members of the congregation were teachers and administration of the Bankhead School, a segregated school organized in 1911 by the TP Community and the only school for Black students on the south side of the town. It was located on 3rd Street SE, south of the Texas & Pacific Railroad tracks, just a few blocks from the church. For many years, Mt. Canaan hosted numerous graduations and events for Bankhead School.

Through the 20th century, Mt. Canaan's location was a boon *and* a hinderance for the church. Although newspapers like the *Paris Morning News*, *Paris News*, and *Dallas Examiner* reported a variety of secular activities held at Paris churches, few mention Mt. Canaan. Doubtless, it was difficult to attract graduation ceremonies, plays, community group meetings, music performance, and visiting speakers from the larger sanctuaries (like Mt. Zion A.M.E. and St. Paul's Baptist Church) in the heart of the city's Black community. By the 1940s, however, Mt. Canaan became the primary venue for Bankhead School's activities.

Unlike the city's other churches, Mt. Canaan drew its congregation from rural areas and the isolated enclave in which it was built. Today, congregants state that people rode in on train cars to attend weekly services.¹⁷ This pattern continues today as many congregants travel from other communities to attend their home church. Paris' cotton industry also remained healthy through the early postwar period, leaving the congregation's original demographic intact. Its location also protected the building from the 1982 tornado that destroyed hundreds of commercial, institutional, and residential buildings. By 1980, the historically Black business district and all but two historic church buildings (St. Paul's Baptist and CME churches) were demolished.

¹⁷ Bonnie Tipton, Interview with Mt. Canaan Congregants, July 25, 2023.

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Conclusion

The 1910 Mt. Canaan Baptist Church is a historically African American church in Paris, Lamar County. Its congregation was initially organized in the late 19th century and worshipped in members' homes until 1910 when they constructed a wood frame vernacular Gothic Revival church. For more than 120 years, Mt. Canaan Baptist Church provided a venue that nurtured and supported Black Parisians socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. It is the oldest extant African American church building, having survived the 1916 fire that devastated Paris, and one of three extant resources associated with the city's once-thriving Black community. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage: Black. The period of significance being in 1910 and ends in 1973, the 50-year threshold for listing in the National Register. The property derives its primary significance from its historical associations, and thus satisfactorily meets Criteria Consideration A (Religious Properties).

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

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Tipton, Bonnie. Oral Interview with Mt. Canaan Congregants. July 25, 2022.

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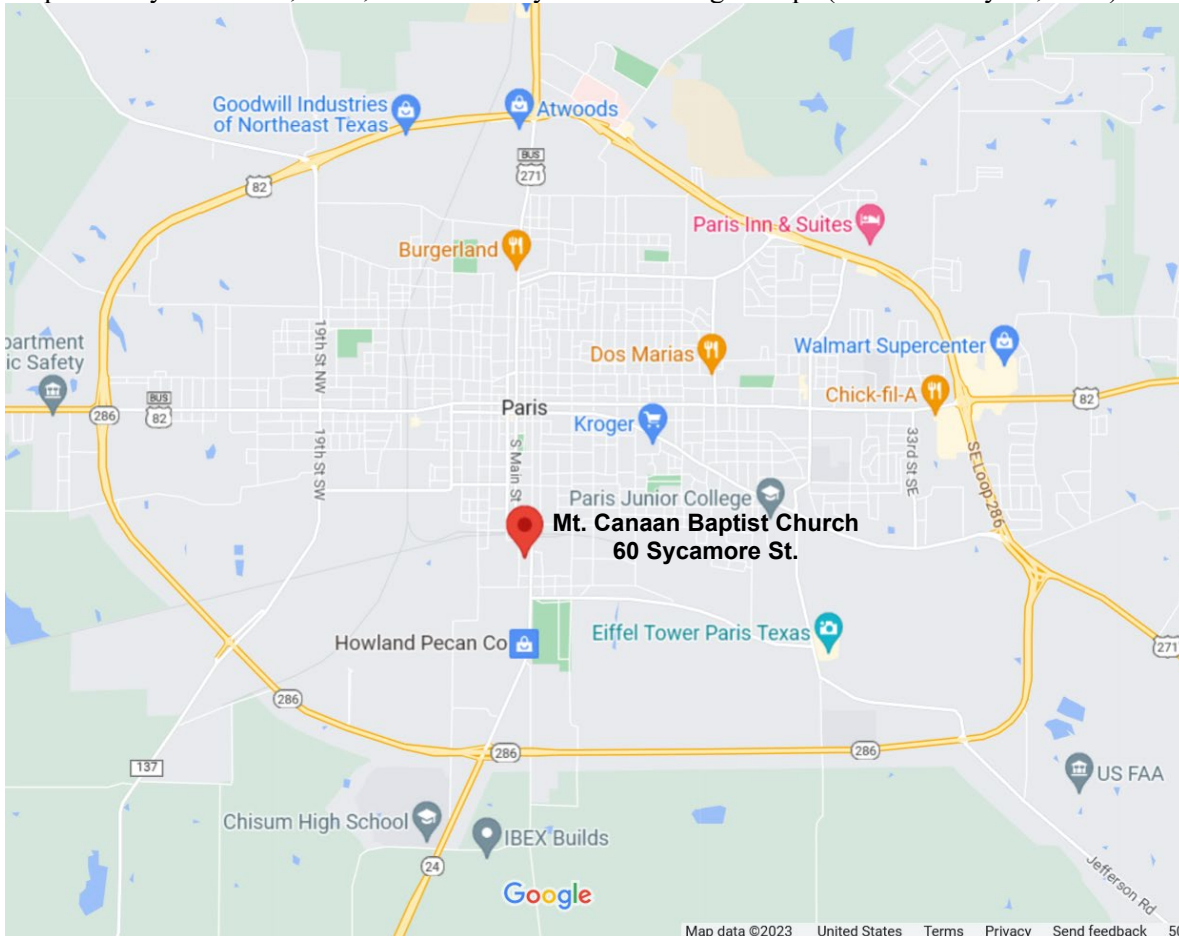
Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Maps

Map 1: Lamar County, Texas



Map 2: 60 Sycamore St., Paris, Lamar County. Source: Google Maps (accessed May 15, 2023)



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Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Map 3: Property ID# 19958 TEXAS & PACIFIC ADDITION, BLOCK 5, LOT E PT OF 11 & E PT OF LOT 12, 60 SYCAMORE ST (0.152 acres). Source: Lamar County Appraisal District <https://lamarcad.org/interactive-map> (accessed 5/15/23).



Map 4: Paris, Mt. Canaan Baptist Church 33.648348° -95.555452°. Source: Google Earth (accessed 5/15/23).



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Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figures

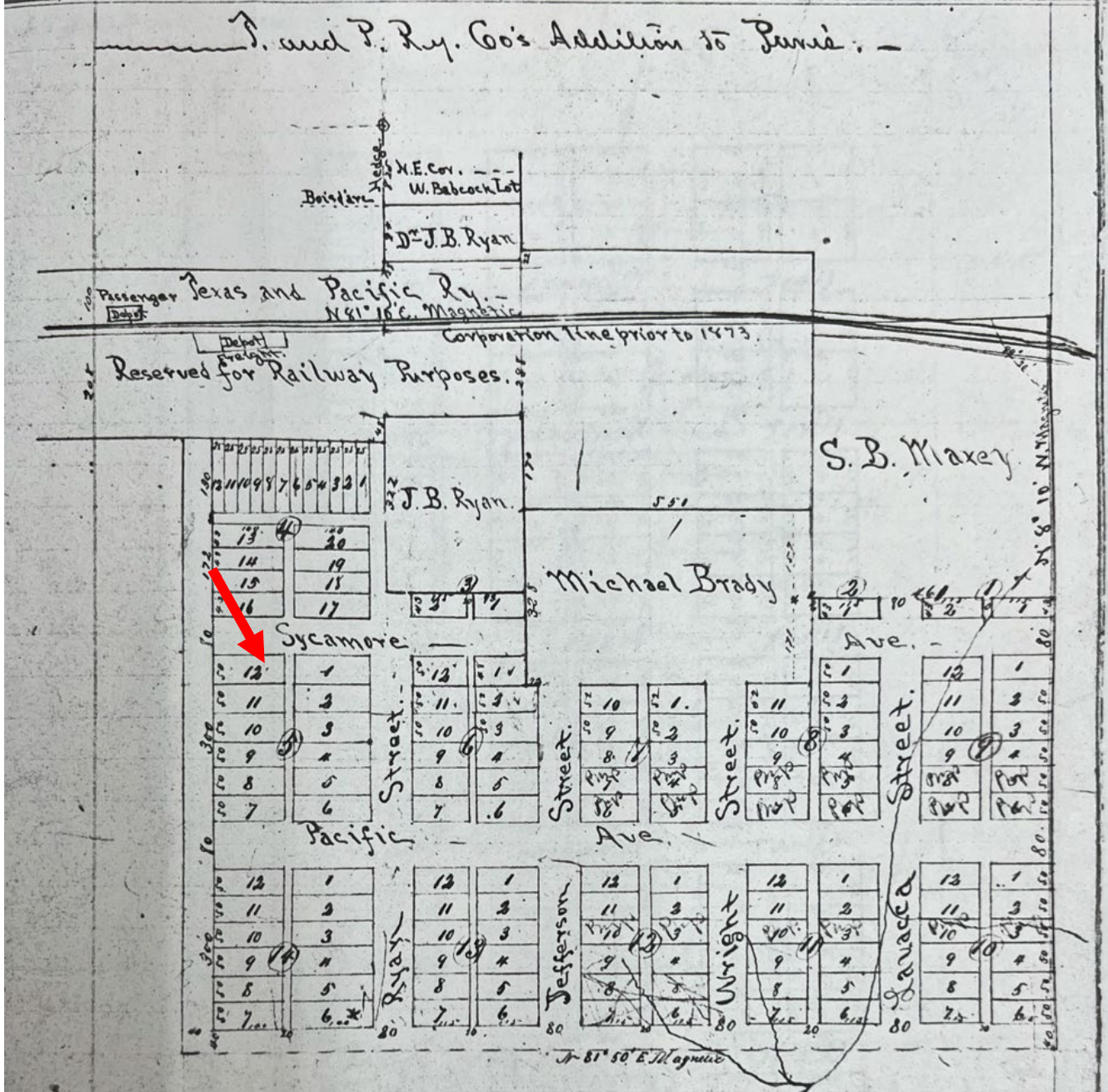
Figure 1: Lamar County in 1900. Source: Rand McNally And Company. Texas Railroads. Chicago, 1900. Map.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/98688561/>.



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Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 2: T&P Railway Co. Addition showing location of nominated church. Source: County Clerk, Lamar County.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 3: January 27, 1903 Warranty Deed, Lamar County Deed Record, Book 129, pg. 556-557.

“That We, M.J. Booker and Josie Booker...of the County of Lamar and State of Texas for and in consideration of Twenty-five (\$25.00), to us in hand paid by John Black, Will Johnson, and Dolphus Heard, Trustees of Mt. Canaan Baptist Church...grant, bargain, sell, and convey unto...the following described tract...”

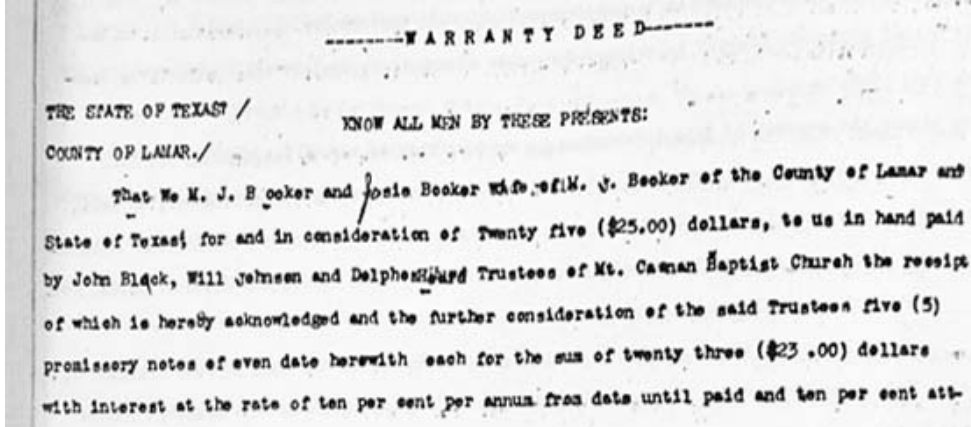


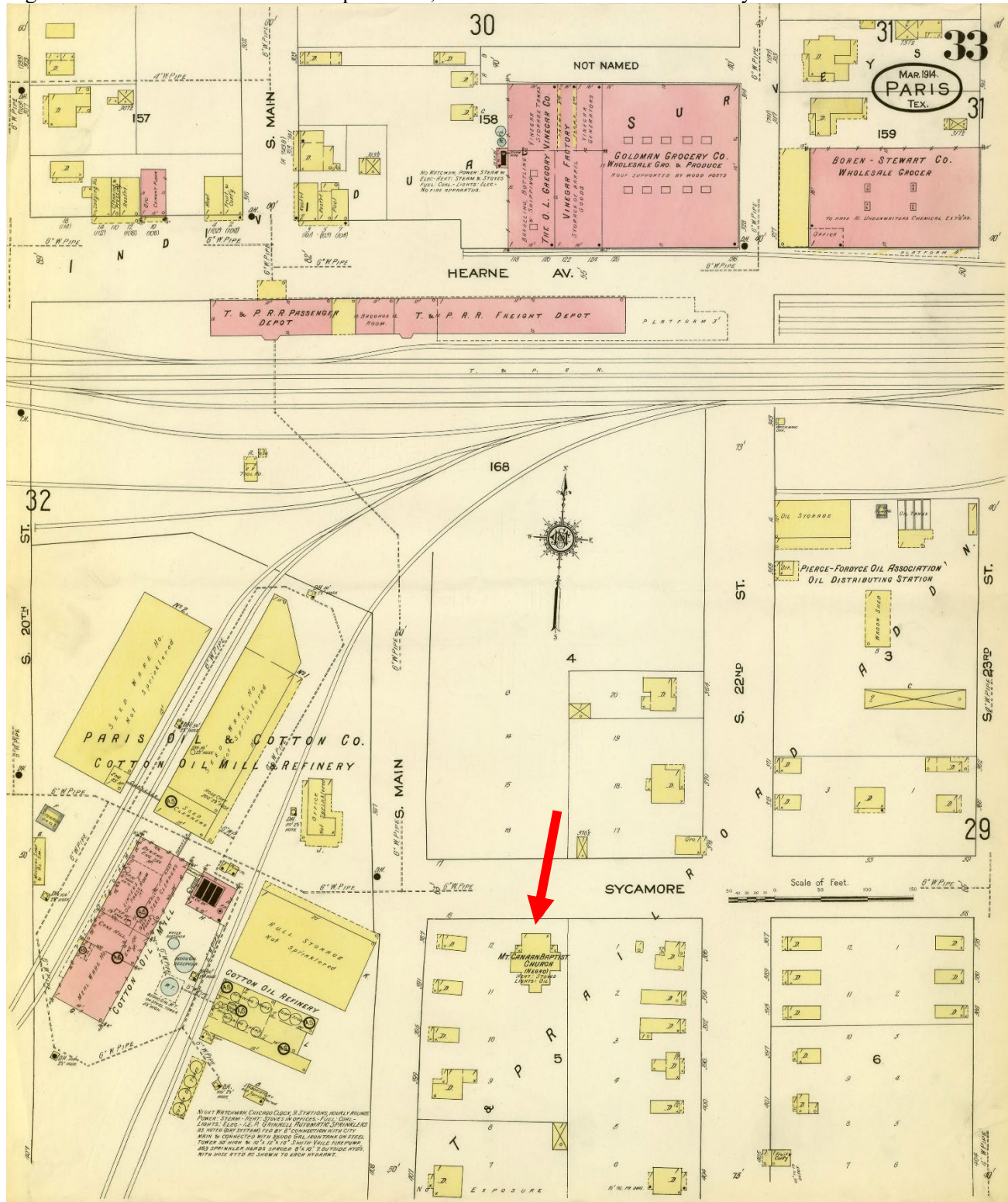
Figure 4: Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, c. 1910. Source: Texas Historical Commission Historical Marker Files.



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Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Paris, Texas in 1914. Source: University of Texas at Austin.

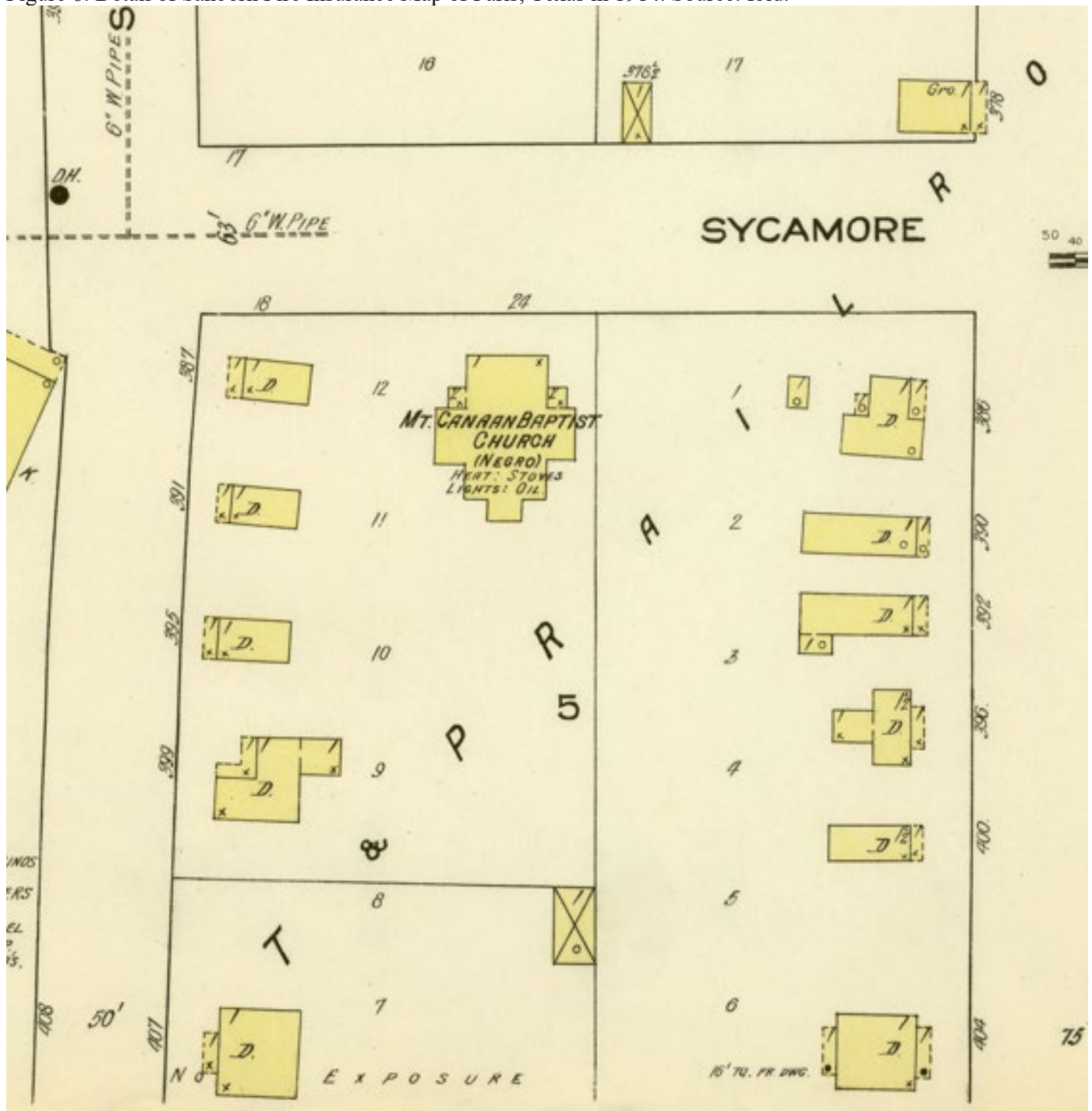


Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

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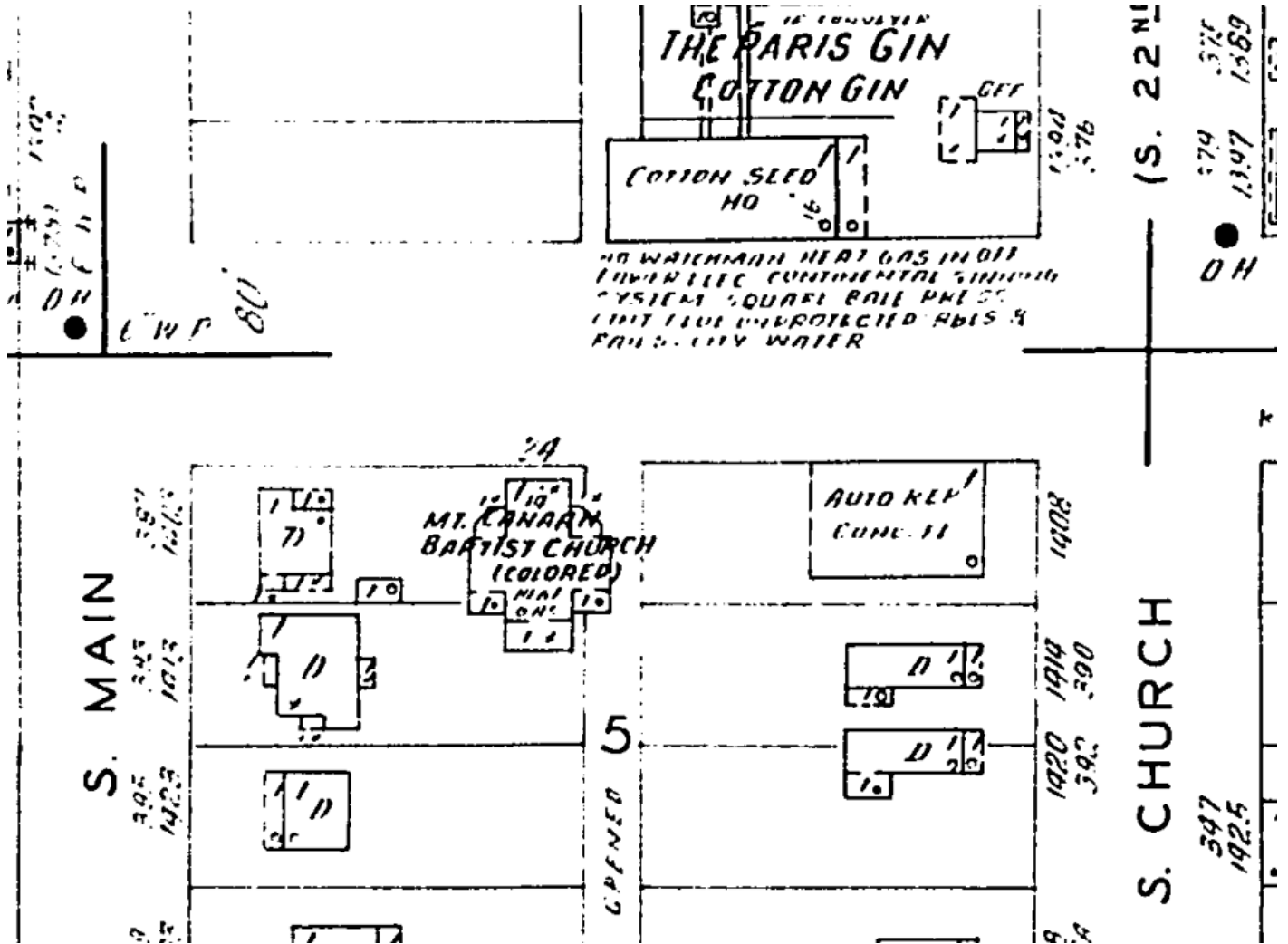
Figure 6: Detail of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Paris, Texas in 1914. Source: Ibid.



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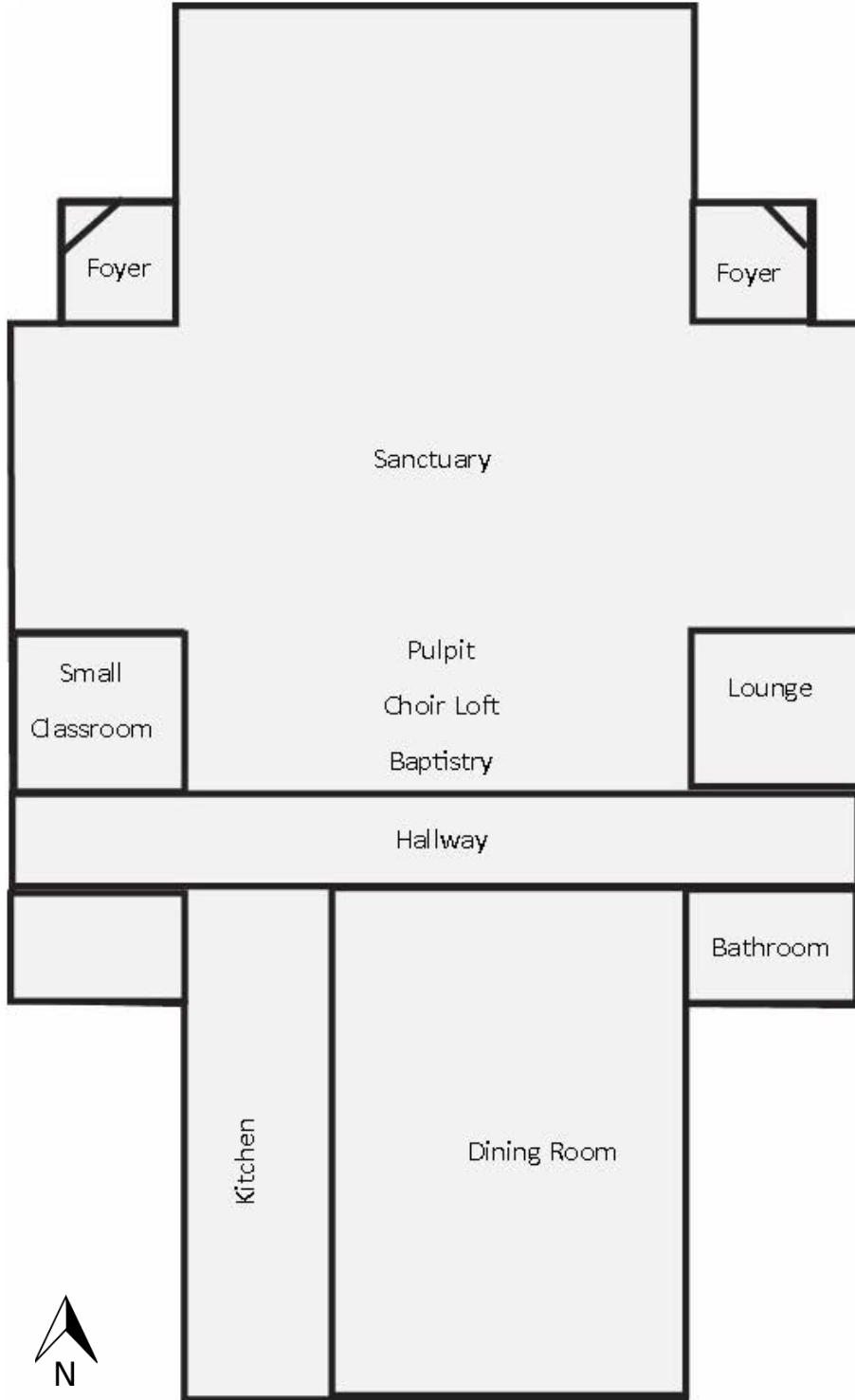
Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 7: Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Paris (1946), p. 24 showing rear additions.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 8: Floorplan (not to scale)



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 10: The nominated church is one of three extant religious buildings associated with Paris' Black community from the early 20th century. These three buildings are also the only extant resources (of any category) that reflect the segregated community from 1910 to c. 1970. Below: St. Paul Baptist Church (1918) and the C.M.E. Church (1918) built these sanctuaries after they lost their previous structures in the 1916 fire.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 11: 1940 Paris Enumeration District Map Detail showing the TP Community neighborhood and significant sites.

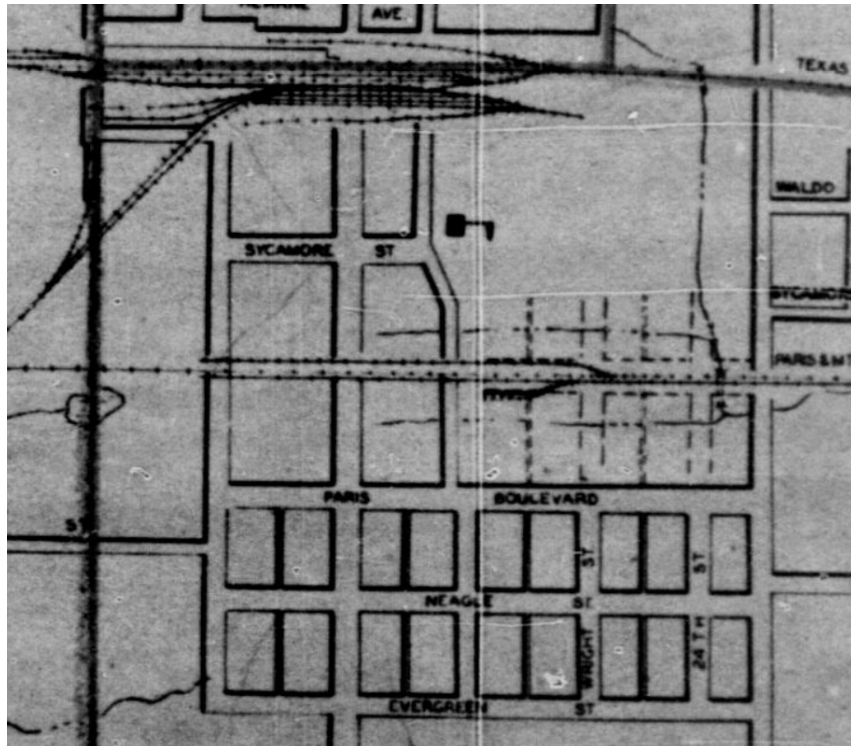


Figure 12: Official Texas Historical Marker (Undertold Marker Program, 2015):

Following emancipation, several Paris black free men and women formed informal congregations to practice their new spiritual rights. These former slaves found Baptist theology, with its egalitarian notion of redemption and informal nature of worship, especially appealing. Mt. Canaan Baptist church originated in temporary prayer gatherings held in the African American community at the area of Chisum's Ranch, a neighborhood in northwest Paris. When the homes were demolished to make way for a new railroad, the displaced residents settled in southern Paris next to the cottonseed oil mill, compress, and cotton processing plants. This new African American neighborhood, called the TP community because of its proximity to the Texas & Pacific Railroad, was where Rev. Sam McCarley formally established Mt. Canaan Baptist Church in 1886. The railroad and the booming cotton industry employed many blacks in the area. Worship services were held in members' houses until the current church was built in 1910 under the leadership of Rev. J.B. Adkins. Mt. Canaan catered to the marginalized African Americans of the TP community, including mill workers, cotton ginners, and teachers at nearby Bankhead Elementary School, the only school in Paris for African American students. In 1939, the congregation purchased more land and remodeled the church. More renovations followed in 1970, including a baptism annex, cement steps, and a back porch. Despite these additions, the building itself remains largely unchanged. Mt. Canaan Baptist Church continues to serve its historic community.

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 13: 1956 Aerial



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Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Figure 14: 1976 Aerial. By the late 1970s, many residences and the Bankhead School were gone.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photographs

Mt. Canaan Baptist Church
Paris, Lamar County, Texas
Photographed by Bonnie Tipton
July 25-26, 2022

Photo 1: Looking west at Mt. Canaan Baptist Church and Cotton Oil Mill & Refinery where congregants historically worked.



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Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 2: Looking southeast across the Texas & Pacific Railway tracks at the church (center background), oil mill (right), and former gin (left).



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 3: North elevation, camera facing south.



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Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 4: Northeast oblique showing one of two main entrances. Camera faces southwest.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 5: Detail of northeast tower.



Photo 6: Original cornerstone beneath siding on the north elevation. "Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Erected 1910, Rev. M.B. Atkins"



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 7: Northwest oblique showing second of two main entrances. Scalloped trim is original. Camera looks southeast.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 8: West elevation showing rear addition. Camera looks northeast.



Photo 9: Dentilled wood molding and modest “capitals” top corner posts. Camera looking at south elevation.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 10: Rear (south elevation) additions supported the growing congregation. Camera looks north.



Photo 11: Historic-age siding on the east elevation. Camera looks northwest.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 12: Sanctuary. Camera looking southwest.



Photo 13: Sanctuary. Camera looking northeast.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 14: Baptistry and mural on south wall of sanctuary.



Photo 15: Hallway, view west.



Mt. Canaan Baptist Church, Paris, Lamar County, Texas

Photo 16: Original molding, transom, and door inside the dining room. Camera looks east.



Photo 17: The kitchen (now enclosed) is in an area that was likely a porch added in 1939. Looking south inside the southwest corner of the building.



~the end~