

HISTORY HAPPENED HERE!

Bethel AME Church

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church of Cedar Rapids is the city's oldest black congregation. The AME Church was founded in the eastern US after the American Revolution and quickly grew into a major national denomination. The Cedar Rapids congregation was organized in the early 1870s and construction of its first church at this location began in 1874. The current brick structure was built in 1931-1932, when the church was officially renamed Bethel AME. As with black churches across the nation, Bethel AME served as an important social and political as well as religious gathering place for Cedar Rapids' black community.



Group portrait of women standing in front of the original Bethel AME Church building, 512 South 6th Street, c. 1910. Collection of the African American Museum of Iowa, Gift of Connie Hillsman.



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