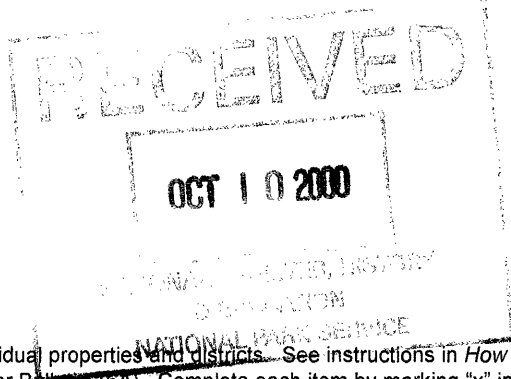


(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



1357

### 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 Providence Primitive Baptist Church

other names/site number RD.87

#### 2. Location

street & number 256 Central Valley Road

not for publication N/A

city or town Walter Hill

vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Rutherford code 149 zip code N/A

#### 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.)

Albert L. Hays  
Signature of certifying official/Title

10/2/00  
Date

DSHPO - THC  
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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

11/3/00

**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	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	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

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls Weatherboard

roof METAL

other WOOD

**Narrative Description**

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

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Rutherford County, Tennessee  
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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
ETHNIC HERITAGE: African-American  
SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance**

1867-1876, circa 1920-1930

**Significant Dates**

1867

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**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:

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Rutherford County, Tennessee  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 2.4 acres Walter Hill 315 NW

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>555860</u>	<u>3977120</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.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Stacy Weber  
organization Tennessee Historical Commission date July 21, 2000  
street & number 2941 Lebanon Road telephone 615-898-1550  
city or town Nashville state TN zip code 37243-0442

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## Additional Documentation

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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

### Sketch map

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

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

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## Property Owner

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

name Martin Rooker (contact person)  
street & number 510 Central Valley Road telephone (615) 893-3241  
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37129

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**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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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## Description

The Providence Primitive Baptist Church is located on Central Valley Road off Route 231 in Rutherford County, Tennessee. Built ca. 1867, the current building did not serve as the congregation's first house of worship. An earlier building, constructed during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was occupied and destroyed by Union troops during the Civil War.

The present structure is an unadorned, one-story rectangular frame building resting on a stone foundation, which is uncoursed on all elevations except the façade. The moderately pitched front-gable roof is composed of metal alloy and has a slight eave overhang and gable returns. The church is sided in white, painted weatherboard. The exterior of the church retains much of its original appearance and has undergone few alterations. Two sets of concrete steps were added at the front in 1931, and metal hoods, added several years ago, were placed over the entrances to protect the original wood doors.

The south façade is the gable-front entrance to the church. Two identical, symmetrically spaced main entrances open into the interior of the church. Each entrance consists of a vertical-paneled double door, painted white, that is approached by two concrete steps and covered by a metal hood. A white sign with black lettering hangs in the middle of the façade and reads "Providence Primitive Baptist Church." An electric light, used at one time to illuminate the sign, is attached to the wall above the sign and now hangs down over the lettering.

The west elevation is dominated by the moderately pitched gable roof line. A wide frieze band runs the length of the elevation. Under this begins the exterior weatherboard wall that continues down to the stone foundation. The elevation contains three symmetrically spaced six-over-six, double hung sash windows, original to the building, which are covered by original green louvered wood shutters. The west and east elevations are identical.

On the gabled north (rear) elevation, white weatherboard siding begins at the roofline and continues down to the foundation. No windows or ornamentation are present on this elevation.

The primary entrances on the south façade of the church lead into the building's interior, which is of simple design, consisting solely of the sanctuary and pulpit. The sanctuary contains a significant number of original features, including paneled wood doors with original hardware, wood floors, beaded board ceiling, windows, wood trim, and kerosene light fixtures. Twenty-nine original wood pews provide seating. The sanctuary is oriented in a north-south direction, with two aisles dividing twenty-five of the pews into three rows. Primitive Baptist men and women traditionally sit

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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in separate sections of the sanctuary during worship, and the wood partition running down the center of the middle row of pews testifies to the importance of this tradition at Providence.

At the north side of the building, the original wood pulpit is situated on a raised wood platform, which is approached on each side by a wood step. A wood bench is located at the back of the platform, behind the pulpit. Also in the chancel area, flanking the pulpit area, at the east and west upper corners of the platform, are wood stands. Another raised bench and a small offering table are in front of the podium at the base of the platform. Two pews flank each side of the platform, providing an area on the left for men and another on the right for women to participate in communion and foot washing.

The interior walls retain their original construction, consisting of flush board from the floor to approximately chair rail height and plaster in the remaining section. A commercial wall covering was added in the 1920s, and painted over at a later, unknown date. A few alterations have been made to the interior for the purposes of heating and lighting. The building was wired for electricity in the 1930s, and the original hanging electric light fixtures date to this time. A wood stove once existed to heat the building but was later replaced with gas heat.

An early twentieth century wood, whitewashed privy stands behind the building, near the north elevation. (C)

The Providence Primitive Baptist Church retains a high degree of historical integrity, proving exceptional in location, association, feeling, design, materials and workmanship. No major alterations have been made to the building since its original construction.

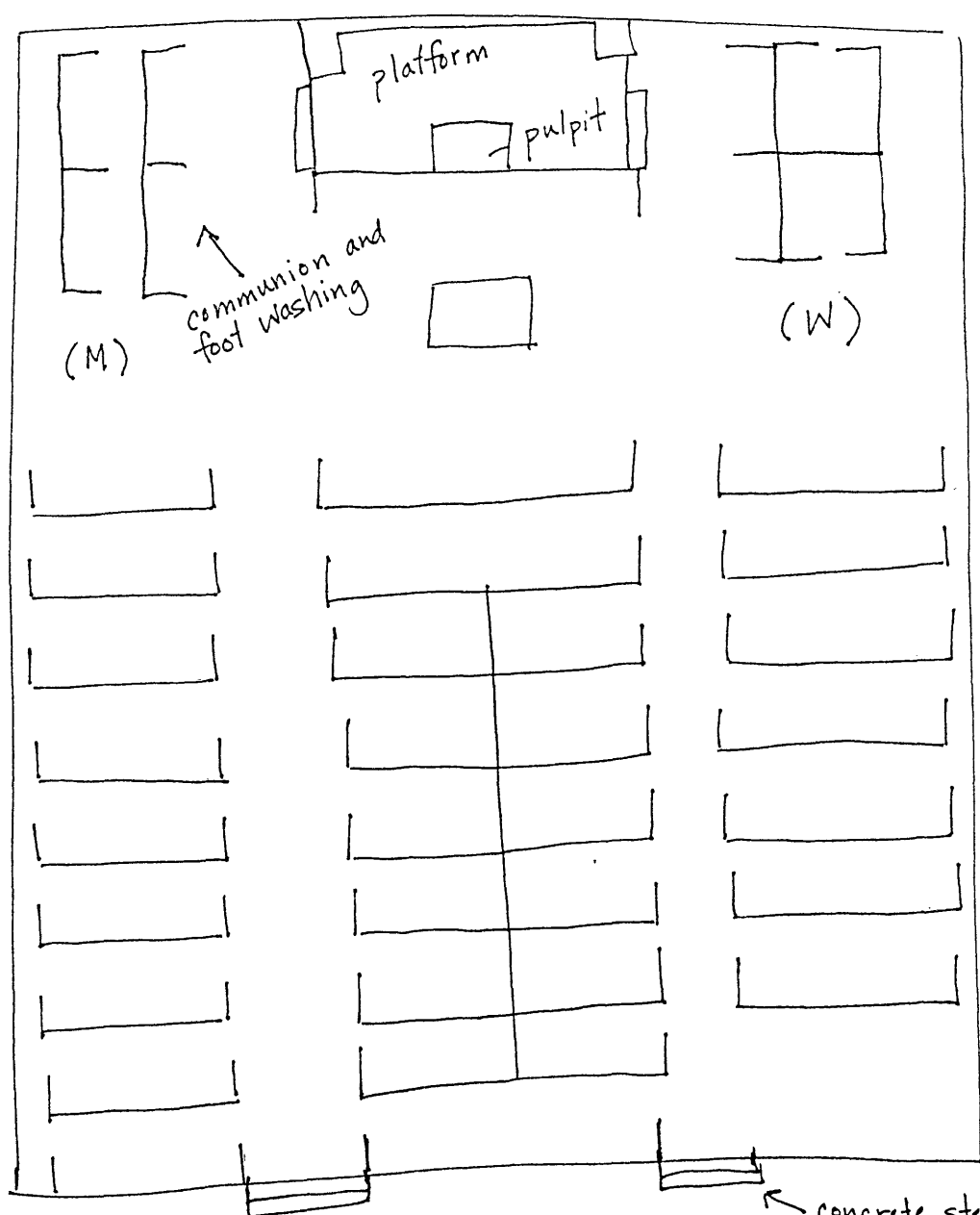
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

Sketch plan



weather-board siding →

← concrete steps (1931)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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## Statement of Significance

The Providence Primitive Baptist Church in Rutherford County, Tennessee is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C as a locally significant example of rural vernacular church architecture, displaying a dignified simplicity of design and a high quality of craftsmanship, which is evident in its interior beaded board ceiling, hand-hewn wood pews, and simple wood pulpit. Providence Primitive Baptist church also documents the early social patterns of religious history in Rutherford County, especially the development of the county's Primitive Baptist community. In addition, Providence Primitive Baptist Church represents one of the few documented examples of changing racial relations in the South in the decades following the end of the Civil War, thus making it eligible under criterion A, as well, for its significance in African-American ethnic heritage.

Local historians such as Carlton Sims and John Bond have recognized the congregation associated with Providence Primitive Baptist Church as one of the county's earliest Baptist congregations. According to the available evidence, the congregation was already well established by the second decade of the nineteenth century, and was participating in the Concord Association, an organization of Middle Tennessee and northern Alabama Baptist churches. The deed for the nominated property is dated 1813, and states that for the sum of one dollar and "in consideration of the love and affection which he . . . has for the Baptist people," Thomas Rucker deeded two acres of land to "the Baptist church near Cummings Mill on the East fork of Stones River holding the doctrines of Election, eternal perseverance of the saints in Christ and Baptism by emersion." The land is described as:

Beginning at a black oak near the public Road running thense south seventy-nine degrees west, Eighteen poles to a stake . . . containing two acres more or less.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after this date, the congregation constructed a meetinghouse that became Providence Baptist Church. It was in this building that the congregation hosted the annual meeting of the Concord Association in 1819.

The history of Providence Primitive Baptist Church is closely associated with the rise of the anti-mission movement among Tennessee Baptists. A hallmark of the Baptist faith is the traditional autonomy of individual congregations, which accounts for the numerous divisions that have emerged within the Baptist faith over time. Disagreements over biblical interpretation and doctrinal issues have historically resulted in splinter groups and the formation of new, independent

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<sup>1</sup> Rutherford County Courthouse, Deeds, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Microfilm.



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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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churches. This occurred in Tennessee in the 1830s when the denomination split over the rise of the missionary movement.

As early as 1810, the records of the Concord Association indicate a spirit of discontent on the part of several member congregations, who were "convinced that there are numbers of Baptist churches which differ from us in many points of faith and practice."<sup>2</sup> The mission vs. anti-mission conflict that arose within the Baptist denomination stemmed from the difference in redemption beliefs – either general atonement or Calvinistic predestination – held by the various congregations. While many Baptists supported missions, strongly Calvinistic churches such as Providence found that their basic church doctrines directly conflicted with missionary activity. Because they maintained a strong belief in predestination and salvation only for the chosen, these Baptists viewed mission work as futile, since it would interfere with God's calling and conversion of the elect. These churches also opposed the creation of large, centralized missionary organizations, fearing they would threaten the independence of individual congregations. In 1827, the Concord Association divided over the issue. Those Baptist churches that opposed the strict Calvinist doctrine and supported the growing movement to establish mission organizations formed a new association called Concord Number Two. These Baptists became known as "Separates." The remaining churches, including Providence, continued their affiliation with the original Concord Association and were called "Regulars."

The Providence church also played a significant role in the rise and development of the Primitive Baptist movement in Middle Tennessee. In 1836, the Concord Association divided again, this time over creation of the Tennessee State Baptist Convention, which had formed in 1833. The congregations of Providence and other like-minded churches feared that the creation of large, centralized organizations would threaten the autonomy of individual congregations. Thus, many church members fiercely opposed becoming part of the Convention. After much heated debate at the annual meetings of 1833, 1834, and 1835, Providence, along with the Baptist church located at West Station near Cottontown in Sumner County, made a request that the Association be dissolved. Stating that "there seems to be a great want of harmony, union, and concert of action," among the member congregations, eleven dissenting churches left the Concord Association and formed the Stones River Association.<sup>3</sup> Perceiving the simplicity and freedom of the primitive church as a model to emulate, they began to call themselves "primitive Baptists."

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<sup>2</sup> John Bond, *A History of the Baptist Concord Association of Middle Tennessee and North Alabama* (Nashville: Graves, Marks, Printers, 1860), 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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Following the formation of the Stones River Association, services were held regularly at the Providence Primitive Baptist Church until the events of the Civil War prevented their continuation in the fall of 1862. The membership included both whites and an unknown number of slaves. At this time, according to congregational tradition, Union troops occupying the original meeting house destroyed it. Services resumed in fall of 1865, and in April 1867, the church minutes state, "the business of the day was the endeavoring to make arrangements to rebuild the meeting house on providence hill."<sup>4</sup> The 1867 building continues to function as the current meeting house for the Providence congregation.

The history of the Providence Primitive Baptist Church in the second half of the nineteenth century clearly demonstrates the changing racial climate in southern churches and other institutions at the end of the Civil War. Prior to the war, like many Tennessee Baptists, Providence's white slave owning members included their slaves in worship services. By allowing them to participate in the white worship services, slave owners could more easily oversee their slaves' activities. Following emancipation, the former slaves chose to continue worshiping at Providence.

While many former slaves were drawn to the all-black, Northern-based African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion denominations after the war, some African-Americans, such as the black members of the Providence Primitive Baptist Church, chose to retain their Baptist affiliations. However, when they began to agitate for a greater voice in church affairs in the late 1860s and early 1870s, they soon discovered that white church members and leaders were unwilling to concede equal rights. Many white Baptists wanted the black and interracial churches out of their religious organizations and encouraged the formation of independent black churches with no official ties to their parent denominations. In many ways, the Primitive Baptist denomination in Tennessee followed the lead of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South in its approach to the racial question. In 1870, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South turned over all titles to "colored church property," to the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, thus making the separation of blacks and whites complete and official. Shortly thereafter, Primitive Baptist churches began granting their African-American members "letters of dismissal," and independent black Primitive Baptist churches began forming throughout the south.

The church minutes of Providence church demonstrate that racial tension surfaced among congregation members almost immediately after the war. In December of 1867, the church's African-American members were accused of "pretending to Baptise without any authority," and a motion was made and seconded to "take into consideration the black brethren and charge them

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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with refusing to remain with us in fellowship unless we give them equal rights.”<sup>5</sup> The church leaders discussed the issue of equal rights for black and white members again in January 1868, and the minutes state that “the church unanimously agreed that she would not grant it. They was willing for the coloured members to live with us as they joined us and no other way.”<sup>6</sup> The minute book falls silent on the matter for approximately eight years, so one must assume that the black members decided to accommodate the wishes of the white members for the time being. By 1876, however, they had expressed their dissatisfaction once again, and in November, a motion was made and seconded to grant the African-Americans “letters of dismissal” so they could form their own church. Providence Primitive Baptist Church became an all-white congregation.

The title “Primitive” in Providence Primitive Baptist Church’s name refers to the denomination’s tradition of allegiance to the original New Testament church and a literal interpretation of scripture. Services are simple in nature, composed largely of preaching, prayer, and singing. Providence continues to celebrate many of the practices traditionally associated with the denomination, including the practice of foot washing, making it a living example of the historic Primitive Baptist faith.

The architecture of Providence Primitive Baptist Church also reflects the denomination’s basic beliefs. Typical of Primitive Baptist buildings, the Providence building is simple and unassuming, and lacks ornament. It has no steeple and plain glass windows. The façade retains the two original doors, which continue to provide separate entrances for men and women. The church’s original partitioned pews separate the sexes inside the sanctuary. This separation of the sexes extends to the pews at the side of the pulpit, which were used for foot washing rites and communion.

In 1894, the printed minutes of the “Stones River Association of the Primitive Order of Baptists” recorded ten Primitive Baptist churches in the Middle Tennessee area. Today, the Providence Primitive Baptist Church building remains in use and is believed to be the oldest active church in Rutherford County. Annual revivals were held in August at the church until approximately twenty years ago, typically beginning on a Tuesday and concluding with a homecoming service the

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<sup>5</sup> Minute Book, Providence Primitive Baptist Church, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 48.

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National Park Service

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   8  

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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following Sunday. Due to a declining membership, the revival was gradually shortened to a three-day meeting, and eventually discontinued. Services are now held monthly, when Elder Wade Towry of Fayetteville preaches for the congregation. The children of the late J.J. Rooker and Ethel G. Rooker are the only active members of the Providence Primitive Baptist Church.

As one of only a handful of rural Rutherford County churches listed on the National Register at this time, Providence Primitive Baptist Church possesses a high degree of historical significance and architectural integrity. Having undergone a minimal number of alterations since its construction in 1867, it appears to be one of the county's most intact historic church buildings.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 9

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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## Bibliography

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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## Geographical Data

### Verbal Boundary Description

The Providence Primitive Baptist Church sits on two and four-tenths acres on Central Valley Road and is located on Parcel 19 on Rutherford County Tax Map

### Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the historic property currently associated with the Providence Primitive Baptist Church.

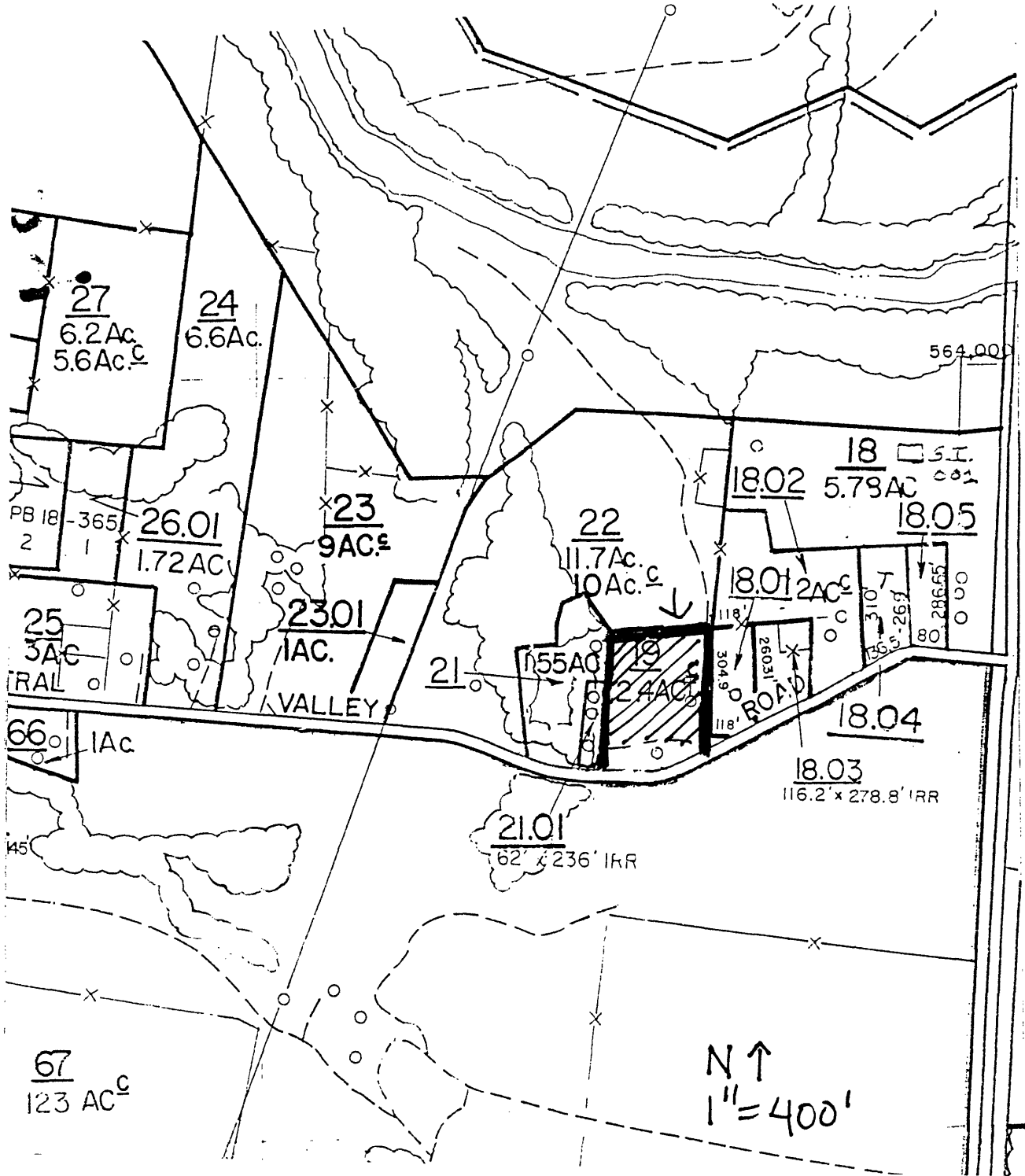
The tax map for this nomination has the scale of 1" = 400'. The Tennessee Board of Equalization prepares this scale tax map for rural areas. In the past, the Tennessee Historical Commission has used this scale map for nominations and has found that 1" = 400' adequately meets our office needs. The Tennessee Historical Commission does not have the facilities to prepare maps to the scale preferred by the National Park Service.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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## Photographs

Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
256 Central Valley Road  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37129

Photos by: Louis Jackson  
Tennessee Historical Commission  
2941 Lebanon Road  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0442

Date: June 27, 2000

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

South façade, facing north.  
1 of 14

West elevation, facing northeast.  
2 of 14

Rear (north) elevation, facing southeast.  
3 of 14

East and north elevations, with privy, facing southwest.  
4 of 14

East elevation, facing northwest.  
5 of 14

Sign on south façade, facing north.  
6 of 14

Original paneled wood doors, facing southeast.  
7 of 14

Sanctuary, facing north.  
8 of 14

Sanctuary, facing north  
9 of 14



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Providence Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, Tennessee

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Sanctuary, facing southeast  
10 of 14

Original wood pews.  
11 of 14

Foot washing basins.  
12 of 14

Original kerosene light fixture.  
13 of 14

Flush board on interior wall.  
14 of 14