

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery

Other names/site number: DHR # 076-6009

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 15008 Lee Highway

City or town: Gainesville State: VA County: Prince William

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>  <u>___ Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____  <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____  <b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>2</u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

FUNERARY: Cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

FUNERARY: Cemetery

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

OTHER: Vernacular

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, WOOD, METAL

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The circa-1928 Mount Pleasant Baptist Church at 15008 Lee Highway (US 211/US 29) is situated on the north side of what is now a four-lane divided highway extending south from Gainesville to Buckland (also known as Route 211). The church faces south and sits back approximately 19 feet from the edge of Lee Highway. At the south end of the property, paved parking areas flank the east and west sides of the church. A dirt and graveled roadway leads north from each parking area to provide vehicular access to the cemetery that fills the northern half of the parcel. Two rail split fence corners are situated at the east side of the cemetery at the end of the gravel drive. A brick and wood sign is situated near the southeast corner of the main massing of the church. Much of the 2.59-acre lot is cleared, with wooded land on the east, west, and north sides. The overall setting of the property immediately surrounding it slightly retains the character of a rural hamlet with clusters of detached single-family houses on wooded lots of varying size nearby; however, the area is interrupted by a recently constructed residential subdivision.

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### Narrative Description

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### **Exterior**

The Mount Pleasant Baptist Church at 15008 Lee Highway is currently vacant with portions exposed to the elements following a significant fire in 2012 caused by arson. The building appears to have at least seven construction periods, the first of which dates to circa 1928 and resulted in a one-story, one-bay, rectangular, frame, vernacular church measuring about 43 feet in length and 33 feet in width. The second construction period added a rear frame, lean-to addition to the church as well as the vestibule and steeple tower at the primary (south) elevation of the building, likely sometime between 1940 and 1950. During this period some renovations to the core of the building occurred, including altering exterior material and fenestration. The next frame addition extended the rear once again sometime during the mid-twentieth century. The fourth phase in the early 1970s included the demolition of the previous rear additions and the construction of a one-story, concrete-block extension in its place. In 1979, a fifth construction period resulted in the addition of a one-story fellowship hall extending from the northeast corner of the circa-1970s rear addition. The combination of the additions extends approximately 70 feet eastward and about 28 feet northward from the northeast corner of the core. During this construction phase, a pale-yellow-brick veneer was added to the entire church, visually uniting all phases of its evolution. In 1987, a one-story, gabled porch was added to the primary entrance of the church building. The final construction period is associated with renovations due to the fire that occurred in 2012 and is currently ongoing. It includes renovations and the addition of a second story to the circa-1970 rear addition and 1979 fellowship hall and eventual restoration to the core of the building.

Although most of the building's foundation and structural system are covered in a stretcher-bonded brick veneer, the damage in the fellowship hall exposed some elements of the church core that were previously covered. It revealed a combination of concrete block and frame walls behind the veneer around the entire church building and some original weatherboard siding at the rear elevation of the original church massing. According to Deacon Henry Peterson, the church was originally clad in weatherboard siding, then stuccoed between the 1940s and 1950s, and finally a brick veneer was added in the mid- to late-twentieth century to tie together the core of this building with its extensions (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). A brick-framed marble cornerstone is situated at the southwest corner of the building's core. It reads "Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, Organized 1877, Rebuilt 1889, Present Bldg. 1928." Metal mounted letters added in the mid-1970s are centered in the south elevation (façade) that read "Mount Pleasant Baptist Church" (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). The core of the church is covered by a standing-seam metal, front-gabled roof. The exposed interior of this section indicates a vernacular roofing system resembling a king post truss system. All sides of the church steeple, which was added between 1940 and 1950, are clad in a Formstone veneer and it is topped by a standing-seam metal pyramidal roof. At that time, the entire building was clad in stucco; however, when the building was covered in a brick veneer, it was decided to use Formstone on the tower as it was more lightweight (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). One small, interior, brick chimney is located on the north slope of the west wing and was once used for a potbelly stove (Janet Robinson, personal communication 2020).

The main entrance is located in the center of the vestibule, added to the center of the south elevation between 1940 and 1950, and is filled by a set of double-leaf, metal, replacement doors.

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The door features a Classical-style wood door surround which features fluted pilasters. Windows at either side of this entrance are six-over-six, double-hung, wood-framed units. Four original lancet, wood-framed, stained-glass windows line both the east and west elevations of the sanctuary. A one-story, front-gabled entry porch added in 1987 provides access to the primary entrance. It features a metal plaque that reads “This project made possible through the efforts of Brother George Moore – August 1987.” The roof covers a set of concrete steps lined by yellow-brick knee walls and is supported by squared brick posts. The gabled end features T1-11 siding and a Classical-style broken pediment that once topped the door (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). A set of circa-1960 poured-concrete steps covered with pressed metal is visible in the north half of the east elevation. It provides access to the circa-1960 cellar that is occupied by mechanical equipment such as a furnace and air conditioning systems.

After the 2012 fire, the walls and foundation of the circa-1970 rear addition and 1979 fellowship hall addition remained extant; however, its roof and interior were gone. The one-story, rectangular, fellowship hall addition stretches roughly 70 feet east of the main massing and appears to have been covered by a side-gabled roof prior to its recent removal, in preparation for reconstruction after the fire (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). Currently, it can be accessed from two entrances at the exterior of the building. A single-leaf, paneled wood door is situated near the northeast corner of the original core of the church on the south elevation of the addition and is accessed by a poured-concrete handicap ramp. Another single-leaf entry is located on the east elevation of the fellowship hall accessed by a one-bay entry porch that has had its roof recently removed. A boarded over entrance is off-centered in the north elevation of the addition. Windows have been replaced with one-over-one, double-hung-sash, vinyl-framed windows. A bronze metal plaque at the southeast corner of the fellowship hall reads “Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, New Addition Completed July 1979, In Memory of Rev. Dr. Wilbur Henry during the Administration of the Rev. Boykin Young.” Most recently, a second story was added to the entire rear addition. It is covered by a side-gabled roof sheathed in asphalt shingles with a gabled dormer on the north elevation where an elevator will be located and is clad in a similar brick veneer as the remainder of the building. A secondary entrance is located in the second story on the east elevation and currently is inaccessible.

### **Interior**

The interior of the core of the church building comprises the vestibule and the sanctuary. The primary entrance into the vestibule is a double-leaf, wood, six-paneled door centered in the south wall. The vestibule walls are covered in wood paneling to a wood chair rail and painted drywall for the remainder of the wall. Wood flooring is covered by faux wood laminate flooring. The ceiling features a drop attic door that provides access to the metal bell. Fenestration features plain wood surrounds. A modern, double-leaf, wood door retrofitted with glass crosses is centered on the north wall and provides access to the sanctuary.

The walls of the sanctuary were originally clad in wood board, then in the renovation period between 1940 and 1950, the walls were covered in stucco. Wood paneling that extends to a wood chair rail was added during the 1970s renovations. The wood flooring is primarily intact and dates to the construction of the church. A small area at the northern end of the sanctuary features some exposed floor beams where both wire and cut nails are extant, indicating the reuse of

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materials from previous iterations of the church (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). The ceiling is currently open, exposing the roof structural system; however, the framing for a drop ceiling is extant which was added during 1970 renovations (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). The multiple additions extending from the north elevation are currently open and accessed from the open north wall of the sanctuary in the core of the building. At one time, this area contained a kitchen, bathrooms, the baptismal pool, and a fellowship hall space. This entire circa-1970 rear addition and 1979 fellowship hall addition was recently covered with a second-story addition and framing for office space, an elevator, bathrooms, and the hall has been constructed as part of the first phase of renovation and reconstruction (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020).

**Secondary Resources**

A contributing small circa-1970 sign is located near the southeast corner of the original church massing, the base of which is clad in the same type of brick as the building. Two brick pillars rise from the base to support a rectangular piece of wood that is painted with the church's name, pastor's name, and meeting times.

A contributing cemetery associated with this church encompasses approximately 1.6 acres of the property parcel. An estimated 230 individuals are interred there with the earliest headstone for John Perry noting his death in 1896 (Turner 1998). The cemetery is laid out in a grid pattern with the vast majority of headstones facing east; several burials at the southeast corner of the cemetery face west per request of the plot owners (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). Headstones are composed of fieldstone, granite, marble, or poured concrete in a mold, some of which are materials that appear to be reused, and feature common design motifs and shapes from throughout the twentieth century. Markers are either slant or beveled markers or upright headstones featuring an oval, oval with shoulders, squared, or peon top and are at times set upon a base. One obelisk headstone was identified during the survey belonging to William Johnson (1878–1938). Design motifs are typically plain but observed stylistic motifs include ferns, lambs, and crosses. Lettering on the stones are primarily engraved or feature a metal plaque, although some examples of inscribing or cutting were identified such as the stone headstone of Thomas Moore (1866–1932). Some of the area's oldest known residents, including Sally Grayson (died 1904) and Alicinda Watson (1851–1941), are interred nearer to the church building at the south end of the cemetery. According to a recent article, “the cemetery behind the church contains one of the oldest graves of an African American that has been buried in a recorded marked location” (Kamphuis 2018). Dozens of United States veterans from World War I, World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War also rest here and are commonly marked by government-issued headstones.

**Integrity Analysis**

Overall, the church and cemetery at 15008 Lee Highway maintains a moderate degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The current building is not the original Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and its former iteration was originally located near the intersection of Old Carolina Road and Thoroughfare Road, prior to being moved to the current property in 1882. However, around 1928, the present church building was constructed on the current parcel. The current parcel has not been altered since the church

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was constructed, therefore, sustaining its integrity of location. Although the property retains the character of a rural hamlet with clusters of detached single-family houses on wooded lots of varying size nearby, a majority of the formerly rural landscape has been fairly altered by suburbanization and transportation expansion, rendering a low to moderate level of integrity of setting and feeling. The resource has a high level of association as it continues to operate as a church and cemetery as well as function as a social gathering space for The Settlement (DHR #076-6010) community. The integrity of design, materials, and workmanship of the building has been slightly diminished due to several renovations and additions; however, the layers of change are visible in the interior of the building's core and reflect the progress and growth of the local community and congregation. The 2012 fire, purposefully set by a young white male from Haymarket who pled guilty to all charges, severely damaged a majority of the additions, but the circa-1928 core of the church remains fairly unscathed, save for smoke damage and several broken window panes.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Ethnic Heritage: African American

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**Period of Significance**

ca. 1928–1970

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**Significant Dates**

ca. 1928

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**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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**Cultural Affiliation**

African American

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**Architect/Builder**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Mount Pleasant Baptist Church has been the center of community life and values in The Settlement (DHR #076-6010), meeting spiritual and social needs of its members and locals alike for over a century since this African American community's establishment in the 1870s in Prince William County, Virginia. Although there have been several iterations of the church due to fires, its current iteration was constructed around 1928 and its main block is predominantly unaltered. The 2012 fire, purposefully set by a young white male from Haymarket who plead guilty to all charges, severely damaged a majority of the additions, but the circa-1928 core of the church remains fairly unscathed, save for smoke damage and several broken window panes. Although there have been several additions appended to the rear of the church as well as interior material alterations layered in the core, these renovations reflect the growth and progress of The Settlement community from the period of first generation African American landowners to established citizens of Prince William County despite continued racial segregation and discrimination. The cemetery is filled with a variety of headstone types and materials and includes the graves of veterans who served in every major conflict from the World Wars to the Vietnam War, reflecting African American traditions as well as the evolution of The Settlement community. Because of this, the church retains a moderate level of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship and a high level of integrity of setting, location, feeling, and association.

Thus, Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery is recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level for its importance to the African American community known as The Settlement, as it was an integral gathering place, a safe haven, and essential component to the social and religious aspects of their lives. It features a period of significance from 1928, when the main block of the church was constructed, to 1970, as it has continuously operated as the core of The Settlement community. The church meets Criteria Consideration A for religious properties and Criteria Consideration D for a cemetery, as it derives its primary significance from historical importance in the African American history of Prince William County. Overall, the resource maintains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Historical Context**

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church of Gainesville congregation was started in 1877 by a group of local African American persons and families including the Churchville and Brook families, Isaac Jackson, John and Henrietta Perry, "Mrs. Coats," and Sally (also seen as Sallie) Grayson (formerly Knight), all of whom resided in or around The Settlement community (DHR #076-6010) of Prince William County (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church n.d.). The rural community which was initially racially diverse was established during the period of Reconstruction and Growth (1866–1916) at a time when Gainesville was known as New Stable and the popular

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Colonial travel route of Old Carolina Road was still very active. Oral tradition suggest that although Carver Road was not an official county road until the mid-twentieth century, locals speculate that it was named after George Washington Carver to denote that the area was a primarily African American community to county officials (Patton 2018:83). Many African American communities in Prince William County and the surrounding counties were established on land that was likely part of former plantations after the Civil War and provided a social and economic support structure for the recently freed African Americans, strengthening community ties that already existed (Smith et al. 2004:16). It was likely that previously enslaved African Americans wanted to remain where they had always lived after emancipation or when they were freed, as occasionally they viewed any move from their familiar surroundings, friends, and relatives to an unknown and possibly hostile area as potentially disastrous (Givens 1972:10). Lack of funds and connections also spurred settlement in the area they knew best. “Lawful discriminations, such as restrictions on movement, and ownership of firearms, dogs, servants, and denial of political rights” also likely made it difficult for free African Americans to leave a familiar place (Givens 1972:13).

Many formerly enslaved African American residents of the county and surrounding counties purchased land within 10 or 20 years after emancipation (Lee 2004). Other ways in which African Americans acquired land included having a former owner deed a piece of property to them for their unpaid service or a formerly enslaved person could rent property from their former owner and then purchase the property at a later date (Lee 2004). Similar to surrounding counties, many historically African American communities in Prince William County comprised smaller lots on land that was generally poor for farming (Smith et al. 2004:56). Located roughly 1 mile west from the center of Gainesville, The Settlement stems from two larger agricultural tracts owned in the mid-nineteenth century by prominent plantation and slave owners: John Webb Tyler and John W.F. Macrae (Saffer 2018; United States Federal Population Census Slave Schedule 1850).

The first known African American to purchase land within The Settlement community was Sally Grayson, who bought approximately 7 acres and 34 poles on the east side of Old Carolina Road near the intersection with Thoroughfare Road from Grayson Tyler for \$100 in 1872 (Prince William County Deed Book [PWCDB] 28:562). It is on that property that Sally Grayson and other African American families residing in The Settlement, including the Churchville and Brook families, Isaac Jackson, John and Henrietta Perry, and Mrs. Coats, created the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church n.d.). The lot was subdivided from a portion of a larger tract known as Mount Pleasant that once belonged to John Webb Tyler, father of Grayson (PWCDB 26:229–331). After his father’s death in 1862, the roughly 656-acre tract was divided between Grayson and his brother, Charles Edwin Tyler (PWCDB 26:591).

According to locals, the members initially worshiped in a brush arbor, similar to other African American churches established around this period; however, shortly after congregating, the members built a log church on Sally Grayson’s property (Patton 2018:79; Scheel 2002:211). They also indicate that originally the church was established as “Beulah Church,” coming from the Hebrew word for “marriage” (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2019; Patton 2018:79; Trinity Baptist Church n.d.). In 1881, Grayson’s brother, Charles Edwin Tyler, went bankrupt and was

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forced by the United States Court for the Eastern District of Virginia to subdivide and sell off portions of his large agricultural tract known as Mount Pleasant. The following year, in 1882, trustees of what was then changed to the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church purchased a 1-acre lot on the Warrenton and Alexandria Turnpike (current Lee Highway) for \$10, the location of the current church building (PWCDB 33:390). The log building was disassembled, moved on a wagon drawn by horses, and reassembled on the 1-acre property that same year and the congregation called themselves “Mount Pleasant Baptist Church” (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2019; Patton 2018:3–4). A local speculates that the move was due to a road widening on Old Carolina Road that took the land where the original log church sat (Patton 2018:160). The new location of the church was surrounded on all sides by agricultural fields and the property was outlined in shrubbery (Prince William County 1937). A fire, potentially caused by arson, occurred after the move and destroyed the log building; the church was rebuilt in 1889 just a few yards west of where the old building stood, where the present church now stands (Patton 2018:3).

Throughout the rural south, “the Baptist church remained a source of strength, solace, and solidarity in African-American communities at the turn of the century as the enactment of Jim Crow laws confirmed that severe racism still existed” (Center for Historic Preservation Middle Tennessee State University 2000:21). This is reflected in The Settlement community as it was further segregated following local trends in the county and regionally to contain primarily African American families including the McPherson, Churchill, Taylor, Tibbs, Moore, Perry, and McKinney surnames with farm labor continuing to be the primary source of work followed by washerwoman and day laborer (United States Federal Population 1900). Residents were predominantly located along what is now known as Carver Road and its intersection with the turnpike during the early-twentieth century, while some resided between Carver and Carolina roads along with small wooded patches and agricultural fields of corn and wheat (Brown 1901; Burr 1904). The church was easily accessible by unpaved paths that traversed the land between the three roads that congregation members would use to walk to the church and were used by children and adults alike (Prince William County 1937). These pathways were accessible from the northern end of the church property and forked to lead to both Carver Road to the northeast and Old Carolina Road to the northwest. They remained in continuous use throughout the twentieth century during periods of racial segregation and discrimination until new development encroached on the community. A current local resident remembers the pathways she was instructed to take to the church:

We would have to walk across the street and go across the graveyard and walk through the woods because it was safer for us to go through the woods. Because the concern was, if we walked down the road, and the longer we stayed on the road, if someone drove by and they would see us, they may throw something out the car, they may turn around and do something to us (Butler 2020:74).

In 1925, Carolina Randall, a widow, granted approximately 1 acre of land on the north side of the church lot to be utilized as a graveyard or a burial ground (PWCDB 81:393). There are several interments dating prior to 1925, suggesting that the Randall family already allowed the congregation to use the land as a cemetery. The cemetery is now a resting place for some of The

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Settlement's "first families: Berry, Berryman, Churchill, Gaskins, Johnson, McPherson, Perry, Thomas, Tibbs, Tyler, Peterson, Randall, Strother," and Grayson (Scheel 1996:86). During the early- to mid-twentieth century, the church property also included two cinder-block outhouses, one for the women and one for the men, with wood planks for the seat (Patton 2018:79). They featured a concrete-block privacy wall sheltering the entrance to each bathroom (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020).

Between 1928 and 1929, the current church building was constructed after another fire completely destroyed the 1889 building (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church n.d.). It was built on the foundation of the 1889 building. A current local resident theorizes that the consistent fires were likely arson (Patton 2018:37). He speculates that "because it was a black establishment [...] once you congregated, and they see you starting to develop numbers, they want to extinguish you right away. And that's how they did it. Break you up" (Patton 2018:37).

Locals interviewed during a county-sponsored oral history project noted that it was common for all in the community to attend church every Sunday morning, rain or shine (Patton 2018:113, 136, 216). Reverends typically did not come from the community, but rather traveled from Richmond and stayed with a local in The Settlement and commonly preached at several different churches in the area (Patton 2018:155). Funerals at the church were also a large gathering. Local funeral homes such as Joynes Funeral Home, Inc., an African American-owned funeral home founded in 1938, and Ames Funeral Home, started in 1959, continue to be the primary funeral home partners of the church (Ames Funeral Home Inc. 2018; Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020; Joynes Funeral Home, Inc. 2020). Prior to a baptismal pool, which is no longer extant since the 2012 fire, being installed in the circa-1970 addition, baptisms occurred in "a small creek behind the woods behind the home of Mama Sadie and Papa Jim" (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2017).

Many local residents of The Settlement recall the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church being a key part of the community as well as an assured safe place for social gatherings during many years of racial segregation and discrimination. Typical of many of rural African American churches in the south, they "were the nerve centers of their denominations, simultaneously sending pulses of humanity running upward through the institutional hierarchy and generating cohesion and a sense of belonging among people in isolated neighborhoods and settlements whom the larger society shunned because of their race" (Montgomery 1993:254). A current local resident who grew up in The Settlement and has been a long-time member of the church states that "...a lot of the things you went to were family things or church things, because that's what you were allowed to do. Because when things were segregated there was like...you kind of did things in your own little community because there was a fear of you know, only going where we were allowed to go" (Butler 2020:74). The church property operated a Sunday school, Bible school during the summers, and church fundraiser lawn parties. Community members would also meet at the church and take bus trips to fairs, such as the York Fair in Pennsylvania, and to nearby cities (Patton 2018:118). A yearly highlight for the community is the church's homecoming, which has been held on the fourth Sunday of every August for decades (Patton 2018:3-4). Other church congregations, such as those from Thoroughfare, Haymarket, Catharpin, and The Plains, among others, would also be invited for this occasion and those churches would invite the Mount

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Pleasant congregation to their own homecomings (Patton 2018:74, 118, 155). Even former members who were no longer active members of the church were welcomed back every year for homecoming as this event is so engrained in the local community (Butler 2020:61). For a period of time, the church had one of the only phones in the community, which was available for anyone to utilize (Patton 2018:116). As previously mentioned, the church was easily accessible from Lee Highway as well as from the unpaved paths deemed safer to use by locals that traversed The Settlement community (Prince William County 1937).

Historic aerials indicate that a one-story, gabled building, utilized as a fellowship hall and community space, was located on the property to the east of the church building near Lee Highway (Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC [NETR] 1952; Prince William County 1937). Pastor Henry Struthers, whose administration at the church began in 1893, raised money for this new space by conducting community events such as cake walks and marches (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2012). In 1907, the hall building was rented by the County School Board and used as a school for seven years while a new educational facility was constructed to replace the condemned Macrae School, which was deemed inadequate and closed (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2012; Phinney 1993:137). The hall was used for community and church events throughout its history until it was demolished by 1962 (NETR 1962).

“Residential architecture after World War II increasingly reflected the influences of mass production in the marketplace. In addition, a population boom along with housing subsidies for veterans triggered the construction of large numbers of houses in and around large cities” (History Matters, LLC 2014:53). As the twentieth century progressed, The Settlement and the Gainesville area were slowly affected by suburbanization due to its proximity to Washington, D.C., and its location along a popular thoroughfare. However, their community remained intact and relatively unscathed by suburban development during this period. Although approximately 45 dwellings were constructed in The Settlement during this time, they were erected by area family descendants and built using local craftsmen (Nathaniel Grayson, personal communication 2020). Many of the dwellings were built as part of small “family compounds” comprising between two to four dwellings formed along Carver Road and in one instance, on Lee Highway (Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC [NETR] 1952, 1962). This phase of development for the community reflects the success of later generations as they upgraded their and their parents’ properties and continued to live as a nucleus (Aiken 1985). Although further financial success was achieved from later generations, the church continued to serve as the center of African American life in this region of Prince William County since its inception in part because it was a safe and welcoming place for members of that community, unlike so many of the nearby recreations, businesses, and churches that discriminated against them because of their race.

By 1954, the area surrounding the church transformed from mainly crop fields into mostly wooded land as small farms were a struggle to keep in operation as a primary source of income (Prince William County 1954). As younger generations were able to find more profitable employment in areas such as domestic work, skilled labor, or government, donations to the church grew from coins to dollar bills and spurred some building improvements (Janet Robinson, personal communication 2020). According to Henry Peterson, a current Deacon for the church,

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local contractors were used to build the church additions or material alterations. Often the work was conducted in phases as the church had money, which was primarily acquired through fundraising activities, and contractors would complete the work until money ran out (Henry Peterson, personal communication, 2020).

Better church buildings became possible with the challenge and eventual smashing of Jim Crow segregation. This intensified period of church building and modernization is further associated with demographic change in rural communities and towns, where the expectations of World War II veterans, the rising number of professionals, and the expansion of a black middle class combined to provide the leadership and financial infrastructure for the push for civil rights (Center for Historic Preservation Middle Tennessee State University 2000:43).

During the early- to mid-twentieth century, the church building was completely stuccoed on the interior and exterior and portions of this material is still visible at the interior of the building where the core meets the additions (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). During the 1960s, a cellar was added beneath the east side of the church when they added a furnace and switched to oil from the wood-burning pot belly stove (Janet Robinson, personal communication 2020). Between the 1960s and 1979, multiple additions and renovations occurred. A one-story, shed-roofed addition (1960s) was appended to the rear elevation of the church and a kitchen was added. During this same period, the one-story, gabled-roof hall building was demolished and the shed-roofed addition was taken down and replaced by a larger rear addition (1970s), indoor bathrooms and a kitchen were added to the rear addition and a baptismal pool was moved from the choir loft to the rear additions, and the entire building's exterior was covered in pale yellow brick (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). In 1979, the rear addition was extended to the east (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020; Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2019). In 1985, additional improvements were made to the church building such as the donation of a lighted cross in the steeple tower by a congregation member, Nimrod Dade, and addition of porches for the front door of the church and fellowship hall (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2012, 2019). During this time, brothers Leon and Ritchie Nickens created a headstone concrete form to make grave markers affixed with brass name plates for burials that did not have markers or to replace temporary or severely damaged markers (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020). They also helped map the graveyard.

In 2005, D.R. Horton, Inc., a Delaware corporation, surveyed the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church property as they were planning a new development to the north and recorded an area of 2.59 acres for the church property (PWCDB 204411040188385). It is likely that the increase in acreage was from Juanita Johnson, who conveyed a small portion of land for the graveyard that contained her parents' graves (Mount Pleasant Baptist Church 2019). At this time, the gravel drive leading to the cemetery was laid with fencing along the west side (Prince William County 2006). In 2012, the church suffered yet another destructive fire that primarily affected the fellowship hall, as the brick and stucco that enclosed the main massing of the church acted as a firewall, protecting the core from significant fire damage. The congregation has been meeting at another local church while they continue their fundraising efforts to restore the church. Recently,

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the roof of the additions has been removed and a second story has been added as part of the first phase of renovation from the fire, demonstrating steady progress amidst ongoing efforts to raise money for its complete rehabilitation (Henry Peterson, personal communication 2020).

### **Architectural Analysis**

To evaluate the architecture of this church, a review of other Baptist churches in Prince William County, particularly those with an African American affiliation, constructed between 1910 and 1930 was conducted. Records in the Virginia Cultural Resource Inventory System note 16 Baptist churches previously recorded in the county, three of which were constructed between 1910 and 1930 (DHR #076-0260, 076-0328, and 272-0012-0062). They have not been formally evaluated for National Register of Historic Places eligibility. The Mt. Olive Baptist Church (DHR #076-0260) in Occoquan is a circa-1915, vernacular, one-story, wood-frame building with a brick and stucco veneer that historically had an African American congregation and features similar renovations conducted over the year akin to the architectural evolution of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. Another Baptist church located in Occoquan is the Ebenezer Baptist Church (DHR #272-0012-0062) is a one-story, frame building constructed around 1924. The building is clad in rusticated concrete block and features a corner tower entrance. Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church/ Nokesville Freewill Baptist Church (DHR #076-0328), located in Nokesville, is a one-story, three-bay church similar in form to the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church. It was constructed around 1912 and features a central gabled tower with a double-leaf door.

Located in nearby Fauquier County is the Beulah Baptist Church (not previously surveyed) in Pilgrim's Rest, a community settled by freed slaves after the Civil War and named after a bible verse. "The sole remaining fixture of the settlement is the Beulah Church, whose congregation was formed in 1899" (Fauquier County Board of Supervisors 2007:73). The church was built in 1911 but unlike the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, it was heavily remodeled in 1966 and now reflects a one-story, two-bay, concrete-block building covered by a front-gabled roof. The only adornment it features is a cross on its primary elevation above the double-leaf door. Another African American Baptist church established at the turn of the twentieth century is the Walnut Grove Baptist Church (DHR #030-5061) located in Warrenton. Organized in 1907 and built in 1918, the one-story, one-bay, front-gabled, frame building features a one-story vestibule and short tower at the façade. Windows are stained-glass double-hung-sash units and the building remains fairly unadorned. Similar to the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, the Walnut Grove Baptist Church features a concrete-block rear addition. Many of these African American Baptist churches constructed during the early-twentieth century have a similar amount of physical integrity as Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and have had alterations over the years to accommodate a growing congregation whose financial means and security became increasingly more stable with newer generations. However, Mount Pleasant's longstanding association and representation of The Settlement community (DHR #076-6010) better exemplifies and demonstrates a space used not only for religious worship and burial but for many community-centric activities associated with a free African American community established during the period of reconstruction and operated throughout the twentieth century to the present day.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: The Ruth E. Lloyd Information Center at the Bull Run Regional Library, Prince William County Circuit Court

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** 076-6009

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2.59

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.7897940                      Longitude: -77.638260
2. Latitude:                                      Longitude:
3. Latitude:                                      Longitude:
4. Latitude:                                      Longitude:

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The NRHP property boundaries are drawn to encompass the current tax parcel where the resources sits, which is recorded as parcel number 7297-81-5699 in Prince William County land records and is depicted on the enclosed tax map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries as deeded to the current owners, the trustees of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, by E.E. Meredith, assignee of Charles E. Tyler, in 1882 encompassing 1 acre along with an additional acre deeded to the trustees of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church by Caroline Randall for use of a graveyard in February 1925 (PWCDB 33:390, 81:393). This is the lot that has been historically associated with the congregation since the 1880s. The lot has not changed in size since the 1920s; however, in 2005 a survey was conducted on the property which indicated a total of 2.59 acres (PWCDB 200411040188385).

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Adriana T. Moss, Architectural Historian  
organization: Dovetail Cultural Resource Group  
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telephone: 540-899-9170 ext. 1003  
date: August 18, 2020

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, 15008 Lee Highway  
(DHR# 076-6009)

City or Vicinity: Gainesville

County: Prince William State: Virginia

Photographer: Adriana T. Moss

Date Photographed: January 29 and July 29, 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Southeast Oblique of Building Core  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0001

2 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Southeast Oblique  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0002

3 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Southwest Oblique  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0003

4 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, South Elevation, Looking Northeast  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0004

5 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Primary Entrance, South Elevation, Looking Northeast  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0005

6 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Northeast Oblique  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0006

7 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery

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Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Northwest Oblique  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0007

8 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, West Elevation, Looking Southeast  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0008

9 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, West Elevation  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0009

10 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Date Stone Detail, South Elevation  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0010

11 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Window and Crawl Space Access Detail, East  
Elevation  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0011

12 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Interior Wall Detail, East Wall  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0012

13 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, View of Where Building Core and Additions  
Abut, West Wall  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0013

14 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Roof Truss System Detail, Looking  
Southwest  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0014

15 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Flooring and Floor Joists Detail, Looking  
Southwest  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0015

16 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Floor Joists Detail, Looking Southwest  
VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0016

17 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Interior of Sanctuary, Looking North

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18 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Overview of Cemetery, Looking Northwest

VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0018

19 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Headstone Overview, Southern Portion of Cemetery, Looking North

VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0019

20 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Headstone Overview, Southern Portion of Cemetery, Looking Southwest

VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0020

21 of 21:

Mount Pleasant Baptist Church and Cemetery, Headstone Overview, Western Portion of Cemetery, Looking Northwest

VA\_PrinceWilliamCounty\_MountPleasantBaptistChurch\_0021

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.