

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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

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### 1. Name of Property

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historic name **Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church**  
other names/site number N/A

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### 2. Location

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street & number NE corner SR 1794 at juncture with SR 1745 not for publication N/A  
city or town Bell Fork vicinity X state North Carolina code NC county Pitt code 147

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### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Jeffrey J. Crow* Signature of certifying official

Date

*2/5/02*

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

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.)

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Signature of commenting or other official

Date

---

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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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): \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private  
public-local  
public-State  
public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)  
district  
site  
structure  
object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion  
Funerary

Sub: religious facility  
cemetery

Present Functions

Cat: Work-in-Progress

Sub:

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## 7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

**Other: Late nineteenth-century gable-front church**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation      **Brick**  
roof              **Metal: tin**  
walls              **Wood: weatherboard**

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

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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

- A      Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B      Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C      Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D      Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A      owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B      removed from its original location.
- C      a birthplace or a grave.
- D      a cemetery.
- E      a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F      a commemorative property.
- G      less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**Architecture**

Period of Significance **1893**

Significant Dates      **1893**

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

Cultural Affiliation      **N/A**

Architect/Builder      **Unknown**

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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
- 

10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property **approx. 1 acre**

UTM References **Zone: 18**      **Easting: 287840**      **Northing: 3938760**

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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title    **Nancy Van Dolsen**                          date    **July 2, 2001**  
street & number    **1601 Highland Drive**                          telephone    **252.243.7861**  
city or town    **Wilson**    state    **NC**                                  zip code **27893**

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Additional Documentation

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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)

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Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Pitt County Historical Society**  
street & number      P.O. Box 1554      city or town    Greenville      state    NC      zip code  
**27895-1554**

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Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

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**Narrative Description**

Built in 1893, the Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church sits facing south in a clearing at the intersection of two state roads, SR 1704 and SR 1725, in Pitt County, North Carolina. Located approximately one hundred feet north of SR 1725 on a lot of approximately one acre, the church and cemetery is surrounded by a small stand of trees to the west, north, and east. Across SR 1725 are two other ecclesiastical buildings, the Faith Pentecostal Holiness Church and St. Timothy's Episcopal Church. The property is an open lawn with no paths or driveways. A small cemetery of less than twenty markers that date primarily to the early- and mid-twentieth century is located to the northwest of the church. A small one-story, frame shed (non-contributing) constructed during the third-quarter of the twentieth century, is located between the church and the cemetery. Once a rural area, the land surrounding the Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church has become suburbanized during the past ten years due to the rapid growth of the city of Greenville which is located less than one mile to the north.

The Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church features a form once common for rural churches constructed during the nineteenth century: frame, gable front, rectangular, buildings without any adornment such as towers, stained glass, or decorative architectural trim. The building, approximately fifty feet by thirty feet, is two bays wide and five bays deep and stands on brick piers with later brick infill. Capped by a sealed seam tin roof and sheathed with plain weatherboards, the church features a box cornice with eave returns and molded corner capitals. Two six-panel doors, each with its own set of steps, and a painted wood sign that proclaims the building as the Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church adorn the facade. The five-bay side elevations exhibit three six-over-six windows, one shortened window at the south end with only the upper six-light sash (changed when two bathrooms were added during the third quarter of the twentieth century), and a four-panel door on the east elevation. The rear elevation is punctuated by three six-over-six windows with the center window set higher to frame the pulpit on the interior. Although shutters were used at one time, none remain on the church today.

The interior of the church is as plain as the façade. A row of four attenuated chamfered columns divide the building in half along the north/south axis. The walls feature a dado with narrow tongue-and-groove beaded board set diagonally. Above the dado the same beaded boards run horizontally. The ceiling is sheathed with boards and battens. The dado and doors are unpainted; the walls above the dado and the ceiling have been painted white. Two bathrooms, one for ladies and one for gentlemen, were carved from the sanctuary at the southwest and southeast corners between 1940 and 1960. Four lights with ceiling fans were also added during the mid-twentieth century.

Two aisles are created by the original slat backed benches. The two opposing four-panel doors on the side walls form the end of the sanctuary space. The pulpit flanked by two chairs

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Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

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(purchased by donation in the 1980s) is located at the north end of the church.<sup>1</sup> The pulpit and chairs sit on a raised dais. Original slat backed benches perpendicular to the benches in the sanctuary face the pulpit from the “amen” corners, the northeast and northwest corners of the building.

A small cemetery of less than twenty markers is located to the northwest of the church. The cemetery is not fenced. The stones range in date from the first decade of the twentieth century to the mid-twentieth century. The markers are granite, marble, and cement.

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<sup>1</sup> Clarisse Mills, Interview with Candace Boyd, September 17, 2000.

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Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

Summary

The Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church is locally significant for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for architecture as a well-executed example of a rural vernacular, frame, gable-front church, a building type that was prevalent for Protestant churches during the nineteenth and twentieth century throughout eastern North Carolina. The church retains integrity, with the only changes being two bathrooms added within the southeast and southwest corners of the building. The austere building reflects the faith of the Primitive Baptists, and remains almost as it was constructed in 1893. The Church meets Criterion Consideration A as it is nominated for its architectural significance.

Historical Background

Members of the Baptist faith dominated religious activity in Pitt County during its first one hundred years of development. Baptist congregations were formed in Pitt County as early as 1728 with the organization of Gum Swamp Church near present town of Bethel.<sup>2</sup> The Red Banks Baptist Church was formed in 1758.

The congregation split in 1827, when a split occurred within the Baptist church between those who believed that one could become saved through good works, and those who believed in predestination, that is, between the missionaries and the primitive Baptists. The particular association of Baptist Churches to which the Red Banks church belonged, the Kehukee Association, sided with the primitive Baptists in 1827. Associations across the nation, and in Europe, declared their allegiance to either the missionary or Primitive Baptists during the period 1827 through 1845.<sup>3</sup> Those of the Primitive Baptist faith, including the congregation at Red Banks, believed that they were a continuation of the true Baptist faith and that the missionary Baptists were introducing a new doctrine into the religion. In 1845, after the split, the Primitive Baptists had about 50,000 members in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

During the early to mid nineteenth century, numerous new Baptist congregations were formed in the county due in part to this splintering of the Baptist church from 1827 through 1845. In 1827 the Greenville Baptist Church was organized and held services in the Greenville Academy building. The Primitive Baptists and Missionary Baptists were the most active of all denominations in Pitt County prior to the Civil War. Eleven of the thirteen churches active in Pitt County in 1850 were

<sup>2</sup> Scott Power ed. *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina* (Greenville, N.C.: Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1991) 78.

<sup>3</sup> Cushing Biggs Hassell, *History of the Church of God, from Creation to A.D. 1885* (1886); excerpts in [www.pb.org](http://www.pb.org), the website for the Primitive Baptist Church, 21-22.

<sup>4</sup> Hassell, 24.

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Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

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Baptists (four Primitive Baptists) “signifying the strength of the Baptist Church in the early religious development of the county.”<sup>5</sup>

The Red Banks congregation undertook the building of the church now standing in 1893 under the ministry of Elder Henry B. Tucker. This was the fourth church for the congregation. According to Henry Tucker,

...the building of the new Church size 50 by 30 feet in 1893. The number of houses have been bilt for the last one hundred and 18 years 6 months has been four. First 16 feet square. Second 60 feet by 50 feet that was destroyed by the Fedrls during the war. Third 40 feet by 30 feet.<sup>6</sup>

In 1896, the total communicants of the Primitive Baptist church in the United States numbered 121,347. North Carolina ranked fifth among the states in the number of communicants with 11,740 followers of the faith.<sup>7</sup> In 1900 the Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church boasted sixty-three members, and had baptized three new members that year.<sup>8</sup>

By 1905, the number of members of the Kehukee Association of the Primitive Baptist Church, of which the Red Banks church was a part, had fallen to 1,590. The decline continued throughout the twentieth century due in part to some of the practices of the church, including no drinking, that became “increasingly more difficult to maintain in a progressively minded society.”<sup>9</sup> By the 1990s, the Kehukee Association had only five active churches and less than a dozen members.<sup>10</sup>

The Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church remained a part of the Kehukee Association until 1996 when, according to church records “there was conflict or trouble...It had to do with Brother Milton Lupton wanting to preach. Our pastor said it was all wrong with the way they were going about it. The disagreement led to Red Banks and Hancocks having their membership withdrawn from the Association and Union.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1999, the last remaining members of the Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church deeded the church and land to the Pitt County Historical Society to ensure the preservation of the building.

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<sup>5</sup> Power, 79.

<sup>6</sup> Red Banks Church Book, 115.

<sup>7</sup> Hassell, 25. The state with the greatest number of communicants was Georgia (18,535), followed by New Jersey and Alabama (both with 14,903), and Tennessee (13,972).

<sup>8</sup> *Minutes of the 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Contentnea Primitive Baptist Association*. East Carolina University Manuscript Collection, Greenville, N.C.

<sup>9</sup> Little and Cross, 8/2.

<sup>10</sup> Drucilla H. York, National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Church, Halifax County, N.C., May 1, 1993, 16-17. As of 1993 there were five congregations in the Kehukee Association; in 1996 the Red Banks and Hancock churches in Pitt County withdrew their membership.

<sup>11</sup> Red Banks Church Book, 240.

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Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

Architectural Context

The Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church was constructed in 1893, and remains virtually as it was built. The building is remarkably preserved, and retains its siding, all but two original windows, its door and window surrounds, all interior finishes, and even the original slat back benches. Only minor alterations having occurred during its history. The alterations include the brick infill between the original brick piers supporting the structure, the new steps and handrails leading to the entrances, the shortening of two windows that are located in the two bathrooms that were created in the southwest and southeast corners of the sanctuary during the mid-twentieth century and narrow pine flooring installed over the original wide plank floors.<sup>12</sup>

The gable-front Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, with its two doors on the façade and lack of ornamentation, exemplifies the form that most Primitive Baptists churches took during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to architectural historian Scott Power, "... typical of Primitive Baptist churches is Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church constructed in 1893... [its] austere appearance became the preferred design for most Primitive Baptist churches constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."<sup>13</sup>

Most Primitive Baptist churches followed a particular plan: a gable-front, rectilinear one-room plan, with two front entrances, one for men, the other for women and children. Generally, two aisles divided three ranges of pews. A raised preaching platform stood at the end opposite the entrances. The "Amen Corners" flanked the preaching stand. Side exits were located toward the rear of the building. A table stood before the pulpit and was the site of "feet washing" and Communion. Trim and ornamentation was minimal. The simplicity of the church building reflected the doctrine of the Primitive Baptist faith that emphasizes the "word" over environment.<sup>14</sup> Church buildings are of particular importance to those of the Primitive Baptist faith, representing, as historian Melanie Sovine Reid has noted, "the Heavenly realm and its sacred qualities her on earth." The Primitive Baptists also believe that it is essential to keep the integrity of the spiritual faith and to not adapt "religious belief of behavior to the prevailing winds of the time." For this reason, Primitive Baptist congregations have hesitated to change the design of their buildings and think carefully before making any alterations to existing buildings.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Prior to the adding of the bathrooms to the interior of the church, at least one privy, a "ladies toilet," stood near the church. This ladies toilet was built in 1898, "on the land of sed heirs of Lucy, and J.J. Evans...This building will remain there unless sed heirs become dissatisfied or want clare sed land." Manuscript donating "One building," J.B. Evans, 6 February 1898. Collection of the Pitt County Historical Society, Greenville, N.C.

<sup>13</sup> Power 148.

<sup>14</sup> York, 12-13.

<sup>15</sup> Melanie Sovine Reid. "'Neither Adding Nor Taking Away': The Care and Keeping of Primitive Baptist Church houses." In Camille Wells, ed. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture I*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1982) 171-172.

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Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

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Primitive Baptist churches survive in limited numbers in eastern North Carolina. The Conoho Primitive Baptist Church in Martin County, where the schism between those who believed in good works and those who believed in predestination was first raised, was destroyed during the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> The (former) Jamesville Primitive Baptist Church (NR), Martin County, was built in 1866 has the same form as the Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, but does not retain the interior integrity of the Red Banks building having been converted to a meeting place during the 1950s. Martin County is home to a number of surviving Primitive Baptist churches, including Bear Grass (mid-nineteenth century), Skewarky (1859), Spring Green (1878), Smithwick's Creek (1897), and Flat Swamp (1924).<sup>17</sup> In Halifax County, the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Church (NR) still stands, but represents two periods of construction, 1872 and 1902; the interior of this building has also been altered.

Pitt County boasts four surviving Primitive Baptist churches, of which Red Banks retains the highest integrity. The Hancock Primitive Baptist Church (mid-nineteenth century) was greatly altered by the Corinth Christian Church during the twentieth century. The Corinth Primitive Baptist Church (1863) was moved and converted to a tobacco packhouse. Tyson's Primitive Baptist Church (third quarter of the nineteenth century) has been remodeled and has lost all integrity.<sup>18</sup>

The austerity of the Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, its retention of a form often constructed during the mid-nineteenth century (or earlier), and its very integrity, embody the faith of its congregation.

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas R. Butchko, ed. *Martin Architectural Heritage: The Historic Structures of a Rural North Carolina County*. (Williamston, N.C. The Martin County Historical Society, 1999) 12. A frame church replaced the log building where the first sermon about missionary work in the Baptist Church was heard in the 1840s or 1850s; it was this building that was demolished in the 1970s.

<sup>17</sup> York, 13. A thematic National Register Nomination of Martin County's Primitive Baptist churches is presently being prepared.

<sup>18</sup> Power, 79, 148. Personal conversation with Scott Power, August 8, 2001.

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Red Banks Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

**Major Bibliographic References**

Bishir, Catherine. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Bishir, Catherine and Michael Southern. *A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Eastern North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Butchko, Thomas, R. ed. *Martin Architectural Heritage: The Historic Structures of a Rural North Carolina County*. Williamston, N.C. The Martin County Historical Society, 1999.

Hassell, Cushing Biggs. *History of the Church of God, from Creation to A.D. 1885* (1886); excerpts in [www.pb.org](http://www.pb.org), the website for the Primitive Baptist Church.

Hassell, Sylvester. "Articles of Faith;" republished in [www.pb.org](http://www.pb.org), the website for the Primitive Baptist Church.

Little, Stanley L. and Jerry Cross. National Register of Historic Places nomination for the (former) Jamesville Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery, Martin County, N.C., May 22, 1984.

Peacock, James L. and Ruel W. Tyson. *Pilgrims of Paradox: Calvinism and Experience among the Primitive Baptists of the Blue Ridge*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989.

Powell, William S. *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, vol. 3 H-K. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Power, Scott, ed. *The Historic Architecture of Pitt County, North Carolina*. Greenville, N.C.: Pitt County Historical Society, Inc., 1991.

Red Banks Church Book, Photocopy in the possession of the Pitt County Historical Society, Greenville, N.C.

Reid, Melanie Sovine. "'Neither Adding Nor Taking Away': The Care and Keeping of Primitive Baptist Church Houses." In Camille Wells, ed. *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture I*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1982.

York, Drucilla. H. National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Church, Halifax County, N.C., May 1, 1993.

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Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, NC

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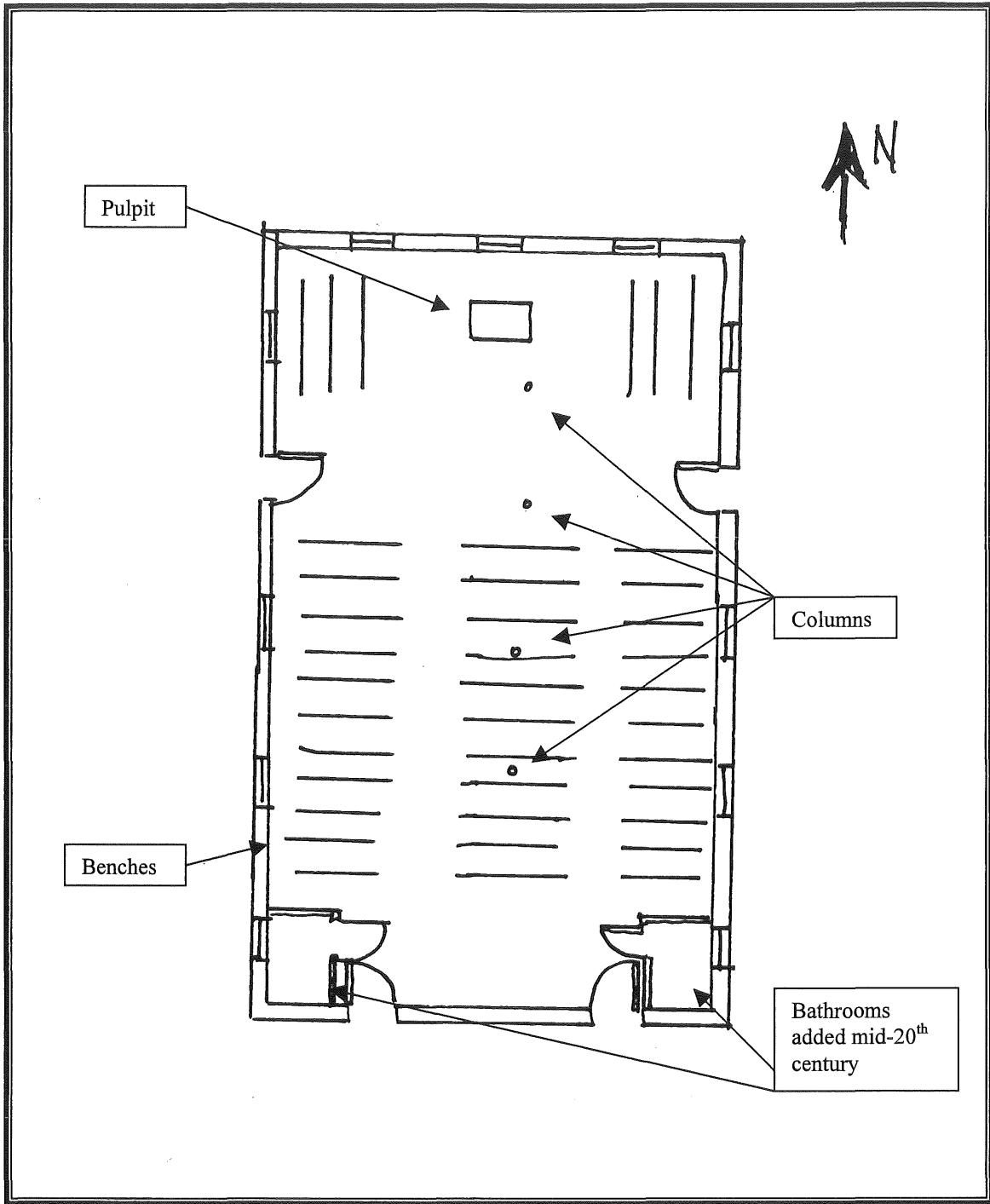
**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

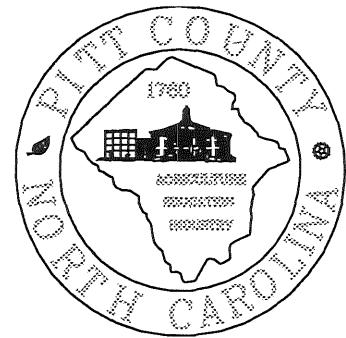
The boundary corresponds to the present tax parcel, 61966, as found in the Pitt County Tax Assessment Office, Greenville, North Carolina.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the church building and accompanying cemetery.



**Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church, Pitt County, North Carolina**  
Rough Sketch of Floorplan, not to scale



## PITT COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

Parcel Number: **61966**

Requested by:

DC



**Parcel Lines**



**Soil Lines**



Based on the North Carolina  
State Plane Coordinate System  
1927 Datum

**Price: \$1.00**

Scale: 1": 141 ft

This map is furnished  
by PITT COUNTY for  
illustration purposes  
only. This map is  
NOT a certified survey  
and no reliance may be  
placed in its accuracy.



Owner: PITT CO.HISTORICAL SOC,INC  
Acct#:11885100  
Cur-tax-value:53680  
Cur-land-value:35000

Red Banks Primitive Baptist Church  
Bell Fork vicinity, Pitt County, NC

Red Banks  
Primitive Baptist  
Church Pitt Co,  
NC - Greenville  
SE Quad - Zone 18  
E 287840  
N 3939000

Different  
Quad  
from  
original

