



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Note: PIFs are prepared by applicants and evaluated by DHR staff and the State Review Board based on information known at the time of preparation. Recommendations concerning PIFs are subject to change if new information becomes available.

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 002-1127

1. General Property Information

Property name: Mount Carmel Baptist Church

Property address: 4870 Browns Gap Turnpike

City or Town: Crozet

Zip code: 22932

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Albemarle County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building X Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: two (2) acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural X

Briefly describe the property's overall location and setting, including any notable landscape features:

Mt. Carmel Baptist Church located in Browns Cove Virginia sits atop a 2.0-acre rounded rectangular tract carved out of a larger mountainous parcel owned by the namesake founding Brown family. The church was constructed on the descent from the mountain, graded and leveled, but retains a forested perimeter and vantage point overlooking Browns Gap Turnpike, Rt. 810 and the Doyles River. The original sanctuary and latter-day fellowship hall are connected by a covered walkway. Founded in 1879 North of White Hall Virginia in the northwest quadrant, both structures are aligned north toward Browns Gap and the Shenandoah National Park.

Historic Browns Cove Colored School, the first school for descendants of the enslaved, remains opposite the church on the east side of the Doyles.

West of the fellowship hall lies the church cemetery on sloping terrain next to the structure with unmarked graves extending toward the northwest corner boundary. It is possible that the cemetery predates any phase of building. The parking area below the west embankment is in view of the front entrance to the church and immediately south of the church cemetery.

A shared gravel entrance lane approached from Rt. 810 begins on a short incline south of the boundary winding past the church and exits on a descent 0.17 mi on the northeast boundary corner again intersecting with Rt. 810, making the church easily accessible traveling north and south on Browns Gap Turnpike.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Colonial Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Unknown

If the builder is known, please list here: Unknown

Date of construction (can be approximate): c.1908 (building); c. early 1900s (cemetery)

Narrative Description (Please do not exceed one page in describing the property):

Briefly describe the property's general characteristics, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions or other major alterations.

Mt. Carmel Baptist Church is composed of two parallel structures, 9' apart, joined by a hyphen at their rear. Principal facades of both structures face south with a double-door main entrance centered in each, including an open porch over the fellowship hall addition. The early church structure is on the east side, with the modern fellowship hall structure, entrance porch, and hyphen on the west. Both structures are perpendicular to a steep west-to-east downhill slope that is slightly flattened for the buildings and parking lot. The entire church and fellowship hall building is of frame construction with vinyl siding. Only the basement of the chancel/choir addition has concrete block exterior walls. Gable roofs with asphalt shingles are on all blocks of the church and fellowship hall, except for the church nave block which has older standing seam metal roofing.

The east-side church structure of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church is formed of three building blocks, with the largest nave block in the center and smaller blocks at both ends—entrance block to the south and chancel block on the north. Both entrance and nave blocks are aligned on the north-south center axis, while the chancel block is slightly off-center of this axis due to alignment of its west wall with that of the nave.

The entrance block, with public facade facing the gravel parking lot, is one bay deep with double entrance doors on the south elevation leading to a center vestibule and flanking toilets. Rising above the vestibule is a bell tower, approximately 23' tall, with a rectangular shaft and nearly flat, pyramidal metal roof. Centered on each side of the tower, just below the cornice, is a fenestration opening, now closed.

Straight ahead from the vestibule, through double doors, is the nave block with center aisle and side pews facing the chancel at the north end. The symmetrical rectangular nave block is four bays deep with a 13'-8" tall ceiling height. Beneath the exterior vinyl siding is the original wood clapboarding finish. Inside, the nave walls and ceiling are finished with original wood beadboard; painted vertical beadboard below the wainscot cap, and above the cap the walls are finished with varnished beadboard in a decorative chevron pattern. The painted beadboard ceiling is coved along its east and west wall intersections with an approximate 2' radius.

The chancel and choir are in the slightly off-center north end block, viewable from the nave through a large, arched opening. The 15" high raised floor level in the chancel block extends through the arched opening about 5' into the nave. Taking advantage of the hillside slope, this

north end block has a basement with a grade-level exterior door on its east elevation. The east elevation of both floors is two bays wide. The upper floor's north elevation has a pair of

centered windows at floor level plus a pair of centered colored glass windows above the floor level windows, just below the chancel's raised cathedral ceiling.

Erection dates for the church blocks begins with construction of the nave block in c.1908 that included a small half-octagon apsidal chancel extension at the north end. The vestibule and bell tower were added in 1931. The two-story chancel and choir block was added in c.1975, replacing the original smaller chancel. Toilets were added to both sides of the entrance block's vestibule in 1988, along with the installation of vinyl siding to all church blocks. Entrance steps to the vestibule were replaced in 1993 with the current enlarged masonry platform.

Lastly, the west-side fellowship hall and hyphen additions were constructed in 1996.

In a bullet list, include any outbuildings or secondary resources or major landscape features (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

- Cemetery
-
-

4. Property's History and Significance (Please do not exceed one page)

Briefly explain the property's historic importance, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property.

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

For generations, oral history held that Mount Carmel Baptist Church was founded by descendants of the enslaved—individuals determined to build a spiritual home in the aftermath of Emancipation. However, recent reviews of historical records, including land deeds and census documents, have unveiled a more profound truth. The church's founders—Lilburn Waller (b. 1827), Daniel Wood (b. 1847), Lilburn Gratton (b. 1847), Lyon Rodes Waller (b. 1858), and James Jackson (b. 1845)—were not merely children of the enslaved but had themselves endured the dehumanization of slavery first hand. This revelation reframes our understanding of the church's origins, highlighting it as a direct act of self-determination by those who had been legally enslaved just years prior. In an extraordinary act of quiet defiance, these men purchased land and built a church—a bold declaration of faith, resilience, and hope in the newly reconstructed South.

Their resistance was not marked by grandiose protests but by steadfast actions rooted in the belief that faith, land ownership, education, and community were essential to securing a future beyond oppression. For two dollars, they acquired land from the heir of the former plantation owner, as documented in the original 1881 land conveyance records (Albemarle County Deed Book 79, Page 116). This act was both symbolic and practical, creating a space where Black men and women could worship freely, educate their children, and strengthen their community against forces intent on disenfranchising them.

Overlooking the banks of the Doyle's River, Mount Carmel Baptist Church has been a continuous place of worship since its founding in 1879. It was among the few Black churches established in post-Emancipation Albemarle County, Virginia—a testament to the perseverance of a people determined to build their own institutions despite relentless barriers. Mount Carmel served as an anchor for the Black population of Brown's Cove, evolving into a beacon of faith, education, and community empowerment. According to church records, in its early years, Mount Carmel Baptist Church served as an informal school, providing essential education in reading, writing, and arithmetic. With the nearest formal school located six miles away in White Hall, Virginia, Mount Carmel became a crucial educational resource for local Black families. Even after the opening of Brown's Cove School, the church's legacy in education remained a vital part of its history.

Mount Carmel has given rise to local leaders who changed local history, including Charles Lewis Barbour, Charlottesville's first Black mayor, and Randolph White, a pioneer in inhalation therapy who later founded a news publication advocating for equal rights for people of color ([The Daily Progress, 1994]; [The Daily Progress 1984]). Their journeys began in the pews of this very church, nurtured by the wisdom, strength, and determination of those who came before them.

Inextricably linked to Mount Carmel Baptist Church is its sacred cemetery, a hallowed resting place where generations of Brown's Cove's African American families are interred. This burial ground is more than a final resting place—it is a testament to the resilience, faith, and contributions of those who built and sustained this community. The preservation of this site is not just an act of remembrance, but a profound commitment to honoring their legacy.

Although small, with approximately 16 visible graves, the cemetery holds the stories of the church's congregation—individuals who shaped local history through their faith and perseverance. Many graves, once marked, have been lost to time, their inscriptions worn away or their locations forgotten. Oral histories from church elders confirm that burials ceased decades ago, and the cemetery is no longer in active use. However, it remains a vital landmark, deeply embedded in the historical fabric of Mount Carmel.

Among those laid to rest is Nimrod Barbour, a soldier deployed to Europe in 1918 with the all-black 808th Pioneer Infantry Regiment during World War I. At the Battle of Meuse-Argonne, Nimrod endured exposure to poison gas, a fate suffered by many African American soldiers who served with distinction despite racial discrimination ([U.S. Military

Service Record, 1918]; [The Daily Progress, 1930]). His story is a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by the church's community, not just in faith, but in service to the nation.

Recognizing the importance of preserving this sacred ground, Mount Carmel Baptist Church has taken the first steps by partnering with the Commonwealth History Fund to undertake a comprehensive effort to identify and document unmarked graves. This includes research into archival burial records and future plans to employ ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to locate additional resting places. These efforts ensure that every individual interred here—whether known or forgotten—receives the dignity of recognition.

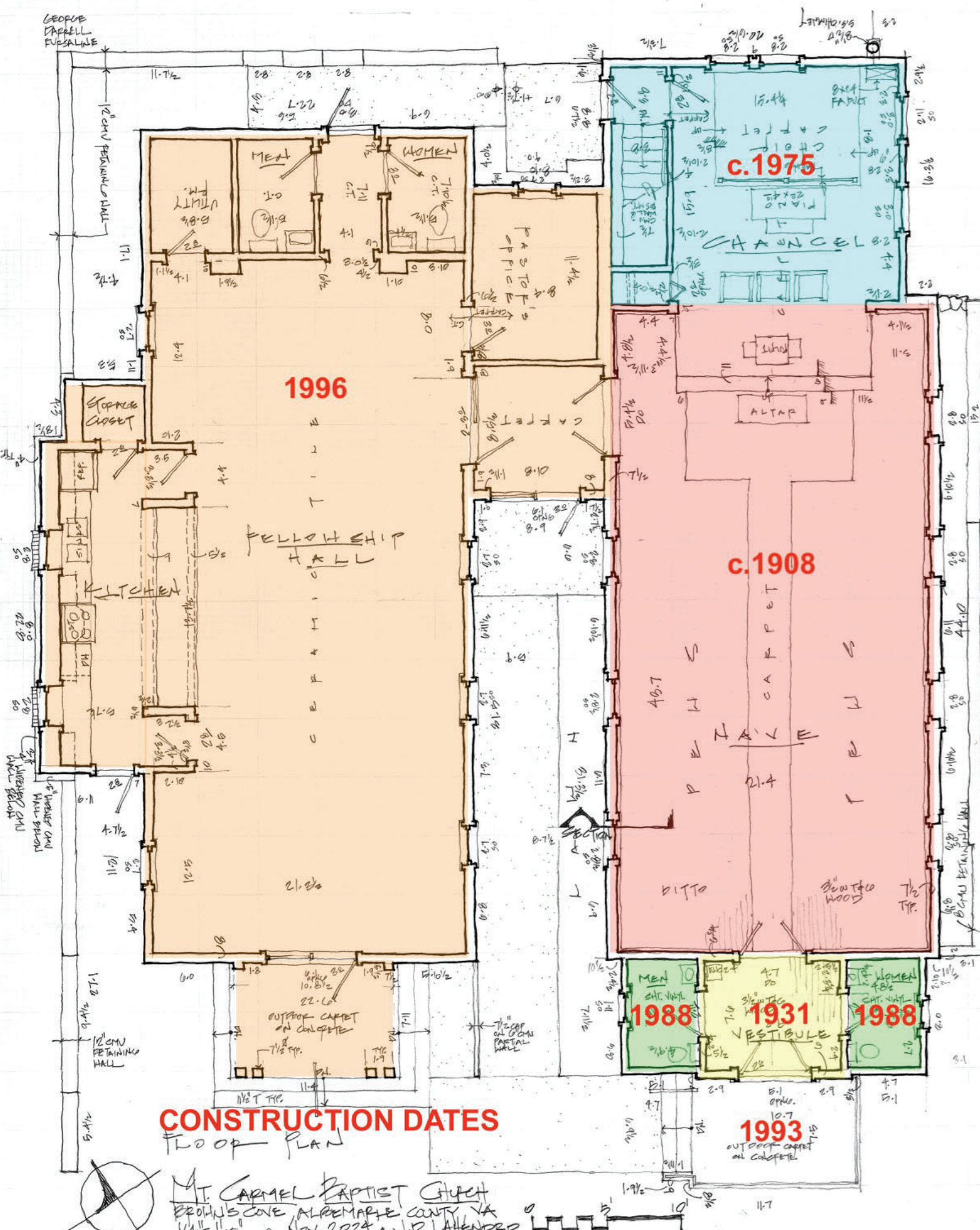
For 145 years, Mount Carmel Baptist Church has stood as a steadfast pillar—a place of worship, a school, a community gathering space, and a witness to history. By establishing the church and securing land, its founders became part of a broader social movement for African American rights during the post-Reconstruction era, embodying a commitment to autonomy, resilience, and the creation of thriving Black communities.

Today, it remains far more than a building—it is a living monument to the African American experience in Brown's Cove, Albemarle County, and broader Virginia black history. Preserving Mount Carmel is not just about saving wood and stone; it is about honoring a legacy, safeguarding sacred ground, and ensuring that future generations can stand where their ancestors once stood—feeling the same strength, unity, and unshakable sense of belonging.

- 1870 U.S Census, Albemarle County, VA Enumeration District 5
- Albemarle County Deed Book 79, page 116
- U.S. Military Service Record, 1918 & The Daily Progress, 1930
- Albemarle County T.M. 14-31 B
- The Daily Progress 1994 & 1984

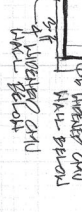
7

GEORGE
CARROLL
EPPSALINE

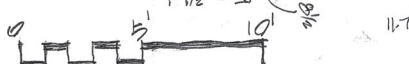


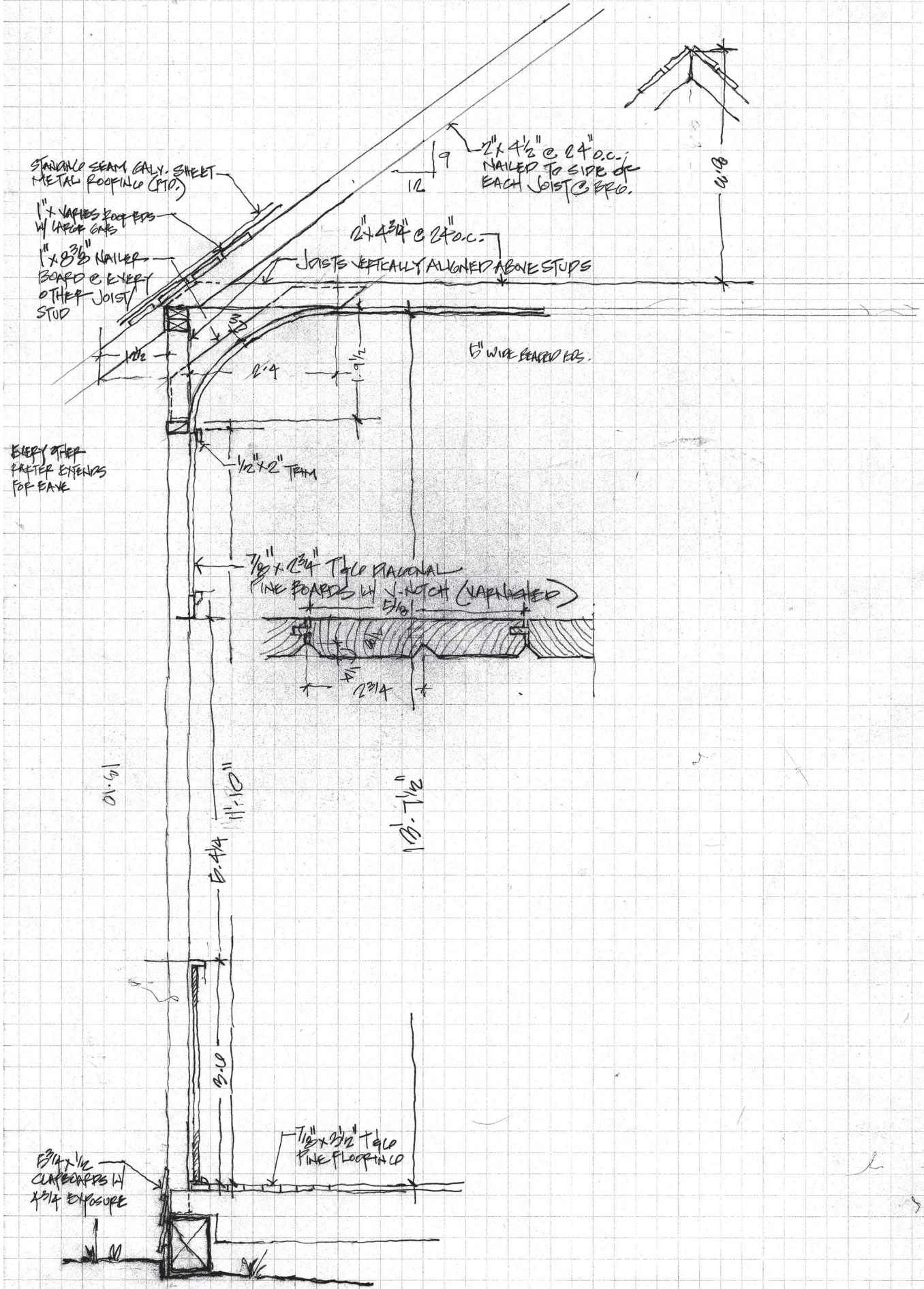
CONSTRUCTION DATES FLOOR PLAN

MT. CARMEL BAPTIST CHURCH
BROWN'S COVE, ALBEMARLE COUNTY, VA
1/4" = 1'-0" • Nov. 2024 • J.D. LATENDRO

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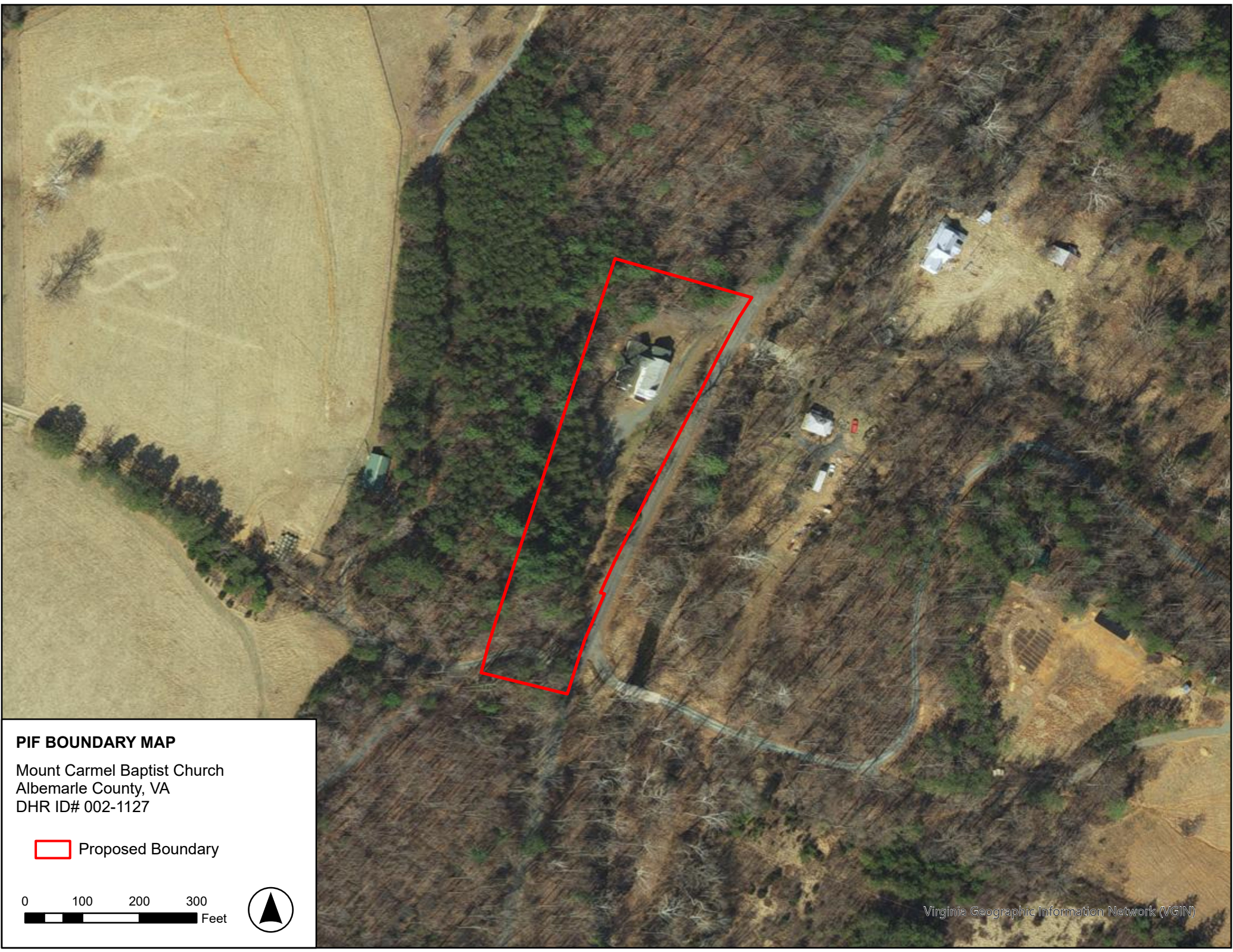
MT. CARMEL BAPTIST CHURCH
BROWN'S COVE ALBEMARLE COUNTY VA
1/4" = 1'-0" • Nov. 2024 • J.D. LAMENDO






SECTION





PIF BOUNDARY MAP

Mount Carmel Baptist Church
Albemarle County, VA
DHR ID# 002-1127

 Proposed Boundary


0 100 200 300
Feet

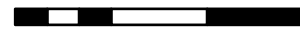




PIF AERIAL-VICINITY MAP

Mount Carmel Baptist Church
Albemarle County, VA
DHR ID# 002-1127

 Proposed Boundary

0 300 600 900
 Feet































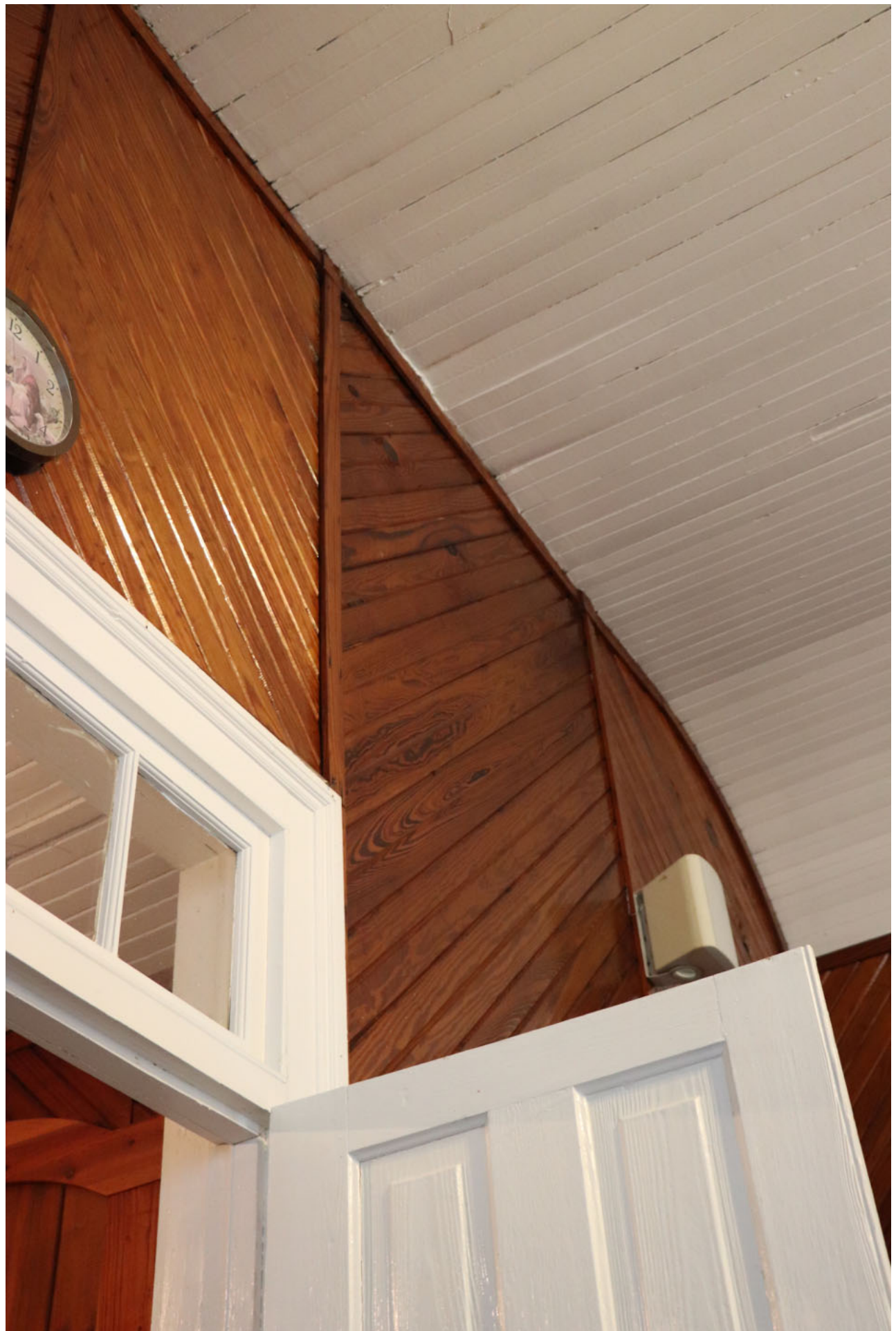










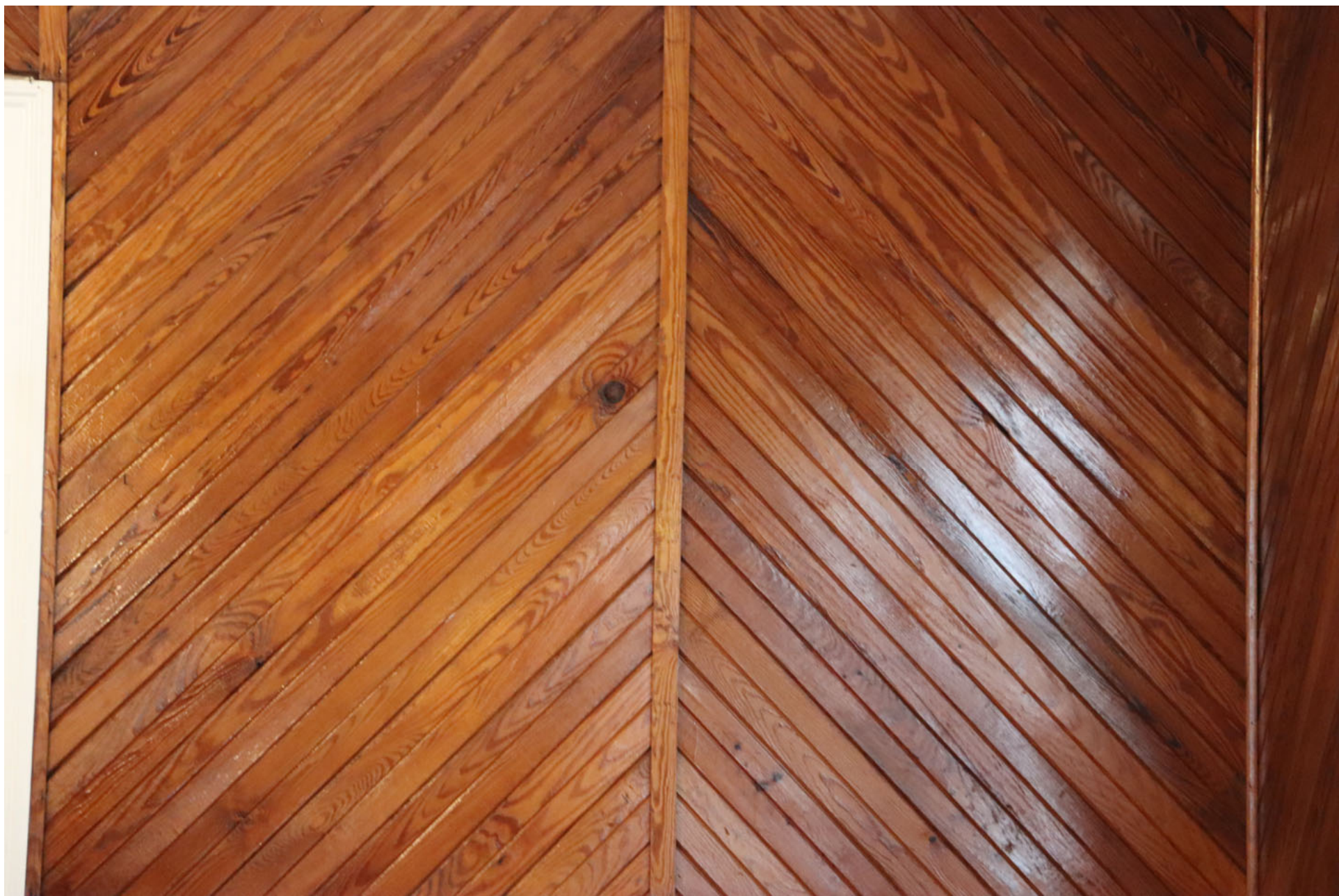


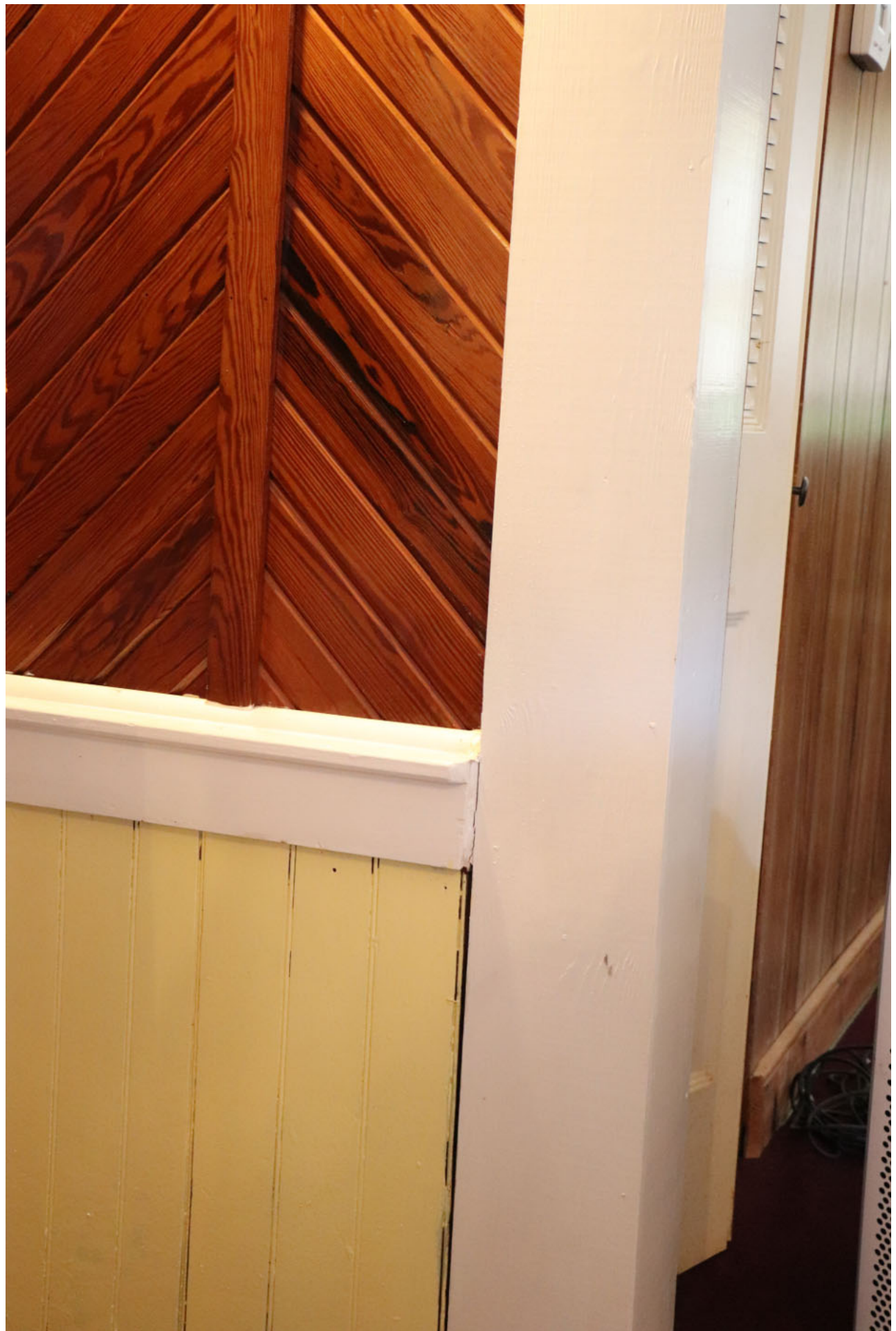
































4870

Mt. Carmel
BAPTIST CHURCH

Est. 1879