

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mount Ararat Baptist Church
other names/site number Mount Ararat Missionary Baptist Church

2. Location

street & number 1920 Slayden Avenue, Ensley N/A not for publication
city or town Birmingham N/A vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35224

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] March 3, 2005
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Office, Alabama Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Danrel J. Visker 4/19/05

Mount Ararat Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Birmingham Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
RELIGIOUS: church

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
RELIGIOUS: church

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation Concrete; brick
walls Brick
roof Asphalt Shingle
other Metal; Wood; Glass

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

See continuation sheets.

Mount Ararat Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History
Ethnic Heritage: African American

Period of Significance

1956-1963

Significant Dates

1958, 1963

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rayfield, Wallace, architect

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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
- Other

Name of repository: Birmingham Historical Society, Birmingham Public Library

Mount Ararat Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately one acre

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

1	<u>16</u>	<u>508540</u>	<u>3708570</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

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 Carroll Van West, with earlier material by Linda Nelson and Marjorie White
organization Center for Historic Preservation date March 20, 2004
street & number Middle Tennessee State University—Box 80 telephone 615-898-2947
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Mount Ararat Baptist Church (Rev. Gabriel McCray)
street & number 1920 Slayden Avenue telephone 205-787-5841
City Ensley state Alabama zip code 35224

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Jefferson Co., AL

VII. Description

Mount Ararat Baptist Church, a restrained Gothic Revival design by African-American architect Wallace Rayfield, sits on a landscaped lot in the Ensley suburb, west of downtown Birmingham, Alabama, overlooking Highway 269. It is a cross-gabled church originally built in 1929 but veneered in smooth varitone red brick in 1950. It has a concrete foundation and a multi-gable asphalt shingle roof.

The gabled front of the east façade has incorporated an east tower interrupting the gable slope and comprising about one-fourth of the facade, rising barely above the eaves with a very low-angled hip roof. The church has a five-bay symmetrical façade with central double-door entry, flanked by rectangular flat-arched windows; outer bays contain same-size windows with triangular overlights, suggesting the Gothic style. The entry bay is round-arched with triple rowlock head and blind tympanum, and the doors are now commercial-style metal-framed glass, added for security c. 1990. The entry is eight concrete steps up from the sidewalk. The metal railing is c. 1950. At the balcony level of the façade are two smaller rectangular windows stacked above the lower ones beside the entry. Near the top of the tower is an occluded oculus, now with a small louvered vent in the middle of it.

The north and south elevations are similar. Both elevations consist of seven window bays, the three middle ones somewhat wider than the others and occupying the slightly projecting crossing bays. All windows have the triangular overlights, which contain the remnants of earlier stained glass. The main windows are now metal-framed sash with green-tinted stippled glass, c. 1953. There are two like vestibule windows on the sides, and a final drop-roof bay at the rear with smaller rectangular jack-arched windows. The crossing side bays also have occluded oculi with inserted vents. On the north elevation the last bay contains a rear entry with concrete block steps, iron railing and shed metal awning.

The west elevation contains a large educational and administrative building addition, c. 1953, a brick two-story wing that rests on a full concrete basement. The north and south sections of this wing are composed of four symmetrical bays, with four paned casement windows. On the north elevation, a rear entry, with a replacement metal door, c. 1990, comprises the western most bay. On the east elevation, a similar metal entry is located on the basement level, underneath the second most westward bay. A metal awning, c. 1980, is over this rear entry. The rear wall of the Sunday School addition contains three bays with metal-frame casement windows on the two-story brick level while four bays, of one-over-one casement windows are on the basement level. This fenestration indicates the number of classrooms on each floor; the Sunday School addition also includes men's and women's restrooms.

The sanctuary is quite large, with a central and two side aisles creating four blocks of pews. The pews on the sloped wood floor are natural wood with white side pieces. There is a rear balcony extending deep into the room and supported on metal poles, with a paneled bulkhead front; seating here is on folding metal chairs. The ceiling is essentially barreled and covered with suspended acoustical tiles, c. 1953, while the light fixtures are traditional Gothic lanterns, c. 1929. The walls are gypsum board with a painted wood paneled wainscot to the window-sill level; the floor is carpeted but the hardwood floor remains underneath.

The pulpit and choir are arranged in a traditional manner. Several pews are turned perpendicular to the rest with the dais between; the raked choir area with its theatre seats is behind the dais, recessed between the anteroom walls. The pulpit is central and chairs for the clergy sit behind it; these repeat the dark-with-white-trim style of the pews. The baptistery is here beneath the pulpit, which has to be opened for baptisms. At the very front behind the choir and above its paneled back wall is a painting of Mount Ararat beneath a rainbow.

The church meets the registration requirements for church buildings in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS. It retains a high degree of integrity in setting, location, materials, design workmanship, and association to its period of significance from 1956 to 1963. The addition of the educational building in c. 1953 to the rear of the building does not lessen the building's sense of place and time, since the addition's mass, style, and materials do not overwhelm or detract from the architectural quality of the older building. It also means that all of the major elements of the building are 50 years old as the building evolved between 1929 and 1953.

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Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Jefferson Co., AL

Archaeological component

Although no formal archaeological survey has been conducted, the potential for subsurface materials exists.

VIII. Significance

Mount Ararat Baptist Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and the related themes of Social History and Ethnic Identity as a locally significant property associated with the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham from 1956 to 1963.

Baptists associated with the earlier Shiloh Baptist Church of Ensley established Mt. Ararat Missionary Baptist Church on this hill in the Sherman Heights section of the Ensley neighborhood in c. 1915, purchasing the property from the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company (TCI). The property is on the western boundaries of the TCI's Ensley works. Rev. A. J. Williams was the first minister. Their first church, erected in 1916, burned after a lightning strike in 1929. The congregation then hired African-American architect Wallace Rayfield to design a larger and more architecturally distinctive sanctuary, a frame Gothic-styled building, at the same location as the first church.

Although reported dates differ somewhat, the church was remodeled in c. 1953 (the dedication stone says "reerected") with addition to the balcony space and destruction of the top of the tower and filling in of the façade to the tower line. A new brick veneer was added to the earlier frame building and the education and administrative building was added to the rear of the church.

The 1950s changes came under the leadership of Rev. John H. Glover, who was the pastor from 1936 to 1973. Rev. Glover expanded the church's education mission and community outreach programs. He wanted the church's new distinguished brick exterior to emphasize the stability and achievement of the congregation. African Americans gathered for meetings in the large open sanctuary of Mount Ararat Baptist. Rev. Glover arrived as a New Deal reformer and encouraged a spirit of activism in all aspects of church life. With the creation of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights in 1956, several members of the congregation became active in the Civil Rights Movement. In its 1958 annual report, the ACMHR listed the church among a number of others "where we have met—so many times" and where the doors had been "generously opened for us." In this listing, the ACMHR asserted that "This is a people's movement—of all the people. Nothing stops the people from enthusiastically coming each night to sing, pray and to give. These are Mass heroes." Historians of the Civil Rights Movement have long discussed the intersection of faith and activism in the mass meetings held at various Birmingham churches. Historian and Baptist minister Wilson Fallin, Jr., emphasized:

The influence of the African-American church and its peculiar culture on the ACMHR stands out most vividly in the organization's weekly mass meetings. These meetings were essentially African-American church worship services. The meetings began with a thirty-minute devotional service made up of prayers, spirituals, and meter hymns, followed by singing by the ACMHR choir. The presider, usually ACMHR vice-present, the Reverend Edward Gardner, offered brief remarks. A local supporting pastor delivered a sermon. President Shuttlesworth then made some remarks and the ushers took up the offering. The meetings were very emotional with much shouting. . . The emotionalism of the mass meetings, as in an African-American church, provided not only emotional release but also the courage to fight the forces of segregation in a hostile environment. (Fallin, 15-16)

Furthermore, the mass meetings were important tools of oral communication for a society that had few other public options, since open discussion of civil rights strategies over the airwaves or in print could provoke severe reactions from white extremists. Furthermore, activists knew that to reach the core working-class residents of their neighborhoods, meetings in the churches were much more effective venues than print or electronic media. It was thus at the churches where activists, often a combination of local ministers, community leaders, and the occasional visitor from another Civil Rights hotbed, relayed the important messages and key strategies to be debated and carried out. The churches were safe havens in an often hostile environment.

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Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Jefferson Co., AL

But the churches were often threatened with violence. Whites made a direct threat against Mount Ararat Baptist in c. 1958, when after one Monday night meeting of the ACMHR, the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in the front yard of the church. Rev. Glover stopped allowing the church to be used for the ACMHR meetings.

In the early 1960s, Glover's decision did nothing to deter the congregation's activism and members continued to play an important role. According to an undated document prepared by Victor Blackledge, Jr., in the mid-1990s, Mose Palmer, Dollet Alexander, Ulyses Williams, Robert Tracis, Eugene Battle, Alberta Williams, Brazzie Smith, Nora Bell Herd, Velma Bush, Alberta Thompson, Mable Alexander, and Ardella Williams were all involved in the Movement. In 1963, young members of the congregation, such as Gwendolyn Odom, Victor Blackledge, Jr., Patricia Threatt-Baker, and James Black, Jr. participated in the Project C marches of 1963. Albert Bry (pastor from 1988-2000), James Williams, and Victor Blackledge, Jr., were jailed for their participation in the April 1963 demonstrations. With the support of Rev. Glover, these adult and teenage members of the congregation met at the church and discussed ways that they could contribute to the demonstrations from 1958 to 1963.

Mount Ararat Baptist Church meets the registration requirements for Criterion A as a strategy center that was locally significant in the activities of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights as planning meetings took place there related to the development and expansion of ACMHR activities and the Project C demonstrations of 1963.

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Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Jefferson Co., AL

IX. Bibliography

Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) Meeting and Police Department Records, Eugene ("Bull") Connor Papers, Birmingham Public Library Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Birmingham, Alabama.

Annual Report, 1958, Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Birmingham: ACMHR, 1958.

Blackledge, Victor, Jr. "Historical Sketch of the Mount Ararat Baptist Church." Unpublished typescript, c. 1989, Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Birmingham, AL.

Fallin, Wilson, Jr. "Rock Solid Faith: African American Church Life and Culture in 1956 Birmingham." Marjorie L. White and Andrew M. Manis, eds. *Birmingham Revolutionaries: The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000. 7-18.

Hendricks, Lola. Interviews with Marjorie L. White. 1999. Birmingham Historical Society.

Fieldwork notes, July 23, 2003. In possession of the author.

Mount Ararat Baptist Church Files, Birmingham Historical Society Civil Rights Collection-Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Civil Rights Churches Files, Birmingham Historical Society, Birmingham, Alabama. Files include Board of Equalization Records, City Directory Trace, and Photographs.

White, Marjorie L., *A Walk to Freedom-The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Movement for Human Rights.* Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society, 1998.

X. Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated boundaries of Mt. Ararat Missionary Baptist Church at 1920 Slayden Avenue, Ensley, are represented by Block 17, Sherman Heights, as noted on the attached Jefferson County Tax Map 01-21-36-1, Sections NE ¼ 36, Township 17 South, Range 4 West. The boundaries contain all of the historic property significantly associated with the Mt. Ararat Missionary Baptist Church.

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Photographs Page

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Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Jefferson Co., AL

Mount Ararat Baptist Church
Birmingham, Jefferson Co., AL
Photos by Carroll Van West (exterior)
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
July 2003
Photos by Michelle Crunk (interior)
Birmingham Historical Society
January 2000

Negatives: Alabama Historical Commission
468 South Perry
Montgomery, AL

East façade, facing west
1 of 13

East façade and south elevation, facing northwest
2 of 13

Dedication market, facing west
3 of 13

North elevation, facing south
4 of 13

North elevation, Sunday School addition, facing south
5 of 13

West elevation, facing northeast
6 of 13

South elevation, facing north
7 of 13

Sanctuary, facing southwest
8 of 13

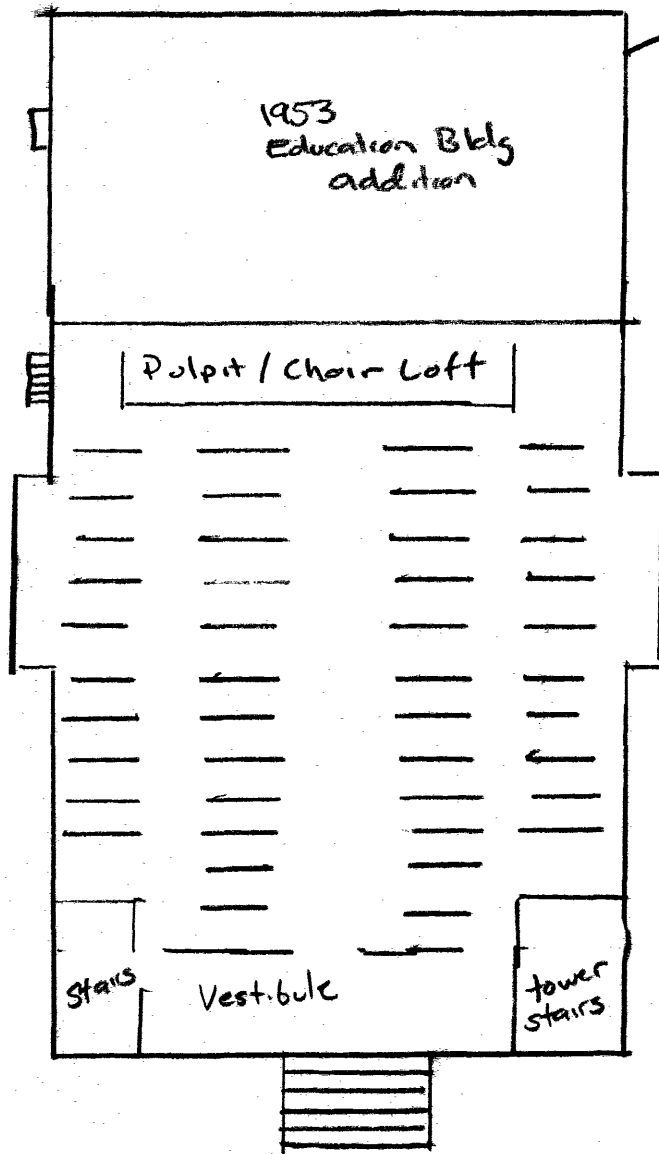
Sanctuary, facing west
9 of 13

Sanctuary, facing northeast
10 of 13

Sanctuary, facing east
11 of 13

Pulpit, facing west
12 of 13

Balcony, facing south
13 of 13



Basement entrance

1953
Education Bldg
addition

Pulpit / Choir Loft

1929, brick veneer
in 1953

Parking

stairs

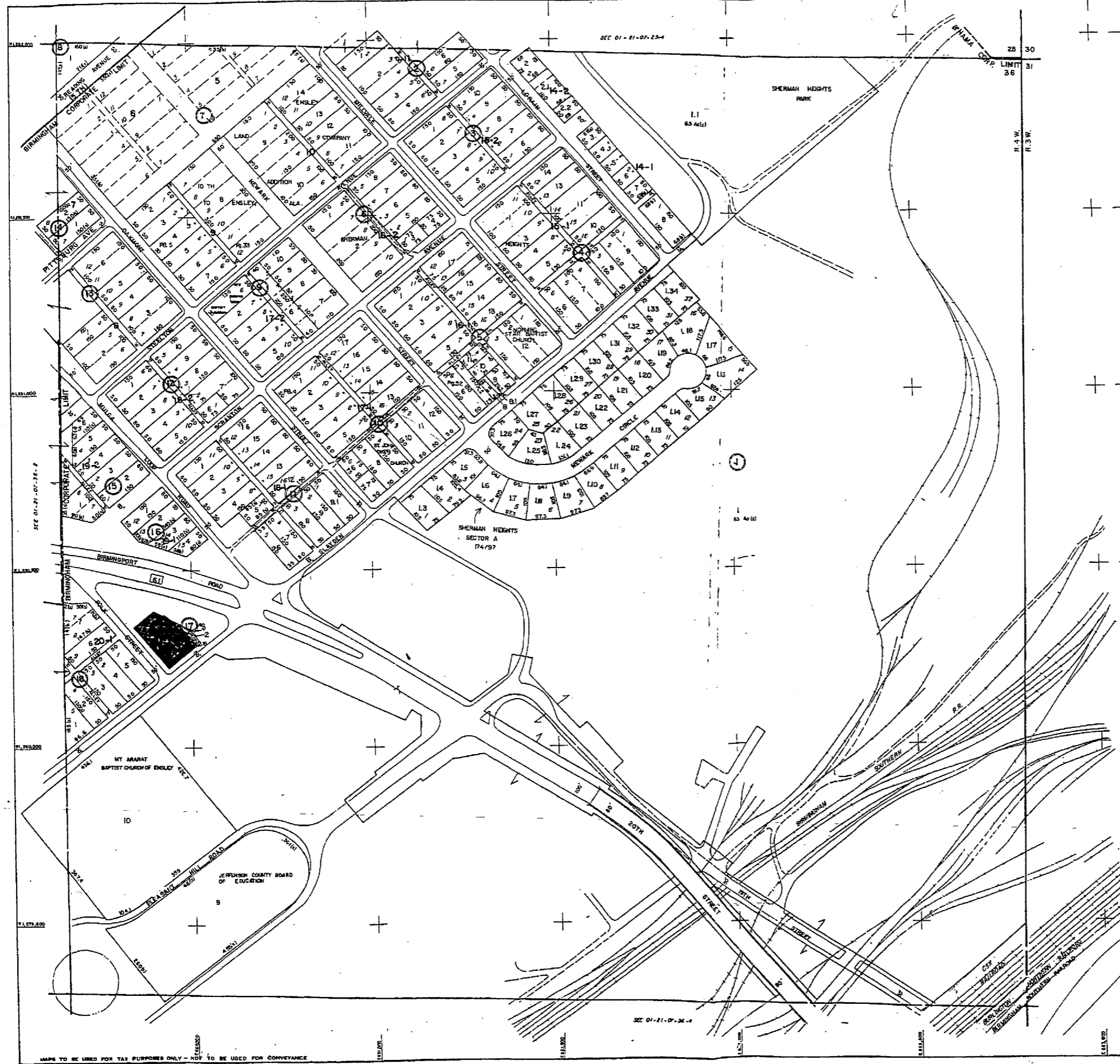
Vestibule

tower
stairs

N →
NTS: 2004

Slagden Avenue

Mount Ararat Baptist Church
1920 Slagden Avenue, Ensley
Birmingham AL 35224



Mount Ararat Baptist
Church
1920 Slayden Avenue
Ensley

OWNERSHIP MAP
COUNTY OF
JEFFERSON
PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION
OF THE
STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
AD VALOREM TAX DIVISION

PREPARED BY
COLE-LAYER-TRUMBULL CO.
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

TAX MAPS DIVISION
SCALE: 1"=200'
DATE OF MAP: 11-11-77 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY: 8-18-74

COUNTY LOCATOR

TOWNSHIP LOCATOR
(INDEX TO 1"=400' & 1"=200' MAPPING)

8	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
04	05	06	07	08	09
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36

SUB-SHEET INDEX

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26-1	26-2	26-3
26-4	26-5	26-6

LEGEND

STATE LINE	AREA (FROM DEED)	10.5 AC
COUNTY LINE	AREA (CALCULATED)	10.5 AC (±)
CORPORATION LINE	DIMENSION (FROM DEED)	10.5
DISTRICT LINE	DIMENSION (SCALED)	10.5 (±)
ROAD R/W	WATER	
TRAVELED ROAD	INTERSTATE HIGHWAY	
RAILROAD R/W	U.S. HIGHWAY	
PROPERTY LINE	STATE HIGHWAY	
LAND HOOD	COUNTY HIGHWAY	
INTERIOR TRACT LINE OR ORIGINAL TRACT LINE	ROADS OR STREETS	BY NAME
SUBDIVISION LOT NUMBER	MAJOR TRANSFEROR LINES	POWER OF ATTORNEY
MURCEL NUMBER	SECTION CORNERS	211
BLOCK LIMIT (WHERE APPLICABLE)	STATE PLANE COORDINATES	1117
OWNER'S MAP BLOCK (WHERE APPLICABLE)		2
CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, CLUBS, FIELDS, AIRPORTS, GOVERNMENT LANDS, ETC.	BY NAME	

REVISIONS
CHANGES OR ADDITIONS

DATE	BY

SECTIONS NE 1/4 35
TSP: 17 SOUTH, RANGE 4 WEST
01-21-36-1
MAP NUMBER

MAPS TO BE USED FOR TAX PURPOSES ONLY - NOT TO BE USED FOR CONVEYANCE
COLE-LAYER-TRUMBULL COMPANY