

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission



Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church

18423 John Connor Road

Cornelius, NC 28031

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

Local Landmark Designation Report

Prepared by Michele Lemere

August 2024

Revised by Tommy Warlick

February & May 2025

HISTORIC NAMES OF PROPERTY

Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church, previously known as Hunters Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY

18423 John Connor Road, Cornelius, NC 28031

PIN

00184138

DEED BOOK AND PAGE

2263-0295

ZONING

GR

LAND/ACREAGE

2.42 Acres

APPRAISED VALUE

The designation would not affect the owner's tax responsibility due to its exempt status as a religious institution. As of January 2025, the total appraised value of the property is \$824,700.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DESIGNATION

The Commission recommends the exterior of the building, the interior of the original 1961 building, the cemetery, and the property associated with the tax parcel for historic designation.

NAME/ADDRESS OF CURRENT PROPERTY OWNER

Hunters Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church
18423 John Connor Road
Cornelius NC 28031

DESIGNATION REPORT CONTENTS

This report includes maps and representative photographs of the property, a brief historical sketch and architectural description of the property, a list of the parameters of the interior designation, and documentation as to why and how the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. § 160D-945.

I. Abstract

Statement of Significance

Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church qualifies for landmark designation because of its unique historical and cultural significance to the postbellum African American experience in north Mecklenburg County. Black sharecropping families founded the congregation in the early 1900s; many of their descendants remain active in the congregation more than 115 years later. The church's original location was in a region of Black and White farmers cultivating crops near the Catawba River. The creation of Lake Norman flooded that original location in the early 1960s, forcing the congregation to relocate. In 1961, the congregation found a new location further inland at which to construct a new sanctuary and relocate its historic cemetery. The then-rural setting of the church remained largely undeveloped until the mid to late 1990s, allowing the building to maintain its character as a country church in a largely agricultural environment well into the last decade of the twentieth century. Since the 1990s, however, the area has experienced rapid residential development, resulting in some of the most expensive residential real estate in Mecklenburg County. As a result of those increasing development pressures, the Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church is now a singular representation of the area's rural, agricultural, and institutional past, the region's evolving social and cultural character from the mid-1960s through the 1970s, and the more recent suburbanization of Cornelius and Mecklenburg County's other once-rural communities since the 1990s. The building is located on John Connor Road, a thoroughfare named for a member of one of the congregation's founding families who was also one of the few early African Americans in north Mecklenburg to own a farm.

Statement of Integrity

Location – HIGH: The Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church building retains a high degree of integrity of location, as it has been at its current site since 1961 and is relatively close to the now-submerged location (due to the creation of Lake Norman) of the congregation's original circa 1909 church facility.

Design – HIGH: Providing a reliable example of postwar Modernist church architecture with its functional minimalist design, Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church retains a high level of design integrity. A rear addition erected within 20 years of completion of the original 1961 structure is not readily visible from the street. The façade retains its original appearance and incorporates the wooden steeple and bell from the circa 1909 structure. The later rear addition represents the spirit of flexibility and growth encouraged by the Methodist denomination. While the architect is unknown, the building's design and layout are comparable to plans provided by the Methodist denomination during that time. Minimal interior alterations have been made to the 1961 structure, limited primarily to the evolving needs of the congregation (*e.g.*, improved lighting, carpeting, bathroom fixtures). The later rear addition included a new kitchen, allowing for the original kitchen (located in the 1961 structure immediately adjacent to the sanctuary) to be converted into an office.

Setting – MODERATE/HIGH: The Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church building is situated on an open 2.42-acre parcel of land located on a Lake Norman peninsula. Although

the area has experienced explosive residential growth in the past thirty years, replacing much of the farming and leisure communities that once existed, the size of the parcel and the mature growth forest separating the parcel on three sides from the adjacent neighborhoods help preserve a sense of the building's original rural setting.

Materials – HIGH: The exterior of the Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church building and the interior of its 1961 structure retain a high degree of integrity of materials. The 1961 brick façade, the 1909 steeple and bell, the cornerstone, and the stained-glass windows remain fully intact, as do such original interior features as the plaster walls, wooden floors, sanctuary fixtures, and wooden trim work. Aside from the circa 1970s addition, which varies slightly in brick color and massing, there are few structural modifications.

Workmanship: HIGH: The Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church building represents the Modernist style of rural mid-century African American churches that replaced the small wooden structures of the postbellum period. The structure embodies the workmanship typically seen during that time in rural Mecklenburg County, competently executing the structure's simple, functional design while reflecting the skills of mid-century rural Mecklenburg County craftsmen. The sustained physical integrity of the original structure evidences the high degree of workmanship in its construction.

Feeling – MODERATE/HIGH: Despite encroaching development, the materials, location, property, and terrain of the Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church building and property emit the feel of a small country church, sustaining a moderate to high degree of integrity of feeling. The building sits close to the road and is surrounded by green open space. The cemetery is in the southwest corner of the property. The wooded border on three sides of the property helps maintain the rural feel, masking the adjacent substantial residential development. The large modern homes surrounding the property serve to accentuate the church's historic character.

Association – HIGH: Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church is a significant example of a rural family church that once served as the community touchstone. Despite the loss of the original church building (due to technological innovations and the region's growing need for electrical power in the 1950s and 1960s) and the area's rapid suburbanization since the mid to late 1990s, the 1961 Hunters Chapel church building remains an active place of worship for a thriving congregation that includes several descendants of the original founders of the congregation, a testament to the congregation's dedication to their religious faith, their historical customs and traditions, and to each other. Indeed, despite those changes, the congregation managed to grow, necessitating the additional space afforded by the circa 1970s expansion of the structure. As families move away and new residents move in, which happens throughout Mecklenburg County, such congregations and their historical places of worship are becoming increasingly rare. In an area and era of remarkable social and physical change, the congregation of Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church has continued to stay the course.

II. Maps and Chain of Title

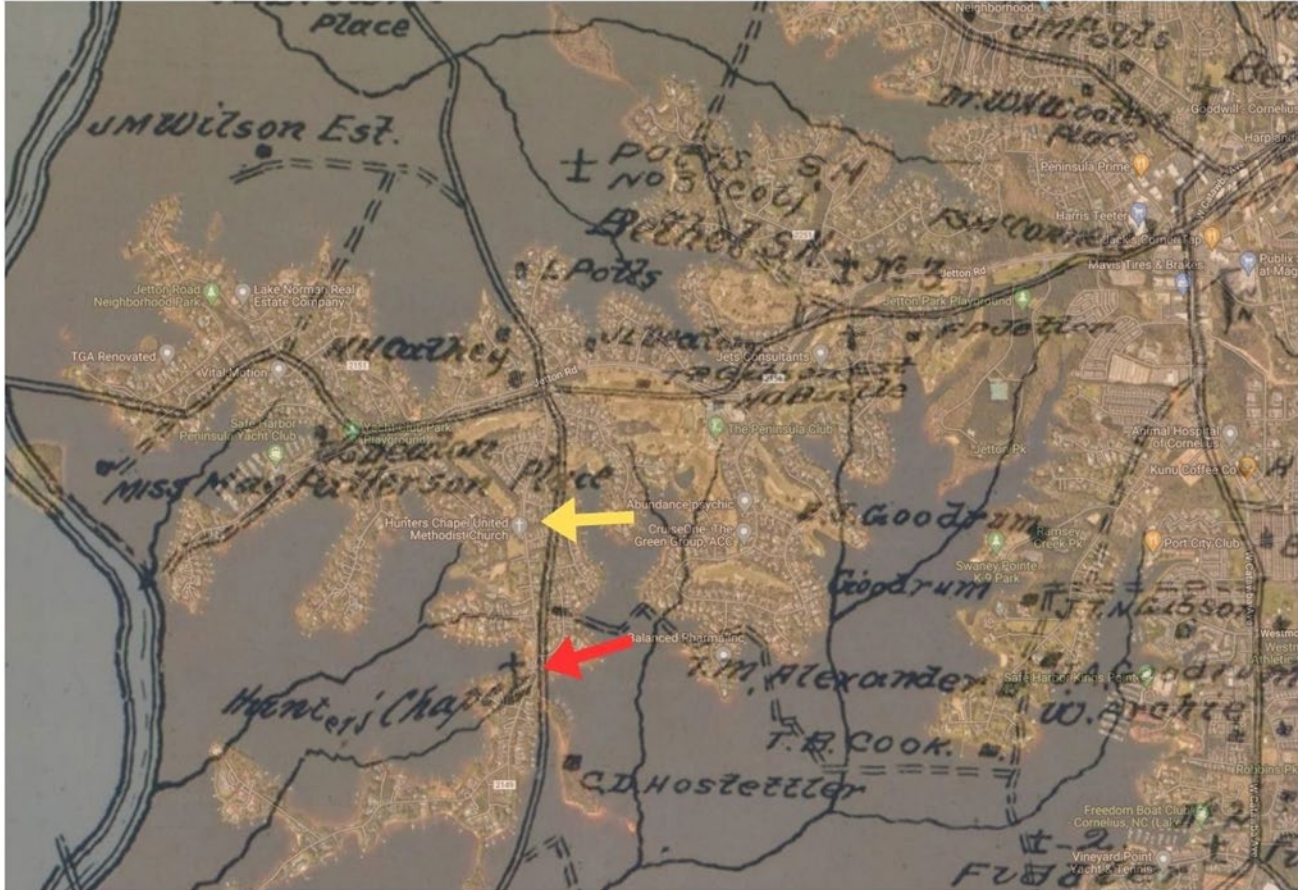
Location 1

The church's first location on Beatties Ford Road currently lies beneath Lake Norman. The portion of the 1911 C.A. Spratt map of Mecklenburg County below marks "Hunters Chapel" with a cross, indicating a church before the existence of Lake Norman. This entire portion of land west of "Beatty Ford Road" was likely known as "Hunters Chapel" within the Lemley township. The towns of Cornelius and Davidson are within the "DeWese" Township at top right.



1911 Map of Mecklenburg County, <https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/ncmaps/id/959>

The map below superimposes a 2024 Google map with the 1911 Spratt map. The red arrow indicates the church's original location, now under Lake Norman; the yellow arrow indicates the current location. The alignment is slightly askew, as noticed in the curvature of Beatties Ford Road.



Historic Overlay Map, https://web.lib.unc.edu/nc-maps/interactive/Cm912-60_1911s.php

Location 2

The map below shows the church's current location outlined in green and nearly surrounded by a high-priced residential neighborhood. The small peninsula containing Connor Quay Court was once the location of the Connor family recreation center, known as Lakeview Country Club. The church's original location was southeast of the peninsula. This surviving section of Beatties Ford Road was renamed John Connor Road in 1993. The area falls under the jurisdiction of the town of Cornelius.



Mecklenburg County Polaris, <https://polaris3g.mecklenburgcountync.gov/address/60298>

Chain of Title

Transaction Date	Grantor	Grantee	Book	Page
10/3/1960	Duke Power Company	John Connor, Aussie Rivens, James Torrence, Lewis Connor, & Pink McNeeley, trustees of Hunters Chapple [sic] of Methodist Episcopal Church	2263	295
10/21/1923	J.B. Withers & Chester Belle Withers	Catawba Manufacturing & Electric Power Company	654	328
5/25/1923	Annie H. Brown	J.B. Withers	506	24

III. Historical Sketch

African Americans and Methodism

Students at Christ Church College in Oxford University developed the Methodist movement in the 1720s which worked to serve the needs of London's poor classes. Likewise, lower classes in the American colonies embraced the Wesleyan movement when it arrived here in the 1730s. Societies spread along the eastern seaboard and into Appalachia and came together to form the Methodist Episcopal (M.E.) Church at the denomination's Christmas Conference in 1784. It also reaffirmed its opposition to slavery at the conference, thus both enslaved and free African Americans were drawn to the denomination.¹

Racial differences in the United States prompted several splits within the denomination both before and after the Civil War. Groups of Black congregants frustrated with discrimination formed the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in 1816 and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E. Zion) Church in 1820. In 1844, the remaining Methodist Episcopal Church, comprised of both Black and White worshipers, split over the issue of slavery. The Methodist Episcopal North faction remained opposed to slavery, while the Methodist Episcopal South permitted the institution among its members.²

The end of the war did not lead to racial integration within the denomination, but more division. In the antebellum period, the enslaved often worshipped with White slaveowners but were relegated to galleries or balconies. After emancipation, they separated from White congregations to form their own churches, which offered spiritual autonomy and "became safe havens for a people under siege."³ Though Black membership grew post-war in part through the M.E. North

¹ Eric C. Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 49-50.

² *Ibid.*, 50, 65. John Wesley previously expressed the Methodist opposition to slavery in his *General Rules* in 1743.

³ Stewart Gray and Paula Stathakis, "African American Resources in Mecklenburg County," *North Carolina Digital Collections*, (September 2002): 14, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/african-american-resources-in-mecklenburg-county/378695>, accessed May 13, 2025.

Church's involvement in organizing missions and building schools through the Freedmen's Aid Society, some southern Black Methodists branched off into the C.M.E. (Colored Methodist Episcopal, later Christian Methodist Episcopal) denomination. Others petitioned to form separate Black conferences within the Methodist Episcopal Church – segregated units that allowed for Black ordained preachers and elected representation in the General Conference. When White factions of the church merged, and regional jurisdictions were formed in 1939, Black conferences were placed in a separate Central Jurisdiction. The Evangelical United Brethren Church and Methodist Church merged to form the United Methodist Church in 1968 and eliminated the Central Jurisdiction.⁴

Early Hunters Chapel History

Hunters Chapel was established as a Methodist Episcopal church that, according to its current members, did not join the A.M.E., A.M.E. Zion, or C.M.E. denominations, and thus functioned within the Central Jurisdiction until 1968.⁵ It is unclear whether its founding members had been enslaved. Church history maintains a founding date of 1909, although the congregation probably predates this by several years, and the “Hunters Chapel” name seems to refer to the surrounding community as well as the church itself. A Mecklenburg County deed dated July 10, 1890, shows the transfer of 1 ½ acres west of Beatties Ford Road from M.A. Gillespie and wife M.A. Gillespie to Adam Graham Morrow/Monro Houston and Columbus Mathews/Mathers, “Trustees of Hunters Chapple [*sic*], a Methodist Church.”⁶ Gillespie was a White landowner who also gave land to Torrence Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in 1868.⁷ Fifteen years later, a *Charlotte News* article published April 19, 1905, reported that the “colored people of Hunter’s Chapel are hauling lumber to build a new church. The plans indicate a very strong desire on the part of this people to supply themselves with an up-to-date structure.” The article credited the congregation as “very thrifty and enterprising.”⁸ This news brief implies two things: Hunters Chapel was a recognizable, inhabited community within the Lemley Township prior to completion of the 1909 church building, and the existing congregation desired an “up-to-date” (*i.e.*, newer, more modern) structure. A 1951 *Charlotte News* article about a planting demonstration at the Connor farm involving “farmers of the Hunter’s Chapel section of Mecklenburg County” is among several references to the community as a cohesive body.⁹

⁴ Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 66-7; “United Methodist African American Timeline,” <https://gcah.org/history/timelines/unity-methodist-african-american-timeline/>, accessed May 13, 2025.

⁵ Edith Summers, interview with Michele Lemere, August 12, 2024.

⁶ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 0074, Pages 86-7.

⁷ Michael Connor, electronic message to Michele Lemere, August 14, 2024.

⁸ “Huntersville Happenings,” *Charlotte News*, April 19, 1905, 3.

⁹ “Demonstration at Connor Farm,” *Charlotte News*, May 21, 1951, 7A.



Headstone of infant Theodore Johnson, Sept. 8, 1901- Feb. 1903, at the current church cemetery (2024). Duke Power moved the Johnson grave and headstone, along with other graves and markers, in 1961 to make way for Lake Norman.

Further evidence of the congregation's pre-1909 existence rests with at least one headstone relocated by Duke Power from the old church cemetery to the current site. Theodore Johnson, the infant son of J.G. and L. Johnson, was born September 8, 1901, and died February 1903.¹⁰ The infant's burial at the church's original location some six years before the structure's construction suggests that a congregation likely began meeting at that location, perhaps informally, before the congregation's official 1909 founding.

While written records are unavailable,¹¹ it would not be unusual for a nascent congregation to form in this manner. Early Methodist "circuit riders" traveled on horseback to farm towns to visit fall revivals and camp meetings and evangelize. Each circuit, supervised by a conference preacher, could include up to thirty meeting places, few of which were actual meeting houses. Services were often held outdoors or in cabins or barns. These circuit riders were key to spreading Methodism throughout the country, particularly in the American frontier and rural South.¹² Hunters Chapel descendent and Methodist pastor Reverend Charlie Rivens explained that as a circuit would grow, a congregation would build a structure similar to a barn raising, often with monetary support from the Methodist conference. He believes this is what occurred with Hunters Chapel.¹³

¹⁰ Duke Power Company, "Relocation of Various Cemeteries from Area Inundated by the Waters of Lake Norman," Davidson College Archives and Special Collections, n.d.

¹¹ Edith Summers interview. Summers, a former church secretary, said much of the church's early records were damaged in storage.

¹² "Circuit Rider," Encyclopedia Britannica, November 18, 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/circuit-rider>, accessed May 13, 2025.

¹³ Charlie Rivens, interview with Michele Lemere, July 18, 2024.

Regardless of the exact date, by 1909 a structure was in place and became a community hub for its founding families. Current church members remember the small wooden church, since swallowed up by Lake Norman. Vera Robertson, aged 85, is a farmer's daughter who remembers sitting in the back of the church and giggling at all the shouting as a child. She recalls a wooden church sitting on rocks. Inside was a wood floor, wood benches, and a potbellied stove in the middle of the rectangular room. There was no indoor plumbing. Her family lived in a little house in the country (also now under Lake Norman), and they traveled more than a mile on foot through the woods, crossing a creek, to get to the Hunters Chapel Church building. For those who drove, there was a dirt road connecting to Beatties Ford Road that would get muddy during the rain, stranding vehicles that would inevitably get stuck. Robertson has fond memories of homecomings, ball games, and other gatherings held under the trees at the church's original location.¹⁴

African American churches in rural Mecklenburg County were community anchors that provided entertainment, sport, and sociability as well as spirituality to farm families with limited social contact throughout the week. "Going to church on Sundays was the culminating event of the week. Those who lived close to church walked to Sunday services; those who had to travel long distances arrived in surreys, mule carts, and ox carts. It was common for families to travel miles for Sunday services."¹⁵

John Connor Jr., son of the namesake for John Connor Road on which the Hunters Chapel Church building is now located, grew up a short walk from the church and remembered looking forward to Sundays as an all-day event. The family would lay out their clothes on Saturday and head out the following morning. Each of the church families, most of whom were related, would bring a dish to share during a picnic after Sunday school and worship. "You didn't go to church to come back. It was all day... That was a socializing day for people in the neighborhood to get together... The church was a very close-knitted family in this area." If someone was missing that week, they would get a house visit to see if something was wrong. "People were deeply concerned about one another back then."¹⁶

Whether the Methodist Episcopal church helped erect the original Hunters Chapel Church building is unclear, but there would have been guidelines available to aid in planning and construction. The Methodist Episcopal Board of Church Extension published its first catalog of church plans in 1870, long before Sears & Roebuck's similar catalog for houses. Architect Benjamin D. Price created the plans, which started at \$2.50 for plans of a small wood church costing \$300 to \$1,000 to build. The congregation would receive a floor plan and slides of completed churches in wood, brick, or stone. The catalog helped the denomination economically build places of worship during its significant growth era between the late 1800s and 1950.¹⁷


¹⁴ Vera Robertson, interview with Michele Lemere, July 10, 2024.

¹⁵ Gray and Stathakis, "African American Resources in Mecklenburg County," 16.

¹⁶ John Connor Jr. and James Garfield Connor, Raw footage of video interview by WTVI, 2000, provided by Michael Connor.

¹⁷ The United Methodist Church, "Methodist History: Church Plans Catalog," January 24, 2018, <https://www.umc.org/en/content/methodist-history-church-plans-catalog>, accessed May 13, 2025.

8 ARCHITECTURAL PLANS.—CHURCHES.



CHURCH PLAN, No. 1.—PERSPECTIVE.

PLANS FOR FRAME

Price List	{	16x22 feet,)	} \$2.00	{	20x27 feet,)	} \$3.00	{	22x27 feet,)	} \$3.50
		16x27 feet,)			20x32 feet,)			22x32 feet,)	
Price List	{	16x32 feet,)	} \$2.50	{	20x37 feet,)	} \$4.00	{	24x33 feet,)	} \$4.00
		18x22 feet,)			24x37 feet,)			24x42 feet,)	
		18x27 feet,)							

These make neat, plain frame churches.

The posts of the smaller sizes are 10 feet, and the ceilings 14 feet in the middle.

The posts of the larger sizes are 12 feet, and the ceilings 16 feet 6 inches high in the middle.


The 16x22 feet size will seat 50 persons in the pews. The 24x42 size will seat 200 in the pews.

There is a vestibule in front. No class-rooms. The construction is of the cheapest character consistent with strength and durability, with or without plastering. The plans are arranged to be heated by one stove.

The cost varies from \$300 to \$900.

The belfry of No. 1 B, No. 2 A or No. 5, will be added to these plans for 50 cents extra.

We have a slight modification of this plan with plain or gothic windows, enlarged to 34x55 feet, posts 16 feet, ceiling 22 feet, price \$8. Also enlarged to 40x60 feet, posts 18 feet, ceiling 24 feet, price \$10.



CHURCH PLAN, No. 1 B.—PERSPECTIVE.

PLANS FOR FRAME.	{	24x37 feet,)	} \$4.00		PLANS FOR BRICK OR FRAME,	{	28x40 feet,)	} \$5.00
		24x40 ")					28x45 ")	
		26x40 ")					28x50 ")	
		26x45 ")					28x55 ")	
		30x50 ")					32x50 ")	
30x55 ")	32x55 ")							

The belfry is 4 feet square on the smaller sizes, and 6 feet square on the larger.

The walls are 14 feet and the ceiling 20 feet high, in the middle. There is a vestibule in front; no class rooms.

These plans are heated by stoves.

The 24x40 plan will seat comfortably 160. The 28x45 plan will seat 200. The 32x50 plan will seat 270.

Where labor and materials are cheap, the 24x40 size will cost about \$1,000, and the 32x50 size about \$1,600.

Plans from the 1889 *Catalogue of Architectural Plans for Churches and Parsonages* include these for a plain frame church similar in footprint to Hunters Chapel. <https://archives.gcah.org/items/28552986-3268-4464-9208-f3157d915ab9>, accessed May 13, 2025.

The General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church maintains a series of mission photograph albums, including images that document the work of the Freedmen's Aid Society in the early twentieth century throughout the United States. While no images specifically identified as Hunters Chapel are included in the collection, the following photographs taken in the rural south may resemble the original church building's appearance and setting.



This screenshot of images from Mission Photograph Album Negro #4 are simply captioned “Negro rural church in the South.” Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, “UMC Digital Galleries, Mission Photograph Album - Negro #4,” 29.

John D. Connor: Pioneering Farmer

Post Civil War African American families in Mecklenburg County frequently became tenant farmers – renting land and sometimes lodging from White landowners – or sharecroppers who worked another man’s land and shared the meager profits with him. However, “there were notable exceptions to the rural poverty among most African American farmers in the early twentieth century, and the best examples of substantial African American farms are in north Mecklenburg near Davidson, and in west Mecklenburg in Shuffletown.”¹⁸

John Dolphus Connor was one such farmer. He was born May 23, 1884, in Lincoln County to Cheasmon (or Cheeseman) Monroe Connor and Janie Johnson, the fifth of nineteen children (the first four children were born to Cheasmon’s first wife, Nancy Longcry, who died in 1881; the children after John were born to Sylvia Johnson). Cheasmon’s father, Cyrus L. Connor, was a Major in the 137th Regiment of the Union Army during the Civil War and commanded a Colored Regiment. Cheasmon’s mother, Margaret “Peggy” Graham, born 1815, was enslaved by Henry William Connor, a North Carolina congressman. According to family history, Cheeseman Connor, born in 1855, came to the Charlotte area from Ireland with a sister. He was a superintendent of the Hunters Chapel Methodist Episcopal Church and, like many of the church’s early members, a sharecropper.¹⁹

¹⁸ Gray and Stathakis, “African American Resources in Mecklenburg County,” 11.

¹⁹ Michael Connor, interview with Michele Lemere, July 29, 2024.



Undated portrait of Cheeseman Connor.



Undated portrait of a young John Connor.

Courtesy of Michael Connor.

John Connor and Roxie Burton married on Christmas Day in 1908. They settled in north Mecklenburg County, raising twelve children (Rosie Lee, Doward, Georgia, Janie, Josephine, John D. Jr., Cheeseman, Maggie, Robert, Garfield, Lewis, and James Arthur) and two foster children (Sherman Burton and Joe Connor). Like his father, John and his wife were members of Hunters Chapel Church, where John helped with cleaning and minor repairs.²⁰ In 1922, John Connor purchased 60 acres off Beatties Ford Road at auction through an intermediary.²¹ In a 1949 *Charlotte News* article, he is described as a former tenant farmer with a fourth grade education who “had seen his father struggle on someone else’s land a lifetime with little to show for his efforts. That wasn’t going to happen to him if there was any way to avoid it.” The article identified Connor as one of 107 Black farm owners in Mecklenburg County of the 700 to 800 Black residents working as farmers in the county at the time. As of its writing, Connor owned 100 acres and was touted in the paper for having excellent examples of strip farming and terracing.²²

John grew cotton, wheat, corn, and sugar cane, bringing the cotton to Cornelius for ginning and the cane to Cashion’s in Huntersville for processing into two fifty-gallon barrels of molasses. To supplement the family income, he would send the children with firewood, chickens, eggs, and butter to sell in the Beatties Ford Road area. There were few Black families in the immediate area, mostly sharecroppers, and White farmers and landowners. The children attended the Caldwell School three miles away for half a day and then picked cotton for White people.²³ By midcentury, most of the Connor children were less interested in farming. Some joined the military, moved away, or pursued other lines of work. That shift away from the family farm became moot. By the 1960s, many of the White and Black farms – and Hunters Chapel Church – were literally underwater. The remainder of John Connor’s land became lakefront property.

²⁰ Dr. Dan L. Morrill, “An African American Farmer and His Wife,” Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1998, <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/An-African-American-Farmer-And-His-Wife.pdf>, accessed May 13, 2025.

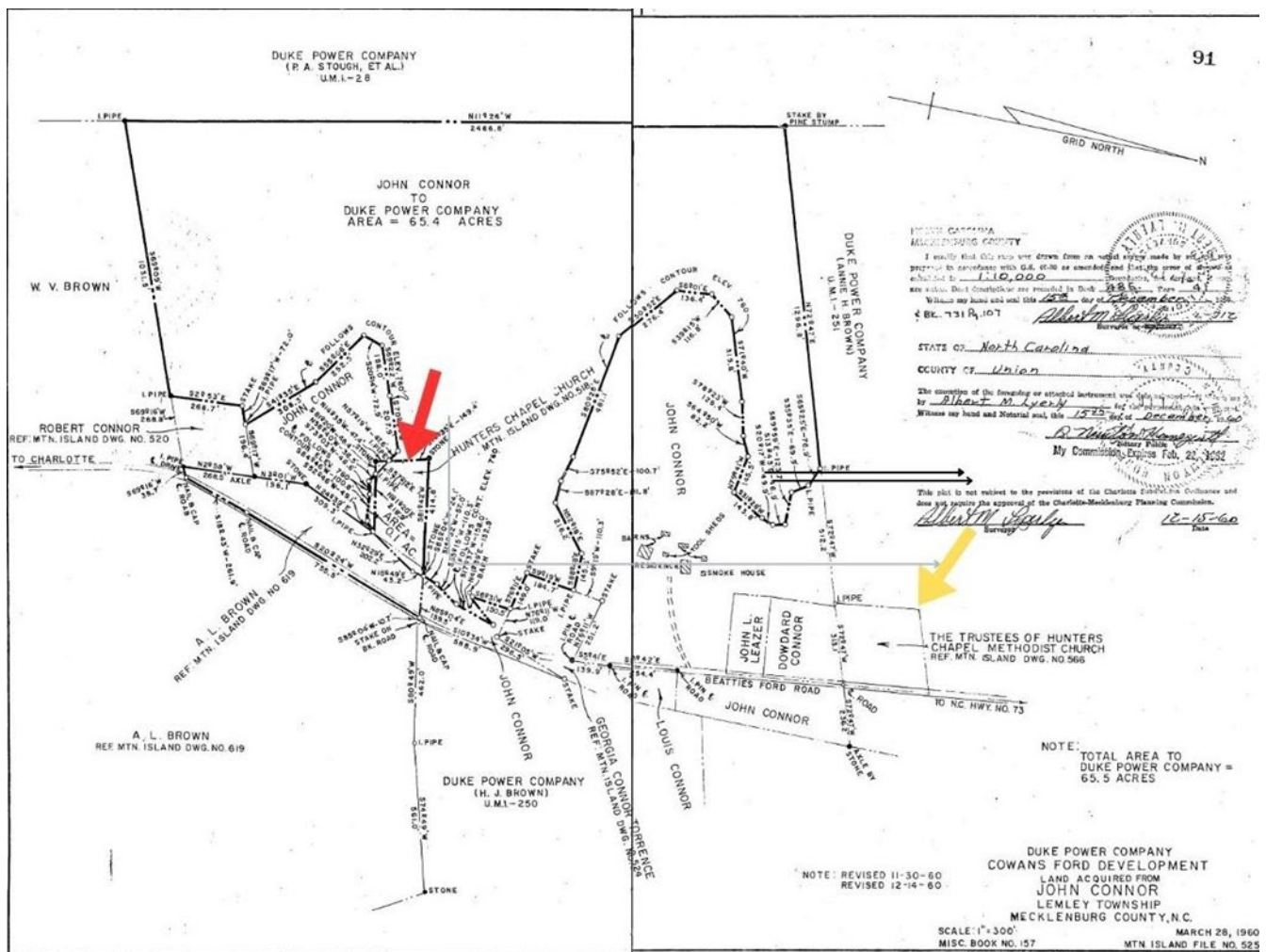
²¹ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 485, Pages 41-2.

²² “One Fifth of Mecklenburg County Farmers are Negro,” *Charlotte News*, May 24, 1949, 4D.

²³ John Connor Jr., WTVI raw footage, 2000.

Lake Norman and the mid-century move

By the late 1950s, Duke Power (now Duke Energy) had announced plans to build a mile-long dam on the Catawba River at Cowan's Ford, a hydroelectric power station, and a 32,500-acre lake. The company had been acquiring land since the 1920s but purchased 30,000 acres of mostly family farmland leading up to the dam's completion in 1962. The new waterway covered the Battle of Cowan's Ford Revolutionary War site where General William Lee Davidson was killed, two textile mills and associated villages, and several homes, churches, businesses, and roads not tall enough to require bulldozing to prevent future interference with boating on the forthcoming lake. John Connor sold 65.5 acres near the original church property to Duke Power in December 1960.²⁴ He was also one of five Hunters Chapel Church trustees to transfer the old 1.5-acre church property to Duke Power in November 1960.²⁵



Images from pages 4-5 in John Connor's deed of 65.5 acres of farmland to Duke Power, December 1960 (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2207, Page 83). The red arrow points to the original church property; the yellow indicates the new church property.

²⁴ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2207, Page 83.

²⁵ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2210, Pages 115-19.

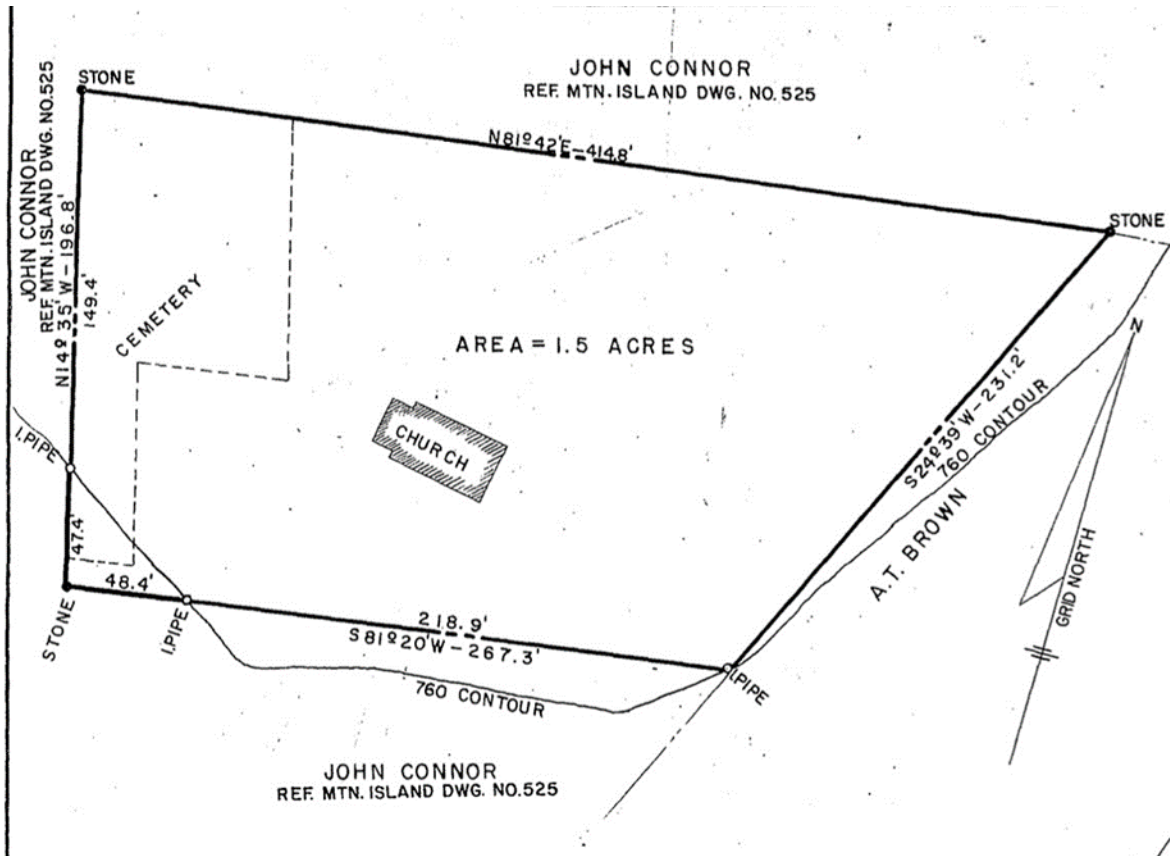


Image from the church's deed of the original church property to Duke Power in November 1960 (Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2210, Pages 115-19.) Note the footprint of the church and cemetery. A dirt driveway connected to Beatties Ford Road. John Connor sold his adjacent property to Duke the following month.

Though the old church would soon be submerged, the congregation's new home was already becoming established. In October 1960, Duke Power deeded 2.3 acres fronting Beatties Ford Road to the church's trustees – John Connor, Aussie Rivens, James Torrence, Lewis Connor, and Pink McNeely - and a new brick building was constructed the following year. Duke had acquired the property in 1923 from J.R. and Chester Belle Withers, who had purchased it from Annie H. Brown earlier that year.²⁶ Perhaps Duke (then called Catawba Manufacturing and Electric Power Company) had secured the land during the early days of planning the Cowan's Ford dam project.

The Cemetery

Duke Power also facilitated the relocation of markers and remains from eight cemeteries, including the Hunters Chapel Church cemetery. A Duke document notes seven marked graves, including "Emma, wife of C.B. Matthews – died June 26, 1906" and "approximately 21 graves unmarked or unidentifiable."²⁷ A public notice looking for next of kin was published March 20,

²⁶ Mecklenburg County Deed Book 2263, Page 295-99.

²⁷ Duke Power, "Relocation of Various Cemeteries." Emma, wife of C.B., could be related to Columbus Matthews, named as a church trustee on the 1890 church deed.

1961, in the *Charlotte Observer* referencing the same graves.²⁸ However, the next page in the Duke report notes 14 graves.

A July 11, 1961, letter to Wallace H. Kuralt of the Mecklenburg County Department of Public Welfare states that, through authorization from the Hunters Chapel Church trustees, Duke was to hire a licensed undertaker to:

- Remove, clean, and relocate the monuments of Theodore R. Johnson, infant son of J.G. and L. Johnson (September 8, 1901-February 1x, 1903); and Clementine (January 12, 1897-March 9, 1917) and Tischa (September 16, 1914-April 8, 1915), both daughters of C.M. and S.V. Connor and kin to John Connor.
- Replace with comparable quality the grave markers of T.C. Conner, Willie Lewis Rivens, Samuel Lewis Patterson, Rossie Lee Conner, and Josephine Leazer.
- Open, remove remains, place in boxes, and reinter the graves of James William Conner, Willie Lewis Rivens, Samuel Lewis Patterson, Rossie Lee Conner, and Josephine Leazer.²⁹

The monuments of Theodore Johnson and Clementine and Tischa Connor were indeed moved and remain in the current cemetery as of 2024, but the Emma Matthews monument is not present. There are other discrepancies between the Duke documents and what currently stands in the cemetery, including additional monuments pre-dating the 1960s absent from the list of monuments to be moved and other monuments that were to be replaced but apparently were not. Some church members who predeceased completion of the new church now have markers that appear to be post-1960. Those markers may have been purchased later by family members or the church.



Along with the 1903 Theodore Johnson monument (see page 10 above), the monument for sisters Clementine and Tischa Connor were moved from the old Hunters Chapel cemetery to the current cemetery as planned.

²⁸ “Notice,” *Charlotte Observer*, March 20, 1961, 7B.

²⁹ Duke Power, “Relocation of Various Cemeteries.” Note: Connor is spelled with an e in some of the documentation and other family names are also inconsistent. The letter contains illegible handwriting near some of the names.



These markers for Charles Gabriel and twins Ben and Glen Gabriel appear to be pre-1960s. Each has a newer flat marker at its base. Black stickers have been placed on the twins' markers to aid the legibility of the original carving. These graves and markers were not on the list to be moved.



Conversely, the Duke letter states that the headstones for Rossie Lee Connor (left) and Josephine Leazer (right) were to be replaced, but those in the cemetery in 2024 appear to predate the 1960s.



This monument for Queen Patterson (1864-1940) is an example of a marker replaced or purchased after the congregation's move to its current location.

The Church Amidst a Changing Landscape



Location of Hunters Chapel church building in 1980 (above) and 1993 (below) indicated by arrows. The church's location is notable for its rural setting and almost complete absence of residential development. Residential development in the area began between 1993 and 1997.

Mecklenburg County GIS Time Machine,

<https://timemachine.mcmmap.org/#35.465135347484896/-80.92467069625856/18/315532800000>

<https://timemachine.mcmmap.org/#35.465135347484896/-80.92467069625856/18/725846400000>





The residential density surrounding the Hunters Chapel property (the green outlined parcel indicated by the arrow) has grown exponentially since the mid to late 1990s.

Mecklenburg County Polaris, <https://polaris3g.mecklenburgcountync.gov/xy/1427002.9934,629470.9958>.

As the waters of the Catawba River rose, filling Lake Norman, the Hunters Chapel congregation continued to function as both a church and a community. Hunters Chapel was among a handful of communities to compete consistently in the Mecklenburg Negro Community Development Contest (others included J.H. Gunn – winner for several years – as well as African American communities in Huntersville, Hickory Grove, Lower Providence, and more), whose winner would compete in the two-state Piedmont contest.³⁰ The Hunters Chapel Sluggers competed in a community baseball league and the Hunters Chapel Gospel Singers performed in community services.³¹ The transition to the new church building was swift. Charlie Rivens remembers as a young boy wondering why they had to attend the small old church with just a stove for heat, but then overnight, it seemed, they had a modern building. “It was like – zoom, zoom – just like Lake Norman. One day it’s farmland, people bailing hay and cutting okra and cutting grapes, and then the next day, it was a lake... There were barns one day, barbed wire fence one day, and the next day you had lake.”³²

The core families – Connor, Rivens, Patterson, Leazer, Alexander, McNeely, and Gabriel – and their kin continued to worship at the new structure, bringing time-honored traditions (as well as the original steeple – including its casing, wood siding, and cross – and bell) to the new space. Vera Robertson, then a young mother, remembers feeling nostalgic for the old wooden church, but the modern building and the continuation of the congregation’s customs and celebrations proved to be a blessing. The church remained, as it does today, a family institution. Many members continued to live in the new Lake Norman area.³³

Even as they were getting settled into their new church home, members of the Hunters Chapel congregation were active and visible participants in the daily life and events of Cornelius and north Mecklenburg County. While the civil rights movement gained momentum and supporters during the 1960s, changing the nation’s landscape, the Hunters Chapel community likewise contributed to the evolving local landscape with their support of and involvement with the campaign for equal rights. Church members Cheeseman and Ada Connor joined such notable local civil rights advocates as Kelly Alexander Sr., Fred Alexander, Julius L. Chambers, and Dr. Reginald A. Hawkins in protest marches and rallies against racial discrimination and segregation in uptown Charlotte. Longtime Hunters Chapel member Ausie Rivens, one of Cornelius’ first Black barbers, is believed to have been the town’s first barber to serve both Black and White customers, cutting each client’s hair in his front yard. Ausie Rivens’ legacy of local barbers includes James Raeford who owned and operated Raeford’s Barbershop in Davidson and Ausie’s grandson David Beatty who owned and operated Beatty’s Barbershop in Huntersville. Both men were trained by and worked as apprentices for Ausie Rivens. Hunters Chapel member Louis Connor played a role in the integration of Ralph Johnson’s barbershop in Davidson.³⁴

Even the younger Hunters Chapel members participated in the social events of the day, as several members of the Rivens family were among the first Black students to integrate North

³⁰ Clyde Osborne, “Huntersville to Compete in PADA Contest,” *Charlotte Observer*, November 23, 1961, 12E.

³¹ “Dodgers Slug Hunters Club,” *Charlotte Observer*, July 23, 1961, 4D; “Many Choirs to be Heard at Services,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 12, 1952, 8A.

³² Charlie Rivens interview.

³³ Vera Robertson interview.

³⁴ Email from Michael Connor to Tommy Warlick, May 1, 2025; Emails from Tonya Rivens to Tommy Warlick, April 27 and May 15, 2025.

Mecklenburg High School (one of the county's first integrated high schools) in 1965 and 1966. Member Marcus "Mack" Rivens was among the first Black student-athletes to integrate the school's basketball and baseball teams. Members Gwen Jackson and Jonathan Rivens were students at North Mecklenburg High School during the riots of the 1970s stemming from the integration and busing controversies that culminated in the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971) decision.³⁵

Siblings John Leazer and Mary Leazer Rogers – great-grandchildren of John Connor who both grew up in the Hunters Chapel congregation – are indicative of the multitalented individuals who have thrived in that closeknit community. As one of the first local African Americans to graduate from Davidson College in Chemistry (1978-1982), John Leazer went on to earn a master's degree in Synthetic Organic Chemistry from North Carolina State University and a PhD in Organic Chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania. The inventor on six U.S. patents and the author of numerous peer-reviewed academic journal articles, Dr. Leazer served as Director of the Sustainable Technology Division of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for six years during the Obama administration, and has since worked as Director of the Northeast Food and Feed Laboratory of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Mary Leazer Rogers also graduated from Davidson College, as well as the law school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After service as a prosecutor with the Mecklenburg County District Attorney's office, she opened her own law practice in Charlotte, where she continues to practice in both state and federal courts.³⁶

Hunters Chapel member Mack Rivens went on to become the founder and owner of the Davidson Jets, a semi-professional baseball team comprised of players from Cornelius and Davidson that played for more than twenty years in the Mecklenburg County League (later known as the Cross County League and the Triple County League), the Jackie Robinson League, and the Stan Musial League, all part of North Carolina's Negro Leagues. The Jets played their home games on property located at the corner of Sloan and Griffith Streets in Davidson. Although information about the team's early years is limited, the Jets must have been a talented team. By 1974, according to the *Charlotte Post*, the Jets had won the Cross County League championship for six of the last eight years. According to church member Tonya Rivens, herself an award-winning radio and television journalist, all male members of the Rivens family, as well as the young adults in the local community, were required to play on the team. In one August 1980 Jets game, manager Mack Rivens fielded a team that included two of his sons (another son did not play that night) and three of his nephews. Indeed, the *Charlotte Post* reported that in 1979 the Jets had four representatives on the Jackie Robinson League all-star roster, three of whom were members of the Rivens family: Mack Rivens as the manager, and players Martin Rivens and Grover Rivens. One of those Rivens men, shortstop Martin Rivens, went on to become the first baseball player from Hunters Chapel to get a tryout with a Major League Baseball team, namely the Boston Red Sox.³⁷

³⁵ Emails from Tonya Rivens to Tommy Warlick, April 27, 2025, and May 7, 2025.

³⁶ Email from Michael Connor to Tommy Warlick, May 5, 2025; LinkedIn listing for John Leazer, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnleazer>, accessed May 13, 2025; Law Office of Mary Leazer Rogers, "Biography," <https://www.marylrogers.com/attorney/rogers-mary-leazer/>, accessed May 13, 2025.

³⁷ Email from Tonya Rivens to Tommy Warlick, May 7, 2025; Nancy Griffith, "Black Baseball in Davidson," *News of Davidson*, February 2, 2022, <https://newsofdavidson.org/2022/02/02/44324/black-baseball-in-davidson/>, accessed May 13, 2025; "Cross County League To Sponsor Dance," *Charlotte Post*, September 14, 1974, 3; "About Tonya

John Connor’s vision was to keep the property for his family. He resisted selling his remaining land, bequeathing it to his children after he died in 1982. Much of John’s remaining acreage formed a peninsula where his children built Lakeview Country Club on eight acres in 1972. The club hosted reunions and receptions and was best known for its reggae concerts throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It closed in 1991 after being zoned “off-limits.”³⁸ Mecklenburg County Commissioners hosted a public hearing in 1993 to rename that portion of Beatties Ford Road “Hunters Chapel Road,” but it was ultimately renamed “John Connor Road.”³⁹

After decades of pressure from developers, the Connor family sold the old Lakeview Country Club site, making way for a twenty-three-house development called “Connor Quay.” As indicated by the images above, the rural character of the church’s property has changed drastically since that time. A placard explaining John and Roxie’s legacy marks the entrance to the neighborhood, where homes routinely sell for well over \$1 million and a 12,000-square-foot home with six bedrooms and nine bathrooms sold for \$6.75 million in 2023.⁴⁰ John and all of his children are buried at the Hunters Chapel Church cemetery including son James Garfield, a World War II veteran who died in 2019 at the age of 100.⁴¹ A small number of Connor descendants still owns homes along the west side of John Connor Road.

Just as John Connor has been memorialized as a community leader, the Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church stands as a symbol of the postbellum evolution of African American religious worship in the South worthy of commemoration. It represents the significant role of African Americans in the development of the United Methodist denomination and the role of the church in twentieth century rural life. Explosive growth has since changed the landscape of northern Mecklenburg County, drawing newcomers from across the country, yet descendants of the founding families of Hunters Chapel Church continue to worship and share fellowship there today. “When talking about the history of the Black churches, why would you not want to recall this history, from the wooden shanty shack, coal little stove to heat the building, to where they are now? The history needs to be kept, told, and retold, and what better way than to preserve it and keep it.”⁴²

IV. Architectural Assessment

Setting

Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church is a rural church surrounded primarily by large, twenty-first century, single-family homes, some of which include waterfront property and docks. The church building is accessed via Jetton Road and sits a short distance beyond the entrance to

Rivens,” <https://tonyarivens.com/>, accessed May 13, 2025; Stan Olson, “Polish and glitter are missing, but it’s baseball, a game they love,” *Charlotte News*, August 18, 1980, 2B, 3B; James Cuthbertson, “Minnie Mendoza, Herman Thomas to Manage Stars,” *Charlotte Post*, July 12, 1979, 9.

³⁸ Garfield Connor, WTVI raw footage, 2000; Dennis Romero, “Uptown Reggae,” *Charlotte Observer*, September 3, 1993, 1F.

³⁹ Pat Borden Gubbins, “Hearing Scheduled on New Name for Beatties Ford Road Section,” *Mecklenburg Neighbors* in *Charlotte Observer*, June 20, 1993, 10.

⁴⁰ Zillow, “17240 Connor Quay Ct, Cornelius, NC 28031,” https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/17240-Connor-Quay-Ct-Cornelius-NC-28031/51524830_zpid/, accessed May 13, 2025.

⁴¹ Text message from Michael Connor to Tommy Warlick, October 14, 2024.

⁴² Charlie Rivens interview.

The Peninsula neighborhood, an upscale golf course community. Facing and situated close to John Connor Road, the church has a loose gravel horseshoe driveway running parallel with the entrance and extending to a small number of parking spaces. The property is bordered by a mature growth forest on three sides. The cemetery sits on the southwest corner of the 2.42-acre lot.

Overview

The church's architecture is a good example of a post-World War II Modernist church of simple functional design, with a gently sloped roofline, geometric features, and minimalist adornments. Most of the African American churches in Mecklenburg County were small frame buildings until wealth increased among these congregations after World War II. "As a result, nearly all of Mecklenburg's Black churches were razed and replaced with more modern masonry buildings, significantly altered, or abandoned for a new location."⁴³ As noted previously, the Hunters Chapel congregation was forced to abandon its original location, replacing its early twentieth-century wood frame church with a more modern masonry building. The architect/builder of the 1961 building is unknown.

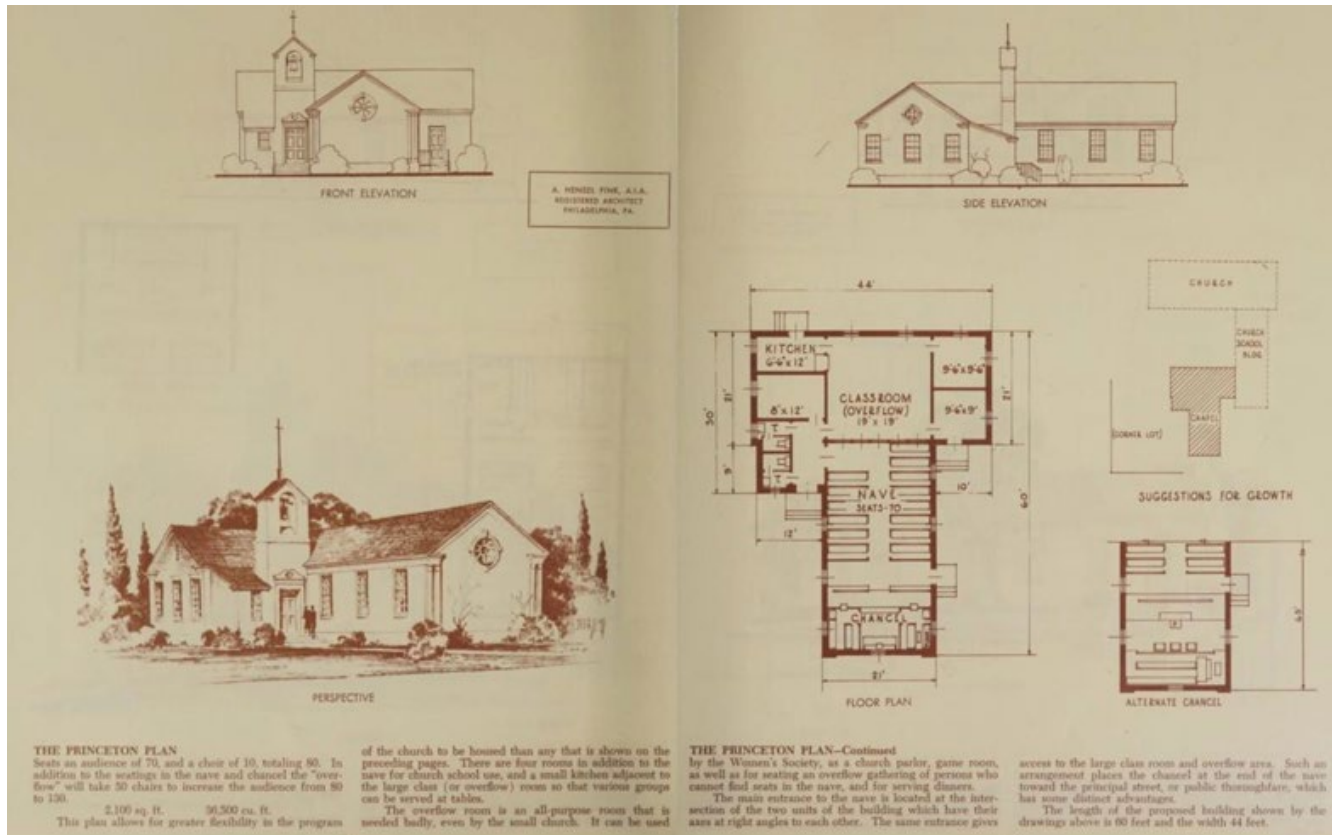
By the 1960s, the Methodist Church advised against stock plans for church construction, recommending instead that congregations hire architects to plan structures better suited for the specific site. A 1961 planning book focused more on the types of errors to avoid in church design and steps to follow throughout the project.⁴⁴ However, the 1961 Hunters Chapel Church building resembles a plan contained in a Methodist guide for church planning published in 1952. Called *A Guide to Church Planning: The Small Church*, the guide emphasizes the importance of a church to be well furnished, attractive, and artistic, with provisions for activities beyond simply worship led by a preacher as the central figure.⁴⁵ The Hunters Chapel Church building currently includes an addition built in the 1960s or 1970s that added a new kitchen, extra bathrooms, and a flexible meeting space.⁴⁶

⁴³ Gray and Stathakis, "African American Resources in Mecklenburg County," 46.

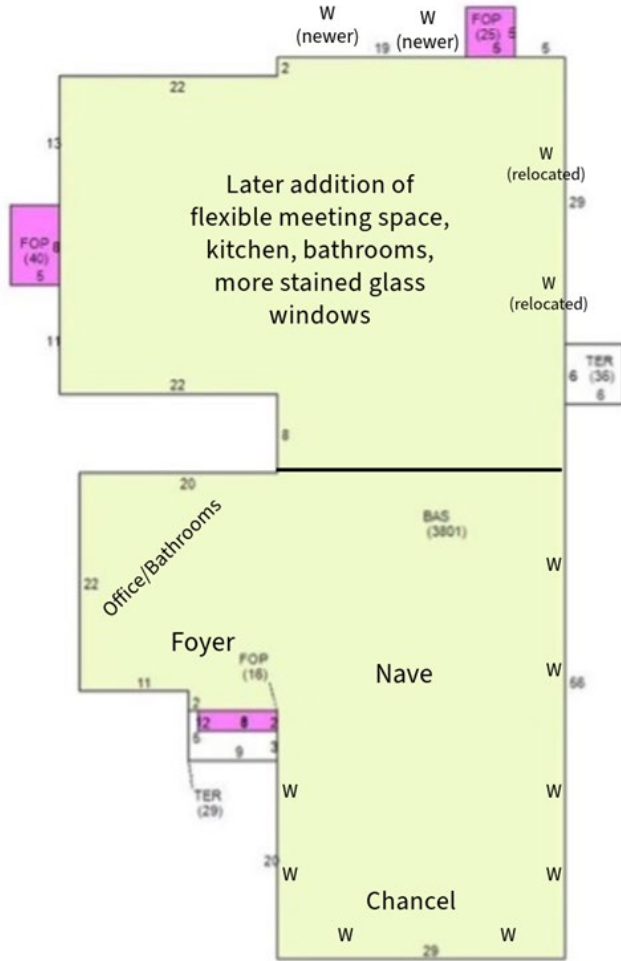
⁴⁴ Methodist Church (U.S.). Department of Architecture, *Detailed Planning, 1963 AD* (Philadelphia: Division of National Missions of The Methodist Church, 1962), <http://archive.org/details/detailedplanning0000meth>, accessed May 13, 2025.

⁴⁵ Joint Committee on Architecture of the Section of Church Extension, Division of Home Missions and Church Extension and Department of the Local Church Board of Education of The Methodist Church, *A Guide to Church Planning: The Small Church: Section I* (Nashville: Section of Church Extension, 1952), 4-5, 18, <http://archive.org/details/guidetochurchpla0001unse>, accessed May 13, 2025.

⁴⁶ Edith Summers interview. Summers reported this general timeframe; on the Time Machine layer of Mecklenburg County's Polaris 3G county property database, the addition appears to be absent in 1978, but present in 1980.



The Hunters Chapel footprint as it exists today resembles the "Princeton Plan" from pages 12-13 of *A Guide to Church Planning: The Small Church* pictured above.



Original 1961 footprint
of sanctuary, foyer,
office, bathrooms

Current configuration of Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church.
“W” represents placement of stained-glass windows.

The one-story, 3,947-square-foot church is constructed primarily of red brick veneer, shingle roofing, and white wood soffits and trim, and sits upon a crawl space foundation. The original 1961 structure consists of the sanctuary, a small lobby, two offices, and two bathrooms. The sanctuary is 29 feet wide with a front gable and extends 20 feet beyond the main entrance, which joins a side gabled office and bathroom space at a right angle.



Aerial Map indicating placement of church building; red arrow indicates location of cemetery.
Mecklenburg County Polaris, <https://polaris3g.mecklenburgcountync.gov/xy/1427002.9934.629470.9958>.

EXTERIOR Façade

The front (east) elevation represents the way the church looked when first built in 1961. The exterior chancel wall includes two symmetrical stained-glass windows, each with a separate stained-glass topper window, and a clear hexagon window centered under the gable. A sidewalk leads to the main entrance and a patio that incorporates a ramp and features a rectangular brick planter and black metal fence. Covered by a wooden canopy that protrudes from the exterior wall, the red-painted double doors of the main entrance are accessible via a five-stair brick staircase or the patio ramp. Two six-lite windows are situated to the left of the main entrance. Two more stained-glass windows also featuring separate stained-glass topper windows, and the cornerstone are on the south exterior wall of the nave. A white wooden steeple, rescued from the former 1909 church and containing the original steeple bell (according to church members), is affixed with a cross and sits atop the main entrance. A brick chimney sits atop the side gable behind the steeple.



Front (east) elevation.





East and south elevations; brick planter and patio/ramp in the foreground (above).
Cornerstone (below).





Main entrance and 1909 steeple (above).
Close-up of 1909 steeple (below).

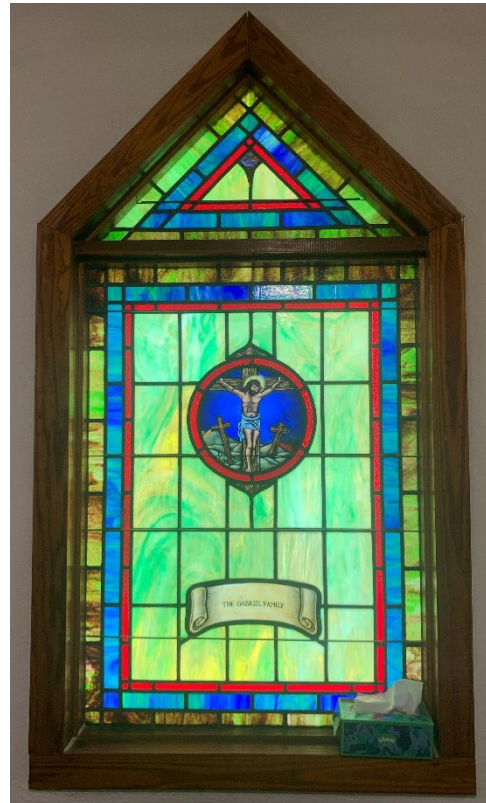
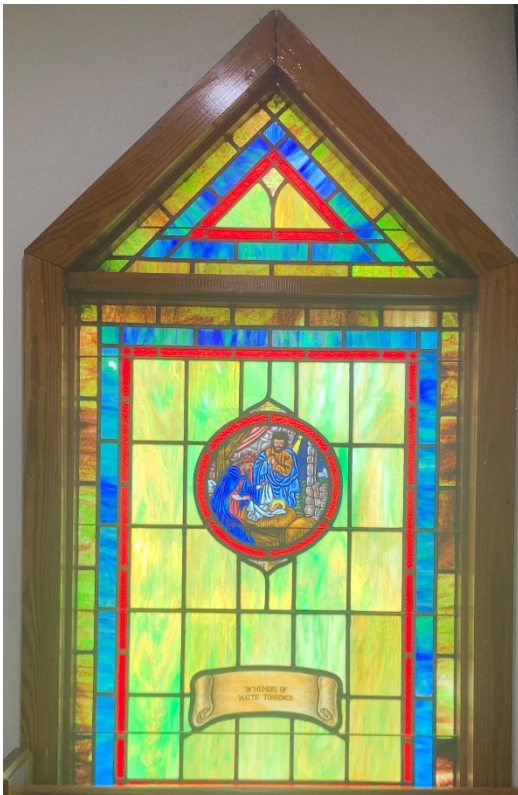
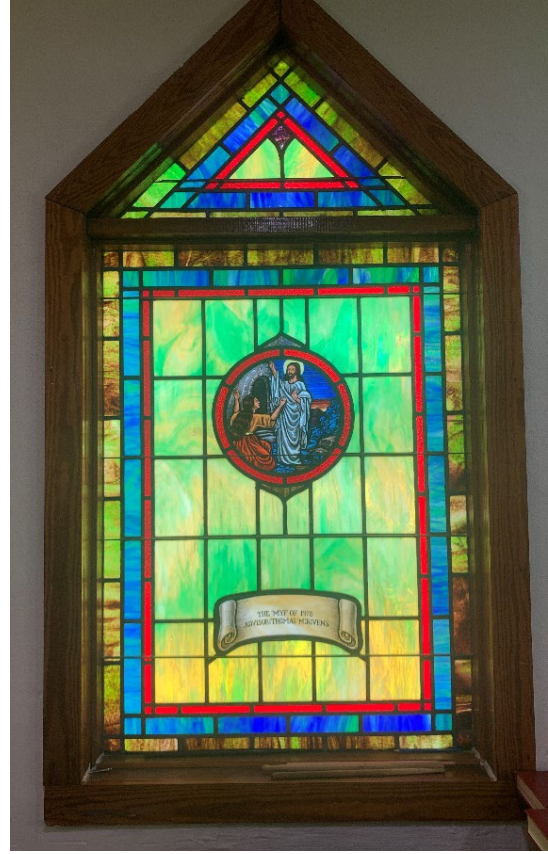


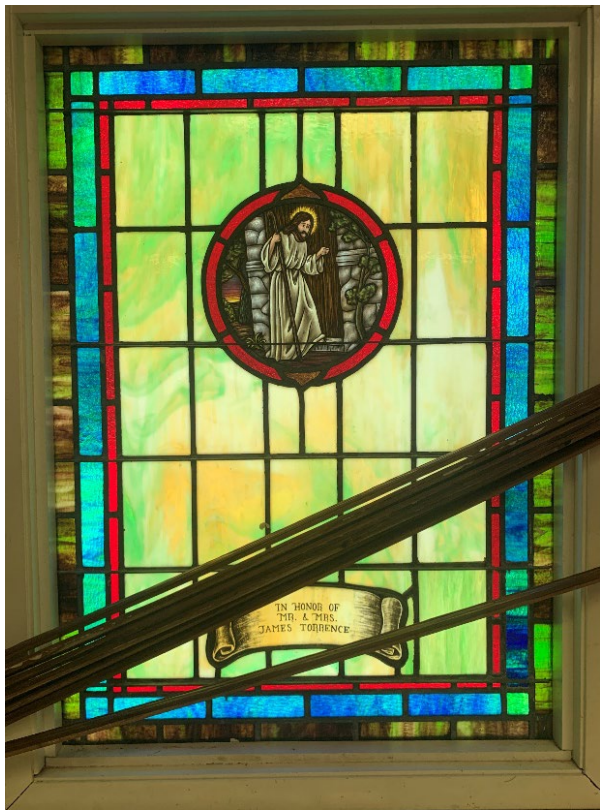
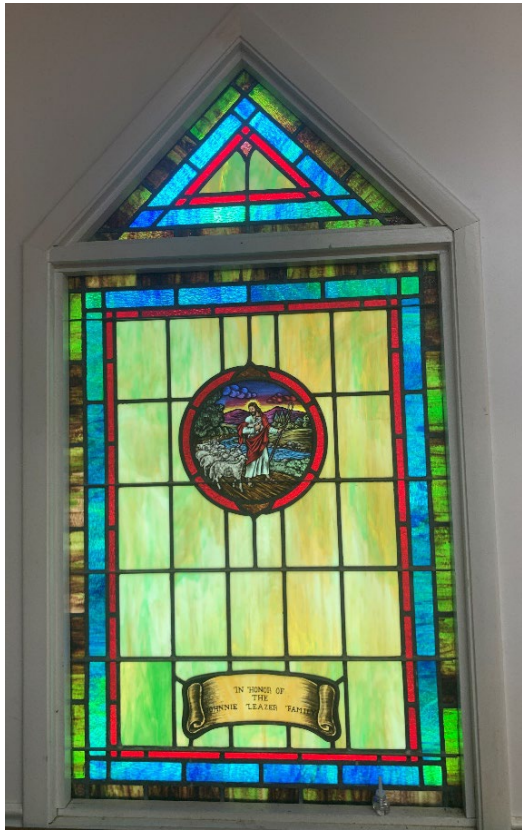
The church includes three additional entrances: a single red door leading out to a small brick landing and five brick stairs with metal railing on the north elevation; a single white door leading out to a wooden landing and six-stair staircase with metal railing on the rear (west) elevation; and a single red door with sidelights leading out to a seven-stair brick staircase and metal railing on the south elevation. The west and south elevation entrances are each covered by a wooden canopy supported by two posts. Windows are trimmed with white casing and include stained-glass windows, square and rectangular clear glass windows, and the front elevation's single hexagon-shaped window.

Each elevation of the original 1961 sanctuary initially included two rectangular stained-glass windows, with the exception of the north elevation which featured four such windows. Displaying biblical scenes and the names of the church members to whom they were dedicated – all visible from the interior of the sanctuary – each rectangular stained-glass window was topped by a separate triangular stained-glass window. Eight of those windows are still situated within the sanctuary's original exterior walls. When the rear elevation of the sanctuary was removed to accommodate the circa 1970s addition, the stained-glass windows and toppers from that elevation were preserved and installed within the north elevation of the new addition. Only the original stained-glass windows are accentuated by the triangular stained-glass toppers.



This window, dedicated to John and Roxie Connor and photographed from the interior, was installed after Roxie passed in 1964 but before John passed in 1982. Interior views of the other original stained-glass windows and toppers are depicted below.







North Elevation

The north elevation runs 85 feet long and features six stained-glass windows – four on the original building and two (the windows originally positioned in the 1961 church building’s rear elevation) past the side entrance on the addition. The original building and addition can be differentiated by a visible seam and discernible variation in brick color between the fourth window and the side entrance. That entrance, included on the addition and accessible via a brick stairway, leads to a multipurpose area that can be closed off with retractable partitions or opened for extra space during services.



North elevation.



North elevation (above).
The discernible variation in brick color differentiates the original building from the addition (below).





Close-up of the seam between the original building and the addition.

Rear (west) Elevation

The rear elevation consists entirely of the addition. Its stained-glass windows – added later, according to Edith Summers, likely to replace standard windows – feature no decorative triangle toppers. The gabled wing includes a rear entrance (with brick stairway and wooden canopy) and a crawl space access door. The peak of the gable is vented. The remaining offset rear elevation features one single hung sash window.



West (rear) elevation.

South Elevation

The smaller of the two gabled wings – positioned on the right adjacent to the 1909 steeple and featuring two original eight-lite windows (the first, shown below, is part of the minister’s office; the second, not shown below but positioned on the west elevation of that gabled wing, is part of the business office) – is part of the original footprint of the 1961 church building. It comprises the non-sanctuary space of the original building, containing a small entrance lobby, two offices, and two bathrooms. The original building’s chimney is visible to the left of the steeple. The larger gabled wing constitutes the later addition. It includes meeting space, a kitchen, and additional bathrooms. The addition features another entrance (the only one featuring sidelights) that is centered below the vented gable. Like the rear entrance, it is accessible via a brick stairway and covered by a wooden canopy supported by two posts.



South elevation.

INTERIOR

Lobby and Adjacent Spaces

The main entry double doors on the east elevation open to a small lobby accessible to the nave to the right (via swinging doors) and two bathrooms and two offices to the left. Hanging from the lobby ceiling just inside and to the left of the main entry is the rope pull that connects to the church bell located in the steeple; both the bell and the steeple were saved from the original 1909 church. With the exception of the laminate bathroom flooring (not original), the lobby, bathrooms, and offices all feature original plaster walls, wood floors, and wood mouldings at the floors, ceilings, doors, and windows.



Interior of the main entry doors, with the church bell rope pull visible in upper right (above).
Rope pull connected to the 1909 church bell and steeple, with illustrative close-up of wood door mouldings (below).





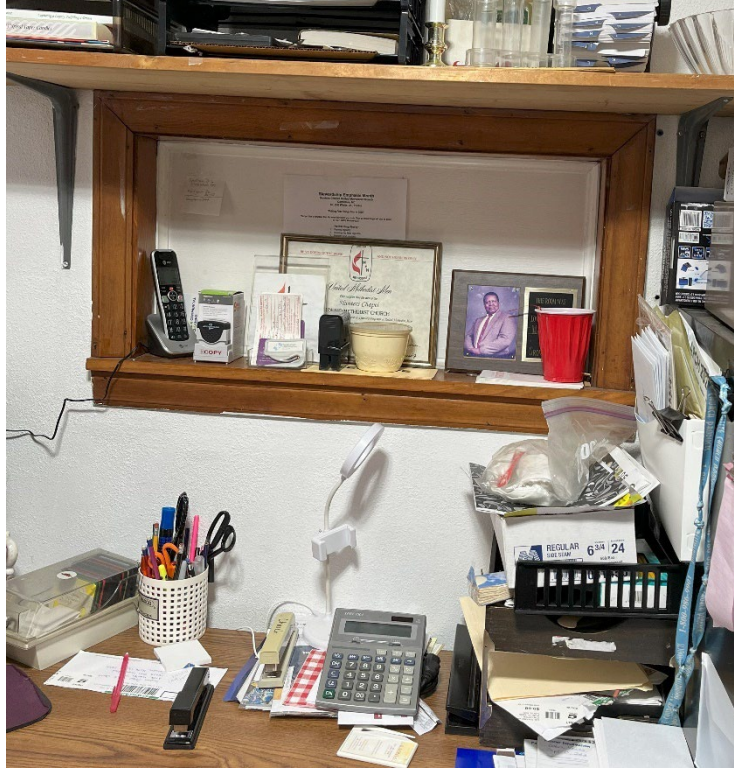
Original wooden lobby floors and swinging doors leading from the lobby to the nave (above).
Lobby, showing the office doors on left and original wood floors and mouldings (below).



The business (front) office, once the building's original kitchen, shares a common wall with the sanctuary. That wall features an extant interior window with a sliding wood door that once facilitated food service from the kitchen directly into the sanctuary. A new kitchen in the later addition allowed for the repurposing of the original kitchen into office space. The sole exterior window in the office is situated within what was the original rear (west elevation) wall of the 1961 structure. The minister's (rear) office is configured much like the business office, except that its sole exterior window is situated within the south elevation of the 1961 structure.



Entrance from the lobby into the business (front) office.



Original kitchen service window, as viewed from the business office (above) and the sanctuary (below).





Minister's (rear) office (above).
View from the minister's office into the hall; the opposite door leads to the front (women's) bathroom (below).



The two bathrooms are located across a short hallway from the minister's office. The bathroom fixtures are not original. Each bathroom features an original exterior six-lite window.



Two bathrooms located opposite the minister's office; the open door leads to the women's bathroom (left). Rear (men's) bathroom and hall separating the offices and the bathrooms (right).

Sanctuary

The swinging doors that open from the lobby into the sanctuary are located approximately midway along the south wall of the sanctuary. The altar is located at the east end of the rectangular sanctuary. Upon entering the sanctuary from the lobby, a visitor standing in the main central aisle facing the altar would note a full complement of nine parallel congregational pews lined perpendicular to the north wall of the sanctuary and eight parallel congregational pews lined perpendicular to the south wall of the sanctuary (one fewer pew to allow for access via the swinging doors). All pews within the sanctuary are original and constructed of wood but were upholstered at some later point after their initial installation. An open space between the altar and the congregational pews accommodates church musicians (along the north wall) and two choir pews situated parallel to the south wall. The nave is functional with minimalist adornments indicative of the midcentury style. Four of the original stained-glass windows are inserted in the north wall of the sanctuary; the east and south walls each have two of the original stained-glass windows.



View from the rear of the sanctuary (above).
North wall of the sanctuary (below).





Close-up of the front of the sanctuary.

The wooden altar and pulpit as well as the wooden mouldings around the stained-glass windows were reportedly crafted by the men of the congregation. It is evident from the surface of the mouldings that they were hand-planed. The altar is situated on a raised platform that is separated from the rest of the nave by a low wooden partial wall constructed in a three-side angular configuration. On either side of the altar, parallel to the east wall of the sanctuary and facing the congregation, are three choir pews also separated from the rest of the nave by low wooden partial walls.



Close-up of the altar area (above).
Choir pews flanking the altar area along the east and south sanctuary walls (below).





Close-up of the pulpit (above).
Rear view of the pulpit (below).



Like the lobby and exterior rooms, the sanctuary features original plaster walls (with the exception of the rear wall), wood floors (subsequently carpeted), and wood mouldings at the floors, ceilings, doors, and windows. The rear wall was removed as part of the construction of the circa 1970s addition. The replacement rear wall, which separates the original 1961 building from the addition, consists primarily of a central doorway flanked by two large open areas with retractable partitions.



Doorway and retractable partitions of the sanctuary's rear wall, leading to the circa 1970s addition. As recommended by the United Methodist denomination, the rear wall allows space to be opened or closed to suit congregational needs.

The rear of the nave opens to the later addition that includes flexible meeting space, additional bathrooms, and a kitchen. The north wall of the addition incorporates the two original stained-glass windows and toppers once fixed within the rear wall of the 1961 sanctuary.



The meeting spaces within the circa 1970s addition that feature the relocated original stained-glass windows and toppers from the rear wall of the 1961 sanctuary.



Cemetery

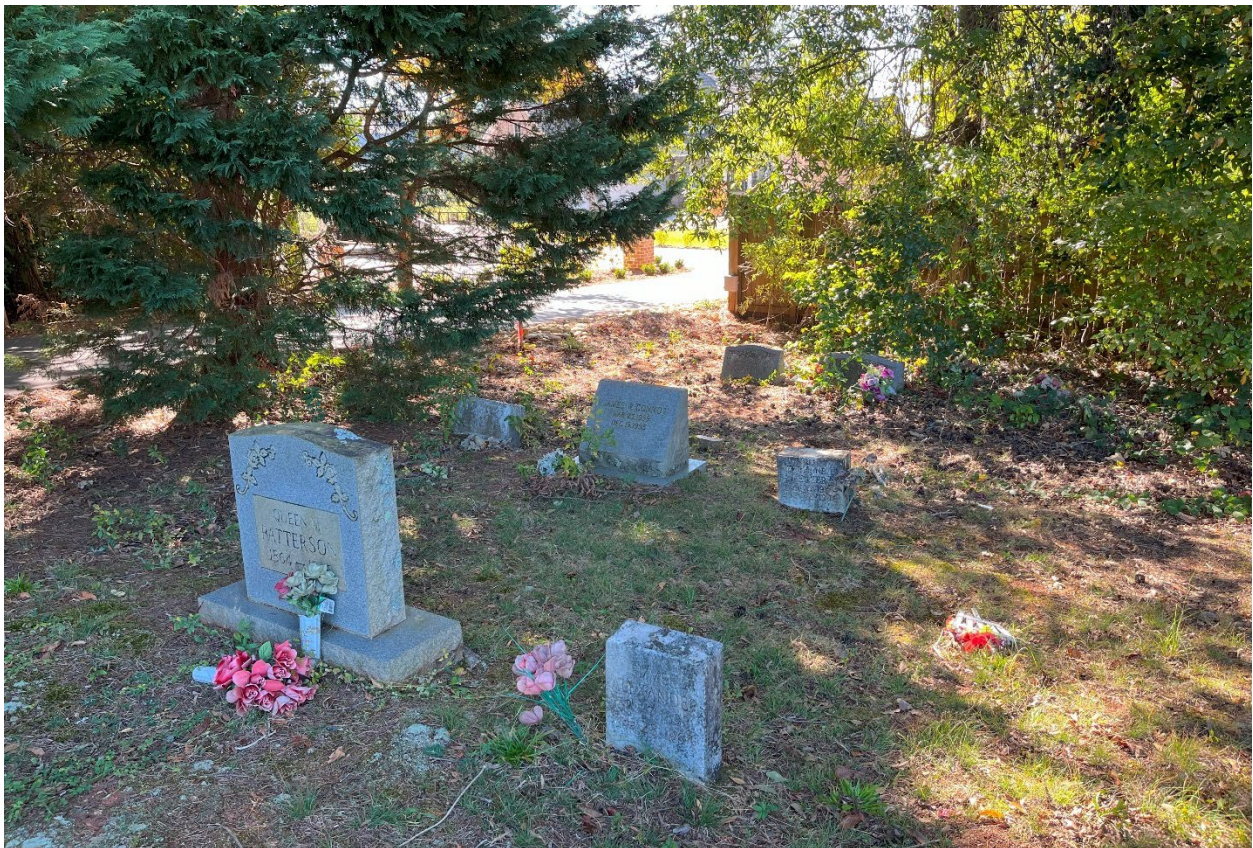
The cemetery was moved from the old church property to the southwest corner of the new location circa 1961. The oldest legible marker is dated 1903, but some interred collected remains may be older. The cemetery is located approximately 160 feet southwest of the church building, adjacent to a subsequently developed multi-million residential waterfront property. Veterans of World War II and the Korean War are among the former parishioners interred in the cemetery, as well as descendants of the congregation's original founders.



View from the rear of the cemetery looking northeast toward the Hunters Chapel Church building.



View from the front of the cemetery with residential property visible in the background (above).
Close-up of rear of cemetery showing proximity of residential property (below).



Setting



The church sign facing drivers on John Connor Road, with the church's U-shaped gravel driveway at right.

Interior Designation Parameters

The following are character-defining interior features of the original 1961 Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church building. With the exception of the original stained-glass windows preserved and later installed in the circa 1970s addition to the original structure (see explanation below), the interior features of that addition are not included within the interior designation. The property owner has provided written consent for interior review of the building pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160D-947(b).

Hunters Chapel United Methodist Church

Features Located Throughout the 1961 Sanctuary, Foyer, Two Offices, and Two Bathrooms

Plaster walls

Wooden floors

Wooden doors

Wooden mouldings at the floors, ceilings, doors, and windows

Steeple

1909 church bell

Casing and wood siding of steeple

Sanctuary

Eight rectangular stained-glass windows, each topped by a separate triangular stained-glass window

Wooden altar

Wooden pulpit and lectern

Wooden pews

Pass-through service window on the interior wall shared by the sanctuary and the original kitchen

North Elevation of Circa 1970s Addition

Two rectangular stained-glass windows, each topped by a separate triangular stained-glass window*

*As noted in the architectural description above, these two windows and their accompanying stained-glass toppers were relocated with the circa 1970s addition to the church. Removed from the original rear elevation, these two windows and toppers were installed within the north elevation of the addition.

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