

Site of Mount Zion Baptist Church, 1884: One of Charlottesville's First African-American Churches

The origin of Mt. Zion Baptist Church is traced back to the period after the Civil War. Although the founding fathers had roots in a white Baptist Church, in 1867 they began meeting independently from house to house. Soon thereafter, Brother Samuel White offered his home as a permanent meeting place. Around 1875, the congregation erected a frame church on Ridge Street that they called Mt. Zion First African Church of Charlottesville. In 1883, this church was razed, and in 1884 it was replaced with the current brick edifice designed by George Wallace Spooner.

The Church's founding minister was Spotswood Jones. Several of the subsequent ministers have been prominent community leaders including Rev. Alvin Edwards who was mayor of Charlottesville from 1990-1992. Hosting many prominent national speakers and leaders, Mt. Zion Baptist Church has been influential in Charlottesville's history, especially the struggle for Civil Rights. Rose Hill Baptist, Ebenezer Baptist, and Zion Union Baptist all came out of Mt. Zion Baptist Church.



Figure 1: Marker at Mt. Zion Church, 105 Ridge Street