

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 11 1986  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

MAY 8 1986

## 1. Name

historic Mount Sterling Methodist Church

and/or common Mount Sterling Methodist Church

## 2. Location

street & number Three miles east of Butler, Alabama, 1/4 mile southwest of the intersection of Co. Rds. 43 & 27 NA not for publication

city, town Mount Sterling NA vicinity of congressional district 1

state Alabama code 01 county Choctaw code 023

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<u>NA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Choctaw County Historical Society

street & number Route 1, Box 320

city, town Butler NA vicinity of state Alabama 36904

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Choctaw County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Butler state Alabama 36904

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970-present  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mount Sterling Methodist Church (c. 1859) is a simple Greek Revival structure located at the end of a dirt road on a two-acre lot in rural northeast Choctaw County. The one-story, rectangular-shaped wood frame building with gable roof is supported on individual brick piers. These piers are corbeled out at grade and bear directly on the ground at a shallow depth.

The exterior walls are covered with exposed lap wood siding. The front (north) elevation features a simple wood pediment with flush boards and wood pilasters at each corner. The entrance consists of two pairs of two paneled doors which have flat panels, mortised and tenoned. These doors are the only doors to the building. The side elevations (east and west) consist of four, nine-over-nine, single hung wood trimmed windows, while the rear elevation (south) has two nine-over-nine windows. There are no porches and the original wood steps have been replaced with concrete steps.

The steeple is supported on four posts which rest on beams that span the width of the building and are notched together. The roof is supported by 2 x 8 rafters, and every sixth rafter and ceiling joist is a 4 x 8. The original roof consists of rough cut pine stripping and heart pine shingles. The present roof consists of exterior grade plywood situated directly over original stripping, roofing felt and textured fiberglass shingles.

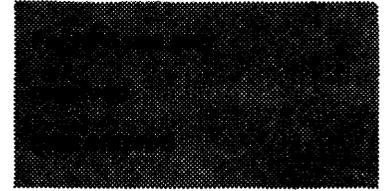
The roof framing is unique to this area. The ceiling joists span half the width of the building and are notched into the bottom chord of a wood truss that runs down the center of the church in the long dimension. The truss is composed of a continuous bottom chord with vertical iron tie rods located at 1/3 points from the center post. The diagonal top chords of the truss are notched into the bottom chord approximately 3'-0" from each bearing end. This has caused the bottom chord to crack and 8" x 8" wood columns were installed from the floor to the ceiling at each end of the truss directly under the cracks. This all appears to have been installed soon after the building was constructed.

The wood framing consists of a series of solid, heart pine beams that are continuous in the long dimension, while a center beam that runs the length of the structure, also one piece, rests on brick piers. The walls are framed of wood studs and diagonally reinforced at the corners while the floor joists are notched into the perimeter beam with approximately 4" of the floor joists extending over the top of the beam.

The original plaster walls and ceilings have been replaced with sheetrock. The original wood base is intact as is also the original tongue and groove heart pine flooring which is in good condition. The original iron hinges remain on the doors, but the original locksets have been

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replaced. The western most pair of doors show evidence of an original box lock; however, the eastern most pair have an iron bracket and wood bar to bolt the doors.

The interior of the building was partitioned in the 1950's to incorporate two Sunday School rooms and a restroom at the south end of the building. To accommodate this change the pulpit platform was moved forward with the construction of a raised platform for the altar and pulpit. Also, the blown-glass window lights were replaced with a crinkle, bathroom type glass. An architect has been engaged to develop specifications for restoration work to return the building to its original appearance and make it functional for use as a museum, for weddings, receptions, meetings and other religious or civic gatherings.

Behind the church building are the tombstones of four graves. The oldest is a flat sandstone slab over the grave of David Gregg, who died March 2, 1814, while two of the others list dates during the 1860's. The last of the four bears the letters A.B.M.N., but has no dates or inscriptions. All these stones have been cleaned and re-set in concrete. It is believed that additional stones marking early graves existed but must be unearthed, and that an earlier religious meeting place existed in the immediate area prior to the construction of the building and earliest date of white settlement since the names on the stones do not hint of a family burial place.

Total contributing resources 2.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates**    c. 1859                      **Builder/Architect**    unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Mount Sterling Methodist Church is significant as an example of mid-nineteenth century Alabama, simple, rural Greek Revival church architecture that has been very little altered and has a unique type of roof construction for West Central Alabama. The roof is supported by a large truss that runs down the center of the building parallel to the long dimension. Ceiling joists and rafters bear on this truss from the side walls. This is the only known example of this type of roof structure in West Central Alabama. The church also contains its original pews and pulpit. This building is a fine example of once numerous, but now increasingly rare, mid-nineteenth century rural vernacular Greek Revival church architecture preserved in its original rural location and surrounded by century-old oaks, as well as an early 19th century cemetery that predates the church.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

The Alabama Historical Quarterly, Peter A. Brannon, Editor, Vol. 25, Fall and Winter Issue 1963.  
Mobile Press Register, "Tribute to the Mount Sterling, AL Community" by Darla Graves, 1985.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Two

Quadrangle name Butler

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	3	9	0	5	1	0	3	5	5	1	1	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

see continuation sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
NA			

state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley D. Qualls, Cultural Resources Coordinator

organization Alabama Historical Commission

date January 29, 1986

street & number 725 Monroe Street

telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery

state Alabama

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



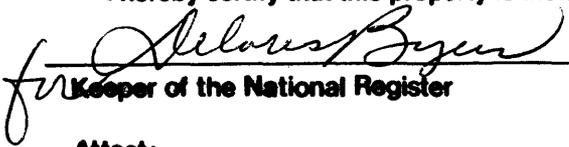
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4-3-86

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

for   
Keeper of the National Register

date 5/8/86

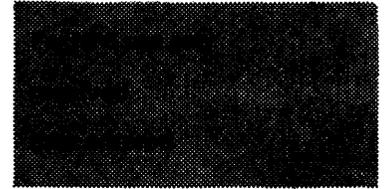
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Historical Summary:

The land on which the Mount Sterling Methodist Church building is located was deeded to the Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, established in the Town of Mount Sterling, Choctaw County on May 28, 1859 by Mr. Sanford E. Catterlin and Mary A. Catterlin. The Catterlins were early Choctaw County settlers, and on October 26, 1838 Catterlin established the Mount Sterling Post Office.

Mount Sterling became a thriving community of approximately 300. In 1847, the same year that Choctaw County was formed from the northern part of Washington County, and the southern part of Sumter County, the town was surveyed and laid out around a public square optimistically designed to be the site of the newly established Choctaw County Court House. Although the town was unable to secure its selection as the county seat it prospered, and along its 19-plus acres boasted several stores, two doctors, two academies (one female, one male), a newspaper, two churches and several fine homes. Only two mid-19th century residences remain in the area. The Roach House was built c. 1855 as the parsonage for the Baptist minister and the Linden House, a similar Greek Revival construction is speculated to have been built prior to the Civil War. Another residence, the McAllister House, occupies the site of Catterlin's 1838 post office, and because of its Victorian detailing, was probably built during the late 19th or early 20th century. The Roach House and the McAllister House are the only 19th century residences located within the original boundaries of the 1847 town plan and survey.

The earliest building used by the local Baptist Church was a two-story structure built in 1847 as the Choctaw County Seminary (male academy) with the Masonic Lodge occupying the upper floor. In 1854 the Baptists purchased the academy/Masonic Lodge building and organized their church.

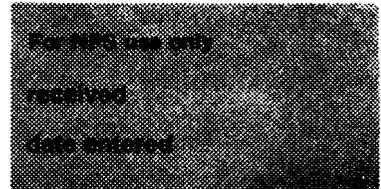
The Mount Sterling Methodist Church was built c. 1859 and was the first local building constructed expressly as a church. The church never had a full-time pastor; however, its services were conducted continuously by Circuit Riders once or twice a month during certain seasons until 1976, when it closed due to steadily decreasing membership.

In 1980 the Methodist Conference deeded the building and two acres of land which include an early 1800's cemetery, to the Choctaw County Historical Society. The Society, with the aid of a restoration architect, has secured plans to embark upon the complete restoration of the building. As additional funds become available, the restoration will proceed.

Today only one other 19th century church building, St. John's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (1870) located about one mile east of the Mount Sterling Methodist Church building, remains in the Mount Sterling vicinity. The 1847 Baptist Church building has been demolished and a modern brick structure constructed in its place.

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A certain lot in the town of Mt. Sterling in Choctaw County; beginning at the Southwest corner of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 15, Township 13, Range 2 West, thence east 495 feet to a stake designated as the point of beginning, thence from said stake north 420 feet, thence east 210 feet, thence south 420 feet, thence west 210 feet to the point of beginning and containing two acres more or less.

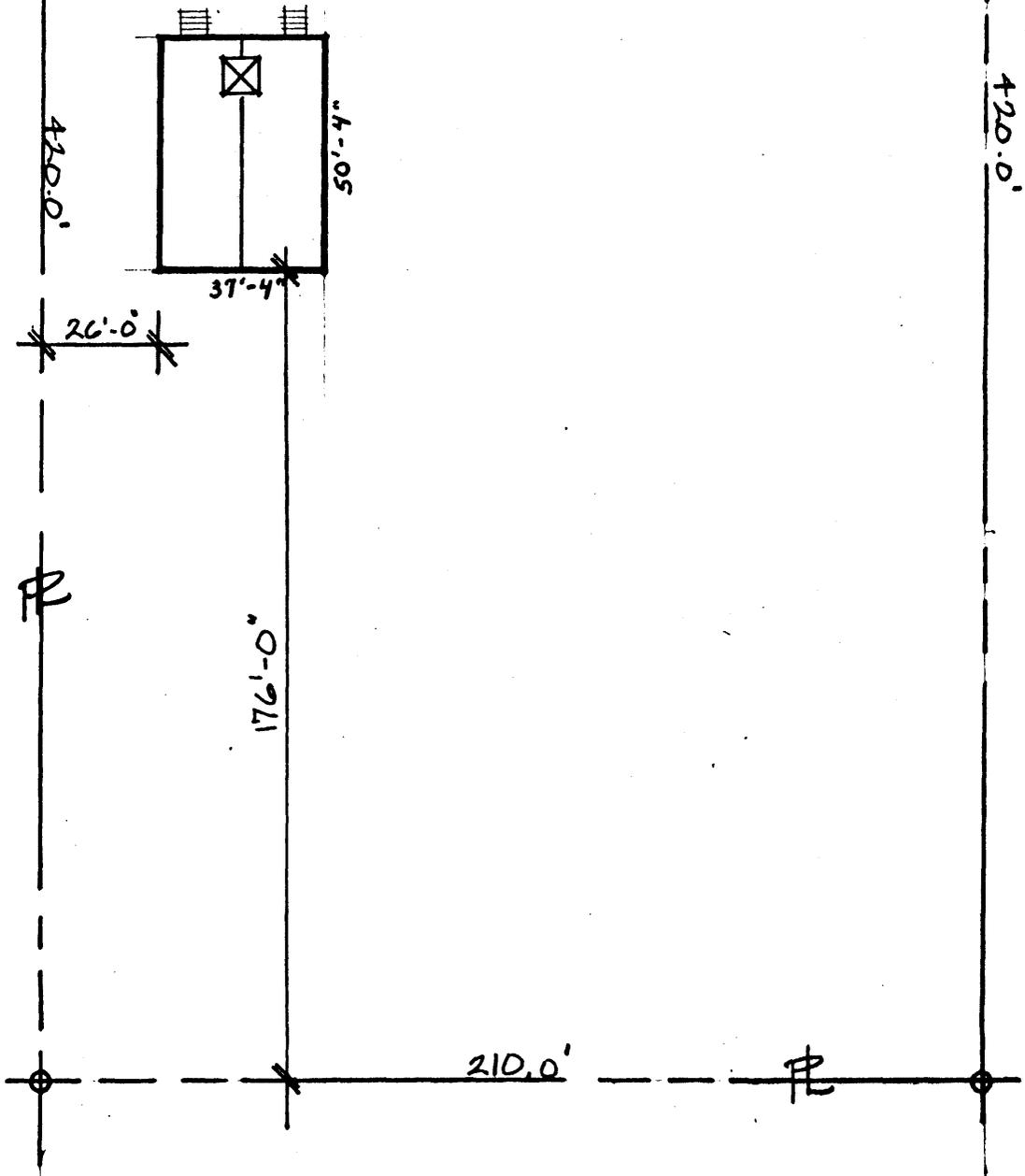
This description is recorded in the Probate Records of Choctaw County, Alabama, appearing in Deed Book No. "M", at Page 74; again in Deed Book No. 54, at Page 605; and again in Deed Book No. 215, at Page 946.

EXISTING DIRTY ROAD

210.0'



NORTH



PLOT PLAN OF MT. STERLING  
METHODIST CHURCH  
MOUNT STERLING, ALABAMA

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"