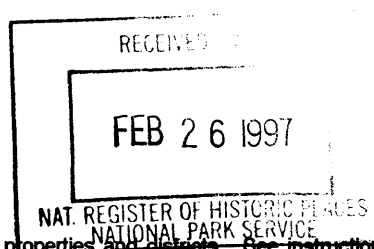


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

other names/site number /8OR8130

2. Location

street & number 15 South Bluford Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Ocoee N/A vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Orange code 095 zip code 34761

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Date 2/24/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Florida Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

3/26/97
Date of Action

National Register of
Historic Places

OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Name of Property

ORANGE, FLORIDA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	total

Name of related multiple property listings
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE GOTHIC REVIVAL

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick piers

walls Wood

roof Composition

other Glass

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuations sheets.)

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY SETTLEMENT

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1891 - 1946

Significant Dates

1891

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Criteria for previous documentation on file (NPS).

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for primary location of additional data.

Name of Repository

#

OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Name of Property

ORANGE, FLORIDA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	4	4	6	7	4	0	3	1	6	0	1	4	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth M. Ervine, Consultant; Gary V. Goodwin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date February, 1997

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Ocoee Christian Church

street & number 15 South Bluford Avenue telephone (407) 656-2010

city or town Ocoee state Florida zip code 34761

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

SUMMARY

The Ocoee Christian Church, located at 15 South Bluford Avenue near McKey Street in Ocoee, Orange County, Florida, was constructed in 1891. The single-story, woodframe, Carpenter Gothic style building has a high-pitched, intersecting gable roof with an octagonal spire and original stained glass windows. The church is thought to be among the oldest Christian Churches in continuous use in the state. The emphasis on patterned wood walls, is present in the decorative detailing applied within the gables. Pointed-arch shape windows are Gothic style features.

SETTING

Although Ocoee is among the fastest growing communities around the City of Orlando, Florida, the Ocoee Christian Church sits in an area in downtown Ocoee that has changed very little in the last fifty years. Private residences and small commercial properties are in the area around the church. An education building/fellowship hall with a shed are adjacent to the church, connected by a covered walkway. A used car lot occupies a corner of the parcel sold c.1939; otherwise, the church property is the same as it was in 1891.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The church is a single-story, white drop-siding and shingle, Carpenter Gothic, cruciform frame building. It rests on brick piers and has an intersecting gable roof. Above the vestibule is a belfry, a rectangular wood structure with small arched openings on three sides. An octagonal steeple rises above the belfry. The tall, shingled steeple, with four louvered openings at its base, is topped with a copper Celtic cross (Photo 1). The main entrance to the sanctuary is below the steeple on the northeast corner of the building. Five concrete steps, covered by a metal rain shelter, lead to paired wooden doors with transom (Photo 2). North and south wings form a transept. There is a rear entrance to the church on the south side of the chancel.

The north elevation has six stained glass, lancet windows in groups of three (Photo 3). The first group is on the side of the nave and set wide apart. The next set is on the side of the transept and grouped close together. The transept has a steeply pitched gable roof.

The east (front) elevation has three closely set lancet windows, like those on each side of the transept except that the center window is taller (Photo 4). The vestibule is canted at the northeast corner of the main block. It has small, round windows on each side.

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Section number 7 Page 2

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

The west (rear) elevation has an original tripartite window flanked by single, 1/1, lancet, sashed windows (Photo 5). Also, the west elevation is separated from the educational/fellowship hall by a covered walkway (Photo 6). The south elevation is similar to the north elevation except it has an entrance to the chancel at the southwest corner (Photo 7).

The roof is believed to have been originally covered with wood shingles. Now the roof over the sanctuary has fiberglass architectural shingles and the steeple is asbestos covered, with copper louvers topped with a rebuilt Celtic cross (Photo 8).

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

With the exception of some changes to the chancel, this building has retained its original integrity. A small, copper edged lamp hangs from the ceiling inside the vestibule where an original communion service is displayed. Inside the main sanctuary, the nave has a center aisle (Photo 9). The church contains an exposed roof truss system which features a scissors truss and hammered beams. The vaulted ceiling, floors, door surrounds, chancel furnishings, and pews are all made of pine. The walls are plastered and painted, and have wainscoting. All the windows in the nave and transepts, with the exception of a few replaced panes, are the original stained glass (Photo 10). The lancet windows throughout the sanctuary are filled with Queen Anne style wooden sashes containing colored glass. The tripartite lancet window over the altar contains symbolic, leaded stained glass which include pressed glass "jewels". The baptistry, designed for total immersion, is located beneath the chancel.

ALTERATIONS

Improvements have been made throughout the years. The original kerosene lamps were replaced with florescent lights to later be replaced by copper-edged ecru glass lamps. The original sisal carpets have been replaced by red carpet strips. Dressing rooms adjacent to the baptistry in the chancel were removed to allow more choir space in the 1950s. Window air conditioning was added in the early 1960s and a central heat and air system was installed sometime in the mid-1980s.

NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

The adjacent educational/fellowship hall was added in two phases: first, an educational building was added in 1947 (Photo 11); ten years later, another addition was made to provide a fellowship hall and a kitchen (Photo 12). It is not attached to the original church, but can be reached from the church building via a covered walkway. The front of the educational/fellowship hall, like the church, faces Bluford Avenue (Photo 13). The hall is a

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

concrete block, single-story, structure which includes a large meeting room with an attached kitchen, the rector's study, classrooms for Sunday School groups, and a storage shed attached to the north end (Photo 14).

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

SUMMARY

The Ocoee Christian Church is significant under Criterion A at the local level in the areas of Early Settlement and Religion. The congregation of the Ocoee Christian Church was established in 1883, two years after the town was founded. The building was built in 1891 on land donated by early settler and founder of Ocoee, Captain Bluford M. Sims. The church, believed to be the oldest Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) building in continuous use in the State of Florida, was the site of the establishment of the Christian Church denomination in Florida. The church is also significant under Criterion C at the local level for its association with Carpenter Gothic style architecture. The main building embodies the characteristics of Carpenter Gothic style architecture, which is found in small numbers in various parts of Florida. A non-contributing education/fellowship hall/shed next to the main sanctuary are the remaining resources on the property.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Citrus cultivation had existed in Florida since colonial times, but had remained a relatively minor industry until the end of the Civil War because of a lack of rail transportation in the state and the limited markets available for fruit before the war. The sale of land on which to raise oranges, lemons, and grapefruit boomed in the 1870s. By that time, Captain Bluford M. Sims, a Georgia native, had begun to cultivate sweet oranges grafted from wild sour root stock orange trees. He later planted a citrus nursery near Lake Apopka, presumed to be the first in the county.

Ocoee is located in the western part of Orange County, bordering Lake Apopka, the second largest body of fresh water in Florida. Ocoee grew out of a settlers' camp established by Dr. J.D. Starke on the shores of a small lake out from the hammocks of Lake Apopka during the Civil War. After the departure of the war-time cotton growers, other settlers arrived and secured homesteads in the area called Starke Lake. Bluford M. Sims was among those early settlers in the Starke Lake region. Captain Sims acquired approximately 74 acres of land next to Starke Lake in Orange County, on which to plant orange trees and establish a small settlement. The town of Ocoee emerged in 1881. Sims is credited with naming the area after a river in the state of Tennessee. By 1885 Ocoee had been platted and a land company had been formed to encourage settlement and growth. Ocoee is in the middle of one of the best vegetable and fruit growing sections of Florida, and Captian Sims was among the first there to produce tomatoes and cucumbers commercially.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The congregation of the Ocoee Christian Church was established in 1883 by Kentucky native William Temple Withers. For several years the group met and held church services in available public places and private homes,

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

including the Withers home. By 1889 it became apparent that the group needed a permanent location. Withers then had plans drawn, set aside money for the building, and arranged for construction on property donated by Bluford M. Sims. The church building was completed in 1891, with stained glass imported from Belgium and a bell from London.

The Ocoee church was the leading Christian Church Congregation in Florida. Growth in all congregations is related to a number of factors, one of which is the growth of the locality in which the potential members are located. In 1885 Ocoee's population was estimated at 115; church membership records indicate that the membership ranged from 77 to 100 for several decades. The membership of the Ocoee Christian Church in 1892 was over 80. In 1891 and 1892 two consecutive conventions of Florida Christian churches were held in Ocoee, and led to the establishment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida. These two gatherings of Florida Disciples mark the beginning of organized cooperative work in Florida. The Florida Christian Missionary Society was voted into being and the first state officers were elected during the 1892 convention.

Bluford M. Sims and William T. Withers both made significant contributions to the history of Ocoee. Both men were very active in establishing the city and developing the citrus industry in the area. Most notable is the fact that they were the persons responsible for obtaining the land and building the Ocoee Christian Church. As the citrus industry continued to grow, the Ocoee Christian Church became a meeting place for prominent local business and civic leaders.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Carpenter Gothic style church is an adaptation of traditional, Gothic, parish church design to wood frame construction. The use of wood was more affordable to small, newly formed congregations in early settlement areas. The craft skills were also more suited to the available resources. Lumber was plentiful in late 19th century Florida, and construction on pier foundations adapted the style to the geographic locale. The use of a steeple, cruciform floor plan, lancet pointed windows filled with stained glass, steeply pitched gable roof, and exposed truss system are Gothic features displayed in the Ocoee Christian Church.

The Ocoee Christian Church today is very much as it was when built in 1891. It has been very well maintained. Most of the windows in the sanctuary are the original stained glass, with the exception of panes that had to be replaced. The impressive church spire with a rebuilt Celtic cross rises high above the vestibule. The original cast-iron church bell still welcomes parishioners to worship. The church is the earliest religious structure in Ocoee and the finest example of Carpenter-style architecture in town.

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Section number 9 Page 1

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

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Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

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Section number 10 Page 1

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Ocoee Christian Church boundary is described in the legal description as : Town of Ocoee A/100. Lots 84 through 89 and lot 48 and East 30 feet of lot 27 (less North 100 feet) and that part of vacant alley lying between said lots. Block 3 - 3000/1391. Shown in shaded area on Ocoee property map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the parcel historically associated with the Ocoee Christian Church.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number PHOTOS Page 1

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY

1. Ocoee Christian Church
2. 15 South Bluford Avenue, Ocoee, Orange County, Florida
3. Elizabeth M. Ervine
4. June, 1995
5. Ocoee Christian Church
6. North and east elevations, showing belfry, steeple, and cross, camera facing southwest.
7. #1 of 14

Items 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

6. Main entrance, camera facing southwest.
7. #2 of 14

6. North elevation, transept, camera facing south.
7. #3 of 14

6. East elevation, vestibule exterior wall, camera facing west.
7. #4 of 14

6. West elevation (rear), camera facing southeast.
7. #5 of 14

6. Covered walkway, education/fellowship hall, camera facing south.
7. #6 of 14

6. South elevation, camera facing northwest.
7. #7 of 14

6. View of roof and steeple, camera facing south.
7. #8 of 14

6. Interior view of center aisle, stained glass, camera facing east.
7. #9 of 14

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number PHOTOS Page 2

**OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida**

-
- 6. Interior view of altar, stained glass, camera facing west.
 - 7. #10 of 14

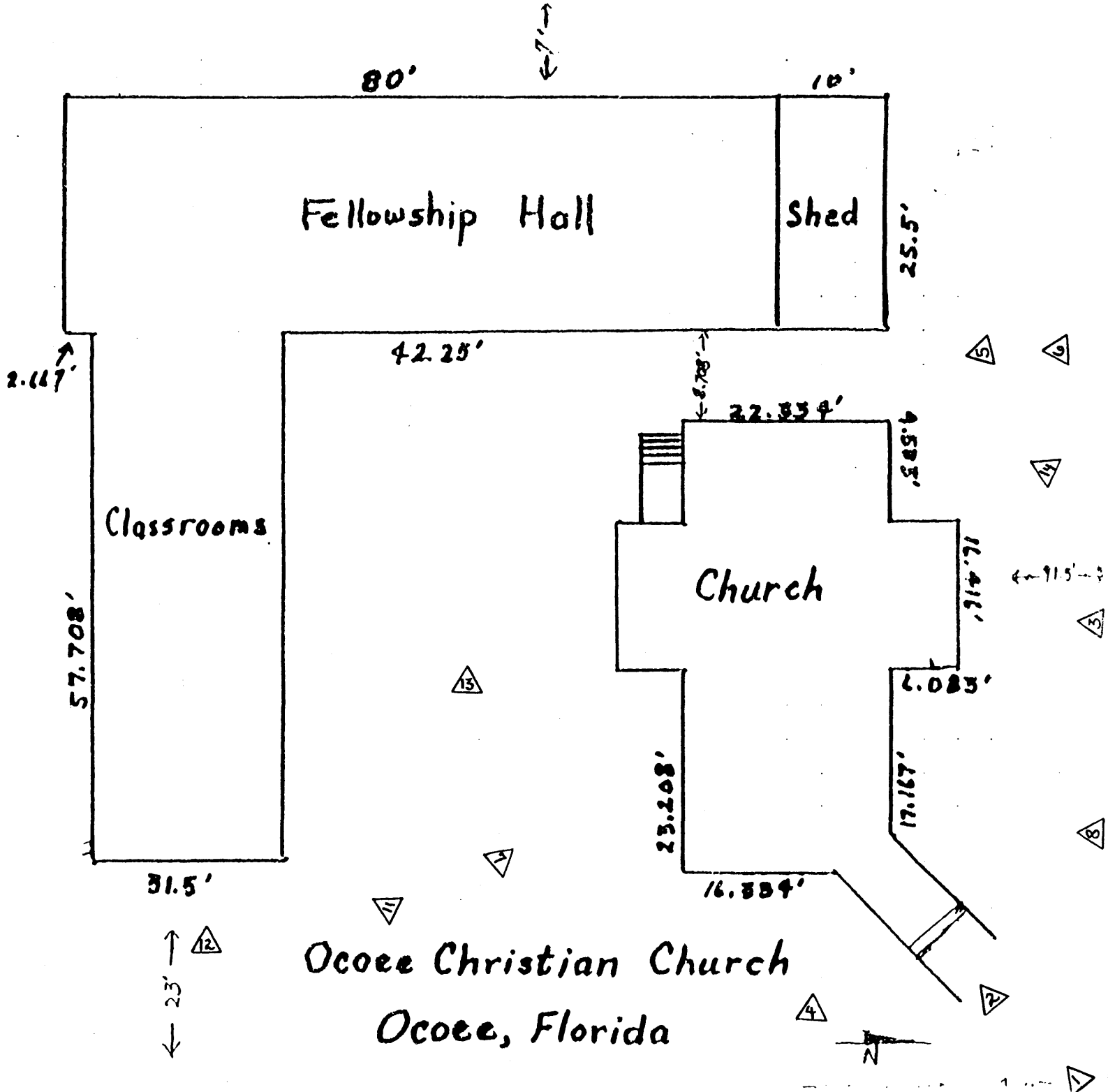
 - 6. Non-contributing education/fellowship hall, camera facing northwest.
 - 7. #11 of 14

 - 6. Non-contributing education/fellowship hall, camera facing west.
 - 7. #12 of 14

 - 6. Front of education/fellowship hall, facing Bluford Avenue, camera facing west.
 - 7. #13 of 14

 - 6. Storage shed, north end of Fellowship Hall, camera facing southwest.
 - 7. #14 of 14

← 180' →



▷ = PHOTOGRAPH

Legend
 1" = 15'

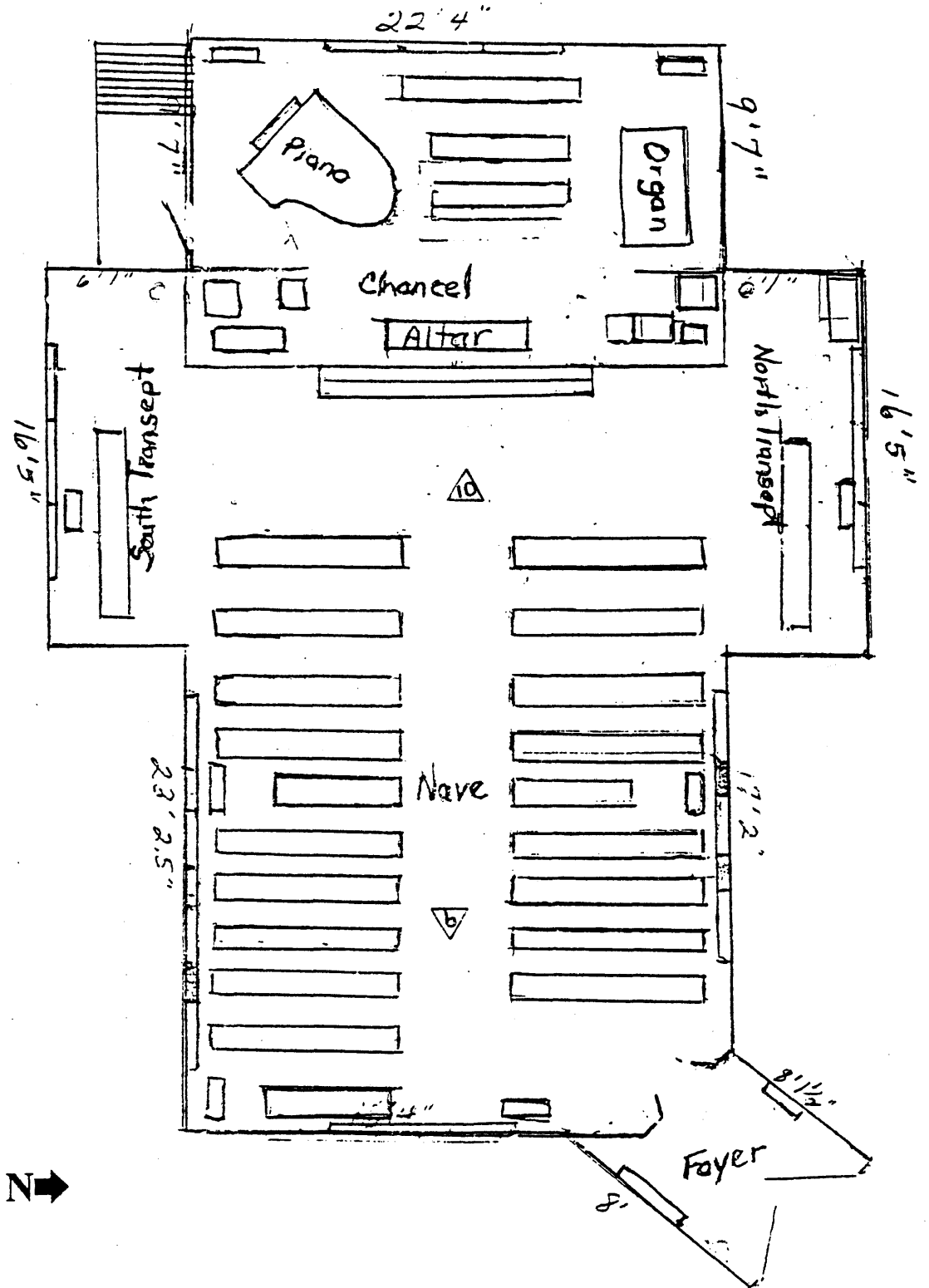
Church Slab =
 1534.5 S.F. (approx)

Fellowship +
 Classroom Bldg =
 3857.8 S.F. (approx)

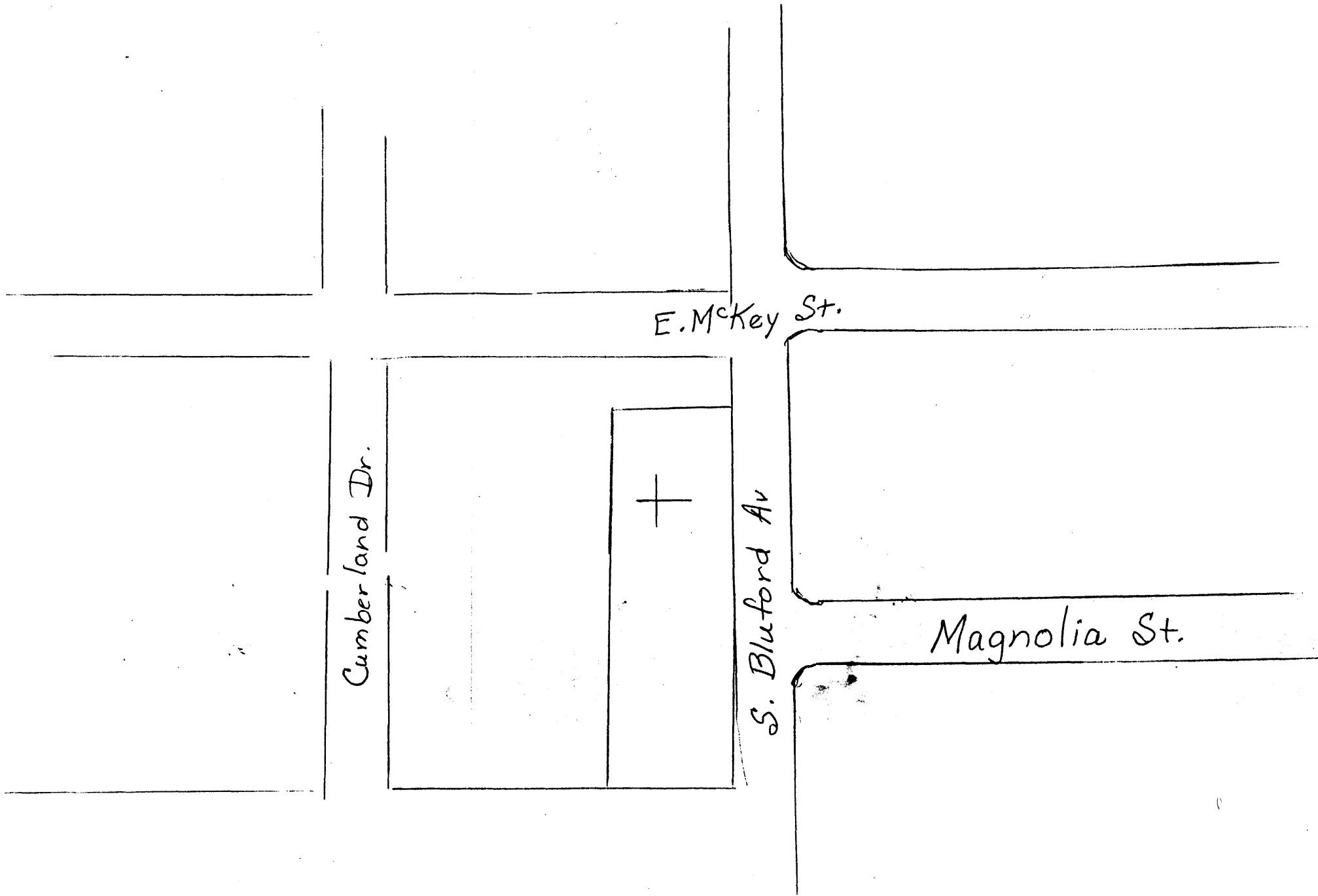
Shed = 255 S.F. (approx)

Ocoee Christian Church
 Ocoee, Florida

OCOEE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Ocoee, Orange County, Florida

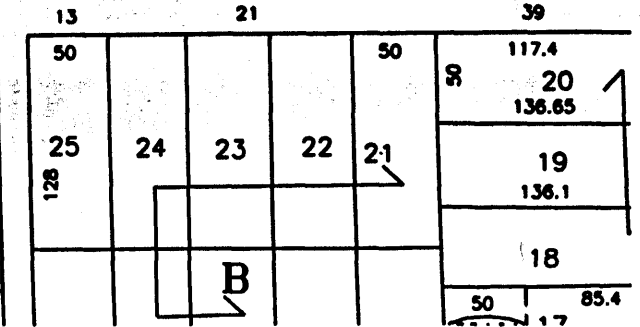
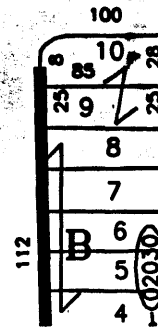
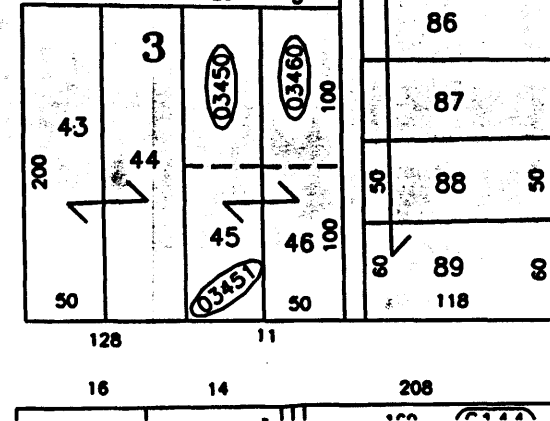
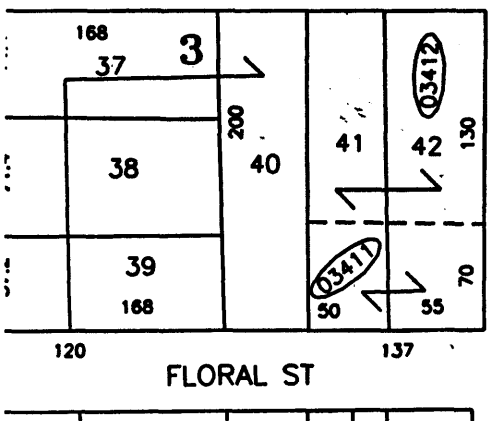
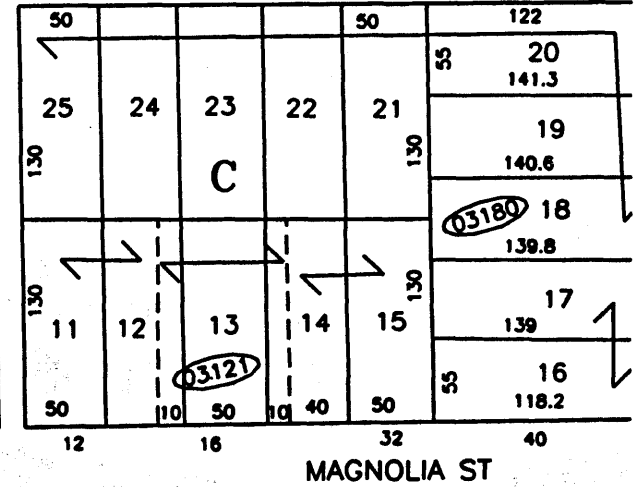
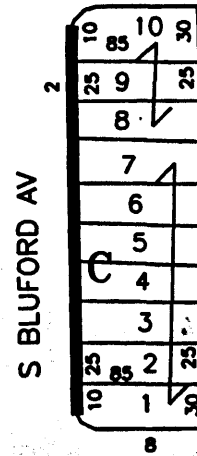
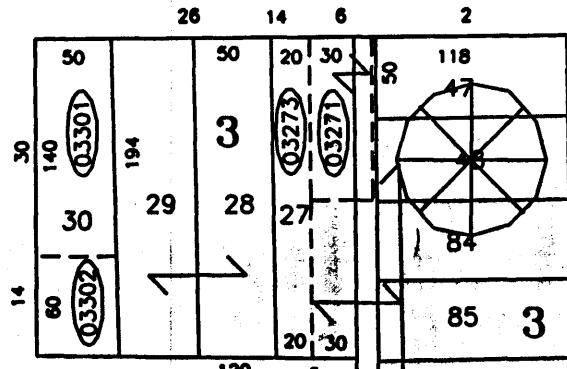
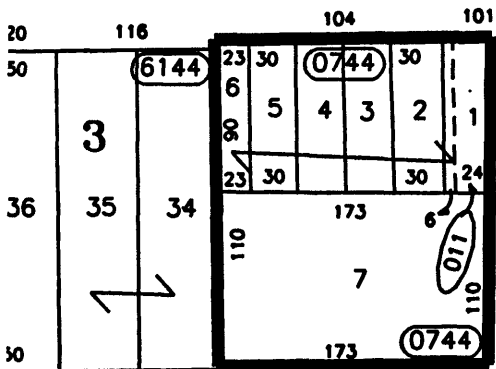
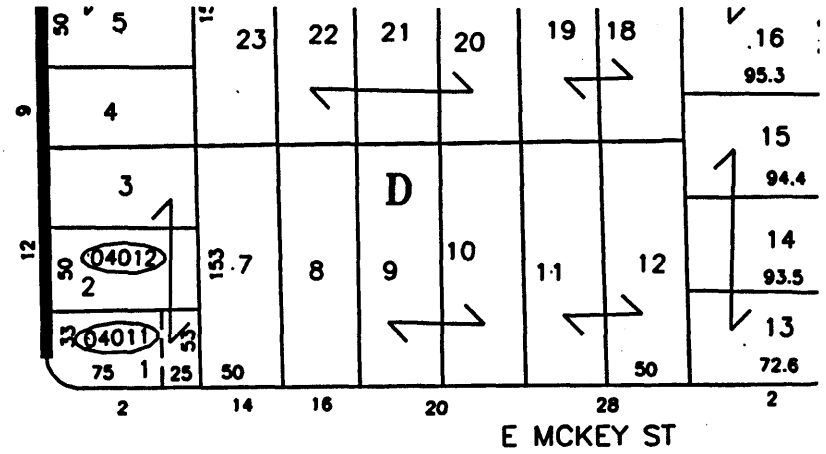
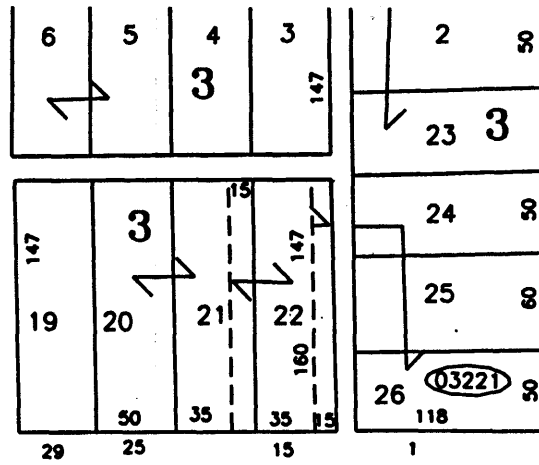
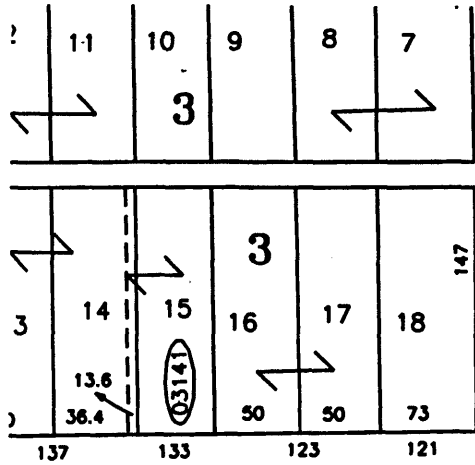


Ocoee Christian Church Floor Plan
Church slab = 1534.5 s.f. (approx.)

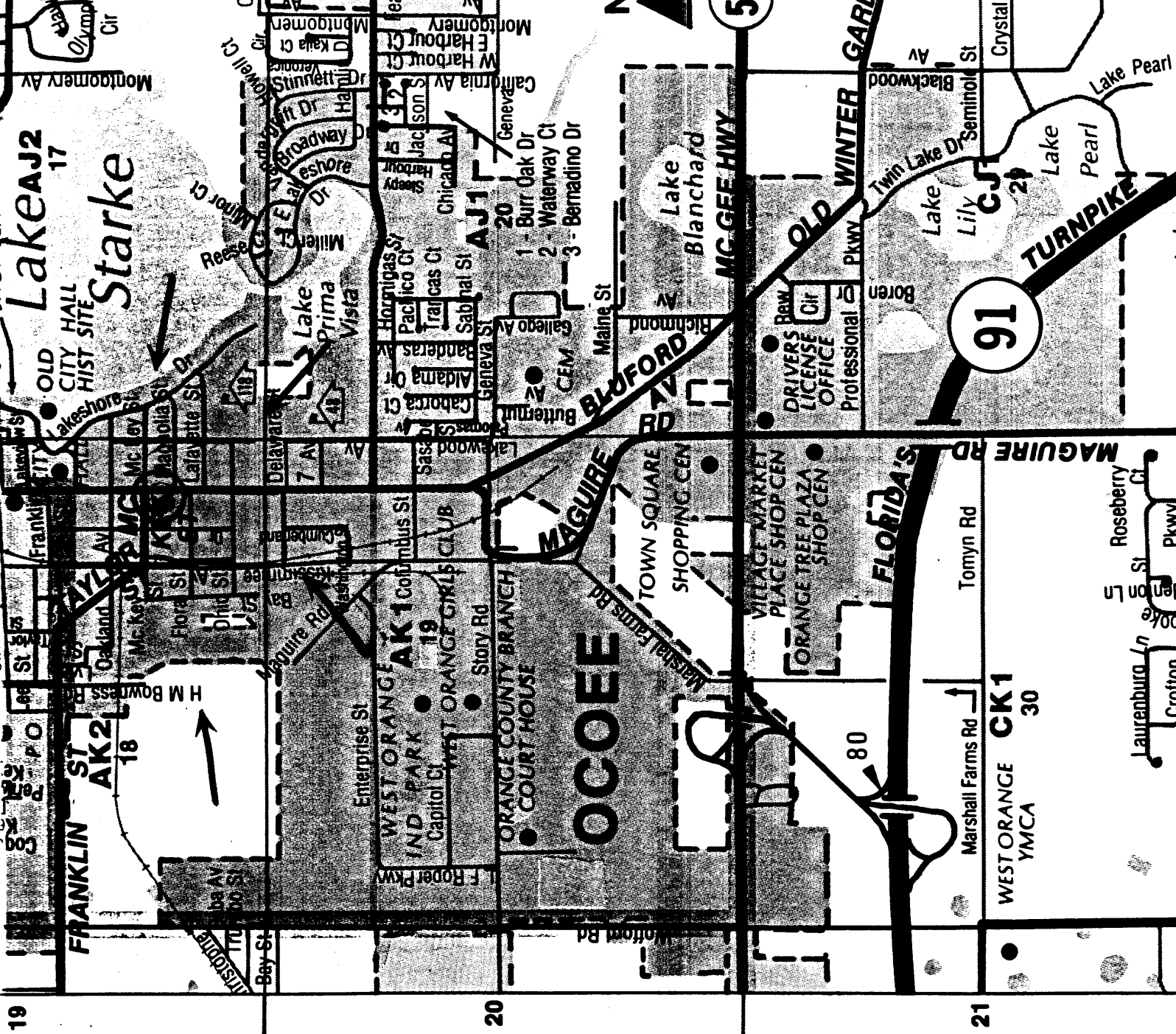


Downtown Ocoee, Orange County, Florida

Ocoee Christian Church property



Ocoee Christian Church
Ocoee, Orange Co., FL.



SEE MAP ON PAGE 48