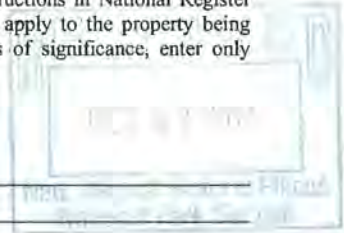


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

56-1875

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Bethlehem Baptist Church

Other names/site number: Glass Church

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: South corner of River Road and White's Mill Road

City or town: Valley State: AL County: Chambers

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide   X   local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  X   A   \_\_\_   B   X   C   \_\_\_   D

*Lee Anne Wofford* / Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 10/24/2017  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date  
Alabama Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official: Date  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title : State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:)

*Joy Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

*12.7.17*  
Date of Action

#### 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

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Structure

Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: religious facility

FUNERARY: cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

FUNERARY: cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19TH CENTURY: Greek Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: wood

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Built between 1870 and 1872 in southeastern Chambers County, Alabama, Bethlehem Baptist Church is a frame, front-gable church with a columned porch and wood, weatherboard siding. The rectangular building rests on stone piers and has a V-crimp metal roof. The temple-front form, the columned porch and pediment, the wide frieze band and molding at the cornice, and the square shape of the door and window openings reflect the influence of the Greek Revival style, which was common on rural, frame churches in Alabama in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A cemetery that was established at roughly the same time as the church lies immediately to its south. The church has integrity of location, feeling, design, materials, workmanship, and association. Although there have been some alterations to the exterior and non-historic partition walls currently divide the interior space, the church retains most of its historic materials and possesses the character-defining features associated with the design and workmanship of this architectural type.

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## **Narrative Description**

### Location and Setting

Bethlehem Baptist Church stands on 1.5 acres on the south side of the intersection of River Road and White's Mill Road in southeastern Chambers County in east-central Alabama. When the building was constructed in 1870-1872, it stood in an unincorporated, semi-rural area near two textile mills that were established in the mid-1860s. Currently, the church and the associated cemetery are located within the Valley city limits and are set amidst single-family dwellings that were constructed in the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. River Road runs parallel to the Chattahoochee Valley Railroad Trail, which occupies the former right-of-way for a railroad that connected the textile mills in the area.

The property comprises two adjacent parcels. The church stands on the triangular, half-acre, northern lot and faces east towards River Road. Trees line the perimeter of the mostly grassy lot. There is evidence of a brick pathway leading east from the front of the church then turning north towards a partially graveled area between the church and White's Mill Road.

The cemetery occupies the one-acre lot to the south of the church; a small embankment and remnants of a fence separate the cemetery from the church lot. White's Mill Road cuts across the northwest corner of the cemetery, a residential street lies to its west, and dwellings are located to its east and south.

### Bethlehem Baptist Church

Parged stone piers support the sills of the wood-frame, temple-front church. Non-historic concrete block piers under the interior of the building provide additional support for the beams and floor joists, and the original foundation for the porch has been replaced with a continuous, concrete block foundation. Most of the wood, weatherboard siding is historic, and portions are attached with square-headed, wrought nails. The front-gable roof is covered in V-crimp metal sheeting. The roofline features a box cornice, overhanging eaves, a flat frieze band with a drip cap along its bottom edge, and wood molding in the corner between the frieze band and the cornice.

The four wood Tuscan columns that support the full-width, pedimented porch on the east elevation are constructed of vertical strips of wood and rest on octagonal plinths. A flat fascia occupies the space between the capitals of the columns and the frieze band of the cornice. The pediment features a raking cornice that is similar in design to the cornice on the main roof. Wood steps with no railing lead up to the wood floor of the porch. The steps are not original; a rectangle of bricks set in the ground to the north of the steps may be the remnant of an earlier stair. The porch's board ceiling has hooks with chains for hanging light fixtures.

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The porch shelters two doors and four second-story windows. Each of the doors is a single, six-panel wood door with horizontal panels, and the windows are six-over-six wood sash. The north and south elevations each have five large, evenly spaced window openings. Two similar window openings are situated in the west (rear) elevation, where they are placed on either side of a centered door opening that was likely added after the church closed in 1938. Non-historic, metal windows occupy the window openings on the north, south, and west elevations. The trim on the east doors and on all window openings is composed of flat, square-edged wood with a drip cap. The west door opening is covered with plywood and as a result, the trim is not visible.

Non-historic, fiberboard partitions currently divide the interior into three rooms, with a second floor inserted above the east room. Originally, the interior was undivided; as a result, the flooring, wall finishes, and trim are generally consistent throughout all three rooms. The floors are wood, but carpet covers most of the wood floor in the east room. Vertical beadboard wainscoting, a molded chair rail, and flat baseboards with base molding and quarter-round shoe molding line the exterior walls. The wood door and window trim features bead molding in the center, and the window sills are set at the level of the chair rail. The lath-and-plaster walls above the wainscoting remain visible in the west room; in the center and east rooms, fiberboard held in place with wood battens covers the lath and plaster. The ceiling is covered with fiberboard in all rooms, but a portion of an older board ceiling is visible in an area at the west end of the building's south wall where the fiberboard has been damaged.

The doors in the east elevation open into a first-floor foyer with a fiberboard ceiling. In the southeast corner of the foyer are quarter-turn stairs and a bathroom that is accessed through the center room. The stairs lead up to a small landing and a catwalk that overlooks the center room. The balustrade along the catwalk and along the edge of the stairs is composed of square posts and flat, board balusters set inside the rails. Along the east wall of the catwalk are four door openings and four fixed, six-light, wood windows. The partition walls on the second floor are constructed of vertical board, and the rooms have wood floors and fiber board ceilings. Flat, square-edged, wood trim surrounds the second-floor windows in the east wall of the building. The materials, design, and configuration of the second floor indicate that it is not original.

The center and west rooms have high ceilings that are roughly level with the cornice line. The partition wall between the two rooms sits directly below a wood truss that fills the space between the top of the wall and the ceiling. A similar truss is roughly centered within the west room. Two wood posts and a centered, round, metal post support the trusses, which were likely added in the late 20<sup>th</sup> or early 21<sup>st</sup> century to stabilize the exterior walls. In the center room, wood beams extend from the partition wall to the second-floor catwalk.

Changes in the flooring between and in front of the two windows in the west wall of the building mark the earlier location of the dais where the pulpit once stood. The west door was likely added after the dais was removed. Although the wainscoting, chair rail, and baseboards continue along the exterior wall where the dais was located, there is evidence of patching near the edges of the dais, suggesting that the wall trim was re-worked when the dais was removed and the door added. A stovepipe hole is located in the south wall, immediately to the east of the westernmost window.

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Overall, the building is in fair condition. The exterior siding and columns are weathered, and sections of the siding, the cornice, and the raking cornice of the pediment are deteriorated or missing. At the front of the building, there is a bee infestation in the south column, and the porch roof sags at the north end in part because the replacement plinth under the north column is several inches thinner than the plinths for the other columns. The most extensive water damage is located at the northwest corner of the building, where the exterior siding above the west window on the north elevation has been replaced with plywood, parts of the cornice are missing, and the roof has been replaced. On the interior, the floor, ceiling, and lath-and-plaster walls in the northwest corner are damaged as a result of water leaking through gaps in the roof. The floor and ceiling above the westernmost window on the south wall also show evidence of water damage.

The damage at the west end of the building is partly the result of the wood-frame structure being too weak to support the height of the building. The installation of two trusses, several tie rods, and an exterior brace at the western end of the south wall have stabilized most of the building. However, lateral forces continue to threaten the western end of the church, causing the walls to separate from the floor and creating gaps at the roofline that have allowed water to infiltrate the building.

#### Cemetery (1871, contributing)

Concrete posts mark the north, west, and south boundaries of the cemetery, and the adjacent residential properties line its eastern boundary. A wide opening between concrete posts at the northwest edge of the cemetery may have originally have been a vehicular entrance from White's Mill Road; an open space with no visible grave markers lies just inside this opening. Within the cemetery, the land slopes down to the east and is terraced, with retaining walls for family plots forming some of the terraces.

The cemetery contains more than 200 graves and includes walled family plots and individual grave markers. The plots are generally laid out orthogonally, and there is no discernible path system. The grave markers face east and date from 1871 (a year after the congregation acquired the property) to 2015; the older graves tend to be located at the western end of the cemetery. Many of the family plots are enclosed with low walls constructed of brick and marble, brick, concrete block, or cast concrete; the ground inside the plots is typically covered with grass or gravel.

Slab markers are the most common type of grave marker; they vary in height from nearly flush with the ground to approximately two feet above grade. The older slabs tend to have raised brick walls with concrete or marble slabs. Other historic marker types within the cemetery include headstones, obelisks, and square posts. A few markers have hand-carved inscriptions. The most common forms of iconography are lambs, veils, urns, Christian symbols (e.g., crosses, crowns, gates), Woodmen of the World symbols, and Masonic symbols. Notable markers include three zinc obelisks that were erected within a family plot between 1871 and 1876 in memory of three brothers who died under the age of two, and a 1940 marker at the grave of a nine-year-old boy



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that features a carved train along the top of the headstone and bears the inscription, "DESTINATION – HEAVEN."

### Evaluation of Integrity

The location of Bethlehem Baptist Church and cemetery is unchanged since the period of significance (1870-1872). The church's spatial relationship to River Road, White's Mill Road, and the adjacent cemetery remain unaltered, but the 20<sup>th</sup>-century houses in the vicinity of the church are not consistent with its setting in the early 1870s.

The building's original footprint, decorative exterior elements, and interior finishes generally remain intact, and contribute to its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Most of the historic materials remain present, including the exterior woodwork, square-headed nails in the weatherboard, and the interior walls and trim. Although small sections of the exterior woodwork are damaged or missing, the exterior design elements associated with Greek Revival-style, frame churches of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century are sufficiently intact to convey the style and character of the building. Notably, the characteristic columns and pediment of the temple-front design remain unaltered. The most significant alterations to the exterior are the replacement of the windows and the addition of a door in the west wall. It is also likely that the four second-story windows on the east elevation are not original to the building.<sup>1</sup> Despite these alterations, the form and exterior architectural details are sufficient to convey the association between Bethlehem Baptist Church and Greek-Revival-style, frame churches of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Alabama.

Although the division of the interior and the removal of the dais significantly changed the design and feeling of church's original floor plan, the materials, design, and workmanship of the historic interior remain intact. The location of the fiberboard wall coverings relative to the wainscoting and wall plane indicates that the original lath-and-plaster walls remain in place underneath the fiberboard panels. Similarly, it is likely that much of the historic board ceiling is present above the fiberboard ceiling panels. The only major element missing on the interior is the dais, but ghost marks in the floor indicate its location.

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<sup>1</sup> Most mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century, frame, Greek Revival churches in east Alabama do not have second-story windows on the front elevation. Moreover, galleries are rare in rural frame churches constructed after the emancipation of the slaves in 1865, and there is no visible architectural evidence that there was a gallery in Bethlehem Baptist Church. Without a gallery, the second-floor windows would be accessible only by ladder.

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### 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.)

- 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.

#### Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1870-1872  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1871  
1872  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Bethlehem Baptist Church is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of frame churches constructed in east Alabama between 1840 and 1875. The period of significance begins in 1870, when the congregation acquired the land, and ends in 1872, with the completion of the church building. Bethlehem Baptist Church's front-gable form with two doors on the front elevation, high ceilings, large windows, dais, and historically undivided floor plan is typical of Baptist and Methodist churches in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Alabama countryside. The building's pediment, columned porch, and box cornice with plain frieze band are characteristic elements of the Greek Revival style as applied to rural churches of this era. The adjacent cemetery contributes to the significance of the property. It was not uncommon for rural congregations of this era to maintain cemeteries on church grounds, and the cemetery represents an important component of the church's historic setting.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Area of Significance: ARCHITECTURE**

In its form and style, Bethlehem Baptist Church is typical of rural, evangelical churches in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Alabama. Like many early congregations in the state, the Bethlehem Baptist congregation started out meeting in a log building.<sup>2</sup> As Baptist and Methodist congregations grew and the area became more settled, they erected frame buildings, typically at crossroads. The churches that they built between circa 1840 and the early 1870s were generally front-gable buildings, often with two doors on the front elevation. The presence of two doors reflected the Baptist and Methodist tradition of separating men and women within the church.<sup>3</sup> High ceilings and large windows provided light and ventilation for the undivided interior. Some rural evangelical churches built before Emancipation had galleries where enslaved African Americans would sit or stand during preaching, but there is no visible evidence of a gallery at Bethlehem Baptist Church, which was constructed several years after the end of slavery in Alabama. Pews or benches faced the pulpit, which often stood on a raised dais. The architectural focus on the

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Basil B. McGinty, *History of East Liberty Baptist Association, Chambers County, Alabama: 125 Years – 1836-1961* (Alexander City, Ala.: Outlook Publishing Company, 1963), p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, & Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp. 130-131.

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pulpit and the absence of an altar reflect evangelical theology, which placed more emphasis on preaching and reading the Bible than on ritual and liturgy. Although some congregations left the lath-and-plaster walls plain, others added baseboards or paneled wainscoting. This form persisted into the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, though typically with one entrance rather than two. As focal points of rural communities, these churches frequently maintained cemeteries as well.<sup>4</sup>

Bethlehem Baptist Church illustrates the use of the Greek Revival style among mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century rural churches in the South. Pedimented front gables, columned porches, and box cornices with frieze bands are the most common manifestations of the style on this building type; all three elements are present on Bethlehem Baptist Church. The Greek Revival style was popular in the United States generally from about 1830 to 1850. Property owners in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana demonstrated a particular affinity for the style and continued to use it on residential buildings until the start of the Civil War in 1861. The style persisted even longer in rural churches, which continued to incorporate Greek Revival elements through the early 1870s.<sup>5</sup>

Baptist and Methodist congregations' use of Greek Revival elements in their church buildings represents a broader shift in the denominations' approach to church architecture. Early 19<sup>th</sup>-century congregations typically met in members' houses or in simple log or frame buildings with few if any architectural embellishments that would pull members' attention away from preaching or suggest that the church was concerned with worldly wealth or status. By the 1830s, however, both Baptists and Methodists had tempered their denunciations of earthly wealth and began building churches that incorporated decorative elements associated with formal architectural styles. Some congregations in cities and large towns erected churches that fully embraced popular ecclesiastical styles such as Greek Revival and Gothic Revival. Their rural counterparts,

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<sup>4</sup> D. Gregory Jeane and Douglas Clare Purcell, *The Architectural Legacy of the Lower Chattahoochee Valley in Alabama and Georgia* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press for the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, 1978), pp. 105-111. These patterns are evident in the Alabama churches that are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places such as Methodist Episcopal Church South at Daphne (Baldwin County, 1858), Montgomery Hill Baptist Church (Baldwin County, 1853-1854), Spring Hill Methodist Church (Barbour County, c. 1841), Sardis Baptist Church (Bullock County, 1850), Oakey Streak Methodist Episcopal Church (Butler County, 1875), County Line Baptist Church (Chambers County, 1875), Mount Sterling Methodist Church (Choctaw County, c. 1859), New Hope Baptist Church (Monroe County, c. 1870), Uchee Methodist Church (Russell County, c. 1859), and Ackerville Baptist Church of Christ (Wilcox County, 1848). Examples of the persistence of the form into the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries but in different architectural styles include Latham United Methodist Church (Baldwin County, 1906) and Shady Grove Methodist Church and Cemetery (Cullman County, 1892-1893).

<sup>5</sup> Most of the pre-1880 churches listed above display one or more of the characteristic elements of the Greek Revival style. On the Greek Revival style in the United States and in the Gulf states, see Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, revised edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), pp. 251-252; Robert S. Gamble, *Historic Architecture in Alabama: A Guide to Styles and Types, 1810-1930* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), p. 78; and Jonathan and Donna Fricker for the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation, "The Greek Revival Style" (2010), [http://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/hp/nationalregister/historic\\_contexts/greekrevivalrevised.pdf](http://www.crt.state.la.us/Assets/OCD/hp/nationalregister/historic_contexts/greekrevivalrevised.pdf).

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on the other hand, incorporated elements of formal styles but shied away from elaborate detailing.<sup>6</sup>

### History of Bethlehem Baptist Church

In 1835, just three years after Chambers County was created from land that the Creek Indians ceded to the United States, thirteen Baptists organized Bethlehem Baptist Church in a location approximately three miles southwest of the present church. Two years later, preacher Jefferson Faulkner and church member J.D. Williams of the Bethlehem congregation requested and received membership in the newly formed Liberty Baptist Association (later renamed the East Liberty Baptist Association). The membership of Bethlehem Church increased quickly in the late 1830s and early 1840s, reflecting an overall increase in the population of east Alabama. By 1840, the church had forty-six members, and nearly doubled its membership over the next two years. Sometime between 1836 and 1863, the church moved again, this time to a site about one mile south of the present church building.<sup>7</sup>

In 1870, Bethlehem Baptist Church accepted a donation of land from member Felix Shanks and began building a new church. The frame, Greek Revival-style church that stands at the corner of River Road and White's Mill Road was completed in 1872.<sup>8</sup> The new church was situated within two miles of two textile mills that were established in 1866 along the Chattahoochee River in southeastern Chambers County. The Alabama-Georgia Manufacturing Company's mill stood on the banks of the river to the east of the church. To the church's north was a factory built by the Chattahoochee Manufacturing Company on the site of a grist mill owned by church member Elisha Trammell, who is buried in the cemetery. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these mills expanded under the ownership of the West Point Manufacturing Company and became known as Riverdale and Langdale, respectively. The West Point Manufacturing Company built new factories, including the Fairfax mill, which was constructed in 1915-1916 less than a mile northwest of Bethlehem Baptist Church.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp. 43-44, 95.

<sup>7</sup> McGinty, p. 237. In 1863, when William Pitts McGinty purchased the land that includes Fairview Cemetery, five acres were already set aside for the church. Jerry McGinty, "Our McGinty Family in America," excerpt reprinted in the entry for Fairview Cemetery in *Find A Grave*, an online database of historic cemeteries and grave markers (<https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=22737&CScn=Fairview&CSentry=4&CSst=3&CSenty=34&>).

<sup>8</sup> McGinty, pp. 237-238.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia Smith, "Church Flaunts Classic Design after 114 Years," *Ledger-Enquirer* [Columbus, Ga.], July 17, 1986. On the history of the textile mills at Langdale, Riverdale, and Fairfax, see the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Historic Resources of Valley, Alabama, and the West Point Manufacturing Company* (1999) by Julie Turner, Trina Binkley, Susan Enzweiler, and Blythe Semmer, as well as the three associated National Register nominations by Trina Binkley: *Langdale Historic District* (1999), *Riverview* [the mill village associated with Riverdale] *Historic District* (1999), and *Fairfax Historic District* (1999).

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Like most textile mill operatives in the South in the late 1800s and early 1900s, workers in the mills along the Chattahoochee River lived in company-owned villages that provided not only housing but also community facilities such as schools, baseball diamonds, and a “union church” that the major Protestant denominations shared.<sup>10</sup> Because of the presence of Baptist congregations within the mill villages, Bethlehem Baptist Church probably did not gain a large number of new members from among the mill operatives. Although the congregation’s membership rose to 112 in 1886, it fell to sixty-six by 1900, not long after Baptists in Langdale and Fairfax formally their own created congregations.<sup>11</sup>

In 1938, the members of Bethlehem Baptist Church decided to merge with the Baptist congregation in Fairfax, which was in the process of building their own church within the mill village. The Bethlehem congregation sold the aging building on River Road, but the cemetery remained in use by former members and their children and grandchildren.<sup>12</sup> After the church closed, the building went through several uses. In 1980, the area became part of the City of Valley, which consolidated the unincorporated mill communities into a single municipality. The City of Valley purchased the Bethlehem Church property in 1999. It is currently vacant.

### Archeological Potential

The archeological potential of the property has not been formally evaluated. Remnants of brick pathways are visible at the surface near the church, and there is no evidence of substantial ground disturbance on the property since the church closed in 1938. Within the cemetery, some markers have broken and fallen over, and it is possible that others have fallen and sunk below the surface. As a result, there is a high probability that archeological investigations would uncover subsurface remains that could shed light on the history of the property.

<sup>10</sup> Binkley, *Langdale Historic District* (NRHP, 1999), Section 7, p. 3, and Section 8, p. 29; Binkley, *Riverview Historic District* (NRHP, 1999), Section 7, pp. 2, 3, 4; Binkley, *Fairfax Historic District*, Section 7, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>11</sup> McGinty, p. 237; *Minutes of the Fifty-First Annual Session of the East Liberty Baptist Association of Alabama* (LaFayette, Ala.: Richards & Burnett, 1886), p. 18; *Minutes of the Sixty-Fifth Annual Session of the East Liberty Baptist Association* (LaFayette, Ala.: Press of the Sun, 1900), p. 23. These and other selected editions of the published minutes of the East Liberty Baptist Association are available online through the Samford University Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/samforduniversity>).

<sup>12</sup> Binkley, *Fairfax Historic District*, Section 7, p. 4; McGinty, p. 238.

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Chambers County, AL  
County and State

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- Binkley, Trina. *Fairfax Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. 1999.
- . *Langdale Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. 1999.
- . *Riverview Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination. 1999
- Gamble, Robert S. *Historic Architecture in Alabama: A Guide to Styles and Types, 1810-1930*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990.
- Jeane, D. Gregory and Douglas Clare Purcell. *The Architectural Legacy of the Lower Chattahoochee Valley in Alabama and Georgia*. Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press for the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, 1978.
- Minutes of the East Liberty Baptist Association*. Various publishers, 1885-1900. Samford University Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/samforduniversity>.
- McGinty, Rev. Basil B. *History of East Liberty Baptist Association, Chambers County, Alabama: 125 Years - 1836-1961*. Alexander City, Ala.: Outlook Publishing Company, 1963.
- Smith, Virginia. "Church Flaunts Classic Design after 114 Years." *Ledger-Enquirer* [Columbus, Ga.], July 17, 1986.
- Turner, Julie, Trina Binkley, Susan Enzweiler, and Blythe Semmer. *Historic Resources of Valley, Alabama, and the West Point Manufacturing Company*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. 1999.

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_



Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Chambers County, AL  
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

---

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.55

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 32.788413° | Longitude: -85.176511° |
| 2. Latitude:            | Longitude:             |
| 3. Latitude:            | Longitude:             |
| 4. Latitude:            | Longitude:             |

Or

#### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property comprises Chambers County, Alabama parcels #12-18-09-30-2-001-033-000 and #12-18-09-30-2-001-035-000.

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Chambers County, AL  
County and State

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary corresponds to the current boundaries of the church and cemetery owned by the City of Valley. The adjacent parcels contain non-historic residences.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Evelyn D. Causey, Ph.D., Historian and Architectural Historian  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: P.O. Box 3385  
city or town: Auburn state: AL zip code: 36831  
e-mail: evelyn.d.causey@gmail.com  
telephone: (334) 444-4490  
date: August 8, 2017

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Bethlehem Baptist Church

Chambers County, AL  
County and State

Name of Property

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Bethlehem Baptist Church

City or Vicinity: Valley

County: Chambers State: Alabama

Photographer: Evelyn D. Causey

Date Photographed: May 8, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 8. Front (east) elevation of church, looking west.
- 2 of 8. North elevation of church, looking south.
- 3 of 8. West and south elevations of church, looking northeast.
- 4 of 8. Church interior, center room, looking north.
- 5 of 8. Church interior, west room, looking southwest.
- 6 of 8. Cemetery, looking northeast.
- 7 of 8. Cemetery, looking north from southwest corner of cemetery.
- 8 of 8. Grave markers near southeast corner of cemetery, looking west.

**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 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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



JOE'S CERAMICS

720







CAUTION  
PLEASE  
WATCH OUT  
FOR HOT  
WATER









LAMB

SCALES



LAMB

SCALES

RUSHTON

1935  
WAYNE BROWN  
SON OF MRS. PEARL BRAMS  
ARRIVED MARCH 2, 1891  
DEPARTED MARCH 1, 1950  
RESTS IN THE HEAVEN

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 10/27/2017      Date of Pending List: 11/14/2017      Date of 16th Day: 11/29/2017      Date of 45th Day: 12/11/2017      Date of Weekly List: 12/7/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      12/7/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall      Discipline Historian

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



# ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

468 South Perry Street  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900  
334-242-3184 / Fax: 334-240-3477

Lisa D. Jones  
Executive Director  
State Historic Preservation Officer

October 24, 2017



Mr. J. Paul Loether  
Keeper of the National Register  
U. S. Department of the Interior, NPS  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the nomination and supporting documentation to be considered for listing the following Alabama resource in the National Register of Historic Places:

Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Valley, Chambers County, Alabama

Your consideration of the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lee Anne Wofford  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

LAW/nw

Enclosures