

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Mark R. Edwards Signature of certifying official June 25, 1998 Date

Mark R. Edwards
State Historic Preservation Officer

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register Ma J. M. W. 8/10/98

determined eligible for the National Register _____

determined not eligible for the National Register _____

removed from the National Register _____

other, explain: _____

see continuation sheet
for _____ Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Religion: religious facility
Funerary: cemetery

Current Functions:

Religion: religious facility
Funerary: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

No Style

Materials:

foundation	Brick
walls	Wood: weatherboard
roof	Metal
other	Concrete

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

New Corinth Baptist Church is a six- and one-half-acre site that includes a 19th-century church and a large cemetery. The property is located approximately five miles south of Americus in rural Sumter County, Georgia. The region's economy is dominated by agriculture and comprises large farms with open expanses of cultivated fields. The church and cemetery are located in a ribbon of trees that flank Philema Creek. An unpaved road leads from Hooks Mill Road to the front of the church and then wends along the south side of the cemetery.

Built in c.1884, the church is a one-story, gable-front building set on brick piers and covered with weatherboard. The front and parts of the side elevations are clad in beveled novelty siding. The main facade features a double-leaf entrance with modern wood doors and concrete-block steps. Five, six-over-six-light sash windows surround the entrance. A small apse is located on the west end. During the 1980s, the original windows that existed along the sides were replaced with one-over-one-light sash windows. The roof is clad in sheet metal.

The interior features a small entrance vestibule with restrooms at each end that were probably built in the 1940s. Above the vestibule is the balcony, which may be a historic addition. Winder stairs on each side provide access to the balcony. The sanctuary is a large, open space with two rows of posts supporting the ceiling. The wood floor is exposed but the walls and ceiling were covered with sheetrock in the 1950s. The current pews were added in the 1970s. The pulpit features a large

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

proscenium and stage that may also a later addition. This addition created two small rooms on either side of the pulpit. These rooms feature flush, horizontal wood sheathing and a beaded, tongue-and-groove ceiling, which also exists beneath the sheetrock in the main sanctuary.

In 1970-1971, a concrete-block addition was built across the rear of the church. Within the annex, which contains the kitchen and dining areas and other service spaces, the north wall of the church survives intact, including the apse, siding, windows, and doors. The interior of the addition is finished with exposed concrete block walls and a poured concrete floor.

The cemetery is located south of the church and is spread over most of the rolling, six-acre property. The cemetery is not bordered by a fence, except a barbed-wire fence on the south side that separates the cemetery from pasture. Plantings in the cemetery include mature oaks and other hardwoods and pines. Some of the trees are dead and others are scorched as a result of controlled burns used by the congregation to clear the thick understory of tall grass and briars. An unpaved farm road skirts the east side of the cemetery but there are no roads or paths through cemetery and access to the graves is difficult.

The interments are dispersed throughout the cemetery and are generally oriented to the south. Family burials are organized in plots but there appears to be no overall organization of the cemetery, rather the burial sites were probably located as they were needed. Many of the burials are unmarked, identified only by depressions in the earth. Most of the burials feature concrete crypts, some exposed, with cement markers. The names and dates appear to have been stamped in the wet cement. Other markers feature names and dates hand written in script in the wet cement. The marker for Mrs. Alice Spivey, who died in 1921, is written in a combination of script and block and upper and lower case letters with a cross drawn across the face of the marker (photograph 10). Most of the markers date from late 19th century and first half of the 20th century.

Congregation members were baptized in Philema Creek, which is located along the north side of the property. A concrete-block baptismal, the only noncontributing property associated with this nomination, was built near the creek in the early 1980s. A new wood fence was recently built around the baptismal, replacing a deteriorated split-rail fence.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Ethnic Heritage-Black
Landscape Architecture/Art

Period of Significance:

c.1884-1947

Significant Dates:

c.1884 - New Corinth Baptist Church congregation established south of Americus. Present church and cemetery built.

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s): Not known.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

New Corinth Baptist Church is significant in the area of ethnic heritage-Black. The New Corinth Baptist Church is significant in the area of ethnic history because it is an important resource in understanding the history of African Americans in rural Sumter County, from Reconstruction to the present. During this period, the church served as the center of community life. The church, however, is not significant under the theme of architecture because the building has sustained numerous alterations since its construction in c.1884. The cemetery is significant under the theme of ethnic heritage-Black because of its association with the African-American community in Sumter County. The cemetery is also significant in the areas of landscape architecture and art because it retains distinctive features that were characteristic of African-American burial practices, including its layout and the design of its markers.

Following emancipation, the church was often the first building constructed in black communities. Although ex-slaves may have lived in the same or similar dwellings that they had previously occupied, they immediately began to organize and built their own churches. During and after slavery, separate denominations formed black associations. The African Methodists Episcopal (A.M.E.) was the first to organize nationally. In Georgia, regional associations were formed shortly after emancipation with the purpose of organizing and supporting schools.

Most blacks withdrew from white congregations to found their own churches. Sometimes land was granted by white churches or individuals. More often, however, buying land and building a church involved black cooperative activities. In 1877, eighteen members of the White Bluff community south of Savannah purchased 200 acres of land, one acre of which was set aside in 1883 for the construction of the Nicholsonboro Baptist Church.

Churches founded and built by blacks in the late 19th century were usually plain, one-room frame structures of a rectangular shape with gable roofs. They had little or no ornamentation or architectural detailing. Sometimes the church had a rectangular wooden steeple, a central tower mounted on the roof, or a tower at one or both front corners. Often these towers were later additions. Side or rear wings may also have been added after the church was originally constructed. The entrances of rural churches were centered. Interiors were usually finished with paneling or plaster and the ceilings were often unfinished.

The rural church site was large enough for outdoor social activities and a burial ground. Burials were organized in family plots, although they may not be defined by fences or walls as is characteristic of white cemeteries. The plots often do not follow a traditional gridiron layout but may include burials oriented in any number of directions. Markers in African-American cemeteries in the South may be fashioned from impermanent materials, such as wood, so that a depression may be

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

the only a surviving record of a burial. Fieldstones were sometimes used to mark the head and feet of grave sites. Cement was another popular material for markers because an inscription could be stamped in the wet cement. In some cases, names of the deceased were written in hand in the cement before it set.

National Register Criteria

A and C.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

New Corinth Baptist Church is a religious property that meets Criteria Consideration A because it draws its primary significance from its religious and historical associations with the African American community in Sumter County, Georgia. The New Corinth Baptist Church cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D because it draws its primary significance from its layout, the distinctive designs of the burial markers and its historical association with the African American community in Sumter County, Georgia.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Period of significance (justification)

The c.1884-1947 period of significance begins with the establishment of the New Corinth Baptist Church and cemetery and ends with the last historic-period burials in 1947. Included within this period is the construction of the church building and its historic use as a house of worship. During this period, the church and cemetery attained the characteristics that qualify them for listing in the National Register.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The church and cemetery are the two contributing resources associated with this nomination. The baptismal pool, built in the 1980s, is the only noncontributing resource located on the property.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

William Walter Hooks, one of Georgia's leading cotton planters, purchased in 1854 the land on which New Corinth Baptist Church now stands. Oral history of the congregation indicates that the congregation was founded in c.1870 and that William Hooks built the church at that time using local lumber from his own nearby mill, for which Hooks Mill Road is named. The congregation comprised Hooks' laborers and their families. Minutes of the Southwestern Baptist Association report that the congregation, known as New Corinth, was formed in 1884 with 144 members. New Corinth Baptist Church most likely split from Corinth Baptist Church, which had 160 members. By 1894, 294 communicants were listed for New Corinth, making it one of the largest Baptist churches in South Georgia. At the beginning of the 20th century, a school was founded at the church that served all primary grades. The school was disbanded in the 1940s. This is identified on land-ownership maps of 1910 in which "New Corinth Ch. & School" are depicted. The church is also documented in a deed in 1928 that refers to a ". . . colored church and graveyard known as New Corinth."

In 1909, Thomas B. Hooks, William Hooks's son, sold 95 acres, including the church and cemetery property, to Mrs. Jessie L. Mathis. In 1928, Mrs. Mathis sold the property to the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance, with the exception of one acre on which the church and a portion of the cemetery were located. In 1941, Russell Thomas and Carroll B. Austin purchased the land. In 1948, they deeded to Deacons Johnnie Ball, Tom Townsley, Reed Hoston, Sr., Reed Hoston, Jr., Freddie Denson, Warren Ingram six acres, "generally known and designated as the New Corinth Baptist (Colored) Church and Cemetery . . ." The church has continued to serve the local African American Baptist community, although the congregation is now smaller and older than it was in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when substantial improvements were made to the building, such as the installation of new pews, replacement windows, and the addition of the large, rear hall.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Hooks, George. Historic Property Information Form. May 1997. On file at the Division of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia, with supplemental information.

Merritt, Carole. Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia. Atlanta: Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1984.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (x) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:**
- previously listed in the National Register**
- previously determined eligible by the National Register**
- designated a National Historic Landmark**
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #**
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #**

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office**
- Other State Agency**
- Federal agency**
- Local government**
- University**
- Other, Specify Repository:**

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6.6 acres

UTM References

A) Zone 17 Easting 766130 Northing 3540720

Verbal Boundary Description

The property boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached map, drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all resources historically associated with the New Corinth Baptist Church and cemetery and follows the legal boundaries of the parcel. The nominated property retains a high level of historic integrity.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Steven H. Moffson, Architectural Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
street & number 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** June 16, 1998

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) (x) not applicable

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

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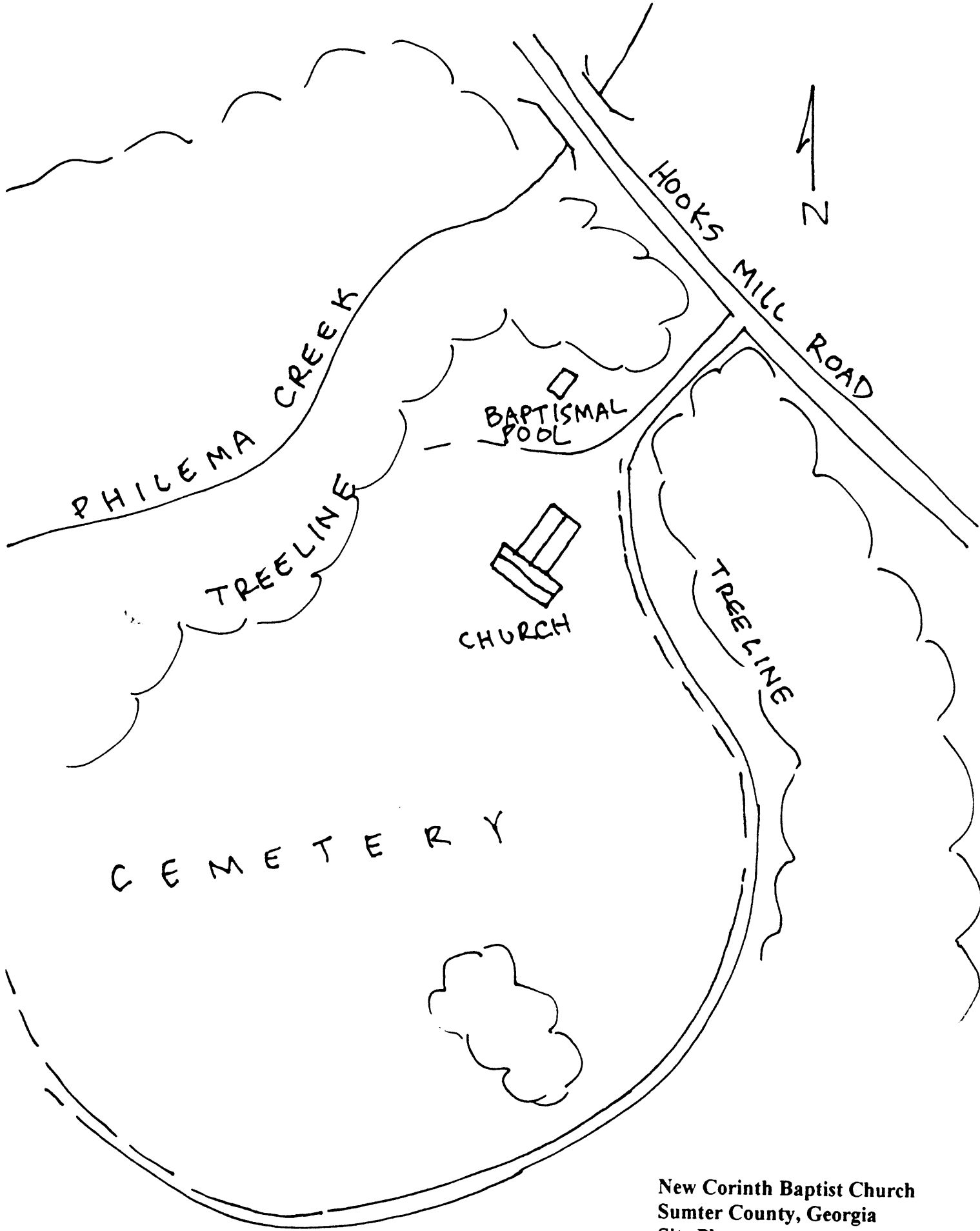
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

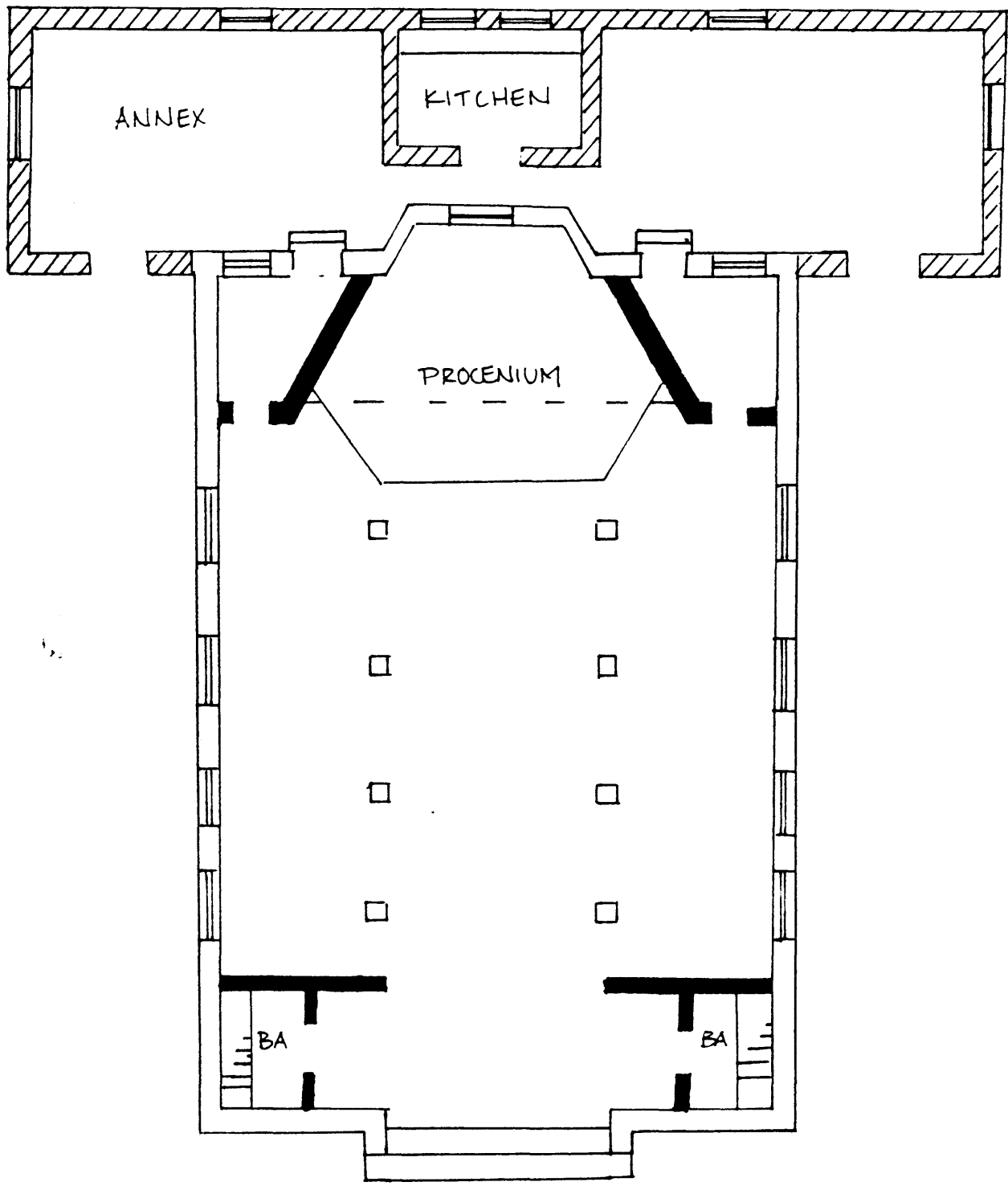
Name of Property: New Corinth Baptist Church
City or Vicinity: Americus vicinity
County: Sumter
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: December 1998

Description of Photograph(s):

1. New Corinth Baptist Church, main facade, photographer facing southwest.
2. New Corinth Baptist Church, main and north facade, photographer facing south.
3. New Corinth Baptist Church, rear addition, photographer facing northeast.
4. New Corinth Baptist Church, south facade, photographer facing, northwest.
5. New Corinth Baptist Church, interior, view of sanctuary and pulpit, photographer facing west.
6. New Corinth Baptist Church, interior, view of sanctuary and balcony, photographer facing north.
7. Cemetery, photographer facing north.
8. Cemetery, photographer facing north.
9. Cemetery, photographer facing northwest.
10. Cemetery, grave of Mrs. Alice Spivey (right) photographer facing north.
11. Baptismal pool, photographer facing northwest.



**New Corinth Baptist Church
Sumter County, Georgia
Site Plan
No Scale**



New Corinth Baptist Church
 Sumter County, Georgia

Key

□ c. 1884

■ c. 1940's-50's

▨ c. 1970-71

NORTH ↙