

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Rehoboth Methodist Church

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

South side of U.S. 64, 0.4 mi. west of junc. with S.R. 1317

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Skimmersville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

1st

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Washington

187

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

☐ DISTRICT☐ PUBLIC☐ OCCUPIED☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☒ BUILDING(S)☒ PRIVATE☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ STRUCTURE☐ BOTH☒ WORK IN PROGRESS☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ SITE☐ PUBLIC ACQUISITION☐ ACCESSIBLE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☒ RELIGIOUS☐ OBJECT☐ IN PROCESS☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ BEING CONSIDERED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☒ NO☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Rehoboth Methodist Church c/o Dr. A. L. Whitehurst

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 566

CITY, TOWN

Plymouth

STATE

VICINITY OF

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Washington County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Plymouth

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Rehoboth Methodist Church, situated amid a small graveyard, is a modest, carefully finished Greek Revival temple-form structure. The road formerly ran in front of the building, but now passes behind it. The area is shaded with large trees draped with Spanish moss.

The wooden frame of the rectangular structure is covered with weatherboards and surmounted by a gable roof. The front (southwest) end of the building is pedimented. A delicate dentil course outlines the weatherboarded pediment and carries around the sides of the building, returning slightly on the rear gable end. Two bays wide and three deep, the church is bounded by cornerposts treated as symmetrically molded pilasters, has a plain board water table and rests on low brick piers.

The front facade has a pair of entrances, each containing a double door framed by vernacular version of a symmetrically molded architrave with paneled corner blocks which employ simple wooden strips in lieu of molding. Each leaf of the double doors is composed of six horizontal raised panels vertically aligned; the panels are outlined by the traditional flat, broad Greek Revival molding. Six-over-six sash windows above the front entrances provide light for the gallery. Architraves like those of the entrances frame the gallery windows as well as the sixteen-over-sixteen sash windows on the sides and rear; simple molded sills and louvered blinds are used on all windows. Located on the southeast side of the church, near the south corner, is a single door identical to one leaf of the front doors, which because of its position immediately adjacent to the gallery stair was probably used by the slaves who were seated in the gallery.

The interior, retaining its original finish and furnishings, has a spacious quality about it. Walls plastered above a simple chair rail and a flush sheathed dado are interrupted by the large windows framed by symmetrically molded architraves and paneled corner blocks. Functional wooden pews with simple curvilinear sides are arranged along the sides and down the middle of the auditorium; the middle section of pews is divided down the center. Two additional sections of pews face the pulpit which is centered in a dais along the northeast wall. Narrow ceiling set diagonally forms a triangular background focal point for the pulpit. The dais is outlined by a communion rail composed of chamfered posts capped by applied necking, and balusters square in section which support a wide molded rail. A small communion table and a reed organ are also on the dais.

The gallery is supported on chamfered posts finished like those of the communion rail. A solid balustrade paneled with flat panels outlined with Greek Revival molding encloses the gallery. Access to the gallery is gained from an enclosed winding stair adjacent to the side entrance. Pews which are rather crude versions of those on the main level are arranged on the sloping floor of the gallery.

Gas light chandeliers (now electrified) suspended from the pine-sheathed ceiling, and smaller lamps in wall brackets illuminate the auditorium and add an authentic antebellum character to this well preserved church.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☒ RELIGION	
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE	
☐ 1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE	
☐ 1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	☐ EDUCATION	☐ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER	
☒ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION	
☐ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		☐ INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

1850s

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Rehoboth Methodist Church has served the Methodists of central Washington County farming communities since about 1850. The consistent, careful finish of the Greek Revival temple-form building is unusually academic by comparison with other buildings in the county, probably reflecting the desire for architectural excellence in a public building. The simple yet dignified frame church in its picturesque setting in a grove of trees draped with Spanish moss has been preserved through local efforts as a landmark of the county.

Rehoboth Methodist Church was built between 1850 and 1853 on a 1 7/8-acre tract of land deeded to the church's board of trustees by Joseph H. Norman. The census of 1850 shows that Norman was at that time the owner of fifty slaves and was Washington County's fourth largest slaveholder. Local tradition has it that these slaves built the church. Norman and his family appear to have taken an active interest in the early affairs of Rehoboth. In 1850, two of the five members of the church's board of trustees were members of the Norman family. William J. Norman was the congregation's "class leader" in 1861.

According to local tradition, Rehoboth Church had its beginnings at Skinnersville Chapel, an interfaith house of worship said to have served the community from about 1735 to 1805. The Reverend Charles Pettigrew, first bishop-elect of the Episcopal Church, is said to have served this chapel twice each month during his early years as a circuit-riding minister. Pettigrew is also believed to have recommended that this chapel, because of its dilapidated condition, be torn down and replaced with a new structure.

The second chapel is believed to have been completed about 1805 on land donated by Esther Davenport and the Reverend Swain Swift. It became known as Swain's Chapel and continued to serve the Skinnersville community as an interfaith meetinghouse until about 1828, when it became affiliated with the new Methodist Protestant sect. Swain's Chapel, like its predecessor, is believed to have become dilapidated and to have been torn down in the late 1840s. It was replaced by Rehoboth Church about 1853.

Little is known about the history of Rehoboth Church or its membership. Today the church stands in a sparsely-populated section of rural Washington County. Its congregation numbers only four. A class book for Rehoboth, probably kept by Richard Henry Wills, the congregation's minister, reveals, however, that in 1861 the congregation consisted of fifty-four male members and 106 female members. The membership also included five male "Colored Members" and twenty-nine colored females. By 1866 the white membership had dropped to fifty-one white males and ninety-six white females, but Negro membership was listed as thirty-five.

Rehoboth has been called the "mother church" of the Methodist Protestant denomination

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in Washington County. It appears to have been the Albemarle Circuit's leading church in terms of membership, at least during the 1860s. Rehoboth remained a Methodist Protestant church until 1939, when the sect was merged into the United Methodist Church. The building survives today in its original condition, with the exception of metal handrails and concrete stairs on the exterior. For the last few years Rehoboth has been maintained by the Washington County Historical Society, the group which also has coordinated the annual homecoming celebration.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, For 1867-8. Raleigh: Branson & Jones, n.d.
Branson's North Carolina Business Directory, For 1869. Raleigh: J. A. Jones, n.d.
Cheshire, Joseph Blount, ed. Sketches of Church History in North Carolina. Wilmington: Wm. L. DeRosset, Jr., 1892.
Historic Washington County. Plymouth: Washington County Historical Society, 1972.
Roanoke Beacon (Plymouth). Sharlene P. Nelson, "117 Year History of Rehobeth" (sic), June 3, 1970.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 acres

L&L 35° 56' 22" 76° 31' 23"

UTM REFERENCES

A

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

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B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Research by Robert Topkins, survey specialist; architectural description
by Janet E. Seapker, survey specialist

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

109 East Jones Street

919/829-7862

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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ITEM NUMBER 9

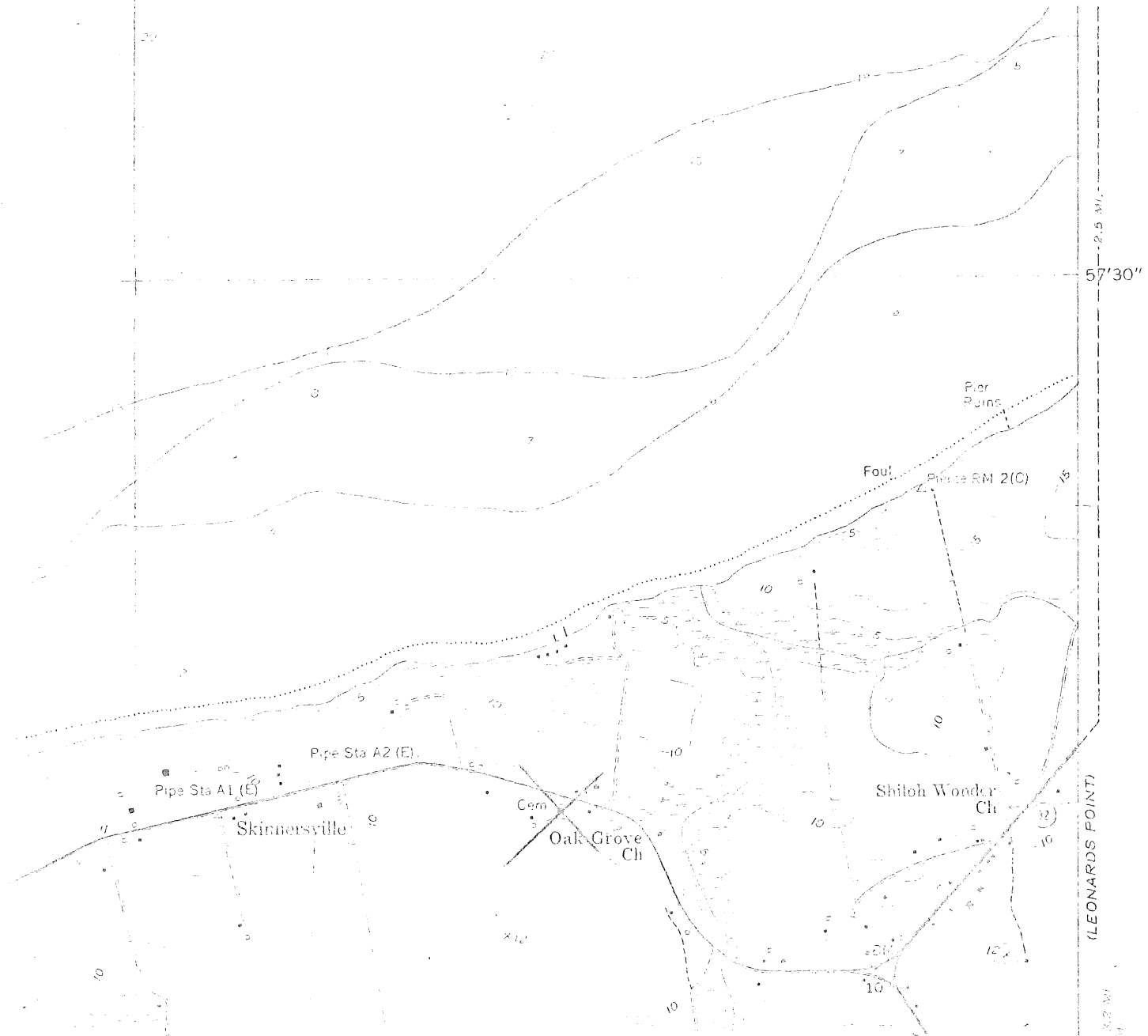
PAGE one

United States Census Office. Seventh Census of the United States, 1850. Population Schedule; Schedule 2, Slave Inhabitants.

University of North Carolina. Southern Historical Collection. William Henry Wills Papers.

Washington County Records, Washington County Courthouse, Plymouth, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds).

Washington County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds).



Rehoboth Methodist Church
Skimmersville vicinity
North Carolina

Latitude			Longitude		
degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
35	56	27	76	31	23

ROPER NORTH

I N N E R S V I L L E

