

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 Mills River Chapel
other names/site number Mills River United Methodist Church
Mills River Methodist Episcopal Church, South

2. Location

street & number East side SR 1328 (a/k/a Old Turnpike Road)
city, town 0.7 mi. north of junc. w/ NC 280, Mills River
state North Carolina code NC county Henderson code 089 zip code 28742

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

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.
Signature of certifying official: William S. Paris
Date: 10-10-88
State Historic Preservation Officer

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.
determined eligible for the National Register.
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)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/church

RELIGION/church

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

foundation brick

walls brick

wood

roof asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Mills River United Methodist Church, historically also known as Mills River Chapel, and as the Mills River Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is located on the rolling bottomland south of the Mills River and 9 miles northwest of Hendersonville, North Carolina. This ca. 1860 brick, Greek Revival style church and its early 19th century cemetery are in a section of northwest Henderson County that was part of Buncombe County until 1838. The rural location is bounded on the north and east by wooded land, on the west by State Road 1328 and on the south by a blacktopped parking lot and a modern enlargement of the burial ground, and beyond these, a horse farm. The church stands on a rise facing SR 1328. The old cemetery lies to the east, behind the church. The buildings, including modern additions, are surrounded by neatly trimmed lawns on the front and south side. A graveled access road begins at the northwest corner of the property and goes eastward alongside the church educational wings and the old grassy cemetery, towards the back property line. The access road peters out about three-fourths of the way along the north side, and reemerges about halfway along the back (eastern) boundary as a rutted dirt road. This road rounds the southeast corner of the old cemetery, then changes to a grassy track as it runs along the cemetery's southern side.

The church is a symmetrical, rectangular, one room, one story, Greek Revival style structure featuring a dominant front gabled portico, created by an extension of the main roof. Constructed of hand-made red brick, the building measures approximately 40 feet wide by 47.5 feet deep. The walls are laid in common bond with each seventh course a bonding row. The front portico is a vernacular interpretation of the Greek Revival character. It is supported by four, square, recessed panel wooden columns resting on modern square brick piers and topped by simple molding-trimmed capitals. Two four-paneled doors with two-paneled blind transoms are placed symmetrically in the front wall. Each door has its original hardware. There is a decorative string course below the cornice and a projecting water table encircling the building. Front and rear gables are sheathed in white painted weatherboard. A modern cross is mounted on the front gable. The church was built four bays deep, with tall, nine over nine light sash windows. Exterior window shutter pins are still in place. There is no fenestration on the rear elevation. The floor of the portico is concrete, replacing a wooden floor. The date Sept. 4, 1931, is written in the concrete. Two concrete steps, with modern, curved, wrought iron railings, front each door. The portico ceiling is board and batten.

In the last quarter of the 19th century the church roof was altered to give it a much steeper pitch. This major change was probably made around 1886, shortly after a devastating snowstorm in the western North Carolina mountains.

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Present and historic physical appearance

Sometime in the 1940s the exterior walls were painted dark red. Paint traces remain on the mortar. In 1945 a small wing was added to the north side of the building, at which time an opening was made into the present sanctuary. The addition was carefully attached so as not to damage the roof line of the church, but did destroy the rear pair of windows on the north elevation. A second addition in 1959 and a third in 1984 were built each one to the north of the preceding addition, causing no further change in the structure of the church.

Inside, an aisle leads from each door, separating the pew rows into a center and two side sections. The original pews, still in use, are made of 16 inch wide slabs of wormy chestnut wood joined with cut nails. There is a choir loft on each side of the front of the sanctuary. The sanctuary maintains its original expanse of interior space, its essential integrity uncompromised by partitioning or spatial intrusion. Acoustical tile has been applied to the original animal hair plaster over split lathe ceiling, thus maintaining the room's original height. A boxed beam running the full length of the sanctuary ceiling is still visible. The walls are plastered. The evolution of the roof is visible in the attic, which is entered by way of a small opening in the ceiling of the adjoining building. In the attic, also, are the remains of two stove flues, one built inside the north wall and the other built into the south wall. (See elevation cross-section enclosed with this nomination.)

Despite additions, a major roof change, and cosmetic interior changes, the building retains its integrity in that care was taken to damage the church as little as possible where the buildings are connected; the greater part of the church exterior is unaltered; the interior changes are reversible; and the roof is a practical response to a weather related problem.

In constant use for over a century, the church has required repair and renovation. The front columns, made of pine, and rotting from the ground up, were cut off and set on brick and locust wood bases. In 1931, the wooden porch floor was replaced with cement. Inside, water and insect damage required replacement of the floor and its underpinnings. Carpet now covers much of the modern white pine floor. In the recent past a paneled wainscoting has been installed over the plaster interior walls to cover moisture damage. Light fixtures with paddle fans hang from the ceiling. The pulpit, communion table, chairs and altar rail now in use are modern pieces constructed of chestnut, although some of the original Greek Revival style furnishings are still in the possession of the church. The organ pipes and speakers behind the pulpit, modern additions, are boxed in with chestnut-style paneling. The windows are covered by interior shutters.

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)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>Architecture</u>	<u>1860-1861</u>	<u>1860-1861</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	Cultural Affiliation	_____
_____	<u>N A</u>	_____
_____	_____	_____
Significant Person	Architect/Builder	
<u>N A</u>	<u>Barnett, Americas</u>	

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

The Mills River United Methodist Church is significant as one of three surviving examples of a mid-19th century brick Greek Revival-influenced church in the thirteen westernmost counties of North Carolina, and is the only such antebellum church in Henderson County (Owen: n.p.). The present building was begun about 1860 and was completed in 1861. (Osborne: Interview). The church is a good example of a vernacular interpretation of the classic Greek Revival style. Americas Barnett, a Mills River carpenter, incorporated features such as strict symmetry and a decorative string course to suggest an entablature. The church roof was altered ca. 1875-1900. The associated cemetery, with gravestones dating from as early as 1824, contains numerous multi-generational family burial groupings, demonstrating the long time close attachment of those families to their church, and provides examples of early 19th century indigenous gravestone art.

Historic context

In the thirteen western counties of North Carolina there are two other documented Greek Revival style, mid-19th century churches: Franklin Presbyterian Church (1856) in Franklin, Macon County, and Harshaw Chapel (1869, Methodist Episcopal Church, South) in Murphy, Cherokee County. Both of these are on the National Register. The Mills River church is the only rural church of this style and period in Henderson County (Owen: n.p.), and the only one used continuously for worship since its construction. Like Franklin Presbyterian Church, the Mills River church has had educational facilities added onto it, with minimal alteration to the original structure. The brick construction of this church is notable because brick was used rarely in antebellum Western North Carolina, being reserved for substantial buildings, usually with public functions, such as courthouses or jails.

Historic background

The circuit riding preacher, Methodist Francis Asbury, probably visited Mills River and preached there as early as 1800-1801 (Clark, n.d., 518, 714). The congregation of the Mills River Chapel was organized sometime between 1800 and 1826, for in the latter year Trustees Philip Britain, John Murry, John Clayton, Frazier Banning, and John Clayton purchased from John Clayton 2 and 1/2 acres of land in the community--then part of Buncombe

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8/9 Page 18.1 Statement of Significance--Historic Background

County--for the purpose of constructing a Methodist Episcopal Church, to be used in perpetuity by the Methodists (Deed Book 19: 446). Evidence from the cemetery suggests that a building on the site had been used as a church prior to the sale of the property to the Trustees. A mid- to late-19th century marker identifies the grave of John Johnson, who was buried here in 1818. Mills River was on a circuit with Sardis, Avery's Creek, Horse Shoe and Shaw's Creek in western Henderson and southern Buncombe counties. A minister served three of the churches two weeks of the month and the other two churches for the other two weeks (Osborne: Interview). Unfortunately, church minutes have not been located for this congregation, and dependence upon oral history has been strong for many years. Dating the construction depends on oral tradition, and the strongest argument is for a date of 1860-61. Mrs. Sue Osborne, a longtime church member before her death in 1981, reported that Daisy Murry Bagwell said that her father, John Harvey Murry, carried the first church Bible, donated by his mother, into the church when he was 11 years old. (Osborne: Interview). Murry was born in 1849 and was 11 years old in 1860-61 (Census: 1850). Daisy Murry was 20 years old in 1900 (Census: 1900). Church tradition tells us that Americus (sic) Barnett was the principal builder. Census records confirm that A. Barnett was a carpenter in the Mills River community (Census: 1870, 1880) and Americas Barnett lived in nearby Flat Rock in 1860 (Census: 1860).

9.1 Bibliography

Clark, Elmer T. Methodism in Western North Carolina, Western North Carolina Conference, The Methodist Church, 1966.

Henderson County Inventory List, the essay, copy in files of North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Western Office, Asheville, North Carolina.

Lee, Niel, Letter to the editor, "The Big Snow of 1886." Clipping in vertical files of Pack Memorial Library from the Asheville Times of March 17, 1936.

Norton, H.B., Interview.

Osborne, Mrs. Sue N., researcher "Mills River United Methodist Church, 1976." Pamphlet of Church history compiled by Mrs. Sue B. Osborne and Mrs. R.E. Clement.(Unnumbered pages). 1976.

Osborne, Mrs. Sue, tape recorded interview on history of Mills River United Methodist Church, Nov. 7, 1977. In possession of the Mills River United Methodist Church.

Owen, Margaret, Henderson County Inventory List. The essay. Copy in files of North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Western Office, Asheville, North Carolina.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Buncombe County Deed Book 19, page 446. Buncombe County Courthouse, Asheville, North Carolina.

Cathey, Mrs. Sybil. "Mills River United Methodist Church." An update of the 1976 pamphlet of Church history compiled by Osborne and Clement (Unnumbered pages) 1985.

Cemetery Inventory, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Henderson County, Mills River, NC. Compiled by the Historical Records Survey, 1939. In the State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

Census of the United States, Mills River, Henderson County, NC, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900.

Clark, Elmer T., et al, eds. The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury, Vol. II, 1794 to 1816. Epworth Press, London, and Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN., n.d.

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

Acreeage of property 2.3 acres

UTM References

A

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3	5	6	7	3	0
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3	9	1	6	6	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

BEGINNING at the SW corner of the church lawn, north 214' along the edge of SR 1328 to the northern edge of the gravel access road; then east 457' along the northern edge of said access road, until the access road runs out, and continuing to a hedgerow; then south 163' along the hedgerow, during which run the access road is again evident as a pathway, to a corner marked by the smaller of two boulders; then southwest 340' along

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were selected to include the church building and its additions, the historic section of the cemetery and the traditional cemetery access road. The blacktop parking lot and the new section of the cemetery, both outside the southern boundaries, were exluded as not of historical significance.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Jean Hooper, Independent Consultant date June 15, 1988
organization _____ telephone 704-1274-3988
street & number 102 Shady Oak Drive city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28803

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

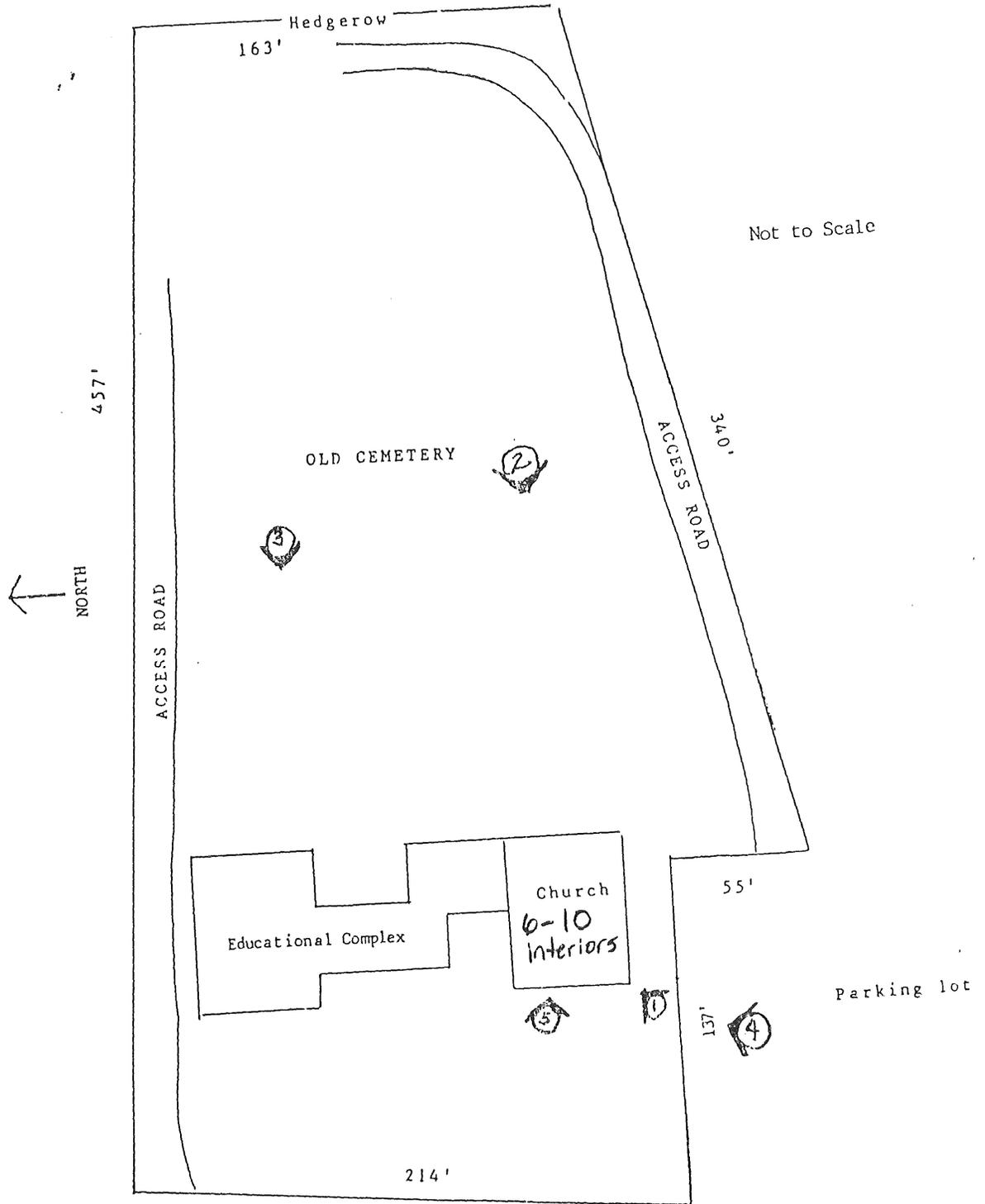
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

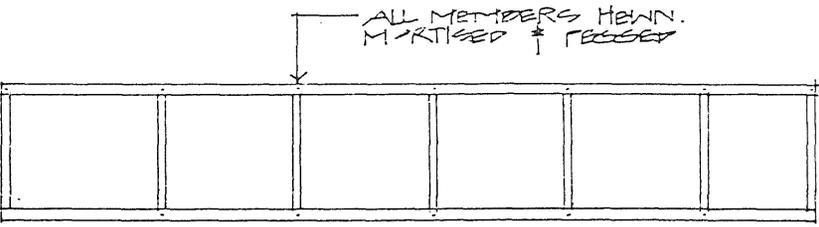
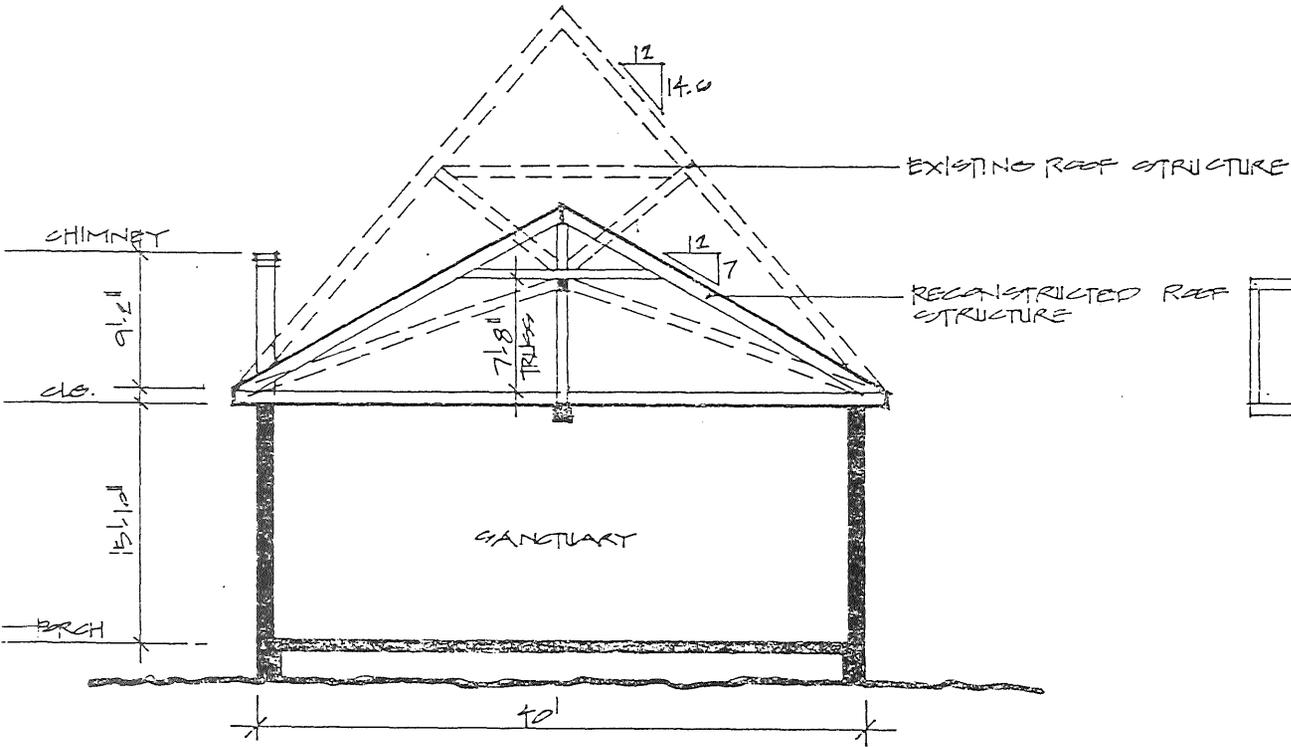
the southern edge of the grassy pathway to the parking lot; then north 55' and then west 137' along the edge of the parking lot to the beginning, encompassing slightly less than 2.3 acres.

PHOTOGRAPH VIEWS



SR-1328

MILLS RIVER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH and CEMETERY
Mills River, North Carolina

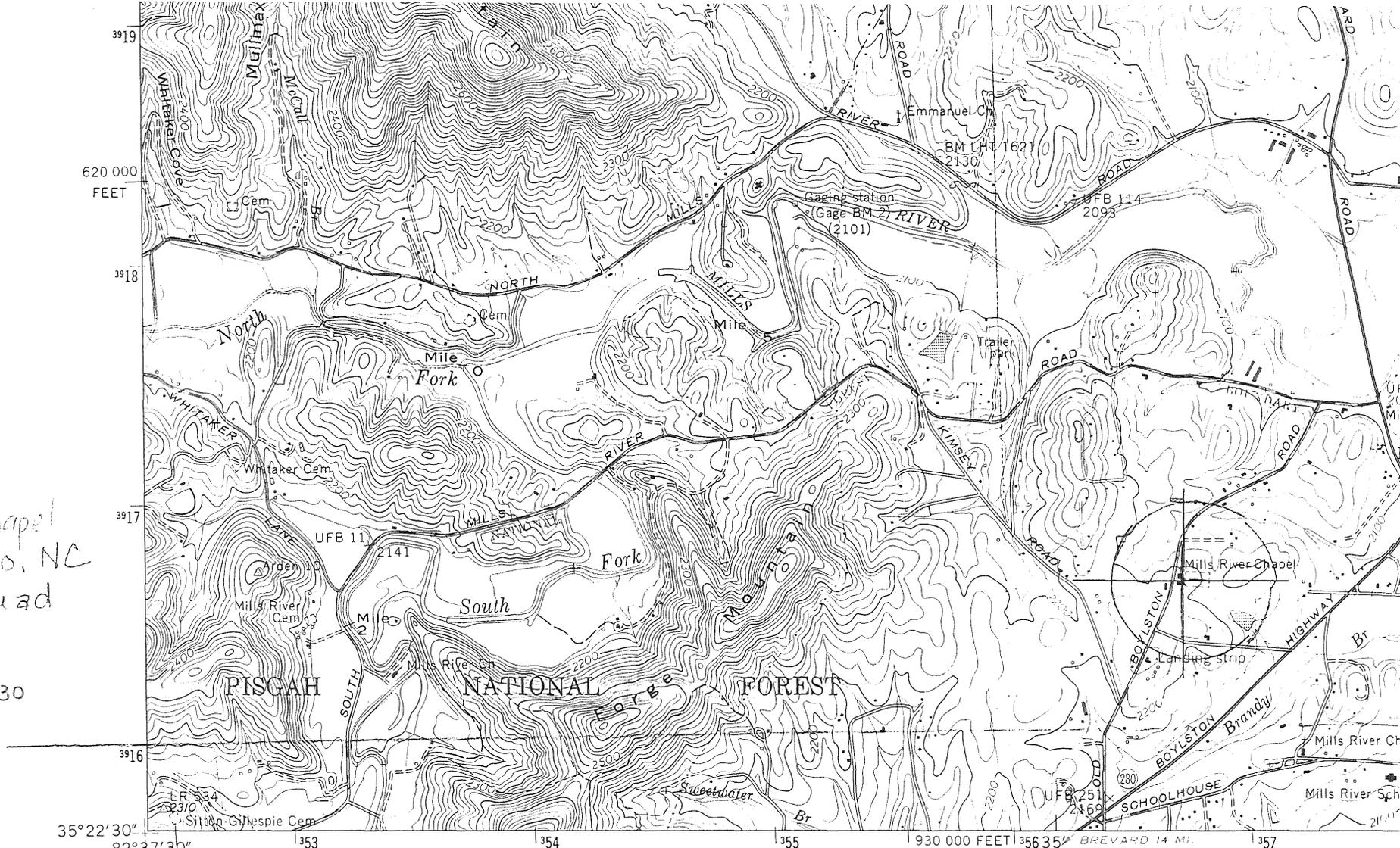


ELEVATION OF TRUSS
 RECONSTRUCTED

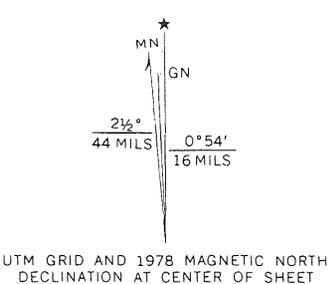
MILLS RIVER CHAPEL
 SECTION 012 + 3 10
 7-27-88 J. MARTIN
 4-28-88 REV.

Mills River Chapel
 Henderson Co., NC
 Skyland Quad
 1.24000
 17/39K6610 356730

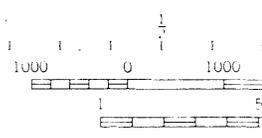
PISGAH FOREST 193-SW1
 4454 | SW



Mapped and edited by Tennessee Valley Authority
 Published by the Geological Survey
 Control by NOS/NOAA, USGS, and TVA
 Revised by TVA in 1964 by photogrammetric methods using
 aerial photographs taken 1962-63 and by reference to TVA-USGS
 quadrangle dated 1942. Map field checked by TVA, 1965
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grid based on North Carolina
 rectangular coordinate system
 1000 meter Universal Transverse Mercator Grid ticks.
 Zone 17, shown in blue
 Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines
 visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
 the National or State reservations shown on this map



UTM GRID AND 1978 MAGNETIC NORTH
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



DASHED LINE
 NATIONAL

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from
 aerial photographs taken 1976 and other source data.
 This information not field checked. Map edited 1978

THIS MAP COMPL
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SU
 AND BY U. S. TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTH
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOP

