

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 an 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 South River Presbyterian Church

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number Northeast side of NC Highway 210, 1.7 miles southeast of junction with US Highway 701  N/A  not for publication

city or town Garland  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Bladen code 017 zip code 28441

### 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.)

Jeffrey J. Crow SHPO 4/10/96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____	_____	_____

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)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
	1	sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(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/religious facility

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other CONCRETE

Narrative Description

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

See 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Religion

Period of Significance

1855-1946

Significant Dates

1855-1857

1859

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Parker, T.A., contractor

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 67) 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.02 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid boxes for Zone, Easting, and Northing with values 17, 737980, and 3845980.

Empty UTM grid boxes for Zone, Easting, and Northing.

See continuation sheet checkbox

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 Edward F. Turberg, Architectural Historian
organization
date February 22, 1996
street & number 307 North 15th Street telephone 910-762-6301
city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28401

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

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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
street & number telephone
city or town state zip code

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 to amend existing 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.

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## 7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION.

Started in 1855 and completed in 1857, South River Presbyterian Church is situated in the rural eastern section of Bladen County, North Carolina, five and four-tenths miles southeast of Garland. The one-story, frame, Greek Revival-style structure is rectangular in form, with a pedimented roof, and is sheathed with plain-edge weatherboarding. Typical in size and plan to many churches of the period, the building exhibits a calculated and elegant flair for Greek Revival architectural detail, and is the most intact example in the county. The rectilinear proportions of the building are emphasized by wide skirt and corner boards, broad friezes, and boxed cornices. The geometrical harmony is climaxed by low-pitched pediments surmounting the front and rear facades.

Facing southwest, the simple, classically-inspired church is situated picturesquely on a knoll nestled within a grove of tall pine trees that screen it from view until the adjacent highway reaches the summit of a low hill in front of the site. A grassy glade, reached from the road by a short driveway terminating near the northwest corner of the building, encompasses the church and a small cemetery at the south end of the clearing. A portion of the cemetery is enclosed by a low, concrete-block wall. Several headstones and obelisks are distributed both within and without the enclosure. Broad agricultural fields skirt the opposite side of the road and extend into the distance, while old stands of oaks and secondary growths of oak and pine trees surround the church and cemetery on the remaining three sides of the two-acre lot.

1. The Church: 1855, contributing

The one-story, pedimented, Greek Revival-style frame structure is typical of many regional churches built during the mid-nineteenth century, and preserves its original architectural details and furnishings intact. Raised above the ground an average of three feet on a series of brick piers, the exterior fabric consists of thirty-two courses of plain-edge weatherboards with five-and-a-half-inch exposure, enframed by eight-and-a-quarter-inch-wide corner boards with molded capitals, eight-inch-wide skirt boards, and a broad encircling frieze that terminates in boxed cornices supporting pediments in the east and west elevations. The front, west, facade is three bays wide, consisting of a central entrance with double-leaf, paneled doors surmounted by a transom, and two tall, twelve-over-twelve sash windows framed by louvered blinds. The door and window frames are fifty-nine-inches wide and the windows have a total height of nearly twelve feet. Both side elevations contain four similar windows, and the westernmost south bay contains a four-panel door opening to a steep interior stairway that rises to the slave gallery. The east, rear, elevation has two symmetrically placed windows flanking the pulpit on the interior.

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A modern brick-end stoop, installed in the late 1940s, with seven concrete steps and rectangular concrete caps, provides access to the front entrance. Inside, a wide vestibule extends across the entire width of the building and occupies a third of its depth. The tall front windows rise through a sloping ceiling which forms the base of the slave gallery. The floors throughout the church are wide, heart pine, and the walls are finished with smooth, white plaster. Three doors open in the east wall of the vestibule to a center and two side aisles that run the length of the nave. Adjacent to the secondary door in the right wall, an L-shaped, enclosed staircase turns along the south and west walls, crosses the front window, and terminates at the rear of the gallery. Except for the paired front entrance, all the doors preserve their extremely rare, faux graining of oak panels, and walnut stiles and rails. Several pieces of original furniture, including a table and long wooden benches with open-slat backs, line the vestibule walls. The nave, likewise, retains its original furnishings, including seven rows of stained-wood pews with paneled and molded ends flanked by the three aisles, a low dais with chamfered front corners and two opposing flights of steps against the east wall, and a handsome Empire-style pulpit and twin upholstered chairs set on the dais between the rear windows. Choir stalls, matching the design of the pews, are arranged in three rows along the east wall facing both sides of the dais. A circa-1910 upright piano stands between the choir stalls and the first row of pews along the north wall, and a modern Communion table is set against the dais below the pulpit. A highlight of the room is a cast iron stove adjacent to the center aisle near the door from the vestibule to the sanctuary. The elaborate, Baroque ornamentation is in dramatic contrast with the severely classical appearance of the surrounding room, and formerly incorporated a tall stovepipe that rose through the plastered ceiling to a flue in the roof.

The rear gallery has four rows of pews similar to those at the first level, and a center aisle. A square hatch at the northwest corner of the gallery ceiling opens into the attic which subdivided by two massive, wooden, bridge-like trusses that span the church from front to rear.

2. The Cemetery: established 1934, noncontributing site

A small cemetery is located about forty feet to the south of the church and contains seventeen headstones dating from 1845 to 1959. The one-acre site was acquired in 1859 as an extension to the land occupied by the church, but, since members of the church were by tradition buried on family plots on their land, the first interment at South River Church was not until 1934. Although the date of establishing the cemetery fits into the period of significance, the majority of the grave markers were moved here after 1946 and are noncontributing. A portion of the site is enclosed by a low wall erected in 1935. Two feet high and twenty-four feet square, the three-course-high wall and the four-course posts at the corners and flanking the central entrance in the north wall are capped by concrete copings. Within the walled confines are six burials and markers: John Calvin Cromartie (1857-

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1935); Angus Cromartie (1874-1934) and his wife, Anna Isabella Black (1879-1959); their son, Angus Black Cromartie (1904-1958); Rossie P. Cromartie (1881-1949); and Patrick L. Cromartie (1869-1956). By 1980, two Cromartie family cemeteries had become overgrown, and in an effort to preserve them, eleven stones were moved to South River Church Cemetery. Five headstones from the Patrick Lafayette Cromartie homestead, just north and across the road from the church, were arranged along the highway side of the wall: Patrick L. Cromartie (1825-1897) and his wife, Eleanor Juliette Cromartie (1833-1918); Henry A. Cromartie (1856-1900) and his wife, Betty Hobbs (1863-1927); and Margarete Faison Cromartie (1865-1912). Six markers from the James Luther Cromartie property, half-a-mile south of the church, were placed along the east side of the wall: Luther Cromartie (1829-1911); Julia Clark Cromartie (1833-1909); Remalia E. Cromartie (1856-1862); Calvin Cromartie (1827-1849); James Cromartie (1767-1845); and Katherine Cromartie (1788-1869).

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### 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.

#### Summary Paragraph

Situated in the picturesque rural landscape of Bladen County's Cypress Creek Township, South River Presbyterian Church exemplifies the strong bond between the Scottish Highland families who settled the area, and the spread of their Protestant faith through missions during the mid-nineteenth century. In addition, the church stands as a premier example of the high quality of architectural design and building craftsmanship that prevailed during the same period.

South River Presbyterian Church is a result of the settlement of an area of North Carolina by Highland Scots during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. After the Scottish defeat by the British in the Battle of Culloden in 1746, economic and social conditions in Scotland changed dramatically. Increased rents, dispossession of lands, population growth, and the disarming of the clans by the British crown caused many Highlanders to leave their homeland and, following the lead of former emigrants, to remove to more salubrious regions in America. For the next thirty years, until the eve of the Revolutionary War, a slow but constant wave of Scots migrated to the Cape Fear region of southeastern North Carolina. Tracing the water courses inland, they acquired property near or along the banks of the Cape Fear, Black, and South rivers, and began to restore their economic standing in agriculture and husbandry.

In addition to economic pursuits, the Scots sought to re-establish their social and religious unity through the preservation of the clan system on the one hand and Presbyterianism on the other. The first families in the area were Stewarts, Cromarties, Beattys, Murphys, Lambs and Sloans. Records indicate that the Reverend Hugh McAden, an early missionary to the region, preached in this section as early as 1756, but it was not until 1795 that South River Presbyterian Church was formally organized. An acre of land "where the church or house of divine worship stands" was given by Charles Stewart on January 28, 1796. In 1859, an additional acre of land was acquired for a cemetery, but the ground was unused until the twentieth century. Tradition holds that the first meeting house on this site was of log construction. By 1855, the church was in need of repair and the building committee decided, rather than repairing the structure, to replace it with a new edifice. The result was the creation of one of Bladen County's eminent examples of the Greek Revival style, combining a Puritan restraint in the use of ornament with a Classical exuberance in proportion and craftsmanship. The ante-bellum pedimented church and its associated later cemetery, are situated on a low bluff screened by oak, cypress and pine trees. Hidden from view until the road reaches the wooded glade, the sudden appearance of the white, frame church against the dark surrounding woods is dramatic in its impact, a scene that is unparalleled anywhere else in the region.

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Historical Background and Religious Significance

Located in Bladen County's rural Big Bay Township, eight miles northeast of White Lake, South River Presbyterian Church exemplifies the important part that religion played in the lives of Scottish settlers who moved into the region during the period from the early-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. It also embodies the high quality of architectural refinement and craftsmanship that characterizes many of the churches constructed in Bladen County during the the mid-nineteenth century.

Beginning in the 1730s, many Scottish Highlanders, motivated by reports of the salubrious climate and fertile soil in the Carolinas, embarked for America with their families and fellow clansmen, to settle in the flat coastal plain of the Cape Fear region of North Carolina. In 1739, two hundred and fifty Scots arrived in the port town of Wilmington at the forks of the Cape Fear and Northeast Cape Fear rivers. Some settled in the immediate vicinity, while others migrated upriver as far as Cross Creek (later Fayetteville) ninety miles to the northwest or followed the Black and South rivers to the northeast.(1) Among the emigrants to the Cape Fear that year were William Stewart and his brother, Patrick. The former led a party along the South River, while the latter and his company moved into a section of the Black River known as Brown Marsh.(2)

In less than a decade, a second tide of Scottish emigration swept into the Cape Fear, brought about by the disparate economic and social conditions stemming from the victory of the British over the Scots at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. An increase in population by the victors resulted in a scarcity of farmland and crops; the British declared the ancient, traditional clan system illegal; and religious toleration was abrogated.(3) The emigration was slow but steady and by the 1770s the upper Cape Fear region was inhabited by 12,000 Scots---the largest concentration in America.(4)

The Scots brought with them not only their family ties: the clan, but also their faith: Presbyterianism. Almost immediately, families formed church groups and presbyteries were established. Until 1755 the South River region was in the New Castle Presbytery, an area extending from southern Virginia into the Carolinas.(5) In 1770, Orange Presbytery was formed to embrace all of North Carolina.(6)

One of the leading religious leaders in the South at the time was Hugh McAden (d. 1781), a dedicated missionary who first visited the North Carolina Scottish settlements in the early 1740s.(7) He was known by many as the "father of Presbyterianism in North Carolina," for in the short span of time from April 1755 to May 1756 he traversed most of the state "from the Catawba on the west to the Neuse and the Pamlico on the east, from the Roanoke on the north to the Cape Fear on the south," stopping to preach in areas where missionaries had never ventured before.(8)

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He was graduated from Nassau Hall, a Presbyterian college in New Jersey which later became Princeton University. In 1755 he received his preaching license from the New Castle Presbytery and set forth for the Carolinas, traveling further south than any missionary before him.(9) In North Carolina he found seven places where the Presbyterian form of worship was used, and although he met many groups of worshipers, organized churches were a rarity and permanent ministers even more so. His diary reveals that he ventured into the Black River area of Sampson County on "Tuesday, March 2nd, crossed the river, rode through Collie's Swamp and preached at South River on the Sabbath, March 7, 1756."(10) Although South River Presbyterian Church was not officially organized until 1795, McAden's account of his visit to the people of South River suggests that religious activities were part of the established life of the community, and services were probably held in a log meeting house built prior to 1795 on the site of the current church.(11) In 1796, James Stewart, son of William Stewart, a scion of the settlement, sold a tract of land in 1796 to James Cromartie. The deed "exempts one acre where the Church or House of Divine Worship stands, being lately conveyed by him, January 28, 1796." (12).

The founding elders of South River Church were James Cromartie's brother, John (1774-1850), and Hugh Murphy (1752-1835). The Reverend Samuel Sanford began to preach to this and other congregations in the region in 1800, and continued in that capacity until his death in 1832---the longest tenure of any minister at South River Church.(13) At the time of his arrival, the country was seized by a religious revival and spurred Presbyterianism both in home missions and abroad, especially those in the Orient. The South River congregation joined other churches to ensure that the missionary zeal was kept alive by their annual contributions to the foreign missions.(14)

The year 1813 marked an important period for the Presbyterian Church in North Carolina. First, the Fayetteville and Concord presbyteries were created from portions of the Orange Presbytery; second, the first Synod of North Carolina met, at Alamance Church, in Guilford county, where the three presbyteries convened. The membership numbered was 4,000 communicants and its jurisdiction extended through North Carolina and small areas in South Carolina and Virginia.(15) The Fayetteville Presbytery encompassed churches in several counties: Brown Marsh, Hopewell, and South River in Bladen County; Grove and Rockfish in Duplin County; and Black River in Sampson County.(16)

The new presbyteries generated further growth in membership. In 1815, Grove and South River churches had a combined membership of 128; in 1832, the South River membership reached fifty-six, and the combined membership of Brown Marsh, South River and Big Swamp reached 137; in 1833, Brown Marsh, South River and Big Swamp had 136 members (compared with fifty-two members in the church in Wilmington); and in 1834-5, with the addition of the Elizabethtown congregation, the South River group reached 146 members.(17)

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The Reverend William Brobston, who succeeded Samuel Stanford as preacher at Brown Marsh, Beth Car, Elizabethtown, and South River churches, married Anne Cromartie of South River Church in 1830.(18) He, in turn, was succeeded by the Reverend Colin Shaw (1812-1905), who was ordained by the Fayetteville Presbytery in 1841 and began his work at South River Church just after the annual meeting of the presbytery there in March of 1841.(19) According to one observer, Shaw "possessed a very fine library and was considered the most widely read minister in the North Carolina Synod."(20)

The meetings of the Fayetteville Presbytery in the years 1833 and 1834 witnessed discussions of the inclusion of blacks in the worship services and religious instruction. The sessions directed that the churches provide "suitable accommodations for the colored when they attended the public worship of God."(21) Thus, many churches erected thereafter provided balconies (slave galleries) at the rear of the sanctuary with access to and from the church through a separate entrance and stair. In the case of South River Church, access to the altar was fairly direct since the stair was located in a corner of the vestibule. In other churches the gallery stair was often walled off, completely isolating those in the gallery above from those in the sanctuary below.(22) It was during the ministry of the Reverend George Gibbs, from 1855 to 1860, that many blacks joined churches in the Fayetteville Presbytery.(23)

In 1843, the Fayetteville Presbytery had grown to include a dozen congregations: Beth Car, Black River, Brown Marsh, Elizabethtown, Grove, Hopewell, Keith, Rockfish, Shiloh, South River, Union, and Wilmington.(24)

In the succeeding years, South River Church membership continued to grow, mostly through the proliferation of the Cromartie clan, and by 1855, the old log meeting house was in need of repair as well as expansion. The building committee decided to erect a new edifice in the prevailing Greek Revival style and selected T.A. Parker as contractor. The estimated cost of construction was \$500.00, which was accepted, and work began in the Fall of 1855. The project proceeded steadily throughout the following year, and in March 1857 the building was completed. The final cost, including plaster and glass, came to \$670.00. In May of 1857 the church was formally dedicated.(25)

Two years later, in 1859, the Reverend Samuel Caldwell Alexander (1830-1907), trained at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, accepted the call to minister to the congregations at Black River, South River, Swansboro and Topsail, a post he served for fourteen years until 1873. He was instrumental, together with Elder W.K. Cromartie, of establishing the Wilmington Presbytery in 1868.(26)

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This was the period in which political, social and religious differences between the northern and southern states, as well as between members of various sects in those states, began to surface. In the Presbyterian Church rifts had formed between Old School moderates and New School reformers. In his definitive study, Presbyterians in the South, Ernest Trice Thompson wrote:

About half of the New School membership was in New York State, which was one of the chief centers of Presbyterian antislavery sentiment, while less than an eighth was in the South. The New School General Assembly remained silent on the slavery question for a number of years, but when it pressed the issue in 1853 and again in 1855, the Southern constituency withdrew in 1857 to organize "The United Synod of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America." The one Presbyterian Church of 1837 was now divided into three---one Old School Church with congregations in both North and South; a New School Church in the North; and this recently formed New School Church in the South.(27)

In the South there was a growing consensus that political allegiance was due to the state rather than to the federal government. Shortly after Abraham Lincoln assumed the presidency, southern unrest manifested itself from South Carolina to Louisiana, with strong voices urging the formation of a "Southern nation."(28) The political upheaval had an impact on the church, too, and the Synod of South Carolina, despite its ties to the Old School Presbyterian Church, leaned towards secession of the state, a move that was effected on December 20, 1860.(29) Two months later, seven other states joined the confederacy, and after the attack on Fort Sumter, on April 12, 1861, at Fort Sumter, Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia followed suit.

Presbyterians were in the front rank of the secessionists and, at a meeting in Raleigh with the the Confederate General Assembly, on November 1, 1861, the North Carolina Synod declared its support of the new political government.(30) Just over a month later, forty-seven Southern presbyteries assembled in Augusta, Georgia to form The Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America. Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer, an outspoken political and religious leader from Louisiana, was voted in as moderator, and Dr. Joseph Wilson, a Virginian and father of Woodrow Wilson, became permanent clerk.(31)

In November of 1868, the fifty-fifth session of the Synod Of North Carolina met at Patrick Murphy's home on Princess Street in Wilmington to discuss, among other issues, the creation of a Wilmington Presbytery. As mentioned previously, two of the sponsors for the move were the Reverend Samuel C. Alexander and Elder W.K. Cromartie of South River Church. The Reverend Colin Shaw, also with South River connections, was the moderator of the Synod.(32) The new judicatory district formed the

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southeastern sector of the Fayetteville Presbytery:

Beginning on the South Carolina line with the western boundary of Columbus County, and running thence along the western boundary of Bladen and Sampson Counties to the southern boundary of Orange Presbytery, and thence along that line to the ocean. The churches included in the new presbytery were Beth-Car, Elizabethtown, Mt. Horeb, Brown Marsh, Whiteville, White Plains, South River, Black River, Clinton, Springvale, Oak Plain, Union (in Duplin), Grove, Goldsboro, Beaver Creek, Catharine Lake, Rockfish, Mount Zion, Hopewell, Keith, Moore's Creek, Pike, Mount Williams, 1st Church Wilmington, 2nd Church Wilmington.(33)

The Reverend Archibald M. McFayden began preaching at South River Church beginning in July 1871, an association that lasted until 1886. While pastor, he reorganized the Woman's Missionary Society.(34) Mrs. Marianna Murphy was chosen president of the Society, and after a short time was replaced by Miss Maggie Beatty who, in her will, left a bequest to foreign missions.(35) The church continually sponsored missionary work abroad and worked diligently to raise funds for the support of a hospital in China established by Dr. and Mrs. George C. Worth in 1895.(36)

After the Reverend McFayden's pastorate, a succession of ministers were assigned to the several regional churches: in 1897, the Reverend N.B. Campbell preached at Harmony, Mt. Horeb, South River, and White Plains; in 1902, licentiate V.H. Starbuck served at Brown Marsh, Caswell, Harmony, and South River; from 1910 to 1917, the Reverend Kenneth McCaskil was assigned to Black River, Caswell Harmony, and South River; in 1918, the Reverend George M. Mathis was called to Graves Memorial and South River; in 1922, licentiate R.E. McClure became pastor of Harmony and South River churches; in 1926, the Reverend A.V. Gibson ministered at Harmony and South River. He was superseded the following year by the Reverend W.B. Knox, who remained until 1929.(37)

The records of South River Church covering the 1930s are not at hand and, therefore, information regarding the 1934 laying out of the cemetery and first interments in that and the following year have not been found. In addition, no listing of ministers for the period have come to light. However, the following preachers served the church from the period of World War II until the 1970s: from 1942 to 1946, the Reverend J.A. Boyd was pastor at South River; from 1946 to 1949, the Reverend Cameron Mosser served South River and nearby churches; in 1950, Brown March Church was dissolved and the Reverend John Walter Mann ministered to the Caswell, Black River, Harmony, and South River groups. Mr. Mann, the last in a long line of ministers at South River Presbyterian Church, was a graduate of Davidson College in North Carolina and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. According to one source, "He was a great Bible scholar who loved the small Church."(38) At his death in 1951, the

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membership of the church had dwindled to six. Shortly thereafter services were discontinued and the church closed. Today it is only used annually for reunions by the descendants of the Cromartie family, who maintain the site.(39) Nevertheless, the church and cemetery are carefully preserved. In 1977, funds were acquired to repair the window blinds; in 1980, eleven Cromartie grave stones were relocated onto the church property; on May 1st of that year, the church was the central attraction for a tour of historical buildings in the area; and in June of 1987, a plaque was placed on the building declaring: "American Presbyterian and Reformed Historical Site No. 282. Registered by the Presbyterian Historical Society - Philadelphia, PA."(40)

Presbyterianism not only instilled religion in its members and in those reached through the home and foreign missions, but also it expanded education wherever it was established. Many of the earliest academies and colleges in the South were instituted and operated by Presbyterian ministers, and many important educators have emerged from those institutions. Among the list of significant educators descended from lineage of South River Church are two men important in the history of education in the south: Dr. Edward Anderson Alderman and Dr. Frank Porter Graham.

Dr. Edward Anderson Alderman (1861-1931) was a fourth-generation descendant of founding Elder Hugh Murphy. Born in Wilmington and educated at Bethel Military Academy in Warrenton, Virginia, he received a PhD degree from the University of North Carolina and LL.D. degrees from Tulane and Johns Hopkins universities. He became the Superintendent of Schools in Goldsboro, North Carolina followed by the presidencies of the University of North Carolina and Tulane University, and served as chancellor of the University of Virginia. The Alderman Library at the University of Virginia honors his name.(41)

Dr. Frank Porter Graham (1886-1972) was also a fourth-generation descendant of a South River Church founder: William Cromartie. Among his accomplishments were United States Senator, United States Representative to India and Pakistan, and---most memorably---president of the University of North Carolina for many years.(42)

A third notable in the Cromartie lineage is Dr. Robert Wright, former president of East Carolina Teachers College (now East Carolina University) in Greenville, North Carolina. On August 19, 1932, Dr. Wright was the guest speaker at the unveiling of a memorial stone honoring his ancestor, William Cromartie, located half a mile east of Garland. "The marker," reported the Wilmington Star, "was purchased with funds given by his descendants, among whom are numbered some of the most prominent citizens of the state."(43)

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Architectural Context

During the mid-nineteenth century, the predominant architectural style for both residential and public buildings in southeastern North Carolina was the Greek Revival. Of particular importance is the religious architecture since many of these buildings have survived through the years, unlike houses and civic structures which burned or were replaced by later styles in the intervening years.

The attachment that churchmen in Bladen County had to the Greek Revival style is illustrated by several extant churches in the region. Mt. Horeb Presbyterian Church (NR 1987), located about ten miles southeast of the county seat of Elizabethtown, was built in 1845. Three bays wide and four bays deep, the sanctuary has a central entrance and windows containing nine-over-nine sash. It is situated picturesquely on a triangular bluff at the forks of N.C. Highway 87 and State Route 1712. In 1932, the roof line was extended south to incorporate an engaged front portico supported by paired, Tuscan style columns. Within the city of Elizabethtown, in 1848, the Methodist congregation erected a two-story rectangular edifice with steep, gable-front roof, central and side entrances, and wide fifteen-over-fifteen sash windows at both levels. The church and surrounding burying ground are situated on a promontory overlooking the Cape Fear River (NR 1989). A third example, Black River Presbyterian Church (NR 1986), was built in 1859 at Ivanhoe near the confluence of the Black and South rivers in southeastern Sampson County. It is a mature example of the classical temple form incorporating a tetrastyle, pedimented portico carried by square posts with molded caps. The broad pediment, elongated windows, central entrance, and wide skirt and corner boards indicate the skill with which the builder blended proportion and materials in the design. The work is remarkably reminiscent of the same details used in the design of South River Presbyterian Church. The latter, with white-painted walls, oversize windows, deep-green blinds, high brick foundation piers, and pedimented roof is unique in that it is the only one of the churches discussed whose builder is known: T.A. Parker. Of him, nothing has come to light. But, certainly, his artistic touch is evident in what he has left to posterity: a classical temple, understated, well-proportioned, sculpted from the surrounding forest, appearing unexpectedly from the peaceful, timeless landscape.

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4. Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South. 3 vols. (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1973) I: p.36
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9. Lefler, op. cit., p.142.; Thompson, p.61
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16. The Reverend D.I. Craig, A History of the Development of the Presbyterian Church in North Carolina. (Richmond, VA: Whittier and Shepperson, 1907) p.20
17. ibid., p.25
18. John Roscoe Dail, A History of the Wilmington Presbytery and its Predecessors. (Burgaw, NC: privately printed, 1984) p.25-37
19. Dail, J.R., op. cit., p.26
20. Howell, op. cit.
21. Dail, Jack, p.5
22. Q.v. the following churches: Beth Car, Black River, Mt. Horeb, Purdie Chapel, in Survey files, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh
23. Dail, Jack, p.6
24. Dail, J.R., p. 44
25. South River Presbyterian Church Records
26. Dail, J.R., p. 62
27. Thompson, p.99
28. ibid., p.105
29. ibid.
30. Howell, p.24
31. Thompson, p.106
32. Dail, J.R., p.68-70
33. ibid., p.68
34. Mrs. D. Lewis Cromartie, "The Woman's Auxiliary of South River Presbyterian Church." (Typed report, 1938)
35. ibid.

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36. South River Presbyterian Church Records; Howell, p.18
37. Dail, J.R., p.126; 130; 132-3; 139
38. ibid., p.163; 177; 179; 182; 184; 188-9
39. Conversations with Mrs. Catherine B. Sloan, Garland, NC and Mr. Scott Cromartie, Wilmington, NC in March and May 1995
40. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA
41. South River Presbyterian Church Records; William S. Powell, editor, Dictionary of North Carolina Biography. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1979) Vol. 1: p.11-12; Wilmington Star newspaper, January 18, 1950.
42. South River Presbyterian Church Records; William S. Powell, editor, Dictionary of North Carolina Biography. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1979) Vol. 1: Vol. 2: p.332-3.
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10. Geographical Data.

Acreage of Property

2.02 acres

Verbal Boundary Description

The 2.02 acre property is identified and plotted on the accompanying survey map by Lewis G. Paschal, R.L.S., Elizabethtown, NC, drawn to a scale of 1" = 60', and dated January 29, 1991.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the 2.02 acre tract that is historically associated with the church and cemetery.

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Bladen County, NC

PHOTOGRAPHS

South River Presbyterian Church  
Garland vicinity  
Bladen County, NC

Photographer: Edward F. Turberg  
Date of photograph: March 1995

Location of negatives: North Carolina Dept. of Archives & History  
109 East Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601-28907

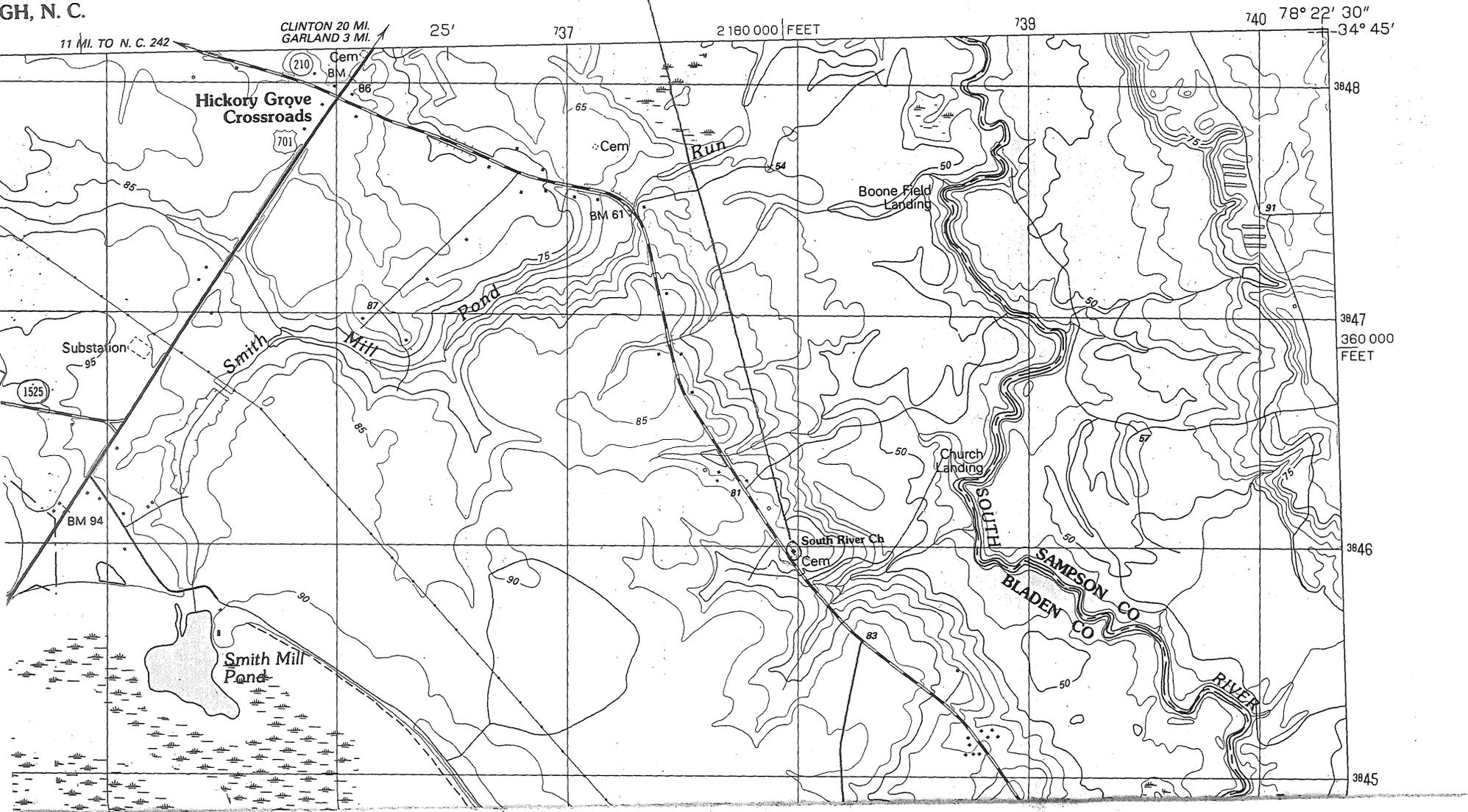
1. South River Presbyterian Church; exterior view from the northwest
2. Cemetery; view looking southeast
3. South River Presbyterian; footed cast iron stove in northwest corner of nave
4. South River Presbyterian Church; exterior from the southwest
5. South River Presbyterian Church; interior view of the vestibule
6. South River Presbyterian Church nave; view southwest across nave
7. South River Presbyterian Church nave; view northwest across nave
8. South River Presbyterian Church; interior view of the gallery

NORTH CAROLINA  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
DEVELOPMENT  
GH, N. C.

South River Presbyterian Church  
Bladen County, NC  
Zone 17  
N/3845980 E/737980

WHITE LAKE QUADRANGLE  
NORTH CAROLINA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
NW/4 WHITE LAKE 15' QUADRANGLE

5353 IV SE  
(INGOLD)



11 MI. TO N. C. 242

CLINTON 20 MI.  
GARLAND 3 MI.

218000 FEET

78° 22' 30"  
34° 45'

36000  
FEET

3845

SAMPSON CO  
BLADEN CO

SOUTH  
RIVER

Hickory Grove  
Crossroads

Smith Mill  
Pond

Run

Pond

Boone Field  
Landing

Church  
Landing

South River Ch  
Cem

Cem

BM 61

91

87

85

85

50

57

3846

83

50

BM 94

Substation  
95

1525

(210)

Cem  
B.M.

86

25'

737

739

740

