



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

February 22, 2018

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 R-5845, Improvements to SR 1140 (Alarka Road) from US 74 to SR 1137 (Deep Gap Road), PA 17-06-0009, Swain County, ER 18-0168

Thank you for your memorandum of January 16, 2018, transmitting the above-referenced report. We have reviewed the report and concur that the following property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

- Alarka Missionary Baptist Church (SW0186) under Criterion C, as an excellent and intact example of a stone church from the mid-twentieth-century in Swain County. The most appropriate boundary is the tax parcel on which the church and associated resources are located.

We also agree that the following properties are not eligible for listing in the National Register for the reasons outlined in the report.

- Oliver-Gibson House (SW0185)
- Alarka School Property (SW0031)

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. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT, mfurr@ncdot.gov

Received: 01/25/2018
State Historic Preservation Office



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

JAMES H. TROGDON, III
SECRETARY

ER 18-0168

January 16, 2018

Due -- 2/15/18

MEMORANDUM

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

H-

FROM: Kate Husband
Architectural Historian
NCDOT Division of Highways

To ALM
2/12
ER/GH
2/16/18

SUBJECT: PA No. 17-06-0009, R-5845: Improvements to SR 1140 (Alarka Road)
from US 74 to SR 1137 (Deep Gap Road), Swain County

Enclosed please find the Historic Structures Survey Report, survey site database, and additional materials for the above referenced project in compliance with the Section 106 review process. Please contact me by phone (919-707-6075) or email (klhusband@ncdot.gov) if you have any additional questions or comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

Mailing Address:
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PDEA-HUMAN ENVIRONMENT SECTION
MAIL SERVICE CENTER 1598
RALEIGH NC 27699-1598

Telephone: (919) 707-6000
Fax: (919) 212-5785
Customer Service: 1-877-368-4968

Website: www.ncdot.gov

Location:
1020 BIRCH RIDGE RD
RALIEGH NC 27610

**Historic Structures Survey Report
Improvements to SR 1140 (Alarka Road) from US 74 to SR 1137 (Deep Gap Road)
Swain County
TIP# R-5845
WBS# 47088.1.1
PA# 17-06-0009**

Prepared for:
Environmental Analysis Unit
North Carolina Department of Transportation
1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

Prepared by:
MdM Historical Consultants Inc.
Post Office Box 1399
Durham, NC 27702
919.336.1602

January 4, 2018

Historic Structures Survey Report
Improvements to SR 1140 (Alarka Road) from US 74 to SR 1137 (Deep Gap Road)
Swain County
TIP# R-5845
WBS# 47088.1.1
PA# 17-06-0009

Prepared for:

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Raleigh, NC 27699-1598

Prepared by:

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Post Office Box 1399
Durham, NC 27702
919.368.1602

January 4, 2018

Jennifer F. Martin, Principal Investigator
MdM Historical Consultants, Inc.

Date

Cynthia de Miranda, Principal Investigator
MdM Historical Consultants, Inc.

Date

Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor
Historic Architecture Group
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

**Improvements to SR 1140 (Alarka Road) from US 74 to SR 1137 (Deep Gap Road) Swain County
TIP# R-5845, WBS# 47088.1.1, PA# 17-06-0009**

Survey Site Number and Property Name	Address and PIN	NRHP Eligibility Recommendation	NRHP Criteria
SW0185 Oliver-Gibson House	1774 Alarka Road Bryson City, NC 28713 666204826354	Not eligible under any criteria	n/a
SW0186 Alarka Missionary Baptist Church	3407 Alarka Road Bryson City, NC 28713 667101156669	Eligible for its architectural significance	Criterion C
SW0031 Alarka School Property	3603 Alarka Road Bryson City, NC 28713 667101252320	Not eligible under any criteria	n/a

Management Summary

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to improve SR 1140 (Alarka Road) from US 74 to SR 1137 (Deep Gap Road) in Swain County, North Carolina. The project area is south of Bryson City in an unincorporated area of Swain County. The study area for the project is delineated on a map on page 5 of this report.

In December 2017, MdM conducted a historic architectural eligibility study of the three properties located in the APE. MdM principal Jennifer Martin conducted the fieldwork on December 19 and 20, 2017, photographing and mapping all built resources and landscapes associated with the three subject properties located within the study area. Ms. Martin conducted research on the Swain County Register of Deeds website, the Swain County GIS website, in the Swain County Board of Education minutes in Bryson City, and at the North Carolina Collection at the Durham Public Library. She interviewed Swain County Clerk of Court

Hester Sitton and Swain County natives Marlena Cloer and Geraldine Gunter, who have knowledge of the Alarka Community. Ms. Martin authored this report.

After an intensive evaluation following the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) criteria for eligibility, the Oliver-Gibson House is recommended not eligible under any criteria because of a lack of significance. The Alarka Missionary Baptist Church, a stone chapel built in 1950, is recommended eligible under criterion C for its architectural significance. The Alarka School Property is recommended not eligible under any criteria because of a loss of integrity and lack of significance in any area.

The historic architectural survey within the APE associated with the improvements to SR 1140 (Alarka Road) from US 74 to SR 1137 (Deep Gap Road) in Swain County, North Carolina was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Secretary of the Interior's standards and Guidelines for Archaeological and Historic Preservation (48 FR 44716); 36 CFR Part 60; 36 CFR Part 800; and the NCDOT document entitled Historic Architectural Resources: Survey Procedures and Report Guidelines (2003). This evaluation meets the guidelines of NCDOT and the National Park Service.

In order to meet the requirements of the above laws, regulations, and guidelines, the work plan for the intensive-level survey included the following items: (1) conducting general historical and architectural background research in order to develop contexts within which to evaluate the potential National Register eligibility of the resources located within the APE; (2) an intensive-level field survey of the APE, including surveying, describing, evaluating, and proposing specific National Register boundaries for any resources believed to be eligible for the National Register; (3) specific historical and architectural research on the resources inventoried at the intensive level; and (4) preparation of a report developed pursuant to the above-referenced laws, regulations and guidelines. The report is on file at NCDOT and is available for review by the general public.

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I. Project Location Maps

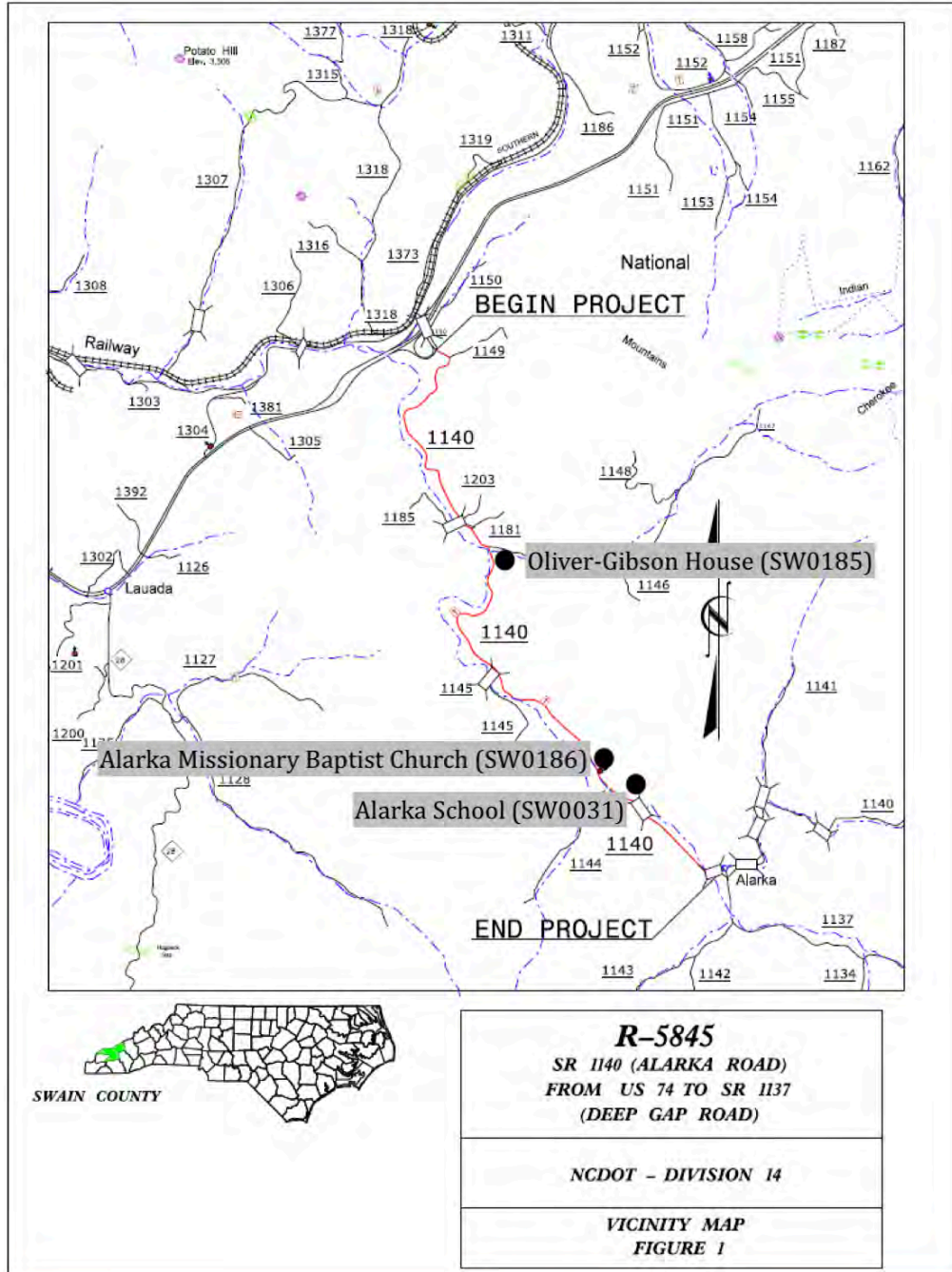


Swain County, North Carolina

Location of Swain County in North Carolina (image from the NCPedia website, www.ncpedia.org)



Project Location on HPO Web map



Map showing project study area and evaluated properties (base map courtesy of NC DOT)



Alarka Road (SR 1140) with Little Alarka Creek to the right and Alarka Creek to the left, view to the north

II. Introduction

The project area for R-5845 is located south of Bryson City, North Carolina in a rural area of Swain County. Two-lane Alarka Road (SR 1140) extends southwestwardly from US 74, a four-lane, east-west highway running for 515 miles from Chattanooga, Tennessee to Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. Formed in 1871, Swain County is located in southwest North Carolina and bounded on the west by Tennessee and by Graham, Cherokee, Macon, Jackson, and Haywood counties in North Carolina. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Nantahala National Forest, Fontana Lake, and the Qualla Cherokee Indian Reservation all lie in Swain County.¹

Three properties were evaluated for this report: the Oliver-Gibson House (SW0185) located at 1774 Alarka Road, Alarka Missionary Baptist Church (SW0186) located at 3407 Alarka Road, and the Alarka School Property (SW0031), located at 3603 Alarka Road. The three properties are located in the community of Alarka, a name derived from the Native American word Yalaka, which means “home of the eagle.”² Once home to clay mines and a lumber company that operated a railroad from Bryson City into Alarka valley from

¹ William S. Powell, *The North Carolina Gazetteer: A Dictionary of Tar Heel Places* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 483.

² “Development Work to Start,” *The Franklin Press*, February 3, 1927.

1917 to 1923, the rural settlement is now mainly residential in character.³ Alarka Creek, which rises in the southeast part of Swain County, flows through the center of Alarka then northeast into the Little Tennessee River.

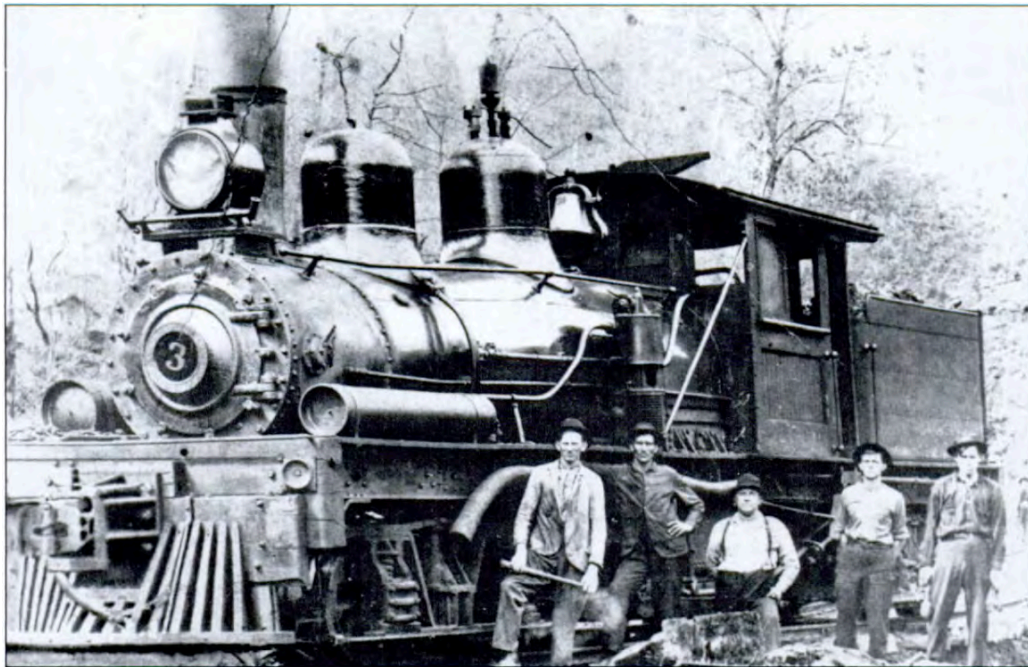


Photo of the Alarka Valley Railroad operated by the Alarka Lumber Company from 1917 to 1923. Published in Alan Coleman, *Railroads of North Carolina* from the collection of Jerry Ledford

III. Methodology

The field survey was conducted on December 18 and 19, 2017. All resources historically associated with the Oliver-Gibson House, the Alarka Missionary Baptist Church, and the Alarka School Property were photographed and recorded. Research on the project area and the subject properties was conducted on the Swain County Register of Deeds website, the Swain County GIS website, and at the North Carolina Collection at the Durham Public Library. The investigators interviewed Swain County Clerk of Court Hester Sitton and Marlana Cloer and Geraldine Gunter, all natives of Swain County. Since very little architectural survey information exists for Swain County, the investigators drove most of the roads located outside Nantahala National Forest and Great Smoky Mountains National Park in order to establish context for the three properties that were evaluated. The project relied heavily on Ms. Martin's research on western North Carolina historic architecture and the intensive architectural survey of adjacent Macon County she conducted in the early 1990s. Ms. Martin authored this report.

³ Alan Coleman, *Railroads of North Carolina* (Mount Pleasant, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 12.



Alarka Road with Alarka Creek to the right, view to the south

IV. Oliver-Gibson House: Property Description and Evaluation

Resource Name	Oliver-Gibson House
HPO Survey Site #	SW0185
Location	1774 Alarka Road, Bryson City vic.
PIN	666204826354
Construction date	Ca. 1880, ca. 1945
Recommendation	Not eligible under any criteria



Facade (west) elevation of Oliver-Gibson House

Description

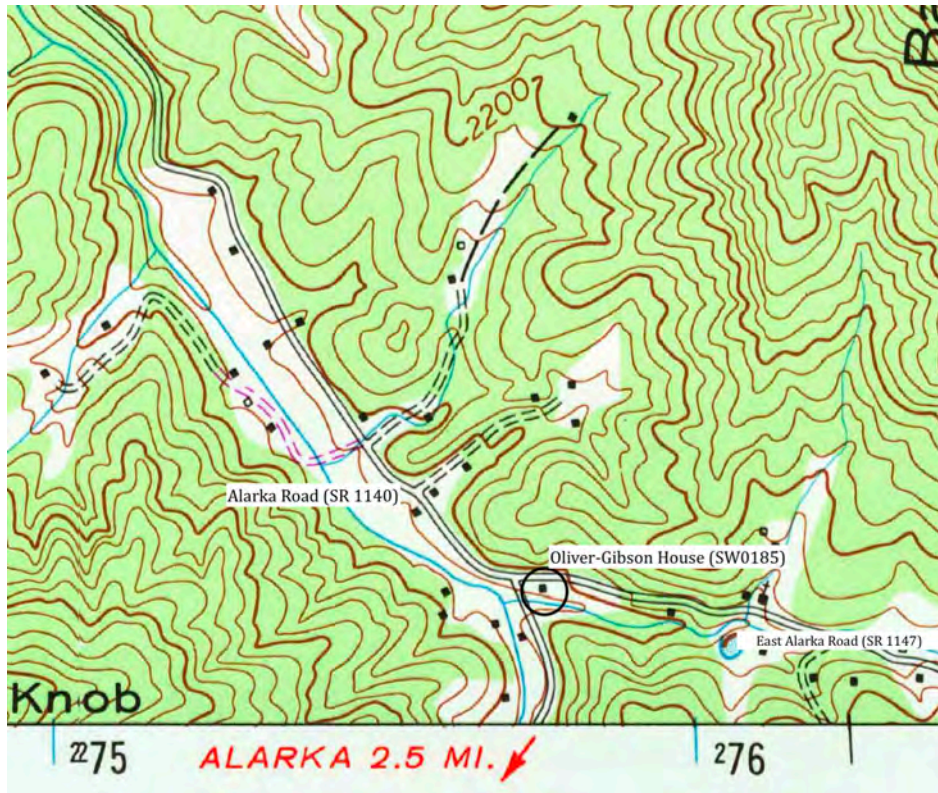
Setting

The Oliver-Gibson House occupies an 11.95-acre parcel at the southeast corner of the intersection of Alarka Road (SR 1140) and East Alarka Road (SR 1147) in the rural community of Alarka south of Bryson City. The right-of-way for East Alarka Road forms the northern boundary for the long, linear parcel stretching from east to west, while Little Alarka Creek serves as its southern boundary. The right-of-way for Alarka Road forms the parcel's western boundary. The parcel is level, grass-covered, and dotted with a few trees except

along the northern edge where a steep wooded hill extends up toward Lower Alarka Road. The lot becomes more wooded toward its east end. Swift moving Little Alarka Creek flows from east to west along the south side of the parcel then through a pair of round concrete culverts under Alarka Road and into Alarka Creek, which parallels the west side of Alarka Road. Stone, concrete block, and railroad tie retaining walls are found throughout the yard, especially along the steep banks of Little Alarka Creek and where the grade increases on the north side of the parcel. For much of the twentieth century, an expansive garden covered the grass-covered space between the house and Alarka Road.



Site plan for Oliver-Gibson House, map from HPO Web



Oliver-Gibson House on the 1961 Bryson City USGS topo map

Oliver-Gibson House

The Oliver-Gibson House faces northwest toward the junction of Alarka Road and East Alarka Road. A gravel drive extends from the southeast corner of the intersection to the late nineteenth-century, one-story, two-room, chestnut log, side-gabled house greatly expanded into its present form in the mid-1940s. No exterior evidence of the log house remains and the house now has the form of a one-and-a-half-story, side-gabled dwelling with wide German wood siding and a corrugated metal roof.⁴ The house is built into a slightly sloping hillside so that the west side rests on a full-height concrete block basement while the east side is built almost directly on the ground. A shed-roofed extension with wide overhanging eaves and vertical wood siding below upper screen walls occupies the lower level of the west elevation. The roof on the north end of this one-story addition extends over a concrete walkway fronting a door leading under a room beneath the front porch.⁵

⁴ Hester Sitton, who grew up in the house, provided information as to the house's original form. Interview with Jennifer Martin, December 22, 2017.

⁵ Because the current owners reside in Florida during the winter, the interior was not accessible.

A full-width engaged porch supported by square wood posts shelters the five-bay façade. Original paired two-over-two windows flank the centered wood door with three upper vertical lights fronted by a wood screened door. A shed dormer with a pair of paired two-over-two windows occupies the front roof slope, while a brick chimney flue rises from the center roof ridge. Wood board and batten sheathes both gable ends. An engaged porch also spans the rear or south elevation, although a portion on the east end is enclosed. A carport open on the north and south ends and topped with a flat corrugated metal roof extends from the east elevation.

A circa 1950, rectangular, one-story, shed-roofed storage building with flush vertical wood siding and a full-width porch with round-log supports stands approximately forty-two feet east of the house.



Southeast corner of the Oliver-Gibson House, view to the north



Oliver-Gibson House rear elevation, view to the northwest



Oliver-Gibson House, west elevation, and Little Alarka Creek, view to the east



Shed located to the east of the Oliver-Gibson House, view to the north



Retaining wall on north side of parcel, view to the northwest toward shed and house



Foot bridge over Little Alarka Creek at east end of parcel, view to the south

History

Mary Elizabeth Phillips Oliver (1904-1983) and Crawford Oliver (1901-1941), who married in 1922, purchased the eighteen-acre parcel where the house stands from W. C. and Ollie Shephard in 1929.⁶ The Olivers had five children, although only three survived to adulthood. Crawford Oliver worked in coal mining and died at thirty-nine from black lung. Mary Elizabeth remarried Samuel Leonard Gibson (1891-1988) in 1945 and the couple lived in the house on Alarka Road. Soon after their marriage, Mr. Gibson, an electrician who also owned and operated the first telephone service in Bryson City from 1911 to 1928, renovated the house. He enlarged it from its two-room plan, expanded the upper story, added plumbing, and incorporated a kitchen into the basement. He covered the chestnut log exterior with wood siding. Mary Elizabeth and Samuel Gibson had one child, Hester Sitton, who was born in 1948 and grew up in the house. She remembers her mother growing corn on the property and her parents tending to a large home garden located in the yard near Alarka Road.⁷ In 2004, the current owners, Jackie and Adrienne Lynn purchased

⁶ According to Hester Sitton, daughter of Mary Elizabeth Phillips Oliver Gibson and Samuel Gibson, the house dates to the late nineteenth century. The original owner remains unknown. Swain County Book of Deeds 55, page 546, dated August 17, 1929.

⁷ Hester Sitton, interview with Jennifer Martin, December 22, 2017; Obituary for Samuel L. Gibson, *Asheville Citizen-Times*, May 2, 1988.

the house and the almost twelve acres where it stands from Oliver descendants.⁸ The Lynns are part-time residents dividing their time between Florida and the house on Alarka Road.

Context

Late seventeenth century traders from Charleston first introduced log building practices to western North Carolina. The earliest traders were familiar with log construction, which had been introduced to the colonies by Swedes and Finns who had settled on the Delaware River in 1638. By the mid eighteenth century Lowcountry traders in western North Carolina had been exposed to log building as practiced by Swiss immigrants to the Carolinas and by settlers coming from the Valley of Virginia. White traders who lived in Cherokee towns built log dwellings and storehouses for their goods and skins and Indians soon adopted this utilitarian building practice.⁹

When white settlers came to what is now Swain County, they too built in log. Because of the abundance of timber, as well as the lack of builders and sawmills, log dwellings and support structures seemed a logical choice. These log dwellings had one to two rooms and typically featured a stone gable-end chimney. The widespread tradition of building in log endured into the late nineteenth century throughout western North Carolina.

A small number of log houses remain in Swain County. The J. H. Kress Cabin (SW0001, NR 1976), a well-preserved half-dovetail-notched log house located north of Fontana Lake in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, the single-pen dwelling contains two rooms and rests on stone piers. Board and batten sheathes the gable ends. The John Davis House (SW0048) at 3365 Coopers Creek Road northeast of Bryson City is a circa 1880 two-story log house with half-dovetail notching. Resting on a river rock foundation, the side-gabled house includes a river rock gable-end chimney. A substantial one-story, gable-roofed addition dating from around 1940 extends from the west side and obscures that end of the Davis House. Windows throughout are replacement two-over-two sash.

⁸ Swain County Book of Deeds 291, page 152, dated May 7, 2004.

⁹ Patricia Irvin Cooper, "Cabins and Deerskins: Log Building and the Charles Town Indian Trade," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 53 (Winter 1994): 276.



J. H. Kress Cabin, Historic American Building Survey (HABS) photo from Library of Congress website, view to the northeast

By the turn of the twentieth century, very few residents in Swain County built houses of log. As dressed lumber and other construction supplies became more readily available, builders constructed frame houses or sometimes improved older log dwellings by covering their exteriors in wood siding, making the original building form almost unrecognizable. One of the few visual clues to original material of these houses is windows with wide jambs indicating an exterior wall built of horizontal log topped by a layer of weatherboard. Along with covering the exterior, the interior was often sheathed with paneling or plaster. Not only did these treatments create a more modern-appearing house, they also saved the owner from re-chinking between the logs and provided insulation.

The number of log houses later covered with weatherboard in Swain County is unknown. No intensive-level architectural survey of the county has been undertaken and this building type is not easily discernable from the exterior. The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office sponsored reconnaissance-level surveys in 1978 and 1997-1998, but neither project specifically identified log houses covered in wood siding. The cursory survey of the county revealed numerous examples of 1940s Craftsman-influenced dwellings, especially along US 19 west and east of Bryson City. Intact weatherboard and brick bungalows line that highway, historically the county's major transportation corridor.

Evaluation

The Oliver-Gibson House stands at its original location and therefore retains integrity of location. With its intact windows and exterior wood siding, the house retains the integrity of materials, design, and workmanship of a 1945 dwelling. The house remains in a rural area of mountainous Swain County and therefore retains its integrity of setting, feeling, and association.

Properties can be eligible for the NRHP if they are associated with a significant event or pattern of events that have made contributions to history at the local, state, or national level. Although the property once functioned as a small self-sufficient family farm, the house and the associated acreage do not convey significance in the area of agriculture because of a lack of resources and landscape related to the history of farming in Swain County. The Oliver-Gibson House is recommended not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A because it has not made a discernable contribution to local, state, or national history.

Neither Mary Elizabeth Oliver, Crawford Oliver, nor Samuel Leonard Gibson made any specific contributions to any field on a national, state, or local level. The house therefore is not recommended eligible for the NRHP under Criterion B.

The Oliver-Gibson House is a vernacular, one-story log house that was later expanded and sheathed with wood exterior siding. Its current appearance is that of a circa 1945, one-and-half-story German-sided house with Craftsman-style influence. The renovation of a hewn-log house into a Craftsman-influenced dwelling with milled lumber siding represents an architectural transformation typical in the southern Appalachians where houses associated with the settlement period were updated with modern conveniences and modern appearances. The circa 1945 dwelling represents a form common in Swain County where Craftsman-influenced dwellings were built from the 1920s into the 1940s. The Oliver-Gibson House is not recommended eligible under Criterion C for architectural significance.

It is unlikely that additional study of this property would yield any unretrieved data not discoverable through informant interviews, building technology, and documentary sources. Therefore, the Oliver-Gibson House is recommended not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion D.



View up East Alarka Road and Oliver-Gibson House facade, view to the east



East end of Oliver-Gibson House parcel and view down East Alarka Road, view to the west

V. Alarka Missionary Baptist Church: Property Description and Evaluation

Resource Name	Alarka Missionary Baptist Church
HPO Survey Site #	SW0186
Location	3407 Alarka Road, Bryson City vic.
PIN	667101156669
Construction date	1950
Recommendation	Eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for Architecture



Facade of Alarka Missionary Baptist Church and homecoming shelter, view to the east

Description

Setting

Alarka Missionary Baptist Church stands on a grass-covered, .35-acre parcel in a valley of the rural mountainous community of Alarka south of Bryson City. The parcel also contains a long, gable-roofed, open-sided shelter used for homecoming gatherings and three small modern storage buildings. A stone water fountain and stone sign, both original features, also occupy the church yard. The parcel is level, but a steep hillside rises just behind or to the northeast of the building. The church faces Alarka Road and Alarka Creek.



Site plan and map indicating recommended National Register boundary (map from HPO web)

Alarka Missionary Baptist Church

The one-story, front-gabled, random-course, rough-cut, ashlar stone church with a standing-seam metal roof stands on a full basement. A pyramidal, metal-roofed square bell tower with a crowning spire rises from the center of the façade. Above the building's roof ridge, each side of the belltower displays louvered vents. The bell tower, which projects slightly from the façade, contains the recessed main entrance beneath a flat stone arch with a stone keystone. A concrete marker above the keystone is inscribed, "Alarka Baptist Church 1950." Steps in front of the bell tower lead to the double-leaf solid door topped by a three-lite transom.

The north and south (side) elevations are nearly identical with three bays on the main level and three bays at the basement level. On the south elevation, doors fill one upper level bay and one lower level bay. That side of the building also features a recently-constructed wooden handicap ramp and a shed-roofed entrance with a stone wall surround leading to the basement. The rear elevation lacks windows and doors. Windows are deep-set with keystones, jack arches with stone voussoirs, and concrete sills. All windows contain one-over-one synthetic replacement sash. Vinyl siding covers the eaves.



Southwest corner of the church, view to the north-northeast



Northwest corner of church, modern storage building, view to the southeast



Detail of north elevation window, view to the south



Interior, view to the west toward the chancel

The interior contains a sanctuary with a chancel at the north end. Wooden pews flank the center aisle. A restroom for men and a restroom for women are located just inside the front entrance. A stairwell in the northeast corner leads to the basement. Plaster walls and synthetic ceiling tiles finish the sanctuary.



Stone water fountain off northwest corner of the church, view to the east



Stone sign in front of the church at Alarka Road, view to the southeast

The church parcel contains three small modern storage sheds and a 1950 rectangular stone water fountain with a concrete basin that stands off the church's northwest corner. The fountain was built for anyone requiring a drink of water—either passersby or church members.¹⁰ A stone sign with a peaked crown stands in front of the church along Alarka Road. A long open shelter with a standing seam metal roof that shelters a long, low concrete block table-like structure stands on the south, rear side of the church. The shelter is used exclusively for the church's annual homecoming celebration, a Baptist tradition that includes a dinner outside and the welcoming back of those who grew up in the church and their families. Homecomings usually occur in the fall of each year.



Rear elevation and two small storage buildings, view to the west

History

In 1951, Lizzie Cochran sold land to the trustees of the Alarka Missionary Baptist Church.¹¹ The building replaced a frame chapel called Cochran Church that had fallen into disrepair and was located to the south. Many local residents refer to this building as Cochran Church. Although the stone on the façade reads Alarka Baptist Church, the building has always been a Missionary Baptist Church.¹²

¹⁰ Geraldine Gunter, interview with Jennifer Martin, January 3, 2018.

¹¹ It remains unclear why the deed was one year after the church was built.

¹² Geraldine Gunter, interview with Jennifer Martin, December 29, 2017. The sale likely took place prior to 1951, but was not recorded until March 9, 1951, Swain County Deed Book 73, page 400.

Context

A small number of historic gable-front churches with native stone exteriors stand in Swain County. Most congregations have replaced their buildings with modern edifices. In 1944, I. B. Jenkins sold three acres to the trustees of the Almond Baptist Church, a Missionary Baptist congregation, to build a front-gabled stone chapel, which was completed in 1945. The church stands on a hillside overlooking Fontana Lake, which was created in 1944 with the construction of Fontana Dam by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Large stones of varying shades of orange, gray, and brown form the exterior of the original portion. In 1988, a front-gabled stone narthex was added to the façade. The gable ends of both sections are sheathed in vinyl siding and a vinyl-clad steeple sits on the roof ridge of the narthex. Like Alarka Missionary Baptist Church, Almond Baptist Church stands one story on a full basement. The building's original six-over-six wood windows remain in place.



Almond Baptist Church built in 1945 with a 1988 front addition

St. Joseph Catholic Church in Bryson City began as a mission of St. John's Catholic Church in Waynesville. The parish built the stone building on the south side of Main Street in 1941. One of the best-preserved churches in the county, St. Joseph is a two-story, front-gabled building with an exterior of random-coursed native ashlar. The crown of the front facade with a flush gable end extends to form a peaked tower topped by a cross and containing an arched opening that holds a statue of Jesus. The single-leaf entrance topped by a jack arch with a keystone and voussoirs is framed in a stone projection with a gabled crown mirroring the tower above. A pair of round windows flanks the entrance. The side elevations feature two levels of original six-over-six windows.



St. Joseph Catholic Church built in 1941 in Bryson City, view to the south

Evaluation

Alarka Missionary Baptist Church remains at its original location and therefore retains integrity of location. The church possesses integrity of setting because it remains in a rural setting where it was built in 1950. The church's integrity of material has been somewhat compromised by the replacement of the windows and covering of the eaves with vinyl siding. However, the windows are deep-set and not a character-defining feature. The church possesses integrity of association because it is mostly intact and overall retains the appearance and form it had when built. The integrity of association is further bolstered by the continuous use of the building by the Alarka Missionary Baptist Church congregation. The church evokes the aesthetic or historic sense of a rural, mountain stone church from 1950 enabling it to retain its integrity of feeling. The physical evidence of the craftsmanship of the stone masonry contributes to the property's integrity of workmanship. Finally, the composition of elements that constitute the form, plan, space, and style of a native stone front-gabled church are intact and therefore the property retains integrity of design.

Ordinarily properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes are not considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance. Alarka Missionary Baptist Church meets Criteria Consideration A as a resource constructed and historically associated with a religious institution that is eligible for its architectural significance.

Properties can be eligible for the NRHP if they are associated with a significant event or pattern of events that have made contributions to history at the local, state, or national level. Although Alarka Missionary Baptist Church has served the spiritual needs of its congregants and as a community gathering place, it does not demonstrate significance for its association with events or patterns of events, including the history of religion in Alarka, and therefore it is not recommended eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A.

No one associated with Alarka Missionary Baptist Church achieved any particular significance on the national, state, or local level. Therefore, the building is not recommended eligible for the NRHP under Criterion B.

Alarka Missionary Baptist Church is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its embodiment of the tradition of stone construction for churches in Swain County in the mid-twentieth century. The church property contributes to the property's architectural significance in the retention of historic landscape features including the homecoming shelter, stone sign, and stone water fountain. The 1950 Alarka Missionary Baptist Church is recommended eligible in the area of architecture for its embodiment of rural mountain church architecture executed in native stone.

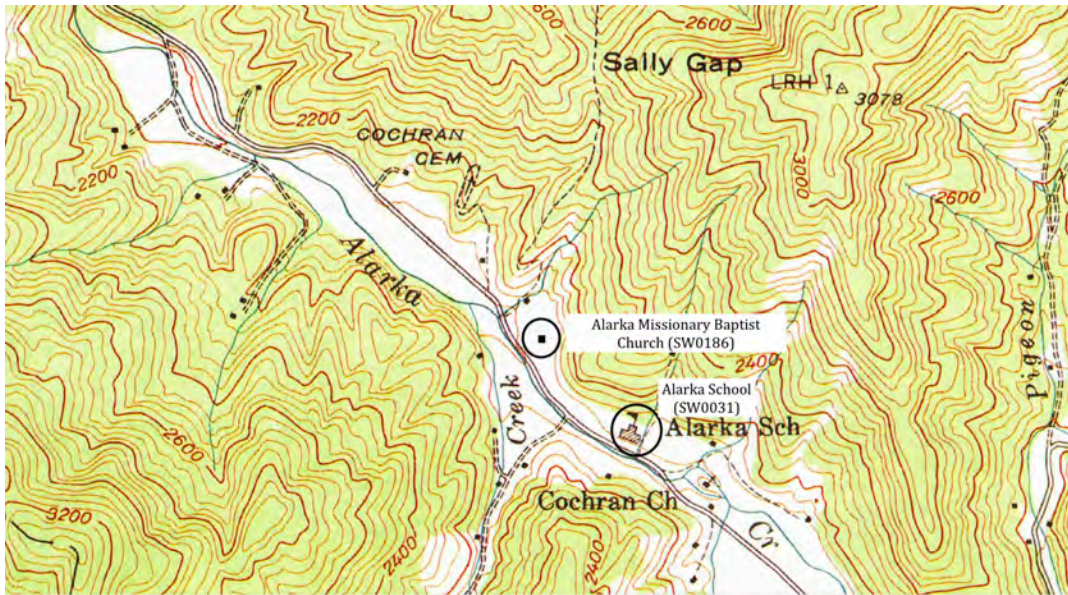
It is unlikely that additional study of this property would yield any unretrieved data not discoverable through informant interviews and documentary sources. Therefore, Alarka Missionary Baptist Church is recommended not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion D.

Boundary Description

The recommended NRHP boundary for Alarka Missionary Baptist Church includes the legal parcel 66710115666. The boundary includes the 1950 church and stone water fountain, the 1950 homecoming shelter, the 1950 stone sign, and three small noncontributing storage buildings. The boundary also includes the significant landscape and setting associated with Alarka Missionary Baptist Church. The boundary follows the existing right-of-way along Alarka Road (SR 1140). The parcel represents the land, resources, and features associated with Alarka Missionary Baptist Church, which has been associated with this parcel since 1950, the date of construction. The less-than-one-acre parcel is an appropriate setting to convey the property's significance in the area of architecture on the local level.



Homecoming shelter, view to the southeast



1940 Alarka USGS topographical map showing the location of Alarka Missionary Baptist Church, Alarka School, and Cochran Church (no longer extant)

VI. Alarka School Property: Property Description and Evaluation

Resource Name	Alarka School Property
HPO Survey Site #	SW0031
Location	3603 Alarka Road, Bryson City vic.
PIN	667101252320
Construction date	1937, 1958, 2010
Recommendation	Not eligible under any criteria

Note: On January 19, 1985, Alarka School, built in 1937, burned leaving only a 1958 classroom building addition containing two primary classrooms and a lunch room. This evaluation is for the historic elements that remain on the school site: the 1958 addition and the 1937 stone wall built along Alarka Road at the same time the school was constructed.



1958 Addition to Alarka School

Description

Setting

A 1.9-acre parcel is the former location of the 1937 Alarka School, which burned on January 19, 1985. Remaining on the parcel are a 1958 addition to the school that contains two primary classrooms and a

lunch room and a stone retaining wall along Alarka Road built in 1937. A modern fire station stands at the site of the 1937 school. The nearly two-acre site on the north side of Alarka Road is level and grass-covered.



North elevation of the 1958 addition containing the two classrooms, view to the southeast



Site plan from HPO Web

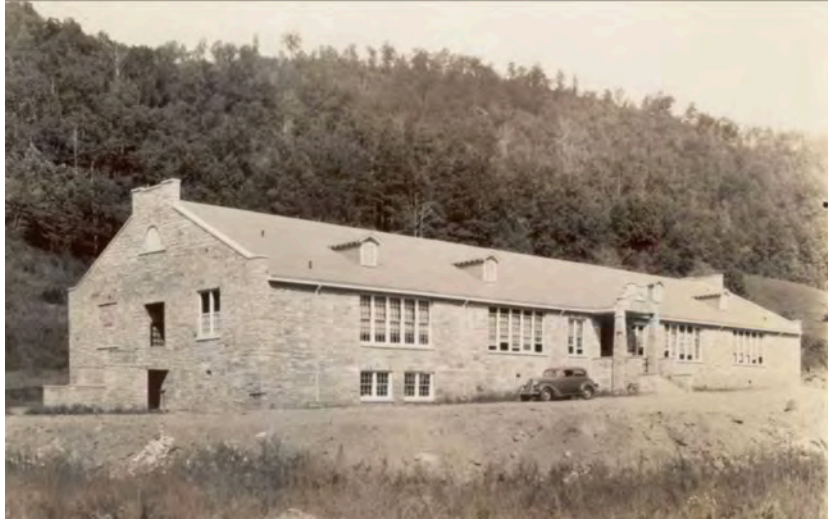
Alarka School Property

Built in 1958, the Alarka School addition consists of a lunch room contained in a random-coursed ashlar stone building with a low gable roof. A flat roofed section with a concrete block exterior to the rear (north) contains two primary classrooms. The lunch room features a span of large, awning-style, metal-frame windows on its east elevation. Small fixed windows with concrete sills on the south and west are positioned near the top of those elevations. A shed-roofed porch shelters two doors at the building's south corner. The large spans of windows on the north side of the classrooms have been dramatically altered. One has been fitted with a garage door, while the other has been mostly covered with plywood and fitted with a door. The west elevation includes two shed-roofed modern open-sided additions. A corridor with double-leaf doors on each end connects the lunch room and classrooms. Concrete block walls and linoleum tile floors finish the interior.

Other elements on the Alarka School parcel include the modern fire station, a one-story corrugated metal building that stands at the site of the 1937 school. A random-course ashlar wall standing approximately four feet tall and topped by a chain link fence extends along Alarka Road in the front of the school site. The wall was built in 1937 when the school was constructed.



Lunch room interior, view to the west



Alarka School in 1937 (no longer extant). Photo from the Zebulon Weaver Collection, Western Carolina University Hunter Library website

History

In 1933, the Board of Education of Swain County voted to consolidate four small schools in Alarka and build a modern building.¹³ In August 1935, the board ordered its superintendent to “take advantage of the Works Progress Administration assistance in the probable construction of school buildings.” The board further directed “that first preference and attention be given to the construction of a modern school building at Alarka.”¹⁴ In April 1936, the board directed the school board chair and secretary to purchase a site for the Alarka School from Mrs. Elizabeth Cochran for \$540.¹⁵ In August 1937, Alarka School, built with stone from Alarka Creek and containing eight classrooms, a principal’s office, and a lunch room, opened to serve elementary children from throughout the community.¹⁶ In 1958, a lunchroom and classrooms for kindergarten and first grade were added to the east end of the 1937 building and four acres were added to the property to accommodate playground equipment.¹⁷ Alarka School served not only as a school, but also a community center, gathering place, and object of pride.

¹³ Janice Hancock, “Alarka Schools,” *The Heritage of Swain County, North Carolina* (Bryson City: Swain County Genealogical and Historical Society in cooperation with the History Division of Hunter Publishing Company, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1988), 41-42.

¹⁴ Swain County Board of Education minutes, August 10, 1935, in possession of the Swain County Board of Education, Bryson City, North Carolina.

¹⁵ Swain County Board of Education minutes, April 10, 1936.

¹⁶ “Alarka School Building Completed: Alarka School Will Be Opened on August 25,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, August 22, 1937.

¹⁷ Hancock, “Alarka Schools,” 42; Swain County Deed Book 79, page 243, April 25, 1958.

As snow fell on the evening of January 19, 1985, the 1937 school building burned leaving approximately thirty percent of the structure and its stone walls standing. The county’s insurance company advised the county to knock down the walls because the heat from the fire had weakened the mortar joints. The 1958 lunchroom and primary classrooms remained standing. Despite great efforts by community members, the school board voted not to rebuild the school. Alarka School students were transferred to Almond School in the western part of the county.¹⁸

After the fire, the county retained ownership of the school property and left the 1958 addition containing the lunch room and primary classrooms. The Alarka Volunteer Fire Department built a fire station where the school stood and now uses the former classrooms in the 1958 building to store fire department vehicles. The lunch room is used as a community gathering space. The stone retaining wall built along Alarka Road in 1937 was kept in place.



Stone wall built in 1937 along Alarka Road and in front of the school, view to the east]

Evaluation

The 1937 Alarka School, a building constructed by the county with assistance from the Works Progress Administration, burned in January 1985. A 1958 addition with a stone and concrete block exterior remains, but has been altered during its conversion to use as storage for fire fighting vehicles and lacks integrity. The

¹⁸ “School Fire Leaves People ‘Sickened,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, January 24, 1985; “Board’s Decision to Close School Draws ‘Slap-in-the-Face’ Response,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, January 25, 1986.

only intact historic resource is the 1937 stone wall built along east property line at the right-of-way for Alarka Road. The wall, a remnant of the historic school campus that lacks integrity of association and feeling, possesses no significance on its own.



Modern fire station at the site of Alarka School and west elevation of 1958 addition, view to the east



West elevation of 1958 addition, view to the north

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