



City of Gainesville  
Department of Doing  
Planning Division

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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD STAFF REPORT

<b>PUBLIC HEARING DATE:</b>	January 5, 2021
<b>ITEM NO:</b>	Information Item B
<b>PROJECT NAME AND NUMBER:</b>	Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, 429 NW 4 <sup>th</sup> Street
<b>APPLICATION TYPE:</b>	Information item
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	Staff recommends that the HPB support the nomination of this property to the National Register of Historic Places.
<b>CITY PROJECT CONTACT:</b>	Jason Simmons

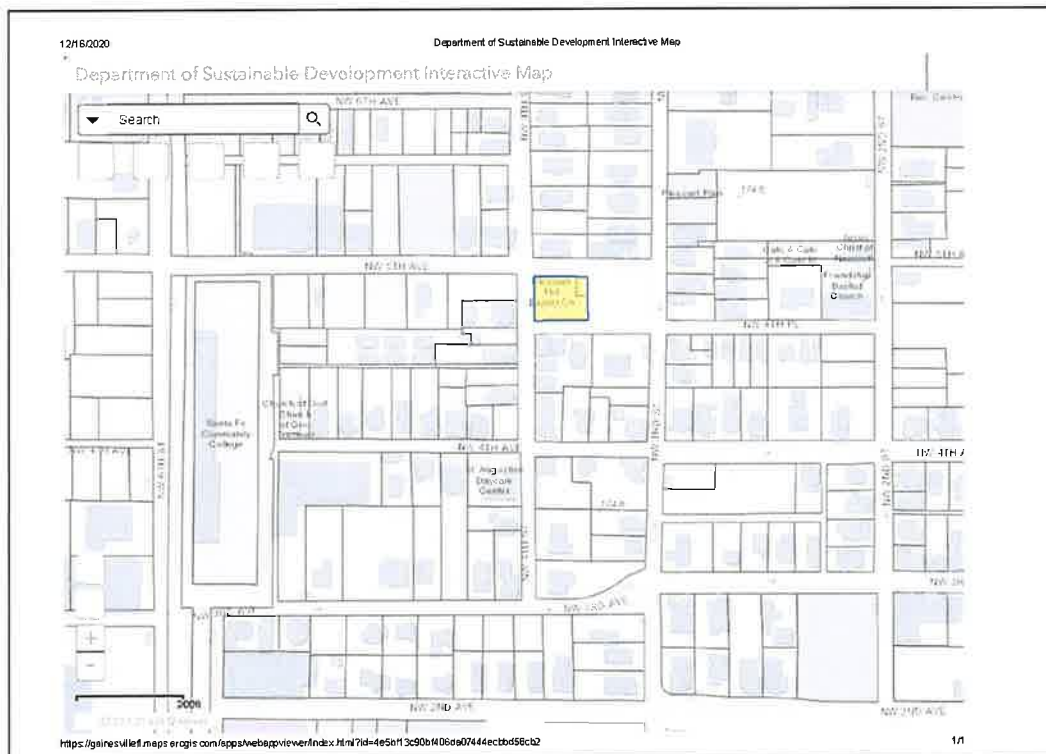


Figure 1: Location Map

**APPLICATION INFORMATION:**

**Agent/Applicant:** Morris Hylton III, Kristine Ziedina, & Linda  
Stevenson

**Property Owner(s):** Pleasant Hill Baptist Church; Mount Carmel Baptist  
Church

**SITE INFORMATION:**

**Address:** 429 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street

**Parcel Number(s):** 14289-000-000 & 14289-001-000

**Existing Use(s):** Place of Religious Assembly

**Zoning Designation(s):** Urban 6

**Historic District** N/A

**Historic District Status:** N/A

**Date of construction:** c. 1900 ACPA & c. 1944 AL01401

**PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:**

**Information Item A.** National Register Nomination: Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church. Located at 429 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Pleasant Hill Baptist Church & Mount Carmel Baptist Church, owners.

**STAFF REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION:**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The property, located at 429 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street, has been nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places by the State of Florida, Division of Historical Resources. The nomination proposal will be reviewed by the Florida National Register Review Board in a public meeting early this year. If the Review Board finds that the property meets the criteria for listing established by the National register, a formal nomination will be submitted to the Keeper of the National Register in Washington D.C., who will make the final decision (see Exhibit 1).

Inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places provides recognition that the property is deemed by the federal and state governments to be significant to our history at the national, state and/or local levels.

## BACKGROUND

“The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is located at 429 NW 4th Street in Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida. The two-and-a-half-story, red-brick church sits on a prominent intersection in the Pleasant Street Historic District. The church was constructed in 1944 during the time of a scarcity of building materials and is an excellent example of a mix of popular architectural styles and traditional religious forms. The building's exterior design elements, characteristic for the Late Gothic Revival style, include a cross-gabled roof, parapeted walls, Flemish-bond red brick construction, brick pilaster-strips, pointed arch windows with colored glass panes, and precast concrete surrounds for doors and windows. The organization of the interior space into two levels, with an assembly room on the ground level, and nave and sanctuary on the second level, reflects a building tradition that builders carried out from the earliest churches that were constructed and owned by free African Americans. Although typical of the 1940s construction with the use of modest materials and minimal decorative details, the building is architecturally significant and retains a high level of its integrity. While overall material condition of the building is good, water damage is visible in the church's interior, especially around the windows, and in proximity to the air-conditioning units. The condition of the ceiling is poor, as the water intrusion from above has caused structural damage. The only significant addition to the church is the circa 1956 one story section on the south side of the main building that was constructed to provide an additional meeting space. Because the addition is subordinate to the size of the original building and set back from the main, west façade, it does not compromise the overall architectural integrity of the building. The exterior of the church had been little altered since its construction in 1944. Whereas the door openings on north, west, and south facades remain original, the doors themselves are replacements. The installation of air-conditioning units has altered the visual appearance of the building's windows. The interior ceiling tiles appear to be added and conceal the original roof construction, possibly during the renovation that was done during the 1980s. The building's original exterior design is intact, and interior alterations are reversible and do not compromise the overall integrity of the building. The physical appearance of the church, especially the intact design features and presence of original materials, conveys the historic character of the property.”

## SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

“The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the **state and local levels** under **Criterion A** in the area of **Social History: Civil Rights Movement**. The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is also proposed for listing under **Criterion B**, as significant at the local and state level for its association with Reverend Thomas A. Wright, an Alachua County leader for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and one of the Civil Rights Movement leaders in Florida. Additionally, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church represents distinctive characteristics of the Late Gothic Revival style and is significant at the local and state level for listing under **Criterion C: Design and Construction**. The building retains sufficient integrity for listing to the National Register. The period of the cultural and architectural significance of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church extends from 1944 to 1970.”

“Since the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church's construction in 1944, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the building served as one of the religious and social centers for Gainesville's African

American community. Since 1962 the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church became a strategic planning center where representatives from local, state, and national institutions and organizations held meetings and planning sessions for implantation of legal, as well as non-violent actions of the Civil Rights Movement in Alachua County and North-central Florida.”

“During 1963 and 1964, legal challenges for the desegregation of the Alachua County school system were discussed at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church. Under the leadership of Rev. T. A. Wright, the building served as the *de facto* command post for the Alachua County chapter of the NAACP, the organization that helped to integrate public education across Florida.”

“The architectural significance of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church relates primarily to its style and method of construction. The building is a good example of the application of principles of the Late Gothic Revival style to a small-scale urban church. The building’s interior spaces reflect architectural trends that were typical for the 19th-century auditorium plan church, such as the nave’s sloped floor and proscenium type arch that emphasizes the pulpit and altar table.”

## **HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Criteria A: Social History – Civil Rights Movement**

“The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is directly associated with one of the major achievements of the 20th century, the end of legal segregation of American society, and is significant for its association with events related to crucial moments in the Civil Rights Movement. Since its construction in 1944, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church served as one of the spiritual and social centers for Gainesville’s African American community. During the 1960s, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, located within the historically African American neighborhood, became a center of the Civil Rights Movement in Gainesville where non-violent activities throughout Alachua County and Florida were planned.”

## **HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Criteria B: Reverend Thomas A. Wright**

“The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is associated with Reverend Thomas A. Wright (1920-2014), one of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement in Gainesville, Florida. Rev. Wright, an advocate for the integration of education and social justice, served at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church from 1962 until 1984. In the early 1960s, Rev. Wright was elected President of the Alachua County chapter of the NAACP and led the organization’s battle for desegregation of the Alachua County school system. Rev. Wright held political meetings at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, and organized picketing, sit-ins, and peaceful marches that took place in Gainesville. During the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Rev. Wright would also become the first African American to run for Gainesville City Commission since Reconstruction, and many looked to him for leadership.”

## **HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Criteria C: Architecture**

“The architectural significance of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church relates primarily to its style and method of construction. The church embodies several architectural trends that prevailed for spiritual buildings starting from the late 19th century and lasted until the Great Depression. The building is a good example of the application of principles of the Late Gothic Revival style to a small-scale urban church. The organization of the church’s interior space into two levels, with assembly room on the ground level and nave and sanctuary on the second level, is building tradition that builders carried out from the earliest churches constructed and owned by free African Americans. The building’s interior spaces reflect architectural trends that were typical for the 19th - century auditorium plan church, such as nave’s sloped floor, sanctuary and choir area located on the elevated platform above the nave’s floor, and proscenium type arch that emphasizes pulpit and altar table.”

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Board support the nomination of this property to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the HPB may provide official comments to the Florida Bureau of Historic Preservation as to whether or not this property meets eligibility criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

<b>LIST OF EXHIBITS:</b>
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**Exhibit 1**      **Florida National Register Nomination Proposal**

**Exhibit 2**      **Photos**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

other names/site number AL01401, Mount Carmel Baptist Church (see continuation sheets for additional names)

2. Location

street & number 429 NW Fourth Street  not for publication

city or town Gainesville  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Alachua code 001 zip code 32601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action


Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

"N/A"

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Church  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Church  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:  
Late Gothic Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Asphalt  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY: Civil Rights Movement

ARCHITECTURE: Late Gothic Revival

Period of Significance

1944-1970

Significant Dates

1944 - construction date

Significant Person

Wright, Thomas Alexander (1920-2014), Reverend

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of Repository

University of Florida

#



Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.17 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	3 7 1 4 1 7	3 2 8 1 3 4 8
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kristine Ziedina, Linda Stevenson, Morris Hylton III

organization University of Florida date 08/31/2020

street & number DCP Arch 148, 1480 Inner Road telephone 352 294 1438

city or town Gainesville state Florida zip code 32611

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Clear and descriptive photographs under separate cover. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Each photograph must be numbered in the order they are referenced in the manuscript, and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Pleasanthill Missionary Baptist Church

street & number 2611 NW 68th Avenue telephone 352 451 4736

city or town Gainesville state Florida zip code 32653

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

### SECTION 1: NAME OF PROPERTY

#### Other names/site number:

AL01401; The Old Mt. Carmel Baptist Church; Pleasant Hill Baptist Church; Pleasant Hill MCB; Pleasanthill Missionary Baptist Church

### SECTION 7: NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

#### SUMMARY

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is located at 429 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida. The two-and-a-half-story, red-brick church sits on a prominent intersection in the Pleasant Street Historic District.<sup>1</sup> The church was constructed in 1944 during the time of a scarcity of building materials and is an excellent example of a mix of popular architectural styles and traditional religious forms. The building's exterior design elements, characteristic for the Late Gothic Revival style, include a cross-gabled roof, parapeted walls, Flemish-bond red brick construction, brick pilaster-strips, pointed arch windows with colored glass panes, and precast concrete surrounds for doors and windows. The organization of the interior space into two levels, with an assembly room on the ground level, and nave and sanctuary on the second level, reflects a building tradition that builders carried out from the earliest churches that were constructed and owned by free African Americans. Although typical of the 1940s construction with the use of modest materials and minimal decorative details, the building is architecturally significant and retains a high level of its integrity. While overall material condition of the building is good, water damage is visible in the church's interior, especially around the windows, and in proximity to the air-conditioning units. The condition of the ceiling is poor, as the water intrusion from above has caused structural damage. The only significant addition to the church is the circa 1956 one-story section on the south side of the main building that was constructed to provide an additional meeting space. Because the addition is subordinate to the size of the original building and set back from the main, west façade, it does not compromise the overall architectural integrity of the building. The exterior of the church had been little altered since its construction in 1944. Whereas the door openings on north, west, and south facades remain original, the doors themselves are replacements. The installation of air-conditioning units has altered the visual appearance of the building's windows. The interior ceiling tiles appear to be added and conceal the original roof construction, possibly during the renovation that was done during the 1980s. The building's original exterior design is intact, and interior alterations are reversible and do not compromise the overall integrity of the building. The physical appearance of the church, especially the intact design features and presence of original materials, conveys the historic character of the property.

<sup>1</sup> Listed on NRHP on April 20, 1989, FMSF 8 AL2557, Shiver, "Pleasant Street Historic District," 1.

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

Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 2

## SETTING

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is located within the boundaries of one of Gainesville's oldest residential areas, the Pleasant Street Historic District. Traditionally dominated by African Americans, the historically and architecturally significant neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1989. At the time of the listing on the National Register, the district consisted of 259 contributing buildings, mostly wood-frame vernacular houses and bungalows, and 12 noncontributing buildings. Most of the homes and structures located in the Pleasant Street District were built in the first thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among the few masonry buildings within the district, the most prominent were churches. The period of significance of the Pleasant Street Historic District is related to building development dating from approximately 1875 to 1935. Therefore, at the time of the listing, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, constructed in 1944, was not considered old enough to be a contributing structure.<sup>2</sup>

The church building is situated close to the sidewalks along NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street and NW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The site features minimal landscaping. The simple grass lawn extends along the south and east sides of the building. A flower bed is located to the west of the walkway that links the building's south-east entrance and NW 4<sup>th</sup> Place; another flower bed separates the building's north facade from the sidewalk along NW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. A single tree grows on the SW corner of the property.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### Exterior

The church's exterior walls are constructed of red brick laid in Flemish bond (Photo 1). The mortar color varies from white to grey, with evidence of various repointing campaigns undertaken at different periods. The foundation of the building is not visible from the exterior as the red-brick walls begin close to grade.

The floorplan of the building is irregular, with the main interior spaces and church offices housed beneath the cross-gabled roof. The building's original floorplan formed simplified Latin cross, with a western arm that barely projects past the face of the north and south arms of the cross. The eastern arm is the longer and more dominant form in the plan and massing (Figure 2). The one-story, rectangular-shaped addition (c. 1956) extends to the south, with its longer side placed against the south wall of the original building. The original building and its addition form the church's current, irregular floorplan. The building's massing is defined by the main, rectangular, two-and-a-half-story volume with gable ends, and is oriented along its longitudinal, east-west axis. The protruding side wings extend to the north and south from the main section and are set at a lower height than the dominant front-gabled volume.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Section 7 Pg. 14.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

The gable ends of the central section's east and west facades, and the end facades on the north and south arms of the cross-shaped form, terminate above the level of the sloped roofs, creating parapets which conceal the roof surface from view. The flat, narrow copings project past the face of the brick and protect the tops of the gable end parapet walls. The eave ends of the gable roofs have exposed rafters and purlins and no soffits (Photo 2). The one-story addition on the south side is sheltered by a lean-to-roof that is built against the vertical face of the south wall. The roof is surfaced with black asphalt composition shingles. While this roofing material is not original, its application did not alter the pitch and shape of the church's original roofline.

The building has five entrances. A double-leaf door and pointed arch window above the door form the building's entrance portal, accessible from the NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The north-west and south-west entrances are located in the center of each protruding wing. The one-story addition that extends to the south of the building's central section is accessible from a door located close to the church's south-east corner. An additional entrance is located close to the building's north-east corner. All entrance openings appear to be original.

Similar to other religious buildings constructed in Florida during World War II, the church is sparsely ornamented. The precast concrete door and window surrounds embellish the main, west façade, and a simple precast concrete belt course runs horizontally between the building's first and second floors. The building's entrance is emphasized by precast concrete surrounds on the jambs and head of the openings. The pointed-arch window is decorated with colored glass panes.

*West facade*

The main façade extends along the NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street between the NW 4<sup>th</sup> Place and the NW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The central, symmetrical section of the west façade extends without a break from ground level to the top, forming a prominent gable end (Photo 1). The top of the west gable is accentuated with a simple Latin cross, made of concrete (Photo 3). The precast concrete belt course runs horizontally between the first and second floors of the west facade except at its central section. The belt course is painted white and contrasts visually with the red-brick walls. Another belt course, unpainted, runs horizontally in the upper section of the front gable and steps down to form the sill for the attic vent opening.

The entrance opening is centered on the gable end of the west façade. The pair of paneled entrance doors each feature four rectangular panels and two small square glass lites at the top of each leaf. The doors are capped by a rectangular four-light transom (Photo 4). The doors, door frames, and the precast concrete surround are painted white. Plywood panels provide infill between the door opening frame and the door surround. Within the entrance opening, a pointed arch window is located above the entrance doors on the second story level. A rectangular, white-painted precast concrete lintel separates the transom frame from this window. The window has colored glass panes, separated by narrow muntins. The lower part of the window is a composition of four vertical panes, and the upper part consists of six panes radiating out from a central point. The composition of the upper six panes is symmetrical, with

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 4

two central blue panes, two translucent lower panes, and burnt orange middle panes. The majority of panes appear to be original. The window frame and precast concrete surround are painted white.

There is a wood frame, one-over-one double paned window on either side of the central entrance. The second floor, wood frame, one-over-one double paned windows have single-pane transoms and are located above the first-floor windows. All the windows on the west facade appear to be original, they are painted white and have white-painted precast concrete surrounds. The masonry openings of the door, transom, and window surrounds are original, and most materials are original. The historical photograph of the west facade suggests that the original double-leaf door has been replaced (Figure 3).

The composition of the central section of the west facade is emphasized by four tall and narrow brick pilasters. Two pilasters accentuate the south-west and north-west corner of the facade's central section and extend above the gable's ridge line. Two shorter pilasters are located between the windows and entrance portal and extend slightly above the central pointed-arch window, with sloped precast concrete caps.

*North facade*

The building's north facade fronts onto the NW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Photo 5). The precast concrete belt course runs underneath the second-story windows of the five-bay, asymmetrical north facade. The gable end wall of the protruding wing forms a parapet and conceals the roof behind. The north-west entrance is accessible from the north wall of the protruding wing. A rectangular four-light transom caps the double-leaf French door. Narrow muntins divide each side of the double-leaf door into fifteen lights. Historic image suggest that the doors are a recent replacement (Figure 3). The precast concrete door surround, door opening, and the transom are original. The first-floor windows have precast concrete windowsills and flat arch soldier course brick lintels. Four of the second-story windows sit on the belt course and are capped by single-pane transoms and brick surrounds that project slightly from the wall plane. The fifth window, located close to the buildings north-east corner, is smaller, has a precast concrete windowsill, and does not have a transom.

*South facade*

The original composition of the south facade duplicates the north façade (Photo 6). The second story windows are similar to the windows on the north facade. The c. 1956 addition was built in front of the first-floor windows. The simple metal grilles protect two, one-over-one, double-hung windows on the addition's wall. The paneled entrance door is located close to the addition's south-east corner (Photo 7). The south-west entrance opening, and second-story window openings are original. The south-west entrance door is a modern flush replacement door. However, the door opening, the four-pane transom light, and the precast concrete door surround are original (Photo 8).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### *East facade*

The original, central section of the east facade is symmetrical (Photo 9). The red-brick wall extends from the ground level to the gable without interruption and forms a raking parapet which conceals the gable roof behind. The precast concrete belt course is painted white and runs horizontally between the first and second floors. The one-story addition connects with the original section in the same vertical plane. However, the change in the color and texture of the brick marks different periods of construction.

The double-hung, one-over-one wood windows are arranged symmetrically in three-bays, in a pattern of single-paired-single sash and are painted white. The first-floor windows have brick rowlock windowsills, and brick soldier course lintels; the second-story windows have precast concrete windowsills and concealed structural lintels. A few glass panes are broken and missing. The louvered vent opening in the upper section of the gable has a brick windowsill.

Openings for the air intake grills have been roughly cut into the brick wall in the upper level, with jagged edges of brick, and indicate that the systems were a later alteration. The electrical conduits and plumbing pipes are exposed on the exterior of the east façade, marking the insertion of later buildings systems, indicating other alterations.

### *Windows*

The church's windows reflect two periods of the building's construction. The one-over-one, double-hung, painted white wood windows of the oldest section of the building are original. The panes used for the windows are a mixture of a clear and floral patterned, frosted, semi-transparent glass. For most of the windows, the frosted glass is used for the top sash, whereas the bottom sash is translucent. The glass jalousie window on the east wall of the one-story addition is original to this section. The ornamental metal grilles protect two windows, located on the addition's south wall. The wood frames of most windows are weathered but in fair condition. The air-conditioning units are installed in the lower section of windows that are located on the north and south facades. Several glass panes of the second-story windows are damaged and pose a threat to the material condition of the building.

### **Interior**

The church's interior is organized according to a modified auditorium plan. The auditorium plan churches were typical for the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Usually, they featured a nave with a sloped floor down towards the raised platform containing the sanctuary and choir area, with a proscenium arch that emphasizes the pulpit and altar table.

The primary access to the church is through the double-leaf door entrance on the west façade. The first and second floors have similar layouts, with a foyer in the western section and central main interior spaces. The assembly room is located on the building's ground level and is accessible through the vestibule. The first floor has office spaces on the north and south sides of the assembly room. The church's main sanctuary is located on the second floor and is accessible from the upper lobby.

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*First-floor vestibule and assembly room*

The first-floor vestibule interior reflects the symmetrical composition of the church's west façade. The double-leaf, wooden door is located at the center of the vestibule's west wall (Photo 10). Windows flank the main entrance on the north and south sides (Photo 11). The interior side of the entrance door is painted white; the interior side of the windows are painted dark red. The decorative and functional metal grillwork provides security on the interior side of both windows.

The rectangular openings in the vestibule's north and south wall lead to the smaller spaces that connect the vestibule and the church's north-west and south-west entrances, and the offices (Photo 12). The walls of the vestibule and other spaces on the first floor are painted white. The wood baseboards are original and are painted white. The floor in the main vestibule is concrete, painted dark red. The floor in front of the south-west and north-west entrances is covered with vinyl tile. The acoustic tile ceiling is painted white.

The entrance to the assembly room is through a double-leaf, fifteen-lite, white painted wood door. The door is located in the center of the vestibule's east wall, between two sets of stairs that lead to the second floor (Photo 13). The elevated choir area extends from the assembly room's east wall and is emphasized by the simple proscenium arch (Photo 14). The plastered walls are painted orange, and the choir area is emphasized by the yellow west wall. Round metal columns support the slightly sloped ceiling (Photo 15).

*Double stair*

The symmetrical, double stair extends along the vestibule's east wall and leads to the second-floor foyer. The stair is accessible from main, western entrance and both side entrances. Each section of the stair begins with two wide steps, has a landing in the middle, and is enclosed by rectangular balusters (Photo 16). The treads, closed risers, balusters, handrail, newel post, skirt-boards are painted dark brown. The two steps that lead to the stair treads are clad in vinyl tile with an aluminum guard on the edge. The space underneath the stair is used for storage.

*Second-story lobby*

The double-stair leads from the ground level to the second-floor lobby, which is lit by the pointed arch window (Photos 17; 18). The upper landings of each staircase flank the double-leaf entrance doors that lead to the nave. The lobby's wood floor, as well as balusters that enclose the staircase openings, are painted dark-brown. The walls and baseboards are painted white. The acoustic tile ceiling is painted white.

*Second-story nave and sanctuary*

The flush double-leaf door gives access from the second-story lobby into the church's nave (Photo 19). The door opens beneath the upper gallery and leads from the nave's west wall to the elevated sanctuary

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area located on the east side of the nave (Photo 20). The upper gallery extends along the nave's west wall, protrudes to the east into the nave, and is accessible only by the stairs that start in the second-story lobby. The gallery is supported by rectangular, bevel-edged pine columns with small brackets. Set above the main columns are similar, slightly smaller columns that extend from the gallery floor to the nave ceiling. The upper gallery's east wall consists of vertical tongue and groove planks inset into large rectangular panels.

Four square pine-wood columns support the nave ceiling (Photo 21). The rectangular, plastered and painted white acoustic tiles clad the dropped edge beams. The condition of the ceiling is poor, as the water intrusion from above has caused structural damage.

The wood floor of the nave slopes down from the west wall to the east and reaches the elevated sanctuary and choir area. The wood floor is mostly intact, with evidence of deterioration in limited areas from exposure to water leaking from the ceiling and possible insect damage.

The elevated sanctuary area extends to the west into the nave, is accessible by two sets of stairs, and is carpeted (Photo 22). The pulpit is located in the front of the raised area. The proscenium-type frame at the east end of the nave marks the transition from the nave to the rectangular-shaped choir area. The frame is emphasized by geometric ornamentation that surrounds the sides and upper section and brackets in the corners of the frame. The cross is located in the center of the upper section of ornamentation. The low wall that extends from the proscenium frame's north side to the south side separates the choir area and altar area. The seating for the choir consists of theatre-style wooden chairs.

The baptismal pool is located high above the choir area (Photo 23). The rectangular opening in the upper sections of the nave's east wall allows the congregation to see into the baptismal pool. The mural that depicts a religious scene is located at the east, deepest wall of the baptismal pool. The low glass partition prevents water from escaping into the choir area below. The date of the installation of the baptismal pool and mural is not confirmed by available sources. The two doors on each side of the choir area lead to the sacristy.

The nave's walls are plastered and painted white. Windows, located on the north and south side of the nave, allow in unfiltered natural light. The door, accessible by four carpeted steps, is located to the north of the sanctuary; a similar door is located to the south. Above two doors, there are openings that resemble windows.

The woodwork, which includes paneling in the gallery, altar and choir area, baseboards, chair rails, window and door surrounds, is stained dark-brown and enhances the architectural details of the nave and sanctuary. Water damage is visible on several woodwork details, especially around the windows and in the proximity to the air-conditioning units.



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*Offices and Technical Rooms*

Two of the four church's offices, a mechanical room, and two restrooms are located on the first floor of the building, in the eastern section, behind the first-floor meeting space. Two offices, a storage room, and two restrooms are located in the eastern section of the second floor. The wall finish in the offices, as well as in technical and service rooms, is painted plaster. There is evidence of weather and insect damage, especially on wooden details.

**ALTERATIONS**

There have been only minor additions and changes made to the original church building. The only significant addition to the building is the circa 1956 one-story section on the south side of the main building that was constructed to provide an additional meeting space (Photo 6). The original building section and addition have similar brick wall patterns. However, the change in brick color and texture marks different construction periods. This type of addition was common for many churches, as buildings adapted to the changing needs of their congregations.

The exterior of the church had been little altered since its construction in 1944. While door openings on north, west, and south facades remain original, the doors themselves are replacements. The installation of air-conditioning units has altered the visual appearance of the building's windows.

The church's interior was impacted by the installation of an air-conditioning system as well as a new plumbing system. Originally, the church was heated by a coal-fired furnace and cooled by natural ventilation through the double-hung windows. A central air system was added sometime after the initial construction, as shown by the round vents in the ceiling and the presence of ductwork in the nave in front of the balcony. The air-conditioning units are installed in the windows. The ceiling tiles appear to be added and conceal original roof construction, possibly during the renovation that was done during the 1980s. Most of the light fixtures appear to be installed in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The chandelier or pendant fixture above the second story choir area appears to be installed in the late 1970s.

**INTEGRITY**

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church possesses a high level of all seven aspects of integrity. The church remains in its original location, surrounded by its historic setting of single-family houses and small-scale commercial buildings. The building maintains its impressive presence within one of the oldest residential areas of Gainesville, the Pleasant Street Historic District. The physical environment that surrounds the church reflects the material conditions and character of the neighborhood, traditionally dominated by African Americans. The building maintains its historic functions and serves the spiritual, educational, and social needs of Gainesville's residents.

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Envisioned in the mid-1930s, and constructed in 1944, the Late Gothic Revival-style building is an example of the work of an anonymous master-builder. The church's original design remains intact and retains a high level of integrity. The proportion and scale of the building have not been altered, and the door and window openings remain in their original form and location. The distinctive architectural treatment of the surfaces, such as Flemish-bond red brick construction, brick pilaster-strips, and precast concrete surrounds for doors and windows, remain intact. The organization of the interior space into two levels, with assembly room on the ground level and nave and sanctuary on the second level, remains intact.

While the one-story addition alters the original form and footprint of the building, it is subordinate to the size of the original building, is located on a south side facade, and set back from the main, west façade. Therefore, the addition does not compromise the overall architectural integrity of the building. The building's original exterior design is intact, and alterations do not compromise the interior design.

The complexity of the church's design and organization of its interior space embodies physical evidence of workmanship of anonymous but experienced master-builders. The building's quality and the use of manufactured ornamentation, such as colored glass and precast concrete, indicate that the congregation had the financial resources to employ a skilled contractor. Most of the historic exterior materials, such as red brick, and precast concrete door and window surrounds are intact. The original interior materials, such as woodwork and plaster, are in fair condition.

The physical appearance of the church, especially the intact design features and presence of original materials, conveys the historic character of the property. The building maintains a feeling that is reminiscent of the late 1940s, when construction of the building, despite the scarcity of building materials, was finished. The church and adjacent area are well-maintained and embody efforts of Gainesville's residents that over the years ensured the integrity of the church's design. The church has a strong association with the politically active pastor Reverend T. A. Wright, as well as students and employees of the University of Florida, who actively contributed to the Civil Rights Movement.

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the **state and local levels** under **Criterion A** in the area of **Social History: Civil Rights Movement**. The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is also proposed for listing under **Criterion B**, as significant at the local and state level for its association with Reverend Thomas A. Wright, an Alachua County leader for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and one of the Civil Rights Movement leaders in Florida. Additionally, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church represents distinctive characteristics of the Late Gothic Revival style and is significant at the local and state level for listing under **Criterion C: Design and Construction**. The building retains sufficient integrity for listing to the National Register. The period of the cultural and architectural significance of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church extends from 1944 to 1970.

Since the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church's construction in 1944, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the building served as one of the religious and social centers for Gainesville's African American community. Since 1962 the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church became a strategic planning center where representatives from local, state, and national institutions and organizations held meetings and planning sessions for implantation of legal, as well as non-violent actions of the Civil Rights Movement in Alachua County and North-central Florida.

During 1963 and 1964, legal challenges for the desegregation of the Alachua County school system were discussed at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church. Under the leadership of Rev. T. A. Wright, the building served as the *de facto* command post for the Alachua County chapter of the NAACP, the organization that helped to integrate public education across Florida.

The architectural significance of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church relates primarily to its style and method of construction. The building is a good example of the application of principles of the Late Gothic Revival style to a small-scale urban church. The building's interior spaces reflect architectural trends that were typical for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century auditorium plan church, such as the nave's sloped floor and proscenium type arch that emphasizes the pulpit and altar table.

**Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties**

Although the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is a religious property, its significance extends beyond its spiritual usage. Since its construction, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church's premises served as multipurpose get-together spaces for Gainesville's residents and visitors. The historic newspapers, oral histories, and written evidence affirm that various events, held in the red-brick building, influenced the economic, social, and political development of Gainesville's African American community. Therefore, the church has strong association with social changes in Gainesville and throughout Florida.

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### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of the cultural and architectural significance of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church starts in 1944 when the building was constructed. It includes the period that begins in 1962, when under the leadership of the Rev. T. A. Wright, the building became a center for community discussions and meetings related to the Civil Rights Movement. The period of significance extends to 1970 when one of the main goals of the NAACP campaigns, the full integration of the public school system in Alachua County, was finalized, including the closing of Gainesville's all-African American Lincoln High school.

### Contributing /Noncontributing resources

Church: Contributing Building

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

### Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

The Mount Carmel Baptist Church has its roots in the Friendship Baptist Church, Gainesville. In 1896 a division in the Friendship Church, which was established in 1888, led to the organization of the new congregation. Within a short period, the church's membership grew from twenty-five to one hundred and twenty-five, and the congregation acquired the property located on the T-shaped intersection of West Seminary Street and Grove Street (currently the intersection of NW 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street) (Figure 1). During the organizational period, one of the congregation's founders, Rev. H. P. Saution, gave the church its biblical name - Mount Carmel Baptist Church.<sup>3</sup> The date of construction of the first, wood-frame church building is unknown; however, the oral histories describe how this structure became inadequate for congregations' needs around the early 1930s.<sup>4</sup>

Under the leadership of the congregation's seventh pastor Rev. H. B. Rich, the planning began for a more substantial, masonry building. Rev. T. A. Wright, who published a detailed history of the church's early years, stated that most of the materials were donated by members of the congregation and civic and commercial organizations.<sup>5</sup> The construction of the red brick, Late Gothic Revival style building started in the mid-1930s when the American building industry recovered from stagnation during the early years of the Great Depression.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "Building Permits Soar," 52.

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**Civil Rights Movement**

The Civil Rights Movement had its roots in the constitutional amendments enacted during the Reconstruction era. The Thirteenth Amendment (1865) abolished slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) expanded the guarantees of federally protected citizenship rights, and the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) barred voting restrictions based on race. The best-known instance of denial of civil rights was the resistance of Southern states to the principle of equal rights for all.<sup>7</sup> In 1896 the final devastating blow to the civil rights gains made during Reconstruction came in the form of judicially sanctioned segregation. In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the concept of “separate but equal” public facilities, thus ensuring racial segregation and discrimination, especially in the realm of public education.<sup>8</sup>

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**

With the continued enforced segregation, minorities began to form organizations that had a vision of how to challenge institutional racism in the United States and to obtain equal civil rights for all Americans, among them the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP, established in 1909 by a coalition of liberal whites, including descendants of abolitionists, and Northern African Americans, among them Harvard-educated W.E.B. DuBois, is considered the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the United States.<sup>9</sup> According to Douglas McAdam, a Professor of Sociology at Stanford University, the growth of the NAACP during and after the World War II made the organization into “one of the strongest institutions in the southern black community next to the black church.”<sup>10</sup> By the early 1950s, the NAACP had more than a thousand branches all over the United States. The commitment of full integration of American society was central to the NAACP's political program.<sup>11</sup> However, only in cooperation between the NAACP and other political forces such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), did the Civil Rights Movement accomplish its goals.

One of the groundbreaking victories, which many scholars consider the birth of the modern Civil Rights Movement, was achieved on May 17, 1954, when the United States Supreme Court agreed with the NAACP and rejected separate white and colored school systems in the case *Oliver Brown et al. v. Board*

<sup>7</sup> National Park “Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites,” 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>9</sup> Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom*, chap. Introduction.

<sup>10</sup> Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, 103-6; also see chapter four; quoted in: Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom*, 143.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 232.

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of *Education of Topeka, Kansas*.<sup>12</sup> In response to the *Brown* decision, conservative and pro-segregation governments of most of the Southern states launched a variety of tactics to avoid school desegregation, which was vigorously opposed in the courts by the NAACP. The resistance to *Brown* peaked in September 1957, when nine African American students, recruited by Daisy Gaston Bates, the civil rights leader, journalist, and President of the Arkansas NAACP, enrolled in the formerly all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus attempted to use the National Guard to prevent the Little Rock Nine from attending school, which led to President Eisenhower's intervention by placing the National Guard under federal control in order to protect the students as they attended school. The Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups targeted NAACP officials and tried to ban the NAACP from operating in the South.

#### NAACP and Civil Rights in Florida, 1933-1961

Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, racial segregation was a way of life in Florida, as elsewhere in the Southern states. In many Florida cities, the early struggles of the black community for fundamental civil rights were blocked by a lack of political power. In 1933, almost a quarter-century after its organization, the NAACP established one of its first branches in Florida. On October 17-19, 1941, the organization's Florida branches formed the first NAACP State Conference in the nation.<sup>13</sup> The murder of Harry T. Moore, an African American educator and President of the state chapter of the NAACP, and his wife on Christmas night of 1951, galvanized the unification of the NAACP Southern branches. The organization renewed its pledge: "to fight for nothing less than full and complete equality."<sup>14</sup> Among the NAACP priorities were legislative and judicial strategies; however, the association provided legal representation and supported members of other protest groups. The four students from North Carolina Central Agriculture and Technical College, who on February 1, 1960, sat down at the segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and initiated a sit-in movement throughout the nation, all were members of NAACP Youth Councils.<sup>15</sup>

In 1961, the Southern Regional Council (SRC), a reform-oriented organization created in 1944 to "avoid racial violence and promote racial equity in the Southern United States," published a report that included a review of the non-violent protest actions throughout Southern states.<sup>16</sup> According to the report, the first sit-in in Florida occurred on February 2, 1960, in DeLand, followed by Florida A.& M. University students who organized a sit-in at Tallahassee's Woolworth's restaurant counter. By September 1961, cities affected by marches, picketing, boycotts, freedom rides, wade-ins, kneel-ins, and sit-ins, included

<sup>12</sup> "Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites," 15; "The Brown vs Board of Education Trial: A Chronology."

<sup>13</sup> "Our History | NAACP Florida State Conference."

<sup>14</sup> "June 25, 1952, 23 - Tampa Bay Times at Newspapers.Com," 23.

<sup>15</sup> NAACP and People, "The Civil Rights Era - NAACP."

<sup>16</sup> "NAACP Campaigns for Florida Desegregation," 3.

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Tampa, Pensacola, St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Daytona Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Jacksonville, Ocala, as well St. Augustine and Gainesville.<sup>17</sup>

### NAACP Gainesville

By the late 1950s, the small, but active and integrated chapter of the NAACP was established in Alachua County. Joel Buchanan, one of the first African American students at the previously segregated Gainesville High School, remembered that protest actions in Gainesville started as early as the late 1950s.<sup>18</sup> For example, several tactics of activities were discussed during the chapter's meeting at Gainesville's Negro Recreation Center on October 28, 1959, including the integration of education. Among active members of the chapter was Gainesville resident Councille Blye, one of 85 African American students who applied to the University of Florida between 1946 and 1958 and were denied admission.<sup>19</sup> The UF faculty also joined the local NAACP chapter, among them Dr. Robert Bader, assistant professor of biological sciences at UF, and Dr. Francis Hayes, associate professor of foreign languages at the UF. Dr. Hayes and Dr. Bader assured the NAACP chapter that several UF faculty members were ready to send their children to integrated schools, as soon "as there is such a possibility."<sup>20</sup>

The significant movement to integrate the university's undergraduate division started in April 1961, when the local chapter of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) was formed at the UF campus. The UF chapter of ADA was supported by Florida NAACP members, who contacted African American high school graduates throughout the state. As a result of efforts, in 1962, seven of eleven African American applicants were accepted to UF undergraduate school. Among them was Stephen P. Mickle, a member of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church congregation.<sup>21</sup>

In the middle of 1963, all of Florida was covered with NAACP activities, mostly peaceful demonstrations for desegregation of public facilities, integration of public schools, and increased employment for African Americans. The major campaign against Gainesville's remaining segregated businesses began in June 1963. The members of the NAACP Youth Council picketed theaters and stores and required desegregation of the summer school session. As a response to non-violent actions that

<sup>17</sup> "The Student Protest Movement: A Recapitulation," 5.

<sup>18</sup> Buchanan, Interview with Joel Buchanan, February 12, 1984, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Blye, "Letters to The Tribune," 14.

<sup>20</sup> "Only Eight At Well-Publicized Alachua NAACP Meeting," 15.

<sup>21</sup> Judge Stephan P. Mickle was the first African American to graduate from UF and the second to graduate from UF's Levin College of Law. After graduation, Mickle went on to have an impressive career. He's served as a judge for the US District Court for the Northern District of Florida, as the judge for Alachua County, as a circuit court judge of the Eighth Judicial Circuit and in Florida's First District Court of Appeal — in addition to his private practice here in Gainesville. "A Tree Is Nice, but Mickle Deserves a Building."

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escalated into a race riot, the Student Group for Equal Rights (SGER) joined the NAACP.<sup>22</sup> Sanctioned by the UF administration, the SGER was composed of more than a hundred members that represented a cross-section of the student body.<sup>23</sup>

The SGER advisor Dr. Marshall Jones, assistant professor of psychology at UF, emphasized the importance of coordination of Civil Rights Movement activities between students and the local NAACP chapter, that resulted in pickets at the College Inn.<sup>24</sup> When the traditional gathering spot for UF students reopened on June 23, 1963,<sup>25</sup> its owners maintained a policy of segregated service, and divided the UF students and faculty “with conservatives and segregationists taking one side and liberals and integrationists the other.”<sup>26</sup> In the vanguard of those opposing the move was SGER, supported by the NAACP and endorsed by more than two hundred of UF faculty members.<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Jones was a devoted supporter of other NAACP activities. “Wherever he could fit in to help with demonstrations, with our picketing, he joined right in and helped,” remembered Rev. Wright.<sup>28</sup> “Caucasians from the University, faculty, and students, they played a tremendous role in much of what we did,” Rev. Wright compared UF support with his experience in St. Augustine, where no white residents were involved in the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>29</sup> Dr. Paul Hahn, a research assistant in the anthropology department of UF, joined the NAACP and was one of the key persons that helped to explore anything related to voting rights or other political issues.<sup>30</sup> “If we needed somebody to write a flyer or somebody to write a letter on a particular issue, he would do that for us,” Rev. Wright noted in his interview.<sup>31</sup> On numerous occasions, Rev. Wright emphasized the importance of the support of UF that Gainesville’s Civil Rights Movement had:

*We did not know a great deal about writing ads to deal with political issues. We did not know a whole lot about strategies and that kind of thing. Dr. Ruth McQuown helped us a great deal from*

<sup>22</sup> “NAACP Campaigns for Florida Desegregation,” 3.

<sup>23</sup> “Rights Effort To Continue,” 6.

<sup>24</sup> Quianthy, “Equal Rights Group Forms on UF Campus,” 1.

<sup>25</sup> “50-Year-Old Cafeteria Reopens,” 11.

<sup>26</sup> Carhart, “Gainesville Restaurant Policy Questioned. College Inn: U.S. Problem Symbol,” 15.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Interviewee: Rev. Thomas Wright, 16.

<sup>29</sup> Interviewee: Reverend T. A. Wright, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Interviewee: Rev. Thomas Wright, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



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*her training and experience in the field of politics. So we would meet at night, and she would share the experience with us.*<sup>32</sup>

Charles Chestnut III, the President of the NAACP Youth Council in the early 1960s, noted that faculty and students were beneficial in the organization of Movement's everyday activities: "We got the tutoring program on the UF campus through the NAACP."<sup>33</sup>

The role of African American churches in the Civil Rights Movement was crucial, as many events were organized by congregations and advertised within church buildings. According to Mr. Buchanan, the integration of Gainesville's educational system started in churches: "Those were the only places that the information of what NAACP was doing became available."<sup>34</sup> Rev. Wright, who soon after his arrival to Gainesville became involved in the organization of the Civil Rights Movement activities, led the effort to file a lawsuit against the Alachua County school board, and his daughter, LaVon Wright, was one of the named plaintiffs in the suit.<sup>35</sup> According to Rev. Wright, the lawsuit was filed after the school board refused voluntary integration.<sup>36</sup> Fourteen students, eleven of whom were black, were represented by lawyers from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. and by local counsel Earl M. Johnson of Jacksonville, Florida.<sup>37</sup> On July 2, 1964, they filed a class action that asked to forbid bi-racial educational system that operated under the Florida Pupil Placement Law,<sup>38</sup> and to present a plan for the reorganization of the County's school system into a "unitary nonracial system."<sup>39</sup> On July 9, 1964, as a response to the lawsuit, as well as following the recently established Civil Rights Act, the school board assigned three African American students, LaVon Wright, Joel Buchanan, and Sandra Williams, to previously all-white Gainesville High School.<sup>40</sup> By October 1964, the remaining seven black students

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>33</sup> Buchanan, Interview with Joel Buchanan, February 12, 1984, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>35</sup> Gengler, *We Can Do It*, 68.

<sup>36</sup> Cormier, *Three Students. July '64*, Gainesville Sun, Jan, 25, 1970, pg. 9A, quoted in: Michael T Gengler, *We Can Do It: A Community Takes on the Challenge of School Desegregation* (Place of publication not identified: RosettaBooks, 2018), 67, <http://rbdigital.rbdigital.com>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>38</sup> The Florida Pupil Placement Law allowed local school boards to admit or deny pupils from public schools for virtually any reason, it did not explicitly prohibit desegregation; thus, it allowed local communities to control segregation policies. According to the law, when assigning pupils to the particular schools, local school boards considered "attendance area, transportation facilities, uniform testing, available facilities, scholastic aptitude, and other factors, except race." The Pupil Assignment Law effectively prevented desegregation in Florida, and the NAACP listed Florida among eight states that had done nothing at all to move toward integration since Brown. "A Moderate Calm?," 6-26.

<sup>39</sup> Complaint (Wright v. Board, July 2, 1964), supra note 35, at 8. Quoted in: Michael T Gengler, *We Can Do It: A Community Takes on the Challenge of School Desegregation* (Place of publication not identified: RosettaBooks, 2018), 67, <http://rbdigital.rbdigital.com>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 63.

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started to attend white schools.<sup>41</sup> The first African American students who attended white schools were exposed to hurtful actions by white students, but they “learned not to react.”<sup>42</sup> While formally Alachua County's schools were desegregated in 1964, only 5 percent of the 6,000 black students that were expected to start school in the 1965-66 year were assigned to white schools.<sup>43</sup> The federal lawsuit *Wright v. Board* remained active for fourteen years.<sup>44</sup>

From the 1965-66 school year through the first half of the 1969-70 school year, the Alachua County public schools operated under the freedom-of-choice desegregation plan approved by US District Court.<sup>45</sup> While many parents of black students preferred to send their children to the historically black schools, the enrollment of African American students in white schools increased to 39 percent in 1969-70. To ensure full integration of the County's school system, all former black schools were closed by the end of the school year 1969-70, among them Gainesville's Lincoln High School (LHS). As in many other Southern communities, the closing of historically all-black schools evoked boycotts. On November 25, 1969, the protest march originated at the LHS and ended at the school board headquarters. One of the young picketers expressed the aspiration of an estimated two thousand demonstrators: "We want our black school, or we won't go to any school at all."<sup>46</sup> The protest actions continued eleven days and were supported by African American community leaders. Among those who preferred keeping LHS open was Rev. Wright, who himself fought for full integration of the education system. "In any community with as many black people in it as Gainesville, there is a need for a high school in the black community that can deal with the fears, frustrations, and limitations of black children that have developed over the past," Rev. Wright expressed his opinion.<sup>47</sup> Despite the efforts of Gainesville's African American community, the school board's decision to close LHS as an academic school was not changed. Lincoln students started the spring term of 1970 in formerly white schools.<sup>48</sup>

In the late 1960s, racial relationships in Gainesville did not improve. During the first months of 1968, the residents and business owners in predominately African American neighborhoods experienced violent acts, mostly firebombing. Gainesville's community asked its leaders for answers. "High,

<sup>41</sup> Complaint (*Wright v. Board*, July 2, 1964), supra note 35, at 8. Quoted in: Michael T Gengler, *We Can Do It: A Community Takes on the Challenge of School Desegregation* (Place of publication not identified: RosettaBooks, 2018), 67, <http://rbdigital.rbdigital.com>.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> Complaint (*Wright v. Board*, July 2, 1964), supra note 35, at 8. Quoted in: Michael T Gengler, *We Can Do It: A Community Takes on the Challenge of School Desegregation* (Place of publication not identified: RosettaBooks, 2018), 67, <http://rbdigital.rbdigital.com>.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Cormier, *1964-72, The Talbot Years in Alachua County*, Gainesville Sun, Feb. 27, 1972, pg. 1B. Quoted in: Michael T Gengler, *We Can Do It: A Community Takes on the Challenge of School Desegregation* (Place of publication not identified: RosettaBooks, 2018), 172.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas A. Wright, Sr., Letter to the Editor, Gainesville Sun, Mar.3, 1969, pg. 6. Quoted in: Michael T Gengler, *We Can Do It: A Community Takes on the Challenge of School Desegregation* (Place of publication not identified: RosettaBooks, 2018), 152.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

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unjustifiable prices are charged, and most do not hire Negroes," explained Rev. Wright. "When a person is living in a condition and looking at a thing every day, and he can't see any progress, he gets desperate," he added.<sup>49</sup> Gainesville's residents frequently called Rev. Wright in his study at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, and he explained his and NAACP's standpoint numerous times: "We are against violence."<sup>50</sup>

**HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

**Criteria A: Social History – Civil Rights Movement**

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is directly associated with one of the major achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the end of legal segregation of American society, and is significant for its association with events related to crucial moments in the Civil Rights Movement. Since its construction in 1944, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church served as one of the spiritual and social centers for Gainesville's African American community. During the 1960s, the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, located within the historically African American neighborhood, became a center of the Civil Rights Movement in Gainesville where non-violent activities throughout Alachua County and Florida were planned.

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, with its ample first and second-floor meeting spaces, as well as convenient downtown location, hosted local and statewide events, among them two General Baptist State Conventions. During the first week of April 1956, the Convention was held in various locations in Gainesville, among them at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church.<sup>51</sup> The African American Baptist leaders of Florida adopted a resolution that urged their 200,000 church members to support the NAACP in "its legal and constitutional fight to end racial discrimination in this state."<sup>52</sup> "We support all peaceful, determined and concrete steps" to end racial segregation, the resolution said.<sup>53</sup> According to Reverend J. A. F. Finlayson, the convention President, about 1,500 African American pastors adopted it "by a unanimous voice vote."<sup>54</sup>

The peaceful pickets, sit-ins, and other Civil Rights Movement activities in Gainesville increased in the early 1960s and were supported by educational sessions held in local African American churches.

<sup>49</sup> Basse, "Gainesville Nights Not So Quiet: Fire Bombs Almost Routine," 22.

<sup>50</sup> "Cause of Gainesville Firebombings? Negroes Claim White Man Robs Them," 72.

<sup>51</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> "Urge Mixing In Florida," 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

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According to oral histories, the organization and preparation for demonstrations and sit-ins happened in the so-called "dining-room" addition (the one-story addition).<sup>55</sup> "I just remember that we had a lot of meetings discussing different tactics, procedures, government policies, the Constitution," recalls Mr. Buchanan, who was an active member of the NAACP Youth Council.<sup>56</sup> The primary sources confirm that in the summer of 1963, eleven members of the Student Group For Equal Rights (SGER) gave demonstrations "of what to expect when in a sit-in at a restaurant counter" at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church.<sup>57</sup> In 1964, during the first months of integration of Gainesville High School (GHS) that followed lawsuit *Wright v. Board*, the first three African American students of GHS started their way to classes from the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church. Mr. Buchanan remembered: "When we got ready to go to school, Reverend Wright, whose daughter was going, was the one to pick us up."<sup>58</sup>

In 1964, many politically active Gainesville residents were involved in the Civil Rights Movement actions in St. Augustine. Since the late 1950s, St. Augustine, the nation's oldest city, prepared to celebrate its 400th anniversary; however, its African American residents were not included in organization committees for celebration planned for 1965. When the protest actions, started by the local NAACP, led to violent racial conflicts, the association asked the SCLC and its leader, Dr. M. L. King Jr., to support St. Augustine's Civil Rights Movement. As Dr. King hoped, the demonstrations mobilized national support for the Civil Rights Act, which took effect July 2, 1964.<sup>59</sup> A public meeting in support of the Civil Rights activities in St. Augustine was held on June 4, 1964, at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church.<sup>60</sup> The event and following demonstration gained statewide attention. An article, published on June 6, 1964, in *The Tampa Tribune*, described the peaceful march, organized by Rev. Wright and his supporters:

*A clapping, singing group of about whites and Negroes conducted a "St. Augustine sympathy march." [...] The orderly procession climaxed a meeting at the Negro Mt. Carmel Baptist Church at which Lavert Taylor, a member of Martin Luther King's organization working out of Atlanta, described the anti-segregation efforts going on in St. Augustine, collected more than \$100 for civil rights activities, and recruited members of the mixed audience to go to the east coast city to participate in demonstrations. The group sang songs and said prayers on the courthouse lawn, then marched back to the church.<sup>61</sup>*

<sup>55</sup> Pastor Gerard Duncan of Prayers by Faith Family Ministers, and his congregation meets at the building. Mallard, "The Historic Mount Carmel Baptist Church Rehabilitation Is on the Table."

<sup>56</sup> Buchanan, Interview with Joel Buchanan, February 12, 1984, 12.

<sup>57</sup> "Picketers to Hear Mayor Winn Tonight," 1.

<sup>58</sup> Buchanan, Interview with Joel Buchanan, February 12, 1984, 17.

<sup>59</sup> University, Stanford, and California 94305, "St. Augustine, Florida."

<sup>60</sup> "2 Arrested In Sit-Ins," 21.

<sup>61</sup> "'Sympathy March' Held In Alachua," 22.

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Rev. Wright noted that his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement's activities in St. Augustine and Gainesville were inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King's philosophy. After Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4, 1968, rioting spread in black areas around the country. Rev. Wright issued a statement that urged the community to continue non-violent action.<sup>62</sup> The organization of a demonstration and a commemorative service in memory of Dr. King started with a meeting at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, with the participation of an integrated group of local ministers.<sup>63</sup> Rev. Wright remembered the hour-and-a-half memorial service was held on April 7, 1968:<sup>64</sup>

*The memorial service was packed to capacity with about three hundred fifty people. There were people all around the church. The choir members consisted of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. We decided to end the service on the Courthouse Lawn Downtown.*<sup>65</sup>

The service at the church and following march were attended by an estimated one thousand people, including Gainesville's newly elected mayor Ted Williams, and Ralph Turlington, Gainesville's representative in the state legislature who then served as Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives.<sup>66</sup> Despite Rev. Wright's urge to keep the rest of the day after the demonstration peaceful, Gainesville's African American neighborhoods experienced a four-hour outburst of violence, including firebombing, rock and bottle throwing, and even gun violence.<sup>67</sup> This outbreak was the only time when National Guard troops were used to stop violence in Gainesville.<sup>68</sup>

While the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church was opened to diverse and integrated political, educational, and spiritual events, Rev. Wright strongly insisted on his principles of full integration. He refused to host an event organized by supporters of Stokely Carmichael (1941-1998), who asked for an only African American audience.<sup>69</sup> "I told them the church could not be used to address a segregated audience since it is a Christian church, and segregation is against Christian principles and the principles of the NAACP," Rev. Wright recollected.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Gengler, *We Can Do It*, 442.

<sup>63</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 20.

<sup>64</sup> "20 Arrested in Gainesville For Civil Rights Protest," 49.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 20.

<sup>66</sup> Gengler, *We Can Do It*, 30.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> As chairmen of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Stokely Carmichael challenged the philosophy of nonviolence and interracial alliances that had come to define modern civil rights movement, calling instead for "Black Power." University, Stanford, and California 94305, "Carmichael, Stokely."

<sup>70</sup> "Negro Leader Predict Cool Reception If Carmichael Shows Up in Gainesville," 45.

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Rev. Wright supported reform-minded Florida politicians and opened his church's doors for their campaigns. In 1966 Robert King High (1924-1967), a mayor of Miami and a strong supporter of the Civil Rights Movement, was the Democratic Party nominee for governor of Florida. On March 2, 1966, he launched his campaign in Alachua County. R. K. High spoke to UF students, had a private press conference with Ed Johnson, editor of the *Gainesville Sun*, and completed his campaign activities with the address at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church.<sup>71</sup>

Philonon Wright, Rev. T. A. Wright's son, had many memories of meetings, that taught how to strategize the Civil Rights Movement, held at Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church:

*Mount Carmel was the hub for all of the activities of the civil rights movement in Gainesville. Meetings were held weekly and often, sometimes two and three times a week. Many high-profile people came in and spoke, some from around the state, and it just was a period in time where black people were strategizing and trying to figure out how to get their liberties and how to move forward in a nonviolent way.<sup>72</sup>*

The historic significance of Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is already recognized by the Florida Historical Marker Program of Florida's Department of State Division of Historical Resources. The historical marker, sponsored by the Florida Department of State and Prayers by Faith Ministries, was dedicated in 2013, is located at the building's north façade (Photo 24). The history of Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, like that of many African American historic resources in Gainesville and Florida, is documented only partially. Primary sources, such as local newspapers, autobiographical books, written by Rev. T. A. Wright, as well as the African American History Project of Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida, helped to develop this nomination.

**Criteria B: Reverend Thomas A. Wright**

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church is associated with Reverend Thomas A. Wright (1920-2014), one of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement in Gainesville, Florida. Rev. Wright, an advocate for the integration of education and social justice, served at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church from 1962 until 1984. In the early 1960s, Rev. Wright was elected President of the Alachua County chapter of the NAACP and led the organization's battle for desegregation of the Alachua County school system. Rev. Wright held political meetings at the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church,<sup>73</sup> and organized picketing, sit-ins, and peaceful marches that took place in Gainesville. During the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Rev. Wright would also become the first African American to run for Gainesville City Commission since Reconstruction, and many looked to him for leadership.

<sup>71</sup> "Mayor High To Launch Campaign in Alachua," 25.

<sup>72</sup> Cleveland, "Old Mount Carmel Church Designated a Historic Site."

<sup>73</sup> Pearson, "Former Alachua County President of NAACP Rev. Wright Dies."

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Thomas Alexander Wright was born in Mansfield, Georgia, on March 26, 1920. He attended high school in Palm Beach County, Florida, and after graduation, briefly lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Wright was drafted and served in the Army in the latter years of World War II. In 1946, after his return from the Pacific Theater, he enrolled in Florida Memorial College. In 1954 he completed his studies at Howard University School of Religion.

Soon after his graduation, he became a pastor at St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church, St. Augustine and served its congregation until 1962. Rev. Wright is recognized as a crucial figure of the Civil Rights Movement in Lincolnton, a historic African American neighborhood in the nation's oldest city. As the President of the St. Augustine NAACP, he led a group that met monthly to discuss civil rights issues, among them school integration, employment availability, and police brutality.<sup>74</sup> In 1960, Rev. T. A. Wright trained students in non-violent protest techniques,<sup>75</sup> and was among St. Augustine's Civil Rights Movement leaders who organized a sit-in at the Woolworth's store.<sup>76</sup> The role of Rev. T.A. Wright in the initial stages of the Civil Rights Movement in St. Augustine is recognized by several publications, among them *The Dark Before Dawn: From Civil Wrongs to Civil Light*.<sup>77</sup>

Because of his civic activities in St. Augustine, Rev. Wright, his wife Affie Mae Clayton Wright, and their four children experienced enormous pressure, including death threats and crosses burned in their front yard.<sup>78</sup> In 1962 Rev. Wright obtained an appointment as pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Gainesville; on June 7, 1962, he became the fourteenth pastor for the Mount Carmel Baptist Church congregation.<sup>79</sup>

Upon his arrival at Gainesville, Rev. T. A. Wright initially stayed away from activism, however, soon realized that city's community needs more than spiritual guidance.<sup>80</sup> He remembered:

*I saw a need for public housing as soon as I got here. I saw a need for daycare centers, and I had it in the back of my mind to do something about black business, and there was a great need for civil rights in Gainesville. I felt that eventually there would be a need for more than a church, and I saw all of these things that needed attending. [...] I saw the opportunity to pastor a community as such, and that is what I had in mind, not just four walls of a particular church but,*

<sup>74</sup> "Rev. Wright."

<sup>75</sup> "Historic Houses of Worship: St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Church - Lifestyle - The St. Augustine Record - St. Augustine, FL."

<sup>76</sup> "Rev. Wright."

<sup>77</sup> Eubanks, *The Dark Before Dawn*, 102.

<sup>78</sup> Taylor, "St. Mary's Missionary Baptist Marker, St. Augustine, FL."

<sup>79</sup> "111 Lincoln Street."

<sup>80</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 17.

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*to do things that would benefit not just 4,000 people but maybe 20,000 people, you think in terms of Gainesville and the black community and others.*<sup>81</sup>

While Rev. Wright started his job in the congregation with organizational issues, his reputation as a community leader had followed him. Stephen Mickle, one of the first African American undergraduate students at UF, encouraged Rev. Wright to join Gainesville's emerging Civil Rights Movement. Rev. Wright remembered Mickle's questions: "When we are going to get some things started here that you had going in St. Augustine? Every problem that they have in St. Augustine, we have them right here in Gainesville."<sup>82</sup> With the support from Florida's NAACP, as well as the faculty of UF, especially Paul Home, and Marshall Jones, Rev. T. A. Wright was able to organize, as he recalled, "real movement."<sup>83</sup>

Rev. Wright led the NAACP's effort to file a lawsuit against the Alachua County school board and was the driving force encouraging more African American students to enroll in formerly all-white schools. Rev. Wright encouraged families that belonged to his congregation, as well as others, to send their children to previously segregated schools. In 1967, Cynthia Cook, whose family belonged to the Mount Carmel Baptist Church congregation, transferred to Gainesville High from an all-African American Lincoln High School. She remembered that her parents decided to send her to an all-white school after listening to Rev. Wright, who shared with the congregation the experience of his children, Philoron and LaVon, in the recently integrated schools.<sup>84</sup>

Rev. Wright's opinion about racial relationships between Gainesville's community and the municipality was frequently represented in the statewide media. In his 1966 interview for *The Tampa Tribune*, Rev. T. A. Wright explained that Gainesville's African American community felt nothing but "despair and hopelessness," mostly because of the lack of municipal concern.<sup>85</sup> Advocating for non-violent actions, Wright admitted: "I would hate to see demonstrations, but if we can't get anything done, it may be the only way."<sup>86</sup>

Rev. Wright was one of the leading speakers at NAACP state conventions. In 1964, Rev. Wright, who insisted on full integration of American society, was the first speaker at the state convention, devoted to desegregation policies of the church. Rev. Wright admitted that there were more integrated restaurants than there were integrated churches in Florida. According to Rev. Wright, the church was teaching a

<sup>81</sup> "Interview with Reverend Thomas Alexander Wright, January 23, 1986," 8.

<sup>82</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 17.

<sup>83</sup> Interviewee: Reverend T. A. Wright, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Gengler, *We Can Do It*, 80.

<sup>85</sup> "Negro Leader Terms 'Hopeless Gainesville's Civil Rights Attitude,'" 44.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



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“kind of love that it was not willing to accept itself.”<sup>87</sup> Rev. Wright presided at the opening session of the 1965 NAACP convention, that discussed church activities in civil rights, self-help programs in education, curbing delinquency and school dropout, and voter education.<sup>88</sup>

In 1965 Wright became the first African American city commission candidate in Gainesville’s history since Reconstruction. In his program, he called for increased cooperation between the city and the University of Florida, new ways to attract industry and the creation of additional employment, development of anti-poverty programs, expansion and improvement for recreational facilities, and the use of capital improvement funds to develop new safety programs for children.<sup>89</sup>

Rev. Thomas Wright, whose whole life was devoted to Gainesville's community, wrote several books that explained cultural and economic gains and losses caused by integration. In his *Business Straight Talk to the African American Entrepreneur* (1990), he described reasons for the plight of African American business and gave some ideas about what could be done:

*So there needs to be a national program of economic development of African Americans.[...] The civil rights movement was a national movement with the cooperation of four or five civil rights organizations, including the NAACP, the SCLC. These groups had their own program, but when there was a time to move forward collectively, they did. All of the strategies that we used in the civil rights movement, wherever we can apply them to economic development, that needs to be done with a national program of economic development.*<sup>90</sup>

Reverend Wright led the efforts to construct Mount Carmel Baptist Church congregations third building, located at 2505 NE 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Gainesville, and opened in 1984. Rev. Wright served his congregation until 2006, however, continued to be involved with Gainesville's and Alachua County's community until his last days. Reverend Thomas A. Wright, activist, former President of the NAACP, and a leader in his community and the pulpit, passed away on December 9, 2014.<sup>91</sup>

### ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, there have been many stylistic developments in American architecture.<sup>92</sup> The buildings, designed until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, included several versions of academic revivals,

<sup>87</sup> “More Restaurants Integrated Than Churches,” 44.

<sup>88</sup> “NAACP Opens 26th Annual State Convention In City,” 3.

<sup>89</sup> “Second Gainesville Negro Seeks Post,” 20.

<sup>90</sup> Interviewee: Rev. Thomas Wright, 16.

<sup>91</sup> “Rev. Thomas Wright Obituary - Gainesville, Florida.”

<sup>92</sup> Poppeliers, Chambers, and Schwartz, *What Style Is It?*, 132.

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among them Colonial, Tudor, Italian Renaissance, Spanish, and Late Gothic Revival.<sup>93</sup> The popularity of Late Gothic-style churches, is credited to the works of Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942) and Bertram Goodhue (1869-1924).<sup>94</sup> Many Protestant congregations built churches, characterized by steeply pitched gable roofs, parapeted walls, pointed-arch windows, masonry construction, stone tracery, and superior craftsmanship.

The organization of interior space of spiritual building on multiple levels is one of the oldest traditions, employed by African American builders. Erected in 1805, the African Meeting House in Boston, Massachusetts, is the oldest surviving African American religious structure in the United States.<sup>95</sup> Since its opening, the building served as a multifunctional center that hosted religious services on the upper level. The first school for Black children and domestic quarters were housed on the building's ground floors. The tradition, initiated by pioneering congregations like Boston's African meeting house, extended over time and space and is reflected in several Florida African American churches. For example, St. Mary's Mission Baptist Church, St. Augustine, has similar interior space organization.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many congregations that were located in urban areas faced the difficulty of accommodating large numbers of worshipers. The high cost of urban property limited the size of buildings; therefore, architects and builders adopted theater and auditorium seating plans for church construction.<sup>96</sup> Rather than long narrow buildings, auditorium plans had assembly areas with wider proportions.<sup>97</sup> The focus of the worship was on the minister and pulpit, usually with the choir providing a backdrop. Many auditorium plan churches featured floors that were sloped toward the pulpit, so members of the congregation in the rear could see well. Walls were plaster, and enclosed ceilings, rather than open rafters, reverberated sound better. In the late nineteenth century, larger churches incorporated curving rows of seats and aisles radiating out from the pulpit; the smaller buildings combined sanctuary's sloped floor above the rectangular, raised basement.<sup>98</sup> Between the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the Great Depression, auditorium planning dominated church construction among the Protestant denominations. The auditorium plan with a sloped floor appears to be an architectural tradition of northern Florida, for example. St. Luke Baptist Church, Marianna, Jackson County, has a similar arrangement of nave and sanctuary.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>94</sup> Tallmadge, "The Modern Church Auditorium," 208.

<sup>95</sup> Boston and Us, "African Meeting House - Boston African American National Historic Site (U.S. National Park Service)."

<sup>96</sup> Bishir, North Carolina Architecture, 379.

<sup>97</sup> Pender and Jones, "St. Luke Baptist Church," 8-2.

<sup>98</sup> Bishir, North Carolina Architecture, 379.

<sup>99</sup> Pender and Jones, "St. Luke Baptist Church," 7-2.

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During the 1920s and 1930, many protestant churches were renovated, and the character-defining feature of auditorium church such as sloping floors, prosceniums, choir seating areas, were removed, and spatial arrangement changed.<sup>100</sup> In the early 1940s, the strict advice of church architects was: "The floor of a church should be level. Have a removable platform inside the pulpit if necessary, but never have a sloping floor in the nave."<sup>101</sup>

**Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church: Construction**

The foundation for the extant, red-brick building was laid during Rev. B.D. Coe's tenure (1933-37)<sup>102</sup> and appears on the *Aerial Photographs of Alachua County - Flight 6 (1937),* Tile 96.<sup>103</sup> While construction work was halted during World War II, Gainesville's Mount Carmel Baptist Church was among several congregations in Florida that completed their buildings. In 1943, the church's tenth pastor Rev. J. H. Roberts (1941-1953), was able to secure a loan, and the congregation resumed work on the church, which was completed in 1944.<sup>104</sup>

In 1952, the earlier wood-frame church building that was constructed on the site around 1900, was moved to the adjacent property and converted into the parsonage, a tradition that was common in Gainesville.<sup>105</sup> The one-story addition that extends along the south wall was built around 1956.<sup>106</sup> During the mid-1960s, the building and grounds were improved, including the ground floor of the church that was renovated and later used as a meeting space for several civic groups, including the NAACP.<sup>107</sup> The congregation, known for its social, educational, and political activities, stayed at the red-brick building until March 18, 1984, when it moved to a new, larger spiritual complex.

**HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

**Criteria C: Architecture**

The architectural significance of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church relates primarily to its style and method of construction. The church embodies several architectural trends that prevailed for spiritual buildings starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until the Great Depression. The building is a good example of the application of principles of the Late Gothic Revival style to a small-scale urban church.

<sup>100</sup> Conover, *The Church Builder*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>102</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 6.

<sup>103</sup> "Aerial Photographs of Alachua County - Flight 6 (1937)," Tile 96.

<sup>104</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 7.

<sup>105</sup> "Alachua County Library District Heritage Collection."

<sup>106</sup> Wright, *The Carmelite. A History of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church 1896-1996*, 8.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 18.

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Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

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The organization of the church's interior space into two levels, with assembly room on the ground level and nave and sanctuary on the second level, is building tradition that builders carried out from the earliest churches constructed and owned by free African Americans. The building's interior spaces reflect architectural trends that were typical for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century auditorium plan church, such as nave's sloped floor, sanctuary and choir area located on the elevated platform above the nave's floor, and proscenium type arch that emphasizes pulpit and altar table.

Although typical of the 1940s construction with the use of modest materials and minimal decorative details, the two-story church, which was designed and built by anonymous masters, is architecturally significant. The building retains character-defining features and decorative elements, including cross-gabled roof, parapeted walls, Flemish-bond red brick construction, brick pilaster-strips, pointed arch window, colored glass panes, and precast concrete surrounds for doors and windows. The building remains in its original location, surrounded by its historic setting of single-family houses and small-scale commercial buildings. The red-brick building maintains a feeling of the mid-1940s when scarcity of construction materials did not stop the creativity of local masters and Gainesville's African American residents. The building retains most of the original materials both on the exterior and interior of the building. The building's original exterior design is intact, and alterations do not compromise the interior's design. The building stands as evidence of the excellent workmanship of Gainesville's builders. There have been only minor additions and changes made to the original church building. Lastly, the building maintains its historic functions and serves not only as a religious facility but also as a community center.

While the sloped floors for sanctuaries were more typical for auditorium plan churches, anonymous builders of the Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church incorporated its second story's sanctuary's inclined floor above the first-floor assembly room. According to many architectural historians, only a handful of examples of auditorium church were completed after 1910.<sup>108</sup>

There are numerous Late Gothic Revival style churches built throughout Florida in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only a few buildings represent churches that were constructed in the middle of the 1940s, within the period of scarcity of building materials. There are only three churches built in the Late Gothic style throughout Gainesville. The Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, a one-story brick building, sheeted with artificial stone, was opened to its congregation in 1907. The First United Methodist Church's second building, the red-brick building adorned with simple stone details, was designed by architect Sanford Goin, and its construction was finished in 1941.

The Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, constructed in 1944, is the landmark that embodies historic building traditions and represents the creativity and aesthetic preferences of Gainesville's African American community.

<sup>108</sup> Loveland and Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch*, l. 3118.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary encompasses all of parcel 14289-000-000, according to the Alachua County Property Appraiser Office Records. The legal description according to the Alachua County Clerk Official Records is: Lot 2, Block 22, Brush's Addition to Gainesville, according to the map of plat thereof recorded Plat Book A, page 88, LESS AND EXCEPT the road right-of-way deeded to the City of Gainesville recorded in Deed Book 182, Page 119, Public Records of Alachua County, Florida.<sup>109</sup> See Location Map 2 for more information.

**Boundary Justification**

The above boundary encompasses all of the property historically associated with Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church during the period of significance.

<sup>109</sup> "Property Search Results. Parcel: 14289-000-000."

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ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (FIGURES, PLANS, HISTORIC PHOTOS)

Figures

A-88  
 A-88

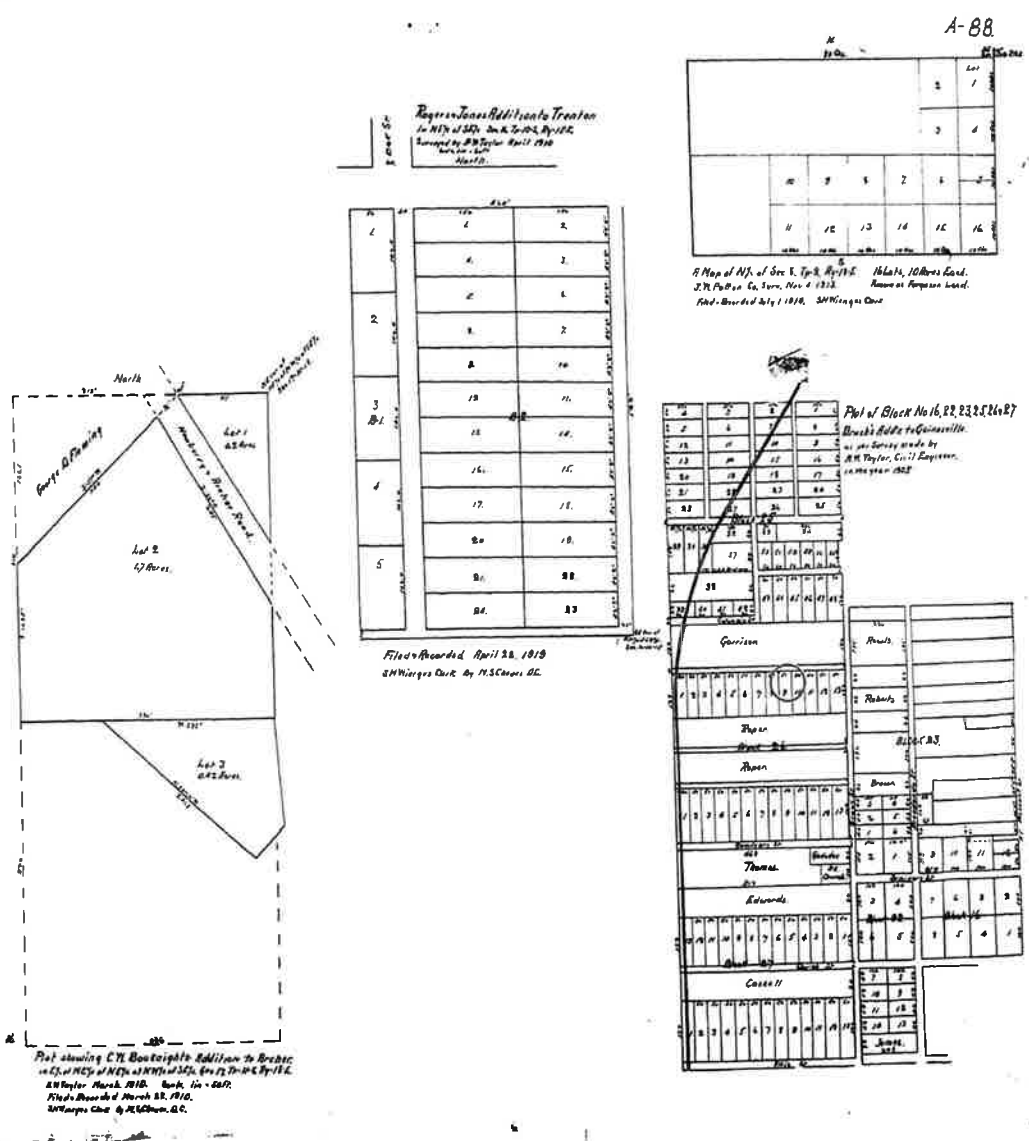


Figure 1. Plat of Block No 16, 22, 23, 25, 26 & 27; Brush's Addition to Gainesville. As per survey made by A.W. Taylor, Civil Engineer, in the year 1905. Source: Alachua County Historic Plot Maps.

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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Alachua County, Florida  
County and State  
N/A  
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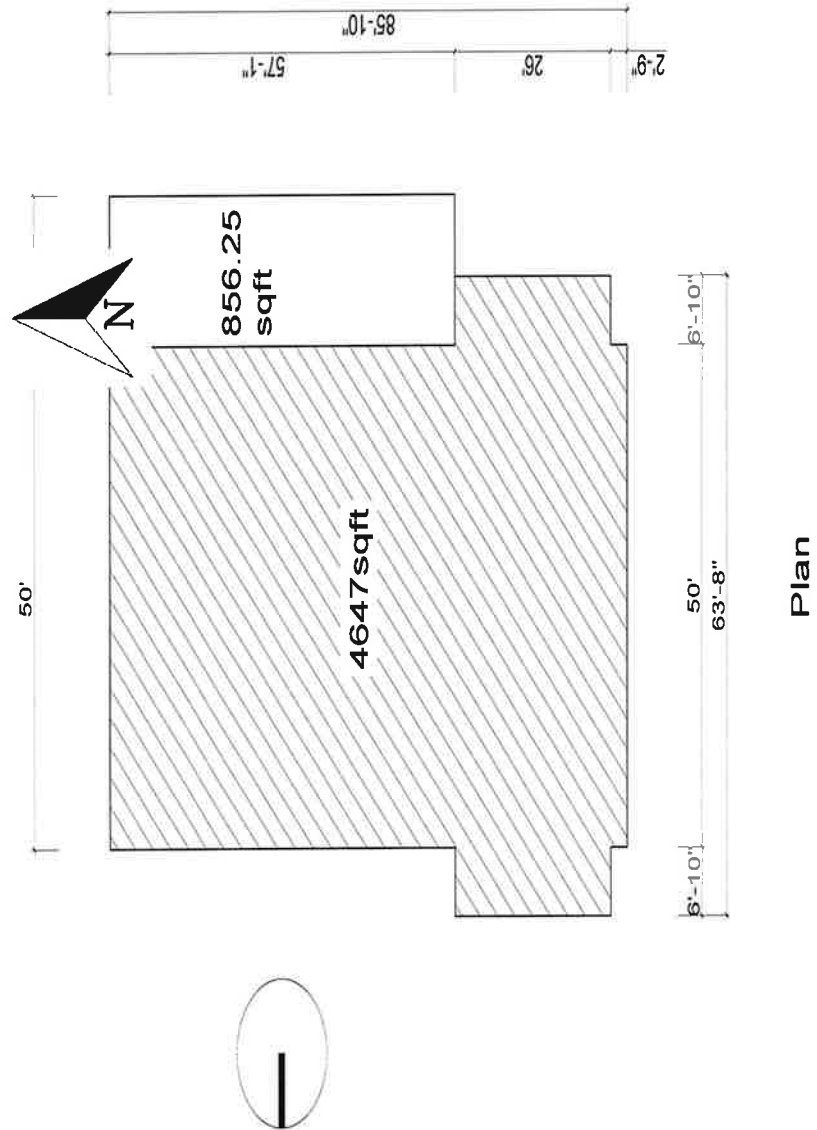


Figure 2. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, footprint. Image: University of Florida DCP 6716 Cultural Resource Management Class, Spring 2020.

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Figure 3. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, historic photo, c. 1945. Image: "Dedicatory Souvenir Program. Mount Carmel Baptist Church N.E. 25th Street & 8th Avenue Gainesville, Florida," April 8, 1984, pg. 94.

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Name of Property

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Section number          Photos          Page   1  

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered in the order they are referenced in the manuscript, and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log.

Property Name: Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

City or Vicinity: Gainesville County: Alachua State: FL

Photographers: Sujin Kim; University of Florida DCP 6716 Cultural Management Class Spring 2020

Date Photographed: 11/2019; 12/2019; 1/2020; 2/2020; 6/2020

Location of Original Digital Files: University of Florida, DCP Arch 148, 1480 Inner Road, Gainesville, Florida, FL 32611

Number of Photographs: 24

**Description of photograph(s) and number, including description of view indicating direction of camera:**

1. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of west façade, camera facing east, photographed December 19, 2019.
2. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, rooftop rafters, camera facing south and up, photographed January 31, 2020.
3. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of west facade, camera facing south-east and up, photographed February 24, 2020.
4. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of west facade, main entrance, camera facing north-east, photographed February 24, 2020.
5. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of north facade, camera facing south-west, photographed December 19, 2019.
6. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of west and south facades, camera facing north-east, photographed December 19, 2019.
7. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of south and east facades, camera facing north-west, photographed November 25, 2019.
8. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of south facade, south-west entrance, camera facing north, November 25, 2019.
9. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of east facade, camera facing west, photographed November 25, 2019.

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10. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of first-floor vestibule, main entrance, camera facing west, photographed February 24, 2020.
11. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of first-floor vestibule, window, camera facing north-west, photographed February 24, 2020.
12. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of first-floor vestibule, opening between vestibules, camera facing north-east, photographed February 24, 2020.
13. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of first-floor vestibule, door to the assembly room, camera facing east, photographed December 19, 2019.
14. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of first-floor assembly room, proscenium, camera facing south-east, photographed December 19, 2019.
15. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of first-floor assembly room, camera facing south photographed February 24, 2020.
16. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of stair to the second-floor lobby, proscenium arch, camera facing south and down, photographed February 24, 2020.
17. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of second-floor lobby, staircase to the upper gallery, camera facing north, photographed February 24, 2020.
18. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of second-floor lobby, pointed-arch window, camera facing west, photographed February 24, 2020.
19. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of second-floor lobby, double-leaf door, camera facing east, photographed February 24, 2020.
20. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of second-floor nave and upper gallery, camera facing west, photographed December 19, 2019.
21. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of second-floor nave and sanctuary, camera facing east, photographed December 19, 2019.
22. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of second-floor sanctuary, proscenium, camera facing south-east, photographed December 19, 2019.
23. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of second-floor sanctuary, baptismal font, camera facing south-east and up, photographed December 19, 2019.
24. Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church, view of a historic marker at the north facade, camera facing south, photographed November 25, 2019.

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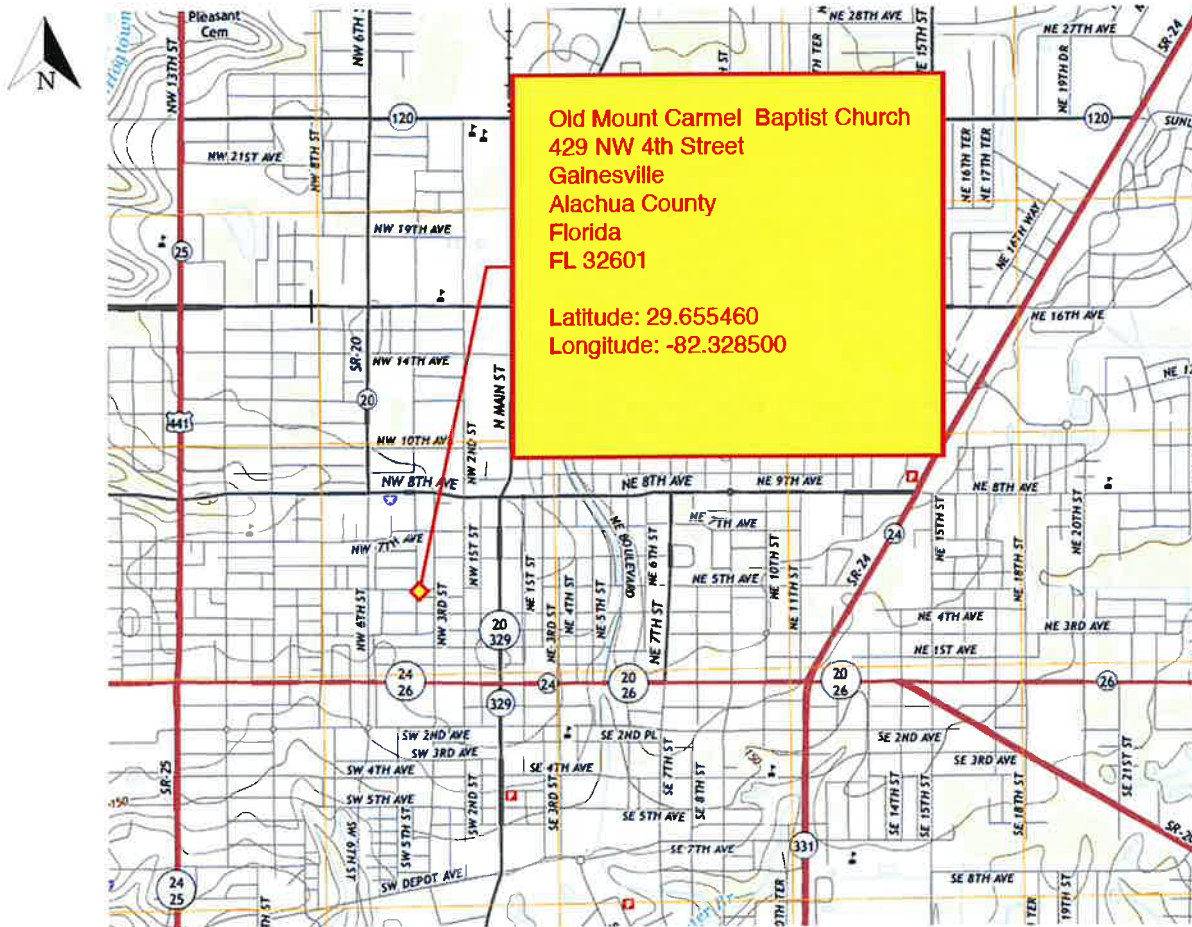
Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Alachua County, Florida  
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## MAPS



Location Map 1:  
Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church  
429 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Gainesville  
Alachua County  
FL 32601

Latitude: 29.655460  
Longitude: -82.328500

USGS 7.5 Map Name: Gainesville East, 2015, fragment.

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Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

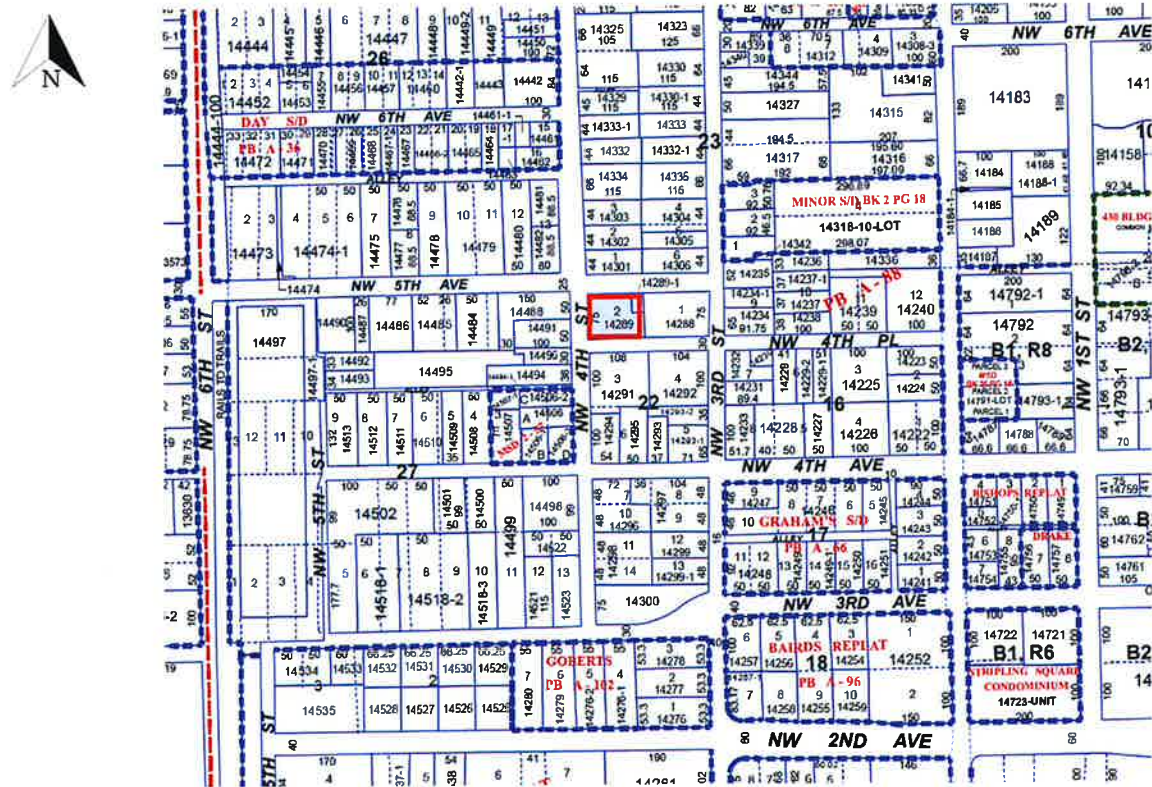
Name of Property

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Section number      Maps      Page      2

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Location Map 2:  
Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church  
429 NW 4th Street, Gainesville  
Alachua County  
FL 32601

Legal Description: Lot 2, Block 22, Brush's Addition to Gainesville, according to the map of plat thereof recorded Plat Book A, page 88, LESS AND EXCEPT the road right-of-way deeded to the City of Gainesville recorded in Deed Book 182, Page 119, Public Records of Alachua County, Florida.

Township 10S, Range 20E, Section 05  
Tax Parcel No. 14289-000-000

Source: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/acpa.pdf/PARCEL\\_201005NE.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/acpa.pdf/PARCEL_201005NE.pdf)





# Boundary: Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

429 NW Fourth St.  
Gainesville, Alachua Co.  
Florida 32601

FMSF#: AL01401

UTM: 17R 371417 3281348

Datum: WGS84

## Legend



OldCarmelBaptistChurch

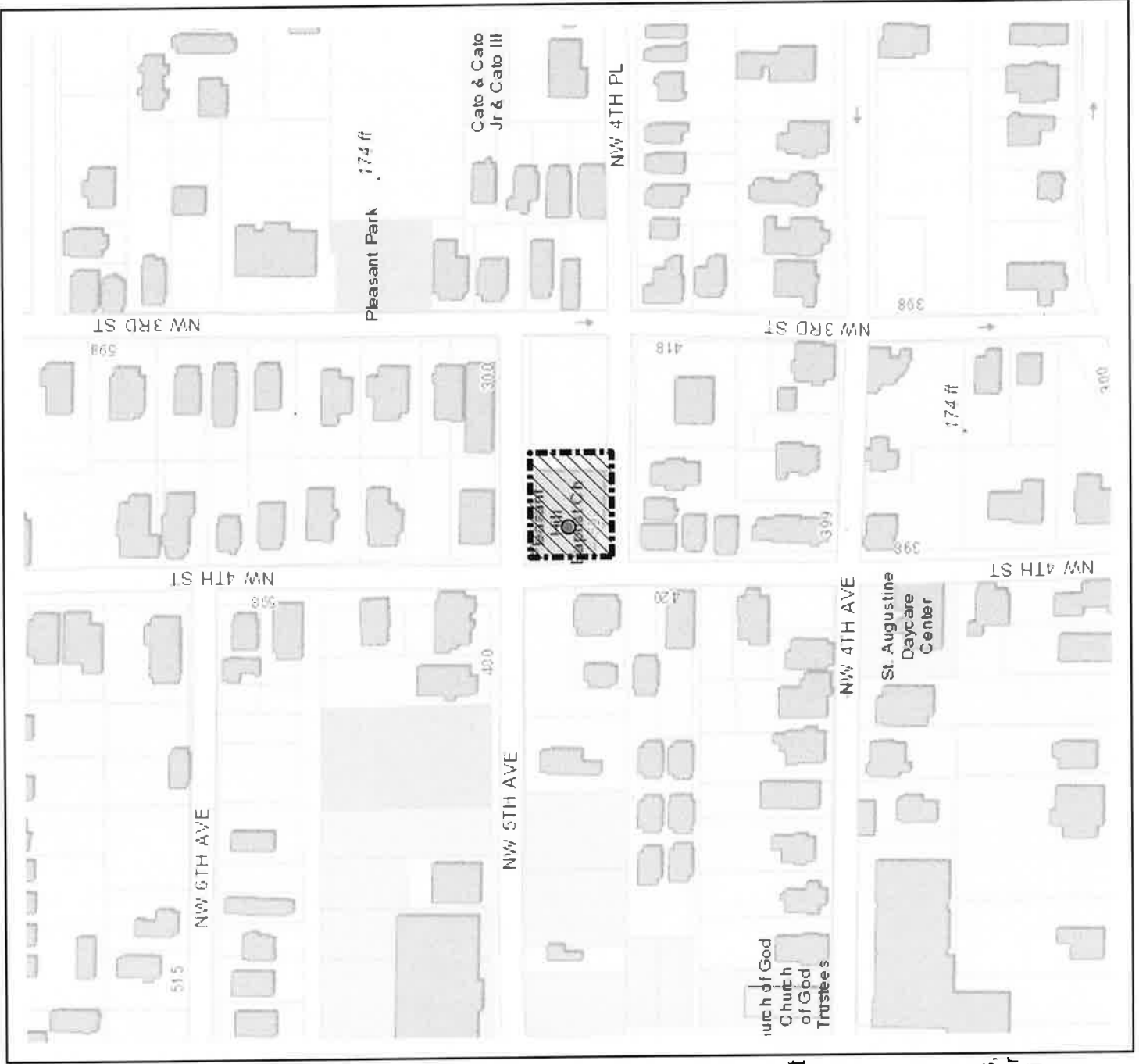


1:2,000 Date: 12/4/2020



Map drawn by: Ruben A. Acosta, BHP, DHR

Basemap Source: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



# Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

429 NW Fourth St.  
Gainesville, Alachua Co.  
Florida 32601

FMSF#: AL01401

UTM: 17R 371417 3281348

Datum: WGS84

## Legend



OldCarmelBaptistChurch

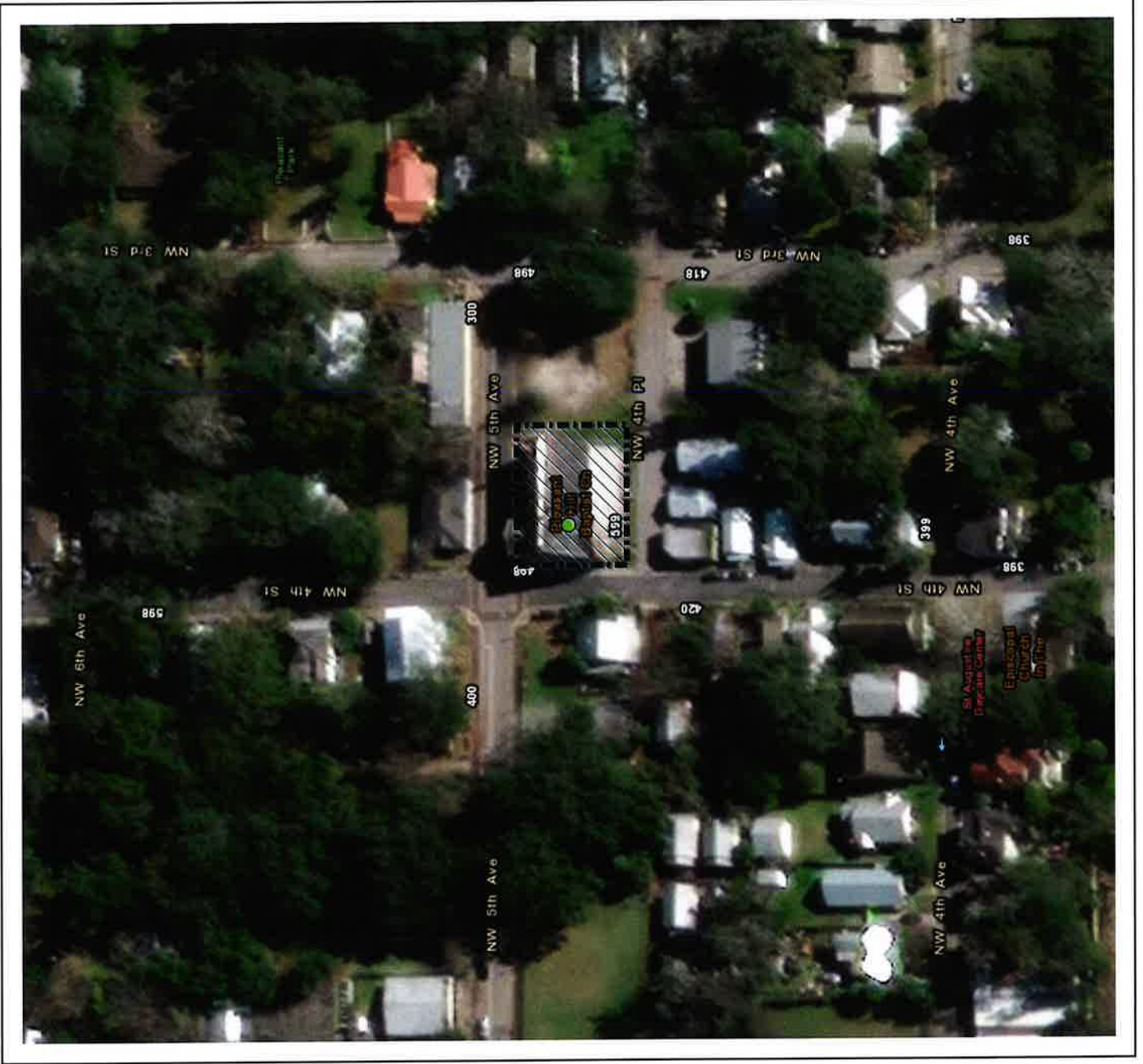


1:1,500 Date: 12/4/2020



Map drawn by: Ruben A. Acosta, BHP, DHR

Basemap Source: Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe,  
GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/  
Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping,  
AerGRID, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS  
User Community



# Old Mount Carmel Baptist Church

429 NW Fourth St.  
Gainesville, Alachua Co.  
Florida 32601

FMSF#: AL01401

UTM: 17R 371417 3281348

Datum: WGS84

USGS Quad: Gainesville East

## Legend



OldCarmelBaptistChurch



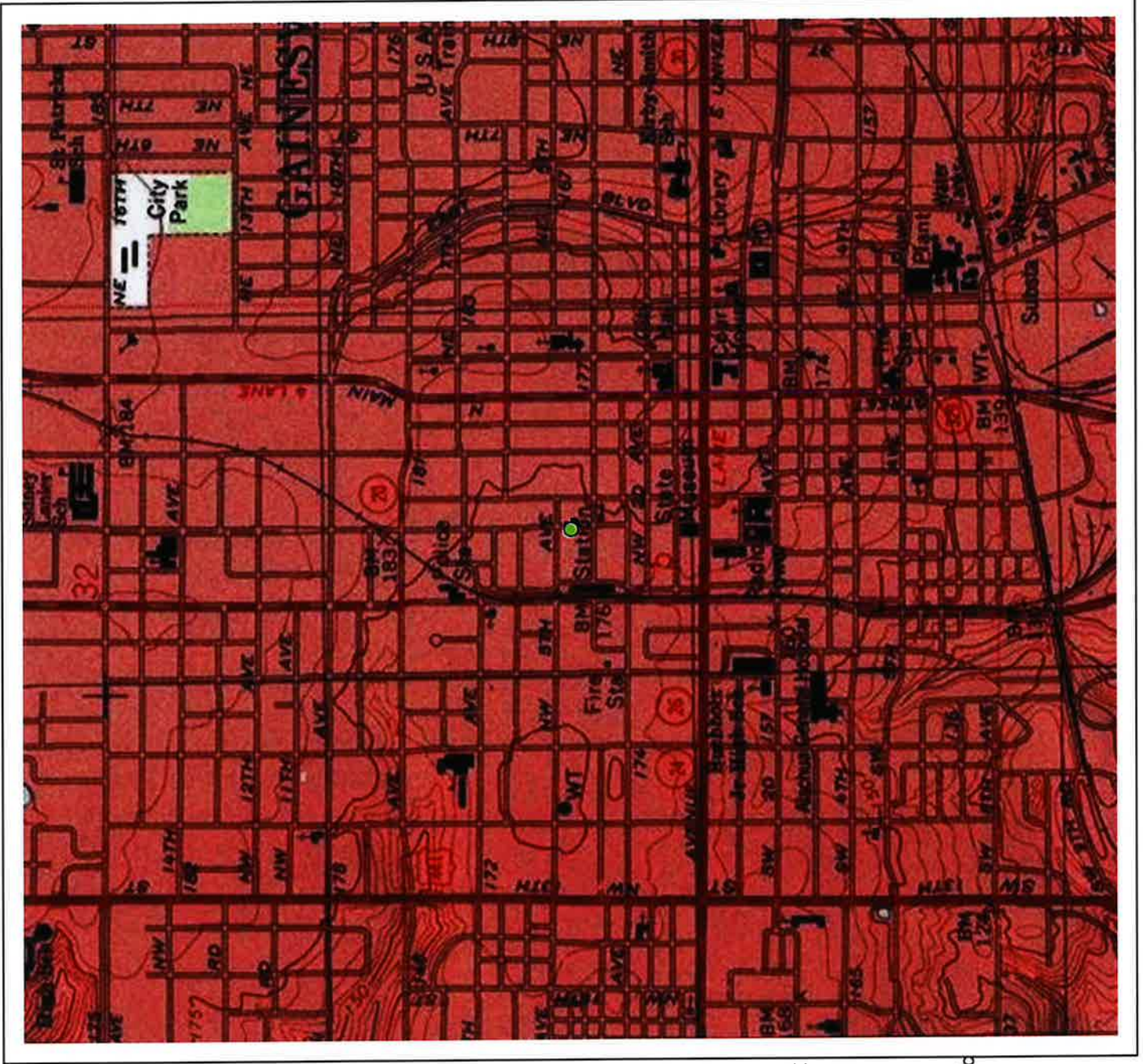
1:18,000 Date: 12/4/2020

0 450 900 1,800 2,700 3,600  
Feet

0 125 250 500 750 1,000  
Meters

Map drawn by: Ruben A. Acosta, BHP, DHR

Basemap Source: © 2013 National Geographic  
Society, i-cubed





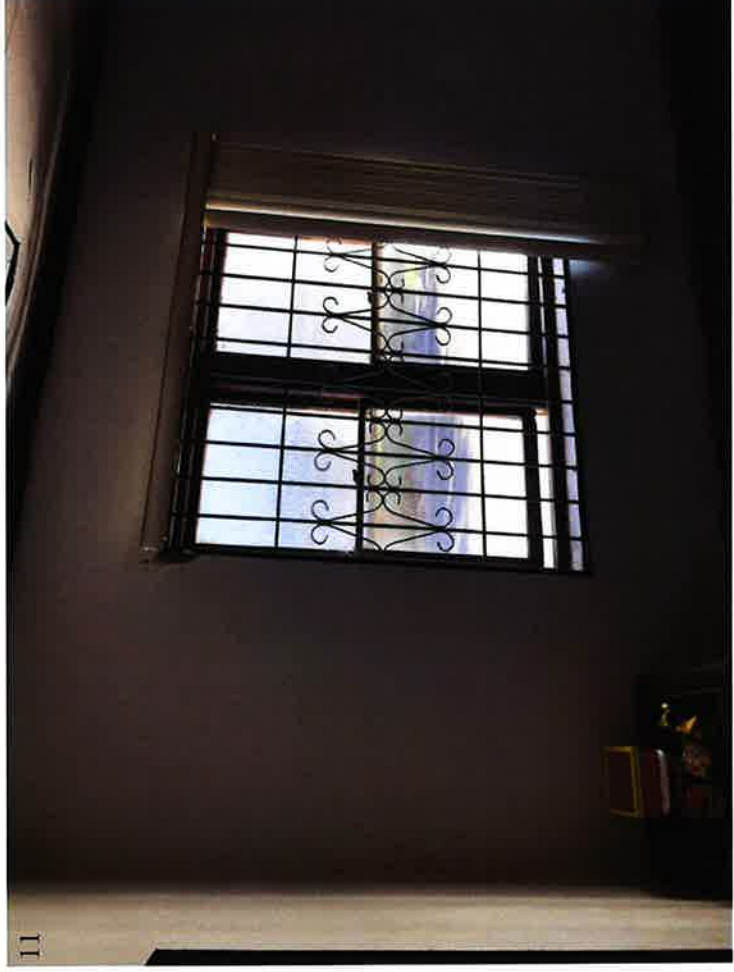
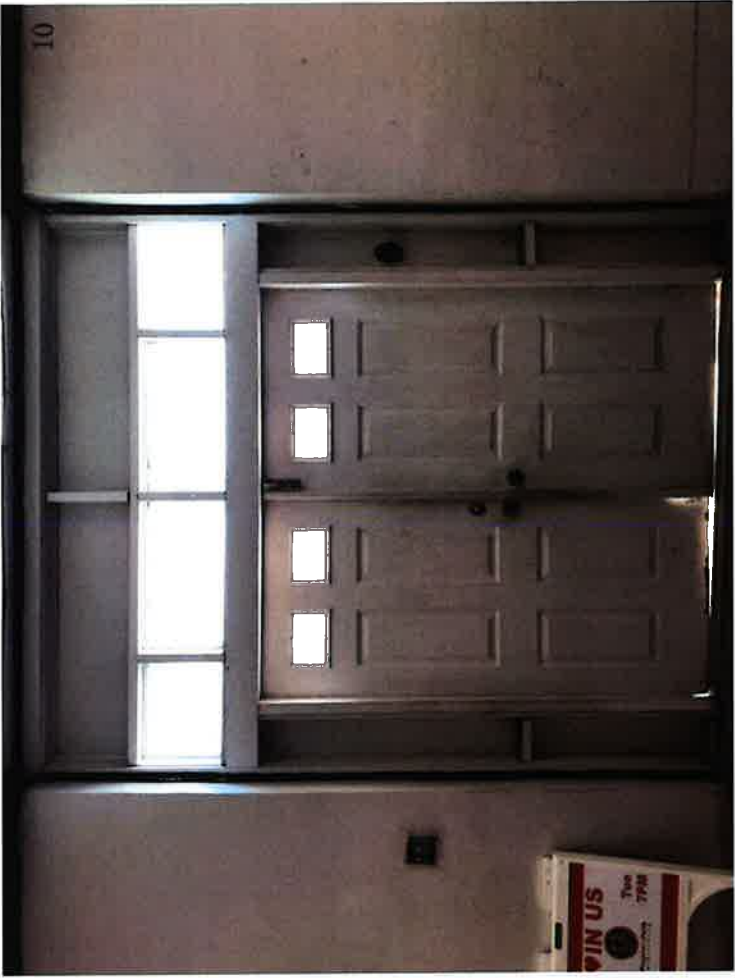
2

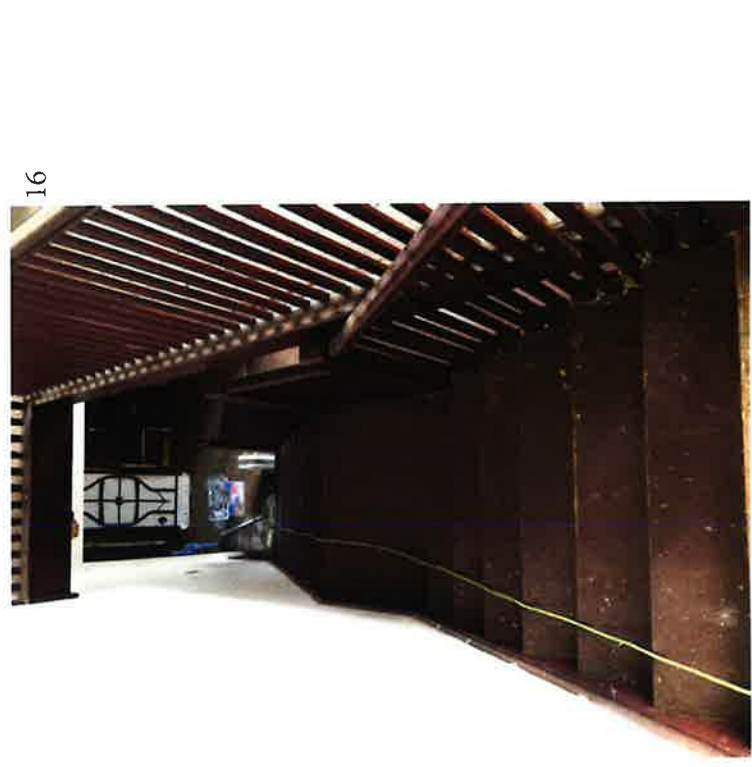
4

1

3









18



20



17



19



