EARLY HISTORY

The early history of Bethel A. M. E. Church is shrouded in darkness, but from diverse accounts given by the early settlers reconciled with newspaper stories, and excerpts from the chronicled histories of Champaign County, it must be true that the church organization now known as Bethel A. M. E Church, came into being sometime during the year 1863,[1] after adherents and members had been holding Prayer Meetings and other religious meetings in their homes. Mention has been made especially of the homes of Mrs. Toles, then located on the west side of six hundred block of North Hickory Street, Champaign. It is said that persons of the Baptist faith met with them first. A church was build by members of the A. M. E. church in 1864 at a cost of $600.[2] The Church was a frame building erected on a lot belonging to Mr. Jake Taylor, former husband of Mrs. Julia Summerville, at what is now 405 East Park Avenue, Champaign. In early years Circuit Rider preached at infrequent intervals, according to tradition, Rev. W. J. Davis, Rev. Charles Jacobs,

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[1] Quarterly Conference Journal in 1891, stated the Church was 28 years old, which would place its origin in 1863.

[2] Lothrop's History of Champaign County in its list of Champaign Churches, states that the "Colored Methodist" was built in 1864, at a cost of $600.