

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Asbury Methodist Church

Raynham, Robeson County, RB0536, Listed April 30, 2009

Nomination by Beth Keane

Photographs by Beth Keane, May 2008



Façade and side view



Side and rear view

**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.

1. Name of property

historic name Asbury Methodist Church

other names/site number Asbury Memorial Church, Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church, South

2. Location

street & number Southeast side US Highway 301 North, .10 mile southwest of SR 1154 not for publication N/A

city or town Raynham vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Robeson code 155 zip code 28383

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

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.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Asbury Methodist Church
Name of Property

Robeson County, NC
County and State

5. Classification

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
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility
FUNERARY cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION Sub: religious facility
FUNERARY cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
roof tin
walls weatherboard
other brick

Narrative Description

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

Asbury Methodist Church
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

1861

Significant Dates

1861

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Townsend, David, builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approx. 2.5 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 665780 3827200
2 _____

Zone Easting Northing
3 _____
4 _____
____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Beth Keane

organization Retrospective date September, 2008

street & number 6073 Gold Creek Estates Drive telephone 828-328-8147

city or town Hickory state NC zip code 28601

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Trustees of Asbury Memorial Church; C/O of W. Daniel Pate (trustee)

street & number 370 Serpentine Drive telephone 910-295-2161

city or town Southern Pines state NC zip code 28387

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Asbury Methodist Church
Robeson County, NC**

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The 1861 Asbury Methodist Church (currently known as Asbury Memorial Church) is located in the south-central section of Robeson County in Raynham, a small town approximately twelve miles south of Lumberton, the county seat, and five miles north of Rowland. The church sits facing northwest in the middle of an approximate 1.5-acre lot on the southeast side of U.S. Highway 301 North. The lot, although mostly cleared, is enhanced by a number of mature deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubbery. A three-board fence marks the church boundaries on the west and south edges of the property and 82.5-feet of the east boundary. A northeast corner of the parcel, measuring approximately 82.5 feet by 121 feet, sits outside the fence line. A church cemetery on approximately one acre, surrounded by a chain link fence, is located across U.S. Highway 301, opposite the church.

The community of Raynham is comprised of several churches, a few houses, a town hall, and several businesses strung out along both sides of U.S. Highway 301. The surrounding area is very rural with agricultural fields and swamp land spread out around the town. For ease of description of the building, the northwest direction will be designated as north, the northeast will be designated as east, the southwest will be designated as west, and the southeast will be designated as south.

1. Asbury Methodist Church 1861 Contributing Building

The timber frame church, built in a modest Greek Revival style, is supported by stuccoed brick piers, with a brick infilled foundation in the front, added in 1970. The simple building, measuring approximately forty feet by fifty feet and painted white, is defined by weatherboard siding, large six-over-six, double-hung, sash windows, a boxed cornice, and a metal roof painted red. The building features a prominent, projecting, pedimented front gable supported by five chamfered, slightly tapered posts with simple capitals, resting on brick piers. Two four-panel, double-leaf, entrance doors on the façade are approached by two sets of brick steps flanked by wrought-iron railings. The brick steps and wrought-iron railings replaced wood steps in 1970. In addition, three windows are symmetrically arranged on the façade: one in the center and one on either side of the doors. A circular vent with a four-blade design is centrally positioned in the front gable, while the porch ceiling is made up of tongue-and-groove boards. The ground area protected by the projecting gable consists of a poured concrete slab added in 1970.

The east and west elevations of the church each include six evenly-spaced windows, while the south (rear) elevation has two widely-spaced windows. A small shed-roof, one-story, addition, placed between the windows, was added to the rear of the church in 1970. Two small bathrooms are accessed by doors located on the east and west elevations of the addition.

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The interior of the church is remarkably intact. The two entrance doors open into two interior aisles separating three columns of straight-back oak pews. There are eleven pews on the left, eleven in the middle, and twelve on the right. In addition, there are seven shorter pews in the front of the church for choir members: four on the left side of the altar and three right of the altar. Carpeting, added in 1970, covers the aisle floors and the front of the church, while the original oak floors are left exposed under the pews. Two square posts, one located near the middle of the center column of pews and one positioned between the altar and the first pew in the center column, assist in providing structural support for the roof.

The church retains the original window frames as well as some of the original glass window panes. The wainscoting in the sanctuary, located on the side walls, consists of a wide board laid horizontally over a beaded baseboard and surmounted by an additional, slimmer board. The walls above the wainscot and the front and rear walls are plaster. The ceiling is sheathed with tongue-and-groove boards. The wainscot, baseboards, and pews are stained a dark oak and the walls and ceiling are painted white. The four panels of the doors in the back of the sanctuary are painted white, while the surrounding molding has been treated with a dark oak stain. The doors retain their original brass hardware. Two hanging corner cabinets, used for storing hymnals, are located in the front corners of the sanctuary.

The original semi-circular communion rail is positioned in front of the raised altar. The communion rail consists of a short, paneled wall surmounted by wood balusters joined by a molded hand rail with square capped end posts. The three exposed edges of the centrally positioned, raised-altar platform have panels similar to the communion rail wall. The panels of the communion rail and the altar are painted white, while the remaining woodwork has been treated with a dark stain. A large wood panel is inset into the wall behind the altar. The altar table sits between the altar and the communion rail. Original altar furniture consists of a decorative Gothic Revival-style pulpit and two old wood chairs separated by a small wood table. Two short, paneled, hexagonal columns rest on either side of the altar. An antique organ is located to the right of the altar.

Four gas space heaters were added to the church in 1965. In 1971, the original glass globe and filigreed brass light fixtures were converted to electricity and a new brass chandelier was added. The lights hang suspended over the central column of pews.

2. Cemetery 1848-present Contributing Site

A one-acre cemetery, located on the north side of U. S. Highway 301, opposite Asbury Methodist Church, contains approximately 200 marked graves. The cemetery is partially enclosed by a chain link fence and entered through a ca. 1930 cast iron gate flanked by brick piers. There are no graves outside the fenced area. The stones are arranged in rows with most of

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the headstones facing west. A number of different marker styles are represented in the cemetery. The earlier markers tend to be upright slabs with segmental or gothic arches. Several of the stones marking the graves of children are topped by lambs or doves. There are also a number of obelisks and several horizontal slabs. Many of the newer markers consist of substantial marble or granite stones.

A number of the original parishioners are buried in the cemetery with numerous members of the Pate, Townsend, Rowland, Moore, Price, Inman, McCormick, Thompson, Bracy, Chambers, Alexander, Norment, and Williams families among the interred. The oldest grave dates to 1848 and belongs to Alexander Moore (b. September 10, 1803, d. October 17, 1848). The earliest burials that predate the church occurred when the property was a community burial ground. The cemetery continues to be used by former church members and their descendents.

3. Granite Marker 1955 Non-Contributing Object

A granite memorial marker sits on the church property close to U. S. Highway 301 in front of Asbury Methodist Church. The marker is engraved on the front with the following:

ASBURY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH
RAYNHAM, N. C.
ORIGINALLY ORGANIZED BY BISHOP ASBURY
AS PROVIDENCE METHODIST CHURCH
LOCATED 3 MILES WEST OF THIS SITE
1811

THIS BUILDING ERECTED HERE ON LAND
GIVEN BY REV. JACKSON TOWNSEND AND
NAME CHANGED TO HONOR BISHOP ASBURY
1861

The back of the marker reads:

ERECTED IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MR. AND MRS. FRANCIS MILTON TOWNSEND
BY THEIR DAUGHTER
MABEL AGNES TOWNSEND
OCTOBER 1955

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located in southern Robeson County, Asbury Methodist Church is situated in a small town that is surrounded by agricultural fields and woods. The church meets criteria consideration A as it meets National Register Criterion C for architecture as an intact example of a mid-nineteenth-century rural Protestant church with elements of the Greek Revival style. The cemetery, dating to 1848, is a contributing site due to its association with the church. The period of significance is limited to 1861, the year the church was constructed.

Asbury Methodist Church is an exemplary example of a rural church built in Robeson County during the antebellum period. The church has not been structurally altered in over one-hundred and forty-seven years and remains in excellent physical condition. Simple classical elements incorporated into the frame, gable-front building include a prostyle portico with a prominent pedimented gable supported by flared posts with simple capitals. The porch is notable in that the wood columns are positioned on brick plinths that rest at ground level, excluding a raised porch floor at door height. Two original double-leaf entrance doors on the façade, accessed by several steps, allowed for men and women to enter the church separately, as was customary at the time the church was built. Large windows on all four elevations flood the sanctuary with light.

The interior retains all the original woodwork and furnishings. Three columns of hand-planed pews remain intact as does the original semi-circular communion rail. Wood floor boards, partially covered with carpet, and hand-planed paneled wainscoting, along with plaster walls and tongue-and-groove board ceiling provide the church with an elegant simplicity. The church sits well back from the road in a peaceful, pastoral setting. Many of the original members of the congregation are buried in the church cemetery located immediately across the highway from the church. Asbury Methodist Church, along with the associated cemetery, retains excellent historic integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, feeling, and association.

Historic Background

Asbury Methodist Church, located in the southern section of Robeson County, was an outgrowth from Old Providence Church, the oldest Methodist church congregation in the county. Old Providence Church, organized in ca. 1811 by Bishop Francis Asbury, was located about twelve miles from Lumberton, near the South Carolina border. Bishop Asbury, celebrated as the first Methodist bishop in America, traveled through Robeson County as early as 1785. Two years later, he preached at the courthouse in Lumberton. In the following years, he continued to visit the county, preaching sermons at various locations (Thomas, p. 100).

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The deed for Providence Church and one acre of land was dated June 20, 1811 (book Q, p. 112). Given by James Bullard, the deed makes reference to a Methodist Meeting House already standing on the parcel. The church had no windows and three doors, one in the front used by the men and two in the back reserved for women and slaves. Inside, the men sat on one side of the center aisle and the women on the other side, while the African Americans sat in the rear. During the early nineteenth century, when church buildings were spread far apart and the preachers were few, it was customary to have religious services only one Sunday a month or as often as the preacher could cover his circuit. Not until the mid 1850s was a Methodist minister assigned specifically to Robeson County (Thomas, p. 102).

By 1860, the area around Raynham had grown in population to the extent that the local leaders felt that they needed a church closer to home. The Townsend family, prominent settlers in the region, had named the settlement Raynham after their ancestral home in England (*Robeson Remembers, Vol. 1*, p. 18). On July 30, 1861, Jackson Townsend deeded approximately two acres of land, cut from his farm, to the trustees of the Methodist Church for the purpose of building a new church (Deed Book EE, p. 440). The new church was named "Asbury" to honor Bishop Francis Asbury. The trustees at the time were Richard Townsend, Willis P. Moore, James P. Barnes, John S. Thompson, Ellis Bullard Jr., William B. Thompson Sr., and Neil A. Thompson. Jackson's brothers, David and Robert, helped in building and financing the church, with David Townsend acting as the master builder. Church history relates that the lumber for the church was cut at Argyle (later Alma, now Daystrom) on the Lumber River and floated down the river to a landing and thence hauled in wagons across the Back Swamp to the building site. The church was dedicated by Reverend Peter Doub, the presiding elder, in the early 1860s. A former member of the church recalled in his memoirs that at one time the rear or back part of the church was separated from the front by a partition about four feet high and was used for the African American congregants, except on some special revival occasions when they were allowed the full use of the building (*Robeson Remembers, Vol. 1*, p. 18).

One of the original members of the board of trustees, Jackson Townsend (b. 1822, d. 1892), was a prosperous farmer who owned a cotton gin and organized wagon trains to carry the cotton to a Fayetteville market. When Asbury Methodist Church was built, the land surrounding it was all forest and there was a footpath from the back of the church to the Jackson Townsend home, affording a shortcut through the woods that was frequently used by those on foot going to and from church. Jackson Townsend later became a preacher and for many years served the Asbury Methodist Church, until his death in 1892 (Townsend, C. B., p. 3).

Jackson and his wife, Sarah Jane (d. 1877) are buried in the Asbury Methodist Church cemetery located across the road from the church. In addition, three of their young children are buried by their sides: a one-day old son (d. 1855), Marcus Stachwell (b. 1863, d. 1870), and Sallie Jackson (b. 1877, d. 1878). Rev. Jackson married a second time after his first wife's death

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in 1877. He and Sarah Melissa Oliver Townsend (b. 1853, d. 1938) had five children, of which only three survived to adulthood (Odum, *Cemetery Records of Robeson County*, p. 12).

Because of its large membership drawn from a sizable area of the region, Asbury was the mother Methodist Church of Robeson County. Daughter churches were later organized in Lumberton, Fairmont, Rowland, and other towns. Rowland Circuit was formed at the annual session of the North Carolina Conference in 1902 and Asbury Methodist Church was placed on it, along with the Rowland Church, Purvis Church, and Centenary Church. It was common practice during the second decade of the twentieth century to hold week-long revival meetings at the four churches (Rowland Church, Asbury Church, Purvis Church, and Centenary Church) belonging to the Rowland Circuit. The same minister served the four churches taking turns at each house of worship. Rev. J. A. Lee was the minister of the Rowland Circuit from 1912 through 1915. The revivals generally attracted large crowds with much socializing among the attendees including picnic dinners on the church grounds. A. J. Groves served the Rowland Circuit as pastor from 1916 to 1919, continuing the custom of holding week-long revival meetings at the various churches (Edens, pp. 10-11).

On March 14, 1902, the Trustees of Asbury Church deeded the southeast corner of their two-acre lot, measuring 82.5 by 82.5 feet, to the Robeson County Board of Education (Deed Book 4-N, p. 368). This corner of the property was utilized by the county for many years. Currently, the Raynham Town Hall is located on this corner of the property.

By 1926, Asbury Church's congregation had dwindled to only about a half-dozen members. Many of the former members had moved to new locations and established or joined new churches. The church decided to close its doors in 1926 with all obligations paid in full. One year later, the Asbury Homecoming Association was formed and the first homecoming was held on May 15, 1927. This annual celebration, which includes a morning worship service, a memorial business session, and a picnic on the grounds, continues to this day. Since 1943, this event has been held in October and since 1962, always on the third Sunday in October. It typically attracts about 100 to 130 people from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Ohio, Florida, New York, Maryland, Kansas, and New Jersey. In addition, the church is also used for occasional weddings, baptisms, and funerals (*Robeson Remembers, Vol. 1*, pp. 18-19).

The North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church deeded the Asbury Methodist Church property to the trustees of Asbury Memorial Church on June 3, 1970. This conveyed title out of the North Carolina Conference into an unincorporated association which now holds title to the property (Deed Book 17-P, p. 139). The trustees of the church continue to keep the church and the grounds in excellent condition. Some years earlier on October 12, 1938, John and Ina McSween deeded the cemetery property across the highway from Asbury

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Methodist Church to the Trustees of Asbury Cemetery (Deed Book 9A, p. 147). The cemetery has been enlarged with the addition of several parcels since that time. Janie Britt deeded 2,608 square feet to the Trustees of Asbury Cemetery on May 16, 1985 and an additional .67 acres on September 23, 1992 (Deed Book 578, p. 763 and Deed Book 773, p. 84). The Trustees of Asbury Cemetery continue to maintain the cemetery grounds.

Context – Architecture, Criterion C

The Greek Revival style dominated American architecture during the period from approximately 1820 through 1850. It was the first truly national style in the United States, popular due to its association with classical tradition and democracy. Common features of the style include a gable or hipped, low-pitch roof, a dentil cornice emphasized with a wide band of trim, porches, square or rounded columns, a gable-front floor plan, and a temple-front entryway with entry door surrounded by a rectangular transom and sidelights (<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~twp/architecture/greek>).

Although the style is commonly associated with courthouses and other public buildings, church congregations also embraced the style, erecting numerous Greek Revival-style churches throughout the country. Although a few urban churches equaled the public buildings in their scale and stylishness, more common were modest frame structures built for rural church congregations (Bishir, p. 177).

Asbury Methodist Church is typical of many rural churches built in North Carolina both before and after the Civil War and is an excellent example of the plain beauty of the country church with simple Greek Revival-style elements. The typical rural nineteenth-century church constructed in North Carolina provided a sturdy and spacious hall for preaching while also serving double duty as the principal location for socializing for the rural farm families. Often the churches were built by members of the congregation from trees harvested from the land the churches were built on. The Protestant evangelical movement of the antebellum period influenced the design and construction of churches in order that the buildings might reflect an image of sophistication and propriety. Churches were designed by denominational leaders of the era to allow for optimal seating, good acoustics, and a respectable image (Bishir, p. 180).

An 1834 circular encouraged Methodists in one Piedmont circuit to build churches that were “neat and comfortable and in every way worthy of enlightened, honorable, and liberal people.” The author offered plans for two plain, gable-end churches measuring thirty-six by fifty feet, one with two front doors and a pair of aisles, the other a single door and aisle. The altar, positioned on a raised platform, was typically located at the gable end opposite the entrance, with the pulpit located behind and above it. The writer of the circular cited the “science of church building” regarding the height, length, and width of the sanctuary and the precise measurements

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and arrangement of doors, windows, seats, galleries, and pulpit to assure good hearing (Bishir, p. 183).

Catherine Bishir in *North Carolina Architecture* writes “the simple aisled, gable-end church became a standard form for protestant congregations. Depending on the size of the congregation, it might be built one or two stories tall, with or without a gallery, and with one or two front doors and corresponding aisles dividing the pews; either aisle arrangement could be used for seating by gender or by family unit” (Bishir, p. 183).

It is probable that the builder of Asbury Methodist Church was familiar with the current thinking on proper church architecture. The builder closely followed the recommendations of the 1834 circular regarding the proper specifications for a “neat and comfortable” church. In this case, the church measures approximately forty by fifty feet, has two entrances opening into two aisles and large six-over-six sash windows on all four elevations that flood the sanctuary with light. A prominent prostyle portico with an imposing pediment supported by flared classical posts assisted in conveying a “powerful aura of respectability and community presence” to the church members and the surrounding inhabitants. The plain beauty of the interior is reflected in the wood floors, straight back pews, paneled wainscoting, plaster walls, and tongue-and-groove board ceiling.

In addition to Asbury Methodist Church, there are several extant churches of the antebellum era in Robeson County. Centre Presbyterian (RB 537), built in 1850 and located on the northeast side of SR 1312 near Maxton, is a two-story example of a mid-nineteenth-century church in Robeson County. Also built in the Greek Revival style, the plain weatherboarded, front-gable church features a steeple and a central entrance door with four windows at the second level of the façade. The side elevations have two rows of double-hung sash windows. The church has several rear twentieth-century additions.

Although built somewhat later, the 1885 Centenary Methodist Church (NR 2006), located near Rowland, employed a design similar to Asbury Methodist Church. As originally built, the church was a modest gable-front frame building with weatherboard siding. The church had two front entrances opening into two aisles. Five, evenly-spaced, six-over-six double hung sash windows were set into both side elevations. The church was later modified with the addition of a steeple and a front vestibule.

On a more sophisticated level than Asbury Methodist Church, the Philadelphus Presbyterian Church (NR 1975), built between 1859 and 1861, is a white frame Greek Revival-style building, with dark green shutters and a large steeple. The architect for the church, Gilbert P. Higley, had migrated to Robeson County from Connecticut. The two-story church features a prominent pediment and an in-antis portico supported by two Doric columns. Similar to Asbury,

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the church has two entrances opening into two aisles, thereby allowing the men and women to enter separately during services. Two tiers of double-hung sash windows are incorporated into the side elevations. The interior included a galley that in the early days was reserved exclusively for the black members of the congregation.

The surviving mid- to late-nineteenth century churches in Robeson County bear testament to the congregations growing awareness of and appreciation for a degree of sophistication in their church buildings. Although simple in design, the churches all employ elements of the popular Greek Revival style, thereby creating an architecture of permanence and propriety as well as moral authority.

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Bibliography

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

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**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

**Continuation Sheet
Section 10 Page 11**

**Asbury Methodist Church
Robeson County, NC**

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel consists of approximately one-and-one-half acres situated on the south side of U.S. Highway 301 and a one-acre cemetery located on the north side of U. S. Highway 301, opposite the church parcel. The boundary is delineated by the heavy black line on the attached Robeson County tax map for Asbury Methodist Church (Parcels 272301007 and 2721010101).

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the 1.5-acre parcel historically associated with Asbury Methodist Church. In addition it includes the one-acre cemetery parcel, historically associated with the church, located opposite Asbury Methodist Church on the north side of U. S. Highway 301.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
Continuation Sheet**

**Asbury Methodist Church
Robeson County, NC**

Section Photos Page 12

The following information applies to all photographs:

Name of Property: Asbury Methodist Church

County and State where property is located: Robeson County, North Carolina

Address: Southeast side of US Highway 301 North, .10 mile southwest of SR 1154

Name of Photographer: Beth Keane

Date of Photographs: May, 2008

Location of Original Negatives: North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh

Photographs:

Photograph 1: North and east elevations; camera looking southwest

Photograph 2: North and west elevations; camera looking southeast

Photograph 3: West and south elevations; camera looking northeast

Photograph 4: South and east elevations; camera looking northwest

Photograph 5: Interior of sanctuary; looking toward rear of sanctuary

Photograph 6: Interior of sanctuary; looking toward altar

Photograph 7: Interior of sanctuary; altar

Photograph 8: Asbury Church Cemetery – gates

Photograph 9: Asbury Church and Cemetery – camera looking southwest

Photograph 10: Asbury Church Granite Marker/Memorial (Non-Contributing)