

Uchee Methodist Church

Russell County, Alabama

Uchee Methodist Church

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the
National Register
- See continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Edson H. Ball 7-3-97

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Uchee Methodist Church

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6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>RELIGION</u>	Sub: <u>Religious Facility</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>VACANT/Not in Use</u>	Sub: _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

GREEK REVIVAL

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

roof METAL: Tin

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See attached Continuation Sheets.

Uchee Methodist Church

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8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance c. 1859

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Significant Dates c. 1859

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Johnson, L. Scott (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See attached Continuation Sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS) N/A

 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

 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

 X Other

Name of repository: Historic Chattahoochee Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 5.1 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	657020	3580610	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	<u> </u> See continuation sheet.					

Uchee Methodist Church

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a Continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Linda Nelson and Trina Binkley, AHC Reviewer

organization FuturePast date December 21, 1996

street & number 4700 Seventh Court South telephone (205) 592-6610

city or town Birmingham state AL zip code 35222

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Alabama-West Florida Conference of the Methodist Church

street & number P.O. Box 851 Telephone (334) 744-7468

city or town Troy State AL zip code 36081
=====

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Description of Physical Appearance

This is a rural church building in the Greek Revival style, a temple-front structure with high, elegantly proportioned windows. It is constructed of lapped weatherboard put together with cut square nails; it rests on sills about nine inches square which in turn sit on a brick pier foundation. In dimension the building is 30' by 50'; it is three bays across the front and six bays in length, the front bay being the porch under the main roof. The gable pediment is substantial but plain, as is the supporting entablature. There are four simple boxed columns supporting the porch roof, with plain bases and capitals; pilasters of similar design join the porch to the front of the building. The front, both in the large gable and under the roof, is faced in horizontal paneling with reversed battens. The shallow eave line across the front, forming the base of the gable, is sagging somewhat, giving a misleading look of bedragglements to an otherwise solid structure.

The facade's pleasing proportions are defined by two double entry doors surmounted by four-light transoms and flanked by pilasters. In the middle of the facade is a window of the same proportions and at the same height as the primary windows; this window and its opposite at the rear have been filled in with plate glass, replacing the original 9-over-9 sash that remains in all the other primary windows. This was done in 1980 during a rebuilding of the porch and other alterations; the purpose of the glass change was to discourage vandalism. All of the original tripartite louvered shutters that covered the windows (even as late as a 1990 survey) have disappeared or been removed.

The rear elevation of the church imitates the front in terms of the door and window placement, though without ornamentation or porch. Steps to the rear doors have not been there for some time, and after 1980 any implied use of the doors as rear entrances was discontinued (see below).

The roof is standing seam metal and the porch ceiling is now plastered. The porch floor was rebuilt in 1980 without any change of construction style or other material, except that some of the details such as the capitals and baseboards were painted black.

The interior is one open room with a central aisle between rows of angled pews, leading from the north front end of the church to the pulpit and dais at the south end. This is not the original floor plan: the editors of *The Architectural Legacy of the Lower Chattahoochee Valley in Alabama and Georgia*¹ document an original arrangement with two aisles aligned with the

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doors at either end, and the pulpit and dais were at the north end of the building. The old floor plan allowed the blacks in this small congregation to enter separately at the rear and sit separated by a space from the white congregants, who of course came in the front door. This plan was changed when the windows were replaced in 1980; the pews now are set at an angle (see photographs) to a central aisle and are facing opposite to their original setting, i.e., they are facing the rear, or south, end of the building. A ghost of the old dais can be seen in the woodwork mouldings at what is now the rear of the room.

Whether or not there was ever any gender separation in the seating arrangements, implied by the two entrances front and rear, is speculative, and the double aisle arrangement may be only architecturally traditional. A number of the old churches in Russell County have this double-door feature, including the Good Hope Baptist Church across the road from Uchee, the old Glennville Methodist Church and, by report, the now-demolished Lebanon Baptist Church (see below, discussion of the Greek Revival in Russell County).

The present ceiling is of beadboard; *Lower Chattahoochee Valley* also suggests that this is probably a later addition, most likely from the early decades of the present century. Ceiling mouldings are plain, and baseboards somewhat more elaborate and deep. The headers over the elegant double doors and the windows are in the Greek Ear design, a feature noted by *Lower Chattahoochee Valley* to be the only decorative detail in the otherwise austere interior. Walls are plaster over lath, and the floor is tongue-and-groove planks in 5" widths. The present light fixtures date from the 1980 alterations, consisting of Williamsburgian chandeliers and strip fluorescent fixtures. There are banners hung on the walls between the windows. The small paneled pulpit sits behind a three-sided balustrade, with a low dais behind.

The church's setting is in a peaceful sandy stretch of ground just off Russell County 22 in the old settlement of Uchee; the drive curves gently from the road and back out again. There is a stand of ancient trees to the front, and various pines and other trees to the sides and rear. Uchee Methodist's cemetery is some small distance to the rear of the building, not in fact within the boundaries of the five-acre plot of land donated to the congregation by the Williamson family for the purpose of building their church. Although from the beginning on land historically associated with the church, the cemetery plot is privately owned by the Walker and Williamson families.

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The condition of this historic church is dejected but not yet deteriorated. Although it plainly suffers from being unused, members of the congregation that met there through the mid-1980s still watch over it carefully and maintain it as well as possible. Its most obvious problem, aside from peeling paint and some broken windows, is the swarms of honeybees that live within the walls. The front gable is stained with dripping honey.

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made at Uchee Methodist Church, the potential for subsurface remains may be high. Buried portions located on properties of this type may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire property.

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Statement of Significance:

Uchee Methodist Church is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion C, Architecture.

CRITERION C: Architecture

This c. 1859 structure is a very good and intact example of the Greek Revival style in probably its purest form, the temple-front house of worship. Its proportions are classical and its details austere, and even in partial decay it has the grace that the style never loses. Uchee Church reflects the popularity of the style even in the most vernacular settings, and testifies to its dissemination in the area during the *ante bellum* period.

The Greek Revival in Russell County

The Greek Revival style with its variants is the dominant historic building style in this southeast Alabama county, which opened up for white settlement in 1832. Unincorporated Russell County is home to two fine two-storey Greek Revival houses and a number of single-storey cottages; the Bass-Perry House near Seale (NR 2-5-76) and Elmoreland or Glennville Plantation in the old Glennville Historic District (NR 8-7-79) are the larger houses, and the one-storey type is best represented by the Samuel Pitts Plantation in Pittsview (NR 6-25-92), Cedar Heights Plantation near Glennville (NR 4-9-80), Iaghee Plantation near Seale, and the Cliatt Plantation below Jernigan. Particularly pertinent to this nomination is the c. 1857 Threadgill-Williamson House in Uchee; built by the carpenter of the church, this fine Greek Revival house is rotting away across the road for lack of anyone to care for it.²

All of these houses are authentically of the Greek Revival period, but variants of the style persisted into Victorian times in terms of the central-hall, deep-porched houses that continued to be built well into the present century.

Greek Revival churches, however, are less well represented today for several reasons. First, many of the original buildings were razed or altered in later times to enlarge or modernize them; the result of this is that most of the historic church buildings in the County actually date from Victorian times, primarily the 1880s.² Of the Greek Revival churches, present informa-

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tion indicates that only Uchee Methodist remains intact, essentially unaltered and on its original site. Only a reconstructed portion remains of the 1859 Good Hope Baptist Church, blown down by a 1990 storm (see History below). Also destroyed in the same storm was the even older (c. 1840) Cool Springs Baptist Church just outside Pittsview. In the case of the Mount Lebanon Baptist Church near Cottonton, the congregation in 1944 razed its older (1852) building to build a new church; the earlier building was reported to be a "simple front-gabled weatherboard structure with two front entrances."³ The c. 1850 Glennville Methodist Church, moved to another site in 1939 and now known as St. John AME Church, also has two entry doors to side aisles, although later alterations and features keep it from being classified as Greek Revival.⁴

History of Uchee Methodist Church

The congregation of the Uchee Methodist Church has its earliest record in 1833, when the Chattahoochee Mission of the Alabama Methodist Conference was established in Montgomery.⁵ The occasion of this development was the opening up of the lands in southeast Alabama after the end of the Creek Wars in 1832; subsequently settlers came into this part of the state via the Federal Road from Columbus and began to domesticate what was then the southwest frontier. True to its evangelical mission, the Methodist Church sent out "ministers with Pauline enthusiasm"⁶ to preach to the pioneers and create settlement congregations.

Uchee Mission was one of five fledgling congregations of the Chattahoochee Mission, the others being Clayton in Macon and Barbour Counties, Line Creek in Macon County, Chambersville (now LaFayette) in Chambers County, and Tallapoosa. Uchee Chapel Methodist Church, as this congregation was then known, was one of several churches in the Uchee Mission; the first pastor to the Mission was recorded as David E. McIntyre, who by his second Conference year could report a Mission membership of 124 white and 53 black members.⁷ The name of the Mission circuit changed from time to time as the churches were reassigned to different organizational areas, but records indicate that the Uchee Chapel membership dates from 1836 and that an early church building was constructed in 1838. Unfortunately there are no surviving records of this structure.⁸

Later in the century Anson West, a minister and later chronicler of Alabama Methodism, would record thus:

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The headwaters of Cowikee, Upintolocco, and Big Uchee Creeks are close together, and thereabout is a most beautiful region of country. A settlement was attempted there by adventurous white men, while yet the savage roamed and hunted in that region. The very year of the savage outbreak, the year 1836, John McTyeire, of Barnwell District, South Carolina, sought him out a possession in that lonely land, and by the year 1838 he, with his household, was domiciled beside his own deadening and clearing. Others were there as soon, and a community at once existed. A preaching place was established by the Methodists and a Methodist Society was organized there at the beginning, and, in the on-going of things, Uchee Chapel was built; and there a Methodist Church has flourished since. John McTyeire, the father of Bishop Holland N. McTyeire, John B. Tate, Joel Hurt, Henry Hurt, William Threadgill, and their families, and others constituted that flourishing Methodist Society. The little village of Uchee is one of the loveliest spots in the original County of Russell.⁹

Other early Russell County families recorded in this congregation but not mentioned in the above account were those of Col. Wilkins Smith and Nimrod Long.

The Uchee settlement was not actually a town, but a collection of homesteads that were arranged along the old Federal Road that wound westward through the County from Columbus. Probably the earliest structure still standing there is the old stagecoach house, a two-storey enclosed dogtrot estimated to have been built about 1839; this eventually became a residence of L. Scott Johnson, a master carpenter whose handiwork has endured to make Uchee an outpost of Greek Revival craftsmanship.

Mr. Johnson is reported to have been serving the community as Postmaster in 1855¹⁰, but he was also building. About 1857 he built the Greek Revival Threadgill-Williamson house that sits across the road from Uchee Church, which was itself finished several years later. During this same period he also built the nearby Good Hope Baptist Church, a beautiful structure very like the Uchee Methodist in its Greek Revival form and proportions. Good Hope was destroyed by a storm in 1990; its facade and first several bays were reconstructed and survive as a monument.

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Based on records reported by Peter Brannon at the Centennial celebration in 1938¹¹, Uchee Methodist Church continued to thrive and was the site of a number of Conference gatherings over the years. Quarterly conference meetings were held at Uchee Church regularly during the 1890s and into the early years of the 20th century "and periodically from then on". Mr. Brannon suggests that the roads could not have been very good in the earlier years, but that the mid-summer sessions were definitely held there; "[p]robably the roads were better, perhaps the crops were laid by and the conditions were propitious."¹²

After 1980 the original floor plan of the church was altered: the original two aisles and somewhat separated rear section, originally for the black worshippers, were changed to a central aisle pattern, and the orientation of the pulpit reversed.¹³ In 1980 there were other alterations to the building as described above, most notably the replacement of the front and rear central window sash with plate glass.

Another local family very involved with Uchee Methodist Church since the early days is the Persons family. When, in the mid-1980s, the church's oldest member, Mrs. Frank Persons, was no longer able to get to the church for services and to supervise its maintenance, the congregation disbanded and the church was closed.¹⁴ As noted above, however, the former membership solicitously watches over the building and maintains it as well as possible under the present circumstances.

Uchee Church merits a biographical footnote as the home church of the family of Holland Nimmons McTyeire, Bishop of Alabama and first President of Vanderbilt University. Bishop McTyeire came to Russell County and the Uchee settlement with his parents from the Barnwell District of South Carolina in 1836 when he was 12; as noted above, his father was among the founders of the Methodist community in Uchee and the most diligent of its supporters. The Bishop received his college education in Virginia and joined the Virginia conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1845. In 1846 he returned to Alabama, after which time he began a series of appointments in the south, one of which took him to New Orleans for a ten-year pastorate. He was awarded an honorary doctorate in divinity by Emory College in 1858. During the Civil War he was in Montgomery as pastor of the Court Street Methodist Church, and in 1866 he was elected a Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He subsequently became the first President of Vanderbilt University and died in Nashville in 1887.¹⁵

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Notes

¹D. Gregory Jeane & Douglas Clare Purcell, eds., *The Architectural Legacy of the Lower Chattahoochee Valley in Alabama and Georgia*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1978, p. 103.

²Discussion of other Russell County properties based on the 1989-90 survey of the unincorporated County: original forms and photographs in Eufaula with the Historic Chattahoochee Commission.

³*Ibid.*, Resource No. 108.

⁴*Ibid.*, Resource No. 251.

⁵Marion Elias Lazenby, "The Work Advances in East Alabama," chapter 28 of *History of Methodism in Alabama and West Florida*; Nashville: North Alabama Conference and Alabama-West Florida Conference of the Methodist Church, 1960 (reprint), p. 215. Original publication information not available.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Anson West, *A History of Methodism in Alabama*, Commission on Archives and History of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, reprinted by The Reprint Co., Spartanburg, S.C., 1983, pp. 497-98. Original publication in Nashville: Methodist-Episcopal Church South, 1893, p. 493. The Mission membership figure is also given by Peter Brannon (see Note 9), p. 5, and repeated by Lazenby; it is Brannon who notes that the Uchee Mission "included several churches," although he does not name them specifically.

⁸Peter Brannon, "Through the Years: Uchee and the Methodist Church There," 1938 typescript based on his speech for the Centennial celebration, p. 1; collection of John T. Smith. Also mentioned in "The Centennial Home Coming: Uchee Church, Russell County, Alabama, July 31, 1939," unattributed typescript in the collection of John T. Smith, p. 2. The log church was probably somewhat south of the present building.

⁹West, *op. cit.*, pp. 497-98. This passage is quoted in subsequent histories of the Methodist Church in Alabama.

¹⁰Brannon, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹¹See Note 8 above.

¹²Brannon, *op. cit.*, p. 6

¹³For a drawing of the original floor plan, see D. Gregory Jeane & Douglas Clare Purcell, *op. cit.*, p. 103 (copy attached to this nomination).

¹⁴Personal communication from Amy Persons, Mrs. Persons' granddaughter.

¹⁵Thomas McAdory Owen, *Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, Vol. IV. Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Co., 1978, pp. 1140-41.

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Bibliography

The primary source of information about the Uchee Methodist Church was the collection of John T. Smith of Uchee, a Russell County historian who has many materials related to the Church where his family were members from early days. Among the specific sources used are:

Peter Brannon, "Through the Years: Uchee and the Methodist Church There," a 1938 unpublished typescript based on Mr. Brannon's address on the occasion of the Centennial Celebration.

"The Centennial Home Coming: Uchee Church, Russell County, Alabama, July 31, 1939," an unattributed typescript of an address on the same occasion, mostly related to the growth of Methodism on the Alabama frontier and touching on the Uchee Church.

Copy of a chapter from Marion Elias Lazenby, *History of Methodism in Alabama and West Florida*, Chapter 28, "The Work Advances in East Alabama." Nashville: North Alabama and Alabama-West Florida Conferences of the Methodist Church, 1960.

Copy of a chapter from Anson West, *History of Methodism in Alabama*, Chapter XXI, "The Further Enlargement and Advancement of the Work of Methodism in Alabama." Commission on Archives and History of the Alabama-West Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1983; originally published in Nashville: Methodist-Episcopal Church South, 1893.

Another architectural portrait of the building is provided by D. Gregory Jeane and Douglas Clare Purcell (Eds.), *The Architectural Legacy of the Lower Chattahoochee Valley in Alabama and Georgia*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1978.

For general information about other historic buildings in Russell County: the survey of unincorporated Russell County sponsored by the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, 1989-90.

Thomas McAdory Owen, *Dictionary of Alabama Biography*, Vol. IV. Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1978.

Conversations with John T. Smith and Amy Persons.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of Uchee Methodist Church are shown as parcel 4 on the accompanying portion of the Russell County tax map, indicating the property donated to the congregation by the Williamson estate for the construction of the church. The map number is 11-05-21-4.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries are drawn to include the land historically associated with the Uchee Methodist Church.

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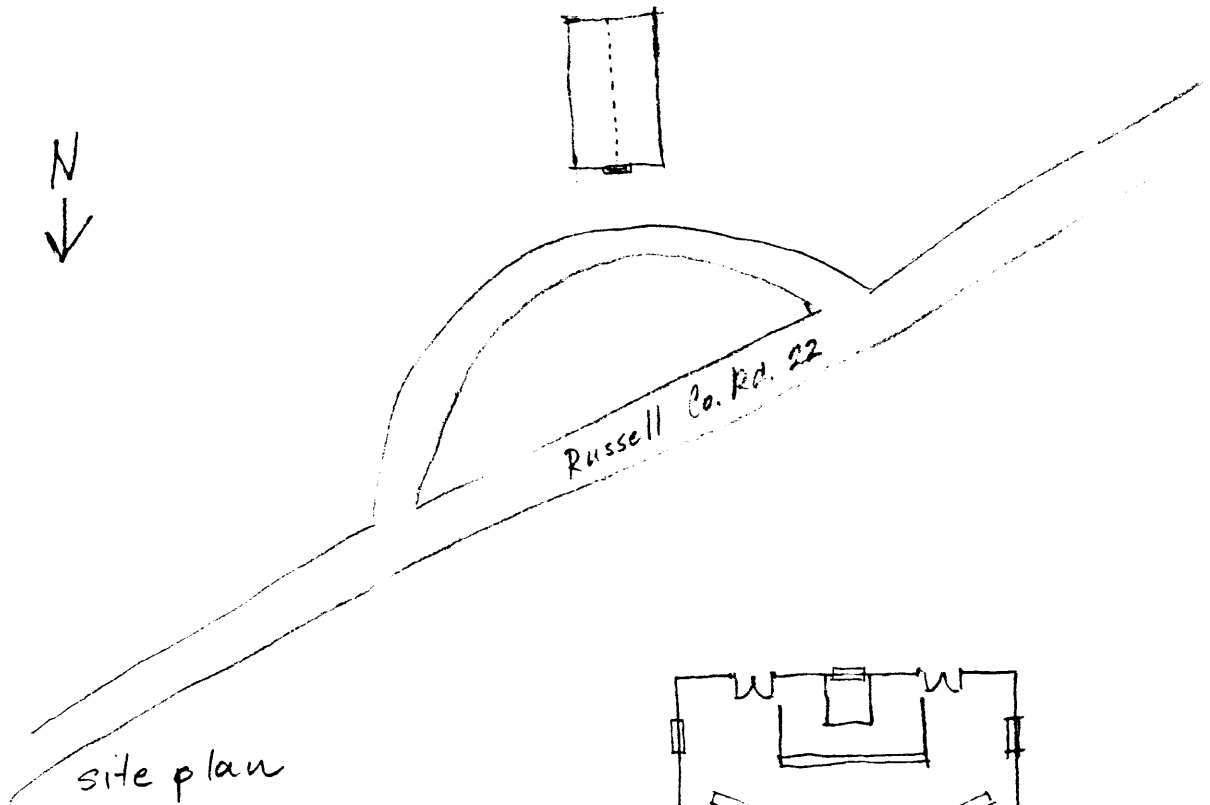
Section _____ Page 11
Photographs

Uchee Methodist Church
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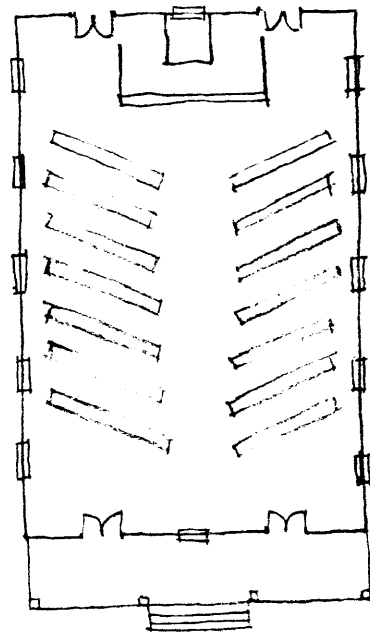
Description of Photographs:

1. Uchee Methodist Church from W., approaching along drive.
2. Facade, from N.
3. West elevation.
4. East elevation.
5. East elevation from slightly more to S., showing graves of neighboring cemetery. (Uchee Methodist's cemetery is behind the photographer).
6. Rear and SE corner.
7. Rear of building, from S.
8. View across front porch, from W.
9. NW front corner and W. side.
10. Detail of front gable and entablature; note dripping honey. Note also sag of board defining base of gable.
11. E. front door and center window, porch detail.
12. Rear doors.
13. Window detail.
14. Interior looking S. from front end toward pulpit.
15. Interior looking N. from pulpit toward front doors.
16. Pulpit and balustrade, detail.
17. Front door, interior, detail.
18. Interior mouldings and facings, detail.
19. Moulding detail at center front, showing former location of platform or dais.
20. View from front porch looking N., old trees, County Road 22.

All photographs February, 1995; Linda Nelson. Negatives on file with the Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery.



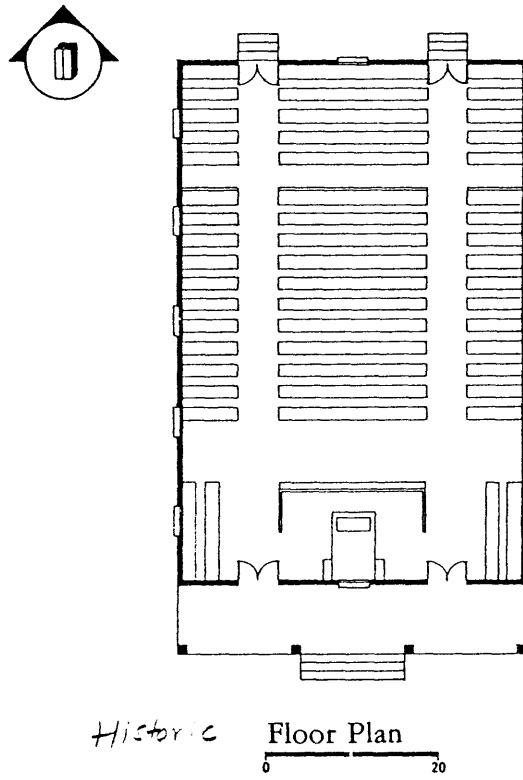
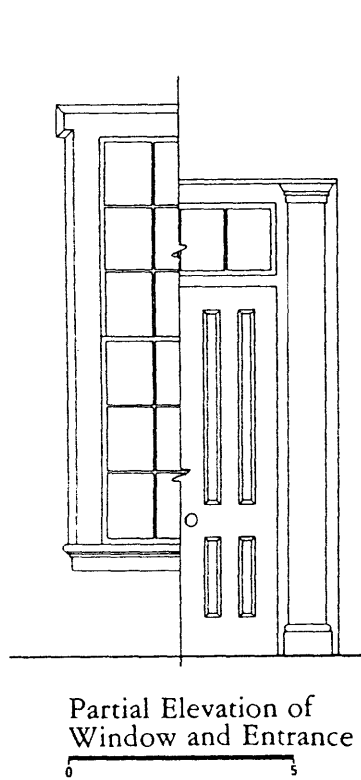
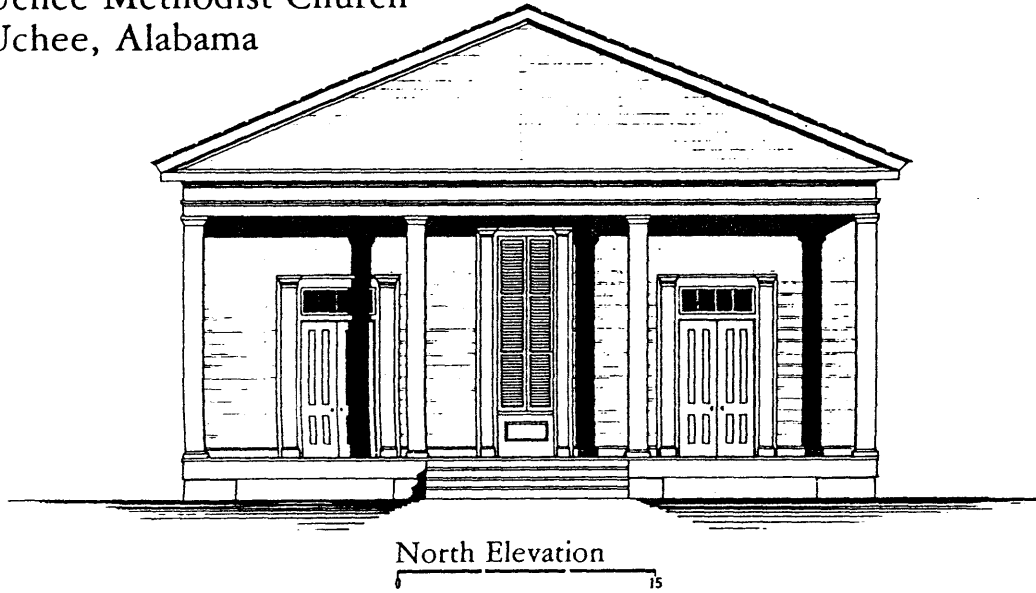
site plan
not to scale



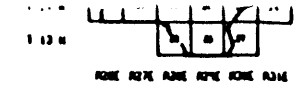
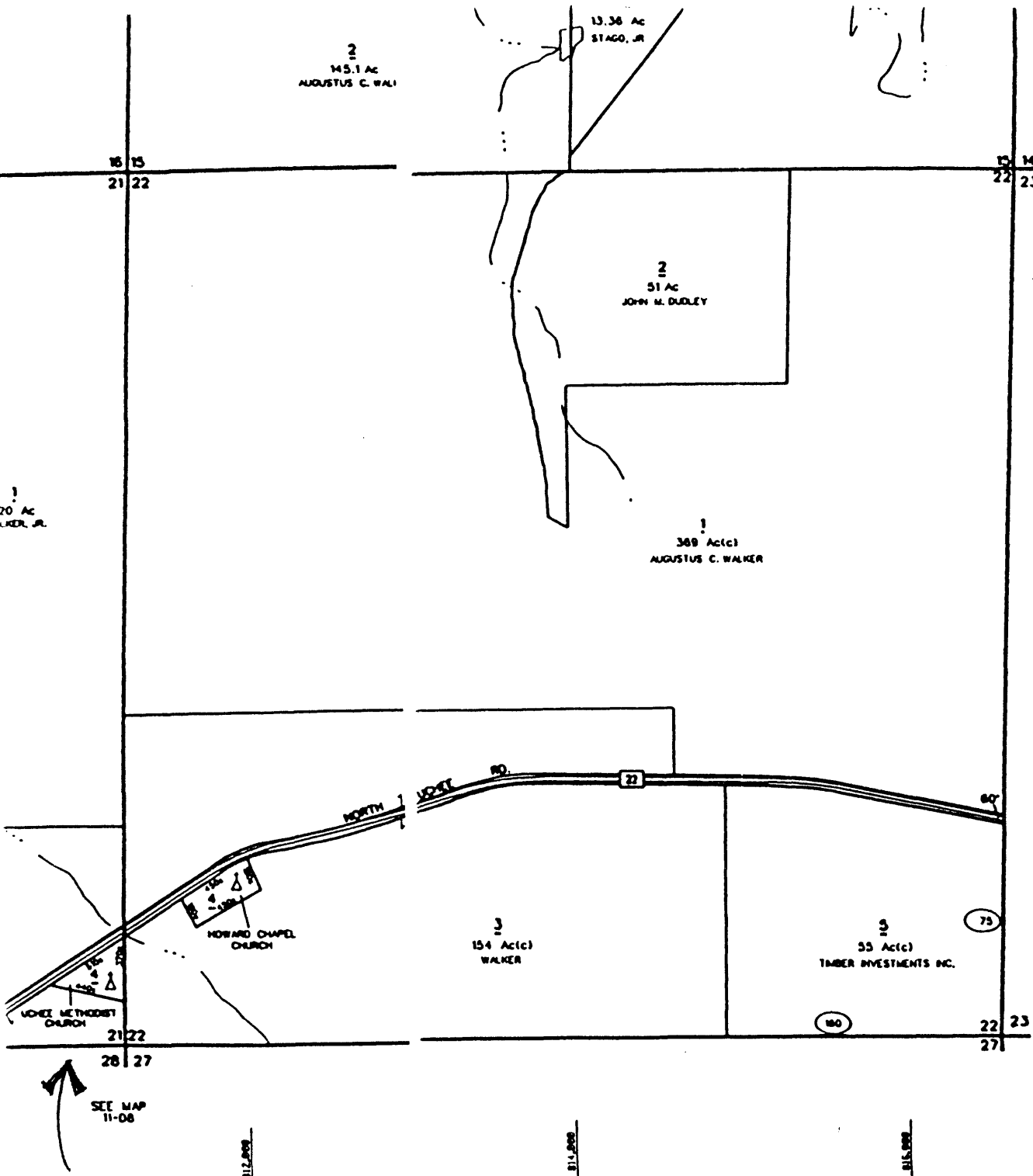
Current Floor Plan
not to scale

Uchee Methodist Church
Russell County, Alabama

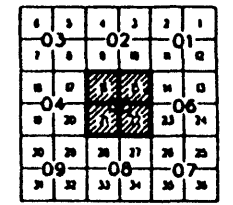
FIGURE 23
Uchee Methodist Church
Uchee, Alabama



Taken from *The Architectural Legacy of the Lower Chattahoochee Valley in Alabama*
by D. Gregory Jones & Douglas Purcell



TOWNSHIP LOCATOR



SUB-SHEET INDEX

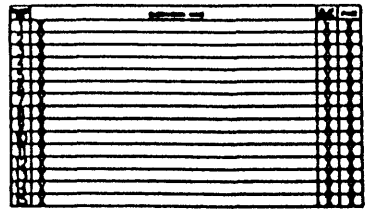


LEGEND

- STATE LINE ----- AREA (FROM DEED) 10.5 AC
- COUNTY LINE ----- AREA (CALCULATED) 10.5 AC(c)
- CITY LIMIT LINE ----- DIMENSION (FROM DEED) "
- TOWNSHIP LINE ----- DIMENSION (SCALE) "
- SECTION LINE ----- INTERSTATE HIGHWAY
- PROPERTY LINE ----- U.S. HIGHWAY
- ROAD R/W ----- STATE HIGHWAY
- ROAD TRAVEL PATH ----- COUNTY HIGHWAY
- PRIVATE ROAD OR TRAIL ----- COUNTY HIGHWAY BY NUMBERING
- RAILROAD R/W ----- ROADS OR STREETS BY NAME
- WATER ----- PARCEL NUMBER 15 15.001
- LANDHOOK ----- SUB. LOT NUMBER 29
- ORIGINAL SUB. LOT LINE ----- MAP BLOCK NUMBER (WHERE APPLICABLE) 2
- MAJOR TRANSMISSION LINES ----- MAP BLOCK LIMIT (WHERE APPLICABLE)
- CONFLICT ----- MAP BLOCK TICK (WHERE APPLICABLE)
- CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, CEM., AIRPORTS, GOVT. LAND, ETC. BY NAME ----- SUB. BLOCK NUMBER 17
- SECTION CORNERS ----- 2 | 1 | 12
- STATE PLANE COORDINATES -----

SECTION 15, 16, 21, 22
TOWNSHIP 16 NORTH RANGE 27 EAST

57-11-05
MAP NUMBER



MAP TO BE USED FOR TAX PURPOSES ONLY - NOT TO BE USED FOR CONVEYANCE



SEE MAP 11-08

SEE MAP 11-08

Lovei Methodist Church, Russell Co., AL

tax map number: 11-05-21-4