

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Presbyterian Church
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 12 W. Fort Street N/A not for publication
city, town Marion N/A vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county McDowell code 111 zip code 28752

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Historic and Architectural Resources in
Downtown Marion, North Carolina

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. 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. See continuation sheet.

William S. Fair Signature of certifying official 2-4-91 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Religion: religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Religion: religious structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof tile

other tin

limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Presbyterian
Church

DESCRIPTION

The First Presbyterian Church is perhaps the most exuberant example of a Neo-Classical Revival design in Marion. Built in 1923, the same year as the present courthouse, it continues a building tradition that was obviously gaining in popularity at the time.

The imposing structure is sited high on a knoll overlooking W. Fort Street, and is on a central axis to the street. A river rock retaining wall, steps, and piers, probably built by Pink Williams, builder of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, is located at the entrance to the present parking lot. It appears this lot originally may have been a large, open lawn on the south side of the church. Another river rock wall delineates the south edge of the present church lawn, forming the north edge of the present driveway.

The structure is a one story plus balcony brick building set on a raised basement. It is basically rectilinear in form, with the front of the building facing W. Fort Street. The most striking feature of this building is the monumental Ionic tetrastyle pedimented portico on the east (front) side. Instead of the characteristic dentils, modillions adorn the cornices of the pediment and those of the main block of the building where the entablature continues that of the portico. The middle of the portico contains a round stained glass window with four evenly spaced keystones accenting the molded frame. The egg and dart motif of the Ionic capitals also appears in the molding over the front doorway. Columns and other trimwork on the yellow brick building appear to be limestone. An unusual feature of the entry portico is that doorways enter the church at either side of slightly projecting wings, rather than a central entrance. Stained glass is in abundance throughout the building, appearing in every window above the basement level. Windows are classic examples of the Roman arch combined with the three-part Palladian window. Arched windows with radiating brick voussoirs and keystones alternate with tripartite windows with transoms. Pairs of one-over-one double hung windows are on the upper portion of the building, at the level of the balcony in the high-ceilinged sanctuary. Basement windows are one-over-one double hung, with patterned frosted glass. Other unique

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details of the exterior of the building include the pressed tin soffit of the entry portico and the limestone belt course which separates the basement from the sanctuary level. The roof is of red tile laid in overlapping layers. The only exterior change to the building in recent years has been the replacement of one window on the north elevation with an arched doorway and a ramp to the parking area. Brickwork and keystone framing the original window remain intact.

The interior of the building is every bit as magnificent, and historically intact, as the exterior. Upon entering the sanctuary, one is struck by the immense size of the pipe organ on the west wall. It is clearly a focal point, but so are the magnificent pressed tin ceiling and massive ceiling beams. A curving balcony forms a U shape at the rear of the sanctuary, and pews are gently curved as well. All stained glass windows are trimmed with wood, much the same as they are on the exterior. All woodworking, including paneling on the balcony, is dark. All doors are two-panel. Fixtures are original. Baseboards are approximately eight inches wide. Stairs to the balcony, upon entering the church, have delicately turned balusters. Downstairs, beneath the sanctuary, are two choir rooms and an assembly room. Pews here are a light-colored oak. A partition wall, Craftsman in design, separates the assembly hall from the choir rooms. Multi-paned fixed windows and two doors punctuate the wall. A fire in the sanctuary in 1955 caused some damage, the most significant of which was the necessity to rebuild the pipe organ. Other architectural features, miraculously, were not harmed. In 1951-52, the present manse was built on the site of the old one. In 1962, the educational building at the rear of the property was constructed. Also during the 1960s, air conditioning was added to the church.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1923

Significant Dates
1923

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Greene, James E. (architect)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

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First
Presbyterian
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SUMMARY

First Presbyterian Church is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C as an outstanding example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture in Marion, finely crafted and designed. It reflects a prosperity in the town during the 1920s which allowed for a congregation such as this one to build one of the finest buildings in Marion.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Architecture

First Presbyterian Church is an outstanding example of the use of the Neo-Classical Revival style in Marion in the 1920s. Significant details include the monumental portico on the front of the building and classical details elsewhere such as Palladian windows, Ionic columns, and use of the arch over windows. Additional exterior details include the pressed tin soffit of the entry portico and a tile roof. The monumental interior is as intact as the exterior, including an immense pipe organ, pressed tin ceiling, and stained glass windows. Exuberant and grand, this church building is one of the most intact buildings architecturally in Marion, attesting to the wealth and prosperity of the time when it was built, employing the best in design and craftsmanship.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On June 25, 1845, three of McDowell County's earliest settlers, William M. Carson, George M. Carson, and J. L. Carson, for one dollar, gave the lot to be used for building a Presbyterian church.¹ Two years later, in 1847, a small, Greek Revival building had been constructed where the present church now stands. This was the first church built in Marion, and it served the Presbyterian congregation for nearly 80 years, until the present building was completed in 1923. Some of the original families associated with the founding of the church in 1845 include Erwin, Carson, Sorrels, Greenlee, Neal, McClelland, and Laughlin. The 1847 church was built by Ephraim Clayton, who also built the 1845 county courthouse in a Greek Revival style.

From 1911-1934, under the guidance of Reverend James Cameron Story, the church underwent its period of greatest growth, which necessitated the construction of a larger building.

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The present church building was designed by Birmingham, Alabama architect James E. Greene.² According to the April 13, 1922 Manufacturer's Record, bids were being accepted for construction in April 1922, at an estimated construction cost of \$35,000. Full sets of drawings and specifications could be received at the offices of Dr. Guy S. Kirby, building committee chairman, or at the offices of the architect. The 1847 brick church was torn down, and these bricks were re-used in the new church.³ The present building, when completed, included seating for 700, 20 classrooms, a pastor's study, ladies' parlor, dining room, steam heat, modern furnishings, and a pipe organ.⁴ The Women's Auxiliary, begun July 31, 1923, helped to raise funds for the organ, pews, and sliding partitions in the lower assembly room.⁵ The building was not dedicated until 1943 when the mortgage was paid; at that time it was valued at \$50,000.00.⁶

Pastors who have served the church over the years include George McKenzie Gibbs (1845-1851), Thomas N. Paxton (1851-1882), Colin Alexander Monroe (1882-1887), Columbus W. Maxwell (May-October, 1890), William Henry White (1891-1899), Willis Sherrard Wilson (1900-1905), Henry Frank Beatty (July-September, 1906), Alexander Napier Perryman (1906-1910), James Bell Black (July-September, 1910), James Cameron Story (1911-1934), Alexander R. Batchelor (1934-1937), Carl McMurray (1938-1971), and George B. Hutchins (1972-present).⁷

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FOOTNOTES

¹McDowell County Deed Book 2, page 60.

²Manufacturer's Record, April 13, 1922, p. 72.

³First Presbyterian Church 1845-1970, Marion, NC,
unpublished booklet.

⁴"Buildings Erected in 1923", McDowell News, 27th of
August, 1950.

⁵First Presbyterian Church 1845-1970.

⁶Ibid.

⁷From photographs in the educational building.

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Presbyterian Church

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alexander, Ted. "Reconnaissance Survey of McDowell County,"
1985.

"Buildings Erected in 1923," McDowell News. 27th of
April, 1950.

First Presbyterian Church 1845-1970. Marion, NC, unpublished
booklet.

Manufacturer's Record. April 13, 1922.

McDowell County Deed Book 2, page 60.

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Section number Photos Page 1

PHOTO LIST: FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of Property.....	First Presbyterian Church
City and State.....	Marion, North Carolina
Photographer.....	Ted Alexander, 1985 photos Sybil A. Bowers, 1987-88, 1990 photos
Date taken.....	1985, except where noted otherwise All 1985 and 1987-88 photos have been field verified in 1990.
Location of original.....	Western Office, Archives & History negative Asheville, North Carolina

Photo A
First Presbyterian Church; 12 West Fort Street
Looking southwest at front facade of church.

Photo B
First Presbyterian Church; 12 West Fort Street
Looking northwest.

Photo C
First Presbyterian Church; 12 West Fort Street
Exterior window detail.

Photo D
First Presbyterian Church; 12 West Fort Street
Exterior detailing on portico.

Photo E
First Presbyterian Church; 12 West Fort Street
Interior sanctuary.
October 1987.

Photo F
First Presbyterian Church; 12 West Fort Street
Interior detailing.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:
Western Office, Archives & History
Asheville, NC

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	7
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4	0	8	3	5	0
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3	9	4	9	2	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is indicated by the bold line defining the area labeled First Presbyterian Church as shown on the accompanying sketch map.

See continuation sheet

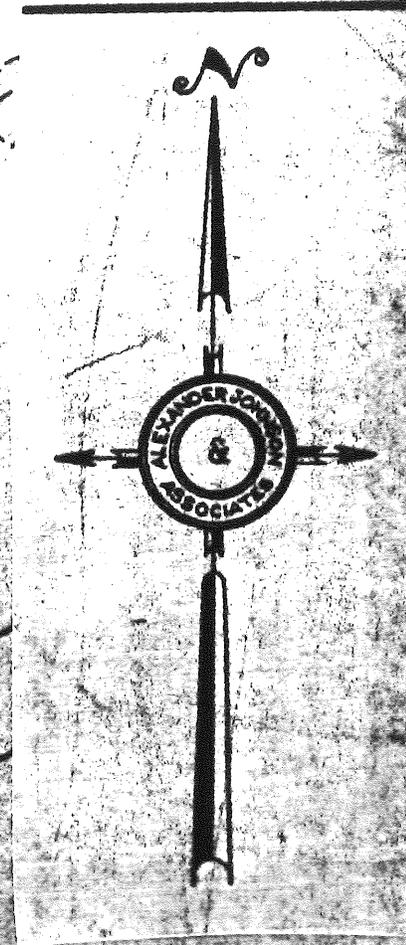
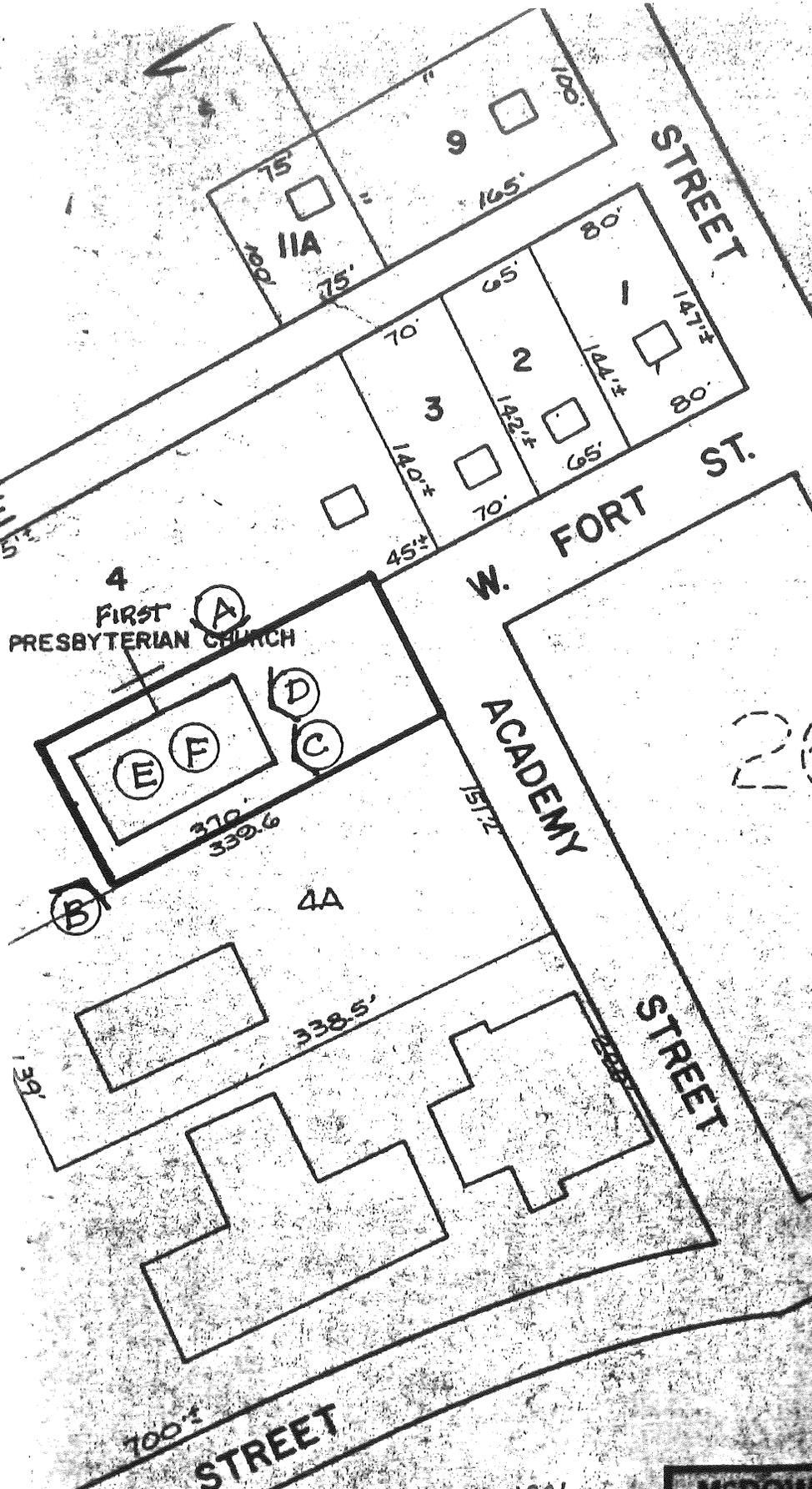
Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the church and sufficient setting within the lot which has been historically associated with the church. It excludes two Non-Contributing properties on the same lot.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sybil Argintar Bowers, Preservation Planning Consultant
organization Bowers Southeastern Preservation date August 31, 1990
street & number P.O. Box 15722 telephone (704) 253-1392
city or town Asheville state NC zip code 28813



SCALE: 1" = 100'

SKETCH MAP

(A) PHOTO AND DIRECTION OF VIEW

MCDOWELL COUNTY, N.C.
MARION TWS.
SHEET NO.
43C
JANUARY 1968



3952
 42'30"
 ALL PROPERTIES ARE LOCATED
 IN MARION, NC, MCDOWELL C
 MARION WEST QUAD
 ZONE 17

MAIN STREET HISTORIC
 DISTRICT
 3951
 A: N 3949430
 E 408420
 B: N 3949570
 E 408590
 C: N 3949010
 E 408910
 D: N 3948920
 E 408740
 N 3949140
 E 408440

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CH.
 N: 3949200
 E: 408350

MAIN ST. HISTORIC
 DISTRICT
 3949
 DEPT HISTORIC DISTRICT
 N: 3948850
 E: 408540

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
 N: 3949020
 E: 408320

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN
 CHURCH
 N: 3949020
 E: 408320
 40'

3947
 3946

N 4.5 MI
 WICKSBURY 33 MI
 (MARION EAST)
 4655 111 NW
 GLENWOOD 4 MI
 RUTHERFORDTON 23 MI

