

**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 any 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 First Presbyterian Church
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 471 Main Street [N/A]not for publication
city or town Highlands [N/A]vicinity _____
state North Carolina code NC county Macon code 113 zip code 28741

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 []state-wide [X]locally.

([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey J. Crow, SHPO 7/16/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or 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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- [] entered in the National Register. _____
- [] See continuation sheet. _____
- [] determined eligible for the National Register. _____
- [] See continuation sheet. _____
- [] determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
- [] removed from the National Register. _____
- [] other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

First Presbyterian Church
Name of property

Macon, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	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 (En-
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

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

roof asphalt

walls weatherboard

other wood

Narrative Description

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

First Presbyterian Church
Name of property

Macon, NC
County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1885 - 1946

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 a 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.

Significant Dates

1885

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect / Builder

Wright, Marion

Parker, Thomas F.

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:

Presbyterian Archives, Montreat, NC

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 7 Page 1

Located on the southwest corner of Main and Fifth streets in downtown Highlands, North Carolina, First Presbyterian Church stands on the land which was donated in 1883 for its construction. The church is a visually commanding presence in the heart of the commercial area; however, its siting on a fenced and walled knoll with hemlocks, rhododendrons, and other native plantings makes for a pleasant, pastoral setting. Originally, the fence atop the stone wall, a vast, sloping front lawn, the sweeping front steps, and abundant plantings tucked away the little frame church from the bustling of the developing young town of Highlands along its Main Street of dirt and mud puddles. Later the steps were extended down the sloping lawn from the church to the paved street and sidewalk to draw the visitors inside. Today the church shares its lot with a modern brick educational and administrative facility which stands down the eastern slope of the knoll at the northeast corner of the lot. Its presence is softened by mature trees and plantings. The original mortise-and-tenon picket fence still embraces the entire lot.

•First Presbyterian Church (1885) - Contributing

Built by Highlands' master carpenter, Marion Wright, the church is extremely well built, not surprisingly like a carpenter's fine piece of furniture. As directed by the benefactors, no quality was spared. First Presbyterian Church is a small, one-story, frame church which stands on a raised basement and measures only approximately thirty-three by sixty feet. A hipped-roof entrance bay projects from the center of the main facade (north elevation) and a lecture room projects across the rear. The main roof of the church is a steeply pitched gable roof which is softened by clipped gables on the front and rear. Boxed eaves, molded cornice, simple fascia boards, and guttering complete the roofing system. Asphalt shingles replace the original wooden ones. The original weatherboarded exterior remains intact with corner boards and molded drip course. A square belfry with bracketed flared eaves supports a steep hipped and pyramidal roof surmounted by a wooden spike finial. The belfry houses the original bell, and speakers for the 1969 carillon. The 560-pound bell was made by the Clinton H. McNeely Company of Troy, New York, and was presented to the church at no charge. The church stands on a raised basement foundation of large, roughly cut stone piers with concrete block and windows in between. The original flared set of front steps has delicate iron railings. Within the last decade the steps have been extended down to Main Street's sidewalk.

The entrance facade (north elevation) features a centered, projecting, single-bay entrance. The hipped roof protects the double-leaf entrance doors which are made of riveted, diagonal beaded boards and feature wrought-iron scroll-and-fleur hinges. An ornate mail-order Victorian knob and key plate also decorate the front doors. A single-light transom tops the door, and all is surrounded under a handsome segmentally-arched architrave with stops. Small, modern coach lights have been mounted on the stops. The entrance bay also has single, six-over-six, double-hung sash windows on each side elevation and a single six-panel door on the west side which leads to handicap access.

Both the west and east elevations have three evenly spaced large casement windows. These double-sash casement windows feature stained and mazed block glass patterns with wooden mullions. Leaded, stained-glass transoms (reputedly from Philadelphia) top the windows and segmentally-arched hood moldings with stops

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 7 Page 2

unite the window components.

The hipped-roof rear lecture room is original and has a single door entrance flanked by single, six-over-six, double-hung sash windows. Also, the side elevations of this rear portion have single windows. All windows and the door have shallow, segmental arches. A brick flue rises at the rear where the vestibule attaches to the main body of the church.

The front entrance doors lead into the vestibule which is sheathed in five-inch horizontal beaded boards, on both walls and ceiling. Generous baseboards, rails of coat hooks, and crown molding surround the room. A pair of swinging, mortise-and-tenon doors, glass-over-panels, lead into the sanctuary. The entire interior is sheathed in the same horizontal beaded board as the vestibule, even the twenty-foot ceiling. Handsome baseboards, crown molding, and hefty window surrounds of segmental lintels and beautifully molded sills embellish an otherwise simple interior. Wrought-iron sash hooks even remain in use. The wooden floors are covered in the plush magenta carpet which was installed in 1978. New "colonial" brass chandeliers replaced the school-type suspended globes at that same time. Although now painted white, the interior originally had a most interesting color scheme: walls were pinkish tan to represent the bark of the hemlock, the trim was dark green like the foliage of the hemlock, and the ceiling was sky blue.

The pews were designed by Thomas Parker and thought to have been built by some of the Prince family of Highlands. The stately pews appear as modified box pews with recessed, molded panels on the ends as the only decoration; two equal ranks of pews march up each side of the center aisle and accommodate 250 to 300 worshippers. In addition to these pews, a balcony was added to the rear of the sanctuary in 1978 to provide approximately ninety additional seats. The balcony is accessed by staircases which flank the doors to the front vestibule.

The focus of the sanctuary is the front area which is raised to accommodate the pulpit and associated altar furnishings, an early reed organ, a newer electric organ, and seating for the choir. (This platform had to be enlarged in 1948 for a growing choir.) A communion table and baptismal font are also located at the front. A large drape on the rear wall provides the background for the pulpit area and is flanked by speakers. Single, diagonally sheathed doors with ornate wrought iron hinges (like the front doors) are located to each side of the drape and lead to the rear lecture room. This room has served as everything from Sunday school space, to choir room, to storage.

First Presbyterian Church's integrity and excellent state of preservation is due not only to careful maintenance over the last 111 years, but also to the careful selection of fine building materials in the beginning. The exterior is intact and accommodations for an active congregation have been carefully made. The basement was excavated in 1947 to house classrooms, restrooms, a kitchen, and fellowship hall. Windows were added at the basement level between the piers to provide light. A handicap ramp has been added to the west elevation. On the interior, the 1978 balcony is the most imposing change. This addition of some ninety seats was done sensitively at the rear of the sanctuary without interfering with the original walls and windows.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 7 Page 3

- Fence (1885) - Contributing

Embracing the entire original property of the First Presbyterian Church, is the handsome, substantial fence built by Marion Wright. This picket fence has arched posts and square pickets with occasional gates. The entire white, wooden fence is of mortise-and-tenon construction and stands on a fieldstone wall.

- Educational Building (1965) with administrative wing (1983) - Noncontributing

Sharing the lot with the church is a noncontributing Colonial Revival-style educational building with an administrative / day care wing. The two-story, brick-veneered, gable-roofed building was constructed in 1965, with the wing added in 1983. Set on an east-facing slope, none of this new construction approaches the 1885 church building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary

Established as a resort town in the 1870s, Highlands' settlement history and social history are one in the same. The First Presbyterian Church — a small, frame church built in the heart of Highlands in 1885 — represents the town founders' desire to offer a wholesome, religious presence for those seeking rest, recreation, or health. This Presbyterian Church was the first church constructed in Highlands and was the first effort to fulfill this desire. It is, therefore, eligible under National Register criterion A, as an important piece of the social history of this resort town. It is also eligible for the National Register under criterion C as an embodiment of nineteenth-century architectural philosophy of the picturesque carried out in a carpenter's vernacular vocabulary. Borrowing from the romantic Italianate style, and embodying the practical and the picturesque, First Presbyterian Church of Highlands exhibits a "Carpenter Italianate" style. This first Presbyterian effort in Highlands flourished throughout its first one hundred years and beyond. Serving not only the hundred or so year-round worshipers, and not only the four-fold increase of summer worshipers, its ministry has grown with the times and now reaches out to serve the Highlands community's child care needs.

CONTEXTS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historical Background and Social History Context

The First Presbyterian Church of Highlands contributes significantly to local social history as the first church built in this prosperous, early resort town.

Kansas natives Samuel Truman Kelsey (1832 - 1922) and Clinton Carter Hutchinson (1833 - 1909) had successfully started other towns in the second half of the nineteenth century such as Ottawa and Hutchinson, Kansas. In February of 1875 they arrived in the mountains of southeastern Macon county to establish a town on a broad plateau which had a spectacular elevation of some 4118 feet above sea level. In March of that year, they purchased 839 acres of this plateau grazing land from W.B. Dobson, and set out to develop the town which is now known as Highlands. Later in 1875, they published a pamphlet and ran advertisements which told of rich soil; not just for farming, but rich with gems and minerals. They also told of rich air; not only pure, but also healing. What Kelsey and Hutchinson had intended as a year-round town quickly established its attraction as a predominately seasonal resort destination offering health and relaxation. People were attracted from all over the United States, but the greatest response seem to come from Atlanta, Charleston, and New Orleans (Cobb 1982).

Because the founders wanted to attract moral, upstanding residents and visitors to their new town, they set out to establish a very high quality of life. The newly established amenities were widely advertised: Highlands Literary Society, Highlands Improvement Association, Floral Society of Highlands, and a Highlands Temperance Union (Kelsey 1876). Levi Branson's business directory indicated that although there were Baptist and Methodist churches in other parts of the county, there were no churches in Highlands. So in March of 1876, only one year after his arrival in this new town, S.T. Kelsey established the "Highlands Union Sunday School" in the Log Law House, a multi-use municipal building (Hudson Library vertical files). Kelsey himself established the church-focused community which he wanted for his newly founded town.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 8 Page 2

As early as 1833 the Presbyterian denomination had established itself in Macon County; and by 1856, Franklin Presbyterian Church [National Register 1986], a formidable Greek Revival structure of brick, boldly stated that the Presbyterians were here to stay. However, the newly established resort town of Highlands had to make its own statement. According to historian, William B. Bynum, the area west of the Blue Ridge was the “neglected ‘backyard’ of the Mecklenburg Presbytery” (Bynum, 1987). An 1884 report made by the Reverend William E. McIlwain of the Presbytery of Mecklenburg gives the only insight into the early Presbyterian history of Highlands. His report tells that there was a regular Presbyterian minister in Highlands as early as June, 1879, the Reverend A. Melvin Cooper of Michigan. Even a second minister, the Reverend James E. Fogartie of the Presbytery of Charleston, found no organized congregation in Highlands when he arrived in 1882, but only a “society composed of about half a dozen Presbyterians, a few Congregationalists, and some non-professors” (McIlwain, 1884).

However, great strides were being made to establish a Presbyterian church in Highlands. In September of 1883, Samuel and Katherine Kelsey, along with ten others (including the Reverend Fogartie) filed a petition to form a corporation known as “The Corporation of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands” (Book R, 1883). Its stated purpose was to hold real estate upon which to erect a building or buildings for “Divine Worship.” In October of 1883, the Kelsey’s sold to the Corporation, for one dollar, five prime adjacent lots on the south side of Main Street at Fifth Street “for the use and benefit of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands” (Book S, 1883). The deed stated that if the Corporation dissolved the lands and any improvements thereon would go to the Presbytery of Mecklenburg; however, a deed hearing and a revised deed revealed that the Presbytery of Mecklenburg would not accept the terms of the original deed since, to their knowledge, there was no organized church there [in their “backyard”]. About this same time one of the Corporation members, Margaretta Ravenel (Mrs. S.P.), a seasonal resident from Charleston, gave an adjoining lot on Main Street for the church to have, but not to build on.

Shortly after all of the land had been given, Margaretta Ravenel and her sister, Clarissa Burt (Mrs. A.A.) of Philadelphia, gave all the money needed for a fine church to be built on that land in memory of their sister, Mary Louisa Fleming. They also stipulated that in addition to being a memorial, their gift was a “free-will offering to Christ and his people, a token of love to the Master and of practical affection for His disciples especially those of the Presbyterian order” (Holt, 1985). By December of 1883, the *Blue Ridge Enterprise* reported that workmen had begun laying the foundation for the church. It was expected to be finished in the summer of 1884 and cost about \$3,000. By November of 1884, the newspaper reported that the bell had been hung and surely the church would soon be finished.

A bold headline in the *Blue Ridge Enterprise* announced that the fine church was dedicated on September 13, 1885. It is not known whether anyone minded that the church construction was more than a year beyond the scheduled completion date or that it had cost approximately \$6,600— more than double the initial estimates. *The Presbyterian* of October 7, 1885, reported: “At once a gem of artistic beauty and a most substantial structure this edifice would be an ornament to any town, and in fact is by far the best planned, and best constructed public wooden building in Western North Carolina.” The church served the Presbyterians of Highlands until 1910 when it closed for fifteen years (Minutes of the General Assembly of the Asheville Presbytery, 1909). No

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 8 Page 3

explanation for this bleak time can be documented, but it coincides with the hard times that befell the Episcopalians across the street. In 1929, the Asheville Presbytery [created to oversee the western portion of the Mecklenburg Presbytery] held a meeting in Highlands to reorganize the church. It had operated as a "Corporation" with officers since the beginning, and only elected the traditional elders and deacons after this reorganization (Minutes, 1929).

The decade of the 1930s saw emphasis on the church youth, and attendance grew from nineteen to sixty-three members. A manse was purchased in 1937 (Holt, 1985). In the 1940s the choir grew significantly as did the church facilities. The basement was excavated to create space for a fellowship hall with kitchen, restrooms, and classrooms. Throughout the summers, the Presbyterian Church was one of four churches to hold services for African-Americans (Holt, 1985). In 1965, a new educational building was constructed on the northeast corner of the church lawn. General landscaping and handicap accessibility to the church were also accomplished in the 1960s. Continued growth in the 1970s called for a balcony to be constructed in 1978 which increased the seating capacity by nearly one-hundred. The new administrative wing was added to the educational building in 1983. Social turmoil over the reunion of the factions of the Presbyterian denomination took its toll on the Highlands' congregation for a while. The 1990s has been a healthy era for the church thus far: all of the buildings are in good shape, the membership has grown to 150, a child care center serves the year-round needs of this resort town, and the congregation still swells to over 400 in the summer. Samuel Kelsey's dream of a religious presence in this resort town continues to come true each day at First Presbyterian Church in Highlands.

Architectural Context

First Presbyterian Church of Highlands is a simple embodiment of the practical and picturesque, achieved in a bucolic setting by a fine local carpenter. Begun in 1883 and completed in 1885, this is Highlands' oldest church building.

After Mrs. Ravenel and her sister, Mrs. Burt, pledged to build the church entirely at their own expense, their involvement did not end there. Although a member of the church and local carpenter, Marion Wright, was hired to build the church, there was always a Ravenel or two or three on the grounds to supervise the undertaking. Mrs. Ravenel instructed Mr. Wright "to hire only the best workers, because she did not want any shoddy work done" (Holt, 1985). The Ravenel family likes to tell how Mr. S. Prioleau Ravenel "personally supervised the selection of each piece of lumber, so that there would be no knot holes or imperfections in the structure (Holt, 1985). Even Mr. Ravenel's step-son, Thomas F. Parker of Charleston helped supervise the project.

Marion Wright was born in 1847 to James Wright, a carpenter and gold prospector; and to Jemima Norton Wright, daughter of Barak Norton, an early Macon County settler. In the 1880 census, Marion Wright was listed as a thirty-three-year-old, single farmer. He married in the early 1880s, and he and his wife were members of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands. Although his occupation was always listed as farmer, his love must have been carpentry, because he was known as a master carpenter early on. The talent of Wright, and the ideas of Ravenel and Parker, were greatly aided by the finest resources available. In addition to an

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 8 Page 4

unlimited supply of virgin timber, in Highlands at the time of the construction of the church, there was a shingle mill, two sawmills, a door and sash works, and a furniture factory (Branson, 1884). The care of a carpenter's hands is evident in the abundant, beautifully carved and planed woodwork through the church. There is no shoddy work to be found. Even after this beautiful accomplishment, years later when Marion Wright was seventy-three, he still referred to himself as a farmer, not a carpenter (1920 census).

Thomas Parker who was also a builder, designed the handsome pews and original communion table (Holt, 1985). But the overall design influence may have been Parker's greatest contribution. Through his travels or knowledge of nineteenth-century pattern books, he may have been very familiar with the Italianate style and responsible for the Italianate accent in the vernacular vocabulary of Wright.

No doubt the undeveloped knoll rising on the south side of Main street provided a natural canvas for a palette of romantic strokes suggested by Andrew Jackson Downing: variety, intricacies, and movement. Clearly a restrained classical-style church would have battled against the natural setting of hemlocks and rhododendron. Transferring Andrew Jackson Downing and Alexander Jackson Davis' characteristics of the rural cottage to a small, bucolic church would have been quite simple. Parker and Wright emphasized "the simplicity of arrangement...the simplicity of construction... and the simplicity of decoration" (Pierson, 1978). Downing had written that embellishment was usually limited to the entrance, primary windows, and the gables. Just as Downing had suggested, First Presbyterian's embellishments were restricted: the *entrance doors* were diagonally sheathed with beaded boards and featured wrought-iron hinges; the *primary windows* were handsomely surrounded with segmental arches; and the *gables* of the temple-like oriented facade were softened by the jerkin head roof. Italianate was the romantic choice to accent this simple building as evidenced in its double windows, nestled beneath segmentally arched hoods; and in its belfry with bracketed wide eaves rising like a campanile from the roof ridge.

Fortunately, the 1885 First Presbyterian Church maintains a high degree of architectural integrity. The growing congregation has been carefully accommodated. Many of the needs were met by expanding in the basement of the church rather than attaching awkward additions. While the 1978 balcony intrudes upon the interior space, care was taken not to damage original materials. Continued responsible stewardship will enable the First Presbyterian Church to continue boasting its historical significance as Highlands' *well-preserved* oldest church.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 9 Page 1

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Book S, pp.533 – 535, January 1885. Deed hearing and revised deed.

Book T, p.284, Maragaretta Ravenel to the Incorporation.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

First Presbyterian Church, Highlands
Macon County, NC

Section number 10 Page 1

McIlwain, William E., 1884. *Historical Sketch of the Presbytery of Mecklenburg: From its Organization, October 16th, 1869, to October 1st, 1884.* Charlotte: Hirst Printing Co.

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Women's Auxiliary, First Presbyterian Church - Highlands. Annual reports of the 1940s – 1990s. Located at the Presbyterian Archives in Montreat.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of all of tax parcel #4299 on the Macon County tax map #7530.01 and is indicated by a bold outline on that enclosed map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel which is made up of the individual lots originally given for the First Presbyterian Church and which have been continuously and solely associated with that church for the past 113 years.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MAIN ST., HIGHLANDS QUAD
MACON CO., NORTH CAROLINA

UTMS ZONE 17
NORTHING 3880.780
EASTING 299.660

NR



