

First African American Church in Staunton, Virginia

Richard Allen converted to Methodism when he was still a slave. After buying his freedom, he chose to go into the ministry. He founded his own church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in 1787 after he saw how blacks were treated when they attended mixed-race services. The new church became a denomination in 1816. He also founded the Free African Society, a society which gave aid to black communities. He was an ardent abolitionist and his writings and actions influenced many black leaders to come such as Frederick Douglas and Martin Luther King.

When the Civil War ended, the black community in Staunton, Virginia, came together under the leadership of Rev. Jacqueline Strange to form the Allen Chapel AME Church in November of 1865. It was the first African American Church established west of the Blue Ridge. The church was located down town, leasing various buildings to hold services. In 1924, the members purchased a building site at 921 West Beverley Street and built a church. The congregation later lost the church due to financial hardship, but was able to buy back the property with the help of the Second Episcopal District and Bishop Abraham Gaines.

Over the years, the church building with its lack of parking and steep steps, proved to be inadequate for congregation. Under the leadership of Rev. Edward Scott, the church was relocated to 936 Sudbury Street in Staunton in formerly the Emmanuel Wesleyan Church. Today, the congregation is growing and prospering as it looks ahead to a bright future.

Sources:

[Http://www.allenchapelstaunton.org/history.htm](http://www.allenchapelstaunton.org/history.htm)

<http://www.biography.com/people/richard-allen-21056735#synopsis>