

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 Forest City Baptist Church  
other names/site number First Baptist Church

### 2. Location

street & number 301 West Main Street  not for publication  
city, town Forest City  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Rutherford code 161 zip code 28043

### 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>	_____ 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	<u>1</u>	_____ objects
			_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

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. Fin, Jr. 8-7-89  
Signature of certifying official 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

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
RELIGION/religious building

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
RELIGION/religious building

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Neoclassical Revival

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Brick

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roof Stone/Slate  
other Wood

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Forest City Baptist Church complex (now called First Baptist Church) is located on a knoll on a corner near the Forest City business district, in Rutherford County, North Carolina. The 1915 brick church and adjoining 1927 Alexander Memorial building face northeast onto West Main Street, a major east-west thoroughfare; a tire and battery business is to the northwest; railway tracks mark the southwest boundary; and South Church Street is to the southeast. Forest City's downtown is laid out around a rectangular public square, and the location of the Neoclassical Revival style church, at a bend in the road west of the square, makes it a highly visible and dignified presence in the community. Originally, the church was surrounded by large oak trees, some of which remain and blend with ample lawns and foundation plantings of woody flowering shrubs to provide a pleasant, spacious, park-like atmosphere.

The original, 1915 portion of the church is a cruciform, symmetrical, solid red brick building approximately 73 feet wide by 95 feet deep overall. The form of the two-story building is that of an octagonal core surmounted by an eight-sided, slate-covered, pyramidal roof from which rectangular pedimented-gable wings project on the four, wider (northeast, northwest, southwest, and southeast) elevations. The pedimented wings are linked by one-story rectangular flat-roofed units with turned balustrades set into the shorter elevations of the octagonal core. Rising above these small units, which accommodate vestibules and seating space, the upper portion of the core's narrow angled walls are capped by gables at the base of the pyramidal roof. The balustrade on the western flat-roofed unit continues along the rooftop of a compatibly-designed small addition fronted by an arcade built at the same time as the 1927 Alexander Memorial Building addition to connect it to the 1915 church. It is likely that the rooftop balustrades were added in 1927.

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

1915

1927

Significant Dates

1915

1927

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

McMichael, James M./Longest & Tessier

Casey and Fant/W. H. Hand & Sons

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

Summary

Eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for architecture, Forest City Baptist Church (now First Baptist Church) is significant not only as a fine 1915 Neoclassical Revival building, but also as the work of James M. McMichael, one of North Carolina's important early 20th century architects. McMichael, active in North Carolina from 1901-1930, designed churches, courthouses and commercial buildings in North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina. The adjoining Alexander Memorial Building, similar in style to the earlier McMichael building, was designed by the firm of Casey and Fant, Anderson, South Carolina, and completed in 1927. The sensitive melding of the two create an impressive and significant facade. This is a physical representation of the history of increasing prosperity and aspirations of a Baptist congregation in a small piedmont community following the turn of the century.

Architectural Context

The introduction of the Neoclassical Revival style at the Chicago Fair's Columbian Exposition in 1893 changed the face of America's towns, both large and small. The imposing style with its monumental proportions, sturdy construction materials, and staunch focus on order and symmetry lent an air of authority to all building modes: civic and educational buildings, residences, and churches. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the World War may have dampened enthusiasm for the construction of such imperialistic structures. This, however, was not true in Forest City, North Carolina, where, in 1915, a fine Neoclassical Revival style church replaced a simple brick Victorian-era one. The most notable Neoclassical Revival style building in town, Forest City Baptist Church has been a dominant feature of the town's landscape since its construction.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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The brick walls of the 1915 portion feature a projecting drip course; soldier and decorative courses; and, between the stories, decorative brick panels centered with plain tiles. All major windows are of stained glass with concrete sills. Window openings are either rectangular or round-arched and have flat stone keystones in brick lintels. There are small round vents high under the eaves of the brick-veneered tympana of the northwest, southwest, and southeast pediments.

The full-height tetrastyle Ionic portico is very nearly the width of the front wing. Typical of the Ionic order, all cornices are denticulated. The tympanum originally was brick-veneered, with a round vent, but later was stuccoed and painted white, probably in 1927. The unfluted wooden columns on low concrete pedestals are arranged so that the middle space is widest, enframing the entrance. Brick pilasters with Ionic capitals define the portico on the elevation. The porch floor, five steps above grade, is of broken red tiles set in concrete. The ceiling is coffered with denticulated trim. Above a pair of twelve-paneled varnished wood front doors is an elliptical hooded and bracketed pediment. On each side of the entrance is a rectangular window. At the second story, windows correspond to the fenestration below.

Inside the church, on each side of the front door, a paneled stairway leads from the spacious vestibule to the balconies. Each has paneled newels and a landing at the bend. To the left of the vestibule is a small classroom, now containing pews. To the right of the vestibule is the connector, known as the Memorial Hall, which leads to the Alexander Memorial Building.

On the wall opposite the outside entrance, two sets of double doors enter the spacious sanctuary, which is the full height of the building. Seating is auditorium style, with three ranks of slightly curved pews. To each side, the gabled wings originally were used as classrooms and second-story balconies. In 1955 partitions were removed; the floors of the wings were lowered; steel posts were installed to support the balconies; and oak pews, matching the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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original pews, replaced folding "theater" seats. Two wide aisles connect the vestibule to the pulpit area. The bowled sanctuary floor has a 23-inch drop. The pulpit area, raised approximately two feet above the sanctuary, and tiered choir behind fill the southwest gabled wing with a radius of 24 feet and are paneled in dark wood. At the back of the choir rises a two-manual, 29-rank Zimmer pipe organ containing three ranks of pipes from the 1915 organ and chimes. The organ was custom designed and built by W. Zimmer and Sons, Charlotte, NC, and was enlarged in 1948 and 1970. Centered between shallow balconies containing organ pipes is a curtained opening to the baptismal pool, relocated from the right side of the pulpit area.

Windows are of stained glass. All paneling and exposed woodwork was originally covered with dark varnish, and the balconies and choir loft were rimmed with brass rails and red velvet curtains. In the 1955 refurbishing, the walls and woodwork were painted beige and champagne (except for choir loft paneling); the rails and curtains were removed, and in the balconies replaced with painted wood panels. A simply decorated octagonal recess is centered on the multi-faceted cove ceiling. From the center of the recess drops an original frosted glass bowl light fixture. This and smaller fixtures have been augmented by modern ceiling lighting.

The adjoining Alexander Memorial Building is a rectangular brick structure with a slate-covered truncated hip roof. It is two stories on a raised basement which becomes a full three stories on the northwest elevation due to the slope of the site. This addition is 48 feet wide by 116 feet deep. It was built in 1926 and occupied in March 1927 as an educational building housing classrooms, kitchen and auditorium. Its monumental tetrastyle Ionic portico, very similar to that on the church, shelters three of the facade's five bays. A pair of beveled-glass front doors is topped by a leaded transom and wooden entablature under a large multi-paned, round-arched window. All of the other windows are rectangular with six-over-one double-hung sash, concrete sills, and brick soldier course lintels. At the basement level on the northwest side, the rear windows were closed off in 1980. A wooden porte-cochere with fluted square posts and denticulated trim was added in 1980,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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extends from the northwest elevation, and shelters a pair of plain doors.

Inside, the main staircase is lit at the landing by a large window over the front door. The interior originally contained meeting rooms, social hall, and kitchen in the lower level off of a central hall; and classrooms opening off of a central hall on the other floors. The kitchen was removed when the fellowship hall was added in 1980. The lower level has been converted to classrooms and meeting rooms. One room on each floor features a brick fireplace with deep mantel supported by corbel brackets. Some rooms now have islands of dropped ceilings, making room for HVAC equipment and modern lighting fixtures, while preserving the original ceiling heights at the margins. Some of the original furnishings remain.

Continuing growth after 1927 resulted in several additions to the church complex. The chapel addition, 1956-57, is a rectangular, brick-veneered two-story building attached to the rear gable end of the sanctuary. It has a parapeted flat asphalt-covered roof and plain modern casement windows. The southeast elevation has a pair of paneled doors sheltered by a narrow porch with broken pediment surround. The addition houses a chapel, church offices, library, music suite, and classrooms. The rear wall and part of the eastern wall of the southern gable end of the church was obscured by its incorporation into the chapel/office building. The interior was remodeled in 1980. The 1980 fellowship hall, attached to the rear of the Alexander Memorial Building, is a windowless, rectangular, brick-veneered structure with a low-pitched gable roof. Doors on three sides are topped by broken pediments. A covered "mall and atrium" were created in 1980 by roofing over the open space between the southwest end of the church, the chapel addition, and the Alexander Memorial Building. Interior walls of the "mall," originally the exterior sanctuary walls, still show off original decorative brickwork, now painted a light color, and the stained glass windows. One new door was cut into the church wall as part of this alteration. In the Alexander Memorial Building some windows were closed off, and a double door was replaced. Forest City Baptist Church has been the home of a rapidly growing congregation, and the additions reflect this growth.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4 Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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However, the major later additions, the chapel and fellowship hall, are placed to the rear of the significant earlier buildings, enabling their architectural integrity to remain largely intact.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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Forest City Baptist Church is the town's only known work of architect, James M. McMichael (1870-1944). Currently, amazingly little is known about this Charlotte-based architect who designed churches and civic buildings across North Carolina. At least eighteen McMichael churches have been identified in North Carolina and include the 1914 French Broad Avenue Baptist Church in Asheville (Wells letter); Page Memorial United Methodist Church in Aberdeen (National Register nomination); St. John's Baptist Church in Charlotte (National Register nomination); and churches in Lincolnton, Elizabeth City, and Gastonia (Bishir). He also designed the 1903 Anson County Courthouse in Wadesboro (Wells letter). From the examination of these buildings, it is evident that McMichael enjoyed designing imposing buildings in the Neoclassical Revival style.

In the early 1920s, the size of the congregation outstripped the classroom space in the McMichael building, so educational facilities were constructed and attached to the church in 1926-27. Designed by the firm of Casey and Fant of Anderson, South Carolina, and built by W. H. Hand and Sons of Belmont, North Carolina, the addition was called the Alexander Memorial Building. The paired Neoclassical porticos emphasized the increasing prosperity of this manufacturing and agricultural community after the construction of new textile mills in the vicinity and the installation of electricity and a public water system.

### Historic Background

A Baptist congregation was organized at Cool Springs in 1848 about 5/8 mile northwest of the site of the present First Baptist Church (History, 1939, p. 1). Tradition holds that the group started with seventeen settlers meeting in the home of John Bostick, said to have built the first house in the settlement in 1825. (Carpenter, Milestones 1848-1986, p. 1) In 1855, Bostick sold the church 3.3 acres of land for a meeting house and burying ground (Deed Book 46, page 347). In 1867, the construction of the Carolina Central (now Seaboard) railroad line interfered with access to the log church and a new frame building was constructed in 1867 on land closer to town that is now part of the present Cool Springs Cemetery (History, 1939, p. 1). In 1887, the town was incorporated as Burnt Chimney, and in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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1887 was changed to Forest City. The following year that congregation, now known as Cool Springs Baptist Church, constructed a new building on property owned by The Reverend James H. and Mrs. Lenora Yarboro, who deeded the land to the church in 1895. (Deed Book 68 Page 620). This simple, vernacular, brick church on a corner lot is said to have been the first brick building in Forest City. The 131-member congregation moved into the new building on February 22, 1889, and later that year selected the new name of Forest City Baptist Church. In 1894 there were 170 church members; by 1898, 232 members (Carpenter, Milestones, p. 1-4).

Forest City Baptist Church was the town's only Baptist congregation at the turn of the century, and as economic conditions in the town improved, so did the fortunes, and the size, of the congregation. In 1904 the first bank was opened and in 1910 electricity and piped water were installed throughout Forest City, but the roads were still unpaved. By 1913, the Baptist congregation required larger facilities and plans were begun for a new church building. The land, adjacent to the 1889 building, was donated by businessman Jacob F. Alexander and physician Dr. Guilford Young (Deed Book 112, page 323). Young was the first mayor of Burnt Chimney. The pair also agreed to pay half the cost of construction, to be matched by the congregation (Carpenter, Milestones, p. 5-6). The contract to construct the church was given to the firm of Longest and Tessier, Greensboro, NC, for \$15,000 (Wells letter). James M. McMichael, of Charlotte, was the architect. The congregation moved into the church on February 21, 1915, and increased its numbers with the baptism of fifty-seven members on that day. The old church was used as a public school from 1917-1922 and demolished in 1923 (Carpenter, Milestones, p. 8).

In 1922, the name of the church was changed to First Baptist Church. Main Street was paved in 1924, and the following year plans were laid for the addition of an educational building to be attached to the northwest wall of the church. Construction was completed in 1927. Designed by the Anderson, South Carolina, firm of Casey and Fant, and built by W. H. Hand and Sons, of Belmont, NC, the addition was named for Jacob F. Alexander, who died in December, 1925.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 1.7 acres

UTM References

A 

17	421000	3910260
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

Zone	Easting	Northing

D 

Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area is indicated on the accompanying tax map by a double solid line. The scale of the map is 1" = 100'.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include the Alexander-Young tract upon which the nominated building stands and the Yarboro tract which historically is associated with Forest City Baptist Church as the site of the 1889 church. The Yarboro tract is now grassy lawn. The Huntley, Hollingfield, and Meares tracts have been omitted because, although owned by the church, they are now paved parking lots.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Jean Hooper, Preservation Consultant  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date May 1, 1989  
street & number 102 Shady Oak Drive telephone 704/274-3988  
city or town Asheville, state NC zip code 28803

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   1   Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 1 Forest City Baptist Church, Forest City,  
Rutherford County, North Carolina

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### Forest City Baptist Church/First Baptist Church

Forest City Baptist Church  
Forest City, Rutherford County, North Carolina  
Photographer: Mary Hooper  
Date: April 1, 1989  
Negatives located: Western Office of Archives and History,  
Oteen, NC

[Letter in ( ) keyed to tax map]

- #1 - Overall shot taken from west (a)
- #2 - Facade of 1915 section, taken from northeast (a)
- #3 - Facade of 1927 section, taken from northeast (b)
- #4 - Polygonal first story projection and wall in angle of gable on second story of 1915 section (a)
- #5 - Exterior wall of 1915 section now painted and enclosed in atrium (f)
- #6 - Exterior rear. Left front, 1980 fellowship hall; left rear,  
1927 Alexander Memorial Building; center, atrium;  
right,  
1957 chapel building, taken from southwest (b,c,d,f)
- #7 - Central ceiling of sanctuary (a)
- #8 - Entry doors to sanctuary, pews and paneling of balcony (a)
- #9 - Pulpit and choir loft (a)

3914000m N.

3913

3912

20'

3910

3909

FOREST CITY BAPTIST CHURCH

FOREST City QUAD

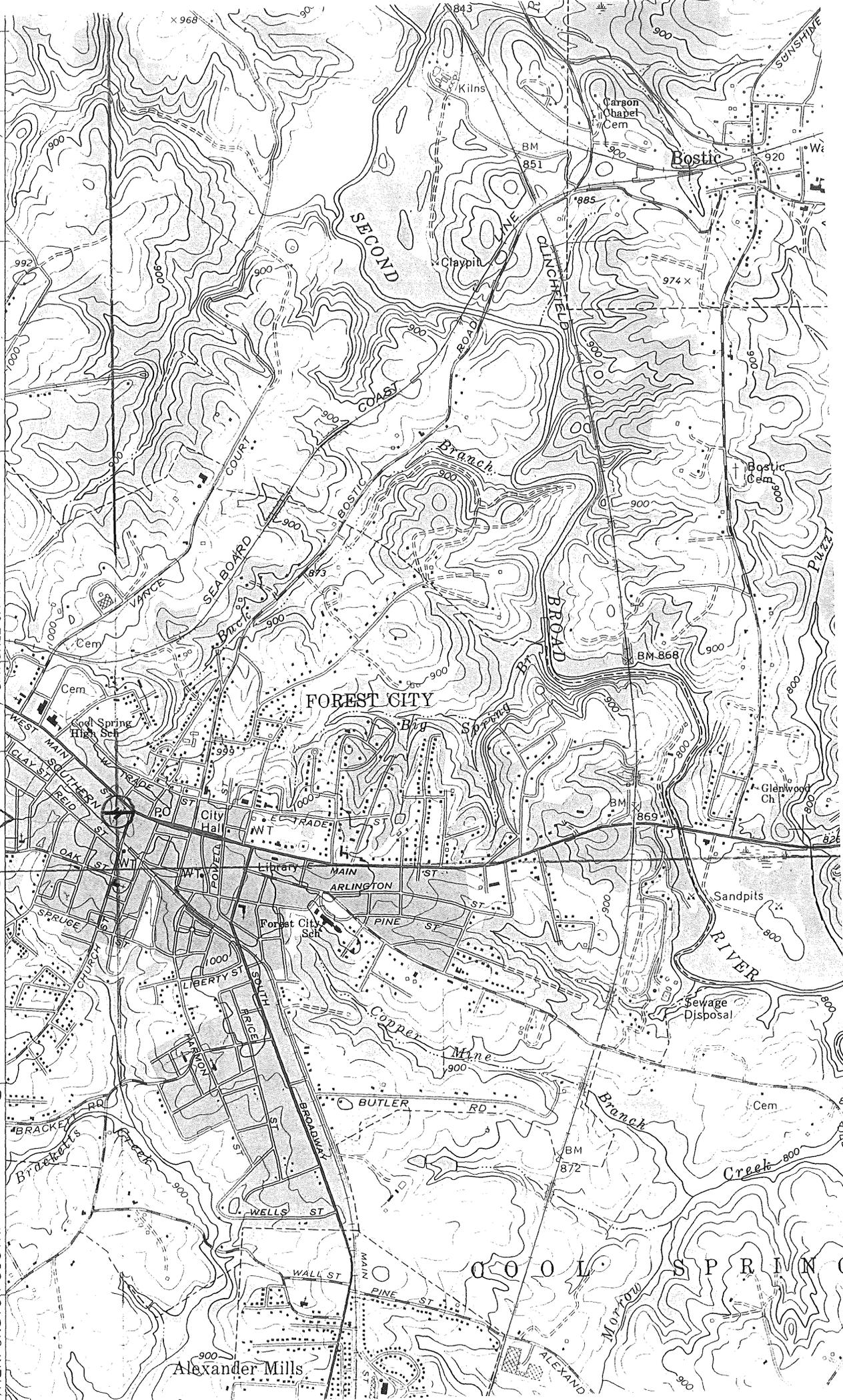
UTMS

Easting 17:421000

Northing 17:3910260

ASHVILLE 53 MI.  
SPINDALE 3.4 MI.

4654 IV SW  
THERFORDTON SOUTH)



Alexander Mills

O O O L S P R I N C

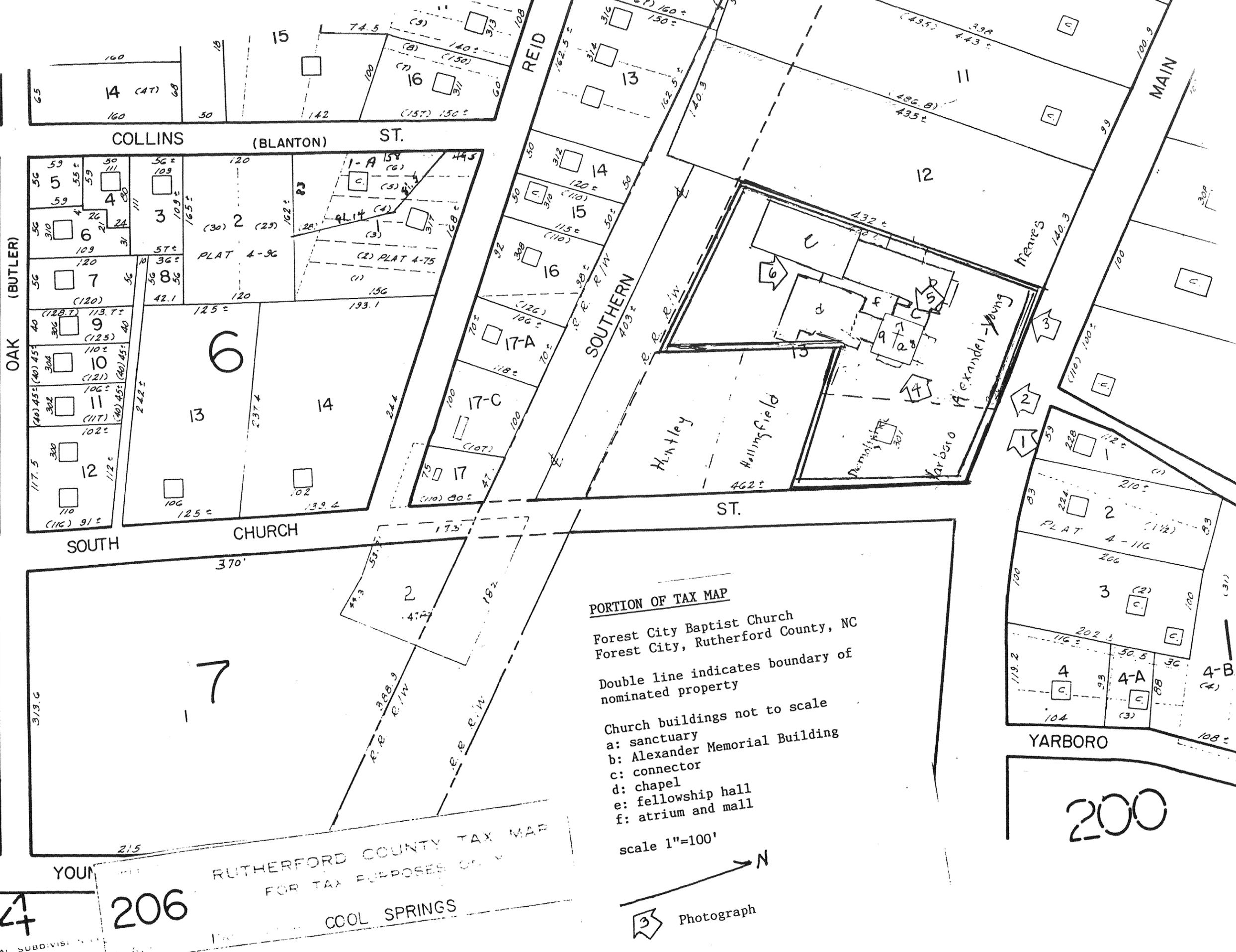
205

204

204

206

200



RUTHERFORD COUNTY TAX MAP FOR TAX PURPOSES ONLY

COOL SPRINGS

LEGEND: NUMBER IN ( ) INDICATES ORIGINAL SUBDIVISION LOT NO.  
 OPEN NUMBER INDICATES TAX MAP LOT NO.  
 DASHED LINE IS ORIGINAL SUBDIVISION LOT BOUNDARY  
 SOLID LINE IS LIMIT OF OWNERSHIP

11

