

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Bethel AME ParsonageOther names/site number: 411 E. Seventh StreetName of related multiple property listing: N/A**2. Location**Street & number: 411 E. Seventh StreetCity or town: Reno State: Nevada County: WashoeNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

	<u>12/10/2025</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Nevada State Historic Preservation Office</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ☐ removed from the National Register
- ☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Private:

☒

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

Object

☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE

Walls: WOOD

Roof: ASPHALT

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Bethel AME Parsonage at 411 E. Seventh Street in Reno is a 1.5-story closed gable house with Colonial Revival influences. Constructed in 1916, the building is wood-framed and clad in both narrow clapboards and patterned wood shingles. It has a partial-width front porch and a wide, non-original shed-roofed dormer on its west elevation. Window types include wood fixed, double hung, and casement, with all second-story windows set in box frames. Colonial Revival style design elements include Tuscan porch columns and the pediment-like closed gable. While the house has experienced some alteration since its construction, it retains sufficient integrity in all seven aspects to convey its significance. The building is located in a residential neighborhood near the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). The setting is characterized by a mix of historic-age and modern single- and multi-family residences amid mature trees. A railroad spur line is located just west of the property.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

Built in 1916 as a single-family residence, the Bethel AME Parsonage is a modest wood-framed house located in the Evans Northeast Addition subdivision in Reno, Washoe County, Nevada. Neighborhood streets are paved with concrete sidewalks and lined with mature trees. Alleyways run between the rectilinear blocks. The property fronts south onto E. Seventh Street, standing one parcel east of the northeast corner of E. Seventh and Record Streets. Railroad tracks run north-south through the center of Record Street, creating a crossing at E. Seventh Street. Because the area provides housing largely catering to students at UNR, modern fourplexes and apartment

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buildings are interspersed with historic-age houses. A number of lots have been subdivided to accommodate additional housing, or alternatively, accessory dwelling units have been constructed on shared lots behind existing houses.

The resource sits on a small lot comprising 0.078 acres. This parcel has been subdivided with a two-story duplex built on the new parcel in 1997, facing the alleyway that defines the northern boundary of this block. The duplex is immediately north of the property. To the west is a two-story eight plex built in 1973. A vacant lot abuts the property to the east. Across the street is a five-story apartment building constructed in 2001. The resource itself is set behind a metal chain-link fence with a wide gate providing access from the street to the driveway and a pedestrian gate leading from the sidewalk to the concrete path to the porch steps. The metal fence wraps around to the sides of the property, meeting a wooden fence that encloses the lot along the sides and the rear. Landscaping includes sparse patches of grass with a mature oak tree on the west side of the house and a walnut tree just south of the fence between the sidewalk and street.

Exterior

The Parsonage is a 1.5-story, front-gabled residence with Colonial Revival influences. It has a rectangular footprint and prominent front porch. It has a moderately-pitched front gable roof and elongated shed dormer with boxed eaves that slightly overhang the walls. It is set on a concrete block foundation. The foundation beneath the porch appears to have been replaced by modern concrete blocks, whereas the foundation beneath the main volume of the house consists of original molded concrete blocks resembling tooled ashlar. The walls are sheathed in narrow wood siding. Patterned rectangular, triangular, and scalloped wood shingles cover the end gables and water table. Simple wood fascia boards separate the water table from the main walls. Vertical wooden boards emphasize the corners of the water table. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The house is in fair condition and has experienced some alteration since its construction, although most alterations occurred during the historic period.

The primary (south) elevation is characterized by a single-story, partial-width porch accessed by a set of concrete steps. The flat porch roof is supported by three partial-height Tuscan columns set on a solid railing decorated with rectangular, triangular, and scalloped patterned shingles. The shingled surface is interrupted by simple wooden cornerboards. An unadorned wood fascia with a narrow coping sits atop the shingled porch railing. The front elevation is asymmetrical, with the front door offset slightly to the west. The wooden entry door is modern with eight panels and a decorative glass window in its center. It is trimmed with simple wooden casings, topped with a rectangular transom, and set behind a non-historic metal security door. A large, fixed, wood-framed window with decorative diamond-paned upper lights is just east of the entrance. West of the entrance is a small, wood-framed square fixed window with a single light. Above the porch is the closed, pediment-like gable end, which is finished with wood shingles laid in rectangular, scalloped, and triangular patterns. A square, projecting wood casement window is centered in the gable, consisting of a small double-casement with square fixed panes on the sides and bottom. The gable-end casement is not original but was added during the historic period. Behind the end gable, the west side dormer addition is visible. Modern ductwork is attached to the exterior of the front elevation, running from a small HVAC unit set on a concrete pier east of the porch.

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The west (side) elevation has three altered window openings with non-original windows. From south to north they consist of a steel window with three stacked lights (the lower two are awning operation, and the top is fixed), a multi-light steel casement window with a small lower sash and added awning unit below, and a smaller multi-light steel casement window with a small lower sash. An exterior chimney is located between the first and second windows. The chimney is red brick with a corbeled top and a darker brick string course just under the main roofline. The second story of the west elevation consists of the shed-roofed dormer addition, which is clad with modern vinyl siding. The dormer windows are wood casements with single and multiple light configurations, framed into shallow, projecting box-bays. From south to north, the second story fenestration includes a rectangular single-light fixed window, a small double-casement with fixed surrounding panes, and a single casement flanked by fixed lights. A small square window on the south elevation of the dormer is also visible from the front elevation.

The east (side) elevation has three rectangular wood windows. From south to north, they include an original 1/1 double-hung window, a non-original three-light steel sash window with lower awning light, and another original 1/1 double-hung window. An interior red brick chimney with a simple chimney cap is visible in the roof slope of this elevation.

The rear (north) elevation consists of a porch that has been enclosed. Originally a partial rear porch, it was extended to cover the entire rear elevation between 1918 and 1949. Owners removed the porch after 1972, adding a basement access hatch and three-step concrete stoop to access the rear door. The rear entrance consists of a three-panel wooden door with single-light glazing. It is set behind a metal security door and topped with a single-light, wood-framed transom. East of the door is an original 1/1 double-hung wood window. On the gable end is a non-original wood casement window identical to the one found on the front elevation. It is also framed as a shallow, projecting box-type window. Exterior ductwork is present on the rear elevation also.

Interior

The interior retains some of its historic materials, and the first floor largely retains its original floor plan. The front door opens into a large foyer. Immediately to the right (east), at the southeast corner of the building, is the living room. The opening to the living room is formally framed in millwork including two low walls that extend partway into the framed opening. The living room contains the decorative front window with diamond-patterned upper sash, plus a single 1/1 window on its east wall. On the left (west) of the foyer is a staircase. It has a square newel post and simple, square balusters. At the bottom of the stair on the house's front elevation is the original square wood window. The stair makes a 90-degree turn as it proceeds upstairs. Under the stair is a historic paneled door that leads to the basement stairs. The foyer, stair, and living room all have wide baseboards with decorative molding along the top edge, and wide, flat trim around doors and windows. The living room also contains a picture rail. Walls are primarily the original plaster.

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A framed opening at the north end of the foyer leads directly into an open space containing the dining room and kitchen. It appears to have been modified to combine previously separate spaces into one large room, with the dining area near the center of the house and the kitchen at the building's northwest corner. The windows in the dining room and kitchen are steel casements, and the room has partial-height painted paneling material, suggesting that the alterations occurred in the mid-20th century. The kitchen also contains an original, paneled back door that has one square lite and a wood transom window.

To the right (east) of the dining room is a framed opening that leads into a short hall. From the hall, a historic paneled door leads east into a bathroom, and another paneled door, this one with a wood transom, leads into a small bedroom. The bedroom contains a non-historic door in its back corner leading into a closet at the house's northeast corner. Both the hall and the bedroom contain the historic baseboards and trim found in the front rooms. At the rear (north) end of the kitchen is an opening into a storage and laundry area located near the center of the rear elevation. It is not known what the back closet and storage/laundry spaces were historically. The 1949 Sanborn map indicates that the house did have a rear porch at one time. However, it was not an inset porch, so it is unlikely that those two small rooms were the result of a porch infill.

The second floor was not accessible, but some information was obtained regarding its floor plan. The stairs lead to a large, loft-like landing space created by the west side dormer addition. The space has a skylight and a railing overlooking the stairwell. On the east side of the second floor are two small bedrooms and a closet, and at the back northwest corner is a small office. The basement is accessed by a narrow staircase under the main stairs. It has concrete foundation walls around the perimeter and thick wood piers on concrete footers supporting floor girders elsewhere.

Integrity

The building has not been moved and retains its integrity of Location. It is located in a historically residential area near the University of Nevada, Reno. Because of the area's ever-changing student housing needs, demolition of historic residences and construction of modern multifamily buildings have impacted the character of the area, and the house is now surrounded by a small apartment building, an empty lot, and a large multifamily building. Despite these changes to the immediate setting, the broader surrounding area still contains modest residential properties of similar era and form, and the resource retains partial integrity of Setting. Although historians and members of Reno's Black community know this house is the former parsonage, the casual observer would not. The church it was associated with is many blocks away, and the house has not been used as a parsonage since 1975, somewhat diminishing its integrity of Association.

The building was altered by the addition of the wide dormer on the west elevation, the casement windows on the west elevation, the casement windows in the front and rear gable ends, the center window on the east elevation, the non-historic security doors, and exterior HVAC ductwork. The dormer and casement windows were likely added during the period of significance, while the security doors and HVAC ducting were more recent changes. However, despite these alterations,

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the building still reflects its historic appearance. The integrity of Design, Materials, and Workmanship is present, as evidenced by the building's massing, front porch configuration, Tuscan porch columns, wood siding, decorative shingles, entrance transoms, and remaining original windows. It would readily be recognized by those who occupied it during the period of significance, so its integrity of Feeling is also present.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

- ☒ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

Ethnic Heritage - Black
Social History

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Period of Significance

1955-1975

Significant Dates

1955

1965

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Bethel AME Parsonage is eligible for listing under Criterion A under the themes of Social History and Ethnic Heritage: Black for its significance at the local level as the parsonage for Reno's Bethel AME Church (NR Ref. #1000587) from the mid-1950s to 1975. Many of the ministers who lived in the house were not only religious leaders but played leading roles in Nevada's Civil Rights movement. The house also served as an occasional meeting and organizing space for activities related to civil rights and social justice. It is a rare extant example of a local resource associated with the Civil Rights movement.

The period of significance for the Bethel AME Parsonage extends from 1955 to 1975. The period begins with the acquisition of the house by the Bethel AME Church in 1955 for use as a parsonage, as the pastors who lived there played prominent roles in community activities related to civil rights and social justice. The period ends in 1975, the latest year that a Bethel AME Church pastor is known to have lived in the house.

Although the property was owned by a religious institution and used for religious purposes throughout its period of significance, it meets Criterion Consideration A, as it derives its primary significance from its historical importance as a community meeting space and the residence of several individuals who in addition to serving as pastors were also important local civil rights and community leaders.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

The house at 411 E. Seventh Street is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, for its role as the parsonage for Reno's Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church during the period 1955-1975. During that period, it served as an occasional gathering place for activities related to civil rights and social justice pursued by the church's ministers, congregation, and community.

Reno's Bethel AME congregation was organized in 1907. In 1910, the congregation constructed a church at 220 Bell Street that was enlarged and remodeled in 1941 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2001 (NR Ref. #1000587). The church was at the time of its construction only the second structure in the state of Nevada to be built by African Americans for the purpose of social activities and remains the oldest surviving Black institutional structure in the state.¹

A Series of Parsonages

For its first two decades, the Bethel AME Church did not have a permanent home for its ministers, who were appointed by the leadership of the AME church's Fifth Episcopal District to the Reno church for short periods of time, often just one or two years. While in Reno, the church's ministers generally stayed in the homes of church members.²

As the congregation grew, its members wanted to provide its pastors with immediate and secure lodging for themselves and their families. In 1928, the church's trustees initiated the purchase of a house at 605 Canal Street in the Evans Sunnyside Addition for use as a parsonage.³ But doing so presented a significant financial hardship to the small congregation, which numbered only 14 active members at the time. The following year, led by its pastor, Reverend S.W. Ford, and trustees J.M. Holley, J.M. Reed, and O.H. Hammonds, the church initiated a public fundraising campaign for \$1500 to pay off the remaining debt owed on the Canal Street house (the address was later changed to 625 Canal Street) (Figure 1).⁴

¹ Mella Rothwell Harmon, National Register nomination for Bethel AME Church, NRIS #01000587, 2001, Section 7, p.1; Section 8, p.8.

² "Historical Statement of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1907-2001." Bethel AME Church archives.

³ Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 51147, Nick Gardella to Bethel A.M.E. Church and O.H. Hammonds and J.M. Tolley, Trustees, April 6, 1928.

⁴ "Bethel Church to Raise Funds," *Nevada State Journal*, February 14, 1929, p.2.

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Figure 1: Appeal to the community to assist in funding the purchase of the Bethel AME parsonage on Canal Street. *Nevada State Journal*, February 14, 1929, p.5.

Following the February 24 fundraising rally, the church announced that they had raised \$912.98, still nearly \$700 short of their goal.⁵ On March 3, the Colored Women's Unity Club announced that it had disbanded, and that the money it had been raising to construct a club house of its own had been turned over to the Bethel AME Parsonage Fund.⁶

The congregation was still struggling to raise the necessary funds in April of that year, announcing on April 14 that they remained short by \$287.56. The announcement also indicated that "We will not publish a list of names as first stated, due to the fact that there are so many of the donors that object," a somewhat vague acknowledgment of either donors' wishes for privacy or perhaps the potential social volatility of expressing public support for a Black church.⁷ A few

⁵ "Bethel AME Church," *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 27, 1929, p.2.

⁶ "To Whom it May Concern," *Nevada State Journal*, March 3, 1929, p.5.

⁷ "Bethel AME Church," *Nevada State Journal*, April 14, 1929, p.7.

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weeks later, the church held a fundraising concert in the Reno High School auditorium, featuring the church's own "A.M.E. Jubilee Singers."⁸ These extensive fundraising efforts were eventually successful, as the title to the house was officially recorded in the church's name in 1930.

For the next two decades, the pastors appointed to the Bethel AME Church resided in the parsonage on Canal Street, where activities were often advertised in the local newspapers. The church's membership continued to grow, prompting a renovation and addition to the original church building on Bell Street after vocal racially motivated community protest prevented the congregation's move into Dania Hall, an existing building located at the corner of W. Seventh and Sierra Streets.⁹

Purchasing a New Parsonage

Reverend Elihue L. Branch was appointed pastor of the Bethel AME Church in 1954 and the following year, he presided over the congregation's celebration of the 48th anniversary of its founding. At the same time, the church also celebrated the receipt of a \$5,000 grant from the Max C. Fleischmann Foundation, to be applied toward the purchase or construction of a new parsonage to replace the existing parsonage on Canal Street.¹⁰

The Max C. Fleischmann Foundation had in a very short time become a major benefactor for local and national nonprofits, churches, and other entities. It was established in 1951, just a few months before its namesake's death. A resident of Nevada since 1935, Fleischmann was the heir to the Fleischmann yeast and gin fortune. In life, he was a generous philanthropist who financed the conversion of the U.S. Mint in Carson City into the Nevada State Museum, established nearly 200 scholarships at the University of Nevada, and donated a dairy farm and associated stock to the university, among many other significant charitable actions.¹¹

Of the \$2,886,000 distributed by the Foundation in 1955 to Nevada organizations including the University of Nevada, the Reno YMCA, Nevada Park Commission, and Guide Dogs for the Blind, religious-oriented recipients that year also included the Immaculate Conception Church in Sparks; the First Methodist Church in Carson City; the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Sparks; and the Community Baptist Church in Reno.¹²

The decision of the Bethel AME Church's leaders to seek out a new parsonage was driven by the official announcement in early 1955 (and likely discussed even earlier) that the Nevada Department of Transportation had completed its analysis of the ideal route through the neighboring cities of Reno and Sparks for a proposed "high-speed freeway." On the west side of

⁸ "Reno Negro Church to Stage Concert," *Nevada State Journal*, April 25, 1929, p.3.

⁹ Mella Rothwell Harmon, National Register nomination for Bethel AME Church, NRIS #01000587, 2001, Section 8, p.9-10.

¹⁰ Mrs. Pearle May, "Bethel A.M.E. Church," *The Sentinel*, Centennial Edition, 1964.

¹¹ "Max Fleischmann Funeral Pending," *Reno Evening Gazette*, October 17, 1951, p.13.

¹² "Fleischmann Foundation Grants are Announced," *Reno Evening Gazette*, January 25, 1955, p.11.

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Reno, the proposed route ran roughly along W. Seventh Street, putting the location of the Canal Street parsonage directly in its path.¹³ The Highway Department eventually purchased all parcels within the highway's right-of-way, and any structures on them were either auctioned off or demolished. The trustees of the Bethel AME Church formally sold the Canal Street property to the State of Nevada Department of Highways in March of 1964, and the highway was completed through Reno and Sparks in May of 1974.¹⁴

With the assistance of the Fleischmann Foundation grant, the Bethel AME congregation purchased the house at 411 E. Seventh Street from Henry F. and Laura E. Strabel in October of 1955.¹⁵ The house had been constructed as a single-family residence in 1916 and went through several owners before its sale to the church. From that point forward, it was home to a series of the church's ministers including Reverend Elihue L. Branch (through 1956), Reverend S.B. Washington (1957-1958), Reverend James H. Blake (1958-1959), Reverend Vivian Bowers (1960), Reverend S.D. Rhone (1960 to 1964), Reverend Harold S. Gloyd (1964-1968), Reverend Vincent L. Thompson (1969-1970), and Lee N. May (1974-1975).

Although located 0.8 miles (as the crow flies) from the Bethel AME Church on Bell Street, on the opposite side of Reno's main commercial and tourist district, the new parsonage was in a neighborhood with many African American residences, rooming houses, and churches. Laid out in 1906, the Evans Northeast Addition was one of Reno's older tracts, established decades before the implementation of restrictive racial covenants that became common in neighborhoods founded from the 1920s onward. The parsonage on E. Seventh Street stood less than two blocks from the Hawthorne Guest House, an African American-operated rooming house at 542 Valley Road that was owned and managed by J.R. Hamlet and advertised in the *Negro Travelers' Green Book* from 1952 to 1967.¹⁶ Two blocks east, on the 500 Block of Elko Avenue, were multiple houses that served as residences and rooming houses for African Americans from the 1930s through the 1970s and beyond. They included the Needham Rooming House at 501 Elko Avenue, which was featured in a 1950 *Ebony* magazine profile of a young woman who was staying there for six weeks to secure a quick Nevada divorce.¹⁷

The neighborhood also had an existing religious presence related to African Americans. Just one block northwest of the new parsonage was the Second Baptist Church, an African American church located at 337 E. Eighth Street from 1951 through the mid-1960s. Like the previous Bethel AME parsonage on Canal Street, that structure was deemed in the right-of-way of the

¹³ "Huge New Freeway Plans are Revealed," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 2, 1955, p.11.

¹⁴ Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 408812, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to the State of Nevada, March 10, 1964; "Interstate 80 Opens in Reno," *Reno Evening Gazette*, May 22, 1974, p.1.

¹⁵ Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 253017, Henry F. Strabel and Laurel E. Strabel to Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, October 21, 1955.

¹⁶ "Nevada." *The Architecture of the Negro Travelers' Green Book*. University of Virginia: The Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities. <https://community.village.virginia.edu/greenbooks/states/nevada>. Accessed March 21, 2025.

¹⁷ "Reno Divorcee." *Ebony* magazine. Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1950, p.18.

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planned interstate highway and was demolished after its congregation moved to a new location several blocks east.¹⁸

A Home to Civil Rights Leadership

From its earliest years, many of the ministers and congregants of the Bethel AME Church were heavily involved in civil rights and social justice activities. Residents affiliated with the church constituted the majority of the founding members of the first Nevada chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) when it was established in Reno in 1919, and the chapter held its board meetings at the church on Bell Street well into the 1960s.¹⁹

The Bethel AME Church's central role in local activities dedicated to ending discrimination and improving race relations continued into the 1950s. In February of 1954, the Reno-Sparks chapter of the NAACP held a mass meeting at the Bethel AME Church to observe "NAACP Sunday," with speeches on the history, purpose, and civil rights strategies of the organization.²⁰ A series of Brotherhood Week activities were held at the church that same year, with participation from multiple local denominations and organizations who together announced "the immediate need for concerted action by all Reno groups in improving local conditions for minority groups."²¹

The close ties between the Bethel AME Church and local civil rights, humanitarian, and social justice efforts can be seen in the intertwined leadership of the church, the local branch of the NAACP, and other community organizations during the Civil Rights era. Together, these Reno organizations worked to combat widespread discrimination in northern Nevada, where African Americans faced limited housing options and exclusion from employment opportunities, and were frequently barred from entering white-owned businesses, particularly those related to entertainment, lodging, dining, and gambling.²²

In August of 1954, Bethel pastor Reverend Elihue L. Branch arrived in Reno after having served as the pastor of AME churches in Vallejo, Chico, and Tulare, California. He was elected president of the Reno-Sparks chapter of the NAACP within months and was the first minister to serve in that role (Figure 2).²³ In April of 1956, he was elected treasurer of the Washoe County Chapter of the Nevada Association for the United Nations.²⁴

¹⁸ "Church Dispute Leads to Court Action," *Nevada State Journal*, July 22, 1966, p.10.

¹⁹ Mella Rothwell Harmon, National Register nomination for Bethel AME Church, NRIS #01000587, 2001, Section 8, p.9.

²⁰ "Local NAACP holds meeting," *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 3, 1954, p.2.

²¹ "Brotherhood Program at Bethel Church," *Reno Evening Gazette*, February 23, 1954, p.2.

²² SWCA, *The African American Civil Rights Experience in Nevada, 1900-1979*. Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, Carson City, Nevada, 2020, p.84.

²³ "Bethel Minister is E.L. Branch," *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 28, 1954, p.7.

²⁴ "United Nations Unit Meets Here, Elects," *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 23, 1956, p.11.

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NEW MINISTER — The Rev. Elihue Branch, who has been appointed to the pulpit of the Bethel A.M.E. church in Reno. He came here from Tulare, Calif., succeeding the Rev. J. S. Bagneris.

Figure 2: Reverend Elihue L. Branch was the Bethel AME Church's pastor when the congregation acquired the house at 411 E. Seventh Street in 1955 and was the first of the church's pastors to live there. *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 28, 1954, p.7.

The close ties between the Bethel AME Church and the NAACP continued in the years to follow. During his term as Bethel's pastor (1958-1959), Reverend J.H. Blake led the local NAACP chapter's committee on churches and arranged a "Freedom Sunday" program for the NAACP at the Bethel AME Church in May of 1959 to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Brown vs. the Board of Education*.²⁵

Reverend Howard S. Gloyd, who served as Bethel's pastor from September 1964 to 1968, was elected president of the Reno-Sparks branch of the NAACP soon after his arrival in Reno from Sacramento.²⁶ In March of 1965, he helped lead a caravan from Reno and a subsequent civil rights rally at the Nevada State Capitol in Carson City to express support for the state anti-discrimination measure then under deliberation by the Senate Judiciary Committee (Figure 3).²⁷ He was also working in the commercial title department at the First National Bank of Nevada, and serving on the board of directors of the Washoe County Family and Marriage Counseling Service. Shortly after the Carson City rally, he entered the race for the Reno City Council's At-Large seat.²⁸

During his campaign, he drew attention to the need for the City to partner with the school district to provide after-school and summer programs for area children and voiced his intent to represent all residents, stating, "By no means is my candidacy based on a racial thing. I'm not running as a Negro councilman, but as a councilman who will work for all the people."²⁹

²⁵ "Segregation Ban Theme of Meet," *Reno Evening Gazette*, May 14, 1959, p.24.

²⁶ "'Meaningful Activities' Asked for Youngsters," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 31, 1965, p.17.

²⁷ "Civil Rights Rally Held to Support Nevada Bill," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1965, p.1.

²⁸ "Reno NAACP Chief Asks Council Job," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 30, 1965, p.1.

²⁹ "'Meaningful Activities' Asked for Youngsters," *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 31, 1965, p.17.

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Figure 3: Reverend Howard S. Gloyd and local realtor Joe Williams prepare to drive from Reno to the Nevada State Capitol for a Civil Rights Rally on March 22, 1965. *Reno Evening Gazette*, March 22, 1965, p.1.

In 1966, Gloyd led the Bethel AME Church's sponsorship of the first local "Race Relations Day," intended "to promote good relations in Reno and Nevada" and featuring an award ceremony at the Sparks Nugget Convention Center. In his remarks to the *Nevada State Journal*, Reverend Gloyd stated, "We're hoping it brings a new movement for the nation—that Washoe County, Reno, and Sparks will lead the nation in these crucial times."³⁰

While pastor, Reverend Gloyd simultaneously held several jobs with Washoe County's Anti-Poverty agencies and was a forceful community advocate for social and economic justice. He was hired as Assistant Director of the Washoe County Community Action Association in 1967. In the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968, Gloyd was vocal in urging the Nevada state legislature to schedule a special session to address ongoing racial discrimination in housing, employment, and education, stating, "We suggest that if

³⁰ "Race Relations Day Planned," *Nevada State Journal*, October 25, 1966, p.8.

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immediate action is not taken in this state we feel that the future of this state is questionable.”³¹ Reverend Gloyd attended King’s funeral in Atlanta on behalf of the local NAACP chapter, along with Reverend Paul Miles, Reverend W.C. Webb, and Reverend Solomon Hiarrs.³² He also served on the state’s Equal Rights Commission, and in 1968 was appointed Director of the Reno Department of Economic Development.³³

The Bethel AME Church’s tradition of hosting periodic activities related to civil rights and social justice at its pastor’s home continued in the new Seventh Street parsonage through the 1960s. For example, in June of 1965, the house was the site of a barbeque fundraiser jointly sponsored by the Bethel AME Church and the University of Nevada Friends of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to raise funds to post bail for J. Garland Strother, a former University of Nevada student. Strother had been jailed in Jackson, Mississippi for joining almost 700 members of the Mississippi Free Democratic Party in protesting the Mississippi state legislature’s discriminatory election policies.³⁴

Reverend Vincent L. Thompson was appointed pastor of the Bethel AME Church in October of 1968.³⁵ After arriving from Sacramento, Thompson and his family moved first into a house at 1900 Montello Street but were living in the parsonage by early 1970.³⁶ In October of 1969, Thompson had become a founding member of Veterans Association Incorporated, a group of ten Black veterans who began a campaign to secure a new recreational facility for the African American youth of northeast Reno. The City of Reno’s Parks and Recreation Commission quickly assembled a committee to work with the group to pursue such a facility.³⁷ In April of 1970, Thompson became the first African American appointed to the Reno Parks and Recreation Commission after Reno Mayor Roy Bankofier made a pledge to appoint more African Americans to the city’s advisory boards and commissions.³⁸

In June of 1970, Reverend Thompson participated in a meeting at the Reno Race Relations Center, where he was one of six pastors to sign a resolution pledging their “moral and financial support” to the center and its programs. Directed by Eddie Scott, the center worked on a wide range of actions to better the lives of minorities, including job training and placement, tutoring, improvement of police-community relations, and more (Figure 4).³⁹ The organization had been

³¹ “Special Session Urged on Rights,” *Nevada State Journal*, April 6, 1968, p.1; “Rights Leaders Ask Special State Legislative Session,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 6, 1968, p.1.

³² “Nevadans Attend Funeral,” *Nevada State Journal*, April 9, 1968, p.1.

³³ “Newquist May Leave Job Sooner Than Expected,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, August 20, 1968, p.2; “Poverty Board, Scouts ‘Misunderstanding’ Could Lead to a Suit,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, October 18, 1968, p.11.

³⁴ “U.N. Graduate Back in Jail,” *Nevada State Journal*, June 18, 1965, p.10.

³⁵ “Church Services in Reno and Sparks,” *Nevada State Journal*, October 12, 1968, p.5.

³⁶ R.L. Polk & Co., *Polk’s Reno-Sparks City Directory 1970*; Joni Sonsella Thompson, email to Alicia Barber, August 18, 2025.

³⁷ “Reno Negroes Want Center for Recreation,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, October 9, 1969, p.1.

³⁸ “Bankofier Asks Recreation Post for Black,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, April 13, 1970, p.1; “Rev. Thompson New Member on Commission,” *Nevada State Journal*, April 28, 1970, p.10.

³⁹ “Race Relations Center Given Church Support,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, June 8, 1970, p.13.

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formed in May 1968 by a coalition of white and minority community leaders to serve as an “information and action headquarters for groups and individuals interested in racial problems.”⁴⁰



Race Relations Center discussed

Eddie Scott, left, director of the Reno Race Relations Center, met with pastors of Reno churches Sunday at the center to discuss the center's continuing need. Meeting with Scott, from left, the Rev. Edward Philips, the Rev. William Webb, the Rev. S. E. Harris and the Rev. Vince Thompson. (Gazette Photo)

Figure 4: On June 7, 1970, Bethel AME pastor Vincent L. Thompson was one of six pastors who met at the Reno Race Relations Center to sign a resolution pledging their financial and moral support for the center and its programs. Pictured are, from left, center director Eddie Scott, Rev. Edward Philips, Rev. William Webb, Rev. S.E. Harris, and Rev. Vince Thompson. *Reno Evening Gazette*, June 8, 1970, p.13.

⁴⁰ “Race Relations Center Formed, NAACP Head Named Director,” *Reno Evening Gazette*, May 21, 1968, p.8.

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Vincent L. Thompson and his wife purchased a house at 350 Denslowe Drive in August of 1970 and moved out of the parsonage although Thompson remained the church's pastor for several more years.⁴¹ Reverend Albert Dunn was appointed Bethel's new pastor in August 1973 but it is not clear if he lived in the parsonage.⁴² The final documented pastor to live there was Reverend Lee N. May in 1975.⁴³ The church sold the property to a private party in 1977.⁴⁴

Summary

Very few physical properties associated with the twentieth-century Black experience in Reno or local civil rights activities have survived, much less received widespread attention or commemoration. The Bethel AME Parsonage serves as a companion property to the Bethel AME Church at 220 Bell Street (NR Ref. #1000587), which also was listed in the National Register for its significance under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Black and Social History, with emphasis on its civil rights era contributions. Both properties are notable for the significant role they played in the Black community's efforts to secure equal treatment and equal justice. The Bethel AME Parsonage at 411 E. Seventh Street is notable specifically for the significant role it played in the local Black community's efforts to secure equal treatment and equal justice between the pivotal years of 1955-1975, at the height of the national Civil Rights movement. Its significance is derived from the two primary roles it served—first, as the home to multiple Bethel AME Church pastors who actively led those secular efforts in addition to and in conjunction with their religious duties; and second, as a gathering place where members of the local Black community and their allies met to rally support and develop strategies to help reach their communal goals.

⁴¹ Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 181826, Betty F. Hazel to Vincent L. Thompson and Catherine Y. Thompson, August 12, 1970.

⁴² "Pastor of the Week," *Nevada State Journal*, August 4, 1973, p.5.

⁴³ R.L. Polk & Co., *Polk's Reno-Sparks City Directory 1975*.

⁴⁴ Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 508550, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to Stephen Stose Nelson and Martin Theodore Nelson, December 23, 1977.

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- 1968 "Nevadans Attend Funeral." April 9, 1968, p.1.
- 1968 "Church Services in Reno and Sparks." October 12, 1968, p.5.
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- 1955 "Huge New Freeway Plans are Revealed." March 2, 1955, p.11.
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1965 "Reno NAACP Chief Asks Council Job." March 30, 1965, p.1.
1965 "'Meaningful Activities' Asked for Youngsters." March 31, 1965, p.17.
1968 "Rights Leaders Ask Special State Legislative Session." April 6, 1968, p.1.
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Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 253017. Henry F. Strabel and Laurel E. Strabel to Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, October 21, 1955.

Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 408812. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to the State of Nevada, March 10, 1964.

Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 181826. Betty F. Hazel to Vincent L. Thompson and Catherine Y. Thompson, August 12, 1970.

Washoe County Recorder's Office, Deed No. 508550. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to Stephen Stose Nelson and Martin Theodore Nelson, December 23, 1977.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
____ previously determined eligible by the National Register
____ designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

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_____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
_____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): B2687

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.078 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

1. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 11N Easting: 258519 Northing: 4379894

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded by E. Seventh Street to the south, APN 007-232-34 to the north, the eastern property boundary for APN 007-232-29 to the west, and the western property boundary for APN 007-232-36 to the east.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary corresponds to the parcel boundary for APN 007-232-35.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alicia Barber and ZoAnn Campana
organization: Stories in Place / Kautz Environmental Consultants, Inc.
street & number: 2370 Watt Street
city or town: Reno state: Nevada zip code: 89509
e-mail alicia@storiesinplace.com
telephone: 775.771.3975
date: 8/20/2025

Additional Documentation

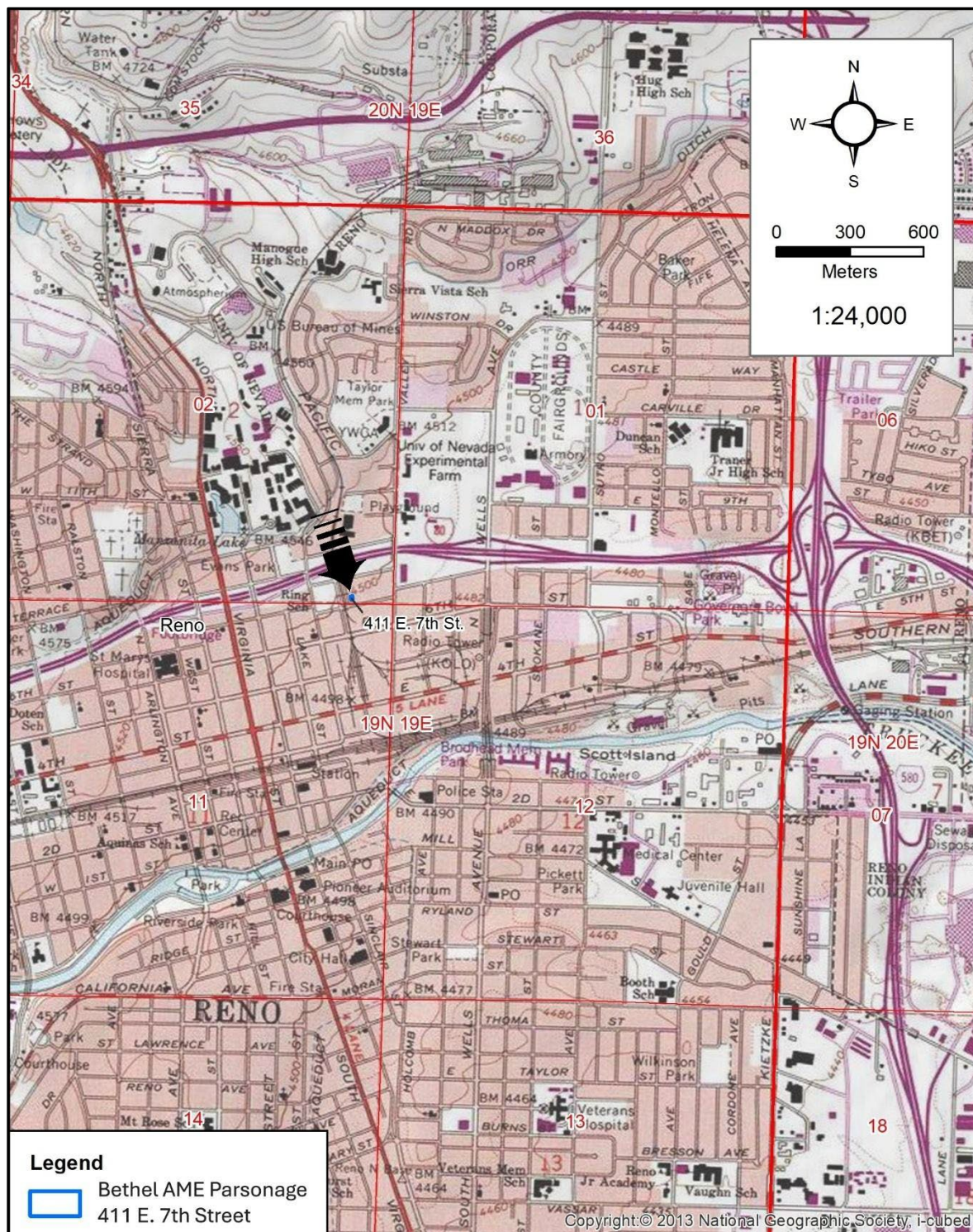
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** N/A

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Bethel AME Parsonage NRHP USGS Location Map



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Aerial Site Map



Bethel AME Parsonage

Name of Property

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Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Bethel AME Parsonage

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

State: Nevada

Photographer: Alicia Barber

Date Photographed: 12/20/24

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 1 of 4. Primary elevation facing north

Name of Property: Bethel AME Parsonage

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

State: Nevada

Photographer: Alicia Barber

Date Photographed: 12/20/24

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 2 of 4. West elevation facing northeast

Name of Property: Bethel AME Parsonage

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

State: Nevada

Photographer: Alicia Barber

Date Photographed: 12/20/24

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 3 of 4. Primary and side elevation facing northwest

Name of Property: Bethel AME Parsonage

City or Vicinity: Reno

County: Washoe

State: Nevada

Photographer: Alicia Barber

Date Photographed: 12/20/24

Description of Photograph(s) and number: 4 of 4. Rear elevation facing southwest

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Photo 1 of 4: Primary elevation facing north

Bethel AME Parsonage
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Photo 2 of 4: West elevation facing northeast

Bethel AME Parsonage
Name of Property

Washoe, Nevada
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Photo 3 of 4: Primary and side elevation facing northwest

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Photo 4 of 4: Rear elevation facing southwest

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Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

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