

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 the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

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

Contributing

1

1

2

Noncontributing

 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

0 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

Historic and Architectural Properties of Clarke County, Alabama

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religious Sub: Religious Facility

Funerary Cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religious Sub: Religious Facility

Funerary Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Front gable church with center steeple

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone, BRICK, CONCRETE

roof METAL: tin

walls WOOD: weatherboard

other STONE

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheet/s.)

USDI/NPS Registration Form

Property Name Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
County and State Clarke County, Alabama

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8. Statement of Significance

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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.)

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

Art _____

Period of Significance 1854-c.1900 1911 _____

Significant Dates 1911 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A _____

Architect/Builder unknown _____

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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 Alabama Historical Commission

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 2.1 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>16 434000</u>	<u>3478620</u>	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>			

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 Blythe Semmer, Historian and Trina Binkley, NR Reviewer

organization Alabama Historical Commission date April 23, 1999

street & number 468 S. Perry Street telephone (334) 242-3184

city or town Montgomery state AL zip code 36130-0900

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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.

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)

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Property Owner
=====

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

name Demopolis District Trustees of the United Methodist Church

street & number 1208 S. Cedar St. telephone _____

city or town Demopolis state AL zip code 36732

**United States Department of the Interior
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

Name of Property: Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery is located in southeastern Clarke County. Gainestown was a busy antebellum settlement and landing on the Alabama River. This Methodist congregation dates to 1819, but the present church was built in 1911 after a tornado destroyed their c.1854 building. It is sited on a neatly-kept lawn on the west side of County Road 29, 0.3 miles south of the intersection with County Road 33, on the flat land that borders the Alabama River. The cemetery lies a few yards west of the church.

The 1911 building was constructed with salvaged materials from the c.1854 church. It was also built on the foundation of the older structure, thereby preserving the spatial relationship of the church to its cemetery. The Gainestown Methodist Church is a simple, rectangular, gable-front building resting on a foundation of limestone piers that has been infilled with brick and concrete block. All sides of the building except the facade are sheathed in weatherboard. The steeple, which is also sheathed in weatherboard, is placed on the east end of the building above the facade. There are rectangular vents in all four sides. Its pyramidal roof is covered in standing seam tin and surmounted by a small cross. Nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows throughout the building are from the c.1854 structure but have mid twentieth-century replacement colored panes.

The facade is composed of three bays. It is faced with diamond-shaped decorative shingling in the gable. Nine-over-nine windows with shutters flank the entrance. Paired five-panel doors are topped by a four-pane fanlight which also contains mid twentieth-century replacement colored panes. The wooden steps up to the doors are a modern replacement. North and south sides of the building contain three nine-over-nine windows with shutters which would have been symmetrically placed on the c.1854 structure. Seams in the weatherboard reveal that the east end of the building, containing the steeple, vestibule, and two small rooms, was added in the 1911 reconstruction of the church. The west or rear elevation is composed of two symmetrically placed nine-over-nine windows with shutters. The weatherboarding flows continuously into the gable.

The interior of the church is equally simple. Through the entry one passes into a vestibule, which is divided from the sanctuary by an arched opening. Interior walls are horizontal flushboard, and the floor is of heart pine boards. The wood flooring is narrower in the vestibule and enclosed rooms on the east end of the building, an indication of its later date of renovation or construction. The ceiling is also flushboard but has been covered with modern ceiling tiles. However, a portion of the tiles have fallen away to reveal the intact boards beneath. Two doors on the east wall of the main interior space lead to a storage room, on the north side, and a bathroom, on the south side. The sanctuary contains six rows of pine pews flanking a central aisle. The aisle leads to a very plain, solid altar rail that is painted white to match both the interior and exterior walls. The simple, unadorned altar area on the west end of the building is one step up from the sanctuary level. Three plain c.1930 opaque glass drop light fixtures illuminate the interior.

The stones in the Gainestown Methodist Church Cemetery are a marked contrast to the simplicity of the modest church building. Stones dating from the antebellum and Victorian periods display elaborate carving and designs reflecting both the burial fashion of their eras as well as the status of Gainestown's inhabitants. The cemetery's arrangement is notable for its scattered family plots, many of which are enclosed with elaborate wrought iron fences from the late nineteenth century. A large cedar tree stands several yards directly west of the church. Family plots are arrayed on either side of the tree and stretching out into the southwest corner of the property. The landscape of the cemetery is very simple, as it is surrounded by woods and brush on three sides and the church on the east side.

Gravestones in the cemetery include antebellum examples of Greek Revival obelisks and tablets. The most impressive and artistic stones date from the 1850s, when the plantation districts along the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers were the focus of

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Section 7/8 Page 2

Name of Property: Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

Clarke County's agricultural prosperity.¹ One large stone dated 1852 reflects the historic role of this site as home of both the church and masonic lodge, two important local social institutions. It boasts a collection of masonic symbols including the apron and the compass and square superimposed on a book. A detailed eye surrounded by rays is carved on the apron. This stone also is inscribed on the rear with the deceased's last name, Flinn. The cemetery also contains examples of the willow motif popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. One is the gravestone of Eliza Flinn, the wife of the man memorialized by the masonic stone. Her headstone shows an angel praying beneath a willow tree. It is topped by a four-petaled flower similar to those that decorate her husband's stone. The gravestone of Angelina Sullivan, dated 1856, stands at the westernmost edge of the cemetery. This tablet, which is approximately five feet high, is topped with an elegantly detailed carving depicting two willow trees, an urn, an obelisk, and a grave with a rose growing on it.

Other elaborate stones date from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. These monuments reflect the popular motifs of Victorian cemeteries, including draped urns, carved doves, scrolls, and bouquets. One large stone in the Smith family plot combines several of these elements. It is a draped pier on which stands a book and a draped urn. A garland grows around the urn. The stone is also decorated with an open book, representing the Bible, that bears the inscription of three verses from the books of Matthew and John. These elements reflect the sentimentalism attached to religion in the late nineteenth century.

The iron fences enclosing the family plots also contribute to the artistic quality of the cemetery. The Smith family plot is surrounded by a fence with an acorn and oak leaf motif that echoes decoration found on one of the headstones within. Other enclosures have detailed gate posts or decorative finials.

Archaeological Component: Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this area, the potential for subsurface remains is good. Buried portions may contain information that may be useful in interpreting the entire area.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CRITERION C: ARCHITECTURE, ART

The Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an intact example of an early twentieth-century rural church. The simplicity of its interior and exterior has not been significantly altered since its 1911 reconstruction. Additionally, it demonstrates how the congregation reused materials from an antebellum church and adapted the remains of an older building to early twentieth-century religious practice and architecture. The church is representative of center steeple churches by its symmetrical fenestration, clapboard siding, simple ornamentation, and paired doors.² Yet the use of nine-over-nine windows rather than more common round-headed or gothic windows reveals how materials from an antebellum building were recycled into this later building type. Furthermore, the property is eligible under Criterion C for its artistic value as a notable local collection of funerary art. The cemetery contains a number of gravestones that illustrate styles and types of funerary art popular with a planter community in the antebellum and Victorian periods. Gainestown's period of significance corresponds with river trade and planter agriculture, which fueled the county's initial prosperity in the antebellum period. The most elaborate gravestones date from a period that began before the Civil

¹Susan Enzweiler, "Historic and Architectural Properties of Clarke County, Alabama," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 4 December 1997), 13.

²Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design. 1870-1940* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 250.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Name of Property: Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

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War and continued in its aftermath until Gainestown's population dwindled in the 1890s. The railroad arrived in Clarke County in the late 1880s, spurring growth in towns along the line and contributing to a changing focus for the county's agricultural economy. Although people continued to live at Gainestown, it became a shadow of its earlier development. The Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery is associated with the development of the Gainestown community and the planter agriculture that constituted Clarke County's first wave of prosperity. It is one of only three extant historic structures from this once thriving Alabama River settlement.

Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties. Although the church is a religious property, it is eligible as an intact representative building of its type. It derives its primary importance from architecture.

Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries. The cemetery derives its primary importance from the artistic value and distinctive design features of the gravestones contained within its boundaries.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The settlement of Clarke County by whites began to accelerate after the opening of the Federal Road in 1811. Clarke County was only newly opened to settlement after cessions by the Creeks and Choctaws. Its history as Indian territory left a lasting imprint on Gainestown, which was named for George Strother Gaines, the federal representative appointed in 1790 to oversee trade with Native Americans in the St. Stephens District. As "factor," Gaines established trading posts on both the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers where he could monitor commerce between Indians and whites. One, located at the Gainestown landing on the Alabama River, was known as Gaines' Trading Post. After the Creeks were defeated at Horseshoe Bend, Gaines abandoned the trading post. The name was then changed to Gainestown Landing in 1815. The Gainestown name referred to a settlement on higher ground above the river landing.³ Rev. Joshua Wilson, a Methodist minister and Revolutionary War veteran, is credited with the founding of Gainestown. He purchased land in 1815 and moved west from North Carolina into the county via the Federal Road two years later. Wilson settled at Gainestown, about three miles from the Alabama River. He brought his slaves, livestock, and wife and children, including those who were married adults, with him.⁴

Gainestown became one of the largest and most active antebellum communities in Clarke County. Plantations lay in and near the bends of the Alabama River between Gosport and Gainestown. Suggsville, also in the eastern section of the county but farther inland from the river, was another antebellum community. By 1860 the river landing was busy with the shipping of cotton, corn, cattle, hogs, potatoes, and other products upriver to Selma and Montgomery and downriver to Mobile. In return, steamboats brought fertilizer, seeds, merchandise, furniture, and farm implements.⁵

The Rev. T.H. Ball attributes the beginning of Methodist religious activity in southern Clarke and western Monroe Counties to the efforts of Rev. John French of French's Landing and Rev. Joshua Wilson of Gainestown. He notes that a number of Methodist families were also settled at nearby Suggsville by 1818.⁶ Wilson helped found the Gainestown Methodist congregation soon after his settlement in the area. The congregation gained a permanent home in 1854, when on April 5

³Clarke County survey information.

⁴Enzweiler, 11.

⁵Clarke County survey information

⁶Rev. T.H. Ball, *A Glance Into The Great South-East, Or, Clarke County, Alabama, and Its Surroundings* (Grove Hill, AL: n.p., 1882; reprint, Clarke County Historical Society, 1973), 568.

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Section 8 Page 4

Name of Property: Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

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John C. Smith and his wife, Francis, gave 2.5 acres in the center of Gainestown to the trustees of the Methodist church and the local masonic lodge. A two-story building was constructed on the land, with the upper floor serving as a masonic lodge while the lower floor functioned as a sanctuary. Burials began in the cemetery in the 1850s. Survey documentation indicates that although the church was established by the Methodists, the building has always been used by other denominations as well.⁷

A 1911 tornado destroyed the church and many other buildings in Gainestown. The Methodists rebuilt the present modest structure using as many of the original materials as could be salvaged. However, the replacement building was to serve only as a church. The Clarke County survey identified the front gabled church form as the most common in the county, popular from the early nineteenth through the mid twentieth centuries. A variation is the inclusion of a small steeple on the gable end flush with the facade. The Gainestown Methodist Church has been recognized as an excellent example of this form.⁸ It is particularly intact since the congregation has remained small and Gainestown has been free of development pressures in the twentieth century. The rebuilt church reflects popular religious building forms of the early twentieth century. Other similar churches have been altered frequently through the growth and change of the congregations they serve.

The cemetery has remained in use from the time the land was donated for the church building until the present. The tombstones and family plots within are reminders of the prominence and prosperity enjoyed by Gainestown in the first century of Clarke County's history. The motifs in the design of the tombstones reflect popular attitudes toward religion and death at the same time they convey a sense of how artistic and architectural styles were understood by Clarke Countians.

Joey Brackner has written that "The decline of traditional forms and the adaptation of those inspired by popular academic styles reflects the establishment of Alabama's merchant and planter classes and their connections to northern urban areas and to Europe."⁹ The popularity of classically-inspired architectural styles with the Alabama planter elite had a direct correlation with the types of tombstones they commissioned from stonemasons moving into the state in the nineteenth century. Gravestones evolved from traditional forms to popular national styles during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the same period that Alabama planters prospered and rose to power. Brackner notes that the change corresponded to a transition from the bedboard silhouette headstone, which dated to the seventeenth century, to a more square shape. "These new, taller, broad tablets usually included neoclassical detail including paneling, fans, fluted pilasters and had adopted funerary motifs such as the urn and willow."¹⁰ James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen have also remarked that "[T]he entire urn-and-willow pattern was a part of the larger Greek revival, which might explain the squared shoulders on the stones--severer classical outline."¹¹ Obelisks were another element associated with classical revival styles.

Approaching midcentury, obelisks and other upright monuments become more popular. Brackner holds that these types of markers heralded "the beginning of the more stylistically eclectic Victorian period. This era is characterized by the addition of more classical motifs to the repertoire and Gothic elements as well as the rose, broken chains, ascending angels and/or

⁷Clarke County survey information.

⁸Enzweiler, 86.

⁹Joey Brackner, "An Overview of the Tombstones of Nineteenth Century Alabama and Their Makers," Unpublished paper in the files of the Alabama Historical Commission.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹James Deetz and Edwin S. Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow," in Thomas Schlereth, ed., *Material Culture Studies in America*.

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Section 8/9 Page 5 Name of Property: Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
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people, masonic emblems, the open Bible, the upwardly pointing finger, lilies, and spires and crockets.”¹² These symbols reflect the religious sentimentalism that characterized Victorian America. A large stone in the Smith family plot is decorated with an open book, representing the Bible, on which three Bible verses are inscribed. The first two, Matthew 24:42 and 44, inform the observer about the death of the two women memorialized by the stone. The verses read “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” The other verse, John 5:39, speaks to the religious faith of the family: “Search ye the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”

Iron plot enclosures serve to reinforce the family identity of groups of gravestones. They are also decorative elements in themselves, as starburst motifs and embellished gates contribute to the artistic quality of the cemetery. Decorated fences convey family status and sometimes elaborate on motifs found on the tombstones. The Smith family plot, for instance, is enclosed with an ornate iron fence with acorn motifs that echo the decoration of stones found inside.

Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery illustrates how this once prosperous planter community evolved in the context of Clarke County’s architectural history. The artistic elements of the cemetery reflect the prosperity and power of the planter class in the 1850s and the sentimentalism of Victorian death practices in the later nineteenth century. The number and detail of the funerary art motifs in the cemetery are unusual for the county. The church building dates from a later period of the community’s development, although many of its materials remain from the c.1854 church and masonic lodge building. The adaptation of early twentieth-century church architecture to salvaged materials shows how the congregation used the destruction of their building by a tornado to tailor the building to their current needs.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ball, T.H. *A Glance Into the Great South-East, Or, Clarke County, Alabama, And Its Surroundings, From 1540 to 1877*. Grove Hill, AL: n.p., 1882; reprint, Clarke County Historical Society, 1973.

Brackner, Joey. “An Overview of the Tombstones of Nineteenth Century Alabama and Their Makers.” Unpublished paper located in vertical files of Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery.

Clarke County Survey

Deetz, James and Edwin S. Dethlefsen, “Death’s Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow.” In Thomas Schlereth, ed. *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville: AASLH, 1982).

Enzweiler, Susan. “Historic and Architectural Properties of Clarke County, Alabama.” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. Washington, DC: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 12 December 1997.

Gottfried, Herbert and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1988.

¹²Brackner.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 10/photos Page 6

Name of Property: Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is a rectangular parcel of 2.1 acres measuring 375' by 250' in the northeast quarter of the southwest quadrant of Section 32, Township 6 North, Range 4 East. It is identified as property number 40-09-32-0-000-013.000 in the tax records of Clarke County, Alabama, and appears as parcel 13 on the corresponding tax map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary is based on the legal description of the parcel on which the church and cemetery are located. It also represents the land historically associated with the church.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
Clarke County, Alabama

Photographer: Johnathan Farris
Date: February 3, 1999
Location of negatives: Alabama Historical Commission
468 S. Perry Street
Montgomery, AL 36130-0900

- 1
General view of property, facing southwest
- 2
East facade, facing west
- 3
West and south elevations, facing northeast
- 4
Interior, east wall and entrance, facing east
- 5
Interior, west wall, facing west
- 6
Interior and detail of pews, north wall, facing north
- 7
General view of cemetery, facing west
- 8
Gate, Smith family plot, facing west

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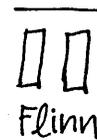
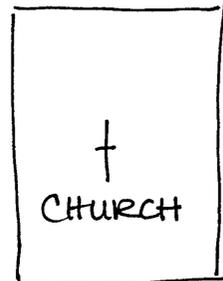
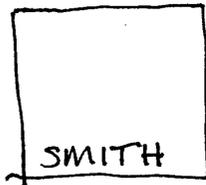
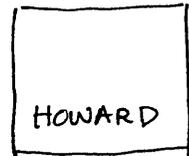
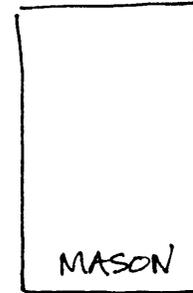
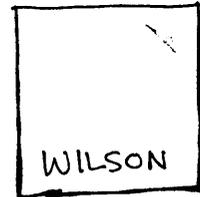
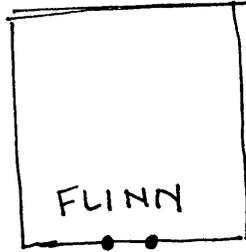
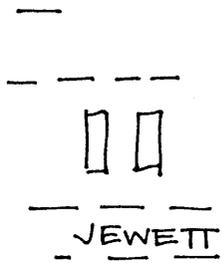
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Section photos Page 7

Name of Property: Gainestown Methodist Church and Cemetery
County and State: Clarke County, Alabama

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- 9
Gate, Flinn family plot, facing west
- 10
Gravestone, Smith family plot, facing southwest
- 11
Gravestone, Smith family plot, facing west
- 12
Detail of carving, facing west
- 13
James A. B. Flinn gravestone, facing west
- 14
Detail of eye carving, facing west
- 15
Eliza A. Flinn gravestone, facing west
- 16
Gravestone, Flinn family plot, facing west
- 17
Angelina Sullivan gravestone, facing west
- 18
Detail of carving, Angelina Sullivan gravestone, facing west

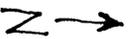


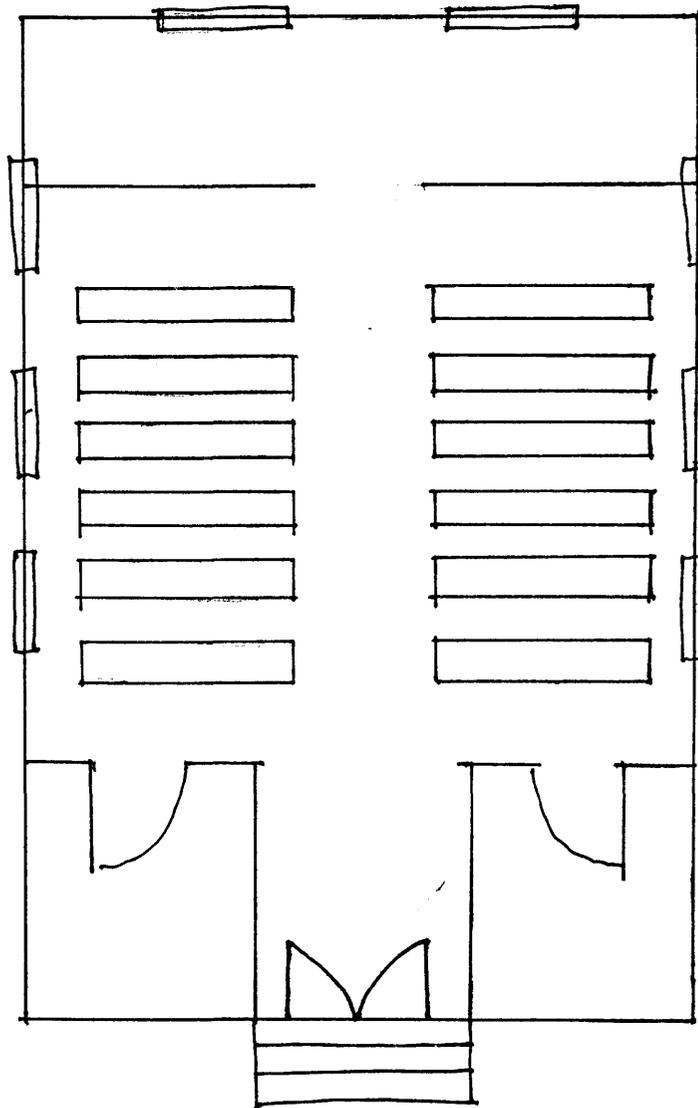
SITE PLAN, SHOWING ARRANGEMENT
OF HISTORIC FAMILY PLOTS AND
IRON ENCLOSURES

GAINESTOWN METHODIST CHURCH AND
CEMETERY

CLARKE COUNTY, AL

(not to scale)





GAINESTOWN METHODIST CHURCH
CLARKE COUNTY, AL
(not to scale)

