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Ala. Historical Commission

Alabama Register Property Information

1. Name

historic Maplesville Methodist Episcopal Church, South

and/or common Maplesville United Methodist Church

2. Location

street & number Railroad Street

city, town Maplesville _____ vicinity of

state Alabama county Chilton

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

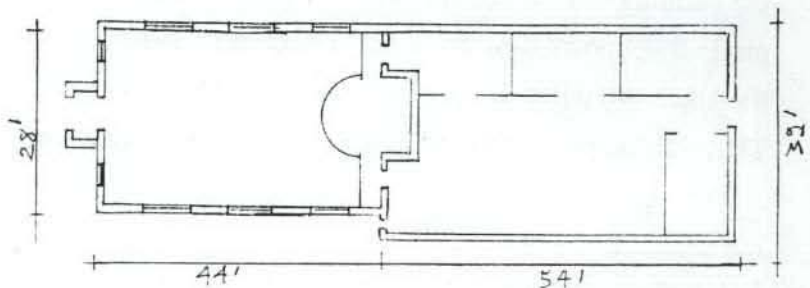
4. Owner of Property

name Maplesville United Methodist

street & number Railroad Street

city, town Maplesville _____ vicinity of state Alabama

5. Please use space below to sketch floor plan/site plan.



6. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date 1887

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in the center of the state and in the heart of downtown Maplesville, the Maplesville United Methodist Church stands in Parcel #14 on Railroad Street and faces the Southern Railroad. The church is surrounded by vacant lots on the south, west, and north sides. Only two late 19th century modest frame dwellings remain on this street.

The church, as it exist today, is composed of two rectangular sections reflecting the growth of the church congregation and the church activities. Typical of Methodist churches of its time and place, the original building has a simple rectangular plan with a projecting vestibule and a recessed pulpit area. Built in the Gothic Revival style, the one-story, wood-frame building stands 1 foot above ground and rests on brick piers. Latticework has been placed between the outside piers. The approximately 28 foot by 44 foot building was constructed using square nails and most of the original wood siding and trimwork remains. North and south elevations have three symmetrically located windows. Narrow pointed arched windows are crowned with two-part molding. The double hung windows have 5 over 6 lights. Curvilinear brackets projecting from a simple molded cornice support the overhanging eaves of the front gable roof (currently asphalt shingles). The roof is further highlighted by a wood-frame belfry trimmed with Gothic details and dentil molding. Original wood shingles on the sides of the belfry have been covered with asphalt shingles and the original decorative metalwork has been removed. The original bell remains.

The front facade of the original section has one window on each side of a central vestibule entrance. The vestibule roof is trimmed with curvilinear brackets in the same manner as the main roof. The same two-part molding that crowns the pointed windows is repeated around the 3-light triangular transom and the top of the door. Replacement brick faced concrete steps and 20th century iron railing lead to the main entrance. Exterior light fixtures are 20th century additions. Original paired double-paneled doors are set within simple wood molding. Smaller versions of the main windows are present on the north and south sides of the vestibule.

In 1953, a 32 foot by 54 foot frame addition was added to the back (west end) of the building.¹ To accommodate the addition, the projecting chancel roof and the three original windows were removed. The center chancel window opening was enclosed and the other two window openings were enlarged for door openings into the new addition.² The addition provided space for Sunday School rooms, rest rooms and a recreation area.

¹ Interview, Church Congregation. The researcher met with church officers and other members at the church building on September 15, 1992, hereinafter cited as Interview, Church Congregation.

² Windows are stored in the new addition.

7. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1870's to Present **Builder/Architect** Builder: G. W. Suttles?

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Exemplary in both the contexts of architecture and religion, the Maplesville United Methodist Church provides insight into the development of the town of Maplesville in Chilton County Alabama. It is one of the few remaining buildings built between 1870 and 1890 in the town of Maplesville and is one of the few remaining Methodist churches built between 1870 and 1890 in Chilton County. The original church building, which has been in continuous use by a Methodist congregation for over 100 years, is an excellent example of the one-room, Gothic Revival style church buildings which once dotted the rural landscape throughout the south. The Methodist Church was the only church building in Maplesville until 1908 and according to the town history published in 1989, the building was used not only as a house of worship by members of both the Methodist and Baptist faith, but it was also used as a school building until the first town school building was built around the turn of the century.⁶ The church building was again used as a school building during the school year of 1923-24 while a new school building was being completed.⁷ The Maplesville United Methodist Church has been an important contributor to the continued welfare and unity of the community.

Continued on **7. Significance Page 7.1**

⁶ LeCroy and Dennis, Maplesville History, pages, 71. As part of a Bicentennial Celebration, a History Committee chaired by Mrs. Frances Thomas was appointed to research the history of the town of Maplesville. This research was collected by Editors Lorene LeCroy and Blanche Dennis and published by the Town of Maplesville in 1989, hereinafter cited as LeCroy, Maplesville History.

⁷ Ibid, page 73.

8. Major Bibliographical References

See 8. Bibliographical References Page 8.1

9. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 24,600 sq. ft.

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

Beg NW int of Main St. & Southern R.R. th N 200' to POB
cont N 150's th W 200's th S 50's th E 70's th S 90's th E 140's
to POB

10. Form Prepared By

name/title Maryellen M. Higginbotham Preservation Design Consultant

organization Preservation Design Concepts

date November 10, 1992

street & number 305 Woodlawn Ave.

telephone (919) 370-4324

city or town Greensboro,

state North Carolina 27401

11. Please submit color slides of the property with this form.

12. Please return ALABAMA REGISTER form to:

ALABAMA REGISTER COORDINATOR
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
725 MONROE STREET
MONTGOMERY ALABAMA 36130

6. Description Page 6.1

Remarkably, interior alterations have been minimal and most original finishes and furnishings have been retained. A simplistic design joined with concern for craftsmanship, which was also exhibited on the exterior, is continued on the interior. The vestibule ceiling is covered with 4 inch wide single beaded boards as are the upper side walls. a 4 foot wainscot of vertically applied triple beaded boards completes the wall design. Junctures of adjoining walls are covered with decorative molding. The pointed arch motif used on the windows has been repeated on the sanctuary entrance and the chancel walls. Paneling and double-swinging doors have been used to enclose the triangular vestibule opening. The traditional one-room church plan features a center aisle, flanked by double rows of benches. The hand crafted benches, said to have been made by a Mr. Gandy, occupy two-thirds of the length of the room.³ The pulpit platform, originally recessed, has been extended toward the congregation to accommodate the addition of choir chairs and an organ. The railing in front of the organ is a 20th century addition. Original walnut pulpit and "preacher's chairs" remain. "The chief distinctive character of Methodist church buildings has been the communion rail reflecting the Anglican heritage".⁴ This communion railing is said to be original, however the turned railings may reflect the platform changes.⁵

The 14 1/2 foot high beadboard ceiling slopes gently down to 12 foot high beadboard walls. Molding covers the joining of the ceiling and side walls. The walls are again decorated with a wainscot of vertically applied triple beaded boards, a 4 inch wide chair railing, and a 5 inch high baseboard. The same 4 inch wide molding used for the chair railing surrounds the windows. Floors in the both the vestibule and the sanctuary are 3 to 4 inch pine boards. Locations for four stoves are visible on the side walls. In 1966 a central heating and air conditioning system was installed.

³ Interview, Church Congregation.

⁴ Harmon, page 128.

⁵ Interview, Church Congregation.

Historical Background

The completion of the Alabama and Tennessee River Railroad from Selma, Alabama to Dalton, Georgia through the central part of Alabama was largely responsible for the founding and early growth of the present town of Maplesville, originally named Cuba, but locally referred to as Maplesville Station. This railroad, which later became the Southern Railroad, was completed through Maplesville Station during the early 1850's.⁸ The town, originally a part of Bibb County, was surveyed and laid out by surveyor, William H. Wilson in 1853. "The State of Alabama, Bibb County- I have surveyed and laid a town in the county on the Railroad in Section 21, Township 21, and Range 12 East and called the name of said town Cuba at the place called Maplesville Depot on the West half of the North East quarter of Section 21, Township 21, and Range 122 East it being on the South end of said half quarter and on the road leading to Selma and where it crosses the Railroad which is represented by the next plan..."⁹ "Old Maplesville", was a stage coach town located approximately 3 miles to the east near the present community of Isabella. The old town of Maplesville gradually declined after the post office was moved closer to the railroad at the Maplesville Station.¹⁰ According to Abraham's History of Bibb County, there was a Methodist Church at "Old Maplesville" called Dunlaps Church. References to Dunlaps Church disappeared from local records after 1850.¹¹

Maplesville and the surrounding area became part of Baker County which was created by legislation in 1868. This new county was formed from territory taken from Bibb, Autauga, Shelby, and Perry Counties. Baker Chilton County was renamed Chilton County in 1871.¹²

⁸ Ibid, pages, 6 &7.

⁹ Ibid, page 10.

¹⁰ Maplesville History, page 62.

¹¹ Johnson, page 75.

¹² Owen, page 249.

Religious Context

Methodism began in Alabama in 1808 with the arrival of Matthew P. Sturdivant, Alabama's first duly appointed elder and missionary. The Alabama Conference of the Methodist Protestant Church was organized in 1829, and the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was formed in 1867.¹³ Most early church records of the Maplesville Methodist Episcopal Church, South were lost in a fire; however, present church members relate that their church was formed during the 1850's. The date coincides with the date of the disappearance of references to Dunlaps Methodist Church in "Old Maplesville". The first services are said to have been conducted in a "brush arbor" at a site located at the crest of a hill on the Selma and Talladega Springs Road, across from Byrd Creek, and about a mile southwest from the new town of Maplesville. This site is referred to locally as the "old camp grounds".¹⁴ This same property of approximately 3 acres, was purchased September 15, 1871 from a Mr. and Mrs. G. V. Dansby by Trustees W. A. D. Ramsey, G. W. Brand, and D. G. Waterworth for the use and benefits of the Maplesville Methodist Episcopal Church, South.¹⁵ The Methodist Cemetery was also established at this site. The earliest readable tombstone inscription reads "I. P. Ward, Born August 3, 1835, Died May 9, 1863"

Among existing church records, are copies of one page from the 1871 Quarterly Conference Record Book, copies of eighteen pages from the 1879-81 Quarterly Conference Record Book, and The Sunday School Minutes for the year 1896. According to the 1871 Conference Records, the Maplesville Methodist Church was listed as being in the Maplesville Charge, in the Prattville District, and in the Alabama Annual Conference. The Presiding Elder was the Rev. A. H. Mitchell, and the Rev. W. A. Montgomery was the minister for the Charge. D. J. Waterworth was listed as the District Steward. The Minutes of the 1st Quarterly Conference for the year 1879 list the same information and also listed the names of other churches within the Maplesville Charge: Maplesville,

¹³ Bicentennial Bulletin.

¹⁴ Interview, Church Congregation.

¹⁵ Chilton County Deed Book 17, page 385.

7. Significance Page 7.3

Mt. Moriah, Isabella, New Hope, Salem, Plantersville, Pleasant Valley, Pleasant Grove, and Pine Hill. Minutes of the 4th Quarterly Conference for the year 1881 list the church as still being in the Maplesville Charge and Prattville District and the Rev. A. H. Mitchell continued as the Presiding Elder. The minister for the Charge was at that time the Rev. J. W. Menefee, and D. J. Waterworth remained the District Steward.¹⁶ Only five of these churches are still active today.¹⁷

Absence of notations mentioning assignments to Maplesville in ministerial journals after 1881, indicates that the Maplesville Methodist Church might have been assigned to another Charge, most likely the Plantersville Charge, as it is today.¹⁸ On July 16, 1887, church Trustees D. J. Waterworth and E. W. King purchased a 40 foot by 210 foot lot, beside the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad, from Mrs. Nancy E. Goodwin for the sum of \$40.00.¹⁹ According to local tradition, the existing church building was dismantled at the cemetery site, each part numbered, and then reassembled at the present site.²⁰ Mr. G. W. Suttles is reported to have been the carpenter and to have been assisted by Mr. H. C. Bearden. The church building is also said to have been relocated to its present site facing the railroad because train passengers reported being disappointed when passing through a town and not seeing a church. The Methodist parsonage stood behind the church until 1920, when it was sold, dismantled, and the lumber used to build another house.²¹

The Alabama Christian Advocate of April 24, 1913 listed the following deaths of Maplesville residents: "Mrs. D. J. Waterworth through whose influence Maplesville Church was built, dies at her home near Maplesville, age 83" and "M.C. Glover Maplesville, Alabama April 4, 1913".²²

¹⁶ Quarterly Conference Records November 26, 1881.

¹⁷ Interview, Pickard.

¹⁸ Interview, Pickard.

¹⁹ Chilton County Deed Book 17, page 386.

²⁰ The original windows stored on the property are etched with Roman numerals.

²¹ Interview, Church Congregation

²² LeCroy, Maplesville History, page III.

7. Significance Page 7.4.

The Maplesville United Methodist Church purchased the lot and house adjoining the church property on the south side in 1957.²³ The house was rented for a number of years before being demolished.²⁴ The church also purchased 20 additional feet on the north side in 1976.²⁵

Architectural Context

Most of the 19th century frame, commercial buildings in Maplesville were destroyed in fires in 1912 and 1927.²⁶ The last remaining frame store was demolished within the last two years.²⁷ The few remaining 19th century buildings are the Methodist Church and a few simple, frame, one-story dwellings.

Plans for the building of the Maplesville Methodist Episcopal Church, South were quite probably purchased from the Methodist Episcopal Board of Church Extension which began publishing suitable church plans, adaptable for all sections of the country, in 1875. These catalogues exhibited church and parsonage plans for neat, plain frame buildings suitable for country settings, as well as, elaborate brick or frame plans for urban settings. Individual plans were available in several sizes, with either plain or Gothic style windows, and with several different styles for a belfry or towers.²⁸ Styles for Methodist churches built during the 19th century "followed popular taste though often with a slight time lapse".²⁹ Popular architectural styles were communicated by observation and publications.

Two other existing early Methodist churches in the Maplesville area, Isabella Methodist Church also in Chilton County and Sandy Chapel Methodist Church near Centerville, have a form similar to the Maplesville Methodist Church but with different entrances. Isabella Methodist Church, a documented member of the Maplesville Charge

²³ Chilton County Deed Book 455, page 105.

²⁴ Interview, Church Congregation

²⁵ Chilton County Deed book 610, page 700.

²⁶ LeCroy, Maplesville History, pages 19 & 22.

²⁷ Interview, Church Congregation.

²⁸ Kynett, 1989

²⁹ Harmon, page 128.

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from 1871 to 1881, appears, stylistically, to have been built after the Maplesville Methodist Church. It is larger in size, has 4 plain symmetrically placed windows on each side, and 2 tower entrances on the front facade. Sandy Chapel Methodist Church, which is no longer an active church, is approximately the same size as the Maplesville Methodist Church. It also has the same pointed arched style windows, however, these windows are wider and have only 3 over 2 lights. The overhanging roof is supported by curvilinear brackets. The front facade has a centrally located bell tower. Other decorative details were either removed or covered when aluminum siding was added. The interior of Sandy Chapel, which has experienced little change, is similar to the interior of the Maplesville Methodist church but exhibits less detail and craftsmanship.

According to the architectural survey conducted in Chilton County between 1983 and 1985 by the Alabama Historical Commission and the Chilton County Historical Society, the Maplesville United Methodist Church building is the only 1870's church building of its type remaining in Chilton County and one of the best preserved of that era in the state.³⁰ With the last of the early frame commercial buildings, a store located at the corner of Main Street and Railroad Street, having been demolished within the last two years and only two other 19th century frame buildings remaining on Railroad Street, there is great concern for the future of the Maplesville United Methodist Church building. The Maplesville United Methodist Church, presently, has a small congregation with only 5 active members.

³⁰ Interview, Klinner.

8. Bibliographical References Page 8.1

Books

- Harmon, Nolan B. The Encyclopedia of World Methodism. New Jersey: The United Methodist Publishing House. 1974.
- Kynett, D. D., Rev. Catalogue of Architectural Plans for Churches and Parsonages For the Year 1889. Philadelphia: Board of Church Extension of the M. E. Church. 1889.
- LeCroy, Lorene, and Blanche Dennis, eds., Maplesville The Town and The People 1820-1989. Montevallo: Times Printing Company. 1989.
- Owen, Thomas McAdory. History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography. Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company. 1978.
- West, Anson, D. D. History of Methodism in Alabama. Spartanbury, South Carolina: The Reprint Company. 1983.

Other

- Bibb County deeds, deed index, and tax maps.
- Chilton County deeds, deed index, and tax maps.
- Johnson, Mattie Sandford, ed. The History of Bibb County by Ulysses Huey Abrahams. 1981.
- Maplesville Quarterly Conference Record Books. 1871, 1979, & 1881. Original books are lost. Xerox copies of sixteen pages are in the possession of the Maplesville Methodist Church officers.
- Pamphlet: "Alabama-West Florida Conference The United Methodist Church Bicentennial of American Methodism 1784-1984". May 27, 1984.

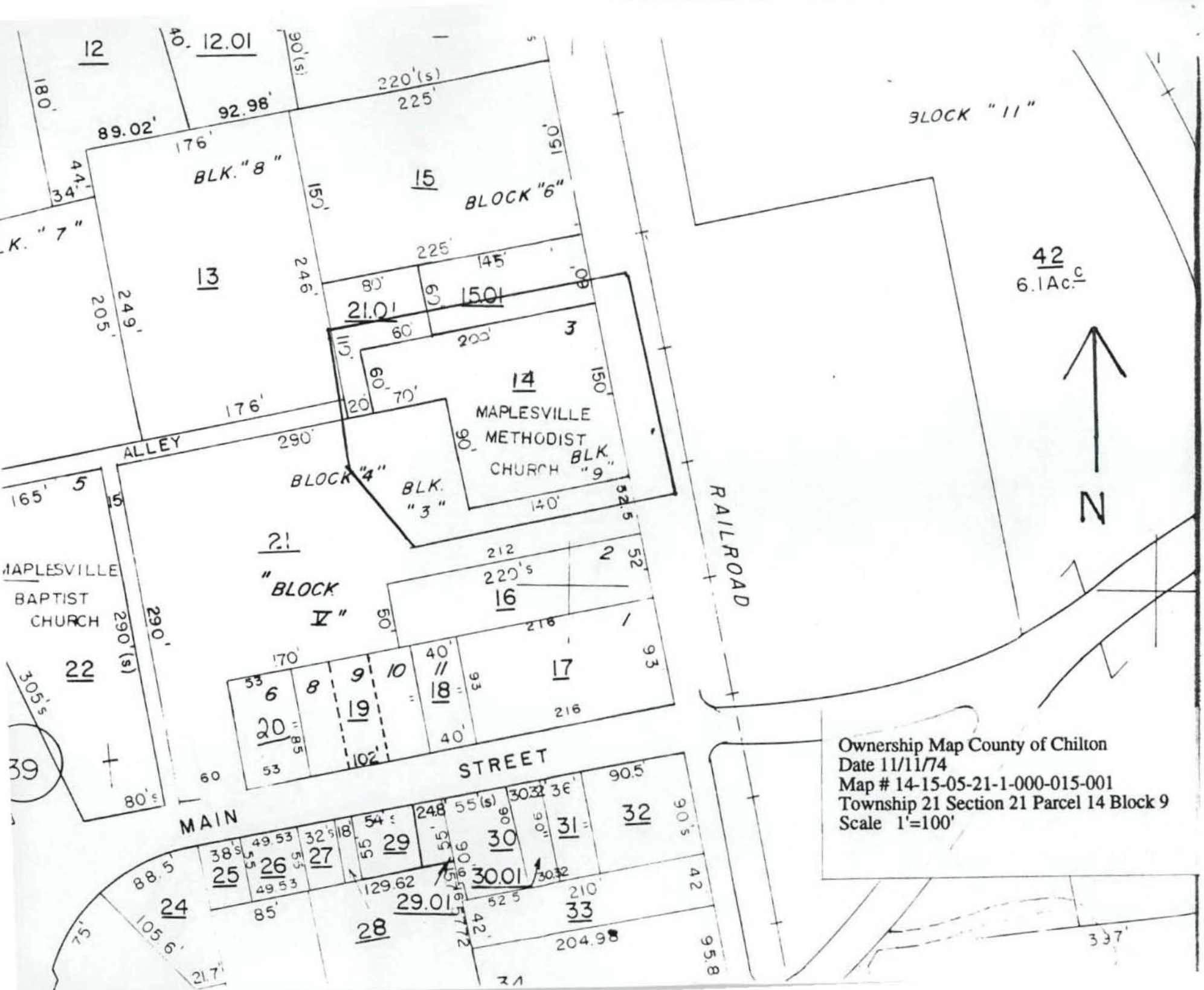
Interviews

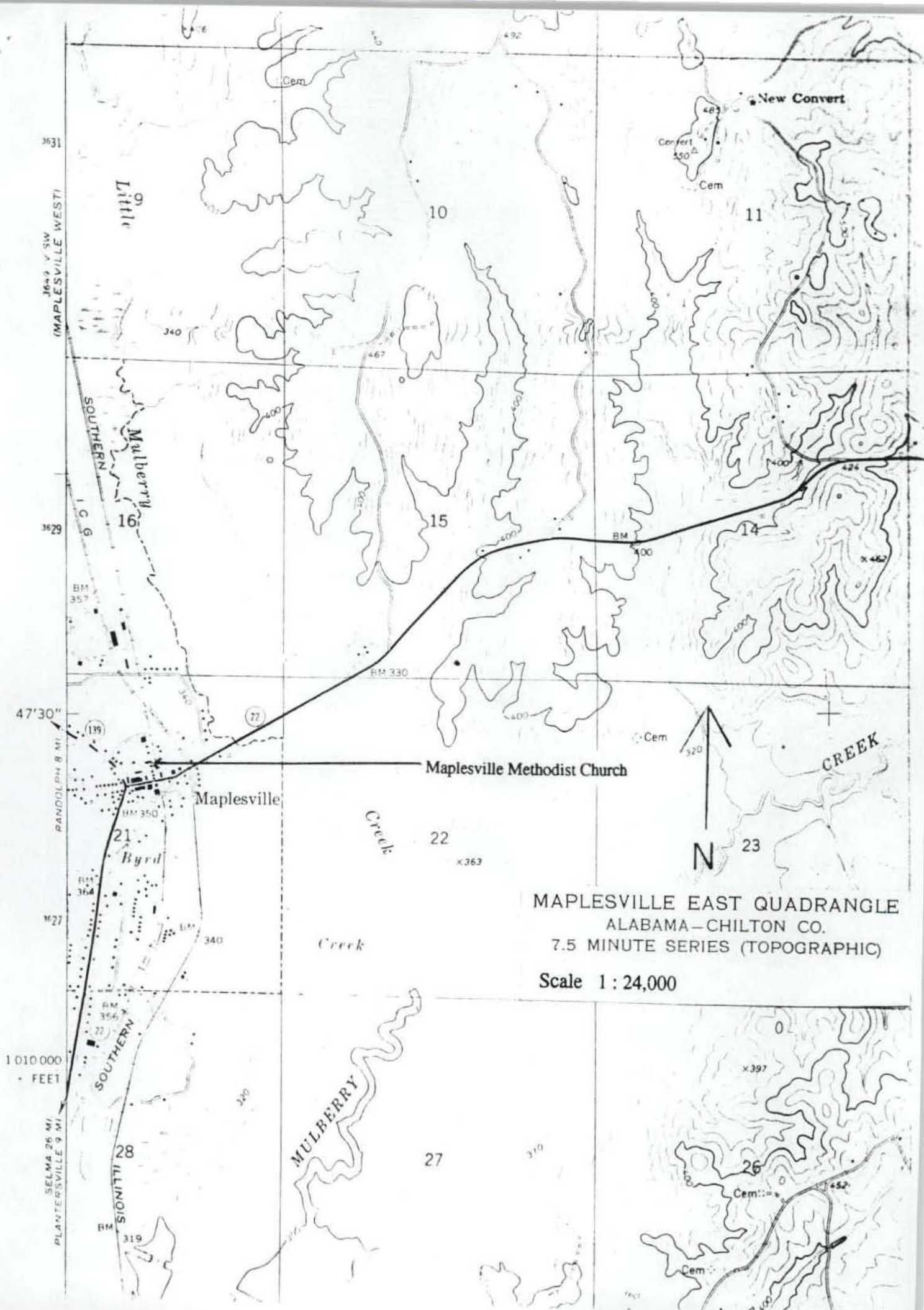
- Higginbotham, Maryellen M. Interview with Erline Nix, Frances Thomas, and other Maplesville Church members. September 15, 1992.
- Higginbotham, Maryellen M. Telephone interview with Linda Klinner, member of Chilton County Historical Society and member of Chilton County Survey Team. October 29, 1992.
- Higginbotham, Maryellen M. Interview with Mary Ann Pickard, Archivist, Depository of Archival and Historical Materials, Houghton Memorial Library, Huntingdon College, Montgomery, AL. September 21, 1992.

11 Slide List Page 11.1

Maplesville United Methodist Church, Maplesville, Alabama.

1. 1912 Post Card showing East Facade.
2. View of Maplesville from the east.
3. Detail of Slide #2 showing Maplesville Methodist Church.
4. View of Maplesville from the west.
5. Detail of Slide #4 showing the Maplesville Methodist Church.
6. East facade of church, 1989.
7. East facade of church, 1992.
8. Detail of vestibule windows and curvilinear brackets, 1992.
9. North facade of church, 1992.
10. West facade of church showing ghost mark of recessed chancel roof , 1992.
11. South facade of church, 1992.
12. View of south facade of original section, 1992.
13. Sanctuary west wall, 1992.
14. Sanctuary east wall, 1992
15. View of pulpit platform, 1992.
16. Detail of pews, 1992.
17. Detail of wainscoting and window molding, 1992.
18. Detail of vestibule entrance showing pointed arch motif, 1992.
19. Detail of vestibule showing corner molding detail, 1992.
20. Detail of vestibule exterior door, 1992.





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3629

3627

Cem

New Convert

Convert 350
 Cem

10

11

Little Mulberry

340

467

15

14

16

BM 357

RM 330

RM 300

47'30"

(139)

(77)

Maplesville Methodist Church

Cem

CREEK

Maplesville

Creek

22

x363

23

21
 Byrd

BM 350

RM 364

340

Creek

Scale 1 : 24,000

SOUTHERN

MULBERRY

27

310

28

BM 319

x397

26

Cem

Cem

452

700