

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: George Jones Memorial Baptist Church

other name/site number: Wheat Church

2. Location

street & number: Blair Road

city/town: Oak Ridge

not for publication: N/A  
vicinity: N/A

state: TN

county: Roane

code: 145

zip code: 37830

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-Federal

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:  
N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Resources of Oak Ridge

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. X See continuation sheet.

Jais M. Thompson  
Signature of certifying official

3/18/92  
Date

Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. Department of Energy  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Herbert L. Styer  
Signature of commenting or other official

7/18/91  
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
Tennessee Historical Commission  
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):

Carol Shull 5-6-92

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: RELIGION

Sub: Religious structure

Current : VACANT

Sub: not in use

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Gable Front Vernacular

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Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation brick/stone roof metal  
walls wood other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : A,G

Areas of Significance: Social History  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: ca. 1901-1942

Significant Dates : N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

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

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State historic preservation office

Other state agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other--Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: Less than 1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 16 737000 3980200 B \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:  See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification:  See continuation sheet.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Kimberley A. Murphy

Organization: Thomason & Associates Date: 4/5/91

Street & Number: P.O. Box 121225 Telephone: (615)383-0227

City or Town: Nashville State: TN ZIP: 37212

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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George Jones Memorial Baptist Church Page #1

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The George Jones Memorial Baptist Church is a three-bay, rectangular plan brick church with wood cladding completed in 1901. The church was built in a gable front plan with a square bell tower at the southwest corner of the building. The church is located on a slight rise facing the old roadbed of state route 61 at the site of the Wheat community.

The church has a brick and stone foundation, gable roof of metal standing seam, interior brick flue, and weatherboard siding over the brick and frame walls. The main (south) facade is composed of three bays while the rear facade has two bays and side facades are five bays. On the main facade is the primary entrance which has a 1990 solid metal door and original rectangular transom. The bell tower at the southeast corner of the building has a pyramidal roof of red asphalt shingles and is located above the entrance bay. On all four sides of the bell tower are rectangular vent openings which have been enclosed with wood panels. The original windows have been removed and the window openings have been covered by wood panels and reinforced wood casement shutters. The gable field of the main facade has a small rectangular louvered vent. At the rear facade is a secondary entrance in the basement level which has a 1990 solid metal door. There is a laminated sign in the gable field inscribed, "George Jones Memorial Baptist Church, est. 1901, Wheat, Tenn."

The interior of the church is divided into two rooms. The main entry leads into a short hallway. To the right, is an anteroom with an opening to the sanctuary. In the anteroom are stairs leading to the basement. The two rooms are separated by a waist-high wall partition. In the northeast corner of the sanctuary is an altar on a raised platform. The interior retains its original horizontal wall siding and wood floors.

The church is located in an isolated area of Oak Ridge to the east of the K-25 Gaseous Diffusion Plant. To the west of the church is a one-and-one-half acre cemetery which is enclosed by a post and wire fence. There are no adjacent buildings or structures. The building is maintained by the Department of Energy.

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George Jones Memorial Baptist Church Page #1

The George Jones Memorial Baptist Church is significant under criterion A for its association with the social history of the Wheat community, especially in reference to the Manhattan Project. The Wheat church is a good example of the type vernacular churches that were commonly constructed in rural areas and is therefore significant under criterion C. Because of its significance in the areas of architecture and social history, the church is eligible under Criteria Consideration A. The building's period of significance extends to 1942, when it was purchased by the War Department. For this reason the church is eligible under consideration G. The church was built in 1901 and served the local Baptist congregation during the early 20th century. The church was the central building in the Wheat community and served as a meeting place, a school, and a community gathering center. Following acquisition by the federal government all of the buildings in the community were razed with the exception of the church. The church is the only existing embodiment of early 20th century social and religious customs of the Wheat community and of other rural communities that no longer exist in the valley.

The church is located just to the southwest of the site of the Mount Zion Baptist Church. Mount Zion was organized in 1854 and a small log church was built at this location soon after. This church served the local Baptist congregation until the turn of the century when a new church was built through the guidance and financial assistance of pastor George Jones. The new church was built at a cost of \$2,838.95, with George Jones contributing \$2,505.90 of this amount. The exact builders of the church are unknown but several members of the church contributed the sawn lumber for its construction. The bricks were made on the site. The church was dedicated on May 12, 1901 and George Jones willed to the church an endowment. Jones died in October of 1903 and the church was renamed in his memory.

The land on which the church is located was acquired by the federal government in 1942 for the Manhattan Project. Like all properties lying within the proposed boundaries of the militarily restricted area, George Jones Church and all properties in the Wheat community were appraised, condemned, and purchased by the Army. The gaseous diffusion plant (K-25) was constructed nearby to process uranium to be used as fuel for the world's first uranium bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

The Manhattan Project had a tremendous impact on the Clinch River Valley. In less than three years, the War Department replaced four scarcely populated rural communities with one of the largest industrial complexes the world had ever known. The acquisition of the lands needed for the Manhattan Project called for the removal of about three thousand people from the valleys in which the reservation was built. Following the government acquisition of the Wheat community, all of the existing buildings were razed or moved with the exception of the George Jones Memorial Baptist Church. It is not known why the building was not razed, perhaps because of its isolated location. As the only remaining pre-WWII structure in this section of Roane County, the church

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George Jones Memorial Baptist Church Page #2

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is significant because it represents nineteenth and early twentieth century rural life as it was before the Manhattan Project. The building has been continuously maintained by the Department of Energy. Former members and descendants of members of all the pre-WWII communities use the church for annual reunions.

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Basic Facts on the Oak Ridge Area of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission and the Community of Oak Ridge. Office of Public Information, Office of Oak Ridge Operations, Atomic Energy Commission. Issued October 15, 1949.

A City is Born. Oak Ridge Operations, Community Affairs Division, Atomic Energy Commission, 1961.

Jackson, Charles O. and Charles W. Johnson. City Behind A Fence. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981.

Moneymaker, Dorathy S. We'll Call It Wheat. Oak Ridge: Adroit Printing Company, 1979.

Overholt, James, ed. These Are Our Voices. Oak Ridge: Children's Museum of Oak Ridge, 1987.

Robinson, George O., Jr. The Oak Ridge Story. Kingsport, Tennessee: Southern Publishers, Incorporated, 1950.

Schaffer, Daniel. Atoms in Appalachia. Tennessee Valley Authority, 1982.

Sparrow, Martha Cardwell. "The Oak Ridgers." M.A. diss., Mississippi State University, 1980.

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Verbal Boundary Description: The George Jones Memorial Baptist Church boundary is bounded on the southeast by the right-of-way of the old Wheat Road; on the northeast by a gravel drive; on the northwest by an intersecting line located twenty feet from the northwest facade of the building; and on the southwest by a post and wire fence located approximately thirty feet from the building and parallel to it.

Boundary Justification: The boundary of the George Jones Memorial Baptist Church is drawn to include the church building and adjacent yard. The boundary excludes a cemetery located to the west of the building. This cemetery contains common 19th and 20th century gravestone and statuary and does not possess significant monuments. No other buildings or structures are associated with the property.

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George Jones Memorial Baptist Church  
Blair Road  
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

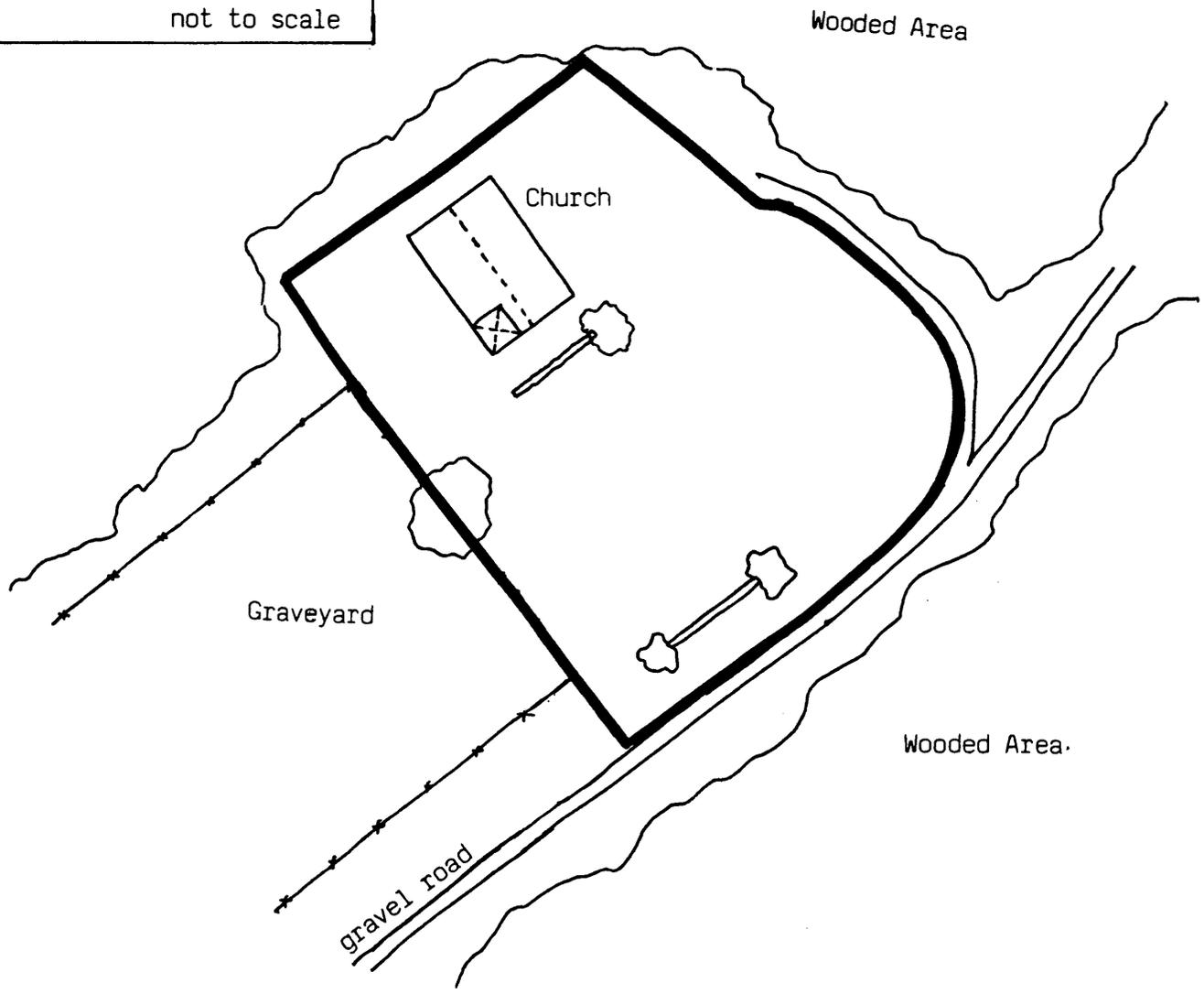
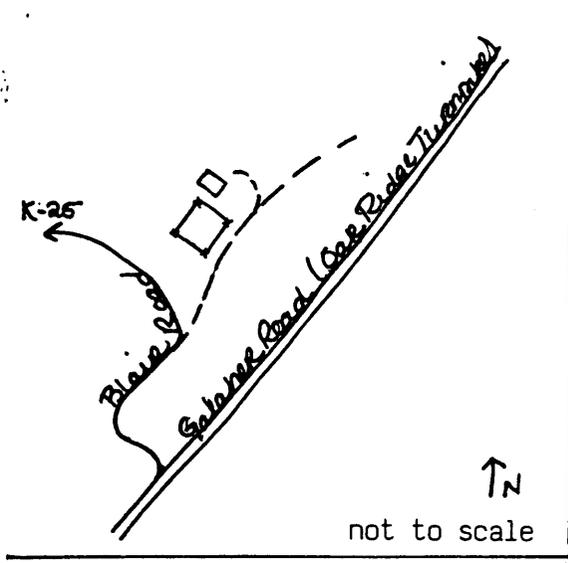
Photographed by Philip Thomason

Negatives are located at: Tennessee Historical Commission  
701 Broadway  
Nashville, TN 37203

Photo #1 of 3: North view of main facade.

Photo #2 of 3: View of east facade.

Photo #3 of 3: View of rear (northwest) and southwest facades.



George Jones Memorial Baptist Church  
Blair Road  
Oak Ridge, TN  
not to scale