

# 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 SALEM CAMP GROUND  
other names/site number Salem Camp Meeting

## 2. Location

street & number 3940 Salem Rd.  
city, town Covington ( ) vicinity of  
county Newton code GA 217  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30209

(N/A) not for publication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:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	28	5
sites	2	1
structures	2	0
objects	1	0
total	33	6

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.

Mark R. Edwards \_\_\_\_\_ Date 1/28/98

Mark R. Edwards  
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

Edson H. Beall 3-5-98

( ) determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

( ) removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

( ) other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

( ) see continuation sheet \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall \_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of the National Register Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

RELIGION/religious facility  
SOCIAL/clubhouse  
OTHER: religious camp ground

### Current Functions:

RELIGION/religious facility  
OTHER: religious camp ground  
GOVERNMENT/fire station

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

OTHER

### Materials:

<b>foundation</b>	brick
<b>walls</b>	wood frame
<b>roof</b>	asphalt shingles
<b>other</b>	N/A

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

#### Summary Description:

Salem Camp Ground is organized around a large wooden building or tabernacle, also called the arbor, with an asphalt shingle roof, which is located in the middle of the camp ground. The tabernacle is open on three sides and contains original benches and beams and a choir loft. Surrounding this on three sides are 25 small frame one and two-story houses, known as "tents," in 24 buildings, 23 of which are historic, many with sawdust floors, some with front overhangs, and most with very minimal interior walls and furnishings. They vary in the materials used. There is also a frame, two-story, 32-room hotel on the property, an original caretaker's cottage as well as a new one, two bath houses, a bell to call worshipers, and a water tower. The property also includes 30 acres of virgin forest, a gum spring and spring house across Salem Road, and a historic woman's clubhouse with a large addition for its current use as a volunteer fire department building. Changes include the addition of cement to the base of the tabernacle columns, the addition of electricity, and the addition of modern features to some of the houses or "tents." Vinyl siding has also been added to the tabernacle and the hotel. Two sidewalks were added to connect the areas. The property has been rural for years, although subdivisions now are nearby, as is the adjacent Salem Camp Ground United Methodist Church and the cemetery, neither of which is associated with this property.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

### Section 7--Description

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#### Narrative Description:

Salem Campground consists of 63 acres of land with 25 tents or houses located in 24 buildings, a tabernacle, a hotel, caretaker's houses, two bath houses, a woman's clubhouse-now a volunteer fire department, a gum spring, and spring house, and approximately 30 acres of virgin hardwood forest. The tents are arranged in a horseshoe like pattern around the central structure, the tabernacle. The tents are approximately 75-100 yards from the tabernacle, which is centered on the site. A grassy area surrounds the tabernacle and is scattered with large oak trees. Two sidewalks have been added connecting the north tents/ campsites and the Salem Inn (hotel) to the tabernacle

The overall character of the site is intact with the most well-preserved structure being the tabernacle. The tent sites, which have been continuously added to through the years, vary in condition from very good to fair. The old Salem Woman's Clubhouse has since been turned into a volunteer fire department and appears to be in good condition. The gum springs, which are located across Salem Road from the tabernacle structure, are still producing water today at a rate of approximately 30 gallons per minute.

The tabernacle, an open air facility, is a very plain building which derives its character from its structure. The tabernacle is usually called the arbor at the camp ground, harking back to the days when they met at a "brush arbor". The tabernacle was built in 1854 by Moses Mann and Slider Presnal. The exterior of the building was originally clapboard siding that was painted white. In recent years the clapboard has been covered with vinyl siding to help reduce maintenance costs. The current roof structure was added around 1900 is gable in style and covered with three-tab asphalt singles. Before this permanent roof, tradition has it that the roof was a more temporary brush arbor-type. An alteration to the roof structure has taken place in the last few years with the addition of a ridge vent to aid in ventilation during the summer months.

The tabernacle is arranged symmetrically around a central aisle. It has a large central space with side aisles and platform at the front to accommodate the pulpits. The interior finishes and details are reflections of the methods of construction used to build the tabernacle. It is constructed of hand hewn timbers which are approximately 40 feet in length. The timbers were shaped with an adze and fastened together with wooden pegs. It is this type of construction that serves as the ornament and represents the character of the structure. Several different methods of construction were used to connect the structural elements together. The first was by means of a mortise-and-tenon joint. Large timber beams were notched out and smaller structural members were fitted and pegged into place. The next method was the use of a large, dovetail joint to connect large beams to the columns. These joints were also pegged and have the added strength of tie rods. Some of the smaller joints were nailed together, but the majority of the structure represents pegged construction.

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The plan of the tabernacle is based on a modular system of bays. It is five bays long and four bays wide. Each bay contains six rows of benches. The benches are constructed of wood and run the whole length of a bay. The floor of the tabernacle is sawdust.

Other buildings on the premises, besides the historic tabernacle, are:

Tents, or houses: These are for the most part frame, one-story, unadorned dwellings, with sawdust-covered floors, rudimentary walls, and some type of front porch. A few of the tents are two-story. The Cunningham-Ramsey Tent, ca. 1840, is measured at 20 feet by 100 feet, from front porch roof to back stoop. It has a center hall, with a entry room, then bedrooms on either side of the hall, with a dining room and kitchen at the end or rear. The front porches are the "socializing centers" and vary from tent to tent, but are linked in a way to allow walking among the tents. Four of the tents now have air conditioning. 23 are historic/contributing. One is non-contributing.

The Caretaker's Cottage (original) is a one-story, frame building, looking much like one of the tents, but built for year-round occupation. Historic/contributing.

The Hotel (1940) is a historic, two-story, frame building with a long, one-story, front porch. It has 32 guest rooms, a 125-seat dining room, and a large two-story lobby with staircase at the entrance.

Bath houses: one is historic, one is non-historic. One is for men, one for women. They are one-story, frame, with windows at the upper level for privacy.

Concession Stand: one-story, frame, with a wall that opens for concession sales. Non-historic/non-contributing.

Utility Building: A utilitarian building with a garage-type door. Non-historic/non-contributing.

Woman's Clubhouse with addition: It is one-story, frame, with an end chimney, built to be a clubhouse with one large room originally. Adapted for use as a volunteer fire department with the addition of a large wing with garage doors for fire trucks. Historic/contributing.

Spring House: a brick covering for a historic spring. It has a number of metal commemorative plaques, and iron gates. Historic/contributing.

Water Tower: It contains a metal water holding tank atop four legs. Historic/contributing.

The Bell: At the northeast corner, rear, of the tabernacle, free-standing on its own pole. Historic/contributing.

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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:**

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  
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
RELIGION  
SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance:**

c.1840-1948

**Significant Dates:**

1840, 1854, 1940

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

N/A

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### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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#### **Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Salem Camp Ground is significant in architecture and community planning and development because it is a very intact camp meeting ground with all the significant features: a large, central tabernacle for meetings, dozens of houses or tents for use of the worshipping families, and other associated necessities, such as the bell for calling people to meeting and a hotel for guests without houses. All of this is laid out in the traditional manner of camp grounds in the South and in Georgia. The tabernacle and many of the older houses or tents retain original materials and form. The form of the camp ground became the framework around which many towns began.

The grounds are significant in religion because this camp ground has been a significant place for religious activity on the frontier or in this rural area since it began in 1828 and especially since this tabernacle was built in 1854. Every summer for over 150 years, except during the Civil War, religious meetings have been held here, bringing in farmers and their families, to this gathering place. In the 20th century, it became one of the first places where different Protestants would gather together, and now is governed by a multi-faith board. At an annual camp meeting, each day would consist of religious activities, prayer meetings, Sunday school-type lessons, ending with a sermon in the evening. The usual encampment, in the summer, would last ten days, and was scheduled in August, as it still remains, originally because that was the time farmers could take a "break" between fodder pulling and cotton picking times. .

The property is significant in social history because this camp ground, one of the best known in Georgia, is part of a larger movement of camp grounds where camp meetings were held throughout the South, providing a gathering place for mostly rural farmers who gathered once a year in the summer--sometimes this was the only time they every got away from their farms. The camp meeting became a yearly event, and a time for many families who did not see each other during the year to reconnect.

#### **National Register Criteria**

Salem Camp Ground meets National Register Criterion A because it is the extant site of a religious camp meeting, one element in a much larger movement of religious activity in the United States and especially in the south. The camp meeting movement is a major element in the broad patterns of American religious development and is still a viable movement.

The camp ground also meets criterion C because it is a very intact example of a camp ground, containing the original antebellum tabernacle, 25 tents or houses, most of which are historic, a historic hotel for those without tents, and a historic water tower and bell, as well as the overall

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arrangement of the camp ground, with the tabernacle in the middle and the tents and hotel on three sides, with the highway preventing tents on a fourth side. The tabernacle, many of the tents, and the hotel retain original workmanship and details.

#### Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

Criteria Consideration A: A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.

#### Period of significance (justification)

The period of significance runs from the construction of the oldest tent, c.1840, the Cunningham-Ramsey family tent, through the building of the tabernacle (1854) until the end of the historic era (1948) because the Cunningham-Ramsey tent, the tabernacle and the grounds have been in continuous use as a camp ground throughout that time, and are currently still used for the same purpose.

#### Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

Buildings: Contributing - Total 28

[23 tents, tabernacle, original caretaker's cottage, hotel, bathhouse, woman's clubhouse]

Non-contributing: total 5

[one tent, new caretaker's house, bathhouse, concession stand, and utility building]

Sites: Contributing: total 2

[spring, and camp ground plan-site plan]

Non-contributing: total 1 [the playground]

Structures: Contributing- Total- 2

[spring house, and water tower]

Non-contributing: 0

Objects: Contributing: total 1 [the bell]

Non-contributing: 0



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#### **Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)**

(This narrative was prepared by W. L. Dorn, III, Georgia Institute of Technology student, as a class project, on behalf of the property owners.)

The origins of the Salem Camp Ground date back as far as 1824. Before the camp ground settled permanently at Salem, the current site, it met in a variety of nearby places. For the first few years the camp meetings were continually moved around from Salem Church-1824, to Honey Creek-1826, to Bear Creek-1828-1829, Ebenezer Church- 1830, until finally in 1835 a brush arbor was constructed at Salem. The brush arbor was a rough-framed structure that was covered with newly-cut tree branches each year to provide shade for the campers who had come to hear the sermons. In 1836 a man by the name of Green B. Turner donated five acres to the camp ground upon which lies the gum spring. By this time several semipermanent structures had been built by families to provide them with a place to stay during the times of the camp meetings. In 1850 one-half of the camp was burned out, with the north and west sides being completely destroyed, but they were immediately rebuilt.

In 1854 the present tabernacle was built by Moses Mann and Slider Presnal, contractors. It will seat approximately 2000 people. The only time the camp meetings were not held at Salem was during the years of the Civil War (1861-1865). One of the most noted revivals in the history of Middle Georgia was held at Salem after the Civil War "when nothing seemed left but God and Heaven." In 1868 Slider Presnal sold 61 1/2 acres to George Cunningham plus other acreage totaling 131 acres. At this time there were 75 tents in double rows with a street between. The rows formed a square around the central tabernacle. By 1890 the second row of tents were unoccupied and in such a state of disrepair that they were removed. The tents are now located in one row surrounding the tabernacle [on three sides] and number about 30.

Around 1900 a permanent roof was added to the tabernacle. It was gable in style and was covered with asphalt shingles. In 1903 the trustees of the Salem Camp Ground bought 9 additional acres of property. By 1927 many of the tents had been rebuilt and the tabernacle was re-roofed.

In 1932, Salem's 104th year of service, 32 tents now existed with a new barn-like hotel that contained a dining room, kitchen, and sleeping rooms. The hotel was unfloored. Straw was placed on the floor to help control the dust of the dirt floor. By 1934 prominent Methodists have been preaching here, among them were Bishop Warren A. Candler, who has been called one of the greatest preachers in the world, Rev. Peter Marshall, and Layona Glenn, a missionary from Brazil. The year 1936 marked the first time in over 100 years the service was conducted by a non-Methodist. In this year the Salvation Army led the camp meetings. The attendance was more than

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2000 people, who attended four services a day. In 1938 they recognized some people who had been attending camp meetings throughout the years. H. W. McCord came to his first camp meeting in 1867 at the age of 13. He said he was the only person still living who saw Sherman's march through this area. Another member was Major R. J. Guinn who has attended for more than 50 years. Bishop Candler was honored for his 50 years of service as a preacher at the tabernacle. More than 3000 people attended that year's service. T. E. Glenn, an Atlanta banker, built and donated a new tent to the camp ground and designated it "stranger's tent." Other new tents were also built. This also was the year that the Salem Camp Ground was deeded to the trustees and since then is referred to as Salem Camp Ground, Inc.

In 1939, the 111th season, Salem became interdenominational for the first time. The board of trustees now is composed of Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians and the Salvation Army. Many of the tents were renovated and an area was being cleared for tennis courts and a new recreation field. The camp ground now has accommodations for 300, running water, a sewer system, and electric lights. Kitty's Cottage was moved to the site from Oxford, Georgia [but was moved back c.1995].

In 1940 a new hotel was built called "Retreat" to replace the previous hotel which had burned. The hotel had screened rooms, a dining room, and innerspring mattresses, and housed 65 people. A new roof had to be placed on the tabernacle and the uprights were braced with hog irons.

In 1945, the 117th year, Mrs. C. D. Ramsey was honored (70 years old). The Ramsey tent was built in 1840 replacing an earlier one built when the camp ground was started by her grandfather, George Cunningham. Her grandfather was the one who bought the land and settled the Covington area. Her father George Cunningham, Jr. was the first white child born in Newton County. She has missed just two camp meetings (when two of her children were born) in 70 years. In 1946, attendance was up to 3000. In 1949 a recreation area is recommended for all the young people. To be included in this recreation area are tennis courts, shuffleboards, camp enclaves, baseball field, athletic field, swings, slides, seesaws, a sandpile, and a merry-go-round. The recreation area was completed in 1951 and a rustic stone wall was built around it. Standing committees were create to help run the camp ground.

In 1952, the 124th camp meeting, Bishop Arthur J. Moore of Atlanta led the sermon. In 1953 more new tents were built and a new water system was added. In 1954 only 15 tents were in use and by 1955 the number had risen to 21 tents. In 1958 four generations of the Ramsey family attended. Attendance in 1959 was low at only 1100 campers. In 1960, the 132nd year, 2500 people attended. Mrs. C. D. Ramsey died that year. Layona Glenn is the oldest tenter at the campground at 95 years old. A new lighting system is added to the tabernacle along with a new rostrum. Improvements are made to the hotel's kitchen. 1961 became the year for improvements. The hotel added a porch onto

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which 27 new rockers were placed. A walk from the hotel to the tabernacle was added along with other general site improvements.

In 1962, a public ladies room was added, as well as floodlights for the spring area. The camp ground donated a small plot of land to the Salem United Methodist Church. In 1970, former missionary Layona Glenn was 104. In 1974's meeting, Governor Jimmy Carter delivered the morning prayer. In 1977, a large increase in attendance occurred, with over 10,000 attending, many from other states. The camp ground received a plaque in 1978 from the Newton County Historical Society marking 150 years of service. By 1981, the acreage of the camp ground was reduced to its current acreage of which 30 or so remains virgin forest.

By 1991, the tabernacle had been rehabilitated and a ridge vent added to the roof. At this time, 28 tents or campsites remained as well as the hotel. Camp meetings do not have the attendance that they used to.

A statement made over a century ago might be appropriate today:

[This] is not because sinners are becoming more hardened... nor because preachers of today are less powerful and earnest, less energetic or persuasive, but it is simply because the field of the camp meeting's work and usefulness has been lessened and narrowed down by the march of progress and Christianity (quote from the Atlanta Journal, August 26, 1890).

There are several "eye witness" observations that clarify in the words of contemporaries what the camp meeting movement was all about:

From Walter G. Cooper's The Story of Georgia, Vol. IV, p 376-377, published c. 1930:

The Georgia Camp Meeting—In the religious life of Georgia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the camp meeting was a great feature and a great factor, especially with the Methodists.

camp meetings were held usually in pleasant weather of the summer or early fall. Many of them were held under great bush [sic] arbors in the open air and the people who came to attend them lived in tents or under the covers of wagons in which they had journeyed for many miles to attend the camp meeting and remained a week. At other places the meetings were held in a large open shed and instead of tents the people lived for a week in wooden shacks called tents.

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Thousands of people attended these meetings and listened to great sermons by the bishops or great pulpit orators. There were many conversions and the camp meeting was an important means of enlarging the churches and increasing their usefulness.

The social feature of these meetings was important when thousands of people came together from a wide territory, traveling many miles to attend the meeting. Each family came prepared with bountiful supplies of food with abundance of pies, cakes and other attractive things. The crowds were composed of old and young and as it was often necessary to bring water for drinking and cooking from a spring a hundred yards away. It was a delightful custom for the boys and girls to go to the spring together and there was a great deal of sparking along the way which resulted later on in many happy marriages. The older people enjoyed meeting old friends and worshiping together and never failed to attend camp meeting each year unless they were providentially prevented.

The following description of Salem Camp Ground in Central Georgia was written by Henry Y. McCord, a leading member of the North Georgia Conference, and quoted by Cooper, see above, in 1930:

Camp meeting was first held at Salem in 1828. There were signs of old tents on Honey Creek near the residence of Mr. Robert Hollingsworth, but we have no authentic history of camp meeting having been held there. Prior to 1828, camp meeting was held at Ebenezer, three miles south of Conyers, for two or three years. After 1828, camp meeting was held on Bear Creek, near Covington, for three or four years. It was then moved back to Salem where it has been held continuously since except for four years during the Civil War.

The ground was first rented for \$10 or \$15.00 per year, for five or six years. Then sixty acres were purchased from David Crawford. The present stand was built in 1854 by Moses Mann and Slider Presnal, contractors. The ground west of the road on which the spring is located, five acres, was donated in 1836 or 1838 by Green B. Turner. This five acres included part of the present cemetery. The Church originally stood on this ground and was afterwards moved on the camp ground exactly west of the present stand. The lot for the Church was donated by David Crawford.

At the time the camp ground was established, there were, of course, no railroads and people came in wagons from long distances to attend the meetings. In those days, many farmers who had to travel to Augusta to sell their cotton and do their marketing, came to the camp meeting in their wagons, using their wagon sheets as

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tents. Camp meeting was so well attended that they had double rows of tents. At one time the tents were nearly all destroyed by fire.

The camp meeting has always been well attended by Christians of other denominations, especially Presbyterians and Missionary Baptists. Many of the outstanding preachers of the Methodist Church have preached at Salem, among them may be named Dr. Alexander Means, Bishops James O. Andrew, George F. Pierce, Atticus G. Haygood, Dr. Lovick Pierce, and many others of more modern times, including Bishops James E. Dickey and the beloved Warren A. Candler....

Another article, from 1993, continues to show the continuity at Salem:

“ ‘A Sweet, sweet spirit’ prevails” by Celia Sibley, Atlanta Journal-Constitution:

Sam Ramsey traded his Covington furniture store this week for a little spot of heaven just over the Newton County line. He spent the week at Salem Camp Meeting, one of the oldest outposts of an enduring religious tradition that is the essence of summer, rural America and Methodism all squeezed together. As program chairman and organizer of the 165th year of Salem Camp Meeting, Mr. Ramsey is the fifth generation of his kin to attend the event, which draws hundreds of people of all ages to the open-sided, sawdust-floored tabernacle (circa 1854).

As Mr. Ramsey says, “If you get sawdust in your shoes, you can’t get it out.” His uncle, Spence Ramsey, agrees, saying, “You get hooked.” He has attended Salem since 1914. The younger Mr. Ramsey thinks evangelism has suffered in recent years under the sway of glittery, money-mad televangelists. To be at Salem, with its old-timey hymns, relaxed atmosphere and nostalgic camaraderie, is for him to see evangelism “at its best.” Religion here isn’t served up with hellfire and damnation or sinners trembling on the brink of salvation. It comes in reverent tones of praise, love and redemption. Although the services are non-denominational, the tradition is characteristically Methodist.

Stress falls to the wayside at Salem, where teens actually seem to like caring for young children at the campground and the generations mix with ease. Ask most of the 800 people who show up for evening services, many with Bibles worn from frequent reading, and they’ll tell you they have been coming for years.

But for a few, the meeting is a more recent path back to long-forgotten days. Camp meeting was an integral part of Conyers resident Mary Lee Kelly’s childhood, but she missed 35 years of meetings because her husband wouldn’t go. “So when he left, I came back to camp meeting,” she said with a twinkle in her eye. Ms. Kelly

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was happy to swap her comfortable bed for a top bunk at the Salem Inn and a chance for spiritual refreshment. "I need to be here," she said.

No matter their age or ZIP code, the campers share deep Protestant roots and for a week they move to a tempo that city dwellers have lost, listening to sermons that inspire and soothe, content to fan themselves and sit in a rocker beside friends. The daily routine includes Bible study, followed by morning worship, lunch, recreation for children and another worship service at 8 p.m.

The campers know many of the old hymns by heart. "There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place, and I know that it is the spirit of the Lord," runs one, written as recently as 1962 and doing a good job of summing up the atmosphere of Salem.

Former trustee Tom Elliott, who was raised on the grounds, brought the song to the camp meeting and it's been sung ever since.

Many families combine the annual meets with a reunion, and spend the week together in rustic, wooden cabins. Called "tents," the cabins have been handed down by their ancestors. The "tents" bring to mind the wagons that the early pioneers slept in, or underneath, when they began the annual trek toward salvation at the first Salem Camp Meeting back in 1828.

The next year the first permanent tent was erected, and meetings have been held ever since, except for times of upheaval, such as during the Civil War.

The campground is supported by contributions and by the Salem Foundation, which is an endowment fund set up in 1981 by the board of trustees.

For children and teenagers, the camp is a combination of Bible school and summer camp. Their parents say it's the young ones who will perpetuate the camp meeting tradition when they are gone.

Afternoon recreation is planned for the youths, while adults take it easy or prepare dinner.

Romance begins here. Mr. Ramsey met his wife, Becky, at Salem, and her twin sister, Alice, met her husband, the Rev. Nat H. Long of Conyers First United Methodist Church, at camp meeting.

The two women have played twin pianos at the meetings for 21 years.

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Mrs. Ramsey noted that "a lot of courting goes on at camp meeting." Her husband grinned and pointed toward a nearby spring, which, he said, was known as "the courtin' place." Today, public water has replaced the sweet spring water, and lights and plumbing were installed in 1939. Fluorescent lights, revolving fans and a sound system hang from the old tabernacle's wooden beams, and circulating fans and air conditioners are crammed into many windows [of the tents].

2nd article: "Beginnings were Presbyterian" by Gayle White, Staff Writer, 1993, in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution:

From early outdoor meetings with evangelistic preaching, through rowdy days when participants barked and jerked, to today's often toned-down versions, camp meetings have been a part of the American landscape since the late 18th century.

But they were actually an import from Scotland and Northern Ireland, said Dr. E. Brooks Holifield, a United Methodist minister and Charles Howard Candler professor of church history at Emory University.

Because of their Scottish and Irish roots, the earliest American camp meetings were Presbyterian, he said, "but they quickly became multi-denominational."

At Cane Ridge in Kentucky, 25,000 souls came together in 1801, under Barton Stone, a Presbyterian minister disillusioned with Calvinism, in a week-long gathering that established the camp meeting as an American institution.

In his 1991 book "The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation," literary critic Harold Bloom called Cane Ridge "the first Woodstock, and the most extraordinary camp meeting ever." He quotes from an account of the meeting written by Stone, who later became a founder of the Disciples of Christ.

Presbyterians, more inclined to intellect and order, quickly grew uncomfortable with the emotionalism of such meetings, but Methodists were ready to claim them as their own.

Methodist circuit riders spread the word about scheduled meetings through announcements and fliers, and the news circulated by word of mouth for up to 100 miles, said Dr. Holifield. No matter what brand of church they attended on Sunday, Mama and Daddy were likely to pile the family into the wagon and head for the site.

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There they found fellowship, heard preaching directed at bringing sinners to the altar, and sang songs about a happy hereafter with no more toil and grief.

Suited to rural areas and scheduled between the planting and harvest seasons, camp meetings became a fixture of the frontier as it moved west, said Dr. Holifield.

When, after several decades, Methodists appeared to tire of them, Holiness preachers took them up with a vengeance. The Holiness movement, founded out of Methodism, sparked such denominations as today's Church of the Nazarene.

Today, both Methodists and Holiness denominations continue the camp meeting tradition, as do some churches of other denominations. Around Georgia, United Methodists participate in about two dozen camp meetings every summer, some dating back as far as the 1820s.

From the early days of sleeping and worshiping outside, many of today campers stay in cabins, lodges or even inns and hold services in covered pavilions.

The spirit of camp meetings also continues in an adaptation—the summertime revival or “protracted meeting” held at a church for several nights. Camp meeting techniques have been adopted by the country's great revivalist preachers, the precursors of the Rev. Billy Graham.

3rd article: August, 1996, Smithsonian magazine. Bonnie Angelo, “Family and faith fire the spirit of camp meetings.” The author interviewed the Ramsey family members, the family with the longest-running occupancy of tents, with theirs built ca. 1840. She summarizes her findings in several ways, stating that a camp meeting is:

part revival, part family reunion--and distinctly American...Hundreds of sites are active [today] across the United States...Most of all there's the connection with long-gone forebears who worshiped here in just the same manner. Says a Salem regular, 'You feel that they are around the altar.' [The sparse comforts of the tents was likened to] a latter-day version of the hair shirts penitents of the Middle Ages wore to heighten their faith...Camp meetings have probably changed less than any other American institution over the years, they do reflect the evolution from 18th to 21st centuries...To experience the spirit of camp meeting, there's no better way than a visit to Salem.



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**Section 8--Statement of Significance**

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**METHODOLOGY:**

There is further study underway on Georgia's religious camp grounds. Claudia Deviney, a graduate student at the University of Georgia's Historic Preservation Program is surveying and studying the total number and types of camp grounds. Her thesis will allow the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office to then proceed toward a thematic nomination for all of Georgia's extant and eligible camp grounds. Also, the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office has a staff member, Michael W. Miller, preservation architect, who recently completed his thesis, begun before he came to the office, on camp grounds, and his expertise will be useful in this future study as well. The title of the thesis is: "The American Camp Ground Community: An Urban Nucleus as Basis for Community Planning", submitted in May, 1996, at Mississippi State University for a Master of Science in Architecture.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Dorn, W. L. III, student at Georgia Tech, prepared the draft Historic Property Information Form (1992) for the owners. A copy of this and supplemental material supplied by the owners is on file at the Historic Preservation Division, Ga. DNR, Atlanta, Ga. Since he completed this student project, other research has been completed on camp grounds in general. The only specific addition to information on Salem has been:

Angelo, Bonnie. "Family and faith fire the spirit of camp meetings", Smithsonian, August, 1996, pp. 66-75 with bibliography on p. 97.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** ( ) 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
- (X) recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #GA-128
- ( ) recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- (X) State historic preservation office
- ( ) Other State Agency
- ( ) Federal agency
- ( ) Local government
- ( ) University

(X) **Other, Specify Repository:** The State Historic Preservation Office has a large thematic file on camp grounds in Georgia and elsewhere, far beyond the National Register or survey files. The collection includes theses, other books and studies. New material continues to be added to this collection.

Also, Rev. Harold Lawrence, Milledgeville, Georgia, author of A Feast of Tabernacles has a large, personal collection of materials gathered during the writing of his book.

**Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):**

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 63.37 acres

**UTM References**

- A) Zone 17 Easting 224520 Northing 3720220
- B) Z17 E225180 N3720200
- C) Z17 E225180 N3719840
- D) Z17 E224380 N3719840

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is marked by a heavy black line on the enclosed plat map provided by the owners.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property is all the owners own at this location and all that remains associated legally with the Board of Trustees of Salem Camp Ground, Inc. This land has been associated with the camp ground for over a century.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**State Historic Preservation Office**

**name/title** Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** January 22, 1998

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

**name/title**  
**organization**  
**street and number**  
**city or town state zip code**  
**telephone**

- consultant**
- regional development center preservation planner**
- other:**

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
**Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

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**Name of Property:** Salem Camp Ground  
**City or Vicinity:** Covington  
**County:** Newton  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** June, 1997

**Description of Photograph(s):**

- 1 of 30: Tabernacle, west facade, as seen from Salem Road; photographer facing northeast.
- 2 of 30: Tabernacle, west facade, from Salem Rd.; photographer facing northeast.
- 3 of 30: Tabernacle, south facade; photographer facing northwest.
- 4 of 30: Tabernacle, interior, west side facing altar; photographer facing northeast.
- 5 of 30: Tabernacle, interior, closer view of altar; photographer facing northeast.
- 6 of 30: Tabernacle, interior, view of roof supports.
- 7 of 30: Tent (two-family unit), with hotel in rear; photographer facing southeast.
- 8 of 30: Hotel, front facade; photographer facing southwest.
- 9 of 30: Hotel, front porch; photographer facing northeast.
- 10 of 30: Hotel, lobby with dining room in background; photographer facing southwest.
- 11 of 30: Hotel, bedroom, first floor; photographer facing north.
- 12 of 30: Hotel, hallway, first floor, with lobby in background; photographer facing northwest.
- 13 of 30: Tabernacle and grounds as seen from hotel front porch; photographer facing northwest.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

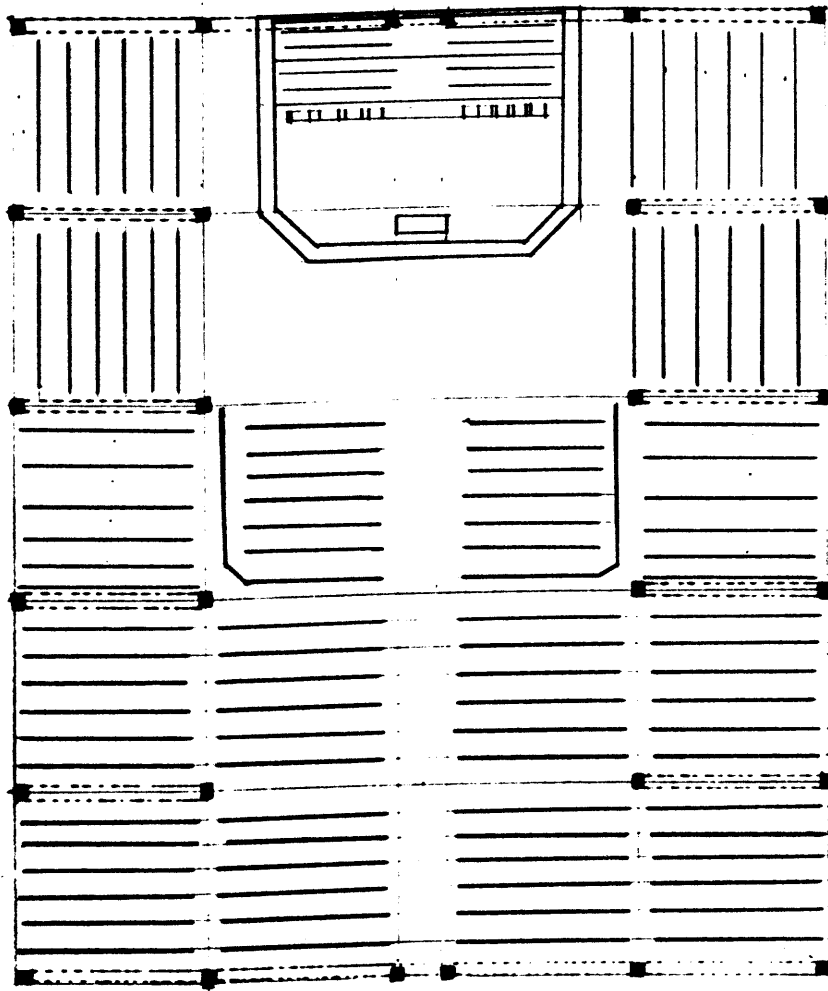
### Photographs

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- 14 of 30: Tabernacle and grounds; photographer facing northeast.
- 15 of 30: Women's Bathhouse and water tower; photographer facing northwest.
- 16 of 30: Tents, east side, Ramsey Tent on right; photographer facing northeast.
- 17 of 30: Tents, east side, Ramsey Tent front porch; photographer facing north.
- 18 of 30: Tents, east side, Ramsey Tent, interior, dining area; photographer facing west.
- 19 of 30: Tents, east side, Ramsey Tent, interior, sleeping room; photographer facing north.
- 20 of 30: Tents, east side, Elliott Tent (2 stories); photographer facing northeast.
- 21 of 30: Tents, east side, last two tents on east and corner one; photographer facing northeast.
- 22 of 30: Tents, north side, corner tent; photographer facing northeast.
- 23 of 30: Tents, east side, from corner, looking back south toward Ramsey tent; photographer facing southeast.
- 24 of 30: Tents, north side, from last one on west end near highway; photographer facing northeast.
- 25 of 30: Tents, east side, rear view with two story Elliott tent (see photo 20) in far left side; photographer facing northwest.
- 26 of 30: Tents, interior of another tent; photographer facing north.
- 27 of 30: Tents, interior of another tent, same as no. 26; photographer facing east.
- 28 of 30: Former Women's Clubhouse, and new Volunteer Fire Dept.; photographer facing northwest.
- 29 of 30: Spring house as seen from gum spring; photographer facing north.
- 30 of 30: Spring house, interior; photographer facing west.

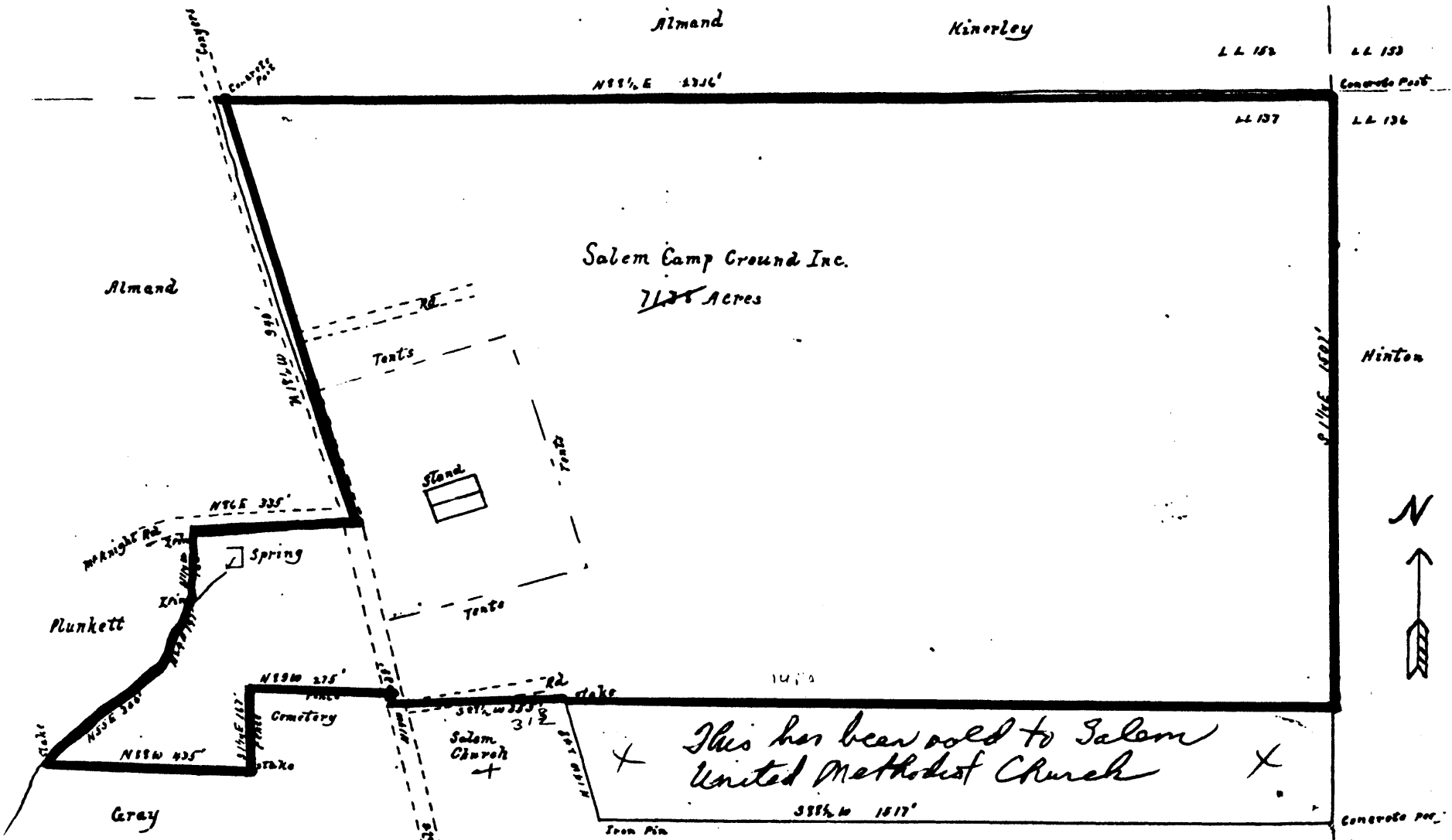


**Floor Plan**  
**Salem Camp Ground**  
**Newton County, Georgia**  
**Scale: Not to scale.**  
**Source; Drawn by W.L. Dorn, III**  
**Date: 1992**  
**Key: Tabernacle floor plan, pews, and altar.**



PLAN FOR TABERNACLE

Salem Camp Ground Inc.  
Plat



Plat Map  
Salem Camp Ground  
Newton County, Georgia  
Scale: 1" = 300'  
Source: Plat Book 1, pg. 101  
Newton County Georgia  
Superior Court.  
Date: 1938  
Key: The nominated property is  
marked by a heavy black line.

Plat of Land surveyed for Salem Camp Ground Inc.  
Part of Land Lot 157-10th-Dist- Orig Henry now  
Newton Co. Ga. - 71.28 Acres  
Scale 1/2" = 100' Oct. 3, 1938.  
Johnson Sur

Recorded: Newton County  
Plat. Book # 1  
# 101  
Page  
Johnson Sur