

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Bear Creek Baptist Church

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Rural Route _____ not for publication

city, town Kirksville vicinity of

state MO code 29 county Adair code 001

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Bear Creek Cemetery Association of Adair County

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

city, town Kirksville _____ vicinity of state MO 63501

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds

street & number Adair County Courthouse

city, town Kirksville _____ vicinity of state MO 63501

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1983 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program

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

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

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

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

8. Significance

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

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

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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

Historical Data

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

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

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.4 acres

Quadrangle name Novinger, MO 7'5/Kirksville, MO 7.5'

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	5	3	1	8	7	0	4	4	5	4	4	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

The church and cemetery are contained in a 1.4 acre lot surrounded by a wire fence. The lot sits on the south side of County Road D, approximately 2½ miles NW of Kirksville, MO. It is the original lot as deeded to the congregation, and is located in the NE¼ of the

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

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

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

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:
 national state local

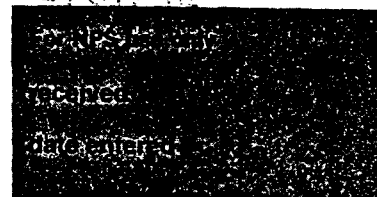
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

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

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
date _____
Keeper of the National Register
Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet BEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH Item number 8 Page 1

Lloyd, Myers, and Willis Families. Erected by the Business Woman's Circle of the Women's Missionary Society of the First Baptist Church, Kirksville, Missouri, dedicated 1946"

Today, both the church and the nearby public cemetery are maintained by the Bear Creek Cemetery Association of Adair County, a not for profit corporation established on May 28, 1982.

Continuation Item number 9 Page 1

Montgomery, Maxine, "Pioneer Days in Adair County," Kirksville Daily Express & News, Kirksville, MO., September 12, 1979.
Ryle, Walter H., Centennial History of the First Baptist Church of Kirksville, Kirksville, MO., 1968, pp.24-32.
Selby, Paul O., "The Rural and Village Churches of Adair County", MSS., 1964, Pickler Library, NMSU, p. 31.
Violette, Eugene M., History of Adair County, Kirksville, MO, 1911, p. 129.

Continuation Item number 10 Page 1

NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 30, T. 63 N, R 15 W. The small frame church is located in the NW corner of the lot, sits close to the road, and faces north. The cemetery extends to the south and east. A narrow ravine divides the cemetery and creates gentle slopes within the fenced area.

Continuation Item number 11 Page 1

2) Dr. David March, Historian & Professor of History, NMSU
9-15-83
715 S. Halliburton 816-665-4502
Kirksville MO 63501

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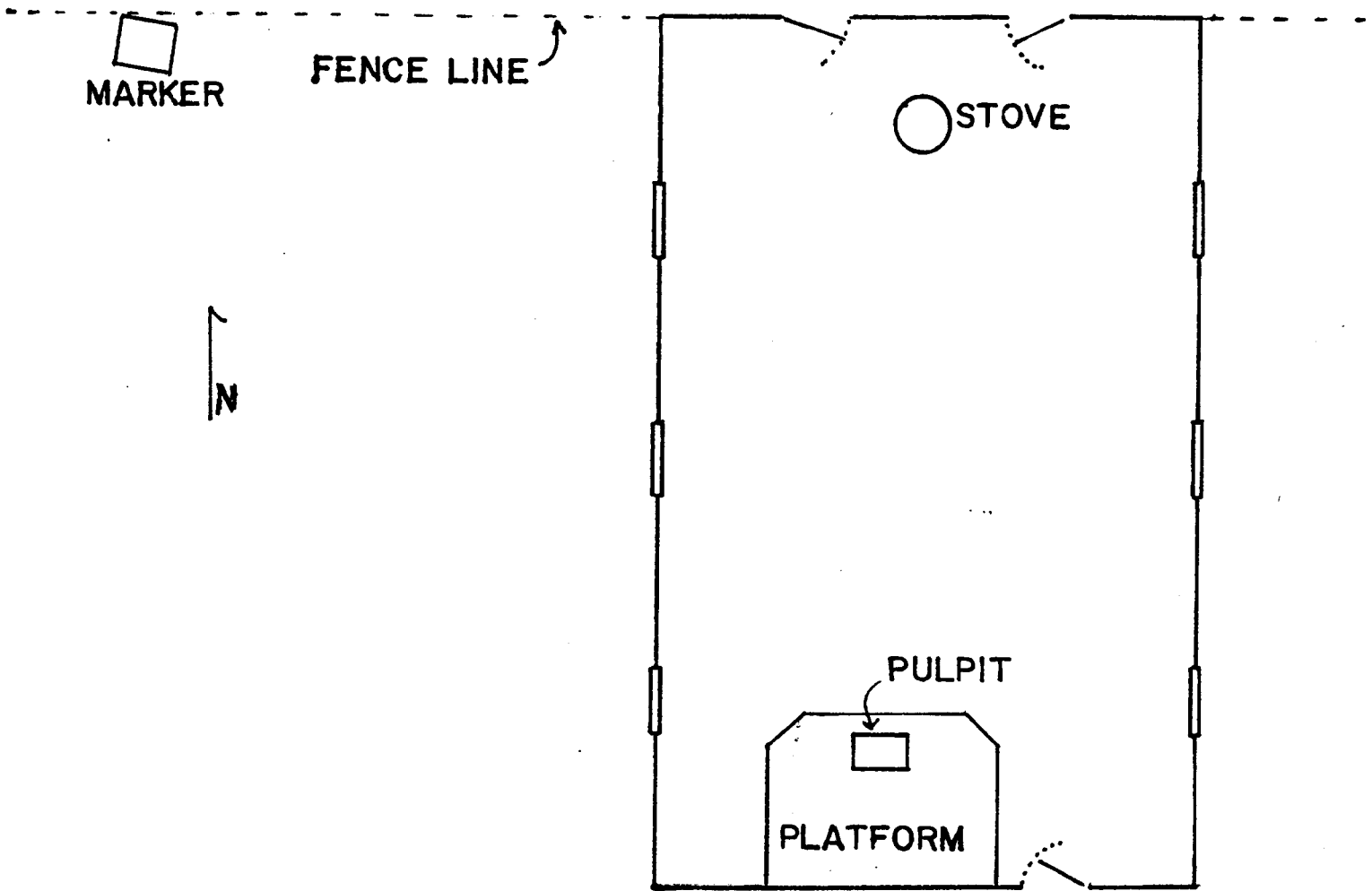
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Continuation sheet BEAR CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH Item number 11

Page 2

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

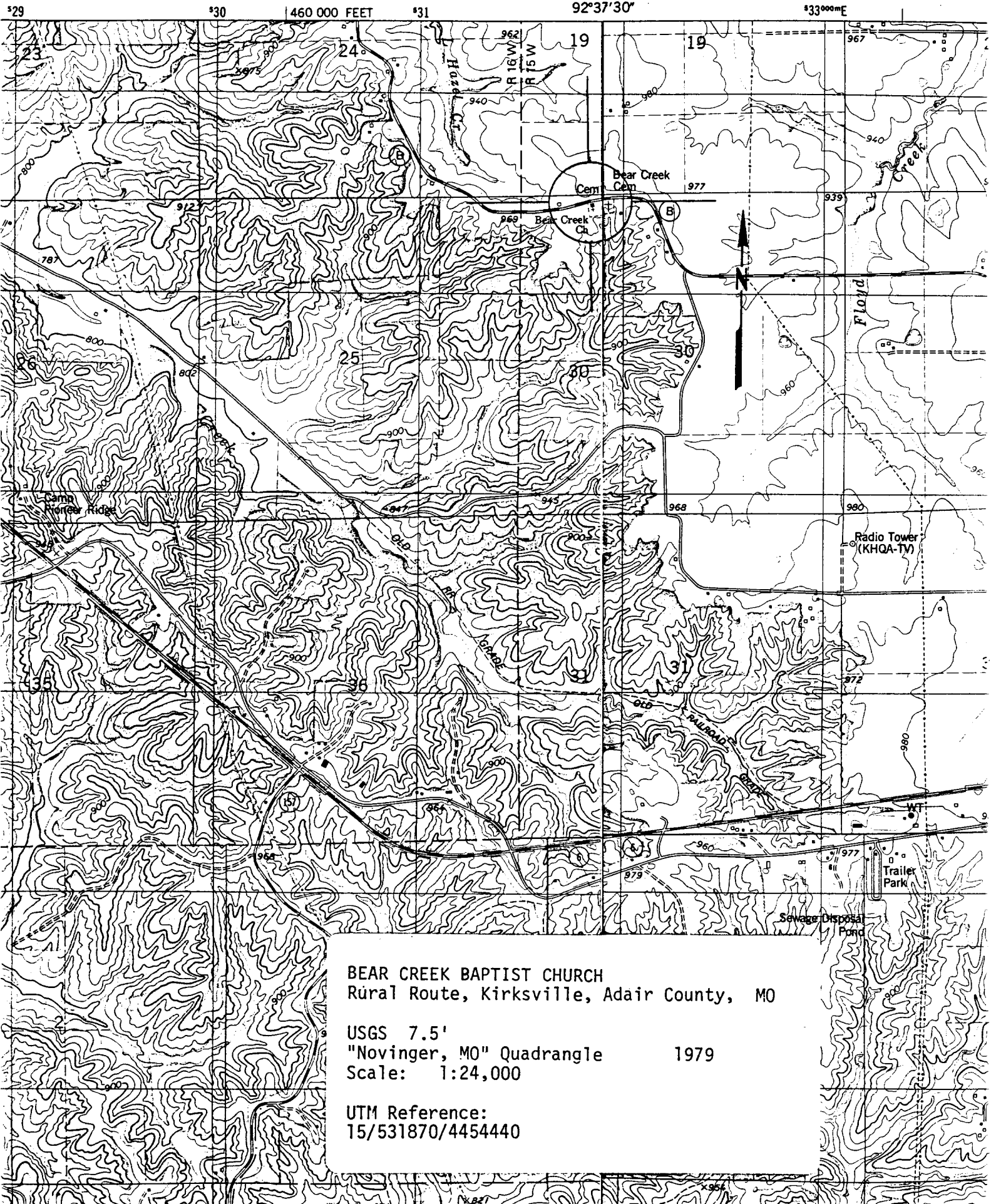
BEAR CREEK CHURCH
ADAIR COUNTY, MO.



SCALE: $1/8" = 1'$

NOVINGER QUADRANGLE
MISSOURI—ADAIR CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC,
NW/4 KIRKSVILLE 15' QUADRANGLE

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



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

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

UTM Reference:
15/531870/4454440

