

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Center Arbor
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number NW corner, junction of US 64 & SR 1150 N/A not for publication
city, town Center N/A vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Davie code 059 zip code 27028

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

William S. Kirk 7-22-91
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Wood

roof Metal

other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Center Arbor is a large, open, timber-framed religious structure built in 1876. It is located in the Center community of west central Davie County near the county seat town of Mocksville. Prominently situated on a triangular piece of land at the junction of US 64 and Godbey Road (SR 1150), Center Arbor stands adjacent to the 1950s Center United Methodist Church building and across US 64 from the church cemetery. Only the arbor and its surrounding grove of oak trees--separated from the rest of the church property by a gravel driveway which runs north and west of the arbor and provides access to both US 64 and Godbey Road--are included in the nomination.

Center Arbor is a rectangular structure, four bays wide and eight bays deep, measuring approximately sixty feet by eighty feet. Typical of nineteenth-century arbors, the entire framing system is open to view and consists of a combination of tree-trunk posts, hewn horizontal beams and corner braces with mortise-and-tenon joints, and some replacement sawn elements. The arbor is open on three sides. Only the south end behind the pulpit--including the south end bays on the east and west sides--is enclosed. Fenestration in this area consists of a single rear door, six symmetrically-placed sash windows across the rear, and a single window on each side. The arbor is sheltered by an expansive gable roof of standing seam metal over board sheathing on pole rafters. This monumental roof has widely overhanging eaves and broad, German-sided gables.

The simplicity of the exterior is continued on the interior. The sawdust-covered dirt floor and the loftiness created by the exposed roof truss system set the tone for the rest of the features. Wooden pews, constructed of plain planks for seats and back rests and nailed to board runners on the floor for stability, line up about twenty rows deep with a center aisle and two side aisles. The side rows angle slightly inward to permit a better view of the pulpit. At the south end of the arbor is the area reserved for the pulpit (speaker's platform) and for the choir or speakers. Stage-like, it is raised several steps above floor level and is separated from the rest of the arbor by a solid wood "balustrade" with the pulpit built in at the center. This area is backed by the rear wall of the arbor.

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Center Arbor retains a high degree of integrity regarding its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The building is well maintained, and few changes have occurred since its construction in 1876. These alterations, as follows, have not diminished the overall integrity of the place. In 1923 the original wood-shingled roof was replaced with the present metal roof. Around 1925 a Delco power system was installed to provide electricity, and the same wiring was used when Duke Power began servicing the area in 1933. In 1941 the weatherboarding of the north and south gable ends was replaced with German siding, and windows were installed along the south wall behind the stage.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Religion
Social History

Period of Significance

1876-1941

Significant Dates

1876

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY:

Center Arbor is a large and impressive timber-framed structure built in 1876 as a religious shelter for camp meetings. The only surviving example of this building type in Davie County, it is architecturally significant as an excellent representative of the small remaining group of religious arbors built in rural Piedmont North Carolina during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Center Arbor is also significant for its association with the religious and social history of the area. Initially, and for some years, it was the site of camp meeting revivals, that phenomenon which epitomized nineteenth century religious fervor in North Carolina as well as elsewhere in America. Later in the twentieth century Center Arbor was the scene of special services, meetings, and events for both Center United Methodist Church and the Center community as a whole. Due to its architectural prominence and its continued role as a community social and religious center, Center Arbor's period of significance spans the years from its construction in 1876 to 1941, the last year in which it meets the fifty-year requirement for National Register eligibility. Although Center Arbor is a religious property, it fulfills Criterion Consideration A because it derives its significance from its architectural distinction as well as from its importance to the combined social/religious history of the area.

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HISTORIC CONTEXT: ARCHITECTURE

Center Arbor is an excellent and well-preserved example of a nineteenth-century religious arbor in Piedmont North Carolina. Although other examples survive--such as Ball's Creek, Wesley's Chapel, Mott's Grove, and McKenzie's Grove in Catawba County and Rock Springs and Tucker's Grove in Lincoln County--Center Arbor is the only structure of its kind to survive in Davie County.

The typical camp meeting ground was set in a rural location with ample shade and fresh water. Since camp meetings were (and still are in a few cases, such as at Ball's Creek) held for a week at a time, some camp sites had rows of "tents"--wooden shacks, really--around the periphery to provide housing. At the center of the campground was the "arbor," an open-air, timber-framed shelter with a sawdust or dirt floor which would shade the participants during the prayer meetings and sermons. Most surviving arbors have hipped roofs. While typical in most respects, Center Arbor is unusual in having an expansive gable roof. A simple pulpit was positioned in the front of the arbor, and the remainder was filled with rustic benches or pews. The vernacular form of the arbor has remained constant from the 1850s to the present and provides a physical manifestation of a religious and social phenomenon (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, F 22-23).

HISTORIC CONTEXT: RELIGION and SOCIAL HISTORY

Camp meetings, as a manifestation of the Great Revival, emerged in North Carolina in the 1790s and swept over the United States periodically throughout the nineteenth century. The tradition has been carried on to the present in some sites in the Piedmont (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, E 5). Center Arbor is a part of this tradition, although yearly camp meetings are no longer held.

Camp meetings were of both religious and social significance in Piedmont North Carolina. The camp meeting can best be described as the meeting of many people in one place to participate in religious worship for several days. Camp meetings also provided a chance for social exchange. Individuals and families would come from miles around to the camp meeting site and live out of wagons, canvas tents, or simple wooden structures

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call "tents." During the day ministers would preach and hold prayer meetings in a centrally located, open-air "arbor," usually built of hand-hewn timber or poles (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, E 6-7).

Several factors influenced the rise and continued popularity of camp meetings in Piedmont North Carolina, lasting in some cases to the present day. During much of the nineteenth century, Piedmont populations were sparse and roads were both limited and poor. Thus, camping at a site for one week out of the year provided a way for many people to worship at one time. The camp meetings sometimes offered experienced ministers as orators and provided them the opportunity to spread the Methodist doctrines to areas deprived of established churches and trained ministers. Camp meetings also offered ministers opportunities to meet with their colleagues and exchange ideas. The numerous conversions made at the camp meetings resulted in the organization of new churches and the rapid growth of Methodism (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, E 7-8).

The social aspect of the camp meeting was equally important. The camp meeting gave friends a once-a-year opportunity to meet. Young people came together and romances often started during camp meeting week. Families would reunite at the meetings, often coming from surrounding states (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, E 8).

The camp meeting tradition in North Carolina appears to have its origins in the Piedmont, with documentation claiming that Rehobeth Camp Meeting in Lincoln County was the first. Reverend Daniel Asbury conducted the first camp meeting there in 1794. Rehobeth evolved into Rock Springs Camp Ground. Wesley's Chapel Arbor Camp Ground in Catawba County may be the oldest camp meeting in the state still holding its identity. This camp meeting site is thought to have begun around 1809. Though no longer used for regular camp meetings, Wesley's Chapel Arbor (NR), like Center Arbor, is still used occasionally for outdoor religious services (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, E 6).

Among other camp meeting sites in the Piedmont which were significant in the past are Ball's Creek (NR), Mott's Grove, and McKenzie's Grove in Catawba County; Tucker's Grove (NR) and St. Matthew's in Lincoln County; Pleasant Grove (NR) and Prospect in Union County; Center, Little Johns, and Mount Pleasant in Caldwell County; Marvin in Burke County; Love Joy in Montgomery

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County; Asbury, Reem's Creek, and Turkey Creek in Buncombe County; Bethel in Cabarrus County; and Center in Davie County, as well as others (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, E 6-7).

In Davie County, the first camp meetings were held at Olive Branch Church and at Walnut Grove in 1805. From these meetings revivals broke out and swept over the county. The result was that the membership of the Methodist church grew rapidly, and new church buildings sprang up over the Yadkin Valley. Other Davie County camp grounds in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included Ward's, Smith Grove, Whitaker's, Fulton, Bethel, Salem, Liberty, and Center (Grissom). The only physical evidence of these remains at Center.

The camp meeting tradition in Piedmont North Carolina, of which Center Arbor is a part, is important as a wide-reaching religious and social phenomenon which has endured from the late eighteenth century to the present, with its heyday being the nineteenth century (Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, E 8). Although camp meetings are no longer held at Center Arbor, its social significance to the community continues. After the cessation of Center's camp meetings in the early twentieth century, the arbor remained the site of other prominent events in the life of Center Methodist Church and the Center community. Until the mid 1930s, Christian Harmony Singings were held annually in the arbor, followed by the institution of the annual Homecoming service every September. Other services and community events are held periodically in the arbor, and the Center Fair, started in the early 1930s, is held there (Big Crowd at Center; 100 Years Ago, 1-2; Tutterow, Interview; Wall, 289).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The history of Center Arbor is a part of the history of Center United Methodist Church. Center Church dates from 1830, when a revival was held nearby in the home of James Penry. There a group of Methodists organized into what became Center Methodist Church. The first church was a log structure built across the road from the present church and arbor on the site that is now the cemetery. In 1872 the log church was replaced with a frame church located just in front of where the arbor was later built.

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In 1931-1932 the frame church was moved west of the present church and remodelled. The construction of the present brick church was begun in 1953 and completed in 1956. Soon thereafter the frame building was removed (Tutterow et al. typescript).

Only four years after the frame church was built in 1872, Center Methodists erected an arbor for the purpose of holding camp meetings. Apparently, being able to have a permanent facility for this popular form of worship was of concern to Center Church, for they already had the facilities for regular worship services (Historic Center Arbor). Indeed, camp meetings constituted an important means by which large numbers of people could be reached by the church. The citizens of the Center community built the arbor, which was constructed of logs cut from the Billy Tutterow farm about two miles south on Hunting Creek. Church tradition claims that the arbor was completed August 26, 1876, the day of the death of local woman Barbbrey Bailey. The tradition continues with the detail that Simeon Gowans, a native of the community, nailed on the last roof shingle (Davie County Bicentennial Committee, 27; Tutterow et al. typescript; Tutterow, Interview).

Church tradition relates that the first camp meeting was held at Center Arbor in 1877. People came from great distances to attend the week-long annual meetings, and they camped in the surrounding area. Local history varies on whether or not wooden "tents" or shacks were constructed to provide the temporary housing often associated with camp meeting sites. Nevertheless, if these were built, none remain. It is also not clear exactly how long the annual camp meetings continued at Center Arbor. Church written records do not indicate this, though local tradition relates that meetings were held until the end of the nineteenth century and possibly into the early years of the twentieth century (History of Center Methodist Church, 3; Tutterow, Interview; 100 Years Ago, 1).

After annual camp meetings ceased at Center, the arbor continued to be used for other services and a variety of special events. One of the most popular events was held the first Sunday in September each year. The Christian Harmony Singing, as it was called, drew hundreds of people--not only from Davie County, but from Iredell, Rowan, Yadkin, Forsyth, Davidson, and other counties. These all-day sings were accompanied by bounteous dinners at the noon hour (Big Crowd at Center; 100 Years Ago, 1-2). In the mid 1930s the sings were replaced by the annual

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Homecoming service of Center Church. On June 6, 1976, The United Methodist Churches of Davie County held a Methodist Bicentennial Service in the arbor. Subsequent summer celebrations have featured a "Gospel Singing and Camp Meeting Service" to commemorate and recall the earlier services which were so popular at Center Arbor. Other events have included revivals, weddings, and funerals (Tutterow, Interview; Tutterow et al. typescript; Center Meets in Arbor, 6; Davie Methodist Summer Celebration).

One of the most popular twentieth-century uses of the arbor has been the Center Fair. First held in the early 1930s, it was the forerunner of the Davie County Fair which was later held in Mocksville. The one-day Center Fair resumed in 1954, drawing some two thousand people. Exhibits representing the entire county include canning, pantry and dairy supplies, household arts, plants and flowers, crafts, field crops, horticultural items, and antiques. Games, sports, and entertainment are part of the fair, and proceeds benefit community projects (Wall, 289-290; Tutterow, Interview).

Center Arbor continues today its role in both the religious life of Center United Methodist Church and the community life of the Center area of Davie County.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Big Crowd at Center." Davie Record, September 5, 1934.

"Center Meets in Arbor." N. C. Christian Advocate, August 21, 1984.

Davie County Bicentennial Committee. "The History of United Methodism in Davie County," Unpublished report, 1976.

"Davie Methodist to Hold 2nd Annual Summer Celebration on July 10th." Enterprise-Record, June 30, 1977.

Grissom, Rev. W. L. "History of Methodism in Davie County." Unpublished lecture at Augusta Seminary, 1890.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approx. 1.1 acres

UTM References

A 17 534230 3174030
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property consists of that portion of Tract 40 on Davie County Tax Map H-3 which lies south and east of the gravel driveway connecting US 64 with Godbey Road (SR 1150), as shown by the heavy black line on the accompanying tax map: Beginning at the northwest corner of U.S. 64 and Godbey Rd., follow the west side of U.S. 64 northwest approximately 275 feet to the gravel drive immediately north of Center Arbor; proceed along the south and east sides of the curved drive to See continuation sheet Godbey Rd.; then follow ~~the north side of Godbey Rd. approximately 300 feet to the point of beginning.~~

Boundary Justification

The nominated property consists of that portion of the Center United Methodist Church property which encompasses Center Arbor and its immediate surrounding of oak trees-- that part of the property which retains its architectural and historical significance.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian
 organization _____ date March 28, 1991
 street & number 637 N. Spring Street telephone 919/727-1968
 city or town Winston-Salem state North Carolina zip code 27101

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"Historic Center Arbor Celebrates 100th Birthday." Davie Co. Enterprise-Record, September 9, 1976.

"The History of Center Methodist Church." Unpublished typescript, 1958.

Kooiman, Barbara M., compiler. "Historic and Architectural Resources of Catawba County, North Carolina." National Register nomination, October 30, 1989.

"100 Years Ago." Unpublished typescript of presentation by Center Church at the Methodist Bicentennial, 1984.

Tutterow, Nancy T. Interview with author. Center, North Carolina, January 9, 1991.

Tutterow, Nancy, Bill Seaford, and Jim Tutterow. Untitled typescript history of Center United Methodist Church, 1976.

Wall, James W. History of Davie County. Mocksville, North Carolina: Davie County Historical Publishing Association, 1969.

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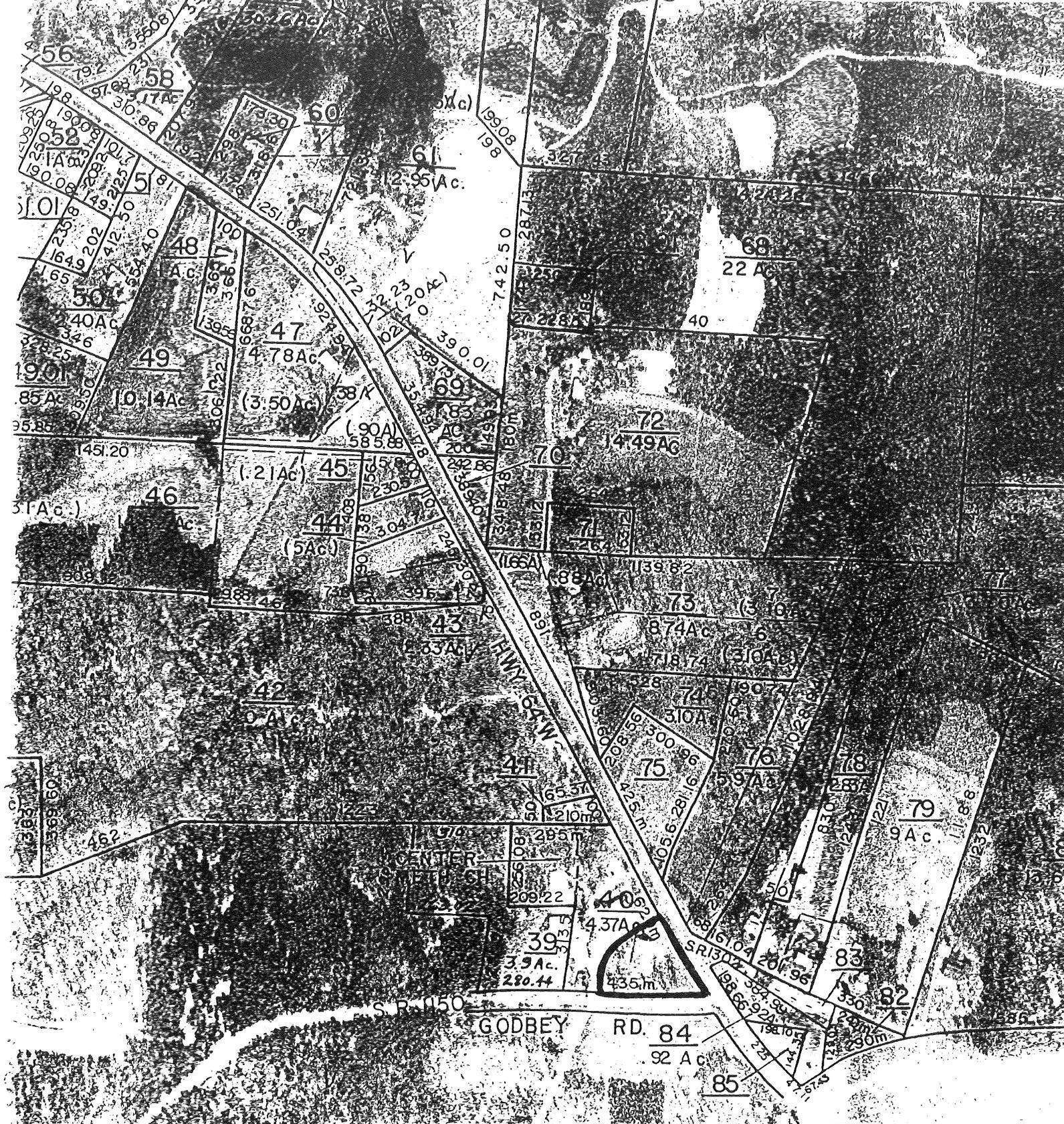
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Center Arbor
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The following information applies to all nomination photographs:

- 1) Center Arbor
- 2) Center, Davie County, North Carolina
- 3) Laura A. W. Phillips
- 4) January 9, 1991
- 5) State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, N. C.
- 6-7) A: overall view, to the south
B: rear view, to the north
C: context view, to the northwest
D: interior framing, to the northeast
E: pews, to the southeast



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
 ALSTER & ASSOCIATES, INC.
 COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

CENTER ARBOR
 Scale: 1" = 400'

DATE OF PHOTOGRAPHY: MARCH 28, 1976

Boundary of nominated property

Davie County Tax Map H-3



