

PH 0662909

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

FEB 15 1978

DATE ENTERED

MAY 22 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME **

HISTORIC
Nicholsonville Baptist Church; Nicholsonburro Baptist Church

AND/OR COMMON

Nicholsonboro Baptist Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

White Bluff Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Nicholsonville

VICINITY OF

1st

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Georgia

13

Chatham

051

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

__PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Nicholsonboro Baptist Church

STREET & NUMBER

White Bluff Road

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Nicholsonville

VICINITY OF

Georgia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Chatham County Courthouse, Deed Records

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Savannah

Georgia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic/Architectural Survey of Chatham County

DATE

January 17, 1976

__FEDERAL STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Preservation Section, Department of Natural Resources

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Atlanta

Georgia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED 1870 structure	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD 1890 structure	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED 1890	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	structure	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

There are two church structures at the Nicholsonboro site on the old White Bluff Road. The older of the two structures is not in use and is in deteriorated condition. It is a simple rectangular 20' x 30' frame building with gabled tin roof surmounted by a small rectangular wooden steeple. There is no ornamentation or architectural detailing.

The east front elevation is pierced by an entrance door made of vertically aligned boards and a second smaller similar door (or window) in the gable area, offset slightly from the main entrance. The north and south side elevations contain two rectangular windows. The west rear elevation contains one door similar to the front entrance.

The exigencies which must have influenced the construction of this edifice can be observed in the use of differing sizes of clapboard, particularly in the rear elevation. In addition, whereas some clapboards reach from a corner to the front entrance, this distance is also spanned by butting two shorter boards together. The interior of the church shows these same exigencies. The back side of the framing clapboards serves as the interior paneling of the church, with the vertical studs, as well as the purlins and rafters fully exposed. The floor is pine decking.

Very little of the interior remains intact; however, it is unlikely, given the extreme simplicity of the church, that much detailing has been lost. Vestiges of the steps leading up to the steeple remain and the bell is intact.

The 1890 structure, which is currently used by the Nicholsonboro congregation, is located approximately 30 yards south of the older church. It too is a rectangular frame building with gabled tin roof surmounted by a small wooden steeple. A frame addition to the rear of the main structure is aligned perpendicular to the east-west orientation of the nave. This addition, which extends approximately 10 feet on either side of the main block, contains the pastor's study on the south and an accessory room on the north.

The plan of this church is basilican with nave and aisles and a colonnade supporting a small gallery. Entrance to the church is gained through a central shuttered door and two flanking doors. The gable is supported by four slender square wooden piers. The area underneath this supported gable forms a narrow porch. Above each of the two flanking doors is a rectangular shuttered window. A similar window is located in the center of the supported gable area.

The south elevation of the main block is pierced by two rows of three rectangular shuttered windows. The lower windows open into the main floor while the upper windows illuminate the gallery. This elevation contains the only chimney.

The north elevation of the church probably also contained six windows. However, a door now opens onto a small concrete porch where the rear lower window would have been. The other five windows are intact and arranged similar to those in the south elevation. The perpendicularly aligned horizontal extensions contain a door on the east elevation and two small windows on the south elevation.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Older structure probably late 1870's and newer church 1890 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Members of the original congregation at the Nicholsonboro Baptist Church had been slaves on the plantation of Jacob Waldburg on St. Catherines Island, off the coast of Liberty County. Waldburg was one of the richest planters in the region. The 1860 Agricultural Census for Liberty County lists Waldburg as owning 19,000 acres of land, 2,000 of which were improved and producing large amounts of corn, rice, cotton, peas, beans, and sweet potatoes, in addition to various animal products. The Slave Census that same year recorded 255 slaves on this property. In addition to owning St. Catherines Island, Waldburg had a home and business interests in Savannah.

General William T. Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15, issued from Savannah in January of 1865, temporarily dispossessed Waldburg of his island property. This order set aside the sea islands from Charleston, South Carolina, to the St. Johns River in Florida for the settlement of freedmen.

It is likely that most, if not all, of the freedmen who later settled at Nicholsonville remained on St. Catherines after the Waldburg family evacuated the island. It is not known, however, whether they became members of Tunis G. Campbell's "Kingdom" or worked for northern speculators who leased part of Waldburg's lands. In June of 1865, Jacob Waldburg was granted permission by the military government to control St. Catherines. Campbell, however, remained on the island as an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau until 1867.

Again, while all the facts are not known, it is likely that most of the future Nicholsonboro congregation remained on St. Catherines until 1868. The Savannah Daily News Herald, January 18, 1868, reported that Capt. Murray Hoag, Sub-Assistant Commissioner of the Savannah District of the Freedmen's Bureau, left that day for St. Catherines Island "to relieve the negroes thereon, and enable them to decamp, they [the negroes] refusing to come to any terms of contract with the proprietors of the Island." The article stated that the nearly 200 Negroes leaving the island were believed to be bound for the White Bluff area, which is near the present site of the Nicholsonville community. At least two of the original signers of the deed for the purchase of the land at Nicholsonville were still on the island in December of 1868.

The oral history preserved by members of the Nicholsonboro congregation states that members of the community, after leaving St. Catherines, first settled at Cedar Grove. This is substantiated by the fact that a cemetery, in which are buried several

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Savannah Morning News

Savannah Unit, Georgia Writers' Project, Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies Among the Georgia Coastal Negroes. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1940.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY One acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	4,8,6,9,4,0	3,5,3,5,6,3,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the southeast corner of the property boundary proceed northerly along the White Bluff Road approximately 300 feet; thence westerly along a fence on the property boundary to the northwest corner; thence southerly along the rear property boundary; thence easterly along a fence on the south property line to the point of beginning.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Steve Henson, Intern

Morton McInvale, Manager, Historical Analysis Unit, Historic Preservation Section

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Preservation Section

October 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

270 Washington Street, S. W.

(404) 656-2840

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Atlanta

Georgia 30334

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Elizabeth P. Lyon 2/7/78

TITLE

Elizabeth A. Lyon

DATE

Acting Chief, Historic Preservation Section

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Muntz

DATE

5-22-78

ATTEST:

Walter Cole

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5-16-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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The interior of the church is basilican with side aisles. The four hand-carved chamfered posts which support a narrow gallery are set slightly into the side pews. The pulpit area is raised about two feet from the main floor level and extends in the form of a semi-circle into the nave of the church. The choir is inset into the rear addition behind the pulpit and is framed by a plaster segmental arch. Two doors underneath the gallery flank the pulpit area and lead into the pastor's office and an accessory room.

There is very little architectural detailing in the church. A modified panel fronts the gallery while wainscoting faces the plaster walls. The wooden pews on the main floor are probably not original, but it is not unlikely that some of the benches in the gallery may date to the nineteenth century. These benches consist of a 1 x 12 with two narrow boards for back support.

A modern acoustical ceiling has been hung from the original wooden decking.

The only other structure on the property is a recent, small, rectangular, one-story concrete block educational building. This structure is perpendicular to the axis of the two churches and is located between them.

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members of the original Nicholsonboro congregation, is located at Cedar Grove, approximately one mile from the present church site.

In September of 1877, a mortgage was signed for the property upon which the Nicholsonboro churches now stand. In this mortgage, John Nicholson sold 200 acres of land to eighteen members of this new community for \$5,000. Under the terms of the contract, the community took possession of the property on January 1, 1878, with the first payment of \$300. Although they had six years to pay off the mortgage, a deed for title was obtained July 19, 1882.

In a deed of partition dated 15 January, 1883, one acre was set aside for the Nicholson-Burrough [sic] Baptist Church, the present site of the two churches. According to this deed of partition, the area reserved for a church "was originally further back in the field, but for convenience sake, and readiness of access, was [now] placed fronting the road." Thus, it is probable that the older, unoccupied church on this property dates from 1883. There is also some possibility that this structure is a reconstruction from an earlier building elsewhere on the property. Although it is not likely that an older church could have been moved intact to the present location, it is possible that a church structure was disassembled and rebuilt on the acre designated in 1883 as church property.

An article in the Savannah Morning News, February 21, 1886, chronicled a brief history of this black settlement stating that it was "perhaps the thriftiest" in the state. According to the article, members of the community raised corn, potatoes, and other vegetables during the summer for market. In the winter, they sold their catches of fish and oysters.

That the settlement was beginning to prosper during the late 1880's is evidenced by the erection in 1890 of the present Nicholsonboro Baptist Church, some 70 feet to the south of the older church. The cornerstone of this new church was laid on August 11, 1890. The smaller church then served the congregation as a feasting house until its deteriorating condition forced its abandonment.

Both of the Nicholsonboro churches possess architectural significance. They are important examples of rural Negro church construction in the latter part of the nineteenth century in South Georgia. Most rural churches from this period have been torn down and replaced by brick or concrete block edifices in the twentieth century. These churches are two of the very few which survive from this period. That these two nineteenth century rural Black churches have been preserved on the same site is most fortunate for architectural historians who not only have the benefit of two distinct architectural records, but also gain the ease of their comparison.

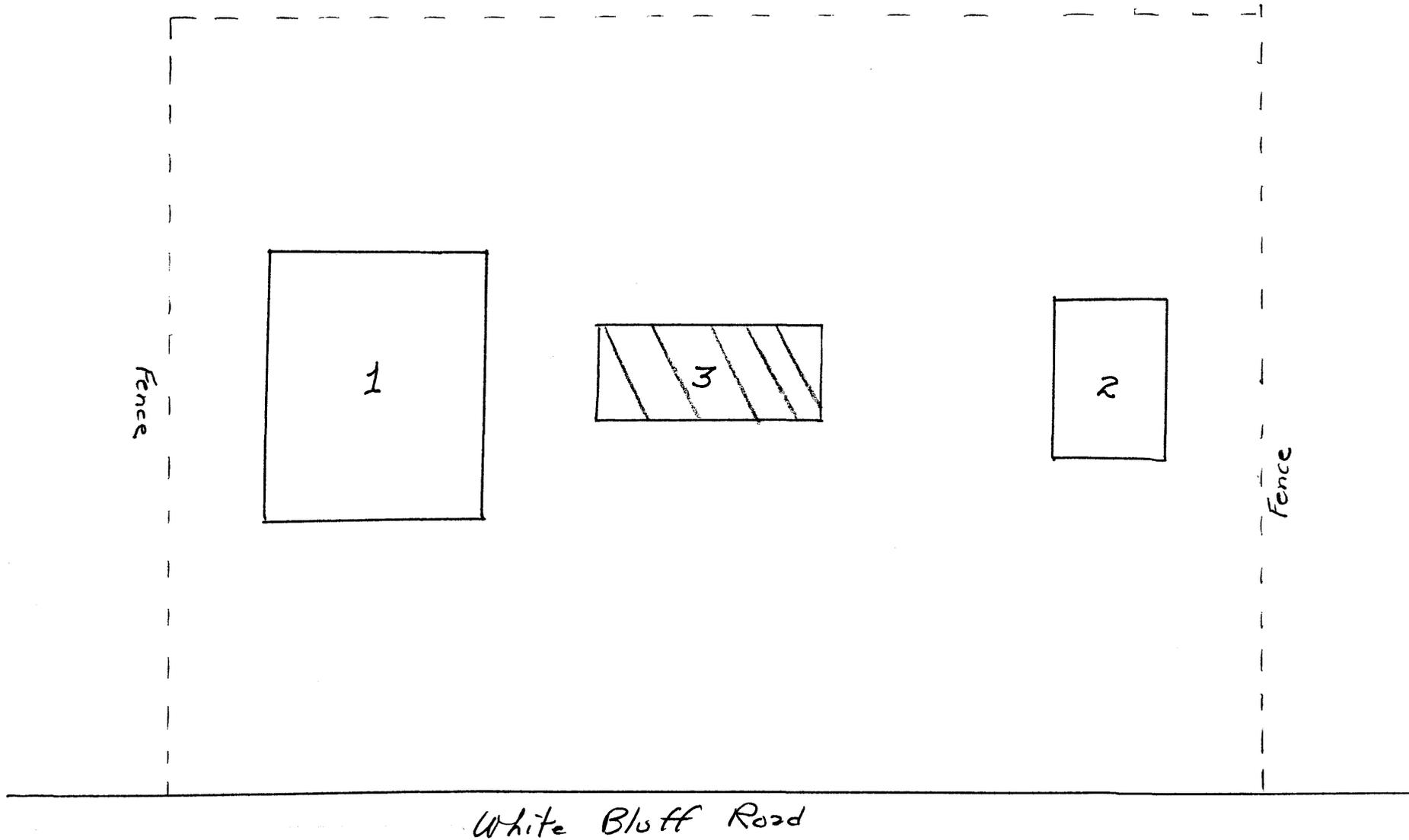
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As the history of these churches records, they are the material embodiments of a period of utmost significance for the Negroes who settled the Nicholsonville community.



SKETCH MAP (Not to Scale)

 - Intrusion

Nicholsonboro Baptist Church,
Nicholsonville, Chatham County, Georgia

- #1 - 1890 Church
- #2 - 1870's Church
- #3 - Concrete Block Building

FEB 15 1978

1978