

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



840

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery

other names/site number Sardis United Methodist Church; Sardis Methodist Episcopal Church, South;  
Shady Oaks Cemetery

### 2. Location

street & number 3725 Powers Ferry Road NW

	not for publication
	vicinity

city or town Atlanta

state Georgia code GA county Fulton code 121 zip code 30342

### 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 forth 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

David C. Crass Signature of certifying official/Title: Dr. David C. Crass/Historic Preservation Division Director/Deputy SHPO Date 21 AUG '12

Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

For Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 10.9.12

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	3	buildings
1	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
2	4	<b>Total</b>

**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**

N/A

**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

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:

Colonial Revival

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: N/A

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery (now known as Sardis United Methodist Church) is located on a relatively quiet five-acre site in the middle of a sprawling urban area of northern Atlanta known as Buckhead. With a congregation dating to c.1848, the 1927 church is at least the third religious building on the site. The current edifice sits prominently on a rise on the southeastern portion of the property. The cemetery is on another hill that occupies the northwestern part of the lot. Three ancillary buildings are on lower land behind the church. The church has a symmetrical brick exterior with a central projecting tower on the front. This tower serves as the entry foyer and is topped by a squat wood steeple with classical details. The tower is flanked by one-story appendages with hipped roofs. The main body of the church is a one-story rectangular mass topped by a moderately pitched front-gabled roof. It has modest Colonial Revival details. One distinctive feature is a brick pattern in monk bond (a variant of Flemish bond) with projecting headers and striated brick faces, creating a rustic look. The interior is dominated by the sanctuary, which features classical details and several stained-glass windows dating to 1941. The cemetery, once known as Shady Oaks, takes up at least two-thirds of the property. It has a generally informal layout behind a granite retaining wall that separates it from a surrounding driveway. Headstones mark the burial places of some of Buckhead's influential early settlers. There are a variety of marked graves, ranging from simple fieldstones to elaborate marble headstones and a few enclosed family plots. Known burials date from 1869 through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but there is evidence of an unknown number of unmarked graves. The stone Donaldson mausoleum is the only above-ground vault. The cemetery terrain is uneven with a few trees and flowering shrubs. Noncontributing resources on the church property include a 1947 Sunday school building (now an art gallery); a World War II barracks that was moved to the property in 1958; a late 1970s building; and a cellular communications tower disguised as a tree. A Georgia Historical Commission marker dates to 1957 (not included in the resource count).

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### Narrative Description

*NOTE: The following description was written by Travis Kirspel, Hillary Morrish, and Erica Danylchek, volunteers and staff with the Buckhead Heritage Society, as part of a Historic Property Information Form for the "Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery," August 31, 2010, on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia. Minimal editing for clarification was made by Denise Messick, National Register Historian, Historic Preservation Division.*

#### Sardis Methodist Church

Sardis Methodist Church is a central tower type—it has a projecting entrance tower in the center of the front of the church (photograph 1). This tower is flanked by small one-story wings that are capped by hipped roofs (photograph 2). The tower is topped by a squat steeple with classical details and a short spire. The main body of the church is a rectangular mass with a moderately pitched front-gabled roof. The church is one-story with a raised basement. At the southeast corner of the main block, there is a projecting wing (photographs 5 and 6). The Colonial Revival-style building is constructed of brick and has a symmetrical main façade with a central entranceway. The exterior has little ornamentation.

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The church has distinctive brickwork. The brick pattern is monk bond with projecting headers, creating a rustic effect (photographs 7 and 8). Monk bond is a variety of Flemish bond with two stretchers between the headers. The brick faces are striated throughout. The appearance of untooled mortar joints and careless brick placement is identified as "skintled brickwork" in some sources.

According to architect Stewart Aiken, a member of the congregation, the main exterior walls of the church are constructed of an interior and exterior wythe of brick. Aiken has been unable to see the structural components between the two layers of brick. However, the church's builder, George Spruill, reported in a 1961 article in *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine* that women convicts from the Fulton County Public Works Camp "helped raise by hand the steel columns that support the sanctuary." The foundation is a stone rubble-formed wall held together with a concrete slurry, according to church members.

Eight concrete-covered stairs lead to a small uncovered stoop at the front entrance of the church (photograph 1). The central wood-paneled set of double doors is topped by a rectangular transom of stained glass. A flat arch of brick voussoirs tops the transom with a keystone of rough pieces of projecting stonework. Approximately halfway up the central tower, a small roundel is ornamented with iron tracery. One single-hung, stained-glass window is located on the front of each of the wings that flank the central tower of the church. Photograph 17 is an inside view of one of these windows. There are also four stained-glass windows on each side elevation of the main core of the building.

The gable and hipped roofs of the church are covered by asphalt shingles. The current steeple (a replacement), is "a pre-engineered metal frame, wood-veneered structure that was set on top of a flat, bitumen roof," according to Stewart Aiken. Prominent dentils appear below the cornice of the main front gable of the church. Dentils are also used in the upper part of the steeple. The steeple is squat in stature and sits upon a hipped base. A Roman-arched window with elaborate tracery dominates the central portion of the steeple, on each of its sides. A pediment and wide entablature with prominent dentils crowns the central part of each side of the steeple. Corinthian columns decorate each corner.

The floor plan of the church is dominated by the sanctuary, which is the focal point of the building. Eight exterior steps rise to double doors, which open into the narthex (the historic term for the foyer, or entryway of the church) on the first floor. Two sets of double doors separate this area from the sanctuary (photograph 11). Small rooms lie to the east and west of the narthex; the one to the west contains the staircase to the basement. An original gold-colored chandelier with white ceramic sconces hangs in the narthex (photograph 12). The stained-glass transom above the doorway has a crucifix and the name, Mr. / Mrs. H.D. Samples.

In the sanctuary, the nave is divided into two rows of pews on either side of a main aisle that stretches to the chancel (photograph 13). The chancel, from which services are conducted, is slightly elevated above where the congregation sits. The chancel is flanked by doors on each side leading into a space behind the stage. This space is used for storage for various items used for worship. The pastor's office is located at the southeast corner of the church in the projecting wing. The first floor interior walls are sheathed in plaster. Detailed woodwork has been applied in the form of composite pilasters, triangular pediments above the windows, and carved moldings. The woodwork has been painted white. The wall behind the chancel is elaborately decorated. At each side, an entablature is "supported" by two sets of composite pilasters. The area between each set of pilasters is dominated by a rectangular stained-glass window. In the middle, top portion of the wall, a rounded arch provides a decorative detail and rests each of its ends on the entablatures below and to each side. Directly below the arched molding is a triptych of stained glass. A large gold-colored chandelier hangs over the center of the chancel, while a smaller chandelier hangs to each side.

The molding is similar on the wall opposite the chancel (photograph 15). However, no stained-glass windows punctuate this southwest wall. Instead, the composite pilasters frame the wooden double doors to the narthex. The long walls of the sanctuary have four stained-glass windows on each side of the nave (photograph 14). The stained glass was donated by individuals in 1941 and their family names are etched in the glass

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(photograph 16). Brass plaques were installed below the windows with the names of individuals that paid for their restoration in 1984. Triangular pediments rest atop each window.

According to architect Stewart Aiken, the church's arched ceiling construction "consists of five steel trusses that free span the sanctuary. Between [the] trusses are steel purlins that support wood rafters and wood decking above. Suspended from these purlins are wires that hold up the plaster ceiling. That ceiling is simply wire mesh and plaster formed to make the arched ceiling."

The partial basement ("undercroft") is a utilitarian space without ornamentation (photograph 18). The space was not finished until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when it was utilized for church functions, such as classrooms for Bible study, and rooms for child care and wedding preparations. There are stairs that connect to the narthex, the front entrance of the church. The basement is finished with drywall and commercial-grade tuft carpeting over concrete floors. Piers run down the center of the space and three half-submerged windows line the side of the walls. The ceiling is dropped or suspended from an overhead floor structure to provide space for pipes, ductwork, and florescent lighting fixtures. There is a second entrance into the space at the rear of the church at the bottom of a flight of stairs. Next to this entrance is the kitchen, which is lit by two small windows, with twelve lights each. Adjacent to the kitchen are bathrooms and utility closets. Three classrooms line the south wall of the basement. These feature Formica paneling on the walls. The main area in the central and northern part of the space is reserved for the fellowship hall.

The church originally had radiated heat. The sanctuary windows are thus single-hung so they could be opened for cooling in the summertime. The church now has central heating and air conditioning. Documentation has not been found to indicate when this change occurred.

The existing church has had few changes except for the steeple. In 1965 the original weather-damaged steeple was removed and the church bell was placed in storage until funds were raised to repair it. Thereafter, Sardis was described as the "flat top" church. In 1976 a new steeple was placed on the building. It was not, however, in keeping with the appearance of the original. In 1995 the steeple was replicated to its original appearance by architect J.B. Satterfield. The church bell was then placed back in the steeple for the first time since 1965.

A historic photograph of the church's interior reveals that the main sanctuary has been slightly changed over time. In 1941 the pilasters and wood trim had a dark finish. The 1941 photograph also reveals that the wooden pews have been replaced since that time. These changes likely took place in 1985 with proceeds from the sale of the church's parsonage. Overall, however, the interior of the church retains its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling.

In 1984 the church's stained-glass windows were refurbished (a term used by the church) and were covered with Lexan, a polycarbonate resin thermoplastic. In 2000, the stained-glass windows were again refurbished. The Lexan protectors were replaced with clear, tempered glass. At the same time, new flooring was installed in the narthex. A handicapped-access ramp that was once constructed along the eastern façade of the church building has recently been removed and replaced by an elevator on the rear (photograph 7). On the exterior of the main façade of the church, the brick stairs have been covered by concrete; no documentation has been found to provide a date for this change.

#### Ancillary Buildings and Structures

In 1947 the building known as the "Deonian Sunday School" was built along the eastern part of the property behind the church (photograph 9). It is a one-story, brick building with a side-gabled roof. This noncontributing building is currently leased by the Gregg Irby Fine Art Gallery. In 1958 a World War II barracks was decommissioned and moved to the property (photograph 10). This long building is only a single room deep. It is covered with asbestos siding and topped by a side-gabled roof. It was once utilized for church activities, but

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in recent years it has been rented by the church to artists for workspace. This building is considered a noncontributing resource. A third building (also noncontributing) along the eastern boundary of the property, was built in the late 1970s. It has a CMU foundation, vertical plywood siding, and a shed roof. The other noncontributing resource is a cellular communications tower constructed behind the cemetery in 1988. It was designed to look like a tree.

### Cemetery

The Sardis Methodist Church has an adjacent cemetery with a fairly informal layout in most sections. There are approximately 700 grave markers of various shapes, sizes, and materials. They range from simple fieldstones to more elaborate marble headstones. These reflect the more-than-150-year evolution of the site from the days of early settlement to more affluent times in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A prominent stone retaining wall with distinctive beaded mortar joints divides the cemetery property from the driveway adjacent to the church (photograph 4).

There are around 87 graves that are marked by fieldstones or rocks. Most of these primitive markers are located in the southeastern portion of the cemetery—the area closest to the church, which was developed first and has few defined spaces (photographs 20, 21, and 24). This area is punctuated primarily by individual grave markers (photograph 37). Several of the family plots are surrounded by low stone walls (photographs 19 and 27). Distinct square plots occupy the northwestern half of the cemetery (photographs 41 and 42). Some plots are graveled and others have grass. The most elaborate dividing walls are granite with beaded mortar joints that give the appearance of vines (photograph 38). The only mausoleum, built for the Donaldson family, is enclosed by such a wall (photograph 39). Other plots have more crudely built walls of stacked stone (photograph 28). One plot has a low brick enclosure, while another is encompassed by a rusted iron fence (photograph 26).

The cemetery is slightly elevated above the driveway that separates it from the churchyard (photograph 4). The oldest section of the cemetery lies on the highest ground near the church. The cemetery's ground is held back here by a stone retaining wall that features a prominent beaded mortar pattern. Two small stone stairways are cut into the retaining wall to provide access to the cemetery (photograph 40). A second driveway also provides access from Powers Ferry Road (photograph 43). The driveway near the northwestern boundary of the property curves around at the back of the property and then cuts almost through the center of the cemetery back toward Powers Ferry Road. The land drops off in elevation towards the northwestern part of the property.

Burials may go back to the 1840s, but the oldest marked grave dates to 1869. Some of the earliest graves have small, uncut, unmarked pieces of stone (examples are seen in the foreground of photographs 20, 21, and 24). Other headstones are simply upright granite or marble slabs that are either rectangular or chamfered at the top. Most of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century examples rest on plinths or bases, while earlier versions were simply settled into the ground. A few of the slabs are a bit more stylized or more distinctly cut at the top. Several cradle graves, bedsteads, pedestals with urns (photograph 28), and obelisks also dot the cemetery.

At least three draped shafts were observed (photographs 22, center and 36, right). Two children's gravestones are topped with small lamb figures, which was a typical representation of innocence in 19<sup>th</sup>-century cemeteries (photographs 32 and 33, center). Tree stumps, representing a life cut short, are also found (photograph 29). Masonic symbols (photograph 23) and crosses are prevalent, but other gravestone symbolism is less common in the cemetery. Many of the gravestones bearing carved motifs have fairly simple floral patterns. Photograph 35 is an example of a more elaborate floral carving. Photographs 30 and 34 show simple streamlined markers from the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

A few trees and flowering shrubs, including crape myrtle and mahonia (an evergreen shrub), dot the uneven terrain of the cemetery. In a few cases, flowering shrubs have actually been incorporated into the family plots.

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The northwestern and northeastern portions of the cemetery are lined with trees which provide a visual separation between it and the adjacent residential and commercial development. The cemetery is well maintained, with a few gravestone repairs evident (photograph 25).

The Donaldson mausoleum is a one-story, rectangular mass with a symmetrical front façade that faces Powers Ferry Road (photograph 39). It has a high-pitched, front-gabled roof. It is simple in its ornamentation, without any definitive style. It sits prominently in the front of the cemetery, near the road. The mausoleum is constructed of rough blocks of granite that were unevenly cut. The structure's roof is covered with large slate shingles that prominently overlap. The mausoleum has a central, metal doorway with a wrought-iron gate in front. An arch of even granite voussoirs is located over the doorway. Above the arch, a smooth, rectangular block of light gray granite bears a Masonic symbol—a compass and square forming the triangle of God, with the letter "G" in the center, or the "eye" of God. The granite block also bears the name Donaldson, B.O.B. and the date 1893, the year in which Silas Donaldson died. (B.O.B. most likely stands for one of the Masonic orders, the Benevolent Order of Bereans who were proponents of nativism during the mid-1850s in the South. The fear of immigrant labor drove artisans of this period into organizations protecting their trade. Donaldson had a close affiliation with the Masonic Lodge 107, F. & A.M. and was a craftsman himself, which makes his affiliation with the B.O.B. plausible.)

Henry Irby, one of the first residents of Buckhead and the namesake of Buckhead's original name—Irbyville—is buried in the cemetery (photograph 28). Other gravestones carry the names Rolader, Collier (photograph 27), Holcombe, Howell, Plaster, Mayson, Cheshire, Maddox, Hicks, Cofield, Hildebrand, Williams, Spruill, Donaldson, and Mathieson; each is important to the development of Buckhead. While an archaeological investigation or complete inventory has not been conducted, church members estimate that more than 750 people are buried at Sardis Cemetery, some in unmarked graves. Thirty of these unmarked graves are pauper's graves which were relocated in 1920 from an old Atlanta cemetery when the land was purchased by the Atlantic Steel Corporation (site of the present day Atlanta Waterworks).

### Landscape and Setting

The Sardis church and cemetery property lies between a commercial and a residential area. Set back from the fork of Roswell and Powers Ferry Roads, Sardis Methodist Church is next to a strip of stores on its Roswell Road side, while the Powers Ferry side is lined by upper-middle-class houses. The church property has a distinctly different feeling from its surroundings—it retains the integrity and feeling from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, in a few places, the skyscrapers of Buckhead can be seen in the distance (photograph 3).

The following highlights a few of the changes to the overall property since the 1920s.

- When the present incarnation of Sardis Methodist Church was completed in 1927, the driveway was paved. The retaining wall that runs along the driveway that separates the church from the cemetery was also installed sometime during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- In 1947 the "Deonian Sunday School" (a noncontributing building) was built along the eastern part of the property (photograph 9). It is a one-story brick building that now serves as the Gregg Irby Fine Art Gallery.
- In 1954 the Jesse Couch estate sold 1.125 acres at the rear of the church property to Sardis Methodist Church for one dollar.
- In 1957 the Georgia State Historical Commission erected a marker along Powers Ferry Road in front of the church (photograph 44).
- In 1958 Sardis acquired and moved an old wooden barracks from Fort Oglethorpe to the church property and placed it behind the church building for use as a Sunday school classroom (a noncontributing building, photograph 10).

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- In 1970 the church purchased and dedicated a home directly across Powers Ferry Road from the church property for use as a parsonage (not part of this nomination).
- A shed-roofed building (noncontributing) was built behind the church in the late 1970s.
- In 1984 the church received an additional 1.5 acres north of the church building from William Cox.
- In 1985 the Atlanta International School began leasing buildings on the property from the church to start its program with 51 students.
- In 1985 the church sold the parsonage across the street and the proceeds from the sale were used to redecorate the church's sanctuary.
- In 1998 Sardis United Methodist Church began leasing part of its property to the Southern Company for a communications tower (a noncontributing structure), which was designed to look like a tree. The area where the tower is located is surrounded by a metal fence and includes a small utility building. It is located at the northern part of the property and is largely shielded from view by trees.



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**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 the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

c.1869-1962

**Significant Dates**

1869 – date of earliest marked grave

1888 – cemetery deeded to the church

1927 – present church building is completed

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Southwell, Owen James Trainor

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery begins c.1869 with the earliest known burial. Because burials in the cemetery continue through history to the present, 1962 was chosen as the end of the period of significance. All the markers placed within the cemetery during the historic period contribute to the significance of the property as a rural cemetery landscape that evolved as it became part of a

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more urban setting. The period of significance represents the period in which the cemetery developed into its full historic form. The period of significance also includes the 1927 date of construction of the present church building.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

The church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria Consideration A as a religious property primarily for the architectural significance of the building. The 1927 church is a good example of the work of architect Owen James Trainor Southwell who designed the building with a rural aesthetic in the popular Colonial Revival style.

The cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria Consideration D as a cemetery that derives its primary significance from its age, from its distinctive design features through its rural landscape aesthetic, and also for its historical association with the early Buckhead community. The cemetery reflects the founding and historical development of a small settlement that began on the outskirts of Atlanta in the 1840s and grew into a major suburb by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Criteria Consideration D is being applied because the period of significance for this nomination begins with a date (1869) that is associated with the cemetery, but not with the church that was constructed in 1927.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery is significant at the local level under Criterion C for the church as a good example of Colonial Revival-style architecture in Atlanta and for the cemetery for its landscape architecture (including its diverse collection of grave markers) representing the evolution from a simple rural cemetery to one that reflects more urban characteristics. The property is also significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of exploration/settlement for the cemetery's association with the early history of the Buckhead community. The first incarnation of Sardis Methodist Church on its current site likely dates to the late 1840s, around the same time that the nearby settlement of Irbyville came to be known as Buckhead. Most of the adjacent Shady Oaks Cemetery, which appears to pre-date 1869, was deeded to the church in 1888 and 1894. (The name Shady Oaks was no longer used after the 1930s.) Church records indicate that there may be over 750 burials, many in unmarked or crudely marked graves. Sardis Methodist Church (1927) is a good example of a church that was designed in a popular style of its era, but in a simplified version with little exterior ornamentation, except for the steeple (now a reconstructed copy of the original). The central tower and rustic brickwork contribute to a rural vernacular aesthetic, which reflected the parishioners' desire to connect with their heritage as one of Buckhead's oldest congregations. The architect was Owen James Trainor Southwell (1892-1961), who practiced in Georgia from 1919 to 1931. While Southwell designed over 30 churches in Louisiana, Sardis is his only known church in Georgia. The cemetery is significant as one of the only extant historic resources associated with the founding of Irbyville, later Buckhead. Burials include many of the first white settlers, such as Henry Irby (1807-1879), Wesley Collier (1824-1906), and Napoleon Cheshire (1843-1921), who each owned large tracts of land that formed the core of the Buckhead community.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*NOTE: Most of following section was written by Travis Kirspel, Hillary Morrish, and Erica Danylchek, volunteers and staff with the Buckhead Heritage Society, as part of a Historic Property Information Form for the "Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery," August 31, 2010, on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia. The text was edited by Denise Messick, National Register Historian, Historic Preservation Division.*

The Sardis Methodist Church is significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a good, intact example of an architect-designed church that intentionally imitated a rural vernacular form. Sardis is a central tower-type and has little exterior ornamentation. The central tower church type was common in rural areas and small towns in Georgia from the 1850s to the 1930s. They could be either ornate or quite plain in their ornamentation. Sardis is a good example of this church type in its form and symmetry. It is quite simple in its design, reflecting its rural roots. Sardis Methodist Church is also significant in the area of architecture as one of the few known extant examples of the work of Owen James Trainor Southwell in Georgia. The current Sardis church building was designed between 1925 and 1927 by the architect, who practiced in Georgia from 1919 to 1931.

Southwell came to Atlanta from Louisiana to manage the local office of renowned architect Henry Hornbostel. In 1922 Southwell set up a private architectural practice headquartered in the Hass-Howell building in downtown Atlanta. He quickly accumulated impressive clients. In 1922 he designed the St. Charles Apartments at 1017-1027 St. Charles Avenue in Virginia-Highland. In 1925 he designed the Fred McGonigal residence, a Tudor Revival-style house at 3028 Andrews Drive in Buckhead. In 1926 he designed "Jacquiland," the home of Cator and Charlotte Woolford, on Ponce de Leon Avenue. In 1927 he designed "Dellwood," the home of Marcus Emmert at 591 West Paces Ferry Road. Southwell likely also had a role in many more Atlanta buildings. In 1931 Southwell returned to New Iberia, Louisiana, where he continued to practice in the field of architecture. According to the inventory of the Owen J. Southwell papers at the University of Louisiana at LaFayette, he was quite prolific. He designed over 30 churches in Louisiana including St. Peter's Church in his hometown of New Iberia in 1953. However, Sardis is the only known example of Southwell's ecclesiastical architecture in Georgia.

Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery is also significant under Criterion A in the area of exploration/settlement. The cemetery is one of the only extant resources associated with the founding of Irbyville, later Buckhead. When the congregation first acquired the property on Powers Ferry Road, it served a rural farming community. Many of the area's earliest settlers worshipped in the antecedents of the current church building, traveling from as far away as five miles to attend services provided by Methodist circuit riders. The site retains some of the rural character reflective of the initial settlement of the community of Buckhead. Furthermore, the inscriptions on the headstones in Sardis cemetery document the early families who contributed so heavily to the development of Buckhead. For instance, Henry Irby, one of the first residents of Buckhead and the namesake of Buckhead's original name—Irbyville—is buried in the cemetery. Other gravestones carry the names Rolader, Collier, Holcombe, Howell, Plaster, Mayson, Cheshire, Maddox, Hicks, Cofield, Hildebrand, Williams, Spruill, Donaldson, and Mathieson; each is important to the development of Buckhead.

The evolution of the style and materials of the cemetery's gravestones also reflects the evolution of the rural community which the cemetery served. The earliest part of the cemetery is dotted with rudimentary fieldstones and modest slabs. It was not until around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that Sardis saw the introduction of Victorian symbols, including lambs, urns, broken-stemmed flowers, and draped broken shafts. By this time,

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these more elaborately carved headstones would have been commercially available to the growing community. According to D. Gregory Jeane, a cultural geographer, the preference for commercial stones in rural communities "began in earnest around the 1890s and became especially prevalent after World War II. Why the change? Partly, one must take into consideration that the composition of communities changes over time. People from other areas were moving into the South, and, like new settlers anywhere, they brought with them new ideas and ways of doing things. People from urban environments, even small ones, would bring different ideas and demands for certain items that would be considered essential in their new environment."<sup>1</sup> By this time, rural communities would also have been able to obtain elaborately carved stones from monument dealers in nearby cities or catalog sources such as Sears, Roebuck and Company.<sup>2</sup> Buckhead was becoming more connected to Atlanta in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Sardis Cemetery is also significant under Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture as a good example of a formerly rural churchyard cemetery that retains the distinctive characteristics that define Southern folk burial grounds of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including location, vegetation, materials, and layout. Rural folk cemeteries were typically small pieces of land found on hilltop locations, or, at the very least, on elevated pieces of land.<sup>3</sup> D. Gregory Jeane has explained that "the sacredness of hilltops is recognized as being of great antiquity, but locals rationalize cemetery location in terms of drainage."<sup>4</sup> The section of Sardis cemetery that was first developed occupies not only the highest ground on the nominated site, but also the highest ground in the vicinity of the intersection of present-day Powers Ferry and Roswell roads.

Rural folk cemeteries tended to contain little vegetation. However, the plant species chosen to grace the site usually had symbolic meaning for settlers in the area.<sup>5</sup> They often contained evergreens, which symbolized immortality. One of the most common cemetery evergreens was the cedar. A large cedar dominates the center of Sardis Cemetery. Pine trees and oaks were also common. These species can be seen lining the edges of the cemetery. Other preferred species included crape myrtle, spirea, gardenia, rose, azalea, and lilies. Crape myrtles are still evident at the Sardis site.

Most gravestones in rural church cemeteries also exhibit an east-west orientation, although the alignment is not always cardinally accurate.<sup>6</sup> According to the Association of Gravestone Studies,

Early settlers had their feet pointing toward the east and the head of the coffin toward the west, ready to rise up and face the "new day" (the sun) when "the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised" or when Christ would appear and they would be reborn. If the body was positioned between the headstone and the footstone, with the inscriptions facing outward, the footstone might actually be facing east and the decorated face of the headstone facing west. If the headstone inscription faces east, the body would most commonly be buried to the east of it.<sup>7</sup>

Gravestones at Sardis Cemetery are indeed laid out in a general east-west axial direction. In instances where the body's orientation is easily discernible, such as plots with headstones and footstones or plots marked by cradle graves, it was observed that the deceased's feet were to the east, while the head was to the west.

<sup>1</sup> D. Gregory Jeane, "Cemeteries," In *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 63.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>3</sup> D. Gregory Jeane, "Rural Southern Gravestones: Sacred Artifacts in the Upland South Folk Cemetery," *Markers IV: The Journal of the Association of Gravestone Studies* (1987), 59.

<sup>4</sup> D. Gregory Jeane, "Cemeteries," In *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989, 463.

<sup>5</sup> Jeane, "Rural Southern Gravestones: Sacred Artifacts in the Upland South Folk Cemetery," 59.

<sup>6</sup> Jeane, "Cemeteries," 464.

<sup>7</sup> Jessie Lie Farber, "FAQs on Symbolism," The Association of Gravestone Studies, <http://www.gravestonestudies.org/faq.htm> (accessed August 14, 2010).

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Many Southern rural folk cemeteries were originally scraped clean of all grass, which created a marked visual contrast to the surrounding wooded environment.<sup>8</sup> However, over time, many of these swept landscapes have been "replaced by park-like expanses of grass."<sup>9</sup> Documentation has not been found that describes the early appearance of Sardis Cemetery. Today, much of the site is covered in grass. However, a few enclosed family burial plots are covered in gravel and are free of vegetation and debris. In summary, Sardis is significant in landscape architecture because it still retains many of the distinctive characteristics that define Southern folk burial grounds, such as its hilltop location, traditional vegetation, east-west orientation, and local materials.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

*NOTE: The following history was written by Travis Kirspel, Hillary Morrish, and Erica Danylchek, volunteers and staff with the Buckhead Heritage Society, as part of a Historic Property Information Form for the "Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery," August 31, 2010, on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia. Minimal editing for clarification was made by Denise Messick, National Register Historian, Historic Preservation Division.*

According to some oral traditions and the 1957 Georgia Historical Commission marker on the property, the Sardis church is believed to have been established in 1812. However, this assertion is unlikely. As renowned Atlanta historian Franklin Garrett later pointed out in a 1973 letter to the editor of *The North Side News*, "the year 1812 ante-dates by nine years the Creek Cession of 1821 whereby this area was opened to permanent legal white settlement. Churches generally follow rather than precede original settlements." In the first volume of *Atlanta and Environs*, Garrett also pointed out that Power's Ferry Road, the thoroughfare adjacent to which the church stands, was not opened until shortly before or after Power's Ferry was authorized in 1835, making the establishment of a church on such inaccessible land unlikely. Garrett believed that the first incarnation of the Sardis Methodist Church on the current property was built "sometime in the 1840s."<sup>10</sup>

History of the Buckhead Community

The land that comprises the present community of Buckhead was settled by white inhabitants after the Creek Indians signed the Treaty of Indian Springs in 1821. A subsequent land lottery parceled out 202 ½-acre land lots to those eligible to draw—white men over the age of 18, who were United States citizens and residents of Georgia for at least 12 months. In 1838 Henry Irby purchased 202 ½ acres surrounding the present intersection of Peachtree, Roswell, and West Paces Ferry roads from Daniel Johnson—the original drawer of the land. Irby soon established a tavern at the junction. In 1840 the Georgia Legislature designated Henry Yearby's [Irby's] house as an election district and in 1841 a United States Post Office was established at Irbyville. In the late 1840s, the small settlement's name changed to Buckhead. The most prevalent account of the origins of the name relates to a buck's head being placed over the door of Irby's tavern.<sup>11</sup>

In 1850 the Buckhead district had a population of 408 people, with 68 heads of households listed. Of those 68 heads of households, 58 were farmers, eight were laborers, one was a lawyer, one was a doctor, one was a blacksmith, and one was a carpenter. Fifty years later, in 1900, Buckhead was still a very small community, with only 236 heads of households. Residents were primarily farmers, farm laborers, blacksmiths, carpenters,

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<sup>8</sup> Jeane, "Cemeteries," 264.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Steve Wright, "Experts Dispute Age of Northwest Church," *Intown Extra*, 8 May 1980.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Barnard, *Buckhead: A Place for All Time*, United States: WWAOW, 2009.

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and potters. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the pottery industry had begun to develop in Buckhead because of the fine quality of clay in the area. Additional commercial development also sprang up at the intersection of Peachtree, Roswell, and West Paces Ferry roads at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Dorsey's grocery and Brumbelow's blacksmith.<sup>12</sup>

In 1907, the trolley was extended from Atlanta to Buckhead, "creating a major change for the small rural community by allowing workers to easily get to and from their jobs in Atlanta, and students to travel to the city for school."<sup>13</sup> Buckhead also became the site of summer cottages for Atlanta's wealthy citizens and not long after became the site of "permanent and viable" residential communities, which included the subdivisions of Peachtree Hills and Peachtree Heights Park. Most of this development, however, was still relatively far from the site of Sardis Methodist Church, which lies approximately 1.2 miles north of the main intersection of Peachtree and Roswell roads. Most of the land around Sardis church and cemetery remained farmland during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The current North Fulton Golf Course and Chastain Memorial Park, adjacent to Powers Ferry Road northwest of Sardis church, was a cornfield until it was developed in the early 1940s. It was developed, in part, to encourage quality residential development in the area, which came in earnest in the post-war years. In 1952, the community of Buckhead was annexed into the city of Atlanta, which "changed it from the once quiet and simple community into a bustling mini-city, with an influx of new residents and a surge of new businesses." Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery, however, remain visible reminders of the community's rural roots before the population explosion that followed.

#### Early History of the Church Property: 1821-1927

The counties of Dooly, Fayette, Henry, Houston, and Monroe were created from the land 1821 cession, and included the land that is now the property of Sardis United Methodist Church (UMC). The land acquired from the Creeks was divided into districts and further divided into land lots measuring 202 ½ acres. These land lots were "disposed of and distributed" in the 1821 Land Lottery. In 1822 part of Henry County became DeKalb County--the county in which the trustees of Sardis Methodist Episcopal Church bought property in 1848 for their congregation. In 1853 the north part of Fulton County was formed out of the western part of DeKalb County. Since that time, Sardis has been part of Fulton County.

Joel Neal of Franklin County drew land lot 97 in the 17<sup>th</sup> district in the 1821 Georgia Land Lottery. Ransom Gaines and Henry Irby later deeded two acres of Land Lot 97 to the "Trustees of Methodist Episcopal church" in 1848. (Between 1844 and 1939 this denomination was known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.) After its initial dedication as church property, there were a series of church buildings erected on the site. While it is not known what was there earlier, documentation seems to indicate that a two-story, wood-frame church was built to accommodate the Sardis congregation c.1859. "Sardis Church" was later indicated on an 1864 Civil War military map.<sup>14</sup> During the Civil War, Union General William T. Sherman destroyed countless buildings in Atlanta. However, oral history and newspaper accounts state that Sardis Church survived the devastation of the war.

In March of 1875, a tornado destroyed the two-story, wood-frame church on the property and damaged many of the grave markers in the adjacent cemetery. A contemporary account in the *Daily Constitution* reported that Sardis church "was a stout two-story building, the upper portion or hall being used as a Masonic hall. Its destruction shows the resistless fury of the wind, as it was a very heavy building, well calculated to withstand any ordinary tempest, and had often done so in times past."

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>14</sup> Map illustrating the military operations in front of Atlanta, GA: from the passage of Peach Tree Creek, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1864, to the commencement of the movement upon the enemy's lines of communication, south of Atlanta, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1864.

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The second known church building was constructed in 1879 by "the persistent farmers of the North Side district."<sup>15</sup> The Sardis Masonic Lodge No. 107 F. & A. M. also assisted in the rebuilding and subsequently used the second floor of the church for its meetings. Many of the Masonic lodge members were also members of the Sardis congregation. James Robert Mayson, Sardis Church's pastor from 1870 to 1875, was a charter member of the lodge and its first elected Worshipful Master. In 1915, the Masonic Lodge donated their part ownership in the church back to Sardis and moved their operation into the heart of Buckhead at the corner of West Paces Ferry and Roswell roads.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sardis Methodist Episcopal Church was served by circuit rider ministers. In 1830 the Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church was created. It was originally divided into six districts and further subdivided into circuits. According to an account by former Sardis minister, Reverend Dr. John Sink, "the circuits were large, consisting of more than two dozen churches and worship services were held at irregular intervals during the month—usually every two weeks and frequently on weekdays rather than on weekends."<sup>16</sup> As Georgia's population grew and Methodism expanded, however, the number of districts and circuits grew proportionately.

Sardis was part of the Decatur circuit of the Georgia Conference's Cherokee district until the Atlanta circuit was established in 1854. After the Georgia Conference split into the North Georgia and South Georgia conferences in 1866, Sardis "became part of the North Georgia Conference on the Fulton circuit of the Atlanta district."<sup>17</sup>

In 1926 congregation member Susan Poss recalled that during the early history of Sardis Methodist Church, "there was preaching every two weeks. The first preachers . . . were Lane and Owens. One came one week and the other, two weeks later. There weren't any Sunday services, either, they preached Tuesdays or Wednesdays. People rode horseback those days, or walked or hitched up the wagon to get to church. When the [Civil War] broke out, the soldiers came along here, but they didn't bother us. There weren't many meetings during those four years, and there wasn't any need for church dinners and bazaars."<sup>18</sup> In 1926 congregation member James Collie recalled that in the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, "We thought nothing of walking five miles to church. Everybody around here belonged to that church. There wasn't another one in the neighborhood for a long time, then the only other one was at Sandy Springs, a Baptist church."<sup>19</sup>

There have been gradual additions to the property over the years in terms of acreage, burials in the cemetery, and additional buildings and structures.

- In 1878 the Donaldson family built the mausoleum in the cemetery close to the western edge of the property, facing Powers Ferry Road. It serves as the final resting place for seven members of the Donaldson family. Silas H. Donaldson, Sr., the Donaldson family patriarch and one of the founders of Sardis Church, was interred in the vault in 1893, but later was moved to Westview Cemetery.
- In 1888, Silas H. Donaldson, Jr. officially deeded part of the current church and cemetery site to the Trustees of Sardis Church. This was ". . . beginning at rock corner on the old Bruce road now known as the Old Roswell road, near a large oak tree running thence in a North westerly direction three hundred and seventy-six feet to rock corner, thence East of rock corner near the house at north East

<sup>15</sup> Fahy, 1926.

<sup>16</sup> John Sink. *On Atlanta's Holy Mountain; A Brief History of Sardis United Methodist Church*, Atlanta, Ga. 2000, p.7.

<sup>17</sup> Sink, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Agnes Fahy, "States Third Oldest Church at Buckhead," *Atlanta Journal*, May 23, 1926.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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corner of the Cemetery – thence south To hundred and thirty-six feet to rock corner. Thence south ward Two hundred and forty feet, to rock corner. . .”

- In 1894, Silas H. Donaldson, Jr. deeded an additional acre of land to G.W. Williams, Charles W. Pope, Charles C. Mason, J. A. Plaster, and W.J. Collier, acting as trustees for the land to be used always as a cemetery. This was “. . . fronting on the Powers Ferry road and beginning at a stone West of the Donaldson Vault lot and Sardis Church and running Easterly one hundred and sixty-six feet – thence Southeasterly sixty feet to a ten foot alley – thence Easterly one hundred and fifteen feet to a stone, thence North one hundred and eighty-eight feet to a stone, thence West three hundred and ten feet to Powers Ferry Road – thence southeast one hundred and thirty-seven feet to front of beginning, containing one acre.”

In 1925, the wood church building on the property was torn down to make way for a more permanent brick building. Owen James Southwell was chosen to design the new edifice. In 1926 Southwell commented on his inspiration for the church's design to *The Atlanta Journal*:

I have used the colonial architecture because it was the prevalent style at the time the first Sardis church was erected – in 1812. It was an age of Puritanical simplicity, and the architecture changed from the Gothic elaborateness of the previous epoch to the severity of line. . . The style of this particular church is in the late eighteenth century tradition. It was the last development of colonial architecture and was known as the Georgian because it developed during the reign of the four Georges. . . The whole architecture was characterized by a dignity of style, carefully wrought detail, and a return to the classic lines. The church will be a pure example of the architecture perfected in 1812.<sup>20</sup>

Designed by Southwell, the church was completed in 1927 by builder George Spruill, who was a member of the Sardis congregation. It was subsequently designated as a fixed station in the North Atlanta district and was no longer served by circuit riders. In 1961 George Spruill retrospectively described the construction of this church building:

When we started construction, we had just \$100. I don't believe I could have kept the project going without the help of the women of the church. They held chicken and oyster dinners to raise funds, and sometimes they sold as many as 1,500 plates at a single supper. That money was like manna to me. The basement was dug by hand by women convicts from the Fulton County Public Works Camp, which was not far from the church in those days. These same women helped raise by hand the steel columns that support the sanctuary.<sup>21</sup>

### The Architect: Owen James Trainor Southwell

Owen James Trainor Southwell (1892-1961) was born September 20, 1892 in New Iberia, Louisiana, the son of William D. and Catherine Trainor Southwell. From 1885 to 1888, William Southwell studied architecture in New York and practiced in New Iberia until the family moved outside of Beaumont, Texas in 1901, where he later established a brick and tile plant. Catherine Trainor Southwell's family owned an architectural millwork business. Owen Southwell's early exposure to the building trades undoubtedly influenced his future career choice and "gave Owen a distinct advantage . . . There were few formally trained architects in America at that point, especially in the South."<sup>22</sup>

Owen Southwell attended Tulane University in New Orleans from 1910 to 1912. He then transferred to the

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Hammack.

<sup>22</sup> Wright Marshall, "Owen James Southwell," *The Georgian Revival*, <http://thegeorgianrevival.wordpress.com/2009/12/09/owen-james-southwell/>.



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Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, where he studied under renowned architect Henry Hornbostel and received the Carnegie Institute of Technology medal of the American Institute of Architects in 1915. Southwell graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture in 1915 and received a one-year teaching fellowship at the Carnegie Institute. He then received a teaching appointment in the University of Illinois Architectural and Engineering Department.<sup>23</sup>

After a brief stint in the United States Navy during World War I, during which time he was stationed at Southampton, England, Southwell was hired by his former teacher Henry Hornbostel to work in the New York-based architectural firm of Palmer, Hornbostel, and Jones. He briefly worked in Hornbostel's Pittsburgh office and then in 1919, Hornbostel sent Southwell to manage his office in Atlanta, which had been created to oversee Hornbostel's commission for the campus of Emory University.<sup>24</sup> During his tenure in Hornbostel's office, Southwell supervised construction work and provided additional drawings for Hornbostel's impressive commissions.<sup>25</sup> Then, in 1922, Southwell forged out on his own and set up a private architectural practice headquartered in the Hass-Howell building in downtown Atlanta.<sup>26</sup> During his time in Atlanta, Southwell also was an instructor of design at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Southwell returned to New Iberia, Louisiana, in 1931.<sup>27</sup>

#### Recent Church History: 1927 to Present

On July 20, 1941, the Sardis congregation celebrated paying off its mortgage with a mortgage-burning ceremony at the church. Simultaneously, the congregation dedicated new stained-glass windows for the church. Southwell had not incorporated stained glass into his original design. In 1942 Sardis was designated a stand-alone station by the North Georgia Conference, and Earl Gladstone Hunt, Jr. became the church's first full-time pastor.<sup>28</sup>

In 1961 Sardis Methodist Church had nearly 800 members, which forced a split in the congregation because the neighborhood opposed the sale and rezoning of the property. As a result, a majority of the members relocated to St. John's United Methodist Church on Mt. Paran Road. Only 44 church members remained at Sardis following the split; they were, however, able to retain the church's historic name.<sup>29</sup>

In 1965 the church's original steeple was damaged in a storm, and removed and placed in storage because the repairs at the time were too costly for the church to undertake. No steeple replaced it until 1976, so the church was nicknamed the "flat top" church in the interim. In 1976 a new modern steeple was placed atop Sardis United Methodist Church. In 1995 the steeple was replaced by a reproduction that matches its original appearance.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Don Spencer, "Owen J. T. Southwell 1892-1961." Research paper--Georgia Institute of Technology, 1991.

<sup>25</sup> Marshall.

<sup>26</sup> Spencer.

<sup>27</sup> *Daily Iberian* (New Iberia, LA), "Owen Southwell, Prominent Iberia Architect, Succumbs," 7 April 1961.

<sup>28</sup> Sink.

<sup>29</sup> Lisa Golem, "Sardis Church: I think theologically it says something about a people, that a church has been able to last this length of time in one place." *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* Buckhead Atlanta edition, 17 July 1979.

<sup>30</sup> Sardis United Methodist Church, "A Brief History of Sardis United Methodist Church," n.d.

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### The Cemetery

According to church accounts, Sardis Cemetery (also known as Shady Oaks prior to the 1930s) has over 750 burials. Some of these are unmarked and some are only marked by rocks. The earliest documented burial in the cemetery (John W. Williams) dates to 1869. As discussed in previous paragraphs, it appears from deed records that most of the current cemetery property was deeded to the trustees of Sardis Methodist Church by Silas H. Donaldson, Jr. in 1888 and 1894. In 1975 the members of Sardis UMC (United Methodist Church) organized and incorporated the Sardis Cemetery Association to help preserve the cemetery through a perpetual care arrangement. Sardis Cemetery contains the graves of many of Buckhead's earliest settlers including Henry Irby, Wesley Gray Collier, Rev. William Joseph Rolader, and James Mathieson.

The following is a brief synopsis of known information regarding some of the prominent burials in the cemetery.

- Henry Irby (1807-1879) – On December 18, 1838, Henry Irby bought Land Lot 99 of the 17<sup>th</sup> district from Daniel Johnson for \$650. The 202 ½ acres of land surrounded the present intersection of Peachtree, Roswell, and West Paces Ferry roads. Irby soon cleared a portion of land and built a tavern and general store at the present corner of West Paces Ferry and Roswell roads with a home nearby. It is often recounted that a buck's head hanging outside his tavern gave Buckhead its name. Irby was initially buried on his property, but later moved by his son, Fulton, to the Sardis cemetery.
- Rial Bailey Hicks (1827-1902) – Hicks was the postmaster of the community's post office and married Henry Irby's oldest daughter, Sarah Jane, in 1854.
- Rev. William Joseph Rolader (1816-1893) – Rolader settled in Buckhead in the mid-1850s after immigrating to America from Germany in 1828. Rolader served as a circuit-riding minister who conducted services at Sardis Church. His son, William Washington Rolader, founded Rolader pottery.
- Napoleon H. Cheshire (1843-1921) – Along with his brother, Cheshire bought a large tract of land along what is now Cheshire Bridge Road after serving in the cavalry during the Civil War. He and his brother established farms in the area and cut the road that bears their name through the surrounding forest to their property.
- Wesley Gray Collier (1824-1906) – Collier owned land from Peachtree Creek to north of West Wesley Road, a thoroughfare that bears his name. He built the first house north of Peachtree Creek at 2510 Peachtree Road (property that now sits across from Lindbergh Drive). Peachtree Heights Park was developed on land purchased from the estate of Wesley Gray Collier.
- Thomas W. Cofield (1865-19??) – His family operated a pottery-making center using the fine quality of clay in the Buckhead area. Cofield ran a pottery plant at 1442 West Paces Ferry Road until 1911.
- James Mathieson (1829-1895) – Mathieson served in the 93rd Iowa Cavalry (Union). After the Civil War, he remained in Atlanta and became supervisor of the Freedman's Bureau, which, among other things, distributed food to the hungry. He also bought a large piece of property on the west side of Peachtree Road near Piedmont Road.

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Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Name of Property

Fulton County, Georgia  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Denise P. Messick, Historian  
organization Historic Preservation Division, GA Dept. of Natural Resources date August 2012  
street & number 254 Washington Street, Ground Level telephone (404) 656-2840  
city or town Atlanta state GA zip code 30334  
e-mail Denise.Messick@dnr.state.ga.us

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs:

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Atlanta

County: Fulton

State: Georgia

Photographer: Charlie Miller, Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources

Date Photographed: April 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 44. Front façade of Sardis Methodist Church. Photographer facing northeast.
- 2 of 44. Front lawn of church. Photographer facing north.
- 3 of 44. Driveway and front of church. Photographer facing east.
- 4 of 44. Driveway, cemetery wall, and front of church. Photographer facing east.
- 5 of 44. Rear (southeast) corner of church. Photographer facing northwest.

Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Name of Property

Fulton County, Georgia  
County and State

- 6 of 44. Rear of church. Photographer facing west.
- 7 of 44. Rear of church. Photographer facing southwest.
- 8 of 44. Detail of brickwork on rear of church. Photographer facing southwest.
- 9 of 44. Former Sunday School building. Photographer facing north.
- 10 of 44. Former World War II barracks building. Photographer facing north.
- 11 of 44. Vestibule of church, looking into sanctuary. Photographer facing northeast.
- 12 of 44. Vestibule and front doors of church. Photographer facing south/southwest.
- 13 of 44. Interior of church sanctuary from the center rear. Photographer facing northeast.
- 14 of 44. Interior of church sanctuary from the rear corner. Photographer facing north.
- 15 of 44. Interior of church sanctuary from the center front. Photographer facing southwest.
- 16 of 44. Stained-glass window in sanctuary, second from rear on northwest wall. Photographer facing northwest.
- 17 of 44. Stained-glass window in front side room, near southwest corner. Photographer facing southwest.
- 18 of 44. Large room in basement level. Photographer facing west.
- 19 of 44. Overview of southern section of cemetery. Photographer facing west.
- 20 of 44. View of older unmarked stones (in foreground) on high point in cemetery. Photographer facing southwest.
- 21 of 44. Overview from high point in cemetery. Photographer facing west/northwest.
- 22 of 44. Various headstones and grave plots in southern section of cemetery. Photographer facing northwest.
- 23 of 44. Vaughn double headstones (1871 and 1898), die-base-and-cap type. Photographer facing southwest.
- 24 of 44. Southern section of cemetery, looking toward Donaldson mausoleum. Photographer facing northwest.
- 25 of 44. 1897 headstone with evidence of repair to tablet. Photographer facing northwest.
- 26 of 44. Hicks family plot with iron fence in central section of cemetery. Photographer facing north.
- 27 of 44. W. G. Collier grave and surrounding family plot. Photographer facing west.
- 28 of 44. Irby plot with a double gravestone on left and a pedestal with urn on right. Photographer facing west.
- 29 of 44. Example of a "Woodsmen of the World" tree trunk monument in northern section. Photographer facing north/northeast.
- 30 of 44. Meckel monument, die-on-base type. Photographer facing southwest.
- 31 of 44. Overview of central section of cemetery. Photographer facing southwest.

Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery

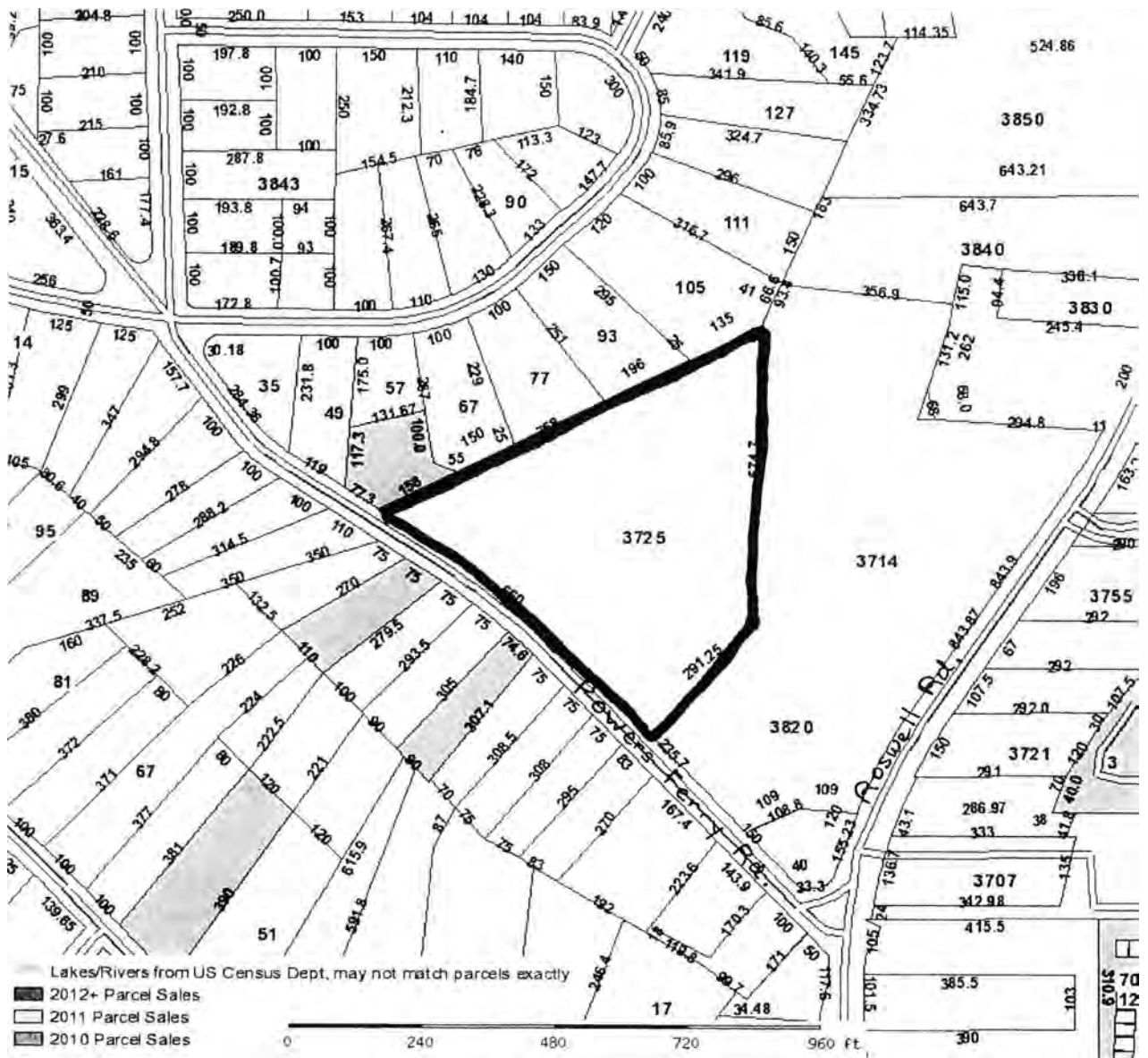
Fulton County, Georgia

Name of Property

County and State

- 32 of 44. Monument for child, using symbol of lamb. Photographer facing west/southwest.
- 33 of 44. Overview of central section of cemetery. Photographer facing southwest.
- 34 of 44. Jacobs-Rutledge monument with streamlined design. Photographer facing southwest.
- 35 of 44. Headstone with elaborate floral design. Photographer facing southwest.
- 36 of 44. Variety of grave markers at high point of southern section. Photographer facing northeast.
- 37 of 44. View from southern section of cemetery toward church, with Buckhead skyscrapers in background. Photographer facing east/southeast.
- 38 of 44. View from cemetery toward church, showing granite wall. Photographer facing east.
- 39 of 44. Donaldson mausoleum next to road in central section of cemetery. Photographer facing north/northeast.
- 40 of 44. Stairs and granite wall in central section of cemetery near Powers Ferry Road. Photographer facing northeast.
- 41 of 44. Central section of cemetery with large delineated family plots, looking toward church. Photographer facing southeast.
- 42 of 44. Northern section of cemetery, looking toward church. Photographer facing southeast.
- 43 of 44. Northern road through cemetery, with view of central section. Photographer facing northeast.
- 44 of 44. Georgia Historical Commission marker from 1957 entitled "Sardis Methodist Church," located along Powers Ferry Road. Photographer facing northwest.





**SARDIS METHODIST CHURCH AND CEMETERY,  
ATLANTA, FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA  
NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY MAP**

NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY:

NORTH:

SCALE: 1 inch = approximately 300 feet

SOURCE: Fulton County, Georgia, Tax Assessor's Office



ation possible. No warranties, expressed or implied, are provided for the data  
oll. All data is subject to change before the next certified taxroll. PLEASE NOTE  
PURPOSES ONLY NEITHER FULTON COUNTY NOR ITS EMPLOYEES ASSUM  
POSSIBILITY FOR ERRORS OR OMISSIONS --THIS IS NOT A SURVEY--  
Date printed: 06/04/12 : 10:32:17

**SARDIS METHODIST CHURCH AND CEMETERY,  
ATLANTA, FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA  
SKETCH SITE MAP/PHOTOGRAPH KEY**

SCALE: Not to Scale

NORTH: ↑



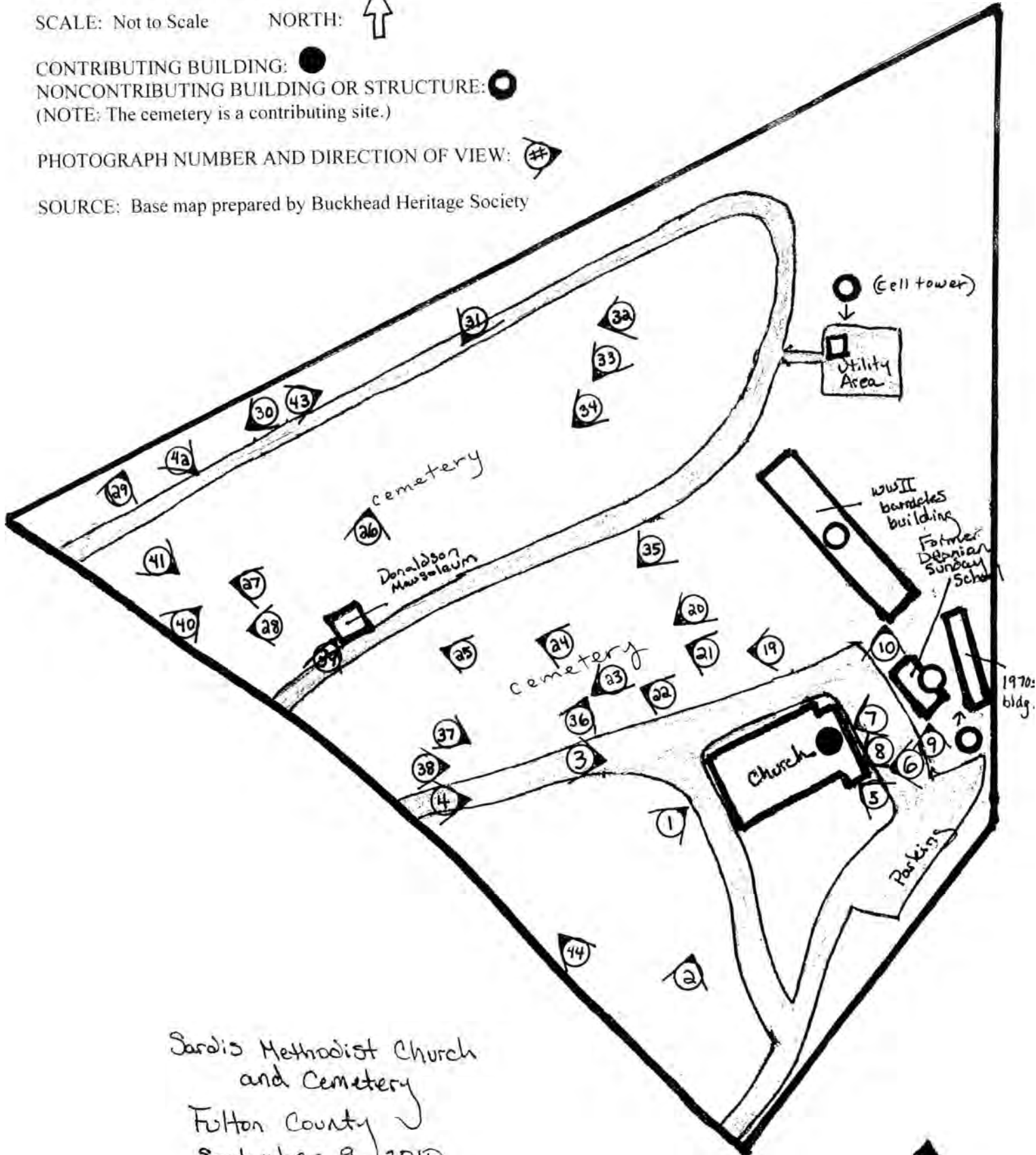
CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: ●

NONCONTRIBUTING BUILDING OR STRUCTURE: ○

(NOTE: The cemetery is a contributing site.)

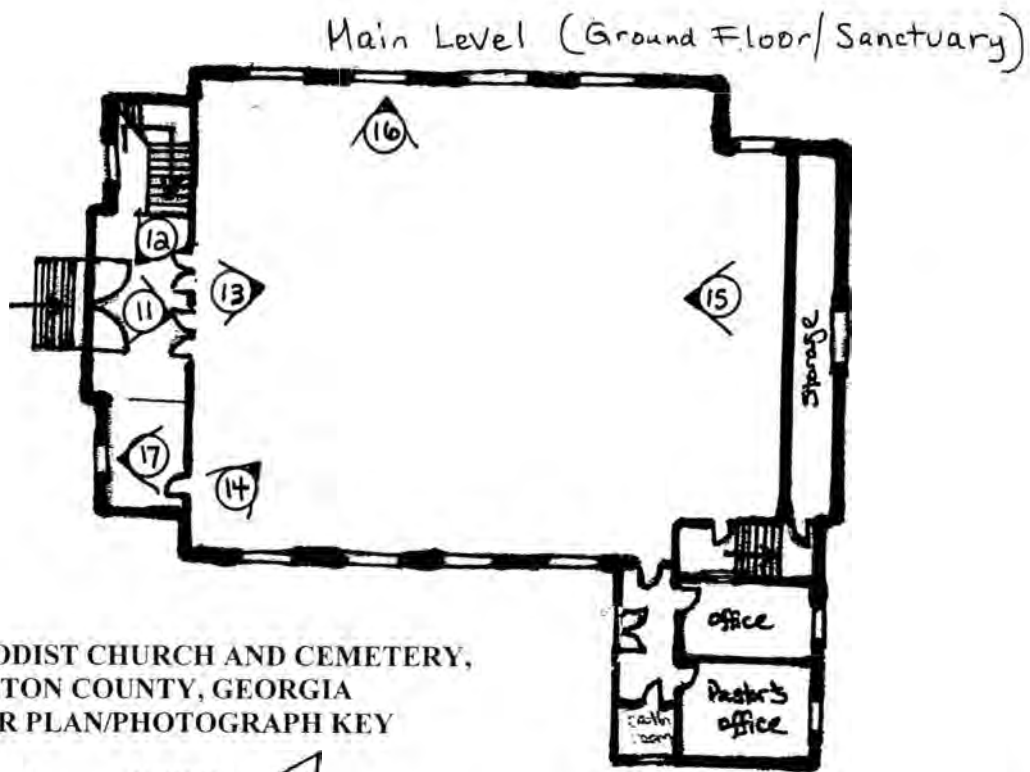
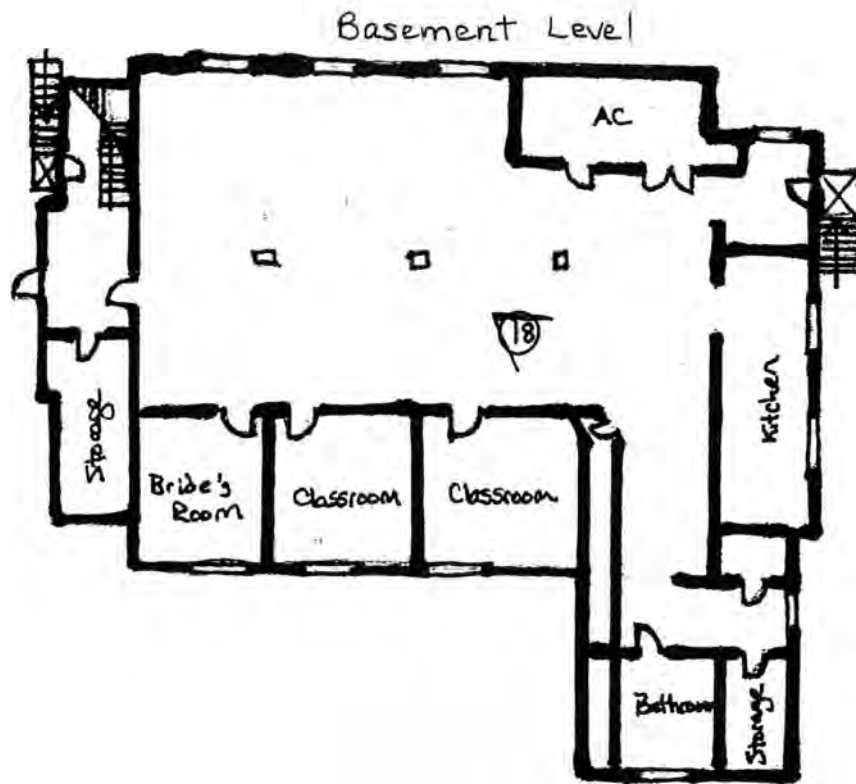
PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER AND DIRECTION OF VIEW: # ↗

SOURCE: Base map prepared by Buckhead Heritage Society



Sardis Methodist Church  
and Cemetery  
Fulton County  
September 9, 2010  
Prepared by: Buckhead Heritage





**SARDIS METHODIST CHURCH AND CEMETERY,  
ATLANTA, FULTON COUNTY, GEORGIA  
SKETCH FLOOR PLAN/PHOTOGRAPH KEY**

SCALE: Not to Scale

NORTH: 

PHOTOGRAPH NUMBER AND DIRECTION OF VIEW: 

SOURCE: Prepared by Buckhead Heritage Society



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: GEORGIA, Fulton

DATE RECEIVED: 8/24/12      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/17/12  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/02/12      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/10/12  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000840

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    10.9.12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 1 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 2 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 3 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 4 of 44**





**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 5 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 6 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 7 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 8 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 9 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 10 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 11 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 12 of 44**





**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 13 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 14 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 15 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 16 of 44**



Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Photograph 17 of 44



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 18 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 19 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 20 of 44**





**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 21 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 22 of 44**



Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Photograph 23 of 44



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 24 of 44**



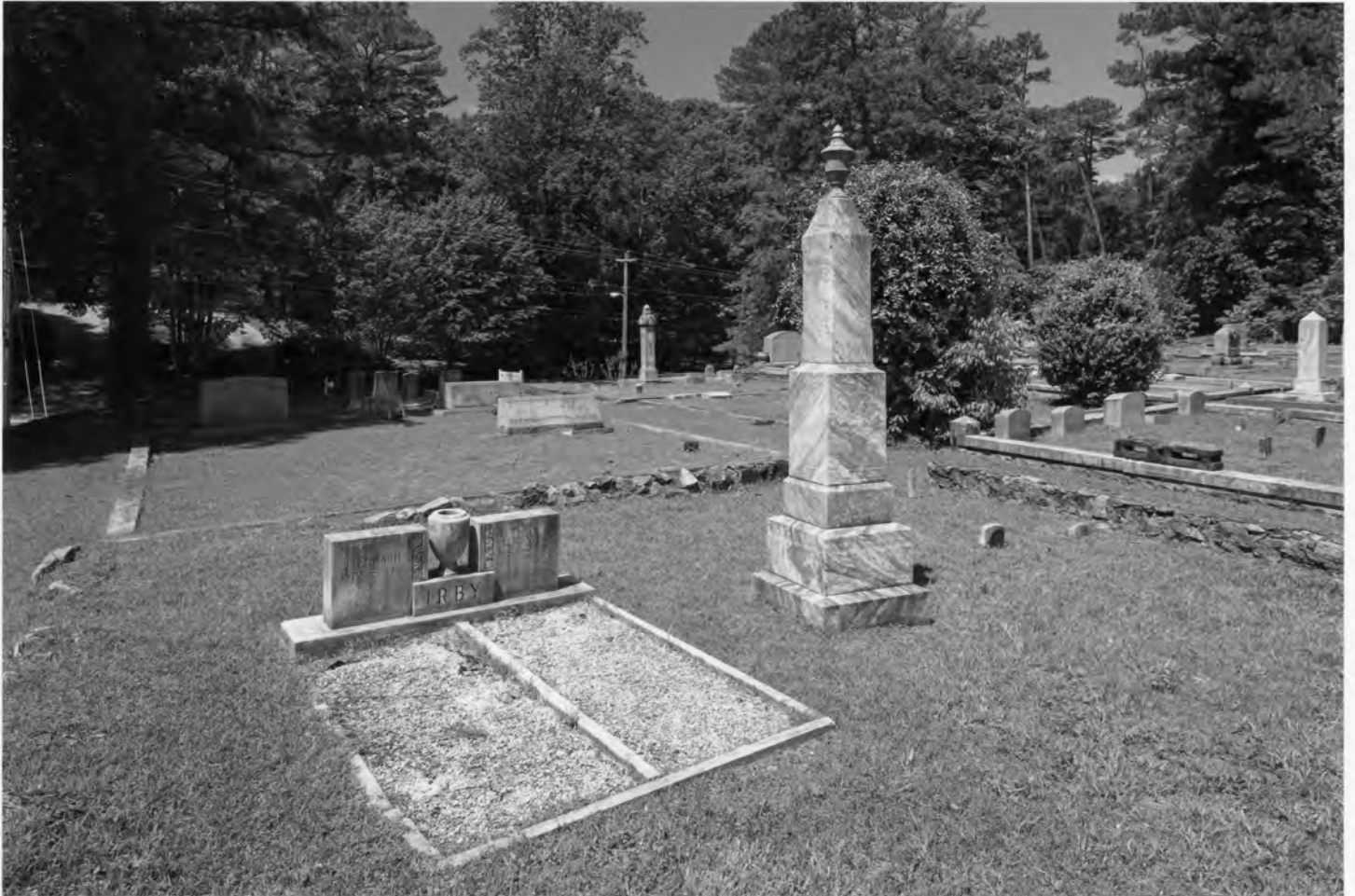
Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Photograph 25 of 44



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 26 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 27 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 28 of 44**





**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 29 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 30 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 31 of 44**



Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Photograph 32 of 44



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 33 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 34 of 44**



Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Photograph 35 of 44



Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Photograph 36 of 44





**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 37 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 38 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 39 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 40 of 44**



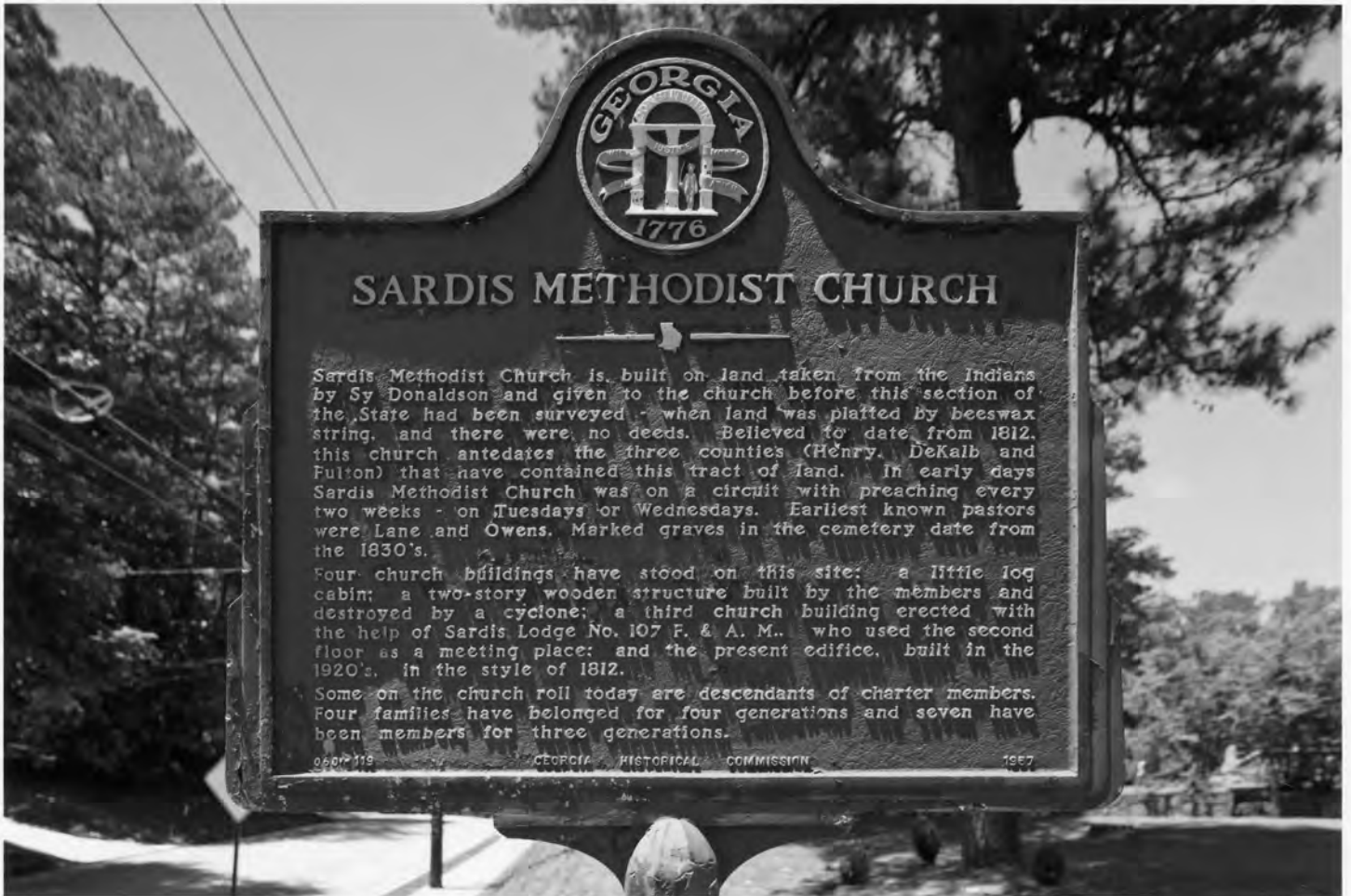
**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 41 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 42 of 44**



**Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery**  
**Fulton County, Georgia**  
**Photograph 43 of 44**



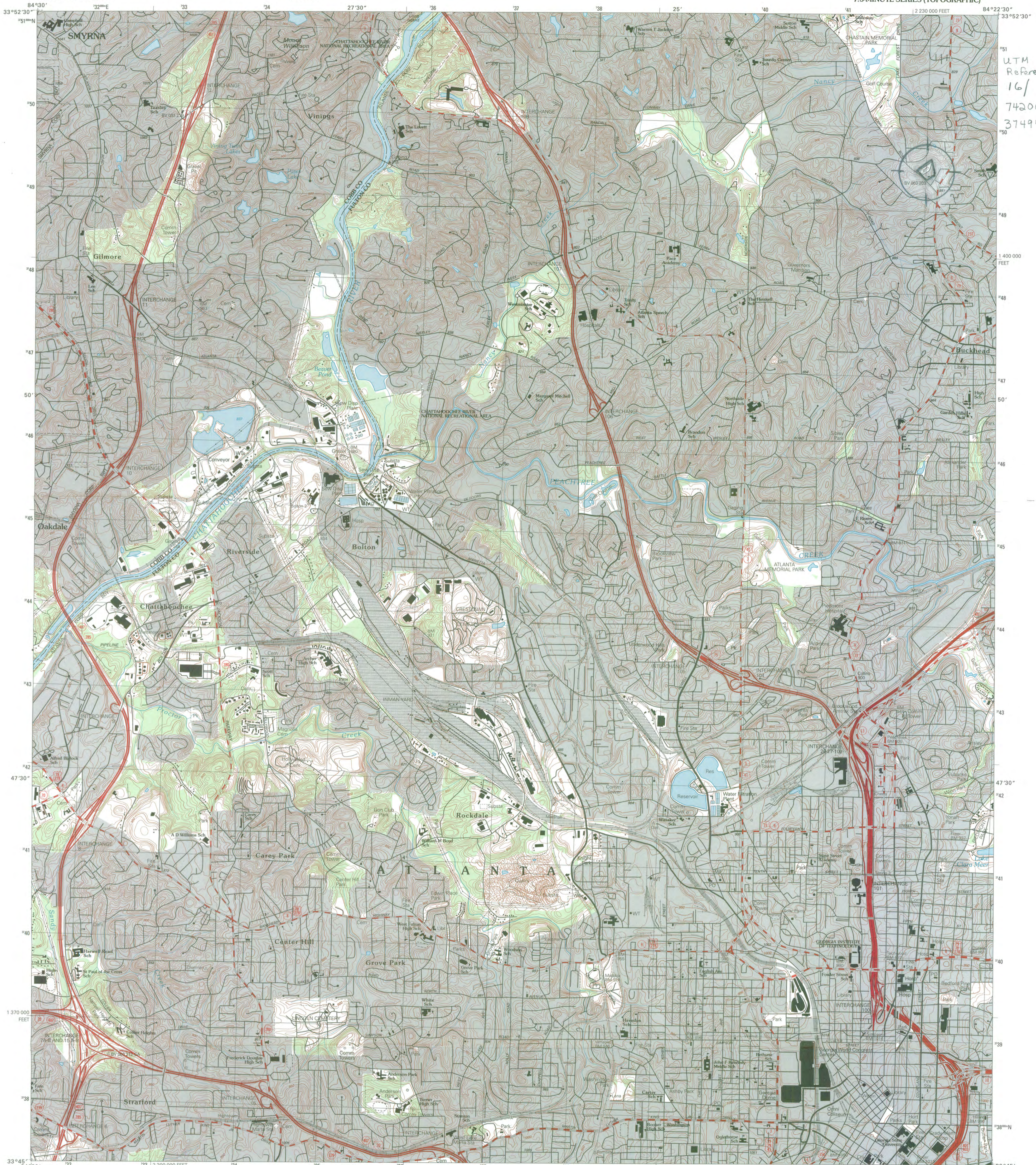
Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
Fulton County, Georgia  
Photograph 44 of 44



Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery  
 Atlanta, Fulton County, Georgia  
 NORTHWEST ATLANTA QUADRANGLE  
 GEORGIA  
 7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

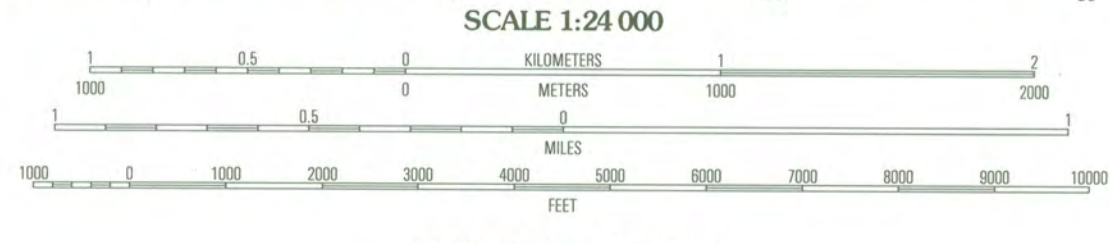
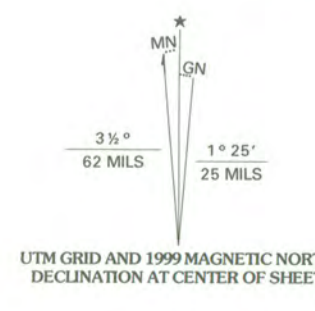


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



UTM  
 Reference:  
 16/  
 742000/  
 3749470

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
 Derived from imagery taken 1993 and other sources. Photosinspected using imagery taken 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1991. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 1999.  
 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 16 10 000-foot ticks: Georgia Coordinate System of 1983 (west zone)  
 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software.  
 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map.



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC DATUM OF 1929  
 TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

ADJOINING 7.5 QUADRANGLE NAMES

1 Marietta  
 2 Sandy Springs  
 3 Chamblee  
 4 Mableton  
 5 Northwest Atlanta  
 6 Ben Hill  
 7 Southeast Atlanta  
 8 Southwest Atlanta

**NORTHWEST ATLANTA, GA**  
 1997  
 NIMA 4151 IV SW-SERIES V845

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST





MARK WILLIAMS  
COMMISSIONER

August 21, 2012

J. Paul Loether  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W. 8th floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the following materials for your consideration submitted on this 21st day of August 2012, for the nomination of the **Sardis Methodist Church and Cemetery, Fulton County, Georgia** to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- DVD with electronic images
- Photographs
- Original USGS topographic map(s)
- Sketch map(s)/attachment(s)
- Correspondence
- Other:

COMMENTS:

- Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do  do not  constitute a majority of property owners.
- Special considerations:

Sincerely,



Gretchen Brock  
National Register & Survey Program Manager

Enclosure