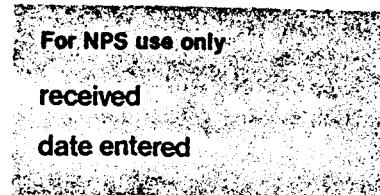


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Bear Creek Baptist Church

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Rural Route \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Kirksville  vicinity of

state MO code 29 county Adair code 001

**3. Classification**

| Category  | Ownership                                   | Status  | Present Use                            |   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input type="checkbox"/> public             | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied                   | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture   | <input type="checkbox"/> museum               |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied      | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial    | <input type="checkbox"/> park                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both               | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational   | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                   | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <input type="checkbox"/> in process         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government    | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific           |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered   | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation       |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military      | <input type="checkbox"/> other:               |

**4. Owner of Property**

name Bear Creek Cemetery Association of Adair County

street & number c/o Cecelia Mihalevich,  
810 E Mill St.

city, town Kirksville \_\_\_ vicinity of state MO 63501

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number Adair County Courthouse

city, town Kirksville state MO 63501

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Missouri State Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Department of Natural Resources  
Historic Preservation Program

city, town P.O.Box 176  
Jefferson City, state MO 65201

# 7. Description

## Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

## Check one

unaltered  
 altered

## Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This one room frame structure is rectangular in shape (approximately 39'8" x 24'6"), sits on a molded concrete block foundation and a hewn log sill, and has a gable roof covered in asphalt shingles. Of timber frame construction, it is sheathed in clapboarding which is accented by plain cornerboards and a raking cornice. Two single leaf entrances on the front gable end are capped by trabeated headers. This motif is repeated over the three 1-over-1 windows on both the east and west facades, and over the rear facade single leaf doorway. Typically the church building is of a plain one room styling and design found throughout the midwest.

Its interior detailing is also quite simple. Millwork is not a decorative feature; it has been painted a flat color. A 10'6" x 7'10" raised platform with pulpit is in the south end of the building. Its front corners are chamfered. Small, unadorned pews remain intact and are situated to form a central aisle. A stove in the north end provides heat.

Alterations including the current molded concrete foundation, which probably replaced a field stone footing, have been minimal and are not deterrents to the merits of the building. There has been some minor attempts to update the building's interior (see photo 3).

# 8. Significance

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning                | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation                      | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics                         | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/<br>humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                       | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry                          | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)         |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention                         |   |  |

**Specific dates**      c. 1860                      **Builder/Architect**

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Bear Creek Baptist Church is significant due to the fact that 1) it housed the first organized christian congregation formed within the county and that 2) it remains the oldest extant Adair County church building. The associations developed among the members of these early settlers played an important role both in their religious and social lives, as well as helping to develop within the group a sense of community, a sense of place. These features, combined with the most typical of early public architectural styles, a simple, one room, gable roofed building, embody the distinctive characteristics of the pioneer effort toward settlement and religion and, therefore, stability within their lives.

Historical Data

About 1835, the early settlers of the area began to meet for religious services, with the earliest recorded service being held in 1836 and conducted by the Rev. Abraham Still, father of A.T. Still, founder of osteopathic medicine. In late 1839 or early 1840, some of the christian families in the Bear Creek neighborhood, west of the present site of the city of Kirksville, met with the Rev. A.T. Hight, an itinerate Baptist preacher, at the home of Lewis Conner to organize a church. The resulting Bear Creek Church was the first organized christian congregation formed in the area that would be organized as Adair County (1841). For many years thereafter, services were held in the homes of the members with the Rev. Lewis Conner serving as the pastor until his death in 1856.

The Rev. Conner was buried in a plot on his land which he may have informally donated for a burial site and a church. Some bodies had already been interred there before 1856. Substantiating this idea, is the fact that the administrator of Conner's estate, his brother - Washington Conner, deeded in 1860 the plot, consisting of approximately 1.4 acres, to the Church of Bear Creek " for meetinghouse and public burying ground." Construction of the building began no later than 1860 and possibly somewhat earlier. The Civil War, however, delayed its completion until shortly after Appomattox.

Bear Creek Church grew and prospered during the ensuing years. It hosted the Macon Baptist Association in 1872 and continued to be a focal point of religious activity in the area until the last recorded service was held on February 7, 1914. Since then services have been held intermittently in the church. It last received public attention when, on October 27, 1946, the First Baptist Church of Kirksville dedicated a memorial erected near the church to the pioneers who founded the Bear Creek Baptist Church of Adair County. The memorial reads "This boulder marks the site of the First Church in Adair County known as Bear Creek Baptist Church, organized in 1838-39 by Rev. Talbot Hight. Charter members included the Asher, Barnes, Collett, Conner, Hibbard, Huston,

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

A Book of Adair County History, published by the Kirksville-Adair County Bicentennial Committee, Simpson Printing Co., Kirksville, MO., 1976  
Deed Record, Book I, p.132, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Adair County Courthouse, Kirksville, MO

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.4 acres  
Quadrangle name Novinger, MO 7'5 /Kirksville, MO 7.5' Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

|   |                   |   |   |   |      |         |          |
|---|-------------------|---|---|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | <u>1</u> <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u> | B |      |         |          |
|   | Zone              | Easting   | Northing  |   | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C |                   |   |   | D |      |         |          |
| E |                   |   |   | F |      |         |          |
| G |                   |   |   | H |      |         |          |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The church and cemetery are contained in a 1.4 acre lot surrounded by a wire fence. The lot sits on the south side of County Road D, approximately 2 1/4 miles NW of Kirksville, MO. It is the original lot as deeded to the congregation, and is located in the NE 1/4 of the

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| state | code | county | code |

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title 1) Linda Donovan Harper, Historic Preservation Specialist  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 9-15-83  
street & number #4 Shady Lane telephone 816-665-0806  
city or town Kirksville state MO 63501

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Fred A. [Signature] 12-5-83  
Director, Department of Natural Resources and  
title State Historic Preservation Officer date

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date  
Chief of Registration



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet BEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH Item number 11

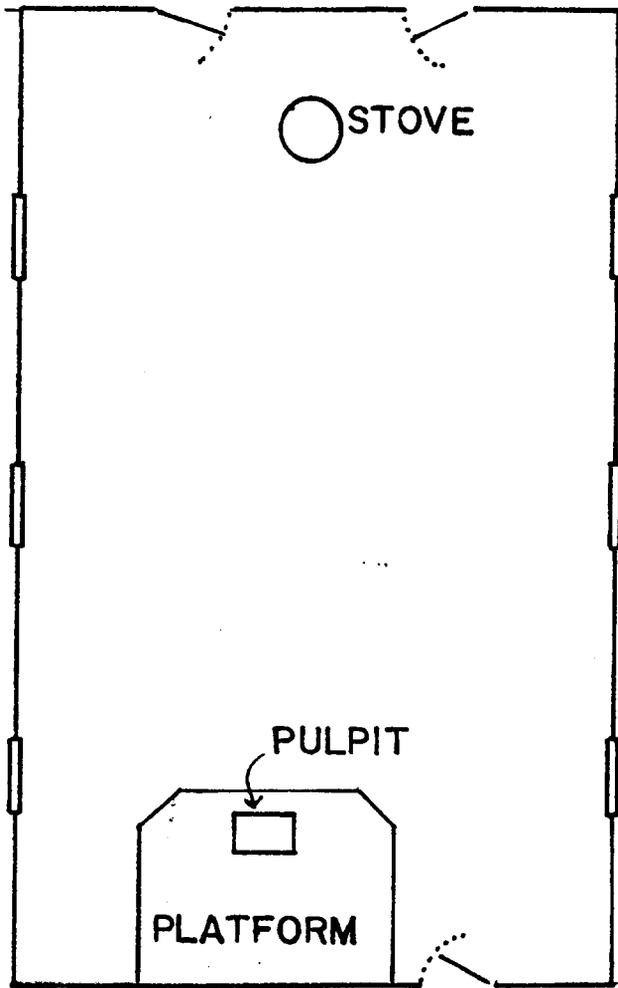
Page 2

- 3) James M. Denny, Chief, Survey & Registration  
and State Contact Person  
Division of Parks & Historic Preservation 9-15-83  
P.O. Box 176 314/751-4096  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65102

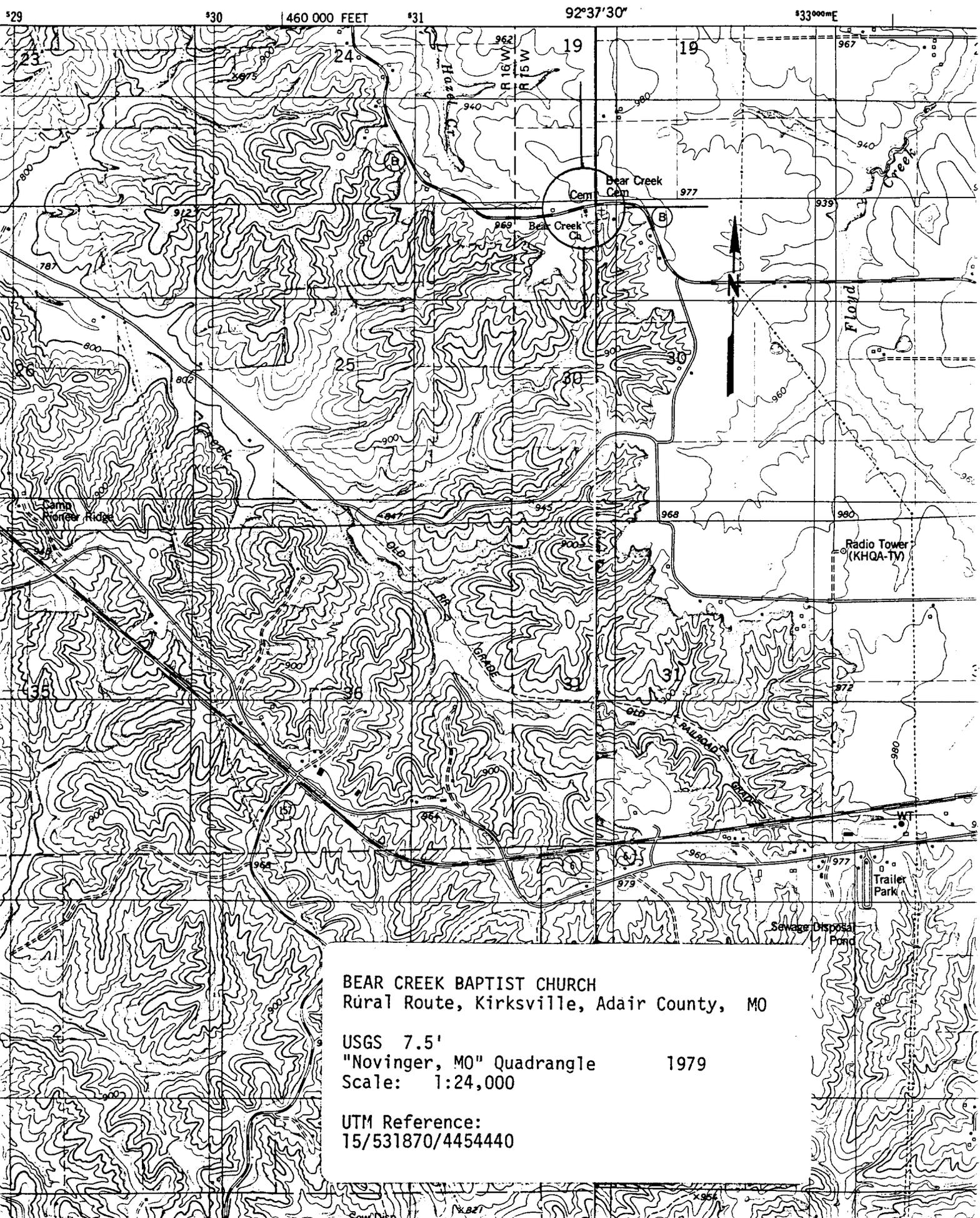
BEAR CREEK CHURCH  
ADAIR COUNTY, MO.

  
MARKER

FENCE LINE



SCALE:  $1/8" = 1'$



BEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH  
Rural Route, Kirksville, Adair County, MO

USGS 7.5'  
"Novinger, MO" Quadrangle 1979  
Scale: 1:24,000

UTM Reference:  
15/531870/4454440



HISTORIC  
BEAR CREEK CHURCH  
ORGANIZED 1838  
BY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST





