



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

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator


Governor Roy Cooper  
Secretary Susi H. Hamilton

Office of Archives and History  
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

August 1, 2017

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Mary Pope Furr, Senior Architectural Historian [mfurr@ncdot.gov](mailto:mfurr@ncdot.gov)  
NCDOT/PDEA/HES

From: Renee Gledhill-Earley   
Environmental Review Coordinator

Re: Replace Bridge 113 on SR 1102 (Otter Creek Church Road) over Otter Creek,  
PA 16-11-0021, Edgecombe County, ER 17-1222

Thank you for your letter of June 29, 2017, transmitting the above-referenced report. We have reviewed the report and concur that the Otter Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (ED0921) is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for the reasons outlined in the report. We would note that it would have been helpful to have photographs of the interior of the church, but understand they may not have been possible.

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 any questions concerning the above comment, please contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919/807-6579.

# HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

Replace Bridge 113 on SR 1102 (Otter Creek Church Road) over Otter Creek  
Edgecombe County  
WBS# 17BP.4.R.81

Prepared for:  
Human Environment Section  
North Carolina Department of Transportation  
1598 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27699

Prepared by:  
 CALYX  
CALYX Engineers and Consultants  
6750 Tryon Road  
Cary, North Carolina, 27518

**JUNE 2017**

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**JUNE 2017**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Woodard David".

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Sarah Woodard David, Principal Investigator

June 28, 2017

Date

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Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor

Historic Architecture Group

North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

## Management Summary

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes replacing Bridge 113 on Secondary Road (S.R.) 1102 (Otter Creek Church Road) over Otter Creek in Edgecombe County. The project's Area of Potential Effects (APE) as defined by NCDOT is a square surrounding the bridge. Figure 2 illustrates the APE. NCDOT architectural historians reviewed the properties within the APE and determined that one property greater than 50 years of age warranted further evaluation.

This project is subject to review under the *Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects* (NCDOT/NCHPO/FHWA, 2007). NCDOT architectural historians established an APE for the project and, following preliminary background research and field investigation, ultimately identified one resource, the Otter Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (ED0921), for further evaluation.

No other properties within the APE that are greater than 50 years of age appear to be eligible for the National Register, and no properties within the APE that are less than 50 years of age appear to meet Criteria Consideration G for properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years.

Edgecombe County's historic architecture has been surveyed several times, most recently in 1985, and the Otter Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery were recorded at that time.

In May 2017, NCDOT requested that CALYX Engineers and Consultants (CALYX) complete research, an intensive-level historic field survey, and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) evaluations for the Otter Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery.

The church's own sign calls the resource Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, which is also how it is referred to in historical records and local history books. Because it is recorded as "Otter" in the 1985 survey and in records with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), this report will style it Otter Creek (Autrey's Creek) Primitive Baptist Church on maps, in titles, and where its SHPO Survey Site number is referenced, but in the text, it will be called Autrey's Creek.

Based on the field survey, background research, and the evaluation documented in this report, the recommendation for the NRHP is as follows:

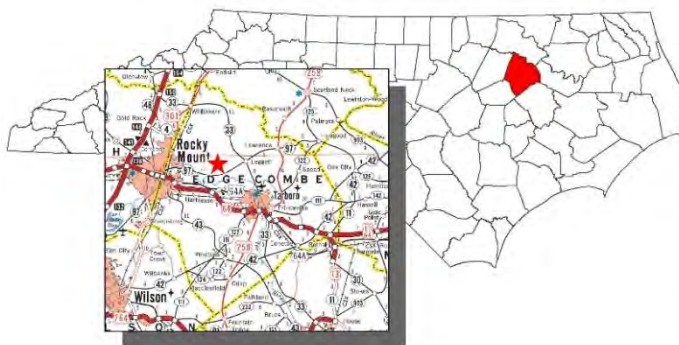
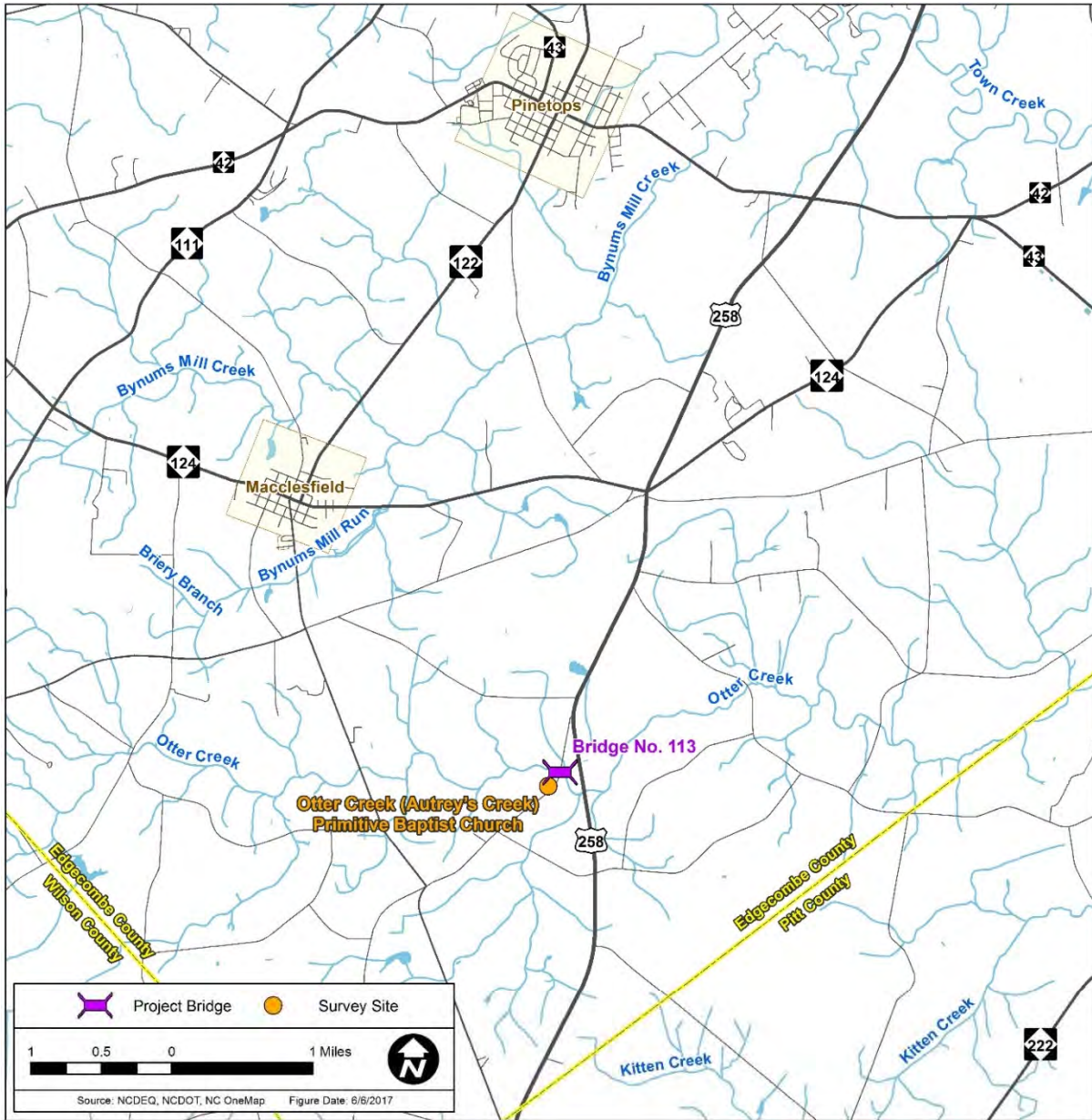
Property Name	NCHPO Survey Site Number	Eligibility Determination	Criteria
Otter Creek (Autrey's Creek) Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery	ED0921	Not Eligible	N/A



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	NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS UNIT
	Edgecombe County <i>Replace Bridge 113          on SR 1102 (Otter Creek Church Road)          over Otter Creek</i> <b>WBS No. 17BP.4.R.81</b>
<b>Figure 1 - Project Vicinity</b>	

Figure 1: Project Vicinity



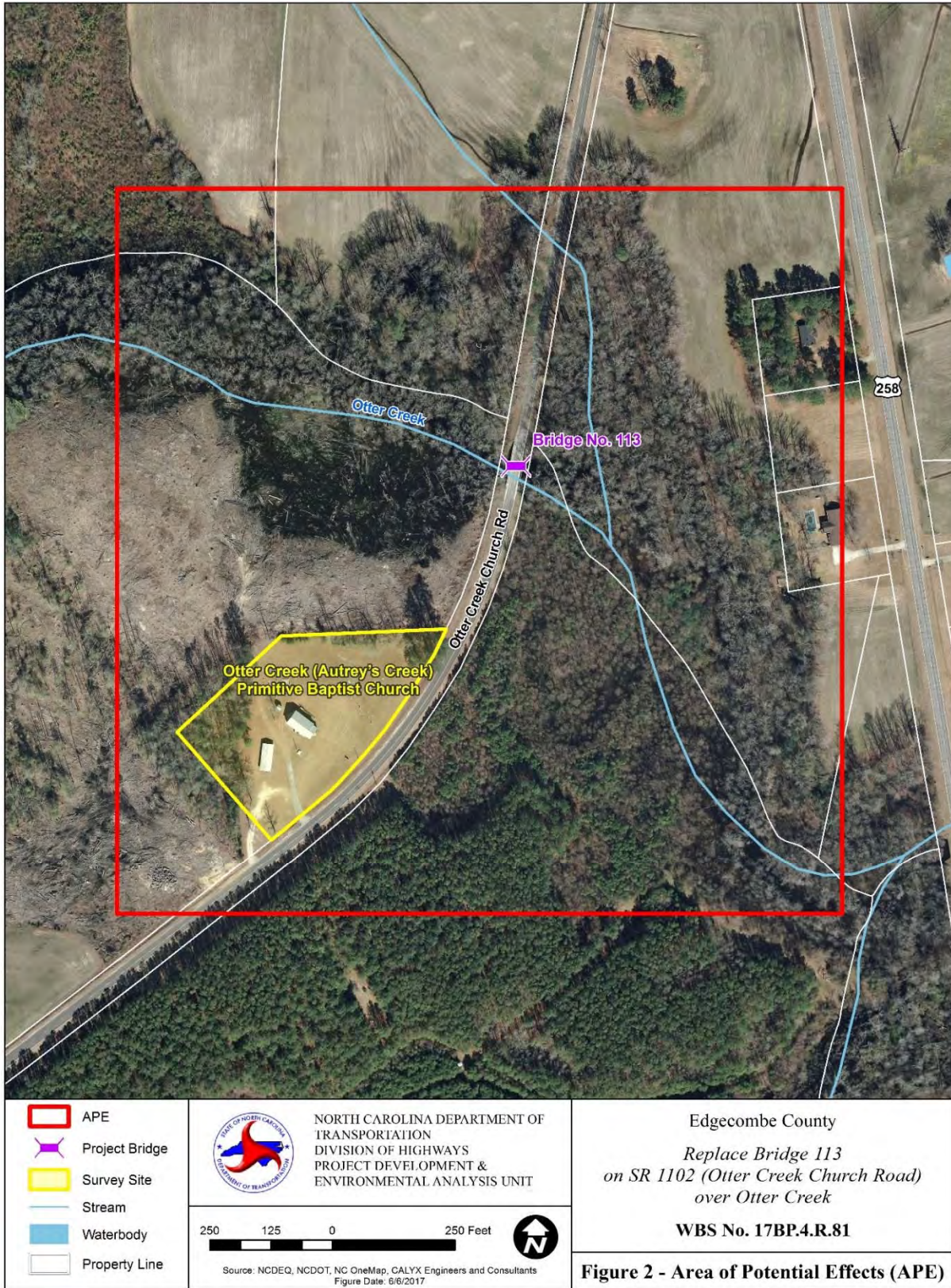


Figure 2: Area of Potential Effects



## Methodology

On May 31 and June 9, CALYX Architectural Historian Sarah Woodard David visited Edgecombe County and completed photo documentation of the Otter Creek (Autrey's Creek) Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery. The investigator undertook research at the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, the North Carolina State Library, the North Carolina State Archives, the Edgecombe County Public Library in Tarboro, and the Edgecombe County Register of Deeds. The investigator made numerous attempts to contact church members or anyone familiar with the church's history, including speaking with adjacent residents and local historians, and writing letters to names and addresses associated with the property's public records. Ultimately, the current minister provided an interior description. The investigator also used online research tools and resources, including the Edgecombe County GIS Mapping, the website findagrave.com, and the web-based subscription services ancestry.com and newspapers.com. Also on May 31, the investigator searched for comparable buildings by visiting other Primitive Baptist Churches that had been included in the 1985 architectural survey of Edgecombe County.

CALYX conducted all fieldwork, research, and evaluations to meet the provisions of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800, as well as NCDOT's *Guidelines for the Survey Reports for Historic Architectural Resources*.

## Evaluation: Otter Creek (Autrey's Creek) Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery

Resource Name	Otter Creek (Autrey's Creek) Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery
HPO Survey Site Number	ED0921
Street Address	588 Otter Creek Road
PIN	4702-30-9193
Construction Dates	ca. 1895
NRHP Recommendation	Not eligible



### Description

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church is a traditional, rural church whose absence of ornamentation and lack of a steeple make it easily recognizable as that of a Primitive Baptist congregation.

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church is located in southern Edgecombe County. The surrounding land is flat, cultivated farmland divided by creeks and swamps. A tree line follows the church property boundary on the south, west, and north. To the north, the land drops significantly down to a swampy bottom land and then to Otter Creek, originally known as Autrey's Creek, which follows an east-west course north of the swamp.

The building faces Otter Creek Road and stands on a slight rise above the road, which runs generally north-south. Immediately north of the church building, a cemetery is oriented on an east-west axis. Directly behind the church building is a small, frame, gabled outbuilding. To the south is a long pavilion that provides shelter for a traditional pot-luck style meal often called "dinner on the grounds." The parcel's west corner is wooded with tall pines, but otherwise, the land is open. Photos from 1985 show a few more trees on the property, but aerial photos taken in 1993 and 1998 suggest they were felled when Hurricane Fran destroyed a picnic shelter in 1996.

The church building is a gable-front rectangle with an apse with clipped corners projecting from the rear gable end. On the façade, or east elevation, a gable-front addition is covered in weatherboards and features a central, double-leaf front door. This addition stands on a continuous foundation of modern brick, in contrast with the original section's brick pier foundation, with six-over-six sash windows on the side elevations. Construction materials support the current minister's recollection that this section was

added in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> The original front elevation, visible above the addition, retains molded gable returns and plain corner boards.

The side elevations feature four bays containing three original six-over-six sash windows and a single-leaf, modern “cross-and-Bible” door sheltered by a metal awning. On the north elevation, the door occupies the bay closest to the back of the building; on the south elevation, the door is located in the bay closest to the front of the building. The windows are covered with single-pane sheets of Plexiglas.

A small five-sided apse projects from the rear elevation. Windows punctuate the diagonal walls. These windows contain nine-over-nine sash that have been re-glazed with modern translucent, wavy glass.

The original section of the building rests on brick piers. Brick infill and vents have been added between the piers. Standing seam metal roofing covers the sanctuary, apse, and front addition.

The congregation’s cemetery occupies the north third of the property. Graves are arranged on an east-west axis. The website, [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com), records 97 interments. Most markers are common, twentieth century forms: wide standing monuments or flat footstones. Three graves are covered with slightly rounded concrete slabs. A group of Wooten family burials is surrounded by a very low wall of modern, brown brick. The earliest noted burial dates from 1911, although its marker is a more recent granite marker. The most elaborate marker is a marble obelisk near the southeast corner of the cemetery area that commemorates the deaths of Allen and Elizabeth Wooten in 1931 and 1956, respectively. The oldest markers are generally located closer to the road. Toward the middle of the cemetery is an open space containing many unmarked graves.

Behind the sanctuary stands a small, windowless outbuilding clad in weatherboards and resting on a brick pier foundation. A batten door is oriented on the gable end facing the back of the church. Five-v crimp metal covers the building’s roof. According to the current minister, this building served as a woodshed until the 1960s when the original wood stove was removed.<sup>2</sup>

South of the sanctuary is a long, rectangular, open-sided pavilion with a gable roof. A plaque notes that an earlier version was built in 1976, but the current structure was re-built in 1997 after Hurricane Fran destroyed it. A long table built of metal legs with wire mesh fencing used as the table top runs the length of the structure. Wooden benches occupy the spaces between every other support post. Stained weather boards cover the building’s gable ends and five-v crimp metal sheathes the roof.

The current minister described the interior as altered. When the front addition was constructed to house bathrooms in the 1960s, carpet was installed and new pews replaced the originals, which the current minister described as wooden with two horizontal slats for the seat backs. The minister also noted that wainscoting was added and the wood stove was removed. The interior was never, to the

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Windham, telephone interview with the author, June 13, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Penne Sandbeck, email correspondence with the author, June 2017, and Penne Sandbeck, “Smithwick’s Creek Primitive Baptist Church,” National Register Nomination, 2004, section 8, page 6-7.

minister's knowledge, divided in any way to separate members by gender. The original entrance was a single door centered on the façade.<sup>3</sup>

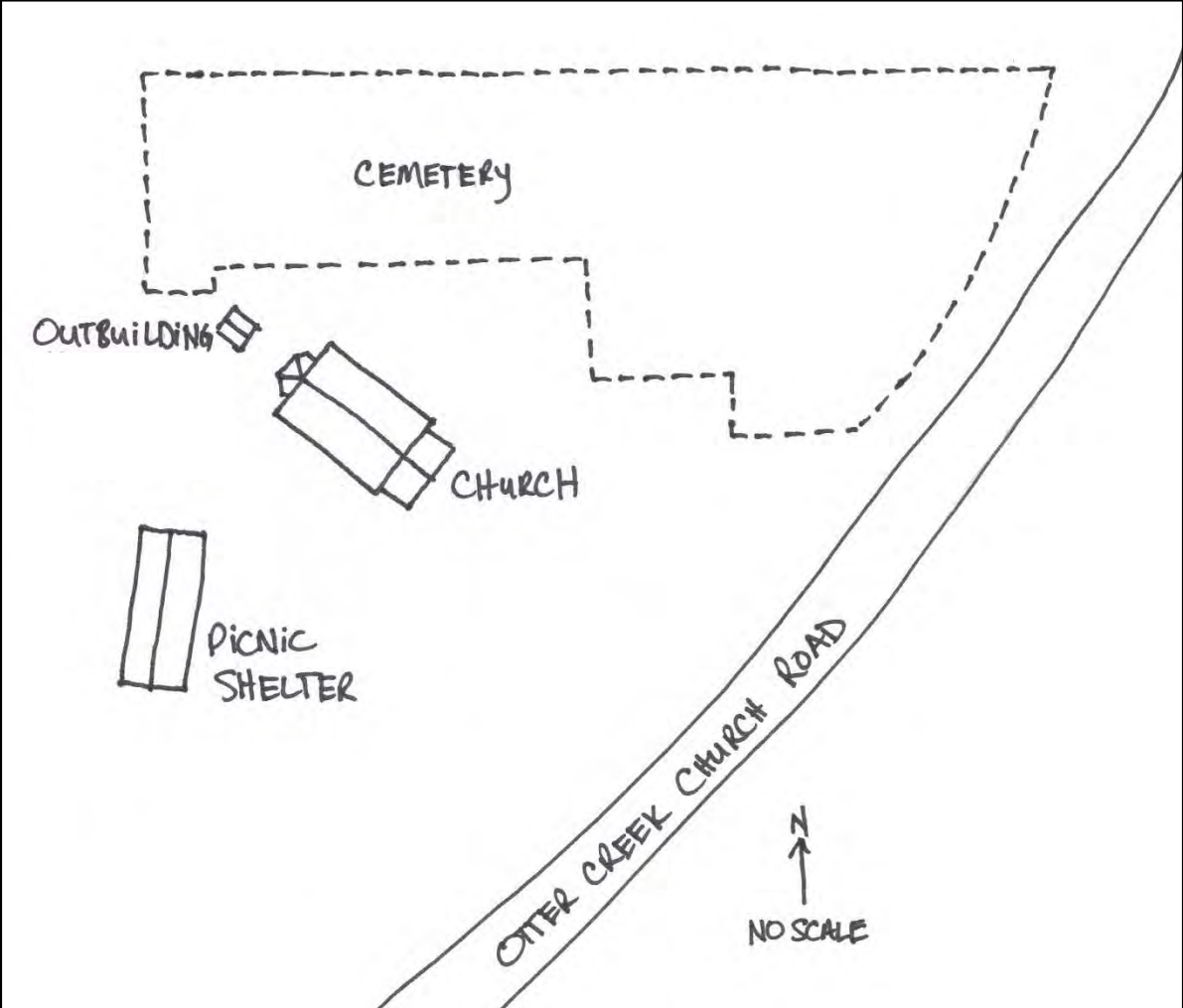


Figure 3: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, site plan

<sup>3</sup> Windham interview.





*Figure 4: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, facing north*



*Figure 5: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, south corner*



*Figure 6: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, southeast elevation*



*Figure 7: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, east corner*





*Figure 8: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, northeast elevation*



*Figure 9: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, northeast elevation*



*Figure 10: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, north corner*



*Figure 11: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, northwest elevation*





*Figure 12: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, apse detail*



*Figure 13: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, west corner*



*Figure 14: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, southwest elevation*

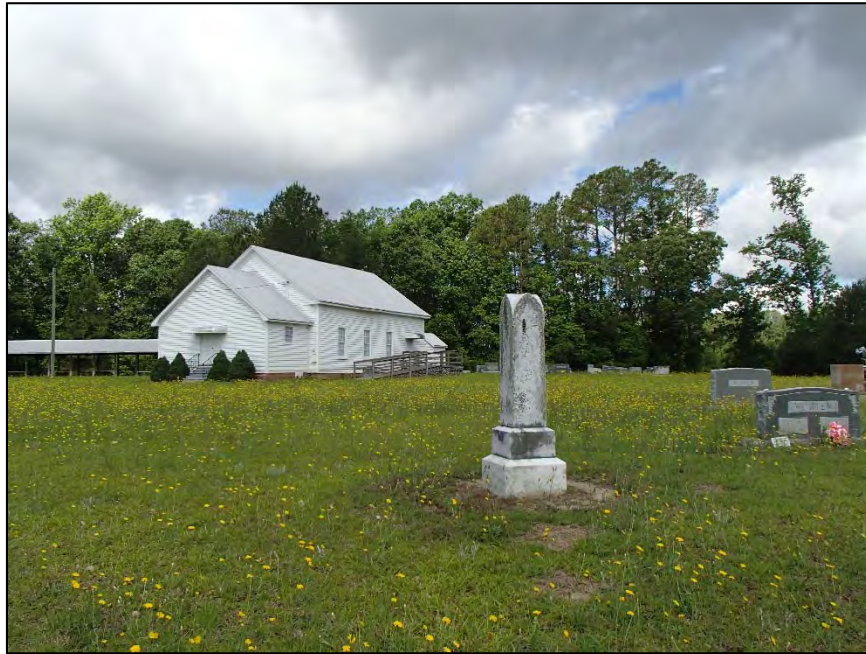


*Figure 15: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, cornerboard and eave/gable return detail*



*Figure 16: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, window detail*





*Figure 17: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, facing south*



*Figure 18: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, facing south*





*Figure 19: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, grave covered with concrete*



*Figure 20: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, rear portion of cemetery*





*Figure 21: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, Wooten plot*



*Figure 22: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, outbuilding, south corner*



*Figure 23: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, outbuilding, north corner*



*Figure 24: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, outbuilding, northwest elevation*





*Figure 25: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, outbuilding, southwest elevation*



*Figure 26: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, picnic shelter*





*Figure 27: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, picnic shelter*



*Figure 28: Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church, picnic shelter*

## Historical Context

Primitive Baptists are one of three primary groups of Baptists in North Carolina, all of which evolved from splits and mergers among the state's earliest Baptists, but all of which practice baptism by full immersion and rely on the individual believer's interpretation of the Bible.

North Carolina's first Baptists were General Baptists, so-called because they believed the death of Christ was a "general atonement" available to all humans, not just God's "elect," an idea espoused by sixteenth century theologian, Jacob Arminius. The first documented Baptist church in North Carolina formed in 1727 in Chowan County, and Baptist membership has far out-numbered other denominations in North Carolina since the 1750s.<sup>4</sup>

In the early and mid-1700s, a significant faction of Baptists began adopting John Calvin's predestination theology. The Baptists then split into two groups with Free Will Baptists carrying Arminius' philosophy forward and the other Baptists, who became known as Particular or Regular Baptists, becoming Calvinistic.<sup>5</sup>

The next major split started in the 1820s and continued into the 1830s when the Regular Baptists splintered into Missionary Baptists and Primitive Baptists.<sup>6</sup> This split came about because the Baptist State Convention, a newly-formed state-wide governing body for the Regular Baptists, began promoting missions, which included foreign and domestic or "home" missionary work, Sunday Schools, and the printing of tracts and pamphlets to spread the gospel, including to Native Americans and people of color. Historian Jesse A. Ashburn, writing in the early 1900s, explains the opposition to missions in this way:

If a compensation in dollars and cents is offered [for mission work], and he who goes is sure of such compensation, there is not only danger, but *great* danger of men, who are not only not called of God to preach, but designing men who know nothing of the grace of God, going out under the title of Missionaries, and preaching such doctrine as would not only dishonor God, but would burden the people. The system of High Schools and Colleges for the preparation of young men for the ministry was also objected to strongly on the ground that many might take advantage of such opportunities, not for the truth's sake, but to benefit themselves.<sup>7</sup>

These anti-mission Baptists used several monikers over the years, including Old School Baptists, Old Side Baptists, and Baptists of the Old Stamp before settling on Old School. By the mid-to-late 1800s,

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<sup>4</sup> Helen F. M. Leary, ed., *North Carolina Research: Genealogy and Local History* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Raleigh: North Carolina Genealogical Society, 1996), 495; and Anne Moore and James I. Martin, Sr., "Baptists," in William S. Powell, ed., *Encyclopedia of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 88-89.

<sup>5</sup> Leary, 496.

<sup>6</sup> Leary, 496.

<sup>7</sup> Jesse A. Ashburn, *Fisher's River Primitive Baptists Association from its Organization in 1832 to 1904* (Laurel Fork, VA: F. P. Branscome, Printer, 1905), 18, quoted in George Washington Paschal, *History of North Carolina Baptists*, volume 2 (Raleigh: North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 1955), 284.

however, the name Primitive had become the commonly accepted name for this group, with Primitive intended to convey the sect's adherence to original or ancient apostolic beliefs.<sup>8</sup>

In Edgecombe County, Baptists were the earliest organized denomination. By the 1770s, four churches in the region had coalesced into the Kehukee Association, which was the fourth Baptist Association organized in the United States. It eventually became a Primitive Baptist Association, and Autrey's Creek Baptists may have been part of this Association when the Autrey's Creek congregation formed.

In 1805, his love of "the Baptist Religion" moved Levi Mayo to donate one-and-a-half acres on Autrey's Creek Road to James Scarborough, Samuel Ruffin, and Exum Holland for the purpose of building a meeting house.<sup>9</sup> In 1807, Autrey's Creek Meeting organizers petitioned the Town Creek Meeting (founded in 1777 and now styled as Lower Town Creek) for permission to hold a church conference and quarterly and yearly meetings at Autrey's Creek. Permission was granted and Autrey's Creek Meeting House began hosting meetings in October 1807.<sup>10</sup> In 1817, Levi Mayo gave another one-and-a-half acres to the church. This 1817 deed states that a meeting house had been built on the land Mayo had donated a decade earlier and it refers to that church as Autrey's Creek Meeting House.<sup>11</sup>

In 1818, Autrey's Creek Meeting House petitioned Town Creek for a church constitution, and in 1819, Town Creek dismissed seventeen members<sup>12</sup> to formally constitute Autrey's Creek.<sup>13</sup> Between the time Autrey's Creek organized in 1807 and 1819 when it was constituted, Autrey's Creek would have been considered an "arm" of its mother church, Town Creek.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout the 1830s, 1840s, and into the 1850s, the *Tarboro Press* and *Tarboro Southerner* listed meetings and minister appointments for Autrey's Creek and other churches that would become Primitive Baptist congregations, but they were simply called Meeting Houses, with no denominational references. Additionally, Autrey's Creek joined the Toisnot Association in 1830, but by 1852, they had joined the Contentnea Baptist Association.<sup>15</sup>

In 1871, Henry and Elizabeth Wooten gave the "Church at Autrey's Creek Meeting House" one-third of an acre "around the said meeting House and where it now stands" out of love and affection for the

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Sheets, *A History of the Liberty Baptist Association* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1907), no page number given, cited in a footnote in Paschal, vol. 2, 281; and Catherine W. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture*, portable edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 220.

<sup>9</sup> According to Kenneth Windham, pastor, this site was about a mile south of the current building. Levi Mayo to James Scarborough, et al., Edgecombe County Deed Book 11, page 668, September 14, 1805.

<sup>10</sup> Vera Webb Stallings, "Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church," in Edgecombe County Heritage Book Committee, *Edgecombe County Heritage* (Waynesville, NC: County Heritage, Inc., 2009), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Levi Mayo to James Scarborough, et al, Edgecombe County Deed Book 16, page 42, June 6, 1817.

<sup>12</sup> James Scarborough, Lucy Hines, Isaac Scarborough, Penelope Scarborough, Edward Williams, Levi Mayo, Rolly Reason, Enos Norville, Jacob Mercer, Ichabod Tyson, Elizabeth Norville, Sarah Phillips, Sarah Harrell, Milly Vick, Hannah Page, Mary Brinley, and Mary Ruffin.

<sup>13</sup> Stallings, 16.

<sup>14</sup> John R. Woodard, Jr., email correspondence with the author, June 2017.

<sup>15</sup> *The Southerner* (Tarboro, NC), December 11, 1852, page 1; and Woodard, email correspondence.

“Primitive Baptist Soc.”<sup>16</sup> The meets and bounds for this land suggest that it was located at the earlier church site, about a mile south of the existing location.

This donation came at a time when Edgecombe County’s Primitive Baptists were arguing over whether or not African American members wanted to manage or were capable of managing their own churches. Prior to the Civil War, many Baptist churches across the state included whites, free blacks, and enslaved persons in their congregations, with the equality of those memberships varying from congregation to congregation. After the Civil War, in Baptist churches of all kinds, some African Americans and some whites wanted separate churches while some blacks and some whites wanted to remain united.<sup>17</sup>

This played out among Edgecombe County’s Primitive Baptists in the 1870s, when Abram or Abraham Wooten, an African American Baptist, led the way in extracting African American members from integrated congregations. A 1920 account calls out Autrey’s Creek Primitive Baptist in particular as believing that Wooten only wanted to form a church closer to his home, when in reality, he was forming an African American congregation called Radicue Primitive Baptist Church to the east of Tarboro and Princeville. Because the 1920 history specifically mentions Autrey’s Creek, it is assumed that Wooten was an Autrey’s Creek member, and the 1920 account implies that the remaining Autrey’s Creek membership felt duped. Regardless of how the split occurred, a monument at Mount Zion Primitive Baptist Church in Princeville commemorates the founding of Radicue and Wooten’s efforts, and it notes that Radicue’s members had been dismissed in good standing from Otter’s (Autrey’s) Creek, Sparta, and Tyson’s meeting houses, all of which became predominately white congregations.<sup>18</sup>

In 1895, Stephen and Elizabeth Wooten sold one acre of land near “Otter Creek” to the congregation, and gave the congregation permission to use another acre of the Wootens’ land for “hitching purposes.”<sup>19</sup> Based on the description of this land and the church’s existing historic fabric, it is likely that the current building was constructed at the time of this donation.

This was an era of general prosperity for white farmers in North Carolina. Indeed, Lower Town Creek, Williams, and Old Sparta Primitive Baptist churches, which were founded before or around the same time as Autrey’s Creek, all replaced earlier sanctuaries in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

The outbuilding behind the church appears to be contemporary with the church, likely dating from the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. According to the current minister, this was a woodshed used when a wood stove heated the church. Since then, then, it has housed extra chairs used for dinner on the grounds.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Henry and Elizabeth Wooten to the Commissioners for the church at Autrey’s Creek Meeting House, Edgecombe County Deed Book 33, page 177, August 9, 1871.

<sup>17</sup> J. Kelly Turner and John Luther Bridgers, *The History of Edgecombe County* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Printing Company, 1920), 428.

<sup>18</sup> Turner and Bridgers, 428; and Abraham Wooten Monument at Mount Zion Primitive Baptist Church in Princeville, NC.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen and Elizabeth Wooten to the Primitive Baptist Church, Edgecombe County Deed Book 89, page 401, October 21, 1895.

<sup>20</sup> Windham interview.



## Architectural Context

The congregation at Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church dates from 1807, but the existing building was constructed in the 1890s and the earliest marked grave in the cemetery is 1911.

Protestant congregations in early nineteenth century North Carolina, particularly Baptists and Methodists, often challenged privilege, status, and outward signs of wealth, and their very plain log or frame buildings intentionally reflected this denunciation. In the antebellum years, however, the white farmers who supported these churches prospered, and as these families became wealthier and more style-conscious personally, their congregations became less radical (changing their position on slavery from against to accepting, for example).<sup>21</sup>

Congregations that heretofore had employed exceptionally unassuming buildings for worship, began constructing larger one or two-story, gable-front buildings with one or two front doors. The gable-front church quickly became the form-of-choice, suited for rural churches that could afford to finish it fashionably but simply with Greek Revival two-panel doors or other modest stylistic references, and for wealthier urban congregations where builders sometimes applied additional Greek Revival features such as pilasters or porticos.<sup>22</sup>

After the Civil War, some denominations began following Gothic Revival designs and added additional adornment, such as lancet windows, steeples, and stained glass. Primitive Baptists, however, held on to the mid-nineteenth-century form. Curiously, this meant that the very building form and finishes that many Protestants had used to "dress up" their churches in the antebellum era had come to convey simplicity and an intentional absence of adornment from the mid-1800s forward.<sup>23</sup>

The result is a distinctive Primitive Baptist Church form. Penne Sandbeck notes in her National Register Nomination for Bear Grass Primitive Baptist Church in neighboring Martin County that Primitive Baptists are intrinsically linked to their architecture:

As few other denominations can claim, the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century meeting houses established by Primitive Baptists throughout North Carolina, as well as other parts of the South and Midwest, convincingly connect form with function. Eschewing worldly things, a Primitive Baptist meeting house, with its plain, front-gable form and double entrances, is the outward and visible sign of an intrinsic practicality where, though loved for its connection to earlier generations and its place as a sanctuary, the building is, nevertheless, a means to an end.<sup>24</sup>

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church follows exactly in this tradition. The congregants chose a plain, gable-front form, the very form selected in the antebellum era as a representation of refinement and worldliness, to reflect the congregation's intentional rejection of sophistication and materialism and

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<sup>21</sup> Bishir, 219-218.

<sup>22</sup> Bishir, 219 and 225.

<sup>23</sup> Bishir, 219.

<sup>24</sup> Penne Sandbeck, "Bear Grass Primitive Baptist Church," National Register Nomination, 2004, section 8, page 12.



broadcast their subscription to primitive, old, or original ways of worship, free from symbols, decoration, or distractions.

The addition, while obscuring the original façade, also follows that pattern, having been executed with the least amount of fanfare possible.

The interior's appearance and architectural integrity are unknown. The author wrote letters to two addresses associated with the congregation, investigated leads for living members with the help of Pam Edmondson, the local history librarian at the Edgecombe County Public Library, and with Betty Reason, a local historian, and spoke with residents of the two houses closest to the resource. The investigator was unable to locate members of the congregation or view the interior.

Outbuildings at Baptist churches are not well documented in North Carolina. They are ephemeral structures: small and nondescript, and in the case of baptismal houses, situated in flood-prone areas. However, Penne Sandbeck notes examples of storage buildings at Primitive Baptist churches where equipment for homecomings and "dinner on the grounds" are stored. Autrey's Creek's outbuilding was used for wood storage and later, for storing chairs used during meals and larger gatherings.

#### Comparable Examples

Several churches are more intact, less altered examples of Primitive Baptist architecture in Edgecombe County. Old Sparta Primitive Baptist Church is the best comparison. Its SHPO survey file notes its construction date as 1856, but it appears to date from the later 1800s and features an apse that is remarkably similar to the one at Autrey's Creek, suggesting that Old Sparta's façade may reflect Autrey's Creek's original appearance.

Williams Primitive Baptist Church, in northern Edgecombe County, dates from the 1870s and is a neat building with a pedimented gable and very tall twelve-over-twelve sash windows. Lower Town Creek Primitive Baptist, constructed in the 1890s and the mother church of Autrey's Creek, features two front doors with heavily molded panels and original windows. While both of these are covered with vinyl siding, they retain original doors and windows and have not been added on to.

Few in Number Primitive Baptist, west of Pinetops, and Willow Chapel, just north of Old Sparta Primitive Baptist, are both more altered examples.

No outbuildings, besides two privies at Williams Primitive Baptist Church, were seen at Primitive Baptist or Baptist churches in Edgecombe County.



*Figure 29: Old Sparta Primitive Baptist Church, ED 895*



*Figure 30: Old Sparta Primitive Baptist Church, ED 895*





*Figure 31: Williams Primitive Baptist Church, ED 661*



*Figure 32: Lower Town Creek Primitive Baptist Church, ED 961*





*Figure 33: Willow Chapel Primitive Baptist Church, 5349 Colonial Road*



*Figure 34: Few in Number Primitive Baptist Church, ED 881*

## National Register Evaluation

### Integrity

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery retains integrity of location because it has not been moved. It retains integrity of workmanship and materials because, aside from the front addition, it has not been altered. The front addition, however, has negatively affected the building's integrity of design by obscuring the original façade, and the interior has been significantly altered with the removal of original pews, installation of carpet, and the installation of wainscoting. The building retains integrity of feeling, setting, and association as a rural church and cemetery, easily recognizable as being associated with a Primitive Baptist congregation.

### Criteria Evaluations

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with events or broad patterns of history significant in our history. The Primitive Baptist Church was pervasive in Edgecombe County and played a significant role in the county's cultural history, but the building is not known to be associated with any significant events, such as a denominational split or a secular event.

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for their association with the lives of persons significant in our past. No such associations were identified during background research.

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. While the church is easily recognizable as a Primitive Baptist building, the front addition obscures the original façade. Primitive Baptist Churches at Sparta, also known as Old Sparta, and Williams Primitive Baptist Church, are unaltered and both retain significantly more architectural integrity and so are superior examples of Primitive Baptist architecture in Edgecombe County. Additionally, the church's cemetery does not contain remarkable funerary art.

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D because it has not yielded nor is it likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.

Autrey's Creek Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery does not meet Criteria Consideration A.

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