

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 05000290

Date of Listing: April 20, 2005

Property Name: Canaan Baptist Church

County: Jefferson

State: Alabama

The Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham, Alabama, 1933-1979
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.


Signature of the Keeper

April 20, 2005
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8. Statement of Significance

The period of significance is hereby changed to 1961-ca. 1965 to more accurately reflect the period in which the church and its congregation played an important role in the Civil Rights movement in Birmingham.

This change was discussed with and approved by the National Register staff of the Alabama SHPO.

The Alabama State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 Canaan Baptist Church
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 824 Fifteenth Street North N/A not for publication
city or town Bessemer N/A vicinity
state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 352020

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.)

Emmanuel Amkrom
Signature of certifying official/Title

March 3, 2005
Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Alabama 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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Care D. Shull

4-22-05

Canaan Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Birmingham Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS: church

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGIOUS: church
RELIGIOUS: church building

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick; Concrete
walls Brick; Concrete

roof Asphalt Shingle
other Metal; Glass

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets.

Canaan Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

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

- 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.)
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.

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History
Ethnic Heritage: African American

Period of Significance
1961-1965

Significant Dates
1961

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Wilson, George

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
- 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: Birmingham Historical Society

Canaan Baptist Church
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 503340 3695640
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carroll Van West, with earlier material by Linda Nelson and Marjorie White
organization Center for Historic Preservation date March 24, 2004
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 Canaan Baptist Church (Rev. Horace P. Turner)
street & number 824 15th Street North telephone 205-428-5575
city Bessemer state Alabama zip code 35020

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

7

Page

1

Canaan Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

VII. Description

Canaan Baptist Church lies on a corner lot at the northern edge of an historic African-American neighborhood in Bessemer. It now faces a busy four-lane highway, which impacts the neighborhood environment of which the church was once part. The building has been on this corner since 1885, and the current nominated building includes sections dating from 1940, 1960, and 1984.

Canaan Baptist Church is a one-story building that rests on a full brick and concrete basement. It has an asphalt gable roof. The north façade is essentially three bays under a very low gable front, the central third being a projecting square tower of decorative concrete block, flat on top with a spire so small it more resembles a spike. The casement windows that flank the central tower are slag glass painted blue. Ells on either side of the tower are closed under a flat roof that extends to cover wooden six-panel double-door entries into the vestibule; the stoop roofs are supported by wrought iron posts, and concrete steps rise from the sides.

The west and east elevations are similar in that they both have five bays of casement windows of slag glass painted dark blue on the highest and lowest panels and light blue on four middle panels. The windows are separated by slightly projecting pilasters. This level rests upon the basement level; the latter has two-pane clear casement windows. The southern most bay on the west elevation has a six-panel metal door, with access provided by a two level concrete handicapped access ramp, which has metal rails. The ramp was installed c. 1984. The southern most bay of the east elevation also contains a side entrance, which has a brick and concrete stoop, metal railing, and metal posts that support a flat metal awning. This entrance is original to 1961, but the stoop and awning date c. 1984.

Inside, the vestibule is continuous across the rear of the sanctuary, with a central entry onto the central aisle. The sanctuary floor is flat; the ceiling follows the crested roofline and has exposed boomerang trusses and crossing beams, with modern pendant light fixtures. Walls are plastered with a knotty pine wainscot; this pine paneling also covers most of the front of the sanctuary, including the choir area and baptistery to the rear of the dais. The pulpit is central, with no other furniture on the dais other than the two choir pews. Pews are natural oak and like the other furniture date to 1960.

The south elevation is a large two-story brick wing, with asphalt gable roof and a brick foundation, constructed as the educational annex in 1984. The annex contains projecting pier buttresses framing stacked metal-framed clear windows and one blind bay. This wing is built across the rear of the sanctuary, with the longer section extending from the west elevation. At the western most end of the extension is a recessed metal and glass door. At the opposite end of the section is another metal and glass door, which is partially hidden behind the handicapped access ramp. On the 15th Street side (east elevation), the wing is a slightly projecting cross-gabled section containing a side double hollow-core door entry. The interior of the annex contains two equal stories, with offices and daycare facilities on the first floor and classrooms on the second floor.

Archaeological Component

While no formal archaeological survey has been conducted, the potential for subsurface materials remains.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

8 Page

2

Canaan Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

VIII. Significance

Canaan Baptist Church in Bessemer, Jefferson County, Alabama is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a locally significant property that was a key Bessemer strategy center during the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham from the early to mid-1960s. Established in 1865 by Reverend W. M. Grimes, a white minister, Canaan Baptist is among the oldest African-American Baptist congregations in Bessemer and grew out of an earlier white Canaan Baptist Church, which still operates as well in Bessemer.

The African-American congregation has occupied this lot in downtown Bessemer since 1889. The first building on the current property's lot at the corner of 9th Avenue and 15th Street was opened in 1940 during the ministry of Reverend E. L. Plant, but all of its features were not completed until 1947. The following year the Reverend Dr. J. H. Browder became the minister of Canaan Baptist Church. The present church building, constructed in 1961, is the second on the lot and was built under the direction of Rev. Browder, with George Wilson of Selma, Alabama, as the contractor.

The civil rights associations of the church lie largely with the leadership of Reverend Dr. J. H. Browder, who was pastor of Canaan Baptist from 1948 until his death in March 1964. Reverend Browder significantly expanded the public outreach and service of the church. He improved church administration and greatly expanded educational programs, establishing a youth department and educational department, a Christian Aid Union, a Sunday School program, and a Matrons Department. He also was active, along with other members of the congregation, in the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights in the late 1950s. Rev. Browder and Canaan Baptist gained a reputation locally for being a strong voice for equal rights, voting rights, and public desegregation. He preached equality and fairness from the pulpit every Sunday and strongly supported local efforts to desegregate school after the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision.

Due to its public positions, Canaan attracted considerable attention from white officials. In 1959, the City of Bessemer abruptly condemned the church's building, which had been first built in 1889 and expanded in 1908, then brick veneered in 1940. The twin-tower church was an African-American landmark within Bessemer and had received numerous updates and improvements during the Browder years to keep it a safe and comfortable edifice. After supposed construction and wiring deficiencies had allegedly contributed to fires that destroyed two other black churches in the city in 1958 (local African Americans believed that the fires were not accidental), the city government condemned the historic building of Canaan Baptist, leaving the congregation with no alternative but to build a new one-story brick structure, of contemporary styling, in 1960-61.

Rev. Browder turned the pain of losing the historic building into an opportunity to expand the church's vital role in the social and educational services available for African Americans in Bessemer. For example, the segregated African American public schools in Bessemer did not support a kindergarten for black children. Thus, Rev. Browder organized a kindergarten for local children, which met in the basement of the 1961 church building. The new building with basement meeting rooms and the large sanctuary became a strategy center for the congregation as it discussed and planned its role in such pivotal events as the Selective Buying Campaign of 1962, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Birmingham in 1962, and the Project C demonstrations of 1963.

After Rev. Browder's death in 1964, Rev. A. L. Bratcher became the minister and moved the church into a significant local role in implementing the Civil Rights Movement in Bessemer. Reverend Bratcher continued the church's tradition of activism by becoming involved in one of the more forward-thinking and controversial programs of the federal War on Poverty—the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Through the creation of a Community Action Agency headquartered at the church, the congregation in 1964 established a Community Development Credit Union (CDCU), which still operates from the church today. The Canaan Baptist CDCU was one of the first developed in the nation and eventually became part of a national program of approximately 400 created between 1965 and 1973. It provided equal opportunity loans to local residents, who otherwise had difficulty securing loans from local banks for the purchases of houses and the development of local businesses. The Community Action Agency also worked with congregation members and local residents on how to gain the benefits created through such federal acts as the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

8

Page

3

Canaan Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

Rev. Horace P. Turner became pastor at Canaan Baptist in December 1969 and continued as pastor to the end of the century. Under his leadership, the congregation built the educational annex in 1984, which provided new office space for the church's religious and social programs.

The Canaan Baptist Church meets the registration requirements for Criterion A for church buildings in the Birmingham's Civil Rights Movement, 1933-1979 MPS as a locally significant strategy center in Bessemer where the congregation regularly met and planned its involvement in key events and programs related to both the end of public segregation in Bessemer and Birmingham and the implementation of the Civil Rights Movement in wake of the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

9

Page

4

Canaan Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

IX. Bibliography

Canaan Baptist Church Files, Birmingham Historical Society Civil Rights Collection-Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Civil Rights Churches Files, Birmingham Historical Society, Birmingham, Alabama. Files include Board of Equalization Records, City Directory Trace, and Photographs.

Dedicatorial Services of the Educational Annex of the Canaan Missionary Baptist Church. Bessemer, AL: Canaan Baptist Church, 1984.

Fieldwork visit to Canaan Baptist Church. Notes in author's possession. July 23, 2003.

Hendricks, Lola. Interviews with Marjorie L. White. 1999. Birmingham Historical Society.

"Our History." National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions website. www.natfed.org. Accessed March 25, 2004.

Scribner, Christopher M. *Renewing Birmingham: Federal Funding and the Promise of Change, 1929-1979.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002.

White, Marjorie L., *A Walk to Freedom-The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Movement for Human Rights.* Birmingham: Birmingham Historical Society, 1998.

X. Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated boundaries of Canaan Baptist Church at 824 15th Street, Bessemer, are represented by Lots 20-24, Block 416 as marked on the attached Jefferson County Tax Map38-09-2, Sections NW ¼ 09, Township 19 South, Range 4 West. The boundaries contain all of the historic property significantly associated with the Canaan Baptist Church.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Photographs Page

5

Canaan Baptist Church, Jefferson County, AL

Canaan Baptist Church
Bessemer, Jefferson Co., AL

Photographs (exterior) by: Carroll Van West
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation
July 2003

Photographs (interior) by: Birmingham Historical Society
January 2000

North façade, facing south
1 of 14

Dedication marker, north façade, facing south
2 of 14

Dedication marker, north façade, facing south
3 of 14

North façade and west elevation, facing east
4 of 14

West elevation and educational annex, facing southeast
5 of 14

Educational annex, west section, facing south
6 of 14

Dedication marker, facing south
7 of 14

Educational annex, south elevation, facing north
8 of 14

Educational annex and east elevation, facing northwest
9 of 14

East elevation, facing northwest
10 of 14

Sanctuary, facing south
11 of 14

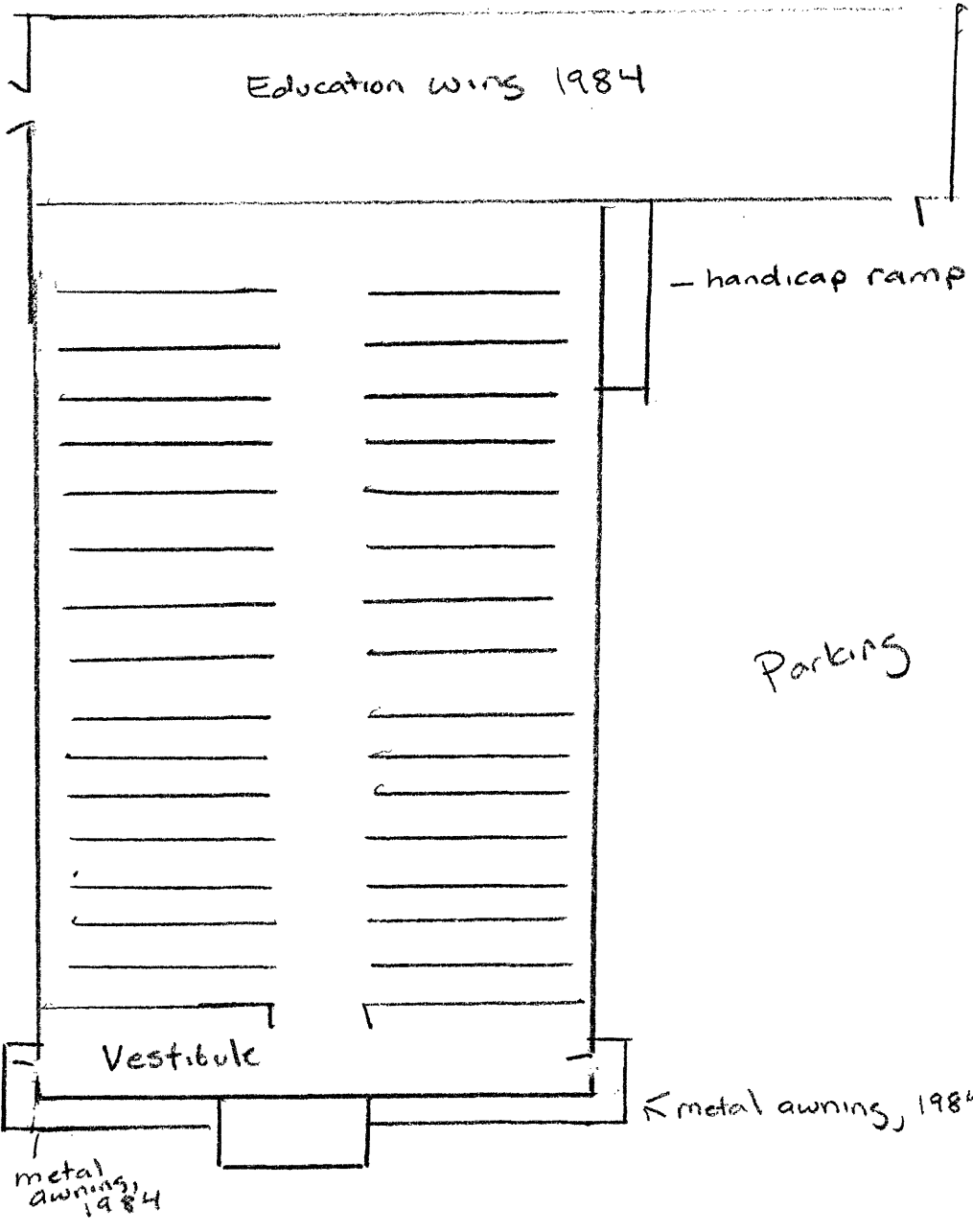
Sanctuary, facing north
12 of 14

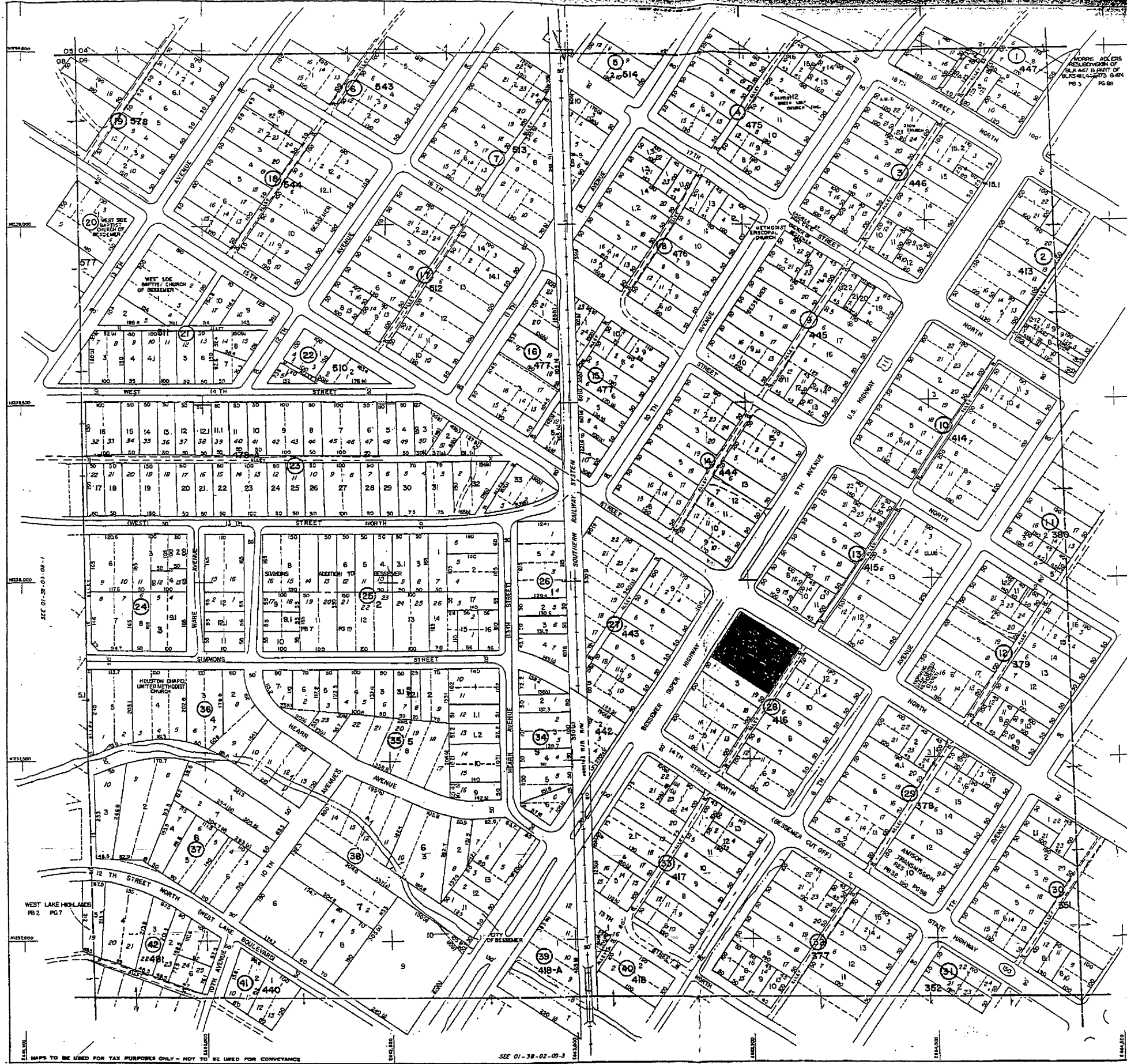
Sanctuary, facing east
13 of 14

Sanctuary, facing west
14 of 14

Canaan Baptist Church
824 15th St. N
Bessemer, AL
UTS: 2004

Parking





656
 OWNERSHIP MAP
JEFFERSON
 PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION
 OF THE
STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
 AD VALOREM TAX DIVISION

PREPARED BY
COLE LAYER TRUMBLE CO.
 ATLANTA, GEORGIA

TAX MAPPING DIVISION
 SCALE 1"=100'
 DATE OF MAP 11/7/77 DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY 11/26/74

COUNTY LOCATOR

TOWNSHIP LOCATOR
 (INDEX TO 1"=400' & 1"=300' MAPPING)

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36

SUB-SHEET INDEX

09-1	09-2	09-3	09-4
10-1	10-2	10-3	10-4
11-1	11-2	11-3	11-4

LEGEND

STATE LINE	AREA (FROM DEED)	10.0 AC
COUNTY LINE	AREA (CALCULATED)	10.0 AC (A)
CORPORATION LINE	DIMENSION (FROM DEED)	10.0
DISTRICT LINE	DIMENSION (SCALED)	10.0 (A)
ROAD R/W	VIADUCT	
TRAVELED ROAD	INTERSTATE HIGHWAY	10
RAILROAD R/W	U.S. HIGHWAY	10
PROPERTY LINE	STATE HIGHWAY	10
LAND HOOK	COUNTY HIGHWAY	10
INTERIOR TRACT LINE OR ORIGINAL TRACT LINE	ROAD OR STREET	BY NAME
SUBDIVISION LOT NUMBER	MAJOR TRANSMISSION LINES	(POWER) (GAS) (OIL)
PARCEL NUMBER	SECTION CORNERS	11
BLOCK LOTS (WHERE APPLICABLE)	STATE PLANE COORDINATES	211
OWNERSHIP MAP BLOCK (WHERE APPLICABLE)		211
CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, CEMETERIES, AIRPORTS, GOVERNMENT LANDS, ETC.	BY NAME	

DATE	BY	REVISIONS
		CHANGES OR ADDITIONS

SECTIONS NW 1/4 09
TSP. 19 SOUTH, RANGE 4 WEST
38-09-2
 MAP NUMBER

Canaan Missionary Baptist Church
 824 15th Street North
 Bessemer

MAPS TO BE USED FOR TAX PURPOSES ONLY - NOT TO BE USED FOR CONVEYANCE