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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: New Bethel Baptist Church

other name/site number: Bethel Church

2. Location

street & number: Bethel Valley Road

city/town: Oak Ridge

not for publication: N/A
vicinity: N/A

state: TN county: Roane code: 145 zip code: 37830

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-Federal

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> | buildings |
| <u>2</u> | <u>1</u> | sites |
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> | structures |
| <u>4</u> | <u> </u> | objects |
| <u>4</u> | <u>1</u> | Total |

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

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Resources in Oak Ridge

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. X See continuation sheet.

Luis M. Thompson
Signature of certifying official
Federal Preservation Officer
U.S. Department of Energy

3/18/92
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet

Herbert L. Hays
Signature of commenting or other official
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Tennessee Historical Commission

7/18/91
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

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

Carol Shuler 5-6-92

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: RELIGION

Current : VACANT

Sub: Religious structure

Sub: not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other: Gable Front Vernacular

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation concrete roof metal
walls wood other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: National.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : A,F,G

Areas of Significance: Social History
Military History
Architecture
Art

Period(s) of Significance: 1924-1949

Significant Dates : 1942, 1949

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

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--Specify Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 1.5 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 16 743110 3979740 B _____

C _____ D _____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Kimberley A. Murphy

Organization: Thomason & Associates Date: 4/5/91

Street & Number: P.O. Box 121225 Telephone: (615)383-0227

City or Town: Nashville State: TN ZIP: 37212

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

New Bethel Baptist Church Page 1

The New Bethel Baptist Church is a one-story frame, three-bay, rectangular plan church built ca. 1900. The church was built with a gable front and has a small square bell tower with a pyramidal roof on the main (south) facade. It has weatherboard siding, a poured concrete foundation, and a gable roof of metal standing seam. The church is located on Bethel Valley Road, directly across from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (X-10).

The church's primary entrance is located on the main, or south, facade. The original doors have been removed and the present doors are vertical board wood double doors added ca. 1970. Concrete steps lead to this entrance and one of the steps is inscribed with the date of "1924." Windows are original four-over-four double hung rectangular wood sash. At the rear facade are two secondary entrances which retain original five paneled wood doors. This facade also displays a projecting central bay with three, four-over-four sash windows. At the eaves are exposed rafters and in the gable field are rectangular louvered attic vent windows.

The interior has not been significantly altered and retains its original wood floors and tongue in groove paneled walls. The altar is sited on a raised platform and the interior retains original wood pews.

A large stone marker is located forty-five feet behind the church which was erected in 1949 to commemorate the church and its congregation. The marker is inscribed "The church having been left in extended session from 1942, this monument was dedicated and the final church session closed at Memorial Day services May 29, 1949." This marker is included as a contributing object to the property.

Located directly behind the church, is a cemetery of approximately one acre containing about 250 marked graves. The oldest graves date from the early 1860s and 1870s. Most of the graves date from the 1880-1940, and there are some modern gravestones. There are also two pre-World War II frame gravehouses. Each gravehouse contains only one grave. The larger gravehouse is constructed over the grave of Roy L. Vann (b. 1901 - d. 1915) and was probably constructed at the time of interment. The Vann gravehouse is a small rectangular-plan frame structure with a poured concrete foundation and a gable roof of corrugated metal. There is a metal ridgecap along the crest of the roof, and vertical board siding in the gable field. The roof stands about six feet tall and is supported by four bracketed corner posts. The walls are composed of a wood picket fence. The smaller gravehouse is built at the western border of the cemetery. The gravestone has been broken and pieces of it stolen, so neither the name nor the dates are available. It is similar on detail to the Vann gravehouse, with a poured concrete foundation, four bracketed corner posts, and a gable roof of standing-seam metal. There is a metal ridgecap along the crest of the roof, and vertical board siding in the gable field. The walls are also composed of a wood picket fence identical to those of the Vann gravehouse. This gravehouse stands only about four feet tall. These two gravehouses are included as contributing structures.

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Section number 8

New Bethel Baptist Church Page #1

New Bethel Baptist Church is significant under criterion A for its role in the social history of Oak Ridge. The church was built in 1924 and served the residents of Scarboro during the early 20th century. The church and its gravehouses are architecturally and historically significant and are eligible under criteria consideration A. The marker is eligible under criteria consideration F because of its historical significance. The church's period of significance extends past 1942, when the church was condemned and purchased by the federal government for the Manhattan Project. The coming of the Manhattan Project was the most significant event in the history of the valley. The church was used as a wartime meeting room for Manhattan Project scientists and for this reason is eligible under criteria consideration G. The church's period of significance extends to 1949, when original members were permitted to return to officially close the church and to erect a commemorative marker that is included as a contributing object. The church has not been significantly altered and retains nearly all of its original architectural character.

New Bethel Baptist Church was organized 1851 to serve the community of Scarboro. Little information is available on the history of this church but it appears that the first building was a small frame structure located at this site in the mid-1800s. In 1924 the present church building was erected facing south towards Bethel Valley Road. Church buildings were often the centers of rural communities, serving as meeting places, schools, and social halls. The church often became the physical center of a community as well as its spiritual center. New Bethel Baptist Church is the only building that remains of the Scarborough community in the valley. The community was small, and the church functioned beyond its role as a place of worship. Like all properties lying within the proposed boundaries of the militarily restricted area, New Bethel Baptist Church was appraised, condemned, and purchased by the Army. The graphite reactor (X-10), the prototype for the plutonium production facility at Hanford, Washington, was constructed directly across the road from the church.

The gravehouses in the cemetery are significant as excellent examples of rare mortuary folk architecture that occurs in the southeastern United States. Examples dating from the 1880s through the 1940s are known to exist in Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. The gable roof and picket surround is the most typical design. It is thought that these structures are rural representations of high-style tombs that were built over the graves of the well-to-do. The practice of building simple frame gravehouses appears to have been widespread in rural areas throughout the South from ca. 1880 until the 1960s, although it became less common following World War II. In Tennessee, there are examples in Rutherford County dating from 1881, 1896, and 1908. There are also examples in Cannon, Claiborne, Coffee, Dickson, Fentress, Hawkins, McNairy, Van Buren, and Wilson Counties. Most of these counties are in Middle and East Tennessee.

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New Bethel Baptist Church Page #2

The impact of the Manhattan Project on the valley is tremendous. In less than three years, the War Department replaced four sparsely populated rural communities with one of the largest industrial complexes the world had ever known. The acquisition of the lands needed for the Manhattan Project called for the removal of about three thousand people from the valleys in which the reservation was built. Most of the structures were razed, although many of the farmsteads were used to house project workers. It is not known why New Bethel Church was spared when other churches were not; perhaps because it was one of the more central community churches and was accompanied by a sizable graveyard. As the only remaining pre-WWII structure in Bethel Valley, the church is significant because it represents nineteenth and early twentieth century rural life as it was before the Manhattan Project.

The church is also significant in the context of the Manhattan Project. The building is located immediately across the road from X-10 and was used during the war as a meeting room and offices for scientists and engineers during the construction of the plant. After 1949, the church was used as a storage facility for the Clinton Engineering Laboratories and Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Following the opening of the townsite in 1949, former church members were allowed to meet again at the church to officially close the building as a house of worship. A stone marker was purchased and dedicated at the rear of the church building on May 29, 1949. Wording on the monument suggests that the church was not expected to be preserved. The church has been used for storage and maintained since 1949 by the Department of Energy. Plans are under way by the Oak Ridge National Laboratory 50th Anniversary Working Group to renovate the building so that it may be used for occasional gatherings and as an interpretive center commemorating the pre-war residents who were displaced by the Manhattan Project as well as the war-time activities that occurred in the vicinity.

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New Bethel Baptist Church Page #1

Basic Facts on the Oak Ridge Area of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and the Community of Oak Ridge. Office of Public Information, Office of Oak Ridge Operations, Atomic Energy Commission. Issued October 15, 1949.

A City is Born. Oak Ridge Operations, Community Affairs Division, Atomic Energy Commission, 1961.

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Fielder, Nick. "Gravehouses: Mortuary Folk Architecture." The Courier (THC Newsletter), October 1982, 4.

Jackson, Charles O. and Charles W. Johnson. City Behind A Fence. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981.

Moneymaker, Dorathy S. We'll Call It Wheat. Oak Ridge: Adroit Printing Company, 1979.

Overholt, James, ed. These Are Our Voices. Oak Ridge: Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, 1987.

Robinson, George O., Jr. The Oak Ridge Story. Kingsport, Tennessee: Southern Publishers, Incorporated, 1950.

Schaffer, Daniel. Atoms in Appalachia. Tennessee Valley Authority, 1982.

Sparrow, Martha Cardwell. "The Oak Ridgers." M.A. diss., Mississippi State University, 1980.

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Section number 10

New Bethel Baptist Church Page #1

Verbal Boundary Description: The New Bethel Baptist Church located within a rectangle which includes the cemetery behind the church. The cemetery is surrounded on three sides by a wooded area. The east and west boundaries of the property extend from the wooded area south to Bethel Valley Road. Bethel Valley Road forms the southern boundary as shown on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification: The boundary for the New Bethel Baptist Church is drawn to include the church and an associated historic marker placed adjacent to the church in 1949. The boundary is drawn to include the cemetery the north of the church because there are two early twentieth-century gravehouses are that represent a rare type of mortuary folk architecture. The cemetery also contains about 250 gravesites from the 19th and 20th centuries. The markers and funeral statuary in the cemetery are typical of the period and do not have particular artistic or historic significance.

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Section number Photographs

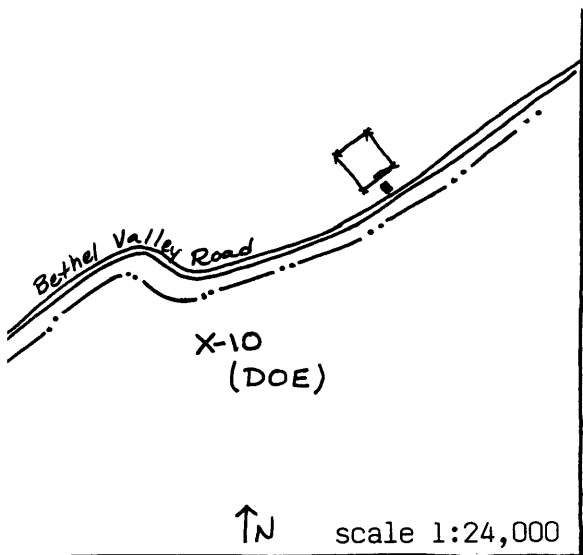
New Bethel Baptist Church Page #1

New Bethel Baptist Church
Bethel Valley Road
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830

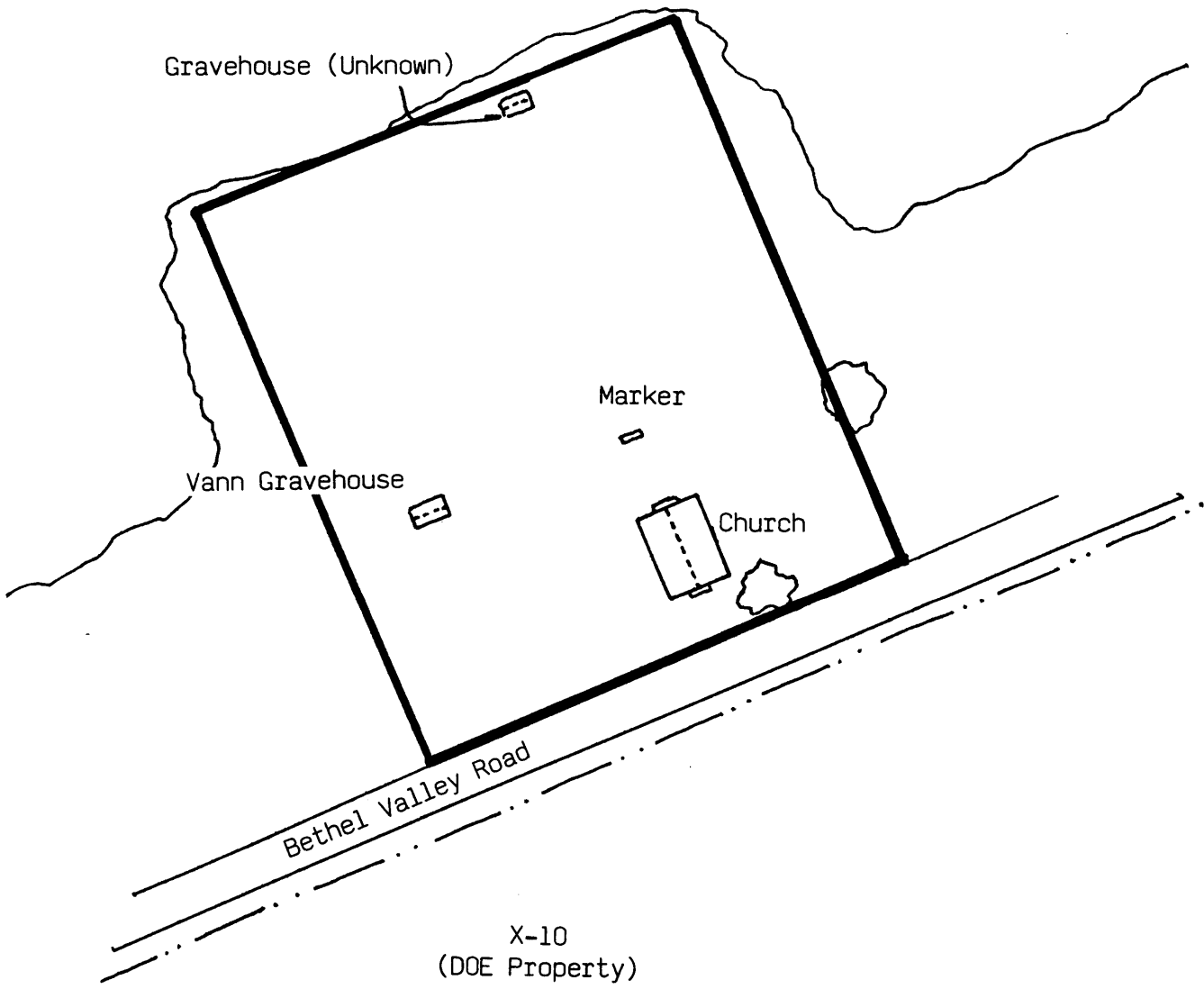
Photographed by Philip Thomason (November 1990) and
Kimberley Murphy (May 1991)

Negatives located at Tennessee Historical Commission
701 Broadway
Nashville, Tennessee 37203

- Photo #1 of 6: North view of main facade.
Photo #2 of 6: South view of rear facade.
Photo #3 of 6: General view of cemetery.
Photo #4 of 6: Gravehouse (unknown) at north edge of cemetery.
Photo #5 of 6: Vann Gravehouse.
Photo #6 of 6: Commemorative stone marker at north of church.



Wooded Area



New Bethel Baptist Church
Bethel Valley Road
Oak Ridge, TN

not to scale