

# 15

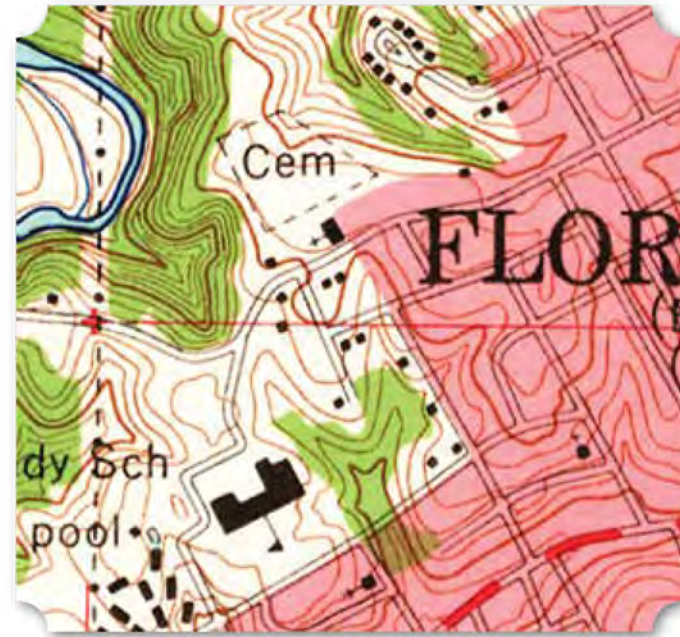
## Greater Mt. Moriah Church and Mt. Calvary Cemetery

The Greater Mt. Moriah Church is located at the intersection of West Irvine and Patterson streets in southwest Florence in a neighborhood known as Handy Homes, north of Canaan. According to the historical marker placed in front of the church, the Greater Mt. Moriah Primitive Baptist Church began about 1896 when the congregation came together in the home of Ms. Betsy Key. It was initially organized as "Fairgrounds Church" at a site just northwest of the church around the old racetrack and fairgrounds. Rev. Andy Sloss was the first pastor. Sometime between the 1900 and 1914, the church moved to what was then called Fish-Trap Road, now Irvine Avenue. The current name was chosen by Ms. Mary Ola Key. In 1924, the adjacent lot was purchased and the church was rebuilt under the direction of Rev. C.A. Crump. Later, the church was remodeled with a rear addition. The Family Life Center to the immediate east of the church was completed in 1997.



(Above) 1936 USGS Topographic Map of Mt. Moriah Church, Florence, Alabama Quadrangle

The church first appears on topographic maps in 1914. Although it is not labeled, a church symbol is depicted on the north side of Fish-Trap/Irvine Avenue.



(Above) 1957 USGS Topographic Map of Mt. Moriah Church and Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Florence, Alabama Quadrangle (Below) Photograph of Mt. Calvary Cemetery, 2013 (Findagrave.com via User Susan Bennett)

A large looped road on the end of Fish-Trap Road may have been the old racetrack and fairgrounds. The church is accompanied by a large cemetery called Mt. Calvary, which is not depicted on the early topographic maps. The first known interments are Annie Dean Davis (1905-1948) and John Wesley Houston (1926-1948), indicating the cemetery may not have been in use until 1948. The cemetery appears on the 1957 and 1971 topographic maps of Florence, but, like the church, it is not labeled.

The Mt. Calvary Cemetery has at least 672 graves and is still in use. Common family names include Boddie, Brown, Davis, Ingram, Jackson, Johnson, Jones, Key, Littleton, Rowell, Simpson, Smith, Stewart, Thompson, Turner, Vaughn, and Williams. Many of these family names are reminiscent of the census rolls for communities in the "Bend of the River," such as Oakland, Woodland, and Smithsonia. Many of those farming family made their way to southwest Florence suburbs. Among those buried here are Dr. Leonard Jerry Hicks (1899-1973) and his wife, Eva L. Callaham Hicks (1905-1990).



### KEY

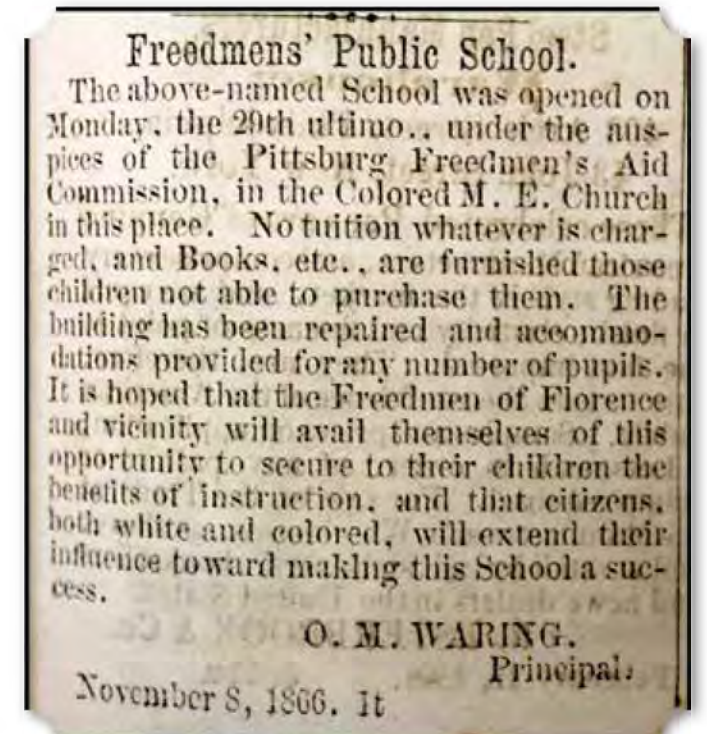
- COMMUNITIES
- CEMETERIES
- CHURCHES
- PLANTATIONS
- SCHOOLS

# 16

## Greater St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Greater St. Paul AME Church is the oldest African American church in Northwest Alabama, dating back to 1840 and including three locations in Florence. It was founded by a group of 14 members of the First Methodist church who came together to form the congregation of the Church Spring Church. This first church was in a brick shed located in south Florence on what was Spring Street, now Veterans Drive, between South Pine and Court streets. The congregation was led by former slave Robin Lightfoot, who, according to the church history, was lynched by Confederate soldiers who heard him preaching and stole him away from his owner's plantation to Stewart Springs.

(Below) An Advertisement for the Newly Opened Freedmen's Public School Dated Thursday, November 8, 1866 From the Florence Journal (Florence-Lauderdale Public Library via Facebook.com)



**Freedmen's Public School.**  
 The above-named School was opened on Monday, the 29th ultimo.. under the auspices of the Pittsburg Freedmen's Aid Commission, in the Colored M. E. Church in this place. No tuition whatever is charged, and Books, etc., are furnished those children not able to purchase them. The building has been repaired and accommodations provided for any number of pupils. It is hoped that the Freedmen of Florence and vicinity will avail themselves of this opportunity to secure to their children the benefits of instruction, and that citizens, both white and colored, will extend their influence toward making this School a success.

O. M. WARING,  
 Principal

November 8, 1866. It