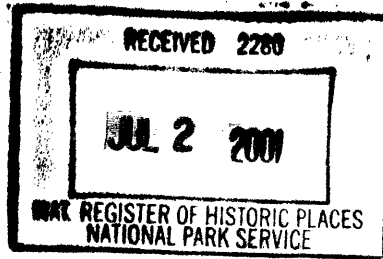


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Thankful Baptist Church
other names/site number Princeton Free Will Baptist Church

2. Location

street & number 104 Water Street N/A not for publication
city or town Johnson City N/A vicinity
state Tennessee code TN county Washington code 179 zip code 37601

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.)

Herbert L. Hays 6/26/01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee 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:)

Elsan W. Beall 8/9/01
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Thankful Baptist Church
Name of Property

Washington County, TN
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	0	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.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious facility; church school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Gothic Revival Influence

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE; BRICK

walls BRICK

roof Tin, Asphalt

other METAL

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets.

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic heritage: African-American
Social History
Religion

Period of Significance

1912-1951

Significant Dates

1912

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Janes, Hobart K., of Janes Construction Company, Johnson City, Tenn., builder

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

- Checkboxes for documentation types: preliminary determination, listed in National Register, etc.

Primary location of additional data:

- Checkboxes for repository types: State Historic Preservation Office, Federal Agency, University, etc.

Name of repository:

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Thankful Baptist Church
Name of Property

Washington County, TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

Johnson City 198 SW

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 378720 4020020
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

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
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date January 26, 2001
street & number PO Box 80, MTSU telephone 615.898.5877
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 Princeton Free Will Baptist Church (Rev. Robert Self, contact person)
street & number 104 Water Street telephone 423.929.8718
city or town Johnson City state TN zip code 37601

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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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

VII. DESCRIPTION

Thankful Baptist Church is at 104 Water Street, Johnson City, Tennessee. The church building is located on a small rectangular lot, between the bluff of Knob Hill (or Science Hill) to the east and the four-lane road of Water Street (a four lane road) to the west. A small parking lot is to the south of the building, while a scrap metal yard is to the north. Built in 1912, the two and one-half story brick church is capped with a gable roof covered in asphalt shingles, with a full basement brick foundation. Two castellated Gothic Revival towers at the southeast and southwest corners highlight the building.

The south facade has a gable-front entrance, flanked by two and one-half story brick castellated Gothic Revival towers topped by asphalt flat roofs. The towers are similar, with symmetrically placed nine-over-nine frosted glass double-hung sash windows, each with a concrete lintel, on the first story. The window pattern is repeated on the second story, although the windows are shorter than on the first story. A concrete belt course is located above this. Due to the property's hillside location, however, only the southwest tower has a bay on the ground, or raised basement, floor. A wood panel door, with a three-light window, provides outside access to the basement. A central concrete staircase, divided into two parts by a 1912 metal railing, leads to an a double-arched entrance, where two wood paneled entrance doors are located in the southeast and southwest corners of the towers. On the southeast side of the central concrete staircase is a handicapped access ramp, installed circa 1990. Also at the southeast corner is the building's cornerstone, which reads "Thankful Baptist Church 1912." The central portion of the first floor has a three-part window, which has been boarded up. The boarded windows are visible from inside; the fiberboard serves to protect the outside windows from damage. On the second floor is a four-part fixed window, composed of twelve frosted glass lights, which share a concrete lintel. The tip of the gable is pedimented, with the horizontal molding supported by Italianate-influenced curved wood brackets. Above this section, the gable is faced with wood shingles.

The southeast tower, on its east elevation, has two symmetrical openings, both with concrete lintels. A boarded up entrance door is on the first story, while a nine-over-nine frosted glass double-hung sash window is on the second story. The primary section of the east elevation has six symmetrical window openings, which have been boarded over to protect them from vandalism, but judging from the interior of the sanctuary, the original nine-over-nine frosted light double-hung sash windows are intact underneath the fiberboard. Likewise, the door is not missing, merely boarded over. Due to the placement of the church adjacent to a hill, this elevation is only one story on the exterior.

The north elevation has bracketed eaves along the raking cornice and two asymmetrically placed window openings. The east opening is a nine-over-nine frosted glass double-hung sash window, with concrete lintel. The west window opening also has a concrete lintel, but it is a narrower six-over-six frosted glass double-hung sash window. Contemporary photographs make it appear that the a small square concrete building, with a pebble stone veneer, has been added to the northwest corner of the elevation, but it is not attached to the building nor is it associated with the nominated property. Rather, it is a telephone company building that is immediately adjacent to the church on a different piece of property.

The west elevation has symmetrically placed openings, although some are boarded up or bricked in. All of the openings have a concrete lintel. The basement story has two extant openings out of an original six. The three northernmost openings have either been covered by a concrete staircase or bricked. The three

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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

southernmost openings contain more of their original appearance. One opening serves as the opening for the central heat and air system, installed circa 1990. On either side of this opening are six-over-six frosted glass, double-hung sash windows. At the northwest corner is a flight of concrete stairs with metal posts and railing, installed prior to 1950, that provides outside access to a wood door. The door has a single light transom and is situated at the northwest corner of the main story of the building. A metal coal chute is located at the northwest corner, basement level, of the elevation. The remaining five window openings of the main story have concrete lintels and are composed of nine-over-nine frosted glass, double-hung sash windows.

The two front doors open into small vestibules, from which double swinging wood doors, with a single centered light on each, provide access into the sanctuary. The seating area, classrooms, pulpit and offices of the sanctuary generally possess architectural integrity, with many original features still intact. These include the wood floors, wood six paneled doors, beaded board wainscoting, two-level wood pulpit and choir platform, and wood altar rail. To conserve electricity, the congregation installed a dropped ceiling of acoustical tiles and closed off access to the balcony circa 1990. The wood balcony was not removed and is believed to be largely intact behind the dropped ceiling. The staircase and the wood railing of the balcony remain in full view.

The original wood floor, which is covered by carpet, slopes to the pulpit area. Two sections of wood pews, with eleven pews in each row, flank a central aisle that leads from the entrance to the pulpit. The pulpit rests on an approximately three-foot-high vertical beaded board platform, and is accessible by flanking flights of three wood steps. Reached by flanking steps, the choir platform has a single level. Behind the choir platform is the baptismal pool, which is flanked by wood paneled doors that provide access to the baptismal pool. The baptismal pool dates to 1912, but the mural that adorns the pool, a portrayal of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus Christ, dates circa 1950 and was painted by an unknown African-American artist. A wood paneled door at the northwest corner leads to a storage area for the choir and a similar door at the northeast corner leads to the children's Sunday school room.

The basement retains much of its original spacing and its concrete walls and floor and its wood doors. A large central opening space was used for community meetings, Sunday school classes, and other fellowship functions. At the northwest end is the men's bathroom. Along the east wall are located three Sunday school classrooms and the women's lounge, which consists of two spaces, with the outer space serving as the lounge, while the inner space was where toilets and a sink were installed. The ceiling in the basement has been dropped so that the central heat and air units could be installed underneath the flooring of the sanctuary circa 1990.

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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

VIII. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1912, the Thankful Baptist Church (now the home of Princeton Free Will Baptist Church) in Johnson City (52,570, 1996 population), Washington County, Tennessee, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in the African-American ethnic heritage of Johnson City, especially in the areas of religion and social history. The turn-of-the-century brought economic and population growth to Johnson City. After the successful expansion of the Clinchfield Railroad through upper East Tennessee, the establishment of the National Soldiers Home (now Mountain Home Veterans Administration Center), and the creation of a state teachers college (now East Tennessee State University) in the first eleven years of the twentieth century, Johnson City experienced significant industrial and residential growth. To meet the needs of a much larger and wealthier congregation, in that a black middle class had been established in the city, the members of Thankful Baptist's congregation built an impressive new castellated Gothic Revival style brick church building in 1912.

With the new 1912 building came expanded programs for Sunday school education and for the congregation's musical ministry. Eventually the church would become famous for its singing groups, including the Senior Choir, the Gospel Chorus, the Junior Choir, and the programs of the all-male Chorus.

Background

The new building was the culmination of a 40-year campaign to build Baptist religious institutions for African Americans in upper East Tennessee, led by a former slave Baptist minister named Horace Leftwich and including George Phillips, William Jobe, and Lewis Parks. African-American church building activity in Johnson City dates to the Civil War era. In 1860, Washington County had 297 free black residents, the fourth highest number of free black residents of any Tennessee county. Whites also owned 952 slaves in the county, according to the 1860 census. Black missionary activity in the African-American community of Washington County dates to the years immediately following the Civil War. Three churches, the Disciples of Christ, the Missionary Baptists, and the A. M. E. Zion, were particularly active.

At the time of the Civil War, Johnson City was nothing more than a railroad stop known as Haynesville. Immediately before and after the war, it was variously called Johnson's Tank and Johnson's Depot. It received a charter as Johnson City in December 1869. According to a 1941 interview with early African-American Baptist preacher Horace Leftwich, the Disciples of Christ, A.M.E. Zion, and the Baptist congregations lacked the members and the money to build their own church buildings. Instead, during the 1870s, they shared an old log house on Roan Hill, now 1303 Buffalo Street, on what was then the southern outskirts of the town.

Reverend Leftwich was an important person in the development of African-American religious institutions in Johnson City. In 1941 he gave an account of his early life to Sarah Hunter Jackson of Johnson City. Born in slavery in Campbell County, Virginia, on January 30, 1846, Leftwich grew up in the ownership of Dr. John Nelson of Lynchburg, Virginia. He recalled that his father was a slave Baptist preacher, who brought up his family in the Baptist faith. The father could read, so Leftwich learned to read from him. Upon Nelson's death circa 1856, Leftwich witnessed the breakup of his family on a Lynchburg auction block. He and his mother were sold to a Charleston, South Carolina, resident named David Lafar; his two brothers and three sisters were sold to an Alabama plantation owner. With emancipation, Leftwich came to Johnson County,

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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

Tennessee, with a Lieutenant William McQueen. According to the 1860 census records, and various military records, William M. McQueen was 26 in 1860, living in Johnson County (in fact the only McQueens in Tennessee in 1860 resided in Johnson County), and he served in Co. G, as 1st Lieutenant, in the 13th Cavalry Regiment, U. S. A. How an emancipated slave from Charleston came to be connected with a Union cavalry officer from East Tennessee and ended up in Johnson County after the war is not clear. Leftwich left no account of how he got to Tennessee by July 1865. However, in his interview he gave his age at emancipation as 17, suggesting that he either was or considered himself to be emancipated in 1863. The 13th Cavalry U.S.A. organized in the fall of 1863 at Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, and moved to Camp Nelson, in Kentucky, for organization and training, being officially designated the 13th Cavalry on December 31, 1863. It served as a unit for the rest of the war and Leftwich, as a contraband, came to join the regiment and served until it disbanded.

Once in Johnson County, Leftwich found himself a member of a tiny, and scattered, African-American population. He married Charlotte Stover and started his family. "I began to think I wanted to be a Christian, but there was not a Baptist church among the colored people in Johnson or Carter or Washington Counties, or Sullivan or Greene," he told Sarah Hunter Jackson. So Leftwich and others set out to establish the Baptist church in the region. Leftwich appealed to white leaders of the Watauga Baptist Association and they appointed a white missionary, Reverend Andy Hyder, to organize congregations among the African Americans of upper East Tennessee. Hyder, helped by local black Baptists and another white missionary, Peter Guinn, sponsored by the Holston Baptist Association, organized congregations in Elizabethton and Jonesborough. The Jonesborough black Baptist congregation was the first in Washington County. It met in the basement of the white Baptist church. (Later known as Mill Springs Baptist Church, the congregation began to decline in the twentieth century and had disbanded by the mid-twentieth century.) Living in Elizabethton about 1870, he persuaded the elderly William Jobe from Johnson City to come and preach to blacks there, and later George Phillips from Jonesborough. Leftwich professed his Christianity and became the clerk and deacon of the Phillipi Baptist Church from 1871 to 1875, at which time he was licensed as a Baptist minister and became the pastor. Evidently in 1875 he joined other activists to organize what became Thankful Baptist Church in Johnson City, though the congregation may in some sense have existed as early as 1872, worshipping together with the Disciples of Christ and the A.M.E. Zion congregations in the log house on Roan Hill. Thankful Baptist is the oldest surviving African-American Baptist church in Washington County.

The earliest possible reference to Thankful Baptist Church in a recorded deed is an uncertain but probable one in an 1879 deed to property touching the bank of Brush Creek. Though the deed is confusing and defective in several respects, the property it conveys to two men adjoins, or possibly includes, "the lot of the Baptist Church." Its exact location is not clear, but it includes property that was later bought by Horace Leftwich in 1919 (which bounds the 1912 building here nominated on the north), and the "lot of the Baptist Church" seems to include the 1912 building or lie close to it. Everything points to Thankful as the Baptist church meant, the more so since there is no record that the white Baptist church ever owned property on Brush Creek. Evidently, Thankful had never registered a deed to that lot. Perhaps the church did not own it yet then. Perhaps it only had the owners' permission to use a building on it for worship.

From his auspicious beginnings in Washington County, Leftwich would enjoy a significant career as a Baptist minister and missionary. To his count, he helped to organize churches in Carter, Johnson, Sullivan, and Washington counties. He remarked to Sarah Hunter Jackson in 1941: "I, as Paul of old, with my hands

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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

I have labored and supported my family. I have walked the hills of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. I always returned to the place that I first trusted God and now I am old and worn out, broken in health [he was 95 years old at the time of the interview].” This is the only extant historic building in Washington County associated with Leftwich’s forty years of building religious institutions in the area.

The congregation at Thankful Baptist began with a mere six members—increasing to sixteen during Leftwich’s first year there—but the congregation grew as Johnson City expanded as a railroad town and industrial center in the late nineteenth century. In 1886, the congregation again acquired its property—meaning that somehow the property had been transferred from them between 1879 and 1886 (or that it was allowed to use a lot for church purposes), but local deed books are not clear on what happened. The 1886 deed clearly proves that the Missionary Baptist Church acquired the property, at a nominal sum of \$1.00. From 1880 to 1900, especially after the construction of a railroad line from Johnson City to mines at Cranberry, North Carolina and another line from the town to mines at Embreeville, the town grew as new industries and businesses located along the railroad line. Census records indicate that by 1890, 20 percent of the town’s population was African-American. Around this time, the congregation built a frame church building, with a tall steeple, to serve its needs (that building is not extant). In 1891-1893, the building served as a public school for Johnson City black youth.

In 1912 the congregation of Thankful Baptist erected the present building. Reverend A. H. Wilson was minister at this time. This new building set a standard for future African-American religious institutions in Johnson City. (St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church, NR 4/12/01) used the same builder and largely the same type of building in a similar architectural style when it built a new church in 1920. The twin castellated Gothic Revival towers created a large, architecturally impressive (although conservative in style) landmark within the black community, large enough to serve its growing number of members. The large basement space, accessible directly to the outside by an exterior door at the southwest corner of the church, provided a meeting place for various community groups.

The builder of the church was Hobart K. Janes of the Janes Construction Company in Johnson City. Although the architect is not known, the assumption is that the Janes Company, as builder, was also the designer of the building. Using a construction company, rather than an architect, may help to explain the generally conservative statement of the architectural style. Due to changes circa 1990, Thankful Baptist does not have quite the architectural significance found in the later St. Paul A.M.E. Zion Church. The many extant features of the interior distinguish St. Paul from the earlier Thankful Baptist Church. While both St. Paul and Thankful have similar Gothic Revival influences, especially evident in their dual towers, St. Paul’s interior has an extremely high degree of integrity in its interior design and craftsmanship. In the 1990s, the present owners of the Thankful Baptist Church building installed a dropped ceiling and closed the balcony, two improvements that cut heating bills but that lessened the architectural significance of the building.

In 1962 the congregation honored its 90th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of its beautiful church building with a celebration. In a pamphlet accompanying the celebration, the congregation reported 255 members, and stated that the church was “not only active in a program of Christian Evangelism but also active in all civic groups whose aims are a better community and a better world for Christ.”

Urban renewal and the widening of Water Street threatened the church in 1974. The congregation decided to move to a new location, and the modern Thankful Baptist Church building on Watauga Street opened in

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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

1975. However, the projected demolition of the older building never took place. In July 1977, the trustees of Thankful Baptist sold the 1912 building to the Princeton Free Will Baptist congregation, which has since maintained the building.

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Section number 9 Page 7

Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

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Section number 10 Page 8

Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

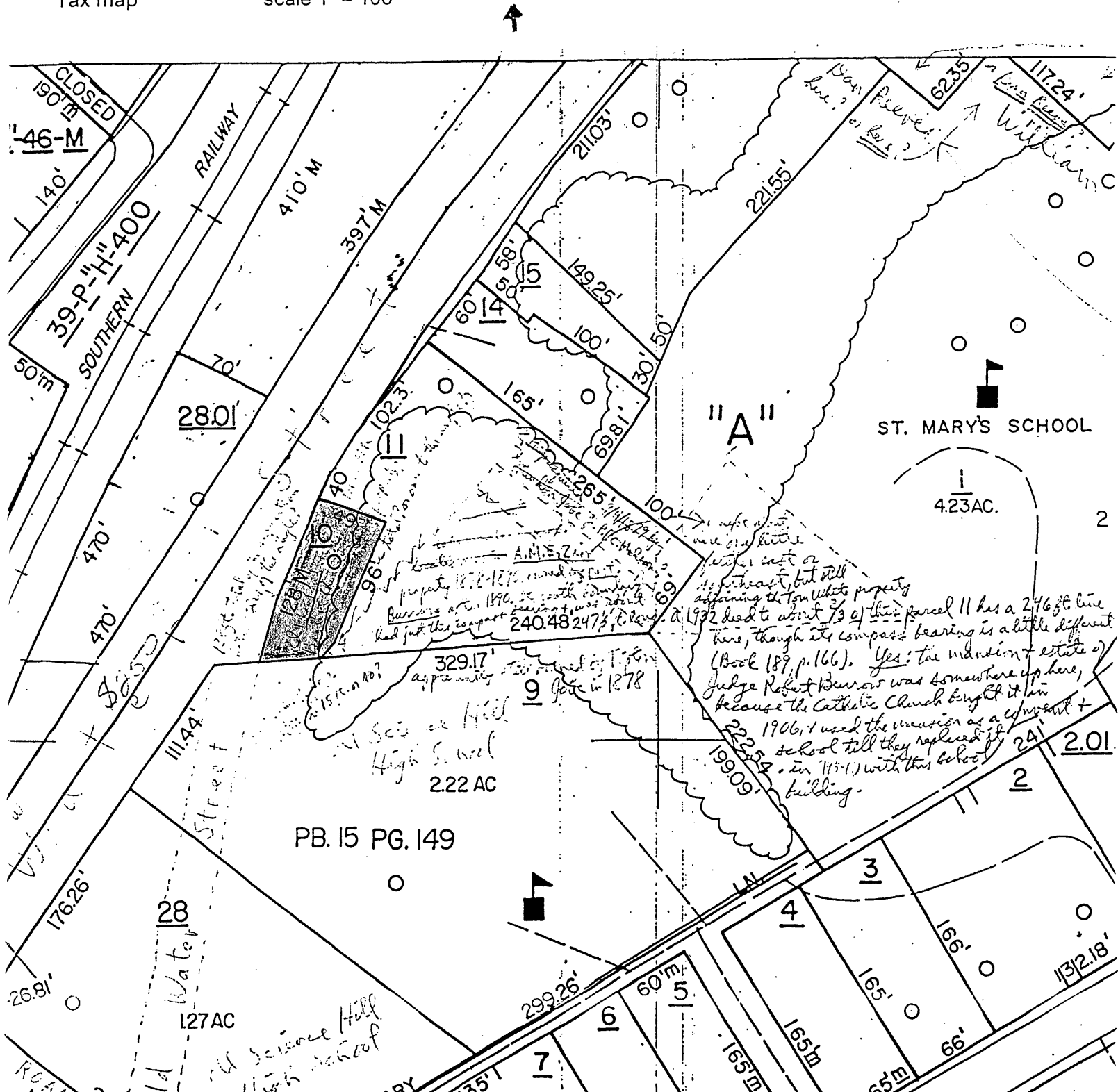
Thankful Baptist Church is at 104 Water Street, Johnson City, Tennessee, designated as lot 10, block A on the attached Washington County tax map. This urban lot contains all of the historic property associated with the Thankful Baptist Church.

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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

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Tax map scale 1" = 100'



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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

PHOTOGRAPHS

Thankful Baptist Church
Washington County, Tennessee
Photos by: Carroll Van West
 MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
Date: November 2000
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

South facade, facing north
1 of 26

Dedication stone, south facade, facing north
2 of 26

Detail, entrance arches, south facade, facing north
3 of 26

Detail, center gable, south facade, facing north
4 of 26

Southeast tower, facing southwest
5 of 26

East elevation, facing northwest
6 of 26

North elevation, facing southwest
7 of 26

West and south elevations, facing northeast
8 of 26

West and north elevations, facing east
9 of 26

Southwest vestibule, facing west
10 of 26

Double doors to sanctuary, from southwest vestibule, facing northwest
11 of 26

Sanctuary, facing north
12 of 26

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Thankful Baptist Church,
Washington County, Tennessee

Sanctuary, facing northeast
13 of 26

Sanctuary from pulpit, facing south
14 of 26

East wall of sanctuary, facing southeast
15 of 26

Details, pews, facing east
16 of 26

Pulpit and choir platform, facing northwest
17 of 26

Pulpit, choir platform, and baptismal pool, facing northwest
18 of 26

Baptismal painting, facing north
19 of 26

Doors to children's Sunday school room and baptismal pool, facing east
20 of 26

Choir room, facing east
21 of 26

Choir room, storage, facing south
22 of 26

Sunday school room, facing east
23 of 26

Basement, facing north
24 of 26

Basement, women's lounge, facing west
25 of 26

Basement, west wall Sunday school rooms, facing west
26 of 26