

1335

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 12 2005

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER
& EDUCATION

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 an 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 Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 5560 Briarpatch Lake Road

NA not for publication

city or town Midway

vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Henry code 079 zip code 38242

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 for 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.)

Michael L. Hays
Signature of certifying official/Title

10/10/05
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Edsall H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

11-25-05

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church
Name of Property

Henry County, TN
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)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	Buildings
1		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
3	0	Total

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

Historic Rural African American Churches in Tennessee, 1860-1970

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: church building

FUNERARY: Cemetery

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: church building

FUNERARY: cemetery

EDUCATION: school

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Gable-front form

Side gable form

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete; Brick

walls Weatherboard; Concrete

roof Asphalt shingle

other Glass; Metal

Narrative Description

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

See Attached Sheets.

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church
Name of Property

Henry County, TN
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 the National Register.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: African American
Social History

Period of Significance
c. 1870-1955

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates
c. 1870, c. 1906, c.1935, 1953

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Cowan, Dolph; Smith, Commodore; Dawson, Wayne
"Brut," builders

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):** N/A
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 - previously listed in the National Register (church)
 - Previously determined eligible by the National Register
 - designated a National Historic Landmark
 - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church
Name of Property

Henry County, TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Approximately 3.9 acres

UTM References Osage, TN 8 SW

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>366546</u>	<u>4018625</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
					<input type="checkbox"/>	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 Carroll Van West

organization Center for Historic Preservation date March 17, 2005

street & number Middle Tennessee State University, Box 80 telephone 615-898-2947

city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

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 Rev. Robert H. Johnson, contact person

street & number 35 Navajo Cove telephone 731-668-3726

city or town Jackson state TN zip code 38305

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 to amend existing listing. 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 20303.

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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, Henry County, TN

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VII. Description

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church historic district is at 5560 Briarpatch Lake Road, approximately eight miles west of Paris, Henry County, Tennessee. The approximately three and one-half acre historic district is well defined as an open space within the surrounding farmscape and woods. It rests at a bend in the Briarpatch Lake Road in a rural part of the county. The district contains three contributing properties: a one-story concrete block church building (1953); a one-story frame school building (c. 1906, 1935); and a community cemetery, where burials date c. 1870 to the present.

1. Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church (1953, c. 1970)

The chapel is the most visible building on the site. It is a one-story gable-front concrete block building, constructed in 1953. The building rests on a concrete foundation and has an asphalt shingle-covered gable roof with exposed rafter tails on the sanctuary roof. The church is a T-shaped building that has three major sections: an entrance with male and female restrooms; the sanctuary; and a wing with three classrooms and a church office. The church (south) facade has a projecting central entrance that has a metal and glass door and a concrete and metal rail handicapped access ramp. Both the door and the ramp were installed c. 1970 to provide safer access for the congregation's older members. A plastic rectangular sign with the name of the church is above the central entrance. To the east of the entrance is a dedication-stone that contains the lettering, "Barr's Chapel C. M. E. Methodist Church Erected 1864." Also visible from the facade is an original section of the weatherboard exterior of the c. 1900 church building, in the top third of the gable end. When laborers first constructed the present building, they built the concrete walls abutting the weatherboard walls so services could still be held in the building. Once the concrete walls were completed, they then removed the wood walls, except for the top third, which contained the roof and roof supports.

The east elevation has five bays. The southern most bay contains a fixed two-pane window for an interior restroom; the northern most bay is a fixed two-pane window for the classroom wing. The three central bays each have three-over-one windows that provide light to the sanctuary.

The north elevation is a solid concrete block wall, punctured by a single pane glass window and a ventilation grille in the classroom wing end of the elevation.

The west elevation is similar to the east elevation, except that the classroom wing takes up half of the elevation, leaving two three-over-one windows to provide light in the sanctuary.

The interior of the church contains three distinct areas. The entrance foyer is flanked by men's and women's restrooms. Double wood doors, with diamond-shaped lights in the top third of the door, provide access into the sanctuary.

The sanctuary contains the original wood floors of the c. 1900 church building covered by carpet. When laborers removed the wood walls of the earlier church, they kept the original flooring and then installed a thin-strip of wood (approximately 4 inches in width) around the floors to connect the historic flooring to the new concrete block walls. The sanctuary contains two sections of ten wood pews, divided by a central aisle. Most pews were installed c. 1970, when the congregation renovated the interior. The original globe-shaped electric lights of 1953 were retained but the ceiling was dropped c. 1970. The congregation also plastered the concrete block walls c. 1970.

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The classroom wing contains an office for the pastor on the northeast side and three classrooms on the northwest side. Hollow wood doors and doorframes date c. 1953.

Although the interior was partially renovated c. 1970, the church retains integrity and is a contributing building to the nomination. (C)

2. Barrs Chapel School (c. 1906, c. 1935)

This one-story frame building has a brick foundation with asphalt shingle gable roof with exposed rafter tails. Single leaf entries are located on the west and east gable ends and on the south facade. The south facade dates to an expansion of the original gable-end entrance building c. 1935. A recessed central entrance was installed, flanked by two symmetrical bays of two-over-two (horizontal pane) windows. A four step concrete stoop with a single wood railing leads to the entrance.

The east elevation is a solid weatherboard wall except for a ventilation grille at the point of the gable roof line.

The north elevation was altered c. 1935 when two horizontal pane two-over-two windows were installed and replaced original windows that appear to have been a bank of three to four windows. Centered in this elevation is a metal exhaust pipe.

The west elevation is the original, but altered, entrance to the school, with a single door entrance, with screen door, in an otherwise solid weatherboard wall. A ventilation grille is at the gable roof point.

The interior of the school building is much like it was after the remodeling of the interior c. 1935. The interior has three major spaces. A recessed entrance leads to a small kitchen, with appliances dating c. 1970, on the east side and a small industrial room (or classroom) on the west side. The original beaded board ceiling is intact, but is partially covered by a drop ceiling. One large rectangular-shaped classroom dominates the interior. Faux pine paneling from floor to ceiling date c. 1970.

The school retains integrity and is a contributing building to the nomination. (C)

3. Barrs Chapel Church Cemetery (c. 1870-present)

The earliest property in the district is the church/community cemetery, where the first burials, according to church elders, date c. 1870. The congregation dates to 1864. The cemetery, due to gullies that run through the land in this area, has three separate concentrations of burials. The oldest identified marker is 1905, but many grave depressions exist and elders in the congregation believe that these currently unmarked graves are from the era of c. 1870 to 1900. These early grave sites are located closest to the school and church. The majority of the markers are more than 50 years old, also some families still bury their dead in rough family plots within the cemetery. The cemetery is well maintained. Based on a count of existing markers and the large number of depressions that have either small stone markers or no extant marker whatsoever, there are

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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, Henry County, TN

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an estimated 250 burials in the cemetery. (C)

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church historic district meets the registration requirements for church-based historic districts in the Historic Rural African American Churches in Tennessee, 1860-1970 MPS. The district contains three primary properties: a church, a school, and a cemetery. The properties retain a high degree of integrity in setting, location, association, design, and materials. Although some changes in the materials and workmanship have occurred in the interior spaces of the church and school, these changes have not overwhelmed the original design, materials, and craftsmanship of the buildings.

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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, Henry County, TN

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VIII. Statement of Significance

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a church-based historic district under Criterion A for its locally significant associations with African American ethnic identity and social history. The nominated property began as a Civil War-Reconstruction era rural enclave for African Americans in Henry County. As the decades of segregation, 1890-1960, came to mark the county's landscape, the nominated property's role as an African American safe haven and community center became manifest through the presence of the church, a cemetery, and a school on this property. The property meets the registration requirements for a historic district as discussed in the Rural African American churches in Tennessee, 1860-1970 multiple property submission.

During the Civil War, circa 1864, Henry County planter John Barr verbally donated the land on which Barr's Chapel C.M.E. Church, cemetery, and school developed. He stipulated that if the church ever closed, the land would revert to his heirs. According to a typed history provided to the Center for Historic Preservation as part of its Rural African American Church Survey, the property "was a refuge during the period after slavery during reconstruction [when] many men who were born into slavery became landowners."¹ Families such as the Freemans, McWherters, Cowans, Taylors, and Teagues formed a group of black landowners who situated their farms around the site of the church and cemetery. Several African American families still own properties in the vicinity of the church but those properties have not been fully assessed for their historic resources. A reconnaissance survey of the areas immediately adjacent to the historic district did not identify any extant historic farms.

The cemetery is the oldest resource in the district, with burials beginning during the Reconstruction era c. 1870. The fourth Sunday in May became the time for an annual graveyard cleaning. Then, "usually in September, everyone would meet to mow the cemetery, in earlier [times] they use[d] to scrape all the grass off the graves, fill in sunken graves, prune the trees, plant flowers, and replace markers."²

According to congregation members, the current church building, although dating to 1953, stands at the same location of earlier buildings, constructed c. 1864, c. 1900, and 1933. Congregation members have been developing a history of the church. Their research and interviews indicate that the church played a prominent role as a community institution from the 1920s forward. "Church was a part of socialization. A way for young boys and girls to meet. In the winter pie struts, rabbit stews and Hell and Heaven Socials were held. ["Heaven and hell" socials combined evangelism with community outreach where religious messages were conveyed as part of larger social occasions.] . . . During the summer months, there was usually a baseball game after church. Almost every community had its own baseball team . . . anyone who could spare a little strip of land would have a diamond."³ The baseball games took place in the large open area between the church, school, and cemetery.

Local residents built the first identified school on the property at least by 1906. A historic photograph of the students gathered at the front entrance of the school, together with local residents who were there to attend a

¹ "Barr's Chapel C.M.E. Church History," typescript, Barr's Chapel C.M.E. Church, Henry County, File, Rural African American Church Project, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.

² Ibid., 4.

³ Ibid., p. 2.

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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, Henry County, TN

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in Paris. Since then the building has been used as a community center, owned by the church.

With the introduction of electrical power in the Barrs Chapel area by the early 1950s, congregation members began to raise funds for the construction of a new, more comfortable church building. One method was that members maintained and picked a cotton field. The church history states:

Bright and early on the way to the field, to hoe or pick cotton. There would be Sisters May Taylor, Lula Freeman, Eddie Cook, Callie Cowan, Sis. Hassie Taylor, and her sister Robbie Foster. Mrs. Irish Freeman, who lived in Paris and had, acquired along with her husband wealth beyond most, even for these days. Mrs. Irish never fail[ed] in her duties to her church, she bowed down and pulled that cotton sack just like everyone else, mattered not who you were, everyone worked side by side. Mr. Spurgeon Taylor and Algia Cook would plant and plow the cotton. [sic]⁹

In 1953, the congregation built a new concrete building, with electricity, under the direction of Rev. Harold Jenkins. The builders, Dolph Cowan, Commodore Smith, and Wayne "Brut" Dawson, were locally recognized by the African American community as excellent builders, who knew how to work with concrete, with prior experience in the concrete foundation of houses and farm buildings. The source of their concrete blocks is unknown, but the congregation credits Cowan, Smith, and Dawson with the building's construction. In this job, they actually laid the concrete around the walls of the church and then as a section was finished, they removed the frame walls through the front door of the building. By building in stages, the congregation was able to keep meeting in the building throughout the construction and they also maintained some elements of the earlier church building, such as the flooring and the roof trusses.

Music has played an important role in the Sunday services at Barrs Chapel for many years. Historic photographs in the congregation's possession document how the church hosted a musical performance by a traveling quartet of African American singers, with a piano player, that was organized at Camp Tyson, a U.S. military installation in Henry County, during World War II. Soldiers from the camp also attended services here. In 1960, Barrs Chapel was an important part of the Union Fellowship of Choirs, where a group of black churches in Henry County shared their choirs and they traveled to different churches to perform and even performed in some white churches in Paris. Congregation member Harry Cowan established the organization.

In 1956, the church began a new tradition of fundraising that made Barrs Chapel regionally famous. Rev. Simmons became minister and began annual summer picnics, featuring Bar B-Q prepared on site, for the Fourth of July, the 8th of August (which was a church homecoming celebration), and Labor Day. The picnics became famous summer gatherings and served as homecomings for community members who had moved away from Henry County. The picnics continued until the mid-1980s.

Through the decades of Jim Crow segregation, Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church and Barrs Chapel school were significant community institutional buildings for African Americans in Henry County. The nominated historic district is a distinctive, significant place within the West Tennessee landscape that ties together three

⁹ "Barr's Chapel Church History," 3.

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key institutions of emancipation communities—a church, a school, and a cemetery—and is treasured today by the county’s African American residents. The complex still serves as a community meeting place.

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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, Henry County, TN

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “Barr’s Chapel C.M.E. Church History,” typed manuscript, undated. “Barr’s Chapel C.M.E. Church, Henry County.” Rural African American Church Project Files, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.
- Cullom, W. Burr, “WPA Builds, Remodels, and Repairs Schools.” *Tennessee Teacher* 3(May 1936): 19.
- Cook, Dorothy, Harry D. Cowman, and Ida L. Thornton. Interviews at property with Carroll Van West. March 2005. Notes in Barr’s Chapel C.M.E. Church File, Rural African American Church Project, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation.
- Henry County Tennessee: History and Families*. Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Co. for Henry County Bicentennial Commission, 1996.
- List of Teacher Assignments, Barr’s Chapel School. Henry County Board of Education Records. Grove Tower Office Building, Paris, Tennessee, 1932-1958.
- West, Carroll Van, et. al. *Powerful Artifacts: Documenting Rural African American Churches*. Murfreesboro: MTSU Center for Historic Preservation and National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2000.
- West, Carroll Van. *Tennessee’s New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001.

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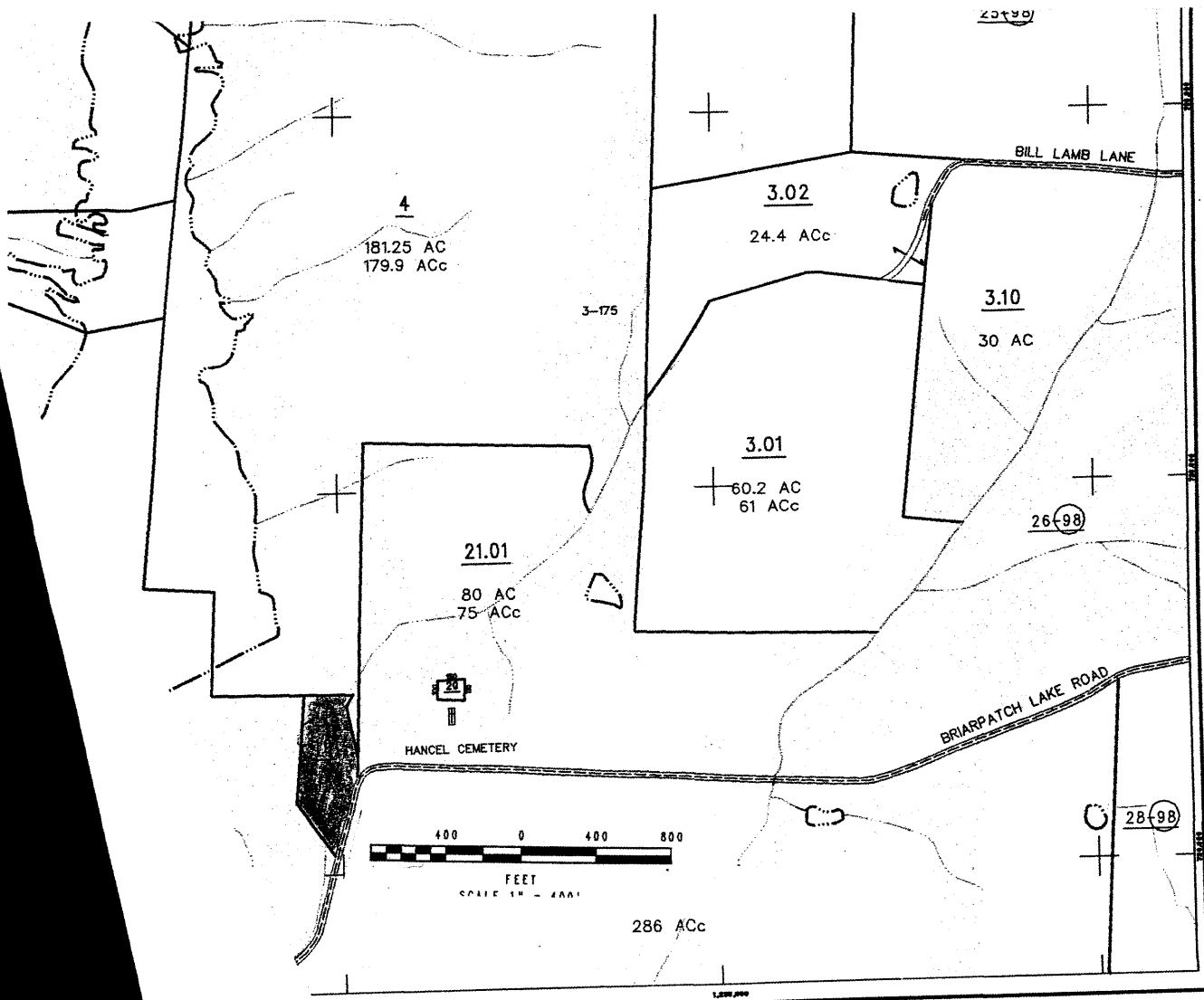
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal boundary description and boundary justification:

The nominated property contains approximately 3.9 acres and is at 5560 Briarpatch Lake Road in Henry County, Tennessee. The nominated boundaries contain all of the extant historic property associated with the church, cemetery, and school of Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church in Henry County during its period of significance. The map scale for this property is the only scale map available for this rural area of Tennessee.

Map 099, parcel 19



MAP

OF PAVEMENT W/CL
RIDGE LINE

081	082	083
100	084	088
101	102	103

HENRY COUNTY, TN	
SCALE: 1" = 400'	DISTRICT: "B"
PHOTO DATE: February 2000	TN STATE PLANE(4100)
COMPILED: JUNE 2001	NAD 83(90) NAD 88

MAP N°
099

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: Carroll Van West
Middle Tennessee State University, Center for Historic Preservation
Murfreesboro, TN 37132
Date: March 2005
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, TN 37243

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, facade, facing north
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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, east elevation, facing northwest
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Dedication stone, Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, facing north
3 of 31

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, north elevation, facing southwest
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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, west elevation, facing east
5 of 31

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, pulpit and choir loft, facing northwest
6 of 31

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, sanctuary, facing north
7 of 31

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, classroom, facing southwest
8 of 31

Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, classroom, facing southwest
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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, choir loft to pastor's office, facing east
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Barrs Chapel C.M.E. Church, sanctuary, facing south
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Barrs Chapel School, facing northeast
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Barrs Chapel School, facing southwest
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Barrs Chapel School, facing east
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Barrs Chapel School, interior, original beaded board ceiling
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Barrs Chapel School, interior, facing northwest
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Barrs Chapel School, kitchen, facing southwest
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Barrs Chapel Cemetery, School and Church, from oldest section of burials, facing west
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Barrs Chapel Cemetery, facing northeast
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Barrs Chapel Cemetery, oldest section of burials, facing southwest
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Handcarved lettering on grave marker, Barrs Chapel Cemetery
21 of 31

Nancy Hurt marker, 1905, Barrs Chapel Cemetery
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Etta J. Phelps marker, 1935, hand blocked lettering, Barrs Chapel Cemetery
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Grave markers and pine trees, Barrs Chapel Cemetery, facing east
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Barrs Chapel Cemetery, facing south
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Barrs Chapel Cemetery, School, Church, from northeast corner, facing southwest
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Jesse Holmes, 1945, federal World War I veteran marker, Barrs Chapel Cemetery
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Freeman family plot, Barrs Chapel Cemetery, facing south
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Lee and Freeman families' plots, Barrs Chapel Cemetery, facing west
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Aavyon D. McCutcheon Marker (metal and straw forming a cross), Barrs Chapel Cemetery
30 of 31

Barrs Chapel Cemetery, overview, facing east
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