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

1. Name

historic  Third Creek Presbyterian Church and Cemetery

and/or common

2. Location

North side SR 1973, 0.2 mile west of junction with SR 1957 (Baker Mill Road)

3. Classification

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4. Owner of Property

David Clark Knox, Clerk of the Session
name  Third Creek Presbyterian Church

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Rowan County Office Building, Office of Register of Deeds

city, town  Cleveland  vicinity of state  N. C.  27013

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

The Historic Architecture of Rowan County: A Catalogue of Surviving 18th, 19th, and Early 20th Century Buildings

title  has this property been determined eligible?  __yes  _no

date  To be published in 1983

depository for survey records  Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History

city, town  Raleigh  state  N. C.  27611
Third Creek Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, the oldest surviving Presbyterian church in Rowan County and one of the oldest Presbyterian church buildings in the State is an impressive two story brick building resting in the gently rolling landscape of western Rowan County north of Cleveland. The present church was completed in 1835 at the southeast edge of the large stone enclosed burying ground whose oldest surviving stone is dated 1776. The earlier church was located inside the walls of the burying ground as was the session house. A log session house was also erected in 1835. There was little change to the site from 1835 except for the deterioration of the cemetery's wall—until the 1920s when the stone wall was taken down. In 1949 the Session house was covered with an unfortunate brick veneer and a brick mausoleum was built over the grave of Peter Stuart Ney. In 1949 a two-story brick educational building was erected to the north of the sanctuary and connected to the church by a one-story three bay brick passage. In recent years the brickwork of the church has been repointed, flue stacks taken down, and a general refurbishing has restored the church's appearance and fabric.

Efforts by the Third Creek congregation toward the construction of a new church were initiated in 1833 during the pastorate (1832-1836) of the Rev. Andrew Y. Lockridge (1801-1876). The Subscription list for the church dated 12 September 1833 survives with the following prefix:

"We whose names are hereunto subscribed do promise to pay the several sums annexed to our names to a Committee consisting of Jacob Krider, W. B. Wood, Moses Graham, John Johnston, and Abel Graham, to enable said Committee to contract for the building of a brick Church at Third Creek of the following dimensions, viz: The house to be built fifty-five by forty, and sixteen feet high, the house to be completed in a plain but workman-like manner, with a sufficient number of doors and windows for such a house. One half of the subscription to be paid in six months from the present date, and the other when the house is finished."

Sept. 12th, 1833

One hundred and three members of the congregation subscribed nearly fifteen hundred dollars. Heading the list and subscribing one hundred dollars each were Robert Johnston (1779-1841), William Burton Wood (1794-1853) and Jacob Krider (1788-1874). Jacob Krider, the chairman of the Building Committee, was a wealthy planter whose plantation, Mt. Vernon (NR), was located on the waters of Fourth Creek a few miles to the northeast of the church. William Burton Wood was on the first Board of Trustees of Davidson College. (His son Daniel Burton Wood (1821-1910) entered the college when it opened in 1837. He graduated in 1841.) The bricks for the church were made near Baker's Mill and stone for the foundation and sills was quarried on property of the Culbertson family. According to the church histories slave labor was used in the construction of the church. The church is significant both as an example of meeting house architecture and for the remarkable degree of integrity it retains.
Resting on a low granite foundation, Third Creek Church is a rectangular three bay by four bay meeting house laid up in Flemish bond and covered with a gabled roof of cedar shingles. High in the west gable front is a recessed tablet inscribed "Third Creek Church Built 1835 by D. Lyles and H. Austin."

The three bays of the west front elevation are grouped in the center of the wall. There are two entrances on the first story here at either side of a central window opening. The hinged two leaf flush board doors are surmounted by five pane transoms. All window and door openings are topped by a flat arch. The doors and windows have granite sills. The wood door and window jambs, heads and transom bars are headed. The window openings on the first level contain six over nine sash while those on the second level contain six over six sash. Most, if not all, of the board and batten blinds at the windows are original.

The north and south side elevations mirror each other having first story entrances in their easternmost bays with windows above and in the other three bays. There are open steps into the basement furnace room under the sanctuary between the two westernmost bays of the north side elevation. A flue stack rises between the two center bays here. The east gable end of the church has a three bay division with a large three-part stained glass window in the center of the elevation (above the raised chancel). To the side and symmetrically disposed are windows at each level. There is also a tablet high in the east gable end. The gable ends of the church have flush simply molded eaves; however, a molded box cornice carries along the side elevations. Copper gutters and downspouts were installed in recent years.

The leaves of the front west doors fold back and open in toward the center bay into the shallow vestibule which carries across the west end of the church. At either end of the vestibule and beginning at the outside edge of the doors are stairs which rise along the brick exterior walls to either the north or south to the corners of the church and then turn along the side walls to the gallery.

Single board and batten doors opposite the front doors connect the vestibule with the sanctuary which follows a double aisle plan. The ceiling of the sanctuary is curved (vaulted) rather than flat and is flush sheathed. The plaster walls are painted white. The gallery carrying on the rear (west) and side (north and south) elevations is supported by tapering square wood columns and protected by a molded flat panel balustrade. The pews on both the main level and the gallery are original to the construction of the church and are made of large plain flat boards. Their unadorned rectilinearity is totally in keeping with the proportions of the church. The chancel at the east end of the sanctuary is raised on two levels and features rounded corners. The communion table is set at the front of the lower level while the pulpit, flower stands, sofa and flanking chairs are at the back of the chancel on the upper level. Kerosene lamps are attached to the columns.
On 13 October 1946 the Session of Third Creek Church voted to hold a congregational meeting on 10 November to consider the construction of an educational building. The building committee nominated by the Session 24 November 1946 and subsequently elected by the congregation was chaired by James Turner Graham. The two-story brick veneered gabled roof building was completed in 1949 and dedicated in the fall of 1950. The building is situated to the north of, recessed behind, and parallel to the church. A three bay gabled roof passage connects the educational building with the exterior door on the north elevation of the sanctuary. Doors in the center bays and windows in the outside bays, all set in arched panels faced with plaster, comprise the passage's elevations.

The educational building repeats in simple form the design of the church. The west front elevation, facing the cemetery, has a central first story entrance, flanked by windows in the outer bays. The paired doors here are sheltered by a bracketed gabled roof porch. There are window openings only in the outer bays on the second story level. The first story window openings are taller than those on the second floor; both are fitted with metal casements. The opposite east gable end elevation has a three bay division on the first story and the same two bay arrangement on the second story. The north and south side elevations have an asymmetrical six bay arrangement. A brick chimney stands near the center, and between the center bays, of the south elevation. In recent years a shallow gabled roof frame ell has been added to the east end of the north elevation. The building contains, on the first story, a large meeting room behind the full south elevation with classrooms and a kitchen behind it along the north elevation. A stair in the southwest corner of the meeting room rises to the second story which has classrooms along either side of a center hall. The finish is very simple.

The Session House, a one-story gabled roof weatherboarded log building also dating from 1835, stands north of the church. The small rectangular one room building has a door and window on the south front elevation, a chimney on the east gable end, and a pair of symmetrically placed windows on the north side elevation. Its exterior appearance is entirely the product of an unfortunate remodeling of the building in 1949 by the Ney Memorial Association. Ney had conducted a school for boys in the building. A stone tablet to the left (west) of the door is inscribed:

Built 1835  
Rebuilt 1949  
In Memory of  
Peter Stuart Ney  
By  
Ney Memorial Assoc.  
Latta B. Ratledge, Pres.  
Dr. J. Edward Smoot, Vice-Pres.  
Charles W. Allison, Secy. & Treas.

When the brick veneer was added the eaves were covered with simple plain boards and the gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles. The window openings have modern six-over-six sash. Fortunately the interior was little disturbed. Its pine floors and flush
horizontal sheathing remain intact. The design of the mantel at the fireplace is copied from Plate 50 of Asher Benjamin's *The Practical House Carpenter* (1830).

The Ney Memorial Association also paid for the erection of a brick mausoleum over the grave of Peter Stuart Ney. That work was completed by September 1953 and the white marble marker made by Boyne and Sprowl, Columbia, S.C., and erected at the grave by Osborne Giles Foard, was encased. It was at Foard's plantation, Rowan Mills, that Ney died 15 November 1846. The mausoleum was dedicated late in 1953 with Luther H. Hodges, Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina as the principal speaker.

To the west and northwest of the church is a large grass covered cemetery containing several hundred grave markers in various forms. The only survivors of the stone wall which once encircled the burying ground are the granite piers which support the hand forged iron gate. The most conspicuous markers in the cemetery belong to members of the prominent Knox family. In addition there are numerous stones signed by known nineteenth century stonemasons. Those identified in a survey of the cemetery include the following:

- W. T. White (Charleston, S.C.)--Mrs. Margaret Cowan (1821-1852), Mary Letitia Morrison (1816-1851), and Margaret Matilda Morrison (1844); G.(eorge) Vogler (Salisbury, N.C.)--Elijah Renshaw (1821-1853), and Susana Baker (1801-1852); Tiddy (Charlotte, N.C.)--John (1778-1828) and Martha (1781-1819) Graham; T. Walker--Lydia Wood (1802-1822)
- Eliza J. Wood (1795-1828), and John Webb (1784-1826); J.(ohn) Buis (Salisbury, N.C.)--Mary E. Allison (1849-1867); McNinch & Wilson (Salisbury, N.C.)--Mary Burke (1790-1862); McNinch (Charlotte, N.C.)--Nenian S. Cowan (1845-1864) and William H. H. Waddell (1840-1862); Milholen & Webb (Statesville, N. C.)--David Calvin Brandon (1839-1862), Thomas A. Burke (1859), Harriet Adaline Burke (1820-1862), Lydia Waddell (1808-1872), Samuel A. Jones (1846-1862), and Nancy Hughes (1814-1873); J. T. Webb (Statesville, N.C.)--Elizabeth M. Phyler (1843-1878); and J. T. Webb & Son (Statesville, N. C.)--Joseph J. Knox (1854-1881).
8. Significance

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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Third Creek Presbyterian Church, set in the rolling Piedmont landscape of western Rowan County between the runs of Third and Fourth creeks, possesses statewide architectural and historical significance. The present building, a vernacular meeting house retaining many of its original furnishings and fittings, is a remarkably intact example of ecclesiastical architecture surviving little altered for nearly 150 years. One of the earliest surviving Presbyterian churches in North Carolina, the building is also important as one of a very small number of churches erected in the 1820s and 1830s during the somewhat sleepy years between the late-Federal period and flourishing ante-bellum Creek Revival period. Although the early history of the congregation remains somewhat obscure, the Third Creek congregation is the spiritual descendant of the preaching stand here dating from the mid-eighteenth century. The earliest surviving gravestones in the cemetery date from 1776: the oldest documentary evidence for a church building dates from 1792. The history of Third Creek Church is tightly interwoven with the history of the Third Creek settlement. Beginning with the pioneer settlers Samuel Young, John Kerr, and John Brandon, the history of the region and its agricultural development mirrors the growth in membership and prominence of the Third Creek congregation. The family names of many of its early elders and leaders remained prominent through the long 200-plus year history of the church; the Knox, Steele, Graham, and Phifer families are to be especially mentioned.

Criteria Assessment:

A. Third Creek Presbyterian Church is associated with the settlement of Piedmont North Carolina by the Presbyterian Scotch-Irish in the eighteenth century and reflects the strong ties between religion and agriculture which dominated rural Piedmont culture into the early twentieth century.

B. The church is associated with the lives of a large number of prominent planters and leaders of Rowan County, including members of the Wood, Fleming, Graham, Knox, Steele, Young, Kerr, Luckey and Phifer families. Jacob Krider (1788-1874), a prominent planter, printer, and the builder of Mt. Vernon (NR, 1980) was the chairman of the building committee supervising the construction of this church and a principal contributor. Also on the committee was the wealthy planter William B. Wood (1794-1853), a benefactor of Davidson College (1837) and a member of its first Board of Trustees. Both are buried in the adjoining church cemetery as are a number of other prominent Rowan County citizens including: James Graham Ramsay (1823-1903), ten years a state senator and a member of the Confederate States Congress; Samuel Young (1721-1793), a member of the Provincial Congress (1774-1775), member of the Committee of Safety (1775), and a member of the state legislature 1781-1782; the Rev. Barnabus Scott Krider (1829-1865), a son of Jacob Krider and pastor of Thyatira Presbyterian Church (Rowan County); the Rev. Joseph D. Kilpatrick (1764-1829), the pastor of the Third Creek congregation from 1792 until his death, who operated a classical school nearby for an undetermined time; and Robert Knox (1804-1885), a planter and member of the large Knox family whose family farm has been nominated to the National Register as the Knox Farm Historic District, and his son James Wilson Knox (1854-1926). The church is also associated with the
life of the Rev. Andrew Y. Lockridge (1801-1876) during whose pastorate at Third
Creek (1832-1836) the present building was built.

C. Third Creek Church, one of the oldest intact Presbyterian churches in North Carolina
and a distinguished example of vernacular meeting house architecture, reflects the
simple but competent craftsmanship of the piedmont builder/craftsman.
Third Creek Presbyterian Church is located in the Scotch-Irish Township of Rowan County near the Cleveland community. Records relating to the church's history before 1837 have been lost. Fortunately, a fairly complete picture can be reconstructed from court documents, physical evidence, and the records of other area churches. A preaching station was established on Third Creek by John Thomson (or Thompson) by 1751. Scores of Scotch-Irish had settled on the Yadkin River tributary by that time. Thomson, like most of the other settlers, had followed a route from Pennsylvania to Virginia to piedmont North Carolina. "Thomson's Stand" on Third Creek, probably at or near the site of the present-day church, was one of several regular stops for the itinerant Presbyterian. The Third Creek land belonged to Samuel Young (1721-1793), who in time became one of Rowan County's principal Patriot leaders. Young served as an arbitrator in the 1771 Regulator uprising, chairman of the Rowan Committee of Safety in 1775, member of the Provincial Congress in 1774-1775, and member of the state legislature in 1781-1782. The exact nature and evolution of the Third Creek preaching point cannot be determined with any accuracy. Since Thomson died in 1753 it is possible that it fell into disuse in the years immediately thereafter. At any rate, two pieces of evidence indicate that services were held on Young's land in the 1770s. An extant collection of sermons includes several delivered there by Samuel McCorkle during the Revolution. The oldest tombstones in the Third Creek graveyard are dated "June 1776", making it highly likely that the first church building was in place by that time.

The earliest written record of this building is a deed dated May, 1792, from Samuel Young to John Luckey, George Niblock, and Thomas Dickey, acting as trustees for the congregation. By its terms Young conveyed to the church a tract of less than two acres which included "the now standing Meeting House, Session House and Grave yard." In 1825 Young's grandson Samuel sold an adjacent tract of two and one-half acres to the church. Samuel McCorkle (1746-1811), led the congregation at Third Creek from 1788 to 1792. Succeeding him and serving until 1829 was Joseph Dickey Kilpatrick (1763-1829). These early days of the church coincided with a period of great revival on the Southern frontier. Third Creek's first two ministers disagreed about the propriety of certain manifestations of this revival, splitting along what is sometimes called "Old Side/New Side" lines. Some, such as the Reverend McCorkle, objected to shows of enthusiasm, such as shouting and wild singing, among the faithful. Kilpatrick, on the other hand, was "anxious for a revival in his charge, and not anxious about the attending circumstances of swoons or exercises." For three years after Kilpatrick's death in 1829 Third Creek Church did not have a full-time pastor. Andrew Y. Lockridge (1801-1876) filled the post in 1832; during his four-year term the present church building was constructed.

The first steps toward building were taken in 1833 with the circulation of a subscriber list specifying a structure of fifty-five feet by forty feet by sixteen feet "to be completed in a plain but workmanlike manner, with a sufficient number of doors and windows for such a house." The building committee consisted of Jacob Krider (chairman), W. B. Wood, Moses Graham, John Johnston, and Abel Graham. The builders, D. Lyles and H. Austin, used brick from nearby Baker's Mill. With the completion of the building in 1835, Lyles and Austin placed a tablet in the north gable noting the event and their efforts. The new sanctuary afforded the congregation many times the space they had in the old log church. In 1838 they hosted the annual meeting of the North...
Carolina Presbyterian Synod, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Synod of the Carolinas and the twenty-fifth of the Synod of North Carolina. During the regular services the balconies were filled by slaves, especially on communion occasions. On those days, according to church historian James Graham Ramsay, whites preceded the blacks in order of communing "and made room for them, without unnecessarily leaving the church themselves." Whites and blacks continued to worship together, if not on the same level, until after the Civil War. Ramsay, writing in 1892, recalled the immediate postwar years:

Those were times of unrest and apprehension, and consequently, of great change. Most of our colored members—and they were numerous— withdrew, as they did from other churches, to organizations of their own.

The church also lost many white members but emerged from the Reconstruction years in a "reasonably prosperous condition," according to Ramsay. The architectural fabric as well as the makeup of the congregation has remained relatively unaltered since Reconstruction. The stone fence surrounding the graveyard, dating to the eighteenth century, was removed in the 1920s. An educational (Sunday school) building, attached to the east side of the sanctuary, was completed in 1949. In 1961 Third Creek Church was included in a volume devoted to antebellum Presbyterian churches in the South. In 1977 and 1978 the church entered into a program of renovation and restoration. The 1835 sanctuary was roofed with cedar shakes, copper guttering was installed, and the exterior walls were repointed with mortar. Renovation plans also called for restoration of the original interior ceiling, replacement of window glasses, and the hanging of oil lamps.

For over a century the mystery surrounding the identity of Peter Stewart Ney has drawn the curious to his grave of Third Creek Presbyterian Church. Ney, who taught school in the session house now located behind the church, has been alleged to be France's Marshal Michel Ney, the "bravest of the brave" by Napoleon's description. The schoolteacher, who died in 1846, is said to have borne a resemblance to the French officer, who was by most accounts executed for treason in 1815. Yet adherents to the legend claim that Ney appeared in Charleston in 1816, that he seemed inexplicably knowledgeable about Napoleon's campaigns, and that he himself admitted to his true identity on his deathbed. Interest in the case led church elders to grant permission in 1887 for the exhumation of Ney's remains, the examination of which failed to turn up either the steel plate or bullets that Marshal Ney was said to have carried in his body. Nevertheless at least three lengthy, detailed defenses of the claim, relying heavily on the memories of Ney's former pupils and the testimony of handwriting experts, appeared in subsequent years. Bolstered by these claims members of the Peter Stewart Ney Association, formed in 1945, placed a mausoleum over the grave and a brick veneer on the log session house. Extensive research by William Henry Hoyt since that time has presented those defenders of Ney's claim with their most serious challenge. Hoyt amassed conclusive evidence that Marshal Ney did not escape the firing squad. He also found an 1820 application for citizenship filed by Peter Stewart Ney in South Carolina. In that petition Ney claimed to have been born in Scotland in 1787 (Marshal Ney, all other accounts agree, was born in France in 1769). This discovery led Hoyt to Scotland where he found the baptism record of Peter McNee, the son of John McNee and Isbal Stewart. On this basis, Hoyt concluded that Peter Stewart Ney of Rowan County could not have been Napoleon's "bravest of the brave."
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

NOTES


4 Rowan County Deeds, Book 12, p. 619; and Book 28, p. 448. The Third Creek congregation has come to accept the 1792 date as the official beginning of the church. J. G. Ramsay's historical sketch, cited above, was first presented at the 1892 centennial celebration. Of the occasion, at which over 1,000 people were in attendance, the church secretary wrote:

The weather was fine; the music good; the order excellent; the speeches appropriate and edifying; the reunions numerous and joyous; and the occasion altogether too memorable to be soon forgotten. (Ramsey, Historical Sketch, 18)


6 Fleming, History, 50-51; Ramsay, Historical Sketch, 7. According to Ramsay (who had attended church in the original building) the log church "was removed, and with it the pulpit canopied by its sounding board, and fronted by the desk of the precentor, who led the music, passed away forever; and the present more commodious brick edifice was erected."

7 Fleming, History, 65; Ramsay, Historical Sketch, 16.

8 Ramsay, Historical Sketch, 8


11 Salisbury Evening Post, 9 June 1928.

12 James A. Weston, Historic Doubts as to the Execution of Marshal Ney (New York: Thomas Whitaker, 1895); J. Edward Smoot, Marshal Ney--Before and After Execution (Charlotte: Queen City Printing Co., 1929); and LeGette Blythe, Marshal Ney: A Dual Life (New York: Stackpole Sons, 1937).

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: 18.20 acres

Quadrangle name: Cool Springs

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification:
The property being nominated consists of all that tract of land being the site of the church, its buildings, and the cemetery which belong to the Third Creek congregation. A plat of that property, made in May 1978 by Thomas Hudson, is enclosed.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

Architectural description and criteria assessment by Davyd Foard Hood; Historical research by Michael Hill and Davyd Foard Hood

organization: Division of Archives and History
date

street & number: 109 East Jones Street
telephone: 733-6545

city or town: Raleigh
state: N. C. 27611

date

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

- national
- state [X]
- 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: [Signature]

date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:
date

Chief of Registration


Rowan County Deeds.


Third Creek Presbyterian Church and Cemetery
Cool Springs Quad.
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000
A 17 528440/3957405
B 17 528640/3957480
C 17 528660/3957180
D 17 528460/3957030
E 17 528405/3957295