

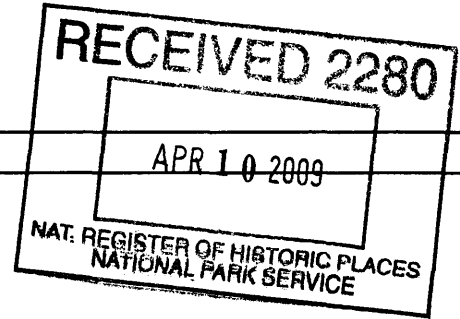
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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Basket Creek Cemetery  
other names/site number N/A



## 2. Location

street & number 7829 Capps Ferry Road  
city, town Douglasville (X) vicinity of  
county Douglas code GA 097  
state Georgia code GA zip code 30135

( ) not for publication

## 3. Classification

### Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

### Category of Property:

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

### Number of Resources within Property:

#### Contributing

#### Noncontributing

buildings	0	0
sites	1	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	1	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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 the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

W. Ray Luce  
Signature of certifying official

4-2-09  
Date

W. Ray Luce  
Historic Preservation Division Director  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

( ) entered in the National Register

Edson H. Beall 5-29-09

( ) determined eligible for the National Register

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register

( ) removed from the National Register

( ) other, explain:

( ) see continuation sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

FUNERARY: cemetery

### Current Functions:

FUNERARY: cemetery

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Southern Folk Cemetery

### Materials:

foundation	N/A
walls	N/A
roof	N/A
other	EARTH: Red Clay

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

Basket Creek Cemetery is located in a still rural but suburbanizing area approximately two miles northwest of the Chattahoochee River south of State Highway 166 in south Douglas County 25 miles southwest of downtown Atlanta. The cemetery is located at 7829 Capps Ferry Road. The cemetery is located in the vicinity of the small city of Douglasville (Douglas County). The cemetery is located to the rear of the Basket Creek Baptist Church (non-historic).

Founded in 1886, this African-American cemetery has a square-shaped lot and is situated on flat terrain. This example of a Southern Folk Cemetery has 110 known burial plots that are arranged informally along a series of irregular rows that do not form straight lines or grids (Photographs 4-9). Approximately 60 percent of the cemetery's plots contain unidentified human remains. The cemetery is void of vegetation and has the appearance of a swept yard. A large majority of the graves have roughly carved upright stone markers (Photographs 11-14). Most of the markers lack inscriptions. One of the cemetery's graves has a bedstead-type marker made of fieldstones (Photograph 2). In lieu of the polished stone that was customarily used to create a bedstead-type marker, this example was constructed using rough fieldstones. The earthen grave mounds that ornament a majority of the burials are the cemetery's most distinctive landscape feature (Photographs 1-19). Grave mounding is a type of funerary ritual that was introduced in Georgia by slaves from West Africa during the late 18th century. The practice had largely disappeared statewide by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Each one-foot high triangular-shaped mound runs the length of the grave between the headstone and footstone. The mounds are created by a mounding ritual which involves forming and continually maintaining sculpted red-clay mounds to perpetually commemorate the life of the deceased. The process involves scraping red clay soil onto the grave from its perimeter. Next, a hoe is used to mound the loose material. Finally, a metal file is used to hone the mound's sides to create a pointed top. Those involved in this ritual see a poorly maintained mound as an insult to their ancestors as well as a bad

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7--Description

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reflection upon the local community's association with its heritage. The constant erosion of the mounds caused by exposure and settling, therefore, necessitates the routine observance of this process and its transference from one generation to the next. This funerary ritual has been observed at Basket Creek Cemetery on at least a biannual schedule under the supervision of the cemetery's presentation team—comprised primarily of contemporary church members and the descendants of the deceased—for the last 123 years.

A small number of the cemetery's graves have commercially produced grave markers. Several of the graves are covered with ledger-type markers (Photographs 4-5). The cemetery has a few examples of die in socket-type and headstone-type markers (Photographs 2, 11, 15). There is a single example of a pulpit-type marker (Photograph 2). There are also several larger marble markers in the cemetery (Photographs 4-5).

The Basket Creek Baptist Church and an unrelated white cemetery (Chapman Family Cemetery) are located next to the Basket Creek Cemetery (Photographs 18, 20). Neither resource is included within the proposed National Register boundary. The church was significantly enlarged in 2004. The white cemetery contains the remains of approximately one dozen members of the Chapman family. The family does not have a known association to the Basket Creek Cemetery or the Basket Creek Baptist Church.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

nationally       statewide       locally

**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

A       B       C       D

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):**  N/A

A       B       C       D       E       F       G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

ETHNIC HERITAGE—BLACK  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
SOCIAL HISTORY

**Period of Significance:**

1886-1959

**Significant Dates:**

1886-First recorded burial

**Significant Person(s):**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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**Statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Basket Creek Cemetery is located in a still rural but suburbanizing area of Douglas County, Georgia, in the vicinity of the small city of Douglasville. The cemetery is located approximately two miles northwest of the Chattahoochee River and 25 miles southwest of downtown Atlanta. The cemetery contains 110 known burials of African-American members of the Basket Creek Baptist Church. The cemetery opened in 1886 and is still active.

The cemetery is significant in the area of **Ethnic Heritage-Black** under Criterion "A" at the state level of significance because it is the last remaining vestige of a turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century African-American community located in south Douglas County. This rural black community consisted of single-family houses, saw mills, tenant farms, and churches situated within an area along the Chattahoochee River. Ancestors of the Endsley (a.k.a. Ensley) family were slaves held in bondage on farms located in the area along the Chattahoochee River. After the Civil War members of the Endsley family purchased small farms in the region and helped develop a local lumber industry. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, members of the Endsley family migrated west to Los Angeles, California, and north to places such as Detroit, Michigan, in search of work and to escape the state of Georgia's racist Jim Crow laws. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this rural black community had diminished in size considerably due to migration. Today the cemetery is the sole extant historic resource in the area associated with the history of this once thriving rural black community.

The cemetery is significant in the area of **Social History** under Criterion "A" at the state level of significance because the survival of the funerary ritual of grave mounding for the past 123 years at this site reflects a series of unique circumstances that allowed for the generational persistence of this vanishing custom. The cemetery's continuous association with the Basket Creek Baptist Church and the persistence of the remaining descendants has preserved a funerary ritual that has virtually disappeared in Georgia due to evolving funerary customs within African-American churches and the geographic relocation of many black families that occurred throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Similar extant examples of grave mounding in African-American cemeteries have been documented in Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. The funerary ritual of grave mounding has Trans-Atlantic origins linked to West African spiritual beliefs that predate the establishment of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Basket Creek Cemetery is the only extant example of grave mounding documented in Georgia to date.

The cemetery is significant in the area of **Landscape Architecture** under Criterion "C" at the state level of significance for its exceptional and rare grave mounds. This expression of funerary ornamentation was common among African-American examples of Southern Folk-type cemeteries prior to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The Southern Folk Cemetery is a physical expression of culturally oriented forms of funerary ritual. Some Southern cemetery traditions include wife-to-the-left burials, bordered family plots, and feet-to-the-east interments. These practices can be fairly common in today's Southern cemeteries, but there are other traditions that may not be. The Southern Folk Cemetery is characterized by hilltop location, scraped ground, mounded graves, east-west grave orientation, creative grave markers and decorations using materials readily available (not commercially produced), certain species of vegetation, the use of grave shelters, and the obvious

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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devotion to God and/or parents and family with the graveyard workdays and monument dedications. Some of these characteristics can certainly be found in other parts of the United States, even the world. It is the compilation of most or all of these traits within one cemetery that allows it to be called folk. Since the regional distribution of this type of cemetery coincides with the Southern culture, this cemetery is known as Southern Folk.

The practice of grave mounding has West African roots. Slaves from West Africa who were sold into slavery carried the tradition with them into the Caribbean Islands and subsequently into North America. It is believed that during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century numerous examples of grave mounding existed throughout the Deep South. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the custom had begun to vanish due to a number of related factors. The migration of hundreds of thousands of African Americans during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century helped reduce the preponderance of grave mounding in the South as scores of black communities relocated to the North and West in search of employment and to escape Jim Crow laws. Following World War II, the nature of family life in America changed with the advent of advances in transportation and communication technologies. The family unit as the central focal point of community life eroded and led to the rapid decline of cultural traditions such as grave mounding. Today Basket Creek Cemetery is the only documented extant example of grave mounding in the state of Georgia.

**National Register Criteria**

The Basket Creek Cemetery meets National Register of Historic Places Criteria "A" and "C" at the state level of significance in the areas of **Ethnic Heritage—Black**, **Social History**, and **Landscape Architecture** for its association with the former rural African-American community in the area, for its association with a distinctive social custom of grave mounding, and for its unique earthen grave mounds.

**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

Basket Creek Cemetery meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion Consideration "D" because the site derives its significance from distinctive design features and because of its association with the historical development of an African-American community in rural Douglas County, Georgia.

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance starts with the first recorded burial at the Basket Creek Cemetery in 1886 and extends through the end of the cemetery's historic period in 1959.

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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**Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)**

The first recorded burial at the Basket Creek Cemetery took place in 1886. Jane Endsley, according to family legend, was born into slavery in west Georgia and died a freedwoman in 1886. Former slaves constituted a majority of the cemetery's earliest burials. Ancestors of the Endsley (a.k.a. Ensley) family account for a majority of the burials in the cemetery. The Endsleys are an African-American family who have inhabited the area along the Chattahoochee River near modern-day Douglas and Fulton counties since the earliest phases of white settlement in the region (c.1820s). Prior to the Civil War, members of the Endsley family were enslaved laborers forcibly brought into the region by white masters and slave traders. Following the Civil War, members of the Endsley family, like most freedpeople, adopted the surname of their former masters. According to family legend, many African-American Endsley family members managed to purchase property during Reconstruction. Overall, fewer than 10 percent of freedpeople owned property during Reconstruction and throughout the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some members of the Endsley family operated small farms while others started a successful sawmill.

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Endsley family helped found the first Basket Creek Baptist Church. The church was located on a plot of land directly adjacent to the Chattahoochee River. In 1885, church members purchased the property where the extant cemetery and church are located. While it is unclear when the first church was built adjacent to the cemetery, it is certain that the first burial at the cemetery took place in 1886. Church legend recalls that the original church that was located along the river—nearly two miles from the extant cemetery's location—was destroyed either by flood or fire during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that the church was relocated in 1885 when members acquired the extant property.

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many members of the Endsley family migrated to California and Michigan in search of employment and relief from the state of Georgia's abusive Jim Crow laws. The Endsley community declined in number locally but family members often returned to the area throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century following their retirement. While some family members never returned, those who continue to live in California and Michigan have maintained an emotional connection to the site.

The cultural tradition of grave mounding began at the cemetery in 1886. Since 1886 church members have met twice annually to clean the cemetery and restore the red-clay grave mounds. Today the Basket Creek Baptist Church owns and maintains the Basket Creek Cemetery.



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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Harmon, Evelyn Davis. "National Register of Historic Places Historic Property Information Form: Basket Creek Cemetery." On-file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, 2008.

Jordan, Terry G. *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1984.

New South Associates. *Old School Cemetery: Mapping, Documentation, Preservation, and Interpretation of a Significant Historic African-American Site, Washington, Georgia*. Stone Mountain, GA: New South Associates, 2008.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** (X) N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued  
date issued:
- 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 #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other, Specify Repository:

**Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N/A

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## **10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property**      Less than one acre

### **UTM References**

A)    Zone 16      Easting 701545      Northing 3720454

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The National Register of Historic Places boundary includes the less than one-acre lot that contains the entirety of the Basket Creek Cemetery. The cemetery is bounded to the east by Capps Ferry Road. The cemetery is bounded to the north by the Basket Creek Baptist Church and Chapman Family Cemetery. Residential property bounds the cemetery to the west and south. The Chapman Family Cemetery is not included in the nomination boundary because the cemetery's history is not associated with the Basket Creek Cemetery. The Basket Creek Baptist Church is not included in the nomination boundary because the building has been significantly altered and is no longer a historic resource.

### **Boundary Justification**

The National Register of Historic Places boundary includes the less than one-acre lot that contains the entirety of the Basket Creek Cemetery.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**State Historic Preservation Office**

**name/title** Keith S. Hébert/ Historian  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**mailing address** 34 Peachtree Street, N.W., Suite 1600  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** 03-02-2009  
**e-mail** keith.hebert@dnr.state.ga.us

**Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)** ( ) not applicable

**name/title** Evelyn Davis Harmon  
**organization** Basket Creek Baptist Church  
**mailing address** 7829 Capps Ferry Road  
**city or town** Douglasville **state** GA **zip code** 30135  
**telephone** 770-653-8473  
**e-mail** N/A

- ( ) **property owner**  
( ) **consultant**  
( ) **regional development center preservation planner**  
(X) **other:** Church Member

**Property Owner or Contact Information**

**name (property owner or contact person)** Rev. Dr. Ricky Seaborn  
**organization (if applicable)** Basket Creek Baptist Church  
**mailing address** 7829 Capps Ferry Road  
**city or town** Douglasville **state** GA **zip code** 30135  
**e-mail (optional)** N/A

National Register of Historic Places **Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

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**Name of Property:** Basket Creek Cemetery  
**City or Vicinity:** Douglasville (vicinity)  
**County:** Douglas  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** 11-10-2008

**Description of Photograph(s):**

Number of photographs: 20

1. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing northwest.
2. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
3. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing northwest.
4. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
5. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
6. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
7. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing northwest.
8. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing north.
9. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing northeast.
10. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
11. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
12. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
13. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
14. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
15. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
16. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing south.
17. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
18. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing north.
19. Basket Creek Cemetery; Photographer facing west.
20. Chapman Family Cemetery; Photographer facing northwest.

(HPD WORD form version 11-03-01)

# BASKET CREEK CEMETERY, DOUGLAS COUNTY, GEORGIA

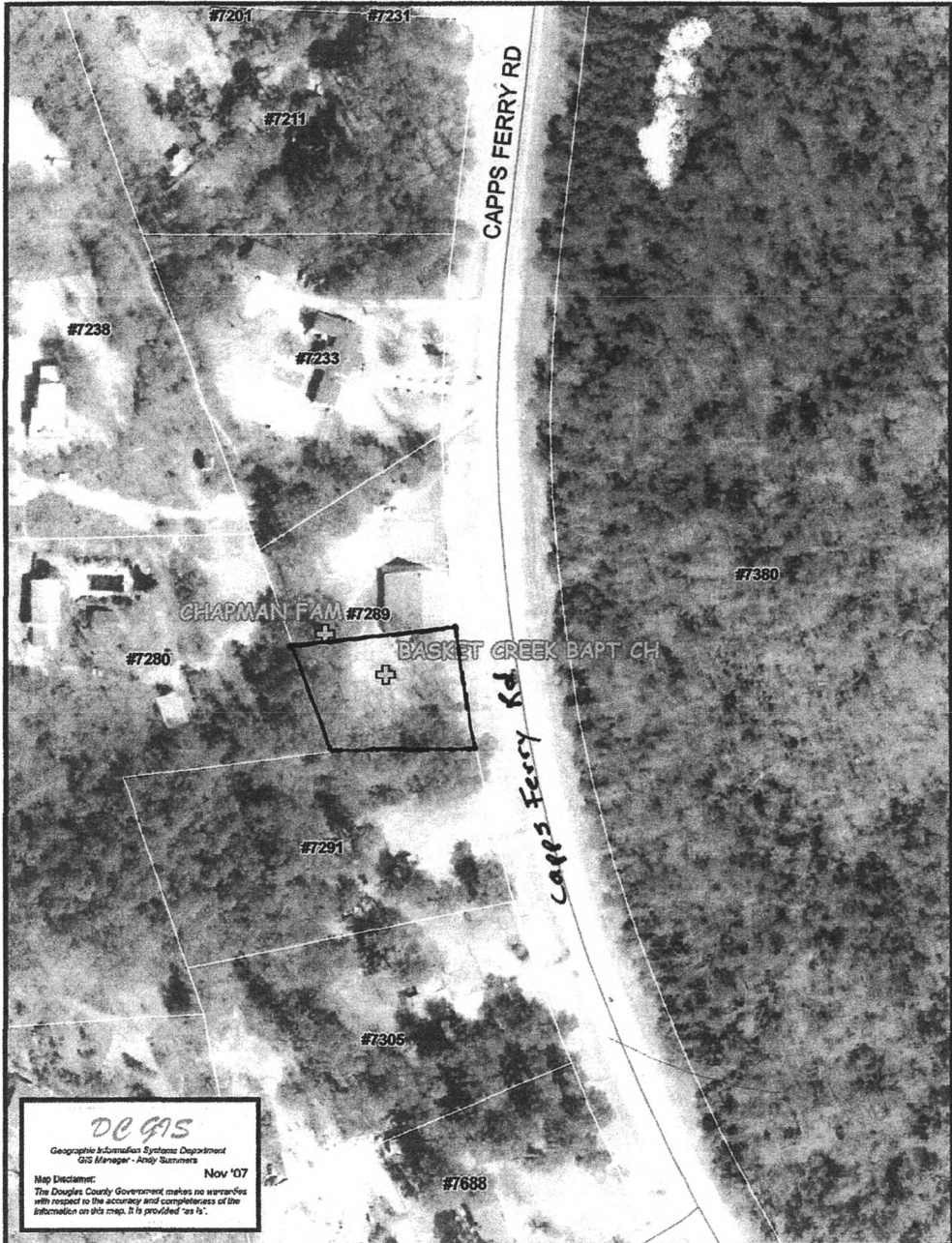
## TAX MAP

NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY: 

NORTH: 

SCALE: 1" = 50'

### BASKET CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH CEMETERY



BASKET CREEK CEMETERY, DOUGLAS COUNTY, GEORGIA

SITE PLAN

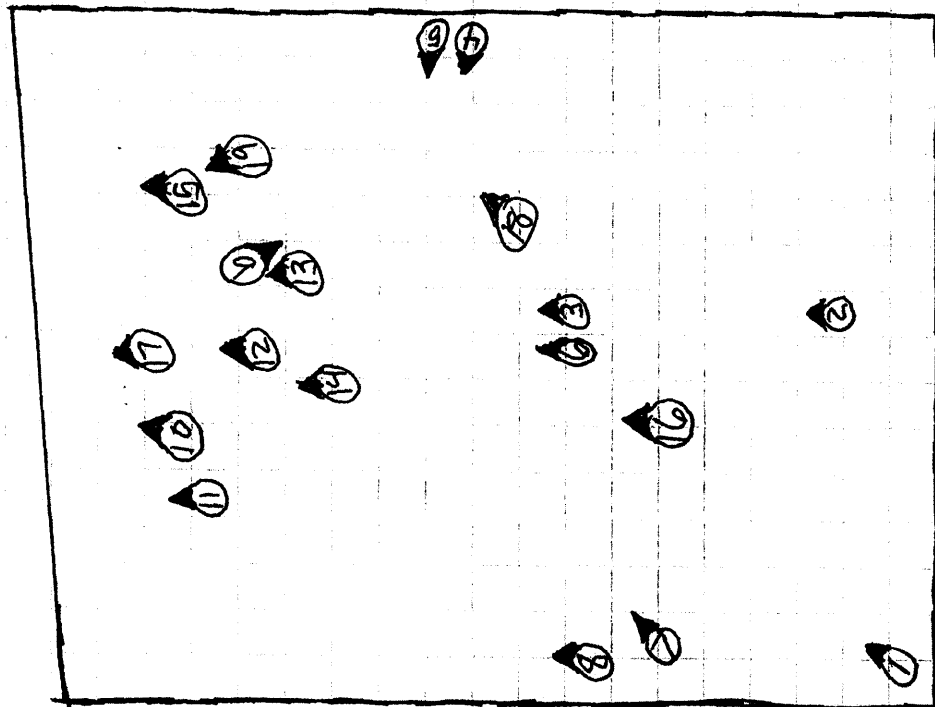
NORTH: ↑

SCALE: 1"=10'

DIRECTION OF PHOTOGRAPH: ⤴

Chapman  
Cemetery

Church



Capps Ferry Rd

Scale 1" = 10'