

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations 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 Bethany Presbyterian Church Complex
other names/site number NA

2. Location

street & number Elkton Road N/A not for publication
city, town Bryson X vicinity
state Tennessee code TN county Giles code 055 zip code 38455

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		_____ objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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 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. See continuation sheet.

Herbert L. Hays
Signature of certifying official Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date 10/9/89
Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Alton Byrum
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 11/13/89

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structureRELIGION: Church-related residenceRELIGION: Church School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious structureRELIGION: Church SchoolDOMESTIC: Single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

GREEK REVIVAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONEwalls Weatherboard

roof METALother WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Bethany Presbyterian Church and its related buildings at Bryson on Indian Creek in southeast Giles County, Tennessee, are an intact complex consisting of the 1853 Bethany Presbyterian Church, its manse, and the adjacent Bethany Academy, one of the earliest schools in the county.

The complex occupies the top of a small knoll overlooking the little farm town of Bryson. The church site is approximately five hundred feet from the Bryson-Elkton Road and is the closest to the pike. About one hundred yards to its northeast is the academy, and to the east of the church, at about the same distance, is the church manse.

Bethany Presbyterian Church

The church is an excellent local example of antebellum Greek Revival chapel architecture. The rectangular weatherboarded frame structure features a pedimented front, full entablature, and corner pilasters. The building rests on a continuous limestone foundation and is topped by a front-gable tin-shingle roof.

The main facade faces west. This front is divided into two bays by a wooden pilaster and is topped by a heavy full-length pediment with raking cornice and weatherboarded tympanaeum set above a full denticulated entablature. Entries at each side consist of six-panel wooden single-leaf doors with a single row of five small pointed-arch windows near the top set under colored glass transoms. The central pilaster and matching ones at the corners are plain unfluted square columns topped with simple molded caps. A low stone porch with steel rail at the front was added about 1950.

North and south elevations are identical. Each is a plain weatherboarded wall with simple box cornice and four rectangular double-hung sash windows with reverse-painted glass windows spaced evenly across. A small wooden batten access door to the crawl space below is located near the front of the south side.

The rear elevation is plain weatherboarded gable end, with no pediment, but only a simple raking cornice defining the roof. Two simple two-panel, wooden doors open from the church to short stone steps. This is somewhat

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) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

SETTLEMENT
 EDUCATION
 ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1853-1887

Significant Dates

1853
 1858
 1887

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Bethany Presbyterian Church, Bethany Academy, and the Bethany Church Manse are nominated together as a related complex under National Register criteria A and C for their collective significance to the Bryson community and Giles County in settlement, education, and architecture. The present church, constructed in 1853, is used by one of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in Giles County, and is an excellent example of vernacular Greek Revival ecclesiastical architecture. Bethany Academy is the oldest surviving educational building in the county; the massive two and-one-half story frame structure housed a distinguished private academy established in the 1850s. The 1858 structure continued in use as a school and, in later years, as a part of the county school system, until 1947. Also on the property is the 1887 church manse, a supporting building from the late nineteenth century; this simple one and-one-half story frame residence has restrained decoration characteristic of rural houses built in the area during this period. The three principal structures form an inter-related complex that is little altered since the last structure was completed. Together, they formed the basis for the small community of Bryson. Around the church and school, several residences were soon built, followed later by a store, and the crossroads beside the church developed into a little village.

In the late part of the first decade of the nineteenth century, three Presbyterian families settled on the Elk River in what is now Giles County, about four miles above Elkton, Tennessee. These were the families of David McCallum, John Smith, and Duncan Brown¹ (afterwards elected Elder of the church, not the Rev. Duncan Brown). Six or seven other Presbyterian families settled a mile downstream, including those of Duncan McIntire and John Baldrige. Across the river were John Temple and several other families. In 1812, the Presbyterian families in the neighborhood, some twenty in number, petitioned the Presbytery for supplies and to be formed

¹Brown was the father of two Tennessee governors, John C. Brown and Neill S. Brown.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bethany High School vs. A.M. Wilson, 12 October 1877. Giles County Chancery Court; copies in Giles County Old Records Department, Giles County Courthouse, Pulaski.

Crawford, Dr. Charles. Interview, October 1988.

Gaultney, Jack. Interview, October 1988.

"Old Bethany School Had Rich History". Giles Free Press, 9 December 1964, p.1.

Session Book of Bethany Presbyterian Church, 1824-1865.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 13.5 acres

UTM References

A

1	6	5	1	2	5	4	0	3	9	3	3	8	6	0
Zone	Easting	Northing												

B

1	6	5	1	2	8	0	0	3	9	8	3	8	1	0
Zone	Easting	Northing												

C

1	6	5	1	2	8	0	0	3	9	8	3	5	5	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

D

1	6	5	1	2	5	4	0	3	9	8	3	5	4	0
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Bethany Presbyterian Church Complex nomination is irregular in shape and contains 13.5 acres, bounded generally on the north by the Bryson-Dellrose Road; on the west by the McBurg-Elkton Road; and on the east and south by adjacent property lines, as shown on the accompanying Giles County tax assessment map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is bounded by county roads and adjacent property lines, and contains the land historically associated with the Bethany Church complex. This is sufficient land to protect the historic and architectural resources of the nomination.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Quin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization South Central TN Development District

date May 1989

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state Tennessee

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uncommon, but the church at Brick Church in northern Giles County follows the same arrangement.

The interior is laid out on the rectangular hall plan common to many chapels in the area. It has a raised chancel area at the east end with two four-panel doors to the rear, oak pews arranged in three courses facing the front, and oak floors and pulpit furniture. Walls are covered in plaster and painted. All of the doors have shouldered surrounds.

Reverse-painted memorial windows replaced the original clear lights between 1911 and 1914; the larger ones cost \$80.00 each, at the time. The ceiling has since been covered with acoustical tiles, and the hardwood floor is a 1959 replacement. (C)

Bethany Academy

Ninety yards northeast of the church is the old Bethany Academy, constructed in 1858-59. The large two-and-one-half story school building is of weatherboarded frame construction and is laid out on a rectangular plan around a central hall. The building rests on a raised stone foundation and is topped by a side-gable tin roof broken by steep gabled dormers on the rear. A small early twentieth century one-story rear ell extends from the northwest corner.

The school faces west towards the church and the Bryson-Elkton Road. The asymmetrical facade is arranged around an elaborate double-leaf entry with double-leaf wooden panel doors set beneath a transom. Double-hung sash windows with crown moldings are located to either side, one to the north and two to the south. Upstairs, windows follow the same arrangement, except that a window is located in the place of the doorway below.

The south elevation is a relatively plain gable end, with 6/6-light double-hung sash windows on the first two floors and smaller windows in the loft. An interior brick chimney is located at center. The eaves at the edge of the roof line terminate in heavy cornice returns. Just below the eaves are small 6/6-light sash windows from the attic.

The north gable end is similar, but joined from the center to the rear by the one-story rear ell. On the first floor, a simple shed roof gallery porch runs across a part of the side from the rear section forward to a set of wooden steps, now collapsed. To the front or west side is a 6/6-light window like those located elsewhere on the building. The four ranked rear

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or east end is very much like the front or main west facade, except that it is joined by the rear ell at its north corner. This simple ell addition contains two rooms. It rests on a stone pier foundation and is topped by a gable roof. Single-leaf wooden doors open south to the porch along the west side of the main building, and south to a collapsed porch connecting with the central doorway on the rear. Windows in the ell are double-hung sash with 4/4-lights.

The school rooms are arranged around the double stair hall at center. This section has two sets of combination open well and dog leg staircases, one to the front and one to the back, each with ornate turned spindles and square newel posts with molded and turned caps. The two sections are connected by a small hallway and single-leaf door. Each of these staircases could be reached from the double-leaf doors opening front and rear. Windows on the first floor have shouldered surrounds.

On the first floor to the south of the entry is the main assembly room. This large rectangular room has broad fireplaces on the north and south walls. These have simple wooden mantelpieces supported by plain pilasters with molded caps and cantilevered shelves. Paneled wooden wainscoting runs around the perimeter of the room; above this, wallpaper covers the plaster walls. Two sets of 6/6-light sash windows are located on the east, west, and south walls. Hardwood floors were laid over the damaged original boards in 1959.

Across the hall, on the front side, is a rectangular classroom of smaller dimensions, with a fireplace in the southeast corner and 6/6-light sash windows centered on the north and west walls; these windows have paneled wooden aprons and shouldered surrounds. Wainscoting like that found in the main assembly room runs across the east and south walls. Behind this room is a second similar room. This room has the fireplace located in the southwest corner (where it shares a chimney with that in the front room) and a single-leaf door on the east side that opens into the rear ell.

The plan of the second floor is identical to that of the first. This section retains its original poplar floors, and the poplar wooden walls are not painted. Only one staircase, the rear, leads from this floor to the third level. The third floor has unfinished classrooms to either side of the stair hall. Walls are unpainted wood. Some light is provided by dormer windows in the roof. (C)

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Manse

Built in 1887, the manse is a one and-one-half story weatherboarded frame structure laid out on a cross-gable plan with three principal rooms on each floor, arranged around a central stair hall. The building rests on a raised foundation and is topped by a cross-gable roof with a half-hipped roof dormer on the front.

Its facade faces west towards the church and school. The front presents a front-gable pavilion at the south side, with a three-quarter length porch extending from this section across the front of a perpendicular side-gabled section. At center is a single-leaf entry with transom that leads to the stair hall. Windows are double-hung sash with 2/2-lights and segmental arch lintels with simple hood molding.

The north elevation, being the gable end of the side-gable section, has a single arched 2/2-sash window at center and an identical window above. The south elevation, the side of the front-gable section, has two smaller windows without arches, one to each of the principal rooms in the section. Otherwise, these elevations are unadorned. The east or rear of the building has another central entry, a rear window from the north side room, and a small one story one room circa 1920s kitchen addition at the rear of the front-gable section. A shed roof addition dates from the early twentieth century.

The interior of the manse is laid out on a modified gable front and wing plan with three principal rooms arranged around a central hall. This hall contains a double-leg staircase with plain paling spindles supporting the banister. The parlor is in the side-gable section has 2/2-light sash windows on the north, east, and west sides. In the front pavilion is a second room, now used as a bedroom, with a segmental arch 2/2-light window on the west wall, a fireplace with plain wooden mantel and a closet on the east, and a four-panel wooden door connecting north to the main hall. This room has a chair rail running along all walls. Behind and off the main hall is a third large room with a four-panel door on the north wall to the hall, two 2/2-light sash windows to the south, and a door to the kitchen on the west wall. The kitchen occupies the small shed addition off the rear of the house. Upstairs in the half-story are three garret bedrooms, each with small sash windows and no fireplaces. Walls are plaster with some use of sheetrock in the kitchen. (C)

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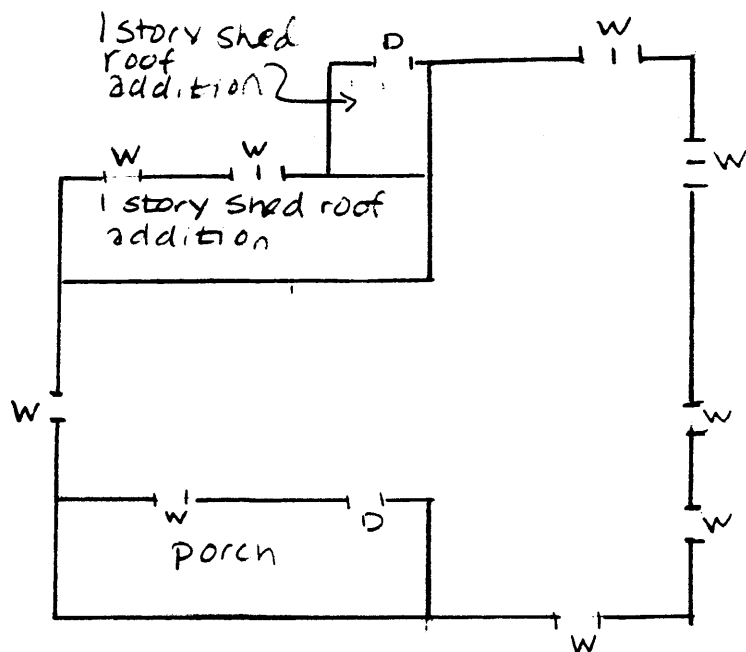
Privy

Also on the property is a small ca. 1930s two-stall privy. The rectangular frame structure is covered with vertical board siding and is topped by a metal shed roof. Two batten doors provide access. (NC)

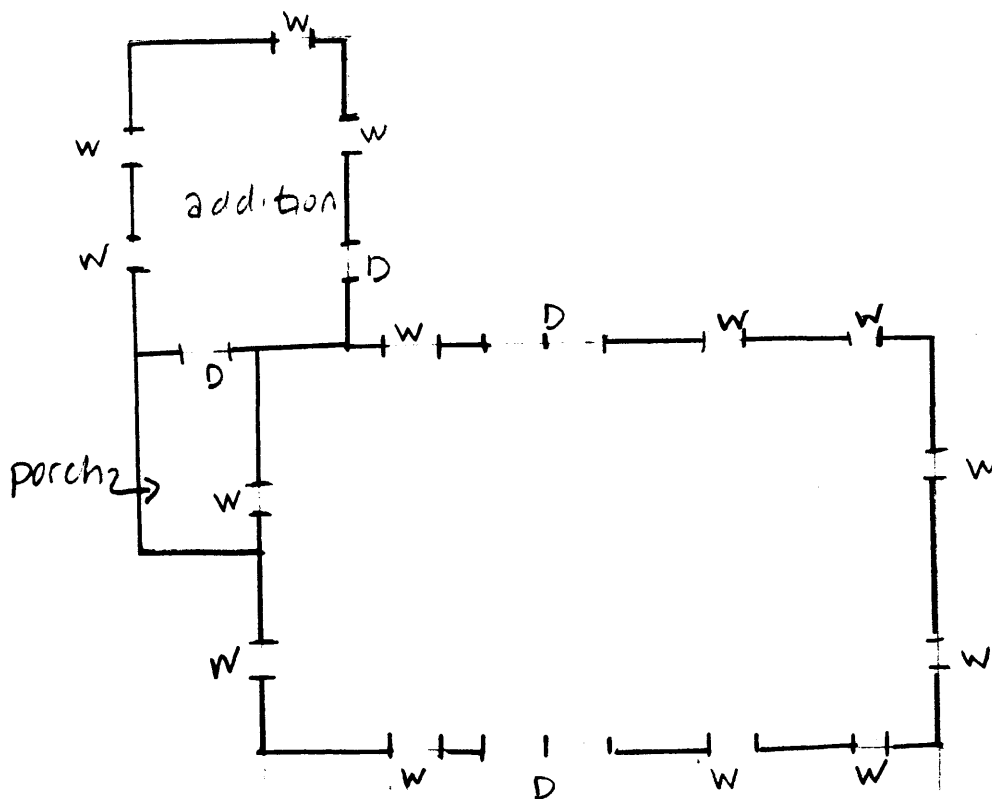
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Manse



not to scale

School

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into a church. The Presbytery then ordered the Rev. Duncan Brown (of the Zion colony in Maury County) to supply one Sabbath at Kelley's Creek, also the Rev. Mr. Gillespie one Sabbath, and A. K. Davis, a Licentiate of Presbytery to visit Kelley's Creek occasionally. A church was probably organized during the year, because the minutes of the Presbytery in 1813 show Duncan Brown (of the neighborhood) as an Elder.

A camp meeting was held on the Anderson place soon after the church was organized. The campers lived in tents and crude rail structures. In 1815, the Rev. David Weir reported to the Presbytery that he had organized a Society at Elkton and, at that meeting, Duncan McIntire of the neighborhood appears as an Elder.

Soon after the organization of the church at Elkton, there was a church meeting held in a grove near Duncan McIntire's spring (later known as Battle Place). Other meetings were later held here, some in McIntire's house. At about the same time or before, the Rev. Gideon Blackburn presided over a church meeting at Upper Elkton. By 1825, a permanent church was established at the schoolhouse here and was called "St. Paul's." The church minute books indicate that the congregation was organized in 1824 by the Rev. Duncan Brown.

The congregation continued to worship at the schoolhouse in Upper Elkton until 1829, when they relocated to property donated by Duncan Brown for a church and cemetery. In 1829, the church petitioned the Presbytery for a name change from St. Paul's to Bethany Church. The petition was granted and the church is now known as Old Bethany. Minutes show that presiding elders in these early years were William Smith, Daniel McCallum, Neill L. Smith, and James McCallum. A church was constructed here by 1829, but the congregation remained here only a few years, relocating to the village of Bryson by the late 1840s. The church cemetery has remained at the site on the Duncan Brown property.

The new church was built on a hill on the southeast side of the village. Work on the structure began in 1848 or 1849, and all work was nearly complete a few years later when a fire, started from shavings made by dressing lumber by hand, destroyed the structure. Work on the present church began immediately afterwards.

In 1853, the congregation resolved to establish a permanent school for the education of their children and procured a charter from the State to establish "Bethany High School." In order to be more accessible to the general populace, the school was built one and one-half miles east of the

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original site of the church and cemetery. At the same time, the replacement Greek Revival church building was erected; it was occupied and in use by October 1853. The land occupied by both structures was donated by Major John Bass, a veteran of the Battle of New Orleans.

The Session accepted most of its members by examination, baptizing relatively few of its adult members into the church. However, christenings for children were recorded fairly frequently.

Church members were sometimes cited to appear before the Session to answer charges. Several male members are cited in early books on charges of public drunkenness. In at least two cases, the malefactors were excommunicated. A merchant, a Col. Harris, was charged with cheating his customers in goods, livestock, and land, and was also excommunicated.

A number of the church members were extensive planters and slaveholders, and their slaves were sometimes members of the church. Minutes show that the church continued to accept black members until 1872, having thirty black members at that time.

The church did not have a regular minister in early years. The minutes record that "after much anxiety" (sic), the Session succeeded in getting the Rev. J. N. Bradshaw of Lawrenceburg to come preach once a month. They agreed to pay him one hundred fifty dollars for his services, and he began in February 1855. The Columbia (sometimes Richland) Presbytery met at Bethany Church in October 1856.

A school may have been built on the property about 1853. The present building dates from 1858, when church and community leaders voted to build the three story building. Prime supporters of the school project were A. M. Wilson, Dr. C. N. Ordway, Neill McCallum, Capt. John Bass, John C. Patterson, A. B. Green and George Bowers (and others), who pledged up to \$1,000.00 each. The school was built at a cost of \$4,500 and opened in the fall of 1859, with W. E. Caldwell and his wife at the head of the Institute.

The school was considered one of the finest in the county. It offered schooling in classical studies, science, and music. Board could be obtained for \$1.50 to \$2.00 a week, and the teachers were paid salaries of \$25 to \$112.50 per month. The school opened with a \$5,000 endowment fund already raised to support poor but worthy students. The school was a church school, on church property, often with the Pastor of Bethany Church as principal. The school admitted students of all denominations.

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Although by this time the State of Tennessee had created, in name at least, a free public school system, before the Civil War this system was very disorganized and underfunded. As such, no free school existed in eastern Giles County, and the Bethany Academy, a private school, was organized. The Academy is significant as it represents the only organized school in the neighborhood and demonstrates the interest of the well-to-do people of the Bryson community in education.

The Civil War disrupted life in the area, and during the middle years of the war services were conducted at Bethany Church only on a sporadic basis. However, the minutes show that a "successful" revival was conducted at the church in August 1864. Classes appear to have continued at the school.

In September 1879, the Bethany High School filed suit in Chancery Court against A. M. Wilson, former secretary-treasurer of the school, charging him with mismanaging and misappropriating funds and refusing to turn over the books to the corporation.

By the early twentieth century, Bethany Academy became a part of the Giles County School System and it continued as Bethany Elementary School until 1947, when it was closed, classes being sent by bus to the consolidated school at Elkton. At present, the building is used sporadically as an education building for Bethany Presbyterian Church. It remained the property of a separate Board of Trustees until 1977. That year, the Giles County Chancery Court ruled that ownership of the Bethany School building be turned over to the congregation of Bethany Presbyterian Church. The Board of Trustees was relieved of any claim to rights of ownership and use of the property. In the same year, a survey of all property, school building, church, and manse, was made a quit claim deed to the 14.3 acres and was given to the congregation of Bethany Presbyterian Church.

The church manse was constructed in 1887, and was the residence of the minister until recent decades. It remains in use as a residence, rented out by the church body to a tenant.

Bethany Presbyterian Church remains the principal Presbyterian church for the Bryson-Bunker Hill-Bee Springs area of southeastern Giles County, with some membership from the Dellrose area in extreme southwestern Lincoln County. The only other Presbyterian church in the immediate vicinity, Young's chapel seven miles distant, has services only on widely scattered occasions. The Bethany Academy is used by the church as an educational

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building and has not been altered, while the manse continues to be used as a residence.

Bethany Church is significant to the community and Giles County for its ties to the early establishment of the Presbyterian church in Giles County. Architecturally, the chapel is a locally uncommon example of the Greek Revival style being applied to a religious building. The well-constructed chapel is distinguished by its pedimented front, dentil cornice, pilasters, and other classical trim. The building is virtually identical to the Pisgah United Methodist Church (and Cemetery, NR 11/23/84) four miles northwest and to the Brick Church Presbyterian Church (frame) in northern Giles County.

The little hamlet of Bryson developed around the Bethany Church and the school. At the corner of the church property, a road broke off from the main Frankewing-Elkton Road to cross the ridge to Dellrose in neighboring Lincoln County. Around the church lot, a number of citizens settled, mostly on small farms and, later, a store was built. The presence of the church was almost certainly responsible for the establishment of this diminutive community.

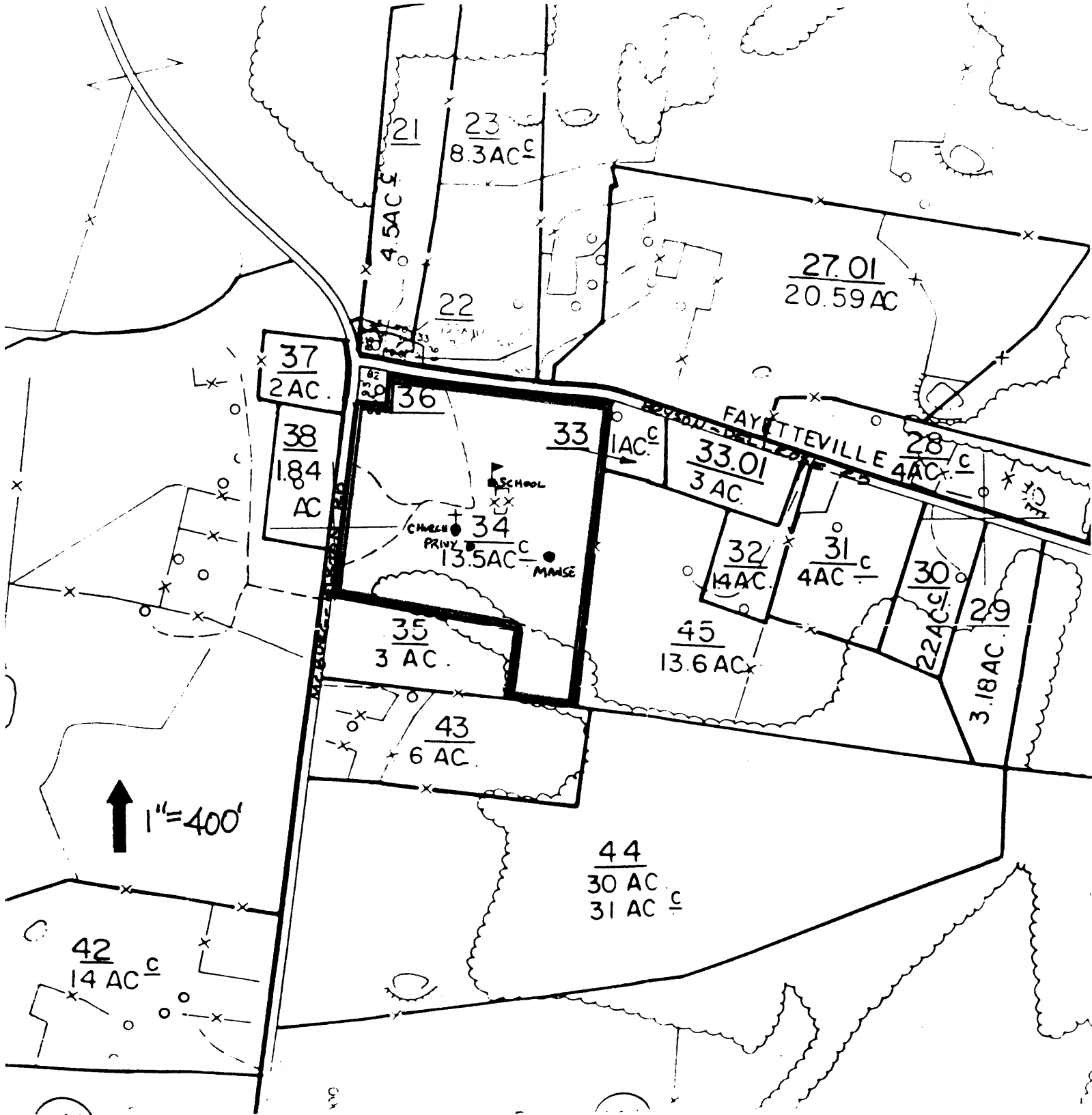
The church likely played an important social role in the community, not only as a church meeting house, but also for a unifying role between different factions of society - plantation owners, small farmers and tradesmen, and slaves. The "communal consensus" which the church promulgated extended into its members earthly as well as spiritual affairs, and gave rural life much of the stability it possessed. The church Session acted as sort of a court to enforce church teachings and beliefs, and sought to resolve conflicts between church members.

Bethany Academy is likewise significant as an early center of learning. This well-respected private school was the finest school in the southeastern Giles County area which it served for nearly a century. The school building is the largest frame structure in Giles County and is notable for its restrained classical decoration, including paneled double-leaf entries with transoms, cornice returns, and corner pilasters. The church manse, a simple vernacular house with limited Victorian period decoration, also contributes to the site. With no apparent exterior changes, the church, school, and manse reflect the same appearance they had throughout the period of significance.

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Bethany Presbyterian Church
Elkton Road
Bryson, Giles County, Tennessee
Photos: Richard Quin
Date: December 1988
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, Tennessee

Bethany Academy, Bethany Church, Bethany Parsonage (1-r)
General view, facing east
1 of 21

Bethany Presbyterian Church
West facade, facing east
2 of 21

Bethany Presbyterian Church
North elevation, facing south
3 of 21

Bethany Presbyterian Church
South elevation, facing north
4 of 21

Bethany Presbyterian Church
East elevation, facing west
5 of 21

Bethany Presbyterian Church
Interior, facing east
6 of 21

Bethany Academy
West facade, facing west
7 of 21

Bethany Academy
North elevation, facing south
8 of 21

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Bethany Academy
South elevation, facing north
9 of 21

Bethany Academy
East elevation, facing west
10 of 21

Bethany Academy
First floor, south room, facing southeast
11 of 21

Bethany Academy
Staircase, facing west
12 of 21

Bethany Academy
Second floor, south room, facing southeast
13 of 21

Bethany Church Manse
West facade, facing east
14 of 21

Bethany Church Manse
North elevation, facing south
15 of 21

Bethany Church Manse
East elevation, facing west
16 of 21

Bethany Church Manse
South elevation, facing north
17 of 21

Bethany Church Manse
Central stair hall, facing east
18 of 21

Bethany Church Manse
Parlor, facing southeast
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Bethany Church Privy
Facing south
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Bethany Academy (foreground) and Bethany Presbyterian Church
Facing southwest
21 of 21