

1195

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 CAMPBELL CHAPEL A.M.E. CHURCH
 other names/site number N/A

RECEIVED 2000
SEP - 5 1997
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

2. Location

street & number 429 N. Jackson St.
 city, town Americus
 county Sumter code GA 261
 state Georgia code GA zip code 31709

(N/A) vicinity of

(N/A) not for publication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:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	1	0
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	1	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.

Mark R. Edwards _____ August 28, 1997
Signature of certifying official Date

Mark R. Edwards
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

Edson A. Beall _____ 9/30/97

() determined eligible for the National Register _____

() determined not eligible for the National Register _____

() removed from the National Register _____

() other, explain: _____

() see continuation sheet

Beall _____
Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions:

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival

Materials:

foundation	brick
walls	brick
roof	asphalt shingles
other	N/A

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Campbell Chapel AME Church is a two-story, red-brick building in the Romanesque Revival style. It has a gabled roof with overhanging eaves and dormer windows. There are stained glass, round-headed windows, a rose window, and a brick belfry on the south side. There is matching red mortar and the exposed rafter eaves have been boxed in except at the entrance. Rafters and supports still are exposed at the porch roofs over arched doorways. The sanctuary, on the second floor, is entered through gabled-entryways and stairs via a vestibule at the base of the belfry. The interior floor plan is a Latin cross plan. There is a lounge next to the vestibule. There are offices, a kitchen, and restrooms centered around an open meeting space with a stage on the ground floor. The church retains original plaster walls, wood floors, and tongue-and-groove ceilings, as well as original lights in the sanctuary. Original pews which remain have carved ends. There is an original paneled balcony railing and paneled beams along the large, U-shaped balcony. The church rests on a brick foundation and round metal columns support the balcony and the ceiling of the basement/ground floor.

The church sits at the corner of Jackson and Wild Streets, across from a former hospital, now a day care center, and is surrounded by residences. It is located three blocks from the central business district of Americus. There is a minimum of landscaping. There are no outbuildings. The church has had minor changes, most notably the addition of a wall at the west end (rear) of sanctuary to create a nursery; and the addition of louvers in the open-aired belfry.

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
ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Period of Significance:

1920-1947

Significant Dates:

1920

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Persley, Louis Hudson (1890-1932)
First registered African-American architect in Georgia

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Campbell Chapel AME Church is significant in architecture because it is a good example of a church designed in the Romanesque Revival style. Elements of the style which are evident are the massing and round-headed windows. There are also Queen Anne style details in the windows. The church retains its original belfry, Latin cross plan, brackets, stained glass windows, rose window, large balcony, and other details. It is also significant as one of the few Georgia documented works of Louis H. Persley (1890-1932), Georgia-born, and the first Georgia-registered African-American architect, who later made his career at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Persley, from Macon, Georgia, did fine work, such as this church, early in his career when he had just begun, and then moved to Alabama to be a professor of architecture. This church is similar in design to the First A.M.E. Church of Athens, Georgia (NR listed), built in 1916, which he also designed and which also survives. It is of the same style, materials, and massing as this one, and also has a wood-frame entry portico and stained-glass windows in groups of threes. In both, the main sanctuary floor is entered from the side, rather than the "front" of the church. In the Athens church, the architect had a larger lot upon which to design a church, hence the designs are slightly different. There are presumed to be other churches in Georgia and Alabama Persley designed that have not yet been identified.

The church is significant in Ethnic Heritage-Black because the church was built to serve the African-American Methodists in the county-seat town of Americus and has continued in that purpose from its construction in 1920 until the present. This church building has been the headquarters for the church since then. The present land was acquired in 1877 and a frame church built there which its congregation outgrew in the early 20th century, necessitating this building in 1920. The earlier church building was razed. The new church was a major financial obligation for the black community and donations came not only from prominent members, but also from laborers, domestic workers, sharecroppers, and others working for as little as 50 cents a day. A public appeal for donations from the white community was also conducted. The church has grown to be able to offer financial assistance to support black colleges and universities and has assisted church members in furthering their education. The church has also been the location through the years for many historic church and political meetings, as well as productions such as the famous play "Heaven Bound" in 1931, all of these making it a major landmark in the black community of Americus. The area around the church has been hit heavy with extensive community development in recent years, and thus few historic buildings remain and this church and a nearby general store are the only historic community landmark buildings left.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

National Register Criteria

The Campbell Chapel AME Church meets National Register Criterion A because as a prominent Methodist church for the black community, it has played a major role in African-American affairs in this south Georgia county seat community. The church was built through a major fund raiser in which the black and white communities worked together and the church congregation itself was a microcosm of black society reflecting both domestic and other worker-types as well as doctors and ministers.

The church also meets National Register Criterion C because it is a good example of a church built in the Romanesque Revival style as late as 1920 and is the work of a trained African-American architect, Louis H. Persley, a native-born Georgian, and the first African-American to be registered in Georgia as an architect.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

The nomination meets Criteria Consideration A because it is significant in architecture as a fine example of the Romanesque Revival style and especially as an early work of Louis H. Persley, Georgia-born architect, and the first African-American architect registered in Georgia.

Period of significance (justification)

The period runs from the completion of the church building (1920) until the end of the historic period (1947) because the church was in continuous operation then, and still is.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

There is only one contributing resource on the nominated property, the church itself.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

HISTORY OF CAMPBELL CHAPEL AME CHURCH Written by Karl Wilson on behalf of the church

Campbell Chapel AME Church had its beginning like the giant oak from a tiny acorn in the year of our Lord 1869 at Hampton and Anchrom Street. The congregation began under the supervision of the white Methodist church which had a small membership of twenty-five people. Moved by the spirit of self-help and freedom of worship, the early members resolved to withdraw and organize an independent Methodist church.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

This newly-formed group moved to what is now known as the McCoy Hill Community on the city's eastern border. At this time the hilly area was thickly wooded with trees and thick bushes. It was at this location, away from the broader community, that Rev. Braswell established a bush harbor in the deepest of the thickets. The bush harbor places of worship were later coined "the invisible early churches" of the newly-freed slaves. It was in these bush harbors that the procurers of Campbell Chapel AME Church would sing, do the holy dance, and lift their voices high in song and prayer to the Lord.

Campbell Chapel had its beginning only four years following the Emancipation of slavery. Out of the dark path she has come shadowed beneath our Father's hand. The present site of Campbell Chapel AME was purchased from Mahala Bosworth on January 29, 1877. The first church was a beautiful wood framed, steepled church built by S. S. Sloan and Company. It was dedicated on October 14, 1877 by Bishop Campbell (Weekly Sumter Republican, Oct. 5, 1877). The congregation was presumably named for this Bishop Campbell. The church was white with beautiful gas lights. The late Mrs. Rosie Lee Brantly explained that when she first attended the Methodist Church as a small child, it was what she imagined heaven would look like. Over the next 41 years, the church grew in prosperity and membership.

One of Campbell Chapel's most famous members was Elbert Head, a highly intelligent and wealthy black man who bought his freedom and later saved his master from peril. Elbert Head, in 1879, for a small donation, sold the property to Campbell Chapel AME Church where now stands the first AME parsonage on Winn Street.

The present brick structure of Campbell Chapel AME Church was erected in 1920 by the late Rev. M. H. Fountain. The church by then had grown to over 500 members. Most were hard working domestic and field workers. However, there were some professional and business members in the congregation. In 1919, E. J. Brinson, M.D., was chairman of the fund raising committee for building the new brick structure. However, the new church was primarily financed by common laborers and domestic workers. The church was paid for on a large scale by share croppers, cotton pickers and peanut shakers, laboring for wages of 50¢ a day.

One of the church's high points was when Bishop W. Sampson Brooks, the "Negro bishop of West Africa," spoke there on March 29, 1926. He spoke on the habits and customs of the natives of the west coast of Africa. For this event, the newspaper announcing the program indicated that "The white people of Americus are invited to hear the visitor, special arrangements having been made to seat the white visitors." In February, 1931, Atlanta's famous drama "Heaven Bound" was staged at this church and was announced on page one of the Americus newspaper. The audience was one-fourth white people. The play continues to be presented in Atlanta annually.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Campbell Chapel's impact on education has been an unmeasurable success as she has given financial support to Black colleges and universities, assisting youngsters in completion of their college education.

One of the greatest and long term acts of benevolence was conveyed during the turbulent years when strong segregationists were losing the battle to the integration movement. Acts of racial unrest were common place. In 1958, a suspected arsonist burned to ashes the Black Staley High School , leaving black students in the county without a large enough facility to hold commencement and graduation exercises.

Campbell Chapel AME, moved by compassion, opened her doors to the county school system and agreed unanimously to allow the Americus/ Sumter County residents to hold senior graduation and commencement exercises at the church. This gracious act on behalf of the children, friends and families of Americus and Sumter County began in 1958 and continued until 1970.

Campbell Chapel, in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity (1995), permitted Habitat to use their facility for the organization's youth development program.

In these 127 years, 54 pastors, 25 presiding elders and 17 bishops have served. These include the ones now serving: The Reverend J. E. Curry, Pastor; The Reverend Elisha Smith, Sr., Presiding Elder; and Bishop George Kenneth Ming, Chief Pastor.

Through the leadership of these 54 pastors, many improvements have been made through the years. The most outstanding of these include the completion of the first unit, installation of heating and cooling systems, equipping an office, installing telephones, erection of a modern parsonage, the organization of many clubs and choirs, installation of a Hammond organ, carpet and choir seats, renovation of the parsonage, reactivation of the Auxiliary Board, Youth Usher Board, organization of the Gospel Choir, new uniforms and robes for the Senior and Cathedral Choirs and the Youth Usher Board, and repair and renovation as needed.

Many needs of the church such as an electric cooler, communion table, flag, and pulpit chairs were donated to the church by dedicated members in memory of loved ones. Mrs. Dorothy Apple has donated a scholarship fund in her name for deserving students who would like to continue their education. Campbell Chapel, with her Christian minister, will continue to work diligently for God's purposes in service and dedication.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

The announcement of the building of the present church structure, nominated herein, is contained in this newspaper announcement from the Americus (GA) Times-Recorder, March 18, 1919:

NEGROES PLAN
\$20,000 CHURCH
STRUCTURE HERE

"A \$20 000 church building will be erected soon by the members of the colored Methodist church, on the site of the present temporary structure on North Jackson street, according to plans announced today. It is planned to start razing the old structure April 1. At the Sunday services the committee which has been raising funds for the church building reported \$534.80 received. In addition to this enough was raised among the colored people to bring the fund to \$4,500. An effort is now being made to increase this to \$5,000., when application will be made to the church extension board for assistance.

"The following card was issued today by Dr. E. J. Brinson, colored physician of Americus, who had charge of the solicitation of funds among the white people of the city:

"Words of Gratitude to Our White Friends.—We cannot find words to express our appreciation and gratefulness to our many white friends who contributed so very liberally through me to the trustees of the A.M.E. church for the purpose of erecting a new, modern, spacious brick structure with departments for special services for our young people.

"We hope to erect such a building as will be an attraction to our people and creditable to the city. Our final purpose is to inject higher ideas, clean thought, noble purposes, and more exalted aspirations into the youth of our race.

"You contributed through me last Sunday to this movement \$534.80. We raised more than \$4500. Our plan was to raise \$5,000 that we might capture a large donation from our Church Extension department. We think, however, we will be able to reach the \$5,000 mark this week.

"If there are any big-hearted, public spirited white friends of ours who have not contributed to this fund, and who are inclined to do so that they may help a very worth[y] cause, we will appreciate receiving the donation this week. We do not think you can contribute to a more worthy cause.

"We want to make better character out of our people, and thereby better citizens. Our heart overflows with thank to those who have already donated liberally to this fund.

E J. BRINSON, M. D."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8--Statement of Significance

NOTES ON THE ARCHITECT:

Louis H. Persley (1890-1932), a native of Macon, Georgia, is considered the architect for this church by Vinson McKenzie, librarian, and lecturer on African-American Architects and Builders in America, especially the south. He has mounted a traveling exhibition of his research and illustrations. In comparing this church with the First A.M.E. Church of Athens, Georgia, which was listed on the National Register in 1980, there are many similarities. The Athens Church has Persley's name on the cornerstone. As mentioned above in the Statement of Significance, the churches are similar in style, massing, use of wood for the entry portico, the hammerbeam-type ceiling in the sanctuaries, and the pairing of three stained glass windows with a rose window above. Persley had designed the one in Athens in 1916, for an A.M.E. church and thus could have been known to the Americus congregation as someone available to design a church for them. McKenzie has written extensively on Persley and continues to document his career. Other information may be discovered to more fully document Persley's career.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Wilson, Karl. Historic Property Information Form, 1996, copy on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Ga. Dept. of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Ga.

Persley, Louis H. Information from Architecture and Builders of GA Files, Historic Preservation Division, Ga. Dept. of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Ga. and from interview with Vinson McKenzie, librarian, expert and lecturer on African-American Architects in America, resident of Atlanta, Ga.

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):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A) Zone 16 Easting 761120 Northing 3552140

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is marked on the enclosed tax map as parcel 6.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is all the owner owns at this location and all that remains associated with the church.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
street & number 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** July 31, 1997

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

name/title Karl Wilson, Sr., Chairman, Church Historic Committee
organization Campbell Chapel AME Church
street and number 238 Academy St.
city or town Americus **state** GA **zip code** 31709
telephone N/A

() **consultant**
() **regional development center preservation planner**
(X) **other:** member of congregation; neighborhood historian

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

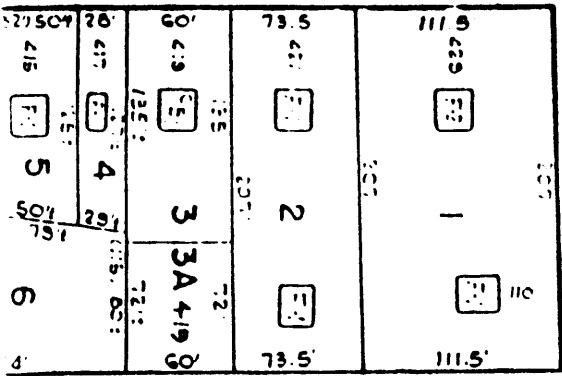
Name of Property: CAMPBELL CHAPEL A.M.E. CHURCH
City or Vicinity: AMERICUS
County: SUMTER
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: December, 1996

Description of Photograph(s):

- 1 of 10 Rear (north) and west facades; photographer facing southeast.
- 2 of 10 West and south facades (both entrance facades); photographer facing northeast.
- 3 of 10 Close up of entrance stairs, west and south facades; photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 10 View of church from Wild St., south and east facades; photographer facing northwest.
- 5 of 10 South facade, closeup of ground floor entrance showing cornerstone; photographer facing north.
- 6 of 10 Cornerstone on southeast corner; photographer facing north.
- 7 of 10 Interior, Second or Main Floor, sanctuary, looking at altar; photographer facing northeast.
- 8 of 10 Interior, Second or Main Floor, sanctuary, looking at balcony; photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 10 Stairway leading to First or Ground Floor; photographer facing east.
- 10 of 10 Stained glass windows on First or Ground Floor; photographer facing east.

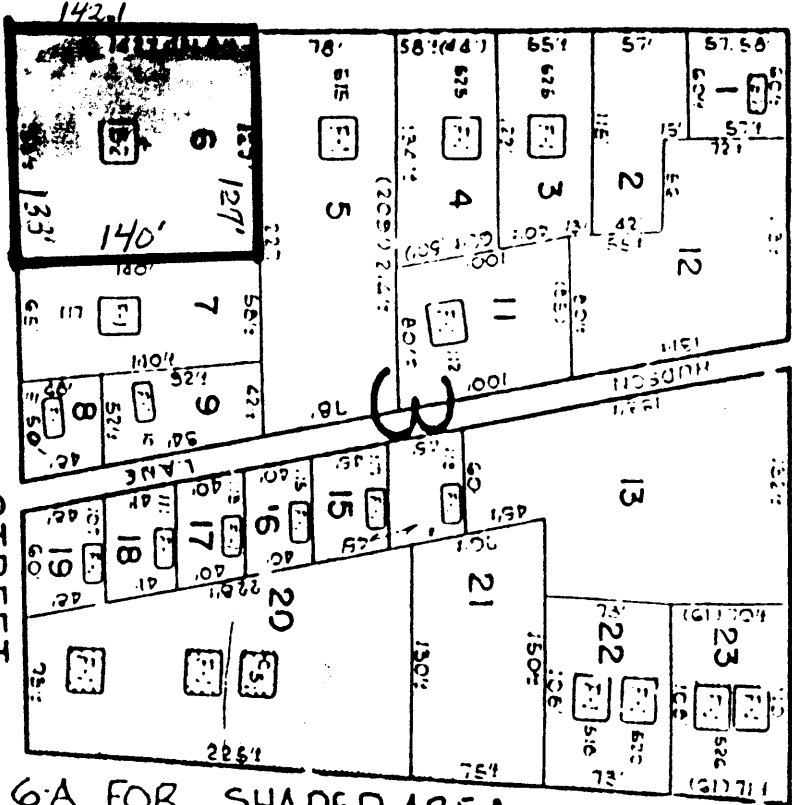
JACKSON

STREET



WILD

STREET



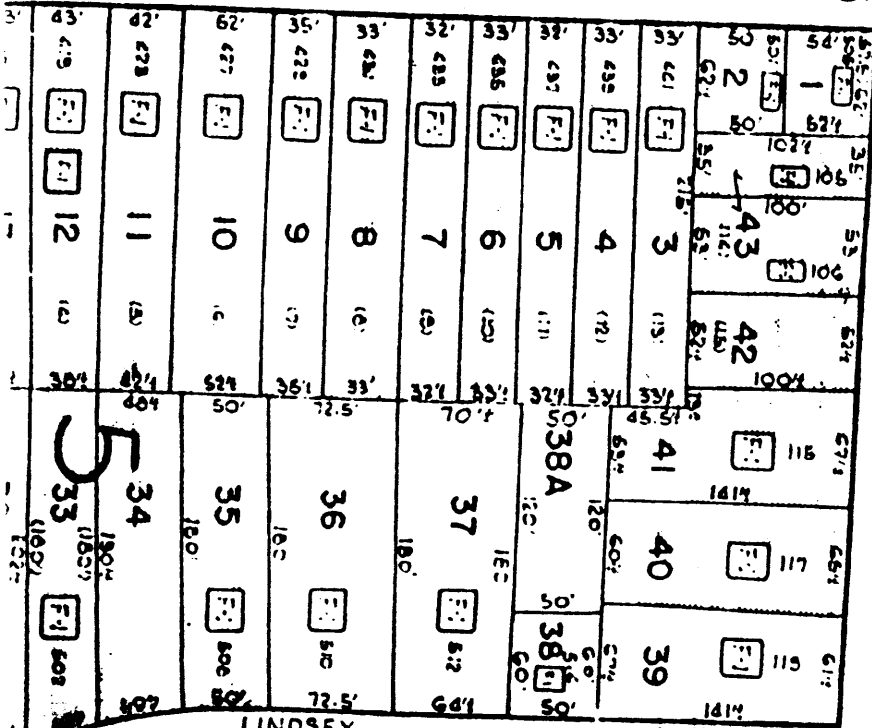
BAY

STREET

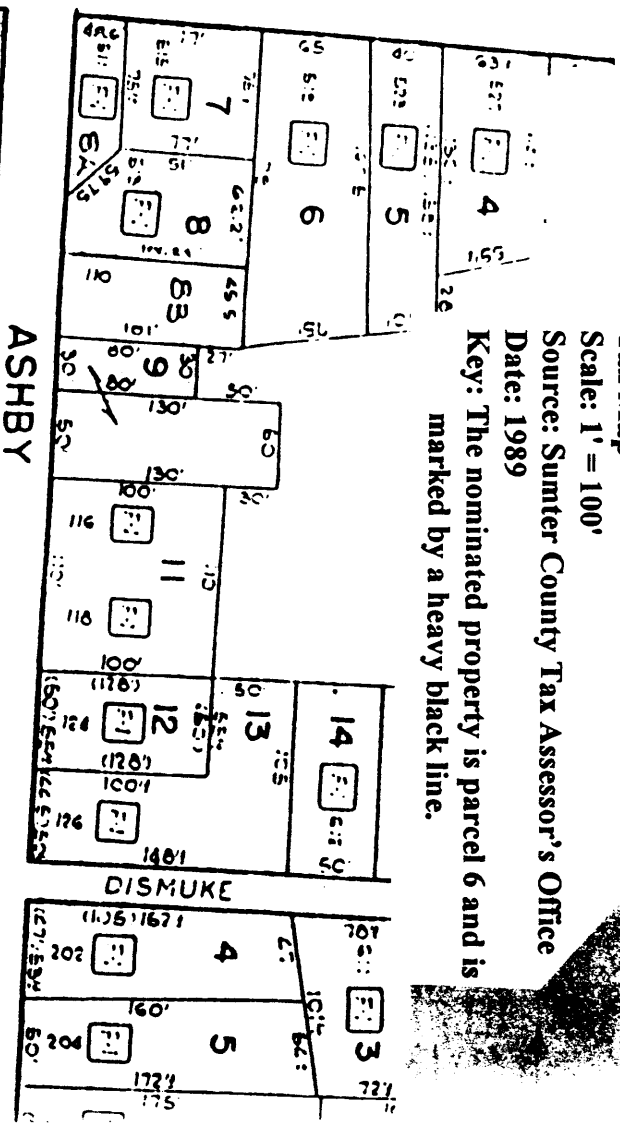


LEE

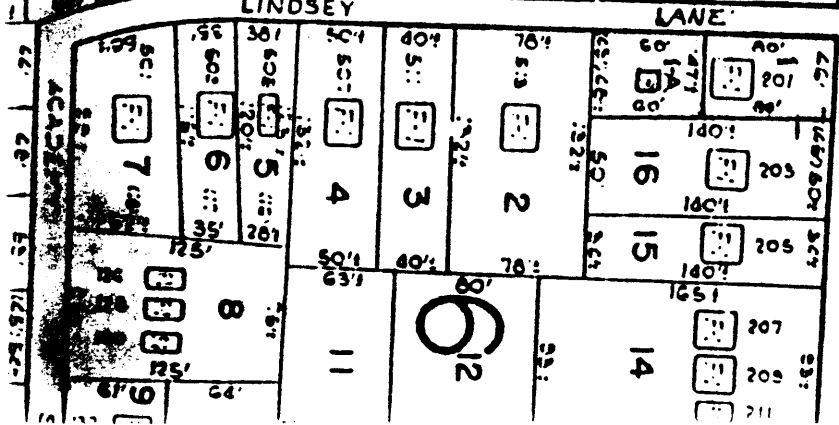
SEE MAP 6-A FOR SHADED AREA



ASHBY

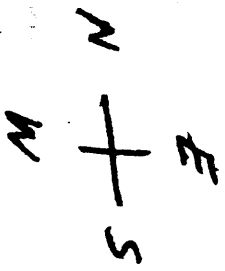
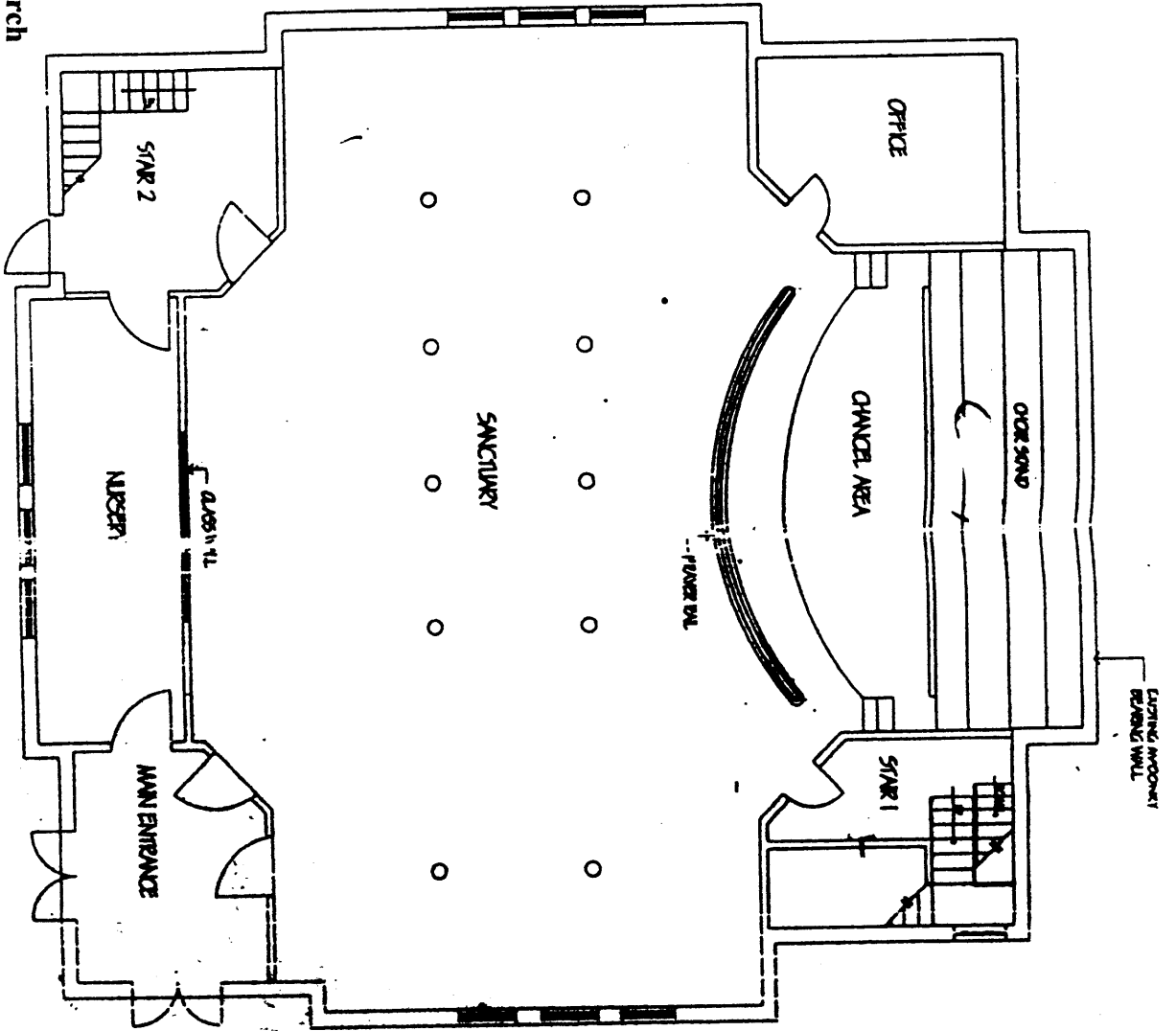


Campbell Chapel A.M.E. Church
 Americans, Sumter County, Georgia
 Tax Map
 Scale: 1" = 100'
 Source: Sumter County Tax Assessor's Office
 Date: 1989
 Key: The nominated property is parcel 6 and is marked by a heavy black line.



LINDSEY

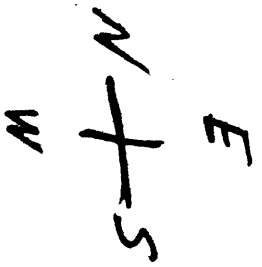
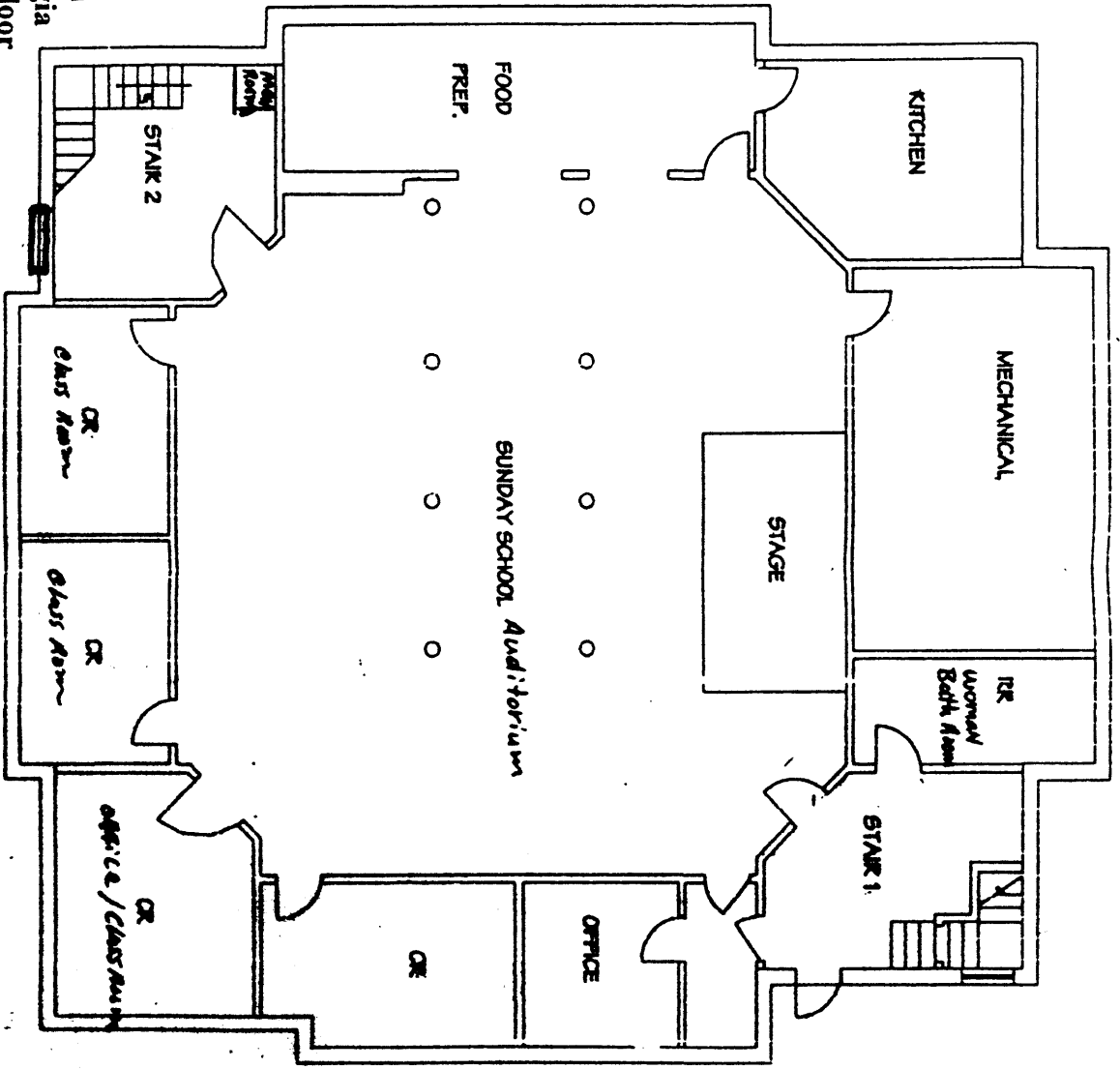
LANE



Architectural Floor Plan



Campbell Chapel A.M.E. Church
 Americus, Sumter County, Georgia
 Floor Plan: Second Floor/Main Floor
 Scale: Not to scale.
 Source: Drawn by restoration architects.
 Date: 1996
 Key: all room usages are marked on plan.



GROUND FLOOR

Campbell Chapel A.M.E. Church
 Americus, Sumter County, Georgia
 Floor Plan: First Floor/Ground Floor
 Scale: Not to scale.
 Source: Drawn by restoration architects.
 Date: 1996
 Key: All room usages are marked on plan.