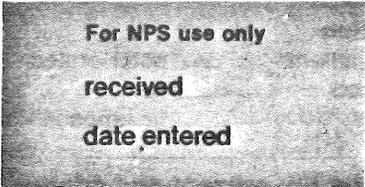


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 Church of the Redeemer

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1202 Riverside Drive N/A not for publication

city, town Asheville X vicinity of ~~congressional district~~

state North Carolina code 037 county Buncombe code 021

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Church of the Redeemer
c/o Father John Southern

street & number 1202 Riverside Drive

city, town Asheville X vicinity of state North Carolina 28804

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Buncombe County Courthouse

city, town Asheville state North Carolina 28807

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Buncombe County Historic Properties
Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978-79 federal state county local

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

city, town Asheville, state North Carolina 28805

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

The Church of the Redeemer is a small, native stone cruciform chapel sited on a bluff overlooking the French Broad River, one mile north of Asheville, North Carolina. A small, grassy cemetery occupies an embankment just above the chapel, and, beyond it, the hilltop is covered in pine forest. Just to the east and slightly downhill from the chapel is the large, concrete block parrish house, separated from the chapel by a courtyard ornamented by a solitary piece of religious statuary. A paved drive winds its way up from a parking area below the parrish house and approaches the courtyard from the north. Two-lane NC 191 hugs a shelf at the foot of the bluff, following the French Broad River just beyond. Wooded hills and a railroad right-of-way form the view on the far side of the broad and muddy river.

The Church of the Redeemer is a faithful representation of a small Romanesque chapel. Its thick walls are built up of locally quarried, irregularly coursed ashlar with unfinished mortar joints. Articulation in the stonework is minimal: a watertable shelf above an uncoursed foundation (visible on the exposed, downhill side only) and projecting voussoirs above its round arch openings.

The building is only about fifty feet in length, its transept extending no more than six feet beyond the outer walls of the nave. Each side wall is divided into four bays: on the south (river side) by four round arch windows, including one in the south transept; on the north by three windows and the entrance doorway. The chancel end of the nave is bayed and illuminated by a three-part, central-and-flanking-windows composition.

The roof is steeply pitched and covered in dark grey slates, the broad and prominent surface being relieved by two continuous bands of scalloped slates. The chancel end closes on a single hip which is truncated to present a gable of similar scale as those over the transepts. The bargeboards are all unadorned, flat boards. A small, simple cross is mounted on the ridge at the chancel end.

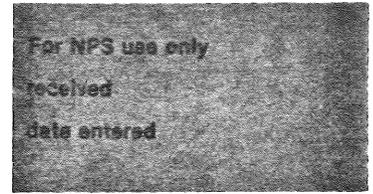
Early in this century a small, gabled vestibule was built outside the original entrance, providing a weather lock. The enclosure was covered in German siding and painted white. Apparently at that time the church's original unframed doors with their massive wrought strap hinges were brought out onto the addition. At present, modern slab doors occupy the original doorway. The arch above the doors contains its original woodwork: narrow horizontal sheathing overlaid by a simple crossing of moldings.

Except for an elaborate rood screen introduced around 1920, the interior of the church is consistent with its simple, sturdy exterior. The stone walls are exposed and the ceiling is open to a simply-detailed hammer beam roof. The ceiling is sheathed in narrow, beaded boards running parallel to the principal rafters.

A central aisle between pairs of simple pews leads to the rood screen and chancel. The rood screen is of Gothic tracery design: four bays with balustrade to either side of a central entrance bay, with a pulpit projecting from the northern-most bay. The screen is surmounted by a polychrome rood of refined simplicity. Directly behind the roof is the altar, of similar Gothic detailing.

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Continuation sheet	Description	Item number	7	Page	one
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Most of the church's windows are filled with leaded glass in simple, geometric patterns. The transept and chancel windows, however, contain sophisticated stained glass compositions. That in the north transept is a signed Louis Tiffany design depicting a fallen WWI soldier.

The small cemetery on the hillside just above the church, in which several members of the church builder's family are buried, is included in this nomination. The large, concrete block parrish house just downhill, much altered in recent years, is not.

The Church of the Redeemer is something of an architectural oddity in its southern mountain context. What it represents quite well is the immigration into the Asheville area of a broad spectrum of cosmopolitan personalities and their sometimes exotic dreams following the coming of the railroad in 1880.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1886–88 **Builder/Architect** Dr. Francis Willis (presumed)

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

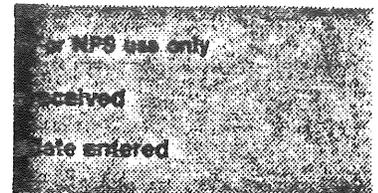
The Church of the Redeemer is a small, native stone cruciform chapel sited on a bluff overlooking the French Broad River, just outside of Asheville, North Carolina. The building features stained glass in round-arch windows--including a Tiffany window signed by Louis Tiffany--banded slates on a hammer beam roof, and finely crafted rood and rood screen introduced in the late teens. Dr. Francis Willis, a British physician, constructed the building on his private estate between 1886 and 1888 as a place of worship primarily for his patients. In 1898 Willis gave the church and land to the Asheville Missionary District of the Episcopal Church in America, later to become the Western Diocese of North Carolina. Originally called St. Philip's, the chapel was consecrated as the Church of the Redeemer on June 29, 1901.

CRITERIA ASSESSMENT

- A. The Church of the Redeemer is atypical for its geographical context and represents the opening up of western North Carolina to--and conversely the importation into WNC of--national and international culture following the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s.
- C. The Church of the Redeemer is significant architecturally as a faithful representation of a small Romanesque chapel.

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Continuation sheet HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8 Page 1

The Church of the Redeemer (Episcopal) was constructed nearly a century ago on a bluff overlooking the French Broad River near Woodfin. The solid stone structure was the creation of Dr. Francis Willis, a British physician, who built the private chapel on his 100 acre estate so that he could meet the spiritual as well as physical needs of his patients.

Born in Greatford, Lincolnshire, England, Dr. Willis emigrated to the United States in 1883 and settled in the Woodfin section of Buncombe County.¹ In three separate transactions, he acquired nearly 100 contiguous acres on the French Broad River. On the second tract, which contained thirty-three acres and was purchased on February 18, 1885, Willis began construction of the church.² Much of a personal fortune inherited from his prominent family was poured into the effort; benefit dinners provided additional funds. Willis personally supervised the building activity and local citizens, many of whom looked to the doctor for medical care, provided the labor.³ The church is made of native stone with a foundation hewn out of solid rock and is shaped in the form of a cross. More than two years were required for construction with the first service being conducted by the Rev. H. S. McDuffy on June 15, 1888.⁴

Dr. Willis was the prime mover and guiding influence in the early history of the Church of the Redeemer, which until 1901 was called St. Philip's Chapel. According to a contemporary, "He was small of stature, straightforward in dealing with others, energetic, and a man of his word."⁵ Influenced more by his British heritage than that of his adopted country, Dr. Willis broke the color line that separated the races. He not only attended to the physical needs of both whites and blacks but invited them to worship in common brotherhood. To serve the black communicants, however, a special cottage was erected, but the increasing presence of Jim Crow legislation and its effects upon the society soon brought an end to the black ministry.⁶

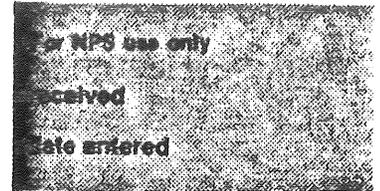
By the late 1890s Willis decided that greater benefits could be derived for the congregation through affiliation with the Diocese of the Episcopal Church in North Carolina. On October 2, 1898, Dr. Francis Willis and his wife, Catherine Maria, deeded 2 16/100 acres and the church to the Trustees of the Missionary District of Asheville for \$10.00. Official consecration took place on June 29, 1901 (St. Peter's Day), and under the name Church of the Redeemer, it was received by the Jurisdiction of Asheville as an Organized Mission.⁷ The Missionary District of Asheville became the Diocese of Western North Carolina during the term of the Rt. Rev. Junius M. Horner, Bishop (1898-1933).

Though he had turned jurisdiction of the church over to the diocese, Dr. Willis retained a strong influence. His son, also named Francis Willis, had received a bachelor of divinity degree from the Seabury Divinity School in Minnesota and had gone west to work as a missionary among the Indians. Dr. Willis sent for his son and took him to the church where he declared, "Here is your work."⁸ Out of respect for his father, the Rev. Francis Willis accepted the position and served the church from 1902 until 1908. Dr. Willis died on November 30, 1906, six years after his wife; both are buried in the Redeemer churchyard. Two years later, the Rev. Francis Willis returned to his work among the Indian population.

The death of Dr. Willis had a negative impact on the church. Regular worship was discontinued for nearly ten years with ministers from Asheville coming to the Redeemer only for occasional services. The church's dark days were lightened when Col. (an

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Continuation sheet HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8 Page 2

honorary title) Garland A. Thomasson, an active member of St. Andrews Brotherhood of Trinity Church in Asheville, took an interest in the Redeemer.¹⁰

Thomasson served as lay reader when the priest in charge, the Rev. Willis G. Clark of Trinity Church, conducted services at the Redeemer. About 1917 Thomasson and other members of the St. Andrews Brotherhood began conducting evening prayer, soon started a Sunday school, and organized a children's choir.¹¹ The church revived and resumed a sense of vitality in the community. Thomasson joined as a full time member and pledged much of his income as a successful lawyer to a renovation of the structure. He replaced the initial temporary altar with a permanent altar, rood and rood screen excellently constructed by local craftsmen. He gave generously towards the purchase of new pews and a reed organ. Regarded as a fine musician, Thomasson often displayed his talents in worship services.¹²

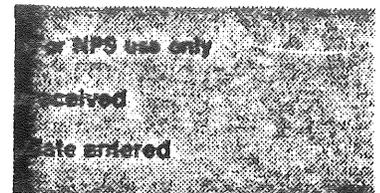
By the early 1920s, the rejuvenated church felt the need for a parish house. Through the generosity of Mrs. Carrie Carr Mitchell and Mrs. Junius Smith, a two-story concrete block structure was erected in 1925 opposite the church. The first floor, on a lower level than the church, contained a kitchen, dressing room and several smaller rooms. The upper floor housed an auditorium and stage.¹³ Still used as a parish house, the structure was expanded by an addition in 1974 and now doubles as a church school.

In the cemetery behind the church lie the remains of numerous members, including several of the Willis family. Attempted burials in more recent years, however, revealed a large bed of hard rock about three feet below the surface. Blasting through the rock to achieve the necessary depth for a grave jeopardized the church's foundation and forced a new burial policy. Interment in the cemetery is now limited to ashes only.¹⁴

The year 1974 was a significant one in the history of the Church of the Redeemer. The diocese upgraded its status from mission to parish and deeded the property to the new parish vestry.¹⁵ Father John Southern is the present rector of the church with its 180 communicants and the congregation is looking forward to 1988 and a centennial celebration of the first service.

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Continuation sheet HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8 Page 3

FOOTNOTES

¹Rev. Norvin C. Duncan, Pictorial History of the Episcopal Church in North Carolina 1701-1964 (Asheville: Norvin C. Duncan, 1965), 132, hereinafter cited as Duncan, Pictorial History; and Buncombe County Deed Books, Office of the Register of Deeds, Buncombe County Courthouse, Asheville, Deed Book 46, p. 349, hereinafter cited as Buncombe County Deed Book.

²Buncombe County Deed Book 46, p. 349; Book 48, pp. 59, 481; and Book 114, p. 56. The last deed transfers the property to the Episcopal diocese and identifies it as that purchased from J. W. Ponders on February 18, 1885.

³Duncan, Pictorial History, 132.

⁴James B. Sill, Historical Sketches of Churches in the Diocese of Western North Carolina Episcopal Church (Asheville: Church of the Redeemer Publishing Office, 1955), 48, hereinafter cited as Sill, Historical Sketches. See also Duncan, Pictorial History, 132.

⁵Sill, Historical Sketches, 48; and Researcher's interview with Father John Southern, Church of the Redeemer, November 9, 1984, hereinafter cited as Father Southern interview.

⁶Sill, Historical Sketches, 49.

⁷Buncombe County Deed Book 114, p. 56; and Duncan, Pictorial History, 132.

⁸Sill, Historical Sketches, 68.

⁹Sill, Historical Sketches, 49, 68. See also Duncan, Pictorial History, 132.

¹⁰Duncan, Pictorial History, 132; and Sill, Historical Sketches, 68.

¹¹Sill, Historical Sketches, 68.

¹²Duncan, Pictorial History, 132.

¹³Sill, Historical Sketches, 69; and Duncan, Pictorial History, 133.

¹⁴Father Southern interview.

¹⁵Father Southern interview.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .65±

Quadrangle name Asheville, N.C.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>7</u>	<u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>5</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>	<u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached Buncombe County tax map, Beaverdam, sheet 18. Nominated property outlined in red.

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	<u>N/A</u>	code
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state		code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Description by Doug Swaim, Preservation Specialist
Significance by Jerry Cross, Research Specialist

organization N.C. Division of Archives and History date January 10, 1985

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone 919-733-6545

city or town Raleigh, state North Carolina

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.

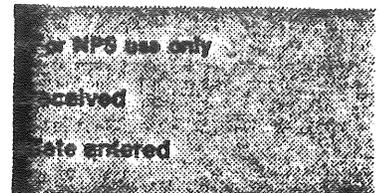
State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. King, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 11, 1985

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	

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

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Item number

9

Page

1

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Duncan, Rev. Norvin C. A Pictorial History of the Episcopal Church in North Carolina 1701-1964. Asheville: Norvin C. Duncan, 1965.

Sill, James B. Historical Sketches of Churches in the Diocese of Western North Carolina Episcopal Church. Asheville: Church of the Redeemer Publishing Office, 1955.

Southern, Father John. Interview, November 9, 1984.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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37'30"

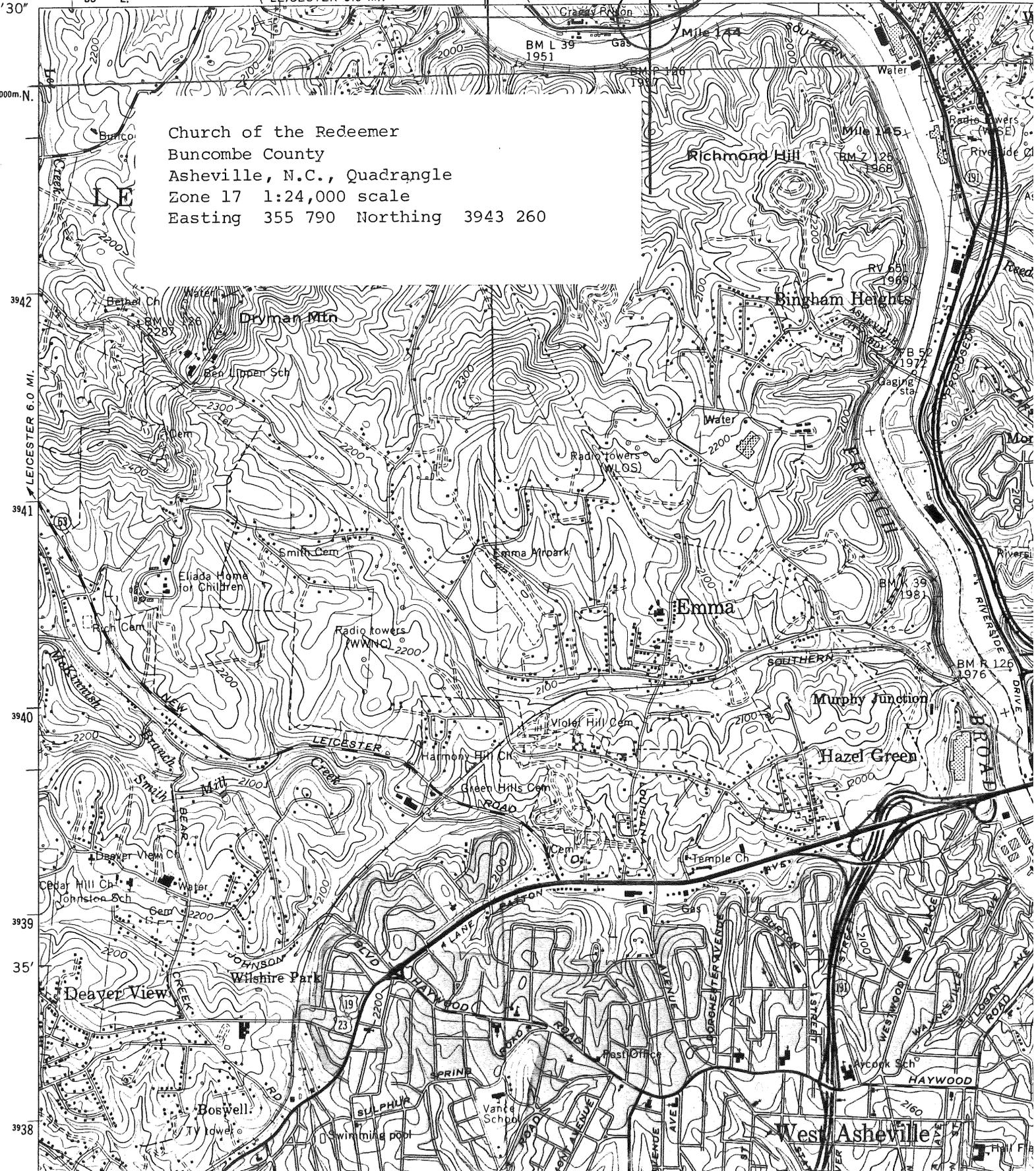
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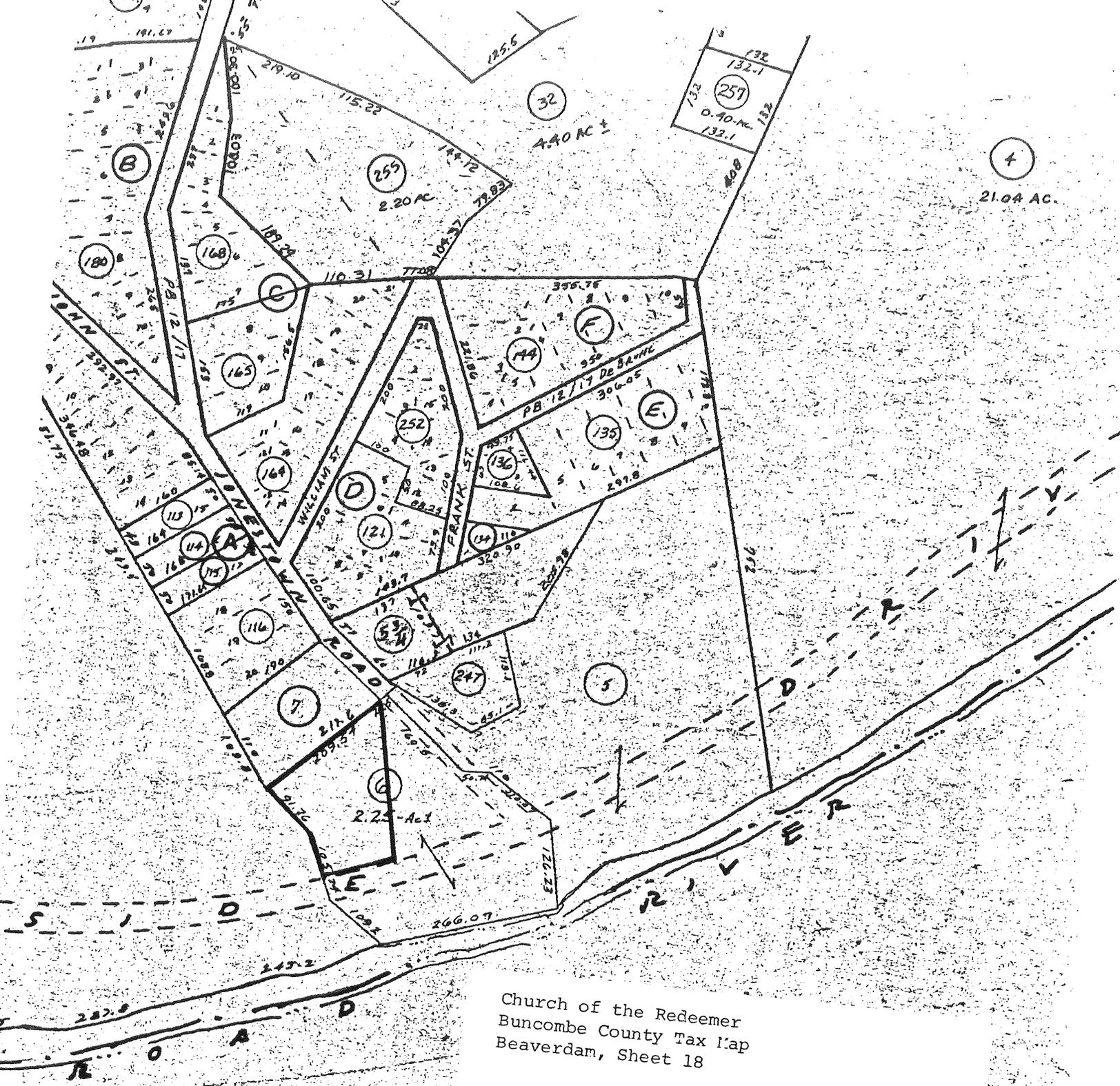
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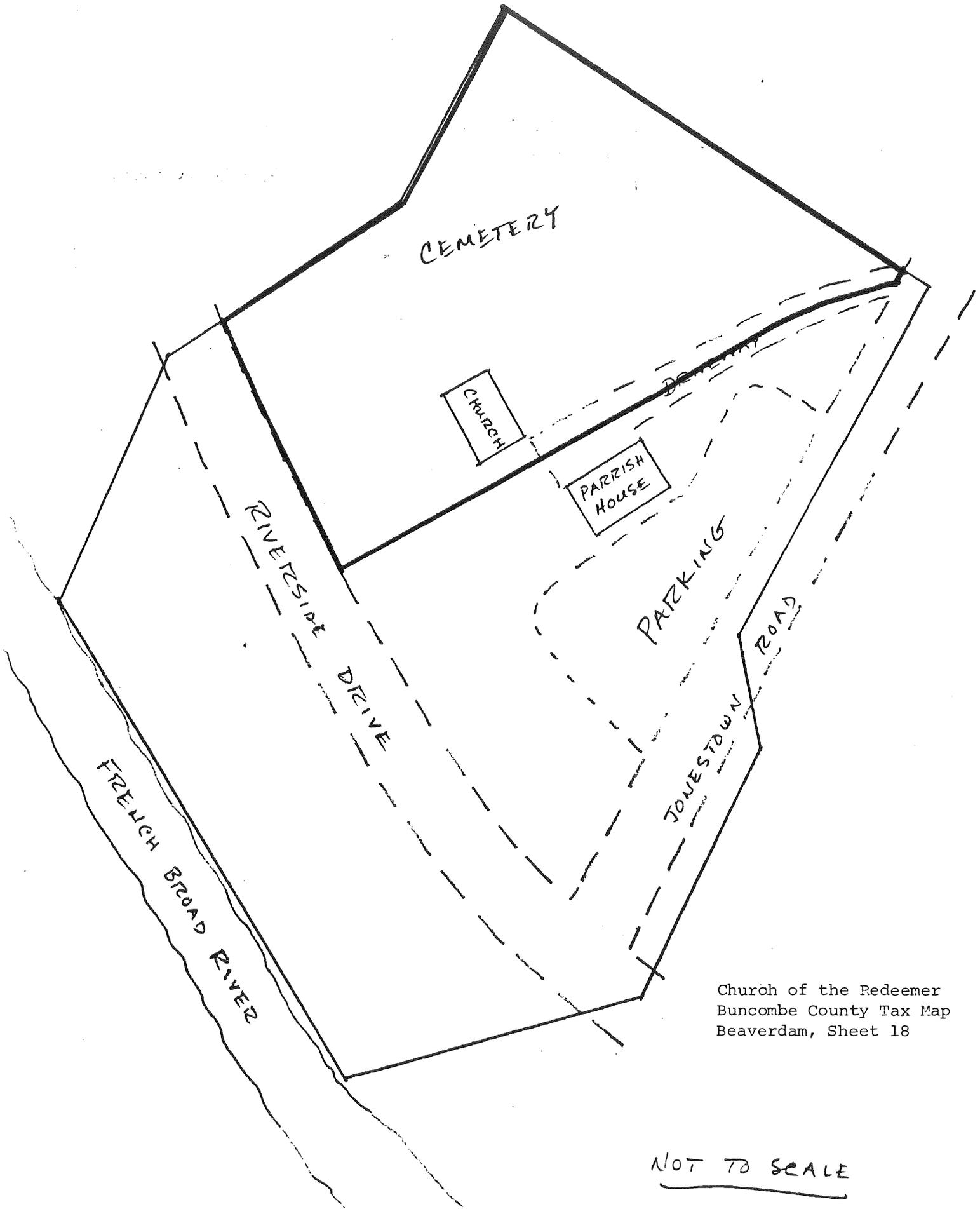
35'

357

Church of the Redeemer
Buncombe County
Asheville, N.C., Quadrangle
Zone 17 1:24,000 scale
Easting 355 790 Northing 3943 260







Church of the Redeemer
Buncombe County Tax Map
Beaverdam, Sheet 18

NOT TO SCALE

