

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Thyatira Presbyterian Church, Cemetery and Manse

and/or common

2. Location

Church and cemetery are at the end of a private land off the west side SR 1737 (White Road); street & number the manse is on the east side SR 1737, just north of its not for publication

intersection with N.C. 150

city, town Mill Bridge vicinity of

state N. C. code 037 county Rowan code

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

4. Owner of Property

name	Mr. James W. Albright, Clerk of Session Thyatira Presbyterian Church Route Three, Box 245	The Rev. George Calhoun Thyatira Presbyterian Church Route Two, Box 610
street & number	Salisbury, N. C. 28144	Salisbury, N. C. 28144

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number 402 North Main Street

city, town Salisbury state N. C. 28144

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

The Architecture of Rowan County(;) A Catalogue and History of Surviving 18th, 19th title and Early 20th Century Buildings has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date Summer 1983  federal  state  county  local

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

city, town Raleigh state N. C. 27611

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Thyatira Presbyterian Church, Cemetery and Manse is a complex of religious and historical significance to Rowan County and the State of North Carolina. The properties being nominated, although they are on contiguous property, are distinctly separated by SR 1737 (White Road) which extends north from its intersection with NC 150. The Church is located at the end of a private drive off the northwest side of SR 1737 in a wooded tract shaded by numerous oak and other deciduous trees. The drive leading to the church runs along the east side of the building and continues northward to the large cemetery behind the church. The drive enters the cemetery through a pair of stone piers which feature at either side iron gates for pedestrian passage. The cemetery is a large rectangular open meadow bounded on the east, north, and west with a partially overgrown tumbled stone wall. Tall trees on the outside of the wall tower over it, shading and visually enclosing the cemetery. The manse is a 1920s brick veneer residence located on the east side of SR 1737 just north of its intersection with NC 150. It too is located on a shaded lawn.

The present brick church building, completed in 1860, is the fourth building on the present grounds erected by the Thyatira congregation as a house of worship. It is the last built of a group of four 19th century buildings--still surviving--which attest to the prominence and wealth of the Thyatira community in the late-Federal and antebellum periods. These other buildings are: Joseph Kerr's plantation seat Oakland (1822), Kerr Mill (1822-23) and the Owen-Harrison House (1843). In fact, the church can be seen as the swansong of the area's prominence in the 18th and 19th centuries. Nothing else of comparable quality to these four buildings has been built in the Mill Bridge area since the completion of this church in 1860.

Efforts toward the construction of the present building began in 1856 during the pastorate (1854-1859) of the Rev. Samuel Caldwell Alexander. The amount of \$5,627.00 was subscribed that year. Additional contributions followed. Dr. Samuel Kerr, the son of Joseph Kerr, was chairman of the building committee which included Major Newberry Franklin Hall and R. H. Cowan. Kerr was one of the wealthiest men in antebellum Rowan County. His plantation Oakland, included much of the acreage which in the mid-18th century belonged to the Cathey family. The congregation of Thyatira was first known as Cathey's meeting house. Hall was a prominent planter whose own house, entered in the National Register in 1982 as the Hall Family House, was being constructed in 1856-1857. It would appear that R. H. Cowan was Richard H. Cowan (1829- ), the son of Abel Cowan (1789-1843), a wealthy planter, and the brother of Maria Cowan (1835-1908) who in 1854 had married the Rev. Barnabas Scott Krider (1829-1865). Rev. Krider was the son of Jacob Krider who built Mt. Vernon (NR, 1980). The Rev. Krider grew up at Mt. Vernon, a handsome Federal house. He began his ministry at Thyatira in June 1859 and continued there until his death in 1865. In May 1860 the session adopted a resolution in appreciation of the efforts of the building committee "for the fidelity with which they have discharged the trust committed to them, and the anxiety they have manifested to meet the wishes of the congregation." It would appear that the building had been completed by that time.

Although the actual contract for the construction of the church does not survive, an itemized list of receipts presented by the builders Murdoch and Raeder to the Building Committee of Thyratira Church does survive together with a large number of individual

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet      Description      Item number      7      Page      1

receipts signed by either Murdoch or Raeder. A total of \$4,736.26 was paid to the builders. The first receipt is dated 8 November 1858. A total of \$4,031.97 had been paid to the contractors by 24 December 1859 which would suggest that the church was, for the most part, constructed in that year. The church was surely completed by 22 March 1860, the date of the last consecutive payment. The sum of \$200 was paid to William Murdoch later, in 1861.

The vernacular Gothic Revival church, a rectangular structure three bays wide along its south front and rear north elevations and five bays deep, is distinguished by the bold and unusual brick work enframing the windows and doors, corbelling and faux buttressing. The buttresses are perpendicular to the elevations of the building except at the corners where they are set on a forty-five degree angle. Dominating the south front elevation is a square three-stage tower, reinforced by diagonally placed triple-shouldered corner buttresses and capped by a tall four-sided conical roof terminating with a spire. The first stage of the tower serves as a vestibule. The entrance here contains a pair of doors below a transom set in a four corner arch. The transom portion of the opening is enframed by a projecting label mold which terminates in a bracket-like fashion at a point level with the lintel across the door. Above the entrance--in the second stage of the tower--are a pair of recessed panels whose lower edges compliment the label mold and whose upper edge is stepped. A frieze of four recessed panels carries across the top of the tower's second stage. The corbelled cornice of this frieze serves as the base for a louvered triangular arched opening in the third and upper stage which serves as the belfry. The top of the arch is enframed by a rank of soldier brick enclosed by a projecting course recalling in form the label mold at the entrance. A projecting string course carries across the top of this third stage from buttress to buttress. In the shallow band at the top of the brick tower are a quintet of recessed hexagonal panels with stepped edges.

Symmetrically positioned on the main south elevation of the church's gable front, recessed behind the tower, are a pair of entrances below three-part transomes enframed by projecting label molds. Directly above them are cruciform shaped windows outlined with projecting brickwork repeating the cruciform shape. A corbelled cornice carries from the double shouldered buttresses at the corners of the front elevation to join the tower.

The five-bay side elevations of the church are marked by double shouldered buttresses and enframed by the diagonally set buttresses at both the front and rear corners. The triangular arch window openings are identical to the belfry opening on the tower and have projecting label molds. The southernmost bay in each side elevation is blind. The rear elevation of the church has a three part division marked by tall double shouldered buttresses which continue up to the building's wood cornice. A corbelled cornice carries along the upper edges of the elevation below the eaves. Recessed opening-like panels occur in each of the bays; however, the outer openings were always blind. The center window raised above the altar was originally glazed but has since been bricked in.

The interior of the church follows a double aisle plan with a balcony carrying fully along the east, south and west elevations. It is supported by square posts boldly chamfered to form octagonal columns. These rest on a molded base, have a molded collar band and molded capitals. The balcony is protected by a molded flat paneled railing. The floor of the church is fully carpeted, the walls are plastered and the ceiling

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet	Description	Item number	7	Page	2
--------------------	-------------	-------------	---	------	---

covered with sheet tin. The paired outside doors open into a vestibule in the base of the tower. At the opposite north wall there are single doors near the east and west ends of the wall which open into the sanctuary under the rear balcony. When the church was built there were stairs in the chambers at either side, in the southeast and southwest corners of the church, connecting the first story to the balcony; however, the stair in the southeast chamber has been removed. Clipping the interior corners of the chambers are openings which now contain five horizontal panel doors which date from the 20th century.

The interior of the church apparently saw little change in its appearance from 1860 until the early 1960s except for the installation of the pressed tin ceiling. However, in the 1960s the pews on the first story were replaced by modern pews, the church was carpeted, new lighting fixtures were installed, and one of the two original stairs to the balcony was removed. There have been various mostly minor additions and changes to the molded woodwork in the sanctuary, and doors replaced; however, these alterations do not compromise the character of the interior. The liturgical east end of the church--here the north elevation--is blind. Projecting southward from its, and about as wide as the center row of pews, is a raised platform. On it are a Victorian sofa flanked by Victorian Gothic chairs at the rear, wood flower stands and the pulpit at the front of the platform. The communion table, also flanked by chairs, is directly in front of the pulpit but on the main floor. Steps are positioned in the southeast and southwest corners of the platform. The southwest chamber containing the stair would appear to be the least disturbed space in the old church. Its four panel exterior door is original and retains its original lock. The stair rises in an unbroken though angular flight where it makes quarter turns. It has chamfered newels, and square banisters carried on a round handrail. The original pews in the balcony, three rows deep, are set on three levels. The pews also survive along the east and west side of the balcony. An organ and choir have been installed in the rear of the balcony and over the vestibule. The room in the southeast corner is used for storage.

The educational building, designed in 1948 by Henry T. Gurley, an engineer from Burlington, North Carolina, was completed by 1950. The two-story main block of the brick veneer structure, three bays wide by nine bays deep, is located to the northwest of the church. A large entrance/stair hall is located in its southeast corner. At the rear of the hall is a secondary hall which extends to the north through the center of the building to provide access to the classrooms, the men's and women's restrooms. There are five large and two smaller classrooms on the second floor arranged around a center hall--above the first story hall. Returning to the first story the main entrance hall here opens into a transverse hall which carries across the front of the one story perpendicular hyphen connecting the educational building to the sanctuary through a door installed in the lower portion of the northernmost bay of the sanctuary's west wall. This hyphen has a five bay front (south) elevation preceded by a porch. Behind the transverse hall and flanking a short service hall opening off the north side of the above hall are the pastor's study in the northeast corner and the church office in the northwest corner. A stair off the west side of the passage leads to the basement furnace and boiler room in the basement of the hyphen. A door at the north end of the passage is set in the center of its three bay north elevation. It opens onto a short, shallow stoop. Leading northward from the stoop is a concrete walk, sheltered

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination FormFor NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Description

Item number 7

Page 3

by an open, flat roof cover which connects to the one-story brick veneer fellowship hall erected in 1962. It is a large undistinguished rectangular building containing a kitchen across its south end and a large meeting/dining room. The covered passage from the church carries to a door on its west rear elevation. There is a pedimented porch, supported by decorative iron supports, sheltering the main entrance on the east (front) elevation.

The last building erected on the immediate church grounds is the Heritage Museum dedicated in September 1980. The rectangular one-story brick building is located west of and parallel to the educational building. The gable roof structure has a single opening--the main entrance--on the south front elevation. Its arched form recalls the shape of the main entrance on the church. Various documents relating to the church and its congregation are displayed inside along with other local memorabilia. The building was donated by Locke C. and Pauline Neel. Mrs. Neel is historian of the Thyatira Memorial Association.

As noted earlier the cemetery is located north of the church and is surrounded on its east, north and west sides by a tumbled stone wall. The principal paved entrance into the cemetery is through pairs of stone piers erected in 1932 by James Crawford Goodnight using stones from the old wall. A tablet set in the south face of the west pier--immediately to the left of the drive--reads as follows: "Thyatira Cemetery (,) Stone For These Pillars Taken From the Old Cemetery Wall, The Iron Gate Was Made By Wm. Cooper in His Shop About 1825 (,) This Work Done 1932." There were originally two iron gates to the cemetery and both of them were removed to Davidson College in the 19th century; however, one of the gates was returned and installed between the above west pier and a secondary stone pier further to the west. In 1978 a duplicate gate was made by Walter Ware Erwin, a member of the congregation, in his shop at Mill Bridge and installed in the pair of piers on the east side of the drive. A tablet, on the south face of the inner pier reads as follows: "THYATIRA CEMETERY This Gate Was Made By Walter W. Erwin By Hand In His Shop In Mill Bridge As A Labor Of Love 1978 (,) This Stone Placed By The Thyatira Memorial Association 1978." The Drive which enters through the paired piers continues into the cemetery for about a third of its depth, circles to the east, and then continues to the south exiting the cemetery.

The cemetery contains an important collection of 18th and 19th century tombstones marking the graves of people prominent in the history of Thyatira community, Rowan County, and the State of North Carolina. Among them are members of the Brandon, Cathey, Carrigan, Cowan, Gillsepie, Grayam, Hyde, Knox, Locke, McConnaughey, McCorkle, Silliman, and Sloan families. (See Statement of Significance.) There are numerous signed stones in the cemetery including the following: P. Fritz, Phil(adelpia)--Benjamin Cowan ( -1828) and Anne H. Cowan ( - 1810); Rowe & White--William (1756-1785) and James (1773-1815) Locke; T. Walker--Ann McKay ( - 1809) and Flora Gillespie ( -1821); W. T. White (Charleston, SC)--Mary J. McCorkle ( -1848); Tiddy (Charlotte, NC)--William A. Baker (1853-1857), Dr. Samuel Kerr (1799-1865); J. H. Buis--Margaret E. (Cowan) Burke (1832-1867); Gray and Tansey, Salisbury--Catherine Sechler (1792-1856); F. A. McNinch--John F. Sechler (1821-1862); and W. G. Berryhill--Dr. Francis Neely Luckey (1823-1878).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Description

Item number 7

Page 4

The Thyatira manse is located down a short drive off the east side of SR 1737 in the northeast corner of its intersection with NC 150. It and its two frame outbuildings, partially shaded by trees, are set on an expansive lawn. The manse is essentially a one-and-a-half story rectangular brick-veneered frame vernacular bungalow covered with a clipped gable roof. A one-story hipped roof porch carries across the front (south) elevation while a like-sized hipped roof shed carries across the rear (south) elevation. The rear porch which occupies most of the rear wall of the shed is covered with a shed roof and is now enclosed. A somewhat temporary looking porte cochere, covered with a hipped roof projects from the center of the house's east elevation. The dormers set in the roof on the east and west elevations have clipped gable roofs with paired windows on their east and west faces, respectively.

The elevations of the house are asymmetrically disposed. The window openings are in three sizes, the smallest being the opening for a single window holding double-hung nine-over-one sash. There are larger openings holding paired nine-over-one sash and yet larger openings containing a trio of nine-over-one sash. The rear shed contains shorter, smaller six-over-one sash. The features of the house typical of modest bungalow style construction are the exposed rafter ends, simply bracketed gables, and the quintessential porch supports consisting of brick piers supporting tapering wood, square-in-plan posts. (The porch floor wraps the southwest corner of the house and continues northward along the west elevation as a terrace.)

The interior of the house is simply finished with sheetrock walls and one-over-one panel doors with plain board surrounds. The ceilings are plastered and the floors covered with tile or carpet. It has an asymmetrical plan with a pair of rooms--the living room and study--across the front of the house. Ranked in triple pile fashion behind the living room--in the house's southwest corner--are the dining room and the large kitchen. Behind the smaller study in the house's southeast corner are an L-shaped hall with closets and an enclosed stair in the crotch of the "L" and a small bedroom in the space to the right (east) of the kitchen. The kitchen opens onto the rear porch. The second story of the manse contains three finished bedrooms and one bathroom. The floors are pine, the walls sheetrocked, and the ceilings sheathed in tongue and groove ceiling.

The one-story weatherboarded frame garage stands to the northeast of the house. Its south gable end holds a pair of doors. It is covered with sheet tin. Further to the northeast is the weatherboarded two-story frame barn which would appear to be contemporary with the earlier manse. It is a small structure, somewhat altered, and of no particular distinction.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1860 **Builder/Architect** William Murdoch and W. Raeder

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Thyatira Presbyterian Church, a vernacular Gothic Revival brick church completed in 1860 by William Murdoch and W. Raeder, enjoys statewide architectural and historical significance. William Murdoch (ca. 1811-1894) was employed briefly as a stonemason on the North Carolina Capitol and later was the contractor for the western North Carolina Railroad. The congregation of Thyatira Church--first known as Cathey's meetinghouse--was comprised of members of one of three settlements established prior to 1752 on the western North Carolina frontier. The church was the anchor of that settlement and continued as the leading social institution in the Federal and antebellum periods and represents, in fact by its construction in 1860, the culmination of the plantation economy which prospered in its community. Thyatira Church, neighboring Back Creek Presbyterian Church, and the (former) Rowan County Courthouse are the three principal surviving public/religious buildings of the antebellum period in Rowan County. The adjoining burying ground contains the graves of members of Cathey's Settlement and their descendants including members of the Cathey, Brandon, Carrigan, Cowan, Gillespie, Graham, Hyde, Knox, Locke, McConnaughey, McCorkle, Silliman, and Sloan families. Among the prominent individuals buried here are: Thomas Cowan (1748-1817), who participated in the battles of King's Mountain, Cowpers, and Ramseur's Mill and was progenitor of Rowan's prominent Cowan family (see Wood Grove, NR); Capt. William Armstrong (\_\_\_\_-1780) who died of wounds at the Battle of Ramseur's Mill; Major Newberry F. Hall (1811-1889), a prominent planter (see Hall Family Farm, NR) and a member of the building committee for the present church; Joseph (1762-1829) and Mary (1764-1839) Kerr who built Kerr Mill (NR) on their large plantation, Oakland, to the west of the church; their son Dr. Samuel Kerr (1799-1865), also a member of the building committee for the present church, the largest subscriber (\$2500) to its construction and one of Rowan County's wealthiest men; John (1708-1758) and Jean Gracy (1708-1772) Knox, the progenitors of the county's prominent Knox family (see Knox Farm Historic District, NR); the Rev. Samuel Eusebius McCorkle (1746-1811), minister at Thyatira from 1777 until his death, a prominent educator and member (1789-1801) of the original board of trustees of the University of North Carolina; James Owen (\_\_\_\_-1853) and John Mack Harrison (1837-1910) prominent local planter/farmers (see Owen-Harrison House); physicians Dr. Francis Neely Luckey (1823-1878), a surgeon in the Confederate army and State legislator, and Dr. Elisha Mitchell Summerall (1858-1934); Matthew Locke (1730-1801) who served many years in the State legislature, was a member of the Provincial Congress, and a member of the United States Congress from 1793-1799; Judge Francis Locke (1766-1823), a judge of the Superior Court from 1803 until 1813; Col. Alexander Brandon (\_\_\_\_-1854) a prominent planter, and benefactor of Davidson College, who bequeathed \$400 to the upkeep of the cemetery. In 1948 the Elizabeth Maxwell Steele Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, erected a monument here to Mrs. Steele (1733-1791), an important Revolutionary patriot.

**CRITERIA ASSESSMENT:**

- A. Thyatira Church is associated with the settlement here on the waters of Cathey's Creek before 1752 and the sustained development and prominence of its society and plantation economy through the 19th century. The church is also the parent congregation of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Criteria Assessment

Item number 8

Page 1

Presbyterian faith in Rowan County.

- B. The church is associated with the lives of a large number of important public leaders, planters, educators, and physicians who are buried in the church cemetery and particularly with the life of William Murdoch (ca. 1811-1894), a prominent antebellum builder/contractor who erected the present building.
- C. Thyatira Church embodies the distinctive characteristics of vernacular Gothic Revival architecture through the use of a rather original program of patterned brick work and lancet arch surrounds. The manse is a typical frame bungalow of the 1920s.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet    HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE    Item number 8    Page 1

Thyatira Presbyterian Church, organized by 1750, is one of the oldest congregations in piedmont North Carolina. The church is located in central Rowan County in the Mill Bridge community, known in the eighteenth century as Cathey's Settlement. The present church building was completed in 1860 by the prominent Salisbury builders William Murdoch and W. Raeder. The large brick structure, representative of Mill Bridge's antebellum prosperity, continues to be the social and religious center of the community.

Between 1746 and 1756 more than sixty thousand settlers, most of whom were Scotch-Irish, moved into piedmont North Carolina in one of the largest migrations in eighteenth century America. By 1749 twenty families, under the leadership of James Cathey and his son George, had settled in Rowan County in the community now known as Mill Bridge.<sup>1</sup> Cathey's settlement has been described as one of the three settlements established before 1752 on the western North Carolina frontier and was probably "the first English-speaking settlement to be established in North Carolina (or, indeed, in the entire South exclusive of Virginia) so far from a navigable river."<sup>2</sup> By 1750 the residents of Cathey's Settlement had organized a Presbyterian congregation and erected a log church with a cemetery nearby. The church was known as the Lower Meeting House or Cathey's Meeting House until the late-eighteenth century when it took the name Thyatira--a city of Asia Minor mentioned in the Bible.<sup>3</sup> In 1753 James Lynn deeded the congregation twelve acres of the present churchyard, and by 1770 a frame church had been erected.<sup>4</sup> Prior to 1765 the church established a library for its members containing such works as Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Prideaux's Connections, and Butler's Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion.<sup>5</sup>

The church was served by itinerant ministers until 1777 when the Reverend Dr. Samuel Eusebius McCorkle (1746-1811), a graduate of Princeton, was called as pastor; McCorkle served Thyatira Church until his death.<sup>6</sup> Dr. McCorkle was a prominent figure in Rowan County, not only as a noted preacher but also as an educator, having established in 1794 the well known classical school Zion-Parnassus Academy. McCorkle was also a member of the original board of trustees of the University of North Carolina, serving from 1789 until 1801. During Dr. McCorkle's pastorate the congregation split on the issue of revivalism, and in 1805 thirty families withdrew from Thyatira Church to form Back Creek Church five miles away. In less than fifty years, however, the differences between the two churches were forgotten, and from 1852 until 1946 the congregations shared the same minister.<sup>7</sup>

After Dr. McCorkle's death in 1811, the church was served by twelve pastors before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. Notable among these were the Reverend Patrick Sparrow, who left Thyatira to become the first professor at nearby Davidson College and then president of Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia, and the Reverend James D. Hall, a founder and trustee of Davidson College for twenty-five years.<sup>8</sup> In 1854 the Reverend Samuel Caldwell Alexander became pastor of the church. The following year Alexander led the congregation in celebrating the church's centennial by writing and publishing a history of the church.<sup>9</sup>

It was during Alexander's pastorate that plans were formed to replace the old frame church, built prior to 1817, with a brick structure. Dr. Samuel Kerr, Major Newberry F. Hall, and R. H. Cowan were appointed a building committee and in 1856 seventy-seven individuals subscribed \$5,627 for the cost of a new building.<sup>10</sup> The largest subscriber was Dr. Kerr, who pledged \$2,500. Kerr, one of the wealthiest men in Rowan County, lived at Oakland plantation which joined the west boundary of the church property.<sup>11</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet    HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE    Item number 8    Page 2

The building committee contracted with Salisbury builders and architects William Murdoch and W. Raeder to construct the church using the labor of Dr. Kerr's slaves.<sup>12</sup> Murdoch (ca. 1811-1894), a native of Scotland, was one of the state's most prominent builders. In the 1830s and 1840s Murdoch was involved in the construction of the State Capitol in Raleigh, the United States Arsenal in Fayetteville, and Fort Sumter and the Graniteville Cotton Mill in South Carolina. In the 1850s Murdoch became active in the construction of several railroad lines connecting New Bern to Morganton, being especially noted for his skill in masonry bridge construction. In the 1850s Murdoch settled in Salisbury and, in partnership with a Mr. Darby, operated a large sash and planing mill producing a variety of building supplies and woodwork. In 1858 W. Raeder, a civil engineer employed as a draftsman by the North Carolina Rail Road, became associated with Murdoch; in 1856 Raeder had pledged \$10.00 for the Thyatira building fund. It is unknown who designed the church building, but both Murdoch and Raeder advertized in North Carolina newspapers that they could furnish clients with designs and plans. No doubt the well-executed woodwork of the interior was manufactured in Salisbury at Murdoch's mill. The interior of the church featured a gallery around three sides of the sanctuary; the west gallery was reserved for slaves.<sup>13</sup> Church records show that between 1854 and 1865 ninety one slaves were received as members of the church. At the time of its completion in 1861, the new church was one of the most architecturally pretentious churches built for a rural congregation in the state, representing the antebellum prosperity of the residents of Mill Bridge.

After the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, nearly forty members of the Thyatira congregation served in the Confederate army.<sup>14</sup> The Mill Bridge community and the church did not experience the violence of the war although Salisbury, only twelve miles away, was raided by Union troops in April of 1865. Also in 1865 the pastor of the church, the Reverend Barnabas Scott Krider, died and the church was unable to secure a permanent minister until 1869. With emancipation most black members ceased to attend Thyatira although one church historian noted that after the war "a few of the oldtimers sat in the colored gallery for years."<sup>15</sup>

Under the leadership of the Reverend J. Alston Ramsay (ca. 1852-1900) from 1877 until 1891, Thyatira recovered from the postwar economic and social conditions of the community.<sup>16</sup> Ramsay, the stated clerk of the Synod of North Carolina, was a noted preacher and the church's membership increased to well over 200 communicants during his pastorate. In 1884, at Ramsay's instigation, the church built a two-story frame building on its grounds and opened a classical school with John N. Correll as principal. The school was well patronized by the community until the first public school was opened in Mill Bridge in 1891. The Ladies' Aid Society was organized by Mrs. Ramsay in 1879.

Also during Ramsay's pastorate the church built its first parsonage on property south of the church. The simple two-story frame house was completed in 1881 and was used until replaced in 1927 with the present bungalow-style manse on the same site.<sup>17</sup> In 1931 the church appointed a committee to oversee the improvement and upkeep of the cemetery which had been in use since the church's founding. About 1825 the cemetery had been enclosed with a drystone wall with a handsome wrought iron gate made by blacksmith Billy Cooper.<sup>18</sup> In 1940 the wall was repaired, the markers put upright, and the cemetery inventoried. Five hundred thirty graves were recorded with the oldest being that of John Nisbet who had died 19 November 1755; fourteen of the markers predated 1770 and ninety-one others were dated before 1800.<sup>19</sup> The Thyatira Memorial Association

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8

Page 3

was formed in 1958 with the support of a \$10,000 legacy from a church member. The association oversees the upkeep of the cemetery and the preservation of the church's historical records by maintaining the Thyatira Heritage Museum in a brick structure built in 1980 near the church.

The Thyatira Church building has received few changes since its construction in 1861. In 1879 the congregation spent \$800 to have the foundation strengthened and iron rods installed to prevent the walls from spreading. In 1892 the wooden belfry and steeple was removed because of decay, and the present roof was built over the brick tower.<sup>20</sup> In 1940 the sanctuary was redecorated with only minor changes done to the pulpit. In 1950 a two-story brick educational building, designed by Henry T. Gurley to blend with the older building, was added to the rear of the sanctuary. In 1962 a one-story brick Fellowship Hall was built on the church grounds as a separate facility from the church building.

Thyatira Presbyterian Church, in the form of its handsome brick building, survives as a reminder of the long presence of the Presbyterian denomination in the area and of the antebellum prosperity of the Mill Bridge community. The church is one of the few surviving structures documented as the work of the important antebellum contractor William Murdoch. The church continues in its long established role as the social and religious center of the community. The congregation, largely formed by descendants of the early settlers of Rowan County, is conscientious of its heritage and maintains its landmark building with a spirit of pride and concern for the future.

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Continuation sheet

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Item number 8

Page

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed discussion of the early settlement of piedmont North Carolina, see Robert W. Ramsay, Carolina Cradle, Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier, 1747-1762 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1964), hereinafter cited as Ramsay, Carolina Cradle. For a specific treatment of the Cathey's Settlement site, see Bruce S. Cheeseman, "Kerr Mill and the Mill Bridge Community, Rowan County, Historical Research Report," Typescript, May 1979, copy in the Research Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Cheeseman, "Kerr Mill." This 119-page report was prepared in conjunction with the restoration of the Kerr Mill, built in 1823, and provides a detailed history of the community from its settlement until the early 1900s.

<sup>2</sup>Ramsay, Carolina Cradle, 37.

<sup>3</sup>Walter L. Lingle, Thyatira Presbyterian Church, Rowan County, North Carolina, 1753-1948 (Statesville, N.C.: Brady Printing Company, 1948), 7-8, hereinafter cited as Lingle, Thyatira Church; most of the author's information on the church comes from this source. For the name Thyatira, see Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 1093.

<sup>4</sup>John Lynn to "Congregation belonging to ye Lower Meeting House," 17 January 1753, Rowan County Deeds, Book 1, p. 46, microfilm copy, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. Lynn had received the land from George Cathey in 1750 (7 February 1750, Anson County Deeds, Book B, 179). The church was referred to as a frame building in the Rowan County court minutes of August 1770, see Lingle, Thyatira Church, 10.

<sup>5</sup>Ramsay, Carolina Cradle, 190.

<sup>6</sup>A biographical sketch of Dr. McCorkle is found in Lingle, Thyatira Church, 12-16.

<sup>7</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 32.

<sup>8</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 31.

<sup>9</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 33; the history was printed as a pamphlet entitled An Historical Address, Delivered at the Centennial Celebration of Thyatira Church, Rowan County, N. C., October 19, 1855 (Salisbury, N.C.: J. J. Bruner, Printer, 1855).

<sup>10</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 35-36. The subscription list is reproduced as appendix F in Samuel M. Houck, To Receive the Morning Star, Thyatira Presbyterian Church, 1752-1976 (Jacksonville, Fla.: Douglas Printing Co., 1976), hereinafter cited as Houck, Thyatira Church.

<sup>11</sup>Dr. Kerr's life and role in the Mill Bridge community has been well documented in Cheeseman, "Kerr Mill," 41-54.

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National Register of Historic Places  
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Continuation sheet      HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE      Item number 8      Page

<sup>12</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 36; the biographical information on Murdoch and Raeder comes from the files of Davyd Foard Hood, survey specialist, Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, who is preparing biographies of both men. Mr. Hood's notes are completely documented with references to contemporary newspapers, census records, railroad stockholders' reports, etc. Murdoch and Raeder's involvement in the construction of Thyatira Church is documented by many receipts preserved in the church's Heritage Museum.

<sup>13</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 37.

<sup>14</sup>Church members who served in the Civil War are listed as appendix E in Houck, Thyatira Church.

<sup>15</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 37.

<sup>16</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 40, 47-50.

<sup>17</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 48.

<sup>18</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 53-54.

<sup>19</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 21; Houck, Thyatira Church, 60-61.

<sup>20</sup>Lingle, Thyatira Church, 36-37; other changes in the building noted in the working file in the Survey and Planning Branch.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 18 acres

Quadrangle name Cleveland

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

**UTM References**

A 

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3	9	4	5	3	6	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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5	3	2	7	6	0
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3	9	4	5	4	0	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

1	7
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5	3	3	1	2	0
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3	9	4	4	8	2	5
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1	7
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5	3	2	8	9	0
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3	9	4	4	6	9	0
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E 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification**

The property being nominated consists of two tracts which appear as Lots 7 & 8, Rowan County Tax Map 770, Steele Township. A copy of the map is attached.

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

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
-------	-----	------	--------	-----	------

state		code	county		code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

Architectural Description, statement of significance and criteria assessment by name/title Davyd Foard Hood; Historical research report by Marshall Bullock; Archaeology and

organization Division of Archives and History date April 14, 1983

street & number 109 East Jones Street telephone 733-6545

city or town Raleigh state N. C.

# 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. Fries, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date September 20, 1983

<b>For NPS use only</b>	
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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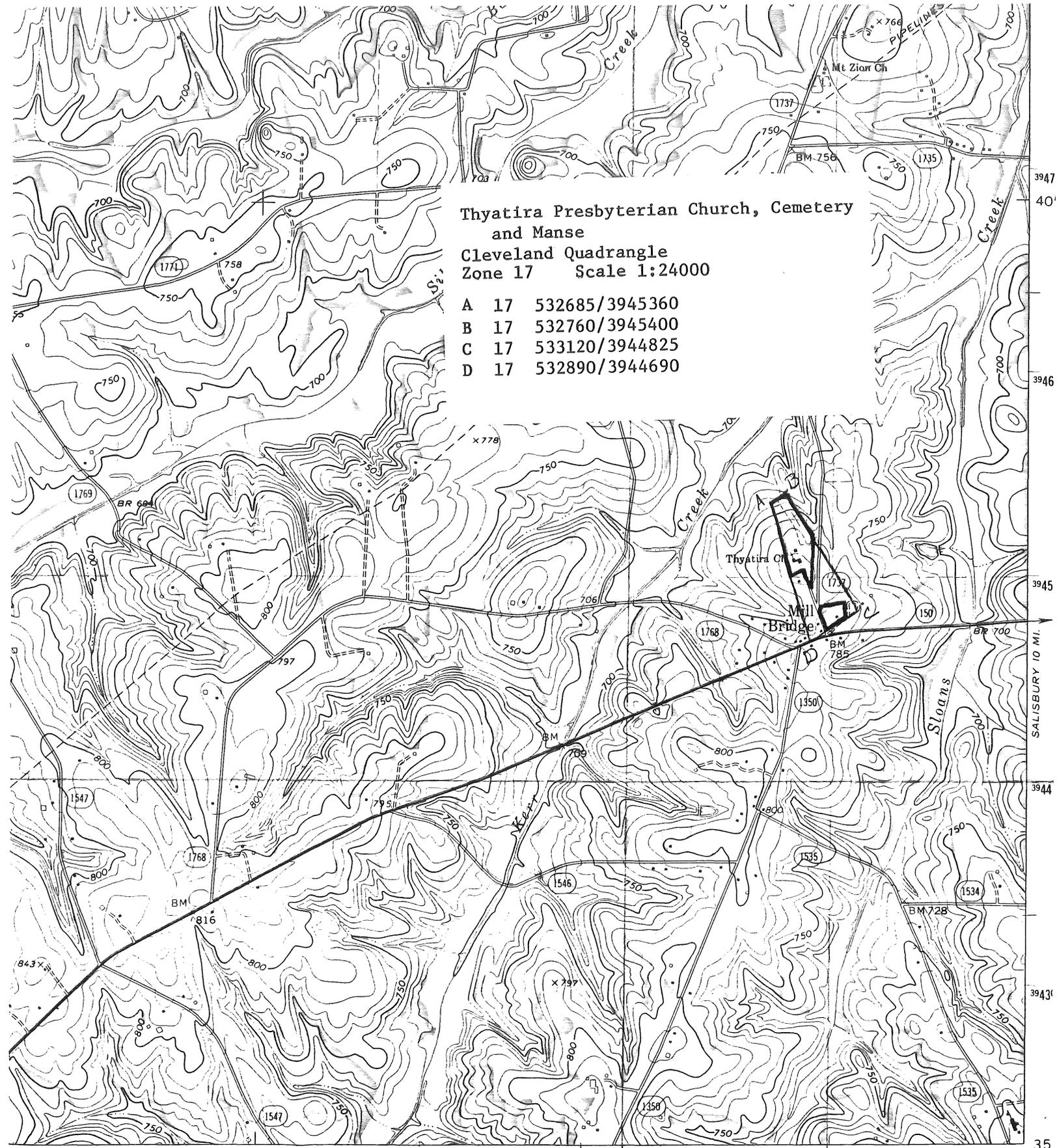
Item number 9

Page 1

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Thyatira Presbyterian Church, Cemetery  
and Manse  
Cleveland Quadrangle  
Zone 17 Scale 1:24000

- A 17 532685/3945360
- B 17 532760/3945400
- C 17 533120/3944825
- D 17 532890/3944690



● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C.—1972  
533000m.E.

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route

