

State of North Carolina
Division of Archives and History

Catawba COUNTY

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY FORM FOR

Hickory QUAD

Catawba County Multiple Resource Nomination

MULTIPLE RESOURCE OR THEMATIC NOMINATION

1 NAME

HISTORIC

First Presbyterian Church

AND/OR COMMON

First Presbyterian Church

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

SW cor. of Second St. and Third Ave., NW

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Hickory

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

North Carolina

CODE
037

COUNTY

Catawba

CODE

035

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

First Presbyterian Church, c/o John Crown, Clerk of the Session

STREET & NUMBER

237 Second Street NW

CITY TOWN

Hickory

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina 28601

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Register of Deeds Office

STREET & NUMBER

Catawba County Justice Center

CITY, TOWN

Newton

STATE

North Carolina

6 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Laura A. W. Phillips, Consultant

Historical Research:

Jim Sumner, Research Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.

ORGANIZATION

STREET & NUMBER

637 N. Spring Street

June 16, 1983

TELEPHONE

919/727-1968

CITY OR TOWN

Winston-Salem

STATE

North Carolina 27101

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1905-1906 on the southwest corner of Second Street and Third Avenue NW in Hickory, First Presbyterian Church is the most outstanding example of the Romanesque Revival style in Catawba County. The granite church is complemented by a 1928 three-story granite education building of Romanesque Revival influence and a modern two-story granite education building erected in 1957. Also on the property are the former manse--a two-story frame house built in 1908--and an adjacent playground.

First Presbyterian Church was designed by the Bowman Brothers architectural firm of Knoxville, Tennessee with Killiam and Whitener (believed to have been a Hickory firm) serving as the contractor. Originally the church was to have been faced with brick, but the building committee decided in May of 1905 that "Belgian Block Veneer", a specific face cut of granite, should be used instead. The Church was completed at a cost of \$14,060 and was dedicated on December 2, 1906.¹

The exterior of the church remains virtually unaltered from its original appearance. Its medieval Romanesque character is emphasized by the rough stonework, the steeply pitched roof lines, the corner tower, and the round-arched openings. Facing east on Second Street NW, the central bay of the facade projects several feet in front of the flanking towers. It is defined by a gable roof with boxed and molded cornice (with trefoil design in the corners created by the cornice returns) and overhanging modillioned eaves. The first story of the center bay has a band of four slender, round-arched stained glass windows. The second level has a semi-circular stained glass window, as broad as the entire band of windows below, with sash separated by fluted Doric columns. In the peak of the gable is a tiny round-arched louvered ventilator.

Flanking the center bay of the facade are square towers of unequal height. The most prominent of the two is the northeast corner tower. This four-stage tower houses the winding stair to the sanctuary balcony. The first stage has a double leaf paneled entrance with stained glass, round-arched transom. The second stage has a sash window with round-arched transom, while the third stage has a sash window with flat-arched lintel. Rising to the third stage on the north side of the tower is a polygonal bay with round-arched sash window with diamond-shaped muntins and a polygonal roof with boxed cornice and modillioned eaves. This projecting stone bay provides space for the curving stair inside. The fourth stage of the tower has a pair of round-arched louvered vents on each side. The tower is topped by a pyramidal roof with overhanging modillioned eaves and chimney-like stone projections at each corner, giving a crenelated effect.

The shorter, two-stage southeast corner tower is similar in detail to the northeast tower. It, too, has a double-leaf paneled entrance with round-arched stained glass transom. On the south side, the first stage has a round-arched stained glass window with small sash window above with flat-arched lintel. The second stage of this tower has paired round-arched windows with diamond-shaped muntins on east and south sides. Like the northeast tower, this tower has a pyramidal roof with modillioned eaves and stone corner projections.

Behind the facade, the nave of the church has a steep hipped roof. On the north side, four bays divided by buttresses are exposed to view, while on the south side only two bays are visible, due to the difference in depth of the transept arms projecting from

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National Park Service**

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each side of the nave at the rear of the church. Nave windows are tall, round-arched openings, filled with stained glass. The second bay from the east end, on either side of the nave, has a larger window, with tracery giving the effect of two round-arched windows.

The gabled transept with round and segmental arched windows is three bays deep on the south side and only two bays deep on the north side. The rear, west end of the church is terminated by a large polygonal apse with corner buttresses, round-arched windows, and polygonal roof.

Originally the sanctuary of the church had a sloping floor with congregational seating arranged in three sections with four aisles, facing the pulpit area in the south-west corner. Sunday School rooms were located at the east end of the sanctuary beneath the balcony and at the west end where the chancel is now located. Other class rooms and offices were located around and above the present chancel.² In 1949 the interior of the sanctuary was extensively remodelled according to the design of Asheville architect Henry Irven Gaines.³ At this time the old Sunday School section at the west end was transformed into an elevated area for altar, choirs, organ, pulpit and lectern. In addition, the congregational seating was changed to two sections of new pews separated by a center aisle and facing west. Additional redecoration took place in 1967.⁴ Other characteristics of the present sanctuary are plastered walls with a wide coved cornice, an accoustical tile ceiling, a red carpeted floor, a balcony at the east end with a turned balustrade, and corner vestibules in the towers. The northeast tower houses the spiral stair to the balcony. The woodwork of the raised altar area utilizes an abundance of pointed arches in its design. The stained glass of the windows is predominantly in shades of pink, purple, brown, green and gold.

In 1928 the first addition to the church was made in the form of an education building.⁵ Erected directly west of the church and connected to it by a three-bay arcaded stone and wood passage, this building is a three-story granite block structure with flat roof and crenelated cornice. The seven bays of the east and west sides are divided by buttressed pilasters, while the four bays of the north and south ends are not. Windows are six-over-six sash with flat lintels. The decorative focal point of this building is the east end of the north facade with its arched entrance with double-leaf batten doors and two sets of three stepped windows--the second story set with flat lintels and the third story with round-arched heads. These windows reveal the location of the main stair in the building and give the effect of a tower. On the west side of the building is a low projecting granite-faced kitchen, partially below grade. It was added in 1957.⁶ Originally this building was used primarily for class rooms. During the 1960s and early 1970s the interior of the building was remodelled.⁷ It now houses a fellowship hall with kitchen and bathrooms on the first (basement) level. The second (main) level now holds the church offices, and the third story is used for classrooms, activity and meeting rooms, and the Session room.

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By the 1950s additional class room space was needed, and in 1957 the third major building in the complex was erected.⁸ Located south of the 1928 education building and southwest of the church, this two-story rectangular structure is of modern design, although it utilizes a granite block veneer to coordinate with the other buildings. Primary entrances to the building are on the east and west ends. North and south elevations are window walls with metal mullions and slender granite piers. Like the 1928 building, the 1957 building has flat roof. The two education buildings are connected by a two-story glass and granite veneer passage with an attached wing-like modern porte-cochere. The interior of the 1957 building has class rooms and nursery with east-west halls on both floors. A small courtyard with grass and shrubbery is formed by the area between the three church buildings.

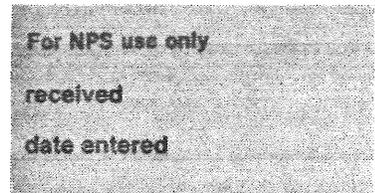
West of the church buildings and facing Third Avenue is the former manse. Built shortly after the church, in 1908, it was moved one lot west in 1928 to make room for the first education building. The manse was used as such until 1962, when another house was purchased several blocks north on Second Street. Since 1967 the second floor of the manse has been used as living quarters for student pastors, while the first floor has become a meeting and recreation place for the young people of the church, who have renamed it "The Manster."⁹

The former manse is a good example of the "American Foursquare" house type which gained popularity across America during the first decade of the twentieth century. Typical of this house type are the two-story, box-like shape, the low hipped roof with overhanging eaves and hipped dormer, the frame construction with weatherboard siding, and the general plainness of design. Originally the house had a porch which ran across the north facade and extended down the east side. The porch had a hipped roof, Doric columns and simple balustrade. It was removed (probably during the 1950s or 1960s), leaving the house with an even plainer appearance. Originally the one-over-one sash windows had louvered shutters, but those shutters currently on the house are non-functional replacements. The manse has exterior brick chimneys on east and west sides, an interior end chimney on the west side, and a one-story bay window toward the rear of the east side. The front entrance has a glass and paneled door with glass transom and sash windows on either side serving as sidelights.

The interior of the former manse has a pair of parlors in the front of the house, separated by sliding paneled doors. Another set of sliding doors separates the east parlor from the dining room behind it. Each of the parlors has a Craftsman style mantel with mirrored overmantel. The dining room is expanded by a bay window which features a high fixed window with diamond and lozenge-shaped muntins. The dining room and west parlor have a wainscot composed of narrow vertical boards. In the southwest corner of the west parlor is the stairway to the second floor. Basically Colonial Revival in design, it features a large paneled newel, turned balusters with molded hand rail, and a paneled closed string. The remainder of the first floor has been remodelled and has a kitchen and a collection of miscellaneous rooms. The second floor of the former manse has four main rooms and a bathroom. The two front rooms have similar, but not identical, Colonial Revival mantels with tall Tuscan Doric columns flanking the firebox. Second floor, five-panel doors had transoms, which are now filled-in.

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The First Presbyterian Church complex is prominently located adjacent to downtown Hickory in a transitional area between commercial and residential structures. The church buildings and former manse are located well above street grade. A low stone retaining wall separates the church yard from the sidewalk. Large oak trees enframe the church facade on the east, and a row of maples borders the church along Second Street on the north. A grassy lawn covers the southeast corner of the lot, while a paved parking lot is found south and west of the education buildings. A shrub-lined driveway separates the granite church buildings from the former manse. The manse itself is surrounded by holly and azalea bushes and the yard is filled with walnut, oak and maple trees. A grassy lawn extends a hundred feet west of the manse, creating a park-like setting. At the rear of this shady lawn is a collection of playground equipment.

FOOTNOTES:

¹Letter, Margaret A. Smith to David Brown, October 29, 1982, in the files of the Survey and Planning Branch, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. Hereinafter referred to as Letter.

²Letter: Mrs. Edmond H. Smith, Jr. and Gerald B. Hurst, The Centennial History of First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, N. C. (n.p.: n.p., 1973), p. 14. Hereinafter referred to as Centennial History.

³Letter.

⁴Centennial History, pp. 14, 21.

⁵Centennial History, p. 14.

⁶Centennial History, p. 32.

⁷Centennial History, pp. 32-33.

⁸Centennial History, p. 17.

⁹Centennial History, pp. 10, 19, 22.

The structure, of course, is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains, such as trash pits, wells, and structural remains, which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the structure. Information concerning use patterns, social standing and mobility, as well as structural details are often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is probable that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

See continuation sheet.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	469240	3954440	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of tracts 5 and 4 in block 1 on Catawba County tax map 1 H, as outlined in red on the accompanying map. It includes the church, its education buildings, the former manse, and a church-owned playground.

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Continuation sheet HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8 Page 1

Hickory's First Presbyterian Church was founded in 1873 as a small mission in the recently incorporated village of Hickory. The church's growth has paralleled that of Hickory and the First Presbyterian Church is now one of Catawba County's largest and most influential. The present church building was constructed in 1906 and is only the second in the church's history.

Although many of Catawba County's earliest settlers were of Scotch ancestry the Presbyterian denomination had surprisingly few churches in the county. Ordained Presbyterian ministers were in short supply and many Catawba Presbyterians became members of other protestant denominations in the county. Newton had a Presbyterian church in 1858. The Hickory church was apparently only the second church of that denomination in the county and it remained Hickory's only Presbyterian church until the middle of the twentieth century.¹

Hickory was a small community in 1873. It was incorporated in 1870, two years after the construction of the Central Hotel, the first hotel in Hickory.² The First Presbyterian Church was formed when a group of interested Presbyterians petitioned the Concord Presbytery for the establishment of a congregation. In March of 1873 a mission, called Gibb's Mission, was established with a membership of 15. The Reverend G. M. Gibbs became the first minister, although the Hickory church had to share Gibbs with churches in Taylorsville and Wilkesborough. Gibbs remained in that capacity until 1878. It was also in that year that the church became known as Hickory Presbyterian Church and construction of the first church building was completed. Prior to that time the congregation met in Hickory's Methodist church. The cost of the first building was \$1,769.³

The church continued to grow under the leadership of the reverends Thomas Thurston (1879-1884) and Colin Munroe (1885-1891). In 1891 with a membership of approximately 100, the church was able to secure the services of its first full time pastor, J. Alston Ramsay, D.D. Ramsay was paid an annual salary of \$900. Eighteen ninety-one also saw the creation of the local Woman's Missionary Society and the purchase of the first manse.⁴ During the economic hard times of the 1890s "the church was greatly crippled financially . . . and had to surrender a part of the pastor's time. The Newton church called our pastor for one-fourth of his time."⁵ This arrangement held until Dr. Ramsay's death in 1900. He was replaced by W. T. Matthews, who remained until 1903. During his pastorate a lot was purchased for \$950 and plans were drawn for a new sanctuary. The first sanctuary was located too near the train tracks and Hickory's increased traffic made it difficult for the church to "cope with the increased noise."⁶ Church membership had also increased to 137 by 1905.⁷

C. W. Trawick (1904-1907) was pastor when the new church building was completed. The structure was dedicated on December 2, 1906. The Hickory Democrat reported that "every seat in the new Presbyterian church was filled for the dedication last Sunday. The Methodist and Baptist churches closed their doors and the Episcopalians having no services the congregations poured out to assist their Presbyterian brethren." It was reported that the new sanctuary cost \$14,060 and that there was no indebtedness, ample proof that the church had overcome the financial difficulties of the previous decade.⁸

John G. Garth took over the pastorate of the church in 1907. He remained until 1918. During his tenure a new manse was constructed and the church obtained its first pipe organ. In 1914 the First Presbyterian Church hosted the annual convention of the

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North Carolina Synod. During this convention the Synod voted to create a new Synod, the Appalachia Synod, which would encompass mountain regions of North Carolina and other states. Edward Marshall Craig was pastor of the church from 1919 until 1925. Enrollment increased greatly during his pastorate, reaching a total membership of 335 in 1923. The pastor's salary also continued to increase, from the \$1,000 paid to the Reverend Mr. Garth to a \$2,700 annual salary paid to the Reverend Mr. Craig in the middle 1920s.⁹

Edward Craig left Hickory in December of 1925 and the First Presbyterian Church was without a regular pastor until February 1, 1927 when John Richard Hays, D.D. began the longest tenure in the church's history. He served for over twenty five years, until September 1, 1952. During this period the church underwent considerable expansion. In 1928 a three story educational building was erected, just west of the sanctuary, at a cost of \$28,000. In 1946 Sweetwater and Belk Memorial Presbyterian churches were organized largely under the efforts of Dr. Hay and taking much of their membership from First Presbyterian. In 1949 the sanctuary was completely remodeled and refurnished, at a cost of \$85,000. Despite the loss of members to the two new churches, membership at First Presbyterian continued to increase, from 372 in 1927 to 541 in 1952. Dr. Hay's salary rose in the same period from \$3,300 to \$4,600.¹⁰

The First Presbyterian Church has continued its growth in the last half of the twentieth century. A second educational building was constructed in 1957, a new manse was purchased in 1962, and the sanctuary was air conditioned in 1967. Northminster church was founded in 1964 with most of its charter members coming from First Presbyterian. Membership in 1973 was 867. In 1958 the church was one of five churches chosen by the Presbyterian United States Board of Christian Education to take part in a three year "Covenant Church Life" curriculum. First Presbyterian has undertaken a number of innovative educational programs. The church has also played an increasingly important role in the social life of downtown Hickory. As many of downtown Hickory's churches have moved to the developments on the edge of town, First Presbyterian become a popular meeting place for a variety of civic, social, business, and fraternal organizations.¹¹

The growth of the First Presbyterian Church from a mission with only a handful of members, a part time pastor, and inadequate facilities to today's large, influential and prosperous church is similar to the contemporaneous growth of the town of Hickory. The church has drawn its membership from some of Hickory's leading families, including the Hall, McComb, Seagle, Bonniwell, Killian, and Yoder families. The church and its congregation continue to be important in Hickory's religious and social life.

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NOTES

¹Charles J. Preslar, A History of Catawba County (Salisbury: Rowan Printing Company, 1954), 88-89, 119, hereinafter cited as Preslar, A History of Catawba County. The primary reason for the short supply of Presbyterian ministers was the relatively difficult educational requirements for ordination.

²Preslar, A History of Catawba County, 344-345.

³Mrs. Edmond H. Smith, Jr. and Gerald B. Hurst, "The Centennial History of First Presbyterian Church, Hickory, N.C." (Unpublished, 1973), 2-3, hereinafter cited as Smith and Hurst, "Centennial History"; Josiah J. Willard, "Historical Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church of Hickory, N.C." (Unpublished, 1949), 2-4, hereinafter cited as Willard, "Historical Sketch."

⁴Smith and Hurst, "Centennial History," 5-7.

⁵Smith and Hurst, "Centennial History," 6.

⁶Smith and Hurst, "Centennial History," 8; Catawba County Deed Book 68, p. 303.

⁷W. B. Ramsay, "First Presbyterian Church of Hickory, N.C." (Unpublished, 1923), 5, hereinafter cited as Ramsay, "First Presbyterian Church."

⁸Hickory Democrat, December 6, 1906.

⁹Smith and Hurst, "Centennial History," 10-12; Ramsay, "First Presbyterian Church," 4-5; John G. Garth, Sixty Years of Home Missions in the Presbyterian Synod of North Carolina (N.p., 1948), 43.

¹⁰Smith and Hurst, "Centennial History," 13-16; Willard, "Historical Sketch," 9-10; Hickory News, September 18, 1975.

¹¹Smith and Hurst, "Centennial History," 16-27; Hickory News, September 18, 1975.

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Hickory News. September 18, 1975.

Preslar, Charles J. A History of Catawba County. Salisbury: Rowan Printing Company, 1954.

Ramsay, W. B. "First Presbyterian Church of Hickory, N.C." Unpublished, 1923.

Smith, Mrs. Edmond and Hurst, Gerald B. "The Centennial History of First Presbyterian Church of Hickory, N.C." Unpublished, 1973. Copy in file.

Willard, Josiah J. "Historical Sketch of the First Presbyterian Church of Hickory, N.C." Unpublished, 1949. Copy in file.

Joseph Alfred Moretz House

17 468200/3956780

2

Houck's Chapel

17 466660/3955500

Oakwood Historic District

- A 17 468520/3955000
- B 17 469120/3955080
- C 17 469230/3954720
- D 17 468470/3954060

First Presbyterian Church

17 469240/3954440

John A. Lentz House

17 468120/3954580

3

Piedmont Wagon Company

17 467930/3954100

A

B

Claremont Historic District

- A 17 469440/3954930
- B 17 470040/3954930
- C 17 470020/3954170
- D 17 469410/3954190

Clement Geitner House

17 468720/3954140

4

5

6

Elliott-Carnegie Library

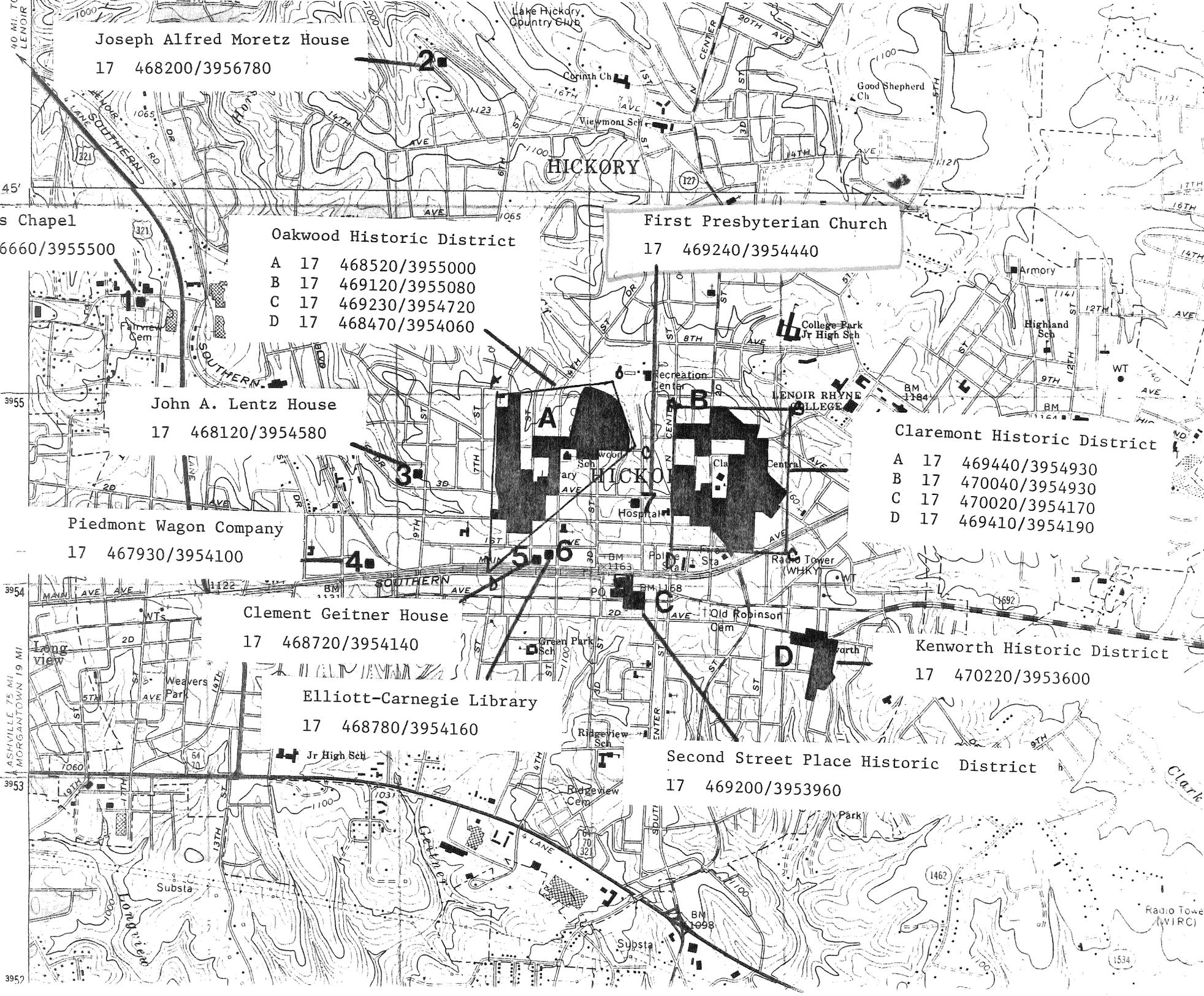
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Kenworth Historic District

17 470220/3953600

Second Street Place Historic District

17 469200/3953960



35° 45'

3955

3954

3953

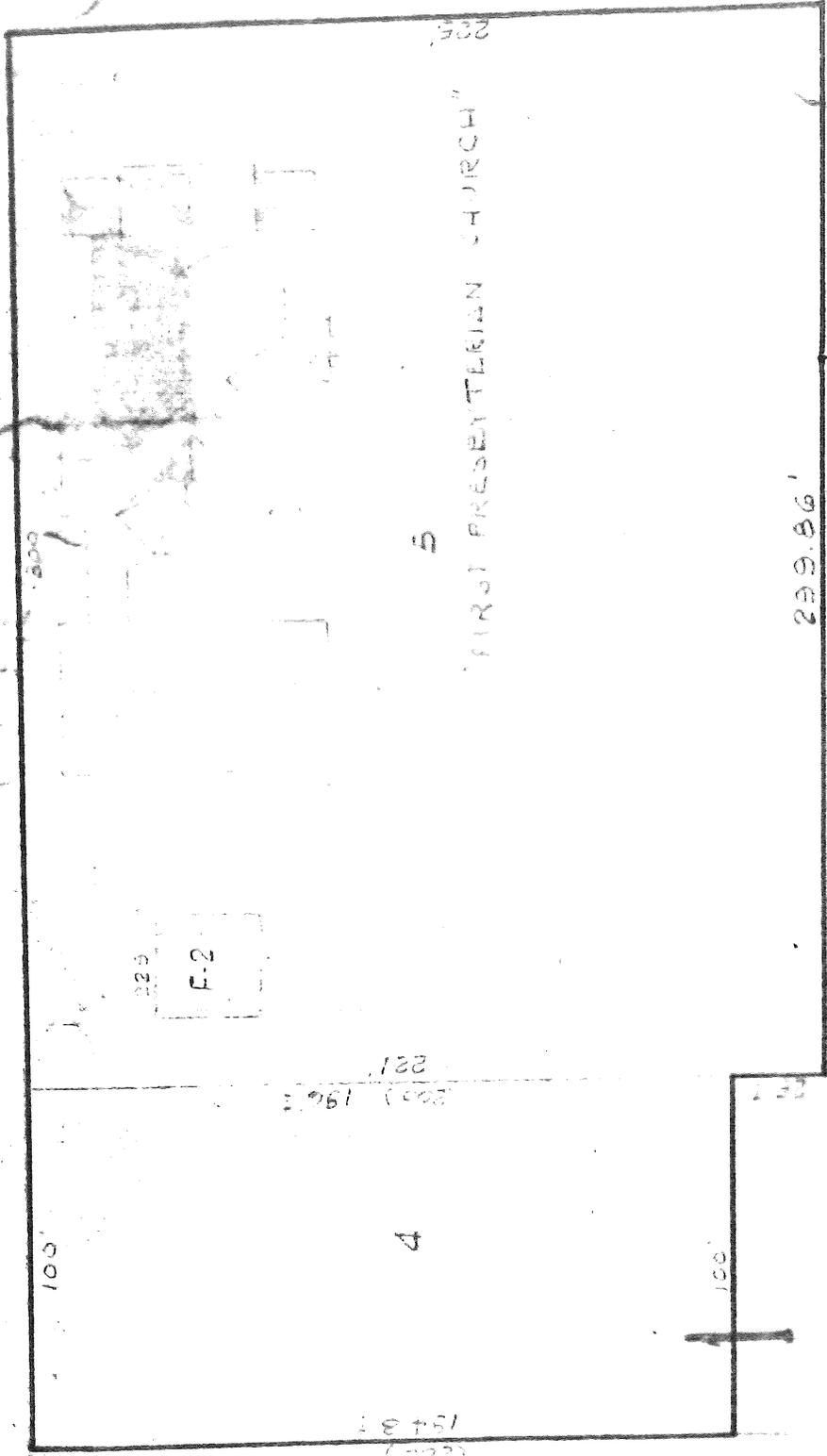
3952

ASHVILLE 75 MI
MORGANTOWN 19 MI

1534

Radio Tower
(WIRC)

THIRD AVENUE



225

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

5

F-2

221

4

1543

3

1543

239.86'

100'

100'

6

155

7

8

9

200.36'

14000

