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TUSCALOOSA COUNTY'S HUNTER CHAPEL A.M.E. ZION CHURCH ADDED TO ALABAMA REGISTER OF LANDMARKS & HERITAGE

The Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) recently added the Aurelia Eliscera Shines Browder House in Talladega to the Alabama Register of Landmarks & Heritage.

The Alabama Register is a prestigious listing of historic, architectural, and archaeological landmarks. The AHC considers the notable historic properties in this register to be particularly worthy of preservation and appreciation, and therefore deserving of this special recognition.

Hunter Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church is listed in the Alabama Register for its architectural significance and association with African-American heritage. Hunter Chapel is significant as the first African-American church to be organized in Tuscaloosa and for its Romanesque architecture designed by prominent African American architect Wallace A. Rayfield," said Lee Anne Wofford, Alabama Register Coordinator for the Alabama Historical Commission. Rayfield was Alabama's first & America's second formally educated and practicing African-American architect.

The church began in 1850 with 150 members as the Freedmen Methodist Society and met at the Old Niter Shed. The original members of the church were former slaves who bought their freedom and were working as masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, and wagon builders. The members worshiped at one other location before settling on its current site in 1878 in a church later destroyed by fire. In 1910, the church hired Wallace A. Rayfield to design its current structure which features an imposing twin tower design along with other Romanesque architectural details. Rayfield, who designed buildings for both blacks and whites including residences, churches, schools and commercial buildings among other types, specialized in churches. Hunter Chapel AME Zion Church is one of four churches in Tuscaloosa designed by Wallace A. Rayfield.

The Alabama Historical Commission administers the Alabama Register program, which gives the public a simple way to bring recognition to historic properties.

The Alabama Register officially recognizes and honors buildings, sites, structures, objects, and historic districts that are at least 40 years old.

The Alabama Register designation is honorary and carries no restrictions on property and offers no financial incentives.

*To protect, preserve, and interpret Alabama's historic places is the mission of the **Alabama Historical Commission**, the **State Historic Preservation Office**.*

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