United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wentworth Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery
and or common Wentworth United Methodist Church

2. Location
South side NC 65, 0.2 mi West of
street & number junction with SR 2124
not for publication

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>building(s)</td>
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<td>structure</td>
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<td>x yes: restricted</td>
<td>x religious</td>
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4. Owner of Property

name Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church

street & number P. O. Box 18750

5. Location of Legal Description
courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rockingham County Register of Deeds

6. Representation in Existing Surveys
title None

has this property been determined eligible? __ yes x no
date

depository for survey records

city, town state

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In its partially wooded setting just west of the Wentworth town limits, located in the rolling hills of Rockingham County, the ca. 1859 Wentworth Methodist Episcopal Church typifies antebellum churches in rural North Carolina. Resting on a fieldstone foundation, the simple rectangular frame building exhibits the meeting house, with its symmetrical two-bay facade and three-bay side elevations. The weatherboard-clad structure is topped by a pedimented gable front roof of standing seam metal which has a small, open, gabled belfry at its apex. The exterior's most unusual feature is a rectangular, box-like projection with louvers on all three sides, set in the center of the pediment, which apparently provided ventilation and is thought to be original. Just east of the building is a small graveled parking area, and a cemetery extends to east and west behind the church, as well as down the hill in the wooded area to the southwest. A two-story with basement classroom and office annex was added to the rear of the church in 1953, at which time two windows on the chancel wall were converted to doorways.

The simplicity of the church's form is echoed in its details, both exterior and interior. Four-panel doors and six-over-six windows are set in flat surrounds with a narrow projecting square bead topping each lintel and at the base of the window sills. Flat corner boards rise to the simple box cornice. Poured concrete steps with plain iron railings lead to concrete stoops in front of each entrance and are the principal changes to the exterior. Each entrance has a four-panel door with a large six-over-six window above. Identical windows pierce each bay on the side elevations, with a small, four-panel door near the front of the west elevation being the original entrance to the slave gallery stairwell.

Although the interior of the church has undergone some remodeling during its 125-year existence, much of the original fabric remains intact. Both floor and ceiling are of wide pine planking, while the walls are plastered. Tall, flat baseboards continue the simple decorative motif as do the flush window and door surrounds with flat corner blocks, suggestive of a modest classical influence. Three ranks of pews with rectangular end panels face the chancel, with aisles separating the narrower side ranks from the wider central section. These pews were apparently grained late in the 19th century in a manner similar to that used on woodwork at the nearby Wright Tavern (National Register, 1970); most of this graining has been painted over. The chancel consists of a rectangular platform projecting from the south wall and surrounded by the original semicircular chancel rail of turned balusters. In front of the platform is a replacement altar table; the original, smaller altar table has been moved to a new position near the organ and piano in the southeast corner of the sanctuary. On the platform are the original Greek Revival style lectern and three later Victorian chairs obtained from the First Baptist Church of Reidsville.

The original slave gallery still spans the north end of the building, supported by a heavy paneled square post. As already noted, the gallery formerly could be reached only through a small door in the west elevation which opened to a winding stairway. Pews identical to those on the main level are set on a floor which slopes to a low, paneled retaining wall. The area under the gallery was enclosed and several rows of pews removed in 1953 to create a vestibule. At the same time, an interior entrance to the gallery was cut; this necessitated the reorientation of several pews in the northwest
corner of the sanctuary, as did the removal of two stoves which had been located about midway in each side section. Other changes included the removal of a partition which originally ran down the center of the sanctuary and the conversion (already mentioned) of two windows in the chancel wall into doors with transoms. These doors lead to the two-story with basement frame and cinder block, one-room deep, 1953 annex containing Sunday School classrooms and offices, which is separated from the sanctuary by a narrow hall. The hip-roofed addition has separate exterior entrances at the rear basement level and on the first floor facing the highway beside the east elevation. Although the addition extends about five feet to each side of the church building, it is of the same height and does not detract from the appearance of the church.

The cemetery to the rear of the church consists of two sections, that nearest the church in a grassy area containing the graves of white church members, with a wooded area behind that used for burying local blacks well into the 20th century. The former has a fine collection of late 19th and early 20th century markers, plus some more typical of later 20th century granite tombstones. Several family plots are set off by ornate iron fences, one of which contains obelisks erected by state senator George D. Boyd in memory of his three sons who died in the Civil War. The earliest tombstone predates the construction of the church; it is a flat table marker placed over the grave of Priscilla Minor (died 15 June 1853), whose husband Levin Minor donated the land on which the church was built. The area of the cemetery reserved for black members of the community slopes gently to the southwest and is fairly heavily wooded and carpeted with leaves and scattered underbrush and saplings. The majority of the markers are rough, uninscribed fieldstone with the appearance of being randomly placed. It seems likely that stones have deteriorated and fallen over and that some graves were not marked. A few markers, principally dating from the 1920s, are simple but competently executed carved stones. There are at least as many graves in this area as in the white area, although this fact is not readily apparent because of the disparity in the size of finish of tombstones and the different physical setting of the two sections.

Together, the Wentworth Methodist Church and its cemetery are an impressive feature on the landscape of rural Rockingham County and a surprising coda at the western edge of the county seat. Their charm remains essentially unchanged, a delightful departure from a marked trend of destruction or radical alteration of 19th and early 20th century rural churches.
### 8. Significance

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<th>Builder Architect</th>
<th>CRITERIA ASSESSMENT</th>
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**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The ca. 1850 building of the Wentworth Methodist (Episcopal) Church is a handsome and remarkably intact example of an antebellum meeting-house form church in rural North Carolina. This oldest Methodist church building surviving in Rockingham County is also associated with the lives of Rev. Numa Reid and his two sons. Reverend Reid, who is buried in the churchyard, was one of the most prominent 19th century Methodist ministers in the state, and his sons, Frank L. and James W., were prominent in their own right, the former as president of two North Carolina colleges, and the latter as a U. S. Congressman. The cemetery to the rear of the church is notable as the resting place of many prominent members of the Wentworth community and contains a fine collection of tombstones dating from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. It can also provide information regarding societal stratification in the same period, as the cemetery is divided into two sections, one for whites and one for blacks, with a clear physical demarcation between the two sections and in the size and quality of grave markers in each.

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**CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:**

B. Is associated with the lives of Rev. Numa Reid, prominent 19th century North Carolina Methodist minister, and his sons, Frank L. Reid, president of Greensboro and Louisburg colleges, and James W. Reid, a U. S. Congressman.

C. Is a handsome and intact example of a rural antebellum meeting-house form church with a fine collection of mid-19th to early 20th century tombstones in its cemetery.

D. Is likely to yield information in our history through study of the cemetery's two distinct sections.
The Wentworth United Methodist Church is located in the Rockingham County seat of Wentworth. The church dates from 1836. The present sanctuary was built in 1859, and is the oldest Methodist building in the county.

Methodists came to Rockingham County slightly later than did Baptists and Presbyterians. Noted Methodist leader Francis Asbury preached in the county seat as early as 1786. The first Methodist church in the county was founded in Lowes in 1796. In 1804 evangelist Lorenzo Dow preached an outdoor revival in Wentworth before an estimated 1,500 people. A Methodist church was organized in Wentworth in 1833 but reorganized in 1836. The 1836 trustees purchased a plot of land from James Wall and built a small church building. Among these 1836 trustees were Joseph Holderly, George Holderly, Thomas Wesdon, William Wesdoy and Loyd Watrs. The present church building was constructed in 1859 at a new site.

The Reverend Numa Fletcher Reid (1835-1873), one of the state's leading Methodists in the middle of the nineteenth century, was pastor of the congregation during the early 1850s, prior to the construction of the present building and at irregular intervals afterwards. Dr. Reid was a prominent educator and churchman, who was superintendent for the Greensboro district for many years. His son, Frank Lewis Reid (1851-1894), was also associated with the church prior to becoming president of Greensboro College. Among other pastors of the church during the post Civil War period were J. W. Lewis, Caiphas Norman, and R. P. Tory.

The sanctuary has remained relatively unchanged since its completion. The Reid family sponsored minor remodeling in the late 1870s and further minor remodeling was undertaken around 1950. In 1953 a school room annex was added.

Located close to the building is the church cemetery, which dates to the 1850s. A number of leading Wentworth citizens are buried there, including Numa Reig, state legislator George Boyd, and two of his sons who were killed during the Civil War.

Although a county seat Wentworth has remained a small town. Consequently the Wentworth United Methodist Church has a small congregation which hopes to restore the building.

Footnotes:
3 Information supplied by Michael Perdue.
4 Craig, "Old Wentworth Sketches," 192.
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 2.86 acres

Quadrangle name: southwest Eden

UTM References

A: Zone 117, Easting 699600, Northing 41028900

B: Zone 118, Easting 900000, Northing 900000

C: Zone 119, Easting 000000, Northing 000000

D: Zone 120, Easting 000000, Northing 000000

Verbal boundary description and justification: See attached survey map. The property consists of three land parcels: the original (1859) plot of 1.64 acres which contains the church and most of the cemetery and 2 additional parcels obtained in 1883. The entire acreage has been associated with the church for more than 100 years, contains the church cemetery, and is an integral part of the church setting.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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<th>county code</th>
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11. Form Prepared By

Description and significance statements - Allison H. Black, Survey Specialist

Historical statement -

organization: N. C. Division of Archives & History
date: Aug. 30, 1985

street & number: 109 E. Jones St.
television: 919/733-6545

city or town: Raleigh
state: North Carolina

date: Aug. 30, 1985

date: Oct. 10, 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

For NPS use only
Bibliography


Perdue, Michael. Information supplied by.

Rodingham county Deed Books.
