1. NAME

HISTORIC

Purdie House and Purdie Methodist Church

AND/OR COMMON

2. LOCATION

House—on dirt lane 0.2 mi East of NC 87
Church—on West side of NC 87, 0.05 mi North of SR 1342

3. CLASSIFICATION

CITY, TOWN

Tar Heel

STATE

North Carolina

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME House: Mr. & Mrs. Jack Mitchell

Church: 1307 Glenwood Ave.

Raleigh, NC

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 37

also: Reverend Henry Lee, Dublin, NC

CITY, TOWN

Tar Heel

STATE

North Carolina

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Bladen County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Elizabethtown

STATE

North Carolina

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE
Purdie House and Purdie Church, located on opposite sides of N. C. 87, are related through long association. The Purdie House is an imposing, recently restored Federal style plantation house dramatically situated on the edge of the western bluff of the Cape Fear River. The two-story brick house is approached by a long straight avenue leading from N. C. 87. The land (south) and water (north) elevations are nearly identical, each with a double gallery.

The house, which is four bays wide and two bays deep, is set on a full brick basement, laid in one-to-three bond. The brick walls rise in Flemish bond throughout both stories on the front and rear and through the first story on the ends, with a combination of Flemish and common bond in the gable ends. A wide brick belt course delineates the stories on the ends. The steep gable roof, covered with composition shingles, terminates in gable parapets with corbelled steps at the ends of the parapets and half way up the southern slope. An interior end brick chimney projects from the apex of each gable end. The east chimney has a segmental-arched fireplace at the basement level, while the west chimney consists of two stacks which rise independently from the basement level, each supported by a round-headed structural arch, the stacks joining in the attic to exit as one.

The main entrance, located asymmetrically in the second bay from the west end of the main (south) facade has a double door, each leaf containing five flat panels, surmounted by a five-pane transom and set within a molded architrave. The corresponding upper gallery door of the main facade is identical, as are the lower and upper gallery doors in the rear elevation. The door openings are surmounted by flat arches.

Three types of window treatments occur on the house. Wooden grills with three pane casements, surmounted by segmental brick arches, illuminate the basement. Nine-over-nine sash with molded architraves and plain sills, flanked by blinds, occurs in both stories of all elevations. Small two-over-two pane sash windows, each with a segmental-arched opening and a single blind, flank the chimney stack in each gable end.

The galleries are nearly identical. Both porches rest on new foundations consisting of brick piers with latticed brick infill. The fabric of both upper galleries is original, and the lower gallery fabric is a recent replacement which matches that of the upper galleries. Flat-paneled Doric pillars and corresponding pilasters support both galleries, which are enclosed by balustrades of slender rectangular balusters and an oval handrail. The ceilings are covered with flush sheathing. Both porches are sheltered by shed roofs with boxed cornices, although the rear porch roof has been raised at least once and now slopes from the apex of the main roof. The balustrade extends out to flank the steps which ascend to the porch in line with each first story entrance. The western bay of the rear gallery is enclosed at both levels. The inner half of this bay contains the only original stair from the first to the second story. This porch stair rises in two flights to the upper gallery; the first flight is open, with a closed string and a railing identical to the porch balustrade, and the second flight is enclosed with wide, vertical flush sheathing. Between the two flights is a latticed door. A very narrow enclosed stair, protected by a batten door, ascends in a single flight from the upper gallery to the attic. The remainder of the enclosed bay at each level contains a room, accessible through a door leading from the porch.
A gabled brick bulkhead with replacement batten doors, which abuts the north bay of the east elevation, shelters the basement entrance. A small one-story frame wing, a pre-Civil War addition, projects from the west end of the rear porch. This wing, set on a brick foundation, is covered with plain siding and capped with a gable roof finished with boxed eaves. An exterior end single stepped shoulder brick chimney laid in one-to-eight bond projects on the west side. Nine-over-nine sash windows with shaped surrounds pierce the wing and are flanked by blinds. The shed stoop, which protects the six flat-paneled door in the south elevation, is a recent addition, and corresponds to the main galleries in appearance.

The original interior Federal floor plan and fabric are essentially intact. The original floor plan consisted of a narrow center hall, with one large east side room and two smaller west side rooms at both levels. An interior stair was added in the nineteenth century, and the hall widened to the east on both levels to accommodate it. The open-string stair rises in a single flight against the south wall to the second story. The railing consists of a thick turned newel post, slender square balusters and a shaped handrail. Curiously, the apparently original attic stair was inside the main block. It was entered through a door in the west wall of the hall, and rose in a single enclosed flight, in the northeast corner of the northwest second floor room, to the attic. This was probably removed when the porch attic stair was constructed. The interior stair door still remains. A bath was added in the southwest corner of the east second story room.

With the exception of the four flat-paneled doors in the later east hall wall, the interior doors have six raised panels, and most are hung on H-L hinges. Simple molded architraves surround all interior openings. The ceiling wall and upper surfaces are plastered throughout the main block. The main parlor (east room) and the center hall at the first level have a raised-paneled wainscot with a molded chair rail, and a molded, pierced dentil cornice. The west side first-story rooms have flush-sheathed dados and molded chair rails. The cornice in the southwest room is a twentieth century addition. The second-story rooms have plastered dados and molded chair rails. A variety of mantels exists in the rooms. The finest of these, located in the main parlor, is a wide tripartite Federal-Greek Revival mantel with turned Ionic colonnettes of vernacular design. The northwest first floor room and the west side second floor rooms contain identical secondary mantels, which appear to be original. Each of these is a wide three-part molded surround capped by a narrow shelf. The bracketted mantel in the first floor southwest room is a late nineteenth century replacement, and the plain mantel with square pilasters in the east second story room is probably also a replacement.

The cellar has bare whitewashed brick wall surfaces and exposed ceiling joists. The fabric of the rear porch rooms has been altered. The lower room now contains a bath and the upper room is used for storage. The west wing contains one room, covered with horizontal sheathing forming a dado, a plain chair rail, and vertical sheathing covering the upper wall surfaces. The hand-hewn and straight-sawn ceiling joists have been
exposed. The simple Federal style mantel has two flat panels ornamenting the frieze.

Purdie Methodist Church, located close to N. C. 87 opposite the Purdie House, is a well-preserved mid-nineteenth century temple-form Greek Revival building. The modest frame structure, three bays wide and four bays deep, is set on brick foundation piers with cinderblock infill. The building, covered with plain siding, and edged with corner posts, terminates in a gable roof with a plain frieze, and a simple molded box cornice. The main (east) facade pediment tympanum is sheathed with plain siding. On the rear elevation, the boxed cornices return and a flush tapering raking cornice outlines the gable end.

The main entrance, in the center bay of the main facade, contains a double door, each leaf containing three flat panels, surmounted by a large, twelve-pane transom and set within a mitred, molded architrave. On each side of the main entrance is a twelve-over-twelve sash window set within an identical architrave and flanked by blinds. An identical window pierces each bay of the side (north and south) elevations. In the east bay of the north side, a single, four flat panel door with an identical architrave opens to the gallery stair. Projecting from the center bay of the rear elevation is a three-sided apse, probably a late nineteenth century addition. In each side face of the apse is a four-over-four pane sash window with a simple surround and flanking blinds.

The interior, which contains a small entrance hall and an auditorium, is finished with vertically sheathed wainscots, plastered walls, and narrow sheathed wooden ceilings. The entrance hall is actually the space beneath the gallery, and is separated from the auditorium by the partition wall which supports the gallery. An enclosed stair rises in the southwest corner in a single flight, with winders, to the gallery. A door containing two vertical flat panels opens to a closet beneath the stair. Two doors with four flat panels each set within a Greek Revival architrave consisting of a plain, strip-bordered surround with square corner blocks with raised motifs, open from the entrance hall into the auditorium. The window surrounds are identical, but have plain corner blocks. A flat-paneled wooden railing protects the balcony. A segmental arched opening, framed by flanking Ionic pilasters and a sheathed soffit with a scalloped drip course, leads into the apse. In front of the apse is a raised platform surrounded by a simple railing with chamfered newels. The handsome pulpit, perhaps original to the building, is located in the center of the platform and consists of a flat-paneled base with a molded cornice and a podium. The pews, with straight, solid backs and sides, are of indeterminant age.
The Purdie Plantation, owned by the locally prominent planter family from 1796 to 1946, includes an imposing Federal plantation house evidently built between 1803 and 1809 for James S. Purdie, and a well-preserved Greek Revival chapel probably built for his daughter-in-law Anna Marie Purdie about 1845. The plantation was visited occasionally by the itinerant Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury, who preached in the present chapel's antecedent in 1803 and 1811. The brick plantation house is among the two finest antebellum plantation houses in the county, sited, like its elder, Oakland, high on a bluff overlooking the Cape Fear River, with double galleries at front and rear providing imposing facades to land and water. Significant to the development of coastal domestic architecture is the survival of the original main stair on the rear porch, and the presence of Federal finish (the earliest known in the county) in a house very similar to the Georgian-style Oakland.

In 1800 the State of North Carolina granted to James Samuel Purdie "320 acres...on the South west side of the North west fork of the Cape Fear river" in Bladen County. Evidently it was on this tract that Purdie built a Methodist chapel around 1800 as well as his second plantation house which, according to his descendents, he completed between 1803 and 1809. A map of North Carolina drawn by Jonathan Price and John Strother in 1808 shows that Purdie was living on the north side of the Cape Fear when he built the chapel. He soon moved across the river when the new plantation house was completed near the church. Apparently the first Purdie house has since vanished.

The tax and census records for Bladen County indicate that James Samuel Purdie was a wealthy planter of some prominence. According to a Bladen County tax list for 1788, he owned 1,920 acres of land in that county, and the 1790 census for North Carolina credits him with owning 28 slaves. He also served as a private in the Continental Line during the American Revolution and was sheriff of Bladen County in the 1780s.

According to local tradition, the Purdie chapel of 1800 was one of the first Methodist churches in the upper Cape Fear Valley. On at least three occasions, Bishop Francis Asbury, an influential official of the Methodist Church who traveled extensively throughout North Carolina during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, stopped at the Purdie plantation to rest and deliver a sermon in the chapel. In February, 1803, he recorded in his journal that he "had about twenty-two miles to make to reach Purdy's Chapel!" where he "preached upon Titus. I have had a day and night of temptation," he wrote. Asbury also mentioned in his journal in February, 1811, that he stopped at "James Purdy's" in Bladen County where he "preached in the evening," and moved on to Samuel Richardson's plantation across the river. In January, 1813, "a bitter cold ride of thirty miles brought us to James Purdy's," the bishop noted, and "I have a high fever, and [am] in great pain." The Methodist clergyman probably spent the night in the new Purdie House on his visit of 1813.
James S. Purdie died in February, 1818. In his will he left to his son, James B. Purdie, his "plantation...with all the plantation tools, household and kitchen furniture, and stock of every description." Evidently James B. Purdie's share of the estate included the mansion house because his father, in his will, instructed his son to "erect in some eligible spot on said land a commodious dwelling house...single story for the use and convenience of [his] wife during the period of her widowhood." Since the chapel was located only a short distance from the mansion house, it probably included in the conveyance.

In his will of 1834 James B. Purdie left his wife, Anna Maria, a portion of his real and personal property "including the mansion house." Apparently between that year and 1845 the Purdie Chapel was destroyed. It was in 1845, according to evidence found by Reverend Nash Odom of Dublin, that a new chapel was standing on the Purdie plantation. Reverend Odom's evidence is a letter written in March, 1845, by John P. Leonard of Fayetteville to Samuel Robeson, who "lived just above Purdie Church." In his letter, Leonard included a notice of a temperance lecture which was to be held at the Purdie Church. "Set up the notice," he wrote to Robeson, "at the Methodist Church, the one lately built near you, and give other notice as you think proper."

A cemetery was located at the site of the old chapel, and, in addition to members of the Purdie family, several Methodist ministers were buried there including Reverend Samuel N. Richardson and Reverend Alex B. Smith. Although there is a cemetery near the present chapel, no one was buried there until 1882.

As owner of the Purdie plantation, Anna Maria Purdie was probably responsible for having the second Purdie Chapel built only a short distance from the first church. The 1850 census reveals that she owned 500 acres of improved and 2,812 acres of unimproved land in the county. She also owned 60 slaves who in 1849 produced 1,700 bushels of corn, 1,500 pounds of rice, and raised livestock valued at $1,125. One of her sons, Thomas J. Purdie, served during the Civil War as commander of a Confederate company known as the "Bladen Guards." The unit was also called "Captain Purdie's Company" and saw service on Zeke's Island in the Cape Fear River. Evidently before she died in 1878, Anna Maria Purdie conveyed the portion of the Purdie estate that included the house and new chapel to her other son, John W. Purdie.

John W. Purdie aided his mother in managing the Purdie plantation, and he continued to run it after her death. He also served in the North Carolina House of Commons, 1858-1859, and in the Senate, 1868-1869. In 1869, however, he was disqualified by the conditions of the newly approved Fourteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution and was removed from his seat in the state senate. The Fourteenth Amendment was the result of the efforts of a Republican congress to insure civil rights for blacks and unionists in the South during Congressional Reconstruction, 1867-1877. Purdie was probably removed from the Senate because he had held state office prior to the Civil War and had subsequently lent his support to the Confederacy, an act which according to Section Three
of the Fourteenth Amendment, prohibited him from holding further national or state office unless two-thirds of both houses of Congress approved.  

In 1880 he sold to the trustees of the Purdie Church for one dollar "that piece or parcel of land upon which the Methodist Church known as Purdie's now stands." The building is still owned by the church members, and services are held there.

In 1884 John W. Purdie willed all of his estate to his wife, Sally, to be held in trust for the benefit of their children. In 1946 the descendents of Sally Purdie jointly sold the Purdie land (approximately 167 acres) and the house to S. A. Bedsole for $10,000. Mr. Bedsole has since sold the Purdie Place to Dr. David Lloyd Pate. In 1972 Dr. Pate sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Jack Mitchell who now reside there.  

FOOTNOTES


2 Nash A. Odon, A History of Purdie Methodist Church, an unpublished research paper, Dublin, N.C., p. 1; W. P. Cumming, North Carolina in Maps (Raleigh: State Department of Archives and History, 1966), plate XIX.


5 Bladen County Record of Wills, Office of the Clerk of Superior Court, Bladen County Courthouse, Elizabethtown, N.C., Will Book 2:323, hereinafter cited as Bladen Will Books.

6 Bladen Will Book 1:17.

7 Odom, A History of Purdie Methodist Church, pp. 2-3. The original letter from Leonard to Robeson is in possession of the family of Mr. Jim Robeson (deceased) of Tar Heel, North Carolina.
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GEORGICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

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F--17/706000/3843010

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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D [1,7] [7] [0,6] [0,210] [3,84] [4,3] [0,10]

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

NAME / TITLE Description by Ruth Little-Stokes, survey specialist

SIGNIFICANCE by Joe Mahley, survey specialist

ORGANIZATION Archives & History, Preservation Section

STREET & NUMBER 109 East Jones St.

CITY OR TOWN Raleigh

STATE North Carolina

TELEPHONE 829-4763

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

DATE

DATE

DATE

DATE


Purdie House and Purdie Methodist Church
Bladen County, North Carolina

UTM References
A--17/706060/3843060
B--17/706080/3843025
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