



**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory  
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History  
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

July 21, 2016

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Kate Husband  
Office of Human Environment  
NCDOT Division of Highways

**FROM:** Renee Gledhill-Earley *Renee Gledhill-Earley*  
Environmental Review Coordinator

**SUBJECT:** Historic Structures Survey Report for Replacement of Bridge 81 on SR 1737,  
Cullowhee, PA 16-02-0119, Jackson County, ER 16-1099

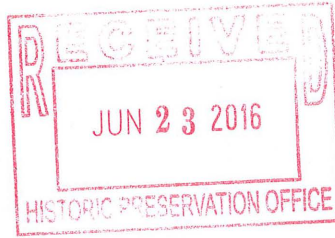
Thank you for your memorandum of June 21, 2016, transmitting the report for the above-referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the report and **concur that the John's Creek Methodist Church (JK0025) is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places** for the reasons outlined.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

Thank you for your cooperation and consideration. If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-807-6579 or [environmental.review@ncdcr.gov](mailto:environmental.review@ncdcr.gov). In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT

[mfurr@ncdot.gov](mailto:mfurr@ncdot.gov)



PAT McCRORY  
Governor

NICHOLAS J. TENNYSON  
Secretary

ER 16-1099

June 21, 2016

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Renee Gledhill-Earley  
Environmental Review Coordinator  
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

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**FROM:** Kate Husband  
Architectural Historian  
NCDOT Division of Highways

Annie Due 7/14  
Due 7/18/16  
not eligible  
7/11/16

**SUBJECT:** Replace Bridge No. 81 on SR 1737 (Caney Fork Road), Historic  
Architecture Eligibility Evaluation (PA No. 16-02-0119)  
CULLOWHEE, JACKSON COUNTY

Enclosed please find the eligibility report and survey site form for the above referenced project. Please feel free to contact me by phone (919-707-6075) if you have any additional questions or comments. We look forward to hearing from you.





May 2016

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## HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE ELIGIBILITY EVALUATION REPORT

# REPLACE BRIDGE NO. 81 OVER JOHN'S CREEK ON SR 1737 (CANEY FORK ROAD)

**27 Johns Creek Road  
WBS# 17BP.14.R.144**

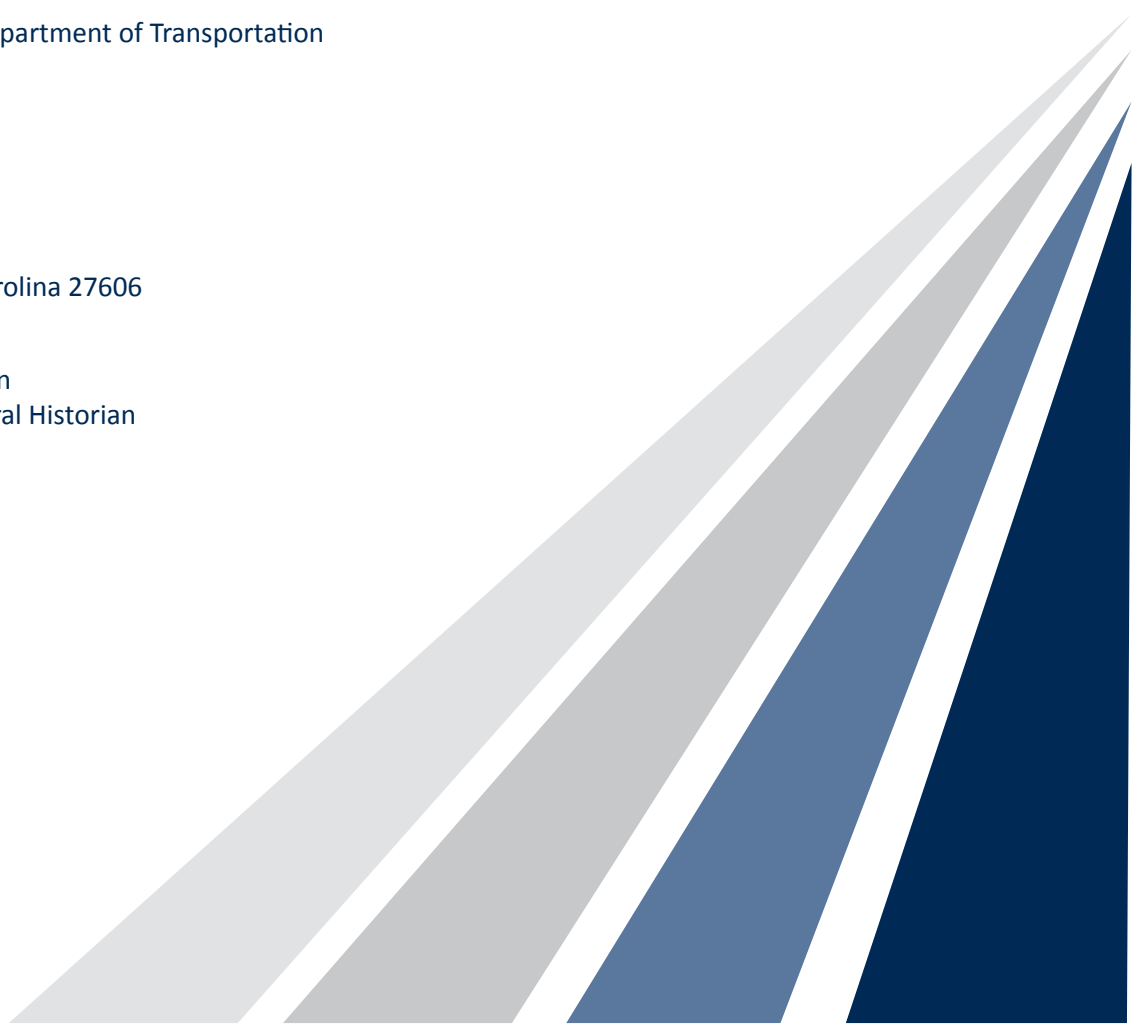
**Prepared for:**

North Carolina Department of Transportation

**Prepared by:**

JMT  
1130 Situs Court  
Suite 200  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27606

Sara B. McLaughlin  
Senior Architectural Historian



May 2016

## HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE ELIGIBILITY EVALUATION REPORT

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Senior Architectural Historian

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Sara B. McLaughlin, Senior Architectural Historian  
JMT

Date

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Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

## Management Summary

JMT prepared this report in April and May of 2016 in response to North Carolina Department of Transportation’s proposal to replace Bridge No. 81 over John’s Creek on SR 1737 (Caney Fork Road) in Jackson County. The project area is located in the center of the county within Caney Fork Township. The APE has been defined by the NC DOT as extending “75 feet from the center of the existing road each way and 300 feet from each end of the bridge” (Figure 3). One property, John’s Creek Methodist Church (JK 0025), has been identified within the APE as requiring further evaluation.

Investigations comply with the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, other state and federal regulations, and NCDOT’s current “Historic Architecture Group Procedures and Work Products and the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office’s (HPO) Report Standards for Historic Structure Survey Reports/ Determinations of Eligibility/Section 106/110 Compliance Reports in North Carolina”.

Resource Name	NC HPO Survey Number	NRHP Eligibility Recommendation	NRHP Criteria
John’s Creek Methodist Church	JK 0025	Not Eligible	N/A

## Table of Contents

Management Summary	i
Table of Contents	ii
Project Description and Methodology	1
Description	4
History	11
Architectural Context	13
National Register of Historic Places Evaluation	15
References	16

## Project Description and Methodology

North Carolina Department of Transportation requested an intensive-level survey, in the form of an Eligibility Evaluation Report, of the John's Creek Methodist Church (JK 0025), 27 John's Creek Road, Cullowhee, Jackson County (Figures 1, 2 and 3). Sara McLaughlin, Senior Architectural Historian at JMT, completed this report.

Fieldwork was completed on May 28, 2016. The interior of the church, which now serves as a private residence, was not accessed and all photos were taken from the public right of way. Background historical research was conducted at the Jackson County Library in Sylva, North Carolina, the Jackson County Register of Deeds, and the Jackson County online Land Records service. Additionally, the HPOWEB GIS service was consulted and revealed no other historic resources within the project area. JMT obtained the existing John's Creek Methodist Church file from the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office's (HPO) Western Office of Archives and History and reviewed National Register of Historic Places Registration Forms for similar churches in the area to provide further context.

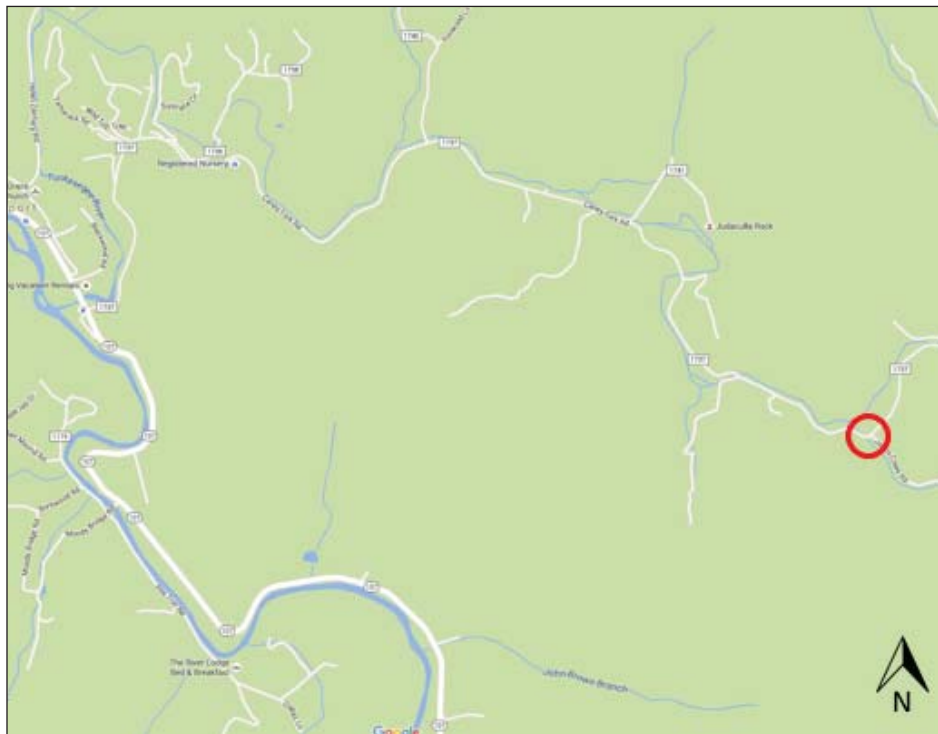


Figure 1: Project area (Source: NC DOT)



Figure 2: John's Creek Methodist Church parcel boundary and site plan (Source: ESRI)



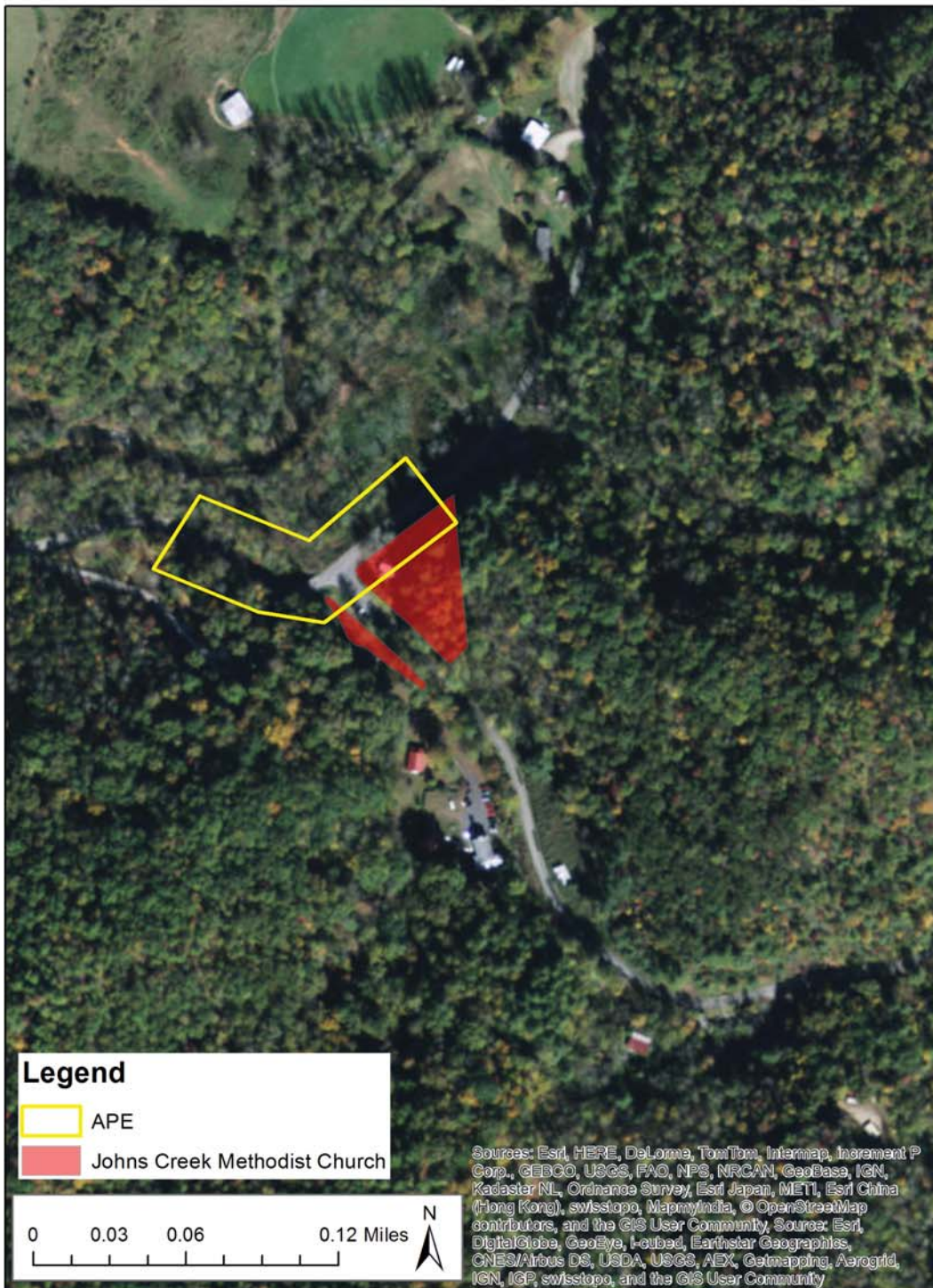


Figure 3: Project area and APE (Source: ESRI)

## Description

Located at the east of the intersection of Caney Fork Road and Johns Creek Road, the former John's Creek Methodist Church sits on a 1.79-acre site. The nearest town, Webster, is located approximately eight miles northwest of the site. The property no longer serves as a religious building, since it was transferred into private ownership in January of 2012.

The parcel is situated east of Johns Creek atop a slight rise. The building is located east of the intersection of two improved, two-lane roadways; however, the surrounding area is rural and sparsely populated. The topography is characterized by rolling hills and dense trees. A flight of historic, likely original stone steps runs northwest-southeast from the roadway intersection and leads up to the main entrance (Photographs 1 & 2). A low, dry-stack stone retaining wall defines the grassy lawn to the northwest of the main building and a paved driveway provides access from the roadway to the property from the south.

Constructed in 1915, the church is a one story, side gable structure, with a secondary front gable addition off of the northeast elevation constructed between 1978 and 1987 (Williams 1987). It is connected to the original church by a small hyphen. The original church building is four bays wide by two bays deep, while the addition is two bays wide by three bays deep. The original wood siding was replaced with aluminum siding in 1979, according to a note on the 1978 Historic Sites Survey. The original structure has a pressed tin roof while the addition has a standing seam metal roof. Both the original church and addition sit on concrete block foundations. The original four-over-four, double-hung wood windows on the church were replaced sometime between 1989 and 2016 with vinyl, four-over-four, double-hung windows.

The front, southwest elevation has three evenly spaced windows and the main entrance, which is protected by a square, aluminum sided tower topped with a belfry (Photograph 3). The tower is supported by four, square wood posts and a flight of stairs leads up to the entry flanked with a simple balustrade. These stairs and porch beneath the belfry were added sometime between 1978 and 1989. The side, northwest elevation has two, evenly spaced windows on the first floor and a half-moon vent below the roofs apex (Photograph 5 and 6). The rear, northeast elevation has three evenly spaced windows and the small gable roof attaching the main structure to the addition (Photograph 7 and 8). The side, southeast elevation is not visible from the public right of way but likely mirrors the northwest elevation.

The side, northwest elevation of the addition has three evenly spaced, vinyl, one-over-one, double-hung windows; the center and one to the left being the same size and the window to the right of center being smaller. The rear, northeast elevation has two, evenly-spaced, vinyl, one-over-one, double-hung windows and a rectangular vent below the roof's apex. The southeast and southwest elevations are not visible from the public right of way.

A one-story, one-bay shed, constructed after 1989, is located northwest of the church. Set on a concrete foundation, the structure is clad in aluminum siding and capped by a front gable, standing seam metal roof.

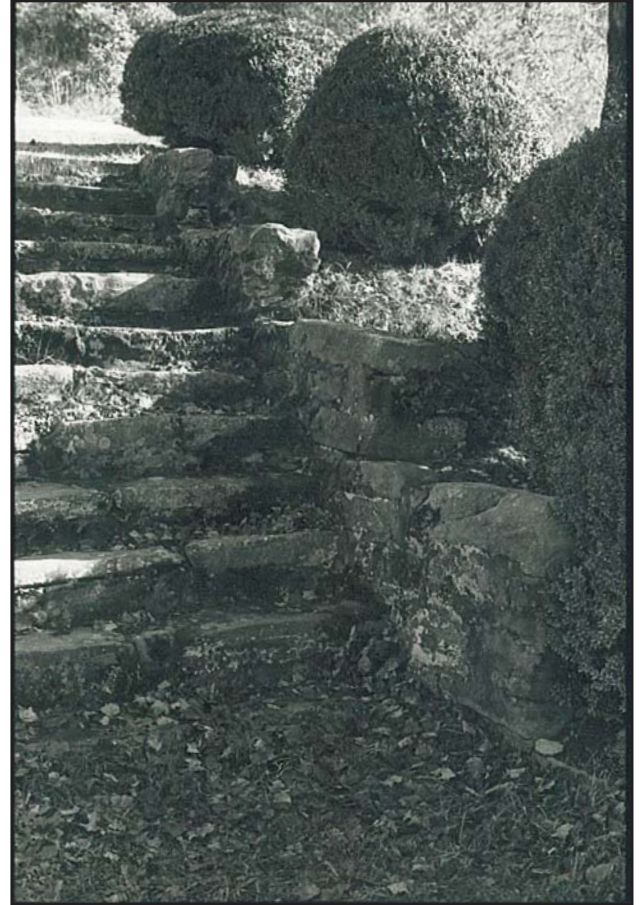


John's Creek Methodist Church

Resource Name	John's Creek Methodist Church
HPO Survey Site #	JK 0025
Street Address	27 Johns Creek Road
PIN	7578-66-8103
Construction Date(s)	1915
NRHP Recommendation	Not Eligible



Photograph 1: View of original steps from the public right of way; looking east. (2016)



Photograph 2: View of the original steps; looking southeast. (Source: 1978 Historic Sites Survey)



Photograph 3: Southwest elevation of the church; looking north. (Source: 1978 Historic Sites Survey)



Photograph 4: Southwest elevation of the church; looking north. (2016)



Photograph 5: Southwest and northwest elevation of the church; looking northeast.  
(Source: 1978 Historic Sites Survey.)



Photograph 6: Southwest and northwest elevation of the church; looking northeast. (2016)



Photograph 7: Northeast elevations of the church and addition and the northwest elevation of the addition; looking southeast. (Source: 1989 Historic Sites Survey)



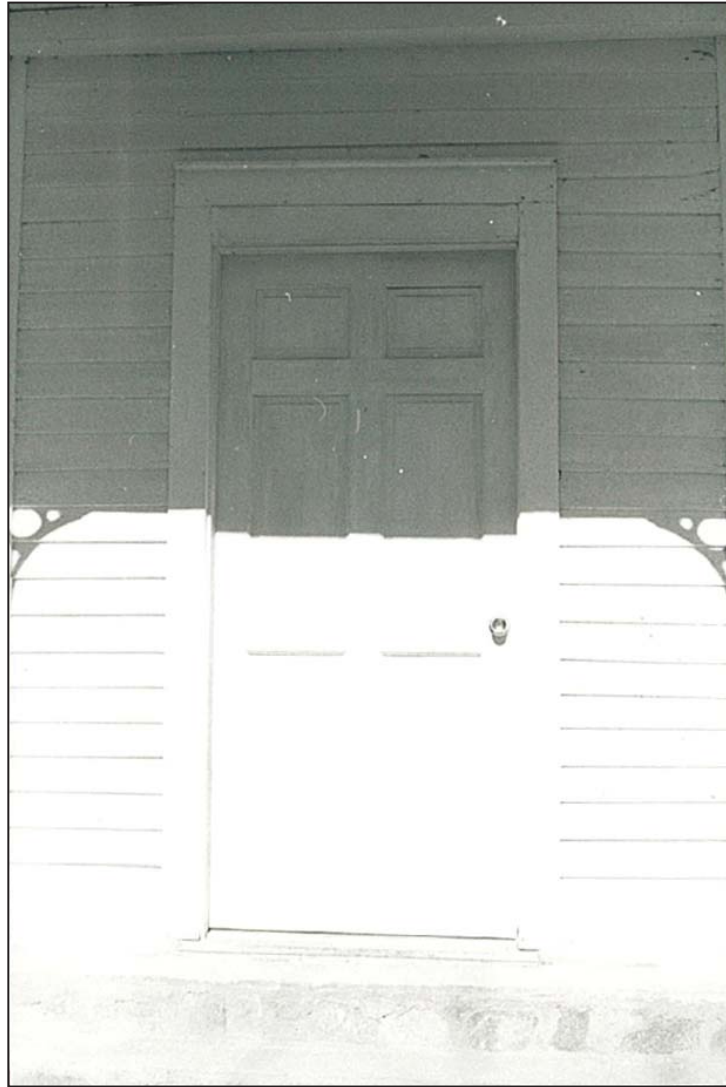
Photograph 8: Northeast elevations of the church and addition and the northwest elevation of the addition; looking southeast. (2016)



Photograph 9: Northwest elevation of the church, looking southeast. (Source: 1978 Historic Sites Survey)



Photograph 10: Northwest and northeast elevations of the church; looking southeast. (2016)



Photograph 11: View of the original door on the southwest elevation of the church; looking northeast. (Source: 1978 Historic Sites Survey)



## History

The John's Creek Methodist Church at 27 Johns Creek Road in Caney Fork was constructed in 1915. A booklet on the Webster Circuit of the Methodist Episcopal Church published in 1907 states:

Johns Creek Church 'was organized as Concord, in 1860 [ ] Smith, PC, and F.M. Fanning, PE,' states the 1907 [article]. 'Besides a number of the Hooper family, who went to the [ ] church later, the following were charter members: William [ ] Pheniah Brown, Jane Coward, Clara Coward Smith and Nathan Coward . . . The church [has not] been housed, but there is now a strong sentiment in [ ] building. The class now numbers 23.' (The Johns Creek Church building was erected in 1915, [eight] years after that booklet was published). (McRorie 25 Aug 1977)

The township of Caney Fork is named for the creek that flows through it, emptying into the Tuckasegee River at East LaPorte, a 1920s logging town. The nearest incorporated town was Webster, approximately eight miles northeast of the church, and the nearest unincorporated community was Tuckasegee, two miles southwest. Jackson County, located in the Appalachian Mountains of southwest North Carolina, was isolated and sparsely settled at the turn of the century. Like the larger county, the Caney Fork area was very rural as well, with farming and agriculture being the primary means of subsistence. Logging and the timber industry became central to the Caney Fork community in the 1910s and 1920s.

When Jackson County was established in 1851, religious life was dominated by Baptist and Methodist denominations that were initially within the Holston Conference, but are now in the Western North Carolina Conference (Jackson County Planning Department 2012). Church services were held in local homes or civic centers and led by itinerant preachers who rode hundreds of miles each month "on circuit," in order to preach (Jackson County Planning Department 2012: 7.3). John's Creek was added to Webster Methodist circuit upon its establishment in 1860 and operated in this style of circuiting for over 50 years. The Webster Circuit of comprised seven churches in 1907: Webster, Cullowhee, Love's Chapel, Speedwell, Wesleyanna, John's Creek, and East LaPorte.

The John's Creek Methodist and Baptist Churches both held services in the John's Creek schoolhouse. Many men in the community served as trustees of the church, and pastors traveling on the Webster Circuit preached to the congregation (Jackson County Genealogical Society 1992:10).

A local news article from 1913 conveys the desire for a church building in the Caney Fork community:

I make a motion that the people of Caney Fork get together and plan on this proposition and build a fine church house in some convenient place at or near the mouth of John's Creek as that is near the center of the township. We have four new school houses on Caney Fork, but I am sorry to say we haven't got one church building on Caney Fork. I think there is no one on Caney Fork who would not be interested in building a church house at John's Creek. (Mountain Times 1913)

Around 1915, two local families sold land to the Trustees for the M.E. Church (Methodist Episcopal Church) and for the M.E. Church South (Methodist Episcopal Church South) in order to erect a structure: Robert Slagle Green and his wife, Sallie Hunter Green (alternatively spelled Greene), and W.A. and L.C. Brown (Jackson County Deed Books 75:52, 99:397, and 1836:170; Jackson County Genealogical Society 1992). The Greens ran a small general store in Caney Fork and W.A. Brown was a town magistrate (Breedlove 2009:22). The property for the new church building was 1.79 acres. News articles from the 1910s indicate that construction of the church building began in 1915 (Balsam Grove).

Jackson County property records note that the church was built in 1955; however, the building appears to date from 1915. Alterations may have been undertaken in 1955, which could account for the reference in the property records. Around 1979, the Church was significantly remodeled—an addition consisting of a religious school classroom, kitchen, and bathrooms was constructed (Jackson County Genealogical Society 1992:10).

It is not clear exactly when the John's Creek Methodist Church closed its doors; however, this likely occurred between December 2009 and January 2012. In December 2009, ownership was transferred from Wiley Ray Henson, acting in his capacity as Chairperson of the Trustees of John's Creek United Methodist Church, to The Board of Trustees of the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is unclear if the church was still open at this time. In January 2012, ownership was transferred from The Board of Trustees of Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church to Jennifer Fitzsimons and the church was converted into a private residence. Ms. Fitzsimons continues to own the property today.

## Architectural Context

Portions excerpted from “Webster Methodist Church Local Historic Landmark Report” prepared by the Jackson County Planning Department in 2012.

Constructed in 1915, the original John’s Creek Methodist Church is a single story, side gable frame structure that follows the typical design of church buildings in Jackson County in the late 19th- early 20th century. Most churches were small, rectangular frame buildings with the entrance in the gable end, and most had belfries capped by conical or pyramid shaped roofs (Jackson County Planning Department 2012: 7.3).

The partial inventory of historic properties in Jackson County (1975) lists extant church buildings with belfries: Catherine’s Chapel Baptist Church (1906), John’s Creek Methodist Church (1915), Olivet Methodist Church (c. 1895), and Webster Baptist Church (1900). The Church of the Good Shepherd (1895) was identified as having a free-standing belfry.

The Webster Methodist Church (Photograph 9), constructed in 1887, was listed in the National Register in 1986 under Criterion C (NR #89002130). This single story, weatherboard church with engaged bell tower in the gable end is one of the oldest and perhaps the most architecturally significant churches in Jackson County. The design of the church is similar to the other churches built in the county before the turn of the century but the wealth of detail and style, both Gothic and Classical, make it an outstanding example. The exterior of the church building has remained largely unchanged since its construction.

According to the National Register nomination, the Webster Methodist Church offers the most elaborate decorative trim of the remaining turn-of-the-century church buildings in Jackson County. It contains Gothic detailed windows, vents and basket arches. The structure is not limited to Gothic architectural details though; the building has a wealth of classical details including Ionic piers, fluted Ionic pilasters with spearpoint heads, sidelights, and porticos. The facade is the masterpiece and product of an unknown, talented carpenter/ builder. The feature has been called “high-spirited and full of charm,” which provides an illustration of the energetic and fast moving society who lived in the Webster area in the latter 19th century. (Humphries 1988).

The Webster Baptist Church (Photograph 10), another vernacular decorative frame sanctuary in Jackson County, was built in 1900. It was listed in the National Register in 1989 under Criterion C (National Register #89002137). With its bell tower and gable end plan, the Webster Baptist Church is typical of first-generation rural churches built in Jackson County during the second half of the 19th century. Entrance to the sanctuary is made through the base of the bell tower. The belfry of the Webster Baptist Church is one of the most elaborate in the county; the tower rises in two stages to an unusual open belfry with balustrade and basket arches



Photograph 9: Webster Methodist Church (Source: 2012 Local Historic Landmark Report)

churches, a local master cabinetmaker produced the interior furniture. Joseph Warrenton Cowan and his son, Lawrence Cowan, also a cabinetmaker, designed and built the oak altar, pulpit, and communion rail. The pulpit has inset panels of walnut burl. The Cowans also designed the molded arch behind the altar. Their work reflects a high level of skill and creativity (NR #89002137).

While typical churches of the period featured belfries with main entrances in the gable end, the entrance of John's Creek Church is placed asymmetrically at the west end of the façade. The entrance is located beneath the square, aluminum sided bell tower capped by a pyramidal roof. The bell tower is supported by square wood posts.



Photograph 10: Webster Baptist Church (Source: 2012 Local Historic Landmark Report)

## National Register of Historic Places Evaluation

Based on research completed for this report, JMT recommends the John's Creek Methodist Church not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While the resource maintains its integrity of location, design, and setting, it does not maintain its integrity of workmanship, feeling, materials, or association. Replacement siding and windows, coupled with the alteration of the belfry and modern addition, minimize its integrity. The building is no longer public-facing and inviting but sheltered to create a more private setting.

John's Creek Methodist Church is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion A (event). To be eligible under Criterion A, a resource must be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. Before Jackson County churches were constructed, services were held in local homes and were led by itinerant preachers who rode hundreds of miles each month "on circuit," in order to preach. Jackson County joined these church circuits in the 1850s, and this style of circuiting went on for almost twenty years, which meant that the local congregations did not have purpose-built church buildings. Two of these first churches, the Webster Methodist Church, erected in 1887 and the Webster Baptist Church, constructed in 1900 are both listed in the National Register. These decorative framework churches were small, rectangular buildings with the entrance in the gable end of the building through an engaged belfry capped by a pyramid shaped roof. Although construction methods, and design mirror those of these National Register listed structure, John's Creek Methodist Church no longer serves as a religious building and has been altered to accommodate residential usage. Due to its extensive alteration in the 1970s and its change in usage, John's Creek Methodist Church does not appear to possess any special historic significance or sufficient integrity to be considered eligible in the areas of Religion or Exploration/Settlement.

John's Creek Methodist Church is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion B (person). To be eligible under Criterion B, a resource must be associated with the lives of significant persons in our past. John's Creek Methodist Church does not appear to be associated with the lives of any significant individuals.

John's Creek Methodist Church is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion C (design/construction). To be eligible under Criterion C, a resource must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. John's Creek Methodist Church is a single story, side gable frame building resting on a concrete block foundation. The new exterior materials, window replacements, and alterations to the belfry compromise the architectural integrity of the building. Comparatively, the Webster Methodist Church and Webster Baptist Church, constructed in 1887 and 1900, respectively, possess special architectural distinction and their integrity has not been compromised. John's Creek Methodist Church does not appear to possess any special architectural distinction or sufficient integrity to be considered eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its design and construction.

John's Creek Methodist Church is **not eligible** for the National Register under Criterion D (potential to yield information). To be eligible under Criterion D, a resource must yield or be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory. The early-twentieth-century church site is unlikely to contribute significant information pertaining to building technology or historical documentation not otherwise accessible from other extant resources and written records.

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