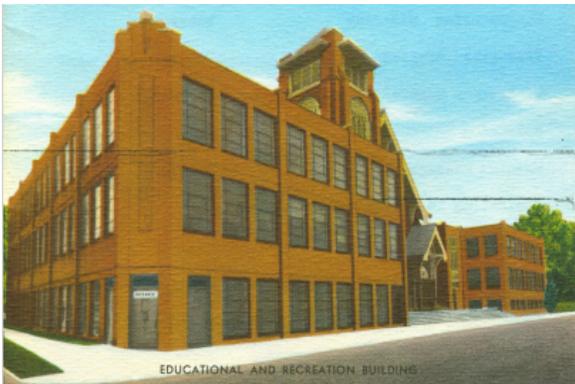


City of Detroit

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King Solomon Baptist Church. Source: Church program, 1979.

Final Report:

Proposed King Solomon Baptist Church Historic District 6102 and 6125 Fourteenth Street

By a resolution dated June 15, 2010, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed King Solomon Baptist Church Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed King Solomon Baptist Church Historic District consists of two contributing buildings located at the intersection of Fourteenth Street and Marquette Avenue: the church's Educational and Recreation Building (6125 Fourteenth Street) on the intersection's northwest corner, and its Main Auditorium (6102 Fourteenth Street) on the northeast corner. The buildings are presently owned and occupied by King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church.

BOUNDARIES

Beginning at a point, that point being the intersection of the centerline of the alley running approximately north-south between Lot 20 of Peter Hughes Second Subdivision, Liber 26, Page 75, and Lots 34 through 38 of Peter Hughes' Second Subdivision, Liber 26, Page 75, with the northern boundary line of Lot 34 of Peter Hughes' Second Subdivision, Liber 26, Page 75, as extended east and west; thence east along said boundary line of Lot 34, as extended, to the centerline of Fourteenth (14th) Avenue; thence south along said centerline of Fourteenth Street to the northern boundary line of Lot 6 of William Y. Hamlin and Thomas N. Fordyce's Subdivision, Liber 11, Page 29, as extended east and west; thence east along said boundary line of Lot 6, as extended, to the centerline of the alley running approximately north-south between Fourteenth (14th) Avenue and Wabash Avenue; thence south along said centerline to the centerline of Marquette Avenue; thence west along said centerline of Marquette Avenue to the centerline of the alley running approximately north-south between Lot 19 of Peter Hughes' Second Subdivision, Liber 26, Page 85, through Lot 20 of Peter Hughes' Second Subdivision, Liber 26, Page 75, and Lots 34 through 38 of Peter Hughes' Second Subdivision, Liber 26, Page 75; thence north along said centerline to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries described above delineate two parcels presently and historically associated with King Solomon Baptist Church. The proposed district is bounded on the south by Marquette Avenue, on the east and west by public alleys, and on the north by residential lots immediately adjacent to the church property.

HISTORY

King Solomon Baptist Church has long served as a focal point of Detroit's Northwest Goldberg community. The church grew to national prominence under the leadership of its longtime pastor, the Rev. Theodore Sylvester Boone, and is significant as the location of Malcolm X's 1963 "Message to the Grass Roots" address, one of the minister's most influential speeches and a key turning point in his career. As an early member of the Progressive National Baptist Convention (an association of African American churches that emphasizes civil rights and social justice) and the site of that body's second annual conference, King Solomon Baptist Church played a prominent role in the Civil Rights Movement in Detroit and nationwide. In that conference and others, it hosted numerous guests including the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, and the Rev. Benjamin Mays. Prior to the King Solomon era, the building was the home of Temple Baptist Church which, by contrast, did not allow African Americans to become members or attend services. Its pastor, the Rev. G. Beauchamp Vick, founded the Baptist Bible Fellowship International, now among the largest fundamentalist Baptist organizations in the United States with a following of over one million members.

Temple Baptist Church, designed by architect J. Will Wilson, and later known as the Educational and Recreation Building of King Solomon Baptist Church, was constructed in 1920. The Main Auditorium, located across the street from the original church building, was erected in 1937.

Temple Baptist Church

The church at Fourteenth Street and Marquette Avenue was briefly known as Fourteenth Avenue Baptist Church before its congregation chose the name Temple Baptist Church. In its first decade, the congregation grew to include 800 members.

In 1934 Temple Baptist Church invited the Rev. J. Frank Norris of Fort Worth, Texas to serve as pastor. Although he was already pastor of First Baptist Church in his hometown, Norris chose to accept both positions simultaneously, commuting between the two churches for the next sixteen years. After the first five years, the membership of Temple Baptist Church had grown to over six thousand, with a still greater number at his church in Fort Worth, and Norris liked to boast that he led the largest Baptist congregation in the world.¹ Faced with the logistical challenges of leading two geographically distant churches at once, Norris almost immediately began to rely heavily on his music director, the Rev. G. Beauchamp Vick, to oversee the church in his absence. As Norris became less involved, Vick eventually became pastor himself.

The church was located squarely in Detroit's Northwest Goldberg neighborhood, which took its name from Louis Goldberg School, located at 1930 Marquette Avenue, which was in turn named after a member of the Detroit Board of Education in the early twentieth century. It was a working-class, multi-ethnic community that by the mid-twentieth century was becoming predominantly African American. Vick, however, forbade African Americans from participating in services at Temple Baptist Church. In 1951 the church moved to a new location farther northwest on Grand River Avenue, then a decade later to West Chicago Avenue near Telegraph Road, following the suburban "white flight" of the members of his congregation. It was not until 1985 that Temple Baptist Church formally rescinded its policies regarding African American membership. By that time, church membership had greatly declined. Soon, what remained of the Temple Baptist Church congregation left its Detroit location and consolidated with NorthRidge Church of Plymouth, Michigan.²

Norris was a leading advocate of Biblical fundamentalism, who had withdrawn First Baptist Church and Temple Baptist Church from the Southern Baptist Convention and Northern Baptist Convention, respectively, and founded his own Premillennial Missionary Baptist Fellowship, now known as the World Baptist Fellowship. Norris and Vick soon disagreed over the extent to which Norris sought to directly control the organization that he founded. In 1950 Vick broke with Norris and founded the Baptist

¹ Barry Hankins, *God's Rascal: J. Frank Norris and the Beginnings of Southern Fundamentalism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996) 91.

² "Truman Dollar," *All About Baptists*. 15 June 2010.
<http://www.allaboutbaptists.com/history_Truman_Dollar.html>.

Bible Fellowship International, now an association of several thousand pastors who together oversee a total of about one million members, mostly in the United States.

Vick remained pastor of Temple Baptist Church into the 1960s. In 1955 Temple Baptist Church was noted in *Life Magazine* for the size of its Sunday School programs, which at that time served about 5,000 students.³

King Solomon Baptist Church

King Solomon Baptist Church was founded in 1926 when the Rev. Moses Williams and eleven other members began to meet at 1551 Rivard Street. It grew by consolidation with Mount Nebo Baptist Church the following year. The small but growing congregation moved several times in its early years, and by the 1930s was located at the intersection of Riopelle Street and East Alexandrine Avenue.

In 1941 it settled at 9244 Delmar Street, in the city's North End neighborhood, in the former Ahavath Achim Temple. The church's Delmar location placed it between the City of Hamtramck, to the east, and Detroit's Arden Park-East Boston area, to the west, a neighborhood of upscale homes (now listed on the National Register of Historic Places) where wealthy African American families began to settle in the 1940s.⁴ King Solomon Baptist Church had become a large and prosperous institution, owning several nearby commercial buildings and a residence for its pastor at 590 East Boston Boulevard.

In 1944 the congregation of King Solomon Baptist Church called the Rev. Theodore Sylvester Boone to serve as pastor, a position that he would continue to hold until his death in 1973. Originally from Texas, Boone was an accomplished historian and lawyer in addition to being a pastor.⁵ Born in 1896 in Winchester, Texas, Boone moved north to attend law school at the University of Chicago and then practice law in Indianapolis before attending Arkansas Baptist College and then returning to his home state to enter the ministry. He served as pastor of Eighth Street Baptist Church in Temple, Texas before spending the majority of his pastoral career at King Solomon Baptist Church. He had been the most prolific Texas African American writer of his day,⁶ and while in Detroit, he continued to write. His works include *The Philosophy of Booker T. Washington: The Apostle of Progress, the Pioneer of the New Deal* (1939), *From George Lisle to L. K. Williams: Short Visits to the Tombs of Negro Baptists* (1941) and *Negro Baptists in Pictures and History* (1964). Under Boone's leadership, the church hosted the National Baptist Convention of America's annual conference in 1945.

Boone soon sought to move King Solomon Baptist Church into an even larger facility that would enable it to expand its educational and recreational offerings. The

³ "Mighty Wave Over the U.S." *Life* 26 Dec. 1955: 54-55.

⁴ National Register of Historic Places, Arden Park-East Boston Historic District

⁵ Texas State Historical Association. "Theodore Sylvester Boone." *The Handbook of Texas Online*. 26 April 2010. <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/fboea.html>>.

⁶ Bruce A. Glasrud and James Smallwood, *Introduction: African American History and the Lone Star State* (Lubbock, Texas Tech University Press, 2007) 4.

congregation purchased the former Temple Baptist Church in late 1951, moving into the building the following year.⁷ The Northwest Goldberg neighborhood also provided King Solomon Baptist Church with a dynamic and expanding African American community to serve.

At the time of the church's move, African Americans were migrating in great numbers, both within Detroit, and to Detroit from other regions. The "urban renewal" policies of Detroit Mayor Albert Cobo's administration and the early development of the Interstate Highway System were eliminating traditionally African American neighborhoods such as Black Bottom and the Paradise Valley district on the city's near east side, which resulted in the break-up communities and displacement of residents to other areas of the city. In addition, Detroit's African American population as a whole was increasing as part of a general emigration of many African Americans from the South to industrial cities in other regions of the country to seek employment in manufacturing and related industries.

Initially, deed restrictions and covenants forbade African American residents from owning property in many areas of the city. Even after these restrictions were eliminated by a Supreme Court ruling in the 1948 case of *Shelley v. Kraemer*, segregation continued to exist as a result of redlining by banks and insurance agencies, discrimination by real estate agents, discriminatory policies of the Federal Housing Administration, and violence or the threat of violence by white residents. Thus, housing options for African Americans were limited, even in this time of high demand. The vicinity of Grand Boulevard west of Woodward Avenue (including the Northwest Goldberg neighborhood) was one of several areas where a large population of African Americans settled during this period. Several growing African American churches existed in this area, including New Bethel Baptist Church on Linwood Avenue, Central Congregational Church (later Shrine of the Black Madonna) also on Linwood Avenue, St. Stephen African Methodist Episcopal Church on Stanford Avenue, as well as King Solomon Baptist Church. Together, these institutions served as a nexus of African American leadership in the 1950s and 1960s.

Gregory Mobley, who settled on Ferry Park Avenue in 1955 and attended King Solomon Baptist Church as a young adult in the 1960s, remembers the Northwest Goldberg neighborhood as "a beautiful, comfortable community" with many Jewish residents. According to Mobley, "everybody looked out for each other. We were all family. Maybe not blood, but family."⁸ Annie Crockett, who moved to the neighborhood in 1966 and has owned and operated a grocery store at Sixteenth Street and Ferry Park Avenue for the past 42 years, describes the community as a "nice place" that encouraged her to relocate from Georgia.⁹ Numerous African American institutions and prosperous small businesses were located on West Grand Boulevard and on Fourteenth Street, including the offices of the Michigan Black Nurses Association and, by 1958, the headquarters of Motown Record Corporation.¹⁰

⁷ "Negroes Buy Big Churches," *Detroit News*, 22 Jan. 1952: A1.

⁸ Mobley, Gregory. Personal interview. 18 June 2010.

⁹ Crockett, Annie. Personal interview. 18 June 2010.

¹⁰ Charles Simmons, "King Solomon Baptist Church/NW Goldberg," *Michigan Citizen*, 10 July 2005.

The Main Auditorium of former Temple Baptist Church, with a capacity of over 5,000 people, was now the largest African American-owned auditorium in Detroit. The facility attracted prominent speakers such as National Association of the Advancement of Colored People chief counsel Thurgood Marshall, whom King Solomon Baptist Church hosted during a fundraising tour immediately following the organization's 1954 victory in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*. It was also the site of an address, broadcast by radio, by United States Representative Charles Diggs immediately following the racially motivated August 28, 1955 murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi. Saviour's Day, an annual Nation of Islam holiday celebration, was held at King Solomon Baptist Church for several consecutive years beginning in the late 1950s.¹¹

At its new site, King Solomon Baptist Church continued to host conferences of nationwide significance. The National Baptist Convention of America held its 78th annual session at King Solomon from September 9-14, 1958, drawing almost 2000 delegates from around the country.¹² The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was in Chicago for the concurrent annual meeting of the National Baptist Convention, USA (The "Mother Church" from which the National Baptist Convention of America separated in 1915), made a brief trip to Detroit to attend the King Solomon gathering on September 12.¹³

King had just been elected vice president of the National Sunday School and Baptist Training Union Congress, one of the National Baptist Convention, USA's policymaking bodies. However, the convention's president, the Rev. Joseph H. Jackson of Chicago, refused to become actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement. In his view, "No matter how nonviolent, civil disobedience lays the ground for civil hatred and the desire to destroy."¹⁴ The election of King, a civil rights leader, to such a prominent position exacerbated a growing rift between Jackson's supporters and the organization's more progressive members, such as King, the Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, the Rev. Benjamin Mays, and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr.¹⁵ When their 1961 campaign to replace Jackson failed, they formed the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) the following year.

In September 1963 King returned to King Solomon Baptist Church, this time for the second annual conference of the PNBC. It was a critical year for the Civil Rights Movement, in Detroit as well as in the nation as a whole. According to one observer, "[1963] was the turning point, the year when Detroit became conscious of itself as the spearhead of the Northern black movement and the rest of the country became aware of the movement emerging in Detroit."¹⁶ Just a week prior the PNBC conference, King had

¹¹ Charles Simmons, Personal interview. 6 November 2010.

¹² "Thousands of Baptists Meet Here: Pension Plan Among Items on Big Agenda," *Michigan Chronicle*, 12 Sept. 1958: A1.

¹³ Clayborne Carson, ed. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Vol. 4. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 53.

¹⁴ "The Black Church: Three Views," *Time* 6 Apr. 1970: 72.

¹⁵ Carson 17-18.

¹⁶ Boggs, Grace Lee. *Living for Change: An Autobiography*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) 124.

given his historic *I Have a Dream* speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at the climax of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.¹⁷ The theme of the King Solomon conference, “Which Way Ahead,” was discussed in a series of workshops in which the PNBC’s individual departments met and developed strategies for the future of the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁸ King, as President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, gave the keynote address on the evening of Friday, September 6, commemorating the 100th anniversary year of the Emancipation Proclamation. King’s message was preceded by addresses from Abernathy and Mays.

King’s philosophy of integration was not shared by all African American leaders. Its counterpart, black nationalism, sought to prioritize economic empowerment as a means of ameliorating the status, not only of African Americans, but blacks worldwide.¹⁹ King Solomon Baptist Church, having hosted King on two occasions, would soon thereafter be the site of two historic addresses by the prominent nationalist leader, Malcolm X.

In November 1963 the Rev. C. L. Franklin of Detroit’s New Bethel Baptist Church and other integrationists excluded nationalists from a meeting of the Northern Leadership Conference that was held at Cobo Hall.²⁰ The Rev. Albert B. Cleage, Jr. (who later changed his name to Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman), pastor of Central Congregational Church (now known as the Shrine of the Black Madonna), along with representatives of the newly-created Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL) and the Freedom Now Party, responded by organizing a conference of black nationalists to be held concurrently.

The Northern Grass Roots Leadership Conference, as it was named, was held at King Solomon Baptist Church on the ninth and tenth of November. Boone was initially hesitant to host the event, perhaps due to concern for the safety of his congregation less than two months after the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. He changed his mind, however, when he realized that an auditorium the size of King Solomon’s would be needed to accommodate the great number of guests that were expected for the conference (Cleage’s own church was significantly smaller in capacity).²¹ Boone was known for his “open and receptive” nature and his eagerness to open his church to meetings and conferences of a variety of organizations, regardless of faith.²²

The Northern Grass Roots Leadership Conference was attended by leaders such as Gloria Richardson, organizer of the Cambridge Movement for desegregation of public accommodations in that city, local Chinese American and African American activists

¹⁷ Elements of this address had been previewed before a Detroit audience at Ford Auditorium earlier in the summer, at the Walk to Freedom march organized by The Rev. C. L. Franklin, pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church and chairman of the Detroit Council for Human Rights.

¹⁸ “Progressive NBC in Sessions Here,” *Michigan Chronicle*, 7 Sept. 1963: A1.

¹⁹ John H. Bracey, et al. *Black Nationalism in America*. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970)

²⁰ James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: a Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991) 114.

²¹ Suzanne E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) 114-115

²² Mobley.

Grace Lee and James Boggs, and journalist and Freedom Now leader William Worthy. About twenty white guests were voluntarily “segregated,” according to the *Michigan Chronicle*.²³ Malcolm X gave the keynote address to an audience of 3,000 in the church’s Main Auditorium on November 10. His “Message to the Grass Roots” speech was later described by journalist Peter Goldman as “the most influential single speech of [Malcolm X’s] life.”²⁴

Malcolm X’s speech served as a nationalist response to the March on Washington, in which he strongly criticized King and the other “Big Six” Civil Rights Movement leaders (James L. Farmer, Jr., John Lewis, A. Phillip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young) for having participated in what he referred to as a “circus” and a “sellout.” He described the march’s African American leaders as “Uncle Toms” who were used by the white establishment “to keep you and me in check, keep us under control.”²⁵ Malcolm X vehemently opposed the degree to which the march was funded and controlled by a mostly white, upper-class, Democratic political establishment. March organizers, for example, censored speeches by Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee Chairman (now Congressman) John Lewis and Harlem novelist James Baldwin that were intended to criticize the federal government and the John F. Kennedy administration in particular.²⁶

Addressing those gathered at King Solomon Baptist Church, Malcolm X referred to the Civil Rights Movement derisively as a “Negro revolution” which, he declared, was “the only revolution in which the goal is... a desegregated public toilet. You can sit down next to white folks on the toilet – that’s no revolution.” By contrast, Malcolm X advocated what he termed a “black revolution,” and identified with the contemporary Mau Mau Uprising against British rule in Kenya and the Algerian revolution against French colonialism. Paraphrasing Cleage, Malcolm X declared, “You don’t do any singing [in a revolution], you’re too busy swinging.”²⁷ For Malcolm X, integration into a white-dominated society was not the goal. He sought a degree of assured power worldwide, which he believed could only be attained through the control of capital and land.²⁸

Malcolm X’s speech at King Solomon Baptist Church also served as a sign of his impending break from the Nation of Islam, the black Muslim religious organization (founded in Detroit in 1930) in which he was a minister. Within the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X was second in influence only to its leader, Elijah Mohammad. The strongly political focus of the minister’s words at King Solomon contrasted sharply with the more spiritual message of his prior speeches as a member of that organization. Referring to Malcolm X’s unusually sparse references to Nation of Islam teachings on that day, Richardson remarked “that was when I really wondered how long it would be before he

²³ Jim Cleaver, “Malcolm X Blasts Big Six: Grassroots Conference Sets Organizational Plans,” *Michigan Chronicle*, 16 Nov. 1963: A1+

²⁴ Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979) 116.

²⁵ George Breitman, ed. *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Grove Press, 1990) 14-17.

²⁶ Cone 117.

²⁷ Breitman 4-17.

²⁸ Cone 116-117.

would break with [the Nation of Islam]... his heart wasn't really in it, you know?"²⁹ Grace Lee Boggs recalls observing a sudden change in the minister's speaking style. Detecting a newfound sense of "passion and urgency" in Malcolm X's words, she whispered to Cleage before the address had concluded, predicting "Malcolm's going to split with Mr. Mohammad."³⁰

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated less than two weeks later, and the following spring Malcolm X was ejected from the Nation of Islam, ostensibly for declaring the act an instance of "chickens coming home to roost," a violation of Mohammed's instruction to his ministers to refrain from commenting on the assassination. Malcolm X, however, maintained that he was quoted out of context, and that "The real reason was [Mohammed's] jealousy of my growing influence."³¹



King Solomon Baptist Church on April 12, 1964, the day of Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" address. [Source: Virtual Motor City, Wayne State University]

Malcolm X visited King Solomon again on April 12, 1964 to repeat his "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech, first given earlier in the month at Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio.³² While Malcolm X maintained his earlier position that violence might be justified if African Americans continued to be illegally and violently oppressed by the white majority, the primary purpose of this address was to encourage his audience to

²⁹ Goldman 117-118.

³⁰ Boggs, 129.

³¹ Hans Massaquoi, "Mystery of Malcolm X: Fired Black Muslim Denounces Cult, Vows to Take Part in Rights Revolt," *Ebony* Sept. 1964: 40.

³² Breitman 23.

exercise their right to vote. He began his speech by encouraging unity among all blacks regardless of faith, socioeconomic status, and beliefs regarding integration vs. nationalism, and did not repeat the strong criticism of mainstream Civil Rights Movement leaders that characterized his “Message to the Grass Roots” address. While the Nation of Islam discouraged its followers from participating in the political process, Malcolm X was increasingly encouraging African Americans to vote. Malcolm X went on to establish the Organization of Afro-American Unity, a secular entity that advocated for civil rights. The growth of that body, however, was interrupted by the assassination of its founder on February 21, 1965 by Nation of Islam member Talmadge Thayer.

In addition to its political history, King Solomon Baptist Church is noteworthy in the realm of arts and culture. The Boone House, a center for poetry and the literary arts, was established at King Solomon in the early 1960s by Wayne State University poet-in-residence Margaret Danner. It attracted talent such as Detroit natives Dudley Randall and Ron Milner and Harlem’s Langston Hughes. Randall drew inspiration for his most famous work, “The Ballad of Birmingham” from other Boone House poets, and Hughes collaborated with Danner to record “Poets of the Revolution” on the Motown Records label.³³

Gregory Mobley describes King Solomon Baptist Church as having played a key role in maintaining a strong community in the surrounding neighborhood by opening its doors to groups such as the Progressive Community Association, which met there during the 1960s.³⁴

The Rev. James Cleveland and Albertina Walker, the “King and Queen of Gospel Music,” founded the Gospel Music Workshop of America (GMWA) at King Solomon in 1968 with an initial meeting of 3,000 participants. These included Dr. Mattie Moss Clark of the Clark Sisters, Thurston Frazier, Lawrence Roberts, and Sara Jordan Powell. The GMWA is now the largest international organization of black Gospel musicians, with over 30,000 members, meeting annually in August. Cleveland, who originally came to Detroit from Chicago when hired by the Rev. C. L. Franklin as music director, trained Franklin’s daughter, Aretha, as a gospel soloist. Historian Charles Simmons credits the prestige of King Solomon Baptist Church, in combination with the influence of T. S. Boone in organizations such as the Progressive National Baptist Convention, as having helped popularize Gospel music, which had not yet gained the degree of mainstream acceptance that it enjoys today.³⁵

The church also became known for its wealth of youth-related programs. An indoor roller skating rink served the neighborhood from the 1960s until the mid-1980s. Boxing trainer Emanuel Steward coached a generation of athletes inside the church’s gymnasium, including National Golden Gloves champion Thomas Hearns. According to Donald Whitaker, who resided north of Grand Boulevard and attended many of King Solomon Baptist Church’s activities in the 1960s, the church’s youth programs helped to maintain

³³ Smith 111-115.

³⁴ Mobley

³⁵ Charles Simmons, personal interview.

the neighborhood's strong sense of community. It was an oasis in the desert," he says, "due to the recreational and social events that generations now don't have."³⁶

King Solomon Baptist Church joined the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America in the 1980s, and is now known as King Solomon Missionary Baptist Church. It is also a member of the National Baptist Convention of America and the Progressive National Baptist Convention. Its current pastor, the Rev. Charles E. Williams II, was called to lead the congregation in 2009.

ARCHITECTURE

The proposed King Solomon Baptist Church Historic District consists of two buildings. The original Temple Baptist Church, completed in 1920, was expanded and repurposed as a Sunday School building when a new building, the Main Auditorium, was completed and began to host regular services in 1937. The original Temple Baptist Church building has been known as the Educational and Recreation Building since at least 1951, when King Solomon Baptist Church purchased the facility.³⁷

King Solomon Baptist Church's Educational and Recreation Building and its Main Auditorium are situated on the northwest and northeast corners of Fourteenth Street and Marquette Avenue, respectively, and face each other across Fourteenth Street. Both buildings occupy almost their entire respective parcels, featuring only a minimal setback from the street. The buildings are located in a residential neighborhood of detached, single-family and multi-family homes, about four miles northwest of downtown Detroit. Most of these homes date from the 1910s and 1920s, and many have been demolished in recent years.

Educational and Recreation Building (6125 Fourteenth Street)

Building permit #502 was issued on February 10, 1916 to erect Temple Baptist Church at an estimated cost of \$50,000. The church was completed in 1920. It was designed by architect J. Will Wilson, principal of the firm Wilson & Catto, and described by city historian Clarence M. Burton in 1922 as "one of the leading architects of Detroit."³⁸ He was perhaps best known for the Chateau Frontenac Apartments on East Jefferson Avenue, which he financed as well as designed. Although this eight-story Mediterranean and French Gothic structure was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991, it was demolished in 1999. Other noteworthy commissions by Wilson included the Arcadia Theatre at 9159 Gratiot, a mineral bath house for the Wayne Hotel at Third and Jefferson Avenues, an apartment building at the intersection of Hague and Oakland Avenues, another at Alfred and John R Streets, and one at 174 Charlotte Avenue. All of

³⁶ Donald Whitaker, personal interview.

³⁷ *King Solomon Baptist Church: Initial Program at New Site: Fourteenth and Marquette Avenues (25 November 1951)*.

³⁸ Clarence M. Burton, *The City of Detroit, Michigan 1701-1922*. (Detroit: S. J. Clarke, 1922) 262.

these buildings, however, no longer exist, leaving Temple Baptist Church as perhaps the best remaining example of Wilson's work.



Old Auditorium, Temple Baptist Church, which has now been converted into a modern Sunday School building.

Temple Baptist Church, circa 1938-1939. [Source: Carpenter, Joel. *Inside History of First Baptist Church, Fort Worth, and Temple Baptist Church, Detroit*]

The church's unique, Arts and Crafts-inspired Tudor Revival detail set it apart from the many Neo-Gothic and Renaissance churches which were being built in Detroit at that time. The building, faced with buff-colored brick, features a prominent gable front and an off-center, projecting rectangular tower. On the building's primary façade (east elevation), a pair of concrete steps leads to each of the building's two main entrances. The steps have been altered to accommodate a poured concrete wheelchair ramp resting on a concrete block foundation, running parallel to the building façade between the two sets of steps. Each entrance consists of a pair of double wooden doors, ornamented with trefoils, situated within a Gothic arched stone surround. A thick, beveled stone belt course extends across the façade at the height of the building's entrances. A gable roof overhangs each entrance, bearing wide vergeboards whose ends flare outwards to accommodate trefoil decorations in relief on the lower ends. The gables are supported by large wooden brackets. The space within each gable is finished with decorative half timbering and stucco. The southernmost entrance, located at the base of a projecting, rectangular tower, sits closer to the street than the northernmost entrance.

Between the two entrances, and extending upwards, is a large wood and leaded glass window with Gothic tracery, sitting within a Gothic arched, tabbed stone surround. The window is surmounted by a small, louvered, lancet-shaped opening near the peak of the

gable roof. A wide vergeboard, supported by projecting wooden brackets, bears a quatrefoil decoration in relief on its northern end.

Brick wall buttresses highlight the corners of the building's rectangular tower. On the tower, a Gothic arched, tabbed-stone surround features a smaller stained glass window, resembling the one centered on the façade, but with stone mullions and tracery. The tower is topped with a louvered belfry capped by a low-pitched, flared, pyramidal roof.

The building's first addition was constructed in 1937 and extends to the north. It is two and a half stories on a high, fenestrated basement. The structure is flat-roofed and four bays wide, its brick color matching that of the original church. From south to north, its first bay projects slightly from the plane of the original church's façade and features a double steel door with wooden transom. A painted sign above the door, added in 1951 at the earliest, reads "King Solomon OFFICES EDUCATION RECREATION." Above the entrance, the first bay features a tall window with wood muntins and mullions. Continuing north, the remaining three bays project forward to meet the public sidewalk. Each of these bays features triple, wood, six over six sash windows on the upper floors, with smaller wood windows on the basement level. Each bay is separated by a brick pier which extends slightly above the roofline, while each floor is separated by a soldier belt course. The north elevation of the 1937 addition is four bays wide, featuring the same fenestration pattern as the east elevation.

The building's second and final addition was constructed in 1940 and extends to the south. It is three stories tall and three bays wide, and for the most part, resembles the earlier addition in appearance. Instead of sash windows, it features multilight steel windows. This fenestration pattern is continued on the south elevation, with some of the window openings having been bricked in. A southeast cutaway corner provides space for a single unglazed steel door.

The 1940 addition concealed the church's south transept. This portion of the structure occupied a multifaceted footprint, each of the transept's six sides bearing a large, Gothic-arched stained glass window resting on a continuous sill course. The transept was capped by a six-faceted, semi-pyramidal roof with projecting eaves, interrupted by a course of clerestory windows.

The west (rear) elevation resembles the front elevation, with similar wide vergeboards and Gothic arched stained glass window.

Main Auditorium (6102 Fourteenth Street)

Concurrently with the church's 1937 addition, a new Main Auditorium was also constructed on the east side of Fourteenth Street. Its large, open interior provided space for at least 5,000 people to gather at one time. A permit was granted for the building, with an estimated cost of \$194,000, on April 29 of that year. An architect was not mentioned. The Main Auditorium contrasts with the Educational and Recreation

Building by its Art Deco style and overall fortress-like massing. It is a two-story, flat roofed building with symmetrical façade, high parapet wall and engaged, quoined towers. It is clad in brick matching that of the original building in color, and features rough stone trim.

The building sits on a random ashlar masonry foundation, set back only a few feet from the street to the west and south, and the public alley on the east. Centered on the façade is a theater-like entranceway, consisting of three sets of paired steel doors, situated beneath a cantilevered, flat roof overhang on the front façade. This projecting roof extends over the public sidewalk, and once supported a marquee which no longer exists. In its place, a series of individual stainless steel letters rises from the edge of the overhang, reading “KING SOLOMON BAPTIST CHURCH.” The doors are separated by narrow, engaged, three-sided towers, and flanked by broader towers that rise to project slightly above the roofline. On the first floor of each tower is a narrow, stone-tapped window opening. The towers, along with piers at the corners of the building, are quoined with rough-cut stone of varying colors and textures. The towers are topped with small, triangular, prism-like projections. A parapet wall adds additional height to the building façade, and is higher above the building entrance than at either end of the façade. Tall, vertical panels of basketweave brickwork exist on the upper half of the building, above the main entrances and on the wider engaged towers, suggesting embrasures or balastraria. The outermost bays of the façade each bear a series of four tall, narrow, slightly recessed window openings, containing steel windows resting on a stone sash course and supporting a stone lintel course. Spandrels between individual windows are flat metal panels.

Similar tall, narrow windows on the building’s cutaway corners face northwest and southwest. On the southwest corner of the building, a large cornerstone is incised in relief “JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF THE CHIEF CORNER STONE 1937.”

The window arrangement of the front (west) elevation continues on the building's side (north and south) elevations, which are each six bays wide, each bay separated by tall brick piers, and each bay containing three windows instead of four. Most of the side windows, however, have been enclosed with concrete block or stucco. Above the westernmost grouping of windows on the north elevation, and each window on the front (west) and south elevations, as well as each basketweave brick panel on the front elevation, is a light-colored, stone, diamond-shaped medallion. On the north elevation, all bays except the westernmost are finished with concrete block instead of brick, and piers do not feature stone quoins.

Immediately to the north of the building is a grassy area that once contained a residential building. According to Sanborn Map Company maps, this building existed prior to 1910 and was later incorporated into the church complex, serving as a “church nursery” as late as 1951. Building permits describe the creation of a “fire door between church and caretaker and Sunday School rooms” in 1944, suggesting that the building was connected to the Main Auditorium at that time. According to building permits, the building was demolished in 1975.

CRITERIA

The proposed historic district appears to meet the first, second, and third criteria contained in Section 25-2-2: (1) Sites, buildings, structures, or archeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is particularly reflected or exemplified; (2) Sites, buildings, structures, or archeological sites which are identified with historic personages or with important events in community, city, state or national history; (3) Buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style or method of construction.

COMPOSITION OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine appointed members and three *ex-officio* members, all residents of Detroit. The appointed members are: Kwaku Atara, Melanie A. Bazil, Robert Cosgrove, Keith A. Dye, Zene' Frances Fogel-Gibson, Edward Francis, Calvin Jackson, Harriet Johnson and Doris Rhea. The *ex-officio* members, who may be represented by members of their staff, are: the Director of the Historical Department, the Director of the City Planning Commission, and the Director of the Planning and Development Department.

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Proposed
King Solomon Baptist Church Historic District
 Boundaries Indicated by Bold Lines