

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Mount Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 913 E. Calhoun Street
CITY OR TOWN: Palestine VICINITY: N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Anderson CODE: 001 ZIP CODE: 75801

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Curtis Jinnell

4-29-98

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain) :

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 6-3-98

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: Historic and Architectural Resources of Palestine, Texas

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: RELIGION/religious facility

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RELIGION/religious facility

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Late Gothic Revival

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION BRICK
 WALLS BRICK
 ROOF ASPHALT
 OTHER GLASS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheet 7-5)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Mount Vernon A.M.E. Church
Palestine, Anderson County, Texas

The Mt. Vernon African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church at 913 E. Calhoun is a brick institutional building with Gothic Revival-style detailing. Two large corner towers with steep pyramidal roofs are the dominant physical features of the facade. They help instill a sense of verticality to the composition, a quality often associated with the Gothic Revival style. The building is in a neighborhood with a mixture of historic and contemporary residences. In a good state of repair and relatively unaltered, it retains a high degree of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Situated in a predominately residential neighborhood a few blocks northeast of the courthouse square, the Mt. Vernon A.M.E. Church stands on a large lot near a 45-degree bend in E. Calhoun Street. The land on which the church was built slopes gently to the south, but drops more dramatically near E. Calhoun Street, creating a terraced effect. There are no major landscaping features other than a grassy lawn surrounding the building and a concrete sidewalk extending from the church to the street. Metal pole railings line the stairs to the church, as well as each side of the concrete steps that ascend the slope of the lawn. The building's plan is essentially rectangular in shape, although small extensions protrude from the corners and mid-section. Brick veneer covers the exterior of the church's wood-frame construction and a cross-gabled roof extends over the sanctuary. The two towers have steeply pitched bellcast pyramidal roofs and asphalt shingles cover all of the building's roof surfaces. The church sits on a raised pier-and-beam foundation.

The front faces south toward E. Calhoun Street and presents a 3-part configuration, including 3-story towers at each corner and a large pointed-arched window opening in the central section. A brick water table accentuates the foundation and a small dedication stone is at the base of the east tower. The primary entrances are set within the inner sides of the towers and are accessible by way of concrete steps that rise from a concrete landing extending along the base of the facade. The entrances contain double doors and 2-light hopper windows. The large pointed arch on the facade is actually comprised of a series of windows set within the archway. The corner towers, on the other hand, have a single opening on each floor. Those on the first and second levels contain double-hung windows, while those on the third floor have louvered panels.

The east and west elevations are identical, and both have large gabled extensions that protrude from the mid-section and the rear corners of the building. The latter contains only a small off-center door, while the former has a pointed archway that is similar to, but smaller than the one on the facade. The church is in good condition and has changed only minimally since its original construction.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Mount Vernon A.M.E. Church
Palestine, Anderson County, Texas

Organized in 1873, Mount Vernon reportedly is the third oldest African Methodist Episcopal church in the state. It testifies to the active and involved African-American population in Palestine during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The congregation built its first house of worship at this location in the late 1870s and completed this building in 1921. Evaluated within the context of *Community and Regional Development in Palestine, Texas: 1846-1945*, the Mount Vernon African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church is nominated to the National Register under Criteria A and C at the local level of significance for its associations with Palestine's Black Ethnic Heritage and its noteworthy Gothic Revival architecture.

Palestine's African-American population has its roots in the institution of slavery. During the Civil War, Palestine's slave population actually expanded. Many slaveowners from other southern states protected their property by moving their slaves from areas of heavy fighting to "Jemison's Quarters," Palestine's northern slave-holding compound. Here county residents rented slaves for various tasks (Neyland 1993:11-9). Although Palestine's early African-American history was largely ignored (Sanborn maps do not cover the oldest African-American neighborhood until 1910), the structures African Americans built provide some insight into their past. Their institutional buildings, such as Mount Vernon A.M.E. Church and the Lincoln School, indicate an increasingly active African-American community in Palestine during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Mount Vernon A.M.E. Church stands in the oldest African-American neighborhood in Palestine, just northeast of the Original Town. Judge John H. Reagan donated the land on which the Mount Vernon A.M.E. Church stands to Palestine's African-American community in 1873, saying: "Whereas I desire that the Colored people of this vicinity shall have a place in which to worship God and to educate their children...I give, grant, and Convey" the land for that purpose (Anderson County Deed Records:Book Q:91-92).

Union Church, the first built on the land given by Reagan, stood at the corner of present day Mulberry and Birch streets. According to a local historian, the facility served both the African Methodists and the Missionary Baptists, who, prior to the construction of the building, worshipped "in homes and in the open fields" (Taylor c.1986:1).

Several years later, the African Methodists withdrew from the Union Church in order to construct their own church. On property purchased from Henry Davis on May 10, 1878, the young congregation erected a small frame church and called it the Mount Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church.

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 VALUE, 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

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Ethnic Heritage: Black; Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1921-1945

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1921

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Rountree, J.B. (builder)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-6 through 8-7)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY: See the bibliographical references for the associated historic context, *Community and Regional Development in Palestine, Texas: 1846-1945*.

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Mount Vernon A.M.E. Church
Palestine, Anderson County, Texas

The African Methodist Episcopal Church movement is considered the first independent black church movement in the world, and was first begun in 1787 by a group of blacks in Philadelphia who protested segregated worship facilities in that city. They formed the Free African Society, which in 1816 became the African Methodist Episcopal Society.

Mt. Vernon is the third oldest African Methodist Episcopal church in Texas; Reedy Chapel in Galveston is the oldest and the Allen Chapel in Fort Worth is the second oldest. In the 1890s, members of Mt. Vernon A.M.E. were instrumental in the formation of Palestine's Grant Chapel A.M.E. Church.

The congregation raised money for their own new church in a "mile of nickels" campaign. In 1921 a new brick building replaced the original frame structure at 913 Calhoun Street. In 1946 all evidence of the earlier building was cleared and it is this 1921 structure which currently stands on the property.

Today the church is involved in a number of activities relating to the social welfare and betterment of Palestine's African-American community. After reaching a high of 500 members at one time, the membership is now approximately 130 members.

Most ecclesiastical architecture in Palestine employs either Gothic Revival or Classical Revival stylistic features. The Mt. Vernon A.M.E. Church is an example of the former and is among the city's finest extant illustrations of the Gothic Revival style. The church's two front towers are typical of African-American churches from the early 20th century. The church remains a prominent physical landmark in the surrounding residential neighborhood and retains its historic ambiance and integrity to an exceptional degree. Although churches typically are not considered for National Register designation, the Mt. Vernon A.M.E. Church is significant for its associations with the development of Palestine's African-American community and for its noteworthy Gothic Revival architecture.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

Zone	Northing	Easting
15	251600	3517540

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Palatine Original Town Site; Block: 66; Lot: 2B.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Boundaries are those historically associated with the property.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Amber Degn, THC Historian)

NAME/TITLE: David Moore (Project Director), Matt Goebel (Historian)

ORGANIZATION: Hardy-Heck-Moore & Associates **DATE:** February 1994/March 1998

STREET & NUMBER: 1414 West Sixth Street **TELEPHONE:** (512) 478-8014

CITY OR TOWN: Austin **STATE:** TX **ZIP CODE:** 78703

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS N/A

PHOTOGRAPHS PHOTO 1: Matt Goebel - Photographer; March 1994; Original negatives on file with the Texas Historical Commission; Oblique view of north and west elevations, camera facing southeast.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS N/A

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Mount Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church

STREET & NUMBER: 914 Birch **TELEPHONE:** (903) 723-6164

CITY OR TOWN: Palestine **STATE:** TX **ZIP CODE:** 75801

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Mount Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church
NAME:

MULTIPLE Palestine, Texas MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Anderson

DATE RECEIVED: 5/08/98 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/18/98
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/03/98 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/22/98
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 98000635

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 6.3.98 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

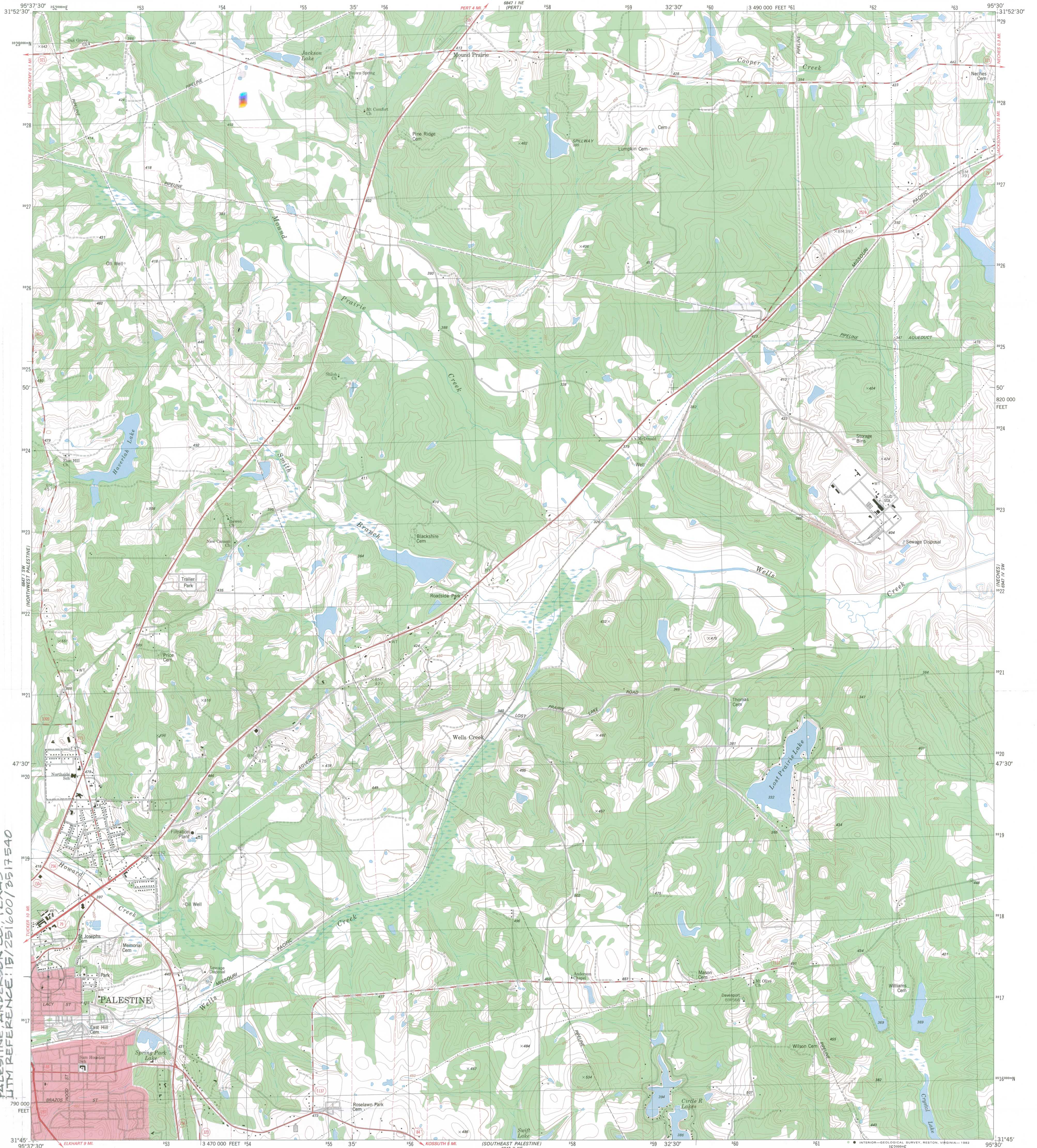
DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



MOUNT VERNON AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

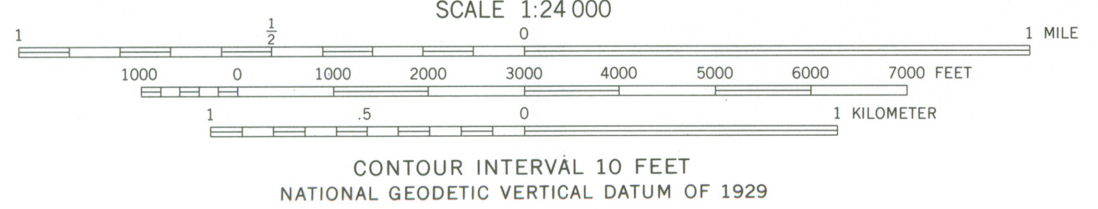
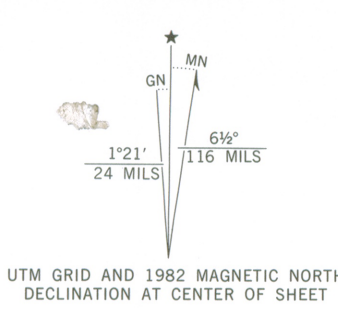
913 E. CALHOUN STREET
PALESTINE, ANDERSON CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 1



MOUNT VERNON AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
913 E. CALHOUN STREET
PALESTINE, ANDERSON CO., TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 15T251600/3517540

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1976. Field checked 1977. Map edited 1982
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Texas
coordinate system, central zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
1927 North American datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 14 meters south and
23 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



NORTHEAST PALESTINE, TEX.
SE/4 PALESTINE 15' QUADRANGLE
N3145-W9530/7.5

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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