

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 California Creek Missionary Baptist Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number E side US 23, 0.3 mi. N jct w/SR 1347 N/A not for publication

city, town Mars Hill vicinity of ~~congressional district~~

state North Carolina code 037 county Madison code 115

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 checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Dodge

street & number Route 3, Box 87-D

city, town Mars Hill N/A vicinity of state North Carolina 28754

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Madison County Courthouse

city, town Marshall, state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Western Ten County Reconnaissance Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978-79 federal state county local

depository for survey records N. C. Division of Archives and History, Western Office

city, town 13 Veterans Drive, Asheville state North Carolina 28805

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>1937</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

California Creek Missionary Baptist Church is a classic "roadside church," sited alongside US 23 four miles north of Mars Hill, N. C. US 23 is a two-lane highway still serving as the major route north from Asheville, through mountainous Madison County, N. C., into Tennessee. Constructed in 1917, the white frame church was moved "several feet" east in 1937 when the highway was created along an old roadway that clung to the bank of California Creek. Aptly named Wooded Mountain rises steeply behind the church to a height of 3,200 feet.

The original church structure is Gothic in its basic form with Colonial Revival details. It is cruciform in plan with paired principal entrances in corner towers at the west end of the nave, facing the highway. The building stands out from its surviving contemporary rural mountain chapels both by this articulated Gothic massing and by eleven fan-lighted doors and windows placed symmetrically on its three unaltered elevations. In 1954 a two-story brick Sunday school wing was added across the rear, or chancel, end of the building extending it three bays to the east. Although functionally conceived, with no consideration for how it blended with or abutted the original architecture, the addition does recede somewhat perceptually due to the abrupt change of materials, its position on the hindside, its simple form, and its darkly painted industrial type metal windows. This addition has been converted into an apartment by the property's present owner.

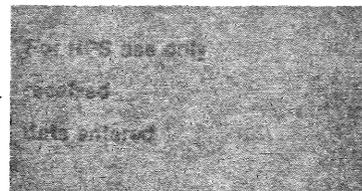
The original church building rests on a mortared fieldstone, or fieldstone-faced, foundation which recedes into the sloping site at the transept but rises to a height of three feet at the west end where it is continuous with the building's entrance stairways at the bases of the two towers. These stairs are bounded by solid fieldstone rails capped with concrete slabs.

The building's roof takes a complex form built up out of simple parts: the nave and transept are surmounted by intersecting gable roofs, the ridge of the nave rising slightly higher than that of the wings, which end in jerkin heads; a small shed roof, or pent roof, abuts the west gable face covering a central fan-lighted bay between the corner towers. A simple gable roof covers the Sunday school addition. Its ridge is about eighteen inches higher than the major ridge of the nave which it abuts at the intersection of the transverse ridge. The original roof at the chancel end was simply overbuilt by the higher gabled addition and survives intact in its attic. The original roof is covered in grey slate, the addition in white asphalt shingles.

The building gains picturesque interest from the asymmetrical arrangement of its corner towers. Both are square in section and rise through a cornice at eave height and upward through round-arched belfry vents with no diminution in dimension. The north tower, however, ends just above the arched vent with a second stage cornice surmounted by a splayed pyramidal cap, while the south tower extends upward through a row of three smaller rectangular vents to its second stage cornice, pedimented gables on all four faces, and an octagonal spire. A round vent with six-point star (or flower) cut-out is centered in each tower gable and another such vent is also centered high in the gable face between the towers.

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DESCRIPTION

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The church owes much of its architectural character to round arch fanlights which crown every door and window. Major windows composed of side-by-side double-hung six-over-six sash surmounted by a single large fanlight are set in pairs in the end of each transept, singly on either elevation of the nave, and another, singly at the west and between the towers. A half-as-large six-over-six window and fanlight is centered in the outside face of each tower. Double-leaf doors--each leaf of six horizontal panels--provide entrances at the bases of the towers, each doorway also surmounted by a fanlight. Overgrown evergreen shrubs practically obscured the entrances until recently when they were thinned by the current owner.

The bases of the towers function as small vestibules within the outer walls of the church. From them entrance to the sanctuary is gained through single, five-panel doors.

The interior of the church is completely sheathed, walls and ceiling, with narrow, beaded match board. The flooring is medium-width pine running parallel to the major axis. None of these surfaces has ever been painted. Well lit by natural light from the large windows and fanlights, the building's interior is bathed in warm, golden hues from these varnished natural woods.

Interior architectural detailing is simple and harmonious with the main features of the building. Dropped beams articulate the intersection of the nave and transept at ceiling height creating a large central coffer beneath which is positioned the dais and, in days past, the pulpit. Large, quarter-circle brackets support the ends of the dropped beams rhyming the round arch fanlights. Both brackets and beams are sheathed in the same match board as the walls and ceiling. The sheathing on the beams, however, runs vertically and is continuous with a band of vertical match board that circumscribes the interior uppermost on the walls creating a simple frieze and cornice effect.

A broad, paneled pulpit occupied the forward edge of the dais until recently when it was removed by the congregation which has relocated to a newer structure. To the rear of the dais, narrowly recessed in the chancel wing behind a small, vertical board rail and raised upon another platform, is the choir. Centered behind the choir and open to the sanctuary only through a square window, is the baptistry. The baptistry is entered through a passage between the chancel and Sunday school addition and is contemporary with that newer portion of the building.

The pulpit and most of the original church pews were removed by the congregation. Ten pews do remain, however, and these are beautifully crafted, their end boards articulated in a sleigh-like design, the armrest continuous with the backrest and closing on either end with a scroll and small bull's eye ornament.

Besides the alterations made to the choir and baptistry during construction of the brick wing in 1954, the only change to the interior of the church has been the addition of four hanging fluorescent light fixtures. The present owners have installed furnishings for use of the building as a roadside restaurant.

8. Significance

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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		

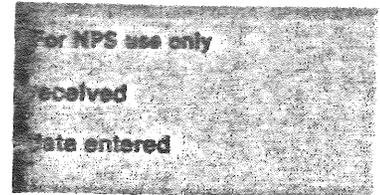
Specific dates 1917 **Builder/Architect** George Corn

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

California Creek Missionary Baptist Church is a classic white frame roadside church which stands apart from its surviving contemporary rural mountain chapels in size and architectural flair. The church was conceived and built by "architect and master builder" George Corn on a Gothic cruciform plan with asymmetrical bell towers and detailed in the Colonial Revival style popular in 1917 when it was completed. Its local significance is heightened by the fact that so many of the descendants of the original settlers in this part of Madison County, and who founded the church, are still residents on the surrounding land and members of the congregation, although the congregation moved on to a newer building in 1976. The church was organized in a traditional log building, also used as a school, moved to a second postbellum structure of larger size but no greater architectural sophistication, and then to this building in 1917. The structure was enlarged with the addition of a two-story brick Sunday school annex in 1954 but otherwise is relatively unchanged and lovingly preserved. It was sold by the congregation to its present owners in the late 1970s and is now being sympathetically reused as a private residence and roadside restaurant.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:

- A. Associated with the growing sophistication of the rural mountain population of western North Carolina following the coming of the railroad in the late nineteenth century.
- C. Represents an unusually large and architecturally distinctive version of the ubiquitous rural mountain chapel.

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The distinctively named California Creek Baptist Church gets its name from the creek that flows near the church. This creek got its name about 1850 when Berry Holcombe and his family moved from nearby Sprinkles Creek to a new home. California gold fever was then rampant throughout the county; and, when Mr. Holcombe was asked by local wags where he was going, he replied that he was going to California, and thus, the creek on which he settled received that name.¹ The area about California Creek was settled by Berry Holcombe, Joseph Holcombe, W. B. Murray, John Hamlin, and Charley McPeters.² After homes were built, they began to think of a church.

During the first years of settlement, families worshiped at Upper Laurel Baptist Church across Walnut Mountain, and some went to Little Ivy Baptist Church, below the settlement.³ When services were held at California Creek, it was in one of the local homes. The earliest church record extant is dated April, 1869, and states that the Reverend J. W. Anderson delivered a sermon. What is most interesting about it is that reference is made to the minutes of previous meetings. Though the records no longer exist for these earlier meetings, we know that the congregation is actually older than 1869.⁴ The early religious assemblies were an offshoot of the church at Upper Laurel, or more quaintly put in the church history: "an Arm of the Church at Upper Laurel."⁵ Church minutes for May, 1869 state "Church agreed to petition the Mother Church, Upper Laurel, for a joint letter of dismission to constitute a church." W. B. Murray was appointed to take the petition to the Mother Church. Petitions were also drafted to ask for dismission of local members of both Flag Pond Church and Little Ivy Church, who wanted to join the new congregation. Members from the Big Ivy Baptist Church also joined. The Reverend J. W. Anderson was reelected minister in June, 1869.⁶

The California Baptist Church was formally organized at the home of Charley McPeters in June, 1869, according to existing Minutes, which record that on Saturday, July 17, 1869 the congregation met, heard a sermon, and then was fully constituted a church by the Mother Church at Upper Laurel. John Hamlin was elected first deacon, and the congregation associated with the French Broad Baptist Association, and remains so until this day.⁷

In August, 1869 a committee was formed to get title to land on which to build a building, but by 1871 the church site was still not determined.⁸ The first sanctuary, used until 1876, was a log house which also served as a school.⁹ Its location was near the fork of a creek about half a mile from the present sanctuary.¹⁰ Early ministers in addition to the Reverend Mr. Anderson, were J. W. Hooker, Jesse Whitt, and W. T. Bradley.¹¹

Since the French Broad Baptist Association was to meet at California Baptist Church in 1876, the congregation worked quickly to erect a new building suitable to the occasion. Under the leadership of the Reverend Mr. Bradley, and on a tract donated by O. B. Holcombe, the new building rose. This is the present church site. Everything but the floor was finished in time for the association meeting in 1876. A rough floor was laid for the occasion, and soon replaced by the one originally planned.

Between 1876 and 1886 the membership grew. The Reverend W. A. Robinson came to the church in 1877, and in 1878 W. T. Bradley returned and served off and on until 1920, giving him the longest ministerial service to the congregation in its history.¹³

By 1916 a new building was needed and plans were laid to build on the same site. The Reverend W. L. Edwards led the congregation in this effort. On Christmas Day, 1916 the old building was torn down.¹⁴ The present building was erected during 1917 with

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George Corn as both architect and master builder.¹⁵ One could safely assume that the building materials were locally obtained as they had been for the 1876 structure, and would be for further additions in the early 1950s. The structure was completed by August, 1917 when the French Broad Association again met at California Baptist Church.¹⁶

Members were baptized in the nearby California Creek and the church's name was lengthened to include recognition of the creek, and is today the California Creek Baptist Church.¹⁷

In 1937 a new state and federal highway was built through the property and the North Carolina State Highway Commission had the church building moved back several feet from the original site. A new roof was installed, and the structure painted at that time.¹⁸ In 1936, a lighting plant had been installed,¹⁹ which shows the progressive nature of the members. Lights such as the ones installed were a new innovation in the mountains during this period.

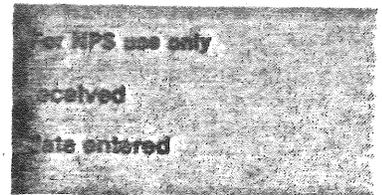
On July 31, 1938 a first Homecoming Day was held at the church, and the first history of the congregation was written by Flossie Murray Phoenix, the church historian.²⁰ By 1945 membership stood at 321.²¹ The congregation was growing fast, and a Sunday school building was badly needed. In October, 1952 timber was cut on church property to begin a church annex, and by the next year the work was nearing completion.²² The Reverend William Abel became minister in early 1953. He was a skilled carpenter, painter, block and brick layer, and it was he who directed the construction work, doing much of it himself. Many church members assisted when they could spare time from their crops and jobs. By August, 1954 the work was completed.²³

In 1956 three acres of land was purchased to form a church cemetery and for future expansion of the physical plant if needed.²⁴ However, a general report to the French Broad Baptist Association about 1962 stated: "There is a decline in resident membership and an increase of non-resident members in practically all the church. Because of economical necessity, there is a movement from rural areas to centers of industry."²⁵ These conditions have affected many rural congregations, including California Creek Baptist Church. Still, the mid-1960s found the church with its largest budget ever.

Through the years the church has remained a staunch supporter of the French Broad Baptist Association, who have met at the church on several occasions of historical importance to the California Creek congregation. In August, 1966, the Reverend W. Robert Holt of the California Creek Church was elected moderator of the French Broad Association, almost a century after the congregation was established.²⁶ It is a recognition which the congregation points to with pride.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, Madison County, North Carolina (Marshall, N.C.: News-Record Printers, ca. 1969). A manuscript copy of this history was used for this historical sketch, so the pagination will not match that of the published booklet, which is no longer available for purchase.

²Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 1.

³Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 2.

⁴Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 2.

⁵Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 2.

⁶Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 3.

⁷Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 3.

⁸Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 4.

⁹Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 4.

¹⁰Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 4.

¹¹Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 4.

¹²Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 4, 5.

¹³Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 5.

¹⁴Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 8.

¹⁵Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 8.

¹⁶Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 8.

¹⁷Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 10.

¹⁸Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 12.

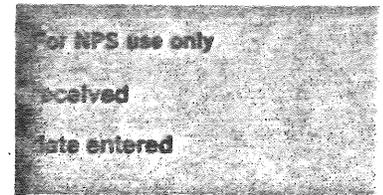
¹⁹Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 12.

²⁰Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 13.

²¹Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 16.

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- 22 Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 17.
- 23 Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 18, 19.
- 24 Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 19.
- 25 Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 23.
- 26 Flossie Murray Phoenix, History of California Baptist Church, 25.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .85

Quadrangle name Mars Hill, N. C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

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

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached plat. Nominated property outlined in red.

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 Significance by John Flowers, Research Specialist
Description by Doug Swaim, Preservation Specialist

organization Archives and History date April 12, 1984

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone 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 William S. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 12, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

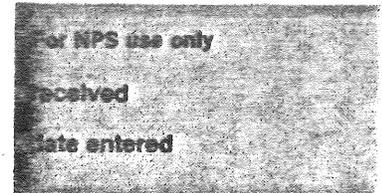
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Item number 9

Page 1

Flossie Murray Phoenix. "History of California Baptist Church, Madison County, North Carolina." Unpublished twenty-seven page manuscript on file in the Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina in 1969.

California Creek Missionary Baptist Church
 Madison County
 Plat showing boundary of nominated property

THIS
 WEST
 END
 AND
 FROM WESTERNMOST
 POINT OF SURVEYED
 PROPERTY

DITCH LINE

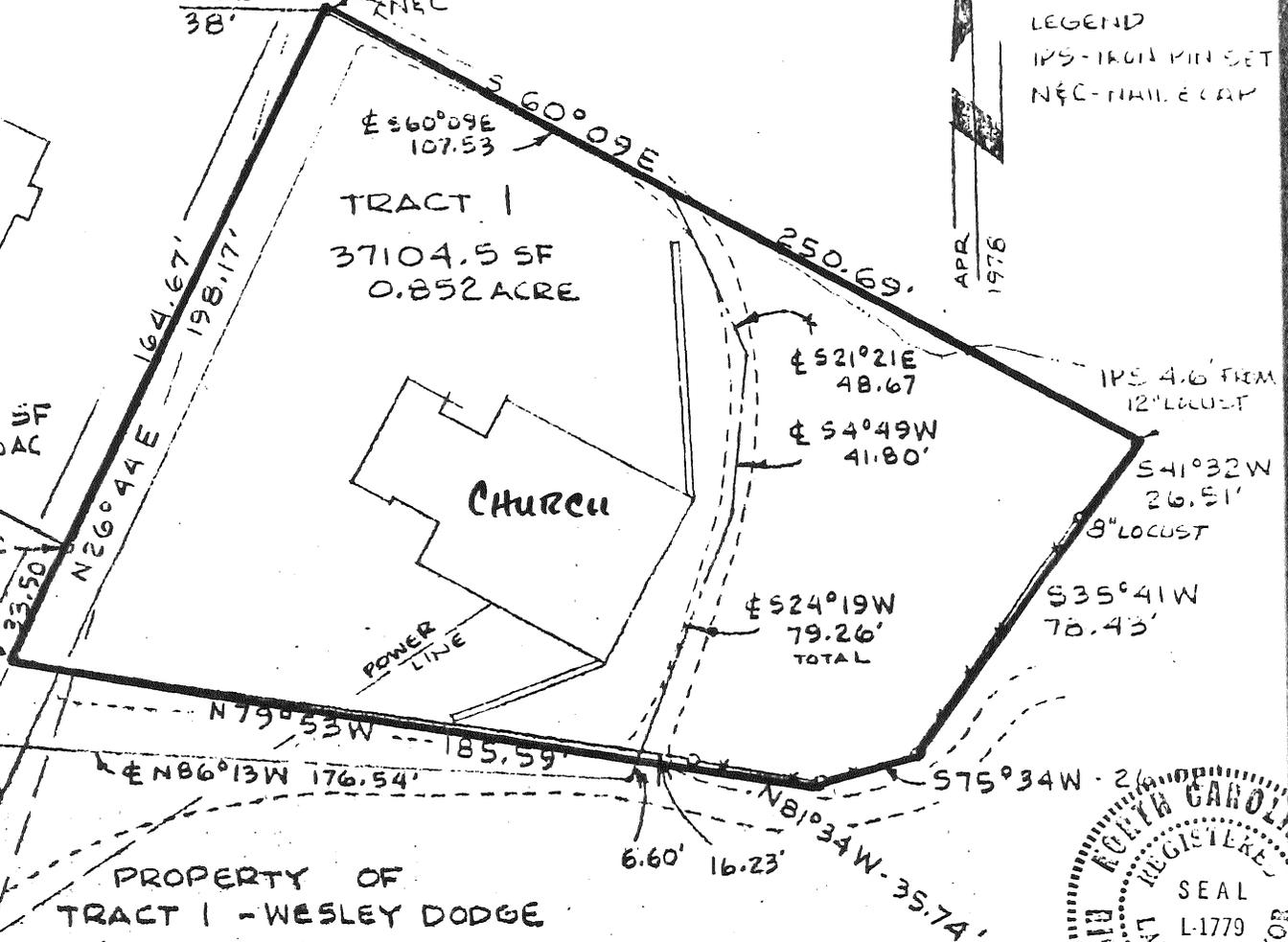
PIPE
 38'

POWER LINE
 TO
 ERWIN TWP

LEGEND
 IPS - IRON PIN SET
 N&C - NAIL & CAP

APR
 1978

TRACT 2
 8955.6 SF
 0.206 AC
 27° OAK
 17.8' FROM
 CNR
 N 61° 23' W
 119.15'

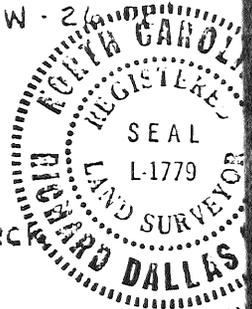


NOTES:
 1. THIS PROPERTY IS
 ESSENTIALLY THAT DESCRIBED
 IN DB 30-404 BUT BOUNDARY
 HAS BEEN CHANGED WITH
 CONSENT OF ALL ADJOIN-
 ING OWNERS.

REFERENCES
 DB 30-404
 DB 15-269
 DB 41-125
 DB 4-407
 DB 4-413

PROPERTY OF
 TRACT 1 - WESLEY DODGE
 AND WIFE GLORIA DODGE
 TRACT 2 - TRUSTEES OF CALIFORNIA CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH
 NO. TWP MADISON COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

APRIL 6, 1978 1" = 50'
 REVO MAR 19, 1983 DESC OF ROAD, POWER LINES

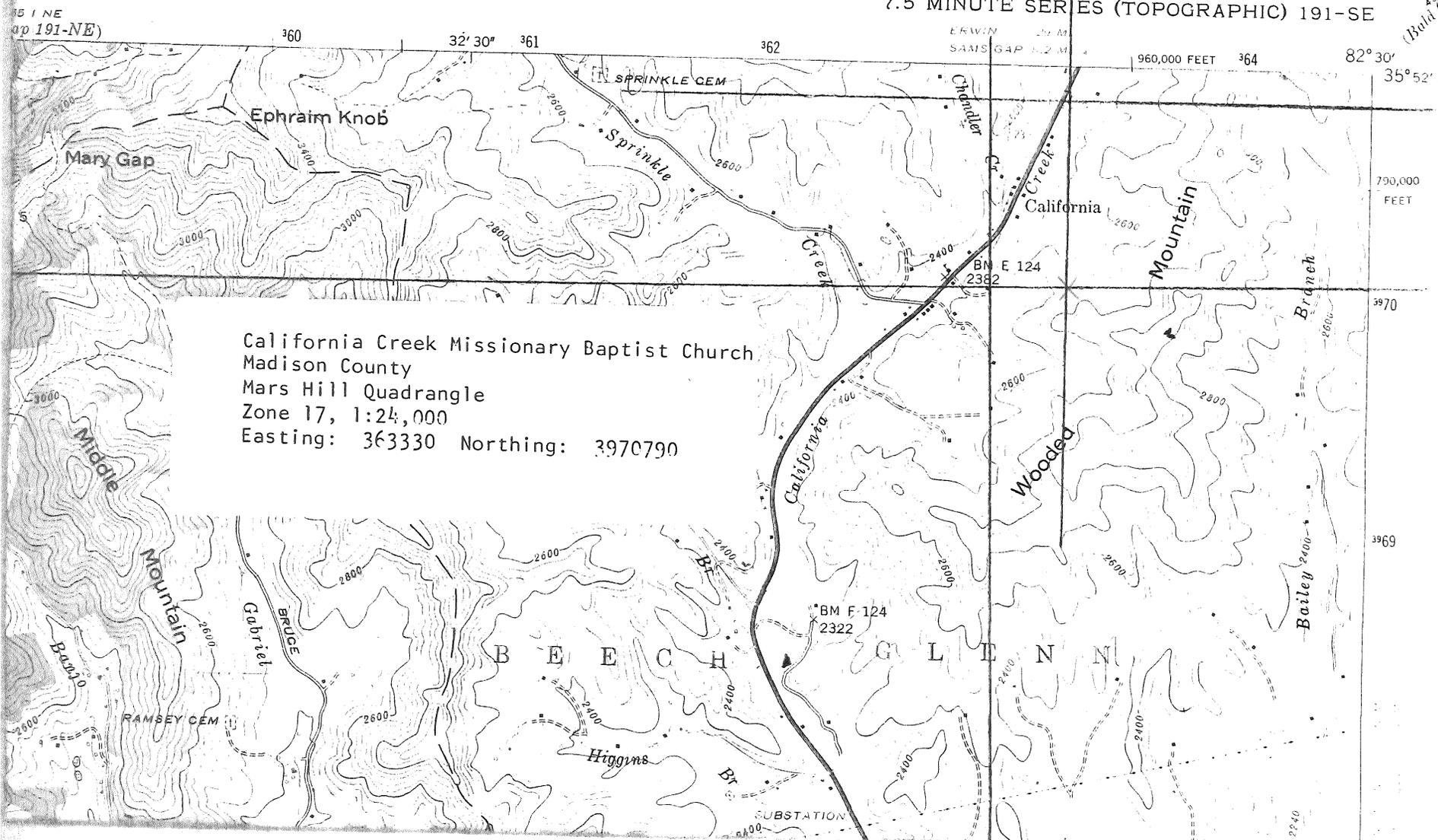


SURVEY BY
 RICHARD D CROOM, PE, RLS
 MARS HILL NC.

STATES
SURVEY AUTHORITY
SURVEYS BRANCH

MARS HILL QUADRANGLE
NORTH CAROLINA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC) 191-SE

4555 IV NW
(Bald Creek 200-A117)



California Creek Missionary Baptist Church
Madison County
Mars Hill Quadrangle
Zone 17, 1:24,000
Easting: 363330 Northing: 3970790

15 1 NE
ap 191-NE)

ERWIN
SAMS GAP

960,000 FEET

82° 30'
35° 52' 30"

790,000
FEET

3970

3979

SUBSTATION

