

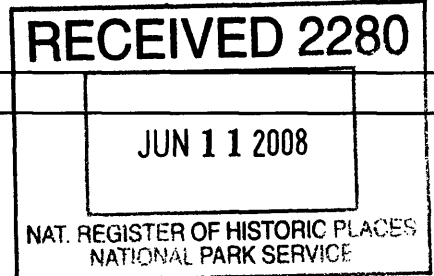
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School
other names/site number N/A



2. Location

street & number 232 Martin Avenue
city, town Whigham () vicinity of
county Grady **code** 131
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31797

() not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	2	0
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	2	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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 the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Richard Coles
Signature of certifying official

5-29-08
Date

for W. Ray Luce
Historic Preservation Division Director
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

Patricia Andrews
Keeper of the National Register

7/23/2008
Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Religion: religious facility, church school

Current Functions:

Religion: religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

No style

Materials:

foundation	Brick
walls	Wood
roof	Asphalt
other	Metal

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School consists of a historic church and school on a flat, sparsely wooded site. The complex is located northwest of downtown Whigham on the north side of the Seaboard Coast Line. The church is surrounded by pecan groves and agricultural storage and processing buildings. Grady County is a rural county in southwest Georgia located near the Florida Panhandle.

The church, built in 1920, is a small frame building clad in beveled weatherboard and covered with a gable-front roof. The building rests on brick piers and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The two-stage corner tower features a truncated hip roof and a pyramidal roof covered with pressed-metal shingles. The shed-roofed entrance is also covered with pressed-metal shingles. Windows throughout the church are one-over-one-light sash windows.

The interior plan features an entrance vestibule with a men's and a women's bathroom at each end. The sanctuary is a large open space with a three-sided choir apse. The sanctuary walls are sheathed with beaded boards and the floor is laid with wood boards. The historic wood pews remain in the sanctuary.

The congregation is in the process of rehabilitating the church. Deteriorated weatherboard and interior sheathing are being replaced so large swathes of siding are missing on the east and west sides. Most of the north end is open because windows in the apse are missing and a section of the north wall is missing. A portion of the wood floor in the sanctuary has been removed. Steel cables have been strung through the church in an effort to stabilize the building, which is out of plumb.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

The school, located adjacent to the church, was built c.1930. It is a small, frame one-room school that is raised on concrete-block piers and clad in weatherboard. The main façade includes the entrance stoop and an exterior brick chimney flue. The gable-front roof, which features exposed rafter ends, is covered with sheet metal. The sides of the school are lined with four-over-four-light sash windows. The interior is finished with wood floors and fiberboard walls.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture
Education
Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance:

1920-1958

Significant Dates:

1920 – The congregation of Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church built its current church building in Whigham, Georgia.

c.1930 – The congregation built the current school building adjacent to the church.

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School is a small African-American church and school located in the town of Whigham in Grady County. Whigham is a small railroad town in southwest Georgia near the Florida Panhandle. The church and school are located northwest of downtown Whigham.

Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church is significant in the area of architecture as an outstanding example of rural African-American church architecture in Georgia in the first decades of the 20th century. Most rural churches founded and built by blacks in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were plain, one-room frame buildings, rectangular in shape with gable roofs. These churches have little or no ornamentation or architectural detailing. Many African-American churches had a rectangular wooden steeple, a central tower mounted on the roof, or a tower at one or both front corners. These towers were sometimes later additions. African-American churches often include side or rear wings that may also have been added after the church was originally constructed. Church interiors were usually finished with paneling or plaster and the ceilings were often unfinished.

The Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church is a small, frame building clad in beveled weatherboard and covered with a gable-front roof. Built in 1920, the church is distinguished by a two-stage corner tower. The interior plan features an entrance vestibule with two bathrooms and an open sanctuary with wood pews that face the three-sided choir apse. The walls of the church are sheathed with plain and beaded boards.

The Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church is also significant in the area of education because the congregation built a one-room school adjacent to the church to provide African-American children in Whigham with academic instruction. The Ebenezer school was the only school for African Americans in the community until racial segregation ended in the 1970s. Small one-room schools, such as the Ebenezer school, were common features of rural African-American churches.

The Ebenezer Baptist African Methodist Episcopal Church and School is also significant in the area of black ethnic heritage because, in addition to its roles as a religious and educational institution, the buildings served the African-American community in Whigham as an important social institution. Like many African-American churches in Georgia and throughout the South, the Whigham church and school served as a center for social and charitable organizations and a focus for civic and political activity.

In *Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia*, Carole Merritt identifies the church as the center of community life in African-American communities. Following Emancipation, churches were often the first buildings constructed in black communities. Although ex-slaves may have lived in the same or similar dwellings that they had previously occupied, they immediately began to organize and build their own churches. During and after slavery, separate denominations formed black associations. The African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) was the first to organize nationally. In Georgia, regional associations were formed shortly after Emancipation with the purpose of organizing and supporting

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

schools.

Most blacks withdrew from white congregations to found their own churches. In some cases, white churches or families granted land for African-American churches. More often, however, buying land and building a church involved black cooperative activities. In 1877 for example, 18 members of the White Bluff community south of Savannah purchased 200 acres of land, one acre of which was set aside in 1883 for the construction of the Nicholsonboro Baptist Church.

Most extant African-American churches in Georgia date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries when most black congregations were large and wealthy enough to finance the building of monumental structures. In many cases, these churches replaced smaller and simpler churches built earlier in the 19th century. Ebenezer is an excellent example of an African-American church and school built during this period.

National Register Criteria

A— The Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School is also significant in the area of black ethnic heritage because the church served the African-American community in Whigham as a center for social and charitable organizations and a focus for civic and political activity. Ebenezer is significant in the area of education because the congregation built a one-room school to provide African-American children in Whigham with academic instruction during the period of racial segregation in the South.

C— The Ebenezer Baptist African Methodist Episcopal Church and School is significant in the area of architecture as an outstanding example of African-American church architecture in Georgia in the first decades of the 20th century.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School is a religious property that meets Criteria Consideration A because it draws its primary significance from its architectural design, methods of construction, and its historical associations with the African-American community in Whigham, Georgia.

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the construction of the Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1920 and ends in 1958, the 50-year end date, because the buildings continued to be used as a church and school.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The National Register nomination for the Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School
Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School, Grady County, Georgia

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

includes two contributing resources, the church and the school. There are no noncontributing resources associated with this nomination.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

The Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in the 1860s by African Americans who would "slip off" into the woods to pray in secret, according to congregation member Brother George Donald. The church began as a "brush arbor" located in the Piney Grove community southwest of Whigham. In 1878, the group purchased the current church property on Martin Avenue in Whigham from J. T. Harrell for \$20. The congregation followed the tenants of the African Methodist Episcopal church. The first trustees of Ebenezer were Brothers Thomas Young, Georgie Donald, Fortune Liphridge, George Shackelford, and Even Swicord.

The first church building constructed at the Martin Avenue site was a log church that was destroyed by fire in 1920. That same year, the congregation built the current wood-frame church. The congregation was centered in Whigham, but also included members from rural Grady County. The church served as a center for social and charitable organizations and a focus for civic and political activity. The Ebenezer congregation built a one-room school c.1930 to provide academic instruction to African-American children who, because of racial segregation, were not permitted to attend public schools with white children. The Ebenezer school was the only school for black children in Whigham until segregation ended in the 1970s.

The church continued as a center for African-American worship through the 1980s. Its condition has deteriorated and it is no longer used for church services. The congregation, which currently comprises only seven members, is rehabilitating the church. They have made efforts to stabilize the structure and make repairs. The congregation currently worships in the school building.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Merritt, Carole. *Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia*. Atlanta: Historic Preservation Section, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1984.

O'Neil, Steve. Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School. Historic Property Information Form. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Atlanta, Georgia. 2006.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:
- 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:

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately one acre.

UTM References

A) Zone 16 Easting 755320 Northing 3419660

Verbal Boundary Description

The historic district boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached map, which is drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the church and school.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Steven Moffson/Architectural Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 34 Peachtree Street, N.W., Suite 1600
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** May 5, 2008
e-mail steven.moffson@dnr.state.ga.us

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) () not applicable

name/title Steve O'Neil
organization Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center
mailing address 30 West Broad Street
city or town Camilla **state** Georgia **zip code** 31730
telephone N/A
e-mail N/A

- () **property owner**
() **consultant**
(X) **regional development center preservation planner**
() **other:**

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) Gloria Walden
organization (if applicable) Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church
mailing address P.O. Box 431
city or town Whigham **state** Georgia **zip code** 31797
e-mail (optional) N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School
City or Vicinity: Whigham
County: Grady
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: September 2006

Description of Photograph(s):


Number of photographs: 15

1. Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School, photographer facing northeast.
2. Church, main façade, photographer facing north.
3. Church, interior view of damaged northwest corner, photographer facing north.
4. Church, interior view, photographer facing north.
5. Church, interior view with support cables, photographer facing south.
6. Church, interior view of west wall near pulpit, photographer facing west.
7. Church, interior view of entrance vestibule, photographer facing east.
8. Church, main and west facades, photographer facing northwest.
9. School, main and south facades, photographer facing northeast.
10. School, rear and south facades, photographer facing northwest.
11. School, interior view of classroom, photographer facing east.
12. School, Interior view of classroom, photographer facing west.
13. Church, apse, photographer facing northwest.
14. Church, west façade, photographer facing west.
15. Church east façade near north end, photographer facing northeast.

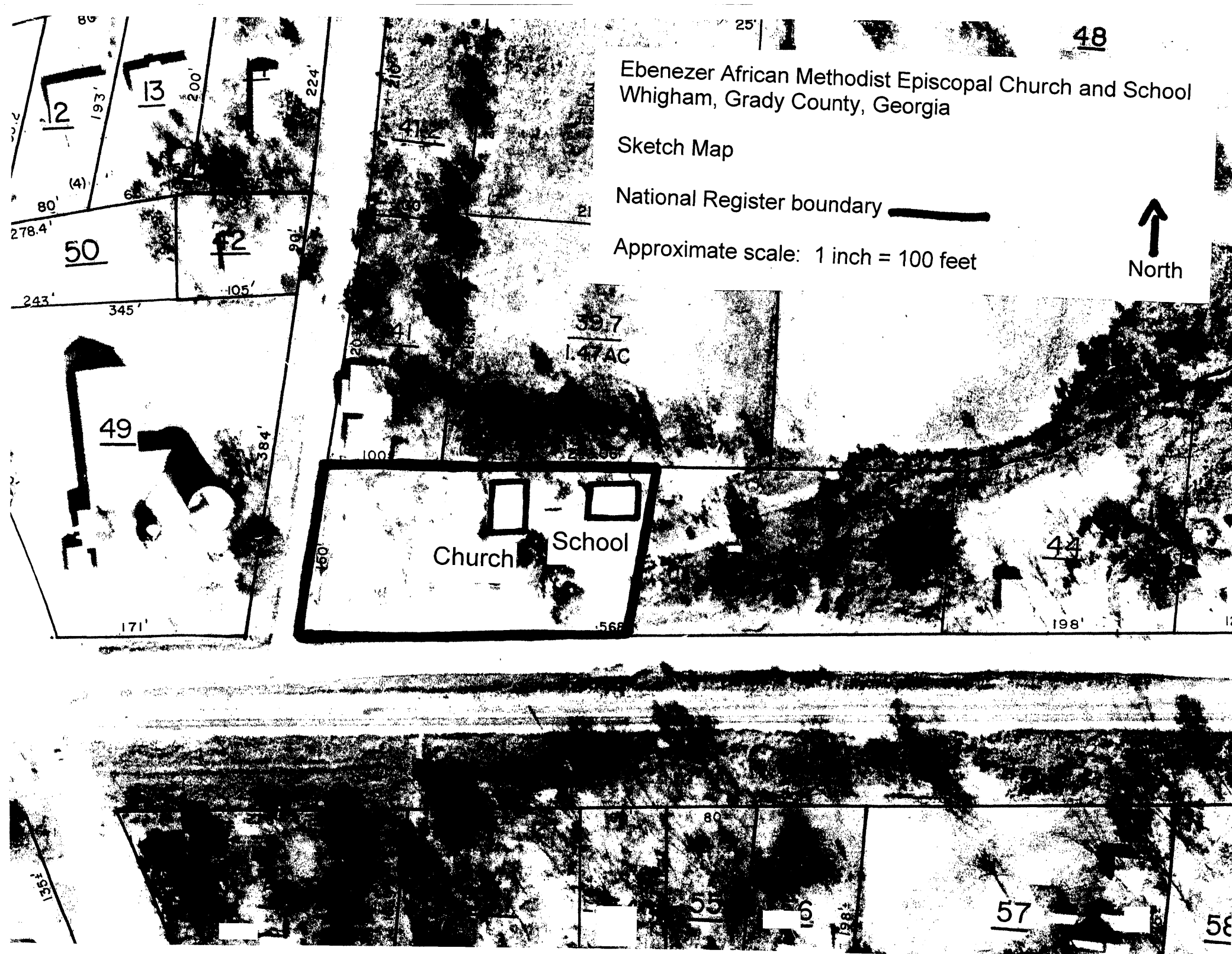
(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)

Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School
Whigham, Grady County, Georgia

Sketch Map

National Register boundary 

Approximate scale: 1 inch = 100 feet



39.7
1.47 AC

Church School

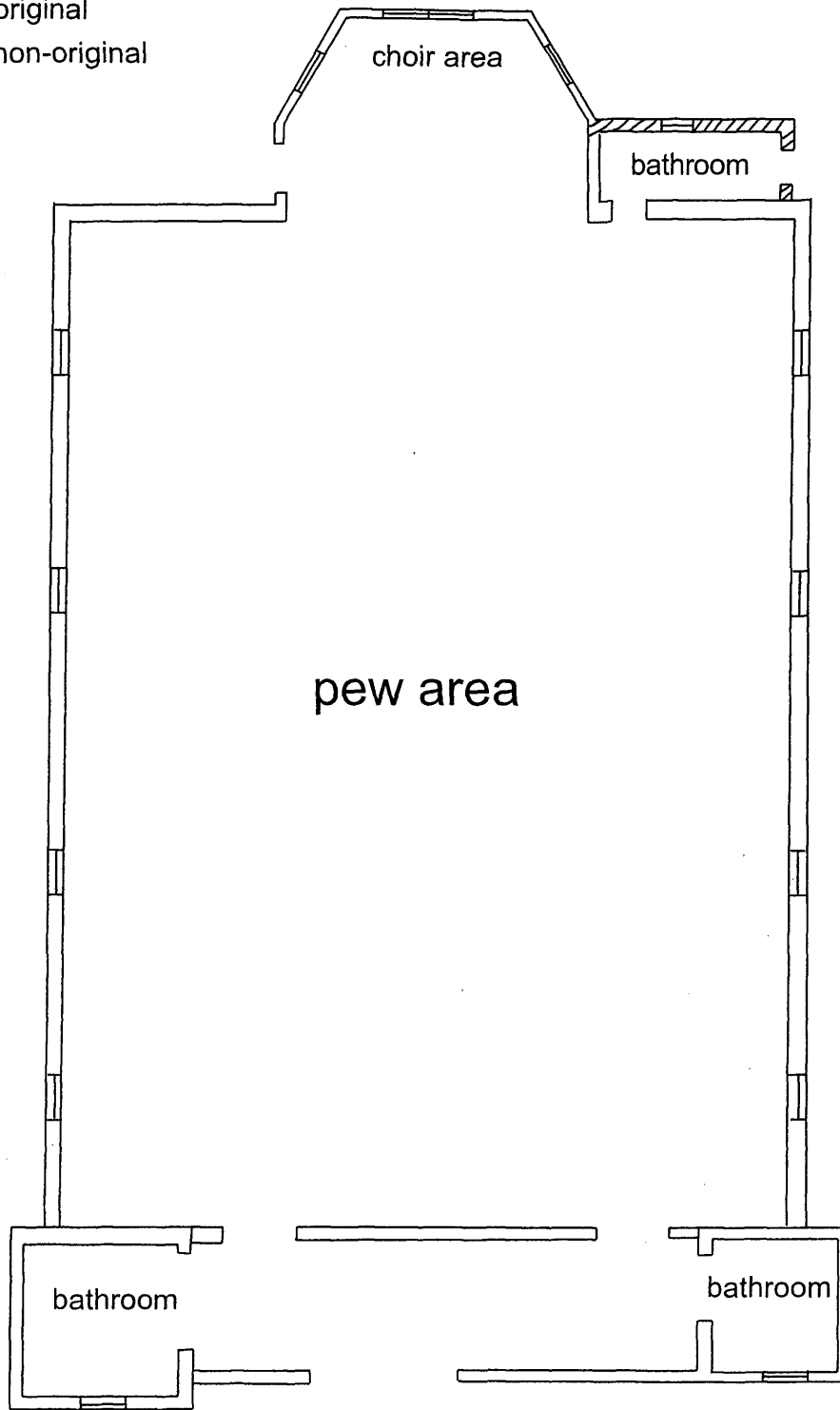
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- original
- ▨ non-original



Ebenezer African Methodist Episcopal Church and School
Whigham, Grady County, Georgia

Church Floor Plan

No scale

