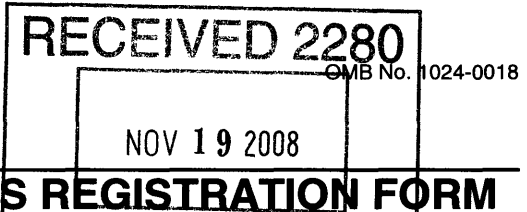


1246



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 Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School
other names/site number Bethlehem Colored School

2. Location

street & number 200 Bethlehem Drive
city, town Pine Mountain Valley (x) vicinity of
county Harris code GA 145
state Georgia code GA zip code 31823

() not for publication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.

Richard Luce
Signature of certifying official

11-5-08
Date

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

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

() entered in the National Register

Edson H. Bell 12/31/08

() determined eligible for the National Register

() determined not eligible for the National Register

() removed from the National Register

() other, explain:

() see continuation sheet

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions:

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

NO STYLE

Materials:

foundation STONE
walls WOOD: Weatherboard
roof METAL
other STONE (chimney)

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School is a small, frame, one-room school that dates from c.1900 or possibly a few years earlier, based on documentary and physical evidence. Located in the Pine Mountain Valley community in rural Harris County, it was used by African-American children until 1952. It is a simple vernacular building with a metal-clad gable roof, unpainted weatherboard siding, and a stone chimney topped with bricks. Constructed in two different phases, its foundation consists of fieldstone piers with a few concrete blocks, underpinning the log sills. The building has a wood door on front and three windows on each side. The school's larger setting includes two churches and two cemeteries in a mostly wooded area. The church sanctuary that currently sits on the same lot dates from 1970. The school has excellent integrity with almost no alterations since the period of significance; however, it is suffering from deterioration of some materials due to disuse, exposure to the elements, and lack of maintenance funds.

FULL DESCRIPTION

The Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School is located eight miles northeast of the county seat of Hamilton in Harris County. It is on the property of Bethlehem Baptist Church, one of two churches with the same name in the immediate vicinity. While the African-American congregation was established in 1871, the current church building on the site dates from 1970, and is not included in the nomination. The church sits on a 17-acre parcel of gently sloping land with a parking lot and cemetery, and almost no trees. The previous sanctuary on this lot was in a slightly different location, directly in front of the school. The property is on a minor road and driveway off the larger Bethlehem Church Road, where an older church and cemetery, belonging to the historically white congregation

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

(also called Bethlehem), are located. Prior to 1871, the black and white congregations are believed to have shared a building, worshipping at different times.

The school, which lies to the rear northeast corner of the church property, is a rectangular, one-room, braced-frame building with a front-gabled roof (photograph 2). Dimensions are approximately 15 feet wide by 37 feet deep. Exterior walls are unpainted weatherboard, and there is no evidence that they were ever painted. The roof is constructed of seamed metal panels, possibly tin. Portions of the roof have been damaged, and there is a substantial hole in the front section (photograph 4). The foundation is primarily stacked fieldstone piers (photograph 6) with some concrete block piers on the end near the door. Sills are rough-cut logs with visible ax marks. There is a wood plank door on one gable end (photograph 3). The opening measures approximately 35 by 70 inches. A fieldstone chimney with soft red-clay mortar is on the opposite gable end (photograph 7). The top portion of the chimney has bricks that have several courses missing on the top. There is no visible mortar between the bricks. Each side of the building has three sash windows, and the front (southernmost) window on each side is shorter than the two back (northernmost) windows. Front windows measure 28 inches wide by 35 inches high, and back windows measure 28 by 46. The four rear windows each have a nine-over-nine sash configuration, but the top sash is fixed, and only the bottom can be moved within its frame (with no counterweight mechanism). The two front windows are six-over-six sashes. Most glass panes are intact on all windows.

The southern one-third of the school was constructed at a later date than the northern two-thirds. Siding, windows, roofline, and foundation all show visible differences (photograph 5). The older exterior siding is 11-inch-wide board, and the newer is eight inches wide. The interior also exhibits differences in the two sections (photographs 10 and 17). The rear (north) section's walls and ceiling have six-inch-wide tongue-and-groove boards (photograph 8). Two large spaces on the side walls were painted black for use as chalkboards (photographs 10 and 16). On the front section near the door, the wall area has left the framing exposed. It appears that there was never an inside wall on this section (photograph 17). The attic area is also partially exposed, revealing saplings used as roof joists on the older section and machine-cut framing on the newer section (photograph 9). Floors are wood planks of varying widths and lengths, with no paint or coverings. There is a hole in the floor near the door. Most of the deterioration appears to be in the front (newer) section. Wire nails are used throughout the building. There are no electrical utilities or plumbing in the building, and a fieldstone hearth appears to be the only evidence of a heat source. The fireplace has been boarded up, and has a covered hole that may have held a stovepipe (photograph 11). Pieces of coal that lie around the building are clues to the heating method. Four of the school's wooden desks remain intact. These are two-person combination desk/chairs with seats that lift (photographs 12 – 15).

The general vicinity is sparsely populated, characterized by mostly wooded land, interspersed with homes and farm fields. The school is surrounded by a grassy area with some small trees to the rear. The setting also includes the non-historic church sanctuary with Sunday school wing and its asphalt parking lot. The simple concrete block building has a cornerstone from 1970 along with one for the previous building (photograph 1). A cemetery to the west of the church dates from the church's founding in 1871. There is a small stream to the east of the school in a low area near the property line that separates the church property from the older (white) Bethlehem Church.

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): (X) N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance:

c.1900-1952

Significant Dates:

1901- first known mention of school in Harris County School Board records

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of education and black ethnic heritage as a rare surviving example of a one-room schoolhouse constructed to educate rural African-American children during years of racial segregation in Georgia. According to *Public Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*, a statewide historic context, as late as 1910 most black schools met in homes or churches, and less than 10 percent of the allocation for public education was spent on black schools. Beginning in 1951, sales tax money was used to upgrade African-American schools and build large modern structures in an attempt to maintain segregation in supposedly "separate, but equal" facilities. The exact date of construction for the Bethlehem school is not clear, but it was sometime after the church's founding in 1871. The school's existence is first mentioned in the 1901 Harris County Board of Education minutes. It continued to be used until 1952 when new county schools were constructed. Bethlehem teachers were qualified through the local school board, but the students and teachers had to work under extreme hardship conditions with poor facilities, materials, and transportation. The school is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a good intact example of a vernacular building with no stylistic features. Its simple form is typical of small one-room schoolhouses. It would have been constructed with local materials and labor, and supported primarily by the church and local community.

In the years following slavery, freed blacks had to work to establish schools for the beginnings of a formal education system. During Reconstruction private benefactors from the North, as well as the federal government, assisted in black education. However, the Freedmen's Bureau closed its offices in 1870, and aid societies also shifted their attention away from rural areas. The state of Georgia began a system of segregated schools with very limited public funding for African-American education. The taxes that blacks paid were not distributed proportionally to their schools. Teachers were paid less than in white schools, and construction and maintenance funds were almost nonexistent. Therefore, it fell upon African-American communities and churches to support education efforts. Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School is a good example of a public school that was associated with a local church. There was a clear need for the school. 1885 school board records state that the county had "48 white schools with 1,467 pupils" and "47 colored schools with 2,404 pupils."

Grades one through eight attended Bethlehem. Teacher applicants would petition the county school board for license to teach, and the board would either grant or deny the petition. The grade level that the applicant was allowed to teach depended on their percentage grade on an exam given by the board. The level of control that Harris County had over the school is reflected in some of the references to the Bethlehem school in the Board of Education records. The first identified mention is in the minutes of January 1, 1901. The (white) board granted a "colored" school on "R.B. Mobley's plantation," not to be less than three miles from Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School. In subsequent years, the board ordered Bethlehem to be moved, then rescinded the order, then required another school to move to Bethlehem, occasionally closed other schools, and promulgated orders relating to the sharing of teachers between schools. Absent from these records is the provision of much material or financial support for black schools, especially not beyond the lowest grade levels. The county did pay teachers' salaries for both black and white schools.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

The reasons for closing the Bethlehem school in 1952 are also part of a significant series of historical events. Five new schools for blacks – four elementary and one combination elementary and high school – were opened that year to take the place of 17 old schools, including Bethlehem. According to the *History of Harris County* (Barfield), “In 1951, a bond issue was passed for the purpose of building Negro schools, thereby making Harris County the first county in Georgia to build all new Negro schools and put all Negro students in the new buildings at the same time, thus not only equalizing facilities of the colored and white, but also surpassing the facilities of the white students at that time.” Throughout Georgia in the 1950s, many counties attempted to circumvent federally mandated integration by providing improved schools for African-Americans. In Harris County this happened even before the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Topeka County Board of Education* ruling in 1954. Local districts tried to avoid desegregating the schools by claiming that they had provided “separate, but equal” facilities for African-American children. Many more years passed before most counties in Georgia integrated their school systems.

Architecturally, the Bethlehem school is significant as a rare remaining intact example of a simple one-room schoolhouse in both Harris County and Georgia. Many of these were constructed across scattered rural areas in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for both black and white children. The conditions were often primitive, and this building reflects the most basic facility without interior lighting or plumbing, and with only a fireplace or wood stove for heat. Building forms were based strictly on function, with little or no architectural embellishment. Only a few of these remain standing. Fewer still have been recognized or evaluated. At this time, only 42 extant one-room schools have been identified across the state, and no others in Harris County.

National Register Criteria

The Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of education and black ethnic heritage as the last remaining one-room school for African Americans in Harris County. The building is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a rare example of a vernacular one-room school.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

Period of significance (justification)

Physical and documentary evidence suggests that the building was constructed c.1900, or possibly a few years earlier. It continued to be used as a school until 1952.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The nominated property is the school building, which is the only contributing resource.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

Harris County was created in 1827 from portions of Troup and Muscogee counties. The town of Hamilton became the county seat the following year. The terrain includes a forested sandstone ridge known as the Pine Mountain Range. It rises abruptly to a height of 1,300 feet above sea level, which is 400 to 600 feet higher than the surrounding Piedmont north of Columbus. The rocky and steep soil deterred large-scale farming, but the unincorporated community of Pine Mountain Valley is a combination of wooded and farm land located between Pine Mountain and Oak Mountain. Living conditions were often harsh for the rural people of the area, and African-Americans fared even worse. The early 20th century brought the boll weevil, soil erosion, and crop failure for farmers.

Pine Mountain Valley was the site of a federal land reclamation project during the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The New Deal relief project sought to resettle impoverished rural people who would reclaim neglected and eroded farms. Roosevelt had taken a personal interest in the Pine Mountain area after arriving in Warm Springs (in nearby Meriwether County) in 1924 for hydrotherapy on his crippled legs. The part-time residence known as the Little White House was constructed there in 1932. Currently, just a few miles north of the nominated property lies the 9,047-acre F. D. Roosevelt State Park (formerly Pine Mountain State Park), which is a National Historic Landmark.

Early historical accounts of the county make little mention of its black inhabitants. In 1829 the original Bethlehem Baptist Church had a membership of 83 whites and 51 blacks, according to a county history. In 1871 the African-Americans formed their own congregation, but apparently continued to share the building with whites for several years. The first building of their own was constructed in the 1880s when they had 245 members on the roll. This church, which was located on the same parcel as the Bethlehem school, burned in 1911. A new building was constructed in 1912, which was subsequently replaced by the present sanctuary in 1970. The construction history of the school is not as well documented, but it is believed to date from the c.1900 period. The following are some sample excerpts from the minutes of the Harris County Board of Education that relate to Bethlehem school.

January 1, 1901-

"A colored school was granted on R B Mobley's plantation, not to be less than three miles from Bethlehem Colored School."

September 18, 1905-

"Bethlehem Col. School was ordered moved to Bethel."

December 11, 1905-

"The action taken, at its last meeting, removing the Bethlehem Col. School to Bethel Church, was rescinded and said school was ordered to remain at Bethlehem for the present."

July 7, 1908-

Bethlehem Colored School was discontinued and one set up at the Jim Copeland Place.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

January 6, 1914-

"The colored school known as the Stanley School was moved to Bethlehem. The public term for schools of the county was ordered to be five months."

January 5, 1915-

"After hearing report from C.S.S. who was requested to look into the situation of application for colored school to be established at the Stanley place; it was ordered that instead of paying \$16.00 per month for the Bethlehem Colored School, that half of it be paid for a teacher of the Stanley School."

December 5, 1916-

"It was ordered that the Stanley Colored School be discontinued and the Bethlehem be recognized as the school for the pupils of Stanleys and that pay for the teacher at Bethlehem be sixteen dollars per month. . . It was ordered that salaries for all Negro schools in the county remain the same as the past year."

There are a few residents of Harris County who remember attending the Bethlehem school before it closed in 1952. One teacher would instruct all eight grades, and conditions were difficult without electricity or plumbing or modern educational materials. While whites also had one-room schools, many white schools in the county had already been consolidated into larger schools by the 1930s or 1940s. Physical facilities for blacks benefited from a massive bricks-and-mortar building program in 1951-1952, which succeeded in placing all African-Americans in new schools of their own. Local taxes and bonds paid for the program. While this was an enormous improvement for the students, it was also a final attempt to retain segregation by those who believed that it sufficed to provide "separate, but equal" educational facilities under the old (1896) *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. After the Bethlehem School closed, the church maintained it until the congregation dwindled and they were unable to afford the upkeep. The church still owns the building, and is actively seeking grant funding for its preservation.

9. Major Bibliographic References

- Anderson, James D. *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.
- Barfield, Louise Calhoun. *History of Harris County, Georgia, 1827-1961*. Columbus, Georgia: The Columbus Office Supply Company, 1969.
- "Bethlehem Baptist Church 135th Anniversary." Printed program dated May 7, 2006.
- Brown, Willie and Gloria. "Historic Property Information Form, Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School" and supporting documentation, August, 2006. On file at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, Atlanta.
- Harris County Board of Education. Minutes from meetings dated 1895 to 1927. On file at the Board of Education Office, Hamilton, Georgia.
- Merritt, Carole. *Historic Black Resources: A Handbook for the Identification, Documentation, and Evaluation of Historic African-American Properties in Georgia*. Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Section, 1984.
- Ray & Associates. "Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971." Historic context on file at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, Atlanta.

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): HS-CO-180 (old survey number);
40144 (NAHRGIS survey number)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.

UTM References

Zone 16 Easting 707683 Northing 3631908

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is just the piece of land that the Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School sits on, plus a 10-foot boundary of convenience around the building. This is indicated by a heavy line on the attached National Register map.

Boundary Justification

A boundary of convenience has been drawn around the school, extending 10 feet on each side of the building. The remainder of the surrounding parcel is not included, because its present appearance has no connection to the period of significance for the school. The school sits on a parcel that includes the present Bethlehem Baptist Church, which is in a building dating from 1970. The property's landscape relates to that later period, including a large paved parking lot. While the church does have a historic cemetery, it is physically separated, and has never had any historical associations with the school.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Denise P. Messick, Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 34 Peachtree Street, Suite 1600
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303-2316
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** October 2008
e-mail Denise.Messick@dnr.state.ga.us

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

name/title Gloria and Willie Brown
organization N/A
mailing address 1346 East Lindsay Drive
city or town Columbus **state** GA **zip code** 31906
telephone (706) 563-4519
e-mail N/A

- () **property owner**
- () **consultant**
- () **regional development center preservation planner**
- (x) **other: members of Bethlehem Baptist Church**

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) Willie J. and Gloria Brown
organization (if applicable) Bethlehem Baptist Church
mailing address 1346 East Lindsay Drive
city or town Columbus **state** GA **zip code** 31906
e-mail (optional) N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Bethlehem Baptist Church Colored School
City or Vicinity: Pine Mountain Valley
County: Harris
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: April 2007

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 18

1. View toward school, showing cornerstone of church; photographer facing northeast.
2. Southwest corner of school; photographer facing northeast.
3. Front (south) side of school; photographer facing north.
4. Southeast corner of school; photographer facing northwest.
5. Northeast corner of school; photographer facing southwest.
6. East side of school, showing foundation and two windows; photographer facing west.
7. North side of school, showing chimney; photographer facing south/southeast.
8. Interior view from near the door; photographer facing north.
9. Ceiling and attic area from near the door; photographer facing north.
10. West interior wall from near the door; photographer facing northwest.
11. Hearth and siding on north interior wall; photographer facing northwest.
12. School desk/chair combination with seat down; photographer facing north.
13. School desk/chair combination with seat up; photographer facing north.
14. School desk/chair combination showing writing surface; photographer facing north.
15. Oblique view of desk/chair combination; photographer facing north.
16. Painted panels used for blackboard on west wall; photographer facing west.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs


17. Interior east wall where older (tongue-and-groove) section and newer (unfinished interior) section meet; photographer facing east.

18. View toward entry from north side of interior; photographer facing south.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)

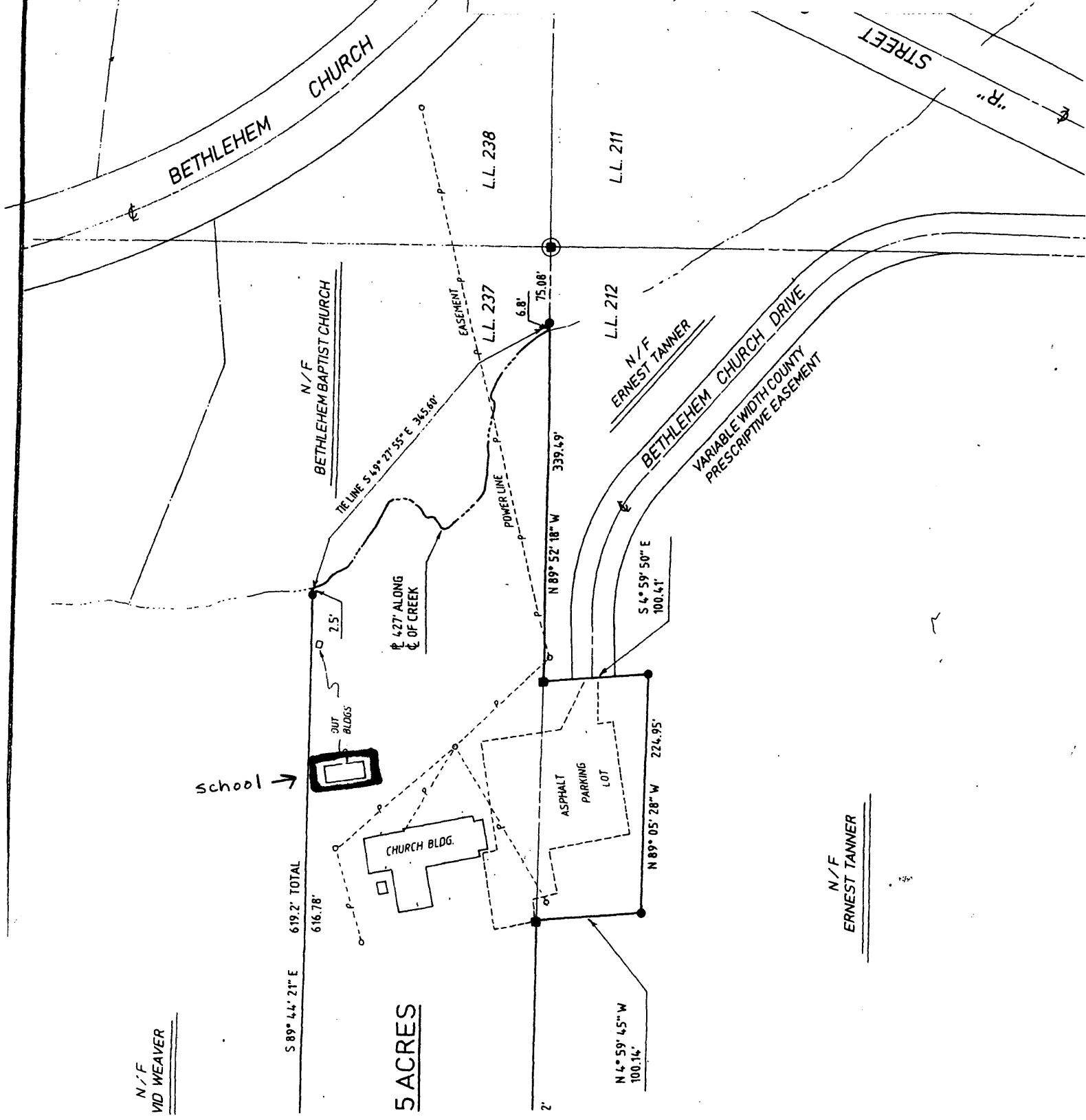
**BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH COLORED SCHOOL,
HARRIS COUNTY, GEORGIA
NATIONAL REGISTER MAP**

NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY: 

NORTH: 

SCALE:  = 100 feet

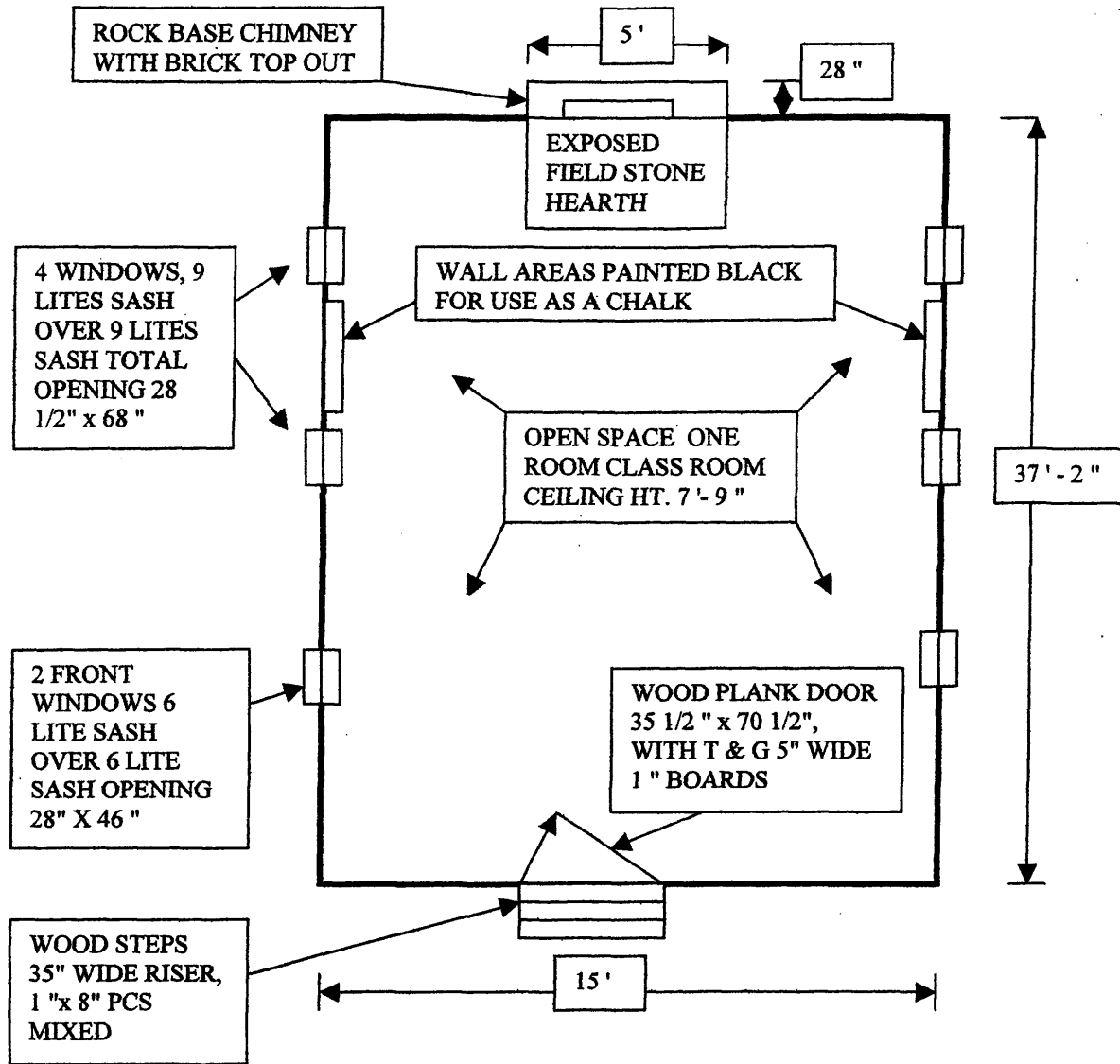
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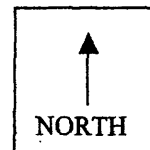
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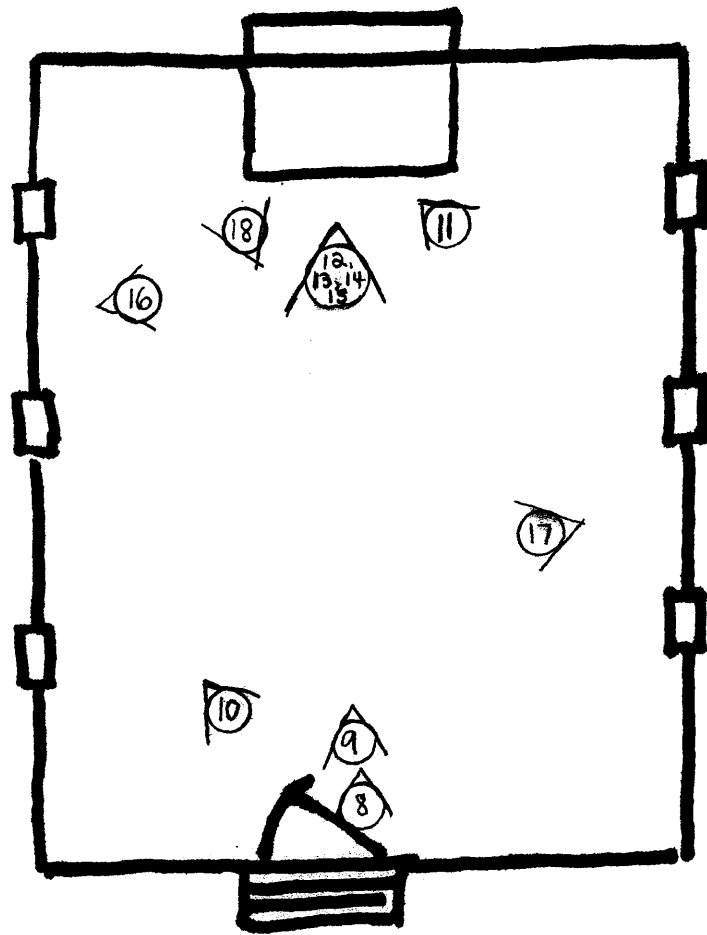
N/F
ERNEST TANNER



**BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH COLORED SCHOOL,
HARRIS COUNTY, GEORGIA
FLOOR PLAN/SKETCH MAP**

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE
SOURCE: DRAWN BY WILLIE AND GLORIA BROWN





**BETHLEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH COLORED SCHOOL,
HARRIS COUNTY, GEORGIA
PHOTOGRAPH KEY**



SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER AND DIRECTION OF VIEW: 

SOURCE: BASED ON DRAWING BY WILLIE AND GLORIA BROWN

