

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National 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 Cape Fear Baptist Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number E side SR 2233 .1 mile W of jct. with SR 2234 not for publication

city, town x vicinity of Grays Creek

state North Carolina code 37 county Cumberland code 51

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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<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 Cape Fear Baptist Church Trustees

street & number Route 7

city, town Fayetteville vicinity of state NC 28306

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Register of Deeds, Cumberland County Courthouse

street & number P.O. Box 2039

city, town Fayetteville state NC 28302

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Cumberland County Historic Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes  no

date 1978  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Division of Archives and History Survey and Planning Branch

city, town Raleigh state NC 27611

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## 1. Description

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**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Cape Fear Baptist Church dates to 1859 and houses a congregation which can trace its origins to the eighteenth century settlement period of the Upper Cape Fear River Valley. Located in the Gray's Creek area of southeastern Cumberland County, the church and rearward cemetery are situated on a grassy and sandy site covered with pines, small ornamentals, and scattered oak approximately one-half mile east of the Cape Fear River. The building embodies the distinctive characteristics of mid-nineteenth century rural North Carolina church architecture with its two-story frame construction, double front entrances, sanctuary arrangement, and Greek Revival finish. The church is set apart, however, by a colossal two-story front portico and cornice detailing, making it a notable and unusually intact landmark in the architectural heritage of Cumberland County.

The two-story frame gable-roof edifice is distinguished by a monumental Greek Revival two-story pedimented front portico. The pediment is sheathed with plain weatherboard in the tympanum, and the entire portico is supported by distinctive tapered paneled square-in-section pillars, each of which is wrapped with a wide band in the midsection. A boxed cornice, ornamented on the face and below with wooden strips placed diagonally to produce a wrapped fasces-like effect, skirts the front roofline. The ceiling of the portico is faced with narrow beaded boards. In lieu of a bell tower, the church bell is conspicuously hung from the ceiling at one side.

This portico protects a two-bay front which exhibits characteristic Greek Revival features of mid-nineteenth century North Carolina vernacular church architecture, such as the double front entrances. Each contains double-leaf doors with two flat panels which are surmounted by a three-light transom. The complimentary second-floor fenestration pattern is asymmetrically placed with each window containing characteristic Greek Revival enlarged 6/6 sash, simple surrounds, and a splayed profile molding, a slight embellishment of the more common two-step surround.

The side and rear elevations echo the basic features of the front. Sheathed with plain weatherboard, the four-bay sides contain 6/6 sash windows which are elongated on the first level. A simplified variation of the facade's boxed cornice continues around the sides and features a soffit now segmented by wooden strips. A brick addition built in 1967 projects from the south side end.

The rear facade, now covered with modern siding materials, bears a single outside door, a double-leaf central entrance covered with an awning hood, and two 6/6 windows on the second level. A simple one-story gable-roof shed also extends from the rear. The gable roof, now covered with asphalt shingles, is devoid of any ornamentation.

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Cape Fear Baptist Church

Continuation sheet Architectural Description      Item number      7

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The interior of the Cape Fear Baptist Church follows the basic floor plan of mid-nineteenth century churches but is reversed. The double front entrances open into the front of the sanctuary rather than into a narthex, the equivalent of which is at the opposite end. The traditional component parts are present, however, and consist of a raised chancel, pews in three sections on the sanctuary floor, and a gallery following three sides. The gallery is supported by slender chamfered rectangular posts with lamb's tongue motifs. It is accessible via a quarter turn staircase in the rear narthex. Notable woodwork includes flat-paneled wainscot with vertical interruptions, as well as a similarly paneled front on the gallery. Original wooden pews with curved ends are still located on the stepped gallery floor.

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## 8. Significance

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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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

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**Specific dates**      1859                      **Builder/Architect**      unknown

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**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Distinguished by its monumental and bold vernacular interpretation of the Greek Revival style, the Cape Fear Baptist Church epitomizes temple-form ecclesiastical architecture being built in rural North Carolina during the mid-nineteenth century. Constructed in 1859 by one of the oldest Baptist congregations in Cumberland County, the church essentially follows a basic double-aisle plan with one distinctive deviation from the norm. Here, the chancel is located directly inside the two front entrances with the vestibule containing the stairs to the slave gallery placed at the rear. With its monumental pedimented portico featuring unusually banded square-in-section columns and fasces-like cornice detailing, the Cape Fear Baptist Church stands as the last of an impressive group of Greek Revival temple-form churches once located in Cumberland County.

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**Criteria Assessment:**

- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a vernacular interpretation of Greek Revival temple-form ecclesiastical architecture being built in rural North Carolina during the mid-nineteenth century and the only example remaining in Cumberland County.

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Continuation sheet      HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE      Item number      8      Page      1

The Cape Fear Baptist Church is located in rural Cumberland County, about twenty miles southeast of Fayetteville. The present church building is the third associated with the congregation and was constructed in 1859. The church is one of the oldest Baptist churches in Cumberland County and traces its origin to the late eighteenth century.

The Baptist church came relatively late to Cumberland County. The first settlers in the area were predominantly Scottish highlanders and the first settlers were accordingly Presbyterian. Episcopal churches followed while the first Baptist moved into the area around 1780 near the present day Cedar Creek Church. Most of the early Baptists in the county came from other places in North Carolina, with a small influx from the Charleston area. Cedar Creek, Cape Fear, and Beaver Dam were the first Baptist organizations, although the exact order is uncertain. All three were organized by 1790. Fayetteville did not obtain its first Baptist church until 1837.<sup>1</sup>

Records show that the Cape Fear Baptist congregation had a rudimentary organization by 1790. The church made its first appearance in the Cumberland County deeds in 1817 when Joseph and John Thames gave the trustees of the congregation one acre. The Thames' were of Quaker descent. Many of the church's earliest records have been destroyed by fire but it is believed that Cape Fear's second building was constructed about this time. In 1859 the trustees of the church were deeded two adjacent tracts about one half mile from this building and construction on the third and present building was begun and completed.<sup>2</sup> The church probably reached its peak in membership during the Civil War before its slave members became freedmen and started their own congregations. According to local tradition the church was visited by Union soldiers of Sherman's army during the closing days of the war and names scrawled on the wall were visible until the 1960 remodeling of the interior.<sup>3</sup>

Cape Fear has operated continuously to the present day. From 1794 until 1805 the church belonged to the Neuse Baptist Association, while from 1805 until 1858 it was a member of the Cape Fear Association. Since 1859 it has been a member of the New South River Baptist Association. In 1930 and again in 1938 Cape Fear hosted the convention of the association. Due to the destruction of records it is not certain how many pastors the church had in the nineteenth century. However, since 1907 it has had twenty five pastors. C. C. Wheeler, 1932-1939; David Miller, 1959-1965; and Grady McKeithan, 1968-1976 had the longest tenures of this group.

In 1967 an educational building was annexed to the south side of the main building. The congregation has also kept the interior of the church in good repair with the constant addition of new furniture, pews, and musical instruments. Cape Fear has a present enrollment of approximately eighty-five. Dougald McLaurin is the pastor. In 1950 Fayetteville historian John Oates wrote that Cape Fear was "a fine example of the old country churches in the South," a designation that still applies.<sup>6</sup> The church still maintains its status as a community focal point for Grays Creek.

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup>John A. Oates, The Story of Fayetteville (Charlotte: The Dowd Press, Inc., 1950), 500-503, hereinafter cited as Oates, The Story of Fayetteville. Oates identifies Baptist settlers in Cumberland County as coming from three areas, the Charleston area, the Sandy Creek settlement in Randolph and Chatham counties, and a Baptist settlement on the Neuse River.

<sup>2</sup>Frances Marsh, "History of Cape Fear Baptist Church," Unpublished typescript, copy in file, hereinafter cited as Marsh, "Cape Fear Baptist Church"; Lucille Johnson, Hometown Heritage (Fayetteville: The Colonel Robert Rowan Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1978), 93, hereinafter cited as Johnson, Hometown Heritage; Cumberland County Deed Book 30, p. 314. In 1859 James Byrne deeded the church 2.4 acres while David Murphy deeded the church 2.1 acres. The deeds were not recorded until 1870 however. Cumberland County Deed Book 58, p. 268. Local tradition is that the first building used for a church by the Cape Fear congregation was probably a house not originally built for the purpose of religious services. The second church was apparently still standing when the third building was constructed in 1859 but was not used for services after this date. Telephone interview with Kesler Butler, August 10, 1982, notes in file.

<sup>3</sup>Telephone interview with the Reverend Dougald McLaurin, August 10, 1982, notes in file, hereinafter cited as McLaurin interview; Marsh, "Cape Fear Baptist Church."

<sup>4</sup>Johnson, Hometown Heritage, 93; Marsh, "Cape Fear Baptist Church." Since 1907 Cape Fear's pastors have been: Ed Pittman, M. A. Stevens, John Gibbs, Eugene Olive, Otis Johnson, Eugene Olive again, J. Hildreth, Joel Snyder, J. L. Jenkins, J. D. Larkins, Dorsey Deaton, Ambrose Dowd, J. Powers, W. O. Diggs, C. C. Wheeler, Kenneth Lindner, George L. Hocutt, Charles Allen, D. M. Clemmons, Albert Bean, David E. Miller, Lewis McMannen, McKeithan, Terry Myers, and present pastor Dougald McLaurin. The latter has served in that capacity since 1978. With the exceptions of Wheeler, Miller, and McKeithan most of Cape Fear's pastors have served from one to three years.

<sup>5</sup>Marsh, "Cape Fear Baptist Church"; McLaurin interview.

<sup>6</sup>Oates, History of Fayetteville, 502.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approximately 3.8 acres

Quadrangle name Saint Pauls, N.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:62,000

### UTM References

A 

17	698550	3864550
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

All of Lot 71, Block 161, Map 98, Gray's Creek Township, as outlined in red on map.

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

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state		code	county		code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Architectural Description: Linda Jasperse, Principal Investigator  
Historical Background: Jim Sumner, Research Branch

organization Division of Archives and History

date November 19, 1982

street & number 109 E. Jones Street

telephone 1-919-733-6545

city or town Raleigh

state North Carolina

27611

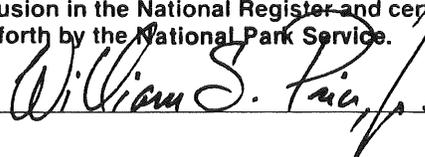
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

Keeper of the National Register

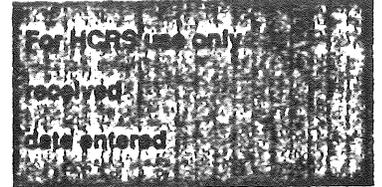
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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Continuation sheet

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Butler, Kesler. Telephone interview with. August 10, 1982. Notes in file.

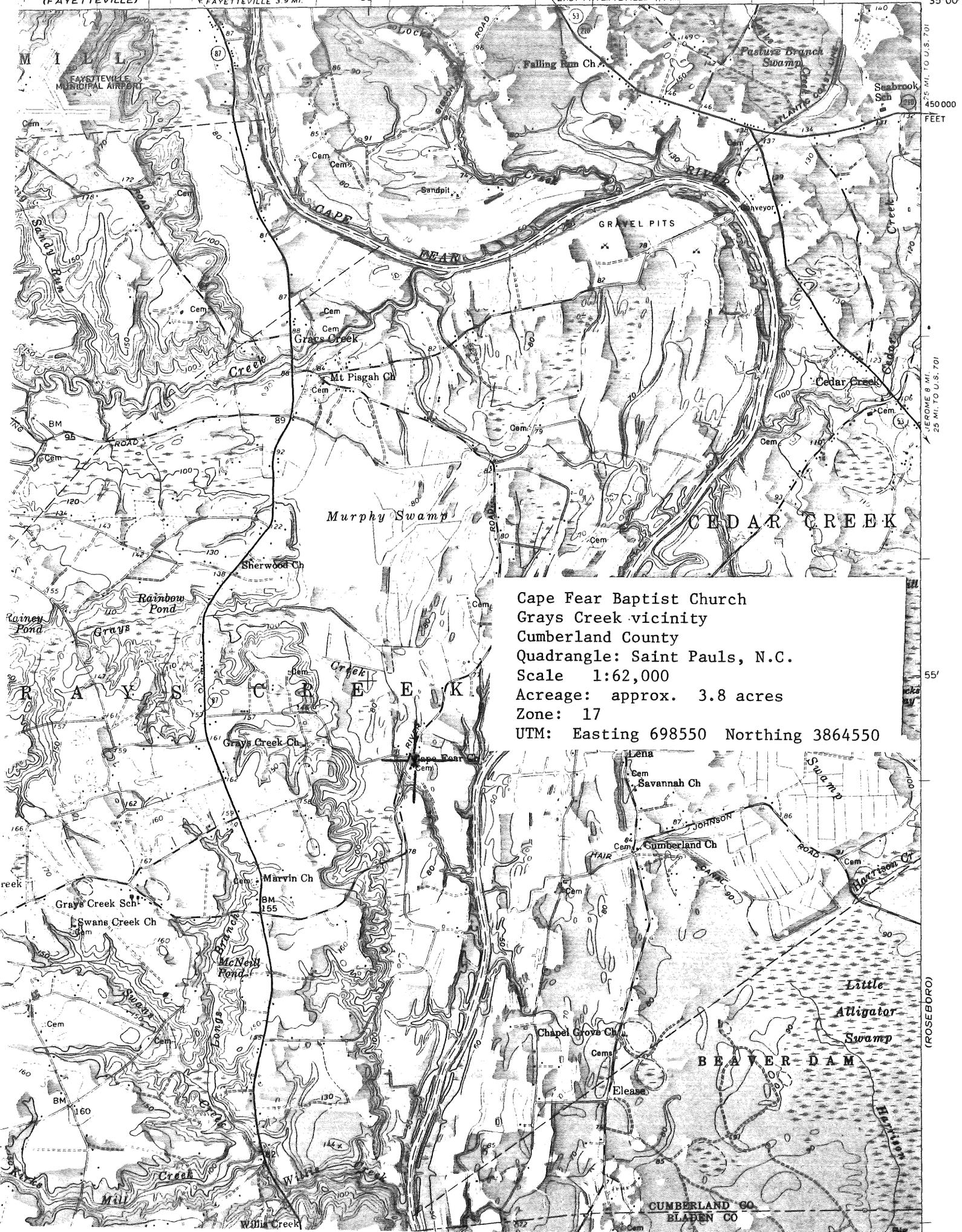
Cumberland County Deed Books. Microfilm copies. Raleigh: Division of Archives and History.

Johnson, Lucille. Hometown Heritage. Fayetteville: The Colonel Robert Rowan Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1978.

McLaurin, The Reverend Dougald. Telephone interview with. August 10, 1982. Notes in file.

Marsh, Frances. "History of Cape Fear Baptist Church." Unpublished typescript. Copy in file.

Oates, John. The Story of Fayetteville. Charlotte: The Dowd Press, Inc., 1950.



Cape Fear Baptist Church  
 Grays Creek vicinity  
 Cumberland County  
 Quadrangle: Saint Pauls, N.C.  
 Scale 1:62,000  
 Acreage: approx. 3.8 acres  
 Zone: 17  
 UTM: Easting 698550 Northing 3864550

75 MI. TO U.S. 701  
 450000  
 FEET  
 25 MI. TO U.S. 701

55'

(ROSEBRO)

