INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

_____ QUAD

___Iredell County___

___X___ MULTIPLE RESOURCE   OR _____ THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC

     Bethesda Presbyterian Church, Session House and Cemetery

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER   E. side SR 2359, 1.3 mi. N. of jct.

with SR 1001   __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN   CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

                       X VICINITY OF   Amity Hill   9th

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
North Carolina	037	Iredell	097

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X_OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X_BUILDING(S)	X_PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	__ENTERTAINMENT	X_RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X_YES RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME   Bethesda Presbyterian Church

       c/o Rev. M. Hampton Hunter, III

STREET & NUMBER

      Route 2, Box 272

CITY, TOWN		STATE
Cleveland	__ VICINITY OF	North Carolina 27013

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN	STATE

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

     Laura A. W. Phillips (Winston-Salem)

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Consultant for Survey and Planning Branch	February 4, 1980
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
Archives and History	919/733-6545
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Raleigh	North Carolina

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X̲EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	X̲UNALTERED	X̲ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	__ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Bethesda Presbyterian Church is located in rural, east central Iredell County just south of Third Creek and not far from the Rowan County line. Constructed in 1853, it appears to be the oldest church building in the county.

The temple form frame church, three bays wide and five bays deep, has an unusual front recessed balcony above the vestibule with latticework posts and railing. The form recalls a group of vernacular Greek Revival style churches with similar decoration built by the Presbyterians of the Upper Cape Fear River Valley of southeastern North Carolina. The gable roof which extends over the balcony forms a large pediment with molded box cornice and flush sheathing. The balcony wall is also flush-sheathed, while the body of the rest of the building is covered with plain weatherboarding. The center bay main entrance in the Greek Revival style features a double leaf, five-panel door, broad sidelights and narrow transom, and a fluted surround with plain corner blocks. A similar but slightly plainer entrance is found at the balcony level. Simple doors are also found toward the rear of each side of the structure. First-story windows are 9/9 sash, while those on the second story are 6/6. Brick piers with latticework infill form the foundation of the building.

On the interior, the sanctuary of Bethesda Church has a gallery with flat paneled dado on three sides supported by plain posts and flush sheathed walls and ceiling. The sanctuary is very similar in plan and detail to the sanctuary of Centre Presbyterian Church of the same period. (See Centre Church portion of MRN.) The vestibule has stairs to the gallery at either corner enclosed by raised panel doors.

Southeast of the church (which faces west) is the session house, contemporary with the church, which is a diminutive one-room frame building with gable roof, batten door on front gable end, exterior brick chimney on rear gable end, and 6/6 sash windows.

Northeast of the church is the cemetery in an open field with no boundary enclosure. It contains about 200 gravestones, many of which date from the nineteenth century.

Southwest of the church is the mid-twentieth century education building, a one-story red brick structure with gable roof and small gabled entrances on front and side. It unfortunately does not contribute to the otherwise coherent religious complex.

A circular drive leads from SR 2359 to the church, and the whole complex is largely surrounded by trees, which helps to maintain its quiet rural setting.

▨ SIGNIFICANCE _____ NATIONAL _____ STATE ___X___ LOCAL

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	X RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES   1853   BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Bethesda Presbyterian Church, built in 1853, is the oldest church building in Iredell and displays a design that is unique in religious architecture in the county. While its session house is typical of those built in the region during the nineteenth century and is especially similar to those at Centre Presbyterian Church and Coddle Creek A. R. P. Church, the design of the church itself is somewhat of an enigma. While it exhibits basic Greek Revival tendencies, and while its interior is very similar to that at Centre Presbyterian Church, built the following year at the southern tip of the county, its exterior form with recessed balcony and latticework posts above enclosed vestibule is unusual in this area of the state.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

A. Associated with the prominence of Scotch-Irish settlers of Presbyterian faith as a cultural group in Iredell County.

C. Bethesda Presbyterian Church, built in 1853 and thereby the oldest church building in the county, displays typical Greek Revival characteristics popular during the mid-nineteenth century, especially in its pedimented temple-front design and double-leaf front door with sidelights, transom and fluted surround with plain cornerblocks. And yet, its overall design with recessed balcony and latticework posts above enclosed vestibule and the two-story effect created by this feature and by the double row of windows along the side elevations is unique in the county. The diminutive session house is typical of others from the nineteenth century in Iredell County, most notably those at Centre Presbyterian and Coddle Creek A. R. P. churches. (Refer to section in MRN on these churches.) The session house is a distinctive building form reflecting the organization.

The history of Bethesda Presbyterian Church dates from 1847, when on August 23 of that year fourteen people presented a request to the Concord Presbytery for the organization of a Presbyterian Church on the Georgia Road near Amity in Iredell County.[1] The Rev. H. N. Pharr and the Rev. Thomas E. Davis were appointed by the Presbytery to help organize the church. On November 13, 1847, the fourteen people who had signed the original petition were admitted as charter members of the new church. These fourteen had come from the previously established congregations at Third Creek, Back Creek, Thyatira and Fourth Creek Presbyterian Churches. In 1848 Bethesda Church asked the Rev. Thomas E. Davis to be its first pastor. In return for a third of his time, he was to be paid an annual salary of $133.

The earliest meetings of Bethesda Presbyterian Church were held under temporary brush arbors. Soon arrangements were made for the congregation to meet in a log schoolhouse until the church itself was erected in 1853.

By 1855 the membership had grown to 85, with 46 white members, 36 slave members and three free black members. The slaves sat in the balcony and also utilized the balcony porch for fellowship following the services.

Bethesda is still an actively used Presbyterian church. Its church building and session house have remained well preserved and little altered, and its cemetery marks the graves of both white and black members through the years.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

[1] Information contained in this brief historical sketch can be found in the following two sources: Mary Pou Hendley, "Chambersburg Township" in Iredell County Landmarks, compiled by Virginia Fraser Evans (Statesville: The Iredell County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976); pp. 104-105; "History of Bethesda Presbyterian Church," an unpublished typescript provided by Dr. Roscoe Brown Fisher, former pastor of Bethesda Presbyterian Church.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ___5___

UTM REFERENCES

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

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All of Tract 44, Block A, Map 5E, Chambersburg Township, as outlined in red on map.

The property being nominated consists of the church-owned tract which includes the church-related buildings, the cemetery, and the immediate surroundings which are vital to the protection of the integrity of this rural site.