

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR \_\_\_\_\_ THEMATIC NOMINATION

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
(former) Ephphatha Church  
AND/OR COMMON  
(currently) Faith Tabernacle

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
220 West Geer Street \_\_\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Durham \_\_\_\_\_ VICINITY OF 2nd  
STATE CODE COUNTY CODE  
North Carolina 037 Durham 063

**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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<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  
William B. Cooke  
STREET & NUMBER  
907 Camden Avenue  
CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE  
Durham \_\_\_\_\_ VICINITY OF North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTER OF DEEDS, ETC  
Register of Deeds  
Durham County Judicial Building  
STREET & NUMBER  
201 E. Main Street  
CITY, TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE  
Durham, North Carolina 27701

**6 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE  
Patricia S. Dickinson  
ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_ DATE  
Consultant to the City of Durham  
STREET & NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE  
101 City Hall Plaza 683-4137  
CITY OR TOWN \_\_\_\_\_ STATE  
Durham North Carolina 27701

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

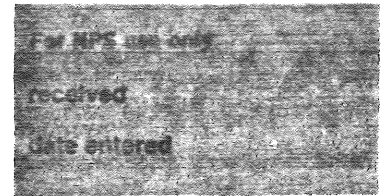
The former Ephphatha Church is situated on a small corner lot at West Geer and North Streets in the North Durham neighborhood (now known as Old North Durham), about one-half mile north of the central business district. The charming, small, one-story, six-bay deep Late Gothic Revival church faces south onto Geer Street and is surrounded by a narrow lawn and shaded by two very large willow oaks. Reminiscent of an English rural church, the Ephphatha Church was constructed in 1930 from plans drawn by prominent Durham architect, George Watts Carr, Sr. All that is remembered today of the contractor is that he was from Sanford, North Carolina. The compact unaltered building in English bond brick, resting on a concrete foundation, features a gable front with projecting narthex; stepped shoulder buttresses alternate with lancet windows on the side elevations. Recessed at the western elevation is a small wing which served as a chapel and meeting place for Bible classes. The chapel wing has separate front and rear entrances set in rectangular stone surrounds. At the rear of the church is a small wing which forms a cross gable and contains the kitchen and restroom.

In addition to the lancet windows, a variety of window types occur including rectangular casements in the chapel wing, and a fixed round, stone-framed window which is centered in the front gable. All windows feature opaque, diamond shaped panes of white and yellow cathedral glass set in lead muntins. The building is handsomely detailed with stone accenting the buttress shoulders, gable-end coping and the pointed arched entrance surround where it is incised with "the way of peace." A simple stone cross, a duplicate of the original shattered by lightning about 1950, surmounts the steeply pitched slate roof. A short flight of stone steps rises to the main entrance of wood double doors leading to the small narthex. These doors are painted red and are highlighted by decorative iron strapping and a Gothic inspired door plate. The original, intricate door hardware, similar to that on the front door, survives throughout the church.

Another set of double doors opens into the nave. Characteristic of the Late Gothic Revival style, on the interior the building's structure is exposed. The English bond brick walls are a dominant element, along with the pine rafters and a trio of king post trusses composed of chamfered pine timbers strapped with wrought iron. The carpeted center aisle separates two rows of simple rectangular heart pine pews and terminates at the chancel which is elevated two steps and enframed by a brick pointed arch delineated by a soldier course. Heavy turned pine balusters support the molded communion rail which extends across the right half of the chancel. Originally the chancel was illuminated with diffused light from spotlights located behind the brick arch. According to Reverend James R. Fortune, Sr., proper lighting is critical to deaf worshippers who need a clear view without a lighted background in order to see the signing clearly (telephone interview with James R. Fortune, Sr., November 15, 1983). Above the original pine altar with recessed panels is a trio of slender lancet windows. According to Reverend Fortune, they were once painted blue to help reduce strong background light. Offset at the left of the chancel is a three-sided pine pulpit with recessed panels and drop pendants. The pulpit projects slightly into the nave. A brick curtain wall with twin pointed arched doorways outlined by soldier courses separates the main sanctuary from the adjoining chapel to the left of the nave. The chapel also features exposed rafters. Through a pointed arched door at the rear of the chapel there is a small kitchen with original full height, built-in pine cupboard, and two restrooms.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet    Ephphatha Church    Item number    7    Page    1

The structure, of course, is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

**8 SIGNIFICANCE**

NATIONAL       STATE       LOCAL

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                      1930                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT    architect, George Watts Carr, Sr.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

At the time of its construction in 1930, the small brick Late-Gothic Revival Ephphatha Church, located at 220 West Geer Street in the North Durham neighborhood, was the first formal church in the South and one of only four churches in the nation built exclusively for a deaf congregation. The organization of the congregation dates to 1906 when a small group of deaf worshippers met monthly at St. Philip's Episcopal Church on Main Street for Bible study conducted in sign language by St. Philip's rector, the Reverend Sidney S. Bost. Bost was instrumental in training the Reverend Roma C. Fortune, one of the congregation's charter members, for the ministry. Encouraged by Diocese Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire, Bost and Fortune undertook a successful fund-raising drive to construct a new church for the deaf from plans drawn by Durham architect, George Watts Carr, Sr. The building served that purpose until 1977 and is now in use as Faith Tabernacle.

**CRITERIA ASSESSMENT**

- A. When the former Ephphatha Church was constructed in 1930 it was one of only four churches in the nation built exclusively for a deaf congregation. Organized in 1906, the congregation was the first in the South composed entirely of deaf worshippers.
- B. The church is associated with the lives and ministries of prominent North Carolina Episcopal churchmen, Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire, and the Reverends Sidney S. Bost, Roma Coxey Fortune and James R. Fortune, Sr.
- C. The Ephphatha Church exemplifies the Late Gothic Revival style widely used by Episcopal congregations. The unaltered church features a steeply pitched slate covered roof, a variety of window types, stone accents on the brick elevations and, on the interior, exposed pine rafters and trusses and brick walls.

The former Ephphatha Church is associated with the lives and ministries of prominent North Carolina Episcopal churchmen Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire and Reverends Sidney S. Bost, Roma Coxey Fortune and James R. Fortune, Sr. Although this building was constructed in 1930, the Ephphatha congregation dates to the first decade of the twentieth-century when it became the first in the South composed entirely of deaf worshippers. When the congregation finally constructed its own church in 1930, the Late-Gothic Revival style building was one of only four churches in the nation built exclusively for a deaf congregation.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a church for the deaf in Durham began in 1906 when the Reverend Oliver Whildin, a minister to the deaf in Baltimore, visited Durham to hold services in St. Philip's Church on Main Street. St. Philip's rector, Reverend Sidney Bost, was so impressed by the response to this service that he organized a special Bible class of seventeen deaf worshippers. Reverend Bost, who "was touched by the religious needs of these isolated people, many of whom were employed by Durham's tobacco industry," learned sign language and, assisted by Miss Robina L. Tillinghast, held Sunday afternoon Bible classes for the deaf at St. Philip's Church for twenty years, from 1906 to 1926.<sup>2</sup>

Reverend Bost also was instrumental in training for the ministry the Reverend Roma Coxey Fortune, one of the congregation's charter members. In May, 1918, Fortune was ordained a deacon in St. Philip's, and in January, 1929, he was advanced to the priesthood. Encouraged by Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire, Bost and Fortune began a fundraising drive in 1926 to erect a church for Durham's deaf. The name chosen for the new church derives from the biblical account of Christ's miraculous healing of a deaf man as recounted in the Book of Mark, Chapter 7, Verses 32-35.

"And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought him to lay his hand upon him. And taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ear and he spat and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, 'Ephphatha,' that is 'Be opened.' And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly."

Since the congregation numbered only fifty when the fundraising drive began, wide community support for the building fund was sought. Many contributions were added to the initial \$3,000 pledged by the Women's Auxiliary of Diocese and \$1,000

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The North Carolina Churchman

Telephone interview with James R. Fortune, Sr., November 15, 1983

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

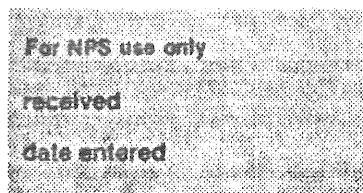
A	1 7	6 8 9 4 5 2	3 9 8 6 4 1 5	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Map 062, Block 4, Lot 002 Durham Tax Maps

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet former Ephphatha Church

Item number 8

Page 1

from the deaf congregation. The goal of \$16,000 was realized before building commenced, so that the congregation would not be saddled with an outstanding debt.

In 1930 the church was built as a memorial to Bishop Cheshire from plans drawn by Durham architect George Watts Carr, Sr. The cornerstone was laid November 19, 1930, and the church was consecrated on May 17, 1931. The consecration was termed "one of the most significant events in the life of the Church in North Carolina" and "a triumph for the Rev. Roma Fortune, minister of the congregation and missionary to the deaf, and many friends who have labored so faithfully with him in the erection and furnishing of the handsome church ediface."<sup>3</sup>

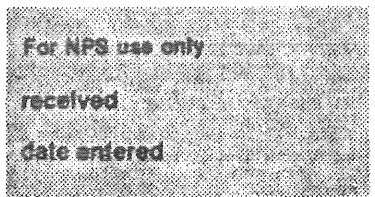
Sidney Stuart Bost, born in 1871 in Rowan County, had moved to Durham in 1898 to serve a parish that grew steadily under his able administration. He was a popular and respected Durham citizen and served as head of many civic campaigns. For his work with the deaf and his guidance in the drive to build Ephphatha Church, he was selected in 1931 to receive one of the twelve Crosses of Honor awarded by the Order of the Sangreal to those who have rendered "conspicuous service to God and Humanity through the Church." The citation upon which the award was based reads in part:

"...because he undertook to carry knowledge of Christ to the deaf mutes; and having learned the sign language, ministered to them, training for the sacred ministry fit persons from among the silent people. As a result of his labors, a church for those who neither speak nor hear has been consecrated, and many have learned the faith who without him could not have known it."<sup>4</sup>

Ephphatha Church's Rector Roma Coxey Fortune was born in 1879 in Black Mountain, North Carolina and was educated at the North Carolina School for the Deaf at Raleigh. Attracted by a good school system for his three children, and the prospect of being able to socialize with other deaf people, he moved to Durham in 1895 with his wife, Elsie Carter. He worked for a time for Durham Hosiery Mills and then for the American Tobacco Company before he began his statewide ministry to the deaf.<sup>5</sup> Reverend Fortune served as rector of Ephphatha Church from 1930 until his death in 1942. He also served as missionary to the deaf in the diocese and was instrumental in organizing congregations in Greensboro, Winston-Salem, High Point, Charlotte and Raleigh and ministering to the congregation at Burlington's St. Athanasius Church (NR). (St. Athanasius, erected 1880, is a small frame Gothic Revival style Episcopal church. In 1911 when the more spacious Church of the Holy Comforter was built to serve the expanding congregation, St. Athanasius was used as a chapel for the deaf in Burlington).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet former Ephphatha Church

Item number 8

Page 2

Fortune, "one of the most beloved clergymen of the Diocese" died on October 27, 1942 and was honored as "one of the outstanding pioneers of the Church to our brethen who live in perpetual silence."<sup>6</sup> His funeral at Ephphatha Church was conducted by Bishop Edwin A. Penick and six other clergymen. The North Carolina Churchman reported that the service was given in sign language by Fortune's son, James.

"And when the choir standing before the communion rail facing the congregation, 'sang' in sign language 'Nearer My God to Thee,' and 'Jesus Lover of My Soul' as Bishop Penick read those memorable hymns, their graceful movements of arms and hands and fingers, with faces wrapped in reverent keeping with hearts that had been sorely smitten, it produced silent harmony that caused one's nerves to tingle and made one feel the reality of what their religion meant to them."<sup>7</sup>

After Roma Fortune's death, his son, James, a graduate of North Carolina State University with a degree in dairy manufacturing, was persuaded by the Episcopal Diocese to carry on his father's work. He was admitted as a postulant in early 1943 and began work as a licensed lay reader at two of his father's former charges, Ephphatha and St. Athanasius. He was ordained to the diaconate in 1944 and was elevated to the priesthood in 1945. "Mr. Fortune possessing full faculties in speech and hearing can with the sign language convey 'fluently' his thoughts and readings to the deaf."<sup>8</sup>

James R. Fortune served as rector of Ephphatha until his retirement in 1977. By this time, the congregation had dwindled from a high of about eighty to approximately twenty worshippers, all of them elderly. Evidence of the decline of portions of the North Durham neighborhood included recurrent vandalism and harassment directed against their church. Upon the Reverend Fortune's retirement, the congregation chose to return to monthly meetings at St. Philip's. The Episcopal Diocese rented the Ephphatha Church building to another congregation until early 1981 when it was deconsecrated and subsequently sold to William Bryant Cooke of Durham. Currently, Mr. Cooke rents the building to a congregation who have renamed it Faith Tabernacle.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Corner Stone of Church for Deaf Laid" and "Brief History of Work Among the Deaf in St. Philip's Parish, Durham, and in the Diocese of North Carolina," The Carolina Churchman, December, 1930, pp. 10 and 11.

<sup>2</sup>/Edwin A. Penick, "Address of the Bishop," Journal of the One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Annual Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of North Carolina, (May, 1943), pp. 38-39. Hereinafter cited as "Address of the Bishop."

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received  
date entered

Continuation sheet former Ephphatha Church

Item number 8

Page 3

<sup>3</sup>"Ephphatha Church Consecrated," The Carolina Churchman, June, 1931, p.9.

<sup>4</sup>Theodore Patrick, Jr., "An Honor Worthily Bestowed: Order of Sangreal Selects Reverend Sidney S. Bost," The Carolina Churchman, December, 1931, p.1.

<sup>5</sup>Telephone Interview with James R. Fortune, Sr., November 15, 1983.

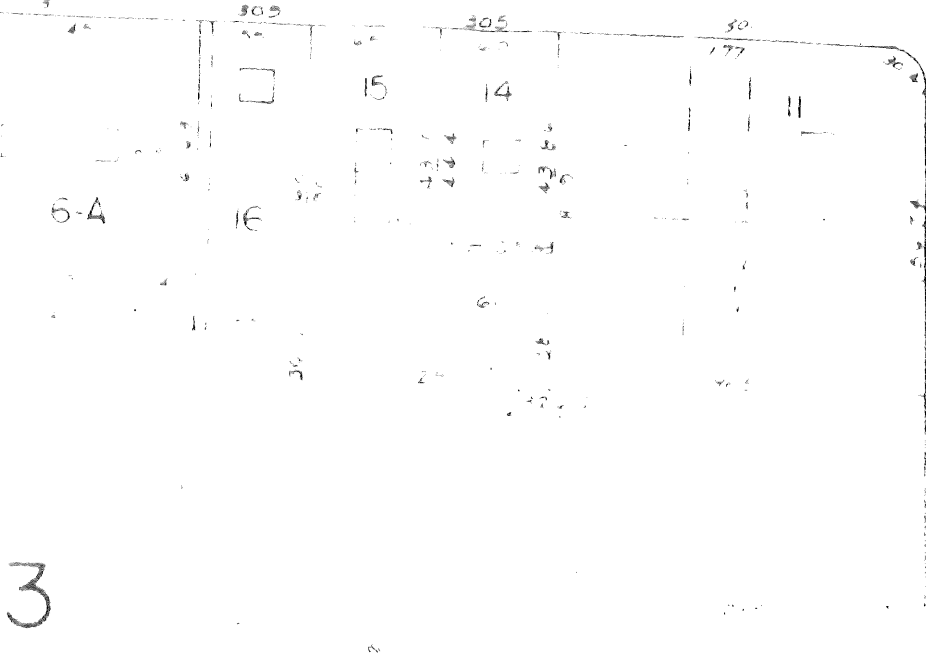
<sup>6</sup>"Address of the Bishop," pp. 38-39.

<sup>7</sup>"Rev. Roma Coxey Fortune," The North Carolina Churchman, November 15, 1942, p. 4.

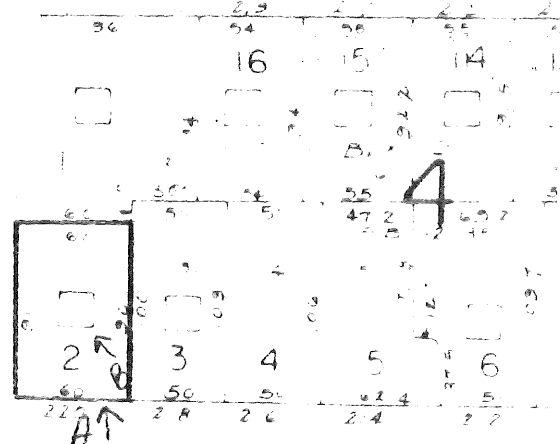
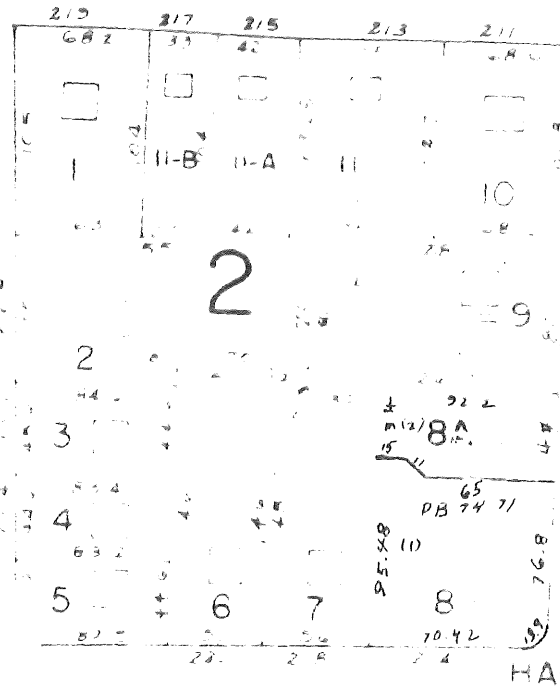
<sup>8</sup>"James Fortune Already at Work," The North Carolina Churchman, February 15, 1943, p. 11.



AVE.



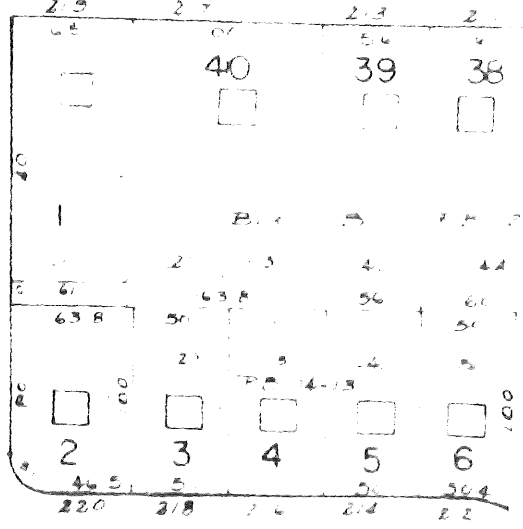
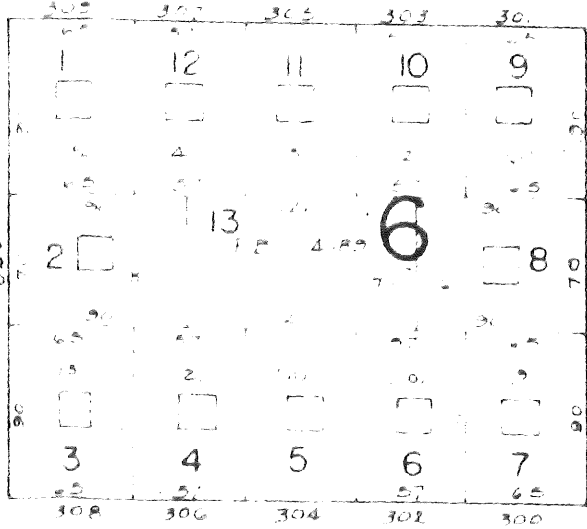
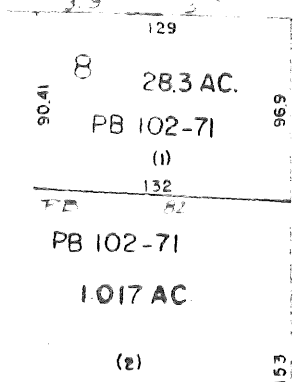
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 Durham, North Carolina



20  
328  
324-320

GEER

ST.



NORTHWOOD

NORTH

CIRCLE

