

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 99000397

Date Listed: 4/8/99

Beesley Primitive Baptist Church  
Property Name

TENNESSEE Rutherford  
County State

N/A

Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*M. J. M. Way*  
for Signature of the Keeper

4/20/99  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Section No. 8

This nomination is amended to change the period of significance to c. 1870-1949, adding the period of significance of the contributing cemetery to the period of significance of the 1913 church.

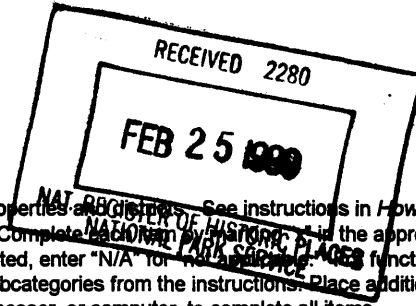
This amendment has been confirmed with the Tennessee SHPO.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 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 Beesley Primitive Baptist Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 461 Beesley Road

not for publication N/A

city or town Murfreesboro

vicinity

state Tennessee

code TN

county Rutherford

code 149

zip code 37130

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Mary M. [Signature]

4/18/99

Beesley Primitive Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Rutherford County, TN  
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

1	_____	buildings
1	_____	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.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

FUNERARY: cemetery

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility

FUNERARY: cemetery

SOCIAL: meeting hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK, CONCRETE

walls BRICK, METAL

roof ASPHALT

other WOOD, GLASS

**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 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 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)

ARCHITECTURE  
RELIGION

**Period of Significance**

1913

**Significant Dates**

1913

**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

Beesley Primitive Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Rutherford County, TN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 1.1 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Murfreesboro, TN 815 SW

1 16 545380 3967560  
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 Carroll Van West  
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date May 20, 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 Beesley Primitive Baptist Church c/o John Marshall, Trustee  
street & number 310 Beesley Road telephone 615-849-1381  
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37128

**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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Beesley Primitive Baptist Church  
Rutherford County, TN

## 7. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Beesley Primitive Baptist Church is a one-story common bond brick building, constructed in 1913 and sits on a one and one-tenth-acre lot on Beesley Road in Rutherford County. Despite recent suburban housing and road developments in the vicinity, the church, its lot, and its cemetery retains an extremely high degree of historical and architectural integrity. Construction of this building occurred in 1913 after a tornado completely destroyed the earlier nineteenth century brick church building. The 1913 building sits on the same location as the earlier church and on its north side is a historic cemetery that contains burials from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. The church has a concrete and brick foundation, with the foundation defined by a solid concrete belt course. The building has an asphalt shingle roof that slightly overhangs the brick walls.

The west facade is the gable-front entrance to the church. It has a recessed central bay, with two concrete steps leading to original four-paneled wood double doors. Above the entrance is a metal sign that was attached to the brick wall in 1963. The wording on the sign states: "Beesley Primitive Baptist Church."

The south elevation has three symmetrical bays, with the original four-over-four double-hung windows covered by original double wood shutters. The windows and the shutters retain their original hardware. At the southeast corner of this elevation is a brick chimney.

The east elevation is a solid brick wall, except for the ends of two metal rods, which were inserted to support the brick wall. These metal rods are symmetrically positioned in the upper half of the wall.

The north elevation mirrors the south elevation. It has three symmetrical bays, with the original four-over-four double-hung windows covered by original double wood shutters. These windows and the shutters also retain their original hardware. At the northeast corner of the elevation is a brick chimney. Church leaders, in 1963, repaired the damaged northeast corner of the brick foundation by the addition of a new concrete section.

The interior is dignified in its simplicity. Original plaster walls, window casings, church furniture, tongue and groove wood flooring, and tongue and groove wood ceiling all remain intact. The twenty-four original pews are arranged symmetrically with north and south aisles dividing the pews into groups of three. The pews retain their original graining; a method of interior decorative painting that introduces a degree of individuality to each pew. This is the most intact example of early twentieth century graining yet identified in a church building in Rutherford County (a complete survey of the interior of rural churches in the county has not been completed as of this time). The artist or craftsman that executed the graining is unknown.

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The original, approximately forty-eight inch high, wood pulpit, sits on a raised tongue and groove wood platform, of approximately eighteen inches, at the east end of the building. Also in the chancel area flanking the pulpit, at the north and south upper corners of the platform are wood stands that are approximately forty-eight inches in height. The building is not wired for electricity or modernized since its construction in 1913. Chains and ropes are present today that have been used to raise and lower kerosene lanterns. A stove once existed to heat the building but it was removed at an unknown date.

To the immediate north of the church building is a historic cemetery that comprises about one-third of the historic church lot. Burials here may date to the early nineteenth century, but surviving intact headstones record burial dates at least by 1839 while church records record burials in 1837. Most of the approximately eighty headstones in the cemetery date between 1870 to 1950. Several stones are extant examples of folk gravestone art, with some stones being hand-carved. For instance, one undated hand-carved stone features a casket and the inscription: "Memory of Mrs (s is reversed in original) Jane Allen." The stone of B.F. Allen, who died in 914, features both machine-carved and hand-carved inscriptions, with the hand-carved section saying "A Loving Husband A Father Dear Lyes Burried (sic) Here." Four rows of headstones are enclosed within a chain-link fence with gate, erected circa 1963. A section of Victorian-styled cast-iron fence survives adjacent to the modern fence; current members believe that the remainder of the Victorian-era fence was swept away or damaged in the 1913 tornado. Due to the integrity of the cemetery, and its historical association with the church, the cemetery is a contributing site. (C)

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Rutherford County, TN

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Beesley Primitive Baptist Church in Rutherford County, Tennessee, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C as a locally significant example of builder's simple design and for the high quality of the craftsmanship evident in its common bond brick work and in its interior tongue and groove ceiling, grained wood pews, and unpretentious pulpit. Long recognized as the most unaltered historic rural church in the county, the Beesley Primitive Baptist Church is a rare surviving artifact of the characteristics and quality of rural craftsmanship found in Rutherford County in the early twentieth century. The original materials and design exhibit a high degree of integrity. No other rural churches in Rutherford County are listed in the National Register of Historic Places at this time. In addition, the property contributes to the religious history of Rutherford County, especially the creation and development of the Primitive Baptist church, and to the understanding of early settlement patterns in the county. Thus, Beesley Primitive Baptist Church is eligible under criterion A for its significance in religion and settlement. It is also eligible under criterion consideration A as a property owned by a religious organization and the site is eligible under criterion consideration D as a cemetery.

Prior local historians C. C. Henderson (1929), Carlton Sims (1947) and Mabel Pittard (1984) have recognized the congregation associated with the Beesley Primitive Baptist Church as one of the county's oldest Baptist congregations. It began in 1805 as the Overall's Creek Baptist Church and services were held on the same lot of the present building. The congregation became associated with the Primitive Baptist movement in the mid-1830s. Members had opposed the creation of the Tennessee State Baptist Convention in 1833 and during the next two meetings, in 1834 and 1835, of the Concord Association, members rigorously discussed the wisdom of creating the new state convention, which some members felt would restrict the actions of individual congregations. In 1836-1837 the Overall Creek congregation and ten other congregations left the Concord Association. These congregations formed the Stone's River Association becoming part of the Primitive Baptist movement. At the time of the split the church had approximately 154 members including both white masters and an unknown number of slaves. The rise of the Primitive Baptist movement is significant to Tennessee's religious history because this group opposed the general movement within the Baptist Church towards the creation of missions and supporting missionary activity. Primitive Baptists like those at Beesley Church derived from rural restorationist congregations in a tradition of strong allegiance to the primitive church and to scripture. The title, "Primitive," then refers to the original or pure church and faith of the apostles. Their cardinal doctrine is a rigid predestinationism and they reject all auxiliaries not in scripture--including seminaries, Sunday schools, and Bible societies in addition to missionary organizations--because these outreach programs are viewed as vain and offensive to basic church doctrines. While regional and national Primitive Baptist associations do exist, authority is vested in the local church. A fear of the impact of outside organizations was another



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key reason the Primitive Baptists split from their local brethren in the mid-1830s.

The history of the church building begins with the initial log chapel built in 1805 with John Beesley as the first pastor. At an unknown time, but possibly in the mid-1830s, the log church was replaced with a frame building. The frame church served the congregation until it burned in 1856. Erected on the same location after the fire was a brick building. In late December 1862, the Civil War Battle of Stones River raged around the church and tradition has it that Federal officers used the 1856 brick building as a headquarters. The brick church remained in use until destroyed by a tornado on March 13, 1913. In the spring of 1913, the congregation built the present building, after raising \$1,188 from 136 donors.

The architecture of this church building reflects basic Primitive Baptist creeds. It is unassuming and humble, and like those of other Primitive Baptist congregations, it lacks ornament. It has no steeple and has plain glass windows. The interior is similarly typical of Primitive Baptist churches: it is uncomplicated and has wooden pews and floors.

The building of the 1913 church coincided with a new period of stability for the congregation. The congregation had met every Sunday from its beginning until 1902. In 1902 weekly services ended, replaced by monthly services conducted by a visiting pastor, for the next ten years. In October 1912, W. P. Russell became the congregation's regular pastor, serving until his death in 1928. W. A. Shutt next served until November 1934 when E. S. Frye replaced him. Frye continued until the congregation ceased regular meetings in 1940. Urban growth at nearby Murfreesboro, combined with a general decrease in the surrounding rural population, ended the need for regular services at Beesley Primitive Baptist Church. In the decades since, the church cemetery has remained in use and the chapel also has been used for weddings, funerals, homecomings, and other related special events. As such, the distinguished old brick building evolved into a rural landmark for this section of Rutherford County, with upkeep and preservation provided by community members and church trustees. Trustee Frank W. Beesley, Jr., who died on November 12, 1997, and current Trustee John Marshall provided the impetus and many of the historical facts about the church for this nomination.

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Rutherford County, TN

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## 9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Henderson, C. C. *The Story of Murfreesboro*. Murfreesboro: The News-Banner Publishing Co., 1929.

King, Joseph E. J. "History of Beesley Church." Unpublished Manuscript, 1963. National Register Files, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Murfreesboro, TN.

Pittard, Mabel. *Rutherford County*. Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1984.

Sims, Carlton C., ed. *A History of Rutherford County*. Murfreesboro: private, 1947.

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Rutherford County, TN

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## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description

The Beesley Primitive Baptist Church sits on one and one-tenth-acres on Beesley Road and is located on Parcel 9 on the attached Rutherford County Tax Map 93.

### Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the historic property currently associated with the Beesley Primitive Baptist Church.

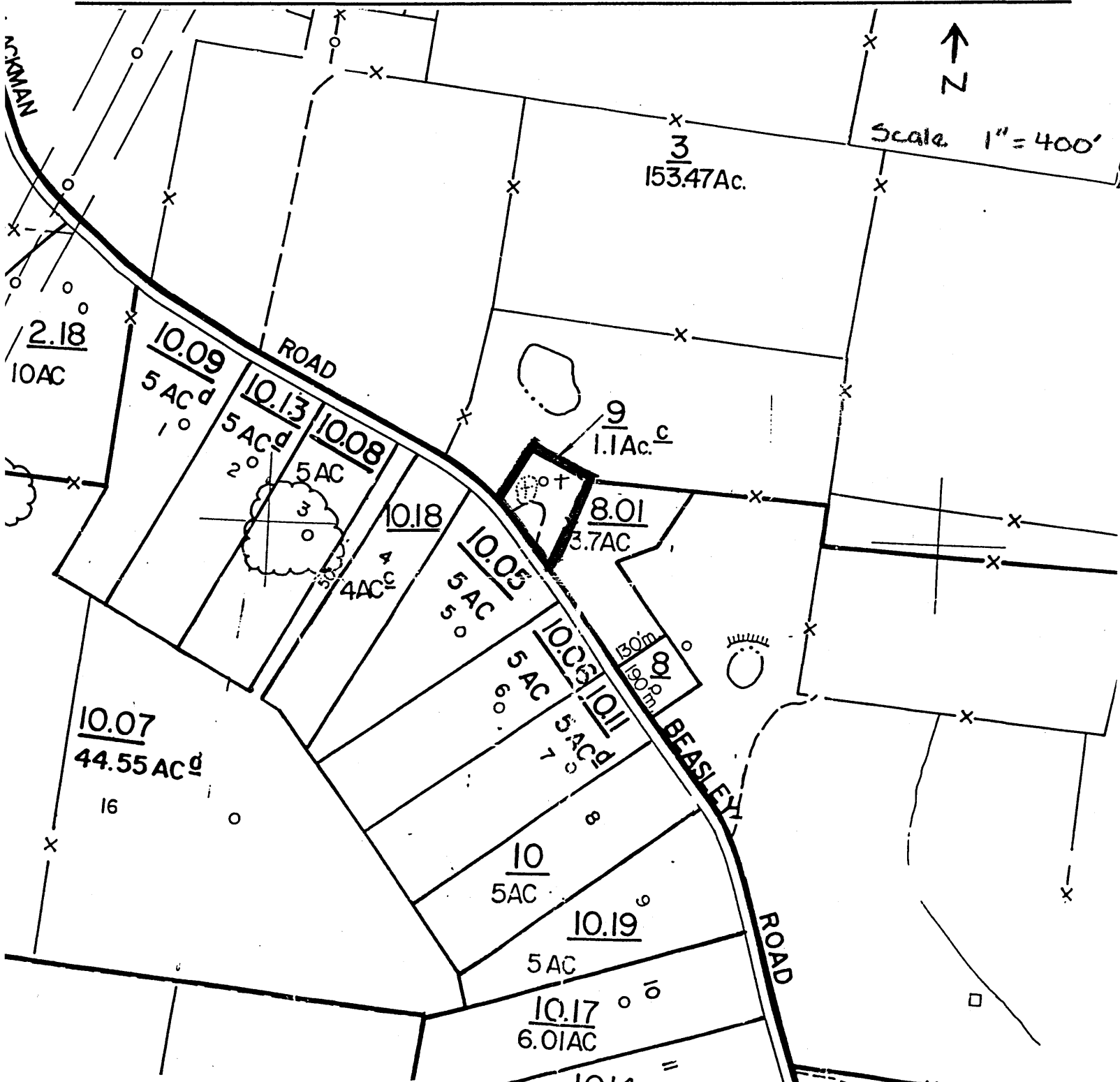
The tax map for this nomination has the scale of 1" = 400". The Tennessee Board of Equalization prepares this scale tax map for rural areas. In the past, the Tennessee Historical Commission has used this scale map for nominations and has found that the 1" = 400' adequately meets our office needs. The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

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Beesley Primitive Baptist Church  
461 Beesley Road  
Rutherford Co., TN

Photos by: Carroll Van West  
            MTSU Center for Historic Preservation  
            PO Box 80, MTSU, Murfreesboro, TN 37132  
Date: October 1997  
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission  
            2941 Lebanon Road  
            Nashville, TN 37243

West facade, facing east  
1 of 15

South elevation, facing northeast  
2 of 15

East elevation, facing northwest  
3 of 15

North elevation, facing south  
4 of 15

Church interior, facing northeast  
5 of 15

Church interior, facing southwest  
6 of 15

Church interior, facing east  
7 of 15

Example of graining on church pew  
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Example of graining on church pew  
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Example of graining on church pew  
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Ceiling, facing southeast  
11 of 15

Platform and Pulpit, facing northeast  
12 of 15

Cemetery and church, facing south  
13 of 15

B. F. Allen headstone, detail  
14 of 15

Mrs. Jane Allen headstone, detail  
15 of 15