



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1976

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[[image - black and white drawing of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church with people walking on the sidewalk in front of it]]
 [[caption]] Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in Philadelphia in 1794 [[/caption]]

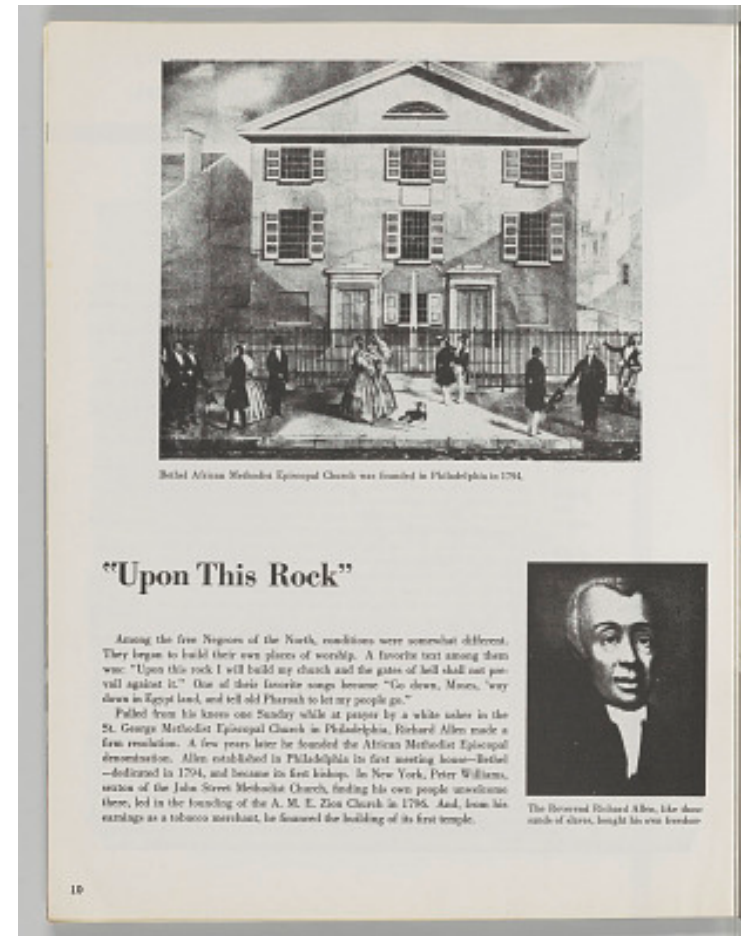
"Upon This Rock"

Among the free Negroes of the North, conditions were somewhat different. They began to build their own places of worship. A favorite text among them was: "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." One of their favorite songs became "Go down, Moses, 'way down in Egypt land, and tell old Pharoah to let my people go."

Pulled from his knees one Sunday while at prayer by a white usher in the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Richard Allen made a firm resolution. A few years later he founded the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. Allen established in Philadelphia its first meeting house - Bethel - dedicated in 1794, and became its first bishop. In New York, Peter Williams, sexton of the John Street Methodist Church, finding his own people unwelcome there, led in the founding of the A. M. E. Zion Church in 1796. And, from his earnings as a tobacco merchant, he financed the building of its first temple.

[[image - black and white drawing of Reverend Richard Allen]]
 [[caption]] The Reverend Richard Allen, like thousands of slaves, bought his own freedom [[/caption]]

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