

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 04001239

Date Listed: November 21, 2004

Property Name: Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery

County: Brooks

State: Georgia

none
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for Daniel J. Visser
Signature of the Keeper

November 23, 2004
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 3. Classification

Two (2) noncontributing buildings are hereby added to the resource count. The total number of resources within the property is therefore changed to 2 contributing and 2 noncontributing.

Section 8. Statement of Significance

The period of significance is hereby changed to ca. 1861-1954.

The Georgia State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

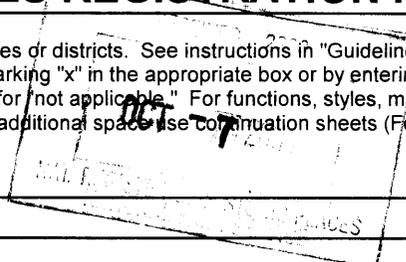
DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

1239

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.



1. Name of Property

historic name Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number County Road 125
city, town Quitman (X) vicinity of
county Brooks **code** GA 027
state Georgia **code** GA **zip code** 31643

() not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- () private
- (X) public-local
- () public-state
- () public-federal

Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings	1	0
sites	1	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	2	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Richard Clowes
Signature of certifying official

9-30-04
Date

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

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, explain:

see continuation sheet

Edson Beall 11/22/04

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

RELIGION/RELIGIOUS FACILITY/CHURCH
FUNERARY/CEMETERY

Current Functions:

FUNERARY/CEMETERY
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

NO STYLE

Materials:

foundation	Concrete
walls	Wood/Weatherboard
roof	Metal/Tin
other	N/A

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (photograph 1) are located in rural Brooks County in the Quitman vicinity in south Georgia. The church, constructed c.1861, is a one-story, gable-front wood-framed building covered with cypress weatherboard. The roof is metal and there are gable returns on the front and rear façades. The church sits on replacement concrete piers.

The front (north) façade (photograph 2) is symmetrical and features a central single-door entrance (photograph 6) and a twelve-over-twelve double-hung-sash window on each side of the entrance. The west and east façades (photographs 3, 4, and 5) each include a single-door entrance and three twelve-over-twelve double-hung-sash windows. The rear (south) façade (photographs 3 and 5) features three twelve-over-twelve double-hung-sash windows, with the center window placed slightly higher on the façade. Doors are made of vertical planks nailed to cross members with thick square-headed nails (photograph 7).

The one-room interior of the building is simple with no ornamentation, typical of Primitive Baptist churches. The walls are cypress flush board (photographs 8 and 10), the ceiling is cypress bead board (photographs 8 and 11), and the floors are pine (photographs 9 and 10). The lower walls are finished with a simple wainscot made of two wide boards (photographs 8 and 10). The only division of space within the interior is a paneled pine pulpit, commonly referred to as a bookstand in Primitive Baptist churches, which is located at the south end of the building (photographs 8 and 9). It is flanked by four pews on each side (photographs 8 and 9). These pews are reserved for the elders of the church and the act of foot washing which is still practiced in many Primitive Baptist churches.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

There are eighteen pews, nine on each side of a central aisle, facing the bookstand (photographs 10 and 11). The pews are made of long, wide boards fastened with pegs and square nails. Men entered and sat on the right, while women entered and sat on the left. Visitors entered through the front door and sat at the rear of the church. The post-and-beam construction of the frame of the building is evident by the posts located in the central aisle (photographs 8, 10, and 11). The posts feature the mortise-and-tenon construction technique. Window and door surrounds are simple (photographs 7, 9, and 11) and doors feature strap-and-pin hinges (photograph 10).

The cemetery (photograph 12) is located behind the church. The earliest burial dates to 1935 and the most recent dates to 2003. Prior to 1935, church members were buried in family cemeteries. There are 52 visible graves in the cemetery, and it is loosely divided into family plots. The graves that are marked feature simple headstones or concrete slabs, some being engraved with only a date or an age.

There are two undocumented privies located northeast of the building. The privies are two-seaters, are sided with metal, and have shed roofs.

There is no formal landscaping on the grounds of the church (photograph 13). However, a sycamore tree that was planted to the south of the church by a preacher in 1861 still stands. The property is characterized by its rural setting surrounded by farmland. It is wooded with mature pine trees and hardwoods.

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
Religion

Period of Significance:

c.1861-1965

Significant Dates:

c.1861-construction date of church building
1965-original congregation disbanded

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Unknown

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Statement of significance (areas of significance)

Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church is one of the last remaining antebellum buildings in rural Brooks County in south Georgia. The building is significant in the area of architecture for its simple form, design, and craftsmanship, typical not only of rural churches but also of Primitive Baptist churches. Most Primitive Baptist churches are small and rectangular with plain glass windows and no steeple. If present, the only writing on the exterior of the building is the name of the church and its inception date. On the interior there are no religious or state insignias. The only division of space is between the bookstand and the pews and the central aisle. The site is also significant for the accompanying cemetery where church members were buried after 1935. The building is also significant in the area of religion as a very early example of a Primitive Baptist church associated with one of the oldest Primitive Baptist congregations in Georgia. The generally accepted date of the founding of the Primitive Baptist faith in the United States is 1832. In that year a small group of Old School Baptists split from the Missionary Baptists at Black Rock, Maryland. The Bethlehem congregation organized in 1834 and constructed the current building c.1861. The congregation used this church continuously from c.1861 to 1965, and again from 1981 to 1984. The congregation voted to disband in February 1984. Owned by the Brooks County Board of Commissioners since 1995, the building has been vacant since 1984. The building is one of only 34 Primitive Baptist churches recorded in the Georgia Historic Resources Survey, which includes over 60,000 historic resources in the state of Georgia.

National Register Criteria

Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of religion as an excellent and rare surviving example of a Primitive Baptist church and cemetery in south Georgia. It is also eligible for listing under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an early intact example of a Primitive Baptist church that exhibits many character-defining features of churches of that faith.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A (Note: Criteria Consideration A, Religious Properties, does not apply since this former church is now owned by Brooks County and is no longer used for religious purposes.)

Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance for Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery begins c.1861, the construction date of the church building, and ends in 1965. The congregation temporarily disbanded in 1965, which led church members to affiliate with other congregations in the area. The building was vacant from 1965 until 1981, when the congregation again met at the Bethlehem site. The congregation officially disbanded in 1984 and the building has been vacant since that time.

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The one contributing building on the nominated property is the church building historically associated with the site. The contributing site on the property is the accompanying cemetery located behind the church. There are two privies located on the nominated property. At this time those resources cannot be documented as to their construction dates, therefore they are not included in the resource count.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

****NOTE: Portions of the following history were compiled by Andrea L. MacDonald, Preservation Planner, South Georgia Regional Development Center, July, 2003. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.**

The year generally associated with the founding of the Primitive Baptist faith is 1832, the year in which the Old School Baptists split from the Missionary Baptists in Black Rock, Maryland. The term Primitive conveys the idea of originality rather than backwardness. Primitive Baptists claim to maintain the doctrines and practices of the original Baptists. Primitive Baptists splintered from mainstream Baptist religion in the United States during the first half of the 19th century as a reaction to the movement towards liberal views and practices. In particular were objections to three newer ideals: mission, non-Biblical societies, and specific education. The fundamental stance taken is that unless a precedent is established in the Bible, an action is likely against the intentions of faith. The Primitive Baptist faith views the Bible as the sole source of teaching and guidance, therefore mission work, non-Biblical societies, and higher education take the teaching out of the church.

The Primitive Baptists are distinguished by their belief in predestination, independence of individual congregations, and the use of small, relatively unadorned churches. Each local church consists of members, deacons, and elders. There is no organization above the loose associations that typically cover several counties. Although white Primitive Baptist churches still operate under this organizational structure, black Primitive Baptist churches did form a national convention in 1907 and have established Sunday schools and aid societies, practices still rejected by white churches. Each church has been constituted on a set of beliefs summarized in Articles of Faith, which vary from church to church, but contain several key elements in common, most of which are common to all Christian religions. Each church may issue a decision on theology or practice that comes before it.

Architecture, music, and preaching are three parts of the Primitive Baptist faith that are unique when compared to other faiths. Most Primitive Baptist church buildings are small, rectangular, and usually wood or brick. There is little or no ornamentation on the exterior or interior, and the interior is a large open space with the only division being the bookstand. There is never instrumental accompaniment to singing. Primitive Baptists usually sing in unison with no solos, men sing the melody while women harmonize, and there is little eye contact or voice change. The sermon is the anchor of the service and there are three types of sermons. Experimental sermons focus on the spiritual experience of

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

biblical figures; doctrinal preaching addresses church practices and beliefs; and duty preaching addresses obligations to the church.

Primitive Baptist membership in the United States doubled between 1846 and 1890 rising from 68,000 to 121,000. However membership has declined sharply and a 1990 estimate placed membership at 49,000.

The original minutes of the Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church still exist and show the congregation was founded on November 19, 1834 as the Baptist Church at Christ Bethlehem. Its founding members, 19 men and 28 women, were a part of a large migration from the Carolinas to central Georgia and into the Wiregrass area of south Georgia. Several of these names can be found among the memberships of earlier churches established along the route of this migration. The church officially adopted the name Primitive Baptist in 1840. In 1861, the congregation made the decision to move to the current location, and the property was deeded to the Deacons of the church in 1868. Services were held regularly at Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church until 1965. By this date the demographics of the rural area had changed, therefore the current members and potential new members affiliated with churches in Quitman, Georgia.

One church member, Sister Lilly Miller, was not baptized into another church, but remained the sole member of the Bethlehem congregation until 1975. In that year she was rebaptized into the Pleasant Grove Church and given permission to reestablish the Bethlehem congregation with the assistance of Elder John Crowley. In November, 1981, Sister Miller and Elder Crowley obtained letters of dismissal from the Pleasant Grove church and regular meetings were again held at Bethlehem. The final minutes of Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church were recorded on February 25, 1984, when the congregation decided to disband. The church property was deeded to the Brooks County Board of Commissioners in 1995. The building is currently vacant, but its proposed use is as a local history facility.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bernard, Bernice. Thomasville, Georgia. Interview by Andrea MacDonald, March, 2004.

"Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church, Brooks County, Georgia, Minutes 1834-1984." On file at Quitman-Brooks County Museum and Cultural Center, Quitman, Georgia.

Historic Treasures of Brooks County, Georgia, Volume I. Madison Florida: JimBob Printing, Inc., 1990.

Huxford, Folks. History of Brooks County, Georgia. Athens, Georgia: The McGregor Company, 1948.

Logan, Jean. Brooks County Museum and Cultural Center, Quitman, Georgia. Interview by Andrea MacDonald, June, 2003.

MacDonald, Andrea L. "Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery." Historic Property Information Form. July, 2003. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.

www.britannica.com/blackhistory/micro/417/21.html

www.carthage.lib.il.us/community/churches/primbap/Ancient.html

www.ls.net/~newriver/nrv/primitiv.htm

www.mainlib.mercer.edu/special_collections/GA_Baptists.htm

www.religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/primitive_baptists.html

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 #**

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 9—Major Bibliographic References

Primary location of additional data:

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

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5 acres

UTM References

A) Zone 17 Easting 251279 Northing 3406551

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the proposed nomination is indicated on the attached map by a heavy black line.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the proposed nomination includes Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church, the associated cemetery, and all of the land historically associated with this location of the congregation.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Holly L. Anderson, National Register Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
mailing address 47 Trinity Avenue, S.W., Suite 414-H
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30334
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** September 30, 2004
e-mail holly_anderson@dnr.state.ga.us

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

name/title Andrea L. MacDonald, Preservation Planner
organization South Georgia Regional Development Center
mailing address 327 West Savannah Avenue
city or town Valdosta **state** Georgia **zip code** 31603
telephone (229)333-5277
e-mail

- () **property owner**
() **consultant**
(X) **regional development center preservation planner**
() **other:**

Property Owner or Contact Information

name (property owner or contact person) Wayne H. Carroll, Chair
organization (if applicable) Brooks County Board of Commissioners
mailing address P.O. Box 272
city or town Quitman **state** Georgia **zip code** 31643
e-mail (optional)

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

Name of Property: Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery
City or Vicinity: Quitman, vicinity
County: Brooks
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: April, 2004

Description of Photograph(s):

Number of photographs: 13

1. Front (north) façade and west façade; photographer facing southeast.
2. Front façade; photographer facing south.
3. West façade and rear (south) façade; photographer facing northeast.
4. West façade, entrance detail; photographer facing east.
5. Rear façade and east façade; photographer facing northwest.
6. Front façade, entrance detail; photographer facing south.
7. Interior, entrance door detail; photographer facing northeast.
8. Interior; photographer facing southwest.
9. Interior, bookstand detail; photographer facing southeast.
10. Interior; photographer facing northwest.
11. Interior; photographer facing northeast.
12. Cemetery; photographer facing north.
13. Front façade and west façade; photographer facing southeast.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)

GROOVERVILLE ROAD
WORTMAN,
H. CLINTON JR.
ETAL
24
4.1 AC.

CSX
RAILROAD

BETHLEHEM CHURCH RD CR 125

WORTMAN, SANDRA J.
23
137 AC.

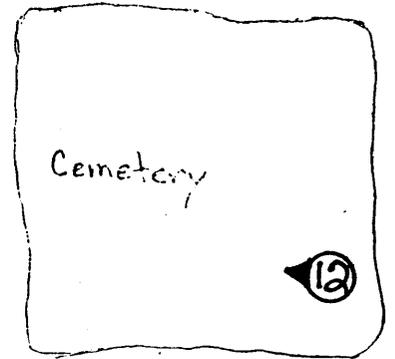
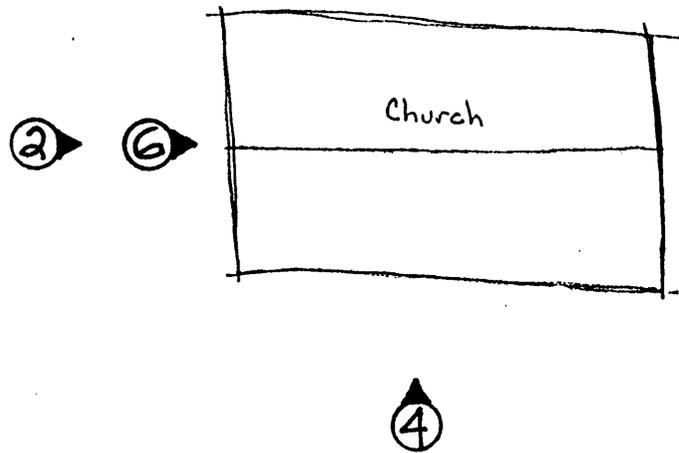
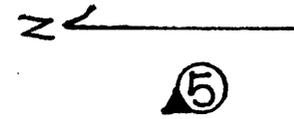
BROOKS CO.
22
5.0 AC.
BETHLEHEM
CEM.

Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery
Quitman (vicinity), Brooks County, Georgia
Brooks County Tax Map 66
National Register Boundary: 
Scale: 1" = 400'
North: ↑

Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church, Bethlehem Church Road, Brooks County, Georgia.
Site Plan & Exterior Photo Key
7/01/03

Privy#1
□

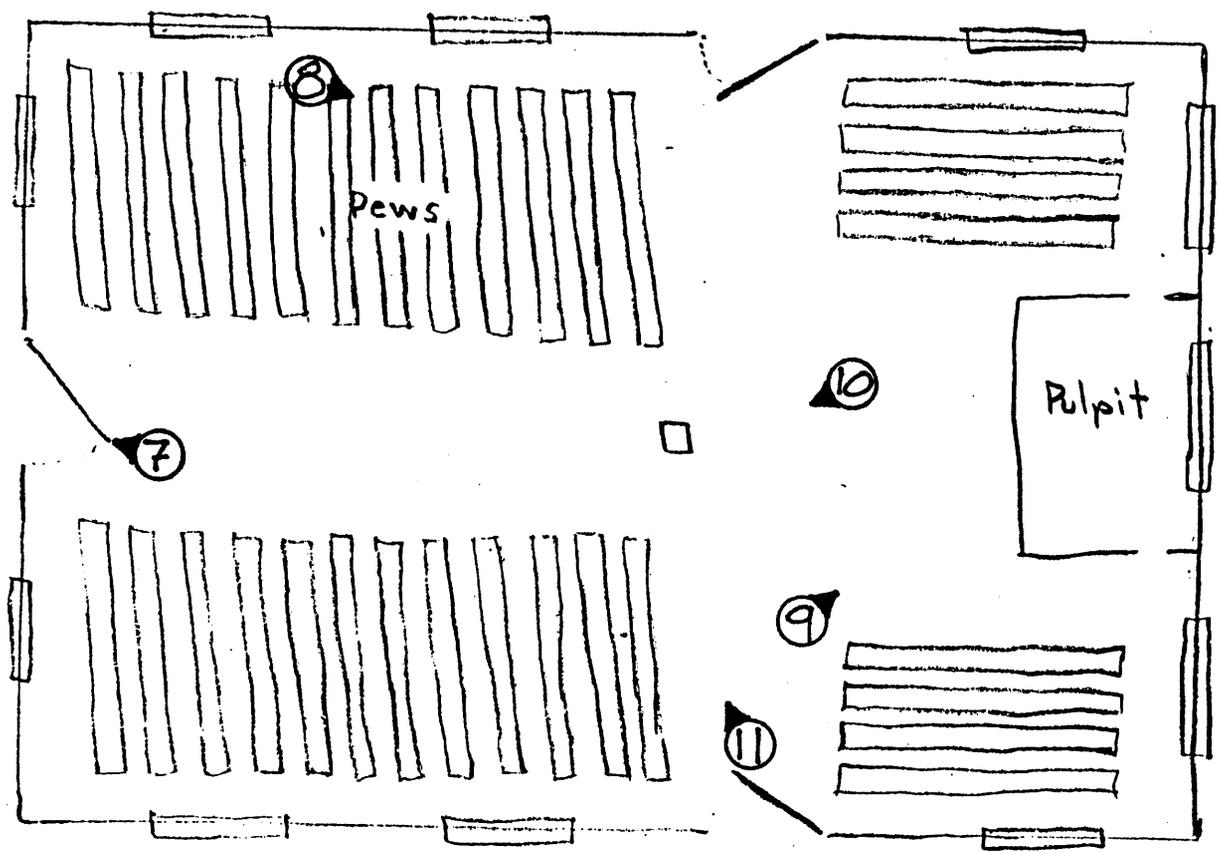
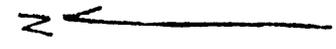
Privy#2
□



Bethlehem Church Road

Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery
Quitman (vicinity), Brooks County, Georgia
Site Plan
Photograph Direction/Number: ①
Scale: Not to scale
North: ←

Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church,
Bethlehem Church Road, Brooks
County, Georgia.
Floor Plan & Interior Photo Key
7/01/03



Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery
Quitman (vicinity), Brooks County, Georgia
Floor Plan
Photograph Direction/Number: ①
Scale: Not to scale
North: ←