



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Liberty Methodist Church
other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 2040 Liberty Church Road
city, town Hephzibah (n/a) vicinity of
county Richmond code GA 245
state Georgia code GA zip code 30815

(n/a) not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property:

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	1	3
sites	1	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	2	3

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of previous listing: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

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

September 29 1997
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

Edson H. Beall

4/2/97

() determined eligible for the National Register

() determined not eligible for the National Register

() removed from the National Register

() other, explain:

() see continuation sheet

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:

OTHER/Vernacular

Materials:

foundation	stone and concrete
walls	wood
roof	asphalt
other	n/a

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Liberty Methodist Church is located in a rural area approximately 13 miles south of Augusta, Richmond County, Georgia. The church was never part of a community, but served a wide area of farms as well as the communities of Richmond Factory (2 miles away) and Brothersville (5 miles southwest). The church is one of a few buildings located along Liberty Church Road, a winding county road. The church is located on the outside (west side) of a curve near the edge of Liberty Church Road. The site includes the historic church, associated cemetery, and three non-historic outbuildings. The largest of these outbuildings is the three-story Fellowship Hall, located just west of the church.

Liberty Methodist Church is a one-story, wood-framed, gable-roofed building featuring two front doors in the gable end (see photo 2 of 7). The building is very simple in design and does not reflect any formal architectural style. The form of the building is representative of many rural churches in Georgia with a gable roof, two front doors located in the gable end, and symmetrical placement of the doors and windows. Other exterior features include cornice returns, paneled doors, sixteen-over-sixteen double-hung windows with shutters, and a stone and concrete pier foundation.

The interior of the church consists of a large open space with no partitions (see photo 5 of 7). A slightly raised platform for the chancel area is located at the southern end of the room and an aisle is located behind each front door creating three rows of pews. The original intact pews are divided into

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Section 7--Description

three sections; one row located along the east and west walls and a larger section is located in the center of the building (see photo 6 of 7). The pews are original to the church and retain the early 19th-century dividers which are not found in later churches. Other intact original interior features include the pine wood floors, wood walls, ceiling, and pulpit.

The building has had some alterations since its construction. A window located between the two existing windows on the rear of the building was in filled with weatherboard during the mid-19th century (see photo 3 and 4). During a rehabilitation of the building in the early 1980s, deteriorated or missing weatherboards were replaced with similar boards. Also, the foundation was restored and rebuilt in places and the roof was replaced.

The surroundings of the church consist of three non-historic buildings and a historic cemetery. The Fellowship Hall, built 1985, is located just east of the church building. The building was constructed so the church building could be restored without having to add intrusive modern restrooms, kitchen, and meeting space. The building is sensitive to the character of the church since it is constructed of wood, has a gable roof, symmetrical placement of the windows and doors, and is similar in massing (see photo 1 of 7). The second building, the Youth Building, is located on the other end of the parking lot north of the church. The Youth Building, constructed c. 1960, is a one-story concrete block building. It was originally constructed to accommodate worship and Sunday School when the church was being restored. A small third building, used to store equipment, is located near the church building.

The historic cemetery is located directly behind (south) of the church and extends around the church to the northwest. The section of the cemetery located directly behind the church is the oldest and surrounded by a iron fence (see photo 3 of 7). The headstones date to the early 1800s and are small and made of stone. The cemetery's development moved west of the church and is still used for burials today (refer to photo 3 of 7).

There is no historic landscaping associated with the church. Currently, small foundation plants and mature hardwood trees are located around the church. A Georgia Historical Commission marker is located just east of the church near the road records the history of Liberty Methodist Church (see photo 7 of 7).

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):

ARCHITECTURE
RELIGION

Period of Significance:

c.1804 to 1947

Significant Dates:

c.1804 Construction of the Liberty Methodist Church.
1979 Restoration of the church.

Significant Person(s):

n/a

Cultural Affiliation:

n/a

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

n/a

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

Liberty Methodist Church is representative of early 19th-century churches and is one of the oldest remaining antebellum churches located in a rural setting in Georgia. The church is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of an intact, 19th-century vernacular, rural church. The character-defining features of this vernacular one-story church building are its wood-frame construction, gable-end form, open interior space, placement of the pews into three section divided by two aisles, placement of the chancel opposite (south end of the building) of the front doors, and symmetrical pattern of facade fenestration. Along with the building's rural setting, these features define the basic function and utility of the building as an early 19th-century church. Other exterior features of the building include paneled doors, cornice returns, and sixteen-over-sixteen double-hung windows. The historic interior features include the pine floor, wood walls, ceiling, pulpit, and pews.

Liberty Methodist Church is significant in the area of religion. The Methodist Church began in Georgia through the work of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church. The Augusta, Washington, and Elberton areas had the first established churches of the Methodists. Liberty Methodist Church, constructed c. 1804, was one of the earliest churches established in the Augusta area. The church has remained active since its beginning and continues to serve as a Methodist church for the nearby communities today.

National Register Criteria

Liberty Methodist Church is eligible under Criterion A as one of the oldest rural Methodist churches remaining in Georgia, and eligible under Criterion C as an intact, rural, vernacular building constructed c.1804.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

Liberty Methodist Church is eligible under Criterion Consideration A since it derives its significance from its development as one of the oldest religious buildings remaining in the state and from its intact vernacular form.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Liberty Methodist Church begins with its construction c.1804 and continues to 1947, the end of the historic period. The church has continued to serve as a Methodist

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church from its construction to today. During that period, the building has retained its original character-defining features and the cemetery has continuously been used for burials.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The one contributing building consists of the Liberty Methodist Church and the one contributing site is the associated cemetery. The three noncontributing buildings consist of the Fellowship Hall, Youth Building, and small utility building.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

NOTE: The following history was prepared by Robert L. Taylor, "Liberty Methodist Church," Historic Property Information Form, 6/1/91. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

In bringing as much information as possible about the origin of Liberty, three sources were used: historical data, legal documents, and family tradition. From historical documents and family tradition it seems reasonable to suppose that Liberty grew out of individual and family efforts. Historians and researchers cite Samuel Collins as the local preacher who was responsible for the group of "Methodist Society" which became the "S.C. Church", later called Liberty. Bishop Frances Asbury mentioned a Collins family Caroline County, Maryland, at least ten times in his Journal. His first reference to them was in 1779-80. Asbury recorded in his journal for Monday, March 1, 1790: "We crossed at Augusta, in Georgia, and rode to the S.C. Church..."

Dr. Robert L. Rhodes of Augusta compiled, ***A History of Old Liberty Church***. Much of his information, he claimed, came from his great, great grandmother (youngest child of Samuel Collins), born August 2, 1794. Rhodes' own mother was also a resource person for him. Dr. Rhodes was convinced by his research that Samuel Collins, urged by Bishop Asbury, came to Georgia and settled south of Augusta, where he began to preach, and soon thereafter steps were taken to erect a log meeting house, which, he said, was known as the "Sam Collins Church".

During the restoration work, Liberty received a letter dated May 27, 1980, from Mrs. Phillip Seebach, now deceased, who lived in Waynesboro, Ga. She said, "I was interested in the newspaper article about the Liberty program... There is a tradition in my family (Matthews) that Liberty was founded by Samuel Collins, who had been converted (through Bishop Asbury's influence) and was sent South at the Bishop's behest as an itinerant Methodist missionary. We have been told that his daughter, Catherine Collins, who married (1) William Matthews and (2) Aquila Matthews, was my great, great grandmother... Further, family tradition says that Samuel Collins probably came from Cork County, Ireland, to America and apparently landed at Boston, and living there, became involved

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in the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Subsequently, he fled the city to avoid arrest. He made his way to Maryland, where he came under the influence of Bishop Asbury... Samuel Collins' land lay just south of the Richmond County line in Burke County. He is said to have given the land where Liberty Church was erected. The deed and his will, if he made one, have not been found. As you possibly know, two court house fires in Burke County have destroyed many records."

Historian George G. Smith in History of Methodism in Georgia and Florida notes: "The S.C. Church was located between Brothersville and Coke's Chapel in Burke County." Prominent families of the Richmond-Burke area were associated with Liberty. The family of the deceased former Mayor of Augusta, William B. Bell, lived only a few hundred yards from where Liberty is now located. The Bells were Liberty members. The great grandfather of the late Herbert Elliott, Sr., is buried in the Liberty Cemetery.

Dr. Walter Clark, Lost Arcadia, indicated: "During its more than 100 years of sacred service Liberty has been blessed by the labors of many honored and useful men. In this connection it is interesting that the late Reverend Albert T. Mann, one of the ablest and most eloquent ministers known to Georgia Methodism, preached his first sermon in old Liberty, and, after 50 years or more of distinguished service in the Master's cause, the same hallowed halls echoed his last public utterance."

During the 1920's and 1930's, Liberty suffered a gradual decline in membership. Several things probably could be cited as reasons: migration from rural to urban areas; general social mobility; the continuing out-dated circuit church pattern with services once a month, etc. This decline continued until Liberty was left in the middle 70's with only eight members. It was in the 1960's that the congregation decided to build the masonry building on the hill and move there for their activities. Worship, Sunday School and other activities were conducted there until the restoration of the old sanctuary. Since restoration there has been a steady growth in membership at Liberty. The membership of eight has grown to the present 104.

Liberty is proud of its history and tradition. A goodly number of persons are granted permission to use the antique sanctuary for weddings, visitation of other church groups, etc. Liberty has played host to youth Sunday School classes, Bible study groups from other churches, and others interested in the church and its history. Such use of the building is the realization of a major goal that Liberty remain a place of worship and a shrine of early Methodist history in this area.

9. Major Bibliographic References

- Books:**
- Asbury, Francis, Journal and Letters, Volume Published 1851 and 1958, Nashville *
- Betts, Albert D. History of South Carolina Methodism. Columbia; Advocate Press, 1952
- Clark, Walter A. A Lost Arcadia. Augusta, Georgia Chronicle Job Print, 1909
- Pierce, A.M. History of Methodism. North Georgia Historical Society: 1956
- Schreitzburg, Abel M. Early Methodism in the Carolinas. Nashville, 1897. *
- Shipp, Albert M. The History of Methodism in South Carolina. Nashville, 1884 *
- Smith, George G. History of Methodism in Georgia and Florida. Published, 1877.
- Smith, George G. Life and Labors of Francis Asbury. Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1898.
- Smith, George G. A Hundred Years of Methodism in Augusta. Augusta: Richards and Shaver Press, 1898.

Courthouse Records: Deeds

Papers and Letters:

Clary, George E., Jr. On the Origins of Methodism in Georgia and Richmond County. Presented at Historical Meeting in Augusta, 1968.

Rhodes, Robert L. A History of Old Liberty Church report of Rhodes' research on the history of Liberty Methodist Church.

Letter: From Mrs. Phillip Seebach (Copy enclosed)

Official Journals of Georgia Conferences. 1786-1982.

Lawrence, Harold, Ed. The Stewards Register Book for Burke Circuit and Ochoopee Circuit. In library Mulberry Street Methodist Church, Macon, Georgia

Newspapers and Periodicals:

The Augusta News. February 22, 1967.

The Augusta Herald. Date not deciphered.

Wesleyan Christian Advocate. June 1980.

Wesleyan Christian Advocate. October 7, 1981.

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Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

"Genealogy Anyone". In Cairo Messenger Newspaper. July 6, 1973.

The Augusta Chronicle. September 12, 1981.

The Atlanta Journal - Constitution. March 24, 1985.

* Though not listed as such, we assume this to be the Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, TN..

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 2.96 acres.

UTM References

A) Zone 17 Easting 403370 Northing 3687040

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary for Liberty Methodist Church is indicated on the attached tax map with a heavy black line.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary for Liberty Methodist Church encompasses the church, associated cemetery, three non-historic buildings, and remaining associated acreage.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Amy Pallante

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** September 1997

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

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consultant

regional development center preservation planner

other:

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

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Photographs

Name of Property: Liberty Methodist Church
City or Vicinity: Hephzibah
County: Richmond
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: June 1996

Description of Photograph(s):

- 1 of 7 View of Liberty Methodist Church and Fellowship Hall; photographer facing southwest.
- 2 of 7 Detail view of the front facade of the Liberty Methodist Church; photographer facing south.
- 3 of 7 Detail view of the rear facade of the church and original section of the associated cemetery; photographer facing north.
- 4 of 7 View of rear facade and west elevation of the church; photographer facing northeast.
- 5 of 7 View of interior of church; photographer facing southwest.
- 6 of 7 View of interior from the chancel; photographer facing north.
- 7 of 7 Detail view of the Georgia Historical Commission marker; photographer facing north.

SITE MAP
 Liberty Methodist Church
 Hephzibah, Richmond County, Georgia
 Not to scale
 ⊕ = Contributing
 ⊗ = Noncontributing
 ○ = Photo direction and number

