



Like all public spaces in the first half of the 20th century, which allowed people of color, the Ritz Theatre was segregated. It could seat some 680-plus guests with 110 of those seats reserved only for people of color in a section upstairs. Since the theatre went out of business in 1951, the segregated sections remained the whole time it was a movie theatre. It was several decades before the Tennessee Valley Arts Association purchased the theatre and reopened it for local plays and concerts.

**(Left)** Photograph of the Ritz Theatre in Sheffield, Alabama in 1939 (jonathanrosenbaum.net) **(Below)** The Ritz Theatre, Sheffield, Alabama, 2010 (Library of Congress)



## 31 ■ St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church

St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church is located in east Tuscumbia on the southwest corner of 4th and Washington streets. It can be easily confused with the Greater St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church in southwest Florence, across the river in Lauderdale County. While more history is known about the St. Paul AME in Florence, the two appear to be related as they share a name and similar signage. The establishment date of the Tuscumbia St. Paul AME Church is not clear, however, it is depicted on the 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of Tuscumbia as "M. E. Church Colored." According to this map, the building was wooden and had the characteristic double, square towers common on other historical AME churches. In a historic aerial photograph from

**(Below)** Excerpt of Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Tuscumbia, Colbert County, Alabama, 1921, Showing Saint Paul AME Church as "M.E. Church Colored." (University of Alabama, Historical Map Collection, Online) **(Top Right)** Aerial Photograph of Saint Paul AME Church in 1949 (University of Alabama, Historical Map Collection, Online) **(Right)** Aerial Photograph of Saint Paul AME Church in 1962 (University of Alabama, Historical Map Collection, Online)

