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  Forestville Baptist Church

and or common

2. Location

W. side U.S. 1-A  0.1 mile south of junction with SR 2049

street & number  with SR 2049  not for publication

city, town  Forestville  vicinity of

state  North Carolina  code 037  county Wake  code 183

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>district</td>
<td>public</td>
<td>occupied</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>building(s)</td>
<td>private</td>
<td>unoccupied</td>
<td>commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>work in progress</td>
<td>educational</td>
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<td>site</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>in process</td>
<td>entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>object</td>
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<td>being considered</td>
<td>government</td>
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4. Owner of Property

name  Dennis Hooper, Pastor  Carroll and Fran Vick (a leading layman)

street & number  P.O. Box 322  819 S. Main St.

city, town  Wake Forest  vicinity of  state North Carolina 27587

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.  Wake County Courthouse

street & number  

city, town  Raleigh  state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title  None  has this property been determined eligible?  yes  XX  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records  

city, town  

state  

The Forestville Baptist Church is the most prominent landmark in the small village of Forestville. It stands near the highway, facing the road, and to the rear extends a churchyard with markers dating from the nineteenth century to the present. To the south, on church property, is a modest brick educational building. The frame church itself stands as an unusually intact and well-preserved example of late antebellum church architecture. It combines the characteristic mid-19th century Greek Revival temple form with eclectic bracketed and trefoil ornament typical of the Italianate style—a blend associated with the work of Warrenton contractor Jacob W. Holt.

The church has a single central entrance in the main facade and is four bays deep. It is sheltered by a gable roof and rests on a low brick foundation. Walls are covered with plain weatherboards, and the elevations are defined by heavy baseboards, broad cornerposts treated as pilasters, and a wide frieze—all typical of Holt's work. The cornerposts are fluted, and their caps are ornamented with three small brackets on each face. Large drop pendant brackets, regularly spaced, adorn the cornice and support the deep roof overhang. The main facade is pedimented, with the tympanum being flush-sheathed. The brackets do not carry up the raking cornices of the pediment.

The openings are treated in distinctive fashion. The central entrance has a double door beneath a broad 8-light double-hung sash window at gallery level. Between the door and window is a horizontal panel with trefoil decoration. The whole is enframed with a heavy mitered molding, and louvered (replacement) blinds flank both the window and the door. The same treatment occurs in each of the side bays, except that in the place of the door is a large eight-over-eight double-hung sash. The trefoil motif—which appears in Holt's domestic work chiefly on mantels and interior panels—combines with the abundant brackets to create a highly decorative exterior unusual in mid-19th century churches in rural North Carolina.

A third stylistic motif, the Gothic, is introduced in modest fashion in the steeple that sits astride the gable roof at the front of the church. Each elevation of the square base of the cupola features a small louvered lancet arched opening. Plain corner pilasters frame each elevation. Above a wide frieze and heavy overhang rises a polygonal, tapered spire of modest height. It should be noted that a similar blend of Greek Revival form, Italianate brackets, and Gothic inspired windows appear in the mid-1850s Presbyterian Church in Warrenton, also attributed to Holt.

In contrast to the eclecticism of the exterior, the interior of the Forestville church adheres almost entirely to a Greek Revival mode. The entrance opens into a shallow narthex. Doors with four arched flat panels set in rectangular moldings open into the sanctuary. In each corner a compact stair rises in a tight curve to the galleries above. Each stair features a turned newel and rounded handrail, supported by thin square balusters.

The sanctuary is an impressive, spacious, and brightly lit place, well served by the large windows and simple Greek Revival finish. Tapered Doric columns carry the gallery that extends around the east end and the two sides. The gallery is cordoned by a flat-paneled balustrade with simple mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival moldings. Doors and windows are enframed by broad simple moldings. The plain box pews are ca. 1960 replacements of the original.
The principal contrast to the simple classical character of the interior appointments appears in the pulpit and other altar furnishings. Round-arched panels and brackets adorn the pulpit in a fashion reminiscent of the exterior work; it resembles other pulpits in Holt's field of work. A similarly detailed, tall balustrade appears behind the pulpit to shield the baptismal area. Other furnishings, two chairs and an altar table, are of later 19th century character. A plain paneled balustrade cordons off the choir area.

Over the years, the congregation of Forestville Baptist Church has taken unusual care to preserve the character of the small church. It is in pristine condition, with the only apparent alterations the replacement of the louvered shutters and the pews. The small brick building to the south does not substantially intrude on the character of the setting, and the cemetery to the rear is an integral part of the place, both for historical associations and as a green space shaded by trees and marked with stones from over a century.
The Forestville Baptist Church was organized in 1859 by several prominent citizens of the flourishing railroad village of Forestville. The church building was completed in 1860 and survives as an intact example of a handsome antebellum church. The eclectic Greek Revival-Italianate style structure may be the work of Warrenton contractor Jacob W. Holt, one of North Carolina's leading builders in the antebellum period, or his brother, Thomas J. Holt, architect with the Raleigh and Gaston Railroad.

Criteria Assessment:

A. Associated with antebellum development of small towns along the route of the railroads built in this period.

B. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles of architecture in a church structure designed for the worship services of a prosperous antebellum Baptist congregation.
The Forestville Baptist Church was organized in 1859 with its present church building completed in 1860. The unusually well-preserved church is distinguished by its blend of Greek Revival and Italianate architectural elements. Several specific features of the church are identical to details found on houses built by contractor Jacob W. Holt (1811-1880) of Warrenton. Holt, one of the state's best known and most prolific builders in the antebellum period, is credited with constructing over ninety structures in sixteen counties of North Carolina and Virginia. The majority of Holt's work was residential, with the Forestville Baptist Church being one of only five antebellum churches connected with Holt's building practice.

The Forestville Baptist Church was organized by the residents of the flourishing Wake County village of Forestville. Nine of the twelve founding members were former members of the Baptist church in Wake Forest, a small village one mile north of Forestville and the home of Wake Forest College, a Baptist-supported school. There was a spirit of rivalry between Forestville and Wake Forest, but Forestville was the larger and more prosperous of the two towns. When the Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road was built through the communities in 1839-1840, the railroad established a passenger and freight depot only in Forestville, and in 1852 Wake Forest saw its post office moved to Forestville. According to the census of 1860, Forestville was populated by 280 people living in 48 households. Inhabitants of the town included five professors of Wake Forest College, six merchants, three Baptist ministers, a doctor, a lawyer, a tailor, a bootmaker, a master mechanic, and a number of prosperous farmers. Prominent among the residents of Forestville was the Dunn family which led in the establishment of the Baptist church in Forestville.

In the spring of 1859, Peyton A. Dunn, William B. Dunn, John R. Dunn, S. H. Dunn, Mary A. Dunn, Mathilda Dunn, Elizabeth Jones, Junius W. Fort, Job Carver and wife, D. W. Allen, and W. L. Cook met to organize the church; all but Fort and the Carvers were members of the Wake Forest Baptist Church. The Dunns were active Baptist laymen. Peyton A. Dunn was a trustee of Wake Forest College intermittently from 1852 until 1896, serving as the secretary of the board of trustees. He was also the auditor of the North Carolina Baptist Publication and Sunday School Society, and with S. H. Dunn and John R. Dunn, served on the board of managers of the Baptist State Convention. Two other of the church founders, Junius W. Fort and Job Carver, also were on the convention's board of managers.

On 23 May 1859 the church trustees, consisting of Fort, Carver, John R., S. H., and Peyton A. Dunn, were deeded one acre of land on the Forestville to Raleigh road by Isham Holding, "in consideration of the love of Christ and respect of the Baptist Church." The church called a meeting on 9 June "for the purpose of adopting some plan to build a suitable House to Worship in. A plan of a House was handed in by Bro. P. A. Dunn, 32 feet by 48--and adopted. Brethren J. Carver, J. W. Fort, and P. A. Dunn were appointed a building committee." Unfortunately, the church records do not include the name of the contractor for the church.

It is significant that Peyton A. Dunn provided the plan of the church for he was the Superintendent of the Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road whose company architect, Thomas J. Holt, was the brother and former building partner of Jacob Holt. It is unknown whether Dunn's plan was his own or one perhaps prepared by Jacob or Thomas Holt.
Dunn and Holt would have been closely associated in their work of overseeing the maintenance of the railroad line and its buildings, and Thomas J. Holt could have suggested his brother Jacob to Dunn as the contractor for the church. The president of the Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road reported in October 1859 that "a number of carpenters have been engaged in repairing the ware houses. Those at Littleton, Warrenton, Ridgeway /all in Warren County/, the Junction and Forestville are in good order." It is possible that Jacob Holt and his carpenters were among the "number of carpenters" employed by the Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road, and that Holt made the acquaintance of Peyton Dunn at this time.

Jacob Holt had moved to Warrenton from Virginia in 1843, and by 1850 he had the largest carpentry shop in the state with seventeen white carpenters and forty-two slaves; in 1860 Holt employed nineteen white carpenters. Holt's building arrangements varied from project to project. He sometimes took the complete contract for a building and at other times he subcontracted with other builders on a project; on several occasions one of his journeymen carpenters worked independently on a project with Holt supplying materials from his workshop. The nature of Holt's involvement in the construction of the Forestville Church is unknown, but it is likely that much of the materials used in the church was manufactured by Holt in Warrenton and shipped on the Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road to Forestville. The cornerposts of the church, fluted in the Greek Revival style but capped with small Italianate style brackets, are a ubiquitous trademark on buildings documented and attributed as Holt's work. The large curved brackets with turned drops of the cornice are variations of those found on Holt's more lavishly decorated houses. The wide architrave molding of the exterior door and window frames is another feature unique to Holt, although he usually limited its use to exterior doors and interior trim. The most distinctive feature of the church's exterior is the panel which appears between the sanctuary and balcony windows. The panels feature a stylized leaf device copied from a design in William Ranlett's The Architect (1849), a popular pattern book which Holt owned. This leaf design was employed numerous times by Holt on mantelpieces and on interior window panels. On the interior of the church, the elaborate pulpit is decorated with Gothic-pointed panels which are repeated on the doors of the church; identical doors are commonly found in Holt-related houses.

The church was dedicated on the fourth Sunday in May of 1860 with the Rev. James MacDaniel, president of the Baptist State Convention, directing the service. The building committee, however, did not report the building as completed until the following August when they stated the church had cost about $2,100. A vote of thanks was given by the church members to the building committee members "for their zeal, energy, and promptness in prosecuting the work." The church records show that forty individuals gave $2,081.12 for the cost of the church; the largest contributors were Job Carver who gave $530, Junius W. Fort who gave $163, and Peyton and John R. Dunn, who each gave $161. The first record of the church in the annual proceedings of the State Baptist Convention occurred in 1860 when the Forestville Church contributed $50.00 to the convention for state and foreign missions; despite the small size of the church this was the eleventh largest of the eighty contributions received by the convention from churches across the state.
With the growth of Wake Forest College after the Civil War, the village of Wake Forest began to overtake and then surpass Forestville as the community's leading town. In 1873 the post office was moved from Forestville back to Wake Forest, and the following year the Raleigh and Gaston Rail Road moved its passenger and freight stations from Forestville to Wake Forest. The pastor of the Forestville Church, the Rev. W. T. Brooks, resigned from the church in 1874 "since some of the members felt aggrieved at his favoring the moving of the station."21 Forestville was incorporated in 1879, but declined in the face of Wake Forest's growth until its charter was repealed in 1915.22 Today Forestville is a quiet residential area on the southern outskirts of Wake Forest.

The Forestville Baptist Church, however, has experienced no decline since its founding. In 1958 a brick educational building was constructed in the church yard away from the sanctuary, and in 1972 classrooms were installed in part of the balcony. Present membership of the church is 270.23 The Forestville Baptist Church, one of the best preserved antebellum churches in the county, is a handsome example of a small town church erected by a prosperous Baptist congregation. The church is also important as being one of the few churches associated with the noted Warrenton contractor Jacob W. Holt and his eclectic Greek Revival-Italianate building style.
FOOTNOTES


2. The Presbyterian church in Warrenton, built ca. 1855, Salem Methodist Church in Granville County, and the now-demolished Warrenton Baptist Church of 1849 have been attributed to Holt on stylistic grounds; Hebron Methodist Church in Warren County, built 1848-1849, is the only church with possible documentation as Holt's work. See the respective files for the above churches in the Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. He also remodeled Emanuel Episcopal Church in Warrenton.


5. Forestville Baptist Church Minutes, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, notes from the minutes supplied by Catherine Bishir of the Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Forestville Baptist Church Minutes.

6. Paschal, Wake Forest College, III, 231; Proceedings of the Twenty-third Annual Session of the Baptist State Convention (Raleigh: M. A. Meredith, 1852), 4-5, hereinafter cited as Proceedings with appropriate year.

7. Proceedings, 1850, p. 2; 1853, p. 3; 1857, p. 2; 1858, p. 2; 1859, p. 2.


10. Forestville Baptist Church Minutes, 9 June 1859.

11. Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Raleigh & Gaston Rail Road Company (Raleigh: N. C. Institute for the Deaf & Dumb and the Blind, 1858), I, 22, hereinafter cited as Proceedings of the Raleigh and Gaston with the appropriate year; Bishir, "Jacob W. Holt," 5. The superintendent, along with the president and treasurer, was one of the three salaried officers of the railroad. Dunn later became the railroad's treasurer.
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13. There are two other possible connections linking Holt with Dunn and the construction of the Forestville Baptist Church. Holt is credited with building in the 1850s a large, two-story house in Warrenton for the Rev. N. A. Purefoy, the son of the Rev. James Purefoy, a prominent Baptist minister who lived in Forestville near the Dunn family. The Gothic-paneled doors of the Purefoy House are identical to those at the Forestville Church, and the decorative details on the mantels of the Purefoy House are repeated on the window panels of the church. Another connection could be that the Rev. J. B. Solomon, pastor of the Warrenton Baptist Church, of which Holt was a founding member and active layman, was the secretary of the Baptist State Convention from 1856 until 1860 when Peyton A. Dunn served on the Convention's Board of Managers. See the files of the Purefoy House, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh; Paschal, *History of Wake Forest*, I, 628; *Proceedings, 1856-1860*; 1860 Census, Wake County, Forestville post office, 25.


17. Forestville Baptist Church Minutes, 11 August 1860.

18. Forestville Baptist Church Minutes, 11 August 1860.

19. Forestville Baptist Church Minutes, following the entry for 11 August 1860.


The 2 1/4-acre property being nominated is the land held by the church, including the cemetery, which is described in deeds of May 23, 1859 (1 acre) and July 19, 1873 (1 1/4 acres), here attached.


Eighth Census of the United States, 1860: Wake County, North Carolina, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Forestville Baptist Church Minutes, 1859-1862, microfilm, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.


Wake County Deeds, microfilm, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

Warren County files, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.