



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

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Roy Cooper
Secretary D. Reid Wilson

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary, Darin J. Waters, Ph.D.

May 19, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelby Reap, Architectural Historian
NCDOT/EAU/Historic Architecture Group

sreap@ncdot.gov

FROM: Ramona M. Bartos, Deputy
State Historic Preservation Officer

RMB for Ramona M. Bartos

SUBJECT: Historic Structure Survey Report, Extension of SR 2751 and revision to intersections of NC 42 at SR 2756, SR 2753, SR2748, and SR 2751, Wake County, ER 22-1091

This memorandum is in response to our receipt of a March 14, 2022, letter from Dewberry Engineering submitting the above-referenced report. We apologize for the delay caused by an overwhelming workload.

We concur with the report's finding that Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (WA1150) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under criterion C in the area of architecture. The church was not constructed in the same mid-twentieth-century idiom of a stripped-down box, as illustrated by the comparable Primitive Baptist churches provided in the report. Instead, the design looks to a simplified Modernism in a way like that illustrated by the comparable examples in Wake County (a Baptist church and a Catholic church). The report does not address why this congregation chose to depart from the very austere designs more commonly associated with Primitive Baptist architecture, but a National Register nomination would need to engage in such analysis.

We do not concur with the report's findings that the church is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A, because the report did not demonstrate this building's significance in the history of the Primitive Baptist movement in Wake County. Simply being a Primitive Baptist church is not significant for the purposes of the NRHP.

As to the boundary, we do not agree with the following proposal:

- NC Highway 42 to the north,
- Panther Lake Road to the southwest, and
- a tree line to the east as shown in Figure 10.

Rather, we believe that the boundary along NC 42 on the north and Panther Lake Road on the southwest should follow the back of the ditch which is visible on the map provided.

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 919-814-6579 or environmental.review@ncdcr.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NDOT
Beth Smyre, Dewberry Engineers

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HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

Extension of SR 2751 (Hilltop Road) and revision to intersections of NC 42 at SR 2756 (Walter Myatt Road), SR 2753 (Dwight Rowland Road), SR 2748 (Panther Lake Road), and SR 2751 (Hilltop Road) in Wake County

WBS #: 49367.1.1

PA #: 21-07-0006

WA#1150

Prepared For:

**Environmental Analysis Unit
North Carolina Department of Transportation**

**Prepared By:
Dewberry Engineers Inc.
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2610 Wycliff Road, Suite 410
Raleigh, NC 27607-3073**

**Cynthia M. Ammerman
Michael Navarro, RPA**

February 2022

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Cynthia M. Ammerman, Principal
Investigator
Michael Navarro, RPA

February 2022



Cynthia M. Ammerman, Principal Investigator
Dewberry – Parsippany, New Jersey

January 2022

Date

Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor
Historic Architectural Resources Team
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to make intersection and roadway improvements on NC 42 at SR 2751 (Hilltop Road) in Wake County, North Carolina. The project involves the potential extension of Hilltop Road and revisions to intersections along NC 42 at SR 2756 (Walter Myatt Road), SR 2753 (Dwight Rowland Road), and SR 2748 (Panther Lake Road). The project proposes to construct the following intersection improvements:

- closure and removal of pavement on Dwight Rowland Road between Walter Myatt Road and NC 42;
- closure and removal of pavement on Panther Lake Road between NC 42 and Hilltop Road; and
- potential closure of the existing connection of Walter Myatt Road to NC 42.

The project is included in the North Carolina Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CAMPO) 2020 Bonus Allocation, Mobility and Safety and is federally funded. This project is subject to the 2020 *Programmatic Agreement Among the Federal Highway Administration, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer for the Transportation Program in North Carolina* (PA 2020). North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Architectural Historians established an Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the project and conducted a preliminary investigation, identifying one resource that warrants additional study and an eligibility evaluation.

This report represents the documentation of the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery. The NCDOT Architectural Historian determined that all other properties and districts do not require further study and evaluation due to a lack of historical significance and/or integrity.

Based on the findings presented in this report, it is recommended that the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (WA1150) meets eligibility criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

PROPERTY NAME	TEMPORARY SURVEY SITE NUMBER	HPO SSN	ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION	CRITERIA
Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery	001	WA1150	Eligible	A and C

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1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

Dewberry prepared this report in support of North Carolina Department of Transportation's (NCDOT) proposed intersection and roadway improvements on NC 42 at SR 2751 (Hilltop Road) in Wake County, North Carolina (STIP No. HL-0008K, WBS No. 49367.1.1) (**Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). The project involves the potential extension of Hilltop Road and revisions to the intersection along NC 42 at SR 2756 (Walter Myatt Road), SR 2753 (Dwight Rowland Road), and SR 2748 (Panther Lake Road). The project proposes to construct the following intersection improvements:

- closure and removal of pavement on Dwight Rowland Road between Walter Myatt Road and NC 42;
- closure and removal of pavement on Panther Lake Road between NC 42 and Hilltop Road; and
- potential closure of the existing connection of Walter Myatt Road to NC 42.

NCDOT established an Area of Potential Effects (APE) (defined by 36 CFR 800.16(d)) for the proposed project that is defined as the project area (see **Figure 2**). NCDOT conducted a preliminary investigation that identified one potential historic resource within the APE that required historic architectural assessment—the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery (WA1150).¹ The subject property is located in the rural community of Willow Spring, which is part of Middle Creek Township, within the southeastern portion of Wake County, North Carolina. The evaluated property is bounded by NC 42, Hilltop Road (SR 2751), and Panther Lake Road (SR 2748).

NCDOT requested that Dewberry evaluate this resource and provide a written report that included: photographs of the resource and landscape; historic and architectural contexts (as needed); evaluation of its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); comparison to similar types of resources in the region; and delineation and justification of its NRHP boundaries, if appropriate.

Dewberry evaluated the resource as required, in compliance with the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and following the 2020 *Programmatic Agreement Among the Federal Highway Administration, United States Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer for the Transportation Program in North Carolina* (PA 2020) that establishes the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as the lead federal agency for the purposes of Section 106 compliance. The resource was evaluated following 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*.

Dewberry Architectural Historian Cynthia M. Ammerman and Dewberry Archeologist Michael Navarro, who meet the Secretary of the Interior's professional qualifications for architectural history or archeology (CFR 36 CFR Part 61) were the staff members who authored this report. Dewberry Senior Archaeologist Zachary Davis, RPA, provided technical review of the report and managed the completion of the report upon Ms. Ammerman's departure from Dewberry in January 2022. Dewberry Senior Architectural Historian Andrea Burk provided the quality assurance review of the document in February 2022. Mr. Navarro conducted fieldwork, completed research, and performed interviews of local individuals with knowledge of the subject property. Ms. Ammerman analyzed the resource and collected research, conducted additional academic research, and drafted the report within the social context of

¹ Based on the findings of background research, the property has been referred to as "Willow Spring" and "Willow Springs." The majority of sources refer to the subject property as the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and additionally this is how the building is identified on one of the stained glass windows of the building. Throughout this report the subject property will be identified as the "Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church" accordingly.



Prepared by
Dewberry

Prepared for



Source: Esri,
DigitalGlobe,
GeoEye, Earthstar
Geographics,
CNES/Airbus DS,
USDA, USGS,
AeroGRID, IGN, and
the GIS User
Community

**Project # HL-0008K
NC 42 at Hilltop Road (SR 2751);
Hilltop Road Extension and
Intersection Improvements
Wake County, NC**

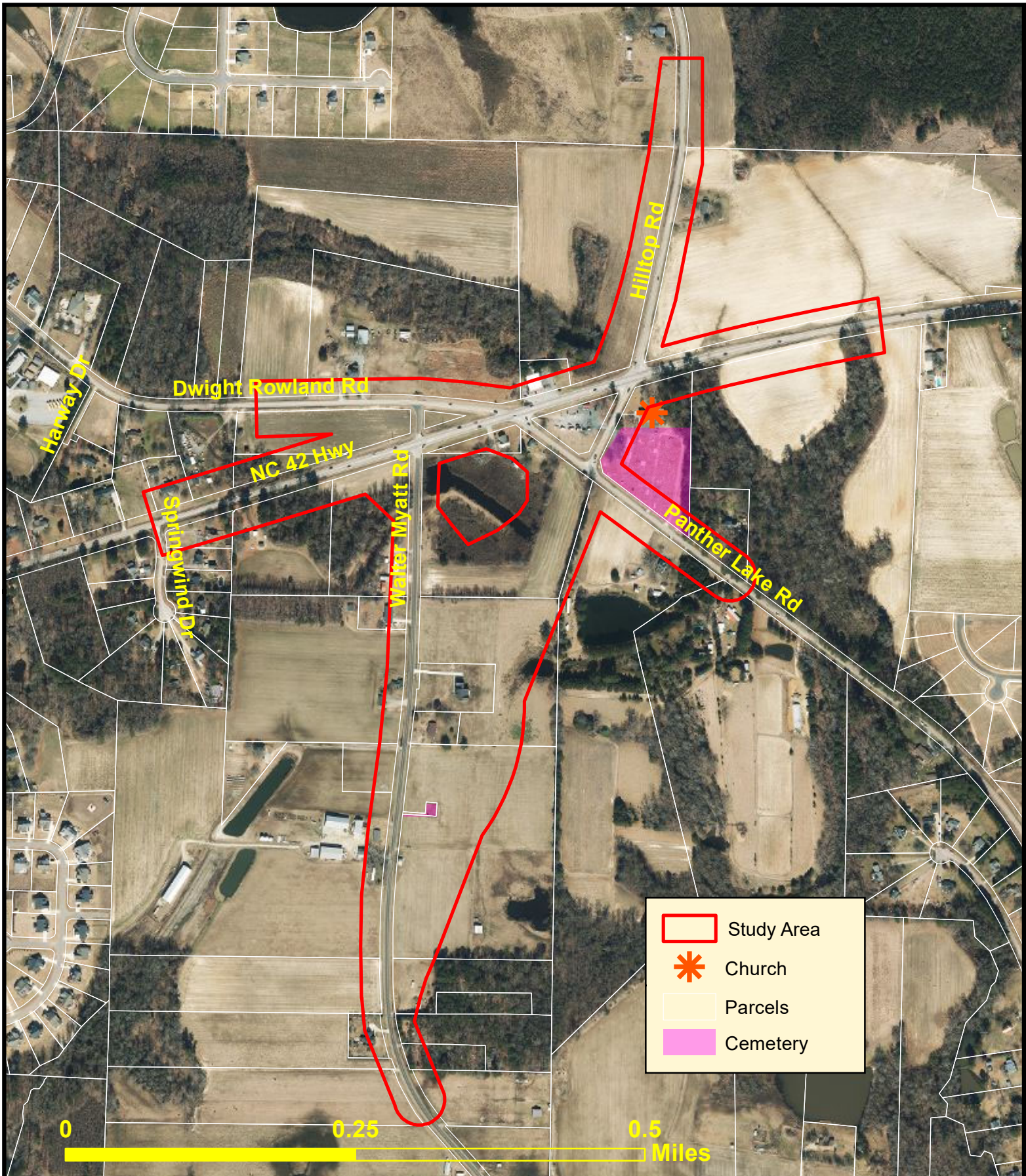
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FIGURE 1

Date: 2/17/2022

Project
Location



	Study Area
	Church
	Cemetery

the Primitive Baptist movement. As part of this effort, three site visits were completed, with photo documentation of the site and associated structures. Additionally, local phone interviews were conducted, and local historical societies and university archives were contacted for supplementary research. This effort included: review of Wake County deeds, GIS maps, plat maps, property and tax records; conducting research using the State Library of North Carolina; studying the Wake county files of the North Carolina HPO; visiting the Wilson Library Special Collections Library at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and the Z. Smith Reynolds Library at Wake Forest University; and conducting online historical and genealogical research.

2.0 HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF THE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST MOVEMENT

The first active churches of record in Wake County were Baptist churches such as the Middle Creek Primitive Baptist Church, located in the same township as the later Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church. New Light Church, established in the 1750s, represented another non-Primitive branch of Baptist Christianity. Baptists gained a strong foothold in Wake County due to their strong emphasis on congregational autonomy in a large, rural county. Wake Forest College was established in east Wake County by Baptists in 1833, following the Saint Mary's School for Boys and the Pleasant Grove Academy at Wake Forest, a girl's school. Methodist-Episcopalians also found strong followings in the county, as well as Presbyterians and Episcopalians. While the late-eighteenth century saw the formation of temporary congregations ministered to by traveling pastors, the Great Revival of the early-nineteenth century both swept the nation and Wake County, bringing larger institutions and a greater emphasis on Protestantism in daily life.²

Primitive Baptists emerged across the southern United States during the early-nineteenth century. In North Carolina, the religious movements of the early 1800s were largely marked by three factions of Baptists: 1) the General Baptists, of English heritage;³ 2) the Regulars, also from England, but followed "particular predestination of the elect" in regard to salvation; and 3) the Separates, who were connected to the Primitive Baptist sect and who rejected extravagance and questioned the Regulars admittance of converts.⁴ The division within the Baptist church occurred during an era when Baptists adopted missions as a main method of evangelism and testimony of Christianity. Primitive Baptists maintained hardline Calvinist theological beliefs including the literal interpretation of the bible and the doctrine of predestination, which takes the stance that God has chosen the followers who shall be rewarded with salvation. Primitive Baptist congregations retained conservative practices and did not believe in missionary work nor the formation of missionary societies, theological schools, or other auxiliary organizations to preach the gospel; these were seen as "man-made" agencies that did not exist in the bible. For Primitive Baptists, missions and social aid societies represented ulterior motives to "artificially increase the numbers of souls that might expect to gain entry into Heaven."⁵ The conservative belief was that organizations that may be necessitated on capital were not appropriate for the faith community.

Origin stories and early records of the Primitive Baptist movement were written in a way in which they:

Wrote themselves into their story, although the process always seemed to them more like self-discovery than self-generation. When the Primitives surveyed their past, they saw themselves walking the old paths, lonely truth-bearers in a fallen world, guardians of the doctrine of election, and hard-working husbandmen whose labor preserved Jefferson's Republic against encroaching aristocracy.⁶

The aesthetics of the Primitive Baptists reflect their commitment to an idealized and literal interpretation of Christianity in the preference of simple worship spaces, extemporaneous sermons, and acapella congregational singing. Within the early years of the Primitive Baptist movement in America,

² Chamberlain, Hope Summerell. History of Wake County, North Carolina, with Sketches of Those Who Have Most Influenced its Development. Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1922; National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Multiple Property Documentation form: Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (ca. 1770-1941). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, 1993; North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, *Willow Spring Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery*, (Raleigh: On File, NC SHPO Survey and National Register Branch,) 2017.

³ Guthman, Joshua. *Strangers Below: Primitive Baptists and American Culture*. UNC Press Books, 2015. Pg. 26.

⁴ Ibid. Pg. 25; Guthman 2015, Pg. 25.

⁵ Reid, Melanie Sovine. "Neither Adding nor Taking Away": The Care and Keeping of Primitive Baptist Church Houses." Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture 1: 169–76, 1982.

⁶ Guthman 2015, Pg. 35.

several splits occurred regarding the differing of opinion and belief whether clergy should be paid or unpaid, if worship music should include instruments or be solely vocal, and if it was appropriate to use the gospel as a tool of conversion and evangelization. During the pre-Civil War era in the American South, white slave owners would allow black slaves to attend the same services; however, upon the end of the war, African Americans founded many of their own Primitive Baptist congregations. Despite the differing opinions and beliefs within the Primitive Baptist community, the strong adherence to predestination remained consistent.⁷ Congregants gathered to “sing, pray, and preach” upon the Earthly realm in order to momentarily associate with the heavenly and spiritual realm within their house of worship.⁸

Primitive Baptist congregations were strong in numbers in North Carolina and typically located within the tobacco-belt hamlets and rural areas. Within Wake County, per the records of HPOWEB 2.0, there were three other documented Primitive Baptist congregations: Oak Grove Primitive Baptist Church (WA0677) (extant), Cedar Grove Primitive Baptist Church (WA1399) (non-extant), and Ironside Primitive Baptist Church (WA3506) (non-extant).

⁷ Crowley, John. "Primitive Baptists." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 06 March 2006.

⁸ Reid 1982, Pg. 173.

3.0 INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

3.1 Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery

Resource Name:	Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery
HPO Survey Site Number:	WA1150
Location:	6605 Hilltop Road, Willow Spring, NC 27592
Parcel ID:	0687307772
Date of Construction:	ca. 1950
Recommendation:	Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places



Photograph 1: Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church, view east.

3.1.1 Setting

The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church (WA1150) sits on the eastern half of a pie-shaped parcel that is bounded by NC Highway 42 to the north and Panther Lake Road at a western diagonal (see **Figure 3**). The cemetery is immediately south of the church. The eastern property boundary abuts another parcel that is bounded by a tree line. A gravel parking lot is sited just across Hilltop Road from the church and cemetery. To the west of the gravel parking lot, across Panther Lake Road, is a former house of worship for the church congregation; it is currently used as a residence.



Figure 3: Site plan of the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery.

3.1.2 Property Description

Church Exterior

According to Wake County tax records and a personal interview with the cemetery groundskeeper, the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church was constructed ca. 1950.⁹ The church building is rectangular in plan; the exterior is clad with grey Roman brick. It has a front-gabled roof clad with composition asphalt shingles. The west (front) elevation serves as the main entrance where paired wooden six-panel doors are centered on the facade. A stained glass transom is located over the doors that reads “Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church.” The entrance is accessed by wide brick stairs with wrought-iron railings and is flanked by two stained glass windows with a third narrow window centered in the front gable. A wooden handicap accessibility ramp has been installed that is oriented from the south parking lot. This addition was completed sometime after 2016 according to Google Streetview records, which do not show the ramp prior to the 2016 captures. The front façade wall is wider than the remainder of the building as the gabled roof extends down nearly to the ground for the front few feet of the building. The

⁹ Sammy Overby, Interview, by Michael Navarro, 4 January 2022.

north and south elevations are five bays wide with leaded-glass stained glass windows with operable, aluminum-framed lower sashes and brick sills. The foundation is brick, and there is a walk-up basement at the east (rear) elevation. A gabled wing at the rear has an interior brick chimney and entrances on the north and south elevations with brick staircases and wrought-iron railings. See **Photographs 1-9** for exterior images of the building.



Photograph 2: View southeast of church and cemetery.



Photograph 3: View southeast of church.



Photograph 4: View east of front entrance and sidewalk. The handicap ramp was added post-2016.



Photograph 5: Detailed view of front entrance and stained glass transom with the inscription "Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church." Light fixtures appear to be original to the building.



Photograph 6: View north of south elevation.



Photograph 7: South and east (rear) elevations, oblique, view northwest.



Photograph 8: East (rear) elevation, view west.



Photograph 9: East (rear) and north elevations, oblique view, view southwest.

Church Interior

The front entrance doors of the church open to the front vestibule (narthex), which leads to the main church interior. The sanctuary has a center aisle configuration with rows of wooden pews on either side of the center aisle. At the east (rear) end of the church is a raised platform with a wooden pulpit and wood chairs; at either side of the platform are doors leading to the rear entrance of the church. The side walls of the church (north and south walls) are composed of exposed unfinished concrete block and the front (west) and rear (east) walls are clad with wood paneling. The ceiling is flat and clad with acoustic tiles which appear to be original or compatible to the ca. 1950 date of construction. The ceiling extends beyond the walls slightly and wood paneling trim runs above the exposed concrete block wall. The church floor is carpeted. Distinguishable features include the stained glass windows with wood frames along the north and south walls and the hanging brass light fixtures. The narthex retains its original configuration with wood paneled walls and ceiling. The narthex walls have been painted white, and the original wood baseboard and door trim has been painted; an updated light fixture has been installed. Along the south wall of the narthex is a stairwell that leads to the basement level. Access to the basement was not permitted. See **Photographs 10-18** for interior images of the building.



Photo 10: Church interior, view east.



Photo 11: Church interior looking west, towards front entrance.



Photo 12: Raised platform and pulpit looking east.



Photo 13: Original light fixture and ceiling tile details.



Photo 14: Stained glass window detail.



Photo 15: Narthex looking north.



Photo 16: Narthex looking south.



Photo 17: Side entrance looking east.

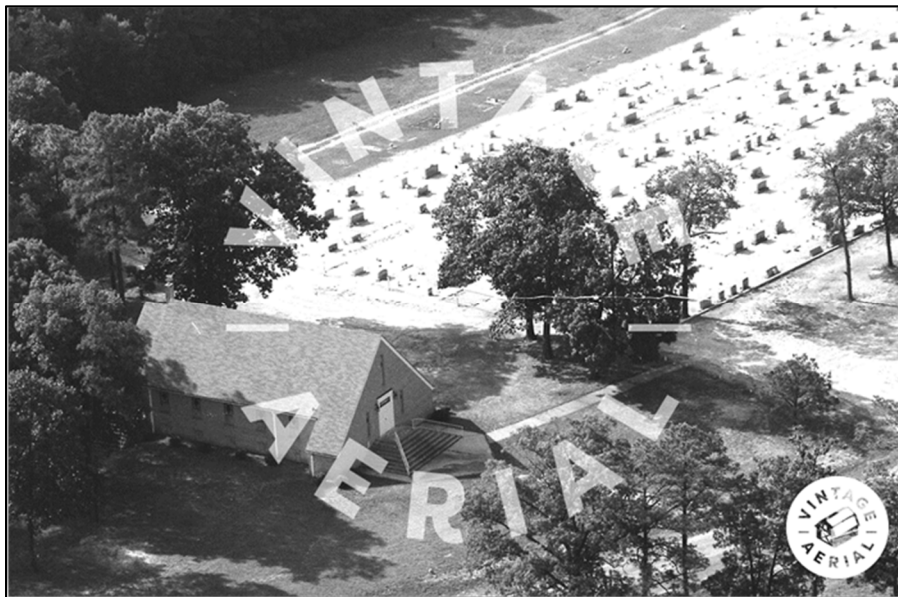


Photo 18: Side entrance leading to basement level.

Cemetery

The cemetery is located at the intersection of Hilltop Road and Panther Lake Road immediately south of the church. An unimproved gravel and earth access road surrounds the cemetery to the north and east; a gravel parking lot is to the west. A low cinderblock wall forms the cemetery's western border. There are approximately 700 graves on the site dating from 1885 to 2021.¹⁰ According to the 2017 Wake County Architectural Survey Update and 2021 site visits, only one grave dates from the nineteenth century; this burial consists of a dual internment dated 1885. The remainder of the burials date from 1902 at the earliest and continue until the latest internment dated November 2021 (**Photograph 19**). The cemetery lacks a clear organization by date of burial. Instead, the cemetery seems to be organized by family plots. Frequent family names include Pollard, Harggis, Fish, Temple, Overby, and Yeargin. A children's section dated 1908 through 1928 is located in the rear of the cemetery (**Photograph 20**); however, other children from different time periods are interred throughout the cemetery. The latest burial, dated November 2021, is located at the rear of the cemetery east of the unimproved access road. It is one of two burials located east of the road; the other is marked by a simple decorative cross.

The 2017 survey update and 2021 site visit have documented headstone carvings typical of twentieth century rural headstones that depict flowers, trees, gates, and weeping willows. The cemetery has a grass lawn that has been maintained. The site is mostly free of statuary except for a single praying angel statue associated with a 1994 burial, and there is no indication that a chapel or other landscape elements have been on the site. Mr. Billy Yeargin of Angier, North Carolina, is the president of the cemetery association; Mr. Sammy Overby is the current groundskeeper.¹¹ Historic aerials indicate that the cemetery grounds were historically sandy-silt and free of grass (see **Figure 4**). A list of cemetery burial records through 2005 can be found online via Internment.net.¹²



**Figure 4: Aerial photo of Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery, June 1985.
(Image Source: Vintage Aerial)**

¹⁰ Chamberlain 1922; National Park Service 1993; North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, *Willow Spring Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery*, [Multi-Year File] (Raleigh: On File, NC SHPO Survey and National Register Branch.).

¹¹ "Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church," Cemetery Census [web page], 2021. Retrieved on November 2, 2021. From <<https://cemeterycensus.com/nc/wake/cem215.htm>>.

¹² http://www.interment.net/data/us/nc/wake/willow_springs/index.htm.



Photograph 19: View northwest at the south corner of the property (South Drive at Panther Lake Road).



Photograph 20: Small children's cemetery at rear of cemetery, view east.

Former House of Worship

According to previous surveys, the first Willow Springs Primitive Baptist church building (non-extant) was constructed ca. 1826 and was located approximately one mile north of the current subject property. An existing building located to the west of the subject property was reported in previous surveys as the

second house of worship serving the congregation ca. 1870 to ca. 1960.¹³ The ca. 1870 building has functioned as a residential property since the mid-twentieth century. The building is cross-gabled with wood siding and composite shingles (see **Photographs 21-22**). It has a full-width front porch with simple posts and concrete steps. The foundation is concrete. It is three bays wide; windows and doors are replacement. Historic photos were not identified; at the time of this investigation, the property was undergoing rehabilitation. Alterations to the front porch and the installation of replacement windows and doors have resulted in a loss of historic integrity.



Photograph 21: Former house of worship, view southeast. Note window modifications.

¹³ hmwPreservation 2017.



Photograph 22: Former house of worship, north (main entrance) and east elevation.

3.1.3 Historic Background

Willow Spring

Willow Spring is an unincorporated community in southeast Wake County and western Johnston County, North Carolina. According to local history, the area was named for a natural spring that was surrounded by willow trees. The community was historically very rural and retains a rural landscape today. Generally, the community centers on the intersections of Dwight Rowland Road, Kennebec Road and NC Highway 42. Black Creek, a tributary of the Neuse River, runs through the community. Swamps and marshes dot the landscape between large agricultural fields.¹⁴

There is no clear beginning date for the Willow Spring community, but it is estimated to have been first populated by European settlers or their descendants in the early-nineteenth century. The community was named by at least 1825, when the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church first met at the Willow Springs Meeting House. The congregation's first church building was constructed near the community's namesake spring in 1826. No longer extant, the structure's original location is unclear, but was described as located about one mile north of the present church site on what is now farmland east of Hilltop Road.¹⁵

The first post office was established in a grist mill known as Myatt's Mill; this post office continued to be the primary post office until a few years before the Civil War, when it was discontinued. During the war, the small community was directly impacted by Sherman's March. During his campaign across North Carolina, General William T. Sherman's army marched from Clayton through Willow Spring along extant Old Stage Road. The army paused at Blalock Farm along what is today Highway 42. While there, soldiers freed the property's slaves and occupied the land for several days, eventually leaving and taking

¹⁴ Wake County Genealogical Society, *The Heritage of Wake County, North Carolina, 1983*, (Winston-Salem: The Society in cooperation with Hunter Pub. Co.,) 1983; "Willow Spring Post Office," *Postal Locations* [web page], Retrieved on January 24, 2022 from <https://www.postallocations.com/nc/willow-spring/willow-spring>.

¹⁵ Wake County Genealogical Society 1983.

crops, supplies, and valuables from the house. After Sherman continued to Raleigh, residents of Willow Spring struggled to survive. Many families had to live off what resources they had managed to hide from the army.¹⁶

Newly freed individuals soon left their old plantations and began their own communities within Willow Spring. In 1866, the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church was joined by an African American Primitive Baptist Church in Willow Spring. In 1882, Mr. A.J. Blalock purchased property to construct the Saint Anna Free Will Baptist Church nearby. A post office returned to Willow Spring under the original postmaster and grist miller, W.A. Myatt. In the early-twentieth century, the post office would be moved to its own building next to the Dowd Mercantile Store. Mail routes were carried by horse and buggy.¹⁷

The first railroad connection to Willow Spring was established in 1899 by John A. Mills, who constructed the railroad using convict labor. The railroad was originally called the Raleigh and Cape Fear, later becoming the Raleigh and Southport. The Willow Springs Depot was soon constructed and became the center of the community. The depot serviced both freight and passenger service. Local history describes “excursion trains,” which took passengers to other rail connections in order to visit circuses, fairs, or religious events. On Saturdays, men in Willow Spring would use the line to travel to Raleigh for business. The rail line is currently operated by Norfolk Southern.¹⁸

As of 2014, the population of Willow Spring was 15,768. With access to NC 42, I-40, and I-440, Willow Spring has become a rural suburban community with a large commuting population traveling to Raleigh, Fuquay-Varina, Apex, and Cary. The community is still primarily agricultural. Two homes in Willow Spring from the 1880s are listed in the National Register of Historic Places: The Frank and Mary Smith House, and the Turner and Amelia Smith House.¹⁹

Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church Congregation

The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church congregation was organized around 1825 and belonged to the Little River Primitive Baptist Association (LRPBA), which included the Primitive Baptist churches (PBC) located in Johnston, Harnett, Cumberland, and Wake counties. Records available on the congregation indicate that from 1871 to 1927, quarterly meetings of the LRPBA were held in Willow Springs on the second Saturday and Sunday in February, May, August, and November as part of the site rotation schedule. The primary pastor of record from 1906 to 1925 was J.A.T. Jones. Pastor Jones also preached at Middle Creek PBC, Salem PBC, Smithfield PBC and served as LRPBA Clerk for the association during his tenure. Indicated as “messengers” in the congregation were G.H. Adams, J.M. Pollard, H.G. Crosby and N.B. Temple who served as the liaisons between the congregation and association. Statistics of the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church were maintained by the LRPBA (see **Table 1**).²⁰

¹⁶ Adcock, Willa Jean. “Annie May Adams Akins Shares her Mother’s Stories about the Aftermath of the War Between the States,” *North Carolina Civil War & Reconstruction History Center Blog* [web page], (NC Civil War & Reconstruction History Center,) Retrieved on January 24, 2022 from <https://nccivilwarcenter.org/annie-mae-adams-kins-shares-mothers-stories-aftermath-war-states/>, 2017; Wake County Genealogical Society 1983; Murray, Elizabeth Reid, *Wake, Capital County of North Carolina, Volume 1: Prehistory through Centennial*, (Raleigh: Capital County Publishing Company,) 1983, pp. 663.

¹⁷ Wake County Genealogical Society 1983.

¹⁸ Wake County Genealogical Society 1983.

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willow_Springs,_North_Carolina

²⁰ *Little River Primitive Baptist Association Records, 1902-1992*. Archival Material. (Chapel Hill, NC: The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,) 1902; *Minutes of the Little River Primitive Baptist Association, Held with the Church at Willow Spring M.H., Wake County, N.C.* Archival Material. (Chapel Hill, NC: The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,) 1871; *Minutes of the Little River Baptist Association, Held with the Church at Cedar Grove M.H., Wake County, N.C.* Archival Material. (Chapel Hill, NC: The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,) 1872; *Minutes of the Little River Baptist Association, Held with the Church at New Hope M.H., Harnett County, N.C.* Archival Material. (Chapel Hill, NC: The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,) 1875; *Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church (Willow Springs, N.C.) Records 1825-1928*. Winston-Salem, NC: Z. Smith Reynolds Library Special Collections, Wake Forest University, 1825.

Table 1: Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church Statistics from 1871 through 1925.²¹

Year	Changes Recorded	Total in Fellowship	LRPBA Contribution(\$)
1871	3 baptized 2 restored 1 dismissed	24	2
1872	3 baptized	27	2.25
1875	4 baptized	28	2
1906	2 deceased	28	2.5
1907	1 dismissed by letter	27	2
1908	--	28	2
1909	--	28	2
1910	n/a	n/a	n/a
1911	2 deceased	26	2.5
1912	2 received by letter 1 deceased	27	2.8
1913	1 restored	26	2
1914	1 restored	28	2
1915	3 deceased	25	2.8
1916	5 restored	31	2
1917	--	32	2.5
1918	3 baptized 1 received by letter 1 restored 1 dismissed by letter 1 excluded 1 deceased	33	5
1919	1 baptized 4 received by letter	31	5
1920	1 baptized	32	5
1921	1 restored 1 deceased	31	5
1922	--	31	6.25
1923	--	32	6
1924 ²²	1 baptized	33	10
1925 Pastor J.A.T. Jones dies	7 baptized 1 deceased	36	8

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the number of congregations that belonged to the association dwindled due to a difference of theological and congregation-operation philosophies.²³ The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church was a member of the LRPBA until 1927, when a split in the LRPBA occurred regarding the behaviors and preaching style of Elder L.H. Stephenson; the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and eleven other churches were removed from the LRPBA for following Elder Stephenson's "disorder." The removed congregations included: Bethany PBC, Bethel PBC, Clement PBC, Hannah's Creek PBC, Little Creek PBC, Middle Creek PBC, Mount Gilead PBC, Oak Grove PBC, Raleigh PBC, Sandy Grove PBC, and Union PBC.²⁴ Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church congregational

²¹ Little River Primitive Baptist Association Records 1902; Minutes of the Little River Primitive Baptist Association, Held with the Church at Willow Spring M.H., Wake County, N.C. 1871; Minutes of the Little River Baptist Association, Held with the Church at Cedar Grove M.H., Wake County, N.C. 1872; Minutes of the Little River Baptist Association, Held with the Church at New Hope M.H., Harnett County, N.C. 1875.

²² Annual LRPBA Meeting Held at Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church

²³ Guthman, Joshua. *Strangers Below: Primitive Baptists and American Culture*. UNC Press Books, 2015.

²⁴ Little River Primitive Baptist Association Records 1902.

records after 1928 were not located during this investigation.

In 1950, the current Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church was constructed. It was designed by a member of the congregation with architectural experience. On a typical fourth Sunday, an important date to Primitive Baptists, the church would host two to three visiting ministers and be at least three-quarters full, with a portion of that congregation coming from up to 100 miles away.²⁵

According to an interview with Mr. Sammy Overby, cemetery groundskeeper, the congregation slowly diminished in its membership numbers. The final worship service held by the congregation was in 2017. Since 2019, the building operated as Rachel's Family Funeral Home until 2021, when the business closed. At the time of this investigation, Mr. Overby indicated there was local interest to operate a wedding chapel business. At the date of this investigation, the funeral home business was closed.

Zion's Landmark

The Primitive Baptists in North Carolina published a semi-monthly periodical entitled *Zion's Landmark* out of Wilson, North Carolina. The newsletter was a blend of biography, church history, theological discourse, and advertisement for bible studies that was first published on November 15, 1867. Elder J.M. Newborn of the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church served as editor.²⁶ Mr. Newborn is not buried in the subject cemetery, nor were any additional records connected to the subject property identified during this investigation. Future research may be beneficial to better define a possible connection between *Zion's Landmark* and the congregation.²⁷

3.1.4 National Register of Historic Places Evaluation

The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C as a representative example of mid-twentieth century vernacular Primitive Baptist church design.

Integrity

The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery retains integrity of location as the church and cemetery are in their original location. The property retains integrity of setting as there have been no modern intrusions or developments that alter the rural setting from when it was constructed. The church retains a high degree of design, materials and workmanship as it has been virtually unchanged since it was originally constructed. The property retains integrity of feeling and association as it conveys its historic significance as a rural, modernistic church. Character defining features of the church include its simple, rectangular plan; front-gabled form; brick exterior; and stained glass windows. Important interior features include the wooden pews, pulpit and light fixtures.

Criterion A

The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Primitive Baptist movement in Wake County, North Carolina.

²⁵ T.F. Adams, *The Autobiography of Elder T.F. Adams*, (Self-Published,) 1971.

²⁶ Reid 1982.

²⁷ "Zion's Landmark," Wilson, N.C.: Zion's Landmark Print. Primitive Baptists Collection, Duke University Libraries. Retrieved on January 9, 2022. From <<https://archive.org/details/zionslandmarkser5819unse/page/26/mode/2up>>.

Criterion B

Based on background research of the area, the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is not associated with any historically significant individuals and therefore is not recommended eligible under Criterion B.

Criterion C

The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a representative example of mid-twentieth century vernacular Primitive Baptist church design. The simple lines and utilitarian features embody the principles of the Primitive Baptist movement that is rooted in Calvinist, predestination theology that discourages adornment and excess. The church is also important as a rare extant example of mid-twentieth century Primitive Baptist Church design in Wake County.

In the 2017 Wake County Architectural Survey Update by hmwPreservation, Wake County rural churches were noted as simple frame buildings, typically designed with front-gabled roofs.²⁸ During the 1950s and 1960s churches often added educational wings or social halls. For the Primitive Baptists, this additional space was typically not needed as the church community primarily met for worship. The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church demonstrates the evolution of Primitive Baptist church architecture. The simple lines and utilitarian features embody the principles of the Primitive Baptist movement that is rooted in Calvinist, predestination theology that discourages adornment and excess. Primitive Baptist houses of worship tended to yield long tenure. This can be attributed to the conservatism of their faith and the propensity to remain tied to the physical space where they manifest the history of their spiritual community. Primitive belief is strongly associated with the belief in the direct lineage to Christ and the house of worship shapes these experiences. Through their frugality, the upkeep of the building has been historically of utmost importance.²⁹ Church buildings have been replaced only when out of necessity, as in the “case of fire or severe structural damage, a new building is constructed of contemporary materials, but of equally simplistic design” as is demonstrated by the subject property; leaving the former building to the “integral part of oral history” of the congregation.³⁰

Characteristics of Primitive Baptist church buildings over time include single, front-facing gabled rooflines, vertically oriented windows and single material type cladding. Early church buildings dating from the 1800s into the early 1900s were often wood slatted or wood-shingle siding; as modern architecture gained popularity, the materials chosen for church design also changed to adopt a more modern aesthetic and was reflected in the typical use of brick for exterior cladding. The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church is comparable to other modern, mid-twentieth century vernacular churches located in Wake County, including the Leesville Baptist Church (WA7948) and Christ the King Catholic Church (CB0182). Both churches have simple rectangular plans, are front-gabled and have brick exteriors (see **Figures 5** and **6**). Notable examples in the surrounding counties of modern, mid-twentieth century Primitive Baptist Churches include: State Line Primitive Baptist Church (built ca. 1951), Big Creek Township, Stokes County (**Figure 7**); Saint’s Delight Primitive Baptist Church (built ca. 1952), Winston-Salem, Forsyth County (**Figure 8**); and a former Primitive Baptist Church, currently known as Voice of Truth Ministries (built ca. 1955), located within the National-Register listed Washington Park Historic District, Winston-Salem, Forsyth County (**Figure 9**). These three churches are simple in design, front-gabled with brick veneers.

²⁸ hmwPreservation, *Wake County Architectural Survey Update Phase III*, (Raleigh: On File, NC SHPO Survey and National Register Branch,) 2017.

²⁹ Reid 1982.

³⁰ Reid 1982, Pg. 174.



Figure 5: Leesville Baptist Church (WA7948), 13301 Leesville Church Road, Leesville, NC. The church was built in 1966. The front-gabled building has a red brick exterior; a modernist full-height stained glass window adorns the front façade.³¹ (Google Street View June 2019)



Figure 6: Christ the King Catholic Church (CB0182), 100 Burns Road, Riegelwood, NC. Front-gabled brick building constructed in 1950 with a one-story rear wing.³² (Google Street View August 2012)

³¹ hmwPreservation, *Wake County Architectural Survey Update Phase III*, (Raleigh: On File, NC SHPO Survey and National Register Branch,) 2017.

³² Architectural Resources Survey Report, Proposed Improvements to NC 87 from US 74 Junction to Elizabethtown Bypass, Bladen and Columbus Counties, North Carolina." Retrieved November 8, 2021 from < <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/historic-preservation-office/PDFs/ER%2005-2886.pdf>>. 2010. Pg. 108.



Figure 7: State Line Primitive Baptist Church (built ca. 1951), Big Creek Township, Stokes County (SK0821). Roughly contemporaneous with Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church (Google Street View September 2021)



Figure 8: Saint's Delight Primitive Baptist Church (built ca. 1952), Winston-Salem, Forsyth County (FY0314). Built around the same time as Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church (NC SHPO 2007)



Figure 9: Primitive Baptist Church, currently known as Voice of Truth Ministries (built ca. 1955), within the National-Register listed Washington Park Historic District, Winston-Salem, Forsyth County (FY4408). Google Street View June 2014

Criterion D

The Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery is not likely to yield any new information pertaining to the history of building design and technology and therefore is not recommended eligible under Criterion D.

Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties.

As the property derives its primary significance for its architecture, it also satisfies Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties.

3.1.5 Recommended National Register Boundary

The recommend boundary for the Willow Springs Primitive Baptist Church and Cemetery includes the tax parcel that is historically associated with the church and cemetery (PIN #0687307772). This parcel is bounded by NC Highway 42 to the north, Panther Lake Road to the southwest, and a tree line to the east as shown in Figure 10. The boundary meets the right-of-way for each of the roads the boundary touches.

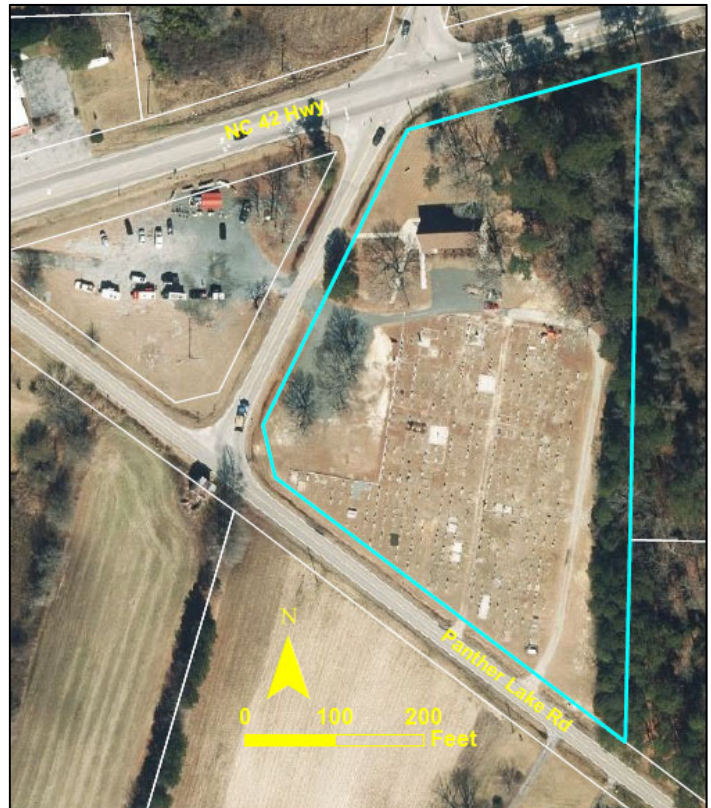


Figure 10 - Boundary of the NR Eligible Resource

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