

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 Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number SR 2439 .3 mi. N of jct with SR 2426

fact for publication

city, town Huntersville

vicinity

state North Carolina code NC

county Mecklenburg

code 119

zip code 28078

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>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historical and Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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 1-3-91

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): _____

Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Mecklenburg Co., NC

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 Greek Revival/
Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls weatherboard

log

roof shake

other brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery
Mecklenburg County, NC

Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery are located on a winding, rural road about one mile east of Huntersville. The current church grounds, constituting about 35 acres, are bordered by dense, mature rows of hickory and pine trees. Rolling farmland, primarily pasture, surrounds this tract and contributes to the church's historically rural character. The boundary for this nomination includes the 1881 church building located on the west side of SR 2439; a 1935 fellowship hall known as "the hut"; a 1958 educational building attached to the church by a covered walkway; and the church cemetery on the east side of the road. Excluded from the nomination are considerable undeveloped acreage and a 1960s manse on the west side of the road.

Church

This dignified frame building was erected by the congregation in 1881. Resting on a fieldstone foundation, it displays a simple, basic church type in its rectangular, gable-front form. This form as well as the gable returns and simple frieze and corner boards suggest the lingering Greek Revival style, while the segmental-arched, double-hung sash windows reflect the influence of the Italianate style. The "1881" date of construction appears in embossed numerals on the frieze board in each gable return of the main facade. This elevation features three bays with a central entrance and two stories of windows. The first-story windows have nine panes in each sash and each sash of the three shorter second-story windows, lighting an interior balcony across the east end of the sanctuary, has six panes. The main entrance has double doors with six recessed panels each and a heavily moulded surround that is shouldered at a tall four-pane, segmental-arched transom. Centered in the gable of the main facade is a tall rectangular and segmental-arched louvered vent. Windows identical to the lower main facade windows define the six-bay side elevations. The middle bay of the three-bay rear facade consists of a small rectangular, hip-roofed apse with relatively small four-over-four segmental-arched windows in its side walls. The building's white weatherboarded exterior walls are contrasted by deep green shutters at all windows except those on the rear facade. These shutters, which appear to be original, have arched tops conforming to the shape of the windows; their hinges have been removed and they are now screwed in place. The building's roof is covered with cedar shakes which replaced an earlier cedar-shake roof in 1987.

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Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Mecklenburg Co., NC

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The building's interior was refurbished in 1972-1973, when new lighting fixtures, carpeting, air-conditioning, pulpit, and tongue-and-groove wooden ceiling were installed, and the original pews were refinished. The original plaster walls, wooden floors, door and window surrounds, and balcony railing, consisting of square balusters, are intact.

Ramah Presbyterian Church Cemetery (Contributing Site)

Measuring approximately 500 feet by 200 feet, and located on a gentle knoll on the east side of Ramah Church Road, the cemetery includes a variety of headstones dating from 1801 to the present. Approximately 500 headstones stand in the cemetery, including 92 stones dating between 1800 and 1860; 156 stones erected between 1861 and 1900; and 162 stones dating between 1901 and 1939. These headstones, constituting those erected during the period of significance, display a variety of shapes and incised designs, and reflect the development of the church and community during this period. Stones erected between 1801 and the middle 19th century are located primarily in the southwest section of the cemetery, and are constructed of granite and occasionally soapstone or marble. Designs are simple and traditional, and no evidence exists that any were created by the Bigham workshop, which made a host of the stones for the Steele Creek Presbyterian Church cemetery in the county. The earliest identified headstone, for church member Benjamin Brown, is a simple, granite curbed marker that dates from 1801. Essentially similar stones for families of Browns, Wallaces, DeWeses, and others date from the first decades of the 19th century to about 1860. Though several feature Masonic emblems, the great majority are plainly incised with family names and dates of birth and death, and occasionally with simple floral designs. Headstones of the late 19th and early 20th centuries comprise many of the same simple designs of the antebellum era, as well as distinctive obelisks. The cemetery includes about 15 obelisk markers, all of marble, erected between 1880 and 1910. Although no distinctive "Woodmen of the World" monuments of the 1930s stand in the Ramah Church cemetery, the stone markers of the 20th century contain simple, conservative tablets as well as a mix of more substantial and sophisticated square and curved monuments, many with rusticated sides, representing the popular headstone designs of the period.

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Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Mecklenburg Co., NC

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The gravestones are arranged in parallel rows running north-south, and they face east. While the earliest stones are situated in the southwest portion of the cemetery, the later stones tend to be distributed to the east and northeast, while the most recent headstones stand in the northeast section. In addition to the stones, the cemetery includes an iron gate with sturdy granite posts. Little is known about the date of this gate or of the stone wall which once bordered the cemetery. No pictorial record is known to exist of the cemetery with the stone wall. However, local church tradition has it that both the wall and the present gate were constructed in antebellum times; and the wall may have been removed during the 1920s and used for the roadbed during the paving of Ramah Church Road (Bill Charles 1989).

Educational Building (Noncontributing)

Erected in 1958, this one-story brick-veneered building includes a gable-front fellowship hall and an attached wing on the south elevation which contains Sunday School rooms. A full basement also contains classrooms. The wing is connected to the 1881 sanctuary by a covered walkway. The front facade of the gable-front portion of the educational building features a Colonial Revival pedimented portico with round wooden columns. The functional interior has walls of concrete block.

Fellowship Building (Contributing)

Erected in 1935 by members of the congregation, this one-story building is constructed of round logs secured with saddle notching. The gable-front form is three bays on a side, has a cedar-shake roof, and features a massive fieldstone chimney on the east elevation. The intact interior includes exposed logs and a wide-board floor. Called "the hut" by members of the congregation, this building is used for Bible classes and a host of social functions.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/settlement
Community Development
Architecture
Art

Period of Significance

1801-1939

Significant Dates

1801

1881

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

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Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Mecklenburg Co., NC

Section number 8 Page 1SUMMARY

The Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery are excellent physical testaments to both the Scotch-Irish settlement of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and the growth of farming and nearby small towns in the northern part of the county throughout the nineteenth century and the first four decades of the twentieth. The cemetery contains 92 gravestones dating between 1800 and 1860, including several from the settlement period ending ca. 1810, as well as 156 stones erected between 1861 and 1900 and 162 erected between 1901 and 1939. Altogether, these gravestones reflect the establishment and growth of the congregation and render the property significant under criterion A in the areas of exploration/settlement (see related Historic Context--Early Settlement) and community development. The cemetery also is important under criterion C in the area of art for its representation of the wide variety of traditional and popular gravestone designs between 1801 and 1939. The 1881 white frame church is architecturally significant under criterion C as an intact example of a church design popularized during the middle decades of the nineteenth century and as one of only two frame nineteenth-century churches remaining in the county. A classical gable-front form, gable returns and symmetrical three-bay facade with center entrance characterize the basic design, while segmental-arched windows and entrance indicate in simple fashion the Italianate style, which had recently made its appearance in the county. (See Associated Property Type 4--Churches and Cemeteries.)

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Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Mecklenburg Co., NC

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Historical Background

The name Ramah means "the height," and although Ramah Presbyterian Church is not situated on a dramatic elevation, this long-established church rests at the top of the hierarchical order of the lives of the Scotch-Irish settlers and their descendants in this corner of Huntersville. Ramah Presbyterian church represents the core of a farming community that has its roots in the Scotch-Irish immigration of the late eighteenth century, and has endured for well over 200 years. The perpetuation of the church by the surrounding area suggests that the structure is symbolic of the identity of generations of its members. This identity is further reinforced by the maintenance of a substantial graveyard, which contains graves dating to 1800.

Ramah Church is nestled in a pastoral setting northeast of Huntersville in the middle of farm country in northern Mecklenburg County. The present structure was built in 1881, but the origins of the Ramah community preceded it by nearly 100 years. A church history written by a member of Ramah points to 1783 as the date that the church was said to have been organized by Scotch-Irish settlers who migrated to Mecklenburg County during the eighteenth century down the great wagon road which originated in Pennsylvania.¹ (See Early Settlement context.) There is speculation that the Ramah congregation was formed from part of the Poplar Tent Church, which was established c. 1764, and the 1799 Session Notes of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church mention the existence of Ramah church. Thus the congregation was established at least by the latter date.² The early church records are not extant; they begin with the 1857 Session notes.

The first members of this church began their meetings under a "brush arbor" at the present church site, which they named Ramah Grove. The first house of worship was made of logs, as were many of the earliest country churches. Built about 1795, it was used until 1820 when it was replaced with a simple, unadorned frame building. This second building had entrances on three sides, and included a slave gallery with an outside stairway. The session book records show that the daughter of a slave belonging to Ramah member James Black was baptized in the church in 1859.³

The present church was constructed on the same site in 1881. This building followed the same simple, unadorned style and also includes a gallery, which the current minister, Rev. Harold Hudson, believes was once used for seating the women. This church, like its predecessors, was built with materials and labor provided by members of the congregation.⁴

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Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, Mecklenburg Co., NC

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Two other buildings occupy the church property, a log hut and the education building. The log hut, built in 1935, serves as a fellowship hall. The education wing was built in 1957 in response to the growing needs of the church. A pamphlet circulated by the minister at the time, Rev. Fred C. Holder, makes passionate pleas to his flock for donations for the construction of this building. He wrote that the estimated cost was \$45,000.00, and that this would require extra dollars in the regular weekly donations, and also asked for an extra \$200.00 contribution from those who could afford it. The result was the successful completion of the new building.⁵

Ramah's graveyard is one of its most striking features as one approaches the church from Ramah Church Road. The sprawling cemetery contains graves dating to c. 1800. Many of the earliest graves are unmarked because the fieldstone markers (that simply denoted a place of burial and were void of personal information about the deceased) have been moved. The first person buried in the cemetery is believed to be Benjamin Brown (date unknown, c. 1800). The cemetery also contains at least one revolutionary war veteran, Hezekiah Deweese (Pvt NC Militia, 1760-1839).⁶ Prominent names from the area, such as Barnett, Deweese, Sloan, Brown, Black, and Mayes, are found repeatedly on the tombstones. An inventory of the cemetery has not been made by the church.

Exactly when and from whom the church acquired all of its property is not clear from the deed records. The earliest known deed is for five acres purchased from Alicia (Olivia?) Harris by the "congregation of Ramah" on 25 January 1821.⁷ This appears to encompass the cemetery and the church site. It may be surmised that the congregation was permitted to use the site, perhaps by renting it, for many years before they purchased it. Another 3/4 acre was bought in 1896, and 18 acres to the south of the church were acquired in 1898.⁸

Ramah Presbyterian Church today is a thriving and active community. The congregation is proud of their heritage and their church. Pains have been taken to preserve the present structure in keeping with its original design, and there is no doubt this interest in their heritage will remain a part of this rural community into the foreseeable future.

¹Mary Beth Bundy, "Ramah, A Labor of Love and Dedication," unpublished typescript essay on file in church office, January, 1988, p. 2.

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²Mary Bohlen Bradford, "The History of Ramah Church," Mecklenburg Gazette, n.d.
from Ramah Church scrapbook.

³Bundy, p. 2.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Church pamphlet prepared by Rev. Fred C. Holder concerning an educational
building, c. 1957. Ramah Church scrapbook.

⁶Bundy, p. 3.

⁷Mecklenburg County Deed Book 19, p. 266.

⁸Ibid., Books 127, p. 257 and 127, p. 379. The church bought two small parcels, 0.88 acre
and 0.40 acre in 1952: Deed Book 1638, p. 173. A modern deed for the present land
is found in Deed Book 5710, p. 871.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

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 approx. 5 acres

UTM References

A

1	7
Zone	

5	1	7	9	1	0
Easting					

3	1	2	1	5	9	1	0
Northing							

B

Zone	

Easting					

Northing							

C

Zone							

Easting							

Northing							

D

Zone	

Easting					

Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination boundary is indicated on the accompanying sketch map drawn at a scale of 1" = 100'. The boundary on the east side of SR 2427 follows the perimeter of the cemetery, which is all of lot 2 in block 141 on page 14 of Mecklenburg County Tax Line Map book 11, and on the west side of the road it approximates a rectangle roughly 300' x 150' that is a portion of lot 10, block 151, on page 15 of Mecklenburg County Tax Line Map book 11.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the church property's three contributing resources which embody the property's architectural and historical significance. The boundary encompasses a noncontributing educational building which is attached to the church by a covered walkway but it is drawn to exclude a 1960s manse and considerable undeveloped acreage that is not addressed by any of the nomination's areas of significance.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Mattson and William Huffman
 organization _____ date July 1990
 street & number 422 Rensselaer telephone 704/375-4236
 city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28203

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Bradford, Mary Bohlen. "The History of Ramah Church." Mecklenburg Gazette. n.d. From Ramah Church scrapbook.

Bundy, Mary Beth. "Ramah, A Labor of Love and Dedication." Unpublished typescript essay on file at church office, January, 1988.

Charles, Bill. Ramah Church historian. Interview, 9 June 1989.

Fincher, B. C. "Ramah's Rich Heritage." "Mecklenburg Neighbors," Charlotte Observer, 24 September, 1989, p. 24.

Mayes, Elizabeth McCord. Unpublished typescript of Ramah Church history, c. 1960. On file at Ramah Church.

Mecklenburg County, N.C. Deed Books.

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Section number 12 Page 1

IDENTIFICATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Ramah Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Huntersville vicinity

Photographer: Richard Mattson

6/25/89

North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh

1. Front facade, Ramah Presbyterian Church sanctuary, and headstones, looking west from cemetery
2. Front facades, sanctuary and educational building, and headstones, looking northwest from cemetery
3. Front and part of north facades of sanctuary, and headstones, looking southwest from cemetery
4. Main entrance of sanctuary, front facade, looking west
5. South and west (rear) facades of educational building, and main facade of fellowship hall, to the northeast
6. Interior of sanctuary, looking east towards gallery
7. Cemetery gate, looking east
8. Cemetery, looking south
9. Headstones, mid-19th century, looking west
10. Cemetery, looking north

RAMAH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND CEMETERY

Mecklenburg Co., N.C.

Scale - 1" = 100'

Approx. 5 acres



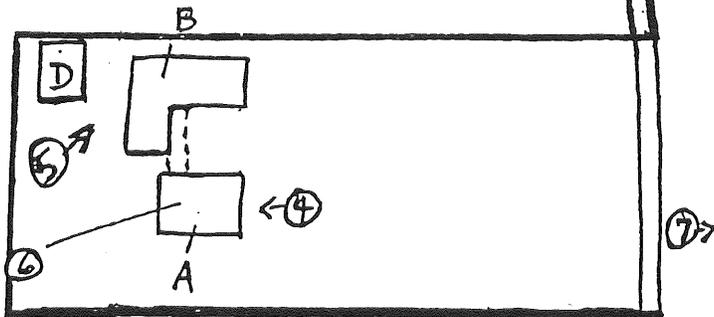
Contributing Building

A - 1881 Sanctuary

D - 1935 Fellowship Hall

Non Contributing Building

B - 1958 Educational Building



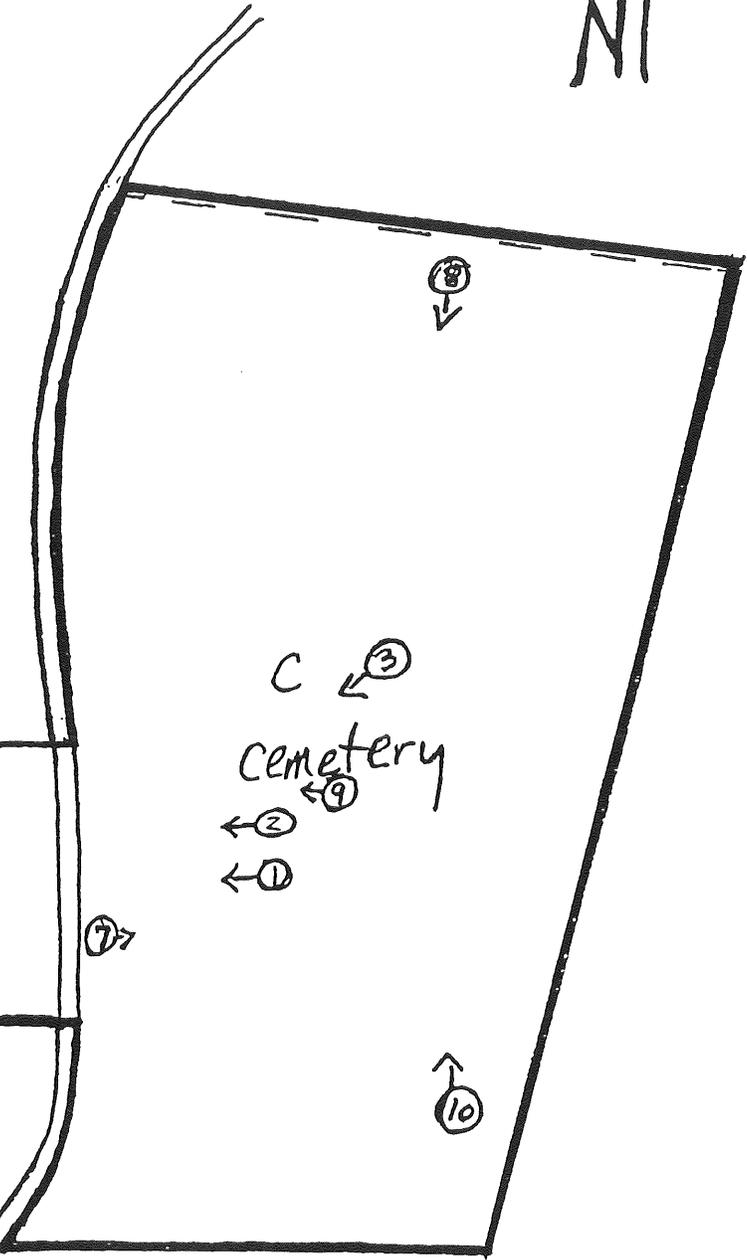
C ← ③
cemetery ← ②
← ①

Contributing Site

C - Cemetery

RAMAH CHURCH ROAD (SR 2427)

9/89
R. Mattson



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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91000081 Date Listed: 02/21/91

Ramah Presbyterian Church Mecklenburg NC
Property Name County State

Rural Mecklenberg County MPS
Multiple Name

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

Amy Federman
Signature of the Keeper

02/21/91
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Since this property includes a church and a cemetery, it can be classified as "Buildings," rather than as a historic district in accordance with National Park Service guidance.

Please note that this issue would not be counted in any State Program Review activity as a technical deficiency.

Discussed with SHPO staff.

DISTRIBUTION:

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

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Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

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Property Name

Mecklenburg
County

NC
State

Rural Mecklenberg County MPS
Multiple Name

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DISTRIBUTION:

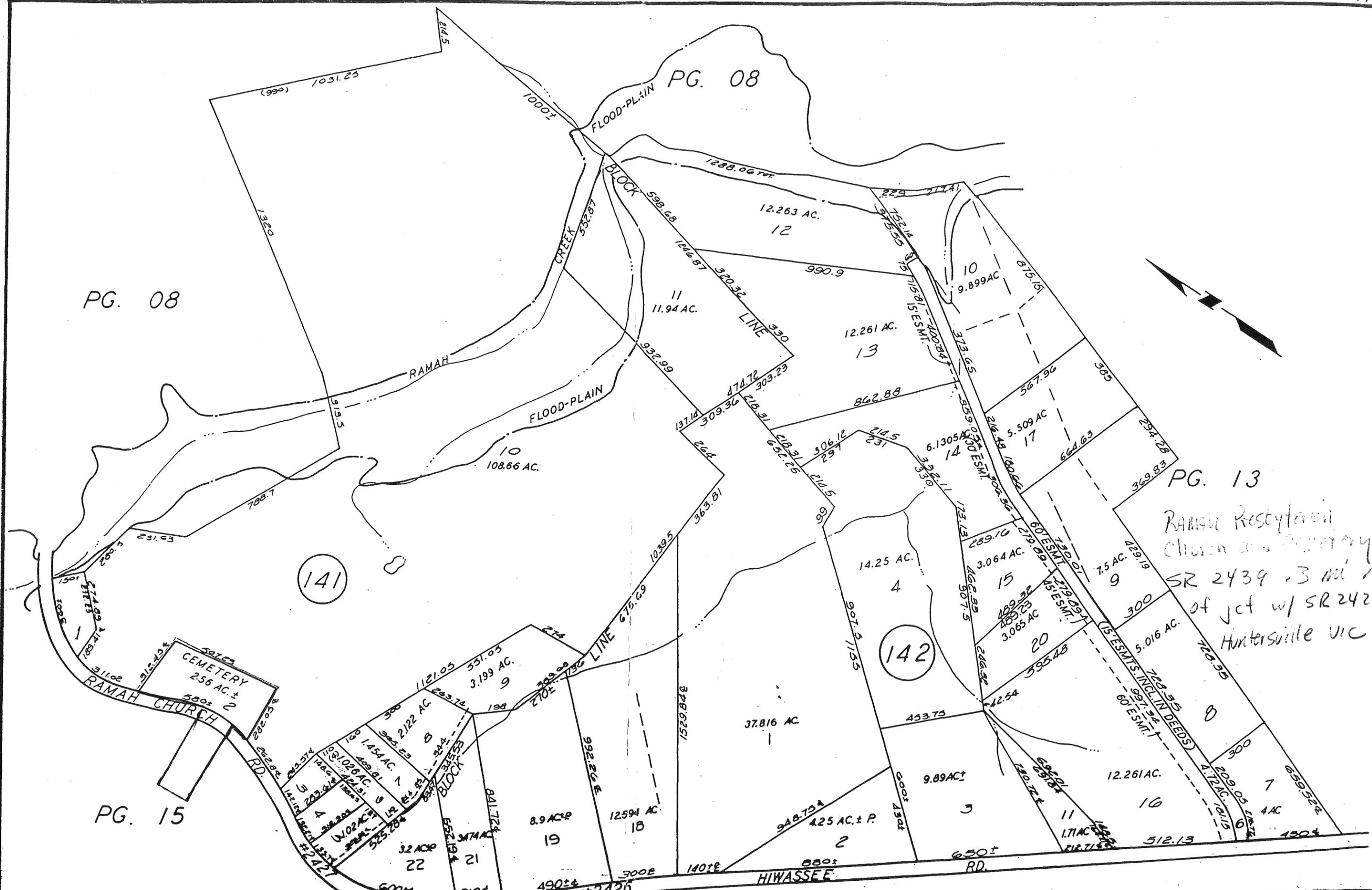
- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)



3925
3924
27'30"
3923
CONCORD 10 MI.
3921
N-3921590

MK 1298
RAMAH PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH AND CEMETERY
HUNTERVILLE VIC, NC
CORNELIUS QUAD
ZONE 17

(KANNAPOLIS)
4854 / NW
E- 517910
N- 3921590



BK. 19

TAX LINE MAP	BOOK 11	PAGE 1*
MECKLENBURG COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA		
REVISED	SCALE 1" = 400'	

