

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Craven	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
First Presbyterian Church and Churchyard

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
New Street between Middle and Hancock streets

CITY OR TOWN:
New Bern (First Congressional District, The Hon. Walter B. Jones)

STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37 COUNTY: Craven CODE: 049

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
First Presbyterian Church

STREET AND NUMBER:
412 New Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New Bern

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Craven County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
302 Broad Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New Bern

STATE:
North Carolina

CODE:
37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 9-11-40 (NCR-F-1) Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
Washington

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
D. C.

CODE:
11

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(restored) (Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The First Presbyterian Church is a large rectangular frame structure with two tiers of windows, the lower being trabeated and the upper arched. A fine tetrastyle pedimented Ionic portico set against the broad pedimented south end of the main block defines a shallow three-bay central pavilion which contains the three front entrances. The pediment of the main block is broken by the base of the projecting tower which rises in four stages, the first three being rectangular and the top an arcaded octagonal belfry.

The double doors in the entrances have three panels in each leaf. As is typical in New Bern, the lowest panels are flush ones. In this case, molding has been applied around the upper panels, which are flat, and around the bottom panels as well. The center entrance is surmounted by a delicate fanlight executed in wood in imitation of leading. Corner posts treated as antae terminate the five-bay front facade and support the pediment which is outlined with a cornice of flat block modillions and dentils. This same cornice carries around the sides of the building and occurs on the portico. All windows on the first level contain twelve-over-twelve sash, and have louvered shutters, as do the arched windows above.

All stages of the tower repeat the antae and the cornice of the main block. Arched louvered openings appear in each tower stage, but they vary in height and width. The belfry, which also employs arched louvered openings, is covered by a bellcap roof and surmounted by a delicate weathervane. The bell hangs in the third level of the tower, just below the belfry, and is rung manually by rope from the first level of the tower. It is not known when the present bell was hung, but it is a large and extremely handsome one, still having its wooden yoke and wheel. Around the top of the bell, in a simple band, is the inscription "For J. Ward Hartford Doolittle Fecit 1832."

Except for the entrance foyer, the arrangement of the interior is not unlike most nonliturgical churches in North Carolina. The foyer, designed in perfect symmetry, harmoniously incorporates various architectural elements, creating an entrance that is impressive as well as beautiful. Located immediately opposite the central entrance is a high narrow five-panel door with a rich fanlight, whose bars, medallion, and boss are rendered in wood. The area behind the door, formerly storage space, now contains a service stair for the pulpit. Transverse arches occur at the east and west ends of the central foyer, each accentuated with a keystone, and spring from Tuscan pilasters. Extremely well-executed twin spiral stairs rise behind the arches at either end of the vestibule. Flush vertical sheathing encloses a storage area beneath each stair. Each tread is adorned with a wave pattern bracket painted brown which contrasts dramatically with the white sheathing. Because of their delicate scale, the stairs have only two square balusters to a tread. These and a tapered square newel post carry a rounded handrail along the sweeping contours of the stair. Both the newel and the handrail are relatively heavy, but have been so well integrated as to disguise their mass. The path of the railing is followed on the opposite wall by a paneled wainscot.

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7. A

The church proper is entered by twin six-panel doors, one on either side of the pulpit. The pews are arranged so that the congregation sits facing this double entrance. Against the rear wall is a choir loft which curves around to join the full-length side galleries. These are enclosed by a solid flat-paneled balustrade, and are supported on slender columns. Similar columns on paneled pedestals, set along the gallery balustrades, support a cornice consisting of undercut modillions, a cable molding and a course of dentils. From this cornice springs the barrel vault which runs down the center of the auditorium. The ceilings over the galleries are flat. The floor of the auditorium gradually ascends toward the rear, elevating the pews to give a clear view of the pulpit. This causes the flat-paneled wainscot along the walls to slope.

The pulpit, the result of a scholarly restoration in 1936, replaces an 1866 Victorian alteration to the chancel. Raised on shorter versions of the gallery columns, the restored pulpit is bowed with a reading desk in the center and is reached by curving stairs from either side. The stairs take the same form as those in the vestibule. The solid pulpit balustrade and the doors at the top of the stairs are flat-paneled with applied molding and have a dentil course beneath the rail. The elements of the blind arch on the wall behind the pulpit are copied from the transverse arches in the vestibule. Within the arch, a six-panel door leads from the pulpit to the service stair behind. One of two nine-foot sections of an early communion table was discovered at the time of the restoration and was reinstated in front of the pulpit.

One Victorian alteration was left untouched by the restoration architect. In order to give those seated in the galleries a clear view of the minister (and probably to give the minister a clear view of them as well), the balustrade across the side galleries was lowered six to eight inches. No attempt was made to restore that feature, since without careful observation the change is scarcely noticeable.

In 1893 a rear entrance was cut in the east bay of the north facade, thus permitting worshippers to enter the church without facing the congregation. A small L-shaped vestibule was built on the rear at that time.

Various remnants of alterations remain in the church. A cast-iron gas pendant chandelier, which has been electrified, hangs in the vestibule as a reminder of the Victorian redecoration. Some of the box pews formerly in the auditorium have been moved into the galleries, where the doors were removed and the sections were coupled together. A surviving door, now in storage, indicates that the pews were at one time wood-grained. This is substantiated by a pre-restoration interior photograph which shows that all the woodwork was grained.

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7. B

A lecture room-educational building to the east of the church was built in 1856. It is a simple one-story T-plan frame structure with a gable roof. A cross gable covering the front portion extends to form a pedimented portico. Simple brackets emphasize the overhanging eaves. A cast-iron lamp standard, one of a pair which formerly lit the 1866 pulpit, stands along a path between the church and education building. The churchyard, shaded by aged oaks, magnolias, and evergreens, is enclosed by a fine cast-iron fence manufactured by the Stewart Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1903.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | | <u>Civil War Hospital</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Presbyterians in New Bern reached sufficient number to organize and begin the erection of a church only after 1800. James Burch, the first minister to be appointed to the congregation was assigned by the Orange Presbytery in 1808. At that time the congregation, was already advertising for subscriptions to secure land and build a structure. But their efforts seem not to have been successful, for the records of the presbytery indicate that the church was not fully organized until 1817, under the leadership of John Witherspoon, grandson of a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was followed by the Reverend John Nicholson Campbell, later chaplain to Congress and minister of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington, D. C., and a succession of other notable ministers. Notice of a new organizational meeting for a Presbyterian church appeared in the Carolina Centinel on October 17, 1818. That meeting was successful, and the church contracted to buy New Bern lot 309 from Edward Graham for the purpose of erecting a church.

The cornerstone for the church was laid on June 9, 1819. The Carolina Centinel noted on June 12 of that year that construction had begun on a Presbyterian house of worship

to be 70 feet in length and 52 in breadth, and capable, by computation, of accommodating 800 persons . . . on Wednesday evening last, the interesting ceremony of laying the cornerstone . . . took place in presence of a respectable concourse of citizens . . . the cornerstone . . . deposited by the master masons present.

Uriah Sandy was the contractor for the construction. Thomas T. Waterman, in discussing its attribution to Sandy, notes similarities to the work of Asher Benjamin in New England. Sandy's origin and background are unknown, but he was already in New Bern and practicing by September 9, 1817, when he took James Thornton as "apprentice to the carpenter's trade." He was in New Bern at least as late as 1826, when Joseph Martin became his carpenter apprentice.

There is no doubt of Sandy's work on the Presbyterian Church. An account book of William Hollister, April 6, 1820-January 24, 1824, still in the possession of the family in New Bern, reveals the Hollister's firm not only provided much of the material to be used in the construction of the church--lead on April 7, nails on April 10, and again on April 11, and paint on

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April 12, 1820, for example--but also that Uriah Sandy, himself, was connected with the work. Several times, such as on May 15, June 1, and June 3, 1820, under the "Presbyterian Meeting House" account, Uriah Sandy drew rum for the workmen, and on May 3, under the same account heading, a note of Uriah Sandy's was paid. Certainly Sandy superintended the work, and because of his trade and the number of apprentices who worked under him, there is reason to suppose that he also designed the structure.

The church was completed before December 29, 1821, when the Centinel noted that it was to be dedicated on the following January 6. Among the original pew purchasers were many prominent New Bern men and women, including Elias Hawes, a local physician, teacher, and druggist, who operated a free school; Robert Hay, early craftsman, carpenter and carriage maker; John Jones, a prominent local merchant; Stephen M. Chester, a member of the shipping firm of Devereaux, Chester & Orme, and early New Bern poet; and John Caruthers Stanly, a freed slave, and Mrs. Stanly, a former slave whose freedom he had purchased.

The education building lot, number 308 in the plan of New Bern, was purchased March 12, 1856, from William G. Bryan for \$905. The "Session-House," or "Sabbath-school," was begun soon thereafter and completed by 1858. It originally stood flush with the church building line, but was moved back to its present site in this century.

During the Civil War the church complex served first as a place of worship for the Union forces, and later, after an outbreak of yellow fever, as a hospital. The ministers of the Brattle Square Church, of Park Street Church, and of Old South Church in Boston, preached there at various periods between 1861 and 1865, either while visiting the Union forces stationed in New Bern or because they were unit chaplains.

Reverend L. C. Vass notes in his history of the church that during this period

The Church, lecture-room and manse were all taken possession of by the United States government authorities, and used in connection with the extensive Hospital, whose wards covered the quiet and umbrageous premises . . . After long and annoying delay on the part of the civil authorities, the last hospital building was pulled down in September, 1866. From ill-usage, destruction of fences, natural decay of property without the owner's supervision, the usual recklessness of soldiers, the whole property, when fully recovered, was in very bad condition.

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Local tradition says that the names and military units of many soldiers are carved on the attic timbers of the church, and "several bullet holes through the weathervane bear evidence of their marksmanship."

Joseph Kittinger of Buffalo, New York, reported in his diary that on February 5, 1865,

I attended services this forenoon at the Presbyterian Church and listened to an able and practical discourse by Chaplain Briggs, text, "Remove not the ancient landmarks."

Evidently two Union soldiers, whether they heard the sermon or not, understood at least one application of the text, and when in the spring of 1865 the church itself was converted to hospital use, they prevented the proposed removal of the pews, and instead had them planked over for bed use.

Ironically, the local congregation removed the pews immediately after the war and gave them away as part of the extensive remodelling of the church.

. . . in 1866, the old, high, and close box-pulpit was removed and a broad platform with handsome desk and gas pillars was substituted; and back of the pulpit a recess was made (which has recently been much improved by the addition of some handsome woodwork), and the front of the galleries was lowered.

These interiors remained until 1934 when Daniel D. Merrill of the New York firm of Merrill, Humbel, and Taylor, was called to assist in the restoration of the interior. Mr. Merrill's research was meticulous, and he discovered much original material within the church--including portions of the circular paneling of the pulpit, one of its doors, sections of the wainscot, and pew doors. The original pew arrangement plat existed as did the pews themselves, which had been transferred to the Presbyterian Church in Pollocksville, North Carolina. The pulpit end of the church was restored, as was the pew arrangement, though not the pews themselves. The lowered galleries were retained. There is every reason to believe from the physical evidence and Mr. Merrill's documentation that the restoration was scholarly and accurate.

One entire block of New Street, between Hancock and Middle, is anchored by the church, its education building, and the surrounding landscaped grounds. The area, enclosed by a iron fence, is a visually and architecturally important open space in the center of the city.

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8. C

The church structure itself, which stands virtually alone as a building type in the state and is more evocative of the New England church and green than of its North Carolina location, has great importance because of its uniqueness. In addition it abuts the property of Chester B'Nai Sholem Synagogue and is across the street from Centenary Methodist Church and St. Paul's Catholic Church, all structures of architectural significance. It is therefore an integral part of an extremely important group of churches, not to mention its value as the prime structure in the Neuse River Historic District.

The building is also of considerable importance as the work of Uriah Sandy, one of a sizable group of craftsmen for such a small town in the early nineteenth century. As an example of Sandy's craftsmanship, and probably of his design, it is a significant work in itself. When compared to the works of James Coor, John Hawks, Martin Stevenson, Sr., John Dewey, and John Hay, all active in carpentry-joinery and/or architecture in roughly the same period it assumes even greater importance.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Carolina Centinel [New Bern, North Carolina], October 17, 1818; June 12, 1819; December 29, 1821; January 19, 1882.

Kittinger, Joseph. Diary 1861-65. Buffalo: The Kittinger Company, in cooperation with the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, n.d.

Merrill, Daniel D., and McClure, R. E. "An American Heritage," Christian Herald, June, 1939.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	35°	06'	43"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	77°	02'	30"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 Acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Survey and Planning Unit, John B. Wells, III, Supervisor

ORGANIZATION: State Department of Archives and History

DATE: 16 September 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh

STATE: North Carolina

CODE: 37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name John B. Wells, III

Title Director, State Department of Archives and History

Date 16 September 1971

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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9.

Vass, Reverend L. C. History of the Presbyterian Church in New Bern, N. C. with a Resume of Early Ecclesiastical Affairs in East North Carolina, and a Sketch of the Early Days of New Bern, N. C. Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1886.

Waterman, Thomas Tileston, and Johnston, Frances Benjamin. The Early Architecture of North Carolina. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; 1947.

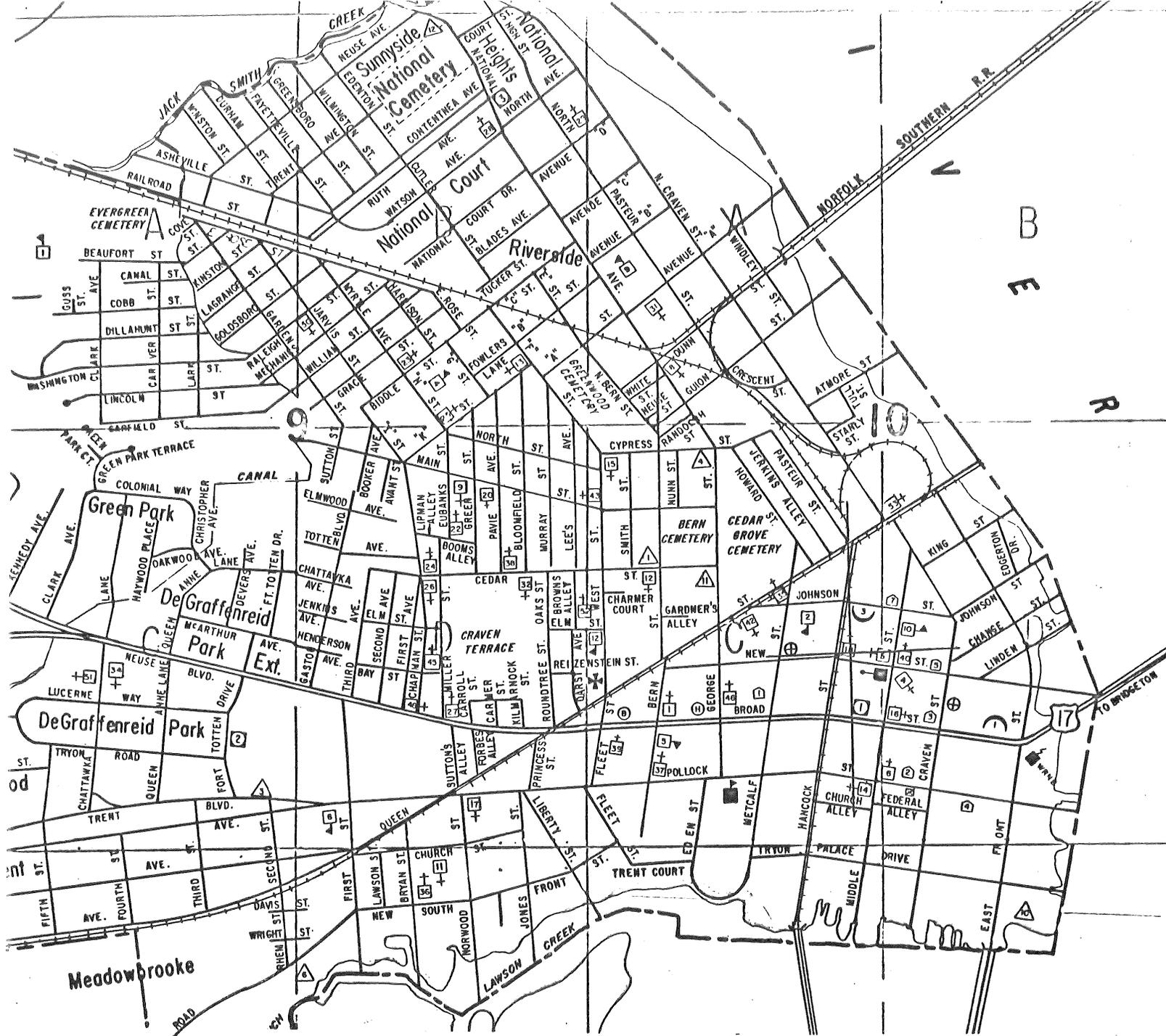


First Presbyterian Church and Churchyard
 New Street between Middle and Hancock Streets
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of Craven County, New Bern Chamber of Commerce
 Scale 3/8" : 1 mile
 no date

Latitude	Longitude
degrees minutes seconds	degrees minutes seconds
35° 06' 43"	77° 02' 30"

AN
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 NATIONAL



First Presbyterian Church and Churchyard
 New Street between Middle and Hancock Streets
 New Bern, North Carolina

Map of New Bern and Vicinity, New Bern Chamber of Commerce
 drawn by Gilfredo Gonzales
 Scale: 1"/1200 feet
 no date

	Latitude	Longitude
degrees	minutes	seconds
35°	06'	43"
		77°
		02'
		30"

