

# WEBSTER METHODIST CHURCH

Local Historic Property Report  
November, 2012



## Constructed 1881 - 1887

Erected by Members of the Methodist  
Congregation of Webster N.C.

### A. The Side (North) Elevation

The north side of the church originally faced the historic Mountain View Hotel, which burned in the early 1900's. A ranch style parsonage is currently located to the north of the church.

### B. The Front (East) Elevation

Following tradition, the church faces east. The main entry to the sanctuary is through the bell tower.

### C. The Rear (West) Elevation

A one story addition was constructed at the rear of the church in 1933 to house a Sunday School. Now the room houses the kitchen and restroom facilities and provides a secondary entrance to the church.



# Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission

## Local Historic Landmark Designation Report

### 6.1 ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

#### Summary:

Webster Methodist Church is located within the Town of Webster on a slight elevation rise on the west side of Webster Road (NC 116). The church is located in an area that contains many other historically significant structures and properties of Jackson County. One such structure is the “rock school” building, which is now the home of Southwestern Child Development Center, and was erected in 1936 to the south of the church. On the north side of the church are a ranch style parsonage (belonging to the church) and a vacant lot that was the site of the Mountain View Hotel. The church is oriented facing east, overlooking Webster Road and the ravine that runs adjacent to the properties abutting the street.

#### The Structure:

The Webster Methodist Church structure is a rectangular building constructed with weatherboard of beaded poplar painted white, sitting atop a foundation of mortised oak laid on logs resting on rock from the Tuckasegee River. The gable roofed style and the engaged bell tower both accent the structural beauty of the church. Construction of the main portion of the sanctuary was completed in 1887 and there has only been one structural change to the church, which was a small addition at the rear (west) end of the building constructed in 1933. This addition was originally used for Sunday School classes but now houses the kitchen and bathroom facilities. Attached to the new addition is a ramp that was built to connect the parking area to the door in order to provide a handicap accessible route and secondary entry into the church.

#### Landscape Aesthetics:

Among the landscaping features is a grass lawn that surrounds the church and is partitioned by a small concrete walkway that leads from the entrance and belfry area to Webster Road. Accompanying these features are a small Biblical herb garden that has been planted in the southeast corner of the lawn with 40 herbs mentioned in the Bible, as well as a flower garden planted on the south side of the church. The church’s grounds are enclosed by a white picket fence approximately 3 feet in height, which is a replica of the original fence. Beech and maple trees have been planted on the north side of the church to create a buffer between the church and the adjacent residential property.

The church’s half-acre lot contains no cemetery. Deceased members of the congregation are buried at the Stillwell Cemetery on Little Savannah Road or at the Webster Cemetery on Buchanan Loop.

## Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission Local Historic Landmark Designation Report

Section number 6 Page 2

Webster Methodist Church, Webster NC

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### Design:

The church was designed and constructed by many residents of the Webster community. Because of this community effort, no one primary designer can be positively identified. This being known, Joseph Cowan, Captain James Terrell, and L.C. Hall are cited by many as playing a key role in the church's design.

The main entryway is on the east-facing end of the building. Entering the sanctuary one must pass under the gable and through the base of the bell tower. The building is four bays long, with each bay containing a six-over-six window, reputed to have been made in England, with pedimented heading. The cornice is boxed and has returns. The frieze, cornice, and corner-boards are plain. The foundation of the building is stone and the roof is of the original tin shingles. The main architectural interest of the church building is found in the three-bay entrance face, which is dominated by an engaged bell tower that rises in two stages and culminates in a splayed pyramidal cap which serves as the steeple. Gothic arched vents are centered on all four sides of the tower's second tier, just beneath its cap. Along with these features, there are a blind fan and a diamond-shaped vent that ornament its principal facade above the church entrance.

On the interior of the church building, a central aisle leads from the main entrance to the communion rail. Behind this rail is the area in which the pastor's chairs are set in an alcove under a low arch. The windows are characterized by plain yet aesthetically pleasing surrounds, many of which still contain the original handblown frosted panes. The pews are high-backed and made of wide pine boards with each pew made from five boards. The walls of the church are made of plaster and painted white. The ceiling is constructed of wood boards and painted white. The present flooring within the church was laid over the original pine flooring in 1945.

The sanctuary was shortened in 1939 when a partition was placed behind the pastors' chairs. This allowed the congregation space for an additional room in the west end of the building. This church schoolroom, as it was in 1939, was entered from each side of the alcove.

During the late spring and early summer of 2012, some restoration work was done on the church. Damaged and missing boards on the interior and exterior were replaced with similar materials of the same size and design as the original. Replacement boards used on the exterior are poplar, \_\_\_ inches in width, milled to the same specifications as the original. Replacement boards used to repair the ceiling are also poplar, \_\_\_ inches in width, and milled to the same specifications as the original ceiling boards. The exterior of the church was painted with the traditional white color used. Repairs were made to the bell tower and it was painted. Some additional interior repairs were made to restore and preserve the architectural integrity of the church. Plaster that had been placed on the ceiling was removed and the original wood ceiling repaired and painted.

# Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission Local Historic Landmark Designation Report

## 7.1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Summary:

The Webster Methodist Church is eligible for designation as a Local Historic Property on the basis that it is one of the oldest and perhaps the most architecturally significant church in Jackson County. Built in 1887 for the Webster Methodist congregation, the design of the church is similar to the other churches built in the county before the turn of the century but the wealth of detail and style, both Gothic and Classical, make it outstanding. No non-cosmetic changes have been made to the exterior of the church since its construction other than the construction in 1933 of a small addition at the rear that originally housed Sunday School classrooms. Of the minimal changes that have been carried out by the church, the most significant was to the interior. The sanctuary, which originally occupied the interior as one large room, was shortened in 1939 to provide space for a second room on the west end of the building. This room is used as a classroom.

### A Distinct Structure:

The Webster Methodist Church offers the most elaborate decorative trim of the remaining turn-of-the-century church buildings in Jackson County. It contains Gothic detailed windows, vents and transom and basket arches. The structure is not limited to Gothic architectural details though; the building has a wealth of classical details including Ionic piers, fluted Ionic pilasters with spearpoint heads, sidelights, and porticos. The facade is the masterpiece and product of an unknown, talented carpenter/ builder. The feature has been called "high-spirited and full of charm," which provides an illustration of the energetic and fast moving society who lived in the Webster area in the latter 19th century.

The building's entrance composition is unique in Jackson County. Rectangular six-over-six sash windows with pointed-ached transom flank the base of the bell tower, which has corners faced by Ionic piers with recessed lancet panels. These piers carry a segmental arch and enframe a portico hollowed out of the base of the tower. The door into the church, a double-leaf door of six panels, is surmounted by a Gothic transom and is flanked by sidelights with Gothic heads. Fluted Ionic pilasters with spearpoint heads separate the sidelights from the doorway.

### Originality of Structure:

With the exception of the interior partition, the small addition to the rear of the church, and new oak flooring in 1945, the Webster Methodist Church is unchanged since its completion in 1887. Missing and deteriorated exterior siding weatherboards were replaced with boards of similar material and design in the spring and early summer of 2012 and the exterior was painted. Some renovation was done to the interior of the building also, with the plaster removed from the original wood ceiling and the interior painted.

## Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission Local Historic Landmark Designation Report

### Historical Background:

When Jackson County was established in 1851, religious life was dominated by Baptist and Methodist denominations that were initially in the Holston District, but are now in the WNC District. In their inchoate stages, these congregations held services primarily in private dwellings, but also met in Love's Chapel. Love's Chapel was founded in 1840 on the property of John B. Love for the purposes of a shared space of worshiping and studying. In 1863, Methodists joined the Baptist and Presbyterian congregations in Webster for the purpose of the construction of a church and school building in Webster. This is the site of the present Hedden House on Main Street. The different congregations met at Love's Chapel on a temporal basis. Webster Methodists met there on the first and third Sundays of each month. Having a church on only a temporal basis quickly inspired the approximately 380 members, including five African Americans, to anxiously plan for a church building that they could call their own.

The initial phases of the construction of a new Church in Webster began on December 11, 1881, when William and Mary Bumgarner sold a tract of land in the middle of the town to the trustees for the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. This land sold for the sum of \$50.00, and the sellers wanted the property to be seen as a "place of Devine worship for the use of the ministry and membership." William Bumgarner (1839-1902) was the son of Charles and Rebecca Odum Bumgarner, who had both been important founding members of the Love's Chapel Methodist Church. The Trustees of the Webster Methodist Church, who were sold the land, were as follows: William Enloe (a wealthy merchant and father-in-law of attorney Walter E. Moore); George W. Spake (a Methodist minister and later postmaster of Webster); L. Coleman Hall (a wealthy farmer whose property extended along the west bank of the Tuckasegee River); Dr. James M. Candler, (a physician); Thomas M. Frizzell, (a pharmacist); and James W. Terrell. All of these were men well-educated men within the county and were well-equipped to design a building of merit and style. The last-mentioned founder, James Terrell, provides insight into the interaction between religion and everyday life in Webster during this period of history.

James W. Terrell was born in Rutherford County, North Carolina in 1829. While there is little information known of his early life, it is known that in 1852 he became an Indian agent with his long-time friend William Holland Thomas, trader, state senator, land owner, and "great benefactor of the Cherokees." Terrell managed Thomas's store in Quallatown in Jackson County, which was the business center of the Cherokee Indian Reservation. During the Civil War, Terrell was a captain in the 69th North Carolina Regiment, which was nominally know as the Thomas Legion in honor of its commander, William Holland Thomas. After the war, Terrell was active in Indian affairs and studied and wrote about Cherokee customs and mythology. In 1858, Terrell married Leila, daughter of Ulrich Keener (1801-1856), a Methodist minister from East Tennessee who in 1850 became the first minister to the Echota Indian Mission in Quallatown. Keener was also the first Methodist itinerant preacher in Jackson County, where he began his circuit preaching in 1847.

## **Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission Local Historic Landmark Designation Report**

Section number 7 Page 3

Webster Methodist Church, Webster NC

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Terrell was Jackson County's first county surveyor and one of the first superintendents of schools. He was a county commissioner from 1879 to 1884, and a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives for the term beginning in 1881. His life was rich with service for the Methodist Church. He was a trustee of the local church and later became chairman of the board of deacons for the Webster Circuit, which served seven Methodist churches. This overview of the life and achievements of James W. Terrell provides an indication of the roles played by the early members of Webster Methodist Church in the development of the community, the county, and the state.

### **Constructed By a Community Effort**

Construction of the new church building was completed in 1887. Local lumber companies provided the weatherboarding, pegged pews, and flooring for the church. The paint was bought and shipped from Knoxville, Tennessee. Handblown frosted panes formed windows and gas lights hung from the side walls. Since the original construction the church has been repainted and the gas lights have been replaced, but many features of the church remain untouched or replaced. These features include the pews, windows, and weatherboarding. Along with the church, a parsonage was constructed just to the north of the church in 1887; this dwelling was renovated and rebuilt several times between 1887 and 1956, when the present brick ranch house was finally constructed.

Although the Webster Methodist church has never had a large congregation, early membership roles read like a who's who in North Carolina: Madison, Mckee, Terrell, Alley, Enloe, Allison, Moore, Fisher, Broyles, Bryson, Coward, Brown, and Frizzel, who were leaders of both the church and the state. The congregation has been active since 1887, and the church is still the central church of the Webster Methodist Circuit.

### **Architectural context:**

After the Federal Government opened the lands of Western North Carolina to settlers, church services were soon held in local homes and were led by itinerant preachers who rode hundreds of miles each month "on circuit," in order to preach. Webster was added to one of these Methodist circuits in 1859. This style of circuiting went on for almost twenty years which meant that the local congregation did not have a church building until 1887. This was when they erected the traditional, yet stylish, Webster Methodist Church. During that era in Jackson County's history, many dwellings were characterized with decorated framework, and churches were likewise of decorated frame construction. Most of these structures were small, rectangular buildings with the entrance in the gable end of the building, and most of the places of worship had belfries capped by conical or pyramid shaped roofs.

## **Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission Local Historic Landmark Designation Report**

Section number 7 Page 4

Webster Methodist Church, Webster NC

The partial inventory of historic properties in Jackson County (1975) lists extant church buildings with belfry: Catherine's Chapel Baptist Church (1906), John's Creek Methodist Church (c. 1899), Olivet Methodist Church (c. 1895), and Webster Baptist Church (1900). The Church of the Good Shepherd (1895) has a free-standing belfry. Jackson County is located in the Appalachian Mountains of southwest North Carolina and the county was isolated and sparsely settled at the turn of the century. Due to the isolation and small population, these buildings are the first generation of church buildings in the century.

# Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission Local Historic Landmark Designation Report

Section number 8 Page 1

Webster Methodist Church, Webster NC

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## Property Included in Designation:

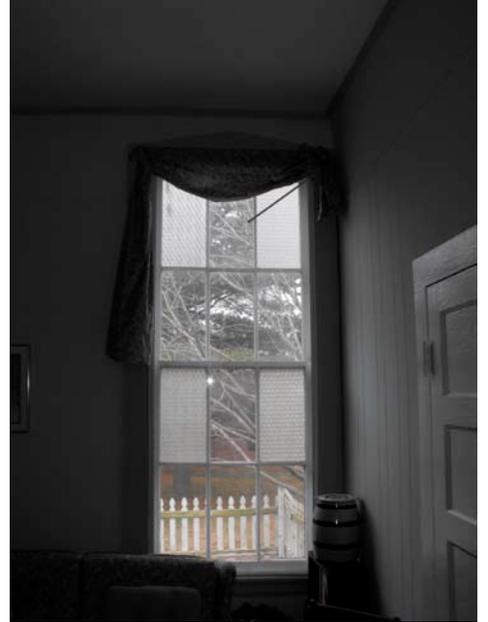
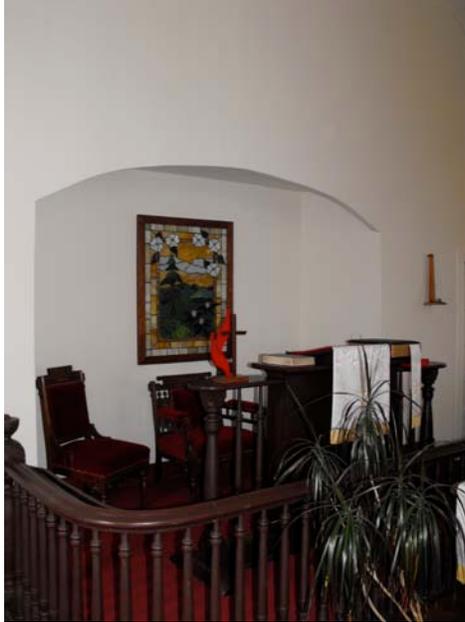
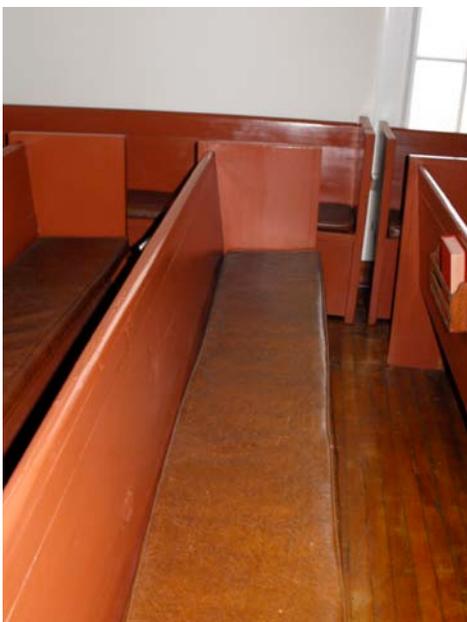
The property proposed for designation includes approximately half the parcel identified as property PIN 7640-16-1898 and shown on the attached tax parcel map. The property included in this parcel is the original land sold by William and Mary Bumgarner. The inclusion of the church grounds provides insight into the heritage of the church and provides context to the significance the building has to the community. All exterior features of the church are included in the designation. Interior features to be included in the designation are the pews and the communion table. These interior features are original to the church and were placed within the church when it was constructed. Each high backed pew is made from 5 wide pine boards and demonstrates the craftsmanship that is evident throughout the Church. The communion table is also of simple design, representing the utilitarian approach taken to the design and construction of items to be used for important purposes. The utilitarian design of both the pews and the communion table reflects the approach taken to life by the frugal and resourceful people who were involved in the construction of the church. Any significant changes to these interior features must be reviewed and approved by the Commission. Refurbishment and repair of these features with similar materials and in keeping with the original design will be required unless the Commission determines that refurbishment/repair is not feasible. If repair is not feasible, replacement with similar materials/items will be permitted.

The church is the focus of the designation with this done in order to aid in the historic and cultural preservation of the structure. Proper management of the building will be required to preserve the church, which means changes must only be made as needed. Plans for alteration must be submitted to the Jackson County Historic Preservation Commission for approval. If designated, the Historic Preservation Commission shall be vested the power to review any structural and or cosmetic changes to the church; this includes the designated features within the church.

The grounds shall be included in this designation, as alteration, demolition, or new construction on the grounds would have an impact on the significance of the Webster Methodist Church and would certainly impact the integrity of the church and its setting. Inclusion of the grounds in this designation provides the Commission with the authority to review any alteration, demolition, or new construction on the grounds to ensure that it does not negatively affect the significance and/or integrity of the church. New construction will be reviewed by the Commission to assure that it is compatible with the church in terms of size, scale, texture, and design. The basic landscaping features shall not be under this standard, as changes to the landscaping will not impact the historic significance of the church. Significant landscape alterations shall be reviewed by the Commission to assure that they do not adversely impact the setting in which the church is located.



**Over 100 Years  
of Original  
Glass, Pews,  
and Siding**



## Overview

The Webster Methodist Church is characterized by a rectangular structure constructed of beaded poplar weatherboard painted white. The gable roof style and the engaged bell tower both accent the structural beauty of the church.

Construction of the main portion of the sanctuary was completed in 1887 and there has been only one structural change to the church, which was a small addition at the rear (west) end of the building constructed in 1933. This addition was originally used for Sunday School classes but now houses the kitchen and bathrooms. Located on the grounds is a Biblical herb garden, containing 40 herbs mentioned in the Bible.

Grounded firmly in the past, the Webster Methodist Church continues to serve the Webster community from its location overlooking the Tuckasegee River.



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