

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



109

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Republican Primitive Baptist Church

other names/site number Union Foot Wash Church

2. Location

street & number 350 Raymond Taylor Road

city or town Brownsville

state Tennessee

code TN

county Haywood

code 075

zip code 38012

not for publication N/A
 vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant

nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Haysen
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/30/00
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper
7/5/00
Date of Action

Republican Primitive Baptist Church
Name of Property

Haywood County, Tennessee
County and State

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 count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	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 Rural African-American Churches in TN

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: community meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER; Rural Church

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete block piers
walls WOOD
roof ASPHALT
other WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons whose contributions to the Nation are outstanding.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African-American
RELIGION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1925 - 1948

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): 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:

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Republican Primitive Baptist Church
Name of Property

Haywood County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property one acre

UTM References

Durhamville, TN, 422NW

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 279770 3945850
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Teresa Douglass, Carroll Van West
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date May 27, 1998
street & number PO Box 80, MTSU telephone 615.898.2947
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

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

name Republican Primitive Baptist Church (Levert F. Baldwin, contact person)
street & number 6931 Fulton Road telephone 901/772-5669
city or town Brownsville state TN zip code 38012

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Republican Primitive Baptist Church,
Haywood County, Tennessee

7. DESCRIPTION

The Republican Primitive Baptist Church is located at the corner of Allen Cox Road and Raymond Taylor Road in rural Haywood County approximately ten miles west of the town of Brownsville, Tennessee. It exists in a very rural setting on a grassy lot surrounded by trees and fields at the intersection of two narrow country roads. Built in 1925, the structure is a simple vernacular style that is characteristic of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Primitive Baptist churches, which were plain, unadorned structures with separate entrances for men and women. The Republican Primitive Baptist Church is a one-story rectangular frame building that rests on concrete block piers. It has an asphalt shingle gable-on-hip roof with wide eaves and exposed rafters. The congregation added a small addition to its one-room building circa 1930 to furnish a pulpit for the minister. The building does have electricity but no indoor plumbing; instead outdoor privies have served church members. The building is in need of some repair, particularly to the roof and floor of the pulpit area, but it remains structurally sound.

The north facade, which faces Raymond Taylor Road, contains two identical evenly spaced main entrances. Both entrances have unglazed flush wood doors with outer wooden screen doors, and a set of concrete steps leads up to each. One of these entrances, the furthest west, has a makeshift wooden handrail to the left of the steps.

The east elevation contains three two-over-two sash windows that were added circa 1970. The larger original window casings remain and are filled with wood siding below the newer windows. The west elevation is identical to the east elevation except it has a large metal stove pipe that exits from the building near the base of the center window and extends toward the roofline.

The south elevation contains a small addition with a shed roof and one six-light casement window. This area is the church's chancel and was added circa 1930. To the west of the addition on the building's south elevation is a circa 1970 two over two sash window with the original larger casing existing as described on the east elevation windows. To the east of the addition on the building's south elevation is a single unglazed flush wood door.

The interior of the Republican Primitive Baptist Church is also of simple design, consisting solely of the sanctuary and pulpit. It is oriented in a north (from the double entrances) to a south (the chancel) direction. Three sets of pews are arranged at the north end with two aisles leading from the main entrances between them. Additional sets of pews facing the pulpit are arranged on the east and west sides of the church's south end. There are a total of twenty-six original (circa 1925) wooden pews in all. The floor, walls, and ceiling are the original wood construction. A strip of carpeting lies along the two aisles and in front of the pulpit; however, it is not tacked down and serves only as a rug. A small heating stove sets along the center of the east wall, and four

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Republican Primitive Baptist Church,
Haywood County, Tennessee

hanging ceiling lamps provide lighting. No artwork or other decorative elements exist in the interior. Only two small fire extinguishers are on the walls near the front and rear entrances.

The pulpit sets at the south end of the church. It is a recessed alcove with a segmental frame opening toward the rest of the interior. It contains a raised carpeted platform that extends into the main room and holds two ornate chairs and the minister's podium. Two wooden straight-backed chairs and a small offering table sit in front of the podium at the base of the platform.

The property contains a board and batten privy, with a tin-covered shed roof. Built circa 1925, it is a contributing building (C).

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Haywood County, Tennessee

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Republican Primitive Baptist Church, located in rural Haywood County, Tennessee, approximately ten miles west of the town of Brownsville, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its significance in African-American religious and social history. With a congregation dating to the late 1800s and a strong history of support to the surrounding black community, the church reflects the historic development of African-American religious institutions as not only places of worship, but also as symbols of freedom, centers of education, and sites of cultural identity. The church building is also eligible under Criterion C as a significant example of African-American craftsmanship from the 1920s. Built in 1925, the building reflects the Primitive Baptist traditions and beliefs that have united its members since its construction. Having a high degree of both historical and architectural integrity, Republican Primitive Baptist Church remains a significant place of African-American community and cultural identity. It meets the registration requirements for Historic Rural African-American Churches in Tennessee.

The Republican Primitive Baptist Church began in the late 1800s (the exact date is unknown) as slavery was abolished and African-Americans in Haywood County were beginning to build a new life of independence. In the 1830s and 1840s, a large number of African-Americans had arrived in the county as slaves coming mainly from southern Virginia and adjacent parts of North Carolina. After emancipation, a substantial number of freed blacks also migrated to the area seeking a new life, and by 1870 the majority of Haywood County's population was black.¹ Among those searching for a new beginning was Jordan Florence, Sr., a former slave from North Carolina who moved to Tennessee after gaining his freedom. Like many African-Americans, Florence found work on a local farm. The majority of black farmers got caught in the inequitable cycle of sharecropping; however, a few, like Florence, who managed to buy two hundred acres of land in the black community of Shady Rest, were eventually able to purchase their own land.

Forming a church was a priority in the community and the Florence family joined the Paytons, another local family, and organized the Republican Primitive Baptist Church circa 1880. Establishing a church meant much more to recently freed African-Americans than simply having a place to worship; it was a crucial step in defining their freedom and identity. As historian William E. Montgomery points out, "control of their churches was as much a part of being self-reliant as owning their own land and exercising legal and political rights."² Nowhere is this more

¹ Dorothy Granberry, "Origins of an African-American School in Haywood County," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 56 (Spring 1997): 44.

² William E. Montgomery, *Under Their Own Vine and Fig Tree: The African-American Church in the South, 1865-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 52.

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Republican Primitive Baptist Church,
Haywood County, Tennessee

evident than in the establishment of the Republican Primitive Baptist Church where the name of the institution itself makes a political statement. Like the majority of African-Americans in Haywood County, the Florence and Payton families were staunch Republicans, the party that made the greatest efforts toward establishing political rights and power to the freedmen. The large population of African-Americans made the Republican party an influential voting bloc, and to maintain their loyalty, "the Republicans gave African Americans more visible roles, including that of running for office."³ In 1880 African-American votes helped Republicans to win the governor's race and throughout that decade African-Americans in Haywood County held the offices of Trustee, representative to the Tennessee General Assembly, and registrar. So in naming their church Republican, the founding families were making a public statement declaring not only their right to worship where and as they choose, but also their political rights and power.

Also significant is the chosen denomination of the church. Most African-American churches in the Reconstruction South chose the Baptist denomination largely because of its many similarities to African religious traditions. Concepts of visions, spiritual journeys, rebirth, healing and prophecy were common in both faiths, and West African river ceremonies closely resembled the Baptist practice of adult immersion baptism.⁴ The sub-denomination of Primitive Baptists developed in the early 1800s as a backlash against that era's strong missionary movement. Resolute Calvinist Baptists opposed it with a strong allegiance to the scriptures and the primitive church opposed missionary and other auxiliary church activities, such as Sunday Schools and publications, on the grounds that they conflicted with the doctrine of predestination and did not emulate the behavior of the original apostles. The majority of Baptist churches in Tennessee had adopted the anti-mission position by 1820, and by 1832 they had begun to separate formally into a distinct sub-denomination.

Originally a white denomination, Primitive Baptists gained an even greater following among blacks and in fact is "the largest of the conversionist Baptist sects in the Black community."⁵ Exemplifying the Primitive Baptist tradition, members of the Republican Primitive Baptist Church throughout its existence have adhered to the doctrine of predestination and observed the cardinal ordinances of communion, foot washing, and adult baptism by immersion. Simplicity, humility, and purity are reflected in all that they do. Ministers are unsalaried but supported from membership donations. Self-educated, ministers do not prepare sermons in advance, but

³ Richard A. Couoto, *Lifting the Veil: A Political History of Struggles for Emancipation*. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 48.

⁴ Mechal Sobel, *Trablin' On: The Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 99-101. Montgomery, 107.

⁵ Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer, *African-American Religion in the Twentieth Century: Varieties of Protest and Accommodation*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 169.

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provide a spontaneous oration, thus directly inspired from God. Services are held twice a month and consist of preaching, prayer, and singing; musical instruments are not allowed. Communion is taken quarterly over a gathering during which members participate in foot washing, the practice of washing one another's feet as an act and lesson in humility.⁶

Soon after its establishment, the Republican Primitive Baptist Church joined the Big Creek Association, a regional organization of black Primitive Baptists. Like most Primitive Baptist associations, the Big Creek organization was primarily social in nature as authority was vested in the local congregations. Nonetheless, such organizations were important as they provided a network of fellowship among Tennessee's African-American communities. The association met biannually at the various members' churches. Republican Primitive Baptist Church hosted The Big Creek Association's Second Annual Session in October of 1882, and in attendance were delegates from black Primitive Baptist Churches in Salem, Smyrna, Mt. Ararat, and Poplar Forest. Representing the Republican Church were Henry Nutt, Nat Foster, and D.C. Taliaferro. Republican's first minister and clerk of the association, Elder D. A. Walker, led the group in prayer..⁷

Equally important to establishing a religious institution for post war African-Americans was the education of their children. Blacks realized as the Freedmen's Bureau's standard commission stated, "that the School-house is the shortest and most direct road to all their social and political rights."⁸ The Freedmen's Bureau and various benevolent societies in Haywood County made valiant efforts to erect and support schools for black children, but strong white opposition significantly limited their progress. Hostility against education of young blacks was so great that violence was directed against teachers and some bureau officers were compelled to deploy troops to protect the few existing schools.⁹ Unable to rely on local or state government to provide an educational facility for their children, members of the Shady Rest community made the best of their available resources and used their church for this service as well. Serving as both church and school, Republican Primitive Baptist Church was the focal point of the community, containing both its joys and struggles, and its hopes for the future.

In 1924, the original church burned and members held their services in a brush arbor until the present building was erected in 1925. A small addition for a pulpit was added in the 1930s. The

⁶ Levert Florence Baldwin of Brownsville, Tennessee, interview by Teresa Douglass, 2 February 1998.

⁷ Minutes of the Second Annual Session of the Big Creek Association of Primitive Baptists (Colored), Brownsville, TN 1882. Unpublished.

⁸ Couto, 13.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

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Republican Primitive Baptist Church,
Haywood County, Tennessee

building is a simple vernacular style that is characteristic of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Primitive Baptist churches, which were as unassuming and humble as the services which took place inside them. The Republican Primitive Baptist Church is a perfect example of this early church style. It is a one-room wooden structure with plain glass windows, white paint, and no steeple or additional adornment. Two parallel doors that were used initially separate entrances for men and women lead to the interior, which is likewise uncomplicated with no decor. Plain wooden pews provide the seating, which older members recall was also once segregated by gender.

Republican Primitive Baptist Church continued to serve double duty as a schoolhouse until the late 1920s when a neighborhood school for black children was finally built. However, the church remained a center for informal education and training as men and women of the church held weekly meetings to instruct the younger generations in a variety of skills. Girls received instruction in nutrition, quilting, sewing, household budgeting and management, and the proper roles and duties of a housewife, while boys learned about farming and the particulars of cultivating crops and raising livestock. Most assuredly mixed in with the practical skills were lessons in morals, values, and tradition that served the young people for a lifetime. Members also held bi-annual homecomings at the church every May and October. Large numbers turned out for these day-long picnics, and even those who had moved out of the area returned for a celebration of community spirit and appreciation.

These gatherings intensified the already close-knit nature of the community that depended on and looked out for one another. This became increasingly important as racial violence against African-Americans in Haywood County mounted in the Jim Crow years. During this time "Every white man was the law," as resident Robert McElwee put it, and in order to avoid harm and potentially life-threatening situations, Haywood County African-Americans had to comply to a behavioral code of compliance and accommodation when around whites.¹⁰ In this atmosphere, community solidarity and fellowship were not only sources of joy and identity, but also a means of survival.

By the mid-1970s, the community began to dwindle as the younger generation of blacks tended to move out of the county to pursue opportunities elsewhere. Attendance at the homecomings, which had been reduced to once a year, trickled off and church membership fell significantly. Only five or six members were left by 1989 and they decided, along with the minister, to consolidate with a neighboring community's Primitive Baptist church. But the Republican Primitive Baptist Church did not remain idle for long. In 1991 matriarch Mother Roxie Florence Wood, the granddaughter of church founder Jordan Florence, re-instituted the annual

¹⁰ Couto, 105-107.

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homecoming, which has continued to be a yearly event. Participation has steadily increased and the founding family names of Florence, Payton, Taliaferro, Reed and others are well represented. Approximately one hundred people attended the May 1998 homecoming and made donations to help support and restore the church, which is in need of minor repairs. The building is currently used as a community meeting hall for organizations such as the neighborhood watch group and plans are in progress to once again hold services there. For over seventy-five years this small and modest structure has expressed and shaped the values of generations of Haywood County African-Americans and it continues to be a source of community identity as new generations are learning its value. As a local newspaper covering a recent annual homecoming explained, "Now generations that never knew about their roots are learning the meaning of sharing not only a building, but a common ground for family and community fellowship."¹¹

¹¹ *Brownsville States Graphic* (Brownsville, TN), 1 June 1995.

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Republican Primitive Baptist Church,
Haywood County, Tennessee

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Haywood County, Tennessee

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The Republican Primitive Baptist Church is at 350 Raymond Taylor Road, Haywood County, on a one-acre lot, Parcel 24.1, as marked on the attached Haywood County Tax Map

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the property historically associated with the Republican Primitive Baptist Church.

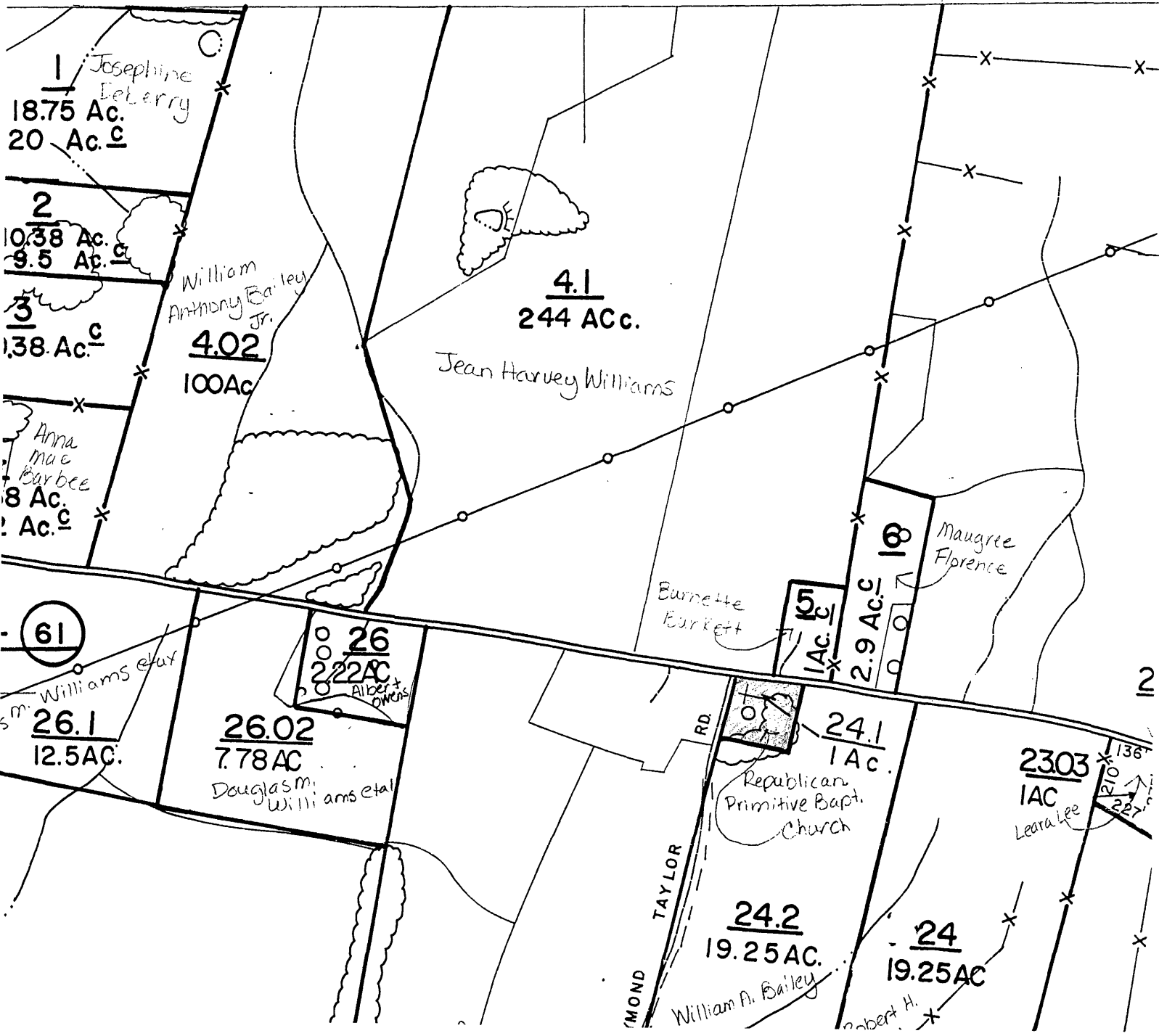
The Tax Map for this nomination has the scale 1" = 400'. This scale tax map is prepared by the Tennessee State Board of Equalization for rural areas. In the past, the Tennessee Historical Commission has used this scale map for nominations and has found that the 1" = 400' scale adequately meets our office needs. The Tennessee Historical Commission does not have the facilities to prepare maps to the scale preferred by the National Park Service.

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1" = 400'



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Republican Primitive Baptist Church,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

Republican Primitive Baptist Church
Haywood County, TN

Photos By: Carroll Van West
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
PO Box 80, MTSU
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Date: November 1997

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37243

North facade and west elevation, facing southeast
1 of 6

North facade and east elevation, facing southwest
2 of 6

South elevation and Privy, facing northwest
3 of 6

Sanctuary and pews, facing south
4 of 6

Sanctuary and pulpit, facing north
5 of 6

Sanctuary and pulpit, facing northeast
6 of 6