



Handy Chapel

Located within the original square mile platted by Grand Junction's founder, George A. Crawford, Handy Chapel was built in 1892 on land deeded to the "black citizens of Grand Junction" in 1883. The intervening nine years were required to undertake a campaign to raise the \$962.50 necessary to construct the church building, a testament to the scarcity of funds available but also to the tenacity of a small group of African Americans in 19th-century Colorado with the dream of having their own place of worship. Handy Chapel stands today as the only original church building in Grand Junction built on the original lots in the original square mile town site. The site was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

While simple in architectural style, Handy Chapel and the adjacent Chapel House built in the 1920s have served a grander purpose over the last 120 years. Not only a house of worship, the stewards of Handy Chapel welcomed visitors who could find no lodging before desegregation and continue to offer homeless families of all races a safe, warm place to get back on their feet. However, a dwindling congregation and shortage of funds have made all but the most critical maintenance needs impossible. The roof of the Chapel House has failed with only a temporary tarp in place to prevent additional damage to the building. Windows and doors are boarded up, preventing the Chapel House from fulfilling a mission as a place of rest and recovery for the destitute. The Chapel is not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the floor in the living quarters portion of the building is failing to the point that use of space by the congregation is difficult.

Josephine Dickey, a member of the congregation and passionate steward of Handy Chapel, finds great joy in running her hands over an exposed interior brick wall, brick that was laid by her great grandfather William Austin in 1892, brick that surrounds Josephine's grandson as he ministers to his flock during Sunday church service. Colorado Preservation is eager to bring awareness to this important historic

resource and to identify funding to complete a full-scale restoration of the Chapel and the Chapel House, so that the next five generations of Josephine's family can continue the tradition of worshipping and tending to the needs of those less fortunate in this sacred space. Additionally, the congregation hopes to provide space for a collection of artifacts to interpret the African American experience in Grand Junction.

A brief history of Handy Chapel

Handy Chapel is the only original church building on the original lots in the original square mile town site. Town founder George Crawford deeded the four lots to the African Methodist Episcopal Church members in 1883 for \$1, and the church was built by church members with the aid of Hunt a controcop, in 1892 at a cost of \$962.50.

The church and chapel house were placed to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

Roots are deep here at Handy Chapel. Josephine Dickey is the great-granddaughter of William Austin, one of those who laid brick for the church. Harry Butler's great-grandfather was, Elijah Hines who served as a Union soldier in the Civil War. Hines sons helped build handy chapel.

Both Harry and Josephine's grandson John Paul, carry on Gods work here at Handy Chapel. Harry holds church services on Saturday and Josephine and John Paul, who is the fifth generation of Josephine's family to minister here at the church, hold services on Sunday.

While simple in architectural style, Handy Chapel has served a grander purpose over the last 120 years. As Josephine says "The mission of Handy Chapel has been, and continues to be a beacon of helping with the spiritual, social and economic needs of all our fellow man".