

**Mount Zion Baptist Church**

413 North Church Street

Salisbury

Mount Zion Baptist Church was founded in 1867 by Harry Cowan, former slave of Thomas L. Cowan, one of Rowan County's largest landowners. Thomas Cowan had encouraged Harry Cowan to take up the ministry to the extent possible as a slave and granted him preaching, baptizing, and marrying privileges in his extensive plantations. Harry Cowan served as preacher for Mount Zion from 1867 until 1891. The congregation probably did not have a church at this time and likely worshiped under brush shelters. In 1893 the congregation purchased the lot on which the church now stands.

The present church was constructed in 1907, replacing a smaller building that stood on the lot. By 1920 the church had been expanded to house a school. The Sunshine School, which served grades one through six, was run by the wife of then pastor Fisher Robert Mason. The school offered both religious and academic training at a time when educational opportunities for black students in North Carolina were extremely limited. Although the school was closed in 1928 because of Mrs. Mason's declining health, the church has maintained a position of social and religious significance in the black community of Salisbury. [A 12/30/85, 85003188]