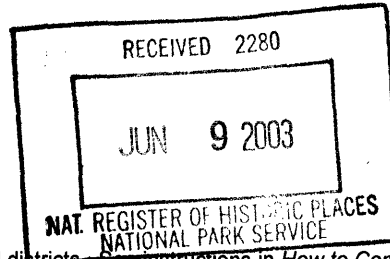


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

6916



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 New Salem Baptist Church
other names/site number New Salem Union Church

2. Location

street & number 601 Eastgate Road N/A not for publication
city or town Sevierville N/A vicinity
state Tennessee code TN county Sevier code 155 zip code 37862

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.)

Herbert J. Weaver / RSM 6/6/03
Signature of certifying official/Title 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:)

Edson H. Beall 7/24/03
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

New Salem Baptist Church
Name of Property

Sevier County, Tennessee
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
	1	objects
1	1	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

Rural African-American Churches MPS

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE/monument/marker

RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Gothic Revival

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof METAL/Tin

other GLASS, WOOD

Narrative Description

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

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.)

- [x] 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.
[x] 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 boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [x] 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 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK
SOCIAL HISTORY
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1886-circa 1940

Significant Dates

1886
1897

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Dockery, Isaac

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
[] 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:

- [x] State Historic Preservation Office
[] Other State Agency
[] Federal Agency
[] Local Government
[] University
[x] Other

Name of repository:

East Tennessee Development District

New Salem Baptist Church
Name of Property

Sevier County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .7 acres Pigeon Forge 156SE

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 269382 3971107
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 Courtney E. Dollar / Amanda Wild
organization Legal Aid of East Tennessee / East TN Development District date August 5, 2002
street & number Post Office Box 19806 telephone 865-584-5159
city or town Knoxville state Tennessee zip code 37939

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 Charles Robert Birden, President, Board of Trustees, New Salem Baptist Church
street & number 216 Chicamauga Avenue telephone 865-687-5726
city or town Knoxville state Tennessee zip code 37917

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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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The 1886 New Salem Baptist Church is a one-story rectangular brick Gothic Revival influence building attributed to local African-American brick mason and builder, Isaac Dockery. The church is nestled in a quiet setting on Eastgate Road, adjacent to Burden Hill. Middle Creek stream flows through the property. This hill provides the backdrop and setting for the historic African-American church. The brick walls, which were made and fired at an adjacent kiln are laid in the common bond pattern. A steeply pitched gable tin roof with slightly flared eaves extends over the sidewalls of the building. Much of the glazing in the windows is original and was hand-blown. During the late 1960s, non-functioning, stylized, wooden shutters consisting of two vertical planks linked by three cross pieces were added to all of the windows. Recently, during a restoration project, these shutters have been removed. The church has no exterior additions and maintains a high degree of architectural integrity on the outside.

Six concrete steps lead to a small concrete platform and the entrance on the façade of the church. Brick cheek walls form the outer edge of the stairs. The south elevation is three bays wide with a central brick entry. This projection originally supported a tower, which rose to a wooden pediment topped by an open cupola and cross, also of wood. The original tower was removed in the 1970s and was replaced by a much smaller bell tower, which is sited several feet back and sits on the ridge of the roof. Four wood posts support the tin roof of the bell tower. The original bell remains. A triangular pediment caps the symmetrically placed double leaf door. The pediment has been boarded and most likely contained a window. Above the entryway is a diamond-shaped inset with decorative brickwork around the perimeter. The diamond inset most likely contained a window, but is now boarded. A double-hung two-over-two window is located on either side of the door. Two smaller triangular lights form a pointed arch above the windows. Both the door and the windows are capped by a decorative course of bricks. These windows achieve a simple but aesthetic balance with the entry.

The east and west elevations are identical and consist of four, four-over-four double-hung windows. As in the façade windows, two triangular placed lights form a pediment above each of the windows, forming a pointed arch, characteristic of the Gothic Revival style. All windows and surrounds are built flush to the wall. The brick foundation originally had three-diamond shaped vents, set at regular intervals between the four windows on each side of the building. Recently, during a restoration day, volunteers repaired and restored these vents to their original appearance.

The stark rear (north) elevation is relieved only by a diamond-shaped vent, also with brick surround, situated in the central lower part of the gable. Below this central vent are four one-brick size vents at equal intervals along the gable's base line. A concrete block flue with a metal pipe, which was constructed circa 1950, extends above the roofline.

The double doors on the facade lead into a small vestibule of the church. All walls of the vestibule, except the walls where the exterior doors are located, are beaded board. A rope to ring the bell is located in the

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

vestibule. Two original wood paneled doors lead into the church from the vestibule. Two partition rooms (or cubicles) are located on either side of the doors. These partitions are temporary and are used to create office space and bathrooms for church staff. Original wood paneled doors are located in the south wall of the partition rooms. One door leads into a restroom, and the other door leads to a stairwell up to the balcony. The balcony (now boarded) is located in the front gable of the building. Originally there was only a ladder that led into the balcony. The original ladder has since been removed and was replaced with a simple single flight of stairs. The balcony was covered sometime in the 1970s. Large pieces of painted fiberboard cover the balcony.

The interior of the church is of a simple design consisting of a nave and a small chancel. An original oak chair rail, which has been painted white, separates the upper and lower portions of the walls. The upper wall is plastered and the lower wall is beaded board. The floor is covered with vinyl and carpeting, although the original pine floor remains intact underneath. There are six circa 1950 wood pews located on either side of an aisle. A small chancel is located in the rear of the building. The chancel is separated from the nave by a single step and a wood banister that extends from the east wall and continues only one-fourth the length of the chancel. The rear wall of the church, behind the chancel, contains a decorative wood molding. The chair rail that surrounds the perimeter of the other walls of the church rises to form a semicircular shape supported by column-like moldings. According to oral tradition, this decorative work is the craftsmanship of Louis Buckner.

Although the roof of the church is steeply pitched, the ceiling is canted at a lower pitch to form a mansard-like roof. The ceiling is covered with narrow wood boards. Three modern ceiling fans are evenly spaced and hang from the middle of the ceiling. Four florescent light fixtures also hang from the ceiling. The building was electrified during the 1940s, although none of the original fixtures remain.

To the side of the church, as one approaches the steps, the family of builder, Isaac Dockery, erected a freestanding brick monument with an engraved plaque detailing some of the church's history of the church in 1980. This is a non-contributing element due to its date.

Although there have been alterations to the interior, these changes are not permanent in nature and may be removed. Furthermore, these changes do not destroy the historic integrity of the building. All original furnishing including the pews, organ, pulpit, and table were crafted by Louis Buckner, a local African-American craftsman who gained a reputation for his decorative work in furnishings and exterior detailing on structures. Unfortunately, all of these furnishings have been removed from the building. All that remains of Buckner's work within the church is the molded woodwork along the rear wall of the chancel.

The New Salem Baptist Church possesses a high degree of integrity of location and association. The church is situated on its historic lot from its period of significance and is located at the place of its initial construction. While there has been some residential growth nearby the church, it is still situated away from the primary residential and commercial districts of the town. The historic setting of the church is intact and the building retains its feeling, its ability to convey a sense of time and place from its period of significance.

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

More importantly the building possesses a degree of integrity of design and materials not found in many rural and small town churches. Since the population of the area never substantially grew since the 1880s, there was never great population pressures to increase the size of the building. The interior has received several alterations, losing many of the features such as the original pews, organ, and altar, which were reportedly crafted by Lewis Buckner. Yet in its brick exterior, mansard-like ceiling, walls, and overall structural appearance, the building conveys integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

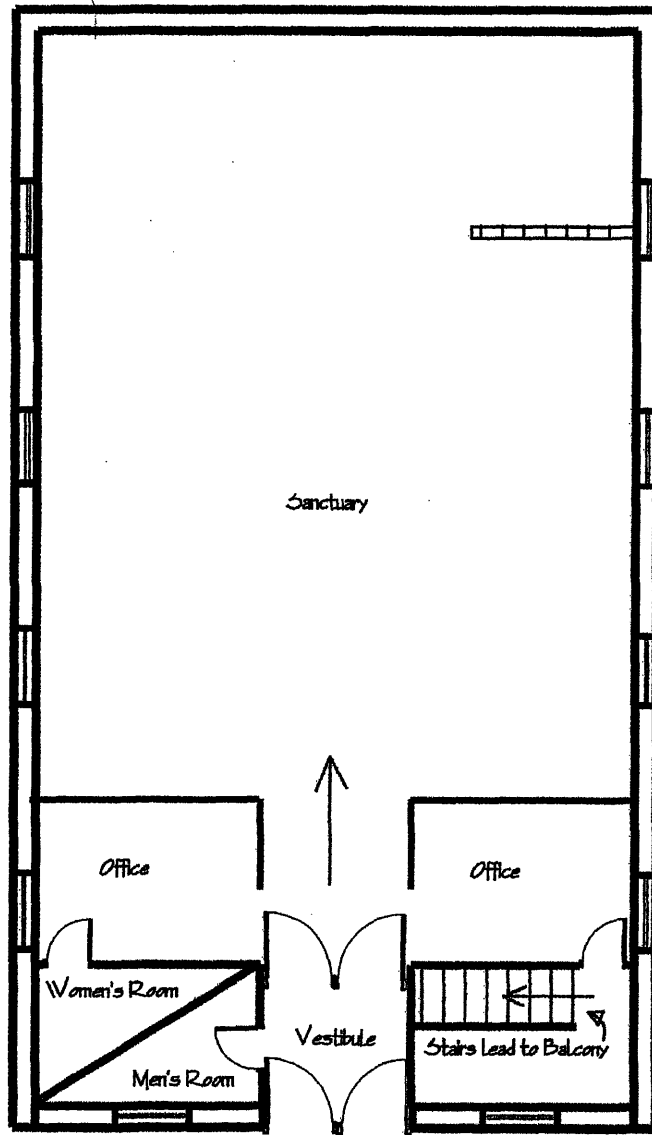
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

Sketch plan



NEW SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH
SEVIERVILLE, TN

M. Childress
NOVEMBER 1, 2002

Scale is Proportional

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National Park Service

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The New Salem Baptist Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its significance in the ethnic heritage as it related to the social history of Sevierville's Black community. Architecturally, the 1886 brick church is a fine example of vernacular Gothic detailing as interpreted by Isaac Dockery, a Black craftsman from the county. The New Salem Baptist Church is located in Sevierville (2000 population of 11,757), Sevier County, Tennessee. Sevier County lies east of Blount County and adjoins North Carolina on the south. It is one of the largest counties in the State with an area of about 660 square miles. The historic church is located in a floodplain along Middle Creek. The well-maintained and little-altered place of worship has served the Black community and other congregations for over a century. The church meets the registration requirements for eligible properties stated in the Rural African-American Churches MPS.

The New Salem Baptist Church was built in 1886 at a bend in Middle Creek and was originally named the New Salem Union Church. It was built for the use of Black worshippers of all denominations. Before the construction of the church building, services were held in a log house overlooking Middle Creek and also at a school near Pleasant View Cemetery. The Trustees of the church obtained land for the church from Squire Bob Henderson. Oral history states that Henderson and Isaac Dockery, the builder of the church, were good friends and neighbors. When Dockery asked the Squire for land for the future church, he cordially agreed and gave permission to use the adjoining land for the brick kiln as well. It remained New Salem Union Church for eleven years and was renamed New Salem Baptist Church on October 11, 1897. This East Tennessee county seat pattern of early African-American churches being multi-congregation church buildings at the time of construction, but later evolving into a single-congregation church buildings, is shared by earlier National Register-nominated churches of Henderson Chapel AME Zion Church (NR 6/22/00) in Rutledge, Grainger County and Pikeville Chapel AME Zion Church (NR 11/30/99) in Pikeville, Sequatchie County.

By 1897, the congregation had developed a stronger affinity to Baptist beliefs, largely because many of the early ministers were Baptist. Some of the early ministers of the church were white circuit riders including Reverends Peter Gwinn, Press Free, and Mick Wynn who came from churches in Knoxville, Jefferson City, and Dandridge. Although white ministers led worship services while it was a union church, Black ministers began to assume leadership positions with its transition to the Baptist denomination. Some of the Black ministers who served the church were Reverends Ethers, Harris, and Bragg.

From the time of its construction, the New Salem Baptist Church has been the focal point of the Black community serving not only the community's religious needs but its social and educational needs as well. Juanita Burden Lundy, a Sevierville native and descendant of the church founders, states, "Any type of entertainment, education, worship or funeral service was located and centered around the Church."¹ Until

¹ Juanita Burden Lundy. Interviewed by Courtney E. Dollar, 30 July 2002.

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

1922, for example, Black children were educated either in their homes or at the New Salem Baptist Church where classes were taught for 26 years. In 1922, education stopped at the church and began at Pleasant View School (extant), which was constructed with Rosenwald school funds.

Funerals were another significant function of the church. The early written history of the church states that the church bell, located in the belfry, rang each Sunday morning for Sunday school, as well as to announce deaths in the community. The number of tolls indicated the age of the deceased. After an individual in the community died, their body was placed inside the church for viewing and for the funeral services. In one such instance, the infamous floodwaters of Middle Creek rose up into the church while a body was placed there for viewing. Members of the community were worried that the body would be washed away, so two Black individuals rode up to the church on horseback and carried the casket out and took it to dry land.

Juanita Burden Lundy also remembers, "that when someone died their body was set up in the church for viewing, but there was still the family hour at the deceased's family home. Then when Atchley Funeral services came along, the body was taken first to the funeral home and then returned to New Salem Church on the day of the burial for the funeral services. After the funeral, the body was taken to either Union Hill Cemetery off Allensville Road, or to our main cemetery on Middle Creek."² Pre-funeral services and funerals were common occurrences in the church from its construction until the late 1930s.

The Black community in Sevier County has always been somewhat small. In 1880, 694 Blacks, which constituted 39% of Sevier County's population were reported in U.S. Census records.³ Although Blacks lived throughout the county there was a strong concentration of families in what is now called Burden Hill, Middle Creek, McMahan Addition, and Pleasant View areas or communities, all of which are located in Sevierville. The Allensville and Boyd's Creek or French Broad River areas were also populated with Black families. The Black population in all of these areas remained consistent until the early 1920s and 1930s when Black families began to leave.

The migration of Black families out of the county was caused primarily by two factors: a lack of educational opportunities and a lack of employment. In 1922, the Pleasant View School was built by some of Isaac Dockery's descendants with money provided by the Rosenwald funds. Unfortunately, classes at Pleasant View School were only offered through the 8th grade. Prior to integration of Sevier County's school system in 1965, there were no high school or college educational opportunities for Black children in the county. If the families valued higher education for their children, they either moved to a county with a high school for Black children or bused their children to a nearby county. If the families chose the latter option, a significant

² Juanita Burden Lundy, Interview, 30 July 2002.

³ Sevier County Public Library, 1880 Sevier County Census. Retrieved online November 8, 2002: <http://www.sevierlibrary.org/genealogy/Census/index1880.html>.

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

tuition fee was placed on each child for the cost of transportation and education. Many Black families paid this fee and when it became too costly they either moved away or withdrew their children from school.

The second wave of migration out of the county occurred during the 1930s due to a lack of steady employment in Sevierville and elsewhere during the Great Depression. During this time, the number of Black families living in Sevier County dwindled substantially. According to the 1920 and 1930 U.S. census, 326 Black individuals lived in Sevier County in 1920, but by 1930 only 291 individuals remained.⁴ Few Black families remain in Sevier County today. The 2000 U.S. Census reports 396 Black individuals in Sevier County.⁵ In 1880, 39.8% of the population was Black; according to 2000 census figures only .6% of Sevier County's population is Black.⁶ Many of these remaining families are descendants of Isaac Dockery.

The New Salem Baptist Church is significant not only for its connection to Sevierville's Black community, but also for its builder, Isaac Dockery. Isaac Dockery (1832-1910) was a master brick mason who began his career in Sevier County during the 1860s. He first tried his hand at framing and chimney work on homes around the county. As the years passed and Dockery obtained more experience he progressed to larger projects including the Murphy College Building (1891), Sevierville Masonic Lodge (1893, NR 2/7/80), and the Sevier County Courthouse (1896, NR 3/24/71). Although these and other buildings throughout the county were fashioned by his hands, the New Salem Baptist Church (1886) is regarded as his most significant work, representing the beginning of his career as well as his talent and legacy.⁷

Isaac Dockery's ancestry was Scotch-Irish. His great-grandparents were among the Scotch-Irish who left North Ireland for the United States when King George VI ruled Ireland during the early 1700s. Oral history indicates that Isaac Dockery's family came to East Tennessee from North Carolina. Isaac's parents, Benjamin and Nancy Dockery, resided in Columbia, Maury County before moving to Sevier County sometime before Isaac's birth in 1832. Isaac was born in the Jones Cove community of Sevier County and moved to Sevierville before the Civil War.⁸ A 1910 *Sevier County Republican News* obituary stated that Dockery had

⁴ Sevier County Public Library, 1920 to 1930 Sevier County Census. Retrieved online November 8, 2002: <http://www.sevierlibrary.org/genealogy/Census/index.html>.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Sevier County Quick Facts from the US Census Bureau*. Retrieved online August 1, 2002: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/47/47155.html>].

⁶ Sevier County Public Library, 1880 Sevier County Census. Retrieved online November 8, 2002: <http://www.sevierlibrary.org/genealogy/Census/index1880.html>.

⁷ Robbie Jones, *Historic Architecture of Sevier County* (Sevierville, TN: Smoky Mountain Historical Society, 1997), 263.

⁸ Robbie Jones, "Dockery, Isaac," Carroll V. West and Connie Lester, et al, eds., *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998), 253.

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

worked as a merchant clerk in the home of Henry Thomas, son of Isaac Thomas, one of Sevierville's early white settlers.⁹

As a merchant clerk and free man, Isaac learned to read, write, and operate a business. On the U.S. Census Bureau forms, Isaac Dockery was a part of the Thomas household until 1870, when he was then listed as head of his own household. Charlotte "Lottie" Thomas, who became Dockery's wife in 1853, was a slave in Isaac Thomas's home. Unfortunately, family historians have not been able to document the relationship between Isaac Dockery and Charlotte "Lottie" Thomas before their marriage. However, it is believed that Isaac Dockery met Lottie Thomas while working for Henry A. Thomas. The marriage of Isaac and Lottie Thomas produced 15 children - 8 girls and 7 boys.¹⁰ Isaac Dockery began his brick making trade in the late 1860s and constructed brick kilns along Middle Creek, east of Sevierville. After Isaac Dockery's sons became adults, he and his sons started their own business in Newport, Tennessee under the name of Isaac Dockery and Sons, Contractors in Brick.¹¹

Dockery not only excelled as a master brick mason, but he also taught generations of brick masons to continue the tradition. All of the sons and daughters learned the family trade. Juanita Lundy said her grandmother, Molly Dockery Burden, and great-aunt, Nancy Dockery Coleman, laid some of the brick for New Salem Baptist Church. Lundy remembers that she and her sisters carried food and water to her father and work hands as they worked day and night molding and drying brick in the 1920s. Dockery's trademark was to inscribe his initials, "I D," in a brick, sometimes with a date as well, although no brick of the New Salem Baptist Church is known to contain this imprint.¹² He left a legacy for his descendants in the historic buildings around Sevierville. The Dockery family made brick for such buildings as the Sevier County Courthouse, which was built in the 1890s, and the Murphy College Institute (1890) that presently houses the Church of God Home for Children. New Salem Baptist Church had a dual purpose as an educational center as well as a place to worship.

Lundy tells of the brick-making process used by her father. "It began by digging a pit in the field of the pit site. The pit grew larger and larger as more clay was dug from the sides to make mud. Sometimes nearly an entire hillside was taken. Once the mud was mixed, bricks were made by a mule-powered device and poured into molds that were sand covered. This is similar to the way a cake pan is dusted with flour to make the cake turn out. A field was then scraped and rows of the brick were laid in the sun for a few days to dry. After drying, the bricks were cautiously picked up. Some were used for the kiln itself. The rest were used inside

⁹ Martha Burden Bowden, *Mountain of Dreams* (Nandel Publishing Company, 1988), 11.

¹⁰ Martha Burden Bowden. *Mountain of Dreams*, 10-11.

¹¹ Martha Burden Bowden, *Mountain of Dreams*, 12.

¹² Robbie Jones, *Historic Architecture*, 248.

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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

the kiln. The kiln would become as large as needed to fire the bricks. Firewood was carried and corded sufficiently to last the entire process. It was like watching ants at work. Many were working different jobs at the same time. The final process in brick making was allowing the bricks to cool a few days so they could be removed from the kiln.” Lundy recalls hearing Phillip Wynn say he and some friends went to the kiln at night to roast weenies as bricks were being made for buildings at Murphy College.¹³ While making and laying brick in some of Sevier County’s historic buildings, Dockery descendants were laying educational foundations for the Black community as well.

Oral history states that the men of the Dockery family worked daily in the brick kiln, except for Sunday, making, firing, and collecting the bricks that were made for the church. Dockery women also worked, not only on housework, but also as the main source of transportation of the bricks from the field to the church site. This was an unusual family tradition for the late 1880s that supports the claims of uniqueness in reference to this church and its history. It has been said that without the work and skill from both the men and women in this family that the church would have never come into existence. When Dockery died in 1910, his obituary states, that “he was strictly honest and enjoyed the respect and esteem of all who knew him both white and colored.”¹⁴ It was said by Isaac Dockery’s great-granddaughter, Martha Burden Bowden that “if Isaac Dockery had not dreamed his dreams and dared to be different during his time in history,” the family would not have had “its strengths, heritage, and the determination to work for changes in a society that stagnates and holds a tight reign on the progress of some of its members.”¹⁵

Isaac Dockery is credited with producing the bricks for several Sevierville buildings in the late nineteenth century including the Sevier County Courthouse (1896), the Sevierville Masonic Lodge (1893), and the Murphy College Building (1890), all of which are still standing. Dockery passed on his brick mason skills to his son-in-law, Paris Witt McMahan, a former slave, who owned and operated the Riverside Steam Brick Company and brick kilns in and around Sevierville until the early twentieth century. Dockery’s master brick mason skills have also continued to live on through his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Isaac Dockery and Sons constructed other brick buildings around the turn of the century. Dockery, and later descendants, who include family names like McMahan, Burden, Coleman, Brabson, and Chandler, also constructed many brick buildings in Sevier and neighboring counties. The bricks were made in the family kilns. The buildings included the First Baptist Church in Sevierville, the former New Central Hotel, which is where the present Sevier County Bank Loan Department is located, the former theater building at the corner of Court Avenue and Commerce Street, the former Bank of Sevierville building on Court Avenue, Broady Hospital and the Yarberry Hospital, now the Sevier County Health Office on Cedar Street. All were built around the 1920s.

¹³ Juanita Burden Lundy. Interviewed by Courtney E. Dollar, 27 June 2002.

¹⁴ Martha Burden Bowden. *Mountain of Dreams*, 25.

¹⁵ Martha Burden Bowden, *Mountain of Dreams*, 9.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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New Salem Baptist Church
Sevier County, Tennessee

Although Isaac Dockery constructed many buildings in Sevier County, it is the New Salem Baptist Church that best represents his life and work as a master brick mason. Robbie Jones states, “The New Salem Baptist Church, which he built in 1886 for the local Black community, remains his most significant building.”¹⁶ His first and most successful project was the planning and construction of this church. He completed the church with the help of all of his family in 1886. The church is said to be standing today because of its well-planned and well-crafted design. When the family dug into the church ground in 1980 to build a monument, they could not find the bottom of the church’s footers. Charles Birden said, “I dug down six feet to pour the footers for the monument and I still did not even begin to find the footers on the church. It is utterly amazing how much skill Grandpa Dockery must have possessed with so few tools in his day. It is almost like he predicted the future and knew how to prepare this church for the test of time let alone the test of raging flood waters from the creek that has risen in the past.”¹⁷

To honor Isaac Dockery’s contributions to the County, a historical marker is placed on the Sevier County courthouse lawn. The marker’s inscription reads, “A native of Sevier County, Isaac Dockery, an African-American brick maker and mason, established brick kilns near Sevierville including the Masonic Lodge (1893), New Salem Baptist Church (1886), and the Sevier County Courthouse (1896). A talented master builder, he taught several generations of local brick masons.” In addition, the descendants of Isaac Dockery, who reunite every year to remember their rich Black history, erected a freestanding brick monument at the New Salem Baptist Church to memorialize the history of the church and its builder, Isaac Dockery.

New Salem’s importance to the community is enhanced because it is the first and oldest surviving brick church in the county and is the only remaining building associated with the nineteenth century African-American community.¹⁸ This property was also used as a place of recreation for the local Black families who lived and worked on the surrounding land. This tradition of recreation and culture continues on today. The New Salem Baptist Church is now the site of yearly family reunions of the Isaac Dockery family and their descendants.

Architecturally, the New Salem Baptist Church represents local craftsmanship and is an excellent example of vernacular Gothic Revival church architecture. The steeply pitched roof, gable front, and rectangular form make the building similar to many other local churches that were constructed in Sevier County during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Gothic Revival detailing is seen in the triangular windows that form points in each of the buildings ten windows. Although Sevierville is not considered rural, it does meet the population

¹⁶ Robbie Jones, “Dockery, Isaac,” 253.

¹⁷ Charles Robert Birden. Interviewed by Courtney E. Dollar, 29 July 2002.

¹⁸ Robbie Jones, *Historic Architecture of Sevier County*, 50.

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requirements of the MPS on Rural African-American Churches in TN MPS and it was assessed as part of that project. The document notes that, "For the era of 1850-1890, Criterion C is superbly represented by the New Salem Baptist Church, which is attributed to master craftsman Isaac Dockery of Sevier County."¹⁹ In evaluating rural African-American churches throughout Tennessee for the MPS, Carroll Van West observed, "The most typical rural African-American church building for 1850-1890 is a one-story, gable roofed, rectangular-shaped building, with the primary entrance on the gable end. The foundation may be brick, concrete, or stone piers. The walls are frame and the windows typically are square or rectangular."²⁰ While the New Salem Baptist Church is a one-story, gable roofed, rectangular-shaped building with its primary entrance on the gable end, its construction is of brick, making it quite distinct among other churches built during this time. The brick construction represents the contribution of Isaac Dockery, a local craftsman and master brick mason. In addition the New Salem Baptist Church is architecturally significant for its simple, but well-executed vernacular Gothic Revival design.

The New Salem Baptist Church is significant on multiple levels. It is a key building in the history and culture of the Sevierville's Black community beginning in the late 1800s to the present day. Built by master brick mason, Isaac Dockery, the building represents the strong tradition of family and community cohesiveness. For the Black people of this community, New Salem Baptist Church has always been the center of every important event including entertainment, education, weddings, funerals, worship services, and reunions for 116 years. With the preservation of its history and structure, the church will continue to represent the lives of this community for many years to come.

¹⁹ Historic Rural African-American Churches in Tennessee, 1850-1970," Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University, 1995, E-34.

²⁰ "Powerful Artifacts," Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University, 2000, 31.

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GEOGRAPHIC DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The New Salem Baptist Church sits on less than one acre of land on Eastgate Road, and is located on Parcel 1 on Sevier County Tax Map No. 61-D.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated boundary includes the parcel of land historically associated with the church, and included within the original deed.

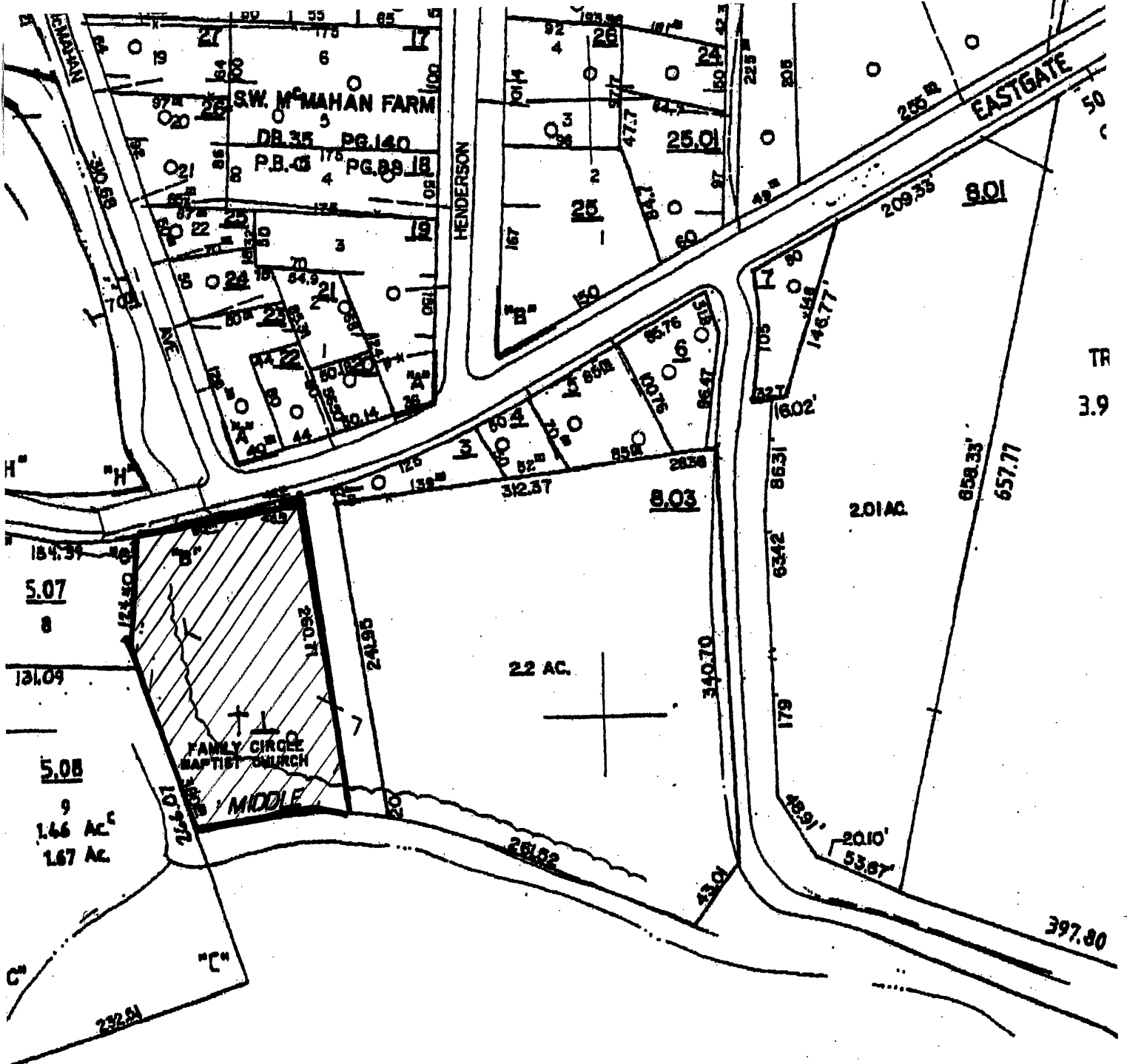
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Tax map 1" = approximately 130'



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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photos by: Amanda Wild
Date: July 2002
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

South façade, facing north
1 of 6

South façade and west elevation, facing northeast
2 of 6

East and north (rear) elevations, facing southwest
3 of 6

Interior of sanctuary, facing north
4 of 6

Interior of sanctuary, facing south
5 of 6

Interior of sanctuary, facing southeast
6 of 6