

# INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR  THEMATIC NOMINATION

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC Mount Ebal Methodist Protestant Church

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER End of SR 2518

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Denton

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

North Carolina

CODE

037

COUNTY

Davidson

CODE

057

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Trustees of Mount Ebal MP Church

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Denton

VICINITY OF

STATE  
North Carolina 27239

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC Davidson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE  
North Carolina

## 6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE  
Ruth Little, Consultant

ORGANIZATION  
Survey and Planning Branch

DATE  
May 7, 1983

STREET & NUMBER  
Division of Archives and History

TELEPHONE  
919/733-6545

CITY OR TOWN  
Raleigh, North Carolina

STATE  
27611

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mt. Ebal Methodist Protestant Church is a small gabled frame building, thirty-six feet wide and forty-eight feet deep, which rests on fieldstone piers. It is located in a well-maintained grassy clearing surrounded by large oak trees at the end of a state-maintained dirt road near the small town of Denton in southeast Davidson County. The entrance facade, the west gable end, contains two double doors. Each leaf has four flat panels, and a four-pane transom surmounts each door. In each bay of the side and rear elevations is a nine-over-nine sash window, and all openings have plain, mitred surrounds. Plain weatherboard, articulated at the corners by simple wooden pilasters, covers the building. The only other exterior detailing is provided by the eave treatment and the gable end ventilators. The wide, overhanging boxed eaves have wide eave returns on the gable ends. In each upper gable end is a diamond-shaped wooden louvered ventilator.

The spartan simplicity and unaltered purity of the exterior continues on the interior. The interior surfaces and built-in furniture are constructed of hand-planed pine, left unpainted. The floors, walls and ceiling are covered with plain, wide sheathed boards. Two slender chamfered posts support the center ceiling joist which runs the length of the building. The window and door openings have wide beaded surrounds. In the center east end is a raised platform containing the pulpit, a rectangular podium constructed with raised panels and a sloping lectern. In front of the pulpit is a second, lower semicircular platform enclosed by a balustrade of turned balusters and a molded handrail. In the center of this enclosed area is a table covered with a white cloth.

The pews are arranged in three sections, separated by two side aisles, and occupy the length of the building. Small groups of pews face the pulpit in the east end. Like the pulpit, the pews are constructed of hand-planed pine, and have simple curved and rounded arm rests at each end. In the center of the sanctuary is a cast-iron stove, its flue vented into a small exterior brick chimney on the south elevation.

The grounds of Mt. Ebal Church testify to its former use as a camp meeting ground and to its present use as the site of annual summer homecoming picnics. On the south side of the church, approximately 50 feet from the building, are two stone cairns which are reconstructions of four cairns which served to hold torches for the illumination of evening revival services under the wooden arbor which stood in this location in the second half of the nineteenth century. On the north side of the church is a long row of wooden picnic tables used for the annual Mt. Ebal Homecoming. Northeast of the church is the cemetery, containing approximately one hundred gravestones with such family names as Sexton, Beck, Gibson, Frank, Morris and Thompson. The oldest dated gravestones have 1890s dates, but about a dozen stones are un-inscribed fieldstones which are probably earlier.

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		

SPECIFIC DATES

1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT John T. Sexton &amp; Alfred Thompson

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of Mt. Ebal Methodist Protestant Church is derived not from its history, which began about 1861 when the congregation began to meet in a private school house near Denton, in southeast Davidson County, but from its representative architecture, typical of the small, unpretentious frame meeting house constructed throughout the county from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. The gabled frame building, 36 by 48 feet, ceased to be used by about 1940, and as a result the church is virtually unaltered. The structure, finished with hand-planed boards, handmade pews and pulpit, was built in 1883 by two local farmers, John T. Sexton and Alfred Thompson, members of the congregation, for \$60.

## CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. Mt. Ebal Methodist Protestant Church represents the peak of the denomination's popularity in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century in Piedmont North Carolina. The church was a focus of annual camp meetings for rural farmers in southeast Davidson County in the late nineteenth century.
- C. The unpretentious, hand-worked construction of Mt. Ebal Church is typical of the architecture of rural Davidson County in the post-Civil War period. It reflects both socio-economic necessity and fundamentalist aesthetic preference.

The Methodist Protestant denomination became very popular in rural North Carolina in the early nineteenth century, as part of the Great Revival movement which swept through the frontier areas of the southern United States. Friendship Methodist Protestant Church, established in 1834, was the earliest M.P. church in Davidson County.<sup>1</sup> The actual founding of Mt. Ebal Church cannot be documented, but church tradition states that the congregation first met in a school house located on William Sexton's land, and that the first church building, a log structure, was built on the site about 1871.<sup>2</sup> According to an anonymous sketch of the church history, written in 1940, the earliest known reference to the church is in the minutes of the 1861 quarterly conference of the Methodist Protestant Church, Davidson Circuit. This reference is to "Sexton's Meeting House," and William Sexton was the church delegate to this conference and to subsequent conferences until April 1871, when the references to "Sexton's Meeting House" or "Sexton's School House" or simply "Sexton's" cease and the name "Mt. Ebal" begins to appear regularly.<sup>3</sup>

The only deed recorded in nineteenth century Davidson County deed books for the church contradicts part of this anonymous church history. On January 16, 1871 William and Sarah Morris and A. G. and Nancy Morris sell to the trustees of the "Methodist Protestant Church Davidson Circuit," who are William Sexton, George Gibson and John W. Morris, for \$10, a tract of land "on the waters of Toms Creek" containing two-and-one-half acres. The deed also grants to the trustees "the privilege of the nearest spring of water east of said premises with the privilege of making a road to said spring and keeping said open from the church to the spring . . . with the conditions that ministers of other denominations have the right to Preach on Said premises but no right to the property."<sup>4</sup> This indicates either that the first church was not on William Sexton's land, as tradition states, or that the 1871 church site was different from the original site.

The date of construction of the present church building, 1883, is also fixed only by church tradition. A 1938 historical sketch of the church, written by John Oakly Garner, then editor of the Denton newspaper, stated that John T. Sexton and Alfred Thompson, church members, contracted to build the new church for \$60.<sup>5</sup> An interview with Mr. Sexton's daughter, Mrs. Coy Kearns, substantiated this. According to Mrs. Kearns, Sexton was a farmer who moved to Denton in the early 1900s and established a livery stable.<sup>6</sup> Thompson was apparently also a local farmer. The 1883 date is reinforced by the architectural style and construction details of

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

See continuation sheet

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre 18 rods

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	5 8 4 4 0 0	3 9 4 2 6 8 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

That part of Tax Map 41, Davidson County Tax Office, contained in Lot 9, bounded on the north by Lot 11, Tax Map 40, on the east by a line running N-S approximately 100 feet behind the cemetery, on the south by a line running E-W approximately 100 feet from the church building, and on the west by a dirt lane, as outlined in red on map.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

Mt. Ebal Methodist Protestant Church

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date entered

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Item number

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the present church building.

In all accounts of the history of Mt. Ebal, the importance of the open-air arbor which stood beside the church is emphasized. In his 1938 sketch, Garner stated that between 1870 and 1900 the Mt. Ebal Camp Meeting was one of the most widely attended revivals in southern Davidson and Randolph counties. During this time the wooden arbor, covered with pine shingles, with a preaching platform, stood on the south side of the church. It was illuminated at night by blazing pine knots anchored in four stone platforms, one at each corner of the arbor. Garner noted that this was the second arbor, built about the same time as the new church, and was a larger version of the first arbor. He recalled that about twenty-five frame and log "tents," as sleeping quarters were called, were built around the church and arbor during the late nineteenth century. No trace of the arbor or tents remain today.<sup>7</sup>

In 1919 Mt. Ebal Church became part of the Denton Methodist Protestant Association, and regular services at the church probably ceased soon after this.<sup>8</sup> By this time most of the members had moved to Denton, and the roads which once intersected at the church had been rerouted, leaving the church at the end of a small private road. In 1947 a 200-acre tract completely surrounding the church was sold by D. B. Thompson to David and Virgie Jackson, but two parcels of the tract were specifically excluded from the sale. The first was a 10 1/4-acre tract unrelated to the church; the second was one lot "containing 1 acre and two rods up the race to the dam and 1 acre and 18 rods known as the Mt. Ebal Church Lot."<sup>9</sup> Obviously the church had become landlocked by private property by this time, and was no longer accessible by public roads. So it remains today, maintained in good repair by the Mt. Ebal Memorial Association and utilized once a year for a homecoming service.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Jacob C. Leonard, Centennial History of Davidson County, 1927, p. 420.

<sup>2</sup>Anonymous, "Mount Ebal Methodist Church Historic Sketch, 1940." Typed manuscript in collection of Mrs. Coy Kearns, Denton, N.C. n.p.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Davidson County Deed Book 22, page 37, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

<sup>5</sup>John Oakly Garner, "History of Mt. Ebal Church," Nov. 17, 1938. Typed manuscript in collection of Mrs. Coy Kearns, Denton, N.C. n.p.

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Mrs. Coy Kearns, 30 March 1983. Denton, N.C.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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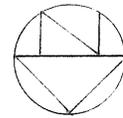
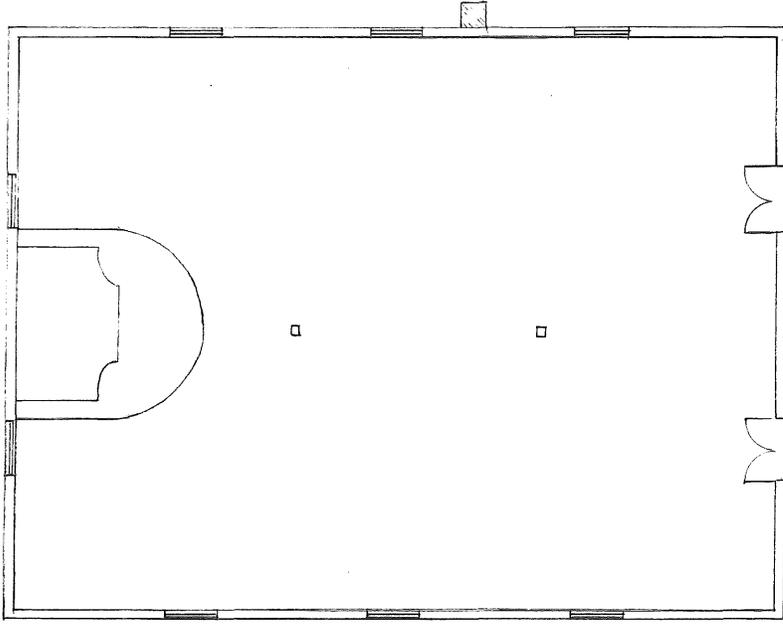
Anonymous. "Mount Ebal Methodist Church Historic Sketch, 1940." Typed manuscript in collection of Mrs. Coy Kearns, Denton, North Carolina.

Davidson County Deed Books, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Garner, John Oakly. "History of Mt. Ebal Church." Nov. 17, 1938. Typed manuscript in collection of Mrs. Coy Kearns, Denton, North Carolina.

Kearns, Mrs. Coy, Interview with. 30 March 1983. Denton, North Carolina.

Leonard, Jacob C. Centennial History of Davidson County. (Privately printed: 1927), p. 420.



MT. EBAL METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH c. 1880  
NEAR DENTON

1



N 682

Not to scale

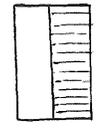
Attach line for map 2

E 16

40

CEMETERY

CHURCH



9

202.84 AC.

25 AC.

EMMONS TOWNSHIP

IN NOS

Mount EBM Church 9 -  
- TAX MAP 41 Lot 9 -

DEEP REFERENCE

176 - 397 18 ROADS

ACRE AND CHURCH

EXCEPTING /  
REMAINING AS EBM

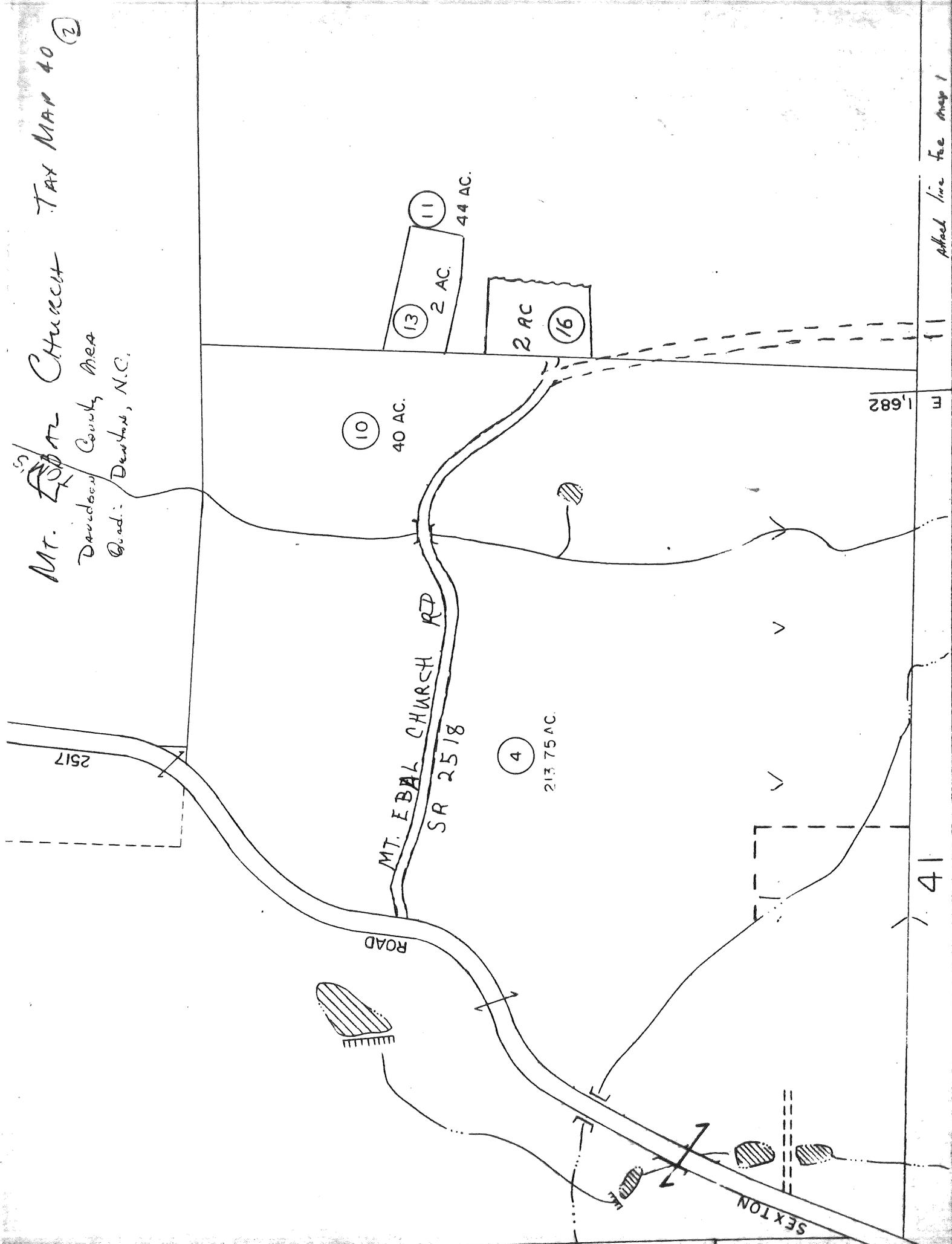
21  
1.6 AC

Dandow Court MEA

TOM'S CREEK

53  
Mt. Ebal Church Tax Map 40 (2)

Davidson County Area  
Dist.: Denton, N.C.



plotted line Tax Map 1

