

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Ackerville Baptist Church of Christ (1848)

other names/site number Baptist Church at Ackerville (1886)
Ackerville Baptist Church (common name)

2. Location

street & number Highway 89

city, town Ackerville

county Wilcox

state Alabama **code** AL

vicinity of 2 mi. north of junction of AL state highways 21 & 89

code 131

zip code 36766

(n/a) not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	1	
sites		
structures		
objects		
total	1	

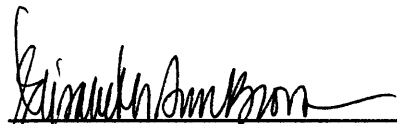
Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of previous listing: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.



Signature of certifying official

March 4, 2003

Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)

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

Signature of commenting or other official

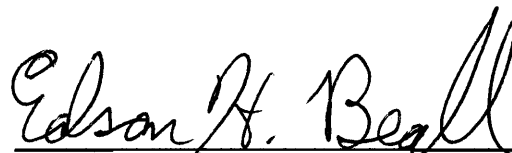
Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register



() determined eligible for the National Register _____

() determined not eligible for the National Register _____

() removed from the National Register _____

() other, explain: _____

() see continuation sheet



Keeper of the National Register

Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Religion: religious facility

Current Functions: Social: meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Mid-nineteenth Century Greek Revival

Materials:

foundation brick piers

walls wood

roof tin

other

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Ackerville Baptist Church is a one-story wood structure built in the Greek Revival style. The main elevation is the east. The 42'x27' rectangular building rests on free-standing, 18" brick piers. The original structural timbers are visible from the crawl space. An unembellished wood pediment rests on four square, paneled Doric columns at the main entry. A 23'x7' wood porch extends across the front of the building. Originally wooden steps extended across the front of the building. They were replaced (it is believed, in the 1950s) by prefabricated cement steps with pipe rails.

The building is clad with white wooden clapboards made of true 1"x6" hand-hewn lumber. The front facade is symmetrical. The main entry to the church is from the porch and consists of two sets of wood panel double doors. Each set of doors features a two pane, wood-framed, fixed transom. The east elevation has three windows and a secondary entrance. The entry door, to the south, is a wood panel door with a simple wood surround. Free-standing wood steps lead to the door. Windows are 9 over 9 single hung wood with drawn glass set within simple wood surrounds. The south elevation consists of three bays of windows below an unembellished wood clapboard gable. The west elevation features four bays of windows.

The interior of the building consists of one room. The walls and ceiling are of hand-hewn 1"x6" boarding butted together with blacksmith-made square head tapered nails. The wood flooring uses the same method of construction. All surfaces are painted. Doors and windows have simple wood trim on the interior. The hardware shows an 1879 patent. Locks are standard 4.5" square surface-mounted, with a turnkey; butt hinges are used. A pot-bellied stove was removed in the 1950s leaving the building with no heat. A six-light oil-burning chandelier originally hung from the ceiling. Matching oil-burning wall sconces were mounted between the windows. The wall sconces gradually disappeared during the 1950s. The chandelier was stolen in the late 1960s. There is no evidence of a slave gallery within the building. Given the relatively small size of the room, both in floor space and height, the church may never have included such a structure within it.

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Section 7--Description

There have been no additions to the original building and few alterations. Alterations include the tin roof, replacement of the original wooden steps with a cement unit, and brace rods installed (circa 1960) to secure the foundation. The brick foundation piers were replaced in-kind in 1988. When replacement was necessary (dates unknown) the square columns in the front were replicated.

The Ackerville Baptist Church sits on approximately three acres of land off Alabama Highway 89. From Highway 89 an unpaved driveway dips slightly and rises again to a knoll. The church sits on this knoll facing the highway. The land slopes gently to small ravines on both the right and left sides of the church, but remains level to the west, well past the cemetery. The church sits approximately in the center of a three acre site. Behind the church lies a family/ community cemetery with graves dating to 1889. The cemetery lies directly to the west of the church and is enclosed by a chain link fence installed in the mid-1950s. A one-room schoolhouse once shared the property, but was never owned by the church. The schoolhouse was demolished in 1942.

Archaeological Component: Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of this area, the potential for subsurface remains is good. Buried portions may contain information that may be useful in interpreting the entire area.

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): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture

Period of Significance: 1848; 1886

Significant Dates: 1848 - original construction
1886 - moved to present site

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect(s)/Builder(s): local craftsmen

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

The Ackerville Baptist Church is significant because it embodies the characteristics of the Greek Revival style of architecture with vernacular influences. In addition, methods of construction typical of the architecture in rural Alabama during the mid to late 1800s are exhibited in the building. It also played an important social role in the community.

Ackerville Baptist Church is a simple structure built in the Greek Revival style. The building is a simple, rectangular block without projection, except for the temple form and portico across the front. It is symmetrical in plan. Wall surfaces are smooth and without ornamentation. The wooden walls are painted white. The roof ridge runs from front to back. The Greek Revival style reached its zenith during the period between 1820-1860 and it is assumed the church was built with these characteristics in mind because other public buildings were being built in this style. In fact, in Wilcox County four other churches Baptist churches were built during the same period of the same Greek Revival-influenced style. Of the four, only one remains.

The lumber industry was an important part of life in south Alabama during the period. The church was built of hand-hewn timber because wood was, obviously, plentiful and inexpensive. On the interior, the boards of the walls and ceiling are held together with blacksmith-made square head tapered nails. All the surfaces are painted. The simplicity of the design of the church reflects the socio-economic levels of the residents of these south Alabama communities of the period. The Ackerville Baptist Church congregation joined the Bethlehem Association of Baptist Churches in 1844 with 28 members. Membership had risen to 79 by 1847. It is presumed, at this time, the members recognized a need for a church building. Construction was completed in 1848. Family records and oral history indicate the church was constructed by members of the community. It is also evident in the design and construction that the church was built and moved by local craftsmen. The church was re-located to the Ackerville community in 1886. It was taken apart piece by piece and moved by mules and wagons to its present site. There it was reassembled in its original design.

The Ackerville Baptist Church was built in the community of Oak Hill in 1848. The somewhat larger community of Ackerville, 3/4 mile away, experienced greater growth after the Civil War and it was decided by the Stuart family and neighbors that the church could better serve the needs of the community by re-locating to Ackerville. At the time a U.S. Post Office, a doctor's office, a grocery store, a sawmill, and a cotton gin were all located in the area just south of the crossroads of Highway 89 and the road to Snowhill. The Pine Barren Baptist Association was formed in 1850 and the Ackerville Baptist Church became a member of the Association at that time. The years between 1850 and 1894 were fruitful ones for the church with membership rising to 103. At the turn of the 20th Century, the church recorded 123 members and had an active Sunday School, a weekly prayer meeting and a "preaching" service one a month. By 1920 membership had begun to decline with 71 recorded members. In 1943, membership had dropped to sixteen and the church ceased regular meetings of any kind. The church had been an integral part of the life of the citizens: Sunday services, Sunday school, weddings, funerals, burials in the church yard, and other gatherings were held there.

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

National Register Criteria

The Ackerville Baptist Church in Ackerville, Alabama meets National Register Criteria 'C' because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Greek Revival style of architecture with vernacular influences. Greek Revival was the dominant style from 1830 to 1850 and was recognized as the first "national style." It flourished in regions being rapidly settled throughout this period and in rural areas remained the dominant stylistic influence until the early 1860s. Vernacular Greek Revival buildings commonly feature square columns which were simple and inexpensive to construct from boards and moldings. Characteristics of Ackerville Baptist Church include: a simple, rectangular block style with no projections; a symmetrical plan; smooth wall surfaces, without ornamentation; a roof ridge running from front to back; front doors with rectangular transoms; and a full facade temple form portico with simplified square Doric columns in the front. In addition, methods of construction typical of the period and style are exhibited in the building. Ackerville Baptist Church is a good, intact, example of a rural mid-19th century church in a simplified vernacular Greek Revival style.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

Period of significance (justification) : 1848; 1886

The Ackerville Baptist Church was built in 1848. It was moved to the present site in 1886. Services continued to be held in the church through the 1930s. The church ceased holding regular services in 1943.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

According to the land deed of 1848, two acres of property was donated by the Smith family of Ackerville for the purpose of erecting the Ackerville Baptist Church. The original location was technically in the Oak Hill community. In the beginning, the church was served by circuit riding ministers. Eventually there were a pastor, a Sunday School, and community picnics at the church. In 1879, George W. Stuart, his brothers James Allen and William, and their neighbors decided to move the church to a site 3/4 mile south of the original location. The community of Ackerville was growing at the time and, apparently, it was believed the church could better serve the community by re-locating.

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

A U.S. Post Office, Dr. Stabler's office, a grocery store, a sawmill, and a cotton gin were all located in the area just south of the crossroads of Highway 89 and the old road to Snowhill. Land was purchased from the Lang/Holt family in 1886 for the sum of \$15. A one-room schoolhouse shared the three acre site with the church. The church was taken apart piece-by-piece and moved by mules and wagons to its present site. The structure was re-assembled in its original design with provisions made for a cemetery to the rear of the building.

Wilcox County was created from portions of Dallas and Monroe counties and chartered on December 1, 1819. The area had been occupied in pre-historic and historic times by aboriginal inhabitants. Early Indian towns were already established on the banks of the Alabama River by the time Europeans first came to the area. The economy of the area from the mid-1800s to the present was based on agriculture and forestry. In the early 1900s, many people left the county for better opportunities during times of economic depression. The Industrial Revolution brought economic opportunity to the cities of Birmingham, Montgomery and Mobile. In fact, the need for steel during the World Wars drove many residents to Birmingham to work in the mills there. The decline in the general population is reflected in the declining membership numbers of the Ackerville Baptist Church. The church continued to be used for regular Sunday services into the 1930s. The first annual Stuart family reunion, or "Ackerville Homecoming" was organized by Dr. Whit W. Stuart and was held in September of 1935. Annual reunions resumed after World War II. By 1944, there was no longer a functioning congregation in the church, but the "homecoming" continued to be held annually, and the Stuart family retained ownership of the property. In the mid-1950s, the Ackerville Baptist Memorial Association was established to care for the cemetery and grounds, as well as the church itself. The standing Building Committee was authorized in October of 1990 to facilitate repairs and plan for future maintenance of the church. The church continues to be used on the first Sunday of October for family reunions.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Published

Harrell, Helen Odum, James Stuart and Mary Matthews of Wilcox County, Alabama: Some Ancestors and Descendants. Family History Publishers, Bountiful, Utah, 1998.

Harris, Cyril M., Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, New York, 1977.

Pine Barren Baptist Association, History of Churches of the Pine Barren Baptist Association, 1825 - 2001.

Poppeliers, John, and S. Allen Chambers, and Nancy B. Schwartz, What Style Is It?, Preservation Press of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1976.

Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780. M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969.

Unpublished

Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage Criteria, "Alabama Register Property Information", compiled by James A. Stuart, 1991.

Further sources of information about the Ackerville Baptist Church are the collections of family records and oral history compiled by:

James Ernest Stuart
Nada Stuart Glaze
James A. Stuart
Anita Stuart Cink

Wilcox County Development Council website, "www.wilcoxdevcouncil.org".

Wilcox County Property Records, "1848 - Deed Book J, page 55", Wilcox County Courthouse, Camden, Alabama.

Wilcox County Property Records, "1886 - Deed Book W, page 466", Wilcox County Courthouse, Camden, Alabama.

Wilcox Historical Society website, "www.wilcoxwebworks.com/history".

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): (X) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued:**
- previously listed in the National Register**
- previously determined eligible by the National Register**
- designated a National Historic Landmark**
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #**
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #**

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office**
- Other State Agency**
- Federal agency**
- Local government**
- University**
- Other, Specify Repository:**

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3 acres

UTM References

A) Zone 16 Easting 493560 Northing 3543740

Verbal Boundary Description

Commencing at a point 190 yards south of the NE corner of the NW 1/4 of NE 1/4 Section 9, Township 12, Range 10, thence west 180 yards, thence south 80 2/3 yards thence east 180 yards, thence north 80 2/3 yards to said starting point, and containing 3 acres. All of said lines running at the same degree of the original land lines.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the extant historic property associated with the Ackerville Baptist Church and its associated cemetery.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title John H. Myers (Christy Anderson, AHC Reviewer)

organization Architectural Conservation Center

street and number 4411 Oliver Lane

city or town Douglasville **state** GA **zip code** 30135

telephone 770-949-1337

consultant

regional development center preservation planner

other:

Ownership of Property

Stuart Family Reunion

(a.k.a. Ackerville Baptist Memorial Association)

Nada S. Glaze, Secretary

P.O. Box 360914

Birmingham, Alabama 35236

205-733-8219

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Photographs

Name of Property: Ackerville Baptist Church
City or Vicinity: Ackerville, Alabama
County: Wilcox
State: Alabama
Photographer: John H. Myers
Negative Filed: Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery, Alabama
Date Photographed: October, 1999

Description of Photograph(s):

Number 1: east elevation, view to west
Number 2: north elevation, view to south
Number 3: west elevation, view to east
Number 4: south elevation, view to north
Number 5: interior, view to west

5. FLOOR/SITE PLAN Ackerville Baptist Church
Wilcox County
May 15, 1991 Ackerville, Alabama

