

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 96000110

Date Listed: 2/16/96


Spring Hill Methodist Church
Property Name

Barbour
County

ALABAMA
State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

9/16/96
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section No. 5

This nomination is amended to show that there are two contributing resources: the church (a contributing building) and the cemetery (a contributing site), in addition to the non-contributing Sunday school building.

This change has been discussed with the Alabama SHPO.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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JAN 18 1996

MAY 3 1995

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Ala. Historical Commission

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 Spring Hill Methodist Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number South side of Barbour County Road 89 and approx. 750' West of the intersection of 89 and County Route 49 N/A not for publication

city or town Spring Hill N/A vicinity

state Alabama code AL county Barbour code 005 zip code 36053

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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 1/4/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain): _____

for Signature of the Keeper **Entered in the National Register** Date of Action
[Signature] 2/16/94

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	1	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

RELIGION/church school

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Wood

roof Asphalt

other

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 the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

Period of Significance

1841

c. 1890

Significant Dates

1841

c. 1890

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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):

- 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:

Alabama Historical Commission

Spring Hill Methodist Church
Name of Property

Barbour County, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 14 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 6	6 5 6 7 1 5	3 5 5 0 4 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	1 6	6 5 6 8 2 0	3 5 5 0 3 2 0

3	1 6	6 5 6 7 3 0	3 5 5 0 1 9 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	1 6	6 5 6 6 0 0	3 5 5 0 3 0 0

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 Jeff Mansell
organization Cahaba Trace Commission date February 21, 1995
street & number Route 1, Box 147 telephone (205) 665-7982
city or town Brierfield state Alabama zip code 35035

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 Alabama-West Florida Conference, The United Methodist Church
street & number Post Office Box 700 telephone (334) 222-3127
city or town Andalusia state Alabama zip code 36420

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 listings. 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 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Ala. Historical Commission

Spring Hill Methodist Church
Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

Architectural Description

Spring Hill Methodist Church, c. 1841, is a significant example of a vernacular interpretation of the Greek Revival style adapted for a religious structure. Located in the Spring Hill community on Barbour County Road 89 just west of the intersection with County Route 49, the white frame structure faces north and rests in the middle of a cemetery featuring impressive markers, headstones, and monuments as well as an imposing mausoleum. The entire property is enclosed by a low concrete wall, erected c. 1919. Varieties of Southern flora, such as pine, cedar, oak, and dogwood, are found on the grounds. The row of cedar trees behind the church were planted to mark the graves of Union soldiers who died during the Civil War in a nearby hospital in the Spring Hill community.

The church is a one story frame Greek Revival "temple" form structure with a pedimented gable roof projecting over a full width recessed porch supported by four wooden square Doric columns. The structure rests on brick piers; the principal beams of the church are hand-hewn timbers which span the entire length of the structure. The exterior is covered by weatherboarding although the facade is finished with flush boarding. The three bay facade features a centrally placed window with single piece fixed shutters or louvers. The outer two bays of the facade are double leaf entrances of hand-planed, double paneled doors set in a shouldered or "eared" surround. A series of three wooden steps spans the entire width of the porch.

The east and west elevations are identical with a band of four large 9/9 double hung sash windows. A smaller window is located over the southernmost bay on the east and west elevations. These upper windows once provided light for an interior balcony which was removed c. 1890. The southern elevation is composed of two 9/9 double hung sash windows. Originally an exterior staircase connected with an upstairs doorway which allowed access to the rear balcony. The opening was closed, c. 1890, when the balcony was removed.

The interior features a central aisle plan with pews on either side. The walls are covered with a paneled wainscoting and plastered walls. Originally, the pulpit was located on the north wall between the twin entrance doors but was moved to the southern side of the church c. 1890 when the balcony was removed. Today, the pulpit rests on a raised dais enclosed by a wooden altar rail. The pulpit is original to the church as are the Gothic Revival altar chairs. The lighting fixtures are oil lamps, original to the structure, which have been converted for electricity.

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Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

The surrounding cemetery is significant due to its age and the distinctive design features of the markers, monuments, headstones and mausoleum. The earliest markers lie to the west of the Church while the more contemporary headstones are found in the eastern portion of the cemetery. Older cemetery plots are laid in a random manner. Markers throughout the cemetery date from mid-1840s (soon after the date of construction of the church) to the present. A number of family plots are protected by decorative wrought and cast iron fencing and are shaded by large trees often located at the corners of plots. Throughout the older section of the cemetery, markers and monuments feature typical mid to late 19th century funerary decoration such as shells, angels, lambs, draped urns, willows, and other motifs. The most impressive monuments are those associated with the Comer family, including the Gothic marker of John Fletcher Comer (1827-1854) the man who donated the land and is most responsible for the construction of Spring Hill Church. Comer's marble monument is adorned with Gothic arches, carved reliefs of classical figures, nicely detailed antheniums and finials. The monument, and others in the Comer plot, were carved by H. McCauley of Columbus, Georgia. The Comer mausoleum was erected by the family in 1919. John Fletcher Comer and other members of the Comer family are the ancestors of Alabama governor Braxton Bragg Comer. Another noteworthy monument is the towering column on square base which marks the resting place of Thomas Burke, an 18 year old who fell during the Battle of Richmond.

Also located on the property is a small two-room Sunday School building, c. 1954, which, while non-contributing, is sympathetic in design. Overall, the Spring Hill Church and Cemetery retain a high degree of integrity in regard to feeling, design, materials, workmanship, and setting. The church and cemetery are in excellent condition. The Spring Hill Methodist Church nomination includes one non-contributing building and one contributing site.

Archaeological Component

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of the Spring Hill church and cemetery, the potential for subsurface remains may be high. Buried portions may contain significant information that may be useful in interpreting the entire property.

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Spring Hill Methodist Church
Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

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Criteria C: Architecture

Located in the Spring Hill community in Barbour County, the Spring Hill Methodist Church, c. 1841, is significant in the field of architecture, National Register Criterion C, as an outstanding example of a vernacular interpretation of the Greek Revival style adapted for a religious structure. The church reflects the popularity and dissemination of the Greek Revival style in America, particularly in the South during the antebellum period. Spring Hill Church yields information regarding the styles, form, construction methods, techniques and craftsmanship utilized by Alabamians in the 1840s. The church retains a high degree of integrity in regard to design, materials, workmanship, feeling and setting.

Historical Summary:

In the 1800s, the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, under the direction of Bishop Francis Asbury, began to send ministers into the sparsely settled territory then known as the Old Southwest. The renowned evangelical minister Lorenzo Dow planted the seeds of Methodism in Alabama in 1803 at McIntosh on the banks of the Tombigbee River. Methodism began to thrive in the newly created state of Alabama (1819) with the majority of the area being ministered to by missionaries from the South Carolina, Mississippi and Tennessee conferences. In 1830, the loosely organized Methodist denominations split into two factions, one becoming known as the Methodist Protestant Church and the other as the Methodist Episcopal Church. Despite the division, however, Methodism continued to flourish in Alabama, boasting a membership in 1832, of over 29,000. In that same year, almost thirty years after the founding of Methodism, the Alabama Conference on Methodism was formed and by 1835, the First Methodist Church along the lower stretches of the Chatahoochee River was built at Eufaula, the year that town changed its name from Irwington. (Heaton)

Lazenby's History of West Alabama and West Florida notes "during the dozen years between 1833 and 1845, Methodism has in this territory opened up...by removal of the Indians, organized thirteen pastoral charges, with no fewer than 75 churches." It was during this period that all of the churches on the Midway Pastoral Charge were created including Spring Hill Methodist Church, c. 1841, at the Spring Hill community in Barbour County. The county was created in 1832. In addition to Spring Hill Church, the Midway Pastoral Charge included the Enon, Comer, Midway, and Batesville churches. (Heaton; "History of Spring Hill")

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Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

The construction of Spring Hill Methodist Church is identified primarily with John Fletcher Comer and his family who moved into Barbour County, Alabama from Jones County, Georgia in the late 1830s. According to the recollections of former minister, M. L. Heaton, "even until this day [1968] this community and this church are identified with the Comers...the Comers always traveled with their mill, their school, and their church. Spring Hill Church is living evidence of this as so." (Heaton; "History of Spring Hill")

In Braxton Bragg Comer, His Family Tree, passages from diaries of the ancestors of the former Alabama governor note that in 1841, "Old Spring Hill church was constructed with lumber from the [John Fletcher Comer's] mill." Later entries for that year include ones which state "Aaron hauled the stocks for the lumber for the church" and "we raised the church today. 6 hands. Cobb and Maddox helped. Commenced covering the church." By March 31, Aaron was able to "haul the benches to the church." The original tract of land deeded by the Comer family comprised approximately 20 acres and according to the dates found on various graves surrounding the church, interment in the cemetery began soon after the completion of the sanctuary. (Comer; Heaton)

No sooner was the church completed than the Methodist faith was again confronted with discord and dissension, this time over the issue of slavery. As was common throughout the south, African-Americans, slaves of the members of the Spring Hill congregation, worshipped with their masters from the balcony of the rear of the church. Indeed, the Spring Hill Church counted a large number of African-Americans as members of their congregation. In 1844, however, the question of slavery caused a split in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The southern delegation became known as the Methodist Episcopal Church-South and would remain known as such until almost 95 years later when all three branches of Methodism became The Methodist Church. (Heaton; "History of Spring Hill")

In the 1860s, the Spring Hill Church maintained a membership of 94 members; the 1867 Sunday School boasted a Superintendent, a Sec.-Librarian, 9 teachers, 73 reading books, 90 question books, 17 prize books, and 54 pupils. By 1872, the membership was up to 104, 32 men and 72 women. By 1879, however, the membership had dropped to 29 men and 52 women. In 1883, the Spring Hill church instituted an assessment among its membership to raise funds for renovation and maintenance of the church building. While most assessments were relatively small, typically less than \$25.00, the Comer family contributed \$1,500.00. Circa 1890, the interior balcony was removed and the pulpit repositioned to the rear of the sanctuary. According to J. M. Glenn, one

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Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

time pastor of Spring Hill Methodist Church, "Before my day, the Spring Hill church had a gallery for the colored people—with two high small windows still showing—and the pulpit was between the doors. These two doors were customary then—one for men, the others [sic] for women. However, most likely the young men and the young women got together before and after services—and MAYBE did some thinking about each other during the service. Maybe the separation during the services made the "re-union" all the more interesting." Rev. Glenn preached his first sermon at Spring Hill in 1899. (Glenn letter; Heaton; "Spring Hill Church register of members and probationers," ADAH)

In 1899, a formal deed for twenty acres was issued from the Comer family to the Spring Hill Methodist Episcopal Church containing the church, cemetery and land for a school. Catherine Comer Consolidated school was erected in 1921 on a six acre tract lying immediately west of the 14 acre Church lot. In the 1960s, the school building was turned over to local residents for use as a community center. The school is no longer extant. (Comer deed; Kuykendall)

In 1954, descendants of the Comer family erected the two room Sunday School building lying immediately to the south of the main sanctuary building. Today, the Spring Hill church and cemetery are maintained in part with monies generated from a trust established by the Comer family business, Avondale Mills. The church, cemetery and Sunday school building are beautifully maintained and in excellent condition.

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Spring Hill Methodist Church
Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

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Bibliography

Comer, G. L. and Laura V. to Spring Hill Methodist Church. Conveyance Deed, Barbour County Probate Records, January 24, 1899. page 528.

Glenn, J. M. "The Glenns and Spring Hill Church." unpublished manuscript, 1953.

Heaton, M. L. "The United Methodist Church: Midway Pastoral Charge." privately printed.

"History of the Spring Hill Methodist Church." Unidentified newspaper, 1939. In Churches Folder, Barbour County Clippings File, Alabama Department of Archives and History: Montgomery, Alabama.

Kuykenall, I. C., Barbour Board of Education, to Mrs. James Oaks, President, Cowikee Club. September 13, 1961. Letter allowing local club to use the vacant Catherine Comer Consolidated School.

"Spring Hill Church - Enon Circuit of the Alabama Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church South." A church register of members and probationers, 1859-1880. Church Records, Alabama Department of Archives and History: Montgomery, Alabama.

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Spring Hill Methodist Church
Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

Verbal Boundary Description

Those 14 acres lying in Section 28, Township 13 North, Range 27 East, lying south of County Road 89 (also known as the old Eufaula and Montgomery public road) and west of County Road 49, being part of the same tract of land conveyed to the Spring Hill Church by G. L. and Laura V. Comer on January 24, 1899.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were drawn to include the 14 acres which comprise the tract of land historically associated with Spring Hill Church and to include the church building, Sunday school building, and cemetery.

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Photographs
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Spring Hill Methodist Church
Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

For Photographs #1-14, the information in items 1-5 is the same.

1. Spring Hill Church
2. Barbour County, Alabama
3. Jeff Mansell
4. December 13, 1994
5. Negatives on file - Alabama Historical Commission

6. Facade, camera facing south
7. Photo #1

6. Facade, camera facing south
7. Photo #2

6. Northeast corner, camera facing southwest
7. Photo #3

6. Eastern elevation, camera facing west
7. Photo #4

6. Southeast corner, camera facing northwest
7. Photo #5

6. Southeast corner, camera facing northwest
7. Photo #6

6. Southwest corner, camera facing northeast
7. Photo #7

6. Detail of front door, camera facing south
7. Photo #8

6. Detail of interior, camera facing south
7. Photo #9

6. Detail of interior, camera facing south
7. Photo #10

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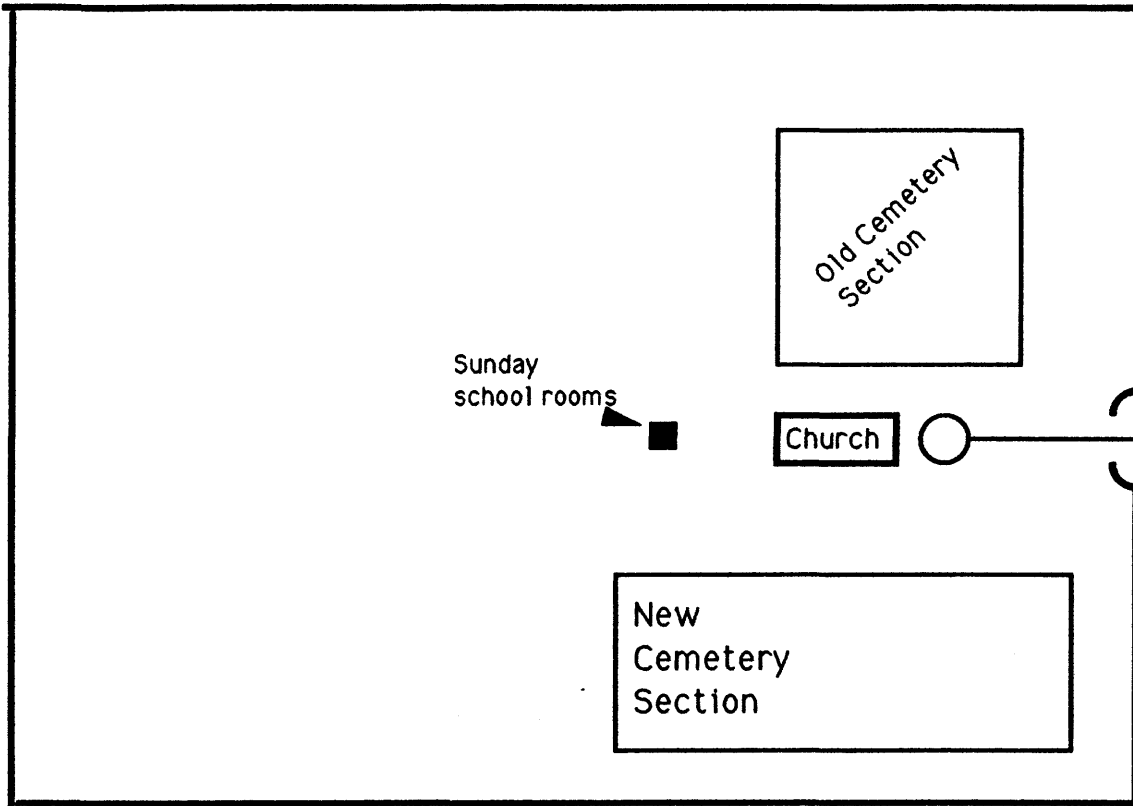
Spring Hill Methodist Church
Spring Hill
Barbour County, Alabama

6. Comer monument, camera facing west
7. Photo #11

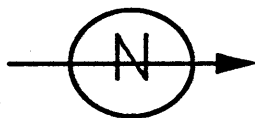
6. Burke monument, camera facing northwest
7. Photo #12

6. Burke monument, camera facing northwest
7. Photo #13

6. Sunday school rooms
7. Photo #14



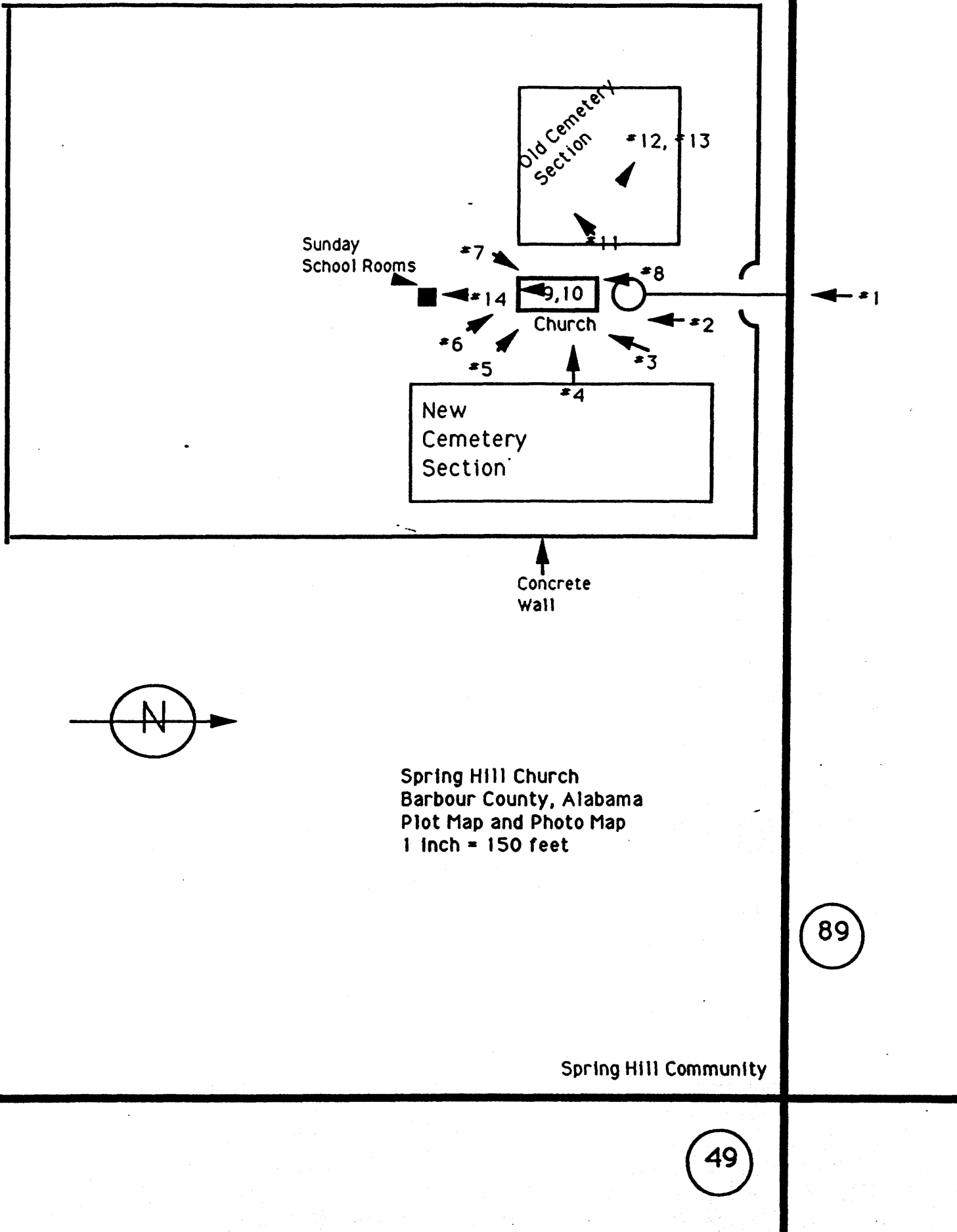
Concrete Wall



Spring Hill Church
Barbour County, Alabama
Plot Map
1 inch = 150 feet

89

Spring Hill Community
49



Spring Hill Church
 Barbour County, Alabama
 Plot Map and Photo Map
 1 Inch = 150 feet

89

Spring Hill Community

49