

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 Wesley's Chapel Arbor & Cemetery

other names/site number Wesley's Chapel

2. Location

street & number W side of SR 2033, 0.4 mile S of junction w/NC 10 N/A not for publication

city, town Blackburn vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Catawba code 035 zip code 28658

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Historic & Architectural Resources of
Catawba County, N.C.

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.

William S. Fin
Signature of certifying official

April 4, 1990
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

Funerary: cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Religion: religious structure

Funerary: cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: rustic shelter

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls wood

roof metal

other wood

stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Wesley's Chapel is a religious complex including a late nineteenth century arbor, an early twentieth century church that was remodeled in 1948, and a cemetery dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Located in rural southwestern Catawba County near the Blackburn community, the complex is situated on a hillside on the west side of a large curve in SR 2033. The church itself is at the top of a knoll facing the road, with drive leading from the road to the church and back out to the road again. Oak, cedar and other trees help to shelter the church from the road, across which a wooded, triangular piece of land (part of the Wesley's Chapel property) adds an additional element of visual serenity to what is already a pastoral setting. The north and west sides of the property are also bordered by trees. From the church the land slopes downward toward the west and south. The arbor is situated toward the bottom of the hill behind the church, almost hidden in a grove of pine and other trees. On the open hillside between the church and the arbor, the cemetery stretches southward from the two.

The present arbor is believed to have been erected circa 1890 and its integrity remains intact, despite some maintenance work done on it in the 1920s. The cemetery, also, remains intact, with only the addition of new stones throughout the years to alter its appearance. However, the church was altered dramatically in the late 1940s, particularly as the exterior was brick veneered. Thus, the church cannot be considered a contributing aspect of this district.

Arbor

Typical of arbors built in piedmont North Carolina during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, **Wesley's Chapel Arbor** ("A:" on attached Sketch Map) is a large open structure, nearly square, with broad hipped roof now covered with 5-V sheet

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steel, an exposed rafter system, and posts and beams on the interior and ringing the exterior of circular sawn heavy timbers, held together in some places by mortise and tenon joints. Lighter weight braces, most of which appear to be added, provide additional support for some of the beams. Probably open originally on all four sides, the west pulpit side of Wesley's arbor has been enclosed with alternating panels of woven wood and corrugated fiberglass. Behind the west wall a shed running the length of the west end has been added for the storage of tables, extra pews, etc. The floor of most of the arbor is covered with sawdust, but at the west end in the pulpit area, a concrete floor has been installed. Arbor furniture includes a paneled wood pulpit and two types of pews, both simple, with one type having solid backs and seats and the other having slatted backs and seats. The pews are arranged in neat rows, with side aisles leading to the pulpit area.

North of the arbor are a brick barbecue pit, two small frame sheds and an outhouse. These are quite small in scale and are not counted as significant resources.

Church

The **Wesley's Chapel United Methodist Church** (C) presently on the site was built in 1902, but was heavily remodeled and brick veneered in 1948. The church is designed with a longitudinal plan with projecting vestibule in front and three-story classroom section forming a shallow "T" at the rear. Round-arched windows filled with colored glass, buttresses between windows, a deeply recessed round-arched front entrance, and a small, pyramidal-roofed belfry add some visual interest to the structure. The interior of the sanctuary is simple, with long pews on either side of a center aisle, a small chancel area recessed behind a round-arched opening, and doors on either side of the chancel leading to the classrooms.

South of the church is a tall commemorative granite marker, whose inscription gives information concerning the history of the site.

Cemetery

Wesley's Chapel Cemetery (B) is said to date from the 1840s, but the earliest stones that are clearly legible bear dates from the 1850s. The oldest stones, from the third quarter of the nineteenth century, are located in the center of the cemetery, surrounded by those of more recent date. Family names such as

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Cobb, Shuford, Clay, Yoder, Helton (and Hilton), Abernethy, Whitener, Hoyle, Weaver and Huffman are found frequently here. A number of the older stones are of artistic interest because they are the work of the Caveny-Crawford Workshop of nearby York County South Carolina (See Property Type "Germanic Gravestones of Catawba County"). This workshop was the principal supplier of gravestones to the Germanic congregations of the Catawba Valley in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Some of the stones -- most notably those with concentric quarter circles in the upper corners and leafy designs elsewhere -- from the 1850s and 1860s bear a strong similarity to some of the gravestones of the same period at Grace Union. Notable stones include those with rounded, curvilinear, pointed, or flat tops with a combination of abstract and realistic design motifs -- circles, stars, flowers, leaves and vines -- but perhaps the most interesting are those designed with a T-shaped top and curvilinear base. The designs carved in low relief on these stones vary somewhat, but include such motifs as scalloped borders, stars enclosed in circles, vines and leafy forms. There are at least five stones of this type at Wesley's Chapel cemetery, ranging in date from 1857 to 1863. Three of these stones mark the graves of Cobb family members, while two others bear the Shuford and Whitener names.

In addition to the arbor, church, and cemetery, Wesley's Chapel complex also included a school during the nineteenth century and campground "tents" (i.e. wooden shacks) until the 1920s, but none of these buildings remain.

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
Art
Religion

Period of Significance
ca. 1850-1939

Significant Dates
ca. 1850

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

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

Summary

Wesley's Chapel Arbor, built circa 1890, in rural Catawba County, is related to the Property Type "Religious Buildings and Sites in Catawba County: Camp Meeting Sites," and meets the registration requirements for that property type under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as an intact example of one of the few remaining camp meeting arbors in the state. The arbor also meets the requirements of Criterion A, in the area of Religion, as being a physical remainder of the dynamic camp meeting tradition which originated in the western piedmont of North Carolina, and swept across southeastern United States during the nineteenth century. The tradition is particularly strong in the Catawba River Valley, as explained in the Historic Context "Religion in Catawba County: 1747-1939." **The Cemetery at Wesley's Chapel** is related to the Property Type "Religious Buildings and Sites in Catawba County: Cemeteries," and meets the registration requirements of its property type under Criterion C, in the area of Art, as an important example of nineteenth century Germanic gravestone design in the Catawba Valley. Both the arbor and the cemetery meet the requirements for Criteria Considerations A and D, as religious properties deriving their primary significance from architectural and artistic distinction.

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Historic Background

The first annual conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States took place at Green Hill's home in Louisburg, North Carolina on April 20, 1785. The new church's aggressive evangelism, employment of circuit riders, disregard of ritual, and emphasis on camp meetings appealed particularly to the rural population. So rapid was its spread in all parts of the state that by 1860 it had 966 congregations and 61,000 members, making Methodism a serious rival to the dominant Baptist faith.¹ It was during this period of rapid growth that Wesley's Chapel and arbor came into existence.

The congregation of Wesley's Chapel began to form as early as 1824 when itinerant Methodist ministers preached at a place called Wesleys Grove, about a mile from the site of the present chapel. Ten years later, those who had been meeting in the grove relocated to the present Wesley's Chapel Complex site and erected their first church building.² The cemetery dates from at least the 1850s. Many of the early stones bear characteristics reminiscent of Pennsylvania Dutch designs that coincide with the heavy German settlement of old Rowan, later Lincoln (1779), and then Catawba (1842) County.³ The first members of Wesley Chapel were primarily of German ancestry who carried on cultural traditions inherited from their immigrant ancestors. Names among the first congregation included Warlick, Ramsour, Deitz, Shuford, Dellinger, and Whitener, which testifies to a large Germanic influence in this early Methodist church in Catawba County.⁴

By 1859 Wesley's Chapel had become a focal point for the growing number of people seeking the services of a camp meeting. An arbor was constructed where the present church building now stands.⁵ While the area of the complex has been used since 1834, only the old cemetery remains in its original location. There have been three churches and three arbors over the years. The first arbor was removed when the second chapel was built on its site in 1880. A second arbor stood between the existing chapel and the present arbor. No one seems to know why it was moved to its present location between 1880 and 1890, but there is some speculation that the second arbor may have burned. In 1902, a third chapel replaced the second structure on the same site. The third building is the present Wesley's Chapel which was remodeled and brick veneered in 1948.⁶

For some years after the Civil War a school, Wesley Chapel

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Academy, was conducted in the complex area. It is not clear whether a separate building existed or whether the chapel or arbor were used. Education was a principal feature of the Methodist doctrine and the academy seems to have flourished until the public school program began to take permanent hold in the late nineteenth century. Many local academies were discontinued about that time.⁷

It appears that for many years the land comprising the Wesley Chapel Complex remained in private ownership. Records indicate that the original owner was Absalom Weaver who sold it to W.H. Blackburn in 1889. Blackburn's descendants in 1975 transferred to the congregation about ten acres "claimed and maintained by Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church for 50 or 60 years."¹¹ Agreements were obviously worked out with the previous owners for the congregation to have exclusive rights though not legal ownership of the tract.

The modern appearance of the church belies the significance of the complex. Though the "tents" were razed in the 1920s, the presence of the arbor and the cemetery clearly link Wesley's Chapel to the era of the Great Revival. Of more importance, perhaps, is the blending of German culture and the Methodist faith as exemplified in the oldest tombstones. Most people of German ancestry remained in the Lutheran or Reformed churches, and conversion to Methodism was rare in Catawba County. However, the Methodist denomination made significant inroads in rural Anglo-German communities in at least one other piedmont North Carolina county - Davidson County (See Davidson County Anglo-German Cemeteries MRA, National Register.) Such conversion testifies to the powerful influence of the Methodist evangelism, and Wesley's Chapel Complex stands as a reminder of the religious intensity of a bygone era.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Hugh Talmage Lefler and Alber Ray Newsome, The History of a Southern State: North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 142, 417, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina.

²Charles J. Preslar, Jr. (ed.), A History of Catawba County (Salisbury: Catawba County Historical Association, 1954), 108, hereinafter cited as Preslar, Catawba County; William L. Sherrill, Annals of Lincoln County, North Carolina (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1967), 493; and J.E. Hodges, A History of Ball's Creek Campground, 1853-1929 (N.p., 1929), 17, hereinafter cited as Hodges, Ball's Creek Campground.

³F. Bogue Wallin, "Notes from Visit to Wesley's Chapel" (undated), on file in Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Wallin, "Notes"; and David Leroy Corbitt, Formation of the North Carolina Counties 1663-1943 (Raleigh: Department of Archives and History, 1950), 60, 137, 185.

⁴Sherrill, Annals of Lincoln County, North Carolina, 493. See also Preslar, Catawba County, 36-44.

⁵Hodges, Ball's Creek Campground, 17-18.

⁶Wallin, "Notes."

⁷See Levi Branson, North Carolina Business Directory, 1872, p. 56; and 1884, p. 200. See also Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 538-539.

⁸Catawba County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Catawba County Courthouse, Newton, Deed Book 1079, p. 739. See also Deed Book 3, pp. 53, 655; Deed Book 33, p. 240; and Deed Book 314, p. 266.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

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 10.05 acres

UTM References

A 17 468560 3941220
 Zone Easting Northing

C 17 468380 3941060
 Zone Easting Northing

B 17 468260 3941200
 Zone Easting Northing

D 17 468550 3941090
 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is all of lot 16 in block 2, sheet 5-J of Catawba County tax maps.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Entire parcel historically associated with property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara Kooiman, compiler; Laura A. W. Phillips, description; Jerry L. Cross, history
 organization Catawba County Historical Assn., Inc. date May 25, 1989
 street & number Rt. 1, Box 76 AB telephone 704/256-3040
 city or town Conover state N.C. zip code 28613

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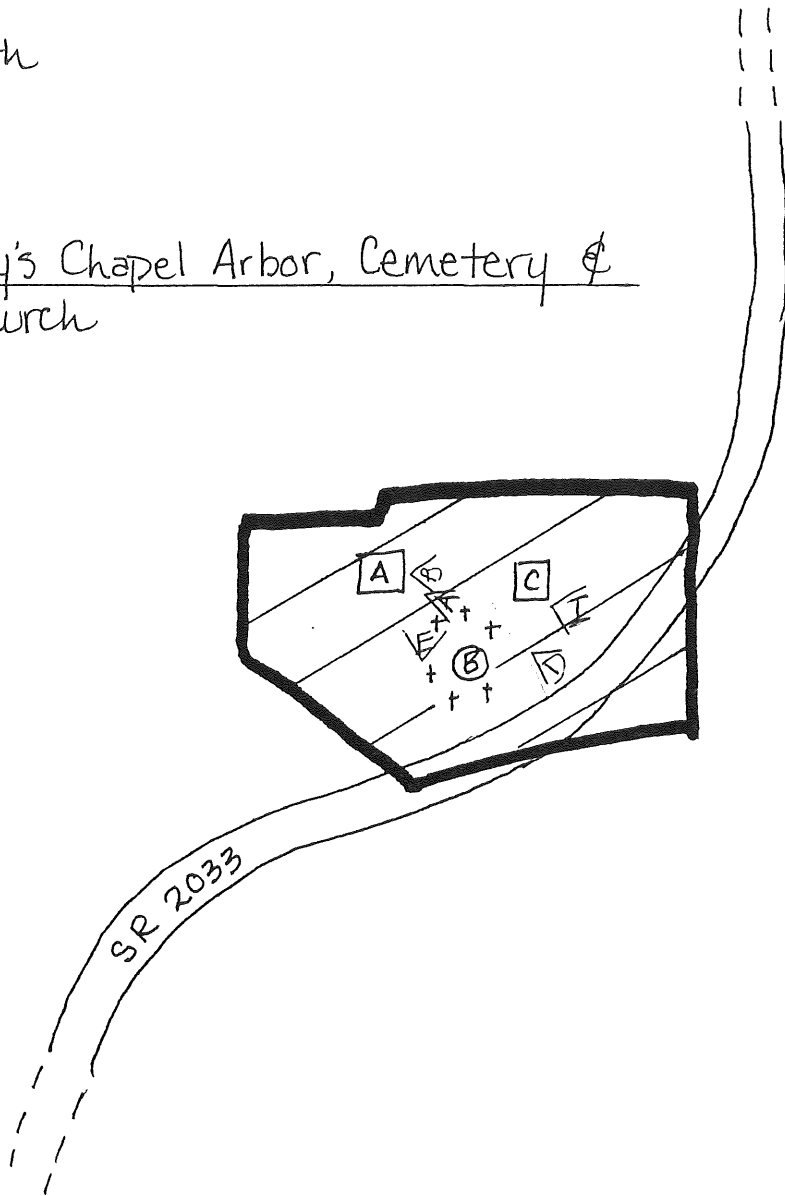
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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----- North Carolina Business Directory, 1884.
Catawba County Deed Books.
- Corbitt, David Leroy. The Formation of the North Carolina Counties 1663-1943. Raleigh: Department of Archives and History, 1950.
- Hodges, J.E. A History of Ball's Creek Campground 1853-1929. N.p., 1929.
- Lefler, Hugh Talmage and Newsome, Albert Ray. The History of a Southern State: North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973.
- Preslar, Charles J., Jr., ed. A History of Catawba County. Salisbury: Catawba County Historical Association, 1954.
- Sherrill, William L. The Annals of Lincoln County, North Carolina. Baltimore: Regional Publishing Company, 1967.
- Wallin, F. Bogue. "Notes on Visit to Wesley's Chapel." Undated. Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.



Wesley's Chapel Arbor, Cemetery & Church



Contributing

A - Arbor

B - Cemetery

Noncontributing

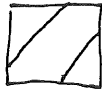
C - Church


Location

Catawba County, N.C.

Jacob's Fork Township

Section 5-J, Block 2, Lot 16

 = Nominated property

 = Photo & direction of lens

