

Preserving Church Records Together: A Sustainable Model



Austin Chapel Methodist Church, Pitts Theology Library,
Emory University, MSS028,
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/17018>

To follow along:



Or visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/ChurchRecordsSGA2025>

Our Partners



Kline Archives,
John Bulow
Campbell
Library,
Columbia
Theological
Seminary



Jack Tarver
Library, Mercer
University



Pitts Theology
Library, Emory
University



Historic Rural
Churches of
Georgia

Our Team



Caitlin Reeves
Greenamyre
Director of Archives,
Columbia Theological Seminary



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University Archivist,
Jack Tarver Library
Mercer University



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Technology
Development Librarian,
Pitts Theology Library



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Cataloging and
Metadata Librarian,
Pitts Theology Library



Ann McShane
Digital Asset Librarian,
Pitts Theology Library



Emily Corbin
Reference Archivist,
Pitts Theology Library

Introduction

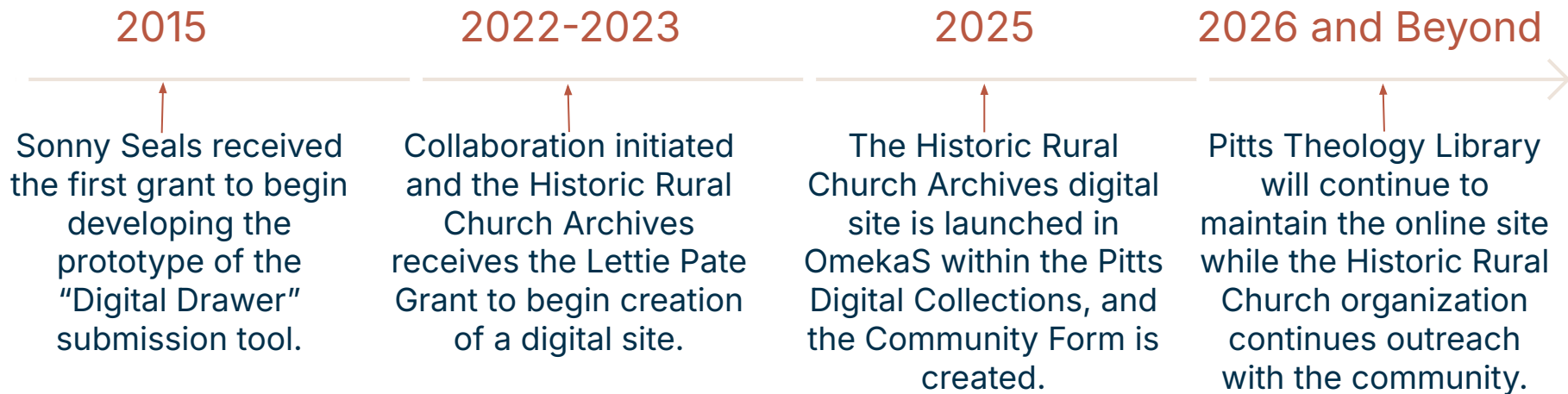
- The Historic Rural Churches of Georgia was founded by Sonny Seals and George Hart to preserve photographs and histories of rural churches and their communities.
- Seals and Hart wanted to start a digital archive driven by contributions from the community.
- With funding from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation and a NEH grant, they created a prototype for a “Digital Drawer” submission tool.
- In 2023 the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation provided a grant to support the creation of a Digital Archive. Along with CTS and Mercer, Pitts Theology Library has worked with the developer Agile to create the OmekaS subsite, and a community portal.



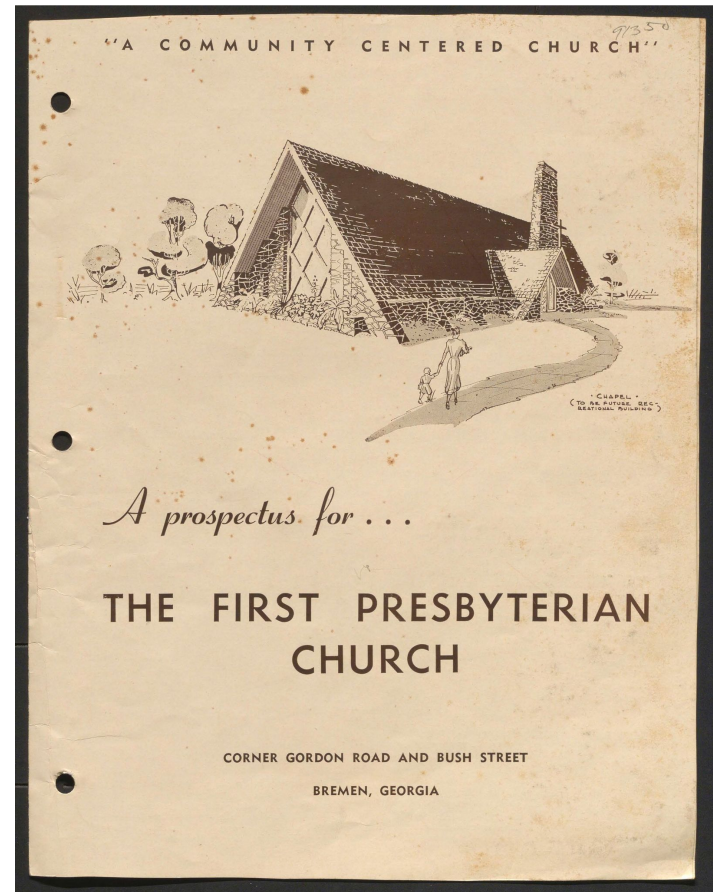
Alcovy Methodist Church, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, MSS 028,
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/16892>

Project Timeline

The HRC Archive serves to collect and provide materials related to the histories of rural churches in Georgia, bringing together records from different denominations to support genealogy and local history research while also compiling datasets for contribution to larger projects

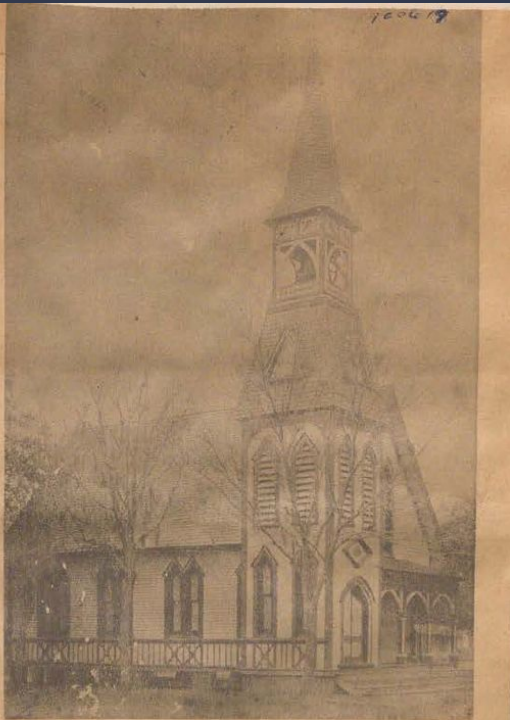


Selecting, Digitizing, and Transferring Archival Materials: Columbia Theological Seminary



First Presbyterian Church (Bremen, Ga.) history,
Courtesy of C. Benton Kline, Jr. Special Collections and Archives,
Columbia Theological Seminary
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/27033>

Kline Archives at CTS: Presbyterian Women's Perspective



This photo shows the First Presbyterian Church as it looked when Dr. L. Ross Lynn was its pastor in 1898. The building was destroyed by fire in 1899.

Images of First
Presbyterian Church
(Darien, GA)

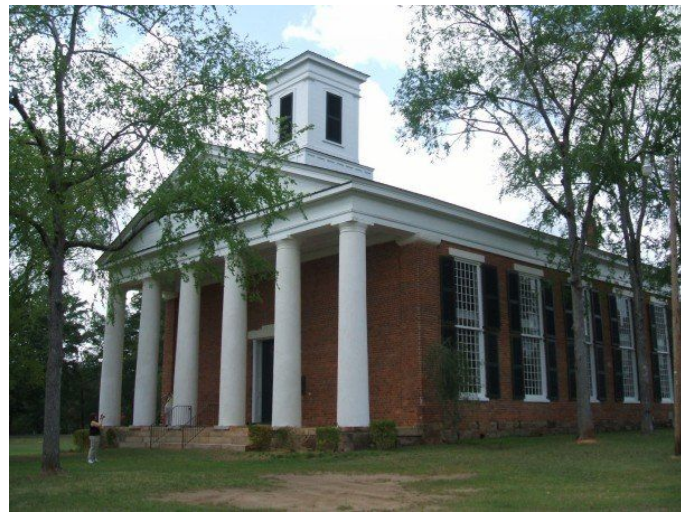
Left: Church Building
1876-1898. Courtesy of
PWH

Right: Church Building,
1899 - Present
courtesy of HRCGA



Selecting, Digitizing, and Transferring Archival Materials: Mercer University

- Physical records
- Documentation and copyright
- Student workers
- Sharing metadata with Emory



Penfield Baptist Church (Greene County, Ga.),
Courtesy of Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University

Pitts Theology Library at Emory University: Local Church Histories

EMORY | Pitts Digital Collections

Emory University

HOME ABOUT DISCOVER COLLECTIONS EXHIBITIONS

- Pitts Theology Library previously had a collection of Local Church Histories that had already been digitized, but lacked a home.
- These records were cleaned up and incorporated into the repository.



Armuchee Methodist Church,
Pitts Theology Library, Emory
University, MSS 028,
[https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/
digital-collections/item/16978](https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/16978)

- Alpharetta 1 2
- Andrew [Photograph]
- Andrews Chapel, Coweta
- Andrew Chapel, Jonesboro
- Anthony's Chapel
- Antioch, Clayton [Photograph]
- Antioch, Fairburn 1 2 [Photograph]
- Antioch, Gainesville
- Antioch, Nicholson [Photograph]
- Antioch, Thomaston
- Anvil Block 1 2 3 4 5
- Apalachee [Photograph]
- Appling
- Aragon [Photograph 2 3]
- Ararat
- Armuchee [Photograph]
- Asbury, Augusta
- Asbury, Decatur
- Asbury, Lagrange
- Asbury, Savannah
- Asbury, Union Point
- Atco
- Athens First 1 2 3 [Photograph]
- Atlanta First 1 2 [Photograph]
- Atlanta-Decatur-Oxford District [Photograph of unidentified churches 2 3 4]
- Auburn
- Audubon Forest
- Augusta District
- Auraria
- Austell 1 2
- Austin Chapel [Photograph]
- Avondale 1 2 3 [Photograph 2 3]
- Azusa Memorial

UMC North Georgia Conference Local Church Histories

(MSS 028)



This digital collection consists of reports, histories, and photographs from churches in the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church (U.S.). The name or location of the church is listed alphabetically below, which includes the church histories and any applicable photographs (in brackets). Although the depth of information varies for each church, some of the material includes dates the church was founded, founding members, pastors, membership lists, location of the church, and other pertinent data. Many of the histories were prepared by members for church homecomings and anniversaries. The digitized files below does not include everything in the MSS 028 collection.

Pitts Theology Library at Emory University: Disaffiliating Church Records



- In 2024 Pitts received 257 disaffiliated church collections.
- 59 churches (23%) were already partially included in the HRCGA site.
- 103 churches (40%) were eligible to be included.
- We focused on collections that were already digitized when we received them
- Staff accessioned, processed, and cleaned up metadata for appropriate churches and then ingested them into the HRC subsite.

Metadata

- Credit where credit is due
- Omeka resource template
 - Metadata vocabularies
 - Required fields
- Resource template to metadata spreadsheet

RESOURCE TEMPLATES

Full Description (Item)

Label

* Full Description (Item)

Suggested classes

Select classes

Identifier	Primary Repository ID	dcterms:identifier	***	
number	System of Record ID	bibo:number	***	
Is Version Of	Legacy Identifier	dcterms:isVersionOf	***	
Title		dcterms:title	TITLE	✓
Alternative Title		dcterms:alternative		
Date Created		dcterms:created		
Date	Date Issued or Published	dcterms:date		
Description		dcterms:description	DESCRIPTION	✓
Creator	Creator	dcterms:creator		
Publisher		dcterms:publisher		
Place	Place of Publication	mods:placeOfOrigin		
Contributor		dcterms:contributor		
Language	Primary Language	dcterms:language		
Subject	Subject - Topic/Names	dcterms:subject		
Spatial Coverage	Subject - Geographic	dcterms:spatial		
Temporal Coverage	Subject - Time Period	dcterms:temporal		
keywords	Keyword(s)	schema:keywords		
Extent	Extent/Dimensions	dcterms:extent		
Type	Content Type	dcterms:type		
Medium	Content Genre	dcterms:medium		
Format		dcterms:format		
edition	Edition	bibo:edition		
volume	Volume	bibo:volume		

Metadata template

The screenshot shows a Google Sheet titled "HRCGA_metadata_template". The interface includes a menu bar (File, Home, Insert, Share, Page Layout, Formulas, Data, Review, View, Automate, Help, Draw) and a toolbar with various formatting and editing options. The sheet is organized into columns labeled A through AH. The first section, "Administrative", covers columns A through I and includes fields for Identifier, Institution, Holding Repository, Collection (Text), Collection (URI), Sublocation, Title, Alternative Title, and Creator. The second section, "Descriptive", covers columns J through V and includes fields for Date Created, Date Issued or Published, Sort Date, Publisher, Place of Publication, Language, Description, Content Type, Content Genre, Extent/Dimensions, Keyword(s), Subject-Topic, Subject-Name, Subject-Time Period, County, City/Town, and City (SA). The third section, "Rights", covers columns W through AA and includes fields for Rights Statement (Text), Rights Statement (URI), Rights Holder, Copyright Date, Re-Use License (URI), and Restrictions on Access. The sheet is currently displaying a blank template with various data entry fields and a "Creative Commons" license notice.

Complete terms:

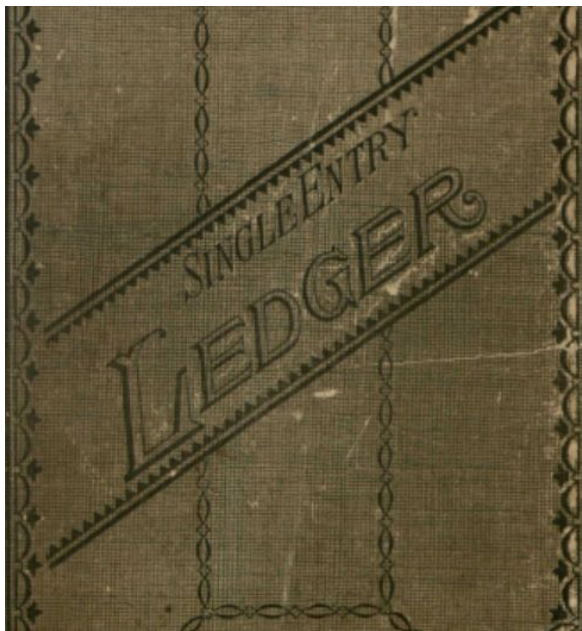
Identifier	dcterms:identifier
Institution	bibo:owner
Holding Repository	dcterms:mediator
Collection (Text)	dcterms:source
Collection (URI)	dcterms:source
Sublocation	bibo:locator
Title	dcterms:title
Alternative Title	dcterms:alternative
Creator	dcterms:creator
Contributor	dcterms:contributor
Date Created	dcterms:created
Date Issued or Published	dcterms:date
Sort Date	dcterms:coverage
Publisher	dcterms:publisher
Place of Publication	mods:placeOfOrigin

Language	dcterms:language
Description	dcterms:description
Content Type	dcterms:type
Content Genre	dcterms:medium
Extent/Dimensions	dcterms:extent
Keyword(s)	schema:keywords
Subject - Topic	dcterms:subject
Subject - Name	mods:subjectName
Subject - Time Period	dcterms:temporal
County	dcterms:spatial
City/Town	mods:subjectGeographic
Rights Statement (Text)	dcterms:rights
Rights Statement (URI)	dcterms:rights
Rights Holder	dcterms:rightsHolder
Copyright Date	dcterms:dateCopyrighted
Re-Use License (URI)	dcterms:license
Restrictions on Access	dcterms:accessRights



Full template available at: <https://tinyurl.com/ChurchRecordsSGA2025>

Maintaining metadata standards



- Share template with partners
- Update template as/if needed
- Adjust partner metadata to institution standards

Courtesy of Jack Tarver Library, Mercer University, Shiloh Baptist Church
(Greene County, Ga.) Sunday School Records, 1935-1942,
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/hrc/item/24046>

Building and Supporting a Digital Archive Site in Omeka S

- Ongoing IT costs:
 - hosting
 - regular maintenance
 - incident mitigation
- Security concerns:
 - bots
 - software stability
 - file uploads
- Knowledge levels
- Lessons learned



Renovation of the Lincoln United Methodist Church, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, RG 407,
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/16794>

Maintaining Community Submissions



Mountville United Methodist Church building and congregation, Pitts Theology
Library, Emory University, RG 405,
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/16790>

Community Submissions: IT Requirements

- Already purchased
 - OmekaS, MS Forms, Google Forms, LibWizard
- Does not require an account to upload files
- Protects against spam/malicious uploads (isolated servers)
- Offers embed code or a trustworthy link
- Is easy for staff to access the form submissions
- Is easy to create and maintain the form
- Has conditional field processing (nice-to-have)

Community Submissions:

- Build the form base
- Use controlled vocabularies
- Consider your audience

The Form

Submit your History

Historic Rural Churches Submission Form

Submission Basics

Current Ownership: Do you own the item you are submitting? If the item is in copyright, do you hold the copyright for it? If no, we cannot accept these items.

(required)

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Permission: Do you give permission for [Pitts Digital Library](#) to include this item and form submission text in this [digital archive](#)? If no, we cannot accept these items.

(required)

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

User Information

Name: Enter your name. (required)

Email: Enter your email. (required)

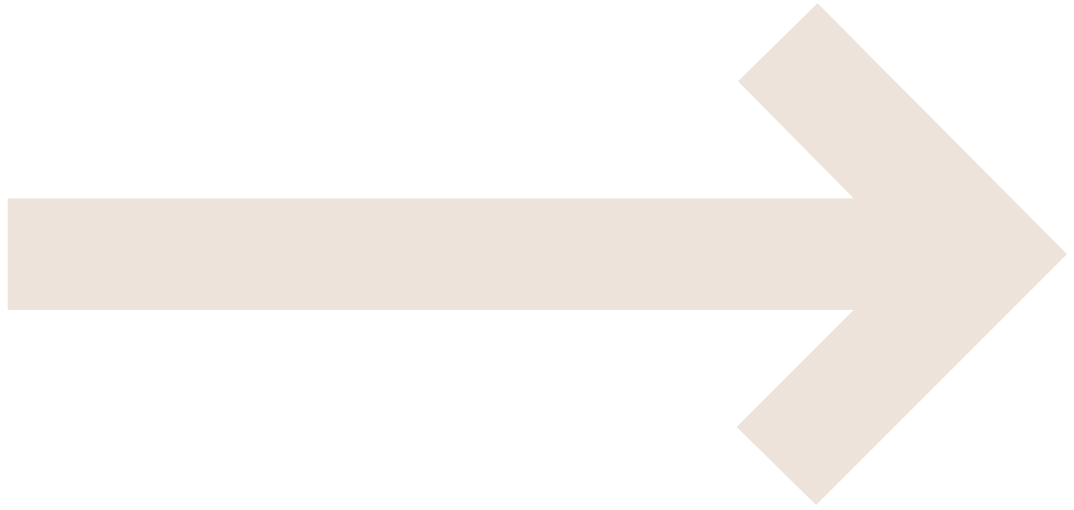
Published Name: Would you like your name included in the publicly accessible record for this item in the digital archive?

(required)

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Item Information

Community Submissions: Workflow & Metadata



Our plan:

- Users will submit histories via form on HRC subsite
 - Digital Asset Librarian will add images to server
 - Metadata Librarian will transfer data from submissions to HRC template and ingest
-

Challenges

- Staff Changes
- Vendor/Software Challenges
- Long Distance Coordination
- Grant Extension



The Stained-Glass Windows of Elizabeth Lee: A Century of Worship, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, RG 448, <https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/hrc/item/16852>

Subsite Preview:

Landing page



Welcome to the Historic Rural Church Archive!

Through this archive, you can explore the histories and stories of rural churches and communities across Georgia. Our collection includes records from Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian archives, with more added all the time. You can search by keyword, browse all items, or explore the map.

Facets

Browse the Collection

Search by collection, item name, or keyword

FACETS

CLEAR OPTIONS

GEOGRAPHIC SUBJECT

- ◆ [Georgia](#) (2021)
- ◆ [Floyd County \(Ga.\)](#) (46)
- ◆ [Cook County \(Ga.\)](#) (20)
- ◆ [Hall County \(Ga.\)](#) (16)
- ◆ [Greene County \(Ga.\)](#) (15)

More options

SUBJECT

- ◆ [Church buildings](#) (1821)
- ◆ [United Methodist Church \(U.S.\) North Georgia Conference](#) (1732)
- ◆ [Church history](#) (1340)
- ◆ [History](#) (1220)
- ◆ [Church records and registers](#) (154)

COLLECTION

- ◆ [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) (2048)
- ◆ [United Methodist Church \(U.S.\) North Georgia](#)

ITEM VIEW LIST VIEW

2049 RESOURCES



STILL IMAGE

Grooverville Methodist (Brooks County, Ga.)

Robinson, Steve

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Hopeful Baptist (Burke County, Ga.)

Kirkland, John

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Hebron Presbyterian (Banks County, Ga.)

Clegg, Randy

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright

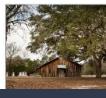


STILL IMAGE

Brandons Chapel (Bartow County, Ga.)

MacInnis, Scott

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

High Bluff Primitive Baptist (Brantley County, Ga.)

Davis, Randall

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright

◆ [Historic Rural Churches of Georgia Virtual Spaces](#) (27)

More options

CREATOR

- ◆ [Roberts, Spencer](#) (28)
- ◆ [Cantrell, Tony](#) (22)
- ◆ [Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church \(Cook County, Ga.\)](#) (19)
- ◆ [Robinson, Steve](#) (16)
- ◆ [Davis, Randall](#) (15)

More options

TYPE

- ◆ [Text](#) (1323)
- ◆ [Still image](#) (614)
- ◆ [text](#) (94)
- ◆ [Interactive Resource](#) (27)

TIME PERIOD

- ◆ [Twentieth century](#) (1814)
- ◆ [Nineteenth century](#) (1045)
- ◆ [Twenty-first century](#) (232)
- ◆ [Eighteenth century](#) (54)
- ◆ [Twenty-First century](#) (10)

More options

LANGUAGE

- ◆ [English](#) (1560)



Bethlehem Primitive Baptist (Brooks County, Ga.)

Robinson, Steve

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Bryan Neck Presbyterian (Bryan County, Ga.)

Moore, Wayne

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Clarks Chapel (Burke County, Ga.)

Kirkland, John

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Bark Camp Baptist (Burke County, Ga.)

Kirkland, John

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Dickey Presbyterian (Calhoun County, Ga.)

Robinson, Steve

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Emmaus Primitive Baptist (Charlton County, Ga.)

Davis, Randall

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Corinth Primitive Baptist (Charlton County, Ga.)

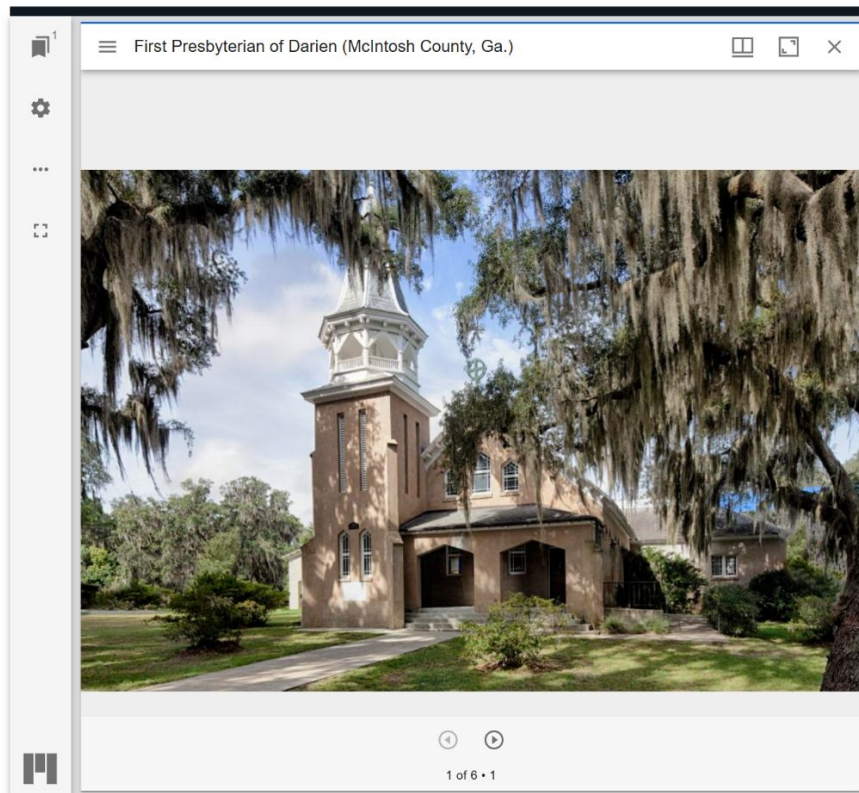
Davis, Randall

Date: 2012 – 2025 Collection: [Historic Rural Churches Archive](#) Copyright: In Copyright



STILL IMAGE

Item page



[DISCOVER](#) > [HISTORIC RURAL CHURCHES ARCHIVE](#)

STILL IMAGE

First Presbyterian of Darien (McIntosh County, Ga.)

Moore, Wayne

SUMMARY [FULL METADATA](#)

This record contains 6 images of First Presbyterian of Darien.

Date Created
2012 - 2025

Subject - Topic/Names
[Presbyterian Churches](#)
[Church buildings](#)

Subject - Geographic
[McIntosh County \(Ga.\)](#)
[Georgia](#)

Subject - Time Period
[Twenty-first century](#)

Collections
[Historic Rural Churches](#)
[Archive](#)

Download

[DOWNLOAD ITEM](#)

[DOWNLOAD METADATA](#)

License

In Copyright

Copyright status

In Copyright

Lessons Learned:

Expect the Unexpected

01

Project Planning and Management: Scope creep must be handled early. Communicate expectations while planning for turnover and absences.

02

Collaboration and Communication: Regular cross-institution check-ins build trust. Clearly understand who is a collaborator. You might have to help train collaborating staff.

03

Technical: Metadata standardization can be more difficult than expected; clear instructions make less work for everyone. Do Discovery before implementing server infrastructure or specific software versions.

What's Next?

- Partnering with Georgia Public Library Service to provide training for librarians to help with scanning and uploading
- Scanning days at rural libraries, guidelines for personal submissions
- Continued site maintenance at Pitts



Available DigiKits

There are four (4) types of DigiKits. Learn more about the contents information, please refer to the [DigiKit FAQs](#) below.

EPSON EXPRESSION 11000 XL LARGE FORMAT DIGIKIT

EPSON V37 PORTABLE COMMUNITY SCAN DAY DIGIKIT

EPSON V37 PORTABLE COMMUNITY SCAN DAY DIGIKIT



Pennington Church Building, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, MSS 028,
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/14934>

Keep in Touch!



Mount Pleasant Church, Pitts Theology Library, Emory University, MSS 028,
<https://digital.pitts.emory.edu/s/digital-collections/item/18536>

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Historic Rural Churches of Georgia

<https://www.hrcga.org/contact-us/>

Q&A

Any questions?
Ask away!



<https://tinyurl.com/ChurchRecordsSGA2025>
