

St. Paul's Celebrates 109 Years

By GAINES BREWSTER

Lithonia's St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, long acclaimed for its service, soul and spirit, has reached another milestone. During the morning worship hour Sunday, ministers and lay persons will pay homage — and offer tributes — to "those who have served mankind" for 109 years. St. Paul's illustrious history dates back to 1879.

Theme of the observance is "Moving Forward In His Hands."

Principal speaker will be Dr. John Hurst Adams, senior bishop, sixth Episcopal district. He will be introduced by the Rev. Samuel William Wicker, presiding elder. Invocation will be offered by Barbara Lester. Special recognitions will be handled by Marcia Glenn. Church history will be reviewed by Al Smith. Maggie C. Woods will give a reading; Dona LaTrelle Lee will sing.

Others on the program include Dr. D.A. Anderson, pastor; the Rev. J.B. Horne and the Rev. Hubert Ammons, associate pastors; Frank Lineberger; Gregory Levett; Barbara Slocum; Winifred Hill; and Carolyn Daniel.

Ann Johnson will preside over the observance program which is co-chaired by Mrs. Daniel and Ms. Glenn. Darrell Whitehead is minister of music.

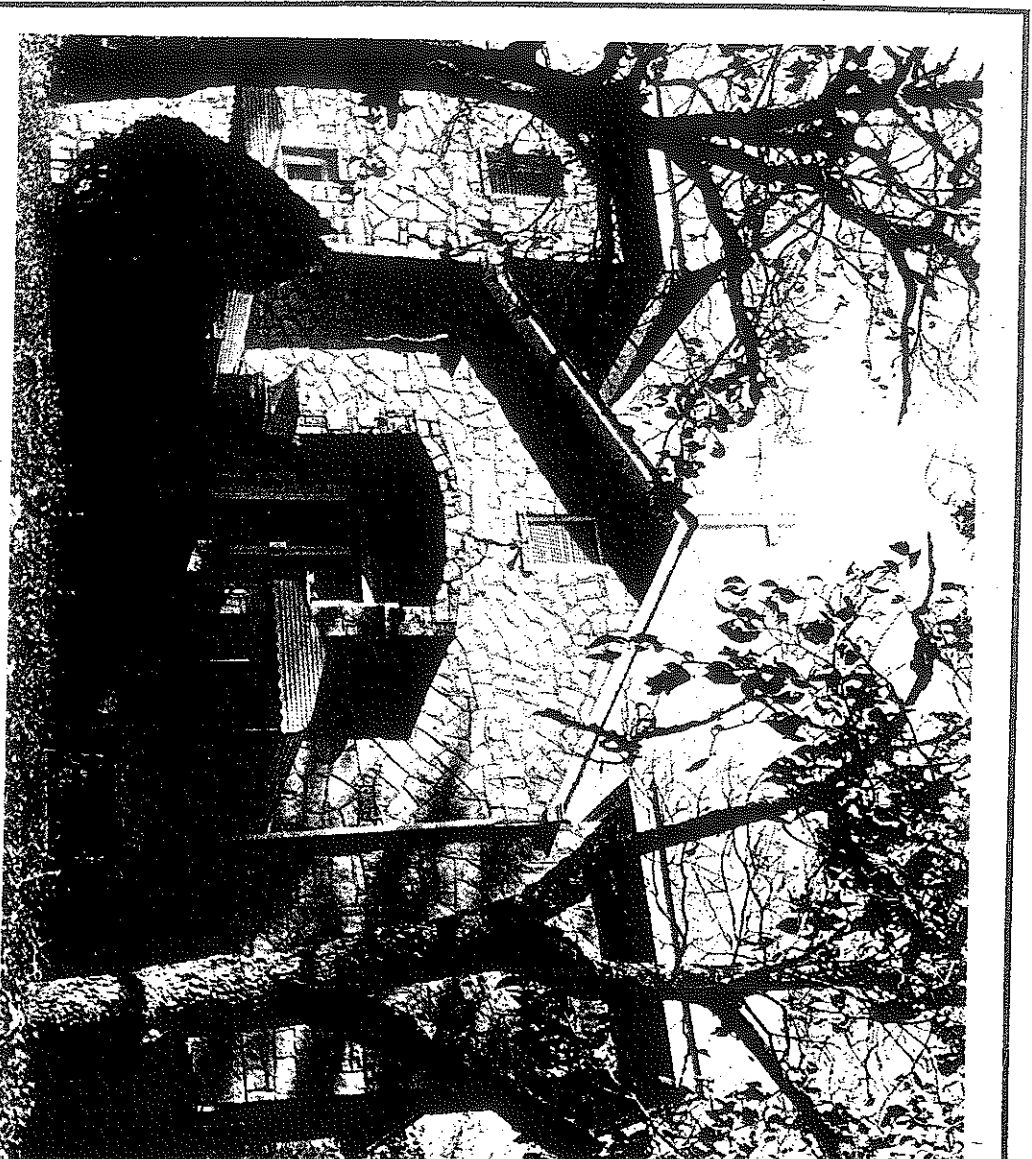
In discussing the upcoming celebration, Ms. Glenn stated, "Sunday our congregation will pay homage to those loyal members of St. Paul who, through the years, have stood by the church as an example of hope for all mankind." Dr. Anderson echoed Glenn's sentiments and added, "St. Paul exists in the lengthened shadow of many devoted and faithful and consecrated men and women who have loved it, worked for it and prayed for it."

ST. PAUL AME started in 1879 in a one-room structure, which some described as "a hut" near the intersection of Covington Highway (Ga. 12) and Evans Mill Road (Ga. 124). In 1928 the church moved to its present location, 2687 Klondike Road. (Corner of Klondike and Magnolia) Here the congregation erected "a solid rock" structure, built of hand-cut Lithonia granite. It's been described "as one of the most beautiful churches herabouts."

Continuing to expand, St. Paul in recent years has experienced considerable growth. The present structure has undergone numerous physical changes. Additions include a pastor's study, choir loft and choir room, educational wing, nursery and facilities for stewards and stewardesses.

The church provides child care and sponsors scout troops, an altar club and a courtesy guild. St. Paul is served by three choirs, a male chorus, a Sunbeam choir and three usher boards. On-going projects include pad-a-pew and a food cooperative.

Church facilities are used to distribute government provided surplus food to 700 area families.



St. Paul's AME Church was built with hand-cut Lithonia granite.

Newsphoto By Gaines B.

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In 1984 St. Paul participated in a community-wide revival crusade which brought blacks and whites together in worship for the first time in Lithonia's history.

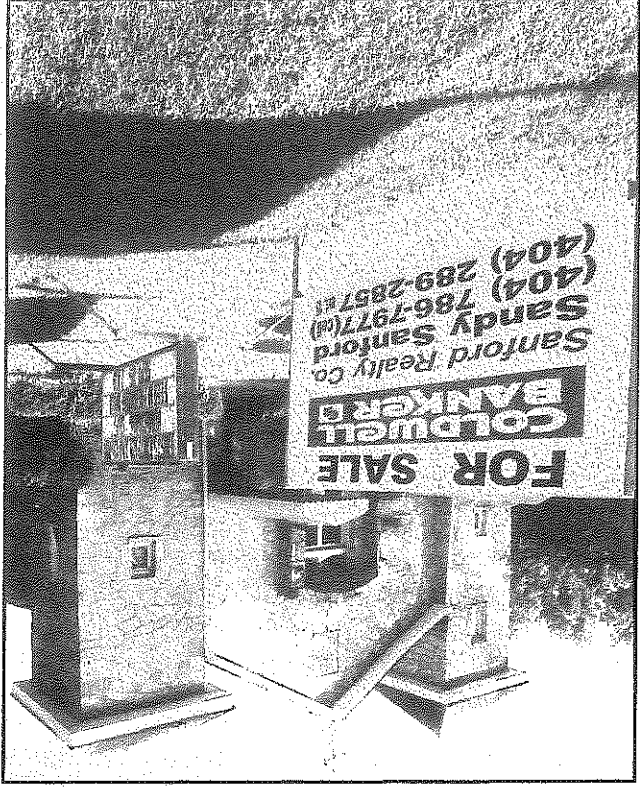
At 104 years of age, Lillie Sims was the church's oldest member until her recent death. Oldest living members now include Mary Harris, who was 92 Sunday, and Lonnie Chaney, 94.

Since 1918, St. Paul has had 24 pastors. The Rev. Solomon Giles served the longest — 11 years, from 1966-1977. Dr. Anderson has been pastor since 1985.

First St. Paul AME's new edifice takes shape as historic building goes up for sale

Common Journal
By Norma Stanley
10/1/04

SUBJECT FILE
Lithonia
Box 35 - Churches - This St. Paul AME



The 64-year-old First St. Paul AME Church, located across from where the new church will be built, is up for sale.

For a little more than half a million bucks, you can own a piece of Lithonia's history. First St. Paul AME Church, located at 2687 Klondike Road in Lithonia, is on the market for \$650,000.

The congregation is selling the 64-year-old architecturally historic building so it can build a bigger facility for its growing congregation. The new church will be built just across the street from the old building.

Marvin L. Crawford, the church's senior pastor, said it took his congregation about three years to decide to finally sell the building because sentiment ran so deeply especially among some of the church's long-time members. As a result, the congregation, he said, is stipulating strict criteria for the buyer of the property.

"Although we have plans to sell, initially, we're planning to lease with an option to buy. But whoever purchases the church cannot alter the main sanctuary, and the sanctuary cannot be re-sold without giving First St. Paul AME Church the right to buy it back for the price for which it was sold," Pastor Crawford said. "My preference would have been for the county to make the church a museum, but we have not received cooperation from them about that."

First St. Paul AME, like a number of churches in the city, is a byproduct of an era long past, Crawford said. It was built of granite, one of the chief sources of structures and paved streets that gave Lithonia world-wide prominence in the 1850s. Skilled stone cutters from

Scotland, Wales, England, Italy and the Scandinavian countries came to quarries established in Lithonia such as Big Ledge, Arabia Mountain, Rock Chapel Mountain and Pine Mountain. These artisans shaped and polished the granite into curbing and paving blocks for streets and into beautiful slabs and blocks for local structures and buildings in the nation's cities.

"There were quite a few members with sentimental attachment to the building, and if we could, we would keep the current building and move into the new one, but it would be too much of a financial burden," Pastor Crawford said.

The new church building will be octagon in shape with one entrance facing Main Street and another facing Klondike Road. Its sanctuary will seat up to 1,000 people compared to the existing church's sanctuary, which seats 250 people. Additionally, the new building will provide much needed space for Sunday school, educational programs, meetings, conferences, ministries, and administrative offices for