

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number NW side N.C. 301, 0.25 miles SW of jct w/SR 1171

not for publication

city, town Benson

vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Johnston

code 101

zip code 27504

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

12-14-90

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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 \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from Instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

FUNERARY: cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from Instructions)

RELIGION: religious structure

FUNERARY: cemetery

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from Instructions)

OTHER: Vernacular church

Materials (enter categories from Instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls Wood: weatherboard

roof METAL: tin

other ASPHALT

### Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church is a modest frame vernacular building located on a one acre predominately cleared knoll overlooking NC 301 between Benson and Four Oaks in Banner Township in Johnston County. North and west of the building is a cemetery and near the east elevation of the building are a small frame woodshed sheathed in corrugated metal and a concrete cover marking a well. On the far east and west lot lines of the property, screened by pine trees, are two small frame outhouses, also sheathed in corrugated metal. Near the edge of the woods on the west side is a post-and wire support for picnic table boards that is about twenty-five feet long and waist high. (The shed, the outhouses and the picnic support are small secondary resources that are not counted.) The property is roughly bisected from the northeast to the south by a dirt drive that encircles the church building and continues north to join the remains of the nineteenth century Raleigh Road on the property boundary that was replaced in the early 1930s by NC 301. At that time, the church was moved out of the path of NC 301, about fifty yards north of its original location, and closer to its cemetery. The present church property, following the 1980 sale of the southern half of its original three-acre tract that was separated from the church building by the construction of NC 301, is an irregular tract containing approximately 1.0 acres, bounded on the south by NC 301 and surrounded by cultivated fields and pine woods.

### 1. The Church. ca. 1834 or ca. 1866. Contributing

The austere vernacular church building is a rectangle 48 feet long and 36 feet wide that rests on brick piers and recent concrete block underpinnings. The floor joists rest on parallel rows of large heart-pine blocks, and some joists show circular saw marks, suggesting that they may have been replaced when the building was moved in the early 1930s. The building is one story tall, five bays wide (except on the south elevation where it is three bays wide because of a 1980 addition) and three bays deep. The structure is timber frame construction covered with weatherboards terminating in narrow cornerboards and is sheltered under a front-gable corrugated metal roof with a plain wooden fascia. A square brick flue with a metal cap rises out of the north plane of the roof and the rafter ends are concealed in a returned box cornice.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

The fenestration pattern is symmetrical on the long, front and rear elevations and almost symmetrical on the end walls. The east and west gable ends contain single doors that are very slightly off-center (to avoid the row of central interior supports) and flanked by single windows. The north (rear) elevation contains pairs of evenly spaced windows flanking a smaller, central window placed higher up on the facade to illuminate the altar. The south (main) elevation originally matched the north except that the central opening was a door. All of the windows in the building contain plain wooden six-over-six, double hung sashes in simple flat surrounds with plain sills. Probably in the late nineteenth century, replacement doors containing six horizontal raised panels set in plain wooden surrounds were installed at each entrance. The west replacement door remains, but the east one was replaced by a modern four-panel wooden door and that on the south was replaced by modern double-leaf four-panel wooden doors about 1960. The other late nineteenth century doors are stored in the church. The only major alteration to the building appears on the main elevation. Here, in 1980, a 12-foot by 24-foot weatherboarded gable-front wing was added to accommodate a small foyer and the building's first bathrooms. This addition eliminated the interior windows of the original pairs flanking the original main entrance (the surrounds remain in the sanctuary but the sashes are replaced by plywood), giving the elevation its current three-bay configuration.

The interior of the church displays the now rare meetinghouse plan and is largely intact. It is composed of one room divided through its width, parallel the the long front and rear walls, with a row of trussed wooden posts. Originally there was a wood-burning stove near the center of the room. The interior walls are finished with whitewashed, planed, heart pine horizontal flush sheathing, the ceiling is finished with wooden board and batten sheathing and the floor is heart pine boards. The focal point of the room is the raised, railed heart pine altar with a central pulpit distinguished by paired raised vertical panels. The altar platform is located under the central, small window on the north wall. To each side, north of the trussed posts are a row of five plain wooden pews oriented north-south, perpendicular to the front of the altar. Parallel to the altar and south of the posts, two rows of five pews each flank the aisle leading from the main entrance. The east pews are designated as the men's, the west the women's and the south pews are the "neighbor pews." There is a narrow board containing a row of metal hooks for hats nailed to the trusses adjacent to the men's pews. The present pews replaced the original church pews about 1940. The original pegged pews are composed of heart pine board seats surmounted by a single rail backrest and supported by V-

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

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notched upright boards. Those still in the possession of the church are presently arranged along the east and west walls of the room. The only other changes to the interior are the installation of liquid propane gas heaters and ceiling fans with globe lamps.

2. The Cemetery. Late Nineteenth Century-1940. Contributing Site  
A small, unfenced, L-shaped cemetery located about 175 feet north and west of the church. The north section is considered the "first" cemetery and contains marked graves dating from 1890, and the west the "second" one which contains graves dating from the 1920s through the present time. Together, they contain about 175 marked graves of church members and, according to local tradition, some unmarked graves of casualties from the Battle of Bentonville. Many of the family plots are delineated with stone or cement curbing and contain graves covered with swept sand or gravel or marked with rows of sea shells.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

1740s, settled in the Sandy Creek section of what is now Randolph County. The radical, evangelical fervor of Stearns' preaching gave rise to a Baptist movement known as the "Second Awakening" that was so powerful that it swept the state and gave rise to the present mainstream Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. (1) Those conservative, Calvinistic Baptists who did not subscribe to the radical missionary precepts embodied in the "Second Awakening," broke away from Stearns' evangelical form of the faith in the early nineteenth century and withdrew into congregations defined as "The Old School Baptists," or similar names that distilled into the present Primitive Baptist title. (2)

Johnston County was settled in the 1740s by Scottish Highlanders and Scotch-Irish immigrants from Pennsylvania. From its beginnings, it was known as a bastion of the Baptist faith, a condition that reflected the staunch Calvinism of the early settlers. The only known eighteenth century congregations in the county were Baptist and by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, several Baptist congregations were flourishing. (3) Among those were the Union Baptist Church and the Fellowship Baptist Church, both formed ca. 1806, the Hannah's Creek Baptist Church, formed in 1817, and the Cross Roads Baptist Church formed in 1825. (4) In 1826, these early Johnston County churches broke away from the evangelical Raleigh Baptist Association and proclaimed their pride in "primitive Christianity." (5) The fact that several early Johnston County Baptist churches chose to retain the Calvinistic, conservative faith that pre-dates the "Second Awakening" is an indication of the very conservative, traditional natures of the Scotch-Irish settlers of the county.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, Primitive Baptists were known as insular, law-abiding, politically conservative members of the community, as illustrated by the following passage in The Smithfield Herald, dated 3 December, 1885.

". . . They believe in immersion, in close communion, in a spiritual manifestation, in brotherly love and they carry out the teaching of the bible that the church should settle disputes between members. If two members have a law suit they attempt to settle it. This often leads to no end of trouble and strife. In Edgecombe [County] it is a by-word with the merchants that if a man is a Primitive Baptist he will pay his debts. With the politician it is known that if a man is a Primitive Baptist he will vote the Democratic ticket. Having a personal acquaintance with several hundred of this faith, the writer knows but one who .

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

votes the Republican ticket, and does not recall half a dozen who are not strictly and conscientiously honest. "Pay all thou owest" is literally interpreted by them."

The Primitive Baptist faith flourished in Johnston County before World War II and Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church hosted the annual meetings of the Little River Primitive Baptist Association that numbered in the thousands in the early twentieth century. (6) Membership in the church began declining in the years following the War because the doctrines of the faith precluded proselytizing, the population of the state began shifting from conservative rural areas to sophisticated urban settings, and because many of the early-twentieth century members of the faith became elderly.

### Architectural Context.

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church belongs to the Johnston County collection of nineteenth century simple, unadorned church buildings. Tom Butchko describes this collection in "The Architecture of Johnston County" as follows: "The extreme conservatism of the county's Baptists, primarily Primitive, resulted in the erection of simple, unadorned houses of worship. . . . The traditional, frame structure is a model of austere, fundamental beliefs, without any trappings of style or liturgy. This simple block was the predominant form in the county." There are seven such church buildings identified in the county; Hannah's Creek is the only one of its type still existing in Banner Township.

Unlike many others, Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church is one of a very few church buildings in the state that has retained its original meetinghouse plan. This plan, a U-shaped arrangement of pews (with designated sides for men and women) around an altar and pulpit centered on a long wall of a rectangular block, was often employed in early rural Protestant North Carolina church buildings, but has become increasingly rare as they have been remodeled or replaced. (An example is the Southwest Primitive Baptist Church in Onslow County dating from the second quarter of the nineteenth century [N.R. 1989] and thought to have originally been arranged in a meetinghouse plan that was altered later.) This arrangement was employed by many early nineteenth century North Carolina Protestant congregations, probably as a reaction to the Anglican church plan that featured a communion table opposite the main entrance with a pulpit to one side. It was largely abandoned in the 1830s and '40s when many Protestant congregations founded in the evangelical fervor of the early part of the century were told to become "enlightened, honorable and liberal," and to build churches that were "neat and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

comfortable in every way." This admonition demanded replacing the old-fashioned meetinghouse with a modern aisle plan church house with the altar on the gable end opposite the main entrance. There is another surviving meetinghouse plan church building, the c.1828 Brown Marsh Presbyterian Church [N.R. 1975], built by the Cape Fear Scots in Bladen County, in the eastern part of the state. In the western Piedmont are the 1785 Grace Reformed Church in Rowan County [N.R. 1972] and the 1818 St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Catawba County [N.R. 1971], both of which display the meetinghouse plan with a gallery. (7) All of the above cited churches designate men's pews on the east side of the altar and women's pews on the west side. Hannah's Creek Church conforms to this pattern except that those pews directly opposite the altar and pulpit are designated as "neighbor pews," an arrangement that has not been noted in any other meetinghouse plan church documented in North Carolina. (8) The exterior of Hannah's Creek reflects this interior pattern with the front door in the center of the south wall opposite the altar and pulpit, the men's door in the east gable end, and the women's in the west gable end.

The cemetery to the north and west of the church building displays stone grave markers that progress through late Victorian to modern styles and date from the the early 1890s until the present time. Interred are deceased bearing common Johnston County names such as Creech, Poole, Holmes and Penny. The cemetery is typically Primitive Baptist in style because a number of the graves are delineated by swept sand or gravel surfaces which is a white folk tradition, and one grave is marked by rows of seashells, a practice thought to be a black folk tradition. (9)

Historical Background.

The Hannah's Creek Church was constituted by Elders Nathan Gulley and George Nance on the third Saturday in September, 1817 as a branch of the Old Mill Creek Church of Johnston County that was eventually dissolved when a new [church] house was built and occupied by the Free Will Baptists. (10) The elders founded their new church on the articles of faith that included belief in baptism by immersion, justification of the imputed righteousness of Christ, the final perseverance of the saints through grace into eternal life and a belief in predestination. (11) The articulation and practice of these founding tenets pre-supposed that the Hannah's Creek Church would become an "Old School" or Primitive Baptist Church after the Baptist schism of 1826. (12) In 1834, the Hannah's Creek congregation was established enough through the ministry of Elder Lewis Cordell that Henry and Sarah Ingram deeded a three-acre tract of land on the Raleigh Road to the trustees of the church for the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

sum of \$2.00. The deed describes the property as the site of the Hannah's Creek Meeting House. (13) According to local tradition, the first church building on the site was a log building, but whether that was the one mentioned in the deed and was temporary while a new church building was constructed upon securing the property by the congregation, or the building mentioned is the present one, is unclear.

During the years prior to the Civil War, the church at Hannah's Creek flourished under the guidance of a succession of elders and was the site of church meetings on the third Sunday of every month, following regular Saturday meetings at which messengers to corresponding churches and the Little River Primitive Baptist Association were chosen. (14) The antebellum membership of the church apparently included the black slaves of the white members, and this pattern of integration continued into the early years of the 20th century. (15)

In 1865, the church Book of Record was burned by Union soldiers as they passed thorough Johnston County from the battle of Bentonville to the state capital, Raleigh. (16) There is no mention in any of the church records that the church building itself was burned, so it is possible that the church book was kept in the church clerk's home or office that was burned. A new Book of Record, beginning with a statement of the articles of faith on which the church was founded and a reconstruction of its history from 1817 until 1866, was started on the third Saturday of August, 1866, and subsequent, regular, detailed entries describing the business meetings and spiritual life of the church have been kept since that date. (17) These record books reveal the democratic organization of the church membership and the charitable attitude it maintained toward its less fortunate members. One example reads as follows:

"On the Saturday "before the third Lord's day in 1877.  
Set in conference, found all in Peace. . .it was agreed  
in conference that Sister Dolly Barker bee allud [allowed]  
for Three Months 50 lbs Bacon and 2 Bushels Corn

Amount from Each Member	
Brother Issac Smith	1 bushel and half of corn
Brother B. Ryals	half Bushel Corn and 12 lb Bacon
Brother J.L. Morgan	13 lbs Bacon
Brother Merritt Woodall	\$2.00
Brother Wm. Lassiter	\$1.00
Brother B. Goodwin	1/2 lbs Bacon and half Bushel Corn"

The church at Hannah's Creek thrived through the late nineteenth and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

early twentieth centuries and the books of record listed many experiences of faith that resulted in baptisms into the congregation. Around the turn of the century, many of the church members were prominent citizens in Banner Township; among them were Dr. Willis Turlington, a physician, Henry Langdon, a merchant, and Tom E. Johnson, a farmer and sometimes church clerk. (18) Although the church was successful, the members did not wish to abandon their simple frame church house. When the nineteenth century Raleigh Road was replaced in the early 1930s by NC 301, the church house was moved out of the path of the new road about 50 yards north of its original location. (19) On the last weekend in September, 1938, the Hannah's Creek Church was the host for the three day meeting of the Little River Primitive Baptist Association that drew ". . .the customary thousands of people to this interesting old church. . ." (20)

Following World War II, membership in the church began to decline as young people migrated to urban areas and the remaining congregation became elderly. In 1980, the congregation sold the two acre south parcel that was formed by the 1930s bisection of their original three acre tract and used the proceeds to build a church addition containing indoor plumbing to accommodate the elderly members. (21) Presently, the congregation of the Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church is composed of eight extremely elderly members, four of whom are inactive, and faces an uncertain future. The July, 1990, completion of Interstate 40 about five miles to the east was recognized as a catalyst for a surge of growth in Banner Township that could engulf the rare and historic church building. (22)

## Footnotes:

1. The Heritage of Johnston County, North Carolina. The Heritage of Johnston County Book Committee in cooperation with The History Division, Hunter Publishing Company, Winston Salem, North Carolina, 1985, pp. 12-14.
2. Paschal, George Washington. History of North Carolina Baptists, Volume II, The General Board, the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, Raleigh, North Carolina, p. 281.
3. The Heritage of Johnston County, North Carolina. The Heritage of Johnston County Book Committee in cooperation with The History Division, Hunter Publishing Company, Winston Salem, North Carolina, 1985, pp. 1-14.
4. Butchko, Tom. "The Architecture of Johnston County." An

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

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unpublished survey report dated 1 March, 1983, on file in the Survey and Planning Section, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, pp. 17-18.

5. The Heritage of Johnston County, North Carolina. The Heritage of Johnston County Book Committee in cooperation with The History Division, Hunter Publishing Company, Winston Salem, North Carolina, 1985, pp. 1-14.

6. Creech, Stella. "Hannah's Creek Church Founded 121 Years Ago," The Smithfield Herald. 20 September, 1938, page 2.

7. Bisher, Catherine W. North Carolina Architecture. The Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina, Inc. and the University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1990, pp. 57-60.

8. Two telephone interviews with Dr. Tim Mattimoe, instructor at Beaufort Community College in Washington, North Carolina and author of a study of Primitive Baptist churches in North Carolina. Also, please refer to the attached sketch floor-plan of Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church.

9. Little, Ruth. Sticks and Stones. An unpublished dissertation completed at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1984.

10. A Book of Record for Hannah's Creek Church, Johnston County, with entries beginning the third Saturday in August, 1866. In the possession of Mrs. Lillie Weaver, former Clerk, Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church.

11. Ibid.

12. The Heritage of Johnston County, North Carolina. The Heritage of Johnston County Book Committee in cooperation with The History Division, Hunter Publishing Company, Winston Salem, North Carolina, 1985, pp. 12-14.

13. Johnston County Register of Deeds, Book Y-2, page 173. Johnston County Courthouse, Smithfield, North Carolina.

14. "A Book of Record for Hannah's Creek Church, Johnston County," with entries beginning the third Saturday in August, 1866. In the possession of Mrs. Lillie Weaver, former Clerk, Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

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15. Creech, Stella. "Hannah's Creek Church Founded 121 Years Ago," The Smithfield Herald. 20 September, 1938, p.2.

16. "A Book of Record for Hannah's Creek Church, Johnston County," with entries beginning the third Saturday in August, 1866. In the possession of Mrs. Lillie Weaver, former Clerk, Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church. Copies of pages on file at the Survey and Planning Office, Division of Archives and History.

17. Various Books of Records for the Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the possession of Mrs. Lillie Weaver, former church Clerk.

18. Creech, Stella. "Hannah's Creek Church Founded 121 Years Ago," The Smithfield Herald. 20 September, 1938, p.2.

19. 24 May, 1990, conversation with Mrs. Lillie Weaver, former church Clerk and daughter of Elder David Escar Parker, preacher for Hannah's Creek Church in the 1960s.

20. Creech, Stella. "Hannah's Creek Church Founded 121 Years Ago," The Smithfield Herald. 20 September, 1938, p. 2.

21. A survey by Linwood E. Byrd, Inc., dated 26 January, 1990, and a 24 May, 1990, conversation with Mrs. Lillie Weaver, former church Clerk.

22. Herndon, Nash. "Benson finds itself crossroads of change," The News and Observer. 11 June, 1990, pp. 1 & 8A.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 1.0 acre

UTM References

A 

17	726510	3921180
Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

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B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Linda Harris Edmisten  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 4 September, 1990  
street & number 2121 Lake Wheeler Road telephone 919-821-9175  
city or town Raleigh state North Carolina zip code 27603

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

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### Bibliography.

"A Book of Record for Hannah's Creek Church, Johnston County," with entries beginning the third Saturday in August, 1866. In the possession of Mrs. Lillie Weaver, former Clerk, Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church.

Paschal, George Washington. History of North Carolina Baptists, Volume II, The General Board, the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, Raleigh, North Carolina.

The Heritage of Johnston County, North Carolina. The Heritage of Johnston County Book Committee in cooperation with The History Division, Hunter Publishing Company, Winston Salem, North Carolina, 1985.

The Smithfield Herald. 3 December, 1885.

The Smithfield Herald. 20 September, 1938.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
Johnston Co., N.C.

Section number 10 Page 1

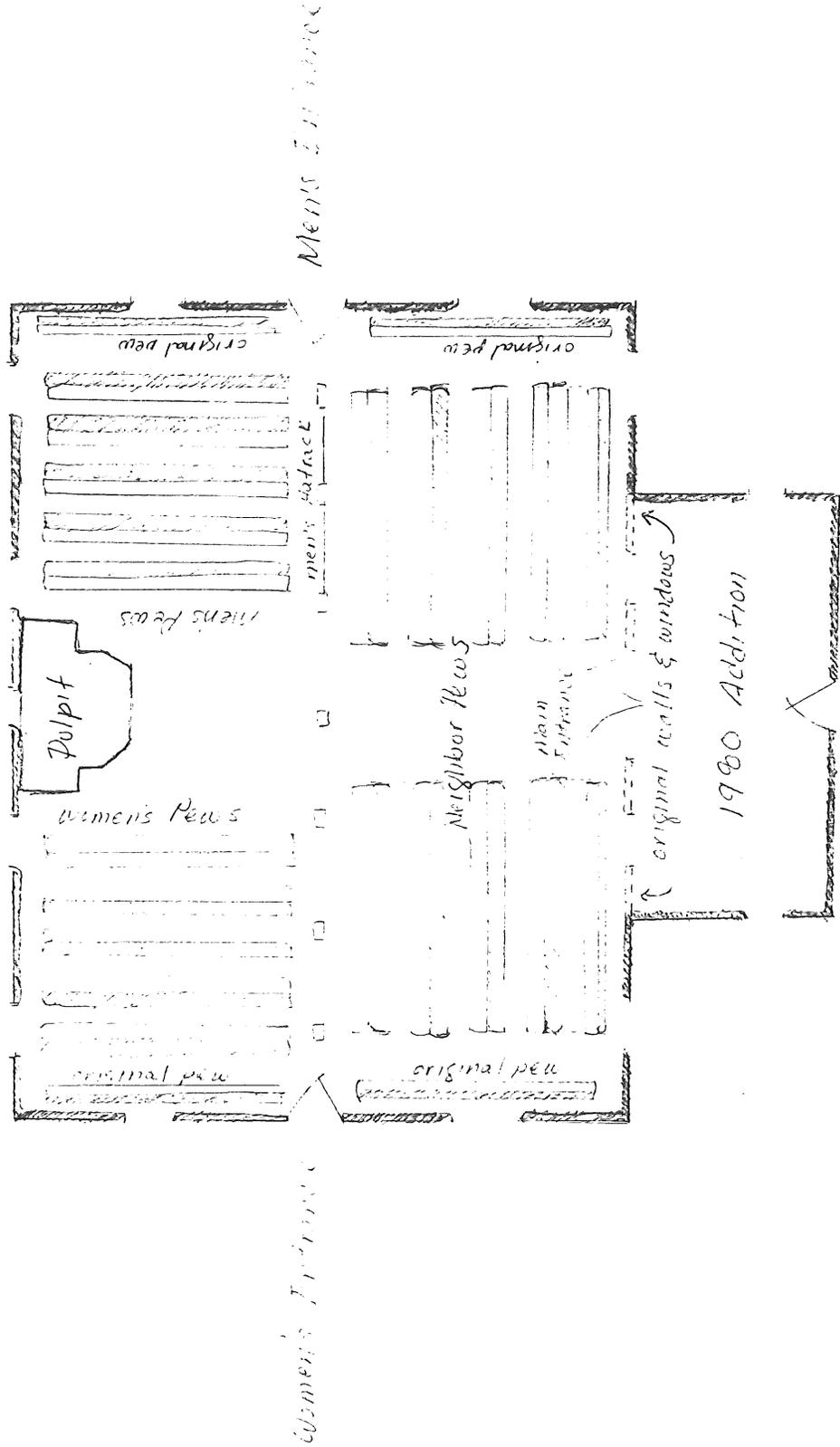
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### Boundary Description:

The Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and cemetery are sited on an approximately 1.0 acre irregularly-shaped tract of land designated as Parcel Number 01A99025U on Highway 301. (Johnston County is not mapped into lot and block numbers. Please refer to accompanying sketch map))

### Boundary Justification:

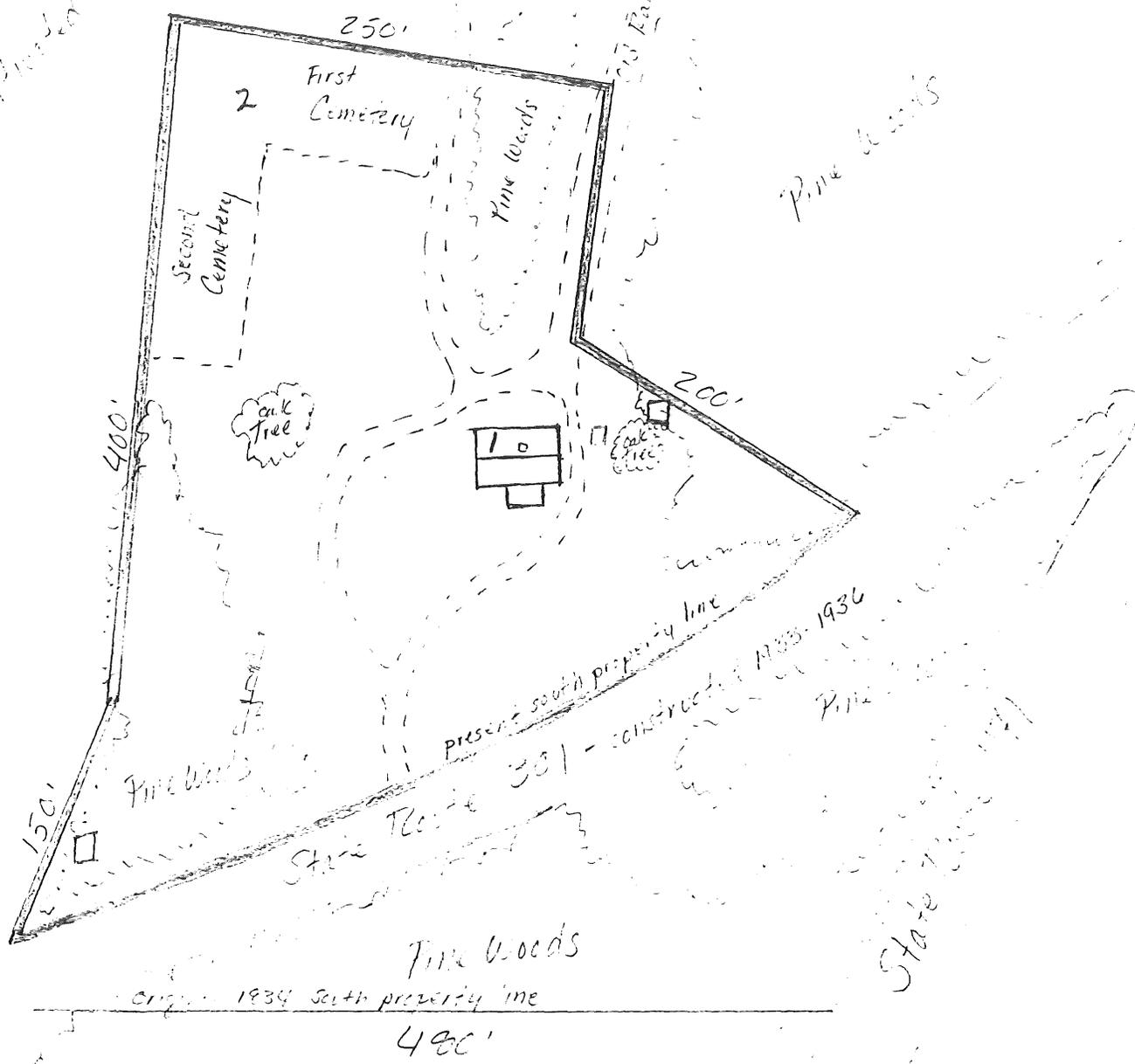
The property being nominated is the approximately one acre remainder of the original three-acre tract in the possession of the congregation of the Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church.



Sketch description  
 Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
 Johnston County; N.C. 301 (near Benson)

1" = approx. 10'  
 drawn by Lyndee Harris Johnston  
 August, 1988

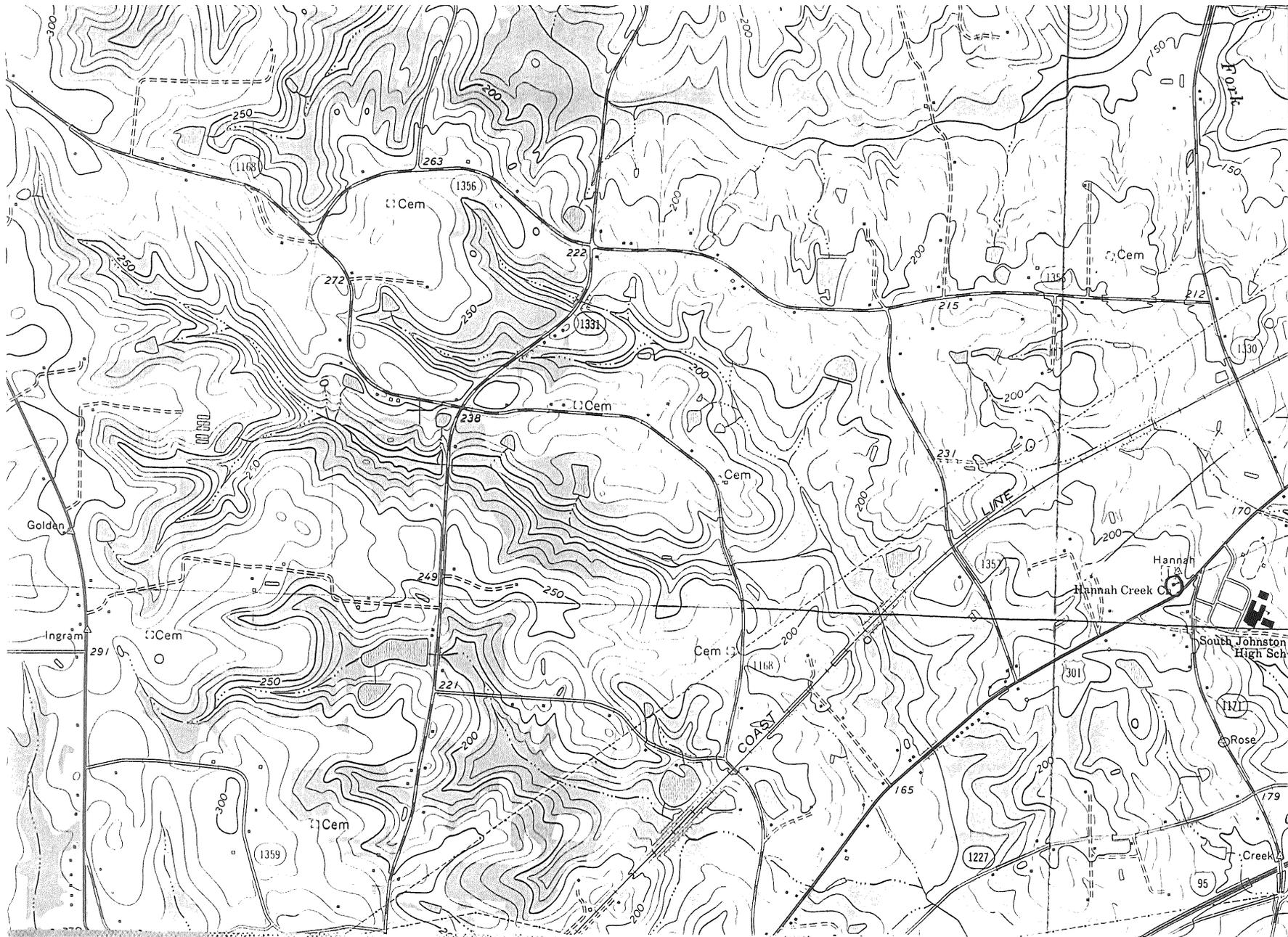
Clipped 7.18.85



Hannah's Creek Primitive Baptist Church  
 Benson Vicinity  
 Johnston County

Drawn by Linda Harris Edmiston  
 June, 1996

1" = 100'      = Historic District Boundary (Johnston County Parcel # C1A990256)  
 = small shed and two outhouses (not recorded)



3923  
3922  
25'  
3921  
3920  
FOUR OAKS 4.2 MI  
SMITHFIELD 10 MI  
TO US 95  
SON 44 W

note:  
printed name on  
map incorrect

BENSON QUAD

Hannah's Creek  
Primitive Baptist Church  
Zone 17  
Easting: 726510  
Northing: 3921180

JT7

