

**Historic Landmark Application  
Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery  
3712 Monroe Rd., Charlotte, NC 28205**

**1. Name and location of the property**

The Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery is located at 3712 Monroe Road, Charlotte NC, 28205. The cemetery is located in a fenced area behind the parking lot of Atlantic Climate Controlled Storage (3404 Monroe Rd.), which controls access, although Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Trustees are the property owners.

**2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the property:**

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church/Trustees  
Antioch Missionary Baptist Church  
232 Skyland Ave.  
Charlotte, NC 28205  
(704) 332-4991  
email@antiochfamily.org

**3. Representative photographs of the property:**

Please refer to Appendix 2.

**4. A map depicting the location of the property:**

Please refer to Appendix 3.

**5. Current Deed Book Reference to the property:**

The most recent deed for the property is listed in Mecklenburg County Deed Book B, page 216. The Tax Parcel Number of the property is 15904104.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:**

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery is the resting place of at least 74 Charlotteans, including the founding generation of a church that remains an important part of Charlotte's religious life 130 years after its founding. That first generation included men and women who had been members of an enslaved community in South Carolina, and who had reassembled in Charlotte after Emancipation, as well as other formerly enslaved people and their descendants.

The land that is now the location of the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery was purchased on November 23, 1895, from the estate of Pat Hall.<sup>1</sup> About four years earlier, a group of African American residents of the Charlotte area began to meet for worship at the home of a charismatic young South Carolina native, Jim McVay (1869-1960), who lived in the Cherry community on the outskirts of Charlotte.<sup>2</sup> According to the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church's online history, "For a considerable time, the Church worshipped and held meetings under a brush arbor when the weather permitted. Later, the Church was granted permission to use a local schoolhouse for its meetings."<sup>3</sup>

Jim McVay was a member of a group of families joined by marriage who had come to the Charlotte area from in and around Blackstock, South Carolina, an area on the line between Chester and Fairfield Counties. Vital records show that the McVays and the Brice family both came from the Blackstock area, and the family of early member Patsy Strong McVay was from the same community, shown in the 1870 census as having several Brice families as neighbors.

Among this extended family were several people who had been born during slavery. While it is yet to be established on what plantations or in what households the oldest members of Antioch's founding generation had lived before the Civil War, the white Brice and Strong families were both large slaveholders in Fairfield and Chester Counties, and the African American families of the same last names do not appear in antebellum census records as free people, so it seems likely that a Brice and/or Strong plantation near Blackstock was where these families originated. Among the early congregation members known to be buried at Antioch, the oldest is Elijah McVay, Jim McVay's father, who was born around 1826.<sup>4</sup> Several other members were born before Emancipation. Daniel Brice was born at Blackstock in 1836, and his daughter Bella Brice Boyd was born in 1858.<sup>5</sup> Patsy Strong McVay was born in 1853; census records suggest that as a girl she probably knew her grandmother, Tabby Strong, who was born (according to the 1870 census) in 1775.<sup>6</sup> Members of the extended Bogan family, who came from Morven in Anson County, and settled in the Old Monroe Road community known as the Crab Orchard, were also among the early Antioch congregants.<sup>7</sup> Paul Fox was born in 1848 in North Carolina.<sup>8</sup> Fox's familial relationship, if any, to the other

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cmstory.org/content/antioch-baptist-church>, accessed January 12, 2018

<sup>2</sup> "He Saw City Born From 'Bush Arbor.'" Undated newspaper clipping, September 19, 1960, in Antioch Missionary Baptist Church's history album.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.antiochfamily.org/church-history>, accessed January 11, 2018

<sup>4</sup> Death certificate for Elijah McVay, June 24, 1916, file number 60, certificate number 411, North Carolina State Board of Health; the death certificate records that McVay, who died on June 23, 1916, was 90 years old.

<sup>5</sup> Death certificate for Bella Boyd (sic), file number 161, certificate number 43, January 25, 1915, North Carolina State Board of Health.

<sup>6</sup> Death certificate for Patsy McVay, file number 488, register number 546, August 18, 1923, North Carolina State Board of Health; 1870 Census, Fairfield County, South Carolina.

<sup>7</sup> Correspondence with Jimmie Kirkpatrick, February 2, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Death certificate for Paul Fox, file number 179, register number 794, December 8, 1922, North Carolina State Board of Health.

early members has not yet been established. (Some of these birth dates may be estimated, given the uncertainty that many formerly enslaved people had about their ages.)

In 1900, the Antioch congregation built their first dedicated church building, constructed on the site that is the subject of this application. Rev. S. W. Waddell became Antioch's first minister, and Jim McVay the first deacon (an office he would hold until his death sixty years later).<sup>9</sup> The original building was destroyed by fire, and a second church was constructed on the site in 1922.<sup>10</sup>

Rev. Waddell was, like other members of the early Antioch congregation, born enslaved in South Carolina. In 1923, he spoke to a writer for the *Monroe Journal*, and shared memories of slavery and the Civil War.

Pastor of one church for thirty-six years is the enviable record of Rev. W. S. Waddell, well-known colored minister. Antioch Baptist Church, near Charlotte, is his charge and friends of the preacher, who is seventy years old, expect him to serve for many more years. Rev. Waddell has a vivid recollection of pre-war days. He remembers being sold at the Polly Medders sale, previous to the declaration of war between the states, to J. Jackson, of Chesterfield county [South Carolina]. His mother, sold at the same time, brought \$800 but he does not remember the price he fetched. When the war ended, the preacher says he was picked up by a Yankee regiment, told that he was free, and that they were going to take him north and give him an education. "I went along," said Rev. Waddell, "but after we passed through Anson county, and when I thought we were almost up north, I found that we had around 2500 miles to go. That was too great a distance for my childish mind to comprehend, so when night came I slipped away, hot-footing it back to my old mistress and master."<sup>11</sup>

The second church building, constructed in 1922, had a pastor's study, choir room, indoor restrooms, office, and a basement, which included a dining and assembly area. Surviving photographs in the congregation's archive show a white wooden church building of a traditional African American architectural form, with towers flanking the front-facing gable end. Jimmie Lee Kirkpatrick (born 1948), a descendant of Jim McVay who grew up attending Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, remembers that the baptismal pool was underneath the floor; in order to open it, the preacher's seat would be moved aside, and the rug rolled back to expose a door in the floor. Kirkpatrick was baptized in this pool at the age of 12. (He remembers as well that the church was heated by woodstoves, and that new benches were installed around 1953 or '54.)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Jimmie Lee Kirkpatrick, great-great-grandson of Jim McVay, whom he knew as a child, remembers hearing Jim McVay and his contemporaries discussing the fire. Telephone conversation, January 18, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> "Local and Personal," *Monroe (NC) Journal*, February 2, 1923, page 5.

<sup>12</sup> Telephone conversation, January 18, 2018.

In an article in the September 20, 1975, edition of the *Charlotte Observer*, two then-elder church members, Cornelia McVay (Deacon McVay's daughter-in-law) and Mrs. E. D. Davis, reminisced about what it was like to attend church at the Monroe Road location.

When Mrs. E. D. Davis was baptized 66 years ago, the immersion took place in the front yard of the Antioch Baptist Church, where a hand-dug pool was filled with water hauled from Briar Creek.

"On the Sunday I got baptized, somebody brought a water moccasin up in a barrel of water and it was swimming around in the pool when the 16 of us were baptized," recalled Mrs. Davis, 80. [...]

"I remember many a Sunday when we had to keep our coats on and huddle together because there was no coal for the stove and no money," said Cornelia McVay, 85...

The 1975 *Observer* article makes reference to the economic conditions of some church members' lives in the early years of Antioch.

Money was always scarce for all the black members of Antioch, most of whom were farmers or domestics like Mrs. McVay and Mrs. Davis.

"I remember making about \$6 a week working with the family I worked for for 58 years," said Mrs. McVay . . . "And I gave \$1 a week to the building fund."<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the early members of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church were hard-working people with largely blue-collar jobs. According to their death certificates, many of the women who were buried in the cemetery worked as domestics, as indicated in the *Observer* article. These include Patsy McVay, and another woman of her generation, Tempy Holmes, who was born in Mecklenburg County in 1863.<sup>14</sup> Several men and at least one woman worked as laborers. Siblings Lucy Alexander (1891-1942) and Steve Garfield Alexander (1887-1958) left Charlotte and worked in the tobacco industry in Winston-Salem, but when they died their bodies were brought back for burial at Antioch.<sup>15</sup>

Although some of the men and women buried in the churchyard lived very long lives, others' lives were tragically short. At least four babies are buried at Antioch, including

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<sup>13</sup> Milton Jordan, "Antioch III Finds Home." *Charlotte Observer*, Saturday, September 20, 1975, page 1B.

<sup>14</sup> Death certificate for Patsy McVay, file number 488, register number 546, August 18, 1923, North Carolina State Board of Health; death certificate for Tempy Holmes, file number 70, register number 60-01, certificate number 25, September 4, 1943, North Carolina State Board of Health.

<sup>15</sup> Death certificate for Lucy Alexander, file number 257, certificate number 59, June 30, 1942, North Carolina State Board of Health; Death certificate for Steve Garfield Alexander, file number 33111, certificate number 1547, January 6, 1959, North Carolina State Board of Health.

Grace Springs (August 31, 1951 – February 2, 1952), Alice Virginia Jordan (August 11, 1968 – August 21, 1968), and an unnamed baby of the Brown family (born and died November 14, 1952).<sup>16</sup> At least two men died by homicide, according to their death certificates. J. L. Alexander, age 25, died when his throat was cut at Ellison and Cherry Streets on July 25, 1948; David Anderson, Jr., age 24, died from a .22 gunshot wound to the abdomen sustained in his home on the night of December 5, 1952.<sup>17</sup> Several women buried at Antioch died in their twenties and thirties, all listed as having worked as domestics (in one case, specifically a cook) — Classie Lytle died at 35 of nephritis; Alberta Washington at 33 of tuberculosis; Birdie Mae Kirkpatrick at 32 of a cerebral hemorrhage; Annie Izzard at 29 of pneumonia; and Carrie Caldwell at only 25 of pneumonia.<sup>18</sup>

In October of 1958, a mother and four children died in a house fire, and all—Lucille McDaniel, age 40, 11-year-old Mabel McDaniel, James and Ann McDaniel, both eight, and seven-year old Sandra McDaniel—are buried at Antioch. A harrowing account of the tragedy appeared in the *Carolina Times*, an African American newspaper published in Durham. The fire broke out on a Sunday morning while the husband and father, John McDaniel, was “chopping kindling on a nearby hill to make a fire to warm water to go to church.” He returned home to find the house burning, with his wife and their four youngest children trapped inside. McDaniel broke a bedroom window and called to his wife, but she was apparently already unconscious, and though he tried to enter the house, he was unable to reach Lucille or the four children whose bodies were later found alongside her remains. Two older daughters survived—Greta, 20, and Johnnie Mae, 18, both of whom had run to neighbors for help—as well as the family’s baby, rescued by one of the grown daughters.<sup>19</sup> Johnnie Mae McDaniel is still a member of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church.

The life stories, and death stories, of the men, women, and children buried at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery form a portrait of a working-class 20<sup>th</sup>-century African American community in Charlotte. Hard work and poor health, and sometimes disaster, were part of their lives, yet together they built a church community that is now over a century old, and continues to thrive. Just as Cornelia McVay remembered saving up one of the six dollars that she made each week, and contributing it to the church’s

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<sup>16</sup> Death certificate for Alice Virginia Jordan, August 27, 1969, file number 28026, North Carolina State Board of Health; Death certificate for Grace Darnell Springs, file number 3381, certificate number 138, February 7, 1952, North Carolina State Board of Health;

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/63579776/baby-brown>, accessed January 12, 2018

<sup>17</sup> Death certificate for J. L. Alexander, July 30, 1948, file number 15805, North Carolina State Board of Health; Death certificate for David Anderson, Jr., December 17, 1952, file number 30174, North Carolina State Board of Health.

<sup>18</sup> Death certificate for Classie Lytle, file number 452, register number 593, September 7, 1923, North Carolina State Board of Health; Death certificate for Alberta Washington, file number 17445, certificate number 29, August 31, 1944, North Carolina State Board of Health; Death certificate for Birdie Mae Kirkpatrick, file number 200, certificate number illegible, May 8, 1941, North Carolina State Board of Health; Death certificate for Annie Izzard, file number 43, certificate number 1166, December 15, 1938, North Carolina State Board of Health; Death certificate for Carrie Caldwell, file number 32075, register number 1120, December 31, 1918, North Carolina State Board of Health.

<sup>19</sup> *Carolina Times*, October 18, 1958, pp. 1 and 8.

building fund, the congregation worked again to raise funds for a new home when the 1922 church building was no longer adequate for the congregation's needs. In September of 1975, Antioch Missionary Baptist Church moved to their new home at 232 Skyland Avenue, which is its location today.

Over the course of the more than 40 years since, the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church cemetery fell into disuse. The old church is no longer standing. In recent years, Antioch's members have teamed up to restore the cemetery, cutting trees, clearing underbrush, and uncovering headstones. Unfortunately, although the cemetery is owned by the Trustees of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, the storage company now located next to the cemetery controls access to it. In order to visit their ancestors' graves, church members must visit during the storage company's hours of operation, and request entrance through the electronic security gate.

To the wider community, the cemetery is essentially invisible, just as the life stories of the people buried there are so little known. Historic landmark status would help to bring deserved recognition to Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery, and educate the public about this important church community of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Charlotte.

## **7. A brief physical description of the property:**

Located at 3712 Monroe Road in Charlotte, the nearly-half-acre Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery is accessible only through the gated parking lot of Atlantic Climate Controlled Storage at 3404 Monroe Road. A retaining pond behind the storage building, next to the northwest side of the property, may pose a flooding risk to the cemetery. To the south and west the cemetery is bounded by a railroad track, which, according to McVay descendant Jimmie L. Kirkpatrick, was a route by which congregation members reached the church on foot before the 1975 relocation to Skyland Avenue.<sup>20</sup>

While many graves are unmarked except by depressions in the ground, some headstones do remain. Of these, at least 16 are professionally made monuments in forms commercially available between the 1910s and 1970s, while the cemetery was in use. The most elaborate discovered thus far is that of Daniel Brice (1836-1924); his marker is a small flat-topped obelisk, with a geometric design of doves and palm or evergreen leaves at the top, above the inscription, and bordered near the base with the decorative device of a pot of ivy, the tendrils of which wrap around the stone. The majority of the extant markers are of vernacular forms. Perhaps most notable is that of Authar Gamble (born 1930, death date illegible), an upright slab-style headstone. The name and dates were hand-inscribed while the concrete was wet, and the carver also incised an image of an angel, apparently traced from a stencil or printed image. Also significant are two

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<sup>20</sup> Jimmie L. Kirkpatrick remembers walking the two or three miles from his family's home to Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, using the railroad tracks for access to the wooded area where the church stood. (Telephone conversation, January 12, 2018)

sandstone markers, apparently architectural scrap material, one skillfully hewn but bearing neither text nor decoration, the other featuring only initials. (Please see Appendix 2 for photographs.) At least one funeral home marker remains, that of Richard Lee Perry (1957-1962), provided by Alexander Funeral Home. The majority of the exposed headstones, however, are unmarked fieldstones, molded slabs or fragments of concrete, cinderblocks, and other improvised markers.

## **8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-400.5:**

### **a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture, and /or cultural importance:**

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church has been an important base for Charlotte's faith community for more than 130 years. This deeply rooted congregation still includes descendants of its founders, and in well over a century it has only had six pastors. (Rev. S. W. Waddell was succeeded by Rev. John B. Massey, Rev. G. W. Crosby, Rev. D. F. Moore, Rev Preston Pendergrass, and the current pastor, Rev. Donnie R. Garris.) Today it is home to thirty-eight ministries, and served by fourteen associate ministers, almost fifty deacons and deaconesses, fourteen trustees, and 650 working laity.<sup>21</sup> For this reason alone—the prominence of the modern church—the Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery would be deserving of recognition.

However, its significance to the history of the wider Charlotte community, and that of the Carolinas, is equally compelling. While it is a well-known phenomenon of nineteenth-century Southern history that emancipated men and women migrated north in search of work and improved quality of life, that story is most often told in the context of Southerners moving to the Northern states. The founders of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church were examples of first- and second-generation free African Americans who migrated within their region—only sixty miles, in the case of the core community of founders from Blackstock, South Carolina—settling in and just outside urban areas where blue-collar work made it possible for them to support their families and themselves. That economic mobility also made possible the building of church homes, which continue to be a crucial part of Charlotte's spiritual and social life today.

### **b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and/or association:**

Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery represents a highly significant, intact collection of twentieth-century African American funerary art. The commercial and vernacular forms of grave markers found in the cemetery reveal the complexity of early-twentieth-century African American memorial practices. Of particular note are the hand-incised design and inscription on the concrete grave marker of Authar Gamble,

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.antiochfamily.org/church-history>, accessed January 12, 2018

and the unmarked piece of worked architectural sandstone used as an anonymous marker. (Please see photographs in Appendix 2.) Comparing these markers, as well as the many unmarked fieldstones and pieces of building material, with the commercially made gravestones at the site (such as that of Daniel Brice, also pictured in Appendix 2), these markers reflect the economic and educational diversity within a single faith community, the reverence in which ministers and community elders were held, and the creativity and resourcefulness with which vernacular gravestone makers set about to memorialize their loved ones.

Though some died more than a century ago, the men, women, and children buried at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery are remembered by the present congregation. Led by Trustee and church historian Mary Bradley, church members have devoted many volunteer hours to clearing and restoring the cemetery. However, the industrial development along Monroe Boulevard threatens the integrity of the site by creating restrictions to access, and possibly the threat of flooding. Despite tremendous efforts of church members to restore their ancestors' resting place, further protection of the site is greatly needed.

#### **9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:**

The total acreage of the tract of land on which the Antioch Baptist Church Cemetery is located is 0.4759. The total appraised value of the Tax Parcel is \$104,500. The property is zoned SF.

**Date of Preparation of this Report:** January 12, 2018

**Prepared by:** Sarah Bryan



## Appendix 1

### Known burials at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church

*Sources: Church records, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), death certificates, and walking survey.*

1. J. L. Alexander
2. John Alexander
3. Lucy Alexander
4. Mariah McVey Alexander
5. Steve Garfield Alexander
6. Walter Franklin Alexander
7. David Anderson, Jr.
8. Minnie Shannon Anderson
9. Robert Archie
10. Emma Bailey
11. P. H. Bailey
12. Arthur Columbus Barber
13. Edna Barber
14. Noah Barber
15. Reuben Barber
16. Minnie Bell
17. Willie Bell
18. C. A. Bogan
19. Belle Brice Boyd
20. Daniel Brice
21. Daniel Brice
22. Baby Brown
23. Claretha Butler
24. Carrie Biggers Caldwell
25. Lottie Caldwell
26. Baby girl Tressa Clifton
27. Mary Conner
28. George Cousar
29. Thomas Davis
30. Rev. John Eily
31. Narcissus Elliott
32. Eliza Hasty Foster
33. Paul Fox
34. Authar Gamble
35. Lula Gilmore
36. Tempy Massey Holmes
37. Annie White Izzard
38. B. J. Johnson
39. Charlie Johnson
40. Hattie Johnston
41. Alice Virginia Jordan

42. Berta (Birdie) Mae McVay Kirkpatrick
43. Truelove Hasty Leak
44. Perry Lightener
45. Ann McDaniel
46. James T. McDaniel
47. Lucille McDaniel
48. Mabel McDaniel
49. Sandra McDaniel
50. Elizabeth Delice McManus
51. Jim McVay, Sr.
52. Will McVay
53. Narcissus McVay
54. Patsy Strong McVay
55. John McVey
56. Robert Miller
57. Anna Bogan Monroe
58. Pastor J. D. Moore
59. Lillie Moore
60. Ethel Mills Parks
61. Huston Perry
62. Richard Lee Perry
63. Katie L. Redfern
64. Thomas Reid
65. Thomas Reid, Jr.
66. Mary Ann Shannon
67. Susie Simpson
68. Susie L. Singleton
69. Grace Darnell Springs
70. Alice Simmons Stitt
71. Silas Walker
72. LaChris Shanae Walls
73. Alberta Marion Washington
74. Lillie Willis

## Appendix 2

### A. Examples of extant tombstones (2017, photos by Sarah Bryan)



*Authar Gamble grave marker*



*Unscribed sandstone marker*



*Daniel Brice marker*

*B. Photographs church members and 1922 church building, from Antioch Missionary Baptist Church archive.*



*Antioch Missionary Baptist Church founder James McVay, with three of his children. Pictured from left to right, William McVay, Essie Belle McVay Stitt, James McVay, Sr., and Emma "Pet" McVay Stroud. Both William and James McVay are buried at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery.*



*Antioch Missionary Baptist Church members, circa 1940s.*

*Back row, left to right: Connie William, Hubert Southerland, Mr. Booker, unknown, unknown, Mr. Bell.*

*Second row: Jim Grier, Thomas Reid, unknown, J. C. Singleton, Robert Baker, Leslie Singleton.*

*Front row: James McVay, Mammie Shannon, Lillie Moore, Pastor J. D. Moore. (The men pictured were members of the Deacon Board.)*



*Women of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, circa 1950s*

*Back row, left to right: Stella Singleton, Jessie Southerland, Luther Mae Kilgo, Janie Cochrane, Connie Cook, Bessie Reid, Mary Ervin, Lorraine Harris, Ann Stradford, Jeanette Benton, Stella McGill, Mary Walls Louise Huey, Inez Hastens, Thelma Boulware.*

*Front row: Louise Cherry, Jerome Watson, Helen Singleton, Martha Eily, Parlie Baker, Essie Backer, Irma Kirkpatrick, Geraldine Baker, Jeanette Benton, Ada McIlwain, Mrs. Clifton, Elizabeth Grier, Beulah Baker.*

*(Jerome Watson, Luther Mae Kilgo, and Elizabeth Grier are now in their 90s and still members of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church.)*





*Pastor J. D. Moore and Mrs. Lillie Moore in white; two seated men unknown.*



*1922 church building at Monroe Road site*

## Appendix 3

### *Maps of property (via Google)*

