

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

**1. Name**

historic (former) LaGrange Presbyterian Church

and/or common LaGrange Rotary Club

**2. Location**

street & number 201 South Caswell Street

not for publication

city, town LaGrange vicinity of

state North Carolina code 037 county Lenoir code 107

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
district	public	X occupied	agriculture
building(s)	private	unoccupied	museum
structure	both	work in progress	commercial
site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	educational
object	in process	X yes: restricted	entertainment
	being considered	yes: unrestricted	government
	n/a	no	industrial
			military
			x other: Rotary Club

**4. Owner of Property**

name LaGrange Rotary Club  
c/o Mr. J. P. Walters, III

street & number P. O. Box 98

city, town LaGrange vicinity of state North Carolina 28551

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lenoir County Courthouse

street & number P.O. Box 3289

city, town Kinston state North Carolina 28501

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Historic and Architectural Resources of  
title the Tar-Neuse River Basin has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date 1977 federal X state county local

depository for survey records N. C. Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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

Situated in downtown LaGrange (1984 population: 3,253), the (former) LaGrange Presbyterian Church occupies the southeast corner of South Caswell and West Washington streets. The church is exemplary of small town North Carolina churches built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Constructed in 1892, the church is an exuberant vernacular interpretation of the Gothic Revival style. The local Presbyterian congregation worshiped here until 1985, when due to a dwindling membership the facility was sold to the LaGrange Rotary Club. However, by virtue of its location at the town's busiest intersection and of its use as a meeting place by the Rotary Club and other groups, the building continues to be a vital and integral part of the community.

The rectangular frame structure is three bays wide and six deep with a picturesque central projecting bell tower on the facade (west elevation) and a hipped roof apse at the rear (east elevation). Lancet windows filled with diamond-paned stained glass set in unmolded surrounds and accented by drip molds mark the facade and side (north and south) elevations. The church rests upon brick piers now infilled with lattice patterned brick. Molded corner posts enframe the elevations with those of the facade having stylized console brackets at the eaves. The building is protected by a steep gable roof which is covered with standing seam metal and accented by two gable air vents on each slope.

The bell tower rises in two stages and is topped with a tall graceful spire. At the tower's first level is the main entrance. The entry is composed of a handsome double door with heavy applied moldings. The doors are surmounted first by a Gothic arch transom with stained glass and finally by a steeply-pitched gable hood with console brackets that echo those found on the facade corner posts. Lancet windows pierce the upper walls of the tower's first stage which terminates with a molded box cornice. The second stage is the belfry which features louvered lancet openings on all four walls and a more delicate cornice highlighted by paired console brackets at each corner. The tower is capped by an eight sided spire with flared eaves and small false gables at each corner.

Access into the church is through the small vestibule in the bell tower. Inside, a center-aisle separates the two ranges of original pews in the nave, and the chancel is accented by a simple rectilinear apse. The interior is virtually pristine with few exceptions.

The imaginative use of narrow beaded tongue-and-groove sheathing throughout the interior is this building's most striking feature. The interplay of light and shadow upon this sheathing imparts a dramatic visual effect to the interior. In the sanctuary and chancel, the tongue-and-groove sheathing is applied in a herringbone pattern on the ceiling, chancel walls, the upper sections of the east and west gable walls, and the aprons beneath each window. In contrast, the remainder of the wainscotting is sheathed vertically below the molded chair rail and plaster walls. The vestibule which contains the belfry ladder is also entirely finished with this narrow beaded tongue-and-groove sheathing.

The chancel is elevated by two platforms, and a pointed arch with molded imposts frames the apse which features a stained glass window and a notable four-panel door.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form**

(former) La Grange Presbyterian Church

Continuation sheet Architectural Description

Item number 7

Page 1

For NPS use only  
Received \_\_\_\_\_  
Date entered \_\_\_\_\_

Each panel is handsomely finished with light green graining. Chancel furnishings, all original and dating from the late-nineteenth century, include a robustly designed pulpit possibly built by Joshua Herring, a sofa, and two chairs.

Other significant interior features are the early twentieth century light fixtures, the tall narrow storage cabinet located at the rear of the nave, and the well-crafted pews. Probably put in place shortly after the building's completion, this cabinet has a heavy crown molding and double doors with pegged rails and stiles. The pews are original and have backs of beaded ceiling board with curvilinear armrests above a single raised panel at the ends. Also, each door and window is framed by a heavily molded surround.

Originally, the interior was heated by a stove that was vented through a flue hole at the center of the interior ceiling. Although the flue hole is still in place, the exterior brick stove stack was removed and replaced by the present one on the south elevation.

The only notable alteration to the building was the formation of two Sunday school rooms by enclosing a small area of the nave at the vestibule entry which necessitated the removal of several original pews. Later, the Rotary Club removed additional pews; however, a representative number of original pews remain.

## **8. Significance**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</b>							
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation				
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)				

**Specific dates** 1892

**Builder/Architect** Unknown

### **Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

A striking example of vernacular inventiveness coupled with traditional Gothic Revival detailing, the LaGrange Presbyterian Church was constructed in 1892 largely due to the efforts of elder Henry Edward Dillon, a prominent LaGrange merchant and civic leader. LaGrange had its beginnings before the Civil War but was not incorporated until 1869. The town developed around the railroad which connected Kinston, the county seat, with Goldsboro to the west and it became a trading center for the surrounding agricultural area. Distinctive for its tall bell tower, gable air vents, and impressive interior woodwork, the building reflects the prosperity that resulted from the town's growth and expansion during the late nineteenth century. The interior features tongue-and-groove sheathing masterfully applied in a herringbone pattern. Lenoir County has relatively few Presbyterians and the LaGrange church usually had only modest membership. In 1985, due to declining membership, the congregation dissolved and the building was sold to the LaGrange Rotary Club.

### Criteria Assessment

- A. Associated with the growth and development of the Presbyterian Church in Lenoir County in the late nineteenth century and the religious life of the small community of LaGrange from 1892 to 1985. It also reflects the prosperity experienced by the town during the late nineteenth century.
- B. Associated with the lives of several men, prominent in LaGrange affairs, including Henry Edward Dillon, LaGrange's leading merchant and one of its largest and wealthiest landowners; H. M. McDonald, a merchant and town commissioner; and Henry Elias Shaw, a lawyer and owner of the local drugstore.
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of church buildings constructed during the late nineteenth century in small towns throughout eastern North Carolina. Built in 1892 to accommodate the needs of the local Presbyterian congregation, the church follows a typical vernacular gable front form distinguished by an impressive projecting bell tower and handsome interior woodwork.

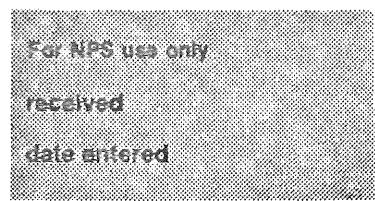
**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

(former) LaGrange Presbyterian Church  
Continuation sheet Historical Significance

Item number 8

Page 1



The LaGrange Presbyterian Church is located in the Lenoir County town of LaGrange. The church organization dates back to the 1880s, while the building dates from 1892.

Presbyterianism came relatively late to Lenoir County. A mission was established in Kinston in the 1860s. It languished and the mission was abandoned in the 1870s. The small building was sold to the Episcopalians. The LaGrange Presbyterian Church was organized on June 3, 1883 and for a number of years held its meetings in the local Methodist church building. In 1890 the congregation was reorganized and plans were made to construct a permanent sanctuary.

LaGrange is located in the western part of the county. It began to grow up around the railroad shortly before the Civil War and was incorporated in 1869. The town became a trading center for the surrounding agricultural area. LaGrange had some industry, such as the lucrative carriage manufacturing plant founded in the early 1880s by John H. Rouse. The town also housed a highly regarded private school, LaGrange Academy.<sup>2</sup>

The LaGrange Presbyterian Church was thus founded during a period of growth in the town. The prime mover behind the creation of the church organization was prominent civic leader Henry Edward Dillon. Dillon was born in Tyrrell County in 1842. He served in the Confederate Army before moving to LaGrange around 1871. He was the town's leading merchant and one of its largest and wealthiest landowners. Dillon was a long time mayor of LaGrange. He and his wife donated the land on which the church was built, while he served as an elder and Sunday School superintendent.<sup>3</sup> Other locally prominent church trustees included H. M. McDonald and Henry Elias Shaw. McDonald was a merchant and served as a town commissioner. He owned LaGrange's drugstore. Shaw (1856-1935) was a native of Bladen County, the son of Presbyterian minister Colin Shaw. Shaw was a lawyer who studied at the University of North Carolina. He left LaGrange for Kinston around 1896 and later served as chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee for the county and was a solicitor for the Fifth Judicial District. In addition to his church activities in LaGrange, Shaw also helped found the Atkinson Memorial Presbyterian Church.<sup>4</sup>

Henry Dillon and his wife donated land to the church in 1890. The building was completed two years later at an approximate cost of \$1,200. Early ministers included W. D. Morton, J. E. L. Winecoff and Fred Thomas.

LaGrange never became the commercial rival to Kinston that its early supporters believed it would. Its population stabilized at less than one thousand. The LaGrange Presbyterian Church maintained an active but small membership throughout much of the twentieth century. Membership declined precipitously during the 1970s and 1980s, however, and in June of 1985 the church was sold to the LaGrange Rotary Club. The building is presently used for a variety of functions, including Rotary Club meetings and Boy Scout meetings. The Rotary Club has left the church in a relatively unaltered state, with the exception of removing some of the pews.<sup>6</sup>

The LaGrange Presbyterian Church, although usually possessing only a modest enrollment, was founded during a period of growth and expansion for the small community

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

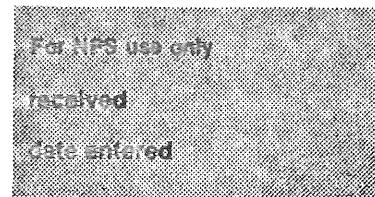
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

(former) LaGrange Presbyterian Church

Continuation sheet Historical Significance

Item number 8

Page 2



and owed its existence to a number of the town's leading citizens. As a remaining structure of the town's early days the church has local significance.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mike Kohler, 200 Years of Progress (Kinston: Kinston-Lenoir Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 131; information supplied by Mrs. Lillian Dillon Wooten.

<sup>2</sup> The Heritage of Lenoir County (Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company for the Lenoir County Historical Association, 1981), 89, 360, hereinafter cited as The Heritage of Lenoir County.

<sup>3</sup> The Heritage of Lenoir County, 206; Levi Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1896), pp. 376, 379; 1897, p. 377, hereinafter cited as Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory.

<sup>4</sup> Branson (ed.), North Carolina Business Directory, 1896, p. 377; 1897, p. 377; The Heritage of Lenoir County, 114, 371-372.

<sup>5</sup> Lenoir County Deed Book 13, p. 325.

<sup>6</sup> Evidence supplied by Mr. J. P. Walters of the LaGrange Rotary Club.

## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

## **10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name LaGrange, N. C. (1983)

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

<b>A</b>	1   8	2   4   6	3   8   0	3   9   1   0	2   1   0
Zone	Easting		Northing		
C	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]		
E	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]		
G	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]		

<b>B</b>	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
Zone	Easting		Northing
D	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
F	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
H	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]	[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

### **Verbal boundary description and justification**

The nearly square lot being nominated fronts on South Caswell Street 125 feet and runs in depth along E. Washington Street 120 feet. See attached Lenoir County tax map, page 2. Nominated property outlined in red, and comprises the original lot donated.

### **List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state	n/a	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## **11. Form Prepared By**

Description prepared by Stanley L. Little, Archives & History Assistant

name/title Significance prepared by Jim L. Sumner, Researcher  
Eastern Office

organization N.C. Division of Archives and History date May 30, 1986

street & number 117 W. 5th St. telephone (919) 752-7778

city or town Greenville state North Carolina 27834

## **12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *William S. Bain*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 10, 1986

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

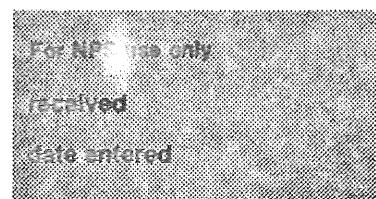
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

(former) LaGrange Presbyterian Church

Continuation sheet Bibliographical references

Item number 9

Page 1



Branson, Levi (ed.). North Carolina Business Directory. Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1896, 1897.

Heritage of Lenoir County, The. Winston-Salem: Hunter Publishing Company for the Lenoir County Historical Society, 1981.

Kohler, Mike. 200 Years of Progress. Kinston: Kinston-Lenoir Bicentennial Commission, 1976.

Lenoir County Records. Deed Books.

Walters, J. P. Information supplied by.

Wooten, Mrs. Lillian Dillon. Information supplied by.

W. H. MINTON

(former) LaGrange Presbyterian  
Church  
Lenoir County  
Quadrangle: LaGrange, N. C.  
Zone: 18 Scale: 1:24,000  
UTM: Easting 246380  
Northing 3910210

LRL

