

Church's History Rediscovered

By VIVIAN B. MARTIN

WINDSOR — The small church on Hayden Station Road dates back to the turn of the century.

It was founded by a South Carolina preacher and renamed in 1914 for Sandy Archer, a church member and former slave who lived to be 108.

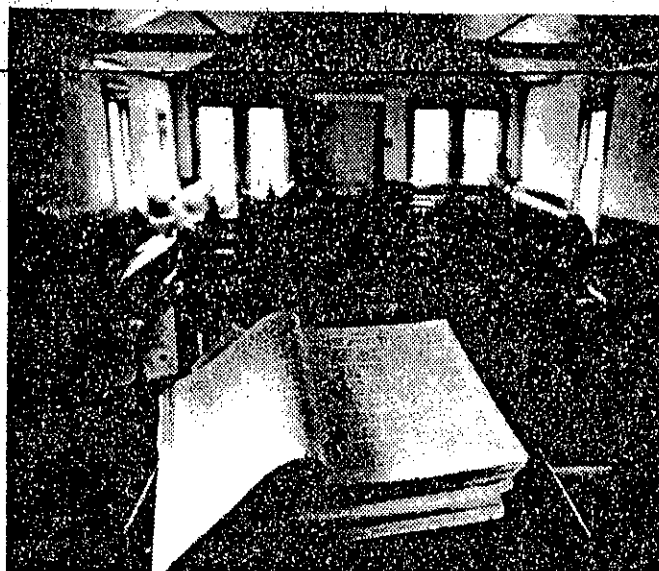
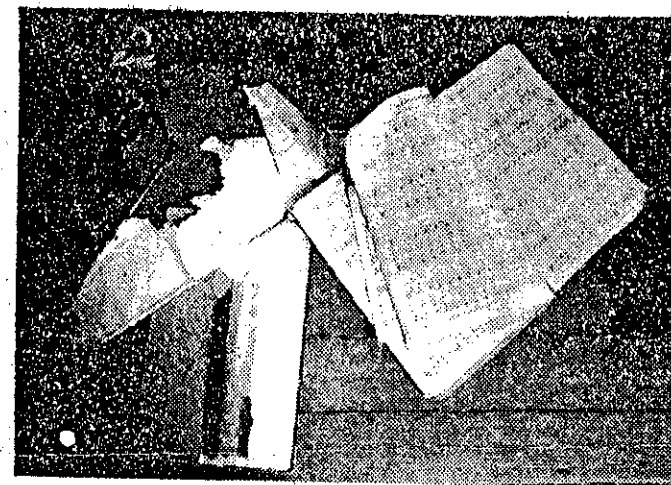
Today the all-black congregation of the Archer Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church is busy raising money to replace its old building, which was condemned two years ago; and the fund-raising has prompted several non-members to dip into the past to get a sense of what the church means to the town's history.

Joan W. Simmons is one of those persons. In addition to being a town councilwoman and a member of the Windsor Historical Society, she is an amateur historian with a particular interest in the Hayden Station area, one of the oldest neighborhoods in the state's oldest town.

Historical projects involving that area abound on the list of things Mrs. Simmons wants to do when she has the time.

She has compiled a sketch of the church's history, getting much of her information from the papers of Grace Clapp, a Hayden Station area resident who was a botanist and local historian. Mrs. Clapp drew her data from diaries that were auctioned off with the rest of her estate after her death.

Additional information in Mrs. Simmons' history came from conversations with Ed



COURANT PHOTOS BY MICHAEL McANDREWS

The Archer Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in Windsor, top, has been condemned, but inside are reminders of its past.

financial assistance from Frederick H. Thrall, described as a philanthropist of the day.

White said his father wasn't only "religious but

that stopped daily at Hayden Station.

Some of the people attending the meetings were from the neighborhood. Freed blacks began living in the

A small man with a mischievous grin, White recalled visits made by a blind Rev. Watts. White and his brother, then young boys, had the task of leading Watts around. He said they were often tempted to lead him astray, but their consciences always got the better of them.

The church's second minister, Byron Scott, in 1915 had the church moved from its place in the pines out to the road. The church was moved by horses and log rollers and plenty of volunteers, and an addition to the church was built. Scott carved a stone noting the date the church was moved and the new official name in honor of Sandy Archer.

Iola English, a descendant of the Hayden family that first settled in 1635 in what became known as Hayden Town, was only 4 when Archer died. But she said "I can just about see him."

She said he wore tan pants, a blue shirt open at the neck, had white curly hair and was "always scrupulously clean." She said Archer was always carting things around in an old wheelbarrow.

Mrs. English, who, like her late cousin Miss Clapp, is considered a knowledgeable local historian, said the church once caught on fire when someone tried to snuff out a swarm of bees. Church members used a nearby chapel until repairs were made.

The congregation now uses facilities at the First Church in Windsor for fund-raisers and services

SINCERELY,
THE ARCHER MEMORIAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.

1 INDIAN HILL ROAD
WINDSOR, CONN 06095

I HOPE THAT THIS IS ADEQUATE INFORMATION FOR YOU TO WORK WITH. IF YOU
NEED ANY MORE INFORMATION OR TO FORWARD YOUR RESPONSE PLEASE SEND TO
AL NARCISSE

REQUEST PLAQUES FOR THESE LOCATIONS.
OUR CHURCH ALSO HAS A RICH HISTORY DEALING WITH A BAPTISTAL POND, WHICH WAS
ORIGINALY LOCATED ON PINK ST, NOW HAYDEN STATION ROAD. WE WOULD LIKE TO
ARCHER MEMORIAL AND OUR CEMETARY WAS ONE OF THE FIRST BLACK CHURCHES IN WINDSOR,
RELAY RACE WITH A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARCHER AND SANDY ARCHER.
ARCHER WAS ALREADY A PART OF THE FREEDOM TRAIL. AL NARCISSE BEGAN THE
SEPTEMBER. EVERYONE IN WINDSOR AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS ASSUMED THAT
ARCHER MEMORIAL WAS THE STARTING POINT ON THE "FREEDOM TRAIL RUN" LAST
IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT WE MUST WRITE A LETTER INDICATING WHY WE
FEEL OUR CHURCH SHOULD BE ADDED TO THE LISTING ON THE FREEDOM TRAIL.
PLACED ON THE FREEDOM TRAIL AS ONE OF THE HISTORICAL SITES.
I AM WRITING IN REFERENCE TO HAVING

Both Mrs. English and
Mrs. Simmons speak of the
church's significance to the
town and neighborhood,
which, despite the nearby
roar of I-91, retains much of
the historic charm of the
18th century.
Mrs. Simmons, though
white, also speaks of the
church's importance to black
history, something she says
isn't always taken into ac-
count in many New England
histories.

War era. Some were given
land by former masters.
Historian Henry R. Stiles
briefly mentions a Revolu-
tionary War time black mil-
lita that practiced near Pick-
ett's Tavern, which once
stood on Hayden Station
Road — then called Pink
Street. Also, historian Jabez
H. Hayden refers to a couple
of black "freedmen" that
lived near the end of Pink
Street in the late 18th centu-
ry.

White's father came to the
area from South Carolina in
the late 1800s. During the
late 1880s and early 1890s he
conducted camp meetings in
the summer in a beautiful
pine grove near the intersec-
tion of Pond and Hayden Sta-
tion roads.
People came from all over
the region to the camp meet-
ings. Groups from Spring-
field were able to take ad-
vantage of the 14 to 16 trains

White has a vast store of
founder and first minister.
and son of the church's
builder, poet and essayist
White has a vast store of
memories. There is a twinge
of bitterness when he speaks
of people's low regard for
what was then a predomi-
nantly black Pond Road
area. But he speaks with
pride of his father and his
father's various enterprises.
Dennis Scott White built
the church in the pines in the
late 1800s after receiving fi-