

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

SEP 17 1986

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic BETHEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

and or common AME CHURCH

**2. Location**

street & number 895 Oak Street

not for publication

city, town Batesville

N/A vicinity of

state Arkansas

code 05

county Independence

code 063

**3. Classification**

**Category**

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

**Ownership**

- public
  - private
  - both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
  - being considered

**Status**

- occupied
  - unoccupied
  - work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
  - yes: unrestricted
  - no

**Present Use**

- agriculture
  - commercial
  - educational
  - entertainment
  - government
  - industrial
  - military
- museum
  - park
  - private residence
  - religious
  - scientific
  - transportation
  - other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Trustees, Bethel AME Church - c/o Montgomery

street & number 1407 Case Street

city, town Batesville

N/A vicinity of

state Arkansas 72501

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Independence County Courthouse

street & number 193 Main Street

city, town Batesville

state Arkansas 72501

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY

A single story, gable roofed, sandstone building dominated by a hip roofed, two story, truncated tower, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was constructed in 1882. Although the tower and the simple lines of the building are typical of most small town and rural churches, growth of the congregation rather than formal considerations of style governed expansion of the building. The tan sandstone, quarried locally and roughly shaped by workers and masons drawn from the church membership, is the most consistent feature of the 1881 and 1910 portions of the structure.

#### ELABORATION

The square two story tower, or stumped steeple, which serves as the church entrance characterizes the facade, or south elevation. Centered in the facade, the stone tower barely rises above the ridge of the original church and protrudes from the original facade, the depth of attachment equal only to the width of the tower's eighteen-inch walls. Double wooden doors surmounted by an arched transom provide entry into the tower. On the east and west sides of the tower, single, 1/1 double-hung arched windows are symmetrically placed. The upper edge of the stone arches over the double doors and lower story windows are cut in an unusual wedge-shaped or stepped pattern to conform with the straight stone course of the tower walls. On the second story of each of three exposed elevations of the tower, single windows identical to those on the lower story are set and embellished by a more typical fan-shaped arch. In 1973 the original belfry which capped the tower was destroyed by a tornado and replaced with an undistinguished, hip-roofed substitute with metal louvers.

Identical arched windows, which flank the tower, comprise the remaining features in the facade. Single stone lintels repeat the arch of the windows and are slightly flared. The window on the eastern side of the facade retains its 1/1 double-hung sash, while the window on the western side has been converted to an access for ventilation ducts.

The only features on the fifty foot length of the east elevation which comprised the 1881 church are two windows, symmetrically placed and identical to the windows on the facade which flank the tower.

In 1956, a vesting room and pastor's office were added to the rear, or north, elevation. The gable and shed roof is offset from the ridge line and lower than the original 1881 roof. The frame addition is covered with an irregular stone veneer which does not conform to the 1881 and 1910 straight stone courses. On the east side of the 1956 addition, a door placed near the original building is balanced by a pair of 6/6 double-hung windows. Three pairs of identical windows, symmetrically spaced, distinguish the north elevation of the addition, with the pair on the western end of this elevation, below its shed roof, placed lower than the other two pairs. A recessed, centrally located door bounded by two narrow casement windows are the only features on the west elevation of the 1956 addition.

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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

The construction and design of the 1910 wing, which bisected the west elevation of the 1881 building, are almost identical to those of the original church. However, the walls of the 1910 addition are only one foot thick, while those of the 1881 structure are two feet thick. A shed addition later filled the north side of the wing to the rear edge of the original building. Sided with pressed or particle board, the north elevation contains three irregularly-arranged metal windows. The only other feature of the shed addition is a door on its west elevation, set close to the 1910 wing. Three evenly arrayed double-hung windows with single stone, slightly flared arched lintels, identical to those on the 1881 building, mark the west elevation of the wing. The window on the northern edge of the elevation, however, is concealed by ventilation ducts.

Two more 1/1 double-hung windows flank a slightly off-center door on the wing's south elevation, but only the window on the west side of the door is defined by a flared arch. The window nearest the 1881 structure is capped by a straight, single-stone lintel. The remaining small exposure of the west elevation of the original church is featureless stone.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1882 & 1910      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SUMMARY

The oldest church building in Batesville, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church also houses the first black congregation in that city. Bethel AME Church represents the struggle for autonomy and survival by the freedmen during Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era which followed. The organization of the church reflected their desire for independence and pursuit of cultural determinism. Architecturally, its modest form and truncated, tower-like steeple are typical of black churches throughout the rural areas of Arkansas.

#### ELABORATION

Although the AME Church began in 1816 in Philadelphia as a defiant response to discrimination against blacks, the first Arkansas AME church was not organized until after the Civil War in Little Rock. The withdrawal of black Arkansas from the state's churches represented their desire for independent authority and leadership. By 1871, the Batesville Bethel congregation purchased the site of the present church building. The selection of the site reflected, in part, an enforced isolation of the minority population of freedmen in Batesville. This segregation eventually resulted in the abandonment or expulsion of black institutions from much of the town and their relocation to a triangular ghetto bounded by Vine, Harrison, and St. Louis Streets.

The original leaders of the Bethel congregation included many leaders of black Batesville, such as Charles Finley and two veterans of the 113th Colored Infantry, Samuel Greer and Sandy Willis. In 1875, M.F.A. Easton assumed the post of pastor, as well as teacher at the Freedman's School, later closed by the irate white citizenry. Fund raising for a church building was headed by Easton's successor, Reuben Johnson. In the December 8, 1880, Batesville Guard, Johnson thanked subscribers for their donations to the building fund, but warned recalcitrant businessmen their trade might suffer if they failed to contribute. A frame structure was completed the same month and on Christmas Day, burned as the result of a faulty stovepipe.

Resolved to erect a more resilient building, the congregation borrowed money "for building a church edifice" from Simon Adler, a Jewish merchant and private banker. Stone for the church was quarried locally, and, of the six black Batesville quarry workers listed in the 1880 Census, four were members of the Bethel AME Church. In 1881-1882, the new church building was completed,

As the course and form of Jim Crow Arkansas solidified, the Bethel AME Church became the center of a realigned black Batesville. After 1900, the black school and the Lafferty Memorial Colored Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church joined black residences, businesses, and other religious and social institutions in their strictly defined and enforced segregation.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Batesville

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

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

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 6, Block 31, School Addition to Batesville.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel Fagg, Professor of History (edited by Steve Mitchell, AHPP staff)

organization Arkansas College

date May 26, 1985

street & number N/A

telephone (501) 793-9813

city or town Batesville

state Arkansas 72501

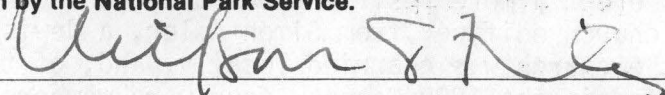
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



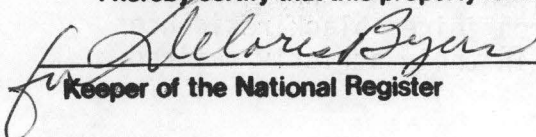
title Arkansas State Historic Preservation office

date 10-10-86

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register



Keeper of the National Register

date 10-16-86

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

In 1910 a substantial wing was extended from the western elevation and the interior of the church was altered to accommodate its enlargement. Although the exact date of construction was not recorded, prior to 1914 an abbreviated tower-like steeple was added to the church entrance.

In 1920, a devastating fire completed the expulsion begun by white social, economic, and political pressures, and local newspaper rejoiced in the removal of a number of "undesirable rent houses" occupied primarily by blacks. By the 1920's, the Bethel AME Church offered a tenuous refuge in an uneasy society, and several of the elevations as well as the entrance tower, conveyed the restrained ideal of the rural, black Arkansas church.

A number of obtrusive additions later marred some secondary elevations of the church. In 1956 a stone-veneered gable and shed vesting room and office was joined to the north elevation of the original building. At a later date, a small shed was also attached to the north elevation of the 1910 wing. In 1973, the original belfry which surmounted the entrance tower was destroyed by a tornado and replaced with a less elaborate substitute.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Savoy Montgomery & Arthur Montgomery, May 15, 1985

Britton, Nancy, "Building of Bethel AME Church". Unpublished paper, 1985.

Fagg, Jane B. "Relocation of the Black School, 1905". Unpublished paper.

John William Graves, "The Arkansas Separate Coach law of 1891," in  
Arkansas in the Gilded Age, 1874-1900, Waddy William Moore ed.  
Little Rock, Ark.: Rose Publishing Company, 1976.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Independence County  
ARKANSAS

Working No. SEP 17 1986

Fed. Reg. Date: 2/2/88

Date Due: 10/16/86 - 11/1/86

Entered in the Action:  ACCEPT 10-16-86

National Register  RETURN

REJECT

Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
 \_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location \_\_\_\_\_

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description \_\_\_\_\_

6. Representation in Existing Surveys  
 Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	
	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection



**8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below \_\_\_\_\_

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Form Prepared By**

**12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_\_ national \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH

2

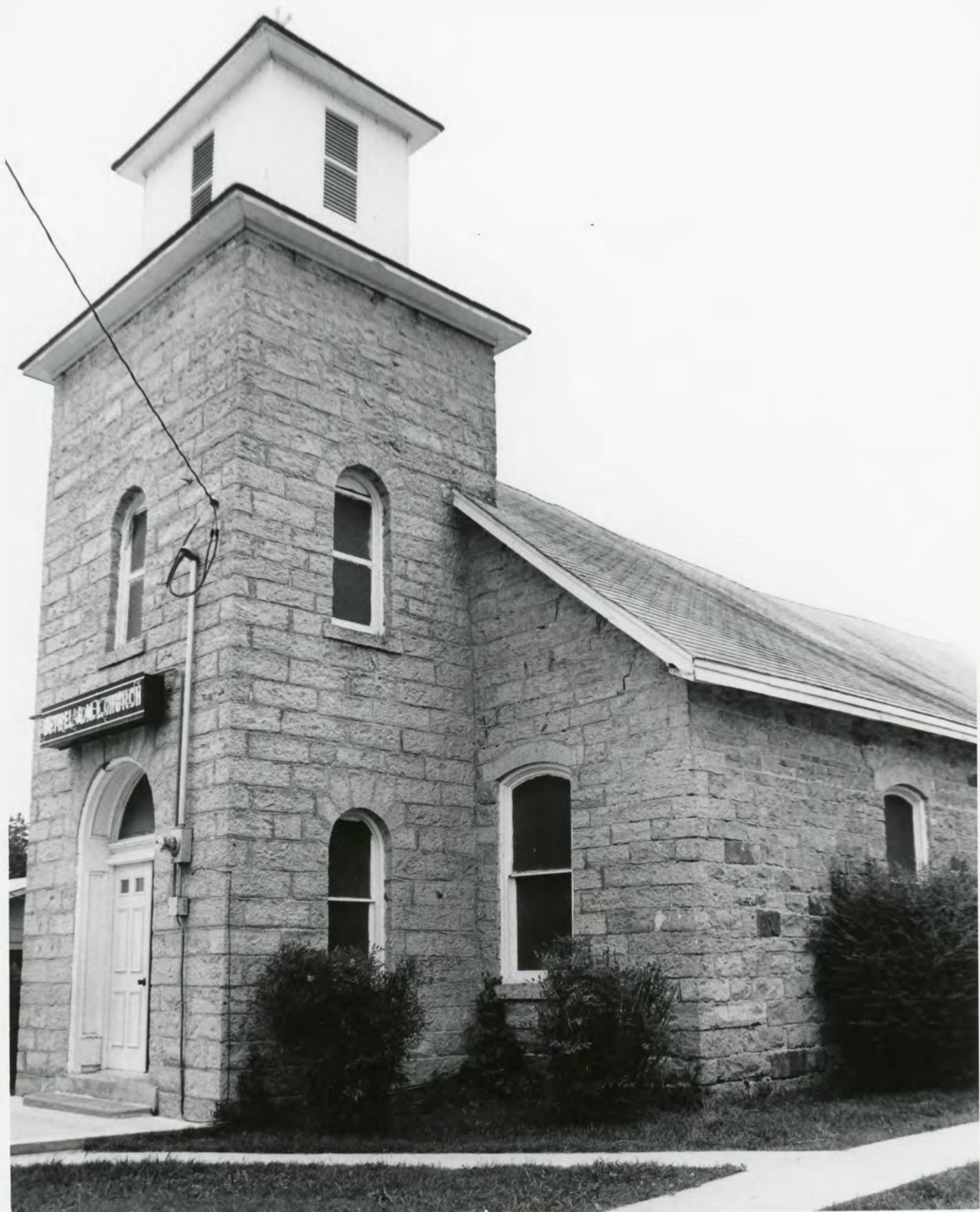
Bethel AME Church  
Batesville, Independence County  
Photographed by A. Jones  
May 1985  
Negatives on file at AHPP  
Viewed from south



SUNDAY  
9:30 AM Sunday School  
11:00 AM Morning Worship  
TUESDAY  
7:00 PM Bible Study  
WEDNESDAY  
7:00 PM Prayer Service  
Rev. James H. Clark, Pastor

BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH

Bethel AME Church  
Batesville, Independence County  
Photographed by A. Jones  
May 1985  
Negatives on file at AHPP  
Viewed from southwest



Bethel AME Church  
Batesville Independence County  
Photographed by A. Jones  
May 1985  
Negatives on file at AHPP  
Viewed from southeast

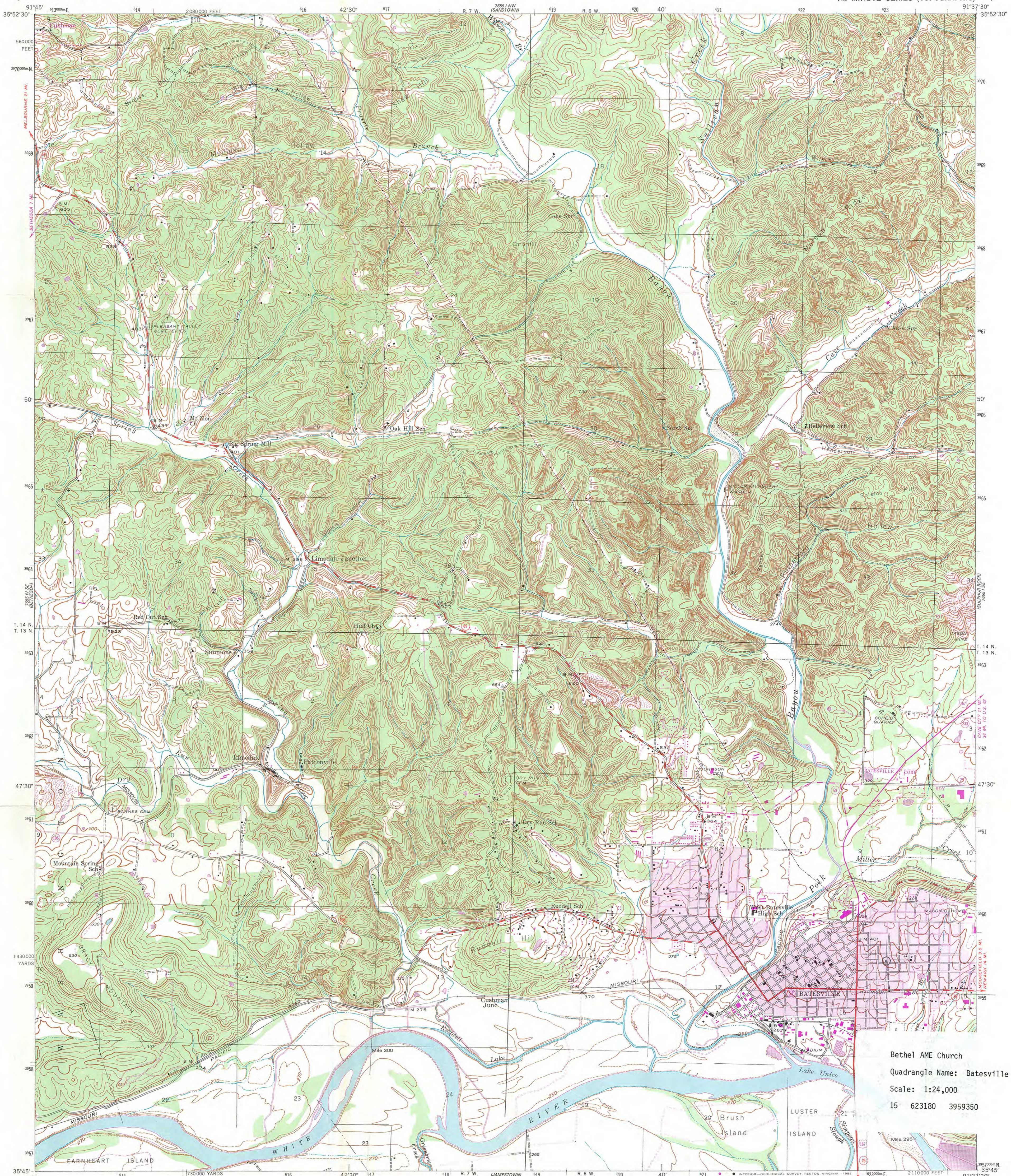




Bethel AME Church  
Batesville, Independence County  
Photographed by A. Jones  
May 1985  
Negatives on file at AHPP  
Viewed from northeast

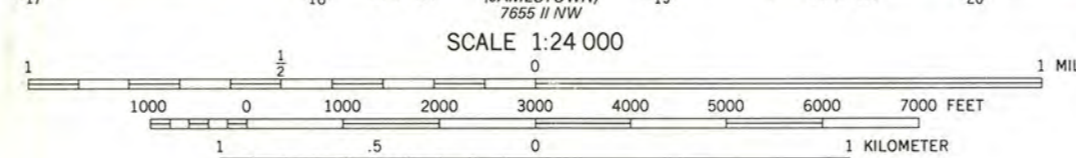
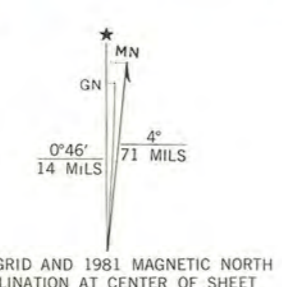


Bethel AME Church  
Batesville, Independence County  
Photographed by A. Jones  
May 1985  
Negatives on file at AHPP  
Viewed from northwest



Bethel AME Church  
Quadrangle Name: Batesville  
Scale: 1:24,000  
15 623180 3959350

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods and topography by  
planetable survey 1942  
Polyconic projection, 1927 North American datum  
5,000 yard grid based on U. S. zone system, C  
10,000-foot grid based on Arkansas (North)  
rectangular coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 15, shown in blue  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983  
move the projection lines 5 meters south and  
13 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks  
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken  
1975 and 1980. Map edited 1981. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban area

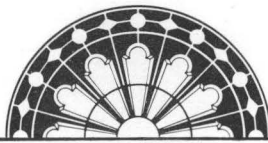


CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET  
DASHED LINES REPRESENT 10-FOOT CONTOURS  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface  
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather  
Interstate Route  
U. S. Route  
State Route

BATESVILLE, ARK.  
N3545—W9137.5/7.5  
1943  
PHOTOREVISED 1981  
DMA 7655 1 SW—SERIES 9884



ARKANSAS  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
PROGRAM

September 10, 1986

Carol D. Shull  
Chief of Registration  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1100 "L" Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20240

Re: Bethel AME Church  
Batesville, Independence County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination for the Bethel AME Church. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Wilson Stiles  
State Historic Preservation Officer

WS/TJ/do

Enclosure/s



SEP 17 1986