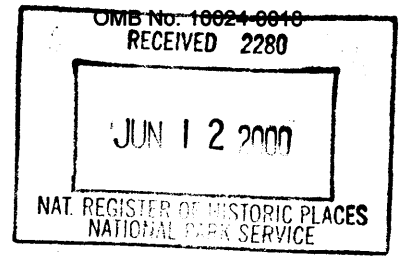


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

809



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 Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery

other names/site number Pierce-Bond Cemetery

2. Location

street & number Seaver Road at Horse Creek Road

NA not for publication

city or town Kingsport

vicinity

state Tennessee

code TN

county Sullivan

code 163

zip code 37660

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
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/5/00
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:)

Edson W. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

7/14/00

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
	1	buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

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

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Rural African American Churches in TN

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY: cemetery

FUNERARY: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

NA

foundation NA
walls NA

roof NA
other Limestone; METAL; granite; WOOD

Narrative Description

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

- 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 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 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

ETHNIC HISTORY: AFRICAN AMERICAN

Period of Significance

circa 1882 - circa 1950

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown; multiple

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: _____

Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre Kingsport 188 SE

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>358700</u> Easting	<u>4040500</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> 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
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date March 10, 2000
street & number 128 North Highland Avenue 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 Trustees of Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery, c/o Orvel Bond
street & number 383 Dunbar Street telephone 423/378-5941
city or town Kingsport state TN zip code 37660

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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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

VII. Description

The Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery is a small rural cemetery located at the junction of Seaver Road and Horse Creek Road in Sullivan County. Placed on the top of a small hill that overlooks the surrounding countryside, the cemetery has a roughly rectangular shape, measuring approximately 195 feet in length on its north side, 140 feet on its west side, 192 feet on its south side, and 151 feet on its east side. Historic tree lines designate the boundaries of all four sides. A historic wire fence (c. 1940), supported by wood posts spaced at regular intervals, runs along the north, east, and south sides of the cemetery.

The cemetery is the highest point, and the oldest historical resource, associated with the place name Butterfly, a post office that existed there from 1883 to 1905, and the place name Shinbone, which is a name known to current African-American residents of Sullivan County. On the north side of the cemetery, and not within the cemetery's boundaries or the boundaries of this nomination, are three abandoned wood frame houses associated with this community. Two are bungalow-influenced wood frame cottages, built c. 1930; the third is a wood frame dwelling constructed circa 1960. There has been no survey undertaken of other potential surviving African-American resources of rural Sullivan County. Older members of the African-American community identify the Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery as the oldest known resource.

The cemetery was the burial ground for local African-American residents and members of the Pierce Chapel AME Church. The church was the focal point of the surrounding community of African Americans in the Bays Mountain section of Sullivan County. The original church was an one-story log, gable-front building located at the southeast corner of the cemetery. While the building was vandalized and demolished in 1967, part of its limestone-pier foundation remains to locate the building site. The placement of these rocks indicates that the exterior of the building measured approximately twenty-four by thirty-six feet.

The majority of the approximately 150 historic grave markers (out of an estimated 250 burial sites) in the cemetery are clustered along the brow of the hill, bisected by a line of large mature oak trees. A large evergreen bush, c. 1930, is located near the center of this concentration of grave markers. The markers are arranged in north-to-south rows, with headstones facing east. The great majority of extant grave markers date between 1882 (the earliest marker that had a death date listed) and 1950. The cemetery remains in use

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Section number 7 Page 2

Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

as the only rural African-American cemetery in Sullivan County, with the latest internment being that of Olivia Lockett in 1995

Theresa Dykes, who attended public school at the Pierce Chapel Church building in the early 1920s, is the oldest surviving member of the congregation. According to Mrs. Dykes, many graves no longer have their markers. Some markers have been lost to vandalism; simple wood crosses marked other graves and these have disappeared over the decades. According to oral traditions passed on to Mrs. Dykes, the earliest graves had small triangular-shaped rocks as headstones. Approximately twenty of these still exist in the center of the cemetery. The estimated number of all burials, determined by a count of headstones and of rectangular-shaped depressed areas, is approximately 250 burials. There are no known extant records of burials for the cemetery.

The cemetery contains no elaborate examples of grave markers. The existing markers are small and often unadorned, and made from concrete, limestone, and granite. Among the more architecturally distinctive markers are those of Nancy Russell (died 1882), which contains a carved hand with an extended finger pointing skyward (a traditional grave marker symbol) ; Frances Brown (died 1900), which includes carved script; and Sarah Amanda Bachman (died 1919), which has a carved rose bush. Extant markers indicate, however, that the cemetery was not a place of indiscriminate burial—most burials are arranged in family groupings.

The cemetery is well maintained and retains a strong sense of location, association, design, feeling, workmanship, materials, and setting. At the northeast corner of the cemetery is a wood frame privy, with a shed metal roof. Constructed c. 1930, the privy is a non-contributing building on the cemetery. (NC, due to its lack of association with the cemetery)

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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

VIII. Statement of Significance

The Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery in Sullivan County, Tennessee, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significant association with African-American settlement patterns in this Appalachian county. Established at least by circa 1870, according to oral history traditions and the history of the church congregation, the earliest marker that can now be read is 1882. The church grounds and cemetery comprised the physical center of the only known rural African-American community in Sullivan County. The nominated property is oldest known historic African-American resource in the county today.

The exact date of the founding of the cemetery and church is unknown. According to interviews with Theresa Dykes, Jack Pierce, Anna Coley, Virginia Leeper, and Orvel Bond, the cemetery began in the antebellum "slave days" and contains unmarked burials from those years. The small triangular headstones found at the cemetery are similar in size and design to slave graves documented in the Bailey Graveyard (NR 3/28/96), established circa 1840, in Wilson County.

The founding families of the Pierce's Chapel AME Church, judging from census data and headstones at the cemetery, appear to be the Bond, Pierce, Bachman, and Russell families. The headstone of Nancy Russell has the oldest marked death date of 1882. But judging by the fact that the Russell marker, due to its placement and design, appears to be later than the small triangular stones, and the general pattern of African-American religious history in Tennessee and Sullivan County, as discussed in the Historic Rural African-American Churches in Tennessee Multiple Property Submission (MPS), it is likely that the establishment of the church and cemetery occurred earlier. According to the MPS document, in December 1863, AME bishop Daniel Payne organized the first Tennessee congregation of the AME Church in Nashville. After the war, AME missionaries spread across the South, organizing large numbers of blacks into new congregations. By 1866, the church counted a membership of 75,000 compared to a mere 20,000 before the war.

Throughout the Civil War decade, the Bays Mountain area of rural Sullivan County was known as a Unionist stronghold in an otherwise Confederate county. William S. DePew, for example, served in K company of the 8th Calvary of the U.S. Army of Tennessee as a chaplain. After the war (or at least after the 1860 census) DePew was joined by two comrades in arms. Benjamin F. Hood had served in K company of the 8th Calvary; he also

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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

served as a minister at DePew Chapel Methodist Church. Their neighbor John N. Dolan was a quartermaster sergeant in B company of the 4th Tennessee Calvary of the Union Army of Tennessee. It is a tradition among African-American residents of Kingsport that this group of Union veterans included Jerome Pierce, who had been born a slave but was the mulatto son of a white farmer named John Pierce. Muriel Spoden's 1976 book about historic sites and places in Sullivan County noted that a log cabin belonging to Jerome Pierce, who she identified as a freedman and Union veteran, once stood along the road among the homes of the white Union veterans. The older members of the Pierce Chapel AME Church congregation date the history of the church and cemetery as beginning with Jerome Pierce; a gravemarker at the cemetery records that Jerome Pierce died in 1942 (no birth date is listed).

However, it has been impossible to locate archival proof for Jerome Pierce's service in the Civil War. No listing for a Jerome Piece exists in the National Park Service's database of individual United States Colored Troops soldier names. Nor is the name listed in the *Tennesseans in the Civil War* collection. Further complicating matters is that no John Pierce, as a white resident, can be found in the 1860 census for Sullivan County. Four families of Pierces can be identified. One, headed by Samuel Pierce, is found on page 67-107 of the Sullivan County schedules. Three Pierce households, however, are located on the schedule page 53-114. Thomas Pierce, age 43, heads one family and none of his sons are named John. Elmira Pierce, age 30, heads another. Her oldest son was named John, but was only ten years old. The third family held a single member, Elizabeth Pierce, who was seventy years old. However, by the time of the 1860 census, the father of Jerome Piece may have been deceased; it is possible that a John Pierce may have been the husband of Elmira Pierce. According to past church member Anna R. Coley, Jerome Pierce joined the Union army near Roanoke, Virginia, when he was about the age of sixteen. He was assigned work with a calvary unit, where he worked with horses (both DePew and Hood served in the 8th Calvary). After the war, he returned to Sullivan County to live with his mother. Thus, the oral history and the book by Muriel Spoden suggest that Jerome Pierce may be best described as an 'unofficial' Union volunteer, who assisted the soldiers without actually joining the army himself.

The most prominent white church and cemetery in the immediate vicinity of the nominated property is DePew's Chapel Methodist Church and Cemetery, which is also located on Horse Creek Road. Established 1840 by white Methodist minister William S. DePew, this cemetery contains no known slave graves. There are no records to indicate that after the

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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

war the Bays Mountain African Americans attended DePew's Chapel Methodist Church, although the assumption would be that they would have been welcomed by the ministers DePew and Hood as fellow Union veterans and supporters. Instead, they appear to have followed the actions of their fellow African Americans across the South as they established at one spot the three institutions that were key institutions of Reconstruction-era black communities: a church, a school, and a cemetery. The year 1870 as an approximate date for the establishment of the church is given additional support by Oliver Temple's county history of 1909. Temple noted that a huge outpouring of religious activity occurred in Sullivan County between 1867 and 1870. This nomination proceeds on the assumption that this church and cemetery were established during these years of revived camp meetings and religious activity. However, the nomination begins its period of significance at circa 1882, since that is the date of the oldest known headstone in the cemetery. Also, in 1883 the Butterfly post office was officially registered for this rural neighborhood; at that time, this cemetery and its church building were the only African-American church and cemetery in existence in the community.

The unadorned rectangular log building of Pierce Chapel AME Church was a place of worship on Sundays and Wednesday nights. In addition, the building served as the local rural school for African Americans, grades one through twelve, during the week, from circa 1870 to circa 1922. In fact, this dual use as church and school lasted until the early 1920s when the Douglass School was built in Kingsport. This significant historic pattern of dual use is similar to that of the Pikeville Chapel AME Zion Church (NR 11/30/99) in Bledsoe County. That building, constructed as a one-room church and school circa 1870, remained in dual use until the Julius Rosenwald Fund supported the construction of Lincoln School (NR 7/15/93) in the 1920s.

Due to the growth of Kingsport as an industrial center in the 1910s and 1920s, and following the impact of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the rural African-American community in the Bays Mountain area began to disappear. This loss of the rural black population occurred throughout the South, according to the recent work of sociologist Stewart E. Tolnay in his *The Bottom Rung: African American Family Life on Southern Farms* (1999). Some former residents moved to Kingsport, where they lived in the modern Riverview Homes public housing project, built by the United States Housing Authority, a New Deal public housing program, in 1941. In the mid-twentieth century, the rural community consisted of a few houses and farms and was known as Shinbone. Throughout the years, the center of religious, social, and cultural activity continued to be

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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

the Pierce Chapel AME Church and Cemetery. According to interviews with Anna Coley, Theresa Dykes, Orvel Bond, James Pierce, and Virginia Leiper, the Reverend Sam Russell from Sweetwater, Tennessee, conducted monthly church services at least until the 1950s. "On Memorial Day the families would gather at the cemetery with lunches to clean the graves of their loved ones with buttermilk and baking soda," recalled Anna Coley. The third Sunday in September was Homecoming Day, continued Coley, when "people came from all over the state for the services and to fellowship with their friends. They would put up tents and serve all kinds of foods. This all took place on the grounds of the church and cemetery," (1)

The people interviewed could not agree on the date that church services ended at Pierce Chapel. The log building deteriorated and it was demolished in 1967. However, the cemetery continued to be used for burials throughout the second half of the twentieth century; the last burial took place in 1995. Descendants of the original congregation members also continue to have annual Homecomings, but now the event has shifted from the third Sunday in September to the fourth Sunday in July.

The Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery, better known locally as the Pierce-Bond Cemetery, is the oldest extant resource associated with the settlement and development of African-American communities in Sullivan County. In particular, it is a significant artifact of the attempt to create post-Civil War freemen communities and community institutions, such as cemeteries, churches, and schools. All three institutions stood at this property and operated until the 1920s. Then the church and the cemetery continued to operate until the 1960s. Since that time, only the cemetery function has remained to mark what was once a rural community known as Butterfly and then as Shinbone. Muriel Spoden, who compiled a listing of historic places of Sullivan County in 1976, and Margaret Ripley Wolfe, who wrote a history of Kingsport in 1987, both noted that African Americans comprise a very small percentage of the local population. For over 125 years at least, the Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery has existed as a compelling artifact of the African-American experience in rural Appalachia.

Endnote

1. Anna R. Coley to Tennessee Historical Commission, August 17, 1998, Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery File, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Murfreesboro, TN.

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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

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- Coley, Anna R. Interview, October 21, 1999. Notes in Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery File. MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.
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- Leiper, Virginia. Interview, October 21, 1999. Notes in Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery File. MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.
- Lifford, Brad. "Black History Month offers chance to recognize Kingsport's rich African-American heritage," *Kingsport Times-News*, February 7, 1998.
- Lovett, Bobby L. *The African-American History of Nashville, Tennessee, 1780-1930: Elites and Dilemmas*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1999.
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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
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Tolnay, Stewart E. *The Bottom Rung: African American Family Life on Southern Farms.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

U.S. Census, 1860, Sullivan County, Tennessee.

U.S. Colored Troops Web Page. Sections on Individual Service Records and Regimental Action Records. Maintained by National Park Service. www.itd.nps.gov.

Wolfe, Margaret Ripley. *Kingsport, Tennessee: A Planned American City.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987.

For additional information and sources on the AME church see the MPS for "Historic Rural African-American Churches in Tennessee, 1850-1970."

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Section number 10 Page 9

Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

X. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is a rectangular shaped cemetery as marked as parcel on the attached Sullivan County Tax Map 075M.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the significant historical resources associated with the Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery.

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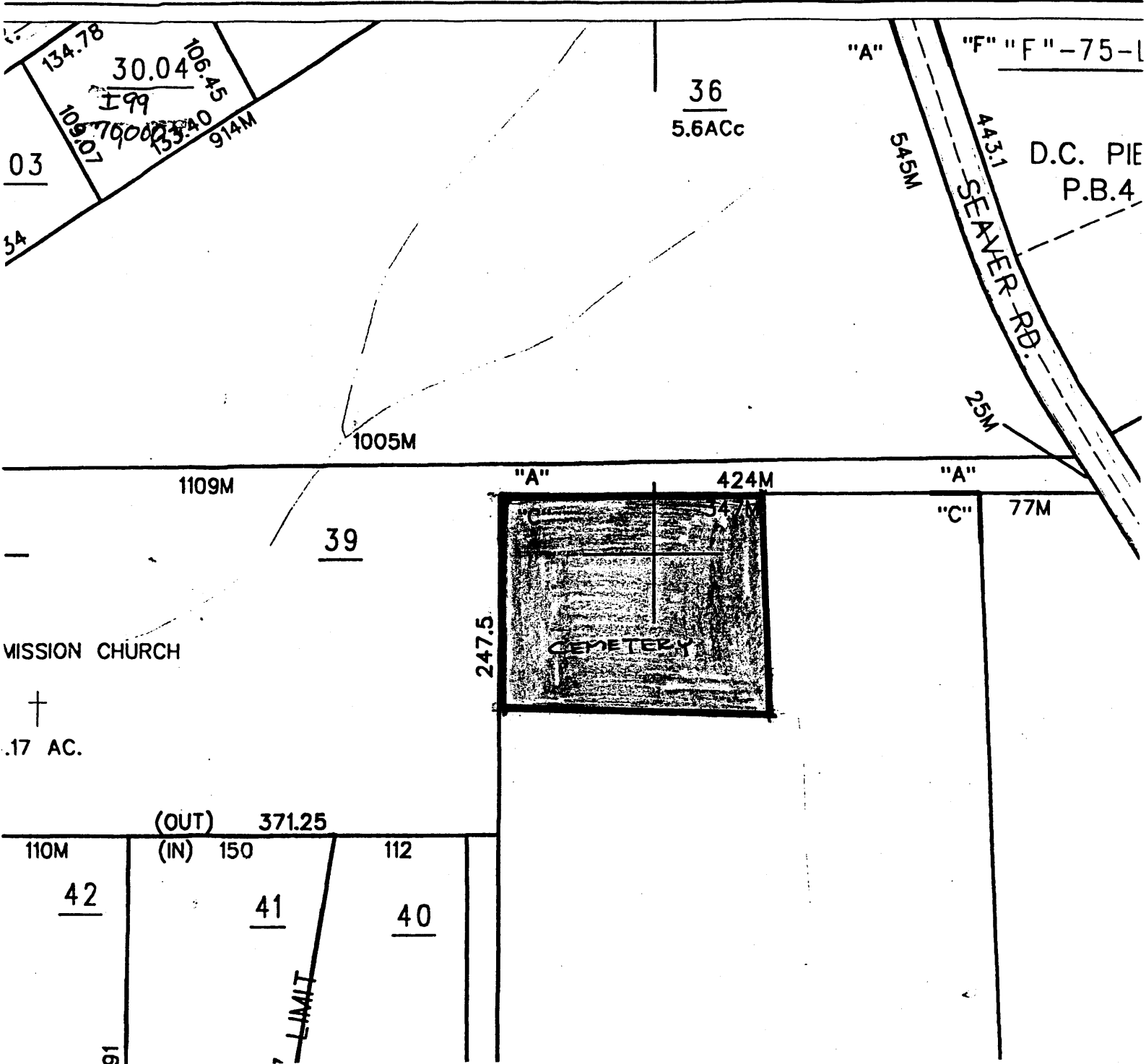
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN



1" = 100'



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Section number photos Page 11

Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

Photographs

Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery
Sullivan County, Tennessee

Photos by: Carroll Van West
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Date: October 21, 1999

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37243

Center of cemetery, with trees and grave markers, facing north
1 of 19

Oldest grave marker section, facing west
2 of 19

Cemetery overview, facing northeast
3 of 19

Cemetery overview, facing southwest
4 of 19

Cemetery overview, facing southeast
5 of 19

Pierce family section, facing east
6 of 19

Stone foundation remains of Pierce Chapel AME Church, facing northwest
7 of 19

Stone foundation remains of Pierce Chapel AME Church, facing southeast
8 of 19

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National Park Service**

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Pierce Chapel AME Church Cemetery,
Sullivan Co., TN

Detail, Nancy Russell grave marker
9 of 19

Detail, Frances Brown grave marker
10 of 19

Detail, Winnie Brown grave marker
11 of 19

Detail, hand-carved child grave marker
12 of 19

Detail, Alice L. Pierce grave marker
13 of 19

Detail, Sarah A. Bachman grave marker
14 of 19

Detail, Mary A. Bachman grave marker
15 of 19

Detail, James A. Bachman grave marker
16 of 19

Detail, Saraphina E. Bachman grave marker
17 of 19

Detail, Carmel K. Evans grave marker
18 of 19

Privy, facing northeast
19 of 19