

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

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

received APR 18 1983  
date entered MAY 23 1983

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

**1. Name**

historic Mount Nebo Baptist Church

and/or common Same

**2. Location**

street & number R.F.D. #1 not for publication

city, town Pilot Grove vicinity of

state Missouri code 29 county Cooper code 053

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mount Nebo Church Membership

street & number R.F.D. #1

city, town Pilot Grove X vicinity of state Missouri 65276

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds, Cooper County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Boonville state Missouri 65233

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Friends of Historic Boonville has this property been determined eligible? X yes no  
County Survey for Missouri Department of Natural Resources

date December 1983 federal state X county local

depository for survey records Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation  
P. O. Box 176

city, town Jefferson City state Missouri 65102

## 7. Description

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

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

Mount Nebo Baptist Church is located on State Highway E near the town of Pilot Grove, in southern Cooper County, Missouri. The church is a rectangular one-story frame building designed in a restrained version of the Greek Revival Style of architecture, with no basement and an exterior steeple which emerges through the roofline to terminate in a tin tower spire shaped with four small spirettes.

### Over-all Dimensions

The church faces south and measures approximately 63 feet long along the east and west facades and 42 feet wide on the south and north facades. The height of the building at the cornice is approximately 20 feet.

### Construction Materials and Colors

The foundation of the structure was originally completely of brick, but in 1871, most of the brick was replaced with local stone, probably from the nearby Petite Saline River. There are still two brick piers in place on the south side of the church structure. The church is of frame construction, utilizing locally obtained lumber, and is sheathed with clapboard siding painted white. A painted tin roof sheathes the ridge roof which is bordered by a boxed wooden cornice with returns on the gable ends. The frame, square steeple is likewise clapboarded and painted white with a silver colored tin spire atop the four sided structure. Four small cones at each end of the steeple painted silver match the main spire.

### Facades

The primary (south) facade contains the only original entrances to the church. The two original entrance doors are identical paired Doric doorways whose cornices and crossettes are outlined by simple moldings. The double-leaf doors, each leaf decorated with four panels, are recessed beneath. The cornice returns on this facade complete the vernacular Greek Revival design.

The east and west facades are identical with the exception of the addition of a door in the west facade leading from the church proper to the educational building. Each facade contains four regularly spaced windows of a single type: a seven foot tall, rectangular, double-hung, six-over-six light sash, with wood slipsill and casing. The windows are set under simple frame lintels.

The north facade contains two windows, identical to those on the other facades and with returns identical to those of the primary facade. Two heating vents run the entire height of the north facade.

### Interior

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The interior of the church consists of three rooms of varying sizes: a large auditorium, a small entrance foyer and a slave gallery immediately over the entrance foyer. The auditorium contains all original woodwork including simple window frames, each with a single row of beading along the bottom. The rostrum area located between the two windows on the north facade is three tiered with the bottom platform now being used for the pulpit. Three narrow steps on each end of the raised dais lead up to a raised platform which was the original pulpit area. This twelve foot wide dais is hand carved in a Greek meander pattern at the ends and halfway up the outside of each outer partition. The side partitions separating the area from the rest of the auditorium are approximately four and one-half feet high with the Greek meander patterns also at the ends. The original pulpit is a Gothic Revival pulpit with an open back and one drawer under it. It is still owned by the church, but is no longer actively used. The original loveseat which sat at the top of the raised dais for the Elders of the church is also still in the church. Thirty-six original handmade pews remain in place in the auditorium, the only alteration to them being a center strut inserted when the partition separating the men and women's side was removed. The pews were fastened originally to the partition. Twelve rows of pews split into three sections form the arrangement of the church. One pew has been removed from the auditorium and is now in the entrance foyer. The walls are plastered and painted green.

The second and smaller room is the entrance foyer. This small room contains two doors leading into the auditorium and the two entrance doors plus the enclosed staircase on the east side of the room leading to the slave gallery. Three steps lead up to an original board-and-batten door which is handmade of four planks of even width, and contains the original hardware. Attached to the enclosed stairway is a crawl space which is used for storage. The entrance foyer is painted green with the woodwork being white.

The fourteen step stairway leads to what remains of the slave gallery. The gallery was partially removed in 1885 and enclosed so that only the back half remains. The gallery evidently never enjoyed the complete finish of the rest of the building. Today it is used for storage.

Alterations

The church is in its original state on the exterior with only routine repairs having been made to the structure. An educational building has been added to the west side of the church. Of frame construction and painted white this addition complements the older building to which it is joined. A door has been cut into the west facade of the church to afford access to the educational building. Otherwise, the exterior of the church retains its original appearance. Heat vents have been attached to the outside wall of the north facade of the church in a way that required no structural alterations to the building. The interior was modified in

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the 1880's with the partial removal of the slave gallery and the closing of the auditorium to form a solid southern wall. An organ was replaced in the latter part of the nineteenth century with a piano which is still in use in the auditorium. Electricity was added in the 1940's; the light fixtures added at that time are still in place. A few window panes have been replaced, mostly in the two north windows. At neighboring Crestmead, also a National Register building, a storm in the 1920's blew out several windows, also all on the north, leading to the speculation that this same storm also caused the damage to Mt. Nebo's north windows.<sup>1</sup> The original floor is in place, but covered.

Site

Mount Nebo Baptist Church stands on a partially tree shaded lot fronting Missouri Highway E. The cemetery is situated immediately behind and adjacent to the church to the north. The cemetery is divided into lots, a record of which is on display in the church entrance foyer. The grounds are well maintained, but several of the gravestones are in dire need of repair as they are broken. On three sides of the church is farm ground with a wooded area being on the fourth side across Highway E to the south.

Present Status and Condition

The church is owned by the congregation of Mount Nebo Baptist Church which still has an active membership served by a pastor. The building is in good condition but needs some repairs to be brought back to excellent shape. In the cemetery, as stated above, some stones need conservation work. The future of the church building is of deep concern to the membership who realize they are located in a rural area with a declining population base. One reason listing in the National Register of Historic Places is desired by the membership is to help preserve the church for future generations to use and love, just as it has been used and maintained for the past 128 years.

FOOTNOTES

1. Interview with Mrs. Anne Betteridge, owner of Crestmead on March 23, 1985.

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1856 **Builder/Architect** Unknown  
 Congregation --1820

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Mt. Nebo Baptist Church is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with Criterion C to wit: It embodies the distinctive characteristics of an antebellum, braced frame, southern protestant church.

Introduction: The area of significance for which this church is being nominated is architecture. Before summarizing the architectural significance of Mt. Nebo Baptist Church, however, the nonregister significance of this congregation should be briefly alluded to. While a recent building housing an older congregation is clearly ineligible for the register for that reason alone, it is still worth noting that few religious bodies in Missouri can claim the continuous history from earliest settlement times to the present that Mt. Nebo Baptist Church has enjoyed. It is linked with the first Baptist association founded in the territory of central Missouri, prior to statehood.<sup>1</sup> In a frontier milieu that afforded few restraints on individual conduct, Mt. Nebo, and other pioneer denominations, represented a powerful force for order and proper moral conduct. As elsewhere on the frontier, protestant churches in early Missouri were a powerful bulwark against the rude and lawless elements that were present on the fringes of settlement. Mount Nebo Baptist Church, and its sister denominations, were vital agents of the civilizing process.<sup>2</sup>

Architecture: The two previous buildings that served the growing Mt. Nebo congregation represented efforts to establish a religious order in a frontier setting; the 1857 building, presently under consideration, in turn, was the product of a southern agrarian social order that was passing into an era of stability and prosperity. In this, the building of Mt. Nebo was part of a general building and rebuilding of the cultural landscape that occurred throughout the southern settlement areas of Missouri during the prosperous and expansive decade of the 1850s. By far, the majority of surviving antebellum buildings in Missouri, including most of the handsome I-houses commonly associated with success and achievement in the Upper South, date from this decade of dramatic growth in the population and economy of Missouri. While no systematic inventory of surviving antebellum protestant churches has been compiled, a number of such buildings, generally the product of Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian denominations, have been observed in the field, particularly in the southern settlement areas bordering the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Generalizations about these protestant church buildings must be made based on the few dozen examples that have survived in these areas. It is unusual to find more than two or three examples in any given county that received a substantial southern migration in Missouri's settlement period. While some of these church buildings date from the 1840s, the majority of them would appear to date, as does Mt. Nebo, from the mid to late 1850s. Furthermore, the great majority of the churches from this period follow the general design of Mt. Nebo. Most are of modest dimensions, one story in height, with one or two entrance

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doors in the gable front, and either built of brick or, braced frame. That more brick examples seem to have survived is probably due to the greater durability of this material. While many church buildings of this period have small steeples in the manner of Mt. Nebo, others lack this feature. Steeples or no steeples, all of these churches seem to evoke the Greek temple form. In Mt. Nebo, this is achieved in a modest way by the cornice returns. In addition, the modest "dog eared" architraves enframing Mt. Nebo's entrance doors are a typical folk expression of the vernacular Greek Revival style in Missouri and are a common feature in all types of buildings built between 1840 and 1870. The paired entry doors so common in churches of this era invariably echo the common antebellum custom of segregating the sexes. The interior partition that provided more emphatic separation of males and females in the Mt. Nebo building before its removal is a construction feature that has not survived in any known example in Missouri. Nor is it common to encounter slave galleries still intact. The gallery in Mt. Nebo is only partially intact.

To summarize the architectural significance of Mt. Nebo Baptist Church, it is an important surviving example of a rural, antebellum, southern, protestant church. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of that property type, as defined by field observation of similar surviving examples in southern settlement areas in Missouri. As a frame example, it is a somewhat less common manifestation than its more numerous brick counterparts. Although once numerous throughout the state, churches of Mt. Nebo's type are now an endangered species due to the decline of rural congregations and resultant closings of churches. The majority of such churches seem to be located in rural areas, for, as towns prospered during the Gilded Age, many of the simple antebellum churches in them were demolished to make way for more pretentious productions. Mt. Nebo is, therefore, doubly important because it is not only in good condition, but it also represents a type that is relatively rare in Missouri. Other regional examples that have survived are mostly brick and include nearby New Lebanon Cumberland Presbyterian Church (National Register), Clark's Chapel, New Franklin vic., Howard County, the United Methodist Church, New Franklin vic., Howard County, the Christian Church, Rocheport, Boone County. A historic photograph of the First Methodist Church in Boonville (demolished in 1880) reveals it to have been nearly identical to Mt. Nebo in design.

From the point of view of integrity, Mt. Nebo has not suffered too severely, considering that the building has been in continuous use since its construction. The exterior has experienced little change, except for the addition of an education wing on the West elevation. Compatible materials and color reduce the intrusive aspect of this wing. The interior has been partitioned at the rear of the sanctuary, resulting in the partial removal of the slave gallery, and the modern amenities of electricity and heat have been introduced into the structure. Despite these modifications, Mt. Nebo would easily be recognizable to any time traveller of the area transported from 1857 to the present.

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The remaining information in this section was submitted by the original applicants. While this information does not clearly address National Register Criteria, it is included as important additional data that is relevant to the history of the church and its congregation.

Additional Information: Mount Nebo Baptist Church is significant for several reasons: It is an excellent, well maintained example of Greek Revival architecture in a religious structure in Missouri. It is one of the oldest surviving church buildings in the Boonslick, the first area settled west of St. Charles. It reflects the desire of the early settlers to immediately establish a place of worship and to refine that structure as living conditions changed. The original log structure was replaced in 1856 with the present building which was remodeled on the interior in the 1880's and 1940's. Although primarily of interest for background purposes, the church is one of the oldest Baptist congregations in the state, having roots stretching back to 1820, before statehood.

Mt. Nebo Baptist Church exemplifies the long tradition of the Baptist church in Missouri. The congregation immediately began plans for a church building upon formulation of the church and as prosperity arrived in the Boonslick the earlier log structure gave way to a modest frame structure that, in turn, was replaced by the present frame Greek Revival building. The church served as the focal point of the community where citizens of all ages, sexes and races could meet in one setting. It was democratic with conference meetings where a majority vote ruled and some of the most prominent Baptist ministers in Missouri history either served or were guest speakers here. As the emphasis of American society shifted from an agrarian base to urban, Mt. Nebo was luckily bypassed. Today, it sits quietly in the Cooper County countryside, still in regular use for its original purpose.

In November 1855, at the monthly conference, a committee was appointed of five men and five women to raise subscriptions to build a new church. By the January, 1856 conference, the committee had been at work and picked out a site of land belonging to a Mrs. Oglesby. By unanimous vote, the congregation authorized the building committee to "commence the work of building and proscribe it to a speedy conclusion upon such terms and in such a manner as they in their judgement may deem best with due reference to the means furnished and the wants of the community".<sup>3</sup> The church board served as the building committee and was authorized to secure the services of two men not members of the church to assist them. The committee was also authorized to use their best discretion concerning the building size, staying within the guidelines of no more than 40 feet wide or 70 feet long. The finished building is 42 feet wide. The original intention was to build the structure of brick and a kiln was even built on the site, the bricks fired and the walls started when "they were found to be unfit".<sup>4</sup> Thus, the walls were torn down and the church started over

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again, using the bricks for the foundation. Oral tradition in the church says that some of the bricks were later used in New Lebanon Cumberland Presbyterian Church which is nearby. The brick foundation which had been made of the bricks burned on the site in 1854 was declared unsafe in 1871 and replaced with stone at a total cost of \$20.00. Ever thrifty, the congregation voted to put the bricks to a third use and constructed a "pavement" from the gateway to the front door where the bricks remain today. No written records have been found to either substantiate or disprove this claim.

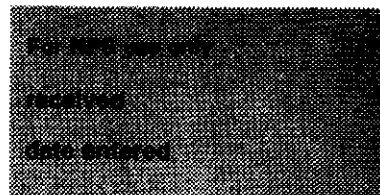
After the failure of the bricks, a frame structure was chosen and erected in the popular Greek Revival style, complete with steeple. A partition was run through the center section of the building, separating the men and women's sides with separate entrance doors for the two sexes. The partition remained until the 1940's. A slave gallery was built in the upper back of the church so blacks could worship. Although hardly an ideal situation, blacks were accepted as full members in the congregation whether or not the owners belonged. A prejudiced account of this situation written for the 100th anniversary of Mt. Nebo in 1920 states:

"At this time may we say something in regard to the membership? It was over 200 and comprised a large area of the country. By foot, on horseback, in wagons some drawn by oxen, came the worshippers. Many came from a distance of 10 miles or more. Here not only came the whites but the negroes as well for in those times both the master and his slaves belonged to the same church. Here in this building mingled their prayers to the One who made the world and called it good; and let me say to you that the religion of the black man was just as respected as that of the white. There are those in this congregation who remember Uncle Edmund and his prayers; especially for his master and mistress. I tell you if Harriet Beecher Stowe had been so fortunate as to have been born and reared in the Mt. Nebo neighborhood instead of Connecticut, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" would never have been written...."<sup>5</sup>

This biased quote matches the monthly conference records in which blacks were admitted to full membership privileges. Uncle Edmond was the church sexton after the Civil War and the conference records show how he brought in delinquent former slaves who had missed the monthly conferences. All asked forgiveness and were restored to full membership privileges.<sup>6</sup> The slave balcony was partially removed and enclosed in 1885.

On the second Saturday of August, 1857, the records of the monthly conference meeting begin with the notation "The first meeting in the New House."<sup>7</sup> The next day the church was dedicated by Reverend F. S. Dulin, president of the Baptist Female College in Lexington, Missouri. Following the dedication a protracted meeting was held at which nine converted and joined. By October, 1857, the monthly conference was worrying about stoves and appointed a committee of



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three to look into the matter and also to sell the 1839 church. By January, 1858, the monthly conference decided that a tax would be levied on the members of the church in accordance with their property and ability to pay for the stoves. Then in January, 1859, they voted to raise the minister's salary to \$150.00 as a token of appreciation for his work on the new church building. Evidently, the congregation was well pleased with their new church for the Baptist General Association held their annual meeting in the newly completed church in 1858 with delegates attending from all over the state. The tax assessment reflects the wide diversity of socio-economic groups in the area attending this church and assessment appears to have been employed several times. Taxes and donations one year ranged from \$93.11 for one wealthy planter to \$0.25 for one poor family. Several members are specifically cited as exempt from taxes; most appear to have been widows. Familiar names in Boonslick history such as Nathaniel Leonard and the Hain family appear in these assessment lists.<sup>8</sup> When all was tallied the church was still \$2,000.00 in debt following the construction and furnishing of the new building. The conference records for the next several years deal with debts, assessments, and worry over salaries for the minister and missionary support.

The church conference records do not mention the Civil War, but surely this conflict loomed large in the minds of the members. On October 12, 1864, Mt. Nebo was the site of an overnight encampment of Union troops under the leadership of General Sanborn who was chasing Sterling Price. The Confederate General and his troops had been skirmishing in Cooper County for approximately three days and as they retreated the Confederates stole horses and supplies. What little remained was confiscated by the Sanborn Union forces as they followed the retreating Confederates. The county was left destitute, but fortunately this ended the actual fighting in Cooper County for the Civil War.<sup>9</sup> In March, 1866, Mt. Nebo attempted to heal the wounds caused by the war of which they had been in the middle. Although Southern in outlook, the church voted to remove prejudice and to show a spirit of brotherly love to everyone while thinking evil of no persons. The Reconstruction Era of this section was more quickly accomplished with this attitude.

As the Gilded Age of prosperity entered American life, Mt. Nebo continued as a rural church, much concerned with agricultural events. In 1875, the church set May 18 aside as a day of fasting and humiliation for the grasshopper plague.<sup>22</sup>

Lightening struck the church steeple in 1899 and the congregation found that its insurance did not cover the repair. The annual premium of \$3.00 did not include fire protection which was an additional cost. The members repaired the steeple fortunately and staved off several other attempts to have the steeple removed (over the course of the years).

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The 20th century history of Mt. Nebo reflects the continuing concerns of a rural church bypassed by the railroads in a setting of little growth. By 1918, the great flu epidemic cancelled services and still two members died. By 1920, Mt. Nebo was determined to celebrate its Centennial and to preserve its history. Various celebrations have been held in the years since. In 1962, the congregation was able to secure the services of a full-time pastor. In 1971, an education frame building was added to the west end of the sanctuary.

Mt. Nebo Church Cemetery: As lifestyles rapidly changed after the Civil War, the church felt it necessary to "inquire into the property of establishing and laying off a burial ground under the control of the church and whether additional ground can be purchased."<sup>10</sup> The demise of family burying grounds on large family farms must account for the sudden interest in a church cemetery. Also, lingering traces of Romanticism made a cemetery a place of moral instruction on life and death which appealed to and seemed most appropriate near a church.<sup>11</sup> By 1871, adjoining land had been purchased, and lots were sold for \$5.00 each with the proceeds to go into a fund to fence the church and cemetery together. Many members of the congregation are buried in the cemetery, the most notable being Samuel Cole and his cousin, James Cole. These two men were two of the first permanent white settlers in the Boonslick, having arrived in the area from Loutre Island near Hermann, Missouri. In the move west to the Boonslick, Samuel Cole's father, William, was murdered by Indians but the family continued westward and the widow, Hannah Cole, founded Boonville, Missouri, in 1810. Her son, Samuel, was nine years old and much of the early history of the settling of the Boonslick is based upon his memoirs which were collected when he was in his eighties by Levens and Drake for their history of Cooper County. It is from his recollections that such stories as Blackhawk and Daniel Boone being in certain parts of the Boonslick are based. In 1825, Hannah Cole moved near Mt. Nebo Church and is buried in a cemetery two miles to the east of the church. Some of her descendants were Mt. Nebo members and naturally were buried in the church cemetery. James Cole was a double cousin to Samuel Cole (their fathers were brothers and their mothers were sisters) and like Samuel came to the Boonslick in 1810 with his parents.<sup>12</sup> The cemetery is well maintained.

Origins of the Mt. Nebo Congregation: Mt. Nebo was organized on June 3, 1820, a year before Missouri became a state, when approximately 63 people met in a log school house a mile north of Bunceton, Cooper County, Missouri, to draw up articles of faith and organize formally as a congregation. The name Mt. Nebo was adopted because it was the name of the mountain upon which Moses stood in his old age to look across at the "Promised Land" realizing that his descendants would inherit a land of milk and honey even though it was denied to him. The congregation felt like wanderers searching and they considered the Boonslick their promised land and hence, they chose the name as the highest point to which they could aspire, both morally and literally.<sup>13</sup> Although the list of charter members is lost, early records tell of the many women who immediately joined the congregation.<sup>14</sup>

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The first minister of Mt. Nebo was Reverend Luke Williams, the first ordained Baptist minister in the Boonslick. Williams preached without any fee, collecting only what the congregation could give him in goods as there was little money in the region. On the side, he and his wife farmed to survive and to allow him to continue in the ministry. In 1876, Margaret Stephens recalled a church meeting she had attended before statehood at which Luke Williams was the minister. Although she does not specifically say that it was Mt. Nebo, she does state that it was in the Bunceton region and it certainly reflects the character of frontier society as reflected in their church. Luke Williams was dressed in a complete set of buckskin and many of the worshippers were likewise attired. Stephens was new to the area having just moved there from North Carolina and the appearance of the congregation so upset her that she cried the entire service. Also, at that service, grease from bear meat stored in the loft of the house where they were worshipping dripped down and spoiled her shawl which she had brought west with her and which could not be replaced in the wilderness at that time.<sup>15</sup> The primitive conditions of worshipping in a home made church building a high priority item with the early settlers plus the idea of a church showed the progress of the area. The congregation built a log structure for their church as soon as possible. Since no money was available each member contributed either work or material; everything was donated.<sup>16</sup>

In the fall of 1820, Mt. Nebo joined the Mt. Pleasant Baptist Association when that organization met in Cooper County. The first clerk of Mt. Nebo, Jordan O'Bryan, wrote a circular letter setting forth scriptural arguments for the support of gospel ministry which became popular. Later, O'Bryan served in the Missouri Legislature. By 1823, so many people had flooded into the Boonslick doubling and tripling the population that the Mt. Pleasant Association divided into three areas and Mt. Nebo was logically assigned to the Concord Association which encompassed all the churches south of the Missouri River.<sup>17</sup>

The twelve Articles of Faith and the fifteen Articles of Decorum approved by the congregation in June 1822 show the status of society, religious thought in the exploration/settlement period, and practical applications of living on the edge of civilization.

The twelve Articles of Faith were standard Baptist doctrine emphasizing baptism by immersion, closed communion, and the Trinity. The fifteen Articles of Decorum prove interesting from the perspective of the 20th century. The church held a conference or business meeting once per month on the Saturday afternoon before preaching Sunday, the one Sunday of the month when an ordained minister was present. Every male member was expected to attend conference and every female member was to attend as many as possible, an interesting difference. Women were, however, entitled to the same membership privileges as men. If a male member failed to attend two conferences in a row, he was visited by five other male members who inquired into his previous absences. If sufficient reason was not found for his absences, he could be churched or expelled.<sup>18</sup> The original church records show the church was

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patient with offenders, but instances can be found where members were chastised for selling slaves for the town market, for dancing, playing cards, drunkenness and fighting. One member was expelled because he habitually swore while another rule forbade the selling of beer, cakes, cider, melons or anything of the kind within one mile of the church.<sup>19</sup> Although the rules were not unusual for the time, it is unusual that Mt. Nebo still has the complete set of original records.

Church life may have been governed by Articles of Faith and moral laws, but the proposed harmony did not last. By 1826, in spite of the high regard of Jordan O'Bryan, the members were divided on the question of paying ministers and sending missionaries to other regions. The anti-missionary group remained in the 1820 log church and the other constituency that believed like O'Bryan became known as New Mt. Nebo. They left and worshipped in members' homes and schools until 1829 when a committee was formed to look into the construction of a new church. For some unknown reason, the actual construction of the church was delayed until 1838 when Alvin P. Williams began his pastorate to New Mt. Nebo.<sup>20</sup> Williams was an energetic Baptist minister who eventually became moderator of the Missouri Baptist Association, the highest honor in 19th Century Baptist Missouri. Under his able guidance, a frame building 26 x 40 feet was finished in 1839 one half mile east of the present church. Each member was assigned his/her proportionate share of the construction cost. At Williams' insistence the pulpit was changed from the side of the building to the end reflecting upon a more traditional church and showing how influences from other denominations were infiltrating the area and being accepted. Williams was minister of New Mt. Nebo for several years and was known for energetic preaching and leadership. It was said that if the New Testament was lost, he could reproduce it from memory correctly. That he was a popular preacher is attested to by the church rolls. In 1842, at a protracted meeting at New Mt. Nebo, Williams baptized 52 one day and then 22 more the next. In an old letter from the period, the sound of praying at this meeting was likened to the "shucking of corn at a husking bee".<sup>21</sup> For his outstanding service, Williams received \$100.00 as his salary in 1843.<sup>22</sup>

During this ante-bellum period, the church grew and members lived in parts of present day Cooper, Saline, Pettis, and Moniteau Counties. Not wishing to neglect anyone, New Mt. Nebo established arms of the church in 4 different areas. Again, this congregation helped in the settlement of other Missouri areas by assisting with money and ministers.

ENDNOTES

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10. Original Church Records, January, 1868.
11. Farrell, James J., Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), Chapter I. Farrell goes on to discuss the implications of various Protestant movements in 19th century America which he feels kept this feeling alive longer here in the Midwest than in other sections of the country.
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14. History of Howard and Cooper Counties, Missouri (St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1883), p. 815.
15. Levens and Drake, p. 178.
16. Ibid., p. 59.
17. Betteridge, Mrs. V. K., Chairman, p. 1.

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18. The Articles of Faith and Rules of Decorum of Mt. Nebo Church (Mt. Nebo Church Records in possession of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Betteridge, Pilot Grove, Missouri, June 2, 1822).

19. Original Church Records.

20. Betteridge, Mrs. V. K., Chairman, p. 2.

21. McDaniel, ed., p. 29.

22. Original Church Records, 1843.

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2. Betteridge, Ann. Personal Interview, February 5, 1985.
3. Betteridge, Robert. Personal Interview, February 5, 1985.
4. Betteridge, Mrs. V. K., Chairman. History of Mt. Nebo Baptist Church. Booklet published for 150th anniversary, 1970.
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13. "Mt. Nebo Church Goers Celebrate." Boonville Daily News. Boonville, Missouri: Vol. 52, No. 239. Monday, June 29, 1970.
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270 feet, east 280 feet, south 270 feet, and west 280 feet to the point of beginning. This legal description is taken from the Cooper County records. The church yard which is being nominated occupies the southwest one-quarter of this area, or a rectangle 135 feet measured north/south and 140 feet east/west. This boundary recognizes only the church and the immediate surrounding area.



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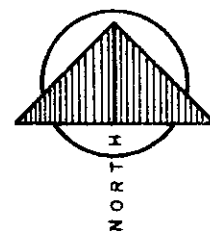
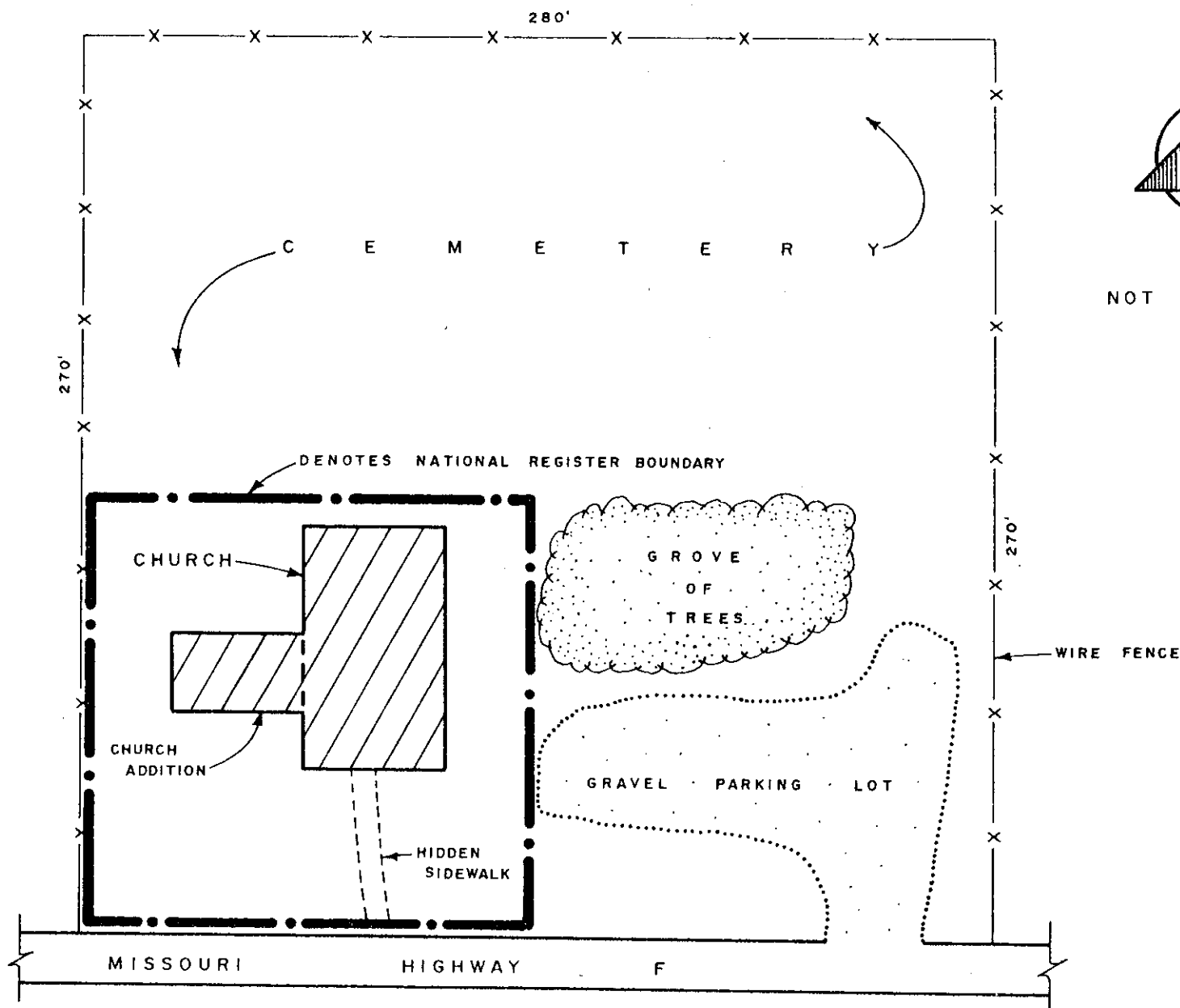
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Date: March 18, 1986

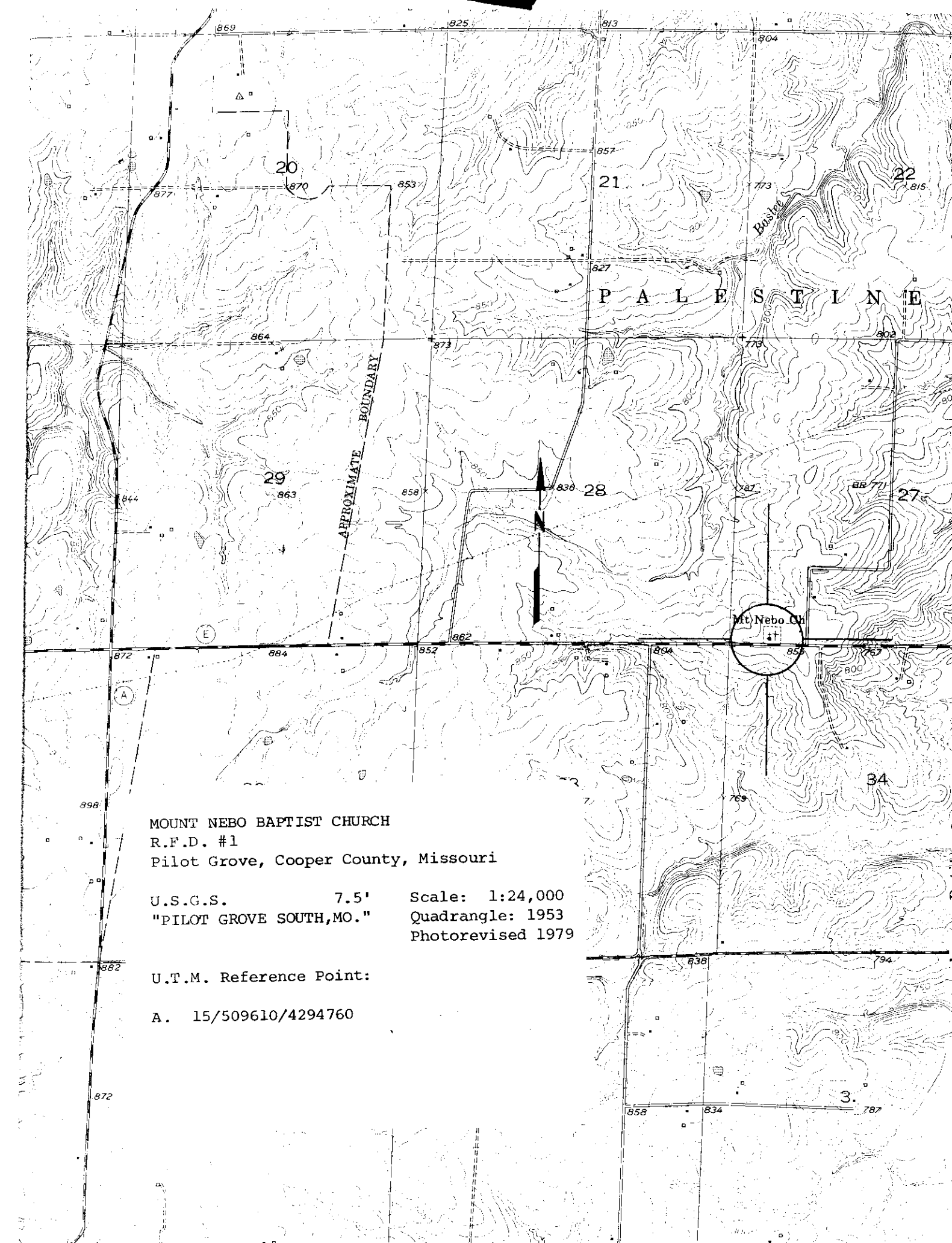
SITE PLAN MAP

MT. NEBO BAPTIST CHURCH

PILOT GROVE VICINITY, COOPER CO., MISSOURI



NOT TO SCALE



MOUNT NEBO BAPTIST CHURCH  
R.F.D. #1  
Pilot Grove, Cooper County, Missouri

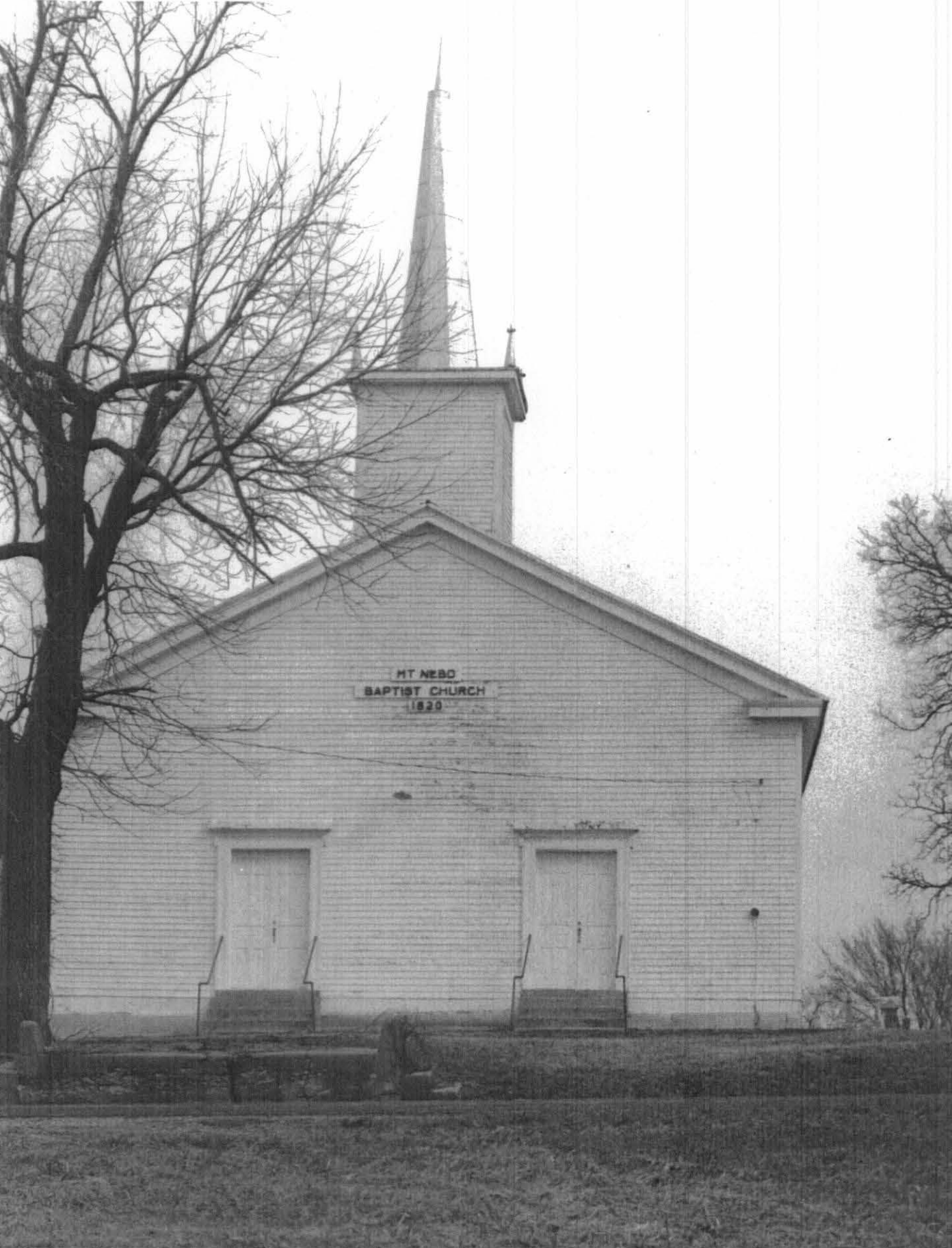
U.S.G.S. 7.5' Scale: 1:24,000  
"PILOT GROVE SOUTH, MO." Quadrangle: 1953  
Photorevised 1979

U.T.M. Reference Point:

A. 15/509610/4294760







MT NEBO  
BAPTIST CHURCH  
1820

























